

Rochdale Station Square Public Realm Redevelopment

Planning Statement

ON BEHALF OF ROCHDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL

December 2022

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Nexus Planning on behalf of Rochdale Borough Council ('the applicant') to support the submission of an application at Rochdale Station Square for:
- 'Public realm works including: new public square; relocation of taxi rank and car parking spaces; and associated works.'**
- 1.2 The proposed scheme presents a major regeneration opportunity for the area, comprising an improved public realm that will provide a new entrance to Rochdale. The public realm, located to the north of the railway station, will provide a civic space for use by local communities. The investment in this area will act as a catalyst for further investment into Rochdale, and support wider regeneration initiatives in the town and the Borough.
- 1.3 The proposals at Rochdale Station Square will provide a series of key design objectives, including:
- a. Reconnecting and establishing a physical and psychological link with shops and business in the wider Milkstone community;
 - b. Providing a multi-use space as the new heart for the community business and recreation;
 - c. Provide a sense of arrival and welcome gateways to the new Square, and more generally Rochdale town centre;
 - d. Celebrate a new sense of arrival at Rochdale Station;
 - e. Provide new drop off and pick up spaces around the Station;
 - f. Use of design features to inform movement and define spaces; and,
 - g. Use of a walking-friendly street design.
- 1.4 Taken as a whole, the proposals will improve and increase north-to-south and east-to-west connectivity through the Square. The proposals have been designed to provide pedestrian priority for movements in the space, as well as using tree planting to achieve a sense of enclosure, and to provide character within the Square. Planting will also improve green infrastructure, and improve the overall sustainability of the site.

Pre-application discussions

- 1.5 In accordance with the Rochdale Statement of Community Involvement and paragraphs 40 and 41 of the NPPF, pre-application engagement with the LPA and key statutory and non-statutory consultees has been undertaken. This engagement has sought to identify and address issues in respect of the scheme design prior to the submission of a planning application in order to provide a better outcome for stakeholders. This engagement has also confirmed the documents required to support the planning application.
- 1.6 The scope of the engagement was informed through discussions with Officers at Rochdale Borough Council, and a list of key statutory and non-statutory consultees was established.
- 1.7 The application have evolved following extensive pre-application engagement and discussions which can be summarised as follows:

- a. On-going discussions with planning officers at Rochdale Borough Council and key stakeholders, including Transport for Greater Manchester ('TfGM'), Historic England and the highway authority; and
- b. Public consultation with local residents and businesses containing information about the proposals, including an online survey and dedicated page on the Council's 'Citizen Space' consultation hub, and drop-in public exhibition events.

1.8 The extent of the pre-application discussions and public consultation that have taken place, and how these have informed the design process, is provided in the submitted Statement of Community Involvement.

Application Documentation

Table 1.1: Submission Material

Document	Ref	Author
Application Forms and Ownership Certificates	n/a	Nexus Planning
Design and Access Statement	36072 (dated August 2022)	Broadway Malyan
Statement of Community Involvement	n/a	Nexus Planning
Location Plan	36072-L-91-010	Broadway Malyan
Landscape Proposals Plan	36072-L-91-100	Broadway Malyan
Arboricultural Impact Assessment	70097916-ARB-001	WSP
Ecology and Survey Assessment	Rochdale Station\Dec20 Rev01	GMEU
Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy	97916-WSP-FRA-001	WSP
Heritage Statement	70097916-004	WSP

Report Structure

1.9 The remainder of this Statement is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides a description of application site and the surrounding area;
- Section 3 provides a summary of the proposed development;
- Section 4 includes a summary of the relevant national and local planning policy context;
- Section 5 provides the assessment of the proposal against the relevant planning policy; and
- Section 6 sets out the overarching summary and conclusion in respect of the proposal and its compliance with planning policy.

