



# Paul Butler Associates

Planning, Development & Heritage Consultants

## **Burke Developments**

7 Chapel Street, Levenshulme, M19 3QB

## **Employment Land Statement**

16 October 2023

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## 1. Introduction

### Introduction to Statement

- 1.1 This Employment Land Statement has been prepared by Paul Butler Associates on behalf of Burke Developments to support a planning application relating to 7 Chapel Street, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 3QB.
- 1.2 The description of development is 'Erection of 8no. houses (Class C3), formation of new access road from Chapel Street and associated car parking, garden areas and boundary treatments following demolition of existing buildings'.
- 1.3 The Statement has been prepared with specific reference to employment land planning policy and relevant requirements set out within the Council's Main Validation Checklist January 2020.

## 2. The Application Site

- 2.1 The application site is located on the north side of Chapel Street and is bounded by alleyways to the north, east and west. Beyond these are residential properties fronting Cromwell Grove to the north, Mercer Street to the east, and Cardus Street to the west. To the south of the site on the opposite side of Chapel Street is further housing. The site boundary is identified by figure 2.1 below. The site is roughly rectangular in shape and is approximately 0.18 hectares in size.

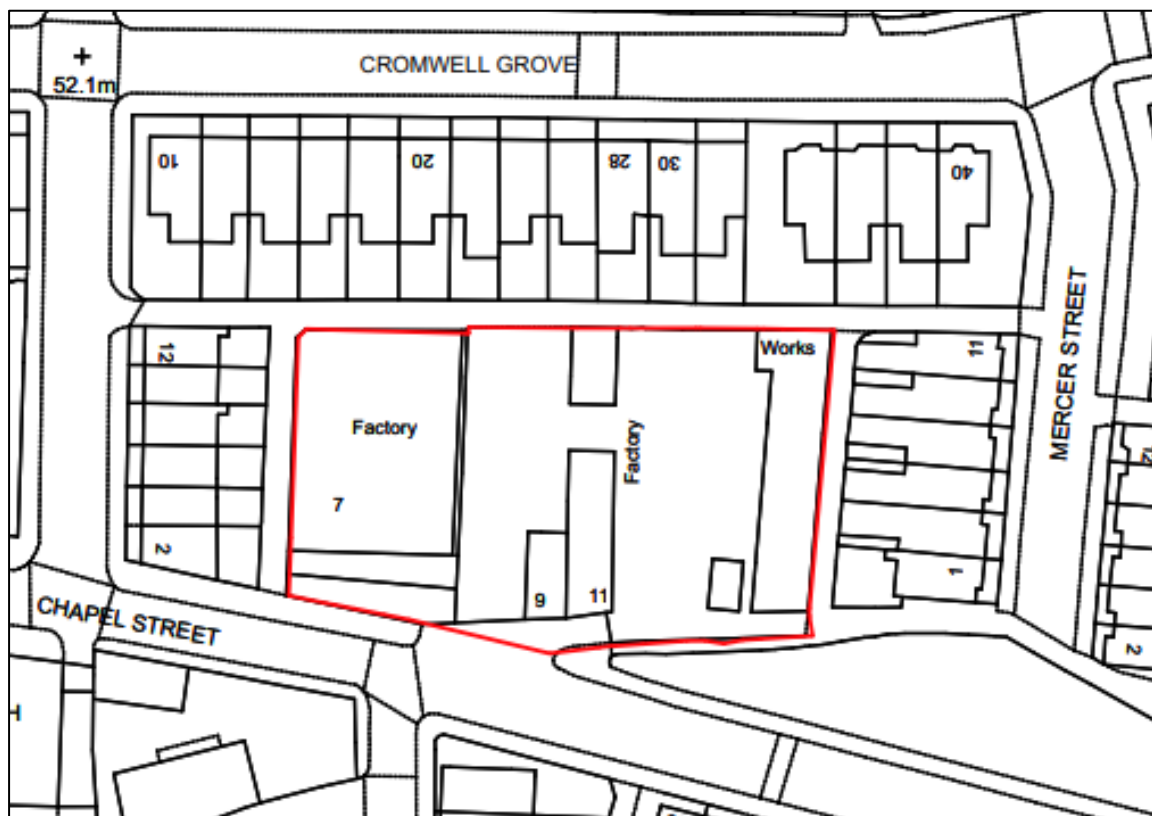


Figure 2.1: Site Location Plan with the application site edged red.

