Design & Access Statement

Former Ambulance Depot, Gorton

Homes & Communities Agency

April 2014

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1. Introduction

This Design & Access Statement accompanies the outline planning application for residential development at the former Ambulance Depot site in West Gorton. The application is made to Manchester City Council on behalf of the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA). IBI Taylor Young have been appointed as masterplanners and PBA are planning consultants.

All matters apart from access are reserved, however the submission does include an indicative masterplan. This is intended to demonstrate that the number of units applied for can be accommodated comfortably within the site, and to indicate the nature of the place that will be created.

The Design and Access Statement explains how the current proposals have emerged, from analysis of the site and its context, and review of the relevant planning policy and design guidance. It sets out the development proposals and the design concept.

This application is made in parallel to a similar application, also by the HCA, on a smaller site in close proximity: the former All Saints school site at Gorton Lane/Crossley Street. Separate Design & Access Statements have been prepared for each site but the Statements benefit from a common approach to the understanding of relevant context.



The Ambulance Depot site and its wider context

2. Regeneration Context

The development proposals are on the site of the recently closed Ambulance Depot on Belle Vue Street. The HCA acquired the site in 2014. The Agency are now seeking to deliver an outline planning permission, after which they intend to market the site through their Developer Partner Panel. This will ensure that the site continues to make a positive contribution to the wider area. Delivery of new, high quality homes will have significant regeneration benefits.

The site sits within a wider context of regeneration effort in both Gorton, and more widely in East Manchester. This section explains this wider context and the contribution that the development will make to local regeneration.

East Manchester Strategy 2008-2018

In 2001New East Manchester Ltd (NEM) was established as one of the first Urban Regeneration Companies in the UK. NEM prepared a Strategic Regeneration Framework for the East Manchester area, which was expanded in 2004 to include Gorton.

In 2008 the strategy for East Manchester was updated with the revised "East Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework 2008-2018". One of the objectives of this revised strategy is to:

"*Establish "neighbourhoods of choice" that can attract and retain working households recognising that neighbourhoods function best when they contain families and households with a broad mix of incomes. In doing so NEM will promote a neighbourhood offer that encourages working households to live in East Manchester which will demand: safety and security; access to quality public facilities – schools, GPs, and dentists; signature design of buildings and places; quality retail*"

The current proposals for the Ambulance Depot site will make a clear contribution to this objective.

The document recognises that recent housing development in East Manchester have been characterised by pockets of higher density apartments and that the provision of high quality family housing is now a priority in order to produce stable communities and sustainable neighbourhoods (SRF 2008-2018, p.72). This is one of the 'key actions' set out (p.76):

Prioritise Development of High-quality, Owner Occupied Family Housin:
New family housing that can be purchased for home ownership must consist of larger homes in high amenity developments, with private garden space, complemented by a high-quality streetscape and safe, inviting open spaces. An increase in the amount of this form of housing is fundamental to ensuring that East Manchester achieves a significantly higher level of owner occupation and, as a result, a balanced housing mix that is comparable with the offer of neighbouring areas. It will better position the area to retain and significantly improve its ability to attract families. Such new quality housing will also promote and encourage re-investment in and improvement to the existing housing stock.

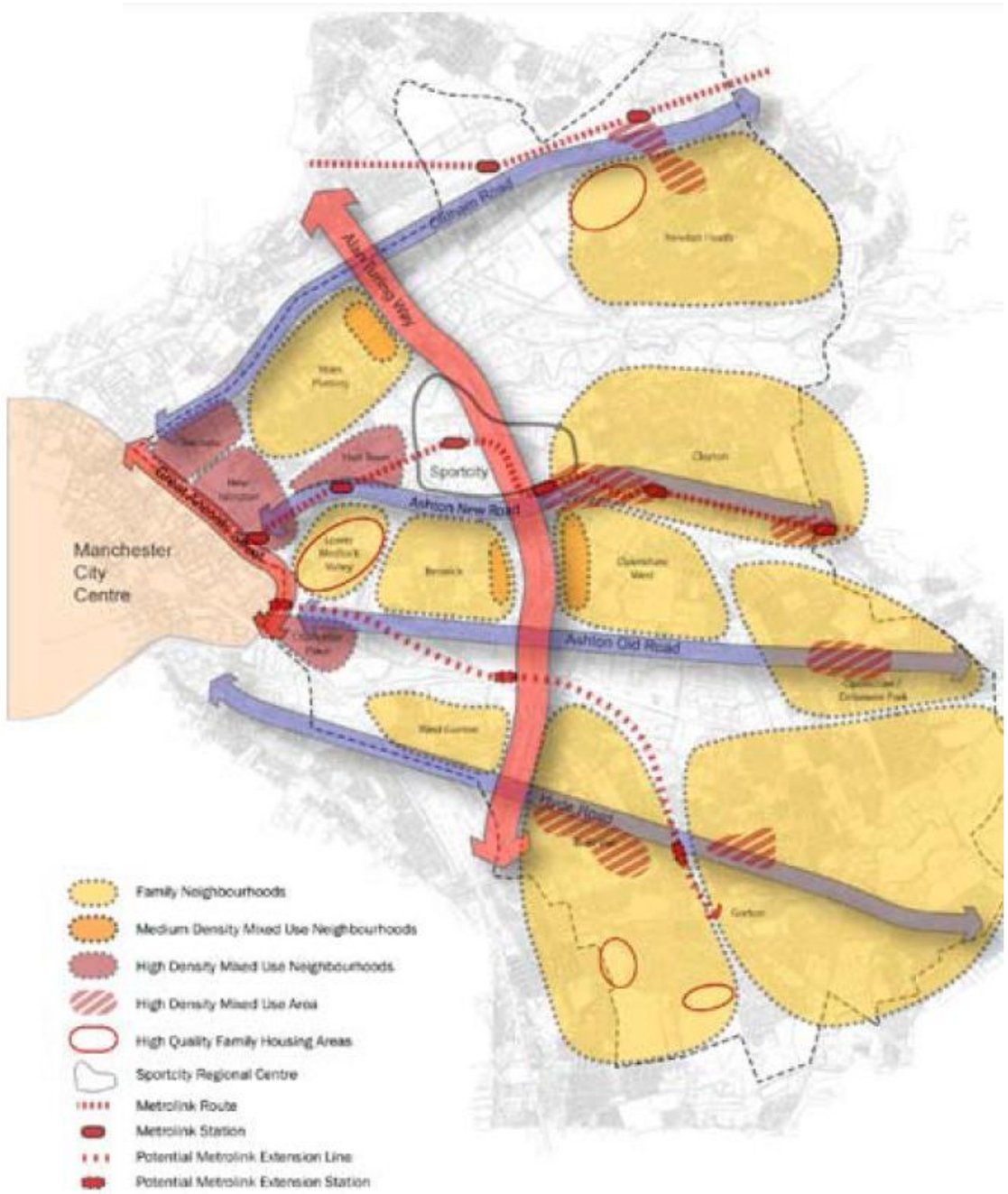
Map 4 (see right) identifies the application site as being within the 'family neighbourhoods' area of the Gorton neighbourhood. These are described as follows:

