

# Parkmount Road, Harpurhey

## Open Space Assessment

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ON BEHALF OF MOSSCARE ST VINCENT HOUSING

June 2023

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Open Space Assessment has been prepared by Nexus Planning on behalf of Mosscares St Vincent Housing (the 'applicant') to support a full planning application for 24 residential units on land at Parkmount Road, Harpurhey, Manchester (the 'site').
- 1.2 Manchester City Council ('MCC') require the submission of an Open Space Assessment in line with its Planning Applications Validation Checklist, in cases where a site which is subject to a planning application consists of open space which is to be lost. The Open Space Assessment must contain an audit of existing open space versus proposed open space and should refer to relevant sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework').
- 1.3 This assessment will consider various factors, including the site's locational characteristics, local and national planning policy context, the site's credentials as open space, other existing open spaces in the vicinity before then drawing conclusions as to whether development of the site for the purpose proposed is justifiable in open space terms.
- 1.4 The assessment should be read in conjunction with the Planning Statement, also prepared by Nexus Planning and which is submitted alongside the planning application. The Planning Statement provides an overview of the proposals and a full assessment of them against the wider suite of planning policies identified as relevant to the determination of the application.
- 1.5 This Open Space Assessment deals specifically with the site's status as open space as described above and in summary, it concludes:
  - The site does not perform a vital function as amenity green space and has deficiencies against the quality standards set out within policy documents;
  - North Manchester benefits from an oversupply of amenity green space against the quantity standards set out in planning policy; and
  - There are alternative open spaces in close proximity to the site which perform a more important role than the site in terms of their function for different types of activities.

## 2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site is located in Harpurhey, north Manchester and is under the jurisdiction of MCC. The L-shaped, 0.57 hectare site is bound by Parkmount Road to the north, Rochdale Road to the west, and Shepherd Street to the south whilst existing residential development accessed via Clayhill Walk bounds the site to the east. To the south east, part of the site lies adjacent to Hemsley Street South. The land rises very gently away from Rochdale Road to the east to a high point adjacent to the existing residential properties. **Figure 1** below shows an aerial view of the site whilst **Figure 2** overleaf demonstrates the site's general appearance and topography.

Figure 1 – Aerial View of the site (Google Maps)



- 2.2 The site consists of grassland which is interspersed with trees of varying age and quality. The site also contains a small network of footpaths allowing travel around the edge and through the middle of the site.
- 2.3 Whilst an assessment of the site as open space is made later in this document, the photographs overleaf, taken by Nexus Planning on 30 May 2023, demonstrate that at the time of writing, the site is maintained and could be deemed as 'useable' i.e. it is not overgrown and is clearly accessible from adjacent public highways.
- 2.4 The site and locality benefits from good transportation connectivity. A bus stop, situated less than 100 meters away, provides convenient access to numerous locations around Manchester, providing sustainable connections to open spaces which may be further afield.

Figure 2 – Images Depicting the Site's Current Appearance (author's own)



### 3. Adopted Planning Policy

- 3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning decisions to be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 The adopted Development Plan for the area comprises the Manchester City Council Core Strategy (CS), which was adopted in July 2012, and relevant Saved Policies from the Revised Manchester Council Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in July 1995.
- 3.3 The Framework is also a material consideration in the determination of the application.

#### Manchester Core Strategy

- 3.4 Policy EN10 of the CS relates to Safeguarding Open Space and Recreation Facilities is of most relevance to the application in terms of open space.
- 3.5 Of relevance, the policy states that development proposals on existing open spaces and sport and recreation facilities will only be permitted where:
  - *Equivalent or better replacement open space, sport or recreation facilities will be provided in the local area; or*
  - *the site has been demonstrated to be surplus for its current open space, sport or recreation function and the City wide standards set out above are maintained, and*
    - *it could not fulfil other unsatisfied open space, sport or recreation needs, and*
    - *a proposed replacement will remedy a deficiency in another type of open space, sport or recreation facility in the local area; or*
  - *the development will be ancillary to the open space, sport or recreation facility and complement the use or character.*

