



Report Title: Report to Planning Committee

Application Number	PL/2025/1215
Proposal	Minor extensions and infills to facilitate the re-organisation and refurbishment of internal spaces and to increase bedroom capacity from 23 to 32 (29 standard, 2 category 3 and one emergency room), along with replacement of windows and doors, resurfacing of external areas, minor landscape works, new access gates and new and upgraded external lighting.
Site	Leopold Court, Leopold Street, Rochdale, OL11 5HA
Applicant	Rochdale Borough Council
Recommendation	Grant subject to conditions
Reason for Report	The application has been called-in to planning committee by Councillor Anstee for the following reasons: 1. Intensification of use; 2. Close proximity to residential properties; 3. Local concerns with the day-to-day impact of the existing use; 4. The Council is the landowner; and 5. Concerns over the consultation period.
Background Papers	The planning application documents are background papers to the report. They are open to inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.
Township	Rochdale South
Ward	Bamford

1. Site and Surroundings

- 1.1 The application site provides temporary accommodation and associated support services, including emergency beds for individuals experiencing

homelessness. The property is an irregular shaped, part two storey, part single storey brick building located to the rear of properties on Bury Road. The site is accessed from Leopold Street and there are residential properties to the east, south and west of the site. There is also commercial use to the east and Rochdale Cricket Club grounds to the north.

- 1.2 The site is surrounded by fencing and trees with the main entrance and parking to the east. Grassed areas and planting beds are also found within the grounds.
- 1.3 The site falls within the Defined Urban Area (G/D/1) and part of the north and west of the site falls within the Protection of Existing Recreational Open Space (Policy G/3) as identified in the saved UDP.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The application is for three minor extensions and infills to the ground floor area of the building to facilitate the re-organisation and refurbishment of internal spaces. The extensions and infills are single storey and located to the northern side of the building. There are a number of changes to the fenestration of the building comprising new windows and doors or the replacement of doors with windows or windows with doors. A significant proportion of the works to be carried, such as internal building works, do not require planning permission.
- 2.2 The submitted Design & Access Statement highlights that the proposal seeks to enhance safety, security, operational efficiency and the overall quality of accommodation for tenants and staff. All residents' bedrooms are located to the west of the building, positioned furthest from the main entrance and separated from the reception, staff areas and training rooms. Staff offices and the reception desk are positioned to the east and north sides of the building adjacent to the main entrance. The first floor has the option to operate as female only accommodation. The proposed extensions and infills along with an internal re-configuration would increase the bedroom capacity from 23 to 32 (29 standard, 2 category 3 and one emergency room).

- 2.3 All external lighting is to be upgraded / replaced, and fob accessed vehicular and pedestrian gates are proposed in the location of the existing gates. Landscaping interventions are minimal with no trees proposed for removal and no additional planting proposed.
- 2.4 The existing car park and access route adjacent to the site entrance will be resurfaced. A small private external staff area and secure fenced bicycle storage is proposed to the north elevation.
- 2.5 The submitted plans state the materials will match those on the existing building where possible.

3. Relevant Planning Policy

3.1 National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

3.2 Adopted Development Plan

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE):

JP-S1 Sustainable Development

JP-S4 Flood Risk and the Water Environment

JP-H3 Type, Size and Design of New Housing

JP-G7 Trees and Woodland

JP-G8 A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

JP-C8 Transport Requirements of New Development

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

SO2 Creating successful and healthy communities

C1 Delivering the right amount of housing in the right places

C3 Delivering the right type of housing

C6 Improving health and well being

SO3 Improving design, image and quality of place

P1 Improving image

P2 Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

SO4 Promoting a greener environment

G1 Tackling and adapting to climate change

G3 Renewable and low carbon energy developments

G6 Enhancing green infrastructure

G7 Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity

G8 Managing water resources and flood risk

G9 Reducing the impact of pollution

SO5 Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport

T2 Improving accessibility

Saved Policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

Supplementary Planning Guidance note 'Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development' (June 2016).

Other Considerations

- 3.3 The application has been considered having regard to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out a person's rights to the peaceful enjoyment of property and Article 8 of the Convention of the same Act which sets out his/her rights in respect for private and family life and for the home. Officers consider that the proposed development would not be contrary

to the provisions of the above Articles in respect of the human rights of surrounding residents/occupiers.

- 3.4 The application has been considered in accordance with the Rochdale Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy – Embracing All Voices (2024-2026), which seeks to promote a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion that benefits the community as a whole.

