Princedom Street, Harpurhey

Open Space Assessment

ON BEHALF OF MOSSCARE ST VINCENT HOUSING

October 2023

Contents

1. Introduction 3

2. Site Location and Description 4

3. Adopted Planning Policy 6

4. The Site's Open Space Credentials 9

5. Open Space Provision in the Wider Area 12

6. Assessment and Conclusions 16

1. Introduction

1.1 This Open Space Assessment has been prepared by Nexus Planning on behalf of Mosscare St Vincent Housing (the 'applicant') to support a full planning application for 22 residential units on land at Princedom Street, Harpurhey, Manchester (the 'site').

1.2 Manchester City Council ('MCC') require the submission of an Open Space Assessment in line with its Planning Applications Validation Checklist, in cases where a site which is subject to a planning application consists of open space which is to be lost. The Open Space Assessment must contain an audit of existing open space versus proposed open space and should refer to relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework').

1.3 This assessment will consider various factors, including the site's locational characteristics, local and national planning policy context, the site's credentials as open space, other existing open spaces in the vicinity before then drawing conclusions as to whether development of the site for the purpose proposed is justifiable in open space terms.

1.4 The assessment should be read in conjunction with the Planning Statement, also prepared by Nexus Planning and which is submitted alongside the planning application. The Planning Statement provides an overview of the proposals and a full assessment of them against the wider suite of planning policies identified as relevant to the determination of the application.

1.5 Whilst the site is not designated as open space within planning policy, this Open Space Assessment specifically analyses the site's attributes as open space as described above, and in summary it concludes:

- The site does not perform a vital function as 'open space' and has deficiencies against the quality standards for 'amenity green space' set out within policy documents;
- North Manchester benefits from an oversupply of amenity green space against the quantity standards set out in planning policy; and
- There are alternative, designated, open spaces in close proximity to the site which perform a more important role than the site in terms of their function for different types of activities.

2. Site Location and Description

2.1 The site is split across two parcels of land as outlined at Figure 1 below. To aid the description of the site, we herein refer to the northern parcel as 'Parcel A' and the southern parcel as 'Parcel B'.

Figure 1 – Illustrative Site Location Plan (Source : Google)

2.2 Parcel A is rectangular in shape covering an area of 0.23 hectares (ha), whilst Parcel B is broadly triangular covering an area of 0.24 ha. Both sites are flat in nature and surrounded by knee rail fencing.

2.3 Parcel A is bound by Sequoia Street to the north, Simister Street to the east and Jonas Street to the west. Princedom Street to the south separates Parcel A from Parcel B, which is bound by the rear of existing dwellings to its south west and east and to the most southerly boundary backs onto a combination of residential gardens and a mechanic / MOT facility.

2.4 Neither site has tree or vegetation cover aside from the grassland which characterises it.

2.5 Whilst an assessment of the site as open space is made later in this document, the screenshots overleaf, taken from Google Maps on 19th October 2023 (Google Map imagery date – August 2023), demonstrate that at the time of image capture the site could be deemed as 'useable' i.e. it is not overgrown and is clearly accessible from adjacent public highways.

2.6 The site and locality benefits from good public transport provision. Frequent bus services operate in the area, with the nearest bus stops to the site located on Moston Lane. From these bus stops services 52orbit, 81, 112, 115, 117, 118, 119 and 704 offer services to a range of destinations including Piccadilly Gardens, Eccles, Middleton, Oldham, and Ashton-under-Lyne. From Manchester, rail access is abundant with services departing to national destinations.

Figure 2 – Images depicting the site's appearance (screenshots taken from Google Maps)

3. Adopted Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning decisions to be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.2 The adopted Development Plan for the area comprises the Manchester City Council Core Strategy (CS), which was adopted in July 2012, and relevant Saved Policies from the Revised Manchester Council Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in July 1995.

3.3 The Framework (2023) is also a material consideration in the determination of the application.

Manchester Core Strategy

3.4 Policy EN10 of the CS relates to Safeguarding Open Space and Recreation Facilities is of most relevance to the application in terms of open space.

