# PLANNING SUPPORT STATEMENT

Full Planning Application for Change of Use



**Barclay House, Whitworth Street West, Manchester, M1 5NG**

*Change of Use of Basement Level from a Snooker Club with Ancillary Bar (Use Class E) to an Indoor Bouldering / Climbing Facility & Gym with Café (Use Class E(d))*

| | |
|---|---|
| **Site Address** | Basement, Barclay House, Whitworth Street West, Manchester, M1 5NG |
| **Application Type** | Full Planning Application – Change of Use |
| **Prepared On Behalf Of** | Newco (Barclay House Manchester) Limited |
| **Prepared By** | Howard & Seddon Architects |
| **Local Planning Authority** | Manchester City Council |
| **Status** | Issue 1 |
| **Date** | 13th August 2026 |

HOWARD & SEDDON A.R.I.B.A.
CHARTERED ARCHITECTS
64 WASHWAY ROAD
SALE, CHESHIRE, M33 7RE
TEL NO. 0161 - 973 8296
FAX NO. 0161 - 962 3485
E-MAIL : ADMIN@HOWARDANDSEDDON.CO.UK

## Contents

1. Introduction
2. The Site and Surrounding Area
3. Relevant Planning History
4. Description of the Proposed Development
5. Planning Policy Context
6. Use Class Considerations
7. Planning Assessment
8. Waste Management and Servicing Strategy
9. Sustainability
10. Summary and Conclusion

# 1. Introduction

1.1 This Planning Support Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for a change of use at the basement level of Barclay House, Whitworth Street West, Manchester, M1 5NG. The application seeks planning permission for the confirmation of change of use of the basement, extending to approximately 900m² gross internal area (GIA), from its former use as a snooker club with an ancillary bar (last operational in 2019), to an indoor bouldering and climbing facility with gym and café floorspace.

1.2 This Statement has been prepared to accompany the application forms, drawings and supporting technical information, and should be read alongside those documents. It sets out the site and surrounding context, describes the proposed development, identifies the relevant national and local planning policy framework, and provides a reasoned planning assessment of the proposal against that framework. It concludes that the proposed change of use represents sustainable development that accords with the development plan and should be approved subject to appropriate conditions.

1.3 The Statement should be read in conjunction with the following application documents:

- Application Forms and Certificates of Ownership;
- Existing and Proposed Floor Plans (basement level);
- Site Location Plan and Block Plan;
- Waste Management and Servicing Strategy;
- Noise Impact Assessment Produced by Red Acoustics.

1.4 References to policy documents, plan status and procedural matters in this Statement reflect the position as understood at the time of writing (August 2026) and should be verified against the Local Planning Authority's current adopted position and any updated validation checklist prior to submission.

# 2. The Site and Surrounding Area

## 2.1 Site Description

2.1.1 Barclay House is a multi-storey Mixed Use building fronting Whitworth Street West, within the Knott Mill / Deansgate Locks part of Manchester City Centre, close to the boundary of the Castlefield Conservation Area and within the wider Great Jackson Street / Deansgate regeneration corridor. The application site comprises the basement level of the building only, accessed independently from the upper floors, and extending to circa 900m² GIA.

2.1.2 The basement was most recently occupied as a snooker club with an ancillary licensed bar, understood to have ceased trading in 2019. The space has therefore been vacant, or in a non-trading "mothballed" state, for a period in excess of five years. The layout retains a large, substantially column-free hall suited to sub-division for sport, leisure and assembly uses, together with WCs, changing facilities, plant space, a bar/servery area and ancillary storage.

2.1.3 A dedicated bin store is located at ground floor level, serving the basement unit, and currently accommodates two Eurobins – one for general waste and one for food waste – associated with the previous bar/leisure use.

## 2.2 Surrounding Context

2.2.1 The surrounding area is characterised by a dense mix of city centre commercial, leisure, hospitality and residential uses typical of this part of Manchester City Centre, including bars, restaurants, hotels and high-

density residential development along Whitworth Street West, Deansgate and the wider Knott Mill/Castlefield locale. The area benefits from excellent public transport accessibility, being within short walking distance of Deansgate-Castlefield Metrolink stop and Manchester Oxford Road and Deansgate rail stations, together with numerous bus routes along Whitworth Street West and Deansgate.

2.2.2 The site lies within a highly sustainable, city centre location where the Council's planning policies actively encourage a diverse and vibrant mix of uses, including leisure and health and fitness uses, to support both the daytime and evening economy.

