



Paul Butler Associates

Planning, Development & Heritage Consultants

Rochdale Council

Land Off Heywood Old Road, Middleton

Statement of Community Involvement

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by Paul Butler Associates on behalf of Rochdale Council. The Statement is part of a suite of technical documents submitted in support of a planning application for the proposed erection of a Special Educational Needs (SEN) school for up to 64 pupils on land off Heywood Old Road in Middleton.
- 1.2 The planning application seeks consent for the construction of a new SEN school with associated access, vehicle parking and drop off, and landscaping. The school will provide a satellite school to Redwood Secondary School, which is an existing SEN school based in Rochdale. The school will provide much-needed public infrastructure in a high-quality facility for children and young people in Heywood and Middleton, and across the wider Rochdale Borough, who have autism.
- 1.3 The accompanying Planning Statement prepared by Paul Butler Associates sets out the need for the development and the various public benefits that will be delivered. This Statement has been prepared to demonstrate the consultation that was undertaken by the Council prior to submission of the application.
- 1.4 This statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2 provides a brief overview of relevant local and national planning policy;
 - Section 3 sets out the key events in the consultation process;
 - Section 4 provides an analysis of feedback, an overview of changes made, and the Team's response; and,
 - Section 5 provides a summary and information regarding future consultations to be undertaken.

2. National and Local Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

- 2.1 In preparing this statement, the Project Team has had regard to the principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which places significant importance on early engagement at 'pre-application' stage.

- 2.2 Paragraph 40 explains that:

'Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.'

- 2.3 Paragraphs 42-44 of the NPPF go on to emphasise the importance of statutory consultees and other consenting bodies participating in pre-application discussions to enable early consideration of all the fundamental issues.

- 2.4 Within the 'Achieving well-designed places' chapter (12), the NPPF stresses at paragraph 137 the importance of early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes and that this is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interest. It states that applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community, and that applications which can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.

Planning Practice Guidance

- 2.5 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides additional advice for applicants prior to submitting an application. This reinforces the value of pre-application engagement by prospective applicants which can offer significant potential to improve both the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system and improve the quality of planning applications and their likelihood of success.¹
- 2.6 The PPG also offers advice on which parties should be involved at pre-application stage including:
- The local planning authority;
 - Statutory and non-statutory consultees;
 - Elected members; and
 - Local people.²

Rochdale Borough Council's of Statement Community Involvement (SCI) – August 2021

- 2.7 Rochdale Borough Council have an adopted SCI dated August 2021. In relation to planning applications this document sets out the Council's procedure for advertising and consulting on applications in line with their statutory duties.
- 2.8 Paragraph 5.9 recognises that 'Involvement in the process can often be useful before an application is formally submitted. The Council encourages applicants to undertake discussions with us prior to submitting their application'.
- 2.9 The SCI notes that 'For significant development proposals the Council will encourage developers to consult with the community before they submit a planning application. This enables the applicants to explain their proposals, receive feedback on which they might be

¹ Paragraph 001, Reference ID 20-001-20190315.

² Paragraph 003, Reference ID 20-003-20140306.

able to act, create an atmosphere of genuine interest in the views of the local community and provide more certainty about any level of concern and the issues of concern.' The SCI sets out various methods which are likely to be suitable for consulting the local community and could be used if deemed appropriate. These include: a letter drop, an exhibition or presentation, social media or websites, or a press release. It is noted that the scale of an application will determine the scope of community consultation.

3. The Consultation Process

3.1 The Project Team recognises the importance of pre-application stakeholder involvement and has undertaken an extensive consultation exercise on the development proposals for this site. Key stakeholders have been involved from inception stage and consultation has been ongoing in various mediums which has helped to guide the design development of the proposals. The key consultation methods employed as part of the project have included:

- Early discussions with the end user Redwood Secondary, the neighbouring school Edgar Wood Academy, and other relevant internal stakeholders such as Children's Services.
- Pre-application engagement with planning officers at Rochdale Borough Council (RBC).
- Various engagement with local ward Councillors to keep them updated on progress.
- Letter drop to neighbouring residents and visitors notifying them of the proposals.
- Drop-in consultation event held at Langley Family Hub, Middleton on 4th March 2026.