Family Residential Neighbourhoods are intended to be primarily low-density, family focused in nature, predominantly house-form building types, including detached, semi-detached and townhouses. Apartment development will generally be discouraged in these areas. Existing uses in some Family Residential Areas may not conform to this type of development, but it is intended that over time, this pattern of development will emerge.

A Neighbourhood Development Framework has been developed for the Gorton (Central) neighbourhood, within which the site falls (see plan overleaf). This includes the following priorities:

- *Create new family housing structured on a regular grid street pattern on potential development sites*
- *Explore opportunities for the future use of Belle Vue racetrack, cinema and car auction sites*

Neighbourhood and Places Framework (from East Manchester Strategy 2008-2018)



- *Develop new high-quality family residential areas north of the playing fields east of Crowcroft Park*
- *Improve and maintain existing open spaces to act as a neighbourhood focus*
- *Improve pedestrian connections and neighbourhood relationship with Gore Brook and the Gorton reservoirs through a linked network of neighbourhood parks and open spaces*
- *Undertake extensive landscape improvements along Hyde Road and Pottery Lane*
- *Continue with the planned development of the Gorton Monastery area*
- *Consider a proposal to rename the Belle Vue Railway Station to promote a greater sense of neighbourhood identity*

Of particular relevance to the current application proposals, the framework for the neighbourhood states:

"The vision is that investment in the area will focus on family residential development and the emergence of a more distinctive series of neighbourhoods. New housing in Gorton should make use of existing vacant sites through sensitive infill and seek to extend the street grid pattern where possible to promote greater inter-neighbourhood connectivity." [SRF 2008-18, p119].

The Framework plan also includes an aspiration for a road connection between Crossley Street and Belle Vue Street, improving access to Gorton Park.

