



# Paul Butler Associates

Planning, Development & Heritage Consultants

## Whitehall Academy Ltd

Unit 1a Kingsway West Business Park,  
Moss Bridge Road, Rochdale, OL16  
5LW

## Planning Statement

04 June 2026

**Job Number:** 26.2294

**Project:** Unit 1a Kingsway West Business Park, Moss Bridge Road, Rochdale, OL16 5LW

**Client:** Whitehall Academy Ltd

**File Name:** Planning Statement

**Document Preparation/Checking Record:**

|              | Name and Qualifications               | Position          | Date       |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Prepared by: | Lynsay Ewart BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI     | Principal Planner | 07.04.2026 |
| Checked by:  | Ralph Taylor BSc (Hons), MPLAN, MRTPI | Director          | 08.04.2026 |
| Issued by:   | Lynsay Ewart BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI     | Principal Planner | 13.04.2026 |

**Document Revision Record:**

| Issue No. | Date | Details of Revisions |
|-----------|------|----------------------|
|           |      |                      |
|           |      |                      |
|           |      |                      |

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. The Application Site and Surrounding Area
3. Planning History
4. The Proposed Scheme
5. Planning Policy Context
6. Planning Appraisal
7. Conclusion

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Paul Butler Associates on behalf of the applicant, Whitehall Academy Ltd. The statement has been provided in support of a full planning application for the change of use of Unit 1a Kingsway West Business Park, Moss Bridge Road, Rochdale, OL16 5LW from a warehouse (Class B2/E) to a privately funded school for children with special educational needs (SEN). The application description of development is 'Change of use of vacant warehouse (Class B2/E) to an SEN school (Class F1) together with associated bike and bin storage and fencing'.
- 1.2 In order to provide a clear understanding of the application proposal this statement includes:
- A description of the application site and surrounding area;
  - A review of the site's planning history;
  - A description of the proposed scheme;
  - A review of national and local planning policies of relevance to the scheme;
  - An appraisal of the scheme against relevant planning policies and an assessment of the scheme in relation to its immediate and surrounding context; and,
  - A conclusion.
- 1.3 In addition to this Statement, the application is also supported by the completed Application Forms and Ownership Certificates, and a suite of drawings prepared by Create It Studios.

## 2. The Application Site and Surrounding Area

### The Application Site

- 2.1 The application site comprises Unit 1a Kingsway West Business Park, Moss Bridge Road, Rochdale, OL16 5LW (see figure 2.1 below). The site is bounded by Moss Bridge Road to the east, Rochdale Canal to the north, commercial units to the west, and the associated cul de sac serving the application site to the south. The application building was most recently occupied by an engineering firm 'Circuitmaster Designs Ltd' and used for manufacturing with associated offices (use class B2 / E). The property is vacant and has been on the market since October 2024.



Fig 2.1: Aerial view of the site (outlined in red).

- 2.2 The subject building is two storeys in height but has high floor to ceiling heights and large windows. It is a steel portal frame construction with profile metal/part brick elevations, set beneath a pitched profile metal clad roof with translucent roof panels. Fenestration is

provided via double glazed aluminium framed windows. The building occupies the north part of the site with an associated hardstanding to the south which accommodates car parking for 13 cars on the eastern portion, and a service area / delivery yard on the western portion. The site is accessed via a vehicular and pedestrian entrance gate from the shared turning circle / cul de sac off Moss Bridge Road.

- 2.3 As identified on the Council's proposals map, the site is located within a Mixed Employment Zone (UDP EC/3). Surrounding businesses vary between light industrial and manufacturing, storage and distribution, retail and offices. Moss Mill Industrial Estate lies directly to the west and a further business park known as Globe Park sits across the Rochdale Canal to the north. To the south of the site is two storey housing and beyond, St Peter's Church of England Primary School, with associated green space. The site is around a 1km to the southeast of Rochdale Town Centre and is close to Kingsway (A664) that provides access to the A627 (M) and Sir Isaac Newton Way (A6193) that in turn provides access to junction 21 of the M62 motorway. Rochdale Railway Station is located to the northwest of the site reachable within approximately 20 minutes' walk. The nearest Metrolink Stop is Newbold tram stop which is approximately 1km to the north of the site, accessible within 13 minutes' walk. There are also a number of high frequency bus services which have stops within proximity of the site.
- 2.4 The application site is approximately 0.18 ha in size. It is located within flood zone 1 (lowest risk) and is not located within an Air Quality Management Area. The property is not located within a conservation area, nor is the application building nationally or locally listed. Trees and vegetation are located around the site boundaries.

