

Heights Justification and changes in approach to gateway locations

1. The process leading to the masterplan is summarised in the Randall Thorp TVIA (C – 08). The approach to building height was an iterative process based on context. The logic of those paragraphs is obvious on any site visit.
 - a. “Up to 6 storeys” on the periphery allows for the transition from the suburban (2 – 3 storey) both beyond Trafford Bar, around Hornby Road and Barlow Road and at Great Stone Road - in the case of the latter up to about the maximum height of the LCC stadium spreading into the southwestern parts of the former Kellogg’s site to “fit” with the stadium and the Town Hall. This approach is considered to be consistent with established principles of stepping down in height to achieve an acceptable relationship with existing buildings. The “up to 6 storeys” is itself considered to represent transformational change to the prevailing heights in these areas;
 - b. Up to 12 storeys then covers what might be called the mid-zone areas – mediating between the lower buildings and the tallest zones around Oakland House and on the northern edge of the GMP site;
 - c. Over 12 storeys relates to a cluster around Oakland House, which at 15 storeys is the tallest building in the Civic Quarter, and a second cluster on the northern edge of the GMP site.

2. The overall logic on building heights is clear – with height rising up from Great Stone Road to the height of the LCC stadium, rising up through the former Kellogg’s site to the peak around Oakland House before falling off to the Bowling Club and to the lower levels beyond at Trafford Bar. To the north (including White City) heights here are generally up to 12 storeys given the lack of significant constraints on the northern boundary of the AAP except in the vicinity of the gates. To the northeast, the GMP site can be up to 12 storeys for the same reason, with scope for taller buildings in the northern part of the former GMP site, where the height will form a relationship with existing tall buildings across the A56 at Exchange Quay in Salford.

3. The issue for the inspector is whether the height proposals are sound – and here that means “justified” and “consistent with national policy”. The Council has an “appropriate” heights “strategy” based on proportionate evidence. This is not a case of suppression – or of being rigid. It is of introducing a framework for transformational change with generous ranges for appropriate heights in appropriate locations. There is significant flexibility for developers to optimise height within those ranges through innovative design and placemaking. But the headline parameters are appropriate – developments which are well designed and fully follow the tall building policy will be able to be towards the upper ends of the spectrum in the various height parameter areas - subject of course to appropriate variation in scale and massing as required by the Design Code, and as shown on the illustrative neighbourhood masterplans. Developers will always want more flexibility but that put forward is an appropriate strategy and is amply able to deliver in excess of the 2500/4000 residential units and 50,000 sqm. of workspace.

4. As to the change to the Trafford Bar gateway approach the logic is as follows:

- a. The area around Trafford Bar includes a number of low rise existing buildings including Trafford Hall Hotel, the Trafford Bar Metrolink station building, Morgan's Bar and the cluster of existing low rise buildings at the junction of Talbot Road and Chester Road. The height of new buildings needs to be sensitive to this context, and so this location is not considered to be an appropriate one for buildings over 6 storeys in height.
- b. As a Gateway Location, priority is given to the provision of high quality public realm, pedestrian movement and wayfinding at this entrance to the Civic Quarter, hence the use of the phrase 'Gateway Locations' rather than the previous references to gateway opportunities and landmark buildings. The identification of a gateway location does not translate into acceptance of a tall building. The intention is that the suitability of each tall building would be assessed at development management stage (subject to the limitations of the Building Heights Parameter Plan and the height maxima it contains).
- c. Previous iterations of the height parameter plan have only ever shown a maximum of 6 storeys around the Trafford Bar location.
- d. The vision for the Civic Quarter from an urban design perspective is to provide variation in height across the area, to focus the tallest buildings in clusters around just two locations (GMP and Oakland House), with mid-height (up to 12 storeys) in those locations that are considered to be able to take that height, and up to 6 storeys around the more sensitive sites / areas.
- e. The up to 12 storey parameter height has been extended from the Regulation 18 and 19 stage height parameter plan to include the Audi workshop site and part of the Bingo 3000 site (the car park), but this increase does not extend to the sites fronting Talbot Road or the eastern edge of the A5067 Chester Road because of the sensitivity of those sites. Sites along the Talbot Road frontage at its eastern end, including the Bingo 3000 building are quite deliberately included within the Eastern Neighbourhood because of the fragmented but rich tapestry of historic buildings in this area. Conversely, the Northern Neighbourhood, the boundary to which sits behind the Talbot Road frontage, is identified as an area that can take significantly greater height.