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GREEN

WORK

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LEISURE

Proposed temporary (3 year) change of use from Wholesale Retail (Sui Generis) to Padel Complex with ancillary Café and new serviced Office space (Class E) over with additional modifications to the building facades including two, lockable external courts: 33, MARY STREET MANCHESTER M3 1DZ. Jun.26.

Loss of Employment Statement

Site: 16–18 Mary Street, Manchester M3 1DZ

Proposal: As above

Application Reference: 145429/FO/2026

Overview

This statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the change of use and adaptation of 16–18 Mary Street, Manchester M3 1DZ to create a padel complex with ancillary café and office accommodation. It responds directly to Manchester City Council's request for a loss of employment statement and addresses the matters identified in the Council's local validation requirements for applications involving the loss of land or buildings for employment purposes.

Manchester's validation checklist requires an economic statement where employment land or buildings are being lost. The statement is expected to identify the amount of floorspace affected, the jobs being lost or relocated, why the site is no longer capable of offering accommodation for employment use, any relocation strategy for the existing occupier, and why the alternative use offers greater benefits.

Planning policy context

At national level, the National Planning Policy Framework supports both economic growth and the effective reuse of previously developed land. Manchester's 2025 Employment Land Review summarises the current national position, including the requirement to place significant weight on supporting economic growth and productivity, while also recognising that alternative uses may be supported where there is no reasonable prospect of the allocated or existing employment use coming forward, or where an alternative use would help meet identified development needs without undermining key economic sectors or sites.

At the local level, Manchester Core Strategy Policy SP1 directs economic and commercial development, retail, leisure and culture toward the Regional Centre, while supporting high quality mixed urban environments. Policy EC1 seeks to secure employment growth across Manchester and identifies the Regional Centre and City Centre Fringe as major locations for employment growth. The same policy context explains why the Council tests proposals that would remove existing employment floorspace, particularly where sites lie close to the city centre or within regeneration areas where land is expected to contribute to the city's wider growth objectives.

The Council's validation checklist expressly states that applications involving the loss of employment space must show how the proposal accords with the city's growth objectives in the Core Strategy, the Manchester Strategy, the Greater Manchester Strategy, and any relevant Strategic Regeneration Frameworks.[That requirement is important here because Mary Street sits within the wider area

influenced by the Great Ducie Street Strategic Regeneration Framework and the Strangeways/Economic Improvement Area evidence reviewed in the Employment Land Review.

Great Ducie Street and local regeneration context

The Great Ducie Street Strategic Regeneration Framework promotes a long-term mixed-use transformation of the area around Strangeways, with substantial commercial floorspace, new homes and public realm improvements over an extended delivery period. The framework identifies Mary Street and Southall Street as locations for commercially led schemes and seeks to connect them to the wider regeneration of the northern city centre fringe.

That context does not mean every existing building must remain in its current employment use indefinitely. Rather, it shows that the area is expected to evolve through regeneration, intensification, diversification of uses and better-quality forms of activity. The Great Ducie Street framework also recognises the area's legacy of enterprise and employment while proposing a more varied mix of commercial, residential, creative and public-facing uses over time

The Manchester Employment Land Review is also directly relevant because it specifically assesses Strangeways as an Economic Improvement Area and explains that Strategic Regeneration Frameworks are intended to guide the mix, scale and phasing of employment development in such areas. In other words, the planning question is not simply whether any employment use exists today, but whether the proposed use would unacceptably undermine the economic role of the area when viewed in the round.

Existing site and current employment position

The application site comprises an existing commercial/industrial-style building currently occupied by a tenant who is due to vacate at the end of May 2026, after which the premises will become available. The proposal therefore does not involve the displacement of a long-term operational business with a continuing commitment to remain at the site; rather, it concerns the reuse of premises that are imminently becoming vacant.

The Council's own validation checklist asks for the number of jobs lost and/or relocated and a relocation strategy for existing users. On the information currently available, the existing tenant is moving out independently of the proposal. The site is therefore not being cleared through the planning application itself; instead, the application seeks to secure an early and productive reoccupation of the building once the present tenancy ends.

No verified employment survey has yet been supplied for the outgoing tenant and therefore this statement should be read as a policy justification statement rather than a final quantified job audit. If required, the applicant can append a short factual addendum confirming the outgoing occupier, number of employees, and whether those staff are relocating to other premises.

Why continued traditional employment use is limited

There are several planning reasons why the site should not be treated as an irreplaceable employment premises whose existing use must be preserved unchanged.

First, the building is in a transitional city-centre fringe location where policy supports regeneration, mixed-use intensification and a broader spread of commercial activity, not the blanket retention of every warehouse or wholesale retail use regardless of suitability. The Great Ducie Street framework in particular points toward a commercially led but evolving urban character on Mary Street rather than a static industrial estate model.

