



ROMAN SUMMER



PLANNING STATEMENT

OUR LADY'S RC HIGH SCHOOL, BLACKLEY

MARCH 2021

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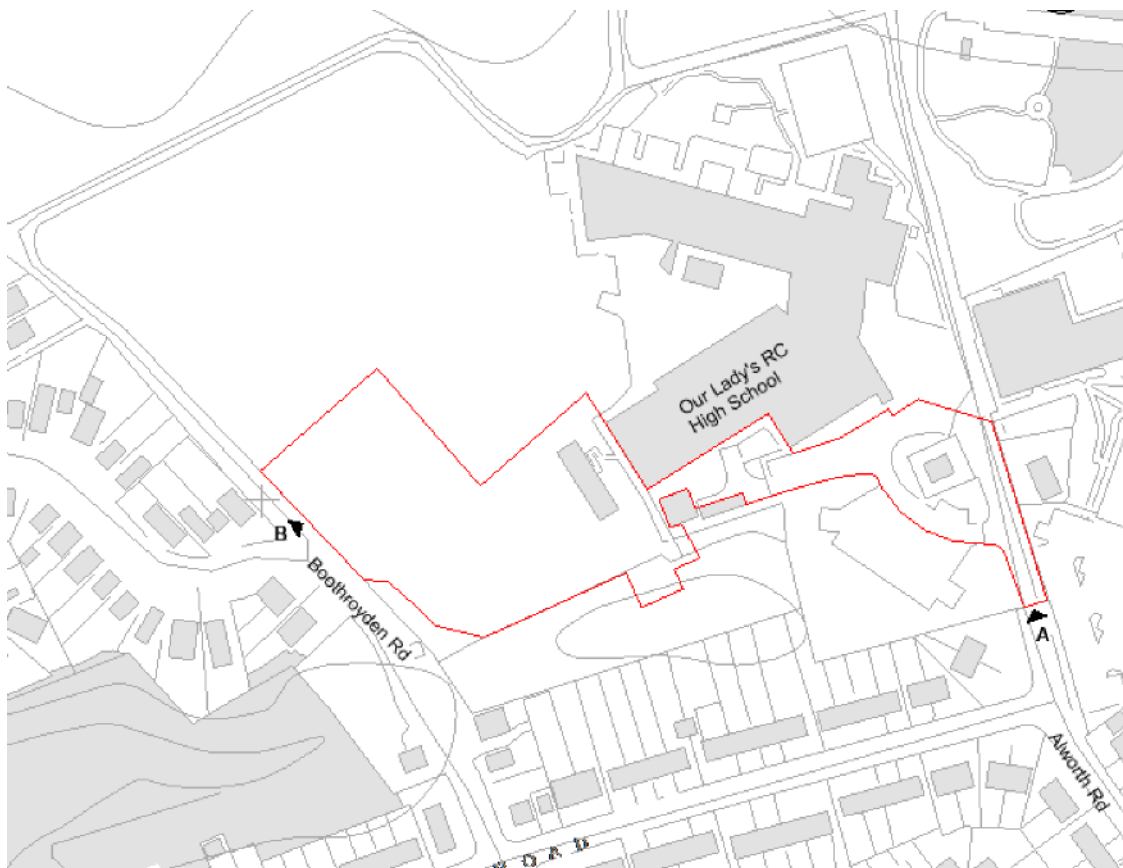
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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement supports a full planning application submitted by *Our Lady's RC High School* promoting the erection of a 1,145 sqm GIA / 1,245 sqm GEA 2-storey educational building [Use Class F1(a)] (following removal of the temporary prefabricated classroom block that currently occupies the site), associated hard and soft landscaping works, and the creation of a temporary vehicular access via Boothroyden Road to be used during the construction process.
- 1.2 The application site boundary is marked in red on the plan below, and photographs of the site are provided at *Appendix 1*.



- 1.3 The site forms part of the grounds of the high school (constructed in 2009), and currently accommodates a temporary classroom block that was approved for a 5 year period in 2017.

- I.4 The purpose of this application is to address capacity issues faced by the school and to replace those poor quality temporary classroom facilities with new, attractive, fit-for-purpose educational provision to accommodate the existing and projected pupil quota, as required by Manchester City Council, which has allocated circa £2.35 million funds to deliver the new teaching block by the start of the academic year in 2022.
- I.5 In developing the proposal, regard has been paid to the provision of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- I.6 The content of this application has been discussed and agreed with the LPA prior to its submission. The LPA has indicated support for the proposal in recognition that the new accommodation is urgently required to provide sufficient, good quality education accommodation to serve the needs of local children, and also in recognition that this is the best and only location within the school grounds that could accommodate the proposal.
- I.7 A comprehensive set of drawings and documents are submitted in support of the application. Those should be considered alongside one another to provide a rounded and comprehensive understanding and assessment of the proposal. The application as a whole comprises :
- Application forms and certificates (completed by Roman Summer Associates Ltd);
 - This Planning Statement (Roman Summer Associates Ltd);
 - Transport Statement (Highways Advice);
 - Design & Access Statement (Pozzoni Architecture);
 - Drawing ref: 589-STO-00-00-DR-L-0001 P00 - Landscape general arrangement (Stiwdio Owens);
 - Drawing ref: 589-STO-00-00-DR-L-0002 P01 - Temporary Construction Access Option (Stiwdio Owens);
 - Crime Impact Assessment (Design for Security);
 - Extended Phase One Habitat Survey (Rachel Hacking Ecology);

- Tree Survey and Constraints Report (ROAVR);
- Preliminary Geo-Environmental Investigation - Site Investigation Report (SKM);
- Factual Report and Desk Study (SKM);
- Noise Assessment for Control of Noise from Mechanical Services Equipment (Hepworth Acoustics);
- Renewable and Sustainability Report (Waterman Building Services);
- Site Waste Management Proforma – see sections 3.8 and 3.9 of Design and Access Statement (Pozzoni Architecture);
- Drainage Strategy (WML Consulting);
- Drawing ref: 9670-WML-ZZ-XX-DR-C-1001 P01 - Proposed Site Drainage (WML Consulting);
- Surface Water Drainage Calculations (WML Consulting);
- Architectural drawings as listed in the Drawing Schedule (Pozzoni Architecture).

1.10 The application fee has been calculated at £7,854, to reflect the erection of 1,245 sqm GEA floorspace.

1.11 The remainder of this Planning Statement is structured as below :

- Section 2.0 describes the site, surroundings, background and proposed development;
- Section 3.0 summarises national and local planning policies relevant to the application;
- Section 4.0 assesses the proposed development against planning policy and addresses other material considerations;
- Section 5.0 sets out our conclusions.

2.0 Description of the Site, Surroundings & Proposal

The Site & Context

- 2.1 The application site is 0.98 ha and forms part of the grounds of Our Lady's RC High School, in Higher Blackley, north Manchester.



- 2.2 The school buildings are located to the rear of surrounding houses on Howden Road, not visible from the main thoroughfare of Victoria Avenue, but accessed via a network of residential streets. The school does not have a major road frontage. It is accessed via Alworth Road, and the western edge of the school grounds is flanked by Boothroyden Road.

- 2.3 The original school was built in 1958 and extended in 1961, and was redeveloped in 2008/9 following approval of a planning application in 2007 that promoted the co-location of three schools to create a campus, incorporating Our Lady's School (750 places), North Ridge Special Educational Needs (SEN) School (110 places) and Meade Hill School for students with Emotional, Social and Behavioural Disorders (ESBD) (25 places).
- 2.4 The application site currently accommodates a temporary classroom block that was approved in 2017 for a period of 5 years. That block sits immediately adjacent to the main school building, on the edge of playing fields / pitches.
- 2.5 It is important to highlight that this proposal will not impact on any playing field or pitch in respect of any sports-related use or function. The location of the proposal is already occupied by a temporary classroom block, and there is a substantial mound of circa 1.3 metres height, beneath which is attenuation apparatus (see photograph below). The application site is clearly not used for, or capable of being used for any sporting purpose, and has never been used as a pitch / playing field since the school was built in 2009 (a period of circa 12 years).



- 2.6 The site is not within or close to a conservation area and it contains no listed buildings. There are no heritage assets in close proximity that might be affected by the proposal.
- 2.7 The main part of the application site contains no trees or vegetation (apart from grass), although it is proposed to create a direct stepped access to the existing 'forest school' to the immediate south, which will involve the removal of a small amount of poor quality vegetation.

The Proposal and Rationale

- 2.8 In considering this application, it is important to understand both the socio-economic context and educational need for the proposal.
- 2.9 The rate of unemployment in Blackley is higher than the national average, and the rate of benefit claims is more than 25% higher than the national average.
- 2.10 A recent study carried out by The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that Blackley is in the top ten most deprived areas in the north west of England.
- 2.11 Within Greater Manchester, the Blackley and Broughton constituency has the highest risk of poverty.
- 2.12 Our Lady's RC High School is one of three High Schools in the area. It is a voluntary aided school, administered by Manchester City Council and the Catholic Diocese of Salford. It provides education for girls and boys aged between 11 and 16, and is located in an 'education village' (built in 2009).
- 2.13 Our Lady's RC High School was originally build as a 5FTE high school and designed to accommodate up to 750 pupils.
- 2.14 It is ranked as a 'good' school (Ofsted February 2017) that is consistently oversubscribed. For each of the last two years, there have been nearly a hundred children on the waiting list for a Year 7 place. There is therefore an urgent need / imperative to increase the number of places, which will in turn assist a community which suffers from high levels of deprivation.

- 2.15 The proposal seeks full planning permission to replace the existing temporary classroom block with a new, fit-for-purpose 2-storey education building of 1,245 sqm GEA.
- 2.16 The current occupancy of the school is 880 pupils, serviced by 130 staff. As noted above, the building was designed to accommodate just 750 pupils, and is therefore not sufficient to meet its current pupil number.
- 2.17 In response to the deficiency, a request has been made by Manchester City Council as Education provider, and £2.35 million funding is in place to deliver a new building, which will address its over-occupancy and avoid the ongoing need to use temporary, unfit 'portacabin' accommodation.
- 2.18 The proposal will not only accommodate the current occupancy of pupils (880), but will also increase its capacity for 20 additional pupils.
- 2.19 There will be no increase in staff numbers, which will remain at 130.
- 2.20 In summary, therefore, the proposed occupancy of the school will rise from 750 places (which the school was designed to accommodate) to 900 pupils, although - reflecting the fact that the school already caters for 880 pupils - the net increase will be just 20 pupils. And as confirmed above, there will be no additional teaching or other staff.
- 2.21 The School's over-capacity has resulted in a number of issues and deficiencies which will be addressed by this proposal, as explained below.
- 2.22 First, the ongoing over-subscription of the school results in restricted circulation / movement around the school, simply because it was not designed to accommodate the current number of pupils, or the extra 20 pupils it needs to cater for. This means that circulation routes become heavily congested during class changes, which presents health and safety and safeguarding issues. Vertical circulation routes (staircases) are similarly undersized in terms of staircase widths and numbers, which again presents health and safety risks, including in the event of fire evacuation.

- 2.23 Second, over-subscription has resulted in inadequate teaching areas. In order to have accommodated the additional pupils it now caters for, the school has had to re-model certain existing non-teaching areas, which in some instances has resulted in 'internal' classrooms without any natural daylight or ventilation, which does not comply with DFE guidelines for teaching areas.
- 2.24 Third, there is overcrowding to the dining area, kitchen and servery, recreation / social spaces and toilets, which are all too small to accommodate the current pupil numbers. Aside from the health and safety issues associated with this (such as insufficient escape routes), these cramped conditions have a negative impact on the lunchtime dining experience for pupils. The lunchtime period is an important aspect of the school day for all pupils, but especially within the local context where 36% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. It is imperative that the school can provide adequate facilities for pupils to sit and enjoy a hot meal at least once per day. Furthermore, there is immense pressure on the toilets, particularly during breaks and lunch times, and there is little access to indoor social spaces for pupils outside of the dining room.
- 2.25 Fourth, in response to the need for a more focused and specialised teaching facility, the school provides a dedicated alternative provision facility (referred to as 'OSAP'), which provides a small number of pupils with a learning environment which can better meet their needs. Because of the lack of space within the existing building, this provision is housed within the temporary standalone 'portacabin' at the side of the main school building. The facilities and functions that the OSAP facility provides is important, as it means that those children can be taught within their local community and stay within a mainstream school setting. The proposed new building will accommodate the OSAP facility in a far more attractive learning environment, and – importantly – those pupils will no longer be segregated from the wider school.
- 2.26 The above issues will inevitably be further exasperated as numbers increase year-on-year (as is anticipated).

