

TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT AND STATEMENT

1. Introduction and Scope of Assessment

This Transport Assessment has been prepared in support of a planning application seeking full planning permission for the change of use of the existing industrial building at 11 Sherborne Street, Cheetham Hill, Manchester, to an indoor sport and wellness facility falling within Use Class E(d), together with an ancillary café use operating as an integral and subordinate component of the development. The proposal comprises the comprehensive reuse of an existing industrial premises to accommodate eight indoor padel courts, associated reception and welfare facilities, circulation space, spectator waiting areas and ancillary refreshment provision.

The application no longer seeks the retention of the existing B2/B8 use as part of the approved planning description. The assessment has therefore been undertaken against the existing lawful use of the site and the realistic fallback position that could continue to operate without restriction in the absence of the proposed development. This distinction remains critically important. The existing lawful industrial and storage/distribution use establishes the correct planning and transport baseline against which the impacts of the proposed development must be assessed. The site could lawfully continue to operate for industrial and warehouse purposes, including activities generating regular staff commuting, servicing movements, courier activity, delivery vehicles and heavy goods vehicle traffic throughout the day.

The purpose of this assessment is therefore not simply to determine whether the proposed development can be accommodated within the surrounding highway network in isolation, but to properly assess whether the proposed use would give rise to materially different or more severe transport impacts than the lawful use of the site. When considered on that basis, the proposal represents a materially less intensive and more controlled form of development in transport terms.

The development introduces a fundamentally different operational model from that typically associated with industrial or warehouse activity. The proposed indoor sport and wellness facility operates through a structured and pre-booked system, ensuring that user attendance is controlled, capped and distributed throughout the day. This creates a highly predictable movement profile, with arrivals and departures occurring in managed intervals rather than in response to fluctuating industrial demand or logistics activity. Critically, the proposal removes the potential for regular heavy goods vehicle movements associated with the existing lawful use and replaces them with modest volumes of light vehicle trips associated primarily with small groups of users.

The application site occupies a highly sustainable and accessible location immediately north of Manchester city centre, within the wider Strangeways and Great Ducie Street regeneration corridor. The surrounding area is characterised by a mix of industrial, commercial and emerging mixed-use activity, with strong pedestrian, cycle and public transport connectivity. The proposal therefore aligns with the strategic evolution of the area towards a more diversified and active urban environment while continuing to support employment-generating activity within an existing commercial building.

The site currently accommodates twenty-three on-site parking spaces. The proposal increases this provision to thirty-one spaces, including three accessible bays, alongside the provision of covered cycle parking accommodating ten bicycles. These measures are supported by an operational strategy actively promoting sustainable travel behaviour through local staffing, cycle use incentives and the urban accessibility of the site itself.

This assessment demonstrates, through detailed and evidence-based analysis, that the proposed development generates a modest, controlled and policy-compliant level of traffic, that it operates comfortably within the capacity of the surrounding highway network, and that it gives rise to no unacceptable impact on highway safety or network operation. The proposal accords fully with the National Planning Policy Framework, the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the Draft Manchester Local Plan 2025.

2. Site Context and Highway Network

The application site is located on Sherborne Street within an established commercial and industrial area immediately adjacent to Manchester city centre. The site lies within the wider Strangeways and Great Ducie Street corridor, an area identified within emerging strategic planning policy as a key location for regeneration, diversification and mixed-use intensification. The surrounding context is characterised by a broad mix of employment, commercial and urban uses operating within a dense and highly accessible inner-city environment.

The site benefits from direct vehicular access from Sherborne Street, which connects immediately to Overbridge Road. Overbridge Road functions as an established urban distributor route serving a range of commercial and industrial premises and provides direct connectivity to Bury New Road (A56), one of the principal arterial corridors into Manchester city centre. The surrounding highway network is therefore not localised or constrained in character, but forms part of a robust urban road system designed to accommodate substantial volumes of commercial traffic, including servicing activity and heavy goods vehicles.

Overbridge Road operates as a two-way carriageway with an approximate width of 7.5 metres and is subject to a 30mph speed restriction. The road geometry, alignment and visibility are typical of an urban commercial environment and are demonstrably capable of safely accommodating a level and type of traffic significantly greater than that associated with the proposed development. There is no evidence of any existing highway safety issue, operational deficiency or capacity constraint associated with the surrounding network.

The existing access arrangement serving the site is long established and has historically accommodated industrial activity without restriction. No alterations are proposed to the vehicular access point, and the existing arrangement remains entirely suitable for the proposed use. The geometry and visibility available at the access are appropriate for the scale and nature of the development, particularly given the materially reduced servicing requirements and absence of heavy goods vehicle traffic associated with the proposal.

