

Officer Report

Case Reference: 25/01164/FUL
Location: 27-29 Long Street, Middleton, M24 6TR
Proposal: Creation of two commercial units (Use Class E) with new entrances at ground floor, change of use of first floor offices into 4 self-contained flats, replacement of existing first floor doorway into a window and provision of new external bin store and cycle store
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Luke Rigby

SITE

The application site relates to No. 27 – 29 Long Street, a two-storey end of terrace building within Middleton Town Centre. The application site is located entirely within the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area. A vehicular car park is found directly to the rear of the building accessed from Water Street.

The building is currently vacant and was most recently used as a Barclays bank. Office accommodation is provided at first floor.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of the ground floor of the building into 2No. separate unit commercial units (Use Class E), and at first floor, 4No. self-contained residential units.

Access to the residential units would be possible by utilising the existing entrance door to the front elevation from Long Street, and the existing fire escape to the rear elevation of the building would be retained. 2No. separate entrances are proposed to the front elevation along Long Street by modifying 2No. windows to accommodate entrance doors.

No other external alterations are proposed to the building itself. To the rear, the existing car park which is accessed from Water Street would be retained. 1No. parking space is proposed for each of the residential units (for a total of 4No. spaces), and 2No. spaces for each of the commercial units – for a total of 8No. spaces overall.

Bin storage would also be found to the rear, with 4No. 1100L bins for the residential units (one for each type of waste), and 1No. general waste bin for each of the commercial units. A cycle store with 4No. spaces would also be provided. In both cases, these bins would be emptied by a private contractor.

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

None relevant.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE subject to conditions

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National

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-H3	Type, Size and Design of New Housing

Local Guidance

Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1	Defined Urban Area
G/S/1	Hierarchy and Role of Centres

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

DM1	General development requirements
C1	Delivering the right amount of housing in the right places
C6	Improving health and well being
G9	Reducing the impact of pollution
P1	Improving image

P2	Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
P3	Improving design of new development
T2	Improving accessibility
E1	Establishing thriving town, district and local centres
SP3/M	The Strategy for Middleton

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

Supplementary Planning Guidance note 'Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development' (2016).

PUBLICITY

Site Notice: Posted 17.04.2026

Press Notice: Posted 12.03.2026

Neighbour notification letters: In accordance with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, notification letters were sent to immediate neighbours

ASSESSMENT

Principle

The application site lies within Middleton Town Centre, within the defined urban area as designated by saved UDP Policy G/D/1, which seeks to concentrate development in urban areas. Policy E1 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will seek to focus retail, leisure, cultural, office, residential and other development within town centres in order to promote viability and vitality. Specifically, the Core Strategy notes that town centres have a role to play in providing new housing in sustainable locations.

Spatial Strategy SP3/M 'The Strategy for Middleton' states that the priorities for Middleton are the focusing of retail, leisure, and cultural employment development within the town centre and regenerating the area around the arena including offices and leisure development.

The application proposes the subdivision of the existing ground floor unit into 2No. separate Class E units. This is considered to accord with Policy E1 which seeks to focus offices, retail and leisure within the boroughs town centres. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the use of the building as – most recently – a Barclays Bank further establishes the acceptability of the principle in this instance. The proposed use of the ground floor as Use Class E further accords with Spatial Strategy SP3/M which states that the priorities for Middleton are the focusing of retail and office uses within the town centre.

It is acknowledged in this instance that the existing first floor of the building comprises office space and that – should permission be granted - this would be lost. This would therefore prejudice the aims of Policy E1 and Spatial Strategy SP3/M. Notwithstanding, however, it is acknowledged that the building has been vacant for a number of years (the Barclays bank appears to have closed in 2022) which itself is harmful to the aims of Policy E1 and Spatial Strategy SP3/M.