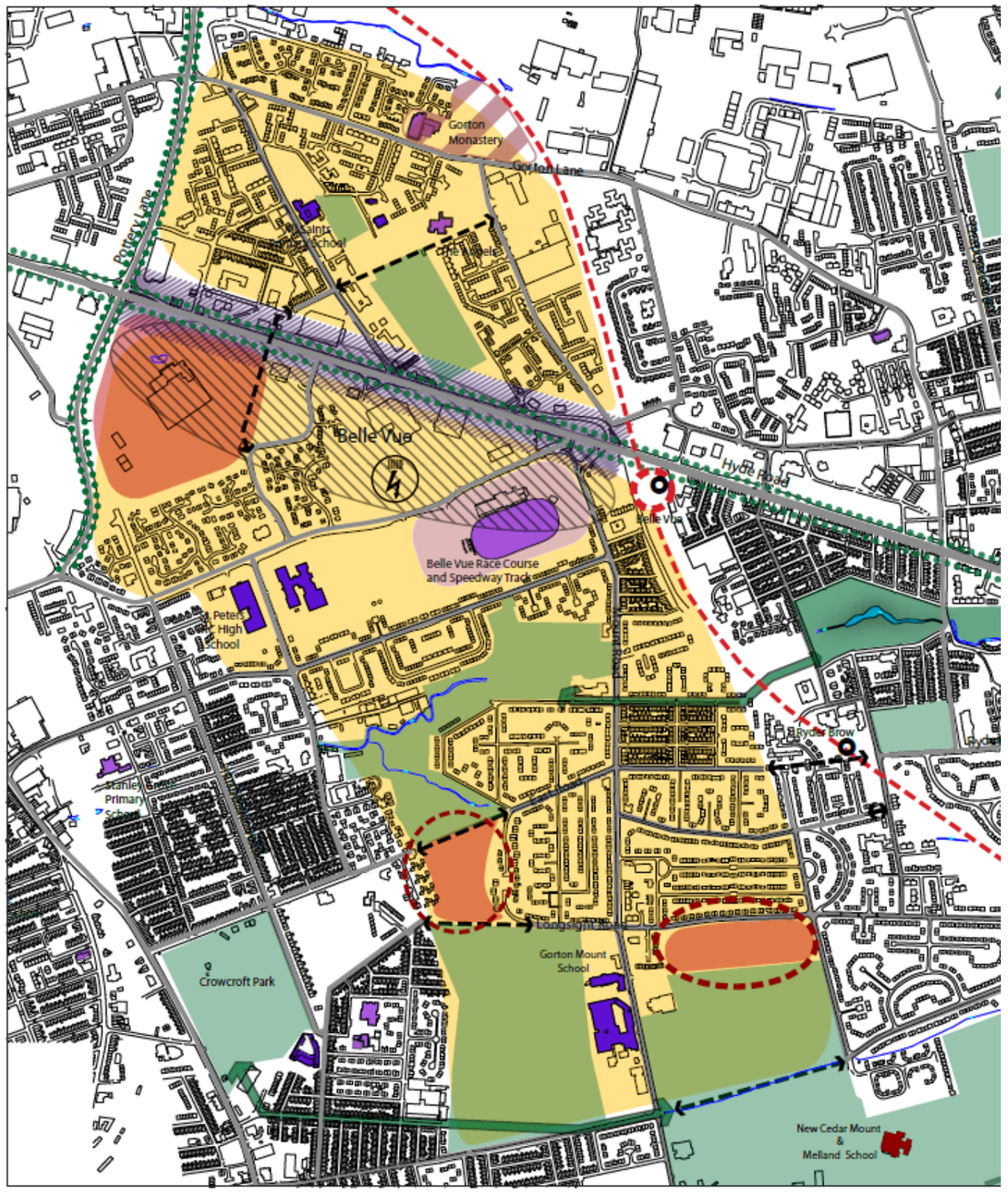
Gorton Monastery and adjacent housing

Significant regeneration and redevelopment has occurred in the Gorton neighbourhood and is ongoing. Opposite the site on Gorton Lane is the iconic Gorton Monastery. The Monastery (a Grade II* listed building, completed in 1872) has been the subject of a £6.5m restoration and extension scheme and is now a premier venue for conferences, weddings and events. A recent planning application by the Monastery seeking to provide an enhanced car park and public realm alongside the building was approved in 2013.

Adjacent to the Monastery is an areas of cleared land that has been the subject of a regeneration initiative led by the HCA, and on which IBI Taylor Young and the Prince's Foundation has also been involved. Planning permission was granted in 2008 for 67 family homes here. A revised scheme is currently prepared by Waites has now received planning permission.

These two initiatives represent significant change in the Gorton neighbourhood, which will result in changing perceptions. The proposed development will both contribute to this and benefit from it.

Gorton (Central) – Neighbourhood Development Framework (from East Manchester Strategy 2008-2018)



3. Design Guidance

The design process for this site has not begun from a blank canvas, instead it build upon a considerable body of site specific work that has already been developed. It also continues to draw upon a wide body of national and local design guidance.

National Design Guidance

The starting point for any residential development in the UK is the now considerable body of best practice design guidance that now exists.

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment in the National Planning Policy Framework. '*Developments should add to the quality of an area and establish a strong sense of place, responding to local character and history while not preventing innovation. Safe, accessible and visually attractive developments should be created that optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development and support local facilities and transport networks'* [NPPF, p15].

A significant body of national guidance now exists to aid implementation of good quality urban design, as outlined in the NPPF. This follows the urban renaissance that was first promoted over ten years ago with the final report of the Urban Task Force and The Urban White Paper (1999). This puts good urban design and placemaking at the heart of the regeneration agenda.

This body of best practice guidance includes:

- 'By Design' (DETR/CABE, 2000) and the supplementary 'By Design – Better Places to Live' (DETR/CABE, 2001);
- the 'Urban Design Compendium' (English Partnerships & Housing Corporation, 2000) and Urban Design Compendium II (2007);
- 'Places, Streets and Movement' (DETR, 1998);
- Manual for Streets and Manual for Streets 2 (2007 and 2010, DfT).
- Car Parking: What Works Where? (English Partnerships, 2006)
- Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future (ODPM, 2003) and 'Creating Successful Neighbourhoods' (CABE, 2005).

All of these documents outline the importance of urban design and place-making and provide practical advice and best practice examples.

Of increased importance recently, has been the concept of creating 'sustainable communities'. This concept is expressed in relevant guidance as "places where people will want to live now and in the future, which involves housing and the local environment in addition to consideration of employment, shops and services and socio-economic factors."

Local Design Guidance

Manchester adopted the **Guide to Development in Manchester SPD** in 2007. This sets a series of design principles, based around six themes:

- Character and context;
- Continuity and enclosure;
- Legibility;
- Ease of movement;
- Diversity;
- Adaptability.

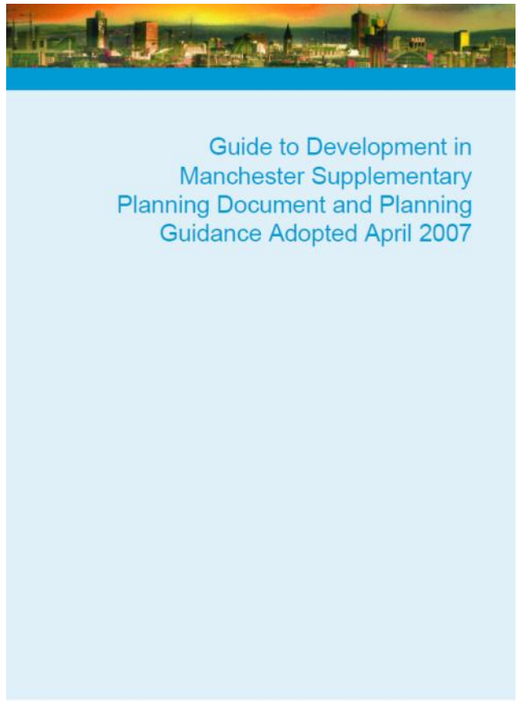
Of particular relevance to the current planning application, the Guide makes the following points:

- Development should help to sustain local neighbourhoods;
- Areas of change should promote a sense of place;
- The design of streets should promote neighbourliness;
- Buildings should front onto streets;
- Buildings should relate well to each other;
- Site boundaries and treatment should contribute to the streetscene;
- Strong corners are important landmarks;
- There should be clear definition between public and private space;
- The impact of car parking areas should be minimised;
- Street trees are encouraged;
- Neighbourhoods should contain a mix of housing;
- Infill developments should enhance the character of the area.

