

Officer Report

Case Reference: 25/00463/FUL
Location: Littleborough After School Club Calderbrook Road
Littleborough Rochdale OL15 9JN
Proposal: Erection of two-storey front extension and side elevation covered area following removal of existing covered play area, remodelling works including alteration of the ridge height, infilling of brickwork and alterations to fenestration to all elevations
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Sam Yuen

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application relates to a vacant building dating 1970s within the Littleborough Campus, previously the infant block of the former Littleborough Primary School. The campus comprises the Littleborough Sports Centre to the northwest, and the newly constructed Littleborough Community Primary School to the southwest. Access to the site is via an access road from Calderbrook Road which is sited some 90m to the west. The site adjoins Town House Road, an unadopted road to the east and is adjacent to Littleborough Cricket Club to the southeast and large playing fields to the east.

The site falls within the Coal Mining Development High Risk Area and Flood Zone 2 and 3.

The site also lies circa 60m away from Townhouse Conservation Area to the northeast which comprises two Grade-II listed buildings: Townhouse and Townhouse Mill.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for the refurbishment of the building to the Littleborough Family Hub to replace and expand the children's services previously provided at the now demolished Littleborough Children's Centre. The proposed works comprise the following:

- A two-storey front extension comprising an entrance area, stairwell and lift, following the removal of an existing covered play area. It covers a footprint of 7.76m by 6.65m and is characterised by a lean-to roof form with a ridge height of 10.56m and an eaves height of 8.48m. It would be constructed in brickwork matching the existing building.
- Alterations to fenestration and infilling of brickwork to existing window openings on all elevations.
- The construction of an open-aspect lean-to covered area to the north-facing side elevation.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE)

The Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan was adopted and became part of the statutory development plan for each of the 9 authorities covered by the plan on 21st March 2024. The following policies are relevant:

Policy JP-S4 Flood Risk and the Water Environment

Policy JP-G8 A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Policy JP-P1 Sustainable Places

Policy J

P-P2 Heritage

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

P2 Protecting and Enhancing Character, Landscape and Heritage

P3 Improving Design of New Development

G7 Increasing the Value of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

G8 Managing Water Resources and Flood Risk

G9 Reducing the Impact of Pollution, Contamination and Land Instability

DM1 General Development Requirements

T2 Improving Accessibility

Appendix 5 Schedule of Parking Standards

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

21/00701/FUL - Part demolition of existing school / children's centre / gym, erection of a new school building of up to two storeys and erection of temporary classrooms, with reconfigured and additional car parking, access and landscaping - Grant subject to conditions

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways And Engineering

No objection.

Environment Agency

No objection following the additional information submitted as part of the revised Flood Risk Assessment. Condition recommended for the implementation of flood resistance and resilience measures set out in the FRA, in line with the requirements of the NPPF.

Lead Local Flood Authority/Drainage

No objection subject to condition for the implementation of the revised FRA.

Environmental Control (Landfill Gas)

No objection following the submission of details of gas protection measures, subject to the submission and approval of a verification report.

The Coal Authority

No objection subject to condition for the submission of a signed statement confirming the site has been made safe and stable for the approved development, alongside the completion of any necessary mitigation measures. The Authority also attached informative relating to ground investigations and groundworks.

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU)

Bat roosts have previously been recorded in 2021 and 2023. An updated survey in 2025 however failed to find evidence of bats. Only one dusk survey however occurred, which for a previously confirmed roost would not be regarded as adequate, with at least three dusk surveys required. It is accepted however that the survey now indicates the roost is either abandoned or less active, which is in-line with the consultant's conclusion that the roost is now at best used occasionally. It is also noted that internal strip-out works have been carried out during the course of the application, where no bat roosts were found; the roost is judged to be likely no longer present with no opportunity for reuse.

In light of the above, the Ecology Unit recommends a condition for the submission of a precautionary working method statement for the removal of the fascia boards where historic evidence of bat roosting has been recorded and the mitigation for the loss of the maternal roost.