Pre-application with Rochdale Borough Council

3.2 Prior to the application submission, engagement with RBC officers took place via submission of a formal pre-application enquiry (ref PREAPP/00146/24). A written response was issued dated 29 May 2025. The response provided guidance on the details necessary to demonstrate that the principle of the development is acceptable. Guidance was also provided in relation to design and the scope of information required to support a submission.

3.3 The pre-application enquiry sought advice from internal consultees such as Highways and Environmental Health, and external consultees including Sport England and GMAAS.

Consultation with Elected Members and Local Ward Councillors

- 3.4 The Early Help and Schools Team have maintained dialogue with and briefings with the elected Members. Local Ward Councillors were also issued the consultation letter inviting them to attend the drop-in event at Langley Family Hub.

Consultation with the Edgar Wood Academy

- 3.5 As the occupier of the neighbouring site, and an existing educational facility which accommodates an SEN satellite unit, early engagement has been undertaken with Edgar Wood Academy. The proposals will utilise the existing access from Heywood Old Road which serves Edgar Wood Academy, and a small portion of the site will be gifted from the Edgar Wood Academy to the new SEN school to facilitate the new access road.

Consultation with the Local Community

- 3.6 A consultation letter was circulated to neighbouring residents and businesses. The letter confirmed details of the proposals, set out the benefits of the development and included a draft site plan. Details of Paul Butler Associates' email and postal address were included should any recipients have any queries on the proposals.
- 3.7 The letter also included details of a drop-in consultation event about the new satellite school which took place at Langley Family Hub on Windemere Road, Middleton, M24 4LA on 4th March 2026, from 4pm - 7pm.
- 3.8 The proposals were presented at the event on a banner and electronic screen. Representatives from RBC attended the event, including the Early Help and Schools Team and project manager, together with the head teacher of Redwood School, and members of the project team including Equilibrium Architects, Gleeds and Paul Butler Associates.

- 3.9 The event was attended by four people; these were residents living close by to the proposed development site. Members of the project team were available to discuss the proposals and respond to any questions raised. Discussions were had on an informal basis and feedback was noted. Comment sheets were available for people to complete and return at the event. Those who were unable to attend the event were able to submit comments via email.

4. Consultation Analysis and Project Team Response

Introduction

- 4.1 This section summarises the feedback received, how this has informed the evolution of the design and guided the proposed development for which planning permission is now sought. The feedback in response to the proposals has overall been positive.

Feedback received from Rochdale Borough Council (RBC)

- 4.2 In response to pre-application advice regarding the development of land designated as Protected Open Land (POL), a robust planning case has been made within the submitted Planning Statement. The application is also supported by a condensed landscape visual assessment (LVA). With regard to comments received in relation to design, the submitted Design and Access Statement provides details of the design evolution, and how this has responded to the pre-application advice and the site constraints.
- 4.3 In relation to the comments from Sport England, the submitted drawings demonstrate that the proposed access will not adversely impact the use of the Edgar Wood playing pitches. An assessment of this against Sport England Playing Pitch Policy and the NPPF policies is provided at section 6.39 of the submitted Planning Statement.

Feedback from the Local Community

- 4.4 Feedback from the local community at the March consultation event provided useful comments in relation to the proposals. Written feedback was obtained at the event, and one response was submitted via email. Generally, people were comfortable with the proposals and appreciated the need for the development. However, some concerns were raised as detailed in the table below along with the project team's response.

