



Neighbourhood
Development
Framework

**Holt
Town**
Wood Town

 MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

Holt Town

A new woodland town in the city

Public Realm Strategy

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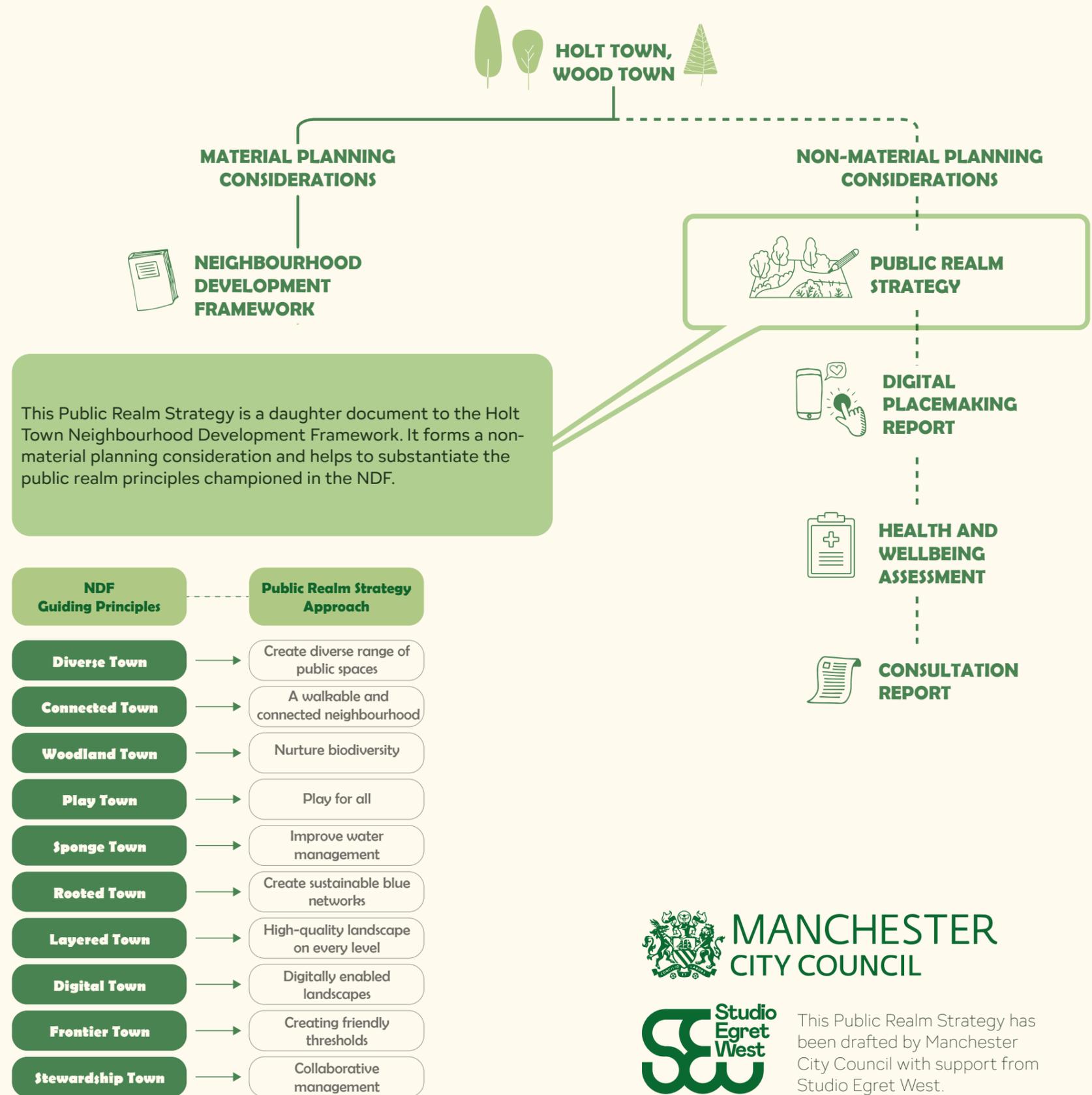
1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Public Realm Strategy

The Public Realm Strategy supports Manchester City Council's (MCC) Holt Town Neighbourhood Development Framework (NDF) in creating the setting for 4,500 new homes. It guides the enhancement of connections with Sportcity and the Etihad Campus, addressing the needs of the entertainment district while benefiting residents and local businesses.

The strategy outlines how the NDF's design principles can shape streets and public spaces, providing a cohesive framework to transform Holt Town into an inviting, sociable environment that celebrates heritage and fosters vibrant community life. It aims to regenerate Holt Town as a sustainable urban community, integral to Manchester's long-term growth plan and aligned with the City Council's vision of a secure, thriving city for all residents.

Key opportunities include improving connectivity across East Manchester by addressing barriers like the canal and creating seamless links to destinations such as Sportcity and the Etihad Campus. The strategy prioritises safe, intuitive public spaces with unique designs reflecting the area's diverse identity. By integrating the woodland character of the Medlock Valley and revitalising Ashton Canal Park, it enhances access to nature, recreation, and play areas. Strong pedestrian and cycling routes are also a focus, fostering inclusivity and community interaction.



1.2 A strategic landscape opportunity

Holt Town has the potential to form a holistic and connected ecosystem that joins up surrounding habitats and strengthens the ecology of the Medlock Valley. Through strategic stewardship and management, these habitats can be experienced and maintained as a unified, cohesive landscape for all.

The sites immediately upstream and downstream from Holt Town have been identified by the Woodland Trust as the 'Medlock Valley Sites', which form a circa 81-hectare wood.

There is a strategic opportunity to grow this wood into Holt Town and collectively attain an 85 hectare wood status for the Lower Medlock Valley with the support and help from existing and new catchment partners along the River Medlock Corridor.

The rather secretive river Medlock runs alongside Philips Park; a valued space for leisure and recreation from the area's heavy industrial past to its rebirth as home to Sportcity and the Etihad Campus and the velodrome. Crossing Bank Road presents a real contrast and the opportunity to walk the 1-mile trail through woodland to Clayton Vale local nature reserve. This comes as a revelation to the newcomer, who will be impressed by the attraction of this urban countryside and the work of the volunteers who care for it.

The Woodland Trust's definition of the 'Medlock Valley sites'

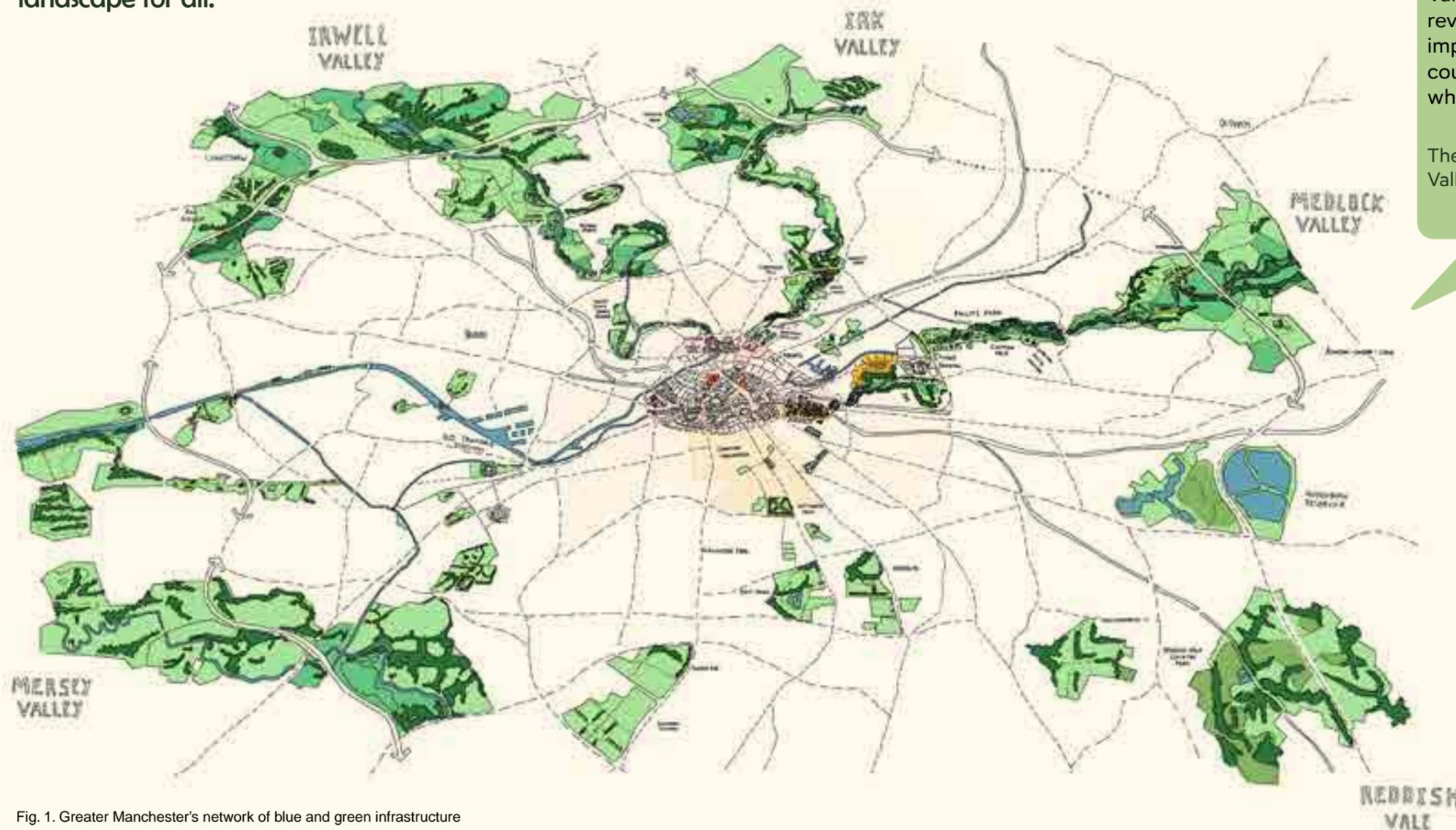


Fig. 1. Greater Manchester's network of blue and green infrastructure

1.3 Objectives of the NDF

The following objectives have guided the approach to the vision and illustrative framework presented in the NDF - they underpin the strategies presented in this document:



A new neighbourhood, inclusive and diverse

Holt Town is an opportunity to bring forward a new town in the city and grow a community that is inclusive and invites a variety of people looking for a home close to the economic opportunities of the City Centre, Sportcity and the Etihad Campus.



Mixed use and rooted in place

Holt Town could be a layered and mixed-use place that weaves a variety of uses and services amid its heritage, as well as cultural and environmental features that contribute to its character.



Creative and entrepreneurial, bridging growth drivers

Holt Town can nurture creativity and entrepreneurship, building on the Area's existing success to further enhance economic prosperity.



Climate-resilient and sustainable

Holt Town can be an exemplar low-carbon, sustainable neighbourhood with climate resilience and nature embedded in its design, contributing to the City's net zero carbon targets set out in the Manchester Climate Change Framework.



Data-informed and digitally-enabled

Holt Town could become a pilot for digitally informed design, governance and management. The Digital Twin could help safeguard the principles of the NDF, while helping ensure that the neighbourhood adapts to the evolving needs of residents and the environment.



Healthy, compact and pedestrian-first

Holt Town can be a compact neighbourhood that prioritises walking, wheeling and cycling and offers a setting that promotes health and wellbeing.

1.4 Vision: Holt Town, Woodland Town

This NDF champions a vision of Holt Town as a Woodland Town, a new, vibrant urban district that embraces innovative approaches to shaping a neighbourhood that is diverse, inclusive, future-facing, and sets a pioneering benchmark for urban growth in Manchester.

Holt Town presents an extraordinary opportunity to expand the reach of Manchester’s growth, bridging the gap between two tremendous drivers of change; the City Centre to the west, and Sportcity and the Etihad Campus to the east.

This NDF outlines guiding parameters for a mixed-use, diverse, climate-resilient neighbourhood of **up to 4,500 homes**, that builds upon the layers of character that make Holt Town special, to bring forward an innovative residential-led neighbourhood. This NDF builds upon the fabric, history, entrepreneurship, and ecology of Holt Town to establish the foundations for economic transformation and inclusive growth, deeply rooted in place.

At the heart of this regenerative approach is a commitment to social, physical, and digital connectivity and the modern, flexible infrastructure that is required to support this. Amenity and social provision will be prioritised, alongside a network of new and existing routes transforming Holt Town to be a safe, accessible place for residents, businesses, and visitors.

A layered approach inspired by the anatomy of a woodland

Emergent

Holt Town is aiming for an appropriate density and scale. Higher density developments will be sensitively placed in areas where a greater density of accommodation could lead to a more generous contribution to public realm and/or the renewal of heritage assets.

Canopy

A creative approach to roofscapes that embraces the full potential for amenity, energy production and rainwater management. Holt Town will celebrate its rooflines, creating views and vistas through careful distribution of scale, density and built form.

Understorey

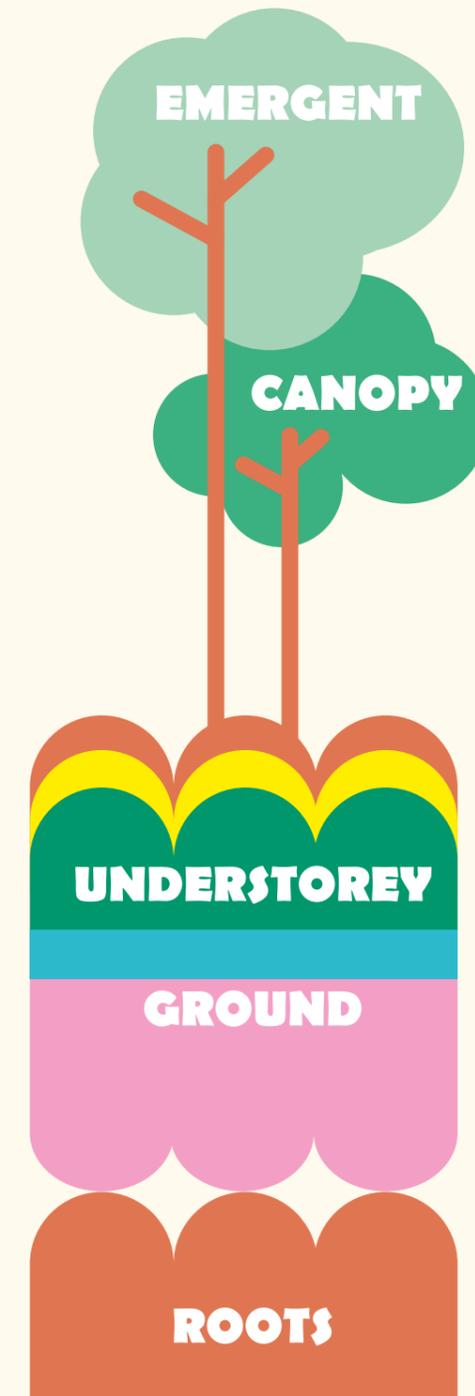
A low-carbon town which includes a diverse range of lower-rise homes. It will promote economic growth with homes of varied tenure and lower density family homes, supported by social infrastructure.

Ground

Holt Town will create sustainable public spaces with enhanced biodiversity and infrastructure. It will promote low car usage, prioritise pedestrians, and integrate community and culture.

Roots

Holt Town’s regeneration will reconnect this part of Manchester, bridging key areas. It will embed social value, retain heritage assets where possible, and aim to meet net zero targets.



2 Place Analysis

2.1 Existing blue infrastructure

Enhancing waterways

In July 2019, MCC declared a climate emergency and committed to becoming a net-zero city by 2038. The aim is to protect all residents from climate change impacts while considering social and environmental factors, especially for the vulnerable. The Manchester Climate Change Framework and Action Plan 2020-2025 outlines seven areas of focus, with key actions for Holt Town including enhancing green infrastructure.

The River Medlock and the Ashton Canal form the backbone of Holt Town's existing blue and green infrastructure. The canal sits to the northern side of the area on higher ground than the river which flows through the valley along the southern edge of the Holt Town area. The river unsurprisingly provides the low topographical point in Holt Town. Both the river and the canal also provide key ecological corridors connecting the area way beyond the confines of the NDF boundary line. Within the existing streets and spaces much of the drainage is serviced through traditional roadside gullies. There are currently no sustainable drainage measures in place. A large area of Holt Town previously housed a reservoir during the city's industrial period. Whilst this has been largely removed there are some structural remnants of the reservoir today such as retaining walls.

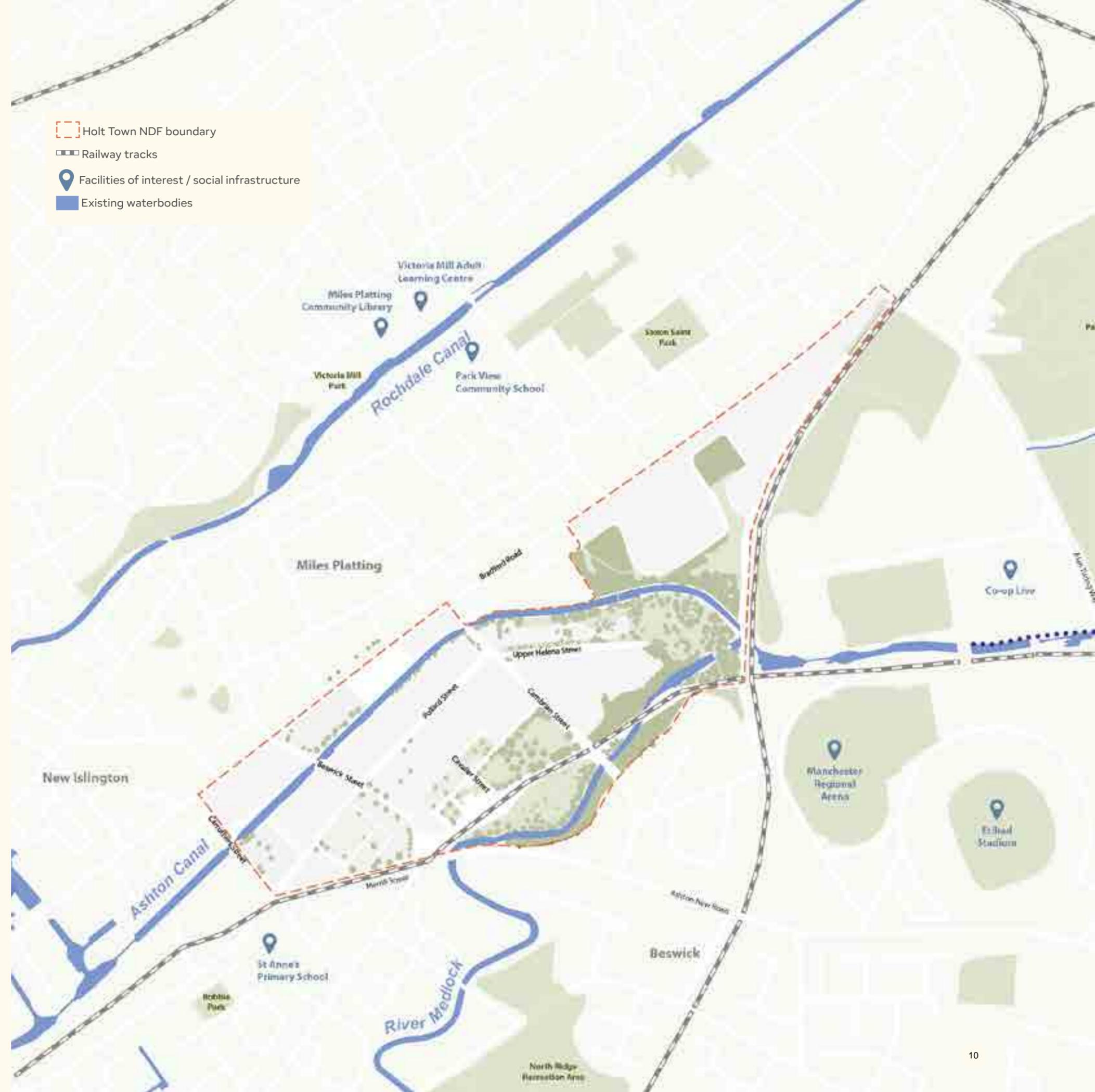


Fig. 2. Existing blue infrastructure

2.2 Existing green infrastructure

Patchwork pockets

Manchester prioritises biodiversity and green infrastructure. The city was the first in England to sign the Edinburgh Declaration on biodiversity, and since 2015, it has invested over £80 million in green projects. The "Great Outdoors" strategy envisions high-quality green and blue spaces by 2025, while the Biodiversity Strategy (2022-2030) focuses on habitat recovery and connecting people with nature. Additionally, the "Our Rivers, Our City Strategy" (2021) aims to improve river valleys, flood management, and community spaces, with a focus on the Medlock Valley's heritage potential.

With some exceptions, Holt Town has not been very active in terms of employment, industry or residential uses. In recognition of this status, the NDF vision introduces the areas current state as Holt Town, Ghost Town. Whilst this is mostly true for human activity, the areas neglect has allowed self-seeded ecology to evolve across many of the disused former industrial zones. Consequently, the area offers consolidated areas of mixed and broadleaved woodland around the River Medlock, some areas of mixed scrub, modified grassland, a neutral grassland within the floodplain of the river and various areas of open mosaic habitat within derelict former industrial plots. Throughout the area there are also some examples of connected tree lines providing a slightly disjointed sequence of tree canopy corridors.



Fig. 3. Existing green infrastructure

2.3 Existing amenity spaces

Holt Town currently lacks dedicated play spaces, and its green spaces are underutilised, offering little in terms of facilities or purpose.

The Ashton Canal Park offers no formal sports, recreation, or play features, leaving residents with little reason to visit. Existing amenity spaces are poorly connected, limiting pedestrian movement and creating a sense of isolation. Overgrown planting and a lack of development overlooking these spaces further contribute to their perception as unsafe and disconnected from surrounding neighbourhoods.

In contrast, nearby neighbourhoods boast numerous parks, play areas, and public sports facilities that encourage community engagement and outdoor recreation, fostering healthier lifestyles.

The redevelopment of Holt Town presents a unique opportunity to enhance connections to these spaces and introduce complementary and missing amenities, integrating them seamlessly into the broader context.

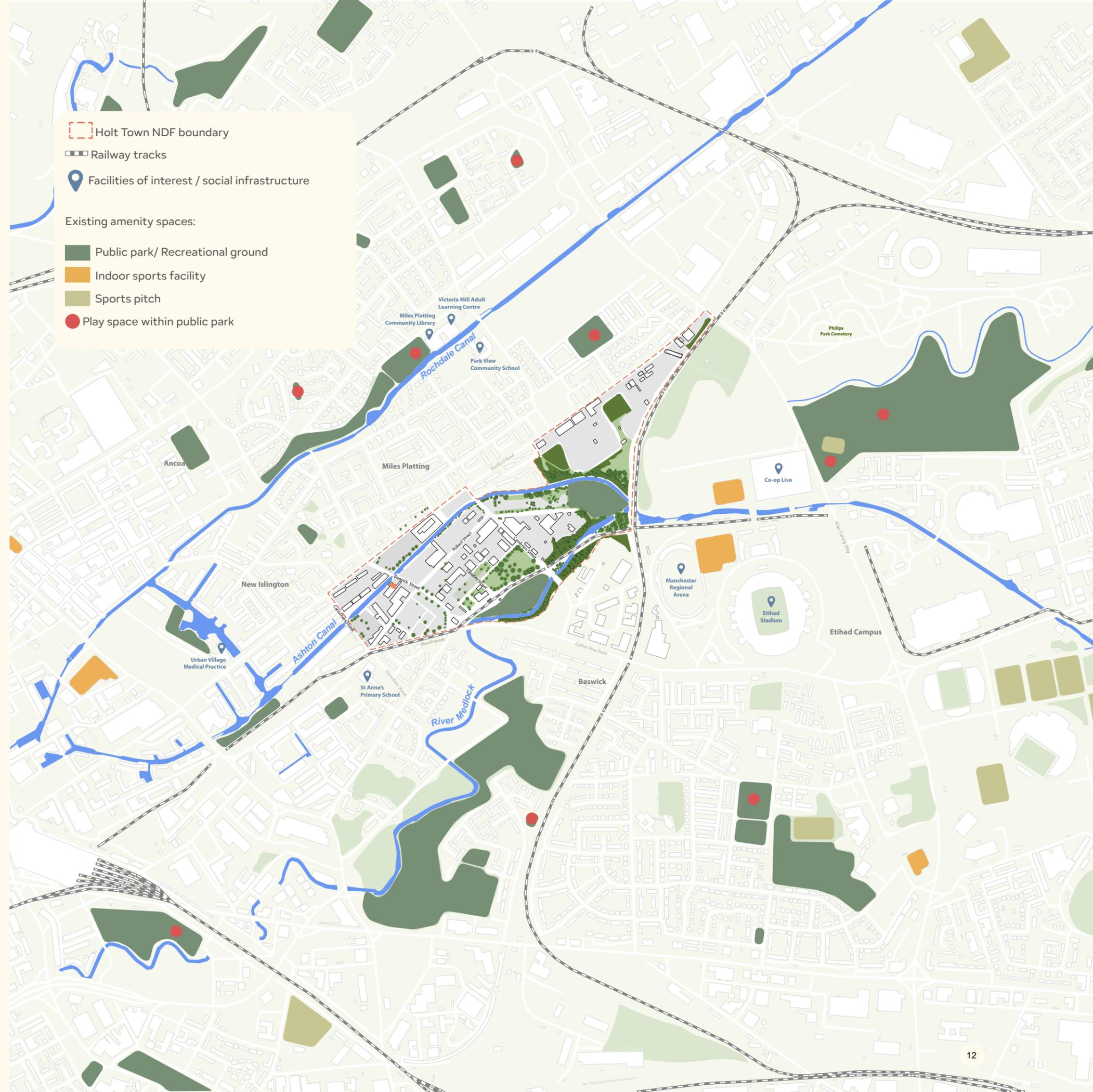


Fig. 4. Existing amenity spaces

2.4 Existing movement

Events and match days

Holt Town's proximity to major venues -including Co-op Live, the largest indoor arena in the UK outside London, Sportcity and the Etihad Campus - results in significant footfall on streets within and around the site during events and match days. Currently, the main route for spectators traveling from the City Centre to these venues follows Merrill Street and continues along the CityLink, which borders the southern edge of the site. Careful planning of the thresholds between Merrill Street, the CityLink, and the Holt Town proposals is essential to accommodate the increased pedestrian traffic during these events.

