



▶ RACE INTO A WORLD OF GAMING ◀

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VERSA
STUDIOS

18 Lower Byrom Street,
Manchester M3 4AP

Planning Statement

Planning Statement – 18 Lower Byrom Street, M3 4AP

Introduction

1. This document is provided to supplement the application of a temporary change of use of the existing building at 18 Lower Byrom Street, Manchester, for a period of three years.
2. The intention is to convert the building into an entertainment and leisure use to house an electric go-kart arena with projected augmented-reality systems that are intended to be attractive to families and particularly those with young children over the age of 8.
3. There are no structural changes proposed to the existing building and no amendment to the arrangements for the connection of services.
4. As part of the proposal, a temporary hoarding will be provided to screen the site which will carry advertising material. A sign will also be erected on the external façade of the building.

Locality

5. The site is within the St John's Strategic Regeneration framework area which has been identified as "a remarkable and immediate opportunity to lead the next phases of regeneration of Manchester City Centre and to deliver "best in class" residential-led mixed use development".
6. In recent years, a number of planning applications have been considered by the Authority to drive forward the redevelopment and these current proposals aim to assist in the aims of regeneration, providing an entertainment and leisure facility that is targeted towards families and young people, offering a new opportunity that is not alcohol-led and fits well with the local area.
7. The proximity of St John's Gardens is recognised and for this reason there will be a transport management plan in place and access to the site will be restricted via the side entrance so as to prevent any disturbance from access and egress. The nature of the activities, contained entirely within the building and without any significant sound generation, fits well with the mixed uses in the area.

8. The locality has been known to host a wide variety of events and activities in the past, including craft fairs, markets, exhibitions and live events. The proposed use is not as intrusive as those activities, by virtue of its containment within the building.
9. The site is within the designated City Centre, falling as part of the Deansgate Ward. It links well with the other uses for which permission has been granted in the area.

Outline

10. The facility is intended to be branded on the 'Chaos Karts' theme, which has been previously operated under a temporary permission elsewhere in the country and visual details can be found at the website www.chaoskarts.com.
11. The previous site has now closed because of redevelopment proposals for the land on which it was sited and having demonstrated the concept of a successful venue, the operators are looking for a new location to provide the facility. It will be seen from the website that there have been many positive comments about the concept, which builds on the other experience venues that are operated by associated companies. These venues include the Crystal Maze Live Experience, based at Studio 2 in the immediate vicinity of the site and in Shaftesbury Avenue, London, as well as the Tomb Raider Live Experience at Camden Market in London.
12. It will be seen that the company specialises in providing visually stimulating and attractive venues that provide a valuable alternative to other forms of entertainment and leisure.
13. The concept is a mix of karting and augmented reality gaming, with anti-collision technology built in to the vehicle systems to ensure the safety of participants. Unlike traditional go-karting, there are no fixed obstacles for players to negotiate and the routes that payers follow can be modified in accordance with the needs of participants and the experience that is aimed to be provided.
14. The vehicles are entirely powered by electricity, which it is anticipated will originate from hybrid generation. Technical details of the karts are attached as Appendix 1.

