

Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

Report to: The Executive – 22 March 2023

Subject: Former Central Retail Park – Updated Strategic Regeneration Framework

Report of: Strategic Director – Growth and Development

Summary

This report informs the Executive of the outcome of a public consultation exercise with local residents, businesses and stakeholders, on the draft Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) for the former Central Retail Park and seeks the Executive's approval of the Framework.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

- i) Note the outcome of the public consultation on the draft Strategic Regeneration Framework for the former Central Retail Park.
 - ii) Consider and agree the proposal to amend the Strategic Regeneration Framework for the former Central Retail Park to include an updated plan illustrating the connections to wider cycle routes.
 - iii) Approve the Strategic Regeneration Framework for the former Central Retail Park and request that Planning and Highways Committee take the framework into account as a material consideration when considering planning applications for the site.
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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
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	<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>
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	<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>
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	<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</p>

	Islington and Manchester as a whole, providing opportunities for people and local businesses.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	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.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	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.

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
- Former Central Retail Park – Updated SRF, report to Executive 14 December 2022
- Draft Former Central Retail Park Strategic Regeneration Framework, December 2022

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 On 14 December 2022, the Executive endorsed, in principle, a revised Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) for the former Central Retail Park on Great Ancoats Street and requested that the Strategic Director for Growth & Development carry out a public consultation on the draft framework. The former Central Retail Park site sits within the wider Ancoats and New Islington Neighbourhood Development Framework area. This report summarises the outcome of the public consultation.

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 redevelopment of the Former Central Retail Park is a long-standing strategic priority for the city, and was acquired by the Council in 2017, with the intention of bringing forward a highly sustainable, commercially-led district, to meet the growing space requirements for new and existing businesses.
- 2.2 The 2020 Central Retail Park Development Framework outlined 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, and a new SRF produced 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.
- 2.4 The overall vision within the updated Former Central Retail Park SRF is to create a high-quality, sustainable office district, with a significant amount of attractive public realm at its centre, connected to the wider community. The public realm will incorporate green space and planting, providing a safe environment that promotes well-being for local residents, new office employees, and visitors, and will contribute to the City's green space network through its interface with Cotton Field Park and the enhanced green spaces with Ancoats Phase 3, in particular Ancoats Green and the public realm surrounding this. 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.

3.0 The Consultation Process

- 3.1 The consultation on the Former Central Retail Park took place over 6 weeks from Wednesday 4 January to Tuesday 14 February 2023. A range of consultation materials were produced to engage and inform the target audiences which included:

- Over 8,000 postcards distributed to residents and businesses in the local area.
- An updated Former Central Retail Park consultation webpage on the Council website, providing details of the draft updated SRF, download links to the Framework document and a dedicated feedback form to submit comments and feedback.
- Consultation emails, providing the web link to the consultation page and draft framework document as well as details of how they could provide their feedback. Emails were distributed to:
 - Local ward councillors.
 - Key local organisations, including landowners, community or services groups and key occupiers.
 - Statutory bodies.
- A dedicated email address and telephone information line, managed by Counter Context (a specialist consultation consultancy).

3.2 A drop-in consultation event was also held on 17 January, with 2 sessions (12-2.30pm and 5-7pm). Display boards at the event gave attendees an overview of the proposals in the SRF and copies of the full SRF were also available. Feedback cards were provided for people to leave their comments, as well as details for how they could respond online.

4.0 Consultation Comments

4.1 A total of 574 responses were received to consultation, broken down as follows:

- 493 online questionnaires
- 12 email responses
- 69 consultation event feedback forms

4.2 3 responses were from statutory or stakeholder organisations, with the rest submitted by residents and businesses. 120 people attended the consultation event across the 2 sessions.

4.3 The summary below covers the feedback received, both online and at the consultation event.

4.4 Public Realm and Greenspace

4.5 Green space and, in particular, the main green space proposed in the centre of the site was a focus of a high number of responses. These comments fell into the following main groupings:

- The view that the entirety (or a larger proportion of the site) should become a new public park, as it was felt there is demand for a new park to meet the growing residential population of Ancoats and New Islington (demonstrated by overcrowding of New Islington Marina last summer and re-development of the area known as New Islington Green). Comments

also highlighted the benefits of green space to the local community and to sustainability.

