



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

Townscape Assessment and Landscape Design

AC/4/B

PROOF OF EVIDENCE CARL TAYLOR

PRELIMINARY

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 23 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 (Forum) 1 LLP 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 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 master-planning during this time.

1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 TPM Landscape was commissioned by Accrue (Forum) 1 LLP to provide landscape design and a landscape/townscape and visual assessment in respect of a proposal for residential development on land at Great Stone Road in Trafford ('the Appeal Site'). 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 provide evidence with regard to matters of landscape, townscape and visual amenity connection with this appeal.
- 1.2 My evidence will address landscape/townscape matters relating to the appeal; the submitted landscape proposals and assessment for the Appeal Site; and the reporting and determination by the Council.
- 1.3 I set out my position as follows:
- (i) In Section 2 I set out a summary description of the appeal proposals, focusing on landscaping considerations
 - (ii) In Section 3 I set out a summary of the planning history and reasons for refusal and give an over view of the supporting presentation work done during the planning process to a Places Matter panel.
 - (iii) In section 4 I set out briefly the Policy framework within which the proposals are set and the various urban strategies that have been developed to support this.
 - (iv) In section 5 I consider the landscape/townscape character baseline and summarise my assessment of this in relation to the proposals. From 5.24 I consider Trafford Council's masterplanning approach to the site and the surrounding area beginning with the Civic Quarter plans. I then move on to consider from 5.35 the most extant of these masterplanning exercises in

the Civic Area Action Plan or AAP. I then move on to discuss how I have assessed the character areas and masterplan areas described within the AAP, beginning with the Cricket Ground area where the proposals are sited. Following this I describe how I have assessed the neighbouring Residential character area. I seek with both to compare and contrast the Council's approach to assessment in supporting the masterplan to my own assessment for the proposals.

- (v) In section 6 I consider the Council's officer report to committee (CD D5) where the Council set out their reasoning behind the putative reasons for refusal given ahead of the appeal. I begin by considering the comments and reasons for refusal relating to landscape/townscape matters.
- (vi) In section 7 I consider the separate but related matters of visual amenity and views potentially affected by the proposals. I consider the base line and how I have assessed this.
- (vii) In section 8 I consider the Council's officer report to committee (CD D5) where the Council set out their reasoning behind the putative reasons for refusal given ahead of the appeal. In this section I consider the comments and reasons for refusal relating to visual matters.
- (viii) In section 9 I seek to summarise and conclude the proof.

The work is supported by Appendices as follows:

- A Methodology
 - A1 TPM Landscape Methodology
- B TPM Townscape Assessment (extracts)
 - B1 TPM Views
 - B2 TPM Extended Views
- C Proposals

- C1 Ground floor and street landscape proposals
- C2 Roof Garden landscape proposals
- D Area Action Plan Documents
 - D1 Randall Thorpe sub sectors (plan), character areas (plan), view locations (plan)
 - D2 Randall Thorpe townscape effects (table)
 - D3 Randall Thorpe visual effects (table)
 - D4 AAP character areas
 - D5 AAP Challenges and opportunities (plan)
 - D6 AAP Scale and massing
 - D7 Southern neighbourhood masterplan

Duty to the Inquiry

- 1.4 I understand my duty to the Inquiry and have complied with, and will continue to comply with, that duty. I confirm that this evidence identifies all facts which I regard as being relevant to the opinions that I have expressed and that the Inspector's attention has been drawn to any matter which would affect the validity of those opinions. I believe that the facts stated within this evidence are true and that the opinions expressed are correct.

2.0 THE PROPOSALS

Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The Appeal Site is a former B&Q store that fronts onto Great Stone Road and is bounded by the grounds of Lancashire County Cricket Club (known as Emirates Old Trafford – 'EOT') 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 EOT.

- 2.2 Residential streets also form part of the wider area with predominantly two storey homes located directly opposite the site off Great Stone Road.
- 2.3 The Appeal Site is currently vacant, 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.

The Proposals in Summary

- 2.4 The proposed development comprises four separate buildings of up to eight storeys in height above the ground floor. The development extends to eight storeys in the eastern corner, close to the railway tracks and steps down in height towards Great Stone Road. Three buildings are linked across three storeys (floors 2-5).
- 2.5 Vehicle parking, cycle parking and refuse storage will be provided at basement level. The buildings will be separated by two internal courtyards, creating shared amenity space for residents and pleasant views across the development. Roof terraces are provided at levels 4, 5 and 6. Balconies and private gardens are also provided.
- 2.6 There are several routes of pedestrian access into and across the site, enhancing permeability. A mixture of stepped and direct level access is provided.

Landscaping & Amenity

- 2.7 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

- 2.8 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 is a pathway leading pedestrians to the rear of the building potentially linking to the tram station. 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. This arrangement is illustrated in Plans in Appendix C1 and CD B8

Level 1

- 2.9 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 on 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. This arrangement is illustrated in Plans in Appendix C1 and CD B8

Levels 5 & 7

- 2.10 Levels 5 and 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. This arrangement is illustrated in Plans in appendix C2 and CD B8.
- 2.11 Levels 6 and 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. This arrangement is illustrated in Plans in appendix C1 and CD B8

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY AND REASONS FOR REFUSAL

- 3.1 This application (the appeal) followed the refusal of a similar (but larger) application by TMBC on 29 March 2019 (LPA ref: 94974/OUT/18) submitted by the same applicant on 28 June 2018 in the following terms:

“Outline application sought for the demolition of existing retail unit and associated structures; erection of a building ranging in height from 5 to 13 storeys for a mix of uses including: 433 apartments (use class C3) and communal spaces ancillary to the residential use; flexible spaces for use classes A1, A3, B1, D1, and/or D2; undercroft car parking; new public realm; and associated engineering works and infrastructure. Consent is sought for access, appearance, layout and scale with all other matters reserved.”

- 3.2 The design also presented and engaged with Places Matter. Places Matter is an independent organisation, hosted by RIBA, which promotes the skills and knowledge of all those involved in new development, promoting good design and encouraging strong client leadership. It offers impartial advice through review panel which is typically comprised of experienced architects, landscape architects and planners from within the development industry.
- 3.3 The applicant took the decision not to appeal against refusal of the previous application in favour of working with the LPA to bring forward a revised scheme which sought to address the previous reasons for refusal. The appellant engaged extensively at pre-application stage with the LPA to discuss options for the scheme prior to submission of the appealed scheme, however no agreement was reached on what was a suitable scale of development on the site.
- 3.4 An outline application for the appeal scheme was then submitted to TMBC on 19 March 2020 in the following terms:

“The demolition of existing retail unit and associated structures; erection of buildings for a mix of use including: 333 apartments (use class C3) and communal spaces ancillary to the residential use; flexible space for use classes A1, A3, D1 and/or D2; undercroft car parking; new public realm; and associated engineering works and infrastructure”.

