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Planning, Development & Heritage Consultants

Anchorbridge Developments

Greenfinch Public House, 108 Palatine Road, Didsbury, Manchester, M20 3ZA

Statement of Community Involvement

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by Paul Butler Associates on behalf of Anchorbridge Developments. The Statement is part of a suite of technical documents submitted in support of a planning application at the former Greenfinch Public House site, 108 Palatine Road, Didsbury, Manchester, M20 3ZA.
- 1.2 The application comprises the redevelopment of the site through the conversion of the public house to office accommodation on the ground floor and apartments on the upper floors, the provision of family dwellings within the grounds of the site, and associated car parking and landscaping.
- 1.3 The submission of this application for planning permission follows detailed discussions with officers at Manchester City Council, Local Ward Councillors, the West Didsbury Residents Association, Ballbrook Conservation Area Group, local residents / businesses, and key statutory consultees including Greater Manchester police. This statement sets out how feedback was sought (the consultation process) and how views and feedback received have been taken into account and influenced the final proposals for the site.
- 1.4 This statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2 provides a brief overview of relevant local and national planning policy;
 - Section 3 sets out the key events in the consultation process;
 - Section 4 provides an analysis of feedback, an overview of changes made, and responses; and
 - Section 5 provides a summary and information regarding future consultations to be undertaken.

2. National and Local Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019

2.1 In preparing this statement, Anchorbridge Developments has had regard to the principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which places significant importance on early engagement at 'pre-application' stage.

2.2 Paragraph 39 explains that:

'Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better co-ordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.'

2.3 Paragraphs 40 - 42 of the NPPF go on to emphasise the importance of statutory consultees and other consenting bodies participating in pre-application discussions to enable early consideration of all the fundamental issues.

2.4 Within the 'Achieving well-designed places' chapter (12), the NPPF stresses at paragraph 128 the importance of pre-application discussions with the community in the design process, stating that applicants will be expected to work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take into account the views of the community. Proposals that can demonstrate this in the design of the new development should be looked upon more favourably.

Planning Practice Guidance

2.5 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides additional advice for applicants prior to submitting an application. This reinforces the value of pre-application engagement by prospective applicants which can offer significant potential to improve both the efficiency

and effectiveness of the planning application system and improve the quality of planning applications and their likelihood of success.¹

2.6 The PPG also offers advice on which parties should be involved at pre-application stage including:

- The local planning authority;
- Statutory and non-statutory consultees;
- Elected members; and
- Local people.²

Manchester City Council Statement of Community Involvement

2.7 Manchester City Council adopted a refreshed Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) on 11 June 2018. This outlines the Council's plans for community consultation and involvement in the preparation of the Council's new Local Plan and other planning policy documents, and the determination of planning applications.

2.8 Appendix 1 of the Statement provides specific guidance for developers submitting a planning application. The SCI states that Manchester City Council will encourage developers to consult with the local community before they submit a planning application. The SCI recognises that pre-application consultation is beneficial to both the local community and the developer as it allows the developer to design a proposal which takes on board the opinions of the community, meaning that there are likely to be fewer objections once an application is submitted.

2.9 The SCI acknowledges that each engagement programme will be tailored in response to various factors including being proportionate to the scale of the development, planning issues and geographical area under consideration. The SCI advises that engagement should be inclusive, transparent and understandable, and allow sufficient time for consultees to make comments that could help shape and change the development rather

¹ Paragraph 001, Reference ID 20-001-20150326.

² Paragraph 002, Reference ID 20-002-20140306.

than just notifying them that a new development is proposed. The SCI states that suitable consultation methods will include:

- Letters sent to residents and businesses;
- Drop in consultation event;
- A website set up by the developer;
- Leaflet distribution to nearby streets and placed in local facilities.

2.10 Anchorbridge Developments have followed this guidance when approaching the community engagement process for this scheme. This has ensured that local amenity groups, local residents and businesses have been fully informed of the proposals, enabling them to provide a meaningful response to inform the development proposals for the site.

3. The Consultation Process

Consultation Methods

3.1 The design team recognises the importance of pre-application stakeholder involvement and have undertaken extensive consultation on the development proposals for this site. The key consultation methods employed as part of the project include:

- Formal pre-application consultation with Manchester City Council (MCC) planning officers.
- Attendance at site meetings with the Didsbury Ward Councillors to present the proposed scheme and answer any queries raised.
- Attendance at site meetings with representatives of the West Didsbury Residents Association and the Ballbrook Conservation Area Group to present the proposed scheme and answer any queries raised.
- Setting up a website and uploading a presentation document which included details of the site location and context; the proposed scheme layout and the landscaping proposals; floorplans and elevations for one of the proposed houses; and computer generated images of the proposed scheme. A letter was sent out to 109 residential houses / commercial premises notifying them of the proposals for the site, inviting them to view the proposals on the website and to provide comments.
- Email correspondence with local residents in response to queries raised following the consultation exercise.
- Attendance at a site meeting with the residents of 114 Palatine Road to discuss the relationship between the proposed scheme and their property and to respond to queries.

