

Plan:8 Town Planning Ltd

Planning Statement

Proposal: Change of use from Bingo Hall to Indoor Sports Complex/Gym with retention of existing bar/restaurant facilities

Site: Former Mecca Bingo, Smith Street, Rochdale, OL16 1YH

Prepared By Simon Plowman MA MRTPI
PLAN:8 TOWN PLANNING LTD
07792784924
info@plan8townplanning.co.uk

REGISTERED IN ENGLAND COMPANY NO. 06279898
M10 MAXRON HOUSE, GREEN LANE, STOCKPORT, SK6 3JQ

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Plan:8 Town Planning Limited have been commissioned by Chuko Odudu to submit to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) a planning statement in support of a planning application seeking full planning permission. The application seeks permission for the proposed change of use of the former Mecca Bingo Hall building on Smith Street Rochdale from a Bingo Hall (Sui Generis) to Indoor Sports and Fitness use including football, cricket and gymnasium (Class E).

1.2 This Planning Statement comprises an assessment of the proposed development against the requirements of Rochdale Borough Council's Local Plan which includes the Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy dated October 2016 and the Saved Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan dated June 2006, and the National Planning Policy Framework which was revised in July 2021. This statement should read alongside the Design and Access Statement and the Retail, Office, Leisure Impact Assessment.

1.3 The purpose of this statement is to describe the local and national policies that are directly relevant to the application and to provide an analysis of those policies and the application site. This statement will put forward our case and provides an explanation to why we believe the proposal conforms with both national and local planning policies and that planning permission should be granted.

