Euan Kellie
PROPERTY SOLUTIONS

Former Central Retail Park - The Park

Public Benefits Statement

5 November 2024

Neo
9 Charlotte Street
Manchester
M1 4ET

Euan Kellie
PROPERTY SOLUTIONS

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VERSION	**FINAL**
AUTHOR	Kelly Paddick MRTPI PIEMA
REVIEWED BY	Ellie Philcox MRTPI PIEMA
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1. Introduction

Introduction

1.1 This Public Benefits Statement (referred to hereafter as 'the Statement') has been prepared by Euan Kellie Property Solutions on behalf of our client, Manchester City Council ('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').

1.2 The Statement has been prepared to support the application for full planning permission being submitted to Manchester City Council ('MCC' - in their role as the Local Planning Authority) for a new public park, including areas of lawn, hard and soft landscaping and a range of seating areas (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development').

1.3 The purpose of the Statement is to provide a clear summary of the public benefits which will be delivered as part of the Proposed Development.

The Application Site

1.4 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 ('SRF') adopted in 2023 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'.

1.5 The SRF outlines the three different developments that are proposed as part of the overall regeneration of the site: Phase 1, Phase 2 and the Park as shown in **Figure 1.1** below.



^ Figure 1.1: SRF Plan

1.6 The part of the site to which this Statement 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. The Site is currently vacant having been formerly occupied by Central Retail Park which has now been demolished.

1.7 The Site is currently vacant following demolition of the buildings associated with the FCRP between January and May 2019. The Site is wholly within the ownership of MCC. The Site is approximately 0.91 hectares (2.25 acres) in area.

1.8 The Site is unattractive in its current form and also highly visible. The Site consists of a concreted area with patches of scrub dotted throughout it. Trees line the edge of the Site and limited vegetation is present including buddleia.

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1.9 There is a notable level change across the site of approximately 5 metres from the northwest, descending to the southwest. An aerial image of the Site can be seen in **Figure 1.2** below.



^ Figure 1.2

Application Proposals

1.10 The application proposals 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. The Landscape Masterplan is included in **Figure 1.3** below.



^ Figure 1.3 Landscape Masterplan

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Summary of the Proposed Works

1.11 The Proposed Development delivers the following key features:

- The design has accounted for the significant 5m level changes within the existing site between the northwest and south east of the Site through the combination of stepped and ramped access routes.
- An accessible route into the new park is created from the intersection of Great Ancoats Street and Old Mill Street. Other alternate access points are also available via steps further up Great Ancoats Street. This successfully develops a green buffer to the busier road and sets the user back into a more enclosed green landscape.
- A timber boardwalk connects the new park through to Cotton Fields Park, along with a wayfinding strategy, including totems and fingerposts, to guide users into and through the new park.
- The park design incorporates a variety of materials to tie into the surrounding areas whilst providing an accessible and permeable solution.
- A range of planting types have been designed into the park to increase the biodiversity and ecological benefits of the site, this will include the planting of 96 no. new trees and the delivery of 659 sq. m of new lawn space.
- The drainage strategy for the park focuses on the discharge of surface water to permeable surfaces and filter drains.
- A combination of lighting features are included through the new park, including lighting columns, furniture lighting and tree uplighters, to create a practical and safe, yet aesthetic atmosphere.
- The proposal enhances active use in the space by providing an array of furniture items that allow users to interact through play, seating, socialising and recreation. The mix of seating areas allows for a total capacity of 435 people. Cycle storage is also provided.

1.12 Further information is set out in the Design and Access Statement prepared by Planit as well as the Planning Policy Compliance Statement prepared by EKPS.

1.13 **Chapter 2** will now present details of the which are expected to be delivered by the Proposed Development.

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2. Public Benefits

2.1 The Proposed Development is expected to result in a broad spectrum of benefits, which will all be experienced by and bring positive gains for the general public. Some public benefits will be direct whilst others will be indirect.

2.2 This chapter details the public benefits to be delivered by the Proposed Development, including the following:

Creation of New Public Greenspace

2.3 The Proposed Development will include:

- Creation of 659 sq. m of new lawn space
- Planting of 96 no. new trees
- Provision of new seating areas for a total capacity of 435 people
- Cycle storage for 54 bikes is also provided
- Stepped and ramped access to ensure the park is fully accessible whilst also addressing the five metre level change across the site
- Provision of play and exercise equipment as well as sculptural elements and wayfinding elements, all designed to support placemaking.

