MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Planning

Delegated Officer Report

Summary of application details

Application reference:	PLA-2026-000705
Application type:	Full planning permission
Proposal:	Use of land in association with mobile coffee van (Sui Generis) for a temporary period of 12 months.
Site address:	Land adjacent to Rochdale towpath off Deansgate. M3 4LY
Ward(s):	Deansgate
Date application valid:	29 June 2026
Applicant name:	Mr Luke Almond
Agent (if any):	
Case officer:	Michael Pearson
Recommendation:	Refuse
Date of recommendation:	18/08/2026

Description of site, building and/or area

The application relates to an area of land off of Deansgate and adjacent to the Rochdale Canal towpath. The site is a former disused access to the canal and is a cobbled street line by mature trees. Vehicular access to the site is constrained by the presence of bollards that line Deansgate. Said access leads to a dead-end with through access to other roads being prevented by the Rochdale Canal to the south and the Grade II listed Castlefield Railway Viaduct to the north.

The neighbouring area lies within Manchester City Centre, specifically that of the neighbourhood of Castlefield, and the Castlefield Conservation Area. With the locality lying within a conservation area, the local street scene is populated by a high number of listed buildings and non-designated heritage assets dating from Manchester's industrial expansion. This then gives the area a rich distinct character that is observed through the extensive use of red brick and major transport infrastructure in the form of the Rochdale Canal, and the two adjacent railway viaducts. Notwithstanding this, the locality is also subject to a high number of new developments in the form of multiple tall buildings with facades of glass and various forms of cladding, that contrast with but compliment the historic buildings within the area. Neighbouring uses form a mix of commercial class E retail uses and drinking establishment uses (Sui Generis), with many of the tall buildings in the area lying in residential use (Class C3).

Description of development

The application seeks planning permission for the temporary use of the application site in association with a mobile coffee van for a period of 12 months.

The van would be located on site trading hot drinks only, in line with the following hours:

- Monday – Friday: 07:00 – 14:00
- Saturday & Sunday: 08:00 – 14:00

Outside of these hours the van would be removed from the site.

Waste generated by the business will be stored within the vehicle itself and be transported off site each day.

Relevant planning history

Not applicable.

Consultation, notification and publicity responses

Publicity – A site and press notice were published. Neighbouring properties were notified of the proposals by letter. No representations were received.

Canal & Rivers Trust – No objection.

Environment Agency – No objection.

Environmental Health – No objection.

Greater Manchester Police – No objection received.

Highway Services – The proposals are unable to be fully assessed, with no information confirming how safe access and egress to the highway will be achieved.

Metrolink – No objection.

Relevant policies

The Places for Everyone Plan - Joint Development Plan Document, for nine of the 10 boroughs which make up Greater Manchester adopted on 21st of March 2024:
- Policy JP-Strat1 – Core Growth Area
- Policy JP-Strat2 – City Centre
- Policy JP-G8 – A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy JP-P2 – Heritage

The Manchester Core Strategy – Development Plan Document 2012-2027 (“the Core Strategy”) was adopted by the City Council on the 11th of July 2012:
- Policy SP1 – Spatial Principles
- Policy EC3 – The Regional Centre
- Policy CC1 – Primary Economic Development Focus (City Centre and fringe)
- Policy CC2 – Retail
- Policy CC4 – Visitors – Tourism, Culture and Leisure
- Policy CC9 – Design and Heritage
- Policy C10 – Leisure and the Evening Economy
- Policy EN1 – Design Principle and Strategic Characters Areas
- Policy EN3 – Heritage
- Policy EN15 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Policy EN19 – Waste
- Policy DM1 – Development Management

The Unitary Development Plan for Manchester – For the reasons outlined below the following saved UDP Policies are of relevance to this application:
- Policy DC10 – Food and Drink Uses
- Policy DC18 – Conservation Areas
- Policy DC19 – Listed Buildings
- Policy DC26 – Noise and Development

National Planning Policy Framework August 2026 (NPPF)
- Chapter 7 – Building a strong, competitive economy
- Chapter 14 – Achieving Well-Designed Places
- Chapter 15 – Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Chapter 20 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Other Legislative Requirements
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
National Planning Policy for Waste

Assessment

Principle of the Development

The proposal would see the use of land by a temporary mobile office van. It is not considered that the principle of development is acceptable. It would introduce a transient use to the area creating clutter in this part of the city centre. This would set a precedent for such uses across the city centre which would undermine the quality of place making.

Visual Amenity and Heritage

The application site lies within the Castlefield Conservation Area, known for its industrial and Roman heritage, and how this then sits alongside how quality modern development. As existing, the application site and surrounding former access road/slipway contribute positively to the neighbouring street scene and Conservation Area, through the presence of cobbles and mature trees. Whilst undeveloped, the site and access road's industrial heritage as a former access to the Rochdale Canal can be easily appreciated, together with views of the side elevation of the Grade II listed Castlefield Railway Viaduct.

The proposals would see the use of the application in association with the siting of a mobile coffee van. It is acknowledged that the proposals would not see the siting of any permanent physical fixings or structures to the site, but rather the siting of a mobile coffee van that would be present on site for six to seven hours a day. With such regular hours, totalling to 47 hours a week, that also include high traffic / peak times, the proposals are read to be a near permanent addition to the local street scene.



Photograph of mobile coffee van associated with proposed use.

