

NO.8 BIRCH POLYGON
MANCHESTER M14 5HX

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

**SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION AND CONVERSION OF PROPERTY TO PROVIDE FIVE SELF CONTAINED
APARTMENTS WITH ASSOCIATED PARKING AND AMENITY SPACE**

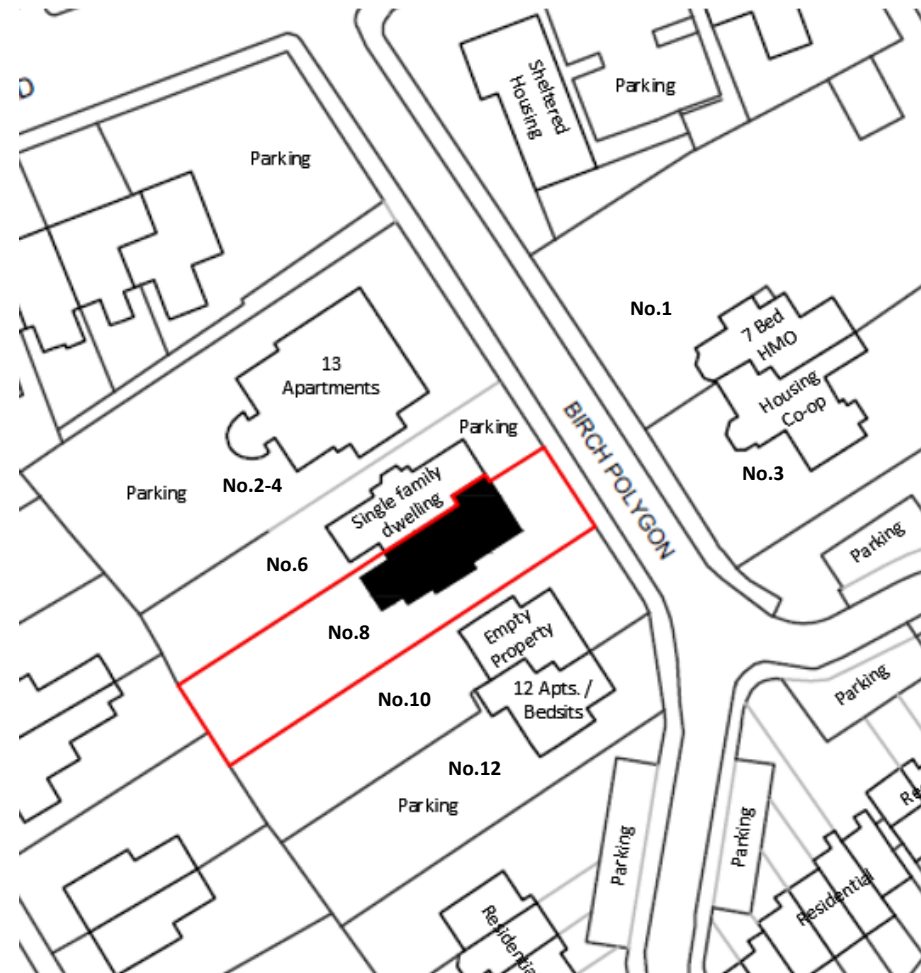
JUNE 2020

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application seeks full planning permission to enable the conversion of the property to provide five new self-contained apartments set over ground, first and second floor levels. A single storey rear extension is also proposed at ground floor level.
- 1.2 The proposals would deliver one new three-bedroom family apartment with access to private amenity space and a single bed apartment at ground floor level. There would be a two-bedroom and a single bedroom apartment at first floor level and a two-bedroom apartment at second floor level. The one and two bedroom apartments would have access to a shared rear communal garden. Five car parking spaces are provided to serve the apartments. Cycle parking and refuse and recycling storage provision is also included.
- 1.3 This statement sets out the planning case in favour of the proposals and comprises the following sections:
 - 2.0 Context
 - 3.0 Relevant History & Pre-Application
 - 4.0 Relevant Planning Policy
 - 5.0 Analysis
 - 6.0 Conclusions

