

Rochdale Road

Statement of Community Involvement

Prepared by Counter Context Ltd

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counter
context

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

This Statement of Community Involvement has been prepared by Counter Context Ltd on behalf of Cynergy Wellness Residences, hereby referred to as 'the Applicant'. It provides:

- An account of the pre-application consultation undertaken with local residents, local community groups, local councillors and other key stakeholders about the proposals.
- A summary of the feedback received from these consultees.
- Evidence that this feedback has been considered in the development of the proposals.

The pre-application consultation strategy was designed to reflect guidance within Manchester City Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (2018) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023).

1.2 Site Location

The proposed site is bound by Northern Angel to the north-west, Rochdale Road (A664) to the south-east, and Hampton by Hilton to the north-east. It currently comprises a disused Baptist chapel, which occupies roughly three quarters of the site, and off-street car parking.

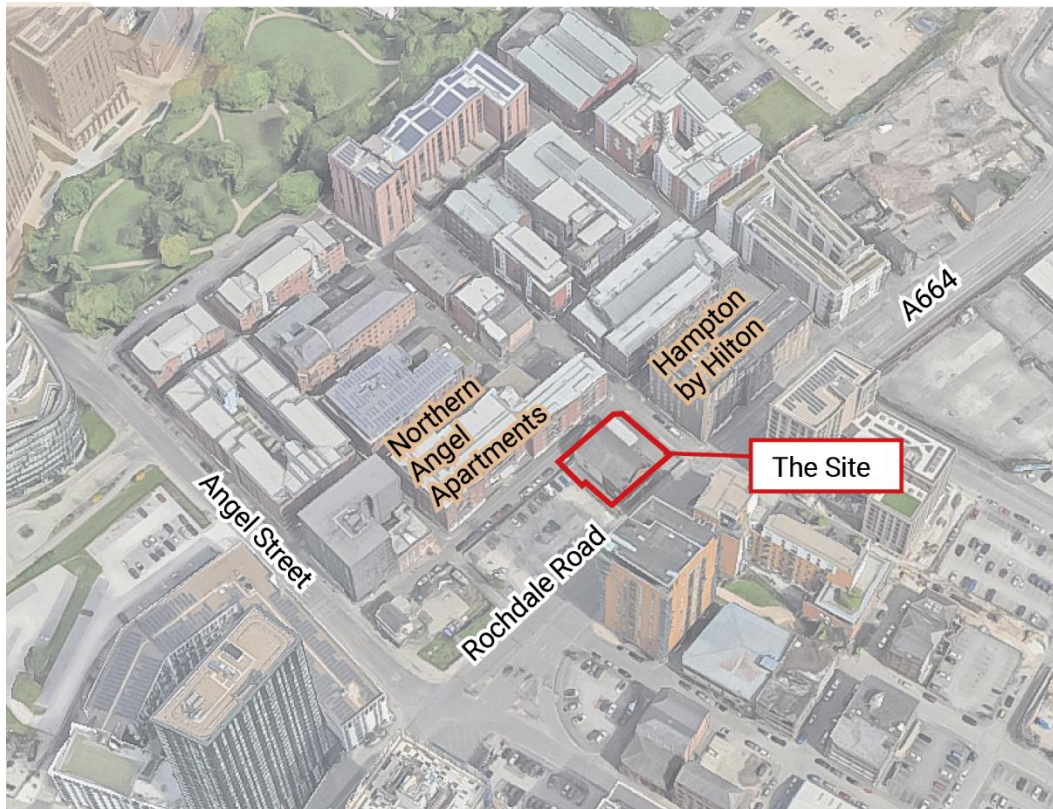


Figure 1: Site location (courtesy of Google Maps).

1.3 Overview of the Proposed Development

Partial demolition of rear of existing building and erection of a 23 storey residential building comprising 133 units with ground floor commercial unit (Use Class E) and associated works.

