Planning Statement

Unit A5/6, Southmoor Industrial Estate, Southmoor Road, Manchester, M23 9XD

Application by The Climbing Depot

Savills
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1. Introduction

Introduction

1.1 This statement has been prepared by Savills (UK) Limited on behalf of The Climbing Depot, in relation to a planning application at Unit A5/6, Southmoor Industrial Estate in Manchester.

1.2 The application seeks permission to enable The Climbing Depot, a large format nationwide climbing and bouldering centre operator to open a new facility, including their national head offices, at Southmoor Industrial Estate. The proposal will provide the premium facility in Europe and will be designed in collaboration with GB climbing and international athletes to ensure provision for the development of domestic, international and Olympic competitors.

1.3 The application is a positive proposal to re-use previously developed land and a vacant commercial building that will provide a high quality sport and recreation facility that will contribute to the health and overall well-being of residents in Manchester.

1.4 The Climbing Depot already have an established and successful operation in Trafford, and this centre will operate as head office in addition to other sites operating in the UK.

1.5 This Statement provides an appraisal of the proposal in relation to relevant local and national planning policies and any other material considerations to assist the Local Planning Authority's (LPA's) consideration of the proposal.

The Proposal

1.6 The application seeks planning permission for:

1. The change of use of the existing floorspace that measures approximately 6,289 sq.m gross internal area (GIA) at ground floor level and Mezzanine from Use Class B2/B8/E(g) (ii) and (iii) to Use Class E at ground

floor only with removal of the Mezzanine floor to enable the floorspace to be operated as a climbing and bouldering centre to provide an overall Gross Internal Area of 4,725 sq. m.

1.7 The operation will include:

1. Office accommodation – this will become the national head office of the Climbing Depot;
2. A small ancillary café and reception area (circa 310 sq.m);
3. A small ancillary shop (circa 138 sq.m);
4. A small ancillary gym area (circa 331 sq.m);
5. Ancillary changing and toilet area (circa 126 sq.m);
6. 34 cycle parking spaces will be provided; and
7. 3 disabled parking spaces and 5 EV parking spaces will be provided.

1.8 The application is a positive economic and recreational proposal that will enable a long-term vacant unit to be brought back into use to provide a high quality climbing and bouldering facility. The proposal will therefore meet sustainable economic growth objectives to which a policy requirement of significant weight applies[1], along with recreation and health benefits to the overall benefit of the City and the wider area.

1.9 The proposed Climbing Depot operation would create approximately 38 jobs on Site. There would be approximately 6 jobs provided as part of the head office, including all of the Climbing Depot's senior management team. There would also be approximately 32 jobs provided within the climbing facility ranging from trained climbing instructors and administrative staff.

1.10 The Local Planning Authority is aware of the requirements of the Climbing Depot's operation and its specific market and locational requirements through pre-application discussions undertaken with Jennifer Connor and Robert Griffin on 20 May 2023. The requirements include:

1. A requirement for large format warehouse style premises. All of the Climbing Depot's existing premises nationwide are located in warehouse premises.

[1] Paragraph 81 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. The requirement for warehouse premises arises as buildings with a minimum eaves height of 10m are required in order to provide sufficient height for the required climbing and bouldering walls.

3. The ability for the Climbing Depot to provide a full indoor climbing and bouldering recreational facility offer. The site provides sufficient height at the apex to provide an International Federation Of Sport Climbing (IFSC) standard competition climbing surface.

1.11 The assessment included with this application demonstrates that the application site is an appropriate location within the City to provide the proposed climbing and bouldering operation.

The Main Issues

1.12 The main issues are:

1. Recreation considerations - whether the proposal accords with policies that seek to enhance community facilities and promote and enhance well-being, namely Policies SP1 and CC4 of the Core Strategy and the relevant parts of the National Planning Policy Framework ('**NPPF**').

2. Economic development considerations - whether the proposal accords with policies that seek to secure sustainable economic growth, namely Policies EC1 and SP1 of the Core Strategy and the relevant parts of the NPPF.

