MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

# Planning
# Delegated Officer Report

## SUMMARY OF APPLICATION DETAILS

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| **Application reference:** | PLA-2026-000160 |
| **Application type:** | Full planning permission |
| **Proposal:** | Construction and operation of a modular data centre. |
| **Site address:** | 1 Cheam Close Manchester M11 2WH |
| **Ward(s):** | Clayton & Openshaw |
| **Date application valid:** | 28 May 2026 |
| **Applicant name:** | Ms Ashleigh Boyce |
| **Agent (if any):** | |
| **Case officer:** | Joshua Lee |
| **Recommendation:** | Approve |
| **Date of recommendation:** | 02 July 2026 |

## DESCRIPTION OF SITE, BUILDING AND/OR AREA

The proposal is related to a section of hardstanding to the rear of the Dresser Centre on Whitworth Street adjacent to the unadopted Cheam Close.

The property is in a mostly industrial part of the Clayton and Openshaw ward. Adjacent the site is 2 x 2MW gas fired power plant and ancillary equipment within a compound. To the rear boundary is a Asphalt plant and located around the site is numerous large industrial warehouses.

## DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The applicant is proposing the construction and operation of a modular data centre.

The proposed development will consist of:

- Two 11kVa Transformers on concrete basis.
- Four prefabricated modular DC units, measuring 14m long x 3m wide x 3.7m high each.
- Module 1 and Module 2 serve as power modules.

- Module 3 and Module 4 serve as data processing/storage modules.
- Four external chiller units located on top of the DC modules.
- Screening around the chillers taking the modules to a total height of 6.6m.
- 2.4m high palisade boundary fencing. Modules will be installed on existing concrete base with maximum structure height of 6.6m AGL

The proposed site will be unmanned but will have frequent inspections for both operational and security reasons. The proposal allows for a single vehicle to park to the front of modules.

