

Building for a Healthy Life Assessment

Devonshire Street, Manchester

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Building for a Healthy Life Assessment

This Building for a Healthy Life Assessment has been produced by DK-Architects in support of the proposed managed residential development on Devonshire Street in Manchester. The document represents a critical analysis of how the scheme responds to policies set out in 'Building for a Healthy Life'.

The intention of this scheme is to provide a new carefully designed, high-quality, residential institution offering temporary accommodation managed by for Jigsaw Homes to meet an identified strategic need.

Building for a Healthy Life is a widely used design tool used by Architects and Designers used to aid in the creation of places that are better for both people and nature. The initiative puts a greater focus on healthier communities. The intention is to give consumers confidence that important aspects of design have been considered during the development of new housing and neighbourhood planning.

The current edition of Building for a Healthy Life guidance was written in partnership with Homes England, NHS England, and NHS Improvement and is based upon previous iterations of this guidance and interoperates user feedback. Building for a Healthy Life is Homes England's key measure of design quality. It is a widely recognised design tool which has been cited in many Local Authorities supplementary planning documents and used by; designers, highways authorities, planning committees, developers, local communities and other stakeholders.

As such it is a valuable design tool which can be used as a metric to measure the success of a proposed scheme against.



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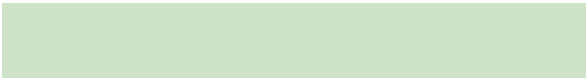
Introduction to Building For a Healthy Life

“What is Building for a Healthy Life?”

Building for a Healthy Life replaced Building for Life 12 (B4L12) and is an industry standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods which is endorsed by the Government.

This policy is broken down into 12 key considerations designed to make those involved in the design of new developments aware of the attributes of successful places and how they can be implemented to align with the unique characteristics of a site and its broader context. Each consideration provides clear written and visual cues to assist in recognizing best practices and steering clear of common mistakes.

The 12 points are listed below:



Integrated Neighbourhoods

- 01. Natural connections
- 02. Walking, cycling and public transport
- 03. Facilities and services
- 04. Homes for everyone



Distinctive Places

- 05. Making the most of what’s there
- 06. A memorable character
- 07. Well defined streets and spaces
- 08. Easy to find your way around



Streets For All

- 09. Healthy streets
- 10. Cycle and car parking
- 11. Green and blue infrastructure
- 12. Back of pavement, front of home

Scoring Metric

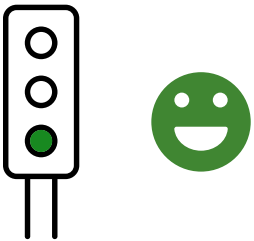
This report represents a critical analysis of the proposal on Devonshire Street against the guidance set out in Building for a Healthy Life. The Design guide provides recommendations which can be easily reviewed against.

By using BHL we can better understand the qualities of well-designed developments. The guidance against each consideration point is set out to help understand how a green light scheme looks and functions - and how a red light scheme looks and functions.

The more green lights a development attains, the better it should be. Amber suggests areas of a development that could be improved and red warns that an aspect of the development needs to be reconsidered.

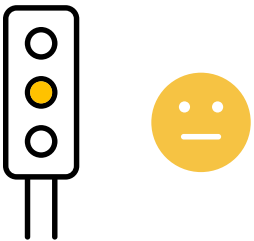
To make it simple to understand how the scheme responds to each policy DKA have scored each sub-strategy with one of three options. The traffic light system is used to easily visualise where a proposal is failing to meet the targets as proposed by the Building for Healthy Life Assessment.

There may be circumstances where amber lights cannot be avoided due to circumstances beyond the control of the local authority and/or the developer. For instance, third-party land ownership may prevent optimal connectivity from being achieved in these instances an amber light might be justified.



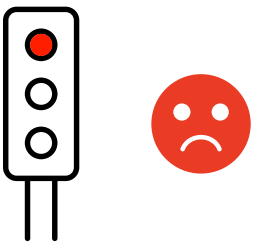
Green - Go Ahead

This represents a scheme that is designed in accordance with Building for a Healthy Life guidance. Great schemes will improve the quality of life of the residents.



