Creative Property People Limited

VIABILITY ASSESSMENT

26A Wilbraham Road

DH/KF
JUNE 2024

PUBLIC

Creative Property People Limited

VIABILITY ASSESSMENT

26A Wilbraham Road

TYPE OF DOCUMENT (VERSION) PUBLIC

PROJECT NO. 70112057

OUR REF. NO. DH/KF

DATE: JUNE 2024

WSP

8 First Street
Manchester
M15 4RP

Phone: +44 161 200 5000

WSP.com

QUALITY CONTROL

Issue/revision	First Issue	Final Issue 1	Final Issue 2
Remarks	Draft for review	Final	Final
Date	13/22/2023	24/22/2023	13/06/2024
Prepared by	Katie Forbes	Katie Forbes	Katie Forbes
Signature			
Checked by	Megan Turner	Megan Turner	Megan Turner
Signature			
Authorised by	Doug Hann	Doug Hann	Doug Hann
Signature			
Project number	70112057	70112057	70112057
Report number	REP.KF.001	REP.KF.001.1	REP.KF.001.1
File reference			

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION 1

2 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT 3

2.1. National Planning Policy Framework 3

2.2. Manchester Local Plan - Core Strategy (Adopted July 2012) 4

3 LOCAL LEVEL OF NURSERY PROVISION AND DEMAND 8

4 SUITABILITY OF PREMISES FOR CONTINUED NURSERY USE 12

5 SUITABILITY OF PREMISES FOR RESIDENTIAL USE 15

6 SUMMARY 17

1

INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. This report has been prepared in response to a request from Manchester City Council for a report to be prepared to justify the loss of the building at 26A Wilbraham Road as it was last used as a children's nursery. This report sets out the case that the building is not viable or required to be retained in nursery use.

1.2. This document has been prepared in relation to the proposal for the demolition of 26A Wilbraham Road in Fallowfield, in order to construct a residential scheme consisting of a block of No.24 apartments. The site is depicted by the red line boundary in Figure 1 below:

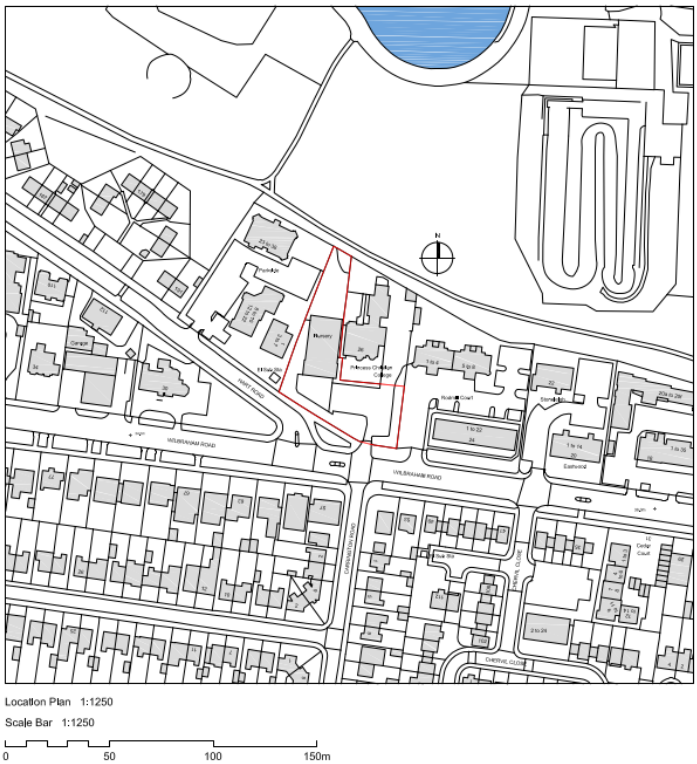


Figure 1 – Site Location Plan

1.3. The building is currently vacant, having last been occupied by Busy Bees Nursery. The use ceased in prior to 2022, with the building sold in April 2022.