2.0 CONTEXT

- 2.1 The application property (No.8) is located on the west side of Birch Polygon. Birch Polygon is a cul-de-sac which runs south from Dickenson Road and comprises a variety of properties ranging from larger Victorian detached and semi-detached, to smaller two storey modern terraced properties at the southern end.
- 2.2 As shown opposite a number of the properties have historically been converted into multi occupancy in the form of bedsits, flats or sheltered housing.
- 2.3 No 12 Birch Polygon, just south of the application site, is occupied as bedsits and there is also a licensed HMO at number 1 Birch Polygon for up to 7 residents.
- 2.4 Planning permission was granted in respect of No.2-4 Birch Polygon in 2013 for conversion to form 13 apartments.
- 2.5 Records associated with the property demonstrate that between 1925 and 1948 it was known as 'Birch Polygon Nursing Home' and was owned and run by three registered nurses.



Context Plan

- 2.6 The nurses operated the premises as a maternity hospital. Between 1948 and 1963 it was owned by a Mr Higgins who took in lodgers. In 1964 it was purchased by Marie Gumuchian, a 'Hotel Keeper' and the premises were run as HMO letting rooms until the end of 2014.
- 2.7 Internally the property is laid out as may be expected from a letting rooms operation. At ground floor level there are four letting rooms (Nos 1, 2, 3A and 4A). Within each of these rooms is an individual coin operated electricity meter and also a sink with individual water heater for the occupant's use. The doors benefit from separate mortis locks and are all numbered. At first floor level there are three letting rooms (Nos 2A, 3 and 4). Again, each benefit from separate electricity metres, sinks and water heaters and the doors have locks and are numbered. In addition, at this level there is a large communal kitchen area. The kitchen cupboards are lockable. Bathroom and WC facilities are at the rear. At second floor level there are four further letting rooms (Nos.7, 7b, 9 and 10) again with electricity metres, sinks, water heaters etc.
- 2.8 In considering a recent application for a lawful development certificate application associated with the use of the property, the Officers report comments that "*it is clear that the property has been used as an HMO from 1964 until 2014*". Whilst ultimately the certificate was not issued due to the Council's view as to the evidence relating to the numbers of HMO occupants and a final period of occupancy by the owner, it is a fact that the property has not provided family style accommodation for approximately 60 years (potentially 89 taking account of the maternity hospital use) and would require substantial internal refurbishment and re-planning to make it useable as such.
- 2.9 Externally the property benefits from an existing vehicular access onto Birch Polygon with driveway running to the side. There is a garden space to the rear and an enclosed forecourt area to the frontage as shown on the following photographs.



Front elevation



View of the rear and garden



Side elevation



Rear and side elevation

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 As noted in Section 1, this application follows an earlier application (reference 124997/FO/2019) which proposed the conversion of the property to provide nine new 1 bedroom flats and included a two storey rear extension. That application was withdrawn in November 2019 following concerns regarding various aspects of the proposals as set out by the case officer as set out in a letter to the applicant dated 8 November 2019.

3.2 The letter raised policy concern regarding the loss of a family dwelling (this is not accepted by the Applicant), and various issues associated with the proposed layout and design. In summary the proposal was considered to represent an overdevelopment of the site with some units not meeting minimum space standards and there were too many small (single person) units proposed.

3.3 Concerns were also raised regarding the impact of six proposed parking spaces to the rear in terms of the character and appearance of the site, loss of trees, the location of the side entrance to the flats, poor window positions (particularly basement flat), the scale of the two storey rear extension, lack of amenity space and the positioning of bin storage at the property frontage. The current application proposals fully addresses these issues as now described in the remainder of this section.



Site Plan as proposed in the 2019 withdrawn scheme

The Loss of a Family Dwelling

- 3.4 As explained in Sections 1 and 2, the application property is not, and has not, been used as a single-family home in recent memory. The applicant respectfully disagrees with the Council that proposals for its conversion should be considered as the loss of family accommodation. However, rather than seek to argue this point further this Application removes the issue by including family accommodation.
- 3.5 The Council defines family accommodation as being a unit with 3 or more bedrooms. The ground floor apartment as proposed by this application would provide 3 bedrooms and would meet the minimum space standard for a three bed home. It would provide a private garden space directly behind the property separate from the communal garden which would be used by the other four apartments.

