MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

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Water Street Strategic Regeneration Framework Update 2026

Contents

1.0 Executive Summary

The refresh of Water Street Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) sets out a clear and coordinated vision for the continued transformation of this undeveloped area at the western edge of Manchester city centre.

This SRF presents an ambitious and coherent approach to unlocking the site's potential as a new city centre residential-led neighbourhood, defined by a generous public park, activated streets and greatly improved connectivity across an historically severed part of the city. The redevelopment of Water Street represents an important opportunity to repair fragmented urban fabric, extend pedestrian and cycle networks, and improve the experience of moving between key cultural destinations including the Science and Industry Museum and Aviva Studios.

The SRF describes the opportunity to create a significant new public open space, centred on the River Medlock, which improves access to nature, supports biodiversity and establishes a distinctive landscape character for the new neighbourhood. The park will act as the primary structuring element of the masterplan, integrating walking and cycling routes, creating new east–west and north–south connections, and supporting active ground floor uses.

The document outlines the key objectives of the SRF. The creation of a new city park is a key Council priority and would be unlocked through tall, residential buildings which would also contribute positively to the city housing supply. The siting, scale and footprint of the residential buildings should be designed to maximise the size and scope of the park as well as responding to the emerging urban scale along gateway routes and the river corridor. The SRF provides an illustrative approach to how height and density could be arranged, with final scale and form to be determined through detailed assessment at planning application stage. A cluster of taller elements is shown at the site's western edge, near the Inner Ring Road and Trinity Islands, to demonstrate how this could contribute to a coherent skyline that reflects the site's gateway role and enable the size and scale of the park area to be maximised.

The SRF provides a spatial framework that will help guide future planning applications, support public consultation, and inform the coordinated delivery of infrastructure, public realm and development plots. It aligns with the ambitions of the Council's strategic priorities to deliver sustainable, high density, inclusive city centre neighbourhoods with access to high quality public spaces and active travel routes.

Through this Framework, Water Street will evolve from an underused, fragmented site into a connected and vibrant place that supports sustainable living, strengthens movement networks across the western city centre, and contributes positively to the ongoing regeneration of Manchester.

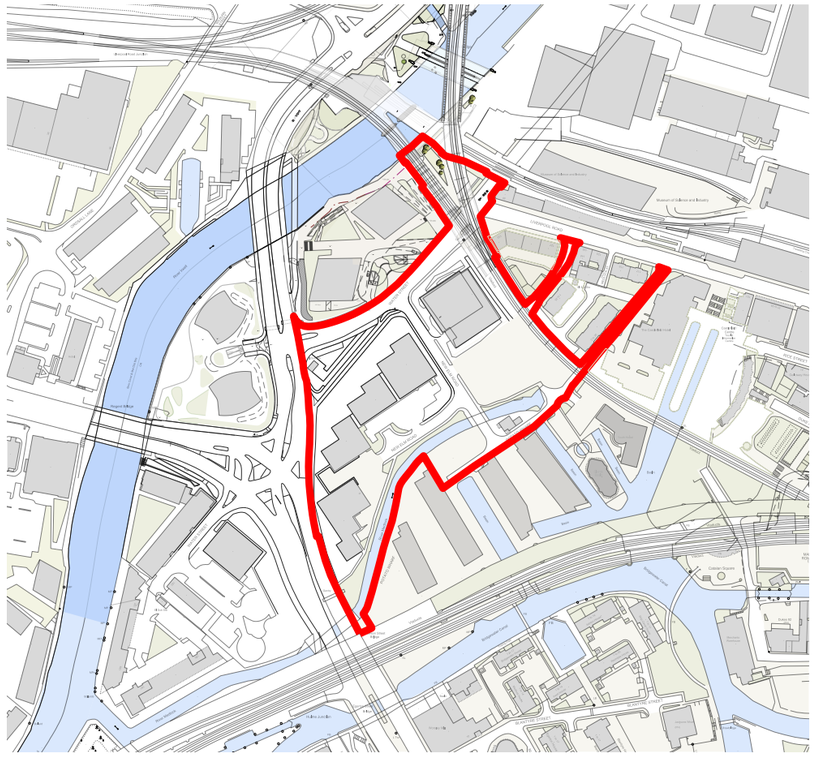
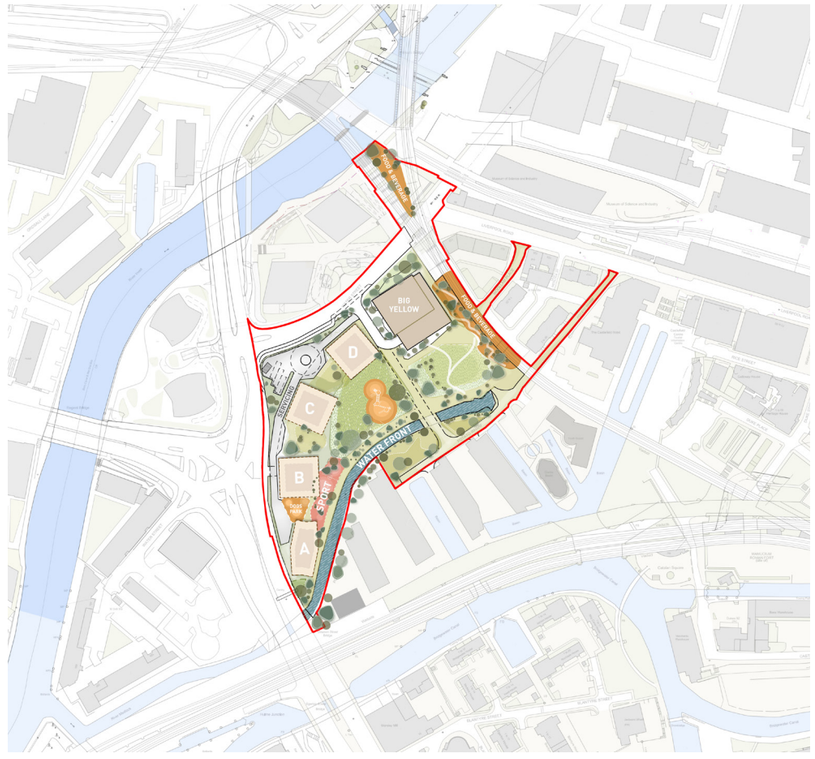


