HOLME PLANNING
Partnership

Planning, Design and Access and Accessibility Statement

Change of Use from Offices (Class E) to Education Facility (Class F1)

Mulberry House
Claverton Road
Wythenshawe
Manchester
M23 9TT

June 2025 (Rev 01)

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1.0 Introduction

Background

1.1 Holme Planning Partnership have been instructed by First Steps Together Care Services to prepare a detailed planning statement to support a planning application for the following development, namely:

> '*Change of Use of Mulberry House, Claverton Road, Wythenshawe from Offices (Class E) to Education Facility (Class F1).*"

1.2 This statement will address the relevant national and local planning policies that deal with the principle of the proposed development, and the pertinent planning matters associated with the scheme. These will be addressed as set out below:

Section 2 - Application Site Context
Section 3 - Relevant Planning Policy – National Planning Policy Framework
Section 4 - Relevant Planning Policy – Manchester Development Plan
Section 5 – Other Material Considerations
Section 6 – Accessibility Statement
Section 7 - Conclusions

Principle of Development

1.3 The Development Plan is supportive as a matter of principle of development on sites which are sustainably located, previously developed and demonstrate an effective and efficient use of land or buildings, especially when meeting wider community needs, such as education.

1.4 It is our view that the development subject of this application is compliant with the core principles of local and national planning policy, and we would therefore kindly request that this application be approved without delay.

Submitted Documentation

1.5 This planning application is supported by the following documents and drawings:

- As Existing and Proposed Floor Plans;
- As Existing and Proposed Site Layout Plans;
- Proposed Fence Plans;
- Location Plan;
- Marketing Information;
- Letter of Support from the Site Owner;
- Transport Statement;
- Waste Form/Strategy;

- Applicant’s Statement of Purpose; and
- Planning, Design and Access Statement.

2.0 Application Site Context

2.1 The application site is located within the built up development area, and defined settlement of Wythenshawe, to the south of the city of Manchester.

2.2 The application site currently comprises of a three storey detached property previously in use as offices (Use Class E). The site benefits from pedestrian and vehicular access from Claverton Road. The site also includes a large area of hardstanding surrounding the existing building on three sides, and currently provides off street car parking for 93 vehicles.

2.3 The site is bounded to the north, south and west by other office and commercial operations, with a number of other commercial, training, office and employment uses in the wider locality. Wythenshawe Hospital is sited to the immediate east of the application site. The scheme as submitted is therefore deemed to be consistent with the mixed nature of the character of the immediate local area, and is therefore acceptable as a matter of principle.

2.4 The site is well located for access to the key settlements of Wythenshawe, Timperley, Baguley and Hale Barns, as well as other services within the immediate locality.

2.5 The property is well related to the main highway network with good links onto the M56 and the A560, and the wider Greater Manchester area. The application site has good provision of off street car parking and is also well located for access to local bus services with bus stops available within walking distance of the site, including stops located on Floats Road, Southmoor Road and from Wythenshawe Hospital. The site is also well located to access the Greater Manchester tram service via the blue line, with the nearest tram stop being located at Roundthorn. The site is therefore deemed to be suitably and sustainably located to service the needs of the proposed development.

2.6 From a review of the Historic England mapping service, the site subject of this application is not understood to be listed, and is not located within a designated Conservation Area. There are in addition no other listed buildings or structures in the wider local area.

2.7 From a review of the Environment Agency Flood Map, the application site is not understood to be located within an area at risk from flooding, the impact of the development on flood risk is not therefore deemed to be determinative in this instance.

Proposed Development

2.8 The development subject of this application comprises the change of use of the existing building. The site has previously been in use as offices, but the existing property is understood to have been vacant for a significant period of time (in excess of five years). The Applicant is now seeking to secure planning consent for change of use to an education facility specialising in education and support for children aged 11-16.

2.9 The Applicant proposes to provide an education facility for up to 100 children with special educational needs. The children will be educated in classes of between 4 and 9 children, with in the order of 12-15 classes taking place on site at any one time. The school will be registered and regulated by Ofsted, and the children to be cared for and educated on site will be the subject of the following specific needs:

- Young people subject of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP);
- Young People with ASD; and
- Young People with SEND

2.10 The facility will be operated by in the order of 45 staff on site at any one time (to include teachers, mentors, occupational therapists, apprentices, administration staff, cleaners etc), with lessons scheduled throughout the day as per a standard school. The school will teach English, Maths, Science, Personal Development, Life Skills, Beliefs and Values, PHSE as well as vocational subjects, such as Bike ability, Construction, Hair and Beauty. Additional GCSE/Functional Skills include Travel and Tourism, Health and Social Care, Sports, Performing Arts.

