

Retail Sequential Test

615 Edenfield Road

Norden

Rochdale

OL11 5XE

Demolition of Existing Taxi Booking Office and Construction of a Replacement Two Storey Building Comprising of Replacement of Taxi Booking Office, a Retail Unit on the Ground floor and Two 2-bed self-contained flats on the First and Second Floors.

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Building Design Services (BDS)

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Retail Sequential Assessment has been prepared on behalf of the applicant in support of a planning application for the 'Demolition of Existing Taxi Booking Office and Construction of a Replacement Two Storey Building Comprising of a Taxi Booking Office, a Retail Unit on the Ground floor and Two 2-bed self-contained flats on the First and Second Floors'.
- 1.2 In terms of retail, a key objective of national planning guidance is to deliver economic growth and prosperity through sustainable development. In order to achieve this in the borough it is important that we ensure sufficient land is available of the right type, quality and in the right places.
- 1.3 The Sequential Assessment guides main town centre uses towards town centre locations first, then, if no town centre locations are available, to edge of centre locations, and, if neither town centre locations nor edge of centre locations are available, to out of town centre locations, with preference for accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. It supports the viability and vitality of town centres by placing existing town centres foremost in both plan-making and decision-taking.
- 1.4 In plan-making, the sequential approach requires a thorough assessment of the suitability, viability and availability of locations for main town centre uses. It requires clearly explained reasoning if more central opportunities to locate main town centre uses are rejected.
- 1.5 Matters that should be considered when taking a sequential approach to plan-making:
- The assessment should consider the current situation, recent up-take of land for main town centre uses, the supply of and demand for land for main town centre uses, forecast of future need and the type of land needed for main town centre uses.
 - When identifying sites, the suitability, availability and viability of the site should be considered, with particular regard to the nature of the need that is to be addressed.
 - If the additional main town centre uses required cannot be accommodated in town centre sites, what are the next sequentially preferable sites that it can be accommodated on.
- 1.6 The National Planning Policy Guidance states that 'It may not be possible to accommodate all forecast needs in a town centre: there may be physical or other constraints which make it inappropriate to do so. In those circumstances, planning authorities should plan positively to identify the most appropriate alternative strategy for meeting the need for these main town centre uses, having regard to the sequential and impact tests. This should ensure that any proposed main town centre uses which are not in an existing town centre are in the

best locations to support the vitality and vibrancy of town centres, and that no likely significant adverse impacts on existing town centres arise.

2.0 TRADING CHARACTERISTICS

- 2.1 The application proposes to demolish the existing building and erect a new replacement building. The taxi booking office would continue to trade from the site, whilst a new retail unit would be provided at ground floor under Use Class E of the Use Classed Order. Currently there is no end user for the proposed retail unit.
- 2.2 The role of the taxi booking office is to be a base for taking telephone calls and the occasional customer which is very scarce nowadays with the use of technology, with other light office duties, including photocopying and computer work, whilst using mobile internet technology to dispatch jobs to drivers who will be predominantly out on the roads. Although drivers will have access to the site to pay their weekly rental fees, a small part of the building will be allocated for customers of the taxi company for the ordering of taxis or as a waiting room for taxis.
- 2.3 The proposed demolition of the building and erection of a larger contemporary building would make a better use of the site and remove an existing property which looks out of character and in need of investment. The site is becoming to appear unsightly in this prominent location, and in need of investment to bring the property back to a suitable functional use and where it would not have a negative impact on the surrounding area.
- 2.4 The close to town centre location characterised by a number of smaller units with a high proportion of food and drink outlets and retail units. The types of uses within the centre, along with its proximity to high density residential areas, create a vibrant area. It is considered that the proposed two retail units at ground floor level in this location would retain a service and provide jobs and add to the vibrancy of the area and would be an appropriate ground floor use at this site, and where it has been for number of years.
- 2.5 The location and presence of the proposed retail unit with housing above would complement this location where the existing local centre of Norden has already extended to a significant degree outside of its designated boundary.

3.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1 The application site relates to a small single storey building on Edenfield Road. The building is used as a taxi booking office, set back from the highway with parking and turning space provided to the side. The construction materials of the building are simple, with breeze block walls, rendered and coloured white, with a corrugated sheet roof. The roof is shallow pitched.
- 3.2 The planning history shows that the building was previously used for car sales offices and has been used as a Taxi Booking Office for a number of years since. The building is positioned adjacent to the Old Library, a gym, whilst on the other side of the road, are restaurants, takeaways and a PH, therefore with mainly commercial activity in the vicinity. The land level rises from north to south through the site. Open land with some trees is located to the back of the site.
- 3.3 The UDP Proposals map shows that the site itself is unallocated but in the defined urban area. The Norden local centre boundary is in walking distance from the site (outlined in blue). Public buses regularly run along this route and can also be used from the local centre, and if required into Rochdale and other places around the borough.