2. Site and Surroundings

The Application Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The application site extends to approximately 1.38 hectares, and comprises the Rochdale Station Square area.
- 2.2 Rochdale Station Square is a large public space located to the front entrance of Rochdale Station, and is bisected by a number of a number of roads, including Station Road, Dowling Street, Lower Tweeddale Street and Maclure Road. The Station Square area is also crossed by the Rochdale – Manchester Victoria tram line, which runs along Station Road and Maclure Road. The site also includes the area of landscaping and cycle storage outside Nye Bevan House. The application site ends at the north opposite St John RC Primary School.
- 2.3 The application red line boundary excludes Nye Bevan House on Dowling Street, as well as the existing buildings on the parcel of land bound by Station Road to the south, Dowling Street to the east, Lower Tweeddale Street to the north, and Milkstone Road to the west. Key buildings surrounding the site include: Rochdale Railway Station; St John's RC Primary School; Church of St John the Baptist Church; the Fire Service Museum; the Pennine Care NHS Rochdale and Nye Bevan House (including a cycle hub and substation); Haji Cash & Carry; and, a number of residential properties to the north-east of the site on Maclure Road. At the south of the site are vacant buildings.
- 2.4 The topography of the site is highest at the south, at 144mAOD, which drops down to 141mAOD at the northern extent of the site. The site is wholly located within Flood Zone 1.
- 2.5 The site lies partially within the Maclure Road Conservation Area. The St John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church is a Grade II* listed building.
- 2.6 In respect of existing vehicular movements through the site, Dowling Street and Lower Tweeddale Street are one way streets, and are both currently accessed via Station Road. A taxi rank is located off Dowling Street at the front of the train station. There are two bus stops within the application site, Rochdale Railway Station Stop A and B. These stops are served by the 471 bus service, which runs every 15 minutes during the day, and provides access between Rochdale town centre and Bolton.
- 2.7 The surrounding area is described as follows:
- To the north of the site, the tram tracks continue to run parallel to Maclure Road, until it reaches Drake Street. Rochdale town centre is defined by Milnrow Road and School Lane.
 - To the east the site is bounded by Milkstone Road, Nye Bevan House, the remainder of Dowling Street, and St John the Baptist RC Church.
 - To the south of the application site is a small carpark accessed from Station Road, with provides short-term car parking. The railway line runs parallel to the southern border of the application site.
 - To the west of the site, Station Road and High Level Road and the tram tracks continue in a westerly direction. At the corner of the junction with Station Road and Maclure Road lies a commercial unit, a hot-food takeaway, the entrance to Fire Station Yard and the Fireground fire museum and co-working space.

Planning History

- 2.8 The planning history of the Rochdale Station Square site is generally limited to the development of the Metrolink line. As such, the following planning applications have been identified:

- Planning permission reference 00/D38370 'Construction of Street Running Section of Metrolink Line and Construction of Three New Metrolink Stops, Including Platforms and Pedestrian Access' – approved May 2001.
- Planning permission reference 04/D43367 'Construction of Street Running Section of Metrolink Line and Construction of Three New Metrolink Stops Including Platforms and Pedestrians Access (Revised Proposal D38370)' – approved July 2004.
- Planning permission reference 07/D49262 'Renewal of Outline Permission D43367 for the Construction of Street Running Section of Metrolink Line and Construction of Three New Metrolink Stops Including Platforms and Pedestrians Access (Revised Proposal D38370)' – approved August 2007.

2.9 Other planning applications within the application boundary include an application for 'the installation of a 20m high monopole supporting 6 no. antennas and 2 no. transmission dishes, 4 no. equipment cabinets and development works ancillary thereto', which was withdrawn on the 17 September 2020 (planning application reference 20/00892/TELE).

2.10 Outside Nye Bevan House approval was given in July 2013 for an enclosed, secure modular cycle hub with associated external works (planning permission reference 13/00479/FUL).

2.11 Finally, approval was given in October 2009 for the construction of three new Metrolink stops at Maclure Road, Drake Street and Smith Street (planning permission reference 09/D52389).

2.12 In the immediate vicinity of the application site, the former Greater Manchester Fire Station on Maclure Road received planning approval for part conversion into a museum (Use Class D1) and café with outdoor seating area and external alterations (planning permission reference 18/00155/FUL). Planning permission was granted in May 2018. Additionally, planning permission was approved in July 2019 for the change of use of parts of the ground and first floors from Use Class B1a (office) use to a youth centre and ancillary storage at Deen House, Station Road (planning permission reference 17/01135/FUL).

3. The Proposals

Vision

‘Create a distinct, attractive and appealing community environment that provides a modern identity, exceptional gateway experience and setting for adjacent heritage assets. Beyond a high quality public realm, utilise the square as a catalyst for growth within the Station/Milkstone neighbourhoods.’

