MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no.	142958/FO/2025
Date registered valid:	16 June 2025
Proposal:	Change of use of Mulberry House from Class E (Offices) to Education Facility (Class F1)
Address:	Mulberry House, Claverton Road, Manchester, M23 9TT
Ward(s):	Baguley Ward
Applicant:	Mr Nicholas Ledger, First Steps Together
Agent (if any):	Mrs Rebecca Booth, Holme Planning Partnership
Case officer:	Robert Griffin Tel: 0161 234 4527 Email: robert.griffin@manchester.gov.uk
Recommendation:	Approve
Date of recommendation:	**29th July 2025**

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Change of use

Date of site visit: 10th July 2025

Standard consultations:
Printed: 26 June 2025 Expired: 17 July 2025

Neighbour notifications
Printed: 26 June 2025 Expired: 17 July 2025

Site notice
No site notice has been produced

Press advert
No press advert had been published

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

Description of area

The application site currently comprises a three storey detached property previously in use as offices (Use Class E) within the Baguley ward in Wythenshawe. 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.

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 area. Wythenshawe Hospital is sited to the immediate east of the application site. As such the site is well related to the public transport network particularly buses which serve the Hospital directly but also Metrolink which is located to the north and west on Southmoor Road.

The site sits within the Roundthorn industrial estate area and is a location that contains a variety of industrial and commercial uses that require locations away from residential areas.

Description of development

The application proposals relate to the change of use of the existing building from offices to a school facility under use class F.1. The application documentation indicates that the school would specialise in education and support for children aged 11-16 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

The facility will be operated by approximately 45 staff on site at any one time with lessons scheduled throughout the day as per a standard school. The children would also benefit from use of the outdoor space on site which is to be provided within areas separated from the car parks via 3m high weld mesh fencing which reflects the limited amount of external physical works proposed through the application. The remainder of the works would be internal and related to the formation of classroom spaces etc.



Mulberry House

Planning History

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

Consultations & Notification Responses

Nearby occupiers were notified of the proposals; no responses were received.

MCC Highways – Have reviewed the submitted Transport Statement and raise no objections to the proposed change of use on highway or pedestrian safety grounds. The proposals would

provide a sufficient level of on-site car parking, and the trip generation of the use would be lower than the existing use as offices.

Whilst a construction management condition is recommended given the proposals would involve minimal external works and there is adequate space around the building such a condition is not considered to be proportionate to the proposals.

MCC Environmental Health – Raise no concerns in respect of the proposed use in this location, the submitted waste management strategy is considered to be acceptable.

MCC Children Education Services – Raise no objections to the proposal and confirm that the City does place Manchester pupils within the applicants other premises.

Cadent Gas – Raise no objections to the proposals.

Policy

Section 38 (6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 2004 states that applications for development should be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The adopted development plan consists of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document (2024), the Core Strategy (adopted 2012) and the saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan. Due consideration in the determination of the application will also need to be afforded to national policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which represents a significant material consideration.

National Planning Policy (NPPF) December 2024 - The 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 forms a material consideration in determining applications, the relevant sections are:
Section 2: Achieving Sustainable Development
Section 8: Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities
Section 9: Promoting Sustainable Transport
Section 11: Making Effective Use of Land
Section 12: Achieving Well-Designed Places

Core Strategy Development Plan Document
The Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012 -2027 ("the Core Strategy") was adopted by the City Council on 11th July 2012. It is the key document in Manchester's Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy replaces significant elements of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as the document that sets out the long term strategic planning policies for Manchester's future development. A number of UDP policies have been saved until replaced by further development plan documents to accompany the Core Strategy. Planning applications in Manchester must be decided in accordance with the Core Strategy, saved UDP policies and other Local Development Documents.

Relevant policies in the Core Strategy are detailed below:
Policy SP 1 – Spatial Principles
Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport
Policy T2 Accessible Areas of Opportunity and Need
Policy EN 19 – Waste
Policy DM 1 – Development Management

Policy DM2 – Safeguarding of Manchester Airport
Policy EC2 - Existing Employment Space
Policy EC10 – Wythenshawe (Employment Land)

‘Saved’ Unitary Development Plan Policies - The following ‘saved’ policies from the Unitary Development Plan is considered to be relevant to the Proposed Development:
Policy DC26.1, highlights the Council intends to use the development control process to reduce the impact of noise on people living and working in, or visiting, the City.
Policy WW2 – Economic Development – Indicates that 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.

