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Design and Access Statement

Residential development at Agnes Court, Victoria Road, Fallowfield, Manchester

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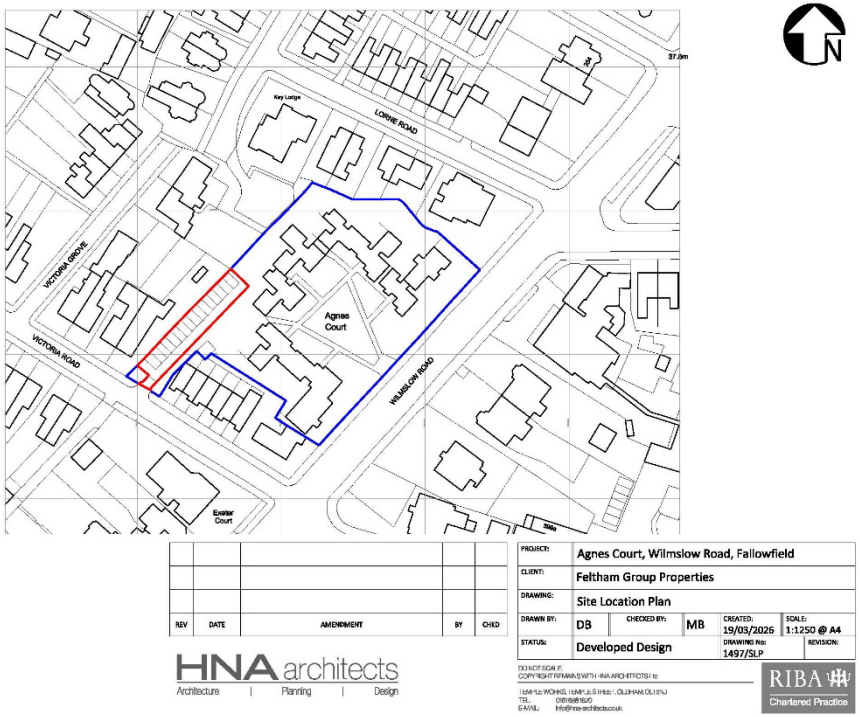
1.0 Introduction



1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared for our client in support of our full planning application for residential development comprising 6no. 01-Bed/01-Person dwellings.

1.2 This statement complies with Department of Communities and Local Government document 'Guidance on Information Requirements and Validation' (March 2010) 'Section 6 – Design and Access Statements'; and CABE's 'Design and Access Statements – How to Write, Read and Use them (2007).

1.3 The application relates to a parcel of land situated within the private grounds of Anges Court flat complex entered via Victoria Road within the Fallowfield area of Manchester. The site is effectively enclosed by a 1.8m+ brick wall with metal railings.

1.4 The site is not within a flood zone and none of the site lies within the green belt nor a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

1.5 The site is currently occupied by a complex of garage units, as such there is no vegetation present within the site however there are a small number of trees located on the edges of the site outside the existing walls and boundaries. The site does not play host to any protected and priority species, important habitats or other biodiversity features, nor does it contain any features of geological conservation importance.

1.6 The enclosed drawings, figures and diagrams within this document are proposals and are not to scale. Distances and measurements should be sought on the accompanying planning drawings which have been provided as part of the application.

2.0 Assessment

Physical Assessment

2.1 The image to the right shows the application site in its immediate context.

2.2 The site is located within the Agnes Court flat complex, a series of connected flat blocks varying between 3-4 storeys. Beyond this the site is within a predominantly residential area, surrounded by 2-3 storey residential dwellings, the majority of which are set within a semi-detached format with many having been spilt up into individual flats as well as more flat complexes.

2.3 There are a few non-residential properties near the site including the READ Foundation and UoM Tennis Club and Withington Girls School

2.4 Currently the site contains 16no. garages.

2.5 On the north side the site shares a physical boundary with no.6-10 Victoria Grove comprising of a brick wall with metal railings and the rear brick wall of the garages being the boundary to no.10 Victoria Road.

2.6 To the east is the Agnes Court flat complex with the complex's east boundary wall, comprising of a brick wall with metal fencing up against Wilmslow road.

