



Paul Butler Associates

Planning, Development & Heritage Consultants

Signature Estates NW Ltd

Unicorn House, Cheetham Street,
Middleton, M24 4DG

Planning Statement

February 2025

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Paul Butler Associates on behalf of Signature Estates NW Ltd in support of a planning application in relation to Unicorn House, Cheetham Street, Middleton, M24 4DG. The application is for 'Change of use of vacant building to 12 apartments (use class C3), with associated alterations, car parking and landscaping'.
- 1.2 The proposal involves the redevelopment of a vacant building and previously developed land to provide much needed housing in a sustainable and accessible location which will contribute to meeting local needs.
- 1.3 To provide a clear understanding of the application proposal this statement includes:
- A description of the application site and surrounding area;
 - A review of relevant planning history;
 - A description of the proposed scheme;
 - A review of national and local planning policies of relevance to the scheme;
 - An appraisal of the scheme against relevant planning policies and an assessment of the scheme in relation to its immediate and surrounding context; and,
 - A conclusion.
- 1.4 The application should be read alongside a series of drawings prepared by SP Architects and the following documents:
- Crime Impact Statement prepared by Greater Manchester Police Design for Security.
 - Noise Impact Assessment prepared by Compliance 4 Buildings Ltd.
 - Energy Statement prepared by Compliance 4 Buildings Ltd.
 - Design and Access Statement prepared by SP Architects.

- Heritage Statement prepared by Paul Butler Associates.

2. The Application Site and Surrounding Area

- 2.1 The application relates to Unicorn House, Cheetham Street, Middleton, M24 4DG. The site is outlined red on the site location plan (figure 2.1 below).

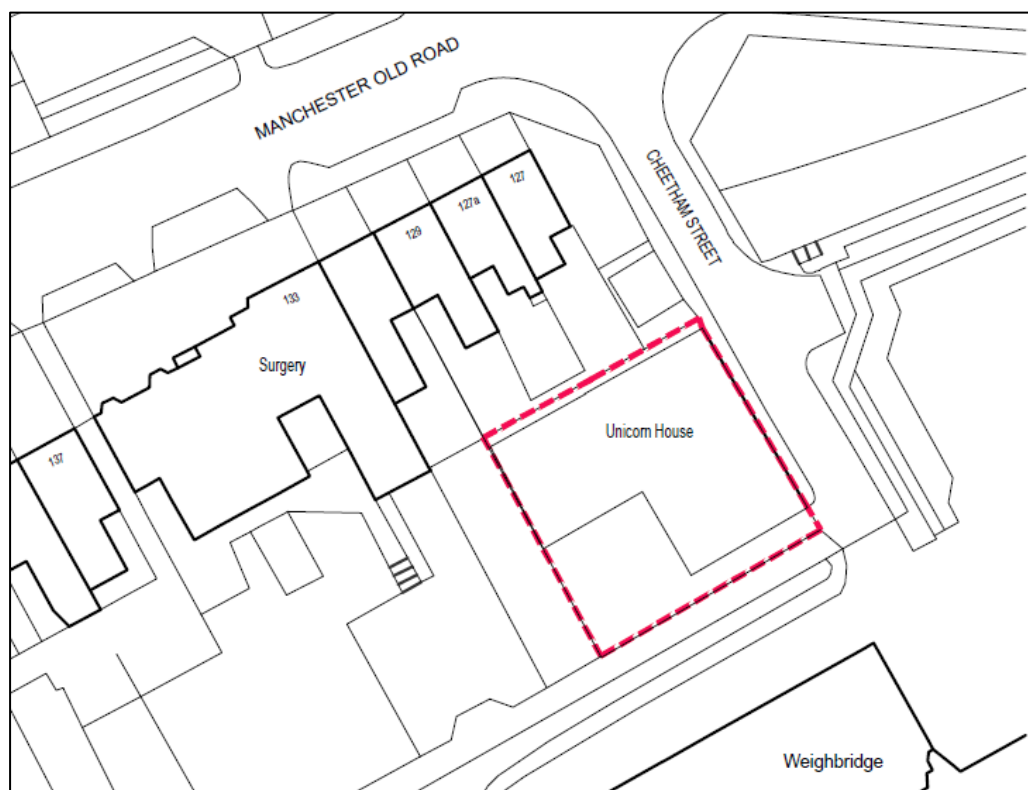


Figure 2.1: Site Location Plan.

- 2.2 The site is square in shape and approximately 0.074 hectares in size. It is located on the west side of Cheetham Street a short distance from Manchester Old Road (A579) which is to the north. Immediately to the north of the site is the rear of properties located on Manchester Old Road; these are traditional residential properties, some of which have been subdivided. To the south of the site is a shared access road beyond which is a warehouse site which is operated by 'McBride' and is understood to involve the distribution of home cleaning products. The main vehicular access to the 'McBride' site is from Middleton Way, with the access off Cheetham Street understood to be rarely used.

- 2.3 The subject site accommodates a two storey building, although externally the western wing appears as single storey with Velux windows serving the accommodation. The elevations are mainly rendered and there is a pitched tiled roof.
- 2.4 The building has an 'L-shaped' plan form with the two storey element aligning Cheetham Street and the single storey element aligning with the northern site boundary. The south west portion of the site comprises a hardstanding and car parking area which has space for c.4 cars.



Figure 2.2: View of the east elevation of the building (Cheetham Street).