Pre-application with Manchester City Council

- 3.2 Prior to the application submission, the Design Team had various discussions with MCC planning officers on the proposals for the site. An initial meeting was held on 15 June 2021 where it was confirmed that the principle of converting the existing building to office use and apartments, with new build housing in the grounds was considered acceptable in principle.
- 3.3 A further meeting took place with MCC planning officers on 25 September 2020 where the proposals for the site were presented and there was discussion on the key planning issues associated with the proposals. There was subsequent email correspondence relating to comments raised and changes were made to the scheme in response. Furthermore, there was also agreement on the importance of engaging with the local community at an early stage of the project, and agreement on the information that would be required in support of a planning application.

Consultation with Didsbury Ward Councillors / Local Amenity Groups

- 3.4 Site meetings were held with the Didsbury Ward Councillors (Councillors Richard Kirkpatrick and Greg Stanton) in November 2020: a site meeting took place with Councillor Kirkpatrick on 19 November 2020; and a separate meeting took place with Councillor Stanton on 25 November 2020, which was also attended by Debbie Hilal and Alison Hunt of the West Didsbury Residents Association. A separate site meeting was also arranged with Jane Bracewell of the Ballbrook Conservation Area Group on 18 December 2020.
- 3.6 Further contact was made with the Didsbury Ward Councillors, The West Didsbury Association and the Ballbrook Conservation Area Group in April 2021 to inform them of the consultation being undertaken with the local community. They were directed to the website to view the latest proposals and invited to make further comments. A further site meeting took place with members of the West Didsbury Residents Association and the Ballbrook Conservation Area Group on 29 April 2021 to discuss the proposals further. These various site meetings provided the opportunity for representatives of these groups to raise queries about

the proposed scheme and for the design team to provide answers, whilst the scheme's design was developed in response to the comments raised.

Consultation with Local Residents and Businesses

- 3.7 Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, rather than hold a face-to-face public consultation event it was decided that a website would be set up to disseminate information on the application site and proposed scheme, which the local community were made aware through a letter drop. All local residents / commercial premises likely to be affected by the proposed scheme were consulted (see appendix 1) and a total of 109 invite letters (see appendix 2) were sent out to local residents / commercial premises via Hobs Reprographics.
- 3.8 The letter confirmed that the proposals would be available to view on the website between 21 April – 4 May 2021, with comments to be provided by the latter date. Comments were raised by a number of residents and these were duly responded to. In addition a site meeting was held with the residents of 114 Palatine Road – which is the property to the immediate south west of the site – on 14 May 2021 to discuss their thoughts on the proposals, and there was subsequent correspondence and changes to the scheme in response.

4. Consultation Analysis and Design Team Response

Introduction

- 4.1 This section summarises the feedback received and how this has informed the evolution of the design and guided the proposed development for which planning permission is sought.

Feedback received from Manchester City Council

- 4.2 An initial meeting on 15 June 2020 established the principle of converting the existing building to apartments and commercial floorspace, with new build family housing in the grounds. At this meeting it was confirmed that the density / pattern of new build housing should reflect that of the surrounding area. It was agreed that there was a mix of properties in the surrounding area, including the larger detached and semi-detached properties fronting Palatine Road and more recent higher density developments such as Raleigh Close to the rear of the site. It was confirmed that all houses should accommodate appropriate car parking provision and private amenity space, and that properties should address Palatine Road and Lapwing Lane.
- 4.3 Following a further meeting 25 September 2020, MCC officers confirmed that whilst the scheme had progressed in the right direction further work was required to ensure that it respected the site's context. It was confirmed that the family housing required private amenity space that was usable for family housing, that the housing should respect the historic context of the site and there should be a reduction in the area of hardstanding. In response a series of changes were made to the scheme, including:
- A reduction in footprint of the Detached and Semi Detached house types to improve the space around and between the dwellings, and to improve visibility through and across the site. The number of apartments within the existing building was also reduced from 4 to 3.

