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# Application Summary

## Contact Details

**Mr Robin Parker**  
([robinparker@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:robinparker@hotmail.co.uk))  
**Telephone:** 07977 481766  
**Alternative Telephone:**  
**Organisation:**  
**Job Title:**  
**Address:** 113 Dunkirk Rise  
College Bank Way  
Rochdale

## Application Type

**Type:** New  
**EAS Type:** Free Standard Service.

## Identification

**Subject:** College Bank Estate  
Listing and Designation Online application

**Primary County/Unitary Authority:** Rochdale District

## Location

**Descriptive Location:** College Bank estate is an iconic high rise estate known locally as 'The Seven Sisters'

## Extent

Extent saved.

## Threat

**Is this asset under threat:** Pre-planning discussions

**Details of threat:** The owners, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, an arms length co-operative created from previous RMBC

council housing, are looking to part or fully demolish the blocks and redevelop the site.

**Current Planning Application/ Permission/Marine Consent:** This asset is **not** the subject of a current planning application, permission or marine consent.

## Ownership & Occupancy

**Owner:** You are the owner of part or all of the subject.  
**Occupier:** You are the occupier of part or all of the subject.  
**Owner/Occupier Details:** Robin Parker - Email: [robinparker@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:robinparker@hotmail.co.uk) - Telephone: 07977 481766 - Owner - Leaseholder - 113 Dunkirk Rise, College Bank Way, Rochdale, , , OL12 6UJ  
Gareth Swarbrick - Organisation: Rochdale Boroughwide Housing - Owner - Majority of rented properties - Sandbrook House, Sandbrook Way, Rochdale, , , OL11 1RY  
Martin Burke - Owner - 111 Dunkirk Rise, Chair of Residents' Association - , , , , ,  
**No Details Reason:** The above are the applicant and key people. There are over 750 residents.

## Reasons

**Historical Interest:** It was in 1961 that Rochdale Corporation, as part of its slum clearance programme, turned its attention to a stretch of land off Spotland Road. The new scheme was of four blocks 20 to 21 storeys high and three blocks 16 to 17 storeys high.

In the taller blocks each floor would contain four two-bedroomed flats and two flats of the bedsitter type for one person while the smaller blocks would see four one-bedroom flats and two flats of the bed-sitting type per floor. Between them they would provide 761 dwellings and 160 garages. Two lifts would be installed in each flat and there would be under floor electric heating in every room. Because the scheme was on a sloping site it was necessary to build a basement on one side of the blocks, with the other side being at ground level.

Work began in early 1963 and over the next two years the increasingly imposing structures began to stretch high into the sky. On Friday 1 October 1965 a new era in Rochdale housing began as the Minister of Housing and Local Government officially opened the first of the

College Bank flats - Underwood. Thanking the minister for his visit the chairman of the estates committee said he believed Rochdale was now setting the pace in municipal housing and that most people were extremely proud of the flats, which were of the finest possible construction and had been described as luxury.

By the 70s the new Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale was both vetting applicants to the flats and advertising them as an incentive to professional people to move into the borough.

In the 80s the Council opened them to general applications, which was a system badly managed with some new tenants demonstrating anti-social behaviour.

A new security system was therefore installed in 1990. It involved a card-entry system, video cameras and a concierge in each block. The cameras monitored both inside and outside the building. Each flat also had an entry phone connected to the main doors of its block.

Additional improvements began in 1993. One of the main tasks was to replace the original under floor heating system, which would be replaced with the much cheaper and convenient night storage heaters. Balcony windows were also replaced, lifts made more reliable and security strengthened.

In 2004 a major project saw refurbishment to bathrooms and kitchens which proved hugely popular.

In 2013 each block was fitted with a huge solar panel to help cut heating and lighting costs.

Now, key fobs are used instead of cards. The lifts were renewed two years ago.

So, more than 40 years after receiving their first tenants, the estate, known locally as The Seven Sisters, is still a big part of Rochdale's housing programme. Without doubt they represent one of the biggest and most ambitious housing projects in the town's history.

It has, however, been poorly managed in recent years with shoddy environmental maintenance and the reduction of the concierges to just one block.

**Architectural Interest:**

They stand tall and proud looking down on the town centre.