Figure 2.3: View of the south elevation of the building.



Figure 2.4: View along the north side of the building.



Figure 2.5: Partial view of the west elevation (right), and south elevation of the single storey element (left).



Figure 2.6: View of the south elevation of the single storey element and parking / hardstanding area.

- 2.5 The site is located close to the boundary of Middleton Town Centre. The site is in flood zone 1 which is the lowest level of risk. The site is not within an Air Quality Management Area. The site is not affected by any TPOs. The site is located adjacent to the Manchester Old Road Conservation Area. There are no nationally listed buildings on or within the vicinity.

The Surrounding Area

- 2.6 The surrounding area has a mixed character which reflects its location close to Middleton Town Centre. This includes residential properties and commercial properties which include a community centre, nursery, medical centre and an Aldi supermarket within the immediate vicinity.
- 2.7 Middleton Town Centre provides a wide array of shops, amenities, facilities and employment opportunities. There are various green open spaces in close proximity to the application site, including Limefield Park, Alkrington Woods Nature Reserve and North Manchester Golf Club.
- 2.8 Middleton Bus Station is approximately 250m away and provides regular services to a wide range of destinations throughout the conurbation. The site has good access by road with Junction 19 of the M60 located approximately 2Km away.

3. Planning Application History

- 3.1 In accordance with best practice a review of the planning history of the site was undertaken in October 2024. This identified the following applications:

Reference	78/D07415
Address	Factory On Cheetham Street Middleton (Rear Of 127A Manchester Old Road)
Description	Store Extension To Workshop
Decision	Details not available

Reference	84/D16862
Address	Cheetham Street Middleton
Description	Gymnasium Extension
Decision	Grant subject to conditions 26 July 1984

Reference	92/D28063
Address	Sheree International Ltd Cheetham Street Middleton
Description	Construction Of New Roof
Decision	Grant subject to conditions 18 June 1992

Reference	96/D33275
Address	Unicorn Health Centre Cheetham Street Middleton
Description	Change Of Use Of First Floor From Ladies Fashion Manufactures To Provide Extension To Health Centre Including First Floor Rear Extension
Decision	Withdrawn 21 Aug 1996

Reference	96/D33522
Address	Unicorn Health Centre Cheetham Street Middleton
Description	Change Of Use Of First Floor From Ladies Fashion Manufacturers To Provide Extension To Existing Health Centre
Decision	Refuse 23 Oct 1996

Reference	96/D33799
Address	Unicorn Health Centre Cheetham Street Middleton
Description	Formation Of Pitched Roof To Rear Of Health Centre
Decision	Grant subject to conditions 22 Jan 1997

3.2 The application history is of no relevance to the determination of the subject application.

4. The Proposed Scheme

- 4.1 The application proposal is for 'Change of use of vacant building to 12 apartments (use class C3), with associated alterations, car parking and landscaping'.
- 4.2 The scheme will comprise 11 x 1 bed apartments, and 1 x 2 bed apartment. All apartments have been designed to meet or exceed the nationally described space standards. On the ground floor a bike store (with 12 spaces), bin store, a post-room, and office space will also be provided.
- 4.3 The proposal does not involve any extension to the building. Only minor external alterations are necessary to the building which include:
- East Elevation: To the ground floor the entrance door will be relocated and replace an existing window. A new window will also be installed. On the first floor a new window will be installed.
 - South Elevation: To the ground floor the existing door will be removed and 10 windows will be installed. To the first floor four windows will be installed. Three dormers and a rooflight will be installed to the pitched roof of the single storey element.
 - North elevation: To the ground floor three new doors and two high level windows will be installed. To the first floor two windows and an AOV will be installed. To the single storey element two dormers and two rooflights will be installed with the existing rooflights being removed.
 - West elevation: The existing metal escape stair will be removed. At ground level a new door with steps and ramp will be installed to provide disabled access into the building, and two new windows also installed. To the first floor four new windows will be installed.
- 4.4 The proposals will also include re-rendering the building and painting windows and doors dark grey to improve its appearance. All brick detailing and features will be preserved.

4.5 Externally the rear hardstanding / car parking area will provide car parking for 6 cars.

5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 Planning policy guidance of relevance to the proposed scheme, and which provides the context for its assessment, is set out within the following:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); and,
- The Development Plan for Rochdale.

National Planning Policy Framework

5.2 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2018 (and most recently updated in December 2024) and sets out the government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. It replaces the Framework published in March 2012, however a presumption in favour of sustainable development continues to be at the heart of the NPPF which ensures that development is pursued in a positive way.

5.3 Development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan should be approved without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

- 5.4 Paragraph 8 confirms that there are three dimensions to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. To achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be pursued in mutually supportive ways through the planning system.

Delivering Sustainable Development

- 5.5 The NPPF explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area. These sustainable objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in the framework. The NPPF is split into 17 chapters, the chapters of relevance to this development are discussed below.
- 5.6 Delivering a sufficient supply of homes (Chapter 5) – paragraph 61 explains that in order to support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. The overall aim should be to meet an area’s identified housing need, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community.
- 5.7 Paragraph 65 states ‘To support the re-use of brownfield land, where vacant buildings are being reused or redeveloped, any affordable housing contribution due should be reduced by a proportionate amount’.
- 5.8 Paragraph 73 highlights that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, are essential for Small and Medium Enterprise housebuilders to deliver new homes, and are often built-out relatively quickly. Paragraph d) emphasises the importance of windfall sites and states local

authorities should support their development through giving **great weight** to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.

