

Officer Report

Case Reference: PL/2026/0241
Location: 63 RAMSDEN ROAD, WARDLE, ROCHDALE, OL12 9LB
Proposal: Change of use of single dwellinghouse to 3no. self-contained flats (Use Class C3) and 1no. office unit (Use Class E(g)(i)) and external works including a rear dormer, a single storey rear extension to replace the conservatory, the insertion of roof lights and the creation of two lightwells to the front.
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions
Officer: Bob Melling

APPLICATION SITE

The application site comprises a large stone-built mid-terrace dwellinghouse located on Ramsden Road within the settlement of Wardle. The property forms part of a traditional terrace row and lies immediately adjacent to the Birch Road / Ramsden Road Local Centre. The property is adjoined by No. 61 to the south and No. 65 to the north. The rear boundary adjoins the rear gardens of Nos. 5 and 7 Heath Road. The application site is located within the Defined Urban Area as defined by saved Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Policy G/D/1. There are no constraints associated with the application site that would negate the presumption in favour of sustainable development in line with Policy S3 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and as far as can practically be ascertained, permitted development rights for this dwelling are intact. The area is characterised by a mix of residential and commercial uses including a bakery within the same terrace block, together with a public house, library, dentist, fish and chip shop and convenience retail premises nearby. Bus services operate directly along Ramsden Road.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for the conversion of the existing dwellinghouse into three self-contained flats (Use Class C3) and one office unit (Use Class E(g)(i)). The residential accommodation would comprise a one-bedroom ground floor flat (63A), a two-bedroom first floor flat (63B) and a one-bedroom second floor flat (63C). The office unit would occupy the front part of the ground floor. External alterations include the replacement of the existing conservatory with a single-storey rear extension, the construction of a rear dormer, the insertion of rooflights and the formation of basement lightwells. Two off-street parking spaces, cycle storage and bin storage facilities are proposed within the rear yard.

CONSULTATIONS

Local Highways Authority

Summary: The site is in a semi-sustainable location with access to local amenities. The limited parking provision proposed does not present a concern that would sustain an objection on these grounds.

Environmental Health

Summary: The supplied acoustic mitigation statement is not sufficient, and further details are requested to ensure adequate internal conditions for future occupiers of the development.

Following an email exchange with officers, the Environmental Health Officer agreed that a pre-occupation condition could be used.

REPRESENTATIONS

The application is referred to Planning Committee in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation following a call-in request from Councillor Adam Branton.

Councillor Branton has requested that the application be determined by Planning Committee due to concerns regarding the impact of the proposed development on highway safety, parking provision, servicing and residential amenity.

The call-in request states that the proposal represents an intensification of use on a constrained site and raises concerns regarding existing on-street parking pressures, congestion and the potential for overspill parking. Reference is also made to existing rear access arrangements serving neighbouring properties at Nos. 65 and 67 Ramsden Road, together with concerns regarding refuse storage and collection arrangements. It is further suggested that the cumulative effect of these matters could result in an unacceptable impact upon the surrounding residential environment.

These matters are addressed in the relevant sections of the assessment below insofar as they relate to material planning considerations.

Summary of Third-Party Responses

The application has been publicised through neighbour notification letters issued to surrounding properties and the display of a site notice on Ramsden Road.

A total of 14 objections were received in response to the original submission.

Following receipt of the amended plans, revised accommodation layouts, updated Design and Access Statement and supporting Acoustic Assessment, a further round of neighbour consultation was undertaken.

At the time of writing this report, two additional objections have been received in response to the amended scheme.

The objections can be summarised as follows:

- The proposal represents an overdevelopment of the site and an excessive intensification of use.
- The proposal would result in increased noise, disturbance and activity levels to the detriment of neighbouring residential amenity.
- Insufficient parking provision is proposed, and the development would place additional pressure on existing on-street parking, resulting in highway safety concerns.
- The development would generate additional traffic movements, servicing activity and demand for local infrastructure within an already constrained location.
- Concerns have been raised regarding refuse storage, waste collection arrangements and impacts upon neighbouring access arrangements.
- The proposal would be out of character with the surrounding area and would erode the established residential character of the terrace.
- Concerns have been raised regarding the standard of accommodation proposed, the adequacy of natural light and outlook, fire safety, drainage, the operation of the proposed office use and the lack of a formal management arrangement for the development.
- It has been suggested that the application does not provide sufficient evidence regarding parking demand, operational arrangements for the office use or long-term management of the development.
- Concerns have been raised regarding works already undertaken within the property and the extent of previous alterations.
- A number of representations also refer to concerns regarding future occupiers, property management, alleged future changes of use and private legal matters relating to access rights.

All material planning considerations raised within the representations are addressed within the relevant sections of the assessment below. Non-material considerations, including private legal matters, property values, alleged conduct of the applicant and speculation regarding the identity or behaviour of future occupiers, have been noted but attract limited weight in the determination of the application.

PLANNING HISTORY

88/D22078: Erection Of Garage And Carport. Refused September 1988.

