



MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

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21 June 2022

Our reference: JA/DMC

Your reference:

Dear Ms Poole

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2017

FORMAL SCREENING REQUEST FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT 'SCREENING' UNDER PART 2 REGULATION 6

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT NEW VICTORIA MANCHESTER

SCREENING OPINION ADOPTED BY MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Thank you for your letter dated 8 June 2022 in respect of your request for a screening opinion at the above site.

In coming to a formal opinion on whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required to support the proposed development, Manchester City Council, as Local Planning Authority, has taken into account the supporting information contained within your letter, site location plan and supporting appendices.

I have now had a chance to consider your screening request and I outline my response below.

The proposal type is listed in category 10 (b) Urban Development Projects of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England) Regulations 2017. The regulations state that the threshold where a development is likely to have significant effects on the environment, by virtue of factors such as nature, size or location, are developments which includes more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwellinghouse.

Your letter of the 8 June 2022 sets out the reasons why you believe an EIA is not required to support the proposed development.

Within the Planning Policy Guidance (PPG), general considerations relating to the need for an EIA for Schedule 2 developments is identified within paragraph 18 of the guidance. This references the selection criteria in relation to Schedule 3 of the Regulations. This criteria which must be taken into account in determining whether a development is likely to have significant effects on the environment. The criteria is as follows:

- I. Characteristics of Development (e.g. its size, use of natural resources, quantities of pollution and waste generated);
- II. Location of Development (e.g. environmental sensitivity of geographical areas);
- III. Characteristics of the potential impact (e.g. its magnitude and duration).

Below is a consideration as to whether an EIA is required to support a planning application for the above development.

CONTEXT AND PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The development site subject to this screening opinion is 0.5 hectares and is bounded by Manchester Victoria Train Station and Long Millgate to the east, the Metrolink tramlines to the south, Corporation Street to the west and Hanover Street to the North.

The development site is previously developed having been cleared of previous uses. The site is currently partially fenced off and within the boundary of the construction compound for the adjacent site (known as New Victoria Phase 1). Access, parking and storage facilities are currently located on the site to support the phase 1 development.

The site benefits from an extant planning permission known as New Victoria which was approved in September 2016 (ref. 111777/FO/2016/C1 superseded by 128667/JO/2020). Phase 1 is currently under construction and comprises two residential buildings together with ground floor commercial space and parking. Phase 2, as consented, comprises an 8 storey commercial office building.

The area known as phase 2 is the subject to this screening opinion for a revised scheme.

The surrounding area is characterised by commercial developments associated with NOMA, an area of the city centre which has undergone significant regeneration. The Printworks, a large mixed use commercial, F&B and entertainment officer is located further along Corporation Street. The retail core of the city centre, including the Arndale Shopping Centre is beyond this.

The development site is in a highly accessible location in the city centre with access to public transport together with walking and cycling routes. Manchester Victoria Station is adjacent to the site and provides access to train and Metrolink services across the city and region.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1, which is a area of low risk of flooding, together with being in a critical drainage area. The river Irk is in a culvert directly beneath the site.

The site is located in the Manchester Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). There are no statutory or non statutory designations for nature conservation at the development site or in the immediate vicinity.

The development site is located immediately adjacent to the Shudehill conservation area. The Cathedral conservation area straddles the Manchester and Salford administrative borders to the south of the site. The Crescent and Adepfi/Bexley Square conservation areas, in Salford, are located to the west of the site. there are 18 listed buildings in a 250 radius of the site many of which area located in the NOMA estate. The nearest listed building is the Grade II Hanover building 20 metres to the west of the site. The other listed buildings which are likely to be affected by the development are as follows:

- Cheetham School of Music (Grade I);
- Manchester Cathedral (Grade I);
- Manchester Victoria Station (Grade II);
- City Building, 67 Corporation Street (Grade II);
- Hanover Building (Grade II);
- Old Bank Building (Grade II);
- New Century House, Corporation Street (Grade II);
- Co-operative Insurance Society (CIS) Building (Grade II); and
- Parkers Hotel (Grade II).