2

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

PUBLIC

2 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1. National Planning Policy Framework

2.1.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) came into effect on 27th March 2012 and was most recently updated in September 2023. This Framework outlines the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF highlights that planning applications must be determined in line with the relevant local authority's development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Indeed, development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole. When considering this proposal, particular emphasis is likely to be given to the following chapters of the NPPF.

2.1.2. Chapter 5: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes –

2.1.2.1. This chapter states that *"to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that: a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed; the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay" (p. 17, 2023).*

2.1.3. Chapter 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities –

2.1.3.1. This chapter demonstrates that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive, accessible, and safe places, where crime and disorder (and the fear of crime) do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion. Furthermore, paragraph 93 states in order to provide the social, recreational, and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

"a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;

b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;

c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;

d) ensure that established shops, facilities, and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and

e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services."

2.1.4. Chapter 11: Making effective use of land –

2.1.4.1. This chapter states that planning 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" (p. 35, 2023).* Indeed, 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)48; 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" (p.35, 2023).

2.2. Manchester Local Plan - Core Strategy (Adopted July 2012)

2.2.1. Objective 1 – Spatial Principles: Policy SP1

2.2.1.1. This policy outlines the key spatial principles that will guide the strategic development of Manchester across the plan period, up until 2027. Amongst other things, Policy SP1 states that development should:

a) "Make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including:-

- *creating well-designed places that enhance or create character.*
- *making a positive contribution to the health, safety and wellbeing of residents, considering the needs of all members of the community regardless of age, gender, disability, sexuality, religion, culture, ethnicity or income.*
- *protect and enhance the built and natural environment.*

b) *Minimise emissions, ensure efficient use of natural resources and reuse previously developed land wherever possible" (p.32, 2012).*

2.2.2. Objective 3 – Housing: Policy H1

2.2.2.1. Policy H1 states that proposals for new residential development (including accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and purpose built student accommodation) should consider the need to:

a) *"Contribute to creating mixed communities by providing house types to meet the needs of a diverse and growing Manchester population, including elderly people, disabled people, people with specific support requirements, BME communities, Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople;*

b) *Reflect the spatial distribution set out above which supports growth on previously developed sites in sustainable locations and which takes into account the availability of developable sites in these areas;*

c) *Contribute to the design principles of Manchester's Local Development Framework, including in environmental terms. The design and density of a scheme should contribute to the character of the local area. All proposals should make provision for appropriate usable amenity space, including in high density development (in which this could be in the form of balconies, as well as shared open spaces such as green roofs). Schemes should make provision for parking cars and bicycles (in line with policy T2); and the need for appropriate levels of sound insulation.*

d) *Address any existing deficiencies in physical, social or green infrastructure, or future deficiencies that would arise as a result of the development, through developer contributions or on site provision;*

e) *Prioritise sites which are in close proximity to centres or high frequency public transport routes.*

f) *Take account of any environmental constraints on a site's development (e.g. flood risk through the Manchester-Salford-Trafford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, or other statutory designations).*

g) *Be designed to give privacy to both its residents and neighbours" (p.99 – 100, 2012).*

2.2.3. Policy H6 – South Manchester

2.2.3.1. This policy summarises the role South Manchester will play in meeting the housing needs identified within Objective 3. It states that *"South Manchester will accommodate around 5% of new residential development over the lifetime of the Core Strategy. High density development in South Manchester will generally only be appropriate within the district centres of Chorlton, Didsbury, Fallowfield, Levenshulme, and Withington, as part of mixed-use schemes. Outside the district centres priorities will be for housing which meets identified shortfalls, including family housing and provision that meets the needs of*

elderly people, with schemes adding to the stock of affordable housing" (p.113, 2012).

2.2.4. Objective 4 – Centres

2.2.4.1. Objective 4 of the Manchester City Council's Local Plan indicates that *"Essential to delivering Manchester's community strategy vision of a successful city that attracts and retains successful people is ensuring that everyone has access to a range of shops, community facilities, services, leisure, and culture opportunities that meet their needs in a sustainable way. Accessible district centres and local centres are important in creating a sense of place and focus and therefore central to creating neighbourhoods of choice" (p.132, 2012).*

2.2.5. Policy C1

2.2.5.1. The Centre Hierarchy outlined under Policy C1 identifies Fallowfield as a District Centre within the City's 'South' Regeneration Area. Within this District Centre, the 'Lloyd St South/Platt Lane/Hart Road' Local Centre has been identified, which encompasses the application site.