- Support for the increased new green space included within the revised SRF.
- A larger group of comments from respondents who expressed support that the publicly accessible green space in this updated SRF is larger than in the 2020 version, but provided further comments and suggestions on this space, including:
 - The request that the green space should feel like a genuine park or garden (a welcoming place for people to sit, meet up and enjoy an expanse of greenery) rather than a hard-landscape dominated area of public realm found in other parts of the city centre (e.g. Spinningfields and Circle Square).
 - Concern that the green space could feel more like a busy thoroughfare than a place to sit and enjoy, and that its position between buildings may result in it getting minimal sunlight.
 - Suggestions for particular things that the green space should include, for example children's play facilities, spaces for sports/recreational activities, facilities for dog walkers, picnic areas and benches).
 - Suggestions on landscaping features that could be incorporated, including planting, evergreens and trees, wildflowers, living walls and vertical gardens, water elements and drainage.
 - Requests that the green space be a continuation of Cotton Field Park and provide a similar type of space.
 - There was a request that the green space be for the exclusive use of office workers, and a request to make the space friendly to rough sleepers.
- A few respondents queried whether the total amount of green space had increased since the previous SRF and asked if the amount now proposed was aspirational or guaranteed.
- There were also a few comments asking that the SRF give stronger consideration to green space, sustainability, and making better use of Cotton Field Park.

4.6 Air Quality & Biodiversity

4.7 A group of respondents expressed concern that the development of the site would lead to increased levels of air pollution, both as a result of construction activity, and from more cars passing through the area in future. Several of these respondents suggested that green space and and/or planting should be maximised to counteract increasing levels of pollution.

4.8 A number of respondents commented on the importance of birds and other wildlife around the marina to the local community and emphasised that these habitats should be protected and nurtured going forward. Some suggested that the new green space offered opportunities for enhancement, for example, by including grass and flowerbeds, or nest boxes for swifts.

4.9 Proposed Uses

- 4.10 There were a number of comments on the commercial focus of the vision in the SRF. Some of the responses were positive, expressing support for creating new jobs, the positive long-term impact on the economy, and potential to encourage businesses to move North. However, there were also comments questioning the development of offices on the site, including the level of demand for office space in the city. Some respondents also queried whether commercial offices on the site would benefit the local community.
- 4.11 Some respondents suggested a more mixed approach to development. A number felt that there is a lack of amenities to support the growing population and particularly the number of families in the area, e.g. a school, dental surgery, GP surgery, leisure centre and space for recreational activities (especially for children and young people). Some suggested that there should be a residential element on the site, including affordable housing.
- 4.12 There were a number of comments supporting the proposals to include active frontages, especially on Great Ancoats Street, and also along the new central green area, New Islington Marina and the Rochdale Canal. A small number requested that small, independent and local businesses be prioritised in these spaces, or requested more information about proposals. There was also a suggestion to include active ground floor uses on walking and cycling routes.

4.13 Current Use of the Site by Skaters

- 4.14 One of the largest groups of comments related to the current informal use of the site by skateboarders. Some of these comments were from respondents identifying themselves as skaters who use the site, whereas some were local residents. These comments were split between those who wanted this informal skatepark to remain, those who requested some provision for skateboarding be included within plans for the site, and a smaller number who question whether alternative provision in the city could be considered.
- 4.15 Supporting comments covered the following main points:
- The positive contribution to mental and physical wellbeing from having the informal skating facility.
 - The value of the facility as a safe, free and inclusive space for the skateboarding community. A small number of comments also mentioned that the skateboarding community feels marginalised from the removal of other spaces.

4.16 Support for New Routes and Connections

- 4.17 There was considerable support for the planned provision of new walking and cycling routes, and the connections set out in the draft SRF. Benefits of providing these routes were highlighted, including linking New Islington Marina and Great Ancoats Street via the new green space; helping to break up the building; and promoting active travel. Specific comments on the proposed routes included the following:

- Suggestions that walking and cycling routes should be separated, be as wide as possible, and be well lit – both for safety and to avoid conflict.
- Other suggestions for the design of the routes, included floor-based wayfinding, tree-lined paths and beige gravel surfaces.
- Comments highlighting the need for a joined-up approach to cycle infrastructure beyond the site, for example, suggesting that a cycle lane be added to Great Ancoats Street.
- Requests for walking and cycling connections to be created through the whole site, rather than just through the middle, and for access points from all sides of the site, or that the entire site be pedestrianised.
- A suggestion for wider openings on the access points from Great Ancoats Street but narrowing down towards Cotton Field Park.
- Suggestions that infrastructure like cycle parking should be included to support these routes and encourage use.
- A request for vehicles and wheeled sports (e.g. skateboarding and roller skating) to be prohibited on the pathways.
- There was one request for a further objective to be included in the SRF (called “building a neighbourhood that people enjoy being part of”), that makes more explicit reference to integration with the surrounding neighbourhoods.