## The Surrounding Area

- 2.5 The immediate surroundings are mixed and include employment uses, and residential areas interspersed with amenities such as shops, educational institutions, recreation uses and retail.
- 2.6 The site is accessible by foot and bike from the nearby residential areas. There are also high quality public transport connections available to users of the site including Newbold Metrolink Stop (13 minutes' walk from the site), and Rochdale Railway Station (19 minutes'

walk from the site). There are also a wide number of bus stops within the vicinity of the site serving much of the surrounding conurbation.



Fig. 2.2: Application building front elevation.



Fig. 2.3: View looking east from within site.



Fig. 2.4: View looking south from within site.



Fig. 2.5: View looking south showing large cul-de-sac area.

## 3. Planning History

- 3.1 In accordance with best practice a review of the site's planning history was undertaken in April 2026 using the Council's online database. The planning history identified for the site is not of relevance to the application proposals but is included for completeness in table 3.1 below.

| Reference and Address                                                                             | Description                           | Decision                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 98/A4752<br><br>Circuitmaster Designs<br>Kingsway West Business Park,<br>Mossbridge Road Rochdale | One Non-Illuminated Wall Mounted Sign | Approved<br>20 March 1998 |

Table 3.1: Application site planning history

- 3.2 Planning history included in table 3.2 is considered to be of relevance to the application proposals. These decisions demonstrate that Rochdale Council has previously supported the change of use of sites in employment areas to non-employment uses to be acceptable.

| Reference and Address                                                                                    | Description                                                                                                                                                   | Decision and Date           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 25/00264/FUL<br><br>Kingsway Business Park,<br>Logic 6<br>Charles Babbage Avenue<br>Rochdale<br>OL16 4NW | Proposed change of use from industrial warehouse unit to construction training academy (F1a)                                                                  | Approved<br>11 July 2025    |
| 22/00222/FUL<br><br>Unit 2 Sherwood Business Park, Queensway<br>Rochdale, OL11 2NU                       | Change of use from warehouse unit (use class B8) to Culinary Art School (use class F1) including single storey side extension and alterations to fenestration | Approved<br>05 July 2022    |
| 11/D54971<br><br>Unit 10 And Part Of Unit 11<br>Ensor Mill, Queensway,<br>Rochdale, OL11 2NU             | Change Of Use Of Premises From Warehouse (Use Class B8) To Martial Arts Studio And Gymnasium (Use Class D2)                                                   | Approved<br>05 January 2012 |

Table 3.2: Planning history of relevance.

## 4. The Proposed Scheme

- 4.1 The application proposal is for the 'Change of use of vacant warehouse (Class B2/E) to an SEN school (Class F1) together with associated bike and bin storage and fencing'. The school will be privately funded, but will be operated in liaison with local authorities to provide much needed support to primary school aged children with complex needs. The facility will cater for 50 pupils and 20 staff.
- 4.2 The school will be operated as a satellite to 'Whitehall Academy', which is located at 21 Whitehall Street just north of the Rochdale Town Centre. Rochdale Council school's department have confirmed their support for the provision of a satellite facility to Whitehall Academy. The facility will be a specialist independent primary school, supporting vulnerable young people with complex needs. Young people might have been diagnosed with Autism, Learning Difficulties, and Complex Neurological Conditions. They may be receiving ongoing CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) support or be awaiting multi-agency assessment. All students have an Education, Health, and Care Plan, or are in the process of being assessed. The facility operators will work in liaison with different nearby local authorities, which could be outside the Borough of Rochdale.
- 4.3 Whitehall Academy strives to provide a broad and holistic curriculum that caters to pupils with a variety of needs, including autism, communication, sensory needs, and specific learning difficulties. The curriculum strives to be tangible in every part of the school day which begins with breakfast club, allowing all learners to be ready to engage in the formal curriculum and provides opportunities for staff to have conversations, address concerns, and prepare learners for the day ahead. The implementation of the curriculum is broad, balanced, and holistic, allowing all pupils to follow the core and foundation of the formal curriculum at KS1 – KS2, and the Engagement Curriculum at all key stages.
- 4.4 At Whitehall Academy the local community will be seen as valuable to pupils' learning, so opportunities will be taken to thread links between the curriculum and the local community. As part of this, the outdoors will be used as a learning environment; this can be both school-based or supplemented with visits, trips and activities at external locations.