- 2.2 The site currently has a single vehicular access from Chapel Street. The site is in use as a factory / workshop by 'Belper Tools Ltd'. The site includes a number of buildings / structures which are used for cutting, grinding and fabrication of metal, and ancillary use including storage and admin. The buildings / site is not extensively used which in part is due to the condition of the buildings and site. The activity which does take place involves various noisy processes including cutting, grinding and hammering of metal, as well as noise from other

machinery. Such noise is readily audible around the site including from surrounding residential properties.

- 2.3 The buildings / structures on site are constructed of brick and corrugated metal, with corrugated sheet roofs. The buildings are all dated and are in very poor physical condition, with structural issues present amongst other signs of deterioration / damage owing to their age. Some buildings could accurately be described as dilapidated. Between the buildings there is only limited hard surfacing with the surface largely comprising exposed bare soil. This is in a very poor condition with large pools formed and mud created as a result. There is no dedicated car parking or loading areas within the site and during our site visit (on 30.08.2023) this was observed to create issues with unauthorised parking on the footway and in breach of double yellow lines.
- 2.4 Buildings are situated on the site boundaries, with other site boundaries including brick walls, brick walls with timber fencing atop, pre-cast concrete fencing and metal securing fencing. The boundaries are generally in poor condition and some show clear signs of structural movement. Photographs of the site are provided at Appendix 1 of this Statement confirming the poor condition of the site buildings and boundary treatment. Overall the site is unattractive visually and has a negative impact on the surrounding streetscene and visual amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 2.5 As noted previously the site is adjoined by residential properties, whilst the wider character of the area is residential as shown by figure 2.2 below. The application site is located in very close proximity to these nearby residential properties as shown by figures 2.3 – 2.6 below.

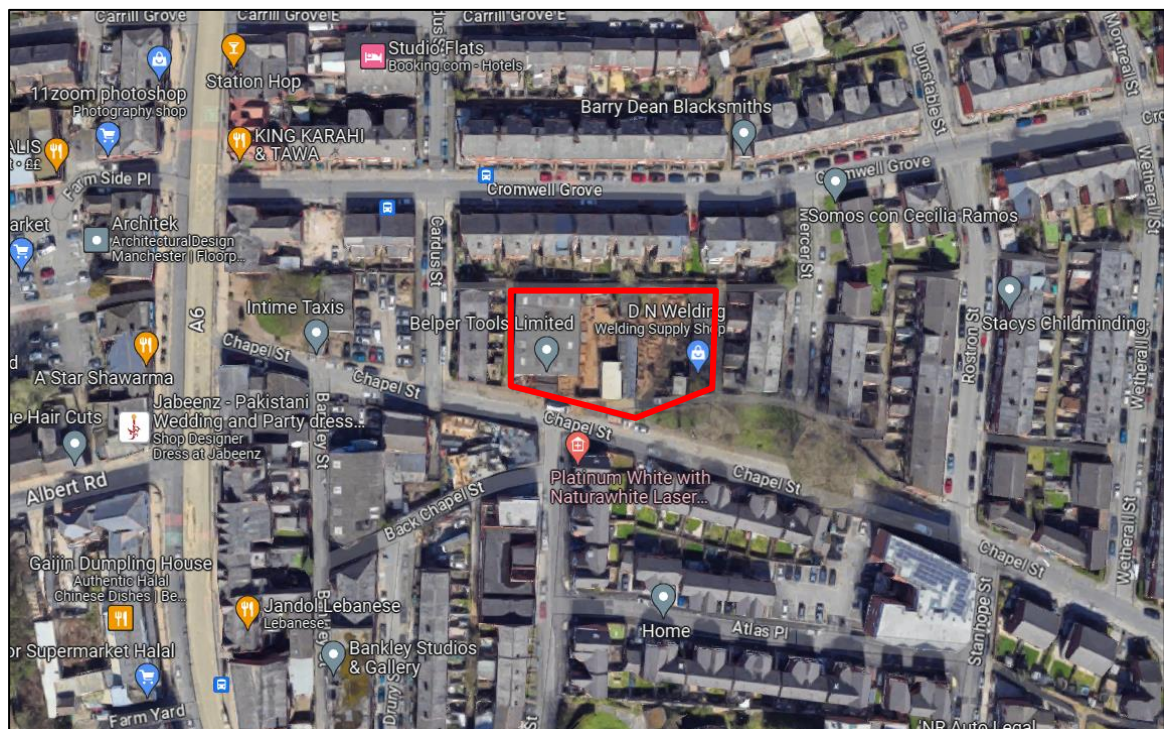


Figure 2.2: Aerial view showing the site and surroundings and the established residential character.



