

HERITAGE & CONSERVATION CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Application Details

Heritage, Conservation & Design team officer

Catherine Fenghour

Date

27 January 2026

Application reference

25/00798/FUL

Address

Jamia Masjid Chashtiah Mosque, 49 to 53 Milkstone Road, Rochdale, OL11 1EB

Proposal

Redesign of the front elevation including alterations to fenestration, erection of 4.8m high minaret to roof. Installation of solar panels and the application of white render to both front and rear elevations

Affected Heritage Assets

Designated heritage assets

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Non-designated heritage assets

- Jamia Masjid Chastiah Mosque, 49 to 53 Milkstone Road

Summary

The proposed works would result in some harm to the significance of this non-designated heritage asset. This is a material consideration, and a balanced judgement should be had.

Assessment

The application site is currently used as a mosque. It was originally built to house a branch of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers in 1872. The premises originally comprised the shop and the archway to the yard to the rear. The building was originally red brick with a slate roof. It has undergone numerous alterations. The Victorian shopfront has been replaced; the ground floor has been rendered; the arch has been infilled; the windows have been replaced, and the ground floor has been rendered. The archway and date stone of 1872 along with the arched window heads have

also been painted. These alterations have undermined the architectural interest of the building, although some features, such as the arch are still legible. The building's interest stems primarily from its historic links with the Cooperative Movement and the heritage statement also notes its appearance on a BBC broadcast.

The proposal is for external alterations to the front of the building and the installation of solar panels on its roof. The proposed plans show a roof canopy (known as a mashrabiya) and a minaret. The front elevation would also be rendered. The proposed alterations appear to be inspired by North African architecture and details, with arched windows, carved wood, green roof tiles and geometric shapes. This architecture is often based around courtyards and buildings are typically limewashed with flat roofs. This architecture is markedly different from that of the host building and its surrounds, which is dominated by dual pitched red brick terraces dating from the late 19th century.

Given the existing proportions, form and appearance of the building, the proposed alterations are likely to read as incongruous features, which would fail to work with the character and features of the original building. Furthermore, the selection of certain elements of North African architecture in isolation without the context and architectural form is likely to give the building a disjointed and incoherent appearance.

The intricacy of the detailing on the woodwork and tiling is particularly important, as specialist craftsmanship is a key feature of this architectural style. If the works are not carried out by specialist craftspeople, then the intended design is unlikely to be achieved.

The rendering of the remainder of the building would also cover over the original brickwork and would obscure the surviving features of the former cooperative branch.

As noted above, the existing front has been unsympathetically altered in the past. There is scope for alterations to be made to enhance its appearance. However, it is important that any alterations work with the existing architecture and are sympathetic to it. This does not mean that inspiration cannot be taken from other architectural traditions and incorporated into the design. For example, the tilework and carved wood could be incorporated as part of a replacement shopfront or as part of replacement doors within the arch. Rather than rendering the remainder of the building, it would be preferable for the existing render to be removed and the paint removed from the existing stonework if possible.

Conclusions

The existing building has been identified as a non-designated heritage asset. It was originally constructed as a branch for the Cooperative Society and is primarily of historic interest. Unsympathetic alterations have diminished its architectural interest. However, the window surrounds, arch and datestone have survived.

The proposed scheme would not pick up on the existing architectural features on the building. Instead it is influenced by North African/Moroccan architecture. The installation of elements of this architectural tradition and the alterations to existing openings, in isolation without the architectural form and wider context, would make the building appear incongruous within the streetscene and would give it an incoherent appearance, as well as obscuring the remaining links to its original use.

The proposed works would result in some harm to the significance of this non-designated heritage asset. This is a material consideration, and a balanced judgement should be had.

The comments of the Urban Design Officer are supported and should be taken on board as part of the evolution of the design.

Re-consultation

Yes