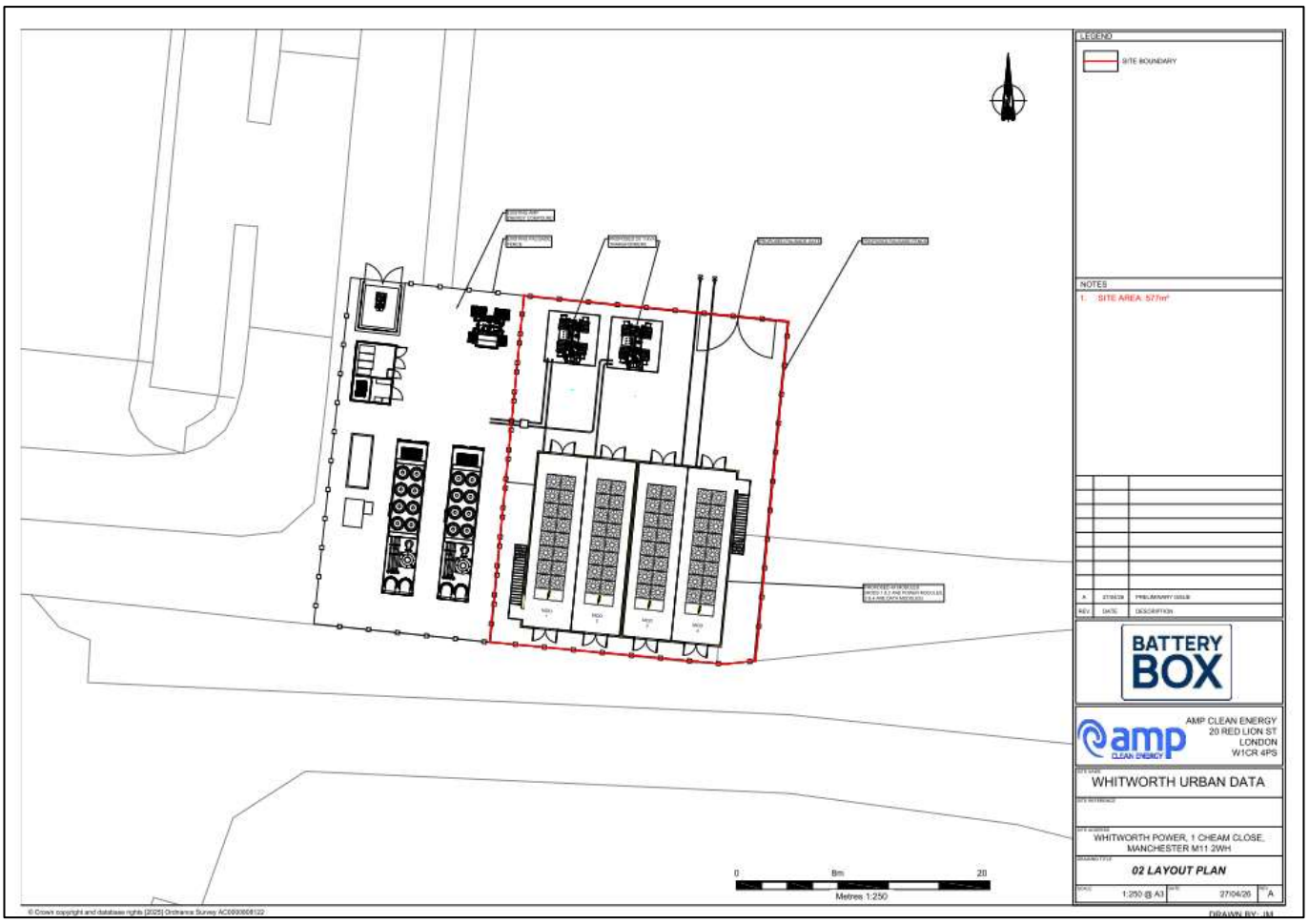



**Figure 1. Proposed site plan**

## RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

### Planning Application - 124850/JO/2019

Variation of Condition 2 (specified plans) attached to planning permission 122250/FO/2018 to enable a larger substation and the siting of waste oil storage tanks

Approve

2019-10-25

### Planning Application - 122250/FO/2018

Construction of an urban reserve 2 x 2MW gas fired power plant and ancillary equipment within a compound including associated boundary treatment

Approve

2019-04-04

# CONSULTATION, NOTIFICATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES

## Consultations

### Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU)

No objection subject to conditions and informatives. GMEU advise that an informative be attached to make clear that protected species legislation remains applicable and that ecological advice should be sought if protected species may be affected. They recommend a condition to secure biodiversity enhancements, including the provision of a bird box on a suitable tree near the site boundary. The development is considered likely to fall below the de minimis threshold for Biodiversity Net Gain; however, the Local Planning Authority should be satisfied that this is accurate.

### Manchester City Council Environmental Health

Manchester City Council Environmental Health were consulted on this application and recommended a pre-commencement noise condition.

### Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

Greater Manchester Police were consulted on this application, but no response was received.

## Notifications and publicity

No comments received.

# NEGOTIATIONS

The applicant was notified of the intention to attach a pre-commencement noise condition and accepted the imposition of this condition

# RELEVANT POLICIES

In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, decisions on planning applications must be made in line with the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For Manchester, the development plan comprises:

- The Core Strategy (2012–2027)
- Saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP)
- The Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document (2022–2039)

These documents are considered up to date and carry substantial weight in decision-making. Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and other local guidance may also be relevant.

National planning policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is a material consideration and provides overarching guidance.

The Government has published a consultation draft of the NPPF, intended to improve housebuilding rates through a clearer, more predictable and faster policy basis for decision and plan making. While this draft is not yet adopted, it is a material consideration.

Where applicable, the Council must give special regard to preserving the character of conservation areas and the setting of listed buildings, in line with statutory duties under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The policies referenced in this report are those considered most relevant to the nature, scale and location of the proposed development as follows:

- The Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012-2027
  - Development Management and Planning Obligations
    - DM 1 - Development Management
  - Objective 1 - Spatial Principles
    - SP 1 - Spatial Principles (Partially replaced by PfE Policy JP-S 1)
  - Objective 2 - Economy and the City Centre
    - EC 1 - Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester
    - EC 2 – Existing Employment Space
    - EC 5 - East Manchester
  - Objective 6 Environment
    - EN 1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas
    - EN15 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (partially replaced by PfE Policy JP-G 8)
- Guide to development in Manchester - supplementary planning document and planning guidance, April 2007
- Extant Unitary Development Plan (UDP) –
  - Citywide Development Control Policies
    - DC26 - Development and Noise
- Places for Everyone Plan Joint Development Plan Document 2022-2039-
  - Strategy
    - JP-Strat5: Inner Areas
  - Sustainable and Resilient Places
    - JP-S1: Sustainable Development
    - JP-S2: Carbon and Energy
  - Places for Jobs
    - JP-J1: Supporting Long-Term Economic Growth
    - JP-J2: Employment Sites and Premises
  - Greener Places
    - JP-G8: A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity
  - Places for People
    - JP-P1 Sustainable Places
  - Connected Places
    - JP-C2: Digital Connectivity
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024–
  - Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
  - Section 4 – Decision-making
  - Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
  - Section 11 – Making effective use of land
  - Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- National Planning Policy Framework Draft for Consultation December 2025 - National decision-making policies
  - Chapter 3 – Decision-making policies
    - DM1: Preparing development proposals
    - DM2: Information requirements
    - DM3: Determining development proposals
    - DM6: Use of planning conditions and obligations
    - DM7: Relationship with other regulatory regimes
  - Chapter 4 - Achieving sustainable development
    - S3: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
    - S4: Principle of development within settlements
  - Chapter 5 - Meeting the challenge of climate change
    - CC2: Mitigation of climate change
    - CC3: Adaptation to climate change
  - Chapter 7 - Building a strong, effective economy
    - E2: Meeting the need for business land and premises

- Chapter 12 - Making effective use of land
  - L2: Making effective use of land
- Chapter 14 - Achieving well-designed places
  - DP3: Key principles for well-designed places
  - DP4: The Design process

# ASSESSMENT

## Principle of Development

The application seeks permission for the installation and operation of a modular data centre within an existing area of hardstanding in an established industrial location.

