

**WARD:** Urmston

**107604/COU/22**

**DEPARTURE: No**

**Change of use from use as church (Class F1) to mixed use as church (Class F1) and day nursery (Class E) so that a day nursery can operate from the church.**

Urmston Methodist Church, George Street, Urmston, M41 9BA

**APPLICANT:** The Little People

**AGENT:**

**RECOMMENDATION: GRANT**

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**The application has been reported to the Planning and Development Committee as more than six objections have been received contrary to officer recommendation.**

### **Executive Summary**

The site relates to an existing church building situated on the eastern side of George Street, a primarily residential area in Urmston. There is associated parking to the front of the property and a small garden to the side and rear.

Planning permission is sought for change of use from a church (Use Class F1) to a mixed use to allow a day nursery to operate from the premises between the hours of 07:30 to 17:30 hours Monday to Friday (Class E).

Representations have been received from neighbouring properties, in particular raising concerns regarding the impact of the proposed development upon the surrounding highway network and parking. The LHA has raised no objections to the proposal and it is considered to be acceptable in terms of highway and parking impacts.

The Council's Pollution and Licensing section has also raised no objections and, subject to appropriate conditions, it is considered that noise from the premises would not be unreasonable or create a level of dis-amenity that would justify refusal on these grounds.

The proposed nursery would bring positive benefits in terms of an identified need for additional Early Years settings and it is recommended that planning permission is granted, subject to appropriate conditions.

## **SITE**

The application site comprises a church and associated grounds and parking located on the eastern side of George Street. The building is a modern, single storey building and constructed of red brick. Car parking is provided to the front of the building within a large area of hardstanding although no spaces are marked out. The front boundary to George Street comprises a low brick wall, brick piers and metal gates. The gardens to the rear of the building are fenced off from the side of the building.

The surrounding area is primarily residential in character. There is a two storey detached dwelling immediately opposite the car park entrance and further to the north on the opposite side of George Street is a row of two storey terraced dwellings. There are two storey semi-detached dwellings immediately to the north and north east of the church with two storey apartment buildings to the south and south east.

## **PROPOSAL**

Permission is sought for the change of use of the premises from a church (Class F1) to a mixed use (Class F1 and Class E) allowing a day nursery to operate from the premises during the week.

The nursery will not operate at the same time as the church,

## **DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**For the purposes of this application the Development Plan in Trafford comprises:**

- The **Trafford Core Strategy**, adopted 25th January 2012; The Trafford Core Strategy is the first of Trafford's Local Development Framework (LDF) development plan documents to be adopted by the Council; it partially supersedes the Revised Trafford Unitary Development Plan (UDP), see Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy.
- The **Revised Trafford Unitary Development Plan (UDP)**, adopted 19th June 2006; The majority of the policies contained in the Revised Trafford UDP were saved in either September 2007 or December 2008, in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 until such time that they are superseded by policies within the (LDF). Appendix 5 of the Trafford Core Strategy provides details as to how the Revised UDP is being replaced by Trafford LDF.

## **PRINCIPAL RELEVANT CORE STRATEGY POLICIES**

L4 – Sustainable Transport and Accessibility

L5 – Climate Change

L7 – Design

L8 – Planning Obligations

R3 – Green Infrastructure

R5 – Open Space, Sport and Recreation

## **PROPOSALS MAP NOTATION**

None

## **PRINCIPAL RELEVANT REVISED UDP POLICIES/PROPOSALS**

None relevant

## **SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**

SPD1 – Planning Obligations

SPD3 – Parking Standards and Design

PG5 – Day Nurseries and Playgroups

## **PLACES FOR EVERYONE**

Places for Everyone (PfE) is a joint Development Plan Document being produced by nine Greater Manchester districts (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan). Once adopted, PfE will be the overarching development plan, setting the policy framework for individual district Local Plans. The PfE was published for Regulation 19 consultation from 9th August 2021 to 3rd October 2021 and was submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 14 February 2022. Independent Inspectors have been appointed to undertake an Examination in Public of the PfE Submission Plan and the hearings are scheduled to start in November 2022. Whilst PfE is at an advanced stage of the plan making process, for the purposes of this application it is not yet advanced enough to be given any meaningful weight, such that it needs consideration in this report.

## **NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)**

The MHCLG published the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 20 July 2021. The NPPF will be referred to as appropriate in the report.

## **NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (NPPG)**

The National Planning Practice Guidance was first published in March 2014, and it is regularly updated, with the most recent amendments made in June 2021. The NPPG will be referred to as appropriate in the report.

## **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

H/58543 - Erection of step access ramp and handrails to front elevation entrance to provide access for disabled persons.

Approved with conditions 23.03.2004

H47207 – Erection of 1 metre high railings and pillars above existing 0.9 metre boundary wall, erection of gates and extension to existing car parking area.

Approved with conditions 03.03.1999

H/20437 – Erection of new single storey church with ancillary car parking and construction of new vehicular access off George Street. Approved with conditions – 08.11.1984

H18368 – Demolition of church and erection of new church linked to existing church hall and provision of car parking.  
Approved with conditions 01.09.1983

H10193 – Demolition of existing building and erection of three link detached houses with garages.  
Approved with conditions 13.09.1979

### **APPLICANT'S SUBMISSION**

The following documents have been submitted as part of the supporting documents for the application:

- Transport Statement
- Travel Plan
- Supporting Statement

### **CONSULTATIONS**

Local Highway Authority – No objections. It has been reasonably demonstrated by the applicant that forecast vehicle trips and any associated on-street parking for the proposed development would not be expected to have a severe impact to the adopted highway at this location, and subject to the requested conditions being secured for any subsequent planning permission, no objections are raised on highway grounds to the proposals.

Pollution and Licensing (Nuisance) – Raise no objection subject to conditions as set out within the main body of this report.

Early Years – The early years sector nationally and locally is somewhat fragile due to a recruitment and retention issue and also the cost of living situation therefore they would want to support any new settings to open to help with sufficiency of childcare places.

### **REPRESENTATIONS**

Letters of objection have been received from 8 addresses and matters raised are summarised below:

#### **Traffic and Parking**

- Insufficient parking and increased traffic on this narrow through road;
- Exacerbation of existing parking problems which cause inconvenience and damage to residents' cars on George Street as well as danger to pedestrians;

- The side of the road opposite the church is parked nose to tail from the double yellow lines at the church end of the houses to the start of the tyre business, rendering the road essentially into a single lane road;
- Increased traffic will make the road more dangerous for residents;
- Concerns regarding increased pollution;
- Church car park is small and users already had difficulty manoeuvring their cars
- It is understood that churchgoers have been advised that they will no longer be able to worship at the church and that the planning application is in fact for a full change of use, not partial as implied within the planning application;
- The development will make it hard for residents to park their own cars;
- Users of the nursery would by and large be using the premises at peak times in the morning and evening, impacting on residents of George Street in being able to leave their own house and get home in the evening due to increased congestion;

### Residential Amenity

- Concern regarding level of noise;

### **OBSERVATIONS**

#### PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

1. S38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 states that planning application should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
2. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions, and as the Government's expression of planning policy and how this should be applied, should be given significant weight in the decision making process. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF indicates that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11(c) of the NPPF states that applications that are in accordance with an up to date development plan should be approved without delay.
3. Policies relating to the protection of residential amenity and highway and parking issues are considered most important within Policy L7 of the Core Strategy. Policy L7 is considered up to date in NPPF terms. Policy L4 is considered to be largely up to date in that it promotes the development and maintenance of a sustainable integrated transport network that is accessible and offers a choice of modes of travel, including active travel, to all sectors of the local community and visitors to the Borough. It is not considered to be fully consistent with the NPPF in that it includes reference to a "significant adverse impact" threshold in terms of the impact of the development on the operation of the road network, whereas the NPPF refers to a "severe impact." Nevertheless this inconsistency is not considered to render the policy 'out of date' in NPPF terms, and the overall 'basket' of policies is considered to be up to date. The tilted balance is therefore not engaged.

4. The principle of a community use at the site has been established through the use of the building as a place of worship. It is usual to have other ancillary uses running alongside the principal use of churches and places of worship such as parent and baby classes, community and group meetings and recreational uses such as yoga classes. Furthermore, a day nursery use would have fallen within the same Use Class as a place of worship prior to the changes to the Use Classes Order in 2020 (both uses having previously fallen within Use Class D1) and therefore the current proposal would not have required planning permission at that time. The use of the building as a nursery further extends the community function of the building and is considered to be acceptable in principle in this location, subject to consideration of the detailed impacts in terms of amenity and highways and parking.

## DESIGN

5. Policy L7 of the Core Strategy states that in relation to matters of design, development must be appropriate in its context; make best use of opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area; enhance the street scene or character of the area by appropriately addressing scale, density, height, massing, layout, elevation treatment, materials, hard and soft landscaping works, boundary treatment; and make appropriate provision for open space, where appropriate, in accordance with Policy R5.
6. No external changes are proposed under this application and there would therefore be no impact on visual amenity.

## RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

7. NPPG on Noise (updated 22 July 2019) advises on how planning can manage potential noise impacts in new development.
8. Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy states that in matters of amenity protection, development must be compatible with the surrounding area and not prejudice the amenity of the future occupiers and/or occupants of adjacent properties by reason of overbearing, overshadowing, visual intrusion, noise and/or disturbance, odour or in any other way.
9. Core Strategy Policy L5.13 states that development that has the potential to cause adverse pollution (of air, light, water, ground) noise or vibration will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that adequate mitigation measures can be put in place.
10. The Council's Pollution and Licensing Team raise no objection to the application on the grounds of noise nuisance, subject to conditions including that the nursery is only to be operated within the proposed times detailed within the application form (07:30 – 17:30 Monday to Friday) only.

11. Another main area of consideration relates to how the children are to be accommodated for outdoor play, and whether arrangements can be put in place to ensure that the use does not result in undue disturbance.
12. PG5 'Day Nurseries and Playgroups' states that *"Outdoor play is an essential feature of day nurseries and common with playgroups."* When considering the types of buildings suitable for use as a nursery, the guidelines state that the site should have large gardens, (e.g. over 10 sq.m per child) *"so that outdoor play need not be unduly close to neighbours."* The guidelines also state however that *"if garden space is restricted the number of children able to be outside at any one time may be limited, but this may expand the period over which outdoor play occurs, and it likely also to mean that play will be close to the boundaries with adjoining properties."*
13. The main garden area to the side of the church building provides approximately 98 square metres of outdoor amenity space (with a single storey outbuilding located within this space). Although narrow, there is also access to the rear of the building and this provides at least an additional 35 square metres. Furthermore, additional supporting information sets out that whilst the nursery will have 40 spaces the garden will be used in groups limited to between 16-22 at any time. Even so, the outdoor play provision fails to comply with the guidelines. Nevertheless, in order to fully assess the impact of noise from outdoor play and to limit the hours of use of the garden (thereby creating periods of respite for neighbours), a condition is recommended requiring the submission/agreement of a Noise Management Plan. It is expected that this will set out times of outdoor play and maximum numbers of children during any one period. It will be necessary to strike a balance between the number of children outside at any one time and the overall hours of outdoor play throughout the day. Supporting information submitted with the application advises that *"although outdoor play may vary we tend to access the garden at the below times:*  
  
9.15am – 10:45am  
12:15am – 1:30pm  
2:30pm – 3:15pm  
4:10pm – 5:00pm"
14. Thus, between the hours of opening it appears likely that over 4 hours of respite (no noise from outdoor play) could be provided to neighbours. This is considered to be acceptable and when also taking into consideration the unrestricted community use of the building, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable on amenity grounds.
15. It is noted that the Pollution and Licensing Team has requested that any grant of permission should also be subject to a condition limiting the use to a nursery use only to prevent the premises subsequently converting to other uses within Use Class E. However, as the approved use would be a mixed use of church and day nursery, it would not fall within Class E and would be sui generis (i.e. not falling within a Use

Class) and therefore there would be no potential to change to other uses without planning permission. It is therefore considered that this condition would not be required. It is, however, considered necessary to attach a condition limiting the overall number of children attending the nursery each day to a maximum of 40 as proposed in the application submission.

### Amenity Conclusion

16. Having regard to the fact that the Council's Pollution and Licensing Section raise no objections to the proposals, it is considered that, subject to appropriate conditions including limiting the overall numbers of children attending the nursery and the overall hours of operation, and requiring the implementation of a noise management plan that sets out the times of outdoor play and the number of children outside at any one time, the development would not have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the thrust of the NPPF.

### HIGHWAYS AND PARKING

17. Policy L4 of the Trafford Core Strategy states that "when considering proposals for new development that individually or cumulatively will have a material impact on the functioning of the Strategic Road Network and the Primary and Local Highway Authority Network, the Council will seek to ensure that the safety and free flow of traffic is not prejudiced or compromised by that development in a significant adverse way."

18. Policy L4 also states that the Council will prioritise the location of development within the most sustainable areas accessible by a choice of modes of transport. Maximum levels of car parking for broad classes of development will be used as a part of a package of measures to promote sustainable transport choices.

19. Core Strategy Policy L7 states that in relation to matters of functionality, development must incorporate vehicular access and egress which is satisfactorily located and laid out having regard to the need for highway safety; and provide sufficient off-street car and cycle parking, manoeuvring and operational space.

20. SPD3's objectives include ensuring that planning applications accommodate an appropriate level of parking; to guide developers regarding the design and layout of car parking areas; to ensure that parking facilities cater for all users and to promote sustainable developments.