4.18 Parking, Traffic & Highways

4.19 Some general concerns were expressed about the additional traffic that would be created by the development of the site, including the impact on existing parking, congestion, safety and air quality on Great Ancoats Street. There were suggestions that car usage to the site should be discouraged, or that the development should be car free. Further comments requested more information on the strategy for dealing with the high volume of people coming to the area by different modes of travel, for example, in terms of car parking spaces, cycle storage, and tram capacity. It was also suggested that changes to Great Ancoats Street should be considered alongside or as part of the SRF.

4.20 Development heights, massing, layout and design

4.21 Some respondents supported the scale, density and layout of the buildings, noting that the scale seemed appropriate for the area and added interest. A number of comments were received expressing concern about the height of buildings that could be developed on the site. Some of these referenced the indicative building heights envisaged in the SRF while others simply requested that building heights not be too high. Specific points included:

- Concern about overshadowing or loss of daylight on neighbouring buildings (including from residents of buildings on Old Mill Street and boaters living on the Marina). Some of the boaters also mentioned the possibility of an impact on their power supply.
- Concern that 16 storeys would be out of proportion with other buildings in the area, particularly the Ancoats Conservation Area, or that buildings should be limited to specific heights (e.g. 6 or 10 storeys).

- Criticism of existing or planned buildings in adjacent areas perceived to be too tall.

4.22 There were some comments criticising the design of the buildings envisaged in the draft SRF, including concerns that they would be “ugly” or “boring”, or that there was a lack of detail on building design. The need to respect and complement the surrounding heritage buildings was also highlighted. Some asked that the development should be as sustainable as possible.

4.23 Responses were also received on the proposed layout of the site in the SRF, including:

- Requests for alternative layouts which would allow an increased proportion of green space or reduce building footprints.
- A suggestion to realign the eastern block of buildings to the back of the site.
- Concern that the four separate blocks shown in the indicative plans for phase 2 would impact light.
- Concerns that the proposed layout would create a wind tunnel.
- Requests for the site to be well-lit and inclusive.

4.24 Timescales for Delivery

4.25 A few respondents asked for details on the timescales for the SRF and for development of the site. Some of these responses included requests that the main green space is prioritised for delivery as part of phase 1. Another criticised slow progress in delivering development on the site to date. There were also some suggestions around the contract for the detailed design for the development on the site, for example, that it should be open to a competition or designed by young architects or students from local universities.

4.26 Management and Maintenance

4.27 Several comments were received highlighting the importance of the long-term management and maintenance of the buildings and spaces developed on the site. Specific points were raised about the links shown to Cotton Field Park, including:

- How they will be managed when the Park is closed at night.
- A request to ensure that the marina continues to be locked overnight for the security of local residents.
- A suggestion that if the plans involve connecting the site to Cotton Field Park, occupiers should contribute to the New Islington Marina service charge.

4.28 A few respondents also highlighted concerns around crime, safety, and anti-social behaviour, requesting more information on the security measures that would be put in place, or making recommendations, for example, the inclusion of CCTV.

4.29 Statutory Consultees

4.30 We have received responses from the following statutory consultees:

4.31 Historic England

4.32 Historic England stated that, as with the 2020 Framework, they continued to have no concerns about the principle of developing the site and recognised the potential benefit from high quality development. They re-iterated the importance of the mill buildings directly to the west of the site, and the need for development to be sensitive to the setting of these buildings and for consideration to be given to the height, design and siting of buildings closest to the canal. Their response requested that the plans in the SRF to redevelop this section of the site be more detailed in their scope and parameters, and the need to respect the adjacent heritage be more strongly stated.