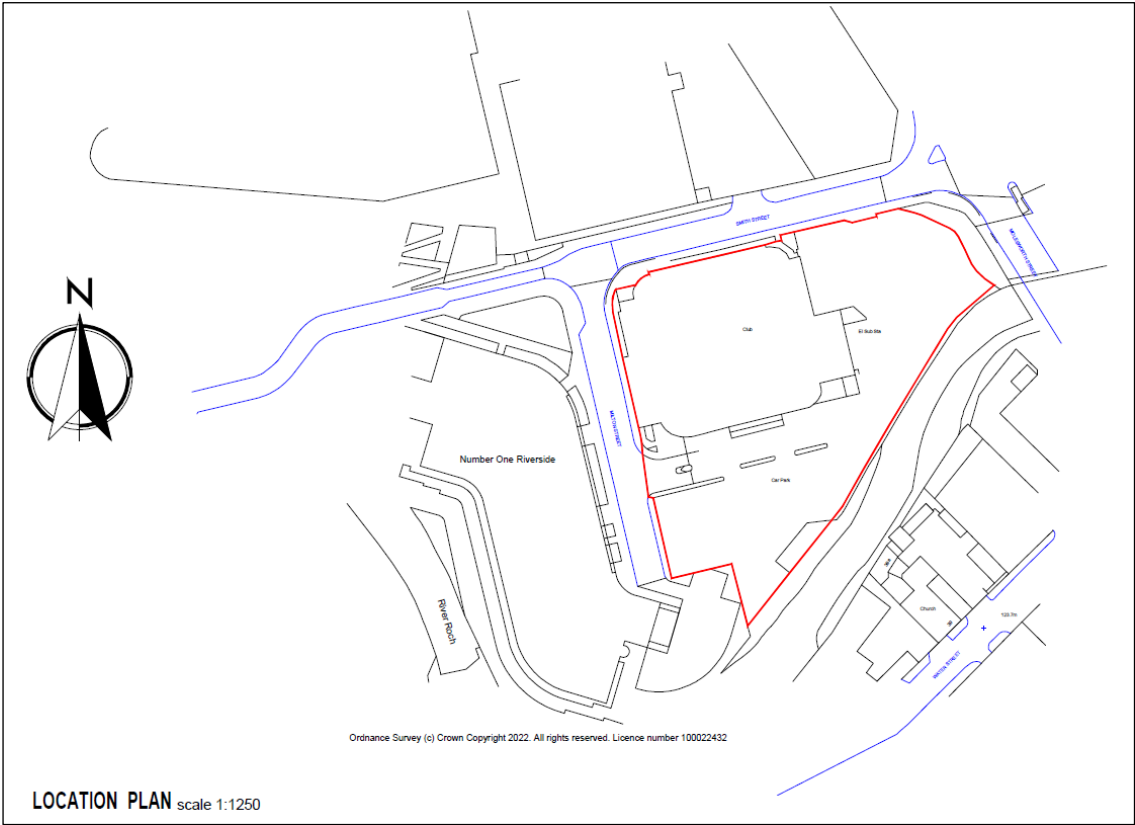
2.0 Site Location and Context

2.1 The application site (Former Mecca Bingo Hall) comprises a large 2800m² internal size part single storey/part two storey, commercial building and it situated in Rochdale Town Centre. The building is located at the junction of Smith Street and Milton Street, and it wraps around the corner of these two highways. There is a large level pay and display car park that is managed by Rochdale Council that immediately abuts the building and this runs around the south and east elevations. The Rochdale Borough Council Offices at Number One Riverside are situated to the west, the new Marks and Spencer Retail Store is located to the north, the A671 (John Street / Molesworth Street) runs to the east, and the River Roch runs to the south of the site. The buildings in the immediate vicinity of the site are predominantly commercial uses due to the town centre location.

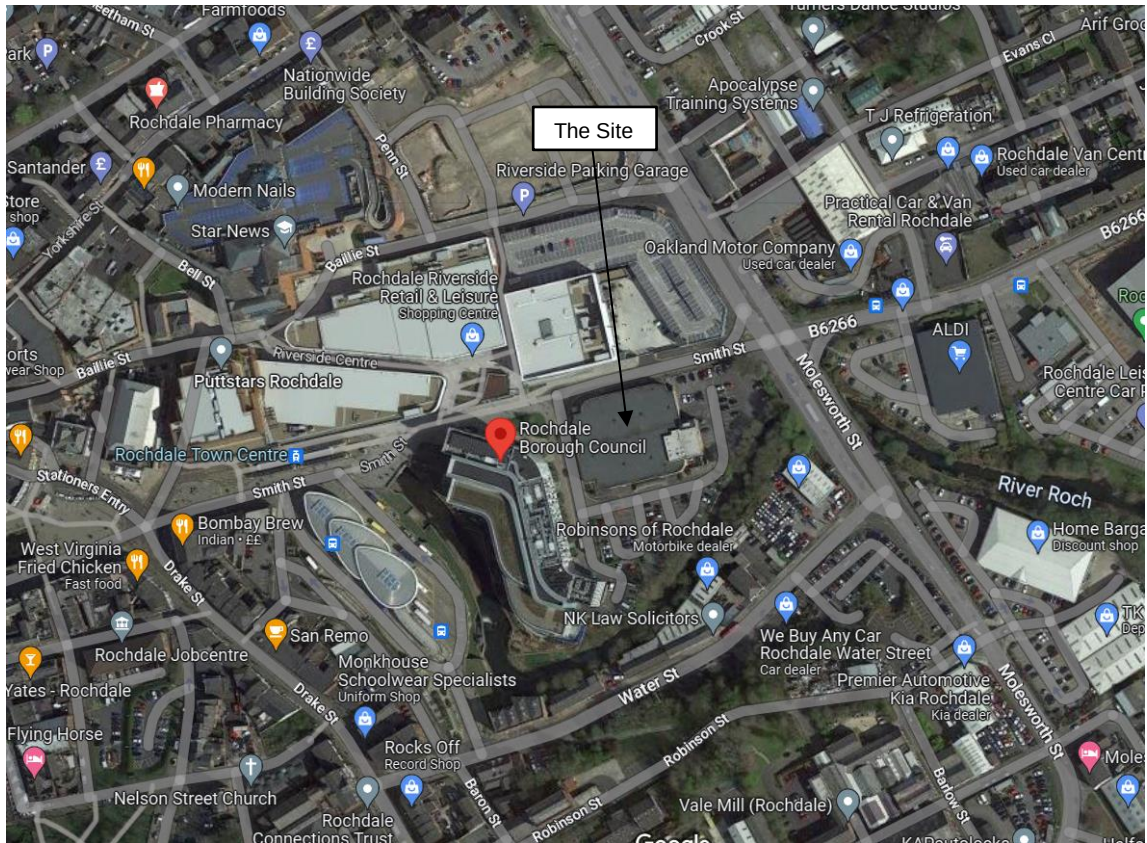
2.2 The building is currently vacant, but it was previously operated as a Mecca Bingo Hall for over 20 years until it closed for business in July 2022, and therefore it falls under the Sui Generis planning use classification. The applicant is wishing to use the existing building as an indoor sports and fitness centre providing the general public with facilities such as football pitches, cricket pitches and a gymnasium. This would bring the building back into use, promote health and fitness, and also bring positive benefits to the vitality and viability of the town centre. The applicant does not propose to make any elevational alterations to the existing building and intends to utilise the large internal space to create the sports pitches and fitness areas.

