

21 March 2025
L250321 SAV Cover Letter



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SUBMITTED VIA PLANNING PORTAL REF: PP-13816957

Dear Sir or Madam,

**SECTION 62 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
APPLICATION FOR A TEMPORARY CHANGE OF USE TO AN INDEPENDENT SPECIAL SCHOOL
(CLASS F.1), ALONG WITH ASSOCIATED WORKS INCLUDING PROVISION OF A MULTI-USE GAMES
AREA AND OUTDOOR YARD
LINK HOUSE, FINLAN ROAD, STAKEHILL INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, M24 2RW
MEADOWS CARE LIMITED**

Introduction

We write on behalf of our client, Meadows Care Limited (the '**Applicant**'), to apply for planning permission for the temporary change of use of Link House at Stakehill Industrial Estate, from 'Office' (Class E(g)(i)) to an 'Independent Special School' (Class F.1). The proposals include provision for the creation of a multi-use games area ('**MUGA**') and outdoor play space.

The proposed development will facilitate the reoccupation of vacant floorspace at the Site by Meadows School (the '**School**'). Link House has been identified as a suitable location for the School on account of its non-typical catchment requirements and the reasonable driving distance for students in Manchester and Stockport.

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

- This cover letter;
- The completed application form and certificates;
- The following plans, prepared by Cadence Architecture:
 - Site Location Plan Ref: 120ROC-100;
 - Existing Site & Roof Plan Ref: 120ROC-101;
 - Proposed Site & Roof Plan Ref: 120ROC-102A;
 - Existing Ground Floor Plan Ref: 120ROC-103;
 - Existing First Floor Plan Ref: 120ROC-104;
 - Existing Elevations – Sheet 1 Ref: 120ROC-105;
 - Existing Elevations – Sheet 2 Ref: 120ROC-106;
 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan Ref: 120ROC-107;
 - Proposed First Floor Plan Ref: 120ROC-108;
 - Proposed Elevations – Sheet 1 Ref: 120ROC-109;
 - Proposed Elevations – Sheet 2 Ref: 120ROC-110;
 - Street Scene Ref: 120ROC-111; and
 - MUGA Elevations Ref: 120ROC-112.
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by Meadows School; and
- Transport Statement, prepared by Ashley Helme Associates.

Offices and associates throughout the Americas, Europe, Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East..

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The planning application has been submitted and the requisite planning application fee (£586)¹ paid electronically via the Planning Portal (Ref: **PP-13816957**).

The Application Site

The application site comprises Link House, on Finlan Road in Stakehill Industrial Estate (the 'Site'). The Site is an existing office building measuring approximately 620 sq. m (GIA), with surface car parking and soft landscaping to the north, east and west of the building. The previous tenant, MID Digital Solutions, was forced to cease operations at the Site, which has now remained vacant for approximately 18 months.

A dense hedgerow and trees are located along the southern boundary of the Site. The site layout and floor plans are illustrated on Drawings: 120ROC-102, 120ROC-107 and 120ROC-108.

The Site is accessed via Finlan Road to the east of the existing building and includes a car park for the premises which provides parking for up to 34 cars.

The Site is surrounded by a variety of industrial, logistics and distribution uses which are common to premier industrial estates across the UK. The wider Stakehill Industrial Estate is a successful commercial area with the majority of industrial units let.

Further to the north, the Site is connected to the A627(M) and Rochdale Road (A664). The Site is within a two minute walking distance from the Stakehill Roundabout bus stop to Rochdale and Middleton.

The full extent of the Site is identified by the red line on the Site Location Plan.

Background to the Proposal

The Meadows School is an independent school which is part of Meadows Care. Meadows Care is a company who run small care homes for young people, with high staffing ratios to provide the care and support required. The majority of Meadows Care pupils have a history of disrupted educational experiences, including poor attendance in previous schools with many of the young people having clear indications of having a Special Educational Need but have not been previously assessed.

Meadows School work closely with communities and alternative providers across Greater Manchester to work to provide appropriate and specialised teaching for young people in the area.

The School is relocating from their existing premises at Egerton House, Wardle Road in Rochdale, which is no longer fit for purpose. The Applicant is receiving an increase in referrals and are therefore required to expand as a school. The existing premises also does not have any outdoor play space which is a limitation to the education and what they can provide in terms of curriculum. They currently utilise private games and play spaces where they are required to travel to and from. The existing School has an Ofsted rating of 'good', which will never be exceeded without access to outdoor play space.

The Proposed Development

In order to meet the requirements of Meadows School, this application seeks planning permission for a temporary change of use to a school (Class F.1) along with all associated works.

