VERITAS PLANNING

Change of Use of Industrial Unit (B8) to Provide 4 x Padel Courts and Associated Facilities

Planning Statement

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Prepared by	Stuart Vendy

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Progress House, 396 Wilmslow Road, Manchester, United Kingdom, M20 3BN

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been produced by Veritas Planning Ltd on behalf of the Applicant to support the proposed change of use of a vacant industrial unit (Use Class B8) to provide 4 x padel courts and associated facilities ('the Proposal'). Each respective padel court will be located within the confines of the existing building.

1.2 This statement provides a description of the application site and its surroundings, the relevant planning history of the site, an overview of the development plan framework and addresses the relevant planning issues. The application is also accompanied by a series of plans, and supporting technical assessments in respect of:

- Highways;
- Ecology; and
- Surface Water and Drainage.

1.3 The proposal was subject to pre-application discussions with the Local Planning Authority. Evidence is presented throughout this Planning Statement and associated reports in response to feedback received during the pre-application process.

1.4 It is concluded that the development proposal accords with both the adopted development plan and the relevant material considerations, and that the proposal can be supported.

2 Application Site

2.1 The application site consists of a vacant commercial unit which is located at the end of Paston Road, Wythenshawe, Manchester, M22 4UA. The site is located within the established Sharston Industrial Estate, which alongside industrial and storage and distribution uses, includes a variety of uses including a rock-climbing centre, a supermarket and offices.

2.2 The building was previously used by Arla Foods UK as part of a wider dairy and distribution facility site across either side of Paston Road. The facility closed in 2009, with operations transferring to other Arla facilities in England.

2.3 Prior approval was granted in November 2016 (LPA Ref: 113949/DEM/2016) for the demolition of the former dairy complex buildings, approximately 7 years after they became vacant. The building subject to this application was intended to be demolished as part of the above prior approval, however subsequently all other buildings within the dairy complex were demolished, with this building remaining in situ.

2.4 Following the demolition of the other buildings within the dairy complex, the building subject to this application fell into a state of disrepair. Google Streetview images demonstrate that by December 2020, a number of windows were either broken or boarded up, and by November 2022, the roof of the building had collapsed or been removed. A small two storey extension to the building had also been demolished at this stage.



Figure 1: Street View image of building in December 2020 in a poor state of repair



Figure 2: Street View image of building in November 2022 following the removal or collapse of the roof.

2.5 Subsequently, a replacement roof has been constructed at the site in an attempt to let the property. However, these attempts have been unsuccessful, and the building has been vacant for approximately five years.

2.6 The application site includes an area of hard standing in front of the building which will be utilised for car and cycle parking. There is very little soft landscaping located within the confines of the application site.

2.7 Land to the west of the site is now used for the storage of machinery and a scaffolding hire depot. Land to the rear of the site (east) is used for the mixing of concrete. Both of these uses are sited outside of the red-line boundary for the application site, and are understood to have formed part of the former Arla dairy complex at the site.

2.8 The wider area is characterised by a mixture of industrial and commercial uses, including industrial premises, storage and distribution, parking for nearby Manchester Airport, car garages and a rock-climbing centre.

2.9 The site has excellent links to the strategic transport network in the area, with the M56 located a short distance away. Vehicular and pedestrian access is achieved via Paston Road, with the site providing good visibility. Furthermore, established footpaths are located near the site entrance. Bus stops are also located in close proximity to the site.

2.10 The Council's policies map confirms that the site is not located within a Conservation Area, nor are there any listed buildings within close proximity to the site. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 – the lowest risk of flooding from rivers or the sea. The Council's Proposals Map identifies that the site is located within an Economic Improvement Area.

3 Proposal

3.1 This proposal seeks to provide 4 x padel courts within the confines of the existing building. In order to facilitate the proposal, the existing building will not need to be enlarged.

3.2 The proposal will also include ancillary facilities which are necessary to operate a managed indoor sports use. This includes a reception and lounge area, changing facilities, toilet facilities and tiered seating. These elements would remain ancillary to the principal sport use. The main entrance will be located centrally within the building.

3.3 Each padel court is rectangular, measuring 10 metres in width by 20 metres in length. Entrances are located at each side of the court. The location and orientation of the relevant courts are clearly indicated on the relevant planning drawings. All of these specifications comply with the standards established in the Regulations of the Padel game provided by the International Padel Federation ("IPF").

3.4 Forty-three car parking spaces will be provided within the red-line boundary, with further spaces offered for overspill parking if required. The car parking provision includes two accessible spaces and four electric vehicle charging spaces. Sixteen cycle spaces will also be provided to encourage the uptake of sustainable methods of transport.

3.5 The operational model of the padel courts would be controlled and booking-led. Sessions would be pre-booked, allowing the operator to manage the use of the property, with the maximum capacity of the premises being restricted by the number of courts being provided.

3.6 The proposal seeks to provide a sustainable commercial use for this building which has been vacant for a long period of time. The proposed development would therefore ensure that the land and building are used in an efficient manner.

3.7 The physical works required for the change of use will largely be internal and associated with the installation of the padel courts and ancillary fit-out. External

works would largely be limited to the provision of car parking and cycle parking spaces.

3.8 We understand that the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), which is the National Governing Body for the sport, is working with Manchester City Council and MCR Active on a padel strategy that will see the sport 'opened up' to communities as an accessible and inclusive sporting offer.