4. Planning History

- 4.1 87/D20734 - Residential Development. Approved 17/09/1987
- 4.2 89/D24391 - Emergency Direct Access Accommodation And Garage Site. Approved 25/01/1990

5. Publicity

Members

- 5.1 The application has been called-in to planning committee by Councillor Anstee for the following reasons:
- The proposal involves a significant intensification of use, with an increase in capacity from 23 to 32 beds;
 - The site is in close proximity to existing residential properties, including directly adjoining neighbours;
 - Local concerns have been raised relating to residential amenity and the day-to-day impact of the existing use, which are capable of being material planning considerations;
 - The Council is the landowner, and committee consideration would assist in ensuring transparency and public confidence in the decision-making process; and
 - Concerns have been raised regarding the effective consultation period, which further supports committee scrutiny.

Summary of Third Party Responses

5.2 The application has been publicised with two site notices (one on Leopold Street and one on Bury Road) and neighbour notification letters.

5.3 28 objections have been received in response to the proposal and the comments are summarised as follows:

- Overbearing development and the extensions will reduce separation distances

Officer comment: The proposed extensions are located to the north of the site and further from existing properties than the existing building. As such there is no perceptible increase in built scale form residential properties and separation distances will remain unchanged.

- Increased noise and disturbance, including during night time hours which will be harmful to residential amenity.
- New lighting could spill into and impact on neighbouring residential properties
- Concerns raised over community safety, anti-social behaviour, and impact on children;
- Increased littering which will worsen existing problems
- Concerns that current management arrangements are inadequate for the existing capacity and raises serious concerns regarding the ability to manage a significantly larger resident population;
- The application provides no evidence of additional crime prevention measures, improved supervision or security arrangements for the increased use;
- Proposed external works and lighting could encourage greater use of the external areas late into the evening increasing noise;
- In the context of the surrounding HMOs and existing pressures the development represents an over-intensification of use;

Officer comment: Matters of pollution, operational management, and impacts on residential amenity of the proposals are addressed in the relevant sections of the assessment set out in this report.

- Concerns that there was a lack of consultation on the application through letters and site notices

Officer comments: In regard to notification of residents, the statutory requirement for notifying neighbours is to consult those adjoining the site by letter OR the display of a site notice. The Local Planning Authority undertook both, neighbour letters were sent to all those adjoining the site and two site notices were also displayed (one on Bury Road and one on Leopold Street). The level of response received demonstrates the effective publicity undertaken.

6. Consultation Responses

Environmental Health

- 6.1 Based on the historic works undertaken in the development of the site, there are no concerns with the ground conditions at the application site and therefore no further assessments are required in respect of this proposal.
- 6.2 No comments were provided in respect of noise or odours.

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit

- 6.3 No objection subject to conditions.

Highways and Engineering

- 6.4 No objections to the proposal.

Street Lighting

- 6.5 No objection subject to a condition for a detailed lighting layout.

7. Assessment

Principle of Development

- 7.1 The application does not propose any change of use of the existing building. The current use was approved in 1990 under planning permission 89/D24391. That permission placed no restriction on the number of occupants within the building. The majority of the increased bedspaces are a result of the

modernisation and internal reconfiguration works which do not require planning permission in isolation. The extensions to the building provide only 2 of the additional bedspaces along with a server room as part of back of house operations.

- 7.2 The principle of this use on the site is already permitted and with respect of the intensification of the use, it is considered that the increased bedspaces resulting from the extensions themselves is negligible.
- 7.3 Due to the national housing and affordability crisis, Rochdale is experiencing unprecedented demand for housing and homelessness assistance, with an increase in the number of households owed a duty increasing by 82% from 1,250 in 2019/20 to 2,281 in 2024/2025. This trend is expected to continue in the short and medium term.
- 7.4 The Government has identified a key objective of the NPPF to significantly boost the supply of homes, including meeting the needs of groups with specific requirements.
- 7.5 Policy C1 of the council's Core Strategy outlines that it will promote the reuse and regeneration of vacant and underused previously developed sites and focus only on sustainable greenfield sites which provide the best access to a range of services, jobs and facilities and have limited impact on green infrastructure and amenity. Policy C3 notes that the Council will seek to ensure that new development provides housing types that take account of local needs and support the provision of housing on appropriate sites to meet the needs of specific groups including older people and other vulnerable groups.
- 7.6 Leopold Court has been in operation since 1992 and provides primary emergency and short-term accommodation provision that enables the Council to meet statutory and mandatory homelessness duties. There are currently 10 full time members of staff and this will be increased to 12 full time staff members through the proposals.