The SPD also includes a section on Environmental Standards. This is address in Section 8 of this document.

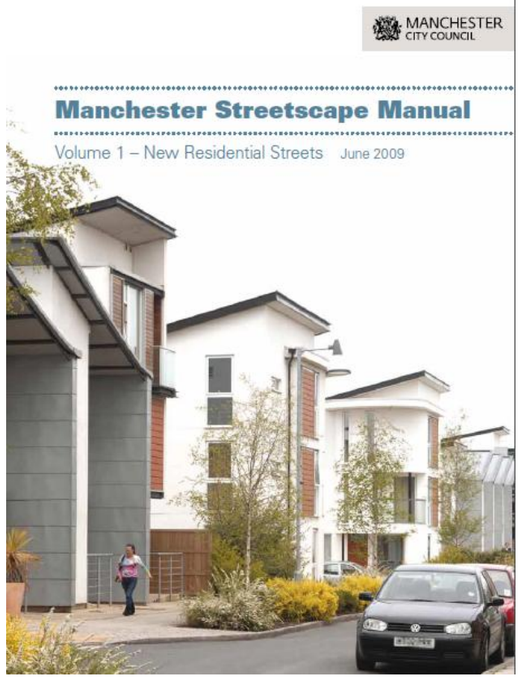
Guidance on accommodating car parking, housing mix and disabled access is also provided. There are no set parking standards for residential development. We have interpreted and responded to this guidance.

Crime prevention is also discussed. A Crime Impact Statement has been submitted with the planning application and our design has addressed its recommendations.



Streetscape Manual

Manchester City Council also published the Manchester Streetscape Manual in 2009. This interprets the advice from the Governments Manual for Streets document to the Manchester context, Setting out how to achieve streets that are for people first, rather than cars and creating streets as 'places'.



4. Design Process

The Brief

HCA's objective is to seek the regeneration of the site by promoting and enabling development. The residential development proposed is fully compliant with national and local planning policies (see the separate Planning Statement) and also fits with MCC's regeneration aspirations for the area (see Section 2: Regeneration Context). Specifically, the promotion of better quality family housing on this site will help to diversify local housing supply and improve quality. The intention of the HCA after obtaining outline planning permission is to dispose of the site to an appropriate residential developer. This developer will then seek a reserved matters approval prior to developing the site.

Wider Context

The site is located on the eastern side of Belle Vue Street, lying between this street and Gorton Park. The site is currently occupied by a large single-storey brick building that occupies the entire site. To the immediate south is a pair of semi-detached post-war houses, in front of a small employment use. To the immediate north are buildings associated with the former All Saints primary school. On the western side of Belle Vue Street is a post-war social housing development. In general, this is an area of transition, it is becoming predominantly residential but with a remnant of employment uses on Belle Vue Street and Hyde Road. To the east of the site is Gorton Park and there are street trees on Belle Vue Street; these provide the basis for a more attractive residential setting.

Local Facilities

The site is well located in terms of community facilities. In addition to Gorton Park, Gorton District Centre is within 10 minutes walk, to the east of the site. There are regular bus services on Belle Vue Street, Gorton Lane and Hyde Road. Ashburys train station is within 10 minutes walk. Other facilities, including schools and places of worship, are also within easy reach (see Figure 4.1).

