

Exhibit 4 -

Townscape
Assessment and
Landscape
Design Appeal
ref: APP/ Q4245/
W/20/ 3258552



Former B&Q Site, Great Stone Road, Stretford, M32 0YP

Appeal by Accrue (Forum) 1 LLP

LPA Ref: 100400/OUT/20

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/W/20/3258552

Exhibit 4: Townscape Assessment and Landscape Design
on behalf of Accrue (Forum) 1 LLP

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Introduction

Qualifications & Experience

My name is Carl Taylor. I hold a Bachelor of Arts degree with Honours in Landscape Architecture and a Graduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture. I am a Member of the Landscape Institute and a Chartered Landscape Architect. I have approximately 21 years experience as a practicing landscape architect within both Public and Private organisations. I have provided evidence at Inquiry previously for both Local Authorities, Mineral Authorities and Private Developers assessing the impacts of a broad range of projects which have included residential developments, wind farms, commercial development and biomass power generation.

I am currently a Director of TPM Landscape, Chartered Landscape Architects and have experience in the field of landscape and visual assessment.

Whilst I am instructed by Accrue I recognise that in providing evidence to an inquiry my duty is to provide my impartial professional view to the inquiry irrespective of by whom I am instructed.

TPM Landscape has worked over many years designing landscapes for residential development and has worked with almost all of the preeminent house builders across the whole of the UK. I have been a Director of the firm from its establishment in 2001 and have led the development of both landscape and visual assessment and residential Masterplanning during this time.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 TPM Landscape was commissioned by Accrue to provide landscape design and a landscape/townscape and visual assessment in respect of a proposal for

residential development on Great Stone Road in Trafford. We were initially approached by the client's agents in October 2017. We have subsequently been involved throughout the development of the scheme, through consultations and the planning submission to the present day. On the basis of this longstanding involvement with the scheme, I am able to support the client's case with regard to matters of landscape, townscape and visual amenity connection with this hearing.

- 1.2 My evidence will address landscape/townscape matters relating to the appeal; the submitted landscape proposals and assessment for the site; and the reporting and determination by the Council.
- 1.3 My evidence will discuss will be restricted to matters of landscape/townscape and visual amenity.

2.0 THE PROPOSALS

- 2.1 The proposal site is a former B&Q store that fronts onto Great Stone Road and is bound by Lancashire County Cricket Club to the north and east, and the Metrolink line to the south. It is accessible from Great Stone Road via an existing vehicular access. The site is located in a mixed use area within the Cricket Club Quarter and includes large office and hotel buildings as well as the stands, flood lights and other infrastructure associated with the Old Trafford Stadium.
- 2.2 Residential streets also form part of the wider area with predominantly 2 storey homes located directly opposite the site off Great Stone Road.
- 2.3 The area is currently a vacant commercial site, with street trees lining the road frontage and along the Metrolink Line. The proposal site is also located within the Civic Quarter Area Action Plan area.
- 2.4 Following and extensive process of design and consultation which included presenting the scheme to a Places Matter review panel, a planning application was submitted. However, the Council failed to determine the application within the

requisite period. As a consequence the application was appealed and the LPA subsequently indicated reasons for refusal of the scheme.

- 2.5 The design of the external spaces has been led by an understanding of the receiving townscape and the proposed building which responds to this. It has also taken into consideration the movement networks that exist, and those that the proposed building will create.

Level 0

- 2.6 The level 0 landscape helps to strengthen links through the landscape while offering an attractive frontage to the development. Soft planting divides the entrance pathways and creates a strong green gateway to the development. The paved car park access road leads vehicles west of the building and also allows access around the building perimeter. Beyond this a pathway leads pedestrians to the rear of the building along. Private units have terraced garden areas which overlook this space but are divided by a level difference (being set above the road) and hedgerow boundary treatments allowing for some privacy and definition of space. Tree planting to boundaries and Great Stone Road add screening and a quality landscape setting.

Level 1

- 2.7 The courtyards will be seen from above by a large number of residential apartments, as well as from the majority of the roof terrace and garden areas. The spaces will offer a strong physical appearance from above as well as at ground level. The design will favour a practical response to the movement and access requirements, and have minimalist modern lines and features which reflect the architecture and work in harmony with the building. The design keeps strict angular forms led by the movements of the residents and has a decorative central square surrounded by pleached trees and an elevated lawn area, with seating elements. This pattern is mirrored across the two courtyards, restricting primary movement to the perimeter of spaces and offering peaceful space for

recreation to the centres. Ground floor residential units will have private terrace space between areas of public space with low hedging defining private / public boundaries.

Levels 5 & 7

2.8 Levels 5 & 7 offer small and intimate spaces for residents to relax. Elevated views to the south are framed by planting and other landscape features. The design of the roof terraces creates intimate spaces through the use of raised planters and pergolas. Planters will support shrubs and perennials, offering year round interest with vibrant colours through the summer months. Moveable cube seating and large wooden loungers offer soft and informal seating areas. Contemporary pergolas create sheltered eating and social areas. Decking is used with bands of flag paving to create contrasting surfaces to the terrace floor.

