

Planning Statement

Change of use of the existing commercial unit at 3 Mirabel Street, Manchester, M3 1PJ to an indoor gym/fitness facility (Use Class E(d)).



Site Location:	3 Maribel Street Manchester M3 1PJ
Date:	2 March 2026
Planning Authority:	Manchester City Council

1. Introduction

Homz has been instructed to prepare and submit a Change of use of the existing commercial unit at 3 Mirabel Street, Manchester, M3 1PJ to an indoor gym/fitness facility (Use Class E(d)).

The application site Mirabel Street is a mixed commercial and residential road on the edge of Manchester City Centre, within Greater Manchester and maintained as a public highway by Manchester City Council. The property itself is a commercial unit located within the railway arches, with its last known use also commercial. The surrounding area has undergone significant regeneration, with major recent planning approvals for large mixed-use residential and commercial developments along Mirabel Street and Great Ducie Street. The site also lies within the setting of several Grade II listed structures, including the Sorting Office at 7 Mirabel Street, North Bridge (Victoria Street), and Middle Bridge (Victoria Street).

The statement outlines the site, the description of development, the planning history, planning policy and material planning considerations.

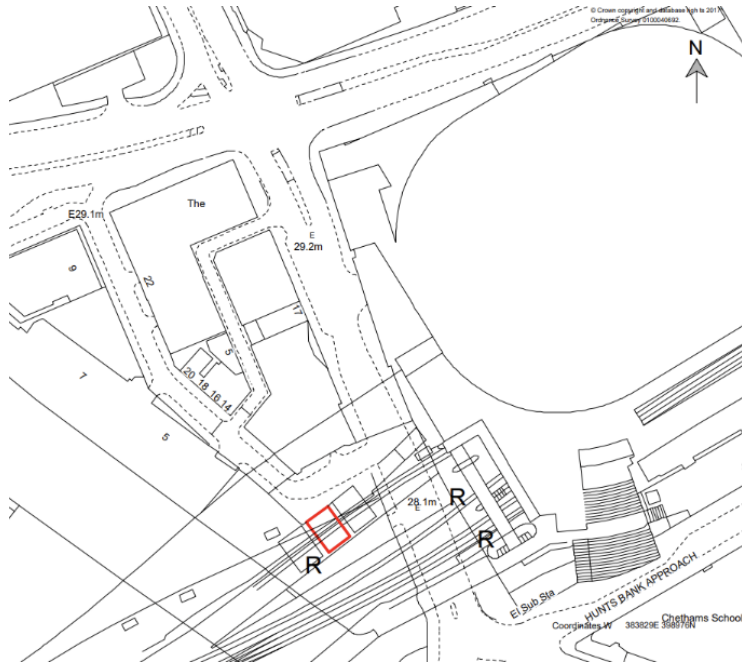
2. Site and Context Analysis

2.1 Location and surroundings

The application site is outlined in red, situated on the south side of Mirabel Street. The plan shows the site positioned within a dense urban environment characterised by a mix of commercial and transport-related infrastructure. The site sits immediately adjacent to a series of linear structures consistent with railway platforms or track alignments, shown by multiple parallel lines running diagonally across the lower portion of the plan. Several features on the plan are labelled “R”, indicating railway-related elements.

To the north of the application site, the plan illustrates a network of streets and buildings arranged in a block formation. The nearest buildings are represented by solid building footprints, with some labelled with spot levels such as 29.1m and 29.2m. A large, curved boundary to the northeast occupies a significant area, shown without buildings, suggesting an open or infrastructural space.