- 5.9 Paragraph 78 advises that local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old.
- 5.10 The NPPF is clear at paragraph 11 that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and that relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites or the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below the housing requirement over the previous three years.
- 5.11 Promoting sustainable transport (Chapter 9) - to protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes, development should be located and designed to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and have access to high quality public transport facilities.
- 5.12 Paragraph 116 advises that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.
- 5.13 Making effective use of land (Chapter 11) – the NPPF recognises the need for the planning system to promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land. Paragraph 125 (c) explains that the planning system should specifically give **substantial weight** to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes

and other identified needs, **proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused**. Part (d) seeks to promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure)'.

- 5.14 Paragraph 128 states 'Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs. In particular, they should support proposals to: a) use retail and employment land for homes in areas of high housing demand, provided this would not undermine key economic sectors or sites or the vitality and viability of town centres, and would be compatible with other policies in this Framework; and b) make more effective use of sites that provide community services such as schools and hospitals, provided this maintains or improves the quality of service provision and access to open space'.
- 5.15 The chapter goes on to discuss how appropriate densities can be achieved. Paragraph 129 sets out that the planning system should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account the following:
- a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;
 - b) local market conditions and viability;
 - c) the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;

- d) the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting or of promoting regeneration and change; and
- e) the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.

5.16 Achieving well-designed places (Chapter 12) - this chapter sets out at paragraph 135 that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

- 5.17 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change (Chapter 14) - this chapter emphasises the importance of securing reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change; and, in terms of flooding, development should be made safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- 5.18 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (Chapter 15) - the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services and minimising impacts of biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible.
- 5.19 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (Chapter 16) – advises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. Paragraph 207 states that ‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance’.
- 5.20 Decision making – guidance in paragraph 39 states that Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

The National Design Guide

- 5.21 The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that creating high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. The National Design Guide seeks to illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful,

healthy, greener, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the Government's collection of planning practice guidance and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools. The guidance is provided in relation to 10 key characteristics:

- Context – enhances the surroundings.
- Identity – attractive and distinctive.
- Built form – a coherent pattern of development.
- Movement – accessible and easy to move around.
- Nature – enhanced and optimised.
- Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive.
- Uses – mixed and integrated.
- Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable.
- Resources – efficient and resilient.
- Lifespan – made to last.

5.22 The proposed development scheme has been designed in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF and NPPG.

The Development Plan for Rochdale

5.23 The Development Plan for Rochdale comprises the following documents:

- Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan
- Rochdale Council Core Strategy
- Rochdale Unitary Development Plan

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan

5.24 The 'Places For Everyone Joint Development Plan Document For Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan' was adopted 21 March 2024 and forms part of the Development Plan for Rochdale. The following policies are of relevance of the application proposal:

- 5.25 Policy JP-S1: Sustainable Development states to help tackle climate change, development should aim to maximise its economic, social and environmental benefits simultaneously, minimise its adverse impacts, utilise sustainable construction techniques and actively seek opportunities to secure net gains across each of the different objectives. In preparing plans, authorities should make as much use as possible of suitable previously-developed (brownfield) land and vacant buildings to meet development needs.
- 5.26 Policy JP-S2: Carbon and Energy states that the aim of delivering a carbon neutral Greater Manchester no later than 2038, with a dramatic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, will be supported through a range of measures including: amongst other things, promoting the retrofitting of existing buildings with measures to improve energy efficiency and generate renewable and low carbon energy, heating and cooling.
- 5.27 Policy JP-S4: Flood Risk and the Water Environment states an integrated catchment-based approach will be taken to protect the quantity and quality of water bodies with reference to the North West River Basin Management Plan and managing flood risk, by: amongst other things locating and designing development so as to minimise the impacts of current and future flood risk, including retrofitting or relocating existing developments, infrastructure and places to increase resilience to flooding.
- 5.28 Policy JP-S5: Clean Air states a comprehensive range of measures will be taken to support improvements in air quality, focusing particularly on locations where people live, where children learn and play, where there are impacts on the green infrastructure network and where air quality targets are not being met, including: amongst other things, locating and designing development, and focusing transport investment, so as to reduce reliance on forms of transport that generate air pollution.
- 5.29 Policy JP-S6: Resource Efficiency states the achievement of a circular economy and a zero-waste economy will play a key role in meeting Greater Manchester's ambition of becoming a leading green city region by 2038. The following measures will help achieve this:
1. Development and implementation of the Zero Waste Strategy for Greater Manchester which promotes overall reduction in the level of waste produced and

supports resource efficiency within the Plan area in order to gain the maximum value from the things we produce;

2. Recognition of the role of existing infrastructure in managing our waste and protecting such facilities to ensure adequate waste management capacity is maintained; and

3. Using sustainable design and construction techniques to reduce carbon emissions, adapt and future proof to the impact of climate change, reduce and recycle waste and minimise water use.

5.30 Policy JP-J1: Supporting Long-Term Economic Growth states that a thriving, inclusive and productive economy will be sought in all our boroughs. There will be an emphasis on, amongst other things, maintaining a very high level of economic diversity across our boroughs providing the high-quality; and sustainable living environments that will help to attract and retain skilled workers.

