

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Resolution**

**Report to:** Economy Scrutiny Committee - 11 March 2021  
Executive - 17 March 2021

**Subject:** Withington Village Framework Update

**Report of:** Strategic Director - Growth & Development

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**Summary**

This report informs the Executive of the outcome of a public consultation exercise with local residents, businesses and stakeholders, on the draft Withington Village Framework and seeks the Executive's approval of the Framework.

**Recommendations**

The Economy Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment on the report and endorse the recommendations to the Executive

The Executive is recommended to:

- (i) Note and comment on the outcome of the public consultation on the draft Withington Village Framework.
  - (ii) Approve the Withington Village Framework and request that Planning and Highways Committee take the framework update into account as a material consideration when considering planning applications for the area.
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**Wards Affected:** Withington, Old Moat

<b>Environmental Impact Assessment</b> - the impact of the decisions proposed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
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The Framework identifies actions to address carbon emissions by creating a greener healthier environment with improved local facilities, local partnership and collaborative working.
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<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of the contribution to the strategy</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The Framework sets out how Withington Village can contribute to a thriving and sustainable City by diversifying the economy, attracting cultural activities and generating footfall, creating local job opportunities.

A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The Framework sets out how Withington Village can support the growth of local enterprises and innovation.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The Framework identifies the key role of the local partnership structures and collaborative working to bring about the vision, objectives and projects.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The Framework identifies actions to address carbon emissions by creating a greener, healthier environment and more liveable centre.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	The Framework identifies opportunities to improve the public realm, reduce traffic movement, improve access and movement for pedestrians and cyclists within Withington Village.

**Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for**

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

#### **Financial Consequences – Revenue**

None

#### **Financial Consequences – Capital**

None

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**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Institute of Place Management – Vital and Viable Withington, October 2019

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 On 9 September 2020, the Executive endorsed, in principle, the draft Withington Village Framework and requested that the Strategic Neighbourhood Lead (south) undertake a public consultation. This report summarises the outcome of the public consultation on the draft Framework.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Withington Village is a key District Centre in south Manchester which serves the Withington and Old Moat population. It provides a hub for the community and a range of services. It has an active range of community stakeholders who are committed and engaged in the ongoing development of the Village.
- 2.2 In Autumn 2017, Withington Village Regeneration Partnership (WVRP) was established and comprises of local traders, investors and residents, Withington Civic Society, Love Withington Baths, We Are Withington, Manchester City Council, Southway Housing Trust and The Christie Hospital.
- 2.3 In 2017, a bid was submitted by WVRP to the Heritage Lottery Fund for environmental improvements and shop front enhancements in Withington Village. This was followed by a bid in March 2019, in collaboration with Manchester City Council, to the Government's High Street Fund.
- 2.4 Both these bids were unfortunately unsuccessful with Withington Village narrowly missing out in attracting funding. Despite this, WVRP has continued to drive forward aspirations for the development and regeneration of the Village and has achieved notable successes. This has included: supporting local residents to develop a scheme to improve a Pocket Park, establishing pop up cultural activities in vacant buildings, setting up the 'We are Withington' business group, organised 'Withington by night' events, changing opening hours of businesses to when footfall in the centre is strong, and organised the successful 'Withington Walls' crowd funding to brighten up walls and shutters through high quality artwork.
- 2.5 To support this strong partnership working and develop a long-term strategy for Withington Village, the Council commissioned the production of a draft Framework, which incorporated the Institute of Place Management's 'Vital and Viable' report for the Village.
- 2.6 The purpose of the Withington Village Framework is to support existing planning policy by:
- Establishing a vision supported by the community, to guide and inform development decisions
  - Generating confidence in the prospects of the Village to encourage further investment
  - Providing a basis for future funding bids
  - Illustrating through a series of precedent images and layouts how design objectives could be achieved.

The Framework should not be seen as inflexible or prescriptive, nor does it represent a commitment to funding by the Council.

- 2.7 The draft Framework identifies a vision for the Village as a liveable place that meets the needs of its diverse community. It builds on its cultural, physical and heritage assets and seeks to develop these further. New public spaces are proposed along with an improved street environment and movement for pedestrians and cyclists. It was developed through a series of public workshops and stakeholder interviews held in 2019.
- 2.8 The draft Framework articulates how the vision may be achieved based upon the '4R's' of repositioning, reinventing, rebranding and restructuring. It includes strategies for public spaces, movement, heritage and streetscape.
- 2.9 The draft Framework was used as the basis for a public consultation exercise involving local businesses, residents, investors and other key stakeholders.

