



Planning Statement

8 Athol Road, Manchester, M16 8QN

**Proposed change of use of vacant basement to
1 bedroom apartment**

Prepared by:

APS Appeals and Planning Services

Date: 21 December 2020

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1.0 THE SITE

- 1.1 This planning application relates to a large three-storey end terrace property that has been converted into three apartments. The surrounding area is residential and characterised by a mixture of large detached, semi-detached and terrace properties, a substantial number of which have also been converted into apartments.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Planning Permission is sought for the change of use of the vacant basement of 8 Athol Road to a one-bedroom apartment. The submitted plans show the access to be provided through the existing front door into the property and then via an internal staircase down to basement level.
- 2.2 The only external alterations proposed are the insertion of two openings within the rear elevation, two small openings within the side elevation and one opening in the front elevation. These will provide habitable windows to the living room, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom.
- 2.3 Permission was granted in 1993 for three garages which serve the car parking requirements of the occupiers of the existing apartments within the building. In addition to this, two off-street car parking spaces are proposed to be located on the hardsurfaced area to the front of No 8 and is accessed directly off Athol Road.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 042858 – Erection of block of 3 garages to rear of existing flats – Granted permission – 24 March 1993.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 The statutory development plan for the borough comprises the Manchester Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012 (CS) and the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (UDP).
- 4.2 As illustrated in Figure 1, the site is designated as falling within South Manchester in the Council's Proposals Map.

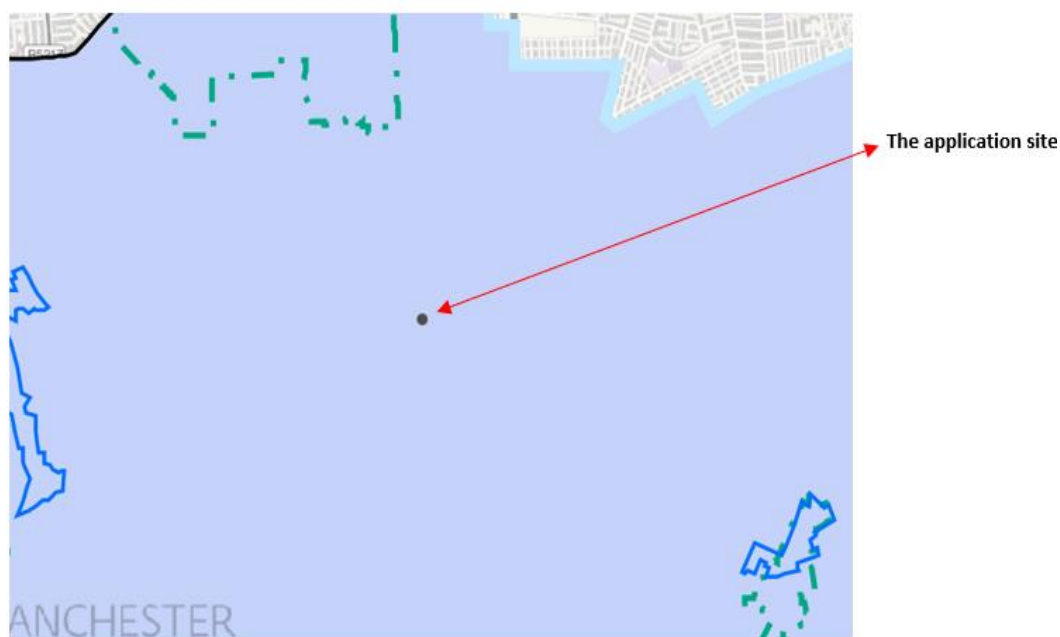


Figure 1: Proposals map allocation

4.3 Policies H6, DM1 and SP1 of the Council’s CS and saved UDP Policy DC5 are therefore the most pertinent in the assessment of this application. The key requirements of these can be summarised as follows:

4.4 **CS Policy H6 – South Manchester**

4.5 This policy sets out that South Manchester will accommodate around 5% of new residential development over the lifetime of the Core Strategy. It states that outside the district centres priorities will be for housing which meets identified shortfalls, including family housing and provision that meets the needs of elderly people, with schemes adding to the stock of affordable housing.