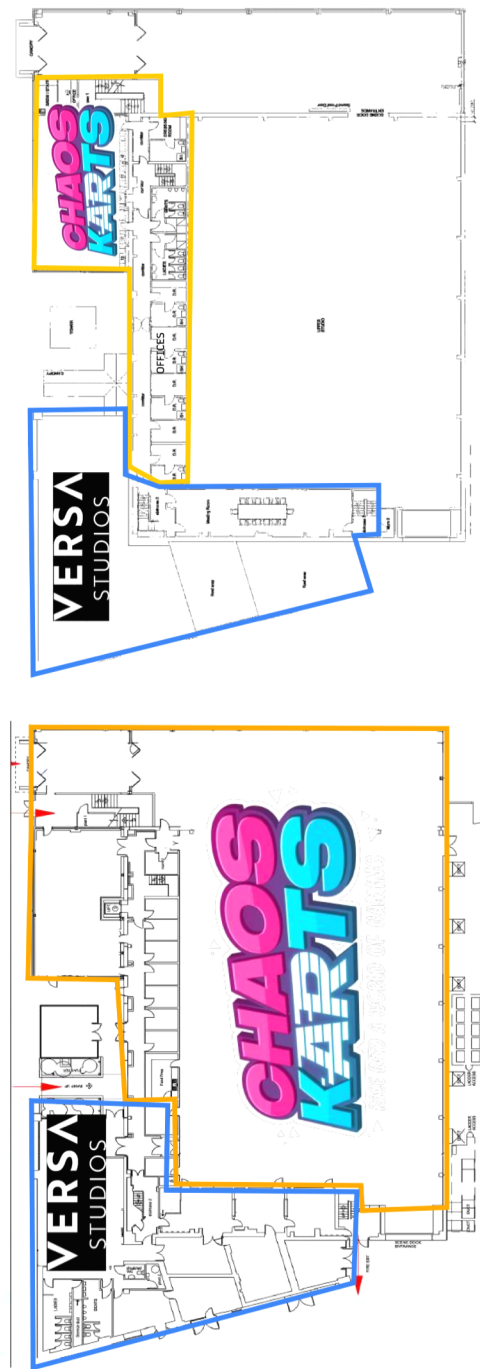


Photographs from previous temporary site

Internal layout

15. There are no proposals to change the external aspect of the building and the internal work would see the creation of the main circuit area, along with offices, a briefing area and spectators area. On the first floor there would be a corporate hospitality area but there is no plan to incorporate the consumption of alcohol within that zone.
16. Because the style of operation requires a significant open space, the building is an ideal location for this type of use and its previous incarnation provides an ideal structure within which this leisure use can be accommodated.
17. The layout as currently proposed is as indicated overleaf with an example track layout as Appendix 2 and other plans provided as Appendix 3;

DISTRIBUTION OF SPACES



Ground Floor for our
primary Operations.

Second floor for
Corporate Functions,
Staff facilities and
Offices.

3rd floor exclusively for
Versa use.



Current Proposed Layout

Operational Outline

18. The mode of operation is that customers arriving at the venue would be given a short briefing on the nature of the activity and how to operate the karts at the commencement of their booking. Subject to satisfactory completion, they would then be permitted to take part in the activity and upon finishing would be expected to leave the area to make way for the next group. The operation is based on three teams of 8 people every 60 minutes, or an absolute maximum throughput of 24 people per hour.
19. The numbers who would be admitted to the premises is restricted by the number of sessions that are available and the flow rate around the building. There is no significant scope to increase the numbers because of the limited space available and the need to keep groups separate in order to preserve the integrity of the experience.
20. In terms of hours of operation, it is anticipated that core trading will take place between 9am to 11pm.
21. Because of the popularity of this type of activity and to enable effective management of numbers, a pre-booking arrangement will be implemented through the Chaos Karts website. Such arrangements are common with this type of leisure activity and are expected by customers. Marketing messaging will encourage customers to book in advance to avoid disappointment. A limited number of last-minute admissions may be possible if spaces are available. Experience of other premises suggests that the venue will often be fully booked several weeks in advance.
22. By adopting a pre-book arrangement queuing will be eliminated and this has been seen at the other venues managed and operated by this team. Removing the need for queues has a clear benefit to the customers, the business and the local area.
23. There is no plan to provide refreshment within the building other than through serviced vending machines.

Noise & Environmental Factors

24. The entire concept of the development is centred around the provision of electrically-propelled go-karts and as such the sound generated from these vehicles is very low and would not be heard outside of the building. Although there is some residential development in the general vicinity, it is unlikely to be affected by the proposals and the presence of the Crystal Maze Live Experience, which operates on a similar model, would seem to suggest that there is not likely to be any impact from customers arriving or leaving.
25. Arrival and dispersal plans will however address the matter of customers arriving and leaving, a fundamental part of which is the pre-book nature of the operation for most participants.

Lighting

26. The arena would feature a number of illuminations within the building, in conjunction with projection systems. The concept of the proposal requires that natural light is controlled so as not to interfere with the scenic atmosphere and by virtue of this the reverse position is that there would be not out-spill of lighting to the outside areas.
27. There will be some limited signage on the external aspect of the building so as to direct patrons to the entrance. Detailed proposals for this would follow along with any intentions for illumination.
28. There is no anticipation that any of the advertisements would be illuminated.

