

HERITAGE & CONSERVATION CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Application Details

Heritage, Conservation & Design team officer

Catherine Fenghour

Date

30 April 2026

Application reference

PL/2026/0108

Address

19 to 21 Boarshaw Road, Middleton, M24 6BR

Proposal

Change of use of a former public house (The Nook) and associated car park to a hand car wash (sui generis) and ancillary office and storage, together with the installation of associated equipment and new perimeter fencing

Affected Heritage Assets

Designated heritage assets

- Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area

Non-designated heritage assets

- 24 Steps
- Pioneer Mill

Summary

The proposal would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. It would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of this designated heritage asset. This is a matter which carries great weight in the planning balance.

Assessment

Site description and significance

The application site lies within the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area. It was part of an extension to the Conservation Area added in 2008. The Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area is a large and eclectic area, with a wide range of heritage assets and has been identified as one of

the borough's outstanding conservation areas by Rochdale CS policy P2. Its special character comes from its medieval buildings, 19th century industrial architecture, and the numerous examples of high-quality Arts and Crafts properties, including those designed by renowned Middleton Architect, Edgar Wood. The open spaces within the Conservation area are also important to its significance, including Jubilee Park and the Old Burial Ground. There are however parts of the conservation area which are in a poor state of repair and where significant buildings have been lost. For this reason, the Conservation Area is included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register: [Middleton Town Centre - Rochdale | Historic England](#)

The area around the application site developed in the 19th century, with the industrial revolution bringing mills, terraced houses and public houses to this part of the town. The public house and terraces are first shown on the 1890s town plan. While there has been some loss of the buildings from this period, including the terraces on the car park site, the surviving elements provide important evidence of the town's development in the 19th century and are of historic interest. While the terraced houses have undergone some unsympathetic alterations, features such as the stone sills and lintels survive, along with chimneys and brick and terracotta detailing under the eaves.

The public house also has brick detailing below the eaves, decorative wooden fascia boards, stone sills and lintels (although painted) and terracotta tiles. Both the terraced housing and public house are of some architectural merit, in addition to their historic interest, as detailed above. While the car park site does not contribute positively to the character and appearance of the conservation area, the pub and surrounding houses do.

The site is also immediately adjacent to a run of steps built in 1851. These '24 Steps' were made famous as the subject of a painting by the nationally renowned Salford Artist, LS Lowry ([Old Church and Steps by LS Lowry - Fine Art Print – The Lowry Shop](#)). The Church at the top of the steps has been lost, but the steps survive and are an important local feature, contributing both aesthetically and historically to the character and appearance of this part of the Middleton Town Conservation Area.

Relevant legislation and planning policy

Section 72(1) and (2) 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 and appearance of that area when carrying out their planning functions.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) chapter 16 deals preserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraphs 212 to 215 set out how proposals affecting the significance of heritage assets should be assessed.

Paragraph 213 states that *"any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification"*.

Paragraph 215 states that *"where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."*

NPPF paragraph 216 confirms that the impact of a development on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset is a material planning consideration. A balanced judgement should be had, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the area.

At a local level, Places for Everyone policy JP-P2 and Rochdale Core Strategy policy P2 deal with preserving and enhancing the borough's historic environment.

Assessment of proposals

The proposal is for the use of the former pub carpark as a hand carwash. The former pub would be used to provide ancillary office and storage space associated with the carwash. A new 1.8m high metal fence and gates are proposed along the highway boundary. Within the site, two canopy structures are proposed. As only streetscene elevations have been provided, there are no detailed plans of these canopy structures. Their appearance and materiality of these structures is not clear.

As detailed above, the public house and terraced housing are of architectural and historic significance, as are the '24 Steps'. The pub carpark is not of any particular interest, noting that the historic terraces, which once covered it have been lost. However, it is not a particularly intrusive feature, with low level metal fencing for the car park and the pub garden having a timber fence.

The installation of 1.8m high metal fencing and gates along the road frontage, with new car washing canopies would neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area. While tall metal fencing is found elsewhere in the wider streetscene, it does not contribute positively and is within the context of industrial uses. Its existence elsewhere does not justify its use in this location. The proposed use and boundary treatments would introduce an incongruous utilitarian features which would be at odds with the architecture and detailing of the late 19th century buildings

It is noted that the proposals seek to use the public house for storage and office space. It is not clear how these uses would function, as no details have been provided. Given the size of the proposed car wash, it is not clear that these ancillary functions would fully occupy the building or bring it back into a meaningful use.

It is considered that the proposed use along with the utilitarian structures it would require would be incongruous and harmful features detracting from the character and appearance of the surviving 19th century streetscene and 24 Steps. It is considered that the proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area. This harm needs to be clearly justified and should only be approved if it would be clearly outweighed by public benefits stemming from the proposal.

Re-consultation

Yes if there are substantial changes