CS Policy DM1 – Development Management

4.6 Amongst other matters, this policy requires new development to have regard to:

4.7 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.

4.8 The character of the surrounding area. Effects on amenity, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality, odours, litter, vermin, birds, vehicular access and car parking, road safety and traffic generation. This could also include proposals which would be sensitive to existing environmental conditions, such as noise.

CS Policy SP1 – Spatial Principles

- 4.9 CS Policy SP1 sets out the spatial strategy for Manchester. This emphasises the creation of high quality and diverse housing around district centres to meet local needs. It directs the majority of new residential development in these neighbourhoods to Inner Areas, defined by the North Manchester, East Manchester and Central Manchester Regeneration Areas.
- 4.10 It also requires all development to 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.

Saved UDP Policy DC5 – Flat Conversions

- 4.11 In determining planning applications to convert property to flats, this policy requires the Council to have regard to:
- a. the standard of accommodation for the intended occupiers of the premises;
 - b. effects on adjoining houses as a result of noise from flats passing through party walls and affecting adjoining houses;
 - c. adequacy of car parking, off-street car parking being normally required where practicable, and essential where there is so severe an existing on-street parking problem that unacceptable additional pressures would be created;
 - d. general effects on the character of the neighbourhood, including the extent to which flat conversion schemes are a new or an established feature of the immediate area, avoiding the loss of front gardens and the retention of existing trees and shrubs;
 - e. adequate private outdoor amenity space;

f. the desirability of achieving easy access for all, including disabled people (as a minimum, access for disabled people will normally be required in conversions of ground floor accommodation);

g. the satisfactory provision of refuse storage and collection facilities.

The National Planning Policy Framework - February 2019 (the Framework)

4.12 The Framework seeks to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes. This advises that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements should be addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. It also supports the objective of creating mixed and balanced communities.

4.13 Amongst other things, paragraph 127 of the Framework requires that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments 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 users, and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

4.14 The footnote to this paragraph advises that planning policies for housing may make use of the nationally described space standard, where the need for an internal space standard can be justified.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

4.15 Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 56-018-20150327 of the PPG confirms that the NPPF says that local planning authorities should identify the size, type, tenure and range of housing that is required in particular locations, reflecting local demand. However, it also stipulates that **where a local planning authority wishes to require an internal space standard, they should only do so by reference in their Local Plan to the national described space standard.**

Manchester Residential Quality Guidance 2017 (SPD).

4.16 This SPD combines some of the requirements of the Government's 'Technical Housing Standards – nationally described space standard' and the 'London Housing Design Guidance space standards'

4.17 Appendix A of this guidance, as illustrated in Figure 2, sets out the minimum space requirements for different types of properties. It suggests that 39 square metres of floor space is required for a 1-bedroom single storey property.

NUMBER OF BEDROOMS (b)	NUMBER OF BED SPACES (persons)	1 STOREY DWELLINGS	2 STOREY DWELLINGS	3 STOREY DWELLINGS	BUILT-IN STORAGE (m ²)
1b	1p	39 (37)			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	83		
3b	4p	74	87	90	2.5
	5p	86	96	102	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	100	106	3.0
	6p	99	107	113	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

*** NOTES**

1. Built-in storage areas are included within the overall GIAs and include an allowance of 0.5m² for fixed services or equipment such as a hot water cylinder, boiler or heat exchanger.
2. GIAs for one storey dwellings include enough space for one bathroom and one additional WC (or shower room) in dwellings with 5 or more bedspaces. GIAs for two and three storey dwellings include enough space for one bathroom and one additional WC (or shower room). Additional sanitary facilities may be included without increasing the GIA provided that all aspects of the space standard have been met.
3. Where a 1b1p has a shower room instead of a bathroom, the floor area may be reduced from 39m² to 37m², as shown bracketed.
4. Furnished layouts are not required to demonstrate compliance.

