

Officer Report

Case Reference: PL/2026/0499
Location: UNIT 2, PRIMROSE STREET, ROCHDALE, OL12 6AW
Proposal: Change of use from vehicle servicing and repairs garage (Use Class B2) to a beauty and aesthetics clinic (Use Class E)
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Bob Melling

SITE

The application relates to Unit 2, Primrose Street, Rochdale, comprising a commercial unit located within a designated Mixed Employment Zone. The site was most recently occupied as a vehicle servicing and repair garage (Use Class B2) but is currently vacant. Surrounding development comprises a variety of commercial and employment-generating premises together with residential properties in the wider area. The site benefits from an existing vehicular access and parking provision and is well connected to the local highway network. The application site lies adjacent to the Spotland Bridge Conservation Area.

PROPOSAL

Permission is sought for the change of use of the existing premises from a vehicle servicing and repair garage (Use Class B2) to a beauty and aesthetics clinic (Use Class E).

The proposed development would involve internal alterations to facilitate the operation of the business, including the provision of treatment rooms, consultation areas, a reception and waiting area, staff facilities and ancillary storage accommodation.

The clinic would offer a range of beauty and aesthetic treatments and would operate on both an appointment and walk-in basis. Opening hours are proposed as follows:

- Monday to Friday: 09:00 to 18:00
- Saturday: 09:00 to 17:00
- Sunday: 12:00 to 16:00

The proposal would employ four full-time and two part-time members of staff.

No external alterations are proposed as part of the application and the existing access and parking arrangements would be retained.

RELEVANT PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT HISTORY

N/A

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Regional Guidance

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE):

JP-S1 Sustainable Development

JP-P1 Sustainable Places

JP-P2 Heritage

JP-C8 Transport Requirements of New Development

Saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

E/C/3 Mixed Employment Zones

Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

E2 Increasing jobs and prosperity

P1 Improving image

P2 Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

P3 Improving design of new development

T2 Improving accessibility

DM1 General development requirements

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

Supplementary Planning Guidance note 'Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development' (SPD).

PUBLICITY

Site Notice: 27.08.2026

Press Notice: 01.09.2026

Neighbour notification letters: 04.08.2026

Weekly List: 17.08.2026

SUMMARY OF THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

N/A

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways (Summary): No objections.

Conservation Officer (Summary): No objections.

ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

The application site is located within a designated Mixed Employment Zone (MEZ) as defined by Saved UDP Policy EC/3. The supporting text to the policy explains that such areas are typically characterised by older industrial premises, commercial buildings and vacant sites within established urban areas. These areas are intended to accommodate a wide variety of industrial, business and commercial activities that generate employment and support regeneration, provided that they remain compatible with neighbouring uses and do not adversely affect the operation of existing businesses. CS Policy E2 similarly seeks to support economic growth and maintain employment opportunities within the borough.

Permission is sought for the change of use of the premises from a vehicle servicing and repair garage (Use Class B2) to a beauty and aesthetics clinic (Use Class E). The proposed use would provide a range of beauty and aesthetic treatments within an existing commercial building and would generate employment opportunities through the creation of approximately four full-time and two part-time positions. The proposal would therefore retain the premises in active commercial use and contribute towards the economic function of the area.

CS Policy E2 seeks to protect existing employment zones and larger employment sites and premises within the north of the borough. However, the application site extends to approximately 465m² (0.0465ha) and is therefore significantly below the 0.2ha threshold identified within Policy E2 for the protection of employment sites and premises. Whilst the proposal would result in the loss of a B2 use from the site, the development would retain an employment-generating use within the building and would continue to support local economic activity.

Although a beauty and aesthetics clinic is not specifically identified within the list of uses set out in Saved UDP Policy EC/3, the supporting text to the policy recognises that Mixed Employment Zones accommodate a variety of commercial and employment-generating activities, including uses that are not industrial in nature, where they are compatible with the character and function of the area. The proposed use is considered to be a commercial service use that would operate from an existing commercial unit, would generate employment opportunities, and would not prejudice the continued operation of surrounding industrial and commercial businesses.

It is also noted that the premises are currently vacant and the proposal would bring an existing commercial unit back into productive use. The reoccupation of the building would support the objectives of Policy EC/3 and Policy E2 by maintaining economic activity within the Mixed Employment Zone and preventing the longer-term vacancy of the site.

In addition, NPPF Policy E2 states that substantial weight should be given to the economic benefits of proposals for commercial development which allow businesses to invest, expand and adapt. Policy L2 similarly requires substantial weight to be given to proposals that make better use of vacant and underutilised land and buildings. The proposal would facilitate the occupation of a vacant commercial unit by an employment-generating business and these benefits weigh in favour of the development.