2.3 The site benefits from having the large Smith Street car park immediately adjacent to it, and it is also in an easily accessible location being in the town centre. It is well served by public transport options including the Metrolink and Bus Station, which are located a very short distance away. For vehicle users, there are numerous other car parks available for use in the centre, and there is also some on-street parking available nearby outside of peak times. The

map, aerial photograph and site photographs provided in Figures 1 to 8 of this Statement clearly identify the site location.



(Figure 1 – Site location plan)



(Figure 2 – Aerial photograph showing the site location and adjoining properties)



(Figure 3 – Photograph showing the front and side elevations of the building)



(Figure 4 – Photograph showing the front elevation of the building)



(Figure 5 – Photograph showing the side elevation of the building and Smith Street car park)



(Figure 6 – Photograph showing the rear elevation of the building and Smith Street car park)



(Figure 7 - Photograph showing the rear elevation of the building and Smith Street car park)



(Figure 8 – Photograph showing the front elevation of the building and wider street scene)

3.0 Planning History and site constraints

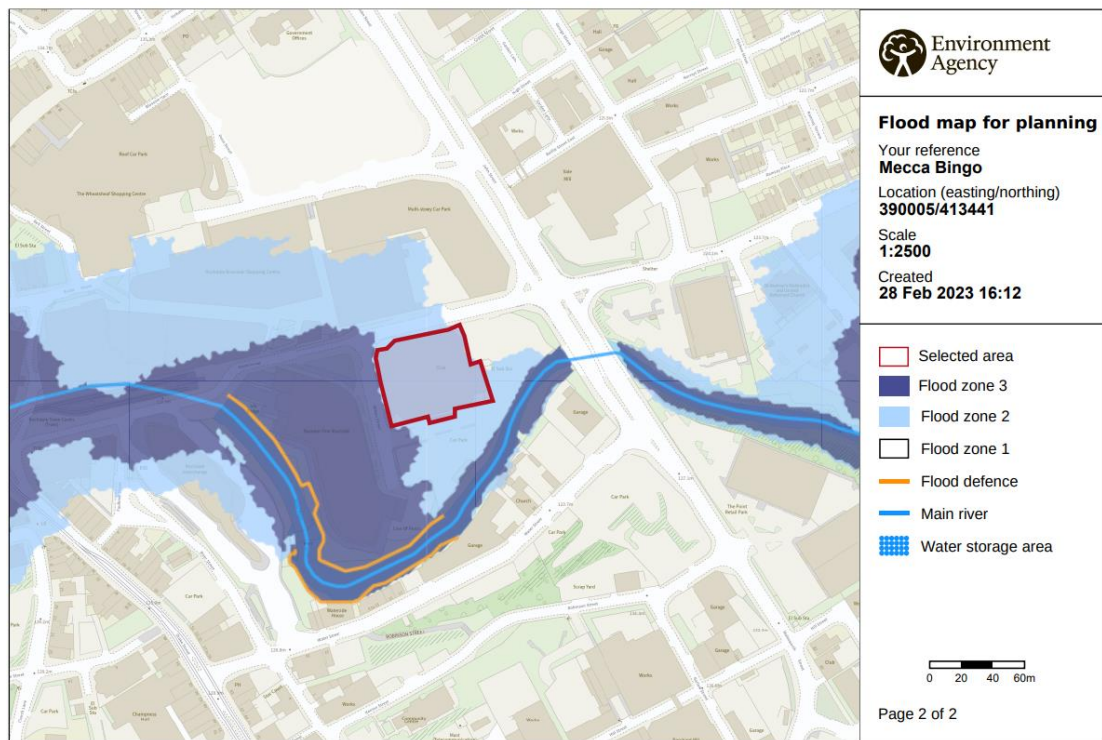
3.1 According to the published on-line Rochdale Borough Council Planning records there are four planning applications showing for the site (Mecca Bingo) from 1995 onwards, as detailed below.

- **12/55873/ADV** – Installation of one, replacement, non-illuminated fascia sign to Smith Street elevation of premises. Two internally illuminated, wall mounted, poster signs to entrance and addition of two internally illuminated lettering signs to existing signs over entrance – Granted subject to conditions 08/10/2012
- **08/D51098** – Construction of Additional Car Parking Area - Granted subject to conditions 20/08/20008
- **07/D48546** - Smoking Shelter Extension To Side Of Premises - Granted subject to conditions 02/03/2007

- **95/D31919** - Change Of Use From Retail Store (Class A1) To Bingo And Leisure Club
(Class D2) - Grant subject to conditions 03/08/1995

3.2 Flood Risk

The site is located within a Flood Zone 3 according to the Environment Agency records which the EA advise means that this area has a high probability of flooding. Figure 11 below shows the flood risk map extract from the Environment Agency records. The applicant has therefore appointed consultant engineers to submit a Flood Risk Assessment for the proposed development.