The proposal would comprise a new commercial office building circa 11,780 sqm (Use Class E) together with ground floor commercial retail within a building of a maximum height of 10 storeys. There would also be improvements to the public realm around the perimeter of the site including new hard and soft landscaping. 84 long stay cycle spaces would be provided together with 6 short stay spaces. Amenity and roof terrace spaces would also be provided.

It is considered that the potential impacts from a development of this nature are as follows:

- Traffic and transport;
- Historic Environment and Visual Impact;
- Air Quality;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Wind;
- Ground Conditions;
- Water resources and drainage; and
- Cumulative effects.

This assessment would determine whether any of the above impacts are significant in nature and warrant consideration by an EIA.

ASSESSMENT

As detailed above, an assessment would now take place based on the three criteria within Schedule 3 of the regulations.

Characteristics of Development

Size of Development

The development site is approximately 0.5 ha and would see the creation of 11,780 sqm of commercial office space within a building up to 10 storeys in height.

The proposed development does not exceed the threshold within Schedule 2 10 (b) of the Regulations. However, given the context of the development, consideration has been given in order to determine if any significant effects on the environment would arise and need to be considered by an EIA.

It is noted that the site is currently vacant, having been previously developed and currently used as a compound area for the adjacent site. The proposed development would represent a change from the current condition and character of the site.

Notwithstanding this, the development is unlikely to result in any significant visual or amenity impacts that would warrant consideration by an EIA given the overall character and scale of developments in the local area. The site forms part of the city centre and the characteristics of the area are of a dense urban form with buildings of different heights and scale and similar to that proposed as part of this development.

It is noted from the supporting information that there would be no need to upgrade any local infrastructure or any major modification to the highway network that would warrant consideration by an EIA.

On this basis, whilst a proposal of this scale and nature would have some impacts (as a result of the density of the proposal) it is considered that this would not be of more than local significance and would not be of a scale of warrant consideration by an EIA.

Cumulation with other development

A screening opinion should be adopted on its own merits, and on the basis of what is being proposed, however, in judging whether the effects of a development are likely to be significant, regard should be had to the possible cumulative effects with any existing or approved development.

Your supporting information provides details of a number of planning permissions in close proximity to the development site. This could result in a number of large scale development being brought forward at the same time in close proximity to each other.

In particular, this could result in cumulative impacts from construction traffic, noise and air quality during the construction phase. Although this would result in some impacts, these are not considered to be of more than local significance and would be short term and would largely be confined to the construction phase of the development.

These impacts can be suitably mitigated through coordinated management of the highways together measures to manage air quality and noise (such as dust suppression measures, not leaving vehicles idle, silencers on equipment and appropriate working hours).

In terms of the operational phases of the development, it is considered that the impacts would be less significant and would be similar in nature to the surrounding area. There is no onsite parking with this development, due to the highly sustainable location, and therefore limited traffic and air quality impacts on the surrounding area.

Use of natural resources

The site is not known to contain any natural resources. In addition, given the scale of the development, it is not believed that a development of this nature would require any excessive use of natural resources in the construction process that are in short supply.

It is noted within your supporting information that any natural resources that would be needed would be minimised through sustainable design and construction. In particular, energy efficient measures, in terms of use of all electric systems (to take advantage of the decarbonising grid), water and waste minimisation through recycling, would be employed throughout the construction and operational phases of the development.

It is therefore considered the use of natural resources would not be significant in respect of this development and therefore does not warrant consideration by an EIA.

Production of waste

Developments of this scale would inevitably create waste both in the construction and operational phases of the development.

During the construction phase, waste would be minimised given there are no structures to demolish. Whilst there would be site excavation, and therefore material needing to be removed off site, this would be done in accordance with the relevant regulations in relation to the disposal and treatment of waste (particularly contaminated waste).

I note the site does not present any specific challenges in this regard that are significant, unusual, complex or any more than local significance.

