

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: Objection to Planning Application 142535/FO/2025 - Proposed Towers at Stockton's Furniture Site (Great Ancoats Street)

I am a resident of [REDACTED] writing to object to the proposed development (Planning Ref. 142535/FO/2025) for 50-storey and 26-storey residential towers on the Stockton's Furniture site off Great Ancoats Street. My objections are based on material planning considerations focused on the issues of design and townscape impact, loss of privacy/overlooking, parking and highway safety, traffic congestion and noise, and provision for disabled access. Each of these concerns is detailed below, supported by recent planning policies and examples from similar Manchester city centre decisions. I urge the Council to refuse this application in its current form.

1. Design, Height and Appearance - Out of Scale and Character

Excessive Height Breaching Planning Guidance: The proposed 50-storey tower is grossly out of scale with the surrounding townscape and even exceeds the Council's own height parameters for this site. The site lies in the East Village Central regeneration area, where the Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) explicitly sets an upper height limit of 45 storeys for new buildings. At 50 storeys, the main tower violates this guideline, overshooting the SRF's maximum by a significant margin. Such excess height is not policy-compliant and would establish a discordant high-rise element in an area that the SRF envisioned to step up more moderately in scale. Even

the smaller 26-storey block exceeds the prevalent heights in the immediate vicinity.

Out-of-Character Massing and Scale: The twin towers would dwarf the prevailing built form of Piccadilly/Ancoats/New Islington, which is predominantly low- to mid-rise (generally below 15 storeys in height) . Aside from the existing Oxygen Tower (32 storeys at its tallest point), the local skyline is characterized by historic mill buildings and newer developments that respect a mid-rise scale. Introducing a 50-storey "skyscraper" here would appear monstrously out-of-place. Local residents raised this exact concern during the SRF consultation, noting that a 40-45 storey tower at this site "would not be in keeping with the character" of the area . Pushing to 50 storeys only amplifies that inconsistency. The massing of the development - 758 apartments plus substantial commercial volume - results in an overly dense, bulky scheme that would dominate views for miles around, rather than blending into the urban fabric.

Visual Dominance and Relationship to Context: Even the 32-storey Oxygen Tower (immediately adjacent) is described as "imposing" when seen from Great Ancoats Street . A new 50-storey tower would far surpass this, looming over not only Oxygen but also casting a long shadow over the neighborhood. The abrupt jump from Oxygen's 32-storey height to 50 storeys next door is poor urban design, creating a jarring visual spike on the skyline rather than a gradual transition. The proposal fails to respect the stepping of heights that the Council envisioned (rising toward the corner of Great Ancoats St/Store St up to a controlled high point) . Instead it reaches a height that would overwhelm nearby buildings and likely overshadow public spaces and streets below for much of the day. This could reduce daylight at street level and make the environment less welcoming.

Architectural Design and Materials: The design, as presented, appears to rely on a generic modern high-rise aesthetic (large glazed facades and contemporary cladding by SimpsonHaugh architects). This is at odds with the architectural character of Ancoats, a district known for its red-brick industrial heritage and human-scaled streets. Successful recent developments in the area have used brick and contextual materials to complement historic mill buildings - whereas the proposed towers, by contrast, risk appearing as alien glass/concrete monoliths. Public comments have already described the initial designs as a "travesty" and "extremely dated architecture - pastiche modernism" , indicating that the scheme does not win support on design grounds. Moreover, the development entails the demolition of the existing Stockton's furniture store building, including historic Victorian façades along Store Street. Little effort seems made to retain or incorporate these heritage assets into the new design, which residents have flagged as a missed opportunity . The loss of those façades would erode local character further. In summary, the proposal's design, height and materials fail to respect the context or comply with adopted design policies, and thus would cause substantial harm to the townscape and visual amenities of the area.