The site is located within a predominantly industrial area characterised by large-scale employment uses, including warehouses, an asphalt plant and energy infrastructure. As such, the proposal would introduce a form of employment-generating development that is compatible with the prevailing character and function of the area.

Policy EC1 of the Core Strategy supports development which contributes to economic growth in Manchester, while Policy EC2 seeks to protect existing employment land and support proposals that maintain or enhance its employment function. In addition, Policy EC5 identifies East Manchester as a key location for economic activity and investment. The proposal would make effective use of previously developed land within an existing employment area and would support digital infrastructure, which is increasingly important to the local and national economy.

At a strategic level, the Places for Everyone plan supports sustainable economic growth (Policy JP-J1) and the provision of modern employment premises (Policy JP-J2), as well as improved digital connectivity (Policy JP-C2). The proposal aligns with these objectives by introducing infrastructure that supports data storage and processing within an appropriate urban location.

National planning policy set out in the NPPF also supports building a strong, competitive economy and recognises the need to support infrastructure that enables digital communications and technological growth.

Given the site context, the compatibility of the use with surrounding development, and the policy support for employment and digital infrastructure, the principle of the proposed development is considered acceptable, subject to detailed assessment of its design, amenity, environmental and technical impacts set out below.

## Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials, and detail

The proposal comprises a series of modular units, plant and associated infrastructure located on an existing area of hardstanding. The development would be relatively low in scale, with modules measuring approximately 3.7m in height and up to 6.6m including screening.

Given the industrial character of the surrounding area, which includes large-scale warehouse buildings, plant and energy infrastructure, the proposed structures would appear modest in comparison and would not be visually prominent within the wider streetscape. The layout is functional in nature and reflects the operational requirements of the use.

The use of prefabricated units and associated plant is typical of this type of development and is appropriate within this context. The proposed palisade fencing and plant equipment reflects the utilitarian character of the area and would not appear out of keeping.

## Impact on the surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development. Development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area.

The site is not prominently visible from public vantage points and is set within a wider industrial landscape characterised by large buildings and external plant.

Given the scale of surrounding development, including nearby energy infrastructure and industrial buildings, the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the area. The additional height created by the chiller screening would remain proportionate within the context of surrounding built form.

The development would therefore have a neutral visual impact and is acceptable in design terms.

## Effects on amenity

*Privacy*

The site is located within an established industrial area with no nearby residential properties in close proximity. As such, there are no overlooking or privacy concerns arising from the proposal.

*Light*

The development would not materially affect access to daylight or sunlight to any neighbouring uses due to its modest scale and separation distances.

*Noise*

The operation of plant equipment, including chillers, has the potential to generate noise. However, the site is located within a predominantly industrial area where higher levels of background noise are expected.

Environmental Health have been consulted and recommended a pre-commencement noise condition to minimise the impact of the development and to prevent a general increase in pre-existing background noise levels around the site.

## Community safety and crime prevention.

The site will be enclosed by 2.4m high palisade fencing and used for secure infrastructure. The proposal includes measures to control access and protect equipment.

The development is consistent with the secure nature of surrounding industrial uses and raises no concerns in terms of community safety.

## Refuse storage and collection.

The development would generate neglible waste given its operational nature. Any waste associated with maintenance activities can be managed through existing arrangements and would not require dedicated refuse infrastructure.

## Vehicular access and car parking

The proposal is for an unmanned facility with only occasional maintenance visits. A single parking space is provided on site for operational access.

The site is located within an established employment area with access to the local highway network.

## Effects relating to biodiversity, landscape, archaeological or built heritage

*Biodiversity*

The application has been reviewed by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU), who raise no objection subject to the imposition of conditions and informatives. GMEU advise that an informative should be attached to ensure the applicant is aware that the granting of planning permission does not remove their legal obligations in respect of protected species, and that ecological advice should be sought should protected species be present or affected. They also recommend that biodiversity enhancements are secured, including the installation of a bird box on a suitable tree within or adjacent to the site, by way of condition.

