

Victoria North

Members Update



Overview

Victoria North is a joint venture between Far East Consortium (FEC) and Manchester City Council to deliver transformational regeneration in north Manchester. Victoria North is set to transform the neighbourhoods running north of the city centre along the River Irk, from Red Bank and New Cross up to Collyhurst. The long-term plan will create sustainable residential communities through 15,000 new homes that will benefit from new and improved transport links, community facilities and a network of green public spaces.

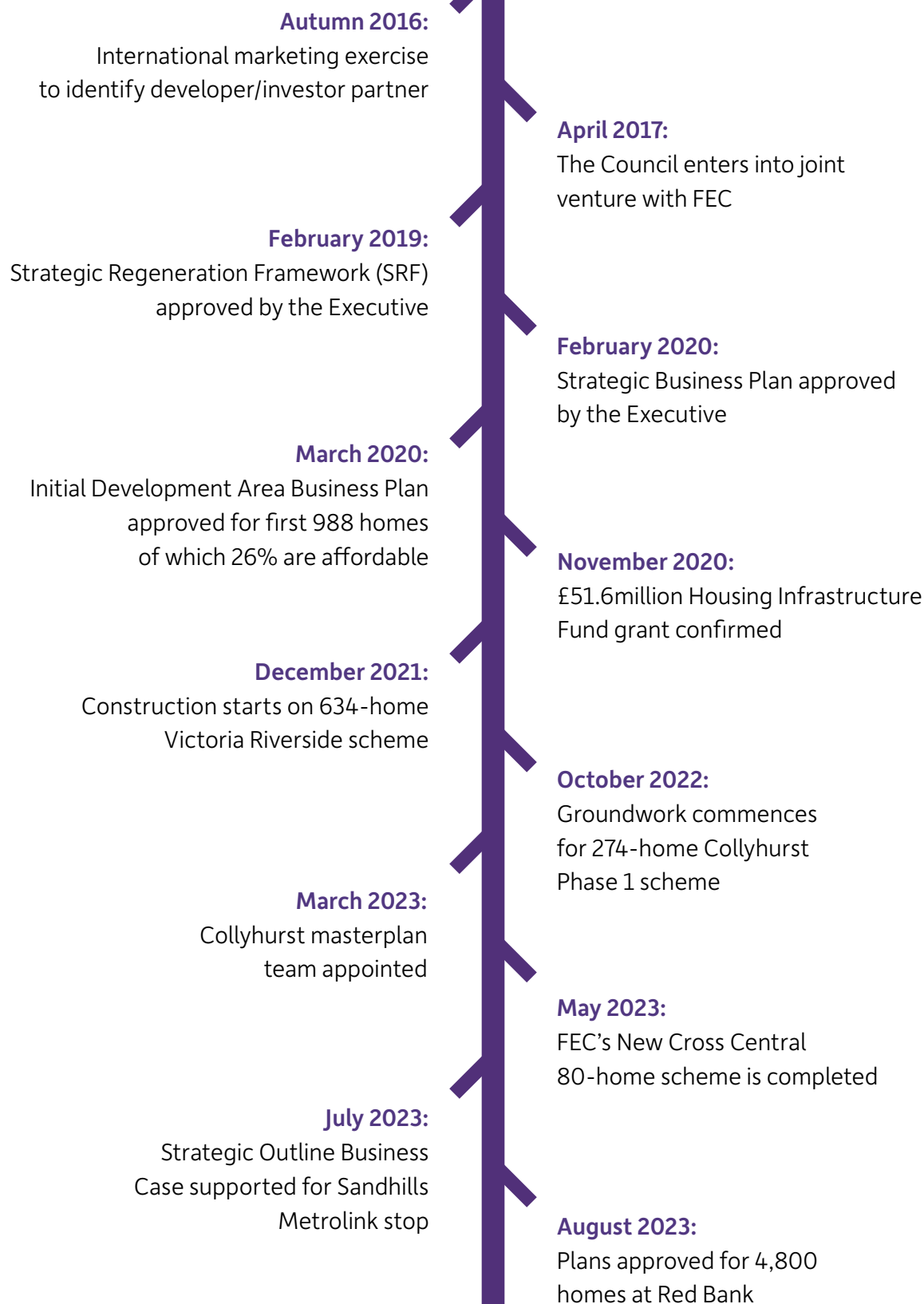
To help realise this objective, the Council undertook an international marketing exercise in 2016 to identify a development/investor partner with the necessary expertise and financial capacity that it could work with to utilise its existing land interests. These include:

- tackling the issues of fragmented land ownership by assembling land from third parties not capable of bringing forward coherent development proposals
- bringing forward development proposals that would allow for place-making, delivery of social and community infrastructure, and meet the Council's emerging objectives in relation to the delivery of affordable housing and low/zero-carbon neighbourhoods.

This marketing process led to the establishment of a 50/50 Joint Venture (JV) Partnership with Far East Consortium International Limited (FEC) in April 2017.

In total, the Victoria North development area comprises 155 hectares and straddles the four wards of Piccadilly, Miles Platting & Newton Heath, Harpurhey, and Cheetham. The following pages are intended to provide members with an overview of progress and activity to date.

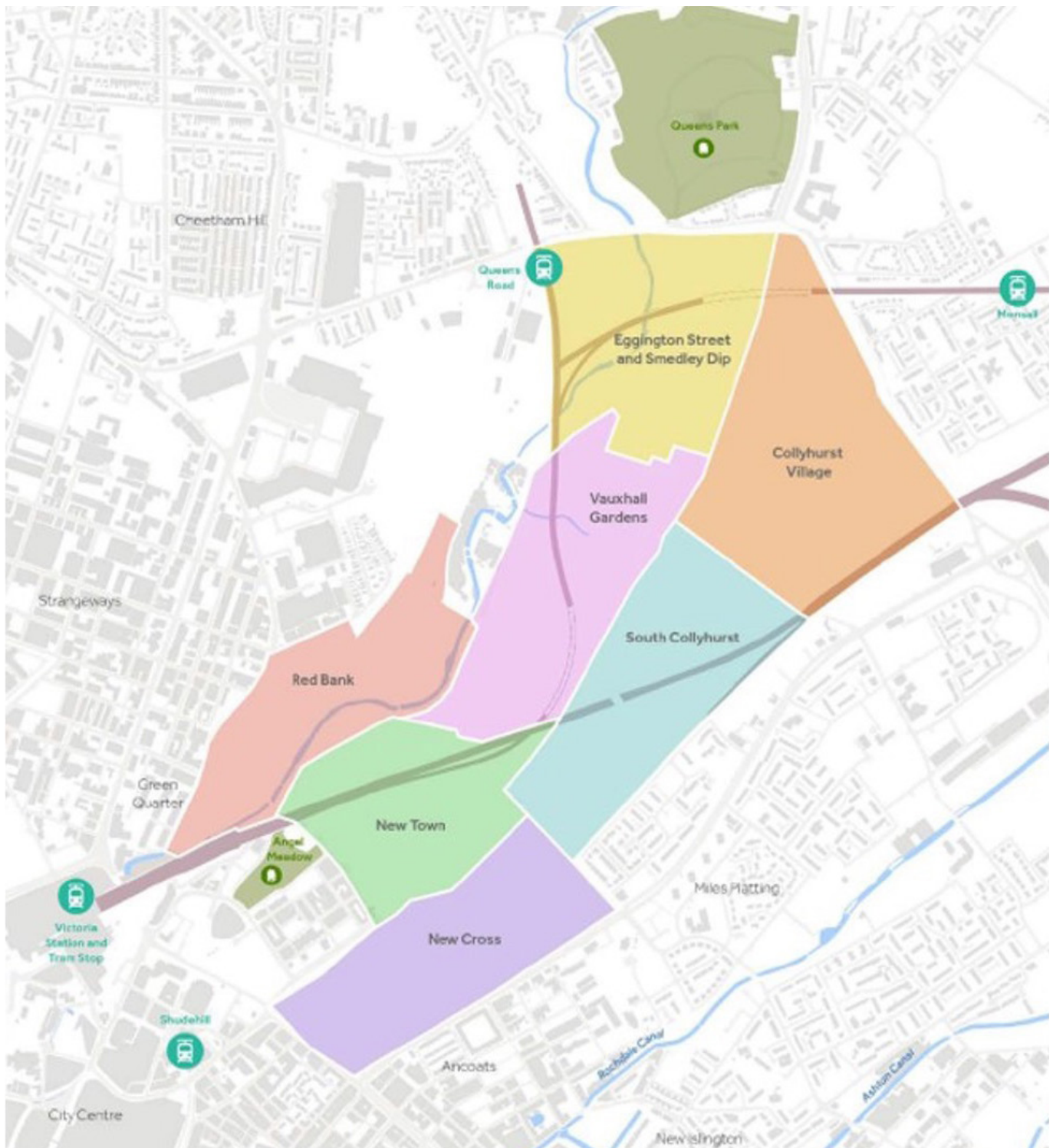
Timeline of key milestones



Neighbourhood-led regeneration

The area covered by the Victoria North programme is home to a number of existing communities and characterful neighbourhoods that reflect the area's rich industrial heritage and unique natural assets. New development will re-enforce existing communities and establish a series of dynamic, sustainable and integrated neighbourhoods within Manchester's extended city centre. The SRF

describes seven interconnected neighbourhoods, each with its own individual character. This is likely to be a 20-year programme, and over the next decade the Council and FEC will focus much of their attention on the three areas of Red Bank, Collyhurst and Sandhills/Vauxhall Gardens. A summary of the plans and progress for each of these areas is outlined across the following pages.



Red Bank

The emerging Red Bank neighbourhood in the Lower Irk Valley is an area characterised by a legacy of former industrial uses, fragmented land ownership, and barriers to development presented by gaps in the provision of key physical infrastructure such as power, utilities and highway access. The neighbourhood is within areas of high flood risk and challenging topography, and limited access presents permeability issues, with much of the land seemingly disconnected as a result of historical use and lack of investment in the past.

Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF)