(Figure 11 – Environment Agency Flood Risk Map)

3.3 Heritage

The application site does not contain a Listed Building, Locally Listed Building and it is not located in a Conservation Area according to the Council and Historic England on-line records. The site is also not situated adjacent to any of these types of Heritage Assets so does not affect their setting.

3.4 Ecology and Biodiversity

There are no known ecology or biodiversity related concerns on the site that are a material consideration in respect of the determination of this proposal.

3.5 Local Plan Policy

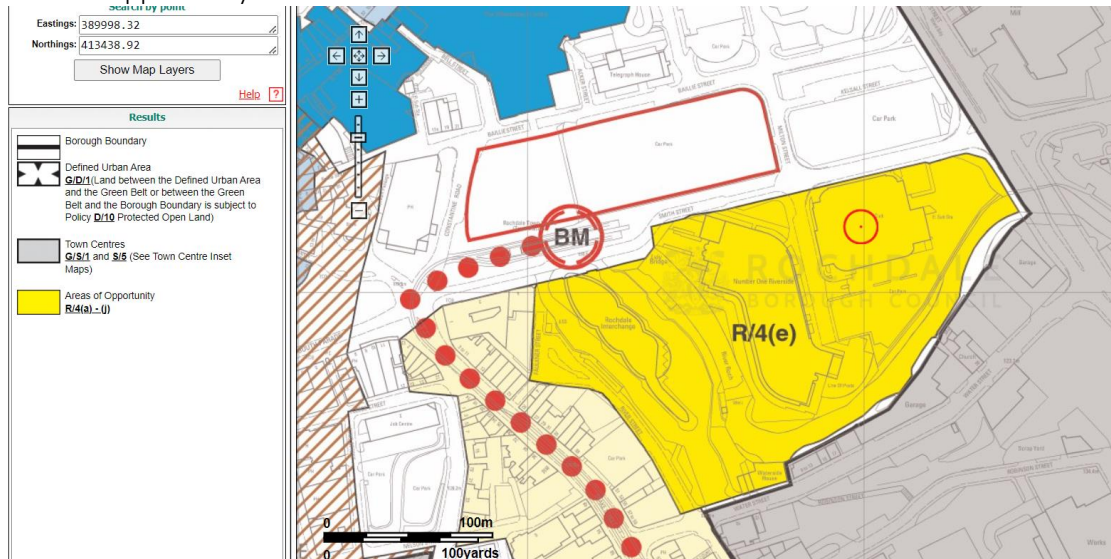
The Rochdale Borough Council UDP proposals map in Figure 12 on the following page shows the application site designated as being within the following.

Borough Boundary

Defined Urban Area

Town Centre

Areas of Opportunity



(Figure 12 - Extract from Rochdale UDP proposals map)

4.0 The Planning Application

4.1 The proposal seeks the grant of full planning permission for the proposed change of use of change of use of the building from a Bingo Hall (Sui Generis) to Indoor Sports and Fitness use including football, cricket and gymnasium (Class E).

4.2 As mentioned earlier in this Statement, the premise was previously operated as a Mecca Bingo Hall for over 20 years until the company closed the business in July 2022. The applicant is

wishing to use the existing building as an indoor sports and fitness centre providing the general public with facilities such as football pitches, cricket pitches and a gymnasium. There are no elevational alterations proposed to the existing building as part of the change of use and the applicant just intends to make changes to the large internal space. The centralised area that was used to conduct the bingo gaming operation and the associated surrounding customer seating areas would be removed and reconfigured to facilitate the creation of the sports pitches and fitness areas. The applicant proposes to retain many of the existing facilities including the main reception, bar and dining area, kitchen, customer toilets and storage and maintenance rooms as they suitable for the new use. The only change will be the creation of some customer changing rooms.