- Inclusion of a second floor within the roof zone of the larger house to reduce their height and form. All dwellings will be lower in height than the existing building to ensure that the non-designated heritage asset retains its prominence within the streetscene.
- Inclusion of a small format semi-detached house type at the expense of previous 1 x No large format semi-detached house and the 2 x No gatehouses, to enable greater open green space along the perimeter of the site by releasing more area facing Lapwing Lane. Realignment of the central semi-detached property to create a central green space to increase the 'open feel' of the site.
- Increase in size of all gardens across the site, with a minimum 10m garden to those properties adjacent to the western boundary of the site which also creates a greater separation with neighbouring properties.
- Properties along Palatine Road realigned to ensure the prominence of the existing building on Palatine Road. Angled alignment of the central small format semi-detached properties to avoid direct views to the gable end of the properties on Raleigh Close.
- Realignment of properties and a reduction in footprint of the house types to enable more of the existing trees to be retained and to allow the opportunity in additional landscaping and tree planting.
- Reduction in hard landscaping and a significant increase in soft landscaping. A 'grasscrete' style product is proposed for the central parking bays to allow grass to grow through composite robust parking surface to increase planted landscape.

4.4 These changes resulted in a 30% reduction in developed floor area across the site thereby allowing the site to become more open, improve the levels of private / shared amenity space, and allow for significant levels of green infrastructure within and on the boundaries of the site.

4.5 Further comments were raised by MCC's planning officers, and a response provided, in November 2020 are set out below.

- The dwellings fronting Palatine and Lapwing need to turn to face those roads with meaningful private garden provision to the rear. There is some concern that the units fronting Palatine Road are too close to the line of trees on the boundary and two may be better here.

Response: The proposed dwellings will have dual frontage thereby contributing positively to the Palatine Road and Lapwing Lane streetscenes. Whilst rear gardens will be adjacent to these roads, dense hedge planting is proposed against the existing stone wall / railing boundary treatment which will provide sufficient privacy. This arrangement also ensures that the proposed housing maintains a similar building line of the existing building thereby ensuring that it remains prominent in the streetscene.

In response the number of houses fronting Palatine Road was reduced from 3 – 2 in order to minimise impact on trees, spacing between dwellings and views into the site.

- The remote nature of the car parking for the apartments whilst central to the site might be an issue for GMP.

Response: The car parking (apart from 1 space) is positioned slightly away from the existing building to improve the setting of the non-designated heritage asset through the provision of soft landscaping around the building. This in turn improves the sense of openness around the building and provides a decent level of amenity space for residents of the apartments. The Crime Impact Statement prepared in support of the application does not raise this as an issue.

- We question the orientation of the 2 angled units on the entrance to the site in terms of historic pattern of development, this may also cause intervisibility issues to property on Raleigh Close.

Response: The properties on Raleigh Close immediately adjacent to the site do not contain any habitable room windows on their elevations directly facing the site, whilst the properties on Raleigh Close that would be viewed from the rear windows of these 2

properties would be of sufficient distance. The siting of these 2 properties would provide oblique rather than direct views to habitable room windows of properties on Raleigh Close which would further ensure no adverse impact on residential amenity. Retained and proposed tree planting on the site boundary will further mitigate this and provide a degree of screening.

- The detached house in the back corner may cause overlooking to the windows to the side of a property to the SW which is well set back from Palatine Road.

Response: The rear of the detached property would face towards the outbuilding to 114 Palatine Road which appears to be used as ancillary accommodation. This outbuilding has a blank gable facing towards the site with no habitable room windows. The detached and semi-detached properties on this boundary are positioned a similar distance away from the boundary as 114, which ensures there is a distance of 18 metres between the habitable room windows to the side elevation of 114 and the rear elevations of the proposed housing. In addition there is boundary treatment and significant screening provided by trees which further reduces the potential for any adverse impact on residential amenity.

- All of the properties at the back of the site are close to the mature trees on the boundary and there may be pressure to fell or prune back these which we wouldn't want to see.

Response: Advice has been provided by an arboriculturalist regarding the positioning of the housing to minimise impact on trees and a tree report will be submitted with the application. There are more significant trees on the south-west boundary of the site and the housing has therefore been set back approximately 10m from the boundary to ensure there is no pressure to fell or significantly prune these trees. It is acknowledged that these trees contribute to the character of the conservation area, and the applicant is keen to protect them as part of the proposals.

- We need to see a street scene elevation to show how the scale sits alongside the existing.

- **Response:** AXI are in the process of developing the elevations for the proposed houses and will also be providing a streetscene of the development from both Palatine Road and Lapwing Lane. These will form part of the application submission.

- There needs to be more garden space around the houses.