2.4 The new park has been carefully designed, having regard to a number of "design drivers" – details are provided within the Design & Access Statement.

2.5 The proposed park will complement the other existing greenspaces nearby. The Design & Access Statement submitted with this application provides details of how the proposed new park compares with other greenspaces within close proximity in terms of size.

2.6 It demonstrates that the park is comparable in size to the Proposed Ancoats Green, and whilst smaller than Mayfield Park in overall terms, is a similar length. The proposed park is almost double the size of Sackville Gardens, and approximately 20% bigger than Piccadilly Gardens.

2.7 The Design & Access Statement also includes a map (on page 88) which illustrates the contribution the park will make to the wider green and blue infrastructure network of Manchester city centre.

Accessibility

2.8 The Site currently provides no public access and as such effectively acts as a barrier to the surrounding areas. Once developed, the park will provide permeable through routes for all users, with the landscaping having been designed to prioritise inclusivity to create an environment that is accessible to all - specifically, focusing on requirements for those individuals with disabilities, the elderly and children.

2.9 The park adheres to the guidelines and standards set within the Disability and Discrimination Act (DDA) and MCC's Design for Access 2. Going above and beyond where applicable to create a public realm greenspace that is inclusive and equitable.

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2.10 As set out within the Design & Access Statement which accompanies this planning application, the Terraced Gardens and Ancoats Street Gateway develop coherent and legible access routes. This includes compliant ramps that meander through the landscape and ensure the user is integrated within the main routes of the park. Avoiding harsh separation of ramped and stepped access and creating a welcoming arrival point from Great Ancoats Street. Pathways are designed to be wide, smooth, and non-slip, with gentle gradients to ensure ease of movement.

2.11 Stepped access, in line with Part M regulations, is also provided for an alternative, more direct route. Appropriate handrail provision and contrasting nosing ensures accessible compliance and safety.

2.12 Materiality, including the use of contrasting colours and textures, acts as an aid for visually impaired users. Appropriate tactile paving has also been included to direct users and make them aware of key level changes in the landscape.

2.13 A range of seating options suitable for different users have been included, along with opportunities and a wide array of lighting types have all been included to ensure the site has a warm and welcoming atmosphere and creates a safe environment for users at all times of the day.

2.14 Clear signage is provided through the scheme. Wayfinding totems to all main arrival points and fingerposts between these totems create a network of signage that ensure site legibility for all.

Green Infrastructure

2.15 The NPPF defines Green infrastructure as ***"A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity".***

2.16 'Manchester's Great Outdoors: A Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy', outlines the importance of Green and Blue Infrastructure in creating successful, liveable cities. The strategy sets out four main objectives for how this will be achieved.

2.17 The Design & Access Statement submitted with this application, sets out how contribution to these objectives will be achieved, and can be summarised as follows:

1. Improve the quality and function of existing green and blue Infrastructure, to maximise the benefits it delivers

- The scheme will enhance the existing Cotton Field Park through establishing a connection to the wider FCRP site, creating a stronger green network of pedestrian connections using materials that tie into the existing scheme.

- Improving the accessibility of green routes to encourage active use of greenspaces to benefit health and wellbeing.

2. Use appropriate green and blue infrastructure as a key component of new developments to help create successful neighbourhoods and support the city's growth

- The Site is embedded between new city centre development, becoming the green heart of the wider scheme. Contributing to the creation of attractive neighbourhoods and supporting residents, workers and visitors in gaining access to local greenspace, and increasing motivation and improved health.

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- The site design has been tailored to accommodate a wide array of users. Providing ample greenspace near employment developments for workers to take time to relax, use the space for leisure and recreation as well as consider walking/cycling to work.

3. Improve connectivity and accessibility to green and blue infrastructure within the city and beyond

- The scheme establishes accessible green transport routes connecting Great Ancoats street to Cotton Field Park and beyond.

4. Improve and promote a wider understanding and awareness of the benefits that green and blue infrastructure provides to residents, the economy and the local environment

- As part of the planning application a biodiversity net gain assessment was carried out to ensure the scheme met the 10% requirement contribution. The proposed scheme obtained over 100% contribution which was a measurable way to highlight the gain of green infrastructure obtained within the park.