Spectators coming from Ancoats, New Islington, and Manchester Victoria Station often use Cambrian Street and Beswick Street to reach the venues in a way that was never envisaged within the original plans for the area. The boundaries between these streets and the more intimate street network within Holt Town will need to be considered in the framework proposals.

Additionally, the Ashton Canal towpath provides a direct route from the City Centre to the eastern venues, yet it is currently underutilised by event-goers. Strategic improvements to the canal towpath will encourage more active travel options, such as walking or cycling, for those attending matches and concerts.

With recent upgrades to the CityLink, which connects Holt Town Metrolink station to the eastern venues, the public realm proposals for Holt Town should prioritise enhanced connections to this improved pedestrian pathway, supporting more efficient and accessible movement throughout the area.

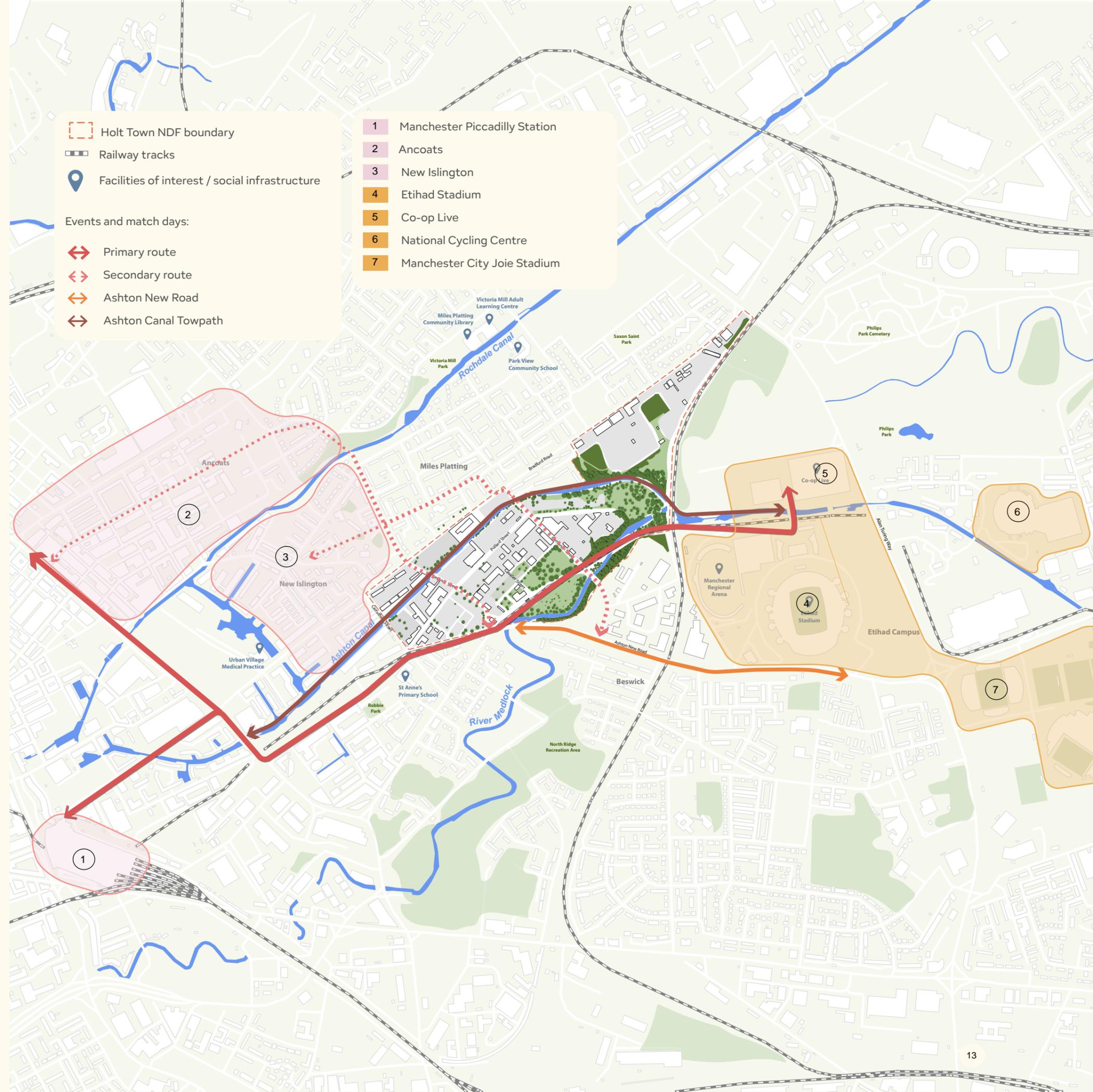


Fig. 5. Existing movement on event days

The CityLink

The CityLink pedestrian connection in Manchester is a thoughtfully designed pedestrian and cycle route that enhances movement between key locations in the city. It links major areas such as Manchester City Centre, Co-op Live, Sportcity and the Etihad Campus, while also providing convenient access to public transport hubs like Metrolink stations and bus stops. Integrating the CityLink into the wider movement strategies for the Holt Town site is therefore essential.

The route features well-lit, clearly marked pathways with smooth, level surfaces, ensuring ease of movement for all users. While signage along the route provides wayfinding and guidance to key destinations, it lacks more localised wayfinding or heritage information. Navigation is straightforward and clear, and public art installations enhance the cultural appeal of the route.

The pathways are inclusive, designed to accommodate individuals with disabilities, as well as those using prams or bicycles. Integration with wider infrastructure, such as cycle lanes and local roads, ensures the CityLink contributes to Manchester's sustainable transport strategy.

As part of Manchester's broader urban planning efforts, the proposals for Holt Town should adopt the principles underpinning the CityLink's design to help create a walkable and cycle-friendly neighbourhood.

As the development of the neighbourhood progresses, the potential for property developers to contribute to further enhancements of the CityLink should be explored, recognizing its integral role in facilitating movement to key venues to the east of Holt Town.



Fig. 6. Illustrative plan of the CityLink



Light art installation lining the CityLink



Light art installation lining the CityLink

2.5 Existing spaces

Underutilised and inaccessible

Public spaces vary in quality, functionality and usability. Some of these enhance the visual appeal and overall woodland character of Holt Town. They however lack programme and purpose, and their maintenance is limited.

Due to poor connectivity and lack of passive surveillance these spaces can often feel isolated, disconnected and unsafe, which makes them underused. This has attracted littering, drug use and antisocial behaviour. Examples of these spaces include:

1. Medlock Valley - Floodplain meadow and areas of self-seeded woodland provide some ecological value but minimal public access, social spaces or opportunity to engage with nature.
2. Ashton Canal Park - Overgrown green space in poor condition with no programme or purpose. Inaccessible footpaths fail to connect well with surrounding areas resulting in low pedestrian movement. Litter, motorbike tracks and bonfire debris suggest the space is frequently misused.
3. National Grid Land - This overgrown area is located on land that is privately owned and currently inaccessible to the public. Above ground gas pipes are a prominent feature of the area.
4. The site of the former Holt Town Reservoir is currently in poor condition. The area is bordered by large, mature trees, but there is a clearing in the centre where the topography of the former reservoir remains visible. Before falling into disrepair, the area served as a recreational ground.



Fig. 7. Existing open spaces diagram

2.6 Existing levels

Informing landscape character

Holt Town's topography is a prominent feature. The lowest point is marked by the River Medlock to the south, with ground levels rising to the north, following a ridge along the Ashton Canal. The highest point is located north of the canal, on the site of the former gasworks. The most significant change in elevation occurs north of the Metrolink track, where an existing retaining wall creates a dramatic multi-story level difference.

This wall also marks the former edge of a large reservoir, constructed during the Industrial Revolution. These changes in elevation have helped define distinct character areas across Holt Town. The canal sits on a higher plateau, while the river and adjacent green spaces occupy a valley, with the intervening areas arranged on levelled plots that step or terrace according to the areas varied topography.

The historic reservoir and associated topography could create the opportunity for a unique feature in the landscape.



Fig. 8. Existing topography

2.8 Existing public transport

Public transport is a critical component of this vision. The Holt Town Metrolink station and local bus services already provide strong connections across Greater Manchester and to Manchester Piccadilly Station for regional and national rail connections. Additionally, local bus services offer frequent routes connecting Holt Town to neighbouring districts.

Bus routes are currently focused along the A662 following the southern edge of the NDF boundary. Buses do not currently pass through the Holt Town area but the public realm strategy will seek to further improve access to these services and would be open to incorporating additional services along key roads such as Beswick street or Cambrian street.



Fig. 10. Existing public transport network

2.9 Existing road network

The Area is accessed via several key routes: Ashton New Road (A662) provides direct access to the east, connecting Holt Town to central Manchester and beyond. Alan Turing Way (A6010) runs southwards, linking the Area to Sportcity and the Etihad Campus.

The Eastlands Resident Parking scheme includes the Area. This scheme replaced the Etihad parking scheme that operated on match days close to the Manchester City stadium for several years. The new scheme was required due to the new 23,500 capacity Co-op Live. The Eastlands Resident Parking scheme operates midday-11pm every day to ensure residents and their visitors can park close to their property while still permitting short-stay parking (up to 90-minutes) for visitors to the shops and businesses in the Area.

Beswick Street and Cambrian Street are the main vehicular connections through the Holt Town area itself. Secondary in scale to these roads a range of streets across the Holt Town areas provide a slightly tighter urban grain remnant of the areas industrialisation.

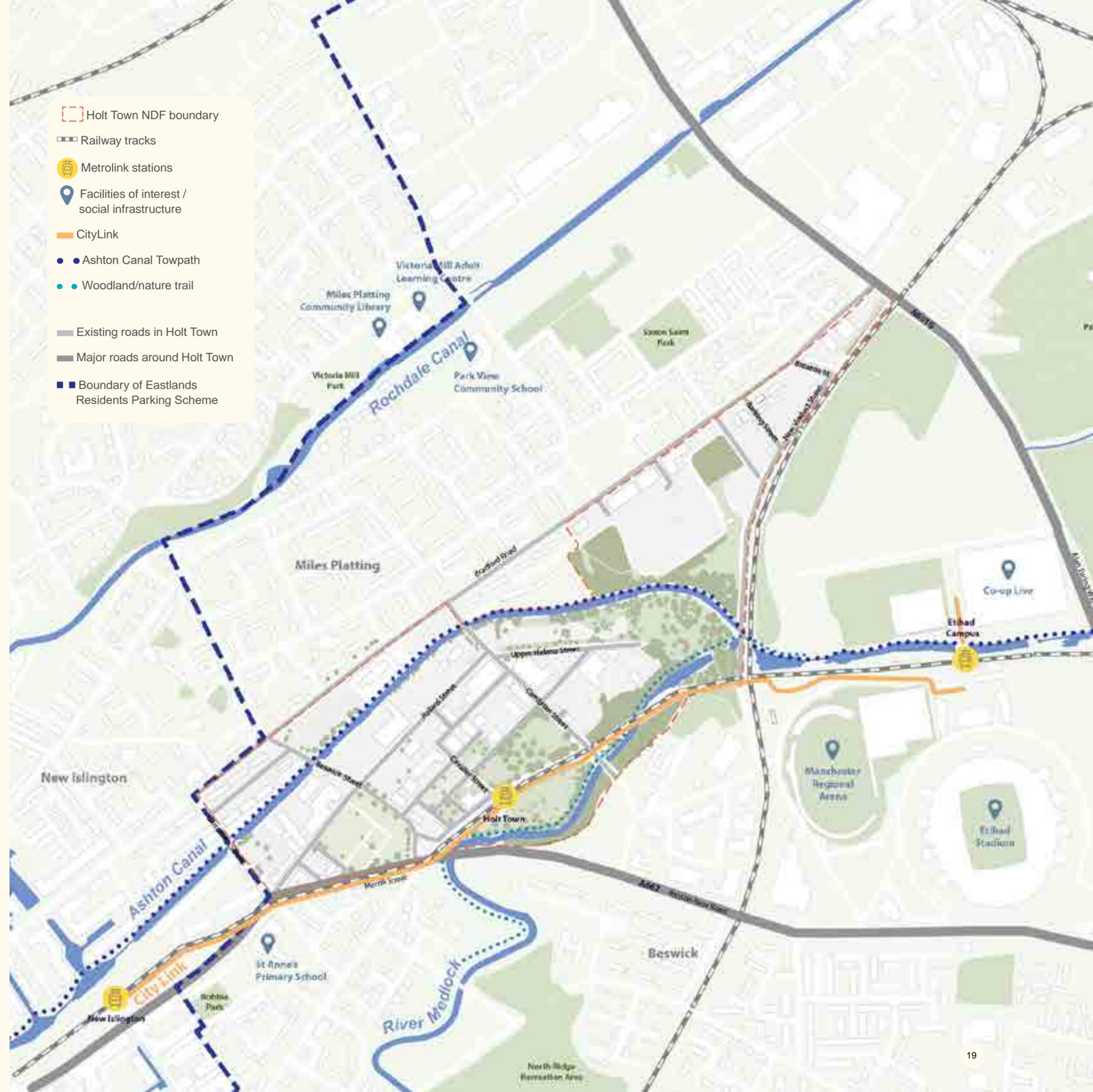


Fig. 11. Existing road network

2.10 Existing contamination

An industrial past

The historic industrial activities at Holt Town have left varying levels of contamination, posing challenges for development.

The Area was historically used for mining, chemical works, iron works, gas works, and scrap metal works. More recently, it has been occupied by garages, scrap yards, tanks, substations, and former landfills. Some areas have been filled with materials brought from off-site, which may have further exacerbated contamination.

The geology beneath the Area includes made ground at varying depths, with deeper areas associated with former in-filled reservoirs, brick pits, and mine workings. These in-filled areas may have issues with ground instability.

It is likely that plot by plot detailed site investigation will be required to fully understand the extent of contamination which is likely to vary across the site even within the zoned areas.



Fig. 12. Existing contamination

2.11 Flood risk

Perched between two blue corridors

The River Medlock floodplain forms a distinct ecological corridor along the southern boundary of the Area. Flood Risk Zones 2, 3, and 3b (Figure 5) constrain development of the area located south of the Metrolink Tracks.

The Environment Agency suggest that development should not be permitted in Flood Zone 3b where the development classification falls under 'highly vulnerable'; 'more vulnerable'; or 'less vulnerable' development. For sites in Flood Zones 2 and 3[a], a sequential approach should be undertaken to ensure development is located in areas at the lowest flood risk in the first instance.

Development proposals for sites located in these areas will need to accurately model the flood risk and agree any necessary flood compensation measures with statutory bodies, and be brought forward in line with Annex 3: Flood risk vulnerability classification of the NPPF and the Flood Risk and Coastal Change section of the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)."

The need for appropriate flood mitigation may offer an opportunity for an upgrade of the riverbank landscape, including a range of measures to support functional as well as recreational landscapes.

There is currently an EA access track down to the river, any proposals in this area should ensure access its retained by either the existing track or via a new one.

Fig. 13. Existing flood risk



2.12 Heritage assets

Rooted in history

Holt Town was established in 1785 by industrialist David Holt as Manchester's only factory colony, featuring a mill complex and housing for workers. Initially isolated, it was later absorbed into Manchester's expanding industrial core, with mills and residential terraces replacing its original villas.

Key heritage features of the area include the Ashton Canal, completed in the late 18th century, which facilitated the transport of coal and raw materials during Manchester's Industrial Revolution. The 19th-century Holt Town Reservoir supported industrial activities, and although it has now been filled in, the level change and retaining wall of its Southern edge remains visible.

Hope Mill, Wellington Mill, Ancoats Works, Brunswick Mill and Bridge 5 Mill remain Holt Towns most noticeable heritage assets. The Wellington Mill water tower provides a key orientation point. Viaduct structures along Cambrian Street and New Viaduct Street as well as retaining walls in and around the River Medlock are also remnants of the industrial era.

Canal bridges, ornate former mill premises perimeter walls, railings, gate piers, other canal features and street cobbles all make up an interesting layering of existing heritage assets that can be retained, refurbished and reused to ensure the future Holt Town moves forward with a strong reuse strategy and remains rooted in its rich history.



Fig. 14. Existing heritage assets

Remaining heritage features

The following existing features have been identified as important heritage assets to be retained, refurbished or reused in future plans for Holt Town.

Street grain



Figure 1: Historic street grain

Materials

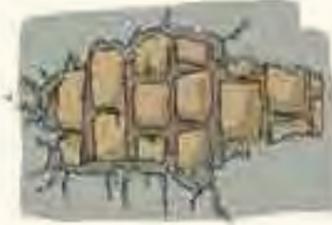


Figure 2: Cobbles beneath tarmac

Viaduct structures

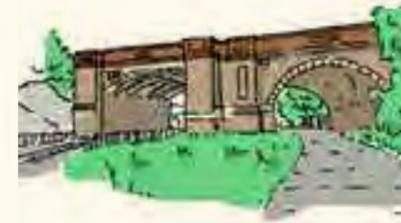


Figure 3: Cambrian Street Viaduct

Boundaries



Figure 4: Boundary wall, Upper Helena Street

Buildings

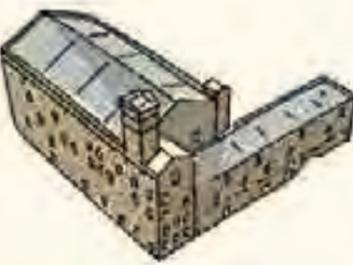


Figure 5: Wellington Mill

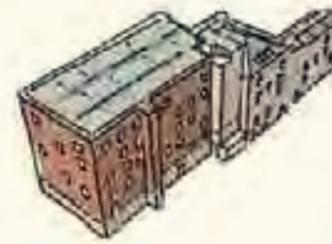


Figure 6: Spectator Mill and Bridge 5 Mill



Figure 7: Confluence point



Figure 8: Brick Pier Pollard Street

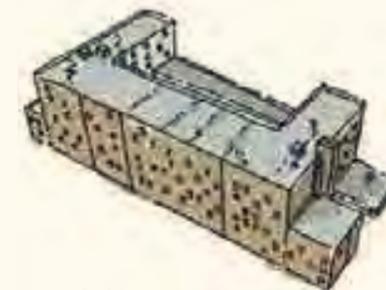


Figure 9: Brunswick Mill

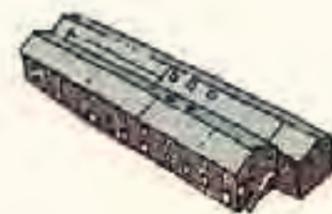


Figure 10: Phoenix Mill



Figure 11: Bridge 5 Ashton Canal

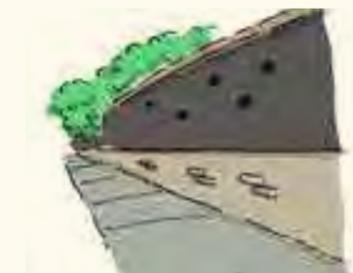


Figure 12: Former reservoir retaining wall

Canal features

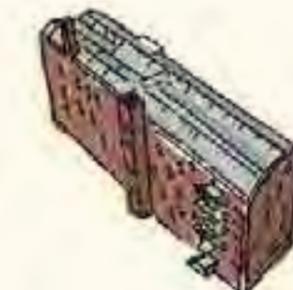


Figure 13: Hope Mill



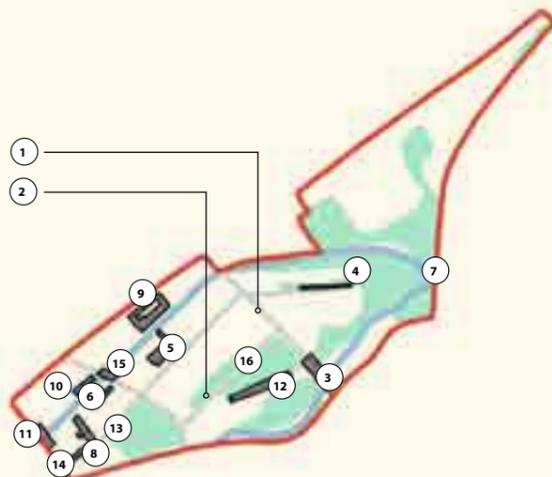
Figure 14: 17-33 Ancoats Works facade



Figure 15: Bridge 4 over Ashton Canal



Figure 16: Cyrus St metal railings



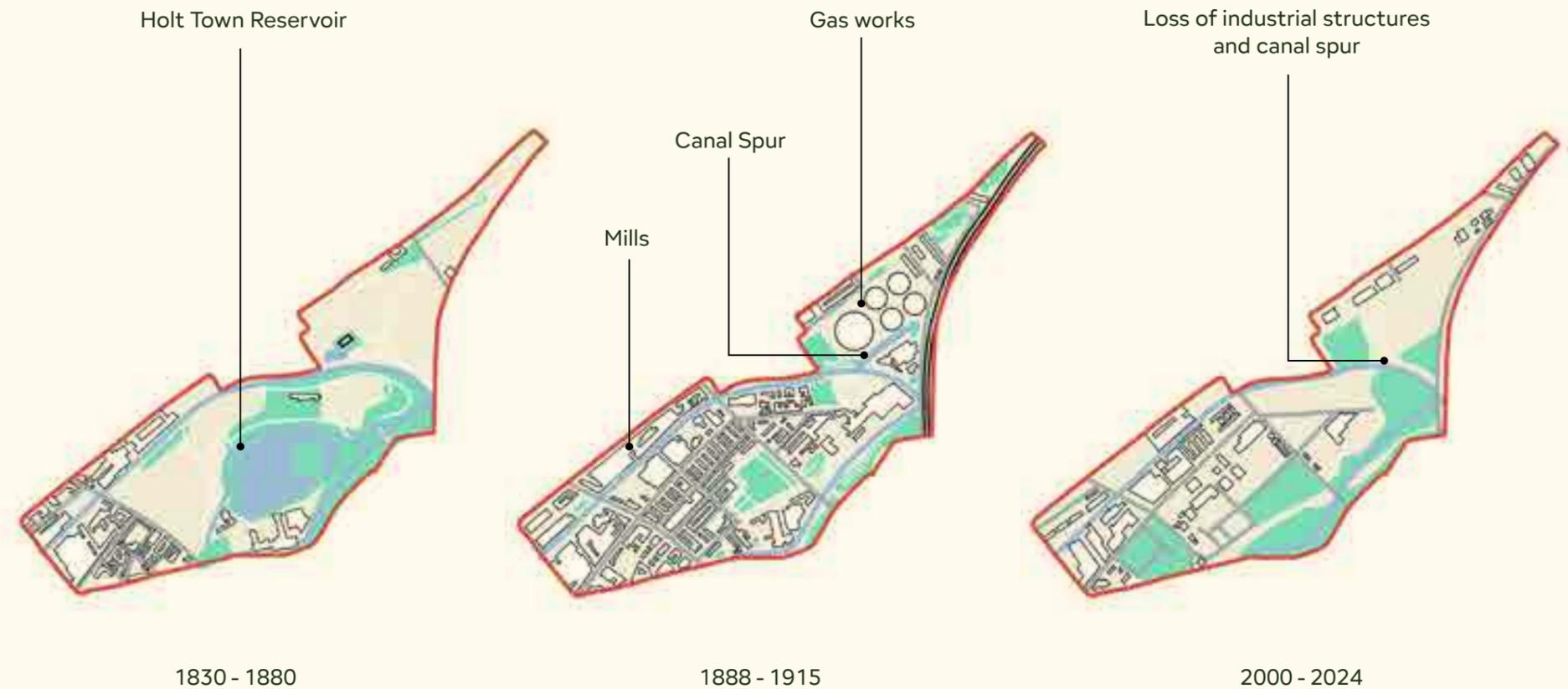
Lost heritage features

Like many areas of Manchester, Holt Town has been through periods of both boom and bust. First emerging from the urban growth of the city core, the area was largely arable land, hosting larger halls and lodges.

Following the expansion of the textile industry in the city and the construction of the Ashton Canal corridor, mill buildings began to hug the canal, providing access for goods and materials. From here linear rows of workers accommodation began to emerge, giving a distinctive gridded urban form.

The north of the area soon established itself as a gas holding site for the expanding city, home to a number of large steel structures.

Through a period of post-industrialisation the fabric of the neighbourhood has become fragmented and disjointed. Much of the historic grain remains but some of the built form and landscape features have been lost.



The birth of an industrial town

In the late 1800's Holt Town was yet to be established, a large reservoir dominated the area, with the grand estates of Medlock and Gleden Halls perched within arable land.

A thriving frontier town

By the early 1900's Holt Town was fast becoming the heartland of the cities growth. Industrial uses dominated Holt Town and the prominent mills, many of which now lost, hug the entirety of the Ashton Canal corridor. The large reservoir which once dominated the area was now gone. A spur connecting the gas works site into the Ashton canal corridor was a notable evolution in the areas blue infrastructure.

From Holt Town to ghost town

Post-industrialisation and urban decline has led to considerable loss to built form within the study area, but the street network still resembles the historical grid. Many mills remain albeit distributed within a fragmented and disconnected neighbourhood. The dismantling of **Gas holder structures is the most recent change to the areas industrial heritage.** The gas works canal spur also became a lost heritage feature several years ago when it was filled in and absorbed into the gas holder site.