3.9 Padel is a sport which is rapidly growing in popularity across England and Europe, and is widely recognised as the fastest-growing racket sport globally. The game itself consists of a mixture of tennis and squash that is usually played in doubles on an enclosed court. The courts are enclosed by walls of glass and metallic mesh, and players can utilise the walls to play shots during a match.

3.10 Padel players use short, stringless racquets with holes and a low compression tennis ball, serving the ball underarm. Due to the equipment used, the game is not dominated to the same extent by strength and technique that tennis is. Compared to other conventional racquet sports, points can be won through strategy and positioning rather than strength and power. When combined with the smaller court size and ability to play off the walls, padel is seen by many as an excellent opportunity to increase wider participation in sport. Entry level padel racquets start from as little as £20, removing cost as a barrier to entry for many participants.

3.11 Padel is also often played as doubles, encouraging social interaction, with clubs providing additional facilities such as coaching programmes, community benefits and social events.

3.12 At a national level, padel is governed by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) who have successfully managed the growth of recreational and professional tennis in the country for decades. The LTA have a clear strategy to capture the increased interest in the sport, and further its growth. The LTA Padel Strategy 2024 – 2029 is a clear commitment to achieving this, and the findings of this strategy and its implications are addressed later on in this report.

3.13 Due to the rapid growth of padel, there remains an under-supply of padel courts relative to demand, with limited court availability. This proposal seeks to accommodate a current unmet demand for such facilities.

4 Planning Policy

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the above requirement relating to the determination of planning applications and also confirms that the NPPF must be taken into account as a material planning consideration in planning decisions.

4.3 The 'development plan' relating to the site consists of the following documents:

- Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2022 to 2039;
- Core Strategy 2012 – 2027;
- Extant policies of the Unitary Development Plan;
- Greater Manchester Joint Waste DPD;
- Greater Manchester Joint Minerals DPD.

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan for Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan 2022 to 2039

4.4 The Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (2024) is a long-term plan for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth across the respective LPA areas. The plan sets out the kind of development that will take place across the city-region. It seeks to:

- maximise the use of brownfield land and urban spaces;
- protects green belt land from the risk of unplanned development;
- releases some sites for housing and employment in key locations;
- ensures we integrate all new developments into Greater Manchester's transport network. Otherwise, new roads and transport will support them.

Vision and Objectives of the Plan

4.5 The Places for Everyone Plan (2024) sets out the following vision for the city-region:

> *"Our vision is to make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world to grow up, get on and grow old:*
>
> - *A place where all children are given the best start in life and young people grow up inspired to exceed expectations.*

- *A place where people are proud to live, with a decent home, a fulfilling job, and stress-free journeys the norm. But if you need a helping hand, you'll get it.*
- *A place of ideas and invention, with a modern and productive economy that draws in investment, visitors and talent.*
- *A place where people live healthy lives and older people are valued.*
- *A place at the forefront of action on climate change with clean air and a flourishing natural environment.*
- *A place where all voices are heard and where, working together, we can shape our future."*

4.6 In order to achieve this vision, the Places for Everyone Plan (2024) sets out a number of Strategic Objectives. This includes reducing inequalities and improving prosperity, promoting the sustainable movement of people, ensuring access to physical and social infrastructure and promoting the health and wellbeing of communities.

Policy JP-Strat9: Southern Areas

4.7 The site is located within the Southern Area of Greater Manchester. Paragraph 4.63 of the Plan states that the overall spatial strategy is to spread prosperity to all parts of the city region, however this needs to be balanced with the need to ensure that the competitiveness of the southern areas is sustained.

4.8 Policy JP-Strat9 states that there will be a strong emphasis on making as much use as possible of suitable previously developed (brownfield) land and promoting the roles of the areas' town centres and its other key assets. It also seeks to ensure that the economic competitiveness of the southern area is protected and enhanced.

Policy JP-S1: Sustainable Development

4.9 This policy states that development should aim to maximise its economic, social and environmental benefits simultaneously, minimise its adverse impacts, utilise sustainable construction techniques and actively seek opportunities to secure net gains across each of the different objectives. In bringing forward previously developed sites for development, particular attention will be paid to tackling land contamination and stability issues, ensuring that appropriate mitigation and remediation is implemented to enable sites to be brought back into use effectively.

Policy JP-J1: Supporting Long-Term Economic Growth

4.10 Policy JP-J1 states that a thriving, inclusive and productive economy will be sought in all boroughs of the city-region. This is to be achieved by maintaining a very high level of economic diversity across the boroughs, and supporting local job growth.

Policy JP-J2: Employment Sites and Premises

4.11 This policy states that a diverse range of employment sites and accessible premises will be made available across the Plan area. The policy also states that existing employment areas that are important to maintaining a strong and diverse supply of sites and premises in our boroughs and will be protected from redevelopment to other uses.

Policy JP-J4: Industrial and Warehousing Development

4.12 This policy seeks to provide at least 3,513,000 sqm of new and accessible industrial and warehousing floorspace over the plan period of 2022 – 2039.

Policy JP-P1 Sustainable Places

4.13 Policy JP-P1 aims to make Manchester one of the most liveable city regions in the world, consisting of a series of beautiful, healthy and varied places. A number of measures are set out to achieve this, including providing socially inclusive development and communities and resource-efficient development.

Policy JP-P7 Sport and Recreation

4.14 This policy states that a network of high-quality and accessible sports and recreation facilities will be protected and enhanced, supporting greater levels of activity for all ages. This includes locating and designing recreation facilities in relation to housing so as to ensure that they are accessible but also minimise the potential for complaints due to disturbance to residential amenity from recreational activity.

