

Comments for Planning Application 142888/FO/2025

Application Summary

Application Number: 142888/FO/2025

Address: Cambridge Halls Of Residence Cavendish Street Manchester M15 6TT

Proposal: Demolition of existing halls of residence and erection of two buildings of 30 and 24 storeys above ground, plus basement and rooftop plant levels, comprising: purpose-built student accommodation with internal and external rooftop communal amenity space (Sui Generis); ground floor commercial and community uses (Flexible Use Classes E, F1(a) or F2(b)); hard and soft landscaping; and associated highway 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: Objection to Planning Application 142888/FO/2025 - Demolition of existing halls of residence and erection of two buildings of 30 and 24 storeys above ground, plus basement and rooftop plant levels, comprising purpose-built student accommodation.

Dear Lucy Harrison,

I am writing to object to the above planning application on the grounds that the proposed development would significantly hinder active travel, disrupt the principal active travel route between Hulme and the Oxford Road Corridor, and introduce safety, accessibility, and environmental risks for pedestrians and cyclists.

1. Loss of a Long-Established Active Travel Route

The development would obstruct the well-used pedestrian and cycle corridor that provides the direct, safe, and efficient connection between Hulme and the Oxford Road Corridor. This route is not only essential for sustainable everyday travel but also forms part of Manchester's historical infrastructure. It appears on published city maps as far back as 1825 (J. Pigot), demonstrating its longstanding role as the primary route between these communities.

Today the route holds significant strategic importance feeding onto Stretford Road making it the only linearly direct city-centre-south: east-west connection point on the Bee Network's cycle routes.

2. Inefficient Alternative for Cyclists

The proposed diversion for cyclists is impractical. It introduces multiple 90-degree turns and adds approximately 150 metres to journeys that are currently direct, well-used, and, crucially, easily navigable due to a clear line of sight between destinations. The Travel Plan's own cycle counts from November (outside the seasonal peak) show roughly 1,000 cyclists use this route daily - a figure expected to grow. This detour would impose a cumulative burden of 150 kilometres of extra pedalling per day. As many of the cyclists are commuters and delivery workers - frequent repeat users - the aggregate impact is a material consideration for these classes of traveller.

3. Unrealistic Safety Mitigation

The application's transport plan acknowledges that the existing infrastructure fails to divert cyclists by as little as 3 metres - due to natural human behaviour favouring the most direct, logical route. Yet the same plan proposes a 150-metre detour, with no credible explanation of how such a diversion would be communicated, enforced, or made safe. It also disregards the innate human navigational dependence on landmarks and dead reckoning. This inconsistency undermines the plan's credibility and highlights that the proposed mitigation does not adequately address the risks introduced by the site design.

The diversion should not be treated as a valid safety mitigation for the risks highlighted by the travel plan. To argue otherwise is inappropriate in a public environment where a Just Culture of health and safety should be upheld. This is a clear systematic oversight.

4. Reduced Space and Safety Concerns

Drawings indicate that the primary route through the site will be reduced to approximately 4 metres in width once planting and barriers are considered. According to the applicant's own transport plan, a minimum of 5.3 metres is required to maintain comfortable movement for pedestrians only - not accounting for cycle traffic. The proposed width is therefore inadequate, particularly in a location that must accommodate both pedestrians and inevitable cyclist use.

In practice, this narrowing will cause congestion, hinder safe passing, and increase the risk of conflict between users. Vulnerable pedestrians - including children, older adults, and people with disabilities - would be especially exposed in such a constrained environment.

5. Loss of Openness and Social Function of the Space

At present, the space is characterised by its open and accessible nature - around 24 metres wide at its broadest, narrowing to approximately 8 metres. It serves not only as a travel corridor but also as a safe and well-used gathering place, particularly for local students. Its openness fosters a sense of activity, visibility, and personal safety.

The proposed development would drastically alter this. The existing buildings are 4 storeys high

and generously spaced around an open courtyard. The proposed buildings would rise to 13 and 24 storeys, positioned just 16.5 metres apart, towering over a narrowed 4-metre-wide footway flanked by 1.8-metre-high fences. This creates a looming oppressive, canyon-like passage that feels enclosed, overshadowed, and unsafe - particularly during off-peak hours or in poor weather. It represents a dramatic and damaging shift from the current welcoming character of the space.

Conclusion

The application represents a severe regression in terms of connectivity, public realm quality, and the promotion of active travel. It relies on unrealistic assumptions about user behaviour, contradicts its own supporting evidence, and fails to meet even the applicant's stated minimum standards for pedestrian comfort. The form and layout of the proposed development impose a harsh and restrictive barrier between communities, replacing a historically open and accessible space.

I urge the planning authority to reject this application in its current form and to require any future proposals to preserve and enhance the safety, accessibility, and openness of this vital connection between Hulme and the Oxford Road Corridor.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.