Level 6 & 8

2.9 Levels 6 & 8 offer larger, more sociable spaces with more contrast in character and potential usage. The west terrace houses a large open grassed area, which acts as a flexible space for all kinds of recreation. The central terrace creates more divided and private interconnected spaces with moveable cube seating, pergolas and large wooden loungers. Raised planters are used carefully to create intimate and sheltered spaces for outdoor recreation. The east terrace offers raised planters for resident growing areas, where people can use the comfortable and relaxing areas for use all year round. The main design focus is on the creation of a simple variety of separate but interlinked social spaces with enough flexibility to allow use for all residents. The large wildflower planted beds bring a sense of wildness to the otherwise formal roof garden. This planting offers a soft buffer to Great Stone Road, summer interest and large benefits to the local wildlife.

3.0 REASONS FOR REFUSAL RELEVANCE TO MATTERS OF LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE

3.1 For the purposes of the application the development plan 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.

3.2 The reasons for refusal that are relevant to landscape and visual matters and matters of landscape design are in my opinion the following. These are taken from the Officers Report to Council setting out their recommendation to refuse ahead of the appeal process:

- *2. The proposed development would have a dominating and adverse impact on Lancashire Cricket Club (LCC) as well as its setting and cultural character and identity. LCC is an internationally significant visitor attraction, cultural and tourism venue. The impact on the visitor experience is considered to be sufficient to weigh strongly against the proposal. The development is therefore contrary to Policies SL3 and R6 of the adopted Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.*
- *3. The proposed development would represent poor design as its form, layout, height, scale, massing, density and monolithic appearance are inappropriate in*

its context and would result in a building which would be significantly out of character with its surroundings. This would have a highly detrimental impact on the street scene and the character and quality of the area. This would be contrary to Policies SL3 and L7 of the adopted Trafford Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework

- *5. The proposed development by virtue of its height, massing, scale and layout would result in a poor level of amenity and unacceptable living standards for future occupiers of the development, by virtue of inadequate daylight and outlook in both apartments and amenity areas. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policies SL3 and L7 of the adopted Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.*
- *6. The proposed development by virtue of its height, massing, scale and layout would result in harm to the amenity of existing residential properties on Great Stone Road and Trent Bridge Walk by virtue of noticeable reductions in the amount of daylight and sunlight that they receive, and would also have an overbearing impact on these properties and other residential properties in the wider 'Gorses' area. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policies SL3, L3 and L7 and the National Planning Policy Framework*
- *7. The proposed development by virtue of its layout, scale and massing would have a harmful impact on the setting of Longford Park Conservation Area equating to 'less than substantial' harm in National Planning Policy Framework terms. The benefits of the scheme are not considered to outweigh the identified harm to a designated heritage asset. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policies SL3 and R1 of the adopted Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.*

3.3 I have judged that the relevant policies in relation to landscape are as follows.

- SL3 LANCASHIRE COUNTY CRICKET CLUB QUARTER

This Strategic proposal sets out the councils vision for a major mixed use development in this location providing a high quality experience, a new, high quality residential neighbourhood and an improved stadium at the Cricket Club. The Councils considers this area can deliver 400 residential units with site specifics identified in the land allocations dpd. This is supported by several further documents notably a Civic Area Action Plan.

- L3 REGENERATION AND REDUCING INEQUALITIES

The Policy includes a requirement for improved quality and design of the Boroughs housing stock.

- L7 Is a design policy and requires development to be appropriate to context; improve character and quality of an area; and enhance street scenes and address scale, height, massing and layout (including landscaping). Existing and proposed residential amenity should be protected.

3.3 Related other policies are:

- R1 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT requiring the protection of the Borough's heritage assets; and

3.4 I believe the proposals comply with all the above policies as cited by the LPA. My evidence in this section will seek to briefly outline the work that has been done to date in support of the application that:

- Surveyed and assessed the receiving baseline landscape considering both its value and sensitivity to the development proposed;
- Developed a design response that is both responsive and sensitive to the assessment work and subsequent consultations with the LPA; and

- Developed a design through this iterative process which received a strongly positive response from the Places Matter group in complete contrast to the continued opposition of the LPA.

4.0 LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER BASELINE AND ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The Townscape and Visual Assessment (TVIA) was conducted following a methodology that is derived from the Landscape Institutes Guidance set out primarily in GLVIA3 and other supporting guidance notes (technical guidance note 06/019 Landscape Institute) The basic approach is to consider the sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors surrounding the proposed development and combine this with the assessed extent of change to the landscape or view to produce a statement on the potential landscape and visual effect or impact of the proposals. The detail of this is set out in the TVIA and its appendix. However it is worth highlighting that the process of assessment typically sets the level of effect as between none/negligible and high and is often a range of 3-4 steps, for example negligible, low, medium and high. The nature of the effect can also vary between adverse and beneficial with the additional possibility of a neutral change occurring if the fundamental nature of the landscape or view remains unchanged.
- 4.2 The assessment has to consider the possible range of value and sensitivity that is represented by landscape and townscapes and reasonably suggest a position for this that acknowledges the highest value and most sensitive landscapes are typically those already acknowledged and protected through designations such as National Parks, AONB, Conservation Areas, and historically through scheduled ancient monument status, historic parks and gardens status or listing for individual buildings. The proposal site does not fall within any of those designations and only a small number of listed buildings lie to the north and west of the site, the closest being Trafford Town Hall (grade II).
- 4.3 In terms of defining the character and quality of the townscape within which the proposed development is sited the first steps are to consider an area of study beyond which the proposals will not exert any influence. This was set for the TVIA at 1km radius from the site, and although clarification on views has been

sought by the LPA within this, no suggestion that this is not an appropriate extent of study has been received from any of the consultees to the application.