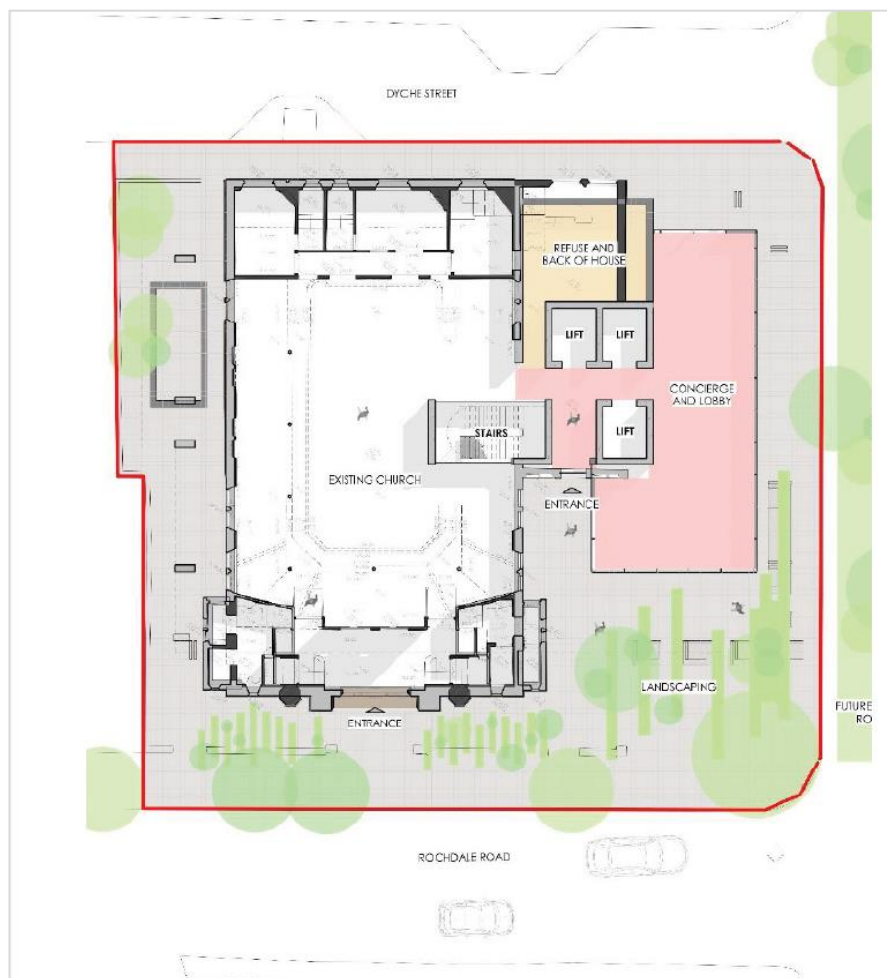


Figure 2: Site plan.

1.4 Policy Requirements

Conducting an early and transparent pre-application consultation is consistent with the guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023).

Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that:

Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.¹

The NPPF goes on to state that:

[Local Authorities] should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.²

¹ Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, 2023, paragraph 39.

² Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, 2023, paragraph 40.

...

Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.³

This Statement of Community Involvement also fulfils a formal recommendation of the Local Planning Authority to provide people with an opportunity to feed into the design process of a scheme at an early stage.

Manchester City Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (2018) sets out 'how developers can ensure that there is an effective opportunity for people to comment and steer development'⁴.

In providing guidance to developers on how they should carry out pre-application consultation, Manchester City Council's Statement of Community Involvement provides recommendations on the types of methods that developers can adopt as part of their pre-application consultation strategy.

Pre-application consultation is beneficial to both the community and the developer as it allows the developer to design a proposal which takes on board the opinions of the community...

...The format of the consultation that the developer uses is likely to be discussed with us as part of pre-application discussions, to help ensure that there is an effective opportunity for people to comment and steer development. The following methods are likely to be suitable and should be used as appropriate:

- *Letters sent to residents and businesses in nearby streets telling them what is proposed, how they can get more information and how they can give the developer their views*
- *Public exhibition in an accessible location close to the development (e.g. library or supermarket) which tells the public about what is happening and gives them an opportunity to make comments*
- *A website set up by the developer*
- *Leaflets distributed to nearby streets and placed in facilities near the proposed developments which have a tear off slip for comments*
- *Social media used by the developer to advertise the development and associated consultation events...*

...We can't require developers to carry out pre-application consultation using the methods set out above, but it is encouraged. Where developers have not engaged with local residents and businesses, it is possible that an application could generate more objections once submitted. This could result in the developer having to amend their application to address the objections which could delay the decision-making process.⁵

From the beginning of the development process, the Applicant set out to undertake a transparent and meaningful consultation with the local community. Throughout the process, stakeholders and local people had the chance to provide feedback to the Applicant and engage in an ongoing dialogue through the consultation channels.

³ Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, 2023, paragraph 132.

⁴ Manchester City Council's Planning and Development Statement of Community Involvement, June 2018, page 33.

⁵ Manchester City Council's Planning and Development Statement of Community Involvement, June 2018, pages 33-34.