21. Paragraph 111 of the NPPF states 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 would be severe.*"



22. Further to the request of the LHA a Transport Statement and Travel Plan have been submitted. This information sets out that a maximum of up to 40 children aged between 2 and 5 years old will attend the nursery per day;
23. Details of the proposed vehicle drop-off and pick-up times are provided and have been obtained via a manual travel survey of the existing nursery site located in a similar location (Bowfell Road), which also caters for the same number of children. The data demonstrates circa 30 arrivals by car between 8am-9am (spread across 10 minute intervals, no more than 10 vehicles per interval), with 33 afternoon pick-ups, these being spread across a longer time period.
24. A walked parking survey was undertaken on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022, with the first beat commencing at 07:40am, and the final one ending at 5:30pm (these hours cover the proposed opening/closing hours of the nursery). Photographs were also taken during the survey. The data provided demonstrates availability of on street parking (up to 35 spaces) in the immediate vicinity of the proposed site.
25. Whilst it is noted nursery staff will be asked to park along Stretford Road, where people opt to park cannot be enforced and ongoing development within Trafford, and traffic regulation order reviews may result in on street parking restrictions being implemented where none currently exist.
26. It is understood seven parking spaces will be provided on site for the use of parents and guardians when dropping off and collecting children. No staff parking will be provided and those working at the nursery who travel by car will be asked not to park on George Street (a travel plan will also be put in place, reviewed, monitored, and action taken in the event that the approved travel plan targets are not met).
27. The transport statement confirms the majority of children arrive/depart the existing nursery by motor vehicle (up to 82% on wet days).
28. It is known from other sustainable locations that having access to public transport or being located within a short walk of the facility does not prevent people driving (also demonstrated by the existing nursery), particularly if the journey comprises multiple destinations (drop offs/pick ups from school, commuting to work, going shopping or to the gym etc.). Therefore, it is not considered that the proposed location of the nursery itself would reduce vehicle trips in comparison to the existing site, and robust initiatives and incentives will likely be needed to achieve the targets set by the travel plan.
29. The aforementioned travel plan will seek to reduce the number of motor vehicle trips directly associated with the proposed development. Whilst it is accepted that cycles/scooters may not be left on site for children attending the existing nursery, cycle parking should be available to accommodate staff and visitors (and any children who do opt to leave their cycle or scooter on site). It is requested a

minimum 2 no. secure and covered cycle parking spaces are provided and a condition is requested to agree details.

30. The LHA raise no objection to the proposal on highways and parking grounds. It is requested however that as a condition of any subsequent grant of planning permission, a full Travel Plan (TP) shall be submitted to the LPA for review and approval in writing within 6 months of the first date of operation:
- A firm commitment to targets detailed within the TP is expected, as such measures indicated in the TP shall not be primarily concerned with providing information e.g. timetables for public transport etc. a map of the local area etc.
  - The TP shall include realistic and quantifiable targets and effective initiatives and incentives to actively reduce car travel and increase use of non-car travel modes for staff, parents, guardians and carers and visitors.
  - TP targets shall be reviewed and monitored against the baseline which will be established within 3-months of the first date of operation of the site and appropriate measures taken to address any concerns and failed targets;
  - A parent, guardian, and carer and employee travel survey shall be completed every 12 months from the date of first operation of the development for a minimum period of 5 years.
  - The TP shall be implemented for a period of not less than 10 years from the first date of operation of the development.

### Secure Cycle Parking and Storage

31. The aforementioned travel plan will seek to reduce the number of motor vehicle trips directly associated with the proposed development. Whilst it is accepted that cycles/scooters may not be left on site for children attending the existing nursery, cycle parking should be available to accommodate staff and visitors (and any children who do opt to leave their cycle or scooter on site).

32. It is requested that a minimum of 2 no. secure and covered cycle parking spaces are provided and a condition is therefore required to ensure the provision of this.

### Summary

33. The LHA conclude that it has been reasonably demonstrated by the applicant that forecast vehicle trips and any associated on street parking for the proposed development would not be expected to have a severe impact to the adopted highway at this location, and subject to the requested conditions being secured for any subsequent planning permission, no objections are raised on highway grounds to the proposals.

### EQUALITIES

34. The Equality Act became law in 2010. Its purpose is to legally protect people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. The Act introduced the term

'protected characteristics', which refers to groups that are protected under the Act. These characteristics comprise: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

35. As part of the Act, the 'public sector equality duty' came into force in April 2011 (Section 140 of the Act), and with it confirmed (via Section 19 of the Act) that this duty applies to local authorities (as well as other public bodies). The equality duty comprises three main aims: A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
  3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
36. Case law has established that appropriate consideration of equality issues is a requirement for local authorities in the determination of planning applications, and with this requirement directly stemming from the Equality Act 2010.
37. The applicant has submitted an Equalities Statement which sets out the nursery's commitment to anti-discriminatory practice to promote equality of opportunity and valuing diversity for all children and families using the setting.
38. The application building has wheelchair access to both the front and back. A wheelchair ramp is installed to the front. There is a small step to the back garden however the site gate can be used for level access. Internally the building has a large disabled WC and all resources will be at low level and accessible for children and adults of all ages and abilities.
39. The Travel Plan advises that the proposal incorporates the provision of accessible parking and a revised parking plan has been received which shows seven parking spaces including an accessible space.
40. It is considered that reasonable measures have been implemented by the applicant in order to provide appropriate access for any disabled users or visitors to the premises. The provision of nursery places would be of benefit to those with pregnancy and maternity as a protected characteristic. No other benefits or dis-benefits have been identified to persons with any other protected characteristic.

## **DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS**

41. This proposal is subject to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and comes under the category of 'all other' development, consequently the development will be

liable to a CIL charge rate of £0 per square metre in line with Trafford's CIL charging schedule and revised SPD1: Planning Obligations (2014).

42. No other planning obligations are required.

### **PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION**

43. Paragraph 11c of the NPPF indicates that proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay.

44. The application proposes the use of the building as a day nursery during the week, alongside the existing use of the building as a place of worship.

45. The proposed development is considered to complement the existing community use of the building and the application has been found to be acceptable and policy compliant in all other respects, including in terms of amenity and parking impacts.

46. All relevant planning issues have been considered and representations and consultation responses taken into account in concluding that the proposals comprise an appropriate form of development for the site. The proposal would comply with the development plan when taken as a whole. The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to appropriately worded conditions.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**GRANT** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development must be begun not later than three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the following submitted plans:

- 91GS-01 - Location and Site Plan, received by the local planning authority on 10 June 2022;
- 91GS-04 – revised Proposed Plan, received by the local planning authority on 29 November 2022.

Reason: To clarify the permission, having regard to Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. The nursery to which the permission relates shall not be open other than between the hours of 07:30 to 17:30 hours Mondays to Fridays and not at all on any other day.

Reason: In order to safeguard the amenities of residents and the occupiers of nearby properties having regard to Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. The premises to which this permission relates, when used as a day nursery shall accommodate a maximum of 40 children at any one time.

Reason: As this is the basis on which the application has been considered, having regard to Policies L4 and L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. The day nursery use hereby permitted shall not be brought into use unless and until a Noise Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Noise Management Plan shall include details of outdoor play sessions including hours and numbers of children involved in each session. The use shall be operated at all times in accordance with the approved Noise Management Plan.

Reason: In order to safeguard the amenities of residents and nearby properties having regard to Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and National Planning Policy Framework.

6. The day nursery hereby permitted shall not be brought into use unless and until plans showing details of the means of access and the areas for the movement, loading, unloading and parking of vehicles (including provision for accessible parking) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and all such areas have been provided, constructed and surfaced in complete accordance with the approved plans.

Reason: To ensure that satisfactory provision is made within the site for the accommodation of vehicles attracted to or generated by the proposed development, having regard to Policies L4 and L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy, Supplementary Planning Document 3 - Parking Standards and Design and the National Planning Policy Framework.

7. The day nursery hereby permitted shall not be brought into use unless and until a scheme for secure cycle storage has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved cycle storage shall be implemented before the development is brought into use and shall be retained at all times thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that satisfactory cycle parking provision is made in the interests of promoting sustainable development, having regard to Policies L4 and L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy, the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Document 3: Parking Standards and Design, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. A Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority within 6 months of the first date of operation. The Travel Plan shall include realistic and quantifiable targets and effective initiatives and incentives to actively reduce car travel and increase use of non-car travel modes for staff, parents, guardians and carers and visitors. The Travel Plan shall also make provision for targets to be reviewed and monitored against the baseline (which will be established within 3-months of the first date of operation of the site) and appropriate measures taken to address any concerns and failed targets. A parent, guardian, and carer and employee travel survey shall be completed every 12 months from the date of first operation of the development for a minimum period of 5 years. The Travel Plan shall be implemented for a period of not less than ten years from the date of the written approval of the document by the local planning authority.

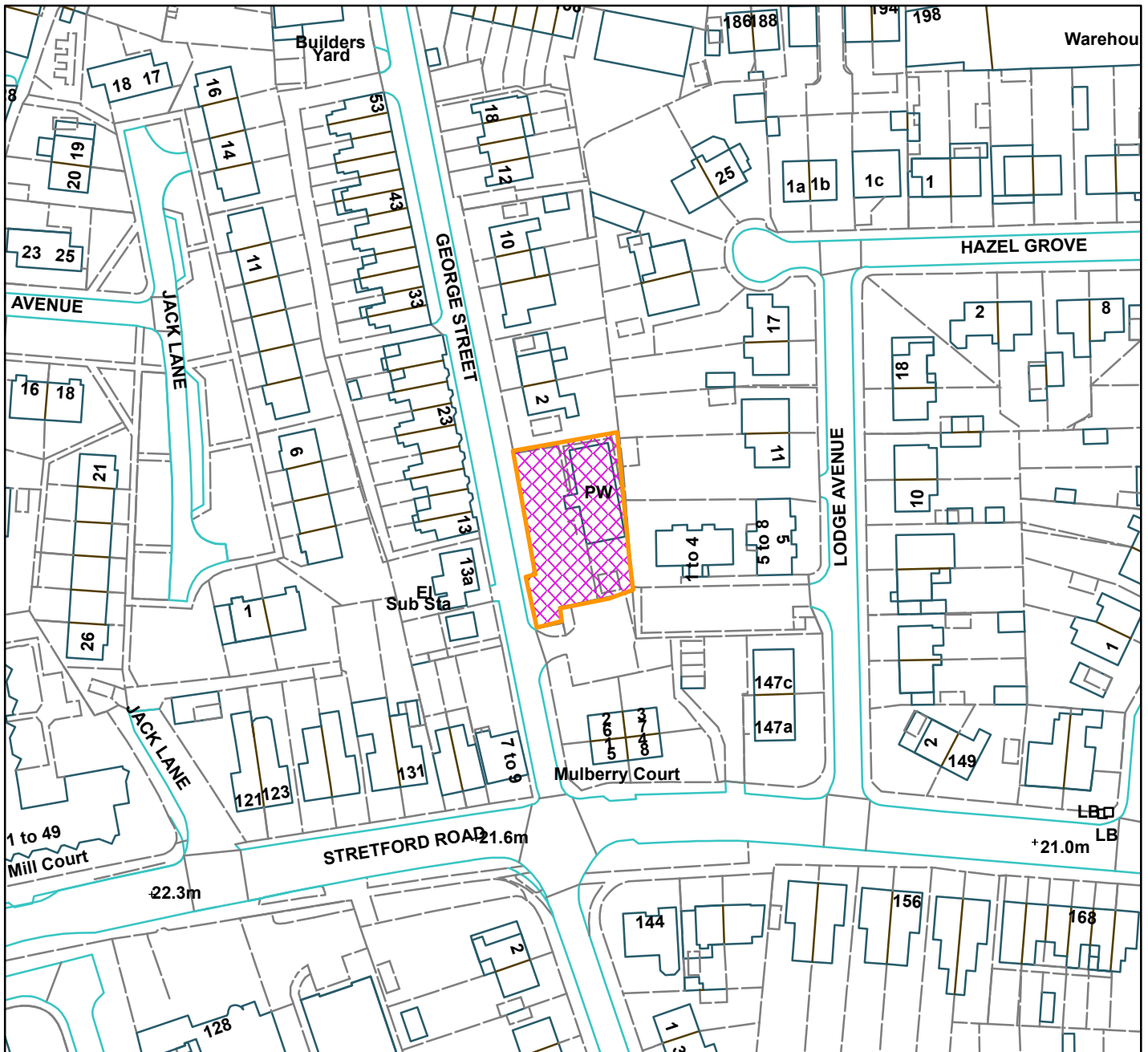
Reason: To reduce car travel to and from the site in the interests of sustainability and highway safety, having regard to Policies L4 and L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

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Urmston Methodist Church, George Street, Urmston M41 9BA (Site Hatched on Plan)



Scale: 1:1,250

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Organisation	Trafford Council
Department	Planning Service
Comments	Committee Date: 08/12/2022
Date	28/11/2022
MSA Number	100023172 (2022)

**WARD:** Altrincham

**109160/FUL/22**

**DEPARTURE:** No

**Alterations to and refurbishment of leisure centre including demolition of entrance porch, double-height extension to front, new entrance canopy, re-roofing, new sub-station, and changes to the elevations, plus alterations to pedestrian access and landscaping.**

Altrincham Leisure Centre, Oakfield Road, Altrincham, WA15 8EW

**APPLICANT:** Trafford Council

**AGENT:** Pozzoni Architecture Limited

**RECOMMENDATION: GRANT**

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**The application is presented to the Planning and Development Management Committee for determination since the applicant is Trafford Council.**

## **SITE**

The application site comprises the buildings and curtilage of Altrincham Leisure Centre, located on Oakfield Road on the outskirts of Altrincham town centre. The site extends to 0.77 hectares. To the east of the site is the carriageway of Oakfield Road with low-rise residential apartments beyond. To the south is Oakfield Road car park, which is a surface-level, pay and display facility accessed from Thomas Street which leads from Oakfield Road. Further to the south is the building of Altrincham Ice Rink.

To the north of the site is a low-level warehouse building which accommodates a car repairs/servicing business, and beyond a small collection of business premises operating as part of the Oakfield Trading Estate. To the site's west are operational railway lines (providing for both mainline trains and the Metrolink) which at this point is in very close proximity to Altrincham Interchange. A highway known as Station Approach is positioned between the site and the railway lines, with this providing a drop off point at the rear of the interchange.