Once the development becomes operational, the commercial building would generate waste. It is anticipated that the impacts of this are predictable and of no more than local significance. A large amount of waste that would be generated would be able to be recycled and therefore minimising the amount of waste that would have to go to landfill. It is considered that any waste that does have to go to landfill would be predictable and would not warrant consideration by an EIA.

On the basis of the above, whilst waste would be created at the development, this would be minimised through careful management of the construction and demolition process along with having a clear management strategy for when the development is operational.

As such, I consider that the production of waste would not be significant, localised in nature and predictable and therefore do not require consideration by an EIA.

Pollution and nuisances

The development, both from the construction process and the operational phases of the development, are not likely to give rise to any pollutants which are hazardous, toxic or noxious. However, there would be dust, noise, vibrations and traffic from these phases which require consideration.

In terms of the construction phase, there would be dust, noise and vibrations from the breaking of the ground and site excavation along with the use of plant and machinery.

In addition, construction vehicles would generate traffic with HGVs using the local highway network. This would result in noise, disturbance and emissions in the local area which could give rise to disruption to nearby residents and have an impact on local air quality conditions.

Vehicles would need to travel along main routes which contain a mixture of commercial and residential developments. Vehicle movements are likely to be noticeable to local residents and businesses in these areas. The characteristics of the local highway network provide direct access onto the main routes minimising disruption in the local area.

Such effects would only be temporary in nature for the duration of the construction period and therefore predictable and do not require consideration by an EIA.

In terms of the operational phases of the development, the site would not contain and parking and vehicle movements would be limited to servicing. This would minimise any significant impacts on local air quality over and above existing conditions. There would be space for cycle stands internally and externally to the building together with being in walking distance to public transport nodes.

I consider that there would be noticeable impacts from noise, vibrations and traffic from the construction and operational sides of the development which could give rise to some short term disruption in the local area (from the construction phase) and predictable and manageable and in terms of the operational phase. Such impacts are therefore not considered to be of a scale which is more than local significance and therefore do not warrant consideration as part of an EIA.

Risk of accidents

The main risks in terms of a development of this nature are the contamination of land and/or water to the canal from spillages and leak. However, it is not considered that the construction or the operational stages of the development pose a significant risk in this regard given the existing conditions at the site and the substances that are likely to be used, particularly in the construction process. Appropriate mitigation can be put in place during construction to minimise the impact on the canal.

It is considered that given the scale and nature of the development, such impacts are not likely to be of more than local significance, short in duration and predictable. In addition, the development is not likely to give rise to any risks to human health from dangerous substances.

Location of development

Existing land use

The development site is considered to be previously developed land and is currently used as a construction compound. The site is largely bare ground with a small amount of ephemeral short perennial having developed on the site edges.

The site is not located in a conservation area, the Shudehill conservation area is immediately adjacent to the site as are a number of listed buildings.

The proximity of the listed buildings would mean that they are viewed in the same context as the development proposal and would therefore require consideration within the planning submission. It is noted from your supporting information that the impacts to the heritage assets would be similar to those considered by the previous application resulting in a degree of change to the setting to some of the buildings. The magnitude of these impacts would not be considered to be significant enough to warrant consideration by an EIA in this instance.

There is known archaeology at the site and your screening request is accompanied by relevant information in this regard which demonstrates that the archaeology is worthy of investigation and recording. However, it is considered that it is of no more than local significance and therefore do not warrant consideration by an EIA.

The site is located within flood zone 1 '*low risk to flooding*', however, the site does fall within the Manchester critical drainage area and is located in close proximity to the Canal and affects the Lrk in Culvert. Whilst there would be some minor impacts from the development on the surface water run off it is not considered that the impacts would be significant in view of the scale of the development and the limited amount of hard surface around the sites. I note a drainage strategy would be prepared as part of the proposal would be devise any mitigation in this regard including consideration of sustainable drainage systems.

