

Planning & Design Statement

Milan Group Mcr

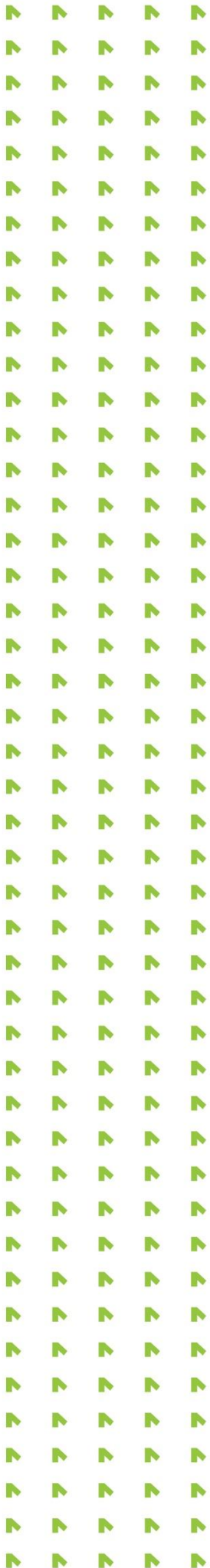
Nos 579-581 Barlow Moor Road

Manchester M21 8AE

Regulated by RTPi

May
2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning and Design Statement has been prepared on behalf of Milan Group Mcr in support of a full planning application for the following works at Nos 579-581 Barlow Moor Road, Chorlton M21 8AE:

- External alterations and extensions to building (including ground floor rear extension and installation of aluminium awnings to provide external seating areas for new restaurant use at ground floor), and
- Change of use of upper floors from vacant Class E commercial floorspace to 7 1b/1p studio apartments.

1.2 The Statement addresses the following matters:

- A description of the site and surroundings;
- A review of the background and history of the site;
- A summary of the development proposal;
- An assessment of relevant planning policy;
- An appraisal of the relevant planning and design issues; and
- Conclusions.

1.3 Accordingly, this Statement addresses the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development in respect of the location, use, layout, scale and appearance – in relation to the site's context. As such, the Statement meets the requirement to formally state how design and access issues have been considered.

1.4 The Statement should also be read in conjunction with the drawings package prepared by FOB Design UK.

1.5 The submissions conclude that the development proposal is acceptable and supportable in planning terms.

2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The site relates to Nos 579-581 Barlow Moor Road, which is a vacant former Halifax bank positioned on the western side of the road close to the ‘four banks’ crossroads with Wilbraham Road within the District Centre of Chorlton.
- 2.2 The property extends over four floors (including basement) and is of traditional construction with brickwork elevations under a pitched tiled roof with gable features on the front roofslope. To the rear is a private gated car park.
- 2.3 The District Centre is a large, busy neighbourhood centre containing a wide variety of small-scale retail, food and drink and other commercial uses at ground level with residential floorspace at upper floor level. The area is highly accessible, with excellent access to public transport including buses and trams (GMAL rating 8).
- 2.4 There are many examples of retractable awnings to the front and side elevations of restaurant premises within the immediate streetscene, including Rudy’s Neapolitan Pizza restaurant to the south of the site on the other side of Silverwood Avenue.
- 2.5 Please refer to the extract of the site location plan and images of the site below and overleaf.