The leisure centre building occupies much of the site. It is comprised of two main building blocks. The most southerly block – constructed in the mid-1970s – houses two swimming pools and associated changing and reception facilities. In the early 1980s, a second block was added to the north. This includes two large sports halls and a fitness suite. The building is single-storey with a flat roof, albeit it has a varied roofscape to account to the function of the building and height requirements for sports halls, together with plant storage. There are levels changes within the site which provides a lower ground floor to parts of the building. The building is of brick construction with areas of metal profile sheet cladding and wooden cladding. The customer entrance is on the east-facing elevation towards Oakfield Road and there is a glazed porch in this location.



The building is elevated relative to the carriageway of Oakfield Road, and there is a sloped pedestrian access and a separate stepped pedestrian access which leads to/from the entrance to the Oakfield Road footway. There is an embankment of trees and planting in this location which serves to conceal the building to the front. The building is highly visible across the Oakfield Road car park, however. The site also includes a small area of car parking to the south of the building.

Parts of the building, both internally and externally, are in a substandard and outmoded condition, reflective of the building's age. This is evidenced by patched brickwork repairs, deteriorating cladding systems, damaged glazing, and dated and poorly defined public realm.

## **PROPOSAL**

It has been recognised that Altrincham leisure centre, as with other Council leisure centres, is in need of substantial investment and modernisation. This is in order to deliver enhanced leisure provision for Trafford residents as well as improving the centre's accessibility, both internally and externally, and its credentials in sustainability terms. Accordingly, the proposals subject of this full planning application are associated with the building's significant internal and external refurbishment.

The overall use of the building, as a Council-operated leisure centre with swimming pools and sports provision, would not change. The building itself would be largely retained. A small area (comprising 6 square metres) of the building is proposed for demolition, comprising the lean-to glazed entrance porch to the front of the building. A small infill extension is proposed to this elevation (at ground and lower ground floor levels) further towards the site's northern boundary and with this incorporating a new secondary entrance to the building (at lower ground floor level). A small single-storey sub-station extension to the rear of the building is also proposed. The extensions would add an additional 198 square metres to the building.

The façade of the building is then proposed for renovation, with the elevations facing Oakfield Road and the Oakfield Road car park being the focus of the aesthetic changes (although with all four elevations affected to some degree). This includes the application of ribbed tiles (taupe in colour) over some areas of existing brickwork, the painting of external doors black, the provision of curtain wall glazing systems (incorporating the use of black frames), the application of metal sheet cladding (bronze in colour) to replace existing timber cladding, and the use of timber-effect cladding to other localised areas. Some new entrance doors (black in colour) are proposed, whilst some existing door openings would be removed and replaced with brickwork (to match the existing). The extended areas would be treated similarly, with the substation being formed in matching brick, and the two-storey extension incorporating two levels of glazing and the same cladding systems. A new canopy is proposed above the building's main entrance (which would lead to a new draught lobby). The proposals also involve the provision of a replacement roof over parts of the building, comprising a new bitumen membrane flat roofing system.

Internally, the buildings would continue to provide a 25m swimming pool and a 20m learner pool - which would be refreshed and with new 'pool pods' incorporated - and a new changing village to serve the swimming area. Other, new 'dry' changing rooms would be provided at both ground and lower ground levels including accessible changing facilities throughout. There would be an enlarged fitness suite, a four-court sports hall, flexible studio spaces, an indoor cycle studio, a wellness assessment room, and a new health and well-being spa facility. The submitted plans also illustrate an enhanced lobby area with a café and viewing zone.

Externally a number of changes are proposed to pedestrian routes to/from the building. This includes the widening of the existing sloped access and the provision of steps within it, a new ramped access adjacent to it, improvements to the pedestrian approach from the Oakfield Road car park, and the provision of a new route from Oakfield Road to the new spa entrance. Some of the existing vegetation in this area is proposed for removal, and then with replacement planting proposed. Some changes are proposed to the small car park serving the leisure centre. Presently offering 12 staff spaces and 10 combined disabled/parent with child spaces, the proposed plans illustrate 8 dedicated disabled spaces and 5 parent with child spaces.

This full application is submitted in conjunction with two other applications for Altrincham Leisure Centre: a full application for the installation of Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP) (ref.109179/FUL/22) and an application for prior approval in relation to the provision of solar panels on the roof of the building (ref. 109174/PRJ/22). The ASHP application is also presented to the Planning and Development Management Committee for determination. The solar panel application has been determined under delegated powers in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

### **Value Added**

Amended plans have been submitted which show some alterations to the materials palette and colour scheme for the building's exterior. In addition, some revisions and additional submissions have been made to address initial concerns regarding the scheme of soft landscaping, cycle parking facilities, and the development's security provisions.

### **DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

For the purposes of this application the Development Plan in Trafford comprises:

- **The Trafford Core Strategy**, adopted 25 January 2012. The Trafford Core Strategy is the first of Trafford's Local Development Framework (LDF) development plan documents to be adopted by the Council. It partially supersedes the Revised Unitary Development Plan (UDP), see Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy;

- **The Revised Trafford Unitary Development Plan (UDP)**, adopted 19 June 2006. The majority of the policies contained in the revised Trafford UDP were saved in either September 2007 or December 2008 in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 until such time that they are superseded by policies within the LDF. Appendix 5 of the Trafford Core Strategy provided details as to how the Revised UDP is being replaced by the Trafford LDF (or new Local Plan); and
- **The Altrincham Town Centre Neighbourhood Business Plan (ATCNBP)**. This was made on 29 November 2017 and it since forms part of the Development Plan for Trafford. Its chief purpose is in relation to the determination of planning applications within the defined neighbourhood area.

### **PRINCIPAL RELEVANT CORE STRATEGY POLICIES**

L4 – Sustainable Transport and Accessibility  
 L5 – Climate Change  
 L7 – Design  
 L8 – Planning Obligations  
 W2 – Town Centres and Retail  
 R1 – Historic Environment  
 R2 – Natural Environment  
 R3 – Green Infrastructure

### **PROPOSALS MAP NOTATION**

Altrincham town centre  
 Part of a site allocation within ATCNBP (for mixed use including leisure, residential, office and car parking)

### **PRINCIPAL RELEVANT REVISED UDP POLICIES/PROPOSALS**

None

### **RELEVANT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS/GUIDANCE**

Revised SPD1: Planning Obligations  
 SPD3: Parking Standards and Design  
 SPD5.4: Stamford New Road Conservation Area Appraisal  
 SPG24: Crime and Security

### **PLACES FOR EVERYONE**

Places for Everyone (PfE) is a joint Development Plan Document being produced by nine Greater Manchester districts (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan). Once adopted, PfE will be the overarching development plan, setting the policy framework for individual district Local Plans. The PfE was published for Regulation 19 consultation from 9th August 2021 to 3rd October 2021 and was submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 14 February 2022. Independent Inspectors have been appointed to undertake an Examination in Public of the PfE Submission Plan and the hearings are scheduled to start in November 2022. Whilst PfE is at an advanced stage of the plan

making process, for the purposes of this application it is not yet advanced enough to be given any meaningful weight, such that it needs consideration in this report.

## **NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY**

### **NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)**

The MHCLG published the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 20 July 2021. The NPPF will be referred to as appropriate in the report.

### **NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (NPPG)**

The National Planning Practice Guidance was first published in March 2014, and it is regularly updated, with the most recent amendments made in June 2021. The NPPG will be referred to as appropriate in the report.

## **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

H01754 – Phase 2 of Altrincham sports complex including erection of sports halls and ancillary accommodation for public recreational use  
Approved with conditions -10.07.75

H11124 – Erection of extension to sports centre including two practice halls, squash courts, training room and stores, a crèche, and café  
Approved with conditions -  
Approved with conditions – 01.12.77

H15923 – Erection of entrance enclosure  
Approved with conditions – 11.03.82

H26516 – Erection of extension at rear of swimming baths  
Approved with conditions – 18.02.88

H44266 – Erection of a storage container to the north of the main building  
Approved with conditions – 16.09.97

109174/PRJ/22 - Application for the installation of solar PV units to the flat roof of the sports hall for determination as to whether prior approval is required under Schedule 2 Part 14 Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015  
Prior approval required and approved – 25.11.22

109179/FUL/22 - Proposed installation of 2no Air Source Heat Pump systems with louvre screen  
Recommended for approval and elsewhere on this agenda.

## **APPLICANT'S SUBMISSION**

Design and Access Statement  
Heritage Statement  
Equalities Statement  
Statement of Community Involvement  
Drainage Statement  
Transport Statement  
Waste Management Strategy  
Crime Impact Statement  
Tree Survey  
Bat Survey  
Noise Impact Assessment  
Landscape Design Proposals

## **CONSULTATIONS**

**Altrincham Business Neighbourhood Plan Working Group** – Some concerns raised, as covered within the report (made specifically by the Altrincham Neighbourhood Plan Design Panel)

**Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society** – No response received

**Cadent Gas** – No objection, subject to informative (to advise of presence of assets)

**Greater Manchester Archaeology Advisory Unit** – No objection

**Greater Manchester Ecology Unit** – No objection, subject to condition (to secure the installation of bat boxes)

**Greater Manchester Police** – No objection, subject to condition (to secure implementation of the recommendations made in the Crime Impact Statement)

**Network Rail** – No response received

**Sport England** – No objection

**Trafford Council Heritage and Urban Design Manager** – No objection, subject to condition (to request material samples)

**Trafford Council Lead Local Flood Authority** – No objection

**Trafford Council Local Highway Authority** – No objection, subject to condition (to request a Construction Method Statement, and to secure details of cycle parking)

**Trafford Council Pollution and Licencing (Air Quality)** – No objection, subject to condition (to secure electric vehicle charging points)

**Trafford Council Pollution and Licencing (Contaminated Land)** – No objection

**Trafford Council Pollution and Licencing (Nuisance)** – No objection, subject to condition (to request additional noise surveys, to secure the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan, and to control external lighting)

**Trafford Council Tree Officer** – No objection, subject to condition (to ensure implementation in accordance with the AIA, and to secure landscape management)

**Trafford Council Waste Team** – No objection

**Transport for Greater Manchester (Metrolink)** – No objection

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

Nothing received

## **OBSERVATIONS**

### The Decision-taking Framework

1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions, and as the Government's expression of planning policy and how this should be applied, it should be given significant weight in the decision-taking process.
2. The NPPF, at paragraph 11, introduces 'the presumption in favour of sustainable development.' For decision-taking purposes, paragraph 11c explains that 'the presumption in favour' means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.
3. The Council's Core Strategy was adopted in January 2012, two months prior to the publication of the 2012 NPPF, but drafted to be in compliance with it. It remains broadly consistent with much of the policy in the new 2021 NPPF, particularly where that policy is not substantially changed from the 2012 version.
4. When having regard to the nature of this proposal and its key considerations, development plan policies concerning design (Policy L7), town centre uses (Policy W2) and heritage impact (Policy R1) have been most central to its assessment. Policies L7 and W2 are consistent with the NPPF and up to date. However, Policy R1 has been formally recognised as not being wholly consistent with NPPF guidance, specifically in relation to the test to be applied. The heritage policy test (as a replacement to Policy R1) is explained in more detail in the relevant section of this report, and likewise in respect of the weight to be afforded to the respective development plan policy. However, it is considered that

when taking the overall 'basket of policies' to be applied to this application, that the inconsistency in Policy R1 does not render the relevant development plan policies 'out of date' in NPPF terms. The tilted balance is not engaged and the application should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### The Principle of the Development

5. The proposed large-scale refurbishment of Altrincham Leisure Centre is part of a wider Council strategy to support the health and well-being of local residents through access to affordable, sustainable and state-of-the-art leisure facilities. Urmston was the first community to benefit from a new leisure centre (with 'Move Urmston' opening in March 2020) and the leisure centres in Sale and Stretford have also been identified for overhaul as part of a staged programme. The plans for Altrincham similarly comprise the remodelling and re-use of the existing facility. The proposals, which have been developed in conjunction with Sport England, comprise a multi-million pounds investment which would bring modern leisure centre provision to the south of the borough and would support the Council's physical activity strategy, Trafford Moving. They would also contribute to the 'health and well-being' priority outcome (see Corporate Plan for 2021/2022) in which 'Trafford has improved health and well-being and reduced health inequalities'. The intention is that Trafford Leisure, a community interest company owned by the Council, would continue to manage the new facility on behalf of the Council, as is currently the case. Should planning permission be granted, work is expected to commence as early as January 2023.
6. The application site is already in use as a Council-run leisure centre. This use is not proposed to change, albeit the facilities would be modernised and the internal and external environment significantly enhanced. With reference to the Composite Proposals Map accompanying the statutory development plan, the site is located within the boundary of Altrincham town centre (albeit towards its eastern edge). The NPPF is clear that local planning authorities should adopt a 'town centre first' approach when assessing applications for 'main town centre uses.' This is in order that town centres remain the focus of retail, commercial and leisure activity and to ensure their continued vitality and viability. The definition of main town centre uses included within the NPPF includes 'health and fitness centres.' Accordingly, the continued use of the site as a swimming pool/leisure centre is entirely consistent with the policy approach in planning for town centres. It is located away from the main retail core but sufficiently central to benefit from the town centre's levels of accessibility (including public transport provision), whilst also supporting the functioning and health of the town centre by increasing its attraction as a leisure destination and being sufficiently close to encourage linked trips.
7. Policy W2 of the Core Strategy identifies Altrincham as Trafford's principal town centre and a key driver in the borough's economic prosperity. It contains a

strategy for its further growth and expansion, identifying the uses it is capable of accommodating. This includes new retail provision, new office floorspace, new leisure facilities, hotel accommodation, a new hospital facility, an improved public transport interchange, and enhancements to the public realm. 'Altair' is recognised as the main development opportunity within the town centre, described as a high quality, high density, multi-storey, mixed-use development. This Altair site is positioned directly to the south of the application site, focussed on the Oldfield Road car park. In turn, the Altair site is identified and named on the inset map for Altrincham Town Centre (which forms part of the Proposals Map accompanying the statutory development plan). The application site and adjoining land is then subject of a separate site allocation, identified as Site E and referred to as having the potential for a mix of uses including leisure, residential, offices and car parking. These allocations are then repeated in the made Altrincham Town Centre Neighbourhood Business Plan (ATCNBP) and reiterated in its Policy A: Land Allocations.