- 7.7 The Strategic Housing section have advised that the Council has 316 statutory households in temporary accommodation, 99 of those are single households which represents 31% of all households in temporary accommodation and this figure is anticipated to increase in the near to medium term. It is therefore acknowledged that the Council needs to retain and increase the supply of this type of accommodation to meet local need and demand.
- 7.8 On the basis that the proposed development would provide a valuable contribution to the much-needed supply of this type of accommodation, with the reuse and modernisation of an existing facility, the proposal accords with the requirements of Policies C1 and C3 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

Visual Amenity

- 7.9 The NPPF states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping. This is largely reflected within Policies DM1 and P1-P3 of the Council's adopted Core Strategy, which requires development proposals to demonstrate high quality design.
- 7.10 The application site is located to the rear of residential properties on Bury Road and is predominantly screened by trees. The existing building is part single storey and part two storey and it is not readily visible from the street until you reach the entrance. The proposed extensions and infills are to the north of the site and are single storey and will not be visible from the main entrance. The design and appearance will be in keeping with the existing building and the materials will match the existing building where possible. The alterations to windows and doors are also not considered to impact on the character and appearance of the building.
- 7.11 Subject to a condition that the materials match the existing building, the proposal would have a minor positive impact on the existing building with a

negligible visual impact on the wider area. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policies DM1, P1, P2 and P3 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

Impact on living conditions of neighbouring properties

- 7.12 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF advises that planning decisions should always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy requires that proposals do not adversely affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy. Also, impacts including noise, air, dust, light and odour pollution are required to be mitigated where necessary. Further to the above, are the considerations of the Councils Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 'Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development' which states that new developments '*should be carefully designed to protect the amenity of the occupants of adjoining properties*'.

Privacy, overshadowing and overbearing impact

- 7.13 The proposed extensions and infills are located to the north of the site which is the furthest side of the building to the closest residential properties. As such, these extensions and infills are not considered to impact on the neighbouring residential properties in terms of loss of privacy, overshadowing or overbearing effects.

External lighting, noise and disturbance

- 7.14 The proposal includes the replacement of all external lighting on the building and within the site itself and a concern has been raised in regard to light spill affecting neighbouring properties. The site boundary is screened by trees, and the application has been submitted with a lighting illuminance layout plan and an external lighting layout although no specifications of the actual lighting has been submitted. These plans have been reviewed by the Council's Street

Lighting Officer who has recommended a condition be attached to the decision to ensure the lighting design protects residents and amenities against intrusive light.

- 7.15 A large number of objections have been received in regard to the impact of increasing the number of residents at Leopold Court where it is stated that the current arrangement already impacts residents in respect of noise, disturbance, anti-social behaviour, crime, impacts on residential amenity and safety. As mentioned previously, the original planning permission did not place any restriction on the number of occupants and therefore, had the current application not included the three small extensions and infills and external alterations, the internal re-configuration could have been undertaken without planning permission. Greater Manchester Police were consulted as part of the application but have not made any comments. Officers acknowledge the comments made by residents however, the building and its use has long been established and the development will deliver much needed primary emergency and short-term accommodation that enables the Council to meet statutory and mandatory homelessness duties. The proposals will also offer a modernised facility with additional staffing and improved service offer.
- 7.16 Concerns have been raised that the external works and lighting could encourage greater use of the external areas late into the evening increasing noise. These comments are acknowledged however, it would be unreasonable to restrict the upgrading of an existing lighting system for this reason. The outdoor amenity space is a benefit to the residents of the building and it would be for the managers of the site to ensure the outside areas are used appropriately. Management of the site is covered at the end of the report.
- 7.17 In light of the above, it is considered that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the amenity of residents of neighbouring properties and the proposal accords with DM1 of the Core Strategy, the SPD and the NPPF.

Living conditions for future residents

- 7.18 The Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) is a technical standards document produced by the Government to ensure internal space within new dwellings is suitable for application across all tenures. Whilst not a standard formally adopted by the council it has been used more recently to seek to improve the size and quality of new homes in the borough and will become part of the council's adopted framework on adoption of PfE.
- 7.19 Although no new dwellings are being introduced, the NDSS states that a single bedroom should provide a floor area of at least 7.5m². The submitted plans show all the rooms exceed the NDSS for a single bedroom. The only bedroom that has no windows is the emergency bedroom which would not be considered appropriate for a permanent residence within a new home, however the specific nature of the accommodation being provided outweighs the limited outlook by the overall benefits of the accommodation by providing a safe refuge for vulnerable residents.

