

Officer Report

Case Reference: PL/2026/0406
Location: ROCHDALE COMMUNITY FIRE STATION, HALIFAX ROAD
OL12 9BD
Proposal: Installation of Air Source Heat Pump and associated works
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Bob Melling

SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

This application relates Rochdale Community Fire Station, which fronts Halifax Road to the northeast of Rochdale Town Centre. The site in question comprises a rectangular parcel of the existing staff car park to the north of the main building. The nearest residential development is located approximately 23m away to the north at no. 24 Halifax Road, which is on a higher ground level than the application site.

PROPOSAL

Permission is sought for the installation of a 2-stage cascade system consisting of air source heat pumps as well as a water source heat pump to meet the temperature requirements of the existing system. Other equipment is also required such as buffer vessels, secondary pumps and pressurisation units, plus ancillary equipment such as air/dirt separators, dosing pots and expansion vessels.

The air source heat pumps would be enclosed by 2.4m fencing while the associated equipment would be positioned within a container measuring 2.6m in height.

RELEVANT PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT HISTORY

10/D53168 – Prior Approval For The Demolition Of 4 Blocks Of Bungalows (14 Dwellings, 1 14 Cliff Street) – Approved 18 Jun 2010.

11/D54082 – Erection Of A Single Storey 3 Bay Community Fire Station With Associated Facilities And Erection Of 2M High Boundary Fencing – Approved 29 Mar 2011.

11/D54557 – Proposed Minor Material Amendment To (Application D54082) To Amend The Finished Floor Levels At The 3 Bay Community Fire Station. – Approved 22 Aug 2011.

11/D54920 – Erection Of A Single Storey 3 Bay Community Fire Station With Associated Facilities And Erection Of 2M High Boundary Fencing (Resubmission Of D54082) – Approved 22 Dec 2011.

13/00555/ANM – Application for non-material amendment to 11/D54920 for amendment to Drill Tower Layout – Approved 2 Jul 2013.

13/00622/AM – Minor material amendment to planning permission 11/D54082 for the installation of solar panels to roof of new fire station – Approved 10 Sep 2013.

13/01175/ADV – Non-illuminated double sided panel sign – Approved 11 Nov 2013.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Regional Guidance

Places for Everyone (PfE) 2024:

JP-P1: Sustainable Places

JP-S1: Sustainable Development

JP-S2: Carbon and Energy

Saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006:

G/D/1: Defined Urban Area

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) 2016:

P1: Improving image

P3: Improving design of new development

G3: Renewable and low carbon energy developments

DM1: General development requirements

PUBLICITY

Site Notice: N/A

Press Notice: N/A

Neighbour notification letters: 13.07.2026

Weekly List: 13.07.2026

ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

The proposal relates to the installation of an air source heat pump system to serve an existing community fire station within the Defined Urban Area. The development would support the continued operation of an established public service use and does not result in any change of use.

Both Places for Everyone and the Core Strategy support measures to reduce carbon emissions and encourage the use of low carbon and renewable energy technologies.

Nationally, the NPPF supports the transition to a low carbon future and advises that renewable and low carbon energy schemes should be approved where impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.

The proposal would provide renewable energy infrastructure to an existing building, contributing to reduced carbon emissions. As such, the principle of development is considered acceptable, subject to detailed considerations.

Character and Appearance

The application site comprises an existing modern community fire station set within a predominantly urban street scene, characterised by functional buildings, hardstanding, signage and highway infrastructure. The surrounding area does not display sensitive townscape or heritage constraints, and the host building itself has a contemporary and utilitarian appearance.

The proposed development comprises the installation of air source heat pumps and associated plant within a dedicated fenced compound to the side/rear of the building. The submitted plans indicate that the units would be positioned at a low level and contained within a 2.4m high enclosure, with the equipment largely screened from wider public views by the proposed fencing and existing site features.

Given the siting within a service area of the site and the limited height and scale of the equipment, the development would not appear prominent within the street scene. Any views would be read in the context of existing plant, boundary treatments and operational features typically associated with such a facility.

In design terms, the proposal is functional in nature and proportionate to the operational requirements of the building. The visual impact is therefore considered to be limited and would not detract from the character or appearance of the site or the wider area.

The proposal is considered to accord with Core Strategy Policy DM1 and Places for Everyone Policy JP-P1, which require development to respect the character of the area.

Residential Amenity

The nearest residential properties are located approximately 23m to the north of the application site. The proposal comprises the installation of air source heat pumps within a fenced compound to the side/rear of the fire station.

The applicant has advised that the units would generate a sound level of approximately 74 dB(A) at a distance of 5 metres. Whilst this level is relatively high at source, noise levels reduce with distance and would be materially lower at the nearest residential receptors, which do not have windows facing towards the development proposals. In addition, the units are to be sited within a 2.4m high enclosure, which would provide a degree of acoustic screening, and positioned within an established operational environment where there is an existing baseline of noise associated with the fire station and surrounding highway.

Taking into account the separation distance, the contained siting of the plant, and the existing character of the site, it is considered that the proposal would not result in unacceptable noise impacts at nearby dwellings. The development is therefore unlikely to give rise to a significant adverse effect on residential amenity.

The proposal is considered to comply with Core Strategy Policy DM1, which seeks to ensure that development does not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of surrounding occupiers.

Highways

Core Strategy Policy DM1 also states that all development proposals should provide satisfactory vehicular access with adequate parking, manoeuvring, and servicing arrangements taking into account of the proposed use and location.

Consultation has been undertaken with the Highways Authority, which has raised no objection to the proposal as it will not affect the adopted highway network.

As such it is considered that the proposal would not adversely impact on public and highway safety, and the application would accord with the requirements of Core Strategy Policies DM1 and T2.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve with conditions

SUMMARY OF THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

N/A

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways: No objections.

Env. Health: No comments received at time of writing.

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) (3)

- 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 The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents hereby approved:

- Site Location Plan. Dwg no. GMFRS-ROC-PARR-XX-00-DR-A-9001. Rev C1
- Specifications
- GMFRS - Carbon 4 Scope of Works – Rochdale. Dated April 2025. Rev P01
- GMFRS Carbon 4. Rev P01
- Rochdale Mechanical Services Specification. Spec no. 312991-HAH-RD-XX-SP-05001. Rev P01
- LTHW System - Proposed Strip Out Schematic. Dwg no. GMFRS-ROC-PARR-XX-00-DR-ME-5001. Rev C1
- LTHW System - Proposed Schematic. Dwg no. GMFRS-ROC-PARR-XX-00-DR-ME-5002. Rev C1
- Proposed M&E Layouts. Dwg no. GMFRS-ROC-PARR-XX-00-DR-ME-5003. Rev C2
- Proposed M&E Elevations. Dwg no. GMFRS-ROC-PARR-XX-00-DR-ME-5005. Rev C2
- Enclosure & Plant Elevations. Dwg no. GMFRS-ROC-PARR-XX-00-DR-ME-5006. Rev C1
- Proposed Electrical Schematic. Dwg no. GMFRS-ROC-PARR-XX-00-DR-ME-7001. Rev C1

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 Rochdale Unitary Development Plan, the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 3 The heat pumps hereby approved shall not be brought into use until such time as the boundary treatments have been installed in accordance with the plans Proposed M&E Layouts. Dwg no. GMFRS-ROC-PARR-XX-00-DR-ME-5003. Rev C2 and Enclosure & Plant Elevations. Dwg no. GMFRS-ROC-PARR-XX-00-DR-ME-5006. Rev C1. The boundary treatments shall be retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interest of the amenity of nearby residential occupiers in accordance with Policy 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 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.