Second, national and local policy accept that previously developed sites may move to alternative uses where there is no reasonable prospect of the existing or allocated use continuing in a meaningful way, provided that wider economic objectives are not undermined. The impending vacation of the unit by the current tenant is a relevant material consideration in that assessment.

Third, the proposal would retain the site in an active commercial use. While padel is not a traditional B-class employment use, the development would continue to support jobs, services, footfall and economic activity, including operational staff, coaching, reception, food and beverage, management and maintenance roles. The Council's checklist expressly invites applicants to explain why the alternative use offers greater benefits, which allows broader economic and regeneration benefits to be weighed in the planning balance rather than limiting the assessment to a narrow class-based comparison.

Alternative use and economic benefits

The proposed padel complex would bring the building and site into an intensive active use through 6 indoor and 2 outdoor courts together with ancillary café and office accommodation. This would create a destination use that extends activity through the day and evening, supports local spend and broadens the commercial offer of the area.

Manchester Core Strategy Policy CC4 supports visitor, tourism, culture and leisure activity in the Regional Centre, while Policy SP1 recognises the Regional Centre as the focus for leisure and cultural development as well as economic activity. Although the site is not in the retail core, it sits within the city-centre fringe context where leisure-led reuse can support vitality, widen the area's functional offer and contribute to regeneration objectives.

The proposal also aligns with the city's broader economic and place-making objectives. Manchester's Employment Land Review summarises the city's economic strategy as requiring the city centre and its fringe to expand outward, use land more productively, and balance commercial, residential and other active uses effectively. A padel-led reuse of a soon-to-be-vacant commercial building is consistent with that more productive and diversified city-centre fringe role.

In social and health terms, the proposal would also deliver benefits that a dormant or marginal employment use would not. Manchester's strategic documents repeatedly link growth with wellbeing, liveability, culture, sport and access to opportunity, and the proposed facility would support active recreation in a highly accessible urban location.

Effect on employment objectives

The proposal would not undermine Manchester's strategic employment objectives for four principal reasons.

- It does not remove a strategically important office cluster, logistics hub or safeguarded employment location identified in policy documents available through the current evidence base.
- It reuses a previously developed site in a city-centre fringe area that is already expected to undergo substantial change through regeneration and mixed-use intensification.
- It retains economic activity on site rather than sterilising the land or leaving it vacant.
- It provides a commercially active leisure use that contributes to footfall, local expenditure and employment, even if the employment profile differs from the outgoing occupier. [

The Manchester Employment Land Review is particularly important because it explains that the city's review of employment areas focuses on locations outside the city centre and assesses whether sites should be retained, altered or removed through the emerging Local Plan review. That demonstrates that employment designations are not immutable and that evidence-based changes are part of the normal plan-led process.[cite:8] In this case, the proposal represents a site-specific form of regeneration that remains compatible with the wider economic function of the area.

Relocation and job effects

The existing occupier is due to vacate at the end of May 2026. On that basis, the proposal is not causing an immediate displacement of an occupier who requires retention on site. If the outgoing

business is relocating, that relocation can be confirmed in a short supplementary note once the final details are available.

The application should therefore be understood as a reoccupation proposal rather than a direct loss of an operational and safeguarded employment facility. Any assessment of employment effects should compare the outgoing use and its actual staffing with the proposed operational model, including direct jobs associated with court management, reception, café operation, coaching, cleaning, maintenance and administration.

Planning balance

When the development plan and material considerations are read together, the proposal is justified. Core Strategy policies clearly seek economic growth and protect Manchester's economic role, but they do so within a framework that also supports leisure, culture, regeneration, mixed use development and high quality reuse of land in the Regional Centre and its fringe.[cite:18] The validation checklist likewise frames the issue as one of planning balance, asking why the alternative use offers greater benefits and how the proposal accords with the city's wider growth objectives.

The relevant regeneration context at Great Ducie Street and Strangeways supports evolution rather than stagnation. In that setting, the conversion of soon-to-be-vacant commercial premises to a high-activity indoor and outdoor padel complex with ancillary café and office space represents a credible, investment-ready and place-supporting form of development.

Conclusion

The proposal would result in the change of use of an existing commercial building, but it would not give rise to an unacceptable loss of employment land or buildings in policy terms. The site is within a regenerating city-centre fringe area where policy supports a broad mix of economic, leisure and cultural activity, and the Great Ducie Street framework specifically envisages commercially led change along Mary Street.

The current occupier is leaving at the end of May 2026, meaning the building is on the point of becoming vacant. The proposed padel complex would bring the site back into active use quickly, generate jobs and expenditure, broaden the area's commercial offer, and support wider regeneration and wellbeing objectives without undermining Manchester's strategic employment function.

Accordingly, the proposal satisfies the substance of Manchester's requirement for a loss of employment statement and demonstrates that the alternative use offers greater planning benefits than retaining the site for an uncertain continuation of the existing employment use.