Figure 2: Appendix A, Manchester Residential Quality Guidance 2017 (SPD)

5.0 ANALYSIS

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 places a requirement upon Authorities when determining planning applications to do so in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 Given the amount of buildings converted into apartments on Athol Road and the similar limited external alterations proposed, the Council should have no substantive objection to the principle of development or the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the original building and surrounding area. It would clearly comply with CS Policies DM1, H6 and SP1 in these respects.
- 5.3 Nonetheless, the issues below require further consideration and are addressed in more detail in the following pages:
- Living conditions of future occupiers (space standards and private amenity space).
 - Living conditions of existing occupiers and residents of neighbouring properties (noise and disturbance).
 - Off-street car parking provision.

Living conditions of future occupiers

- 5.4 The Council's housing standards are set out in the Manchester Quality Guidance 2017 (SPD) which can be seen in Figure 2 of this document. This SPD combines some of the requirements of the Government's 'Technical Housing Standards (THS) – nationally described space standard' and the 'London Housing Design Guidance space standards' for proposed residential developments.
- 5.5 As can be seen in Figure 3 the proposal would exceed the SPD's space standards. At 61 square metres it would be well over the total required floor space threshold of 50 square metres for a one bed single storey property. The double bedroom also exceeds the THS space standard of 11.5 square metres (by approximately 5.5 square metres), and is over 2.75 metres wide. There is also approximately 2.7 square metres of internal storage space proposed. All of these factors would combine to provide a spacious and functional internal layout for future occupiers.

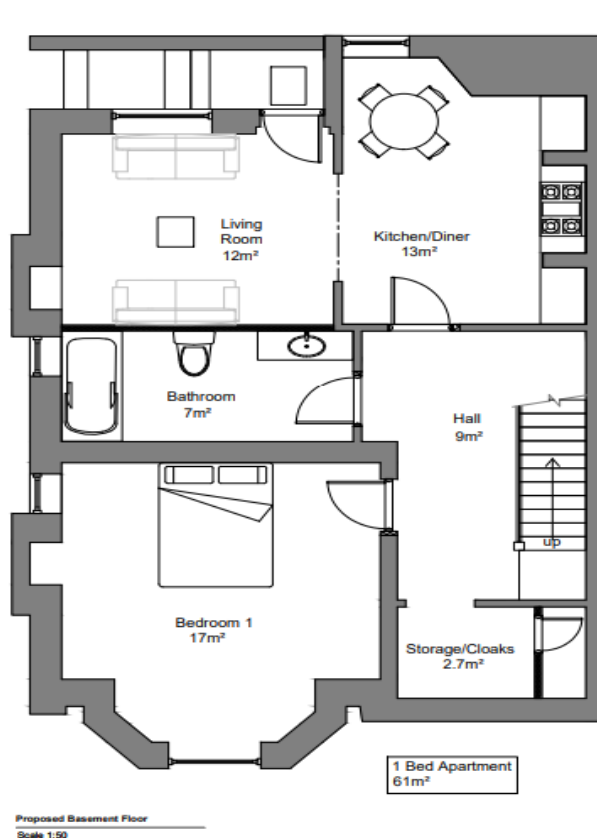


Figure 3 – Floor Layout and measurements

- 5.6 The internal layout of the building has been adapted to provide access to the proposed apartment via the existing front door and an internal staircase. This would ensure a safe and secure environment for potential future occupiers as it would have natural surveillance.
- 5.7 The existing communal private rear amenity space would remain untouched and although modest in size is sufficient to accommodate the needs of an additional occupier/s. It should also be noted that the

Council does not have any adopted space standards for the sizes of garden areas and in a recent appeal (Appendix 1) for the neighbouring 2-4 Athol Road a Planning Inspector was satisfied that the combined garden areas of these properties was adequate for the occupiers of ten apartments. It is therefore logical to conclude that the garden space for No 8 which is over half the size of Nos 2-4 rear garden would be sufficient for four apartments.



