

APPENDIX 10.2: BASELINE CONDITIONS

Existing Character

National Landscape Character

10.1.1 The Site lies within National Character Area (NCA) 55: Manchester Conurbation, the key characteristics of which are:

- *“Large settlements have come together to form the conurbation, characterised by dense urban and industrial development, commercial, financial, retail and administrative centres, commuter suburbs and housing.*
- *The area is centred on low hills, enclosed by the Pennine hills to the north and east, and crossed by several meandering river valleys.*
- *The geology is dominated by sandstones, with the underlying PermoTriassic sandstones forming an extensive aquifer; this is overlain by thick deposits of glacial till.*
- *Woodland is usually found in corridors along the slopes of the river valleys, and also on what was once brownfield land.*
- *There are small pockets of farmland, bounded by fences or hedges. However, an increasing number of farms are now given over to urban farming uses such as equestrian facilities, supplying the demand for recreation.*
- *Public parks and recreation facilities provide valuable open spaces for people within this urban environment; community gardens and allotments are places for local food growing.*
- *River valleys form important corridors of semi-natural habitats and natural green spaces – with open grassland, woodland and wetland – linking urban centres with open countryside. Many post-industrial sites and canals provide wildlife habitats.*
- *Drainage is through a series of river valleys that weave through the urban fabric, flowing broadly from the Pennine moors to the east and north, towards the lower-lying areas of the south and west.*
- *The area’s legacy of industrial archaeology – particularly relating to the textile industry – is increasingly recognised. Red brick and sandstone buildings are prominent in the city and town centres, alongside buildings using a mix of modern materials, high-rise buildings, and landmark 19th-, 20th- and 21st-century buildings.*
- *The Manchester Conurbation forms a busy transport hub, interlinked with surrounding areas by an extensive web of roads, tramways and railways – major communications corridors. Access is also provided by the canal network.”*

10.1.2 There are four Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) for this NCA with SEO 1 aiming to provide and maintain green infrastructure, SEO 2 aiming to conserve and enhance the cultural heritage, SEO 3

aiming to provide a healthy water environment, and SEO 4 aiming to conserve and enhance the river valleys and canals.

Manchester City Strategic Level City-Wide Urban Characterisation (2010)

- 10.1.3 The Manchester City Strategic Level City-Wide Urban Characterisation forms part of the evidence base for the Manchester City Council Core Strategy and identifies 11 strategic character areas (SCA), which describes the underlying natural form; the urban form; and the use, activity and movement of each area. The Site is located on the boundary of the City Centre SCA and the Central Area of Change SCA.

City Centre SCA

- 10.1.4 The City Centre SCA description sets out, with regard to Urban Form:

“The urban form is one of contrasts. Despite an urban history dating from Roman times, the principal remaining influence of the pre-Victorian era on the city centre urban form is the street pattern in the historic core and routes that radiate from it and that respond organically to topography and other landscape features.

While some built form remains of both Medieval and Georgian Manchester, the core area is principally a mix of development from the Victorian period onwards with some localities often displaying a predominance of a particular age and style of built form and others having a more eclectic mix. A series of colliding street grids - with origins in the Georgian period but mainly dating from the Victorian period - have informed both the original and subsequent built development and the legibility and permeability of the city centre. The scale of built form also varies, sometimes dramatically, but the core area is mainly one of higher, larger scale buildings. Other than open spaces relating to transport infrastructure, the core has a relatively modest amount of open space (when compared to built floorspace) principally in the form of larger, high quality civic spaces but also with some smaller, much greener and less formal public gardens. The Conservation Area status of much of the centre and the concentration of listed buildings reflects the urban history and quality of the urban environment.

The urban form around the core reflects the economic, social and physical dynamic of the city’s on-going evolution and transition from the core to the outer areas. It contains a mix of building ages, types and quality but with a predominance of often lower scale built form a greater sense of space and lower density arising from areas of cleared, previously developed land...”

- 10.1.5 The City Centre SCA description sets out, with regard to use, activity and movement:

“The diversity and intensity of use, including over extended periods of any 24 hour day, reflects the regional (as well as city) centre role of the area. The predominant use in any particular part of the city centre can vary in relatively short distances to give pockets with particular use and activity characteristics. However, the over-riding character of the core area is a dense mix of non-industrial commercial uses, a predominance of regionally and locally significant uses and activities (including events) and a notable number

of residential apartments. By comparison, outside the core, the intensity of activity falls and, within larger areas, uses are less mixed with fewer uses of particular regional significance but that can include uses not generally found in the core area including elements of industrial use. The non-core area includes significant areas of cleared land (often used for surface car parking) and a growing component of contemporary residential use as the core area pushes outwards...”

Central Area of Change SCA

10.1.6 The Central Area of Change SCA sets out, with regard to urban form:

“This area covers the majority of the area engulfed by the industrialised expansion of the city in the 19th and early 20th century, focused on the Rochdale and Ashton Canals, but the current-day character principally derives from change: The subsequent comprehensive redevelopment of the area in the 1960's and the more recent on-going programme of large-scale regeneration. As such, the urban form is predominantly of the 1960's: one of lower-density development set within open areas consisting of a mix of generous principal highways and junctions, commercial yards, public open space (including significant areas of incidental open space), school playing fields and small private gardens. The area remains the focus of the city's industrial and other out-of-centre commercial activity mostly in low-rise industrial shed-style buildings. It also contains a significant concentration of 1960's housing with a predominance of purpose-built, social housing estates, often on the segregated vehicle and pedestrian Radburn layout and containing a mix of high and low-rise flats and short terraces on a series of cul-de-sac roads.

This change was almost area-wide although pockets of older development remain to contribute to localised distinctiveness such as at Ardwick Green - both Ardwick and Clayton are known sites of medieval halls. Change is once again underway with regeneration programmes that have, and continue, to transform the urban form of significant parts of the area. In Hulme, for example, new development has taken place on a reinstated gridstreet pattern (which, as elsewhere in the area, was often swept away or heavily corrupted in the 1960's) to provide an area which is once again legible and permeable. An over-all higher density, but human scale of development has been achieved but with less incidental open space and larger areas of more meaningful public open space...” 8.59 In regard to use, activity and movement this SCA description states that: “The greatest sense of activity within the area is found in Sport City and the other centres which are a focus for facilities, services and pedestrian and vehicle movement. The level of activity in and around Sport City increases dramatically at the time of events. The activity levels outside these 'hot-spots' are relatively low with the greatest sense of activity generated by vehicle movement on the principal routes. There are, however, localities which exhibit increased levels of overall activity: Those close to the city centre and the Higher Education Precinct and areas that have recently experience regeneration to higher densities that can now sustain a greater range of associated facilities.”