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document (2024)
The Plan and its policies are a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Plan and its policies must therefore be given significant weight in the planning balance. Relevant policies in this instance:
Policy JP-P1 Sustainable Places
Policy JP-P5: Education, Skills and Knowledge
Policy JP-S1:Sustainable Development Policy
Policy JP-P5: Education, Skills and Knowledge
Policy JP-C8: Transport Requirements of New Development
Policy JP-Strat 9: Southern Areas
Policy JP-J2: Employment Sites and Premises

Other material considerations:

General Permitted Development Rights – Class T ‘Business and service, hotels etc to state-funded schools’ of Part 3 ‘Changes of Use’ of Schedule 2 permits the change of use of Class E (commercial, business or service use) to the use as a state funded school falling within Class F.1(a) (the provision of education) subject to a prior approval process relating to transport and highway impacts, noise impacts, and contamination risks of the site.

Issues

Principle - Part 3 ‘Changes of Use’ of Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Rights (2015) as amended allows, via a prior approval process, the change of use of a Class E use to a state funded school (F.1a) use. In this instance the proposal is not a state funded school so this prior approval route is not open to the applicant. However, it has been confirmed that places within the applicants’ other schools is subject of placement by pupils by the City Council. As such whilst the prior approval route is not open to the applicant it is considered that the general principle of the conversion of offices to education facility is in general acceptable. However, in this instance given the location of the premises within a defined employment area in Wythenshawe further consideration is required given the loss of the premises to the general employment floorspace capacity within the area, together with further consideration of residential and visual amenity impacts and impacts in terms of noise and highways.

Benefits of the proposal – The proposals would reuse an existing vacant building currently not contributing to the locality or City in general. The proposal is for a school to provide SEN places, the applicant indicates that the provision would enhance life chances and lifelong learning opportunities for children who cannot be catered for within the mainstream education system.

Loss of Employment Space - The site has previously been in use as offices, but the existing property has been vacant for a significant period of time (in excess of five years) this has been demonstrated through submitted supporting information.

The site is located within the Places for Everyone Spatial Strategy Southern Areas where economic competitiveness is protected and enhanced. There will also be a strong emphasis on making as much use as possible of suitable previously developed (brownfield) land.

The site falls within the Core Strategy Policy EC 10 Wythenshawe within which economic development will be focused on a number of locations including Roundthorn Industrial Estate. Paragraph 8.82 acknowledges that “existing employment provision in Roundthorn and Sharston Industrial Estates is, in places, not considered entirely suitable for modern users.”

In addition, there is an extant Manchester UDP policy area for economic development covering the site. The proposal would involve the loss of office space and existing employment areas are considered important to maintaining a strong and diverse supply of sites and premises and will be protected from redevelopment to other uses it therefore needs to be tested against Core Strategy policy EC2.

Based upon the supporting evidence around the marketing of the premises together with the Council’s own knowledge it is considered that it has been demonstrated in this instance that the existing use is not viable in terms of business operations. It is considered however, that the existing use continues to be overall compatible with adjacent uses.

The proposal would reuse the site for an identified end user who would use the site for an independent special educational needs schools, the application documents identified the need and lack of spaces for the specialist provision that they provided to pupils within Manchester. There is clear evidence provided within the submission that this application proposal together with the identified operator would meet the vision of the Core Strategy and in this instance it has been demonstrated through the submission that on balance this provision offers greater benefits than the existing use. Given the submission, location of the building within a commercial area, supporting information and identification of the operator of the school, in this instance it is considered necessary to attach a condition that the use of the building as a school be specific to the applicant and that if in the future the school were to cease operating from the building it would revert back to its previous office use.

Residential Amenity – It is noted that there is an isolated residential dwelling adjacent the site. Given the general commercial nature of the area, comings and goings from commercial premises and Wythenshawe Hospital and the general hours of operation of the school, it is not considered that the proposals would give rise to unacceptable impacts on residential amenity.

Visual Amenity – The proposals would include minor external works in the form of the installation of 3m high fencing to external play areas. Whilst some elements of these would be visible from footpaths and roads around the site such an installation would not give rise to significant visual amenity impacts, given the existing vegetation and soft landscaping around the site boundaries and the siting of the fence within the site.