2. Pre-Application Public Consultation Activities

2.1 Introduction

This section of the Statement of Community Involvement sets out the range of activities undertaken as part of this pre-application consultation, which ran from Monday 30 September to Monday 21 October 2024, in addition to prior engagement with elected representatives.

2.2 Elected Representative and Stakeholder Engagement

Ahead of the consultation launch, an email was issued to the elected members for the Piccadilly, the ward within which the site is situated. The email provided an introduction to the Applicant, the site, the proposals, and the consultation process. It also invited the councillors to a meeting with the Applicant's team, either in-person or virtually, to discuss the plans in more detail should they wish to. No response was received.

2.3 Publicising the Consultation

2.3.1 Consultation postcard

A postcard was issued 2nd Class via Royal Mail on Wednesday 25 September 2024 to ensure it landed in line with the launch of the consultation on Monday 30 September 2024. It was issued to 2727 addresses within the consultation boundary, as shown below.

The postcard introduced the proposals for Rochdale Road and directed recipients towards the consultation website to find out more.

The consultation leaflet is provided as **Appendix 1**.

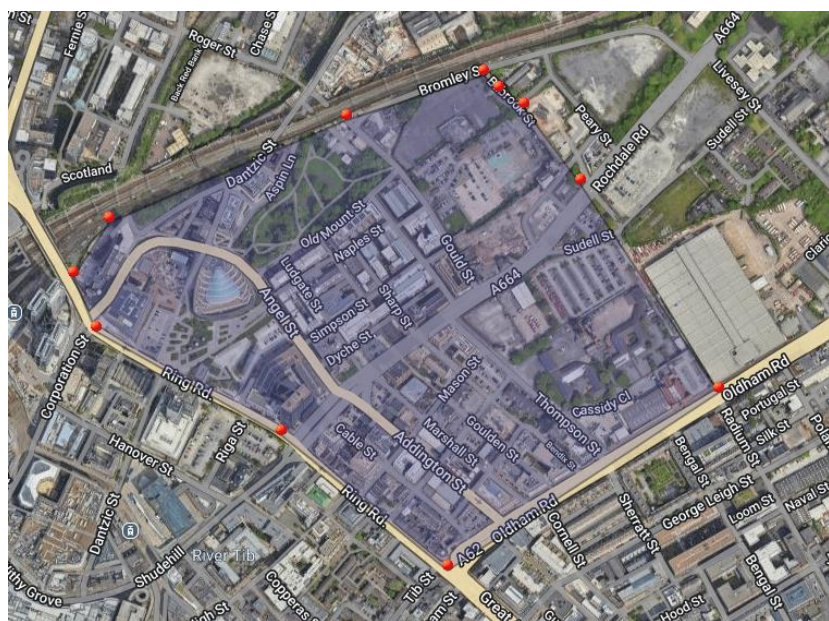


Figure 3: Postcard distribution area.

2.3.2 Press release and media coverage

A press release was issued on Monday 30 September to a range of local, regional and national media publications. It provided introductory information about the proposals and details of the public consultation. Articles subsequently appeared in Place North West, The Business Desk, Business Live, About Manchester and BBC News.

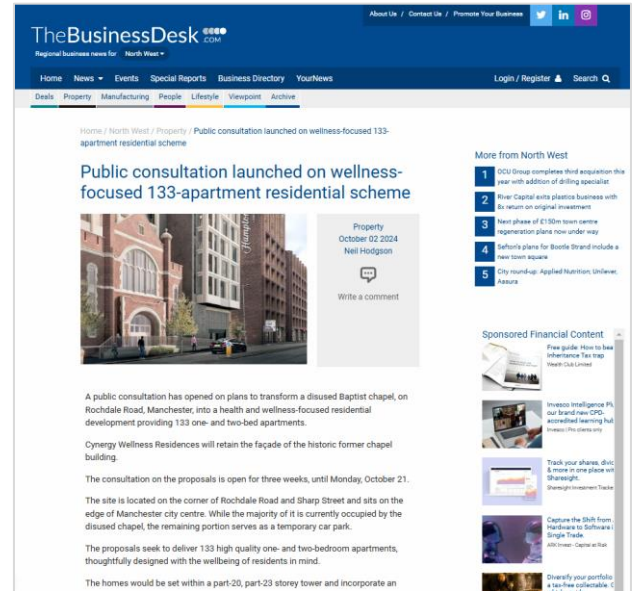
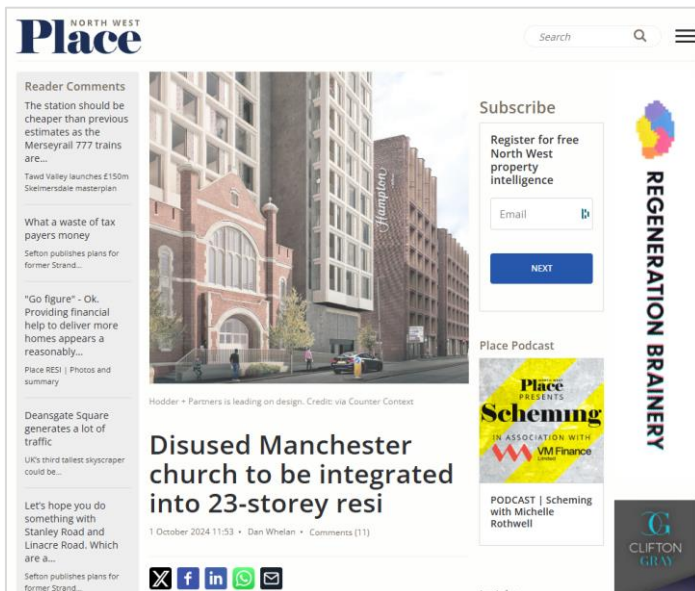