3.1 The project drivers, set out at Page 37 of the Design and Access Statement, are set out as follows:

1. Provide physical links to the town centre and adjacent communities. Stimulate pride through ownership referencing local narratives;
2. Create a people first space and reduce movement conflicts;
3. Create a space with a strong sense of purpose;
4. Promote station square area as a gateway experience for the town and region;
5. Ensure an adaptable approach to accommodating change/use flexibility;
6. Enable connectivity, a place that facilitates natural navigation through design;
7. Celebrate and provide attractive and vibrant setting for existing heritage assets;
8. Provide a green infrastructure hub that can connect to a network of public green spaces;
9. Mitigate climate emergency through design; and
10. Recognise requirements for health and wellbeing.

3.2 The Design and Access Statement also sets out a number of design objectives that the proposals have sought to respond to. These include providing a physical and psychological link with shops and businesses in the Milkstone community, through the implementation of a multi-use square and recreation space in a new ‘heart’ for the community and businesses. The proposals also seek to provide a sense of arrival, in particularly from those arriving into the town centre from Rochdale Station, and to provide a visual focal point through the proposed design of the Square. Proposed tree planting will introduce both formal and informal nature to the space.

3.3 Crucially, the proposals also seek to provide drop off and pick up spaces around the station, as well as features that inform movement and define spaces, including walking friendly street design, and improved and increased north and south and east and west connectivity. Pedestrian priority is also given throughout the Square.

The Proposals

3.4 The proposed scheme presents a major regeneration opportunity for the area, comprising an improved public realm that will provide a new entrance to Rochdale. The public realm, located to the north of the railway station, will provide a civic space for local communities. The investment in this area will act as a catalyst for further investment into Rochdale, and support wider regeneration initiatives in the town and the Borough.

3.5 The scheme has been designed with two distinct character typologies; streets and square. The streets will be pedestrian prioritised routes, with and traffic calmed through design. Low kerbs, narrowed carriageways, widened footways and clear movement routes are proposed. High quality block materials, tree planting and integrated Sustainable Urban Drainage (SUDs) in the form of rain gardens will create decluttered green corridors connecting the Milkstone community to the space. Vehicle parking, loading, access and circulation is incorporated into the design. The taxi ranking is relocated to Station Road (to the east), as is the bus stop. Thresholds between the streets/square create a transition point to mark the changing character and emphasise arrival within the square.

- 3.6 The square itself will accommodate both events and movements. Movements will be simplified, reducing conflict points and prioritising pedestrians. Navigation is also made more clear, with natural wayfinding driving layout and design. A controlled access and bus route is incorporated within the square along Maclure Road. Materials are small scale block units and coloured/textured poured materials that provide a pedestrian character to the square.
- 3.7 Tree Planting/Greening has been introduced in order to separate modes, adds SUDs and provide sustainability/environmental/biodiversity value. A plaza is divided in to parts supporting both passive and formal activity. Bespoke furniture clearly defines the space, protecting and controlling movement flows. These provide unique, distinctive and strong features within the space.
- 3.8 Outside Nye Bevin House, a community garden provides space for informal dwell, meeting friends and exercise. This space provides also adds to a positive heritage setting. Next to the station a more open, flexible area provides a stage for events and activation.
- 3.9 Key design features include:
- Viaduct Walls – The Viaduct walls provide a canvas for local street art and green wall panels which connect the platform park to the square physically and visually;
 - Surface Materials – Paving materials used to replace the current surface treatments, providing a cohesion across the square that promotes a pedestrian-first environment and community focus, whilst integrating the Metrolink and reflecting the local heritage;
 - Greenspace – Located in the existing landscaped area outside Nye Bevan House, increased community use, providing a positive heritage setting;
 - Proposed Tree Planting – Tree planting to help define the spaces within the Square, assist with the wayfinding and navigation, humanise the scale, integrating and expanding biodiversity and ecology. Existing trees will be translocated into the new scheme where possible;
 - Activated Edges and Activity Space – Ground floor space immediately outside existing and proposed developments, opportunity to activate space and create a sense of ownership by businesses, provide on-going activity in the Square, maximising sunny spots;
 - Street Furniture – The provision of street furniture that not only facilitates the interaction of communities, but also assists with wayfinding and navigation, further define the spaces for activity and screening where required, be part of the public art strategy;
 - Special Features – Public art is incorporated within a fulcrum feature along the axis of Lower Tweedale Street. An urban feature integrated into the materials (surface treatments / street furniture / signs), special lighting or public art, will assist in creating a special place, that provides distinction and contributes to town gateway experience, respectful of the heritage assets and local community.
 - Heritage Assets – Setting and Key View Points Decluttering and revealing the façades/ features of heritage assets, removal of vehicles allows a more considered appreciation of heritage assets, opportunity to enhance curtilage with sympathetic and quality surfacing materials, enabling new experience of heritage assets by activating frontages.
 - Designing within known constraints – Recognition of the location and type of utilities that are located within the square in order to minimise the need to undertake diversions.