Overdevelopment, Mix & Space Standards

- 3.6 The proposal has been reduced from 9 proposed flats with a two storey rear extension to five flats with only a single storey rear addition.
- 3.7 All apartments now proposed meet or exceed minimum space standards and the mix now proposed comprising one family (3 bed), two, 2-bed and two single-bed apartments which is more appropriate for the location than the previously proposed single bed units only.

Character & Appearance

- 3.8 The reduction in units proposed brings a subsequent reduction in the required parking for the site. Only three spaces are shown to the rear separating the private garden for the three-bed unit from the communal garden at the rear for the other flats. The parking is set away from the rear of the neighbouring property (No.6) and would not result in any significant noise and disturbance given this small number.

3.9 Notwithstanding this parking to the rear of the houses in Birch Polygon (2-4 and 12) and area in general is not uncharacteristic

Side Passage: Entrances to flats considered unsafe due to width.

3.10 Only three car parking spaces are now proposed to the rear with a consequent 50% reduction in likely traffic movements along the driveway from the 6 previously proposed. The entrance to the flats is north east facing such that occupiers do not step out directly onto the driveway but rather to the north east away from passing vehicles.

Windows: Poor relationships with side passage, particularly the basement flat.

3.11 The basement flat has been removed. The number of ground floor windows facing the drive have been reduced and the internal layout amended so that main habitable rooms face to the rear (south west) and front (north east). The ground floor windows facing the drive are now a bedroom window only.

Rear & Roof Extensions: Resulting in harmful and overbearing impacts.

3.12 The previously proposed two storey rear extension has been deleted from the scheme and only a single storey addition of 3 metres is now proposed. This is set in away from the boundary such that there would be no sense of enclosure or other overbearing impacts upon the neighbour.

Lack of Amenity Space

3.13 As set out above the 3-bed apartment is provided with its own rear amenity area and a communal garden is now provided for the users of the other four apartments.

- 3.14 This provides useable areas on site in addition to the fact that the site lies within 50 yards of Birchfield Park to the south, Future occupants would benefit from ease of access to this facility.

Bin storage: concern regarding front location

- 3.15 Given the reduced number of apartments the bin storage requirement has also reduced. It has been moved from the front to the side and would be enclosed within timber stores to ensure no adverse visual impacts.

Summary

- 3.16 In summary issues which resulted in the Applicants decision to withdraw the previous application have now been addressed fully.

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Feb 2019

- 4.1 The NPPF provides the governments guidance on the way in which the planning system should approach the delivery of sustainable new development. We highlight the following aspects.
- The purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development (p.7)
 - There are three objectives associated with the desire to deliver sustainable development. These are economic, social and environmental. (p.8)
 - Proposals which accord with up to date development plans should be approved without delay. A presumption in favour of granting applications for sustainable development should be applied either where the relevant policies in the plan are out of date or silent on a particular issue or where the Council cannot demonstrate an adequate five year land supply position. (p.11, 73 & 75).
 - Where the presumption in favour or the tilted balance applies then permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. (p.11 (d). ii.)
 - Local Planning Authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way so that application for sustainable development can be approved wherever possible. (p.38)
 - Planning conditions should be used in order to enable permission to be granted where possible rather than simply seeking to refuse development which could be made acceptable. (p.54 & 55)
 - The type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing) (p.61)
 - Small and medium size sites play an important role in meeting housing requirements (p.68)
 - Development should only be refused on highway grounds if there would be unacceptable impacts upon highway safety or the cumulative impacts upon the road network would be severe. (p109)

- Planning decisions should promote the effective use of land in meeting housing requirements. (P.117)
- Planning decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land. (P.122)
- Planning decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the quality of an area, are visually attractive, sympathetic to character and maintain or establish a sense of place. (p.127)

Manchester City Council Core Strategy

- 4.3 The Core Strategy was adopted by the City Council in July 2012.
- 4.4 Policy SP1 states that the key spatial principles which will guide the strategic development of Manchester to 2027 include: the emphasis is on the creation of neighbourhoods of choice, providing high quality and diverse housing around district centres which meet local needs, all in a distinct environment.
- 4.5 Policy EN1 describes relevant design principles for the City based upon different character areas. The application site falls within the Southern Character Area which is identified as having a notable presence of older development (1750 – early 1900s). Development across the City is expected to be of high quality and follow the seven design principles set out in national guidance.
- 4.6 Policy H1 relates to overall housing provision across Manchester and emphasises the need to increase the provision of family housing.
- 4.7 Policy H5 also notes that priority is given to family housing and other high value, high quality development where this can be sustained.
- 4.8 Policy H11 explains that:

“.... all proposals for change of use of existing properties into houses in multiple occupation, and *all proposals for conversion of existing properties into flats (which might not necessarily fall within Class C4), would be permitted only where the accommodation to be provided is of a high standard and where it will not materially harm the character of the area, having particular regard to the criteria in policy DM1*

4.9 Policy DM1 ‘Development Management’ advises that all new development should have regard to:

- 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. This could also include proposals which would be sensitive to existing environmental conditions, such as noise.
- 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.
- The use of alternatives to peat-based products in landscaping/gardens within development schemes.
- Flood risk and drainage.
- Existing or proposed hazardous installations.

- Subject to scheme viability, developers will be required to demonstrate that new development incorporates sustainable construction techniques.

4.10 Saved UDP Policy DC5 specifically considers flat conversions. DC5.1 it states that in determining planning applications to convert property to flats the following should be considered:

- 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.

4.11 DC5.2 makes clear that there will be a general presumption in favour of flat conversions within residential areas, on the upper floors of businesses within commercial areas and in properties on main road frontages, subject to other relevant policies of the Plan.

4.12 Importantly in this case conversions are said to be particularly welcome where large, old, difficult to re-use properties are involved, and where proposed schemes provide investment enabling the retention and improvement of housing stock.

4.13 Policy DC5.3 states that the Council will normally refuse permission for any developments in this category which:

- a. do not provide accommodation to the Council's current approved standards;
- b. are in tightly-packed residential streets where there is no scope for off-street car parking and where there is already an acknowledged problem of on-street congestion;
- c. involve conversion schemes without adequate private external amenity space;
- d. are schemes without satisfactory refuse storage and collection facilities.

4.14 The Council does not appear to have adopted parking standards for residential uses. However Policy T2 states that any car parking standards applied should be treated as maximum not minimum.

5.0 **ANALYSIS**

5.1 It is considered that the following matters are relevant to the assessment of this application:

- Whether the conversion to create five apartments at the property is acceptable in principle?
- Whether the residential units created would provide high quality accommodation?
- Whether there would be any adverse impacts upon the character of the area and the amenity of neighbouring properties?

The Principle of The Conversion

5.2 As outlined in Section 4, saved UDP Policy 5.2 includes a general presumption in favour of proposals for the conversion of existing buildings to flats. The NPPF also advises (paragraph 68) that small sites such as this play an important role in boosting the supply of much needed new housing. The proposal occupies a sustainable location and so the provision of new housing is clearly appropriate in this context.

5.3 However, it is acknowledged that the Council's Core Strategy (Policies H1, H5 & H11) highlight a need for family sized homes and that proposals which result in the loss of family sized accommodation are unlikely to be supported.

5.4 This application would not run contrary to these policies. Firstly, the property is not and has not been in use as a single family home for 60 or potentially 89 years. It is laid out as an HMO with eleven separate letting rooms. It has been vacant for three and a half years. As a matter of fact, therefore the granting of this application would not result in the physical loss of family accommodation.

- 5.5 Secondly and notwithstanding this, it is recognised that the Council has previously adopted the position that the application property should be considered to have the potential to provide family sized accommodation and so even though there would be no actual loss there would be a theoretical lost opportunity to deliver a family sized unit.
- 5.6 As a result and so as to avoid further discussion over this point, the applicant, (without prejudice to any future Appeal relating to the lawful development certificate application), has developed proposals that will provide a unit of family sized accommodation at the property. The local plan defines family sized accommodation as having three or more bedrooms. Therefore, the application would not lead to the loss of family accommodation, rather it would positively deliver it through the provision of a three- bedroom ground floor apartment.
- 5.7 For these reasons the proposal does not run contrary to H1, H5 or H11 and may be supported as a matter of principle.

