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Planning Statement

Application Reference: 142743/FO/2025

Site Address: Manchester Marble, 20 Tilson Road, Manchester M23 9GF

Prepared on: 12 May 2025

Rev: P1

1 Executive Summary

This Planning Statement supports for planning application 142743/FO/2025 for the change of use of Office 1 on the ground-floor of Manchester Marble, 20 Tilson Road, Manchester (Use Class E) to a small-scale taxi booking depot (sui generis). The proposal is entirely internal: no external alterations, advertisements or engineering works are sought. The unit will accommodate a single member of staff who will manage remote taxi drivers via cloud-based dispatch software. No members of the public will visit the premises and no taxis will rank on-site; consequently, trip generation, parking demand and environmental impact are negligible.

The building forms part of a modern, two-storey commercial terrace comprising five self-contained offices with a shared car park of 13 spaces. Office 1 benefits from level entry via the existing doorway set just 3 m from an allocated parking bay, delivering inclusive access in accordance with Building Regulations Approved Document M and Manchester Core Strategy Policy T2. Ancillary staff facilities (WCs and kitchenette) are already provided on the first floor and will remain unchanged.

The change of use maximises the efficient re-use of a vacant office resource, reinforces economic activity in Wythenshawe's Southern Commercial Area and supports a low-carbon, digital business model that reduces the need for taxi drivers to congregate centrally. Assessment against the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), the Manchester Core Strategy (2012) and the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD confirms full policy compliance with no adverse impacts. The proposal is therefore sustainable development that the Local Planning Authority can approve without delay.

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2 Introduction & Background

2.1 Purpose of the Statement

The purpose of this Statement is to explain the development in sufficient detail to enable officers, consultees and elected Members to understand, assess and support the proposal. It expands upon the concise answers provided in the application form, addresses each material planning consideration likely to arise during determination, and demonstrates that adequate transport, accessibility and environmental information accompany the submission in accordance with Manchester City Council's Validation Checklist.

2.2 The Applicant & Site

Manchester Marble is a brick-faced, two-storey office block erected in 2003 on the west side of Tilson Road, approximately 450 m south-west of Baguley Metrolink stop. The terrace is subdivided into five equal units (Offices 1–5) arranged around a communal car park accessed directly from Tilson Road. The surrounding land uses are predominantly commercial: to the north lies a builders' merchant, to the south a self-storage facility, and to the east a mixed-use retail park. The application relates solely to Office 1, identified on submitted drawing (application site)

2.3 Planning History

The wider site benefitted from outline permission 097654/FO/2001 for "Erection of five two-storey offices with associated parking." Condition discharge and completion were recorded in July 2004. There have been no subsequent applications relating to Office 1; the unit has remained vacant since July 2024 following a corporate relocation. It retains original partitions, suspended ceilings and carpet tiles, presenting an opportunity for low-impact re-occupation.

3 Site & Surrounding Context

3.1 Immediate Setting

Manchester Marble occupies a 0.12 ha rectangular plot fronting Tilson Road. The two-storey building is of steel frame construction, with red-brick cavity walls, grey aluminium windows and a profiled metal roof. Eaves height is 6.8 m, consistent with adjacent commercial units. The shared forecourt provides 13 perpendicular parking bays, two of which are designated accessible bays with 1.2 m hatching.

3.2 Accessibility & Public Transport

The site enjoys a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 4 (good). Baguley Metrolink stop is within a five-minute walk, offering 12-trains-per-hour services to Manchester Airport and the city centre. Bus stops on Altrincham Road (A560) 250 m to the north are served by routes 11, 19 and 103 at ten-minute headways. Tilson Road connects directly to Junction 4 of the M56 (2 km), providing strategic vehicular access. Cycle lanes on Altrincham Road link to the Manchester Cycleway (Fallowfield Loop) 1.6 km north-east.

3.3 Environmental Constraints

Flood risk maps place the site in Flood Zone 1 (low probability). There are no heritage designations or protected trees. Ground contamination risk is low given the post-millennium construction and absence of industrial uses. Air quality falls within the Manchester City Council Clean Air Zone but the proposal does not introduce additional combustion or traffic emissions.

4 Description of Development

The application seeks planning permission for:

"Change of use of ground-floor Office 1 (Use Class E(g)(i)) to a taxi booking depot (sui generis), involving internal alterations only."

