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Manchester City Council
(submitted online via Planning Portal)

Dear Sir / Madam,

Planning Application for a Single Temporary Wind Turbine in Association with the Christmas Ice Rink at Cathedral Gardens, Corporation Street, Manchester, M4 3BG

This full planning application is submitted on behalf of Octopus Energy Group in respect of a “Temporary permission (1st October – 31st January) for the erection of a single wind turbine with a maximum tip height of up to 21m at Skate Manchester temporary ice rink” at Cathedral Gardens, Corporation Street, Manchester, M4 3BG.

The temporary wind turbine will be located within the ice rink and provide a source of sustainable power to this key winter attraction. It is estimated that the 15kW turbine will generate 13,000kWh of power over the four month period.

This application is supported by the following documents:

- This covering letter
- Site Location Plan (MBW001, Rev A)
- Site Layout Plan (MBW002, Rev A)
- BW10 Elevation Plan

To assist your understanding and review of the proposal, this letter provides an outline of:

- Site Description and Context;
- Proposed Development;
- Key Planning Policy Context;
- Assessment; and
- Conclusion.

Site Description and Context

This planning application seeks temporary planning permission for the installation of a 15kW wind turbine to support the operation of the Skate Manchester Ice Rink. The Ice Rink will be located within Cathedral Gardens, a key public open space in Manchester city centre.

The turbine will be positioned within the outdoor section of the ice rink in the 'feature' area, which has previously been occupied by a tall Christmas tree.

Cathedral Gardens is bounded by Corporation Street to the east and Fennel Street to the south, with Todd Street and Cathedral Street providing further access points from the north-east and south. The site is well-connected by public transport, located immediately adjacent to Exchange Square Metrolink station and within walking distance of Manchester Victoria Railway Station, making it a highly accessible city centre destination for residents, workers, and visitors.

The Gardens are located within the Cathedral Conservation Area and prominent heritage assets surround the Gardens including:

- The Triangle (Grade II), a former Corn and Produce Exchange building now housing retail and leisure uses, located directly south of the proposed turbine site;
- Manchester Cathedral (Cathedral Church of St Mary, St Denys and St George) – (Grade I) located south-west of the site;
- Chetham's School of Music and Library (Grade II), situated just north of the Gardens, across Long Millgate.

Immediately fronting the site is the Urbis building, housing the National Football Museum, a striking contemporary building that contributes to the area's civic and cultural identity. The Gardens themselves are a popular location for public events, seasonal attractions, and informal recreation, offering a rare combination of green space and civic function in the heart of the city.

This central, high-profile location provides an ideal setting for the Ice Rink and proposed wind turbine, allowing it to contribute in a functional and fun way to the Ice Rink development, and acting as a symbol to the city's commitment to sustainability. The temporary turbine will be sensitively integrated into the festive event infrastructure, complementing the vibrancy of the site while avoiding harm to nearby heritage assets or the character of the conservation area.

Proposed Development

The proposal is for a 15kW wind turbine which will generate approximately 13,000 kWh of green, sustainable energy which will be used to power the tourist attraction.

The proposed wind turbine consists of four main components:

- a rotor (a hub and three blades);
- a nacelle (containing a generator) to which the rotor is mounted;
- a tower; and
- a mobile foundation.

The key maximum parameters of the turbine are set out below:

- Hub Height – 15m
- Rotor diameter – 10.7m
- Maximum height to blade tip – 20.35m
- Number of blades – 3

The turbine will be a colourful design with a purple tower and pink blades. The tower of the turbine will also be adorned with Christmas decorations.

The foundation site on the ground level and does not require any excavation. It is stabilized with 12 ballast blocks. The Ice rink structure will be constructed on a raised platform above the foundation and ballast and will not be visible to the public.

The mobile nature of the turbine means that it can be erected and derigged in a single day without any permanent development being required. Permission is requested for the 4 month period that the ice rink is constructed, operational and demobilized and for this 25/26 season only. The impact of the proposal is therefore temporary and reversible.

