



Mark Jones

PLANNING CONSULTANCY

PLANNING STATEMENT

Part change of use of ground floor – Suites 1 – 4 from Class E (Commercial, Business and Service) to a dual use (flexible change of use) Class F1 (Learning and non-residential Institutions) – F1a – for the provision of education and Class E - (Commercial, Business and Service) for a period of 10 years under Class V of Part 3, Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015

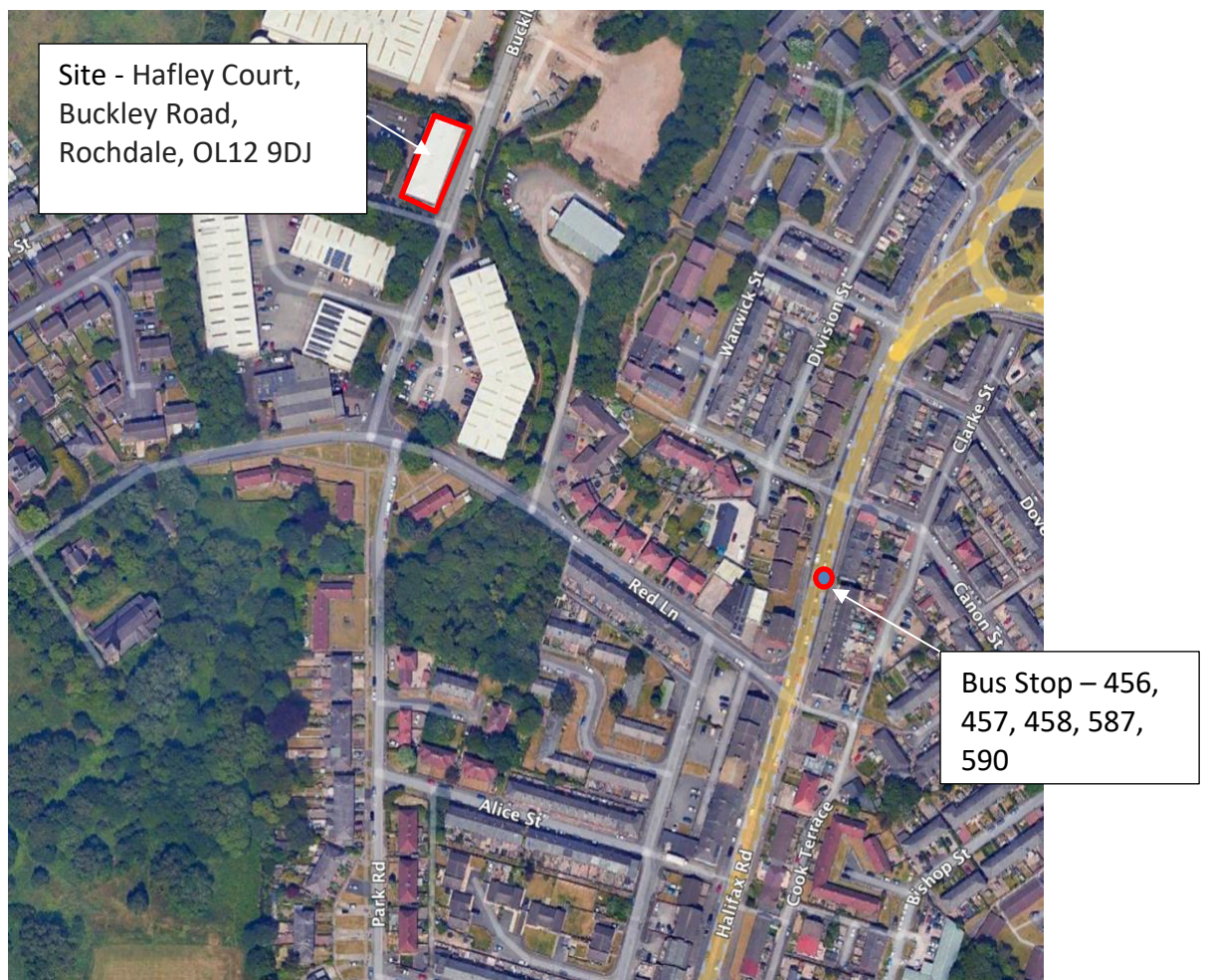
Hafley Court, Buckley Road, Rochdale, OL12 9DJ