In respect of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), GMEU consider the development is likely to fall below the de minimis threshold (i.e. less than 25sqm of habitat loss) and therefore may be exempt from formal BNG requirements. Following a review and site visit, the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that this position is accurate and BNG does not apply.

## Green Infrastructure including open space, both public and private

The site does not form part of any green infrastructure network. The proposal would not result in the loss of open space or vegetation.

## Flood risk and drainage.

The site is not located in a flood risk area and therefore does not require a flood statement or assessment.

The proposal relates to development on an existing hardstanding area and would not significantly alter surface water runoff.

Subject to ensuring appropriate drainage arrangements are maintained, the proposal is acceptable in flood risk terms.

## OTHER LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

## Equality Act 2010

Section 149 (Public Sector Equality Duty) of the Equality Act 2010 requires due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act and; Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Equality Duty does not impose a legal requirement to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment. Compliance with the Equality Duty involves consciously thinking about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

## Human Rights Act 1998 considerations

This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have made representations) have a right to a fair hearing and to this end the local planning authority must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved polices of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits

of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

## CONCLUSION

The proposed modular data centre would provide digital infrastructure within an established employment area and would support economic growth and investment in East Manchester. The development would make effective use of previously developed land and is appropriate in principle, scale and appearance for its industrial surroundings. Subject to conditions relating to noise mitigation and biodiversity enhancement, the proposal would not result in any unacceptable impacts on visual amenity, neighbouring occupiers, highway safety, ecology or flood risk. The development is therefore considered to accord with the Development Plan and there are no material considerations that indicate planning permission should be refused. Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval.

## RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

### Article 35 Declaration

Officers have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with the planning application. The proposal is considered to be acceptable and therefore determined within a timely manner.

## CONDITIONS

### 1. 3-year time limit

The development must be begun not later than three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

### 2. Specified plans

The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings and documents:

a. 01_Whitworth_Urban_Data_Location_Plan_REV_B.pdf - Location Plan - 01B - 28 May 2026

b. 02_Whitworth_Urban_Data_Layout_Plan_REV_A.pdf - Proposed Site Plan - 02A - 1 May 2026

c. 04_Whitworth_Urban_Data_Proposed_North_Elevation_REV_B.pdf – Plan - Proposed North Elevation - 04B - 28 May 2026

d. 06_Whitworth_Urban_Data_Proposed_East_Elevation_REV_B.pdf – Plan - Proposed East Elevation - 06B - 28 May 2026

e. 06_Whitworth_Urban_Data_Proposed_East_Elevation_REV_A.pdf – Plan - Proposed East Elevation – 08A - 1 May 2026

f. 08_Whitworth_Urban_Data_Proposed_South_Elevation_REV_B.pdf – Plan - Proposed South Elevation - 08B - 28 May 2026

g. 10_Whitworth_Urban_Data_Proposed_West_Elevation_REV_B.pdf – Plan - Proposed West Elevation - 10B - 28 May 2026

h. Whitworth_Ecological_Assessment_BNG_Redacted - Ecology report - Habitat Evaluation - 1 May 2026

i. Whitworth_Urban_Data_Planning_Cover_Letter.pdf - Planning statement - 1 May 2026

Reason - To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans, pursuant to policies DM 1, SP 1 and EN 1 of the Core Strategy and JP-P1 & of Places for Everyone.

## 3. Biodiversity Enhancement (Bird Box)

The development shall not be first brought into use until a bird box has been installed on a suitable tree within or adjacent to the site. The bird box shall be retained thereafter.

Reason: To secure biodiversity enhancement in accordance with Policy EN15 of the Manchester Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

## 4. APPROVED PLANT EQUIPMENT NOISE – PRE-INSTALLATION

a. Prior to the installation of the modular data centre hereby approved, either a scheme that demonstrates that the modular data centre will achieve a rating level of 5dB (LAeq) below the typical background (LA90) level in each octave band at the nearest noise sensitive location, or a scheme showing a method to acoustically treat/insulate the modular data centre so as to achieve a rating level of 5dB (LAeq) below the typical background (LA90) level in each octave band at the nearest noise sensitive location, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
b. Prior to the first operation of the modular data centre, a verification report, which will include post-completion testing, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to validate that the modular data centre achieve a rating level of 5dB (LAeq) below the typical background (LA90) level at the nearest noise sensitive location.
c. In the event of non-conformity with a rating level of 5dB (LAeq) below the typical background (LA90) level in each octave band, then any measures/changes required to achieve conformity shall be carried out. Any required measures/changes and verification shall continue until conformity has been achieved and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, before operation of the modular data centre can commence.

Reason - To minimise the impact of the development and to prevent a general increase in pre-existing background noise levels around the site. Pursuant to policies SP1 and DM1 of the Core Strategy and saved policy DC26 of the UDP.