Policy JP-C8 Transport Requirements

4.15 This policy states that development will be located and designed to enable and encourage walking, cycling and public transport use, to reduce the negative effects of car dependency, and help deliver high quality, attractive, liveable and sustainable environments.

Manchester Core Strategy 2012 - 2027

4.16 Manchester's Core Strategy was adopted in July 2012, and remains part of the development plan. The following policies are considered to be relevant to the determination of this application.

Policy SP1 Spatial Principles

4.17 This policy sets the overall spatial strategy for Manchester and supports sustainable development, economic growth, neighbourhood quality, accessibility, health and environmental improvement. The proposal supports these objectives through the active reuse of a vacant building, job creation, health and wellbeing benefits and use of previously developed land.

Policy EC2 Existing Employment Space

4.18 Policy EC2 seeks to retain and enhance existing employment space and sites, but allows alternative uses where it can be demonstrated that the existing use is unviable in terms of business operations, building age and format; incompatible with adjacent uses; unsuitable having regard to flood risk; or where, on balance, the proposal offers greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy vision and spatial objectives than the existing use.

4.19 The supporting text to Policy EC2 also recognises that leaving land vacant is not an efficient use of land, and that there are circumstances where alternative uses may be appropriate, particularly where a site has remained vacant despite marketing or where the employment space no longer meets business needs due to age and condition.

Policy EC10 Wythenshawe

4.20 This policy identifies Wythenshawe as an important employment location, and it expects employment land to be provided in offices, research and development, light industry and logistics/distribution. It identifies Sharston Industrial Estate as an existing employment location and states that its existing employment role should be supported.

4.21 The policy goes on to acknowledge the importance of connectivity between employment locations and local communities, and recognises the need for local employment opportunities.

Policy C9 Out-of-centre Development

4.22 Development of town centre uses in locations which are outside of a centre identified in policy C1 or a strategic location identified for such uses will be inappropriate unless it can meet the following criteria:

- There are no sequentially preferable sites, or allocated sites, within the area the development is intended to serve that are available, suitable and viable
- The proposal would not have unacceptable impacts, either individually or cumulatively with recently completed and approved schemes and having regard to any allocations for town centre uses, on the vitality and viability of the City Centre and designated district and local centres. An assessment of impacts will be required for retail developments of more than local significance; and,
- The proposal is appropriate in terms of its scale and function to its location.

4.23 The policy goes on to state that development that improves the environment of an existing out-of-centre facility or its relationship with surrounding uses will be supported, providing that it also meets the other criteria in this policy.

4.24 The plan does not define the term 'town centre uses', instead leaving the definition of the term to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Policy T1 Sustainable Transport

4.25 This policy seeks to encourage modal shift away from car travel to public transport, cycling and walking. It states that the Council will support proposals which improve choice by developing alternatives to the car.

Policy T2 Accessible Areas of Opportunity and Need

4.26 Policy T2 states that the Council will ensure that new development is easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport by connecting residents to jobs, centres, health, leisure, open space and educational opportunities.

Policy EN1 Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas

4.27 This policy requires development to follow the seven principles of urban design which are set out in national guidance.

Policy EN 11 Quantity of Open Space, Sport and Recreation

4.28 This policy states that the Council will seek the provision of new open space, sport and recreation facilities, in particular where a quantitative shortage of a particular use per head of population has been identified in the local area.

Policy EN 15 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

4.29 Policy EN 15 states that the Council will seek to maintain or enhance sites of biodiversity and geological value throughout the City. It goes on to state that any adverse impacts on biodiversity will need to be justified against the wider benefits of the proposal, assessed against the other policies.

Policy DM1 Development Management

4.30 Policy DM1 sets out a number of considerations for the determination of planning applications in the area. It states that all development should have regard to a number of specific issues, including:

- Appropriate siting;
- Impact on the surrounding areas;
- Effects on amenity, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality, odours, litter, vermin, birds, road safety and traffic generation;
- Refuse storage and collection;
- Vehicular access and car parking;
- Effects relating to biodiversity, landscape, archaeological or built heritage.

The Saved Policies of the Manchester Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

4.31 Upon adoption of the Core Strategy, many of the policies of the Manchester UDP were replaced. However, a selection of policies remain extant.

Policy EW12 – Sharston Industrial Estate

4.32 Saved Policy EW12 of the UDP states that the Council will protect the role of the Sharston Industrial Estate as a centre for industrial activity and employment which is convenient and accessible to Wythenshawe people in particular.

Policy 26.1 – Development and Noise

4.33 Saved Policy 26.1 of the UDP states that the Council will consider both the effect of new development proposals which are likely generators of noise, as well as the implications of new development being exposed to existing noise sources which are effectively outside planning control.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.34 The NPPF was updated in December 2024 to set out the Government's planning policies for England, and how these are to be applied to both policy making and decision taking. The Framework provides that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.35 The NPPF provides a presumption in favour of sustainable development, whilst balancing and protecting the needs and priorities of communities without adversely impacting on future generations.

4.36 The NPPF requires that planning authorities should provide 'due weight' to the relevant policies in their development plans, according to their conformity with the NPPF. Further guidance is also provided on the weight to be attributed to emerging planning policies, with less weight to be attributed to policies at an early stage of plan making.