4.33 Canals & Rivers Trust (CRT)

4.34 The response from CRT welcomed the aim of the SRF in encouraging pedestrian and cycling connectivity and a greater interaction with the Rochdale Canal. They stated that the overall design principles seemed appropriate, especially improved connectivity and respecting the existing mill buildings and canal setting, and expressed particular support for the following aspects of the draft SRF:

- The acknowledgement given to the canal corridor.
- The use of the Rochdale and Ashton canals as pedestrian links.
- Clear illustration of the current access constraints along the Rochdale canal towpath.
- The reduced scale of buildings closer to the canal corridor, with a view that 7 storeys would be sympathetic to the canal corridor and heritage assets.
- The central green space, which is shown linking to Islington Marina and the Rochdale canal, and the indicative canal piazza.
- The potential for a new pedestrian access from the corner of Great Ancoats Street and Rochdale canal.

4.35 CRT also made a number of specific points and requests, including:

- Extension of the red line boundary to the water's edge of the canal/lock to ensure the whole area is considered holistically.
- Careful consideration of building heights along the canal to ensure that there is no excessive overshadowing or wind tunnelling.
- The provision of an active frontage along the canal corridor interface.
- Consideration given to the towpath adjacent to the development, extending towards Piccadilly, especially under the Great Ancoats Street footbridge.
- Funding for improvements/renovations to the CRT owned footbridge.
- Soft landscaping around the canal edge, including native species.

4.36 United Utilities

4.37 United Utilities highlighted that development on the site should fully consider both the impact on their assets and the integration of surface water management and requested that the Council continue to consult and engage them on the detail of the design and proposed construction works. Specific points included:

- Concern about the lack of reference to their assets within the draft SRF.
- Objection to the proposal to build over the two large sewers with the area included in the illustrative masterplan.
- The need to consider landscaping proposals, including level changes and proposed crossing points with their assets (which will need to be agreed).
- Avoiding the planting of new trees and landscaping too close to their assets.
- Support for the intention to survey the Shooters Brook culvert and explore opportunities to integrate the culvert.
- The need for further detail on, and full consideration of, flood risk.
- The critical importance of evaluating and incorporating water management, including sustainable drainage and water efficiency, at the outset of the design process, with a number of suggestions as to how this could be managed.

5.0 Response to comments

5.1 The following section provides responses to specific comments made as part of the consultation.

5.2 Public Realm and Greenspace

5.3 In response to the requests to develop a public park and significant green space on the site, the Council recognises that the communities of Ancoats and New Islington have asked for access to further high-quality green space. There is a commitment to significant new public realm investment across the city centre, as well as a number of established city centre parks and gardens. New quality public realm space is being included within new developments, as well as the more significant construction of new public parks, both in the local neighbourhood and more widely across the city centre.

5.4 In the immediate area, we have developed a new £34m public realm and green space plan for the next phase of development of Ancoats (Ancoats Phase 3), including the Ancoats Mobility Hub. This includes the transformation of Ancoats Green, a multi-functional, green heart to the neighbourhood, including a new children's play area, enhanced existing green spaces, creation of a multifunctional space for events and the delivery of key routes that will connect the Rochdale Canal with the Green and Poland Street with Butler Street. On completion the project will deliver 4 acres of improved public open space providing a 76% net increase in trees and 600sqm of new planting. Cotton Field Park has received key refurbishment investment in recent years. The new Mayfield Park is within walking distance of the former

Central Retail Park site, providing 6.5 acres of green space alongside the River Medlock. Therefore, the future development of the former Central Retail Park site fits into a wider picture of green space and public realm within this part of Manchester. The draft SRF illustrates the number of green spaces around the site and describes how the new space proposed will help provide connections to the existing and planned green spaces, as well as creating a sense of place.

- 5.5 The updated, draft SRF includes a larger area of public green space compared to the 2020 Framework. This responds to the consultation feedback received in 2020. A new green space will be at the heart of the development proposals for the site and the development will open the site and create a gateway to Cotton Field Park for the first time. It is the intention to include the green space as an integral part of the development, central to creating an attractive neighbourhood, rather than it being an aspiration. The final dimensions of the green space will be established during the detailed design phase.
- 5.6 While there is a clear commitment to provide a substantial amount of new green space and public realm within the SRF, the Council is also cognisant of the central role this site can play in helping to continue the city's economic growth and respond to the current economic climate, and the opportunity it provides to bring vital jobs and businesses to the city. It is, therefore, felt that a balance is needed to maximise the benefits of the regeneration of the site to include both local well-being and jobs impacts. It should also be noted that there is a shortage of available land in the city centre to meet the growing demand for new commercial and residential accommodation.
- 5.7 We welcome residents' views on their preferred uses and features of the main green space. Pages 29, 36-38 and 48 of the SRF set out the positive characteristics the new green space should consider as part of its development. As we are at an early stage of development, the detailed design of the park has not yet been undertaken. The layout, composition, and uses of the space will be refined as the designs are developed and will consider the feedback received as part of the consultation. The detailed design process will also consider the connections to Cotton Field Park.
- 5.8 Air Quality & Biodiversity**
- 5.9 The detailed design phase will include a full air quality and noise analysis and assess if mitigation measures are needed, in line with planning policy. A planting strategy will also be developed as part of the detailed design, which will build upon existing planting strategies delivered in Ancoats that reflects the feedback from consultation events within the wider neighbourhood. Engagement with ecology consultants will be a component of the design process.
- 5.10 The site is well connected by public transport, and new cycling and walking connections are being proposed in the SRF. It is expected that the majority of trips to the area will be made by public transport, walking or cycling. As set