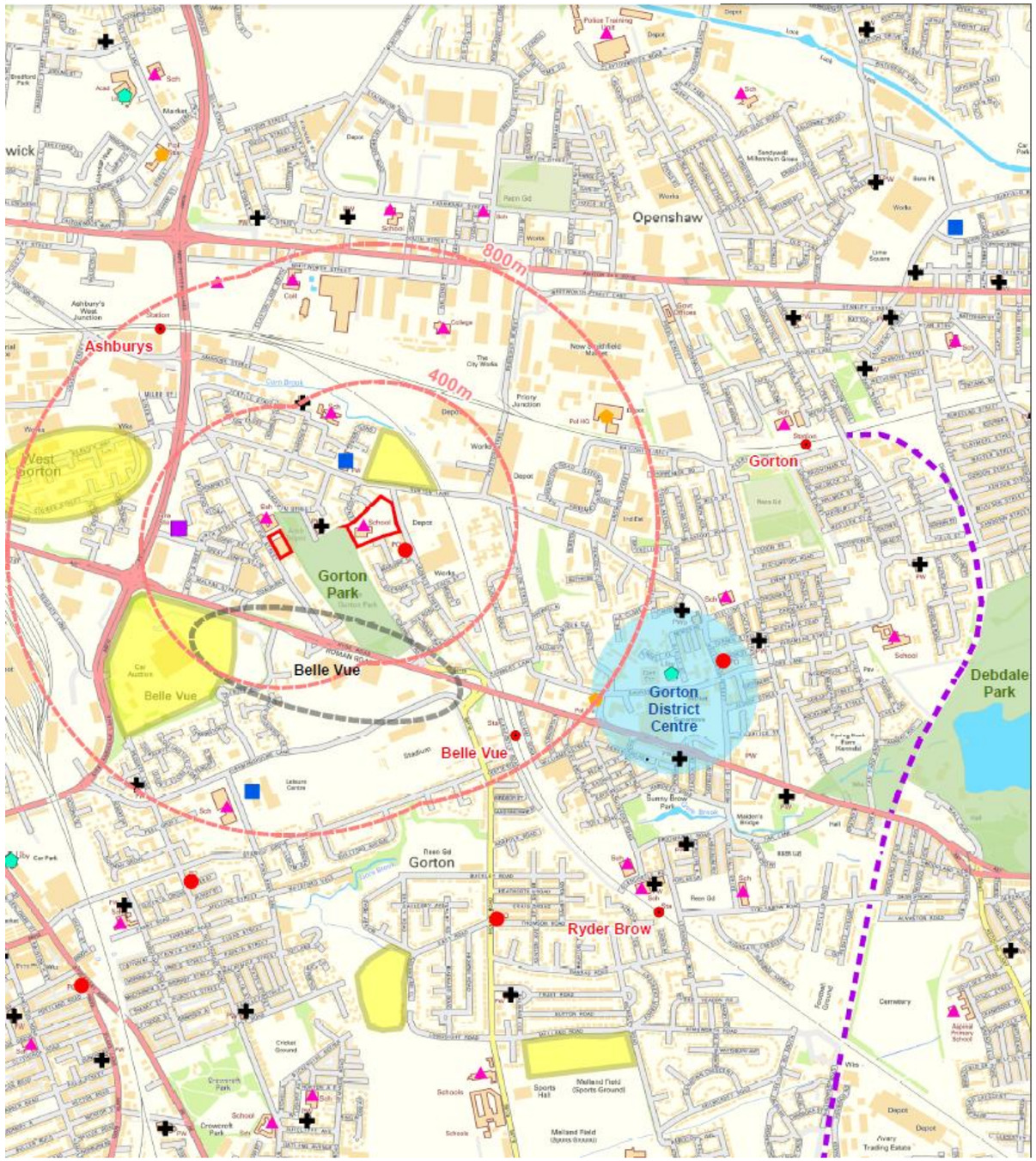


Figure 4.1: Local Facilities

Site Boundaries
Education Facility
Hospital
Leisure Or Sports Centre
Place Of Worship
Police Station
Post Office
Library
Fire Station
Railway Station
Fallowfield Loop Line
Parks
Housing
Gorton District Centre



The application site (left) and adjacent houses



Gorton Park

Design Context

The immediate surroundings offer few vernacular design cues. The surrounding post-war housing is generally of a generic type that does not have a local distinctiveness. Gorton Monastery, a Grade II* listed building is, of course, of great local significance. However, views to the monastery will not be possible from within the site, and the scale and use of the listed building is not appropriate to domestic housing. Instead, the site offers an opportunity for well designed contemporary family housing which can help to raise residential design standards in the local area.



Belle Vue Street



Gorton Lane in the late 19th century

Site Analysis

The site is flat and almost wholly occupied by the brick depot building, which will be cleared. The building line is currently set around 5m from the pavement edge, which is consistent with residential properties next door. Gorton Park adjoins the site to the rear. There are no trees on the site or other features of note. The site is a regular rectangular shape.

Constraints

A number of supporting studies have been undertaken to fully understand the site and inform the design, these include the following:

- Ecology
- Archaeology
- Phase 1 Ground Contamination
- Utilities

A summary Constraints Plan is provided on the following page. The indicative masterplan (see page 10) has addressed all of the above issues and the resulting scheme is reflected within the submitted outline planning application proposals.

Involvement

The design process has involved a meeting with MCC planning officers and ongoing liaison with the case officer. This process has also included comments from MCC Highways. The submitted scheme responds positively to these discussions.

Design Concept

The design concept for the site has been to deliver the aspirations for the site whilst responding to site conditions and responding positively to the opportunities of the site. The indicative layout is built around the following concepts:

- Providing a strong street frontage to Belle Vue Street
- Maximising the capacity of the site to deliver family housing by introducing a perpendicular street
- Using both this courtyard housing form and the proximity of Gorton Park to provide an attractive setting for family housing
- Providing the potential for a new gated pedestrian access to the park from the site
- Extending the parkland feel into the site providing private gardens with tree planting that will benefit the public realm
- Ensuring that the carriageway allows servicing by refuse vehicles and that the new street can be adopted.
- Incorporating an appropriate level of car parking and providing this in-curtilage in a form that does not overly dominate the streetscene