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 55

- 4.4 The assessment of the townscape begins by setting the context of the site within its National and Regional location by reference to the National Character Area (55) Manchester Conurbation, a published character assessment which describes the area generally as:

The area is characterised by dense urban and industrial development, commercial, financial, retail and administrative centres, commuter suburbs and housing, interspersed with a network of green infrastructure. The industrial heritage now provides sites of wildlife interest in the urban environment. Canals that weave through the conurbation not only offer opportunities for access and recreation, but also form a network of wetland habitats. Sections of the Rochdale Canal, in particular, have been designated as being of international importance as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Woodland cover is generally low, but variable – and significant for such a heavily urban location.

The architecture is predominantly red brick and sandstone in the city and town centres, alongside buildings using a mix of modern materials, high rise buildings, and landmark 19th, 20th and 21st century buildings.

- 4.5 In summary the TVIA finds that the proposal site is located in Longford, within Stretford, forming part of the Manchester conurbation. As a result, the proposals falls within a townscape setting that only partially reflects the key characteristics identified in the NCA. The majority of the key characteristics and statements of landscape opportunity are related to the more rural areas with the character area, away from the main settlement of Manchester.

- 4.6 The only key characteristic that relates to the site is: *The architecture is predominantly red brick and sandstone in the city and town centres, alongside buildings using a mix of modern materials, high rise buildings, and landmark 19th, 20th and 21st century buildings.*
- 4.7 The area is characterised by dense urban and industrial development, commercial, financial, retail and administrative centres, commuter suburbs and housing, interspersed with a network of green infrastructure.

NORTHWEST CHARACTER FRAMEWORK

- 4.8 A slightly more detailed assessment for the area is available with the North West Character Framework 2009
- 4.9 The landscape is divided into a series of landscape character types that are further divided into landscape character areas. Stretford and the proposal site falls within the character type **Urban** and within the landscape character area **Urban and Industrial Landscapes**.
- 4.10 The potential for the site to deliver street trees and habitats is highlighted. It is acknowledged that views are often limited by other built development.
- 4.11 A more local study, the Trafford Council Landscape Strategy 2004 follows on from this regional work..
- 4.12 The character of the study area is generally within an Urban description but more specifically includes the following key characteristics:
- Urban land use which supports industry, retail, infrastructure, services and settlement;

- Street trees and parkland containing tree groups. Some parklands support mature specimens which provide important habitat;
- Built landscape with habitat mainly confined to amenity grasslands, public gardens and parks and residential gardens;
- Derelict land and former industrial sites that can provide important habitat;
- Low network tranquility;
- Busy urban character;
- Views are often limited by built development;
- Longford Park Conservation Area within the study area;
- No landscape designations or green belt relating to the proposed site.

4.13 The development of the proposal site would not lead to the loss of any identified positive landscape features and landmarks within this character area. The proposed development also has the opportunity to reflect the local building materials and provide green spaces on a brownfield site.

4.14 No sensitivity assessment is made for any of these urban landscape types and areas. Often the areas are not assessed or are only partially considered, suggesting a broad understanding that urban landscapes are ones that offer significant differences to those within countryside and that the nature and speed of change within these areas is also often very different. The descriptions that are offered describe townscapes and landscapes that are accustomed to, and accommodating of, change, with areas and highlights within these spaces that might be of value and sensitivity within the context of a town, city or residential environment. No such specific areas of note occur within the study area and the overall descriptions for Trafford and Longford suggest a low susceptibility to change and an **ordinary or low value**. A **low sensitivity** to change for these urban character areas reflects their existing varied character and the constant change that they undergo through economic activity and movement of people and commerce.

- 4.15 Finally there is a more recent piece of work by Randall Thorpe which supports the masterplanning of the Civic Quarter Area. The TPM TVIA considers this piece of work and its descriptions of townscape character areas surrounding the proposal site. The proposals potentially affect two character areas identified within this study: the sports and recreational area and the residential area.

