25 July 2025
L250724 SAV Cover Letter

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SUBMITTED VIA THE PLANNING PORTAL REF: PP-14188424

SECTION 62 OF TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE OF AND PHYSICAL WORKS TO PROVIDE A 'PADEL TENNIS' FACILITY AT ROOF TOP LEVEL
ROOF TOP CAR PARK AT VICTORIA EXCHANGE (FORMER MARTIN HOUSE), HUNTS BANK, MANCHESTER, M3 1LD
LONDONMETRIC PROPERTY PLC

Introduction

We write on behalf of our client LondonMetric Property PLC, to apply for planning permission for the redevelopment of the rooftop at Victoria Exchange for the change of use of hardstanding car park and physical works to provide a padel tennis facility (Use Class F2).

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 (as amended), we confirm the following documents comprise the application:

- This covering letter;
- The completed application form and certificates;
- The following Zebra Architects plans:
  - Drawing Ref: PL-100 - Site Plan - Location Plan & Existing
  - Drawing Ref: PL-102 - Site Plan - Proposed
  - Drawing Ref: PL-105 - Existing GA Plan - Level 4 - Roof Plan
  - Drawing Ref: PL-110 B Proposed GA Plan - Level 2
  - Drawing Ref: PL-111 B Proposed GA Plan - Level 3 - Mezzanine
  - Drawing Ref: PL-112 D Proposed GA Plan - Level 4 - Car Park Plan
  - Drawing Ref: PL-113 D Proposed Roof Plan - Level 4 - Roof Plan
  - Drawing Ref: PL-120 C Proposed Elevations & Sections - Elevation 1 & Section AA
  - Drawing Ref: PL-121 C Proposed Elevations & Sections - Section BB & Section CC
- Design & Access Statement (July 2025) – Zebra Architects
- Noise Impact Assessment (July 2025) – Hoare Lea
- Transport Statement (March 2025) – Astute

The application has been submitted and the requisite application fee (£588.00) paid electronically via the Planning Portal (Ref: **PP-14188424**).

Offices and associates throughout the Americas, Europe, Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East..

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The Application Site

The application site comprises an open air car park on the roof top of Victoria Exchange (the **'Site**'). The lower floors of Victoria Exchange comprise commercial floorspace and a multistorey car park adjoining the AO Arena and Manchester Victoria Train Station.

The Site is located in a highly sustainable, city centre location, adjacent to Victoria Train Station and is accessible by private, public and sustainable modes of transport.

The Site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of flooding.

The Site is not located in a Conservation Area or statutory listed but is adjacent to the Grade II listed Victoria Station, however, it is physically separated and cannot be viewed from the Site.

Relevant Planning History

On 29 October 1992, planning permission was granted for: *"Mixed use redevelopment including indoor arena, multi storey car park, hotel, offices, retail, multi screen cinema, ancillary facilities and landscaping."* (App Ref: 42136) (the "**1992 Permission**")

The 1992 Permission covered the wider site and established a mixed use development.

A Certificate of Lawful Use was issued for the use of the first and second floors for 'Commercial, Business and Service' operation within Use Class E (App Ref: 141894/LE/2025) (the '**2025 Certificate'**).

The Proposed Development

The proposed development comprises the change of use of the Site and physical works to create a padel tennis facility (Class F2).

The proposed development would comprise five, external padel tennis courts. Two of the courts will be partially covered with a lightweight canopy to optimise the recreational use by enabling outdoor play to take place even in poor weather conditions.

The proposed works also include associated player facilities including: toilets, a small scale café and bar area (serving food and drink) from a container and pergola covered social area.

The proposed works at rooftop level will be the external elements of a wider padel tennis facility which will be created inside Victoria Exchange. The facility will be operated by Padel Social Club, a premium padel tennis operator which has established clubs at London; Earls Court, The O2 (Greenwich), Wandsworth and Babington House (Soho House). This proposal forms part of their intention to launch their first facility in the north.

The indoor elements of the facility will be configured across Levels Two and Four and will include provision of nine courts, customer changing facilities (including showers and toilets), a club shop offering padel equipment for sale and hire and additional social spaces for players and guests.

The 2025 Certificate confirms that all 'Commercial, Business and Service' uses (Class E), which includes 'indoor recreation and leisure' operations[1], is lawful from the internal floorspace of Victoria Exchange.

Padel is a racquet sport that is typically played in doubles on an enclosed court a third of the size of a tennis court (20 x 10 sq. m). Unlike traditional tennis, the court has walls and the balls can be played off them in a similar way to squash. It is the fastest growing sport in Europe and is now endorsed by the Lawn Tennis Association ('**LTA**') in the UK.