- 4.5 The school will be open from 9 am to 3 pm for pupils and 8 am to 4 pm for staff. If including breakfast club and some after-school clubs, then the opening hours may be from 8 am to 5 pm for staff and pupils on some days.
- 4.6 The proposed school will accommodate six classrooms, three sensory rooms, a multi-purpose hall, offices, a board room, staff room, dining and kitchen spaces, reception and medical room. There are no external alterations proposed to the building.
- 4.7 The existing site boundaries and hardstanding will be retained. The car parking spaces located to the east of the site will be retained for staff use, and drop-off if required. One disabled parking bay will be provided.
- 4.8 The external hardstanding area to the west of the site will have artificial grass and be separated by new fencing within the site, to provide a safe and secure external play area. A timber bin enclosure and covered bike store will also be provided. The bike store will accommodate 12 spaces.

## 5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 Planning policy guidance of relevance to the proposed scheme, and which provides the context for its assessment, is set out within the following:

- The Development Plan for Rochdale;
- Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan; and,
- National Planning Policy Framework.

### The Development Plan for Rochdale

5.2 The Development Plan for Rochdale comprises the following documents:

- Rochdale Adopted Core Strategy (October 2016);
- Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan (June 2006); and,
- Places for Everyone Joint Plan (March 2024).

### Rochdale Adopted Core Strategy (October 2016)

5.3 The Rochdale Core Strategy was formally adopted by the Council on 19 October 2016. It forms part of the Local Plan for Rochdale Borough and will be used in decision-making on planning applications.

5.4 Policies SO1 to SO5 in Chapter 4 of the Core Strategy set out the strategic objectives of the Council. These are centred on the themes of: economy; healthy and successful communities; design and quality place; greener environment; and accessibility and sustainable transport. The detailed policies for the Core Strategy are then grouped under these key themes. In accordance with the guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy SD1 states that the Core Strategy is centred on delivering and supporting sustainable development.

- 5.5 The following detailed policies of the Core Strategy have been considered in the preparation of this planning application.
- 5.6 Policy C6 'Improving health and well-being' supports the creation of an economic, social and physical environment which promotes and supports healthy lifestyles and outlines a number of policy objectives to achieve this.
- 5.7 Policy C7 'Delivering education facilities' seeks to improve education, skills and training in the borough and raise educational achievement by providing good quality primary and secondary education facilities. This will be achieved through, amongst other things, providing educational facilities in appropriate and accessible locations; and, improving accessibility to educational facilities by foot, cycling and public transport.
- 5.8 Policy G1 'Tackling and adapting to climate change' aims to ensure that new development minimises its impact on climate change and also adapts to its impacts. This involves locating growth in areas which are likely to minimise the need for travel and which are well served by public transport, services and infrastructure and encouraging the efficient re-use of buildings.
- 5.9 Policy P2 'Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage' seeks to protect and enhance the Borough's valued and distinctive landscape and heritage assets, including non-statutory heritage assets of local interest.
- 5.10 Policy T1 'Delivering Sustainable Transport' states that the Council will secure a programme of sustainable transport proposals to ensure accessibility for all users and reduce pollution and climate change emissions. It is further stated that the Council will reduce the need to travel, make best use of the existing transport infrastructure and ensure the transport network continues to become safer and more secure for all users.
- 5.11 Policy T2 'Improving Accessibility' states that the Council will improve accessibility by locating development where good access to public transport is available or can be

provided, and will ensure that development is located to minimise the need to travel by car. Development proposals should also satisfy the accessibility hierarchy.

- 5.12 Policy DM1 'General Development Requirements' sets out a number of basic planning and design considerations which development proposals will be expected to demonstrate compliance with.
- 5.13 Policy E2 'Increasing Jobs and Prosperity' states that the Council will ensure a sufficient supply of suitable land, buildings and infrastructure in the right places to support the creation and retention of successful businesses and increase the number and quality of jobs to create a more prosperous lower carbon economy. To do this new employment development and jobs will be created in the south, and existing levels of employment land will be retained in the north. Importantly, there are no restrictions on change of use of existing employment sites smaller than 0.4ha in the south of the borough. The application site falls in the north of the borough and is 0.18ha in size.
- 5.14 Policy E3 'Focusing on Economic Growth Corridors And Areas' states that in the economic growth corridors and areas the Council will prioritise the redevelopment of previously developed land for employment uses but promote other uses if it's more appropriate to delivering a prosperous economy or to meeting the needs for any adjoining regeneration areas. It will also promote the development of, and linkages with, education, training and investment services and facilities.

