

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Executive – 18 January 2023

Subject: Gorton District Centre Development Framework

Report of: Strategic Director (Growth and Development)

Summary

This report updates the Executive on the future plans to regenerate Gorton District Centre and the outcome of the public consultation that has informed it. The Development Framework will guide the future investment and development of the district centre, outlining opportunities for over 400 new homes (including affordable tenures) and public realm on Council land. Further interventions are identified that will provide resilience to existing community and market assets alongside opportunities to unlock significant economic growth.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

1. Note the outcome of the results of the public consultation on the Development Framework Gorton District Centre.
2. Approve the Development Framework for Gorton District Centre and request that Planning and Highways Committee take the Development Framework into account as a material consideration when considering planning applications with Gorton District Centre.

Wards Affected – Gorton & Abbey Hey, Longsight

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

Future redevelopment activity brought forward by the Council and partners target net zero development. The provision or relocation of existing facilities such as the library and gymnastics centre will enable the demolition of older, inefficient buildings which will be replaced by new low carbon buildings.

As part of any reconfiguration of the Indoor Market, necessary investment will seek to reduce carbon outputs, however given that the existing structure is likely to be retained, it is unlikely that a scheme could achieve net zero carbon.

The Council will ensure that sustainable new homes are delivered on the Council's land and work with third party landowners to promote zero carbon developments across other sites.

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Contribution to the strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	<p>The diversification of the centre will expand the centre's retail offer creating an enhanced offer for residents and creating both casual and full time employment opportunities.</p> <p>The development of new homes in and around the district centre will increase the housing supply and support the viability of an increased commercial offer.</p>
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	<p>The proposed investment, diversification of the centre and the creation of an enhanced retail offer will provide a significant opportunity to Manchester residents in terms of jobs and training.</p> <p>The incorporation of digital infrastructure within the investment strategy will support residents and businesses with access to increased connectivity.</p>
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	<p>Any contractual capital works to deliver the regeneration of the district centre will incorporate significant social value outputs as part of the procurement and evaluation. This will include a commitment to local employment strategies.</p> <p>The provision of high-quality affordable homes is vital to support a growing population. A range of tenures would ensure all homes needs are catered for including affordable tenures in line with local housing needs.</p>
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	<p>As detailed above, the proposed interventions will utilise existing building wherever possible, and all works will be undertaken in line with sustainability principles to meet wider MCC targets.</p> <p>A key component will be to activate the district centre at evenings and weekends to ensure that it becomes a destination for local residents and visitors.</p>
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	<p>The centre is well-connected in terms of public transport via the rail and bus routes. There are also bus services connecting the centre to the neighbouring areas.</p> <p>By linking public realm improvements on key gateway locations to the wider active travel network, such as the existing Fallowfield Loop, residents will be able to</p>

	access the district centre and beyond by walking, cycling and other active travel means.
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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 directly from this report.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None directly from this report.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report summarises the outcome of the public consultation on the draft Development Framework for Gorton District Centre.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Gorton District Centre is located to the south east of Manchester city centre and serves a population of approximately 36,000 residents according to the 2011 census. With the A57, Hyde Road, running through the centre, the centre is easily accessible via car as well as having well serviced bus links from Manchester city centre. The A57 is also a main arterial entry point into Manchester from the M60 and Tameside area and has recently undergone significant improvement works to widen the road and reduce congestion. Part of this widening scheme saw the addition of a new arch bridge linking the area to the Fallowfield Loop walking and cycling route. In addition, the Belle Vue Railway Station provides an hourly train service to Manchester Piccadilly within approximately 10 minutes.
- 2.2 In November 2022, the Council completed the construction of the new £22m Gorton Hub, a multi-occupied publicly facing community building including a new district library, Manchester Adult Education Service, Job Centre Plus, Manchester Local Care Organisation, pharmacist and medical centre.
- 2.3 Also fronting Hyde Road is located a large Tesco Extra which acts as the anchor tenant in the centre. The store offering includes a large car park which also services the other commercial buildings within the vicinity.
- 2.4 To the north of Garratt Way is located the Gorton Institute of Gymnastics, a Council owned and operated facility, occupied by a community gymnastics group. Adjacent to this is the site of the former Gorton Library, with the now surplus building earmarked for demolition in 2023. The wider site is currently used for surface car parking.
- 2.5 Across the wider area, the area bordering the Gorton/Longsight Wards have seen significant development over the past ten years including the development of the Gorton Hive Youth Zone, Co-Op Academy sponsored Secondary School and the Belle Vue Sports Village.
- 2.6 Gorton has high demand for new housing. Since 2015, approximately 590 homes have been built in the area with a further 400 homes currently under construction, plus an additional pipeline of 370 properties, excluding any opportunities which may be identified through the new Development Framework.