- The Proposed Development has also been subject to public consultation, raising the awareness of the benefits of green infrastructure, how this might be implemented within the scheme. This has allowed opportunity for the public to have their say on the proposals.

- The scheme raises the profile of Manchester as an attractive place to live that has accessible connected green infrastructure throughout the city.

2.18 In summary, the creation of a public park will result in the provision of new green infrastructure within the City which does not currently exist. This will bring numerous and wide ranging benefits (as captured within this Statement).

Ecology and Biodiversity

2.19 Urban areas typically provide a less diverse range of plants, animals and birds than rural areas. However, green spaces within an urban area can be home to many different species, including those more commonly found in rural settings and some for whom urban areas provide a more suitable habitat. This can include species that are rare or threatened. Towns and cities can therefore make an important contribution to national conservation efforts.

2.20 Urban parks can act as "wildlife corridors", facilitating the movement of animals, birds and insects between green spaces and preventing the destruction and fragmentation of wildlife.

2.21 Urban parks can also form an important habitat for pollinators, such as bees, the populations of which are declining in the UK. The provision of viable habitats in urban regions can therefore form part of a broader strategy to overturn this trend.

2.22 The Proposed Development has been designed to ensure maximum ecology and biodiversity benefits. This will be achieved through a range of different planting typologies produced to create a habitat mosaic across the Park.

2.23 The typologies include tree planting, native habitat, wildflower grassland, ornamental flowering and amenity turf. Trees have been selected for their suitability to the conditions of the Site. Many of the chosen species are native, evergreen or have potential uses as part of the SUDs strategy for the scheme. Similarly, plants include a mix of native and non-native species for biodiversity, plants for pollinators, evergreen species for all year round interest and those that are more climate resilient.

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2.24 More generally, the potential ecological impacts of the Proposed Development have been assessed by Atkins Realis (Chapter 8 'Biodiversity' of the Environmental Statement, Volume 2 of the EIA). The Proposed Development would result in an increase in habitats in terms of area and quality (through grassland, shrub, and tree planting) to ensure that sufficient and increased habitat is provided.

2.25 The accompanying Biodiversity Net Gain assessment shows for area habitats, the post-development scenario results in a total net % change of 199%, meeting the requirement for a 10% uplift in biodiversity units – albeit it should be noted that this has been calculated using a baseline position which assumes the site has already been cleared and therefore has a low biodiversity score. This is due to the fact that the site clearance works form part of the proposals for the adjacent 'Phase One' part of the site. The overall biodiversity net gain is likely to be less than 199% this when compared to the current position.

2.26 For watercourse habitats, whilst there is no net loss, the requirement for a 10% uplift in biodiversity units has not been met. Therefore, the Proposed Development is required to deliver 0.002 watercourse biodiversity units. This will be achieved through on-site enhancement, off-site enhancement, or purchasing biodiversity credits (either through a biodiversity banking scheme or statutory biodiversity credits).

Townscape and Visual

2.27 In its current form the Site does not provide any positive contribution to the local townscape character, and views to and across the site are poor comprising a vacant, concreted expanse of land with some low quality scrub and vegetation.

2.28 The Site is located within a mixed residential and commercial area of central Manchester. In the immediate vicinity of the Site, there is the New Islington Free School, a primary school directly adjacent to the north (around 55 m) and to the northeast, the Ancoats Primary Care Centre.

2.29 Cotton Field Park is an eco-park which lies to the north of the Site and partially sits within the planning red-line boundary to the north. The existing park forms the heart of New Islington. It uses nature to bring people together within the surrounding urban context. It forms an important accessible green space which connects to others within 15 mins walking distance of the proposed site.

2.30 Great Ancoats Street borders the southern edge of the Site and is a major transport artery which forms a barrier to the city centre. Directly to the south are residential buildings of scale (both built and consented).

2.31 Once complete, the improved appearance of the Site as well as its use will completely transform the outlook and setting for local residents, workers, and visitors to the area, including those visiting local facilities such as the New Islington Free School and the Ancoats Primary Care Centre, as well as those passing the Site on Great Ancoats Street.

Socio-Economic

2.32 Consideration of socio-economic impacts includes consideration of direct and indirect job creation, as well as the social benefits which will be derived from the creation of a new park and public open space on the City Centre fringe. Each are considered in turn below.