History

29. It is understood that the site has seen a number of uses and temporary permission has been granted in the past for a visitor attraction for a period of 6 months in the wider planning unit that was previously in existence in the area. This new phase continues the theme of attracting visitors to the area in a way that is of benefit to the local economy but also sensitive to the needs that are present.

Pre-application advice

30. The advice of the Local Planning Authority has sought in relation to the proposals and in particular an evaluation of whether a planning application for temporary change of use would be favourably received. The verbal advice received indicated that such a temporary change of use might be considered to be acceptable in planning terms but that contact should be made with the Environmental Health Service of the Council. Such contact has also been made.

Summary

31. The proposals for a temporary use over a period of three years fit well with the strategic aims for the area and will secure the continued use over the period of the permission.
32. The type of leisure use anticipated adds a value to the area and provides a facility that does not currently exist in the vicinity, but also sits well with the nearby existing provision of the Crystal Maze Live Experience that is run by the same operator. Because of the low numbers of patrons and a booking system, the potential for disturbance is reduced and this is demonstrated by the use of the Crystal Maze venue for a number of years. The use of vehicles powered by electricity results in a use that can be accommodated within the existing building with no structural changes being required. The structure of the building contributes to the viability of the project, given the previous studio use.

Appendix 1 – Vehicle Specifications

THE ECOVOLT GT.

The all new BIZ EcoVolt GT brings the latest in battery technology, smart technology and innovative design to the commercial karting market. Having built on the unrivalled global success of its predecessor, the EcoVolt NG+, the GT uses the latest in Lithium technology to achieve a 74% battery capacity increase and at the same time reducing the battery weight by 23% over its predecessor. The overall results are outstanding, with 1 hour run times easily achievable. As well as the performance and endurance improvements, the GT offers remote battery monitoring & remote diagnostics capabilities to make operation as trouble-free and smooth as possible. A host of exciting, new optional features including engine sound generator, Premium package LED Smart lights (e.g. flag colour repeaters) and bespoke F1 style steering wheel make the GT the most innovative commercial kart available today.

STANDARD SPECIFICATION.

Powertrain, Electronics and Batteries

- 10.5kW, 45Nm permanent magnet brushless motor.
- 48V, 350A motor controller.
- 5.34 kWh (106AH) Lithium battery.
- Front & Rear Smart lights (Basic).
- Motorsport Battery Management System (BMS).
- Temperature controlled active battery cooling.
- Ignition button with Halo LED.
- Steering wheel mounted Forward and Reverse buttons.
- Emergency stop switch.
- Electronic anti-double pedal system.
- Waterproof wiring harness.
- De Haardt Xtra.CAN Transponder (Basic) with 4x Speeds.
- Kart status LED.

Rear Axle Components

- High tensile 30mm hollow rear axle.
- Self adjusting hydraulic brake system.
- Drilled 8mm brake disc.
- Quick change axle bearing hangers.
- Heavy duty UCX axle bearings.
- Heavy duty mono alloy wheels.

Chassis, Steering, Seat and Pedals

- Adjustable pedals.
- Adjustable seat with anti-vibration seat mountings.
- Belt Drive.
- Heavy duty wheel shafts.
- Black metal ended track rods.
- HD impact bumper system.
- Duro tyres.
- Black chassis and bodywork.

Bodywork and Bumpers

- EcoVolt GT premium bodywork.
- EcoVolt GT bumper system.
- Quick release axle safety cover with wheel protection.
- Standard graphics set.

Charging Options (sold separately)

- Single phase up to 50A.
- Three phase up to 100A.

OPTIONS.

- Roll bar & Inertia seat belt.
- 4 Point harness.
- F1 style steering wheel.
- Quarter covered Tillett seat.
- Half covered Tillett seat.
- Full covered Tillett seat.
- Semi-custom graphics set.
- Premium package LED Smart lights: Flag colour repeaters.
- Push 2 Pass power boost.
- Engine sound generator.
- Choice of tyres.
- High front bumper blade.



Pictures may show karts with extra cost options fitted.

Appendix 2 : Example Track Layouts