JUNE 2026 - updated 21st September 2026

1.0 Planning Background and Proposal

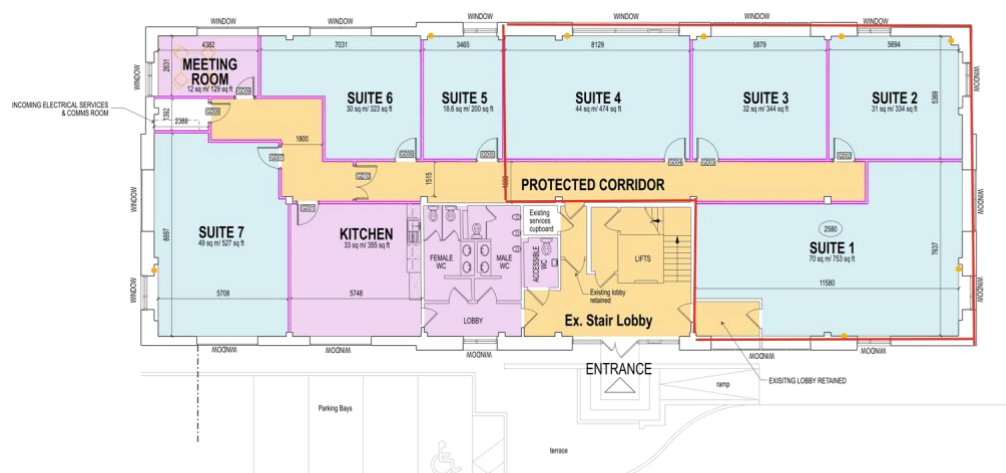
- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by Mark Jones Planning Consultancy, on behalf of ASTML Rochdale for the change the use of part of the ground floor of the office building (Class E) to a Higher Educational use (Class F1(a)). The proposal also seeks to retain its Class E status should it be necessary to return into offices in the future. The proposed use will take place within Suites 1, 2, 3 and 4 (ground floor) and will be approximately 294 sq metres of floorspace plus a corridor. The property address is Hafley Court, Buckley Road, Rochdale, OL12 9DJ.



Aerial view

- 1.2 By way of background the Academy of Science, Technology and Management (ASTML) please see <https://astml.co.uk/>. They are a higher education provider that concentrates on career focussed accommodation. They are working in partnership with Coventry University to provide courses from Foundation level to BA(Hons) degrees in Business Management and Leadership and Health and Social Care.
- 1.3 Over the last 10 years, ASTML has supported thousands of students in Oldham, London, and Birmingham to graduate successfully. ASTML was also featured by

the BBC for achieving the highest number of female graduates from the Asian community in the North West.



Red line – proposed use for Class F1(a) use

- 1.4 The proposal is to use Suites 1 – 4 as four classrooms. It is currently an open plan office that will be subdivided into 4 classrooms. It is anticipated that 150 students maximum will be attending the university at any one time.
- 1.5 The remainder of the ground floor is to be used for other businesses with the upper floors currently used as a call centre or is currently vacant.

