

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: Member of the Public

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: I object to the proposals on several grounds including overdevelopment, appearance, grossly inappropriate scale and massing, development out of character with its context, loss of public amenity space, loss of retail & commercial space, inadequate public parking provision, inadequate servicing provision and refuse collection to the commercial units and flats.

Proposals for 8-10 storey street lining perimeter blocks are hugely overdeveloping this site. The existing Graeme House is set back from the road and only 8 storeys high and we think of that as a tower. Nowhere in the city centre has 10 storey blocks along the street. The grid part of super urban Barcelona is mostly 7-8 storeys high. The proposal characterises these blocks as Mansion Blocks. There is no precedent for this London concept in Manchester and even in London they are generally around 6 storeys with fine Edwardian detail, ie. nothing like the unrelenting lumpen monolithic brickwork brutalism of this proposal. This is grotesquely inappropriate for a suburban district centre? This proposal is greedy over development which sets a dangerous precedent for future development in Chorlton and all district centres across the city and will cause damaging over-inflation of land prices

The scale of the proposals are clearly in contradiction of Manchester's Guide to Development SPD as shown by the following excerpts:

"Design should respect and be informed by location

2.3 A high quality environment is created by buildings which reflect their purpose and respect the place in which they are located. Different parts of the City, its neighbourhoods and streets have

distinct or individual characters which are a product of the design of their buildings, the nature of the streets, the quality of the landscape or the nature of their activities. Such positive characteristics should be recognised and enhanced by new development. Each new development should be designed having full regard to its context and the character of the area."

The proposals completely fail to recognise or enhance the positive characteristics of the area. They have no regard to the context and character of the area. They do not respect, nor are informed by the location.

"Development should help to sustain local neighbourhoods

2.7 We wish to encourage the most appropriate form of development to enliven neighbourhoods and sustain local facilities. The layout of the scheme and the design, scale, massing and orientation of its buildings should achieve a unified urban form which blends in with, and links to, adjacent areas. Increased development density can be appropriate where it is necessary to reinforce community identity, promote a more economic use of land, increase demand for local facilities and contribute to safer, self-policed streets. However density levels must be informed by the character of an area and the specific circumstances of a proposal."

The design, scale and massing of the scheme do not blend in or link with adjacent areas at all. Density levels are in no way informed by the character of the area. This is an entirely alien, overbearing form which would be much to the detriment of the local character and have a highly negative impact on the local neighbourhood.

"Areas of change should promote a sense of place

2.8 In areas of significant change or regeneration, the future role of the area will determine the character and design of both new development and open spaces. It will be important to ensure that the development of new buildings and surrounding landscape relates well to, and helps to enhance, areas that are likely to be retained and contributes to the creation of a positive identity. There should be a smooth transition between different development forms, and styles and integration will be a key factor in the determination of planning submissions."

The new buildings clearly do not relate well to nor enhance neighbouring areas nor buildings that will be retained. There is no smooth transition between different development forms, rather there is a preposterously abrupt explosion in scale of 500% in height from surrounding buildings. The crudely articulated monolithic brick facades are so devoid of detail they look like unfinished drawings.

"Buildings should relate well to each other

2.13 The scale, position and external appearance of new buildings should respect their setting and relationship to adjacent buildings, enhance the street scene and consider their impact on the roof line and skyline. Buildings should recognise the common building line created by the front face of adjacent buildings. Projections and setbacks from this line, such as bays, foyers and entrance halls, can help to create visual emphasis; they should not, however, reduce safety by creating hidden areas, or accessibility by making obstructions, nor detract from the visual continuity of the frontage."

The new buildings in no way relate well to the local urban forms. The scale, position and external appearance of the new buildings shows no respect to their setting and relationship to adjacent buildings, do not enhance the street scene nor consider their massive impact on the roof line and

skyline. They obviously and enormously detract from the visual continuity of the frontage by their alien scale.

"Building height should be carefully considered

2.14 It is important that new developments are of an appropriate height having regard to location, character of the area and specific site circumstances and local effects, such as microclimatic ones.

2.15 Although a street can successfully accommodate buildings of differing heights, extremes should be avoided unless they provide landmarks of the highest quality and are in appropriate locations. In established residential areas, significant variation in height may not be appropriate."

The proposed development is not of an appropriate height in this area. The scale of this proposal is absolutely unprecedented for a suburban district centre and will severely damage the character and very nature of Chorlton centre. The change in height is extreme and the proposal is certainly no landmark of the highest quality. This significant variation in height is entirely inappropriate.

"7 Housing Density and Mix

7.2 New housing development should not be viewed in isolation and proposals must be designed having regard to not only the immediately adjoining buildings but also the townscape of the wider area. Developments should be informed, both in terms of design and layout, by the wider context. It is the character and identity of an area that will determine appropriate densities and form"

The new housing development has quite clearly been viewed in isolation and proposals are not designed with any regard to immediately adjoining buildings nor the townscape of the wider area. The development is absolutely uninformed in terms of design and layout, by the wider context. While the aspiration for some higher density housing use on brownfield sites is understandable, this proposal is not a sustainable model for regeneration but an absurd experiment which will destroy the character and life of the place it supposedly seeks to enliven. Blocks of 4-5 storeys above shops would be adventurous but 10 storeys is just ridiculous.

