

Officer Report

Case Reference: PL/2026/0551
Location: Units G34 - G46, Middleton Shopping Centre, Middleton, Rochdale, M24 4EL
Proposal: Installation of powder-coated aluminium panels to the front and side elevations
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Luke Rigby

SITE

The application relates to units G34 – G46 of the Middleton Shopping Centre. This site is west of Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area and within the Defined Urban Area. The shopping centre is two stories and provides parking on the roof of the building. South of the shopping centre is a hardstanding pedestrian area that connects the bus station to shopping centre.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks planning permission for the installation of powder-coated aluminium panels to the front and side elevation of the existing building; the panels would act as signage zones.

For the avoidance of doubt, the application relates to the aluminium panels only, advertisement consent is to be sought separately.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

15/00669/FUL – Conversion of 8 existing units into four enlarged units including ground floor infill extension, external alterations to include new cladding, shop frontages and external canopy, new car parking area to front with public realm improvements, landscaping and security bollards and formation of new access onto Manchester New Road. Approve Subject to Conditions

23/00301/FUL – Refurbishment of existing shop and front roller shutters. Approve Subject to Conditions

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Sub-Regional Guidance

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE)

JP-P1 Sustainable Places

JP-P2 Heritage

Local Guidance

Saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006:

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) 2016:

P2 Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

P3 Improving Design of New Development

DM1 General Development Requirements

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

None relevant.

PUBLICITY

Site Notice: Posted 28.07.2026

Press Notice: Posted in the Rochdale Guardian on 16.07.2026

Neighbour notification letters: In accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement, notification letters were sent to immediate neighbours.

SUMMARY OF THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

None received.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Conservation and Design

Thanks for consulting me on this application for works to Middleton Shopping Centre, which is adjacent to the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area. The existing Shopping Centre dates from the second half of the 20th century and is not of any

particular architectural or historic interest. The proposal is for the installation of two new signage zones: one on the southern elevation facing the bus station and another on part of the east elevation facing Colmar House. There is no objection in heritage terms to the principle of these signage zones. However, it will be important to get the details right as signage in this position on the building will be far more prominent.

With this in mind, I would recommend that you clarify the following:

- Means of fixing – I would ask for a section so you can see how it would fit with the existing panels and the brick detailing. It would look neater if the panels do not protrude beyond the brick below, and so that it lines up with the panels it would cover (i.e. not cut through them)*
- While they may not know the precise details of the adverts, it would be best if they could submit an advert consent application, with parameters for the signage (i.e. locations/size/illumination/means of fixing). This would prevent the need for additional advert consents and would also ensure that any future signage does not water down the existing concept. Something similar was done with Rochdale Riverside.*

ASSESSMENT

Principle

The application site is located entirely within the Defined Urban Area under Saved UDP Policy G/D/2, however, is within the wider setting of the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area (henceforth, the MTCA).

Policy HE6 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that when considering the impact of a development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the assets conservation; this weight should be proportionate to the importance of the asset. Policy HE4 of the Framework states that any harm to, or complete loss of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.

Core Strategy policy P2 states that the Council will conserve, promote and enhance key heritage assets and their wider settings, including listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and scheduled ancient monuments. The policy also requires the protection of the borough's heritage by conserving, enhancing and utilising other non-statutory heritage assets of local interest.

The proposed works are to improve the shopfronts of the Middleton Shopping Centre and would not directly impact on the significance of the MTCA. Subject to an assessment of the impact of the development visually on the significance of the conservation area, the principle of development is therefore considered acceptable.

Design, character and appearance

The application proposes the addition of 2No. signage zones to the face of the Middleton Shopping Centre. These would be constructed of aluminium and finished

in dark grey. The Council's Conservation Officer was consulted on the proposal and notes that the Middleton Shopping Centre dates from the latter half of the 20th century and is not of any particular architectural or historic interest and that there is no in-principle objection to the installation of the signage zones.

The Conservation Officer has suggested that sectional drawings should be provided to demonstrate the method of fixing and alignment with existing brick detailing. However, given the building is of relatively modern construction and outside of the MTCA, it is considered that the submitted elevations provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the proposal. The precise fixing method and minor visual protrusions would not result in material harm to the setting of the adjacent MTCA, nor the general visual amenities of the area. Officers therefore consider that the requirement to provide further sectional drawings would therefore be disproportionate to the scale and nature of the development.

Furthermore, the Conservation Officer has also requested that the applicant submit a parameter-led Advertisement Consent to control future advertisements. The current application is for the installation of the signage zones only, and any future advertisements erected on these zones will be subject to the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007. The Local Planning Authority maintains control of future advertisements through this separate regulatory framework where the impacts on visual amenities (including on the setting/significance of the MTCA) will be assessed on their individual merits. It is not reasonable nor necessary to require this to determine the current application.

Having regard to the above, the proposed development is considered to accord with Policies DM1, P2 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policies JP-P1, JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the design provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Residential amenity

The application is not considered significantly detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring uses; there are no neighbouring dwellings immediately adjacent to the application site and the surrounding use is predominantly commercial.

Highways and parking

The application would have no impact on highway safety or parking provision within the area and relates to the installation of signage zones only. Middleton Shopping Centre has parking available on the roof of the building.

Having regard to this, it is considered that the proposed development accords with Policy T2 and Appendix 5 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy.

Conclusion

Subject to the conditions set out below and taking into account the provisions of the development plan and all other material planning considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be granted.

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. [AC1]

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 hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason – To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

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

- DWG No. BC-MSC-BSCP-B03-001 (Existing and Proposed Elevations)
- DWG No. BC-MSC-BSCP-D03-001 (Proposed Block Plan)
- DWG No. BC-MSC-BSCP-D03-002 (Location Plan)

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 Unitary Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 3 The materials used in the construction of the exterior of the development hereby permitted shall be those specified on approved DWG No. BC-MSC-BSCP-B03-001 (Existing and Proposed Plans).

Reason – In the interests of ensuring a satisfactory visual appearance to the development and in accordance with Policies P2, P3 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-P1 and JP-P2 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.