

HERITAGE & CONSERVATION CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Application Details

Heritage, Conservation & Design team officer

Catherine Fenghour

Date

14 September 2026

Application reference

PL/2026/0692

Address

Old Hall Street, Middleton, M24 1AG

Proposal

Erection of a mixed-use building comprising of a self-storage facility (Use Class B8) and ground floor commercial units (use class E) together with associated access, car parking, servicing infrastructure and landscaping

Affected Heritage Assets

Designated heritage assets

- Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area
- 3 Market Place (grade II)
- Providence Chapel (grade II)
- St Michael's Church (grade II)

Non-designated heritage assets

- 7 to 11 Market Place
- 23 to 25 Market Place
- Bricklayers Arms
- Assheton Arms
- Lodge Mill
- Brookside Mill
- Electricity substation (Townley Street)

Summary

There are no objections to the principle of the building and the increased height. There are concerns regarding the detailed treatment of the elevations and the proposed material palette and detailing.

Assessment

Site description and significance

Historically the site formed part of the grounds to Middleton Hall and was covered by outbuildings associated with the Hall. The Hall was demolished in the second half of the 19th century and replaced by a mix of terraced housing and industrial buildings, including Albany Mill, as well as a theatre. Some of these 19th century terraces remain to the north of Old Hall Street.

The site was last covered by a late 20th century building, used for storage purposes. This building was demolished following a fire and the site is currently vacant.

To the south of the site lies the Middleton Arena, which is also a relatively recent addition to the streetscene.

To the north and east of the site lies the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area. This Conservation Area includes, in the immediate vicinity of the site, the surviving terraces along Market Place, as well as Brookside and Lodge Mills, the former electricity substation on Townley Street, the Assheton Arms, and the Edgar Wood designed 3 Market Place.

Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area is one of the borough's outstanding conservation areas, famous for its links to eminent Arts and Crafts architect, Edgar Wood, as well as the medieval church of St Leonard's Church (grade I) and timber framed Old Boars Head (grade II*).

The scale, form and materiality of the former Storage World building was at odds with the surviving 19th century buildings which surrounded it. While outside of the Conservation Area, the site is within the setting of this asset, as well as the wider setting of other designated and non-designated heritage assets and was a detracting feature. The site is also within the wider setting of the Church of St Michael. The Church's crenelated tower is a landmark feature within the wider area, with key, long distance views from Market Place along Townley Street.

Relevant legislation and planning policy

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 66(1) - "in considering whether to grant planning permission [...] for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority [...] shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses."

Section 72 (1) - this applies to any buildings or other land within a conservation area. It requires local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2026)

Chapter 20 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Assessment of proposals

The proposal is for a new storage building on the western part of the site. The building would have four floors and an overall height of around 15m. At ground floor, units with shopfronts are proposed along three of the elevations. The upper floors would be given over to storage. The building would be constructed using a mix of masonry, brick slips and metal cladding. On upper floors where the elevations are blank, grid-like brick detailing is proposed to add visual interest.

The proposed building would have a reduced footprint when compared to the previous structure but would be of a greater height.

The application is supported by a detailed heritage statement, which sets out the significance of both designated and non-designated heritage assets within the vicinity, as well as assessing the impact of the proposals. Overall, the conclusions of this report are broadly agreed with.

There are no objections to the principle of reinstating a building on the site. The reduced footprint is also welcomed, as this offers an opportunity to improve permeability north-south into the Conservation Area and leaves a site along Townley Street, which could in future have a more active frontage onto this road.

The building would be taller than the previous structure but would be of a similar height to the adjacent Middleton Arena. The site is also at a lower level than the historic buildings to the north on the corner of Market Place and Long Street, and as a result would not appear disproportionate in comparison to them.

The scheme has been revised following initial pre-application advice and efforts have been made to break down the building's massing and provide visual interest. These changes have helped. Nevertheless, the building's use for storage does provide limitations on the form and elevational treatment of the building.

Given the increased height and the proximity to numerous heritage assets, including the Conservation Area, it is important that a high-quality palette of materials and detailing is achieved. I am not necessarily convinced by brick slips, and samples of these should be required up front prior to determination to see if they are appropriate. Ideally brick would be used, as this would be able to provide the detailing which is essential to the design's success.

Only limited details have been provided on the cladding. Again, it is essential that a high-quality metal cladding is used. A flat panel solution as shown would not provide the necessary interest and would undermine the design approach. A profiled metal cladding system should be used.

Conclusions

While there are no objections to the principle of the building and the increased height. There are concerns regarding the detailed treatment of the elevations and the proposed material palette and detailing. It is essential that high-quality materials and finishes are achieved to ensure that the new building preserves the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and ensures a neutral impact on the significance of the designated and non-designated heritage assets. The applicant should also look to continue working with the Urban Design officer to refine the design.

Re-consultation

Yes