Job Creation

2.33 The Socio-Economic Assessment (Chapter 19 of the Environmental Statement, Volume 2 of the EIA) undertaken by Atkins Realis, anticipates that in terms of economic benefits, the Proposed Development will create an estimated 60 gross direct construction full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs.

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2.34 This has been estimated using the construction cost of the Proposed Development of £8,200,000 and an average turnover required to support one construction job of £142,816. The average turnover is calculated at the North West level from the total construction turnover and construction employment.

2.35 After assigning leakage, displacement and economic multipliers the estimates for total net additional FTEs is 25 for the Ancoats and Beswick and Piccadilly wards, with a total of 89 jobs created in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority area.

2.36 Whilst this figure is relatively low, it does have the potential to provide opportunity to local people who are currently unemployed or with poor labour market contributions, and/or through apprenticeship opportunities providing wider social value in Greater Manchester.

2.37 Furthermore, using the average GVA per worker for Manchester Local Authority District and Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the GVA for the construction of the scheme can be estimated at approximately £6 million reflecting the net direct and indirect employment in the Ancoats and Beswick and Piccadilly wards, along with the rest of Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

2.38 The Proposed Development will require some operational maintenance once complete. The main activities will include waste removal, refurbishment and replacement of street furniture, maintenance of the drainage system when needed and general upkeeping of the landscaping and vegetation. This is expected to generate 4FTE new jobs.

Use of Local Labour

2.39 The Applicant is committed to working with MCC's Work & Skills Team to ensure that employment opportunities resulting from the Proposed Development are made available to Manchester residents through the existing recruitment offer and allow hard-to-reach groups an equal opportunity to be successful in applying.

2.40 A Proposed Local Labour Agreement has been submitted with the planning application. This includes a number of key performance indicators covering the areas of employment, skills and training; supply chain opportunities; employability and learning; and community engagement.

2.41 This Proposed Local Labour Agreement is supportive of Core Strategy Policy EC1, which seeks to promote employment and economic growth in Manchester.

Other Associated Economic Impacts

2.42 Although now somewhat dated, the CABE document 'The Value of Public Space' [1] explains that there are other economic benefits associated with the creation of new public open spaces and parks, including the ability to attract business and investment to an area.

2.43 According to the CABE document ***"companies are attracted to locations that offer well-designed, well-managed public places and these in turn attract customers, employees and services"***.

[1] https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/fileadmin/uploads/dc/Documents/the-value-of-public-space1.pdf

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2.44 The development of high-quality public spaces also facilitates the regeneration of an area, with commercial property prices increasing in those locations. The CABE document also states ***"A good public landscape also offers very clear benefits to the local economy in terms of stimulating increased house prices, since house-buyers are willing to pay to be near green space".***

Human Health and Wellbeing Impacts

2.45 In terms of social benefits, the creation of a new park on the fringe of Manchester City Centre will be beneficial for local residents, workers and visitors, and will include positive outcomes for health and wellbeing.

2.46 Access to good-quality, well-maintained public spaces can help to improve physical and mental health by encouraging people to walk more, to get active, or simply to enjoy a green and natural environment.

2.47 The health benefits of walking are well documented and the provision of a new park will encourage people to walk by providing a new destination for those looking to visit and enjoy the greenspace provided, and a new, attractive walking route for those travelling through or visiting the surrounding uses.

2.48 Similarly, there is increasing evidence that the presence of 'nature' and greenspaces in towns and cities is good for both physical and mental health. Being able to experience and be amongst natural elements such as trees and planting can help to reduce feelings of stress.

2.49 Research by the Sheffield Hallam University and The University of Sheffield published in 2019 [2] confirms ***"Physical health, mental wellbeing and life satisfaction are all enhanced through access to and use of parks and green spaces".*** The study also found that ***"Parks and green spaces enable people to connect with nature, which in turn brings benefits in terms of wellbeing."***

2.50 The provision of trees, grass and planting are also good for children, helping them to experience being amongst nature and stimulating creative play. The proposed park will therefore offer significant health benefits.

2.51 Other human health impacts include those resulting from the change in land use from a derelict, underused plot with some young woodland, scrub, and grassland, to a public park with managed landscaped areas, resulting in an improved environment for local residents, local business and their workforce, and visitors alike.