## **Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan (June 2006)**

- 5.15 Upon adoption of the Core Strategy, the majority of policies within the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan were deleted. Those policies which were saved will be replaced through the Site Allocations DPD or other DPD. The saved policies of relevance to this application are outlined below.
- 5.16 Policy G/D/1 'Defined Urban Area' seeks to concentrate new development within the urban area in order to support urban regeneration and protect the countryside.

- 5.17 Policy CF/2 'General Criteria for the Development of Local Community and Health Facilities' this policy sets out requirements in relation to location and accessibility, impact on amenity and highways impacts.
- 5.18 Policy EC/3 'Mixed Employment Zones' outlines relevant areas and aims to protect and enhance Mixed Employment Zones for a variety of industrial, business and commercial uses to enable the retention and expansion of existing firms and attract new employment uses.
- 5.19 The detailed assessment of the scheme within the following planning appraisal section confirms that the proposal accords with the above Core Strategy and UDP policies.

## **Places for Everyone (PfE)**

- 5.20 PfE is a joint Development Plan Document being prepared by nine Greater Manchester districts (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan). It identifies the quantum of new housing and employment development, supports the delivery of key infrastructure, and protects environmental assets. The joint plan determines the kind of development that takes place in their boroughs, maximising the use of brownfield land and urban spaces while protecting Green Belt land from the risk of unplanned development. The Places for Everyone Plan took effect and became part of the statutory development plan for each of the nine PfE authorities on March 21, 2024.
- 5.21 The policies which are relevant to the application proposals are listed below:
- JP-S 1 – Sustainable Development
  - JP-P 1 – Sustainable Places
  - JP-P 5 – Education, Skills and Knowledge
  - JP-C 7 – Transport Requirements of New Development
  - Policy JP-J1: Supporting Long-Term Economic Growth
  - Policy JP-J2: Employment Sites and Premises
  - Policy JP-J4: Industry and Warehousing Development
  - Policy JP-P2: Heritage

5.22 Policy JP-P 5 'Education, Skills and Knowledge' states that significant enhancements in education, skills and knowledge to benefit existing and new residents will be promoted, including by:

1. Enabling the delivery of new and improved accessible facilities for all ages, such as early years, schools, further and higher education, and adult training to ensure our workforce is ready to benefit from new employment opportunities;
2. Ensuring the delivery of sufficient school places to respond to the demands from new housing, such as through:
  - a. Working with education providers to forecast likely changes in the demand for school places; and
  - b. Where appropriate, requiring housing developments to make a financial contribution to the provision of additional school places and/or set aside land for a new school, proportionate to the additional demand that they would generate.

## National Planning Policy Framework

5.23 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2018 and last updated in February 2025, and sets out the government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. It replaces the Framework published in March 2012, however a presumption in favour of sustainable development continues to be at the heart of the NPPF which ensures that development is pursued in a positive way.

5.24 Development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan should be approved without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, permission should be granted unless:

- The application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the proposed development; or
- Any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

- 5.25 Paragraph 8 confirms that there are three dimensions to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. To achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be pursued in mutually supportive ways through the planning system.

## Delivering Sustainable Development

- 5.26 The NPPF explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area. These sustainable objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in the framework. The NPPF is split into 17 chapters, the chapters of relevance to this development are identified below.

- Building a strong, competitive economy (Chapter 6)
- Promoting healthy and safe communities (Chapter 8)
- Promoting sustainable transport (Chapter 9)
- Making effective use of land (Chapter 11)
- Achieving well-designed places (Chapter 12)
- Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change (Chapter 14)
- Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (Chapter 15)
- Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (Chapter 16).