- 3.4 **Above:** The UDP Plan above shows the location of the site circled in red on the edge of the local centre of Norden (Blue), in an accessible location from the local centre and amongst commercial properties.



- 3.5 **Above:** The site is located on Edenfield Road as shown above, a Bus Stop is located close to the site. The site is positioned in a mixed-use area within walking distance of the Norden Village local Centre to the west.



- 3.6 **Above:** Photo shows the front elevation of the building and parking area to the side.

4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The applicant is applying for planning permission to demolish the existing building and erect a new replacement building. The building will be two stories high with small pitched roof front and rear dormers on the roofslope to provide space in the roof area. This Statement focuses on the retail impact of the development and what impact it would create, if any on the vitality and viability of Norden Village Local Centre.
- 4.2 The taxi booking office business would continue to trade from the site, whilst a new retail unit would be provided at ground floor, Use Class E of the Use Classed Order. Two self-contained residential units would be provided on the first and second floors of the building. All the uses would remain separate.
- 4.3 The design of the building has been taken from the building adjacent, but the proposed building would appear modern in design and finish however share similar features.
- 4.4 The role of the taxi booking office is to be a base for taking telephone calls and the occasional customer which is very scarce nowadays with the use of technology, with other light office duties, including photocopying and computer work, whilst using mobile internet technology to dispatch jobs to drivers who will be predominantly out on the roads. The taxi booking office will employ approx. 3 full time and 3 part time taxi booking/call centre staff, only 2 of which will be on site at any one time.

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

NPPF (2023)

- 5.2 The NPPF clearly states ‘that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development’ (paragraph 7). Paragraph 10 confirms that ‘in assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development’. Paragraph 11 states that a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the NPPF.
- 5.3 Para 90. 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:
- e) where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for main town centre uses, allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, policies should explain how identified needs can be met in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre;
- 5.4 Para 91. Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.
- 5.5 Para 92. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored.
- 5.6 **Edge of centre:** For retail purposes, a location that is well connected to, and up to 300 metres from the primary shopping area. For all other main town centre uses, a location within 300 metres of a town centre boundary. For office development, this includes locations outside the town centre but within 500 metres of a public transport interchange. In determining whether a site falls within the definition of edge of centre, account should be taken of local circumstances.

5.7 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

The government published its NPPG on 6 March 2014. This is intended to complement the NPPF and to provide a single resource for planning guidance, whilst rationalising and streamlining the material. Almost all previous planning Circulars and advice notes have been cancelled. Specific reference will be made to the NPPG or other national advice in the Analysis section of the report, where appropriate.

Rochdale Core Strategy

- 5.8 Policy E1 - Establishing thriving town, district and local centres of the Core Strategy states 'We will focus retail, leisure, cultural, office, residential and other development to promote the viability and vitality of all the borough's town centres to maintain them as thriving and sustainable centres and the preferred shopping and leisure destinations for people living, working and visiting the borough. We will also ensure the provision of a hierarchy of accessible district and local centres and shops that meets people's daily shopping needs'.
- 5.9 Policy E1 goes on to state that 'In considering proposals for main town centre uses we will:
- f. Support the provision of small-scale shops and services to meet local needs outside centres, including in Employment Zones, where:
 - i. They are in a location that is not, or will not be, reasonably served by an existing or proposed centre or local shop;
 - ii. There are no suitable vacant shops nearby; and
 - iii. They will be accessible to local residents / workers on foot.

6.0 PROPOSAL IMPACT

6.1 Paragraph 91 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan. They should require applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered.

6.2 The NPPF goes on to note that when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites, well connected to the town centre. Both applicants and local authorities are required to demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale.

In addition to the above Policy E1 of Rochdale's Core Strategy states goes onto state that 'In considering proposals for main town centre uses we will:

f. Support the provision of small scale shops and services to meet local needs outside centres, including in Employment Zones, where:

i. They are in a location that is not, or will not be, reasonably served by an existing or proposed centre or local shop;

ii. There are no suitable vacant shops nearby; and

iii. They will be accessible to local residents / workers on foot.

6.3 As set out above, the existing Taxi Booking office would be retained at the site, albeit within a newer larger building which would suit the evolving business and use of technology. As such, the taxi booking office which is well established and outside of the local centre would not impact on the vitality and viability of the local centre anymore than existing. This use has always been viewed as an ancillary linked business helping customers reach the local centre and surrounding area and plays a pivotal role for the local community such as the older generation and people who do not have access to a car. It also helps the adjacent Pubs and restaurants as part of the night time economy.