2.11 The children will also benefit from use of the outdoor space on site, but only during breaks and lunch, so never earlier than 10am, and never later than 3.15pm. There will be no p.e activities on site as these will all take place off site at a local sports and swimming centre.

2.12 Children will be dropped off on site at staggered times from 8.30am and collected at the end of the school day no later than 4pm by parents/carers/guardians or dedicated transport at the site frontage. All staff and parents will be required to either utilise the existing site car park, or will also be actively encouraged and supported to utilise the local public transport connections to access the site, to further assist in limiting traffic demands associated with the proposed use.

2.13 There are only limited physical build works being proposed relating to the reallocation of some of the outdoor spaces for play space and outdoor learning, in order to more flexibly meet the needs of the Applicant and their students. The alterations proposed within this application are in our view minor in nature, are suitable and well designed, and will not result in harm to the visual amenities of the street scene, nor to the amenity of neighbouring properties, and certainly not a degree that would justify refusal of this application.

Statutory Development Plan

2.14 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that when determining a planning application, local planning authorities must make their determination in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan relating to the site consists of the Greater Manchester Places for Everyone (2024), the saved policies of the Manchester Core Strategy, and the saved policies of the Manchester Unitary Development Plan. As shown within this statement, the scheme is

deemed to be compliant with the relevant provisions and policies of the Development Plan when read as a whole.

Planning History

2.15 From an initial review of the council website, we are aware of a number of previous applications on site, with specific attention being drawn to the following applications:

Application Ref: 033280
Description of Development: Erection of 1 three storey office building with associated parking
Decision: Approved
Date of Decision: 23rd March 1989

Application Ref: 040203
Description of Development: Erection of a two storey building to provide ground and first floor offices and adjoining warehouse
Decision: Approved
Date of Decision: 16th December 1991

Application Ref: 031874
Description of Development: Erection of 4 two storey buildings for B1 use, with associated car parking
Decision: Approved
Date of Decision: 27th October 1988

3.0 Relevant Planning Policy – National Planning Policy Framework

3.1 In the assessment of this application, due regard needs to be paid to the provisions of the Development Plan, which comprises the Revised National Planning Policy Framework and the Manchester Development Plan. This section of the report will focus on the latest national planning policy position, with local policies addressed at Section 4.

Revised National Planning Policy (NPPF) December 2024

3.2 The Revised National Planning Policy Framework was last updated in December 2024, and sets out the Government's planning policies for England, and how these are expected to be applied. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration in the decision-making process, and a summary of paragraphs considered material to the determination of this application read as follows:

Section 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development

*"**Paragraph 8:** Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):*

a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

c) an environmental objective–to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."

*"**Paragraph 10:** So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development."*

*"**Paragraph 11:** Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means:*

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; "

*"**Paragraph 12**: The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed."*

Section 4 - Decision Making

*"**Paragraph 38:** Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible."*

*"**Paragraph 47**: Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing."*

Section 6 – Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

***"Paragraph 85:** Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential."*

Section 8 – Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

*"**Paragraph 96:** Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:*

a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;

b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of

attractive, well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and

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."*

*"**Paragraph 100:** It is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:*

a) *Give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and*
b) *Work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted."*

Section 9 - Promoting Sustainable Transport

***"Paragraph 114:** In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:*

a) *appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;*
b) *safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;*
c) *the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code; and*
d) *any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree."*

***"Paragraph 115:** Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe."*

***"Paragraph 116:** Within this context, applications for development should:*

a) *give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;*

b) address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;

c) create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;

d) allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and

e) be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations."

Section 11 – Making Effective Use of Land

*"**Paragraph 123:** Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land."*

*"**Paragraph 124:** Planning policies and decisions should:*

a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;

b) recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production;

c) give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;

d) promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure); and

e) support opportunities to use the airspace above existing residential and commercial premises for new homes. In particular, they should allow upward extensions where the development would be consistent with the prevailing height and form of neighbouring properties and the overall street scene, is well designed (including complying with any local design policies and standards), and can maintain safe access and egress for occupiers..."

***"Paragraph 128:** Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:*

a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;
b) local market conditions and viability;
c) the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed –as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;
d) the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and
e) the importance of securing well-designed and beautiful, attractive and healthy places."