There is historical evidence of land contamination at the sites. Made ground is present at the site and there is also potential to impact on controlled waters. Ground gas is also noted as a potential risk albeit a low one. The development proposal does not warrant consideration by an EIA on this basis given that the contamination levels are no more than local significance and suitable mitigation can be prepared.

There are nearby residential buildings in close proximity to the development sites. However, given the urban context of the surrounding area, it is considered that any development of this site would be compatible with the use of surrounding sites.

There are also likely to be impacts from noise from the nearby tram tracks and tram station. Given the commercial nature of the buildings proposed, these impacts are likely to minimise through the construction and acoustic insulation of the building.

Overall, it is considered that the development sites would have some impacts on the heritage assets and the visual amenity of the area along with impacting on drainage, ground conditions and biodiversity. However, these impacts are considered to be predictable and are not considered to be of significance to require consideration as part of an EIA.

Relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area

The site is not known to contain any natural resources that would be affected by the development.

Absorption capacity of the natural environment

The sites are not designated for its ecological interest and there are no international or nationally protected sites near to the development site.

The removal of the limited vegetation on site may result in short term, but predictable, disruption to habitats for birds and bats. However, the sites are not known for their ecological value and therefore such impacts can be managed as part of the process and would therefore not require consideration by an EIA.

The development site falls within the Manchester City Centre Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Whilst the construction and operational phases are likely to generate vehicles movements that would release emissions into the atmosphere, along with dust from the construction process, it is not considered that this would be significant and

detrimental to the environment in the long term with such impacts being predictable and manageable.

In terms of the occupation of the development, it is noted that there would be no car parking associated with the development with cycle provision and travel planning measures to promote the sustainable location. This would minimise and significant impacts on local air quality conditions by minimising vehicle emissions at the site.

The impact on the climate would further be minimised through the overall energy efficiency of the building fabric and consideration other other renewable energy technologies. The building would be entirely electric and the carbon reduction from the building usage would improve as the grid decarbonises. New tree planting, landscaping and public realm together with sustainable drainage systems would ensure that the impact on climate change would be minimised. I note appropriate details would be prepared to support the application in this regard and therefore considered The impact of the building on the environment and predictable and would not warrant consideration by an EIA.

Overall, it is considered that the impacts on the natural environment would be of no more than local significance from the operational aspects of the development and the impacts from the construction phase can be carefully managed to minimise any impacts on and nearby sensitive receptors. On that basis the development is unlikely to give rise to any significant impacts and therefore consideration by an EIA is not considered necessary.

Characteristics of the potential impact

There would be no transfrontier impact as a result of the development and impacts of the development are local in nature.

The site clearance, and the erection of the proposed development, would result in a permanent change to the appearance of the site which would only be reversed if the developments were to be removed. The visual impacts of the new development, particularly from the scale, would alter the visual amenity of the site and how it is viewed in the local area. In addition, there would be associated impacts on the heritage value of nearby listed buildings. However, it is considered that such changes are of no more than local significance with the development reflecting the scale, height, form and materiality of buildings in the local area.

There would be noise, vibrations and traffic from the construction and operational phases of the development along with associated impacts on the local highway network when servicing the development site. However, I consider these impacts are not of a magnitude of more than local significance and therefore do not warrant consideration by an EIA.

In terms of the duration, frequency and reversibility of the impacts, it is acknowledged that the scale of the construction activity, along with the operational phases, would have a local impact on the area that would be greater than the current land use which is vacant.

However, the construction activities would be short term, predictable and temporary in nature. When the development is complete there would be a permanent change in the visual amenity of the area which could only be reserved if the building was to be demolished.

On that basis, I do not consider that impacts from the development would be of more than local significance and therefore do not require consideration by an EIA.

Paragraph 58 of Appendix 2 of the NPPG (Screening Checklist)

Paragraph 58, contained within appendix 2 of the NPPG, provides a screening checklist as to which types of cases in which an EIA is more likely to be required for particular types of developments.

This goes on to state that an EIA is unlikely to be required for the redevelopment of land unless the new development is on a significant greater scale than the previous use, or the types of impact are of a markedly different nature or there is a high level of contamination.