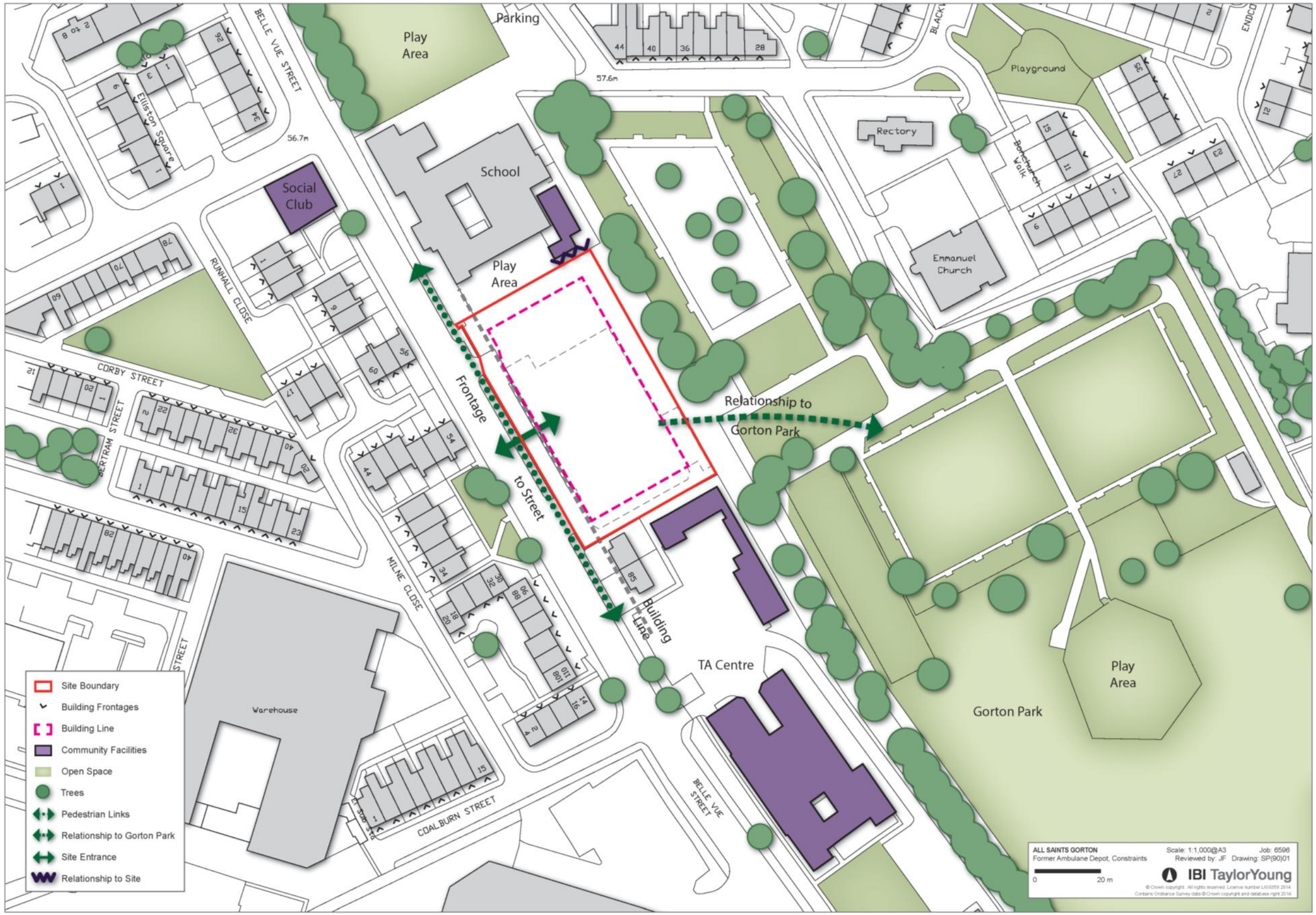


Example of a park entrance and setting on a residential street (Didsbury)



Above: the emerging design framework for the site – creating an appropriate block form and movement structure; establishing a green link to Gorton Park; and providing a strong frontage with an integrated car parking strategy.

Summary Constraints Plan



Indicative Masterplan



5. Development Proposals

Use

The application is for residential (use class C3), with associated landscaping and infrastructure.

Amount

This outline application is for 14 dwellings. The indicative masterplan illustrates 14 dwellings on the site. The housing mix will be agreed at reserved matters stage. For information, the indicative masterplan delivers the following mix;

2-bed terrace	6	43%
3-bed semi-detached	8	57%

Scale

The properties will all be of a domestic scale: up to two residential storeys.

Layout

The layout is a reserved matter but an indicative masterplan has been provided. The indicative masterplan shows the 14 dwellings as four pairs of semi-detached units on Belle Vue Street and two terraces, each of three units on the new cul-de-sac.

Landscaping

Landscaping is a reserved matter but the indicative masterplan shows how this can be provided. Planting will be within private gardens but trees planted here will have a positive effect on the surrounding public realm, especially alongside the new cul-de-sac.

Access

Vehicle access and pedestrian access to the site will be taken from a new junction on Belle Vue Street. The road layout has been shared with MCC Highways and has responded fully to their comments. The properties on Belle Vue Street will be accessed directly from this road. Refuse vehicles swept path analysis has been undertaken and confirms that suitable access can be provide. The layout also accommodates potential through pedestrian access to Gorton Park.

Appearance

Appearance is a reserved matter and is not covered by this outline application. Nonetheless, we expect high quality and well designed family housing on this site.

Security

A Crime Impact Statement has been provided by GM Police. Security has been a key factor in the design of the indicative masterplan and should remain so at reserved matters design stage, when the recommendations of the Crime Impact Statement should be addressed.

Indicative Masterplan – Design Comments

The indicative masterplan provides one example of how the site could be developed and demonstrates that 14 dwellings can be comfortably accommodated on the site. In relation to this indicative masterplan please note the following:

Density and mix – the 14 units proposed represents a site density of 37.5 dwellings per hectare. This is relatively low for an urban site of this nature and is lower than surrounding existing housing areas, and recently approved planning applications in the vicinity. This is an appropriate density to provide the family housing envisaged.

The mix predominantly comprises semi-detached units but includes a proportion of terraces in order to provide wider choice. The indicative masterplan shows two terraces, each of just 3 units. This is partially a reflection of the surrounding housing character, which includes terraces of between 3 and 12 units.

Car parking - two parking spaces are provided for all of the semi-detached units and one space for all of the terraced units. All of these spaces are provided on-plot.

