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Project/File: 333102168

Planning Services

Rochdale Borough Council
Smith Street,
Rochdale
OL16 1XU

Dear Sir/Madam,

RECONFIGURATION AND SUBDIVISION TO FACILITATE DUAL RESTAURANT AND DRIVE THRU CAPABILITIES FORMER PINK DRIPS UNIT AT SANDBROOK RETAIL & LEISURE PARK, ROCHDALE

We act on behalf AIG Holdings Limited ('our client') and have been instructed to submit a planning application regarding the reconfiguration of the Former Pink Drips Unit at the Sandbrook Retail & Leisure Park, Rochdale ('the Site') to facilitate dual restaurant and drive thru capabilities.

Site Context

The Site is located within the Sandbrook Retail and Leisure Park, which sits within Defined Urban Area of Rochdale approximately 1.6 kilometres to the south of the Rochdale Primary Shopping Area.

The Park is strategically positioned in the Rochdale area due to its proximity to the surrounding road network with linkages to the Town Centre. Access is taken from Sandbrook Way onto the A664 Edinburgh Way and the A267 which connects to junction 20 of the M62 Motorway.

The Application Site more specifically, comprises the former Pink Drips Units which is situated to the eastern side of the wider Retail and Leisure Park alongside the existing Pizza Hut unit.

The unit was until recently, occupied by Pink Drips Restaurant. However, following the expiry of the lease over a year ago, the unit has since stood vacant. Our client is therefore seeking to market the unit to prospective occupiers, and in doing so, has found significant demand for units which have capabilities for a dual restaurant and drive thru format when compared to traditional restaurant units. Our client therefore wishes to accommodate these requirements in the interest of bringing the unit back into productive economic use. In doing so, our client also seeks to futureproof against vacancy in enabling the to accommodate both traditional restaurant uses and drive-thru format.

Planning History

There is an extensive planning history pertaining to the wider Site. The retail and leisure park was first established by permission:

- Ref: 93/D30059 for the erection of non-food retail store, fast food outlets, hotel and leisure facility, including multi-screen cinema and ten pin bowling.
- Ref: 96/D32931 – Erection of non-food retail unit, fast food outlets and leisure uses in 1993 and 1996 respectively.

A further permission was granted in 2007 (07/D48551) for the erection Of Single Storey Restaurant (Use Class A3). This is the operant permission for the Former Pink Drips Unit and confirms that the lawful existing use is Class E(b) (formerly A3).

Application Proposals and Pre-application Advice

To facilitate the desired level of flexibility to ensure the unit can be viably marketed and brought back into productive use, our client is seeking to reconfigure the existing floorspace. The intention would be to retain the established Class E(b) use but also allow for the subdivision into two distinct units and to facilitate a drive-thru offer/operation for each of these, in responding to active market demand.

In exploring the practicality of this option, Pre-application Advice (PREAPP/00043/25) was sought from Rochdale Borough Council in May 2025. Following the meeting held 30/05/2025, the subsequent written response issued 07/07/2025 confirmed that the Council considered that the principle of development is acceptable and in accordance with the requirements of CS Policies E1 and E2 and the NPPF. Subsequently, the detailed design of the scheme has been informed by the feedback received in the pre-application advice.

The existing unit would maintain its overall footprint and scale, layout general appearance, but would be sub-divided to facilitate the use of two separate units operating within Use Class E(b). All works to accommodate the subdivision of the unit can be accommodated internally and would not result in any external alterations. The primary external alteration is the installation of the two drive thru lanes. The layout of the site remains broadly consistent with the existing configuration, with the drive thru lane entrances being introduced at the northwestern corner of the unit and running parallel to one another, between the Pink Drips and Pizza Hut units. Vehicles would then drive around the perimeter of the building before reaching an intersection at the unit's northwestern corner and finally exiting at the southwestern corner of the unit and re-entering the wider car park circulation roads.

The proposals can be comfortably accommodated, with minimal disruption to the existing car park configuration and layout. The proposed drive thru lanes would be contained within the existing area of hardstanding between the Pink Drips and Pizza Hut units and the area of car park to the west of the former Pink Drips Unit, so will not prejudice the existing circulation routes within the wider site, or result in a significant reconfiguration of the parking bay layout, only requiring alterations to those which are immediately adjacent to the proposed drive thru lanes.

This conclusion was supported by the Highways Engineers at pre-app stage, who offered no objection to the proposal in principle, and following discussion at the meeting, were satisfied with the approach to how pedestrian traffic would interact with queues of traffic and moving vehicles when moving around the retail park.

The development proposals would result in a net loss of 16No. car parking spaces from the existing car park and would provide 6No. car parking spaces including 2No. disabled parking spaces and 12 electric

vehicle car parking spaces to serve the drive-thru unit. 8No new Bike Stands will also be delivered, in line with the Council's parking standards, along with a new bin store adjacent to the drive thru lane.

Following feedback received at pre-app stage, the layout has been updated to allow for deliveries and servicing to take place from the rear of the unit. It is not anticipated that drive thru food operators would require bulky deliveries, and this can be sympathetically managed through the rear entry door and can be carried out during non-peak times.

Planning Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan for the Site consists of:

- The Core Strategy for Rochdale (2016);
- Greater Manchester Joint Waste Development Plan (2012);
- Greater Manchester Joint Minerals Development Plan;
- Saved policies of the Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan 2006 ("UDP") (saved policies May 2009) and Planning Policies Map (June 2006); and
- Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PFE) (March 2024).