Figure 4: neighbouring garden spaces

- 5.8 In light of the above it is therefore considered that the proposal would not cause any material harm to the standard of accommodation or living conditions of future occupiers and would therefore comply with CS Policies DM1, SP1 and DC5 of the UDP.

Living conditions of existing occupiers and residents of neighbouring properties

- 5.9 The access to the proposal would be via the existing front door which is a similar arrangement to that which was allowed at appeal for Nos 2-4 Athol Road (Ref: APP/B4215/W/18/3195414 - Appendix 1).
- 5.10 In this appeal the Planning Inspector found that the provision of two additional apartments would inevitably result in an increase in the number of people entering and leaving the building. However, as those comings and goings would be via the existing front door and hallway they would represent an increase in the frequency of existing noise events rather than new sources of noise in a different part of the building. In his judgment, he found that the resulting increase in the frequency of those noise events would be unlikely to cause unacceptable levels of noise or disturbance to the occupiers of the existing apartments.
- 5.11 The proposal is only for an additional one-bedroom flat (rather than two) and would clearly have less impact in terms of noise and disturbance caused to existing occupiers of the building and neighbouring properties than those that were allowed at appeal at Nos 2-4.
- 5.12 As shown in Figure 5, there would also be a separate enclosed area provided for the storage of additional bins associated with the proposal. These are to be located away from the majority of the apartments, adjacent to the rear garages. This would ensure that no undue level of disturbance would be caused to future and existing residents through the disposal of waste or movement of bins.
- 5.13 As such the proposal would not cause any material harm to the living conditions of existing occupiers of the building or residents of neighbouring properties. It would thereby not conflict with CS Policy DM1 and Saved UDP Policy DC5 in this regard.

Off street car parking

- 5.14 Along with the existing three garages to the rear of the site there is sufficient space for two additional car parking bays to the front of the property. This area is already hard surfaced and used infrequently for parking, thereby causing no further harm to the character and appearance of the area.

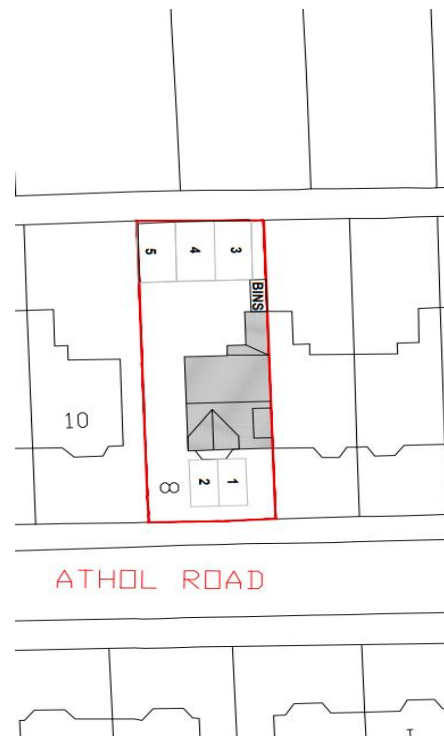


Figure 5: Proposed off-street car parking arrangements

- 5.15 Even if the proposed parking arrangements are not considered to be acceptable, the findings of the Planning Inspector in the appeal decision (Ref: APP/B4215/W/18/3195414 - Appendix 1) at Nos 2-4 is a material consideration of substantial weight in the assessment of this application.
- 5.16 In this appeal the Inspector noted that a large proportion of the properties in this section of Athol Road have some off-street parking provision and that there are few parking restrictions on the highway. He stated that only a few vehicles are parked on the street and that there is ample room for additional on-street parking both on Athol Road and Kingsbrook Road. This can also be seen from the image taken from google maps in Figure 6. The Inspector stated that there is no evidence of any undue pressure for on-street parking or a significant undersupply of such provision. As such the Inspector concluded that the proposal would not result in undue pressure on the availability of on street parking spaces in the area and cause harm either to highway or

pedestrian safety or to the amenity of other local residents in this regard.

