HERITAGE, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Site Address: 15 Cresswell Grove, West Didsbury, Manchester, M20 2NH

Local Planning Authority: Manchester City Council (MCC)

Application Reference: PLA-2026-000452

Proposal: Conversion and side/rear extension of existing semi-detached residential property to form 4 no. self-contained duplex apartments, erection of rear box dormer, rebuilding of front chimney stack, demolition of redundant rear chimney stack, formation of front and rear lightwells, replacement fenestration, associated hard and soft landscaping, car parking with EV charging, cycle storage, and refuse facilities.

Design / Architectural Agent: S W Foulkes Design

Date: September / October 2026

1. Executive Summary & Site Identification

1.1 Executive Summary

This Heritage, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by S W Foulkes Design in support of a full planning application at 15 Cresswell Grove, West Didsbury, Manchester, M20 2NH.

The application seeks full planning permission for the sensitive conversion, structural repair, and modest extension of an existing semi-detached Victorian villa to create four high-quality, sustainable, self-contained residential duplex apartments. The scheme incorporates:

- A replacement single/two-storey side-to-rear extension footprint regularising existing disjointed outriggers/garage additions;
- A modern standing-seam zinc/anthracite rear roof dormer serving second-floor accommodation;
- Rebuilding and structural consolidation of the prominent front chimney stack;
- Safe removal and demolition of an unstable, redundant internal/rear chimney stack;
- Formation of sunken lightwells to the front and rear to enable natural daylighting and ventilation to converted basement habitable accommodation;
- High-performance UPVC "heritage-style" sliding sash fenestration set within traditional 100mm masonry reveals;
- Dedicated secure cycle parking (4+ cycles), integrated bin storage enclosure, and 2 no. on-site vehicular parking spaces with Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCP) surfaced in permeable paving;
- Revisions omitting the previously noted rear raised patio (drawing revision 581-01-202P Rev A) to respect rear garden amenity and root protection areas.

The proposals have been formulated to secure a viable, long-term, low-carbon residential use for this non-designated heritage asset, respecting the character and appearance of the Albert Park Conservation Area in accordance with local and national planning policies.

1.2 Site Identification & Context

- Location: The application site comprises No. 15 Cresswell Grove, situated on the eastern side of Cresswell Grove, north of Lapwing Lane and west of Clyde Road, in the suburb of West Didsbury.
- Heritage Status:
  - The subject property is not a statutory Grade I, II*, or II Listed Building.
  - The site lies wholly within the Albert Park Conservation Area, designated by Manchester City Council in July 1988.
  - It is identified as an unlisted Victorian semi-detached residential dwelling contributing positively as a non-designated heritage asset to the prevailing townscape of late 19th-century suburban development.

- Immediate Built Form: Cresswell Grove is characterised by substantial semi-detached and detached red-brick Victorian villas (2.5 to 3 storeys plus basements), set back from the highway behind dwarf brick boundary walls, private driveways, and mature domestic tree planting. No. 15 forms the left-hand half of a mirrored semi-detached pair with No. 17 Cresswell Grove.

2. Legislative & Planning Policy Context

2.1 Statutory Duties

- Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990: Places a statutory duty upon Local Planning Authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- Chapter 5 (Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes): Promotes the efficient re-use of existing brownfield sites and residential buildings in accessible urban locations to deliver diverse, high-quality housing.
- Chapter 9 (Promoting Sustainable Transport): Advocates the provision of active travel infrastructure (cycle storage) and facilities for electric vehicles.
- Chapter 11 (Making Effective Use of Land): Supports upwards extensions, basement conversions, and internal reconfigurations that optimise housing capacity within existing built footprints.
- Chapter 12 (Achieving Well-Designed and Beautiful Places): Stresses that developments must be sympathetic to local character and history while not discouraging appropriate innovation or change.
- Chapter 16 (Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment):
    - Paragraph 195 / 200: Requires applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting, commensurate with the asset's importance.
    - Paragraph 203: In determining applications affecting non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgment will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
    - Paragraphs 205–208: Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset (here, the Albert Park Conservation Area), this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

2.3 Manchester Local Development Framework Core Strategy (Adopted 2012)

- Policy EN 3 (Heritage): Requires proposals to preserve or enhance the historic environment, the character, setting, and appearance of areas of heritage value (including Conservation Areas), and to protect significant features and architectural detailing.