To begin to address these challenges, the Council submitted a joint bid with FEC to the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) programme in 2019. The bid was successful, and the Council entered into a contract with Homes England for £51.6million of grant funding in November 2020.

The HIF programme is focused on the delivery of a broad package of infrastructure work designed to deliver some 5,500 new homes across the neighbourhood to be known as Red Bank. The core package of proposed infrastructure work includes bulk earthworks and remediation required to repurpose the former 25-acre brownfield Red Bank sidings site, the acquisition and demolition of the former Creamline Dairies site, and new reinforced utility networks for electricity. Longer term improvements will also be made to St Catherine's Wood and the banks of the River Irk, which will form the first phase of the City River Park and enhanced public realm.



As a result of unforeseen circumstances that have arisen since the HIF bid was submitted in 2019, the original plan has had to be amended. The global pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and construction-cost inflation owing to unprecedented market volatility have all had an impact on the overall deliverability of the original programme. Some original aspects have been removed following further design changes, and some have been considered unfeasible within the funding programme window.

Despite the challenges in delivering some parts of the HIF programme, positive progress has been made on a number of key work packages. Since the commencement of the scheme, the following have been completed:

- HIF programme enabling work-planning application (approved on 23 December 2021)
- HIF main work-planning application (approved on 14 July 2022)
- Ground investigations, including those of the River Irk
- Enabling work, including tree and vegetation clearance
- Acquisition and demolition of Creamline Dairies to create a new access point onto the Red Bank plateau, and the creation of a temporary haul road
- Clearance of the former Manchester City Council gypsy and traveller site
- Launch of BAM Community Hub at Hargreaves Street, delivering social value
- Enabling work on Dantzic Street development plots, including invasive species treatment
- Demolition of 'Love Factory' scheduled to commence in November.