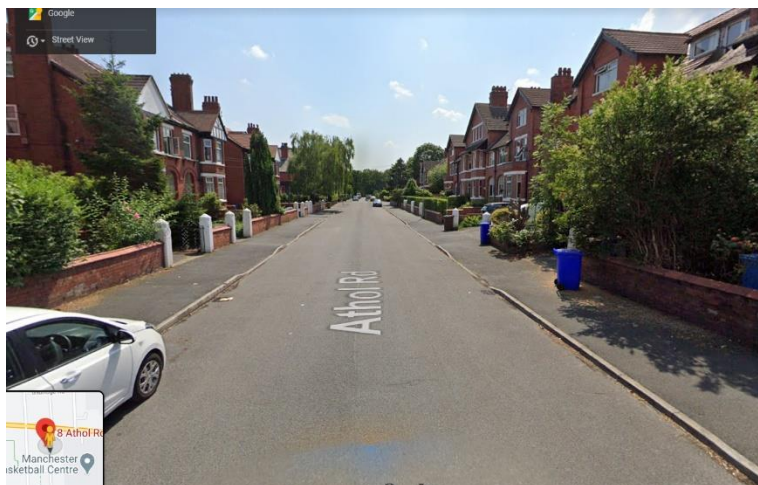


Figure 6: Google maps street view of lack of cars parked on the highway.

- 5.17 It is therefore reasonable to conclude that there is not a severe existing on-street parking problem that Saved UDP Policy DC5 seeks to avoid. Moreover, five off street parking spaces for the occupiers of four apartments would be provided. Given that the proposal is only for a one bed apartment it is therefore unlikely that any undue additional pressures would be created or that this would cause any harm to highway safety.
- 5.18 Notwithstanding this, the Council's Highways Section has previously found this area to be accessible by sustainable modes and in close proximity to a range of public transport facilities. As bus stops on Wilbraham Road, Princess Road and Alexandra Road South are all within a comfortable walking distance it is not necessary for any future occupier/s (who are likely to be either a single person or a couple) to rely on a car for the majority of their journeys to serve their day to day needs. In these circumstances, future occupiers may not own a car and would therefore not need to utilise the proposed in-curtilage parking facilities or park on the street.
- 5.19 The proposal would thereby comply with the requirements of CS Policy DM1 and part (c) Saved UDP Policy DC5 in respect of car parking.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Overall, the proposal would provide much needed additional housing to the area and comply with CS Policies DM1, SP1, Saved UDP Policy DC5 and advice contained within the Framework. As a consequence, it would comprise sustainable development for which there is a presumption in favour. It is therefore respectfully requested that planning permission should be granted subject to appropriately worded planning conditions.