out under the Parking, Traffic & Highways section below, minimal parking is envisaged on the site, which is well connected by public transport. Vehicle access is restricted to the perimeter of the site, so that the main part of the site will be for pedestrians and cyclists only. Along with the provision of new green space, planting and trees, these measures will mitigate air pollution.

5.11 Proposed Uses

- 5.12 In response to the comments raised about the demand for office space in the city centre, including in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, Manchester city centre remains a strong business location. The city centre is the region's economic hub, providing a strategic employment location, with a significant growing population. Businesses continue to be attracted to the city - over 1m sq ft of office space was let in Manchester in both 2021 and 2022 (close to the amount let in 2019 before the pandemic).
- 5.13 Intelligence from office agencies highlights that business are increasingly seeking new, high quality (Grade A) office space, with the highest environmental credentials, which can provide the best working environment for their staff. There is currently a shortage of new, Grade A office space, highlighted by the fact that office vacancy rates have reduced to around 3%. Additional new, quality office space is, therefore, needed for Manchester to remain competitive as an attractive location for businesses, and to attract new jobs and growth to the city, particularly crucial in the current economic climate. In particular, the Former Central Retail Park site represents an opportunity for new, high quality and sustainable office space at a scale and standard that meets the requirement of potential occupiers. The refreshed SRF for the site also responds to potential interest from the GPA to locate government offices on the site.
- 5.14 This part of the city is now increasingly a destination of choice for office occupiers, particularly for businesses in the Technology, Media and Telecoms (TMT) sector. These organisations are being attracted to the character of the Ancoats area. The adjacency of the Northern Quarter, which is also popular with businesses who operate in the TMT sector but has limited space to accommodate such occupiers, is key in driving forward a commercially-led development opportunity of scale on this site. New types of office spaces that encourage agile and collaborative working and that contribute to the wellbeing of the workforce are key to attracting the TMT sector into new purpose-built workspace in a wider neighbourhood setting that is attractive to the workforce talent it needs.
- 5.15 Providing new commercial development on the site will also create a range of new employment opportunities that could benefit local residents, both through the construction phase (through apprenticeships and training opportunities), and also through the permanent jobs located on the site. It is estimated that up to 8,000 jobs could be provided on the site.
- 5.16 The vision for the site in the SRF responds to and complements the mix of uses currently surrounding the site, which includes a school (Co-op Academy

New Islington) and a GP surgery (New Islington Medical Practice). The draft SRF envisages supporting a range of amenity uses to serve the local community (e.g. retail and hospitality offers) as part of the mix of uses on the site, mainly at ground floor level. Community facilities, such as those suggested by respondents, could potentially be considered as part of these uses as designs progress.

5.17 The principles for active building frontages are outlined on page 40 of the draft SRF. Several potential routes have been identified, including portions of Great Ancoats Street, the Canal Piazza, within parcel B, and around the green space. The specific uses will be further developed in the future detailed design for each plot and building.

5.18 In terms of residential development, including affordable housing, the Manchester Residential Growth Strategy aims to address residential needs and the provision of housing delivery, including affordable housing, across the city, to ensure that the right homes are provided in the right locations. The ambition for the Former Central Retail Park site has always been primarily commercial in focus, reflecting the accessible location of this key strategic site on the edge of the city centre. A range of housing is already being developed in the surrounding Ancoats and New Islington neighbourhood, with a further 1,500 homes planned as part of the next phase of development. Furthermore, within Ancoats and New Islington, three initial sites in City Council ownership have been set aside for affordable housing. Land adjacent to Butler Street, land adjacent to Downley Drive and the former Ancoats Dispensary, will be used to provide affordable housing, delivering up to 145 new homes. The schemes at Downley Drive and the former Dispensary are now on site. The commercial focus of the site will complement the developing mix of uses and help bring further life to the area.