Red Bank masterplan

FEC are on-site delivering the first 634 homes within Red Bank at Victoria Riverside. Enabling work for this scheme commenced in March 2021, with the main work starting in October 2021. Around this time, FEC undertook a nationwide marketing exercise to identify a panel of Registered Provider partners to support the delivery of affordable housing at Victoria Riverside and across the wider Red Bank neighbourhood. As a result, the provision of affordable housing at Victoria Riverside was increased from 5% to 20% (128 homes) through partnership with Trafford Housing Trust. The first homes are due for completion in 2024.

Running concurrently, an extensive masterplanning process for the wider Red Bank neighbourhood has been undertaken by FEC to guide the delivery of new housing and ensure integration with the HIF work. A series of public consultation events were held in the local area between autumn 2021 and spring 2023 to communicate plans and gather feedback.



The plans for the Red Bank neighbourhood include:

- 5,435 new homes across a range of tenure types and sizes, including affordable homes, set within high-quality public realm
- More than five hectares of new or improved green space, which include the JV partners intentions' for a riverside park, incorporating St Catherine's Wood; planning approval was secured for this as part of the HIF infrastructure planning consent
- New commercial, social and community uses, including primary school and health facilities
- New walking and cycling routes to improve connections between neighbouring communities and within Red Bank itself
- Improvements to the River Irk to enhance the river environment
- Zero-carbon and sustainability principles embedded throughout the neighbourhood.

In August, FEC received detailed planning consent for 1,551 new homes alongside 4,292 sq m for non-residential use, including commercial, public realm and cycle/car parking. Outline planning consent was granted for a further 3,250 new homes alongside up to 15,550 sq m of non-residential use, including commercial, healthcare, primary school, public realm and cycle/car parking. This brings the total number of homes consented to in the neighbourhood to 5,435, to be delivered over the next 10–15 years.

It is intended that the approach to delivering affordable housing across the Red Bank neighbourhood will mirror the approach taken for the Victoria Riverside scheme. As with Victoria Riverside where FEC are delivering 20% affordable housing provision, FEC will work with their appointed panel of RP's to increase affordable housing delivery in excess of the 5% secured at planning. The ambition is to deliver a 20% provision outside of the confines of the s106 which will allow access to grant funding.



New Homes in Collyhurst: Phase 1

Construction update

The scheme will deliver 274 new homes across two development sites in Collyhurst Village and south Collyhurst.

Collyhurst Village (244 new homes – 100 new Council social rent properties and 144 open market sale): The provision of a new commercial/retail unit, community space, new public realm, and the delivery of Phase 1 of a new community park. Delivery of the scheme requires the demolition of 29 existing properties (including 22 existing Council tenanted properties and seven properties in private ownership).

Work is progressing well and substantial progress has been made on new road construction, the excavation of the swale pond in the park, and foundation work. The work to erect timber frames for the houses has commenced. Completion of the new council homes will be delivered in stages: the first stage will be a block of ten houses in July 2024, followed by an apartment block in April 2025, a second apartment block with a new shop and community space in June 2025, and 14 more houses also in June 2025. FEC's marketing suite is now installed in Collyhurst Village and following fit out, is due to open to the public shortly.

The new park being delivered in Phase 1 has planning approval (the design was subject to widespread public consultation through the overall scheme design). There remain some areas of design to be refined, specifically the play equipment and planting, and some further engagement work was undertaken with the local primary schools last year. The contractor is currently undertaking this design-refinement work, and it is intended to feed back to residents on the final design in the coming months. A timetable for engagement will be developed and shared with local members in advance.