Putative reasons for refusal

3.5 The appeal is against non-determination.

3.6 The council determined at planning committee on 15 October 2020 (CD D4) that had it determined the application, it would have refused permission for the following reasons:

1. *The proposed development would prejudice the use of the fine turf and non-turf training facility at Lancashire Cricket Club. The proposed development therefore conflicts with Strategic Objective OTO11, Policies SL3 and R6 of the adopted Core Strategy.*
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.*
4. *The proposed development would not provide a development plan policy compliant level of planning obligations in relation to affordable housing and education improvements to suitably and appropriately mitigate the impacts of the development. The applicant has failed to demonstrate that there is a*

robust viability case to demonstrate that the scheme could not offer a policy compliant level of obligations. The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policies SL3, L2 and L8 of the adopted Core Strategy and the Council's adopted Revised Supplementary Planning Document 1 (SPD1) - Planning Obligations 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.*

3.7 Subsequently, the Council has 'revised' its position as regards putative reasons for refusal. For the purposes of my evidence the relevant 'revisions'; are that the Council no longer pursues RfR2 or RfR7.

3.8 I judge that the relevant policies in relation to landscape for the purposes of this appeal are as follows.

Core Strategy

3.9 SL3 LANCASHIRE COUNTY CRICKET CLUB QUARTER

- Policy SL3: Lancashire County Cricket Club Quarter outlines that a major mixed-use development will be delivered in this strategic location to provide a high-quality experience for visitors balanced with a new, high quality residential neighbourhood centred around an improved stadium at Lancashire County Cricket Club. The policy sets out that this location can deliver, amongst others, 400 residential units comprising predominately accommodation suitable for families, improvements to education, community and commercial facilities, and improvements to the local highway network and better linkages with public transport infrastructure.

3.10 L3 REGENERATION AND REDUCING INEQUALITIES

Identifies the importance of improving the Council's Regeneration Areas. Development will be supported which improves the quality of design, construction and range of the Borough's housing stock on offer to residents, improves the access to and between Regeneration Areas; improving facilities for the communities; and providing opportunities to reduce crime and to enhance community safety.

3.11 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. 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 relation to matters of amenity protection, development must:

- Be compatible with the surrounding area; and
- Not prejudice the amenity of the future occupiers of the development and/or occupants of adjacent properties by reason of overbearing, overshadowing, overlooking, visual intrusion, noise and/or disturbance, odour or in any other way.

3.12 R1 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

All new development must take account of surrounding building styles, landscapes and historic distinctiveness. Developers must demonstrate how the development will complement and enhance the existing features of historic significance including their wider settings, in particular in relation to conservation areas, listed buildings and other identified heritage assets.

3.13 With regard to landscape matters, I believe the proposals comply with all the above policies as cited by the LPA. My evidence will seek to demonstrate that the Appellant has:

- 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

PLACES MATTER REVIEW

3.14 On the 20th Nov 2019 the design team presented the appeal proposals to a Places Matter Panel. The meeting was very constructive and resulted in comments from the panel on the design and suggestions for how this could be further improved. The comments were set out in a report following the presentation, which is provided at CD K1.

3.15 A number of comments are directly relevant to aspects of the LPA's case in respect of the appeal proposals and so have been reproduced below as extracts from the original report. My notes are added below each point to highlight where and how these comments were translated into revisions to the appeal proposals:

- a. *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;*

The proposals were revised following the presentation to the panel and sought to build on and enhance the ability of the buildings to offer a frontage onto Great Stone Road. Building heights across the blocks are at six storeys along the Great Stone Road frontage and step back towards a higher level of up to nine storey in the south east. The panel supported this approach.

- c. *The Panel's clear view is that this development would benefit from being a series of separate buildings;*

Following this the scheme was re-configured to form a development of a series of three buildings, albeit with the central and north west blocks joined at a higher level.

- g. *You need to be designing the space to the north-east as if the indoor nets have been replaced by something much more amenable and you must avoid any sense that the rear space is just a service yard;*

The proposals were amended to include screen planting along the boundary and a landscaped consideration of public and private spaces. Further consideration was also given to the surfacing of the rear service yards and access with materials used to create a higher quality feel to these spaces.

- j. The Panel felt strongly that you should consider bringing the development closer to Great Stone Road, to allow for greater engagement with the street. This will also guide you in placing additional pedestrian entrances and how to further articulate the elevations;*

The revised proposals achieved this aim, bringing a direct engagement between the street and the appeal proposals and linking entrances directly onto Great Stone Rd.

- k. The intended overall architectural quality, proportions and details were felt to be successful and you must strive to retain these in the final scheme and not lose elements to any future efficiency savings;*

These comments were noted and the revised scheme sought to lose none of the architectural and landscape quality of the original designs.

- m. The internal courtyards present an opportunity for you to have small areas of highly valuable private amenity space and perhaps even 'front door' apartments to help animate the courtyard and help ensure its use;*

The design of these spaces was rethought in light of the changes to the blocks with a clear division between private and public amenity spaces worked into the designs.

- q. The Council is clear that it is seeking a placemaking approach to this development and the others in the area. The Panel supports this principle, which would suggest separate blocks, lower levels of car parking and higher levels of liveability;*

The proposals were revised following the presentation to the panel to enable an active frontage with entrances onto Great Stone Road and the separation of the blocks with a free flow of space through the courtyard space. Care was taken in the revisions to carefully delineate private and public space and to allow for sufficient landscaping to create privacy and a high quality environment.

- r. The Panel suggests that you fragment the plan form and sculpt the roofline, reordering the mass slightly to help make this happen. Greater height, than currently proposed, adjacent to the tramline is not considered an issue, especially if this maintains a viable development*

The proposals underwent further revision work tested through modelling to create a well-balanced scheme which steps back in height and scale from Great Stone Road.

3.16 Not all points made by the Place Matter panel have been addressed in my proof as I have chosen to focus on those directly relevant to matters relating to visual and townscape issues, particularly matters of height, scale and massing and the amenity of residents both within and without the proposed development.

4.0 **POLICY**

4.1 For the purposes of the appeal the development plan comprises

- **The Trafford Core Strategy** (2012) sets out the spatial framework for delivering the development and change needed in the Borough up to 2026. Trafford Council undertook a review of their local plan policies to assess compliance with the NPPF in February 2019.
- The site is located within the identified 'Inner Area' on the adopted policies map (2013) and falls within the wider area known as the Lancashire County Cricket Club (LCCC) Quarter Strategic Location under Policy SL3 but is not designated for any specific use or development within 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.

4.2 The Trafford Local Plan: **Land Allocations document** (published January 2014) identified the site as falling within a wider area known as the Lancashire County Cricket Club (LCCC) Quarter Strategic Location (LAN1) and also specifically land which is allocated as the Lancashire County Cricket Stadium Area (LAN2).