Response: In developing the proposals the footprint of all properties has been significantly reduced and the size of gardens increased. The larger properties have a minimum 10m rear garden, and all gardens are comparative in size to other developments nearby. The changes to the layout allow for greater openness within and on the boundaries of the site and provide a greater level of green infrastructure.

- The existing building could be classed as a non-designated heritage asset and it and its setting needs to be given due consideration. The building has some heritage value underneath all of the alterations, so there will be a need to carry out a form of map regression and heritage appraisal. The house was originally set in generous grounds and this needs to be given some consideration and should help inform the development.

Response: It is agreed that the existing Greenfinch should be viewed as a non-designated heritage asset which contributes positively to the character and appearance of the Albert Park Conservation Area. The proposed scheme will remove previous unsympathetic alterations / additions to the building and improve its setting through soft landscaping and high quality designed housing. A Heritage Statement will accompany a planning application and will assess the heritage impact of the proposals on heritage assets. The scheme will provide numerous heritage and public benefits.

Feedback received from Didsbury Ward Councillors and Local Amenity Groups

- 4.6 A series of site meetings were held with the Didsbury Ward Councillors, the West Didsbury Residents Association and the Ballbrook Conservation Area Group. Set out below are the various comments that were raised / discussed and the responses provided by the design team.

- **Existing Building:** Use and retention of the existing building is important. The existing building is a non-designated heritage asset, therefore the proposals will involve removal of previous unsympathetic extensions and restoration of the building.
- **Site Openness:** It was confirmed that 10 family houses were proposed in the car park area (this has since been reduced to 9), with each property having front and rear gardens and in-curtilage car parking. It was highlighted that the housing had been laid out in order to ensure openness on the site boundaries, whilst a central green space would provide openness within the site. Adjacent to this central open space would be 6 car parking spaces (since reduced to 5) for the converted existing building, which would be grasscrete to fit in with the greening of the site.

There was a query about any openness being eroded in the future through the extension of properties. It was highlighted that the properties proposed were good sized family houses that would cater for resident's needs without the requirement for extensions, whilst PD rights could be removed as part of any planning permission.

- **Trees:** It was confirmed that all trees on the boundary of the site would be retained where possible, particularly the mature trees on the site but also on neighbouring sites. It was confirmed that an Arboricultural Report – including Tree Constraints Plan and Tree Impact Assessment – would be submitted in support of the application.

It was agreed that any tree that had to be removed would be mitigated through replacement tree planting on a 3:1 ratio. Replacement trees would be of a native species and a variety would be chosen in order to enhance biodiversity.

- **Green Infrastructure:** It was explained that the level of hardstanding across the site would be reduced and the level of tree planting and soft landscaping increased. As well as improving the visual aesthetics of the site and enabling biodiversity enhancement, this would enhance the permeability of the site and help with issues such as drainage.

- **Sustainability:** It was agreed that the development should comprise high sustainability credentials that go beyond building regulations. It was agreed that a fabric first approach would be important but that renewable forms of energy (i.e. PV) would also be considered, providing they didn't have a negative impact on the character of the conservation area. Electric vehicle charging points would also be provided in the development.
- **Design:** It was confirmed that the houses would be of a traditional design which referenced features of the existing building (i.e. pitched / slate roofs / curved windows), and that red brick might be used to act as a contrast to the Greenfinch building. Red brick was also prevalent in the conservation area. The housing would be 2 storey with space in the roof, whilst the height would be lower than that of the existing property to ensure the heritage asset maintained its prominence in the streetscene.
- **Boundary Treatment:** It was confirmed that the boundary treatment – stone walls / gate piers – would be retained, with railings being added to the stone walls where they were currently missing in order to provide consistency. There was discussion on the provision of dense hedge planting (Hawthorn/Beech/Holly mix) on the site boundaries which would help provide privacy for residents but also absorb particulate pollution.
- **Pedestrian / Vehicular Access:** It was highlighted that the existing pedestrian / vehicular access points to the site would be retained.
- **Biodiversity Enhancement:** As well as additional tree planting / shrubs / hedges and soft landscaping, it was confirmed that an array of other biodiversity enhancement measures were being considered including the incorporation of raised fences for hedgehogs, bat boxes, swift boxes etc. It was mentioned that an ecologist had been commissioned and they would be advising further in this regard.
- **Parking for the Apartments/Office Space and Overall Provision:** 6 spaces are provided. 5 of these are grasscrete – to provide greening/drainage benefits – and are located centrally within the site, the other space is to the immediate rear of the building. The

apartments will be provided with 1 space each, whilst 3 spaces will be provided for the office. The office space is to be occupied by the applicant's business which is currently located in Didsbury Village and they have confirmed their car parking requirements.

