

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Resolution**

**Report to:** Executive – 26 June 2019

**Subject:** Knott Mill Masterplan

**Report of:** Strategic Director – Strategic Development

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**Summary**

This report presents Executive Members with a draft masterplan for Knott Mill, and requests that the Executive approve the masterplan in principle, subject to a public consultation on the proposals.

**Recommendations**

The Executive is recommended to:

1. Approve in principle the draft Knott Mill Masterplan
  2. Request the Chief Executive undertake a public consultation exercise on the masterplan with local stakeholders and that a further report be brought forward, following the public consultation exercise, setting out comments received.
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**Wards Affected** Deansgate

<b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>	<b>Summary of the contribution to the strategy</b>
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	<p>The masterplan will provide a range of direct employment opportunities within a number of sectors and across a variety of levels.</p> <p>The Knott Mill area's proximity to First Street will improve linkages and access to the core of the city centre, and add to the employment opportunities presented within this part of the city centre.</p> <p>New residential development will be delivered within walking distance of city centre employment opportunities. Additionally, residents within the area will be connected to employment opportunities across Greater Manchester through easily accessible public transport links.</p>

<p>A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success</p>	<p>The masterplan sets out the opportunity to create new homes, enabling people to live near employment opportunities. Development will also improve connectivity to surrounding areas which will enhance access to opportunities within the city centre.</p> <p>Delivering residential development at Knott Mill will both support the city's population growth and the attraction and retention of the talent required to support Manchester's strong growth trajectory across a range of economic sectors.</p> <p>The redevelopment proposals will support new job opportunities across a range of levels accessible to local people. In addition, opportunities for apprenticeships during construction will also be available.</p>
<p>A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities</p>	<p>The proposals set out within the Knott Mill Masterplan are aligned to and will support regeneration in the wider area. The proposals will contribute to the delivery of the Manchester Residential Growth prospectus and meet the growing demand for new homes in the city.</p> <p>The proposed public spaces, connections and pedestrian routes will improve access to job opportunities, key neighbourhoods and amenities such as First Street, Castlefield and Hulme Park.</p>
<p>A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work</p>	<p>The masterplan area is well connected to a number of city centre neighbourhoods and amenities within walking distance. Knott Mill is well served by public transport and, located at a key southern gateway to the city centre, is also easily accessible by walking or cycling.</p> <p>The introduction of enhanced active frontages at ground floor level will support the residential and business community within the Knott Mill neighbourhood, and also provide amenities to adjacent city centre districts including Castlefield, First Street and the emerging Great Jackson Street.</p> <p>The proposals to extend the existing riverside walkway adjacent to the River Medlock would both enhance pedestrian connections within the area, and also provide access to the river.</p>

A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	The neighbourhood benefits from strong transport connectivity. This includes excellent public transport links, with both rail and Metrolink stations within a two minute walk from the masterplan area, reducing reliance on car usage.
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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

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**Financial Consequences – Revenue**

The costs of undertaking the masterplan consultation exercise will be funded from within existing approved revenue budgets.

**Financial Consequences – Capital**

There are no direct capital consequences arising from the proposals in this report, and any future capital proposals will be subject to City Council approval processes.

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

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

- Report to the Executive – Whitworth Street West Development Framework - October 2008
- Draft Knott Mill Masterplan – June 2019