Fig. 15. Historic maps illustration

2.13 Existing landscape materiality

Existing materials

The predominant material used in the streets and public spaces of Holt Town is macadam, with some areas of concrete flag paving and cast concrete within certain industrial plots. These materials form a basic, low-value urban palette typical of many neighbourhoods across the country. However, the retaining walls and factory boundary walls offer a more distinctive material palette, connecting the area to its industrial heritage. For example, a substantial retaining wall north of the Metrolink tracks is faced with stone at the base, transitioning to blue engineering brick above a set datum line.

A characterful red brick boundary wall lines the former industrial area along Upper Helena Street, featuring intricate wall and pier detailing, which serves as a reminder of the area's prosperous industrial past. The red brick of the remaining Wellington and Hope Mills adds further texture and warmth to the material palette of the neighbourhood. In many places, stone cobbles are becoming visible through the worn macadam street surfaces, indicating that a significant amount of cobblestone material should potentially be restored or salvaged and reused elsewhere. Along the towpaths of the canal, distinctive dock stones provide a heritage edge to the water, though the footpaths lack similar heritage quality in their surface treatments.



Artworks on the retaining wall



Blue engineering brick of the reservoir retaining wall



Red brick boundary wall lines



Dock stones along the towpath



Cobble stone peaking through worn macadam street surfaces

2.14 Summary of place analysis

Key themes

Holt Town's historic context creates a unique and characterful setting, with a number of large industrial features and mill buildings being juxtaposed within an increasingly wild and untamed landscape.

The Ashton Canal and Medlock Valley are key considerations, providing a valuable landscape asset and a key strategic connection into the City Centre, as well as Sportcity and the Etihad Campus.

Whilst the Ashton Canal sits prominently and at the top of Holt Town, the river valley is hidden, with the watercourse providing little interaction with the area.

Light Industrial uses across Holt Town have spilled out into the public realm with the streetscape being dominated by vehicles and materials associated to the businesses located within the area. Pockets of significant dereliction and disrepair are prominent in more isolated areas of Holt Town.

The historic urban grain is intact but feels fragmented with areas of activity isolated by open and expansive areas lacking programmed purpose or use.

Holt Town holds a number of key thresholds with well established residential neighbourhoods, but currently does not interact positively or create well-used connections.

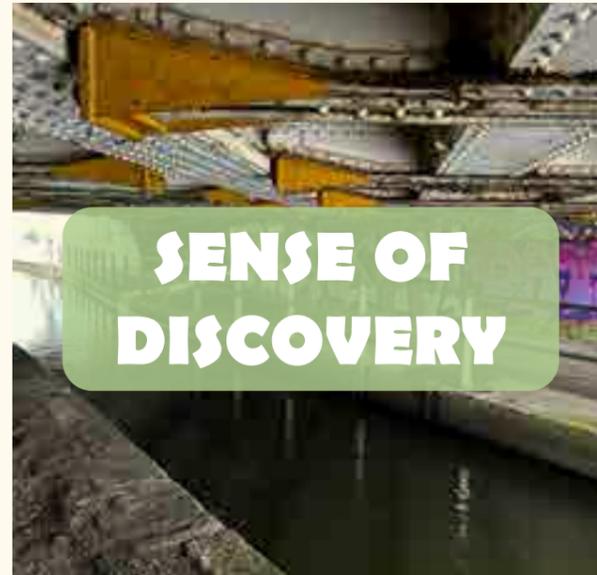


Fig. 16. Summary of place analysis

2.15 Strengths and weaknesses

Things to build upon

Holt Town has several strengths that provide a strong foundation for the creation of a new neighbourhood. Its proximity to the city, nature, and cultural activities, combined with significant ecological opportunities, heritage features, and natural assets like the River Medlock and Ashton Canal, make it an attractive location. Access to green spaces like Philips Park, the implementation of CityLink, and public transport options, including the Metrolink, enhance connectivity. The area also benefits from existing urban fabric, cleared residential spaces, and a mix of businesses that add character and potential for growth.

Despite these strengths, Holt Town faces notable challenges. Match-day traffic and events disrupt movement, while low footfall and limited natural surveillance raise safety concerns. The lack of social infrastructure, such as play areas and sports facilities, along with barriers to pedestrian movement caused by the canal, affect accessibility. Environmental challenges, including potential ground contamination, old industrial remnants, and above-ground gas infrastructure, pose additional risks. Flood risks and poor connections to surrounding neighbourhoods further highlight the need for improvement and investment.



Fig. 17. Site constraints

2.16 Design opportunities

Enhancing natural assets

The Public Realm Strategy outlines opportunities to enhance connectivity in East Manchester by addressing barriers such as the canal, thereby improving access to key destinations, including Sportcity and the Etihad Campus. It aims to create safe, legible public spaces that provide the setting for 4,500 new homes, incorporating distinctive design elements that reflect the area's unique characteristics.

By enhancing the woodland character of the Medlock Valley and integrating it into Holt Town, the strategy seeks to improve access to nature through recreational and play areas for the community. It also emphasises the development of robust pedestrian and cycling connections throughout Holt Town and the reimagining of Ashton Canal Park to foster community interaction and inclusivity.

Topographical features, such as level changes, will be used creatively to enhance accessibility and visual interest. The broader ecological context informs planting and habitat creation, while addressing site-specific challenges such as contamination and material reuse to prioritise sustainability and safety.

Finally, the strategy considers movement and connectivity, ensuring seamless links between key destinations and supporting various modes of transportation. It aligns with existing planning proposals to create a cohesive and functional public realm.



Fig. 18. Celebrate historic assets

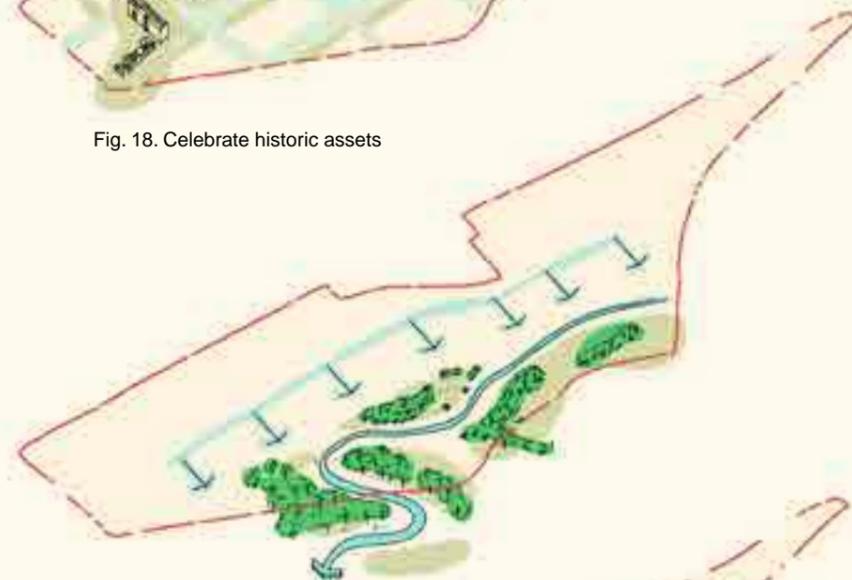


Fig. 19. Reveal the river

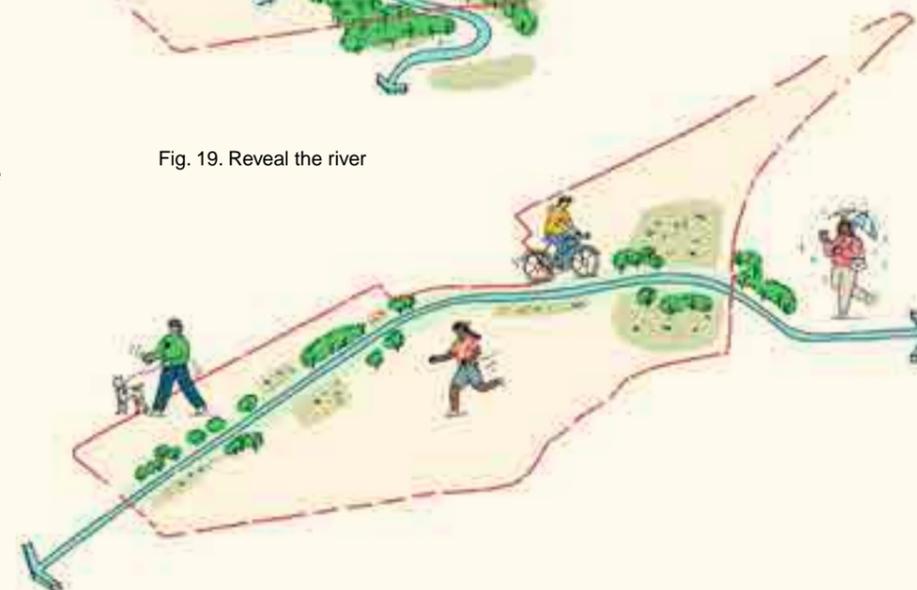


Fig. 20. Enhance the canal corridor

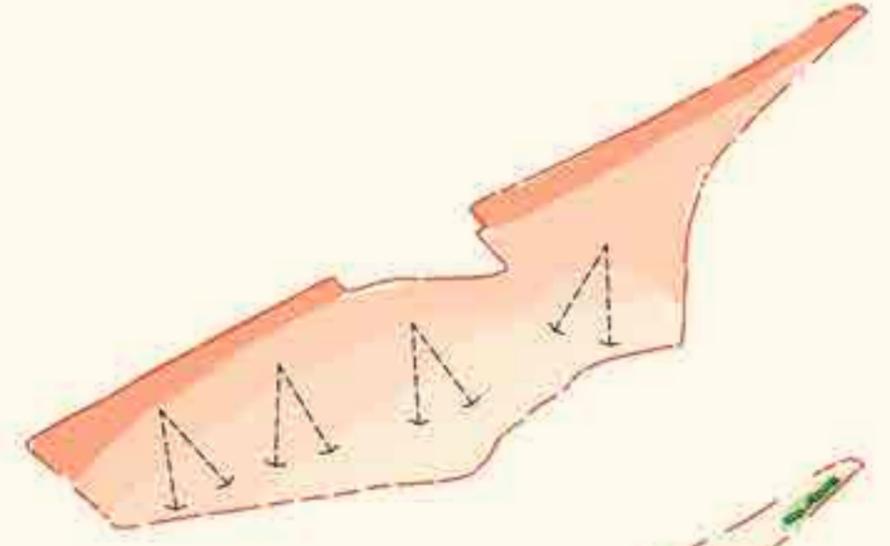


Fig. 21. Work with the topography



Fig. 22. Connect pockets of landscape

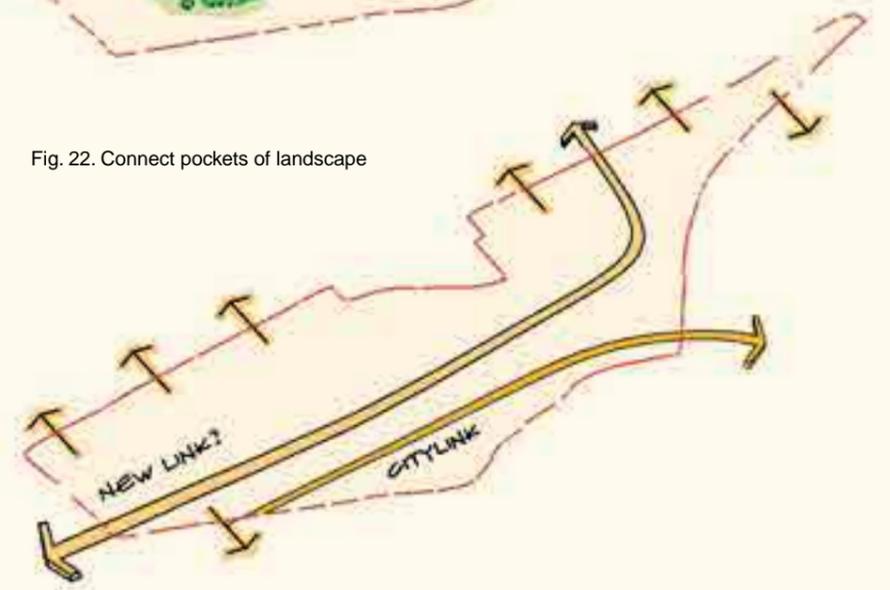


Fig. 23. Create new connections

3 Public Realm Framework

3.1 Public realm and placemaking principles

This section explores how the visionary design principles of the Holt Town Neighbourhood Development Framework transform the public realm, crafting an innovative landscape for 4,500 new homes.



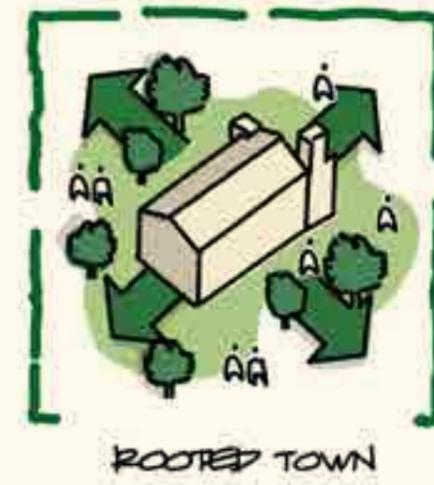
A diverse range of public spaces

A range of public spaces and landscapes stitch together the framework plan and offer spatial diversity and character change throughout Holt Town,



A walkable and connected neighbourhood

The development in Holt Town aims to create a connected, walkable neighbourhood with improved access to surrounding areas while managing traffic between the City Centre and Sportcity and the Etihad Campus.



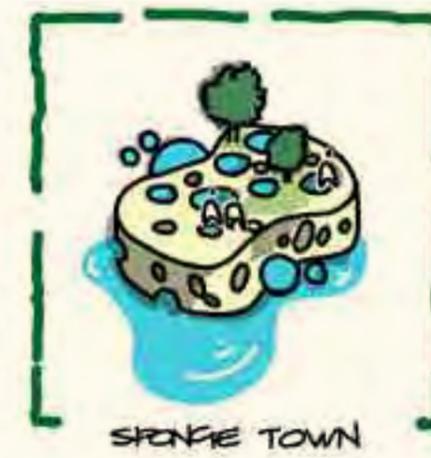
Celebrate heritage assets

Heritage assets and retained features in the landscape are intended to root the public realm strategy in Holt Town's layered history.



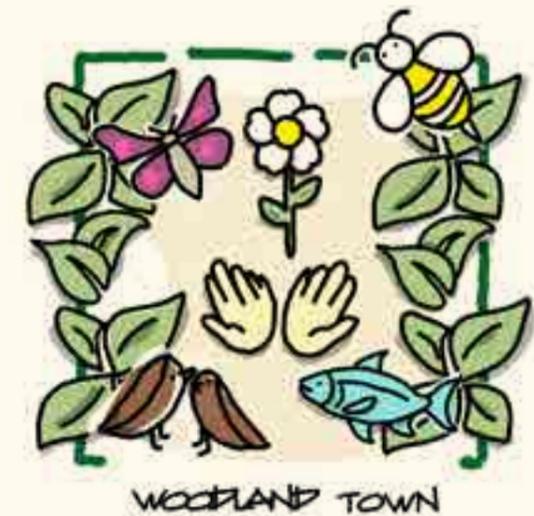
High-quality landscape on every level

Holt Town's topography, existing ecology and heritage assets establish a layered quality to the public realm which builds up from the river valley to the roof top level of the proposed built form.



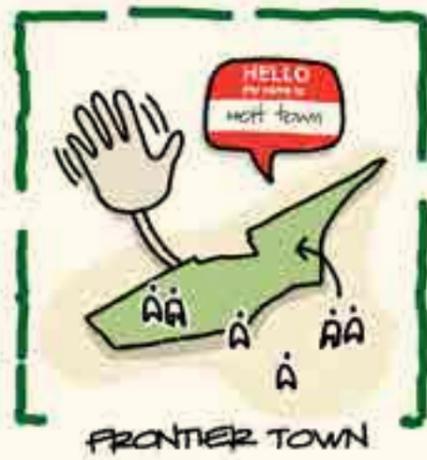
Integrated water strategy

A proposed 'Sponge City' approach for Holt Town emphasises sustainable urban design and innovative water management to mimic natural hydrological processes, aiming to reduce flood risk while improving ecological habitats.



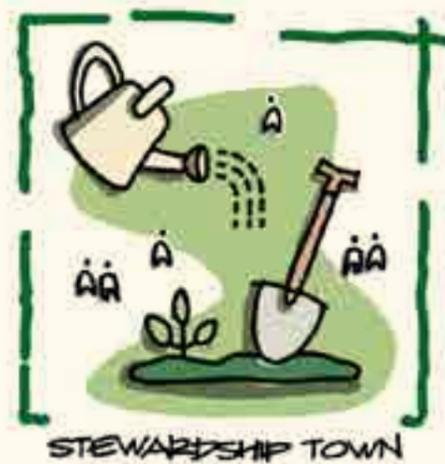
Nurture biodiversity

The public realm framework will nurture biodiversity across Holt Town by preserving existing habitats, as well as creating new environments for nature and wildlife to flourish.



Creating friendly thresholds

Holt town occupies an area of the city that fronts onto several different edges of new, existing or changing urban landscape.



An ecosystem of management guardians

Maintaining and managing open space across Holt Town gives an opportunity for community and stakeholders to come together and take ownership of their space.



Play for all

The design for Holt Town emphasises play as a central principle to create a family-friendly, intergenerational public space that prioritises pedestrian safety and accessibility.



Digitally enabled landscapes

Holt Town has the potential to become a digitally enabled neighbourhood, allowing residents, businesses, and visitors to utilise technology to monitor maintenance and enhance their quality of life and experiences.

3.2 Public realm concept

The public realm concept envisions transforming Holt Town into a vibrant new neighbourhood by linking the Medlock Woodland Corridor and the Ashton Canal towpath. These well-connected routes currently bypass Holt Town, the proposals aim to integrate them through the introduction of a dynamic network of green corridors and ecological stepping stones.

This approach seeks to unify the landscape, creating a richer and more ecologically interconnected series of public spaces. The concept culminates in the transformation of Ashton Canal Park into Confluence Park—a vibrant gathering space for the Holt Town community and beyond. This new hub will celebrate the convergence of the canal and river through playful social infrastructure and community activities. Key drivers of the concept include heritage, adaptive reuse, programming, enhanced natural features, and blue infrastructure.



Fig. 24. Public realm concept diagram

3.3 Illustrative framework

The Illustrative Framework plan provides a general arrangement identifying potential development footprints, green space, streets, public spaces and play areas.

This plan has evolved to incorporate the public realm and placemaking principles of the NDF whilst responding to the site constraints and opportunities identified earlier in this public realm strategy.



- Holt Town NDF boundary
- Key Public Realm Spaces:
- ① Play Link
- ② Green Links
- ③ River Medlock Valley
- ④ Confluence Park
- ⑤ Cyrus Street Lido
- ⑥ Ashton Canal Corridor
- ⑦ Gas Holder Green
- ⑧ Holt Town Metrolink station
- ⑨ Ashton Canal Bridge
- ⑩ Play Link gateway
- ⑪ Holt Town Arrival Square
- ⑫ Bradford Road gateway

Fig. 25. Illustrative framework plan

3.4 Sitewide landscape strategies

The application of public realm and placemaking principles to the framework has shaped several sitewide landscape strategies.

These strategies illustrate how the innovative and pioneering placemaking framework can support the introduction of 4,500 new homes, helping to establish a vibrant new neighbourhood in Holt Town.

3.5 Sponge town

Approach to Blue Infrastructure

The “sponge town” concept brings an innovative vision to Holt Town, transforming the landscape into a dynamic ecological infrastructure. The approach goes beyond traditional water management by naturally regulating water through the seasons, filtering out contaminants, and enhancing biodiversity.

Through reimagining conventional infrastructure, ‘sponge town’ principles replace stormwater pipes with bioswales and rain gardens that channel water along the site’s natural topography, ultimately reaching retention ponds in the Valley area. These permanent water features create a visible connection to water and enrich the neighbourhood’s ecological vitality.

Adapting Holt Town’s landscape to withstand climate challenges will not only foster resilience but also create a greener, more vibrant neighbourhood for the community. By embracing the sponge town principles, the framework proposals should set a new standard for blue infrastructure in Manchester and help action recommendations of MCC’s Our Rivers Our City Strategy.

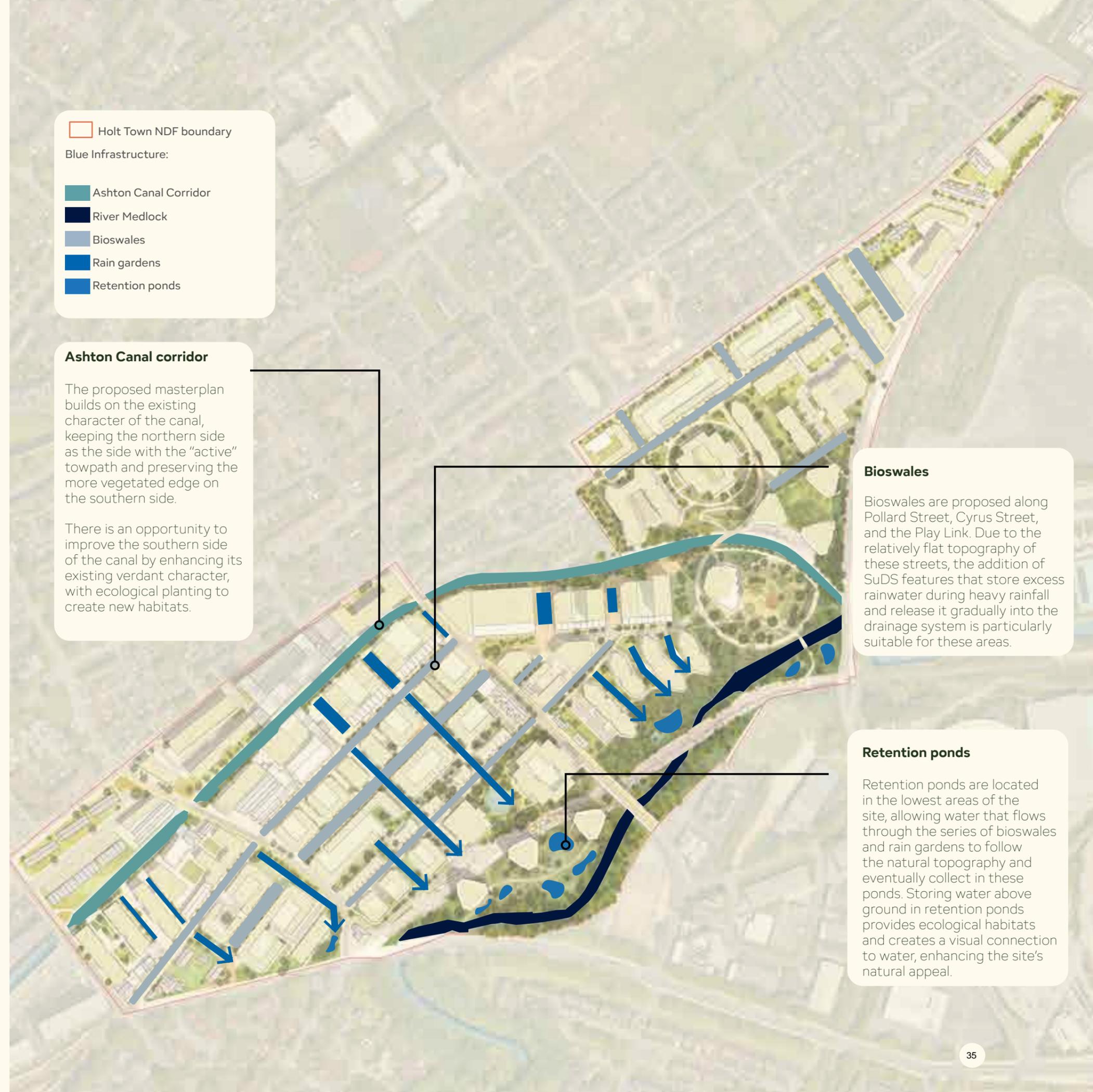
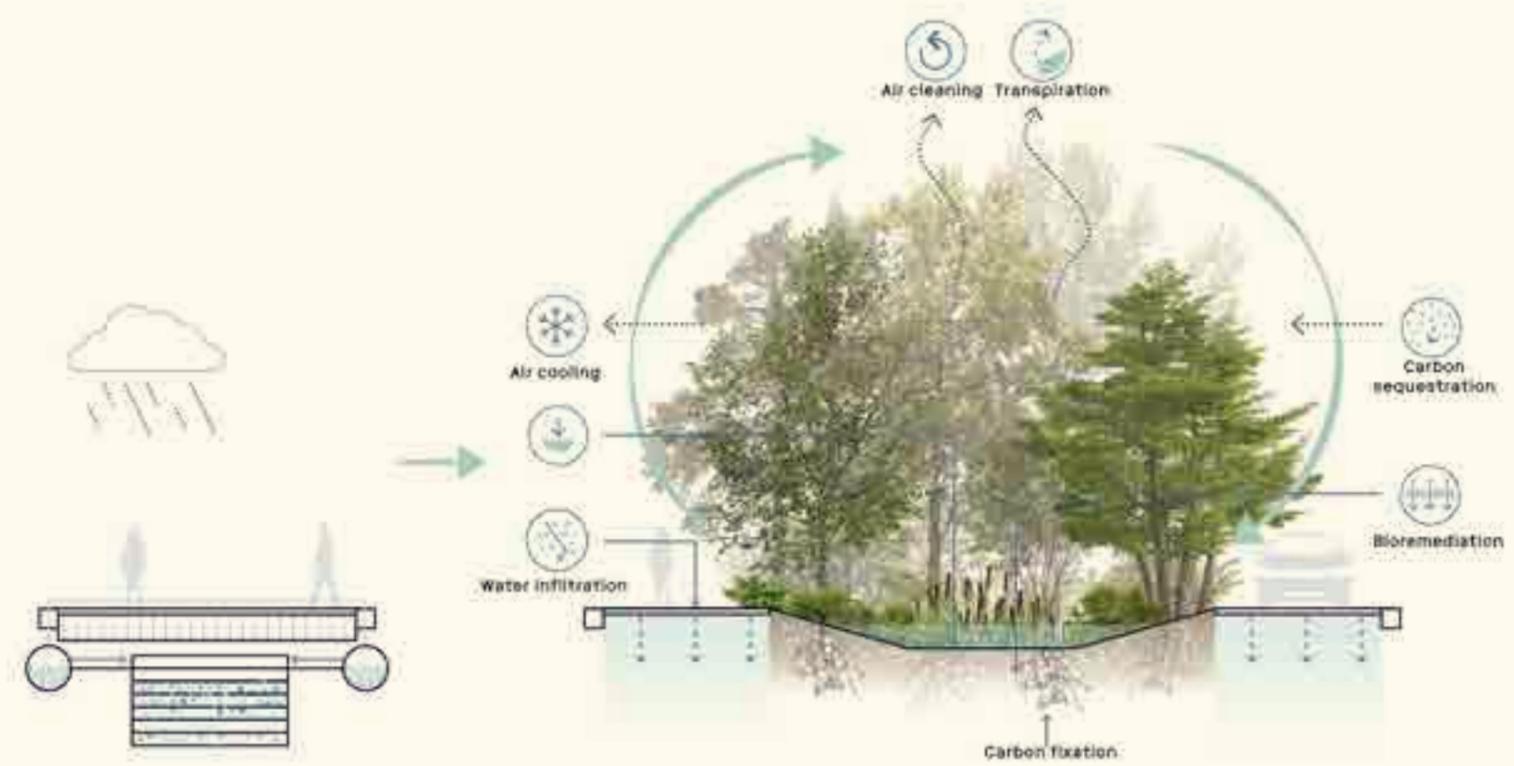


Fig. 26. Sponge Town diagram

Nature based systems

For Holt Town a nature-based system will not solely rely on free draining into the ground, it is about a soak/retain/filter and slow-release strategy. Implementing a sponge town approach on a former industrial site is quite challenging due to contamination. In some areas of Holt Town this might mean water cannot infiltrate directly into the ground but instead should filter through nature-based attenuation systems before slowly being released back into the system in reduced volumes.