CIVIC QUARTER AREA ACTION PLAN TCA -THE SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL AREA (CRICKET GROUND)

- 4.16 The proposed development would directly impact the Sports and Recreational TCA that includes the Old Trafford Cricket Ground which is an important sporting venue that provides a high sense of place. Randall Thorp assess the townscape value as high and the quality as moderate however the TCA contains the former B&Q site that is in a degraded condition, of low value and of poor quality. The TCA also contains the Lancastrian Office Centre and car parking areas that are of moderate value and ordinary quality. This appraisal considers the overall townscape quality to be **Good-Ordinary** due to the recognisable Cricket Ground that provides a sense of place, mixed land use, areas of degradation with some detracting features. The proposed development would not be a sport or recreational use however the area is in fact of mixed use with the proposed development being an improvement to the degraded current condition of the proposal site. The proposed residential and commercial use would be in keeping with the mixed use of the TCA and relatable to the neighbouring residential area to the east, south and west. The susceptibility to the change is considered **Low**, the value is considered **Good** and the quality is considered **Good-Ordinary** resulting in the sensitivity to change being **Medium**.
- 4.17 The varied heights of the proposed development from 4 to 9 storeys would integrate with the existing varied heights of the (up to) 3 storey high residential area and the 5 to 6 storey buildings within and around the Sports and Recreational TCA. The other parts of the Civic Area Action Plan facilitate far taller buildings to

the north and north-east from 7 to 11+ storeys high. The design of the proposed development has considered the surrounding height differences and has stepped back the building height in transition to reduce the impacts on the neighbouring residential area. The transitional approach to the building height will also integrate the proposed development into the townscape setting between the residential area and the mixed urban area.

- 4.18 The proposed development would not affect the key characteristics of TCA dominated by the Lancashire County Cricket Club and would be a positive change with the loss of the degraded former B&Q site. The addition of the proposed development would be of good-design and congruous with the surrounding mixed use architecture. The magnitude of change to the Sports and Recreational TCA would be a **Medium-Low** Change and the Overall Landscape Effects would be **Moderate-Slight Beneficial**.

THE RESIDENTIAL AREA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL SITE

- 4.19 The proposed development would indirectly affect the neighbouring residential area located to the east, south and west of the proposal site. This appraisal considers the residential area to be of ordinary-poor quality and the value Low as it is residential area that has a low sense of place with no noted significance or distinct features. Randall Thorp acknowledges that it is normal for the residential area to experiences views towards higher buildings located on the periphery of the TCA. The TPM TVIA appraisal considers a low susceptibility to change from the residential area due to the existing influence of taller buildings resulting in a Low Sensitivity.
- 4.20 The proposed development would indirectly impact on part of the residential area with large parts of the character area experiencing limited to no intervisibility with the proposed development. The change would be congruous with the surrounding mixed urban area while the nature of change would be neutral/ beneficial as the

proposed change would be an improvement in quality and condition to the surrounding mixed urban area already with tall buildings nearby. The magnitude of change to the Residential Area TCA would be **Medium-Low** and the overall landscape effects would be **Moderate-Slight Neutral/Beneficial**.

5.0 COUNCIL COMMENTS ON LANDSCAPE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSALS AND REBUTTAL

- 5.1 It appears that the LPA does not share the analysis outlined above in section 4 of this report, and believes that the appeal site and its surroundings are of a higher value and higher sensitivity to the type of development proposed than the TVIA assessment concludes. In their report to Council ahead of this hearing the Officers stated (at para 87 and following:

It is considered that the TVIA attaches too much weight to the taller buildings to the north of the site and does not provide sufficient consideration of the larger proportion of the surrounding area which has a prevailing height of two storeys. It is also considered that the assessment of the effect of the proposed development on character has generally under-stated the likely scale of the development in comparison with the existing buildings surrounding the cricket club, Metrolink stop and office developments off Talbot Road. The assessment describes the existing buildings (which are a maximum of six storeys in height and visually permeable with glimpses between the blocks of Lancastrian House and LCC possible) as being 'broadly similar and coherent in scale' as the proposed development which extends to the equivalent of nine storeys. It is considered that this is an inaccurate judgement on the relative heights of the proposed development and surrounding existing buildings. (87)

It is also considered that the predicted magnitude of change for some of the views has been understated and the use of landscape (rather than

portrait photography) in visualisations has meant that the upper part of the building is not shown in some images, particularly VP 1 and VP5. This gives an incomplete and inaccurate representation of the likely visual impact of the proposals. (88)

It is considered that the conclusion of the TVIA that there would be 'no notable townscape effects' arising from the proposed development is an inaccurate summary of the likely impact of the development and the proposals are likely to result in some significant impacts on the local townscape character and key views, particularly when travelling along Great Stone Road and when viewed from Longford Park Conservation Area. Whilst it is acknowledged that some effects will be beneficial such as the introduction of a new active frontage along Great Stone Road and the removal of the existing building on site, the scheme is also likely to result in negative townscape and visual effects. These primarily relate to the scale and massing of the proposed scheme which is out of scale with the character of not just its immediate context, but the wider surrounding area. (89)

The visual representations 1 to 3, 5, 8, 9, 14 and 15 included in Appendix 1.0 of the amended TVIA demonstrate that the proposed development will be highly visible from a number of viewpoints. Its prominence is exacerbated by the scale, height and massing of the proposed development and it is clear within the viewpoints that there are no developments of a comparable scale and massing which sit within the same viewpoint. This indicates that the scale of the proposed development is out of keeping with the general character of the development area. Scale, height and massing of proposed development (90)

