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L260803 SAV Cover Letter

Planning, Growth and Development Department
Manchester City Council
PO Box 532
Manchester
M60 2LA

Bradley Wiseman
Savills
12 Booth Street
Belvedere
Manchester
M2 4AW
[redacted]

SUBMITTED VIA THE PLANNING PORTAL REF: PP-15117629

SECTION 62 OF TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE AND PHYSICAL WORKS TO PROVIDE A 'PADEL TENNIS' FACILITY
ROOFTOP CAR PARK AT VICTORIA EXCHANGE (FORMER MARTIN HOUSE), HUNTS BANK, MANCHESTER, M3 1LD
LONDONMETRIC PROPERTY PLC

Introduction

We write on behalf of our client LondonMetric Property PLC, to apply for planning permission for the change of use and redevelopment of the rooftop at Victoria Exchange to provide a padel tennis facility.

This application follows the withdrawal of a previous submission in December 2025 to allow further consideration of design and residential amenity matters, particularly in relation to the appearance of the proposed development and its potential noise impacts.

The revised scheme has been informed by ongoing engagement with the Local Planning Authority and has evolved in response to officer feedback. The proposals are supported by a comprehensive evidence base which demonstrates that these matters have been satisfactorily addressed and that the development represents sustainable, policy compliant development.

As such, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable and should be granted planning permission at the earliest opportunity.

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015 (as amended), we confirm the following documents comprise the application:

- This covering letter;
- The completed application form and certificates;
- Design & Access Statement (Rev C) (July 2026) – Zebra Architects
- Noise Impact Assessment (Rev 9) (30 June 2026) – Hoare Lea
- Transport Statement (July 2026) – Astute Transport
- Vehicle Tracking, Drawing Ref: 23925-CWA-00-DR-A-04170 – Corstorphine & Wright
- The following Zebra Architects plans:
    - Drawing Ref: PL-100 D Site Plan - Location Plan & Existing
    - Drawing Ref: PL-102 D Site Plan – Proposed
    - Drawing Ref: PL-120 M Elevations - Elevation 1
    - Drawing Ref: PL-121 M Elevations - Elevation 2
    - Drawing Ref: PL-125 B Elevations - Elevation 3

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- Drawing Ref: PL-126 B Elevations - Elevation 4
- Drawing Ref: PL-105 D Existing GA Plan - Level 4 - Roof Plan
- Drawing Ref: PL-800 - GA Plans & Elevations - Container - 20ft F&B
- Drawing Ref: PL-820 A GA Plans & Elevations - Container - 40ft F&B
- Drawing Ref: PL-830 A GA Plans & Elevations - Container - Store
- Drawing Ref: PL-840 B GA Plans & Elevations - Container - WCs
- Drawing Ref: PL-127 A Existing Sections - Section AA, BB & CC
- Drawing Ref: PL-122 E Proposed Sections - Section AA, BB & CC
- Drawing Ref: PL-VD D Views Document - Existing & Proposed
- Drawing Ref: PL-110 F Proposed GA Plan - Level 2
- Drawing Ref: PL-111 F Proposed GA Plan - Level 3 (Mezzanine)
- Drawing Ref: PL-130 C - Proposed Canopy - Elevations
- Drawing Ref: PL-112 M Proposed GA Plan - Level 4 - Car Park Plan
- Drawing Ref: PL-113 J Proposed Roof Plan - Level 4 - Roof Plan

The application has been submitted and the requisite application fee (£610.00) paid electronically via the Planning Portal (Ref: **PP-15117629**).

The Application Site

The application site comprises an open air car park on the rooftop of the former Martin House building within Victoria Exchange, in Manchester city centre (the **'Site**'). Victoria Exchange incorporates the vacant floorspace within the former Martin House comprise vacant commercial floorspace and a multi-storey car park adjoining the AO Arena and Manchester Victoria Train Station.

The Site is located in a highly sustainable, city centre location, adjacent to Victoria Train Station and is accessible by private, public and sustainable modes of transport.
The Site benefits from two existing pedestrian access points. Visitors can access the building either at street level from Trinity Way via Trinity Tunnel, or from the existing pedestrian bridge within Manchester Victoria Station. Both routes provide access to Level 2 of Victoria Exchange.

The Site is located in Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of flooding. The Site is not located in a Conservation Area or statutory listed, but is adjacent to the Grade II listed Victoria Station. The Site is, however, physically separated from the listed building and is not visible from it.

Relevant Planning History

On 29 October 1992, planning permission was granted for: *"Mixed use redevelopment including indoor arena, multi storey car park, hotel, offices, retail, multi screen cinema, ancillary facilities and landscaping."* (App Ref: 42136) (the '**1992 Permission**')

The 1992 Permission covered the wider site and established a mixed use development incorporating what is now Victoria Exchange and the AO Arena.

