

APPLICATION NUMBER: 24/00056/FUL

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.

24/00056/FUL

CASE OFFICER

Tom Hiles

DETERMINATION DATE 12.07.2024 EXT OF TIME 26.11.2025

Address: The Wood Yard Pilsworth Road Heywood Rochdale OL10 2TA

Proposal: Retrospective planning permission for the change of use to Class B8 (storage and distribution) and installation of a concrete platform, erection of modular units with ancillary offices along with vehicle parking, servicing, external storage, fencing, landscaping and associated works.

PUBLICITY	Weekly list expired?	Y	Site notice expired?	Y
	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/A
	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	Approve
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CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: AC DATE: 26.11.2025

SITE

The application site is located in an industrial and business park on the east side of Pilsworth Road in Heywood. The site is generally surrounded by similar uses, with the closest residential dwellings located around 90m to the north on the far side of a wooded area and a railway line.

The site lies within a primary employment zone as designated by saved UDP policy EC/2, a development site within the employment zones (designated by EC/8) and is otherwise within the defined urban area.

The application notes that the site was previously used by a timber merchant since around 2014. This appears to have occupied a wider area including land extending to the east of the application site, and it appears this operation has now been consolidated into the remaining eastern portion of this land.

The site forms part of a wider area subject of permissions in the 1990s for development of industrial units and storage and distribution units. These permissions were implemented with the development of the existing units immediately surrounding the site. A small gas-powered energy reserve plant (subject of a more recent permission) is located at the immediate east of the site.

Commencing at some point in 2023 the site was developed without planning permission to operate as a traffic management depot. This comprised:

- ☐ The construction of a flat concrete plinth across the site, which is elevated above street level at the north-west corner due to changes in the natural ground levels. The surface of the plinth is laid out to provide HGV parking and equipment storage, and this forms the majority of the site area.
- ☐ Creation of a new vehicular access point from the estate service road
- ☐ Two sets of site cabins, one and two storeys in height, and a storage shelter, arranged around the south-west corner of the site adjacent to Pilsworth Road
- ☐ The plinth is enclosed by black mesh fencing and gates around the north, west and south sides of the site

The operation of the depot had commenced, thereby changing the use of the site, by the time of the officer's site visit in June 2024.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks retrospective permission for the retention of the completed operational development and continuation of the use of the site as the depot.

Additional details were submitted during determination to address concerns in relation to the accuracy of the originally submitted plans to the situation on the ground (due to works progressing on-site), and in response to concerns with the appearance of the completed development, specifically the appearance of sides of the raised concrete plinth from outside the site.

Additional details about the drainage arrangements installed during construction of the plinth were also submitted in response to queries from the drainage/flood risk officer.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

Places for Everyone (PfE)

A strategic plan for Greater Manchester city region. It seeks to guide strategic housing and employment developments across the region. This Plan also sets up-to-date housing requirements and allocations for each district.

Strategic Objectives

Objective 6 Promote the sustainable movement of people, goods and information.

Sustainable and Resilient Places

JP-S1 Sustainable Development
JP-S4 Flood Risk and the Water Environment
JP-S5 Clean Air

Greener Places

JP-G6 Urban Green Space
JP-G8 A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Connected Places

JP-C1 An Integrated Network
JP-C8 Transport Requirements of New Development

Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) 2016

The Core Strategy sets out local strategic and development management policies for Rochdale Borough, and should be read alongside PfE.

Spatial Strategy

SD1 Delivering sustainable development
SP1 Rochdale Borough's role in the city region
SP2 The Spatial Strategy for the borough
SP3/H The Strategy for Heywood

Delivering a more prosperous economy (SO2)

E2 Increasing jobs and prosperity

Improving design, image and quality of place (SO3)

P1 Improving image
P2 Protecting and Enhancing Character, Landscape and heritage
P3 Improving design of new development

Promoting a greener environment (SO4)

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, contamination and land instability

Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport (SO5)

T1 Delivering sustainable transport
T2 Improving accessibility

A majority of the relevant UDP policies have been superseded by the CS and PfE, except for the following:

EC/2	Primary Employment Zones
EM/7	Development and Flood risk
EM/8	Protection of Surface and Ground Water

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

18/01320/FUL – Construction of a gas powered energy reserve plant (2no. 2MW generators) with associated infrastructure, landscaping, perimeter fencing and provision of new vehicular access. Approved with conditions, 03/05/2019 (*land adjacent to the application site, previously forming part of the 'Wood Yard' site*)

00/D37454 - Erection Of Class B1/B8 Industrial/Storage Unit With Ancillary Offices. Approved with conditions, 13/03/2000

98/D35716 - Erection Of Two Storage And Distribution Units (Class B8) With Offices And Associated Car,Lorry And Trailer Parking And Landscaping. Approved with conditions, 14/10/1998

96/D33705 - Erection Of A Storage And Distribution Depot With Offices Vehicle Maintenance Bay Vehicle Wash Derv Station And Associated Car Lorry And Trailer Parking And Landscaping. Approved with conditions, 17/12/1996

94/D30254 - Erection Of Industrial Unit. Approved with conditions, 31/05/1994

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways

No objections

Environmental Health - Noise/Odours

No comments

Lead Local Flood Authority/Drainage

Finalised comments (04.09.2025):

I have reviewed the Technical Note and associated infiltration testing report.

I concur that traditional soakaways are unlikely to be viable for this site.

The initial portion of the curves from the testing would suggest that some diffuse infiltration may be viable and if this was a normal application rather than a retrospective one then we would be seeking to maximise this potential.

However, the benefits of retro fitting may not be realised and therefore the application is considered to have delivered what is can under the circumstances.

Environmental Control (Landfill Gas)

No objections in light of retrospective nature of application

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit

We have no concerns with this application. It looks like there was a small amount of vegetation cleared along the boundaries at some point last year or this but some green space has been incorporated into the design.

- ☐ Protected species can turn up in unexpected places and the granting of planning permission does not negate the need to abide by the laws which are in place to safeguard biodiversity. An informative should be used so that the applicant is aware that they must seek ecological advice should they find or suspect that the proposals will impact on protected species.
- ☐ Work that will impact on habitats where nesting birds may be present (for example demolition of a building or works to trees and other vegetation including undergrowth like bramble), should not be undertaken in the main bird nesting season (March – August) unless suitable checks for active bird nests have been undertaken.
- ☐ Planning policy encourages enhancements and net gains for biodiversity to be delivered through the planning system. Wherever possible measures to enhance the site for biodiversity should be secured as part of this planning application.

REPRESENTATIONS

The application was publicised by site notices placed in the vicinity of the site in June 2024 and neighbour notification letters issued in May 2024. Repeat notification letters were issued in August 2024 following clarification of the description of the development and updated plans. An updated site notice was also posted in August 2024.

No public comments have been received.

ANALYSIS

Principal of Development

The application indicates that the use of the site as a traffic management depot falls under the range of uses permitted under the historical permissions, as implemented by the previous use of the site as a timber merchant's depot, comprising a storage and distribution use. However, given the lack of detail as to the nature of the operation of the previous use and its informal character, it is unclear whether the previous permission should be considered to have been enacted on this site and therefore whether any such uses under the earlier permissions are subject of a relevant approval.

As such it is considered appropriate to consider the acceptability of the current proposal in principle. The site is allocated by saved UDP policy EC/2 as part of a Primary Employment Zone. EC/2 notes that:

Within Primary Employment Zones development and change of use, for industrial, business and warehouse uses (Use Classes B1, B2 and B8) will be permitted where proposals:

- a) Are of an appropriate scale and character to the area;*
- b) Will cause no unacceptable environmental or amenity problems in the employment area or adjoining areas ; and*
- c) Will cause no unacceptable traffic problems and have adequate on-site provision for parking, servicing and manoeuvring.*

Other uses will not be permitted unless it can be shown that they are ancillary and complementary (both in terms of size and function) to the industrial and business nature of the employment area.

The proposed use of the site is considered to comprise a use falling under Use Class B8 (storage and distribution), as the purpose of the proposed compound is primarily for the storage of traffic management vehicles and associated equipment. As set out in the rest of this analysis, the proposal is considered to satisfy the requirements set out in paragraphs a) b) and c) of EC/2.