3. Whether the proposal accords with various development management policies in the development plan, particularly those relating to highway safety, accessibility and sustainability, namely Policies T1 and T2 of the Core Strategy and the relevant parts of the NPPF.

1.13 The climbing and bouldering use is not one of the 'main town centre uses' listed at Annex 2 of the NPPF. It follows that main town centre use policies in NPPF and Core Strategy, namely Policy C1, are not considered to apply to the proposal. As set out above, the proposed use has specific market and locational requirements

that mean it requires warehouse premises in order to provide a comprehensive and dedicated first class climbing and bouldering facility.

1.14 In line with the above, and in order to comprehensively assess the proposed development against the relevant planning policies, the remaining sections of this Report are structured as follows:

Section 2.0 Site Description and the Proposed Development

Section 3.0 Planning Policy Context

Section 4.0: Planning Policy Assessment

1.15 We finally set out in **Section 5.0** our Summary and Conclusions that the proposal:

1. Will provide the premises for the head offices of The Climbing Depot and provide the premium facility in Europe and will be England's international climbing centre with the intention of becoming the home of GB climbing.
2. Will provide a high quality sport and recreation facility that will make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.
3. Will bring vacant floorspace back into use. This will have a positive impact on job creation and local earnings, and therefore contribute towards achieving sustainable economic growth.
4. Is in a location that is accessible by a variety of modes of transport.
5. Is acceptable in relation to all other highway considerations.
6. Is acceptable in all regards.

1.16 In the light of the above, we further conclude that:

- The proposal accords with the relevant policies in the development plan;
- The proposal accords with the principal material considerations, namely the objectives to secure economic development, recreational facilities and improve the health and well-being established by the National Planning Policy Framework ('**NPPF**'); and

- There are no other material considerations that should outweigh the presumption in favour of granting planning permission for sustainable economic development.

1.17 Planning permission should therefore be granted in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Furthermore, the application should be granted 'without delay' in accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

2. Site Description and the Proposed Development

The Site

2.1 The application site is Unit A5/6, Southmoor Industrial Estate in Manchester. The unit is currently vacant and has been vacate for an approximate period of nine months, having previously been occupied by a manufacturer of packaging.

2.2 The unit is located off Southmoor Road, which connects to the A560 to the north and the M56 at a further distance to the south east.

2.3 The site is very well located within the urban area of Manchester, within the suburb of Baguley within 500m of the boundary of Baguley District Centre. It is located approximately 4km north west of Wythenshawe Civic Centre and 12km south of Manchester City Centre in a location near the border of Manchester and Trafford.

2.4 The immediate surrounding area is predominantly commercial and industrial premises, with some retail occupiers situated to the north at Altrincham Road. The site is also located in close proximity to a number of residential areas including Baguley, Newall Green, Broomwood, Brooklands and Northern Moor which are within easy walking distance of the site.

The Site History

2.5 On 3 August 2021, planning permission was granted for *"Use of the site for Class B2/B8/E(g)(ii) and (iii) purposes, namely general industrial/storage or distribution/research and development of products or processes/industrial processes"* (Ref: 131249/FO/2021) (the **'2021 Permission**').

The Site's Accessibility

2.6 The site is well-connected to surrounding areas by a variety of modes of transport, including:

1. **Public Transport,** namely:

    a. **Buses:** The site benefits from a number of bus stops accessible within 800m of the site. The closest bus stops are located on Southmoor Road, approximately 60m from the site (north bound travel) and opposite the site access for southbound travel. These bus stops provide a shelter with seats and timetable information. Services run at high frequency and operate to locations including Altrincham and Eccles.

    b. **Metrolink:** The Site lies adjacent to Baguley Metrolink stop, which provides connections to Manchester Airport and Victoria via the Navy Line. The Navy Line runs from Manchester Airport through Wythenshawe Town Centre, Chorlton, Firswood, St Peter's Square and Manchester Victoria. It is considered to be within an acceptable walking distance for both staff and visitors to the Site and can support commuting purposes for those using it as a linked journey.

    c. **Trains:** The nearest railway station is Navigation Road railway station, which is located approximately 4.7km to the west of the site and is therefore within an achievable cycling distance. The station is operated by Northern Rail and offers services to Chester and Manchester Piccadilly on an hourly basis throughout the day.

