

Heritage Statement
to support planning application
for conversion to apartments
at 24a Baron Street, Rochdale

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This heritage statement has been produced to support a planning application to Rochdale Borough Council for the conversion of the existing building at 24a Baron Street, from storage units to self-contained residential apartments. It was commissioned by the applicant following his receipt of pre-application advice¹, and a site visit was made by the writer on 22 December 2025.
- 1.2 The site lies within the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area (a designated heritage asset), and is identified by the council as a non-designated heritage asset (NDHA). It also stands next to a grade II listed building (24 Baron Street), whose setting the development has the potential to affect.
- 1.3 The conservation area is included in Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register, where its condition is described as "very bad", but "improving".

2 Location and setting

- 2.1 The site stands on the south-west side of Baron Street, to the east of the town centre, at NGR: SD 89971 13173. It forms part of a group of primarily commercial and industrial 19th century buildings situated between Oldham Road and Baron Street.
- 2.2 The building as a whole forms a U-shape in plan, though it comprises a main block, with two subsidiary wings on the south-west side flanking a courtyard. Of the main block, one long elevation (shown on the drawings as the front) faces north-east directly onto Baron Street, while the other faces south-west onto the yard, which is at basement level in relation to Baron Street. The yard is reached indirectly from Oldham Road.

3 Current use

- 3.1 Parts of the building are currently in use for commercial storage, while others are disused.

4 Historical background

- 4.1 Baron Street is thought to have been established between 1764 and 1795, though this part of the town underwent relatively little development until the 19th century, when it emerged as a primarily industrial quarter.

¹ PREAPP/00086/25

- 4.2 The Ordnance Survey map of 1851² shows some buildings on the application site, but with a different arrangement from those which survive today: it includes a row of five terraced houses or similarly sized units along the north-west side, with a mix of other buildings opposite (figure 1). In contrast, the 1892 map³ (figure 2) shows an arrangement very similar to today's, of which the northern end is marked "smithy", and it appears that the site had been redeveloped in the intervening period, but retained some of the 1851 elements.



Figure 1: OS 1:1056 map, 1851



Figure 2: OS 1:2500 map, 1892

- 4.3 The 1892 arrangement is shown unchanged on the 1910 map⁴ (figure 3), but by 1930⁵ (figure 4), parts of the north-west and south-east wings had been demolished. Rebuilding between then and 1959⁶ appears to have created the mix of structures which remain today (figure 5).

² Rochdale, Sheet 8 (surveyed 1848)

³ Lancashire, Sheet 89.1.17 (surveyed 1890)

⁴ Lancashire, 1:2500 map, sheet 89.1 (revised 1908)

⁵ Lancashire, 1:2500 map, sheet 89.1 (revised 1928)

⁶ OS 1:1250 map sheet SD8913SE - A (surveyed 1959)



Figure 3: OS 1:2500 map, 1910



Figure 4: OS 1:2500 map, 1930

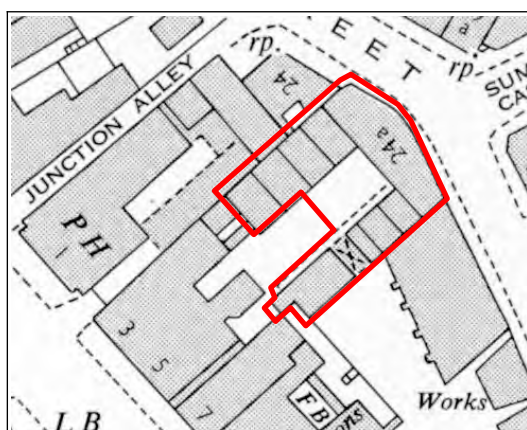


Figure 5: OS 1:1250 map, 1959

- 4.4 A recent historic area assessment of the town centre⁷ notes that in the late 19th century the courtyard was known as “Irwin’s Yard” or “Erving Court”, after a previous owner, James Irvine. Between about 1880 and 1894 the site contained

⁷ Roethe, & Williams, M 2019 *Central Rochdale, Greater Manchester: Historic Area Assessment* (Historic England)

stables and forge of the Rochdale Horseshoeing Co-operative Society Ltd, and by 1894, the complex was known as “Veterinary Buildings”.

5 Rochdale Town Centre conservation area (CA)

- 5.1 The CA was designated in 1980 and is described at length in the council’s character appraisal⁸.
- 5.2 As a whole, the CA takes in the historic core of the town centre, and topographically is influenced by the course of the river, which runs east-west through it. The town’s historical development, particularly during the industrial revolution and 19th century, was very much influenced by the economic boom of the textile trade, which led to rapid expansion.
- 5.3 The character appraisal identifies a number of character areas, of which that named “Regency Drake Street” contains the application site. Drake Street is an important thoroughfare within the town, established in its present form during the Regency period (around the beginning of the 19th century), when it linked the town centre with the canal. This part of the CA was densely settled with commercial premises as well as merchants’ houses, and still contains former industrial buildings; a good overview of these can be seen in recent aerial photographs by Historic England⁹. The CA appraisal identifies 24a & 28 Baron Street as an NDHA within this character area.