4.3 This draft plan was abandoned on 25 March 2015. However, it is the only meaningful way to ascertain the extent of the LCCC Quarter, as this had not been defined in the Core Strategy, and also is relevant in signposting the Council's previous 'direction of travel'.

Masterplans descriptions / designations

- 4.4 New plans for the “Civic Quarter” area were initially progressed by the LPA as a Masterplan document (which would, once adopted, have SPD status), holding a public consultation event during August 2018. The document is now being developed as an Area Action Plan (AAP), with initial consultation taking place in February and March 2020.

5.0 LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER BASELINE AND ASSESSMENT

TVIA

- 5.1 The Application was supported by a Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA by TPM Landscape) which was conducted using a methodology that is derived from the Landscape Institute’s Guidance, as set out primarily in GLVIA3 and other supporting guidance notes (technical guidance note 06/019 Landscape Institute).
- 5.2 The basic approach is to consider the sensitivity of the landscape/townscape 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/townscape 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 three to four 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.
- 5.3 The assessment has to consider the possible range of value and sensitivity that is represented by landscape and townscapes and reasonably suggests 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 Appeal 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).

- 5.4 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, there has been no suggestion that this is not an appropriate extent of study from any of the consultees to the application.

NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA 55

- 5.5 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:

“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.”

- 5.6 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 Appeal Site 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.
- 5.7 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.”*
- 5.8 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

- 5.9 A slightly more detailed assessment for the area is available with the North West Character Framework 2009.
- 5.10 The landscape is divided into a series of landscape character types that are further divided into landscape character areas. Stretford, which includes the Appeal Site, falls within the character type **“Urban”** and within the landscape character area **“Urban and Industrial Landscapes”**.

- 5.11 The potential for the landscape within this character area to deliver street trees and habitats is highlighted. It is acknowledged that views are often limited by other built development.
- 5.12 A more local study, the Trafford Council Landscape Strategy 2004, follows on from this regional work.
- 5.13 The character of the study area is generally within an “Urban” landscape character type 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.
- 5.14 The development of the Appeal 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.
- 5.15 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.

GREATER MANCHESTER LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND SENSITIVITY ASSESSMENT (LUC 2018)

- 5.16 LUC were commissioned to produce an assessment on behalf of Manchester CC and nine other authorities in work as evidence base for the since abandoned GMSF. This considers the proposal site as part of the Manchester conurbation and does not assess this any further considering instead areas of open landscape and urban edge areas around the main conurbation for study.

STRETFORD REFRESHED MASTERPLAN

- 5.17 The Stretford Refreshed Masterplan was approved by TMBC in January 2018 and has evolved from the original Stretford Town Centre Masterplan which was approved in 2014. The Refreshed Masterplan provides the strategic framework for the delivery of the emerging investment and regeneration opportunities in the Town Centre and wider Stretford area, identifying areas for future development and the key actions required to deliver major regeneration.

- 5.18 The masterplan identifies the appeal site as falling within the UA92 Campus Quarter. UA92 is a University Academy that has opened in the former Kellogg's building, located off Talbot Road and Warwick Road, ie on the eastern side of the cricket ground.
- 5.19 Finally there is a more recent piece of work by Randall Thorpe which supports the masterplanning of the Civic Quarter Area (CD F82-84 &/or I22-24). The TPM TVIA considers this piece of work and its descriptions of townscape character areas surrounding the proposal site. The proposals principally affect two character areas identified within this study: the sports and recreational area and the residential area.

SUMMARY OF TPM TOWNSCAPE ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS OF TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

- 5.20 The TPM Townscape assessment (TVIA CD B15) considers three local character areas as well as two of the TCA's from the Randall Thorpe (CD I22-I24) assessment of the AAP masterplan. A summary table of this assessment is reproduced below with the detailed analysis found within the main report

Landscape/ Townscape Receptor	Hierarchy of Importance	Sensitivity	Change to Landscape (Impact)	Landscape Effect	Landscape Effect
				Year 1 pre- mitigation	Year 15 with mitigation
Wider Landscape Character Effects	National and Regional	Low	Low- Negligible	Slight-Negligible (neutral)	Negligible (neutral)
Local Landscape Character Effects					
Character Area 1	Local	Medium	Low	Moderate-Slight (beneficial/neutral)	Slight (beneficial/neutral)

Recreation Leisure					
Character Area 2 Mixed Urban	Local	Medium-Low	Medium-Low	Moderate-Slight (beneficial)	Slight (beneficial)
Character Area 3 Residential	Local	Medium-Low	Low	Moderate-Slight	Slight
Civic Quarter Area Action Plan - Townscape Character Area Effects					
Sport and Recreational TCA	Local	Medium	Medium-Low	Moderate-Slight (beneficial)	Slight (beneficial)
Residential Area TCA	Local	Low	Medium-Low	Moderate-Slight (beneficial)	Slight (beneficial)

5.21 The conclusion of this document was that: *“No notable townscape effects are recorded and no notable effects are assessed for the local conservation and historic assets. 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”.* (11.3 TPM TVIA CD B15)

5.21.1 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.

5.21.2 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. 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.

5.21.3 The Civic Quarter Area Action Plan (Consultation Stage)

The Sports and Recreational Townscape Character Area identified within the Randall Thorp TVA will experience direct adverse effects 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. The townscape character area will experience **Moderate-Slight beneficial effect at year one reducing to Slight beneficial by year 15**. Positive effects include the addition of residential development that will be of good-design and quality with commercial and community spaces. Positives also include the loss of the degraded former B&Q site.

5.21.4 The neighbouring residential townscape character area located to the east, south and west of the site will experience **Moderate- Slight beneficial**

effects at year 1 reducing to Slight by year 15. The indirect effects will be experienced by parts of the residential area in close proximity of the proposal site with an overall large part of the townscape character area experiencing limited to no intervisibility of the proposed development.

TRAFFORD COUNCIL MASTERPLANS - SUPPORTING EVIDENCE BASE

TRAFFORD CIVIC QUARTER AREA

- 5.24 Given the clear intention of the Local Authority to engage in transformational urban planning and development over the coming years, and their stance as to how the appeal proposal might be accommodated within this vision, it is necessary to look in further detail as to the background of the master-planning proposals for the site and the wider area and how this might inform decision making for the appeal site itself.
- 5.25 The LPA has, over several years, developed, but not fully integrated masterplans for the proposal site and the wider Trafford Civic Quarter Area. With regard to approved plans which sit alongside approved and extant planning policy, the Stretford Refreshed Masterplan (which itself evolved from the original Stretford Town Centre Masterplan 2014) is an approved plan for the area. The site lies within areas outlined for the UA92 education campus. At this strategic level the aspirations for the appeal site are set out simply as a site that can accommodate new opportunities in line with the emerging UA92 masterplan. (page 23 Stretford Refreshed Masterplan CD H5)
- 5.26 More detailed Masterplan work was developed as part of a Civic Quarter Masterplan, (compiled by Fielden Clegg Bradley with supporting work by Planit IE) on behalf of the LPA. This was published in draft in 2018 and intended as being adopted as an SPD. The document is supported by a TVIA by Planit IE.