5.31 Policy JP-H1: Scale, Distribution and Phasing of New Housing Development states that a minimum of 175,185 net additional dwellings will be delivered over the period 2022-2039, or an annual average of around 10,305. The new homes will be of good quality and design, adaptable, supported by the necessary infrastructure and amenities and their distribution will support the Plan's overall strategy which enables people to reduce the need to travel when taking advantage of key assets. Rochdale is identified for a total provision of 10,472 dwellings during the plan period.

5.32 Policy JP-H3: Type, Size and Design of New Housing states that development across the plan area should seek to incorporate a range of dwelling types and sizes to meet local needs and deliver more inclusive neighbourhoods. All new dwellings must:

1. Comply with the nationally described space standards; and
2. Be built to the 'accessible and adaptable' standard in Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations unless specific site conditions make this impracticable.

5.33 Policy JP-H4: Density of New Housing states that new housing development should be delivered at a density appropriate to the location, reflecting the relative accessibility of the

site by walking, cycling and public transport and the need to achieve efficient use of land and high-quality design.

- 5.34 Policy JP-G8: A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity states that through local planning and associated activities a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought.
- 5.35 Policy JP-P1 Sustainable Places states the aim to become one of the most liveable city regions in the world, consisting of a series of beautiful, healthy and varied places.
- 5.36 Policy JP-P2 'Heritage' states the aim to positively conserve, sustain and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets and their settings. Particular consideration will be given to ensure that the significance of key elements of the historic environment which contribute to Greater Manchester's distinctive identity and sense of place are protected from harm. Development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets and/or their settings will be considered having regard to national planning policy.
- 5.37 Policy JP-C8: Transport Requirements of New Development states that new development will be required to be located and designed to enable and encourage walking, cycling and public transport use, to reduce the negative effects of car dependency, and help deliver high quality, attractive, liveable and sustainable environments.

Rochdale Council Core Strategy

- 5.38 The Core Strategy was formally adopted by the Council on the 19 October 2016. Following adoption of Places for Everyone a number of policies of the Core Strategy have been replaced. Those policies which remain extant are summarised below.
- 5.39 Policies SO1 to SO5 in Chapter 4 of the Core Strategy set out the strategic objectives of the Council. These are centred on the themes of: economy; healthy and successful communities; design and quality place; greener environment; and accessibility and sustainable transport. The detailed policies for the Core Strategy are then grouped under these key themes.

- 5.40 In accordance with the guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy SD1 states that the Core Strategy is centred around delivering and supporting sustainable development. To this effect, the policy repeats the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in paragraph 14 of the NPPF and what this means for decision-taking.
- 5.41 Chapter 6 presents the spatial strategy for the borough. Policy SP1 states that the borough will contribute to the success of the Manchester city region and the North West by playing its part in the delivery of sustainable development and investment that meets national and sub regional objectives for housing and employment growth.
- 5.42 The following detailed policies of the Core Strategy have been considered in the preparation of this planning application.
- 5.43 Policy C1 'Delivering the right amount of housing in the right places'. Parts of this policy have been superseded. The policy seeks to ensure that there is always a deliverable five year supply of land for new homes. This will include an additional buffer of 20% which would be reduced by 5% if delivery of the annual target is achieved. It also seeks to maximise the potential of previously developed sites, including empty homes and buildings, within the urban area to achieve a target of 80% of new housing on previously developed land; and ensure that sites are sustainable with good access to local services, facilities, green infrastructure, shops, jobs, schools and public transport.
- 5.44 Policy C3 'Delivering the right type of housing'. The policy seeks housing which is designed and built to appropriate densities, recognising the need to make an efficient use of land and respond to local housing priorities.
- 5.45 Policy C4 'Providing affordable homes'. This policy advises that the Council will seek affordable housing on all developments of 15 dwellings or more. This policy is superseded by the NPPF which seeks affordable housing for major development (i.e. 10 or more dwellings).

- 5.46 Policy C6 'Improving health and well-being'. The policy supports the creation of an economic, social and physical environment which promotes and supports healthy lifestyles and outlines a number of policy objectives to achieve this.
- 5.47 Policy P1 'Improving image'. The policy requires design which is of a high standard in all developments, which is particularly important in various locations including town centres. The policy also promotes the development and re-use of under-used land and buildings, maximising the potential for heritage assets to provide a sense of place and image.
- 5.48 Policy P2 'Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage'. The policy seeks to protect and enhance the borough's valued and distinctive landscape and heritage assets.
- 5.49 Policy P3 'Improving the design of new development'. All new development including landscaping should adhere to high standards of design. The policy therein sets out design principles which development should comply with.
- 5.50 Policy G8 'Managing water resources and flood risk'. This policy sets out what the Council will require to ensure development (including flood risk mitigation measures) does not lead to any form of increased flooding locally or further downstream, does not impede natural water and flood risk management, is not detrimental to existing or potential flood storage areas, contributes where possible to alleviating existing flood risk, and is itself well protected from flood risk and ensures prudent use of water resources.
- 5.51 Policy G9 'Reducing the impact of Pollution'. The policy requires that new development does not lead to an increase in air, water, noise, light or other pollution. New development should also not be adversely affected by existing sources of pollution.
- 5.52 Policy T2 'Improving accessibility'. The policy states that the Council will improve accessibility by locating development where good access to public transport is available or can be provided, and will ensure that development is located to minimise the need to travel by car. Development proposals should also satisfy the accessibility hierarchy.