2.27 The new building proposed by this application will address the above deficiencies and reflects a number of the school's aspirations, including :

- The creation of visual and physical links between the new building and the adjacent (existing) Forest School.
- A design solution which incorporates sustainability and environmental features.
- Creation of a learning environment which enhances the educational experience of pupils. This will include a learning resource centre (library), which is a key space in terms of encouraging children to read. Reading is a key priority for the school, and also Manchester City Council as part of its 'Read Manchester' initiative. Notably, the school does not currently have an exclusive library for pupils.
- Provision of a new / alternative learning facility for pupils, which can function as its own entity, but very much an integral part of the overall campus, and continues to impact on pupil outcomes by maintaining extremely low exclusion rates.

2.28 The proposed building is to be located to the south west of the school site which (as noted above) is currently occupied by a grass mound and the temporary OSAP building – a single storey portacabin. This is the only possible location for the proposed building, and is ideal for the new building for the following reasons:-

- The site is very close to the main kitchen deliveries area of the existing main building.
- There are existing established paved routes leading between the main school building and the OSAP building which can easily be adapted to suit the new build.
- The site is immediately adjacent to the existing Forest School area, and as such there is the potential for good visual and physical links between this and the new building. This will further link into the sustainable and environmental features.
- The chosen site location means minimal / no impact on existing facilities of school grounds (such as playing fields and the hard play area).

2.28 The 'stand alone' / detached option has been selected in order to minimise disruption to the existing school building during construction works. The site is located such that it can be easily and safely cordoned off as a construction site.

- 2.29 It is also important to emphasise that this is the only realistic location for the new building. There is no other option for the new building, because that would severely compromise the spaces that are critical to the functioning of the school, including its yard area (which needs to safely accommodate 880+ pupils) and its playing fields / pitches.
- 2.30 The new building will provide the following accommodation:
- Additional general teaching classrooms
 - A dedicated alternative provision suite which includes classrooms, office and small learning areas
 - A dining hall and small kitchen (which will be used as a reheat facility)
 - A learning resource centre
 - Staff and administration spaces
 - Storage
 - Toilets and changing areas
 - Plant and server rooms
- 2.31 All of the proposed areas have been based upon the DFE area guidelines and totals a GIFA (gross internal floor area) of 1,145 m² (equating to a gross external area of 1,245 m²).
- 2.32 The existing site access and parking areas will remain unchanged, as will the boundary landscaping. While no tree loss will arise as a result of the proposed building itself, a very small amount of poor quality vegetation will be removed to accommodate the proposed hard and soft landscaping, but – as highlighted on the submitted landscaping plan – these will be replaced with new planting of much improved quality.
- 2.33 In design terms, the development is of contemporary design, to reflect (albeit not mimic) the existing building. The materials palette is simple, crisp and of excellent quality. Full details of the proposed building materials will be seen on the elevation drawing materials key. The materiality concept is neutral and natural tones generally, but additions of colour will be introduced through the metal window / door / curtain wall frames, soffits and reveals. Coloured glass will feature at the main entrance and adjacent chapel room, as well as the

'living green wall'. A glass and timber balcony is proposed, with integrated retractable canopy / shade, which offers semi-sheltered external space to enhance the building's internal space.



- 2.34 The base of the building will be a buff brick of similar appearance to the existing building buff brick base, but the dominant facade material will be a composite cladding (timber effect). A composite cladding material (rather than natural timber) is essential for the school as it meets the maintenance, lifespan & robustness requirements that are appropriate to an education environment.
- 2.35 As noted earlier, a temporary access road is proposed to be created via Boothroyden Road as an option for construction traffic. The precise details of the alignment / configuration of any such temporary access that might be created (and the associated contractors' compound) will be the subject of future discussions with the selected contractor. That said, it is important to highlight that any such information presented in support of the application shows an indicative arrangement at this stage, and we anticipate that a condition will be attached that

will require the submission of full and precise details prior to any works taking place. It is worth highlighting that a broadly similar access arrangement was used during the construction of the school in 2009.

- 2.36 Following the completion of the development – which is anticipated will be circa 12 months – any new access that might be formed from Boothroyden Road will be removed, and the land restored. Likewise, any temporary use of any part of the site for the purposes of a contractors' compound will be fully restored, and we anticipate that an appropriate 'aftercare' condition will be attached.
- 2.37 Beyond the new building and the access road, works will be very minimal, namely hard and soft landscaping and the creation of a stepped access to the adjacent 'forest school'.
- 2.38 It is important to reiterate that – aside from the possible temporary closure of one playing pitch during the construction process (in order to accommodate a sufficient site compound that will be critical to the construction process) – there will be no loss of or impact on any of the school's sports pitches / fields in respect of their capacity to be used as such. The application site does not form – and has never formed - a functioning / usable part of any existing sports pitch or field or any other form of sports provision, and already accommodates a temporary classroom facility and sizeable mound with protruding vents. Furthermore, any such impact will be temporary, and the land will be restored back to its current condition and use immediately after the construction process (which is scheduled for completion in late summer 2022).
- 2.39 The School fully recognises the sensitivity of the surrounding residential context and appreciates that local residents will be concerned to ensure that the entire construction process is closely managed / regulated, with utmost respect for its neighbours. The School wishes to offer an absolute commitment in that regard, and will ensure that the selected contractor is charged with adopting best practice 'considerate construction' methodologies at all times, and that a nominated 'community representative' will be on hand and readily contactable at all times to deal with any concerns that any member of the community might have throughout the construction period. We anticipate that all of this – including restrictions on working times and days – will be enshrined within a condition that will require the submission and approval of such details.
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Planning History

- 2.40 Our Lady's RC High School was one of the first schools in the UK to benefit from the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme.
- 2.41 It was redeveloped in 2009 following the approval of application 082189/VO/2007/N1 (approved in June 2007). That proposed the redevelopment of the former school site to enable the co-location of three schools, involving the erection of a part 2, part 3 storey building to form the new Our Lady's RC Sports College, with a 14-19 centre and replacement for North Ridge High SEN School. It also involved the remodelling and extension of an existing building at the east of the site to form a replacement for Meade Hill School for children with behavioural difficulties. The application also proposed the formation of sports facilities, including playing pitches and all weather pitch; landscaping and car parking.
- 2.42 More recently - in April 2017 - application 115194/FO/2017 was approved for the erection of a single storey 'Portacabin' building to be used as classrooms for a temporary period of 5 years. That 'portacabin' remains in place today (see photograph below) and is located in broadly the same position as the building promoted by this application.



2.43 That application was presented at the time on the following basis :

'There will be no immediate increase to the numbers of staff or pupils attending the site as a result of this proposal. The proposed building will be used to accommodate a definite increase of 50 pupils in September 2017 and, as demand for places increases, it is estimated that a further 30 students per year group (150 in total) will require extra space over the coming years, so future proofing is needed to accommodate these increases. Additionally, 15 pupils who have been educated offsite previously, are being brought back into mainstream school and require more space for specific small group and 1:1 tutoring, hence the need for extra space.'

2.44 The agent for the application confirmed (by email of 16th February 2017) that :

'The proposed building will not encroach on the school playing pitches. The proposed site area is not used as a playing pitch and has not been used as such since the school opened in 2009. I have not contacted Sports England regarding this proposal.'

2.45 It is noted that Condition 1 of the above approval states :

'The permission hereby granted is for a limited period only, expiring on 13th April 2022. The portacabin hereby permitted, and other associated structures, shall be removed from the site edged red shown on Drawing no. TSNG220137841 by 13th April 2022. Within three months of removal, or in the first planting season following removal, the playing field land shall be reinstated to a condition fit for a playing field.'

2.46 That condition arose from the consultation response of Sport England (9th March 2017), which stated :

'Although there is encroachment onto the playing field where a pitch or part of a pitch could be located in the future, it does not immediately affect the existing pitches. The portacabin will be located 11m from the southern pitch and is outside of the minimum 3m run off area of the pitch.'

2.47 We comment elsewhere (in Section 4.0) on matters arising in respect of playing fields / pitches, but at this point would reiterate that :

- The land to be occupied by the proposed development is not used as part of any playing field / pitch or for any other sports provision or purpose.
- The land has never been used as such since the construction of the school in 2008/9 - a period of circa 12 years.
- The land is incapable of being used as a playing field / pitch or any other form of sports provision, in that it is occupied by a large mound with extraction vents.
- The proposed development will not impact to any extent on the use of any playing field / pitch or any form of sports provision. It will be located at a considerable distance from the closest pitch and its run off areas.

2.48 It is also important to highlight that :

1. The School does not currently use the pitches due to their very poor irrigation and a lack of toilet /changing facilities. The proposed building will provide these facilities and a supply for first aid. This will enable the School to be able to host sports-related tournaments for primary schools, which it cannot currently cater for.
2. The dining facilities within the proposed building can be used to provide refreshments for visiting sports teams, to accommodate sporting competitions / events.
3. Locating classrooms next to the playing fields will allow the PE faculty to complete both practical and theory lessons together.
4. The classrooms in the proposed building can be used to host governing body coaching awards / teacher awards. Many of the School's children wish to become sports coaches but struggle to travel to other venues.

2.49 Accordingly, not only will this proposal not impact on any playing field / sports pitch, but it will create new facilities that will enable the better / more intense use of playing fields that are currently hardly used.

Pre-Application Advice

- 2.50 The draft / emerging proposal has shared with the LPA prior to submission. The LPA has confirmed the extent of information required to validate the application, and has confirmed that :

'In terms of the initial concept/layout plans I would comment that the layout appears okay at this stage, if the proposed extensions were to involve a loss of the existing playing fields I think this would raise issues in terms of mitigation that would have to be addressed as part of the application.'

- 2.51 The Council's Highways officer has also commented on the provision of a possible new access via Boothroyden Road as below :

'We can appreciate the concerns in terms of taking construction traffic through the main car park and why you seek an alternative.

Whilst the Boothroyden Road access option is feasible from a highway perspective, it would be useful if you could quantify the amount of daily construction traffic intended to use the access. In addition, we would suggest that you first engage with the residents at houses 37, 39 and 41 and seek their buy in since they are most likely to be adversely affected by traffic/noise generated.

It may be helpful if a suitably sized area within the development could be set aside for construction traffic/contractor parking to provide further assurances to local residents.

If the proposed access point were to be used we would not be averse to it functioning as a permanent emergency access, but the caveat would be that it should have a means of preventing permanent general access (eg gates).'

- 2.52 Subsequent discussions have confirmed the LPA's support in principle for the proposal and its recognition of the urgent educational imperative for the new education building to serve the children of the local community.