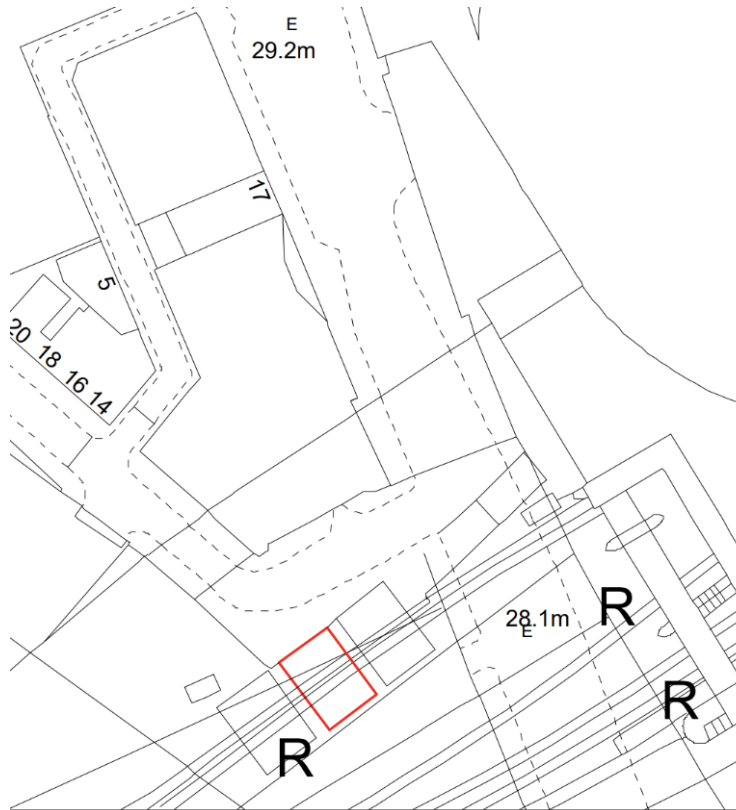
The north arrow in the upper-right corner confirms that the red-lined site lies on an east–west alignment, with Mirabel Street located directly to its north. The plan includes topographical features, boundary lines, building edges, and ordnance survey data typical of a standard 1:1250 location plan. Overall, the plan clearly delineates the extent of the application site within its wider urban context, demonstrating its proximity to surrounding buildings, street layout, and railway-associated land. Refer to drawing below for the site location:



2.2 Existing built form

The block plan shows the application site outlined in red, located within a row of linear commercial units situated beneath elevated infrastructure. The red-edged site sits along the southern side of the plan and forms part of a continuous strip of narrow plots aligned parallel to the railway structure above. Surrounding the site are a series of buildings and land parcels shown in black outline, with several numbered units visible to the west (including 14, 16, 18, 20 and 5). A building identified as 17 is located to the north. The wider block exhibits a mix of irregular and angular plot boundaries, typical of areas influenced by historic transport and industrial infrastructure.

The site is positioned within a dense urban block, characterised by a combination of narrow commercial units below the viaduct and larger buildings to the north and east. The block plan confirms the constrained and highly urban nature of the setting, with the application site forming a small, well-defined unit integrated within the broader railway arch structure. Refer to drawing below for existing block plan:



3. Description of development

Change of use of the existing commercial unit at 3 Mirabel Street, Manchester, M3 1PJ, to an indoor gym and fitness facility (Use Class E(d)), including associated internal alterations and ancillary operational arrangements.

The application relates to a commercial premises located within a railway arch fronting Mirabel Street, as shown on the submitted Site Location Plan (1:1250) and Existing Block Plan (1:500). The property forms part of a continuous row of narrow arch-based commercial units positioned beneath elevated railway infrastructure. The existing lawful use of the unit is commercial, and the proposed gym use remains within Use Class E(d) (indoor sport, recreation or fitness), ensuring the development sits within the same overall Use Class E.

The proposal involves the reuse and activation of an existing vacant or underused commercial space, supporting the wider regeneration of the Mirabel Street area. The physical works are limited to internal reconfiguration only, including the creation of an open-plan fitness space, changing areas, WCs, a reception zone and small staff area. All adaptations remain fully contained within the existing structural envelope of the arch.

No external building works are proposed. There will be:

- No change to the façade, openings, or external elevations
- No alterations to the structural form of the arch
- No increase in height, footprint, or external massing
- No external plant, vents, or mechanical equipment

This ensures the character and visual integrity of the wider viaduct structure is fully preserved.