Car parking provision has been a key consideration in developing the scheme's design and the design team are aware that on-street car parking pressures are a concern for local residents. For that reason an appropriate level of car parking is provided within the scheme, whilst at the same time creating a visually pleasing development. The level of car parking will be justified in a Transport Report to accompany the application.

- **Ground Rents:** Whilst the financial viability of a scheme without the additional capital value of grounds rents is inevitably tighter, the applicant believes the current scheme can stand on its own without it and therefore they do not intend to impose escalating ground rents.

- 4.7 The Ward Councillors, West Didsbury Residents Association and Ballbrook Conservation Group were appreciative of the efforts made by the design team regarding engagement, the responses that had been provided to the queries raised, and consideration of the comments raised in developing the proposed scheme. Positive comments were received in relation to the principle of the scheme, retaining the prominence of the existing building, the design of the proposed housing, the retention of existing stone boundary walls, the landscaping of the site and biodiversity enhancement measures. The design team also confirmed that they would be keen to engage further following the submission of the planning application.

Feedback received from Local Residents and Businesses

- 4.8 Comments were received from a total of 6 local residents in response to the proposals. Positive comments were made, with residents commenting that the proposed housing was of an attractive / sympathetic design, and that the proposed use of the existing building would secure its long-term future. The design team responded to comments raised with

regards to species of the hedges provided on the site boundaries and clarification on the car parking to be provided for the apartments and offices.

- 4.9 A separate site meeting was held with the residents on 114 Palatine Road. They had sought reassurance that the pair of semi-detached properties would not impact on their amenity. The site meeting was useful in understanding the relationship between the proposed semi-detached properties and windows within 114 Palatine Road. It was confirmed at the meeting that existing trees on the boundary of the application site would be retained in order to maintain privacy, and that the existing boundary fencing would be replaced with a more solid fencing treatment.
- 4.10 Following the meeting, the architects issued an elevation drawing for the pair of semi's and prepared a 'first floor site plan and sight line analysis' drawing to show the first floor layouts of the houses and the direct site lines between the windows within the proposed properties and 114 Palatine Road. The 'first floor site plan and sight line analysis' drawing showed the direct sight lines from the nearest windows of the proposed houses to 114 Palatine Road, 1 window being within the detached property and 1 window in one of the semi-detached houses. It was confirmed that these windows provided light to secondary dressing rooms with cill level windows, which would reduce the potential for direct looking between the properties; and, they would not directly overlook the habitable room windows in 114 Palatine Road, whilst the window of the semi-detached property that does align with room in the neighbouring property is to a bathroom and will comprise obscure glazing. However, the design team have also agreed to provide opaque glazing to the window of the dressing room to further minimise the potential for impact on amenity.
- 4.11 The consultation that has been undertaken with Manchester City Council, Didsbury Councillors, local amenity groups and local residents has significantly influenced the design process and parameters of the development, enabled the content of the application submission to be 'fixed', and ensured that the development has been appropriately considered against the key planning issues.

5. Summary and Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 As part of the preparation of the planning application an extensive pre-application consultation exercise has been undertaken. The consultation process has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of national policy and guidance, and Manchester City Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI).
- 5.2 The objective of the pre-application consultation was to engage effectively with the local community (including the Didsbury Ward Councillors, West Didsbury Residents Association and Ballbrook Park Conservation Group) to introduce the proposals, and identify and consider any issues prior to the submission of the application. This was undertaken alongside pre-application consultation with Manchester City Council.
- 5.3 The comments and feedback received during the consultation exercise have been carefully considered alongside those from the Local Planning Authority and other relevant consultees in finalising the proposals. The design team are grateful for all feedback received during the consultation process from the local community.
- 5.4 This statement has demonstrated that throughout the preparation of the proposed scheme, the applicant and their design team have actively engaged with the Council and the local community. Consultation has confirmed that the principle of the proposed scheme is supported by the local community and Local Planning Authority.
- 5.5 Further opportunities for the local community and statutory consultees to comment will be provided through the Council's statutory consultation exercise. Additional value has been added to the project as a result of the consultation undertaken, and the proposals have been developed and refined to deliver a scheme of the highest possible quality. The project team look forward to working closely with Manchester City Council and other stakeholders in progressing the application through to a positive determination.

Next Steps

- 5.6 As part of the planning application process, Manchester City Council will now undertake their own statutory consultation (in accordance with their SCI) to publicise and seek comments on the planning application to inform the decision-making process.

Appendix 1: Plan of Consultation Boundary

Appendix 2: Public Consultation Letter