

Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

Report to: District Centres Subgroup – 28 November 2019

Subject: Underserved and Emerging Communities

Report of: Strategic Director (Growth and Development)

Summary

The report considers underserved communities in three categories:-

- communities that surround an existing district centre which is underperforming
- communities without reasonable access to a district or local neighbourhood centre
- emerging communities without reasonable access to shops and other community facilities or to a designated district centre

It summarises key findings to date including the latest trend in the District Centre Survey: Planning Use Classes and describes the on-going centre audit which has evolved from the IPM district centre Vital and Viable pilots.

The report also finds that the majority of Manchester residents live within walking distance of a centre (taken to be 1km), however residents in Higher Blackley and Charlestown on average live over 1.5km from a district centre.

New communities expected to emerge over the next 15 to 20 years are mainly concentrated in the extended city centre area. These areas are not currently underserved but the level of provision of shops and other services will need to be kept under review as communities grow.

As part of the Local Plan review, analysis will continue to establish whether there is a need for new district centres and/or amendments to current boundaries. However, following the completion of the centre audit and policy recommendations, many of the priorities of the liveable and loveable approach will not be delivered through the planning process but will require proactive steps to be taken and the active engagement of local communities.

Recommendations

To note the report and to agree that:-

- officers carry out further analysis into the performance of centres to inform policy as part of the development of the Local Plan
- the level of provision of shops and other services in emerging communities is planned for proactively through the development of Strategic Regeneration Frameworks.

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Wards affected: All**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

None

1.0 Background

1.1 Previous reports to the District Centre subgroup have set out the work programme the council has endorsed, which aims to consider the most effective policy approach the council and its partners can take to promote successful district centres in Manchester. The work programme has been developed alongside the Institute of Place Management (based at Manchester Metropolitan University), a body with particular interest in the study and promotion of place management techniques.

1.2 A core aspect of the work programme comprised Vital and Viable (V&V) Place Management Pilots in four of Manchester's centres (Chorlton, Gorton, Harpurhey and Northenden). The pilots brought together a centre's stakeholders; key evidence relating to activity and character; and focused on medium and controllable interventions that could be most beneficial for the centre's performance. There are aspects of this process that are clearly aligned with the Our Manchester approach. The council has a key role to play, but the degree to which an ongoing programme of activity can be agreed and delivered is also a function of the level of commitment from other stakeholders and the ongoing support required from the Council.

1.3 With the pilot studies complete the Institute of Place Management (IPM) has been asked to consider district centres across Manchester and provide a methodology for assessing whether Manchester has any current or new communities at risk of being underserved in terms of local district centre service provision.

1.4 District centres are designated in the Manchester Local Plan. The Local Plan is made up of a number of documents and with policies relating to district centres in the Core Strategy, saved Unitary Development Plan policies and the Hot food takeaway Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). In the Core Strategy the key district centre policies are:-

Policy C1, Hierarchy of centres, which states that 'District centres have an essential role in providing key services to the City's neighbourhoods including shopping, commercial, leisure, public and community functions, ensuring that residents can access such services easily. They are also a focus for the City's residential neighbourhoods, providing an important opportunity to define local character

Policy C2, District Centres, which states that 'Development will support thriving district centres, with distinct local character, providing a good range of accessible key services, including retail, health facilities, public services, leisure activities and financial and legal services. Housing will also be considered an appropriate use within District Centres, providing it supports the vitality and viability of the centre.'

1.5 The Hot food takeaway SPD was adopted in 2017 to support the vitality and viability of centres and introduced policy to restrict the density of hot food takeaways within centres.

1.6 A review of Manchester's Local Plan is about to start which will involve a review of district centre policy, taking on board recommendations made through the IPM pilots, including the designation and boundaries of district centres.