Community Consultation

- 2.53 Prior to submitting this application, the School has contacted ward councillors and the wider community.
- 2.54 The letter reproduced at *Appendix 2* has been hand delivered to all homes in the local area (ie homes on Alworth Road, Howden Road and Boothroyden Road) to explain the project and the intended planning application. It will be seen that the School has invited local residents to make contact and has offered 'socially distanced' meetings or telephone contact, and has also drawn attention to details of the proposal on the School website (extracts from which are also provided at *Appendix 2*).
- 2.55 On Friday 26th February, the School's Head (Mr. Ormsby) held a productive meeting with Cllr Lanchbury to outline the proposal. We understand that the councillor welcomes the benefits for the pupils of the area, but she considers that the main concern of local residents is likely to relate to the volume of construction traffic.
- 2.56 The School acknowledges that likelihood, and – as explained earlier – makes a very firm and clear commitment to the community that the entire construction process, including the traffic it will generate, will be strictly supervised and subject to the details of a comprehensive and robust Construction Management Plan that will be presented to the Local Planning Authority as required by condition.
- 2.57 Councillor Lanchbury also considered that the local community would be concerned if the new building was likely to generate significant extra numbers of staff and pupils, and in that regard we hope that the community will be comforted by the fact that this project will only generate capacity for circa 20 extra pupils, and that there will be no increase in staff levels.

3.0 Overview of Planning Policy

- 3.1 This section summarises the planning policy context against which the application falls to be considered. These policy strands will then be considered further in Section 4.0 of this Statement. Before consideration of Development Plan policies, we first summarise the strategic policies set out at national level.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 3.2 The NPPF was first published in 2012 and revised (twice) in 2019.
- 3.3 At its heart is the encouragement of sustainable forms of development. Paragraph 8 explains that achieving 'sustainable development' means that the planning system has three overarching objectives (economic, social and environmental), which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives).
- 3.4 Paragraph 10 reinforces this by confirming that, '**at the heart**' of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, while paragraph 11 states that LPAs should apply this presumption. It is confirmed that - for decision-taking - this means:

'approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay'

- 3.5 Paragraph 12 states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.

- 3.6 Chapter 4 (Decision-Making) further reinforces the message about sustainable development, imploring (at §38) LPAs to :

‘approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way ... Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.’

- 3.6 §47 confirms that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. It tells us that decisions on applications should be made ‘as quickly as possible’, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.

- 3.7 §20 (under the title ‘Strategic Policies’) states that :

‘Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and **make sufficient provision** for ... [*inter alia*] ... health, **education** and cultural infrastructure.’

- 3.8 Chapter 8 focuses on the promotion of healthy and safe communities, and §94 goes to the heart of this proposal :

‘It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should **give great weight** to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications.’

3.9 §97 states that :

'Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.'

3.10 In this regard, the Framework's 'Glossary' confirms that the definition of a 'playing field' is :

'The whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.'

3.11 The above Order includes the following definitions :

"playing field" means the whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch;

"playing pitch" means a delineated area which, together with any run-off area, is of 0.2 hectares or more, and which is used for association football, American football, rugby, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, rounders, baseball, softball, Australian football, Gaelic football, shinty, hurling, polo or cycle polo.

3.12 §104 states that planning policies should:

'support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, **education** and other activities.'

3.13 Chapter 9 is concerned with promoting sustainable transport. Paragraph 102 states that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of development proposals, while paragraph 108 states that, in assessing sites or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;
- b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; and
- c) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

3.14 Paragraph 109 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be 'severe'. Paragraph 110 explains that, within this context, applications for development should:

- a) give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;
- b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;
- c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;
- d) allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and
- e) be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

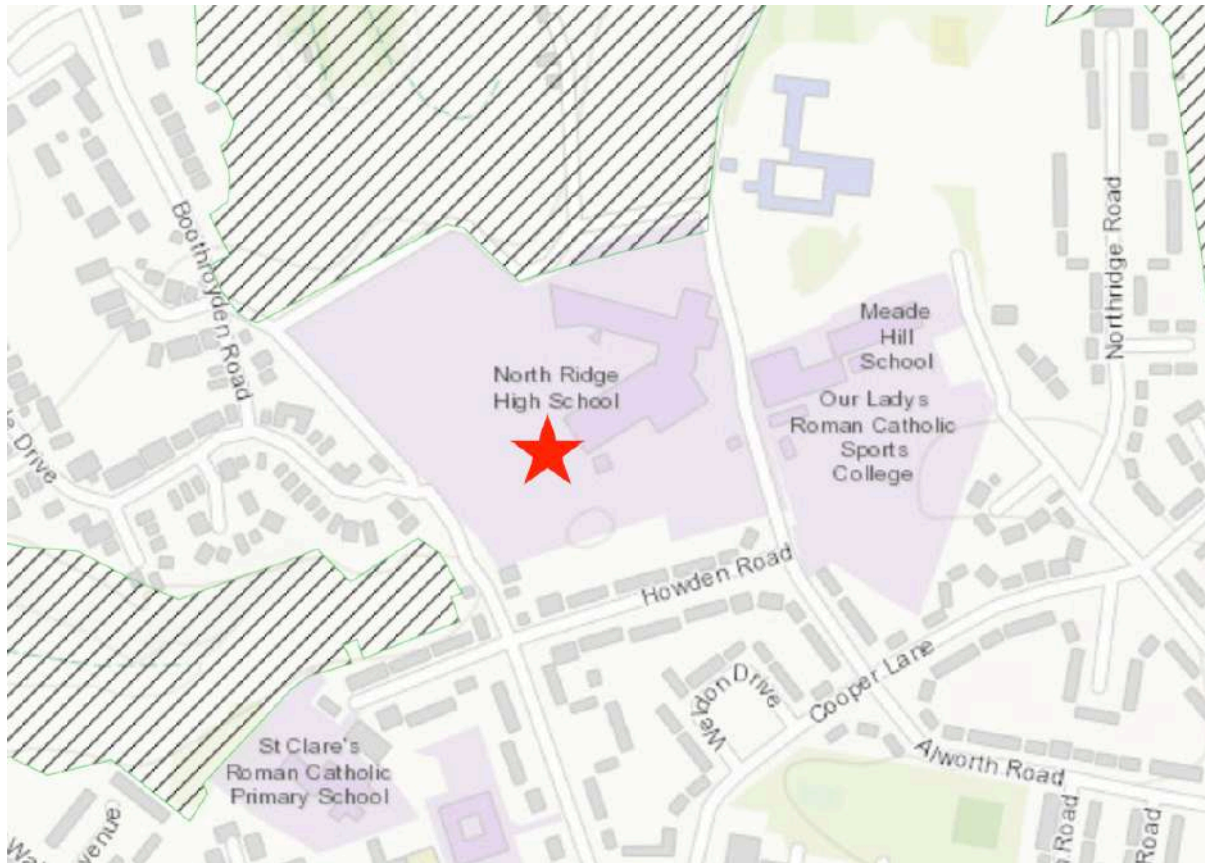
- 3.15 Chapter 11 promotes the effective use of land. Paragraph 117 states that planning policies and decisions should **promote the effective use of land** in meeting the need for different uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.
- 3.16 Paragraph 122 reinforces this in stating that planning policies and decisions should **support development that makes efficient use of land**.
- 3.17 Chapter 12 is concerned with achieving well-designed places. Paragraph 124 states that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. It states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Paragraph 127 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
- 1 will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - 2 are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - 3 are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
 - 4 establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
 - 5 optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
 - 6 create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁴⁶; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

- 3.18 Paragraph 130 states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development.
- 3.19 Chapter 14 is concerned about meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. Paragraph 148 states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change.
- 3.20 Paragraph 155 states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future), while paragraph 165 confirms that major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate.

The Development Plan

- 3.21 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.22 Manchester's statutory Development Plan currently consists of:
- 'Saved' Policies of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (July 1995);
 - Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012-2027 (July 2012); and
 - Greater Manchester Joint Waste Development Plan (April 2012)
- 3.23 The Proposals Map extract below confirms that the site falls inside the settlement area, but is not subject to any specific designation or allocation aside from its location within the 'North Manchester' area (see CS policy EC4 below).

Extract from online Policies Map [nb the text on this map is confusing / incorrect, in that it implies that the proposed building will serve North Ridge School, and it incorrectly labels the position of Our Lady's] :



‘Saved’ Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Policies (July 1995)

- 3.24 The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) was adopted in July 1995. The ‘saved’ policies (11th July 2012) have now largely been superseded by the Core Strategy. Certain limited policies remain in force, but our review of those policies concludes that none of these has any direct relevance to this particular proposal.
- 3.25 It is, however, worth highlighting Saved’ UDP policy DC26.1 ‘Development and Noise’. This seeks to reduce the impact of noise on people living and working in, or visiting, the City. In giving effect to this intention, it states that the Council will consider both:
- a) the effect of new development proposals which are likely to be generators of noise; and

- b) the implications of new development being exposed to existing noise sources which are effectively outside planning control.

Manchester Core Strategy (July 2012)

- 3.26 The Core Strategy was adopted in July 2012. It replaced significant elements of the 'saved' UDP and established the long-term strategic planning policies for Manchester's future development. It sets out MCC's vision for Manchester over the Plan period to 2027, along with the planning policies that provide the framework for delivering that vision.

- 3.27 §5.8 states that a key spatial objective of the Core Strategy is to:

'support a significant further improvement of the City's economic performance and spread the benefits of this growth across the City to reduce economic, environmental and social disparities, and to help create inclusive sustainable communities.

The Regional Centre will continue to be the main focus for business, retail, higher education, leisure, cultural and tourism development, to further develop its role as the main employment location and primary economic driver of the City region.'

- 3.28 In Chapter 2 'Manchester Now', §2.9 notes that Manchester is a centre of excellence for research and learning. It notes that it is home to several institutions of higher education including the University of Manchester, the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), the Royal Northern College of Music, the Central Manchester University Hospitals and the University Hospital of South Manchester. However, §2.11 highlights that, despite the high levels of students, Manchester also has a higher proportion of residents with no formal qualifications, which acts as a major barrier to accessing the jobs available.

- 3.29 §2.12 explains that Manchester has a relatively high rate of worklessness, due to high unemployment amongst those registered as disabled and the proportion of the population dependent upon income support. Many of the residents claiming out of work benefits are lacking the appropriate skills which would help them secure the growing number of job opportunities in the City. The skills gap between residents and available work is therefore a key challenge for Manchester.
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- 3.30 §2.13 notes that, whilst the economy has been restructured and new jobs are being created, the City is still tackling the social, physical and environmental legacy of years of economic decline. Manchester is the fourth most deprived district in the country, and 52% of the City's neighbourhoods are the worst 10% nationally. The health of Manchester's residents is also amongst the worst in the country.
- 3.31 Under the heading 'Citywide Challenges', §2.27 states that the City benefits from a strong economy, major higher education institutions and a good transport network. However, it points to a number of major challenges, and highlights two dimensions to the challenge of raising long term growth. These are the need to boost productivity so that the growth rate increases, and to ensure that all parts of the city region and all its people enjoy improved opportunities as a result of a stronger economy.
- 3.32 §2.28 states that, to meet the key challenges for the Greater Manchester Strategy and to achieve the Sustainable Community Strategy vision, Manchester must also address other challenges, including **improving access to education**.
- 3.33 §2.29 explains that Manchester has established five Regeneration Areas that, along with the City Centre, cover the entire City. Each area has different issues, challenges and opportunities. The application site sits within the 'North Manchester Regeneration Area'. This is home to over 90,000 residents. It includes six wards: Higher Blackley, Charlestown, Moston, Harpurhey, Cheetham and Crumpsall and the Collyhurst sections of Miles Platting and Newton Heath and Ancoats and Clayton wards.
- 3.34 One of the North Manchester Regeneration Area's key 'Challenges' is to tackle the high rates of worklessness and the need to target training to employment opportunities.
- 3.35 'Spatial Objective' SO1 'Spatial Principles' provides a framework within which the sustainable development of the City can contribute to halting climate change. Within the context of mitigation and adaptation to climate change, the framework will guide the scale and distribution of economic, housing, transport, environmental, health, education and other service and infrastructure investment across the City.

3.36 Policy SP 1 'Spatial Principles' states that development in all parts of the City should :

- Make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including creating well designed places that enhance or create character. making a positive contribution to the health, safety and wellbeing of residents considering the needs of all members of the community regardless of age, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, culture, ethnicity or income. protect and enhance the built and natural environment.
- Minimise emissions, ensure efficient use of natural resources and reuse previously developed land wherever possible.
- Improve access to jobs, services, **education** and open space by being located to reduce the need to travel and provide good access to sustainable transport provision.