6 Present setting

- 6.1 The site forms part of a relatively dense cluster of varied buildings, originally commercial or industrial for the most part, which have developed piecemeal, and which include the grade II listed house and workshop of the 1820s or 1830s to the north-west. To the south-east is 28 Baron Street, a former workshop or warehouse dating from between 1848 and 1890, of two to three storeys, and five bays; its rear elevation faces onto the large yard to the rear of properties on Oldham Road.

7 The application site

- 7.1 The block which stands parallel with and facing onto Baron Street is the most significant part of the complex and can be dated to the period between 1848 and 1890 (photo 1). It is brick-built with blue slate roof and has two storeys on the Baron Street front, with an under-storey which faces south-west and is

⁸ *Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal* Edited draft, May 2023

⁹ eg see: [2019a](#) [2019b](#)



Photo 1: Baron Street frontage

accessible only from the courtyard there. While the south-west side follows a straight line, the outer parts of the Baron Street elevation are canted to reflect the street plan, and this accounts for the rising eaves level here at either end. The long elevations are composed with a classical influence, with off-centre gables which do not align with each other.



Photo 2: Horse's head, Baron Street entrance



Photo 3: Baron Street frontage, looking south-east

- 7.2 Details in the Baron Street façade include brick arches over most of the openings and corbelled bricks below the sills, with the wide entrance in bay 3 also being distinguished by the cast (or carved) horse's head (photo 2). Over the entrance is a large rectangular panel, suspected to have held an inscription at one time. The narrow gabled bay to the right seems to have held a taking-in door at first floor level. Modern render covers the brickwork beyond here, but the openings in it are consistent with those in the rest of the façade (photo 3).
- 7.3 The courtyard elevation of this block has openings only within the central portion, beneath the wider gable, and details around them are generally similar to those on Baron Street, albeit with stone sills and lintels to the windows in the upper floors (photo 4). At ground level is an arched doorway embellished by a bull's head, and flanked by windows, now infilled (photos 5 & 6). The gable imitates a classical pediment and has a circular window within it; the gable and eaves are enhanced by brick corbels, picked out in a cream-coloured paint (photo 7).



Photo 4: Courtyard elevation of main block



Photo 5: Ground floor openings, courtyard elevation



Photo 6: Bull's head, over courtyard doorway



Photo 7: Upper floor details, courtyard elevation

- 7.4 The north-west end of the building is rendered and faces the grade II listed 24 Baron Street across a short gap, while the south-east end adjoins no. 28.



Photo 8: North-west wing

- 7.5 The two wings which break forward and flank the narrow courtyard are much less distinguished architecturally. The north-west one (photo 8) seems to have been domestic in origin, with the left-hand end being recognisable as a former house, which maps show to be mid 20th century in date, while to the right of it some more modern brickwork and openings are apparent within what may be a 19th century structure. Opposite this, the south-east wing (photos 9 and 10) similarly has a former mid 19th century dwelling at its outer end (painted white), and much more recent commercial elements next to the main building. It contains a wide entry through, on the ground floor. Between the wings, the courtyard is surfaced with stone setts, which contribute to significance.

8 Statement of heritage significance

- 8.1 The application building has local significance, and contributes positively to the Rochdale Town Centre CA, principally for the architectural and historic interest conferred by the main block on Baron Street, a former smithy and stables dating from the second half of the 19th century, believed to have operated as a co-operative venture. The exterior of this block is relatively little altered, and forms a simple composition enhanced by some decorative brickwork and gables to front and rear, as well as the rather quirky animals' heads. The two-storey wings which flank the courtyard are much plainer architecturally and have been subject to a degree of modern redevelopment and alteration which reduces their interest,



Photo 9: South-east wing

but the manner in which they enclose the yard is an important aspect, enhanced by the setted surface of the courtyard.

- 8.2 The setting of the site amongst other buildings of broadly similar character within the conservation area (including the grade II listed 24 Baron Street), and tucked away in a mews position, also lends it significance.

9 Proposals and impact on significance

- 9.1 The conversion scheme proposes a minimum of work to the exterior so as to preserve all those positive features which confer significance, and would enhance the building envelope through the removal of the security grilles and roller shutters which have been fitted to both the Baron Street frontage and to the courtyard elevations of the two-storey wings. The development would have a positive impact on the building as a NDHA, and would preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the CA, without harm to significance or the setting of the neighbouring listed building. The site is underused at present and shows clear evidence of deterioration, in common with many others in this part of the CA, so conversion to residential use would establish its optimum viable use and offer a sustainable future. A successful scheme is also likely to seed similar conversion applications in the surrounding area, so would have a beneficial effect beyond the immediate site.



Photo 10: South-west end of courtyard (rear of Oldham Road properties to right)

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