The Ecology Unit also recommends conditions for the submission of a working method statement for nesting birds, the implementation of the proposed soft landscaping, and the provision of bat boxes and sparrow terraces.

The development appears to be exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain with all existing vegetation retained. The Ecology Unit therefore accepts the development is exempt under the de minimis rule.

Conservation And Design

No objection.

Env Health - Noise/Odours

No comments received at the time of writing.

Rights Of Way Officer

No comments received at the time of writing.

REPRESENTATIONS

Neighbour notifications via letters were sent to surrounding properties and a site notice was posted in the vicinity of the site. No comments were received.

AMENDMENTS

Amendments were submitted which comprises the omission of a previously proposed two-storey side extension and the retention of the existing escape staircase, and the omission of the

external rain screen cladding. An external covered area was also later added to the north-facing side elevation.

DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

The NPPF states achieving good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, and decisions should ensure developments are visually attractive and sympathetic to local character. This is also reflected in Policy JP-P1 of the PfE and Policies DM1 and P3 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, which require development to respect local context with regard to siting, size, scale, massing, height and materials.

The host building is a former school building of a dark brown brick construction and is of a style consistent with education buildings of the post-war era. The proposal seeks to renovate and repurpose into a multi-purpose community hub through numerous alterations and enlargements.

The proposed two-storey front extension would introduce a large mass to the front façade and would project 3.48m above the ridge of the original building. Whilst this addition would appear somewhat prominent due to its partial obscuration of the north-facing views of the Pennines, the extension would not dominate the host building and the adjacent extant buildings and is considered to be appropriately scaled. The design of the lean-to roof form would signal the entry point into the hub and would be represent a suitable built form.

The proposed increase in ridge height is marginal and would not have a material visual impact to the building.

The proposed works would correspond with the design language of the recently constructed primary school building through the use of contrasting brickwork and projecting brickwork detailing to the extension and would constitute a well-designed and contextual proposal. The applicant has supplied details and samples of the proposed brickwork which has been accepted by the LPA and can be secured via condition.

Taken as a whole, the proposed development constitutes sympathetic repurposing of an existing building which would enhance the visual amenity of the wider area. The proposed design is therefore acceptable in accordance with Policy P2 of the adopted Core Strategy, Policy JP-P1 of the PfE, and the NPPF.

AMENITY

Protection of residential amenity is considered under Policy DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, which states development proposals should ensure they do not adversely affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy.

The proposed front extension is located in a relatively isolated location and is sited in excess of 70m from the nearest residential dwelling of no. 2 Crofthead, therefore the proposal is not expected to give rise to adverse amenity impacts to the neighbouring occupiers.

The level of noise expected with the proposed use of the family hub would be consistent with the existing educational/leisure use of the wider site and would thus maintain an acceptable standard of amenity.

The proposal would not result in unacceptable levels of amenity impact and would be acceptable in accordance with Policies DM1 and G9 of the adopted Core Strategy and the NPPF.

HIGHWAYS AND PARKING

Policy T2 of the adopted Core Strategy aims to locate development where good access to public transport is available or can be provided. Policy DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy requires development proposals to provide satisfactory vehicular access with adequate parking, manoeuvring, and servicing arrangements taking into account of the proposed use and location.

The application site is sustainably located in an established public space with access to local buses within walking distance. The proposed use and expected activity of the family hub is not considered to significantly impact on the highway network. Sufficient existing off-street parking space has been provided as part of the previous redevelopment of the wider site. The Council's Highways Officer has also raised no objection to the proposal.

The proposal would be acceptable in respect of highway safety and would accord with Policies T2 and DM1 of the adopted Core Strategy.

