

Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

Report to: The Executive – 14 December 2022

Subject: Former Central Retail Park – Updated SRF

Report of: Strategic Director (Growth & Development)

Summary

This report informs the Executive of an updated Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) for the former Central Retail Park site, and requests that the Executive approve the framework in principle, subject to public consultation.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- (1) Approve in principle the proposals set out in the draft updated Former Central Retail Park Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF);
 - (2) Request the Strategic Director to undertake a public consultation exercise on the draft updated Former Central Retail Park Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF); with local residents, businesses and other stakeholders; and
 - (3) Agree that a further report be brought back to the Executive, following the public consultation exercise, setting out comments received.
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Wards Affected: Piccadilly, Ancoats and Beswick

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

The revised Former Central Retail Park Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) has responded to the City Council's aim of achieving zero-carbon targets through the creation of a highly sustainable, commercially-led neighbourhood, together with leisure uses, complementing surrounding developments. The revised SRF has improved connectivity, increased green space and biodiversity, and will aim to achieve the highest standards of sustainable design. The revised SRF also aligns with the city's active travel aspirations, to provide attractive and safe walking and cycling routes for visitors and residents.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments

The Former Central Retail Park will provide a range of job, skills and leisure opportunities available to all local residents from across the city. Enhanced connections will be provided to surrounding communities, to enable them to take advantage of the opportunities offered on the site and in the wider area beyond.

In line with the previous framework, the proposals in the updated SRF will provide significant new public realm, accessible to all, providing wellbeing opportunities to all residents, workers and visitors. In addition, there is a commitment to ensure that design standards throughout the development will comply with the highest standards of accessibility.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
<p>A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities</p>	<p>The proposals contained within the revised Former Central Retail Park SRF will bring forward commercially-led, development that will contribute to the creation of jobs within the area, diversifying the economy and activating large key sites connecting to the city.</p> <p>The proposals will be a catalyst for regional investment through supporting infrastructure, innovation, and people, providing a significant boost to the future economic growth for the local area and the region.</p>
<p>A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success</p>	<p>The proposals contained within the revised Former Central Retail Park SRF will provide additional commercial space to meet demand from existing and newly established businesses, thus creating and sustaining employment opportunities within this area of the city centre. The proposals will deliver a range of new high quality employment opportunities through the design, construction, and occupation of the scheme, for local residents including apprenticeships and training opportunities.</p>
<p>A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities</p>	<p>The proposals contained within the revised Former Central Retail Park SRF could create a business hub that is a vibrant and attractive destination for all business sizes, thereby helping to also meet existing office demand from local businesses and allowing them to grow. The scheme will attract substantial financial investment which will deliver positive socio-economic changes for Ancoats, New Islington and Manchester as a whole, providing opportunities for people and local businesses.</p>

<p>A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work</p>	<p>The revised SRF responds to the Council's commitment to deliver zero carbon growth and sets out the intention of creating a sustainable neighbourhood with strong connections to public transport infrastructure; enhanced active travel routes, increased green space and biodiversity, and improved public realm.</p>
<p>A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth</p>	<p>The revised SRF proposes to deliver extensive new public realm, with new attractive and safe routes connecting New Islington and East Manchester back to the rest of the city. The proposals will create a seamless link to the neighbourhoods of East Manchester, contributing to the connectivity, vibrancy and attractiveness of these areas.</p>

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

Equal Opportunities Policy
Risk Management
Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

There is no direct revenue implication for the City Council arising from this report.

Financial Consequences – Capital

There are no direct capital implications for the City Council arising from this report. A report will be brought forward in due course setting out the terms of the proposed land deal with the Government Property Agency.

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Background documents:

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 officers above.

- Ancoats and New Islington Neighbourhood Development Framework, report to Executive 29 October 2014;
- Refresh of the Ancoats and New Islington Neighbourhood Development Framework, report to Executive 14 December 2016;
- Central Retail Park, Executive, 13th September 2017;
- Eastlands Regeneration Framework, Executive, 24th July 2019
- Draft Central Retail Park Development Framework – February 2020
- Refresh of the Ancoats and New Islington Neighbourhood Development Framework – Poland Street Zone, report to Executive 3 July 2020
- Refresh of the Ancoats and New Islington Neighbourhood Development Framework, report to Executive 12 February 2020