2.2.5.2. Policy C1 highlights that the role of Local Centres is to *"meet local needs for small scale retail and services to meet day-day needs" (p.133, 2012)*. This policy goes on to state that *"Local centres are important in providing sustainable smaller scale shopping and community facilities to local residents and their continued vitality is important" (p.135, 2012).*

2.2.6. *Policy C2*

2.2.6.1. The site lies close to Fallowfield District centre. Policy C2 seeks to ensure that district centres remain the focus for meeting peoples' day to day needs. It states that "*the Council will ensure that retail remains the principal use in Primary Shopping Areas, but also ensure that provision is made in District Centres for commercial and service uses, leisure and community facilities and other uses which make a positive contribution to vitality and viability of centres*".

3

LOCAL LEVEL OF NURSERY PROVISION AND DEMAND

PUBLIC

3 LOCAL LEVEL OF NURSERY PROVISION AND DEMAND

3.1. In order to comply with The Childcare Act 2006 and the 'Early Education and Childcare' Statutory Guidance 2018, local authorities have a legal duty to annually complete a Childcare Sufficiency Report. The aim of this report is to evaluate the authority's current formal childcare provision, assessing what upcoming demand might look like as well as considering the future needs of the sector. In Manchester, the Council's most recent Childcare Sufficiency Report was published in 2022.

3.2. Available data demonstrates that there is currently sufficient early education and childcare provision for pre-school aged children across Manchester. Citywide there are sufficient childcare and early learning places for children entitled to 2-year-old free entitlement to early learning, 3- and 4-year-old universal early learning and the extended 30 hour free childcare offer. At a local level, provision position varies with some wards showing an undersupply of places compared to other wards where there is an oversupply. However overall, while there are pockets where it is difficult to find childcare to meet specific requirements, high quality childcare for younger children is widely available in private nurseries, preschools, with childminders, in maintained nursery schools and in primary school nursery classes.

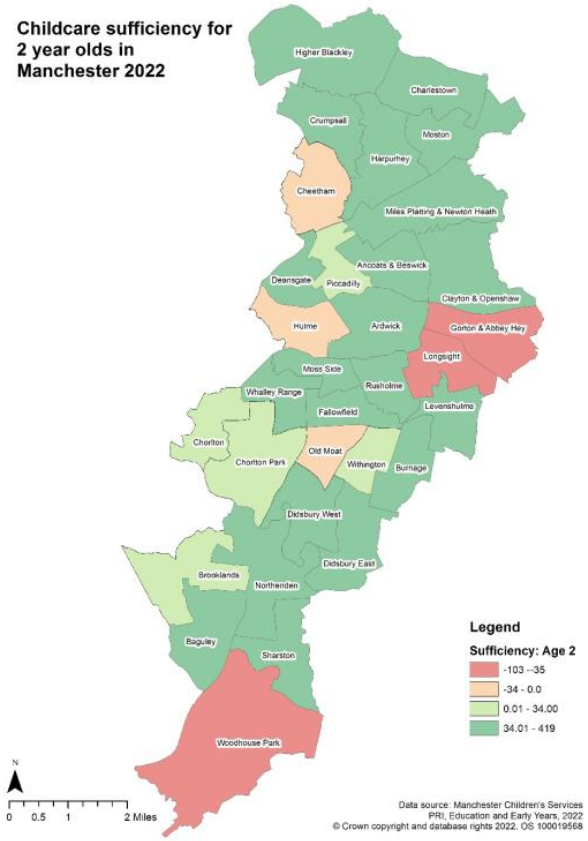
3.3. A declining birth rate as demonstrated in the figure below has seen a reducing demand for nursery places in Manchester. This coupled with factors associated with the Covid-19 pandemic such as loss of employment, changing working patterns and practices (i.e.. Working from home), sickness and bereavement has also impacted upon demand for childcare. The Sufficiency Report concludes this is in line with the national picture and has led to some closures. This in part explains the close at Wilbraham Road.