2. **Bicycles**: The local highway network is conducive to encourage cycling with large carriageway widths and dedicated cycle lanes. The 5km cycling catchment allows for travel to surrounding residential areas such as Baguley, Timperley, Sale and Hale Barns. Secure cycle spaces are proposed at the site as part of the application.

3. **Pedestrians:** The site is easily accessible on foot from surrounding businesses which employ a significant number of people and bus and Metrolink stops located in close proximity to the site that serve the wider area. The Site also benefits from being within walking distance to retail destinations such as Brookway Retail Park, Tesco Extra and Lidl supermarkets, as well as the residential areas of Baguley and Northern Moor.

The Proposed Development

2.7 As stated in the introduction, the proposal seeks planning permission for the following elements:

1. The change of use of the existing floorspace that measures approximately 6,289 sq. m gross internal area (GIA) at ground floor level and Mezzanine from Use Class B2/B8/E(g) (ii) and (iii) to Use Class E at ground floor only with removal of the Mezzanine floor to enable the floorspace to be operated as a climbing and bouldering centre and Climbing Depot's national head office.

2.8 The application does not propose any additional floorspace but does propose the removal of the existing Mezzanine floorspace to provide an overall Gross Internal Area of 4,725 sq. m.

3. Planning Policy Context

3.1 The starting point for the consideration of the acceptability of a development proposed in a planning application is the assessment of it against the development plan. If a development is in accordance with the plan, and the plan is up-to-date, then the decision should be to grant planning permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF does not change the statutory basis on which planning decisions are founded. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 remains the key decision making principle.

3.2 Material considerations can include, amongst other things, more up to date policy guidance in the NPPF, Planning Policy Guidance ('**PPG**'), site specific and operational circumstances. LPAs should have proper regard to such statements and must give clear and convincing reasons if they elect not to follow them. Emerging development plan policies are material considerations, although the weight to be attached to them varies according to their current status.

3.3 The NPPF is a material consideration in decisions on planning applications and reaffirms the Government's commitment to securing economic growth. Decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, whilst significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity[2].

3.4 The documents that comprise the development plan are as follows:

- Manchester's Local Development Framework – Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012 (the 'Core Strategy'); and
- The Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester – Extant UDP Policies (1995) (the 'UDP')

The Core Strategy

3.5 The policies of relevance in the Core Strategy are:

[2] See Paragraph 81 of the NPPF

1. Policy SP1 – Spatial Principles
2. Policy CC4 – Visitors – Tourism, Culture and Leisure
3. Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport
4. Policy T2 – Accessible areas of opportunity and need
5. Policy DM1 – Development Management
6. Policy EC1 – Employment and Economic Growth
7. Policy EC2 – Existing Employment Space
8. Policy EC10 – Wythenshawe

The UDP

3.6 Whilst the Core Strategy replaced the majority of the UDP policies, some policies remain saved and the most relevant are:

1. Policy WW2 – Economic Development
2. Policy DC26 – Development and Noise

3.7 For the reasons set out in Section 1 above, the proposed climbing and bouldering centre recreation use is not one of the 'main town centre' uses listed at Annex 2 of the NPPF. It follows that main town centre use policies in the NPPF and Local Plan, namely Policy C9, are not considered to apply to the proposal. The use has specific market and locational requirements that mean it requires warehouse premises in order to deliver a first class climbing and bouldering facility. Notwithstanding this, for completeness the two policy tests are considered below.

Impact

3.8 Policy C9 of the Core Strategy relates to out of centre development and states that development of town centre uses in locations which are outside a centre identified in policy C1 or a strategic location identified for such uses will be inappropriate unless it can meet the following criteria:

- *The proposal would not have unacceptable impacts, either individual or cumulatively with recently completed and approved schemes and having regard to any allocations for town centre uses, on the vitality and viability of the City Centre and designated district and local centres. An assessment of impacts will be required for retail developments of more than local significance*

3.9 Climbing Centres are a specific fitness and training recreational offer, and the proposal will not have an impact on conventional fitness gyms within town centres.