4.37 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out three key themes of sustainability that run through the whole framework and include:

- *an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*

- *a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-*

designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

- *an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.*

4.38 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF requires that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should:

c) "approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date[8], granting planning permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance[7] provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination[9]. "

4.39 Section 4 of the NPPF provides guidance with regard to decision-making and seeks to encourage early engagement between parties with a view to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning system for all parties. In this regard, it should be noted that this application follows pre-application engagement with Manchester City Council, which has been used to shape this proposal.

4.40 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

4.41 Paragraphs 91 - 92 of the NPPF state that:

> *"Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered."*
>
> *"When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored."*

4.42 Annex 2 of the NPPF defines the term main town centre uses as follows:

> *"Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment and* ***more intensive sport and recreation uses*** *(including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, nightclubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities)."* (emphasis added)

4.43 Section 8 of the NPPF highlights the important role the planning system can play in promoting healthy and safe communities. It is noted that the Council's Development Plan is silent in relation to the enhancement of existing sports facilities, paragraph 96 of the NPPF stipulates that planning policies and decisions should:

> *"enable and support healthy lives, through both promoting good health and preventing ill-health"*

4.44 In addition to this, paragraph 98 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should: plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces and community facilities such as sports venues; take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being; and guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services.

4.45 Section 9 of the NPPF addresses highways and sustainable transport matters. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that in assessing sites for development, LPAs should ensure that sustainable transport modes are prioritised and that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.

4.46 Section 11 of the NPPF promotes the effective use of land in meeting the need for development, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Paragraph 125d of the NPPF states that planning decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings.

4.47 Section 12 of the NPPF highlights the importance of high-quality design. It states:

> "*Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities*".

Manchester City Council Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy

4.48 Knight Kavanagh & Page (KKP) were commissioned to undertake a Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (PPOSS) for Manchester City Council, which was published in October 2022. The PPOSS builds upon the preceding Assessment Report, and provides a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of existing playing pitch and accompanying ancillary facilities up to 2031.

4.49 The study does not include an assessment of the capacity of, or demand for, padel courts in the area. The proposal does not result in the loss of an existing sport facility, thus the remainder of the document is not determinative to this application.

Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) Padel Strategy 2024 - 2029

4.50 As previously stated, since 2020 padel has been governed by the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA), which have managed the growth and development of tennis in England for decades.

4.51 The foreword of the Strategy states:

> *"Over the coming years we will maintain our focus on padel infrastructure, growing and diversifying the padel coaching workforce, and implementing a performance pathway that supports current players whilst also paving the way for the next generation."*

4.52 The substantial growth of the game is highlighted by the Strategy which states:

- There has been a 600% increase in the number of courts since 2021;
- 129,000 players take part annually in padel, which is expected to grow to 400,000 players by 2026;
- The number of courts is expected to grow to 1,000 by 2026 to accommodate growth (an additional 650 courts); and
- The LTA has invested £6 million since 2021 to grow padel infrastructure.

4.53 The Strategy sets out 6 strategic pillars, which are: invest; grow; manage; engage; diversify; perform; and lead. The Strategy also seeks to make padel more accessible and welcoming to increase participation across age groups, genders and people with disabilities.

Planning for Sport Guidance – Sport England (June 2019, last updated April 2024).

4.54 The purpose of this guidance, and the twelve planning-for-sport principles it presents, is to help the planning system provide formal and informal opportunities for all to take part in sport and be physically active.

4.55 Principle 1 is to recognise and give significant weight to the benefits of sport and physical activity. Principle 6 seeks to support improvements to existing sport and physical activity provision where they are needed, with principle 7 encouraging and securing wider community use of sport provision.

4.56 Principles 8 – 12 of the Guidance relate to the provision of new facilities, and include supporting new provision which meets identified needs, providing a positive approach to meeting the needs generated by new development, and proactively address amenity issues.

4.57 The Guidance highlights that under-represented groups include women and girls, disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. A Sport England commission in 2020 found that every £1 spent on sport and physical activity led to a £4 return across health and wellbeing, communities and the economy[1].

[1] Social and economic value of community sport and physical activity (2020) – Sport England

5 Planning Assessment

5.1 The starting point for determining any planning application is set out in Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), which states that "where in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise". The NPPF at paragraphs 2 and 47 reinforces this requirement and at paragraph 12 states that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as a starting point for decision making, and that where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not normally be granted.

5.2 The planning application submission raises some planning issues, and this statement now appraises the proposal in respect of the following issues:

- Principle of development;
  - Provision of new sport facilities;
  - Loss of Employment Land;
  - Sequential Test requirements;
- Visual Amenity;
- Residential Amenity;
- Ecology; and
- Highways.

Principle of development

Re-use of brownfield land

5.3 The Places for Everyone Plan (2024) identifies the site as being within the Southern Area where there is a strong emphasis on making as much use as possible of suitable previously developed (brownfield) land. The proposal would secure the active reuse of a long-term vacant building and would not require any extensions or external alterations to facilitate the change of use. This will also ensure that the embodied carbon within the existing building will be retained.

5.4 Similar provision is set out at paragraph 125 of the NPPF, which states that planning decisions should promote and support the development of under-utilised land and

buildings. Therefore, the proposal complies with Policy JP-Strat 9: Southern Areas of the Places for Everyone Plan (2024) and paragraph 125 of the NPPF.

Loss of employment land

5.5 The application site is located within the established Sharston Industrial Estate and within an area where the development plan seeks to generally retain and support employment land.

5.6 Policy JP-J2 of the Places for Everyone Plan (2024) states that it is important to maintain a strong and diverse supply of sites and premises. The Site is also located within an area where Policy EC 10 of the Core Strategy (2012) applies, within which economic development will be focused.