2.0 Underserved and emerging communities methodology

2.1 IPM provided a draft methodology to assist in identifying underserved communities and in discussion with IPM, council officers have refined the process. The methodology considers three possible types of underserved communities:-

- communities that surround an existing centre which is underperforming
- communities without reasonable access to a district centre
- emerging communities without reasonable access to shops and other community facilities or to a designated district centre

Current communities

2.2 During a previous stage of the Vital and Viable District Centres project IPM identified two main aspirations for district centres across the city. These are to meet functional needs, or be liveable, and to meet affective needs, or be loveable. Drawing on a major research project, High Street UK 2020, a method for identifying whether a centre met liveable and loveable criteria was established.

Liveable

There are four main criteria to establish whether a centre is liveable:-

- Does the offer meet the everyday, 'convenience' needs of the catchment?
- Are shops and other services open at suitable times?
- Is the centre clean and welcoming?
- Is the centre accessible (by a variety of transport modes), compact and walkable?

Loveable

In addition to the liveable criteria above, there are four main criteria to establish whether a centre is loveable:-

- Is there a central, spatial focus to the centre, like a market or attractive public realm?
- Are there community events and festivals that activate the centre?
- Are there unique attractions or businesses that add character to the centre?
- Is there a place management partnership that takes responsibility for the centre?

2.3 As part of their research IPM have established the most important factors affecting a centre's vitality and viability¹ and a method for investigating the performance of a centre by analysing footfall. As far as possible, officers will use the important factors together with the biennial District Centre planning uses survey, to assess how well each district centre is performing across Manchester. However, the more subjective priorities e.g. feeling safe, being clean and welcoming will not be assessed until a Vital and Viable workshop takes place within the centre and the views of local stakeholders can be sought. A list of loveable and liveable priorities assessed is attached in Appendix 1.

2.4 In addition to the assessment of liveable and loveable priorities, IPM have carried out an analysis of footfall data² in the 5 centres as part of the Vital and Viable pilots and are analysing footfall in a further 5 centres where counters have been installed.

2.5 To consider the proximity of local communities to centres, a review of guidance on recommended walking distances was undertaken. A distance of 2km has been used for many years to define the areas within which facilities are considered accessible on foot. This was based on guidance in Planning Policy Guidance 13 which was withdrawn in 2012. It was replaced with the National Planning Policy Framework which does not provide any specific guidance on walking distances. Recognising this gap in guidance, White Young Green Environment Planning Transport Limited produced a report 'How far do people walk?' in 2015. It concluded that the average walking distance for All Regions excluding London is 1,150m.

2.6 For the purposes of this study, geographical information systems have been used to assess distances 'as the crow flies' and a distance of 1000m has been used as an acceptable walking distance to a district centre. The average distance from resident's homes to the closest district centres in each ward has been assessed. Barriers which may limit walking access such as motorways, rivers and railway lines have also been mapped for information.

2.7 Officers have also reviewed the current population and number of homes served by each centre.

Emerging communities

2.8 Over the next 15 years approximately 50,000 new homes are expected to be built in Manchester. When considering the role and the performance of District Centres the impact of new housing and the resulting increase in population must also be assessed. The methodology, therefore, has also included:-

¹ <http://www.placemanagement.org/media/57742/HSUK2020-End-of-Project-Reportcompressed.pdf>

² <http://www.placemanagement.org/media/99861/monthlysignatureclusteringv45withlondon.pdf>

- Mapped data showing all new housing development expected to be delivered by 2037³
- Projected population growth assessed at ward level to 2030
- Consideration of planned new centres/commercial activity in significant emerging housing developments

3.0 Summary of information to date

3.1 The liveable/loveable audit is an on-going process which will be built up over time as part of the evidence being developed to support new policy on centres in the Local Plan.

3.2 The 2019 Planning District Centre survey is complete. It maps each District Centre showing the type of use in each building including vacancies. The survey is completed every two years so trend data is also analysed. A summary of the Planning District Centre survey is attached in Appendix 2. The key trends since the first survey in 2013 are:-

- Shop provision (A1) has declined slightly but has remained relatively steady in recent surveys
- Financial & professional provision (A2) has declined slowly, partially but not entirely due to change to classification of bookmakers and payday loans to another use class.
- Pubs (A4) have seen a slow decline with some centres having no pubs at all.
- There has been a growth in cafes/ restaurants (A3).
- The percentage of hot food takeaways (A5) has dropped between 2017 and 2019 surveys. This is likely to be due, at least in part, to the adoption of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in March 2017 which introduced policy to restrict the concentration of hot food takeaways.

