

Planning

Growth & Development

Delegated officer report for planning application

Application no. 130456/FO/2021

Date registered valid: 3 June 2021

Proposal: Retention of Parcel Locker

Address: 261 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M21 7GJ

Ward(s): Chorlton Park Ward

Applicant: InPost UK, C/o Agent

Agent (if any): Mr Neil Jones, NL Jones Planning, Duke House Business Hub, Duke Street, Skipton, BD23 2HQ

Case officer: Constance Phillips
Tel: 0161 234 5792
Email: constance.phillips@manchester.gov.uk

Recommendation: Refuse

Date of recommendation: 4 August 2021

Application details

Type of application: Full Application Consent

Development type: Minor Other

Date of site visit: 13 July 2021

Standard consultations: Printed: 14 June 2021 Expired: 5 July 2021

Neighbour notifications: Printed: 14 June 2021 Expired: 5 July 2021

Site notice: No site notice has been produced

Press advert: No press advert had been published

Departure from Development Plan: No

Environmental Statement: Not required

Description of site/building

Listed building: Not applicable

Conservation area: Not applicable

Tree Preservation Order: Not applicable

The application relates to a white metal parcel locker sited on the forecourt of an estate agents located within a two storey commercial parade in Chorlton.

Description of area

This mixed use parade, south-east of the district centre, contains financial/professional services, shops and takeaways, some with residential flats above. Each unit has a 7-8m deep forecourt, which many use for parking.

Description of development

The applicant, InPost, wish to regularise the unauthorised parcel locker which has been in situ since February this year, though the proposed locker is smaller in width than existing.

Consultations & Notification Responses

Local residents and businesses – Objections and photographs were received from local residents at one address. Their concerns have been summarised below:

- *Not objecting to lockers in principle, just to the location and feel there is a more suitable location for the locker, perhaps at other locations in the area where it would not affect the quality of the parade of shops.*
- *The modern structure using modern materials is out of character with the rest of the shops and blocks the views along the parade.*

- *The structure protrudes at a 90-degree angle along the boundary and is over 2m tall, which is unacceptable and blocks out light from the neighbouring shop front. Although the parcel locker will be replaced with a smaller one in width it still has the height to block off light from our front door and window and will still distort the view of the shops on the parade.*
- *The back of the structure that faces on to a Funeral Directors of 137 years history in supporting families at their most vulnerable times and feel that this is unsuitable for people visiting the premises to have to look out onto.*
- *It is causing infringements to neighbouring forecourts as delivery vans and cars dropping/collecting parcels think it's acceptable to park over neighbouring frontages, blocking parking facilities. I have enclosed picture evidence to show that this is happening.*
- *It is also defeating the claim that InPost states re sustainability, because the owners of 261 are also now being forced to park their vehicles over the pavement, blocking access for pedestrians as they have no room on their frontage for all their own vehicles.*
- *Someone has now put bollards in front of the InPost locker leading me to believe they have a fear of vandalism and the worst-case scenario of more serious crime happening due to the locker location. I therefore cannot see how they feel this locker in its current position is sustainable to the environment.*

Highway Services – Original comments: *Sufficient carriageway clearance is being provided and sufficient footway width is being maintained. It is accepted by highways that the proposals would not cause a distraction to passing vehicles, and would not give rise to forward visibility issues. Whilst Highways have no objections, given that the equipment will be located on the private forecourt, permissions will be required from the landowner.*

Additional comments: *Highways are aware of concerns regarding the arrangements for collection and delivery to the parcel locker, we would advise that the developer looks to resolve those issues.*

Ward Councillors – *I am writing on behalf of the Chorlton Park councillors to object to the above application to site a parcel locker outside 261 Barlow Moor Rd. In summary we are very concerned about how this unit is sited, its scale, its impact on the street scene and the congestion it is causing. The unit protrudes at 90° from the front of 261 and creates a barrier along the street. It is out of keeping with the street scene here. The materials used are very different to the brickwork of the parade and so again are out of keeping with the design of the parade. The height of the unit is over 2 meters and given its proximity to the neighbouring property causes a loss of light into the front of their funeral parlour. The locker unit which is already in position is also having a detrimental impact on traffic movement on this narrow service road. Photographs attached from the objection show how cars park up across the pavement and dropped kerbs. The delivery vehicle also due to its size, blocks access. The site is not suitable for such a unit as it is not easily accessible and causes obstruction of the highway by visiting customers.*

Policies

The following policies are considered relevant in the consideration of this application.

Unitary Development Plan (UDP) - The UDP has been superseded by the Core Strategy Development Plan but certain policies are still considered of relevance:

- **Saved policy DC14** - Shop fronts and related signs

The Manchester Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012-2027 ("the Core Strategy") was adopted by the City Council on 11th July 2012:

- Policy DM1 - Development Management
- Policy SP1 - Spatial Principles
- Policy EN1 - Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2019):

- Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places

For reasons to be outlined below, it is considered the proposal conflicts with the principles of these policy documents.

Issues

Principle – The installation of a parcel locker within the curtilage of a commercial unit is acceptable in principal, and often accords with Permitted Development, however consideration must be given to the siting, scale and design of the locker as well as any potential impacts upon residential or visual amenity.