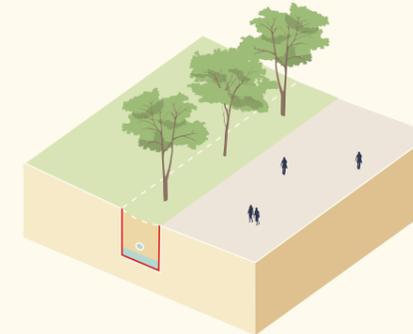
Tree pit infiltration/retention
(where ground conditions allow)



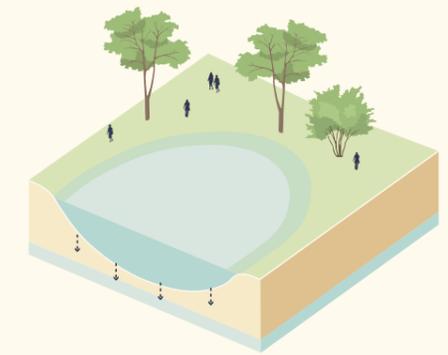
Swales



Infiltration trench
(where ground conditions allow)



Rain gardens
(with check dams for gradients)



Retention and detention basins

Fig. 27. Nature based systems in Holt Town

Sponge streets

Pollard Street

Pollard Street is one of the main routes through Holt Town and will need to accommodate pedestrian, cycle and vehicle movement. This existing street will be remodelled to include a 4.8m wide central movement zone that allows for two way traffic, introducing verdant street greening, widening pavements for pedestrian movement and enhancing ground floor activation from new development.

The fundamentals of the street remodelling will align with sponge town principles, creating a street that adapts to weather patterns and seasonality. A combination of rain gardens, SuDS and wetland planting will allow the street to accommodate higher volumes of surface level water.

- ① Wellington Mill
Retained existing Wellington Mill with new activated uses
- ② Wellington Glade
Wetland space that allows the celebration of a significant Holt Town heritage asset - Wellington Mill
- ③ Cavalier Cascade
Tiered landscape that will filter the flow of water from the ridge towards the Medlock Valley
- ④ Remodelled Pollard Street
Redesigned carriageway and streetscape of the existing Pollard Street

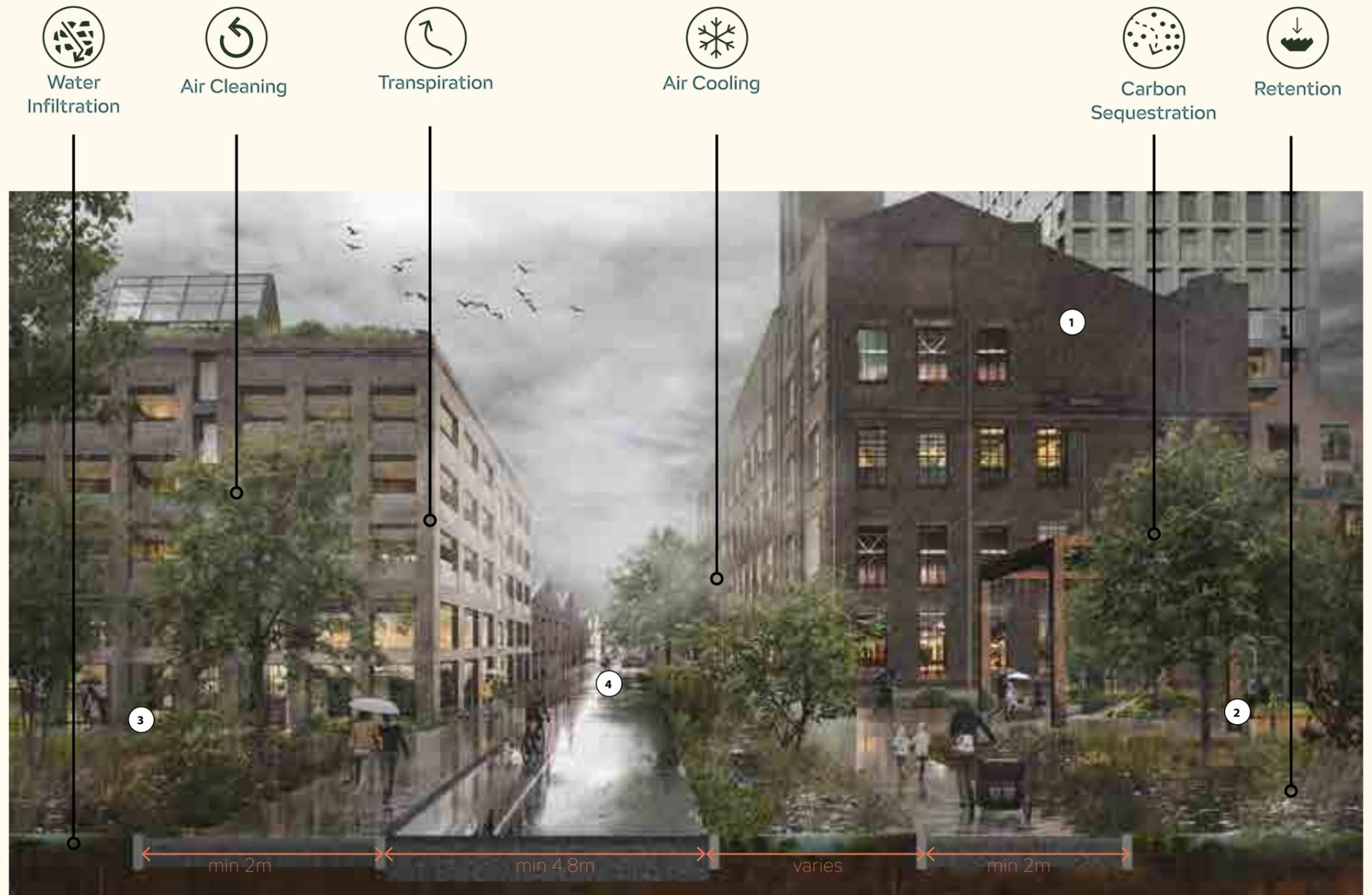


Fig. 28. Pollard Street sponge principles

Green link and cascading rain gardens

The Cavalier cascade is a multi-level rain garden designed to manage water flow on sloping topography. It consists of a series of shallow, stepped basins planted with vegetation that captures, slows, and filters stormwater runoff as it moves downhill.

Sustainable urban drainage

These landscaped street edges will capture and filter stormwater runoff, preventing it from overwhelming drainage systems and polluting the adjacent waterways.

Rain gardens

This landscape area will feature shallow, vegetated channels that direct, slow, and filter stormwater runoff from surrounding development. This will only allow water to soak into the ground if ground contamination and conditions allow. Rain gardens will also help reduce surface runoff, prevent flooding, and recharge groundwater.

Cavalier Street

Cavalier Street is a key connecting route, from Holt Town Metrolink station through to Wellington Mill. This route will be a car-free pedestrian route and accommodate higher volumes of footfall to and from the station. This area is also the location for a potential future cultural and community hub.

This street will also act as a key landscape in the water management strategy featuring 'Cavalier Cascade', a rainwater management system that is specific to the streets sloping topography.

- ① New residential development
Residential development providing activation to the streetscape
- ② Wellington Mill
Retained existing Wellington Mill with new activated uses
- ③ Former Holt Town reservoir retaining wall
This edge condition is a key heritage feature of Holt Town, and represents the area of the former reservoir
- ④ Potential new community and cultural use
This development plot has the potential to house a new cultural and community facility, activating Cavalier Street and being easily accessible from Holt Town Metrolink station.

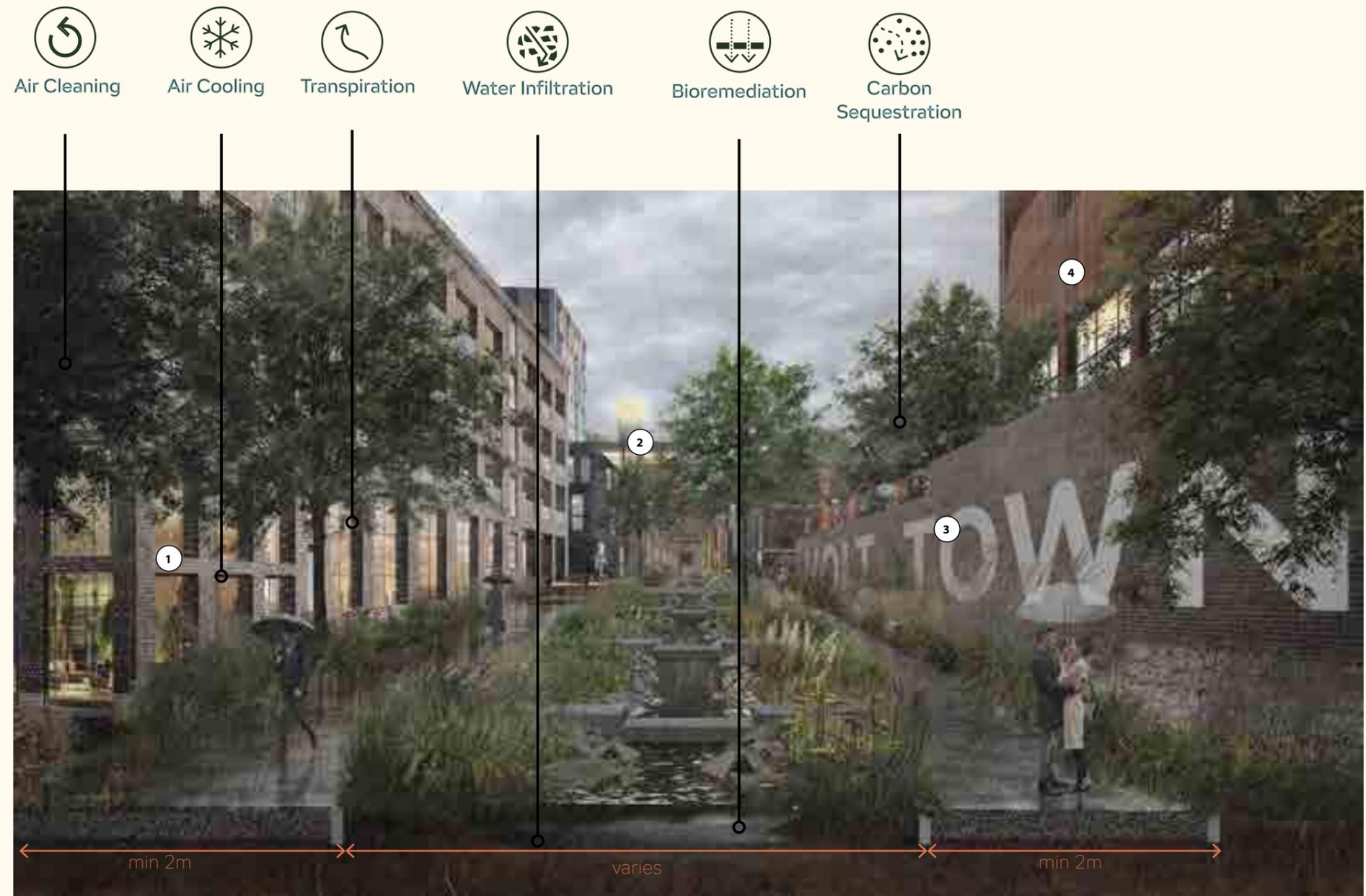


Fig. 29. Cavalier Street sponge principles

Permeable paving

Permeability in the paving materiality allows water to pass through its surface, reducing runoff by enabling rainwater to infiltrate into the ground below where contamination and ground conditions allow. Permeable paving helps mitigate urban flooding, recharges groundwater, and reduces strain on drainage systems, mitigating any impact on the Medlock Valley.

Cascading rain gardens

The Cavalier cascade is a multi-level rain garden designed to manage water flow on sloping topography. It consists of a series of shallow, stepped basins planted with vegetation that captures, slows, and filters stormwater runoff as it moves downhill.

Planting edge

A green planting edge will soften the hard interface of the retaining wall whilst also supporting local biodiversity and contributing to a sustainable approach to urban water management.

Cyrus Street

The existing make-up of Cyrus Street is green in character with large mature trees contributing to the woodland make-up of the neighbourhood.

This character will be retained and enhanced whilst also integrating a nature based solutions approach to water management. Cyrus spinney will encourage areas of water retention and attenuation, referencing it's former use as a reservoir.

The streetscape will integrate generous swales running the length of the street, contributing to water retention and providing a green visual amenity to the streetscape. The carriageway widths will remain the same as they are in the current layout of the street allowing for two-way traffic.

① New residential development

Residential development providing activation to the streetscape

② Landmark tower

Landmark residential tower located at the edge of Confluence Park

③ Existing trees

The cluster of trees on the former Holt Town reservoir will be opened up to Cyrus Street allowing landscape to flow to the edge of the carriageway

④ Cyrus Spinney

This area of trees, also termed a spinney gives rise to an opportunity for the creation of a woodland space for the community.



Fig. 30. Cyrus Street sponge principles

Swale

A shallow, vegetated channel that helps manage stormwater by capturing, slowing, and directing runoff. Swales help prevent flooding, recharge groundwater, and support sustainable water management while adding green space and enhancing urban biodiversity.

Swale boardwalk

The boardwalk is an elevated pathway through the swale environment, allowing people to cross and explore above the wetland ecosystem without disturbing the sensitive planting.

Wet woodland planting

Wet woodland planting involves establishing trees and shrubs that can respond to being waterlogged or seasonally flooded. Species like willow and alder are commonly used, stabilising soil, enhancing biodiversity, and improving water quality by filtering runoff.

3.6 Woodland town

Approach to green infrastructure

Over the years, Holt Town has transformed into a greener space, largely populated by colonising ecology. The wildness of the river corridor has become a defining feature of the town's landscape. This natural recovery is primarily due to neglect and lack of maintenance, allowing significant woodland areas to establish themselves along the river. Beyond the site's boundaries, there are also large expanses of woodland both upstream and downstream, and Holt Town's ecological evolution has helped connect these habitats. We believe there is potential to further enhance ecological connections throughout the wider Holt Town area, linking the river corridor to the Canal corridor through the introduction of a series of verdant streets and habitat islands within the design of the public realm.

As outlined in Manchester City Council's 'Our Rivers' strategy, rivers are the lifeblood of the city, and with the right conditions, they can support wildlife in the heart of Holt Town. By creating a series of habitat islands, we will set a precedent for habitat-led planting, boosting biodiversity in the existing habitat zone and aiming for a net biodiversity gain to support the broader area redevelopment. This approach not only revitalises the river corridor but also promotes improved health and wellbeing by strengthening the community's connection to nature throughout the neighbourhood.

Fig. 31. Woodland Town diagram



Approach to Biodiversity Net Gain

To achieve biodiversity net gain on a large masterplan site with woodland pockets, the focus begins with protecting and enhancing existing habitats. Building on this foundation, the landscape design can then prioritise creating new habitats and integrating biodiversity-friendly features. The steps could be taken to achieve BNG targets:

Woodland Management: Enhance structural diversity, enrich existing habitat, and retain deadwood to support wildlife.

New Habitats: Diversify the existing site ecology by establishing new habitats such as species-rich hedgerows, meadows, wetlands, and scrubland to improve ecological connectivity and biodiversity.

Built Environment features: Integrate features such as green roofs, wildlife corridors, and nesting or roosting structures to support urban wildlife.

Micro-habitats: Incorporate log piles, brash piles, and soil improvements to create niches for smaller species.

Community Engagement: Use a proposed horticultural hub and digital technology to engage residents in educational programs and biodiversity monitoring.

Wider River Medlock Improvements: Working with other partners along the River Medlock corridor identify and contribute to targeted off site BNG improvements.



Fig. 32. Approach to Biodiversity Net Gain

3.7 Play town

Play for all

The design for Holt Town emphasises play as a central principle to create a family-friendly, intergenerational public space that prioritises pedestrian safety and accessibility.

Key initiatives include the Play Link, a one-kilometre, car-free pedestrian route connecting two local schools, St Anne’s RC Primary School and Park View Community School, with neighbouring areas like the City Centre and Etihad Campus.

This space will promote community interaction with play and sport equipment, green space, and events. Additionally, Ashton Canal Park will be transformed into Confluence Park, a recreational hub featuring an indoor sport and play venue, aiming to serve both new and existing communities while complementing nearby amenities like Sportcity and the Etihad Campus.



Fig. 33. Approach to play space

3.8 Frontier town

A town within the City

Holt Town occupies an area of the city that connects to several distinct edges of new, existing, or evolving urban landscapes. The interfaces between these edges, along with the design of arrival spaces at key thresholds, are strategic elements that shape the landscape and public realm framework.

Bradford Road Interface

This is the largest interface along the study area, with a defined edge between Holt Town and the established low-rise community of Miles Platting. Here the public realm will prioritise the celebration of gateways, creating a welcoming entry point to Holt Town and inviting footfall from the east.

City Centre Interface

Here the public realm has the opportunity to celebrate the entry point to Holt Town, emphasising heritage features and facilitating movement.

Medlock Valley Interface

Here a naturalistic, riparian and wild approach to landscape should seamlessly blend the framework plots with the setting of the river valley.

Sportcity and the Etihad Campus Interface

The interface along the eastern edge of the area needs to be welcoming and future-proof, acknowledging the further growth ambitions for Sportcity and the Etihad Campus.



Fig. 34. Existing interfaces

3.9 Connected town

Pedestrian network

The strategy will improve east-west connections linking Ancoats, New Islington, Sportcity and the Etihad Campus facilitating the movement of local residents and workers in the area.

This includes enhancing the flow of visitors to Sportcity and the Etihad Campus on event days and managing any related impacts.

The framework will introduce a variety of movement types, including connecting routes and recreational pathways that support both fast and slow movement. The Ashton Canal towpath will be improved to accommodate active movement, such as running and cycling.

The Play Link will run through the heart of the scheme, providing a central connection across the neighbourhood. This car-free route will connect community facilities and offer a playful space for both local residents and visitors to Holt Town. Additional routes with wide pavements will connect to surrounding communities, increasing east-west permeability across the neighbourhood.

Key routes, such as Beswick Street and Cambrian Street, will be redesigned to improve their connection to the CityLink, reducing pedestrian traffic on more residential streets and spaces during major events



Fig. 35. Existing pedestrian network

Cycle network

High-quality cycle parking will be installed for residents, employees, and visitors in phases as the development progresses, ensuring compliance with or exceeding Manchester City Council's standards.

All cycle parking will be easily accessible via safe, clear routes and will feature coverage, security, and natural surveillance.

The Play Link will include an informal, child-friendly cycle route, providing a safe movement corridor through the heart of the scheme. This route will connect the core residential areas with Park View Community School and St. Anne's RC Primary.

A dedicated cycle route is proposed to start from the north of Confluence Park, crossing a new bridge and providing a direct connection into Manchester City Centre. The precise location of additional segregated cycle routes within Holt Town will be determined following further traffic flow analysis.

The cycle network across Holt Town will prioritise seamless integration with Manchester's broader cycle network, as well as connections to regional and national cycle routes



Fig. 36. Existing cycle network

Vehicular network

The parking strategy for Holt Town will be developed in coordination with the existing Eastlands Residents' Parking Scheme. All parking provisions will include facilities for electric vehicles, aligning with Building Regulations and supporting the goal of creating a low-carbon neighbourhood.

At the site of the former Bengal Mill, the proposed "Mobility Mill" will serve as a central mobility hub, incorporating multi-level parking wrapped in affordable workspace. The hub's design will be adaptable, allowing for future repurposing to accommodate evolving mobility patterns, emerging technologies, or alternative uses. Additionally, the hub will support initiatives such as car-sharing schemes, ensuring it remains flexible and responsive to changes in private and public transportation.

There is also potential to introduce two new bus stops to serve residents and visitors. The most logical locations for these stops are along Cambrian Street and Beswick Street, as these routes already connect to local transport networks. The exact placement of these stops will require engagement with Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM) and further refinement as the framework plan evolves.

Moreover, pedestrian and cyclist crossing facilities should be provided along Cambrian Street and Beswick Street. The precise locations of these crossings will be determined following additional traffic flow analysis; indicative positions are shown in the diagram opposite.



Fig. 37. Existing vehicular network

Event footfall and arrival spaces

Holt Town's proximity to large venues such as the Etihad Stadium and Co-op Live results in the streets surrounding and within the site experiencing high footfall during events and match days. Currently, the 'last mile' of spectator movement from the City Centre to Sportcity and the Etihad Campus primarily follows Merrill Street and Ashton New Road.

The plans for Holt Town aim to build on the investment already made in the CityLink by guiding event footfall towards the link and introducing public arrival spaces connected to the newly renovated route. An arrival square adjacent to Holt Town Metrolink station, the gateway to the Play Link and an arrival space along Bradford Road are examples. These spaces will function as gathering, meeting, and resting points for spectators and visitors en route to their destinations.

These arrival spaces should be illuminated with greater impact than surrounding residential streets elements to help communicate the hierarchy of movement and safely light the main routes to and from Sportcity and the Etihad Campus.

Improvements to existing connections

To further encourage a clear movement hierarchy during events which leads to the CityLink as a primary pedestrian connection, the public realm proposals for Holt Town aim to enhance existing connections to the newly renovated CityLink, along the CityLink itself and the Ashton Canal towpath. There are three locations where existing connections should be improved.

The first is the staircase connecting the Ashton Canal towpath to Beswick Street. The stairs have an uneven surface and a handrail only on one side. This connection would be significantly improved by introducing a level paving surface, installing handrails on both sides of the staircase and installing bike stair rails. These enhancements would create a more inclusive and welcoming design, encouraging greater use of the towpath by pedestrians and cyclists traveling to and from events.

The second existing connection that can be improved is the historic steps linking Cambrian Street to the CityLink. A functional staircase in this location would ease footfall along Cambrian Street during events and match days, while encouraging pedestrians to make greater use of the improved CityLink.

The third is the pathway that connects Carruthers Street to the Ashton Canal towpath. The path would benefit from improved signage and replacing the existing gravel surface with a more accessible paving material, ensuring equitable access for all users.