Figure 4: Screenshots of the articles about the proposals that appeared on Place North West (left) and The Business Desk (right).

2.4 Consultation Webpage

The dedicated consultation website went live at the start of the consultation period on Monday 30 September 2024. The website (www.rochdale-road-mcr.com) provided information on the proposals and vision for the development. It also included a 'Have Your Say' section with a link to an online feedback form so that people were able to offer feedback and provide their views on the proposals.



Chapel Retention Plan

The existing chapel would serve as main entrance to the proposed residential development. The façade, which fronts onto Rochdale Road, would be incorporated into the design of the building.

Inside, as much of the chapel has been incorporated into the design as possible. The balustrade and cast-iron columns would be preserved and stand as proud reminders of the chapel's rich history, blending seamlessly with the modern design elements of the development.

Stepping inside, the open foyer would provide a welcoming and inviting atmosphere. The large arched window at the front would provide natural light, casting a soft, warm glow that accentuates the chapel's architectural details. This window would not only serve as a striking focal point but also offer views of the surrounding area.



Proposed view towards the Chapel entrance



To the rear is where the thoughtfully designed co-working space would be situated, providing a dynamic yet serene environment for residents to work and connect. The space would have an open and airy feel, enhanced by the height of the chapel's original ceiling.

Figure 5: Screenshots of the consultation website.

2.4.1 Website activity

Throughout the consultation period, the website received a total of 683 views from 629 unique users.