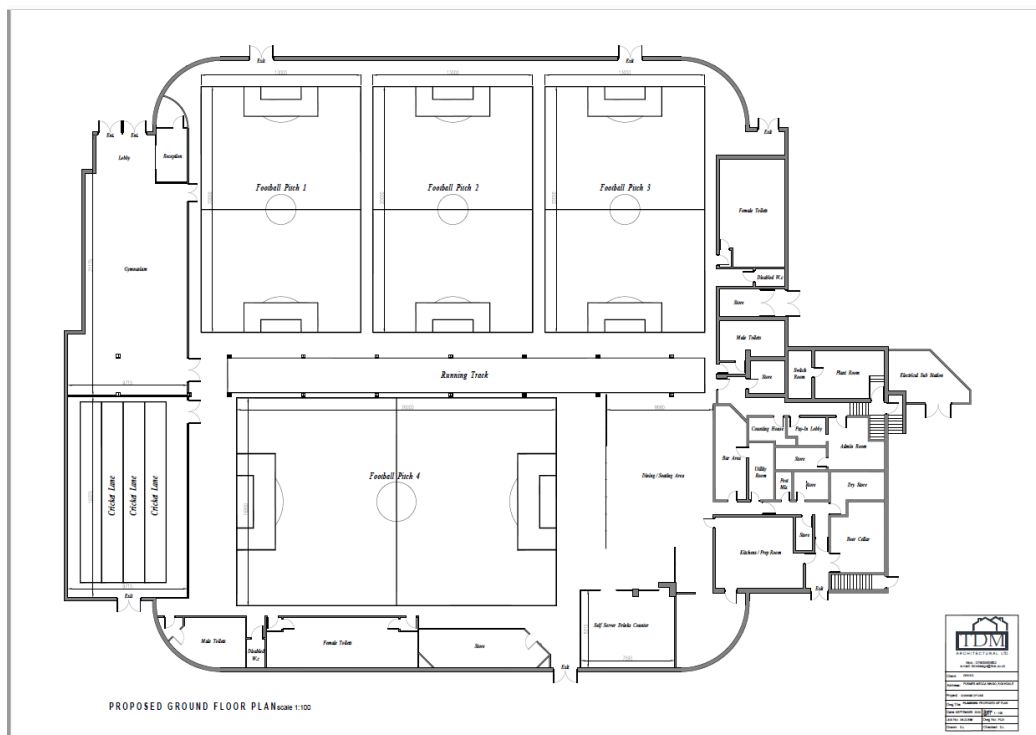
4.3 There are four football pitches proposed within the building and they include three of the same size and a larger pitch. The three pitches measure 20 metres by 13 metres, and the larger pitch measures 26 metres by 16.9 metres. The size and layout of the pitches would be sufficient to enable small-sided football games to take place. There are also four practice cricket lanes, a gymnasium, and a small running track included as part of the sports and fitness business. Being located inside the building, the various sporting facilities can be used all year round and they will not generate any excessive noise. The applicant is proposing to hire out the football pitches and cricket lanes to customers on an hourly basis like other facilities of this type.

4.4 The indoor sports and fitness use would take place between the hours of 07.00 and 22.00 Monday to Sunday, which would suit all persons and their respective lifestyle. The various facilities could be used by all members of the community including individuals, friends, work colleagues, football teams or other sporting clubs.

4.5 The site is in an easily accessible location being in the town centre and for vehicle users it benefits from having the large 130 space Smith Street car park immediately adjacent to it. The A671 highway (John Street / Molesworth Street) runs to the east of the site and Smith Street is

served directly off it. There are numerous car parks available for use in the centre, and there is also some on-street parking available nearby outside of peak times. There are excellent public transport options including the Metrolink and Bus Station, which are located a very short distance away at the Rochdale Interchange. The applicant is also happy to provide some secure bicycle storage provision at the site to support sustainable transport and healthy lifestyle choices if required by the Council.

- 4.6** The scheme drawings have been prepared by TDM Architectural Limited and they include a site location plan and existing and proposed elevations and internal floor plan layouts of the building. A copy of the proposed internal floor plan layout drawing (Dwg No. PL01) is included below in Figure 13.



(Figure 13 - Proposed internal layout of the building)

5.0 Local Planning Policies

- 5.1** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 5.2** Rochdale Borough Council's Local Plan which includes the Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy dated October 2016 and the Saved Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan dated June 2006 sets out the Council's planning policies that are used to guide development within the Borough. Amongst other things, the local plan has policies relating to developments in Town Centres with objectives specifically encouraging the retention of shops and commercial uses to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres especially where there are good links to sustainable transport options. The policies also ensure that associated developments are well designed to respect the character of the area and do not have an unacceptable impact on neighbouring properties and uses.
- 5.3** In submitting this planning application, the following policies are considered relevant to the determination of this application: -

Rochdale Core Strategy

Policy SO1 - To deliver a more prosperous economy

Included within this policy it states that the Council will focus on establishing strong thriving attractive town centres, particularly Rochdale town centre.

Policy SP3/R – The Strategy for Rochdale

Included within this policy it states that one of the Council priorities to transform the town centre is by focusing growth and major retail, leisure and office developments which will maintain and reinforce the centre as the main town centre.