[1] Class E(d)

Given the specialist nature of the use, there are minimum space requirements and operational characteristics which have to be accommodated in any development scheme. In addition to the ground space required for the courts, a minimum height is required to accommodate walls and enable unrestricted play.

Amenity facilities are also essential including changing rooms, toilets and other smaller ancillary functions such as a retail (selling padel tennis equipment) and refreshment facilities.

The proposed physical works would include:

- Installation of five padel courts (three open and two covered) measuring 200 sq. m a court.
- Installation of lightweight, canopy structure over two of the courts (five and six) comprising a 2-bay canopy, measuring ten metres in height (at maxima), to meet the minimum international standard for padel courts.
- Siting of shipping containers converted to provide player facilities including: changing rooms, toilets, a retail space (selling refreshments and padel tennis equipment) and pergola covered social area.

The layout of the Site is included with this submission (Drawing Ref: PL-102).

The proposed facility will operate between 06:00 and 00:00, Monday to Saturday and on bank holidays and 06:00 – 23:00 on Sundays.

Policy Considerations

The statutory development plan for the Site consists of the Core Strategy (adopted January 2012), Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan ('**PfE**') (adopted March 2024) and extant policies from the Unitary Development Plan ('**UDP**') (adopted June 2006) which were 'saved' in 2012 and remain in effect today. The Council.

Below we assess the proposed development against the relevant planning policies in the development plan and all other material considerations (including the National Planning Policy Framework) ('**NPPF**').

1. Principle of Proposed Use

The Site is located within Manchester's defined City centre; a key location for the increased diversity of activity, with an emphasis on family-orientated activities, as set out in Policy CC10 of the Core Strategy. It follows that the proposed development will provide a new recreational facility in line with the requirements of the Policy.

Policy EN11 (Quantity of Open Space, Sport and Recreation) of the Core Strategy and JP-P7 of PfE sets out the Council's requirement for new open space, sport and recreation facilities in locations where new housing is being developed. The proposals are located close to existing and new residential development, including the recently approved development on the former Boddingtons Brewery Site (App Ref: 118831/FO/2018).

PfE policies JP-P4, JP-P6 and JP-P7, support new development that aids healthy lifestyles through active design principles ensuring physical activity is easy, practical and an attractive choice. The location of the proposed facility ensures that sporting activity is within an accessible location.

In addition to being supported by local policies, the proposed development would help meet a requirement for new tennis courts of 'all types' across Manchester, a requirement identified in the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (2022).

The principle of providing additional sport and recreation space is an entirely appropriate land use for the Site and a City centre location. Furthermore, the development accords with the strategic objectives of the various documents that comprise the development plan in terms of improving provision of and access to sport and recreation.

2. Benefits of the Proposed Use

The proposed development will generate a number of important benefits which weigh in favour of the grant of planning permission and link directly to the proposed leisure use.

Chapter 8 of the NPPF relates to 'Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities' and explicitly states the need for facilities which integrate members whilst also promoting health and wellbeing. Paragraph 96 explains that decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

> "c) ***enable and support healthy lifestyles****, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure,* ***sports facilities****, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling*."

The proposed development accords directly with the strategic objectives of the NPPF. It will help to increase and diversify the sports and leisure facilities in Manchester to promote social interaction within a safe and accessible space.

The proposal will provide social and economic benefits to the surrounding area and members of the public.

3. Other Relevant Considerations

a. Design

This application includes a detailed Design and Access Statement ('**DAS**'), prepared by Zebra Architects. The DAS sets out the design rationale and details of the proposed development.

The design follows comprehensive analysis of the Site and its local context and demonstrates how a bespoke design solution has been developed.

The design successfully balances the specific operational requirements of a padel tennis facility (in terms of courts, a canopy and a social area) with the location and surrounds. For example the shipping containers are located away from the away from residential development and the courts closest to the residential development have been covered to minimise light and noise spill, as set out in more detail below.

The material palette, which includes the use of industrial materials such as recycled shipping containers and timber takes cues from the surrounding context such as the existing car park and adjacent railway. The proposals include Padel Social Club's high specification branding and premium offer which can be seen at their existing sites.

The DAS demonstrates that the proposed development comprises an appropriate and high quality design. It accords with the requirements of Policy DM1 in terms of having regard to the surrounding area and will meet the Council's aspirations for good design in Policy EN1 of the Core Strategy.

b. Highways and Transportation

The proposed use of the Site as a padel tennis facility will not generate any unacceptable impacts on the safe or convenient use of the local highway network.

Core Strategy Policy T1 supports the use of active travel modes as an alternative to car usage. The site is located within a highly sustainable location, with exceptional accessibility. The City centre location benefits from pedestrian and cycle links, as well as directly adjoining Victoria Station, which has national rail and tram links.