4. Planning Policy

- 4.1 This Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations which indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The adopted Development Plan for the area comprises the Rochdale Core Strategy (adopted October 2016), and relevant Saved Policies from the Rochdale 1996-2016 Unitary Development Plan (adopted June 2006). Other material considerations relevant to the determination of this application are:
- a. National Planning Policy Framework;
 - b. National Planning Practice Guidance; and
 - c. Rochdale Supplementary Guidance and Documents.

Adopted Development Plan

- 4.3 The Development Plan for the site comprises the Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) (adopted October 2016) read together with relevant saved policies of the Rochdale 1996-2016 Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (adopted June 2006).
- 4.4 The application site is located adjacent to a defined Bus/Rail/Metrolink Interchange and just to the east of Milkstone Road with Tweedale Street and Station Road Local Centre, as defined by saved Policy S/6 of the UDP and identified in the saved Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan proposals map.
- 4.5 We provide a summary below of the policies of relevance to this application.

Core Strategy

- 4.6 The CS outlines five 'Strategic Objectives', these being: to deliver a more prosperous economy; to create successful and healthy communities; to improve design, image and quality of place; to promote a greener environment; and, to improve accessibility and deliver sustainable transport.
- 4.7 CS Policy SP3 relates to the Spatial Strategy for the four townships in the Borough, with Policy SP3/R specifically relating to Rochdale. This vision for Rochdale includes reference to how:

'Rochdale station and the adjoining area will be regenerated as a new transport / mixed use hub providing an exciting gateway into the borough.'

- 4.8 CS Policy SP3/R goes on to state that a priority for Rochdale will be supporting major transport works and improvements to deliver a high quality public transport interchange.
- 4.9 CS Policy E1 relates to the establishment of thriving town, district and local centres and states that development should focus on the promotion of viability and vitality of centres, and helping to maintain them as thriving and sustainable centres. Development will be expected to ensure routes to and from local areas and local transport nodes and across the centre are convenient, attractive and feel safe, creating them or enhancing them where necessary.

- 4.10 CS Policy G6 concerns the enhancement of green infrastructure and states that the Council will seek to sustain and enhance a green network to support growth and regeneration in the borough and provide a high quality environment that meets the needs of the community.
- 4.11 CS Policy G7 relates to increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity, and states that opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity, creating new sites and features of interest and improving opportunities for public enjoyment will be supported. No development should result in a net loss of biodiversity or geodiversity interest in the borough and overall development in the borough should result in a net gain.
- 4.12 CS Policy G7 relates to the management of water resources and flood risk, and indicates 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.
- 4.13 CS Policy P1, which concerns improving the image of the Borough, identifies that the Council will require high quality design in all new developments, and this will be particularly important at key gateways into the borough and into centres, as well as within town centres and at prominent sites. These areas are identified as being crucial to the image of the Borough. Accordingly, proposals will be required to be designed to a high standard, demonstrating innovation and originality, the incorporation of public art, the 'greening' of the urban environment through the planting of trees, maximising the potential for heritage assets to provide a sense of place and image and creating people-friendly, safe, vibrant, uncluttered public areas.
- 4.14 CS Policy P2 relates to protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage, and states that the Council will protect and enhance the borough's character, the distinctiveness of its town centres, housing areas and countryside, and the qualities of its landscapes, utilising the considerable potential of these assets in development and regeneration schemes.
- 4.15 CS Policy P3 relates to improving the design of new development, and states that the Council will require all new developments, including associated landscaping, regardless of location in the borough, to adhere to high standards of design. Development will be expected to enhance the borough's identity and sense of place, by respecting context where it is positive and having regard to the scale, density, massing, height, layout, landscape, materials and access of surrounding buildings and areas in general. Development will be expected to be easy to move through and get around, especially for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, disabled people and emergency service vehicles. Development will be expected to minimise impact upon the environment, and help adapt to the impacts of climate change, and be designed so that quality and appearance can be maintained over time.
- 4.16 CS Policy T1 relates to the delivery of sustainable transport, and states that the Council will support improvements to the strategic, borough-wide and local transport networks. The policy outlines that improved access to the public transport network and interchange / hub facilities will be facilitated, including improvements to Rochdale Railway Station and Rochdale Town Centre Public Transport Interchange.

