

Officer Report

Case Reference: PL/2026/0105
Location: 69A, Church Street, Littleborough, OL15 8AE
Proposal: Change of use and conversion of existing office building (Use Class E) into 6-bedroom House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Sui Generis) with associated works including installation of 2no. windows to first floor front elevation, removal of security shutters/grilles and installation of cycle rack
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Bob Melling

SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

The application relates to no. 69A Church Street, a two storey, attached property located within the Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area. The property is a vacant office building set back from the main building line by approximately 11m. The front entrance is accessible from Church Street, although the building is not widely visible from Church Street. It is adjoined by nos. 69 and 71 Church Street to the north, no. 73 Church Street to the west and no. 65 Church Street to the east. The property also has a rear entrance on Queens Road with two off-street parking spaces located across Queens Road to the south. The rear elevation of the application property faces a large industrial unit occupied by 'AD Laser Cutting.' This unit is elevated above Queens Road and measures approximately 12m from the rear elevation of the application property. The surrounding area is characterised by a mixture of residential and commercial uses.

PROPOSAL

Permission is sought for the change of use from an office building (Class E) to a 6-bedroom, 8-person House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). Minimal external alterations are proposed such as the installation of two new windows and the removal of the security shutters and grilles from the existing windows and doors. The internal layout of the building would be reconfigured to provide an entrance, bathroom, bedroom, two storage areas, kitchen and living / dining room at ground floor level and a bathroom, shower room, WC and five bedrooms at first floor level. Two off-street parking spaces would be provided across Queens Road to the south along with a cycle rack and bin storage.

Accommodation Schedule

Bedroom 1 = 7.5sqm

Bedroom 2 = 9.3sqm

Bedroom 3 = 7.1sqm

Bedroom 4 = 6.6sqm

Bedroom 5 = 10.3sqm

Bedroom 6 = 13.6sqm

Kitchen = 12.3sqm

Living/Dining Room = 25.9sqm

RELEVANT PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT HISTORY

25/00983/FUL: Change of use and conversion of existing office building (Use Class E) into 7-bedroom House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Sui Generis) and associated works including removal of security shutters and grilles and installation of cycle rack. Refused (December 2025) for the following reason:

By reason of its design and relationship with neighbouring properties, the proposed HMO would fail to provide a satisfactory standard of amenity for future occupants. The standard of accommodation would be undermined through an unsatisfactory outlook, a lack of sufficient natural light and a loss of privacy by way of the ground floor bedroom windows being at street level, with passersby able to see directly into these rooms. As a result, the proposal would fail to comply with the requirements of the Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document, Policy DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-P1 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

07/D50150: Variation Of Condition 05 Of Planning Permission D48803 To Allow Opening Hours From 0800 To 2300 HRS Monday To Sunday Inclusive. Granted subject to conditions (February 2008).

07/D48803: Change Of Use From Workshop To Café. Granted subject to conditions (June 2007).

05/D46511: Change Of First Floor From Office To Dwelling. Granted subject to conditions (February 2006).

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Sub-Regional

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE):

JP-S1 Sustainable Development

JP-P1 Sustainable Places

JP-P2 Heritage

JP-C8 Transport Requirements of New Development

Local

Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

DM1 General Development requirements

SD1 Delivering sustainable development

SO2 Creating successful and healthy communities

C1 Delivering the right amount of housing in the right places

C3 Delivering the right type of housing

SO3 Improving design, image and quality of place

P2 Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

P3 Improving design of new development

SO4 Promoting a greener environment

G9 Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability

SO5 Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport

T2 Improving accessibility

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

G/S/1 Hierarchy and Role of Centres

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

PUBLICITY

Site Notice: 30.03.2026

Press Notice: 01.04.2026

Neighbour notification letters: 16.03.2026

Weekly List: 02.04.2026

ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

The application site is located within the Defined Urban Area (saved UDP policy G/D/1) which expects new development, where possible and appropriate, to be concentrated in the urban area. Additionally, CS policy C1 seeks to provide the right amount of homes in the right places, with a specific focus on regenerating inner areas and town centres.

Chapter 5 of the NPPF seeks to deliver a sufficient supply of homes, with paragraph 61 setting out that 'the overall aim should be to meet as much of an area's identified housing need as possible, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community'. Paragraph 63 states 'within this context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.'

The principle of an HMO at this highly sustainable location is considered to be acceptable given the existing mixture of both commercial and residential uses. HMOs provide an additional housing accommodation option that contributes towards housing requirements in the borough and in this instance would provide accommodation for 8 residents. As such the development is considered acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with other development management requirements, assessed below.

Accommodation Standards, Impact on Residential Amenity and Noise

Occupier Amenity

CS policy DM1 states that proposals need to demonstrate that they do not adversely affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy. Additionally, the NPPF advises that planning should always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

PfE policy JP-P1 requires all new development to be comfortable and inviting with indoor and outdoor environments that offer a high level of amenity that minimises exposure to pollution and addresses microclimate issues such as sunlight and shade (inter alia).