- 5.27 In this document the proposal site is located within a character area identified as “Lancashire Cricket Club” and adjacent to Gorses residential area to the south; Trafford Town Hall area along Talbot Rd to the north and an unspecified area to the east currently occupied by the former Kellogg’s build and proposed as the “Campus Quarter” (page 7 figure 1.4).
- 5.28 Building heights are also considered alongside other character elements such as: land use; urban grain; movement networks and open space.
- 5.29 On heights the masterplan comments that: *it is generally characterised by large footprint commercial, civic, leisure and retail developments. (3.6 page 18)*
- 5.30 Building heights vary and are up to fifteen storeys in height: *On the southern side of Talbot Road Lancashire Cricket Club and adjoining Lancastrian House office development are both up to six storeys in height. The former Kellogg’s and British Gas buildings lie in large open plots, with height reducing significantly towards the historic Trafford Bowling Club and Victorian Villas (in the north) which do not exceed three storeys.*
- There are traditional two storey residential properties to the north and south of the Masterplan area. (Civic Quarter Masterplan consultation draft 2018 3.6)*
- 5.31 Ultimately this translates into a masterplan proposal that sees the appeal site as an: *Optimal location for consolidated parking, possibly as part of a mixed use scheme (4.3 opportunities box4).*
- 5.32 The consultation draft proposes the appeal site as mixed use and mixed height up to six storeys. In contrast to this and somewhat contrary to the guiding comments leading up to the masterplan, the area to the east of the Cricket Club is identified for mixed use of between 10 and 12 storeys, gradually reducing to 6 and 4 adjacent

to the historic bowling club and Victorian Villas previously noted alongside the appeal site as being potentially sensitive with regard to building height.

- 5.33 Within the TVIA the masterplan area is assessed as a whole with both townscape character and building heights assessed as being of medium sensitivity. The residual impact on both these elements is considered minor. (Appendix 1.1)
- 5.34 The report also considers visual change alongside the townscape impacts which feed into these conclusions. In this proof I deal with visual effects in section 7..

CIVIC AREA ACTION PLAN

- 5.35 This Masterplan proposal was modified to become the Civic Area action plan, and this new plan (published Jan 2020) was also accompanied by a Townscape Assessment (TVIA) this time by Randall Thorpe. (CD I22-24 see also appendix D)
- 5.36 The methodology of this report is similar to that of the earlier Planit IE report in that it considers the impacts of the whole masterplan area and considers landscape/townscape impacts alongside visual impacts.
- 5.37 The existing townscape is divided into character areas shown in figure 3 of the TVIA appendices. The appeal site is shown in a character area (TCA) defined as Sport and Recreation. To the north of this is another TCA Civic Townscape which includes Talbot Rd. To the south of the appeal site is a TCA – Residential Area and to the north east of the LCC ground is a TCA entitled Commercial Area (Talbot Rd). These relate to character areas identified in the Planit IE report and represent broadly the areas potentially affected by the appeal proposals.
- 5.38 The Recreational Area (known as the Southern Neighbourhood in the AAP) is described:
- The majority of this area is formed by the cricket ground and associated buildings and structures. There is a row of office blocks to the west, and a redundant*

*warehouse to the south. The more recent stadium structures and the office blocks to the west are built of orange brick. Some of the stadium structures are rendered with dark grey, light grey and red panelling. The height ranges from 2-6 storeys. Overall the value of the character area has been assessed as **High**. (CD I22-24 page 28-30 TVIA)*

5.39 Further on in the document the masterplan proposals are described claiming that this has been developed as part of an iterative process. Building heights are considered from 5.14 stating that: *Proposed developments should be cognisant of the appropriate heights for their location.* Under LOW (6 storeys) is the appeal site with the justification: *Former B&Q Site - sensitivities to height due to the proximity to neighbouring suburban homes.*

5.40 This is in contrast the Eastern Neighbourhood area, which includes:

- *Existing valuable buildings: Talbot Road Villas, Old Trafford Bowling Club and historic building fragments;*
- *Public spaces: one existing space associated with the Old Trafford Bowling Club and two proposed public spaces;*
- *Height: Low (< 6 storeys) across the area with two gateway opportunities on the southern edge;*

This character area is located in the masterplan neighbouring areas of development that can accommodate up to 20 storeys in building height. (ref- AAP masterplan northern neighbourhood and central neighbourhood). Although the eastern neighbourhood has a suggested height cap of 6 storeys this will be clearly influenced by larger built form in the masterplan to the immediate north and west.

5.41 Section 6 of the TVIA (Randall Thorpe CD I22-24) considers susceptibility to change over these areas from the masterplan. What is not evident in this analysis are any of the iterative processes that may have led to the development of the masterplan and in particular the relevance and testing of appropriate building heights. The report records for the appeal site and Sports and Recreational TCA

that: *The proposals would not be at odds with the townscape setting of this area. Proposals provide an opportunity to improve the townscape of this area, particularly the interface between the stadium and Brian Statham Way, and the experience of visitors arriving on the Metrolink. The susceptibility to change of this TCA to the proposed kind of development has been assessed as **Low**.* (paragraph 6.6)

The Randall Thorpe TCA areas broadly translate into the following masterplan area zones:

Masterplan Zone	Townscape Character Area
Southern Neighbourhood	Sports and Recreation Area
Western Neighbourhood	Civic Townscape, Residential and Retail
Central Neighbourhood	Retail, Residential and Commercial areas
Northern Neighbourhood	Police Headquarters and Retail areas
Eastern Neighbourhood	Police Headquarters, Historic, Retail and Commercial areas

5.42 The sensitivity of the TCA's is summarised in table 6 reproduced below (Appendix D2)

Townscape Character Area	Value	Susceptibility	Sensitivity
Civic townscape TCA	High	Low	Medium
Commercial TCA	Medium – Low	Low	Low
Retail townscape TCA	Low	Low	Low
Historic TCA	Medium	Medium	Medium
Sports and recreational TCA	High	Low	Medium
Residential TCA	Medium	Low	Medium - Low

Police headquarters TCA	Low	Low	Low
Commercial and industrial TCA	Low	Low	Low
Park TCA	High	Low	Medium

5.43 It should be noted that even though the TCA’s assessment noted heritage assets and residential scale buildings of historic importance as well as both the LCC and Manchester United stadiums, the susceptibility and sensitivity to the masterplan changes proposed do not exceed Medium. This includes areas of proposed development up to 20 storeys in height. Although we only see the final assessment of a fixed plan, this (and the earlier work of Planit IE) would suggest a collective of urban areas with low-medium sensitivity to change and able to accommodate a broad range of building heights and massing subject to the detailed design approach brought to bear on the individual areas in question.