A Certificate of Lawful Use was issued in 2025, which confirmed that the first and second floors within the former Martin House are able to be used for any 'Commercial, Business and Service' operation within Use Class E (App Ref: 141894/LE/2025) (the '**2025 Certificate'**).

A full planning application was submitted on 30 October 2025, (App Ref: 143558/FO/2025) for: *"The creation of padel tennis facility and associated external alterations comprising of rooftop covered court and pergola"* (the **'2025 Application'**). The 2025 Application was withdrawn on 19 December 2025 following feedback from the Local Planning Authority ('**LPA**') relating to design considerations.

The Proposed Development

The proposed development comprises the change of use of the Site and physical works to create a padel tennis facility.

The proposed development would comprise five, external padel tennis courts (each measuring 200 sq. m). Two of the courts will be covered by a lightweight, tensile fabric canopy measuring a maximum of 10 metres in height (to meet the minimum international standard for professional-level play) and enable the recreational use of those courts by enabling outdoor play to take place even in poor weather conditions. The proposed works also include associated player facilities ancillary to the main padel use, including the siting of converted shipping containers to provide player facilities such as changing rooms, toilets, a retail space (selling refreshments and padel tennis equipment) and pergola covered social area: toilets, a small scale café and bar area (serving food and drink) and pergola-covered social area. The proposed works also include the installation of netting surrounding the uncovered courts, to prevent the escape of balls.

Padel is a racquet sport that is typically played in doubles on an enclosed court a third of the size of a tennis court (20 x 10 sq. m). Unlike traditional tennis, the court has walls and the balls can be played off them in a similar manner to squash. Padel is the fastest growing sport in Europe and is now endorsed by the Lawn Tennis Association ('**LTA**') in the UK.

The proposed works at rooftop level will be the external elements of a wider padel tennis facility which will be created inside the former Martin House building within Victoria Exchange. The indoor elements of the facility (which do not require planning permission given that the proposed use within the building falls within Class E) will be configured across Levels Two and Three within the former Martin House and will include provision of a further four padel tennis courts, customer changing facilities (including showers and toilets), a club shop offering padel equipment for sale and/ or hire, socialising and viewing areas along with other ancillary spaces for customers/ guests, including a gym, wellness area and co-working space.

The composite facility will be operated by Padel Social Club, a premium padel tennis operator which has established clubs at London; Earls Court, The O2 (Greenwich), Wandsworth, Paddington and Babington House (Soho House). The site at Victoria Exchange will be Padel Social Club's flagship padel tennis operation in the north of England, and is intended to raise the bar of available padel tennis facilities in Manchester city centre.

Whilst the internal elements of the wider facility do not form part of this planning application, it is important to recognise that the proposed rooftop development is integral to the delivery of a padel tennis facility at Victoria Exchange. The rooftop courts will support the occupation of currently vacant internal floorspace, bringing underutilised parts of the building back into economic use. The proposal should therefore be viewed in the context of the wider facility being created and operated by Padel Social Club and the associated benefits arising from the reoccupation of vacant space within the building.

Permission is sought to allow the proposed padel facility will operate between 07:00 and 23:00, seven days a week. The use of amplified music at the rooftop bar is proposed to be restricted to 07:00 – 22:00, Sunday to Wednesday and 07:00 – 22:30, Thursday to Saturday.

Policy Considerations

The statutory development plan for Manchester City Council consists of the Core Strategy (adopted January 2012), Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan ('**PfE**') (adopted March 2024) and extant policies from the Unitary Development Plan ('**UDP**') (adopted June 2006) which were 'saved' in 2012 and remain in effect today.

Below we assess the proposed development against the relevant planning policies in the development plan and all other material considerations (including the National Planning Policy Framework) ('**NPPF**').

1. Principle of the Proposed Development

The Site is located within Manchester's defined City Centre; a key location for the increased diversity of activity, with an emphasis on family orientated activities, as set out in Policy CC10 of the Core Strategy. It follows that the proposed development will provide a new recreational facility in line with the requirements of the Policy.

Policy EN11 (Quantity of Open Space, Sport and Recreation) of the Core Strategy and JP-P7 of PfE sets out the Council's requirement for new open space, sport and recreation facilities in locations where new housing is being developed. The proposals are located close to existing and new residential development, including the development on the former Boddingtons Brewery Site (App Ref: 118831/FO/2018).

PfE policies JP-P4, JP-P6 and JP-P7, support new development that aids healthy lifestyles through active design principles ensuring physical activity is easy, practical and an attractive choice. The location of the proposed facility ensures that sporting activity is within an accessible location.

In addition to being supported by local policies, the proposed development would help meet a requirement for new tennis courts of 'all types' across Manchester, a requirement identified in the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy (2022).