2. Overlooking and Loss of Privacy for Oxygen Tower Residents

The proximity and positioning of the new towers would lead to severe overlooking of existing homes, particularly Oxygen Tower. The plan places a 50-storey residential wall of windows just across narrow Store Street, directly facing the Oxygen Tower's apartments at close range. This raises serious privacy concerns. Dozens of new apartments would look directly into the windows and balcony spaces of Oxygen's residents, eroding the sense of privacy in one's own home - a fundamental residential amenity. The separation distance between facing windows is extremely small for buildings of this height; Store Street is a relatively narrow road, meaning the new tower could be only tens of meters away from Oxygen Tower. Such tight spacing is well below typical guidelines for privacy distances in high-rise developments (for example, one rule of thumb suggests ~20m+ between habitable-room windows, which this scheme likely breaches). The result would be a pervasive "fishbowl" feeling for current residents, who would have hundreds of new neighbours' eyes able to peer into their living space.

In addition to direct overlooking, the development's scale would cause loss of natural light to nearby dwellings. With a 50-storey block immediately to the west/south-west of Oxygen Tower (and much taller), it is inevitable that daylight and sunlight to Oxygen's lower and mid-level flats will be reduced, especially in the afternoon and evening. A local resident's consultation response noted that the narrowness of Store Street and the closeness of the proposed tower to Oxygen Tower would cause "loss of light and privacy" for existing residents. This loss of light could be significant - yet the application has not publicly demonstrated compliance with BRE daylight/sunlight standards for surrounding properties. Overshadowing of Oxygen's amenities (and of other nearby buildings and public realm) is therefore a major concern. Diminished daylight can impact residents' quality of life and even energy usage (lights on during the day, etc.), which are material planning considerations.

Furthermore, the sheer number of new units (758) means increased noise and disturbance facing existing residents. Many of those new apartments will have balconies or windows that, when open, could project noise (music, voices, etc.) toward Oxygen Tower. The proposal also includes 45,000 sq ft of commercial space, potentially including cafes or other evening uses, which could generate noise audible to neighbours. With the towers so close, sound could carry and echo between the buildings. Residents during the framework consultation feared "noise nuisance" as a result of the tower's proximity. While some level of city centre noise is expected, this development would bring an unusually intensive concentration of people into a small area, amplifying activity right beside an existing residential tower that until now had an open aspect. This raises the prospect of increased late-night noise, loss of peace, and general disturbance for Oxygen Tower occupants - impacts that are material in planning terms (falling under residential amenity).

In summary, the proposal compromises the privacy and comfort of existing residents to an unacceptable degree. The Council has a duty to protect the amenity of established homes when assessing new development. As it stands, the scheme would result in a severe overlooking intrusion and notable loss of light for Oxygen Tower (and possibly other nearby dwellings), contrary to good planning practice. This is a strong ground for refusal or substantial redesign (for

example, reducing height and re-siting the towers further from Oxygen, as even residents suggested).

3. Parking Provision and Highway Safety Issues

Lack of Off-Street Parking: The application proposes zero on-site car parking spaces for the 758 apartments and the commercial/office units . While encouraging sustainable travel is welcome in principle, a development of this scale with absolutely no parking raises serious practical and safety issues. It is unrealistic to assume that none of the hundreds of new residents (nor their visitors, service providers, etc.) will own or use cars. In reality, many occupants may still have vehicles or need to be picked up/dropped off regularly. With no dedicated parking or drop-off area, those vehicles will inevitably seek space on surrounding streets or other developments' car parks. The surrounding network of streets (Great Ancoats Street, Store Street, and nearby residential roads in Ancoats/New Islington) is already heavily parked and congested, leaving little spare capacity. The overspill parking from this development could overwhelm the limited on-street bays and potentially lead to illegal or unsafe parking practices.

Overspill and Safety Hazards: Residents in the area have already observed that local roads suffer from bad congestion and people "pulling over" unsafely due to lack of parking availability . Introducing 758 car-less units without any parking management plan will exacerbate this. Likely scenarios include: vehicles circling the area looking for a spot (adding to traffic); cars parked on double-yellow lines, pavements, or in front of hydrants out of desperation; and use of nearby residential streets' bays (displacing existing community parking). Such indiscriminate parking can create hazards - e.g. blocking sightlines at junctions, impeding emergency vehicle access, and forcing pedestrians (including disabled users) onto the road. Greater Manchester Police and highway officers often raise these safety issues when parking is under-provisioned. The development needs to demonstrate it won't result in dangerous parking displacement, but currently it fails to do so.

