



Active
Travel
England

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Your Ref: 25/00418/OUT
Our Ref: ATE/25/01106/OUT
Date: 13 August 2025

Active Travel England Planning Response Detailed Response to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Planning & Development Division, Active Travel England

To: , Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council

Application Ref: 25/00418/OUT

Site Address: Land Bound To The North By Brightley Brook, Pilsworth Fisheries, Pilsworth Road & Heywood Distribution Park; The West By Whittle Brook; The East By Birch Industrial Park & Agricultural Fields; And The South By The M62 Corridor, Rochdale

Description of development: Application for outline planning permission (all matters reserved) for a national-scale employment development, comprising Storage & Distribution (Use Class B8) and Industrial (Use Classes B2, E(g)(ii) and E (g)(iii)) uses (including, but not limited to, Logistics, Manufacturing Processes and Data Centres), with supporting ancillary uses including Hotel (Use Class C1), Commercial, Business & Service (Uses Class E (a-g)), Education (Use Class F1(a)), Local Community (Use Class F2(a-c)) uses, Sui Generis uses (in accordance with the Uses Schedule), and associated demolition works, landscaping, drainage, ecological enhancements, highway works, cycleway and footpath linkages and other ancillary infrastructure.

Notice is hereby given that Active Travel England's formal recommendation is as follows:

- c. **Deferral:** ATE is not currently in a position to support this application and requests further assessment, evidence, revisions, and/or dialogue as set out in this response.

1.0 Background

Active Travel England (ATE) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the outline planning application in Rochdale, Greater Manchester for a national-scale employment development, comprising Storage & Distribution (Use Class B8) and Industrial (Use Classes B2, E(g)(ii) and E (g)(iii)) uses (including, but not limited to, Logistics, Manufacturing Processes and Data Centres), with supporting ancillary uses including Hotel (Use Class C1), Commercial, Business & Service (Uses Class E (a-g)), Education (Use Class F1(a)), Local Community (Use Class F2(a-c) uses, Sui Generis uses (in accordance with the Uses Schedule), and associated demolition works, landscaping, drainage, ecological enhancements, highway works, cycleway and footpath linkages and other ancillary infrastructure.

The application is pursuant to all relevant local, regional, and national planning policy & guidance and that this application is a significant component of the Atom Valley Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ).

2.0 Summary

ATE has reviewed various documents associated with the application in accordance with aligned National and Local policy and/or guidance, including the Design & Access Statement (DAS), Transport Assessment (TA), Planning Statement (PS), Travel Plan (TP) and associated documents.

ATE advises that there are various aspects which require more detail for clarification for ATE to fully endorse the proposed development. While some of these could be set as conditions of planning permission, ATE's position is that in the application's current state, some aspects are required for further review, with it being crucial that Active Travel provision is committed to at the earliest stage possible of the planning process. ATE acknowledges the scale and scope of the proposed development and the opportunity it presents as a location of extremely significant employment for residents of Greater Manchester and beyond.

Subsequently, ATE is issuing a deferral response, with the following points the main areas which require further detail/clarification:

- Commitment of details of all internal active travel provision, active travel access points.
- Lack of precise details of how the proposed developed can enhance offsite active travel infrastructure.
- Commitment to a suitable quantum of to the provision of a suitable number of cycle parking spaces.

These areas are considered in greater detail below:

Active Travel Assessment

2.1 Trip Generation, Travel Plan Targets

ATE Rating: PASS > CONDITION RECOMMENDED

ATE acknowledges that a vision-led, scenario approach to trip generation has been used, and that the applicant is aware of its need to be aligned with ATE (Chapter 3.4, TA, p.15). This sets the basis for the proposed development to set strong objectives to ensure that all active and sustainable transport modes are duly considered.

In alignment with this, the applicant has also set Travel Plan targets which aim for 60% of car journeys and 30% of active and sustainable modes (Para 7.3.5, TP, p.43). While this could be considered applicable to the context of the site, there is still a case to aim for higher active mode shares, particular with cycling, with the site being located in relatively close cycling proximity to various population sources and attractors. ATE advises that these are reviewed accordingly so that total active and sustainable travel mode-share targets coalesce with government targets that 50% of all short urban journeys are walked, wheeled, or cycled.

2.2 Walking & Cycling Accessibility/Public Transport/ Active Travel Route

Audit/Offsite Improvements

Rating: FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED

ATE acknowledges the applicant's commitment to pedestrian movement and that 'The ability for pedestrians to travel through the Application Site on foot will be maintained through the masterplan, through footpaths and footways' (para 3.6.2, TP, p.26). To complement this intent, it is important for the applicant to provide all details of pedestrian provision in terms of the proposed pedestrian network, crossings, and junction treatments and that this is in alignment with relevant policy/guidance such as *Inclusive Mobility*.

A key aspect will be the composition of the spine road and street hierarchy which should be detailed in an enhanced layout plan. Also crucial will be the connections to public transport provision and the amenity that bus stops etc. provide and the links to the areas of public realm. Regarding cycling specifically, ATE advises that the proposed development should possess suitably substantial cycle infrastructure, adherent with the applicable measures as recommended in LTN 1-20 and welcomes the submission of precise details of this.

With regards to off-site improvements, there are numerous existing pedestrian and cycling connections in the vicinity of the proposed development, with the applicant expressing these in Chapter 4.2. of the TP (p.28). While there is a commitment to this in principle it is important that the applicant conducts an extensive qualitative analysis of active travel provision from the site to the local areas. The basis for this should link with the presented Cycle Infrastructure Plan (Figure 8.2) and Pedestrian Infrastructure Plan (Figure 8.1).

This process should then inform the eventual contributions for active travel enhancement of the most important routes, such as the improvement of the Whittle Lane provision and connection with the limited active travel provision on the A6045. Improving this route could provide a genuinely strong active travel link for cyclists to connect from the proposed development to the attractors in Heaton Park, Prestwich, and other areas of North Manchester. Corresponding to this should be extensive details of how the site will specifically synchronise with and contribute to Greater Manchester's Bee Network, with the opportunity for thousands of employees to benefit from choosing integrated public transport/active travel journeys.

2.3 Cycle Parking and Trip-End Facilities

Rating: FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED

ATE acknowledges that the applicant has indicated that there will be the inclusion of 'Active Travel Hubs' and secure cycle parking as one of its 'Movement and Access Principles' (DAS, p.34). While this demonstrates broad intent, the composition, location, and technical details to support cycle parking and associated provision needs to be committed to at the earliest stage possible. The proposed development could undoubtedly be an extremely large employer (~7500 if the site were entirely B8 class according to the employee's density guide but likely to be more if included other classes).

Consequently, ATE position is that cycle parking numbers should be in adherence with Table 11.1 of LTN 1-20. These cycle parking spaces should be in accordance with all applicable guidance in LTN 1-20, to ensure that the provision includes all the necessary supporting facilities such as lockers, showers etc. of which ATE notes that the applicant has indicated this on para 4.7.18 of the TA. All cycle parking should also be in a suitable location (of which the currently proposed cycle store is). In this case, details of the Active Travel Hubs is also important to ascertain, including their location and spatial relationship with all land uses in the proposed development.

3.0 Next Steps

It is requested that these recommendations are provided to the LPA case officer and forwarded to the agent and applicant. ATE welcomes the review of further submitted information to help address the above issues, with a view to eventually providing a further response and the setting of planning conditions and obligations as appropriate.