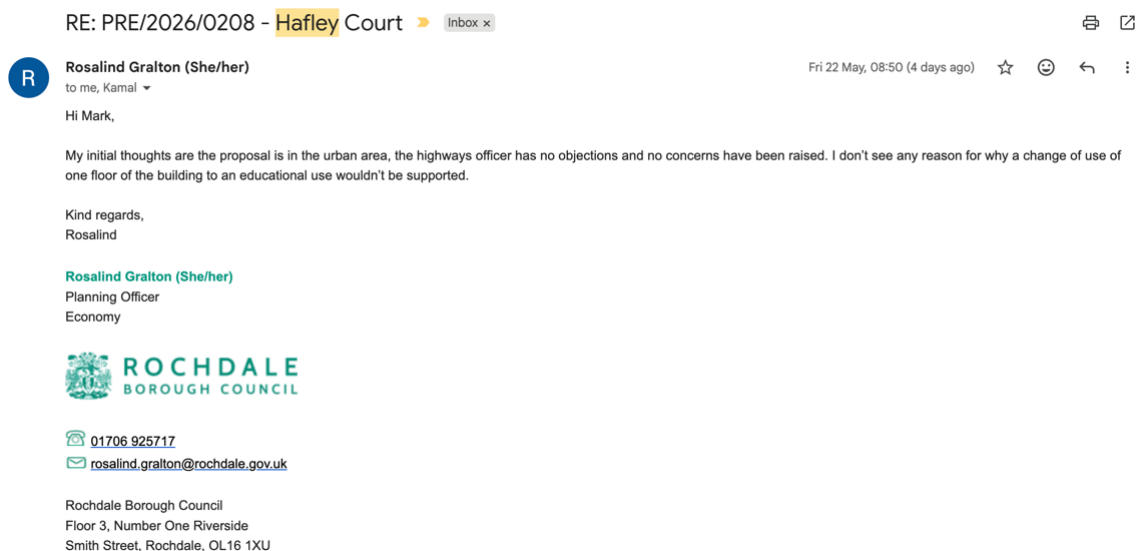


Car park to rear

- 1.6 To the rear is a shared car park, which is available for use. There is on-street parking available within the vicinity.
- 1.7 It is a 1 mile walk from the building to Rochdale Town Centre (25-minute walk) and there is a regular bus route on Halifax Road (5-minute walk) – bus routes 456, 457, 458, 587 and 590 can be accessed. The site is therefore located in a

sustainable location where students have the option of travelling by car or public transport to the University.

- 1.8 A pre-application enquiry was submitted during May 2026 and the following informal advice was provided by Rosalind Grafton. The informal opinion of the Council was that it has no objection, in principle to the proposed part change of use.



- 1.9 On 12th June 2028 a formal response was provided it is evident which are as follows:

“The site falls within the boundary of Buckley Hill Industrial Estate which is defined as a Primary Employment Site under saved UDP Policy EC/2. This policy ultimately seeks to restrict changes of use and the use class of new development to that of B1(now E(g)(i)), B2 and B8. Saved Policy EC/2 should be read alongside CS Policies E2 and E3 which collectively seek to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable land buildings and infrastructure to support the creation and retention of successful businesses, in part through focusing such forms of development on economic growth areas of which Buckley Hill Industrial Estate is not identified as one.

Within the north of the Borough (as the application site falls) Policy E2 generally seeks to restrict changes of use to non, or low employment generating uses in such areas, however does make an exception for sites below 0.2ha, for which this site would qualify as it is only 177sqm. Policy E2 also seeks to direct office space to town centres unless it is close to a public transport interchange, or is ancillary to a manufacturing use, and given the site is quite unsustainably located, being served only by infrequent and limited services along Foxholes Rd, and services between Littleborough and Rochdale from Halifax Rd, it may be considered that the

unsustainable location of the site may make it unsuitable for continued office use.

Policy JP-P5 of the PfE states that enhancements and skills to residents will be promoted by 'Enabling the delivery of new and improved accessible facilities for all ages, such as early years, schools, further and higher education, and adult training to ensure our workforce is ready to benefit from new employment opportunities'. Additionally, Rochdale Core Strategy Policy C7 states the Council improve education in the borough by promoting existing and new facilities and providing educational facilities in appropriate and accessible locations.

In a similar manner as to the concerns raised over the sustainability of the location for office use, it is not clear how access to the site for young people can be provided in a sustainable manner given the relative absence of public transport infrastructure which may feed into the overall balance in determining the suitability of this location for the proposed use.

