

Planning Statement

2-4 BETHEL STREET | HEYWOOD |
OL10 1HU

PROJECT NO: RA26114
DATE: 27-07-2026
REVISION NO: -



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1. INTRODUCTION

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of an application relating to 2–4 Bethel Street, Heywood. It should be read alongside drawing RA26114-002 (Existing Plans and Elevations), drawing RA26114-003 Rev. 3 (Proposed Plans and Elevations) and the other documents submitted with the application.

The proposal would secure the comprehensive refurbishment and beneficial reuse of a prominent vacant building which is presently in a visibly poor and deteriorating condition. It would introduce four new apartment units in a highly accessible town-centre location, while repairing the street edge and making more efficient use of previously developed land.

The main planning considerations are:

- The suitability of the proposed residential use
- The scale and design of the upward extension
- The impact on the building as a non-designated heritage asset
- Residential amenity
- Highways, parking and sustainable travel
- The regeneration benefits of bringing a long-vacant building back into use

2. SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

The application site occupies the north-west side of Bethel Street, immediately behind the commercial frontage to Market Street in central Heywood. The building abuts neighbouring premises and forms part of a varied and tightly developed urban block. The surrounding area contains a broad mix of shops, services, licensed premises, community uses, commercial buildings, surface parking and residential accommodation.

The existing building is two storeys with a pitched roof. Its Bethel Street elevation contains a distinctive red-brick upper-floor frontage with Gothic-influenced window heads and a central gabled feature, above a largely blind and heavily weathered rendered ground floor. The building is vacant and visibly dilapidated, with stained and failed finishes, local cracking, blocked openings and general deterioration. Its present condition detracts from the appearance of Bethel Street.

Rochdale Borough Council's register identifies 2–4 Bethel Street as a non-designated heritage asset. The building is therefore not statutorily listed, but its local historic and architectural interest is a material planning consideration.



Figure 1: Existing Bethel Street frontage and side access.

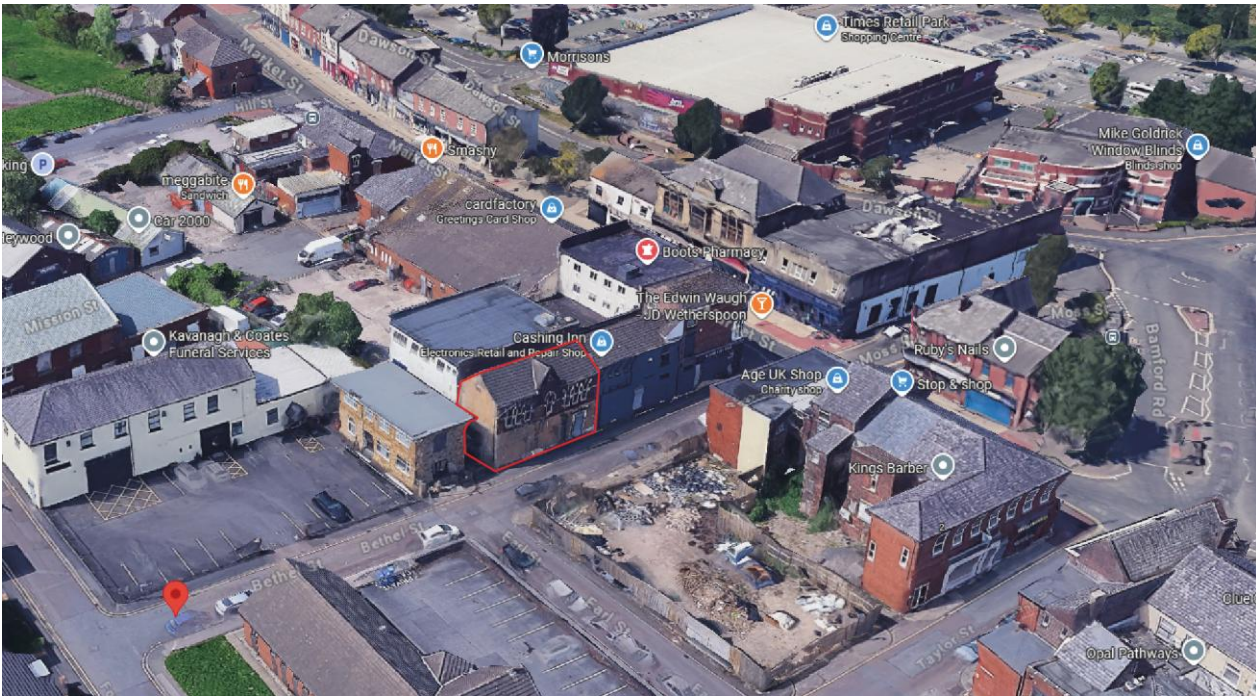


Figure 2: Aerial context. The application building is outlined in red; the approved apartment site lies opposite.

