New City Park, Former Central Retail Park Site, Manchester

Statement of Community Involvement

Prepared by Counter Context Ltd

NOVEMBER 2024

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

This Statement of Community Involvement has been prepared by Counter Context Ltd on behalf of Manchester City Council, hereby referred to as 'the Applicant', in respect of land within the Former Central Retail Park ("FCRP") site, off of Great Ancoats Street, Manchester (herein referred to as 'the Site'). It provides:

- An account of the pre-application consultation undertaken with local residents, local community groups, local councillors and other key stakeholders about the proposals.
- A summary of the feedback received from these consultees.
- Evidence that this feedback has been considered in the development of the proposals.

The pre-application consultation strategy was designed to reflect guidance within Manchester City Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (2018) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023).

1.2 Site Location

The Site falls within the administrative boundary of Manchester City Council ('MCC'), within the Ancoats and Beswick ward, and within East Manchester and the Regional Centre (as defined by the adopted Manchester Core strategy).

1.2.1 The Former Central Retail Park Site

The wider former Central Retail Park (FCRP) site covers an area of approximately 4 hectares and is bound by Great Ancoats Street, Old Mill Street, the Rochdale Canal and Cotton Field Park. This brownfield site has been vacant since the Central Retail Park was demolished in 2019.

The Proposed Development will form one part of the wider development of the FCRP site as outlined within the Central Retail Park Strategic Regeneration Framework 2023 (the "SRF"), which seeks to bring forward the wider site for a 'high-quality sustainable office district with an attractive public realm at its centre, including a new green space'.

The SRF outlines the three different developments that are proposed as part of the overall regeneration of the site: Phase One, Phase Two and the Park, as shown in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: SRF Plan.

1.2.2 The Application Site

The part of the site to which this application relates sits centrally within the FCRP site and also extends across the front part of the southern section of the site, adjacent to Great Ancoats Street (see Figure 2.2 overleaf). The Site is approximately 0.91 hectares (2.25 acres) in area.

The Site is bound by Great Ancoats Street to the south, Cotton Field Park and Co-op Academy New Islington to the north, Phase One development to the northwest and the Phase Two development to the southeast.

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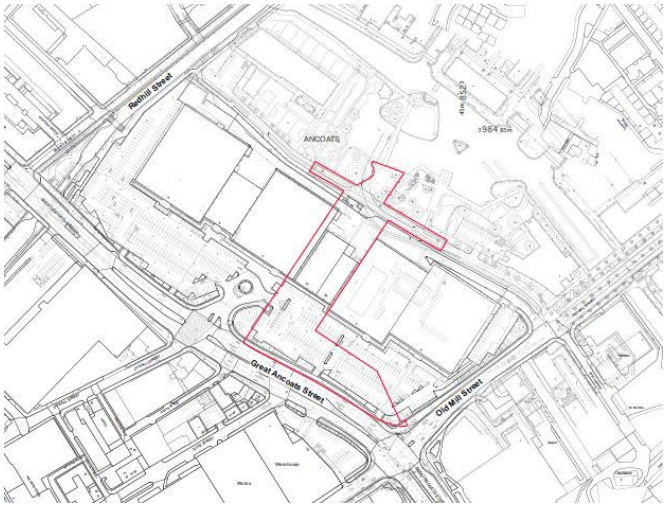


Figure 2: Site Location Plan.

More information on the site and planning context can be found within the Planning Compliance Statement prepared by Euan Kellie Property Solutions.

1.3 Overview of the Proposed Development

The application proposals ('the proposals' or 'the Park') present an opportunity for the delivery of a new public park, including areas of lawn, hard and soft landscaping and a range of seating areas for the use and enjoyment of residents, office workers and visitors to the City, and which form a key part of the delivery of the Central Retail Park SRF area.

Further information on the proposals is set out in the Design and Access Statement prepared by Planit.

1.4 Policy Requirements

Conducting an early and transparent pre-application consultation is consistent with the guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023).

Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that:

> *Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.*[1]

The NPPF goes on to state that:

> *[Local Authorities] should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.*[2]

…

> *Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and*

[1] Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, 2023, paragraph 39.
[2] Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, 2023, paragraph 40.

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commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.[3]

This Statement of Community Involvement also fulfils a formal recommendation of the Local Planning Authority to provide people with an opportunity to feed into the design process of a scheme at an early stage.

Manchester City Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (2018) sets out '*how developers can ensure that there is an effective opportunity for people to comment and steer development'*[4].

In providing guidance to developers on how they should carry out pre-application consultation, Manchester City Council's Statement of Community Involvement provides recommendations on the types of methods that developers can adopt as part of their pre-application consultation strategy.

Pre-application consultation is beneficial to both the community and the developer as it allows the developer to design a proposal which takes on board the opinions of the community…

…The format of the consultation that the developer uses is likely to be discussed with us as part of pre-application discussions, to help ensure that there is an effective opportunity for people to comment and steer development. The following methods are likely to be suitable and should be used as appropriate:

- *Letters sent to residents and businesses in nearby streets telling them what is proposed, how they can get more information and how they can give the developer their views*
- *Public exhibition in an accessible location close to the development (e.g. library or supermarket) which tells the public about what is happening and gives them an opportunity to make comments*
- *A website set up by the developer*
- *Leaflets distributed to nearby streets and placed in facilities near the proposed developments which have a tear off slip for comments*
- *Social media used by the developer to advertise the development and associated consultation events…*

…We can't require developers to carry out pre-application consultation using the methods set out above, but it is encouraged. Where developers have not engaged with local residents and businesses, it is possible that an application could generate more objections once submitted. This could result in the developer having to amend their application to address the objections which could delay the decision-making process.[5]

From the beginning of the development process, the Applicant set out to undertake a transparent and meaningful consultation with the local community. Throughout the process, stakeholders and local people had the chance to provide feedback to the Applicant and engage in an ongoing dialogue through the consultation channels.

[3] Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework, 2023, paragraph 132.
[4] Manchester City Council's Planning and Development Statement of Community Involvement, June 2018, page 33.
[5] Manchester City Council's Planning and Development Statement of Community Involvement, June 2018, pages 33-34.

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2. Pre-Application Public Consultation Activities

2.1 Introduction

This section of the Statement of Community Involvement sets out the range of activities undertaken as part of this pre-application consultation, which ran for four weeks from **Tuesday 27 August to Monday 23 September 2024**.

The consultation ran in parallel with the Government Property Agency's (GPA) proposals for a new civil service hub - Manchester Digital Campus - on the northern part of the FCRP site (Phase 1).

