



## **Press release from the Castlefield Forum**

15 February 2017

### **Secretary of State considers taking Castlefield planning application out of City Council's hands**

Castlefield Estates and the Castlefield Forum, are hoping a Public Inquiry could stop Renaker Build from constructing two towers (one 21 storeys and the other 12 storeys) in the historic Castlefield Basin in Manchester city centre.

Conservationists argue that the historic area, which contains the world's first passenger railway, the world's first cut canal, is arguably the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and is famous for its low rise red brick warehouses will be blighted by two light coloured high rise blocks. They have been campaigning for months for a lower rise scheme that is more respectful of the heritage area in which it sits, and have been supported by more than 500 local residents and are also asking the Mayoral candidates and local councillors for their support.

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid, has been asked by Castlefield Estates to 'call in' the planning application for 2-4 Chester Road that was recommended for approval by Manchester City Council following which the city's planning committee voted to approve it on 9 February 2017. It will be taken out of the hands of the local authority, if he considers it raises issues of national significance. This would lead to a Public Inquiry to consider it and make a recommendation to the Government.

The group want the planning application 'called in' as they consider this a matter of national importance. Grounds for 'calling it in' include:

- The area is a nationally significant conservation area;

- Key comments made by Historic England comments relating to design and impact were ignored by planning officers and the planning committee
- The cladding materials, which inform an assessment of its impact were not considered by councillors and were instead delegated to planning officers
- There has been a breach of planning law as a key question wasn't addressed - "does this preserve and enhance the conservation area?"
- the findings of an independent heritage impact assessment were not taken into account

Sarah Ramsbottom, managing director of Castlefield Estates said:

"We believe there was a clear breach of planning law here and the heritage implications simply weren't scrutinised properly by Manchester City Council, who clearly believe in development in the city, irrespective of its impact on its heritage assets.

The planning committee failed to scrutinise the planning law that relates to this application and far too much reliance was placed on the heritage assessment prepared by the developer, Renaker Build that downplayed its impact on a sensitive Conservation Area, one of the oldest in Manchester. This is a grave error on the part of the local authority.

A previous development in the area, on a much lower scale, has been rejected at Public Inquiry level. We're not against development on this site, in fact we positively encourage it, but it must be the right development so we don't ruin this precious place that is so much part of our national heritage."

Carol Middleton, Chair of the Castlefield Forum, said: "At Thursday's planning meeting the vote was 5 to 2, with several abstentions, in favour of the Renaker proposals which was very unusual as these decisions tend to be unanimous. We were encouraged by this and felt we should take the next step and call it in. Castlefield is where the industrial revolution began and we have the first transport hub where the canals and the railways met. This is an incredibly historically significant place and the current scheme will change the canal basin forever. We simply can't let this happen."

Anyone who believes this planning application should be 'called in' because it is a matter of national importance should write to the NPCU at [npcu@communities.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:npcu@communities.gsi.gov.uk) saying why they believe it to be the case and quoting planning application reference number 113870/FO/2016. For more information visit [www.ourcastlefield.co.uk](http://www.ourcastlefield.co.uk). For up-dates follow @ourcastlefield on Twitter.

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Note to editors

**The Castlefield Forum** is a voluntary group set up by residents to help improve the Castlefield area of Manchester city centre for those who live, work and visit it. The Forum has more than 430 members, 2,300 Twitter followers and more than 780 followers on Facebook. For more information visit [www.ourcastlefield.co.uk](http://www.ourcastlefield.co.uk) or follow @ourcastlefield on Twitter.