The vacant land opposite, bounded by Earl Street, Bethel Street and Taylor Street, benefits from permission 23/00727/FUL for a four-storey building containing 23 apartments. That permission is relevant contextual evidence of the Council's support for additional housing, a four-storey urban scale and a car-free residential scheme with cycle storage in this immediate town-centre location. It is acknowledged that every application must nevertheless be determined on its own merits.

3. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks permission for the conversion and refurbishment of the existing two-storey building, together with an upward extension of two additional floors, to provide four self-contained one-bedroom apartments. As illustrated by the three-dimensional views on drawing RA26114-003 Rev. 3, the first additional floor would form a full new storey above the existing building, while the uppermost floor would be contained within the new mansard roof space.

- One single-bedroom apartment would be provided at each of ground, first, second and third-floor level, accessed from a shared internal stair.
- Each apartment would contain a separate bedroom, bathroom and open-plan living, dining and kitchen area.
- The new windows and architectural treatment have been designed to complement the proportions, rhythm and character of the existing building, with vertically proportioned openings, horizontal string courses, a clearly defined entrance and a restrained rendered finish.
- Windows would be introduced to the exposed side elevation to provide additional daylight and outlook.
- Secure internal cycle storage would be incorporated beneath the staircase at ground-floor level.

The development remains within the established footprint. It therefore makes use of an existing building without encroaching onto undeveloped land.

4. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.1 NATIONAL POLICY

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) is a material consideration. Relevant themes include the presumption in favour of sustainable development; boosting the supply of homes; supporting the vitality of town centres; promoting sustainable transport; making effective use of land and buildings; securing well-designed places; and taking account of the effect of development on non-designated heritage assets.

Of particular relevance, the Framework supports the efficient use of land, identifies town centres and locations well served by public transport as suitable for optimised densities, and encourages efforts to bring empty homes and other buildings back into residential use.

4.2 DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND GUIDANCE

The statutory development plan includes Places for Everyone, adopted by Rochdale Borough Council on 21 March 2024, together with the Rochdale Core Strategy (adopted October 2016) and relevant saved policies.

The most relevant Core Strategy policies are:

- SP2 and SP3: the spatial strategy and priorities for the townships, including regeneration of Heywood town centre.
- C1: delivering the right amount of housing in the right places.
- C3: delivering the right type of housing, promoting efficient densities and focusing higher-density development in and around town centres.
- P1, P2 and P3: improving image, protecting and enhancing character and heritage, and securing high-quality design.
- G1, G2, G8 and G9: climate change, energy, flood risk and environmental protection.
- T1 and T2: sustainable transport and accessibility.
- DM1: general development requirements, including amenity, design, access, parking, servicing and environmental effects.

5. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

5.1 Principle of residential development

The principle of residential use is strongly supported. The site is in central Heywood, immediately accessible to shops, services, employment opportunities and public transport. The proposal reuses previously developed land and an existing vacant building, thereby avoiding pressure on greenfield land and supporting the vitality and passive surveillance of the town centre.

Four one-bedroom apartments would make a modest but useful contribution to local housing supply and choice. Their higher-density form is appropriate to the town-centre setting and accords with Policy C3, which specifically directs higher-density development to and around Heywood town centre.

The approved 23-apartment development opposite reinforces the changing residential character of this back-of-centre block. It demonstrates that the immediate locality is capable, in principle, of accommodating apartments at four-storey scale without dedicated car parking, subject to the detailed merits of the scheme.

5.2 Design, scale and townscape

The existing building has a distinctive architectural character but is currently vacant and in a poor state of repair. Its appearance has been affected by deteriorating materials, weathered finishes and the largely blank ground-floor frontage. The proposal provides an opportunity to comprehensively refurbish the building, improve its appearance and establish an active residential frontage along Bethel Street.

The proposal would add two floors above the existing two-storey building. The first would form a full additional storey, while the uppermost floor would be contained within the mansard roof. This approach reduces the visual prominence of the uppermost floor and helps the additional height sit comfortably within the surrounding town-centre setting.

The proposed windows and external detailing have been designed to complement the character of the existing building. The windows maintain a regular rhythm and vertical emphasis, while the recessed openings, horizontal string courses and simple rendered finish create a balanced and coherent elevation. The dormer windows align with the openings below, helping to visually connect the mansard roof with the remainder of the building.