Any application is also subject to the following development management considerations such as impact on neighbouring properties by way of noise an impact on highways."

Impact on neighbouring properties - Rochdale Core Strategy Policy G9

The site is situated immediately next to a row of terraced properties. The impact on neighbouring properties would likely be negligible given the sites protected status as a Primary Employment Zone and established use as an office. No external alterations have been proposed

Highways

The Council's Highways Officer was consulted and no objections were raised to the change of use, the parking requirement for higher education is lower than that of an office space and as such the parking provided would be considered adequate. There are no new road safety issues apparent at time of writing, raised by this proposal.

You are encouraged to provide details to demonstrate how safe access to the site via sustainable methods can be provided for future users of the site, which it is assumed would include young people given that the proposals relate to higher education. It is appreciated that the overall scale and intensity of the proposals are unlikely to be of an extent as to require a full travel plan, however a framework of sorts would assist in demonstrating the principle of development at the site.

Conclusion

Based upon the submitted information it is not possible to conclude whether the proposed use would be supported, however the guidance provided within this letter provides a sufficient starting point for any application, and outlines the relevant policy and how an acceptable case may be demonstrated.”

- 1.10 Lease agreements are in the process of being signed with term commencement being September 2026.
- 1.11 On Friday 18th September 2026 the Council’s Planning Officer sent the following email:

“Thank you for your emails. I apologise I have not responded until now.

One consultee was consulted; this is highways. I noted the website did not display this publicly and I have changed this now so you should be able to review. The only other comment that is flagging up is a letter of representation in support of the scheme.

The planning statement suggests a maximum at any one time there could be up to 150 students in the building. As such, highways have concerns with this given that is a significant demand and clarity is needed on the operational expectations of the university.

Can you please describe the intensity of the use in a bit more detail; what are the timetables of sessions that will be held there at what times, would this be in peak hours. What is the realistic class sizes and what are the expected attendee numbers per suite at what times?

I can see the University have an existing site in Oldham. While this is in a more central location it would be useful comparison to know what the expected intensity would be.

I trust this provides a bit more clarity on our current position. I appreciate the 150 number was included at pre-app but no concerns raised at that stage by the highway officer, however we just need that little bit more information to justify why a trip generation exercise has not been completed. There are no other issues I have flagged to share.”

Planning Policy

1.12 The site is an existing Class E office use – formerly Class B1.

1.13 Paragraph 101 of the NPPF (Framework) states:

101. To ensure faster delivery of other public service infrastructure such as health, blue light, library, adult **education**, university and criminal justice facilities, local planning authorities should also work proactively and positively with promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to plan for required facilities and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted. Significant weight should be placed on the importance of new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure when considering proposals for development.

1.14 The Adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document (March 2024) is a Greater Manchester wide plan. This is an extract from the policy document that supports Higher Educational Uses:

Policy JP-P5: Education, Skills and Knowledge

Significant enhancements in education, skills and knowledge to benefit existing and new residents will be promoted, including by:

1. Enabling the delivery of new and improved accessible facilities for all ages, such as early years, schools, further and higher education, and adult training to ensure our workforce is ready to benefit from new employment opportunities;

1.15 Policy E2 - Core Strategy (October 2016) promotes education and uses other than employment where it can be demonstrated they would be appropriate within an employment zone.

E2 - Increasing jobs and prosperity

We will ensure a sufficient supply of suitable land, buildings and infrastructure in the right places to support the creation and retention of successful businesses and increase the number and quality of jobs to create a more prosperous lower carbon economy. To do this we will:

- Ensure supply of up to 210ha of highly accessible land, focused in the south of the borough, that is attractive to 21st century employment development for offices, manufacturing and distribution (B1 - B8) as well as other employment generating uses;
- Protect those existing employment zones and employment (B1 - B8) sites outside employment zones which are most suited to continued employment use. Uses other than employment will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that they would be more appropriate;
- Promote the delivery of infrastructure, such as improved transport, housing, education, energy (including decentralised energy networks), water and wastewater, and information and communications technology (including high speed broadband) with a focus on supporting economic development in the above locations; and
- Support other employment generating uses that comply with the policies of this plan (e.g. retail, entertainment, leisure and tourism uses).