- Policy DM 1 (Development Management): Ensures developments respect suburban amenity, character, scale, layout, parking standards, and environmental standards.
- Policy H 1 & Policy H 3 (Housing Distribution & North, Central and South Manchester): Directs high-density, sustainable residential developments to accessible suburban centres such as West Didsbury, close to district centres and high-frequency Metrolink corridors (West Didsbury / Burton Road).
- Policy T 1 & Policy T 2 (Sustainable Transport): Encourages active travel, cycle storage, and appropriate car parking infrastructure with EV facilities.

2.4 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

- Albert Park Conservation Area Declaration & Character Appraisal: Emphasises the preservation of red-brick elevations, stone bay dressings, vertical timber sash rhythms, chimney silhouettes, slate roof scapes, and verdant front gardens.
- Manchester Residential Design Guide SPD: Provides space, aspect, lighting, and amenity standards for converted and extended residential properties.

3. Assessment of Heritage Significance

3.1 Significance of the Albert Park Conservation Area

The Albert Park Conservation Area is characterised predominantly by late Victorian and Edwardian domestic architecture. Developed rapidly following the expansion of the Cheshire Lines Committee railway in the early 1880s, the area exemplifies the affluent mercantile suburban expansion of South Manchester.

Key attributes contributing to its special architectural and historic interest include:

1. Regular Urban Grain & Plot Layouts: Deep, linear plots accommodating substantial semi-detached and detached villas, established with consistent building lines set behind leafy front gardens.

2. Architectural Cohesion & Materiality: Dominance of red Cheshire/Accrington facing brickwork, decorative timber fascias/eaves, ornate stone/terracotta window dressings (cills, heads, canted two-storey bays), slate roof coverings, and bold, articulated chimney stacks.

3. Roofscape Silhouette: Steep gabled roofs with rhythmic chimney stacks articulating the party walls and flanking gables, which define the street view against the sky.

4. Verdant Streetscape: Mature boundary hedgerows, high tree canopies, and landscaped frontages providing a soft garden suburb character.

3.2 Significance of No. 15 Cresswell Grove (Host Asset)

No. 15 Cresswell Grove is an unlisted Victorian semi-detached villa dating from circa 1885–1895. It possesses local architectural and historic interest:

- Principal (West/Front) Elevation: Exhibits strong architectural interest and group value with No. 17. The two-bay front facade features a prominent canted ground-floor bay window with decorative stone lintels and mullions, a raised ground-floor threshold accessed by stone steps, vertical proportioned sash fenestration with stone cills and lintels at the first floor, and an intact front gable chimney stack that mirrors No. 17.
- Side (North) Elevation: Blank brick flank wall with off-centre secondary openings and historical ad-hoc additions (a later flat-roofed single-storey garage structure of negligible architectural value).
- Rear (East) Elevation: Historically more utilitarian and heavily altered. Previous additions (including the extended family room and modern fenestration inserted during the 20th century) have disrupted the original rear elevation plane.
- Interior: Considerably altered over successive decades with loss of primary decorative joinery and fireplaces. Retains traditional structural spine walls and timber joist configurations.

4. Detailed Description of Proposed Works

The proposals represent an integrated architectural scheme designed to repurpose the building efficiently across four levels (Basement, Ground, First, and Second/Attic Floor).

PROPOSED SCHEME SCHEMATIC

- ROOF LEVEL: Rear Dormer (Standing Seam Anthracite) + Rooflights (2 x Duplex Upper Floors)
- FIRST FLOOR: Reconfigured Living & Kitchens
- GROUND FLOOR: Extended Side/Rear Footprint
- BASEMENT LEVEL: Underpinning, Lightwells & Conversion

4.1 Accommodation Schedule

The development provides 4 no. high-standard self-contained duplex apartments, all meeting and exceeding the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) and Manchester Residential Design Standards.

4.2 Structural Consolidation & Rebuilding of Chimneys

- Front Chimney Rebuild: The drawings specify: "line of existing chimney stack to be rebuilt". The prominent front brick chimney stack on the party wall/front roof slope has suffered historic weathering and structural decay. It will be taken down carefully and rebuilt to its exact original height, profile, and corbel detailing using reclaimed/matching red facing bricks, lime-based mortar, and clay pots. This restores the street-facing architectural symmetry with No. 17.
- Rear Chimney Demolition: The drawings confirm: "line of existing chimney stack to be demolished / removed". The redundant secondary chimney stack to the rear roof slope is structurally compromised, no longer tied into functioning hearths, and internally encroaches upon habitable attic volume. Its removal is isolated to the non-public rear roof pitch.