5.7 Policy EC2 of the Core Strategy (2012) states that the Council will seek to retain and enhance existing employment space and sites. However, the policy and supporting text, recognises that alternative uses may be acceptable where one of the identified exceptions is met. These include circumstances where the existing use is unviable in terms of business operations, building age and format, or where, on balance, the proposal would offer greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy's vision and spatial objectives than the existing use. Furthermore, paragraph 8.82 of the Core Strategy (2012) acknowledges that not all parts of Sharston Industrial Estate are entirely suitable for modern users.

5.8 It should be noted that in order to comply with Policy EC2 a proposal will need to comply with one of the exceptions, not each and every one. In respect of the first criterion, the site has a long history of vacancy, with recent attempts to market the property for industrial uses being unsuccessful. The property has been vacant for more than 5 years, and during this time it has been actively marketed by national commercial agents Savills, and local agents W. Maher & Sons Limited. The property has been marketed on the relevant agents' websites, as well as on commercial portals including RightMove, LandSale and LoopNet UK.

5.9 Advertisement signs have been placed at the site, and the junction of Paston Road and Bradnor Road. As evidenced by the advertising boards, the marketing agents have also attempted to market the premises as sub-divided units, and this has also been unsuccessful.

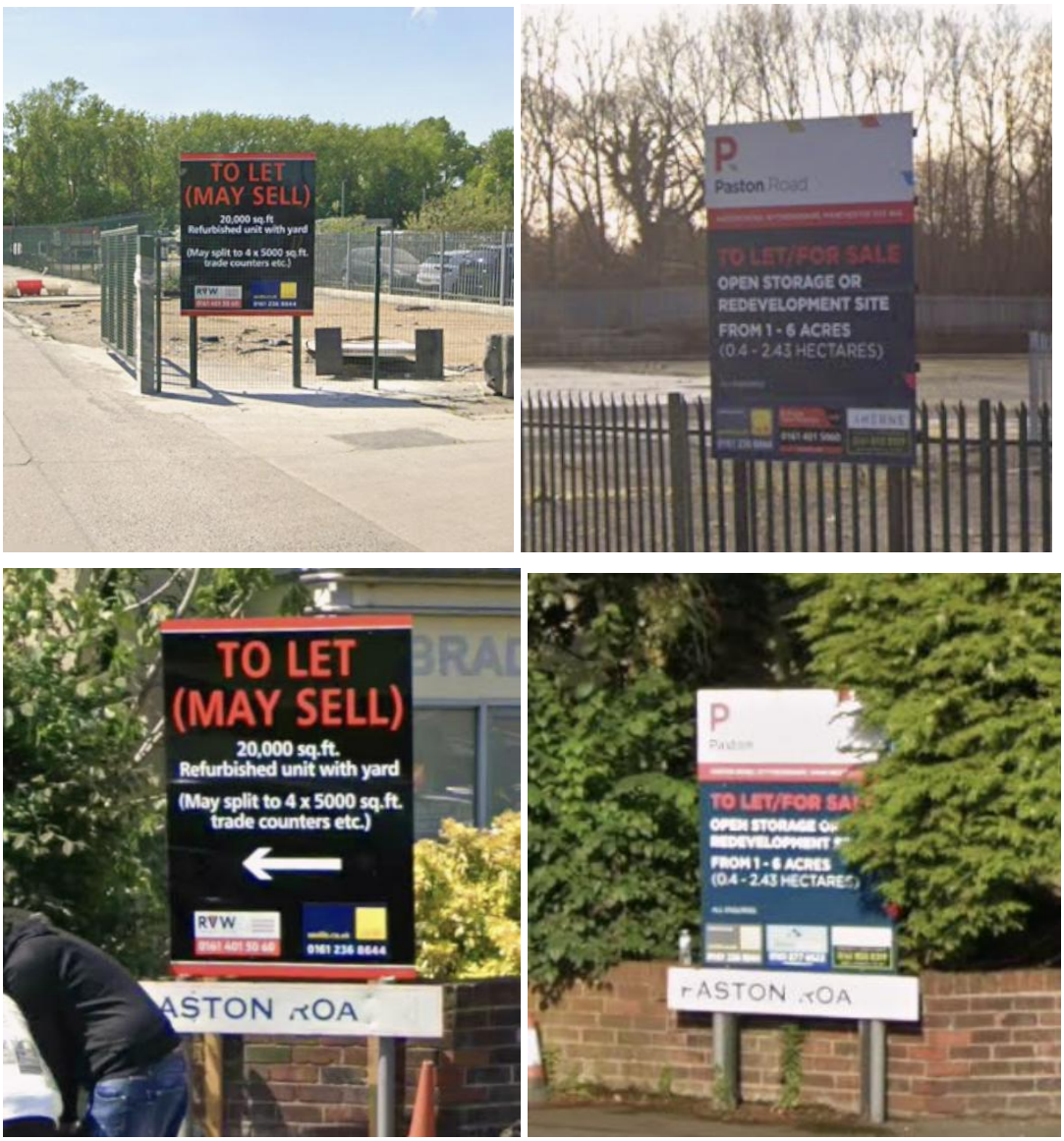


Figure 3: Advertising sales boards on Paston Road and the junction of Paston Road and Bradnor Road. Source – Google Maps from August 2019 to May 2025.

5.10 In addition to the marketing process, the owner has undertaken repair works to the property, including a new roof and external cladding. Despite these measures, no credible occupier has come forward for traditional B2/B8 uses.