3.5 Of relevance, the policy states that development proposals on existing open spaces and sport and recreation facilities will only be permitted where:

- *Equivalent or better replacement open space, sport or recreation facilities will be provided in the local area; or*
- *the site has been demonstrated to be surplus for its current open space, sport or recreation function and the City wide standards set out above are maintained, and*
    - *it could not fulfil other unsatisfied open space, sport or recreation needs, and*
    - *a proposed replacement will remedy a deficiency in another type of open space, sport or recreation facility in the local area; or*
- *the development will be ancillary to the open space, sport or recreation facility and complement the use or character.*

3.6 It is important to note that the site is not a designated open space.

Figure 3 – Core Strategy Open Space standards (MCC)

Open space type	Quantity	Accessibility
City Parks	0.2 ha per 1000 population	15 minute Public Transport Time City Centre – 15 minute drive time (Public Transport)
Local Parks	0.49 ha per 1000 population	10 minute walk time (480m)
Natural and Semi Natural Open Space	1.86 ha per 1000 population	15 min walk (720m) City Centre – 15 minute drive time (Public Transport)
Amenity Green Space	0.40 ha per 1000 population	10 minute walk time (480m)
Provision for Children	0.0265 ha per 1000 population	10 minute walk time (480m)
Provision for Young People	0.035 ha per 1000 population	15 minute walk time (720m)
Outdoor Sports	0.98 ha per 1000 population	15 minute walk time – grass pitches, tennis courts and bowling greens 20 minute drive time for athletics facilities and Synthetic Turf Pitches. Golf Courses – 30 minutes drive time.
Allotments	0.13 ha per 1000 population	15 minute walk time
Indoor Sports	Quality standards only - see below	Quality standards only - see below

3.7 Figure 3 above, which is taken from Table 12.4 in the Core Strategy, sets out the standards for quantity and accessibility of green spaces in Manchester. These standards are informed by the Strategic Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study, which was conducted in July 2009.

3.8 CS Policy EN12 sets out area priorities for open space, sport and recreation and describes the priorities for open space, sport, and recreation in different parts of the City as set out in the Strategic Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study. For the north area, within which the site lies, the priority is to ensure that new development will deliver improvements to the quality of existing provision.

City Wide Open Spaces, Sport & Recreation Study (August 2009)

3.9 The City Wide Open Spaces, Sport & Recreation Study ('CWOSSRS') also referred to within the CS as the Strategic Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study undertakes an assessment of facilities within the City Council's boundaries, providing an understanding of local needs and aspirations, a full audit of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities, informs the local standards enshrined in planning policy and highlights areas where there is over or under provision of open space and seeks to provide certainty to developers and landowners.

3.10 Importantly, the site does not feature within the CWOSSRS and it is not designated as open space. However, for the purposes of this Open Space Assessment, we consider that the site's characteristics are most akin to 'amenity green space,' which is defined within the CWOSSRS as follows on page 101:

"Amenity green space is most commonly found in residential areas. It includes informal recreation spaces in and around housing. It fulfils a primary purpose of providing opportunities for informal activities close to home or work. Amenity green space is also often used for landscaping purposes."

3.11 The north area of the city has a provision of 0.44 hectares of amenity green space per 1000 people, according to the CWOSSRS and a total of 87 individual sites. Each of these sites is assessed for its quality and in the north area,

the average quality score is 70% (with 100% being of the highest quality). Key issues with amenity green spaces were found to be general accessibility of them, with footpaths and disabled access perceived to be an issue in some locations.

Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (April 2007)

3.12 This SPD provides general guidance for developers and sets out principles for those looking to promote development in the City. Whilst directed to assessing and appraising proposals, it contains some useful guidance regarding open space, particularly that:

"successful open spaces encourage use and ownership by local people, stimulating neighbourliness and pride, and contributing to people's sense of wellbeing" and

"open spaces, whether big or small, hard or soft, public or private, should have a clear intended use…" and

"The Council will look to eliminate areas of incidental open space in new developments…"

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 99 states that:

'Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus requirements; or

b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or

c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.'

4. The Site's Open Space Credentials

4.1 The CWOSSRS does not provide the results of individual site assessments and in any case the site does not feature within it. To undertake a comparable assessment of the site's quality as an amenity green space, we have qualitatively assessed it against the categories in the Site Assessment Matrix used in the CWOSSRS at Appendix C.

4.2 The assessment is made based on utilising the functions provided by Google Maps and Street View. This software looks back over the available dates at which Street View has captured images of the site, in this case between July 2019, June 2023 and August 2023.

1 – Cleanliness and maintenance (vandalism and graffiti, litter problems, dog fouling, noise, equipment, maintenance)

4.3 There is no evidence of vandalism and graffiti due to the nature of the open space. The lack of facilities on site means that opportunities for vandalism are low.

4.4 Litter is evident within both parcels on all the time-stamped images provided by Google. It is most prevalent to the areas of open space adjacent to the public highways of Princedom Street Road, Jonas Street, Sequoia Street and Simister Street. Screenshots included at Figure 4 evidence the extent of the littering.