- 5.27 Paragraph 100 of Chapter 8 states: It is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should: a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and b) work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners

and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

## 6. Planning Appraisal

6.1 Having regard to the relevant planning policy guidance in the previous section, the key material considerations against which the proposed scheme should be considered, and which are discussed in this section, include:

- Principle of Development
- Design and Heritage
- Potential Impact on Amenity
- Highways, Accessibility and Parking
- Sustainable Development

### Principle of Development

6.2 The lawful use of the property is general industry (Class B2) with ancillary offices (Class E). The property was most recently occupied by an engineering firm (Circuitmaster Designs Ltd) however they have vacated the property and it has been on the market since October 2024.

6.3 The application site is located within a Mixed Use Employment Zone under saved policy EC/3 of the UDP. This advises that in Mixed Employment Zones change of use will be permitted for various employment (former B1, B2, B8) uses, tourism, leisure, retail and other uses that would be complimentary to the industrial and employment nature of the area. The aim of this policy is to protect and enhance Mixed Employment Zones for a variety of industrial, business and commercial uses to enable the retention and expansion of existing firms and attract new employment uses. Developments will not be permitted if they are likely to cause nuisance or disruption to existing uses within the area. This suggests alternative uses which are complimentary and would not cause a nuisance or impede business uses in the area may be acceptable. The following sections of this planning appraisal demonstrate that the proposed F1 use would not be a nuisance or impede business uses.

- 6.4 Policy E2 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable land, buildings and infrastructure in the right places to support the creation and retention of successful businesses in the north of the borough. The policy also advises that the Council will do this by: protecting those existing employment zones which are most suited to continued employment use. Uses other than employment will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that they would be more appropriate; and, promoting the delivery of infrastructure, such as improved education, with a focus on supporting economic development in the above locations; and, supporting other employment generating uses that comply with the policies of this plan (e.g. retail, entertainment, leisure and tourism uses).
- 6.5 The site lies in the Rochdale Town Centre / Kingsway economic corridor in the south of the borough. CS Policy E3 states that in the economic growth corridors and areas the Council will prioritise the redevelopment of previously developed land for employment uses but promote other uses, such as housing, if it's more appropriate to delivering a prosperous economy or to meeting the needs for any adjoining regeneration areas; and, promote the development of, and linkages with, education, training and investment services and facilities.
- 6.6 Policy E2 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable land, buildings and infrastructure in the right places to support the creation and retention of successful businesses in the borough. However, the policy also supports other employment generating uses that comply with the policies of the adopted plan and states that uses other than employment will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that they would be more appropriate. Furthermore, in the south of the borough (including the Rochdale town centre / Kingsway corridor) the policy notes that there are no restrictions on change of use of existing employment sites smaller than 0.4ha. Considering the site is 0.18ha in size and unit comprises only circa 0.08ha of floorspace, the application site would qualify for the exemption. Examples of this policy exemption being applied by the Council are included in the planning history in table 3.2 of this statement, and discussed in the associated officer reports for the applications.

- 6.7 It is also important to highlight that the proposed use as an SEN school will generate a reasonably high level of employment since staff to pupil ratios are higher than in mainstream schools, indeed this may even be higher than some traditional employment related uses. The school is anticipated to have circa 20 staff, this is comparable to when the building was occupied by 'Circuitmaster Designs Ltd' who employed a maximum of 23 employees at the site before staff numbers decreased as they transitioned to a new premises.
- 6.8 Core Strategy Policy C7 states that the Borough will seek to improve education, skills and training and raise educational achievement by, amongst other things, providing good quality primary and secondary educational facilities and promoting new facilities which have the opportunity to encourage and promote better links with schools and colleges. This will be achieved through, amongst other things, providing educational facilities in appropriate and accessible locations; and, improving accessibility to educational facilities by foot, cycling and public transport. Policy CF/2 (part a) of the UDP requires that community facilities are accessible to the community it is intended to serve, and where practicable, within District or Local Centres. While the site is not located in an a designated centre, it is in proximity to residential areas and the local community that it's intended to serve, furthermore it is not typical for schools to be located within centres. The provision of this facility is considered to signify a valuable contribution towards the overarching aim of increasing educational attainment of young people in the borough.
- 6.9 Places for Everyone Policy JP-P 5 states that significant enhancements in education, skills and knowledge to benefit existing and new residents will be promoted, including by enabling the delivery of new and improved accessible facilities and ensuring the delivery of sufficient school places to respond to the demands from new housing.
- 6.10 Paragraph 100 of the NPPF states that it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. LPAs should do this by giving great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through decisions on applications.