Conflict with Council Parking Standards: Manchester's Core Strategy requires that new developments include adequate parking such that they do not cause disamenity or safety problems for others . The Council's approach is that parking provision should reflect the site's accessibility but must not simply shift the burden to surrounding streets. In this case, the site's city centre location near public transport might justify lower car provision than a suburban scheme - however, providing zero spaces is an extreme approach that conflicts with common practice. For comparison, other large city centre residential schemes have included at least some parking or made provision for car club bays, visitor parking, etc., especially to accommodate those residents who absolutely need a car. Here there is no indication of any such measures. Notably, the Planning and Highways Committee has recently taken a firm stance on inadequate disabled parking in new developments, going so far as to defer a hotel proposal that lacked on-site parking - the committee was "minded to refuse" until the issue was addressed . This underscores that totally car-free schemes can be unacceptable. The current application has not justified its

departure from parking standards in a way that ensures no harm to others; therefore it fails the test of sustainable development on transport grounds.

Increased Traffic Movements and Loading: Even if residents do not own cars, the development will generate significant traffic from service and delivery vehicles: moving vans for 758 apartments (on move-in/out days), daily parcel and grocery deliveries, taxis and ride-share pickups, maintenance and emergency vehicles, etc. With no on-site loading bay or car park, these vehicles will have to stop on Great Ancoats Street or Store Street. Great Ancoats Street is a busy arterial route (part of the Inner Relief Road) where stopping could be very dangerous and is likely not permitted except in designated bays. Store Street is narrower and already handles traffic to Oxygen Tower and other buildings; multiple vans pulling up at the kerb will cause obstructions. The highway safety risk from this unmanaged loading activity is considerable - drivers may double-park or block lanes, leading to collisions or forcing cyclists into traffic. The developer's plans should have included a dedicated service lay-by or similar, but it appears none is proposed in the publicly available information. Without proper off-street loading facilities, the scheme compromises the safety and free flow of the highway, contrary to Core Strategy policy and national guidance (NPPF para 111 states developments should be refused if they cause an unacceptable impact on road safety).

In summary, the lack of any off-street parking or loading provision is a major flaw. It is likely to result in parking overspill, traffic obstruction, and safety hazards in the surrounding area - a material planning harm. The Council is urged to require a rethinking of the parking strategy (at minimum, some controlled on-site parking or funded measures to manage on-street parking) before considering approval. As it stands, this aspect alone could justify refusal due to the risk of severe residual cumulative impacts on the transport network's safety and capacity.

4. Traffic Congestion and Noise Impacts on the Local Area

Strain on an Already Congested Network: The cumulative impact of adding 758 apartments and 45,000 sq ft of commercial space in this location will be to inject thousands of additional trips into an area that is already traffic-saturated. Great Ancoats Street is known as one of the busiest and most congested routes around the city centre - it forms part of the Inner Ring Road and is meant to carry traffic around the centre, but in practice it often experiences stop-and-go congestion and queuing, especially at peak times. In fact, Great Ancoats Street has been identified as one of the most polluted streets in Greater Manchester, with illegal and dangerous levels of air pollution from traffic. The Council's own £9m improvement scheme for this road (the "European-style boulevard" project) acknowledged the severe noise and pollution issues, aiming (only partially) to mitigate them by resurfacing to reduce traffic noise by 40%. This is the baseline into which the new development would be dropped.