- 5.53 Policy DM1 'General development requirements'. The policy sets out a number of basic planning and design considerations which development proposals will be expected to demonstrate compliance with.

Rochdale Borough Council Unitary Development Plan (saved policies)

- 5.54 Upon adoption of the Core Strategy, the majority of policies within the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan were deleted. Those policies which were saved will be replaced through the Site Allocations DPD or other DPD. The saved policies of relevance to this application are outlined below.

- 5.55 Policy G/D1 'Defined Urban Area'. This policy seeks to concentrate new development within the urban area in order to support urban regeneration and protect the countryside.

- 5.56 BE/17 'New Development Affecting Conservation Areas' states that development proposals will be permitted that preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area. In assessing a proposal, the following principles – where relevant – will be taken into account:

- a) Its relationship to existing buildings, the site and its surroundings;
- b) Its design - including elevations, roof form, materials, finishes and detailing;
- c) The retention, replacement and restoration of historic features and details of buildings, and - in the public realm - walls, paving and street furniture;
- d) The retention and enhancement of landscaped areas, trees and natural features;
- e) The design of new shop fronts (and replacements and/or alterations to those existing) should reflect the character or appearance of the conservation area, consistent with the provisions of Policy BE/5;
- f) The design and siting of advertisements, new street furniture, paving and other highway surfaces and related structures (e.g., lighting and signs); and
- g) The design and siting of car parking and servicing facilities.

Development proposals should include detailed plans and drawings enabling its implication(s) for the character and appearance of the conservation area to be established.

5.57 BE/18 'Changes of Use to Buildings in Conservation Areas' states that proposals for the change of use of unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas will be permitted provided that:-

- a) The new use is compatible with adjoining uses;
- b) Conversion and adaptation respects the architectural and historic interest of the buildings and their settings; and
- c) The provisions of Policy BE/17 "New Development Affecting Conservation Areas" are satisfied.

Supplementary Planning Documents

5.58 The Council have also adopted a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which the scheme will have to be assessed against, these include the Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development SPD; Rochdale Town Centre East Area Framework SPD; Biodiversity and Development SPD; Climate Change Adaption SPD; and Energy and New Development SPD.

Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development SPD (2016)

5.59 This SPD was adopted in June 2016, and provides a set of standards to be considered in the design of new housing to ensure that the impact on neighbouring residents is limited and that the design and appearance of new homes makes a positive contribution to the local environment.

Biodiversity and Development SPD (2008)

5.60 Rochdale Borough Council adopted the Biodiversity and Development SPD in January 2008. The SPD explains the level of information that should be provided with a planning application and the principles that should be adhered to in the design and implementation phases of development.

Climate Change Adaption SPD (2012)

- 5.61 Adopted in June 2012, the Climate Change Adaption SPD outlines guidance for developments in order to assist climate change adaption. The SPD addresses eight broad categories: location, layout and orientation; materials / structure; environmental performance; green roofs and walls; rainwater harvesting; Sustainable Drainage Systems; and green and blue infrastructure.

Energy and New Development SPD (2008)

- 5.62 The Borough Council adopted this SPD in 2008, the document sets out the Council's requirement in terms of energy performance.
- 5.63 The proposed redevelopment scheme has been designed in accordance with the policies of the UDP, and the above SPDs.

6. Planning Appraisal

6.1 Having regard to the relevant planning policy guidance in the previous section, the key material considerations against which the proposed scheme should be considered, and which are discussed in this section, include:

- Principle of Residential Development
- Loss of Existing Use
- Design
- Potential Impact on Amenity
- Sustainable Development: Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits
- Highways, Accessibility, Parking and Servicing
- Disabled Access
- Relationship with Trees
- Ecology
- Crime and Security Matters
- Flood Risk
- Land Contamination
- Air Quality
- Affordable Housing

Principle of Residential Development

6.2 Core Strategy Policy C1 states that to meet the Borough's housing supply the potential of previously developed sites, including empty buildings within the urban area, will be maximised to achieve a target of 80% of new housing on previously developed land. It also seeks to ensure that sites are sustainable with good access to local services, facilities, green infrastructure, shops, jobs, schools and public transport. PfE Policy JPH-1 sets out the requirement for Rochdale to deliver 10,472 dwellings over the plan period to 2039, at an average of 616 dwellings per year, increasing periodically, with the delivery target at 568 dwellings over 2022-25. PfE policy JP-S1: Sustainable Development advises that the Councils

should make as much use as possible of suitable previously-developed (brownfield) land and vacant buildings to meet development needs.

- 6.3 The proposed scheme will involve the conversion of a vacant building and previously developed land to provide much needed housing. The building is understood to have been vacant for a number of years and therefore does not make a positive contribution to the area. The provision of 12 apartments will contribute to meeting local housing supply within Rochdale.
- 6.4 The site is located close to the boundary of Middleton Town Centre and in proximity to existing housing including immediately to the north of the site and within the wider area. As discussed at Section 2, the site's location means there is excellent access to the range of shops, amenities and facilities provided in the wider area which make it ideal for new housing. This includes health, education and outdoor recreation facilities.
- 6.5 The site's location also means that access to public transport is very good, with Middleton Bus Station approximately 250m away and with services to a wide range of destinations including Manchester City Centre, Ashton-under-Lyne, Oldham, Bury and Rochdale.
- 6.6 The importance of achieving a sufficient supply of housing is emphasised throughout the NPPF, particularly in terms of making efficient use of land and contributing to the economy, with a lack of housing being identified as a barrier to economic growth. It also confirms that the Government's objective is to significantly boost the supply of homes. In addition, the value of small housing sites is also recognised in terms of contributing to housing requirements of an area, particularly as they are often built-out quickly. It is also confirmed within the NPPF that windfall sites play an important role in meeting housing needs and states that local authorities should support their development through giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes. Paragraph 125 (c) explains that the planning system should specifically give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused. Section 7 of the NPPF also highlights that residential development plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of

centres and encourages residential development on appropriate sites. The proposed scheme aligns with the above policy provisions.