80/D10936: Excavation To Form Extension To Cellar. Approved July 1980.

79/D08469: Erection Of Fence To Roof Of Existing Garage And Carport. Refused June 1979.

POLICY CONTEXT

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Adopted Development Plan

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE)

JP-S1 Sustainable and Resilient Places

JP-P1 Places for People

JP-H3 Places for Homes

JP-C8 Connected Places

Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) 2016

Spatial Strategy

SD1 Delivering sustainable development

Delivering a More Prosperous Economy (SO1)

E1 Establishing thriving town, district and local centres

Creating Successful and Healthy Communities (SO2)

C1 Delivering the Right Amount of Housing

C3 Delivering the Right Type of Housing

Improving Design, Image and Quality of Place (SO3)

P3 Improving design of new development

Improving Accessibility and Delivering Sustainable Transport (SO5)

T2 Improving accessibility

Managing Delivery and Monitoring Progress

DM1 General development requirements

Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006

G/D/1 Defined Urban Area

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

Supplementary Planning Guidance Note: Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development (June 2016).

Other Considerations

The application has been considered having regard to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out a person's rights to the peaceful enjoyment of property and Article 8 of the Convention of the same Act which sets out his/her rights in respect for private and family life and for the home. Officers consider that the proposed development would not be contrary to the provisions of the above Articles in respect of the human rights of surrounding residents/occupiers.

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 benefits the community as a whole.

ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

Policy S3 of the NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For proposals within settlements, Policy S4 states that development should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by adverse effects when assessed against the decision-making policies of the Framework. Policy HO7 further requires substantial weight to be given to the provision of homes which contribute towards meeting identified housing needs, whilst Policy E2 requires substantial weight to be given to proposals which support economic activity and allow businesses to operate and expand.

At a local level, Policy SD1 of the Core Strategy confirms that the Council will take a positive approach to development which accords with the Development Plan and secures economic, social and environmental benefits. Policy C1 seeks to deliver housing in appropriate locations and Policy C3 supports the provision of a range of housing types to meet identified needs. Policy DM1 requires development to be of an appropriate scale and nature having regard to the surrounding area.

The application site lies wholly within the Defined Urban Area as designated by saved UDP Policy G/D/1 and therefore the presumption set out within Policy S4 of the Framework, that development should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, applies.

The proposal seeks the re-use of an existing residential building through the creation of three self-contained flats together with a small office unit falling within Class E(g)(i). The proposal would not involve the loss of any protected employment land, open space, community facilities, heritage assets or other protected land use and would retain the existing building. The proposal therefore represents the re-use and adaptation of an existing building within the urban area, which is consistent with the objectives of national policy relating to the efficient use of land.

The proposal would result in the delivery of three separate self-contained dwellings. The provision of additional housing within existing urban areas contributes positively towards housing supply and would make effective use of an existing building in a sustainable location. This attracts significant weight in favour of the proposal.

The proposed office unit requires separate consideration. Office development is identified as a main town centre use within the NPPF. Policy TC3 therefore requires the application of a sequential approach where such uses are proposed outside existing centres and are not allocated within the Development Plan. The application is not accompanied by a formal sequential assessment, and this is acknowledged. However, the proposed office accommodation is exceptionally small in scale and forms part of a mixed-use conversion of an existing building rather than a stand-alone commercial development. The office would occupy only part of the ground floor of the existing property and would be associated with low-intensity office and creative workspace activities as set out within the submitted Design and Access Statement. No customer-facing retail use is proposed and no external advertisements or alterations intended to create a commercial appearance are proposed.

The site is located immediately adjacent to the Birch Road / Ramsden Road Local Centre and within the same terrace block as an existing bakery and sandwich shop. The office use therefore occupies what is effectively an edge-of-centre location and forms part of a mixed-use frontage where commercial activity already exists. Furthermore, the scale of the use is such that it is unlikely to materially affect the vitality or viability of any designated centre.

Limited weight can also be afforded to the emerging Draft Local Plan. Draft Policy PR8 confirms that office development should generally be directed towards centres but allows office accommodation outside centres where specific circumstances justify the location. Whilst not part of the adopted Development Plan, the policy nevertheless demonstrates an emerging local acceptance that small-scale office uses may, in appropriate circumstances, be accommodated outside designated centres.

Having regard to the modest scale of the office use, the site's relationship with the adjoining local centre, the absence of any identified harm to the vitality and viability of that centre, and the existing mixed-use character of this section of Ramsden Road, Officers do not consider the absence of a formal sequential assessment sufficient to justify refusal of planning permission in this instance. The office use is therefore considered acceptable in principle.

Accordingly, subject to the detailed assessment of design, residential amenity, highways, parking, noise and other material planning considerations set out below, Officers consider that the proposal is acceptable in principle and accords with Policies S3, S4, HO7, E2 and TC3 of the NPPF, Policies SD1, C1, C3 and DM1 of the Core Strategy, and saved UDP Policy G/D/1.