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In October 2020, following public consultation, the Executive approved a Development Framework for the Former Central Retail Park site on Great Ancoats Street. This document set out the overarching strategic principles and planning context for the future development of the site, as a new highly sustainable, commercially led neighbourhood, bringing new jobs and businesses to the area, and complementing and connecting to surrounding areas.
- 1.2 This report outlines an updated Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) for the area, to ensure the regeneration aspirations for the site are met, and opportunities to achieve the best outcomes for its development are maximised. Within this updated version, we have taken on board the feedback provided by residents on the desire for more green open space in the area and have ensured that green space is a core component of the proposals.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Former Central Retail Park is a 10.5-acre site located to the north-east of the city centre, bounded by Great Ancoats Street, Old Mill Street and Rochdale Canal. The Former Central Retail Park was acquired by the Council in 2017, with aspirations to bring forward a commercially-led development that would be one of the city's first net zero-carbon business district.
- 2.2 The redevelopment of the Former Central Retail Park is a long-standing strategic priority for the city and identified for development in previous planning documents, including the Ancoats and New Islington Neighbourhood Development Framework (2016) and Development Frameworks prepared for the Central Retail Park site in 2015 and more recently in 2020. The 2020 Central Retail Park Development Framework outlines the Council's vision to create a new commercial district with the ability to attract new businesses and talent to Manchester to support the ongoing growth of the city centre.
- 2.3 The 2020 Development Framework has now been reviewed to reflect the current market position and positively respond to the latest market requirements to provide purpose-built offices and high-quality facilities for workers. A new Strategic Regeneration Framework has been produced, which builds on many of the key design principles set out in the in the 2020 Framework, to provide a comprehensive approach to the future redevelopment of the site, supporting the Council's aspirations to drive economic growth through the provision of new high-quality Grade A offices to attract new companies to Manchester, surrounded by attractive and accessible public realm.
- 2.4 The new SRF positively responds to modern market requirements for businesses in providing purpose-built offices and high-quality public amenities. The new proposed public realm will provide a significant amount of new space that will be an attractive and safe environment which is fully integrated with the wider community and promotes well-being. The updated SRF also responds to

a potential interest from the Government Property Agency (GPA) to locate government offices on the site and work collaboratively with the Council to help unlock this development opportunity. Were GPA to commit to offices at the Former Central Retail Park, this would provide the catalyst to deliver the masterplan and provide socio-economic benefits, including new high-quality jobs. The proposal relates to adjacent communities and sets out design drivers informed by the site parameters, the potential requirements of the GPA, and a detailed understanding of the local context.

3.0 Former Central Retail Park Strategic Regeneration Framework Proposals

Vision & Purpose

- 3.1 The overall vision within the updated Former Central Retail Park SRF is to create a high-quality, sustainable office district, with an attractive public realm at its centre. The public realm will provide an attractive green space and recreational uses for local residents, new office employees, and visitors. The scheme builds upon the strategic location of the site and its strong connections to the local neighbourhoods, city centre, and transport networks. An indicative layout plan is attached at Appendix A.
- 3.2 The SRF aims is to provide a flagship model of sustainable development, to create a flexible, efficient and inspiring district that is inclusive and promotes social value and well-being. As well as new sustainable offices and public realm, it is proposed the site will include retail and leisure uses, providing attractive new facilities for people who live and work in the area.

Supporting Regeneration and Economic Growth

- 3.3 As Manchester's economic growth continues to develop and diversify, further provision of new high quality office stock in the city is required. The regeneration of the Former Central Retail Park responds to this need and aids key strategic objectives relating to place making, job creation and supporting local communities.
- 3.4 While many of the key design principles set out in the 2020 Development Framework are carried over, the new SRF proposes an entirely commercial scheme, positively responding to the need to provide more purpose-built offices within the city centre. As set out earlier, GPA have indicated a potential interest for commercial offices, and the site would provide flexibility to meet future office demand in the city centre.
- 3.5 Benefits from the proposed investment include the following:
 - **Regional investment** - GPA is exploring options for delivering office solutions in Manchester to meet the needs of various civil service departments, with the Former Central Retail Park as a potential option. Securing investment from the GPA would be a significant boost to the future economic growth for the local area and the region.

- **New employment opportunities** - The proposal will deliver a range of new employment opportunities through the design, construction, and occupation of the scheme, providing significant opportunities for local residents including apprenticeships and training opportunities. Once developed the scheme is likely to support in excess of 8,000 jobs, many of which will be new to the city.
- **High quality office spaces** - The proposals will make a significant contribution to the Council's policy to deliver over 20 million sq. ft (circa 1.85m sq.m) of new office floorspace by 2037. This will strengthen the city economy, further enable its continued growth agenda, and deliver substantial local socio-economic benefits.
- **Connectivity** – The Former Central Retail Park is strategically located, with Great Ancoats Street to the south, that connects to important routes that further lead to the M60 and M62 regional and national connections. The site will benefit from its proximity to Manchester's two main rail stations, Piccadilly, and Victoria, including the proposed investments of HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR). New Islington Metrolink tram stop is also on the doorstep of the site providing local connection across the city.
- **Variety of office space** - The Northern Quarter and the Ancoats neighbourhoods have become popular destinations for a variety of businesses in many sectors. As a result, the demand for space has increased significantly and the lack of floorspace has led to rapidly rising prices. The Former Central Retail Park could create a business hub that is a vibrant and attractive destination for all business sizes, thereby helping to also meet existing office demand from local businesses and allowing them to grow.
- **High quality new public realm and improved connectivity** - At the centre of the site, a variety of new spaces are proposed which will provide benefit for the local community and the building occupants. In addition, the SRF proposes to deliver extensive new public realm, with new attractive and safe routes connecting the site to the rest of New Islington and East Manchester and to the rest of the city centre.
- **A new public park** – A new public park will enhance the existing green space and improve biodiversity on the site, improving the quality of life for residents, occupiers and visitors, and providing an attractive green space in which to relax, play and promote well-being.
- **New retail and leisure facilities** – A range of new independent and national retail and leisure facilities will be promoted to serve both local residents and the office workers, proving a new and exciting offer and associated employment opportunities.
- **Investment** - The scheme will attract substantial financial investment which will deliver positive socio-economic changes for Ancoats, New

Islington and Greater Manchester as a whole, providing opportunities for people and local businesses.