The formal description of development is as follows:

"Temporary change of use to an independent special school (Class F.1), along with associated works including provision of a multi-use games area and outdoor yard"

¹ Calculated on the basis of 'Other Operations' and a site area of 1,854 sq. m.

The proposal seeks to facilitate the occupation of vacant floorspace through the introduction of a positive use which will also contribute to facilities and services for local children and those further afield.

As set out above, the application is for a temporary change of use. The Applicant requests the temporary use is permitted for a period of 15 years, from the first date of occupation.

The proposed school will cater to a maximum of 40 students at one time, with an initial enrolment of approximately 26 pupils. As set out above, the school is classified as an independent special school with mixed gender entry and provides education for students aged 11-17 years old. Disability access will be incorporated into the internal arrangements to ensure full accessibility for all students. There will be a maximum of nine teachers / members of staff present on site during opening times for the school.

The proposal includes an outdoor yard and MUGA located to the west of the building, within the existing car park. The MUGA measures 150 sq. m and will be enclosed with a net roof (3m in height) to ensure exercise and games are maintained within the MUGA. The proposal also includes an outdoor yard which is provided to allow space for young people who want to be outside but not necessarily involved in games. The proposed outdoor yard is shown on the Proposed Site and Roof Plan, Ref: 120ROC-102 and includes a 2.4m high green paladin fence to ensure the safety of all students.

As the proposed change of use is temporary, the Applicant is willing to accept a condition which requires them to return the car park to its previous condition when the temporary permission expires.

The redeveloped site will provide a total of 19 car parking spaces (including a disabled space), to provide for staff and visitors, which is in accordance with the Council's parking standards set out at Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy.

The refuse storage and collection will remain as existing and the proposed change of use is not likely to materially increase the existing situation.

Relevant Planning Policy

The development plan relevant to the determination of the application consists of:

- Rochdale Core Strategy (October 2016) (the '**Core Strategy**'); and
- Saved Policies of the Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan and Policies (June 2006) (the '**UDP**').

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**').

Assessment of Proposed Development

The Principle of the Proposed Use

Policy C7 of the Core Strategy relates to delivering education facilities and states that improved facilities will be achieved through providing educational facilities in appropriate and accessible locations amongst other criteria. The Core Strategy recognises that there is a need to improve the quality of education facilities to improve the range of skills necessary to make the borough more competitive and productive.

The proposal is for an independent special school with some ancillary office functions relating directly to the primary education use. The School has provided specialist care to young people in Rochdale for approximately 15 years, having been established at Egerton House, on Wardle Road, in 2010. The service they provide offers a unique, creative and individualised approach to education who support the core GCSE curriculum by fostering an additional enterprising approach to learning through an environmentally driven curriculum.

The proposal provides a key educational requirement for a specialist group for which there is a demonstrable need. The Site is within a sustainable location with good access to surrounding areas where the majority of students live. The Site is located within approximately 40 minute driving times from Manchester and Stockport which provides the ideal location for the general catchment area of Meadows School.

The proposed use is considered to have wider social and economic benefits by providing an important education facility for specialist needs in a sustainable location. It is demonstrated that the proposed Class F.1 use is acceptable and accords with the wider strategic aims of the Core Strategy by providing improved education opportunities.

Loss of Employment Use

Stakehill Industrial Estate is allocated as Primary Employment Zone (Policy EC/2) within the adopted UDP and relates to primary employment zones. The policy states that development for industrial, business and warehouse uses will be permitted subject to certain criteria as set out. The policy continues by stating that:

'Other uses will not be permitted unless it can be shown that they are ancillary and complementary (both in terms of size and function) to the industrial and business nature of the employment area.'

The existing site of Link House is a small office building set within the wider Stakehill Industrial Estate, which consists primarily of general industrial, warehousing and distribution uses. It follows that the existing office use is itself ancillary to the wider function of the industrial estate. Furthermore, the proposal simply seeks permission to change the use of the existing building (along with an associated package of minor physical works) to enable it to be used as an independent special school. The proposal doesn't involve any increase in floorspace or other meaningful built development. It follows that the proposed use is clearly ancillary to the existing industrial nature of Stakehill Industrial Estate and therefore accords with Policy EC/2.

In addition, Policy E2 of the Core Strategy relates to 'increasing jobs and prosperity' and is of relevance in the assessment of the proposals. Part 1(g) of Policy E2 provides circumstances in which non-employment uses within Stakehill Industrial Estate is permissible, including where:

- i) there is a proven lack of demand for the site for a suitable employment use, it's not suited in land use terms to any employment use and there is a satisfactory employment land supply in the area; and
- ii) it would not impact on the ability of existing businesses to operate satisfactorily; and
- iii) it will enable high quality mixed use employment development on strategic corridors, close to centres or transport interchanges, or
- iv) it will help support the delivery of regeneration proposals in a priority regeneration area; or
- v) redevelopment of the site would enable reinvestment that will provide jobs in the borough; or
- vi) development would remove a severe environmental problem.

