

Planning Statement

Application number: 144130/FO/2025

Proposal: Change of use of garage from storage to cafe together with associated elevational alterations

Location: 224A Burton Road, Manchester, M20 2LW

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application to Manchester City Council for the change of use of an existing garage (currently used as storage space) to a small café (Use Class E(b)), together with the replacement of the existing 'up-and-over' garage door with a new glazed frontage.

The application relates to the unit known as 224A Burton Road, Manchester, M20 2LW, which forms part of the wider Burton Road frontage within the West Didsbury area. The proposed development is a modest, small-scale re-use of an under-utilised garage in a highly accessible and mixed commercial/residential context.

The café will:

- Serve hot drinks, ice cream and frozen yoghurt;
- Not undertake any primary cooking of hot food (no fryers, grills, ovens or hot-food extraction);
- Operate primarily as a walk-up café serving customers through a servery window/hatch- no customer seating.
- Employ 1–2 staff at any one time and trade during daytime/early evening hours only.

The proposal builds on, and refines, the previously approved planning permission for the change of use of the same garage from storage to office (Use Class E) under ref. 128331/FO/2020. That earlier consent established that commercial re-use of the garage and a new shopfront are acceptable in principle in this location. The present proposal seeks an alternative, but equally small-scale, town centre use which is considered to offer a wider public benefit.

2. Site and Surroundings

The application site comprises a single flat-roofed attached garage 13m² located to the rear of 224 Burton Road, fronting Bottesford Avenue. The garage has a steel up-and-over vehicular door and is presently used solely for storage. It has not been used as a parking space for vehicles for a number of years.

Adjacent to the garage is a doorway marked '224A', which provides access to residential accommodation above/behind 224 Burton Road. To the rear of the building is a service alley

used by neighbouring properties for bin storage and access.

The wider area is characterised by the mixed-use, high street environment of Burton Road in West Didsbury, which accommodates numerous independent shops, cafés, restaurants, bars and services at ground floor level, with residential accommodation above and along the surrounding streets such as Arley Avenue and Bottesford Avenue. The site is within the Albert Park Conservation Area, where the character derives from traditional brick terraces and the lively, fine-grain commercial frontage along Burton Road.

The area is highly accessible by sustainable modes. Burton Road is served by frequent bus routes and the nearby Burton Road Metrolink stop, and the immediate neighbourhood is predominantly walkable for local residents.

3. Proposed Development

The application seeks planning permission for:

- Change of use of the existing garage/storage space to a small café within Use Class E(b);
- Replacement of the existing garage door with a new timber-framed glazed shopfront, including a servery window/hatch for walk-up trade.

The café would:

- Offer hot drinks (such as coffee, tea and hot chocolate), ice cream, frozen yoghurt and similar cold desserts;
- Not prepare or serve any hot food typically associated with fast food (e.g. no burgers, fried chicken or other fried items);
- Operate with no fryers, grills, ovens or equivalent primary cooking equipment and therefore no requirement for a large external flue;
- Primarily serve customers through a window/hatch opening onto the street, similar in operation to other small cafés in the area (for example, the well-known Dish and Spoon at 230 Burton Road);
- Provide only a very limited area for internal circulation/storage due to the constrained floorspace.

Indicative opening hours are envisaged as:

- Monday–Friday: 8:00–19:00
- Saturday–Sunday: 09:00–19:00

If deemed necessary, the applicant is willing to accept conditions limiting hours of opening and delivery times to protect nearby residential amenity.

4. Planning History and Relationship to Previous Consent

4.1 Planning Permission: 128331/FO/2020 (approved)

The site is subject to an earlier planning permission:

- Ref: 128331/FO/2020
- Description: Change of use of garage from storage to office (Use Class E) together with associated elevational alterations
- Decision: Approved under delegated powers (January 2021)

The consent related to the same flat-roofed attached garage at the rear of 224 Burton Road, fronting Bottesford Avenue, within the Albert Park Conservation Area. In determining that application, Manchester City Council accepted that:

- The garage had long ceased to function as a parking space and was used only for storage;
- The unit occupies a sustainable, mixed commercial/residential location close to the Burton Road local centre; and
- The loss of the garage as a parking space and its re-use for a small-scale commercial office use (Use Class E) were acceptable in principle.

The approved scheme also authorised the replacement of the existing up-and-over garage door with a new timber-framed glazed shopfront. The Officer report concluded that the new shopfront would remove a blank, utilitarian garage opening and introduce a simple, well-proportioned frontage using appropriate materials, thus enhancing the appearance of Bottesford Avenue and the Albert Park Conservation Area.