Figure 3 – Core Strategy Open Space standards (MCC)

| Open space type                     | Quantity                           | Accessibility                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| City Parks                          | 0.2 ha per 1000 population         | 15 minute Public Transport Time<br>City Centre – 15 minute drive time (Public Transport)                                                                                                    |
| Local Parks                         | 0.49 ha per 1000 population        | 10 minute walk time (480m)                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Natural and Semi Natural Open Space | 1.86 ha per 1000 population        | 15 min walk (720m)<br>City Centre – 15 minute drive time (Public Transport)                                                                                                                 |
| Amenity Green Space                 | 0.40 ha per 1000 population        | 10 minute walk time (480m)                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Provision for Children              | 0.0265 ha per 1000 population      | 10 minute walk time (480m)                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Provision for Young People          | 0.035 ha per 1000 population       | 15 minute walk time (720m)                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Outdoor Sports                      | 0.98 ha per 1000 population        | 15 minute walk time – grass pitches, tennis courts and bowling greens<br>20 minute drive time for athletics facilities and Synthetic Turf Pitches.<br>Golf Courses – 30 minutes drive time. |
| Allotments                          | 0.13 ha per 1000 population        | 15 minute walk time                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Indoor Sports                       | Quality standards only - see below | Quality standards only - see below                                                                                                                                                          |

3.6 Figure 3 above, which is taken from Table 12.4 in the Core Strategy, sets out the standards for quantity and accessibility of green spaces in Manchester. These standards are informed by the Strategic Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study, which was conducted in July 2009.

3.7 CS Policy EN12 sets out area priorities for open space, sport and recreation and describes the priorities for open space, sport, and recreation in different parts of the City as set out in the Strategic Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study. For the north area, within which the site lies, the priority is to ensure that new development will deliver improvements to the quality of existing provision.

#### City Wide Open Spaces, Sport & Recreation Study (August 2009)

3.8 The City Wide Open Spaces, Sport & Recreation Study (CWOSSRS) also referred to within the CS as the Strategic Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study undertakes an assessment of facilities within the City Council's boundaries, providing an understanding of local needs and aspirations, a full audit of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities, informs the local standards enshrined in planning policy and highlights areas where there is over or under provision of open space and seeks to provide certainty to developers and landowners.

3.9 The CWOSSRS designates the site as an 'amenity green space,' which is defined as follows on page 101:

*"Amenity green space is most commonly found in residential areas. It includes informal recreation spaces in and around housing. It fulfils a primary purpose of providing opportunities for informal activities close to home or work. Amenity green space is also often used for landscaping purposes."*

3.10 The north area of the city has a provision of 0.44 hectares of amenity green space per 1000 people, according to the CWOSSRS and a total of 87 individual sites. Each of these sites is assessed for its quality and in the north area, the average quality score is 70% (with 100% being of the highest quality). Key issues with amenity green spaces

were found to be general accessibility of them, with footpaths and disabled access perceived to be an issue in some locations.

### Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance (April 2007)

3.11 This SPD provides general guidance for developers and sets out principles for those looking to promote development in the City. Whilst directed to assessing and appraising proposals, it contains some useful guidance regarding open space, particularly that:

*“successful open spaces encourage use and ownership by local people, stimulating neighbourliness and pride, and contributing to people’s sense of wellbeing”* and

*“open spaces, whether big or small, hard or soft, public or private, should have a clear intended use...”* and

*“The Council will look to eliminate areas of incidental open space in new developments...”*

### National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 99 states that:

*‘Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus requirements; or*
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.’*

## 4. The Site's Open Space Credentials

- 4.1 The CWOSSRS does not provide the results of individual site assessments and so it is not possible to review the assessment made of the Site when the document was prepared.
- 4.2 To undertake a comparable assessment of the site's quality as an open space, we have qualitatively assessed it against the categories in the Site Assessment Matrix used in the CWOSSRS at Appendix C.
- 4.3 The assessment is made based on a combination of a site visit (conducted in the afternoon of 30 May 2023) and utilising the functions provided by Google Maps and Street View. This software looks back over the available dates at which Street View has captured images of the site, in this case between September 2008 and April 2021.