Taking these matters into account, it is considered that the proposal would not materially undermine the overall function of the Mixed Employment Zone. The development would maintain an employment-generating use within an existing commercial building, contribute to the vitality of the local economy and make effective use of a vacant premises. The principle of the proposed development is therefore considered acceptable, subject to an assessment of all other material planning considerations.

Impact on Character and Heritage

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that, in the exercise of planning functions relating to land within or affecting the setting of a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

CS Policy P2 seeks to conserve, promote and enhance the borough's heritage assets and their settings, including conservation areas. Policy DM1 requires development proposals to respect the character, appearance and significance of heritage assets and their surroundings. NPPF Policies HE4, HE5, HE6 and HE9 seek to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance and support proposals which preserve the significance, character and appearance of conservation areas.

The application site lies adjacent to the Spotland Bridge Conservation Area, the significance of which derives principally from its historic association with Rochdale's industrial development, including the former textile mills and associated workers' housing that contribute to the area's special architectural and historic interest.

No external alterations to the building are proposed as part of the application. The proposal relates solely to the change of use and internal alterations required to facilitate the operation of the business. Any future advertisements or signage would require separate assessment under the Advertisement Regulations where necessary.

Given the absence of any external works, the proposal would not alter the appearance of the building, affect views into or out of the conservation area, or result in any physical changes that would impact upon the significance, character or appearance of the Spotland Bridge Conservation Area. Whilst the proposal would result in the loss of an existing industrial use, the building would remain in active commercial occupation and the change of use would not erode the industrial character of the wider area to any material extent.

Furthermore, the continued occupation and productive use of the building would assist in maintaining the vitality of the area and would secure the ongoing use of an existing commercial premises without the need for external alteration or redevelopment.

Having regard to the scale and nature of the proposal, it is considered that the development would preserve the character and appearance of the Spotland Bridge Conservation Area and would result in no harm to its significance. The proposal therefore accords with the statutory duty contained within Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, NPPF Policies HE4, HE5, HE6 and HE9, PfE Policies JP-P1, and CS Policies P2 and DM1.

Impact on Surrounding Occupiers

CS Policy DM1 seeks to ensure that development is compatible with surrounding land uses and does not result in unacceptable impacts upon the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. PfE Policy JP-P1 and NPPF Policy P3 similarly seek to secure high quality living conditions and ensure that development does not result in unacceptable impacts arising from noise, disturbance or other forms of pollution.

The proposed use would operate primarily on an appointment basis, with customer visits naturally staggered throughout the day according to the duration of treatments. Whilst customers would attend and depart from the premises throughout opening hours, the nature of the use is not considered likely to generate significant levels of noise, disturbance, activity or other impacts that would adversely affect neighbouring occupiers. Furthermore, the proposed use is considered likely to generate less noise and disturbance than the lawful B2 use of the premises as a vehicle repair garage.

Given that no external alterations are proposed and the development would not result in any overlooking, overshadowing, overbearing impacts or loss of privacy, it is considered that the proposal would not have an unacceptable effect on the amenities of surrounding occupiers.

Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to accord with CS Policy DM1, PfE Policy JP-P1, NPPF Policy P3 and the SPD for Residential Development.

Highways and Parking

CS Policy T2 seeks to ensure that development proposals do not adversely affect highway safety and that appropriate provision is made for access, parking and servicing. NPPF Policies TR3, TR4 and TR6 seek to ensure that development is located in sustainable locations, provides suitable access and parking arrangements and does not result in severe impacts on the transport network or unacceptable impacts on highway safety.

The proposal would utilise the existing vehicular and pedestrian access arrangements and would not require any alterations to the surrounding highway network.

The Local Highway Authority has been consulted and advises that whilst the proposed use would be expected to generate a different traffic profile to the existing use, it is not anticipated that the proposal would generate problematic levels of traffic. The Highway Authority further considers that the existing parking provision associated with the site is sufficient to support the proposed use.

The Highway Authority raises no concerns regarding the suitability of the existing access arrangements, emergency service access, highway safety, or the operation of the surrounding highway network. No new highways works are proposed as part of the development.

Having regard to the scale and nature of the proposal, the existing access arrangements, the parking provision available at the site, and the comments of the Local Highway Authority, it is considered that the development would not result in a severe adverse impact on the transport network or prejudice highway safety.

The proposal is therefore considered to accord with CS Policy T2 and NPPF Policies TR3, TR4 and TR6.

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) (2)

- 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:

- Planning Statement by Building Design Services dated June 2026
- Location Plan
- Existing Floor Plans. Dwg no. 2426/1
- Existing Elevations. Dwg no. 2426/2
- Proposed Floor Plans. Dwg no. 2426/3
- Proposed Elevations. Dwg no. 2426/4
- Existing and Proposed Site Plans. Dwg no. 2426/5

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.

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.