The site sits within a dense mixed-use environment on the edge of Manchester city centre, characterised by a combination of commercial, transport-related and emerging residential uses. The block plans show nearby commercial properties (including units numbered 14, 16, 18 and 20) and surrounding buildings forming irregular urban blocks typical of historic city-centre infrastructure. Spot levels (28.1m and 29.2m) indicate slight variation across the immediate area.

The site also lies within the setting of several Grade II listed structures, including:

- The Sorting Office building at 7 Mirabel Street
- North Bridge, Victoria Street
- Middle Bridge, Victoria Street

While the proposal does not involve external alteration, the development has been designed to ensure continued respect for the heritage character of the surrounding railway infrastructure and nearby listed townscape. Overall, the development represents a sustainable reuse of an existing commercial unit, contributes positively to local health and well-being, supports economic activity, and fits comfortably within the mixed-use character of Mirabel Street and its continuing transformation.

4. Planning History

A review of the Council's planning portal has revealed no planning history associated with the application site.

5. Planning Policy

Below is a full planning policy assessment based on the description of development:

In assessing development at the site, decision-makers must have regard to the statutory Development Plan and other material considerations, with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) forming a central component of national planning policy. The revised NPPF (December 2024) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and

confirms that planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024):

Achieving Sustainable Development (NPPF Chapter 2)

The NPPF requires that planning decisions proactively support sustainable development, ensuring that social, environmental and economic objectives are delivered collectively. Sustainable development includes the reuse of existing buildings, supporting accessible local services, and promoting healthy, active communities. The Framework emphasises that planning should play a proactive role in achieving positive social outcomes, including providing facilities that contribute to health and well-being.

Building a Strong, Competitive Economy (Chapter 6)

The NPPF states that planning decisions should help create the conditions for economic growth by supporting a productive economy, including enabling the development of flexible commercial spaces. Local authorities should support business locations that allow existing businesses to expand and new enterprises to emerge.

Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres (Chapter 7)

Town centres are expected to be flexible, diverse and resilient. The NPPF identifies leisure, sport and fitness uses as activities that strengthen town centre vitality by generating footfall and supporting mixed-use economies. Planning policies should support a diversity of uses that meet community needs.

Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities (Chapter 8)

The NPPF encourages planning decisions that promote social interaction, allow for healthy lifestyles, and support community well-being. It identifies the importance of providing accessible sports and recreational facilities.

Promoting Sustainable Transport (Chapter 9)

The NPPF emphasises locating development in sustainable locations with good access to public transport, pedestrian routes, and cycling networks. Development should reduce reliance on private car travel.

Making Effective Use of Land (Chapter 11)

The NPPF strongly promotes the reuse of brownfield land and existing buildings. Local planning authorities should support the efficient and flexible reuse of urban land and redundant premises.

Achieving Well-Designed Places (Chapter 12)

Planning decisions must ensure that developments create high-quality environments that function well and add to the character of the area. Good design includes appropriate integration with surroundings and maintaining the quality of urban spaces.

Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment (Chapter 16)

The NPPF requires that planning decisions take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing heritage assets and their settings. Any impact on the setting of listed buildings must be considered proportionately.

Nearby Grade II listed buildings include:

- Sorting Office, 7 Mirabel Street
- North Bridge, Victoria Street
- Middle Bridge, Victoria Street

Climate Change and Low-Carbon Development (Chapter 14)

The December 2024 update strengthens climate policy by requiring planning decisions to address the “full range of potential climate change impacts” and emphasise the move toward a net-zero future.

Manchester City Council Local Plan Considerations:

Planning applications in Manchester must be assessed against the adopted Local Plan, which currently comprises:

Manchester Core Strategy 2012–2027 (adopted 11 July 2012; updated in March 2024)

Extant Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Policies (remaining saved policies)

Places for Everyone (PfE) Joint Development Plan 2022–2039 (adopted 2024) part of Manchester’s statutory development plan alongside the Core Strategy

Greater Manchester Waste Plan (2012) and Minerals Plan (2013) (part of the development plan for completeness)

Core Strategy (Adopted 2012, Updated 2024)

The Core Strategy is the primary document against which applications are assessed. It sets long-term strategic policies guiding sustainable development in the city.