Even if residents do not have private cars, the development's population influx (likely well over 1,000 new residents, plus office workers, retail customers, etc.) will generate substantial vehicle trips in the form of taxis, deliveries, service vehicles and general through-traffic responding to the

new activity hub. Trip generation analysis would undoubtedly show hundreds of additional vehicle movements per day. This will add to existing traffic congestion and pollution on Great Ancoats Street and feeder roads. A local community website reviewing the Council's plans for this area noted that current road layouts already "contribute to congestion and pollution with excessive starting, stopping and idling traffic" on Great Ancoats Street . Adding more development without significant transport infrastructure improvements will only worsen these problems - contrary to Manchester's transport and environmental policies. Notably, the site is directly across from the planned new Civil Service campus on the former Central Retail Park, which will host 7,000 workers . The traffic and transit demand from that project will already be high; approving another massive trip-generator next door, all funnelling into the same road network, is a recipe for gridlock unless properly mitigated.

Noise Pollution from Traffic and Activity: Ancoats residents already endure high ambient noise from the volume of cars and lorries on Great Ancoats Street - noise levels that the Council has tried to reduce, but remain significant. The introduction of 758 new households and commercial premises will bring additional noise sources: increased road traffic noise (from more cars/taxis coming and going, horns, engines idling), more foot traffic and general bustle, and noise from on-site uses (e.g. restaurants/cafes in the commercial space, outdoor gatherings in the new public square). Given the density of the development, there is potential for a 24/7 noise environment: daytime construction and commercial noise, and nighttime noise from residents or late-night traffic. This could affect not just Oxygen Tower residents but also other nearby communities (e.g. Islington Wharf, Albion Works, and future residents of the Central Retail Park development).

Of particular concern is night-time noise. With no on-site parking, many residents or visitors will be dropped off by taxis on the street late at night, possibly with car doors slamming and people talking loudly under Oxygen Tower's windows. The commercial units, if they include bars or late-opening eateries, could generate evening and late-night patron noise and service vehicle noise. The applicant has not clarified how noise will be controlled. At this stage, the proposal risks worsening local noise pollution, when planning policy (both local and national) requires new development to mitigate and not exacerbate noise impacts. Residents should not lose their right to a reasonable night's sleep due to an oversized development.

Moreover, the design of two tall towers close together can create a wind tunnel effect, which often leads to amplified wind noise at ground level and around nearby buildings. This microclimatic impact is not fully detailed, but it is a known issue with tall buildings that can further degrade environmental quality (wind noise and discomfort for pedestrians).

In summary, the traffic generation and noise implications of this scheme are materially harmful. It threatens to push local traffic conditions from bad to worse, potentially leading to increased air pollution (contrary to environmental objectives) and noise that harms residential amenity. Until a robust traffic impact assessment and noise mitigation strategy are presented - and the scheme is perhaps scaled to what the infrastructure can handle - it would be premature to approve this

development. The NPPF makes clear that developments should only be allowed if they do not cause "severe" transport problems or "unacceptable" noise pollution; currently this scheme fails that test.

5. Inadequate Disabled Parking and Accessibility Provision

The development in its current form does not appear to provide any dedicated disabled persons' parking or sufficient measures to accommodate those with mobility impairments. By providing zero car parking on-site, the proposal effectively also provides zero disabled bays (unless on-street bays are proposed, which has not been evidenced). This is a glaring omission given the scale of the project. Manchester City Council's adopted approach is that new developments must be accessible to everyone, including disabled people, in line with its Access for All policy and the "Design for Access 2" inclusive design standards. Those guidelines typically require a proportion of parking spaces (if parking is provided) to be marked for Blue Badge holders, and even in car-free developments, there should be provisions such as accessible drop-off points, nearby allocated bays, or equivalent arrangements to ensure disabled residents/visitors are not disadvantaged.

The absence of any on-site disabled parking is not policy compliant. It fails to meet the needs of disabled drivers or passengers who might live in or visit these buildings. For instance, a wheelchair user who drives would have no way to park near the entrance of their home. Relying on public transport is not always feasible for those with certain disabilities, and taxis might not suffice if there isn't a safe, guaranteed place to alight close to the building. This undermines the Council's vision of Manchester as "the most accessible city in Europe". It's also inconsistent with recent planning committee expectations - as noted, a hotel scheme on Great Ancoats St was held back by the committee due to lack of disabled parking until the developers addressed it. The same scrutiny should be applied here: 758 apartments with no disabled bays is far more egregious than a 212-room hotel lacking a few bays.