Section 12- Achieving Well-Designed Places

"***Paragraph 131:*** *The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process."*

Summary

3.3 The development subject of this application secures an effective and efficient use of an existing building, within a suitable and sustainable location. The scheme proposes only limited external alteration which includes the delivery of outdoor play spaces, secured by fencing, all of which will be sited well within the existing boundaries to negate impacts on existing trees and vegetation.

3.4 The scale of built development is clearly very limited and will not therefore result in visual impacts on the wider local area, or the character and appearance of the street scene. The site secures provision of off street car parking sufficient to meet the operational needs of the development. The site is also sustainably located, and it is also material to the decision making process to assess the realistic comparable scale of traffic generation and parking demands from the use as proposed, from that previously in situ and lawful. The application has been supported with a detailed Transport Statement further demonstrating the acceptability of the development in highway terms.

3.5 The scheme as proposed whilst resulting in the loss of office accommodation, will be delivering much needed new educational support which will help to meet the needs of the younger members of the local community, and on a site which has long been vacant, despite extensive site marketing. It is our view therefore that when viewed holistically, that the scheme represents an appropriate use in this location and is therefore supported by the Framework.

3.6 When weighing up the case in favour, and the benefits to be achieved through the viable re use of the building, the delivery of much needed additional new school places for young persons with specific needs, and the benefits to the local economy in relation to the investment in the existing site, securing job creation and additional disposable income in the wider local area, it is clear that the case in favour of this application is sufficient to justify approval. In addition, there does not appear to be a policy presumption against the scheme, given that the loss of the former use in our view can be robustly justified by the lack of market interest for a large scale office development, and the wider public benefits to be achieved through the grant of consent, including securing a viable use for a longstanding vacant building.

3.7 The application has been submitted with sufficient information to allow a thorough examination of the scheme, and to set out the support for a positive determination of the application. The scheme as submitted is therefore deemed to be compliant with the provisions of national guidance, and in line with the provisions of paragraph 11 of the Framework, we would therefore kindly request that the Council grant consent for the scheme as proposed without delay.

4.0 Relevant Planning Policy – Manchester Development Plan

4.1 The Development Plan for the City of Manchester includes the Greater Manchester Places for Everyone (adopted 2024), the saved policies of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012) and the saved policies of the Manchester Unitary Development Plan (1995).

4.2 From a review of the adopted Proposals Map from the Unitary Development Plan (extract included below), the site is understood to be located within the main built-up area, within an Economic Improvement Area, and within the sub area of Wythenshawe.



Figure 1: Proposals Map Extract

4.3 The key determinative policies associated with the proposed development are understood to include:

Greater Manchester Places for Everyone (2024)

4.4 **Policy JP-P1 Sustainable Places:** We aim to become one of the most liveable city regions in the world, consisting of a series of beautiful, healthy and varied places, each having the following key attributes that all development, wherever appropriate, should be consistent with:

1. Distinctive, with a clear identity that:
a. Conserves and enhances the natural environment, landscape features, historic environment and local history and culture;
b. Enables a clear understanding of how the place has developed; and
c. Respects and acknowledges the character and identity of the locality in terms of design, siting, size, scale and materials used.
2. Visually stimulating, creating interesting and imaginative environments which raise human spirit through the use of green space, public art and quality design.
3. Socially Inclusive
a. Responding to the needs of all parts of society;
b. Enabling everyone to participate equally and independently;

c. Providing opportunities for social contact and support; and
d. Promoting a sense of community…

17. well-served by local shops, services and amenities, including education and health facilities.

4.5 **Comment:** Policy JP-P1 sets out a clear objective to be socially inclusive, responding to the needs of all parts of society, to providing opportunities for social contact and promoting a sense of community. It is clear that the delivery of an educational facility for those children needing additional care and support is therefore wholly consistent with this policy, and the scheme is therefore deemed to be acceptable as a matter of principle.

4.6 **Policy JP-Strat 9: Southern Areas:** The economic competitiveness, distinctive local neighbourhood character and environmental attractiveness of the southern areas will be protected and enhanced. There will be a strong emphasis on making as much use as possible of suitable previously developed (brownfield) land and promoting the roles of the areas' town centres and its other key assets, including education and training facilities enabling people to gain access to employment opportunities.

As identified in Chapter 11 of this Plan, a number of sites have been specifically allocated through this Plan in support of the area's future growth.

The economic potential of, and benefits of investment in Altrincham, Trafford's Main Town Centre and Manchester Airport, along with associated transport infrastructure will be maximised. There will be an emphasis on improving transport connections and accessibility by public transport, cycling and walking, ensuring access to key employment opportunities in this area.