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Knott Mill area is located south west of the city centre, in close proximity to the Castlefield neighbourhood, Whitworth Street West, First Street and the emerging Great Jackson Street regeneration area. Knott Mill is adjacent to the River Medlock and is close to Deansgate Railway Station and Deansgate-Castlefield Metrolink Station.
- 1.2 During the 1980s and 1990s the area provided the type of accommodation that was attractive to embryonic businesses, and particularly those from the design community within the city's creative industries. It also saw some of the earliest residential developments in the city centre. The Boardwalk nightclub was also located there, which was a key asset to the night time economy. Whilst it has since experienced some regeneration which has continued this process, it has seen little in the way of new development for some time. This has been brought more clearly into focus as a result of the significant change that has, and is, taking place in surrounding areas. As a result of this, the pace of change here has failed to reflect that of similar areas in the city centre, and it now lacks the vibrancy it once had. Unless action is taken, the area will not make the fullest contribution to the economy or function of the area and the wider city centre.
- 1.3 In 2008, the Council approved a development framework for the Whitworth Street West area which sits immediately north of Knott Mill, with part of the area within the "zone of influence" for Knott Mill. This framework was created to respond to the rapid economic and spatial growth of the city centre, promoting the expansion of the city core southwards. Since then, there has been significant investment within the area including Deansgate-Castlefield Metrolink Station and Axis, a 29 storey residential building, set for completion later this year. The Knott Mill Masterplan builds upon the development framework and subsequent and planned development proposals at Whitworth Street West. In addition this, other adjacent key development areas including Great Jackson St and First Street have provided an important context to the creation of the Knott Mill Masterplan.
- 1.4 This masterplan has been prepared by the Knott Mill Association, which represents the major landowners within the area. It seeks to establish a strategy to guide future development within the area that both acknowledges its unique character, and improves legibility and connections both within Knott Mill and with neighbouring areas.
- 1.5 Knott Mill has a distinctive sense of place and unique characteristics due to the presence of key buildings of architectural, historical and cultural importance. The area's important heritage buildings provide a very different look and feel to that of adjacent neighbourhoods, and this needs to be appropriately reflected in any redevelopment proposals.
- 1.6 The area is very much established as a successful hub for creative industries and professional services, and the masterplan seeks to build on this success, to ensure businesses are retained and able to grow and develop within the

area. It highlights the potential to deliver a range of new commercial development which should, where appropriate, deliver buildings designed to accommodate small and medium-sized businesses in the creative industries, as well as independent operators.

- 1.7 There is also the opportunity for the Knott Mill area to play an important role in satisfying demand for new residential accommodation, delivering new homes within a desirable location, and in close proximity to the range of employment opportunities offered within the rest of the city centre.
- 1.8 In addition to the delivery of new commercial and residential development, the Knott Mill area has a crucial role in linking key city centre developments. Connectivity will be enhanced at this key gateway location, improving links to First Street and Great Jackson Street.
- 1.9 All development in Knott Mill should be carefully considered to help facilitate the changes needed to meet the city's ambition to be zero carbon by 2038.
- 1.10 The following sections of this report summarise the draft masterplan.

## **2.0 Site Context**

- 2.1 The Knott Mill Masterplan area (see plan attached at Appendix 1) is broadly bounded by Hewitt Street and the Whitworth Street railway viaduct to the north, Albion Street and the Little Peter Street car park (within the First Street SRF) to the east, the River Medlock to the south, and the southern extent of Old Deansgate to the west. The masterplan area extends slightly beyond these broad boundaries at Bugle Street, Rowendale Street, and Cameron Street to the north and fronting onto the Bridgewater Viaduct to the west at the interface with the Castlefield Basin. However, there are proposed higher density developments immediately to the north of the railway viaduct along Whitworth Street West, which are within the "zone of influence", and need to interact with it. These are reflected by the broken line boundary on the plan attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The built environment is in good repair and provides a generally welcoming experience. However surface car parks, under-utilised buildings and gap sites have a negative impact on the local townscape. The quality of public amenity space and public realm is also limited.
- 2.3 There is significant scope to improve key interfaces between nearby neighbourhoods. The Deansgate railway viaduct and River Medlock, together with the Little Peter Street car park, currently act as barriers to efficient interfaces with adjacent areas.
- 2.4 The Knott Mill area contains a mix of uses and diverse architectural styles with differing scales, which are generally low-to-medium rise. The area is served by excellent transport links which enhance its desirability as a place to live and work. The site lies adjacent to Deansgate Rail Station, and is close to

Deansgate-Castlefield Metrolink tram stop, which provides a direct rail link between Piccadilly, Victoria and Oxford Road Rail Stations and onto Manchester Airport and wider national rail destinations. The masterplan area is easily accessible from the city's inner ring road (Mancunian Way) and other arterial routes.

- 2.5 There is fragmented land ownership within the Knott Mill area, with a number of small plots owned by a variety of predominantly private sector land owners with both freehold and leasehold titles. There is some potential to combine a few of the smaller plots to create development plots of a reasonable size without adversely impacting on the historic street pattern. Despite the fragmented nature of land ownership, it is envisaged developments can progress without the need for lengthy land assembly processes. All existing landowners within the Knott Mill area have been invited to contribute to the development of the masterplan.