2.7 On the south side the site boundary meets Victoria road and includes the vehicle access to the site and the rest of Agnes Court, secured via an automatic gate.

2.8 Boundary treatments prominent in the vicinity of the site comprise of brick walls, stone walls and/or hedging, typically separating residential curtilage from the public highway, concrete post and timber panel or timber post and vertical timber board fencing typically depict boundaries between residential dwellings (to the sides and rear).

2.9 The site is a rectangular shape stretching from northeast to southwest with the topography of the site being relatively flat across the whole site.

2.10 The area is dominated by properties with red brick external walls and slate tile finished roofs, stone, brick and wood decoration is also prevalent around window and door openings and at eaves levels, although it is commonly painted light colours (white/cream, etc).

2.11 The site is in a sustainable location, being close to a variety of local amenities, with good access to public transport including bus stops along the A6010 Wilbraham Road and the B5093 Wilmslow Road, providing links with Manchester Centre and the surrounding areas.

Social Assessment

2.12 The main issues that we believe will most affect local residents will be as follows:

- Traffic: Although vehicle and pedestrian traffic will continue to use Victora Road to access the development site, the increase in residents of Agnes Court will cause an in-parking needs, this should be met by the inclusion of no.6 parking spaces for the residents. (see separate Transport Statement). The 16 garages being converted on the site currently aren't being used for vehicle parking and so their loss will not affect the amount of on-site parking for residents of Agnes Court.

- Loss of open space: The site consists of private land and is not used for any recreational purposes, there are no public footpaths within, through, or alongside the site.

Economic Assessment

2.13 The local economy will receive an initial boost as a result of construction work on the project and once complete there will be a boost to local authority funds via Council Tax contributions. New residents in the area will also mean new customers for local businesses.

Planning Policy Assessment

2.14 The site is not within a flood zone.

2.15 None of the site lies within the green belt or an area considered as public open space.

2.16 None of the site lies within a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

2.17 None of the site is situated within the confines of a conservation Area.

2.18 The site is currently occupied by a complex of garage units, as such there is no vegetation present within the site, however there are a small number of trees located on the edges of the site outside the existing walls and boundaries and within the rest of Agnes Court. The site does not play host to any protected or priority species, important habitats or other biodiversity features, nor does it contain any features of geological conservation importance.

2.19 There is no other special designation or policy affecting the site.

Planning History

2.20 Searching Manchester City Council website, there is no planning history for the garages on site, however the flats at Agnes Court have a short planning history and has been the subject of relatively few planning applications; these applications have been assessed and considered (including reasons for approval/refusal, officer's reports, etc) and used to inform the design during the concept stage of this application. The following is a summary of these applications:

- ***050135/FO/SOUTH2/96***: Three storey extension to existing block of flats to form 4x1 bedroom flats, 2x2 bedroom flats and enlargement of one existing two bedroom flat into a three-bedroom flat. ***Approved 19/6/1996.***

- ***30401***: Erection of boundary wall, new entrance porches and replacement of windows and cill panels. ***Approved 25/11/87***

2.21 A pre-application enquiry was submitted to Manchester City Council in July 2025 with a draft of these proposals. Formal comments were received from the planning authority in August 2025, and these comments have informed this application package (see 'Section 3.0).

3.0 Involvement

3.1 Various groups and professional consultants have been appointed and have helped guide the proposed design including:

- Alyn Nicholls Chartered Town Planner (planning consultant)
- SCP Transport Ltd (transport and highways consultants)
- PG Consulting (drainage strategy)
- Envance Ltd (Ecology)

3.2 Given the development is relatively minor and not complex or contentious, no community or public consultation was deemed necessary prior to submission of this planning application; it is expected that any public comments received post-submission can be assessed and responded to during the determination period.

Pre-Application Submission

Pre-application advice was requested by Alyn Nicholls and was obtained from senior planner David Lawless at Manchester Planning Council

3.3 A submission was made in August 2025 seeking pre-application advice, feedback was received and was relatively positive. The local authority's planning officers provided detailed comments that could be addressed via changes to the design which will hopefully promote a favourable outcome when applying for full planning permission.