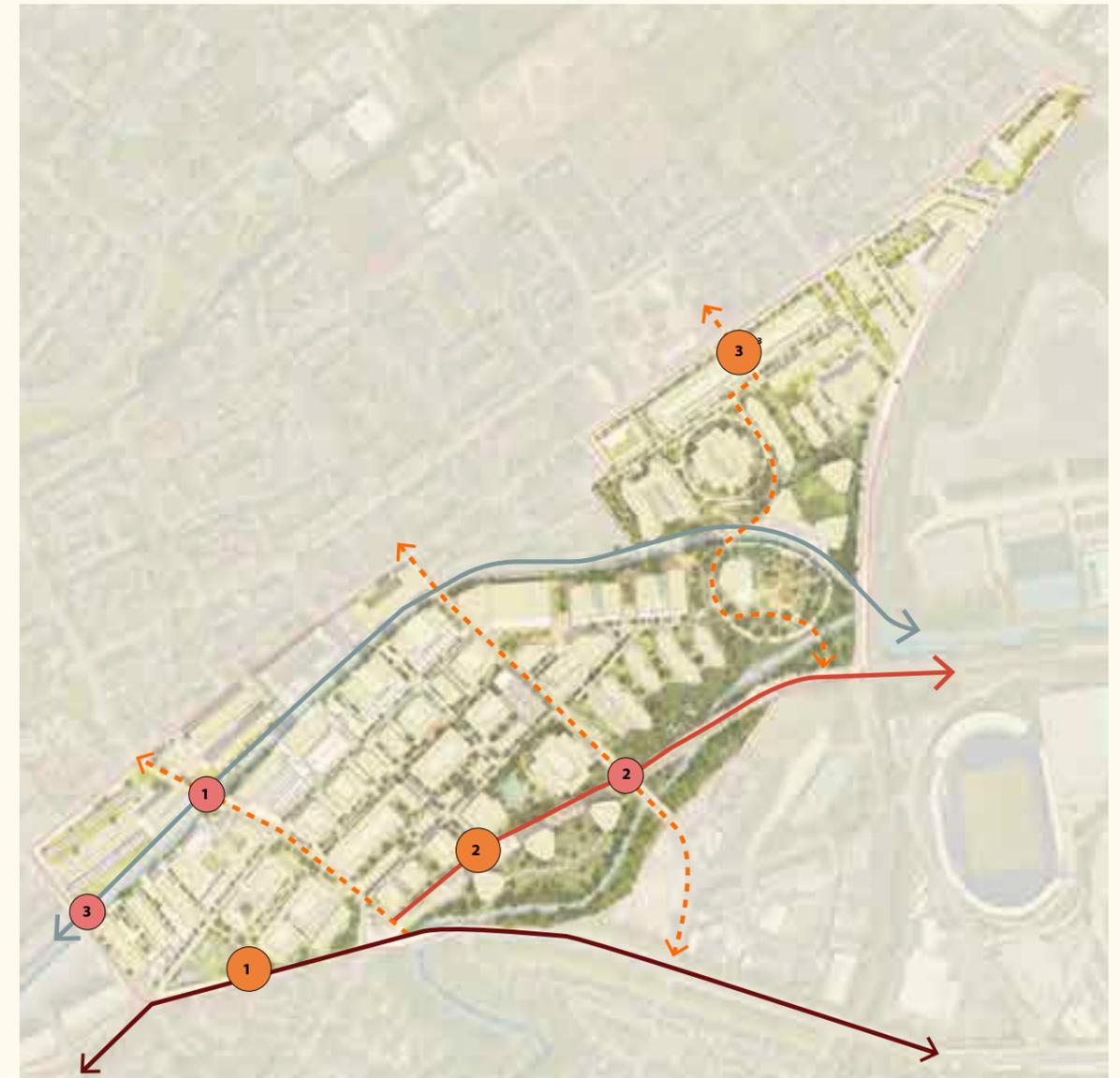


Fig. 38. Event arrival spaces and route improvements

Holt Town NDF boundary

Key Connections:

↔ Merrill Street

↔ Ashton Canal

↔ CityLink

↔ Secondary connections

Proposed arrival spaces:

1 Play Link gateway

2 Holt Town Arrival Square

3 Bradford Road gateway

Improvements to Existing Connections:

1 Ashton Canal - Beswick Street Connection

2 CityLink - Cambrian Street Connection

3 Ashton Canal - Carruthers Street Connection

Proposed connections

In addition to improving existing connections to the Ashton Canal towpath and CityLink, there is an opportunity to introduce new connections in strategic locations. The Public Realm Strategy identifies two areas where new links to the Ashton Canal towpath and the newly renovated CityLink would be beneficial.

The first proposed connection is between Cambrian Street and the Ashton Canal towpath. The building plot southwest of the bridge is within the ownership boundary, and a portion of it should be utilised to create an accessible pathway from street level to the canal towpath. This would enhance the public realm, making it more inclusive, while encouraging greater use of the towpath by pedestrians and cyclists traveling to and from events.

The second proposed connection involves constructing a bridge over the Ashton Canal. A bridge at this location would ensure the primary pedestrian route through the centre of the site continues seamlessly over the canal, providing a continuous path between St Anne's RC Primary School to the west and Park View Community School to the north.

Events and match days

During event and match days, spectators should be directed to travel along streets designed to accommodate both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. These streets are of an appropriate scale to handle the high levels of foot traffic expected during large events.

In the Holt Town proposals, the vehicular and pedestrian streets are constructed with adopted highway materials, selected for their durability and ability to withstand heavy footfall.

A key strategy for managing crowd flow on match days and during events should include the option of positioning match day stewards at the entrances to pedestrianised residential streets in Holt Town. These streets, with their residential scale and character, are less suited to accommodate the large crowds typical of such events.

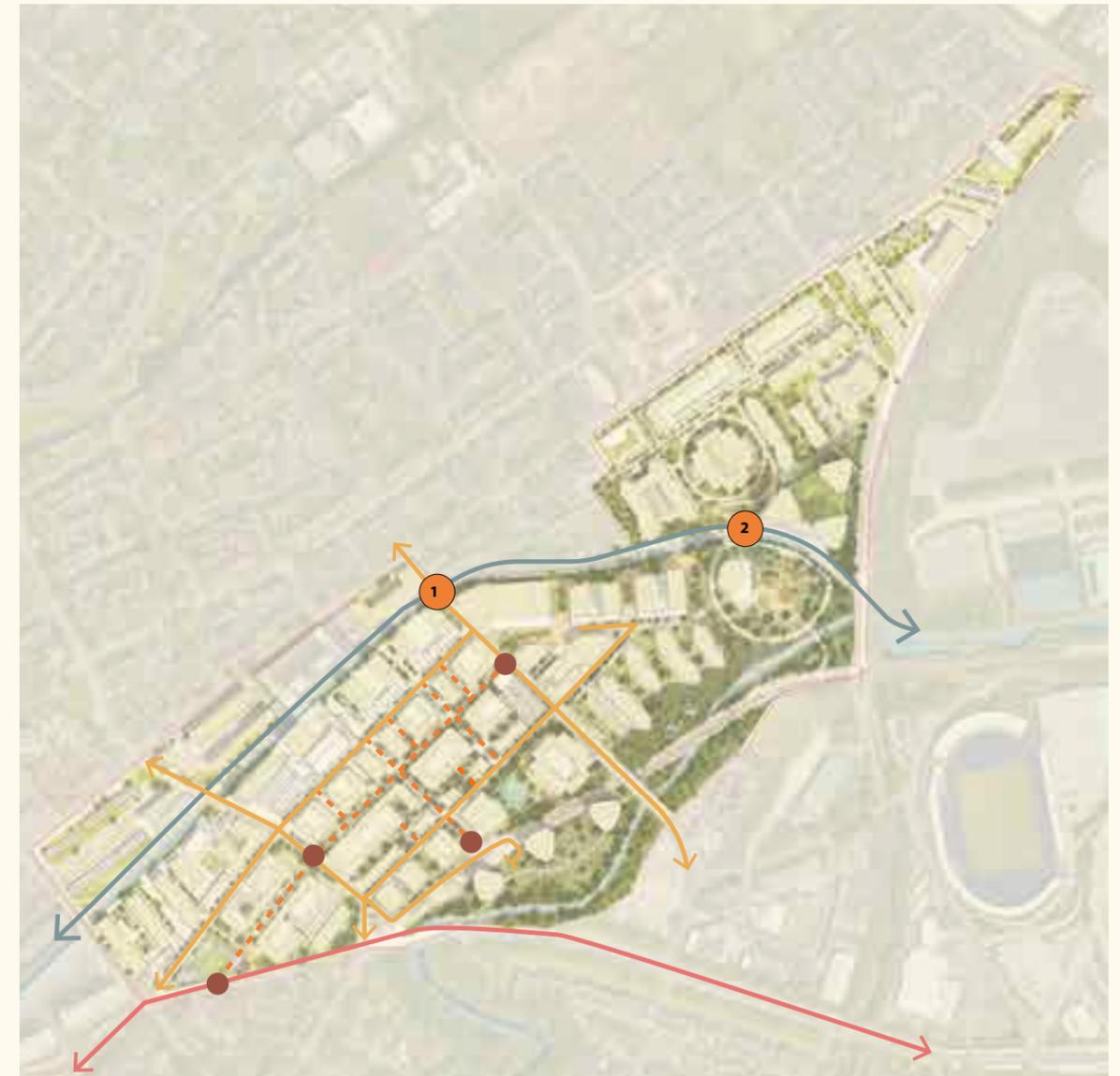


Fig. 39. Events and match days proposed connections

□ Holt Town NDF boundary

Events and match days :

↔ Merrill Street / Ashton New Road

↔ Vehicular and pedestrian streets

- - - Pedestrian streets

↔ Ashton Canal

● Indicative location of match day stewards

Proposed Connections:

① Ashton Canal - Cambrian Street Connection

② Ashton Canal - Proposed Bridge Location

3.10 Public realm interfaces

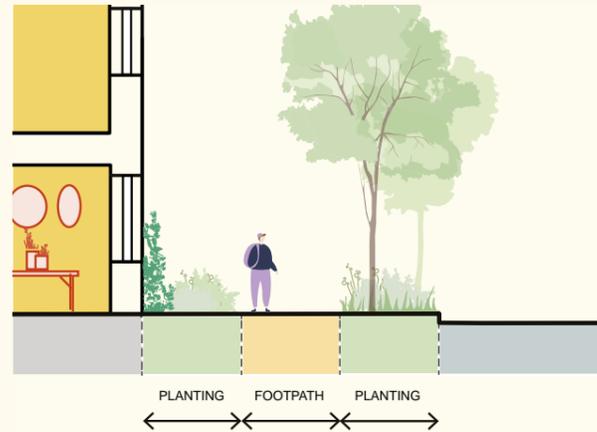
The public realm proposals for Holt Town respond to various uses that populate the ground floor of the building plots. There are different use classes that populate the ground floor of the buildings throughout the Holt Town proposals. These are shown on the diagram opposite.



Fig. 40. Public realm interfaces

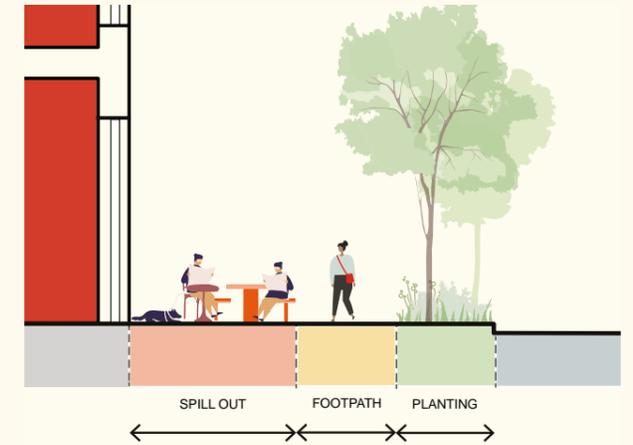
Residential

Where residential uses dominate the ground floor, generously proportioned defensible planting should be incorporated to provide a degree of privacy between habitable rooms and the public footpath. This buffer ensures a balance between private and public spaces.



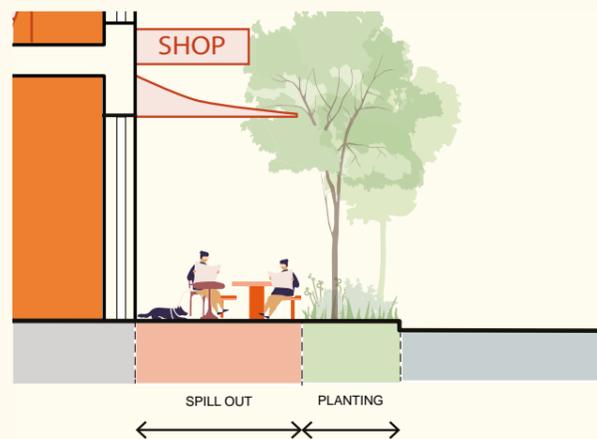
Cultural / Community

The building adjacent to the Holt Town Metrolink station is earmarked as a potential cultural venue. Its southern and western elevations are bordered by historic retaining walls, which mark the former location of a reservoir and create significant level differences. As a result, the primary frontage will face Cyrus Street. To encourage activity and interaction with the public realm, this frontage should include a generously proportioned footpath that supports spill-out activities.



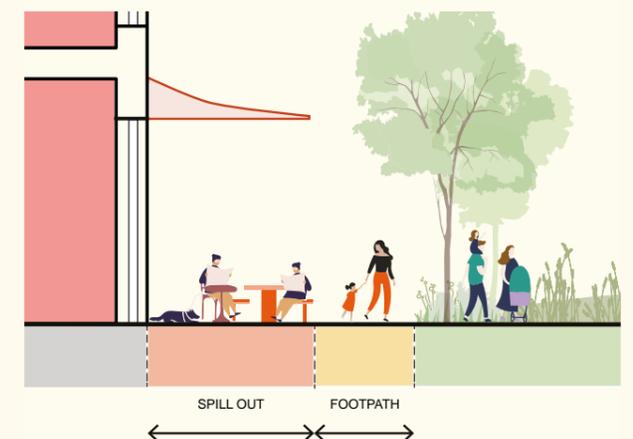
Mixed-Use

For buildings with predominantly mixed-use ground floors, the adjacent public realm should accommodate spill-out areas. These zones would allow for external seating, enabling the internal activities of the building to extend into the public realm, fostering a vibrant and active street atmosphere.



Leisure / Recreation / Health and Wellbeing

Buildings dedicated to leisure and recreation, such as those adjacent to the Lido, will serve as essential public amenities for both residents and the wider community. The activities within these buildings should integrate seamlessly with the public realm. To achieve this, the hard landscaping should extend directly to the building facades.



Commercial

The majority of the proposed commercial plots are located along Pollard Street. In this area, the public realm design should incorporate planting and trees on the northern side, where vegetation will receive optimal sunlight exposure. The public footpath should be positioned adjacent to a narrow strip of defensible planting to maintain a strong visual connection between the active uses inside the buildings and the public realm.

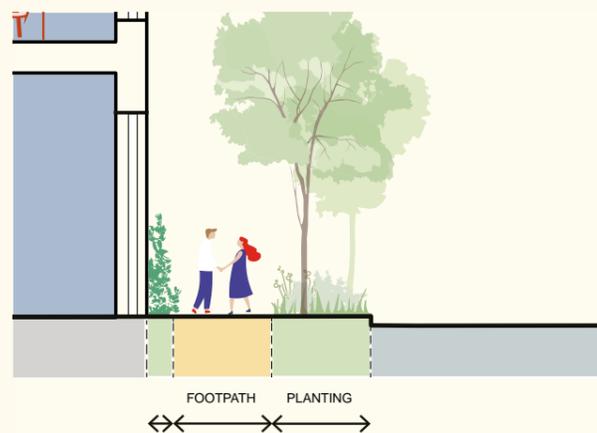


Fig. 41. Public realm interfaces detailed sections

3.11 Diverse town

A range of diverse public spaces

The NDF vision for Holt Town outlines a new urban area in the city, the scale and massing parameters of this framework are divided into five distinct sub-areas based on natural and man-made features. The Plateau on the northern edge will feature lower-rise buildings harmonising with Bradford Road. The Ridge connects Ancoats with Sportcity and the Etihad Campus, featuring mid-rise structures, historic mill buildings, and canal access. The Terraces focus on compact, low-rise family housing. The Embankment, on a former reservoir site, will create a key entry point near the Metrolink station. The Valley will enhance the River Medlock area, balancing tall buildings with ecological and recreational improvements, including a landmark tower near Confluence Park.

Overlapping these five distinct sub-areas of the framework is a range of diverse public spaces. This network of landscape spaces forms the social and environmental infrastructure that connects the neighbourhood. This sequence of spaces includes the following key spaces:

- River Medlock Valley
- Confluence Park
- Play Link
- Ashton Canal Corridor
- Gas Holder Green
- Lido / Natural Swimming Pool
- Cyrus Spinney

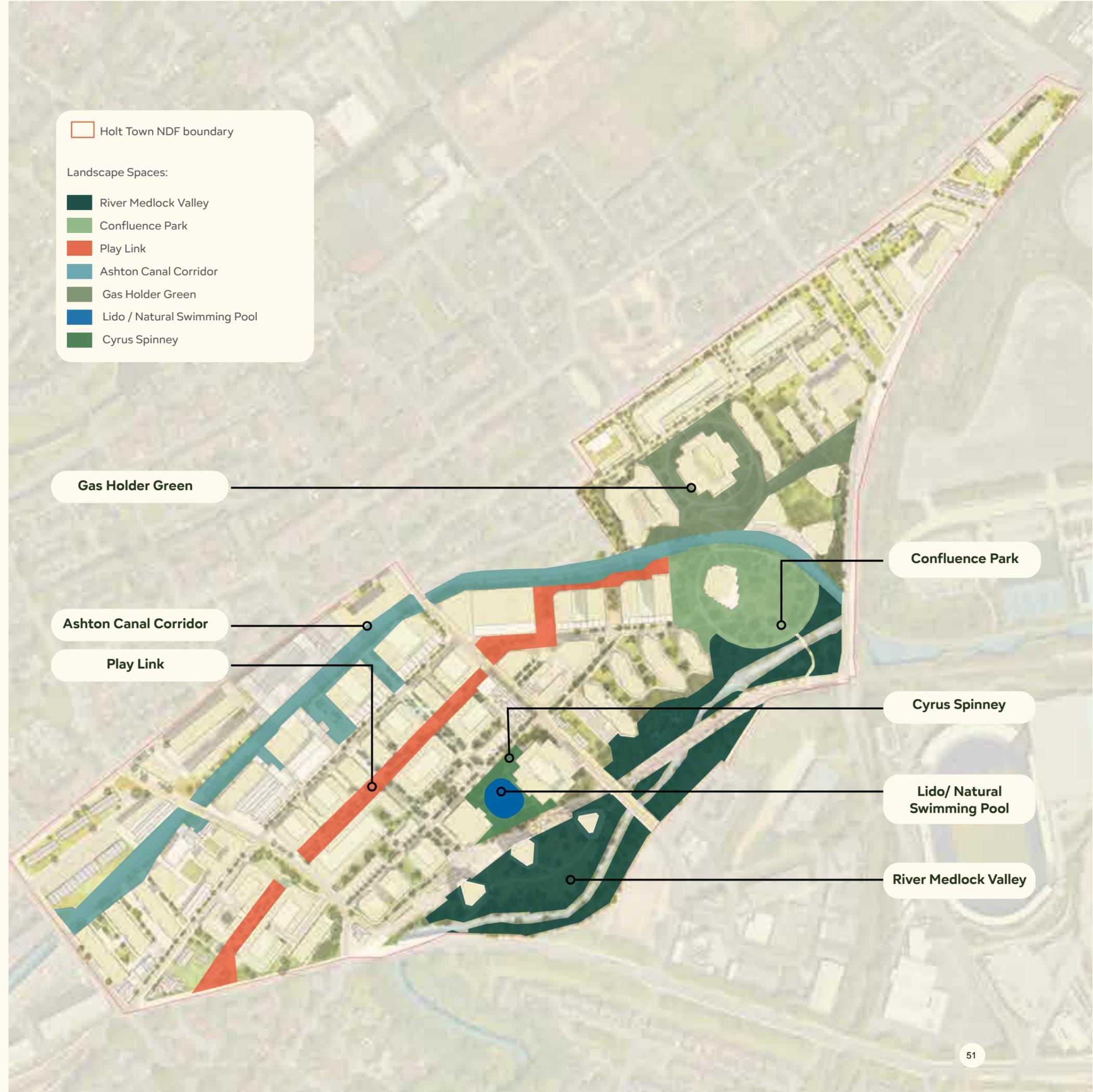


Fig. 42. Diverse public spaces

4 Landscape Spaces

4.1 River Medlock Valley

Potential improvements to the River Medlock Valley

- ① Marginal planting using pre grown and anchored systems
- ② Stone riffles to oxygenate the river water
- ③ Partially naturalised weir to improve wildlife connections along the river corridor
- ④ Rip rap boulders on river bend to create robust edge to the river and new habitat
- ⑤ Inaccessible woodland area with wildlife, habitat and wilding focus
- ⑥ Terraced seating edge to open up views along the river corridor
- ⑦ Existing walls retained and restored where required
- ⑧ Mountain bike trails through wooded areas
- ⑨ Existing woodland managed and enhanced
- ⑩ Proposed development in the distance

Fig. 43. Artist's impression of enhanced River Medlock Valley.



River Medlock Valley

The Medlock corridor should be maintained and enhanced as a wild and natural area, with efforts focused on improving the structure of woodland planting through active management and increasing biodiversity by encouraging more varied understorey vegetation.

The river's habitat should be enhanced to better support wildlife, while creating safe opportunities for people to explore and engage with nature along the corridor, ensuring protected zones remain undisturbed.

Floodplain areas should be respectfully enhanced with strategic planting to diversify the ecology, and access to the river corridor should be maintained and improved for the Environment Agency. Additionally, development should be avoided within Flood Zones 3a and 3b.

Fig. 44. River Medlock Valley illustrative plan

Development is not located in Flood Zone 3b where the development classification falls under 'highly vulnerable'; 'more vulnerable'; or 'less vulnerable' development.



Potential improvements to the River Medlock Valley

- ① Improved vehicular access track to the river for the Environment Agency
- ② Improved wildflower meadow
- ③ Board walk nature trail
- ④ Marginal planting improvements along the slow edge of the river less susceptible to erosion
- ⑤ Building footprints avoiding flood zones 3a and 3b
- ⑥ CityLink route with additional layer of nature focused wayfinding and information
- ⑦ Opportunities to integrate water attenuation as part of the wider sponge town strategy
- ⑧ Naturalised weir using boulders to encourage better wildlife connection down river
- ⑨ Terraced seating looking along the river corridor
- ⑩ Existing footbridge re-clad and refinished to highlight key pedestrian connections



Potential improvements to the River Medlock Valley

- ① Boardwalk - safe access to the floodplain allowing the meadow to continue below
- ② Improved floodable meadow
- ③ Seating edge interface with meadow to encourage access to nature within the Holt Town area
- ④ CityLink connection and activation of archway
- ⑤ Seating areas and jetty points to bring people closer to nature in a safe and controlled way
- ⑥ Informative wayfinding to encourage nature trails
- ⑦ Existing riverside ecology to remain wildlife focused
- ⑧ Potential high level connection to existing viaduct
- ⑨ Potential high level connection to Cyrus Spinney
- ⑩ Metrolink line

Fig. 45. Artist's impression of enhanced River Medlock Valley

4.2 Confluence Park



Potential improvements to Confluence Park

- ① Connected ecology encouraged along the Southern bank of the Ashton Canal
- ② Mooring points encouraged where possible to activate the canal corridor
- ③ Existing towpath resurfaced where required
- ④ South facing seating steps overlook the canal and park
- ⑤ Spill out space from buildings to help animate the water
- ⑥ Floating marginal planting extending the ecological diversity of the canal corridor
- ⑦ Opportunity to play in the tree top
- ⑧ Opportunity to play at the understorey level
- ⑨ Sportcity and the Etihad Campus in the distance
- ⑩ Woodland areas to be retained and enhanced

Fig. 46. Artist's impression of the Confluence Park

Potential improvements to Confluence Park:

- ① Paved entrance space
- ② Accessible meandering route through trees
- ③ Seating steps with view along the river corridor
- ④ Flexible central space for programmed uses and functions
- ⑤ Play equipment at ground level
- ⑥ Stepped seating bank and play equipment working with site topography
- ⑦ Tree canopy play provision
- ⑧ Spill out space promoting active edges and passive surveillance
- ⑨ Terraced seating overlooking the river corridor
- ⑩ New accessible footbridge crossing the canal

Confluence Park

Confluence Park will see the transformation of an underutilised greenspace into a vibrant public park that fosters community connections through diverse play and exercise features, along with enhanced accessibility, including a new canal bridge crossing. The site's topography will be integrated into the design, with play features utilizing natural slopes, and steep, non-compliant footpaths replaced with accessible, meandering trails and pathways.

Existing trees and woodland areas will be managed to promote longevity and ecological diversity. This will include selective thinning of overgrown, gridded tree plantings to enhance the woodland's structure and encourage a richer understorey habitat. To unify both sides of the canal, the park's northern boundary will be extended to include south-facing seating terraces overlooking the canal and main greenspace. Along the canal itself opportunities for barge moorings and floating ecology will further animate the confluence.

Fig. 47. Confluence Park illustrative plan



4.3 Play Link



Potential features of the Play Link

- ① Street tree planting
- ② Pockets of play and exercise equipment along the route
- ③ Suspended lighting to avoid ground level clutter
- ④ Rain garden/defensible interface with homes
- ⑤ Clear walking route along the street
- ⑥ Threshold crossings to residents front door
- ⑦ Podium deck gardens with opportunities for residents to grow productive landscapes
- ⑧ Living roof tops to provide further ecological stepping stones across the site

Fig. 48. Artist's impression of the Play Link

Play Link

A 1km car free playable street. The Play Link aims to become a safe, inviting space for pedestrians, free from vehicle traffic, featuring play and exercise equipment, benches, and green spaces. It will foster community interaction, hosting events like street festivals and block parties, while improving urban quality of life by reducing noise, air pollution, and promoting physical activity.

Play is a key design principle for Holt Town to foster a family-friendly and intergenerational public realm that prioritises people-first, safe, and accessible routes through the Area and to neighbouring communities, amenities, and schools.

A one kilometre long, car-free, pedestrian-friendly connection through Holt Town along Lind Street, connecting St Anne's RC Primary School and Park View Community School complementing links between the City Centre, Sportcity and the Etihad Campus, and neighbouring communities.