Core Strategy policy E2 seeks to protect existing employment sites by supporting their continued use in employment uses (B1 to B8). The use of the site in a B8 use would align with this objective of policy E2.

In more general terms, the application site is considered to be well placed for the purpose of the proposal, being well connected to the surrounding local highway network and to the M62 motorway junction.

The proposal is therefore supported in principle by policy EC/2 and would support its objectives. As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle.

Flood Risk and Drainage

NPPF paragraph 182 notes that applications which could affect drainage on or around the site should incorporate sustainable drainage systems to control flow rates and reduce volumes of runoff, and which are proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal. Local requirements relating to managing surface water, flood risk and protecting water resources are set out in Core Strategy policies G8 and saved UPD policy EM/8.

The site is located within flood zone 1 and is not at risk of flooding from the sea or rivers, but is identified as being within a Critical Drainage Area.

Extensive discussions between the drainage officer and the applicant's agent and drainage consultant during determination, to address concerns relating to the as-built surface water drainage arrangements implemented during construction of the concrete plinth.

The application is supported by a drainage strategy technical note which sets out that surface water from across the site is collected through gutters and downpipes, rain gardens and gulleys to a below-ground attenuation tank which flows to the combined sewer at the north-west corner of the site. It is noted that the strategy indicates that the approach to designing this drainage strategy has involved detailed engagement with United Utilities regarding the use of the combined sewer and the intended outfall rate.

The technical note was revised during determination in response to queries raised by the drainage officer. In particular, the final version of the note reported the findings of infiltration testing on-site to justify the absence of infiltration drainage (preferable in the hierarchy of sustainable urban drainage systems) within the proposed drainage scheme.

The strategy proposes a number of improvements to the existing drainage arrangements to address other feedback from the drainage officer, including the provision of small rain gardens within the site, and increasing the capacity of the attenuation tank.

On this basis, the drainage officer has accepted the proposed surface water drainage arrangements. As elements of the approved drainage scheme require further implementation, a time-limited condition is recommended to ensure compliance with the agreed arrangements.

Subject to this, it is considered that the proposed development would not give risk to unacceptable concerns in terms of flood risk on or off site or in terms of sustainable drainage, and therefore that the scheme is acceptable in terms of policies G8 and EM/8.

Design and Appearance

Core Strategy policy P3 states that high standards of design will be required of new development, including associated landscaping, regardless of location in the borough. CS policy DM1 states that all development proposals will be expected to demonstrate that they are of high quality design and take the opportunity to enhance the quality of the area. Places for Everyone policy JP-P1 'Sustainable Places' notes that all development should be consistent with certain key sustainable design attributes, including being distinctive with a clear identity, being visually stimulating, and being socially inclusive.

The completed concrete plinth, finished using large concrete blocks, appears somewhat prominent in some views, particularly from the north of the site, and it is considered that its finished appearance detracts from the character of the area, taking account of the nature of the immediate area as a business park.

It was considered necessary that some means of mitigating the appearance of the plinth should be secured in order to ensure that the external appearance of the site is acceptable and contributes to planning policies for design of the built environment.

Details have been secured during determination of a landscaping and planting scheme around the base of the plinth, to allow climbing plants (ivy and hydrangea) to be established and grow up the faces of the blockwork. It is considered that this would be an acceptable solution to improve the completed appearance of the development, subject to a condition to ensure implementation and retention of this planting scheme.

Otherwise, the development is considered to be acceptable in visual terms. The compound is arranged in an orderly manner, and boundary treatments are appropriate to the proposed use of the site and to the character of the area.

For the above reasons, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of design and appearance and to support the objections of local policies P3 and DM1 and PfE policy JP-P1.

Highways Safety, Access and Transport

NPPF paragraph 116 notes that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. Local requirements for highways safety, transport and access matters are set out in Core Strategy policies DM1, T2, and PfE policy JP-C7.