4.7 **Comment:** Policy JP-Strat 9 refers to the emphasis on making best use of previously developed sites and using key assets including education facilities to help to enable people to gain access to employment opportunities. The children to be educated on this site are those whose needs cannot be best met within the mainstream system, for which there is an urgent and growing need. Without access to education facilities such as that proposed within this application, there is a risk that those children will miss out on lifelong opportunities to access a good education, and then potentially future employment opportunities, with the well being and financial benefits this can bring. It is therefore essential that additional school places are secured to service the particular needs of these children, to offer them the chance to thrive, and in sustainable locations such as Mulberry House.

4.8 **Policy JP-J2: Employment Sites and Premises:** A diverse range of employment sites and accessible premises, both new and second-hand, will be made available across the Plan area in terms of location, scale, type and cost. This will offer opportunities for all kinds and sizes of businesses, including start-ups, firms seeking to expand, and large-scale inward investment, which will help to tackle inequalities.

A strong portfolio of prime investment opportunities for new floorspace will be brought forward in the key growth locations identified in JP-Strat1 to JP-Strat12 and in complementary locations, with many being particularly suitable for key economic sectors and specialisms. This includes the selective removal of land from the Green Belt and other land previously safeguarded for development, as identified in chapter 11 of this plan, to provide the quality of well-connected employment land supply necessary to deliver the required scale of long-term economic growth, as set out in Policy JP-J3 'Office Development' and Policy JP-J4 'Industry and Warehousing Development'.

Existing employment areas that are important to maintaining a strong and diverse supply of sites and premises in our boroughs will be protected from redevelopment to other uses, nurtured to ensure they remain competitive and their accessibility improved where necessary. This will include local employment areas as well as key growth locations.

4.9 **Comment:** Policy JP-P2 sets out a clear preference for the retention of existing employment sites, with a focus on not seeking to promote alternative uses. However, it is also important to ensure that policies and decisions reflect current and future market trends and business needs, and the protectionist approach to employment sites does not come at the cost of delivering and meeting other needs, where justified. In this case, the application site has been vacant for in excess of 5 years, and robustly marketed by three different Agents over that time. The space has been offered to let on as flexible an approach as feasible, in relation to letting the building whether in whole or in part. The property owners have also invested heavily into the internal condition of the building to enhance its appearance and on site facilities to further seek to assist in securing a tenant, demonstrating clear efforts on their behalf to do their best to secure another office occupier.

4.10 Sadly to date there has been no firm offer to take the site forward from any parties in relation to use of the site for office accommodation, and whilst the building was used temporarily by the NHS, this was solely in order to assist the health service with a short term solution to the national challenge of social distancing for administrative staff, close to Wythenshawe Hospital at the height of the Covid pandemic and lockdown restrictions. The NHS were unfortunately not able to take the building on a long term basis once their initial short term requirements had abated. It is therefore clear that efforts have been made over a protracted period of time to secure an office end user for this site, however sadly without success. The building has therefore in effect stood vacant for in excess of five years, and without the willingness of the property owner to manage and maintain their asset, there is a risk that the building could already be visually detrimental to the local area. We are of the opinion that the site owners desire to maintain the building to a suitable standard, and their desire to help out the NHS in a period of national crisis (albeit for just 6 months), should not now be used against them when assessing this proposal for an alternative use, but should in fact be used as a material consideration weighing in favour of the grant of consent.

4.11 There is therefore in our view a clear case in favour on this occasion to support an alternative use of the application site, and no sound planning reason to continue to resist alternative uses of the site. In addition, given the site's location, accessibility and the mix of uses in the wider locality, Mulberry House is in our view an ideal site within which to house a

new educational facility. This is a view now supported by Ofsted who have viewed the site and support its reuse for a SEN school.

4.12 **Policy JP-P5:** Significant enhancements in education, skills and knowledge to benefit existing and new residents will be promoted, including by:

1. Enabling the delivery of new and improved accessible facilities for all ages, such as early years, schools, further and higher education, and adult training to ensure our workforce is ready to benefit from new employment opportunities;
2. Ensuring the delivery of sufficient school places to respond to the demands from new housing, such as through:

a. Working with education providers to forecast likely changes in the demand for school places…

4.13 **Comment:** Policy JP-P5 sets out the need for significant enhancements in education for the benefit of residents. This includes enabling the delivery of new and improved facilities for all ages, including those in secondary education. The policy also sets out a need to ensure the delivery of sufficient school places to meet demands. This is an application which will help to meet all of these requirements, by delivering 100 school places for children with additional and specific educational needs, and on an accessible site within an area of mixed character, which will not cause harm to residential amenity, nor causes harm to the highway network. In our view this scheme is wholly consistent with the provisions of the Places for Everyone policy document, and is therefore acceptable as a matter of principle, with other material considerations further weighing in favour of the grant of consent.