Feedback was sought on the two sets of proposals individually by the respective applicants, but with a coordinated approach to consultation information channels. This was to allow local residents and other stakeholder to understand both sets of proposals within the context of the SRF, providing a comprehensive update to those who participated in the public consultation on the Draft SRF last year (January 2023).

2.2 Elected Representative Engagement

Local councillors representing the Ancoats & Beswick ward were contacted ahead of the consultation period with information about the consultation and subsequently received regular updates from the Leader of Manchester City Council / The Applicant throughout the process.

2.3 Engagement with close site neighbours

Co-op Academy New Islington

The Applicant, alongside the Phase 1 Applicant, held regular meetings with the head teacher and other member of staff at Co-op Academy New Islington, the primary school adjacent to the site. The Applicant held a total of six such meetings from 6 December 2022 to 16 October 2024 - throughout the development of the proposals.

These meetings included updates on the proposals and next steps, as well as practical discussions on areas such as changing the existing boundary fence to a wall to help prevent noise and dust during construction.

New Islington Medical Practice

The Applicant also held three meetings with the Practice Business Manager and other members of staff at New Islington Medical Practice, between 9 December 2022 and 20 October 2023.

Again, these meetings were held in coordination with the Park Applicant.

In the last of these meetings, it was agreed that the MDC proposals would have little impact on the Practice and hence there was no need for further direct engagement.

2.4 Publicising the Consultation

2.4.1 Consultation postcard

A consultation postcard was delivered to all residential and business addresses located within a distribution area of **8,088 addresses** (see Figure 3 below) at the start of the consultation period.

The A5 sized postcard introduced the proposals for the former Central Retail Park site and directed recipients towards the consultation website to find out more and provide their feedback via the dedicated online feedback form or by email. The postcard also provided details of the two in-person consultation drop-in sessions held during the consultation period.

The consultation postcard is provided as **Appendix 1**.

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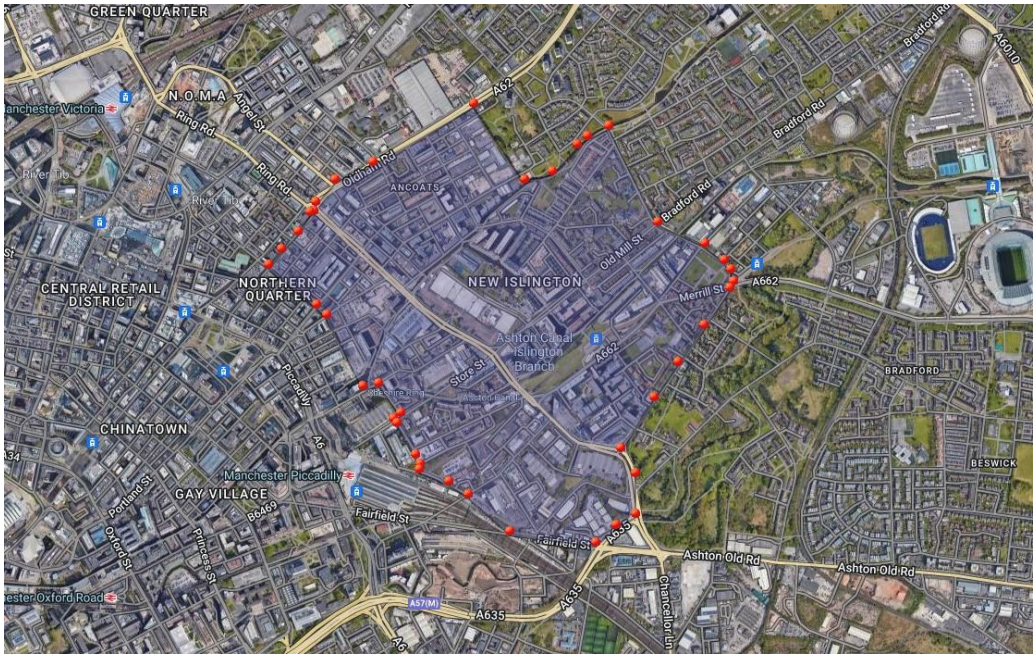


Figure 3: Consultation postcard distribution area.

2.4.2 Press release and media coverage

A press release was issued on **Tuesday 27 August** to a range of local, regional and national media publications to public both the Park and Phase 1 consultations. It provided introductory information about both sets of proposals and details of the public consultation, including the joint consultation website and in person drop-in events.

Articles subsequently appeared in the BBC, Manchester Evening News, Place North West, Insider Media, Construction Enquirer, Civil Service World, Manchester Confidential, Manchester Wire and I Love Manchester, among others.

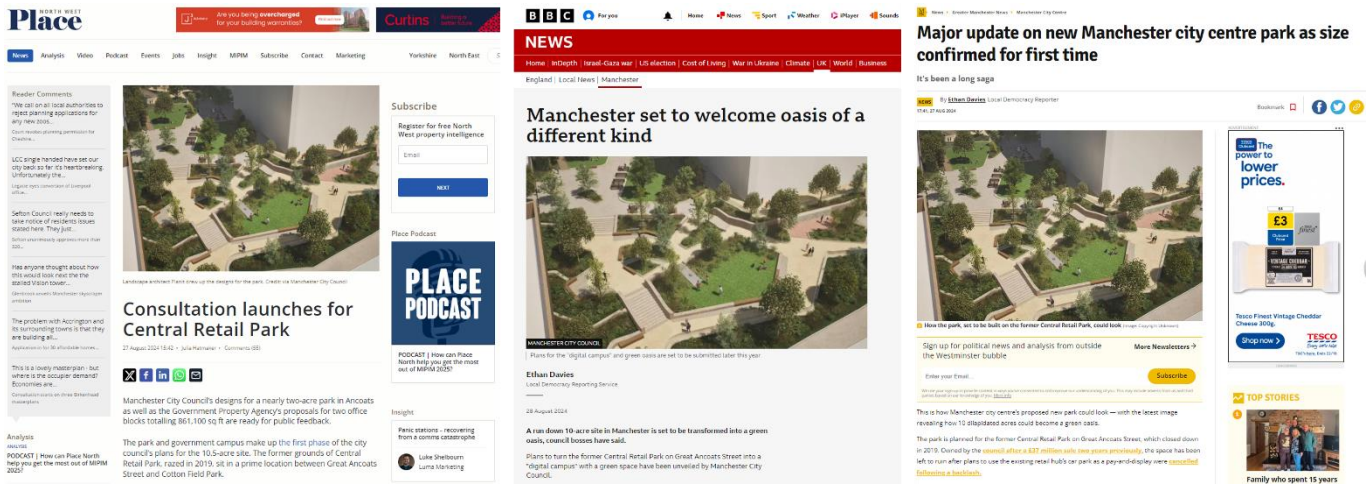


Figure 4: Screenshots of the articles about the proposals that appeared on the BBC, Place North West and Manchester Evening News.