## 3. Relevant Planning History

3.1 The building is understood to have benefited from an established use as a snooker club with ancillary bar, a use which falls within Use Class E(d) under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). However, we are not able to fully establish through Historical evidence the limits to the use of the associated Bar within the demise which could form a view that the former snooker club with ancillary bar may have operated as a Sui Generis use.

3.2 It is a matter of fact and degree whether the lawful use of the basement has been lost through abandonment given the period of vacancy since 2019; however, the application is submitted on a full, non-reliant basis – that is, it does not rely on an argument that the proposed use falls within the same or a more flexible use class as the former use, and instead seeks express planning permission for the change of use applied for.

## 4. Description of the Proposed Development

### 4.1 Overview

4.1.1 Full planning permission is sought for the change of use of the basement (circa 900m² GIA) from a snooker club with ancillary bar to a bouldering and climbing facility with ancillary gym and café floorspace. The proposal will re-purpose the existing large-volume basement hall, which is well suited by virtue of its floor-to-ceiling height, column spacing and structural form to accommodate bouldering walls and associated climbing structures.

4.1.2 The principal elements of the proposal are:

- A bouldering/climbing hall comprising a series of free-standing and wall-mounted climbing structures with impact-absorbing flooring, together with associated circulation and viewing areas;
- An ancillary fitness/training gym area (functional fitness, free weights and stretching/mobility space) directly supporting the climbing offer;
- An ancillary café/social zone providing food and beverage facilities for members and visitors, together with informal co-working and social seating;
- Reception, retail (chalk, footwear and small equipment hire/sales), changing rooms, showers, WCs (including accessible WC) and staff/back-of-house accommodation;
- Plant, storage and a dedicated Dry Goods Store Room within the basement to serve the café use;
- Retention of the existing ground floor bin store, continuing to accommodate two Eurobins (general waste and food waste), supplemented as necessary to reflect the operational needs of the new use (see Section 8).

4.1.3 The proposal is a change of use application only. No external alterations to the building envelope are proposed as part of this application.

### 4.2 Operational Characteristics

4.2.1 The facility is anticipated to operate on a membership and pay-as-you-go basis, typically between approximately 06:30 and 22:30 daily, reflecting comparable operators elsewhere in Manchester and other UK city centres. Ancillary gym and café uses will operate within the same hours as the principal climbing use and are integral to, and share the same basement footprint as, the primary leisure use.

4.2.2 The proposed use is expected to generate a broad range of visitors across the day, including a considerable "off-peak" daytime demand from local office workers, students and residents, which supports the vitality of the city centre outside of the traditional evening economy peak.

## 5. Planning Policy Context

### 5.1 The Development Plan

5.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the purposes of this application, the development plan comprises:

- The Manchester Core Strategy (2012–2027), adopted July 2012 and updated by the Addendum to the Manchester Core Strategy (March 2024) following adoption of Places for Everyone;
- Places for Everyone: the Joint Development Plan Document for Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan (2022–2039), adopted 21 March 2024, which now provides the strategic policy framework for cross-boundary and strategic matters and has replaced parts of the Core Strategy;
- Saved/extant policies of the Manchester Unitary Development Plan (UDP), where not superseded by the Core Strategy or Places for Everyone;
- Any adopted Supplementary Planning Documents relevant to the City Centre, design, or waste and recycling provision.

5.1.2 Manchester City Council is preparing a new Local Plan to replace the 2012 Core Strategy, which has progressed through Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 stages of consultation. As this document has not yet been adopted, it can only be afforded limited weight in decision-making at this stage, in accordance with paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), increasing as it progresses toward adoption. Its emerging direction of travel – supporting the diversification and intensification of city centre uses and encouraging sustainable, low-car development – is nonetheless supportive of the principle of this proposal.

### 5.2 National Planning Policy Framework

5.2.1 The NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of the application. Of particular relevance to this proposal are the Framework's objectives to build a strong, competitive economy; to promote healthy and safe communities by ensuring good access to a broad range of leisure and recreational facilities; to make effective use of previously developed land and existing buildings; and to support the vitality of town and city centres through the re-use of vacant floorspace. The presumption in favour of sustainable development set out at paragraph 11 of the Framework is engaged, and the proposal should be approved where it accords with an up-to-date development plan.