Fig. 1.01
Location plan depicting the site boundary for this Water Street Strategic Regeneration Framework update



SRF

Fig. 1.02
Illustrative masterplan

Fig. 1.03
Illustrative sketch of the railway viaduct and potential retail spaces from the proposed park

2.0 Purpose, Status & Scope

2.1 Why the SRF is being refreshed and the Purpose of the Framework

Since the previous Water Street Strategic Regeneration Framework (2017) was produced, the wider area has undergone significant transformation. Major parts of the earlier SRF have now been delivered or are well underway, meaning much of the surrounding context has fundamentally changed. As a result, the remaining undeveloped land at Water Street presents a strategic opportunity for coordinated regeneration.

Alongside the physical change delivered in the area over the last ten years, Manchester's needs and priorities have continued to evolve. Delivering high-quality public open space, strengthening pedestrian and cycle permeability, enhancing connections to public transport, supporting climate resilience and creating inclusive neighbourhoods with access to nature are key. In this context, a refreshed approach for the remaining land at Water Street is required, which shifts the focus towards a residential and landscape-led strategy, centered around a major new public park along the River Medlock.

The refreshed SRF therefore provides an updated and coordinated spatial vision for the transformation of this strategically located but underused site. Its purpose is to guide future development proposals, shape investment decisions and support public consultation, ensuring the site evolves in a way that reflects the City's regeneration ambitions and responds to its changing context.

The Framework establishes a clear direction for the creation of a new residential-led neighbourhood anchored by a significant public park, enhanced east–west and north–south connections, and active ground-floor uses that contribute to the vibrancy of the wider area. It sets out the spatial structure, urban design and placemaking ambitions that should inform future planning applications, alongside high-level movement, landscape and implementation considerations. The SRF aims to ensure that the site is brought forward in a coordinated manner that aligns development activity, public realm delivery and infrastructure improvements.

The focus of this update is on the remaining undeveloped land between Water St and the River Medlock, as indicated on the plan adjacent.

2.2 Status of the SRF

Once approved by Manchester City Council's Executive, the SRF will provide an up to date framework within which to guide development and priorities for the Council in this area. It articulates the Council's expectations for the regeneration of the area.

The SRF should be read in the same context as the development plan which consists of Places for Everyone, the Manchester Core Strategy and the saved policies in the UDP.

The SRF signals the Council's regeneration priorities and supports ongoing collaboration across the area. It sets out a shared vision and coordinated structure that provides clarity for landowners, developers, neighbouring communities, infrastructure providers and other stakeholders.