2.4.3 Local stakeholder emails

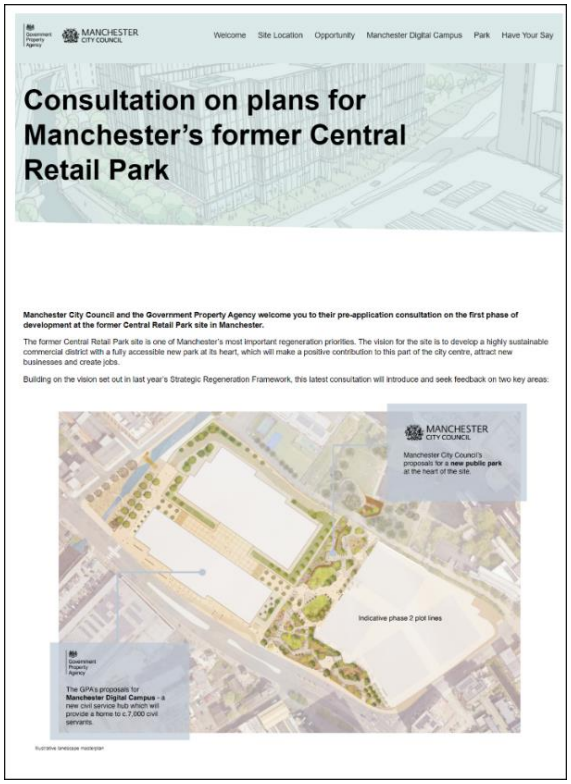
A number of local and city-wide stakeholders were contacted directly by email on **Tuesday 27 August** (the day the consultation opened). The email provided a summary of the proposals being presented as part of both consultations (the Park and Phase 1), as well as information about the consultation process and an invitation to take part and provide feedback.
A full list of stakeholders to whom notification emails were sent is provided as **Appendix 2**.

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2.5 Consultation Website

A dedicated, joint consultation website (**www.fcrp-manchester.co.uk**) was updated to go live with all consultation information on **Tuesday 27 August 2024**.

The site provided contextual information about The Site and the SRF, with a page introducing the Park proposals. A digital version of the consultation display boards was available to view and download from this page, with contact details for the consultation team and a link to the online feedback form clearly signposted on a **Have Your Say** page.



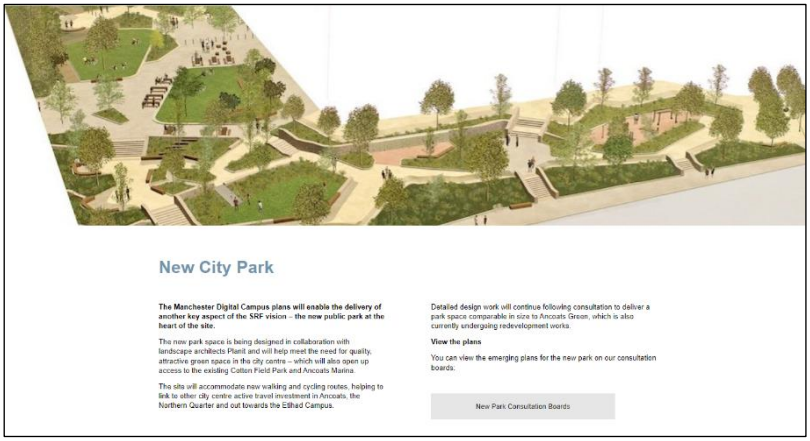


Figure 5: Screenshots of the consultation website (Left to right - Homepage and Park page).

2.5.1 Website activity

The joint consultation website saw a total of **4,312 visits from 3,989 unique users** over the consultation period.

As the graph below shows, the largest number of visits occurred at the start of the consultation period – in response to publicity – with a smaller peak on the day of the consultation drop-in events.

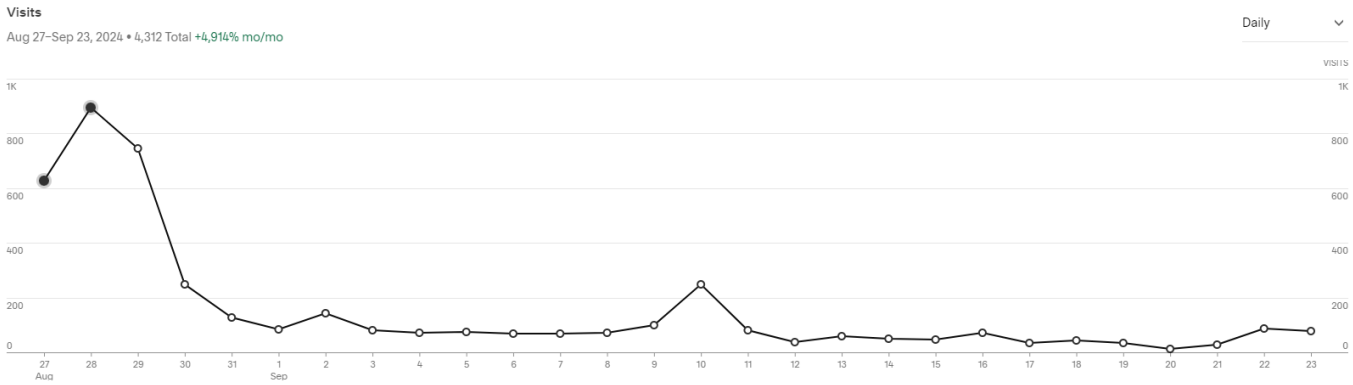


Figure 6: Graph showing the website activity during the consultation period.

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2.6 Consultation Drop-in Events

As part of the consultation, two public drop-in events were held on **Tuesday 10 September 2024**. Both sessions were held at Hallé St Peter's (40 Blossom St, Ancoats, M4 6BF), with the first taking place from 12pm to 2.30pm, and the second from 5pm to 7pm.

These were joint consultation events, allowing local residents the opportunity to find information and provide feedback on both the Park proposals and the proposals for Phase 1.

Representatives from the Applicant's team were present to answer questions and 8 display boards were displayed in an exhibition style presenting information about the scheme. A video showing a walkthrough of a 3D model of the proposed park was also displayed on a screen as part of the consultation information.