Figure 2.3: View showing the relationship of the application site (right) with terraced properties located to the west on Cardus Street (left).



Figure 2.4: View across the site looking north with residential properties located on Cromwell Grove located beyond.



Figure 2.5: View showing relationship of the application site (left) with terraced properties on Mercer Street (right).



Figure 2.6: Recent residential development located opposite the site on Chapel Street.

- 2.6 The site is located close to the centre of Levenshulme which provides a wider range of shops, services and amenities to meet the day to day needs of residents. The A6 is well served by frequent bus services with routes between Manchester and Stockport. Levenshulme Railway Station is located approximately 180m away with regular services to Manchester, Crewe, Alderley Edge and Buxton. The above characteristics make the location a desirable residential area.

## Planning History

- 2.7 Research of the site's planning history has been undertaken. This identified a number of historic applications which are reviewed in the table below:

| Application reference | Description of development                                                       | Decision and date                | PBA comments |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| F05618                | Alterations to yard and buildings, for use as medium/heavy engineering workshop. | Not proceeded with<br>30.09.2017 | N/A          |

|        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 018224 | External alterations as a result of the division of an existing industrial building into four industrial units; provision of parking, servicing and secure storage areas after demolition of derelict building, erection of fencing, and new vehicular access fr [sic] | Approved<br>01.12.1982 | This planning permission does not appear to have been implemented with the site forming a single entity.                                                                                                            |
| F09221 | Erection of a single storey building at Engineering Works after demolition of existing building and provision of car parking and turning area.                                                                                                                         | Approved<br>04.10.1978 | This permission allows for work / activity on site to take place 08.00am – 08.00pm Monday to Friday and 08.00am – 12 midday on Saturdays. There does not appear to be any control on the type of engineering works. |

2.8 In addition to the planning history of the application site, planning permission 113618/FO/2016 is of relevance and relates to the housing development located opposite the site on the south side of Chapel Street. This was approved on 13 January 2017 for 'Erection of 64 no. dwellings comprising of: 28 x two bedroom apartments with associated

28 space car park and communal bin storage area; 22 x three bedroom houses; 6 x four bedroom houses; 8 x four bedroom houses with garages, boundary treatments (including walls, railings gates and fences), formation of new access road linking Elbow Street and Stanhope Street and landscaping following demolition of existing buildings.'

- 2.9 It is noted that prior to development this neighbouring site it accommodated employment use. However, as part of the planning application it was highlighted that the buildings and site were in disrepair and unfit for commercial purposes, unless significant funds were available for their repair and restoration. Furthermore, it was noted that due to the site's location within a well-established residential area it was considered that if the site were brought back into an active, industrial use, it could cause significant harm to the amenity of existing residents. These arguments have parallels to the subject site / proposed development and demonstrate that redevelopment of employment land for housing within this context has previously been supported by Manchester City Council.

### 3. The Proposed Scheme

- 3.1 The description of development is 'Erection of 8no. houses (Class C3), formation of new access road from Chapel Street and associated car parking, garden areas and boundary treatments following demolition of existing buildings'.
- 3.2 An extract of the proposed site plan is provided below (figure 3.1). The access to the site will be similar to the existing position. Either side of the access road are two pairs of semi-detached houses. These are two storey properties with additional accommodation in the roofspace. The properties are set behind landscaped areas with an allocated parking space per dwelling. To the rear of each property is a landscaped garden with space for the storage of bins.
- 3.3 The scheme will provide family housing which will contribute to the wider housing mix in the area and help to meet housing needs for people in Levenshulme.

