

12th August 2013

Dear Manchester City Council,

Re: proposals for communal bins

We, the many residents of Haydn Avenue, Ruskin Avenue, Playfair St, Acomb St, Maine Rd 1-8, Great Western Street (backing onto Ruskin Avenue) and Moss Lane East (between Fairbank and Maine Rd), vehemently oppose the introduction of communal bins in our neighbourhood. Having seen the squalor and filth that they have brought where implemented elsewhere in the Great Western Street area, we are shocked at the disgusting conditions in which some of our fellow Moss Siders are being forced to live when a communal bin is placed near their home. They are a magnet for fly-tippers and vermin.

Please see the attached photos (in appendix) as evidence of the disgraceful health hazards that are caused by the communal bins in the Great Western Street area, and the misery that they cause for those who live near them. You will know about this, because of the many complaints and the petition sent by residents in Beresford St. area asking for their wheelie bins back. Residents whose homes border these bins, report that they have brought them vermin, stench and misery. ***Some report not being able to use their back yards, or open their kitchen windows. See attached photo appendix for quotes from residents near existing communal bins.***

We are exasperated to read in the papers that when residents have complained about communal bin issues the council claims "people are not using them properly." It is inevitable that in rows of 20 or more houses, particularly with a transient population (and hence less of a community feel) there will be some who abuse the system, creating filthy living conditions for others. ***This is precisely why it is not a good idea in the first place.*** The council cannot possibly control how they are used, or what goes in them. There is nothing that the clean, tidy residents can do, other than be victims of their neighbours' behaviour and lack of council action. By contrast, when a neighbour puts their individual bin out on the wrong day, or fly tips, they can be asked to return the rubbish to their property, as often happens here, which keeps our environment clean.

Our photos (see appendix) taken ***just 2 days*** after the communal bin collection showed that 58% of the communal bin alleys had bins that were already overflowing, and/or had rubbish dumped alongside them. In other words, the majority will be attracting vermin and will smell for most of the week. ***5 days*** after collection 90% were overflowing and/or surrounded by rubbish. In comparison, photos taken ***9 days*** after the wheelie bin collections showed the majority of the individual bin alleys were STILL free from dumped rubbish, with very few bins abandoned on the pavement and no overflowing bins. Whilst the individual bin system is not perfect, in summary, most of the residents in our streets will enjoy a vermin free, stench free alley for most of the time.

There are 4 particularly messy alleys in these streets that a group of neighbours and landlord are working to improve through identifying those not sticking to the system and working with them to get it right. This has had some success and will continue to do so. More households are now recycling as direct result of this.

Communal Bins Discourage Recycling

When people know their general waste bin has to last 2 weeks it is necessary for them to recycle, otherwise rubbish will pile up in their own back yard, hence the present individual bin system encourages recycling. When people know they have the option of placing their rubbish elsewhere away from their home, they might be less motivated to recycle. We found that vast amounts of recyclable materials dumped around the communal bins mixed in with general waste.

Communal Bins are a Fire and Security Hazard

Acomb St alone has had at least 5 wheelie bin fires over the past few years, with one causing more than £1000 of damage to a family home (148 Acomb St.) As a result, most residents now keep their bins in their back yards. Not all do, but the council should be urging people to keep their rubbish in their back yards until collection day, in order to decrease arson risk, not creating permanent receptacles up against people's homes. Who knows what flammable substances could go placed in these? Furthermore, there are concerns that the bins could make it easier for criminals to enter backyards by assisting them climb over the yard walls.

High Rate of Short Term Tenants Mean Alley Gates Will Not Solve the Problem

Whilst gating the alleys will help prevent fly tipping from outsiders and prevent people sorting through bins, it won't solve the problem of "house clearances." These particular streets have a very high rate of short term tenants. For example, in the 47 houses backing onto the alley between Haydn/ Ruskin (from Maine Rd up to Acomb St) there can be as many as 80 short term tenants, usually students. Most leave over the summer months but throughout the year there is coming and going. Whilst many are responsible, quite a few, take little pride in an area they live in so briefly and dispose of everything out into the alley (duvets, clothes, coursework, crockery, etc). In the past week alone, a Great Western Street student had a huge clearout in one alley entrance, and a Haydn Ave landlord emptied out everything into another. Now, as we all have our own bins, we still were able to dispose of our general waste. Had we have had the communal bin system, these bins would have been filled by just one person, leaving the other households with no bin for the rest of the week. Furthermore, because there were no communal bins to fill, residents were able to identify the culprits or their landlords by their mess, and both piles of fly tipping were collected by those responsible within 48 hours. The high rate of transient tenants makes communal bins highly unsuitable in these immediate streets. The presence of communal bins will discourage the more responsible tenants who are moving on, to go to the tip, since there is now such a large bin nearby.

We know that in some communities, communal bins have worked well. However, due to proximity and demographics, we feel that the failure of the system in the Great Western St area is a predictor of how it will be here, compounded by the high rate of transient tenants, which reduces the community feel.

Many of the potential problems that we have suggested will occur in our area appear to be very real, as they affect communal bin areas already. The issues are documented in Manchester City Council's

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee meeting minutes. See attached appendix with our comments in orange boxes over council document extracts.

We want the council to work with us in tackling the fly-tipping and rubbish here. Sufficient numbers here are committed to working to improve our environment and encourage one another to recycle.

Communal bins will work against us. The vermin ridden, noxious, putrid, vile mess they have caused to our fellow Moss Siders has no place near our homes. We therefore insist that Manchester City Council does not impose these flawed measures upon us.

Communal bins are not a long term solution in this area and will not be accepted here.