Ladybarn House

Wilmslow Rd, Fallowfield,
Manchester
M14 6ND

Planning Statement

September 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by THIS Planning on behalf of Almero Student, in support of a full planning application submitted for the following proposals at the Ladybarn House site.

- Modernising and renovating the internal finishes of the existing student accommodation.

- Revised ground floor layout comprising the change of use of an existing vacant Class E premises (Units 1-3), to a new reception and ancillary amenity area for use by student residents. In addition, the conversion of existing ancillary areas at ground, first and second floor levels to an additional 3 student studios.

- Rejuvenate of existing retail units along Wilmslow Road

1.2 The key objectives of the proposed development are to:

- Refurbish the existing student accommodation to improve quality of bedrooms and shared living/kitchen spaces;
- Introduce high-quality shared amenity spaces for use by the student residents;
- Provide 3 additional high-quality student rooms;

The Applicant

1.3 This Planning Statement is submitted on behalf of Bluesky Student Ladybarn House Limited, a subsidiary company of Almero Students. Almero Students own and operate 20 properties across the UK, housing a population of over 1,300 student residents. This includes 77 student bedspaces within Clydesdale House, located in the heart of the Northern Quarter in Manchester.

1.4 Almero Students specialises in providing well-managed, clean, and comfortable accommodation - that feels like a home from home and a dedicated in-house management team, overseeing marketing, lettings and maintenance, ensure all students have a smooth and enjoyable experience.

1.5 Further details related to Almero Students can be viewed on its website (www.almerostudent.com).

1.6 This Planning Statement includes the following sections:

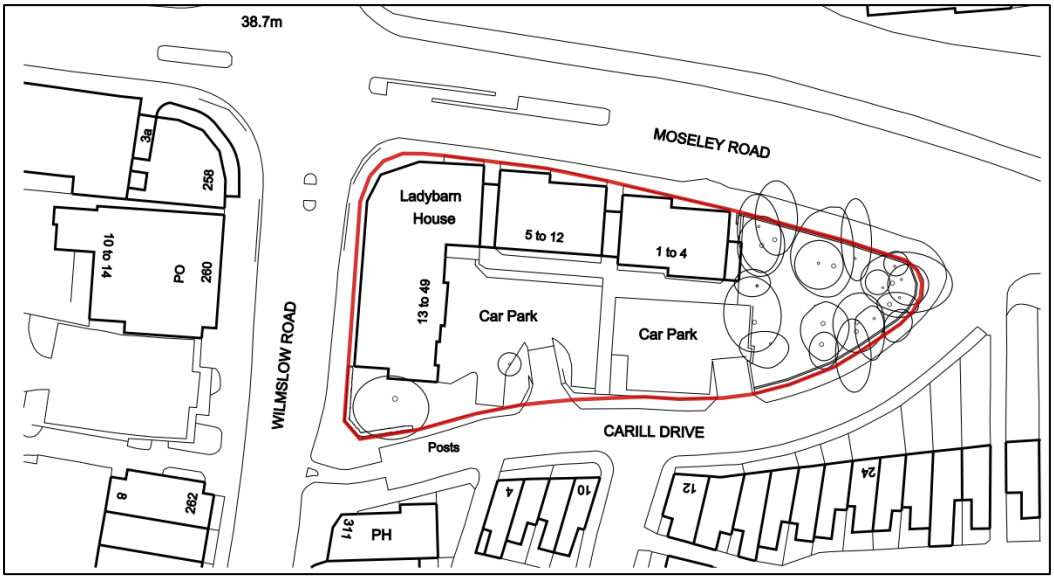
- Section 1 – Introduction
- Section 2 – Site Context
- Section 3 – Proposals
- Section 4 – Planning Policy Framework
- Section 5 – Assessment of the Proposals
- Section 6 – Conclusions

2. SITE CONTEXT

The Application Site

2.1 The site comprises Ladybarn House, including associated areas of car parking and landscaping, and extends to a total of approximately 0.12 hectares.

2.2 Ladybarn House is located on the corner of Wilmslow Road and Moseley Road, in the heart of Fallowfield. It is a roughly triangular site, bordered to the south by Carill Drive. Due to its corner location it offers frontages to both Wilmslow Road (the B5093) and Moseley Road, whilst its vehicular access is taken from Carill Drive at the rear. The site tapers to the east, where Carill Drive and Moseley Road meet. There is an amenity area in the eastern corner that is rarely used at present by the students.