8. These policy objectives for this part of Altrincham were conceived more than a decade ago when having regard to the specifics of the Altair development at the time. The Altair site has benefitted from an outline planning permission for a mixed-use development since August 2008 (ref. H/OUT/68603) and with a more recent, amended outline permission granted in January 2014 (ref. 81115/O/2013). There have also been two reserved matters permissions granted in 2017 (refs. 86755/RES/15 and 90432/RES/17). The permissions remain extant by virtue of preliminary works having commenced on site. One of the components of the approved development for the site is the provision of a new leisure centre (which was to act as a re-sited facility), and with the intention that this would then lead to the demolition of the existing leisure centre and the opening up of the application site (and adjoining land) for other new development.
9. However, the Altair development has suffered from a series of hold ups. In the interim, while the Council remains committed to improving its much-used leisure centres and bringing them up-to-date, the strategy has switched to one of refurbishment rather than replacement. Whilst the proposal to maintain the use of the application site as Altrincham's leisure centre does not reflect the detail behind the site's allocation in the Core Strategy and the ATCNBP, nor is it considered to be contrary to it since some form of 'leisure' use is still envisaged. Overall, it is considered that the proposed use of the site, which is already established, is fully in line with wider policy objectives for the town centre in supporting its role as a retail, commercial and leisure hub. The proposal would not prejudice the future delivery of the Altair development. It would, in fact, symbolise investment and deliver improved environmental quality with scope for enhanced pedestrian activity on an adjacent site. Therefore, the principle of the proposed use and refurbishment is supported.

### Design and Visual Amenity



10. The promotion of high standards of design is a central narrative within the NPPF, and with this message strengthened and reinforced in the July 2021 update. Paragraph 126 explains that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. The publication of the National Design Guide (NDG) in October 2019 further emphasises the Government's commitment to achieving high quality places and buildings. The Trafford Core Strategy also attaches importance to the design and quality of the borough's built environment. The text supporting Policy L7 (Design) advises that high quality design is a key factor in improving the quality of places and in delivering environmentally sustainable developments. Design solutions must: be appropriate to their context; and enhance the street scene by appropriately addressing scale, density, height, massing, layout, elevational treatment, materials, hard and soft landscaping, and boundary treatments, the policy is clear. In taking forward the advice in the NPPF and the NDG, and in seeking to raise design quality across the borough, this Council is producing its own Trafford Design Guide and a separate Design Code, supported by the DLUHC Design Code Pathfinder Programme. Work is underway and both are expected to be adopted as supplementary planning guidance during 2023.
  
11. The application site commands a somewhat transitional location on the edge of Altrincham town centre. The main approach to the site, and where vehicular and pedestrian entrances are located, is from Oakfield Road. Existing uses in this location are predominantly residential and generally of medium density in accommodating terraced properties and two/three-storey apartments (brick built). Wide grass verges, lawned islands between highways, mature and semi-mature trees (including street trees), hedges to front gardens, and landscaping at the application site combine to provide a pleasant green character to Oakfield Road. There are some commercial uses – however - including the small industrial estate neighbouring the site, and taller office premises within the town centre can be seen in the background, along with railway infrastructure and overhead tram lines. The influence of this more commercial town centre environment is evident to the south of the site, including the modern large floorplate buildings of Altrincham Ice Rink and the Tesco superstore (also set within surface-level car parking). The Oakfield Road car park provides views of the site from the south although a line of trees which flanks the southern elevation of the leisure centre building provides some filtering. The ice rink building restricts views of the site on approach to the town centre along Moss Lane. The core of the town centre, which is reached further up Moss Lane to the east, has a more historic, traditional character incorporating individual shop units and commercial premises and commanding a tighter urban grain. Again, the dominant building material is brick.
  
12. Altrincham town centre boasts a broad collection of heritage assets, including five conservation areas, a number of listed buildings/structures, and many other

notable buildings. The Stamford New Road Conservation Area is in closest proximity to the application site, focussed on the main commercial streets of Stamford New Road and Railway Street, plus their side streets. That part of the conservation area which encompasses Altrincham Interchange (and which extends to the western side of the tracks) is within some 30 metres of the site (to its east). There are listed buildings/structures on Stamford New Road (its east and west side) towards the railway station and also on Moss Lane (its north side). The Stamford New Road Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Document (SPD5.4) identifies the buildings at the railway station as 'positive contributors' to the character of the conservation area, as well as local landmarks. No. 4 Moss Lane (on its south side) is also a positive contributor.

13. The existing leisure centre building is functional in its character and very archetypal of its era. However, over time its appearance has inevitably deteriorated and environmental quality across the site is substandard. Whilst wholesale redevelopment of the site may have seemed advantageous in offering a wider transformation, this is no longer an option available to the Council. Moreover, there are some established features of the existing development which it is considered work well with the site and which it is beneficial to retain. This includes, for example, its landscaped setting, its low-rise nature, and its setback from Oakfield Road. These characteristics provide an understated development which in many way is compatible with the site's geography, respectful of nearby residential uses, and reflective of its location at the town centre's edge.
14. In principle, the proposal offers the opportunity to provide a considerably revamped leisure centre building and significantly improved areas of public realm. The key areas of change would derive from the building's appearance and materials since its footprint, height, mass and form would remain largely the same. Whilst upgrades to the building's exterior were welcomed from the outset, some concerns were initially expressed regarding the proposed colour choices. Originally the external makeover was focussed on a grey/black palette, incorporating grey ribbed ceramic tiles, grey paint to be applied to some existing brickwork, black profiled metal sheet cladding, and black louvre screens. These harsh tones were not regarded as being sufficiently complementary to the character of the site and its surroundings. The existing building incorporates a brown/red brick, and red bricks of various hues are evident in the existing buildings and boundary treatments along Oakfield Road, as well as within the more historic town centre environment. The NDG, in establishing the characteristics of well-designed places, identifies the importance of a new development relating well to its local and wider 'context'. It explains that proposals should respond 'positively to the features of the site and the surrounding context...including layout, form, scale, appearance, details and materials.' Accordingly - following the raising of officer concerns that the proposed changes to the building's elevations were not sufficiently contextual - a different shade and tone palette for the external materials and decoration has

been put forward. This is focussed around 'warmer' tones which, it is considered, would better harmonise with the prevailing building material of brick. It is reflected in the use of taupe (not grey) ribbed ceramic tiles, the application of metal sheet cladding but now bronze in colour, and bronze louvre screens, Existing brickwork is largely to remain exposed (rather than painted grey). Some features remain consistent, such as the black frames to windows, black external doors and the use of timber-effect cladding, but the overall colour palette is now more natural and welcoming, and regarded as being more sympathetic to its context, and more reflective of local distinctiveness and heritage.

15. The other main area of change would be to the external environment to the front of the building. The proposals involve considerable investment in this area in order to deliver a more accessible and inclusive leisure centre facility. The plans indicate that an attractive and inviting space would be formed which would be tiered and stepped to account for changes in levels. It is anticipated that these works would serve to 'open up' the site and make it more visible when observed from Oakfield Road, making the main building entrance more prominent and thus assisting with legibility and way-finding. However, the submitted planting plans still illustrate a well-landscaped setting to the Oakfield Road frontage, and with new planting maturing in the longer term to provide added visual benefits and to assist with the development's assimilation within the street scene. Proposed hard surfacing materials to outdoor areas include bound resin, concrete block paving, and tactile paving. Some existing paving and tarmac would be retained (mainly to the sides and rear of the building). It has been confirmed that the colour choices for the external hard surfaces would match the revised warmer tones of the building's elevations. Full material specifications and samples (proposed to be used throughout the development) would be secured via conditions.
16. The Altrincham Business Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, who led the making of the ATCNBP, acts as a statutory consultee in relation to planning applications submitted within the neighbourhood plan area. The working group includes an Altrincham Business Neighbourhood Plan Design Panel, and the Design Panel has provided comments on the application on behalf of the wider Working Group. This followed a presentation delivered by the applicant's design team to the Design Panel (as well as to the Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society). The comments of the Design Panel have been provided in two stages during the application process: in relation to the original plans, and then following the amendments to the building's exterior. At the outset the consultation response is clear that the principle of the refurbishment of Altrincham leisure centre is supported since it would ensure the long-term retention of an important town centre leisure use. The approach of renewal and refit is identified as being more sustainable than a new build development, and with far less waste generated. Some detailed aspects of the scheme are also identified as being beneficial (for example, the provision of new areas of glazing, the rationalisation of landscaping, and the provision of a new canopy to emphasise the building's

entrance). However, whilst the consultation response acknowledges that the external alterations would deliver a marked improvement to the building's south-east (to Oakfield Road) and south-west (to the car park) elevations, disappointment has been expressed that the remaining elevations (which are visible from Altrincham Interchange and Station Approach) would not benefit from the same level of improvement. In response, it has been explained that the full refurbishment works (which cover the internal transformation) have had to be tailored to remain in line with the project's budget. With this in mind it was felt that the exterior changes should be focussed on the principal parts of the building which are most visible and where the benefits of enhancement and improvement would be maximised. Indeed, whilst officers would accept that the north-west and north-east elevations of the leisure centre can be observed, and would also agree that more comprehensive exterior renewal would be preferred, equally it is acknowledged that these are secondary elevations and viewing opportunities are reduced as a consequence of intervening built form and the railway line.

17. Budgetary constraints have also been cited in response to other design comments raised by the Design Panel (for example, it has been explained there is no scope to incorporate screening to the roof to conceal existing ductwork and pipework, other than new louvres that are proposed to surround the new ASHP systems). Again, whilst officers would agree that the concealment of this existing infrastructure, which is concentrated on a central roofscape between the two main building blocks, would be advantageous, financial limitations have to be acknowledged, and at least the current scheme is offering visual mitigation to the new plant and equipment that is proposed. The suggested use by the Design Panel of painted graphics to be applied to the existing brickwork to give greater vibrancy has been dismissed as not being in keep with the design philosophy, whilst the incorporation of public art – whilst well-intentioned – has also been turned down for financial reasons.
18. In its second consultation response, the Design Panel records that the changes to the south-east and south-west elevations are regarded as an improvement in providing a more sympathetic colour scheme. It is accepted, however, that some concerns of the Design Panel remain unaddressed. Whilst still not presently proposed via this application, more recently the applicant has made it clear that the project's budget will continue to be closely monitored and that any remaining funds could be used to implement other physical improvements (this could include some screening to the roof and a makeover of the secondary elevations, it is understood).
19. Overall, it is concluded that the proposed refurbishment works would deliver a much improved physical environment to the leisure centre building and its surroundings. However, the scope of the project as a repair and redecoration is accepted, with most significant change taking place to the outdoor area at the Oakfield Road frontage as well as in the external treatment of the two main building elevations. This more modest scope allows some important

characteristics of the building to be retained (including footprint, mass, height, form and siting) which would enable it to remain in keeping with the less commercial character of Oakfield Road. However, the extent of re-landscaping to the front, together with the provision of new areas of glazing and the incorporation of new entrance features, would serve to provide more prominence to the site and would assist in making the building more legible. The alterations to the colour scheme and materials, negotiated during the application process, would provide a development that would better reflect the character and appearance of the site and its environs, including within Altrincham town centre. Budgetary constraints are unfortunate, however, since more could be achieved in improving the condition and appearance of the building, although such limitations have to be acknowledged and the proposal would not exacerbate any adverse visual effects. On the contrary, the proposed development is considered compliant with Core Strategy Policy L7 since it would enhance the street scene and the character of the area, and it has appropriately addressed elevational treatment, materials, and (hard and soft) landscaping. It is also consistent with the NPPF on the matter of design together with the NDG.

### Heritage Impact

20. Policy R1 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that the borough's heritage assets are safeguarded for the future, where possible enhanced, and that change is appropriately managed and tested for its impact on the historic environment. It should be noted, however, that Policy R1 does not reflect the NPPF's categories of 'substantial' and 'less than substantial' harm (which apply to designated heritage assets) and their corresponding tests. Those NPPF tests contained at its paragraphs 201 to 203) provide an opportunity for an applicant to demonstrate that there would be public benefits arising from a proposal which may outweigh heritage harm. The 'protect, preserve and enhance' requirement of Policy R1 infers that no harm should be caused or would be justified. In this respect, Policy R1 is inconsistent with the NPPF.
21. It has already been explained that there are heritage assets (both designated and non-designated) within the site's vicinity. In consultation with the Council's Heritage Development and Urban Design Manager, it has been concluded that the application site lies within the setting of Stamford New Road Conservation Area (specifically towards its eastern boundary); a number of Grade II listed buildings/structures comprising of the clock tower to Stamford New Road, nos. 1-11 Stamford New Road (Stamford House) and nos. 42-44 Stamford New Road (the Station Hotel); and two positive contributors as identified by SPD5.4 (the buildings at Altrincham Interchange and no. 4 Moss Lane). The application submission includes a Heritage Statement which covers each of these heritage assets. It correctly identifies that there is some inter-visibility between the site and no. 4 Moss Lane together with Altrincham Interchange. The statement records that the site is not visible from the other buildings; and whilst it is agreed that intervening built form restricts public viewing opportunities in both directions,

the Council's Heritage Development and Urban Design Manager has commented that views of the site can be obtained from the upper floors of nos. 1-11 Stamford New Road and nos. 42-44 Stamford New Road.

22. The Heritage Development and Urban Design Manager's position on the application has been sought in the interests of understanding the potential impact on the setting and thereby the significance of the heritage assets. The consultation response highlights that, in determining this application, there is a statutory duty under Section 66 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess. In addition to this, the statutory duty under Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also applies, which is to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.
23. Concerns were initially expressed in respect of the colour scheme that had been adopted, which it was felt would not complement the historic architecture and use of traditional materials within the adjacent conservation area. However, the final response welcomes the change in the tone of the proposed materials, recording that the warmer colour palette is more in keeping with the existing historic townscape and the local distinctiveness of the adjacent Interchange and buildings on Stamford New Road and Moss Lane. Accordingly, the response concludes that the proposed development – as amended – would not harm the setting of the identified designated and non-designated heritage assets. It continues that the applicant has sought to minimise the harm, and thus has addressed the requirements of paragraph 195 of the NPPF which seeks to avoid conflict between a heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of a proposal.
24. In the absence of any harm to significance, the NPPF's 'public benefit balancing' tests at its paragraphs 201 to 203 need not be applied, and the proposal is considered fully compliant with Policy R1 of the Core Strategy.