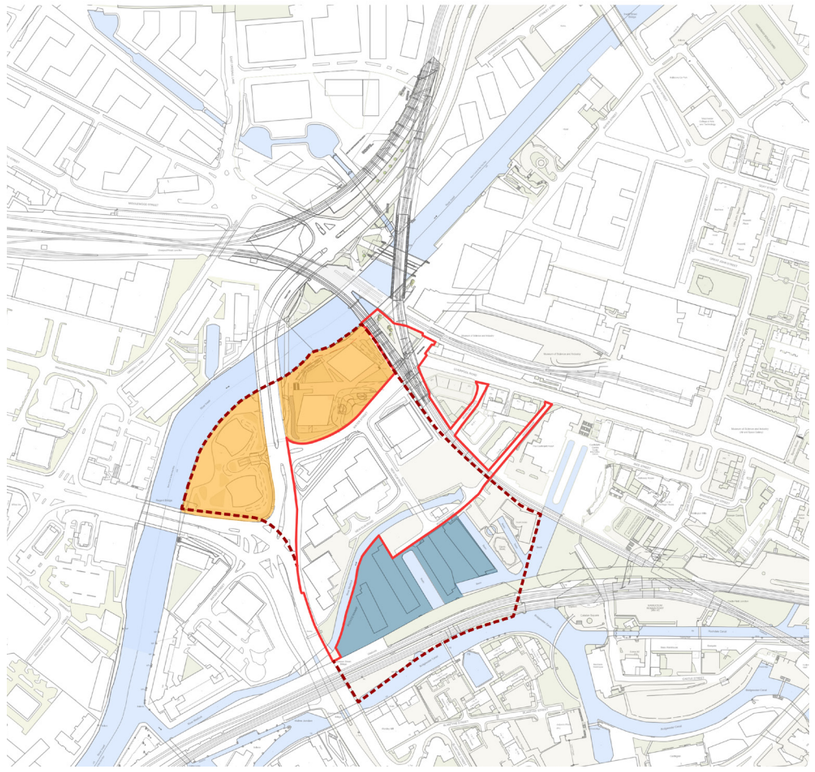


Fig. 2.01
SIte plan showing Current and 2017 SRF Boundaries showing completed and under construction projects within the original boundary

2.3 Scope of the SRF

The SRF applies to the defined Water Street study area, comprising the land bounded by the River Medlock to the south, the railway viaducts to the east, Water Street to the north, and the Inner Ring Road (Regent Road) to the west. As part of this update the boundary has been amended as shown, to allow the consideration of potential connections and linkages beyond the original red line and through the railway viaducts to Liverpool Rd and St John's. The area bounded by the new red line is 3.7 hectares.

The SRF sets out the following:

- Spatial Vision – an overarching vision for the site that reflects its gateway position, heritage setting and regenerative potential.
- Illustrative masterplan – aspirations to guide the arrangement of buildings, open spaces, routes, and public realm, ensuring development responds to local character, environmental conditions and heritage.
- Development Aspirations – high-level ideas relating to scale, massing, built form, active frontages and character areas, without stipulating building heights, density figures or policy-based criteria.
- Movement and Connectivity Framework – high-level strategies to improve pedestrian and cycle movement, enable onward connections to public transport, enhance permeability under and around the viaducts, and strengthen links within Castlefield to St John's, Trinity Islands and the wider city centre.
- Landscape and Public Realm Strategy – showing the creation of a major new public park centred on the River Medlock, and a wider network of green and blue infrastructure connections.

All building heights, massing and illustrative views in this SRF are indicative only and are included to show how a high density, park led neighbourhood could be arranged. The site lies within the Castlefield Conservation Area and nearby listed and non-listed heritage assets/structures. The acceptability of height, scale and townscape impact will be determined at planning application stage, in line with national and local policy.

3.0 Regeneration Context

3.1 The Evolution of Manchester City Centre

Regeneration proposals for the Water Street site must be understood within the wider transformation taking place along the southern edge of Manchester city centre. This area, shaped by its post-industrial heritage and the infrastructure of the Mancunian Way, has seen coordinated regeneration across multiple projects with shared goals: repairing severance, improving pedestrian and cycle permeability, expanding public realm networks, and delivering high-density, mixed-use neighbourhoods. To the west of the city centre, Water Street is a key component of this evolving geography. Over the past decade, major regeneration at St John's, Trinity Islands, Great Jackson Street and a range of cultural, institutional and commercial developments have been transforming a fragmented landscape of former industrial uses and surface parking into a network of compact, walkable, high-density communities that support the expansion of the city's cultural, economic and residential offer.