- 5.2 These comments inform Reason for Refusal 6 and are of indirect relevance to Reasons for Refusal 2,5, & 7
- 5.3 There are a number of points to consider within this section of the report to committee, and I will take them in turn:
- 5.4 In answer to the matters outlined above by the Council relating to: the efficacy and accuracy of the assessment work and consequent design development; the appropriateness of the design to the local character; and the appropriateness of the proposals in relation to the scale, character, height and massing as compared to the local context. I set out my response below:
- 5.4.1 I am content that the assessment of the townscape and the work done is a well researched and methodologically sound assessment that considers the baseline townscape a place where the proposed development could occur without harming the intrinsic urban characteristics, quality and value present. The TVIA looks at the townscape from a National, Regional and Local perspective. There is no particular emphasis on tall buildings to the north save for them actually existing and being part of the assessed baseline and visual backdrop.
- 5.4.2 The assessment comprehends and acknowledges the shift in scale from residential (2 storey) towards the cricket club and other, larger commercial and leisure buildings north of the site. I consider the proposal site to lie at the edge of two very different and well defined urban character areas with the residential area falling to the south of Great Stone Rd and the proposals site, with LCCC grounds and other leisure and commercial development falling to the north. In common with most urban centres, a transition from one urban form and land use is to be expected and the fact that large buildings and structures may sit alongside lower rise residential areas is not in of itself harmful or out of character. This is expressed in

more detail within the TPM TVIA through detailed local landscape character assessment that considers three townscape character areas surrounding the proposal site (section 8 of the TPM TVIA)

- 5.4.3 The development of the design for the buildings has undergone several design iterations which have seen the reduction in height of the proposed buildings and their stepping back from Great Stone Road so as to provide a transition in height from the road into the urban character area to the north. It has undergone design review with Places Matter where suggested changes have led to the buildings being arranged to provide a greater variation and articulation to the street scene.
- 5.4.4 Many of these changes were in response to comments from the Places Matter panel but it should be noted that from the start the Places Matter panel did not share the Local Authority's continued assertion (repeated within the Randall Thorpe work) that the proposal site could only accept a building of (at most) six storeys in height before becoming something that would be both harmful and incongruous within the receiving landscape. The Places Matter panel offered 24 notes but the introduction and first bullet point are worth repeating alongside this discussion topic:

The height of the scheme is being guided by the "planning reference" of the six storey office blocks to Talbot Road, with the potential for additional height at the tramline interface. The Panel outlined a series of headline comments to help guide the next stage of the design development, as follows:

The Panel expressed its clear view that a site of this significance feels right for development at this scale, height and massing. The Panel did not agree that there was any need to define a rigid datum

at six storeys and that justification could be made to adjust this as outlined in more detail below; (note a)

5.4.5 This supports my own view, underpinned by the TPM TVIA work, that far from *understating the likely scale of the development in comparison with the existing buildings surrounding the cricket club, Metro Link stop and office developments off Talbot Rd (ref para 87)*, the proposed development is the right solution for the site and is further improved by design developments that have led to the re-arrangement of building blocks so as to offer more separation and articulation visually on the street scene.

5.4.6 The panel also commented that:

Greater height, than currently proposed, adjacent to the tramline is not considered an issue, especially if this maintains a viable development quantum, allows for breaking up the blocks and secures greater liveability; (note r)

5.5 In answer to the matters outlined above by the Council relating to: the efficacy and accuracy of the assessment work; the suitability of the visualisations in depicting the proposals; and the level of landscape and visual effect that the proposals will bring to bear upon the surrounding townscape. I deal with views and visual amenity separately but as they appear in the LPA discussions alongside matters of townscape I briefly comment below on how it is suggested views contribute to the Council's opinion that the proposals are not appropriate for the location.

5.5.1 At para 88 (of the report to committee) the officers suggest that the magnitude of change for views is understated commenting that landscape views rather than portrait views fail to show the full extent of change

offered. I do not agree with this assessment not least because the assessment work is not carried out from photography and the extent of change can be fully realised by the experienced assessor without recourse to photomontage work. As it happens with this project photomontage work and modelling have been key to the design development of the project throughout and the TVIA has been developed with access to full architectural models and fly throughs which have been shared with the Council during the consultation process. To assist the Inspector we have produced the views highlighted by the LPA (V1 & 5) in portrait form but the assessment of these views remains as before.

5.5.2 At para 90 (Officers Report to committee) it is suggested that from view locations 1 to 3, 5, 8, 9 14 and 15 the proposals are highly visible and that the proposed building will be prominent in the view and out of keeping with the character of the area. This assessment appears entirely without reference to any alternative TVIA or visual assessment work and bares no relation to the survey work and assessment of the TVIA. This in contrast finds that only two of the views will experience Moderate Substantial effects with the remaining noted views being moderate or below. Excluding views 14 and 15 the effects all reduce with mitigation. The nature of these visual impacts is also assessed as being potentially neutral or beneficial. This view was supported by the Places Matter Panel who stressed that:

- *The intended overall architectural quality, proportions and details were felt to be successful and you must strive to retain these in the final scheme (note k)*

5.6 In answer to the matters outlined above by the Council relating to: the efficacy and accuracy of the assessment work and consequent design development; the appropriateness of the design to the local character; and the appropriateness of

the proposals in relation to the sale, character, height and massing as compared to the local context. At paragraph 89 it is suggested that the conclusions of the TVIA's landscape assessment is an *inaccurate summary* of the likely impact. Again this assertion is made without reference to an alternative technical assessment or TVIA and is simply the opinion of the author rather than a reasoned view based on an agreed and/or standard methodology such as utilised within the TPM TVIA.