3.0 Development Framework details

- 3.1 The Development Framework is being prepared to guide future regeneration and redevelopment in the District Centre. This includes long-term aspirations to maximise the potential of the centre through:

- Creating a more attractive environment that is more comfortable for residents/visitors to dwell in;
- Extending the periods of activity of residents and visitors within the centre, beyond the traditional Monday to Friday 9am-5pm;
- Encouraging more diversity through an increased provision of commercial offers,
- Increasing the accessibility of the centre for walkers and cyclists;
- Creating better quality public realm within the centre, through the provision of both hard and soft landscaping;
- Creating a new heart of the community, focusing upon Garratt Way; and the new town square;
- Opportunities to deliver 400 new homes on brownfield land with a mixed tenure approach that matches local housing demand.

- 3.2 A key component of the Development Framework will be through the re-positioning of the successful Indoor Market. The market performs well, with a number of long term tenants and low void rates, however as the national trend for markets to deliver a hot food and beverage offer has grown, the Development Framework will consider the options around developing an offer which supports the existing tenant base, whilst also seeking to accommodate new offers which provide a wider appeal to residents/visitors, extending opening hours to kickstart the local night-time economy as well as supporting new employment opportunities. Physical improvements into the market building are outlined including activating frontages onto Garratt Way and the new Civic Square along with futureproofing the building through reorganisation and decarbonisation investment.
- 3.3 In addition to this is the development potential to the north of Garratt Way. The Council owns two strategic sites – the former library site and the existing gymnastics centre site. Combined, the land totals circa 2.75 acres, providing significant development potential to shape the district centre through mixed use development including a multi-tenure residential offer with active ground floor uses as well as a high quality public realm strategy which makes the area inviting for local residents. It should be noted that ground floor activation of these buildings has the opportunity to attract community and commercial uses, providing diversification.
- 3.4 Key to maximising the opportunity will be identifying and delivering a long term, sustainable facility for the gymnastics club to continue the delivery of positive outcomes to Manchester residents. The existing building was previously utilised as a Council swimming baths, however was closed in 2002 before being transformed into a gymnastics centre. Given the age of the asset, it is acknowledged that the building will require financial investment in the short to medium term. In addition, a new facility could provide the club with a fit for purpose centre, meeting the modern requirements of the sport.
- 3.5 The club is a valued community asset to the city and currently serves a wide catchment area, drawing visitors from across Greater Manchester and beyond. There will be an emphasis to identify a site in an accessible location

which continues to deliver positive outcomes to existing users, as well as supporting the continued growth of the club.

- 3.6 Through the potential to be a focal point of development within district centre, the impending financial liabilities for the centre and also the geography of the centre's users, it has been acknowledged by the club, that if a more sustainable location can be identified in East Manchester then it will work with the Council to relocate to a new fit for purpose provision. It would be essential that a new facility would need to be fully operational in advance of any alternative development being brought forward on the existing site, to ensure business continuity for the group.

4.0 Public Consultation

Consultation strategy

- 4.1 A consultation with thirty local businesses was carried out October 2022. The process involved a letter drop with a contact email address for businesses to offer comments upon their aspirations for the Development Framework. The consultation excluded the market operators, who were previously canvassed about proposed changes in 2019.
- 4.2 A public consultation was held online from 9th December 2022 to 6th January 2023. Communications were broadcast on the Council's social media channels, as well as in local media and trade press. Key individual stakeholders were contacted by letter/email on 4 occasions throughout the consultation. On Friday 16th and Saturday 17th December, Council officers attended the district centre within the Gorton Hub and Gorton Market with display boards to discuss the proposals with members of the public. This was advertised on corporate social media, industry and local press. Residents were also directed to the online consultation.
- 4.3 A total of 268 online survey responses were received, and the face-to-face activity resulted in conversations with a number of centre users and several of the centre's independent retailers. To help maximise the number of responses, Council Officers assisted centre users to complete the consultation as part of the face-to-face conversation period.
- 4.4 The consultation asked respondents if they supported proposals around broad themes:

A better, broader town centre

- Creation of a more attractive environment that is more comfortable to spend time in
- Extending periods of activity beyond a traditional weekday 9am-5pm offer, apart from the Tesco store
- Encouraging more diversity - a broader mix of uses that appeal to different communities and age groups

Improved useability

- It was noted that better pedestrian access was needed, especially when crossing the busy Hyde Road thoroughfare
- Aspiration to unlock the creation of safer access through walking and cycling routes
- Improved permeability to the surrounding housing estates and better connections to the surrounding greenspace, Debdale Park and the nearby Fallowfield Loop.

Increased usability

- Development of new, quality, green space to complement the existing nearby parks right in the town centre-
- Build on Gorton being a green suburb with lots of mature trees
- Identification of a new heart for the community, delivering a new civic square and public realm

New Housing

- Delivery of new mixed tenures homes to match local housing demand and average local household incomes (including affordable housing such as Social Rent and Shared Ownership)

Respondents were also given an opportunity to provide any additional comments about the proposals.

