

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.	CASE OFFICER	DATE
25/00520/FUL	Hamish Rigg	19/08/2025

Address: Capitol Car Wash, Whitworth Road, Rochdale, OL12 6ER

Proposal: Retrospective application for the erection of an enlarged canopy to replace the previous smaller canopy.

PUBLICITY	Weekly list expired?	Y	Site notice expired?	
	Neighbour letters expired?	y	Press Notice expired?	n/a

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?	N

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

RECOMMENDATION	Refuse
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CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: RK

DATE: 01/09/2025

SITE

The application relates to a carwash site on Whitworth Road on the outskirts of Rochdale town centre. The site comprises a large metal canopy structure, a metal storage container and a tarmacked forecourt. Whitworth Road is a key transport route linking the town centre to the northern suburbs and includes residential, commercial and retail units.

The site faces north-east towards Whitworth Road, with the canopy separated from the pavement by the forecourt. It borders a Tesco carpark to the south-east, and to the south, west and north-west, the site is bound by an area of cleared grassland accessed via Bentley Street to the south. The cleared grassland is the subject of application 24/00993/FUL for the erection of two apartment blocks.

PROPOSAL

Retrospective permission is sought for the erection of a large metal canopy structure accommodating a car wash and associated equipment. The structure is open and the front and the roof slopes downwards to the rear. It comprises grey corrugated metal sheets fixed to a metal frame.

At the front the canopy measures 4.3m (height) X 27m (width) and at the rear it measures 3.7m (height) X 23m (width), with a total depth of 11m.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Places for Everyone

JP-P1 Sustainable development

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

P2 Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

P3 Improving design of new development

T2 Improving accessibility

DM1 General development requirements

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

None

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways - 14/07/2025:

No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

Notification letters were sent to neighbouring properties, and a site notice was displayed; no objections were raised.

ANALYSIS

Design & Amenity:

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Paragraph 135 goes on to state that planning decisions should ensure that new developments are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, materiality, layout, and landscaping and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment. Paragraph 139 reads that development that is not well designed should be refused.

Furthermore, PfE policy JP-P1 requires all new development to respect and acknowledge the character and identity of the locality in terms of design, siting, scale and materials used. Policies P3 and DM1 of the Council's adopted Core Strategy requires development proposals to adhere to high quality design and enhance the borough's identity and sense of place, by respecting context where it is positive and having regard to the scale, density, massing, height, layout, landscape, materials and access of surrounding buildings and areas in general.

The application is for a large metal canopy structure, comprising grey corrugated metal sheets fixed to a metal frame. The main concern with the design of the canopy is its appearance from Bentley Street and the visual harm to the street scene.

The canopy is located approximately 40m north of the pavement on Bentley Street, separated by a vacant site which is sparsely vegetated. It is easily visible from Bentley Street as it is elevated well above street level and also exceeds the height of the existing fence by 2.4m, and is completely unobscured.

Its considerable size, visual prominence, and use of corrugated metal sheeting make the canopy an imposing and incongruous feature within the landscape. The poor-quality materials contribute to a dilapidated appearance, and the structure's utilitarian design fails to integrate with the residential character of Bentley Street, resulting in a negative impact on the area's visual amenity.

Bentley Street is primarily composed of residential dwellings, with the presence of mature trees and grass verges contributing to its established residential character. As such, the industrial appearance of the canopy provides a harmful juxtaposition to the red brick houses and greenery of Bentley Street. It is acknowledged that Continental Motors and Tesco represent examples of utilitarian structures. However, compared to the canopy, the former is considerably smaller in scale and neater in appearance, whilst the latter is less visually prominent and is obscured by a taller fence.

It is noted that the site which has been cleared to the south of the installed canopy is subject to Planning Application ref. 24/00993/FUL which seeks to deliver 2no apartment blocks comprising 23no. units. The plans supporting this application indicate the positioning of a block to the rear of the canopy which is the subject of this application. This site has a longstanding planning history demonstrating the suitability of residential development, whilst also being identified within the Council's SHLAA (site ref. SH

1969). In acknowledging the 'Real Prospect' test established within the Gambone v SSCLG case, it is a matter of planning judgement to determine the appropriate weight to afford to this live application, however, given the well-established principle of development, the absence of any obvious constraints which would prevent delivery, it can still be considered that the proposals within this application do have more than a theoretical chance of being implemented and therefore form a material consideration in the determination of this application.

In acknowledging this, it can be reasonably assumed that the site to the south of the installed canopy would be redeveloped to positively contribute towards the character and appearance of the local area which would only serve to further highlight the incongruity of the canopy. This land would inevitably see a greater degree of pedestrian movements within it in much closer proximity to the development which is the subject of this application, and thus, would be more visible and harmful to the general visual amenity of the area, including being an obtrusive and overbearing feature on any private or public spaces established below the canopy.

For the avoidance of doubt, there are no design concerns with the canopy when viewed from Whitworth Road. The application site and the adjacent Tesco Express create an immediate commercial character which is suitable for a metal canopy structure. Furthermore, the open frontage and set back from the pavement ensure that the canopy is not visually overbearing.

Yet overall, the appearance of the canopy is considered to be unduly harmful to the character and appearance of Bentley Street due to its siting, scale and materiality. It does not integrate with its surroundings, appearing imposing and incongruous on the landscape. The canopy, therefore, fails to comply with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework in respect of the need for development to be well-designed, Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document, and Policy P3 of the Rochdale Core Strategy.

Highways:

Core strategy Policy DM1 states that all development proposals should provide satisfactory vehicular access with adequate parking, manoeuvring, and servicing arrangements taking into account of the proposed use and location.

The Council's Highways Officer has been consulted and raised no objection to the canopy, stating that it has no detrimental impact on highways safety. The development is therefore acceptable in accordance with the NPPF, and policies DM1 and T2 of the Core Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse:

1. By virtue of its siting, scale and materiality the canopy represents an imposing and incongruous feature, harmful to the character and appearance of Bentley Street. Its dilapidated and utilitarian appearance fails to assimilate with its surroundings and is detrimental to visual amenity of the area. The development therefore fails to comply with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and Policy P3 of the Rochdale Core Strategy.

Procedure statement

The proposal would not improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area nor does it comply with the development plan and therefore does not comprise sustainable development. There were no amendments to the scheme, or conditions which could reasonably have been imposed, which could have made the development acceptable and it was therefore not possible to approve the application.

Notes for Applicant:

For the avoidance of doubt, this decision relates to the following plans:

- Current elevations: 03
- Current site plans: 01
- Site location plan: 02