3.37 Policy EC 4 'North Manchester' says nothing specific about education, but §8.59 notes that some parts of North Manchester suffer high levels of deprivation, with low educational attainment which can be a barrier to accessing employment.

3.38 Policy T 2 'Accessible areas of opportunity and need' states that the Council will actively manage the pattern of development to ensure that new development is easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport; connecting residents to jobs, centres, health, leisure, open space and educational opportunities.

3.39 Policy EN 1 'Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas' states that all development in Manchester will be expected to follow seven principles of urban design, and have regard to the strategic character area in which the development is located. Opportunities for good design to enhance the overall image of the City should be fully realised.

3.40 In respect of the 'Northern Character Area', it is noted that the character of this area is significantly affected by the topography, with a marked increase in height moving northwards, cut by the River Irk and its tributaries. There is a finer grained, predominantly residential mix of development, broken up by open spaces and significant tree cover also linked to the local topography. Developers should respond to the underlying topography and varied townscape created by the balance between built form and the tree-covered landscape.

- 3.41 Policy EN 4 'Reducing CO2 Emissions by Enabling Low and Zero Carbon Development' states that the Council will seek to reduce fuel poverty and decouple growth in the economy, growth in CO2 emissions, and rising fossil fuel prices, through a number of actions. These include that all development must follow the principle of the Energy Hierarchy, being designed to reduce the need for energy through design features that provide passive heating, natural lighting and cooling to reduce the need for energy through energy efficient features such as improved insulation and glazing to meet residual energy requirements through the use of low or zero carbon energy generating technologies. Wherever possible new development and retrofit projects, including energy generation plant, must be located and designed in a manner that allows advantage to be taken of opportunities for low and zero carbon energy supplies.
- 3.42 Policy EN 6 'Target Framework for CO2 reductions from low or zero carbon energy supplies' states that applications for development over 1,000 sq m will be expected - as a minimum - to meet the target shown in Tables 12.1 or 12.2, unless this can be shown not to be viable. This should be demonstrated through an Energy Statement submitted with the application, and such statements will be expected to set out the projected regulated energy demand and associated CO2 emissions for all phases of the development.
- 3.43 Policy EN 8 'Adaptation to Climate Change' states that all new development will be expected to be adaptable to climate change in terms of the design, layout, siting and function of both buildings and associated external spaces. In achieving developments which are adaptable to climate change developers should have regard to the following, although this is not an exhaustive list:
- Minimisation of flood risk by appropriate siting, drainage, and treatment of surface areas to ensure rain water permeability
 - Reduction in urban heat island effect through the use of Green Infrastructure such as green roofs, green walls, increased tree cover and waterways
 - The need to control overheating of buildings through passive design
 - The opportunity to provide linked and diverse green space to enhance natural habitats which will assist species adaptation

- 3.44 Policy EN 10 'Safeguarding Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities' states that the Council will seek to retain and improve existing open spaces, sport and recreation facilities and provide a network of diverse, multi-functional open spaces. Proposals will be supported that:
- improve the quality and quantity of accessible open space, sport and recreation in the local area
 - provide innovative solutions to improving the network of existing open spaces
 - increase accessibility to green corridors
 - enhance biodiversity improve access to open space for disabled people.
- 3.45 Policy EN 14 'Flood Risk' states that, in line with the risk-based sequential approach, development should be directed away from sites at the greatest risk of flooding, and towards sites with little or no risk of flooding. All new development should minimise surface water run-off, including through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) and the appropriate use of Green Infrastructure.
- 3.46 Policy EN 15 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' states that the Council will seek to maintain or enhance sites of biodiversity and geological value throughout the City.
- 3.47 Policy EN 19 'Waste' states that the Council will require all developers to submit a waste management plan to demonstrate how both construction and demolition waste will be minimised and recycled on site wherever possible and how the sustainable waste management needs of the end user will be met.
- 3.48 Policy DM 1 'Development Management' states that all development should have regard to the following specific issues :
- Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail.
 - Impact on the surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development.
 - Development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area.
 - Effects on amenity, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality, odours, litter, vermin, birds, road safety and traffic generation.

- Accessibility: buildings and neighbourhoods fully accessible to disabled people, access to new development by sustainable transport modes.
- Community safety and crime prevention.
- Design for health.
- Adequacy of internal accommodation and external amenity space.
- Refuse storage and collection.
- Vehicular access and car parking.
- Effects relating to biodiversity, landscape, archaeological or built heritage.
- Green Infrastructure including open space, both public and private.
- Flood risk and drainage.

Material Considerations

3.49 A series of material considerations are also of specific relevance to the proposals. These are grouped as follows:

- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) – Provide a synopsis of the relevant provisions of the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD;
- Strategic Regeneration Frameworks (SRFs);
- Local Strategies and Guidance;
- Emerging Planning Policy – Details relevant emerging (as yet not examined or adopted) policies being prepared by MCC and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA); and
- National Policy and Guidance – Sets out relevant aspects of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019) (summarised earlier), Planning Practice Guidance (PPG, 2014 and as amended) and National Design Guide (2019)
- Sport England policies relating to playing fields and sports pitches /provision

Supplementary Planning Documents

Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (April 2007)

- 3.50 Part I of this SPD sets out the design principles and standards that the City Council expects new development to achieve - i.e. high-quality developments that are safe, secure and accessible to all. It seeks development of an appropriate height having regard to location, character of the area and specific site circumstances and local effects, such as microclimatic ones.
- 3.51 The following design principles and standards are relevant to the consideration of this application:
- Each new development should have regard to its context and character of area.
 - The design, scale, massing and orientation of buildings should achieve a unified urban form which blends in and links to adjacent areas. Increased density can be appropriate when it is necessary to promote a more economic use of land provided that it is informed by the character of the area and the specific circumstances of the proposals;
 - Developments within an area of change or regeneration need to promote a sense of place whilst relating well to and enhancing the area and contributing to the creation of a positive identity. There should be a smooth transition between different forms and styles with a developments successful integration being a key factor that determines its acceptability;
 - New developments should have an appropriate height having regard to location, character of the area and site specific circumstances;
 - Developments should enhance existing vistas and create new ones and views of important landmarks and spaces should be promoted in new developments and enhanced by alterations to existing buildings where the opportunity arises;
 - Visual interest should be create through strong corners treatments which can act as important landmarks and can create visual interest enliven the streetscape and contribute to the identity of an area. They should be designed with attractive entrance, window and elevational detail and on major routes should have active ground floor uses and entrances to reinforce the character of the street scene and sense of place.

Local Strategies and Guidance

Our Manchester Strategy 2016-2025

3.52 The Manchester Strategy 2016-25 was adopted by MCC in January 2016 and set the ambitions for the City for the next decade. The Strategy sets out a vision for Manchester to be in the top flight of world-class cities by 2025, together with five objectives as to how it can be achieved.

3.53 It notes that schools are the custodians of Manchester's next generation of inventors, scientists, teachers, nurses and high-tech engineers, and that :

'we need to connect our economic growth sectors with the core-education curriculum taught in our schools.'

3.54 It highlights that schools also have a wider role to play in instilling confidence and aspiration, social literacy and a culture of respect, preparing young people for the workplace and for life:

'It is vital to help them to develop into confident young adults with the drive and the social, communication and critical thinking skills they need to succeed. Manchester Youth Council polled all 11 to 18-year-olds in the city about what matters most to them. They received almost 24,000 responses (one of the highest turnouts in the country). The second-highest priority for young people was to have 'a curriculum that prepares me for life.'

3.55 The Strategy states that, as a highly skilled city, Manchester will, *inter alia* :

'improve educational attainment to be above the national average, with a focus on science, technology, engineering, maths, digital skills and creativity, and inspire the next generation to be the best they can be and provide them with the knowledge, skills and resilience they require to succeed.'

Draft Zero Carbon Framework 2020-2038 (February 2019)

- 3.56 The Framework outlines the approach which will be taken to help Manchester reduce its carbon emissions over the period 2020-2038. The target was proposed by the Manchester Climate Change Board and Agency, in line with research carried out by the world-renowned Tyndall Centre for Climate Change, based at the University of Manchester.
- 3.57 Areas for action include generating more renewable energy to power buildings; creating well connected cycling and walking routes, public transport networks and electric vehicle charging infrastructure; plus the development of a 'circular economy', in which sustainable and renewable materials are reused and recycled as much as possible.

Climate Emergency Motion (10 July 2019)

- 3.58 A motion asking MCC to formally declare a 'climate emergency' was unanimously agreed on Wednesday 10 July. The motion committed to embedding the issue of climate change as an integral part of council decision-making, ensuring that all key decisions are taken with the city's target of becoming zero-carbon by 2038 in mind. The council approved the 2038 target on behalf of the city in November 2018.

A Strategic Regeneration Framework for North Manchester

- 3.59 This Framework confirms that 'North Manchester' extends from Manchester's thriving city centre to the city's northern boundary and is home to some 86,000 residents. It includes six City Council wards: Blackley, Charlestown, Moston, Crumpsall, Cheetham, Harpurhey and the Collyhurst area of Central Ward. It notes that these neighbourhoods are today confronting an array of challenging and inter-related economic, social and physical issues.
- 3.60 It points to a legacy of under employed residents and long-term unemployment. It notes that North Manchester still contains pockets of impoverishment, and that economic decline has led to acute housing market failure in some parts. Associated with this is an increase in crime, fear of crime, anti-social behaviour, poverty, ill health and **poor educational attainment**.

- 3.61 The Framework identifies a number of strategic objectives which underpin the regeneration of North Manchester, which are interrelated. These include the need to strengthen communities, and acknowledges that there are neighbourhoods where the sense of community has completely broken down. It explains that these communities are not equipped to take advantage of the economic resurgence of the city or to take an active part within it. As such, a variety of intensive measures are required to improve their life chances, and in particular :

‘to improve educational attainment, and employability’

- 3.62 Part 3 of the Strategy sets out three triggers for success, which includes **improvement in educational attainment, quality and delivery of schools services**, and suggests that this is fundamental to stabilising the housing market.
- 3.63 Section 5 of the Framework is devoted to Education and ‘Enabling Life Long Learning to Achieve Excellence.’ It notes that education plays a pivotal role in regeneration and getting it right is essential to North Manchester. It states that :

‘good quality education will provide North Manchester’s residents with the skills and qualifications to succeed in a rapidly changing economy.’

- 3.64 It suggests that **high performing schools will help to restore stability to the housing market** by securing the commitment of aspiring families with children, and attracting new families. Conversely, the current instability in the housing market has an adverse affect on educational achievement. In short, **there is a direct link between the quality of education and stability in the housing market, and the wider regeneration objectives.**

- 3.65 The Framework suggests that a step change in performance is required :

‘Too many schools still perform poorly as compared to the rest of Manchester and national averages. From nursery and primary schools to 6th form, improvement needs to be achieved with some speed.

It will not be sufficient to say that education will be improved within 10 years if the aim is to attract new residents within the next 2–5 years. Early, meaningful change needs to be achieved.

The number of pupil spaces does not match the existing and planned supply of housing.

With the frequent focus on the construction of new premises, there is a strong sentiment that the approach to regeneration and education must not simply be buildings-led, and should focus on more strategic issues.

However, the importance of high quality physical premises cannot be under-estimated: they express and inspire confidence, aspiration, and achievement.

A key related Action is therefore to continue investment to provide high quality, modern education premises. Attracting more diverse new residents requires high quality, modern educational premises that are fully equipped with computers and IT to ensure that students have the tools required for the economy of the 21st century.'