Quality of Accommodation Created

- 5.8 The application proposes to convert the property to provide five apartments. All units have been designed to meet or exceed the National Minimum Spaces Standards. In addition, all units benefit from good quality outlook, daylight and sunlight conditions as follows:

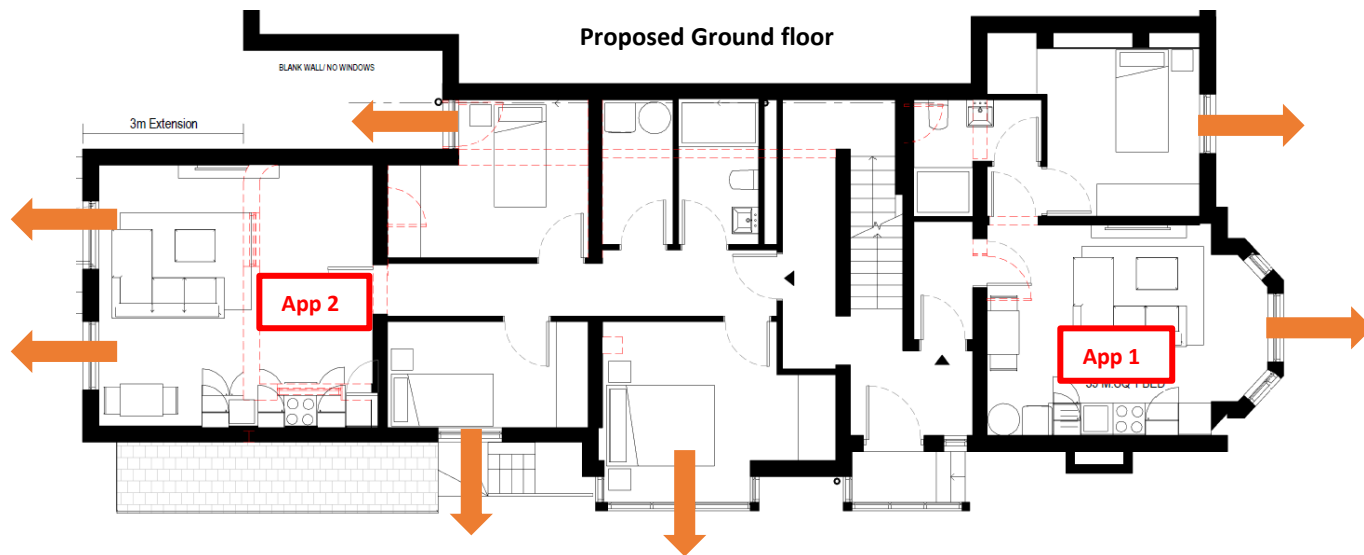
Apartment 1 – 1 bed, 39 sqm, outlook to the east (frontage) including bay window.

Apartment 2 – 3 bed, 74sqm, dual aspect outlook to the west (rear) onto private garden and also to the south.