5.19 Current Use of the Site by Skaters

5.20 The Council understands the desire for users of the temporary skating facility on the site for further spaces for skating within the city. The Council have been working with Skate Manchester for over 12 months on potential provision across the city. The SRF doesn't envisage a permanent skateboarding use on the site, but the Council is keen to continue to engage with the skateboarding community around alternative provision in the city. MCRactive, a not for profit organisation overseen by the Council which aims to encourage people to lead more active lifestyles, is working with partners to bring forward a long-term investment strategy for action sports. This strategy will guide the future provision and management of indoor and outdoor action sport facilities in the city.

5.21 Development heights, massing, layout and design

5.22 The design principles in the draft SRF recognise its urban setting in terms of its density and scale, with development to be structured around meaningful, people focussed public realm. The draft SRF does not specify the exact location and size of buildings, as this will come at a later stage in the

development process. However, the draft SRF does envisage building heights ranging from approximately 6 to 16 storeys across the site, with a transition in height from west to east to integrate development on the site into the existing skyline (see page 41 of the draft SRF). It is proposed that the office buildings to the west and north of the site would step down to respond to the scale of the Ancoats Conservation Area and its listed buildings, as well as New Islington School. Any future planning applications will be expected to follow the height principles within the draft SRF.

- 5.23 Compared with the previous (2020) Development Framework, the refreshed SRF overall envisages lower and more consistent building heights across the site. The previous framework involved much higher elements, with heights varying from 4 to 30 storeys. This responds to feedback from the previous consultation about the need for development on the site to respect and complement the surrounding architectural context.
- 5.24 The SRF recognises the importance of taking into account the character of the conservation area, and responding positively to it, respecting its heritage, key features and views from and towards the area. Future detailed designs for the site will consider the heights of adjacent buildings and their relationship to the setting of them.
- 5.25 The design layout illustrated in the SRF is intended to create an attractive neighbourhood, which provides amenities for local people, and can attract modern office occupiers. The layout of the development parcels has been strategically designed to enable the creation of a central green space. This space also aligns to Cotton Field Park, enabling connections to be made. (Please see pages 35-36 of the draft SRF). The proposed development will be of mid-rise character, with indicative heights as described above.
- 5.26 As a high-level framework, the SRF does not provide detailed designs for the buildings on the site, but page 42 outlines the quality parameters intended for any future development of the site. Future detailed design work will be undertaken to inform individual planning applications. The future individual planning applications will enable the Council to ensure development meets the quality standards for the city and set out in the SRF. All planning applications will themselves be subject to further public consultation. These proposals would be required to be supported by detailed technical analysis, including a full daytime, wind, noise and air quality analysis that assesses potential impacts on amenity and any measures needed to address these. Any identified impacts would be required to be fully justified and submissions assessed in accordance with adopted Planning Policy.
- 5.27 The creation of a highly sustainable commercial district is a central aim of the SRF. The aim is to foster a positive environment for both individual well-being and the urban environment (see page 44 for more details). Planning applications will be required to demonstrate high levels of sustainability within their design and operation. We are also committed to making the area as inclusive, safe and welcoming as possible.

5.28 Support for New Routes and Connections

- 5.29 We welcome the support raised as part of this consultation for the new walking and cycling routes across the site as proposed in the SRF. The integration of new green space and public realm will play a key role in facilitating successful connections through the site and beyond, building on the creation of a network of streets and public spaces that are linked via a common design theme, with green infrastructure as a key element in this. In the process of developing the draft SRF, several key entry points and potential landscape character areas have been identified that include the Canal Piazza, Great Ancoats Street, the park and New Islington gateway, creating pedestrian and cycle-friendly routes through the site will maximise permeability and create an area focused on people, encouraging social interactions. (Please see page 38 of the draft SRF). The canal tow path provides the opportunity to connect to the neighbouring districts, and future detailed designs should encourage pedestrian and cycling connectivity and greater interaction with the canal.
- 5.30 The layout and designs for the routes will continue to be developed, and the suggestions received as part of the consultation will be taken into account as part of this. The designs will look to connect into the existing and planned cycle routes around the site, as part of the wider cycling strategy underway across the city. In recognition of this, it is proposed that an updated plan illustrating the connections to wider cycle routes is included on page 38 of the final SRF document.
- 5.31 The SRF is intended to guide and shape future development on the former Central Retail Park site. As such it is not able to influence highway improvements and other interventions beyond the site boundary.