Highways and Parking

- 7.20 Policy T2 of the Core Strategy sets out that development and infrastructure proposals are required to satisfy the Council's accessibility hierarchy and, in all circumstances, the safety, accessibility and amenity of those who live or have business in the area will have priority, while providing reliable journey times for those travelling through. Developments are required to provide parking in compliance with the Council's Maximum Car Parking Standards as set out in Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy. Policy JP-C8 of PfE states that 'we will require new development to be located and designed to encourage walking, cycling and public transport use, to reduce the negative effects of car dependency, and help deliver high quality, attractive, liveable and sustainable environments'.
- 7.21 No changes are proposed to the existing parking on site where 10 car parking spaces and 1 disabled parking space are provided. The Council's Highways Officer has advised that the existing parking provision is acceptable and it would not operate any differently to at present. The site is located in a sustainable

location with good access to bus services on Bury Road and is within a 10-minute cycle or 20-minute walk from Rochdale Town Centre. As such staff and residents would have genuine options for accessing the site by sustainable modes of transport.

- 7.22 In light of the above, the proposal is considered acceptable and in accordance with Core Strategy Policy T2, PfE Policy JP-C8 and the NPPF.

Ground Conditions and Drainage

- 7.23 The site is identified on the RMBC and EA Landfill Records however, the Council's Environmental Protection (Land) officer has advised that given the historic works undertaken in the development of the site, there are no concerns with this proposal and no further assessments are required. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy G9 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.
- 7.24 The Council's Drainage & Flooding Officer raised no objection and advised that given the minor nature of the proposals it is assumed that any drainage will be discharged into the existing infrastructure. Officers therefore consider that the proposed development would accord with Policy G8 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-S4 of PfE and the NPPF.

Landscaping and Ecology

- 7.25 Policy G6 establishes that development should protect and improve green spaces. Policy G7 of the Core Strategy requires developments to protect existing biodiversity including trees and vegetation. Policy JP-G8 of PfE states that 'through local planning and associated activities a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought'. The NPPF also requires the planning system to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.
- 7.26 There are trees around the boundary of the site, and the proposed development will not result in the removal of any trees. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment

(AIA) has been submitted which states that the proposed development will not result in any new Root Protection Area incursions. The proposed extensions and infills are to be constructed in areas of existing hard surfacing. A number of trees will require pruning. A condition will be imposed to ensure the Tree Protection Measures within the AIA are carried out.

- 7.27 The Council's Ecologist has reviewed the submitted information and advised that the site holds relatively little ecological value however, it has the potential to support roosting bats, nesting birds and hedgehogs. A condition will be imposed to ensure the works are carried out in line with the recommendations in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). A condition will also be included to ensure that the Precautionary Method of Works, including a sensitive lighting scheme, within the PEA (Section 4.2) is strictly followed during the works to safeguard any bats in the unlikely event that they are found.
- 7.28 Planning policy also encourages enhancements and net gains for biodiversity to be delivered through the planning system and this could include a bat and bird box onto the building. This matter can be dealt with by way of condition.
- 7.29 A statement has been provided by the ecologist to detail that the application meets the de minimus exemption for BNG. Officer's and the council's ecologist accept this position.
- 7.30 Taking the above into consideration, the development is considered to have an acceptable impact on landscaping and ecology and accords with Policy G6 and G7 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy.

Other matters

- 7.31 The application has generated a number of concerns from local residents which have either been addressed in the Representations section above or within the analysis of the application itself. There are some other matters however, which do not fit into the report sections above, but which are addressed below.

Current and future management arrangements

- 7.32 A number of objections have focused on the management arrangements, and the consequential impacts on neighbouring residents, raising concerns over how the premises will be managed with the increase in residents. As set out previously the works requiring planning permission make only a minor contribution to the increase in residents. Whilst the management of the facility is not directly a planning matter, the facility has provided an essential function for over three decades and has been provided in line with all necessary health and safety, building, and fire regulations, alongside an established risk and incident reporting process. The proposals will allow for modernisation of the facilities to ensure ongoing compliance with all relevant regulations and management procedures.

Conclusions

- 7.33 The proposed works to refurbish Leopold Court and to deliver an increased number of bed spaces through minor extensions and alterations is afforded great weight in the assessment of the application due to the high demand in the borough for this type of accommodation. As mentioned previously, the increase in the number of bed spaces would not have been required had it not been for the extensions and external alterations proposed. No technical matters have been considered to represent a barrier to the development proposals which are on balance supported and compliant with local and national policy.