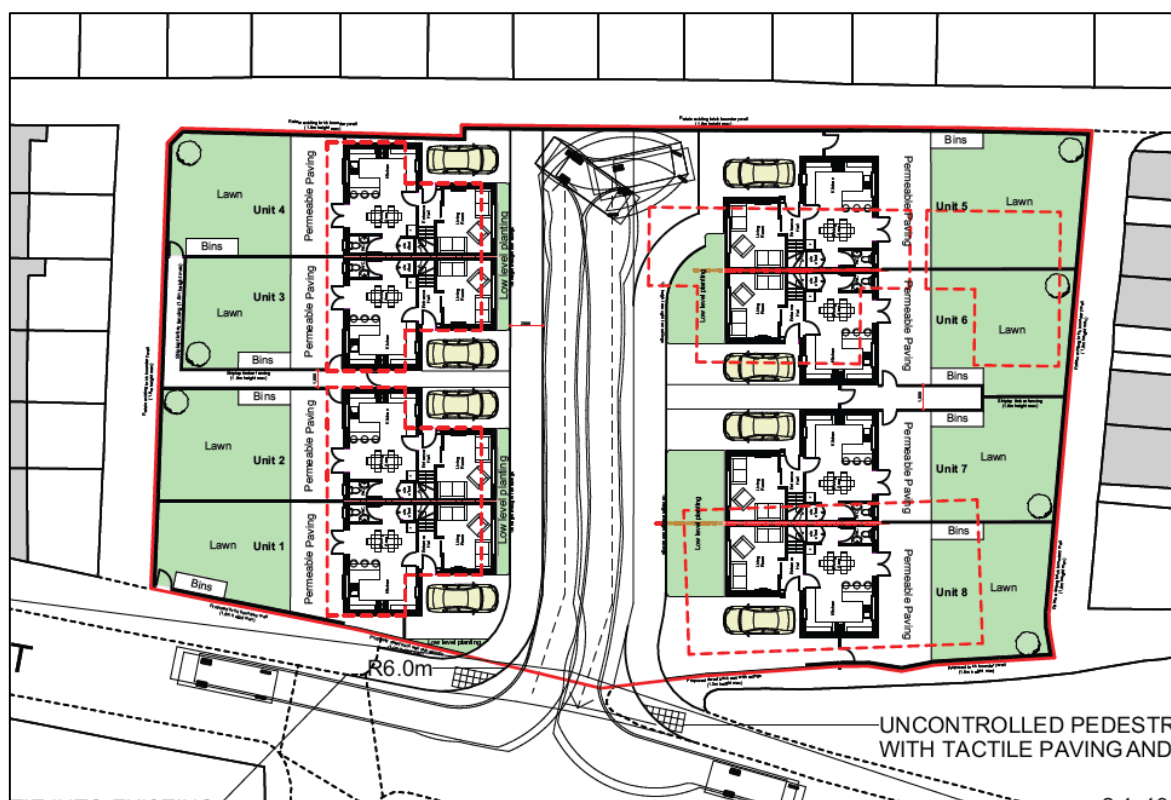


Figure 3.1: Extract of Proposed Site Plan.

- 3.4 Full details of the proposals are provided in the Design and Access Statement and drawings submitted as part of the planning application.

## 4. National and Local Employment Land Planning Policy Guidance

- 4.1 Section 38 (6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 2004 states that applications for development should be determined in accordance with the adopted development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In the case of Manchester City Council, the adopted development plan consists of the Core Strategy (adopted 2012) and the saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan. Due consideration in the determination of the application will also need to be afforded to national policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which represents a significant material consideration.
- 4.2 This Statement specifically relates to the application of employment land related matters. Relevant provisions are considered below.

### National

#### National Planning Policy Framework, September 2023

- 4.3 The National Planning Policy Framework was adopted in September 2023 and is an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF advises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 goes on to advise that 'achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):
- a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
  - b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the

needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy'.

- 4.4 Section 11 of the NPPF 'Making Effective Use of Land' includes various provisions relevant to the determination of applications in relation to employment land.
- 4.5 Paragraph 119 states 'Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. 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'.
- 4.6 Paragraph 120 c) states that local planning authorities should 'give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land'. Paragraph 120 d) goes on to state that local planning authorities should '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'.
- 4.7 Paragraph 123 states that 'Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs. In particular, they should support proposals to: a) use retail and employment land for homes in areas of high housing demand, provided this would not undermine key economic sectors or sites or the vitality and viability of town centres, and would be compatible with other policies in this Framework; and b) make more effective use of sites that provide community

services such as schools and hospitals, provided this maintains or improves the quality of service provision and access to open space’.

