Report

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PLANNING AND
BUILDING CONTROL

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Unit 28, Manchester Fort Shopping Centre

Planning Statement

May 2012

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For and on behalf of GVA Ltd

1. Introduction

1.1 Manchester Fort Shopping Park General Partner Limited is applying for the development of internal mezzanine floorspace within Unit 28 of the Manchester Fort Shopping Park, in order to meet the requirements of a prospective tenant for a presently vacant unit.

1.2 This Statement provides an explanation of the proposed development and the appropriate context for its consideration. In doing so, it provides clear justification for the proposal.

2. The Application Site

2.1 The application relates to Unit 28 of the Manchester Fort Shopping Park, Cheetham Hill Road, Cheetham, Manchester. The unit, which is presently vacant, is identified on the submitted plans. The unit has been vacant since 2009, having previously been occupied by Blacks.

3. Relevant planning history and authorised development

3.1 Manchester Fort Shopping Park was developed pursuant to a series of different planning permissions, granted over a number of years. Below we make reference only to those planning permissions of direct relevance to Unit 28 and the proposed development.

3.2 Planning permission ref. 065265, granted 24th September 2002, allowed for a total of 4,329 sq.m. (46,600 sq.ft.) distributed amongst Units 27, 28 & 29 (as referenced in condition 17 of that permission).

3.3 Planning permission ref. 076135, granted 7th October 2005, varied condition 17 of permission ref. 065265 to 'incorporate additional mezzanine floorspace'. Condition 3 of the permission authorises a total 5,073 sq.m. (54,600 sq.ft.) and refers to an approved set of drawings which identify for Unit 28 a Gross Internal Area of 1,207 sq.m. (13,000 sq.ft.) including 464 sq.m. (5,000 sq.ft.) mezzanine.

3.4 Unit 28 was developed pursuant to planning permission ref. 076135 alongside adjoining units at the Shopping Park. Planning permission ref. 076135 has therefore been lawfully implemented.

3.5 A measured survey of the unit has confirmed that 266 sq m (2,863 sq ft) of mezzanine floorspace has been constructed within Unit 28, pursuant to planning permission ref. 076135.

3.6 This leaves a residual consented, but unconstructed mezzanine of 198.5 sq m (2,137 sq ft) (as authorised by planning permission ref. 076135, which has been implemented). This additional mezzanine floorspace could be constructed under the terms of planning permission ref. 076135.

3.7 Within the terms of planning permission ref. 076135 there is no limitation that removes the ability to introduce additional mezzanine floorspace beyond that authorised. Condition 3 states 'the retail floorspace hereby approved shall not exceed 5,073 sq m'; this does not provide any limitation over additional floorspace beyond that approved.

3.8 Given the terms of Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, up to 199 sq m (2,142 sq ft) additional mezzanine can be constructed within Unit 28, over above the constructed and consented floorspace, without it constituting development and triggering the need for further planning permission.

3.9 Taken together with the consented unconstructed mezzanine, this totals 439 sq m (4,279 sq ft). Added to the existing constructed mezzanine, this would give a total of 663 sq m (7,142 sq ft).

3.10 Therefore, a mezzanine of 663 sq m (7,142 sq ft) could be developed within Unit 28 without the need for planning permission.

4. Proposed Development

4.1 The application proposes the introduction of an internal mezzanine floor within Unit 28. The mezzanine floor would extend to 647 sq m (6,964 sq ft) and would be used for retail (Class A1) purposes, but not for the sale of convenience goods. The development entails internal alteration only, no changes to the external appearance of the unit are proposed.

4.2 As noted above, Unit 28 already comprises 266 sq m (2,863 sq ft) of existing mezzanine floorspace. The prospective tenant requires a mezzanine of a greater scale, of the amount proposed, but removal of the existing mezzanine and replacement with a larger

mezzanine is preferred, as opposed to extending the existing mezzanine. Therefore, prior to implementation of the mezzanine floor hereby applied for, the existing mezzanine would be removed.

5. Planning Considerations

5.1 In the determination of the application, the following matters are of principal relevance:

- the quantum of retail floorspace proposed is less than the quantum that could be delivered within the Unit without the need to secure planning permission. The requirement to seek planning permission is only brought about by the intention to remove the existing mezzanine and replace it, rather than extend the existing mezzanine;
- the use of the proposed mezzanine floorspace will be consistent with the existing and consented mezzanine floorspace, that is for the sale of non-food goods only;
- accordingly, there is no need to justify the proposal against the retail policy considerations within Section 2 of the National Planning Policy Framework, or relevant retail policies of the Manchester UDP / emerging Core Strategy. The proposals would entail less floorspace and no different retail offer than would otherwise be capable of implementation, and therefore it is not appropriate or necessary to consider the sequential approach or matters of retail impact;
- For the same reason, no additional or different impacts on the environment or local highway would arise as a consequence of the development beyond that would arise from the scale of mezzanine floorspace that could otherwise be implemented;
- Comprising internal alterations only, the development does not generate issues of design or external appearance;
- The grant of planning permission will assist in letting a presently vacant unit within Manchester Fort Shopping Park, supporting the continued success of the Park, providing additional choice for the consumer and offering employment opportunities for the people of Manchester. The Park is a major employer within the North Manchester area and performs an important role within the City's retail network, complementing the City and District Centres. By facilitating the removal of an existing long-standing void on the Park and introduction of a new retailer to the Park, the proposal will convey significant economic and social benefits.

- The proposal is therefore consistent with prevailing policies, raises no issues of significance and will convey material benefits.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The proposal is considered to be straightforward and uncontroversial. Considered in the appropriate context, the proposal raises no material issues, is consistent with policy, and would deliver considerable benefit. Accordingly, the application should be determined positively.