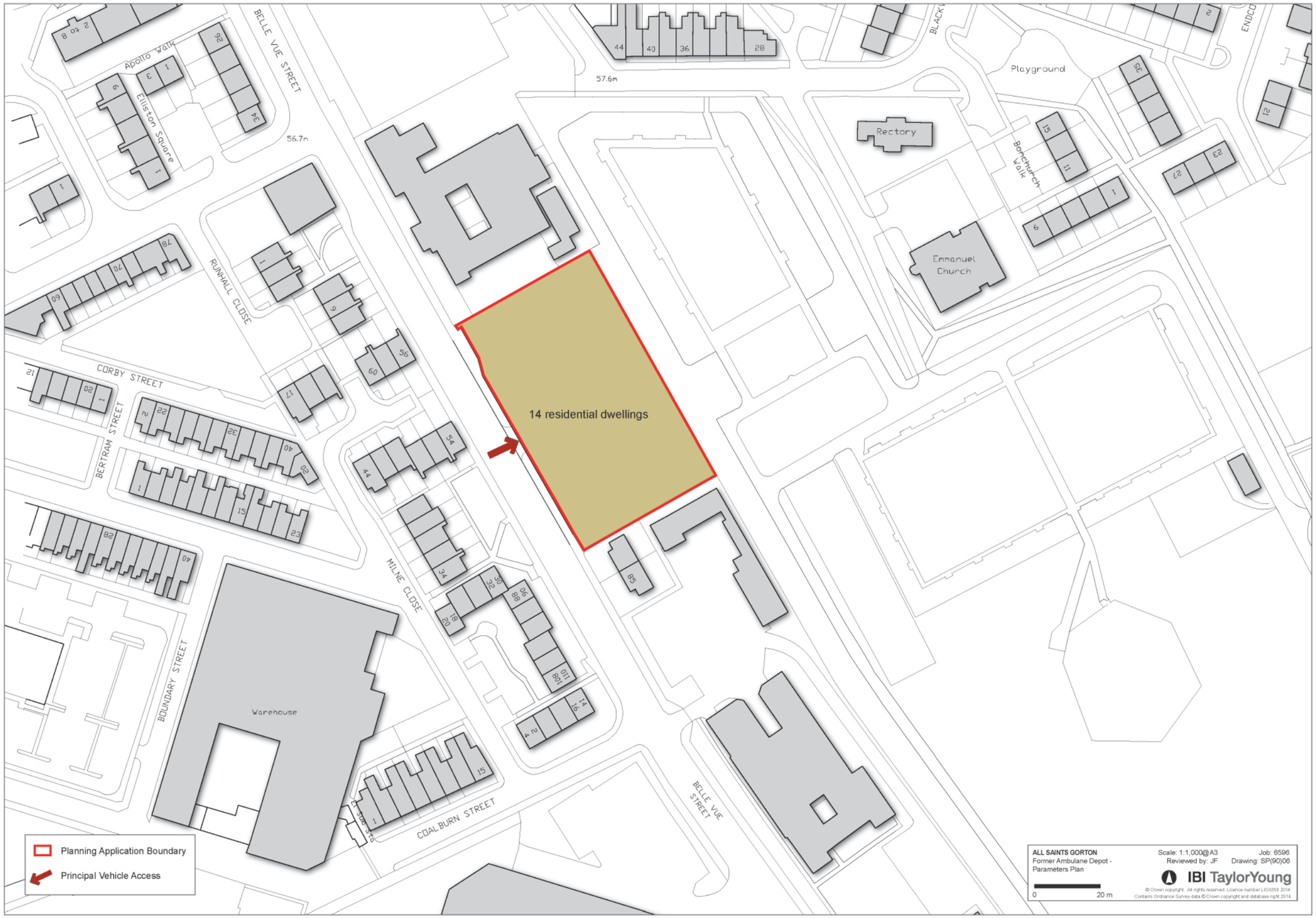
All of the semi-detached spaces are provided behind the building line at the side of units. Space is not available at the side of the terraced units due to a utility easement that passes to the east of the houses. In the event that this needs to be excavated a useable parking space must be provided. To the west of the terraces the position of the semi-detached units, and amenity distances from them, limit the position of the terraces and their spaces. Consequently each terrace has a parking space provided in front of each property. These spaces only occupy approximately 50% of the frontage. This provides ample space for landscaping, potentially including a front lawn or planting, which would mitigate the impact of parking on the streetscene. This detail would be progressed and agreed at reserved matters stage. The indicative masterplan ensures that the parking strategy will maintain an attractive street environment.

Corner Units – the indicative masterplan includes carefully designed corner units which provide activity and surveillance to the streetscene on both sides. On these corner units the rear garden area is slightly smaller than on other units but this is mitigated by the additional useable green space provided to the front and side of these units.

The car parking arrangement to these corner units provides spaces adjacent to the rear gardens. There will be a secure boundary to the street and around the parking space. This could be a hit-and-miss timber board fence between the parking space and the property and the parking space, in order to provide visibility, and with a lockable gate to provide direct access to the property via the garden. This is a commonly used parking arrangement. The exact arrangement would need to be designed and approved at reserved matters stage.

Boundary treatments to junction – the boundary treatment to the new access road will need to ensure that visibility splays are maintained. This would typically be achieved by providing a low brick wall (under 600mm) or railings here. All boundary treatments would be designed and agreed at reserved matters stage.

Parameters Plan



6. Energy Standards Statement

The Guide to Development in Manchester SPD requires applicants to demonstrate energy efficiency . This can be cross-referenced to policies EN4 to EN9 of the Core Strategy for Manchester.

Policy EN6 requires an Energy Statement to be submitted as part of the Design & Access Statement, for schemes of more than 10 residential units. This section provides this Statement. As the current application is outline, and reserves the detailed design of houses, many of the points covered by the environmental policies cannot be addressed at this point. Instead, reserved matters applications will need to respond to these points.

Policy EN6 Response

Policy EN6 requires developments to meet the targets set out in Tables 12.1 of the Policy unless these are demonstrated as not being viable.