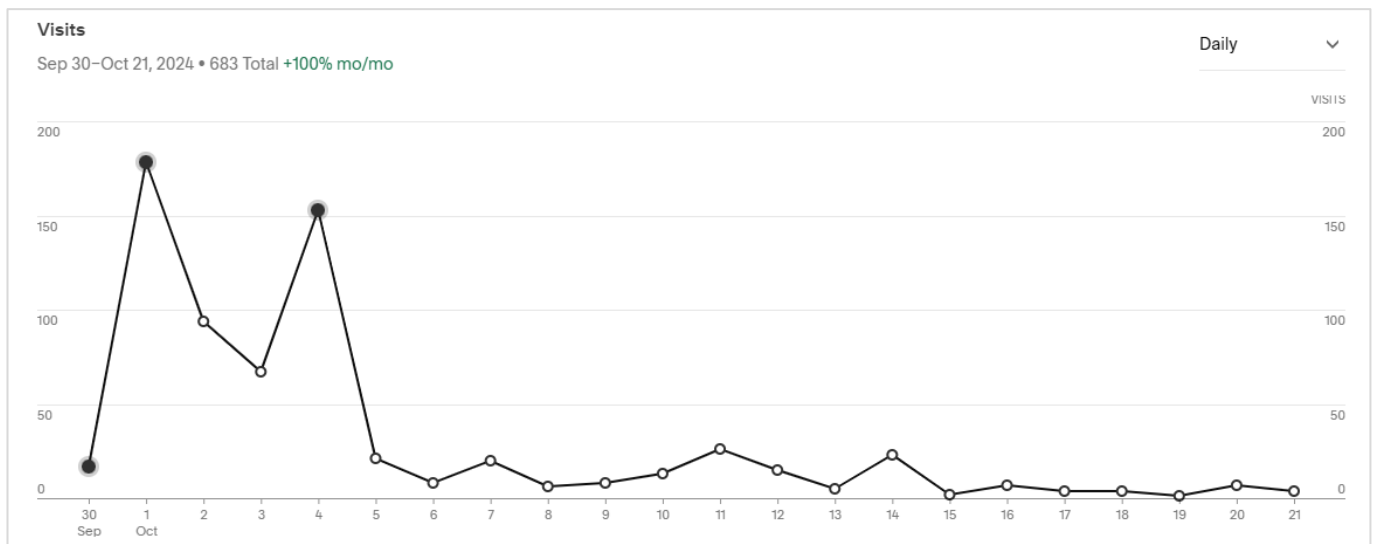


Figure 6: Graph showing the website activity during the consultation period.

2.5 Methods for Receiving Feedback

2.5.1 Email Address

The project email address (info@rochdaleroad-mcr.com) was publicised on all consultation materials, including the website and consultation postcard, allowing people to submit feedback or ask additional questions.

2.5.2 Online Feedback Form

An online feedback form was linked on the consultation website.

3. Pre-Application Consultation Feedback

3.1 Summary of Feedback Received

In total, 55 responses were received during the pre-application consultation via the following channels:

Response Type	Number
Online feedback form	53
Email	2
Total	55

All of the responses received during the pre-application consultation period have been logged and considered by the Applicant's team.

3.2 Analysis of Feedback Forms

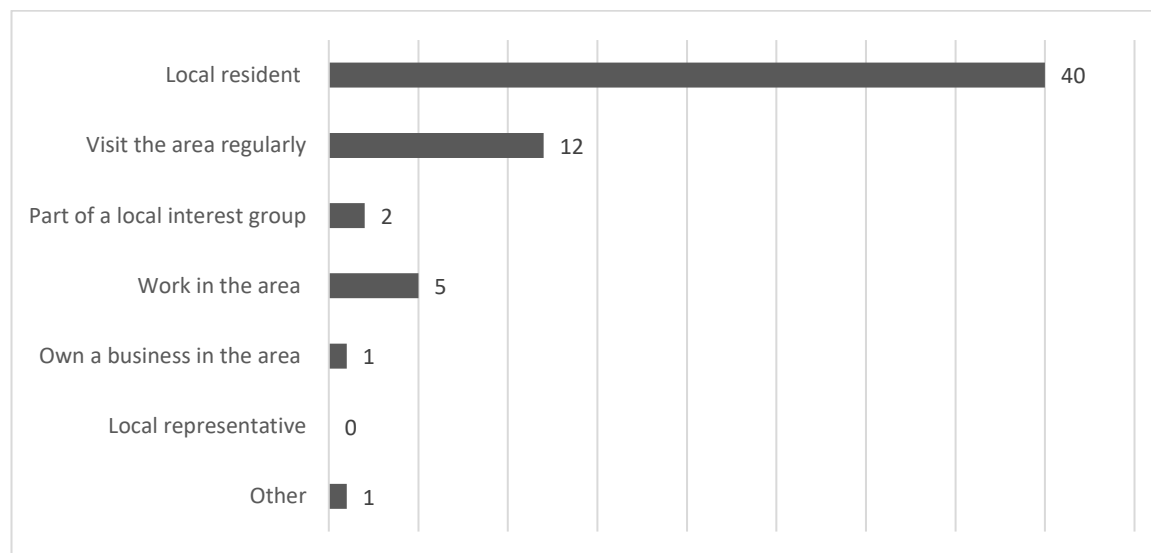
The feedback form included a series of multiple choice questions and open questions about the proposals. Here follows a summary of the answers received through the multiple choice questions asked as part of the online feedback form.

Comments received through the open-text questions included in the feedback form and by email and phone are summarised and responded to in Section 4.1.