Manchester Core Strategy (saved policies)

4.14 **Policy EC2 – Existing Employment Space - Existing Employment Space:** The Council will seek to retain and enhance existing employment space and sites. Alternative uses will only be supported on sites allocated accordingly, or if it can be demonstrated that:

- The existing use is un-viable in terms of business operations, building age and format;
- The existing use is incompatible with adjacent uses;
- The existing use is unsuitable for employment having had regard to the Manchester Salford - Trafford SFRA; or
- On balance, proposals are able to offer greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy's vision and spatial objectives than the existing use.

4.15 **Comment:** Policy EC2, like the employment policies laid out a regional level seek in the first instance to protect and retain existing employment sites for associated employment uses. Policy EC2 does however also set out a clear set of guidelines as to when alternative uses may be deemed appropriate. In this instance it is clear for the reasons laid out within this submission and the application when read as a whole, including within the marketing evidence submitted by the site owner's Agent's, that the site has been vacant for in excess of 5 years. In addition, the site has not only been robustly marketed over that extended time period, but has also been upgraded and enhanced with a view to doing all possible to secure

a suitable alternative office end user for the site. Despite this extensive investment, the site sadly remains vacant. The site has been marketed either for the building as a whole, or on a floor by floor basis, and has sadly had no real interest from potential alternative office users. As set out in the Agents letter, the office market has changed fundamentally since Covid with the growth in home working, hot desking etc, and sites such as this are simply no longer being actively sought for office accommodation in these types of location. The market has clearly shown a lack of desire to retain and protect this site or office use, and others in the wider locality, with a significant number of properties lying vacant and under used.

4.16 There is therefore a case to be made to support an alternative use of the site, with the proposed educational use deemed by the applicant, Ofsted and the site owner to be a viable and sensible reuse of the property. The site can offer the required floor area, the provision of outdoor space required to meet needs, the level of on site car parking to service the needs of the development, and an accessible location which is mixed in character, and would be well suited to the use proposed. Importantly, the development will be meeting the educational needs of Manchester children who need specific provision in order to thrive. In addition, the scheme can offer job and training opportunities including apprenticeships for the wider local community.

4.17 It is therefore clear, that on balance, the reuse of a building which has stood vacant for more than five years, and its reuse with a proposal which offers significant wider public benefit in relation to meeting the special educational needs of the local community, and to offer them enhanced life opportunities all weigh in favour of this proposal, and make a case to justify compliance of this development with the provisions of policy EC2.

4.18 **Policy EC10 – Wythenshawe – Wythenshawe:** Wythenshawe is expected to provide 55ha of employment land within B1a offices, B1b/c research and development and light industry and B8 logistics and distribution. The majority of economic development will be focused on:

1. Manchester Airport and specifically Manchester Airport Strategic Site and Airport City Strategic Employment Location are suitable for aviation related development and a mix of economic development uses including offices, high technology industries, logistics, warehousing and airport hotels.

2. University Hospital South Manchester suitable for growth related to the healthcare and biosciences and ancillary offices.

3. Existing employment sites along: West Wythenshawe Development Corridor - Oaks Business Park (B1) and Roundthorn Industrial Estate (B8); East Wythenshawe Development Corridor - Sharston Industrial Estate (B8), Atlas and Concord Business Parks (B1) and Ringway Trading Estate (B8).

4. The district centres of Wythenshawe, Northenden and the proposed centre at Baguley will all be suitable for mixed use local employment provision serving their catchment area.

Development and infrastructure provision will be supported which strengthens transport connections between Roundthorn Industrial Estate, University Hospital

South Manchester, Airport City and Manchester Airport. The Council will seek to maximise the opportunities to enhance this spatial cluster of key employment uses. The existing employment role of Roundthorn Industrial Estate and Sharston will be supported, including the existing industrial and manufacturing uses. Proposals which improve the connectivity of Roundthorn Industrial Estate to the Airport and Motorway network will be encouraged. Development proposals and planning applications should have regard to:

- Ensuring employment opportunities are made accessible to local communities, particularly those at Manchester Airport;
- Locations with good access to the national motorway network M56 and M60 and their suitability for logistics;
- Proposed extension to Metrolink and new stops plus improved bus routes;
- Delivery of low and zero carbon decentralised energy schemes and energy projects within Strategic Employment Locations.