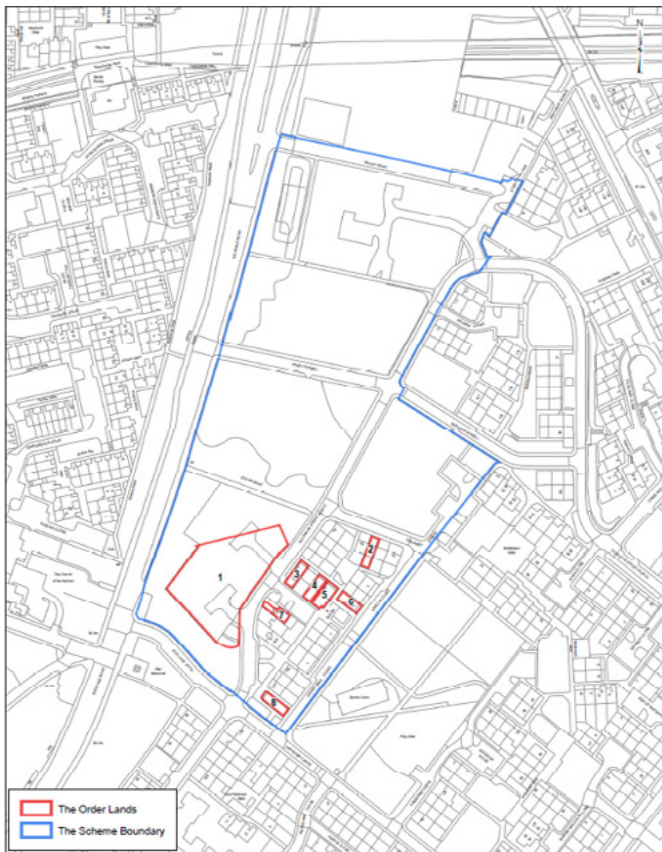
South Collyhurst: The construction of 30 new Council social rent homes. Archaeological activities are now complete with no significant findings. Site remediation work and piling installation is also complete. Currently, the contractor is awaiting dates for service diversion work prior to continuing, which is expected imminently. The new homes are scheduled to be complete in April 2025.



Compulsory Purchase Order

The Thornton Street North CPO was made on 8 March 2023 to enable delivery of the Phase 1 scheme in Collyhurst Village. We have now been informed that there were no objections to the Order and the Council can confirm the CPO. This confirmation process started on 20 September 2023 with the service of notice on affected residents and owners.

Compensation negotiations with the owners of the properties affected by the CPO are progressing positively. The Council is also making available Relocation Assistance to help owner-occupiers buy replacement homes and Council Officers are supporting residents through the application process.



Rehousing

Phase 1 residents affected by demolition

Residents whose homes will be demolished as part of the Phase 1 scheme are being supported to move into the new development. Housing Services have begun re-engaging with Council tenants affected by demolition in Phase 1 to review their rehousing needs in advance of allocating specific homes, clarifying timescales for their moves, and commencing discussions about practicalities. The residents will move into the new homes in stages in line with the expected completion of construction, and they will be supported through the process to ensure that it runs smoothly. We will ensure that the allocation process is done in a way that allows effective management of the vacant properties pending demolition.

Right to return for residents affected by the previous maisonette demolitions

The 30 new homes being built in South Collyhurst as part of Phase 1 will be prioritised for any of the former maisonette residents who moved out of Collyhurst and still wish to return. Completion of the new homes is expected in April 2025.

A desktop exercise has been undertaken to review whether those residents who moved out of Collyhurst are still living in the same home. There are a maximum of 66 residents who are still in the home they moved to outside of Collyhurst when their former home was demolished. Officers will identify households that may be interested in returning to Collyhurst, and will work in consultation with local members to develop how the allocations process will be administered.



Eastford Square demolition and sculpture relocation

The demolition of the last block of maisonettes at Eastford Square is now complete. Work to relocate the sculpture from the front of the block into the grounds of the nearby Roach and Vauxhall Courts has been delayed after the discovery of larger-than-expected foundations. Further calculations and a geotechnical survey are being undertaken to ensure a safe lift, particularly given the proximity to the Metrolink tunnel. Timescales for completion are not yet known.



Collyhurst Community Enterprise: Growing Space

Collyhurst Community Enterprise (CCE), a social enterprise organisation based in Collyhurst, propose to set up and run a Community Growing Space on a meanwhile basis using two currently vacant plots of land close to Southchurch Parade in south Collyhurst. No objections were made to a recent Loss of Open Space advertisement and the terms of a three-year lease have now been agreed between the Council and CCE. Signed copies of the lease are awaited, after which CCE's programme of work will be confirmed.