The mobile coffee van, as pictured above, is a smaller vehicle than that of some typical mobile food trailers/trucks, notwithstanding this, the development is still that of a moveable vehicle. By virtue of the development's status as a moveable vehicle, it lacks the visual permanence of other features, buildings and structures within the street scene, and is more akin to that of a parked vehicle, which are read as temporary and impermanent features within the street scene.

Further to this and due to these factors, the siting of the mobile coffee van on site is considered would bestow the application site a haphazard appearance, with the van contributing to visual clutter, being read as a temporary and poorly sited addition to the local street scene when compared with the high quality design of both the Conservation Area's historical and modern additions. Despite the proposals only being proposed for a period of 12 months, this would not negate the visual impact identified above.

If approved the development would be an outlier within the local street scene, with such development being absent from the Conservation Area. This relationship would highlight the harsh contrast the development would have with the locality, further highlighting its inappropriateness. On this basis, the proposal is considered would detract and distract from the local street scene, causing a low level of harm to be caused to the setting of the Castlefield Conservation Area and Grade II listed Castlefield Railway Viaduct. No public benefits have been identified with the proposals that could outweigh the recognised harm. On this basis, the proposal fails to accord with Places for Everyone Plan Policy JP-P2, Manchester Core Strategy Policies SP1, EN1, EN3, CC9 and DM1, Saved Unitary Development Plan Policies DC18 and DC19, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Residential Amenity

Residential dwellings are located within the locality as previously mentioned within this report. Environmental Health do not object to the proposals. Taking into account the constrained hours of use, the presence of major transport infrastructure either side of the site, and the limited size of the commercial use in question, the proposals are considered acceptable in this regard and

therefore accord with Core Strategy Policy DM1, Saved Unitary Development Plan Policy DC26, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Ecology

The application site neighbours the Rochdale Canal, and a high number of mature trees. The Canal & Rivers Trust do not object to the proposals. In light of this, and how the proposal would only see the siting of a moveable vehicle, it is considered that there would be no unacceptable impact on local ecology, and therefore the development accords with Places for Everyone Plan Policy JP-G8, Core Strategy Policies EN15 and DM1, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Highway Safety

The application site lies off of Deansgate, with vehicle access being restricted with the presence of bollards, though a dropped kerb access still features (See photograph below).



Photograph of existing site access.

Highway Services within their consultation have stated that the submission has not made clear how the vehicle associated with the proposed use would gain access to and egress from the proposed location and whether this would require the existing bollards to be demounted. Highway Services then go onto state that they have concerns regarding the suitability of the proposed location and the potential highway implications arising from its operation, in particular reference to vehicle movements associated with the coffee van, and how this could affect highway safety. Notwithstanding this, the submission has been accompanied by evidence showing the proposed van on site (See photograph above), thereby suggesting that access is possible without the removal of the bollards at the site entrance. Furthermore, it is considered planning condition could secure the submission of swept path analysis and an operational management statement that would confirm the proposal could operate without detriment to highway safety. On this basis, the proposal is considered to accord with Core Strategy Policy DM1 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Waste Management

Supporting information within the submission makes clear that waste generated by the business would be stored within the vehicle and at the end of each working day be transported off site and be disposed of. Environmental Health do not object to this arrangement. On this basis, the proposals are acceptable in this regard and therefore accord with Core Strategy Policy EN19 and DM1, and the National Planning Policy for Waste.

Conclusion

In light of the above, it has been found that the development would contribute to visual clutter within the local street scene and Castlefield Conservation Area, seeing the siting of a low quality and visually temporary/impermeant structure in the form of a mobile coffee van. This development, even though only proposed temporarily, lacks the design quality to be a near permanent feature within the local street scene, for a 12 months period, that is populated by high quality development and acts as an arterial route in and out of Manchester City Centre. On this basis, the proposals would have an unacceptable impact on local visual amenity, causing a low level of harm to be caused to the setting of the Castlefield Conservation Area and Grade II listed Castlefield Railway Viaduct, and is therefore contrary to Places for Everyone Plan Policy JP-P2, Manchester Core Strategy Policies SP1, EN1, EN3, CC9 and DM1, Saved Unitary Development Plan Policies DC18 and DC19, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. On this basis the application is recommended for refusal.

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.

Article 35 Declaration

Officers have worked with the applicant/agent in a positive and proactive manner in determining this application by assessing the proposal against relevant planning policies and all material considerations, identifying matters of concern with the proposal and discussing those with the applicant/agent. However, the issues identified are considered to be so fundamental that it has not been possible to negotiate a satisfactory way forward and due to the harm which has been clearly identified within the reason for the refusal, approval has not been possible.

Recommendation: Refuse

Reasons for refusal

1) The use of the land by a mobile coffee van would add to visual clutter in the locality, impacting negatively on the appearance of the local street scene and Castlefield Conservation Area. The proposal would also not contribute positively to local place making. The development would have an unacceptable impact on the appearance of the local street scene, causing a low level of harm to be caused to the setting of the Castlefield Conservation Area, and Grade II listed Castlefield Railway Viaduct. There are insufficient public benefits to outweigh this harm. The development is contrary to Places for Everyone Plan Policy JP-P2, Manchester Core Strategy Policies SP1, EN1, EN3, CC9 and DM1, Saved Unitary Development Plan Policies DC18 and DC19, the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.