ECOLOGY

Bat surveys conducted as part of 21/00701/FUL found a maternity bat roost present in the infant block of the primary school, the subject of the current application. Subsequent surveys carried out in 2023 observed significant reduction in emerging bats and noted the maternity roost is no longer occupied. The latest survey, carried out in May 2025, found no bats emerging from the building and confirmed the maternity roost is no longer present, with individual bats appearing to roost intermittently. During the course of the determination process, internal strip-out works have been carried out and the ecologist has noted that no bat roosts were found. It was also considered that the roost is likely no longer present and therefore presents no opportunity for reuse in the future. Whilst the disused status of the building and the internal works have ostensibly resulted in the loss of the roost, the Ecology Unit accepts that the risks of a roost being disturbed is now very low and therefore recommends the precautionary working measure for the removal of the fascia boards where historic evidence of bats has been recorded and for the mitigation of the loss of the roost, details of which can be secured by condition.

The 2023 survey found a pair of house sparrows nesting within the building, however, these were not present in the 2025 survey and the nest site is confirmed to be no longer in use. Notwithstanding, an informative has been attached the decision notice regarding the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

With regard to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the LPA is satisfied the development is exempt from mandatory BNG under the de minimis rule. Notwithstanding, the proposed landscaping around the perimeter of the building will enhance the biodiversity value of the site and would result in a net gain. The implementation of the landscaping plan can be secured by condition.

Subject to conditions, the requirements of Policy G7 of the adopted Core Strategy, PfE and the NPPF will have been met.

CONTAMINATION AND LAND INSTABILITY

Core Strategy Policy G9 states the Council will ensure that any risks arising from contaminated land or land instability are identified, and that any appropriate actions to address these risks are taken, prior to development taking place.

The application site falls within the Defined Development High Risk Area, where it is noted that unrecorded coal mining activity is likely to have taken place at shallow depth.

Following discussions with the Environmental Control Officer, the applicant has submitted additional information setting out the gas protection measures by way of a radon and methane gas barrier membrane underneath the proposed extension which is acceptable. The submission of a verification report to confirm the installation of the measures has been recommended by condition.

The submitted Coal Mining Risk Assessment was used to inform 21/00701/FUL though the assessment site includes the current application site boundary. The report identifies a low to moderate risk in coal mining legacy and recommends that the geological and mining settings on site should be confirmed by intrusive site investigation by way of rotary boreholes, along with the implementation of any remedial works as necessary.

Whilst it is acknowledged that subsequent site investigations have been carried out as per the recommendation of the risk assessment under 21/00701/FUL, the boreholes were carried out within the vicinity of the adjacent primary school footprint and not the application site. Notwithstanding, additional details have been submitted indicating reinforced raft foundations as a precautionary measure against potential ground movement relating to coal mining legacy. The Coal Authority has reviewed the proposed plans and mitigation measures (including the gas barrier membrane) and has raised no objection, subject to the submission of a signed statement confirming the development has been made safe and stable for occupation.

Subject to conditions, the requirements of Policies G9 and DM1 of the adopted Core Strategy and the NPPF will have been met.

FLOOD RISK

Core Strategy Policy G8 sets out the Council's strategy for managing water resources and flood risk more effectively in the interests of public safety, protecting property and infrastructure and the conservation of the natural environment.

The application site boundary falls within Flood Zone 3, however, the footprint of the proposed extension falls within Flood Zone 2 and has a less than 0.5% annual probability of fluvial flooding.

As noted in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), the surrounding land naturally falls away to the open fields to the east and has historically directed overflow away from the site. Considering the proposal mostly relates to the refurbishment of an existing building, with proposed extension occupying a limited additional footprint, the LPA is satisfied with the

conclusions of the FRA. The flood resistance and resilience measures are also satisfactory and can be secured via condition requiring the implementation of the approved FRA.

It is considered the proposed development would be acceptable in respect of flood risk, in accordance with Policy G8 of the adopted Core Strategy, Policy JP-S4 of the adopted PfE and the NPPF.

