

Comments for Planning Application 142535/FO/2025

Application Summary

Application Number: 142535/FO/2025

Address: 140 Great Ancoats Street Manchester M4 6DU

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and erection of 2no. new buildings providing up to 758 apartments (Use Class C3), Class E floorspace (comprising flexible office accommodation (Use Class Eg(i)) and Class Ea and b) and associated hard and soft landscaping (including works within the public highway), formation of vehicle accesses and servicing access together with associated works.

Case Officer: Lucy Harrison

Customer Details

Name: Not Available

Address: Not Available

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Re: Planning Application 142535/FO/2025 - Proposed 50-Storey and 26-Storey Residential Development at "Stocktons" Furniture Site, Great Ancoats Street - Formal Objection

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to formally object to the above-referenced planning application. My objection centres on the unacceptable loss of daylight and resultant harm to residents of the Oxygen building (50 Store Street) and surrounding community. As a resident of this area, I have grave concerns that the proposed 50-storey and 26-storey towers would dramatically reduce natural light, contravening planning policies on amenity, well-being, and sustainable development. I urge the Council to refuse this application or require a substantial redesign. The detailed grounds of my objection are outlined below.

Severe Daylight Loss to Oxygen Residents

The daylight impact on the Oxygen building is extreme and unprecedented. The developer's own Daylight/Sunlight reports indicate that many windows in Oxygen would see their Vertical Sky Component (VSC) plummet to the "mid-teens" or even lower under the proposed scheme. For example, numerous living-room and bedroom windows currently enjoying VSC values around 30-36% would be reduced to approximately 15% VSC or less, losing well over half of their daylight. In some cases, windows would be left with single-digit VSC (around 9-11%) after the new towers are built. Such outcomes are far below the BRE's recommended daylight levels - by comparison, the BRE Guidelines (2022) consider 27% VSC or at least 80% of the original VSC as a general benchmark for acceptable

daylight, with reductions beyond 20% deemed noticeable to occupants . Here, the retained VSC for most of Oxygen's affected windows would not only fall well under 27%, but in many instances amount to only 40-50% (or less) of the former light levels, a drastic breach of the usual 0.8× standard. The applicant's own Supplementary Daylight Report graphics underscore this severity - for Oxygen's facade facing the proposal, the retained daylight is labelled "mostly mid teens" VSC , and virtually all windows are shown to fail the normal BRE daylight criteria . In practical terms, this means families and residents in Oxygen would go from enjoying reasonably sunlit apartments to living in perpetual semi-gloom, with many rooms requiring electric lighting even on clear days.

Such an enormous loss of daylight is plainly unacceptable in a residential context. The magnitude of change is admitted to be "high" even by the developer's Environmental Statement . By any reasonable standard, leaving urban homes with only a fraction of their current daylight - on the order of 10-15% VSC - would fundamentally degrade living conditions. It would rob Oxygen's residents of natural light that is essential not only for visibility, but for basic well-being and comfort in their homes. This outcome squarely conflicts with Manchester's development policies (which seek to prevent "undue loss of sunlight [and] daylight" to neighbouring occupiers) and fails to meet the intent of national guidance on amenity. The National Planning Policy Framework stresses that planning decisions should promote health and well-being with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users - a standard clearly not met when an established residential building's windows are starved of daylight by a massive new construction.

Flawed 'Mirrored Massing' Baseline and Misrepresentation of Impact

I am particularly concerned by the developer's attempt to downplay these severe impacts through the use of a hypothetical "mirrored massing" baseline in their daylight analysis. In the Environmental Statement (Daylight/Sunlight chapter), the applicant argues that the effect on Oxygen is "not significant" because they choose to compare against an alternative scenario - essentially as if another building of the same size as Oxygen were already standing on the development site . This approach is justified by citing paragraph H6 of the BRE Guidelines, which notes that a less stringent target may be applied for a "window standing unusually close to the boundary" . In other words, the developer assumes Oxygen has no inherent right to its current light, and uses a mirror-image of Oxygen as the baseline for analysis, thereby treating the massive light loss as if it were expected and acceptable. I strongly contend that this "mirror massing" exercise is misleading and beyond the intent of the BRE guidance. Paragraph H6 in the BRE 2022 guide was meant to address exceptional cases - for example, windows on a building very close to a boundary where one might reasonably expect a similar structure opposite in a dense urban pattern. It was not intended as a loophole to justify extreme tower proposals that obliterate a neighbour's light. The BRE itself cautions that the mirror-image test is a "fairly simplistic" tool, not easily applicable to large or complex developments that don't share equal footprints or street widths . Oxygen and the proposed towers exemplify an unequal scenario: a 32-storey residential building (Oxygen) next to a proposed 50-storey monolith on a relatively small