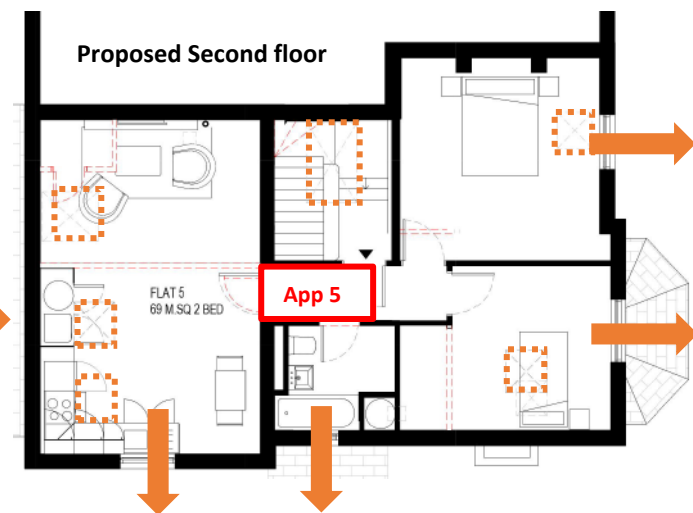
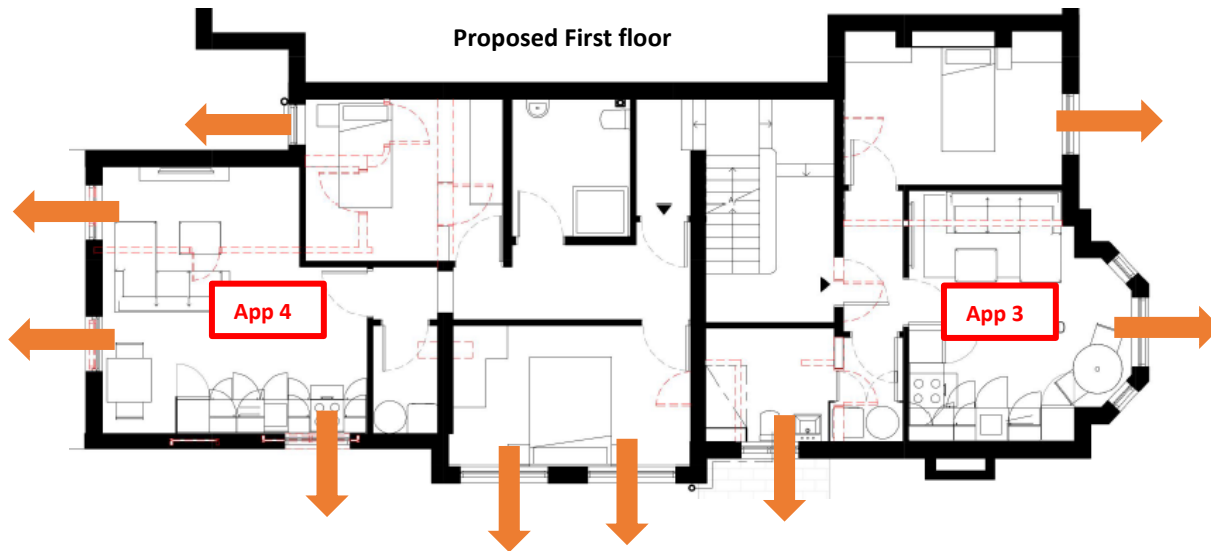
Apartment 3 – 1 bed, 39sqm, outlook to east (frontage) including bay window.

Apartment 4 – 2 bed, 61sqm, dual aspect outlook to the west (rear) and to the south (side).

Apartment 5 – 2 bed, 69sqm, dual aspect outlook to the east (front) and to the south (side)



- Arrangement of and outlook from the flats highlighted with the orange arrows.
- No North facing windows
- All units meet or exceed minimum space standards.
- One three bed family sized unit retained
- Rooflights



5.9 The ground floor family apartment would be provided with access to a private rear amenity area as shown opposite.

5.10 The four smaller apartments would have access to a communal garden set at the rear of the site.

5.11 Cycle parking and storage space for residents is proposed within the lower ground floor / basement.

5.12 Five on plot parking spaces are provided for use. Subject to the Council's view's these could be provided on the basis of one per apartment or potentially two spaces for the three bed and larger two bed apartment and one for the smaller two bed with the single person apartments car free.



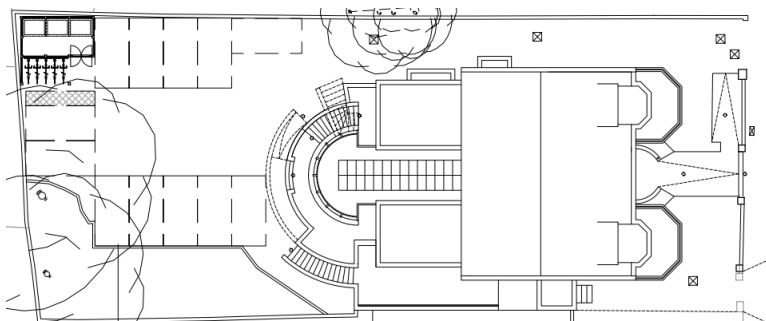
Site Layout Plan as Proposed

5.13 Storage for refuse and recycling is provided to the side of the building sufficient for the needs of the five apartments.