### **3. The Consultation Process**

- 3.1 Due to coronavirus restrictions being in place, a range of methods were put in place to allow respondents to have their say on the draft Framework.
- 3.2 A survey link hosted on the consultations page of the Council's website was live from 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021.
- 3.3 A dedicated email address, [withington.village@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:withington.village@manchester.gov.uk) was established to aid the consultation process and also to establish an ongoing dialogue for the future implementation of the Framework.
- 3.4 Paper copies of the draft Framework along with the survey questionnaire were made available on request from Withington library.
- 3.5 Letters were hand delivered to over 1200 local residential and business properties, advising of all the different methods available to participate in the consultation.
- 3.6 Two virtual consultation events were held online on 7th January 2021 and 12th January 2021. These events were attended by 36 and 44 individuals respectively.

### **4. Consultation Responses**

- 4.1 The City Council received a strong response with a total of 200 responses, 189 of which were submitted via MCC's consultation web page, 10 via email and one written response.

The breakdown of responses is as follows:

- 189 responses from via the MCC web link
- A response from a Withington Ward Councillor

- A response from the Council's Highways department
- A response from the Council's Housing and Residential Growth team
- 3 responses from residents
- 1 response from a GP practice
- 3 responses from local community groups
- A response from Natural England (statutory consultee)

4.2 The overwhelming majority of the 189 online respondents were supportive of the framework proposals:

- 66% strongly agree with the proposals
- 24% agree with the proposals
- 7% neither agree or disagree
- 2% disagree with the proposals
- 1% strongly disagree with the proposals

4.3 Similarly, email and written responses show a high level of support for the framework and the proposals contained within. Comments from the emailed and written responses are incorporated within the parts of this report that detail specific sections of the Framework.

## **5. Responses From Statutory Consultees**

5.1 MCC Highways supported the overall Framework, noting that the opportunities relating to sustainable movement and sense of place are in line with best practice and policy.

5.2 MCC Housing supported the vision and opportunities in the Framework. MCC Housing requested that reference to the Council's Residential Growth Strategy be made within the policy context section and reference be made to the emerging work on purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). The Framework has been amended accordingly.

5.3 Natural England acknowledged the consultation but did not have any specific comments to make.

## **6. Movement in and around the village**

6.1 Regarding movement in and around the village:

- 70% strongly agree with the proposals
- 22% agree with the proposals
- 3% neither agree or disagree
- 2% disagree with the proposals
- 2% strongly disagree with the proposals

6.2 There was strong support for reducing levels of traffic in the Village and making the area much more pedestrian and cycling friendly.

- 6.3 Respondents gave strong support to reducing the number of junctions for vehicles on to Wilmslow Road through the Village, reconfigured junctions, speed controls, wider pavements and changes to pedestrian crossings to reduce traffic and improve pedestrian links.
- 6.4 Pedestrianising Copson St received strong support although the GP practice on Copson St expressed some concerns at this proposal and the effect this may have on patients with mobility or support needs.
- 6.5 Numerous comments were made in relation to free parking in the Village. The vast majority of respondents wanted to see Gledhill and Egerton car parks continue to provide public parking to service the Village but that these areas are enhanced. There was support for removal of loading bays along Wilmslow Rd to increase the width of the footpath.
- 6.6 Cycleways and enhanced provision for cyclists through the Village and cycle storage were also supported by a considerable number of respondents.
- 6.7 Enhancing walking links between The Christie and the Village along with new way finding and gateway signage were also supported.

## **7. Public Space**

- 7.1 The public space proposals in the also received high levels of support:
- 69% strongly agree with the proposals
  - 20% agree with the proposals
  - 7% neither agree or disagree
  - 3% disagree with the proposals
  - 1% strongly disagree with the proposals
- 7.2 A theme of more greenery was a recurring comment from respondents with street trees and planting welcomed along with more opportunities for pocket parks.
- 7.3 High levels of support were given to creating family friendly public spaces. Rutherford Place was viewed as having the potential to be the focal point of the Village. Support was also given for reducing the number of vehicular junctions along Wilmslow Road and to widen pavements to create outside dwell space and the opportunity for food and beverage operators to have outside space. Respondents felt this would enhance the Village feel and identity.
- 7.4 Support for a makers market and pop-up event space in the Village also featured strongly in respondents comments as did a desire for improved lighting in the Village.