Policy P3 – Improving Design of New Development

The policy requires all new developments, including associated landscaping, regardless of location in the borough, to adhere to high standards of design.

Policy E1 – Establishing thriving town, district and local centres

The policy states that the Council will focus on retail, leisure, cultural, office, residential and other development to promote the viability and vitality of all the boroughs town centres to maintain

them as thriving and sustainable centres. It also seeks to promote a scale of retail and leisure development within Rochdale Town Centre which is appropriate to the size, catchment and role taking. It identifies Rochdale Town Centre as the borough's principal town centre and centre of sub regional significance.

Policy E1/R - Establishing Rochdale as a thriving town centre

The policy states that Rochdale town centre will be the main location for major developments attracting a large number of people. In particular, planning permission will be granted for development that supports the vitality and viability, such as major retail, leisure, cultural and office development.

Policy E2 – Increasing jobs and prosperity

The policy seeks to ensure sufficient supply of employment land within the borough and supports other employment generating uses such as retail, leisure, entertainment and tourism uses to support the creation and retention of successful businesses.

Policy C8 - Improving community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities

The policy states that the Council will support and promote the provision of better community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities and will follow a sequential approach as set out, provided they are of a type and scale appropriate to the size of the settlement, are accessible and support our objectives. It mentions that the Council will require facilities that serve the borough as a whole, and facilities that attract large numbers of people, to be located within or adjoining Rochdale town centre.

Policy G8 - Managing water resources and flood risk

The policy states that the Council will ensure that new development (including flood risk mitigation measures) does not lead to any form of increased flooding locally or further downstream, does not impede natural water and flood risk management, is not detrimental to

existing or potential flood storage areas, contributes where possible to alleviating existing flood risk, is itself well protected from flood risk and ensures prudent use of water resources. The Council also requires full regard to the published evidence of local flood risk and its significance as included in Strategic Flood Risk Assessments, Surface Water Management Plans and other recognised sources of flood risk data and the production of additional Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs) as appropriate.

Policy G9 – Reducing the impact of pollution

The policy states that the Council will reduce all forms of pollution in the borough by requiring that development does not lead to an unacceptable increase in air, water, noise, light or other pollution.

Policy DM1 – General Development Requirements

The policy states that all development proposals will be expected to demonstrate that they are appropriate in terms of their design and location. They need to respect and enhance the quality of the local area, and not adversely affect residential amenity, or create highway / access, environmental, or crime related issues. It also states that development proposals should provide, or demonstrate the availability of, the service and community infrastructure necessary to meet local needs e.g. local shops, community, leisure and sport facilities and provision of open space.

Policy T2 – Improving Accessibility

The policy mentions that development that offers greater access to all forms of travel will assist the borough's continuous improvement to becoming more sustainable, healthier, greener and prosperous.

Saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan

Policy G/D/1 - Defined Urban Area

The policy mentions that the boundary of the urban area is defined on the proposals map and it states that the Council wishes to ensure that new development, wherever possible and appropriate, is concentrated within the urban area in order to support urban regeneration and to protect the countryside.

6.0 National Planning Policy

6.1 Government guidance is set out in the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) dated July 2021. The NPPF expresses a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of the application. The Planning Practice Guide (PPG) is intended to complement the NPPF and to provide a single resource for planning guidance, whilst rationalizing and streamlining the material. Almost all previous planning Circulars and advice notes have been cancelled. Specific reference will be made to the PPG or other national advice in this Planning statement, where appropriate.

6.2 The following sections of the NPPF are considered of most relevance to the application proposal:

-

- Chapter 2: Achieving Sustainable Development (paras. 7-14)
- Chapter 4: Decision Making (para. 38)
- Chapter 6: Building a strong, competitive economy (paras. 81-85)
- Chapter 7: Ensuring the vitality of town centres (paras 86-91)
- Chapter 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities (paras. 92-103)
- Chapter 9: Promoting sustainable transport (paras. 104-113)
- Chapter 12: Achieving Well-Designed Places (paras. 126-136)

6.3 Central to the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and the need for the planning system to support new development. Paragraph 10 states *“So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).* Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out the

presumption in favour of sustainable development and the application of the policy for decision-making: -

“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

6.4 For decision-taking this means: -

- Approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan without delay; or
- Where there are no relevant Development Plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, granting permission unless:
 - (i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

6.5 Paragraph 11 in Chapter 2 (Achieving Sustainable Development) of the NPPF advises that where the development plan is out of date, the presumption in favour of sustainable development means granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

6.6 Paragraph 38 of Chapter 4 (Decision-making) of the NPPF confirms that Local Planning Authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

6.7 The NPPF states that the planning system has three overarching objectives to achieve sustainable

development, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.