This is an important consideration in transport terms. The lawful industrial use of the site is capable of generating regular servicing activity, including vans, rigid vehicles and HGVs, together with operational traffic associated with industrial processes, warehousing and logistics activity. The surrounding network is therefore already designed and conditioned to accommodate a materially more intensive traffic profile than that which would arise from the proposed indoor sport and wellness facility.

The proposal removes this industrial servicing profile entirely and replaces it with a significantly lighter and more predictable pattern of vehicle movements. The resulting traffic profile is less intensive, less variable and substantially lower in operational complexity than the existing lawful use. Accordingly, the correct conclusion is not simply that the highway network can accommodate the proposed development, but that the proposal represents a materially reduced transport impact when compared against the lawful baseline.

3. Sustainable Accessibility and Active Travel

The site occupies a highly sustainable urban location with strong accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport. This is a critical material consideration and weighs heavily in favour of the proposal when assessed against national and local planning policy objectives seeking to reduce reliance on the private car and maximise opportunities for sustainable travel.

Pedestrian accessibility is particularly strong. Continuous footways are present along Sherborne Street, Overbridge Road and Bury New Road, providing direct, safe and legible routes to and from the site. The surrounding streets form part of a dense urban environment with strong permeability and connectivity, allowing the site to be readily accessed on foot from surrounding residential neighbourhoods and the city centre. Manchester city centre lies approximately 500 metres to the south, placing the site comfortably within accepted walking distances of a substantial population base, employment catchment and transport interchange.

Cycle accessibility is similarly robust. Bury New Road forms part of the wider Manchester cycle network and provides strategic connectivity across the city. National Cycle Network Route 6 is located approximately 1.3 kilometres west of the site and provides further regional cycle connectivity. The proposal actively supports cycling through the provision of secure covered cycle parking accommodating ten bicycles via five covered Sheffield stands. The cycle parking is positioned within the site in a secure and convenient location, ensuring that it is both attractive and practical for users and staff.

Importantly, sustainable travel is embedded within the operational characteristics of the development itself. The facility is intended to serve a largely local and urban user base, materially reducing average trip lengths compared to many out-of-centre leisure facilities. Staff recruitment will prioritise local employment wherever reasonably practicable, resulting in shorter commuting patterns and a significantly greater propensity for walking and cycling.

In addition, the operator intends to actively incentivise sustainable travel behaviour through discounted bookings for customers arriving by bicycle. This represents a proactive behavioural transport measure rather than passive compliance and demonstrates a clear commitment to reducing private vehicle reliance.

Public transport accessibility is equally strong. Bus stops are located approximately 200 metres from the site on Bury New Road and are served by frequent routes operating throughout the day and evening, providing direct access to Manchester city centre and the wider urban area. Manchester Victoria railway station lies approximately 850 metres south of the site and provides regional and national rail connectivity. The site is therefore exceptionally well connected in public transport terms and is fully capable of supporting a leisure use of this nature without generating unsustainable travel patterns.

The proposal accords fully with paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which requires developments to maximise opportunities for sustainable transport modes and prioritise walking, cycling and public transport. The proposal not only satisfies these objectives but materially exceeds baseline expectations through the integration of active travel measures and the inherently sustainable location of the site itself.

4. Parking Provision and Demand Assessment

The proposed development provides a total of thirty-one on-site parking spaces, including three dedicated accessible bays positioned adjacent to the building entrance. All parking provision is contained entirely within the site boundary, ensuring that the development operates independently without reliance on overspill parking or on-street provision.

The assessment of parking adequacy has been undertaken using a robust and deliberately conservative methodology, incorporating maximum occupancy assumptions, peak staffing levels and operational overlap scenarios. The conclusions reached therefore represent a realistic worst-case assessment rather than an optimistic or artificially reduced scenario.

The proposed facility comprises seven doubles padel courts and one singles court, equating to a maximum simultaneous on-court occupancy of thirty participants. Padel is inherently a group-based activity, with users commonly travelling together in pairs or groups of four. Applying a deliberately conservative vehicle occupancy assumption of two persons per vehicle results in an estimated peak player parking demand of approximately fifteen vehicles. In practice, observed car-sharing patterns associated with indoor padel facilities are typically higher than this assumption, meaning actual parking demand is likely to be materially lower.

Peak staffing associated with the development is modest and proportionate to the scale of the use, comprising coaches, reception staff, operational management and café personnel. Even under robust assumptions, staffing demand is unlikely to generate more than six to eight vehicles during peak operational periods. The urban location of the site and local staffing strategy further reduce likely parking demand associated with employees.