Printed copies of the questionnaire were available for attendees to submit feedback at the event. The event displays are provided as **Appendix 3** and the feedback form is provided as **Appendix 4**. Photos of the events are shown in Figure 7 below.

A total of 128 people attended the drop-in events, 54 at the first session and 74 at the second. 56 people completed the consultation questionnaire on the Park at the event.



Figure 7: Photos from the consultation drop-in events.

2.7 Methods for Receiving Feedback

2.7.1 Email Address

The project email address (info@fcrp-manchester.co.uk) was publicised on the consultation website, allowing people to contact the consultation team with any questions, as well as offering an alternative channel to submit feedback.

2.7.2 Online Feedback Form

An online feedback form to provide feedback on was clearly signposted on the consultation website, accessed via a link on the **Have Your Say** page.

As the primary method for channel for consultation feedback, the feedback form (or questionnaire) invited respondents to share their views on the proposals overall, as well as specific aspects or areas.

Paper copies of the questionnaire were available at the consultation drop-in event for attendees to complete. The feedback form is provided as **Appendix 4**.

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3. Pre-Application Consultation Feedback

3.1 Summary of Feedback Received

A total of 534 responses were received during the pre-application consultation via the following channels:

Response Type	Number
Online feedback form	473
Paper feedback forms completed at consultation drop-in events	56
Emails containing feedback*	(5)
Emails (enquiries only)	5
Total	**534 responses**

All of the responses received during the pre-application consultation period have been logged and considered by the Applicant's team.

*Enquiries received during the consultation period were managed and responded to by the consultation team. where Note that where these did not contain feedback, they have not been included in the total number of responses.

3.2 Analysis of Feedback Forms

The feedback form on the consultation webpage included a series of multiple-choice questions and open questions about the proposals. Here follows a summary of the answers received through the multiple-choice questions asked as part of the online feedback form.

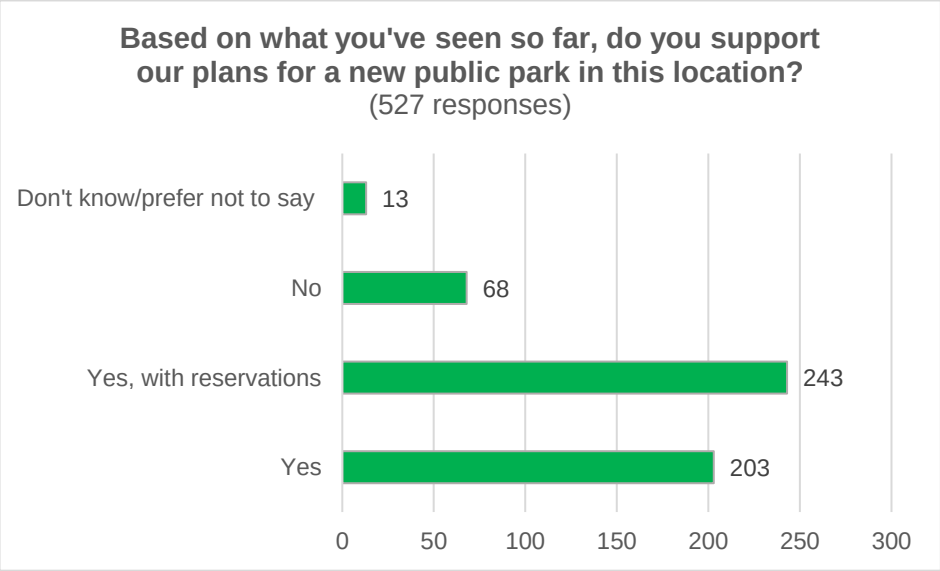
Verbal feedback received at the consultation event and comments received through the open-text questions included in the feedback form and by email are summarised and responded to in **Section 4.1**.

3.2.1 Responses to Closed Questions

The consultation questionnaire included four questions to gauge support for the plans overall, as well as possible uses and different features that could be included.

Support and opposition (Question 3)

The third question on the response form gauged the level of support for the Central Retail Park. The most common response was **Yes, with reservations** (46%).

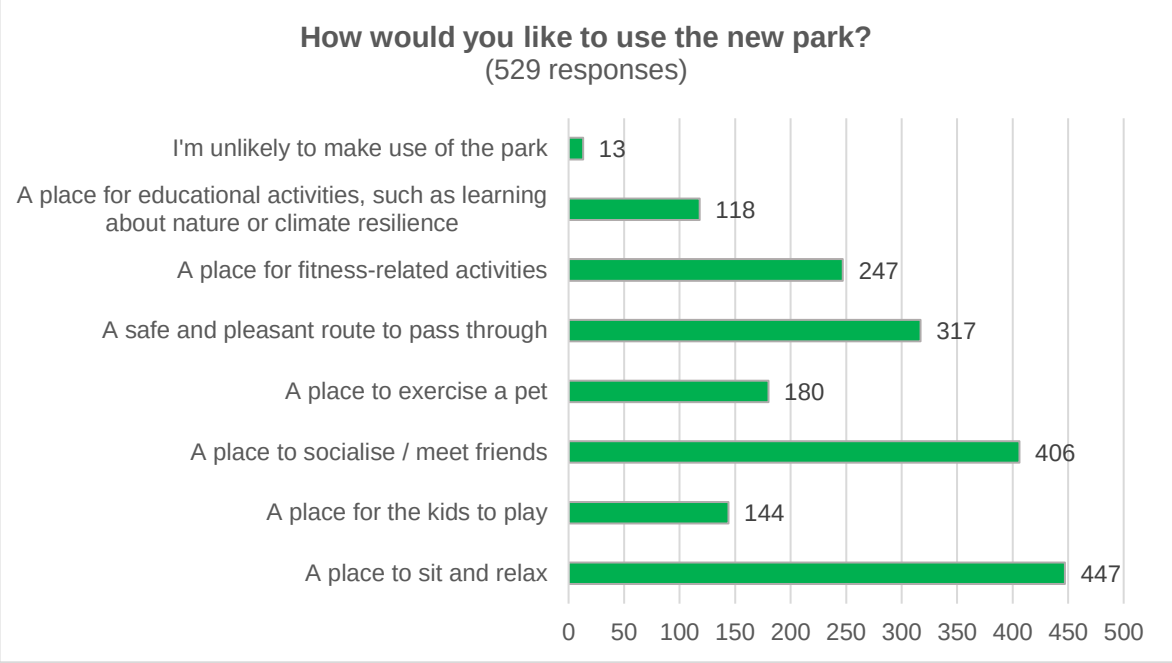


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Use of the new park (Question 1)

The first question asked respondents to select from a list of options to indicate how they would use the new park (selecting as many as apply).