- 1.16 In terms of Local Planning Policy the site is located within a Primary Employment Zone and any planning application for a change of use will be assessed against Policy EC/2 of the Rochdale Unitary Local Plan (June 2006). This policy states:

EC/2 PRIMARY EMPLOYMENT ZONES

Within Primary Employment Zones development and change of use, for industrial, business and warehouse uses (Use Classes B1, B2 and B8) will be permitted where proposals:

- a) Are of an appropriate scale and character to the area;
- b) Will cause no unacceptable environmental or amenity problems in the employment area or adjoining areas ; and
- c) Will cause no unacceptable traffic problems and have adequate on-site provision for parking, servicing and manoeuvring.

Other uses will not be permitted unless it can be shown that they are ancillary and complementary (both in terms of size and function) to the industrial and business nature of the employment area.

Planning Considerations

- 1.17 The premises at Hafley Court are being marketed as offices. The ground and second floors are currently vacant. For reference please see: [Hafley Court, Buckley Road, Rochdale \(Property Listing\)](#).
- 1.18 It is a modern, purpose-built office building within a mixed-use commercial area, with flexible office accommodation and good transport connectivity. The types of courses offered by ASTML are perfectly connected to the surrounding business uses and will be appropriate in scale and character to the neighbouring uses. It will cause limited impact on the employment area. It is our opinion that the use of part of the ground floor as a small university campus would be a complimentary use to the surrounding business uses found nearby. Such a use is accessible to public transport links (5 minutes walk from bus routes) and students will have the option of driving and using the associated car park. In term of the planning policy a higher education use within a business site must be considered to be acceptable and accord with the objectives of national and local planning policy.
- 1.19 In terms of the additional highway comments received on 19th September 2026 the applicant has provided the following additional statement:

“The proposed premises will operate as a Coventry University Study Centre rather than a full University campus. The nature and intensity of use will therefore be considerably different from that of a conventional University campus.

The anticipated arrangements are as follows:

- *Teaching/study hours: Weekdays, 9:30am to 4:30pm.*

- *Days of operation: Primarily weekdays.*
- *Class size: Approximately 20 students per class.*
- *Maximum occupancy: Although the pre-application figure of up to 150 students was provided as a potential maximum capacity, this should not be interpreted as 150 students attending or arriving at the premises at the same time.*
- *Student movement: Students will attend according to their individual timetables and scheduled sessions, meaning that student numbers will be distributed throughout the operating hours rather than generating a single large arrival or departure period.*
- *Transport: The majority of our students are expected to travel by public transport, given the location of the study centre and the demographic of our student population.*
- *Peak hours: Teaching sessions are scheduled between approximately 9:30am and 4:30pm, with student arrivals and departures therefore generally spread across the day rather than concentrated around traditional school/university peak periods.*

The realistic teaching group size is approximately 20 students per class, and students will be allocated to different sessions/timetables. Consequently, the day-to-day intensity of the use is expected to be substantially lower than might be assumed from the maximum potential figure of 150 students within the building.

In relation to the existing University site in Oldham, the proposed centre would operate on a same study/teaching-centre model, rather than functioning as a large, conventional university campus. The proposed operation is therefore intended to provide scheduled teaching and study facilities for students, with relatively small class groups and staggered attendance.

We hope this additional information provides the clarity required regarding the operational expectations of the University and helps to explain why the maximum figure of 150 students should not be considered representative of the number of students travelling to or from the site at any one time."

- 1.20 Generally, ASTML employs around 10–15 staff members per centre. Rochdale and the surrounding communities would benefit greatly from having one of the UK's top-ranked universities on their doorstep.