Siting, scale and massing – The locker is sited at the right-hand side of the forecourt, against the frontage and along the boundary shared with No.263 (a funeral directors). The existing locker is to be replaced with a slightly smaller locker (in width only) which would have a width of 2m, a depth of 0.92m and a height of 2.42m. It would occupy the same position as existing, partly obscuring the estate agent's front window and just 0.35m from No.263's entrance door. Under Permitted Development click and collect facilities can be installed within shop curtilages. The proposal does not accord with two important elements of these regulations though, as it is sited within 2m of a boundary and is not located within the curtilage of a shop (A1/E(a)) but in front of a professional service (A2/E(c)). Due to the scale and siting of the proposal, it is considered to form an obtrusive feature within the street scene, to the detriment of the surrounding parade. The siting is inappropriate as it obscures part of the frontage of two businesses and due to its close proximity to the shared boundary. It therefore conflicts with policies DM1 and SP1 of the Core Strategy.

Design and appearance – The locker is constructed of white stainless steel panels, with a galvanised steel door sat atop a concrete base. It features branded decals surrounding a touch screen on the elevation facing into the forecourt and a projecting element on the top which holds CCTV cameras. In front of the structure 3no yellow bollards have been installed, presumably to prevent a ram raid, which have not been included on the drawings. Due to the colour and materials, the locker stands in stark contrast to the units it sits in front of, which comprise of redbrick and glazed frontages with grey signage. It visually interrupts the parade and negatively detracts from the shopfronts, causing harm to the visual amenity of the site and wider area, contrary to policies DM1 and SP1 of the Core Strategy and Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Amenity, parking and access – Local residents/business owners and Ward Councillors objected to the proposal, citing concerns regarding the proposal overshadowing the neighbouring unit, obstructing views, inappropriate siting, uncharacteristic design/materials and impacts upon access and parking. Due to its 2.42m height and siting along the shared boundary only 0.35m from the door of No.263, it does cause overshadowing of this unit early morning and would obstruct views from their glazed entrance and windows. The main topic of the objections was the parking access issues already caused by the locker. The design and access statement stated that a Hermes transit van would conduct one drop off a day to the locker, taking just 15 minutes each visit. The objectors have submitted multiple photos over different days showing

large wagons dropping parcels, blocking the access to neighbouring forecourts and cars, blocking the pavement to pedestrians and causing congestion on the road itself. Ideally click and collect facilities are located within carparks and petrol stations for this reason. However Highway Services pointed out there are no parking restrictions on this section of Barlow Moor Road, hence they did not object to the development.

Conclusion – Although in principle parcel lockers are sustainable, enabling couriers to reduce the number of delivery trips and therefore reduce their emissions, the siting of this locker is not appropriate as it harms the character and visual amenity of the parade. It therefore conflicts with development control policies DM1 and SP1 of the Core Strategy and chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The agent was informed of the decision but as no amendments or conditions would have rendered the scheme acceptable, revised plans were not requested.

Human Rights Act 1998 considerations

This application needs to be considered against the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998. Under Article 6, the applicants (and those third parties, including local residents, who have made representations) have a right to a fair hearing and to this end the local planning authority must give full consideration to their comments.

Protocol 1 Article 1, and Article 8 where appropriate, confer(s) a right of respect for a person's home, other land and business assets. In taking account of all material considerations, including Council policy as set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan, the Director of Planning, Building Control & Licensing has concluded that some rights conferred by these articles on the applicant(s)/objector(s)/resident(s) and other occupiers and owners of nearby land that might be affected may be interfered with but that that interference is in accordance with the law and justified by being in the public interest and on the basis of the planning merits of the development proposal. She believes that any restriction on these rights posed by the recommendation given is proportionate to the wider benefits of and that such a decision falls within the margin of discretion afforded to the Council under the Town and Country Planning Acts.

Recommendation: Refuse

Article 35 Declaration

The proposal would not improve the social and environmental conditions of the area nor does it comply with the development plan and therefore does not comprise sustainable development. There are no conditions which could reasonably have been imposed, which would have made the development acceptable and it is therefore not possible to approve the application.

Condition(s) to be attached to decision for approval

1) The proposal would, by reason of its siting, scale and design, form an incongruous and obtrusive feature within the street scene to the detriment of the visual amenities of neighbouring occupiers and businesses. The development would thereby be harmful to the character and visual amenity of the area and be contrary to policies SP1, EN1, and DM1 of the Core Strategy for the City of Manchester, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Appendix 1 – List of consultees & neighbours notified

Highway Services

265B Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M21 9GJ

265A Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M21 7GJ

Flat B, 257 - 259 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M21 7GJ

Flat A, 257 - 259 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M21 7GJ

257 - 259 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M21 7GJ

261A Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M21 7GJ

263 Barlow Moor Road, Manchester, M21 7GJ

Appendix 2 – Planning constraints

Article 4 Direction - Removal Of PD Rights Change Of Use From Class C3 To Class C4

Aircraft Safeguarding Zone - Aircraft Safeguarding Zone - All Exceeding 90M

Area Team Boundary - Name: SOUTH