Character and Appearance

Policy DP3 of the NPPF states that development proposals should respond positively to their context so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings. The policy further advises that development should create visually attractive and distinctive development which contributes positively to local character and sense of place. Policy DP3(3) confirms that proposals should be refused where they conflict with these principles without clear justification.

At a local level, Policy JP-P1 of Places for Everyone requires development to be well designed and responsive to its surroundings. Similarly, Policy P3 of the Core Strategy requires development to enhance the Borough's identity and sense of place by respecting local context and having regard to scale, massing, layout, materials and the characteristics of surrounding development. Policy DM1 further requires all development to be of a high-quality design and to take opportunities to improve the quality of the area.

The application site comprises a large stone-built terraced property which is materially larger than adjoining residential properties within the terrace. The building already occupies a prominent position within Ramsden Road and possesses a greater internal floorspace than neighbouring dwellings.

In terms of external alterations, the proposal includes the replacement of the existing conservatory with a single-storey rear extension. Officers note that the proposed extension would occupy broadly the same footprint as the existing conservatory and would project no further than the principal rear wall of that structure. The extension would have a simple design with a dual-pitched roof and rendered walls. Overall, it is considered that the proposed extension would represent a visual improvement on the existing conservatory.

The proposed dormer extension would be located on the rear roof slope and would not be readily visible from the public realm. Paragraphs 5.16 to 5.18 of the Residential Development SPD advise that rear dormers should be modest in scale, remain below the ridge line, be set in from side walls and utilise materials that reflect the existing roof coverings. The submitted plans demonstrate that the dormer would remain below the ridge, would be set in from the side walls and would be finished in materials to match the existing roof tiles. Officers are therefore satisfied that the dormer accords with the relevant SPD guidance and would not appear incongruous or over-dominant within the roofscape.

The proposal also includes the insertion of rooflights within the front roof slope. These are modest in scale and are considered to represent a relatively minor alteration to the building. The lightwells proposed to serve the basement would be positioned behind the existing front boundary wall and would have very limited visibility from the street scene. As such, neither element is considered to give rise to any appreciable harm to the appearance of the property or wider street scene.

No external signage, display areas or alterations intended to create a commercial appearance are proposed as part of the office use. The frontage would therefore retain its predominantly residential appearance, and the proposal would not introduce features that would materially alter the character of this section of Ramsden Road. This is an important consideration given a number of objections raise concerns regarding the impact of the office use on local character. Officers are satisfied that, in the absence of any associated commercial signage or shopfront alterations, the proposed office use would have a neutral impact on the appearance of the building.

Several representations raise concerns that the proposal would be out of character with the surrounding area or would erode the established residential character of the terrace. These comments are noted. However, Officers consider it important to distinguish between the use of the building and its physical appearance. The

application relates primarily to the reconfiguration of an existing building and would not result in a substantial alteration to its external appearance. The proposal would retain the existing building and would not introduce any significant increase in built form, height or massing. Consequently, whilst the intensity of the use would differ from the existing arrangement, the physical impact upon the character and appearance of the area is considered limited. The proposal would not appear visually harmful within the street scene and would preserve the established character of the terrace.

Having regard to the above, Officers consider that the proposal represents an acceptable form of development which would preserve the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area. The development is therefore considered to accord with Policy DP3 of the NPPF, Policy JP-P1 of Places for Everyone and Policies P3 and DM1 of the Core Strategy.

Residential Amenity

Policy P3 of the NPPF states that development proposals should be appropriate for their location, taking into account the likely effects of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment. The policy requires development proposals to provide healthy living conditions for occupiers and users and to avoid unacceptable adverse impacts arising from noise, disturbance, loss of privacy, loss of outlook or other amenity considerations. Policy DP3 further requires development proposals to create well-designed places that provide acceptable living conditions for future occupiers whilst respecting the amenity of neighbouring residents.

At a local level, Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy requires development proposals to avoid adverse impacts on neighbouring residents through visual intrusion, overshadowing, overbearing impact or loss of privacy. Policy P3 similarly requires development to respect its surroundings and provide a satisfactory standard of amenity for both existing and future occupiers. The Residential Development SPD also provides guidance in relation to separation distances, outlook and residential relationships.

Living Conditions for Future Occupiers

A significant proportion of the representations received raise concerns regarding the quality of accommodation proposed. Officers acknowledge that most concerns existed in relation to the original submission. However, the application has subsequently been amended, and the revised scheme now presents a materially different proposal.

The amended development would provide three self-contained residential units comprising a one-bedroom ground floor flat, a two-bedroom first floor flat and a one-bedroom second floor flat. The submitted plans and associated floorspace calculations confirm that the ground floor flat would provide approximately 41.5 square metres of internal floorspace, the first floor flat approximately 61.5 square metres and the second floor flat approximately 37.7 square metres.

Having assessed the amended layouts against the Nationally Described Space Standards, Officers are satisfied that all three units achieve the relevant minimum internal floorspace requirements and provide acceptable living accommodation. In

addition to meeting the required floorspace standards, the amended plans have significantly improved the quality of accommodation proposed within the roof space through the introduction of a rear dormer and additional rooflights. These changes improve both outlook and natural light available to future occupants and overcome concerns that existed in relation to the original scheme.