## Local

### Manchester City Council Core Strategy Development Plan Document, 2012

4.8 Manchester's Core Strategy was adopted on 11 July 2012 and is the key Development Plan document. The document sets out the long term strategic policies for Manchester's future development and forms the framework that planning applications will be assessed against. The following employment land related policy is of relevance:

- Policy EC 2 ‘Existing Employment Space’ states that the Council will seek to retain and enhance existing employment space and sites. Alternative uses will only be supported on sites allocated accordingly, or if it can be demonstrated that:
  - The existing use is un-viable in terms of business operations, building age and format;
  - The existing use is incompatible with adjacent uses;
  - The existing use is unsuitable for employment having had regard to the Manchester Salford - Trafford SFRA; or
  - On balance, proposals are able to offer greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy’s vision and spatial objectives than the existing use.

4.9 Paragraph 8.12 provides supporting explanation to Policy EC2 and states ‘In certain areas the City has experienced pressure on existing employment space for other uses, for example residential. Historically there have been reductions in industrial space across the City. More recently the City has witnessed a considerable increase in office space and forecasts indicate there will continue to be growth in this type of employment space during the lifetime of the Core Strategy. Office development often seeks different types of locations to industrial sites leaving the City with underused employment land. The Council wishes to ensure there is provision of a wide selection of business space, types, sizes, quality and cost. In appropriate situations the policy will allow redevelopment of sites to provide the

opportunity for alternative uses of land. Leaving land vacant is not an efficient use of land and should be avoided if an appropriate alternative use can be considered’.

4.10 Paragraph 8.13 goes on to state ‘Although the Council values employment land, there are circumstances where it will be appropriate to support alternative uses. These circumstances are outlined in the policy, and broadly aim to acknowledge situations in which it would be unproductive to protect the land for employment uses, either because:

- Employment is un-viable, particularly if the site has remained empty or vacant for a period of time although it has been marketed and the employment space no longer serves the needs of businesses due to its age and the conditions of the property; or,
- An alternative use would bring more benefits to the City, either because the employment use is not the optimum use for the site or because any harm is outweighed by the benefits of the new use. Judgements on the net value of such benefits will be based on the key strategic objectives in the Core Strategy’.

4.11 There are no site specific designations relating to the site. It is however noted that the site is located adjacent to the Levenshulme District Centre. It is also highlighted that the site is not within an ‘Economic Improvement Area’ or affected by another employment related policy designation.

4.12 At a regional level, the emerging ‘Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document’ is of some relevance to the determination of the application. This document has passed the examination stage and a letter from the Planning Inspectorate dated 11 August 2023 confirmed that the Places for Everyone plan is ready to move to the next stage of the process. This recommended that the nine authorities consult on a set of recommendations to clarify the wording of the policies however the vision, objectives and Spatial Strategy for the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan of nine Greater Manchester districts remain unchanged. The ‘Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document’ seeks to maximise the use of sustainable urban/brownfield land to meet development needs. It is also confirmed that an essential aspect of the efficient and effective use of land will be to prioritise the reuse of previously-developed (brownfield) land when meeting development needs.

## 5. Analysis

5.1 This section of the report considers the application proposal against national and local employment related planning policy having regard to relevant material planning considerations.

5.2 It is important to highlight that the application site is not identified as a designated employment area by the Council's Proposals Map. Core Strategy Policy EC2 is the key local policy relating to the alternative use of employment land and confirms the occasions / policy tests when alternative uses will be supported. The proposal is considered against the key tests of this policy below:

*'The existing use is un-viable in terms of business operations, building age and format'*

5.3 In terms of the current position it is noted that the site is only 0.18 hectares in size and therefore has a minimal contribution to the employment land supply of the wider Council area. The floorspace of the existing buildings is calculated as 740sqm by the architect, however this is unlikely to give a true representation given the poor condition of buildings and the true usable area is likely to be much less.

5.4 Whilst there is a minimal level of employment land / space associated with the existing 'Belper Tools Ltd' operation it is also understood that this business is winding down and currently only supports around 10 jobs. It is understood that around 50% of the existing staff are due to retire or relocate in any event. The closure of the business will leave the application site vacant and without active use. This does not represent an appropriate or efficient use of land having regard to national and local planning considerations.

5.5 As confirmed at Section 2, the site is in very poor condition. This includes the application buildings / structures themselves, hardstanding / surfacing and boundary treatments. Site Photographs provided at Appendix 1 illustrate this. These show extensive structural defects to multiple buildings including missing / dilapidated roof coverings and rainwater goods; missing / broken windows; extensive vegetation growth to walls and roof; holes and other damage to building fabric; and the presence of asbestos containing materials. Given the

age and condition of the buildings it is also unlikely that utilities would meet the requirements of modern industrial use and would necessitate significant improvement and investment.