5.6.1 The application TVIA, as well as referencing published assessment work, also considers in detail the local landscape and urban character dividing this into 3 areas: Residential/Leisure; Mixed Urban; and Residential. Landscape Value and susceptibility are considered leading to a sensitivity for each area to the development proposed. The extent and nature of change is then assessed and this leads to a judgement on the landscape effect. The TVIA concludes that:

5.6.2 *The Wider Landscape*

*The wider landscape has been considered through National and Regional studies and through published work on the local landscape of the Manchester conurbation. The landscape descriptions share many common threads and the overall picture is of an urban landscape with both settlement and industry but with a strong and recognisable urban landscape structure. The overall landscape effects are considered **Slight-Negligible neutral** at year 1 and reducing to **Negligible neutral** by year 15 due to the proposed development establishing as part its townscape setting. (REF)*

5.6.3 *The Local Landscape*

*The character area within which the site is located will experience **Moderate-Slight beneficial/neutral effects**. These effects will be adverse during construction but will have beneficial aspects as the site begins to be*

returned to use and forms an active role in both the urban block, character areas and street scene.

5.6.4 *Other adjoining townscape areas will also experience some change through alteration to views and skyline. This is a combination of adverse effects associated with a large building appearing in view where non was previously and beneficial effects returned through the regeneration of a currently derelict site and the activation of the street scene along this section of Great Stone Road. Other landscape benefits of the proposals include the provision of courtyard gardens, green roofs and garden terraces.*

5.6.5 As before I am confident the work within the TVIA remains a reasoned and researched assessment that is not inaccurate and I find nothing in either the Council's comments or the work of Randall Thorpe to suggest the alternative view that the proposals would lead to '**Significant Impacts on the local townscape character**' (para 89 of the report to committee)

5.6.6 The report to committee acknowledges that *some effects will be beneficial such as the introduction of a new active frontage along Great Stone Road and the removal of the existing building on site*, (Para 89 of the Officers Report) and that these are balanced against more negative aspects of the development such as the scale and massing of the buildings. Although I do not accept the premise that the scale and massing of the buildings are negative aspects within the townscape it is clear that logically this position would lead to a more nuanced and balanced view than found by Officers, and that the proposals offer the opportunity for redevelopment of the site which is both appropriate in character and able to bring quality and activation to the street scene of Great Stone Road through the redevelopment of the site.

BUILDING HEIGHT AND MASSING

5.7 The study area has a wide variety of building types and heights with the Cricket Club and residential tower blocks rising up to 14 storeys in height offering an immediate large scale building context. There are currently several tall buildings on Talbot Road, which runs perpendicular to Great Stone Road. Talbot Road is the closest main road linking the site to Manchester City Centre and it has several office buildings of 11-14 storeys high. As figure 12 (within the TPM TVIA) shows, all of the buildings above 2 storeys within the immediate vicinity of the proposals site fall to the east of Great Stone Road with only 2 storey residential buildings to the west. Further east and north this pattern of mixed building types and heights continues with a more mixed urban setting of both uses, building forms and heights. In the urban block within which it is located the proposed building, although up to 9 storeys, will be a strong fit, forming a corner site, bounded by Great Stone Road and the Metro line, beyond which building types become more homogeneous and heights drop to 2-3 storey. Architecturally the proposed development has been designed to step up from 6 storeys against Great Stone Road rising as the building mass shifts away from the more residential scale of the estate to the west. In this way the proposals will both offer a strong corner site to the urban block while offering a sensitive approach to the transition from the western side of Great Stone Road towards the east.

5.8 This view that the proposals are able to offer a strong corner site to the urban block was supported by the Places Matter Panel which stated that: *The Panel felt strongly that you should consider bringing the development closer to Great Stone Road, to allow for greater engagement with the street. (note j)*

6.0 VISUAL BASELINE AND ASSESSMENT

6.1 The proposals were assessed by reference to 15 view point locations agreed with the LPA where several of the views were added to the assessment during the consultation and application process. The views represent receptors that include residential, pedestrian, highway, heritage and leisure users. As with

landscape the views are assessed for susceptibility and value leading to a view on their sensitivity to the change proposed. This is then combined with an assessment of the change to the view leading to a statement on visual effect.

- 6.2 The assessment has been assisted by computer modelling work and photomontage.