The ground floor accommodation would similarly benefit from the replacement of the existing conservatory with a more practical and functional extension, resulting in an improved internal arrangement and outlook. The first-floor flat benefits from windows to both the front and rear elevations and provides an acceptable standard of accommodation in terms of outlook, daylight and overall living conditions.

Accordingly, Officers are satisfied that the proposal would provide an acceptable standard of accommodation for future occupiers and accords with the objectives of national and local planning policy.

Impact on Existing Occupiers

The principal neighbouring properties are Nos. 61 and 65 Ramsden Road, which adjoin the application property, together with Nos. 5 and 7 Heath Road to the rear. The concerns raised by members of the public largely relate to privacy, outlook, noise and the intensification of the use of the building.

In respect of privacy and outlook, the rear elevations of Nos. 5 and 7 Heath Road are located approximately 29 metres from the rear elevation of the application property. This significantly exceeds the SPD guideline of 21 metres between directly facing principal windows and ensures that an appropriate degree of separation would remain between existing and proposed residential accommodation.

The proposed dormer extension would face towards the rear gardens of properties on Heath Road. Whilst the dormer would be approximately 10 metres from part of the rear garden of No. 5 Heath Road, this represents only a marginal departure from the 10.5 metre guideline contained within the SPD. Furthermore, the affected gardens are substantial in depth and Officers do not consider that the resulting relationship would give rise to unacceptable overlooking or loss of privacy. The proposal would therefore maintain a satisfactory level of amenity for neighbouring occupiers.

The proposed single-storey rear extension has also been carefully considered. Whilst the extension would exceed the SPD guidance by approximately 0.74 metres, Officers note that the extension would occupy a footprint broadly comparable with that of the existing conservatory. Importantly, the existing conservatory already presents a solid side elevation towards No. 65 Ramsden Road, and the proposed extension would maintain a very similar relationship. The extension would also be constructed with a roof form that pitches away from No. 65 and would broadly replicate the existing eaves and ridge heights. Consequently, Officers are satisfied that the proposal would not materially worsen the existing relationship between the two properties.

Noise and Disturbance

A significant number of objections relate to the potential increase in noise and disturbance associated with the subdivision of the building. These concerns have been carefully considered.

The Residential Development SPD acknowledges that the subdivision of existing properties can often represent an appropriate means of bringing larger or under-utilised buildings back into effective use and can assist in meeting housing needs. The SPD also recognises that subdivision can intensify occupation and has the potential to give rise to noise, disturbance and parking concerns, particularly where properties share party walls. These considerations are therefore material to the assessment of the current proposal and have been carefully considered by Officers.

It is important to recognise that the application property is currently a substantial five-bedroom dwellinghouse. As a lawful residential use, the building is capable of accommodating a large family household. For example, a family comprising two adults and five children could reasonably occupy the property, resulting in a comparable level of permanent occupation to that proposed under the amended scheme.

The amended proposal would provide three self-contained flats accommodating a maximum of five permanent residents. Whilst the pattern of occupation would differ from that of a single-family household, the proposal would not necessarily result in a materially greater number of permanent residents than could arise from the existing lawful use of the building.

Furthermore, the application property is materially larger than adjoining terraced dwellings and extends across basement, ground, first and second floor levels. Officers are therefore satisfied that the building is capable of accommodating the proposed subdivision without resulting in the excessive intensity of occupation suggested by a number of objectors.

The proposal also differs significantly from many of the concerns raised within the objection letters. Several representations refer to an "11-person property", "HMO" or similar form of intensive shared accommodation. This does not reflect the proposal currently before the Local Planning Authority. The application seeks permission for three self-contained flats and a small office unit and must be assessed on that basis.

Notwithstanding the above, the applicant has submitted an Acoustic Assessment in support of the application. The submitted information confirms that a range of acoustic mitigation measures have been incorporated or are proposed as part of the conversion. These include upgraded floor constructions, acoustic mineral wool insulation, acoustic plasterboard systems, upgraded partition walls and acoustic sealing measures. The submitted section drawing further confirms that enhanced floor and wall constructions are proposed between units and adjoining properties.

In recognition of the concerns raised by neighbouring residents, Officers consider it appropriate to secure the recommendations of the Acoustic Assessment by planning condition. A condition is therefore recommended requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved Noise Impact Assessment / Acoustic Mitigation Strategy, together with the submission and approval of a post-construction

verification report demonstrating that the approved acoustic and ventilation measures have been installed and are capable of achieving the required noise performance standards prior to occupation of the development.

The proposed office use is also considered unlikely to give rise to significant disturbance. The submitted Design and Access Statement indicates that the premises would be used for low-intensity office and creative workspace activities, including administration, floral design, sewing and similar activities. The proposed use would be further controlled through a planning condition restricting the commercial unit to specified uses within Use Classes E(c), E(g)(i) and E(g)(ii), thereby preventing more intensive commercial uses from operating from the premises without further planning permission.