Red Line Boundary of the Ladybarn House site

2.3 Ladybarn House currently comprises 117 student units. There are also limited common room and laundry facilities which are not regularly used by student residents.

Ladybarn House frontage onto junction of Moseley Road and Wilmslow Road

2.4 At ground-floor level there are the following commercial units:

Unit 1 -3: Vacant and previously occupied by Manchester Student Homes

Unit 4: Vacant and previously occupied The Sun Room;

Unit 5: Vacant and previously occupied by Company Hair Studio; and

Unit 6: Currently leased and operated by Subway.

2.5 In the wider context, Fallowfield is a district in the heart of south Manchester. The cross-roads adjacent to the site (where the B5093 and A6010 meet) is recognised as the centre of the district. Wilmslow Road is a principal main road through southern Manchester, connecting Didsbury, Withington, Fallowfield and Rusholme with the city centre. It is a very busy bus route with at least one bus every 5 minutes.

2.6 The University of Manchester's Owens Park campus is located to the north of the site and the University is currently progressing significant redevelopment proposals for the campus site, replacing existing accommodation with up to 3,300 new student bedspaces.

2.7 There are a significant number of services and facilities provided within the district centre, including a Sainsbury's superstore, numerous shops and stores and several smaller pubs and restaurants. Platt Fields Park is a large public open space located to the north-west of the cross-roads; the University Athletics Ground and

Ladybarn Park are two other large areas of open space within the local area.

2.8 Fallowfield is at the southern end of the A6010 corridor associated with Manchester's two largest universities. It is an area extremely popular with students, as are its neighbouring districts such as Withington to the south. The Fallowfield residential and athletics campus is situated on the northern side of Moseley Road.

2.9 The main university establishments (both University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University) are located to the north along the A6010, on the Oxford Road corridor. The site is ideally located for the City's student population, being within close proximity to the following universities:

- University of Manchester Campus (1.4 miles)
- Manchester Metropolitan University Campus (2 miles)

2.10 In terms of planning history, a planning application was submitted by the previous landowner for outline planning permission on the site (ref. 110236/00/2015/S1), within the car park area, was refused on 8 February 2016 by Manchester City Council. The application was for the following description of development,

"Erection of a 4 storey building to form a total of 28 student flats with associated common room, cycle store and bin store and reorganisation of car park to provide a 13 space and 7 space car park"

Aerial view (north-west) of the refused planning application ref.: 110236/00/2015/S1

2.11 The application was refused with four reasons of refusal related to:

- Failure to demonstrate a need for the student accommodation

- The position of the building on site and the scale and design of the application which was considered to be out of character with adjacent properties
- Amenity impacts related to the position, size and scale of the proposal
- Lack of sufficient car parking

2.12 The application was subsequently dismissed at appeal on 24 January 2017 by the Planning Inspectorate. The appeal was dismissed principally on design grounds, due to the scale of the proposed building and its relationship to the existing bedrooms, resulting in the loss of daylighting. The proposed four storey building was not found to be 'objectionable' by the Inspector, but the impact of the context of the site was unacceptable. The Inspector considered that the appeal site was more closely related to CariIl Drive and Standish Road to the south, rather than the Owen Park student housing development across Moseley Road to the north, and the context was set predominantly by these two storey, red brick terraces to the south. The new four storey building with a blank gable elevation located approximately 3 to 4 metres from the south elevation of Ladybarn House was also found to have an unacceptable impact on daylighting and outlook.

2.13 Overall, the Inspector found that the application would *"appear as an incongruous feature within the street scene and, consequently, would not represent a high standard of design."* The Inspector found the following to be unacceptable:

- Blank gable to Carill Drive which would emphasise the profile of the roof which would contrast with the pitched roofs on Ladybarn House and the terraces opposite;
- Horizontal emphasis of the building would contrast with the vertical emphasis of the terraces opposite;
- Prominent eastern elevation and low solid to void ratio on the western elevation, inconsistent with the surrounding buildings;
- Timber cladding would be an alien material in the area.