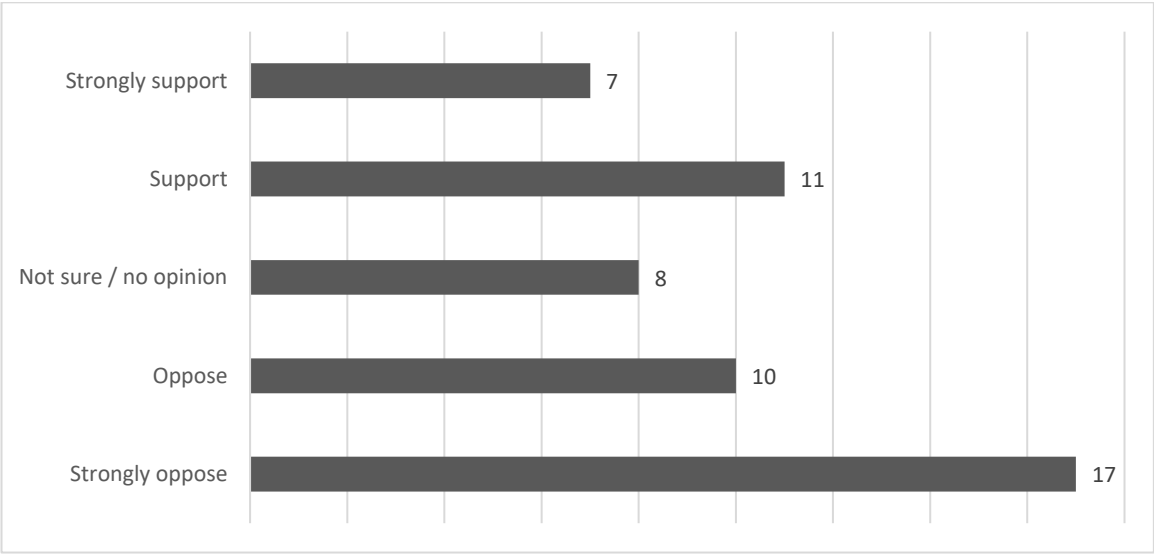
3.2.1 Responses to Closed Questions

How would you describe your interest in the proposals for Rochdale Road? (52/54 respondents answered this question).

Respondents were encouraged to select as many as applied.



To what extent do you support our proposal to breathe new life into the former Baptist chapel on Rochdale Road through the provision of new homes? (53/54 respondents answered this question).



4. Consideration of Pre-Application Consultation Feedback

4.1 Consideration of Issues

A summary of the issues raised by respondents and how they have been considered and responded to by the Applicant is provided in the following table. It should be noted that the submission documents including the Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement respond to these matters in far greater detail.

Topic	Applicant Response
Design	
A number of comments suggesting the height of the building is too tall and out of scale with the surrounding area. - It was suggested that the tallest buildings in the area are nine storeys, which are themselves out of scale with the area as most buildings are six storeys tall. - Suggestion that the building should be capped at 20 storeys. - Suggestion that the building should be capped at 10 storeys. Relatedly, respondents suggested the proposed height of the building would negatively impact existing residents in buildings/properties around the site insofar as it would reduce daylight/sunlight exposure, reduce heat, reduce the quality of life. Some respondents noted that while they are supportive of bringing the church back into use, the scale of the proposal is too big and represents an overdevelopment of the site. A comment acknowledging the logic behind the massing insofar as it follows the rhythm of nearby developments.	The design has been developed to respond to the scale of development in the local area whilst upholding the highest standards of amenity and design quality. There are a range of tall buildings in the immediate area, including the Skyline buildings opposite the site, which reach 19 storeys, NOMA and the nearby Angel Gardens at 35 storeys. Development at scale responds to the Council's ambitions for the regeneration of this city centre fringe location. High density schemes are encouraged in areas such as this, which benefit from the proximity of the city centre facilities and excellent connectivity via public transport and active travel options. The proposals have been carefully designed to uphold amenity for existing and future residents. This is demonstrated through the detailed evidence base which accompanies the application, including a Daylight Sunlight Assessment.
Comments from residents of Northern Angel, a building in close proximity to the site, suggesting that the development would reduce daylight/sunlight levels.	The development's scale and footprint evolved in response to a close analysis of its surroundings and constraints. This included nearby residential dwellings. Northern Angel residents were considered with particular emphasis as they are the proposal's closest residential neighbour. Several design principles were employed to protect their amenity. The building is set back 2.2m from the site's northern boundary, and there are setbacks at levels 3 and 19. As such, suitable separation distances are in place between the existing and proposed dwellings. This is covered in more detail in the application documents. The existing church on the site aligns closely with the ridge height of Northern Angel, with its eaves significantly lower, meaning it does not obstruct surrounding residents' natural light.