5.44 This corresponds with the TPM TCA which assesses the Cricket Ground TCA as Medium sensitivity.

5.45 This work is then brought into an assessment of townscape effects for each character area. The appeal site, which previously appeared to be included within a TCA entitled Sport and Recreation now seems to appear as Cricket Ground in tables which start from page 48 of the TVIA. The Cricket Ground TCA is assessed as the reproduced table below:

SOUTHERN NEIGHBOURHOOD (Appendix D2)

TCA	Size scale of effect	Magnitude	Sensitivity	Impact	Significance
Civic Area	Changes adjacent to	Medium	Medium	Moderate Beneficial	The effects will be beneficial and would

	southern edge				result in a positive change to the townscape
Commercial Area	Limited change to western edge of the TCA	Medium	Low	Moderate Beneficial	The effects will be beneficial and would result in a positive change to the townscape
Retail Area	Not adjacent to the TCA	Low	Low	Minor Beneficial	The effects will be beneficial and would result in a positive change to the townscape
Historic Area	Not adjacent to the TCA	Low	Medium	Low Beneficial	The effects will be beneficial and would result in a positive change to the townscape
Cricket Ground	Change to the area across the TCA	High	Medium	Moderate Beneficial	The effects will be beneficial and would result in a positive change to the townscape
Police HQ	Not adjacent to TCA	Negligible	Low	Negligible	The effects will be negligible on the TCA
Commercial Industrial	Minor changes to the edge of the TCA	Low-Medium	Low	Minor	The effects will be beneficial and would result in a positive change to the townscape
Residential	Major changes to	Medium	Medium-Low	Moderate beneficial	The effects would be beneficial and would

	some areas adjacent to TCA				result in a positive change to the townscape
Parks and openspace	Limited change to TCA	Low-negligible	Medium	Minor beneficial-negligible	The effects weill be beneficial and would result in a positive change to the townscape
MUFC	Limited impact on TCA	Low	Medium	Low	The effects will be beneficial and would result in a slight positive change to the townscape.

- 5.46 There are a number of things to draw from this analysis, considering how the change brought by the masterplan is seen differently to the change proposed as part of the appeal development.
- 5.47 The appeal site lies within the Cricket Ground TCA and the change proposed – enhancement to parking and up to 6 storey height leisure and parking development (on the appeal site) is judged as a high level of change leading to a Moderate Beneficial effect. Clearly the idea of development on the site is capable of delivering beneficial townscape change and, even over the site itself, up to six storeys of development, including parking provision, leads only to a moderate level of effect (which is viewed as *beneficial*).
- 5.48 The appeal site proposals in contrast are judged by the LPA to bring an adverse effect to the townscape even though the difference in scale and massing between the two propositions is largely confined to building height and scale. In my view, following the further development of the proposals with Places Matter, the appeal proposals offer a more sympathetic massing (a split of blocks along Great Stone Rd) to the site than the intention visualised within the masterplan document.

- 5.49 I do not consider the negative view of the appeal proposals taken by the LPA is a logical one supported by the available evidence base. Although the Area Action Plan assessment work does not consider the options of differing use and massing over the appeal site it seems apparent that a position is reached where development on the site at scale is viewed as a positive change. Furthermore it appears that the principal difference between the broadbrush proposals of the masterplan and the detailed proposals of the appeal is the height of the development over six storeys moving this from a beneficial townscape impact to an adverse impact in the eyes of the LPA.
- 5.50 Much is made in the response of the LPA regarding the potential effect of the appeal proposals on the neighbouring residential area and it appears the Randall Thorpe in their assessment of the masterplan agree that development on the Cricket Ground TCA will lead to major changes and a medium level of change. The neighbouring residential TCA is assessed as having medium- low sensitivity to change. As before, the introduction of a six storey building, parking and the redevelopment of the former B&Q site (in the AAP masterplan) is seen as a Moderate beneficial effect.
- 5.51 When considering the appeal proposals however this changes dramatically, and without any cogent explanation, to a position where the Council consider the development proposals lead to negative townscape effects. There is no nuance to this position, and although the Council in their comments prior to the decision acknowledge the ability of the appeal proposals to bring positive change to the frontage onto Great Stone Rd, this is still viewed in the final analysis as an adverse townscape effect on the neighbouring residential TCA.
- 5.52 In contrast to this approach the AAP masterplan places large (up to 20 storey height development) adjacent to important heritage buildings and open space

within the historic area TCA. The sensitivity to change for this area is the same as that of the Cricket Ground TCA at Medium.

- 5.53 Even though it would seem that the potential townscape change over this Historic TCA (including an accommodation for the clear visual change which would occur through the introduction of neighbouring 20 storey buildings), would be similar or larger to that of the appeal site and Cricket Ground TCA, the final analysis is that this would result in Low change and this would have a Low Beneficial townscape effect. (see appendix D2)
- 5.54 In my opinion this suggests an approach which does not fully interrogate the possible townscape effects of the masterplan and by extension does not support the criticism of the appeal proposals. It appears only to support pre-conceived judgements regarding what form and massing of development is appropriate within the masterplan without any flexibility in approach which might be tested further.

TPM TVIA ASSESSMENT - THE SPORTS AND RECREATIONAL AREA (CRICKET GROUND)

- 5.55 The proposed development would directly impact the Sports and Recreational TCA that includes the Old Trafford Cricket Ground. Randall Thorpe 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. The TPM TVIA 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 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**. This is the same conclusion as the AAP TVIA by Randall Thorpe.

- 5.56 The varied heights of the site from four to nine storeys would integrate with the existing varied heights of the (up to) two storey high residential area and the five to six 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 up to 20 storeys high and sit these adjacent to areas of equal sensitivity (Medium). 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, this is also an approach taken to mitigate height differences elsewhere in the AAP plan. 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.
- 5.57 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**. This is aligned with the methodology applied by Randall Thorpe across the AAP where (for example) the Historic TCA in the Southern, Central Neighbourhood is assessed as undergoing major changes adjacent to its eastern edge (this is an area adjacent to sections of the masterplan where up to 20 storey buildings are planned). Despite this being an area of Medium sensitivity and the change being a clear result of new built form of considerable height, the final assessment is that the effect would be Moderate and a combination of adverse and beneficial elements.

