

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: Dear Planning Officer,

I am writing to formally object to the current planning application for the redevelopment of Chorlton Precinct. While I support the principle of regenerating the site, I believe the proposed development conflicts with several key Manchester City Council policies and frameworks, and risks undermining the character, inclusivity, and sustainability of Chorlton's district centre.

1. Conflict with Affordable Housing Policy

Manchester's Local Plan and housing strategy require that new developments deliver a minimum of 30% affordable housing, with a strong emphasis on social rent. The Chorlton Precinct proposal falls short of this target, offering only 49 social-rented units and 4 discounted market homes out of 262 total dwellings. The remainder are market-sale units, contingent on external grant funding. This not only fails to meet policy requirements but also introduces uncertainty around delivery. In a time of acute housing need, especially for families and lower-income residents, this shortfall is unacceptable and contrary to the council's commitment to inclusive growth.

2. 10 Storeys too High

The proposed buildings, ranging from six to ten storeys, are entirely incompatible with the

established architectural character of Chorlton. The area is predominantly composed of Victorian and Edwardian-era buildings-modest in height, rich in detail, and defined by pitched roofs, bay windows, and brickwork that reflects a human scale and historic charm. Introducing monolithic, flat-roofed apartment blocks of up to ten storeys would dramatically alter the visual landscape, dwarfing surrounding structures and disrupting the cohesive streetscape that gives Chorlton its distinct identity. This level of massing is more suited to city centre developments and fails to respect the suburban context and conservation principles that underpin Manchester's Local Plan. Moreover, such scale risks overshadowing public spaces, creating wind tunnel effects, and diminishing the pedestrian experience. A development of this magnitude would not only clash with the built heritage of the area but also undermine the sense of place that residents and visitors value deeply.

The height of the flats needs to be descaled and to be in keeping with the local area.

3. Loss of Green Infrastructure and Public Realm Quality

The proposed development involves the removal of mature trees and offers minimal replacement green space. While some new trees are proposed, this does not compensate for the ecological, aesthetic, and climate benefits of the existing canopy. The scheme lacks integrated biodiversity measures, sustainable drainage systems, or meaningful public open space. This contradicts Manchester's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and the Local Plan's emphasis on climate resilience and environmental enhancement.

4. Inadequate Community Engagement and Transparency

A development of this scale and significance should be shaped through meaningful, transparent, and inclusive engagement with the community it affects. Unfortunately, I feel that the consultation process for the Chorlton Precinct redevelopment has been inadequate and superficial. When it was announced that the precinct was going to be redeveloped, it was advertised as a redevelopment of the shopping centre. However, it then transpired this was not the case and it was a cover for introducing flats. The final design, characterised by dense, uniform apartment blocks, feels generic and disconnected from Chorlton's unique identity as a vibrant, low-rise, mixed-use neighbourhood with a strong independent spirit. This stands in stark contrast to successful planning models such as Shrewsbury's Big Town Plan and Exeter's City Centre Vision, where extensive public engagement shaped developments that reflect local heritage, values, and aspirations. In Chorlton, the lack of genuine co-design risks delivering a scheme that feels imposed rather than embraced, eroding trust in the planning process and missing the opportunity to create a place that truly belongs to the community.

5. Loss of a Central Community Shopping Hub and Retail Provision

The precinct is located in the heart of Chorlton and like all towns, needs a centre that functions as a vital community hub, offering not just retail but a space for social interaction, accessibility, and everyday convenience. Its removal, without a clear and inclusive replacement strategy, risks fragmenting the neighbourhood. A successful district centre must serve all members of the community and not just new residents in high-density flats.

The current redevelopment proposals fail to adequately support Chorlton's independent business community, which is a defining feature of the area's identity and economy. The precinct provided space for a diverse mix of small retailers, many of whom have served the community for decades. These businesses have been forced to close, and it is doubtful they will return to Chorlton, such as Frosts, Adam's greengrocers, Martin's bakery, and the Arts Market.

The proposed reduction in retail units from 22 to just 11 represents a significant loss of commercial space. Furthermore, the lack of accessible parking, and absence of dedicated community or market space will make it harder for small businesses to thrive. A successful regeneration should enhance-not displace-the local commercial ecosystem, and this proposal falls short of that goal.

6. Loss of Car Parking and Impact on Accessibility

The proposed redevelopment will result in a significant reduction in publicly accessible car parking spaces within the heart of Chorlton. The existing precinct currently provides essential parking for visitors, shoppers, patients attending nearby medical practices, and those with mobility challenges. Its removal will place increased pressure on surrounding residential streets, many of which already suffer from congestion and limited parking availability. This will not only inconvenience local residents but also deter visitors from accessing Chorlton's independent businesses and services, undermining the viability of the district centre. The lack of a clear alternative parking strategy demonstrates a failure to plan for inclusive access. In a neighbourhood that prides itself on being welcoming and accessible, the loss of central parking without mitigation risks excluding older people, disabled individuals, and families with young children, and could lead to increased traffic, frustration, and environmental harm on surrounding streets.