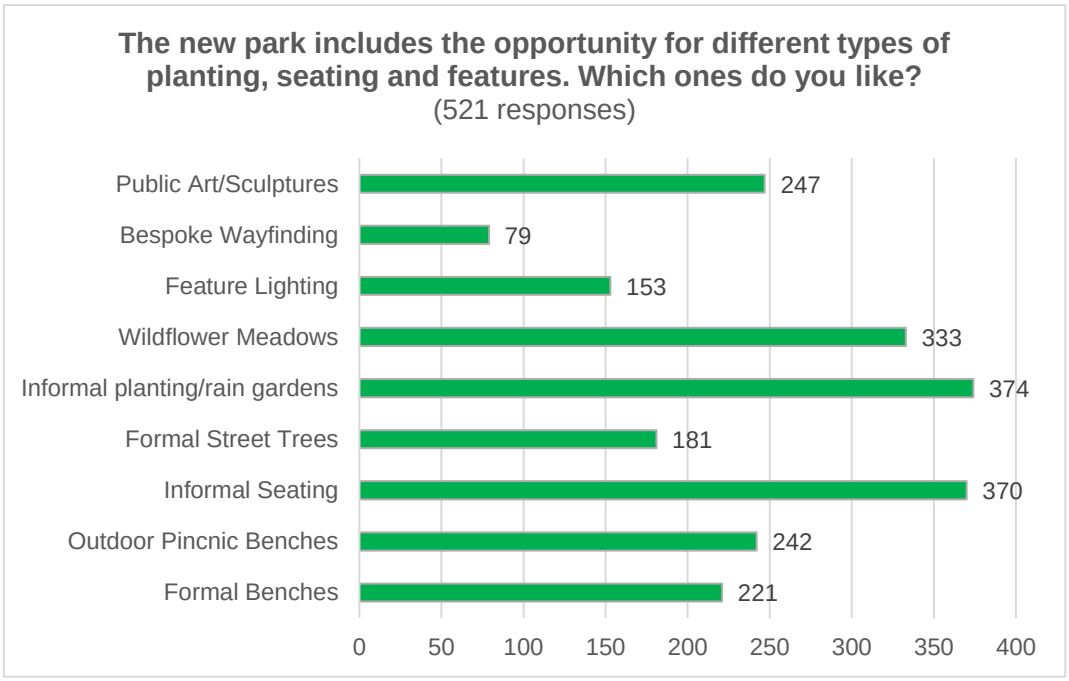
A s the chart shows, the most popular intended uses of the new park were as **a place to sit and relax** (84%), **a place to socialise/meet friends** (77%) and **a safe and pleasant route to pass through** (60%).



Features (Question 2)

The second question presented a number of opportunities for **planting, seating and features**, asking respondents to choose which of these they liked (again, selecting as many as they liked).

The options with the most support were: **Informal planting/rain gardens** (70%), **Informal seating** (70%) and **Wildflower Meadows** (63%). The least supported feature by far was Bespoke Wayfinding (15%).



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Two of the display boards at the drop-in events included an interactive element building on this question, with a number of possible features illustrated with precedent images. Three possible options were shown for each of six features, under the headings: Seating, Trees & Planting, Details, Activities, Play, Walls. Those attending the event were encouraged to put stickers on the features they would like to see within the park.

These two boards are shown in Figure 8, below. The most popular features (in order) were natural play, informal seating and lawn space. The least popular was formal play.

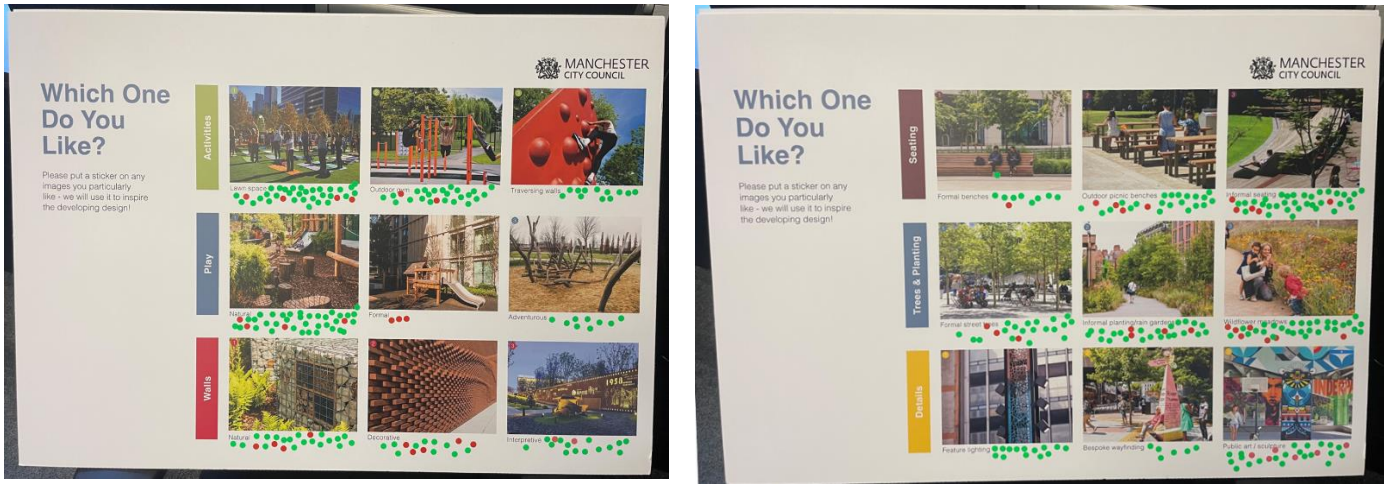


Figure 8: Photos of the two interactive consultation boards inviting feedback on features.

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4. Consideration of Pre-Application Consultation Feedback

4.1 Consideration of Issues

An extensive summary of the issues raised by respondents and how they have been considered and responded to by the Applicant is provided in the following table.