plot. Using a mirror-image assumption here grossly understates the true impact - it effectively writes off the residents' existing light as if a 50-storey neighbour was a given, which it is not. The result is that a "high" magnitude impact (acknowledged as such against the real baseline) is artificially reclassified as "minor adverse" by this contrived comparison . This is an exploitation of BRE's guidance beyond its intent. It masks the real-world harm: Oxygen's inhabitants will experience a stark and painful diminution of daylight, regardless of what a theoretical mirror-analysis might suggest. Planning decisions must be based on actual impacts on people, not convenient theoretical baselines. I urge the Council to reject the applicant's mirrored massing argument and judge the proposal against the current, actual environment - in which the loss of light is unquestionably severe.

Conflict with Planning Policy: Amenity, Well-Being and Sustainability

Allowing this development in its current form would clearly contravene key planning policies aimed at protecting residents. Manchester's own policies and the national framework place great importance on safeguarding the amenity of existing communities. As noted, the Council's saved policy (e.g. UDP policy DC1 and Core Strategy principles) requires that new development does not create an undue loss of daylight or sunlight for neighbours . The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) reinforces this, stating that planning decisions should create places that promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users . The proposal, by casting much of Oxygen into shadow and necessitating permanent electric lighting, fails these fundamental tests. Moreover, the development as designed runs counter to principles of sustainable development and liveability that the Council champions. In an era where we strive to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions, designing a scheme that forces hundreds of people next door to keep lights on for most of the day is plainly irresponsible. The increased reliance on artificial lighting is not only a cost and inconvenience for residents; it undermines Manchester's objectives for environmental sustainability (for example, the City's commitment to lower carbon footprint and efficient energy use in buildings). Good planning and design should improve living conditions and well-being, not degrade them. This application prioritises maximizing built volume over the quality of life of its neighbours, which is antithetical to the spirit of equitable urban planning. The benefits of development must be balanced against the impacts - here the balance is entirely skewed, with commercial gain (dense luxury housing yield) taking precedence over the rights of existing residents to decent living standards.

Impacts on Residents' Health and Quality of Life

It is important to recognise that daylight is not a trivial amenity - it is a critical component of healthy living. A drastic reduction in natural light for Oxygen's hundreds of residents would have long-term repercussions on mental and physical well-being. Ample research shows that exposure to natural light has powerful positive effects on mood, mental health, and general wellness . Conversely, living in dimly lit environments with heavy reliance on artificial light is linked to issues such as depression, anxiety, disrupted circadian rhythms and poorer sleep quality . By enclosing Oxygen's apartments in the shadow of a 50-storey wall,

the development would create an oppressive, sun-starved indoor environment. Residents - including those who may spend much of the day at home, such as people working remotely, parents with young children, or the elderly - would be deprived of regular sunlight and sky views that are vital for psychological health.

The daily experience for those occupants would markedly deteriorate: needing to turn lights on during what used to be sunlit morning hours, experiencing a permanent "twilight" even at midday, and losing the cheer and warmth that natural daylight provides. This can contribute to a sense of confinement and lowered mood. It is well established that natural daylight boosts serotonin and vitamin D levels, improving mood and energy, whereas dark interiors can contribute to Seasonal Affective Disorder-like symptoms year-round. The applicant's submission has made no meaningful attempt to address or mitigate this human impact - their focus is solely on meeting minimum technical ratios (and even those only by manipulating benchmarks). The Council, however, has a duty to consider the human dimension: the proposal as it stands would inflict an unacceptable deterioration in living conditions, contrary to the Council's core priority of fostering healthy, sustainable communities.

Wider Community Impacts

While Oxygen at 50 Store Street is the most directly affected building (due to its proximity and orientation), it is not the only neighbour that would suffer. The scale and massing of the proposed towers raise serious daylight and overshadowing concerns for the surrounding community as well. Notably, the lower-rise William Jessop Court apartments and the houses in Piccadilly Village (along Millbank Street and the canal basin) will also experience additional loss of light and sky visibility. These are established residential enclaves that currently enjoy a relatively open aspect to the south and east; the introduction of a 50-storey block will cast long shadows and reduce daylight, especially during morning and late afternoon periods. Indeed, the applicant's daylight assessment covered numerous nearby properties - Quantum Apartments (47 Ducie Street), William Jessop Court, Wharf Close, John Smeaton Court, Thomas Telford Basin, Paradise Mews, and multiple buildings in the New Islington / Ancoats area - indicating measurable light losses in many of these locations. The aggregate effect on the community is one of diminished liveability: darker streetscapes, overshadowed open spaces, and a precedent that existing residents' amenity can be sacrificed. This runs against the Council's policies on inclusive, resilient neighbourhoods and would set a worrying example for future developments. In short, the harm is not confined to one building - it would ripple out to affect the character and comfort of the wider area.