APPENDIX 1 – APPEAL DECISION: APP/B4215/W/18/3195414

The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 July 2018

by Paul Singleton BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 20 August 2018**Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/W/18/3195414****2-4 Athol Road, Manchester M16 8QN**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Edge Property Management against the decision of Manchester City Council.
- The application Ref 116712/FO/2017, dated 19 June 2017, was refused by notice dated 9 August 2017.
- The development proposed is conversion of two existing basements to 1 No. one bedroom apartment and 1 No. two bedroom apartment, including installation of lightwells to the front and external terraces to the rear.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for conversion of two existing basements to 1 No. one bedroom apartment and 1 No. two bedroom apartment, including installation of lightwells to the front and external terraces to the rear, at 2-4 Athol Road, Manchester M16 8QN in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 116712/FO/2017, dated 19 June 2017, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: T6409 P001; T649 P003; T649 P005 Rev B; T649 P008; T649 P009; T649 P010.
 - 3) Neither of the apartments hereby approved shall be occupied until refuse and waste recycling facilities have been provided in accordance with details that shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The submitted details should be in line with the principles set out in the Design and Access Statement, Reference T649_DAS, dated June 2017, and the facilities shall at all times thereafter be retained and maintained exclusively for waste recycling purposes.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Edge Property Management against Manchester City Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Appeal Decision APP/B4215/W/18/3195414

Procedural Matter

3. The application as originally submitted sought approval for the provision of 2 two bed apartments but was amended, prior to the Council's decision, to propose 1 two bed and 1 one bed apartment within the basements of the two linked properties. I have adopted the amended description of development which reflects that revision.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - (a) The effect on the living conditions of: (i) the occupiers of the existing apartments within the appeal property and of neighbouring properties, and (ii) the future occupiers of proposed Apartment 2, with regard to noise and disturbance; and
 - (b) Whether the failure to make provision for off-street parking would cause unacceptable pressure on the availability of on-street parking within the vicinity of the appeal site.

Reasons

Living conditions

5. The appeal relates to the basement areas of two adjoining, part 2 and part 3 storey dwellings which have been converted under a planning permission granted in 1984 to form 8 self-contained apartments. The conversion has linked the two properties together and all access to the apartments is taken through a single front door leading to a communal hall and stairs. The appeal proposal would increase the total number of apartments from 8 to 10.
6. The provision of two additional apartments would inevitably result in an increase in the number of people entering and leaving the building. However, as those comings and goings would be via the existing front door and hallway they would represent an increase in the frequency of existing noise events rather than new sources of noise in a different part of the building. No technical evidence has been submitted by either party but, in my judgment, the resulting increase in the frequency of those noise events would be unlikely to cause unacceptable levels of noise or disturbance to the occupiers of the existing apartments.
7. There would be no need for residents of the proposed basement flats to use the main stairs. The potential for their comings and goings to disturb existing residents would arise only from the noise of the opening and closing of the front door, their footsteps in the hallway and their conversations if more than one person is entering or leaving at the same time. The property is of substantial construction and there is no evidence that noise and disturbance from the use of the front door and hallway has been a source of complaint from the existing occupiers. This issue was not raised by the one resident who objected to the application. Having apparently misunderstood the details of the proposal, that objector was concerned about the possibility of access to the proposed apartments being taken via the rear garden and suggested that access via the front door and hallway would be a preferable arrangement.

Appeal Decision APP/B4215/W/18/3195414

8. Given that there have been 8 apartments in the property for nearly 30 years comparison with its past use as 2 family houses is unjustified. The key issue is whether the additional movements generated by the proposed apartments would make a material difference in terms of noise and disturbance to the existing residents. Insofar as they may be able to hear comings and goings via the front door and hallway from within their apartments, the existing residents will be familiar with such noises and are unlikely to be able to distinguish any difference in the type or level of noise from these activities. The likely increase in the frequency of such events alone would not be such as to cause an unacceptable level of noise and disturbance to those residents. As the new apartments would be on the bottom level of the building noise from within these units is unlikely to be transmitted to those other apartments.
9. The door is set centrally in the front elevation of the linked properties and both these and the neighbouring residential properties are set back from the pavement behind front gardens of some 5 to 6 metres in depth. There would, accordingly, be minimal risk that the increased use of the front door by residents of the two additional apartments would cause disturbance to the occupiers of any neighbouring properties. The proposal would generate additional pedestrian movements along the street but the relative increase would be inconsequential given the number of dwellings on Athol Road.
10. The amenity of the future residents of the proposed apartments is a legitimate planning concern. The Council states that it normally seeks to avoid the siting of a bedroom next to a kitchen or living room but has not pointed to any adopted policy or guidance on this matter. Neither has it given any reason for its apparent conclusion that acoustic insulation would not address the issue of potential noise transmission. The kitchen to Flat 2 would be separated from the bedroom to Flat 1 by a substantial masonry and load-bearing wall rather than a thin partition. I see no reason why additional insulation should not be capable of ensuring a satisfactory noise environment for the occupiers of both apartments in accordance with building regulation requirements.
11. The private amenity areas to the rear of each of the new flats would be below windows that serve bedroom or living areas to the ground floor apartments. These relatively small spaces would be at a much lower level than the ground floor accommodation and would occupy part of the garden that currently forms a shared amenity space for the existing apartments. The juxtaposition of such uses is not unusual in flatted developments and would have limited potential to cause unacceptable levels of noise or disturbance to other residents.
12. I find that the proposal would not result in unacceptable noise or disturbance either to the future occupiers of the proposed apartments or to occupiers of other dwellings within 2-4 Athol Road or other nearby properties.