### Accessibility

25. The NPPF, when naming the three overarching objectives of the planning system (paragraph 8), identifies under the social objective the importance of delivering accessible services that reflect current and future needs and support communities health and social and cultural well-being. When assessing applications for development, it should be ensured – according to paragraph 110 – that safe and suitable access to a site can be achieved for all users. In addition to covering design and the appearance of new development, Policy L7 of the Core Strategy also refers to matters of accessibility. It identifies that new development should offer equal access for all potential users and should provide good pedestrian connections within a site as well as to/from it. The merits of the proposed development when having regard to these policy aims have been

carefully reviewed and are covered below with the focus at this stage being on pedestrian access. Vehicular and cycle access, together with public transport availability, are reported in the subsequent section in drawing on the consultation response of the local highway authority (LHA).

26. The proposal for Altrincham leisure centre is underpinned by an acceptance that there are shortcomings in terms of how the facility is presently accessed when on foot. The site's topography is the main contributing factor, with a 3.25m level difference between the main building entrance and Oakfield Road. The primary pedestrian route to the entrance is via a steep ramp (some 1:10) from the Oakfield Road footway. There is also a stepped access from Thomas Street towards the south-eastern corner of the building, and a staggered stepped access from Oakfield Road at the north-eastern corner of the building. According to the application submission, none of these three access routes meet current access accessibility guidelines, with disabled users generally having to rely on arriving at the leisure centre by car via Station Approach. The proposal seeks to rectify this issue through considerable re-contouring and landscape intervention to the front of the building. This would allow for the creation of a new ramp on a 'zig-zag' configuration – from Oakfield Road to the main building entrance - which would provide a far more gentle gradient. It would be supplemented by a wide stepped access with a landing platform at the mid-point, and a further, gradual sloped access from Oakfield Road to the new spa entrance. The existing route from Thomas Street would be retained and enhanced. The landscape submission identifies how these new routes would be surfaced, comprising mainly concrete block paving together with select tactile paving to notify visually-impaired users of particular transitions and levels changes. Handrails to the stepped access would also be provided, and some seating opportunities throughout. It is understood that the proposal has been designed in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations 2010 which covers 'access to and the use of buildings (other than dwellings)' and seeks to ensure that new public buildings and commercial developments have made reasonable provision to enable full access to be gained.
27. Overall, it is considered that the proposed development would deliver a vastly improved external pedestrian environment. In doing so it would meet the access needs of different user groups, including people with disabilities and those with prams and pushchairs, and would ensure that the enhanced facilities at the leisure centre would be available for use by all sections of the community. The proposal is therefore considered compliant with the requirements for inclusive pedestrian access in both the Core Strategy (Policy L7) and the NPPF.

### Highways Matters

28. The NPPF (paragraph 104) explains that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and of development proposals. Significant development should be focussed on locations which are or which can

be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes, paragraph 105 continues. However, development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds if there would be an 'unacceptable impact on highway safety', or 'the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe', it advises (paragraph 111). Policy L4 of the Core Strategy is the relevant policy at development plan level. This is clear that planning permission will not be granted for new development that is likely to have a 'significant adverse impact' on the safe and efficient operation of the strategic road network (SRN), and the primary and local highway network. It has been concluded that the severe reference within the NPPF is a more stringent test for residual cumulative impacts, and thus it is the NPPF test which takes precedence over Policy L4 (on the issue of traffic impact).

29. The existing leisure centre provides no dedicated general car parking to serve customers, although mobility, parent with child and staff spaces are available (accessed from Station Approach and providing a total of 22 spaces). The public car park of Oakfield Road can be used for general customer use, however, and the site is a short distance from Altrincham Interchange (which provides local bus and tram services). A Transport Statement submitted with the application acknowledges that existing on-site parking is somewhat compromised, with limited circulation space or room for loading/transfer. Parking would be rationalised and downsized, it is explained, moving to 13 spaces in total. However, the number of allocated mobility spaces would increase to 8 (currently there are ten dual-purpose mobility and parent with child spaces) plus five dedicated parent with child spaces would be provided, and with these meeting up-to-date design standards and laid out in a manner which would provide for easy access and manoeuvrability. There would be no staff car parking, however.
30. The application has been reviewed by the LHA. No concerns have been raised on matters of principle when noting that the overall use and usage of the site is not proposed to change, and likewise in respect of the vehicular access and servicing arrangements (which also would not alter). On the matter of car parking, the LHA has confirmed that it is satisfied with the adjusted position, commenting that the uplifted quantity and improved configuration of the mobility parking in particular would constitute a significant betterment. Whilst some concerns were highlighted regarding the location of one mobility space adjacent to an entrance with opening doors (which could pose a pedestrian conflict), it has since been explained that the entrance (to a substation) is seldom used, by staff only and that the substation cannot be accessed internally. The LHA has raised no concerns regarding the loss of staff parking when noting the ease of accessing the development by other, more sustainable transport modes.
31. In turning to cycle parking, the present leisure centre provides three uncovered Sheffield-style stands outside the main entrance. The Transport Statement explains that the proposal would deliver a new cycle hub towards the south-eastern corner of the building, adjacent to the mobility spaces. The location of



the cycle hub is indicated on the proposed site plan, and the Transport Statement explains that it is envisaged to consist of a series of Sheffield-style stands contained within a shelter and with it also accommodating adaptive bikes. Full details are not presently available, however, since the design is still being worked up, it is continued. Whilst supportive in principle of increasing cycle parking provision and offering it within a covered environment, the LHA has advised that the proposed hub's location could impede pedestrian movement between the car park and the main entrance. However, an alternative location that would also offer the same advantages in terms of visibility and proximity to the building entrance cannot be found, it has been explained, but the applicant has confirmed that signage and footpath markings could be used to minimise pedestrian/cyclist conflict. The LHA is satisfied with this response, and with a condition recommended to secure the full specification of the cycle shelter including measures to ensure its identification and to prevent any conflict.

32. A further condition is recommended by the LHA to request a Construction Method Statement to minimise any risks to highway users during the construction process. Overall, it has been concluded that the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety and nor would generate severe residual cumulative impacts. It is therefore compliant with Policy L4 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

### Landscaping and Green Infrastructure

33. The NPPF is clear that the creation of well-designed places is also dependent on the incorporation of appropriate and effective landscaping (paragraph 127). Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy also refers to the importance of ensuring that new developments are appropriately landscaped. In addition to this requirement, there is a separate Core Strategy expectation (as articulated by Policy L8 and Policy R3, and complemented by Revised SPD1: Planning Obligations) for development proposals to contribute on an appropriate scale to the provision of 'specific green infrastructure' (SGI), which includes tree planting and other forms of soft landscaping.
34. There are a number of documents which have been reviewed when considering the proposal's approach to landscaping. This includes an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) together with a Landscape Design Statement and accompanying landscape/planting plans. Updates to this documentation have been provided in response to initial concerns. The AIA records that there are no trees covered by Tree Preservation Orders on the site, and it is known that the site is not in a conservation area. 27 trees and 4 tree groups are identified by the AIA as existing on site with the potential to be affected by the proposed development. Silver birch dominates as a species but there are also some Scotts pine, common alder and willow. The majority of these are situated on the sloped embankment which faces Oakfield Road. None of the trees have been classified as having high amenity value (i.e. with an estimated remaining life expectancy of

at least 40 years and which should be retained (Category A)).

35. In order to facilitate the proposed development – and mainly the extension works and the new pedestrian access routes – the AIA (as updated) has found that eight trees and 75 percent of one tree group would need to be removed. This includes four trees which have been afforded a Category B value (i.e. of moderate quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 20 years). A Category C value has been assigned to the remaining affected trees and also the tree group (i.e. smaller trees or ones considered to be of low value). Two further trees have been identified as warranting removal on the basis of their poor health and condition (irrespective of the proposed development). The AIA also acknowledges that the proposed access works in particular would encroach into the root protection areas (RPAs) of other trees. However, it explains that careful construction techniques could be applied to prevent irreparable damage to roots.
36. The Council's Tree officer has considered the submission. The consultation response describes how the site's trees, collectively, provide an attractive feature around the leisure centre building and give some green aesthetic to Oakfield Road to complement other planting. The classification of the trees by the AIA is agreed with. The loss of four Category B trees is regarded as unfortunate however, although it is noted that this is an improved position relative to the original AIA which anticipated the loss of a further two trees in this class. Moreover, it is acknowledged that the majority of trees on site would be retained and would continue to provide a pleasant, green feature to the exterior of the leisure centre. The benefits of thinning out the tree stock and of removing poorly-sited trees is also referred to, subject to suitable, quality replacement planting being proposed. The Tree officer endorses the use of protection measures to affected retained trees during the construction process, and this could be conditioned.
37. In turning to the new planting that is proposed, the landscape plans illustrate the provision of nine new trees to the front of the building, positioned towards the new spa entrance and aligning the new pedestrian access routes. The planting specifications explain that these would be of a semi-mature standard when planted, and varieties of maple, alder and elm are proposed. The plans also indicate new areas of shrub and meadow planting surrounding the new, and some of the retained, trees, and to provide natural, green treatment adjacent to the new pedestrian routes. Existing low-level shrub planting is also shown as being retained. The Tree officer is satisfied with the proposed approach to new soft landscaping, in noting that the selected species would be well-suited to this environment. Originally, twelve new trees were proposed but the Tree officer felt that the trees' close proximity could affect their ability to grow and flourish. Indeed, the success of planting at the site would be dependent on careful and consistent landscape maintenance. Accordingly, the Tree officer has advised on the need for a condition to be used to secure a scheme of landscape

management, to ensure that the new planting would thrive over time and would deliver its design intent (as visuals and imagery supporting the application submission illustrate).

38. Overall, it is concluded that the proposed development adopts a reasonable approach in seeking to minimise the loss of existing trees. The scale of new planting (nine new trees plus shrubs) is considered to comprise a suitable replacement for the eight trees and tree group which would be removed (or part-removed) and when also having regard to the expectations of Revised SPD1 regarding all new developments making a proportionate contribution to 'specific green infrastructure'. This conclusion has also taken into account the comments of the Tree officer regarding the potential for tree crowding and also the limited extent of new floorspace associated with the proposal which reduces expectations under Revised SPD1. Subject to careful execution and maintenance, the proposed planting scheme would serve to ensure that the leisure centre building would remain within a landscaped setting, harmonising with existing trees and verges to Oakfield Road. Policies L7, L8 and R3, on the matter of landscaping, are considered complied with, alongside the supplementary guidance document and the NPPF.

#### Residential Amenity

39. In addition to ensuring that developments are designed to be visually attractive, the NPPF (at paragraph 130) advises that planning decisions should create places that provide a high standard of amenity. Policy L7 of the Core Strategy contains a similar requirement, and with it made clear that new development must not prejudice the amenities of neighbouring occupiers by reason of being overbearing or through overshadowing, overlooking, visual intrusion, noise/disturbance or in any other way.
40. There are residential uses in the vicinity of the application site, namely to the east, north-east and south-east on the opposite side of Oakfield Road. The nearest residential properties comprise some two/three storey apartments known as Great Oak Drive. At its nearest point, the distance between the facing elevations (of the apartments and the leisure centre) is some 33 metres, with the Oakfield Road carriageway and landscaping to the front of the leisure centre and the apartments in the intervening space. When having regard to the site's existing leisure centre use, the limited adjustments to the built form relative to the existing arrangement, and the extent of separation which would be maintained, no residential amenity issues on the topics of overshadowing, overlooking or visual intrusion are anticipated. This conclusion also accounts for the changes that are proposed to the landscaping and planting to the front.
41. However, from the outset some caution has been taken on the subject of the potential for noise disturbance for surrounding residential uses, when noting in particular that the refurbishment works could involve the installation of new plant

(within the existing building and/or within the new substation) which may generate elevated noise levels relative to the existing scenario. This concern was also in recognition of new mechanical equipment associated with the ASHP systems - which are proposed via the accompanying application (ref. 109179/FUL/22) - and generally the potential for an enhanced leisure centre facility to generate greater levels of customer activity which could lead to some degree of disturbance.

42. Accordingly, advice on these matters has been sought from the Council's Pollution and Licencing (Nuisance team) and when having regard to the findings of a submitted Noise Impact Assessment (NIA). In the context of the existing baseline noise climate, the NIA concludes that the identified sources of new noise would not have a significant adverse impact on the nearest residential receptors. Whilst the Nuisance team is satisfied with such conclusions and is of the view that there are no 'in principle' concerns regarding the potential for adverse noise impacts at the refurbished leisure centre site, two noise-related conditions are recommended in order to secure further noise surveys. The first would establish the combined noise emissions of all new plant to be installed (including within the new substation, within plant rooms, and that associated with the ASHPs) whilst the second would look more closely at any uplift in noise as a consequence of more intensive customer use (for example, attributable to the enlarged fitness suite and the timetable of activities that it would support). The recommended conditions would also secure the implementation of a scheme of noise attenuation – where justified - to ensure that noise levels would not exceed guidance levels.
43. Some additional conditions have also been recommended by the Nuisance team in the interests of minimising and mitigating any adverse effects for the environment and for the local community. This includes to request a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which, as a working document, would outline the contractors approach to environmental management throughout the construction process, and also to ensure that any external lighting installed at the site would be carefully sited and of suitable specifications to prevent any adverse glare. The LHA has made a similar request regarding a CEMP. With these conditions in place, it is concluded that there would be no detrimental impact on the residential amenities of neighbouring properties, and the requirements of Policy L7 on this matter are therefore fulfilled (together with the NPPF).