Conditions attached to 128331/FO/2020 included controls on opening hours, noise from any external plant, and refuse storage and collection. Importantly, a condition restricted the permitted use to an office within Class E(g)(i) only, ensuring that any alternative commercial use would be subject to formal planning control in order to safeguard residential amenity and the conservation area setting.

4.2 Implementation Status

Although the earlier permission remains a material consideration, it has not been fully implemented in practice. The existing garage continues to operate as a storage space with the original garage door in place. No commercial office use has commenced at the site.

Nevertheless, the principles established by 128331/FO/2020 remain highly relevant:

- The Council has accepted the loss of the garage as a parking space;
- The change of use from storage to a small-scale commercial use is appropriate in this location;

- A glazed shopfront, in place of the garage door, is considered a positive enhancement to the Albert Park Conservation Area.

4.3 Current Proposal in Context of Previous Consent

The current application builds directly on these accepted principles, while substituting the previously approved office use for a carefully-defined café use within Class E(b). The physical extent of the unit and the elevational treatment remain consistent with the earlier scheme, with a glazed frontage in place of the garage door.

The key difference is the nature of the authorised activity within the unit:

- Rather than an office, the unit would trade as a small café offering hot drinks, ice cream and frozen yoghurt;
- There would be no hot-food cooking and no sale of fast food products such as burgers or fried food of any kind;
- The operation would be primarily via a servery window/hatch, with only a very limited internal area available given the constrained floorplate.

4.4 Exact Use Being Sought (Planning Classification)

Based on the description above, the proposed lawful use is:

- Use Class E(b) – the sale of food and drink principally for consumption on the premises or in the immediate vicinity.

The proposed café is distinguishable from a hot-food takeaway (sui generis) in that:

- No primary cooking or deep frying would take place;
- No large extraction flue is required or proposed;
- The offer is limited to drinks and cold desserts, with no fast food such as burgers, fried chicken or similar products;
- The focus is on daytime/early evening use and walk-up trade, rather than late-night takeaway activity.

Accordingly, the application is properly framed as a Class E(b) café and not as a hot-food takeaway use.

5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and supports:

- Re-use of previously-developed and under-utilised land;

- The role of town, district and local centres as the focus for commercial, retail and leisure uses;
- Small-scale economic development and local employment opportunities, particularly in accessible locations;
- High quality design that responds to local character and heritage assets.

5.2 Manchester Core Strategy

Relevant policies of the Manchester Core Strategy include (summary):

- Policy SP1 – Spatial Principles: promotes development that contributes to neighbourhoods of choice, makes efficient use of previously developed land, and is accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.
- Policy DM1 – Development Management: sets out criteria for the assessment of all development, including design quality, impact on amenity, traffic and access, waste management and sustainability.
- Policy EC9 – South Manchester: supports small-scale employment and economic development that contributes to the vitality of local and district centres.
- Policy EN3 – Heritage: seeks to preserve and, where possible, enhance the character and appearance of conservation areas.

5.3 Saved Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Policies

Relevant saved UDP policies include:

- Policy DC14 – Shop Fronts: requires that new and altered shopfronts are of high quality, respect the building's proportions and materials, and contribute positively to the street scene.
- Policy DC18 – Conservation Areas: requires that development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of conservation areas.
- Policy DC26 – Noise: seeks to protect residents from unacceptable levels of noise and requires appropriate mitigation where necessary.

6. Planning Assessment

6.1 Principle of Development

The proposal involves the re-use of an under-utilised storage garage in a sustainable, mixed-use neighbourhood. The principle of commercial re-use of the unit has already been accepted through permission 128331/FO/2020. The change to a small Class E(b) café use is entirely consistent with the surrounding pattern of development along Burton Road, which comprises numerous independent cafés, restaurants and shops.

The development will:

- Bring an underutilised unit into full and active commercial use;
- Introduce an active, well-presented frontage to Bottesford Avenue, significantly improving the appearance of the current garage-style façade;
- Support a local business and contribute to the vibrancy, safety and economic vitality of the Burton Road corridor and the wider West Didsbury area.

The proposal therefore aligns strongly with the objectives of the NPPF and Core Strategy Policies SP1, DM1 and EC9.