- 6.11 The application seeks permission for the conversion of a vacant industrial premises to a special education needs (SEN) school for 50 children and 20 staff. This would wholly satisfy the above local, regional and national policy aims. It is reiterated that 'great weight' should be afforded to the need to create schools through planning decisions.
- 6.12 Saved UDP Policy G/D1 'Defined Urban Area' seeks to concentrate new development within the urban area in order to support urban regeneration and protect the countryside. The proposed conversion of the vacant building will achieve these policy aims.
- 6.13 The site benefits from an accessible and sustainable location on proximity to residential areas where future pupils and staff may travel from. For anyone travelling from further afield, the site benefits from access by non-car modes of transport including Newbold Metrolink Stop (13 minutes' walk from the site), and Rochdale Railway Station (19 minutes' walk from the site). There are also a wide number of bus stops within the vicinity of the site serving much of the surrounding conurbation.
- 6.14 The proposal will also have positive sustainability credentials since it involves the re-use of an existing building, and the re-development of brownfield land therefore having less environmental impact than new build education provision. The reuse of a vacant building is also supported by Core Strategy Policy P1. Taken as a whole, the proposed change of use would comply with the requirements of the adopted Core Strategy, adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework in respect of the loss of an employment use within an employment area and would be acceptable in principle.
- 6.15 It is important to highlight that the proposed scheme is also deliverable on the site for the following reasons:
- **It is Available** – The applicant is in a position to purchase / lease the property immediately and is therefore in a position to develop it once permission is secured.
  - **It is Suitable** – The suitability of the site for educational development is confirmed throughout this report, by reason of its sustainable / accessible location including its proximity to surrounding residential areas.

- **It is Achievable** – There are no policy restrictions or development constraints that would impact on the scheme's deliverability. Should planning permission be granted, the applicant is keen to commence works on site immediately.
- **It is Viable** – The scheme is viable and deliverable in the short-term.

## Design and Heritage

- 6.16 No external alterations are proposed to the building. Visual impacts of the development therefore relate to the proposed bin store, bike store, and boundary fencing within the site. The proposals are relatively modest interventions and will be read against the backdrop of a modern warehouse unit with a functional appearance. The proposed bin store will offer some visual benefit by screening bins. Moss Mill to the west of the site is of some local historic interest, and may be regarded as a non-designated heritage asset by Rochdale Council. The proposed operational development within the curtilage of the site would not have any impact on the significance of this building or the contribution made by its setting, which is primarily modern industrial and commercial units.
- 6.17 The proposals are consistent with Core Strategy policies DM1, P2, PfE policy JP-P2 and Chapters 12 and 16 of the NPPF.

## Potential Impact on Amenity

- 6.18 Paragraph 200 of the NPPF requires that policies and decisions should ensure that new development can be integrated effectively with existing businesses and community facilities (such as places of worship, pubs, music venues and sports clubs). Existing businesses and facilities should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of development permitted after they were established. Core Strategy Policies G9 and DM1 also set out that development proposals should avoid or mitigate against impacts due to noise, while Places for Everyone Policy JP-P1 sets out that development should be consistent with the aim to offer comfortable and inviting indoor and outdoor environments, by offering a high level of amenity that minimises exposure to pollution. Policy CF/2 (part b) of the UDP

requires that the proposal would have no unacceptable impact on the amenity of surrounding land uses, particularly residential, by reason of visual appearance, scale, noise or other nuisance.

- 6.19 The land uses immediately surrounding the application building are employment uses including 'Mother Riley's Bakery' to the west, 'Constell Engineers' to the north beyond the canal, various offices within the Moss Bridge House development to the east and the Gordon Rigg Garden Centre beyond this. The wider area is increasingly mixed, with employment and industrial areas to the west and north, and residential and recreational areas the south.
- 6.20 The proposed use of the application building as an education facility will be compatible with the various uses in the area including the residential uses located to the south, the closest house on Woodbine Street East being circa 60m from the site.
- 6.21 The type of development proposed and use of the site as an education facility is not expected to result in any undue impact on the amenity of surrounding users or occupiers. Likewise, the existing surrounding uses are not expected to present undue impact to the future users of the development proposed. The proposed school would only be used during daytime hours and thus no significant noise generation would be expected to occur during night-time hours. It is anticipated that any audible noise from the site would be limited to external play, and the numbers of children using the play area would be staggered for management reasons. It is not uncommon for schools with much larger external play areas or pupil numbers to exist immediately adjacent to sensitive receptors. It is worth highlighting that the building could lawfully be used for noisy industrial or manufacturing processes which could have a greater impact than the proposed school.
- 6.22 The application proposal does not involve the creation of new floorspace or extensions which could impact on the amenity of users within the adjoining properties. As such, there will no overbearing or overshadowing impacts resulting from the proposals. The proposals are considered to be wholly consistent with local and national planning policy in relation to amenity considerations.