4.3 Side/Rear Extension & Ground Floor Modifications

- The existing poor-quality single-storey side garage and disparate utility structures are removed and replaced by a unified, highly insulated brickwork addition measuring 10.32m along the northern side boundary.
- Built in facing brickwork to match the existing host building in colour, coursing, and English garden wall bond, with artificial stone heads and cills to window openings.
- The rotten timber lintel over the front ground-floor canted bay window will be replaced with a structural steel beam (RSJ) to structural engineer's details, preserving the masonry integrity of the bay.
- The ground-floor timber floor structure will be raised 200mm, reducing internal basement stair head height requirements while maintaining compliant ceiling heights (2.28m–2.48m clear headroom).

4.4 Rear Dormer Construction

- Located entirely on the rear (east-facing) roof pitch.
- Materials: Clad in standing seam metal sheet cladding in an anthracite grey finish, providing a crisp, contemporary aesthetic that contrasts honestly with the natural slate roof tiles.
- Dimensions & Hierarchy: Subordinate to the main roof plane, set down well below the main ridge line, set in substantially from the side gable and the party wall boundary with No. 17, and set back from the rear eaves line.
- Fenestration: Houses 2 no. heritage-style sliding sash double-glazed units symmetrically aligned over the lower-floor masonry openings.

4.5 Basement Conversion & Formation of Lightwells

- The existing cold, unhabitable cellar void is deepened, waterproofed (Type C cavity drain membrane), and converted to provide peaceful, well-insulated sleeping quarters for Apartments 1 and 2.
- Front Lightwell: A modest, flush-guarded lightwell formed to the front elevation serving Bedroom 1 of Apartment 1. Discreetly screened by front boundary treatments, matching existing art stone cill and head profiles.
- Rear Lightwells: 2 no. sunken lightwells formed to the rear elevation serving bedrooms in Apartments 1 and 2, providing natural light, passive cross-ventilation, and Building Regulations Part B escape access.

4.6 Replacement Fenestration & Conservation Rooflights

- Replacement of aged, non-original timber/aluminium/early-UPVC windows with UPVC 'heritage-style' sliding sash double-glazed frames, detailed with authentic slim sightlines, run-through sash horns, and traditional Georgian-proportioned dividing bars.
- All window frames are recessed a full 100mm into the brickwork reveals, recreating the authentic deep shadow lines critical to Victorian facade modelling.
- Low-profile "heritage-style" metal conservation rooflights (flush with slate line) installed to provide daylighting to top-floor internal stairs and studies.

4.7 Access, Parking & Site Infrastructure

- Access & Parking: Widened vehicle crossover constructed to MCC Highways standards; driveway finished in fully permeable surfacing; 2 no. allocated off-street parking spaces provided with 2 no. dedicated EV charging points (VCP).
- Cycle Storage: Secure, covered cycle storage facility accommodating 4+ bicycles sited conveniently in the rear garden amenity space.
- Refuse & Recycling: Dedicated, screened bin enclosure positioned adjacent to the cycle store, with level gated side access to the street for collection days in accordance with MCC Waste Management guidelines.
- Trees & Landscaping: The rear raised patio has been omitted (Revision A) to eliminate tree root conflicts with neighbouring canopies (T1–T4).

5. Impact Assessment on Character & Appearance

5.1 Impact of the Rear Dormer

- Visual Enclosure: The rear dormer is sited on the secondary, non-public rear elevation. Due to the high building bulk of Cresswell Grove and the parallel residential blocks along Clyde Road, the dormer cannot be viewed from the public highway.
- Design Subordination: In accordance with the Manchester Residential Design Guide SPD, the dormer remains visually subordinate:
  - It occupies less than 60% of the rear roof pitch;
  - It leaves the historic slate roof slope visible on all sides (sides, ridge, and eaves);
  - The selection of dark anthracite standing-seam cladding visually recedes into the background slate roofscape.

5.2 Fenestration & UPVC "Heritage-Style" Sliding Sashes

- 100mm Deep Reveal Setting: A common failing of standard modern UPVC replacements is flush-fitting frames. In this scheme, the architect's drawings stipulate that all new UPVC frames must be set 100mm back into the masonry reveals. This preserves the historic shadow line, masonry relief, and structural appearance of the Victorian openings.
- Architectural Detailing: The proposed heritage units incorporate true vertical sliding sashes, authentic transoms/mullions, and run-through sash horns, ensuring the external visual appearance is indistinguishable from painted timber sash frames from the public street.
- Thermal Performance: Achieves high acoustic and thermal insulation (low U-values), directly advancing national carbon-reduction objectives without compromising visual amenity.

