

Officer Report

Case Reference: PL/2026/0595
Location: Hafley Court - Suites 1, 2, 3 and 4 (Ground Floor), Buckley Road, Rochdale, OL12 9DJ
Proposal: 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
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Rosalind Gralton

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site relates to Suites 1-4 of Hafley Court, accessed from Buckley Road. The building is a 4-storey office building. Based on the submission, submitted evidence and photos show the office space is available to let.

The site has a shared car park, and is a 1 mile walk from the town centre, and regular bus services located off Halifax Road.

The site is designated as defined urban area and the general area of Hafley Court is designated as EC/2 - Primary Employment Zones. The site is located within Flood Zone 2.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for the temporary change of use to both Class F1a and Class Ec and Eg(i), for a 10-year period.

The application seeks to grant consent for ASTML for a Higher Educational facility, in partnership with Coventry University. The centre will be operating as a study and teaching centre, rather than a conventional university campus, with the following details of operation:

- Teaching/study hours: Weekdays, 9:30am to 4:30pm.
- Days of operation: Primarily weekdays.
- Class size: Approximately 20 students per class.
- Typical employment numbers are 10-15 staff members per centre.

The maximum capacity of the building is up to 150 students; however, this is not considered a typical or expected capacity for students in attendance at all times.

There are no external works proposed as part of the change of use.

RELEVANT PLANNING AND ENFORCEMENT HISTORY

None available

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

Local Guidance

Saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006:

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) 2016:

P3 Improving Design of New Development

DM1 General Development Requirements

T2 Improving Accessibility

Appendix 5 Schedule of Parking Standards

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

Supplementary Planning Document 'Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development' (2016)

PUBLICITY

Site Notice: N/A

Press Notice: N/A

Neighbour notification letters: Sent 27/07/2026

SUMMARY OF THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

One letter of support was received regarding the application.

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

None applicable or received

ASSESSMENT

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. Saved UDP Policy EC/2 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 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. The application site is 177sqm and would fall within the exception. 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. Alongside the application, an Accessibility Statement has been provided to demonstrate the location is within ample reach of the bus network, with multiple bus stops within 400m of the application site. While this is only one mode of transport, it is likely this will be a mode well-frequented by students and adult learners.

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 conclusion, the principle of development is accepted subject to development management considerations.

Impact on neighbouring properties - Rochdale Core Strategy Policy G9

The site is situated immediately next to a row of terraced properties. It is not considered the impact of the change of use would be detrimental or unacceptable, given the application site is an established office base and protected status as a Primary Employment Zone and established use as an office. No external alterations have been proposed. The details regarding the number of expected students and staff do not give rise to any proposed impact on noise or disturbance, over and above that that would be expected of the existing office use.

Highways

The Council's Highways Officer was consulted, and no objections were raised to the scheme, following additional information provided regarding the number of staffing, hours of operation and expected numbers of students within the building. It is considered that movements associated with the property are well established at much greater intensity and the proposals are unlikely to contribute to an adverse impact on highways safety or functionality.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

Condition(s) (2)

- 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: -

- Existing site plan scale 500
- Proposed site plan
- Existing ground floor plan
- Accessibility Statement.pdf
- Proposed Ground Floor.pdf
- Revised Planning Statement September 2026
- Application Form

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.

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.