The surrounding area contains buildings of different heights, forms and architectural styles, including substantial commercial premises and the approved four-storey apartment development opposite. The proposed scale would therefore be appropriate within this varied town-centre context and would not appear isolated or out of character.

Overall, the proposal would improve the appearance of the site, strengthen the Bethel Street frontage and provide a high-quality and long-term use for a prominent vacant building.

5.3 Non-designated heritage asset

The architectural and historic interest of 2–4 Bethel Street is principally derived from its longstanding presence within Heywood town centre, its traditional proportions, vertically emphasised window openings, decorative detailing and central gabled feature. However, the building's appearance and condition have deteriorated considerably as a result of vacancy, weathering, previous alterations and limited maintenance.

The proposal has been designed to respond positively to the established character of the building while providing the additional accommodation required to secure its viable reuse. The proposed elevations retain a strong vertical emphasis and regular window rhythm, together with horizontal string courses and recessed openings that reflect the proportions and architectural composition of the existing building.

The additional height would be handled through one full additional storey and an uppermost floor contained within a mansard roof. This provides a clear transition between the main elevation and roof level and avoids the appearance of an undifferentiated four-storey frontage. The dormer windows would be aligned with the openings below to maintain a consistent and ordered elevation.

Although the proposal would change the building's existing appearance, it would retain its established footprint, street alignment and prominent position within Bethel Street. The development would secure the comprehensive repair, occupation and continued maintenance of a vacant and deteriorating building, preventing further decline and allowing it to continue contributing positively to the surrounding townscape.

The proposal would also provide four new homes in a sustainable location, improve the appearance and activity of the street frontage and support the wider regeneration of Heywood town centre. These benefits should be given significant weight when considering the effect of the development on the building as a non-designated heritage asset.

5.4 Residential quality and amenity

The submitted layouts provide each apartment with a separate bedroom, bathroom and open-plan living/kitchen area. The indicated principal rooms are comfortably proportioned.

Habitable rooms are served by external windows, with the principal living spaces and bedrooms addressing Bethel Street and/or the exposed side elevation. The regular openings would provide suitable daylight, outlook and natural ventilation for a town-centre conversion.

The building lies in a mixed central location where a degree of commercial activity and background noise is expected. Suitable glazing, ventilation and separation between apartments can be addressed through detailed acoustic design and Building Regulations.

There are no directly opposing residential windows at close range on the principal Bethel Street frontage. The arrangement would therefore avoid unacceptable overlooking or loss of privacy. The development remains on the existing footprint and would not materially reduce neighbouring private amenity space.

5.5 Access, parking and sustainable travel

No off-street car parking is proposed. This is appropriate in principle for a small apartment scheme in the town centre, where everyday services and public transport are available within easy walking distance and where public parking is already present nearby. The proposal is unlikely to generate a level of movement that would have a severe effect on the highway network.

A secure internal cycle store is shown beneath the staircase at ground-floor level, supporting active travel and reducing dependence on private cars. The approved car-free apartment scheme opposite is a relevant indication that a parking-free approach can be acceptable in this location.

5.6 Refuse, servicing and management

Refuse and recycling bins for the four apartments would be stored on the existing strip of land along the exposed side of the building. This location is within the application site, is directly accessible from Bethel Street and provides a practical route for residents to present bins for collection without taking them through the internal communal areas.

The bins should be positioned and, where necessary, enclosed so that they do not obstruct the side passage, affect pedestrian visibility or detract from the street scene.



Figure 4: Existing side land proposed for refuse and recycling bin storage.

5.7 Environmental considerations

The reuse of the existing footprint and structure represents an efficient use of embodied resources. The comprehensive refurbishment offers the opportunity to improve thermal performance, air-tightness, windows, services and water efficiency substantially beyond the present condition.

5.8 Planning balance and public benefits

The proposal would deliver the following public benefits:

- reuse of a prominent vacant and deteriorating local heritage asset
- four additional homes in a sustainable and accessible town-centre location

- efficient use of an existing building and previously developed land
- visual improvement to Bethel Street
- support for the vitality of Heywood town centre and nearby businesses and
- a car-free form of development supported by cycle storage.

6. CONCLUSION

The application presents an opportunity refurbish and develop a prominent vacant building and secure a viable residential future for it. The site is well suited to apartments because of its central location, accessibility and mixed urban surroundings. The proposal aligns with the strategic objectives of directing housing to sustainable locations, making effective use of land and buildings, supporting town-centre regeneration and improving the image of the borough.

The buildings present condition is poor, its significance has already been eroded, and the proposal would secure its repair, occupation and ongoing maintenance. Together with the provision of four homes and the improvement of the street scene.