- 6.7 PfE Policy JP-H3 advises that development across the plan area should seek to incorporate a range of dwelling types and sizes to meet local needs and deliver more inclusive neighbourhoods. PfE policy JP-H4 states that new housing development should be delivered at a density appropriate to the location, reflecting the relative accessibility of the site by walking, cycling and public transport and the need to achieve efficient use of land and high-quality design. Core Strategy policy C3 seeks housing which is designed and built to appropriate densities, recognising the need to make an efficient use of land and respond to local housing priorities.
- 6.8 The proposed scheme will provide 12 apartments. This type of accommodation is appropriate for a site that is located close to Middleton Town Centre. A mix of one and two bedroom apartments are provided which will be attractive to a range of future occupiers including couples, young families, key workers and older people. This mix will contribute to the wider housing mix in the locality, where traditional larger houses are a common house type, and help to maintain a sustainable and mixed community. Importantly the proposal will utilise suitable brownfield land within a settlement for homes, which Paragraph 125 (c) of the NPPF confirms should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused. As discussed within the remainder of this Statement it is established that the development will not be associated with harm which would weigh against the benefit of providing much needed housing on this brownfield site.
- 6.9 For the reasons given above the proposed scheme complies with PfE policies JP-S1, JP-P1, JP-H1, JP-H3 and JP-H4; Core Strategy policies C1 and C3, Saved UDP policy G/D1 and relevant provisions of the NPPF.
- 6.10 The scheme will also be associated with a series of positive planning and regeneration benefits including:

- Redevelopment of an existing building and previously developed land which makes more efficient use of the land and will help to address housing demand in Rochdale and reduce pressure to develop greenfield and Green Belt sites.
- The development of a brownfield site in a sustainable and accessible location which makes more efficient use of the land and will help to address housing demand in Rochdale and reduce pressure to develop greenfield and Green Belt sites.
- Provision of 12 dwellings which will be attractive to a range of occupiers including couples, young families, key workers and older people and will support a mixed and sustainable community.
- Securing direct investment into the local community through the provision of jobs during the construction stage of the project and increased spending in nearby facilities by future residents.
- The encouragement of further investment into Rochdale and the provision of residential use that will promote natural surveillance to help reduce crime and the fear of crime.

6.11 These factors are considered in more detail within the remainder of this section and demonstrate that the scheme wholly accords with national and local planning policy guidance.

6.12 In addition to the above it is also highlighted that the property could potentially be converted to apartments (use class C3) via the Class MA prior approval route. This represents a fall-back which the applicant could use and is a material consideration in the determination of the planning application.

Loss of Existing Use

6.13 The subject building is currently vacant and has been for a number of years and therefore provides no benefit in terms of local employment. It is noted that a gym use is not one which

is protected by planning policy. Paragraph 128 of the NPPF is relevant and advises that 'Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs. In particular, they should support proposals to use retail and employment land for homes in areas of high housing demand, provided this would not undermine key economic sectors or sites or the vitality and viability of town centre'.

- 6.14 The subject site is located in a sustainable and accessible location where there is a high demand for housing. The conversion of the vacant building to provide 12 new dwellings will help contribute to meeting the local housing needs, including the reuse of brownfield land. The proposal relates to a modest building which is not located within a key economic area. The site is also situated outside of Middleton Town Centre and it is not considered that the change of use of the vacant building to residential would adversely affect the vitality and viability of the town centre. On the contrary, it is considered that the residential conversion will have a beneficial effect on Middleton Town Centre through the potential for increased footfall and custom for local businesses. For the above reasons the proposed conversion of the vacant gym building is in accordance with Paragraph 128 of the NPPF.

Design

- 6.15 The existing building is vacant and its current condition therefore has a negative impact on the surrounding area. The reuse of the building for much needed housing will return the building to active use and allow it to make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the area.
- 6.16 The proposed scheme does not involve any extension to the building and involves conversion with associated external alterations. The external alterations largely relate to changes to windows / doors, and in particular providing new windows to facilitate the residential conversion. Five new dormer windows are also proposed to the pitched roof of the single storey element. The design and placement of the windows and dormers is considered appropriate in design terms and reflects the existing architecture of the building.

The new rear windows to the western wing (dormers and Velux windows) will comprise obscured glazing. As part of the scheme a redundant unattractive metal escape staircase will be removed which will have a positive design impact.

- 6.17 For the above reasons it is concluded that the proposal is consistent with Policies JP-P1 and JP-J1 of Places for Everyone; Policies P1, P2 and P3 of the Core Strategy; and provisions within Section 12 of the NPPF.
- 6.18 Heritage considerations associated with the proposal are assessed separately within the supporting Heritage Statement prepared by Paul Butler Associates. This demonstrates that the proposal is in accordance with relevant national and local heritage planning policy.