TPM TVIA ASSESSMENT - THE RESIDENTIAL AREA

- 5.58 The proposed development would indirectly affect the neighbouring residential area located to the east, south and west of the proposal site. The TPM appraisal considers the residential area to be of ordinary-poor quality and the value Low as it is a residential area that has a low sense of place with no noted significance or distinct features. Randall Thorpe acknowledges that it is normal for the residential area to experience views towards higher buildings (paragraph 6.6 page 38 CD I22-24) 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. The Randall Thorpe study places this as Medium-Low.
- 5.59 The proposed development would indirectly impact on part of the residential area with large parts of the character area experiencing limited - no intervisibility with the proposed development. The change would be congruous with the surrounding mixed urban area, being a residential development, while the nature of change would be neutral/ beneficial as the proposed change would be an improvement in quality and condition to the existing appeal site and set within a townscape which is already full of prominent tall buildings and structures. The magnitude of change to the Residential Area TCA would be **Medium-Low** and the overall landscape effects would be **Moderate-Slight Neutral/Beneficial**. Again, this is entirely in line with the conclusions of the AAP TVIA which sees buildings of height located adjacent to areas of lower height and Medium sensitivity able to deliver beneficial townscape effects.

6.0 COUNCIL OFFICER REPORT ON TOWNSCAPE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSALS AND REBUTTAL

- 6.1 The LPA's position is that the proposal site and its surroundings are of a higher value and higher sensitivity to the type of development proposed than the TPM

TVIA assessment concludes. In the officer's report to the Council's planning committee (CD D5), the Council set out from para 87 as follows:

“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 understated 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)

- 6.2 These comments are reflected in reasons for refusal 3 and 6 and are also relevant to reasons for refusal 2, 5 and 7. (RFR 2 and 7 have since been withdrawn)
- 6.3 There are a number of points to consider within this section with regard to the officer report, and I will take them in turn:

COMMENT ON OFFICER REPORT FROM PARAGRAPH 87 (above) and RFR3

- 6.4 Below I address the commentary made in the officer report to the planning committee and then discuss how this ‘follows through’ to the reasons for refusal:
- 6.4.1 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 recording their existence) and they are part of the assessed baseline and visual backdrop. The sensitivity judgement for the character area of the appeal site is the same as that of the Council's own evidence base. The difference lies in the judgement on nature and scale of change. As I have outlined I believe our approach to both is in line with the methodology used to both assess and develop the recent AAP plan.

6.4.2 The assessment comprehends and acknowledges the shift in scale from residential (two storey) towards the cricket club and other, larger commercial and leisure buildings north of the site. The proposal site lies 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 (CD B15). I believe this is also in line with the Council's own approach with the specific example of development within and adjacent to the Historic TCA being one where a Moderately sensitive townscape of value is placed adjacent to potentially 20 storey built form without this being seen as either: wholly adverse; or unacceptable.

6.4.3 The development of the design for the buildings has undergone several design changes 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.

- 6.4.4 Many of these changes were in response to comments from the Places Matter panel but it should be noted that from the start the panel did not share the Council'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:

“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)

- 6.4.5 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 paragraph 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.

6.4.6 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)

COMMENT ON OFFICER REPORT PARAGRAPH 88 (above) and RFR5&6

6.5 I will deal with views and visual amenity separately but as they appear in the LPA discussions alongside matters of townscape I comment here on how it is suggested views contribute to the Council’s view that the proposals are not appropriate for the location.

6.5.1 At para 88 (of the officer’s report to committee CD D5) 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 but 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. This is now also supplemented by verified views (CD F111).

6.5.2 At para 90 (officer’s report to committee CD D5) 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)*

6.5.3 Randall Thorpe as part of their TVIA also considered views to assess the change across the AAP area. Two of their views look across the Cricket Ground TCA and towards the appeal site – views 1.3 and 1.4 (CD F83/I24) are close to TPM view 8 (CD B15 appendix B1). On comparison I believe the level of visual change and massing are comparable when considering the effect from this location. Randall Thorpe assess this as a High change leading to a Major /Moderate Beneficial effect for all receptors. (table 12 southern neighbourhood visual effects-Talbot Road views east-Appendix D3)).

6.5.4 View 6.1 of the Randall Thorpe assessment (CD F83/I24) is from Great Stone Road and is close to TPM view 5 (CD B15 appendix B1). There is a clear comparison in terms of scale, massing and visual impact when comparing the models used by Randall Thorpe and the appeal proposals. The Randall Thorpe assessment of this change is: a High–Medium change leading to a Moderate Beneficial change (table 12 southern neighbourhood visual effects- Great Stone Rd views). This in contrast to the assertion that the TPM images are misleading due to their landscape orientation (note the orientation and cropping of the Randall Thorpe images) and the Council’s view that the visual impact will not be as described (ie a Moderate and potentially beneficial visual change mirroring the assessment of the Randall Thorpe work).

- 6.5.5 Randall Thorpe (CD F83/I24) view 9.2 is also instructive as its approach to a receptor(s) considered as part of view 14 from close to the tram station which is singled out by the LPA in their comments as mis-represented. Although the Randall Thorpe view is not directed towards the appeal site it does consider change of a large scale from this location. The conclusion reached is that the pedestrian receptors will be medium sensitive receptors and that the change will be Medium-Low leading to a Moderate-Minor beneficial effect (table 12 southern neighbourhood visual effects-Ayres Road). This is in contrast to the modelled view and assessed Moderate-Substantial effect considered for the appeal scheme in the TPM TVIA assessment (CD B15). The change in the TPM view shows that the proposals will be visible alongside the substantial stadium infrastructure of the LCC ground. The Randall Thorpe view looks north towards the rest of the masterplan area but appears, in my opinion, to be subject to even greater visual change through the introduction of numerous large built forms and also within the visual reference of the LCC stadium.
- 6.5.6 Another view not taken from an identical location, but in my opinion instructive, is Randall Thorpe view 1.1 (CD F83/I24) taken from Talbot Road but close to TPM view 13 (CD B15) within Gorse Hill Park. The Randall Thorpe view indicates a clear visual change to the distant horizon where taller buildings will become apparent. The sensitivity is High with a High-Medium level of change leading to a Major/Moderate Beneficial effect. This compares with the view towards the appeal site from the TPM study (view 13 Appendix B1) where the sensitivity is also High and the change considered as Low leading to Moderate level of effect. In my opinion this is a comparable assessment and it is logical to assume that the appeal site would also be seen in the same context as the wider masterplan as a beneficial change.
- 6.5.7 View 15 (CD B15 appendix B1) is from Longford Park and is assessed within the TPM TVIA. The view is assessed as being of High sensitivity being in the

Conservation Area and experiencing a Medium-Low change leading to a Moderate level of effect. Randall Thorpe have not assessed visual change from this location or any others within Longford Park and there is no direct comparison, however the nature of change is similar to that experienced elsewhere. The change in the context of other large urban forms and buildings, and this has the potential to bring beneficial change as part of the overall AAP developments.