#### Crime and Security Considerations

44. Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that development proposals create places that are safe, and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion and resilience. These objectives are supported by Policy L7 of the Core Strategy which requires applicants to demonstrate that a proposed

development would help to create a safe environment and reduce the potential for crime. A supplementary planning document (PG24: Crime and Security) further develops these principles.

45. The application is supported by a Crime Impact Statement (CIS) which has been prepared in conjunction with the Greater Manchester Police (GMP), and with the GMP subsequently reviewing the document in its role as consultee. The CIS identifies several aspects of the proposal which are regarded as making a positive contribution to the prevention of crime. For instance: the existing building is regarded as being dated, and the proposed refurbishment would provide an opportunity to introduce modern security infrastructure to the building; the management of landscaping to the Oldfield Road frontage would enable the main entrance of the leisure centre to be seen from the public highway; and the new car parking area would be better related to the leisure centre and would discourage more distant parking. The CIS then makes a series of design and security recommendations in order to maximise the ability of the development to deliver a safe and secure environment. These have been reviewed by the applicant and the majority are within the scope of the proposal and are readily capable of implementation. This includes, for example, careful placing of new, suitable plant and tree species to reduce opportunities for concealment, the provision of new external lighting to the pedestrian approach from Oldfield Road to improve natural surveillance beyond daylight hours, and the use of security certified doors locks, window locks and glazing.
46. However, the response from the applicant to some of the suggestions is to highlight the constraints associated with this refurbishment project. Indeed, the CIS refers to recesses at ground floor level within the building envelope which, it is explained, have the potential to be misused since they provide a dark corner concealed from public view. However, such recesses (in three locations on the front, side and rear of the building) are already a design feature that cannot be changed. Moreover, the introduction of gates to secure the outer edges of the building in these locations is not feasible since these would be positioned close to fire doors and maintenance access doors and could cause an obstruction. The initial response of GMP was to advise on the need for the recesses to be illuminated to a high standard and to be covered by a CCTV system, and this principle of using lighting (including advanced dusk-till-dawn lighting) and cameras elsewhere as a crime prevention measure in the absence of being able to design the site afresh has been advocated by GMP. Whilst the applicant remains firmly committed to the incorporation of well-designed lighting together with CCTV within certain locations, it has been made clear that there are some budgetary limitations to the project. Thus, the precise coverage and specification of these features cannot be guaranteed at this stage. In final discussions with the consultee it has been confirmed that GMP is satisfied that this proposal to alter an existing building has adequately incorporated the principles of 'designing out crime', and that the scope of the refurbishment project going forward would (to some degree) further enhance the safety of its users through the use of

reactive security measures. A condition is recommended to secure the implementation of the recommendations in the CIS (where feasible and with non-adoption of any of the recommendations adequately justified). Accordingly, the proposal is considered to meet the requirements of Policy L7 regarding crime prevention along with SPG24 and the NPPF.

### Ecology Impacts

47. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, including by minimising impacts on - and providing net gains for – biodiversity, the NPPF is clear (paragraph 174). At the development plan level, Core Strategy Policy R2 similarly seeks to ensure that new development would not have an unacceptable ecological impact.
48. The site is not subject to any ecology-based designations. However, the application submission includes a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment in order to understand whether the site provides suitable habitat when having regard to the proposed works to trees and the building (including the roof). The report refers to a recent on-site survey during which no bats were recorded emerging from the building or from any trees on site, and no bat roosts were identified. Accordingly, the report defines the site as having ‘low’ bat roost potential and it concludes that the works could take place without causing harm to bat species.
49. The report has been reviewed by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. This consultee is satisfied that the bat survey was carried out by suitably qualified consultants and to appropriate standards, and thus there is no reason to disagree with the survey findings. No objections are raised, although a condition is recommended to secure the installation of two bat boxes on the refurbished building in order to deliver a net gain in biodiversity and in recognition that the survey found evidence of bats in the wider area. On this basis the proposal is considered compliant with Core Strategy Policy R2 and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

### Equality Matters

50. Under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 (specifically Section 149 of the Public Sector Equality Duty, PSED), all public bodies are required - when exercising their functions - to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations. The PSED applies to local planning authorities when taking decisions on planning applications.
51. In noting that the proposal relates to a Council building which would be publicly accessible, the submission has included an Equalities Statement. This document makes reference to the Council’s Equality and Diversity Mission Statement, which sets out a commitment ‘to ensuring that people are treated fairly and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone to live, learn, work

and relax in the borough.’ It has already been documented within this report that the existing leisure centre does not offer inclusive access, with disabled users required to approach the main entrance via a different route. The Equalities Statement makes further reference to this, and it also outlines that, internally, the centre lacks an accessible changing facility. The document continues by explaining that the desire to make the enhanced leisure centre a fully inclusive and accessible environment formed a core principal in the project’s design evolution. In doing so, the valuable services on offer - with beneficial impacts on health and well-being - would be freely available for all.

52. In itemising particular features of the proposal which are intended to eliminate any discrimination, the Equalities Statement refers to: the formation of the new access ramp from Oakfield Road; the provision of level access to the new spa entrance; the increase in the number of disabled parking bays and with their layout improved; the installation of a new internal lift for wheelchair users when accessing the sports hall; the creation of accessible toilets and changing rooms for each of the swimming pool, spa, sports hall and fitness facilities; and the provision of two Changing Places toilets (comprising larger, accessible toilets with equipment such as hoists, curtains, adult-sized changing benches and space for carers). The document also refers to a gender neutral changing village being incorporated, and also for the upgraded leisure centre to offer new employment opportunities for adults of any working age and with scope for apprenticeships and other community-based programmes to be offered.
53. Overall, there is no evidence at this stage that the proposal could differentially or disproportionately impact upon groups with ‘protected characteristics’, as defined by the Equality Act (covering age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation). The submitted Equalities Statement would indicate that the development would meet the needs of people with such protected characteristics and that - in fact - it would improve and promote equality in certain respects. However, the issue of whether due regard has been taken of the public sector equality duty is a matter for the decision-maker.

#### Other Planning Considerations

54. The site is located in Flood Zone 1 which means that it has a low annual probability of river or sea flooding. The application submission includes an overview of the application’s drainage proposals, and with it made clear that the existing arrangements for managing surface and foul water would continue (utilising existing sewers). The Lead Local Flood Authority has confirmed acceptance with the proposals, with it noting that there would be no material change in the quantity of hard surfaces at the site.
55. No concerns have been raised by the Council’s Pollution and Licencing team regarding the potential for the proposed development to adversely impact upon

air quality conditions. However, a condition is recommended to ensure that the new parking spaces incorporate electric vehicle charging infrastructure. The Council's Pollution and Licencing (Contaminated Land) team has confirmed that there are no concerns with regard to contamination or ground instability. The Metrolink team within Transport for Greater Manchester is satisfied that there would be no operational impacts on the tramline given the distances involved. Cadent Gas has advised that it has assets in the site's vicinity which must not be harmed (to be covered in an informative attached to any notice of planning permission). Finally, Sport England, the Greater Manchester Archaeology Advisory Service, and the Council's Waste team have raised no objections.

## **DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS**

56. The proposed development would appear to be subject to a CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) charge on the basis that the additional internal floorspace proposed (substation plus entrance extension) would amount to 100 square metres or above. The charge (for a leisure scheme) would be £10 per square metre. The necessary CIL calculations would be undertaken post any grant of planning permission.
57. The position regarding specific green infrastructure has been explained and the proposed development does not generate a requirement for any additional developer contributions.

## **PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION**

58. The application site is Altrincham leisure centre and the proposal – made in full – involves the alteration and refurbishment, both internally and externally, of the building. The external changes include an extension and new entrance canopy to the front, a new substation, changes to the building's façades, and re-roofing works. In addition, the proposal involves changes to the outdoor areas, focussed on the Oakfield Road frontage, including new pedestrian approaches within a reconfigured landscape setting. It has been recognised that many aspects of the building and site are in need of renewal and repair in order to meet present-day standards regarding accessibility and sustainability, to deliver a refreshed and vibrant physical environment, and to provide an up-to-date, community leisure centre for Altrincham.
59. It has been identified that the proposal would support the health and well-being of local residents through access to affordable, sustainable and modern leisure and swimming facilities. The retention and enhancement of the existing uses at the site is regarded as contributing to the functioning of Altrincham town centre without prejudice to wider redevelopment aspirations. The physical changes to the building – following some adjustments to materials - have been found to be in keeping with the character and appearance of the site and its surroundings. Whilst more significant intervention in the exterior of the building may have



served to eliminate other negative features, the scope of the project as a 'refurbishment' has been recognised (and with this offering some advantages in sustainability terms over the option of wholesale redevelopment). The prominence of the building within the Oakfield Road street scene would be increased through adjustments to landscaping and more definition to the front elevation, but it has been concluded that it would remain compatible with the existing landform and surrounding, more sensitive residential uses. The revamped development's accessibility credentials would be significantly superior to the present arrangement (including the pedestrian routes outside of the building, the interior layout and other internal provisions, and more - and improved quality - accessible car parking and cycle parking). The development also provides the opportunity to rationalise planting at the site, whilst retaining many quality tree specimens and offering new tree and shrub planting which could be better managed and maintained. No harm to nearby heritage assets has been identified (following the scheme amendment), and similarly no adverse residential amenity impacts with the option for further noise attenuation to be introduced where necessary. Features to deliver biodiversity enhancements would be installed. Whilst all crime and security recommendations may not be capable of being incorporated to the fullest extent, nonetheless the GMP is satisfied that the development would deliver a safe and secure environment. The proposal has been found to be acceptable in all other respects. Improvements to and within the building are also likely to deliver improved thermal performance and energy efficiency, and with accompanying applications at the site also seeking to introduce renewable and low carbon technology to support the building's operation.

60. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. That remains the starting point for decision-taking. The NPPF is an important material consideration. The decision-taking structure to be applied in the determination of this application is that set out at paragraph 11c and paragraph 12 of the NPPF since this is not a proposal in which relevant policies or the development plan as a whole have been deemed 'out of date'. It has been concluded that the proposal is compliant with relevant policies of the statutory development plan when taken as a whole, national policy in the NPPF and also other local guidance. Approval is recommended, subject to conditions.

**RECOMMENDATION: GRANT subject to the following conditions**

1. The development must be begun not later than three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the following approved plans:

Location plan (ref. 5970\_01000 P01);  
Proposed block plan (ref. 5970\_01001 P03);  
Proposed site plan (ref. 5970\_01200 P04);  
Proposed lower ground floor plan (ref. 5970\_01210 P01);  
Proposed ground floor plan (ref. 5970\_01211 P02);  
Proposed first floor/lower roof plan (ref. 5970\_01212 P02);  
Proposed upper roof plan (ref. 5970\_01213 P03);  
Proposed elevations (ref. 5970\_01350 P04);  
Proposed site sections (ref. 5970\_01400 P01);  
Proposed strip sections (ref. 5970\_01450 P01);  
Landscape general arrangement plan (ref. 763-ALA-00-XX-DR-L-0002 P06);  
Landscape illustrative masterplan (ref. 763-ALA-00-XX-DR-L-0001 P06); and  
Planting plan (ref. 763-ALA-00-XX-DR-L-0008 P06).

Reason: To clarify the permission, having regard to Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. Notwithstanding the approved plans referred to at condition no.2, no works of refurbishment and alteration to the exterior of the leisure centre building shall take place unless and until samples and specifications of all materials to be used externally on the building have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The samples and specifications shall include all cladding systems, tiles, glazing systems, window frames, doors, and roof systems, and a constructed panel of new brickwork illustrating the type, colour and texture of the brick and the type of joint, the type of bonding, and the colour of the mortar. Development shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to ensure a satisfactory appearance in the interests of visual amenity and the character, appearance and setting of adjacent heritage assets, having regard to Policy L7 and Policy R1 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. Notwithstanding the approved plans referred to at condition no.2, no works of refurbishment and alteration to the external environment at the leisure centre site (other than vegetation clearance) shall take place unless and until full samples and specifications of all materials to be used in the hard landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The samples and specifications shall include: materials for vehicle and pedestrian

routes; all other hard surfacing materials; means of enclosure/boundary treatments (including handrails); and any other furniture (including planting beds, bollards and benches). Development shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to ensure a satisfactory appearance in the interests of visual amenity and the character, appearance and setting of adjacent heritage assets, having regard to Policy L7 and Policy R1 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. Soft landscaping at the development hereby approved shall be provided in accordance with the details shown on the approved landscape plans (refs. 763-ALA-00-XX-DR-L-0002 P06; 763-ALA-00-XX-DR-L-0001 P06); and 763-ALA-00-XX-DR-L-0008 P06). No works of refurbishment and alteration to the external environment at the leisure centre site (other than vegetation clearance) shall take place unless and until the following additional details regarding the soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority: a planting implementation programme; and a scheme of landscape management and maintenance which shall remain in force throughout the lifetime of the development. Development shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the site is satisfactorily landscaped, having regard to Policy L7 and Policy R3 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

6. No development or works of site preparation shall take place until all trees that are to be retained within or adjacent to the site have been enclosed with temporary protective fencing in accordance with the details contained in the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment (prepared by Biora and dated 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022). The fencing shall be retained throughout the period of construction. The development shall be carried out in full accordance with all other tree protection measures identified in the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment.

Reason: In order to protect existing trees in the interests of the amenities of the area, having regard to Policy L7 and Policy R3 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework. The fencing is required prior to development taking place on site as any works undertaken beforehand, including preliminary works, could damage the trees.

7. No cycle parking infrastructure shall be installed until full details of proposed cycle parking have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The submitted details shall identify the type, specification and quantity of proposed cycle parking, and shall confirm that the cycle parking would be provided within a sheltered and secured environment. The submitted details

shall also include a scheme for the advance identification of the cycle parking. The approved cycle parking works shall be installed and made available for use prior to the opening of the refurbished leisure centre and shall be thereafter retained.