Emerging Local Plan

- 3.66 The Council has embarked on its production of its new Local Plan. As set out in the Council's Executive Reports dated 15 January 2020, the new Local Plan will replace the Core Strategy and the remaining 'saved' UDP policies, taking account of the 'Our Manchester' strategy, the emerging GMSF, the NPPF and Greater Manchester's new devolved planning powers.
- 3.67 The Council consulted on its 'Issues' document between February and May 2020. One of its proposed 'objectives' is to **improve the education** and skills of Manchester residents so that they are able to participate in the growth of the city and - through employment – benefit from its prosperity.

- 3.68 To ensure critical infrastructure requirements are addressed, it states that the delivery of new homes and jobs must ensure that places function efficiently and effectively, and that supporting infrastructure provides a high degree of resilience. Key areas of infrastructure include utilities (power, water and telecoms), transport, schools and other education facilities, health facilities, and social care facilities.

Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework

- 3.69 The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework is being promoted as a joint plan for Greater Manchester that will provide the land for jobs and new homes across the city region, setting out ambitious plans “to make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world.”
- 3.70 Until recently, the Framework was being produced by all 10 GM councils working together in partnership, but Stockport Council elected to withdraw from the process in late 2020. The remaining nine Greater Manchester boroughs have since pledged to draw up a revised strategy, with an amended timeline that proposes public consultation by June 2021.
- 3.71 The current version is the GMSF (published in November 2020) is the third iteration of the document since the first draft was published in 2016.
- 3.72 Draft policy GM-S 4 ‘Resilience’ states that the development of Greater Manchester will be managed so as to increase considerably the capacity of its citizens, communities, businesses and infrastructure to survive, adapt and grow in the face of physical, social, economic and environmental challenges, including climate change. Key measures will include promoting significant enhancements in education, skills and knowledge.
- 3.73 Policy GM-E 5 ‘Education, Skills and Knowledge’ states that significant enhancements in education, skills and knowledge to benefit existing and new residents will be promoted throughout Greater Manchester, including by:
- Enabling the delivery of new and improved accessible facilities for all ages, such as early years, schools, further and higher education, and adult training to ensure our workforce is ready to benefit from new employment opportunities; and

- Ensuring the delivery of sufficient school places to respond to the demands from new housing, such as through working with education providers to forecast likely changes in the demand for school places.

Sport England Playing Fields Policy and Guidance (March 2018)

3.74 As noted earlier, the NPPF's 'Glossary' confirms that the definition of a 'playing field' is :

'The whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.'

3.75 In that regard, it is acknowledged that the application site falls within the definition of a 'playing field' by virtue of the fact that it forms a very small part of 'the whole of a site' that is occupied by two sports pitches.

3.76 Part (z) of Schedule 4 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 requires that Sport England be consulted about development which 'is likely to prejudice the use, or lead to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field.'

3.77 The land in question - that will accommodate the proposed teaching block - is not used as a sports pitch or for any other form / type of sports provision, and it has not been used as such since the school was constructed in 2009 (12 years ago). Indeed, the land is incapable of being used as a playing field. Aside from the fact that it is occupied by a temporary classroom block (and we noted the requirements of Condition 1 of that consent in Section 2.0 of this Statement), it is also occupied by a sizeable earth mound of around 1.3 metres height that covers drainage attenuation infrastructure. This has metal pipes sticking upwards, and clearly cannot be used as a playing field or for any other form of sports provision.

3.78 Part (z) also states that SE should be consulted where a proposal is on land which has been :

- a) used as a playing field at any time in the five years before the making of the relevant application and which remains undeveloped; or

b) allocated for use as a playing field in a development plan or in proposals for such a plan or its alteration or replacement.

3.79 Neither (a) nor (b) apply. The land has not been used as a playing field or for any sports-related purpose for a period of at least 12 years - well beyond the 5 years specified in part (a). Nor are we convinced that the land was used as a playing field / sports pitch before the school was built. And nor is the site allocated for use as a playing field in the development plan (either adopted or emerging).

3.80 For those reasons, it is the Appellant's contention the SE ought not to be consulted in respect of this application, simply because none of the provisions of part (z) apply.

3.81 However, in the event that the LPA opts to consult SE, SE's policy is set out in its Playing Fields Policy and Guidance (March 2018). This confirms that :

'Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of :

- all or any part of a playing field, or
- land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or
- land allocated for use as a playing field

unless, in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions.'

3.82 We will consider those 'exceptions' in Section 4.0 of this Planning Statement, but at this stage contend that the proposal meets both of the following :

Exception 2

The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field, and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.

Exception 3

The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

- reduce the size of any playing pitch;
- result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
- result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; or
- prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.

4.0 Planning Assessment

4.1 The key planning policy issues arising in this case are summarised in Section 3.0. The purpose of this section is to consider these further and to present the level of compliance with those policies and the benefits likely to accrue from the development. Each of the key issues will be addressed in turn, namely :

- Compliance with the Development Plan;
- Compliance with Emerging / Draft Policies (Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and Manchester Local Plan);
- Sustainable Development;
- Compliance with the NPPF;
- Playing Pitch Considerations;
- Transport and Access;
- Ground Conditions.

Compliance with the Development Plan

4.2 In determining this application, regard must be had to section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case, the proposal complies with the development plan, and 'material considerations' (such as compliance with the NPPF) lend further weight to the case for approval.

4.3 As noted in Section 3.0, the development plan for the purposes of this application comprises:

- 'Saved' Policies of the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (July 1995);
- Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012-2027 (July 2012); and
- Greater Manchester Joint Waste Development Plan (April 2012)

- 4.4 Our review of the saved UDP policies suggests that only one has any material bearing on this application. That policy - DC26.1 'Development and Noise' - seeks to reduce the impact of noise. We see no conflict with this policy, given that this is an established educational campus and proposes the replacement of an existing temporary education-related structure with an alternative permanent and better quality / better insulated educational building. School classrooms are intrinsically quiet in character, and the closest residential premises are at some distance.
- 4.5 The application is supported by a *Noise Assessment for Control of Noise from Mechanical Services Equipment* (prepared by Hepworth Acoustics). This determines appropriate noise limits at the nearest dwellings for any new externally mounted plant / flues associated with the proposed 're-heat' kitchen and any air handling units that might be required (which will operate in the daytime only).
- 4.6 The report is based on noise measurements that are considered representative of the background noise levels at the nearest dwellings to the south on Howden Road, some 70m to the south of the proposed kitchen location. Those measurements were taken between 10:55am and 12:40pm on Friday 22nd January 2021.
- 4.7 The noise levels were primarily attributed to distant road traffic noise and some local traffic on Boothroyd Road which passes the site to the west, and the report acknowledges that the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic is likely to result in lower levels than during normal (non Covid) conditions. Therefore, the assessment sets out a worst-case scenario in the case of using the data as a basis for specifying noise limits for mechanical plant relative to the background noise.
- 4.8 The report reflects the advice in paragraph 3.6.1.5 of the Manchester City Council's "Planning & Noise Technical Guidance" (December 2015), which states that "*development should be designed so as to achieve a rating level of 5dB (LAeq) below the typical background (LA90) level at the nearest noise sensitive location*".

- 4.9 The report notes that no precise details of the plant / equipment are available at this stage, and so an appropriate noise design limit has been determined based on the results of the noise survey in line with BS 4142 and Manchester City Council planning noise guidance. This can be used as a basis for a planning condition if necessary, and should be fully taken into account in subsequent detailed design of any new mechanical services plant required as part of the proposed development. The report concludes that it should be straight-forward to ensure that plant noise is adequately controlled to within the recommended limit.
- 4.10 We therefore contend that there is no prospect of additional noise disturbance arising from this proposal, but the Applicant will accept any necessary and reasonable noise-related conditions.
- 4.11 We suggest therefore that there is no conflict with the saved policies of the UDP insofar as those relate to this proposal.
- 4.12 The Core Strategy was adopted in July 2012. Before turning to specific policies, it is important to highlight that the proposal reflects a number of its core aims and objectives. For example, the provision of a new, fit-for-purpose education building - which will remedy the current school overcrowding and create capacity for an additional 20 pupils in need of school places - will respond to the key spatial objective to:
- ‘reduce social disparities, and to help create inclusive sustainable communities.’
- 4.13 It will also play a part in addressing the concern (CS §2.11) that Manchester has a higher proportion of residents with no formal qualifications, which acts as ‘a major barrier’ to accessing the jobs available, and the ‘major challenge’ skills gap (CS §2.12) of many residents claiming out of work benefits and lacking the appropriate skills which would help them secure the growing number of job opportunities in the City.
- 4.14 The new school building and the associated enhancement of educational provision will play a small part in addressing the ongoing socio-economic issues facing the City as outlined in CS §2.13, which notes that Manchester is the fourth most deprived district in the country, that 52% of the City’s neighbourhoods are the worst 10% nationally, and the health of residents is also amongst the worst in the country.
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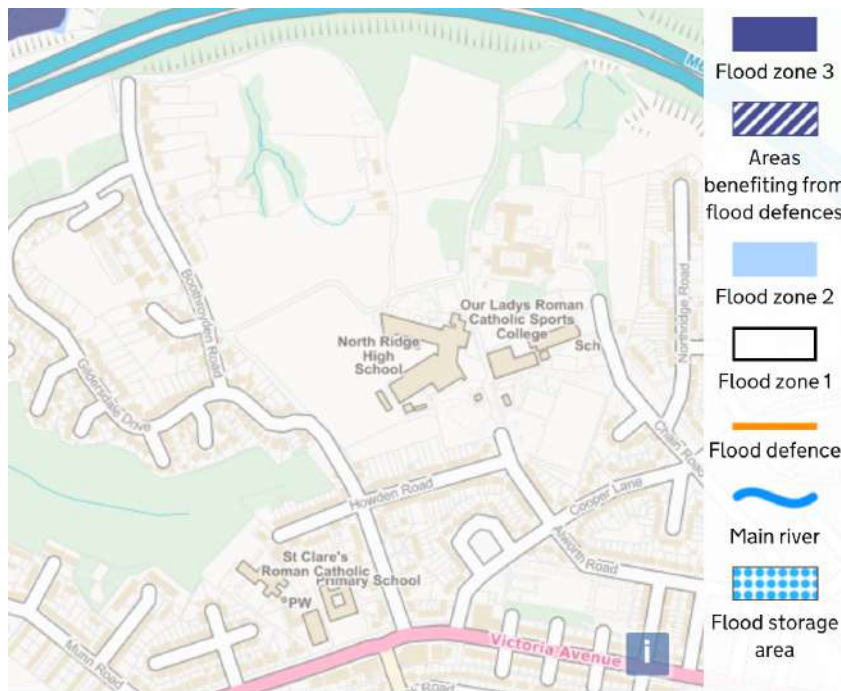
- 4.15 The proposal responds to the sentiment in CS §2.28 states that, to meet the key challenges for the Greater Manchester Strategy and to achieve the Sustainable Community Strategy vision, Manchester must also address key challenges, including improving access to education.
- 4.16 It also responds positively to one of the North Manchester Regeneration Area's 'key challenges' to tackle the high rates of worklessness and the need to target training to employment opportunities.
- 4.17 The proposal is consistent with Policy SP 1 'Spatial Principles', in that it will make a positive contribution to 'neighbourhoods of choice' and improve access to education.
- 4.18 It is consistent with Policy EC 4 'North Manchester', which highlights (§8.59) that some parts of North Manchester suffer with low educational attainment, which can be a barrier to accessing employment.
- 4.19 The site is inarguably located in a very accessible location, and the proposal is therefore consistent with CS Policy T 2 'Accessible areas of opportunity and need', which seeks to ensure that new development is easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport, better connecting residents to educational opportunities.
- 4.20 The application accords with CS Policy EN 1 'Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas'. The proposal is of excellent design quality and respectful of its context and the 'Northern Character Area' in which it sits.
- 4.21 The submitted '*Renewable and Sustainability Report*' sets out how the proposal responds to CS Policy EN 4 'Reducing CO2 Emissions by Enabling Low and Zero Carbon Development', Policy EN 6 'Target Framework for CO2 reductions from low or zero carbon energy supplies', and Policy EN 8 'Adaptation to Climate Change'. The report outlines the renewable and sustainable energy design proposals for the new building, setting out the approach that has been taken to minimise the energy use of the building through passive and active measures and incorporating renewable technologies to further reduce the carbon emissions. The report also addresses the design steps taken to allow the building to adapt to climate change in future years.