Amber - Try and Turn Green

This represents schemes that mostly meets National Design Guide policies however may have a few elements that counter its success. Attention should be paid to see if it is possible to improve the scheme.



Red - Stop and Rethink

This represents a scheme that is in contradiction with the National Design Guide and planning policy and will make the area worse. Any red marks should be addressed prior to the scheme proceeding.

Devonshire Street

Brief Introduction

The site is situated on Devonshire Street in the South East of Manchester. It has excellent transport links to the city centre an as such is a highly sustainable location for development.

The site is currently unoccupied with historic mapping analysis appears to show that the site may have been built on previously with the surrounding area cleared and a new road layout set out sometime since World War II. The site features a dense collection of low quality and is surrounded by chain link fencing.

The design of the proposed building meets policy guidance and will serve as an architectural asset to the area, creating a high-quality, sustainable development. The proposal is designed to appear domestic in nature and to be of a scale appropriate to the local context. It will improve upon the current materiality and aesthetic value for the street and improve the quality of the housing provision within the area.



Executive summary

Key Findings

In completing this report DKA found that the building scores well overall achieving 10 out of a possible 12 green lights with no red lights. This suggests that the building will likely act as a positive development for Ardwick, Manchester and will improve the character, quality and urban form of the Town.

The two points which scored amber were 04. integrated neighbourhoods and 08. easy to find your way around. In both of these instances elements outside of the architects control were the root cause of this selection. These were mainly due to the scale of the development prohibiting it from offering cross site connectivity and addressing larger issues in the area and the nature of the development requiring security to be a fundamental design response in which some of the Building for a Healthy Life guidance was found to be in contradiction to secure by design principals. In these instances the guidance has been best applied to the proposal where possible.

As a result of this assessment DKA are satisfied that BFHL guidance has been applied suitably and that the proposal will promote healthy lifestyles and improve the design of neighbourhood.

Integrated Neighbourhoods

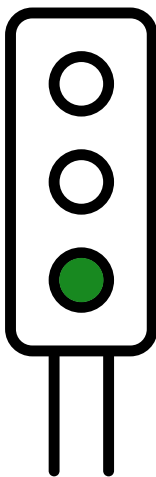
01. Natural Connections

Recommendations

Create places that are well integrated into the site and their wider natural and built surroundings. Avoid creating isolated and disconnected places that are not easy places to move through and around.

What Is Needed

- Look beyond the red line that marks the extent of your site. Ordnance Survey maps along with satellite mapping software such as Google Earth are useful tools to help you understand the wider context and how you can best stitch a new development into a place.
- Identify the places, facilities and services you need to connect to.
- Draw points of connection into and through your site - creating a strong and direct street, path and open space network.
- Create well-connected street and path networks, providing opportunities for these to be extended beyond the site boundary in the future.
- Research and respond to how water flows and nature moves across your site and the wider surroundings.



Reasoning:

Key proposed design responses and considerations

- Residential institution will be in location with fantastic transport facilities into Manchester city centre along with pedestrian access to a large amount of local amenities.
- Low maintenance shrubs, hedgerows and new trees continue and improve upon character of street and provide a positive impact to the public realm.
- Single point vehicular entrance prevents frustration of pedestrian and cycle movement along Spring Street with clear separate pedestrian entrance.
- Parking spaces behind a secure gate within a managed zone.

Integrated Neighbourhoods

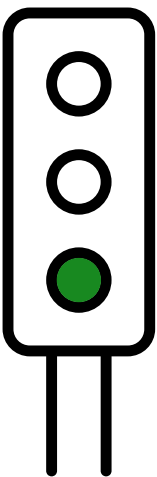
02. Walking, Cycling and Public Transport

Recommendations

Short trips of up to three miles can be easily made on foot or bicycle if the right infrastructure is in place, helping to improve public health and air quality whilst also reducing local congestion and carbon emissions..

