'6' PARK PLACE, MANCHESTER
APPLICATION FOR A CHANGE OF USE
DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

The premises are currently vacant and were last used as offices some 6 years ago. Despite being marketed by one of Manchester's leading commercial practices, no viable tenant has been attracted to the premises in that time. The interested party wishes to use the premises for a completely different use hence this application.

Design: There are no proposals to change the building's external appearance other than the provision of handrails to the entrance to facilitate access for ambulant disabled visitors. Internally, some minor alterations are required to suit the proposed use, which will comprise the construction of some stud walls with appropriate new doors.

No signage is envisaged at this time.

Access: The property stands back from the highway approximately 5m at an elevated position of some 835mm and is accessed by a series of steps. To the rear is a roofed-over yard, which is a similar height below floor level of the main building. The business is well served by public transport with a bus stop a short walk away, Victoria Station a short distance away, three car spaces within the demise and on street parking available on Park Place.

Guidance from the planning department states that "where buildings are adapted, provision of access for disabled people will be sought, as stated in UDP Policy DC9.1" In view of this, we have looked at the various issues and would advise as follows:

a) Access into the building – the height of the building above pavement level to the front and rear means that access is not possible for wheelchair users. The provision of a ramp to the front or rear is not viable due to the lack of space (a ramp in excess of 10m plus intermediate landings would be needed). The provision of a platform lift would cost in excess of £14,000 plus builder's work costs, which would render the new business commercially non-viable, perhaps leaving this building empty for a further six years before any suitable tenant could be found.

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Despite this, we feel that the provision of handrails to the front steps would provide suitable assistance for the ambulant disabled and the applicant is prepared to install these.

A door bell will be provided for access into the controlled areas of the building.

Therapy sessions are expected to be by appointment only so any visitor's special requirements can be discussed prior to the visit.

b) The external door leaf is in excess of 800mm wide when open and therefore offers good access. It is solid but would most likely be pinned open during the day, offering a dry, wide lobby to visitors. A new, inner, security-controlled door is proposed and the leaf would be two thirds glazed thereby giving people on either side a clear view. Under most circumstances, the external door will be pinned open offering easy access for all.

c) Once in the building, there are two floors available to the public, which will have a carpet finish so will not form a trip or slip hazard. The internal stairs are existing and fairly shallow with a handrail to one side.

d) A portable induction loop will be provided for the hard of hearing.

e) The internal colour scheme will be such as to provide a contrast between walls and floor and service counter thereby making the point of service conspicuous to those with impaired vision.