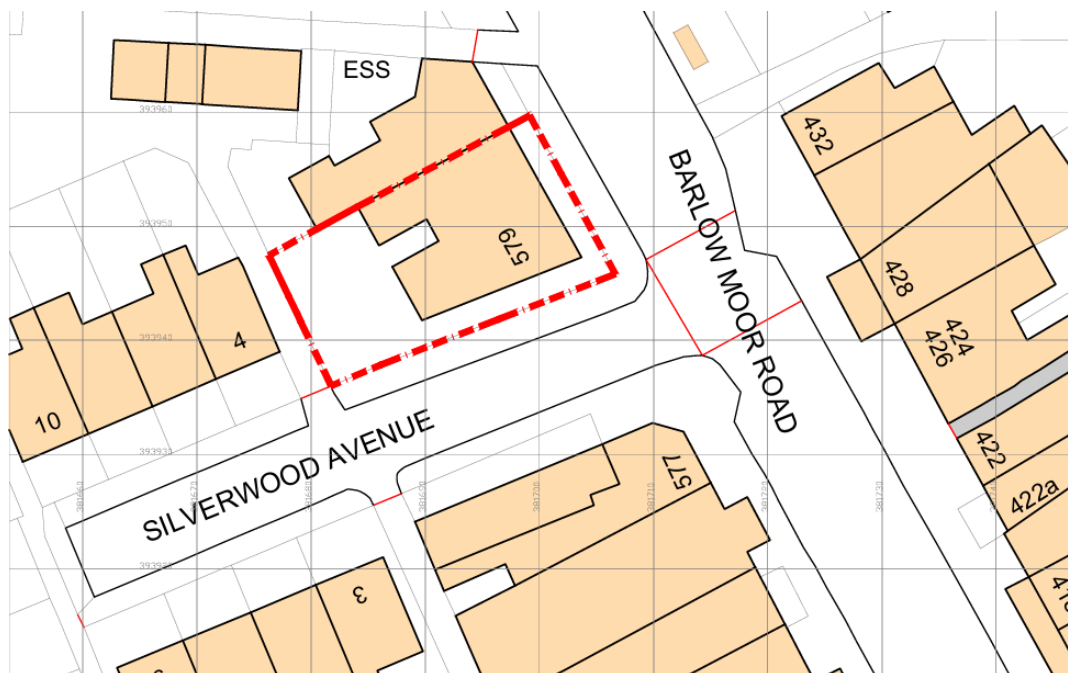


Image 1 – Extract of Site Location Plan



Image 2 – Photograph of front elevation from Barlow Moor Road



Image 3 – Photograph of rear elevation and car park facing towards Silverwood Avenue



Image 4 – Streetview image of Barlow Moor Road streetscene facing south (with site visible in foreground). The image displays several commercial premises within the immediate streetscene with retractable external awnings/seating areas which contribute to the vibrant character of the District Centre



Image 5 – Overhead view of site facing north west

3 PLANNING HISTORY

The Site

- 3.1 The site has been subject to several historical applications, although these relate to the (now vacant) commercial use of the premises and are of no relevance to the current application proposal.

Surroundings

- 3.2 Of key relevance to the development proposal are the following applications:
- **Ref 137425/FO/2023** - Three storey rear extension and elevational alterations at Nos 597-599 Wilbraham Road, in connection with the creation of two retail units (Class E) on the ground floor and six self-contained flats above (Class C3) – Approved 20th September 2023
 - **131058/FO/2021** - Proposed alterations to the existing elevation at No 577 Barlow Moor Road (Rudy's Pizza) to form new door opening and reinstate blocked up windows, installation of retractable awnings, small rear extension and installation of new pizza oven flue – Approved 7th October 2021
- 3.3 The above planning history clearly demonstrates the conversion of vacant commercial floorspace (at upper floor level) within the District Centre to residential apartments, in addition to the introduction of external awnings to accommodate outdoor seating in association with restaurant premises.