The Site has been vacant for a period of 18 months and has been marketed as office space during this time with no demand being received from prospective occupiers. The lack of market interest in the Site is attributed to the function of the wider Stakehill Industrial Estate, where there are no other office uses, combined with a general lack of interest in secondary office buildings generally, originating from changes to office working patterns since the coronavirus pandemic. On the basis that there are no office tenants willing or interested in occupying the Site we conclude that there is a proven lack of demand for continued employment use. Furthermore, the Site is clearly not suited to redevelopment for other employment uses, for which there remains a satisfactory supply of land in the area.

The proposal would not impact on the ability of existing uses to operate satisfactorily within the vicinity and would remain ancillary to the wider industrial estate. The scale and operations of the proposed temporary use ensure that there is no material impact to the wider operations. It is therefore demonstrated that the proposal accords with Policy E2 of the Core Strategy.

As set out above, the proposal would provide approximately 9 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs from the Site in addition to providing important education facilities for a specialist group. The education of the young people from the Site would have direct positive social and economic benefits.

This submission is for a temporary period of 15 years to allow the Site to return to a Class E(g(i)) use following this period of time.

The proposed use will continue to operate within the boundaries of the site and does not require any works that will constrain the continued viability or deliverability of surrounding businesses. In contrast, the proposal provides a more active and attractive space by the Applicant operating from the premises.

The proposed specialist education provided by the proposals will meet an identified need for new and expanded education facilities in the Borough, which would outweigh the temporary loss of an existing office use and does not detract from the ongoing industrial uses within the wider estate. It is demonstrated that the proposal complies with the requirements of Policy E2 of the Core Strategy and Policy EC/2 of the UDP.

Highways and Transportation

As previously set out, the existing car parking allows for 34 spaces, one of which is a disabled bay. Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Schedule of Parking Standards' and includes the requirements for amount of car parking for different use classes. The proposal reduces the amount of car parking on Site and proposes a total of 19 spaces, including amends to the existing disabled bay to propose one of an appropriate size. The parking arrangements therefore accord with the requirements as set out in Appendix 5.

The Site is located within an established industrial estate with excellent transport links including a 2 minute walking distance to the Stakehill Roundabout bus stop with links to Rochdale, Middleton and further afield. The location of the proposals is considered to be highly sustainable and therefore accord with the strategic aims of the development plan.

Design and Amenity Considerations

There are no external alterations proposed to the existing building as part of the application, however the proposal includes provision of a MUGA and outdoor yard for students, which is a key requirement of the Applicant. The proposed materials are in keeping with the commercial nature of the area in which the Site is located and would not detract from the character of the wider industrial estate. We therefore consider that the proposed development is acceptable with regard to Policies P1, P2 and P3 of the Core Strategy.

The proposal is for a change of use from an existing office to an independent special school within an established industrial estate. The proposed change of use would not result in any material increase in visitors to the Site. The nature of the operations are not considered to give rise to any increase in noise or air pollution over and above existing operation and there are no residential properties within the vicinity which could be impacted upon by the proposed change of use and is therefore considered acceptable.

Summary and Conclusion

The application seeks planning permission for the temporary change of use to an independent special school (Class F.1).

The proposed development will facilitate the occupation of vacant floorspace at the Site by an independent special school and provide an important facility for young people in the area.

The proposed development for accords directly with the overarching objectives of the Core Strategy.

Whilst there will be a temporary loss of exclusively Class E(g) floorspace; the allocation for the Site is specifically for industrial uses and would therefore not detract from the overarching strategic allocation. The

proposal will provide significant benefits for local people including specialist care for young people. The small scale nature of the proposal means it will not have any material impact on employment land supply within Rochdale and importantly does not impact on any B2 or B8 uses within Stakehill Industrial Estate. The proposed use improves education facilities in the Borough and provides benefits for local people in accordance with Policy C7 of the Core Strategy.

The proposed use will not generate any other unacceptable impacts that would conflict with relevant policies within the development plan. The use is entirely appropriate for the Site having regards to its established function and location.

Critically, the proposed development accords with the overarching objective of the NPPF to deliver sustainable economic development. It will facilitate an improved facility for young people whilst ensuring that a vacant office building is appropriately utilised.

We trust that the details included within this submission provide you with sufficient information to register and consider this application. We will endeavour to contact you within the next few days to establish your timetable for decision making.

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

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Savills", written in a cursive, stylized script.

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