The provision of 4No. residential units in this instance would provide a clear benefit in the form of housing stock within a sustainable location in close proximity to the town centre and therefore aligns closely with the aims of Policy C1 of the Core Strategy which seeks to provide the right type of housing in the right places. Policy C1 makes specific reference to focusing new housing stock in or close to the boroughs town centres in the south. It is further acknowledged that Policy C2 of the Core Strategy seeks to focus on regeneration areas and growth corridors with a distinction made for the delivery of new housing in Middleton Town Centre; these benefits in this instance are considered sufficient to outweigh any harm caused by the loss of the office space having regard to the site location.

The proposed development in this instance, on balance, is therefore considered to accord with the overall aims of the Core Strategy and would play a role in facilitating the development of a thriving town centre in accordance with the aims of the NPPF.

Impact on Character

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas.

Within a Conservation Area, the Local Planning Authority has a duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of that area in accordance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out guidance relating to conserving and enhancing the historic environment. It notes that local authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets; the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness.

When considering the impact of proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, such as a Conservation Area, the NPPF notes that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation; the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be.

CS policy P2 states that the Council will protect the borough's heritage by conserving, enhancing and promoting key heritage assets, both statutory and non-statutory, including consideration of their wider settings. Saved UDP policy BE/17 only permits development that preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. In this case, the site lies entirely within the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area.

The application primarily proposes a Change of Use, and only marginal external changes are proposed. Proposed external changes include the replacement of 2No. Windows to the front elevation of the building (adjacent to Long Street) to accommodate doors.

The existing building has been vacant since Barclays vacated the premises in 2022; the vacancy of this premises detracts from the character and vitality of the Conservation Area which in itself is harmful. The development would bring the building back into use and would therefore contribute to the formation of an active frontage which would be beneficial to the character of the Conservation Area.

In respect of the proposed doors, these would be single doors which are not considered to appear significantly incongruous or out of character set within the frontage of the building, which features large format windows to its front elevation. The 2No. doors would be minor additions which are not considered to detract from the character of the existing dwelling or setting of the Conservation Area; these changes would preserve the character of the building.

Furthermore, the formation of residential curtilage at first floor would secure a viable, long-term use of the building and would secure long term maintenance of the building.

No concerns are raised regarding the bin store or cycle storage. These would be to the rear of the property and would not be readily visible and are therefore not considered to harm the significance of the Conservation Area.

Having regard to the above, the proposed development is considered to preserve and safeguard the historical significance of the Conservation Area. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with Policies P2, P3 of the Core Strategy, Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the PfE joint development plan, and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Amenity

CS policy DM1 requires that proposals do not adversely affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy. Also, impacts including noise, air, dust, light and odour pollution are required to be mitigated where necessary.

The 'Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development' SPD contains a number of guidance parameters for the design and layout of new housing in order to preserve the amenity standards for surrounding residents.

Overbearing Impact

The scope of the external changes to the building would be limited to the replacement of 2No. windows with combined window and door units. No other external changes are proposed which would increase the sense of overbearing beyond that which could already reasonably exist by virtue of the existing building.

It is therefore not considered that the proposed development would appear overbearing or overshadowing for neighbouring dwellings and/or buildings, nor for those walking along Long Street or neighbouring streets.

Minimum Space Standards

Policy JP-H3 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan requires that all new dwellings comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) to ensure a satisfactory level of amenity for future occupiers.

The proposed development would create 4No. self-contained apartments. The NDSS requires that for a 1-bedroom, 1-person dwellinghouse, 39sqm of internal floor space be provided with 1sqm of internal storage. All of the apartments would meet this requirement. Furthermore, the NDSS require that a minimum of 7.5sqm of floor area is provided for single bedrooms, and these must be 2.15m wide. Each bedroom in the development would meet these requirements.

Future Occupiers

Internally all rooms would have sensible arrangements and would provide adequate outlook from windows. A Noise Impact Assessment has been provided (Hann Tucker Associates) which found that the windows of the existing building would not provide acceptable internal noise levels under typical background ventilation conditions due to traffic on long street.

Several methods to overcome this have been proposed, such as upgrading the windows, or installing trickle vents for ventilation. The application submission, however, does not make clear which of these methods—if any—will be used. It is therefore considered that this should be secured by way of pre-commencement condition having particular regard to the location of the site within a Conservation Area.