6.4 The proposed retail unit would be at ground floor and is considered an appropriate use in this particular location. This would be a small unit which would be reliant heavily upon the customers from the local centre for its overall trade and survival. It is unlikely due to the small shopfront and size of the future business operation that there will be linked trips with other local centres or Rochdale town centre uses. Whereas the application site is well placed in terms of its proximity to future potential customers with no suitable properties available in the local centre along Edenfield Road.

- 6.5 The proposed future retailer is not considered to attract large numbers of customers given its size and the operation is aimed at serving a small catchment area who do not wish to be drawn into Rochdale town centre. The proposal in this location and type of business would offer very little potential for linkages with retail operators. This would have little to no impact on the vitality and viability of other local centres or Rochdale Town Centre.
- 6.6 It is considered important that the approach of the retail impact is applied in a realistic and practical manner having regard to both the size of the operation, its position in relation to the local centre (within 30metres), the availability of other units within the centre, the existing surrounding area which consists of mainly spill out retail from the centre, and the overall positive development to an underused plot and poorly maintained building.
- 6.7 In this instance this would be a small scale shop which would meet the local need and is very short distance from the local centre outside centres. In addition, there are no suitable vacant shops nearby, and the shop would be accessible to local residents on foot.

7.0 SEQUENTIAL APPROACH

- 7.1 The NPPF defines edge of centre sites (for retail purposes) as being locations that are well connected to, and within easy walking distance (i.e., up to 300m) of the main town centre. The site is located more than a 2.5-mile distance from the town centre as defined on the UDP proposals map. It is therefore out of centre.
- 7.2 As the site is out of centre, it is therefore necessary to assess whether there are any sequentially preferable sites within Norden Village Local Centre which is only 30 metre distance from the site.
- 7.3 An assessment was undertaken on Wednesday 9th October 2024 of Norden Village Local Centre to identify whether there are any available and viable sites within this local centre, please see photographs below. The only site that was available for Sale was 'Lancashire Financial Services'. However, this site is for Office use and is already 'Under Offer' online, see below.



COMMERCIAL UNDER OFFER

Edenfield Road, Rochdale

Offers in Region of

£255,000



PROPERTY TYPE

🏠 Commercial Property

BEDROOMS

🛏 2

BATHROOMS

🛀 1

SIZE

📏 Ask agent

- 7.4 The Photographs below show northern side of Edenfield Road, apart from the property mentioned above, there were no properties within the local centre which were for sale/to let or unoccupied. However, it was very evident that there were a large number of commercial units on edge of centre locations which make up this vibrant area.

North side of Edenfield Road – below photos.





South side of Edenfield Road, including application site

- 7.5 The photos clearly show all of the sites are occupied. No units appeared to be empty within this local centre or available for sale/rent. Edge of centre sites were also occupied by commercial uses.





8.0 CONCLUSIONS OF SEQUENTIAL ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 The sequential assessment concludes that there are no available, suitable or viable units to accommodate the proposed development within the Norden Village Local Centre as they are all occupied or unavailable. Given the size, specific use and location, the proposal would have no significant impact on the town centre of Rochdale, the proposed units would not compete with town centre occupiers. The proposed retail unit would serve mainly the community around the Norden local centre.
- 8.2 The application is also supported by the NPPF. In the first instance, the NPPF states that the Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not to act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore, significant weight should be placed on the need for economic growth through the planning system, and the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops.

9.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 In plan-making, the sequential approach requires a thorough assessment of the suitability, viability and availability of locations for main town centre uses. It requires clearly explained reasoning if more central opportunities to locate main town centre uses are rejected. As such the nature of the need that is to be addressed.
- 9.2 The National Planning Policy Guidance states that It may not be possible to accommodate all forecast needs in a town centre: there may be physical or other constraints which make it inappropriate to do so. In those circumstances, planning authorities should plan positively to identify the most appropriate alternative strategy for meeting the need for these main town centre uses, having regard to the sequential and impact tests. This should ensure that any proposed main town centre uses which are not in an existing town centre are in the best locations to support the vitality and vibrancy of town centres, and that no likely significant adverse impacts on existing town centres arise.
- 9.3 The NPPF goes on to note that when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites, well connected to the town centre. Both applicants and local authorities are required to demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale.
- 9.4 The site is located out of centre but is an edge of centre site within a short walking distance of 30m and therefore a well-connected site to Norden Village Local centre, therefore pedestrian accessibility is good. A sequential assessment has been undertaken, which has revealed that there are no suitable, available or viable sites either within the Local Centre to provide or carry out this development. Furthermore, the proposed retail unit would not be positioned in isolation as there are commercial uses to both sides and in front of the proposed site.
- 9.5 Therefore, it has been demonstrated that the proposal would have little to no impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre of Rochdale and local Centre of Norden and accords with policy E1 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.
- 9.6 In addition, given the presumption in favour of development and the Government's commitment to promoting sustainable development in accordance with the development plan, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted without delay.