Visible from miles around, when approaching Rochdale from the motorway they stand out above all else, seven fingers reaching into the sky beckoning visitors. A landmark not only for travellers, though, but also a potent symbol of the town's determination to emerge from its dark industrial past into the bright new world which opened up during post war regeneration.

In 1967, after winning a class one commendation in the Civic Trust Awards, they also collected an award in the Ministry of Housing and Local Government's 'Good Design In Housing' scheme. In 1975 the estate was recommended for conservation by Rochdale Civic Society during European Architectural Heritage Year.

Many blocks of flats were erected during the 1960s and many of them have now been demolished, tossed into the dustbin of history as miserable failures by disillusioned local authorities. The Seven Sisters are still standing and still in good health - a success story which fully justified that bold move all those years ago.

(The applicant acknowledges much of the copy in 'Historic' and 'Architectural' has been taken from a 2013 article 'Reach for the Sky' in the Manchester Evening News.)

**Archaeological Interest:**

Before the College Bank flats were built, the area was known as The Paddock. Despite the attractive sounding name, it was a slum. The area comprised back-to-back houses, often with dirt floors, slop stones and no running water. The blocks on College Bank are named after buildings that stood in The Paddock, such as Mardyke and Dunkirk House.

**Artistic Interest:**

Whenever Rochdale is featured on film, The Seven Sisters are usually included as an iconic image of the town.

Photographs are appended

## Photographs

**Uploaded Photograph/s:**

Paddock\_Housing\_\_in\_1832.png - Other - Paddock housing 1932  
Paddock\_Dunkirk\_and\_Dunkirk\_House\_1932.png - Other - Paddock Dunkirk and Dunkirk House 1932  
Artwork\_\_The\_Construction\_of\_College\_Bank.jpg - Other - Artwork The Construction of College Bank  
Artwork\_\_John\_Cooke.jpg - External - Artwork by John Cooke

Seven\_Sisters\_View\_from\_the\_hills.jpg - External - Seven Sisters view from the hills  
Seven\_Sisters\_View\_\_from\_Broadfield\_Park.jpg - External - Seven Sisters view from Broadfield Park  
Seven\_Sisters\_from\_behind\_Town\_Hall.jpg - External - Seven Sisters view from behind Town Hall  
Seven\_Sisters\_Single\_block.jpg - External - Single Block  
Empty\_Lounge\_kitchen\_combined.jpg - Internal - Empty lounge kitchen combined  
Empty\_Lounge.jpg - Internal - Empty Lounge  
Bedroom.jpg - Internal - Bedroom  
Second\_bedroom.jpg - Internal - Second bedroom  
Bathroom.jpg - Internal - Bathroom  
Artwork\_\_ceramic\_mural\_Mitchell\_Hey.jpg - Internal - Artwork Ceramic Mural Mitchell Hey  
Occupied\_Lounge.jpg - Internal - Occupied lounge  
You will **not** post any photographs.

**Other Photograph/s:**

## Documents

**Uploaded Documents:**

You are **unable** to upload any Documents.

**Other Documents**

You will **not** post any documents.

**Bibliographic References:**

You have **not** provided any bibliographic references.

## Comments

**Comments:**

Most members of the public, both within the borough and elsewhere, consider The Seven Sisters to be the most recognisable feature of Rochdale, more so than the Grade One Town Hall. 'Iconic' is a word frequently used. Residents value them as convenient and offering walking distance access to not only shopping in the Town Centre but also to three supermarkets, Lidl, Aldi and ASDA. With proper management, the properties should be attractive to over 50s wishing to downsize after children have left home, due to the spacious nature of the rooms. They are also completely mobility accessible. Residents have also suggested that such properties, when vacant, could be advertised for Leasehold sale. The applicant has been a leaseholder for many years. There is also a continuity factor. The applicant moved into his current property in 1995 and three of the other five properties on that landing are still occupied by the same residents then. There is a strong desire to remain by the majority of long standing tenants and leaseholders. RBH argue that they have problems filling them because of changes to benefits, but there are

currently only 3% voids (as stated by Clare Tosteven, Director of Communities, at the consultation). We would argue that the properties could be made attractive to people who are not on benefits with proper management. Other key figures strongly against any demolition are Simon Danczuk MP and Cllr Richard Farnell, Council Leader.