Recommended Design Changes and Alternatives

If the Council is minded to consider approval of a development on this site, I strongly urge that major design changes be required to reduce the harmful impacts. The scheme in its current form is fundamentally over-scaled for this location. Several feasible alternatives could achieve redevelopment of the site while respecting neighbours' rights to light:

- Substantially reduce the height of the proposal - for example, limit any tower to under 30 storeys. A lower overall height would significantly cut down the extent of overshadowing and allow more daylight to reach surrounding buildings. There is nothing sacrosanct about 50 storeys; a better balance must be struck between

development yield and liveability.

- Shift the massing away from Oxygen. The footprint and placement of the tallest elements should be adjusted to increase the separation from the Oxygen building. For instance, the tallest tower could be relocated toward the corner of Lomax Street and Great Ancoats Street (the northern end of the site), which is farther from Oxygen. Pushing height toward the Lomax St side or centre of the plot would open up more sky to the south, alleviating the direct blocking of Oxygen's windows.

- Reconfigure the building orientation and spacing. The design could be revised so that the bulk of new construction is not directly facing Oxygen's primary elevation. By turning or staggering the towers, and introducing greater setbacks or podiums, the development can allow more light around its sides. A thoughtful redesign (such as breaking up one monolithic block into varied heights or orienting a tower diagonally) could maintain a degree of density while creating "light corridors" that preserve daylight access to neighbours.

- Moderate the overall density and mass. The current plan appears to maximize floor space at all costs; instead, the Council could insist on a more modest, human-scaled development - perhaps a cluster of mid-rise buildings - that meets housing goals without dominating the skyline. Alternative schemes could include relocating mass off-site or incorporating more open space on this site, to strike a balance between new housing provision and the amenity of existing residents.

Each of the above measures (individually or in combination) would help mitigate the worst impacts. They demonstrate that the site can be developed in a more context-sensitive way. It is entirely possible for the applicant to achieve a profitable scheme without a 50-storey tower directly adjacent to a residential block - indeed, many successful projects in Manchester have found creative design solutions to protect neighbours' light and privacy. The onus should be on the developer to come back with a substantially improved design that earns its place in the community, rather than forcing the community to bear an intolerable impact.

No Affordable or Social Housing Provision

This application proposes zero affordable or social housing, despite being one of the largest residential developments submitted in Manchester in recent years. With 758 units planned across two high-rise towers, the omission of any contribution to the city's affordable housing stock is deeply troubling - and runs counter to both local and national planning policy objectives.

Manchester City Council's Core Strategy, alongside national guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), is clear: major developments are expected to deliver affordable housing as part of a balanced and inclusive community. The complete absence of such provision in this scheme undermines the principles of sustainable development, housing equality, and social cohesion.

We are in a period of high housing need across Manchester. Families, key workers, and young people are struggling to access secure, affordable homes. For a scheme of this scale - involving hundreds of new units in a highly desirable city-centre location - to offer nothing

back to the wider population is unacceptable.

This proposal is clearly a luxury build-to-rent or investor-driven project, designed to extract the maximum financial return from a constrained site, rather than provide mixed-tenure, inclusive housing. There is no justification provided for the absence of affordable units - no viability statement, no off-site contribution, no offer of key worker accommodation. It reflects a deliberate choice to exclude.

The Council should be especially cautious about permitting high-density schemes that strain local infrastructure and displace local communities, yet provide no corresponding public benefit. The failure to include affordable housing in this case is a clear breach of the principle that development must contribute positively to the community in which it is placed.

If Manchester is to remain a liveable, fair, and inclusive city - and not just a playground for overseas investment and speculative development - then this kind of omission must be rejected as a matter of principle. A revised scheme must deliver a meaningful proportion of affordable housing, either on-site or through a robust financial contribution to fund affordable homes elsewhere in the city.

No Genuine Engagement with Local Residents

Despite the major scale and impact of this development, there has been no genuine or meaningful engagement with the existing community. Residents of Oxygen Tower, which stands directly opposite the proposed site, have made repeated attempts to engage with the developer - both through formal letters and written responses to the developer's own consultation process.