Fig. 49. Play Link illustrative plan

Potential improvements to create a car free play link:

- 1 Arrival threshold prioritising pedestrian movement and playable landscape
- 2 Play and exercise pockets with defensible, sensory and SuDS planting
- 3 Safe pedestrian crossing point
- 4 Existing street trees to be retained
- 5 Occasional refuse vehicle crossing point
- 6 The Play Link widens as it nears the canal
- 7 New footbridge to Miles Platting



4.4 Ashton Canal Corridor



Potential improvements to the Ashton Canal Corridor:

- ① Resurfaced towpath
- ② Cleaned up heritage coping stone
- ③ South-facing seating steps
- ④ New accessible pedestrian bridge
- ⑤ Existing trees retained along canal edge
- ⑥ Floating vegetated systems to improve the canal habitat corridor
- ⑦ Overgrown and invasive species cleared and replaced with biodiverse meadow
- ⑧ New mooring points encourage canalside activity. Reclaimed cobbles could be used.
- ⑨ Treetop play equipment in Confluence Park
- ⑩ Safe water recreational activity encouraged

Fig. 50. Artist's impression of the Confluence Park and Ashton Canal

Potential improvements to Ashton Canal Corridor:

- ① Existing trees and ecology retained where possible
- ② New canalside access and visual connection from nearby streets
- ③ Buildings set back from the canal edge allow existing trees to be retained
- ④ Spill out space along the canal helps activate the towpath
- ⑤ Accessible pathway connecting to new bridge crossing
- ⑥ New pedestrian footbridge
- ⑦ South facing steps create seating space overlooking the canal and park
- ⑧ Confluence Park

Fig. 51. Ashton Canal illustrative plan

Ashton Canal Corridor

The Ashton Canal corridor is a vital part of Holt Town's Public Realm Strategy, shaped by guidance from The Canal and River Trust. Key priorities include:

Accessibility and Connectivity: Improve physical and visual access through pathways, bridges, and accessible features to link canals with neighbourhoods and transport hubs.

Vibrant Public Spaces: Activate canal-side areas with seating, event spaces, and community-focused uses.

Biodiversity: Enhance green infrastructure, such as floating vegetation and wildlife habitats, to support local ecosystems.

Active Travel: Upgrade towpaths to encourage active modes of transportation.

Heritage Preservation: Integrate historical canal architecture into designs that respect the area's character.

Safety: Design safe, well-maintained spaces with lighting and natural surveillance to deter anti-social behaviour. Implement safe interfaces between play space and the canal.

Water Management: Address water quality and flood risks using sustainable drainage and monitoring systems.



Community and Economy: Foster local businesses, community activities, and partnerships for long-term stewardship.

Climate Resilience: Implement green and blue infrastructure to mitigate heat islands and manage extreme weather.

These actions aim to transform the canal corridor into a sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant urban space.

Ashton Canal Bridge study

In order to assess the feasibility of a bridge being installed across the Aston Canal, a study of the site's existing topography was conducted. At the bridge location outlined in the masterplan, there's a notable 3.2 metre difference in elevation between the towpath and the top of the northern embankment.

To make this change in elevation accessible for both cyclists and wheelchair users, a gently sloping 50 metre ramp with a 1:15 gradient would extend on the canal's southern side. The Canal and River Trust recommended a 2.5 metre minimum clearance from the towpath to the bridge's underside, with a 500mm allowance for the bridge structure.

Designed to be 3.5 metres wide, the shared pedestrian and cycle path across the Ashton Canal will provide a welcoming and functional crossing for all users.

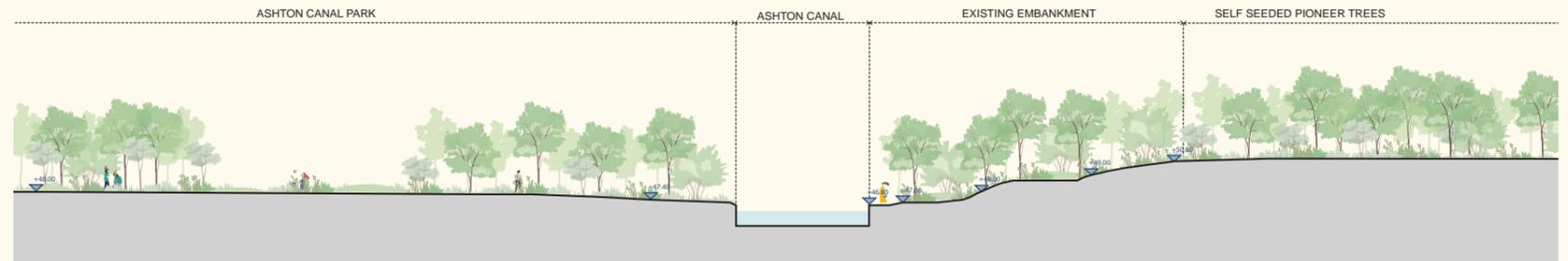


Fig. 52. Existing section

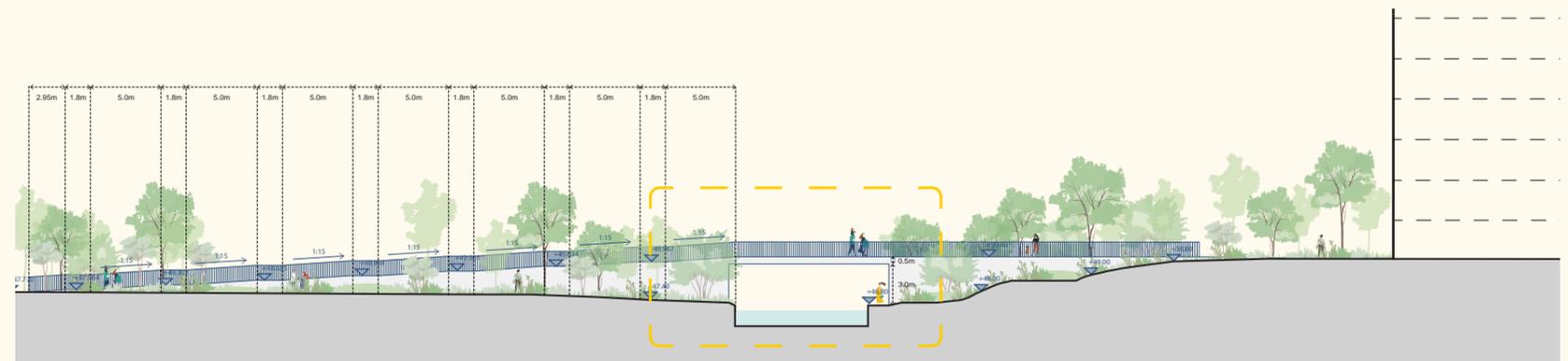


Fig. 53. Bridge study section

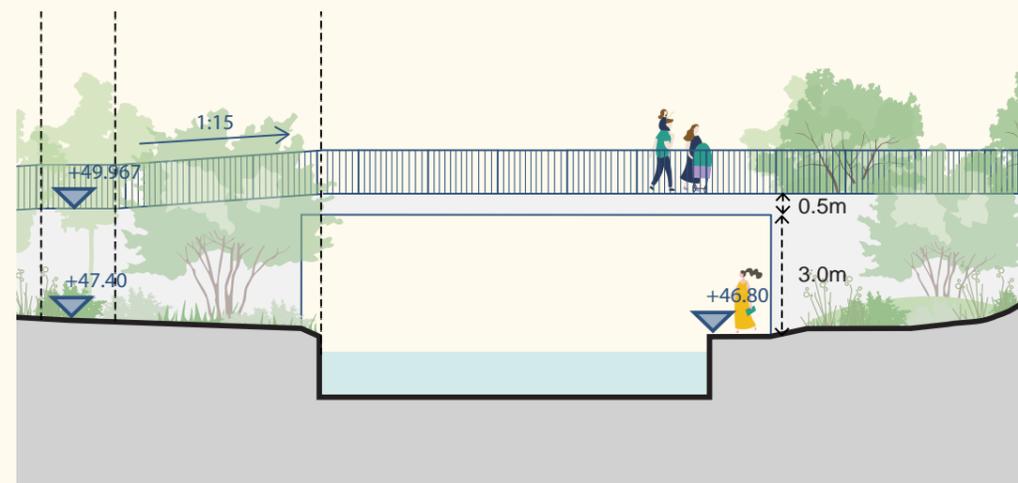


Fig. 54. Zoom in of the bridge study section



Fig. 55. Section showing the width of the bridge

4.5 Gas Holder Green

Potential improvements to the former gas holder site:

- ① Sustainable urban drainage features
- ② Key pedestrian connection through the heart of the Holt Town framework
- ③ New pedestrian bridge over the Ashton Canal - Play Link extension
- ④ Confluence Park
- ⑤ Outdoor exercise space along the play link
- ⑥ Existing trees to be retained long the Canal Corridor

Fig. 56. Artist's impression of Gas Holder Green





- Potential improvements to the former gas holder site:
- ① Connection to proposed pedestrian footbridge crossing the canal
 - ② Accessible footpath linking the towpath to the gas holder green site
 - ③ Seating bank facing onto the canal
 - ④ Circular path around the former gas holder site
 - ⑤ Defensible planting at building edge
 - ⑥ Play link footpath continuing to Miles Platting
 - ⑦ Linear sustainable drainage feature
 - ⑧ Boardwalk connection to New Viaduct street

Fig. 57. Gas Holder Green illustrative plan

Gas Holder Green

This section of the public realm framework seeks to celebrate the industrial heritage of this part of Holt Town, drawing inspiration from historic maps and the former gas holder structure. Historical mapping shows that a canal spur once branched off the Ashton Canal but has since been filled in. The framework proposes to acknowledge this history by incorporating a linear, sustainable water feature along the southern edge of the former gas holder site.

The landscape design for the location of the former gas holder frame should reflect its circular footprint, with dense planting near the building's edge to provide a buffer for ground-floor residents from activity in the green space.

The Gas Holder Green also strengthens green and blue infrastructure connections throughout Holt Town and extends the play link to Miles Platting.

4.6 Cyrus Spinney with Lido



Potential improvements to the Lido/ Natural Swimming Pool:

- ① Existing mature trees to be retained
- ② New footpaths and spill out space facing onto the spinney
- ③ Lido / natural swimming pool in footprint of former reservoir
- ④ Reed planting to filter water and create wetland habitat beneath canopy

Fig. 58. Artist's impression of Cyrus Street Spinney/Lido

- ① Existing mature trees to be retained
- ② New footpaths to active ground floors facing onto the spinney
- ③ Lido / natural swimming pool at the heart of the Cyrus spinney
- ④ Existing boundary wall and railing to be retained in areas to maintain character
- ⑤ Understorey planting renewed and lower limbs of trees cleared to improve visual permeability of planted boundary
- ⑥ Street footpaths and spinney footpaths merge to promote better connectivity between the two spaces
- ⑦ Potential high level footbridge connection to Cambrian Street

Fig. 59. Cyrus Street Spinney and Lido illustrative plan



Historic location of the Holt Town reservoir



Historic location of the Holt Town reservoir overlaid on contemporary map

Cyrus Spinney with Lido

The site of the former Holt Town reservoir has slowly evolved into an area dominated by dense clusters of trees, some of which have sunken due to the underlying ground conditions.

Tree pockets, embedded within the broader landscape, can serve as ecological stepping stones, bridging the more densely populated residential parts of the site. By linking these green spaces with routes that align with the principles of Sponge Town, we can create a cohesive network of interconnected, ecologically rich areas.

The area's past as a reservoir is subtly reflected in the presence of self-seeded waterside species and its sculpted terrain. With this in mind, we propose introducing a natural lido at the heart of the spinney with integrated planting edges to boost biodiversity and support the wider Sponge Town framework. Thoughtfully designed pathways, seating areas, and strategic planting beneath the mature tree canopy will add complexity and variety to the space. Currently, the area feels somewhat enclosed and disconnected from the Cyrus Street environment. Our plan is to open up these boundaries, merging the space with the surrounding area to create safer, more connected and active public spaces. The North Pool will be a managed space and will include a secure line. Ground floor uses on adjacent buildings will be tied into the operation and management of the community facility.

This outdoor swimming facility would provide an exceptional experience for residents and visitors, as no comparable amenity currently exists in the vicinity.

5 Street Typologies

Introduction

The proposed street typologies introduce seven distinct street types, each designed with a focus on creating vibrant, more sustainable neighbourhood. These streets place play at the heart of the development, encourage active transportation, and celebrate the site's existing woodland character. Together, this network of streets will form the backbone of Holt Town, shaping a dynamic, well-connected community that sets a new benchmark for sustainable living in Manchester.



5.1 Street hierarchy

Seven neighbourhood street types

To create a clear and cohesive street network across the site, the public realm proposals incorporate seven distinct types of streets. For streets that allow vehicular access, this network aligns with the guidance set out in the Greater Manchester's Streets for All Design Guide document produced by Transport for Greater Manchester and the 10 Greater Manchester local authorities.

The various street types are illustrated in the diagram opposite. Streets allowing vehicular traffic are depicted in shades of blue, while car-free streets are shown in shades of red. Detailed explanations of these street types are provided on the following pages.



Fig. 60. Neighbourhood street types

5.2 Street types

Play Link

The Play Link is the main pedestrian route running through the centre of the site, serving as an inclusive, community-focused pathway that connects St Anne’s RC Primary School to the west with Park View Community School to the north.

Designed as a welcoming and accessible space, the Play Link prioritises pedestrians. With minimal vehicle traffic, it offers a safe environment for people of all ages to navigate.

Primarily residential in character, the street’s generous width accommodates multi-generational spaces, ideal for gathering, play, and daily activities. It will provide a safe space for children and young people to play, making it a destination for both local residents and children from the surrounding area.

As the Play Link follows the canal route, it creates a spatial connection between key heritage features on the site and the proposed Mobility Mill building. In this section, the scale of the Play Link will become more expansive, allowing for spill-out spaces from adjacent buildings to activate the edge of Ashton Canal. The spill-out zones, play areas, materials, and planting will be designed to enhance the post-industrial character of the canal and surrounding heritage assets.

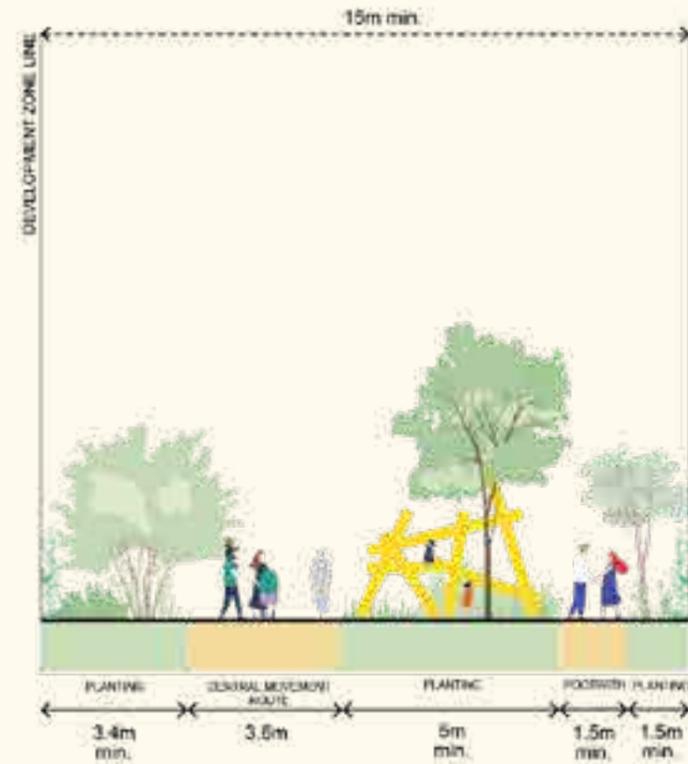


Fig. 61. Typical section through the Play Link



Spill out spaces
Coal Drops Yard, London



Play spaces
Mayfield Park, Manchester (© SEW)



Play Link
King’s Crescent Estate, London

Green Links

The Green Links serve as key north-south connections across the site. These streets reach a high point near the Ashton Canal, with a gradual slope downward toward the River Valley in the south. A series of interconnected Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) line the streets, using the site's natural topography to channel water collected from surrounding streets and buildings along the existing gradient. This water is guided through the rain gardens and ultimately directed into retention ponds located in the valley area.

The planting along the Green Links promotes biodiversity, with drought-tolerant species chosen to thrive in the rain gardens. These trees and plants will also bring colour and fragrance to the public spaces, enhancing the residential character of the neighbourhood streets.

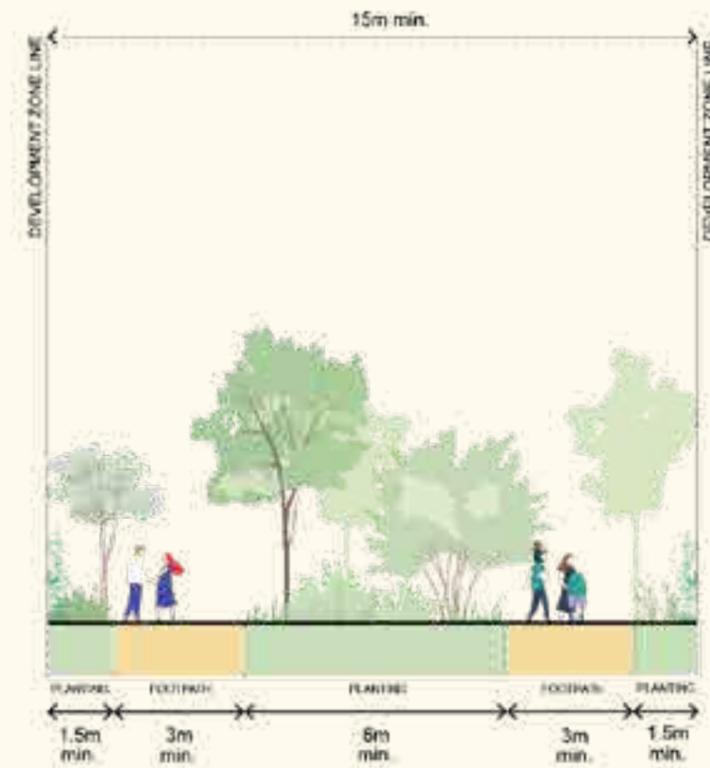


Fig. 62. Typical section through a Green Link



Colourful planting - Old Vinyl Factory (© SEW)



Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems - Old Vinyl Factory (© SEW)



Verdant street - Eastwick Phase 1 (© Chris Hopkinson)

Vehicular + Cycle

Beswick Street, Cambrian Street, and New Viaduct Street are currently dominated by vehicular traffic. Under the masterplan proposals, these three streets will be transformed to prioritise the safe movement of pedestrians and cyclists throughout the site.

To encourage more active forms of transport, the proposals for each of these streets incorporate generously proportioned cycle lanes, each 2.5 metres wide. This width has been informed by the Greater Manchester Cycling Design Guidance and Standards produced by Manchester City Council. The widths of the cycle lane outlined in the illustrative section are subject to further development and transport modelling.

Furthermore, the design of the reconfigured streets will ensure that pedestrians can navigate through the site comfortably. The proportions of the footpaths will align with the recommended widths outlined in the same guidance.

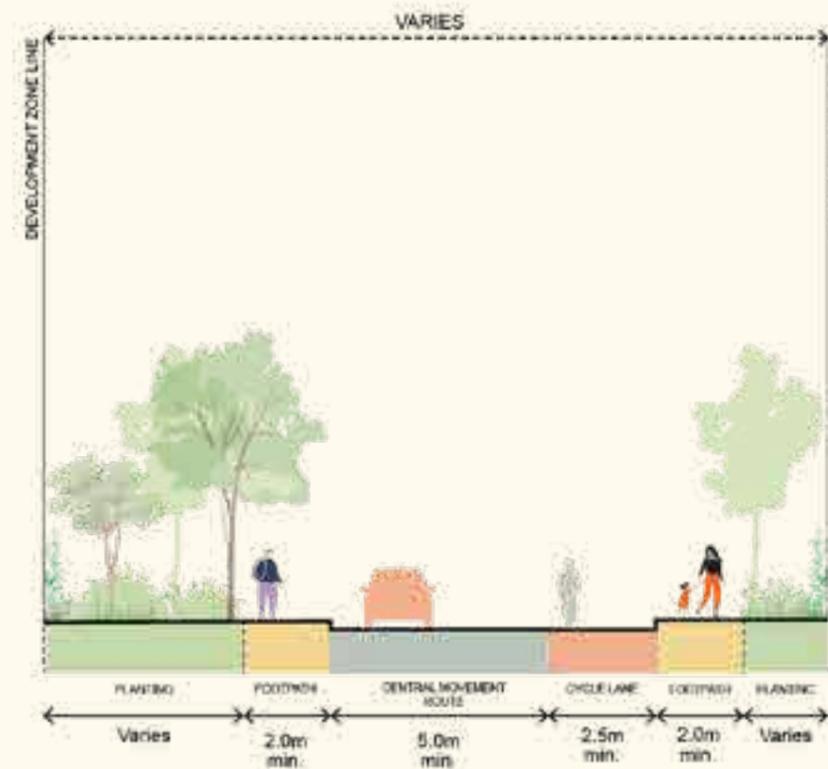


Fig. 63. Typical section through a vehicular and cycle route



Cycle lanes - Kempenstraat, Antwerp (© OMGEVING)



Pedestrian footpath - South Gardens, London (© Gillespies)



Pollard Street

Pollard Street serves as a key east-west connection within the masterplan, playing a vital role in enhancing accessibility and mobility throughout the site. Pollard Street will undergo a comprehensive reconfiguration that includes the addition of well-defined areas of planting. These features will provide shade, improve air quality, and create inviting spaces for social interaction.

Given its relatively flat topography, Pollard Street presents an ideal opportunity to incorporate interconnected water attenuation areas, designed to effectively manage water runoff from the surrounding streets and buildings. These blue infrastructure features will not only enhance the street's aesthetic appeal but also contribute to the site's overall sustainability goals. By allowing rainwater to be stored and filtered through natural systems, these areas will reduce the risk of flooding and promote groundwater recharge.

The illustrative section shows a 4.8m central movement route which allows for two way traffic. The widths outlined in the illustrative section are subject to further development and transport modelling.

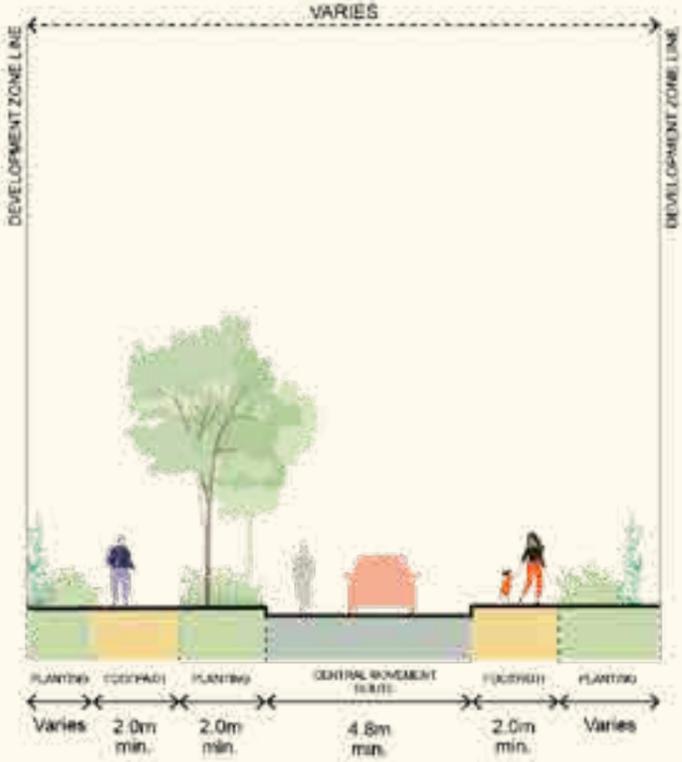


Fig. 64. Typical section of Pollard Street



Tree lined street and planted attenuation areas

Cyrus Street

Cyrus Street will serve as a key residential street within the framework. On its western end, small-scale residential homes will line the street, with buildings set slightly back from the pedestrian footpath to create defensible space. This will not only soften the architectural frontage but also provide residents with a degree of privacy from the public walkway.

As the street moves east, the street widens, and the scale of the residential buildings increases. This expanded space will allow for outdoor spill-out areas adjacent to the commercial units on the ground floor of the larger residential buildings, creating a more dynamic street atmosphere.

The residential character will be further enhanced by preserving the mature trees that currently line Cyrus Street. Incorporating these trees into the design will maintain the street's verdant, established character.

To preserve as many trees as possible, the central movement route will follow the line of the existing carriageway. This ensures that the street can accommodate servicing vehicles without impacting the mature vegetation.

The widths specified in the illustrative section are subject to refinement through further development and transport modelling.



Fig. 65. Typical section of Cyrus Street



Tree lined street and planted attenuation areas

Residential Streets

The design of these streets reflects the residential character of the surrounding architecture, creating quiet and intimate outdoor spaces for residents to enjoy.

These residential streets prioritise pedestrian movement, offering generously proportioned footpaths where people can move comfortably, with cars taking secondary importance.

All streets incorporate defensible spaces adjacent to ground-level habitable rooms, ensuring a degree of spatial separation from the public footpaths.

The residential streets are landscaped with ample planted areas to help slow water runoff from adjacent carriageways and buildings.