4.19 **Comment:** This part of Wythenshawe is understood to be sought to be protected for employment uses. However, for the reasons laid out above in relation to the assessment of policies JP-J2 and Policy EC2, there is in this case a clear justification to seek to move away from a traditional employment use on this site. It is of course also relevant to remind officers that the educational use as applied for will in itself generate in the order of 45 new jobs across a variety of skill sets including teachers, teaching assistants, occupational therapists, cooks, cleaners, administrative staff etc. This means that a site which not has offered, nor created, any new job opportunities for the last 5-6 years, can now be seen to be delivering a significant number of new jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities for the local community. This is a point which is clearly material to the decision making process, and in our view ensures that the site continues to create and deliver new jobs, both now and into the future, which is surely the focus of the policy itself.

Saved Policies of the Manchester Unitary Development Plan

4.20 **Policy WW2 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WW2:** Within the Roundthorn Industrial Estate the Council will permit new industrial and commercial activities, incompatible with a location in a residential area, except where serious harm to the amenity of nearby residents or adjoining businesses would result.

Reasons: The Council is keen to identify sites for commercial and industrial activities which provide services or employment for local people. However, it wishes to ensure that these activities do not generate disturbance for local people. Examples of these businesses are taxi firms and vehicle repair firms. The Council also wishes to ensure that industrial developments which can create significant residential disamenity if poorly located, are directed or relocated to appropriate sites where such disamenity would not occur and where they would not have a significant adverse impact on other economic and employment activities.

4.21 **Comment:** The application site is noted to be located within the Roundthorn Industrial Estate, which again has a focus on industrial and commercial uses, including those deemed

not compatible with residential areas. The case in favour of this development in this location has been laid out in detail throughout this report, and we do not therefore propose to replicate those arguments here. However, we would draw attention to the fact that this site is located on the periphery of the Estate, and is adjacent to Wythenshawe Hospital, offering a different character to other sites more centrally positioned. We are also aware of other sites and uses approved within the Industrial Estate for non industrial and commercial uses, where on balance, their case could be justified including gymnasium, television production studio, climbing centre, as well as a training facility which is also located on Claverton Road and owned and operated by the site owners 'Timpsons' (application reference 121457/FO/2018). It is our view that the case to be made in favour of many of those approvals remain valid and relevant to the assessment of the scheme now before the Council, and in our view, on balance, all justify the case in favour of the grant of consent.

Commentary

4.22 In relation to the site subject of this application, it is clear that the site has been in employment use previously (Use Class E - offices) prior to becoming vacant in excess of 5 years ago. However, as evidenced within the documentation submitted in support of this application, the reality is that the site has been actively marketed for a protracted period of time, and that there has been no real interest in taking on the site for a traditional office use. The site is therefore not only currently vacant, but clearly under utilised.

4.23 The Applicants have endeavoured to seek to locate suitable premises for their intended use, with the proposal site being deemed the most appropriate given its scale, layout and location away from a residential area. Other benefits of this location have bene laid out within the as submitted Applicant's Statement of Purpose.

4.24 The fact that the development complies with the provisions of policy EC2 in relation to, on balance, offering greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy Vision and objectives, with regards to expanding access to education, a skilled and inclusive workforce, and meeting specific needs of some of the more vulnerable members of the local community, as well as the potential extensive job creation to support the development, do all in our view tip the planning balance in favour of the proposals.

4.25 For the above reasons, we are of the view that the scheme is compliant with the tests laid out within Development Plan and is therefore acceptable. The fact that the proposed use will also be securing the delivery of a number of new jobs for the unemployed, within a sustainable and accessible location is also in our view material to the decision making process and further weighs in favour of the scheme.

4.26 **Summary:** For the reasons laid out above, and given the clear benefits to be achieved from the scheme including enhancing lifestyles and well being for children in need, improving educational attainment, improvements in social interaction and wellbeing, and the reuse of a currently vacant property in a suitable and sustainable location, all weigh in favour of the development. We are therefore of the view that the scheme as proposed within this

application is wholly compliant and consistent with the provisions of the adopted Development Plan.

Supplementary Planning Documents

4.27 In addition to the provisions of the adopted Development Plan, it is noted that any development on site will also need to consider and adhere to relevant supplementary planning documents, including:

- Guide to Development in Manchester

4.28 The provisions of the guidance at this stage have simply been noted and in our view addressed within the application.