Highways impacts – The application is supported by a Transport Statement that has been fully assessed by the Council’s Highway Services team who raise no concerns or objections on highway or pedestrian safety grounds. The level of retained car parking at the site is considered adequate for the proposals and double yellow lines are set out on the surrounding roads. The submitted information indicates that those children being dropped off at the site would be 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 would be required to either utilise the existing site car park, or would 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.

As such it is not considered that the proposals would give rise to unacceptable impacts to the surrounding highway network.

Agent of Change – The proposals would introduce a use that could be impacted by the surrounding environment which is acknowledged to be of a commercial nature and also includes the adjacent hospital. The applicant has provided a detailed response acknowledging the location of the premises. The site is located on the edge of the industrial estate and has a character that differs from other parts of Roundthorn. The building has been subject of a relatively recent refurbishment and the built fabric is considered to be sufficient to address potential external noise issues and Ofsted and the Department of Education have recently considered the building suitable for its intended use. It is also noted that no adverse comments have been raised by the Council's Environmental Health team and no additional requirements in terms of noise mitigation or insultation have been recommended. In this instance it is considered that the proposed use can be integrated effectively with existing business in the area.

Conclusion – It is considered that the application proposals are acceptable in this instance and in this location and the applicant has demonstrated that the proposals can be accommodated within the area without detriment to the wider character of the employment area in which the site is located. The specific school operator has been identified and has indicated the acceptance of a specific personal permission to use the application premises based upon the information provided in support of the proposal.

Other Legislative Requirements
Equality Act 2010
Section 149 (Public Sector Equality Duty) of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act and Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations
This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have made representations) have a right to a fair hearing and to this end the local planning authority must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved polices of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a

decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Recommendation: Approve

Article 35 Declaration

The application has been determined in a positive and proactive manner. Any issues that have arisen have been raised with the applicant's agent and further information has been provided in response and a decision has been issued in a timely manner with appropriately worded conditions attached.

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval OR Reasons for recommendation to refuse

1) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents:
Layout Plan received on the 15th May 2025;
Proposed Ground floor plan 'KS3 and 4 SEMH Hub'; Proposed first floor plan 'KS3 ASD; Proposed second floor plan 'KS4 ASD' all as received on the 16th June 2025.

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans. Pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy.

3) The use hereby permitted shall be carried on only by First Steps Together; and shall be for a limited period during which the premises are occupied by First Steps Together.

When the premises cease to be occupied by First Steps Together the use hereby permitted shall cease and the use of the premises shall revert to the previous use prior to the granting of this permission that being an Office use under Use Class E.

Reason - In granting this permission the City Council as local planning authority has had regard to the special circumstances of the applicant and the location of the premises.

4) The use hereby approved shall be operated in accordance with the scheme for the storage and disposal of refuse as submitted to the City Council as local planning authority on the 16th June 2025. The approved scheme shall be implemented as part of the development and shall remain in situ whilst the use is in operation.

Reason - In the interests of public health and amenity pursuant to policy DM1 of the Core Strategy.

5) Whilst the hereby approved use is in operation it shall be managed and provide the car parking and cycling facilities in accordance with the details contained within the Transport Statement prepared by Fastnet Transport Planning dated June 2025.

Reasons - In the interest of pedestrian and highway safety pursuant to policy T1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy and policy JP-C8 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document.

6) The boundary treatments as set out on the 'Fenceline' drawings received by the City Council as local planning authority on the 16th June 2025 shall be installed prior to the first use of the building hereby approved and shall be retained insitu whilst the use is in operation.

Reason - In the interests of the safety of the users of the development pursuant to policy DM1 of the Core Strategy.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services
Environmental Health
Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Cranoe House, 6 Claverton Road, Manchester, M23 9FT
J A Bellis Adjacent Floats Cottages, Floats Road, Manchester, M23 9NJ
Uniserve, Claverton Road, Manchester, M23 9FT
Klick Technology Ltd, Claverton Road, Manchester, M23 9FT
Claverton Court, Claverton Road, Manchester, M23 9NE
Floats Cottages, 1 Floats Road, Manchester, M23 9NJ
Music Exchange Manchester Ltd, Claverton Road, Manchester, M23 9ZA
Dexter Court, Claverton Road, Manchester, M23 9DY
Andrews Sykes Ltd, Claverton Road, Manchester, M23 9NE

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4
Article 4 Direction - Wythenshawe PD Restriction - Class B1(c) To C3
Area Team Boundary - Name: SOUTH AREA