Potential Impact on Amenity

- 6.19 With regards to the scheme's potential impact on residential amenity, two issues require consideration: whether the proposed scheme will maintain a satisfactory level of amenity for neighbouring uses; and, whether the design will ensure that future occupants of the scheme are able to enjoy a satisfactory level of amenity.

Neighbouring Uses

- 6.20 The application site is located in an area where residential use is acceptable in principle, and immediately to the north is existing housing. The proposed use is therefore wholly appropriate in this context. Bringing the building back into active use also enhances the amenity for neighbouring residents.
- 6.21 The proposed development comprises conversion of the existing building to 12 apartments (use class C3). No extensions are proposed.
- 6.22 On the north elevation - which faces towards neighbouring residential properties - two dormer windows and two rooflights will be provided to the roof of the single storey element and two new windows will be provided (plus an AOV). In relation to the two new windows, one of these will serve a bathroom (and will therefore be obscured), whilst the other window

will be a secondary window to a living area. The position of this window means that it has an outlook towards Manchester Old Road rather than directly to the rear of an existing property. In relation to the two new dormer windows and rooflights, these will be obscured glazed ensuring that outlook towards existing properties on Manchester Old Road will not be possible.

- 6.23 Windows on the south, east and west elevations of the building will not be associated with any impacts such as loss of privacy, overlooking, loss of light or overbearing.
- 6.24 The proposed scheme will provide 6 car parking spaces, equating to 50% provision. This level of provision is appropriate taking account of the nature of the apartments, which are mainly 1 bed, and the site's sustainable and accessible location. The proposed residential use is not considered to result in an increase in vehicle movements compared to the lawful gym use. On this basis there will not be a 'severe' change in local highway network operational conditions having regard to the policy test set out in the NPPF.

Proposed Dwellings

- 6.25 Future residents will be provided with a good level of amenity in terms of outlook and privacy. The proposed scheme will be of a high standard of design in terms of living accommodation, sound proofing, natural lighting and ventilation, and will comply with NDSS. Due to the nature of the site it is not possible to provide external amenity space, however this is not uncommon for properties located in sustainable / accessible locations such as this. There are however various green open spaces in close proximity to the application site, including Limefield Park, Alkrington Woods Nature Reserve and North Manchester Golf Club.
- 6.26 It is noted that the site to the east comprises a distribution business operated by 'McBride'. The application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment prepared by Compliance 4 Buildings Ltd which considers potential for noise impacts in the vicinity of the site. Based on measured noise levels within the vicinity of the site, the report identifies a façade specification for glazing and ventilation in order to comply with relevant acoustic standards.

The measures identified can be readily achieved and ensured by a standard planning condition.

- 6.27 The proposed scheme will not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of existing residents or future occupants of the scheme, and as such accords with Places for Everyone Policy JP-P1, Core Strategy Policies G9 and DM1, the Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development SPD, and chapters 12 and 15 of the NPPF.

Sustainable Development: Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits

- 6.28 The proposal will have high sustainability credentials as a result of the economic, social and environmental benefits that it will bring.

Economic Benefits

- 6.29 The proposed development will bring a number of economic benefits during and post construction. The shortage of housing can act as a barrier to people accessing job opportunities, thus preventing the Borough from achieving its economic potential. The provision of 12 new homes will make an important contribution to meeting housing needs in Rochdale and in turn supporting Rochdale Borough's economy. It is accepted that house building is a driver of the local economy. Together with creating job opportunities during construction, retailers/businesses nearby and in Middleton Town Centre will benefit from footfall and spending in the local community.

Social Benefits

- 6.30 The site is located within proximity to a wide array of shops, facilities and amenities, as well as being nearby to open space and recreation facilities, primary and secondary schools and places of worship, which will provide for the needs of future occupants of the scheme. The proposed development will deliver a mix of dwelling sizes and will contribute to the creation of a sustainable community.

Environmental Benefits

- 6.31 The proposed scheme will have significant environmental benefits since it contributes to helping the Council to meet their 'at least 80%' target for new development to be on previously developed land, as noted by Core Strategy Policy C1. The scheme will involve the installation of energy efficient heating systems and appliances which will minimise carbon emissions. An Energy Statement prepared by Compliance 4 Buildings has been submitted as part of the application. This demonstrates that development will incorporate upgrades to improve the energy efficiency of apartments. This includes the installation of gas combi boilers replacing the less efficient electric heating, and improvements in air-tightness and upgraded glazing to reduce heat loss and improve thermal comfort. These measures will ensure that all apartments will achieve an EPC rating of C or B.
- 6.32 On the basis of the above the proposal constitutes Sustainable Development and complies with Places for Everyone policies JP-S1, JP-S2, JP-S5, JP-S6; Core Strategy policies C6 and DM1; provisions of Climate Change Adaption SPD and Energy and New Development SPD; and the NPPF.

Highways, Accessibility, Parking and Servicing

- 6.33 The site is located in a sustainable and accessible location with access to a wide range of shops, amenities and services including within the nearby Middleton Town Centre. The site also benefits from good public transport links by bus as noted in Section 2 of this Statement. The proposed scheme will also include a secure cycle store with 12 spaces. These characteristics help to promote sustainable means of travel and reduce reliance on car travel.
- 6.34 The proposed scheme will accommodate 6 car parking spaces which equates to 50% provision. This level of off-street parking is appropriate for this location, given the site's locational characteristics highlighted. There is some availability on Cheetham Road for on-street parking which can cater for ad hoc visitors and deliveries if required. Waste servicing can be undertaken on street in line with existing servicing arrangements, with collections

taking place from Cheetham Street and bins being presented by the property management team and returned to the store following collections.