Topic	Applicant Response
Views on the proposals overall	
Comments expressing support for the proposals. Some of these positive comments highlight particular aspect, including that the new park: • Will be a resource for the local community, providing for different uses by residents, – e.g. to sit, socialise, exercise and relax. • Strikes the right balance – in terms of green space and other uses/facilities – and represents a good use of available space. • Combines a mix of curated and 'ad hoc' facilities in a creative way. • Provides new routes and connections across the site – particularly the link with Cotton Field Park. • Includes areas of wildflower meadow and planting to enhance biodiversity. • Includes play areas/facilities for children • Represents an improvement over previous plans.	These comments have been noted. The full range of public benefits associated with the proposals are set out in the Public Benefits Statement.
Supportive comments highlighting the benefits they feel the proposed park will bring to the wider area. These include that it will: • Bring much needed green space to the area, or to the city centre. • Bring life to the site and improve the surrounding area – some going further to describe the site as a blight in its current state. • Support/ improve the physical and mental wellbeing of residents • Bring environmental benefits in terms of wildlife and biodiversity	
Comments expressing support for the proposals with the caveat that the proposed park should be larger in size.	The SRF includes a larger area of public green space compared to the Framework presented for consultation in 2020, responding to feedback received as part of that consultation. In turn, the SRF was finalised and agreed following a robust public consultation process in January 2023, which helped establish the proportion of the site to developed for the Park and for built form. More information and context on this process is provided within the Planning Statement. The delivery of the high-quality green public space proposed by the Applicant - which will be
Comments expressing the view that the proposals are inadequate because the proposed park is too small. Many respondents question whether the proposals constitute a park, or suggest that the park should occupy larger proportion of the wider site – for example half the site, the whole of the site, or including part/all of the area earmarked for Phase 2. Some respondents express this view with reference to the needs of the surrounding community, while a small number suggest that the pressure on usage of the park will be	

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exacerbated by the number of office workers employed on the site as part of the Phase 1 proposals.	owned by Manchester City Council - will be made possible through the development of a sustainable office district on the remainder of the site. While there is a clear commitment to provide a substantial amount of new green space and public realm within the SRF, the Council are also cognisant of the importance of the site 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. The elongated layout of the park allows it to take full advantage of the afternoon sun. The design maximizes this feature by positioning grassed areas on higher ground, where they will benefit most from both elevation and sunlight. Additionally, the park will offer a variety of activities, including playgrounds and fitness equipment, ensuring year-round active use that isn't reliant on weather conditions or sunlight.
Comments questioning the need for new offices – including the proposed GPA hub - in this location and suggesting that a higher priority should be placed on the park. Some of these respondents question demand for commercial space, referring to empty buildings, or question the benefits of the Phase 1 proposals to the local community.	
Comments suggesting that the proposed park is too narrow, often referring to it as a path or walkway between buildings.	
Comments expressing concern that the park would be overshadowed by the office buildings to be delivered as part of Phases 1 and 2, resulting to much of it being in shade. Some respondents comment that these buildings appear to be too tall, while one suggests higher buildings could allow for a larger area for the park. Concern is also expressed about development on Great Ancoats Street overshadowing part of the park.	
Comments suggesting that the location and orientation of the park be changed so that it extends more into the centre of the site from the east (Cotton Field Park), with the building plots for Phases 1 and 2 moved to the edges of the site (along Great Ancoats Street and Old Mill Street). They suggest that this would allow it to integrate more effectively with the existing park, as well as protecting the space and its users from traffic fumes. Other respondents suggest that suggest the park should face on to the Rochdale Canal and the historic former mill buildings of Redhill Street, drawing on the character of Ancoats.	
A comment expressing the view that there is no need for park in this location after recent investment in the nearby Mayfield Park and that other areas should be prioritised.	
Comments expressing concern around the character of the proposed park, for example suggesting that the design is too formal, restrictive or 'overengineered' – as opposed to 'wild or 'fun' – or that it is not unique enough.	The proposed park aims to provide a cohesive public realm creating attractive, green and accessible new public space in Manchester city centre. This new space will be a destination for local communities. The park design has been shaped by several key constraints and design must meet the needs of a durable city-centre park. The most significant of these is a 5-meter level change across the site. To ensure accessibility, a network of gently graded pathways is required, integrating with retained planting features which can come across as formal in design. In the next phase, the planting scheme will evolve, introducing a more informal natural character over this. Alongside this, the interpretation

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	strategy will add a unique layer of historic significance, reflecting the rich heritage of the area. The Design and Access Statement sets out in detail how the Park design has been developed and the considerations behind this.
Green space	
Comments expressing the view that more useable open green space (grass or lawn) should be accommodated within the proposed park relative to the amount of paving or hard landscaping. Related comments include those expressing the concern that the areas of grass proposed within the design that are isolated and not joined up, rather than the continuous space often provided in parks. Others point to the way that areas of grass within the existing Cotton Field Park are used by people relaxing, sitting, picnicking and sunbathing. Some of these respondents note that there is increasing pressure on this existing green space, particularly in good weather, and suggest that providing more such space would allow the new park to better integrate with and support existing provision.	The updated Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) agreed in March 2023 set out the high-level development principles for the site: to create low carbon commercial office space and high quality, accessible green space to support continued economic growth in this part of Manchester's city centre. Responding to feedback in relation to the previous iteration of the SRF for the site in 2020, the agreed SRF includes a larger area of public green space. The delivery of this high-quality green public space, which will be owned by Manchester City Council, will be made possible through the development of a sustainable office district on the remainder of the site. The park is constrained by several factors that limit the ability to provide a single, large lawn area. These include the need for paths to manage the 5-metre level change and ensure accessible circulation to Cotton Field Park. Additionally, large lawn areas are often inaccessible for many users and unusable during significant parts of the year. To maximise year-round usability, the design strikes a balance between lawn provision and other features such as seating, biodiverse planting, play areas, and outdoor gym zones. The lawn spaces that has been included is big enough to accommodate approximately 600 people seated. More information is provided within the Design and Access Statement.
Comments highlighting a perceived lack of green space within this area of Manchester or the city as a whole, suggesting that more such space is very much needed. In terms of demand for green space, there are a large number of flats surrounding the site, with more being built. There is also an increasing number of young families in the local community, as well as dog owners who would make us of such space.	The Applicant recognises the growing communities of Ancoats and New Islington need access to high quality green space. The proposals for a park on the former Central Retail Park site fits into a wider picture of green space and public realm within this part of Manchester, which includes Mayfield Park and the proposals for Ancoats Green (forming part of the public realm strategy for the Poland Street Area), to name just two.
A comment expressing concern that green space may not end up being delivered as	The planning application seeks full planning permission for the new Park in line with the