- 5.6 The wider site is also in very poor condition with a lack of hard standing creating pooling of water and mud which detrimentally affects the functionality of the site. These conditions limit space available for parking, storage and other activities, and effectively mean that large parts of the site cannot be utilised for economic use, whilst also hindering the function of the wider site.
- 5.7 Related to the above, site access and vehicular manoeuvrability is also very constrained. There is a single access point off Chapel Street. This leads to a small forecourt area in front of the west building, and onto a larger forecourt area to the east of this. The small forecourt area provides a limited setback from the highway and does not provide sufficient space for a HGV to park for unloading / loading. There is also no turning space available which would necessitate a vehicle reversing on or off the highway which is undesirable from a business point of view as well as from a highway / public safety perspective. In terms of the larger forecourt area this is also unlikely to provide sufficient space for larger vans and HGVs to park and manoeuvre, meaning the site is only likely to be directly serviceable by smaller vehicles which again restricts functionality and its attractiveness to any other commercial use. Vehicles manoeuvring / parking within this space would also conflict with the service route between buildings representing a further limitation and constraint.
- 5.8 A further constraint is the absence of any parking for staff or other visitors. This arrangement means that there is a reliance for on street car parking. Although the north side of the highway of Chapel Street has double-yellow lines it is observed that vehicles do in fact breach this and park on the footway. Review of Google Earth confirms this is a regular situation. This form of behaviour is symptomatic of the inadequacy of the site from a functional perspective. Were car parking to be accommodated within the site this would reduce space available for economic purposes and could also conflict with activities on the site particularly if they were potentially hazardous.
- 5.9 The nature of the site as a cluster of small buildings creates functional challenges with businesses often preferring a larger single unit to house activities 'under one roof'. Some of

the buildings are small and relatively cramped which limits their use for industrial processes and related activities. This characteristic means the site is unlikely to appeal to any other commercial operator.

- 5.10 Boundary treatments are also in a poor state of repair with structural movement observed. This could present a liability / safety risk and is something which any occupier would need to swiftly rectify incurring further expense for any operator that was to consider relocating to the site.
- 5.11 Given the extremely poor state of the buildings / site it is almost certain that they would be condemned and not deemed fit for purpose by any new prospective occupier. The cost associated with maintaining buildings / the site in active economic use will therefore almost certainly provide unviable and any marketing of the site for employment use would not yield any bona-fide interest. The condition of the buildings alone is considered enough to mean there would not be any commercial interest, whilst there are also further constraints.
- 5.12 Aside from the characteristics of the buildings / site, from a locational perspective the site is also unlikely to be attractive for employment related use due to access challenges. It is anticipated that most vehicles accessing the site would approach from the A6 to the west of the site. The road geometry on the junction of the A6 and Chapel Street is very tight and a large van or HGV would likely have difficulty making this turn. The surrounding residential streets are also relatively narrow with on street parking a feature. More generally movements of larger vehicles could be associated with a level of noise / vibration / fumes to nearby residential properties and resultant adverse amenity impact. There could also be highway safety considerations particularly in a location close to the District Centre where pedestrian activity is a notable feature. Linked to the above factors it is also highlighted that modern industrial related businesses will often favour purpose built industrial estate locations which benefit from ready and convenient access to the motorway and strategic highway network. Such locations also offer economic benefits through a grouping of businesses employed in similar industries which may be involved in linked processes and form part of the same supply chain. The site is isolated in this regard which further detracts from its attractiveness as a viable business proposition.

'The existing use is incompatible with adjacent uses'

- 5.13 The site is surrounded on all sides by existing residential properties. Their compatibility with the existing use of the site is considered below.
- 5.14 The existing use of the site is undertaken by 'Belper Tools Ltd'. The activities include cutting, grinding and fabrication of metal. Based on site observations, grinding and cutting activities typically occurred for a duration of 30 seconds whilst hammering activities typically occurred for a duration of 10 seconds. The noises are consistent throughout the hours of operation, although the intermittent nature of the sources increases their prominence and disruptive influence.
- 5.15 As shown by figures 2.1 and 2.2 there are existing residential properties to all sides of the site. These are generally terrace properties with smaller yard areas and with habitable accommodation in close proximity to the site boundary. Given the level of noise generated, this undoubtedly will be audible from within these properties as well as the gardens, and will amount to an existing adverse amenity impact. The proposed residential use provides an opportunity to resolve this conflict.
- 5.16 Other noise factors are associated with employment use such as forklift trucks and vehicle movements, as well as voices of staff who may have to shout to each other across the site and over the noise of mechanical equipment.
- 5.17 Based on the above it is confirmed that there is already an adverse amenity impact associated with noise. If an alternative industrial use was to occupy the site then there could be an increased level of activity, with further noise disturbance in very close proximity to the neighbouring residential properties.
- 5.18 In addition to the noise impacts, other amenity impacts which could be associated with alternative industrial use of the site could include activities which involve the creation of dust, vibration, emission of foul smell / odour, or creation of other forms of pollution. Whilst stringent health and safety measures can be followed, risks cannot always be removed entirely and the presence of industrial use in such close proximity to residential does carry a degree of risk.