	The application includes a Daylight Sunlight Assessment which considers the impact of the scheme on nearby residents' amenity.
Comments that the colour of the building is not in keeping with others in the surrounding area. It was suggested for red brick to be used instead, as other recent developments along Rochdale Road have done (Ancoats Gardens, Hampton, Premier Inn, Downtown Victoria North).	While brick may complement other local designs, its use in this context risks overshadowing the Particular Baptist Chapel. The design approach is guided by the principle that heritage assets should be thoughtfully integrated into the evolving city centre. By selecting a material that offers a clear contrast, the chapel is both emphasized and celebrated.
Comments praising the proposed high-quality materiality.	
Suggestions that the building should match the materiality and style of the church.	The use of concrete allows for a range of high-quality textured surface finishes as well as the ability to create profiled elements on the facade to add richness. The rigorous grid is complemented by an anodised coloured aluminium for the window frames and cladding to set back recesses to give an accent.
Comments criticising the appearance of the scheme. It was suggested that it is indistinctive and is not in keeping with the surrounding area. Another suggested it was outdated.	Following the consultation, the side elevations have undergone further design development to better articulate the façade. This has been achieved through the addition of windows to living spaces and relocating the glazing on the stair cores to face the city centre. The stair cores now appear less monolithic after coordinating a panelised system which will encase them, improving both their appearance and integration with the overall design.
Comments that the facades on the side of the building need more detailing and should seek to be better articulated.	
Suggestion to step back the ground floor of the development further to expand the public realm at the entrance to the chapel.	The front elevation of the proposal is dictated by the position of the existing chapel. Given that the chapel is to remain as a local heritage asset, it is not felt appropriate to re-situate it and install public realm which does not reflect its original appearance.
A comment that there needs to be adequate space for refuse within the design.	The proposals have been carefully considered and include suitable internal refuse storage which is conveniently located for use by residents and collection by operatives. Further information is provided within the application documents.
A request to include some form of green space within the design.	The proposals incorporate two residents' terraces as well as internal amenity spaces.
Church	
A number of respondents praised the decision to integrate the disused church into the design. It was noted that the church is a heritage asset and that the proposals will ensure it is preserved.	The Applicant welcomes these comments of support. Significant attention has been devoted to preserving the existing Baptist Church as far as possible within the design.
It was noted that the church provides a fantastic frontage at street level.	
Comments objecting to the principle of delivering residential accommodation on the site.	The principle of housing on this accessible site that is close to the facilities of the city centre is fully in line with policy and will be a positive addition to the local area.

A number of respondents commented that the design does not respect the church, but rather serves to overshadow and encase it. It was suggested that a new design is needed that celebrates the church.	Promoting the church's frontage was a key consideration in shaping the design's massing. While sections of the building extend outward to interact with the streetscape, the overall proposal is set back to ensure the church remains prominently visible.
A suggestion to demolish the existing church so it is not an impediment on the plans.	The retention of the church is a key element of the proposals and is not considered an impediment.
A suggestion to retain the view of the church façade from the west.	The western return of the church is partially retained and will be clearly visible. This is considered a positive aspect of the design.
A suggestion that the church should be listed.	Historic England reviewed the church as a potential candidate for listing in April 2023. Their report concluded that while the building had a degree of architectural and historic interest, it lacked the strong level of distinction required to merit national listing. While the building is not listed, the applicant is keen to retain it and include it within the proposals due to its local interest.
Site	
A number of comments praising the proposals for bringing a key city centre site back into use.	The Applicant welcomes these comments of support.
Facilities	
Requests for the facilities within the development to be open to the local community. - A request for them to be offered at a discounted rate. - It was noted that doing so will help embed the development within the wider community. A comment noting that facilities such as co-working spaces are often underutilised when only available to residents of the development.	The facilities within the development would only be available to residents, but the commercial elements will be available to both residents and the general public.
Local amenities and infrastructure	
Comments suggesting the Applicant should support local infrastructure.	The planning process requires decision makers to review the potential impacts of the scheme on local infrastructure and require applicants to make contributions/improvements where necessary.
Suggestion to include a commercial unit in the development which could host a new shop.	A commercial unit is included on the ground floor of the development.
Affordable housing	
Comments expressing a preference towards seeing affordable housing delivered on site. Others suggested that at least some of the units included in the development should be offered as affordable housing. Suggestions that there should be some affordable housing specifically for local people. It was noted that many local residents are being priced out of the area due to developments such as this.	The Council has policies in place regarding the provision of affordable housing, and these will be addressed within the submission.
Demand for housing	