4 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The development proposal relates to a series of external alterations and extensions to the building associated with its accommodation of a new restaurant and the change of use of the first and second floors from vacant Class E commercial floorspace to 7 1b/1p studio apartments.
- 4.2 The change of use from bank to restaurant does not require permission as the Use Class for both falls under class E.
- 4.2 The proposed external alterations are summarised in turn below:
- Ground floor rear extension with a width of 6.2 metres and rear projection of 3 metres to match existing extension on adjoining neighbouring property to accommodate part of new kitchen associated with the new restaurant on site;
 - Installation of aluminium awnings to provide external seating areas for new restaurant use at ground floor level to the front and side elevations;
 - Re-positioning of existing gates to rear car park and integration of external cycle and refuse stores at ground floor;
 - Integration of new gable dormer roof extension within front roof slope facing Barlow Moor Road;
 - New rooflight within front roof slope;
 - Two flues on rear elevation of ground floor extension;
 - New window within rear elevation, and
 - Removal of existing chimneys from roofscape.
- 4.3 For the residential element of the scheme, all units achieve a minimum internal floor area of at least 37 sqm to comply with the National Described Space Standards. Flat 4 (which is split over two floors) extends to 49 sqm.
- 4.4 As shown on the enclosed drawings package, each habitable room will benefit from at least one window (or rooflight) providing good outlook and levels of sunlight/daylight throughout.
- 4.5 The site is not located within a conservation area, albeit careful consideration has been afforded to ensure that all external elements of the proposal respond positively to local distinctiveness and sit comfortably in terms of visual appearance and massing, whilst respecting the host property and visual character of the streetscene.
- 4.6 As demonstrated on the enclosed drawings package, provision is made for safe and secure cycle and refuse storage within the dedicated service yard to the rear. The existing vehicular access to the site will be retained.

5 PLANNING POLICY

5.1 This section provides a review of relevant national and local planning policy and guidance.

NATIONAL POLICY

5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in December 2023 and sets out the Government's objectives for achieving sustainable development. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

5.3 Development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan should be approved without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, permission should be granted unless:

- The application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the proposed development; or
- Any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

5.4 Paragraph 8 confirms that there are three dimensions to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. To achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental net gains should be pursued in mutually supportive ways through the planning system.

5.5 The NPPF explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area. These sustainable objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in the framework.

Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes

5.6 Paragraph 60 explains that in order to support the Government's commitment to significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land comes forward for development where it is needed, that needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.

5.7 Local Planning Authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies or against their local housing need where strategic policies are more than five years old. The five year supply should include an appropriate buffer. Where the local authority chooses to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable sites through an annual position statement or recently adopted plan the buffer should be 10% to account for any fluctuations in the market during that year. In the event that there has been significant under delivery when measures against the Housing Delivery Test (November 2018 onwards) then a 20% buffer should be applied.

5.8 The NPPF is clear at paragraph 11 that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites or the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below the housing requirement over the previous three years.

Building a Strong and Competitive Economy

- 5.9 Chapter 6 of the NPPF emphasises that the government is committed to ensuring that the planning system should help create conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight is afforded to 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. Furthermore, it is confirmed that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

- 5.10 To protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes, development should be located and designed to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and have access to high quality public transport facilities; address the needs of people with disabilities by all modes of transport; create safe and secure places minimising conflicts between traffic and pedestrians; allow for the efficient delivery of goods and access by service and emergency vehicles; and be designed to enable the charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

Making Effective Use of Land

- 5.11 The NPPF recognises the need for the planning system to promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses. 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.
- 5.12 Paragraph 124 (c) explains that the planning system should specifically give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for new homes and other identified needs. Furthermore, sub-section (d) of this paragraph explains that planning should also 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.
- 5.13 Sub Section (e) of paragraph 124 outlines that Council's should 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.
- 5.14 The chapter goes on to discuss how appropriate densities can be achieved. Paragraph 128 sets out that the planning system should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account the following:
- 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.

Achieving Well Designed Places

5.15 This chapter sets out at paragraph 135 that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- Are sympathetic to local character and history including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- Establish a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks, and
- Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being.

Decision Taking

5.16 Guidance in paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive and creative way. They should work proactively with planners 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.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5.17 The Development Framework currently consists of the Manchester Core Strategy combined with several saved policies from the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2006).

5.18 Accordingly, the Core Strategy and UDP set out the detailed policies for consideration of planning applications within the City. The policies relevant to the assessment of the development proposal are summarised below.

Core Strategy

5.19 **Policy SP1 (Spatial Principles)** advises that the key spatial principles which will guide the strategic development of Manchester to 2027 are:

- The Regional Centre will be the focus for economic and commercial development, retail, leisure and cultural activity, alongside high quality city living.

