Blue and Green Infrastructure Statement

Hill Quays, Jordan Street, Manchester
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Manchester City Council have produced a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (dated 2015). The Strategy states;

"Manchester's green and blue spaces cover 58% of the city. Outside of the city centre and central Manchester green infrastructure coverage is generally high, made up of a combination of assets in public ownership and privately owned spaces, particularly residential gardens in south Manchester and Wythenshawe.

Most residents have access to an area of natural or semi-natural greenspace over two hectares in size (approximately the size of three football pitches) within 720m (approximately half a mile) of their homes, the standard set in the Manchester Core Strategy. In some areas, where the existing urban form does not accommodate these types of larger greenspace, other smaller scale GI is typically present, appropriate to that location, as well as public transport providing access to nearby green areas. In some parts of south Manchester there is a lower provision of natural or seminatural greenspace over two hectares in size, compared to other areas of the city. Mature street trees and private gardens provide an alternative source of GI in this area, contributing to its reputation as being home to some of the city's most attractive, leafy neighbourhoods. Ready access to the Mersey Valley and its adjacent greenspaces also provides part of south Manchester's appeal.

In the city centre a number of existing parks and high-quality areas of public realm form important elements of the landscape, with new development providing the opportunity to create additional new public space, as seen in recent years at One Angel Square and Spinningfields. Other public spaces are also planned as part of First Street and at St John's, the old Granada Studios site.

The city centre also benefits from ready access to areas of greenspace on the edge of its boundaries, including Angel Meadow, New Islington Water Park, Hulme Park, Whitworth Park, and the Irk and Medlock river valleys. The growing public transport network also provides access to major parks within the city at Heaton and Wythenshawe, and areas beyond including those within Greater Manchester, the Peak District, Cheshire, and the Lake District. As with other cities, continuing to develop these transport links is an important part of ensuring that all residents have access to high quality areas of greenspace.

Blue infrastructure, focused mainly in the river valleys, the canal network, and at Gorton Reservoir is a strong part of the city's history and will be an important part of its future. Industry and its decline left a legacy of degraded river valleys and poor water quality for a period. The concerted efforts of the Council, the Environment Agency, United Utilities, the Mersey Basin Campaign, Groundwork and others have been instrumental in reversing this decline, transforming these areas into havens for wildlife and recreation. Further work will continue to enhance these areas, including investment to improve accessibility and the ability for them to provide safe, attractive routes for walking, cycling and jogging.

The city's trees stock is an important part of overall GI levels, particularly in the south and north of the city. 20% of the city is classed as being tree-covered, compared to a national average of 9% in towns and cities. Street trees can be an integral part of the overall character of an area, helping to create an attractive green environment, sometimes despite a lower provision of public open spaces compared to other areas. Making sure that the city has the right species of trees for a changing climate and the right arrangements for their long-term management are both essential to ensure that trees – in parks, forests, gardens and on streets – can continue to be an important part of the city's character.

In well-established areas of the city, with low levels of overall GI, and where low levels of development are planned, including parts of central Manchester, smaller-scale interventions such as street trees and

community-led greening can provide an important means of improving local GI provision. In combination with making best use of existing resources in both public and private ownership, for example through registered housing providers, there are a range of options for ensuring that quality, accessible GI can form an integral part of these neighbourhoods"

The Proposal sits in line with the aspirations of this action plan and has been designed to take advantage of all the opportunities to increase and preserve green infrastructure. The proposals contain external amenity space for the residents and also include a roof terrace with incorporated green infrastructure that supports this action plan. Due to the nature of the proposed development it is considered that the design has taken every opportunity to create outdoor space.

With regard to Vision, the Strategy states;

"By 2025 high quality, well maintained green and blue spaces will be an integral part of all neighbourhoods. The city's communities will be living healthy, fulfilled lives, enjoying access to parks and greenspaces and safe green routes for walking, cycling and exercise throughout the city. Green and blue infrastructure will be supporting Manchester's growth. Businesses will be investing in areas with a high environmental quality and attractive surroundings, enjoying access to a healthy, talented workforce. New funding models will be in place, ensuring progress achieved by 2025 can be sustained and provide the platform for ongoing investment in the years to follow.

The delivery of the strategy will mean;

- *Our river valleys are well managed, accessible and safe – providing a key recreational resource to residents;*
- *Our canal network is rejuvenated as a key asset for the city centre and beyond;*
- *Our parks and green spaces are attractive and accessible to residents;*
- *Our networks of smaller scale urban green connect more residents with urban nature and provide corridors and stepping stones for biodiversity*
- *Our green spaces, both permanent and temporary, work harder, providing multiple social, economic and environmental benefits to the city.*
- *Our growth is supported by green and blue infrastructure, as a key part of creating attractive, successful neighbourhoods."*

The proposed development has been designed to maximise external amenity space for residents and retain accessible roof space for existing residents. Due to the nature of the proposed development it is considered that the design has taken every opportunity to create outdoor space.

With regard to actions and relevant to residential development, Action 1 of the Strategy states;

"Embed green infrastructure as part of residential developments"

There are a number of Opportunities identified within the Strategy, which includes;

"Enhance the quality and accessibility of existing parks and greenspaces, including raising the profile of St John's Gardens, Piccadilly Gardens, Sackville Gardens, Parsonage Gardens, Roman Gardens and All Saints Park, and engaging communities who live and work in the city centre through friends of and other similar groups.

Development opportunities on key city centre and corridor sites including; St John's, Piccadilly Strategic Regeneration Framework, First Street, NOMA, BBC site, Manchester Science Park, the MMU All Saints Campus and UoM capital build programme. Increasing the density of new development in certain locations can create space for green and blue infrastructure.

Enhanced blue corridors create safe, attractive green routes for a walkable/cyclable city, health benefits and accessible 'lunch hour' green space for city workers. Utilisation of the waterways as recreational green space assets to increase sale/rental value of residential and business units.

Walkable neighbourhood links to improve access and legibility across the city.

Canal enhancement to provide links and legibility across the city.

Use city centre gardens and green space for events and temporary features- revenue generation and increasing use by local residents, businesses and visitors, for example, street food vending, open air cinema, exhibitions, street art, pop up retail and Dig the City.

Establish the corridor as a Living Laboratory for the development of research on the benefits of GI.

Opportunities for green retrofit to existing buildings and infrastructure; green roofs/walls, courtyards, planters where space limitations curtail opportunity for larger intervention (Symbol denotes existing green roofs).

Meanwhile use on appropriate sites.

Greening of existing apartment blocks by residents and management companies."

With regard to the role of developers, the Strategy states;

"Developers have a key role to play in contributing to the delivery of this strategy, in terms of responding directly to local planning policies, but also in terms of recognising that GI can add value to their scheme and looking to identify creative solutions for incorporating high quality GI as part of development."

The Proposal is a roof extension, so there is no opportunity to contribute a soft landscaping intervention; instead, the scheme been designed to maximise external amenity space for residents and retain accessible roof space for existing residents.

Therefore, in this instance the opportunities to increase green infrastructure are very limited. However, by developing an existing building, this ensures that there is no net loss of green infrastructure or biodiversity.