HERITAGE

Regard has been had to Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Core Strategy Policy P2, PfE Policy JP-P2 and the NPPF in respect of the impact on the Townhouse Conservation Area and the two Grade-II listed buildings. The proposal sits outside of the Conservation Area boundary and would be seen clearly understood to form part of separate existing development of post-war buildings and later additions. As such, the proposal is considered to have a neutral impact on the significance of the Conservation Area and listed buildings. This is reflected in the comments received from the Council's Conservation Officer.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

Condition(s) (8)

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this planning permission.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that any conditions imposed on the original permission remain in force other than as expressly hereby varied and development must be started in accordance with Section 73(5) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents hereby approved:

- Location Plan – received 06/05/2025
- Existing Site Plan – drawing no. A1/2005021/BS/001 received 06/05/2025
- Proposed Site Plan – drawing no. A1/2005021/BS/005A received 03/03/2026
- Existing Floor Plans – drawing no. A1/2004570/BS/002 received 06/05/2025
- Existing Elevations – drawing no. A1/2004570/BS/04 received 06/05/2025
- Proposed Floor Plans – drawing no. A1/2005021/BS/012 E received 03/03/2026
- Proposed Elevations – drawing no. A1/2005021/BS/028 F received 03/02/2026
- Proposed Extension Floor Plans, Section Plans and Details – drawing no. A1/2005021/BS/019A received 05/12/2025
- Proposed Covered Area Elevation and Section Plan – drawing no. A1/2005021/BS/019D received 17/03/2026
- Proposed Surfacing Plan – drawing no. LA02 Rev. A received 06/05/2025

- Proposed Landscaping Plan – drawing no. LA03 Rev. A received 06/05/2025
- Proposed Foundation Details - drawing no. 0400/02-10-C2 received 17/03/2026

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the policies contained within the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan, the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 3 Prior to works to the fascia boards, a Precautionary Working Method Statement shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The statement shall set out details relating to the following:

- Soft stripping of fascia boards in the presence of a licensed bat worker; and
- Mitigation and enhancement for loss of a historic common pipistrelle maternity roost.

The proposed works and mitigation measures shall be implemented in accordance with the approved method statement.

Reason: In order to safeguard protected species and their habitats, in accordance with Policy G7 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Reason for pre-commencement condition: Any mitigation and/or enhancement measures for bat roosts would need to be established to ensure the safeguarding of protected species and their habitats.

- 4 The gas protection measures hereby approved shall be installed in accordance with “Staircase 1 Plan, Section & Details drawing no. A1/2005021/BS/019A” received 05/12/2025.

In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development that was not previously identified it must be reported in writing immediately to the Local Planning Authority. An investigation and risk assessment must be undertaken and where remediation is necessary, a remediation scheme must be prepared, which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in full accordance with the duly approved remediation strategy thereafter.

Prior to the first use or occupation of the approved development, a verification report confirming the installation of the gas protection measures and any remediation measures where necessary shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the safe development of the site in the interests of the amenity of future occupiers in accordance with Policy G9 of the adopted Rochdale Core

Strategy, Policy JP-S1 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 5 Prior to the development being taken into beneficial use, a signed statement or declaration prepared by a suitably competent person confirming that the site has been made safe and stable for the approved development shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval in writing. This document shall confirm the completion of mitigation measures necessary to address the risks posed by past coal mining activity.

Reason: In order to ensure the safety and stability of the development, in accordance with Policy G9 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-S1 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 6 The development hereby approved shall be constructed in the following approved materials:

- Wienerberger Ltd Rothesay Blend brick for the infill panels, string courses and proposed extension;
- Ibstock Milburn Ashen Brown Blend brick for the projecting brick detailing;
- uPVC windows and doors in Smooth Anthracite Grey;
- Aluminium doors and windows in RAL 7016 Anthracite Grey; and
- Cambrian slate roof.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring a satisfactory visual appearance to the development and in accordance with Policies DM1 and P3 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-P1 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 7 The proposed soft landscaping works, including planting plans, specifications and schedules (including planting size, species and numbers/densities) and existing plants / trees to be retained shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on "Proposed Landscape Layout drawing no. LA03 Rev. A" received 06/05/2025 and "Proposed Planting Plan drawing no. LA04 Rev. A" received 06/05/2025 for timing / phasing of implementation or within the next planting season following final occupation of the development hereby permitted, whichever is the sooner, and maintained thereafter.