4.5 No site visit was undertaken and as such there is no evidence of dog fouling present within the site. However, given the site is easily accessible to the public and there are no bins present at the site nor within close proximity, which may deter dog walkers from disposing of dog waste appropriately, it is considered likely that dog fouling would be present.

4.6 In terms of noise, the site is located within a residential albeit suburban area and as such it is considered that the acoustic environment would be somewhat tranquil.

4.7 There is no play or sports equipment provided on site so there is no opportunity for either formal or informal play or sports.

4.8 Street View images show the site is mown periodically however there is also evidence that areas of the grassland have been scorched (assumed to be caused by illegal fires), as evidenced within the screenshots at Figure 4.

Figure 4 – Images Showing Litter and scorch marks on Site (screenshots taken from Google Maps)

C2 – Security and safety (lighting, equipment, boundaries e.g. fencing)

4.9 The site suffers from an absence of surveillance measures and insufficient lighting infrastructure. Whilst both parcels benefit from passive surveillance from the surrounding residential properties, there is limited on street activity (especially during the evening hours).

4.10 There are a limited number of streetlights present along the adjacent pavements near the highway and no dedicated lighting fixtures are directed towards the site. As a result, the site is likely to become dark during night-time potentially leading to security concerns and additional opportunities for crime to be committed.

4.11 Both parcels are easily accessible on foot. Parcel A is surrounded by a knee rail fencing, and Parcel B is enclosed to the east, south and west by full length fencing and knee rail fencing to the north. Due to the knee rail fencing, those in wheelchairs or with prams may find access challenging.

3 – Vegetation (planted areas and grassed areas)

4.12 Neither Parcel has tree or vegetation cover aside from the grassland which characterises it.

4.13 It does not appear that the site has been particularly well maintained over the years, as the Google Street View images depict uneven grass with a number of weeds growing.

C4 – Ancillary accommodation (toilets, parking, bins, seats, pathways)

4.14 Facilities which may enhance user comfort, usability, and overall experience are not available and this detracts from the value of the site as viable and appealing open space.

4.15 Some users may consider these amenities essential to their enjoyment of an open space, for instance the absence of toilets limits the duration of visits and may discourage usage by families with young children or the elderly. Google Street View photographs over the years show no form of engagement or use of the site (besides the evidenced scorch marks) as compared to other surrounding open spaces with these facilities.

4.16 Whilst not to be expected in all open spaces, the absence of cafes or refreshment facilities deprives visitors of opportunities to relax and socialise and may encourage people to use other open spaces.

4.17 The absence of seating limits the opportunity for users to rest, while the lack of footpaths and presence of knee rail fencing restricts the movement of individuals with mobility issues. These limitations make the site less inclusive and accessible.

Summary

4.18 The assessment undertaken above demonstrates that the site has several deficiencies when considering whether it makes a successful open space.

4.19 The site is affected by littering which may be a result of the lack of refuse facilities on site.

4.20 The lack of footpaths present within the site could pose difficulties for individuals with mobility issues, whilst a lack of surveillance measures and low levels of lighting infrastructure lead to safety and security concerns for users of the site and adjacent neighbours as crime may be easier to hide. Further to this, the scorch marks that are evident within the site (as seen via Google Maps), were presumably caused by illegal fires demonstrating likely anti-social behaviour.

4.21 In terms of vegetation, neither parcel has tree or vegetation cover aside from the grassland which does not appear particularly well maintained.

4.22 Regarding ancillary accommodation, the absence of facilities such as toilets, cafes, seating, and well-maintained footpaths significantly detracts from the usability and comfort of the open space. The lack of amenities like toilets limits the duration of visits, whilst the absence of seating and accessible footpaths restricts movement and enjoyment for individuals with mobility limitations.