The following Core Strategy policies are most relevant to the change of use to a Use Class E(d) gym:

Policy SP1 Spatial Principles

Promotes development in sustainable locations, prioritising previously developed land, accessible sites, and areas that strengthen neighbourhood centres. The Mirabel Street area meets these spatial objectives.

Policy CC1 Primary Economic Development Focus

Supports economic and commercial activity within Manchester City Centre, encouraging diversity of uses that sustain vitality.

Policy CC3 City Centre Mixed Use

Promotes a wide range of commercial and service uses within the City Centre to maintain economic diversity and activity levels. A gym/fitness use aligns with this policy.

Policy DM1 Development Management

Requires proposals to demonstrate:

- Appropriate design quality
- No adverse impact on amenity
- Suitable access and servicing
- Consideration of noise, air quality and environmental effects

An indoor gym with internal works only can satisfy these criteria.

Policy EN1 Design Principles

Ensures development contributes positively to the urban environment.

Policy EN3 Heritage

Seeks to protect listed buildings and their settings. Given your proposal has no external alterations, it is unlikely to have any harmful heritage impact, consistent with EN3.

Places for Everyone (PfE) 2022–2039 (Adopted 2024)

PfE is the joint Greater Manchester development plan, now a legal part of Manchester's Local Plan.

Relevant PfE themes include:

PfE Policy JP-Strat 3 – City Centre

Supports growth, regeneration and intensification in and around Manchester City Centre, encouraging employment, leisure and community use that contribute to the area's role as a major regional centre.

PfE Policy JP-P1 – Supporting Economic Growth

Encourages flexible commercial spaces and supports businesses that contribute to resilience and diversification.

PfE Policy JP-S1 – Health

Promotes development that supports active lifestyles and improves local access to health and recreation facilities. A fitness use directly supports this objective.

PfE Policy JP-S2 – Sustainable and Vibrant Places

Emphasises high-quality design, well-integrated land uses and supporting the well-being of communities.

Extant UDP Policies (Saved Policies)

Manchester City Council retains several older UDP policies that continue to apply where not replaced by the Core Strategy. These are visualised on the Interactive Proposals Map. Typically, relevant UDP policies for city-centre and commercial uses include:

- Policy DC26 – Noise (commonly still relevant)
- Policy DC7 – Setting of Listed Buildings

Given the site is near Grade II listed structures, DC7 remains relevant but the proposal is benign due to lack of external works.

Draft Manchester Local Plan (Regulation 18 – 2025 Draft)

Although not yet adopted, the Draft Local Plan provides insight into emerging policy direction and is a material (but limited) consideration. It includes policies supporting:

Policy C9 Leisure Developments

Encourages accessible indoor leisure uses in appropriate locations.

Policy C10 Leisure and the Evening Economy (Amenity)

Requires gym/fitness uses to demonstrate they will not harm residential amenity (noise, hours, activity levels).

Policy DQ1 High Quality Design & Heritage

(Replaces earlier design policies in draft form) Requires sensitivity to heritage assets and high-quality internal layouts.

Policy SI Social Infrastructure (Draft)

Supports facilities that enhance community health and wellbeing, directly supportive of a gym use.

As the plan is not yet adopted, these policies cannot be determinative but can support the planning balance.

Overall Compliance Summary

The proposal will be assessed in terms of their alignment with the policy in the material planning considerations, however from a description of development perspective without considering the details of the proposal it is considered to align strongly with adopted Manchester planning policy because:

It reuses an existing commercial unit (supported by SP1, EN1, PfE JP-Strat3). The proposal contributes to the City Centre's economic and leisure mix (CC1, CC3, PfE JP-P1). It further supports, active lifestyles and wellbeing (PfE JP-S1, Draft SI). There are no external alterations, ensuring no harm to heritage settings (EN3, UDP DC7). Amenity and noise will be considered in detail in the material planning considerations section.