The principle of providing additional sport and recreation space is an entirely appropriate land use for the Site and a City centre location. Furthermore, the development accords with the strategic objectives of the various documents that comprise the development plan in terms of improving provision of and access to sport and recreation.

2. Benefits of the Proposed Use

The proposed development will generate a number of important benefits which weigh in favour of the grant of planning permission and link directly to the proposed leisure use.

Chapter 8 of the NPPF relates to 'Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities' and explicitly states the need for facilities which integrate members whilst also promoting health and wellbeing. Paragraph 96 explains that decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

> "c) ***enable and support healthy lifestyles****, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure,* ***sports facilities****, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling*."

The proposed development accords directly with the strategic objectives of the NPPF. It will help to increase and diversify the sports and leisure facilities in Manchester to promote social interaction within a safe and accessible space.

The proposal will provide social and economic benefits to the surrounding area and members of the public.

3. Other Relevant Considerations

a. Design

This application is accompanied by a detailed Design and Access Statement ('**DAS**'), prepared by Zebra Architects, which sets out the evolution of the proposals and the design rationale underpinning the revised scheme.

The principal design issue identified by the LPA during the consideration of the 2025 Application related to the visual prominence of the covered courts and associated canopy structure within views from Trinity Way and

the wider area. It was suggested by officers that the design of the scheme could be revised in order to reduce the visual impact of the proposals in this setting.

In response, the Applicant has undertaken a comprehensive redesign of the rooftop layout and canopy structure. The most significant amendment has been the relocation of the entire scheme away from the Trinity Way frontage of the rooftop car park. The revised proposals set the covered courts back within the Site and substantially reduce the extent of the canopy structure which is visible from street level in the surrounding area. The design has also been amended to replace the previously proposed black canopy with a white tensile fabric instead. The lighter colour palette enables the structure to blend more effectively with the sky backdrop, reducing its perceived mass and allowing it to visually recede when viewed from surrounding areas. The combination of these changes significantly lessen the prominence of the development and ensure it sits more comfortably within the roofscape as a subordinate addition to the existing building.

The amendments are demonstrated within the submitted Existing, Previous and Proposed Views Assessment, which confirms that the revised canopy is no longer visible from street level along Trinity Way. The current application therefore directly addresses the principal design concerns identified during consideration of the 2025 Application and delivers a significantly improved scheme.

In relation to the proposed canopy, it is considered that the revised proposals achieve a high standard of physical design, whilst accommodating the operational requirements of a specialist padel facility. Tensile fabric structures are well suited to padel courts, providing the large covered playing areas required whilst maintaining a lightweight appearance. This minimises structural intervention, reduces visual bulk and provides a more elegant architectural solution than conventional roof forms. The material also allows natural light to penetrate the covered courts, maintaining an open air character whilst providing weather protection to support year round use.
The details provided with the application demonstrates that the proposed tensile fabric is a durable and high quality material, which has been utilised in numerous schemes across Manchester, including Castlefield Bowl, Crown Square at Spinningfields, the Manchester Regional Arena and the rooftop football facility at Old Trafford. The use of tensile fabric within a scheme of high quality design is therefore entirely appropriate within the context of Manchester City Centre, Victoria Exchange and the AO Arena.

The wider material palette incorporates repurposed shipping containers, timber and lightweight structures which respond positively to the site's industrial character and relationship with the existing car park and surrounding transport infrastructure. Collectively, these elements create a coherent and distinctive design that supports the delivery of a high quality leisure destination whilst respecting its context.

The Design & Access Statement demonstrates that the proposed development represents a high quality and contextually appropriate design solution. The revised proposals directly respond to Officer feedback, substantially reduce visual impacts compared to the 2025 Application and accord with the objectives of Policy DM1 and Core Strategy Policy EN1 in respect of design quality and local character.

b. Highways and Transportation

The proposed use of the Site as a padel tennis facility will not generate any unacceptable impacts on the safe or convenient use of the local highway network.

Core Strategy Policy T1 supports the use of active travel modes as an alternative to car usage. The site is located within a highly sustainable location, with exceptional accessibility. The City Centre location benefits from pedestrian and cycle links, as well as directly adjoining Victoria Station, which has national rail and tram links.

The existing AO Arena car park will be retained at lower levels which will provide parking close to the Site. It follows that the loss of car parking at roof top level is appropriate and the change of use to facilitate a leisure use, is well connected and served by existing sustainable travel modes.

A Transport Statement has been completed by Astute Transport, which demonstrates the proposals are in accordance with local and national planning policy requirements. The Statement confirms that whilst the proposals would remove some parking capacity, this will only result in a minimal reduction that will have no material impact on the operation of the existing multi storey car park or wider transport infrastructure. Therefore the proposals would not have any severe impact t on highway capacity or safety

c. Amenity

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by preventing new and existing development from contributing to, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of noise pollution. Paragraph 198 further requires planning decisions to mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts arising from noise and avoid significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life.