6.2 Design, Heritage and Conservation Area

The existing garage door is a blank, utilitarian feature which makes a limited contribution to the character of the Albert Park Conservation Area. The proposal replaces this element with a timber-framed glazed shopfront, incorporating a servery window/hatch, which will:

- Provide an active frontage with good levels of natural surveillance onto Bottesford Avenue;
- Reflect traditional shopfront proportions and materials, with a defined stall riser and well-scaled openings;
- Enhance the appearance of the host building and the wider street scene.

The Council has already concluded, in granting 128331/FO/2020, that a glazed shopfront in this location would preserve and enhance the conservation area. The current design approach is consistent with that previously approved and continues to meet the requirements of Core Strategy Policy EN3 and UDP Policies DC14 and DC18.

6.3 Residential Amenity (Noise, Odour and Hours of Use)

The site is located in a mixed commercial/residential environment where some level of activity is expected and characteristic, particularly along Burton Road. Key amenity considerations include:

Noise from Customers and Operation:

- The unit is very small, significantly limiting the number of customers at any one time;
- The primary operation as a walk-up servery reduces the need for internal seating and associated noise;
- Proposed hours of operation are modest and can be controlled by condition to ensure that the premises do not operate late into the night.

Odour and Fume Control:

- No primary cooking of hot food will take place. There will be no fryers, grills or ovens and no fast food such as burgers or fried chicken will be prepared or served;
- Odour generation will therefore be minimal and can be adequately managed by standard internal ventilation systems without the need for an external flue;
- The café is clearly distinguishable from a hot food takeaway, which typically involves intensive cooking and significant odour emissions.

External Plant and Equipment:

- Any external condensers or small-scale mechanical equipment required for refrigeration or ventilation can be designed and specified to meet appropriate noise limits at the nearest residential facades;

- A planning condition can require submission and approval of details for any plant, ensuring compliance with UDP Policy DC26.

With appropriate conditions on hours, plant noise and deliveries, the proposal will not result in any unacceptable impact on residential amenity.

6.4 Highways and Parking

The garage has not been used for vehicle parking for some time and currently functions solely as storage. The loss of this theoretical parking space was accepted by the Council in granting the earlier office consent.

The proposed café is extremely small and will generate only a modest level of patronage. Many customers are likely to be local residents arriving on foot, by bicycle or via public transport. Staff numbers are limited (1–2 at any given time), and the development will have a negligible effect on on-street parking demand.

The proposal therefore accords with Core Strategy Policy SP1 in terms of accessibility and is acceptable in highway and parking terms.

6.5 Waste Management and Servicing

The café will generate relatively small volumes of waste, consisting mainly of packaging, recyclable materials and a modest amount of food waste.

A detailed Waste Management Plan is submitted with this application, showing refuse/recycling storage, the route to the kerbside and the collection point, in line with the Council's collection arrangements. The applicant is content for compliance with this plan to be secured by condition if required.

Servicing and deliveries (for example, coffee, milk and ingredients for desserts) will be limited in scale and frequency and can be undertaken from Bottesford Avenue during daytime/early evening hours. Conditions can restrict the times for deliveries and waste collections to protect residential amenity.

7. Conclusion

This Planning Statement demonstrates that the proposed change of use of the existing garage at 224A Burton Road to a small Class E(b) café, together with the replacement of the garage door with a glazed shopfront, is acceptable in planning terms and should be supported by Manchester City Council.

In summary:

- The proposal builds directly upon the principles established by permission 128331/FO/2020, which accepted the loss of the garage as a parking space, the commercial re-use of the unit and the introduction of a glazed frontage as a positive enhancement to the conservation area;

- The café is clearly defined as a Class E(b) use, explicitly excluding any hot food cooking or fast food takeaway-type operation, and is therefore of a fundamentally different character to a hot food takeaway use;
- The development will bring an underutilised unit into full and active commercial use, introduce an attractive and active frontage to Bottesford Avenue, and support a local business, thereby contributing to the vibrancy, safety and economic vitality of the Burton Road corridor;
- The small scale of the operation, limited hours of opening and absence of hot food cooking ensure that there will be no unacceptable impact on neighbouring residential amenity in terms of noise, odour or disturbance;
- The proposal is consistent with the objectives and provisions of the NPPF, the Manchester Core Strategy (including Policies SP1, DM1, EC9 and EN3) and the relevant saved UDP policies (including DC14, DC18 and DC26).

For these reasons, it is respectfully requested that planning permission for application 144130/FO/2025 be granted, subject to such conditions as the Local Planning Authority considers appropriate.