Material Planning Considerations

The planning assessment will make the following considerations:

- Principle of development
- Impact on amenity
- Heritage considerations
- Highways considerations
- Design
- Environmental considerations
- Economy and social benefits
- Planning Balance

5.1 Principle of development

The principle of the proposed Use Class E(d) gym is acceptable as it aligns with the city-centre mixed-use objectives of Manchester's Core Strategy, which supports a diverse range of commercial and leisure uses within the City Centre (Policies CC1 and CC3). The site is already in commercial use and located within a dense, sustainable urban area consistent with Policy SP1, which prioritises accessible, previously developed land for active economic uses. The proposal also contributes positively to local vitality, health and well-being, supporting the objectives of the Places for Everyone plan (e.g., Policies JP-Strat 3 and JP-S1), which encourage leisure and community-focused uses within the regional centre.

Manchester's Core Strategy requires that development protects the setting of listed buildings (Policy EN3) but does not prohibit certain uses simply because heritage assets exist nearby. It requires only that proposals preserve or enhance heritage significance. The Core Strategy confirms that it is the impact of development, not the use class, which must be assessed.

Places for Everyone (PfE) also emphasises supporting economic, leisure and community use within the City Centre (Policies JP-Strat 3 and JP-S1) and requires heritage sensitivity but again does not restrict acceptable uses purely due to listed buildings nearby. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) applies a proportionate test in terms of protecting heritage assets. Development is acceptable where it causes no harm or less than substantial harm that is justified by public benefits, but it does not prevent particular uses from operating within the setting of heritage asset.

Given the proposed change of use, its compatibility with surrounding commercial and residential activity and its consistency with both local economic policies and wider social-infrastructure aims, the principle of a gym use at this location is considered appropriate.

5.2 Impact on Amenity

Amenity is a significant material consideration, particularly regarding potential noise, vibration, opening hours, activity levels and the impacts of comings-and-goings on nearby residential properties. The submitted Block Plan confirms that the unit sits within a robust railway arch structure and is surrounded primarily by commercial premises, with no residential units immediately adjoining the arch frontage (Block Plan: H-0603-02). The Site Location Plan similarly shows the wider city-centre context, where mixed commercial and transport-related uses predominate (H-0603-01). Given the inherently solid construction of the railway arch, the absence of any external plant equipment, and the ability to incorporate internal acoustic treatment, any amenity impacts can be effectively mitigated through conditions in accordance with Core Strategy Policy DM1, which requires development to avoid unacceptable harm to amenity; EN3, which protects the character of heritage structures without restricting compatible uses; and saved UDP Policy DC26, which specifically addresses noise and requires appropriate mitigation in commercial and mixed-use environments. Collectively, the plan evidence and policy framework confirm that the proposed gym use can operate without giving rise to undue adverse amenity impacts.

5.3 Heritage Considerations

The site lies within the wider setting of several Grade II listed structures, including historic railway bridges and nearby listed buildings, and therefore heritage impacts must be considered in line with Core Strategy Policy EN3, which requires development to preserve or enhance the setting and significance of heritage assets. The railway arches in this area do

carry historical significance because they form part of the wider historic railway infrastructure associated with the Grade II listed bridges and structures around Manchester Victoria. This is evidenced by the presence of several Grade II listed railway bridges in the immediate surroundings, as confirmed in the NPPF heritage requirements and Manchester Core Strategy Policy EN3, which protects the setting and significance of listed structures.

Although the arches themselves are not listed individually, they form part of the historic viaduct system, which contributes to the architectural and historical townscape character. The Site Location Plan shows the arches connecting directly into the larger network of railway infrastructure (H-0603-01), and the Existing Block Plan illustrates their structural continuity beneath the elevated railway lines (H-0603-02). Because of this physical and functional relationship, the arches fall within the *setting* of nearby listed assets such as the Grade II listed bridges and the Sorting Office on Mirabel Street.