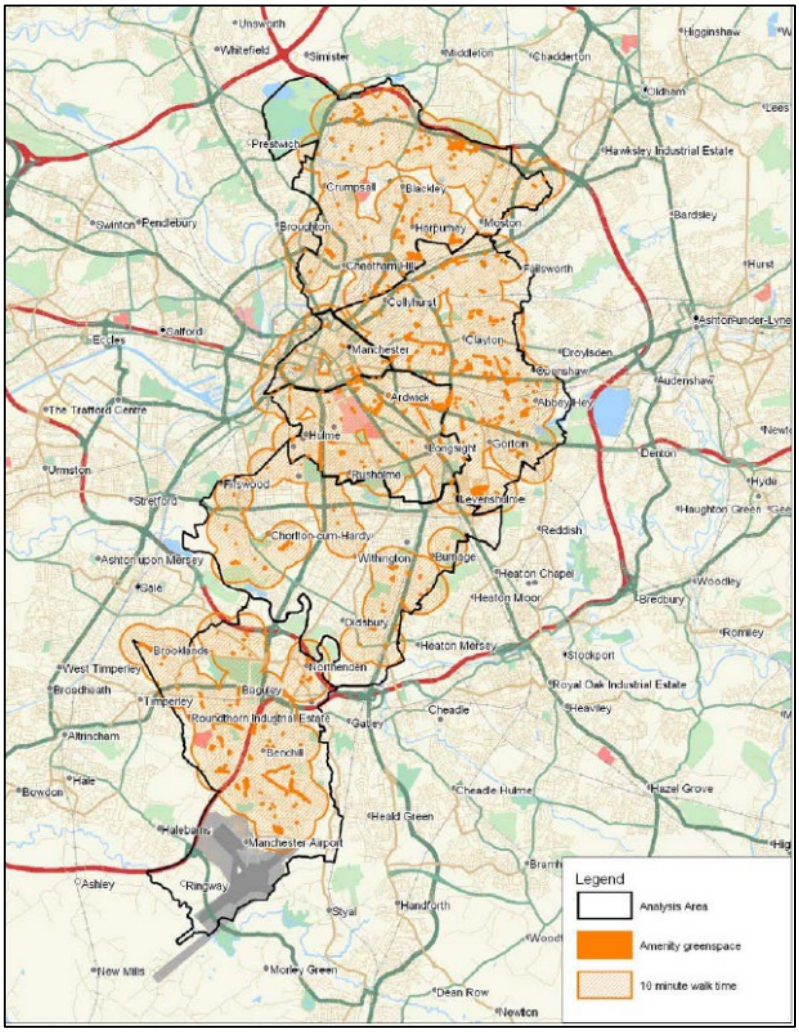
4.23 The findings of the analysis indicate significant deficiencies in cleanliness, security, and ancillary accommodation. Addressing these issues may require extensive and costly modifications that are not likely to be feasible or justifiable when there are other more suitable open spaces that users may use instead. Notably, the David Lewis Recreational Ground is less than 700m to the north and offers facilities such as tennis courts, open grass spaces, and play areas for residents to enjoy.

5. Open Space Provision in the Wider Area

5.1 According to the CWOSSRS, *'there is a wide range of open space, sport and recreation facilities within Manchester and these provide a valuable recreational resource to local residents as well as visitors.'*

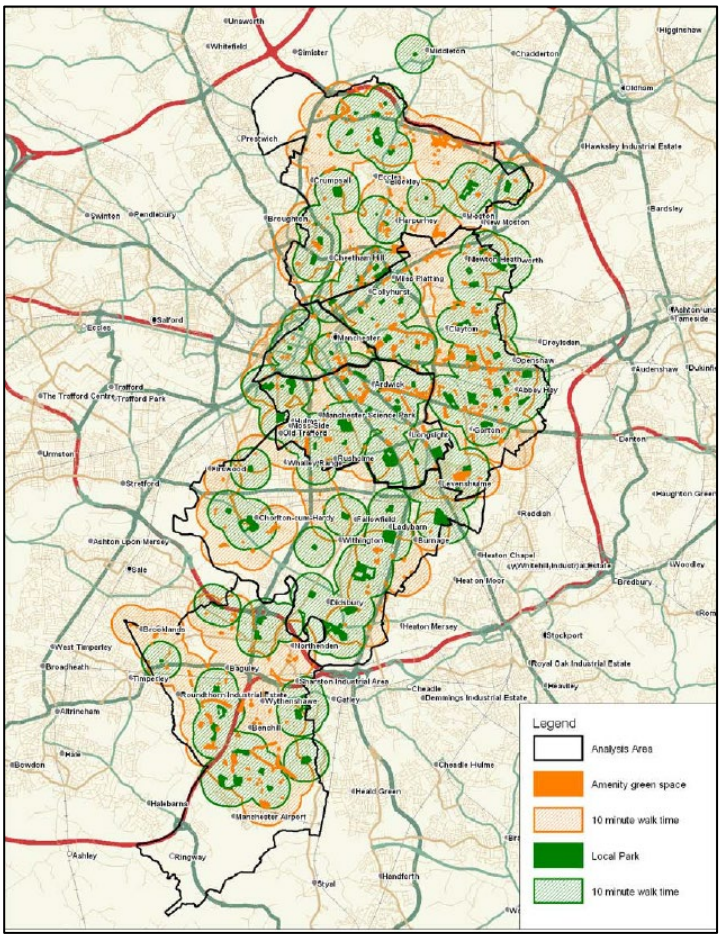
5.2 Figure 5 below shows the location of all amenity green spaces within Manchester, demonstrating their abundance, particularly in the north of the City close to the site. It also shows that almost the whole of the north of the City is within a 10 minute walk time of an amenity green space.