3.4 The pre-application response was favourable in some areas and raised concerns in others – the points have been responded to overleaf.

Design Response to Pre-Application Advice

3.5 The pre-application advice from MCC is provided in full below (in blue) and is followed with an explanation of our design response to each point:

The proposal would be lower that the adjoining properties and as such should be no cause of concern in terms of overshadowing. The same can be said for overlooking, given the location of window openings.

Given the positive reception to the proposal in this regard, the proposed developments height, window positions etc will be kept the same as within the proposal drawings seen by the planner.

In addition, the lock-up garages were obviously placed there for use by the residents of Agnes Court, if no longer used as such, we'll need to understand the current and future parking demand.

The 16 garages being converted on the site currently aren't being used for vehicle parking and so their loss will not affect the amount of on-site parking for residents of Agnes Court. The development proposes the creation of no.6 car parking spaces to be allocated to the proposed dwellings, leaving the parking demand for the rest of Agnes Court unchanged.

In terms of ecology reports, given the age and redundancy of the lock-up garages I think it would be advisable to undertake a bat survey.

A preliminary bat survey was carried out, and the assessment report has been included within the submission. The report found no signs of bats internally or externally and the risk assessment determined the impact of the works on bats to be negligible.

4.0 Design

4.1 The final proposals take into account the site analysis work, context assessment, review of previous planning applications and schemes, and the responses to the pre-application submission (see previous section), along with advice from other members of the design team. This background work has led to the design being put forward to the local planning authority.

4.2 The scheme has been designed so as to complement and follow the more appropriate and best examples of design within the area, whilst making full use of existing structures to achieve a design in character with, and complimentary to, the area.

4.3 The overall use, amount, layout, scale, landscaping and appearance of the proposals have been carefully considered given the surrounding environment and constraints. The proposed application seeks full planning permission, therefore details of the proposed materials, hard and soft landscaping, external lighting, etc. have been considered and details included within the submitted drawings. All choices have considered closely matching, or sympathetic, materials and details to enhance the site and it's setting within the conservation area.

4.4 The site layout proposed (see drawing: 1497 P-001) has considered the amenity impact on the surrounding neighbours and maintains suitable separation standards and solutions which maintain or improve amenity for new and existing residents.

Use

4.5 Currently the site is used for garages/lock-up units.

4.6 The proposals alter the existing structures and land to provide residential dwellings (Planning Use Class C3), together with associated off-street car parking and a communal bin store.

4.7 Due to the nature of the existing site (i.e. intensely developed with no greenery/vegetation), the proposal is exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain requirements under De Minimis exemption (impacting less than 25m^2 of non-priority onsite habitat and less than 5m non-priority onsite linear habitats.

4.8 As the application site lies within a predominantly residential area and taking into account the planning history of the site, we believe there is sufficient justification for our proposals to be considered as appropriate development and use (see also 'Planning Statement' by Alyn Nicholls).

Amount

4.9 Currently the site contains a significant number of garages/lock-up units.

4.10 The proposals seek to provide 6no. 1-storey dwellings each providing 1-bedroom/1-person accommodation. The proposed dwellings will be high quality housing, will meet all National Space Standard requirements and be of a high-quality construction that will meet/exceed energy performance requirements of the current Building Regulations.

Layout

4.11 The layout of the scheme has been developed carefully over successive iterations, including comments made by Manchester City Council during the pre-application submission, with these final proposals taking into account those comments and our core design principles, namely:

- Access
- Amenity, privacy and space
- Appearance/layout of the surrounding built environment
- Crime and security
- Enhancing the neighbourhood
- Light

4.12 The proposed dwellings will follow the footprints of the existing buildings, with proposed plots copying the orientation of existing garage units. A shared surface roadway. Proposed flats will be largely concealed by the existing brick boundary walls and be partially visible from the public highway along Victoria Road. The front elevation of the flats will be fully visible by the flats opposite.

4.13 The proposals reflect the surrounding built environment and ensure overshadowing and overlooking is restricted.

4.14 The residential units have been provided with allocated off-street car parking spaces. The proposed car parking spaces are situated within a carport built into the converted units. The proposed off-street parking will eliminate any impact from the proposed scheme on the surrounding roads.

