



National
Trust

Castlefield Viaduct – Extension to Temporary Use as Urban Park, Trial Phase

Supporting Statement; January 2023

Permission was granted by the Council for the initial trial phase of the Castlefield Viaduct project in November 2021. The application description was for *Temporary change of use to an urban park (F2(c)) for a period of 20 months*, with condition 1 of the planning consent stating: *The permission hereby granted is for a limited period only, expiring twenty months from 1 February 2022.*

Since opening in July 2022, Castlefield Viaduct has been exceptionally successful, with demand far exceeding our original expectations, thereby limiting our capacity to accommodate visitors.

We are therefore of the view that allowing additional time for this initial trial phase of the development would enable us to welcome more visitors, and in doing so obtain a greater depth and diversity of views to inform the Phase Two permanent scheme (which will be subject to a new planning application in the future - work is already underway to prepare for this).

As a consequence, we are seeking to extend the temporary site operations to December 2024.

Further to the above, the following points provide a rationale for seeking an extension:

- The extension will enable more public benefit to be generated from the initial temporary capital investment as more visitors can be welcomed to site. This will also support the city centre economy bringing more people into the area to shop and dwell. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and we forecast continued high demand for visits. (The appendix to this statement highlights the positive feedback received, and socio-economic benefits already achieved during the short period in which the viaduct has been open to the public).
- 12.8 FTE local jobs created by the viaduct will be extended supporting employment in the city.
- The National Trust has demonstrated we can operate the site successfully in terms of health and safety, impact on the local community and impact on local infrastructure i.e. transport networks, anti-social behaviour; it therefore suggests risks of negative impacts associated with a short operational extension for the pilot are low.

- As stated above, in parallel, we are developing the next phase of works 'Phase Two'. The National Trust remains committed to the project, but it is unlikely Phase Two will be open until 2025. The extension will therefore shorten the period between Phase One and Phase Two when the site is closed to the public and not delivering public benefit.

Appendix: Positive Feedback and Socio-Economic Benefits

Engagement

Since opening at the end of July 2022, over 16,000 people have engaged with the viaduct, whether as visitors, volunteers, community groups or as part of our special programming and events (approx. 3,000 per month).

Jobs

We have brought jobs to the local area, employing 12.8 FTEs through the day to day operation of the viaduct, and we would be looking to extend those roles from 12 months fixed term to 26 months fixed term.

Demand for future access

We have had an overwhelmingly positive response from visitors, with 99.4% of those visiting saying they would like permanent access to the viaduct site in future.

Attracts visits from beyond Manchester

We have had our first interim evaluation report from Morris Hargreaves McIntyre in December evaluating the first 5 months of operation. From this we know that the Viaduct is attracting visits from beyond Manchester: half of visitors are non-Manchester residents visiting the city because of the viaduct (3% stayed in a hotel), so there is strong potential to increase visitor business for the city. Metrolink was commonly used to get to the viaduct.

- ❖ *'It inspires me and motivates me to want to help create green spaces in cities and I am more willing to visit Manchester if I have a beautiful green space to spend time alone or with the family.'* Survey respondent, female, 45, non-resident, Member

Approximately half of visitors appear to be NT-members

Roughly half of survey respondents stated that they are National Trust members. We're aware this coincides with early demand and the 'early adopter' trend, with the people willing to fill in a survey being likely to indicate a level of comfort with this kind of attraction. Our own data shows a higher level of non-members visiting the viaduct, which we expect to see as the 'early-adopter' trend levels off.

People rate their visit as excellent

We know people are really enjoying the experience and the chance to relax in green space in the city centre up close to heritage: 95 % of people rated their visit 'excellent', 'good' or 'very good' and 85% of people would recommend it to others.

- ❖ *'I felt really proud to see this semi-derelict piece of architecture becoming something wonderful. I have passed it for years on the tram, thinking 'what if...'* Survey respondent, female, 52, resident, non-member
- ❖ *'I visited the restored section of the Castlefield Viaduct which @nationlatrust have done a top job in restoring..... Well worth a visit and I hope the rest of it is restored and opened',* Twitter

The Viaduct encourages a connection to Castlefield

We've also learnt that the Viaduct inspires connection with the local area and willingness to get involved, with 7 in 10 feeling that the Viaduct belongs to them and their community, at least to some extent.

- ❖ *'It's such a beautiful space, full of potential for a nature-filled walking route into the city centre and a place to escape work during the day'* Instagram
- ❖ *'Love the contrasting 3 views of greenery, old industrial look and modern city'* Verbal feedback from visitor

The Viaduct encourages people to take action

Top 5 things visitors are more likely to do as a result of visiting the viaduct:

- 'Visit Castlefield Viaduct again' (81%)
- 'Visit other heritage sites in Manchester' (62%)
- 'Make time to connect with nature to support my wellbeing' (45%)
- 'Do more to protect nature/the environment' (33%)
- 'Join in with other activities/projects that are connected to Castlefield Viaduct in the future' (29%)

The Viaduct is seen as a destination

The Viaduct is seen as a destination: somewhere to connect with nature, connect with others and support mental wellbeing

- ❖ *'It's nice to spend time in nature especially because I live in the city. I also loved chatting having a conversation with other visitors and the volunteers about the space.'* Survey respondent, female, 34, resident, non-member
- ❖ *The loss of green space to developments can be more than off-set by being innovative and creative, and the transformation of Castlefield Viaduct is the perfect example of that.'* Survey respondent, male, 21, resident, non-member

- ❖ *'It isn't my local area but I worked in the Castlefield basin as a ranger over 20 years ago and we were taken up on the viaduct and my colleagues all agreed that the viaduct should be made into a garden of some sort. It was a very emotional moment to actually see our wish come into being - even though it had taken over 20 years.'*
Survey respondent, female, 72, non-resident, non-member