2.52 Once operational, the Proposed Development will provide:

- a new recreational and educational facility for local schools
- a new recreational facility for local residents, workers and visitors to the area
- an improved through route for those using local facilities (including the New Islington Medical Practice, Urban Village Medical Practice and Co-op Academy New Islington; Cotton Field Park)

[2] https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/attachments/Space%20to%20thrive_2019-A%20rapid%20evidence%20review%2014102019-accessible.pdf

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- a more visually amenable setting for users of public routes and open spaces to enjoy, thus encouraging increased use of these active travel routes and outdoor spaces
- increased permeability through the urban landscape which is a benefit to pedestrians by cutting journey times.
- Improved accessibility to walking routes, supporting human health.
- Improved townscape amenity by changing the appearance of the Site;
- Increased green space and open space facilitating recreation and leisure-time activities
- Improved accessibility to walking and cycling routes, supporting the human health of users of educational facilities as well as safer and more amenable routes for students to travel home.

2.53 This is likely to lead to an increase in recreational activities and exercise, which will improve the mental and physical health and wellbeing of local residents. This will indirectly lead to a reduced pressure on health and social care services in the local area.

Reducing Crime and Fear of Crime

2.54 The creation of a new well-designed public park on what is a currently vacant, underused, private site with no public access will provide safe access and walking routes, with public use providing natural surveillance. Alongside this, the design itself promotes and ensures natural surveillance to allow clear sightlines across the park, reducing hidden areas where anti-social behaviours may occur. Where appropriate and required planting can be kept lower with more single stem tree species that allow for visual sightlines across the landscape.

2.55 This natural surveillance and the ability to see across the park will reduce crime and the fear of crime which can deter people, especially vulnerable groups, from using public spaces.

2.56 The park has been designed with safety and security considerations at the forefront to ensure all users feel comfortable accessing the space. A large part of this is ensuring inclusive design, and ensuring all users, especially vulnerable groups, and those with disabilities feel safe accessing and using the space.

Providing a Space for People to Come Together

2.57 Public spaces provide the opportunity for communities to come together in a way that empty sites do not. The CABE document recognises:

"Public spaces are open to all, regardless of ethnic origin, age or gender, and as such they represent a democratic forum for citizens and society.

When properly designed and cared for, they bring communities together, provide meeting places and foster social ties of a kind that have been disappearing in many urban areas. These spaces shape the cultural identity of an area, are part of its unique character and provide a sense of place for local communities".

2.58 Community cohesion and respectful coexistence can be encouraged through the creation of new open spaces and public parks, especially in urban areas where such developments provide a welcome alternative to the surrounding built form.

2.59 The aforementioned research by the Sheffield Hallam University and The University of Sheffield also confirms ***"Parks create important opportunities for social integration."***

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Regeneration

2.60 As outlined within Chapter 2, the Site is covered by the Former Central Retail Park Strategic Regeneration Framework ('SRF') to guide the redevelopment of the Site. The SRF has been prepared having regard to national and local planning policy and the draft version was subject to consultation with the local community, businesses, landowners and other key stakeholders. The SRF was subsequently endorsed by MCC's Executive.

2.61 The scheme has been developed with careful consideration given to the SRF to ensure that it accords with its key principles and contributes positively towards its regeneration objectives for the area. The redevelopment of the FCRP is a long-standing strategic priority for MCC, and the SRF is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications within the SRF area.

2.62 The SRF for the wider FCRP site is clear in its vision for the site to deliver ***"a new high-quality, sustainable office district with attractive public realm at its centre"***. Specifically, ***"A new park will provide an appealing green space and recreational facility for the local residents, new office workers, employees, and visitors"*** (our emphasis).

2.63 The Proposed Development is therefore completely aligned with this vision and the new public park has been designed to achieve the key principles of the SRF as follows:

- **Place making** - The Proposed Development, when delivered alongside the proposed office development, will ensure the creation of a create a vibrant new destination for local residents, employees and visitors alike through the creation of a high-quality integrated development.

- **High quality development** -The SRF envisages a new green space at the heart of the FCRP site, which will deliver ***"a high-quality inclusive open space for the local community, workers and visitors".*** The Proposed Development will meet this key principle head on.

- **Connectivity** - The Proposed Development will result in new pedestrian linkages, making it easier, safer and more attractive to walk or cycle to and from the site and surrounding areas, which is a key principle of the SRF.

