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LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT USE – JUSTIFICATION

2025 SEPTEMBER

PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF EXISTING WAREHOUSE BUILDING FROM B2 (GENERAL INDUSTRIAL) TO F1(F) (PUBLIC WORSHIP OR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION)

MIRAGE HOUSE, 25-27 ST CHADS STREET, MANCHESTER, M8 8QA

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This statement is submitted in support of the planning application to convert **Mirage House** from its current lawful use (B2 – General Industrial) to **F1(f) – Place of Worship or Religious Instruction**.
It addresses Manchester City Council's validation requirement to provide **justification for the loss of employment land** and explains why the change of use is both reasonable and policy-compliant.



2. Background and Site Context

- The property is a **mid-20th century warehouse**, historically used for **textile storage and packaging**.
- Planning history shows a 1997 approval for **B2 use**, but since then industrial activity has **declined significantly** across the Strangeways area.
- The building has been **vacant and underutilised in recent years**, reflecting the wider trend of industrial relocation to more modern estates on the city fringe.
- The site lies in the **Strangeways commercial district**, close to Cheetham Hill Road, characterised today by a **mix of wholesale, cultural, and faith-based uses** rather than traditional manufacturing.



3. Employment Land Policy Context

3.1. Manchester Core Strategy (2012)

- **Policy EC1 (Employment Land):** protects employment sites unless there is no reasonable prospect of continued employment use.
- **Policy SP1 & DM1:** support regeneration, inclusive communities, and sustainable re-use of existing buildings.

3.2. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023)

- Paragraph 120 encourages **re-use of underutilised land and buildings** where they no longer serve their original purpose.
- Paragraph 93 supports the development of **social and cultural facilities**, including places of worship.

3.3. Places for Everyone Plan (2024)

- Encourages **flexible land use**, particularly in inner-urban areas, to reflect changing needs and support community resilience.

4. Evidence for Lack of Ongoing Employment Demand

- **Functional Obsolescence:** The warehouse is outdated, lacking the floor-to-ceiling heights, servicing, and energy standards demanded by modern industrial operators.
- **Vacancy:** The building has been vacant for significant periods, with no active industrial tenant in place.
- **Market Shift:** Employment floorspace in central Manchester has increasingly shifted to **modern estates at the edge of the city**, with Strangeways evolving towards wholesale and community uses.
- **Planning History:** The last employment-related approval dates back to **1997**, highlighting the absence of recent industrial investment.
- **Site Constraints:** Limited yard space and constrained servicing access mean the site is not attractive for large-scale industrial or distribution operators.

5. Community and Regeneration Benefits of the Proposed

- **Social Infrastructure:** The proposal provides a **multi-generational place of worship** with facilities for children, teenagers, and youth groups.
- **Community Cohesion:** The development will strengthen social and cultural life in the Cheetham Hill/Strangeways area, consistent with **Core Strategy Policy C1**.
- **Regeneration:** The scheme brings an **empty building back into active use**, contributing to the vitality of the area.
- **Sustainable Re-use:** Conversion avoids demolition and new build, thereby reducing environmental impact and promoting sustainable development.
- **Complementarity:** The proposed use is consistent with the **existing cluster of religious, cultural, and wholesale uses** in the area.

6. Conclusion

- The site has **no realistic prospect of continued employment use**, given its functional obsolescence, vacancy, and location within an area no longer favoured for B2 industry.
- The proposal delivers **clear public benefits**, including community cohesion, regeneration, and sustainable re-use of existing buildings.
- The change of use therefore accords with the **NPPF (paras 93 & 120)**, the **Manchester Core Strategy (Policies EC1, SP1, DM1, C1)**, and the **Places for Everyone Plan (JP-S1, JP-S4)**.

On balance, the proposal represents an appropriate, sustainable, and beneficial re-use of the site, and the loss of employment land is fully justified.

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THIS CONCLUDES THE DOCUMENT