

Officer Report

Case Reference: PL/2026/0082
Location: Heybrook Service Station, Halifax Road, Rochdale, OL16 2NT
Proposal: Subdivision of commercial unit (Class E) to form office unit (Class E) and laundrette (Sui Generis) including insertion of windows and door to side elevation and formation of additional entrance to front elevation.
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Bob Melling

SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

The application site is Heybrook Service Station fronting Yorkshire Street in Rochdale. The Service Station has a forecourt to the front with the sales building set back from the main road. To the east of the sales building is a vacant single storey building that was formerly used as a pharmacy.

The surrounding area is a mixture of commercial uses (fronting Yorkshire Street) and residential dwellings to the south. Immediately to the rear of the application site is Heybrook Mill, a Grade II listed 19th century woollen mill and associated housing.

The site is located within the defined urban area.

PROPOSAL

Permission is sought to subdivide and change the use of the premises from a pharmacy (Class E) to offices (Class E) and a laundrette (Sui Generis). The hours of operation would be 8am to 11pm. External alterations comprise a minor reconfiguration of the modern shopfront facing the forecourt, the addition of two windows and a replacement door to the side elevation facing Hamer Lane and a new extraction duct in the Hamer Lane elevation.

It should be noted that the existing windows and door on the side elevation facing Hamer Lane are unauthorised and the current application seeks to regularise this unauthorised development.

Prior to the installation of the existing unauthorised windows and door, the side elevation facing Hamer Lane comprised a rendered elevation with a single door.

RELEVANT PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT HISTORY

17/01513/FUL – Erection of a single storey extension to rear – Refused – 25.05.2018.

11/A5934 – Installation Of One Internally Illuminated Fascia Sign And One Internally Illuminated Projecting Box Sign (Retrospective) – Part Granted and Part Refused 24.10.2011 – Appeal Allowed - 19.04.2012.

10/D53386 – Proposed Change Of Use Of Forecourt Mot Centre To Forecourt Dispensing Chemist Including Alterations And Installation Of New Shop Front – Resubmission Of D53044 – Approved – 26.08.2010.

10/D53044 – Change Of Use Of Forecourt Mot Centre To Forecourt Dispensing Chemist Including Alterations And Installation Of New Shop Front – Withdrawn – 11.05.2010.

05/D45013 – Installation Of Wall Mounted A.T.M (Resubmission Of D43733) – Approved - 22.04.2005.

04/D43733 – Installation of An Automated Teller Machine – Refusal - 13.08.2004

98/D35254 – Alterations To Petrol Service Station Including- Enlargement Of Existing Sales Building To Extend Retail Sales Area And Incorporate Hot Food Takeaway (Class A3) And Also Additional Underground Storage Tank – Approved - 09.06.1998.

81/D13135 – Use of Premises as Vehicle Repair Workshop – Approved - 19.11.1981.

81/D12664 – Use of Premises as Vehicle Repair Workshop – Refused - 27.08.1981.

86/D19899 – Installation of 2000 Gallon Derv Tank And Bund Wall And Erection Of 2.1-Metre-High Fence – Approved - 08.01.1987.

80/D10158 – Car Sales Unit – Refusal - 21.04.1980.

80/D10709 – Car Wash Slot Machine – Decision - 16.06.1980.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

Sub-Regional

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE) 2024:

JP-S1: Sustainable Development

JP-P1: Sustainable Places

JP-P2: Heritage

Local

Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) 2016:

E1: Establishing thriving town, district and local centres

E5: Encouraging the visitor economy

P1: Improving image

P2: Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

P3: Improving design of new development

T2: Improving accessibility

SD1: Delivering sustainable development

DM1: General development requirements

Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006:

G/D/1: Defined Urban Area

PUBLICITY

Site Notice: 02.04.2026

Press Notice: 18.03.2026

Neighbour notification letters: 10.03.2026

ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

The application site is located approximately halfway between Yorkshire Street Local Centre and Halifax Road (Hamer) Local Centre, as defined under saved UDP Policy S/6. The immediate area comprises a mix of commercial, light industrial and residential uses. The property subject of this application was most recently used as a pharmacy and was used prior to that as an MOT centre. The application seeks to intensify the existing use through the subdivision of the unit to provide a laundrette.

CS Policy E1 establishes that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will focus retail, leisure, cultural, office and other development to promote the viability and vitality of the borough's town centres. Further, Policy E1 sets out that the LPA will only consider out of centre development when there are no suitable sites in, or on the edge, or well connected to, the town centre, district centres or local centres and the proposal would cause no significant overall impact on the existing centres vitality and viability.

In this instance, the application proposes the addition of a small-scale unit to be used as a laundrette that would in turn reduce the floor space of an existing commercial unit; subdivision of a commercial unit to two uses under that same class does not ordinarily require planning permission and thus it can be equated that a similar impact to the proposals could be achieved without the need for permission. The proposed laundrette would front the Service Station forecourt and provide a service use that would not be considered to adversely affect the vitality of the nearby local centres and in this regard the application is acceptable in principle.

Impact on Character and Heritage

The application site lies adjacent to Heybrook House, a Grade II Listed Building. The proposal must therefore be considered in the context of Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, which places a statutory duty on the LPA to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building, its setting, and any features of special architectural or historic interest when determining applications.

Case law has established that decision-makers must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings when undertaking the planning balance.

The Development Plan is also relevant in this regard. CS Policies DM1 and P3 require development proposals to achieve high quality design, while Policy P2 seeks to ensure that development protects and enhances the character, landscape, and historic environment. PfE Policy JP-P2 confirms that proposals affecting heritage assets should be assessed in accordance with national policy set out in the NPPF.