Key Development Principles

- 3.6 The revised Former Central Retail Park SRF sets out a series of key design principles to maximise the use of a vacant site, as set out below:
- **Place making** – Place making has been a central component of the Former Central Retail Park SRF from the outset, helping to deliver the overarching vision for the new district. The Former Central Retail Park will create a mix of spaces including the public realm and retail facilities. This will help create a vibrant destination for employees and visitors alike. Creating a high-quality integrated development will be a key driver to ensure it will have a positive effect on future growth and job creation.
 - **High quality development** – The SRF promotes high-quality architecture and urban design that responds to the local context while establishing its own distinct character. New offices should be of high-quality architectural design with the use of appropriate materials. The public realm will also be a high-quality, inclusive open space for staff, visitors, and members of the community. The new green space at the centre of the new SRF will have materials and design features that reflect and complement existing green space in the local area.
 - **Connectivity** - The Former Central Retail Park SRF promotes new and improved links and permeability for pedestrian and cycle routes in the area, making it easier, safer, and more attractive to walk or cycle into the city or towards key transport hubs. The site's proximity to the city's main transport routes will make it a prime location for future business. Building upon wider connections will promote accessibility to the site and enable business collaboration.
 - **Sustainability** - The development will aim to achieve the highest standards of sustainable design. The public realm will extend Cotton Field Park and the Marina, creating new ecological habitats that contribute positively to the city's sustainability goals.
 - **Scale and mass** – Scale and massing is informed by following the key principles already established by the previous 2020 Development Framework. The offices will respect the Ancoats conservation area and be respectful of the listed mills. Office height increases towards the eastern side of the site, where it will be well integrated into the existing urban context.
 - **Form and layout** – The public realm will enable the site to be separated into two developable areas. The two parcels of land naturally extend the urban grain of Ancoats and New Islington, ensuring the site is integrated into its local context. The significant green space serves as the focal point of the scheme and provides new connections between existing elements.

- **Use** – Primarily a commercial, office-led proposal, the scheme is focused on delivering a significant amount of new office space to meet both the potential interest from GPA and further recognised market demand. This will be complemented by a retail and leisure offer included as part of the overall development. The uses will be distributed across the site, with retail and leisure at ground level providing primary active frontages along key routes to secure the area’s vitality throughout the week.

Public Realm

3.7 As highlighted above, in response to comments received on the previous consultation, public realm is central to the site, providing attractive new space for residents, workers and visitors. A number of potential new spaces are proposed within the illustrative plan for the site. These are:

- **The Garden** – The Garden could be the largest green space on the site and sits at the centre of the masterplan. It will be very closely linked to Cotton Field Park through both strong physical connections and also extending the design elements of the park through the materials of hard and soft landscape.
- **The Boulevard** – The Boulevard would be a major east-west site pedestrian route, linking all of the buildings in phase 1 with a direct view down to The Garden. There is the opportunity to create a relaxed ambience with planting islands and an avenue of mature trees, to provide a unique sense of place.
- **Canal Plaza** - will be a major arrival point for pedestrians into site from the city centre. It provides the opportunity to create a high-quality public piazza that reflects the canal and waterfront setting and uses the listed canal heritage.
- **Great Ancoats Street Frontage** - The illustrative masterplan seeks to provide an improved, greener frontage to Great Ancoats Street. Active frontages will be sought to provide animation along the street with wide footways and attractive soft landscape. It should be noted that limited vehicle access will be required off Great Ancoats Street into the site, which will need to be carefully designed and managed within the overall site.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 The updated Former Central Retail Park SRF captures the aspirations set in the vision for the site and will create a high-quality, sustainable office district with an attractive public realm at its centre. It will also deliver significant socio-economic benefit to the city and the local community. The public realm will provide an appealing green space and recreational facility for the new office employees, local residents and visitors and builds upon the strategic location of the site and its strong connections to the local neighbourhoods, city centre, and transport networks.

4.2 The updated Former Central Retail Park SRF proposals provide an opportunity to deliver in excess of 8,000 high quality jobs, along with apprenticeships and other training opportunities. The jobs represent both opportunities that are completely new to the city and capacity for growth of existing enterprises, already located within the city.

5. Legal Considerations

5.1 Subject to Executive approval, a further report will be brought forward after the public consultation exercise, setting out the comments received and any changes to the final version of the draft updated Former Central Retail Park SRF.

5.2 If the draft updated Former Central Retail Park SRF is subsequently approved by the City Council, it will become a material consideration for the Council as Local Planning Authority when determining any applications within the Former Central Retail Park SRF area.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 The recommendations are set out at the front of this report.