Residential Receptors

- 6.3 Seven representative residential receptors were assessed. Of these, residential properties to the immediate west or nearby to the east of the proposal site will experience a high change and some potentially substantial - moderate effects. These are localised to a small number of properties and can be mitigated to some degree through landscaping, layout and screening. The majority of the residential and settlement areas around the proposal site have limited views of, or towards the proposed development. In common with the rest of the character area both topography, urban form and high rise buildings mitigate the potential visible effects.

Pedestrian Receptors

- 6.4 Eleven representative pedestrian receptors were assessed, the majority being highway footpaths. Pedestrian users to the immediate or nearby vicinity to the east, south or west of the proposal site will experience potentially Substantial-Moderate or Moderate effects. These are localised to a small extent of sequential routes within the immediate or nearby vicinity and can be mitigated to some degree through landscaping, layout and screening. A Moderate-Slight or Slight effect is recorded for the majority of paths as the nature of this change would be in keeping with the existing infrastructure and urban form. This is reflective of views of the proposals, other than those immediately adjacent to the site, being seen between, through or over other built form. The level of both the sensitivity and change reflect this existing urban scene.

Vehicle Receptors

6.5 Five representative travel receptors were assessed. No vehicle users will experience substantial change, as the roads which surround the study area generally have walls, hedgerows, trees, topography and buildings restricting views on approaching the site. The proposed development will be readily visible as it fronts onto Great Stone Road, however this is in the context of the existing urban form and the change is expected to be neutral with beneficial aspects as it will create a visual focal point and anchor at the edge of this urban block and re-energise a currently derelict piece of land.

Heritage Receptors

6.6 Two representative historic receptors were assessed. The proposals will not be visible from almost all available view locations around and within the Town Hall, with only glimpses between the LCCC stands possible from a small number of location along the highway. The change and effect are assessed as Negligible. The proposals will be visible to a limited extent from Longford Park (Conservation Area) in its northern section with a medium-low change leading to a moderate effect. The parks locations within an established urban area and the existing visibility of flood lighting from the LCC set the building in context with an expectation that over time the high quality architecture of the proposals will become integrated into the existing view.

6.0 COUNCIL COMMENTS ON OVERBEARING IMPACT AND REBUTTAL

6.1 The Council's position as expressed in the following extracts from the report to Committee and reasons for refusal, appears to be that views from existing residential properties and the outlook from new residential properties will be

adversely affected. I will consider these with reference to the agreed (with the LPA) representative views from the TVIA:

1. *Overall it is considered that the proposed development would introduce a dominant and intrusive feature which would appear overbearing to the surrounding area and would significantly affect existing views and appear completely at odds with the scale, form and character of the area. (para 175 report to committee)*
2. *The proposed development by virtue of its height, massing, scale and layout would result in harm to the amenity of existing residential properties on Great Stone Road and Trent Bridge Walk by virtue of noticeable reductions in the amount of daylight and sunlight that they receive, and would also have an overbearing impact on these properties and other residential properties in the wider 'Gorses' area. (reason for refusal 6)*

6.2 In answer to the matters outlined above by the Council relating to: the suitability of the visualisations in depicting the proposals; and the level of landscape and visual effect that the proposals will bring to bear upon the surrounding townscape. I set out my response below

6.2.1 Views 1,2,3,4,5, and 6 are all taken from locations that are representative of properties located on or west and south of Great Stone Road. All of the locations are within 0.5km of the proposal site. The visual effects assessed range from Moderate Substantial to Negligible as the extract table below:

View	Sensitivity	Change	Impact Yr1	Impact Yr15
1	Medium	High	Moderate Substantial	Moderate
2	Medium	Medium	Moderate	Slight
3	Medium	Low	Moderate Slight	Slight
4	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
5	Medium-Low	High-Medium	Moderate	Moderate Slight
6	Medium-Low	Low	Moderate Slight	Slight

6.2.2 Only three views are considered to experience Moderate or above visual impacts and these are from locations immediately adjacent to the proposals and as such would reasonably expect to generate a large visual change regardless of how the regeneration of the site progressed. All of the views are expected to reduce with time through mitigation that includes tree planting along Great Stone Road. The nature of change is judged to be neutral and beneficial in character for some locations close to the site where the regeneration of the site and activation of the street scene is seen as a valuable contribution. This is a position that the LPA agree with.

6.2.3 The LPA during the consultation period and subsequently in their report to committee do not challenge the basic metrics of the evaluation process preferring to describe their opposition to the scheme in descriptive terms of being dominant and intrusive. The Council describe the effects on residential properties as significant but this technically is only correct with three of the views (view 1, 2 and 5 of moderate and over) and following mitigation and maturation only one view remains at a level that could be described as significant (in the terms of the TVIA). As previously stated these views are all from close to the proposal site and the change is considered to have neutral and beneficial elements bringing regenerative

change into an established urban environment where tall buildings and structures are already part of the view.

6.2.4 Views 9 and 14 are representative of properties from on Trent Bridge Walk. The visual effects range from Substantial Moderate to Slight as the table below.

View	Sensitivity	Change	Impact Yr1	Impact Yr15
9	Medium-Low	High	Moderate Substantial	Moderate
14	Medium	Medium	Moderate	Slight

6.2.5 The properties concerned are all within 250M of the proposal site and are already visually dominated by the large LCC stand, flood lights and the tram line.