### 1 – Cleanliness and maintenance (vandalism and graffiti, litter problems, dog fouling, noise, equipment, maintenance)

- 4.4 There is no evidence of vandalism and graffiti due to the nature of the open space. The lack of facilities on site means that opportunities for vandalism are low.
- 4.5 Litter is evident on both the time-stamped images provided by Google, especially to the areas of open space adjacent to the public highways of Rochdale Road, Parkmount Road and Shepherd Street. The site visit emphasised this point, with litter identified by the photographs included at [Figure 4](#) overleaf.
- 4.6 Evidence of dog fouling was encountered on the site visit and it should be noted (explored below) that there are a limited number of bins at the site which may deter dog walkers from disposing of dog waste appropriately.
- 4.7 The location of the site adjacent to Rochdale Road, a major trunk road into and out of Manchester is likely to mean that tranquillity is limited and traffic noise dominates the acoustic environment. Indeed, the site visit took place at a time of day where traffic was heavy and there was audible disruption to the peace often expected of open space.
- 4.8 There is no play or sports equipment provided on site so there is no opportunity for either formal or informal play.
- 4.9 Street View images show the site is mown periodically however there is also evidence that bushes on site are not trimmed or kept neat and tidy. At the time of site visit, grass was recently mown and trees and bushes were relatively tidy.

Figure 4 – Images Showing Litter on Site (author's own)



## 2 – Security and safety (lighting, equipment, boundaries e.g. fencing)

- 4.10 The site suffers from an absence of surveillance measures and insufficient lighting infrastructure. Whilst there is an element of natural surveillance from Rochdale Road, views of the site from this perspective are fleeting due to users travelling along the road. Properties to the east have some surveillance but views are limited by vegetation.
- 4.11 Although street lights are present along the adjacent pavements near the highway no dedicated lighting fixtures are directed towards the open space. As a result, the site is likely to become dark during night-time potentially leading to security concerns and additional opportunities for crime to be committed.
- 4.12 Furthermore, the absence of perimeter fencing around the site poses potential risks to users of the open space. Noting that the surrounding area mainly consists of residential buildings and is close to Holy Trinity Primary School, the likelihood of users of the open space being children is high. A lack of enclosure close to a busy route such as Rochdale Road increases the risk of accidents and collisions with vehicles.

## 3 – Vegetation (planted areas and grassed areas)

- 4.13 The site comprises grassed areas with several trees scattered throughout. It appears the site has been properly maintained over the years, as the Google Street View images depict a well-kept appearance and evidence of mowing of the grass. Grass also appeared recently mown at the time of the site visit.
- 4.14 The site visit demonstrated further that maintenance of the site as open space must be periodically undertaken as grass was recently mown and trees and other foliage were in reasonable condition.

#### 4 – Ancillary accommodation (toilets, parking, bins, seats, pathways)

- 4.15 Facilities which may enhance user comfort, usability, and overall experience are not available and this detracts from the value of the site as viable and appealing open space.
- 4.16 Some users may consider these amenities essential to their enjoyment of an open space, for instance the absence of toilets limits the duration of visits and may discourage usage by families with young children or the elderly. Google Street View photographs over the years show no form of engagement or use of the site as compared to other surrounding open spaces with these facilities.
- 4.17 Whilst not to be expected in all open spaces, the absence of cafes or refreshment facilities deprives visitors of opportunities to relax and socialise and may encourage people to use other open spaces.
- 4.18 The absence of seating limits the opportunity for users to rest, while the lack of well-maintained footpaths restricts the movement of individuals with mobility issues, forcing them to navigate only certain areas within the open space particularly the low lying areas on the western section of the site. These limitations make the site less inclusive and accessible.