4.22 The report explains how low energy lighting, energy efficient controls and high efficiency plant selection will be incorporated to reduce carbon dioxide emissions of the proposed development. The use of low and zero carbon technologies will also supplement the scheme, with the proposed use of air source heat pumps and photovoltaic cells. The result of this combined approach is that the design has been shown to achieve a **10.8% betterment** of the Building Regulation emissions, exceeding the requirements of Core Policy ENE06, and the design also meets the requirements set out for compliance of ENE04 and EN8.

4.23 There is no conflict with CS Policy EN 10 'Safeguarding Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities'. This policy seeks to retain and improve existing open spaces, sport and recreation facilities and provide a network of diverse, multi-functional open spaces. It states that proposals will be supported that improve the quality and quantity of accessible open space, sport and recreation in the local area. As we note elsewhere, there will be no direct impact on any sports-related space, but the proposal will create opportunities to better utilise the sports pitches through the creation of quality indoor facilities that can be used to support visiting teams and competitions (providing refreshment facilities and changing space). Furthermore, the proposal will introduce new and better quality landscaped open space that will improve both the amenity and the function of what is currently a somewhat isolated, nondescript and unused zone of space, with a direct, good quality, wheelchair accessible link created to the existing 'forest school' to the immediate south.

There is no conflict with CS Policy EN 14 'Flood Risk', which seeks to direct development away from sites at the greatest risk of flooding, and towards sites with little or no risk of flooding. In that regard, the extract below from the EA Flood Map confirms that the site is in Flood Zone 1, and as such highly unlikely to flood.

Extract from EA Flood Map [nb the text on this map is confusing / incorrect, in that it labels Our Lady's School as North Ridge School]



- 4.24 The policy also states that all new development should minimise surface water run-off, including through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) and the appropriate use of Green Infrastructure. The planning application is supported by a Drainage Strategy (prepared by WML Consulting). This considers a range of drainage options (for surface water and foul), and concludes that it will be necessary to connect both to the existing drainage mains in the vicinity of the site.
- 4.25 The Strategy confirms the intention to discharge all surface water at the required Greenfield run-off rate, including a 40% climate change allowance. It confirms that a below-ground attenuation system has been incorporated within the new drainage system to store surface water for all storms up to and including the critical 100 year event plus 40% climate change allowance. It also notes that the drainage system includes a permeable paving drainage solution.
- 4.26 There is therefore no conflict with CS Policy EN 14.

- 4.27 Nor is there conflict with CS Policy EN 15 'Biodiversity and Geological Conservation', which seeks to maintain or enhance sites of biodiversity and geological value throughout the City. The application site does not form part of any such designated area, and comprises a grassed area partly covered by a temporary classroom portacabin. It is self-evident that the site possesses no meaningful biodiversity value. This is confirmed in the Extended Phase One Habitat Survey (Rachel Hacking Ecology), which notes that the majority of the site comprises amenity grassland, which is species-poor and short-mown (see photograph below). In short, the site offers limited ecological value.



- 4.28 The report confirms that no potential roosting features were identified on the prefabricated temporary classroom block or any of the trees in the plantation woodland. It recommends the following measures to enhance the biodiversity value of the site :

- Where planting is proposed, this should include the provision of native and non-native flowering perennial, annual and shrub species, to provide a pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.
 - Bird boxes and/or bat boxes could be erected where possible.
 - Tree planting – native tree species should be planted.
- 4.29 The Applicant accepts all of the above recommendations and would be pleased to accept an appropriate condition to govern the precise details.
- 4.30 The application is supported by a completed Waste Management Proforma, which responds to the requirements of CS Policy EN 19 'Waste'. We contend that there is no conflict with that policy, and the details of the handling of any construction-related materials can be dealt with via the imposition of a condition requiring such details prior to the commencement of development.
- 4.31 The proposal complies with CS Policy DM 1 'Development Management'. This is a design-related policy that demands, inter alia, development of appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail, and due consideration of its likely impact on the surrounding area in terms of the design, scale and appearance. The policy also requires consideration of impact on amenity, accessibility to disabled people, crime prevention, refuse storage and collection, flood risk and drainage. All of these matters are addressed in the supporting materials, and we draw particular attention to the Design & Access Statement (which sets out the design rationale and accessibility considerations) and the Crime Impact Assessment.
- 4.32 Having regard to the above assessment, we contend that the application is compliant with all relevant development plan policies and should be approved accordingly.

Compliance with Emerging / Draft Policies (Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and Manchester Local Plan)

- 4.33 As noted in Section 3.0, the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework will be a joint plan for Greater Manchester (excluding Stockport) that sets out ambitious plans “to make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world.”

4.34 The weight that can be attached to the Draft Framework at this stage is only limited, because it is some way to being finalised and will be subjected to a further round of consultations and independent scrutiny.

4.35 Notwithstanding that, it is worth highlighting draft policy GM-S 4 'Resilience', which looks to manage development to increase the capacity of Manchester's citizens, communities, businesses and infrastructure to survive, adapt and grow in the face of physical, social, economic and environmental challenges, including climate change. The draft policy states that one of the 'key measures' will include :

'promoting significant enhancements in education, skills and knowledge.'

4.36 This proposal is clearly in line with that sentiment and is consistent with the draft policy.

4.37 It is also consistent with draft Policy GM-E 5 'Education, Skills and Knowledge', which seeks 'significant enhancements in education', including :

4.38 'Ensuring the delivery of sufficient school places to respond to the demands from new housing, such as through working with education providers to forecast likely changes in the demand for school places.'

4.39 In respect of the new Local Plan, this is at a very early stage, and as such only limited weight can be attached. However, it is worth highlighting that – in the 'Issues' document (February 2020) - one of the declared 'objectives' of the new Local Plan is :

'to improve the education and skills of Manchester residents so that they are able to participate in the growth of the city and - through employment – benefit from its prosperity.'

4.40 The application is inarguably in line with that sentiment.

4.41 There is therefore draft policy support for the proposal in both the emerging GMSF and Local Plan, which call to be factored into the overall planning balance as noteworthy material considerations.

Sustainable Development

- 4.42 The promotion and encourage of sustainable development goes to the heart of the NPPF.
- 4.43 In the simplest of terms, a development of excellent quality is being promoted that will address serious capacity issues at the school, and provide for / enhance education provision / opportunities for young people. The project is supported by Manchester City Council as Education provider, and circa £2.35 million funding is in place to deliver the project by the beginning of the 2022 academic year.
- 4.44 The likely physical impacts of the proposal are self-evident. The site is currently of somewhat unprepossessing appearance and is not used for any purpose, aside from its part occupation by temporary, not fit-for-purpose classrooms.
- 4.45 NPPF §11 states that :
- ‘Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.’
- 4.46 We have explained elsewhere why we consider the proposal complies with both the adopted and emerging development plan, but it is also important to demonstrate that the proposal is sustainable.
- 4.47 The NPPF states that there are three core strands / roles relating to sustainable development : **economic, social and environmental**. We consider each in turn below.

Economic Benefits

- 4.48 In terms of its **economic** role, it is widely recognised that the provision of good quality educational infrastructure is intrinsically linked to economic performance and opportunities. For example, the **Strategic Regeneration Framework for North Manchester** points to the array of challenging and inter-related economic, social and physical issues, and the legacy of under-employed residents and long-term unemployment. Associated with this is poor educational attainment. It identifies a number of strategic objectives which underpin the regeneration of North Manchester, and a variety of ‘intensive measures’ to improve life

chances. Of particular relevance to this proposal is the need **‘to improve educational attainment, and employability’**, and Part 3 of the Strategy sets out three triggers for success, including **improvement in educational attainment, quality and delivery of schools services**, suggesting that this is ‘fundamental to stabilising the housing market.’

- 4.49 Section 5 of the Framework notes that education plays a pivotal role in regeneration states that :

‘good quality education will provide North Manchester’s residents with the skills and qualifications to succeed in a rapidly changing economy.’

- 4.50 It suggests that **high performing schools will help to restore stability to the housing market** by securing the commitment of aspiring families with children, and attracting new families, and **there is a direct link between the quality of education and stability in the housing market, and the wider regeneration objectives.**

- 4.51 The Framework notes that **the number of pupil spaces does not match the existing and planned supply of housing, and** suggests that a step change in performance is required :

‘A key related Action is therefore to continue investment to provide high quality, modern education premises. Attracting more diverse new residents requires high quality, modern educational premises that are fully equipped with computers and IT to ensure that students have the tools required for the economy of the 21st century.’

- 4.52 The draft Manchester Local Plan ‘Issues’ also recognises the link between education and the economy. One of its proposed ‘objectives’ is to **improve the education** and skills of Manchester residents so that they are able to participate in the growth of the city and - through employment – benefit from its prosperity. It states that, to ensure critical infrastructure requirements are addressed, the delivery of new homes and jobs must ensure that places function efficiently and effectively, and that supporting infrastructure provides a high degree of resilience. Key areas of infrastructure include utilities (power, water and telecoms), transport, schools and other education facilities, health facilities, and social care facilities.

- 4.53 The same connection is made in the *Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework*, with its ambition “to make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world.” Draft policy GM-S 4 ‘Resilience’ seeks to increase considerably the capacity of its citizens, communities, businesses and infrastructure to survive, adapt and grow in the face of physical, social, economic and environmental challenges, including climate change. One of its ‘key measures’ will include promoting significant enhancements in education, skills and knowledge.
- 4.54 The construction sector is a diverse sector ranging from international companies to thousands of small businesses offering services such as contracting, house building, consultancy and professional services, and includes manufacturers of construction products.
- 4.55 Overall, construction accounts for circa 7% of the UK’s GDP. For this project, circa 60 FTE construction-related jobs are likely to be generated over the course of an expected 1 year construction period.
- 4.56 The scheme has the potential to draw upon local labour for the construction of the new school building. While many of these jobs will be located on the site itself, others will be based in the wider Greater Manchester area, with some further afield within the construction supply chain. The jobs will vary in type, from elementary occupations (e.g. site labourers) to professional and higher skilled technical occupations (e.g. project managers and site surveyors).
- 4.57 Alongside its role in supporting employment creation, the construction industry is a good source of training and skills development, including apprenticeships. This is important at a time when young people face particular problems entering the workforce.
- 4.58 On the above basis, we suggest that there can be no question that this scheme will deliver important positive economic benefits to Manchester.

Social Benefits

- 4.59 **Socially**, the proposal will address the need to deliver more and better quality education in one of the most deprived locations in the UK.
- 4.60 The Core Strategy notes that Manchester is the fourth most deprived district in the country, and 52% of the City’s neighbourhoods are the worst 10% nationally.

- 4.61 It highlights Manchester's several highly successful institutions of higher education, but (at §2.11) highlights that the City has:

'a higher proportion of residents with no formal qualifications, which acts as a major barrier to accessing the jobs available.'

- 4.62 It explains that Manchester has a high rate of worklessness, that many of its residents are lacking the appropriate skills which would help them secure jobs, and that the skills gap is 'a key challenge'.

- 4.63 §2.13 notes that, whilst the economy has been restructured and new jobs are being created, the City is still tackling the social, physical and environmental legacy of years of economic decline. The health of Manchester's residents is also amongst the worst in the country.

- 4.64 §2.28 states that, to meet the key challenges for the Greater Manchester Strategy and to achieve the Sustainable Community Strategy vision, Manchester must also address other challenges, including 'improving access to education'.

- 4.65 CS Policy EC 4 'North Manchester' (§8.59) reiterates that the low educational attainment in North Manchester is a barrier to accessing employment.