The three overarching objectives are; economic, social and environmental as follows: -

- **Economic** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- **Social** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **Environmental** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

6.8 Paragraphs 81 – 85 in Chapter 6 (Building a strong, competitive economy) of the revised NPPF advises that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.

- 6.9** Paragraph 86 (Ensuring the vitality of town centres) states that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should also define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters.
- 6.10** Paragraph 92 (Promoting healthy and safe communities) states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other. Paragraph 93 further adds that to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community.
- 6.11** Paragraph 106 in Chapter 9 (Promoting sustainable transport) states that planning policies should support an appropriate mix of uses across an area to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities. Paragraph 110 goes on to state the in assessing specific applications for development, it should be ensured that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes have been taken up given the type of development and its location, and that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. Paragraph 112 mentions that applications for development should give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use. Paragraph 111 advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an

unacceptable impact on highways safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

6.12 Paragraphs 126 -136 in Chapter 12 (Achieving well-designed places) of the revised NPPF advocates a requirement for good design. This is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Paragraph 130 advises that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Paragraph 132 confirms that design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Paragraph 134 confirms

that permission should be refused for development that is not well designed, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.

6.13 PPG: Town Centres and Retail

6.14 The Planning Practice Guidance on Town Centres and Retail highlights that Local planning authorities can take a leading role in promoting a positive vision for town centres, bringing together stakeholders and supporting sustainable economic and employment growth. They need to consider structural changes in the economy, in particular changes in shopping and leisure patterns and formats, the impact these are likely to have on individual town centres, and how the planning tools available to them can support necessary adaptation and change. A wide range of complementary uses can, if suitably located, help to support the vitality of town centres, including residential, employment, office, commercial, leisure/entertainment, healthcare and educational development.

7.0 Assessment

7.1 The key planning issues for consideration in the determination of this application are: -

- i) Principle of development.
- ii) Design considerations
- iii) Impact on Amenity
- iv) Highway Safety / Parking / Accessibility

7.2 Principle of development

7.3 The application site is located within Rochdale Town Centre and offers an opportunity to fully utilise an existing commercial building, which is located within an accessible and sustainable location. The existing former bingo hall building is currently vacant and this proposal will see the building used to its full potential and offer an important service to the local community by providing a facility where people can undertake in sport and fitness activities. This will provide important health and well-being benefits and will also encourage social interaction. There will also be significant economic benefits to Rochdale and the town centre with this large building being in full use and the associated customers and visitors it will attract on a daily basis. It is likely that customers and visitors will also choose to use some other businesses and services on offer whilst being in the town centre.

7.4 The Rochdale Core Strategy Policies E1, E1/R, E2 and C8 would all appear to support large sport and leisure use developments that attract customers, provide employment opportunities, and overall promote the viability and vitality of the town centre to maintain it as a thriving and sustainable centre.

7.5 There are no external changes being made to the existing building and the applicant just proposes to reconfigure the internal space to create the sports and fitness facilities. We consider that the proposed development is acceptable in terms of its town centre location, its visual impact, its relationship to neighbouring businesses and its impact upon the highway network. It

has good access for pedestrians and vehicles, good access to public transport, and it is well placed with the local road networks. The proposed change of use would therefore appear to meet the aims and expectations of Core Strategy Policies E1, E1/R, E2 and C8, and the NPPF.

7.6 Design considerations

7.7 The applicant does not intend to make any elevational changes to the front, side or rear of the existing building as part of the application and they will be leaving all the doorways and window openings and servicing areas in situ. The main entrance point on the Smith Street frontage is being fully retained for the proposed new use and this will provide safe and easy access for all customers. Therefore, from the street scene views, there will be no difference to the current visual appearance of the building.

7.8 It will however be necessary to make some design changes to the large internal space within the existing building to facilitate the change of use. The building will remain part single storey/part two storey, and the centralised area that was used to conduct the bingo gaming operation and the associated surrounding customer seating areas would be removed and reconfigured to create the sports pitches and fitness areas. The applicant is proposing to retain many of the existing facilities including the main reception, bar and dining area, kitchen, customer toilets and storage and maintenance rooms as they suitable for the new use. The only change will be the creation of some customer changing rooms.

7.9 For these reasons, we consider that proposal meets the aims and expectations of Core Strategy Policies DM1 and P3, and Paragraph 130 of the NPPF, which amongst other things promotes good design.