What Is Needed

- Cycle and walk the neighbourhood to understand where off-site interventions will be most useful. Local residents and councillors can help you understand where investment in improvements to pedestrian and cycle infrastructure might have most impact.
- Invite people to cycle within the site & beyond to destinations within at least a 3 mile radius; with routes through green spaces, quiet streets alongside prioritised and protected routes on busy streets, junctions & roads.
- If there is an existing protected cycle network, connect to it. Alternatively, begin a new one by building or funding routes to key destinations.
- Ensure access for all and help make walking feel like an instinctive choice for everyone undertaking short journeys.
- Streets and paths that connect people to places and public transport services in the most direct way, making car-free travel more attractive, safe and convenient.
- Make sure that all streets and routes pass in front of people's homes rather than to the back of them – creating a well overlooked public realm.
- Exploit existing public transport hubs, such as train stations and bus interchanges to build at higher densities and channel a higher percentage of journeys to public transport.



Reasoning:

Key proposed design responses and considerations

- The site is well connected to the local area by the public transport network providing good access to local amenities in Manchester city centre.
- The proposal supports cycle use with the provision of secure covered bike storage for residents and staff with Sheffield stands located next to the primary entrance for visitors.
- Proposed windows face outwards towards the street creating a well overlooked public realm and activity within the street scene.
- Pedestrian favoured junction with narrow corner radii into car park.

Integrated Neighbourhoods

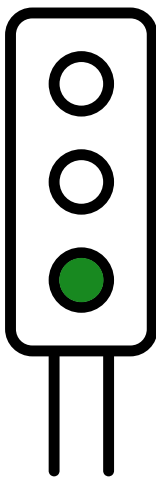
03. Facilities and Services

Recommendations

Places that offer social, leisure and recreational opportunities a short walk or cycle from their homes.

What Is Needed

- Developments that provide community facilities, such as shops, schools, workplaces, health facilities, co-working spaces, parks, play spaces, cafés and other meeting places that respond to local community needs.
- Locate any new facilities in the best location for those walking, cycling and using public transport.
- Consider whether improving existing facilities will add more value to the local community than adding new ones.
- Assess or identify what sport and leisure provision there is for people of all ages, paying particular attention to the needs of children, teenagers and older people.
- Create places where people can meet each other such as public spaces, leisure facilities, community buildings, cafés and restaurants to provide opportunities for social interaction – helping to improve public health by encouraging physical activity and helping to tackle those affected by loneliness and isolation.
- ‘Play on the way’ can make car-free trips more fun for children making them want to walk or cycle to school.
- Sustainable drainage schemes that contribute towards an attractive and accessible network of streets and public spaces.



Reasoning:

Key proposed design responses and considerations:

- Development is in a sustainable location that benefits from good access to the public transport network offering access to local shops on foot and larger civic centres through public transport.
- This proposal will support wider residential and community facilities by meeting an identified need for a residential institution in this area.
- The development is for a specialist facility that offers a vital much needed service which benefits the wider community.
- All street facing frontages featuring windows that provide passive natural surveillance and animation within the street scape.

Integrated Neighbourhoods

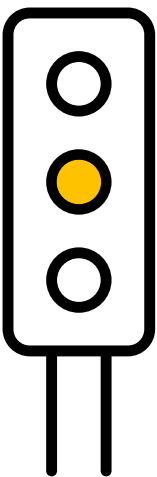
04. Integrated Neighbourhoods

Recommendations

A range of homes that meet local community needs.

What Is Needed

- A mix of housing types and tenures that suit the needs of the local community. This may include first time buyer homes, family homes, homes for those downsizing and supported living.
- Maximising the opportunities offered by supported accommodation, placing these homes at the heart of new developments above active ground floor uses such as shops, community facilities and pre-schools.
- Offering people access to at least some private outdoor space. This is particularly important for people’s mental health and well-being especially when social distancing and travel restrictions are in place



Reasoning:

Key proposed design responses and considerations:

- The development is for a vital much needed service that is under-prescribed in the area which will offer a benefit to the wider community.
- Supported accommodation is in sustainable location with good transport network links.
- High-quality outdoor space provided in a secure, private layout improving well-being for residents.