Unitary Development Plan

- 4.17 Saved UDP Policy S/6 'District Centre, Local Centres and Linear Commercial Areas' identifies that in such centres the development of, or change of use to, shops, financial and professional services, food and drink outlets, offices, community and cultural facilities and other uses appropriate to a district or local centre will be permitted. Development must be of a scale and character appropriate to the size, role and function of the centre or area, and it will be compatible with surrounding land uses and will not harm local residential amenity.

- 4.18 Saved UDP Policy A/17 'Bus Interchange and Bus/Rail Interchange' states that such locations will be the focus of measures to promote and ease interchange between bus services or between bus and rail services. These locations include Rochdale railway station.
- 4.19 Saved UDP Policy A/18 'Metrolink' states that the development of Metrolink to Rochdale from Oldham and Manchester will be actively pursued, including an interchange with rail, buses and taxis at Rochdale Station and a terminus interchange with buses and taxis at Smith Street.
- 4.20 Saved UDP Policy BE/17 'New Development Affecting Conservation Areas' indicates that development proposals will be permitted that preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area. In assessing such a proposal, the following principles will be taken into account:
- Its relationship to existing buildings, the site and its surroundings;
 - Its design - including elevations, roof form, materials, finishes and detailing;
 - The retention, replacement and restoration of historic features and details of buildings, and - in the public realm - walls, paving and street furniture;
 - The retention and enhancement of landscaped areas, trees and natural features;
 - The design of new shop fronts (and replacements and/or alterations to those existing) should reflect the character or appearance of the conservation area, consistent with the provisions of Policy BE/5;
 - The design and siting of advertisements, new street furniture, paving and other highway surfaces and related structures (e.g., lighting and signs); and
 - The design and siting of car parking and servicing facilities.

Development proposals should include detailed plans and drawings enabling its implication(s) for the character and appearance of the conservation area to be established.

- 4.21 Saved UDP Policy EM/7 'Development and Flood Risk' states that development will not be permitted in areas identified as flood plains, or other areas where development could contribute to increased flood risk, unless an appropriate flood risk assessment has been carried out key criteria have been met. These include not increasing the risk of flooding within the flood plain or in adjoining areas by reducing flood storage capacity, increasing flows within a flood plain or through the additional discharge of surface water, that the development itself will not be at risk from flooding and that appropriate sustainable drainage systems are used.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- 4.22 The Council has also published a series of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to help guide future development.

Rochdale Station Area SPD (September 2021)

- 4.23 The SPD seeks to provide a development strategy for the Rochdale Station area. It outlines potential development opportunities within the area including options for the scale and mix of future proposals on a number of different sites. The SPD builds upon Core Strategy policy SP3/R, and sets a list of priorities, which include the promotion of the station as a gateway experience creating a new gateway public square outside the station that enhances the arrival experience to Rochdale.
- 4.24 In setting out the vision for the Rochdale Station Area, the SPD again reiterates that development in the area will:

‘Promote the station as a gateway experience creating a new gateway public square outside the station that enhances the arrival experience to Rochdale towns’

4.25 As such, a key development principle of the SPD is to secure the **‘creation of a Station square, with events space and public art’**. This is further emphasised at Section 4.1 of the SPD, which states that, in respect of the Station Gateway:

‘The principle here is to seek to create a new public square /civic space that can provide a setting for the station and surrounding buildings create a sense of arrival into both the station area and Rochdale itself. The aim is to create a place that has a distinct, vibrant and authentic identity that places people at the centre to celebrate and builds upon the strong local communities and heritage.’