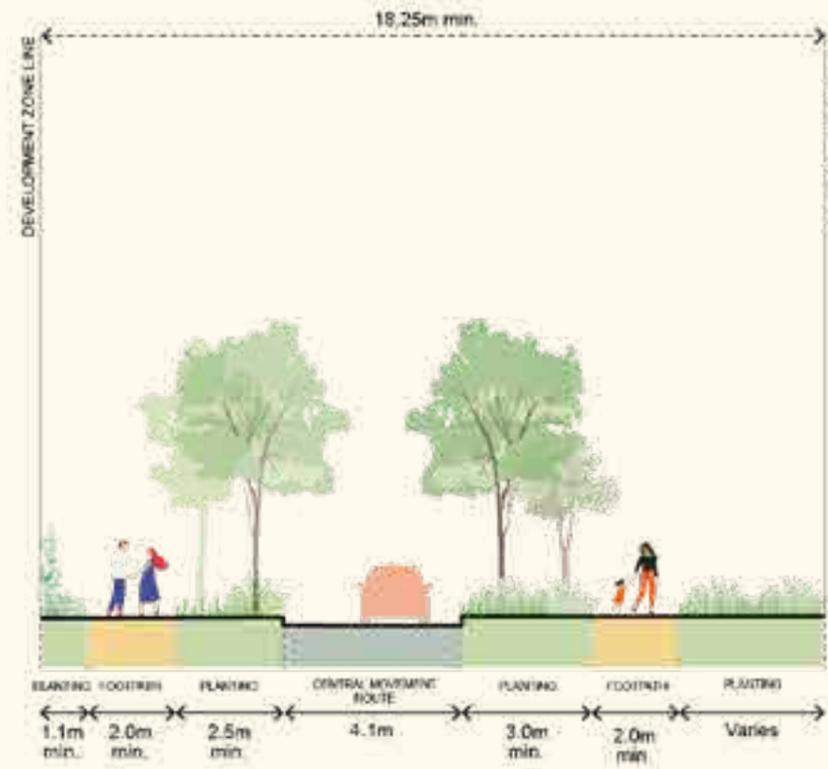


Fig. 66. Typical section through a residential street



Planted defensible space - Tingbjerg, Copenhagen (© SLA)



Planted areas that collect water run off - Sheffield



Street with a residential character - Vauban, Freiburg (© Daniel Schoenen)



Holt Town

Holt Town serves as a key threshold into the site due to its proximity to the Holt Town Tram Stop. However, the street's current condition creates an uninviting environment for pedestrians and cyclists using the CityLink route.

To enhance this connection into the site, the street will be reconfigured to make it more user-friendly for cyclists and pedestrians. Additionally, space for maintenance vehicles has been integrated into the illustrative design to ensure easy access to the tram tracks and surrounding infrastructure.

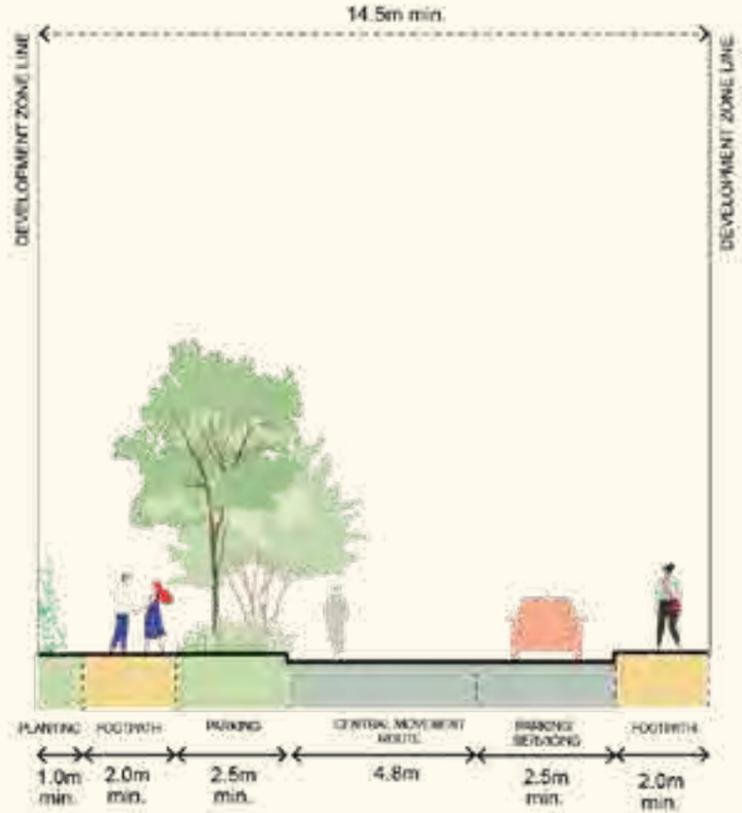


Fig. 67. Typical section through Holt Town Street



Defensible planted space



Holt Town Metrolink stop



Trees and planting - Meta HQ, London (© Hufton + Crow)

6 Design Guidance

6.1 Materiality and street furniture

Coherent and characterful

The materiality and street furniture strategy balances overall coherence across Holt Town while allowing for the unique expression of each Character Area and its local context. This strategy is carefully tailored to suit different types of spaces.

To enhance navigation and connectivity, we will ensure a clear differentiation of materials between foot ways, bike lanes, and roads or shared surfaces. This thoughtful design will make wayfinding intuitive and enjoyable, guiding users effortlessly through the public realm.

The hard landscape materials will be carefully selected to prioritise inclusivity, featuring wheelchair-friendly, firm, and slip-resistant options that can withstand all weather conditions.

The material palette is also conscious of cost and deliverability with a focus on hard wearing durable surfaces over expensive decorative patterning.



Fig. 68. Materiality and street furniture

Material characters

Industrial heritage materials

Along the Ashton Canal corridor and near key Holt Town heritage assets, we propose a materials palette that complements the area's industrial aesthetic. The focus will be on re-purposing and reusing existing materials, such as salvaged stone cobbles or brickwork from the ground or any disused structures. Where new materials are introduced, stone setts or brick pavers should closely match the existing area features.

Key locations: Ashton Canal towpath, numerous spaces between retained heritage buildings along the canal corridor.

Adopted highways

For streets with vehicular access, the material strategy will adhere to MCC's adoptable highways standards. This approach is designed to integrate the Holt Town streetscape with its broader surroundings while supporting MCC's long-term highway maintenance plans.

Key locations: Beswick Street, Cambrian Street, Cyrus Street, Upper Cyrus Street, Upper Helena Street, Pollard Street, Pollard Street East

Pedestrian Streets

To promote safe movement in the heart of Holt Town, several streets have been designated as pedestrian-priority areas, with public vehicle access restricted. These streets are designed with a pedestrian-focused material palette to enhance their character.



Park am Gleisdreieck, Berlin



Little C, Rotterdam (© CULD)



Mayfield Park, Manchester (© SEW)



King's Crescent, London (© Muf Architecture)



New Leiden, Leiden (© MVRDV)

Precedents for adopted highways and pedestrian streets.

Parkland materials

The landscape materials throughout the main green spaces should evoke a parkland character. Footpaths meandering under tree canopies should primarily use aggregate-based surfaces, such as resin-bound or self-bound gravels. These materials are well-suited for areas with tree roots and can be designed as permeable surfaces where ground conditions permit. At key interfaces with buildings, incorporating recycled materials from the site, such as stone cobbles, may be appropriate. However, these cobbles may need to be refinished to ensure they meet slip resistance and accessibility standards.

Key locations: Medlock corridor, Confluence Park, Cyrus Spinney, Gas Holder Gardens, Viaduct pocket park.



Parc du Chemin de l'le, Nanterre



Novo Nordisk Nature Park, Copenhagen (© SLA)

Arrival materials

The public realm spaces at key entrances should use high-quality materials, similar to the natural stones and paving found in the City Centre, to highlight key entry points in Holt Town and establish a visual connection to central areas of the city. Primary transport hubs and key routes leading into the site should incorporate durable, aesthetically pleasing materials that encourage residents and visitors to stay and explore Holt Town.

Key locations: Holt Town Station, Merrill street entrance space, Bradford Road entrance space



Bonn Square, Oxford (© Graeme Massie Architects)

Precedents for arrival spaces materials.

Street furniture

Industrial heritage street furniture

The street furniture strategy for the areas along the Ashton Canal corridor and near key Holt Town heritage assets is designed to subtly enhance the site's industrial heritage. Historically, the northern edge of the canal has been the more active side, as it hosts the towpath, while the southern side is more vegetated and receives less foot traffic.

Adopted highways

Street furniture consistent with Manchester City Council's preferred selection of benches, bollards, bins, cycle stands, and wayfinding elements should be incorporated into areas of the masterplan where adopted highway materials are used, allowing the planting design to remain the primary focus of these spaces.

Key locations: Beswick Street, Cambrian Street, Cyrus Street, Upper Cyrus Street, Upper Helena Street, Pollard Street, Pollard Street East.

Pedestrian street furniture

The street furniture strategy for the designated pedestrian-priority areas focuses on using elements that feature expressive forms, tasteful colors, and innovative materials. Wayfinding in these neighbourhood streets should engage pedestrians. In line with guidance from BS8300-1, clear information and wayfinding should be provided in various formats—visual, audible, and tactile—according to the principle of engaging at least two senses.



Heavy-duty benches (© Streetlife)



The Department Store Studios, London (© Squire & Partners)



Cycle stands, Sheffield (© Falco)

Precedents for street furniture for pedestrian streets.

Parkland street furniture

The street furniture within the Parkland area will enhance its character as a more naturalistic sequence of space within Holt Town.

Seating elements accommodating smaller groups will punctuate the parkland areas. These seating elements are recommended to be composed of materials such as timber, creating a natural and informal aesthetic.

Wayfinding elements should be placed at key intersections within the areas of the framework that utilise a parkland material palette. Information and signage is best positioned where it is clearly identifiable and visible.

Arrival street furniture

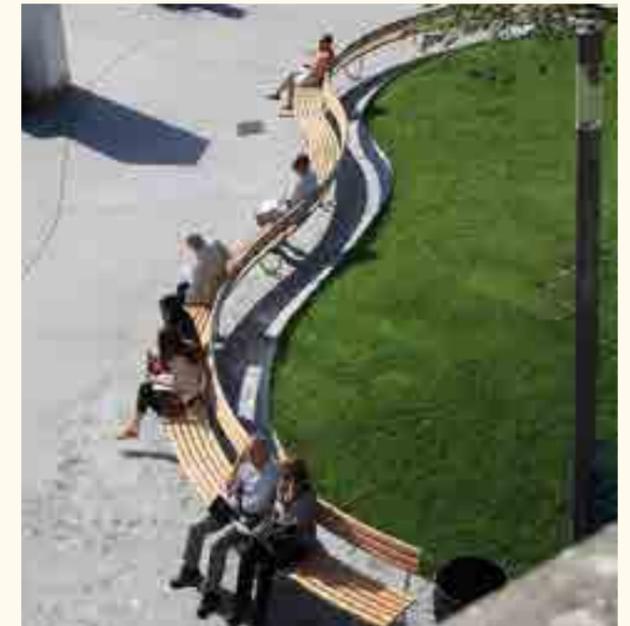
The street furniture; seating, bollards, bins, and cycle stands, should embody the unique character of the arrival spaces within the public realm. High-quality, durable materials will be used to complement those used in the paved surfaces, ensuring cohesion and longevity.

Public realm areas near primary transport hubs and key entry routes will feature public seating configurations designed for larger groups to accommodate higher levels of footfall.



Bjørvika Urban Spaces, Oslo (© SLA)

Precedents for parkland street furniture.



Khokhlovskaya Square, Moscow (© Olga Alexeyenko)

Precedents for arrival spaces street furniture.

Lighting

The lighting strategy is designed to create a safe, inviting, and dynamic environment throughout the public realm. By tailoring a diverse array of lighting characteristics to the unique functions and identities of each area within the framework plan, the aim is to enhance both safety and aesthetics.

Industrial heritage lighting

Lighting fixtures along the Ashton Canal should be positioned exclusively on the northern side, adjacent to the towpath, to prevent light pollution from affecting habitats on the southern side. This approach safeguards the ecological corridor, maintaining a safe and accessible environment for both people and wildlife.

Key locations: Ashton Canal towpath

Parkland lighting

Within Parkland areas the lighting strategy should create a perceivably safe environment through implementing a clear hierarchy of lighting fixtures. Lighting should subtly highlight architectural features and destination in the public realm. However, along the River Medlock, lighting fixtures should minimise light pollution to protect local ecosystems. Controlled light levels will help preserve wildlife habitats while ensuring the ecological corridors remain safe and accessible for all.

Key locations: Medlock corridor, Confluence Park, Cyrus Spinney, Gas Holder Gardens, Viaduct pocket park.



Residential public lighting that minimises clutter on the street
The Warsaw Uprising Mound Park (© topoScape)



Ecologically sensitive lighting
La Troche Footbridge, Palaiseau (© Bassinet Turquin Paysage)

Adopted highways lighting

Lighting fixtures that are consistent with Manchester City Council's preferred selection of street lighting elements should be incorporated into areas of the masterplan where adopted highway materials are used.

Key locations: Beswick Street, Cambrian Street, Cyrus Street, Upper Cyrus Street, Upper Helena Street, Pollard Street, Pollard Street East.

Pedestrian street lighting

The lighting strategy should identify a variety of luminaires, locations, mounting types, and approaches to the control of the lighting in the pedestrianised streets that creates suitable residential atmospheres. In order to minimise clutter on these streets suspended overhead lighting fixtures are recommended.

Key locations: Play Link (Lind Street), Cavalier Street.

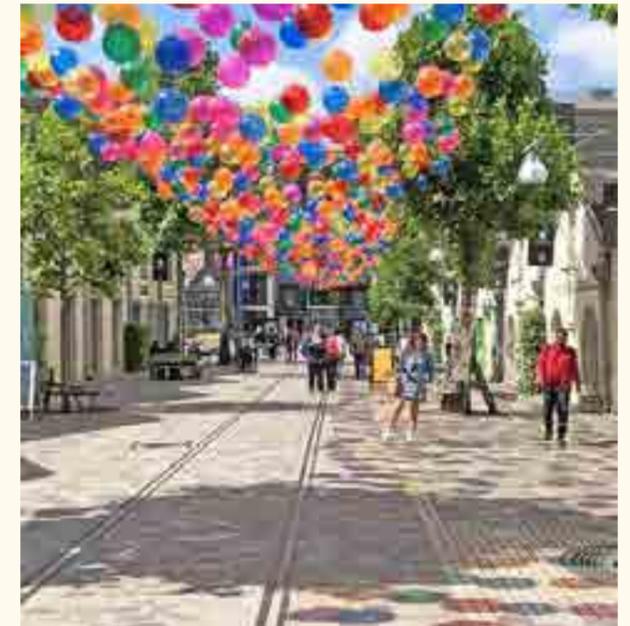
Arrival lighting

At the key thresholds into the site providing a welcoming lit atmosphere is essential. Lighting fixtures which change over time to meet varying demands of the arrival spaces and users that travel through them throughout the night and across seasons.

Key locations: Holt Town Station, Play Link gateway, Bradford Road entrance space.



Residential public lighting that minimises clutter on the street
Kampus, Manchester (© Mecanoo)



Lighting fixture helping to create a destination
Bercy Village, Paris

6.2 Planting approach

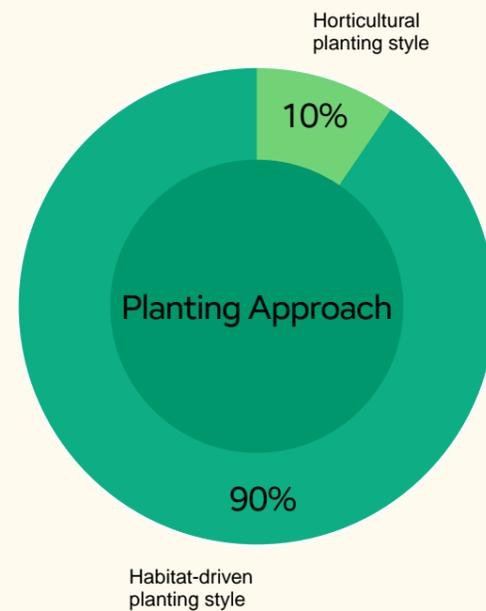
Habitat-driven approach

Holt Town's current planting has naturally developed into a series of woodland habitats. We propose to embrace these qualities through retention and management of existing woodland areas as well as creating and extending new areas of habitat focused planting throughout Holt Town's streets and spaces.

There is often a desire for visually dramatic, horticulture-led planting designs in public realm projects, Holt Town's existing landscape and its strong ties to the broader blue and green infrastructure can support a more habitat-focused strategy. This approach may have a wilder, less traditionally attractive appearance to some but it can offer the benefits of lower maintenance and higher ecological value and climate resilience performance. Such planting is typically found in natural environments, country parks, wildlife gardens, and corridors, but there are also exemplary projects that successfully integrate nature into urban settings like streets, squares, and city parks.

There are emerging movements that blend naturalistic aesthetics with designed planting approaches, such as Steppe, designed ecologies, and plant communities. These approaches represent a crossover between habitat and horticultural design. This style of planting is considered suitable for key parks and green spaces like The Confluence, Viaduct Park, and Cyrus Spinney.

The majority of Holt Town's planting will follow these ecology focused approaches but a smaller proportion of the planting strategy should also acknowledge the likely desire residents may have for freedom to plant and garden themselves. Gardening is a physical and social exercise widely considered to have positive mental health benefits. In these areas expectation and control on planting style should be relaxed to encourage personalisation of residential interfaces and any communal gardening endeavours.



Green pedestrian streets, Silkeborg (© SLA)



Mayfield Park, Manchester (© SEW)



The South Harbor of Køge (© SLA)



Budolfi Square, Aalborg (© SLA)

Precedents for habitat-driven landscape

Planting Typologies

 Holt Town NDF boundary

Planting Typologies:

-  Amenity grassland
-  Woodland
-  River Medlock Corridor
-  Cyrus Spinney
-  Resilient meadow
-  Ashton Canal Corridor
-  Canalside glades
-  Rain garden meadows
-  Hedgerow

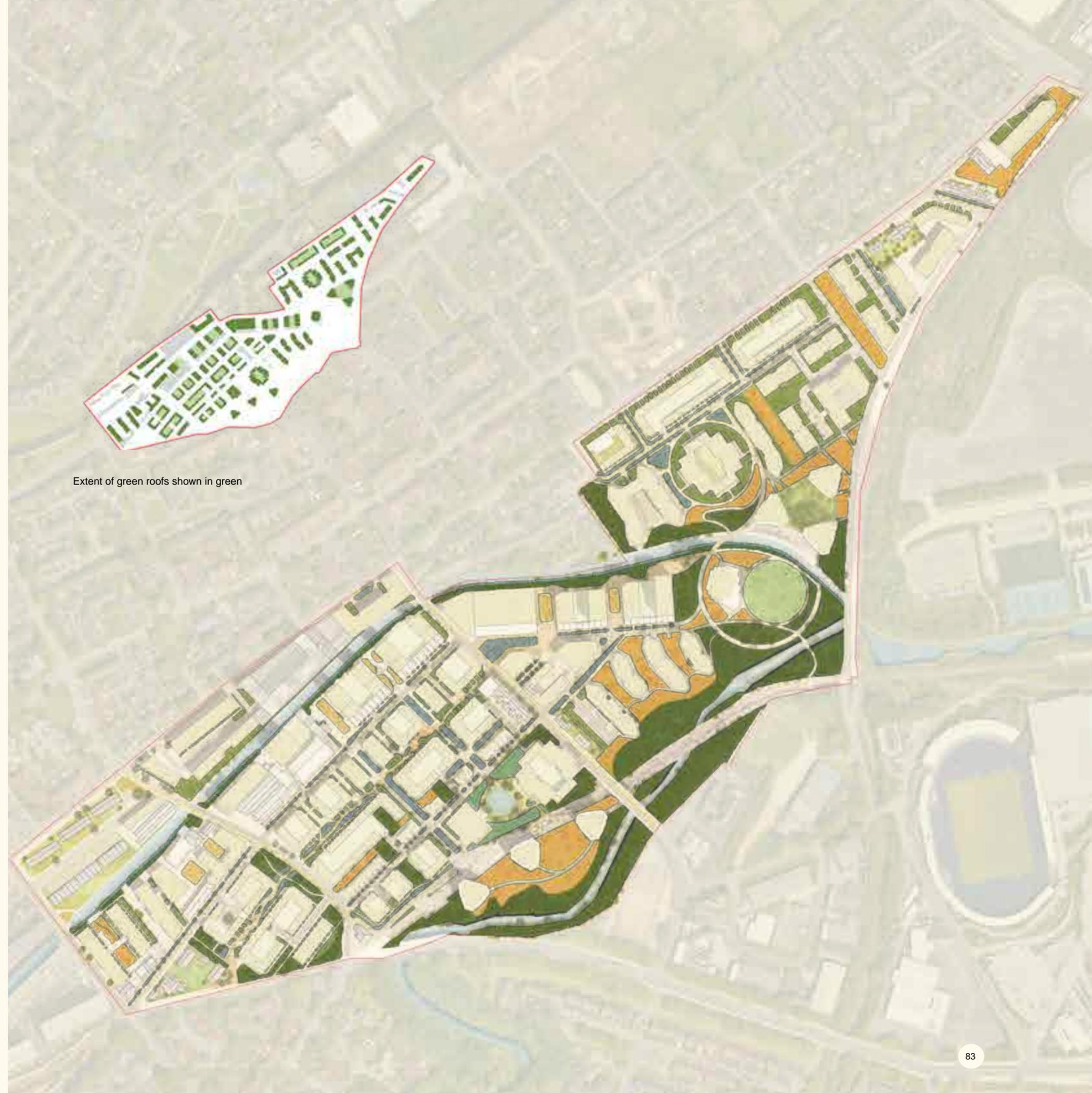


Fig. 69. Planting typologies map

Planting typologies

The following planting typologies identify how a diverse habitat-led approach to planting can be implemented across Holt Town:

Woodland

The existing broadleaved woodland along the river corridor will be diversified with additional layers of lower canopy trees and understorey planting. This will involve managing existing trees, and in some cases, selectively removing or cutting them back to allow more light into the understorey, encouraging improved biodiversity from the ground up.

Building on the extensive tree cover already present at Holt Town, new woodland areas will help extend canopy coverage across the full length of the site. These areas will include wet woods, integrated with a “sponge town” approach, and a series of spinneys, woodland pockets, and glades that cluster new tree groupings around retained specimen trees.

Native trees such as birch, English oak, hazel, blackthorn, hawthorn and willow and also for climate resilience non natives such as maidenhair tree, Indian bean tree and holm oak should be considered. It is also recommended that the Urban Tree Manual is consulted.



Wet Woodland, Pylewell (© Pierre Terre)



Cloud Wood Coppice, Leicestershire (© The Wildlife Trust)



Mayfield Park, Manchester (© SEW)

Precedents for woodland planting.

River Medlock Corridor

Though wetlands are limited across the site, there is considerable potential to establish wetland, aquatic, and marginal habitats in slower sections of the River Medlock. Pre-grown and anchored river edge systems should be applied along the riverbank to enhance biodiversity without risking erosion from faster currents.

Species such as Lesser Pond Sedge, Blue Sedge, Yellow Flag Iris, Soft Rush, Hard Rush, Purple Loose strife and Reed Canary Grass should be considered to help diversify the river corridor habitats.



Pembroke Commons, West Wales (© Salix)



Mayfield Park, Manchester (© SEW)

Precedents for River Medlock Corridor planting.

Planting typologies

Cyrus Spinney

Working with existing trees and lower level shrubs this area will amplify the qualities of a spinney which is defined as 'a small area of trees and bushes'. Differentiating from the woodland planting typology the spinney will establish greater structural diversity through shrub and ground covering plants which will help to transition from the larger woodland habitats. A range of shade and semi-shade species will include species tolerant of drought and waterlogged conditions.

Whilst native species are encouraged for local habitat creation, non natives species should also be included for climate resilience. It is also recommended that the Urban Tree Manual is consulted.



The Woodland Garden, NYC (© Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates)

Resilient meadows

A variety of meadows, designed and naturalistic, suited to the site's diverse ground conditions and microclimates will be introduced to create strategic habitats, enhancing the River Medlock corridor, which is currently heavily wooded. Meadow areas should vary in scale, from large flood plain enhancements to smaller scale greens to drought-tolerant rooftop meadows.

Wildflower meadows play a vital role as pollinator habitats, but they are a habitat under threat which has contributed to the decline of pollinators such as bees. Creating room for them in the Holt town area can play a vital part in supporting the wider ecosystem. The planting strategy identifies Medlock corridor, Confluence Park, Gas Holder Gardens and Viaduct pocket park as suitable meadow locations.



Ladywell Fields, London (© BDP)



The Woodland Garden, NYC (© Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates) Precedents for Cyrus Spinney planting.



Forest Fragment, Paris (© Bassinet Turquin Paysage)



The Meadow at the Elephant Park, London (© B|D landscape) Precedents for meadow planting.

Planting typologies

Ashton Canal Corridor

Working with existing trees and lower level shrubs this area will amplify the qualities of a spinney which is defined as 'a small area of trees and bushes'. Differentiating from the woodland planting typology the spinney will establish greater structural diversity through shrub and ground covering plants which will help to transition from the larger woodland habitats. A range of shade and semi-shade species will include species tolerant of drought and waterlogged conditions.

Whilst native species are encouraged for local habitat creation, non natives species should also be included for climate resilience. It is also recommended that the Urban Tree Manual is consulted.



London Docklands (© Biomatrix Water)



Regents Canal, London (© Biomatrix Water)



Regents Canal, London (© Biomatrix Water)



River Vilaine, Rennes (© Biomatrix Water)
Precedents for Ashton Canal Corridor

Canalside Glades

A number of intimate spaces plug into the canal corridor to help stitch the Holt Town public realm into this waterside setting. Through the planting strategy we aim to create a sequence of 'glade' gardens which feature trees with delicate and lighter canopies for casting dappled light into a predominantly grassy understorey. This is the high point in the site and the starting point of a gravity fed sequence of nature based drainage systems. As such planting will be suited to deal with dry and occasionally waterlogged conditions.