Fee application form for more details on the proposed. Key attributes are summarised below.

Staffing: 1 full-time employee (09:00–17:00 Mon–Fri)
Public access: None – phone and digital bookings only
Drivers: ≈120 remote drivers subject to drivers availability online; no on-site parking or waiting
Parking Existing: 13 shared bays retained; 1 bay allocated to employee
Cycle: 1 wall-mounted Sheffield stand inside the unit
External works: None
Accessibility: Level threshold; door width 1,030 mm; reception loop system

Internal modifications are limited to installing a lightweight stud partition to create a server cupboard and replacing carpet with non-slip vinyl flooring. All works are fully reversible.

5 Planning Policy Framework

5.1 Statutory Development Plan

- Manchester Core Strategy (2012) – policies most relevant include:
  SP 1 Sustainable Community;
  T 2 Accessible Areas of Opportunity and Need;
  EC 3 The Regional Centre and Key Employment Areas;
  DM 1 Development Management.

- Manchester Local Plan (Submission draft 2023) – limited weight but material, particularly Policy EC 6 Office to Other Uses and Policy TR 3 Sustainable Movement and Car Parking.

5.2 Other Material Considerations

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023, especially paragraphs 119 (efficient use of land), 130 (inclusive design) and 111 (development generating negligible traffic).
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on "Housing & Economic Land Availability" and "Transport Evidence."
- Manchester Guide to Development SPD (2007).
- Manchester City Council Annotated Transport Note – Taxi, Private Hire & Chauffeur Booking Offices (2021 Update).
- Building Regulations Approved Document M – Access to and Use of Buildings (2022 edition).
- Equality Act 2010 – Public Sector Equality Duty.

5.3 Strategic Alignment

The proposal contributes to Core Strategy Objective 3 (economic competitiveness) by retaining high-tech employment, Objective 4 (inclusive communities) through level access, and Objective 7 (tackling climate change) by facilitating remote working and eliminating unnecessary vehicle mileage. It also supports the draft Local Plan aim of "supporting modern, flexible workspace within existing stock."

6 Assessment of Key Issues

6.1 Principle of Development

Core Strategy Policy EC 3 encourages the retention and upgrade of employment floorspace within Key Employment Areas such as Tilson Road. A taxi booking depot is

an employment-generating activity compatible with surrounding B-class uses and maintains economic vitality. As the change involves no physical expansion or loss of office stock (only one of five units), the principle is acceptable.

6.2 Accessibility & Equalities

The depot will employ one staff member who may be wheelchair users in the future; accordingly, the design exceeds the minimum requirements of Approved Document M:

- Level threshold (gradient < 1:60) between car park and entrance door.
- Door-set clear opening width 1,030 mm, exceeding the 900 mm minimum.
- Internal circulation space 1,500 mm turning circle at workstation.
- Visual fire alarm beacons and ceiling-mounted hearing loop transmitter.
- Contrasting colour scheme (≥30 points LRV difference) for door architraves and ironmongery.

Existing WCs and kitchenette on the first floor remain available. Staff with mobility impairments will be provided with flexible working arrangements or home working in compliance with Equality Act 2010 duties. Given that public access is excluded by operational policy, visitor facilities are unnecessary.

6.3 Transport, Parking & Servicing

A separate Transport Statement (Section 7) details compliance with Manchester City Council guidelines. In summary:

- Staff Trips – One two-way trip per weekday during inter-peak hours.
- Driver Interface – All registered drivers operate remotely via an app. No customers or drivers will attend the site for fares or licence purposes.
- Parking – Existing 13 spaces comfortably exceed the "maximum one space per 50 m²" office standard (13 vs 12.7). One bay will be labelled "Booking Depot Staff Only." No increase in demand arises.
- Servicing – Weekly refuse collection via wheeled bins to Tilson Road as existing.
- Sustainable Transport – Proximity to Metrolink and bus services offers genuine modal choice. A cycle stand inside the unit promotes active travel for the staff member.

6.4 Amenity

Noise – The operation is office-based; servers emit < 40 dB(A) at 1 m, well below background daytime levels (LA90 ≈ 46 dB). A Noise Management Plan commits to closing windows after 19:00 if late working occurs.

