

APPLICATION NUMBER: 24/01022/FUL

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	CASE OFFICER	DATE
24/01022/FUL	Nick Brookman	29 November 2024

DETERMINATION DATE

9 December 2024

Address: 27-29 Long Street, Middleton, Rochdale, M24 6TE

Proposal: Change of use from a vacant former bank premises Use Class E(c)(i) to a place of worship Use Class F1(f)

PUBLICITY	Weekly list expired?	Y	Site notice expired?	Y
	Neighbour letters expired?	Y	Press Notice expired?	Y

DELEGATION	Significant departure from local plan?	N	Contrary to national policy?	N
	Applicant a Council Member or officer?	N	Contrary to previous decision?	N
	Major with 10 or more objections and recommending approval?	N	Called in or Planning Panel objection?	N

COMMENTS	Planning Panel comments received?	N
	Neighbour comments received?	Y

EIA	Screening opinion completed and saved to Onbase?	N
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CONDITIONS	Pre-commencement conditions proposed?	N
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	N

RECOMMENDATION	GRANT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS
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CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: LA DATE: 05.12.24

SITE

The application relates to 27-29 Long Street, an end-of-terrace two-storey commercial property in Middleton Town Centre most recently occupied by Barclays Bank. The building is situated within the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area, although does not fall within the setting of any buildings recognised as designated, or non-designated heritage assets.

The site is accessed from Long Street to the front of the existing building and vehicular access is provided to the rear via Water Street.

The surrounding environment consists of many different town centre uses comprising of banks, betting shops, public houses, convenience stores, barbers, estate agents and takeaways.

The building was constructed in the mid-1980s from multi-toned, orange brick and features a mansard roof form. The front facing elevation of the ground floor contains six arched panels of glazing. The three furthest window openings to the northeast are identical in size and incorporate a stall riser, (in facing brickwork), below; approximately 0.5m in height. The glazing within the three panels towards the southern corner of the building nearly reaches floor level and the central panel incorporates a set of double doors that act as the entrance and exit to the premises. The first floor contains five windows with a strong vertical emphasis, which are spaced apart by an equal distance.

PROPOSAL

The applicant, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, proposes the change of use of the existing building from its vacant former bank premises Use Class E(c)(i) to a place of worship Use Class F1(f). No external alterations are proposed.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

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:

JP-S1	Sustainable Development
JP-P1	Sustainable Places
JP-P2	Heritage
JP-P3	Cultural Facilities

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

SD1	Delivering sustainable development
DM1	General development requirements

SO2 Creating successful and healthy communities

C8	Improving community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities
SO3	Improving design, image and quality of place
P2	Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
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
BE/17	New Development Affecting Conservation Areas
BE/18	Changes of Use to Buildings in Conservation Areas

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

83/D16120	Outline application for two storey office building – Approved.
84/D17417	Construction of two storey building for use as bank premises – Approved.
91/D26619	Installation of second automatic cash dispenser – Approved.
00/A5015	One externally illuminated fascia sign and one internally illuminated projecting sign – Approved.
05/D46120	Installation of external condenser unit – Approved.
10/D53323	Replacement of existing window opening with fire exit door to rear elevation of building including relocation of existing bollards – Approved.
12/55666	Installation of one internally illuminated fascia sign, one internally illuminated projecting sign, one non-illuminated ATM surround and one non-illuminated wall mounted sign to front elevation of premises – Approved.
12/56241	Replace existing glazed entrance doors to front elevation with new solid hardwood doors within existing metal frame – Approved.
22/00782/FUL	Alteration to existing shopfront including removal of fascia signage, removal of ATM and reinstatement of windows – Approved.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Environmental Health (Noise)

No objection subject to condition.

Highways

No objections.

Heritage

No objections.

REPRESENTATIONS

25 Letters of notification were sent to neighbouring properties and a site notice was placed in the vicinity of the application site. 51 objections have been received which predominantly raised the following comments:

- ☐ Overdevelopment of number of places of worship in Middleton
- ☐ Insufficient parking available to accommodate the development
- ☐ Inappropriate development for the proposed location
- ☐ Would result in increased traffic
- ☐ Noise

A significant number of objections suggested that the building should and could be better used under an alternative use. Officers can confirm that the building is not Council owned and it is instead privately owned. In determining the planning application the Council can only assess the application before it against both local and national planning policies. It cannot choose the future use of the building.

ANALYSIS

Principle of Development

The application site is located within the Defined Urban Area as designated under the Proposals Map of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP). New development, wherever possible and appropriate, should be concentrated within the urban area in order to support urban regeneration and to protect the countryside. The application site is also located within Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area.

Policy C8 of the adopted Core Strategy sets out that the Council will support and promote the provision of better community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities and the Council will follow a sequential approach provided the facilities are of a type and scale appropriate to the size of the settlement, are accessible and support the Council's objectives. In this instance, of relevance is point b, which requires facilities serving towns to be located in or adjacent to town centres or local centres, or highly accessible locations.

In addition, Policy JP-P3 of PfE states that '*we will proactively develop and support cultural businesses and attraction in our cities and towns through a range of measures*'. One of these measures (2) includes supporting the development of new cultural venues in town centres and places with good public transport connectivity. As well as (5) considering the use of vacant properties and land for pop-ups or meanwhile uses for cultural and creative activities during the day and at night-time to stimulate vibrancy and viability and promote diversity in town centres.

Paragraph 97 of the NPPF sets out that '*to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural*

buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments’.