5.0 Summary of feedback received

Objectives

- 5.1 Overall, the consultation feedback was very much supportive of the objectives for the Gorton district centre.
- 5.2 92% of responses supported the objective of creating a more attractive environment delivering more is comfortable space to spend time in. Several respondents commented that the district centre lacked a sense of place and community.
- 5.3 Several respondents felt that the indoor market, as an asset to Gorton, had a good selection of stalls, but that the exterior of the building is unwelcoming and needed improvement. The wider commercial offer was noted to be limited by available space and that a diversified retail offer was welcomed.
- 5.4 87.5% of responses were supportive of extending periods of activity with a particular aspiration for new uses during evenings and at weekends and supported the diversification of uses that would appeal to different communities and age groups with reference to a lack of space for younger people. Concerns were raised about the perception that the town centre currently felt unsafe at night-time.

- 5.5 81.6% of respondents supported making the centre more accessible by walking and cycling, especially through the improvement of non-car dominated connections north to the surrounding housing estates, south to Sunny Brow Park and west to Debdale Park. Additional comments were made in support of safer road crossings and cycle lanes, especially when crossing Hyde Road and accessing the new Gorton Hub.
- 5.6 87.5% of respondents supported the objective to make the centre greener, with comments regarding aspirations for new tree planting.

5.7 **Proposed framework amendments**

1. City of Manchester Gymnastics

Early engagement indicated strong community feeling regarding any plans for the redevelopment of the existing gymnastics site. Amendments have been made within the document that any redevelopment would be subject to identification and delivery of a new futureproofed facility. Plans have reflected the potential need for phased construction to allow for this move in the future.

2. Active Travel links

Aspirations are very clear about the ability for the redevelopment of the town centre to unlock opportunities to walk and cycle as oppose to drive. Strong linear connections to the adjacent neighbourhoods have been incorporated, footpaths have been widened and Garratt Way now includes a best-in-class segregated cycle way. Particular areas of focus allow for better pedestrian connections across Hyde Road and to reconnect the community to the South to the town centre and the newly constructed Gorton Hub.

3. Safety improvements

Along with better pedestrian crossings across highways, the carriageway width on surrounding secondary roads has been narrowed. Improved lighting on all existing and new footpaths will improve perceptions along with improvements to the market frontage providing natural surveillance.

4. A new town centre heart

Respondents agreed with the principle of promoting the historical Garratt Way as the new focus of the town centre and the framework proposes a new town square, reconnecting the indoor market back and providing opportunities for an outdoor makers market or facilitation of community events.

5. Connecting the town centre to Belle Vue railway station

Gorton is well connected to the local public transport network and the town centre currently feels disconnected to the nearest station. Improvements have been proposed to the public realm from Chapman Street along with new

development investment to animate uses and build density running towards the new town square.

The above feedback, the engagement with stakeholders and local businesses has been invaluable in informing the formation of our plans. Continual engagement especially as these plans are delivered will be crucial to the success of the wider regeneration project.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The interventions and future development opportunities outlined in the proposed framework will guide future investment in Gorton. Its currently thriving and the improved environment will provide a town centre that meets the local community aspirations along with unlocking opportunities for new homes and employment.

7.0 Contributing to the Our Manchester Strategy

A thriving and sustainable city

- 7.1 The diversification of the centre will provide for new retail and leisure space to expand the centre's offer which will provide employment opportunities small to medium sized businesses to locate in Gorton with associated opportunities for the local community.
- 7.2 The provision of additional services will increase the local offer available to the community to attract a more diverse cross section of the community.

A Highly Skilled City

- 7.3 During future construction phases, there will be employment opportunities available on site and a social value policy will be sought.
- 7.4 The provision of sustainable new homes within the District Centre would support the growing population. The site is also well-connected to the city centre thereby helping to support Manchester's local economy.

A progressive and equitable city

- 7.5 Any contractual capital works resultant from the regeneration of the District Centre will include significant social value outputs as part of the procurement and evaluation. This will include a commitment to local employment strategies.
- 7.6 The provision of high-quality affordable homes is vital to support a growing population. A range of tenures would ensure that the delivery of new housing will be in line with local housing needs.

A liveable and low carbon city

- 7.7 Any future development will be undertaken in line with sustainability principles to meet wider Council targets.

A connected city

- 7.8 The District Centre is highly accessible by vehicle along Hyde Road. Additionally, the Belle Vue Station provides direct train access to and from the city centre.
- 7.9 The proposed investment into safe cycling routes to the north and south of the district centre will link to the Fallowfield Loop and enhance the connectivity of the centre.

8.0 Key Policies and Considerations

Equal Opportunities

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been produced to assess impact on protected characteristics. Ongoing reviews will take place as the outcomes from the Framework are considered for implementation.

Risk Management

- 8.2 Not applicable

Legal Considerations

- 8.3 If approved by the Executive, the Gorton District Centre Development Framework will not form part of the Council's Development Plan but would be a material consideration when development control decisions are made.