Any trees or shrubs planted or retained in accordance with this condition which are removed, uprooted, destroyed, die or become severely damaged or become seriously diseased within 5 years of planting shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

Reason: To ensure that the site is satisfactorily landscaped having regard to its location and the nature of the proposed development, in accordance with Policies P3, G6, G7 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-G7 of the

adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 8 The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until such time as the recommendations contained within the Flood Risk Assessment by Aval Consulting Group Limited (ref. 94068 Rev. B dated 18/11/2025) have been implemented in full and retained and maintained for their intended purpose thereafter.

Reason: In the interest of providing a safe environment in the event of a flood and to prevent an increased risk of flooding further downstream and in accordance with Policy G8 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-S4 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Approval Reason(s) (1)

- 1 The Local Planning Authority worked proactively with the applicant to identify various solutions during the application process to ensure that the proposal comprised sustainable development and would improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area and would accord with the development plan. These were incorporated into the scheme and/or have been secured by planning condition.

Informatives (2)

INFORMATIVE:

- 1 The proposed development lies within an area that has been defined by the Mining Remediation Authority as containing coal mining features at surface or shallow depth. These features may include: mine entries (shafts and adits); shallow coal workings; geological features (fissures and break lines); mine gas and former surface mining site. Although such features are seldom readily visible, they can often be present and prob can occur, particularly as a result of new development taking place.

Any form of development over or within the influencing distance of a mine entry can be dangerous and raises significant land stability and public safety risks. As a general precautionary principle, the Mining Remediation Authority considers that the building or within the influencing distance of a mine entry should be avoided. In exceptional circumstance where this is unavoidable, expert advice must be sought to ensure a sui engineering design which takes account of all relevant safety and environmental risk factors, including mine gas and mine-water. Your attention is drawn to the Mining Remediation Authority Policy in relation to new development and mine entries availab

Building on or within the influencing distance of mine entries - GOV.UK

Any intrusive activities which disturb or enter any coal seams, coal mine workings or coal mine entries (shafts and adits) requires a Mining Remediation Authority Permit. Such activities could include site investigation boreholes, excavations for foundations, piling activities, other ground works and any subsequent treatment of coal mine workings and coal mine entries for ground stability purposes. Application forms for Mining Remediation Authority permission and further guidance can be obtained from The Mining Remediation Authority's website at: www.gov.uk/get-a-permit-to-deal-with-a-coal-mine-on-your-property

What is a permit and how to get one? - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

In areas where shallow coal seams are present caution should be taken when carrying out any on site burning or heat focused activities.

If any future development has the potential to encounter coal seams which require excavating, for example excavation of building foundations, service trenches, development platforms, earthworks, non-coal mineral operations, an Incidental Coal Agreement will be required. Further information regarding Incidental Coal Agreements can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/incidental-coal-agreement/guidance-notes-for-applicants-for-incidental-coal-agreements>

If any coal mining features are unexpectedly encountered during development, this should be reported immediately to the Mining Remediation Authority on 0800 288 4242. Further information is available on the Mining Remediation Authority website at: Mining Remediation Authority - GOV.UK

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The applicant is reminded that, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), it is an offence to remove, damage, or destroy the nest of a wild bird, while the nest is in use or being built. Planning consent does not provide a defence against prosecution under this act. If a bird's nest is suspected work should cease immediately and a suitably experienced ecologist employed to assess how best to safeguard the nest(s).