Paragraph 123 of the NPPF sets out that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. More specifically, paragraph 124 (c) states that *‘planning policies and decisions should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land’.*

The application is submitted by the Redeemed Christian Church of God and purely comprises a change of use of the vacant building to a place of worship on previously developed land in an existing former bank building, on a sustainable site which would wholly accord with both local and national planning policies. The Core Strategy provides strong policy support for developments of this nature that are located in accessible locations such as town centres and this location is highly accessible.

The supporting policy text to CS Policy C8 recognises that facilities such as the one proposed here are vital to local communities and provide the services needed for a good quality of life which also help to promote community cohesion.

The site is located within the Middleton Town Centre and Middleton Town Conservation Area and given the surrounding land uses and proposed development, it is considered that the principle of development for a place of worship is acceptable and in accordance with the NPPG and the requirements of Policy C8 of the Core Strategy and Policy JP-P3 of PfE.

Noise, Impact on Surrounding Land Uses & Residential Amenity

Policies DM1 and G9 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy seek to ensure that new development is compatible with surrounding land uses, both in terms of its impact upon those uses and the impact of the surrounding land uses upon the amenities of future residents / users, also requiring that development does not have impacts that lead to an unacceptable increase in air, water, noise, light or other pollution. Additionally, policy DM1 of the Core Strategy requires that proposals should not adversely affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy.

Paragraph 180 of the NPPF also states that planning policies and decisions should 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, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. Paragraph 135 also seeks to ensure that planning decisions create places which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

The site is located within an existing well established town centre location. There are no residential properties within close proximity of the site which would be adversely affected by the proposed development and it is not considered that any additional traffic movements into and around the site would be so great as to create unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance above and beyond the existing circumstances surrounding the application site.

Environmental Health were consulted on the application and they have no objections in principle subject to the inclusion of a condition prohibiting the provision of any external speakers.

Accordingly, subject to condition it is considered that the proposal would be in accordance with the requirements of CS Policy G9.

For the above reasons it is considered that the proposal would be in accordance with the amenity requirements of CS Policies DM1 and G9 and the SPD.

Heritage

The Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area surrounds the building to the north, east and south. The overall Conservation Area covers over sixteen hectares in the northern part of the town centre and is aligned around the north-south axis of Long Street.

In its pre-existing state, the building was considered to have a neutral impact on the significance of the Middleton Town Centre Conservation due to an absence of any significance in its age, architecture, or historically, although broadly adhering to the form, massing and material palette of surrounding buildings.

The Council's Conservation Officer was consulted on this application and they have commented that on the basis that no changes are proposed to the external fabric of the building, it is considered that the proposed development would have a neutral impact on the significance of the Conservation Area.

As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in respect of its appearance and impact on the character of the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area. Where no harm to the character of the Conservation Area is identified, no balancing act otherwise required by the NPPF is necessary, and the proposals would therefore accord with the requirements of Policies P2 and P3 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Highways

Highways were consulted on this application and they raised no objection given the highly sustainable location of the application site. Accordingly, the proposed development is acceptable and would comply with DM1 and T2 of the Core Strategy, PfE and NPPF.

Ecology and Trees

Core Strategy Policy G7 sets out that it is expected that development proposals will protect and include existing biodiversity and take opportunities to promote biodiversity and create new habitats using landscaping and building and construction features wherever possible. CS Policy G7 requires that no development should result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity.

PfE Policy JP-G9 seeks to deliver a net enhancement of biodiversity resources through a collective of measures which are broadly aligned with the approach to BNG outlined within the Environment Act (2021), the NPPF and supporting guidance documents. The provisions of the Environment Act in respect of BNG are now a statutory requirement for planning applications but given the urban and built environment on and around the application site, it is acknowledged that this site does not impact any biodiversity and the site has a completely sealed surface and therefore has a biodiversity value of **zero**.

Accordingly, it is not considered that the statutory requirement to provide 10% BNG is applicable here.

Drainage and Flood Risk

The proposed development does not break any ground and it purely comprises a change of use. The development therefore would not increase or re-direct surface water elsewhere and Officers consider that the proposed development would accord with policy G8 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-S4 of PfE and the NPPF.

Conclusion

The proposed development purely comprises a change of use to a place of worship on previously developed land in an existing former bank building, on a sustainable site which would wholly accord with both local and national planning policies. The Core Strategy provides strong policy support for developments of this nature that are located in accessible locations such as town centres and this location is highly accessible.

The proposal would therefore be acceptable in terms of impacts on design, residential amenity, highways safety and access arrangements, flood risk and drainage arrangements, ecology and biodiversity and heritage. For these reasons the proposal would comprise sustainable development because it complies with the development plan, and accordingly the application is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

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. This permission relates to the following plans and documents:

- Location Plan Drawing No MH1434-100
- Site Plan Drawing No MH1434-101
- Floor Plans Drawing No MH1434-102
- Heritage Statement Referenced MH1434/E Dated October 2024

The development shall be carried out in accordance with these drawings and documents hereby approved unless otherwise required by condition 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 saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan, Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. No external speakers must be externally placed around the exterior of the entire building for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To protect the amenity of the surrounding town centre location in accordance with Policy G9 of the Rochdale Core Strategy.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition (biodiversity gain condition) that development may not begin unless:

- a. A Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority,

and;
- b. The planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan, if one is required in respect of this permission would be Rochdale Council.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because one or more of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements in the list below is/are considered to apply.

1. The Development is below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:
 - ii) does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006);

and;
 - iii) impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

Procedure Statement

The proposal complies with the development plan and would improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. It therefore comprises sustainable development and the Local Planning Authority worked proactively to issue the decision without delay.

Notes for the Applicant

The planning permission hereby granted does not grant or imply consent for any advertisements. A separate application under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 maybe required for the installation of any advertisements in the future.