5.3 Front and Rear Lightwells

- Front Elevation: The front lightwell is strictly limited in width and depth to serve a single window opening. Positioned adjacent to the deep bay window and set behind

retained front boundary planting/walls, it will not be perceptible in oblique street-level views along Cresswell Grove.
- Rear Elevation: The rear lightwells are functional domestic interventions located within the private enclosed garden, maintaining the historic solid-to-void masonry balance above ground.

5.4 Chimney Stack Works: Rebuilding vs. Removal

- Front Stack Rebuild (Positive Heritage Benefit): The front stack forms part of a prominent skyline pair shared with No. 17. Structural restoration and rebuilding to original details halts progressive decay and actively enhances the conservation area streetscape.
- Rear Stack Demolition: The rear stack is visually obsolete, internal to the private roof valley, and entirely imperceptible from public vantage points. Its careful removal does not erode the historic roofscape experienced from the public realm.

5.5 Front Curtilage, Parking & Boundary Treatments

- The front curtilage retains its established front garden boundary line.
- Rather than hard surfacing the entire front garden, permeable resin/block paving is utilized with soft boundary landscape buffers.
- The provision of 2 off-street EV-equipped spaces reduces on-street parking congestion along Cresswell Grove, directly resolving highway amenity concerns while integrating modern sustainable transport infrastructure.

6. NPPF Policy Balance & Justification

6.1 Level of Harm

Paragraphs 205–208 of the NPPF require the decision-maker to categorise any potential heritage harm as either substantial or less than substantial:

- Substantial Harm: Reserved for proposals involving total demolition or utter destruction of an asset's significance.
- Scheme Assessment: The scheme preserves the host building's principal front facade, restores the front chimney, maintains historic masonry, and confines larger interventions (dormer and side/rear extension) to secondary elevations.
- Consequently, the proposed alterations result in no harm to the public appreciation of the Albert Park Conservation Area, and at most, a negligible degree of "less than substantial harm" at the lowest end of the spectrum to the private, rear fabric of the non-designated asset.

6.2 Public Benefits

Under NPPF Paragraph 208 and Policy EN 3 of the Manchester Core Strategy, this minimal "less than substantial harm" is overwhelmingly outweighed by substantial public benefits:

1. Housing Delivery: Delivers 4 no. high-quality, sustainable duplex dwellings in a highly sustainable, accessible location within West Didsbury, supporting MCC housing delivery targets.

2. Heritage Asset Conservation: Secures the long-term viable future of a deteriorating Victorian villa; fully funds the structural rebuilding of the prominent front chimney stack and the replacement of the rotting bay window lintel with a permanent steel RSJ.

3. Removal of Detracting Elements: Replaces an unsympathetic modern garage and dilapidated rear additions with a coherent, high-quality brick-built side/rear extension.

4. Climate Change & Sustainability: Upgrades building envelope insulation (floors, roofs, cavity linings, double glazing), integrates 2 no. EV charging points, and provides 4+ cycle spaces.

5. Drainage & Ecology: Installs SuDS-compliant permeable front paving; omission of the rear patio preserves mature tree root protection areas (T1–T4).

7. Conclusion

The proposed conversion and enhancement of 15 Cresswell Grove has been designed with sensitivity to the architectural interest of the host dwelling and the prevailing character of the Albert Park Conservation Area.

1. Compliance with Section 72: The architectural integrity of the front elevation is preserved and enhanced through the restoration of the front chimney stack, repair of the bay window, and installation of deeply recessed (100mm) heritage-detailed sash windows.

2. Subordinate Interventions: The rear dormer, rear lightwells, and side extension are modest, well-proportioned, and positioned away from public street view.

3. Optimised Sustainable Re-use: The scheme delivers four sustainable, generously sized duplex homes within an existing residential footprint, adhering to all spatial, amenity, and transport standards.

4. Planning Balance: In accordance with NPPF Chapter 16 (paras 195–208) and Policy EN 3 of the Manchester Core Strategy, the public benefits generated by this investment overwhelmingly outweigh any negligible, less than substantial harm.

Manchester City Council is respectfully requested to support this sustainable conversion and grant full planning permission.

Accommodation Schedule Breakdown

Unit	Type / Configuration	Level	Gross Internal Area (sq m)	Gross Internal Area (sq ft)
Apartment 1	2-Bed / 4-Person Duplex	Ground & Basement	75.3 m^2	811 ft^2
Apartment 2	2-Bed / 4-Person Duplex	Ground & Basement	74.4 m^2	801 ft^2
Apartment 3	1-Bed / 2-Person Duplex	First & Second	63.9 m^2	687 ft^2
Apartment 4	1-Bed + Study / 2-Person Duplex	First & Second	64.3 m^2	692 ft^2
Total	Site Area		277.9 m^2	2,991 ft^2