3.10 There are currently three climbing centres operating within Manchester City Council boundary, all of which occupy 'out of centre' sites. It follows that the proposed development will not have an impact on Manchester City Centre or any other defined centre.

3.11 We are not aware of any planned investment from the climbing sector within the City Centre, or any defined town centres and there are no sites allocated for the delivery of Climbing Centres. The proposal therefore cannot be considered to have any impact on planned investment.

3.12 Further, the proposal is located within close proximity to Baguley District Centre and therefore presents opportunities to support its vitality and viability through cross-visitation trips, including by sustainable travel modes that surround the site and District Centre.

3.13 In light of the above, the requirements of the impact test are met.

Sequential Test

3.14 With regard to the sequential approach to site selection, the proposal seeks for a change of use to allow occupation by a climbing centre operator, which has specific operational requirements. This includes a requirement for a minimum eaves height of 10m to provide sufficient height for the climbing and bouldering walls.

3.15 A high level sequential assessment has been undertaken for completeness. As there are no specific requirements for the sequential assessment, it has been based on centres within the vicinity of the Site.

3.16 The sequential assessment discounts local centres from consideration which is considered reasonable, given the lower order centres predominantly cater for everyday needs and contain much smaller units which would not be capable of accommodating an operation of the type proposed.

3.17 A summary of the key findings of the sequential assessment are set out below. The assessment is based on the latest empirical survey data published by GOAD and cross referenced with other live data sources.

3.18 To demonstrate flexibility in accordance with the NPPF, the Applicant has assessed any existing units that measure between 4,500 - 5,000 sq. m (or sites that can provide a similar floorspace with associated infrastructure such as parking). This range accords with the floorspace which is proposed to be delivered at the ground floor of the Site.

Wythenshawe Town Centre

3.19 The largest vacant unit within Wythenshawe Town Centre measures 2,500 sq.m, and is located at Rowlandsway, Civic Centre. The unit was previously occupied by Buzz Bingo.

3.20 It falls below the minimum floorspace threshold adopted as part of this assessment and is not 'suitable' to accommodate the proposed development. The unit doesn't offer the eaves height requirement or warehouse type premises required by the operator.

3.21 All of the other vacant units within Wythenshawe Town Centre are too small to accommodate the proposal.

3.22 Wythenshawe Town Centre is the closest centre to the site and therefore has been assessed in detail above, however a desktop review of vacant units has been undertaken in the following centres with the largest available units set out below:

- Didsbury (440 sq. m)
- Manchester Central (2,660 sq. m)
- Sale (300 sq. m)

- Altrincham (830 sq. m)
- Chorlton (1,830 sq. m)
- Fallowfield (80 sq. m)
- Withington (380 sq. m)
- Northenden (200 sq. m)

3.23 There are no vacant units within Baguley District Centre.

3.24 A desktop review of the above town centres has demonstrated that there are no vacant units that are suitable to accommodate the proposed development either within, or on the edge of centre. The largest available unit within any of the town centres comprises circa 2,660 sq. m of floorspace, which is clearly too small to accommodate the proposal. Notwithstanding this, as previously noted, any available unit would also need to meet the specific requirements of the operator and none are of a sufficient scale to accommodate a climbing and bouldering centre.

3.25 Policy C 9 of the Core Strategy states that development of town centre uses in locations which are outside a centre will be inappropriate unless it can meet certain criteria. Although the proposal is not considered a town centre use, a sequential assessment has been provided. The criteria includes that there are no sequentially preferable sites, within the area the development is intended to serve that are available, suitable and viable. It is demonstrated above that there are no sequentially preferable sites identified.

3.26 Policy C 9 also states that one of the criteria is that "*the proposal is appropriate in terms of its scale and function to its location".*

3.27 As described in Section 2 and the Transport Statement, the proposed site is extremely accessible from the city centre and nearby town and local centres by a wide variety of sustainable transport modes and is in close proximity to surrounding residential areas. The location of the proposed development therefore accords with the guidance for out of centre developments within Policy C 9.