- The growth of Manchester Airport will act as a catalyst for the regional economy, and will also provide the impetus for a second hub of economic activity in this part of the City.
- Beyond these areas, the emphasis is on the creation of neighbourhoods of choice, providing high quality and diverse housing around district centres which meet local needs, all in a distinct environment. The majority of new residential development in these neighbourhoods will be in the Inner Areas, defined by the North Manchester , East Manchester and Central Manchester Regeneration Areas.
- The City is covered by regeneration areas including the City Centre. All development should have regard to the character, issues and strategy for each regeneration area as described in the North, East, Central and South Manchester and Wythenshawe Strategic Regeneration Frameworks and the Manchester City Centre Strategic Plan.
- The City's network of open spaces will provide all residents with good access to recreation opportunities. The River Valleys (the Irk, Medlock and Mersey) and City Parks are particularly important, and access to these resources will be improved.
- New development will maximise the potential of the City's transport infrastructure, in particular promoting walking, cycling and use of the public transport. The extension to the Metrolink network through the Oldham and Ashton lines will create key corridors for new development.

Core Development Principles

Development in all parts of the City should:

- 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;
 - Minimise emissions, ensure efficient use of natural resources and reuse previously developed land wherever possible. Improve access to jobs, services, education and open space by being located to reduce the need to travel and provide good access to sustainable transport provision.

6.18 **Policy H6 (South Manchester)** advises 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.

6.19 **DM1 (Development Management)** states that development management should have regard to the following specific issues

- Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail;
- Impact on the surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development. Development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area;
- Effects on amenity, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality, odours, litter, vermin, birds, road safety and traffic generation. This could also include proposals which would be sensitive to existing environmental conditions such as noise.
- Accessibility: buildings and neighbourhoods fully accessible to disabled people, access to new development by sustainable transport modes;
- Community safety and crime prevention;
- Design for health;
- Adequacy of internal accommodation and external amenity space;
- Refuse storage and collection;
- Vehicular access and car parking;
- Effects relating to biodiversity, landscape, archaeological or built heritage;
- Green Infrastructure including open space, both public and private;
- The use of alternatives to peat-based products in landscaping/gardens within development schemes;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Existing or proposed hazardous installations;
- Subject to scheme viability, developers will be required to demonstrate that new development incorporates sustainable construction techniques.

6.20 **Policy EC9 (South Manchester)** advises that South Manchester is not expected to make a significant contribution to employment provision within the City. The District Centres of Chorlton, Didsbury, Fallowfield, Levenshulme and Withington will be suitable for mixed use development providing local needs and services.

6.21 **Policy C2 (District Centres)** requires development to support thriving district centres, with distinct local character, providing a good range of accessible key services, including retail, health facilities, public services, leisure activities and financial and legal services. Housing will also be considered an appropriate use within District Centres, providing it supports the vitality and viability of the centre.

Unitary Development Plan

6.22 **Policy DC5 (Flat Conversions)** Outlines that in determining planning applications to convert properties into flats, the Council will have regard to:

- The standard of accommodation for the intended occupiers of the premises;
- Effects on adjoining houses as a result of noise from flats passing through party walls and affecting adjoining houses;
- Adequacy of car parking, off street car parking being normally required where practicable, and essential where there is so severe an existing on-street parking problem that unacceptable additional pressures would be created;
- General effects on the character of the neighbourhood, including the extent to which flat conversion schemes and the retention of existing trees and shrubs;
- Adequate private outdoor amenity space;
- The desirability of achieving easy access for all, including disabled people (as a minimum, access for disabled people will normally be required in conversions of ground floor accommodation), and
- The satisfactory provision of refuse storage and collection facilities.

6.23 There will be a general presumption in favour of flat conversions within residential areas, on the upper floors of businesses within commercial areas and in properties on main road frontages, subject to other relevant policies of the plan. They will be particularly welcome where large, old, difficult to re-use properties are involved, and where proposed schemes provide investment enabling the retention and improvement of housing stock.