Reason: To ensure that satisfactory cycle parking provision is made in the interests of promoting sustainable development, and whilst also minimising pedestrian/cyclist conflict, having regard to Policy L4 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

8. No development shall take place, including any works of demolition and site clearance, unless and until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CMP shall address, but not be limited to, the following matters:
  - a. Suitable hours of construction and demolition activity (which shall be: Monday to Friday 0730 to 1800 hours; and Saturdays 0900 to 1300 hours. No construction/demolition works shall take place on Sundays and Bank Holidays);
  - b. the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors;
  - c. loading and unloading of plant and materials including times of access/egress;
  - d. storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
  - e. the erection and maintenance of security hoardings;
  - f. measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during demolition and construction and procedures to be adopted in response to complaints of fugitive dust emissions;
  - g. a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works (prohibiting fires on site);
  - h. measures to prevent disturbance to adjacent dwellings from noise and vibration;
  - i. information on how asbestos material is to be identified and treated or disposed of in a manner that would not cause undue risk to adjacent receptors; and
  - j. information to be made available for members of the public (for example, contact details in the event of complaints).

The approved CEMP shall be fully adhered to throughout the demolition/construction period.

Reason: To ensure that appropriate details are agreed before works start on site and to minimise disturbance and nuisance to occupiers of nearby properties and users of the highway, having regard to Policy L4 and Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework. The details are required prior to development taking place on site as any works undertaken beforehand, including preliminary works, could result in adverse residential amenity and highway impacts.

9. No new plant shall be installed in association with the development hereby permitted unless and until an assessment of plant noise has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The submitted details shall include a scheme of mitigation to ensure that the combined noise level of all plant at the leisure centre building, when assessed and rated in accordance with BS 4142:2014 +A1:2019 at 1 metre from any sensitive residential receptors, does not exceed 10dB below the prevailing background noise level ( $L_{A90,T}$ ) at the quietest time that the equipment would be operating. Noise measurements and assessments shall be compliant with BS 4142:2014+A1:2019 'Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound'. The approved scheme of mitigation shall be implemented prior to the new plant being brought into use and shall thereafter be maintained in good working order and retained throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity, having regard to Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

10. The leisure centre use at the site shall not be re-introduced unless and until an assessment of noise to determine the impacts arising from the new fitness suite at ground floor level has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The submitted details shall consider the noise impacts of the fitness suite in combination with other sources of noise attributable to the site arising from operational activities and shall include a scheme of mitigation to ensure that noise from operational activities would be in line with relevant national standards. The approved scheme of mitigation shall be implemented prior to the leisure centre use being re-introduced and shall thereafter be maintained in good working order and retained throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity, having regard to Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

11. Any external lighting provided at the site shall be designed, erected and directed so as to avoid any light nuisance to sensitive residential receptors in accordance with the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light GN01:2021.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity, having regard to Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

12. No works of refurbishment and alteration to the external environment at the leisure centre site (other than vegetation clearance) shall take place unless and until a scheme for the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure (including charging points and dedicated parking bays) within the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Development shall be implemented in full accordance with the approved details and the infrastructure shall be retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of sustainability and reducing air pollution, having regard to Policy L5 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

13. The development hereby approved shall be constructed in accordance with the recommendations contained within Section 3 and Section 4 of the submitted Crime Impact Statement (dated 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022, referenced 2022/0413/CIS/01 version B). Prior to the leisure centre use being reintroduced a verification report confirming implementation of the recommendations shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The verification report shall also identify any recommendations which proved unfeasible to implement (with written justification) and shall outline alternative measures which would be capable of implementation to achieve the same or similar outcome. The approved recommendations and alternative crime prevention measures shall thereafter be maintained in good working order and retained throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of crime prevention and the enhancement of community safety, having regard to Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

14. Prior to the leisure centre use being reintroduced, 2no bat boxes shall be installed on the exterior of the building, and shall be thereafter retained.

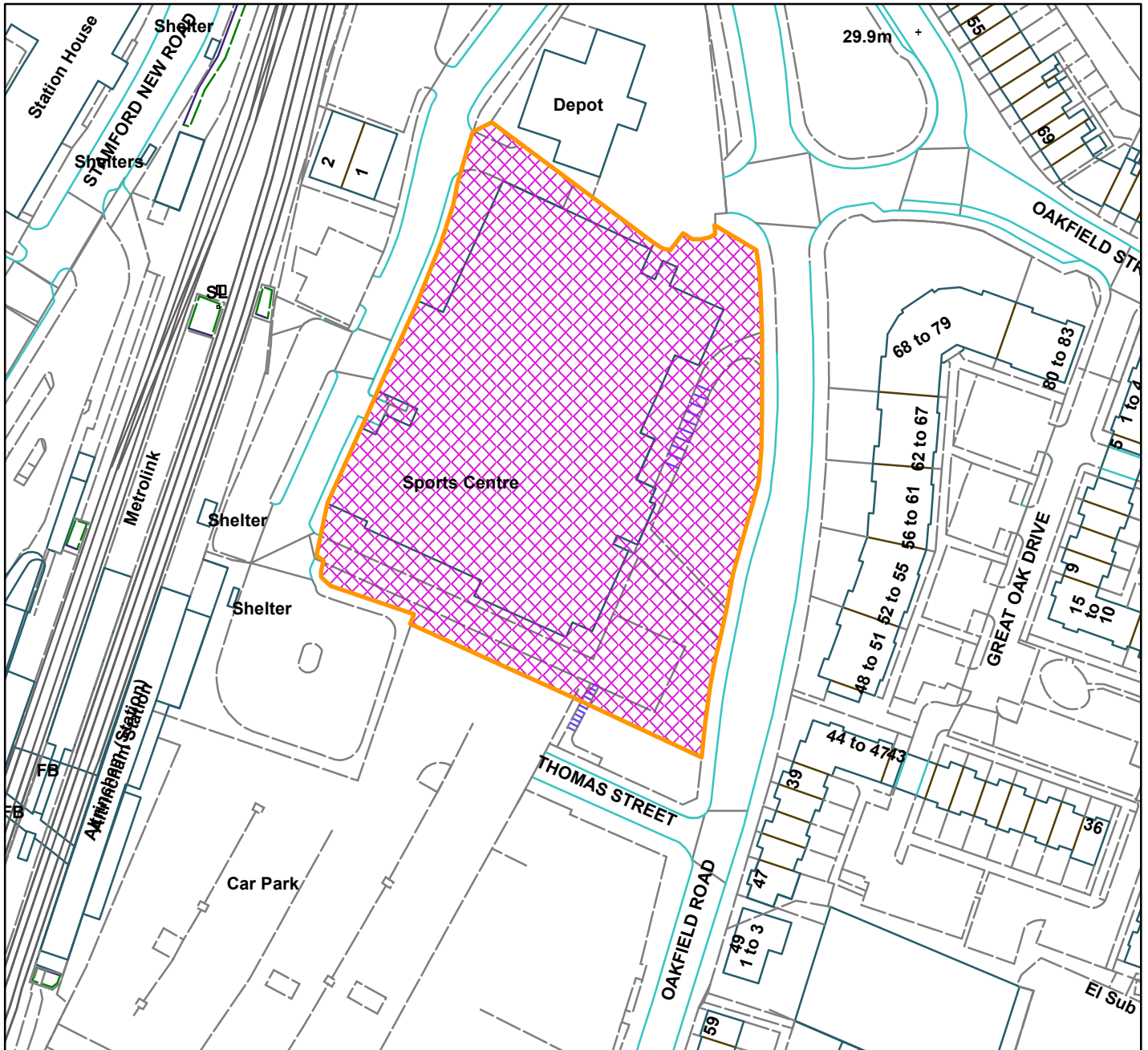
Reason: To enhance the biodiversity value of the site, having regard to Policy R2 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

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Altrincham Leisure Centre, Oakfield Road, Altrincham WA15 8EW (Site Hatched on Plan)



Scale: 1:1,250

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Organisation	Trafford Council
Department	Planning Service
Comments	Committee Date: 08/12/2022
Date	28/11/2022
MSA Number	100023172 (2022)

**WARD:** Altrincham

**109179/FUL/22**

**DEPARTURE:** No

**Proposed installation of 2no Air Source Heat Pump systems with louvre screen**

Altrincham Leisure Centre, Oakfield Road, Altrincham, WA15 8EW

**APPLICANT:** Trafford Council

**AGENT:** Martin Glynn (Trafford Council)

**RECOMMENDATION: GRANT**

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**The application is presented to the Planning and Development Management Committee for determination since the applicant is Trafford Council.**

**SITE**

The application site comprises the building and curtilage of Altrincham Leisure Centre, located on Oakfield Road on the outskirts of Altrincham town centre. To the east of the site is the carriageway of Oakfield Road with low-rise residential apartments beyond. To the south is Oakfield Road car park, which is a surface-level, pay and display facility. To the north of the site is a low-level warehouse building which accommodates a car repairs/servicing, and to the site's west are operational railway lines (providing for both mainline trains and the Metrolink). A highway known as Station Approach is positioned between the site and the railway lines.

The leisure centre building comprises two main building blocks. The most southerly block, which was the original building, houses two swimming pools. A second block was added to the north, and this includes two large sports halls. This application relates specifically to the original block (the swimming pool building). Constructed in the mid-1970s, it is a single storey building with a flat roof, albeit it has a varied roofscape which incorporates taller elements to account for the function of the building and plant storage. It is of brick construction with areas of cladding and glazing.

**PROPOSAL**

The application, which is made in full, relates to the provision of two air source heat pump systems (ASHP) at the leisure centre building. An ASHP works by extracting naturally occurring heat from the air – even when it is cold outside – and then amplifies it, and the resultant heat can then be used to heat a building. It is classed as a low-carbon heating source. The application, made by the Council, follows the granting of funds under the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) to support the provision of energy efficiency and heat decarbonisation measures within public sector buildings. This application is submitted alongside another application for the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on the roof of the leisure centre (ref.109174/PRJ/22).



The area where the ASHP systems are to be installed affects the rear (east-facing) elevation of the swimming pool building which fronts Station Approach. In this location there is a low-lying projecting element of built form (single-storey, with a flat roof and containing roof lights). The ASHP equipment is proposed to be installed on the roof, and with a louvre screen erected at the perimeter of the roof to conceal the equipment (along three of its four sides). The roof lights would be removed. The proposed louvre screen, which would be coated aluminium in a bronze colour, has a height of some 2.9 metres and with a maximum height of some 6 metres from ground level in being positioned atop the existing single-storey built form.

At the same time as the two PSDS applications there is a further full planning application for the refurbishment of the leisure centre building as part of the Council's commitment to deliver enhanced leisure centre provision throughout the borough (ref. 109160/FUL/22). As with the ASHP full application, this refurbishment application is also presented to the Planning and Development Management Committee for determination. The application for the solar PV panels is an application for determination as to whether the prior approval of the local planning authority is required, and with this procedure reflecting the fact that the installation of solar equipment can be permitted development. All such applications for prior approval are delegated to officers for determination.

### **Value Added**

Amended plans have been submitted which show a different external colour to the louvres (previously black, now bronze) and which reflects wider changes to the refurbishment proposals (in response to the comments of the Heritage Development officer).

### **DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

For the purposes of this application the Development Plan in Trafford comprises:

- **The Trafford Core Strategy**, adopted 25 January 2012. The Trafford Core Strategy is the first of Trafford's Local Development Framework (LDF) development plan documents to be adopted by the Council. It partially supersedes the Revised Unitary Development Plan (UDP), see Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy;
- **The Revised Trafford Unitary Development Plan (UDP)**, adopted 19 June 2006. The majority of the policies contained in the revised Trafford UDP were saved in either September 2007 or December 2008 in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 until such time that they are superseded by policies within the LDF. Appendix 5 of the Trafford Core Strategy provided details as to how the Revised UDP is being replaced by the Trafford LDF (or new Local Plan); and
- **The Altrincham Town Centre Neighbourhood Business Plan (ATCNBP)**.

This was made on 29 November 2017 and it since forms part of the Development Plan for Trafford. Its chief purpose is in relation to the determination of planning applications within the defined neighbourhood area.

## **PRINCIPAL RELEVANT CORE STRATEGY POLICIES**

L5 – Climate Change

L7 – Design

R1 – Historic Environment

## **PROPOSALS MAP NOTATION**

Altrincham town centre

Part of a site allocation within ATCNBP (for mixed use including leisure, residential, office and car parking)

## **PRINCIPAL RELEVANT REVISED UDP POLICIES/PROPOSALS**

None

## **RELEVANT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS/GUIDANCE**

SPD5.4: Stamford New Road Conservation Area Appraisal

## **PLACES FOR EVERYONE**

Places for Everyone (PfE) is a joint Development Plan Document being produced by nine Greater Manchester districts (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan). Once adopted, PfE will be the overarching development plan, setting the policy framework for individual district Local Plans. The PfE was published for Regulation 19 consultation from 9th August 2021 to 3rd October 2021 and was submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 14 February 2022. Independent Inspectors have been appointed to undertake an Examination in Public of the PfE Submission Plan and the hearings are scheduled to start in November 2022. Whilst PfE is at an advanced stage of the plan making process, for the purposes of this application it is not yet advanced enough to be given any meaningful weight, such that it needs consideration in this report.

## **NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY**

### **NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF)**

The MHCLG published the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 20 July 2021. The NPPF will be referred to as appropriate in the report.

### **NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (NPPG)**

The National Planning Practice Guidance was first published in March 2014, and it is regularly updated, with the most recent amendments made in June 2021. The NPPG will be referred to as appropriate in the report.