4.15 Public and private spaces are demarcated by brick walls or low metal railings. The heights of the boundary treatments have been carefully considered to provide a balance of privacy and visibility.

4.16 The proposed site plan incorporates efficient and practical external waste storage. The designated communal external bin store area indicated on the proposed site plan is sufficient for the storage of bins containing non-recyclable and recyclable waste in accordance with local authority's current refuse and recycling system and procedures. This will help promote recycling whilst maintaining a neat and tidy streetscape. The bin store has been located next to the vehicle access road for ease of the refuse collection team.

4.17 Currently the site follows the 1.8m+ brick wall which borders the north and south boundary and surrounds the entirety of Agnes Courts Ownership Boundary, with the proposal site specifically open to the rest of Agnes Court to the northeast / east sides. The proposals intend to retain these walls as they currently provide a solid and secure boundary for the development; they provide a significant privacy and acoustic screen from the site to the surrounding homeowners (and vice versa) and provide an attractive red brick structure which is wholly characteristic of the area. To propose removing the brick walls would ultimately change the character of the area significantly.

4.18 Leaving the boundary walls in place also means far less impact on existing trees surrounding the site and brings sustainability to the fore as a significant amount of demolition is avoided, significantly reducing the amount of new materials needed in the development construction and greatly improving the sustainability of the proposals.

4.19 Security has been carefully considered within the proposals. The development seeks to create a safe and accessible environment where crime does not undermine the quality of life. Crime prevention measures have been considered, making use of 'active' windows to the fronts of the property, aiding natural surveillance and maintaining a site layout that reduces/eliminates hidden corners and areas where people can gather together.

4.20 In short, the proposals intend to create a small community of flats within an existing flat complex court; this approach is best suited to the constraints posed by the site and the surrounding context, and it has the least impact on surrounding neighbours and the wider area.

Scale

4.21 The site is located within the Agnes Court flat complex, a series of connected flat blocks varying between 3-4 storeys. Beyond this the site is within a predominantly residential area, surrounded by 2-3 storey residential dwellings, the majority of which are set within a semi-detached format with many having been spilt up into individual flats as well as more flat complexes.

4.22 The existing garages building comprise a single storey brick-walled structure with a simple flat corrugated metal roof.

4.23 Our proposals have been designed sympathetically with the surrounding materials in order to reinforce the local character of the area. The proposed dwellings retain the existing 1.8m+ tall brick boundary walls to the rear and then incorporate a new first floor and roof slope (in metal cladding) which extrudes up from just below the existing wall top to a ridge, then back down to the new 2-storey front façade (within the site). This forms a pitched roof and effectively obscures most of the development when viewed from outside the site (see proposed elevation and section drawings).

4.24 As previously discussed, the proposed dwellings follow the footprints of the existing garage units, therefore the width and length of the units have been dictated by the existing structure.

Landscaping

4.25 The existing site has ample gardens and landscaping which provide amenity space. There are no landscaping proposals as part of this proposed development of an existing building.

Appearance

4.26 The design principles laid out the basic tenets from which to base decisions during design development. In terms of appearance the most notable principles were:

- Appearance/layout of the surrounding built environment
- Enhancing the neighbourhood
- Materials/detailing

4.27 The neighbouring buildings have a basic and traditional palette of materials, notably red facing brick external walls and natural slate roofs; a mixture of timber, brick and/or stone detailing is also prevalent. This palette has heavily influenced our choices in this proposal.

4.28 Window openings in the area vary but retain a vertical emphasis which has been carried over into the proposal.

4.29 Discussion with Manchester City Council (via pre-application advice) has meant full consideration has been made when choosing the external materials. Options were provided and the final choice of red brick and metal cladding has produced a design that fully responds to the neighbouring dwellings and wider local area. The result is a well-proportioned and responsive proposal that is sympathetic and in-keeping with the character of the wider area.

5.0 Evaluation

5.1 The final proposals have taken the local planning authority's pre-application comments on-board and made changes necessary to amend the scheme prior to submitting this application seeking full planning permission.