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proposed – referring to other Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) plans where this has apparently been the case.	FRCP SRF. It remains MCC's intention to deliver this park subject to securing the necessary approval.
Other uses and facilities	
Comments underlining the need to include a space for children to play, including suggestion for natural play features.	Responding to feedback to the consultation on the Draft SRF last year about what people would like to see in the park and how they would like to use this space, the Applicant's proposals include a number of different features or character areas catering to the different groups of people who will use the park. This includes areas of open lawn, as well as facilities for recreation and play, seating and planting. In addition to accommodating a range of possible uses and features (including open green space), the park also responds to the need to provide safe and attractive walking and cycling routes through the site – another key aim of the SRF. The Council understands the desire for users of the temporary (and unlawful) skating facility on the site for further spaces for skating within 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. MCRactive, a not for profit organisation overseen by Manchester City 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 Manchester Local Authority area. A consultation was held with the access representative at Manchester City Council to review the scheme and ensure the design is accessible to all. The discussion covered various aspects, including site levels, seating, materials, access points, and crossings. Feedback was provided and will be incorporated into the design where feasible, ahead of the planning submission. The park will include a range of interpretive features to honour the area's rich industrial heritage, integrated through play areas, street furniture, and boundary walls. Further details can be found in the Design and Access Statement. Provisions for pop-up events will be explored further in collaboration with Manchester City Council at the next stage. Additionally, maintenance and service vehicle access has
Comments suggesting that more space and facilities for recreation, sports and activity should be included within the proposals, often with reference to a perceived need for these in the area. Specific suggestions include a basketball court, tennis courts, outdoor gym, table tennis, or just space to kick a football around.	
Comments expressing the view that provision for skateboarding should be included in the plans for the park or within the wider site. This is another of the themes raised most frequently in feedback, with some respondents commenting further on the constructive use of the site by skateboarders currently, the value of this (temporary) space to the skating community and the lack of other free or affordable spaces to skate in the city.	
Suggestions for weather protection measures such as a canopy or including areas of shade.	
Suggestion around seating, including the need for comfortable (as opposed to hard) seating – for example stepped or terraced lawns (Mayfield Park cited as an example), or hammock style. A couple of these comments suggest that 'anti-homeless architecture' – such as additional bars and handrails on benches – should be avoided.	
Suggestions around facilities for dog walkers, including dog friendly areas (including one for an enclosed area), or just a space suitable for exercising pets and letting dogs off the lead.	
Suggestions around water features and integrating integrate water as a feature of the new park. These include introducing flowing waterways, ponds, wetland, a lido, facing the park on to the canal to add a waterside feel and making a feature of the canal (e.g. through activities like kayaking).	
Specific suggestions for other features or amenities to be included within the proposals for the new park. These include: a space for accommodating pop-up events - including music and theatre; sculptures; interactive features to learn about the area; interpretative features highlighting Manchester's history of hydraulic power and industrial past; making use of the old town hall colonnade (currently in Heaton Park) as an entrance; and involving local VCFSE organisations such as Sow the City.	

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	been incorporated into the design to ensure it does not hinder event setup.
Access and connectivity	
Comments underlining the need for the park to be accessible, including a suggestion that grade levelled disabled access should be provided from New Islington Marina to Great Ancoats Street.	These comments have been noted. The park has been designed to be accessible for all, with alternatives routes/access available where steps are proposed within the design. One of the key objectives within the agreed SRF is to create safe and attractive walking and cycling routes through the site. This will improve links between Great Ancoats Street and Cotton Field Park, as well as the New Islington community beyond. Highway improvements and other interventions beyond the site boundary will be considered as part of a coordinated approach to access and connectivity, working alongside partners such as Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM). More information on how transport has been assessed and considered in the development of the proposals can be found in the Transport Statement. A consultation was held with the access representative at Manchester City Council to review the scheme and ensure the design is accessible to all. The discussion covered various aspects, including site levels, seating, materials, access points, and crossings. Feedback was provided and will be incorporated into the design where feasible, ahead of the planning submission.
Comments expressing concern about the accessibility of the park with reference to the plans shown – for example noting the steps shown in visuals.	
Comments asking for clarification around access from Cotton Field Park, noting that the existing park is currently closed at certain times.	
Comments suggesting that the plans should include a more direct cycle route across the site. A specific suggestion for a new crossing on Great Ancoats Street that links directly to the walking and cycling route through the park.	
A comment suggesting that a new crossing on Great Ancoats Street that links directly to the walking and cycling route through the park.	
Comments around the lack of safe cycle routes or infrastructure in the surrounding area and the need for the site to link into wider improvements.	
Operational concerns	
A question around the extent to which the park will be actively managed, expressing concern that it will be a ‘controlled’ (as opposed to public) space.	The new park would be owned and managed by Manchester City Council for the benefit of residents and the public. It is intended to be genuinely welcoming and useable by members of the local community, not a sterile environment.
Questions around the maintenance of the proposed park and how this will be funded, often referring to the service charge paid by adjacent residents for the maintenance of Cotton Field Park and the public realm of New Islington Marina. Some respondents ask whether the same mechanism would apply to the new park. Others argue that if the new park is designed to integrate with this existing space, it would not be fair for the charge to continue to apply to that group of residents only.	The Park will be managed by Manchester City Council and no additional service charges will apply to residents.

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Comments underlining the need for the new park to be safe for children and families, or expressing concern that it will not be safe.	We also committed to making the area as inclusive, safe and welcoming as possible. The Council understands the importance of good long-term management of both the buildings and public space, recognising that this will be vital to the ongoing success of the area. A maintenance and management strategy is being developed and whilst no space is zero maintenance, the park will be developed to be as low maintenance as possible in order to work with MCC's ongoing maintenance regimes. Further details of the design features, including lighting, furniture and maintenance strategies can be found in the design and access statement (ref 3363-ID-001).
Specific suggestions to increase the safety of the park, including sufficient lighting and more active ground floor uses (e.g. commercial or hospitality) around the edges of the park to increase use and vibrancy at different times – particularly in the evenings.	
Suggestions for design measures to discourage anti-social behaviour, including protecting areas of planting, putting certain features out of reach, and not leaving surfaces open to graffiti.	
A small number of comments and suggestions around allowing dogs within the park – for example suggesting that dogs should be kept on a leash at all times (for safety reasons), or that dogs should be banned altogether.	
Sustainability	
Concerns around air quality, often with reference to the proximity of the park to Great Ancoats Street as a busy, congested main road. Some of these respondents note that part of the park containing a play area and outdoor gym equipment appear to face on to this road.	A diverse array of planting and trees is proposed throughout the park. This includes 96 new trees, comprising a mix of native and non-native species for both biodiversity and climate adaptation purposes. Species that are particularly effective at mitigating pollution will be concentrated in the green buffer along Great Ancoats Street. The different planting types are outlined in greater detail in the Design and Access statement, with a focus on wildflower meadows (630m²) for their contribution to pollinator habitats and low maintenance needs, natural shrub planting (450m²) for its biodiversity value, and more ornamental/diverse mixes (1,200m²) that add seasonal variety and visual appeal. Due to the sloping nature of the site, SuDS systems have focused on permeable paving to manage runoff at the source. The potential for rain gardens will be explored further in the next phase, once more detailed level designs can be considered. Air quality has been assessed and considered in relation to the proposals as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
Comments questioning whether and how flooding and attenuation have been considered and what is proposed in terms of sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) – sometimes with reference to hard landscaping has proposed. One of these comments highlights the cooling effects of softer surfaces, as well as helping water retention and natural soakaway routes.	
Comments expressing the view that more trees and planting should be included within the proposals, often with reference to increasing biodiversity.	
Specific suggestions around planting to increase biodiversity, including incorporating native plants, wildflowers, evergreen shrubs and trees, flowers and herbs. A small number of these respondents specifically request that the existing greenery on the site towards Great Ancoats Street be maintained, stating that these provide much needed greenery and wildlife, as well as a barrier from the road.	
Other suggested measures to promote biodiversity, including bug hotels, ponds for wildlife, green walls/moss walls and urban farming.	

