

Officer Report

Case Reference: PL/2026/0634
Location: 1A RAILWAY STREET, LITTLEBOROUGH, OL15 8AG
Proposal: Change of use of dwellinghouse and ancillary storage buildings to provide additional floor space for existing nursery including alterations and additions to fenestration (part retrospective)
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Bob Melling

SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

The application site comprises Railway House Nursery at 1A Railway Street, Littleborough, an established childcare facility operating from a group of interconnected buildings including the main nursery building and ancillary accommodation to the rear. The site occupies a sustainable location adjacent to Littleborough Railway Station and within walking distance of Littleborough Town Centre. The surrounding area is mixed in character, with the River Roch and Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area located to the north, the Co-op supermarket and associated car park to the south, No. 3 Railway Street, a residential property, to the west, and the railway station and associated infrastructure to the east. The site lies outside the boundary of the Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area and is located within Flood Zone 1.

PROPOSAL

Permission is sought for the change of use of the attached dwellinghouse at 1A Railway Street to form part of the existing Railway House Nursery, together with the retrospective regularisation of nursery accommodation within a former workshop and detached garage located to the rear of the site. The proposal would create a single, integrated nursery facility and increase the nursery's registered capacity from 45 to 55 children. In addition to the internal reconfiguration of the buildings, the development includes alterations to the existing fenestration comprising the insertion of two new windows and one new door, together with the replacement of two existing windows with doors.

RELEVANT PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT HISTORY

14/00244/FUL: Proposed change of use from retail (use class A1) to a day nursery (use class D1). Approved April 2014.

84/D16747: Single Storey Extension To Workshop And Detached Private Garage. Approved July 1984.

81/D12434: Two Storey Extension To Front Of Dwellinghouse. Approved June 1981.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Regional Guidance

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE) 2024:

JP-S1 - Sustainable Development

JP-S4 - Flood Risk and the Water Environment

JP-P1 - Sustainable Places

JP-P2 - Heritage

JP-P5 - Education, Skills and Knowledge

Saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006:

G/D/1 - Defined Urban Area

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

C7 - Delivering education facilities

C8 - Improving community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities

P1 - Improving image

P2 - Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

P3 - Improving design of new development

G8 - Managing water resources and flood risk

G9 - Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability

T2 - Improving accessibility

DM1 - General development requirements

Appendix 5 - Schedule of parking standards

Other Material Considerations

Guidelines & Standards for Residential Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2016.

PUBLICITY

Site Notice: 23.08.2026

Press Notice: 18.08.2026

Neighbour notification letters: 18.08.2026

Weekly List: 24.08.2026

Earliest Decision Date: 25.08.2026

SUMMARY OF THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

N/A

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways (summary): No objections.

LLFA: No comments received at time of writing.

Conservation Officer (summary): No comments received at time of writing.

ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan comprises the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, the Rochdale Core Strategy and saved policies of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is also a material consideration.

The application relates to Railway House Nursery, an established childcare facility operating from the site since 2014. The proposal seeks the change of use of the attached dwellinghouse to form part of the existing nursery together with the regularisation of additional nursery accommodation within existing ancillary buildings. The proposal would increase the nursery's registered capacity from 45 to 55 children.

The site is located within the defined urban area of Littleborough where the spatial strategy of the Development Plan generally seeks to direct development to sustainable locations. The site occupies a highly accessible location adjacent to Littleborough Railway Station and within walking distance of the town centre and local residential communities. The proposal would therefore be situated in a location where users are able to access the facility by a range of transport modes.

The NPPF confirms that planning decisions should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and support strong, vibrant and healthy communities through the retention and development of accessible community services and facilities. It also seeks to make effective use of land and existing buildings.

The proposal would not result in the introduction of a new use within the area but would instead facilitate the expansion of an existing and well-established nursery. The application demonstrates an identified demand for additional childcare provision, including a waiting list for places and increased demand arising from the expansion of funded childcare provision. The proposal would therefore support the continued operation and expansion of a community facility that provides an important service to local families whilst also supporting local employment and economic activity.

The proposal would result in the loss of one dwellinghouse. However, the dwelling is physically attached to the existing nursery and would be incorporated into a single integrated childcare facility. Whilst the loss of a residential unit attracts moderate weight against the proposal, this must be balanced against the benefits associated with the provision of additional childcare capacity, the enhancement of an established community facility and the efficient re-use of existing buildings in a sustainable location. NPPF Policy HC2 also requires Authorities to attach considerable importance to providing sufficient education facilities, which includes early years provision such as this. In this instance, it is considered that the identified public and community benefits outweigh the loss of a single dwelling.

Accordingly, subject to compliance with other relevant Development Plan policies relating to matters such as residential amenity, highways, design and heritage, the principle of the proposed development is considered acceptable and accords with the objectives of the Development Plan and the NPPF.