Table 12.1 refers to “network development areas”, “electricity intense buildings” and “micro-generation areas”. We believe that the current application falls into the category of a “**micro-generation area**”, i.e. “*locations where lower densities and a fragmented mix of uses mean that only building scale solutions are practical*”.

In this instance Target 3 of Table 12.1 applies. This means the houses proposed will need to meet a minimum requirement of **15% above Part L of the 2010 Building Regulations**. This will need to be applied at the reserved matters stage of this scheme.

Appendix A of the Guide to Development in Manchester provides guidance on how this target should be met, and how the energy statement should be structured to respond to this. This requires detailed calculations of energy requirements and emissions so it must wait until the architecture of the individual houses is being determined, and cannot be completed at this outline stage when these matters are reserved.

At the reserved matters stage the methodology set out in Appendix A should be followed within a new Energy Statement. This comprises the following stages:

A. Set out the baseline information
B. Calculate the total energy demand of the completed development
C. Calculate the equivalent annual carbon emissions from the completed development
D. Apply the appropriate carbon emissions reduction target
E. Apply the energy hierarchy
F. Consider all appropriate low carbon, renewable and/or decentralised energy technologies
G. assessment of least cost technology option

Response to other Environment Policies

Policy EN4 refers to the **low and zero carbon development** and the energy hierarchy. This will be dealt with in the Energy Statement at reserved matters stage, as described above.

Policy EN5 expects decentralised energy infrastructure in identified strategic locations. The application site does not fall into any of the categories of strategic locations listed in the policy. The development site lies outside of the Strategic Housing Area, as defined in Figure 9.1 of the Core Strategy.

Policy EN7 provides design considerations for any low or zero decentralised energy schemes that may be provided. If the analysis at reserved matters stages means that this infrastructure is provided then these considerations must also be followed at this stage.

Policy EN8 covers adaptation to climate change. The site is smaller than 1 hectare, it is not close to any watercourse and does not require a flood risk assessment. The site is currently all hard standing. The introduction of private gardens will improve surface water run-off attenuation.

Policy EN9 is concerned with Green Infrastructure. The outline proposals respond positively by allowing the potential of a new pedestrian access to Gorton Park through the site from Belle Vue Street. This should be explored further at reserved matters stage.

7. Summary

Building for Life 12 Initial Assessment

The table below summarises the content of this Statement in the form of the Building for Life 12 assessment method. This is assessed on the basis of the Indicative Masterplan. At reserved matters stage, detailed designs will be expected to retain and positively develop the points described below.

Building for Life 12 Assessment Criteria	Response	R/A/G
1 Connections Does the scheme integrate into its surroundings by reinforcing existing connections and creating new ones; whilst also respecting existing buildings and land uses along the boundaries of the development site?	• The scheme reinforces the primary frontage of Belle Vue Street and introduces a new secondary street. Local connectivity is increased by proposing using this street to access a new pedestrian access to Gorton Park.	
2 Facilities and services Does the development provide (or is it close to) community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, parks, play areas, pubs or cafes?	• Yes, there are many community facilities within walking distance, including Gorton district centre (see page 7 of this Statement).	
3 Public transport Does the scheme have good access to public transport to help reduce car dependency?	• Belle Vue Street, Hyde Road and Gorton Lane are bus routes and Ashburys train station is within 10 minutes walk.	
4 Meeting local housing requirements Does the development have a mix of housing types and tenures that suit local requirements?	• Yes, the layout creates a mix of 2 and 3 bed homes, with the emphasis on creating good quality family housing.	
5 Character Does the scheme create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character?	• The site is small but the scheme responds to the character derived from Gorton Park and the street trees on Belle Vue Street. The arrangement of houses allows a new sense of place to be achieved around the central courtyard-type space.	
6 Working with the site and its context Does the scheme take advantage of existing topography, landscape features (including water courses), wildlife habitats, existing buildings, site orientation and microclimates?	• The site is relatively flat and with few natural features of note. However, the scheme maximises the opportunity of Gorton Park in the orientation of dwellings and the potential to create a new pedestrian entrance.	
7 Creating well defined streets and spaces Are buildings designed and positioned with landscaping to define and enhance streets and spaces and are buildings designed to turn street corners well?	• The indicative masterplan shows a strong frontage to Belle Vue Street, that responds to the building line established by the existing houses on the adjacent site. The new cul-de-sac is positively addressed by new houses that face the street.	
8 Easy to find your way around Is the scheme designed to make it easy to find your way around?	• The street layout is an easily understood T-shape. The site is small enough to be easily navigated.	
9 Streets for all Are streets designed in a way that encourage low vehicle speeds and allow them to function as social spaces?	• The new street is short and is not a through vehicular route so vehicle speeds will not be a problem. The arrangement of this street and the houses facing it enables it to become a social space for these residents.	
10 Car parking Is resident and visitor parking sufficient and well integrated so that it does not dominate the street?	• Car parking (generally 2 spaces per dwelling) is provided in-plot and off-street for all houses. This has been accommodated in a format that makes use of the space between houses to avoid over dominance of car parking on the streetscene.	
11 Public and private spaces Will public and private spaces be clearly defined and designed to be attractive, well managed and safe?	• The site has been designed to clearly provide private land associated with dwellings and adoptable roads, thereby ensuring easily understood management responsibilities. This has been discussed with MCC Planning and MCC Highways and the indicative masterplan responds to their advice on road adoption.	
12 External storage and amenity space Is there adequate external storage space for bins and recycling as well as vehicles and cycles	• The housing layout provides sufficient space for recycled waste storage. The road layout has been designed to ensure that refuse vehicles can access all properties and this has been tested through swept path analysis.	