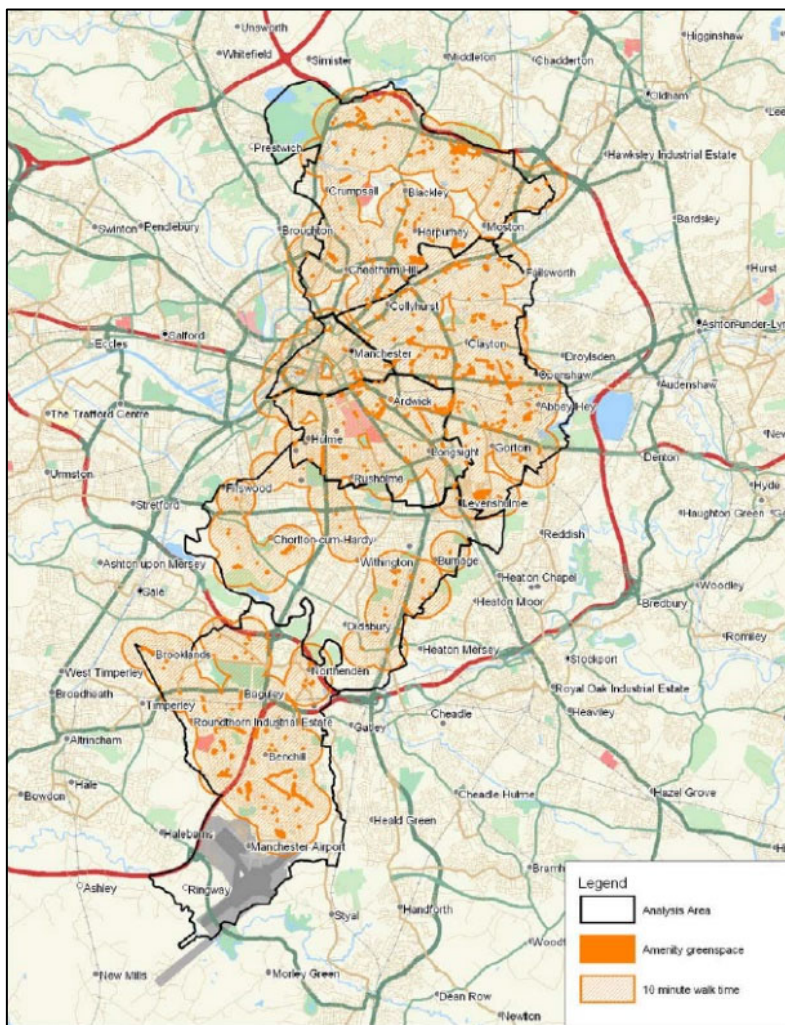
#### Summary

- 4.19 The assessment undertaken above demonstrates that the site has several deficiencies when considering whether it makes a successful open space.
- 4.20 The site is affected by littering and dog fouling, which may be a result of the lack of refuse facilities on site. In addition, being adjacent to a main road unfortunately leads to litter being thrown from passing cars and this is unavoidable given the site's location.
- 4.21 The presence of a slightly steep slope and general uneven terrain could pose difficulties for individuals with mobility issues, whilst a lack of surveillance measures and low levels of lighting infrastructure lead to safety and security concerns for users of the site and adjacent neighbours as crime may be easier to hide. The lack of fencing raises concerns regarding the safety of children and animals who may use the site, particularly in the context of the site's position adjacent to a busy arterial route.
- 4.22 In terms of vegetation, the grassed areas and trees on the site appear to be reasonably maintained, even if these lack interest. It could be said that there is an opportunity to create a more engaging and enjoyable environment for visitors.
- 4.23 Regarding ancillary accommodation, the absence of facilities such as toilets, cafes, seating, and well-maintained footpaths significantly detracts from the usability and comfort of the open space. The lack of amenities like toilets limits the duration of visits, whilst the absence of seating and accessible footpaths restricts movement and enjoyment for individuals with mobility limitations.
- 4.24 The findings of the analysis indicate significant deficiencies in cleanliness, security, and ancillary accommodation. Addressing these issues may require extensive and costly modifications that are not likely to be feasible or justifiable when there are other more suitable open spaces that users may use instead. Notably, the David Lewis Recreational Ground is less than 200 metres to the north and offers facilities such as tennis courts, open grass spaces, and play areas for the surrounding residents.