As part of the masterplanning work for future phases of development, the team are identifying other potential locations in Collyhurst for future meanwhile uses.

Future regeneration phases in Collyhurst



Masterplanning and community engagement

FEC have appointed a Masterplanning team: Mae (Lead Architects), Schulze + Grasso (Landscape and Public Realm), Turner Works (Meanwhile use), and If Do (Community Engagement) to undertake masterplanning for the Collyhurst Village and South Collyhurst neighbourhoods.

The Masterplanning team's Community Engagement Strategy was finalised and presented to elected members in early June.

The strategy is split into four key periods:

- Discover – initial engagement focused on listening to the community and stakeholders
- Develop – development of masterplan proposals through community-focused masterplanning
- Define – defining the preferred masterplan prior to planning submission
- Deliver – delivering the masterplan.

The initial 'discover' stage of engagement started in July. The team held one-to-one listening sessions with members of the community and key stakeholders to understand hopes and concerns for the masterplan, to outline the programme of work, and to ensure that residents can continue to actively participate in the ongoing masterplan process.

The team also attended the Collyhurst Stakeholder Group meeting, and the most recent Collyhurst Big Local meeting, and have conducted calls with other local groups, such as YPAC, Collyhurst Boxing Club, 0161 Project, and Winning Hearts and Minds. The team attended the Collyhurst fun day in the park on 24 August and undertook a range of activities to obtain feedback on people's views about Collyhurst now and in the future.



Image by Harley Bainbridge

Initial site surveys have started across Collyhurst to inform the development of the masterplanning proposals. Officers from the Major Regeneration team are working with colleagues in Housing Services to carry out a tenancy audit for the existing residents in Collyhurst, as well as update Housing Services' records and better understand current household occupancy and circumstances. This will initially take place over the phone, but there will be a need to follow up with home visits in some instances to ensure that as many residents as possible are spoken to. It is anticipated that this will commence in October 2023. The information obtained from the survey will help inform thinking on the masterplan but will also be useful in assisting Housing Services in their day-to-day management responsibilities.

Housing Services are also commissioning a Stock Condition Survey of all the Council housing stock in north Manchester. Collyhurst is included in this survey and the programme for doing the survey is under discussion. Once timescales are known, this will be communicated with local members and the community.

Delivery strategy

As set out in the recent report to the Executive in July, the community-focused masterplanning process will establish detailed proposals that will guide redevelopment activity in Collyhurst on a phased basis.

These detailed proposals will be informed by community engagement and will ultimately be the subject of community and elected-member consultation; they will inevitably include proposals for demolition and replacement of some of the existing Council tenanted homes and properties acquired through Right to Buy.

The redevelopment programme will significantly increase the overall number of homes within the Collyhurst estate. The intention is that an appropriate level of new affordable homes, above and beyond the levels of any replacement of existing Council homes, will be delivered, leading to a net increase in the amount of affordable housing. The delivery of these new affordable homes will require involvement of an Affordable Housing Delivery Partner (AHDP), which could come in the form of a Registered Provider, an Affordable Housing Investment Partner, or a combination of the two.

To inform the delivery strategy, and the role of the Council and an Affordable Housing Delivery Partner, further work is being undertaken to understand the implications for the Council's Housing Revenue Account. This work is underway and will inform the next steps in determining the Delivery Strategy, set out in the July report to the Executive.



Image by Harley Bainbridge

Vauxhall Gardens/Sandhills

The SRF identifies the potential for an integrated transport hub at Sandhills, including a new Metrolink stop, providing extensive public transport services within the area. A centrally located integrated hub would ensure that nearby homes (currently outside of acceptable walking distances to public transport modes, including the Metrolink network), as well as future homes, are provided with enhanced access to sustainable forms of travel. It would also connect new and existing residents to employment and leisure opportunities across the entire TfGM network.