Limitations of the development and opportunities for improvement:

- The proposal is for a single use type development due to the scale of the development. It however sits in an area that has an variety of housing types suitable for the wider community needs which it will compliment.

Distinctive Places

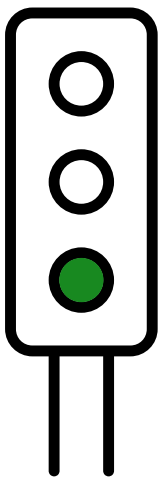
05. Making the most of what’s there

Recommendations

Understand and respond.

What Is Needed

- Allow time for good design, walk the site & the surroundings with the local planning authority. Discuss, understand & agree opportunities & constraints building a shared vision that uses topography & other existing assets on & beyond the site.
- Explore conceptual ideas before settling on an agreed way forward and producing a site layout. For instance, if there are existing site features explore how these might be best integrated into a place.
- Identify any visual connections into, out, through and beyond the site.
- Work with the contours of the land.
- Understand how water flows and pools on the site. Explore how water can be used to enhance biodiversity, create character and improve people’s sense of well-being.
- Draw all these considerations together to get the street, block and open space structure right from the start.
- Consider opportunities for natural lighting, cooling and ventilation. Take care not to compromise urban design principles eg. perimeter block structure.
- Identify opportunities to integrate & reuse existing features, these might be natural or man-made, on or beyond the site.
- Be careful that hedges are not simply retained and prevent a sensible and practical new development layout. It may be more effective to create and plant new hedgerows & tree belts into development proposals than work around existing hedges. A well thought out approach may increase habitat and biodiversity.
- Be sensitive to existing development but avoid creating buffer spaces between existing and new back gardens.
- Using the landform and ground conditions (soil) in a considered way.



Reasoning:

- Key proposed design responses and considerations:
- Urban design respects local character and improves existing street scene.
 - Building layout and orientation is sensitive existing dwellings interface distances and the grain of the street.
 - Site context considered as part of the design with context-specific materials chosen.
 - Proposed scheme has been designed to respond to the massing of buildings in the close vicinity
 - Brick detailing is a contemporary use of a local material.
 - SUDS considered as part of the design alleviate known issues.
 - New biodiverse habitats created.

Distinctive Places

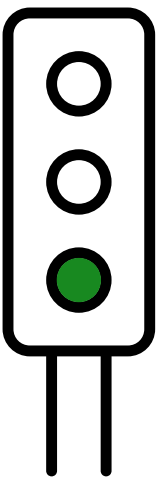
06. A Memorable Character

Recommendations

Create places that are memorable.

What Is Needed

- Create a place with a locally inspired or otherwise distinctive character.
- Review the wider area for sources of inspiration. If distinctive local characteristics exist, delve deeper than architectural style and details. Where the local context is poor or generic, do not use this as a justification for more of the same. Inspiration may be found in local history and culture.
- Understand where positive local character comes from: streets, blocks and plots (urban grain), green and blue infrastructure, land uses, building form, massing and materials often underpin the essence of the distinctive character of settlements rather than architectural style and details.
- Using a local materials palette (where appropriate) can be a particularly effective way to connect a development to a place. This is often more achievable and credible than mimicking traditional architectural detailing which can be dependent on lost crafts.
- Brownfield sites can offer sources of inspiration for new development. Greenfield and edge of settlement locations often require more creativity and inspiration to avoid creating places that lack a sense of local or otherwise distinctive character.
- Character can also be created through the social life of public spaces. Create the physical conditions for activity to happen and bring places to life



Reasoning:

- Key proposed design responses and considerations:
- The buildings brick detailing is deliberately intended to respond to context specific brickwork.
 - The building’s position on site is deliberate to align with the frontages of neighbouring buildings, respect interface distances and exploit potential site features (e.g. windows facing onto Devonshire Street and Coverdale Crescent).
 - The proposal’s massing and grain matches local vernacular.
 - The proposal reflects the surrounding character in contemporary style through form and material choice.