The proposed office use is low intensity in nature and is not expected to generate significant levels of noise, activity or customer visits. Officers do not consider that a restriction on opening hours is necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

Environmental Health have reviewed the submitted Noise Impact Assessment / Acoustic Mitigation Strategy and note that the document does not contain baseline noise monitoring, predictive noise calculations or a formal assessment against recognised standards. Environmental Health have advised that further acoustic assessment is required in the interests of future occupiers. However, Officers note that Environmental Health are satisfied that this matter can be addressed through a suitably worded planning condition requiring implementation of the approved mitigation measures and submission of a post-completion acoustic assessment and verification report prior to occupation of the development.

Subject to the recommended condition requiring compliance with the submitted acoustic mitigation measures and verification that acceptable internal noise levels can be achieved prior to occupation, Officers are satisfied that the proposal would provide acceptable living conditions for future occupiers and would not result in unacceptable harm to neighbouring residential amenity through noise and disturbance.

Residential Amenity Conclusion

Overall, taking account of the amended plans, the submitted supporting information, the relationship with surrounding properties and the guidance contained within the Residential Development SPD, Officers are satisfied that the proposal would provide acceptable living conditions for future occupiers and would not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity of neighbouring residents. The development is therefore considered to comply with the objectives of the NPPF together with Policies JP-H3 and JP-P1 of Places for Everyone and Policies P3 and DM1 of the Core Strategy.

Highways, Parking and Accessibility

Policy TR3 of the NPPF states that development should be located where it can support sustainable patterns of movement, provide good accessibility for different users and make efficient use of existing transport infrastructure. Policy TR4 requires development to provide a suitable number of parking spaces having regard to the location and nature of the development, whilst Policy TR6 confirms that development

should only be refused where it would result in a severe adverse impact on the transport network or an unacceptable impact on highway safety. At a local level, Policy T2 of the Core Strategy seeks to improve accessibility and requires development proposals to ensure that the safety, accessibility and amenity of those who live in, work in or visit an area are protected. Policy DM1 further requires development to provide satisfactory vehicular access and parking arrangements appropriate to the nature of the development proposed.

A significant number of objections, together with the call-in request submitted by Councillor Branton, raise concerns regarding parking provision, highway safety, traffic generation and the ability of the surrounding highway network to accommodate the proposed development. Particular concern has been expressed regarding existing parking pressures along Ramsden Road, the proximity of nearby schools and local services, and the limited amount of off-street parking proposed as part of the development.

These concerns are acknowledged and have been carefully considered. However, the Local Highways Authority have assessed the proposal and raise no objection.

In their consultation response, the Highways Authority notes that the application site is located immediately opposite the Birch Road / Ramsden Road Local Centre and is within walking distance of a range of day-to-day services and facilities including convenience retail provision, food outlets, a library, dentist and public house. The Highways Authority therefore considers the site to represent a semi-sustainable location where opportunities exist to reduce reliance on the private car. The Highways Authority further concludes that the proposal is not expected to generate any significant volume of traffic and confirms that the level of parking provision proposed would not justify an objection to the scheme. The response concludes by confirming that no highway objections are raised.

The proposal would provide two off-street parking spaces within the rear yard. Whilst Officers acknowledge that this level of provision may not meet the parking demands of all future occupiers, it is important to note that the site occupies a sustainable location within the village centre and benefits from access to public transport and local facilities. The Highways Authority has specifically considered the parking implications of the development and has concluded that insufficient parking provision would not constitute a sustainable reason for refusal in this instance.

A number of objectors have sought to compare the proposal against a worst-case scenario involving six or more vehicles associated with the residential units together with additional vehicles serving the office accommodation. Whilst such concerns are understandable, there is no evidence before the Council demonstrating that the proposal would result in vehicle movements of a magnitude that would materially exceed the capability of the surrounding highway network. Equally, there is no evidence demonstrating that any additional demand for on-street parking would result in conditions that would prejudice highway safety.

It is also relevant that the existing lawful use of the property comprises a five-bedroom dwellinghouse. Such a dwelling could reasonably accommodate a large family household capable of generating multiple vehicle movements with no restrictions on vehicle ownership. Whilst the proposed development would alter the pattern of occupation, Officers do not consider that the proposal would inevitably

result in a materially greater traffic impact than could already arise from the lawful residential use of the building.

Concerns have also been raised regarding rear access arrangements serving neighbouring properties, particularly Nos. 65 and 67 Ramsden Road. The submitted plans indicate that the existing rear access route would remain available and unobstructed. To the extent that representations relate to private legal rights of access, ownership of land or maintenance responsibilities, these are civil matters which fall outside the remit of the planning system and cannot be afforded significant weight in the determination of the application. The assessment must instead focus on land-use planning impacts. On the basis of the submitted plans, Officers are satisfied that the proposal would not physically prevent the continued use of the established access arrangements.