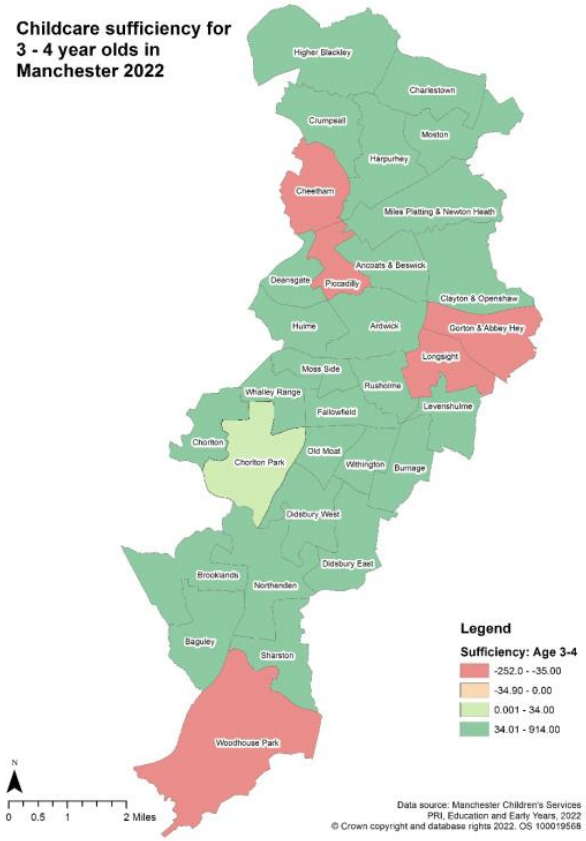
Appendix E – Manchester's 0-4 year old population (based on NHS data)

NHS data - Year	0 to 4	Difference from previous year
2017-18	60971	
2018-19	60315	Down 656
2019-20	58684	Down 1631
2020-21	56769	Down 1951
2021-22	55982	Down 787

3.4. With particular regards to the application site, it falls into Fallowfield Ward The report concludes that Fallowfield is significantly oversupplied in nursery places for all age groups (2 year olds and 3-4 year olds). The neighbouring wards of Old Moat, Withington and Rusholme are also all over supplied. This means that there is no need for the Wilbraham Road site to be retained for nursery use. It also explains why the previous nursery was unable to fill its places.

Appendix B - Maps showing sufficiency of childcare (Early Childhood Education and Care) for children aged 2 – 3 years and 3 – 4 years Summer 2022





3.5. Indeed, there are a number of high-performing nurseries within Fallowfield itself. As seen in Table 1, there are four nurseries located within approximately 1 mile of the Busy Bees Nursery site. As the above table shows some of these nurseries have capacity to take more children.

Table 1 – Details of Nurseries located within 1 mile of 26A Wilbraham Road (Busy Bees Nursey Site)

Name	Address	Approx. Location from Busy Bees Nursery	Most Recent Ofsted Inspection Report Details		
			Total No. of Places	No. of Children on Roll	Rating
			2020		
Brighter Beginnings Day Nursery	Waverton Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 7EB	0.6 miles	74	85	Outstanding
			2022		
WMB Born2Reign Day Nursery	Claremont Sure Start, Claremont Rd, Moss Side, Manchester M14 7NA	0.9 miles	80	87	Good
Bizzie Kidz	357 Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6XU	0.5 miles	45	45	Good
Little Hamza's Nursery	197 Claremont Rd, Manchester M14 4JF	1 mile	90	59	Good

4

SUITABILITY OF PREMISES FOR CONTINUED NURSERY USE

PUBLIC

4 SUITABILITY OF PREMISES FOR CONTINUED NURSERY USE

4.1. The site comprises a single storey building and a rear garden area. The building is ageing in condition.

4.2. Before closure, the nursery's final Ofsted Inspection was conducted in October 2016 and ranked the facility as 'Good'. However, at the time, the nursery had a surplus of places as although the total number of available places was 84, only 68 children were enrolled. This 20% under occupancy was significant in impacting on the viability of the business, given the need for nurseries to have the right amount of children to sustain required high staffing levels. The shortfall in children significantly impacts the viability of a nursery as the same number of staff are required for welfare and care reasons, but the income to off-set costs is reduced. This shortfall in children contributed to the nursery closure and indicates that there was a shortfall in local demand for places at the nursery.