4.26 Furthermore, it states that heritage, and maintaining the primacy of heritage assets including St John the Baptist’s RC Church and the Maclure Road Fire Station within the new space will be crucial.

Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide SPD

4.27 This SPD aims to encourage high quality design of places, buildings and landscapes that meet the current and future needs of the communities that use them.

Public Realm Design Guide SPD

4.28 This SPD aims to provide clear guidance to everyone involved in designing and constructing streets and space (including architects, designers, public and private sector developers, house builders and engineers) on the quality of design expected by the Council.

4.29 The SPD sets out a number of principles that will inform the development of high quality public realm, including character, safety and inclusion, ease of movement, legibility, adaptability and sustainability.

Design and Planning Process: A Guide to Good Practice SPD

4.30 This SPD elaborates on the content of Design and Access Statements, and provides advice on good practice for what these Statements should cover.

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.31 The National Planning Policy Framework (‘the NPPF’) was updated in July 2021 and sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The policies contained within the Framework are material considerations which local planning authorities should take into account.

4.32 It identifies at Paragraph 8 that there are three overarching objectives to sustainable development:

- Economic: building a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
- Social: supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities; and
- Environment: protecting and enhancing the natural environment and built and historic environment.

4.33 Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development that lies at the core of the NPPF. It makes clear that decision takers should apply this principle, and in practice this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

- 4.34 Paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. Paragraph 60 outlines that to support the objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forwards where it is needed.
- 4.35 The specific policies and considerations that relate to the core land use principles are outlined in the 17 chapters of the NPPF. The chapters relevant to the application proposals are: Chapter 9 'Promoting sustainable transport'; Chapter 12 'Achieving well-designed places'; and, Chapter 16 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'.
- 4.36 Paragraph 112 states 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 – facilitate 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. Development should create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards, and also allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles.
- 4.37 Paragraph 126 states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.
- 4.38 Paragraph 130 states that planning decisions should ensure that developments:
- 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;
 - are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - 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);
 - 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;
 - 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
 - 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.
- 4.39 Paragraph 131 indicates that trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- 4.40 Paragraph 167 states that when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment.
- 4.41 Paragraph 194 identifies that decision-makers should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Paragraph 195 requires local authorities to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal.

- 4.42 Paragraph 197 requires local authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 4.43 Paragraph 199 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (i.e. the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).
- 4.44 Paragraph 201 states that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent.
- 4.45 Paragraph 203 relates to the impacts of a proposal on a non-designated heritage asset, and states that applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

5. Planning Appraisal

5.1 This section considers the proposed development against the provisions of the development plan and other material considerations. In summary, it assesses the following:

- Basis for decision taking;
- Principle of development;
- Design;
- Other material considerations, namely;
 - Design
 - Heritage;
 - Flood Risk and Drainage;
 - Ecology; and,
 - Trees.

Basis for Decision Taking

5.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations which indicate otherwise. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF - the presumption in favour of sustainable development - asks decision-makers to approve development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

5.3 As set out above, the adopted development plan for the area comprises the Rochdale Core Strategy read together with the relevant saved policies of the Rochdale 1996-2016 Unitary Development Plan.

5.4 The starting point for decision taking is therefore the statutory development plan. It is also important to consider other key material considerations, such as Supplementary Planning Documents and the NPPF.

Principle of Development

5.5 The application site is located within the defined Rochdale Station area, where the relevant SPD considers the 'promotion of the station as a gateway experience' a key priority for this area. The gateway will result in the creation of a new gateway public square outside the station that enhances the arrival experience to Rochdale.

5.6 The Rochdale Station Area SPD builds upon Core Strategy Policy SP3, and particularly part 'R' of this policy, which relates to Rochdale. In setting out a vision for this area, the policy notes that:

'Rochdale station and the adjoining area will be regenerated as a new transport / mixed use hub providing an exciting gateway into the borough.'

5.7 The policy further notes that a priority for Rochdale will be supporting major transport works and improvements to deliver a high quality public transport interchange.