2.14 However, the Inspector accepted the need for additional student accommodation stating *"I find that the balance of the evidence indicates that there is a need for the accommodation proposed. The proposal would meet the relevant requirements of Core Strategy Policies SP1, DM1, and H12 which seek to provide high quality and diverse housing around district centres which meet local needs and provide better accommodation for students in appropriate locations."*

2.15 Further, the Inspector considered the proposal for a car free development, with only six spaces to be retained for student parking (disabled badge holders and pick up / drop off) to be acceptable. At the appeal it was stated that the proposal *"would effectively reduce the capacity of the car parks by 12 spaces and remove all student parking, leaving only the barrier controlled car park to the west, which is associated with the commercial uses on the ground floor of Ladybarn House"*. He concluded *"the low parking demand of the existing and proposed development would result in only limited additional competition for parking spaces in the area where there is some additional capacity and, in combination with the district centre location of the appeal site and the good public transport connectivity, the impact of this would not be so severe to warrant refusing planning permission."*

2.16 Following the January 2017 appeal, a full planning application was submitted by the previous landowner in June 2018, for the following revised development proposals:

"Erection of a three-storey building to form student accommodation comprising 44 bedspaces above ground floor communal space, together with reorganisation of car parking, associated landscaping, cycle parking and waste storage."

2.17 The revised proposal sought to address the issues raised in the previous application and appeal decision to address the context of the adjacent terraces at Carill Drive and Standish Street. The proposal included a mix of studios, two bed apartments and six bed townhouses fronting onto Carill Drive.

Street view (west) of the withdrawn planning application ref.: 119320/FO/2018

2.18 The planning application was withdrawn in November 2019 and was therefore not determined by MCC.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Overview of the Proposals

3.1 The proposed development comprises the following components:

1. **Modernising and renovating the internal finishes of the existing student accommodation.**

3.2 The proposals follow the recent acquisition of the site by Almero Student after identifying the need to refurbish and modernise the existing student accommodation on the site (see existing images below). In addition, the opportunity to explore proposals for increasing the number of student bedspaces on the site in order to help meet the significant demand for new purpose built student accommodation (PBSA) in Manchester and to support the growth strategies of Manchester's leading educational institutions.

Existing student bedroom and lounge/dining room

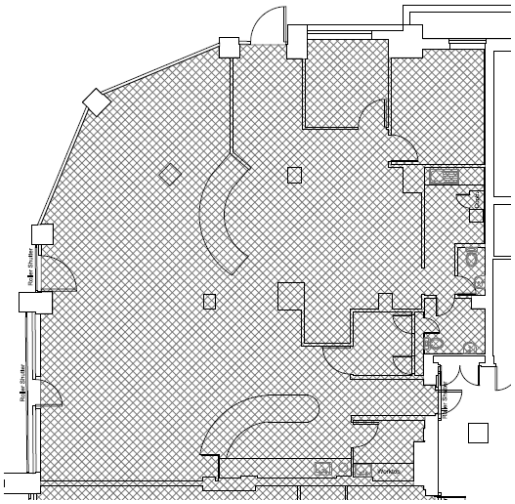
3.3 The renovation works will include modernising and renovating the internal finishes of the existing student accommodation wherever required, including the following:

- Painting walls and ceilings of bedrooms, communal areas and corridors
- New flooring
- New modern LED lighting
- New kitchen worktops, cupboards and appliances
- New bathroom sanitary ware
- New loose furniture

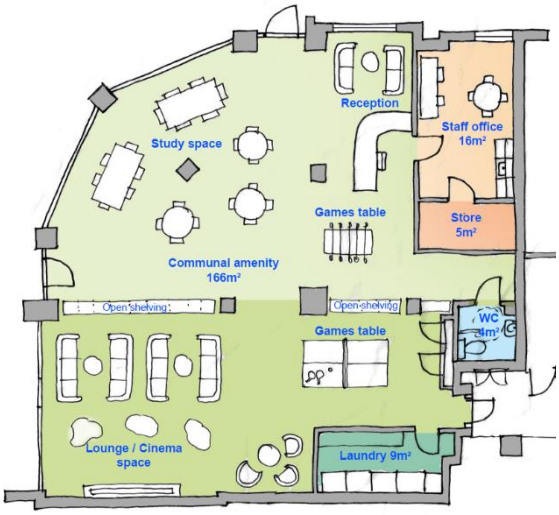
2. **Revised ground floor layout comprising the change of use of an existing vacant Class E premises (Units 1-3), to a new reception and ancillary amenity area for use by student residents. In addition, the conversion of**

existing ancillary areas at ground, first and second floor levels to an additional 3 student studios.