Figure 5 - Extract of CWOSSRS Map 6.1 (MCC)



5.3 Figure 6 overleaf shows that when set alongside the existence of local parks, there is even greater accessibility to open space.

Figure 6 - Extract of CWOSSRS Map 6.2 (MCC)



5.4 In terms of the site itself and other open space opportunities nearby, David Lewis Recreation Ground, located 6-800m to the north of the site, is considered more than adequate in meeting the day-to-day recreational needs of the local community in terms of amenity green space and grassland. In addition, the David Lewis Recreation Ground also offers opportunities for formal and informal play, including play areas, basketball courts and multi-use games areas (MUGA), tennis courts, football goalposts and a bowling green. It also benefits from a broader network of made footpaths with associated seating opportunities and rubbish bins. It therefore represents a more attractive proposition for residents than that provided by the site.

5.5 Additionally, the broader surrounding area encompasses Boggart Hole Clough and Charlestown Parks, both situated approximately 1.2km from the site, again providing ample open space for various outdoor activities. These parks offer a range of formal and informal recreational features, including children's play areas, a running track, parking facilities, and a boating lake with associated café.

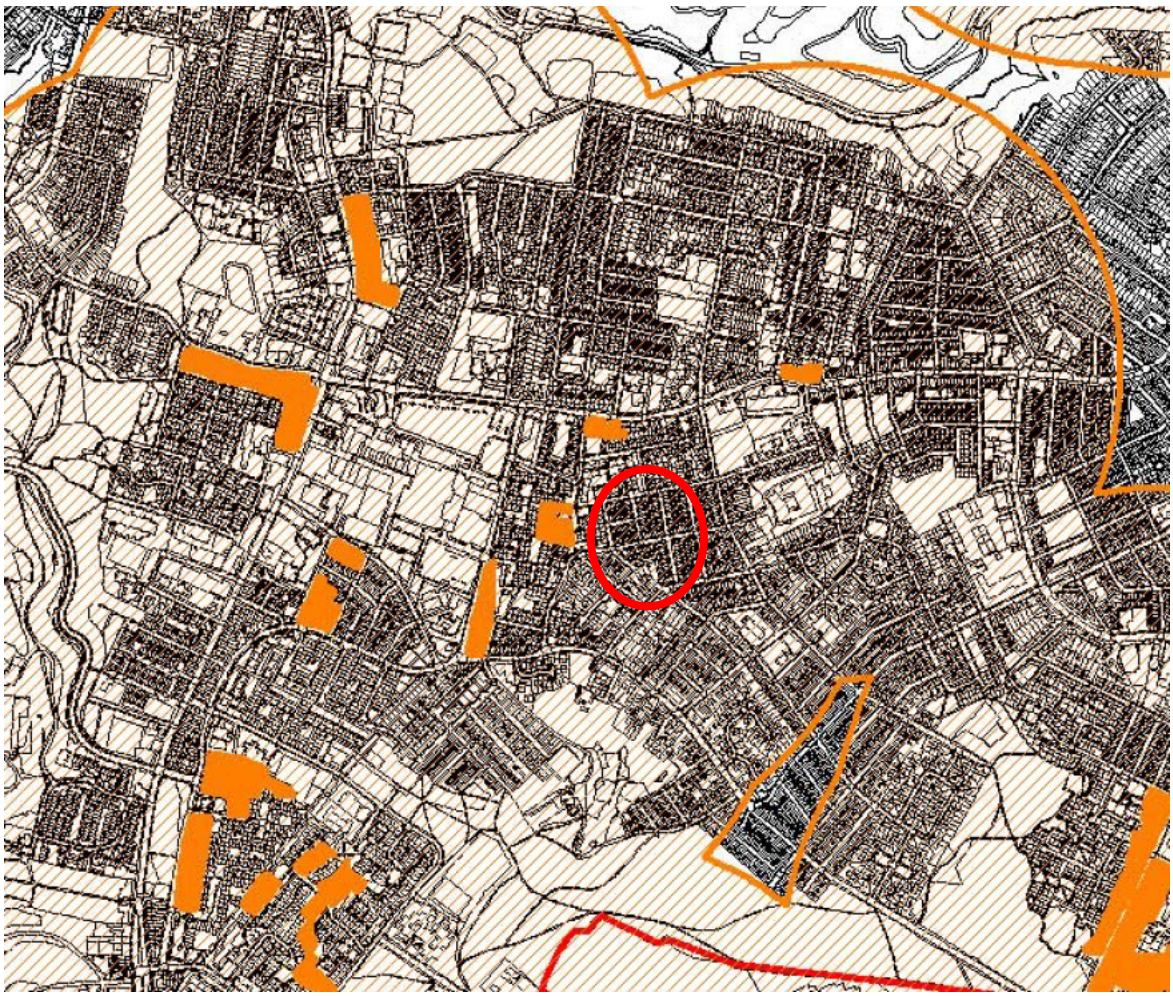
5.6 Boggart Hole Clough is designated as a Site of Biological Interest within the CS and is therefore protected by the provisions of CS Policy EN15 which generally does not support development which is detrimental to Sites of Biological Interest. It can therefore be said that Boggart Hole Clough is well protected against future development.