Parking provision

13. The Council's Highways Consultation response states that the site is considered to be accessible by sustainable modes and in close proximity to a range of public transport facilities. Given that bus stops on Wilbraham Road, Princess Road and Alexandra Road South are all within a comfortable walking distance I agree that this would be the case. The occupiers of the proposed apartments would not be any more dependent on the use of a private car for their daily travel requirements than existing residents of the property. It would, therefore, be wrong to assume that the proposal would necessarily result in a

cumulative demand for 10 off-street parking spaces as the Council seems to do. Even if the proposal was to lead to two more occupiers seeking on-street parking the evidence before me does not suggest that this would result in an unacceptable level of pressure on the availability of such spaces.

14. A large proportion of the properties in this section of Athol Road have some off-street parking provision. The need to keep pavement crossings clear prevents parking along the full length of the street but there are no other parking restrictions. At the time of my visit, only a few vehicles were parked on the street and there was ample room for additional on-street parking both on Athol Road and Kingsbrook Road. The parking I observed included a number of vans of contractors working at various properties in the road and it is reasonable to assume that those spaces would be available for other users in the evenings and at weekends.
15. Although one objector suggests that parking can be difficult at peak times, the appellant's surveys do not support that view. They do not suggest that spaces are at a premium during the evenings and there is no evidence before me to indicate otherwise. Had the failure to provide the off-street spaces approved as part of the 1984 permission resulted in a significant problem with on-street parking the Council would likely have been aware of this and would have sought to enforce compliance with the condition requiring that provision. That this appears not to have been done suggests that no such problem materialised then and there is no evidence of any undue pressure for on-street parking or a significant undersupply of such provision now.
16. I find no evidence that the failure to include off-street parking provision as part of the appeal proposal would result in undue pressure on the availability of on-street parking spaces in the area and cause harm either to highway or pedestrian safety or to the amenity of other local residents in this regard.

Other Matters

17. I note one objector's concerns about the presence of electricity meters and other services within the two basement areas. It is likely that these services would need to be relocated to enable the development to go ahead but I have no reason to conclude that this cannot satisfactorily be achieved.

Conditions

18. Permission is granted in accordance with the terms of the planning application but in the interests of certainty a condition is needed to tie the permission to the details set out in the approved plans. A condition has also been attached to require the provision of facilities for refuse storage and waste recycling in accordance with details to be submitted and approved by the local planning authority. This is required to ensure that adequate provision is made for these activities and to safeguard the visual amenity of the local area.

Conclusions

19. The proposal would not result in unacceptable noise or disturbance either to the future occupiers of the proposed apartments or to occupiers of other dwellings within 2-4 Athol Road or other nearby properties. Accordingly, I find no conflict with those parts of saved Policy DC5.1 of the Manchester Unitary Development Plan 2005 (UDP) which seek to ensure a satisfactory