3.4 The existing common areas within the building are not well used by existing student residents and are in need of improvement. It is proposed to utilise the vacant estate agents office at Units 1-3 to enable the consolidation of shared student amenities to the ground floor, incorporating a reception area, staff office, laundry room, WC and flexible amenity space. The proposals will increase to overall amount of amenity space available to student residents compared with the existing layout.



Existing Ground Floor Plan (Units 1-3)



Proposed Ground Floor Plan (Units 1-3)

3.5 In addition, the proposals will enable the use of a vacant estate agency unit, which has stood empty for over 4 years (see images below). The proposals will include an improved frontage onto Moseley Road and Wilmslow Road, through a refurbished shopfront and the new reception area and ancillary amenity space will restore active frontage onto a prominent part of the Fallowfield District Centre.

Existing Frontage of Units 1-3

3.6 The consolidation of shared student amenity areas at ground, first and second floor levels will enable the existing and significantly underused common spaces to be converted to an additional 3 studios, measuring between 21 – 22 sqm and inclusive of a double bed, ensuite shower room, desk, wardrobe and kitchenette.

3.7 Further details on the location of indicative layout of the proposed studio rooms are provided in the attached Design and Access Statement prepared by BAL Architecture.

1. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND OVERVIEW

Overview

1.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that an application for planning permission shall be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Conversely, applications that are not in accordance with relevant policies in the plan should not be allowed unless material considerations justify a grant of planning permission.

1.2 The Development Plan for Manchester comprises:

- The Core Strategy (2012); and
- Saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (1995).

1.3 The site is not allocated on the adopted Proposals Map but is located within the Fallowfield District Centre and also located in the South Manchester area as defined on the Local Plan Proposals Map.

1.4 Relevant material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (NPPF), the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), the emerging Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF), and other local policy guidance documents.

1.5 The below sets out an overview of relevant policies and considerations. A detailed assessment of how the proposed development accords with these policies and considerations is contained in Section 5.

Adopted Development Plan

<u>Core Strategy</u>

1.6 The Core Strategy was adopted in 2012 and covers the period to 2027. The Core Strategy is the key document within Manchester's Development Plan.

1.7 The site is unallocated within the adopted Proposals Map whilst the site is located within the Fallowfield District Centre.

1.8 Relevant policies include:

- Policy SP1 (Spatial Principles);

- Policy CC5 (Transport);
- Policy CC8 (Change and Renewal);
- Policy CC9 (Design and Heritage);
- Policy CC10 (A Place for Everyone);
- Policy H12 (Purpose Built Student Accommodation);
- Policy T2 (Accessible Areas of Opportunity and Need);
- Policy EN1 (Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas);
- Policy EN4 (Reducing CO2 Emissions by Enabling Low and Zero Carbon Development);
- Policy EN5 (Strategic Areas for low and zero carbon decentralised energy infrastructure);
- Policy EN6 (Target Framework for CO2 reductions from low or zero carbon energy supplies);
- Policy EN8 (Adaptation to Climate Change);
- Policy EN14 (Flood Risk);
- Policy EN15 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation);
- Policy EN16 (Air Quality);
- Policy EN18 (Contaminated Land and Ground Stability);
- Policy EN19 (Waste); and
- Policy DM1 (Development Management).

Remaining saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan

1.9 The Unitary Development Plan was adopted in 1995. Whilst the Core Strategy replaced a large number of the policies, a number of policies were 'saved' and remain relevant considerations.

1.10 Relevant policies include:

- Policy DC18.1 – Conservation Areas;
- Policy DC19.1 – Listed Buildings;
- Policy DC20.1 – Archaeology; and
- Policy DC26.1, 26.2 and 26.4 – Development and Noise.

Material Planning Considerations

1.11 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the following represent material considerations to be attributed appropriate

weight in the balance of any decision.

1.12 Separate reports to the Council's Executive are also relevant material considerations to the context of and application of Policy H12. These are covered in further detail in chapter 5 of this Planning Statement.

National Planning Policy Framework

1.13 A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in February 2019.

1.14 The NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications. Relevant sections include:

- Achieving sustainable development;
- Promoting sustainable transport;
- Making effective use of land;
- Achieving well designed places; and
- Meeting the challenges of climate change, flooding and coastal change.

Planning Practice Guidance

1.15 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was first published in 2012 and was revised in July 2018. The PPG sets out supplementary advice to the policies and guidance contained within the NPPF.

2. ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSALS

2.1 This section provides an overview of specific considerations in respect of the proposed development. It assesses the acceptability of the proposal against the planning policy context and other material considerations, demonstrating its compliance with adopted planning policy.

Principle of Additional Student Bedspaces

2.2 Policy H12 relates to Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA). Policy H12 supports the provision of PBSA where it satisfies the criteria indicated in the policy. Priority is given to scheme which are part of the university's redevelopment plans. The policy outlines ten criteria which must be complied with to achieve support for PBSA. The relevant criteria are stated as below with a response demonstrating the proposals compliance with each relevant criterion.

> *Sites should be in close proximity to the University campuses or to a high frequency public transport route which passes this area.*

2.3 The site is within close proximity to the University of Manchester Owens Park Campus immediately adjacent. The site is also located on a high frequency public transport route and therefore satisfies this criterion. The main campuses of the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University are each located within 2 miles and can be accessed by foot, cycle of public transport.

> *High density developments should be sited in locations where this is compatible with existing developments and initiatives, and where retail facilities are within walking distance. Proposals should not lead to an increase in on-street parking in the surrounding area.*

2.4 The site is located within Fallowfield District Centre and is in close proximity to a number of retail and leisure services, some of which are located at the ground floor of the existing PBSA. Local retailers include a Sainsbury's Superstore, Savers, Nandos and McDonalds. There are also a large number of local convenience stores, pubs, estate agents and hairdressers.

2.5 Almero Students own and operate 20 properties across the UK, housing a population of over 1,300 student residents. This includes at Clydesdale House, located in the heart of the Northern Quarter in Manchester. All Almero Student developments across the UK have very low car usage. The current building also

has very low car usage and therefore the proposal is not expected to result in an increase in on street parking in the area. The proposal therefore complies with this criterion.

Proposals that can demonstrate a positive regeneration impact in their own right will be given preference over other schemes. This can be demonstrated for example through impact assessments on district centres and the wider area. Proposals should contribute to providing a mix of uses and support district and local centres, in line with relevant Strategic Regeneration Frameworks, local plans and other masterplans as student accommodation should closely integrate with existing neighbourhoods to contribute in a positive way to their vibrancy without increasing pressure on existing neighbourhood services to the detriment of existing residents.

2.6 The proposal will have a positive regeneration impact by bringing a currently under-utilised area of land into use through the development of a sensitively designed proposal. The site will retain a mix of uses as the existing PBSA with ground floor retail units retained. The proposal will result in a modest increase in bedspaces and will not increase the pressure on existing neighbourhood services. The proposal therefore complies with this criterion.

Proposals should be designed to be safe and secure for their users, and avoid causing an increase in crime in the surrounding area. Consideration needs to be given to how proposed developments could assist in improving the safety of the surrounding area in terms of increased informal surveillance or other measures to contribute to crime prevention.

2.7 The proposal will be designed to ensure the safety of the surrounding area without impacting in the amenity of existing residents. The proposal therefore complies with this criterion.

Consideration should be given to the design and layout of the student accommodation and siting of individual uses within the overall development in relation to adjacent neighbouring uses. The aim is to ensure that there is no unacceptable effect on residential amenity in the surrounding area through increased noise, disturbance or impact on the streetscene either from the proposed development itself or when combined with existing accommodation.

2.8 The proposal has been carefully designed to ensure the design and layout is

compatible the existing PBSA at Ladybarn House. The proposal will help provide an active street frontage.

Consideration should be given to provision and management of waste disposal facilities that will ensure that waste is disposed of in accordance with the waste hierarchy set out in Policy EN 19, within the development at an early stage.

2.9 Given only a modest increase of 3 additional student bedspaces, the existing waste management facilities and processes are adequate and will be maintained.

Developers will be required to demonstrate that there is a need for additional student accommodation or that they have entered into a formal agreement with a University, or another provider of higher education, for the supply of all or some of the bedspaces.

2.10 In respect of the previous application that was considered at appeal, the Planning Inspector found there is a need for additional student accommodation. MCC has expressed a preference for students to be accommodated in PBSA within District Centres as opposed to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and this was considered, on appeal, to be a *"persuasive argument that there is a need for further PBSA"*, particularly considering that the proposal would not result in the loss of a site which could be developed for other purposes.