Any proposed change of use to an HMO must comply with the standards set out by the Council, including minimum standards for bedrooms, communal rooms and bathrooms/WCs. The Council's Housing Standards Officer has been consulted on the application and confirmed that all space standards, facilities and amenities have been met based on the plans provided. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed HMO would comply with the Council's HMO standards.

Under the previous application, significant concerns were raised with the proposed internal layout and the impact this would have on the living conditions of future occupiers. It is noted that amendments have been made to overcome the previous reason for refusal, in particular the number of bedrooms has been reduced to six and the living room has been re-located to the ground floor. The communal living space (including the kitchen) comprises 38.2 sqm, which would constitute a 4.2sqm uplift on the refused scheme. Furthermore, the communal living / dining room would benefit from two front elevation windows, which would provide improved natural light and outlook. Overall, it is considered that the communal living spaces would provide occupants of the HMO with a comfortable and inviting space of a functional layout.

To accommodate the proposed first floor bedroom measuring 13.6 sqm, it is noted that two windows would be installed on the front elevation facing north. This bedroom would also benefit from an existing rooflight. Given the proximity of the front elevation of the application property to the rear elevation of no. 69 Church Street, it is noted that the amount of natural light received by the proposed bedroom would be limited compared with the rear-facing bedrooms. Notwithstanding, it is acknowledged that one of the proposed windows would benefit from a direct line of sight between nos. 63 and 69 Church Street, overlooking the public highway. Given this factor and considering that the bedroom would benefit from three windows, it is considered that future occupants of the bedroom would benefit from an acceptable standard of amenity. This is supported by the aforementioned improvements made to the communal living areas.

It is noted that concerns were raised under the previous application regarding the level of privacy afforded to the ground floor bedrooms due to the position of the windows at street level directly overlooking the road. Under the current application, only one bedroom is proposed at ground floor level, however it is noted on the proposed plans that this window would be fitted with privacy film. The installation and retention of one-way privacy film for this window can be secured by planning condition.

Paragraph 198 of the NPPF seeks to ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment. In this context, planning decisions should avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life. CS policy G9 also requires that new development does not have impacts that lead to an unacceptable increase in noise pollution.

The application property is sited in close proximity to a number of retail and industrial uses and thus may be subject to potential noise impacts. A Noise Impact Assessment, which includes mitigation measures, has been submitted in support of the application. The Council's Environmental Health Officer was consulted under the previous application and raised no objections to the proposed development subject to the implementation of the recommended mitigation measures prior to occupation.

The proposed development would be provided with an outdoor amenity space; however, this is only adequate for car parking, cycle storage and bin storage. Due to the site's town centre location, it is acknowledged that there are other opportunities to access outdoor public amenity spaces.

Privacy and Overlooking/Overbearing Impacts

Given the position and location of the windows, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any overlooking or overbearing effects that would be detrimental to the living conditions of the neighbouring residents. It is noted that there is an upper floor window to the rear of no. 69 Church Street that directly faces the front elevation of the application property, however this window is obscurely glazed.

Noise Disturbance

The level of noise and disturbance from up to 8 additional residents is considered negligible within the existing context and would not give rise to any harm to local amenity. Management of the property would be controlled through separate legislation in respect of management and licensing of HMOs which sits outside of the planning system.

Summary

Taken overall, the proposal is not considered to unduly impact on the amenity of the occupants of existing residential properties. Furthermore, the amendments made to the internal layout and installation of two windows to the front elevation would ensure that future occupants of the HMO would be provided with a suitable living environment, in accordance with PfE policy JP-P1, CS policy DM1, the SPD and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Impact on Character and Appearance

The application site is located to the rear of Church Street within the Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area. It is a red brick building, which appears to be late 20th century in appearance, however it may have replaced an earlier 19th century building.

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas. NPPF chapter 16, PfE policy JP-P2 and CS policy P2 also apply. Conservation Areas are key heritage assets for the purposes of CS policy P2. This policy seeks to conserve, enhance and promote these assets.

The proposal is for the conversion of the existing building into a 6-bedroom HMO. External changes include the installation of two front elevation windows, the removal of the existing security shutters and grilles, and the installation of a new cycle rack.

There are no heritage objections to the principle of the proposed use. The removal of the security shutters and grilles would have a positive impact on the building. No concerns are had regarding the design of the proposed cycle rack, which would not be considered a visually intrusive addition, and details of the proposed windows and bin store can be secured by condition.

Overall, the design of the proposal is considered to be acceptable and would have a neutral impact on the significance of the Conservation Area. Therefore, the proposal accords with CS policies DM1, P2 and P3, PfE policies JP-P1 and JP-P2, and the NPPF.

Highways and Parking

CS policy DM1 requires development proposals to provide satisfactory vehicular access with adequate parking, manoeuvring, and servicing arrangements taking into account the proposed use and location.

The application site is in a highly sustainable location in Littleborough Town Centre with local amenities and public transport provisions within walking distance. Notwithstanding, the submitted plans indicate the provision of two off-street parking spaces which would be adequate for the proposed use. The development would also provide space for cycles to be stored, enabling future occupants to utilise alternative modes of active travel.