The National Planning Policy Framework

3.28 The NPPF seeks to secure development that is sustainable. Paragraph 8 confirms that the planning system has three overarching objectives to achieving sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. The objectives of relevance to this proposal are:

1. The economic objective, which helps to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available to support growth and innovation;
2. The social objective to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities; and
3. The environmental objective to make efficient use of land.

3.29 Paragraph 11 outlines the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking, this means:

1. Approving development proposals that accord with an up to date development plan without delay; or

2. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the applications are out of date, granting permission unless:

    a. The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
    b. Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

3.30 Paragraph 81 states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Paragraph 81 is one of only a few policies that place the weight to be attached to a policy requirement, that is that significant weight should be attached to proposals that support economic growth.

3.31 Paragraph 92 seeks for planning policies and decisions to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places, which, of relevance to this proposal, enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs.

3.32 Further, at Paragraph 93, it states that in order to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community. It also seeks to ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community.

3.33 Paragraph 98 relates to open space and recreation, and recognises the importance of providing access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity.

3.34 Paragraphs 104-113 relate to promoting sustainable transport. It should be noted that in accordance with national and local planning policy, a Transport Statement prepared by Hydrock has been submitted as part of this application. Paragraph 111 states that development should only be prevented or refused if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the impacts on the road network would be severe.

3.35 Paragraphs 119-125 relate to making the most effective use of land. Of relevance to this proposal, Paragraph 120 states that policies and decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings. Paragraph 122 states that planning policies and decisions need to reflect changes in the demand for land. Where the Local Planning Authority considers there to be no reasonable prospect of an application coming forward for the use allocated in a plan, they should reallocate the land for a more deliverable use, and in the interim, support applications for alternative uses, where the proposed use would contribute to meeting an unmet need for development in the area.

4. Planning Policy Assessment

4.1 Based on the preceding Policy Context at Section 3, the four key development policy topics are:

1. Community Facilities, Sport and Recreation Policies;
2. Economic Policies;
3. Sustainable Transport and Accessibility Policies; and
4. Employment Land Policies.

4.2 The below provides an assessment of the proposal against local and national planning policy. The assessment is undertaken on the basis of the three key development policy topics.

1. Community Facilities, Sport and Recreation

4.3 Policy CC4 of the Core Strategy seeks to focus culture and leisure facilities within the City Centre. Although the proposals are considered a leisure facility, as set out above, they would not be considered a main town centre use and therefore in principle are not considered to be suitable to be located in the City Centre, particularly given the specific requirements of the proposal for warehouse premises. The nature of the proposals requires The Climbing Depot to be located within areas such as Southmoor Industrial Estate with large format warehouse premises.

4.4 As previously noted, the proposed development will allow The Climbing Depot to occupy the floorspace to facilitate the occupation of a first class indoor climbing facility that is open to a range of users from experienced and regular climbers to beginners, and children and families. The facilities proposed and set out above demonstrate that the facility will cater for a wide range of users.

4.5 As demonstrated in Section 2 above and within the associated Transport Statement, the site is an accessible and sustainable location and therefore accords with the aims of the NPPF.

4.6 The proposal will deliver a first class climbing and bouldering facility, which will provide a climbing experience for all level users. In addition, the centre will be the premium facility in Europe and will be England's premier climbing centre. The Applicant is currently in talks to host GB climbing and to become the home of GB climbing in the run up to the Paris 2024 and USA 2028 Olympics. The proposal will clearly contribute to the aim of ensuring access to sport and recreation for all.

4.7 In addition, the facility will run sessions for youth groups and schools at a subsidised rate. The organisation have a grassroots programme for introducing local juniors into climbing, and also offer a unique product of 'rock tots', which endeavours to help parents introduce young toddlers to the benefits of climbing. The proposal will clearly contribute to the aim of ensuring access to sport and recreation for all

4.8 The use of the Unit as a climbing centre will contribute to a healthy population by encouraging healthy lifestyles and a well society through providing access to a first class recreational facility.