The Council and FEC are continuing to work with Homes England and TfGM to promote a new Metrolink stop in the Sandhills area, which would facilitate the creation of a new local centre, including community uses and the potential for a further 2,500 homes built to a medium-high density. This is purely indicative at this stage and local residents and members will be fully engaged as part of any future masterplanning process at the appropriate time.

In total, across the Red Bank, Collyhurst and Sandhills/Vauxhall Gardens neighbourhoods, the Joint Venture can deliver 10,000 new homes over the next ten to fifteen years. Proposals for the three neighbourhoods are still being finalised; however, it is envisaged that most of the projected housing plans could be secured by early 2025, when the next phases of delivery in Red Bank will be well underway.



Parks and green spaces

In total, the Victoria North programme is aiming for more than forty hectares of public open space, including parks, plazas, green streets and other public spaces. This will be a mix of newly created spaces and investment into existing spaces over the course of the development programme. The neighbourhoods in which initial development activity is planned will include significant new public spaces.

In Collyhurst, the Phase 1 development includes a new community park, most of which will be delivered by 2026. In Red Bank, the Council secured planning consent in July 2022 for an enhanced and enlarged St Catherine's Wood and associated public realm along the River Irk. This is rightly considered to be a crucial component in terms of place creation in this neighbourhood, and officers are working closely with FEC to bring forward delivery of the green infrastructure in due course. Across the wider Red Bank neighbourhood, FEC will be delivering new public spaces as part of their new developments. Adhering to the Wild Urbanism landscape design concept, approximately 50% of the developable land will be public space to be enjoyed by all. Officers are working closely with FEC on an estate-management strategy to ensure that the parks and public spaces will be suitably funded, managed and maintained.



Health and education

Carefully planned social and community infrastructure will be needed to deliver sustainable and liveable neighbourhoods. Engagement with key stakeholders, including local education and health authorities is ongoing to assess the social and community provision required to support a growing, and changing, population. Where possible, co-location and sharing of facilities with other uses and in areas which are easily accessible or close to public transport nodes, will contribute to optimal and sustainable land use.

Plans for new and enhanced health facilities will be aligned to wider investment opportunities in north Manchester, including the District Centres programme and the planned investment into the North Manchester General Hospital site.

In August 2023, the Department for Education approved an expression of interest from the Dixons Academy Trust for a new secondary school in north Manchester, the need for which is driven by expected demand for additional places arising from the Victoria North developments and other local housing schemes. Officers are continuing to work closely with the Director of Education, and with FEC, to identify a suitable site for the new school and determine the wider approach to meeting future demand across all levels of education.





Social value

Planned investment into the residential-led Victoria North development and renewal programme, together with the redevelopment of the North Manchester General Hospital site, present a major opportunity to deliver a holistic place-based programme of inclusive growth. This ambitious programme could allow north Manchester to spearhead the city's continued transformation over the next 20 years. It could also make a significant contribution to tackle the spatial inequalities currently evident within the city and to develop stronger and more resilient communities as part of our aims for an inclusive economy.

Launched in 2021, the North Manchester Social Benefits Framework articulates the key priorities, opportunities and outcomes to which activities related to the major north Manchester regeneration programmes could contribute. The Framework provides the high-level context against which more detailed social value action plans, aligned to key themes, can be produced (such as through procurement exercises). Progress reports, collated on a quarterly basis, pull together all the social value activities and outputs being delivered across the major north Manchester regeneration programmes.

The latest report contains the following highlights:

- 1,029 jobs have been reported across the Victoria North developments since 2021; these include newly created and retained roles
- 17% of all jobs have been taken by north Manchester residents
- 58% of all jobs have been taken by residents of Manchester, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale and Salford
- 29 apprentices have been employed to date
- 100% of employees across all projects are paid the Real Living Wage
- 649 hours of volunteering time provided to support local community projects
- 210 hours spent on local school and college visits supporting pupils, including delivering career support, literacy support and safety talks
- 155 hours of support to unemployed people through career advice, mentoring, mock interviews and CV advice
- £9,000 worth of devices and connectivity provided for north Manchester residents to increase digital inclusion.