Emerging Local Plan

4.29 It is understood that Manchester City Council have begun work on a new Local Plan. It is understood that consultation took place on an Issues Consultation back in May 2020. The emerging Local Plan is therefore clearly at a very early stage in the Plan Making Process, and as such in our view is not currently determinative or relevant to the determination of this application.

Summary

4.30 For the reasons laid out above and throughout this assessment, the scheme as submitted is deemed to be compliant with the provisions of the Development Plan when read as a whole, and we would therefore kindly request that the Council support and approve this application.

5.0 Other Material Considerations

5.1 Section 70(2) of the 1990 Act requires that the authority, in dealing with the application, shall have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. It has been demonstrated above that the proposed development is in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Development Plan, including national and local plan policy. In addition to this, material considerations exist that weigh further in favour of the development, including:

Sustainable Development

5.2 The scheme as proposed represents a sustainable form of development given it involves the re-use of a previously developed site within a built up area. The application site is well located for access to public transport and other key local services and facilities. The proposed layout has been designed to meet the needs of the development, whilst limiting impacts on adjacent land uses, as well as taking account of the character of the existing building and on neighbouring sites. The scheme secures the viable long term reuse of an existing building which has stood vacant for in excess of 5 years, and is currently bringing no social, economic or environmental benefits. The scheme as proposed can assist in addressing all of those elements and should in our view be seen positively by the local authority, as it has bene by Ofsted.

School Places and Social Benefit

5.3 This application will secure the effective and efficient use of the application site, maximising development density, but not to a degree which impacts on the character of either the existing building, nor the wider local area. The site has been shown to be suitable and appropriate for the proposed use, and will help the Council to deliver much needed (and urgently required) new educational provision to meet a specific need within Manchester in an accessible and sustainable location.

5.4 The scheme will help to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community, through delivering a purpose driven development that meets the needs of children who cannot be catered for within the mainstream education system. The scheme promotes well being, will improve mental health and will promote social interaction, which again can be essential to improved quality of life and enhancement of future life chances.

5.5 The requirement to deliver school places to meet the needs of those children with additional needs simply cannot be underestimated. If these children can locate services better suited to their needs, it significantly enhances their health, mental health and well-being, and importantly significantly enhances their life chances and life long opportunities. Access to a good education is a basic right, and the children create greater chances of accessing future employment opportunities, with the well being, mental health and financial benefits this can deliver, if they can benefit from a suitable and supportive educational experience. The benefits both for the children and the wider local community from the scheme, both now and into the future, are clearly significant and weigh heavily in favour of the scheme as

proposed. The fact that this a growing need is also heavily material to the assessment of the scheme.

Economic Growth and Permitted Development

5.6 Whilst the proposal does result in the loss of an existing class E office use, the property is vacant and has been for more than 5 years. The site has been extensively marketed for lease for a protracted period of time, both as a whole use or on a floor by floor basis, as well as the site owner investing in upgrades and refurbishment to seek to attract end users, but sadly to date this has been without success in locating an end user/office occupier. There is therefore no justified need to protect and retain the existing use of the site, especially given that there is no loss of jobs and no real harm to the immediate and wider economy. Furthermore, the scheme will assist in benefiting the wider local economy through job creation, student training and apprenticeships, as well as spend within the wider local area from staff, visitors and families once the facility is operational. This could result in a material benefit to the wider local economy, and will ensure that the site continues to provide local job opportunities. The fact that the use would be deemed to represent permitted development if this had been a scheme for a state school, is also in our view material to the wider assessment of the development.

Other office provision

5.7 As detailed throughout this statement, the application site has previously been in use as an office. The property has however been vacant for a significant period of time and is not making a positive contribution to the local economy. Whilst the loss of the former use will result in change at the application site, it is clear that the loss will not result in harm or a material reduction in office accommodation within the local area (where we understand that there is currently in the order of 750,000 sq ft of Office Space currently advertised "To Let" or vacant within a 3 mile radius of Mulberry House – the schedule at Appendix 1 provides details of over 600,000sq.ft on that provision). We understand from an initial review of alternative provision, that there are a number of alternative premises currently available, and a number of which are within walking distance of the application site, indicating a lack of demand and a lack of justification to protect the existing use of the site, especially where there is wider public benefit to be achieved from the scheme as proposed.