For sites which have not previously been intensively developed the following criteria is relevant:

- (i) area of the scheme is more than 5 hectares; or
- (ii) it would provide a total of more than 10,000 m² of new commercial floorspace; or
- (iii) the development would have significant urbanising effects in a previously non-urbanised area (e.g. a new development of more than 1,000 dwellings).

The site has been previously development, however, it has been vacant for many years in preparation from development. As such, there would be a change in the scale of activities taking place at the site and there nature from the addition of the commercial floor space. However, the site is located in the city centre in an area where significant change and redevelopment is expected to take place and is supported by appropriate infrastructure in this regard. Whilst the sites are contaminated they are considered to be of low to moderate risk in this regard.

Mitigation if development is not EIA development 'General Provisions relating to Screenings' Under Part 2 Regulation 5

Regulation 5 (5) (b) and paragraph 18 of the NPPG states "if it is determined that proposed development is not EIA development, state any features of the proposed development and measures envisaged to avoid, or prevent what might otherwise have been, significant adverse effects on the environment".

As detailed above it is considered that the potential impacts from a development of this nature are as follows:

- Traffic and transport;
- Historic Environment and Visual Impact;
- Air Quality;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Wind;
- Ground Conditions;
- Water resources and drainage; and
- Cumulative effects.

It is considered that whilst some there would be environmental impacts associated with this development, these can be suitably mitigated against. This is detailed below:

- Traffic and Transport –Traffic and highway implications from the construction aspects of the site can be mitigated through a highway management plan being implemented for the duration of the construction works. There would be minimal impact from the operation of the development as there would be no on site car parking together with an effective travel plan and cycle provision to take advantage of the city centre location.
- Historic Environment and Visual Impact – The development is located in an area where there are a number of heritage assets including, listed buildings and other non-designated heritage assets. A heritage assessment and targeted archaeology would consider this further. Any heritage considerations are considered to be of no more than local significance. The site does not contain any green infrastructure. It is acknowledged that the openness of the site would alter as a result of the development and its scale. The development would suitably mitigate against any visual harm through careful high quality design and change in massing of the buildings which can be considered through a supporting design statements and heritage impact appraisal. As such the proposal does not warrant any consideration by EIA.
- Air quality – Mitigation can be put in place to minimise impact on local air quality during the construction through a dust suppression strategy and reducing vehicle emissions through not leaving construction vehicles idle. The impact on local air quality would be minimised during the operation of the development by the no car parking on site strategy, promotion of the travel plan and ensure adequate ventilation is installed in the buildings to ensure existing air quality conditions and mitigated and minimise the impact on the occupants of the development.
- Noise and vibration – The proposal would generate a degree of noise from comings and goings in the local area both during the construction and operations of the development. Mitigation can be put in place during the construction in the form of a construction management strategy. For the occupation of the development, the buildings would be acoustically insulated and the comings and goings would be commensurate with local area.
- Wind – The impact on the wind environment can be considered through appropriate evidence with the planning submission together with appropriate mitigation measures.
- Ground conditions – The land is not complex in this regard and mitigation can be put in place in the form of a remediation strategy to deal with any contamination found.
- Water resources – The proposal would not utilise any resources which are in short supply. There would also be a drainage strategy for the site which would ensure that surface water is managed effectively as part of the development.

CONCLUSION

This response is based on the letter of the 8 June 2022 from Ms Rachel Poole of Deliotte.

It is concluded that this development would have some impact on the surrounding area. However, it has been judged that these would not be significant to warrant a formal Environmental Impact Assessment. Therefore, the opinion of the City Council, as Local Planning Authority, is that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required in this instance.

This screening opinion relates to the requirements of an Environmental Impact Assessment only and does not imply or confer any approval of such a proposal.

I trust this information is of some assistance to you. Should you require anything further please do not hesitate to contact **Jennifer Atkinson**.

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of the Deputy Director of Planning.

Deputy Director of Planning