- 4.66 This is reinforced in the *Our Manchester Strategy 2016-2025*, which describes schools as:

'the custodians of Manchester's next generation of inventors, scientists, teachers, nurses and high-tech engineers ... we need to connect our economic growth sectors with the core-education curriculum taught in our schools.'

Schools also have a wider role to play in instilling confidence and aspiration, social literacy and a culture of respect, preparing young people for the workplace and for life.

'It is vital to help them to develop into confident young adults with the drive and the social, communication and critical thinking skills they need to succeed. Manchester Youth Council polled all 11 to 18-year-olds in the city about what matters most to them. They received almost 24,000 responses (one of the highest turnouts in the country). The second-highest priority for young people was to have 'a curriculum that prepares me for life.'

4.67 The Strategy adds that, as a highly skilled city, Manchester will, *inter alia* :

'improve educational attainment to be above the national average, with a focus on science, technology, engineering, maths, digital skills and creativity, and inspire the next generation to be the best they can be and provide them with the knowledge, skills and resilience they require to succeed.'

4.68 This is further emphasised in the *Strategic Regeneration Framework for North Manchester*, which sets out that :

'Too many schools still perform poorly as compared to the rest of Manchester and national averages. From nursery and primary schools to 6th form, improvement needs to be achieved with some speed.

It will not be sufficient to say that education will be improved within 10 years if the aim is to attract new residents within the next 2–5 years. Early, meaningful change needs to be achieved.

With the frequent focus on the construction of new premises, there is a strong sentiment that the approach to regeneration and education must not simply be buildings-led, and should focus on more strategic issues.

However, the importance of high quality physical premises cannot be under-estimated: they express and inspire confidence, aspiration, and achievement.'

4.69 The connection between education of socio-economic health is also highlighted in the Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. For example, Draft Policy GM-E 5 'Education, Skills and Knowledge' states that significant enhancements in education, skills and knowledge to benefit existing and new residents will be promoted throughout Greater Manchester, including by:

'Ensuring the delivery of sufficient school places to respond to the demands from new housing, such as through working with education providers to forecast likely changes in the demand for school places.'

4.70 Having regard to all of the above, it is evident that this critical education project – which will tackle the existing and ongoing over-subscription at the school, and provide much needed /

enhanced education space in one of the UK's most deprived areas – is a social imperative, and will deliver very important benefits to those pupils who most need it.

Environmental Benefits

- 4.71 In considering **environmental** benefits, we are mindful that paragraph 8 of the NPPF states that, to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental “**net gains**” should be sought.
- 4.72 The site is currently an unprepossessing plot of land that serves no real purpose. It is partly occupied by a somewhat unsightly ‘portacabin’ used for education purposes. The remainder of the land is covered grass, including a substantial mound (with protruding metal vents) beneath which is attenuation infrastructure. There are no trees or shrubs on the land, aside from a small amount poor quality scrub-like trees / vegetation adjacent to the forest school.
- 4.73 The submitted Arboricultural Assessment (ROAVR Environmental) records five tree groups, and one off site individual tree, that are located on the periphery of the site. It notes that a number of low quality trees that were planted as part of the original setting out of the school will be required to be removed to facilitate the proposed steps. This is considered justifiable given their poor structure, form and long-term prospects due to their location. In addition, it may be that tree group G2 will be required to be removed to facilitate temporary site access for the construction phase (subject to its precise positioning / alignment), but this design aspect is yet to be finalised. The Tree report notes that the proposal should be used an opportunity to remove the poor quality vegetation and plant new robust and sustainable tree cover. That advice is reflected in the submitted landscaping details prepared by Stiwdio Owens.
- 4.74 Ecology Assessment (Rachel Hacking Ecology) confirms that the site possesses no biodiversity of note or importance.
- 4.75 The existing portacabin will be removed, and replaced with a far superior, sensitively designed building of architectural quality and stature. A thoughtful hard and soft landscaping scheme is presented, which will create attractive sitting out space for staff and pupils, including facilities for outdoor learning and dining. For the first time, this area of land will possess a true, active and sustainable role / function. New trees and other vegetation will be planted, selected for its visual and ‘greening’ potential, and also its biodiversity benefits.

- 4.76 During the formulation of the scheme design and layout, due regard has been paid to delivering excellent quality design and layout, with its emphasis on the need to deliver quality architecture. Such matters, together with an explanation of the rationale behind the design and layout is contained in the separate Design & Access Statement. The intention is that new buildings will contribute to character, adding visual interest and distinctiveness.
- 4.77 It is therefore considered that the proposal presents an appropriate, thoughtful and respectful design solution, in terms of height, scale, siting, massing, and its relationship with existing buildings and spaces.
- 4.78 We also point to the separate *Energy and Sustainability Report* (produced by Waterman), which reinforces the sustainability credentials of the proposition. As noted earlier, this explains that the combined approach is that the design has been shown to achieve a **10.8% betterment** of the Building Regulation emissions, exceeding the requirements of Core Policy ENE06, and the design also meets the requirements set out for compliance of ENE04 and EN8.
- 4.79 Overall, therefore, we contend that the proposal represents sustainable development, which will contribute **economically and socially and environmentally**. In view of that, the NPPF advises (at paragraph 11) that the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be the basis for every planning decision, and that **developments that are sustainable should go ahead “without delay”**.
- 4.80 We therefore anticipate that this application will be welcomed by the Council in respect of its deliverance of sustainable growth and its associated socio-economic and regeneration benefits.

Compliance with the NPPF

- 4.81 The NPPF is an important material consideration.
- 4.82 We addressed the sustainability credentials of the scheme above, and concluded that the proposal represents **sustainable development which should go ahead without delay**. We therefore say nothing further in respect of the sustainability support provided for this application by the NPPF.
- 4.83 The application is also consistent with the remainder of the NPPF.
-

- 4.84 It will create much needed, better quality, fit-for-purpose education accommodation, reflecting the requirement under §20 to :
- 4.85 **'make sufficient provision for ... [*inter alia*] ... education infrastructure.'**
- 4.86 The proposal will play a part in the creation of a balanced community, and – specifically – responds to the provisions of §94 :
- 'It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should **give great weight** to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications.'**
- 4.87 As we explain elsewhere, there is no conflict with Framework §97, in that there will be no harmful impact on or loss of any sports or recreational land. The existing playing fields will be retained, and the new building will facilitate the wider and more intensive use of the sports facilities, by creating internal facilities for visiting teams and allowing the school to host sports-related competitions and other events.
- 4.88 The proposal is consistent with §104, in that it will create educational space at a highly accessible established school, thereby minimising the number and length of journeys needed to access education.
- 4.89 The proposal reflects policies in the NPPF designed to 'build communities', by delivering much needed, better quality education. This will have positive implications for the social, cultural and economic well-being of the area.
- 4.90 The NPPF promotes good design, and suggests this is fundamental to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities.
- 4.91 It encourages developers to make effective use of land and existing infrastructure.
- 4.92 This application addresses all of these key policy aims and objectives: good quality, sensitive design; making efficient use of land and existing infrastructure; providing for educational needs; and building the community in a sustainable, balanced fashion.

- 4.93 As such, the scheme complies with the NPPF, and that level of compliance represents and important material consideration in the overall planning balance.

Playing Pitch Considerations

- 4.94 We noted earlier that the NPPF's 'Glossary' confirms that the definition of a 'playing field' is :

'The whole of a site which encompasses at least one playing pitch as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.'

- 4.95 In that regard, it is acknowledged that the application site falls within the definition of a 'playing field' by virtue of the fact that it forms a very small part of 'the whole of a site' that is occupied by two sports pitches.

- 4.96 We also drew attention to Part (z) of Schedule 4 of *The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015* and its requirement that Sport England (SE) be consulted about development which :

'is likely to prejudice the use, or lead to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field.'

- 4.97 The land in question – ie that that will accommodate the proposed teaching block - is not used as a sports pitch or for any other form / type of sports provision, and it has not been used as such since the school was constructed in 2009 (12 years ago). Indeed, it is not clear whether or not the land was used for the purposes of support *before* the school was built.

- 4.98 Fundamentally, the land is incapable of being used as a playing field. Aside from the fact that it is occupied by a temporary classroom block (albeit we noted the requirements of Condition I of that consent in Section 2.0 of this Statement), it is also occupied by a sizeable earth mound of around 1.3 metres height that covers drainage attenuation infrastructure (see photographs at *Appendix 1*). This has metal ducts protruding upwards, and clearly cannot be used as a playing field, sports or for any other form of sports provision.

4.99 Part (z) of the above Order also states that SE should be consulted where a proposal is on land which has been :

- a) used as a playing field at any time in the five years before the making of the relevant application and which remains undeveloped; or
- b) allocated for use as a playing field in a development plan or in proposals for such a plan or its alteration or replacement.

4.100 Neither (a) nor (b) apply.

4.101 First (regarding part (a)), the land has not been used as a playing field or for any sports-related purpose for a period of at least 12 years - well beyond the 5 years specified in part (a). Nor are we convinced that the land was used as a playing field / sports pitch before the school was built.

4.102 Second (part (b)), the site is not allocated for use as a playing field in the development plan (either adopted or emerging).

4.103 For those reasons, it is the Applicant's contention the SE ought not to be consulted in respect of this application, simply because none of the provisions of part (z) apply.

4.104 However, SE indicated during pre-application dialogue that it considers itself to be a statutory consultee, so – in the event that the LPA opts to consult SE – it is important to consider SE's policy as set out in its *Playing Fields Policy and Guidance (March 2018)*. This confirms that :

'Sport England will oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of :

- all or any part of a playing field, or
- land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or
- land allocated for use as a playing field

unless, in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions.'

4.105 It is our contention that the proposal meets both of the following exceptions :

Exception 2

The proposed development is for ancillary facilities supporting the principal use of the site as a playing field, and does not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.

Exception 3

The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch and does not:

- reduce the size of any playing pitch;
- result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches or the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches to maintain their quality;
- result in the loss of other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site; or
- prejudice the use of any remaining areas of playing field on the site.

4.106 In respect of **Exception 2**, while the principal focus of the proposed building is inevitably on educational provision and improvement, there will be direct and positive implications in respect of sport. We reiterate that :

- The land to be occupied by the proposed development is not used as part of any playing field / pitch in respect of any sports-related provision, purpose or function.
- The land has never been used as such since the construction of the school in 2009 - a period of at least 12 years.
- The land is incapable of being used as a playing field / pitch or any other form of sports provision, in that it is occupied by a large mound above attenuation infrastructure, with protruding extraction vents.
- The proposed development will not impact to any extent on the use of any playing field / pitch or any form of sports provision. It will be located at a considerable distance from the closest pitch and its run off areas.
- The School does not currently use the pitches or hire them out, due to their very poor irrigation and a lack of toilet / changing facilities. The proposed building will provide these

facilities and a supply for first aid. This will enable the School to be able to host sports-related tournaments for primary schools, which it cannot currently cater for.

- The dining facilities within the proposed building can be used to provide refreshments for visiting sports teams, to accommodate sporting competitions / events which cannot currently take place.
- Locating classrooms immediately next to the playing fields will allow the PE faculty to complete both practical and theory lessons together.
- The classrooms in the proposed building can be used to host governing body coaching awards / teacher awards. Many of the School's children wish to become sports coaches but struggle to travel to other venues.

4.101 Accordingly, not only will this proposal not impact deleteriously on any playing field / sports pitch or provision, but it will create new facilities that will enable the better / more intense use of playing fields that are currently hardly used. That said, the proposal accords with *Exception 2* in that :

- It will deliver ancillary facilities that support the principal use of the wider site as a playing field; and
- It will not affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use;
- Conversely, it will positively affect their use by providing facilities that will allow for the better, more intensive use of the existing pitches.