### 5.3 Key Development Plan Policies

5.3.1 The following policies of the Core Strategy are considered most relevant to the assessment of this application:

- Policy SP1 (Spatial Principles) – supporting sustainable growth focused on the Regional Centre and City Centre;

- Policy EC1 (Employment and Economic Growth in Manchester) – supporting economic development that contributes to job creation and the vitality of the City;
- Policy CC1 (Primary Economic Development Focus: City Centre and Fringe) – supporting a wide mix of commercial, leisure and complementary uses within the City Centre;
- Policy CC4 (Visitors – Tourism, Culture and Leisure) – supporting proposals which improve the appearance, use or accessibility of leisure and visitor-facing facilities within the City Centre;
- Policy DM1 (Development Management) – requiring all development to be well designed, appropriately serviced, and to protect the amenity of neighbouring occupiers;
- Policy T2 (Managing Transport) – supporting a reduction in reliance on the private car in favour of sustainable and active travel modes, consistent with the City Centre's highly accessible location;
- Policy PA1 (Developer Contributions) – where relevant, to secure any necessary mitigation.

5.3.2 Read together, these policies establish a strong and consistent policy support for the re-use of existing City Centre floorspace for leisure, health and fitness uses of the type proposed, subject to satisfactory management of amenity, waste and servicing impacts, addressed in the assessment below.

## 6. Use Class Considerations

6.1 The former snooker club with ancillary bar is understood to have operated as a Class E Use class although as previously mentioned this could also be viewed as a Sui Generis use, falling outside the standard Use Classes Order. The proposed bouldering/climbing facility, with its ancillary gym and café elements, is a form of indoor sport and recreation use Class E(d).

6.2 Given this uncertainty, and to provide the Local Planning Authority with the fullest opportunity to consider the proposal on its merits, this application is submitted as a full application for change of use, rather than relying on any assumed permitted change between use classes.

## 7. Planning Assessment

### 7.1 Principle of Development

7.1.1 The proposal reoccupies a substantial area of long-vacant basement floorspace (circa 900m²) in a highly sustainable City Centre location with an existing lawful leisure use. The re-use of vacant floorspace for an alternative leisure use is strongly supported in principle by both national policy, which seeks to make effective use of existing buildings and to support the vitality of centres, and by Core Strategy Policies CC1 and CC4, which actively promote a diverse range of leisure and visitor uses within the City Centre.

7.1.2 Indoor climbing and bouldering facilities have become an increasingly popular and mainstream leisure and fitness activity in UK cities, and the proposal would introduce a use not currently well represented within this part of Manchester City Centre, adding to the diversity and attractiveness of the local leisure offer, complementary to the surrounding bars, restaurants and hotels along Whitworth Street West and Deansgate.

### 7.2 Health, Wellbeing and Inclusive Access

7.2.1 The NPPF and Core Strategy both recognise the contribution that accessible sport and recreation facilities make to public health and wellbeing. The proposed facility will provide a supervised, indoor, weather-independent leisure activity accessible to a broad cross-section of the local resident, worker and student population, consistent with the Council's wider public health objectives. The basement layout will be designed to provide step-free access from the ground floor entrance, together with accessible WC and changing provision, in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations and Policy DM1.

### 7.3 Design and Layout

7.3.1 As the application relates solely to a change of use of an existing basement, with no external alterations proposed to the principal building envelope, the impact on the character and appearance of Barclay House and the surrounding streetscape, including the setting of the nearby Castlefield Conservation Area, is considered to be negligible. Internally, the existing hall is well suited to the proposed climbing structures, and the proposed layout has been designed to make efficient and safe use of the available floor-to-ceiling height, subject to confirmation of the required climbing wall clearances by the Applicant's specialist climbing wall contractor and Building Control.

7.3.2 Any plant, ventilation louvres or external signage required to support the new use will be designed sensitively and will be the subject of separate consent as necessary, with details to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority prior to installation.

### 7.4 Amenity

7.4.1 The basement location of the proposed use, below occupied upper floors and street level, provides an inherent degree of noise and vibration attenuation to nearby sensitive receptors when compared to a ground or upper floor leisure use. Nonetheless, a Noise Impact Assessment has been prepared to accompany this application, addressing structure-borne noise and vibration associated with bouldering falls and gym activity, plant noise, and noise breakout from the café/social areas, and recommending appropriate mitigation (including acoustic flooring build-up and plant attenuation) to protect the amenity of any residential or commercial occupiers within the building and surrounding properties. Subject to compliance with the recommendations of that assessment, secured by condition, the proposal is not considered to give rise to unacceptable amenity impacts, in accordance with Policy DM1.