## **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

H01754 – Phase 2 of Altrincham sports complex including erection of sports halls and ancillary accommodation for public recreational use  
Approved with conditions -10.07.75

H11124 – Erection of extension to sports centre including two practice halls, squash courts, training room and stores, a crèche, and café  
Approved with conditions -  
Approved with conditions – 01.12.77

H15923 – Erection of entrance enclosure  
Approved with conditions – 11.03.82

H26516 – Erection of extension at rear of swimming baths  
Approved with conditions – 18.02.88

H44266 – Erection of a storage container to the north of the main building  
Approved with conditions – 16.09.97

109174/PRJ/22 - Application for the installation of solar PV units to the flat roof of the sports hall for determination as to whether prior approval is required under Schedule 2 Part 14 Class J of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015  
Prior approval required and approved – 25.11.22

109160/FUL/22 - Alterations to and refurbishment of leisure centre including demolition of entrance porch, double-height extension to front, new entrance canopy, re-roofing, new sub-station, and changes to the elevations, plus alterations to pedestrian access and landscaping.  
Recommended for approval and elsewhere on this agenda

### **APPLICANT'S SUBMISSION**

Noise Impact Assessment

### **CONSULTATIONS**

**Altrincham Business Neighbourhood Plan Working Group** – No response received

**Altrincham and Bowdon Civic Society** – No response received

**Trafford Council Heritage and Urban Design Manager** – No objection

**Trafford Council Pollution and Licencing (Air Quality)** – No objection

**Trafford Council Pollution and Licencing (Nuisance)** – No objection (subject to condition (to request a further noise survey of plant and subsequent implementation of any mitigation, and to limit the hours of construction)

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

None received

## **OBSERVATIONS**

### **The Decision-taking Framework**

1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions, and as the Government's expression of planning policy and how this should be applied, it should be given significant weight in the decision-taking process.
2. The NPPF, at paragraph 11, introduces 'the presumption in favour of sustainable development.' For decision-taking purposes, paragraph 11c explains that 'the presumption in favour' means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.
3. The Council's Core Strategy was adopted in January 2012, two months prior to the publication of the 2012 NPPF, but drafted to be in compliance with it. It remains broadly consistent with much of the policy in the new 2021 NPPF, particularly where that policy is not substantially changed from the 2012 version.
4. When having regard to the nature of this proposal and its key considerations, development plan policies concerning visual and residential amenity (Policy L7) and climate change (Policy L5) have been most central to its assessment. Whilst elements of Policy L5 in particular has been deemed to be inconsistent with more up-to-date national guidance, these are not 'out-of-date' policies in the manner envisaged by paragraph 11d of the NPPF and the 'basket of policies' remains up to date in NPPF terms. The tilted balance is not engaged and the application should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

### **The Proposal in Principle**

5. In November 2018 Trafford Council declared a climate emergency. This prompted the Council to develop a Carbon Neutral Action Plan (December 2020) which aims for carbon neutrality by 2038, affiliated to the wider Greater Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan. The Action Plan commits the Council to work across its service areas to deliver climate change and carbon reduction initiatives over a series of themes and topics. This includes renewable and low carbon heat and energy. The Action Plan pledges support for investment in low carbon heating technologies, including through retro-fit works to existing

buildings. The application for PSDS funding was made in the knowledge of the Carbon Neutral Action Plan.

6. In order to meet the challenge of climate change, the NPPF (at paragraph 152) advises that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future, including by helping to increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy. Policy L5 (Climate Change) of the Core Strategy also recognises the role that low carbon, renewable and decentralised energy facilities can play in reducing CO2 emissions. It is evident that the proposal would be consistent with the strategies embedded in both local and national planning policy associated with supporting low carbon technologies, and it would also align with commitments made in the Carbon Neutral Action Plan. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle.

### Design, Visual Amenity and Heritage

7. The proposed ASHP systems, two in number and which would have an appearance similar to an air conditioning unit, would be concealed behind the proposed louvre screen. The screen itself would be visible; this would be located away from the building's principal elevation. Whilst the elevation affected (the rear elevation) is open to public views – mainly from Station Approach and the Oakfield Road car park – this part of the building has the characteristics of a secondary elevation and it functions in these terms (with no customer entrance points, for example). This subordinate role and appearance for this part of the building would continue following the proposed refurbishment works.
8. The proposed louvre screen has been designed to harmonise with the enhancements to the external envelope of the full leisure centre building proposed via the accompanying application. This includes the application of ribbed tiles (taupe in colour) over some areas of existing brickwork, the application of metal sheet cladding (bronze in colour) to replace existing timber cladding, and the incorporation of timber-effect cladding to other localised areas. The use of such 'brown' tones is in contrast to the original design concept which was based on a more dominant grey palette. The use of black window frames and black external doors has remained a consistent feature of the proposals. The bronze louvre screen would be seen in the context of a new sub-station which would form a small, brick extension to the leisure centre, as well as bronze cladding applied to the upper parts of the swimming pool building. The revised colour scheme is considered more reflective of existing building materials (predominantly brick, in various shades) in the locality of the site, including on Oakfield Road and within Altrincham town centre, and thus the development would be better integrated into its surroundings. Full details and samples of the proposed materials could be secured via condition.
9. Even with louvre screen installed, the overall height of the building in this location would be lower than adjacent built form (with the height of the main swimming

pool building amounting to some 6.9 metres). Overall, it is concluded that the physical manifestation of the ASHP systems – the louvre screen and when taking account of the amendment secured – has been carefully designed and sited to assimilate with the wider building overhaul. The work itself is modest in scale, it would be positioned in a peripheral part of the building which – whilst visible – is not especially sensitive, and thus the proposal’s visual impact would be limited.

10. For the same reasons it is further concluded that the proposed development would not have a material harmful impact on the setting and thereby the significance of heritage assets in the site’s vicinity. This includes the Stamford New Road Conservation Area to the west of the site and listed buildings which align it. The position has been confirmed in consultation with the Council’s Heritage and Urban Design Manager and is a consequence of: the limited scope of the work; the separation distance and limited inter-visibility between the area of the proposed works and the heritage assets, and the adjustment to the colour palette.
11. Overall, the proposal is considered to comply with Core Strategy policies L7 (Design) and R1 (Historic Environment) by offering a suitable and contextual design in terms of scale, siting, materials and which would have no harmful visual impact on the building itself, the wider townscape, or on the setting of heritage assets. It is also consistent with the NPPF on matters of design and heritage.

### Residential Amenity

12. The potential for the proposed ASHP systems to impact on residential amenity has been considered. The main focus of this assessment has been in terms of whether the equipment could be a generator of noise which could be audible at the nearest residential properties, located on Great Oak Drive some 100 metres to the east. The application is accompanied by a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) which has been reviewed by the Council’s Pollution and Licencing (Nuisance) team. When having regard to existing background noise levels, the NIA concludes that the noise generating potential of the two ASHP systems would be insignificant. Whilst the Nuisance team is satisfied with such conclusions and is of the view that there are no ‘in principle’ concerns regarding the potential for adverse noise impacts at the refurbished leisure centre, a condition is recommended in order to secure a further noise survey prior to the ASHP being installed. This new survey would establish the collective impacts of the proposed refurbishment works as a whole and would also seek a scheme of noise attenuation, where justified, to ensure that combined noise levels would not exceed guidance levels. A similar noise survey condition is recommended to be imposed on the accompanying application ref. 109160/FUL/22, and a further condition is requested by the Nuisance team to limit the hours of construction. With these conditions in place, it is concluded that there would be no detrimental impact on the residential amenities of neighbouring properties, and the

requirements of Policy L7 on this matter are therefore fulfilled (together with the NPPF).

## **DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS**

13. The development proposed is not subject to a CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) charge and there is no requirement for any other developer contribution.

## **PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION**

14. The application site is Altrincham leisure centre and the proposal - made in full - involves the installation of two ASHP systems. As part of the wider refurbishment plans for the leisure centre building, an opportunity has been identified to incorporate both renewable energy (solar panels) and low carbon technology (the ASHP) and with this offering the potential to lower energy costs, reduce carbon emissions and generally increase the building's environmental sustainability. The ASHPs would be located over an existing single-storey, flat-roof structure positioned at the rear of the building. The infrastructure would sit behind a louvre screen (composed of coated aluminium and with a bronze finish) and would thus be concealed from view.
15. When having regard to the extent of the works, the secondary nature of the elevation affected, that building heights would not be breached, and the selected colour scheme, it is concluded that the proposal would not be detrimental in visual terms to the character and appearance of the area. In addition, for the same reasons, it is considered that there would be no harm to nearby heritage assets. The conclusion regarding the materials palette follows a scheme amendment, with the revised choice having better association with existing local character. As such, the proposal is in compliance with Core Strategy policies L7 and R1 as well as the NPPF on matters of design and heritage.
16. The potential for the technology to be a source of noise has been assessed; no significant adverse impacts to residential amenity are anticipated. Some conditions are recommended to provide additional safeguards.
17. Overall, the proposal – which will contribute to local policy objectives on climate change - is considered acceptable in planning terms and in accordance with the development plan when taken as a whole and national policy and guidance. Approval is recommended, subject to conditions.

## **RECOMMENDATION: GRANT subject to the following conditions:**

1. The development must be begun not later than three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the following approved plans:

Location plan (ref. ALLCR\_01000 P01);  
Proposed site plan (ref. 5970\_01850 P04); and  
Proposed elevations (ref. 5970\_02950 P03).

Reason: To clarify the permission, having regard to Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. Notwithstanding the approved plans referred to at condition no. 2, the louvre screen hereby approved shall not be installed unless and until a sample and specification of the material used externally on the louvre screen has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved material.

Reason: In order to ensure a satisfactory appearance in the interests of visual amenity and the character, appearance and setting of adjacent heritage assets, having regard to Policy L7 and Policy R1 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. No new plant shall be installed in association with the development hereby permitted unless and until an assessment of plant noise has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The submitted details shall include a scheme of mitigation to ensure that the combined noise level of all plant at the leisure centre building, when assessed and rated in accordance with BS 4142:2014 +A1:2019 at 1 metre from any sensitive residential receptors, does not exceed 10dB below the prevailing background noise level ( $L_{A90,T}$ ) at the quietest time that the equipment would be operating. Noise measurements and assessments shall be compliant with BS 4142:2014+A1:2019 'Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound'. The approved scheme of mitigation shall be implemented prior to the new plant being brought into use and shall thereafter be maintained in good working order and retained throughout the lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity, having regard to Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. No development associated with the installation of the Air Source Heat Pump systems and louvre screen hereby approved shall take place outside the hours of Monday to Friday 0730 to 1800 hours, and Saturdays 0900 to 1300 hours. No installation works shall take place on Sundays and Bank Holidays.



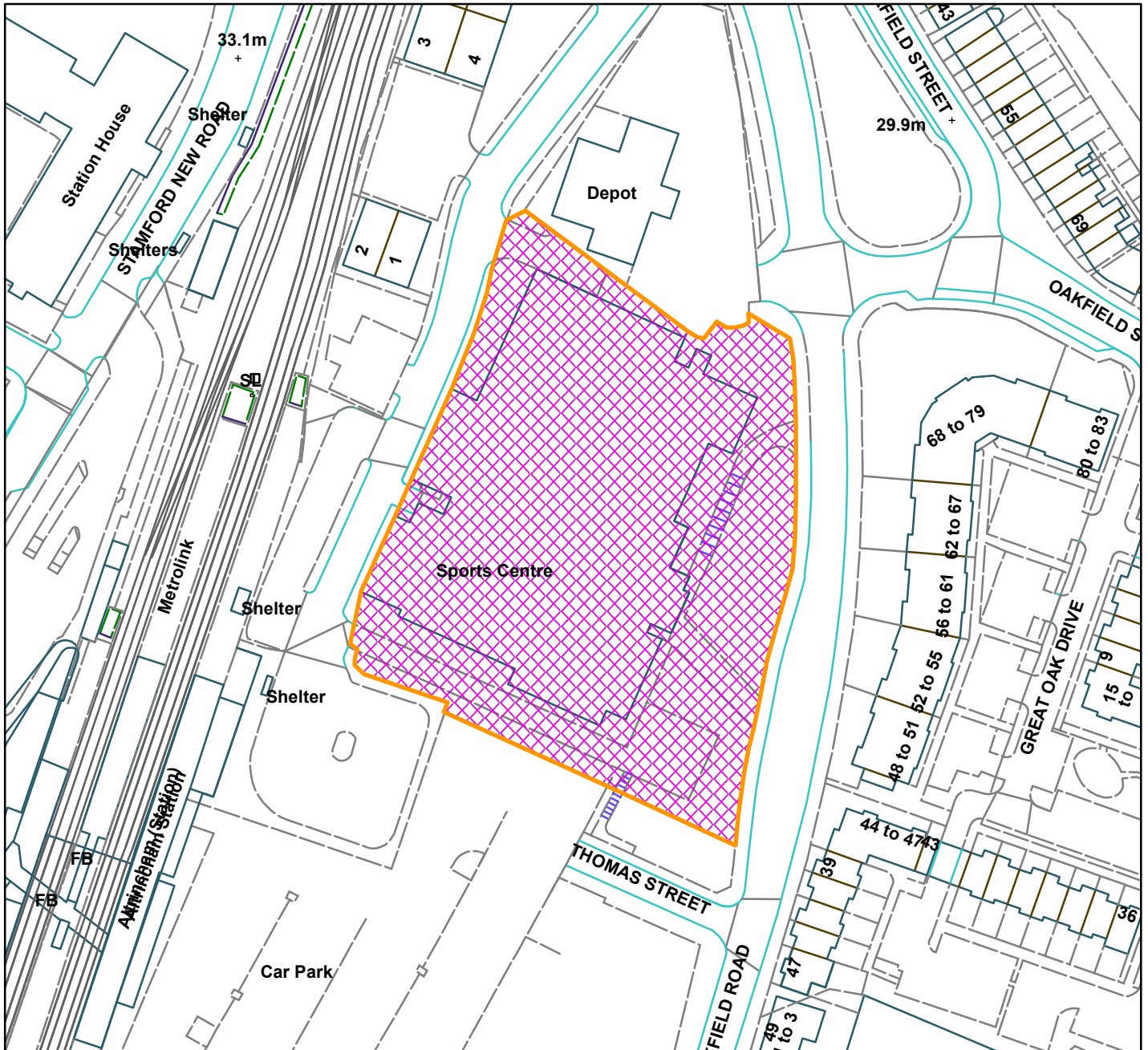
Reason: In the interests of residential amenity, having regard to Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

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Altrincham Leisure Centre, Oakfield Road, Altrincham WA15 8EW (Site Hatched on Plan)



Scale: 1:1,250

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Comments	Committee Date: 08/12/2022
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