6.24 Notwithstanding this the Council will normally refuse permission for any developments in this category which:

- Do not provide accommodation to the Council's current approved standards;
- Are in tightly packed residential streets where there is no scope for off-street car parking and where there is an already acknowledged problem of on-street congestion;
- Involve conversion schemes without adequate private external amenity space;
- Are schemes without satisfactory refuse storage and collection facilities.

7 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The planning issues relevant to the determination of the development proposal are assessed in detail below.

Principle of Development

- 7.2 As examined within the previous section, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires the Council to make the most efficient use of land by maximising the use of underutilised, previously developed land and buildings.
- 7.3 The NPPF directly advocates the promotion and support for 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).
- 7.4 Furthermore, the NPPF encourages the exploration of opportunities to utilise airspace above existing residential and commercial premises for new homes (subject to ensuring an acceptable design).
- 7.5 The site is positioned within an accessible, sustainable District Centre location with easy access to a range sustainable transport modes.
- 7.6 The proposed introduction of studio apartments at first and second floor levels thereby accords with Policy H6 of the Core Strategy which confirms high density residential development in South Manchester is appropriate within the District Centres of Chorlton, Didsbury, Fallowfield, Levenshulme, and Withington, as part of mixed-use schemes.
- 7.7 The proposed external works to the vacant building will also serve to enhance its general appearance and reintroduce an active mixed use for the benefit of the District Centre and local community. The proposed addition of the external extensions at ground floor to provide additional and improved space for the new restaurant use is acceptable in principle, particularly given the District Centre location.
- 7.8 By way of demonstration, the principle of the proposed development (in relation to both the external residential seating area and the residential floorspace at upper floor level) has previously been confirmed as acceptable by the Council when approving two applications at immediate neighbouring sites (Nos 597-599 Wilbraham Road and 577 Wilbraham Road) as summarised at Section 3.

Design

- 7.9 The site is not located within a conservation area, albeit careful consideration has been afforded to ensure that all external elements of the proposal respond positively to local distinctiveness and sit comfortably in terms of visual appearance and massing, whilst respecting the host property and visual character of the streetscene.
- 7.10 The canopies would project above the existing windows, with a height of 2.6 m from ground level and finished in aluminium to ensure a high quality, contemporary external appearance that will positively contribute to the vibrant commercial nature of the District Centre.

- 7.11 This element of the proposal has been informed by the Council's approval of application Ref 131058/FO/2021 at the neighbouring Rudy's Pizza site on the opposite side of Silverdale Avenue and also seeks to ensure that the external flues associated with the restaurant use will be positioned discreetly on the rear elevation to ensure no harmful impact upon the streetscene.
- 7.12 The range of other external alterations (including the proposed rear extension) are relatively minor in nature and will respect the visual appearance of the host property as explained above.
- 7.13 Overall, the proposed development will enhance the appearance of this vacant unit. The visual improvement brought by the change to a restaurant and the rationalisation of refuse storage within the rear yard area will improve the visual amenity of the streetscene (including Silverwood Avenue) parade as a whole in accordance with Policies DM1 and SP1.

Impact upon Neighbouring Properties

- 7.14 The proposed development will not result in any unacceptable impact in terms of over-dominance, overlooking or overshadowing.
- 7.15 In terms of activity, the proposed development would result in the addition of 7 studio apartments. Within the context of a busy District Centre environment, it not considered that resulting levels of activity would be significant or capable of being sustained in a location where a lesser degree of amenity would be expected.
- 7.16 If necessary, the applicant is happy to accept conditions relating to acoustic insulation, hours of opening and servicing arrangements to ensure any impact can be suitably regulated.