Odour / Air – No cooking, vehicle idling or odour-emitting processes take place. The change therefore presents neutral air quality impact.

Lighting – Existing external lighting remains; no new luminaires are proposed, avoiding light spill.

6.5 Sustainability & Climate

By re-occupying an existing unit with no material works, the scheme avoids approximately 32 t CO_2-e of embodied carbon (LETI 2023 office fit-out benchmark). Remote driver operation prevents congregational mileage; modelling indicates up to 8,400 km of "dead mileage" saved annually compared with a traditional depot model, equating to 1.5 t CO_2-e reduction.

7 Transport Statement

This Transport Statement is prepared under Manchester City Council's "Annotated Transport Note – Taxi, Private Hire & Chauffeur Booking Offices" (2021), satisfying the requirement for proposals generating < 50 daily trips.

Trip Generation

Recorded call-out logs from the applicant's existing virtual depot show an average of 0.3 visits per driver per month. Transposed to 120 drivers as an example, this would equate to 36 annual visits (0.14 trips per weekday), well below TRICS® Category "Taxi Office" average of 18 daily trips. Given the 'remote-first' business model, a robust assumption of two driver visits per week has been applied for contingency. Combined with the single staff commute, total two-way vehicle movements are therefore 12 per week (average 2.4 per day), occurring outside the network peaks (09:00 arrival, 17:30 departure).

Car Parking Demand

Manchester Parking Standards (Appendix B, Core Strategy) set a maximum of 1 space per employee plus 1 space per 20 m² for public areas. As there is no public access, and the depot employs only one person, demand is capped at one space. The shared car park thus retains a healthy surplus of 12 spaces (92 %).

Public Transport Accessibility

Using the City-approved PTAL tool (v1.3), the site achieves a score of 4. This exceeds the threshold for "good accessibility," enabling car parking provision to be approached flexibly under policy T 2.

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Cycle & Micro-Mobility Provision

The internal wall-mounted stand provides secure, dry cycle storage in line with paragraph 6.2.9 of the Guide to Development SPD, which prefers high security for staff cycles. Electric scooters and e-bikes may also be charged from an existing 13 A socket within the server cupboard.

Servicing & Deliveries

Royal Mail delivers once daily; parcels are infrequent (< 3 per week). Refuse is limited to general waste; the existing 360 L wheelie bin is sufficient. Collection occurs kerb-side on Thursdays, in accordance with waste management arrangements for all five units.

Impact on Highway Safety

Swept-path analysis submitted (Drawing MM-TP-02) demonstrates that the largest anticipated vehicle (7.5 m panel van) can enter and exit in forward gear. Accident statistics from CrashMap show no recorded collisions on Tilson Road in the past five years, indicating a safe environment that will not be compromised by the minimal intensification.

Mitigation & Travel Planning

Given the extremely low trip generation, no physical mitigation measures are necessary. Nonetheless, a Staff Sustainable Travel Pack (Appendix A) has been prepared, providing:

- Metrolink and bus network maps;
- Real-time app download links;
- Cycle route planner;
- Car-share database registration.

The applicant commits to annual monitoring of travel modes via an online survey and will submit results to the Council's Transport Policy Team for the first three years of operation.

8 Planning Balance & Conclusion

Under NPPF paragraph 11(c) the LPA should approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay. This Statement has demonstrated that the change of use of Office 1 to a taxi booking depot fully aligns with the Manchester Core Strategy, emerging Local Plan and national policy:

Benefits

- Re-occupation of a long-vacant unit, supporting local employment.
- Inclusive, step-free workspace exceeding statutory access standards.
- Facilitation of an innovative, low-carbon taxi business model that minimises dead mileage.
- No visual, heritage, flood, noise or air-quality impacts.
- Negligible traffic increase; existing parking and public transport provision more than adequate.

Harms

None of material significance have been identified. The proposal is entirely internal and reversible, ensuring the long-term adaptability of the building.

Conclusion

The planning balance is unequivocally positive. The development constitutes sustainable growth, optimising existing urban brownfield land in accordance with the Core Strategy and NPPF. The Local Planning Authority is therefore respectfully invited to grant planning permission subject to a single condition tying the use to a maximum of one on-site staff member and prohibiting taxi ranking or public access.