Representations have also raised concerns regarding increased refuse collections and servicing activity. The proposal is not expected to generate commercial servicing activity beyond that associated with a modest office use and routine residential occupation. The level of servicing anticipated is considered typical of a development of this scale and would not give rise to highway impacts that would justify refusal.

Having regard to the consultation response received from the Highways Authority, the sustainable location of the site, the modest scale of the proposed office use and the absence of evidence demonstrating unacceptable impacts on highway safety, Officers conclude that the proposal would not result in severe residual cumulative impacts on the transport network and would not give rise to an unacceptable impact on highway safety. The development is therefore considered to accord with Policies TR3, TR4 and TR6 of the NPPF together with Policies T2 and DM1 of the Core Strategy.

Ecology

Policy N2 of the NPPF states that development proposals should contribute positively to the natural environment and support nature recovery. The policy requires development to consider the environmental qualities of land proposed for development and identify opportunities for those qualities to be conserved or enhanced. Policy N2(2) further states that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for, then the development should be refused.

At a local level, Policy JP-G8 of Places for Everyone seeks a net enhancement of biodiversity resources and expects development to achieve a measurable biodiversity net gain where relevant. Policy G7 of the Core Strategy requires sites and features of biodiversity importance to be protected and seeks opportunities to promote biodiversity and create new habitats wherever possible.

In England, biodiversity net gain is required under the statutory framework introduced through Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Subject to a number of exemptions, development is required to achieve a minimum 10% increase in biodiversity value when compared to the pre-development biodiversity value of the site.

The application form indicates that the applicant considers the proposal to be exempt from the statutory biodiversity net gain requirements on the basis that it falls within the de minimis exemption. Officers have reviewed the application and are satisfied that this position is correct. The proposal relates primarily to the conversion and reuse of an existing building and includes only relatively minor external alterations comprising rooflights, a rear dormer, replacement rear extension and associated works. The development would not result in the loss of any priority habitat and would not have a material impact on ecological assets of recognised importance.

Accordingly, the statutory biodiversity net gain requirements do not apply in this instance and no further assessment under the statutory BNG framework is required.

Whilst Policies JP-G8 and G7 seek biodiversity enhancements where appropriate, Officers do not consider it reasonable or proportionate to require a measurable biodiversity gain having regard to the limited physical scope of the development and the nature of the works proposed. Nevertheless, biodiversity enhancement measures, such as the provision of integrated bird and bat boxes, could reasonably be secured by condition and would provide a modest ecological benefit.

Subject to such a condition, Officers are satisfied that the proposal would not result in any unacceptable ecological impacts and accords with Policy N2 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy JP-G8 of Places for Everyone and Policy G7 of the Core Strategy.

Other Matters Raised by Objectors

A number of matters have been raised by objectors which do not fall directly within the main planning considerations addressed above.

Concern has been raised regarding the identity, behaviour and characteristics of potential future occupiers. Several representations express concern that the proposal may attract anti-social behaviour, increased crime or undesirable occupiers. Whilst such concerns are acknowledged, planning decisions must be based upon the land use proposed rather than assumptions regarding the conduct of future occupiers. The proposal comprises three self-contained flats and a small office use and there is no substantive evidence before the Local Planning Authority which demonstrates that the development would give rise to crime, anti-social behaviour or other harmful activity. Accordingly, limited weight can be afforded to these concerns.

A number of representations refer to the proposal as a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO), an "11-person property" or a form of intensive shared accommodation. This is not an accurate description of the development for which planning permission is sought. The application proposes three self-contained flats and a small commercial unit. The application must therefore be assessed on the basis of the development proposed rather than alternative forms of development which are not before the Local Planning Authority.

Concern has also been raised regarding the operation and long-term management of the development. The proposal relates to self-contained residential flats, which would operate in a similar manner to conventional residential accommodation. Officers do not consider that a management plan is necessary to make the

development acceptable in planning terms and there is no policy requirement for such a document in relation to a development of this nature.

A number of representations question the accuracy of information submitted as part of the application process and refer to works already undertaken within the property. The planning merits of the proposal must be assessed on the basis of the plans and supporting information currently before the Local Planning Authority. Whether any separate works required planning permission, Building Regulations approval or other consents is a separate matter and does not alter the planning assessment of the development proposed.

Several representations raise concerns regarding room sizes, internal layouts, internal alterations, structural works, lowered floors and the overall standard of accommodation. These matters have been assessed through consideration of the submitted plans, supporting documents and the Nationally Described Space Standards. As set out earlier within this report, Officers are satisfied that the amended residential accommodation provides an acceptable standard of accommodation and complies with the relevant space standards.

Objections have also been received regarding the quality of workmanship, the use of replacement windows and doors, structural integrity, means of escape, fire safety measures, emergency lighting and compliance with Building Regulations. These matters are principally controlled through separate legislation, including the Building Regulations regime. The planning system should not seek to duplicate controls exercised through other regulatory processes and do not require further consideration.