5.32 Parking, Traffic & Highways

- 5.33 The development looks to provide a minimal level of parking, in order to encourage public transport and active travel to the area. Vehicular access (other than emergency vehicles) is confined to the perimeter of the site, with access points from Great Ancoats Street and potentially Old Mill Street. Restricting vehicle access to the edges of the site allows pedestrian and cycle routes and connections to be prioritised; public space to be maximised; and the activation of multiple frontages. This will ensure that the site becomes a place for people. (Please see pages 38 & 39 of the draft SRF).
- 5.34 Chapter 5 of the draft SRF (pages 35-43) gives consideration to the adjacent area along Great Ancoats Street and sets out proposals to enhance the environment of this area.

5.35 Timescales for Delivery

- 5.36 In relation to timescales for the development, if the revised framework is approved by the Executive, it will be used as part of the planning process to

shape and guide future development proposals The SRF itself does not give permission for any development to go ahead.

5.37 The SRF proposes a phased approach to development, to ensure that the full potential of the site is realised over a manageable time period and to minimise disruption during the construction phase. The exact timing of development coming forward will largely be driven by the need to respond to commercial office and market requirements. The potential interest from the GPA to locate offices in the area gives a positive indication of current market demand.

5.38 The intention is that the main green space proposed in the SRF will be delivered as part of the phase 1.

5.39 Management and Maintenance

5.40 The importance of good long-term management of both the buildings and public space is recognised as being vital to the ongoing success of the area. A management strategy and appropriate charging arrangements will be established to cover the site. Maintenance and management plans will also be required for all planning applications for individual buildings.

5.41 Statutory Consultees

5.42 Historic England

5.43 The support of Historic England to the overall development of the site is welcomed. As the SRF is a high-level document, designed to set out the overall principles for the site, it is not appropriate to be more prescriptive on the parameters of the buildings on the area of the site closest to the canal and mill buildings. This will be determined within individual planning applications. However, as stated above, the proposed height ranges in the SRF are deliberately designed to step down to take into account the context of the heritage buildings and the canal. Please also see the section on development heights, massing, layout and design, which outlines how the SRF references the importance of sensitivity to the neighbouring heritage assets.

5.44 Canals & Rivers Trust

5.45 We also welcome the support for the draft SRF given in the response from the Canals & Rivers Trust. The points raised will be considered as part of the detailed design process, and further consultation will be undertaken as part of the design and planning process. Suggested improvements outside of the boundary of the site would need to be considered as part of wider work within the area.

5.46 United Utilities

5.47 The detailed design process will include a full assessment of the impact on utility assets and water management, both in terms of landscaping and building designs. Further engagement will take place with United Utilities as

part of this, to ensure there is no impact on the functioning of the main sewers. Surface water management and inclusion of sustainable drainage is a policy requirement and will be addressed as part of the landscaping strategy and delivered via each planning application. All development proposals will be assessed in accordance with adopted policy and up to date guidance.

- 5.48 United Utilities will be consulted in respect of individual development proposals and opportunities to minimise water uses and enhance drainage will be considered in respect of individual scheme feasibility and viability.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The updated Former Central Retail Park SRF is part of a wider set of plans for the development of Ancoats, including the delivery of significantly upgraded and extended green space at Ancoats Green, supported by a network of routes that are pedestrian and cycle friendly, connecting the public spaces together and creating coherent links within the neighbourhoods surrounding Ancoats. The revised draft SRF captures the ambition set out 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 local residents, the new office employees, and visitors, and enhance connections to other green spaces, the local neighbourhoods, city centre, and transport networks. It should be noted that the Former Central Retail Park SRF relates specifically to this site and does not influence wider areas of the city.

6.2 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.

6.3 It is proposed that the draft SRF is updated to better show linkages to existing and planned cycle routes in the area. Further consultation will take place with local residents and statutory organisations as proposals progress.

7.0 Legal Considerations

7.1 If the draft updated Former Central Retail Park SRF is approved by the City Council, it will not form part of the Council's Development Plan but would be a material consideration for the Council as Local Planning Authority when determining any applications within the Former Central Retail Park SRF area.

8.0 Recommendations

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