4.3. Therefore, the proposals meet Policy C1 of the Local Plan due to the fact that it is no longer an active community facility used by local residents, there is no loss. The proposal also accords with NPPF paragraph 93 as such facilities must only be retained where they remain viable and provide an important service to the local community. In this case the use is vacant and was not viable. As set out later, there is an oversupply in the area.

4.4. The suitability of the site for continued nursery use is also an important factor. There are a number of key factors that are important to consider when determining the suitably of a premises for use as a nursery (Use Class E: Commercial, Business and Service). In particular, it is vital to ensure such premises are safe and secure with sufficient access and parking to meet the day-to-day needs of the facility. Also, existing flows of traffic and highway conditions in the local area must be carefully considered, to ensure any potential increase in congestion can be mitigated.

4.5. The site at 26A Wilbraham Road sits on the junction between Wilbraham Road (the A6010) and Hart Road, close to the busy junction, with the access crossing a cycle route. There isa narrow single access that does not allow cars to pass each other, making congestion at the AM and PM peaks more likely, and discouraging parents to use the car park, leading to on street parking. The car park itself is shared by the neighbouring EF International Language Campus limiting space availability.

4.6. In amenity terms the suitability of a site for use as a nursery also depends on the nature of the surrounding neighbours, as noise created by children can cause issues in residential areas. In this case, residential apartments closely border the nursery site to the west, and whilst boundary trees provide visual separation from these homes, they have little impact on noise. Noise generated by outside play at the nursery is very hard to mitigate, and therefore given the proximity and sensitive nature of the neighbouring uses, the site is not ideally located for nursery use. Under UDP policy CD26.3 guidance is clear that noise generating uses should be located away from noise sensitive uses like residential.

4.7. In contrast, development of this site for residential use complement neighbouring uses and would contribute positively to the local housing supply and thus, accord with NPPF Chapter 5

and Policy H1 of the Manchester Local Plan. That being said, In addition, there is substantial evidence to indicate that this proposal would comply with NPPF Chapter 8 which requires demonstration that the loss of such a facility would not reduce the ability of the local community in Fallowfield to meet its daily needs for childcare provision.

5

SUITABILITY OF PREMISES FOR RESIDENTIAL USE

PUBLIC

5 SUITABILITY OF PREMISES FOR RESIDENTIAL USE

5.1. The regeneration of this site for residential use would support the delivery of Objective 3 within the Manchester Local Plan, which identifies the need for 90% of residential development across the Plan period to be upon previously developed land. Indeed, in respect of NPPF Chapter 11 and its emphasis on addressing the need for new homes, substantial weight should be placed on the fact that this proposal demonstrates the utilisation of brownfield land within the settlement of Fallowfield for new housing.

5.2. Fallowfield itself, has been identified within Policy H6 as an appropriate location for higher density new residential developments due to its role as a District Centre.

6

SUMMARY

PUBLIC

6 SUMMARY

6.1. The site at 26A Wilbraham Road is no longer suitable and viable for use as a nursey as:

6.2. The previous nursery use was at least 20% under capacity and could not fill its places;

6.3. Before its closure, the nursery could only achieve a ‘good’ rating given its facilities and building, this below other nurseries locally;

6.4. The premises are not ideally located for nursery use given the location close to a junction with limited parking provision;

6.5. The Fallowfield area is well served by other children’s nurseries, with 4 in a 1 mile radius;

6.6. Other nurseries in Fallowfield have capacity, demonstrating that there is not a shortfall in places available.

6.7. The use of the brownfield site for housing will deliver much needed homes in the area and would accord with the NPPF and local plan policy.

6.8. The proposal therefore accords with Core Strategy policy C8 which acknowledges that community services and facilities must only been retained where they remain viable, in order to maintain a reasonable level of provision.

8 First Street
Manchester
M15 4RP

wsp.com

PUBLIC