A number of representations request further investigations into drainage, sewer capacity, water pressure and the structural condition of the building. No technical evidence has been submitted demonstrating that the proposal would result in unacceptable impacts in these respects. Furthermore, the development relates primarily to the conversion and reuse of an existing building rather than a substantial new-build scheme. Officers are therefore satisfied that there is insufficient evidence to conclude that the proposal would result in unacceptable impacts on local infrastructure or justify refusal of planning permission.

Representations have also been received regarding the ownership of land to the rear of the site, boundary positions, rights of way, access arrangements, bin collection points and possible wear and tear associated with the use of private land. These matters are private civil issues and do not fall within the remit of the planning system. The grant of planning permission does not remove the requirement for the applicant to secure any separate legal rights, agreements or consents that may be necessary to implement the development. Limited weight can therefore be attached to these matters.

Some representations also refer to alleged conduct, comments or behaviour of the applicant. Whilst such matters are acknowledged, the planning system is concerned with the use and development of land rather than the personal circumstances, character or behaviour of applicants. These matters are not material planning considerations and cannot be afforded weight in the determination of this application.

Concerns have also been raised regarding property values and the desirability of the proposal within the village. Property values are not material planning considerations and cannot be taken into account in the determination of a planning application.

Accordingly, whilst all representations have been carefully considered, Officers are satisfied that the material planning issues raised by objectors have been fully addressed within the preceding sections of this report. Any remaining matters attract limited or no weight in the planning balance.

Planning Balance and Conclusions

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration of critical importance and Policy S3 establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Where development proposals are located within settlements, Policy S4 states that development should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects when assessed against the Framework as a whole.

The application seeks the conversion and re-use of an existing building located within the Defined Urban Area and immediately adjacent to the Birch Road / Ramsden Road Local Centre. The proposal would secure the beneficial re-use of a vacant property and deliver three additional self-contained residential units within a sustainable location well served by local facilities and public transport. In addition, the proposal would provide a modest office use capable of supporting local economic activity without introducing significant changes to the character or function of the building. These are matters to which significant positive weight is attached.

A substantial number of objections have been received raising concerns relating to overdevelopment, parking pressures, highway safety, noise, disturbance, refuse storage, privacy and the impact of the proposal on the character of the area. These concerns have been carefully considered and are acknowledged. However, it is important to note that most of the objections were submitted in response to the original scheme and prior to the submission of the amended plans, revised accommodation layouts, updated Design and Access Statement and Acoustic Assessment. The amended proposal has materially altered the scheme and addressed many of the issues originally identified.

In terms of living conditions, Officers are satisfied that all three residential units comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards and would provide an acceptable standard of accommodation for future occupiers. The revised dormer and rooflight arrangements have significantly improved the second-floor accommodation, and the replacement rear extension provides an improved ground floor layout. Compliance with Policy JP-H3 attracts moderate positive weight in favour of the proposal.

With regard to design and character, the proposal would retain the existing building and would not result in a significant increase in its scale, height or massing. The proposed rear extension broadly replicates the footprint and relationship of the existing conservatory, whilst the rear dormer is modest in scale and accords with the

general principles contained within the Council's Residential Development SPD. The proposal is not considered harmful to the street scene or wider character of the area.

In relation to residential amenity, Officers have carefully assessed the proposal against the adopted SPD and are satisfied that the relationships between the application property and neighbouring dwellings remain acceptable. Although the rear dormer falls marginally short of one of the SPD relationship guidelines, the degree of departure is limited and is not considered to result in demonstrable harm, particularly given the substantial separation distances involved and the depth of the affected gardens. Similarly, whilst the proposed rear extension technically exceeds the SPD guidance for single-storey extensions, it would effectively replace an existing structure and would not materially worsen the relationship with neighbouring occupiers. Overall, Officers are satisfied that the proposal would not result in unacceptable harm to neighbouring residential amenity.

The issue of noise and disturbance has been considered in detail. The proposal is supported by a dedicated Acoustic Assessment and includes a range of acoustic mitigation measures designed to improve sound insulation between units and adjoining properties. The application property is also an existing five-bedroom dwelling capable of accommodating a large family household. Whilst the subdivision of the building would alter the pattern of occupation, Officers do not consider that the proposal would necessarily result in a materially greater level of permanent occupancy than could arise from the lawful residential use of the property. Subject to conditions securing the acoustic mitigation measures, the proposal is not considered likely to result in unacceptable levels of disturbance.

Parking and highway safety have featured prominently within the objections and within the Ward Councillor's call-in request. These concerns are acknowledged. However, substantial weight must be attached to the technical advice of the Local Highways Authority. The Highways Authority has assessed the proposal and concludes that it would not generate significant volumes of traffic, that the site occupies a semi-sustainable location and that insufficient parking provision does not justify an objection in this case. No highway objections are raised. In the absence of technical evidence demonstrating unacceptable impacts on highway safety, significant weight is attached to this professional advice.