At a local level, Policy DM1 (Development Management) of Manchester's Core Strategy confirms that development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area and impact on amenity including privacy, light, noise and vibration.

Saved UDP Policy DC26 (Development and Noise) requires proposals to reduce impact on people working and living in or visiting the City and the effect of new development proposals that are likely to be generators of noise will be carefully considered.

The existing building is in commercial use and the prevailing contextual character of the site is comprises a mix of uses within the City Centre, including the AO Arena adjacent. It is acknowledged there are some sensitive receptors in the immediate vicinity and therefore, a Noise Impact Assessment ('**NIA**') has been prepared by Hoare Lea and is submitted in support of this application. The NIA assesses noise associated with plant, amplified music and padel play. The assessment is informed by an environmental noise survey undertaken in February 2025 and has subsequently been updated to reflect amendments to the proposed development following discussions with the LPA.

During pre-application engagement and consideration of the previous application, the principal issue raised by officers related to the proposed use of amplified music associated with the rooftop social area. In response, the Applicant undertook further acoustic assessment and revised the layout of the proposal, including relocating the bar and court areas further away from nearby residential properties. We therefore consider that the already low prospects for the proposed padel scheme to impact upon residential amenity have been further reduced through the process of redesign.

With regard to noise generated by padel play, Manchester City Council do not have specific noise guidance for padel tennis, therefore the NIA utilises Sport England Guidance and measured noise data from a number of operational padel facilities, including Earls Court, Fulham, Manchester and Solihull. The assessment concludes that the proposed padel activity is suitable for this location and complies with the relevant assessment criteria. A detailed noise model predicts a maximum noise level of 47dB at the nearest residential façade, which is below the applicable Sport England assessment criteria.

With regard to entertainment noise, the assessment has been undertaken in accordance with Manchester City Council's Planning and Noise Technical Guidance. The assessment demonstrates that music can be controlled so that maximum noise levels remain at least 5dB below the existing background sound level at the nearest residential receptors to satisfy the Council's adopted requirements. In the event that planning permission is granted for the proposed development, it is expected that a condition of approval would be included on the decision notice limiting the use of amplified music on the rooftop according to those maximum levels and in accordance with the hours of operation identified above.

The NIA also establishes noise limits for any plant associated with the development and concludes that the relevant standards can be achieved through appropriate design and mitigation measures.

The lighting proposals have been carefully developed to protect amenity whilst contributing to the functionality of the Site. The Lighting Strategy is set out in detail at Section 3.8 of the DAS and confirms the lighting will comprises floodlights on the courts to allow gameplay, outdoor lighting for wayfinding around the Site and lighting on the containers, to maximise the use of the Site. Lights serving the courts will only operate during hours of play to minimise energy use and any potential impacts.

The floodlights will be directed onto the courts to minimise spillage and court's five and six, closest to residential development will be located under a canopy to minimise impact.

The proposed development would not be detrimental to the amenity of users of the Site and surrounding land, in line with Policy DM1 of the Core Strategy and saved Policy DC26 of the UDP.

d. Sustainability

The proposed development is sustainable in its nature, given that it promotes the reuse and refurbishment of Victoria Exchange, optimising the use of sustainable floorspace and contributing positively to both the local economy and community. The proposal represents sustainable development by optimising the use of land within a highly accessible location.

The use of recycled shipping containers reduces the need for new building materials and construction on Site and the padel courts and associated equipment is sustainable in that the canopies, court surfaces and perimeter materials are all demountable and reusable.

The proposals comprise sustainable development in line with the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development, Policies JP-S1 and JP-C1 of PfE and Policies T1 and T2 of the Core Strategy.

e. Biodiversity Net Gain

As there is no existing natural habitat at the Site, the proposed development meets the 'de minimis exemption' and BNG is not applicable.

Summary and Conclusion

The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of an existing roof top car park to create a padel tennis facility, including five external courts and associated facilities.

The proposed development accords with the overarching objective of the NPPF to deliver sustainable forms of development. New sport and social infrastructure uses within the city centre is expressly supported by the Core Strategy and Places for Everyone.

The technical documents comprising the application have also demonstrated that the proposal is appropriate development and will not generate any unacceptable impacts on residential amenity or any other policy matter.

The evidence provided as part of this application demonstrates that the proposal accords with the strategic objectives and policies of the development plan. We request therefore that the application is approved without delay in accordance with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

We trust that the information and detail above and in the documents enclosed provides the LPA with sufficient information to consider the emerging development concept and provide advice on the principle of the proposed development.

In the meantime, should you require any clarification or additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Brad Wiseman or Sophie Moore at these offices.

Yours faithfully,

[redacted]

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Planning