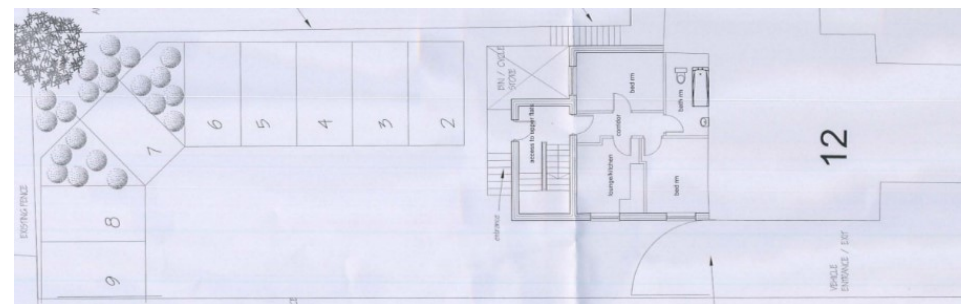
5.14 It is considered that the apartments would provide a high quality living environment for the future occupants.

Impacts upon the Character of the Area and Neighbouring Properties

- 5.15 As noted in Section 3, when the previous application was considered, Officers raised concerns that the provision of refuse storage on the property frontage and the loss of the entire rear garden area to hardstanding for car parking would be harmful to the character of the site and wider area. Concerns were also raised regarding the scale of the two storey rear extension and its overbearing impact upon No.6 Birch Polygon.
- 5.16 As a result of the reduction in the number of apartments proposed the number of parking spaces at the rear has also decreased. Three spaces only are proposed set between the rear garden for the family apartment and the communal garden. The rear area would not therefore appear as a hard surfaced car park as is the case at Nos 2 – 4 and No.12 Birch Polygon (extracts from approved plans below), but rather would retain significant areas of green space.



Rear car park at No.s 2-4 Birch Polygon



Rear car park at No. 12 Birch polygon

- 5.17 The refuse storage has also been relocated to the side of the building with the frontage being retained for parking and landscaping, again in a manner characteristic of the area.

- 5.18 The single storey rear extension as proposed would only be three metres deep and set away from the boundary with No.6 by 1 metre. It would be largely screened from No.6 by the existing brick boundary wall as shown in the photograph opposite.
- 5.19 It would not therefore appear overbearing and given its height it would not result in any material loss of daylight or sunlight to No.6.

Relevant Planning Policies

- 5.20 Saved Policy DC5.1 states that flat conversions will be considered acceptable subject to compliance with a number of detailed criteria (a – g). This application accords with DC5.1 as follows:
- a. The standard of accommodation provided would be of a high quality as detailed above.
 - b. There would not be adverse noise impacts for neighbouring properties.
 - c. Appropriate off-street car parking is provided.
 - d. There would not be any adverse impact upon the character of the neighbourhood which is already characterised by mixed tenures including HMOs, apartment conversions sheltered housing schemes and student housing as outlined in Section 2.
 - e. A private garden space is provided for the larger family unit and communal garden at the rear of the site for the other apartments.
 - f. An existing access to the site exists, this is not proposed to change as part of this application.
 - g. Appropriate provision for refuse storage and collection is included.



View of the rear where extension would be added

5.21 The proposal also accords with Policy DC5.3 as follows:

- a. The accommodation follows the Council's current approved standards;
- b. The site is not located in a tightly-packed residential street where there is no scope for off-street car parking. The proposals provide five off street spaces.
- c. The proposal provides adequate private external amenity space;
- d. The proposal includes satisfactory refuse storage and collection facilities.

Other Material Considerations

5.22 It is respectfully submitted that there are no material considerations which weigh against the grant of planning permission in this case.

6.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 This application seeks full planning permission to enable the renovation and refurbishment of No.8 Birch Polygon to provide five new apartments. A small single storey rear extension is also proposed. All apartments would be of high quality, meeting or in excess of national spaces standards.
- 6.2 In response to matters raised as part of the Council's consideration of the previous application at this site the proposals incorporate a family sized unit thereby removing Officers concerns regarding that issue.
- 6.3 The property has been vacant for a number of years and does not as a result contribute to the area visually or in terms of providing much needed affordable accommodation for local people.
- 6.4 The Council's favourable consideration of this application is therefore requested.