

Comments for Planning Application 137226/FO/2023

Application Summary

Application Number: 137226/FO/2023

Address: Part Of Plot C And Plot E Great Jackson Street Manchester M15 4NP

Proposal: Full planning permission for the demolition of existing structures and the phased construction of four residential buildings (two at 47 storeys and two at 51 storeys) to provide 1,746 homes (Use Class C3), flexible commercial, leisure, food and drink uses (all Use Class E) and / or drinking establishment (Sui Generis), basement car parking, cycle parking, landscaping and public realm, servicing and access arrangements, highways alterations and 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: Dear Lucy,

I would like to share with you the following comments to object to application 137227/FO/2023. Please confirm in writing by 28/06/2024 that you have received my comments.

Natural Daylight - Deansgate Square

The GIA report states that, as a whole, Deansgate Square will retain average daylight comparable with similar types of developments and that residents of Deansgate Square have been aware for several years of proposed developments.

The second part of the statement is completely untrue. In fact, it is very surprising that Renaker, the applicant, have not asked GIA to correct these statements in the report as Renaker themselves have been advertising properties in the marketing suite with much smaller buildings on the plots discussed. Numerous photos of the models are available and other photos are part of the Great Jackson Street Development Framework authored by Deloitte. Many Deansgate Square residents have bought properties based on the natural daylight the properties would offer for years to come.

The GIA report comments on the daylight situation as an average. It is clear from the visuals on figure 16 that pretty much the entirety of the West facing side of the North Tower will be left with low level lighting. The situation is almost similar for the West side of East Tower. When combined with the other proposed developments on plot C and E and the new constructions currently rising on the South and West side, circa 2/3rds of apartments on the South Tower will be left with very

little daylight. The report itself seems incomplete. The assessment focuses on only one side of some key buildings. This is the case for South Tower, for example, which will be impacted on three sides. The South face will be impacted by plot D (no figure), the West face will be impacted by plot D and C7/C8/E1/E2 and the North Face will be impacted by C7/C8/E1/E2 (no figure). Curiously, whilst the report fails to show before and after (called existing and proposed in the report) for buildings heavily impacted by the loss of sunlight, for example the West side of Deansgate Square North Tower, it happily volunteers before and after for apartment blocks completely unaffected by the towers (like City South). With these kinds of inconsistencies, one cannot help but feel that the report has not been written in a completely neutral way.

Another well-known impact of the change in lighting conditions for so many apartments will also result in an increased need for internal lighting and heating, and thereby an increase in CO2 emissions. The environmental impact assessment for this planning application does not take that into account.

Residents of Deansgate Square have access to a green area on the West facing side of North Tower called the Roof Garden. Due to its positioning, the Roof Garden is a very windy place, and therefore unless warmth provided by natural sunlight is present, it is not a very welcoming place. The Roof Garden is used a lot less use than it used to at the beginning following the construction of the four towers on the West side of the Great Jackson development. Direct sunlight is now available early afternoon and late afternoon, but there is a gap mid-afternoon when the sun is behind the four towers opposite. The combination of the proposed 72 floor tower in this application and the four towers on plots C and E will effectively deprive all the residents from their only private green space, as there will be no direct sunlight ever reaching the Roof Garden as can clearly be seen from figure 16 of the Gia report. It is worth noting that this green space has often been used for events designed to create a community at Deansgate Square. So the proposed development will impact not only residents' wellbeing from a natural sunlight point of view, but it will also make it more difficult for them to belong to a community, which, as we know, also has a number of positive impact on crime rate, wellbeing, antisocial behaviour, loneliness, and other.

The Roof Garden is also the only child-friendly place within the Deansgate Square environment. There are no places in the entire development where children can go and play apart from the Roof Garden. The next closest place is the playground outside Crown Street School, and that playground will also be without any direct natural sunlight if the proposed development goes ahead.

Considering a lot of properties were sold to purchasers on the belief, reinforced by drawings and models, that their apartment would benefit from high levels of direct light and that they would be able to enjoy a green, communal, child-friendly, place in the Roof Garden, it is not acceptable, and could even be considered as dishonesty and misselling, that an application for a completely different development which will impact the daylight of so many apartments in such a drastic way has been submitted. The situation for Deansgate Square should not be looked at as an average, but should really focus on the West facing sides of the South, East and North towers, and disregard the negligible impact of West Tower which is geographically detached from the other three towers. The application is also in direct contradiction with the Greater Jackson Development Framework, two pillar of which are "maximising separation distances between buildings" and

"enhancing sunlight and daylight penetration into the site".