6.35 In terms of assessing car parking provision and highways matters paragraph 116 of the NPPF is relevant and advises 'Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios'. This is a high policy test and for the reasons given above it is not considered that the development would be associated with severe adverse highway impacts which could warrant refusal.

6.36 It has been demonstrated that the scheme accords with the transport requirements of the NPPF; Places for Everyone Policy JP-C8, and Core Strategy Policy T2.

Disabled Access

6.37 As part of the proposal a new ramp will be installed to ensure level access to the ground floor of the building and access to the ground floor apartments for wheelchair users. Apartments on the first floor will be accessible for ambulant disabled, and all apartments have been designed to reflect Part M4(2) building regulations where this is practicable.

Relationship with Trees

6.38 The application site does not include any trees nor have any impact on existing trees on adjacent land. Standard planning conditions can be applied to a planning permission if deemed necessary. On this basis the proposal is in accordance with relevant national and local planning policies concerning trees including Places for Everyone Policy JP-G8 and provisions of the Biodiversity and Development SPD.

Ecology

6.39 The application site is occupied by the existing building and associated hardstanding. The proposed development does not impact 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat or

5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows and therefore falls below the threshold for requiring assessment in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain. Nevertheless, should it be considered appropriate planning conditions can be utilised to allow for installation of bat and bird boxes which will deliver biodiversity benefits and comply with local planning policy including Places for Everyone Policy JP-G8, provisions of the Biodiversity and Development SPD, and relevant provisions of the NPPF in terms of ecology implications.

Crime and Security Matters

- 6.40 The application is supported by a Crime Impact Statement (CIS) prepared by Greater Manchester Police Design for Security. The CIS recognises a series of positive benefits associated with the scheme at section 3.2. The report also advises on a number of recommendations to enhance security relating to doors & access controls, windows, and boundary treatments. The proposals have been updated following review of the CIS with measures incorporated into the scheme where feasible.
- 6.41 On the basis that the recommendations of the CIS are complied with the application will therefore be considered consistent with requirements of the NPPF and Core Strategy Policy DM1 relating to safety and reduction of crime.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 6.42 The site is located in flood risk zone 1 of the Environment Agency Flood Map which is the lowest level of flood risk. The application scheme does not propose any increase in hardstanding which would increase flood risk on other land. The building is already connected to the drainage system with no changes proposed. Should further details relating to drainage be required it is anticipated that these can be secured through planning condition. On this basis relevant local and national flood risk / drainage policies can be satisfied including section 14 of the NPPF, Places for Everyone Policy JP-S4, and Core Strategy Policy G8.

Land Contamination

- 6.43 The proposal involves the change of use of an existing building with no demolition or extensions proposed. On this basis it is not considered that any reporting in relation to land contamination will be required. Should this be necessary then it is considered that this can be secured by a standard planning condition.

Air Quality

- 6.44 The application site is not located within an Air Quality Management Area. The proposed use will not result in any material change in traffic or air quality impact. There are no further considerations in this regard.

Affordable Housing / Developer Obligations

- 6.45 The proposed development comprises 12 dwellings and therefore would meet the threshold within the NPPF for affordable housing provision (i.e. 10 or more dwellings). It is however noted that Vacant Building Credit (VBC) applies to the subject building. This applies to the entirety of the building therefore no affordable housing provision is required. It is confirmed that VBC applies in this instance as the building has not been abandoned; that the building did not become vacant for the purpose of redevelopment; and that the building is not covered by an extant or recently expired planning permission for the same or substantially the same development.
- 6.46 No other planning obligations are considered relevant to the proposed development to make it otherwise acceptable in planning terms.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposal accords with national and local planning policy guidance, conforming with Places for Everyone, Core Strategy policies, saved policies of the UDP, and relevant supplementary planning documents/guidance. Importantly the proposal will utilise suitable brownfield land within a settlement for homes, which Paragraph 125 (c) of the NPPF confirms should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused. As demonstrated within this Statement it is established that the development will not be associated with harm which would weigh against the benefit of providing much needed housing on this brownfield site.
- 7.2 The proposed scheme will deliver a series of positive benefits, including:
- Redevelopment of an existing building and previously developed land which makes more efficient use of the land and will help to address housing demand in Rochdale and reduce pressure to develop greenfield and Green Belt sites.
 - The development of a brownfield site in a sustainable and accessible location which makes more efficient use of the land and will help to address housing demand in Rochdale and reduce pressure to develop greenfield and Green Belt sites.
 - Provision of 12 dwellings which will be attractive to a range of occupiers including couples, young families, key workers and older people and will support a mixed and sustainable community.
 - Securing direct investment into the local community through the provision of jobs during the construction stage of the project and increased spending in nearby facilities by future residents.
 - The encouragement of further investment into Rochdale and the provision of residential use that will promote natural surveillance to help reduce crime and the fear of crime.

7.3 On this basis Paul Butler Associates are pleased to provide this Planning Statement in support of the development proposal and respectfully recommend its approval.