Distinctive Places

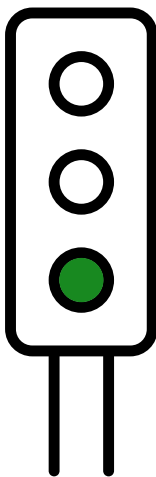
07. Well defined streets and spaces

Recommendations

Create a network of streets and spaces that are well enclosed by buildings and/or structural landscaping, taking care to ensure that front doors and the principal façades of buildings face streets and public spaces.

What Is Needed

- A strong framework of connected and well overlooked streets and spaces.
- Look beyond the plan and illustrative street scenes; what will you actually see and experience walking along the street?
- Perimeter blocks with clearly defined public fronts and private backs.
- Active frontages. Front doors, balconies, terraces, front gardens and bay windows are a good way to enliven and add interest to the street and create a more human scale to larger buildings such as apartments and supported living accommodation.
- Carefully considered street corners.
- Three dimensional models (physical or computer generated) and simple, hand drawn street cross sections can be particularly useful tools to understand and test the spatial qualities of a place.



Reasoning:

- Key proposed design responses and considerations:
- Well defined front boundaries though the use of landscaping and fences.
 - Publicly visible elevations broken up though window composition and brick detailing features typical to the local area.
 - Staff areas placed to provide surveillance of the public realm with residents windows also providing passive natural surveillance.
 - The building's front door is located directly off Coverdale Crescent within a single storey link which signifies the entrance point into the development. This area will have both the lobby and staff rooms and provide surveillance. Due to the need for management and security for this type of accommodation the apartment entrances are accessed from a communal corridor with single point of entry.
 - The junction of Coverdale Crescent and Devonshire Street has a double gable increased massing which provides an architectural response onto both frontages.

Distinctive Places

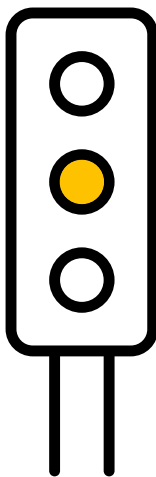
08. Easy to find your way around

Recommendations

Use legible features to help people find their way around a place.

What Is Needed

- Streets that connect with one another.
- Streets that are as straight and as direct as possible.
- Use street types, buildings, spaces, non- residential uses, landscape, water and other features to help people create a 'mental map' of a place.
- Streets with clearly different characters are more effective than 'character areas' in helping people grasp whether they are on a principal or secondary street.
- For larger sites, it will be necessary to use streets and spaces with different characters to help people to find their way around.



Reasoning:

- Key proposed design responses and considerations:
- The scheme consists of two clear 2 storey elements with a single storey link which includes the front and rear access points
 - Clear street access to the front of the building off Coverdale Crescent.
 - Feature corner has increased massing creating an identity within the area with the single storey massing signifying the main entrance.

Streets For All

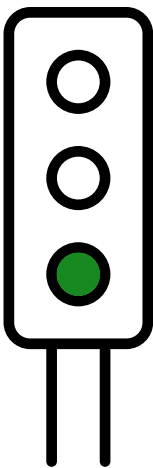
09. Healthy Streets

Recommendations

Streets are different to roads. Streets are places where the need to accommodate the movement of motor vehicles is balanced alongside the need for people to move along and cross streets with ease. Activity in the street is an essential part of a successful public realm.