Impact on Character and Heritage

The proposal involves only limited external alterations to the existing buildings. The most noticeable changes relate to the insertion of additional openings within the east-facing elevation. Notwithstanding this, the proposed windows and doors are considered to be appropriately proportioned, sympathetic to the host building and reflective of the scale, appearance and detailing of the existing fenestration.

The application site lies immediately adjacent to, but outside, the Littleborough Town Centre Conservation Area. Given the limited nature of the proposed external alterations, together with their sympathetic design, it is not considered that the development would adversely affect the character or appearance of the surrounding area, nor would it result in harm to the significance, setting or appreciation of the Conservation Area. The proposal would therefore preserve the setting of the Conservation Area and complies with the relevant heritage policies of the Development Plan and the NPPF. Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on visual amenity, local character and heritage assets.

Residential Amenity

The principal residential amenity consideration relates to the impact of the proposed incorporation of the dwellinghouse into the existing nursery operation, particularly on the occupiers of neighbouring No. 3 Railway Street. Whilst the proposal would result in an intensification of the established nursery use, including an increase in capacity from 45 to 55

children and the provision of one additional member of staff, it is not considered that the scale of the increase would fundamentally alter the character of the use or give rise to a level of activity significantly greater than that already associated with the lawful operation of the nursery. Given the site's long-established use as a childcare facility, the relationship with surrounding uses, and the relatively modest increase in capacity proposed, it is not considered that the development would result in unacceptable levels of noise, disturbance or general activity that would warrant refusal on residential amenity grounds.

Furthermore, the proposal does not involve any extensions or significant external alterations that would result in overlooking, overshadowing, loss of privacy, loss of outlook or an overbearing impact upon neighbouring occupiers. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to comply with the amenity objectives of the Development Plan.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The site lies within Flood Zone 1 but is also located within a Critical Drainage Area. As the proposal does not involve any significant operational development and would not alter existing surface water or foul drainage arrangements, it is not considered to increase flood risk either within the site or elsewhere. The proposal is therefore acceptable in flood risk and drainage terms.

Highway Safety

The Local Highway Authority has been consulted on the application and raises no objection to the proposed development. In reaching this view, it notes that the site occupies a highly sustainable town centre location that is well served by public transport and is within close proximity to local services and amenities. The Highway Authority considers the proposal to represent only a modest intensification of the existing nursery use through the incorporation of the adjoining dwellinghouse into the established operation.

The proposal would not result in any alterations to the existing access arrangements, highway network, servicing arrangements or emergency access provision. Whilst no additional parking is proposed, the Highway Authority is satisfied that, given the site's sustainable location and the limited increase in capacity, this does not warrant an objection. Furthermore, no highway safety concerns have been identified as a result of the development.

Having regard to the advice of the Highway Authority and the nature of the proposal, it is not considered that the development would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety, parking demand or the operation of the local highway network. The proposal is therefore acceptable in highway and transportation terms.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

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) (5)

- 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
- Existing Ground Floor Plan. Dwg no. 26.3827.1
- Existing First Floor Plan. Dwg no. 26.3827.2

- Existing Elevations. Dwg no. 26.3827.3
- Existing & Proposed Block Plans. Dwg no. 26.3827.4
- Proposed Ground Floor Plan. Dwg no. 26.3827.SC1.1A
- Proposed First Floor Plan. Dwg no. 26.3827.SC1.2A
- Proposed Elevations. Dwg no. 26.3827.SC1.3
- 'Transport Statement' by James Campbell Associates Ltd dated June 2026
- 'Flood Risk Statement' by James Campbell Associates Ltd dated June 2026
- 'Heritage Statement' by James Campbell Associates Ltd dated June 2026
- 'Planning Statement' by James Campbell Associates Ltd dated June 2026

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 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) or any Order revoking, re-enacting or modifying that Order, the premises hereby approved shall be used only as a children's day nursery and for no other purpose, including any other purpose within Use Class E or any other use class.

Reason: The application has been assessed on the basis of the specific operational characteristics of a children's day nursery. Having regard to the limited parking provision available to serve the site and its relationship with nearby residential properties, a different use within Class E could give rise to materially greater impacts in terms of highway safety, parking demand, traffic generation and residential amenity. The condition is therefore necessary in the interests of highway safety and the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, in accordance with Policies JP-P1 and JP-C8 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, Policies G9, P3, T1, T2 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 4 The premises shall not be open for trade or business before 07:30 hours nor after 18:00 hours Monday to Friday inclusive or at any time on Saturdays or Sundays.

Reason: In the interests of safeguarding the living conditions of nearby residential occupiers and to ensure that the operation of the development does not result in unacceptable noise, disturbance or activity outside normal daytime hours, in accordance with Policies 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.

- 5 The number of children accommodated in the nursery at any one time shall not exceed a total of 55.

Reason: To ensure that the intensity of the use remains commensurate with the level of parking provision available to serve the site and to safeguard highway safety and residential amenity in accordance with Policy JP-P1 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, Policies G9, T1, T2 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy 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.