7.10 Impact on Amenity

7.11 The application site is located in a town centre environment where there is generally lots of activity and associated noise and disturbance during the daytime and evening due to the various types of commercial business uses that operate there. We do not consider that the proposed

change of use will cause any additional adverse impact to the operators of the adjoining commercial properties above and beyond the existing lawful Sui Generis bingo hall use situation that exists. The proposed development will not lead to an unacceptable increase in air, water, noise, light or other pollution.

7.12 The bingo hall is a building that is open to the public during the day and into the late evening and it has associated comings and goings with customers attending to socialise and play the various bingo games on offer by the operator. It will also have several staff employed there and associated deliveries / collections during the day. The bingo games and associated social activities would all be undertaken within this relatively modern brick constructed building, and it is unlikely that there will be any significant noise nuisance heard outside in the public realm. This would be the same for the sports and fitness use. We would also wish to highlight that the proposed indoor sports and fitness use falls under the wide-ranging Class E (Commercial, Business, and Service) use designation and arguably in planning terms this type of use is considered to have less overall impact than a bingo hall which falls under the Sui Generis category. It would also be fair to say that the indoor activities will have significantly less impact in noise and disturbance terms than an outside sports facility where shouting may at times be clearly seen or heard. Many of these outside facilities take place in areas close to residential properties. There are no residential properties in the immediate vicinity of this site.

7.13 The proposed use will be well-managed and controlled by the operators and they aim to deliver a good quality sports and fitness experience for their customers. The hiring of the sports pitches will be carefully planned and organised to ensure that there is no impact on the adjoining businesses that are situated in the immediate locality. The applicant is looking to open the building for business 7 days a week and it is envisaged that the facility will likely be at its busiest in the early to late evening period during the week and during the daytime at weekends when the football pitches will likely be in more demand for hire. As previously mentioned in this statement, there is excellent car parking facilities available directly outside the site on the Smith

Street car park and elsewhere in the town centre, along with good public transport options for those who are not able to come on foot.

7.14 For these reasons, we consider that proposed sports and fitness use is appropriate for the site and complies with the expectations of Core Strategy Policies DM1 and G9, and the NPPF.

7.15 Highway Safety / Parking / Accessibility

7.16 The site is situated in a sustainable town centre location in terms of car parking and public transport accessibility. The wide A671 highway (John Street / Molesworth Street) runs to the east and serves the adopted highways on Smith Street and Milton Street providing easy and safe access into the site for vehicle users. There is a large level pay and display car park on Smith Street immediately adjacent to the building that is managed by Rochdale Council and this car park provides 130 spaces including 114 general use spaces and 16 disabled spaces. It is pay and display Monday to Saturday between 8am and 6pm, and then free to use outside of these hours. There are also numerous other car parks available for use nearby in the town centre should this car park be full.

7.17 The site is also very well served by public transport options with the Metrolink and Bus Station at Rochdale Interchange being located within 100 metres. Rochdale Train Station is also within close proximity approximately 800 metres away. It will also be accessible by foot for some users who work or live in the town centre or on its outskirts. The applicant is happy to provide some secure bicycle storage provision at the site if required by the Council to promote sustainable transportation and healthy living choices. There is a large fixed covered smoking shelter at the rear of the building that could be easily adapted for bicycle storage.

7.18 In terms of access into the building, the existing main entrance point on the Smith Street frontage is being fully retained for the proposed new use and this will provide safe and easy level access for all customers.

7.19 For these reasons, we consider that proposal is acceptable in terms of Highway Safety / Parking / Accessibility and meets the aims and expectations of Core Strategy Policies T2 and DM1, and Chapter 9 of the NPPF.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1** At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, this requires planning applications that accord with the development plan to be approved without delay and where the development plan is absent, silent or out of date granting permission unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the framework as a whole or specific policies in the framework indicate that development should be restricted.
- 8.2** The proposed development will provide economic, social and environmental benefits and constitutes sustainable development.
- 8.3** The proposed indoor sports and fitness use is an appropriate use in Rochdale Town Centre, which will help to preserve and support the vitality and viability of the centre.
- 8.4** The proposed use will provide health and fitness and wellbeing benefits to the local community.
- 8.5** The site is fully accessible to public transport and car parking options being in the Town Centre.
- 8.6** There is no adverse effect on the amenity of nearby businesses or other uses as a result of the proposal.
- 8.7** For the reasons stated in this statement, and in other supporting statements, we consider that the proposed development is consistent with local and national planning policy and will enable the building to be utilised to its full potential and will provide local investment in Rochdale without any detrimental effect on the area. Therefore, we respectfully request that planning permission should be granted for this proposed development.