5.7 Moston Vale is located approximately 1km south of the site. This is a recreational park, comprising of meadows and foliage, with designated footpaths for users.

5.8 In terms of "Amenity Green Space" requirements, as outlined in Table 12.4 of the CS (and Figure 3 of this Statement), there is a stipulated need for 0.4 hectares per 1,000 people within a radius of 480 meters or 10 minutes walking time.

5.9 North Manchester has a total of 87 amenity green spaces, covering a combined area of 39.31 hectares, according to the CWOSRSS. At the time of production north Manchester could demonstrate 3.46 hectares of amenity green space per 1,000 people against the local standard of 0.4 hectares per 1,000 people. Taking the evidence we have to hand as concrete, north Manchester is therefore well-provided for in terms of amenity open space. Notably, there are seven amenity green spaces within a convenient 10-minute walking distance from the site, as illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7 - Amenity green space in North Manchester with the site denoted by the red ring (MCC)



5.10 As set out earlier in this statement, the site benefits from good access by public transport ensuring that those residents who wish to visit open space facilities which are not provided for in the local area can easily travel further afield to access the facilities of their choice.

Summary

5.11 The open space at the application site is solely amenity grassland, with no features of formal open space and with generally very limited qualitative value.

5.12 There are other, more useable open spaces close to the site, in the form of the David Lewis Recreation Ground and Boggart Hole Clough. These both provide facilities that the site does not and are more suitable for a wider range of activities often associated with the use of open space.

5.13 Further, designated, amenity green space is located close to the site and throughout north Manchester, with many sites of this type remaining available for use by those specifically seeking to visit areas similar in nature to the site.

6. Assessment and Conclusions

6.1 This Open Space Assessment supports an application for a residential development comprising 22 affordable units. It seeks to provide a robust assessment of the site's role in providing open space, and to form a view as to whether it can be 'lost' to provide much needed residential development.

6.2 MCC's assessment, contained within the CWORSSRS, does not designate the site as open space. It does however show that there is no quantitative shortfall of amenity green space, with the North of the City demonstrating an abundance of open space and within walking distance of the site. The loss of 0.47 ha of amenity green space will still allow the accessibility standards set out within the CS to be met.

6.3 When coupled with the mixed assessment of the site's qualities, including the presence of litter, anti-social uses of the site and limited ancillary facilities; and the presence of more appropriate facilities in terms of the David Lewis Recreation Ground and Boggart Hole Clough, it is considered that the site does not play an important role in the provision of open space in this part of the City.

6.4 In addition, looking back at the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD, it is clear that the site does not perform well against the requirements for an open space to have a clear and intended use.

6.5 Therefore, in accordance with CS Policy EN10 and Paragraph 99 of the Framework, it has been demonstrated that the site is surplus to requirements as open space and the City wide standards set out in policy are maintained. The site is not capable of fulfilling other unsatisfied open space needs due to its size and topography.

6.6 Furthermore, when balanced against the requirement for affordable homes, as set out further in the submitted Planning Statement, the Open Space Assessment concludes that there is adequate provision of sufficient quality open space in close proximity to the site to allow it to be released for development.

Nexus Planning
Manchester

nexusplanning.co.uk