## Highways, Accessibility and Parking

- 6.23 The site is located in a sustainable and accessible location and benefits from good quality public transport links, including nearby bus stops with high frequency services to Peppermint Bridge, Middleton, Milnrow, Firgrove, and Rochdale. The site also benefits from proximity to Newbold Metrolink Stop (13 minutes' walk from the site), and Rochdale Railway Station (less than 20 minutes' walk from the site).
- 6.24 Policy CF/2 (part c) of the UDP requires that the surrounding road network is capable of accommodating any additional vehicular traffic likely to be generated by the proposal without damage to the local environment or road safety. Policies T1 and T2 of the Core Strategy promote the use of sustainable transport and improved accessibility.
- 6.25 The site will continue to be accessed as per the existing arrangements, via the existing gated access from the cul-de-sac serving the site, off Moss Bridge Road. The site will accommodate 13 car parking spaces (including one accessible bay) for staff and school drop off / pick ups. The majority of children will travel to site in shared mini-buses or taxis, and drivers will be able to do drop offs within the curtilage of the site. The proposals also include for provision of 12 secure cycle spaces to further promote sustainable patterns of travel.
- 6.26 It is not considered the proposed use as a school accommodating circa 50 pupils and 20 staff would result in any significant increase in vehicle movements or have any unacceptable impact on the highway network. It is worth highlighting that most recent use of the site by 'Circuitmaster Designs Ltd' employed 23 staff at the site. Furthermore, the building could lawfully be brought back into B2 or B8 use employing a similar number of staff at the site. A B8 use could also generate a greater number of trips or deliveries than anticipated from the proposed school use.
- 6.27 Rochdale Council's maximum car parking standards for a school is 1.5 spaces per classroom, albeit there is no specific category for SEN schools which have different operational requirements. Based on six proposed classrooms this equates to nine car parking spaces, which the site achieves with three additional spaces for visitors or drops offs.

The proposed on-site parking and availability of a sizeable cul-de-sac means that the proposed school will be able to operate without impact on the operation of the nearby employment uses, including the other two units (1b and 1c) in the cul-de-sac.

- 6.28 NPPF paragraph 116 states 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.
- 6.29 It has been demonstrated that the scheme accords with the transport requirements of the NPPF and relevant local planning policies.

## Sustainable Development

- 6.30 The proposed development will achieve economic, social and environmental benefits and therefore constitutes sustainable development. These are highlighted below:
- 6.31 Economic: Education is a cornerstone to accessing employment opportunities. The proposed development is for an educational facility which will cater to children and young people with special educational needs, thereby providing a much-needed form of education to help all people access the best opportunities in life. The school will also be a privately run, thereby helping to support business in Rochdale.
- 6.32 Social: The proposed facility will provide much needed school places for primary school aged children who have special educational needs, and would relieve significant pressure on existing educational facilities and services within the Borough and also reduce reliance on out of Borough placements.
- 6.33 Environmental: The proposal involves the re-use of an existing vacant building, in a highly sustainable location close to Rochdale Town Centre and high-quality public transport facilities. The scheme will provide much needed educational infrastructure, which will help to ease pressure on Green Belt sites and potentially more valuable greenfield sites.

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposal accords with national and local planning policy guidance, conforming with policies of the NPPF, Places for Everyone Joint Plan, Core Strategy, and saved UDP policies.
- 7.2 The proposed scheme involves the conversion of a vacant building and its associated curtilage to a school for children with special educational needs. The development will bring the building back into use, enabling it to make a positive contribution to the area and helping to relieve pressure on SEN educational facilities in Rochdale. In accordance with paragraph 100 of the NPPF, this attracts 'great weight' in the determination of the planning application. Furthermore, the development will provide economic, social and environmental benefits and constitutes sustainable development.
- 7.3 On this basis Paul Butler Associates are pleased to submit this planning application and look forward to working with the Council on progressing it through to a positive determination.