Key Planning Policy Context

The following section provides an overview of the relevant planning policy framework relating to the application proposal. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, this application should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The statutory Development Plans comprises:

- Manchester's Core Strategy 2012-2027 (updated in 2024) (Core Strategy)
- Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2022-2039 ('PfE')
- Extant (remaining) Unitary Development Plan policies

Material planning considerations include:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (adopted in 2007)

Statutory Development Plans

1. Manchester's Core Strategy 2012-2027

The adopted development plan comprises Manchester's Core Strategy, adopted in July 2012. The proposal map shows that the site is located within the:

- The Regional Centre
- City Centre
- Cathedral Conservation Area

The following policies contained within the Core Strategy are considered relevant and informative for the proposed development:

- Policy SP1 Spatial Principles
- Policy CC1 Primary Economic Development Focus: City Centre and Fringe
- Policy CC4 Visitors Tourism, Culture and Leisure
- Policy CC9 Design and Heritage
- Policy C10 (Leisure and Evening Economy)
- Policy EC3 Regional Centre
- Policy EN1 Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
- Policy EN 3 Heritage
- Policy EN 4 Reducing CO2 Emissions by Enabling Low and Zero Carbon Development
- Policy EN 8 Adaption to Climate Change
- Policy EN15: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Policy DM 1 Development Management

2. Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2022 to 2039 (PfE)

The proposed development is not located within a specific policy area, however, the following policies are considered relevant and informative to the proposed development:

- Policy JP-S1: Sustainable Development
- Policy JP-S2: Carbon and Energy
- Policy JP-S6: Resource Efficiency
- Policy JP-P1 Sustainable Places
- Policy JP-P2: Heritage
- Policy JP-C5: Streets for All

Assessment

Principle of Development

The proposed development involves the temporary installation of a 20.35m wind turbine to provide green, renewable power to the seasonal Ice Rink in Cathedral Gardens, Manchester city centre. The principle of this development is strongly supported by national and local planning policy objectives relating to sustainability, climate action, and the promotion of vibrant city centre environments.

The turbine will directly power the ice rink venue using renewable electricity, reducing the carbon footprint of the event by an estimated 3.29 tonnes of carbon compared to diesel generators. This aligns with both the Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25 and overarching policy ambitions to become a zero-carbon city by 2038.

Manchester's city centre is a key destination for events, tourism, and seasonal attractions, all of which contribute to the local economy, footfall, and vibrancy of the urban core. The Ice Rink at Cathedral Gardens is a popular, recurring event that brings both economic and social benefits to the city and the wind turbine will become a distinctive new feature of the event, especially with eye catching Christmas decorations.

The Core Strategy Policy CC1 (Primary Economic Development Focus) supports a wide range of uses in the city centre, including tourism and temporary events. Policy CC4 (Visitors Tourism, Culture and

Leisure) aims to support existing visitor attractions in reaching their potential. The PfE Policy JP-S6 (Resource Efficiency), JP-P1 (Sustainable Places) and JP-S2 (Carbon and Energy) also support new development connecting to low or zero carbon energy sources.

Although temporary, the turbine fully embraces these principles. The turbine not only reduces the reliance on grid electricity but also serves as a visible symbol of clean energy use in a highly frequented public space—helping to normalise and promote sustainable behaviour among residents and visitors.

Access

The site is located within Cathedral Gardens next to the National Football Museum. There is established vehicle access to the site from Corporation Street or Cathedral Street.

Access to Cathedral Gardens for the construction of the temporary wind turbine will be carefully managed to ensure minimal disruption to pedestrian movement, public safety, and the surrounding highway network.