Neighbouring Dwellings

The proposed development would not give rise to any unacceptable impact on amenity of neighbouring dwellings or buildings. It is therefore considered to accord with Policy DM1 and P3 of the Rochdale Core Strategy, and the guidance of the Housing SPD and NPPF.

Highways and Parking

The proposed development would provide 8No. parking spaces to the rear elevation of the building on a dedicated parking space. This would comprise of 4No. spaces for the ground floor commercial units, and 4No. spaces for the first floor apartments.

The application site is located in a sustainable location in close proximity to Middleton Town Centre and is therefore in walking distance to local amenities. The Council's Highway Department were consulted on the proposal and raise no objections in relation to parking or highway safety. The Highways Officer notes that

access to the site for refuse collection and for emergency vehicles would be acceptable.

Having regard to the above, the proposed development is considered to accord with Policy T2 of the Core Strategy and Appendix 2.

Ecology

Paragraph 187 of the Framework states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

In England, biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met. This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits.

PfE Policy JP-G8 also states that through local planning and associated activities a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought where relevant. In particular, development will be expected to achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity of no less than 10%.

Policy G7 requires that sites and features of biodiversity and geodiversity importance are given full and appropriate recognition and protection and that opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity will be supported. 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.

The application form indicates that the applicant believes that the development be exempt from the Biodiversity Net Gain requirement as it is under the threshold and is therefore eligible for the de minimis exemption. The Case Officer has reviewed the proposal and agrees that this is the case. The application predominantly pertains to a change of use of the existing building and therefore there is no scope for the creation of a net gain. External changes to the building would be marginal in the form of new entrance doors. The rear of the site used for vehicular parking is comprised of established hardstanding and there would be no change to this.

Notwithstanding, the application form indicates that bird boxes will be installed. This is considered a positive and having regard to the above, the proposed development is considered to accord with Policies G7 of the Core Strategy, JP-G8 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the aims of Paragraph 187 of the Framework.

SUMMARY OF THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

None received.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Conservation and Design

No response received.

Highways and Engineering

No objection. The development is small scale and the traffic generated by the proposal would not be recognisable against existing traffic volume. Access to the site is acceptable. No concerns regarding emergency service access or refuse collection. No road safety concerns.

Environmental Health

No response received.

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) (4)

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason – To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 This permission relates to the following plans and documents: -

DWG No. PP-13476017v1 (Location Plan)

DWG No. 647.03 (Proposed Site Plan)

DWG No. 647.02 (Proposed Floor and Elevation Plans)

DWG No. 647.05 (Bin Store Details)

32939/NIA1 (Environmental Noise Survey and Noise Impact Assessment)

Cycle Store Details

Design and Access Statement

Heritage Statement

Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption Statement

and the development shall be carried out in accordance with these hereby approved.

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 Unitary Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 3 The materials used in the construction of the exterior 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 in accordance with Policies P3 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.

- 4 Notwithstanding the details shown on the submitted plans, prior to the installation of any replacement windows serving the first-floor residential apartments, or installation of any external ventilation equipment, full details of the proposed glazing and ventilation strategy shall be submitted to, and approved in writing, by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include but are not limited to detailed drawings, proposed material finishes and colours, location and design of ventilation features, and confirmation that the proposed strategy achieves the minimum sound reduction performances set out in Section 10.2.2 of the submitted Environmental Noise Survey and Noise Impact Assessment (produced by Hann Tucker Associates, Ref: 32939/NIA1, dated February 26 2026).

Prior to occupation of the residential units the acoustic glazing and ventilation measures approved under this condition must have been fully installed and implemented. The approved measures shall be retained and maintained in working order thereafter for the lifetime of the development to ensure adequate background ventilation and noise mitigation.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory standard of residential amenity for future occupiers and to preserve the character and appearance of the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area in accordance with Policy DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework

Approval Reason(s) (1)

- 1 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.