

Comments for Planning Application 142652/FO/2025

Application Summary

Application Number: 142652/FO/2025

Address: Chorlton Square Shopping Centre Barlow Moor Road Manchester M21 9AQ

Proposal: Erection of 6 no. residential buildings of 10, 8, 6 and 4 storeys in height to provide up to 262 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) with ground floor commercial uses (Use Class E (a-e)); infrastructure works including electric substation and associated utilities works, basement and ground level car parking, service yard, vehicular and pedestrian accesses; together with public realm works and hard/soft landscaping following the demolition of the existing buildings and structures on site.

Case Officer: Robert Griffin

Customer Details

Name: Not Available

Address: Not Available

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Neighbour

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: 1. Size and provision of retail units

The plans state that the quality of retail and restaurants in Chorlton has "declined over the last decade with lots of retail space being taken over by takeaways"

The plans propose to remove larger retail units and replace them with fewer, much smaller units that will exclude useful, popular high street shops such as Home Bargains. It is more likely that vape shops or takeaways will use a 23sq meter unit, therefore reinforcing the decline that the plans describe. This will prevent any small to medium retail business from being able to establish in the high street in future.

There are fewer retail units proposed in this latest iteration compared to the original proposal. Had the developer listened to residents' concerns about the proposed retail offer as claimed, there would be more and larger units not fewer.

2. Retail offer

The plans state that "The current retail and leisure provision is stretched along the principal roads of Chorlton and there is a lack of focal point for the district centre, which it is hoped that the proposed development will provide."

Most would agree that The Precinct needed investment. However, it was the focal point of the district centre and this is being replaced with hundreds of high-rise flats with small retail units along the main road. Even the developer acknowledges that this is a poor outcome for a district centre and would exacerbate the poor outcomes that the developer suggests they aim to address.

3. Scale, massing and height

The developer's site analysis acknowledges that Chorlton is "a relatively low-lying suburban neighbourhood with only a handful of buildings exceeding a 3 to 4-storey datum, which includes extensive rooflines." Further "the scale of Graeme House is not overbearing on the streetscene as it is set-back from the boundary edges, placing the height within the Site."

Planning regulations include that: 'Designation of scale and massing should respond to the existing building heights in the current development and the surrounding streets.'

The Development in general is imposing but the east block AB along Barlow Moor Road is far taller and longer than any other building in Chorlton. I understand that Graeme House has been used as a yard stick. However, as acknowledged by the developer, this was set back at an oblique angle within the site and was a single unit.

The closest comparator along Barlow Moor / Manchester Road is the 5-story development situated on the demolished leisure centre. The steels are in place and this looks and feels very imposing along the road. The proposal is twice the height of this development.

The development of 6 towers will change the area's character because, as acknowledged by the developer, it is not sympathetic in scale and design. The height, scale and massing of the buildings compared to existing homes and retail (most of which are Victorian domestic homes conversions) will have a detrimental impact, by overshadowing existing homes and disrupting the architectural rhythm of the district centre. This proposal is clearly an overdevelopment of the site, as measured by planning regulations and acknowledged by the developer itself. Therefore, the proposal should not be supported.

4. Light

The excessive height will deprive homes and units along the opposite side of Barlow Moor Road of light, throwing the residences, businesses, bars and restaurants along here into shadow. These are some of the very few premises that offer a place for people to sit and enjoy the sunshine because they are currently not in shade and face west. This important aspect of Chorlton life will be lost due to the height and scale of the flats proposed along this road.

5. Parking

The huge reduction of public parking spaces in addition to the removal of parking for cycle lanes will have a cumulative, detrimental impact on the local economy, particularly affecting the older population and those who can not walk distances for other reasons. Already visitors are staying away because of the removal of parking along the main roads.

6. Public Realm

The developer claims to have a positive impact on public realm. Evidence provided in the plans to support this improvement is primarily the retention of the grass verge & flower beds along barlow moor road and referring to this as a 'linear park' and 'pocket park'. Mature trees will be felled and replaced with saplings. Is the developer basing their claims around improvements in public realm on the current, boarded up precinct? If they compare to the precinct prior to eviction notices being served to businesses in December 2023, there does not appear to be a significant positive impact of scale.

7. Publicly Accessible Amenities

The developer claims that the inclusion of retail / commercial floor space will have a positive impact on publicly accessible amenities. This appears to be inaccurate because there will be a reduction in retail and community space compared to how the district centre existed before businesses and organisations were evicted. Is the developer comparing their plans to how the precinct existed prior to compulsory evictions or on the current state of the derelict precinct? For accuracy, the assessment should be made against the precinct before the eviction and boarding-up took place, which was enforced because of the proposed development.

8. Provision of family homes

90% of the proposed homes are 1 or 2 bed flats which typically accommodate fewer children than a typical family sized home i.e single family homes with 2, 3+ beds. The original proposal offered family homes within the site but they have been replaced with more flats. Why has the pressing need for typical family homes within the district not been considered, and why have family homes been removed from the proposal?

9. Health Impacts

Having read the health impact assessment document, all of the outcomes on health are identified as positive or neutral. This document is very subjective in many of the domains. For example, positive impacts are noted for the access to work and training domain. How has this been concluded when the office block at Graeme house is to be demolished and replaced with flats, and the retail offer and public parking provision are to be reduced compared to the original precinct?

Here, the developer admits that they are comparing their proposal with the 'vacant shopping precinct' which has been made vacant due to the proposed development. Why has the assessment not been based on how the precinct existed prior to the compulsory eviction of the vibrant businesses and offices that occupied the units prior to eviction? This seems disingenuous and calls into question the trustworthiness of the consultation process.

10. Tall building policy

Policy EN 2 - Tall Buildings Elsewhere within Manchester tall building development will only be supported where it can be shown to play a positive role in a coordinated placemaking approach to a wider area. Suitable locations are likely to relate to existing district centres. The height of tall buildings in such locations should relate more to the local, rather than the City Centre, urban context.

As even the developer acknowledges, the scale and impact of the proposed development does not meet this planning requirement and as such, should not be supported.

11. LOCAL PLANNING STRATEGY: Key Aims:

- Provide a further, high-quality range of convenience offers to improve the retail core and improve and develop the comparison non-food retail offer.
- Protect existing employers and encourage the space for SMEs where appropriate

The small size of the commercial units will limit the potential for non-food retail offer.

Existing employers have been evicted since before Christmas 2023, which appears to be premature as demolition has not even begun as yet. The site has since been made intentionally derelict. Unfortunately, existing employers were not supported. This approach is against local planning guidance and does not encourage trust in the consultation process. This also risks losing the engagement of local residents, who are generally keen for development to proceed.

12. Would the illustrations showing 3 story buildings along barlow moor road be removed from the latest public planning material and replaced with a truer representation of the 10 story buildings along this stretch to mitigate misrepresentation of the proposals?

Overall, the proposal is an overdevelopment of the site and it will have a detrimental impact on the neighbourhood for the reasons listed, such as by significantly altering the architectural rhythm of the district centre and removing the potential to provide popular high street shops in future. Unfortunately, this proposal appears to be a lost opportunity for the future of Chorlton.