5.2 Our proposals have looked at utilising what is already present on-site (the garages and boundary walls) to preserve the character of the conservation area and to a maximise the potential of the site; this general principle was supported by Manchester City Council within their pre-application response.

5.3 Having identified keeping the brick boundary walls as bringing significant benefits (character, sustainability, etc), we then looked at the impact to the area of the various development options. We referenced other successful proposals and decided that the most authentic option was to create a scheme that appeared simply as though the garage units had been extended upwards and converted into residential accommodation – much the same way as mews properties are often converted around the country.

5.4 This arrangement has led to us leaving the ground floor elevations remaining in brick, whilst above a new cladded first floor would be constructed for additional dwellings. This arrangement would create an understandable narrative in that mews were often built behind large houses (such as those on Vincent Avenue to the north and Wilbraham Road to the south) and they historically contained upper floor living quarters for coachmen and drivers.

5.5 With regard to the inside of each property, as single aspect units we were mindful of having attractive internal spaces to live. All rooms meet Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) and would be constructed to at least current Building Regulation requirements in relation to energy conservation (Part L).

5.6 The properties have been designed to comply with Building Regulation Part M4(2) where required.

5.7 The scheme submitted provides no1. Parking spaces for each proposed dwelling, in order that visitors do not need to park on any surrounding roads. Given the site's sustainable location, the proposals will not adversely impact neighbouring streets.

5.8 Details of hard landscaping, including materials specifications have been provided. Sympathetic materials and details have been chosen which fit the local character of the area and provide good quality and hard-wearing finishes.

6.0 Access

Vehicular Access

6.1 The site is accessed directly from the existing entrance off Victoria Road via the vehicle access gate or alternatively by the pedestrian access gates located off Wilmslow Road; this currently provides access for 40+ garage units and a vehicle repair business; the proposals seek permission for 6no. dwellings with one allocated parking space each. The proposals will not impact upon the neighbouring roads when compared to the existing situation, this is evidenced by the supporting Transport Statement (submitted separately as part of this application).

6.2 The existing entrance is to be improved by the installation of 4.5m radius raised kerbs with a dropped crossing for pedestrians travelling along Oswald Road. The entrance provides suitable sight lines as required. A new cobbled 'speed table' (positioned at the back of the footpath within the site) adds a further safety measure for pedestrians using the Oswald Road footpath; the proposed cobbles keep the speed table materials in-keeping with the conservation area.

6.3 Each dwelling has been provided with one allocated car parking space (100% provision). This off-street car parking (6no spaces in all) will prevent parking overspill on the surrounding roads. Refer also to the sperate Highways and Transport Statement for full details.

6.4 From the application site, residents will be able to access and travel along Wilmslow Road providing travel routes towards Manchester City Centre to the north and the M60 and wider motorway network to the south.

6.5 We have provided convenient space for the storage of refuse and recycling bins within a communal bin store (hidden by existing brick and metal fencing); these will be arranged to be collected at the required time in accordance with Manchester City Council refuse and recycling procedures. The bin store is located adjacent to the vehicle turning head (for the benefit of the waste collection team).

Pedestrian Access

6.6 Within this proposal pedestrian access into the proposed dwellings comes from the existing site access off Victoria Road, or via Wilmslow Road by use of the established adopted footways.

6.7 One of the main objectives is to provide a place that everyone can get to and move through on equal terms regardless of age, disability, ethnicity or social grouping. A benefit of the site is that it is relatively flat throughout with the ability to provide an inclusive and accessible scheme. The proposed development will be accessible across the entire site, and each dwelling will have level access to the principal entrance door; there are no steps from Victoria Road to the main entrance of any ground floor unit.

6.8 The site is situated in close proximity to local bus stops providing pedestrians with easy access to Manchester City Centre and the surrounding area, as well as local and national train networks.

6.9 Residents of the site will be fortunate to be within a sustainable location benefitting from excellent amenities enjoyable without the necessity of car ownership.

6.10 Cycle access is gained along the same routes as pedestrians and vehicles, and we have provided residents with a convenient space for the communal secure storage of bicycles within the carport of the converted garages.

6.11 We have endeavoured to provide good overlooking and visibility of all spaces and footpaths to reduce/eliminate anti-social behaviour and crime.