Bin storage would be provided across Queens Road to the south of the application property in a convenient location for future occupants. No concerns are had regarding the servicing arrangements for the proposed use, which are expected to take place much the same as they do for neighbouring residential properties.

Taking the above matters into consideration, the proposed development is in accordance with CS policies DM1 and T2, PfE policy JP-C8 and the relevant requirements of the SPD and the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to the following conditions:

SUMMARY OF THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

N/A

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways

No comments received at time of writing.

Conservation

Summary: No objections.

Environmental Health (Noise)

Summary of comments submitted under previous application: No objections to submitted Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) subject to implementation of mitigation measures prior to occupation.

Strategic Housing

All bedrooms meet the requirement of 6.5m² for single rooms. If you wish to use the 2 larger bedrooms as doubles, they would need to be 10.2m². One of the bedrooms on the plan is measuring 10.3m², therefore we may need to measure this in person to confirm with it being so close.

We would be happy to accept kitchen/living/diner based on the total communal space.

I can also confirm the personal washing provisions have also been met.

PROCEDURAL STATEMENT

Article 35 Declaration

Officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with the planning application. No significant problems have arisen during the consideration of this application, and the application has been determined in a timely manner, in accordance with the policies with the Development Plan.

Human Rights and Public Sector Equality Duty

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken into account in the processing of the application and the preparation of this report. In particular, Article 6 (1), of the European Convention on Human Rights in relation civil rights and a fair hearing; Article 8 of the ECHR in relation to the right to respect for private and family life and Article 1 Protocol 1 of the ECHR in relation to the protection of property have all been taken into account.

In addition, the Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination in respect of certain protected characteristics namely: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, or beliefs and sex and sexual orientation. It places the Local Planning Authority under a legal duty to have due regard to the

advancement of equality in the exercise of its powers including planning powers. Officers have taken this into account in the assessment of the application. In particular due regard has been afforded to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Officers are satisfied that the application material and Officers' assessment has taken into account these issues.

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 benefit the community as a whole.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

Condition(s) (8)

- 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 permission relates to the following plans:

- Drawing No: Ex03. Revision A – Existing Plans and elevations
- Drawing No: P05. Revision C – Proposed Plans and elevations
- Drawing No: P06. Revision B – Proposed First Floor Plan
- Drawing No: P07. Revision C – Proposed Location and Site Plan

and the development shall be carried out in accordance with these drawings hereby approved unless otherwise required by the conditions below.

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

- 3 The materials used in the carrying out of any repair works to the exterior of the building as a result of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the construction of the exterior of the existing building in colour, form, type, size and texture.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring a satisfactory visual appearance to the development and to safeguard the character of the Conservation Area, in accordance with Policies P2, P3 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 4 No development shall take place until full product specifications for the windows including detailed designs of the window reveals, at a scale of not less than 1:50, to be used on the development hereby approved, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. For the avoidance of doubt, the submitted details shall also include a product specification for the privacy film shown on drawing number P05 revision C. The windows and privacy film shall be installed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the building hereby approved.

Reason: In the interests of visual and occupier amenity, and to safeguard the character of the Conservation Area, in accordance with Policies P2, P3 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 5 The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until such time as details for the design of refuse/recycling bin store has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The duly approved scheme shall be installed in complete accordance and made available for use prior to the approved development first being brought into use. The approved refuse and recycling scheme shall be retained as constructed for its intended use thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring a satisfactory visual appearance to the development and to safeguard the character of the Conservation Area, in accordance with Policies P2, P3 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 6 Prior to first occupation of the HMO hereby approved, the cycle racks shall be implemented fully in accordance with those details shown on the approved plans and thereafter retained for use by occupiers of the HMO at all times.

Reason: In order to encourage travel by sustainable alternatives to private vehicle in accordance with Policy T2 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy.

- 7 The development hereby approved shall be constructed in accordance with the noise mitigation measures set out within the submitted 'Noise Impact Assessment' (Project No: 22488) prepared by Enevo and dated 15/09/2025. No part of the development shall be occupied until such time as a verification report has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to confirm that the approved ventilation and acoustic measures have been implemented to achieve the required maximum noise levels. The noise attenuation measures shall be retained as installed thereafter.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of residents in order to comply with the requirements of Policies G9 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-P1 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 8 The development hereby approved shall be for use by a maximum of 8 residents only and the communal kitchen and living / dining room as shown on approved drawing number P05 revision C shall be retained for communal use for so long as the property remains in use as an HMO.

Reason: To ensure that an adequate standard of amenity and living space is provided for the residents in accordance with Policy DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-H3 of PfE, the SPD and the NPPF.

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 (1)

- 1 The applicant is advised that this property will require licensing. Please contact the Landlord Licensing Team via landlordlicensing@rochdale.gov.uk
- 2 The applicant is advised that as the property is located on an un-adopted road care should be taken to ensure that the road is not damaged and any damage that may be caused need to be rectified.