5.19 Vehicle movements associated with industrial use including those of large vehicles and HGVs may also conflict and have adverse amenity and safety impacts for the occupants of surrounding residential properties.

5.20 In overview, having regard to the above it is confirmed that the existing industrial use is clearly incompatible with the surrounding residential uses. Furthermore, if an alternative industrial use was to occupy the site then the activities and processes associated with this could raise further amenity and safety implications which would further threaten residential amenity. The planning system should act to resolve such issues of incompatibility and the proposed residential development will help to secure this aim.

*'On balance, proposals are able to offer greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy's vision and spatial objectives than the existing use'*

5.21 The above analysis has established that the existing employment use of the site is not viable, and that the use is incompatible with adjacent residential uses in terms of generating adverse amenity impacts. Given these circumstances it is not desirable to retain the site in employment use. Given the surrounding residential context, it is considered that a residential redevelopment of the site represents the optimum use of the site. The proposed residential use will also deliver a number of benefits which align with the vision and objectives of the Core Strategy. These include:

- Redevelopment of brownfield land for residential use which will meet housing demand within Levenshulme.
- The provision of residential use which will be compatible with the surrounding residential housing.
- A mix of dwelling types will be provided which will be attractive to a wide range of occupiers including young professionals, key workers, families and older people, helping to support a mixed and balanced community.
- Visual enhancements through the development of an unattractive site, and provision of a development which enhances the streetscene and reflects the local context.

- The redevelopment of a site located in highly sustainable and accessible location in close proximity to Levenshulme District Centre and the array of shops, facilities and amenities it has to offer. The site is also highly accessible by public transport including regular bus services along the A6, and rail services at Levenshulme Railway Station.
- As part of the delivery of the development remediation will be undertaken and any contamination issues addressed.
- The scheme will incorporate soft landscaping and tree planting which will provide biodiversity benefits and visual enhancements.
- The provision of a development with high sustainability credentials that will deliver economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Securing direct investment into the local community through the provision of jobs during the construction period and spending by future residents in local shops / businesses in Levenshulme District Centre.
- Encouraging natural surveillance that will improve security and help reduce the fear of crime.

5.22 The above benefits associated with the scheme are judged on balance to deliver greater planning and regeneration benefits than the existing use of the site. In conclusion, it has therefore been demonstrated that the proposed development is consistent with Core Strategy Policy EC2.

5.23 At both a local and national level planning policy prioritises the development of brownfield land to meet housing needs and promote the redevelopment of underutilised employment land. For the reasons provided within this section it is confirmed that the proposal aligns with these objectives.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This Employment Land Statement has been prepared to support a planning application for the development of a site at 7 Chapel Street, Levenshulme.
- 6.2 The application site is currently in use for employment purposes, however it only supports a limited level of employment. The condition of the buildings and site is very poor, and when combined with other characteristics of the site and its location, when the current businesses closes the reuse of the site for viable economic purposes is extremely unlikely. Alongside this it is highlighted that the site is surrounded by residential properties with the current employment use being incompatible with this, in particular due to the high level and disruptive nature of noise. Any alternative employment use could be associated with similar or more severe characteristics which could further harm the amenity of residents living adjacent to the site and in the surrounding area. For these reasons it is not considered appropriate to retain the site in employment use, whilst it has been demonstrated that residential use will deliver a series of planning and regeneration benefits which will align with the vision and objectives of the Core Strategy and national planning policy.
- 6.3 For the above reasons it is concluded that the development is in accordance with national and local planning policy relating to employment use of land. Paul Butler Associates are therefore pleased to submit this Employment Land Statement in support of this application and respectfully recommend its approval.

## Appendix 1: Site Visit Photographs