Yet these efforts have been entirely ignored. There have been no meetings, no direct communication, and no attempt to address residents' concerns or incorporate feedback into the evolving scheme. The consultation appears to have been treated as a formal box-ticking exercise, not a sincere effort to co-design or collaborate with the local neighbourhood.

This is especially disappointing given the direct and serious impact the scheme will have on surrounding properties - including overshadowing, overlooking, privacy loss, and construction disruption. Hundreds of existing residents are due to be affected, yet the applicant has refused to engage in even the most basic form of community dialogue.

Meaningful engagement is not an optional extra in modern planning. Manchester's own guidance - along with national best practice - clearly states that early, transparent, and inclusive consultation is essential, especially for schemes of this magnitude. Developers are expected to work with communities, not build over them.

The failure to consult is not only a breach of trust - it also weakens the legitimacy of the planning process and erodes public confidence in how decisions are made. When people are excluded from shaping the future of their neighbourhoods, it leads to alienation, resentment, and resistance.

If the developer had genuinely listened, they might have heard serious, constructive concerns about daylight loss, privacy, traffic, accessibility and more. Instead, they proceeded without dialogue, presenting a fixed scheme that places the burden entirely on others.

We urge the Council to give weight to this lack of consultation in its decision-making and,

if not refuse the scheme outright, then at least defer the application until proper engagement has taken place and genuine revisions have been explored with local residents.

The Council failed to adequately consult local residents regarding the East Village Central Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF), which makes provision for a building of up to 45 storeys to be built. This is disproportionately high for the area. No formal communication-such as letters or notifications-was issued prior to the consultation deadline last year, and the existence of the report was discovered purely by chance. Although the Council later agreed to reopen the consultation, it was for a limited duration with minimal notice, and participation was restricted to Oxygen residents, excluding those from surrounding neighbourhoods. Furthermore, while feedback was submitted, the only response received was a basic acknowledgment of receipt, with no indication that the input was considered or addressed.

Conclusion: Prioritise Residents' Wellbeing - Reject or Redesign this Proposal

In summary, the proposed 50- and 26-storey development at the Stockton's site would cause irreparable harm to residential amenity in the area - most significantly by halving, or worse, the natural daylight available to the Oxygen building's occupants. This is not a minor technicality; it is a severe, lasting impact on people's homes, wellbeing, and quality of life. The application relies on speculative modelling and technical loopholes to justify this outcome, but no amount of manipulated baselines can mask the lived experience of hundreds of residents who will be left in the shadow of this scheme.

Crucially, this level of harm is incompatible with both local and national planning policies, which aim to ensure that development is sustainable, inclusive, and fair to existing communities. Instead, this proposal represents the opposite: a scheme that maximises floor area, investor yield, and visual impact while giving nothing back in the form of affordable housing, public space, or meaningful community benefit.

Indeed, the absence of any affordable or social housing provision - in a development of this scale - is indefensible. At a time of growing housing inequality, for the Council to approve a 758-unit scheme that contributes nothing to Manchester's affordable housing supply would send the wrong message about whose interests are being prioritised. It would further entrench the idea that city centre regeneration is primarily for the benefit of developers, not residents.

Equally troubling is the lack of any genuine engagement with the local community.

Despite multiple written attempts by Oxygen residents to initiate dialogue with the developer - both through formal letters and responses to the consultation - no engagement has been offered in return. There have been no meetings, no follow-ups, and no effort to listen, collaborate, or respond to legitimate concerns. This is not responsible urban planning; it is a closed-door approach that undermines public trust and planning legitimacy. There was also inadequate consultation on the East Village Central Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF), which forms the basis for the plans for the extremely high proposed new building. Taken together - the loss of daylight, the invasion of privacy, the absence of affordable housing, the lack of parking and access, the noise, the overshadowing, and the refusal to

engage - this application fails the basic test of planning balance. It offers overwhelming harm with no meaningful mitigation or public benefit.

I therefore respectfully request that Manchester City Council refuse planning permission for this scheme in its current form. The only acceptable path forward would be for the applicant to undertake a serious redesign - one that reduces the building heights, repositions or rotates by 90 degrees the massing, reintroduces light and space into the scheme, includes on-site parking and disabled access, provides affordable housing, and genuinely engages with the people already living here.

Manchester has built a reputation for regeneration that brings new and existing communities together - not one that pits them against each other. Approving this scheme would undermine that legacy and send a dangerous message: that resident liveability is secondary to developer profit.

I trust the Council will stand by its planning principles, protect the amenity and health of residents, and require major changes to this proposal before any approval is considered.

Thank you for considering my objections. I would be happy to provide further information if required and hope the Planning Committee will give proper weight to the voices of those who call this neighbourhood home.