The existing AO Arena car park will be retained at lower levels which will provide parking close to the Site. It follows that the loss of car parking at roof top level is appropriate and the change of use to facilitate a leisure use, is well connected and served by existing sustainable travel modes.

A Transport Statement has been completed by Astute Transport, which demonstrates the proposals are in accordance with local and national planning policy requirements. The Statement confirms that whilst the proposals would remove some parking capacity, this will only result in a minimal reduction that will have no material impact on the operation of the existing multi storey car park or wider transport infrastructure. Therefore the proposals would not have any severe impact t on highway capacity or safety

c. Amenity

Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states that, "planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by […] preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of […] noise pollution."

Policy DM1 (Development Management) confirms that development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area and impact on amenity including privacy, light, noise and vibration.

Saved UDP Policy DC26 (Development and Noise) requires proposals to reduce impact on people working and living in or visiting the City and the effect of new development proposals that are likely to be generators of noise will be carefully considered.

The existing building is in commercial use and the prevailing contextual character of the site is comprises a mix of uses within the City centre. It is acknowledged there are some sensitive receptors in the immediate vicinity and so, the proposed development has been assessed in order to protect amenity.

A Noise Impact Assessment has been prepared by Hoare Lea in support of this planning application. The report is informed by a background noise survey undertaken in February 2025 and assesses the noise impact of the proposed development on the closest noise sensitive receptors which include the apartments currently under construction 30m to the north (Old Brewery Gardens) and existing New Victoria apartments approximately 80m to the south.

The proposed development includes new items of mechanical and electrical plant and some entertainment noise associated with the rooftop terrace area. The NIA concludes that plant and entertainment noise would not exceed Manchester City Council ('**MCC**') Guidance.

Manchester City Council have not adopted specific noise guidance for padel tennis, therefore the NIA utilises Sport England Guidance and relevant noise data from other padel facilities across the country (including Fulham, Earl's Court, Manchester and Solihull). The NIA concludes that the proposed padel facility would not materially impact surrounding noise sensitive receptors and is an appropriate location for this type of use, in terms of noise emissions.

The lighting proposals have been carefully developed to protect amenity whilst contributing to the functionality of the Site. The Lighting Strategy is set out in detail at Section 3.8 of the DAS and confirms the lighting will comprises floodlights on the courts to allow gameplay, outdoor lighting for wayfinding around the Site and lighting on the containers, to maximise the use of the Site. Lights serving the courts will only operate during hours of play to minimise energy use and any potential impacts.

The floodlights will be directed onto the courts to minimise spillage and court's five and six, closest to residential development will be located under a canopy to minimise impact.

Although the canopy will facilitate play all year round, despite weather conditions, it also has a number of other benefits including, controlling balls from leaving the roof space and reducing any potential noise and light spill from gameplay.

The proposed development would not be detrimental to the amenity of users of the Site and surrounding land, in line with Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy and saved Policy DC26 of the UDP.

d. Ecology, Biodiversity Net Gain and Trees

Biodiversity Net Gain ('**BNG**') is mandatory, under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).

There is no existing biodiversity at the Site. Given the development impacts less than 25 square metres of non-priority habitat, it meets the 'de minimis exemption' and BNG is not applicable.

e. Sustainability

The proposed development is sustainable in its nature, given that it promotes the reuse and refurbishment of Victoria Exchange, optimising the use of sustainable floorspace and contributing positively to both the local economy and community. The proposal represents sustainable development by optimising the use of land within a highly accessible location.

The use of recycled shipping containers reduces the need for new building materials and construction on Site and the padel courts and associated equipment is sustainable in that the canopies, court surfaces and perimeter materials are all demountable and reusable.

The proposals comprise sustainable development in line with the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development, Policies JP-S1 and JP-C1 of PfE and Policies T1 and T2 of the Core Strategy.

Summary and Conclusion

The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of an existing roof top car park to create a padel tennis facility, including five external courts and associated facilities.

The proposed development accords with the overarching objective of the NPPF to deliver sustainable forms of development. New sport and social infrastructure uses within the city centre is expressly supported by the Core Strategy and Places for Everyone.

The technical documents comprising the application have also demonstrated that the proposal is appropriate development and will not generate any unacceptable impacts on residential amenity or any other policy matter.

The evidence provided as part of this application demonstrates that the proposal accords with the strategic objectives and policies of the development plan. We request therefore that the application is approved without delay in accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

We trust that the information and detail above and in the documents enclosed provides the LPA with sufficient information to consider the emerging development concept and provide advice on the principle of the proposed development.

In the meantime, should you require any clarification or additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Tim Price or Sophie Moore at these offices.

Yours faithfully,

Savills

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