NJLConsulting
Planning+Development

8 Ashbrook Office Park, Longstone Road,
Manchester M22 5LB
T: 0161 498 1050 | **F:** 0870 130 5579
E: info@njlconsulting.co.uk
www.njlconsulting.co.uk

Our Ref: 2017-115
Your Ref: PP-06263410

Planning Technical Support Team
P O Box 532
Town Hall
Manchester
M60 2LA

01 August 2017

Dear Sir/Madam

Unit 2, Abbey House, Cooper Street, Manchester
Submission of Planning Application for Change of Use

We write on behalf of the Romanian Consulate to submit a planning application to change the use of Unit 2, Abbey House from Use Class A3 to Use Class B1, to enable it to operate as part of the Romanian Consulate.

The application seeks permission for:

'Change of Use of Ground Floor from a Café (Use Class A3) to Office (Use Class B1a)'

The application has been submitted via Planning Portal on 01 August 2017 and comprises:

- Application forms and certificates;
- Site Location Plan Reference: OBI-01-000; and
- Site Plan Ref: EN-0-Releveu.

The requisite planning application fee of £385 has been paid on the phone using the Planning Portal reference.

The Proposed Development
The Romanian Consulate plan to occupy the first floor of Abbey House for their Manchester consular office.

The functions of the consular office will consist of a number of different functions, as set out in Article 5 of the 1963 Vienna Convention, including:

a) protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, both individuals and bodies corporate, within the limits permitted by international law;
b) furthering the development of commercial, economic, cultural and scientific relations between the sending State and the receiving State and otherwise promoting friendly relations between them in accordance with the provisions of the present Convention;
c) ascertaining by all lawful means conditions and developments in the commercial, economic, cultural and scientific life of the receiving State, reporting thereon to the Government of the sending State and giving information to persons interested;
d) issuing passports and travel documents to nationals of the sending State, and visas or appropriate documents to persons wishing to travel to the sending State;
e) helping and assisting nationals, both individuals and bodies corporate, of the sending State;

f) acting as notary and civil registrar and in capacities of a similar kind, and performing certain functions of an administrative nature, provided that there is nothing contrary thereto in the laws and regulations of the receiving State;
g) safeguarding the interests of nationals, both individuals and bodies corporate, of the sending State in cases of succession mortis causa in the territory of the receiving State, in accordance with the laws and regulations of the receiving State;
h) safeguarding, within the limits imposed by the laws and regulations of the receiving State, the interests of minors and other persons lacking full capacity who are nationals of the sending State, particularly where any guardianship or trusteeship is required with respect to such persons;
i) subject to the practices and procedures obtaining in the receiving State, representing or arranging appropriate representation for nationals of the sending State before the tribunals and other authorities of the receiving State, for the purpose of obtaining, in accordance with the laws and regulations of the receiving State, provisional measures for the preservation of the rights and interests of these nationals, where, because of absence or any other reason, such nationals are unable at the proper time to assume the defence of their rights and interests;
j) transmitting judicial and extrajudicial documents or executing letters rogatory or commissions to take evidence for the courts of the sending State in accordance with international agreements in force or, in the absence of such international agreements, in any other manner compatible with the laws and regulations of the receiving State;
k) exercising rights of supervision and inspection provided for in the laws and regulations of the sending State in respect of vessels having the nationality of the sending State, and of aircraft registered in that State, and in respect of their crews;
l) extending assistance to vessels and aircraft mentioned in sub-paragraph (k) of this Article and to their crews, taking statements regarding the voyage of a vessel, examining and stamping the ship's papers, and, without prejudice to the powers of the authorities of the receiving State, conducting investigations into any incidents which occurred during the voyage, and settling disputes of any kind between the master, the officers and the seamen in so far as this may be authorized by the laws and regulations of the sending State;
m) performing any other functions entrusted to a consular post by the sending State which are not prohibited by the laws and regulations of the receiving State or to which no objection is taken by the receiving State or which are referred to in the international agreements in force between the sending State and the receiving State.

The consular district will cover the City of Manchester and the Greater Manchester Area, as well as the counties of Cheshire, Cumbria, Lancashire and Merseyside within the North West England, the counties of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and North Yorkshire within the North East of England, Yorkshire and the Humber, the regions of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire within the East Midlands, and the West Midlands. As a rule, the appointments are made in advance and there are limited ad hoc visits for services. The Consulate anticipate in the region of 120 to 240 people a day using consular services, with peak times of the year being the Easter, Summer and prior to Christmas.