Planning Considerations

Principle of Proposed Use

The proposals relate to existing Class E floorspace in an established retail and leisure park setting. The proposal is simply to re-purpose the existing floorspace in order to better respond to market demands and no new floorspace is proposed.

National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 85 seeks to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, whilst Core Strategy Policy E2 and PFE Policy JP-J1 confirm that the Council will work to support the creation and retention of successful businesses and increase the number and quality of jobs. The repurposing of vacant floorspace to best meet market demands accords with these principles.

The subdivision of the unit would not usually require planning permission provided that there are no conditions within the existing permission governing the unit to preclude this. Having confirmed this point at Pre-app stage, the subdivision would, in isolation of the external physical works to the unit, be achievable without the need for planning permission.

The primary changes proposed are therefore those which seek to facilitate the drive thru format of the unit. It is noted that existing units with a drive-thru facility already operate from the retail park, including KFC, McDonalds and Subway. In addition, a further unit, which we understand is due to be occupied by Starbucks was approved in October 2023 (Ref: 23/00119/FUL). The presence of these existing users and the approval of the 2023 application confirms the acceptability in principle of drive thru operations within this location, subject to other development management considerations.

Transport and Parking

Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Policy T2 of the adopted Core Strategy seeks to prioritise the safety, accessibility and amenity of those who live or have business in the area. Policy DM1 states that all development proposals should provide satisfactory vehicular access with adequate parking, manoeuvring, and servicing arrangements taking into account of the proposed use and location.

No new floorspace is proposed and it is not therefore anticipated that the provision of drive thru capabilities for the unit will generate additional demand. As a result of the propensity for linked trips within the Retail & Leisure Park and non-primary pass-by trips on the local highway network; it is considered that the impact of traffic generated by the proposals would not result in a material impact on the wider highway network or site access junction operation.

In assessing the highways impact of the approved Starbucks scheme, it was accepted that the proposals would not affect the access into the retail park from the A627 and no conditions were proposed, and no objections were raised from the Council's highways officers. In applying a similar logic here, and noting that in the case of the Starbucks Unit, this was accounting for new built floorspace, as opposed to the reconfiguration of existing in this instance, it is not considered that either of the proposed options would give rise to unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network by way of additional traffic movements.

The layout of the new drive thru lanes proposed has been designed and tracked to ensure that vehicles can safely access and egress from the wider car park circulation roads and can safely manoeuvre within the drive thru lanes without conflict with pedestrians or other vehicles.

With regard to parking, the retail and leisure park is an established leisure and retail destination which shares its car parking across the majority of site. The wider Retail and Leisure Park provides circa 681 car parking spaces and the proposals will result in a net loss of 16 spaces. The existing car park is not fully utilised and it is considered that the net loss in parking will not result in a material impact on the operation of the car park due to the varying peak hours of demand for different uses on-site.

Amenity Considerations

Policies DM1 and P3 of the Council's adopted Core Strategy require development proposals to demonstrate high quality design. The site is located on an existing car park, with multiple similar, single storey style drive thru buildings in close proximity.

The existing unit would maintain its overall footprint and scale, layout and general appearance. The proposed introduction of drive thru facilities would not detrimentally impact the visual amenity of the wider area given the precedent already set on site so long as such a facility was to be designed accordingly. In this regard, essentially, all external physical operations are limited to those required to accommodate the proposed reconfiguration of the unit to include the desired drive thru capabilities.

Given the existing uses on the site and the fact that the proposed use would look to re-purpose an existing unit that would complement these, it is not considered the proposed unit would result in an unacceptable level of amenity to these nearby residential occupiers, by reason of noise, odour or light pollution.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The Environment Act 2021 introduced a new requirement for new developments to demonstrate a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). In England, BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. This means a development will result in more or better quality natural habitat than there was before development.

A soft landscaping will be delivered on site and all of the existing trees will be retained, as detailed within the accompanying site plans. Accordingly, as detailed within the BNG calculation and associated BNG Assessment Report, the 10% requirement is exceeded by the proposals, which will deliver a net gain of 14.61%.

Submission Materials

The application comprises this covering letter and the following documents:

- Completed application forms;
 - Application Drawings prepared by RGP:
 - Site Location Plan 11649 L001;
 - Existing Site Plan 11649 L002;
 - Block Plan 11649 L003;
 - Existing Ground Floor Plan 11649 P001;
 - Existing Roof Plan 11649 P002;
 - Existing Elevations Sheet 1 11649 E001;
 - Existing Elevations Sheet 2 11649 E002;
 - Existing Street Scene 11649 E003;
 - Existing Sections 11649 S001;
 - Site Photos 11649 PH001;
 - Proposed Site Plan 11649 L020;
 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan 11649 P010;
 - Proposed Roof Plan 11649 P011;
 - Proposed Elevations Sheet 1 11649 E020;
 - Proposed Elevations Sheet 2 11649 E021;
 - Proposed Street Scene 11649 E022;
 - Proposed Sections 11649 S020;
 - Pick Up Window Details 11649 D020;
 - Order Point Details 11649 D021;
- Design and Access Statement Prepared by RGP ;
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment prepared by Peak Ecology; and
- Planning Statement (included within this covering letter).

The planning application fee of £383.00 (inclusive of service charge) has been paid electronically via the Planning Portal (PP-14218264).

We trust the information provided is sufficient and look forward to receiving confirmation that the application has been registered and validated. If you require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Justin Kenworthy at this office.

Yours faithfully,

D Melling

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