## 5. Open Space Provision in the Wider Area

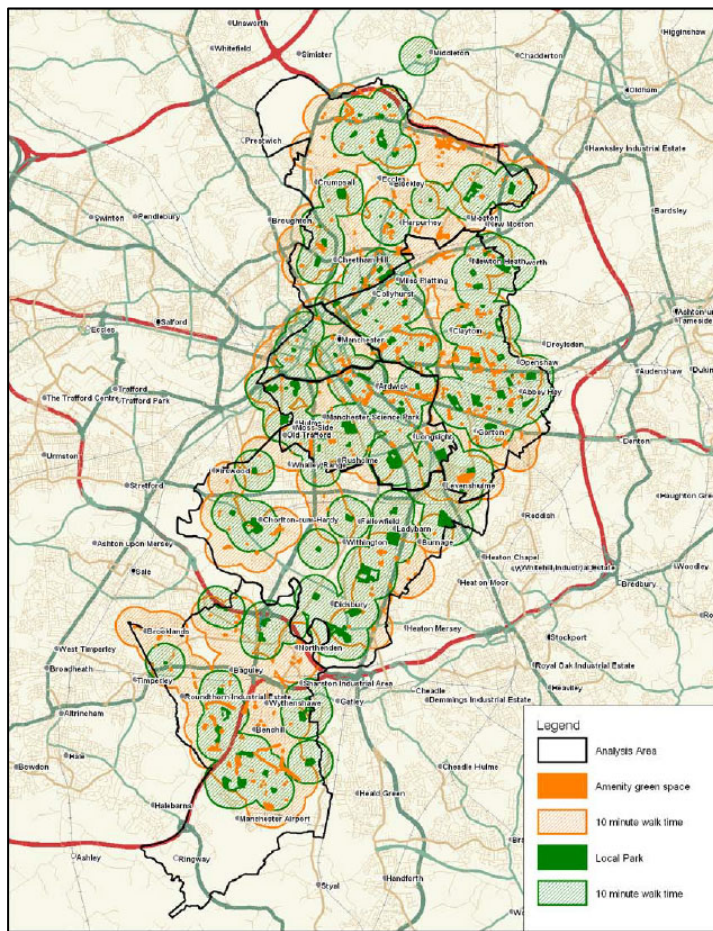
- 5.1 According to the CWOSSRS, 'there is a wide range of open space, sport and recreation facilities within Manchester and these provide a valuable recreational resource to local residents as well as visitors.'
- 5.2 Figure 5 below shows the location of all amenity green spaces within Manchester, demonstrating their abundance, particularly in the north of the City close to the site. It also shows that almost the whole of the north of the City is within a 10 minute walk time of an amenity green space.

Figure 5 - Extract of CWOSSRS Map 6.1 (MCC)



- 5.3 Figure 6 overleaf shows that when set alongside the existence of local parks, there is even greater accessibility to open space.

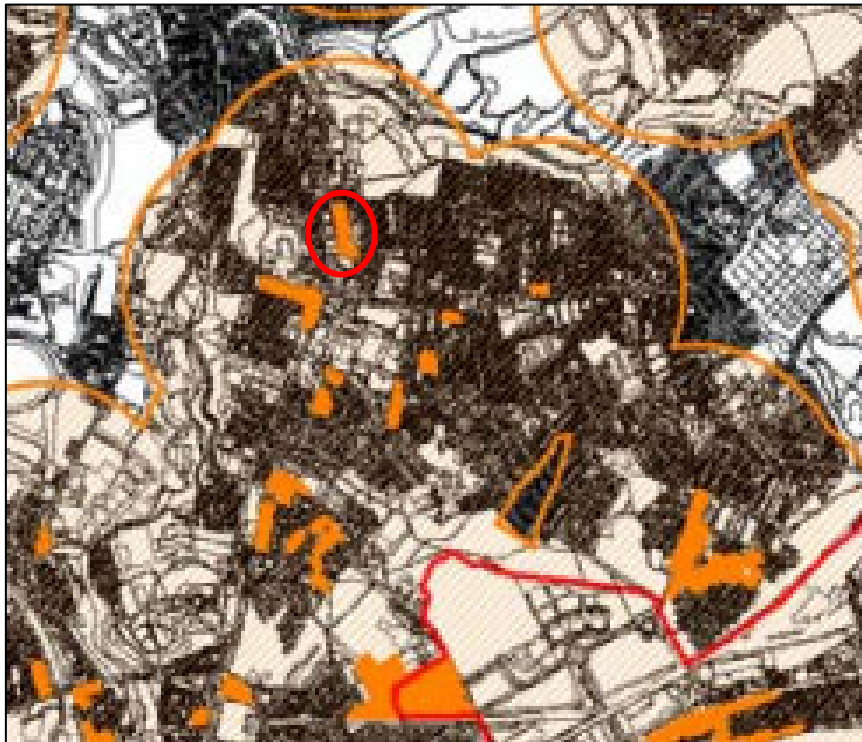
Figure 6 - Extract of CWOSSRS Map 6.2 (MCC)