Natural Daylight - Green Spaces

Recent aerial photographs show that there are currently only two green spaces easily accessible to residents of the Great Jackson developments. One of them is the park located outside the school and in front of the Blade building, the other one is a private area only available to Deansgate Square residents called the Roof Garden.

Both of these spaces will see a drastic reduction in natural daylight if the proposed construction goes ahead.

There is already very little natural daylight for the park on Plot C as the park was built on the East side of Plot C's tall buildings and is surrounded on three sides by tall constructions. Thus, the park gets very little sunlight post midday, apart from a brief period when the sun is between the towers known as the Circle and the Blade.

That park gets good natural sunlight in the morning though, but the proposed towers on plots C and E, alongside the proposed 71 floor high tower on Plot D, will remove most of the morning natural daylight from the park.

The situation is very similar for the Roof Garden, which will see close to ZERO natural sunlight if the project to build E1 and E2 as well as Plot D goes ahead.

As is widely known, easy to reach green spaces contribute both to the physical and mental health of local communities, even more so in places like Manchester where winters can have very short amount of natural daylight. Due to their location in the midst of tall buildings, the parks are very windy, and natural daylight provides the necessary warmth to make these spaces enjoyable in windy conditions. By drastically reducing the amount of natural daylight, the proposed constructions will also drastically reduce access to green spaces for the local community.

The proposed development has two small grassland areas which will be surrounded on all sides from tall buildings and will see very little direct natural sunlight. So there will be very little 'green benefit' to residents of Great Jackson from these two small grassland areas.

Apart from the impact on the residents of the Great Jackson development, the reduction in natural light will also impact plant growth in these green areas, and consequently the overall biodiversity of the area.

The initial aim of the Great Jackson redevelopment was to create a mix of green spaces and tall buildings providing a pleasant and relaxing environment for residents of the area. A few years on, it is proposed to remove the natural daylight from the only two green spaces available to local residents (and most residents in the area actually have access to only one as the Roof Garden is a private green space) and render them inhospitable and unusable most of the time. This seems completely at odds with the initial objective set for the area. It feels instead like Manchester has not learnt from its past, particularly the 1970's high-rise developments which failed partly due to the lack of enjoyable green spaces available to local residents.

Daylight - school

A popular addition to the redevelopment of the Great Jackson area was the addition of a primary school, the first one to open in Manchester city centre for 20 years.

It is common knowledge that students' learning ability, mood and overall well-being is affected by natural daylight, even more so in places which get very little daylight in the winter like Manchester. The GIA Daylight Sunlight report states that the school will lose very little daylight and recognises that the baseline is very low. It also states that occupants will not be aware of any reduction in daylight as the school is not yet constructed. This information is incorrect. The school is built and the first intake of students will take place in September 2024.

It is also concerning that low level baseline daylight is used as a reason to proceed with the development. It can definitely be argued that as students and staff at the school are already provided with a very dark environment, everything ought to be done to preserve the very little natural light that these human beings will be getting.

Furthermore, it is notable that the GIA report only considers the building itself. It is the front of the building that will be hugely impacted by the construction of the four towers. Directly outside of the building there is a play area. That play area will also be hugely impacted by the proposed development. Currently it is possible for future pupils to exercise and enjoy the play area in direct sunlight in the morning. This will be taken away from them as the proposed new developments (plot C and E and the 71 floor tower from plot D) will remove any direct sunlight in the morning from the play area.

In conclusion, for the wellbeing of students and staff at the school it is imperative not to go ahead with a development which will leave them with no direct sunlight even in the school outdoor areas for most of the year.

The Great Jackson redevelopment was meant to be a place which attracts a mixed population, including young families. This proposed development goes against the initial aim of the redevelopment scheme.

Impact of Increase in Traffic

Increased traffic in the area is to be expected with the construction of four additional towers and an additional tower of 71 floors.

It is stated in the Framework Travel Plan that the traffic flow on Owen St is controlled by barriers. This is inaccurate information. The traffic on Owen St has not been controlled in that way for at least 3 years as it was impractical. Furthermore the barriers have now been removed.

Apart from Owen St, other road infrastructures appear inadequate. Referring to report Transport_Note from Curtins, it is difficult to understand how estimates of vehicles have been reached. The population of the Deansgate Square towers is made in majority of wealthy students and young professionals who tend to travel by taxis when going out. What we witness at Deansgate Square during term time, i.e. when the buildings are at full capacity, are vehicles queuing to get onto the turning circle. We easily see three times the number of taxis per tower picking up people on the turning circle. It seems a reasonable assumption that the lifestyle of the towers will not differ significantly. There are regular occurrences of vehicles queuing on Owen St. when there are already 5 vehicles parked on the outer circle and 3 double parked on the inside. It is therefore reasonable to expect a lot more than 8 taxis per hour between the hours of 8 and 9 in the evening for a tower which has 7 more floors than the South Tower.