The proposed development takes access from an estate service road accessed off Pilsworth Road, which connects onto the wider local and strategic highways network at the M66 and M62. The use of the site is not considered to raise any significant impacts in terms of highways safety or the operation of the highways network above the previous use, and no objections have been received from the Highways Officer.

Accordingly, the application is considered to be acceptable in terms of access arrangements and highways safety, and to accord with NPPF paragraph 116 and the above local policies for highways and transport.

Residential Amenity

The NPPF advises that planning should always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land or buildings. Locally, Core Strategy policy DM1 and PfE policy JP-P6 set out planning expectations for the protection of residential amenity.

Owing to the location of the site, the distance to the nearest dwellings, and the nature and scale of the proposed development, it is not considered that it would give rise to any material concerns in terms of residential amenity relating to visual intrusion, overbearing effects, overshadowing or loss of privacy. For the same reasons it is not considered that the operation of the site would result in any harm arising from noise, vibration or light nuisance to nearby residences. The Environmental Health officer was consulted on the application and has not raised any objections in relation to these matters.

Accordingly the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of effects on residential amenity.

Ecology

Section 15 of the NPPF sets out requirements relating to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. This includes a requirement, set out in Paragraph 187, for development to minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity.

Core Strategy Policies G6 and G7 set out the Council's expectations in relation to green infrastructure (including trees), ecology and biodiversity. PfE policy JP-G8 sets out similar expectations including for improving habitats.

Prior to development of the depot, the site was enclosed at the south, west and north edges by narrow strips of scrub hosting a number (around 20) of small and medium trees, almost of which has been removed to accommodate the concrete slab.

GMEU were consulted on the application and their comments are noted above. Details of biodiversity enhancements (comprising three bird boxes to be placed on the modular buildings) were submitted during determination, and whilst these are limited in scale they are considered to be appropriate and acceptable, given the nature of the proposal.

For the avoidance of doubt, the application was submitted prior to national mandatory requirements for biodiversity net gain coming into effect. The proposal is not considered to give rise to any other ecology considerations and as such the application is considered to be acceptable in terms of impacts upon ecology, wildlife and biodiversity, subject to a condition to secure implementation of the submitted biodiversity enhancements.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development would support local plan policies for the use of land designated for employment uses, and is considered to be acceptable in principle. The proposal would not give rise to any significant harms in terms of residential amenity, highways safety, ecology or flood risk. Subject to conditions to secure the implementation of further mitigative works to address the appearance of the site and the existing drainage arrangements, the proposal would be acceptable in terms of its outward appearance and in terms of sustainable drainage.

Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval subject to the following conditions.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve with conditions

1. The development shall be completed and retained in accordance with the following approved plans:

Location Plan
28612-100 Proposed Site Plan
28612-105 Proposed Levels Plan
28612-300 Building Elevations
28612-310 Street Elevations
28612-400 Site Cross Sections
A6827 01 Rev A Landscaping Scheme
Drainage Strategy Technical Note (including the drainage strategy drawing ref 240560-RAP-XX-XX-DR-D-3100 Rev P03) Rev 03 dated 26.08.25 by Rappor

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory development in accordance with the policies 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.

2. The approved drainage plan shall be completed in full no later than 12 months of the date of this decision and retained thereafter. The applicant shall notify the Local Planning Authority of completion of the works within one calendar month of the date of completion.

Reason: To secure proper drainage and to manage the risk of flooding and pollution and to ensure satisfactory disposal of surface water from the site 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.

3. The completed drainage scheme shall be maintained in strict accordance with the details set out on page 9 of the approved Drainage Strategy.

Reason: To secure proper drainage and to manage the risk of flooding and pollution and to ensure satisfactory disposal of surface water from the site 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.

4. The biodiversity enhancements indicated on the approved plans shall be installed in full no later than three months of the date of this decision, and then retained thereafter.

Reason: In order to secure an enhancement for biodiversity in accordance with Rochdale Core Strategy policies G6 and G7 and PfE policy JP-G8.

5. The approved landscaping works shall be completed in full no later than the end of the first planting season following the date of this decision.

Any plants 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 and has an acceptable outward appearance in accordance with Core Strategy Policies DM1, G6 and G7, Policies JP-G6 and JP-G7 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