The proposal is also considered acceptable in ecological terms. Officers are satisfied that the development benefits from a statutory biodiversity net gain exemption and would not result in the loss of any priority habitat or ecologically important features. Subject to modest biodiversity enhancement measures secured by condition, no ecological concerns arise.

Taking all of the above matters into account, Officers conclude that the proposal would deliver a number of clear planning benefits, including the re-use of a vacant building, the delivery of additional housing within a sustainable location and the provision of a modest employment-generating use. Whilst limited concerns remain regarding the intensification of the site and the departures from certain aspects of the Residential Development SPD, those impacts are not considered to give rise to demonstrable planning harm of such magnitude that they would outweigh the benefits of the proposal.

Overall, Officers conclude that the development accords with the Development Plan when read as a whole and represents sustainable development. The proposal therefore complies with the relevant policies of the National Planning Policy Framework, Places for Everyone, the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and saved Unitary Development Plan policies. Planning permission is accordingly recommended for approval, subject to the conditions set out below and any amendments considered necessary following receipt of the outstanding Environmental Health consultation response.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Planning Committee resolves to
GRANT planning permission subject to planning conditions noted below.

Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

Condition(s) (9)

- 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:

- Location Plan dated 27 May 2026
- Existing Site Plan dated 19 December 2025
- Rev 3 'Site Plan – Proposed' submitted on 11 September 2026
- Existing Elevations
- 'Basement Plan – Existing' dated February 2026
- Ground Floor Plan – Existing' dated February 2026
- First Floor Plan – Existing' dated February 2026
- 'Second Floor (Attic) Plan – Existing' dated February 2026
- Rev 3 'Basement Plan – Proposed' submitted on 7 September 2026
- Rev 3 'Ground Floor Plan – Proposed' submitted on 7 September 2026
- Rev 3 'First Floor Plan – Proposed' submitted on 7 September 2026
- Rev 3 'Second Floor – Attic Proposed Dormer Extension' submitted on 7 September 2026
- Rev 3a 'Proposed Elevations' submitted on 11 September 2026
- Rev 3a 'Cross Section' submitted on 11 September 2026
- 'Design & Access Statement' by Adelle Hartwell submitted on 7 September 2026

- 'The Noise Impact Assessment / Acoustic Mitigation Strategy' by Adelle Hartwell submitted on 11 September 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 No above ground works shall take place until such time as a detailed specification and/or samples of materials to be used externally in the construction of the development have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such details shall include the type, colour and texture of the materials. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the duly approved details thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring a satisfactory visual appearance to the development and in accordance with Policies P3 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.

- 4 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended), the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), or any Order revoking, re-enacting or modifying those Orders, the ground floor commercial unit hereby approved shall only be used for purposes falling within Use Classes E(c), E(g)(i) and E(g)(ii), and for no other purpose, including any other use falling within Use Class E, without the prior grant of planning permission from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the approved commercial unit remains compatible with the surrounding residential area and to ensure that uses which may generate materially greater levels of activity, visitor numbers, servicing requirements or parking demand are subject to further assessment by the Local Planning Authority, in the interests of residential amenity and highway safety and in accordance with Policies P3 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 No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied until a scheme of biodiversity enhancements has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The duly approved scheme shall be implemented in full prior to final occupation of the development and retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of enhancing biodiversity and habitat provision within the site in accordance with Policy G7 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-G8 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 6 The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until such time as details for the design of refuse/recycling bin store has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The duly approved scheme shall be installed in complete accordance and made available for use prior to the approved development first being brought into use. The approved refuse and recycling scheme shall be retained as constructed for its intended use thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring a satisfactory visual appearance to the development and in accordance with Policies P3 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.

- 7 The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until such time as details for the design of cycle store has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The duly approved scheme shall be installed in complete accordance and made available for use prior to the approved development first being brought into use. The approved cycle store shall be retained as constructed for its intended use thereafter.

Reason: To ensure the provision of satisfactory and secure facilities for cycle storage and in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policies P3, T2 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policies JP-P1 and JP-C6 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

- 8 The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures contained within the submitted Noise Impact Assessment / Acoustic Mitigation Strategy received by the Local Planning Authority on 11 September 2026.

No part of the development shall be occupied until a post-completion acoustic assessment and verification report, prepared by a suitably qualified acoustic consultant, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The assessment shall:

- include on-site noise measurements undertaken following completion of the development;
- assess the internal noise environment within the residential units against
- recognised national standards for residential accommodation;
- demonstrate that the approved acoustic and ventilation measures have
- been implemented; and
- demonstrate that acceptable internal noise levels for habitable rooms can be achieved.

Where the approved report identifies any additional mitigation measures necessary to achieve acceptable internal noise levels, those

measures shall be implemented prior to first occupation and retained thereafter.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of residents in order to comply with the requirements of 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.

- 9 The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until such time as the parking provisions associated with each phase have been installed in accordance with the approved plans. The parking spaces shall be retained as such thereafter.

Reason: In the interest of highway and pedestrian safety and in accordance with Policies T2 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-C8 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.