5.8 Taken together, it is clear that the principle of development on the site is considered to be wholly acceptable and consistent with the objectives of the Local Plan, insofar as it will result in the redevelopment of an underused space in order to provide a significantly improved area of public realm that will also provide an enhanced gateway and sense of arrival to the town centre.

- 5.9 The principle of development is established, and further consideration of the detail of proposals is provided below from a technical perspective.

Other Material Considerations

Design

- 5.10 CS Policy P3 relates to improving the design of new development, and states that the Council will require all new developments, including associated landscaping, regardless of location in the borough, to adhere to high standards of design. Development will be expected to enhance the borough's identity and sense of place, by respecting context where it is positive and having regard to the scale, density, massing, height, layout, landscape, materials and access of surrounding buildings and areas in general.
- 5.11 The Rochdale Public Realm Design Guide SPD also provides detail on how areas of public realm are expected to be of a high quality, and to include character, safety and inclusion, ease of movement, legibility, adaptability and sustainability.
- 5.12 The proposed scheme presents a major regeneration opportunity for the area, comprising an improved public realm that will provide a new entrance to Rochdale. The public realm, located to the north of the railway station, will provide a civic space for local communities. The investment in this area will act as a catalyst for further investment into Rochdale, and support wider regeneration initiatives in the town and the Borough.
- 5.13 The proposals therefore clearly accord with CS Policy P3 and the Rochdale Public Realm Design Guide SPD.

Heritage

- 5.14 CS Policy P2 relates to protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage, and states that the Council will protect and enhance the borough's character, the distinctiveness of its town centres, and the qualities of its landscapes, utilising the considerable potential of these assets in development and regeneration schemes.
- 5.15 WSP have prepared a Heritage Statement to support the application proposals. The report identifies that the site is located within the Maclure Road Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset. As well as the conservation area, other designated heritage asset assessed, is located in the vicinity of Station square and within the Maclure Road Conservation Area, is the Grade II* listed St John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church. Its significance comes from its mosaic interior and its Byzantine style architecture, complete with a large dome. The setting of the church is primarily in its relationship to the Conservation Area and to other non-designated heritage assets which surround the square including, the fire station and accompanying housing and 29-31 Maclure Road.
- 5.16 The Heritage Statement provides an understanding of the heritage significance of the Maclure Road Conservation Area, as well as the Grade II* St John the Baptist RC Church and other built heritage assets within the vicinity of Station Square and considers how setting contributes to that significance. It then assesses the likely impact of the proposals on that significance in support of a planning application to undertake the proposed works.
- 5.17 The proposed scheme design would visually enhance the Conservation Area and the group of heritage assets located along the northern and eastern enclosure of Station Square which are positive contributors to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The de-cluttering of the site and the removal of vehicular traffic would reduce the overall visual and noise impacts from traffic.

5.18 The proposed scheme would not result in harm to the Maclure Road Conservation Area, or any of the assets within it, including the Grade II* listed St John the Baptist RC Church, or those assets noted on the local planning authority non-designated heritage asset list; the fire station, 15,17, 19,21, 23,25 Maclure Road and 29-31 Maclure Road. There will also be no harm to the small industrial building on Station Road.

5.19 Accordingly, the proposals are considered to be in accordance with CS Policy P2.

Flood Risk

5.20 CS Policy G7 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, and contributes where possible to alleviating existing flood risk, is itself well protected from flood risk and ensures prudent use of water resources.

5.21 WSP have prepared a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy to support the planning application. The report confirms that the site is located in EA Flood Zone 1 and therefore has a low probability of flooding from rivers or the sea. Surface water flooding ranges from very low to high risk within the site. This is primarily because the site is located at the bottom of a hill and is bound by the railway embankment to the south. Other sources of flood risk including surface water, groundwater and sewers have been assessed within this report and are considered to present a low risk to the site.

5.22 The provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) has been considered and, where appropriate, have been included within the surface water drainage proposals. It is not considered feasible to dispose of surface water drainage from this development to soakaways or directly to a watercourse. Therefore, it is proposed to discharge surface water from the site to the existing public combined sewer network utilising existing connections where possible. The main area of development is to be provided with new surface water drainage that predominantly comprises linear drainage to collect and convey surface water.

5.23 The Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy concludes that the development is appropriate and can be occupied safely subject to implementation of the flood risk mitigation being carried out.