4.9 The proposal complies with the policies of the NPPF in relation to recreation policies. The proposal facilitates social interaction and assists in creating healthy inclusive communities. Approving the application will provide access to a high quality sport and recreation facility for both local residents and further afield.

4.10 The proposal meets all national Government objectives that seek to achieve development that can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities. The proposed development will help meet the local and national policy objective as it will encourage physical activity and will have positive benefits to the health and wellbeing impacts of the local population.

4.11 In light of the above, the proposal accords with the aims of the NPPF in relation to promoting healthy communities.

2. Economy

4.12 The application site is currently vacant floorspace that is not in economically beneficial productive use. The proposed development will assist in bringing the floorspace back into use in a sustainable manner and assist in securing economic growth.

4.13 Appendix 2 provides marketing information demonstrating that the unit has been marketed for a period of 14 months with no interest from employment operators.

4.14 As well as the health and social community benefits outlined above, the proposal will have significant community benefits through creating a number of new jobs and generating earnings. The proposal will make a positive contribution to economic growth and prosperity and accords with the Government's agenda to promote development that results in economic growth. The Climbing Depot confirms that the head office will create approximately 6 jobs and the operations of the climbing centre will create 32 jobs comprising climbing instructors, cleaning staff and an onsite manager.

4.15 Table 1 below demonstrates that the increase in employment positions at the site is estimated to increase the earnings in the local economy by over £840,000 per annum.

Table 1: Economic Growth in Manchester

	No. of Jobs	Average Weekly Pay	Weeks in a Year	Earnings (£m/annum)
Proposal	38	£429	52	**£847,704**

Notes: Average weekly pay from mean average weekly pay for caring, leisure and other service occupations as taken from the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, April-June 2023

Value to the Local Economy = No. of Jobs x Average Weekly Pay x 52

4.16 The number of jobs created by the proposed development is a material benefit. As demonstrated above, a range of jobs will be provided. The proposal is socially inclusive by providing a range of jobs. Reducing barriers of entry to employment positions is a key objective of the NPPF. Policy EC 1 of the Core Strategy seeks to support job retention and creation by improving access to jobs for all via public transport, walking and cycling and improving the portfolio of employment premises amongst other matters.

4.17 It is also important to note that Paragraph 119 of the NPPF seeks for decisions to promote and support the development of under-utilised land and Paragraph 81 places significant weight on the need to support economic development.

4.18 In summary, the economic benefits of the proposal are significant. Notably, the proposal will allow Unit A5/6 to be brought back into an economically productive use, which will assist in bringing the floorspace back into use in a sustainable manner and assist in ensuring sustainable growth. The proposal will allow for the creation of 38 employment positions at the site, including a range of positions including head office jobs, instructors, support staff and administerial positions. The benefits of the proposal in terms of additional job and wage creation are material considerations that weigh in favour of the grant of planning permission.

4.19 In light of the above, the overwhelming economic positives of the proposal weigh heavily in favour of the grant of planning permission. It follows that the proposal accords with Policy EC 1 of the Core Strategy and the aims of the NPPF that seek to build a strong, competitive economy and place significant weight on the need to support economic growth.

3. Sustainable Transport and Accessibility

4.20 Section 2 above demonstrates that the site is accessible by a variety of modes of transport.

4.21 This application is supported by a Transport Statement prepared by Hydrock. It demonstrates that the proposed development is entirely acceptable from a highway perspective. There is no adverse impact on highway capacity and the site is easily accessible by a wide range of sustainable transport modes as demonstrated above.

4.22 Paragraph 7.2.1 of the Transport Statement concludes that the proposed development accords with highway access, design recommendations and sustainable values and hence there is no basis for highway and transportation objections to the proposals.

4.23 In light of the above, we conclude that the proposal should be supported under the terms of Policy T1 of the Core Strategy and the relevant policies in the NPPF.