I understand that parking usage surveys have been conducted for the existing precinct car park, and it is likely that the developers will use the reported low usage figures to support a narrative that the facility is no longer needed. However, as a long-standing resident who knows the area intimately and uses the car park occasionally to take my husband to his doctor's appointments (he has mobility issues but has no blue badge), I can attest that these figures do not reflect the true demand. Since the car park was privatised approximately ten years ago, it has been plagued by persistent issues-most notably, unreliable payment machines that frequently fail to accept coins and an app-based system that doesn't work properly. These problems have led to a high number of fines and a general reluctance among residents and visitors to use the facility. As a result, many

drivers now choose to park on surrounding residential streets to avoid the hassle, contributing to congestion and parking stress in areas that are already under pressure. The apparent underuse of the car park is therefore not a reflection of lack of need, but rather a consequence of poor management and accessibility.

Earlier this year, I attended a local meeting where representatives from the development team were present to answer questions from residents. During the discussion, they suggested that residents could use the Morrisons supermarket car park as an alternative to the precinct's parking, which they do not intend to replace. This suggestion is deeply concerning. It is inappropriate for a developer to advocate the use of a private business's car park, one that is intended for Morrisons customers, as a substitute for public parking that serves a much broader community purpose. Morrisons has not publicly agreed to this arrangement, and it is unreasonable to assume they would support increased, long-term use of their facilities without formal agreement. The reluctance of the developers to provide adequate parking for both the public and the occupants of the proposed 262 flats reflects a lack of commitment to inclusive access and responsible planning. This oversight will inevitably increase pressure on surrounding residential streets, which are already congested, and further diminish the accessibility of Chorlton's district centre.

It also needs to be noted that on-street parking on the high street has recently been removed due to new cycle lanes. This is also adding to parking pressures on surrounding residential streets.

Chorlton is a destination that attracts many visitors from outside the immediate area, including those who do not have access to convenient public transport links. While the neighbourhood is well-served by tram and bus routes to Manchester city centre, connections to other parts of Greater Manchester, such as Stretford, Fallowfield, and surrounding suburb, are limited or indirect. This makes car travel a necessary option for many visitors. For example, I have relatives who live in the countryside near Warrington who regularly drive to Chorlton specifically to visit its specialist shops, such as the well-regarded fishmonger Out of the Blue. Public transport is simply not a viable option for them due to the lack of direct links. The removal of accessible parking in the precinct will make it significantly harder for these visitors to continue supporting local businesses, and risks reducing the diversity and reach of Chorlton's customer base.

7. Pressure on Local Services and Infrastructure

Chorlton already has a number of housing and flat developments in progress, such as Albany Road, the site of the old Irish Club and the site where the swimming baths used to be. The introduction of a further 262 new residential units will significantly increase the local population, placing further strain on essential public services that are already under pressure.

Chorlton's GP surgeries, dental practices, and schools are widely reported to be oversubscribed, with residents often facing long waits for appointments and limited availability of school places. The proposed development does not include any new healthcare or educational facilities, nor does

it outline how existing services will be supported to accommodate the influx of new residents. Without strategic investment in infrastructure, this increase in demand risks reducing the quality and accessibility of services for both new and existing residents. It may also exacerbate inequalities, particularly for vulnerable groups who rely most heavily on timely access to healthcare and education. A responsible development must be accompanied by a clear and funded plan to expand local capacity in line with population growth.

8. Financial Context of P.J. Livesey and Implications for the Development

P.J. Livesey Group is a privately held company with no external investment backing. Financial records for its subsidiary show a relatively low cash balance and a working capital deficit, suggesting limited liquidity and tight operational margins. In this context, the Chorlton Precinct redevelopment may be driven primarily by the need to generate cash flow through the sale of market flats, rather than by a commitment to delivering affordable housing, public realm improvements, or community benefits. This raises concerns that the development is being used to fill a financial gap in the developer's balance sheet, potentially at the expense of local priorities and policy compliance. A scheme of this scale must be guided by public interest-not private financial necessity.

9. Concerns About Decision-Making and Representation

I am also concerned that local decision-making around the Chorlton Precinct redevelopment is being disproportionately influenced by a preference for high-density residential development, rather than a balanced approach that reflects community needs. While elected councillors are expected to represent the interests of their constituents, many residents feel that their voices-particularly those advocating for a retained and revitalised community shopping centre-have been sidelined in favour of developer-led priorities. The emphasis on delivering large volumes of flats, without adequate provision for retail, public realm, or infrastructure, suggests a disconnect between policy objectives and lived experience. This perceived bias risks undermining public trust in the planning process and reinforces the need for transparent, inclusive engagement that genuinely reflects the diverse needs of Chorlton's population.

Conclusion

In light of the above, I respectfully urge the planning committee to reject the current application and require a revised proposal that aligns with Manchester City Council's policies on affordable housing, green infrastructure, retail vitality including parking, community engagement, and appropriate scale. Chorlton deserves a development that enhances its character, supports its diverse community, and contributes meaningfully to a sustainable future.