- 5.4 In terms of the site itself and other open space opportunities nearby, David Lewis Recreation Ground, located northeast of the site and less than 300 meters from the site, is considered more than adequate in meeting the day-to-day recreational needs of the local community in terms of amenity green space and grassland. In addition, the David Lewis Recreation Ground also offers opportunities for formal and informal play, including play areas, basketball courts and multi use games areas (MUGA), tennis courts, football goalposts and a bowling green. It also benefits from a broader network of made footpaths with associated seating opportunities and rubbish bins. It therefore represents a more attractive proposition for residents than that provided by the site.
- 5.5 Additionally, the broader surrounding area encompasses Boggart Hole Clough and Charlestown Parks, both situated within less than 600 meters from the site, again providing ample open space for various outdoor activities. These parks offer a range of formal and informal recreational features, including children's play areas, a running track, parking facilities, and a boating lake with associated café.
- 5.6 Boggart Hole Clough is designated as a Site of Biological Interest within the CS and is therefore protected by the provisions of CS Policy EN15 which generally does not support development which is detrimental to Sites of Biological Interest. It can therefore be said that Boggart Hole Clough is well protected against future development.
- 5.7 In terms of "Amenity Green Space" requirements, as outlined in Table 12.4 of the CS (and Figure X.X of this Statement), there is a stipulated need for 0.4 hectares per 1,000 people within a radius of 480 meters or 10 minutes walking time.

- 5.8 North Manchester has a total of 87 amenity green spaces, covering a combined area of 39.31 hectares, according to the CWOSRSS. At the time of production north Manchester could demonstrate 3.46 hectares of amenity green space per 1,000 people against the local standard of 0.4 hectares per 1,000 people. Taking the evidence we have to hand as concrete, north Manchester is therefore well-provided for in terms of amenity open space. Notably, there are seven amenity green spaces within a convenient 10-minute walking distance from the site, as illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7 - Amenity green space in North Manchester with the site at Parkmount Road denoted by the red ring (MCC)



- 5.9 As set out earlier in this statement, the site benefits from good access by public transport ensuring that those residents who wish to visit open space facilities which are not provided for in the local area can easily travel further afield to access the facilities of their choice.

## Summary

- 5.10 The open space at the application site is solely amenity grassland, with no features of formal open space and with generally very limited qualitative value.
- 5.11 There are other, more useable open spaces close to the site, in the form of the David Lewis Recreation Ground and Boggart Hole Clough. These both provide facilities that the site does not and are more suitable for a wider range of activities often associated with the use of open space.
- 5.12 Further amenity green space is located close to the site and throughout north Manchester, with many sites of this type remaining available for use by those specifically seeking to visit areas similar in nature to the site.

## 6. Assessment and Conclusions

- 6.1 This Open Space Assessment supports an application for a residential development comprising 24 affordable units. It seeks to provide a robust assessment of the site's status as open space, and to form a view as to whether it can be 'lost' to provide much needed residential development.
- 6.2 MCC's assessment, contained within the CWORSSRS, shows that there is no quantitative shortfall of amenity green space, with the North of the City demonstrating an abundance of this type of open space and within walking distance of the site. The loss of 0.57 ha of amenity green space will still allow the accessibility standards set out within the CS to be met.
- 6.3 When coupled with the mixed assessment of the site's qualities, including the presence of litter and dog fouling and limited ancillary facilities and the presence of more appropriate facilities in terms of the David Lewis Recreation Ground and Boggart Hole Clough, it is considered that the site does not play an important role in the provision of open space in this part of the City.
- 6.4 In addition, looking back at the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD, it is clear that the site does not perform well against the requirements for an open space to have a clear and intended use.
- 6.5 Therefore in accordance with CS Policy EN10 and Paragraph 99 of the Framework, it has been demonstrated that the site is surplus to its current open space function and the City wide standards set out in policy are maintained. The site is not capable of fulfilling other unsatisfied open space needs due to its size and topography.
- 6.6 Furthermore, when balanced against the requirement for affordable homes, as set out further in the submitted Planning Statement, the Open Space Assessment concludes that there is adequate provision of sufficient quality open space in close proximity to the site to allow it to be released for development.



**Nexus Planning**

Manchester  
Express Building  
1 George Leigh Street  
Manchester M4 5DL

T 0161 819 6570

[nexusplanning.co.uk](http://nexusplanning.co.uk)