Active Travel England
West Offices
Station Rise
York
YO1 6GA
Tel: 0300 330 3000

Your Ref: 144791/FO/2025
Our Ref: ATE/26/00092/FULL
Date: 02 February 2026

Active Travel England Planning Response
Detailed Response to an Application for Planning Permission

From: Planning & Development Division, Active Travel England

To: Manchester City Council

Application Ref: 144791/FO/2025

Site Address: PENDULUM HOTEL, WESTON BUILDING, SACKVILLE STREET, MANCHESTER, M1 3BB

Description of development: Phased development comprising:
(a) Partial removal of existing structures and erection of two buildings comprising purpose-built student accommodation (sui generis), one of 50 storeys and one of 17 storeys with an 8-storey link, together with associated amenity space, external landscaping, highways works, and change of use of the Pendulum Hotel to purpose-built student accommodation; and
(b) Removal of remaining existing structures and erection of two buildings comprising purpose-built student accommodation (sui generis), one of 33 storeys and one of part-24 and part-8 storeys with a 1-storey link, together with associated amenity space, external landscaping, and highways works.

Notice is hereby given that Active Travel England's formal recommendation is as follows:

a. ~~**No Objection:** ATE has undertaken a detailed assessment of this application and is content with the submission.~~

b. ~~**Conditional approval:** ATE recommends approval of the application, subject to the agreement and implementation of planning conditions and/or obligations as set out in this response.~~

c. **Deferral:** ATE is not currently in a position to support this application and requests further assessment, evidence, revisions and/or dialogue as set out in this response.

d. ~~**Refusal:** ATE recommends that the application be refused for the reasons set out in this response.~~

1.0 Background

This application relates to the redevelopment of the Weston Halls and Pendulum Hotel site in Manchester to deliver purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). The site is located within Manchester city centre and is bounded by Charles Street, Sackville Street and Princess Street, within an area characterised by high levels of pedestrian activity and strong access to public transport, education facilities and city centre services. The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement, Transport Statement and Framework Travel Plan.

2.0 Summary: Active Travel Assessment

The submitted documentation establishes the scheme as a **car-free development**, with no on-site car parking provision, and places emphasis on walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport as the primary modes of travel. The active travel vision is focused on exploiting the site's highly accessible city centre location, providing inclusive pedestrian routes within the site, direct access from Charles Street, and convenient connections to the wider walking and cycling network, including the National Cycle Network.
Positive measures include the car-free approach, the provision of step-free and gently graded routes across the site to address a documented level change of approximately 2–2.5m, lift access from Charles Street to enable DDA-compliant access, and the inclusion of on-site cycle parking with a phased strategy that allows for expansion as later phases come forward. The proximity of National Cycle Network Routes 6 and 66, both accessible via Charles Street, provides strategic cycling connections across Greater Manchester.
However, the submitted material also identifies a number of limitations. Access for pedestrians and cyclists is concentrated primarily on Charles Street, with limited detail provided on how Sackville Street will function as an attractive and safe active travel frontage. While cycle parking is proposed, the quantum, distribution and long-term adequacy relative to the scale of the development are not clearly justified against recognised standards. In addition, the Framework Travel Plan remains high-level and does not yet demonstrate sufficiently ambitious, measurable targets or robust mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement.

ATE RAG rating: Amber

ATE recommendation:
The overall vision aligns with active travel principles, and the site location is inherently sustainable. However, further clarity and strengthening of the active travel strategy is required, particularly in relation to cycle parking provision, Travel Plan ambition and the quality of external active travel connections, to move towards full compliance with the ATE Toolkit.

2.0 Summary

2.1 Trip Generation and Travel Plan

The Transport Statement and Framework Travel Plan are predicated on the site's city centre location and car-free status, with trips expected to be predominantly undertaken by walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport. This approach is appropriate in principle for a PBSA development in this location and is consistent with the surrounding land use context and accessibility characteristics described in the Design and Access Statement.

The Framework Travel Plan sets out a range of measures intended to encourage sustainable travel, including the provision of cycle parking, information provision for residents, and reliance on the extensive surrounding pedestrian and public transport networks. However, the Travel Plan remains high-level and largely qualitative. While it recognises walking and cycling as key modes, it does not clearly set out quantified, time-bound mode share targets for walking, wheeling and cycling, nor does it robustly demonstrate how all day trips to, from and within the site by these modes have been forecast.

Monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are referenced at a framework level but lack detail. There is limited information on how baseline travel behaviour will be established, how progress against targets will be measured, or what remedial measures would be triggered if targets are not met. As submitted, the Travel Plan therefore falls short of demonstrating how active travel outcomes will be secured and embedded over time.

ATE RAG rating: Amber

ATE recommendation:
The Travel Plan should be strengthened to include clear, ambitious and measurable mode share targets for walking, wheeling and cycling, supported by a defined monitoring regime and enforceable remedial measures. Further evidence is required to demonstrate that all day trips are appropriately forecast and that active travel is prioritised in both daily operation and long-term management of the development.

2.2 Active Travel Routes, Off-Site Infrastructure and Access to Public Transport

The site benefits from strong existing walking and cycling connectivity. Pedestrian and cyclist access is proposed from Charles Street, which connects directly to key destinations within Manchester city centre. The surrounding area experiences high levels of pedestrian movement throughout the day, particularly between Manchester Piccadilly Station to the east and the University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University to the south and west, indicating that the site sits within a well-used and established pedestrian network.

Strategic cycling connectivity is a notable strength of the location. National Cycle Network Route 6 passes close to the western boundary of the site and is accessible via Charles Street, providing onward connections north towards Bury via Salford and south towards Sale and Stockport. National Cycle Network Route 66 runs close to the eastern boundary and is also accessible from Charles Street, offering connections towards Failsworth and Rochdale via the canal towpath. These routes provide high-quality, largely traffic-free links to a wide range of destinations.

The submitted documentation confirms that the site is within walking distance of a wide range of services, public transport facilities and education uses, consistent with a highly accessible city centre location. The Transport Statement confirms proximity to key highway routes, while also emphasising access to rail stations and bus services in the surrounding area. However, while accessibility is clearly strong, the application does not include specific proposals to enhance off-site active travel infrastructure, nor does it provide

detailed assessment of route quality, crossing points or potential severance along key desire lines, particularly in relation to Sackville Street.

ATE RAG rating: Amber

ATE recommendation:
While the site benefits from excellent existing connectivity, further detail should be provided to demonstrate the quality and safety of key walking and cycling routes, including crossing arrangements and frontage treatment. Opportunities to enhance local active travel infrastructure or contribute to off-site improvements should be explored to strengthen compliance with the ATE Toolkit.

2.3 Site Permeability and Placemaking

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2.4 Cycle Parking

The application proposes a total of **144 cycle parking spaces**, with **84 spaces** identified within the courtyard as part of a phased strategy that allows for retention and expansion when Phase B comes forward. The Design and Access Statement indicates that cycle parking is integrated with landscape features and supported by a flexible layout that can adapt over time. Double-stacked cycle storage is shown on submitted plans.
While the provision of cycle parking is welcomed, the submitted documentation does not clearly demonstrate how the proposed quantum has been calculated or how it aligns with LTN 1/20 or local standards for PBSA developments of this scale. Limited detail is provided on the quality of spaces, ease of access, provision for non-standard cycles, or the relationship between cycle parking locations and building entrances. As such, it is not possible to fully assess compliance with LTN 1/20 based on the submitted evidence.

ATE RAG rating: Amber

ATE recommendation:
Further justification is required to demonstrate that the quantity, distribution and design of cycle parking is compliant with LTN 1/20. This should include confirmation of parking standards used, provision for inclusive and non-standard cycles, and details of access, security and convenience to ensure cycle parking is attractive and usable for all residents.

3.0 Conclusion

The application benefits from a highly sustainable city centre location with excellent access to walking, cycling and public transport networks. The car-free approach, inclusive internal layout, proximity to National Cycle Network routes and emphasis on pedestrian accessibility are all positive and align with the objectives of the ATE Planning Application Assessment Toolkit.

However, the scheme does not yet fully demonstrate compliance with the Toolkit or LTN 1/20. Key deficiencies remain in relation to the ambition and robustness of the Framework Travel Plan, the justification and design of cycle parking provision, and the lack of detail on how the development will enhance or integrate with the surrounding active travel environment, particularly beyond Charles Street.

Overall ATE RAG rating: Amber

ATE position:
Active Travel England recognises the strong locational advantages of the site and supports the principle of a car-free, active travel–focused development. However, further information and refinement are required to address the identified deficiencies. Strengthening the Travel Plan, providing clearer evidence of LTN 1/20–compliant cycle parking, and demonstrating how the scheme will positively contribute to the surrounding active travel network are necessary for the application to move towards full compliance with the ATE Toolkit.