## **8. Heritage and Streetscape**

- 8.1 Heritage and streetscape proposals had the highest levels of support:

- 71% strongly agree with the proposals
- 22% agree with the proposals
- 5% neither agree or disagree
- 1% disagree with the proposals
- 1% strongly disagree with the proposals

- 8.2 The most comments in relation to Heritage and Streetscape related to public art. Withington Walls was extremely well received by respondents with an overwhelming desire to see high quality public art expanded. Opportunities for sculpture in addition to artwork was also highlighted by some respondents.
- 8.3 Respondents commented on the importance of the history and conservation area status and expressed strong support for improving shop fronts, consistency of signage and restoration of building frontages.
- 8.4 Concern was also expressed around the number of takeaways in the Village and a strong desire for more high-quality independent business to locate in the Village.
- 8.5 There were a number of comments that emphasised the history of the Village and this to be enhanced and given a higher profile. The rich diversity of Withington was also referenced by many, with a desire for this to be recognised and celebrated.

## **9. Governance Arrangements**

- 9.1 As with other sections of the framework, governance proposals received strong support:
- 52% strongly agree with the proposals
  - 32% agree with the proposals
  - 12% neither agree or disagree
  - 4% disagree with the proposals
  - <1% strongly disagree with the proposals
- 9.2 Regarding the rich diversity of Withington, most governance comments related to ensuring that all sections of the community are consulted and communicated with as the Framework proposals are developed and implemented.
- 9.3 Having the WVRP oversee implementation of the Framework was broadly welcomed but with a desire to see a written constitution for the Partnership, ensuring it is accountable and its structure reflecting the diversity of Withington so that it represents all stakeholders and sections of the community.

## **10. Other Comments**

- 10.1 There were a wide range of other comments from respondents. The most comments were in relation to perceptions of crime and anti-social behaviour in the Village and the numbers of vulnerable people loitering in the area.



- 10.2 There were also numerous comments made about litter and fly-tipping in the Village. Respondents felt both these issues needed addressing alongside the Framework.
- 10.3 These observations have been noted and will be progressed by the Council and our partners through ward coordination processes and other partnership structures.
- 10.4 Ensuring any changes to the Village are accessible to all sections of the community was also commented on as was the library having the potential to be a community hub for culture and heritage.
- 10.5 A number of respondents wanted the framework boundary expanded to include nearby shopping parades, walking and pedestrian routes. As framework delivery is progressed, wider opportunities outside the boundary area will be considered to provide wider local benefits. The Framework boundary identified does represent the key buildings institutions and businesses that enables the centre to operate as a District Centre.
- 10.6 Identification and implementation of quick wins was also viewed as important once the Framework is approved.

## **11. Community Group Comments**

- 11.1 WVRP firmly support the objectives of the Framework including aspirations to improve the general environment of the Village in favour of walking/cycling, create high quality public spaces, pedestrianise Copson St, provide a market, increase public art, improve conservation area shop fronts, establish a formal shop front design guide, identify residential development opportunities and enhance links to The Christie, Withington Baths and local parks.
- 11.2 Withington Civic Society are broadly supportive of the proposals but made specific comments including removal of loading days, widening pavements, relocating pedestrian crossings, pedestrianising Copson St, Rutherford Place, public access to toilets, stress area enforcement and improving the general environment of the village in favour of walking/cycling.
- 11.3 Love Withington Baths support the Framework and commented that the Framework feels practical and achievable, that local empowerment is essential, they fully support the cross-cutting themes identified and the prioritisation of projects in the Framework.

## **12. Conclusion**

- 12.1 The Framework has received strong support from the vast majority of respondents and has been well received by the community. The Framework has the potential to transform Withington into a liveable, accessible, vibrant Village. The Framework can be implemented in a flexible manner as opportunities and resources are identified and the Centre's recovery from

covid becomes clearer. The Framework is practical in that it identifies a series of independent projects with a range of interventions depending on resources that become available. Further study will be required to bring about the individual project workstreams which will include engagement with the community and technical analysis.

12.2 Subject to approval of the Framework the next steps are to discuss with WVRP and local Cllrs in Withington and Old Moat the development of governance arrangements to ensure that community are consulted and communicated with as the Framework proposals are developed and implemented, develop a delivery plan and communications plan.

12.3 Recommendations can be found at the front of this report.

### **13.0 Key Policies and Considerations**

#### **(a) Equal Opportunities**

13.1 The proposals will provide enhanced connections to surrounding communities, providing improved access for local residents to Withington Village.

#### **(b) Risk Management**

13.2 Manchester City Council will be a key member of the WVRP, overseeing implementation of the framework.

#### **(c) Legal Considerations**

13.3 If approved by the Executive, the Withington Village Framework will not form part of the Council's Development Plan but would be a material consideration when development control decisions are made.