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5. Conclusion and Influence of Consultation on the Proposals

The consultation which has been undertaken is in accordance with both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) and with Manchester City Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (2018). This document fulfils the requirement for a consultation supporting statement that summarises the methods used, the representations received, and the changes made to the proposals as a result of feedback submitted.

The comments received during the pre-application consultation have been considered by the Applicant's team on an ongoing basis to ensure that the issues raised could be addressed during the development of the proposals.

Overall, the response to the consultation has enabled the Applicant to better understand how local residents would like to use the park and the features they would like to see included, such as the type of planting, seating areas and public art. The proposals presented as part of this application have been refined in response to this insight and feedback provided during the consultation.

The Applicant would like to thank all those who have provided their feedback during the pre-application consultation and looks forward to further constructive dialogue throughout the development process

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6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1: Consultation Event Display



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6.2 Appendix 2: Consultation Postcard

Consultation Invitation

Government Property Agency

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Plans for the former Central Retail Park site on Great Ancoats Street take a step forward

Manchester City Council and the Government Property Agency are launching a consultation on the first phase of development at the former Central Retail Park site in Manchester.

The former Central Retail Park site is one of Manchester's most important regeneration priorities. The vision for the site is to develop a highly sustainable commercial district with a fully accessible new park at its heart, which will make a positive contribution to this part of the city centre, attract new businesses and create jobs.

Building on the vision set out in last year's Strategic Regeneration Framework, this latest consultation will introduce and seek feedback on two key areas:

- The Government Property Agency's proposals for Manchester Digital Campus: a new civil service hub with a focus on digital skills.
- Manchester City Council's proposals for a new public park at the centre of the former Central Retail Park site, providing a significant new green space for local communities around Ancoats and New Islington.



Illustrative park view

Get involved

We want to hear your views on the proposals for Manchester Digital Campus and the new public park. This pre-application consultation will run from 27 August - 23 September 2024.

Have your say online

You can view the plans and provide your comments on a dedicated consultation website: **www.fcrp-manchester.co.uk**

Come and talk to us

We will be holding two public drop-in events as part of the consultation. This will be an opportunity to find out more about the plans for Manchester Digital Campus and the new public park, with members of the team from the GPA and Manchester City Council in attendance.

Drop-in session 1

Hallé St Peter's 40 Blossom Street, Manchester, M4 6BF	Tuesday 10 September 2024	12pm – 2:30pm

Drop-in session 2

Hallé St Peter's 40 Blossom Street, Manchester, M4 6BF	Tuesday 10 September 2024	5pm – 7pm

Get in touch

If you have any questions about the proposals or the consultation process, please do get in touch with our dedicated consultation team:

Email: **info@fcrp-manchester.co.uk**

Phone: **0808 175 3408**

If you do not have access to the internet or if you have any other accessibility needs, please call us so we can ensure you can participate in this consultation.



Image courtesy of Google Earth

counter context

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6.3 Appendix 3: List of stakeholders notified of the consultation by email

Adjacent site neighbours

New Islington Medical Practice

Nearby landowners/developers

Northwards Housing
Great Places Housing Group
Manchester Life
General Projects
Urban Splash
PlumLife
Town Centre Securities
Select Property Group
Renaker
Grainger
Forshaw Land & Property Group Ltd
Henry Boot Developments
Northern Group
McCauls
Zenith Management
Savills (planners for development next to Lockgate Mews)

Local community groups and services

Trees Not Cars
Mustard Tree
Halle
Royal Mills Residents Association (RoMRA)
Northern Quarter Forum
Smithfield Residents Association
Friends of Ancoats Green / Kemp Street Park
Ancoats Food and Beverage Network
Victoria Square

Economic and industry stakeholders

CityCo
Chamber of Commerce
City Football Group
University of Manchester
Manchester Metropolitan University
University of Salford

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6.4 Appendix 4: Consultation Feedback Form

Consultation Questionnaire: Plans for a new park on the former Central Retail Park Site

MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

1.How would you like to use the new park?
Select as many as you like.

- ◯ A place to sit and relax
- ◯ A place for kids to play
- ◯ A place to socialise / meet friends
- ◯ A place to exercise a pet
- ◯ A safe and pleasant route to pass through.
- ◯ A place for fitness-related activities.
- ◯ A place for educational activities, such as learning about nature or climate resilience.
- ◯ I'm unlikely to make use of the park.

2.The new park includes the opportunity for different types of planting, seating and features – as shown on one of the consultation boards. Which ones do you like?
Select as many as you like.

- ◯ Formal benches
- ◯ Outdoor picnic benches
- ◯ Informal seating
- ◯ Formal street trees
- ◯ Informal planting / rain gardens
- ◯ Wildflower meadows
- ◯ Feature lighting
- ◯ Bespoke wayfinding
- ◯ Public art / sculptures

3.Based on what you've seen so far, do you support our plans for a new public park in this location?
Select as many as you like.

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ Yes, with reservations
- ◯ No
- ◯ Don't know / prefer not to say

4.Please use this space to explain your answer to the previous question or to provide any other feedback:

About You

The following questions are to help us understand who has responded to the consultation.

You do not have to supply personal details. However, it will help us to work towards meeting the needs of the public during the consultation period and will enable us to contact you with updates on the scheme. Your personal details will be stored in compliance with the GDPR by Counter Context acting on behalf of Manchester City Council and the Government Property Agency.

Name: **Postcode:**

If you would like to be kept updated on the scheme, please tell us your email address:

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