4. Employment Land

4.24 The application site comprises existing employment land and the site falls within the wider allocation for an 'Economic Improvement Area' within Saved Policy WW2 of the UDP. The policy has been saved and forms part of the development plan and it is therefore considered that the area continues to be identified as an area for improvement.

4.25 Policy EC2 of the Core Strategy is relevant in the assessment of the proposals, which states:

"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.*

4.26 Appendix 1 has been provided to demonstrate that the site has been marketed for a significant period of time and is therefore not considered viable for employment uses within the existing use classes as approved by the 2021 Permission.

4.27 The proposed climbing centre use will provide significant benefits and opportunities to the local area and to Manchester City Council area as a whole through the health and well-being and community benefits described above as well as the economic benefits also set out above.

4.28 The area of Wythenshawe is expected to provide 55ha of employment land however the Site is not specifically allocated as employment land within the Core Strategy but is allocated as an Economic Improvement Area within the Saved Policies of the UDP. The supporting text for Policy EC 10 states that *'Existing employment provision in Roundthorn and Sharston Industrial Estates is, in places, not considered entirely suitable for modern users. Across the Wythenshawe employment areas there is a need to provide a portfolio of sites and premises to meet the needs of inward investors and indigenous businesses.'* Although the proposed use is not a traditional Class B or E employment use, it is a commercial economic generating and will provide a national head office. The proposal therefore provides variation for the overall portfolio of sites across the Roundthorn Industrial Estate, promoting inward investment of a first class national facility. The supporting text also states that '*Access to a range of employment opportunities is also important'*. The proposal provides a vary of employment opportunities ranging from head office roles, to climbing instructors, cleaners and maintenance staff. It follows that the proposal would not result in the loss of a deliverable employment site necessary to meet the employment needs during the plan period. The proposal therefore accords with Policy EC 10 of the Core Strategy.

5. Summary and Conclusions

5.1 This application seeks planning permission to enable The Climbing Depot, a large format nationwide climbing and bouldering centre operator to open a new facility at Southmoor Industrial Estate in Wythenshawe. The proposal will provide a first class climbing facility.

5.2 The application is a positive proposal to re-use previously developed land that will provide a high quality sport and recreation facility that will contribute to the health and overall well-being of residents in Wythenshawe and further afield.

5.3 The above has demonstrated that the proposal:

1. Will provide a high quality sport and recreation facility that will make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities.
2. Will bring vacant floorspace back into use. This will have a positive impact on job creation and local earnings, and therefore contribute towards achieving sustainable economic growth.
3. Is in a location that is accessible by a variety of modes of transport.
4. Is acceptable in relation to all other highway considerations.
5. Is acceptable in all regards.

5.4 In light of the assessment undertaken, we conclude that:

- The proposal accords with the relevant policies in the development plan;
- The proposal accords with the principal material considerations, namely the objectives to secure economic development, recreational facilities and improve the health and well-being established by the National Planning Policy Framework ('**NPPF**'); and
- There are no other material considerations that should outweigh the presumption in favour of granting planning permission for sustainable economic development.

5.5 We conclude that the proposal should be supported in accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the presumption in favour of sustainable development outlined in The Framework. The proposal will enable the beneficial sustainable economic regeneration of vacant floorspace to provide a high quality sport and recreation facility that will contribute to the health and overall well-being of residents in Manchester.

Appendix 1 – Marketing Evidence from Knight Frank

Katie Parfett

From: Rob Tilley <Rob.Tilley@knightfrank.com>
Sent: 07 August 2023 12:07
To: Katie Parfett
Cc: Matthew Sobic; Amelia Robson; steve@theclimbingdepot.com
Subject: RE: Southmoor Industrial Estate - Climbing Depot

EXTERNAL EMAIL: Be cautious when opening attachments or clicking links

Katie,

I trust you are well.

We have been fully marketing the unit since June 2022, which was six months before the previous tenants lease expired.

We have received limited interest during this period.

If it helps we had the adjacent 80k unit A3/4 available for over 18 months in a very strong market before securing a tenant in April 2023.

Regards

Rob

Rob Tilley
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