Aside from taxis, a lot of food deliveries take place. It is, again, difficult to understand how Curtins

came up with figures for loading bay requirements for loading bays. Curiously, peak times for servicing vehicles are between 10 and 11am and 4 and 5pm. The peak time that can be observed at Deansgate Square is between the hours of 7 and 10pm, when a lot of the food gets delivered by cars. Delivery drivers regularly complain that there is nowhere for them to stop, and some have even threatened to stop delivering to the towers.

It is very doubtful that 2 spaces for drop off areas of Plot D will be enough. Curtin's view quoted in the report is that the majority of takeaway deliveries and groceries will be delivered by bicycle or last-mile option. This is not what has been observed at Deansgate Square, as groceries tend to be big orders and drivers will often carry piles of 4-6 boxes on a trolley. They do so to the apartment door where the resident will take the time to empty the crates in their kitchen area before bringing the crates back to the door. This process takes considerably more time than what Curtins think, particularly in a building of 71 floors where the travel time on the lift itself (including the regular stops at different levels) will take a significant amount of time. On the way up and on the way down.

Finally, it is questionable as to whether the assessment by Curtins is valid at all. Curtins seem to be under the impression that C7 and C8 are smaller towers than E1 and E2. It is easy to see from the Elevation drawings that that is not the case. So when Curtins state that "there could be instances on Towers C7 and C8 ... when theoretical demands slightly exceeds the supply of loading spaces", that conclusion is drawn on estimates which are even lower than they will be in reality. Given that Curtins developed their entire assessment on the wrong sizing of the towers, it is really doubtful whether the entire report can be relied on for informed decision making.

So based on the above, I would like to comment that the report on road infrastructure seems to be based on incorrect, out of date or inaccurate data, and therefore should not be trusted for decision making.

Greater Manchester Strategy, crime and anti-social behaviour

Contrary to what is stated in the marketing literature promoting the Great Jackson redevelopment, there is not really a "mixed type" of occupation in the area. The apartments are primarily marketed abroad to foreign investors in the Middle East and the Far East. As a consequence, the proportion of owner occupiers in the towers is very low. The foreign property owners do not tend to occupy the properties themselves, and in turn promote their properties locally. So circa 80% of the occupiers are wealthy foreign students mainly from the Middle East and China and the Far East. The families with children living in Deansgate Square are few and far between, as the environment is becoming less and less conducive to raising families. This can be seen, for example, with the Crown Street school which has had to extend its catchment area as there were too few families in the surrounding towers to fill the classrooms, despite the school itself being very small (only 54 places for September 2024).

As a consequence of the type of occupancy, petty crime rate has started to rise significantly in the area mainly around drug taking, anti-social behaviour or mobile phones theft. The type of anti-social behaviour revolves around noise pollution from music played loudly within apartments, noise from car revving engines to attract attention on the vehicle, cars driving aggressively on Owen St., fouling (vomiting, dog fouling, human urine in shared spaces, broken glass). Due to the

wealthy nature of the student population, that population has also become a target for thieves mainly for smash and grabs on mobile phones. The areas has now also had for multiple years a very high rate of cars being broken into.

Drug taking is also a real problem at Deansgate Square with dealers residing within the towers so as to be closer to the recreational consumers.

As there is no reason to believe that the properties will be marketed differently, and therefore consist of a different type of demographics, it is a real concern that the construction of 642 new apartments (plus the 1,746 new apartments on plot C and E) on the doorstep of Deansgate Square will also result in even more drug taking in the area as well as an increase in anti-social behaviour. But it also is in contradiction with the Greater Manchester Strategy which mentions people as its biggest asset and the need to build on the strength of families and communities. Instead of having residents invested in the long term future of the Jackson Street development, less than 10 years after its launch, we now already have a population which is in majority transient and seasonal. This is also directly in contraction with The Great Jackson Development Framework which set out to cater for a 'diverse population' and whose vision was to cater for a 'vibrant, safe, secure and sustainable community'.

Concluding remarks

Based on the various elements above, I would like to request that you reject application 137227/FO/2023.

It is clear that the application has been made using a blend of wrong data, inaccurate or out of date information and that the proposed development will have a serious impact on the residents of Great Jackson and even in surrounding areas like Castlefield.

Furthermore, it is breaching ALL THREE of the key pillars published in the Great Jackson Street Development Framework published by Deloitte (namely maximising separation distances between buildings, increasing the quantum and variety of public spaces within the Development Framework, enhancing sunlight and daylight penetration).

Best regards