Recommendation

GRANT subject to the following conditions:

1. The development must be begun not later than three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents hereby approved unless otherwise required by the conditions below:

Drawing No: 3000 Rev P01 – Site Location Plan

Drawing No: 3011 Rev P01 – Proposed Site Layout / Block Plan

Drawing No: 3110 Rev P01 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Drawing No: 3111 Rev P01 – Proposed First Floor Plan

Drawing No: 3112 Rev P01 – Proposed Roof Plan

Drawing No: 3210 Rev P01 – Proposed Building Elevations

Drawing No: 3310 Rev P01 – Proposed Building & Site Sections

Drawing No: 3500 Rev P01 = 3D Views – Existing & Proposed Building

Received on 4th December 2025

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. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used on the existing building.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and ensuring the new development responds positively to the local context and character in accordance with Policies DM1, P1, P2 and P3 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

4. Prior to first occupation of the development hereby approved, details of any external lighting shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The following details shall be provided:

- A detailed lighting layout;
- Any curfew hours applied and switching times of outdoor lighting to be included on the layout;
- Lux lines need to be shown clearly;
- A full lighting design, calculations, and detailed layout - providing details of lanterns, angle of lanterns, maintenance factors, mounting heights, exact locations of lanterns etc;
- Confirmation of lighting standards the private area has been lit to (BS5489, CIBSE etc.);
- Calculations showing compliance with ILE guidelines (GN01) for the control of intrusive lighting to Environmental Zone E3;
- Lux plots showing light spill onto surrounding areas to include 10, 5 and 1 lux levels;
- Source Intensity of lanterns should be considered for the proposed installation to ensure compliance with the requirements of GN01;
- All lighting calculations showing light spill and obtrusive light should be for worst case scenario, i.e., when the installation is first operational;
- If any complaints are received, the Maintaining Body should consider the fitting of shields to the lanterns in line with the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) "Guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light" - Environmental Zones.

This lighting scheme also needs to follow the recommendations set out in Section 4.3 of the Bat Survey Report by Collington Winter, Rev 001, Date:12/2025 to minimise impacts of lighting on bats.

The approved scheme shall thereafter be maintained and operated in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to protect the privacy and amenity of adjoining and future occupiers and enhance the appearance of the development in accordance with Policies DM1, G6 and G7 of the adopted Core Strategy.

5. Prior to the commencement of development, the erection of fencing for the protection of any retained tree or trees shall be undertaken in accordance with the Arboricultural Impact Assessment by SEED, Issue Date: 27th November 2025, Ref: 2045-AIA-V1-A, received by the Local Planning Authority on 4th December 2025 before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought on to the site. Such protection as required by the above condition shall be retained throughout the entire period of construction and until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. No materials, soil, rubbish or vehicles shall be deposited or stored in any area fenced in accordance with this condition and no fires shall be lit, and no raising or lowering of ground levels shall take place within this area. No drains, pits, ditches or trenches shall be dug in or run across the area protected by the fencing, at any time before, during and after the development of the site, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to ensure that retained trees are adequately protected, in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality in accordance with Policy G6 of the Rochdale Core Strategy.

6. The development shall be carried out in full accordance with the precautionary bat method statement as set out in section 4.2 of the approved Bat Survey Report by Collington Winter, Rev 001, Date:12/2025. Prior to occupation the development shall also incorporate bat boxes in line with section 4.2.2 of the same report which shall be retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interest of species protection and biodiversity enhancement in accordance with Policies G6 and G7 of the Rochdale Core Strategy, JP-G8 of PfE and the NPPF.

7. No development, earthworks or works of site clearance, preparation or machinery shall take place until the precautionary measures for hedgehogs as detailed in Section 4.3.10 of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report by Collington Winter, Rev 001, Date: 12/2025, received by the Local Planning Authority on 4th December 2025, have been put into place. These measures shall be adhered to throughout the entirety of the construction works.

Reason: In the interest of species protection, in accordance with the requirements of adopted Rochdale Core Strategy Policies G6 and G7 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. No works or vegetation clearance shall take place during the optimum period for bird nesting (1st March - 31st August inclusive) unless a pre-works nesting bird check has been carried out by an appropriately qualified ecologist no more than 48 hours prior to the commencement of works. If nesting activity is observed, the nest(s) should be left in situ until the young have fledged and any mitigation measures submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason - In order to protect wildlife from works that may impact on their habitats in accordance with Policy G7 of the Rochdale Core Strategy, JP-G8 of PfE and the National Planning Policy Framework.