A comment praising the proposal for providing much-needed high density housing.	The Applicant welcomes this comment of support.
A comment objecting to the claim that the proposals will help to meet demand for housing in the area as many apartment buildings in the area currently stand half empty.	There is an acknowledged demand for housing of all types in Manchester City centre and for this reason, the Council's policies encourage housing, particularly on sustainably located brownfield sites such as this one.
Construction	
A comment noting the disruption caused by the construction of other developments in the area in recent years, and concern that these proposals would ultimately add to this.	Should planning consent be granted, this will be dependent on the provision of a Construction Management Plan, to be submitted by the Applicant prior to commencement of construction activities. These are typically required to address delivery arrangements, hours of operation, dust mitigation and the like, with the aim being to ensure that the process occurs with the minimum disruption to local residents and businesses.
Concern that the construction of the development would lead to road closures and cause disruption to local residents in the area.	
Car parking	
Comments criticising the exclusion of car parking from the proposals. It was suggested that there should be some level of provision. It was noted that the car parking in the area is already challenging at present and that the proposals would likely exacerbate the situation.	The site is in a highly sustainable location – it is within 30m of a bus stop, and 600m of Manchester Victoria train station and tram stop. It is also within a short walk, or cycle, to the city centre core. Residents will not require a car. Car-free living is popular particularly within such close proximity to the city centre facilities. Furthermore, the proposals include generous provision of secure internal cycle storage.
Traffic	
Suggestions that the proposal would exacerbate traffic in the area	The proposal is entirely car-free. This is a popular approach particularly in such well-located urban areas. The application is accompanied by a Travel Plan which will further promote sustainable travel.
Key services and infrastructure in the local area	
A comment that the adequacy of the area's infrastructure should be considered.	The planning process requires decision makers to review the potential impacts of schemes on local infrastructure and require applicants to make contributions/improvements where necessary.

5. Conclusion and Influence of Consultation on the Proposals

The consultation which has been undertaken is in accordance with both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) and with Manchester City Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (2018). This document fulfils the requirement for a consultation supporting statement that summarises the methods used, the representations received, and the changes made to the proposals as a result of feedback submitted.

The comments received during the pre-application consultation have been considered by the Applicant's team on an ongoing basis to ensure that the issues raised could be addressed during the development of the proposals.

Overall, the feedback received in response to the consultation was broadly balanced. Many respondents expressed support for the plans to bring the disused church on the site back into use, with comments praising the proposed approach to the preserving and retaining the heritage asset. On the other hand, there were concerns around issues such as the proposed scale and design. The table in Section 4.1 provides a comprehensive response to this feedback and all other points raised during the consultation process.

The Applicant would like to thank all those who have provided their feedback during the pre-application consultation and looks forward to further constructive dialogue throughout the development process.

6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1: Consultation postcard

WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS

On our plans for a new development on Rochdale Road

Cynergy Wellness Residences is bringing forward plans to redevelop the former Particular Baptist Chapel on the corner of Rochdale Road and Sharp Street, on the edge of Manchester city centre.

The project seeks to breathe new life into the disused chapel building by delivering much-needed city centre housing.

A total of 133 homes are proposed in a mix of one and two bedroom apartments, supported by a range of amenities including a concierge-manned reception, gym, spa and wellness facilities, social areas, co-working space, secure cycle storage and a communal roof terrace.

As an important heritage asset in the area, the former Baptist chapel fronting Rochdale Road has been carefully integrated into the design. It is retained in the street frontage and in the scale and character of the ground floor space.

In addition to residents' co-working spaces, the ground floor will include a separate commercial unit, helping to activate the surrounding streetscape.

Before we submit a planning application for our proposals, we are keen to hear feedback from the local community.

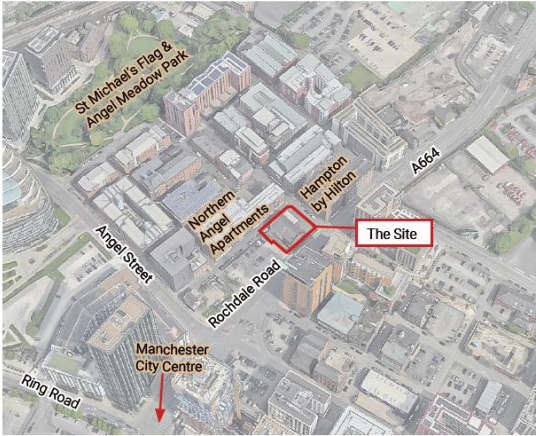


HAVE YOUR SAY

The consultation on our proposals for Rochdale Road will be open for three weeks, from Monday 30 September to Monday 21 October 2024.

You can find more information on our plans by visiting our website, www.rochdaleroad-mcr.com, which also includes a link to a questionnaire to tell us your views.

If you have any questions or would like further information on our proposals, please feel free to contact us via email: info@rochdaleroad-mcr.com.



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