A full worst-case operational assessment has also considered transitional overlap between departing and arriving users together with ancillary café activity. Even under this deliberately conservative stress test scenario, total parking demand remains within the thirty-one spaces provided on site. There is therefore no realistic evidential basis upon which overspill parking or highway stress could arise.

The operational structure of the facility provides an additional and highly significant layer of parking control. All activity is managed through a pre-booked system, meaning occupancy levels are fixed and known in advance. Session structures incorporate transition periods between bookings to ensure departing users vacate parking spaces before incoming users arrive. There is no uncontrolled walk-in demand and no mechanism by which parking accumulation could exceed the designed operational capacity of the site.

The ancillary café does not function as a standalone destination and is wholly subordinate to the primary sporting use. It therefore does not generate independent parking demand beyond that already associated with users of the facility. When compared against the existing lawful industrial use, the proposal represents a materially more controlled and predictable parking profile. Industrial and warehouse uses can generate variable staff parking demand, operational parking, servicing vehicle requirements and irregular peak accumulation associated with logistics operations. The proposed development eliminates these variables entirely and replaces them with a tightly managed operational model governed by pre-booked attendance and capped occupancy.

Accordingly, the parking provision is robust, proportionate and fully capable of accommodating the proposed development under all realistic operational conditions. There is no evidence-based justification for any concern regarding parking stress, overspill or adverse impact upon the surrounding highway network.

5. Trip Generation, Temporal Distribution and Network Capacity

Trip generation associated with the proposed development is modest in scale, highly predictable in distribution and materially less intensive than the lawful industrial use of the site. The operational characteristics of the development fundamentally distinguish it from industrial and warehouse activity, both in terms of traffic composition and temporal distribution.

The proposed facility operates exclusively through a pre-booked system, ensuring that attendance is capped, structured and distributed evenly throughout the day. This contrasts directly with industrial and warehouse operations, which can generate irregular servicing activity, shift changes, logistics movements and operational peaks that are inherently less predictable and less controllable.

Each booking session incorporates a transition period allowing departing users to leave prior to the arrival of incoming participants. This operational structure prevents parking accumulation and avoids concentrated surges of vehicle movement. Arrivals and departures are therefore staggered and distributed rather than compressed into singular peak periods.

The temporal distribution of trips is also materially beneficial from a network capacity perspective. Peak activity associated with the facility is expected to occur primarily between 16:00 and 23:00. This is critically important, as it aligns with a period during which surrounding industrial and commercial traffic is already declining. The prevailing traffic profile within the surrounding area is dominated by daytime commercial activity, servicing and commuter traffic associated with employment uses. The proposed development therefore operates largely outside the dominant daytime network peak associated with the surrounding industrial area.

During the morning peak period, when industrial traffic demand is typically highest, the proposed development will generate minimal activity. This represents a materially superior outcome compared to the lawful B2/B8 use, which could generate substantial staff commuting, servicing and logistics movements during peak network periods.

The resulting traffic profile associated with the proposed use is therefore not only modest in scale but strategically time-shifted away from periods of highest background demand. This significantly reduces any potential interaction with existing network pressures and ensures that the development operates comfortably within the available capacity of the surrounding highway network.

The surrounding road infrastructure is demonstrably capable of accommodating substantially greater traffic volumes than those associated with the proposal. Sherborne Street, Overbridge Road and Bury New Road already accommodate commercial and industrial traffic, including heavy goods vehicles, on a daily basis. Against that context, the modest and controlled level of light vehicle traffic associated with the proposed development is negligible in operational terms.

When assessed against paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the proposal clearly gives rise to no unacceptable impact on highway safety and no severe residual cumulative impact on the road network. The threshold for refusal on transport grounds is therefore plainly not engaged.

6. Highway Safety, Servicing and Operational Characteristics

The proposed development does not introduce any adverse highway safety impacts and, when properly assessed against the existing lawful use, results in a material improvement in operational safety conditions. The existing access arrangement has historically accommodated industrial traffic, including vehicles substantially larger and more operationally complex than those associated with the proposed use. The proposal does not alter the existing access geometry, visibility or highway arrangement in any way. There is no evidence of any existing collision pattern, operational deficiency or highway safety issue associated with the site access.

The most significant highway safety benefit arising from the proposal is the complete removal of heavy goods vehicle activity associated with industrial and warehouse use. The lawful B2/B8 use of the site is capable of generating servicing vehicles, articulated deliveries, reversing manoeuvres and logistics operations, all of which inherently introduce a greater degree of highway safety risk and operational complexity.