- **Sustainability** - The Proposed Development will aim to achieve the highest standards of sustainable design. Trees have been selected for their suitability to the conditions of the site. Many of the chosen species are native, evergreen or have potential uses as part of the SUDs strategy for the scheme. Similarly, plants include a mix of native and non-native species for biodiversity, plants for pollinators, evergreen species for all year round interest and those that are more climate resilient.

- **Scale and mass** - The scale and mass proposed for the park is appropriate to the Site and the proposals for buildings elsewhere on the FCRP site.

- **Form and layout -** The public park provides an important role in separating the wider FCRP site into two developable areas, allowing a phased delivery. The two parcels of land naturally extend the urban grain of Ancoats and New Islington, stitching the site into its local context. The significant green park at the heart of the site complements the built elements and 'anchors' the masterplan, whilst also providing multiple new connections between the existing site surroundings.

- **Use** - The SRF envisages the former FCRP site will be developed primarily a commercial office led proposal aimed at delivering a significant amount of new office space. This will be complemented by a retail and leisure offer, as well as a new public park - which the Proposed Development will deliver.

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2.64 In addition to the above, the SRF identifies site opportunities and parameters for the Central Retail Park site, as follows:

- **Retention of the existing trees and integration of the culvert** - Existing trees present an opportunity to act as noise, air quality and visual buffers to the site, and should be retained where possible. The existing culvert (Shooters Brook) will also be surveyed.

- **Great Ancoats Street Environment -** The potential to improve the site's relationship and active frontage to Great Ancoats Street is encouraged. There needs to be a focus on providing a welcoming and attractive environment that offers a unique experience. Mitigation measures need to be considered to address traffic, access, air quality, and noise pollution of Great Ancoats Street.

- **Levels** - There is a significant change of level across the site with an approximate 5 metre difference between the southern and northern corners of the site (rising to the North). The level difference creates an opportunity to connect to the surrounding context and explore creation of a service and operation under croft for parking and servicing activities.

- **Extension of Cotton Field Park -** There is an opportunity to extend Cotton Field Park across the site, towards Great Ancoats Street, increasing connectivity and cohesion. The new public realm within the site will take influences from the character of Cotton Field Park but ultimately have its own distinct appeal and design.

- **Pedestrian Arrival Gateways** - The intention is to link new gateways to pedestrian and cycle connections to and from the site and limit vehicular access to the perimeter, creating a pedestrian friendly environment. The extension of the park creates the opportunity to increase permeability within the site which enhances connections to its surrounding context, creating more usable pedestrian environments. The intention is to prioritise pedestrian and cycle connections to and from the site and limit vehicular access to the perimeter.

- **Cycle routes -** The existing cycle routes are fragmented, however, there is an opportunity to extend the cycle paths to allow for greater connections. Cycle-friendly routes through the site will maximise permeability and create an area focused on people. This in turn will help in establishing a sense of 'place,' promoting more social interactions within the scheme and encouraging people to visit using their cycles.

2.65 In summary, key features of the Proposed Development include:

- **Stepped and ramped access** which will deal with the 5m level change on site (Key Benefit)

- **Accessible materiality strategy** providing key benefits to the area in terms of access

- **96 new of trees and 659sqm of new lawn space**

- **Ecology and wildlife promotion** all of which link to the biodiversity and ecological enhancement key benefit of the site.

- **Permeable drainage solutions alongside a drainage strategy** providing a key benefit in terms of water management for the site.

- **Lighting columns, furniture lighting and tree uplighters** creating a comprehensive lighting strategy to ensure safety and a warm atmosphere

- **A mix of seating with total capacity at approximately 435 people** providing opportunities for rest and reflection

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- **Opportunity for formal and informal play space** to encourage play and activity
- **Cycle storage** to facilitate sustainable travel to and from the Site.
- **Timber Boardwalk connecting through to Cotton Field Park** to enable a seamless link between the two areas of greenspace
- **Wayfinding strategy** including totems and fingerposts to ensure ease of use for all users.
- The Proposed Development therefore closely aligns with the vision and objectives of the FCRP SRF, recognising the parameters and maximising the opportunities to deliver the successful regeneration of the Site and will make a substantial contribution towards achieving the objectives of the FCRP SRF.