Paragraph 213 of the NPPF states that any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 215 goes on to state that where a development proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

In this case, the existing pharmacy building is a mid-20th century, brick-built, flat-roofed structure which has been rendered and fitted with a modern glazed shopfront. It is of no particular architectural or historic merit and makes a neutral contribution to the setting of the adjacent listed building. The lawful side elevation is currently blank, save for a single door, and presents an inactive and visually poor frontage to Hamer Lane.

The proposed insertion of an additional door within the existing modern shopfront would read as a minor alteration associated with the operation of the service station and would not result in harm to the setting of the listed building.

The introduction of two new windows and a replacement door within the side elevation would provide a more active and visually engaging frontage. The use of stone surrounds to frame these openings is considered to respond positively to the character of the nearby listed building, introducing a level of detailing that enhances, rather than detracts from, the wider setting. Subject to appropriate conditions securing the detailed design, materials, and finishes (including large-scale drawings), these changes would represent a modest improvement to the appearance of the building.

Overall, the proposal would result in no harm to the significance or setting of Heybrook House. Even if a very low level of less than substantial harm was identified, this would be clearly outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme. These include bringing a vacant unit back into active use, contributing to the vitality and economic function of the area. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to comply with the statutory duty under Section 66 of the Act, the Development Plan and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Impact on Surrounding Uses

CS Policy G9 requires that development does not give rise to unacceptable levels of air, water, noise, light, or other forms of pollution. Policy DM1 similarly requires that proposals safeguard residential amenity and incorporate appropriate mitigation where necessary.

The application site forms part of an established service station complex located at the junction of Hamer Lane and the A58, a heavily trafficked route. The surrounding environment is therefore characterised by a relatively high level of background noise and activity, with neighbouring uses including a tyre workshop, a gym, and the petrol filling station itself.

The proposal involves the subdivision of the existing unit to accommodate a small-scale laundrette, comprising a total of five machines within a unit of approximately 28sqm. It does not involve any increase in overall floorspace or a significant intensification of the established use of the site. Given the modest scale of the proposed operation and its position within a commercial setting, it is not considered that the development would generate levels of noise, activity, or disturbance that would materially exceed the existing baseline conditions.

In particular, the proposal is unlikely to result in undue harm to the amenities of nearby residents, including those occupying Heybrook House. The nature and scale of the use, when viewed in the context of the surrounding commercial activities and high levels of passing traffic, would not give rise to unacceptable impacts in terms of noise or general disturbance.

Notwithstanding this, it is considered reasonable and necessary to impose a condition controlling the hours of operation in order to ensure that residential amenity is protected, particularly during more sensitive time periods.

Overall, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions, the proposal is considered to comply with CS Policies G9 and DM1, as it would not result in unacceptable pollution or harm to residential amenity.

Highway Safety

CS Policy DM1 requires development to provide satisfactory vehicular access with adequate parking, manoeuvring and servicing arrangements.

The property occupies a sustainable location within a dense urban environment. The premises front the A58 which is well served by public transport and would be readily accessible to surrounding residential properties on foot.

Nevertheless, it is recognised that, owing to the unique services provided and its inherent use where potential customers are likely to have several bags of items to wash/dry, that many visitors to the premises would visit the site by car. Parking is available in front of the premises and additional spaces are available within the service station forecourt. With the above in mind, it is considered that the development would not substantially increase congestion or create additional on-street parking pressures in the locality.

The development would make adequate parking, access and servicing arrangements relative to the scale, type and location of the premises and the site is highly accessible by modes of transport other than private car. The proposal would not lead to a degree of additional traffic generation that would be detrimental to the safe and efficient operation of the highway network both adjacent to or further away from the site and is therefore in accordance with the requirements of the Development Plan and the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve with Conditions

SUMMARY OF THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

N/A

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Environmental Health - No comments received at time of writing.

Conservation Officer - The site is immediately adjacent to the grade II listed Heybrook Mill. The openings installed along the road elevation are unauthorised and are not acceptable, given the adjacent listed building. While openings in this elevation would potentially be welcomed, they should be carefully designed and should use high quality materials and finishes. The use of UPVC as installed is not acceptable.

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 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:-

- Location Plan. Dwg no. D258-02
- Existing and Proposed. Dwg no. D258-01 / C

and the development shall be carried out in accordance with these drawings hereby approved unless otherwise required by the conditions below.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the policies contained within the saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan, the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 3 Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans, no use of the units hereby permitted shall commence until full details of the external alterations to the side elevation facing north-east have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include:

- Sections and elevations at a scale of 1:20 (or similar) of the proposed windows and door;
- Details of materials, finishes, colour, and framing (including confirmation of timber or aluminium) for the proposed windows and door;
- Details of the proposed stone surrounds, including material, profile, depth, and method of fixing;
- Details of the treatment of the opening to be infilled, including materials and finish to match the existing wall.

The approved details shall be fully installed prior to the first use of the units and retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of securing a high quality form of development and to safeguard the setting of the adjacent Grade II Listed Building, in accordance with the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies P2, P3 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core

Strategy, Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 4 The uses hereby permitted shall not operate outside the hours of 08:00 to 23:00 on any day of the week, including Bank Holidays, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the amenity of nearby occupants and in accordance with policies G9 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.

Approval Reason(s) (1)

- 1 The Local Planning Authority worked proactively with the applicant to identify various solutions during the application process to ensure that the proposal comprised sustainable development and would improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area and would accord with the development plan. These were incorporated into the scheme and/or have been secured by planning condition.

Informatives (1)

- 1 The applicant is reminded of their obligations under the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007. Advertisement Consent must be obtained prior to the installation of any signage or advertisements associated with the uses hereby approved.