### **3.0 Knott Mill Masterplan Urban Design Principles**

#### **3.1 Development uses**

- The masterplan sets out the scope for Knott Mill to accommodate commercially-led development, alongside the provision of additional, new homes. It is envisaged that at least 60% of the new space created will be allocated to employment uses. The ambition is for new development to create a critical mass of workspace and residential accommodation, which will support the provision of a range of amenity uses, in particular independent, small-scale retail, and food and beverage outlets to create further activity at street level.
- The ground and first floors of all new development and property refurbishments should, where practical, incorporate workspace designed to accommodate creative industries and independent operators. This will animate the area at street level and enhance the sense of place by contributing to evening and weekend activity.
- As a city centre location with strong transport connections, the neighbourhood will be particularly attractive to small/medium sized creative industry businesses and start-ups, building on the sector's long-established success in Knott Mill. The masterplan sets out the vision to further grow the sector within the area.

#### **3.2 Sense of place**

- The existing key buildings of architectural, historical and cultural importance, together with the historic urban grain, are seen as an intrinsic part of the character of Knott Mill and are central to the creation of a sense of place within the neighbourhood and fundamental to the area's local distinctiveness. The industrial heritage assets, including surviving brick built warehouses, are a distinctive element of the streetscape in the area,

and reflect Knott Mill's previous industrial role in the local economy.

### **3.3 Street hierarchy & connectivity**

- As the Deansgate railway viaduct and the River Medlock act as physical and psychological barriers to pedestrian movement, the masterplan places significant importance on creating and enhancing walking routes. These improved connections will integrate Knott Mill with adjoining areas and bridge the separation which exists between these districts.
- The existing street hierarchy remains largely unchanged in terms of vehicular traffic, however, the introduction of traffic calming measures are proposed, which will create a more welcoming environment for pedestrians.

### **3.4 Public realm & amenity**

- The masterplan includes a proposal to create a new "pocket park" at the junction of Commercial Street and Constance Street, surrounded by independent cafés. It is envisaged that enhancing the public realm within the area will provide an appropriate setting for the existing and new buildings of high architectural quality.
- The Masterplan proposes the extension of the existing riverside walkway provided by the Hills Quay development, within the masterplan area. The walkway could potentially extend across the Little Peter Street car park site to enhance pedestrian connections between Knott Mill and First Street. It could also enhance the amenity asset of the River Medlock.
- A further key part of the place-making strategy is to ensure Knott Mill is well connected to neighbouring large public spaces at First Street and the Deansgate Square (Owen Street) development, part of the Great Jackson Street framework area.
- The potential provision of a pedestrian bridge across the River Medlock would connect the Deansgate Square's public plaza, the Great Jackson Street developments, First Street and the city centre. A significant pedestrian route runs south-west to north-east as part of the Great Jackson Street SRF and this route terminates within the Owen Street development. This route could be extended via a pedestrian bridge link to Commercial Street, and the new "pocket park", via the 4 Commercial Street and Commercial Wharf plots.

### **3.5 Height & density**

- The proposals are underpinned by economic analysis which informs the identified uses and quantum of development. The vision for the area is to mediate the scale of development between the city centre and emerging development areas at the southern edge of the city centre. A limit on scale has been set to ensure development height is appropriate. Heights are

therefore capped well below the scale of the Great Jackson Street and Whitworth Street West developments, to ensure a more gradual transition and rhythm of scale along the southern edge of the city centre.

- New developments will respond appropriately to the form and size of development plots, the street pattern, the character, density and scale of surrounding developments.
- New development or refurbishment of existing buildings should be designed to support active frontages, particularly along the main pedestrian routes, to promote street activity and to animate the street scene.