2.66 **Chapter 3** will now provide a summary of this Statement.

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3. Conclusions

3.1 This Public Benefits Statement has been prepared to support the application for full planning permission being submitted by MCC for the development of a new public park, including areas of lawn, hard and soft landscaping and a range of seating areas ('the Proposed Development') on land within the Former Central Retail Park ('FCRP') site, off of Great Ancoats Street, Manchester ('the Site').

3.2 The Site falls within the Former Central Retail Park Strategic Regeneration Framework ('SRF') area, which sets out MCC's Vision for the Site:

"to create a new high-quality, sustainable office district with attractive public realm at its centre. A new park will provide an appealing green space and recreational facility for the local residents, new office workers, employees, and visitors. The proposals build upon the strategic location of the site and its strong connections to the city centre and transport networks." (our emphasis)

3.3 The Proposed Development will deliver a high-quality, new public park on a currently vacant brownfield site which is well located in relation to public transport links and to nearby residential and commercial/employment locations, key amenities and services located in and around the City Centre fringe.

3.4 The Statement has demonstrated that the Proposed Development would deliver significant public benefits, including a substantial contribution towards the regeneration objectives of the FCRP site, as set out within the SRF.

Summary of Public Benefits

3.5 In summary, the Proposed Development will play a positive role in terms of the economic, social and environmental dimensions that shape sustainable development and would deliver a range of significant public benefits. It would:

- Create new jobs during both the construction and operational phases.
- Provide opportunities for local labour.
- Improve physical and mental health and wellbeing by encouraging people to walk more, to get active, or simply to enjoy a green and natural environment.
- Reduce crime and fear of crime through the provision of safe access and walking routes, with public use providing natural surveillance.
- Provide a space for people to come together, providing a welcome alternative to the surrounding built form.
- Provide a new recreational and educational facility for use by local schools, local residents, workers and visitors to the area
- Provide an improved through route for those using local facilities (including the New Islington Medical Practice, Urban Village Medical Practice and Co-op Academy New Islington; Cotton Field Park)
- Provide a more visually amenable setting for users of public routes and open spaces to enjoy, thus encouraging increased use of these active travel routes and outdoor spaces

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- Allow increased permeability through the urban landscape which is a benefit to pedestrians by cutting journey times.
- Improve townscape amenity by changing the appearance of the Site;
- Increase green space and open space facilitating recreation and leisure-time activities
- Improve accessibility to walking and cycling routes, supporting the human health of users of educational facilities as well as safer and more amenable routes for students to travel home.
- Provide permeable through routes for all users, with the landscaping having been designed to prioritise inclusivity to create an environment that is accessible to all. Specifically focusing on requirements for those individuals with disabilities, the elderly and children.
- Include coherent and legible access routes, including compliant ramps that meander through the landscape and ensure the user is integrated within the main routes of the park.
- Provide stepped access, in line with Part M regulations, for an alternative, more direct route, materiality, a range of seating options suitable for different users and clear signage to ensure it is suitable for use by everyone.
- Deliver new green infrastructure within the City which does not currently exist, which will bring numerous and wide ranging social, economic and environmental benefits (as captured within this Statement).
- Not result in any long-term significant adverse environmental effects.
- Ensure environmental benefits through the provision of new planting, minimal use of resources during operation, and improved ground conditions.
- Deliver an increase in habitats in terms of area and quality (through grassland, shrub, and tree planting) to ensure that sufficient and increased habitat is provided.
- Result in a Biodiversity Net Gain for area habitats of 199%, meeting the requirement for a 10% uplift in biodiversity units.
- Ensure the improved appearance of the Site which will completely transform the outlook and setting for local residents, workers, and visitors to the area, including those visiting local facilities such as the New Islington Free School and the Ancoats Primary Care Centre.
- Reinstate urban grain across the Site, with reference to the historic street plan.
- Introduce public benefit to the area by developing the vacant site into a new community resource.
- Reestablish a more coherent setting for the adjacent designated assets.
- Accord with the key principles and align with the vision and objectives of the FCRP SRF, recognising the parameters and maximising the opportunities to deliver the successful regeneration of the Site
- Make a substantial contribution towards achieving the objectives of the FCRP SRF.

3.6 The Proposed Development should therefore be supported to enable the delivery of the associated public benefits which the scheme will also provide.

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