5.24 As such, the proposals are considered to wholly be in accordance with CS Policy G7.

Ecology

5.25 CS Policy G7 relates to increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity, and states that opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity, creating new sites and features of interest and improving opportunities for public enjoyment will be supported. No development should result in a net loss of biodiversity or geodiversity interest in the borough and overall development in the borough should result in a net gain.

5.26 An Ecology and Survey Assessment, prepared by GMEU, is submitted in support of the application. This report relates to land around Rochdale Railway Station, and provides an appraisal of the baseline ecological conditions surrounding the site, identifies potential ecological constraints, and provides recommendations for potential ecological enhancements to improve the biodiversity status of the area.

5.27 Whilst the report recommends further ecological surveys, it should be noted that the Assessment relates to a large, urbanised area, which includes the Rochdale Canal and a number of other areas. As such, many of these recommended reports relate to features that are not part of the submitted red line boundary.

- 5.28 Notwithstanding this, insofar as the Assessment relates to the application site, it demonstrates that the proposal accords with CS Policy G7.

Trees

- 5.29 CS Policy G6 states that the Council will seek to sustain and enhance a green network to support growth and regeneration in the borough and provide a high quality environment that meets the needs of the community.
- 5.30 WSP have produced an Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report. This is based on a survey of 30 arboricultural features, consisting of 25 individual trees and five tree groups. Two arboricultural features are assessed to be moderate quality and 28 features are low quality.
- 5.31 The Proposed Development requires the removal of 11 low quality trees which are identified at Appendix C of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report as T1, T2, T3, T8, T15, T16, T17, T18, T20, T22 and T24. Retained trees within the Station Square and within the red line boundary of the planning application are to be protected through special protection measures. Principles for tree protection are set out in the outline Arboricultural Method Statement provided at Appendix D of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report.
- 5.32 Tree protection measures, which are to be agreed pre-construction, will confirm the extents of the Construction Exclusion Zones and precautionary working methods. These should include the need for existing hard surfacing to remain in situ (currently covering indicative root protection areas), installation of protective fencing or ground protection and Arboricultural Clerk of Works site supervision.
- 5.33 The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with CS Policy G6.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Nexus Planning on behalf of Rochdale Borough Council to support the submission of an application at Rochdale Station Square for:
- ‘Public realm works including: new public square; relocation of taxi rank and car parking spaces; and associated works.’**
- 6.2 The proposed scheme presents a major regeneration opportunity for the area, comprising an improved public realm that will provide a new entrance to Rochdale. The public realm, located to the north of the railway station, will provide a civic space for local communities. The investment in this area will act as a catalyst for further investment into Rochdale, and support wider regeneration initiatives in the town and the Borough.
- 6.3 The proposals at Rochdale Station Square will provide a series of key design objectives, including:
- Reconnecting and establishing a physical and psychological link with shops and business in the wider Milkstone community;
 - Providing a multi-use space as the new heart for the community business and recreation;
 - Provide a sense of arrival and welcome gateways to the new Square, and more generally Rochdale town centre;
 - Celebrate a new sense of arrival at Rochdale Station;
 - Provide new drop off and pick up spaces around the Station;
 - Use of design features to inform movement and define spaces; and,
 - Use of a walking friendly street design.
- 6.4 Taken as a whole, the proposals will improve and increase north-to-south, and east-to-west connectivity through the Square. The proposals have been designed to provide pedestrian priority for movements in the space, as well as using tree planting to achieve a sense of enclosure, and to provide character to the Square. Planting will also improve green infrastructure, and improve the overall sustainability of the site.
- 6.5 The application site is located with the defined Rochdale Station area, where the relevant SPD considers the ‘promotion of the station as a gateway experience’ a key priority for this area. The gateway will result in the creation of a new gateway public square outside the station that enhances the arrival experience to Rochdale.
- 6.6 Any potential constraints presented by the site have been positively addressed such that the proposals a wholly suitable scheme, consistent with the objectives of the Local Plan, insofar as it will result in the redevelopment of an underused space in order to provide a significantly improved area of public realm that will also provide an enhanced gateway and sense of arrival to the town centre. Importantly, the proposals fully accord with relevant local and national planning policies.
- 6.7 It is therefore submitted that the application can be positively determined by the local planning authority.



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