The proposal considers the setting of the site and as such involves no external alterations, as confirmed by the submitted plans, meaning it will not affect the appearance, fabric or character of the railway arch or its historic context. This approach accords with NPPF (2024) Chapter 16, which permits development that results in no harm or negligible harm to heritage significance where the setting is preserved. As such, the proposal is heritage-compliant, with any impact on the setting of listed buildings expected to be negligible and acceptable in planning terms.

5.4 Highways considerations

Highways and transport considerations focus on whether the proposed Use Class E(d) gym would generate safe and suitable access, create unacceptable traffic or parking demand, or raise any pedestrian or cycle safety concerns.

The site lies within a highly accessible city-centre location, immediately adjacent to established pedestrian routes and within close proximity to Manchester Victoria Station. The block plan demonstrates the sites context in terms of its surrounding network of commercial frontages and service access points, indicating that existing circulation patterns can safely accommodate the modest level of activity associated with a small gym. The site is well connected to public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure, and therefore complies with Manchester Core Strategy Policy SP1, which promotes sustainable, accessible development, and Policy DM1, which requires proposals to demonstrate safe access and no significant adverse highway impacts. Furthermore, the surrounding city-centre context limits reliance on private car travel, consistent with NPPF (2024) Chapter 9, which emphasises prioritising sustainable modes and reducing parking pressure. Given the limited floorspace, no external alterations, and the sustainable location, the proposal is not expected to result in any unacceptable highways, parking or transport impacts.

5.5 Design

The external appearance of the application site remains unchanged; all design considerations are contained within the internal configuration of the unit. In terms of material planning considerations, they include and should regard, the effect on the character and appearance of the area and whether alterations would impact the streetscape or railway viaduct structure.

The proposed design retains the existing form and character of the railway arch, with only minimal and sensitive external interventions, fully consistent with the need to preserve the appearance of the historic viaduct structure. The Proposed North and South Elevations show that the only external additions comprise new aluminium composite signage panels (2m x 0.5m) positioned above the openings. These are modest in scale, lightweight in appearance and visually subordinate to the arch structure, ensuring compliance with Policy EN1, which requires new elements to respect the surrounding built form and avoid visual clutter. No alterations are proposed to the masonry, arch openings or structural features, meaning the external character remains unchanged and continues to contribute positively to the established streetscape.

Internally, the Proposed East and West Elevations indicate functional fit-out works typical of a fitness use, including a metal functional fitness rig and 18mm OSB lining to the internal walls. These works are entirely contained within the envelope of the arch and do not affect the external appearance or architectural integrity of the structure. In accordance with Policy DM1, the internal design promotes safe operation, durability and efficient use of space while having no impact on external amenity or heritage considerations.

Overall, the design approach is restrained, respectful and proportionate. By limiting all substantive changes to the interior and ensuring external elements remain minimal and reversible, the proposal is consistent with local design policy and supports the continued active use of the railway arches without compromising their visual or historic character.

5.6 Environmental considerations

Environmental considerations include climate resilience, energy use, noise and air quality effects, and the sustainable management of land and resources. The proposal involves the reuse of an existing commercial unit, which aligns strongly with the NPPF (2024) Chapter 14, which emphasises reducing carbon emissions, addressing climate impacts and supporting a transition to a “net-zero future” through efficient use of existing buildings and minimising embodied carbon. By avoiding demolition and new construction, the development inherently reduces material consumption and construction-related emissions, consistent with the NPPF’s wider objective of making effective use of land (Chapter 11). At the local level, Manchester Core Strategy Policy EN1 promotes environmentally sustainable design and efficient use of resources, while Policy DM1 requires proposals to demonstrate that noise, air quality and environmental impacts can be satisfactorily mitigated. The gym use,

contained entirely within the railway arch, introduces no external plant and allows for internal acoustic treatment to avoid noise breakout, reducing potential amenity effects and supporting compliance with local environmental policy. Overall, the reuse of the existing structural envelope, combined with the limited operational impacts, ensures the proposal accords with both national sustainability principles and Manchester's environmental design requirements.