5.11 Thus, the proposal should be viewed in the context of a long history of vacancy, where the proposed development would not result in the displacement of any active employment uses. On the contrary, the scheme will generate new economic activity through coaching roles, operational management and maintenance.

Additional indirect jobs will also be created through increased local footfall and supply chain benefits.

5.12 It is also noted that the Council's own employment land review highlights factors which make the site difficult to market for traditional employment uses. The site is located at the end of Paston Road – a no through road – where visibility of the commercial uses is poor. Potential customers would have to travel through the Sharston Industrial Estate to access the site. As a result, commercial occupiers would not benefit from customer recognition created by having a unit and their respective advertising in a prominent location.

5.13 It is also noted that a similar leisure and recreation use was approved at Unit B, Southmoor Industrial Estate (LPA Ref: 137902/FO/2023) just a short distance away from the site. In determining that application, in accordance with Policy EC2 of the Core Strategy (2012) the Council acknowledged that whilst they value employment land, there are circumstances where it will be appropriate to support alternative uses. Similarly, weight was given to the fact that the property could easily revert to traditional B-uses if the leisure use were to cease.

5.14 The premises at Unit B, Southmoor Industrial Estate stood vacant for a period of 9 months at the time of the application. This is significantly shorter than the 5 years which the application site has been vacant.

5.15 In addition to the above, at 19,588 sq ft, the premises only makes a negligible contribution to the employment provision across the wider employment site and LPA area. Furthermore, the Council's Employment Land Review identified a relatively equal mix of warehouse/storage, factory and light industrial and office use across the site. It also identified some alternative uses, including retail, fast-food outlet and an indoor leisure / sporting facility. As a result, the proposed development would not negatively impact upon the vitality or viability of the industrial area as a whole, and the industrial estate's role as an employment area will be retained. Therefore, the proposal accords with Saved Policy EW12 of the UDP.

5.16 It is also noted that the contribution which Manchester City Council is to make towards the net increase in industrial and warehousing space of the city-region is significantly smaller than all other districts within the Places for Everyone Plan

(2024). Such a conclusion also accords with the Council's Employment Land Review (2025) which states that whilst there is generally good occupation across the wider industrial estate, some stock is dated, and that the low profile of Paston Road within the broader industrial estate limits its market appeal.

5.17 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal complies with the first criterion of Policy EC2 in that it is un-viable in terms of business operations, building age and format.

5.18 The final criterion of Policy EC2 requires that on balance, proposals are able to offer greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy's vision and spatial objectives than the existing use. The vision of the Manchester City Core Strategy seeks:

- a successful sustainable and accessible City in the front rank of cities in Europe and the world
- a City with a growing economy driven by the strength of the Regional Centre and Manchester Airport which supports a successful City Region. The knowledge-based economy flourishes within an entrepreneurial community, characterised by a fully skilled, inclusive working population
- meeting the challenge of climate change at the forefront of environmental initiatives and improvements and continuing to deliver sustainable development and a more effective Green Infrastructure.
- a City with an increased and sustainable healthy population and a community which both benefits from and drives the City's productivity upwards.

5.19 It is considered that the proposed development would contribute to these objectives in a number of ways.

5.20 Firstly, the proposed development would bring a long-term vacant building back into productive commercial use. This would support economic activity, by providing a net increase in jobs over the existing use, and would ensure that land is used in an effective manner. Moreover, the proposal would reuse the existing building without requiring external expansion. This would retain embodied carbon, avoid unnecessary demolition and support the effective use of previously developed land. These are all measures which contribute to meeting the challenge of climate change.

5.21 Secondly, the proposal would generate direct and indirect economic benefits. Direct employment opportunities would be generated through coaching, management, cleaning and operational roles. Indirect economic benefits will also be provided through supply chains, increased footfall and increased physical activity driving the productivity of the city-region.

5.22 Thirdly, the proposal would introduce a new indoor sport facility to meet growing demand. The benefits of padel to the wider community are set out in a number of documents including the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) Padel Strategy 2024 – 2029, with guidance provided by Sport England setting out the wider benefits of sporting participation.

5.23 With specific reference to padel, the sport is rapidly growing in popularity and has a low barrier to entry. It can be played by people with disabilities, and the characteristics of the game make it well-suited for high levels of participation, especially from people who are not currently participating in sports or fitness. Therefore, the proposed development is well suited to improve the health of the local community, which has a number of benefits including driving the City's productivity, which is expressly recognised by the vision of the Core Strategy (2012).

5.24 It should also be noted that the Applicant would be willing to engage with MCR Active to discuss a community use agreement to maximise the benefits of the proposed development to the local community. The facility could provide structured access for local schools during curriculum hours, discounted community sessions, youth coaching programmes, and off-peak availability for local groups. Padel is one of the fastest-growing and most accessible participation sports in the UK, and this scheme presents a meaningful opportunity to increase physical activity provision within the local curriculum and wider community.

5.25 As a result, it is considered that the proposal accords with the vision of the Core Strategy (2012). Further information on the benefits of the proposal is provided throughout this Statement.

Provision of new sports facilities - Leisure Use

5.26 Section 8 'Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities' of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places (paragraph 96 of the NPPF), with paragraph 103 stating that access to opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and wellbeing of communities.