In order to provide effective access to the Consulate without affecting other occupiers of the building, they will require a separate access arrangement. The separate access will include a new reception at Unit 3 that will be provide the administrative services for people attending appointments.

This new access will include a reception area, a new staircase and a new lift as well as a new mezzanine level that will be used as a seating area. The planning application to change the use of Unit 3 is to facilitate these works.

The office will be open from 09:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours only consular staff will have access to the building.

There are no external works proposed with this application. A separate advertisement consent application has been submitted for the signage associated with the Consulate.

Site and Surroundings
The site is located within the city centre in an area that is characterised by a mix of retail, office and leisure uses. The ground floor of the Abbey House building contains a number of different uses, including restaurants, cafes and retail units. The upper floors of the building comprise a range of different sized office units.

Planning Policy Context
The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was introduced by the Government in March 2012. It was intended to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, to protect the environment and to promote sustainable growth.

Part of the economic dimension of sustainable development is to secure economic development that is required to create jobs and prosperity within local economies. The Framework states at paragraph 18 that the '*Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth.*' Suggesting that planning should not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Paragraph 21 goes on to highlight that '*Planning policies should recognise and seek to address potential barriers to investment*'. Going on to say that local planning authorities should '*support existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting*' and that '*policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan'*.

The Manchester Core Strategy was adopted in July 2012 and sets out the local planning policies that guide development across Manchester. The development plan is adopted and up-to-date and therefore holds weight in the decision-making process. The document contains a number of policies relating to the control of development within the city. The two policies of relevance to this application are Policies CC1 and T2.

Policy CC1 highlights that the city centre is a '*strategic economic location and focus of employment growth in the City and City Region*' going on to say that the focus for employment growth '*will be in B1a high density offices*'.

The accessibility of developments is covered by Policy T2 which promotes sustainable locations within the city centre. The policy states that developments should be '*easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport*'.

Assessment of the Proposal Against Planning Policy

Office Use
Both the Framework and the Manchester Core Strategy support economic development within the city centre.

The Romanian Consulate has identified Abbey House as their preferred location within Manchester to locate their offices. The Consulate will occupy the first floor of the building as their offices. Changing the use to B1 Office will allow for an improved access to be created to the first floor that is a requirement of the Consulate's operation.
This will mean a vacant unit within the city centre will become occupied and in use. The newly created reception area is complementary to the surrounding uses. Providing an active frontage, with activity throughout the day, will contribute to the streetscene along Cooper Street and generate additional footfall.

The proposed change of use will help to facilitate a number of new jobs associated with the new Consulate and provide new opportunities for local residents. The Consulate has advised that the number of staff at the Consulate General will include seven persons posted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania – the consul general, two consular officers, and four consular employees (two consular clerks and two administrative staff). The Consulate General will also contract up to ten local staff; these numbers may vary depending on the volume of consular services.

Additionally, the Consulate General will contract locally the security and cleaning services, either by hiring local staff or local companies and so will indirectly generate additional jobs within Manchester.

The change of use accords with the economic development principles of Policy CC1 of the Core Strategy and the Framework`.

Accessibility
The site is highly accessible by a range of different modes of transport. Manchester Piccadilly train station is located 0.6 miles (12 minute walk) to the east of the site and provides frequent services across south, east and west Manchester as well as nationally. Manchester Victoria train station is located 0.6 miles to the north of the site and provides frequent services to north Manchester and the north of England.

The nearest Metrolink tram stop is located in St Peter's Square, approximately 200 metres from the site. St Peter's Square tram stop is the main city centre hub for the network, with all routes passing through it.

The nearest bus stops to the site are located in Albert Square, approximately 250 metres from the site. There are a number of bus services from the Square that provide access to all areas of the city. In addition to paid bus services, there is also the free Metroshuttle service that stops at Albert Square. Metroshuttle Route 3 provides a free service to Manchester Piccadilly train station.

The change of use proposed accords with the accessibility aspirations set out in T2 of the Core Strategy.

Conclusion
The information submitted in support of this application demonstrates that the proposals accord with the planning policies set out in the Manchester Core Strategy and the aspirations of the Framework. In line with paragraph 14 of the Framework, the local authority should approve '*development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay*'.

I trust the information submitted is sufficient to validate the application, and, in the absence of any material factors to the contrary, the application should therefore be approved.

Yours faithfully,



Annabel Partridge
Associate Director
On behalf of NJL Consulting