COMMENT ON OFFICER REPORT PARAGRAPH 89 (above) and RFR3,6,&7

6.6 At paragraph 89 of the officer report it is suggested that the conclusions of the TVIA's landscape assessment is an "*inaccurate summary*" of the likely impact. Again, this appears completely 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. In fact on close examination the Council's own evidence base appears to strongly align with, and support the TPM Landscape work (as demonstrated in previous paragraphs).

6.6.1 The TPM TVIA, as well as referencing published assessment work, also considers in detail the local landscape and urban character dividing this into three areas: Residential/Leisure; Mixed Urban; and Residential. Landscape Value and susceptibility are considered leading to a sensitivity for each area to the development proposed. This is set out in detail at (section 5 in this doc). All of the changes and effects should also be viewed alongside the wider AAP plans for change which are large, transformational with regards to views and skyline throughout the area, and are all assessed as Beneficial in nature (by the Randall Thorpe TVIA).

6.6.5 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*’ (paragraph 89 of the report to committee).

- 6.6.6 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*”, (paragraph 89 Report to Committee) 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.

COMMENT ON OFFICER REPORT PARAGRAPH 89&90 (above) and RFR3,5&6

BUILDING HEIGHT AND MASSING

- 6.7 Towards the end of paragraph 89 of the officer report the author offers the following view on building height, scale and massing: “*the scale and massing of the proposed scheme ... is out of scale with the character of not just its immediate context, but the wider surrounding area.*” This carries on in comments within paragraph 90 which discuss both visual matters and matters of scale.

- 6.7.1 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 CD A17+B15) 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 8 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.

- 6.7.2 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 CD K1)

SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE/ TOWNSCAPE MATTERS

- 6.8 The application was accompanied by a TVIA which considered the landscape/townscape with regard to published National, Regional and Local character assessments. It also considered the masterplanning work for the Area Action Plan and the various supporting documents (including TVIA work) which has been carried out during its development.

- 6.9 The proposed development has been assessed as leading to only a Slight-Negligible-neutral effect over the wider National and Regional landscape types. At a local level the proposals are judged to lead to a Moderate/Slight beneficial/neutral effect.
- 6.10 When compared against the masterplan and character areas within the AAP it appears that there is agreement with regards to the sensitivity of the proposal site and its surroundings. 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**. This is the same conclusion as the AAP TVIA by Randall Thorpe.
- 6.11 The difference in approach lies in the final analysis where the Council take the view that the proposals will bring adverse change and harm to the character area whereas my own assessment is that this will be Beneficial/Neutral, being a balance of some adverse elements set against clear beneficial townscape change. I believe that this is a conclusion supported by both the methodological approach of the Council, in its evidence base within the Randall Thorpe TVIA, and within other areas of the masterplan where development of over 6 storeys is viewed as beneficial change.

7.0 VISUAL BASELINE AND ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The proposals were assessed by reference to 15 view point locations agreed with the LPA. 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 the landscape assessment, 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. (see appendix A1)

7.2 The assessment has been assisted by computer modelling work and photomontage. Prior to the appeal, work towards a hearing was started by the appellant team and as part of this work two views (view 1 and view 5) were extended into portrait views at the Council's request (see appendix B2). A further modelled view was also requested from within the LCC ground. For this appeal a series of verified views have also been provided which add to this body of work. (CD F111)

Residential Receptors

7.3 Seven representative residential receptors were assessed (see appendix B1, views 1,2,3,4,5,10,12,14). 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. I believe this change will have both beneficial and adverse elements but that as part of the wider regeneration and development plans of the AAP the appeal proposals will be seen as Beneficial. I believe the assessment work of Randall Thorpe supports this view.

Pedestrian Receptors

7.4 Eleven representative pedestrian receptors were assessed (see appendix B1, views 1,2,3,5,6,7,8,10,13,14,15), 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. As discussed previously I believe this change will have both beneficial and adverse elements but that as part of the wider regeneration and development plans of the AAP the appeal proposals will be seen as Beneficial. I believe the assessment work of Randall Thorpe supports this view.

Vehicle Receptors

7.5 Five representative travel receptors were assessed (see appendix B1, views 6,7,8,9,10). 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

7.6 Two representative historic receptors were assessed (see appendix B1, view 11). 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 locations along the highway. The change and effect are assessed as Negligible. The proposals will be visible from Longford Park (Conservation Area) northern section with a medium-low change leading to a moderate effect (In light of the Verified View (CD F111) I am of the opinion this

may actually be a lower effect). The park's 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.

8.0 COUNCIL OFFICER REPORT ON THE VISUAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSALS AND REBUTTAL

8.1 The Council takes a view expressed in the following extracts from the officer report and reasons for refusal that views from existing residential properties and the outlook from new residential properties will be adversely affected. I have considered the term "overbearing impact" to imply visual harm to the receptors and have discussed this in the common terms used in the visual assessment (appendix B1 and CD B15 see also paragraph 166 of officers report) 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)*

COMMENT ON OFFICER REPORT FROM 8.1 POINT 1 (above) and RFR6

8.2 The following considers the comments from officer’s relating to visual amenity matters and how they can be understood through reference to both the TPM TVIA assessment work (CD B15) and the Council’s own supporting evidence base, principally the Randall Thorpe assessment work for the AAP (CD I22-24)

8.2.1 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 in the extract table below:

Table taken from TVIA table 2 page 45 CD B15

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

8.2.2 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 something that the LPA agree with. As highlighted previously when a detailed consideration of the evidence base

work for the AAP is viewed alongside the TPM TVIA it is clear that there is a large amount of agreement. This includes:

1. Broad agreement on levels of sensitivity for receptors with pedestrian receptors considered as High-Medium and highway users Low-Medium;
2. Broad agreement on the nature of effect with the Randal Thorpe visual assessment finding **ALL** of the views assessed as returning Beneficial visual change across the APP.
3. Broad agreement on specific visual change and effect for views 3, 5, 8, 13 and 14 where comparable views assessed by Randall Thorpe demonstrate a similar or identical assessment for the AAP masterplan. Although the AAP shows a 6 storey building on the plot of the appeal site a comparison of visuals (Randall Thorpe view 6.1 CD F111 for verified view) shows clearly how the stepping of the appeal proposals from 6 storey at Great Stone Road offers a very similar massing to that assessed by Randal Thorpe.

8.2.3 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 inappropriate (officer report concluding paragraph 364) The Council describe the effects on residential properties as significant (paragraph 89 officer report) 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/notable (in the terms set out within the TPM TVIA (see 11.3 discussion in conclusion on notable impacts CD B15)). 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. This is entirely in line with the evidence base of work by both Planit IE and Randall Thorpe in support of the overall AAP masterplan.

8.2.4 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.