5.27 As illustrated by the LTA's Padel Strategy, padel is a sport that is rapidly expanding in interest and visibility. Furthermore, padel is accessible, social and generally easier for beginners to take up than some traditional racket sports, and other traditional sports. In order to meet this demand, there is a pressing need for new Padel courts, which this proposal seeks to meet. The nearest padel courts are located at Heald Green Gatley, Cheadle, approximately 2.9 miles to the south-east of the site, and at Hale Country Club and Spa approximately 3.9 miles to the south-west. This is a significant distance away from the site. Given the rapidly increasing popularity of padel, there will be unmet need for padel courts in this location.

5.28 It is also noted that a number of courts located in nearby centres have outdoor courts which will be susceptible to poor weather limiting the uptake of the sport, and its benefits. In contrast, each of the courts at this site will be located within the building, which will ensure that the sport can be played all year round.

5.29 Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 (specifically Section 149 of the Public Sector Equality Duty, PSED), all public bodies are required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. This duty applies to Local Planning Authorities when taking decisions on planning applications.

5.30 Under Section 149 of the Duty, disability is a 'protected characteristic', and the Act states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. The proposal would provide four padel courts. Padel is a sport that is easily adapted for wheelchair users, and the building itself can easily be accessed by wheelchair uses with the provision of accessible car parking spaces and the lack of steps to, or within the building. As such, the proposal is considered to represent a significant improvement in respect of advancing equality of opportunity. This should weigh significantly in favour of the proposal.

Sequential Test and Town Centre Policy

5.31 Policy C9 of the Manchester Core Strategy seeks to ensure that main town centre uses are directed to appropriate locations and that out-of-centre proposals do not undermine the vitality and viability of designated centres. The Council's development plan does not define the term 'main town centre uses' instead leaving this to be defined by the NPPF. Annexe 2 defines such uses as 'more intensive sport and recreation uses', thus the determination of whether the proposed development would constitute a town centre use hinges on whether this is an intensive sports use.

5.32 The scheme would provide four courts, with the only other facilities located within the confines of the building being ancillary to the use of the site as a padel facility. The capacity of the building, and therefore its use, is limited by the modest number of courts to be provided. Limited spectator provision is provided within the building; however, this is limited to small-scale seating for the family and friends of players. Thus, it is considered that the proposed development would not create significant movements of people to the facility.

5.33 On that basis, the proposed development should not be regarded as a more intensive sport and recreation use and the sequential test is not required.

5.34 Such a conclusion would comply with a recent decision of the LPA at Unit 9, Vaughan Street Industrial Estate (LPA Ref: 141847/FO/2025), where the LPA determined that an application for 11 padel courts did not meet the definition of a main town centre use, and therefore no sequential test was required. Given that this scheme seeks to provide fewer padel courts, it is considered that the same conclusion should be reached here.

5.35 Moreover, it should be noted that the proposed use is not a stereotypical leisure use. Indoor padel courts have specific requirements relating to both area and height, with sufficient ceiling heights required to ensure that padel can be played properly within the respective unit. A similar conclusion was reached by the Council at Unit B, Southmoor Industrial Estate, and it is considered that there is no reasonable justification to conclude differently in respect of this application.

5.36 For these reasons, the proposal is considered to comply with Policies C9, EC2 and EC10 of the Manchester City Core Strategy (2012) and Policy JP-J2 of the Places for Everyone Plan (2024). Furthermore, the proposed development does not undermine the objective of Policy JP-J4 of the Places for Everyone Plan (2024).

Visual Amenity

5.37 Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Plan (2024) sets out a number of criteria for well-managed design, with design also considered in Policy DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012).

5.38 The proposed development is located within an established employment area, and is not located within a sensitive landscape or townscape area. The proposed development does not require the existing building to be extended to facilitate the change of use, ensuring that the proposal will have minimal impact on the surrounding area.

5.39 The application site is located at the end of a no-through road and is therefore not located within a prominent location. On the contrary, the building can only be viewed from within its immediate surroundings, which is industrial in nature.

5.40 As previously stated, the premises has been vacant for a long period of time. The proposed development seeks to bring the premises back into a long-term sustainable use, which is considered to be of benefit to the site and wider area.

5.41 The wider employment area includes a mixture of traditional industrial and employment uses, with some retail, trade counters and leisure uses. Thus, the proposed use of the site is considered to accord with the character of the area.

Residential Amenity

5.42 Policy JP-P7 of the Places for Everyone Plan (2024) states that recreation facilities should be located to ensure that they are accessible but also minimise the potential for complaints due to disturbance to residential amenity from recreational activity. Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy (2012) requires consideration of the effects of development on amenity, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality,

odours, litter, vermin, birds, road safety and traffic generation. Similarly, saved Policy 26.1 of the UDP states that the Council will consider both the effect of new development proposals which are likely generators of noise, as well as the implications of new development being exposed to existing noise sources which are effectively outside planning control.

5.43 The nearest property is located approximately 200m to the north-west of the site. It is considered that the nearest residential property is located a sufficient distance away from the site to ensure that the proposal does not cause a negative impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring residential properties.

5.44 It should also be noted that the site is located within a long established industrial area, with a number of noise generating uses located within close proximity. In particular, it is noted that there is an open storage area for scaffolding located between the application site and the nearest residential dwellings.

5.45 Each padel court would be located within the existing building which will limit the noise and light spillage that would otherwise occur from 'open' courts. Given the historic use of the wider site for industrial purposes, and the noise associated with planes flying to and from Manchester Airport and nearby major roads, it is not considered that any increase in traffic and/or people entering and exiting the site would have a noticeable impact on noise levels in the area. Moreover, the proposed development would not place undue restrictions on neighbouring businesses.