2.11 A Report was presented to the Manchester City Council Economy Scrutiny Economy on 23rd May 2023, titled 'Purpose Built Student Accommodation in Manchester'. This Report confirms that Manchester has one of the largest student populations in Europe, with over 120,000 studying at Greater Manchester's five universities. 84,260 students were enrolled at one of Manchester's three HEIS in 2021/22, of which 53,155 had a term time address in Manchester.

2.12 The May 2023 Report also confirms that *"It is now broadly recognized and accepted that there is a shortage of PBSA in Manchester. This was brought clearly into focus at the beginning of this academic year when some Manchester students could not be housed in PBSA in the City."*

2.13 The Report also identifies that *"demand for new PBSA could be between 5440 bedspaces (representing a 1% growth per annum) and 11320 (representing 2% growth per annum) up to 2030. The actual demand will depend on a number of factors, including the growth of the Universities, government policy (e.g., tuition fees), the highly competitive global market for international students, global*

pandemics… etc., which are outside of the control of the city and its universities. Therefore, we need to review demand regularly, but officers currently consider that around 750 new bed spaces are required per annum up to 2030."

Applicants/developers must demonstrate to the Council that their proposals for purpose built student accommodation are deliverable.

2.14 The proposal is entirely deliverable within the existing site and ownership and therefore complies with this criterion.

2.15 In summary, Given the recent appeal decision and the similar nature of the revised proposals, the Ladybarn House meets the requirements of Policy H12 on the basis of its close proximity to the University campuses and to a high-frequency public transport route through the area; and its high density in a location which is easily accessible not only to the University campuses but also to retail and other services. The site, when developed in the 1990's, provided a positive regeneration impact and has integrated successfully with existing neighbourhoods to provide positive vibrancy without increasing pressure on existing services. The proposed development is entirely consistent with Policy H12.

2.16 Policy EN1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas expects all developments in Manchester to follow the seven principles of urban design, as identified in National Planning Guidance (currently the National Planning Policy Framework - see below). The Policy requires regard to be had to the Strategic Character Area in which the development is located. The site is located within the Southern Strategic Character Area as defined in the Core Strategy. The Southern Strategic Character Area is described as having a notable presence of older development at key junctions and historical radial routes including Wilmslow Road adjacent the site. Development around these routes has a more regular layout of predominantly residential development up to the 1960's. The policy states that new development within these areas needs to retain the identity and focus of activity associated with the historic District Centres.

2.17 Policies EN6 and EN8 relate to target reductions in CO2 emissions and adaptability to climate change. Full details of the energy efficiency and adaptability of the subject property, including the proposed development, will be provided at planning application stage and will ensure the proposed development is in compliance with Policies EN6 and EN8 as far as they are relevant.

2.18 Policies C1, C2 and C6 seeks development which will maintain and enhance the role of existing centres, by providing services as locally as possible and minimise the need to travel by car. The site is located within the Fallowfield District Centre, which policy C6 identifies as seeking development which creates more diverse uses. Fallowfield District Centre is described in the inspectorate's decision notice as being *'focussed along Wilmslow Road and contains a range of buildings of a mix of ages, architectural style and built form.*' The centre is primarily mixed-use, with an active student population, night-time economy and retail offering. The centre has the capacity for an additional 3 student beds from the proposal, which is in character with the area and will help support the vitality and viability of the centre.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The proposals are supported by adopted Local Plan and National planning policies and would deliver the following significant benefits:

- The proposals will enable the refurbishment and modernisation of the existing student accommodation in Ladybarn House, to improve the enjoyment and living quality of all student residents.

- Existing shared amenity spaces within the existing Ladybarn House are significantly underused. Improved shared amenities will increase the living quality and enjoyment of student residents and encourage social interaction. In addition, the existing shared spaces will be repurposed to provide an additional 3 high quality studio rooms.

- The proposals will re-activate the ground floor, through the much needed use of the prominent corner unit (Unit 1-3) and restore active frontage to an important part of Fallowfield District Centre. Rejuvenation of existing retail units will maximise the chances of appealing to new retail occupiers and restore active frontage to Wilmslow Road, as well as employment opportunities for local residents.

3.2 Following the reasons set out above, it is considered that the proposed development meets the objectives the Manchester City Council's Development Plan. The refurbishment of the existing student accommodation, revised shared amenity space arrangements and sustainable increase in student bedspaces is supported by adopted planning policy.