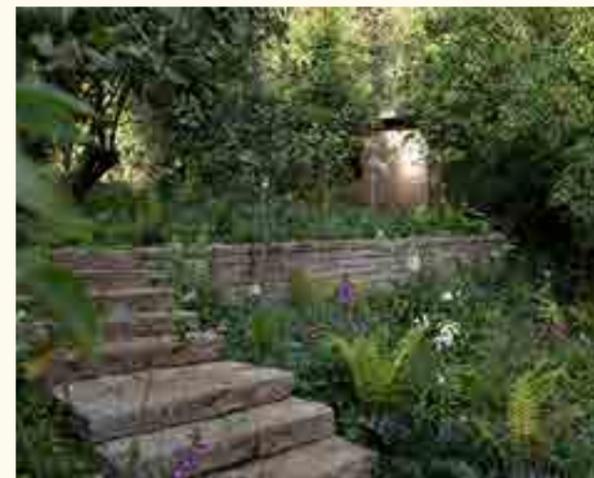
Whilst native species are encouraged for local habitat creation, non natives species should also be included for climate resilience. It is also recommended that the Urban Tree Manual is consulted.



Max Family Garden, NYC (© Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates)



Max Family Garden, NYC (© Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates)



Forest Garden, Mexico City (© Estudio Ome)
Precedents for canalside glades planting



Silhouette Garden, Shanghai (© YIYU Design)

Planting typologies

Street Planting

Planting in streets throughout the Holt Town area will need to be robust, resilient and have simple and efficient maintenance regimes. Sustainable drainage features such as rain gardens are a key feature of these spaces. Rather than deploying fussy horticultural led designs it is more realistic to propose meadow mixes to further connect the site with habitat led ecology.

Rain garden meadows should balance combinations of spring, summer and autumn species, which either thrive or tolerate living in moist and waterlogged soils.

Where below ground utilities allow, shrubs and street trees are also appropriate to add structure and height to the composition.

At interfaces with residential homes mixed 'wild' hedgerows are preferred to barriers or single species topiary. Mixed species hedgerows are crucial for wildlife foraging and connectivity and through similar species choices can relate to the mixed woodland typology.

Roof gardens

Roof-level planting should prioritise low-maintenance, high-biodiversity planting types. This can include a mix of brown and green roof systems, potentially incorporating ecologically rich habitats, such as open mosaic habitats, to compensate for those lost during development.



Mixed hedging (© Hedgingplantsdirect)



Rain garden, Marrickville (© Fore ground)



The Elevated Acre, NYC (© Ken Smith)

Communal Horticulture

To inspire residents to take pride in and take responsibility for their streets, we promote communal and individual threshold planting. This type of social gardening allows flexibility in plant choice, giving residents the freedom to cultivate their spaces as they wish, while encouraging community-driven gardening efforts.

Productive landscapes

Productive planting on the podium gardens at Holt Town offers numerous benefits, enhancing environmental sustainability, community wellbeing, and urban resilience. By creating spaces for residents to grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs, the development encourages a stronger connection to nature and promotes locally sourced food production. These productive gardens can create shared spaces that build social connections, bring neighbours together in communal gardening efforts and foster a strong sense of community.



Bonnington Square Pleasure Garden, London (© Londonaire.co.uk)



Los Muelles, Saint-Ouen (© Takuji Shimmura)



Stedsans Rooftop Farm, Copenhagen (© Ignant)

7 Technical Strategies

Introduction

A series of technical strategies form the foundation of the illustrative material, outlining how the new neighbourhood will operate. These strategies will undergo further detailed testing as the more detailed design of the public realm and plots progresses in the future.

7.1 Refuse strategy

The framework is designed to incorporate adequate space to facilitate servicing and refuse collection without requiring overly engineered streets. This will seek to reduce reliance on turning heads where possible by utilising courtyards and looped streets. Refuse will be primarily collected from on-street with on-plot collection undertaken for limited parts of the site. These areas may also include pedestrianised areas where access for vehicles are generally prohibited but access is permitted for refuse collection.

The framework can effectively accommodate servicing needs while maintaining the desired sense of place and community atmosphere promoted by the framework. This approach ensures functionality without compromising aesthetics or user experience.



Fig. 70. Refuse strategy diagram

7.2 Services and utilities strategy

The utilities strategy for Holt Town ensures efficient management of existing services and seamless integration of new infrastructure across all development phases.

For existing services, surveys of buildings marked for demolition will identify active utility connections. Utility bills and Letters of Authority (LOAs) should be obtained to facilitate disconnection applications. Existing mains and infrastructure should be reviewed using utility asset maps, Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) surveys, and title deed examinations. New development should be planned to avoid disrupting critical infrastructure, such as high-pressure gas mains and Extra High Voltage (EHV) cables.

For proposed utilities, the energy strategy will assess peak demands while reusing existing capacities wherever feasible. Early engagement with utility providers will identify local capacity, upgrade requirements, and connection points. Establishing strategic utility corridors and resolving potential conflicts with drainage systems and landscaping will also be key priorities.

This streamlined strategy supports a sustainable, efficient, and well-coordinated approach to utilities management, aligning with Holt Town's development goals.

An initial study of proposed utility corridors has been conducted. The current strategy proposes locating services beneath footpaths. This is a robust approach, as it minimises potential disruptions caused by future maintenance by avoiding central movement zones. Additionally, service operators are often reluctant to place their infrastructure beneath heavily used vehicular routes.

The section illustrates that services are positioned away from main circulation routes to reduce maintenance-related disruptions. This arrangement maximises planting within the public realm, with utility corridors placed strategically to avoid conflicts with proposed tree planting shown in the illustrative masterplan.

A minimum distance of 1m between the façades of proposed buildings and utility corridors is indicated in the sections. However, the location of services adjacent to buildings may require further design development. The final placement will depend on detailed information regarding construction methods and phasing.

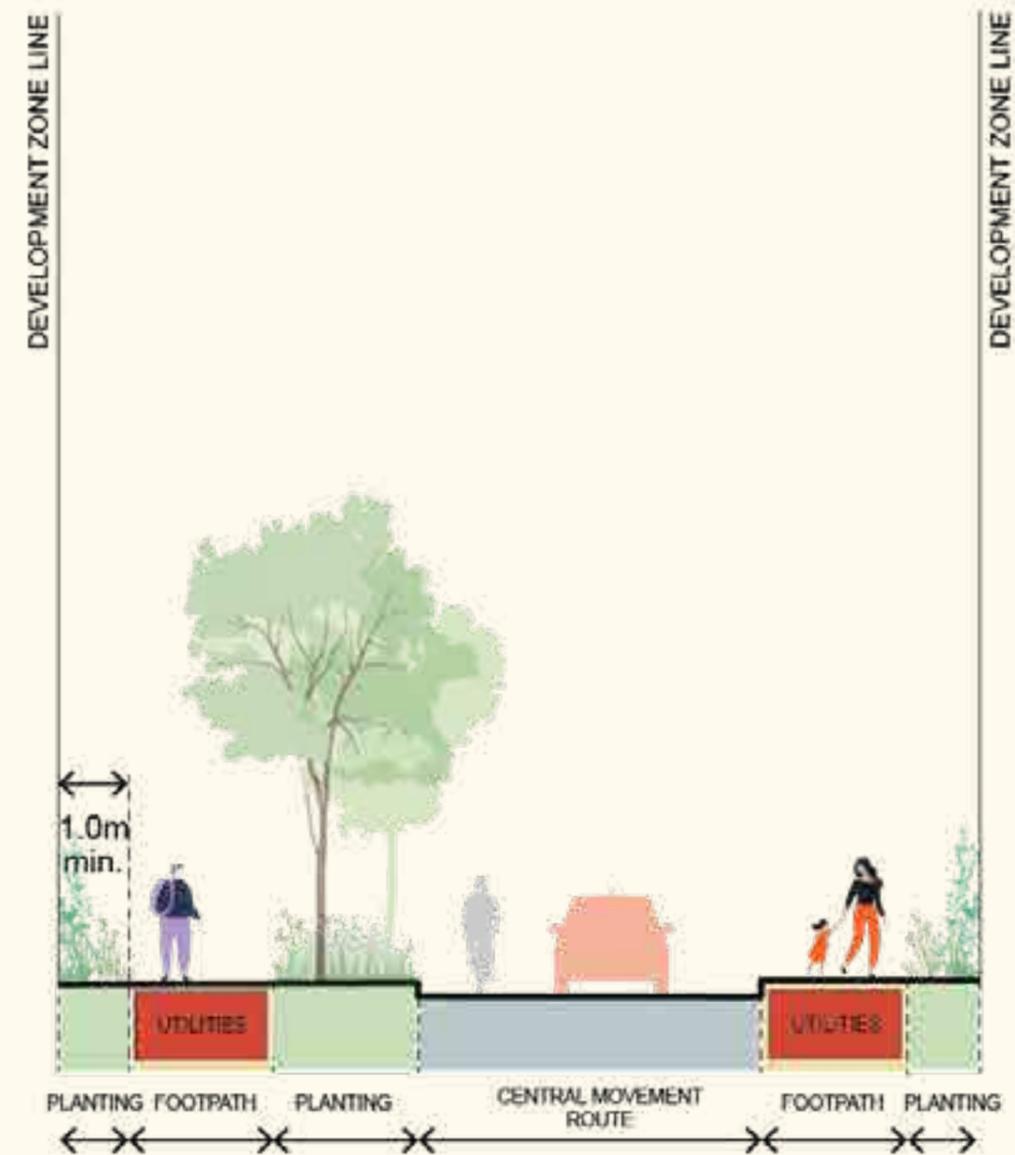


Fig. 71. Utilities strategy

7.3 Sustainability strategy

The sustainability strategy for Holt Town provides a framework for addressing sustainability throughout the design, construction, and operational phases of the development. This framework captures the priorities outlined in the NDF and aligns them with local, national, and global sustainability objectives. The strategy is structured around several themes, with clear outcomes, indicators, and checkpoints to ensure accountability and progress.

Socio-economic context

Holt Town's development aims to accommodate Manchester's growing population by providing adequate housing and infrastructure. Housing supply should meet demand, with an emphasis on mixed-use developments that address evolving socio-economic needs. Affordable housing and integrated social infrastructure are key components, ensuring accessibility for a diverse population.

Social sustainability

The strategy emphasises creating healthier environments with enhanced air quality, biophilic design, water refill stations, and car-free neighbourhoods. Public realm designs should inspire creativity, encourage participation, and provide spaces for social and recreational interaction. These spaces must be functional, incorporating clear wayfinding for both neurodivergent and neurotypical users. The development also aims to address diverse demographic needs across age, gender, ability, and cultural groups, fostering inclusivity and accessibility.

Education and skills

Educational standards and opportunities will be enhanced through new facilities, lifelong learning programs, and partnerships with local institutions to upskill the community and support local employment.

Business and culture

Holt Town aims to support creative, entrepreneurial, and industrial communities by establishing innovation hubs and creative districts, linking businesses to regional economic networks to drive economic growth.

Climate change and sustainability

Holt Town's commitment to sustainability includes achieving net-zero carbon through retrofits and innovations aligned with Manchester's 2038 target. Carbon savings will be tracked through metrics for renewable energy, life cycle carbon reductions, and community engagement in energy initiatives. Water-neutral systems will focus on conservation, metreing, and recycling. A circular economy strategy will minimise waste, emphasizing material efficiency, recycling, and limiting landfill diversion. Climate change resilience will be addressed through risk assessments and mitigation plans for both human and infrastructural impacts.

Natural environment

The strategy aims to achieve over 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) through strategic ecological integration. Habitat enhancement plans will support blue-green infrastructure, species diversity, and accessible natural areas. Green corridors will enhance connectivity, wellbeing, and ecological resilience by expanding public green spaces and linking natural habitats.

Digital sector

Digital inclusion will be promoted by improving digital literacy and skills within the local population through training programs. Accessible and robust digital infrastructure, including public Wi-Fi and IoT (Internet of Things) applications, will support smart urban management. Innovation will leverage data and AI-driven insights to address city challenges such as mobility, energy, and service delivery through pilot projects and infrastructure improvements.

This comprehensive sustainability framework ensures Holt Town meets its environmental, social, and economic responsibilities, contributing to a thriving, inclusive, and resilient urban community.

8 Stewardship and Maintenance

8.1 Holt Town Trust

A community-led trust

A community-led trust can be an effective stewardship model for Holt Town because it empowers local residents to take ownership of assets and decisions, ensuring they are managed in the community’s best interest.

This model fosters transparency, accountability, and long-term sustainability by prioritising local needs and values over external interests. It also encourages collaboration, civic engagement, and resource pooling, which can lead to innovative solutions for economic development, environmental preservation, and social equity.

The Holt Town Trust (HTT) would aim to create a sustainable, well-maintained, and vibrant public realm through a digitally enabled collaborative maintenance and stewardship approach involving multiple stakeholders.

Key stakeholders include local government, private landowners, community groups, local businesses, charities and environmental organisations. There are also a number of existing catchment partners who have a history in the area, the HTT will continue to build on these relationships.

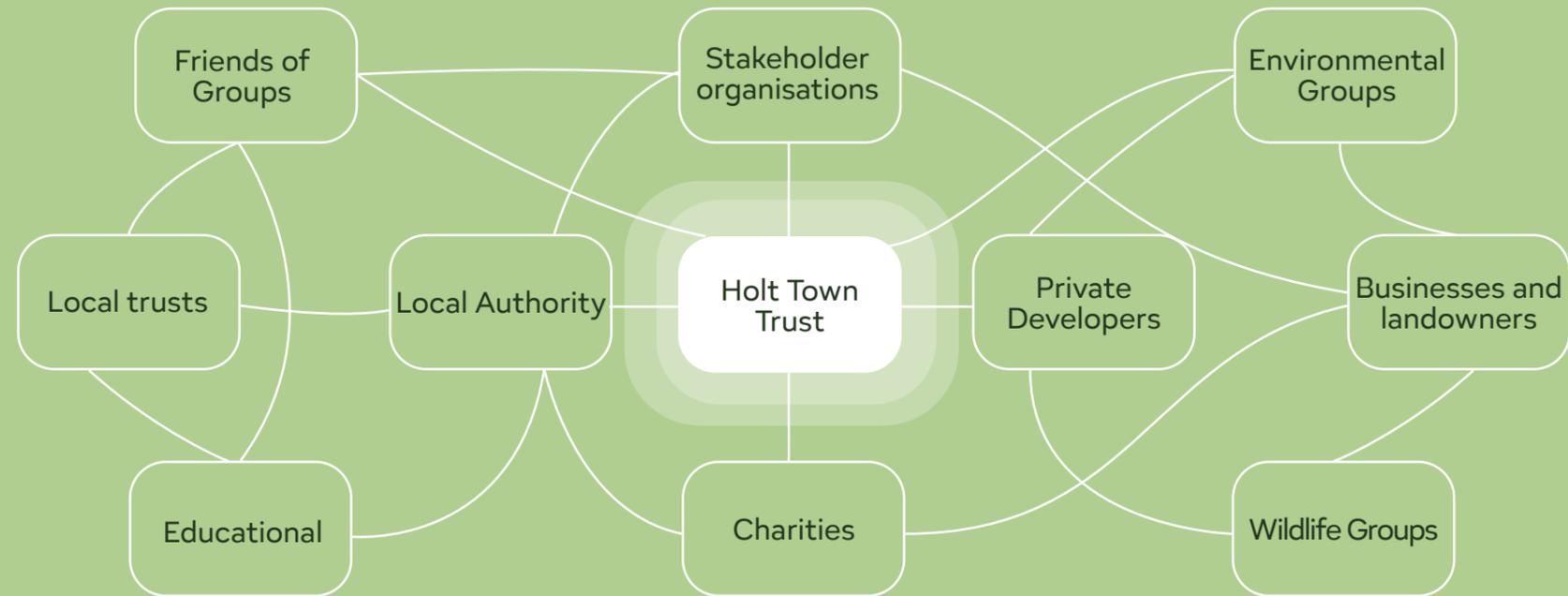


Fig. 72. Ecosystem of potential stewardship partners

Sharing the responsibility

Local Authorities are continuing to experience financial difficulties when it comes to the stewardship of public spaces.

Funding cuts to local authorities have severely impacted many local authority resources including open space maintenance. Consequently more and more public spaces are falling into disrepair.

The maintenance and stewardship plan for Holt Town could involve conducting a comprehensive survey of assets, implementing eco-friendly practices, and developing collaborative maintenance agreements with landowners. Sustainable practices such as using organic fertilisers, water-efficient irrigation, and promoting native plants and habitat management

could be prioritised. Community involvement could be fostered through volunteer events, educational programs, and the creation of a “Friends of Holt Town” group to engage residents in ongoing stewardship activities.

Holt Town’s landscape maintenance could cover a range of spaces requiring responsibilities to be shared based on the specific conditions and type of landscape involved. This may involve habitat stewards, who can oversee broader landscape stewardship and management of areas like woodland, as well as garden stewards, who can concentrate on targeted horticulture-tural initiatives like community growing.

8.2 Implementing a new model of stewardship

A digitally enabled landscape maintenance strategy, led by a community trust and involving public and private sectors, can transform how green spaces are managed and maintained.

The following initiatives provide a step-by-step guide to implementing and running such a strategy in Holt Town, supported by relevant case studies.

1. Formation of a community-Led trust

Establish a trust to act as the central governing body, comprising community members, local government representatives, and private sector stakeholders.

Case Study: Milton Keynes Parks Trust (UK):

A community-led trust funded through private-sector partnerships and property endowments, managing parks and open spaces with community participation.

The Parks Trust, established as an independent charity in 1992, manages over 6,000 acres of green spaces in Milton Keynes, including parks, woodlands, lakes, and landscaped areas. Unlike most cities where parkland is managed by local authorities, Milton Keynes' founders created a separate charity to protect its landscapes permanently. The trust was set up with a 999-year lease on 4,500 acres and a £22m property endowment, which funds its operations.

Case Study: Crystal Palace Park Trust (UK): A charitable organization responsible for managing and preserving Crystal Palace Park in London. Established to ensure the park's long-term sustainability, the Trust works to enhance its historical, cultural, and recreational value for the local community and visitors. It aims to safeguard the park's heritage, promote biodiversity, and provide inclusive spaces for education, leisure, and events, ensuring its legacy as a vital public resource.

2. Digital inventory and mapping

Following on from the work prepared by MVRDV NEXT to support the project with a digital layer of analysis and direction, a baseline survey of the landscape would need to be conducted to create a digital inventory of green assets, such as trees, paths, water features, and facilities.

This would implement GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and drone technology to map the area, identify needs, and monitor assets over time.

Case Study: Singapore's Smart Nation Initiative:

The government uses GIS-based mapping to monitor urban greenery and plan maintenance efficiently.

3. Integrated maintenance scheduling

Develop a maintenance schedule based on data from sensors and community inputs.

To enable this strategy we would deploy IoT sensors to track soil moisture, weather conditions, and infrastructure wear, and integrate this data into a central management platform.

Case Study: Smart Watering Systems in Barcelona (Spain):

IoT-enabled sensors control irrigation in public parks, saving water and improving plant health.

Case Study: AI-powered garden Chelsea show garden 2025:

Collaboration between leading garden designer Tom Massey and Microsoft to go on display at Chelsea flower show 2025. Wireless sensors hidden in the soil measure moisture, nutrient levels, acidity and alkalinity. These will connect to a computer in a pavilion in the garden, which people will be able to consult to see how the garden is doing.

4. Community engagement through apps and platforms

Engage the local community to report issues, suggest improvements, and volunteer for maintenance activities. Issues might include reporting a tree that looks to be suffering from lack of water or a pot-hole in the road.

This approach should be developed or use existing platforms like FixMyStreet or bespoke apps to collect reports, manage volunteer schedules, and encourage participation.

Case Study: Heart Your Parks (San Francisco, USA): An app allows residents to report park maintenance issues and join improvement projects.

5. Partnerships with the private sector

Partner with private entities to provide funding, resources, or expertise in exchange for recognition or benefits (e.g., sponsorship opportunities).

This should be digitally enabled using an app like 'blockchain' for transparent tracking of contributions and spending, ensuring accountability.

Case Study: Friends of the High Line (New York, USA): A public-private partnership raises funds from private donors and corporate sponsors to maintain and improve the iconic urban park.

6. Data-driven decision-making

Use collected data to evaluate the effectiveness of maintenance strategies and adjust accordingly.

This should be implemented using AI or machine learning to analyse trends in usage, wear, and environmental conditions to optimise resource allocation.

Case Study: Melbourne Urban Forest Visual (Australia): A digital platform uses data to track tree health and engage the public in planning and upkeep.

7. Long-term sustainability and funding

Develop a financial model leveraging grants, local government funds, and private investments while keeping costs transparent.

Crowd funding platforms and digital marketing campaigns to attract wider support.

Case Study: Emscher Landscape Park (Germany): Funded through partnerships and public contributions, it uses digital tools for community outreach and ecological monitoring.

Benefits of the strategy

Efficiency: Technology reduces manual effort, improves response times, and optimises resource use.

Engagement: Apps and platforms ensure sustained community involvement.

Transparency: Digital tools provide clear records of activities and finances, building trust.

Resilience: Data-driven insights support adaptive maintenance to mitigate climate impacts.

By integrating digital tools and fostering collaboration across sectors, Holt Town's community-led trust can effectively maintain and enhance public landscapes while promoting shared responsibility.



Emscher Park



Melbourne Urban Forest Visual platform

Horticultural Hub

To ensure adequate space is dedicated to maintaining key habitats across the site from the outset, it is recommended that a Horticultural Hub be integrated into the masterplan.

The Horticultural Hub would provide a central space for the community to gather, learn about the site's diverse habitats, and actively participate in landscape maintenance. In addition to serving as storage for maintenance equipment, the hub should function as a dynamic community engagement space, incorporating digital technologies to monitor the landscape and provide educational opportunities.

In the initial phases of the project a structure should be lightweight and designed for flexibility, enabling it to be easily disassembled and relocated as the project evolves. This adaptability ensures the hub can expand and adapt in alignment with the development of new public spaces over the years. Later on in the development of Holt Town a more permanent hub could be incorporated in the base of a building in a location convenient to The Confluence Park or River Medlock Valley.

There is also an opportunity to connect the hub with skills development and training, transforming it into a "living lab." This could include partnerships with the University of Manchester and programs such as the MSc in Nature Recovery, Restoration, and Rewilding. The Mobility Mill, could prove an appropriate location for this Horticultural Hub.



Serge Hill Project and Plant Library
(© The Garden Conservatory)



A city farm - Waterloo City Farm, London (© Feilden Fowles)



Modular horticultural workspace with flexible design (© Darren Bradley)



Greenhouse used for community gardening - The Natural Pavillion, Alemre (© Daria Scagliola & Stijn Brakkee)



Functional horticultural workshop and tool storage - The Orangery, Norwich (© Simon Kennedy)

Fig. 73. Horticultural hub in urban context precedents.

9 Concluding Remarks and Next Steps

9.1 Concluding remarks

This Public Realm Strategy (PRS) has been developed to support the Neighbourhood Development Framework (NDF), addressing Manchester City Council’s ambitious brief from October 2023.

The Council’s vision called for not only refining and articulating its goals but also identifying realistic opportunities to establish a new City Centre neighbourhood. The roadmap for transforming Holt Town’s public realm, as outlined in this document, now requires actionable investment, ongoing collaboration with the private sector and central government, and strong leadership from Manchester City Council to drive investment, development, and inclusive growth.

Creating a high-quality public realm that benefits all current and future residents and employees will necessitate innovative delivery models, alongside effective management, maintenance, and governance structures grounded in the vision and principles defined in this PRS.

The PRS has been designed to support the comprehensive redevelopment of Holt Town, offering a framework to guide collaboration between landowners and developers.

Development proposals must align with the area’s planning objectives as set out in the NDF, this document, and other planning documents endorsed by the City Council.



Fig. 74. Aerial sketch of Holt Town proposals

9.2 Potential meanwhile opportunities

The comprehensive redevelopment of Holt Town will take many years to complete. The strategy for delivery will focus on early phases to create immediate momentum and confidence through building partnerships and collaborating with investors and developers. Manchester City Council will lead with an enabling role to deliver inclusive growth in line with the NDF vision.

The City Council recognise that good meanwhile and interim uses can bring meaningful employment, social and cultural activity and animation of post-industrial landscapes such as Holt Town. Such uses can also bring greater connectivity, security and environmental benefits to regeneration areas in transition with opportunities for phased environmental improvements and public realm. Improving walking and cycling routes and linkages across Holt Town is a high priority. The City Council will expect tangible socio-economic and physical environmental benefits from any meanwhile proposals that improve the quality of life and wider beneficial outcomes for residents neighbouring Holt Town within adjoining communities.



Temporary Lido - Kings Cross, London



Regents Park Open Air Theatre



Hoardings involving artist collaboration



Temporary art installation - Kings Cross



Temporary installation - Rooftop Walk Rotterdam (© Pavlos Ventouris / MVRDV)

9.3 Meanwhile interfaces

Early activation

Careful attention will be given to temporary interfaces, to ensure the development feels complete at every phase.



Earls Court hoarding



Borough Market stalls



Coal Drops Yard seasonal activation



Elephant Park hoardings and edge planting

Key creative hoarding

Prominent sections of the hoarding serve as a canvas, drawing inspiration from the site's cultural heritage and offering a platform to showcase the talents of local artists.

Temporary kiosks and seating

There is potential for temporary kiosks and seating at the edge of construction sites, which should support ground-floor businesses, such as retail or cultural uses, that would benefit from outdoor seating areas.

Temporary site activation and opportunity areas

During construction, there will be opportunities for temporary uses before the development of the plots. These spaces may face the public realm but might require secure boundaries depending on the intended use.

Landscaped edges

Temporary landscaping can enhance the interface with construction sites and help soften the visual impact of construction hoarding.

