

Date: 27 July 2026
Our ref: 552565
Your ref: PL/2026/0509



Michael Atkinson-Smith
Rochdale Borough Council

Customer Services
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BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Michael Atkinson-Smith

Planning consultation: Change of use from warehouse (Class B2/ E) to an SEN school (Class F1) including installation of a bicycle store, bin store, associated car parking and installation 3.0m high fencing and gate.

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

Thank you for your consultation on the above which was received by Natural England on 29 June 2026 which was received by Natural England on the same date.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

SUMMARY OF NATURAL ENGLAND'S ADVICE

FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED TO DETERMINE IMPACTS ON DESIGNATED SITES

As submitted, the application could have potential significant effects on:

- Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Rochdale Canal Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Natural England requires further information in order to determine the significance of these impacts and the scope for mitigation.

The following information is required:

- A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) that includes an assessment of the concerns set out in this letter.

Without this information, Natural England may need to object to the proposal.

Please re-consult Natural England once this information has been obtained.

Natural England's further advice on designated sites/landscapes and advice on other issues is set out below.

Internationally and nationally designated sites

The application site is within 4m of Rochdale Canal SAC and Rochdale Canal SSSI.

In considering the European site interest, Natural England advises that you, as a competent authority under the provisions of the Habitats Regulations, should have regard for any potential impacts that a plan or project may have¹. The [Conservation objectives](#) for each European site explain how the site should be restored and/or maintained and may be helpful in assessing what, if any, potential impacts a plan or project may have.

Please see the subsequent sections of this letter for our advice relating to SSSI features.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

Despite the proximity of the application to European Sites, the consultation documents provided do not include information to demonstrate that the requirements of regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) have been considered by your authority, i.e. the consultation does not include a Habitats Regulations Assessment.

In advising your authority on the requirements relating to HRA, it is Natural England's advice that the proposal is not necessary for the management of the European site. Your authority should therefore determine whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on any European site, proceeding to the Appropriate Assessment stage where significant effects cannot be ruled out.

Natural England advises that there is currently not enough information provided in the application to determine whether the likelihood of significant effects can be ruled out.

- We advise that further information required to understand how surface water run off and foul discharge will be dealt with to ensure there will be no pollution entering the designated sites. Potential hydrological impacts which may arise from surface (both operational and construction) and foul discharge should be considered within the assessment along with any required mitigation measures if necessary.

Rochdale Canal SSSI

As submitted, the application does not contain sufficient information to conclude that the proposed development is not likely to damage or destroy the interest features for which Rochdale Canal SSSI has been notified. As the features of the SSSI coincide with those for the European Sites our concerns are set out above.

Please note that if your authority is minded to grant planning permission contrary to the advice in this letter, you are required under Section 281 (6) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to notify Natural England of the permission, the terms on which it is proposed to grant it and how, if at all, your authority has taken account of Natural England's advice. You must also allow a further period of 21 days before the operation can commence.

If you have any queries relating to the advice in this letter, please email consultations@naturalengland.org.uk, quoting the reference number at the top of this letter.

For any new consultations, or to provide further information on this consultation please send your correspondences to consultations@naturalengland.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-regulations-assessments-protecting-a-european-site>

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