The construction and installation phase is expected to be short in duration and low in intensity, involving a limited number of vehicle movements, specifically:

- 1 x standard articulated lorry for turbine components
- 1 x 40ft flatbed lorry for the base and associated infrastructure
- 1 x 40-ton crane for vertical installation
- 1 x cherry picker for assembly and safety checks

There will be no long-term road closures, no significant increase in traffic levels, and no excavation or heavy groundwork required. Upon completion of the installation, the site will be immediately cleared of plant and materials, and form part of the Ice Rink development until the public realm is reinstated to its original condition after four months.

The proposal is fully compliant with Manchester Core Strategy Policy DM1 (Development Management) and with Places for Everyone policies JP-P1 (Sustainable Places) and JP-C5 (Streets for All), ensuring that pedestrian safety, sustainable transport, and the functionality of the public realm are preserved throughout the brief construction phase.

Visual Impact

The proposed 20.35m high temporary wind turbine, will introduce a vertical element as part of the Ice Rink development, however it will not surpass the ridge line of the adjacent Urbis building which stands at 35m at its highest point. The turbine will therefore be viewed against the back drop of the Urbis when viewed from the surrounding locality and it will not unduly dominate the skyline.

While the turbine introduces a new vertical element into the landscape, its slender profile and clean modern aesthetic will complement the diverse architectural background of Cathedral Gardens. Surrounded by a blend of contemporary structures and listed building, the turbine will create a symbolic link between heritage and innovation – a visual representation of Manchester’s commitment to sustainability and green energy leadership.

The temporary nature of the installation ensures that any visual change is reversible and limited in duration. In the context of the festive period – when Cathedral Gardens hosts a vibrant, temporary

transformation – the turbine will enhance the overall spectacle, acting as a positive landmark. Its motion and presence can contribute to the seasonal atmosphere, reinforcing the city's image as both environmentally responsible and culturally dynamic.

The proposal aligns strongly with Manchester Core Strategy's emphasis on sustainability, climate change mitigation and high quality design, Policy EN4 (Reducing CO2 emissions through sustainable energy use), Policy SP1 (Spatial Principles) and Policy EN1/EN3 (Design and Heritage.). The proposal is also consistent with the PfE plan's broader ambition to promote renewable energy projects, Policy JP-S1 (Sustainable Development), Policy JP-S2 (Carbon and Energy), and Policy JP-P1 (Sustainable Places).

Heritage

The proposed wind turbine would be installed in Cathedral Gardens Conservation area and adjacent to a number of heritage assets, including the Triangle (Grade II), Cathedral Church of St Mary (Grade I) and Cheltham's School of Music (Grade II).

The Cathedral Gardens Conservation Area is defined by a unique interplay between historic architecture, open green space, and public activity. It forms a cultural and civic hub at the heart of Manchester, with a rich layering of architectural styles that reflect the city's evolution. The area's significance lies not only in its historic buildings but also in the visual and spatial relationships between these structures and the surrounding public realm.

The temporary wind turbine is proposed within this active, high-profile context, but its impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area and surrounding heritage assets is considered to be limited, carefully controlled, and ultimately acceptable.

The wind turbine would be temporary and reversible in nature. The installation is strictly time-limited to four months and involves no permanent alteration to land, structures, or vistas. Once removed, the area will fully revert to its existing condition.

The turbine is sympathetically sited within a festive Ice Rink development. Although taller than immediate structures, the turbine's slender, modern form will be sensitively located to avoid dominating key views or competing with heritage buildings. Its scale, while visible, is modest in comparison to many urban features and well within the visual absorption capacity of this dynamic public space.

When viewed from all three nearby listed buildings, it would be viewed in the context of the taller, modern Urbis building and would therefore not look incongruous nor would it dominate the view.

There would be no physical or structural impact on the conservation area or heritage assets. The proposed development would be appropriate in siting, scale and design quality in accordance with Policy DM1 (Development Management) and will preserve the significance of the conservation area and surrounding assets by maintaining key views and ensuring the installation is non-intrusive and fully reversible in accordance with Policy EN3 (Heritage) of the Core Strategy. The PfE Plan, maintains strong protections for heritage while supporting innovation in energy and public realm use, the proposal complies with Policy JP-P2 (Heritage) by causing no harm to heritage assets and, by raising awareness of sustainability and supporting a public amenity (ice rink), offering demonstrable public benefit.