What Is Needed

- Low-speed streets and neighbourhoods with pedestrian and cycle priority.
- The right balance between movement and place functions.
- Rethinking the way we distribute street space. At times of more relaxed social distancing, demand for better quality cycle provision is expected to increase
- as public transport capacity reduces. Congestion caused by motor vehicles will make it unattractive for people to switch from public transport to cars creating a unique opportunity to change the way we move around our cities, towns & villages.
- Healthy streets improve people's physical and mental health. Encouraging walking, cycling, outdoor play and streets
- Where it is safe for younger children to cycle (or scooter) to school can create opportunities for social interaction and street life bringing wider social benefits.
- Street trees.
- Avoid streets that are just designed as routes for motor vehicles to pass through and for cars to park within.
- Boulevards and streets with active edges rather than distributor roads and bypasses with no (or limited) frontage access.
- Streets that are easy to cross; providing priority for pedestrians and cyclists across junctions and accesses.
- Well overlooked streets with front doors facing streets and public spaces.
- Provide conditions for cycling appropriate to the speed and volume of motor traffic.
- Inclusive design: think about how people with visual, mobility or other limitations will be able to use the street confidently and safely



Reasoning:

- Key proposed design responses and considerations:
- New street trees and planting facing onto Devonshire Street will improve well-being, air quality, outlook and character.
 - Differing types of landscape for different areas creating texture and variation in the natural form in line with BNG requirements.
 - Clearly defined separate pedestrian and vehicular access.
 - Level access to ground floor.
 - Pedestrian access meets M4(2) requirements.
 - Cycle store located within large south facing rear garden with staff rings provided by main entrance to support sustainable transport.
 - Carparking located on Coverdale Crescent away from the main entrance

Streets For All

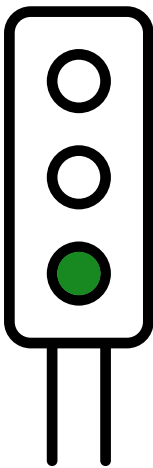
10. Cycle and Car Parking

Recommendations

Well-designed developments will make it more attractive for people to choose to walk or cycle for short trips helping to improve levels of physical activity, air quality, local congestion and the quality of the street scene. Well- designed streets will also provide sufficient and well-integrated car parking.

What Is Needed

- Provide secure cycle storage close to people's front doors so that cycles are as convenient to choose as a car for short trips.
- Integration of car parking into the street environment.
- Anticipate realistic levels of car parking demand, guarding against displaced and anti-social parking; thinking about the availability and frequency of public transport.
- Avoid confusing car ownership with car usage.
- Creative solutions for attractive, convenient and safe cycle parking or higher density developments (such as apartment buildings).
- Generous landscaping to settle frontage car parking into the street.
- Shared and unallocated parking.



Reasoning:

- Key proposed design responses and considerations:
- Secure cycle storage within communal garden
 - Cycle provision also included at front entrance to development
 - Staff Parking located off Coverdale Crescent within a landscaped setting to soften the outlook from both the street and neighbouring properties.
 - Electric car charging parking provision provided

Streets For All

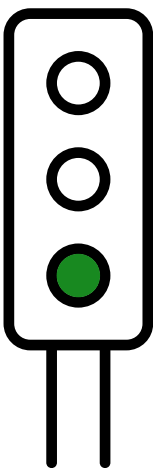
11. Green and blue infrastructure

Recommendations

Creative surface water management such as rills, brooks and ponds enrich the public realm and help improve a sense of well-being and offer an interaction with nature. As the richest habitat for a range of flora and fauna, they are also a key play in achieving the net gain in biodiversity sought by the 2020 Environment Bill.

What Is Needed

- Create a strong landscape strategy that has impact from ‘day one’. Don’t ‘layer’ landscape onto a scheme at the end of the process. Landscape changes can offer opportunities to reintroduce lost habitats and species.
- Create a network of different types of spaces.
- Weave opportunities for habitat creation throughout the development. Plan these as movement corridors to support biodiversity.
- Create food growing opportunities such as allotments and orchards on larger developments.
- Have a sustainable drainage ‘treatment train’ thinking about the ‘four pillars’. Capture water as close as possible to where it falls. Be creative with rain gardens, ponds and swales and avoid steeply sided or fenced holes in the ground.
- Well-designed multi-functional sustainable drainage will incorporate play and recreational opportunities.
- Well-overlooked public open spaces with strong levels of natural surveillance.
- Robust management and long term stewardship.