There are other contraventions to Manchester's Planning Policy statements, for example the Core Strategy, in particular C6 and EN2:

"South Manchester

Policy C 6

South Manchester District Centres - Chorlton, Didsbury, Fallowfield, Levenshulme and Withington

Across the area there is capacity for both further convenience and comparison retailing floorspace. In total, approximately 8,000 square metres of convenience and 4,500 square metres of comparison retail floorspace will be promoted up to 2027. Identified capacity will be directed to Chorlton centre to support more sustainable shopping patterns, with enhanced provision also promoted in Levenshulme. Redevelopment in Chorlton will provide a substantial increase in retail, alongside improvements to other commercial and community services. New development should also make a contribution to the character of the centre, including a range of unit sizes and environmental improvements."

And

"10.38 The Retail Study indicates that Chorlton District Centre retains a relatively high proportion of expenditure by local residents in both the large foodstore and small local shops, although it is

notable that there is leakage to larger foodstores. There is an opportunity for redevelopment in Chorlton which can improve performance, providing it builds on the centre's existing strengths. Further development is expected to be accommodated through the redevelopment of the precinct, and this may be alongside an increase in capacity at existing facilities. A comprehensive scheme in the centre should provide opportunities for the continued growth of the independent sector and improved facilities for other services (including health and education)."

This is that comprehensive scheme in the centre and it should be providing opportunities for the continued growth of the independent sector and improved facilities for other services (including health and education), but it demonstrably does not. The proposal actually includes a significant reduction in retail space, offering only a third of existing provision. While the Planning Statement tries to argue that some of the units were empty, this is obviously because the Precinct Centre has been winding down operations over the last few years and retailers could not be offered secure tenancies. There is a complete loss of office space with the proposed demolition of Graeme House and with this the loss of local employment opportunities that should be part of any sustainable large District Centre's mixed economy. The proposals offer nothing by way of community services.

"Policy EN 2

Tall Buildings

Tall buildings are defined as buildings which are substantially taller than their neighbourhoods and/or which significantly change the skyline.

Proposals for tall buildings will be supported where it can be demonstrated that they

- Are of excellent design quality,
- Are appropriately located,
- Contribute positively to sustainability,
- Contribute positively to place making, for example as a landmark, by terminating a view, or by signposting a facility of significance, and
- Will bring significant regeneration benefits.

A fundamental design objective will be to ensure that tall buildings complement the City's key existing building assets and make a positive contribution to the evolution of a unique, attractive and distinctive Manchester, including to its skyline and approach views

The proposals do fall under this description of tall buildings, but they fail to be of excellent design quality and are not appropriately located. The scheme does not contribute positively to placemaking. There is a significant reduction in the public realm area provided, by removing the pedestrian precinct space and this is not replaced anywhere. The amount of green space provided in the 'Linear Park' along Barlowmoor Rd is drastically reduced from existing provision as half of it will be paved over.

The building does not provide a positive landmark located on the corner of a side street and not being a significant public building or facility. It does not terminate any significant views and does not make an attractive and distinctive contribution to the neighbourhood or the city or its skyline.

"12.13 Elsewhere across the City, District Centres may be appropriate locations for "tall" buildings. Being generally accessible to the local population and well served by public transport, they are natural foci for developments that attract a larger number of people. The definition of tall as being in relation to neighbouring buildings should be noted, however, as the scale of development

acceptable within a District Centre is unlikely ever to match that within the City Centre."

The Core Strategy acknowledges that the scale of development acceptable within a District Centre is unlikely ever to match that within the City Centre and yet the height of these buildings is actually greater than most city centre developments. The closest of this scale is Spinningfields but this has none of the elegance or generosity of public space that that delivers, and who could imagine development of that scale in a suburban context?

There is a huge and unsustainable reduction in public parking provision with the loss of the site carpark and only 12 spaces (2 disabled) provided. Whilst there are good public transport connections to/from the city centre, other local areas whose residents currently use Chorlton Centre are not so well served for travelling to Chorlton eg. Stretford, Firswood, Northenden, Moss Side. Loss of parking provision will obviously force them and others with mobility problems to shop and visit other areas such as out of town retail parks etc. The Planning Statement claims there is plenty of street parking available, but since the cycle lanes have significantly reduced this, the only other options are residential side streets which are already overpopulated. Many patients need to drive to the adjacent doctor's surgery due to mobility issues and there don't appear to be any drop off areas. Where will they park?

The proposals do not demonstrate how the retail units are serviced for deliveries or refuse collection. The units appear to have no rear doors to where the retail refuse rooms are located in the ground level indoor carpark. Will deliveries be made to the Barlowmoor Rd frontage which has no parking or drop off facilities shown?

The refuse rooms seem very small to accommodate full recycling facilities for several retail units and the large number of flats and the collection points are not identified. Have the refuse quantities and storage solutions been adequately modelled as there is nothing apparent in the drawings or Planning Statement?

The indoor parking area will not have sufficient headroom for the collection trucks, so presumably large communal and commercial refuse and recycling bins will be left out in the surrounding streets or blocking the small public parking area?

Overall I agree that redevelopment of the site is badly needed with a reasonably high density mixed development but this proposal is just pushing the limits way too far. Manchester Council has good policies and vision for progressive redevelopment but these are only meaningful if rigorously enforced and evidenced in proposals. I just hope the words actually mean something real and that those making decisions can appreciate the value and impact of urban design quality and not just the tick boxes and spreadsheets offered which would make that vision seem farcical.