Noise

While there are some residential properties in the vicinity of Cathedral Gardens, construction activity will be limited to a short period, and undertaken during standard working hours to minimise disturbance.

Once operational, the turbine is designed to operate quietly, with modern engineering ensuring that any mechanical noise is minimal and well below ambient city centre levels and those of the ice rink development. The installation of the turbine would remove the need for standby diesel generators at the site and would therefore actually reduce the noise impact of the overall development. Given the temporary nature of the installation and its location within a vibrant mixed-use area, the development is considered to have a negligible noise impact on nearby residential and commercial receptors.

The development is fully in accordance with Core Strategy Policies DM1 (Development Management) and Policy C10 (Leisure and Evening Economy), and aligns with PfE Policies JP-S6 (Resource Efficiency) and JP-P1 (Sustainable Places), ensuring that residential amenity and environmental quality are protected throughout.

Ecology / Biodiversity

The proposed installation of a temporary wind turbine within Cathedral Gardens is anticipated to have a negligible impact on ecology.

The site comprises a small area of maintained amenity grassland within a highly urbanised city centre location. This grassed area is regularly mown and heavily used by the public throughout the year. It does not support any notable habitats or species of ecological importance. The area is reinstated after the end of the ice rink residence and the turbine will not alter this.

There are no statutory or non-statutory ecological designations on or adjacent to the site, and no evidence of protected species, priority habitats, or biodiversity corridors in the immediate vicinity. The installation will not involve the removal of any trees, shrubs, or semi-natural features, and will be undertaken in a way that avoids disturbance to any surrounding soft landscaping.

Given the temporary nature of the installation, the very limited ground disturbance, and the lack of ecological constraints, the development is not expected to have any adverse ecological impacts. No mitigation or enhancement measures are required in this instance.

The proposed development is in accordance with Core Strategy Policy EN15 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation) as it does not affect any designated or priority habitats.

Safety

The Bestwatt wind turbine incorporates several safety features designed to ensure the reliable operation, especially in small scale, onshore settings:

- **Survival Wind Speed:** Engineered to withstand extreme conditions, with a survival wind speed of up to 60 m/s, which is well above typical storm thresholds.
- **Cut-Out Mechanism:** Automatically shuts down at 25 m/s to prevent damage during high wind events.
- **Steel Tube Tower with Corrosion Protection:** The conical tower is coated to resist environmental wear, ensuring long-term structural integrity.

- Ice detection – in the event of ice build up the turbine will stop rotating so that there is no potential for ‘ice throw’.
- The blades will be 10m above the ice rink and not interfere with the enjoyment of ice skaters.

Conclusion

The proposed development for the temporary installation of a 15kW wind turbine at Cathedral Gardens is consistent with the overarching planning principles set out in both the Manchester Core Strategy (2012–2027) and the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (2022–2039). The scheme supports the city’s wider ambition to transition to a zero-carbon economy, providing clean, renewable energy to a popular seasonal visitor attraction in a highly accessible city centre location. The principle of temporary development to support events using renewable energy is supported.

The turbine’s impact on landscape and views is considered acceptable within the context of a busy, visually dynamic public realm. Its slim profile, colourful design, and seasonal setting mean it will enhance the festive atmosphere without detracting from the character or appearance of the Conservation Area or harming the setting of nearby listed buildings. The turbine is temporary and reversible, with no permanent effects on heritage, ecology, amenity, or public safety. Noise impacts will be negligible and construction access will be managed efficiently, with no disruption to the local highway network or public access. In all respects, the development is well-designed, proportionate, and policy-compliant, and should be supported accordingly.

I trust the submitted documents provide you with sufficient information to approve the application and that no further information is required, although if you have any queries then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