Consultation comment	Project team response
Concern that the proposed location of the gate will give rise to anti – social behaviour on the access road, and requested that this is positioned closer to Heywood Old Road.	The gate has been re-located further west, closer to the access with Heywood Old Road, to prevent access outside of opening hours.
Security concerns and request for additional security fencing.	The proposals involve boundary fencing and two secure access gates. This will provide enhanced security to the land which is currently a vacant plot with no access restriction. The submitted Crime Impact Statement confirms the positive aspects of the proposal with respect to security. The report also makes recommendations for physical security measures and management / maintenance measures to further enhance the security credentials of the development. Further details of security measures to be incorporated into the proposals can be secured by way of condition.
Concern regarding noise pollution and light pollution, and a request for boundary treatment to mitigate this.	A noise impact assessment has been submitted in support of the application, this assesses the proposed development including impacts associated with the development including external areas, access road, and plant. The report concludes there would be no undue noise impacts upon neighbouring users as a result of noise emissions from the site. The application is also supported by an Exterior Lighting Design And Impact Assessment, this confirms there will be no impact on surrounding sensitive receptors.
Request for the building to be moved closer to Edgar Wood Academy.	The layout has been designed amidst various site constraints to accommodate access, parking, and drop-off requirements, as well as external areas for educational purposes. Moving the building would raise issues in terms of accommodating the access and required parking areas. An assessment of impact on amenity has been provided within the Planning Statement and it is judged that the separation distances to nearby properties is acceptable.
Loss of privacy due to the access road.	The proposals retain a green buffer between the access road and houses on Heywood Old Road. Planting is proposed to provide visual screening.

Concern about surface water flooding, and potential for the culvert to flood. Concern regarding a blocked gully at a residential property.	The application is supported by a Drainage Statement and Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The FRA report confirms that the site will be safe from flooding and will not result in an increase in flood risk elsewhere. in accordance with planning policy. The Drainage Statement confirms various SuDS measures will be incorporated into the drainage design, including tanked permeable paving, a detention basin, oversized pipes, filtration trenches and below ground storage in the form of geocellular crates. SuDS techniques will slow the flows from the proposed development, decreasing the peak discharge rate directed into Whittle Brook. Any permission will be subject to a Construction Management Plan (CMP) which will consider controlling flooding from blocked drains/run off.
Concern over construction impacts such as noise, dust, contractor parking and community liaison.	As noted above, a CMP will be prepared to demonstrate measures that will be adopted to ensure construction impacts on neighbours are minimised. This will include details in relation to the issues raised.
Request to purchase land to the rear of property.	This is a separate matter from the planning application and is being considered by the Council separately.
Traffic concerns.	The application is supported by a Transport Assessment which assesses the impact of the scheme on the highway network. This provides a robust assessment of parking and traffic, taking into account the future uplift in the number of pupils at Edgar Wood Academy. The report confirms that the proposed parking provision is adequate and that the development is not anticipated to have a material impact on the highway network.
Events outside of school hours.	Any events outside of regular school hours will be subject to an operating / management strategy to ensure there is no unacceptable impacts on neighbours.

How the Scheme has been Shaped in Light of Pre-application Engagement

- 4.5 The feedback that has been received from RBC planning officers, Sport England, and the Local Community has positively contributed to the final application proposals. The

collaborative design process has seen the scheme evolve in response to certain comments received.

- 4.6 The pre-application process has fed into the planning issues that have been considered as part of the design process and also shaped the scope of the submission. A key design change which has been incorporated into the proposals includes revision to the proposed site layout, which has evolved in response to comments regarding design included within RBC's written pre-application response. In addition, resident concerns have been responded to through updates to the proposals including the relocation of the security gate.

5. Summary and Conclusions

- 5.1 As part of the preparation of the planning application, a pre-application consultation exercise has been undertaken. The consultation process has been carried out in accordance with the requirement of national and local policy and guidance.
- 5.2 The objective of the pre-application consultation was to engage effectively with the local authority and the local community to introduce the proposals, and to identify and consider any issues prior to the submission of the application.
- 5.3 This statement has demonstrated that throughout the preparation of the proposed scheme, the applicant and design team have actively engaged with stakeholders and the local community. Further opportunities for local residents and businesses to comment on the proposed scheme will be provided through the Council's statutory consultation process. Additional value has been added to the project as a result of the consultation undertaken, and the proposals have been developed and refined to deliver a scheme of the highest possible quality. The project team look forward to working closely with RBC planning officers and other stakeholders in progressing the application through to a positive determination.

Next Steps

- 5.4 As part of the planning application process, RBC will now undertake their own statutory consultation (in accordance with their Statement of Community Involvement) to publicise and seek comments on the planning application to inform the decision making process.