5.46 By virtue of its size, use, design and location, it is considered that the proposal accords with Policy JP-P7 of the Places for Everyone Plan (2024), Policy DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012) and Saved Policy 26 of the UDP.

Ecology

5.47 Policy EN 15 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012) seeks to maintain or enhance sites of biodiversity and geological value throughout the City. Since the adoption of the Core Strategy, Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) requires development to provide a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

5.48 The site is not located within an environmentally sensitive location, and given that the scope of the works would largely be contained within the confines of the building, it is not considered that the proposal would result in a negative impact on ecology.

5.49 Paragraph 17 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 provides specific exemptions from biodiversity net gain for certain types of development. One such exemption is the 'de minimis exemption' where development does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat and 5 metres of linear habitats. The proposed development accords with this exemption, and as such the Biodiversity Gain Requirements do not apply to this proposal.

Highways

5.50 Collectively the Council's policies and the NPPF seek to direct development towards accessible locations, and ensuring that development causes no adverse impact upon the safe and effective operation of the public highway.

5.51 The application is supported by a Transport Statement which assesses the suitability of the proposed development from a parking and highways perspective.

5.52 Paston Road is an adopted highway subject to a 30mph speed limit. On the approach to the site, parking and waiting restrictions apply to one side of the road. Paston Road is a no-through road, and sits within an established industrial estate where vehicular movements, including commercial traffic, already form part of the local highway context.

5.53 The proposed development has been designed with specific regard to the pre-application highways advice. In particular, measures will be provided to ensure that safe and effective access will be retained for adjoining commercial operations, including the scaffolding operation opposite the site and the concrete batching plant to the east.

5.54 The padel facility would operate on a managed, pre-booked basis, with predictable peak periods typically outside standard industrial HGV movement times (for example at evenings and weekends).

5.55 To further mitigate any concerns, the applicant is fully prepared to:

- Install fencing to segregate and enclose the road serving neighbouring businesses.
- Clearly demarcate pedestrian routes within the allocated parking area.
- Physically separate parking provision from any industrial circulation areas.
- Provide appropriate signage and traffic management measures if required.

5.56 These measures would ensure there is no pedestrian conflict with surrounding commercial activity and that the development operates safely alongside existing businesses.

5.57 The proposal seeks to provide 43 car parking spaces, with additional overspill car parking located within the confines of the site if necessary. Furthermore, in order to encourage the uptake of sustainable transport, the proposal will provide 16 cycle spaces, enough to accommodate 4 spaces per court. The Manchester Core Strategy (2012) does not provide guidance on the number of cycle spaces required for sports facilities. In the absence of such guidance, the provision of 16 spaces is considered to be acceptable. Accessible parking spaces and electric vehicle charging spaces will also be provided.

5.58 Given the modest scale of the proposed development, the proposal will not generate a significant number of trips in peak traffic hours, and it is considered that the local transport network has sufficient capacity and safety to accommodate the proposed development.

5.59 The site is located in a sustainable location, with bus stops located within 600m of the site. Multiple bus stops are located on Sharston Road and Longley Lane, which are served by the No. 43, 103, 370, 371, 714 & 796 services. These provide services to central Manchester, Wythenshawe and West Didsbury. Notably, the bus stops provide a regular service which starts early in the day and extends late into the evening, well beyond the opening times of the facility.

5.60 It is also considered that the location of the site within an established employment / industrial area provides the potential for linked trips, reducing the overall transport demand. For example, the number of nearby employment, industrial and other uses provides the opportunity for users to play padel after work, reducing the need to travel long distances.

5.61 As such, it is considered that the proposal complies with Policy JP-C8 of the Places for Everyone Plan (2024) and Policies T1 and T2 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012).

6 Conclusion

6.1 The proposed development presents an exciting opportunity to respond to growing demand for padel courts, whilst also bringing a long-term empty employment unit back into sustainable use. The social and health benefits of increasing sports participation are well-established, and padel offers an inclusive sport that can be played by all ages and under-represented groups such as women and people with disabilities.

6.2 The application site has been subject to a prolonged marketing campaign, and measures have been taken to improve the marketability of the building. This includes the provision of a new roof and cladding, with the premises also being offered on a sub-divided basis. However, these measures have been unsuccessful, and the property remains vacant. In its place, the proposed development will provide a net increase in the number of jobs to be provided at the site, whilst also providing social and health benefits offered by increasing padel provision in the locality. In order to maximise the social benefits, the applicant would be willing to enter into engagement with MCR Active in relation to community use agreements.

6.3 As a result, the proposed development complies with Policy EC2 of the Manchester Core Strategy (2012) which permits the change of use of industrial units where the existing use is un-viable, or on balance proposals offer greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy's vision and spatial objectives. Furthermore, the existing unit only makes up a small part of the employment area, and the proposed development is not considered to harm the overall vitality or viability of the employment designation, or employment provision across the LPA area as a whole.

6.4 Given the small scale of the proposed development, it is not considered that the proposal is a "more intensive sport and recreation use", thus the sequential test does not apply. It is noted that the LPA has reached the same conclusion for other padel court developments in the area, including those with a much larger number of courts compared to this application.

6.5 The application is supported by a Transport Statement which confirms that the proposed development will not cause significant harm to the safety or capacity of

the local road network. Clear access will be retained for neighbouring commercial uses.

6.6 The site is well served by public transport, with a number of bus services located within 600m of the site. Moreover, cycle spaces will be provided as part of the development to further encourage the uptake of sustainable modes of transport.

6.7 As such, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted for this proposal.