3.3 Officers are using the planning survey to inform the liveable/loveable audit of centres and are also currently collating information on:-

- social media and other local forms of communication eg radio/newsletters etc
- residents groups
- community events/festivals
- sport/leisure clubs
- trade associations
- other active local groups/partnerships

3.4 The above information will be supplemented with the views of Councillors and local stakeholders both through the roll out of Vital and Viable workshops and consultation on the emerging Local Plan.

³https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/200074/planning/7818/strategic_housing_land_availability_assessment

3.5 Officers have completed the review of data as described in 2.5 to 2.8 above. The full information is included in Appendix 3 and the key findings for current communities are:-

- The majority of Manchester residents (73%) live within 1km of a district centre and over a third (37%) live within 500m.
- Based on census output areas Higher Blackley and Charlestown contain more areas than other wards where residents have to travel over 1km to a district centre. Just over 32% of residents in Higher Blackley and 15% of residents in Charlestown have to travel over 2km to a district centre.
- Other output areas where residents have to travel further than 1km to a district centre are mainly in or adjacent to the city centre.
- Excluding the City Centre, Harpurhey serves the highest number of homes in the city at 18,688. Other centres serving over 13,000 homes are Wythenshawe (17,660), Chorlton (15,865), Cheetham Hill (14,503), Rusholme (13,226) and Withington (13001).
- Wythenshawe and West Wythenshawe combined serve over 28,000 households which is a significant number, particularly as these centres are also the furthest from the city centre.
- Residents need to travel 1.03km on average to reach Harpurhey which is the only district centre requiring residents to travel on average over 1km.
- Middleton (Rochdale BC) and Failsworth (Oldham BC) are the closest centres for some Manchester residents (around 2,600 and 4,500 residents respectively). These centres are 1.87km and 1.29km away from their homes.

3.6 The data in appendix 3 shows that a significant proportion of emerging communities is expected to be concentrated around the extended City Centre area. Population forecasts show the biggest increases in population are expected in Ancoats and Beswick and Deansgate wards. These areas are not currently underserved particularly due to the close proximity of city centre services and retail and services are actively encouraged within new developments. However, the level of provision will need to be kept under review as communities grow.

3.7 The Strategic Regeneration Frameworks for significant developments such as Northern Gateway include proposals for retail and service provision. For example a new centre is planned in the Vauxhall Gardens area of Northern Gateway which will complement neighbouring facilities and will reflect factors such as housing density, access to public transport, open space, health facilities and schools. As the development programme is long term the lessons learnt from the IPM pilots will be taken on board and the retail and services needs will be kept under review as communities develop.

4.0 Discussion and next steps

4.1 The liveable and loveable centre audit is on-going and along will be used to inform the review of centre policy in the Local Plan.

4.2 The majority of Manchester residents live within walking distance of a district centre however residents of Higher Blackley and Charlestown lack adequate access

to a district centre. The role of local neighbourhood centres has not yet been assessed and these may be significant, in particular the larger centres such as Moston Lane and Victoria Avenue, in serving residents without good access to a district centre. As part of the Local Plan review further work is required to assess to what extent local centres may be fulfilling this role. Further work is also required on the impact of barriers such as motorways, railways, and topography to the accessibility of centres.

4.3 Demand on current centres or the need for new centres by emerging communities needs to be kept under review, especially those areas around the city centre and in North Manchester.

4.4 As part of the Local Plan review, analysis will continue to establish whether there is a need for new district centres or amendments to current boundaries. However, following the completion of the centre audit and policy recommendations, many of the priorities of the liveable and loveable approach will not be delivered through the planning process but will require proactive steps to be taken to help create the right conditions to provide the services needed. Within such an approach the active engagement of local communities and other stakeholders is central to successful delivery.