### 3.6 Masterplan Area

The masterplan area identifies three distinct zones within the area and sets out the most appropriate uses and scale of development for each zone:

- **The Band** - The strip of mid-rise development along the northern edge of the masterplan boundary, which includes a mix of recently developed buildings either side of the character assets of 8 Hewitt Street and the former St Peters School
- **The Core** - The central, lower rise heart of Knott Mill, which comprises the remnants of the historic buildings of most character value.
- **The Fringe** - The larger plots and larger scale developments along the river edge, linking with the higher density Great Jackson Street developments.
- Development on the sites within the “zone of influence” are included for context. The plots adjacent to Rowendale Street and Cameron Street are occupied by existing buildings, and 10 – 12 Whitworth Street has an existing planning permission for 327 residential apartments.
- Network Rail is promoting the redevelopment of its land interests adjacent to Deansgate railway station at land bounded by Whitworth Street West and Bugle Street. Proposals will provide for the retention of the existing Grade II listed building, with works to enhance the station’s entrance, internal environment, prominence and accessibility. The parts of the site that do not form part of the original station currently do not make best use of its prominent city centre location. As such, redevelopment options are being considered for the non-listed buildings, which currently include the potential for a hotel and / or residential building with the potential for other complementary retail and leisure uses within the lower levels of the development.

### 4.0 Economic & Social Benefits

- 4.1 There are currently approximately 118 companies located within the Knott Mill masterplan area employing around 600 people. These jobs are within a number of high value sectors, including 12 architectural practices, 20 media & marketing organisations and 20 specialist consultancies. The ambition of the masterplan is to retain and grow the existing business base within the Knott Mill area, in order to support the continued economic growth of the city centre.
- 4.2 The masterplan sets out a flexible approach to bringing forward an appropriate mix of development in Knott Mill. The underlying ambition for the area is to ensure future development is commercially led. At least 60% of new space created will therefore be allocated to employment uses, building on the area's established business base. This will be provided within the ground floor units of all buildings, and the proposed commercial development plots marked as A, B, D and E on the attached plan, as well as the hotel development at the Alpha Street site (plot F), which has an approved planning consent. This hotel will also generate employment within the Knott Mill area. The combination of new commercial development and additional new homes will re-energise this distinctive, mixed-used district in the heart of the city centre.
- 4.3 The masterplan economic analysis identifies the capacity for Knott Mill to accommodate up to 230,000 sq. ft. of new commercial floorspace. This will include an element of retail and leisure uses. New commercial development could potentially accommodate up to 750 new jobs, creating a broad range of employment opportunities within micro and small businesses, particularly in the creative, digital and professional services sectors.
- 4.4 Analysis undertaken in relation to the draft masterplan indicate that the delivery of commercial development would generate an additional £80million GVA.
- 4.5 The commercial development will be supported by an appropriate level of new residential development, creating around 150 new homes within Knott Mill. A mix of homes should be provided, including accommodation suitable for families.
- 4.6 Residential development (plot C) within the Knott Mill area will comply with the Council's affordable housing policy. This states that where any of the exceptions in the policy are being relied upon, these will need to be fully justified. For example, where scheme viability is an issue, a viability assessment would be required, which should take account of the reasonable and appropriate costs of place making and of securing the necessary quality of buildings. Residential planning applications will be considered on a case by case basis, in line with relevant national and local planning policy, and an appropriate level of developer contribution will be assessed and agreed at that time.
- 4.7 Residential development at Knott Mill will support continued demand for new homes, and would benefit from the planned amenity provision at Great Jackson Street, which will include primary educational facilities/nursery/child-care provision, alongside a gym, and a range of retail amenities. If required,

appropriate contributions will be sought towards the provision of social infrastructure from any residential schemes which come forward in the areas part of the planning process.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

5.1 Knott Mill is an intrinsic part of the city centre, and given its established business base and the existence of a number of development-ready sites, this distinctive area has the potential to play a significant part in meeting current and future demand for commercial space and new homes in the city centre. This development can help to support the population and economic growth of the city.

5.2 With significant phases of development delivered at First Street, and development underway at Great Jackson Street, Knott Mill represents an opportunity to integrate with neighbouring areas. Through development that is appropriate and sympathetic, Knott Mill's historical assets can be preserved and enhanced, whilst contributing to the continued growth of this part of the city centre.

## **6.0 Key Policies and Considerations**

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

6.1 A key aim of the masterplan is to ensure the delivery of new commercial workspace and retail space, alongside a high quality residential offer, with a range of housing types. The masterplan will create a range of employment opportunities through both end uses and construction phases that local people can access and benefit from. The commercial space proposed is expected to be particularly attractive to start-up, small and independent businesses.

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

6.2 Not applicable.

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

6.3 If approved by the Executive, the Knott Mill Masterplan will not form part of the Council's Development Plan but would be a material consideration when development control decisions are made.