Residential Living Standards

- 7.17 All internal rooms will meet and/or exceed targets set out within the National Space Standards. Provision will also be made within the site for secure cycle accommodation and refuse storage as explored in further detail in the subsequent section.
- 7.18 Furthermore, as shown on the enclosed drawings package, each habitable room will benefit from at least one window (or rooflight) providing good outlook and levels of sunlight/daylight throughout.
- 7.19 The drawings package indicates that the proposed external flues will be placed on the rear elevation of the proposed single storey kitchen extension at ground floor, which is positioned away from habitable room windows to mitigate the potential for any harmful impacts in terms of noise/odours.
- 7.20 Given that the residential element of the proposal relates to the upper floors of an existing building, there is no reasonable scope to provide private amenity space for occupiers. However, the site is positioned within a highly accessible area where high density development is acceptable.
- 7.21 Future residents will benefit from immediate access to a wide range of shops, services and transport links, in addition to several local parks and open spaces including Beech Road Park which is positioned approximately 500 metres to the south of the site.
- 7.22 Accordingly, the revised scheme will provide acceptable living conditions for occupiers in line with Policies DM1 of the Core Strategy and DC5 of the UDP.

Parking/Cycle/Refuse Provision

- 7.23 The proposed development would result in the removal of a small number of poorly arranged car parking spaces from the rear yard, resulting in zero provision for the development.
- 7.24 This approach was considered acceptable by the Council in approving the directly comparable development Ref 137425/FO/2023 in September 2023 for works including six new flats at Nos 597-599 Wilbraham Road, with the delegated report confirming that:
- “Highways consider that given the highly accessible location of the site and the car parking restrictions surrounding the site which would deter parking, the lack of off-road car parking provision can be accepted in this location. This is particularly so, given the sustainable location of the site within Chorlton District Centre, with access to a range of shops and services, high frequency bus services along Barlow Moor Road and Wilbraham Road and with Chorlton Metrolink stop a short walk from the site.”*
- 7.25 The rear yard will be used to accommodate accessible, secure cycle and refuse storage as shown on the drawings package, as well as space for off-street servicing.
- 7.26 The proposed scheme is therefore compliant with Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy.
- 7.27 Furthermore, Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that 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. Against this background, we do not consider that there is any reason to refuse the scheme on highways grounds.

8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 It is concluded that the revised development proposal is in accordance with the NPPF and the Council's adopted Development Plan. It therefore constitutes appropriate development and should be supported for the following reasons:

- The principle of creating new residential dwellings on an existing site in a highly accessible District Centre location within the urban area, is clearly supported by national and local policy. The proposed scheme will provide much needed new housing for the local community whilst enabling an efficient, effective use of the site;
- The proposed external works to the vacant building will also serve to enhance its general appearance and reintroduce an active mixed use for the benefit of the District Centre and local community. The proposed addition of the contemporary aluminium seating extensions at ground floor to provide additional and improved space for the new restaurant use is acceptable in principle, particularly given the District Centre location;
- The internal layout of the scheme (together with the careful orientation of new windows) ensures there will be no unacceptable adverse impact upon the amenity of occupiers of any existing neighbouring properties;
- The proposed accommodation is fully acceptable and of a high standard. Each new apartment will meet or exceed internal space standards and rooms will benefit from good levels of outlook and sunlight/daylight, and
- The highly accessible nature of the site means that zero parking provision is acceptable as evidenced by the Council's approval of similar applications within the recent past. Secure and accessible cycle and refuse storage (together with room for off road servicing) within the rear yard will be provided for the benefit of future residents and to ensure highways safety.

8.2 Overall, the scheme adopts the principles of sustainable development in relation to social, economic and environmental factors. This is because it recycles urban land and delivers a mix of residential dwellings which are accessible by a choice of travel modes including foot, cycle and public transport. The proposals thereby accord with the emphasis of national policy (set out within the NPPF), which confirms a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

8.3 In light of the above, the revised scheme has been demonstrated to comply with all relevant planning policies of the NPPF, adopted Local Plan (most notably Policies SP1, H6, DM1, EC9, C2 of the Core Strategy and EC5 of the UDP) and should be considered acceptable.