The proposed indoor sport and wellness facility removes this entirely. Servicing requirements associated with the proposal are extremely modest and comprise only occasional light goods vehicle deliveries associated with refreshments, sporting equipment and operational supplies. There is no requirement for HGV access, industrial servicing infrastructure or high-frequency delivery activity.

Refuse generation is similarly limited and proportionate to the scale of the use. Dedicated bin storage areas are provided within the site together with a controlled kerbside collection arrangement. Waste management arrangements are materially less intensive than those associated with industrial operations and do not give rise to any servicing conflict or highway safety concern.

The internal site arrangement provides clear separation between parking, servicing and pedestrian movement areas, ensuring safe circulation throughout the development. Vehicle manoeuvring has been assessed using Autodesk Vehicle Tracking software based on the British Design Vehicle DB32 standard private car and demonstrates that vehicles can safely manoeuvre within the site.

The operational environment created by the proposal is therefore materially safer, simpler and more predictable than the existing lawful use. The removal of industrial servicing activity, the elimination of heavy goods vehicle movements and the introduction of a tightly managed operational model collectively result in a clear betterment in highway safety terms.

7. Policy Compliance and Planning Balance

The proposal accords fully with the transport objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the Draft Manchester Local Plan 2025. Paragraphs 114 to 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework require development to provide safe and suitable access for all users, prioritise sustainable transport modes and avoid severe residual cumulative transport impacts. The proposal satisfies each of these requirements unequivocally.

The site benefits from a safe and established access arrangement, strong sustainable transport connectivity and a highly accessible urban location immediately adjacent to Manchester city centre. The development actively promotes walking, cycling and public transport through both physical infrastructure and operational measures.

The proposal also aligns fully with the strategic objectives of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, which seeks to maximise the efficient reuse of previously developed urban land, support sustainable movement patterns and reduce reliance on private car travel. The reuse of an

existing industrial building for a highly accessible indoor leisure use directly supports these objectives while contributing positively to the wider regeneration of the Strangeways and Great Ducie Street corridor.

Similarly, the Draft Manchester Local Plan 2025 supports the diversification and regeneration of employment areas through active and sustainable commercial uses that contribute to economic activity, health and wellbeing and urban intensification. The proposal introduces a socially beneficial and employment-generating use within an accessible urban location while simultaneously reducing the transport intensity and operational complexity associated with the lawful industrial use of the site.

When considered in the round, the proposal delivers a materially superior transport outcome compared to the existing lawful use. It reduces heavy vehicle activity, introduces a controlled and predictable operational model, promotes sustainable travel and operates comfortably within the capacity of the surrounding highway network. There is therefore no transport policy conflict and no evidential basis upon which refusal could reasonably or sustainably be justified.

8. Conclusion

This Transport Assessment has comprehensively demonstrated, through a detailed, technical and evidence-based analysis, that the proposed indoor sport and wellness facility at 11 Sherborne Street is entirely acceptable in transport terms and gives rise to no unacceptable impact on highway safety or network operation. The proposal has been assessed against the correct planning baseline, namely the existing lawful industrial and warehouse use of the site, which is capable of generating materially greater traffic intensity, servicing activity and heavy goods vehicle movements than the proposed development.

In direct contrast, the proposed development introduces a tightly controlled and highly predictable operational model based entirely around pre-booked attendance, capped occupancy and staggered session management. Vehicle movements are modest in scale, evenly distributed throughout the day and primarily concentrated during evening periods when surrounding industrial traffic is already declining.

The proposal removes the potential for heavy goods vehicle activity entirely and replaces it with low-intensity light vehicle trips associated with small groups of users. Parking provision has been robustly stress tested under worst-case operational scenarios and has been demonstrated to operate fully within the thirty-one spaces provided on site. There is no realistic prospect of overspill parking, congestion or operational conflict. The site benefits from exceptional sustainable accessibility, with strong pedestrian, cycle and public transport connectivity. The proposal actively reinforces sustainable travel behaviour through secure cycle provision, behavioural incentives and local employment practices.

When assessed against the requirements of national and local transport policy, the proposal is fully compliant. It gives rise to no severe residual cumulative impacts, no unacceptable highway safety issues and no capacity constraints within the surrounding network. On the contrary, the development represents a materially improved and more sustainable transport outcome when compared to the lawful industrial use of the site. In the overall planning balance, the transport effects of the proposal are not merely acceptable but positively beneficial. The development supports sustainable regeneration, enhances active travel opportunities, reduces industrial traffic intensity and introduces a highly controlled and efficient operational model within an accessible urban location. There is therefore no transport-based justification for refusal, and planning permission should be granted without delay.