4.107 The proposal is also compliant with *Exception 3*, in that :

- For reasons set out above, the proposed development affects only land incapable of forming part of a playing pitch;
- It will not affect or reduce the size of any playing pitch;
- It will not result in the inability to use any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins and run-off areas);
- It will not reduce the sporting capacity of the playing field to accommodate playing pitches;
- While the proposal will – theoretically - affect the capability to rotate or reposition playing pitches in this particular part of the site, such rotation / repositioning has never taken

place or been considered over a period of 12 years (and counting), and – as explained elsewhere – it would be physically impossible to locate a pitch on the land by virtue of the raised 'mound' and associated drainage attenuation infrastructure / protruding ventilation ducts. In view of that 'physical impossibility', we anticipate that the LPA and SE will adopt a pragmatic and proportionate stance on this matter.

- It will not result in the loss of any other sporting provision or ancillary facilities on the site;
- It will not prejudice the use of any part of a playing field and any of its playing pitches.

4.108 We accordingly contend that, in the event that it is deemed that SE call to be consulted about the application (having regard to the provisions of part (z) of Schedule 4 of the Order), it will be recognised that the proposal meets two of the 'exception' criteria. In short, given the condition of the site and its inability to serve any possible sports-related function, there can and will be no impact on / harm to any sports facilities. Conversely, benefits will arise by introducing facilities that will enable the better and more intense use of the adjacent sports pitches.

Transport and Access

4.109 The site is located in an accessible location within the built up area, close to frequent bus services.

4.110 Transport considerations are reported in more detail in the Transport Statement (by Highways Advice). This concludes that the scheme accords with local and national policy to site development adjacent to good transport linkages and other attractions to minimise trips and share trip movements.

4.111 It confirms that the site occupies a sustainable location and that the site layout and access are designed to accord with good practice. It further confirms that there are no operational transport issues that would arise if the development was to proceed. Fundamentally, Highways Advice concludes that there are no reasons why the scheme should not be approved from a transportation point of view.

4.112 The proposal will involve the creation of a potential temporary access via Boothroyden Road during the construction process (a period of circa 12 months).

4.113 In overall terms, the Transport Statement concludes that :

- The application site is situated within an established residential area and is highly accessible by walking and cycling.
- Secure covered cycle parking areas (sufficient to accommodate the parking of 40 bicycles) exist on site to accommodate cycle parking demand.
- The site is accessible by public transport and is located within 450m of 2 bus stops on Victoria Road, offering frequent bus services (5-7 per hour) to local destinations. The 717, 718 and Y9 school bus services are also in place serving many local areas of North Manchester.
- No changes to existing car parking arrangements are proposed. The proposals are expected to generate an additional 4 vehicle trips per day. This low level of additional daily traffic would have a negligible impact on the local highway network.

4.111 In overall conclusion, it is considered the proposed development is acceptable in respect of transport and highways matters and can therefore be recommended for planning approval.

Ground Conditions

4.112 The application is supported by the following ground-related reports :

- Preliminary Geo-Environmental Investigations - Site Investigation Report (SKM); and
- Factual Report and Desk Study (SKM)

4.113 The above reports were prepared to inform the construction of the school in 2008/9, and we anticipate that the LPA will attach a condition requiring any further site investigations it deems necessary.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The development promoted by this planning application will deliver much needed education space at Our Lady's RC High School.
- 5.2 The School is consistently over-subscribed and cannot cater for the demand for places from local children.
- 5.3 For each of the last two years, there have been nearly 100 children on the waiting list for a Year 7 place.
- 5.4 The School was designed and built (in 2009) to accommodate 750 pupils. Its current occupancy is 880 pupils. This manifests itself in over crowded / cramped classrooms, dining areas, corridors and staircases, with associated health and safety issues. Some children need to attend lessons in the 'portacabin' that currently occupies the application site. That is not fit-for-purpose, sustainable or appropriate in the long term.
- 5.5 There is therefore an urgent need / imperative to increase the number of school places, which will in turn assist a community which suffers from high levels of deprivation.
- 5.6 In response to these deficiencies, £2.35 million funding has been allocated by Manchester City Council (Education) to address the over-occupancy and to avoid the need to use temporary, unfit accommodation.
- 5.7 The proposed building will not only accommodate the current occupancy of pupils, but will increase its capacity for 20 additional pupils.
- 5.8 In considering this application, it is important to understand the socio-economic context and the link between education and the health and well being of society. The rate of unemployment in Blackley is higher than the national average. The rate of benefit claims is more than 25% higher than the national average.

- 5.9 A recent study carried out by The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that Blackley was in the top ten most deprived areas in the north west of England. Within Greater Manchester, the Blackley and Broughton constituency was found to have the highest risk of poverty.
- 5.10 The Core Strategy highlights that Manchester has a high proportion of residents with no formal qualifications, which acts as 'a major barrier' to accessing jobs. It points to a 'major challenge' skills gap.
- 5.11 The proposed school building and the associated enhancement of educational provision will play a part in addressing the ongoing socio-economic issues facing this part of North Manchester. It is consistent with Core Strategy Policy EC 4 'North Manchester', which highlights that some parts suffer with low educational attainment, which is a barrier to accessing employment.
- 5.12 The proposal is also consistent with the emerging Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. Its draft policy GM-S 4 'Resilience' states that one of the 'key measures' is :
- 'promoting significant enhancements in education, skills and knowledge.'
- 5.13 It is also consistent with draft policy GM-E 5 'Education, Skills and Knowledge', which seeks :
- 'significant enhancements in education ... [including] ... Ensuring the delivery of sufficient school places to respond to the demands from new housing, such as through working with education providers to forecast likely changes in the demand for school places.'
- 5.14 The *Strategic Regeneration Framework for North Manchester* points to the array of challenging and inter-related economic, social and physical issues, and the legacy of under-employed residents and long-term unemployment. Of particular relevance to this proposal is the need 'to improve educational attainment, and employability', suggesting that this is 'fundamental to stabilising the housing market.' Section 5 of the Framework notes that education plays a pivotal role in regeneration :
- 'good quality education will provide North Manchester's residents with the skills and qualifications to succeed in a rapidly changing economy.'

5.15 This is reinforced in the *Our Manchester Strategy 2016-2025*, which notes that :

'Schools also have a wider role to play in instilling confidence and aspiration, social literacy and a culture of respect, preparing young people for the workplace and for life.

It is vital to help them to develop into confident young adults with the drive and the social, communication and critical thinking skills they need to succeed. Manchester Youth Council polled all 11 to 18-year-olds in the city about what matters most to them. They received almost 24,000 responses (one of the highest turnouts in the country). The second-highest priority for young people was to have 'a curriculum that prepares me for life.'

5.16 This is further emphasised in the *Strategic Regeneration Framework for North Manchester*, which explains that :

'Too many schools still perform poorly as compared to the rest of Manchester and national averages. From nursery and primary schools to 6th form, improvement needs to be achieved with some speed.

It will not be sufficient to say that education will be improved within 10 years if the aim is to attract new residents within the next 2–5 years. Early, meaningful change needs to be achieved.

The importance of high quality physical premises cannot be under-estimated : they express and inspire confidence, aspiration, and achievement.'

5.17 We have explained in this Planning Statement why this is a sustainable form of development, which will deliver a range of economic, social and environmental benefits.

5.18 We have also explained that there will be no loss of, or harm to, any sports-related provision (such as the adjacent pitches), and how the use of those sports facilities will in fact be enhanced / intensified by the proposal, in that it will provide associated accommodation / facilities that can be used to facilitate sports events and competitions.

5.19 We have explained how and why the application accords with all relevant policies of the Development Plan and the NPPF as an important material consideration. We have noted §20 of the Framework, which states that :

5.20 'Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and **make sufficient provision** for ... [*inter alia*] ... health, **education** and cultural infrastructure.'

5.21 We have also noted Framework §94, which goes to the heart of this proposal :

'It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should **give great weight** to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications.'

5.22 We accordingly invite the LPA to '**give great weight**' to this proposal.

5.23 We contend that the application is compliant with all relevant policies and will deliver a range of much needed and sustainable education (and other) benefits.

5.24 We accordingly commend the application to the Council and urge its positive determination.

Appendix I
Photographs of Site / Context





















Appendix 2

Community Consultation

Letter hand delivered to local residents



Our Lady's R.C. High School

Alworth Road, Blackley, Manchester, M9 0RP

Telephone: 0161 507 9640

Email: admin@olsc.manchester.sch.uk

Website: www.olhs-manchester.org.uk

Headteacher: Mr L Ormsby BA (Hons)



11th February 2021

Dear Residents,

We are writing to inform you about some proposed developments at Our Lady's RC High School. As you may be aware, the school was built on the current site in 2008 to provide secondary education to 750 pupils from the local area but due to the increasing popularity of the school and local demand, we are currently over capacity.

Manchester City Council have requested that we increase our published admission number to 900 pupils (in a staggered increase over the course of the next five years). To enable this to happen, we are proposing to build some additional facilities to accommodate this requirement.

The proposals involve removing the current temporary classroom facilities located at the back of the school, adjacent to the school fields and replacing them with a permanent two-storey building which will encompass additional dining space, classrooms and a number of other facilities. There will also be some newly landscaped areas around the new building.

We wanted to bring this to the attention of our immediate neighbours at the earliest opportunity to allow for open discussion to take place, and to give the school the opportunity to provide you with further information about the proposals in advance of the planning application being submitted.

As opposed to holding a formal consultation due to the Covid restrictions being in place, we have shared the outline of our plans on our school website for your perusal and we are happy for you to contact the school so that we can discuss the proposals further with you. The initial proposals can be viewed at <https://www.olhs-manchester.org.uk/building-proposal/>

If you would like to have a conversation or virtual meeting to discuss the plans this can be arranged by contacting Tracey Torr, School Business Manager via email – t.torr@olsc.manchester.sch.uk or by contacting the school. Please note that we are closed for half term until Monday 22nd February but she will respond to any requests when we reopen. You are also welcome to submit any comments in writing to the school.

We have shared the information with the ward counsellors; Shelly Lanchbury, John Farrell and Paula Sadler who have been invited to meet with the school to discuss the proposals further.





Our Lady's R.C. High School

Alworth Road, Blackley, Manchester, M9 0RP
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Website: www.olhs-manchester.org.uk

Headteacher: Mr L Ormsby BA (Hons)



We hope that you share in our enthusiasm to provide our young people with enhanced facilities and space but understand that as local residents you may have questions about the proposals which we are more than happy to answer for you.

I would like to reiterate that this is an initial consultation process with local residents in advance of the planning application. You will receive further details from Manchester City Council at a later date.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me,

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L Ormsby'.

Mr Lee Ormsby
Headteacher

Extracts from School website explaining the proposal



Building Proposal

[Home](#) >> [About Us](#) >> [Building Proposal](#)

New Build Proposals – 2021

Our Lady's RC High School was built on the current site in 2008 to provide secondary education to 750 pupils from the local area but due to the increasing popularity of the school and local demand, we are currently over capacity.

Manchester City Council have requested that we increase our published admission number to 900 pupils (in a staggered increase over the course of the next five years). To enable this to happen, we are proposing to build some additional facilities to accommodate this requirement.

The proposals involve removing the current temporary portacabin facilities located at the back of the school with a new purpose built teaching building. The proposed building will provide a much enhanced pupil dining space, as well as a large library space and reading room. There will also be a new Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) teaching department and other facilities for pupils.

External works include a balcony space adjacent to the library and outdoor landscaping will provide improved outdoor social / learning spaces for pupils. A new pathway is also proposed providing better pedestrian links from the current building to the

The target planning submission date is the 1st March 2021.

Below you will find an outline of the proposals including plans and images. We welcome any feedback on the proposals by email to Tracey Torr, School Business Manager – t.torr@olsc.manchester.sch.uk.

We are more than happy to discuss the plans further should this be needed and you are welcome to contact the school to arrange an appointment.



1. Draft Existing Location Plan



2. Draft Proposed Location Plan



3. Draft Ground Floor Plan



4. Draft First Floor Plan



5. Draft Landscaping Plan