Table 2 TPM TVIA extract

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

8.2.5 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. (verified views in F111)

8.2.6 As with other views it is considered that 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 the proposals will act as a visual corner anchor to the urban block and will not be viewed singularly or as an adverse addition.

8.2.7 A comparison can be made against the Randall Thorpe view 9.2 (CD I24) where it is clear large scale visual change alongside the stadium is not only acceptable but viewed as positive.

COMMENT ON OFFICER REPORT RELATING TO THE PROPOSED `
OUTLOOK FOR NEW RESIDENTS

8.3 The Council takes a view expressed in the following extracts from the officer's report (paragraph 177, 179, 180) and reasons for refusal that views from new residential properties will be adversely affected:

1. *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. (paragraph 177)*
2. *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. (paragraph 179)*
3. *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. (paragraph 180)*
4. *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)*

COMMENT ON OFFICER'S REPORT IN RELATION TO POINTS 1, 2, 3 (above 8.3) & RFR 5

8.4 The proposed landscape scheme was revised following the Places Matter panel review to include garden/terrace areas raised up above the service route to the rear of the buildings.

8.4.1 The outlook for these residential properties following these revisions is of a private garden/terrace with a hedge boundary.

8.4.2 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 2m wide planting bed. This is wide enough to hold tree planting which would have to be pleached to some degree and would also include climbing plants that could grow to cover the back elevations of this wall. In combination these landscape treatments will easily 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.

9.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

9.1 The Appeal Site is a former B&Q store that fronts onto Great Stone Road and is bounded by the grounds of 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 EOT.

- 9.2 Residential streets also form part of the wider area with predominantly two storey homes located directly opposite the site off Great Stone Road.
- 9.3 The Appeal Site is currently vacant, 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.
- 9.4 This application (the appeal) followed the refusal of a similar (but larger) application by TMBC on 29 March 2019 (LPA ref: 94974/OUT/18) submitted by the same applicant on 28 June 2018 in the following terms:
- 9.5 The design also presented and engaged with Places Matter. Places Matter is an independent organisation, hosted by RIBA, which promotes the skills and knowledge of all those involved in new development, promoting good design and encouraging strong client leadership..
- 9.6 The applicant took the decision not to appeal against refusal of the previous application in favour of working with the LPA to bring forward a revised scheme which sought to address the previous reasons for refusal.
- 9.7 An outline application for the appeal scheme was then submitted to TMBC on 19 March 2020. The scheme included landscape proposals and a Townscape Assessment (TVIA) which informed the layout and appearance of the proposed development.
- 9.8 The submitted scheme was determined by the Council and so this appeal is against non-determination.
- 9.9 The proposed development comprises four separate buildings of up to eight storeys in height above the ground floor. The development extends to eight

storeys in the eastern corner, close to the railway tracks and steps down in height towards Great Stone Road. Three buildings are linked across three storeys (floors 2-5).

- 9.10 Vehicle parking, cycle parking and refuse storage will be provided at basement level. The buildings will be separated by two internal courtyards, creating shared amenity space for residents and pleasant views across the development. Roof terraces are provided at levels 4, 5 and 6. Balconies and private gardens are also provided.
- 9.11 There are several routes of pedestrian access into and across the site, enhancing permeability. A mixture of stepped and direct level access is provided.

Landscaping & Amenity

Level 0

- 9.12 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.. 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. Appendix C1 and CD B8

Level 1

- 9.13 The design 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. This arrangement is illustrated in Plans in Appendix C1 and CD B8

Levels 5 & 7

- 9.14 Levels 5 and 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. arrangement is illustrated in Plans in appendix C2 and CD B8.
- 9.15 Levels 6 and 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. This arrangement is illustrated in Plans in appendix C1 and CD B8
- 9.16 The TPM Townscape assessment (TVIA) 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 in terms of change over the immediate urban surroundings.
- 9.17 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.
- 9.18 The nature of change was assessed as being a combination of elements 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.

- 9.19 No notable townscape effects are recorded and no notable effects are assessed for the local Conservation Area and historic assets.
- 9.20 For those visual effects that are notable at moderate-substantial or above, the mitigation proposals reduce some adverse impacts over time through screening and integration. Those that remain are expected to become 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.
- 9.21 The proposals before this appeal 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 of the Local Planning Authority and then more recently to respond to the comments of the Places Matter panel.
- 9.22 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 matters with which the Places Matter panel agreed.
- 9.23 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 stories, specifically directing the design team to consider taller buildings towards the metrolink boundary to consolidate the corner of the urban block.

- 9.24 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.
- 9.25 A detailed analysis of the Council's own evidence base makes clear that there is a great deal of common ground and agreement for both townscape and visual assessment. The Randall Thorpe findings indicate townscape change over Medium sensitivity areas able to accommodate large scale development which includes those that neighbour development of up to 20 storeys in height.
- 9.26 The change that the Council does assess for the appeal site as part of its evidence base includes imagining the site developed for leisure and parking provision with buildings of up to six storeys in height. This is considered as a beneficial townscape effect.
- 9.27 In contrast the appeal proposals, which are for residential development, and at a standard of design praised by the Places Matter Panel, are found to: *“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.”*
- 9.28 In my view this is both inaccurate and unjustified. Indeed, what is available as comparable evidence from the LPA suggests the opposite – that the proposals are of form, layout, height, scale and massing that is appropriate in the context of the existing townscape and the evolving AAP masterplan.

- 9.29 Furthermore, where comparisons are able to be made against the Council's own evidence base the appeal proposals are clearly similar or identical to proposals within the AAP that deliver beneficial townscape and visual change. The suggestion that the proposals represent poor design belies the Council's involvement in the Places Matter presentation and the expression from the Places Matter team within the meeting that the proposed design was of a high architectural standard. In particular, the panel concluded 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 and not lose elements to any future efficiency savings*" (bullet k report from Places Matter).
- 9.30 I am not able to find any justification or explanation as to how the AAP masterplan proposals, when assessed by Randall Thorpe, are capable of delivering beneficial townscape and visual effects across the combined townscape character areas whilst the appeal proposals, with all their clear benefits and similarities to what is conceived within the AAP plan, are viewed by the LPA as seemingly wholly negative and adverse.
- 9.31 It is my opinion that the work done by the design team, through its engagement with the LPA and Places Matter and through the willingness to adapt and change the proposals to accommodate comments and concerns as they have arisen, has led to a high quality proposal. I believe the assessment work within the TVIA by TPM Landscape is an evidenced and professional piece of work that, when compared against the Council's own evidence base, is found to share many of the same conclusions. I believe that this assessment work and the work of Randall Thorpe demonstrate that the appeal site is capable of accommodating the appeal proposals and that this will bring benefits to the local character area and the wider AAP masterplan through the regeneration of an unused site; the formation of a strong and attractive architectural corner piece fronting onto Great Stone Road; and the provision of housing within an area where residential homes are an established character element.