5.8 The loss of this single office building will not therefore result in significant harm to the overall level of provision locally, the character of the local area, nor on the local economy. In fact, the social and economic benefits to be achieved through the delivery of an educational facility for young persons with additional needs at this site is clearly significant, and in our view weighs in favour of the grant of consent in any event. It is also pertinent to note that the facility itself will still be creating job opportunities for both teaching staff and administrative and support staff, and will continue therefore to create and deliver local job opportunities.

Visual Harm

5.9 The proposed development site is currently under utilised, and if continuing to remain vacant for a protracted period of time, could result in harm to the character and appearance of the street scene and wider local community. The site only continues to not

result in significant harm given the on going maintenance and investment of the site owner to ensure the building remains ready for occupation. The proposed development will ensure that the site can be put to good use, with a use of suitable intensity and scale. The proposed development will also offer an effective and efficient reuse of the existing building, and will deliver local job opportunities whilst ensuring that there are no residual impacts on the wider local area.

Summary

5.10 As such, whilst we are of the view that the development is compliant with the policies, provisions and principles of the Development Plan when read as a whole, there are also a number of clear material benefits to the grant of consent which also tip the balance in favour of the development as submitted. We therefore kindly request that this application now be approved without delay.

6.0 Accessibility Statement

6.1 The application site benefits from level access from the highway onto a flat vehicle parking area.

6.2 Within the confines of the site itself, the property benefits from level access via a small ramp to the main entrance, and onwards into the main internal lobby area.

6.3 The site benefits from an internal lift to all floors, securing access for all, with disabled toilets also available on all floors.

6.4 All door widths are sufficiently wide to allow wheelchair access within the building. All doors re also subject to security locks, which will assist in securing the safety of pupils and staff on site.

6.5 The site is deemed to be fully accessible, and in that regard wholly acceptable for the use as applied for.

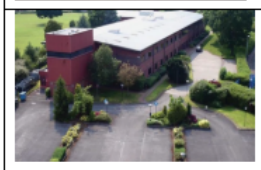
7.0 Conclusions

7.1 It has been demonstrated throughout this submission that the development subject of this application, accords with the relevant statutory duties and the Development Plan when read as a whole. The proposed development is therefore deemed to be acceptable in principle, by virtue of the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Manchester Development Plan.

7.2 Section 70(2) of the Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that where an application accords with the relevant Development Plan and material considerations are in favour, applications should be determined positively. As such, based on the above principles, we would therefore kindly request that the Council seek to support this proposal, and issue a grant of consent for this application without delay.

Appendix 1

Schedule of available office accommodation within 3 miles of Roundthorn Industrial Estate

	**Southmoor House** Southmoor Industrial Estate Southmoor Road Wythenshawe M23 9XD	GF	10,986 Sq Ft
	**Voyager House** Chicago Avenue Manchester M90 3DP	3F	5,500
		4F	11,400
		5F	11,400
		6F	11,250
	**Mulbury House** Roundthorn Industrial Estate Wythenshawe	GF	6,653
		1F	6,385
		2F	5,814
	**Waterside Court** 1 Crewe Road Wythenshawe M23 9BE	1F	12,238
	**464 Palatine Road** Northenden M22 4DJ	GF	4,083
		1F	4,160
		2F	4,189
	**Rowan Court** Concord Business Park, Wythenshawe M22 0RR	GF	8,639
		1F	8,639

	**Jackson House** Sibson Road, Sale M33 7RR	1F	14,500
		2F	29,134
		3F	43,149
		4F	6,512
		4F	7,784
	**Vertex** Altrincham WA14 1EZ	GF	2,220
		3F	7,907
		4F	3,488
	**Manchester Green** Styal Road, Heald Green M22 5LW	B1	19,905
		B4	1,237
		B4	6,957
		B3	13,414
	**3 Stockport Exchange** Railway Road, Stockport SK1 3SW	GF	7,226
		1F	11,222
		2F	11,381
		3F	11,382
		4F	11,384
	**3 Barrington Road** Altrincham WA14 1GY	1F	5,425
		1F	3,228

	**One Didsbury Point** The Boulevard Didsbury Manchester M20 2EY	1F	9,512
	**Foundation** 2 George Street Altrincham WA14 1RN	1F	3,740
		3F	12,550
	**Elm House** Cheadle Royal Business Park Cheadle SK8 3GX	GF	4,989
		1st	5,039
	**Trident** Styal Road Manchester M22 5XB	2nd	10,000
		2nd	9,892
	**Towers Business Park** Scotscroft Didsbury Manchester M20 2RY	GF	17,198
		1F	19,354
		2F	18,992

	**Lakeside** **5500** Cheadle SK8 3GR	2F	8,745