7.4.2 Given the site's City Centre location, surrounded predominantly by established commercial, leisure and hospitality uses, and the proposed hours of operation, the proposal is not considered likely to result in a significant increase in activity beyond that which would reasonably be expected and accepted in this location.

### 7.5 Transport, Access and Parking

7.5.1 The site benefits from an exceptionally high level of public transport accessibility, being within easy walking distance of Deansgate-Castlefield Metrolink stop, Manchester Oxford Road and Deansgate rail stations, and numerous bus services. In accordance with Core Strategy Policy T2 and the City Centre's established approach to restraint-based parking, no dedicated car parking is proposed or considered necessary for the development. Secure cycle parking will be provided within the site or building curtilage, commensurate with the scale of the proposed use, to support sustainable travel in accordance with the Council's cycle parking standards.

7.5.2 Servicing (including deliveries to the café and Dry Goods Store Room, and waste collection) will be managed via the building's existing service arrangements from Whitworth Street West, with a Delivery and Servicing Plan to be secured by condition to ensure servicing activity does not conflict with pedestrian movement or the public highway.

## 8. Waste Management and Servicing Strategy

8.1 An existing dedicated bin store is provided at ground floor level, serving the basement unit, and currently accommodates two 1,100-litre Eurobins: one for general waste and one for source-segregated food waste, both associated with the site's former bar/leisure use.

8.2 The proposed café use will generate food waste and general/dry mixed recycling waste broadly comparable in nature, though likely somewhat greater in volume, to that previously generated by the ancillary bar. Dry goods associated with the café operation will be stored within a dedicated, purpose-fitted Dry Goods Store

Room located within the basement, separate from food preparation and waste holding areas, in accordance with good food hygiene practice.

8.3 The Applicant's Waste Management and Servicing Strategy, submitted with this application, sets out the following:

- Retention of the Two-Eurobin arrangement (general waste and food waste) within the existing ground floor bin store, with bin capacity and collection frequency to be kept under review against actual operational waste generation once trading commences;
- Provision of dedicated recycling receptacles (dry mixed recycling, glass and cardboard) within the café back-of-house area, to be transferred to the ground floor store for collection, consistent with Manchester's commercial waste and recycling requirements;
- A managed internal transfer route from the basement to the ground floor bin store that avoids conflict with customer circulation and the public highway;
- A commercial waste collection contract to be procured prior to occupation, with collection frequency and bin numbers to be confirmed with the appointed waste contractor and, if required, adjusted subject to the agreement of the Local Planning Authority.

8.4 Subject to a condition requiring the waste and recycling strategy to be implemented and thereafter maintained, the proposed arrangements are considered acceptable and consistent with Policy DM1 and the Council's waste and recycling guidance for commercial development.

## 9. Sustainability

9.1 The proposal represents sustainable development in the fullest sense: it makes productive re-use of an existing, previously developed basement in a highly accessible City Centre location, avoiding the need for new build floorspace and the associated embodied carbon; it is located to minimise reliance on the private car; and it supports the health, wellbeing and social objectives of national and local policy. Any new services, lighting, ventilation and mechanical plant will be specified to current Building Regulations energy standards, and further sustainability measures (such as energy-efficient LED lighting and low-water sanitaryware) will be incorporated as part of the fit-out, of the type ordinarily secured through Building Regulations compliance and, where applicable, any relevant condition.

## 10. Summary and Conclusion

10.1 This Statement has demonstrated that the proposed change of use of the basement at Barclay House, Whitworth Street West, Manchester from a former snooker club with ancillary bar to a bouldering/climbing facility with ancillary gym and café accords with the objectives of the NPPF and the development plan for Manchester, including Core Strategy Policies SP1, EC1, CC1, CC4, DM1 and T2.

10.2 The proposal will bring a substantial area of long-vacant City Centre floorspace back into active, beneficial use, diversifying and strengthening the leisure offer of this part of Manchester City Centre, supporting public health and wellbeing objectives, and making full and effective use of an existing building in a highly sustainable, well-connected location. The waste, servicing, transport and amenity implications of the proposal have each been assessed and found to be capable of being satisfactorily managed, secured where necessary by planning condition.

10.3 For the reasons set out in this Statement, it is respectfully submitted that the proposed development represents sustainable development which accords with the development plan when read as a whole, and that there are no material considerations which indicate that planning permission should be withheld. It is therefore requested that the Local Planning Authority grants full planning permission for the proposed change of use.