6.2.6 As with other views it is considered that the over time the level of effect will reduce as a consequence of mitigation and the natural integration of the scheme into the existing townscape and view. The scale and massing of the buildings in the view have been shown through wireframe modelling to appear as comparative alongside the stadium buildings and it is considered that over time the proposals will act as a visual corner anchor to the urban block and will not be viewed singularly or as an adverse addition.

6.3 COMMENTS AND ASSESSMENT ON OUTLOOK

The Council's position as expressed in the following extracts from the report to Committee and reasons for refusal, appears to be that views from new residential properties will be qualitatively inadequate:

Occupiers of the flats located at ground and first floor level in the rear elevation of the proposed development would directly overlook a building which provides ancillary facilities to LCC and is located within the LCC ground. The building is industrial in design being clad in corrugated metal cladding. This building has an eaves height of approximately seven metres and is located approximately 12.5 metres away from the rear elevation of the proposed development where habitable room windows would be located. (para 177)

The ground floor units would benefit from some landscaping to screen this with garden areas being provided to these units. The Level 0 site layout plan indicates that trees would be planted along this rear boundary, however the Landscape Design Statement contained conflicting information with the Level 0 plan at page 14 omitting any reference to trees on this boundary. (para 179)

There is concern that the amount of space potentially set aside for tree planting (0.5 metres) would provide very little room for tree planting which would provide any meaningful softening, nor would it allow room for trees to grow, flourish and mature within the bounds of the application site. The development is considered to be too close to this boundary. (para 180)

The proposed development by virtue of its height, massing, scale and layout would result in a poor level of amenity and unacceptable living standards for future occupiers of the development, by virtue of inadequate daylight and outlook in both apartments and amenity areas. (reason for refusal 5)

- 6.4 In answer to the matters outlined above by the Council relating to: the visual outlook for residents of the proposed development and the potential for appropriate and effective landscape mitigation and design.

6.4.1 The proposed landscape scheme was revised following the places matter review to include garden/terrace areas raised up above the service route to the rear of the buildings. The outlook for these properties to the immediate rear at ground floor level is of a private garden/terrace with a hedge boundary.

6.4.2 The service yard itself is surfaced with an attractive block paving to give the impression of a courtyard rather than service road. Between the service road and the offside building is a 0.5M wide planting bed. This is wide enough to hold tree planting which would have to be pleached to some degree and a hedgerow line running the length of the boundary. In combination these landscape treatments will screen some or all of the first 4M of this wall expanse. Overall I do not believe the properties in question will experience a poor level of amenity and will enjoy views of garden areas and a planted backdrop to the neighbouring development.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 Our original Townscape assessment concluded that the proposals will regenerate a brownfield site through the construction of residential apartment blocks and landscaping and that this would inevitably be visible from locations close to the proposal site and have some influence of change over the immediate urban surroundings.

7.2 The scale and appearance of the proposed buildings were considered to be contiguous with the adjacent LCC stadium and the larger office and commercial buildings within the wider area.

- 7.3 The nature of change was assessed as not always being adverse with the new development bringing real benefits to the site and to the street scene of Great Stone Road. This is a reflection of the ability of the proposals to offer a strong and striking architectural form at the corner of an existing urban block which is defined by other large and notable urban forms alongside the regeneration of the site, bringing vacant brownfield land into active use.
- 7.4 No notable townscape effects are recorded and no notable effects are assessed for the local conservation area and historic assets.
- 7.5 For those visual effects that are notable at moderate-substantial or above, the mitigation proposals reduce some of these over time through screening and integration. Those that remain are expected to become over time an accepted part of the established urban scene with the nature of change altering from adverse to neutral. No notable or significant effects are recorded over 0.6km from the proposal site.
- 7.6 The proposals before this hearing were developed through an iterative process which took onboard the results of various technical assessments and surveys including the townscape and visual report. They have additionally undergone several further revisions to attempt to accommodate the concerns raised by the Local Planning Authority and then more recently to respond to the comments of the Places Matter panel.
- 7.7 The resulting proposals in my view are a high quality design response which proposes development that is appropriate to its setting, cultural character and identity and of a height, mass, density and appearance that will both integrate into the existing townscape character and bring beneficial aspects to the urban block and street scene. These are views with which the Places Matter panel agreed.

- 7.8 The Places Matter panel also agreed explicitly that the height and massing of the buildings as now proposed is a strong and appropriate response to the site and they saw no reason to limit the potential height of the development to six storeys, specifically directing the design team to consider taller buildings towards the metrolink boundary to consolidate the corner of the urban block.
- 7.9 The proposals will not have an undue adverse effect on residential properties and the outlook for proposed dwellings has been carefully considered so as to provide landscape settings for ground floor apartments and views of landscaped courtyards, roof gardens and boundaries for others.
- 7.10 Although not offering heritage evidence I find no landscape or visual harm of note to either the Grade II listed town hall buildings, the non designated asset of the cricket ground and pavilion or the Longford Park Conservation Area.