Reasoning:

Key proposed design responses and considerations:

- Improvement to the type and offering of biodiverse habitats including species rich grasslands.
- Bird boxes, swift nesting bricks and bat bricks are among a number of improvements for biodiversity incorporated directly into the scheme.
- Well-overlooked public open spaces to both the front and rear with strong levels of natural surveillance.
- Water attenuation considered as part of the development.

Streets For All

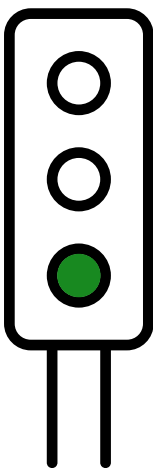
12. Back of pavement, front of home

Recommendations

Garden cities, towns and suburbs used hedges to define public and private spaces, helping to create characterful and biodiverse places. The space between the back of the pavement and the face of buildings has a significant impact on the quality of a place. Clear demarcations between public and private spaces can encourage people to personalise the front of their homes whilst also offering opportunities to integrate level changes, utility boxes and waste storage.

What Is Needed

- Clearly define private spaces through strong boundary treatments.
- Manage changes in level in a way that does not compromise the qualities of the street.
- Design the space between the back of the pavement and building façades carefully to integrate services, waste storage and utilities cabinets (meter boxes) so their impact is reduced.
- Avoid pieces of ‘leftover’ land that serve no useful public or private function. Homes with shallow street backs need careful thought as it is not uncommon to see these spaces poorly resolved with small pieces of grass turf or gravel.
- Outdoor amenity space for apartment buildings, such as a balcony for relaxing or the drying of clothes.



Reasoning:

Key proposed design responses and considerations:

- Clearly defined private spaces through strong clearly defined boundary treatments with SBD principals adopted.
- Considered use of concealed RWPs on the feature elevations of the building with deliberate effort to conceal SVPs and roof penetrations from the street.
- Discreet bin and bike storage with a robust refuse strategy.
- Design proposal set back from street with defensive planting

Conclusion

Summary of Scheme

Integrated Neighbourhoods

- 😊 01. Natural Connections
- 😊 02. Walking, Cycling and Public Transport
- 😊 03. Facilities and Services
- 😬 04. Integrated Neighbourhoods

Distinctive Places

- 😊 05. Making the most of what's there
- 😊 06. A Memorable Character
- 😊 07. Well defined streets and spaces
- 😬 08. Easy to find your way around

Streets For All

- 😊 09. Healthy Streets
- 😊 10. Cycle and Car Parking
- 😊 11. Green and blue infrastructure
- 😊 12. Back of pavement, front of home

Overall Score

😊 10/12

Final Remarks

The Building for a healthy Life emphasises the creation of high quality and sustainable buildings as a fundamental part of the planning process. The documentation published makes it easy for designers and developers to understand this policy and consider how a proposal either positively or negatively responds to it.

The proposed development represents an opportunity to provide a high-quality residential development that will provide a vital service and contribute to, and complement the character of an established residential community. Through careful design development and consideration, the proposal offers a contemporary design response, sensitively integrated into the existing context. The proposed scheme will offer a high-quality contemporary building with attractive landscaping that fits well into it's contexts.

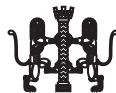
Devonshire Street has been reviewed against the most recent Building for a healthy Life. In doing so DKA has found that the building scores well overall. The building will likely act as a positive development for Ardwick and improve the character, quality and urban form within this urban setting.

The scale of the site and proposal is limited, so some aspects cannot be met entirely through this proposal. However where possible the design proposed has addressed all aspects of the BFHL. The two points which scored amber were 04 integrated neighbourhoods and 08 easy to find your way around. Both of these are due to the scale and nature of the development preventing the proposal from With security being a fundamental requirement.

January 2024

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