

14 September 2023

Mr Rob Griffin
Development Management South
Planning, Licensing and Building Control
Manchester City Council

Via Planning Portal

Dear Rob

Submission of Two Outline Planning Applications for Residential Redevelopment at Land at Northenden on behalf of Express Solicitors

This cover letter supports the submission of two parallel outline planning applications seeking permission to redevelop the existing offices on two sites currently occupied and owned by Express Solicitors in Northenden. The two sites are:

Land at Resolution House & Annexe / 311 to 319 Palatine Road, Northenden ("Palatine Road" site)

and,

Land at Transformulas House, 1a Brett Street, Northenden ("Brett Street" site)

Parallel applications are made because Express Solicitors will be vacating the premises at each site as part of its relocation to new premises at South Court, Sharston to enable consolidation of its business operations that is dispersed over the two sites and other temporary accommodated in South Manchester. The relocation will enable Express Solicitors to continue to expand from its circa 560 staff to its planned scale of around 1,000 staff.

To assist we provide a validation list for each application where you will see that the supporting documentation is shared between the two applications given the proximity of the two sites and similarity of issues arising in principle in the outline applications. Separate drawings are provided for each. The validation list follows that set out in our pre-application list sent earlier this year and advice from the development team. We trust all will be in order for validation, please let me know as soon as possible if this is not the case.

Summary

The Planning Statement, section 1, sets out a summary case in support of the two proposals. In each application we are seeking for Express Solicitors outline planning permission with matters of access, layout and scale for approval for residential development. At the Palatine Road site the applied for development is:

Outline planning permission (with matters of access, layout and scale for approval) for demolition of all existing buildings and redevelopment of site for up to 34 apartments and 3 townhouses (Use Class C3)

And at Brett Street the applied for development is:

Outline planning permission (with matters of access, layout and scale for approval) for demolition of all existing buildings and redevelopment of site for 2 townhouses (Use Class C3)

As mentioned above Express Solicitors is seeking to consolidate and relocate its business to new premises at South Court, Sharston which is under a mile away from the centre of Northenden which has been its base since the company started some 20 years ago. As an employer of around 560 people currently, it is one of the largest single employers in South Manchester and employers of professional staff. As many of its employees live in the wider South Manchester area it has chosen to retain its presence and base locally. Relocation is scheduled to complete in phases by early 2024.

The existing premises at the Palatine Road site (two buildings) and Brett Street (single building) have been assessed for potential conversion / extension / reuse, including opportunities for exercise of permitted development rights which was set out in the pre-application submission details to you. But the exercise demonstrated that the buildings as converted retail spaces are at the end of their useful life, require extensive alteration and modernisation, and would be a sub-optimal choice.

The Design and Access Statement sets out the site context, constraints and opportunities at each site. The smaller Brett Street site on a corner location which is predominantly residential in character save for the premises itself, lends itself to small scale redevelopment into townhouses, which is proposed for two units as a reduction in the density initially suggested and commented upon in pre-application.

The larger Palatine Road site lend itself to two buildings to be formed following the building line of Palatine Road to front and Allanson Road to rear. The front to take a larger scale building for up to 34 apartments and the rear a short row of up to 3 townhouses to reflect the terraced residential street of Allanson Road. An internal parking courtyard with private amenity space for townhouses completes the basic layout concept, with vehicular access taken via Allanson Road as it is now albeit relocated to the northern side to improve layout efficiency.

All matters and design rationale to the outline layout can be seen in the accompanying drawings and Design & Access Statement with the policy implications addressed in the Planning Statement.

Supporting evidence includes key issues of flood risk and drainage, transportation, sustainability, noise and air quality amongst other matters. The findings demonstrate that each site can be brought forward for a residential use including reference to flood risk given that it is a 'more vulnerable' use in an area designated as Flood Zone 2. Through proposed mitigation on raising internal ground floor levels by circa 500mm and reducing the built extent of the site agreement in principle has been received from the Environment Agency to the design approach.

In presenting the proposals in outline the architects, AEW, has prepared illustrative floor plans, elevations and 3D images to demonstrate that the parameters sought can achieve a development that we say meets a balance of planning policies. This includes matters of principle of the material change of use from office to residential, matters of scale and character and amenity. Sections 6 and 7 to the Planning Statement set out the full case.

Affordable housing is proposed on the larger Palatine Road scheme as it exceeds relevant policy threshold for 8 units. It is submitted with an assumption for a mix of four 1-bed and four 2-bed apartments for social rent, but the applicant is open to consideration of alternative tenures. We suggest that an appropriate planning condition can agree in detailed design at reserved matters stage what that provision will be once there is benefit of firm proposals from a registered provider on need / requirements.

At submission stage we have not prepared any heads of terms and we will respond to consultation with you.

Overall we consider the proposals submitted in outline will provide the basis to deliver a sustainable development for residential units in the centre of Northenden which will assist in meeting wider housing needs, supporting the vitality of the centre and improvement to the townscape and character of the area.

We look forward to receiving confirmation of registration and validation of the two applications in due course, and once initial consultation is completed to discuss the proposals in more detail with you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R Purser", with a horizontal line drawn through the signature.

Richard Purser, Director
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cc. Express Solicitors

Enc. Submission checklists x2