Beyond parking, we must consider general accessibility: Are the pavements and site entrances designed for disabled access? How will disabled residents move from car drop-off to their door? Will the new public realm be fully accessible (e.g. step-free, with tactile paving and seating)? These details are unclear, but given the parking oversight, one worries the scheme has not been thought through holistically for those with limited mobility. Disabled residents' needs are a material planning consideration, protected by both local policy and equality legislation. A development that does not adequately cater for them should not be granted permission. At minimum, a revised plan should include a number of designated disabled parking bays either on-site or immediately adjacent (with enforceable reservation for Blue Badge holders), as well as a management plan for disabled drop-offs. In the current proposal, the lack of such provision is a strong ground for objection.

Accessibility compliance must also extend to ensuring all entrances, lifts, and facilities meet the

highest standards (which would be dealt with at building control stage), but planning can insist on an inclusive design approach from the outset. Right now, the scheme's approach - essentially a one-size-fits-all "car-free" ethos - does not account for the differing needs of disabled people, and thus conflicts with Manchester's inclusive development policies . The Council should require the developer to demonstrate how disabled people's needs are met in terms of parking, access, and overall usability of the development; otherwise, the application should be refused as contrary to the public sector equality duty and local planning guidance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this proposal in its present form would have unacceptably adverse effects on the surrounding area and community. The design and extreme height of the towers are incongruous and breach adopted planning frameworks, the proximity of the development would severely impact existing residents' privacy and daylight, and the lack of any parking provision (especially for disabled users) alongside the huge increase in units would exacerbate traffic congestion, parking chaos, and noise in an already stressed city-centre environment. These are all material planning considerations that conflict with local and national policy aims (including Manchester Core Strategy policies on design, transport and inclusive access, and the NPPF's goals for healthy, safe and inclusive communities).

Critically, none of the above objections touches on non-material issues like property values - my concerns are firmly rooted in planning policy and the public interest. For example, the development fails to meet the criteria of good design and context sensitivity in the City Council's Guide to Development SPD, which requires new buildings to respect their surroundings and protect amenity . It also appears to disregard the East Village Central SRF guidance on height limits , and does not adequately mitigate its impact on infrastructure (contrary to Core Strategy T2, which seeks to ensure new development does not cause traffic problems). Approving such a scheme could set a negative precedent, undermining carefully crafted plans for the area's regeneration and harming the living conditions of current and future residents.

I respectfully ask Manchester City Council to refuse planning permission for application 142535/FO/2025. At the very least, major revisions should be required - including a substantial reduction in height and massing, reorientation to increase the distance from Oxygen Tower, provision of appropriate parking/servicing solutions, and improved design that responds to the local context. Without these changes, the development would fail to satisfy the basic tests of planning acceptability. The goal should be development that complements Ancoats and Piccadilly, not overwhelms it.

Thank you for considering these objections. I trust the Council will uphold its planning policies and the interests of local residents in this case.

Sources Cited:

- Manchester City Council, East Village Central SRF (Nov 2022) - height parameters (p.21) .
- MCC Piccadilly SRF Consultation Summary (2023) - resident comments on height/scale and Oxygen Tower proximity .
- Place North West (30 Apr 2025), Plans in for £241m Manchester towers - scheme details (height, 758 apts, 45k sq ft commercial) .
- ManchesterWorld (1 May 2025), Ancoats towers bring 758 flats... - note of no parking provision (974 cycle spaces) .
- Manchester Core Strategy (2012) - Transport Policy T2 on parking not causing disamenity .
- Place North West (Dec 2021), Oxygen Tower completes - Oxygen Tower height/imposing appearance .
- Great Ancoats Street info - noted as "illegal levels" of pollution, congestion issues .
- Place North West (2019) - Planning Committee deferred a scheme for lack of disabled parking .
- Manchester City Council - Disabled Access Guidance (inclusive design expectations) .