5.7 Economy and social benefits

The proposal delivers clear economic and social benefits, which are important material considerations. The introduction of a Use Class E(d) gym will support local employment, stimulate small-scale economic activity and enhance city-centre vitality, aligning with Manchester Core Strategy Policies CC1 and CC3, which promote a diverse commercial and leisure mix to sustain economic vibrancy in the City Centre. The use also provides accessible health and fitness infrastructure, directly supporting the well-being objectives embedded within the Places for Everyone plan, particularly Policies JP-Strat 3 (promoting leisure uses within the City Centre) and JP-S1 (enhancing health and well-being provision). In addition, the NPPF (2024) highlights the importance of planning in promoting healthy and safe communities and supporting facilities that foster social interaction and active lifestyles (Chapter 8). By reactivating an existing commercial unit and improving local access to indoor sport and recreation, the proposal contributes positively to Manchester's economic resilience, social inclusion and city-centre vibrancy, reinforcing strategic objectives at both the local and national level.

Planning Balance

In assessing the proposal, the key considerations including the principle of the use, amenity, design, heritage, transport and environmental performance must be weighed against the statutory development plan and national policy. The proposed Use Class E(d) gym represents an active and appropriate use of an existing commercial unit within the City Centre, fully consistent with Manchester Core Strategy Policies CC1, CC3 and SP1, which collectively promote economic diversification, sustainable urban reuse and vibrant mixed-use activity in central locations. The proposal generates clear economic and social benefits, including employment, increased footfall and improved access to health and fitness facilities, supporting wider wellbeing aims under Places for Everyone Policies JP-Strat 3 and JP-S1 and the NPPF's focus on building healthy and safe communities (Chapter 8).

In relation to amenity, the use operates entirely within a robust railway arch structure, involves no external plant and can incorporate internal acoustic mitigation, ensuring compliance with Core Strategy DM1 and saved UDP Policy DC26, which require protection of neighbouring amenity. The Existing Block Plan confirms that the immediate surroundings are primarily commercial and capable of accommodating the expected activity levels

(H-0603-02). Transport considerations also weigh in favour, as the highly accessible city-centre location, confirmed by the Site Location Plan (H-0603-01), is well served by public transport, walking and cycling networks, consistent with NPPF Chapter 9 and Core Strategy SP1 requirements for sustainable accessibility.

Regarding heritage, the proposal lies within the setting of Grade II listings and historic railway structures; however, with no external alterations, the scheme preserves their significance in accordance with Core Strategy EN3 and NPPF Chapter 16. Environmental outcomes are also positive, with the reuse of the existing envelope reducing embodied carbon and avoiding demolition, aligning with NPPF Chapter 14 on climate resilience and sustainable resource use.

Overall, no adverse impacts have been identified that would significantly or demonstrably outweigh the clear social, economic and environmental benefits of the proposal when assessed against the development plan and the NPPF. The planning balance therefore weighs strongly in favour of approval.

Conclusion

In summary, the proposed Use Class E(d) gym at 3 Mirabel Street represents an appropriate, sustainable and policy-compliant reuse of an existing commercial unit within Manchester City Centre. The development aligns strongly with the Manchester Core Strategy, particularly Policies SP1, CC1, CC3, EN1, EN3 and DM1, which collectively promote sustainable urban development, economic diversification, high-quality design and the preservation of heritage settings. It also accords with the Places for Everyone policies, notably JP-Strat 3 and JP-S1, which support leisure, health and well-being uses that contribute to city-centre vitality and community benefit. The proposal delivers clear economic, social and environmental benefits, including employment, increased activity in the city centre, and expanded access to fitness facilities that promote community health. The submitted plans confirm that the scheme involves no external alterations, ensures a negligible heritage impact, and is in a highly accessible area well served by sustainable transport. No significant adverse impacts have been identified in respect of amenity, transport, design or the historic environment, and any minor operational considerations can be appropriately controlled through planning conditions.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the change of use application to permit a gym, should be granted planning permission. Should the Planning Authority request any further information in order to process the planning application please contact Chadernnay Glenn at **Homz UK** (Chadernnay@homz.uk) directly as the acting agent and we will be more than happy to deliver any additional information as and when required.