The Water St site forms a hinge between several major regeneration areas, each with its own character and scale, but all sharing the ambition to deliver a more connected, sustainable, and inclusive city centre. The SRF provides an opportunity to complete this picture by turning an under-utilised plot into a coherent new neighbourhood that reinforces wider city-centre regeneration objectives:

- The growth of high-density residential neighbourhoods supporting Manchester's expanding population.
- The emergence of new cultural anchors, particularly Aviva Studios, the Science & Industry Museum and programming across St John's.
- The city's strategic shift towards green and blue infrastructure, with new parks, canalside routes and riverside landscapes.
- Ongoing initiatives to improve connectivity and permeability, particularly at locations historically divided by infrastructure.

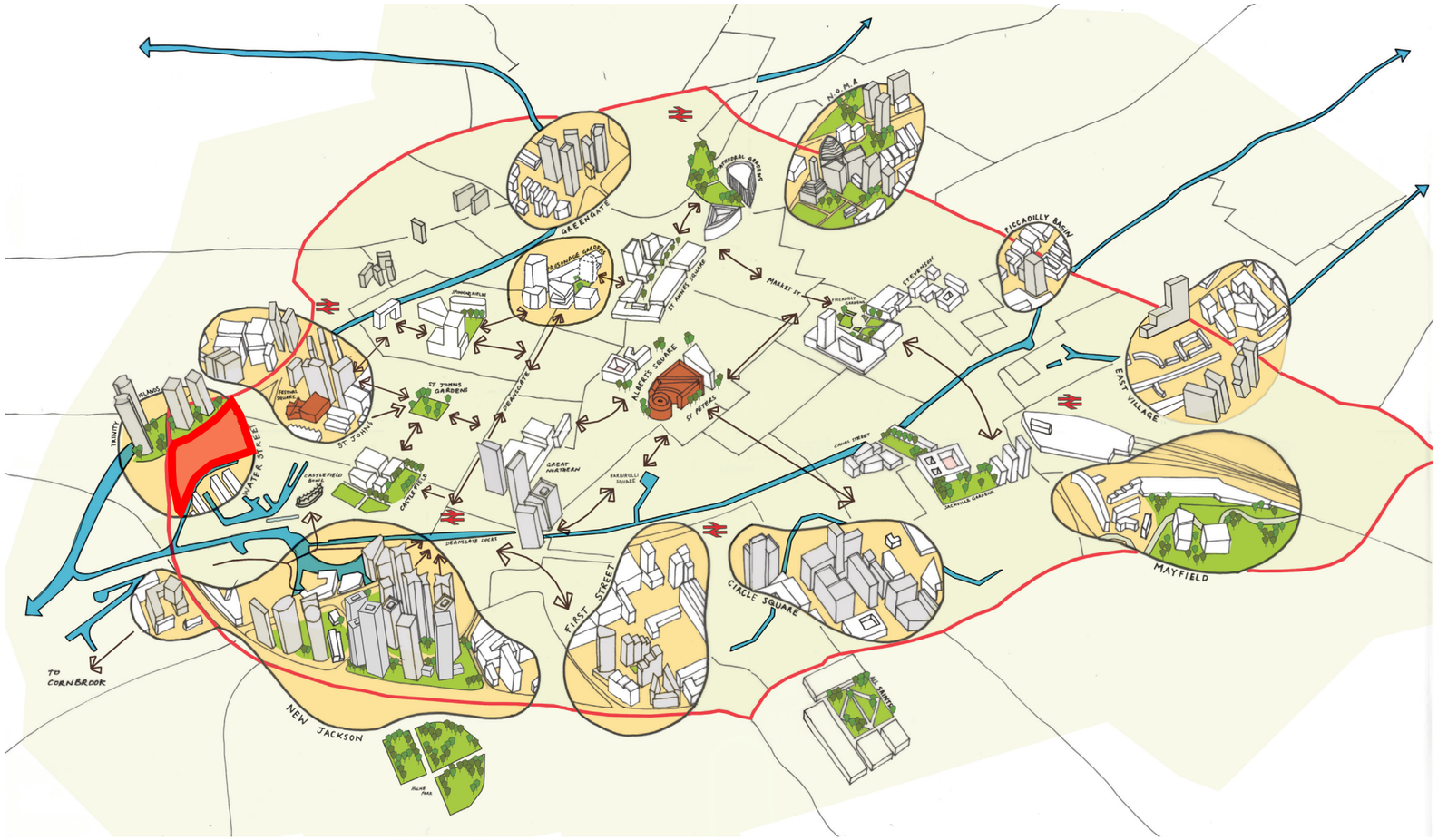


Fig. 3.01
City wide diagram showing links between existing character areas within and around the inner ring road.

3.0 Regeneration Context

3.2 Repairing Long-Standing Urban Severance

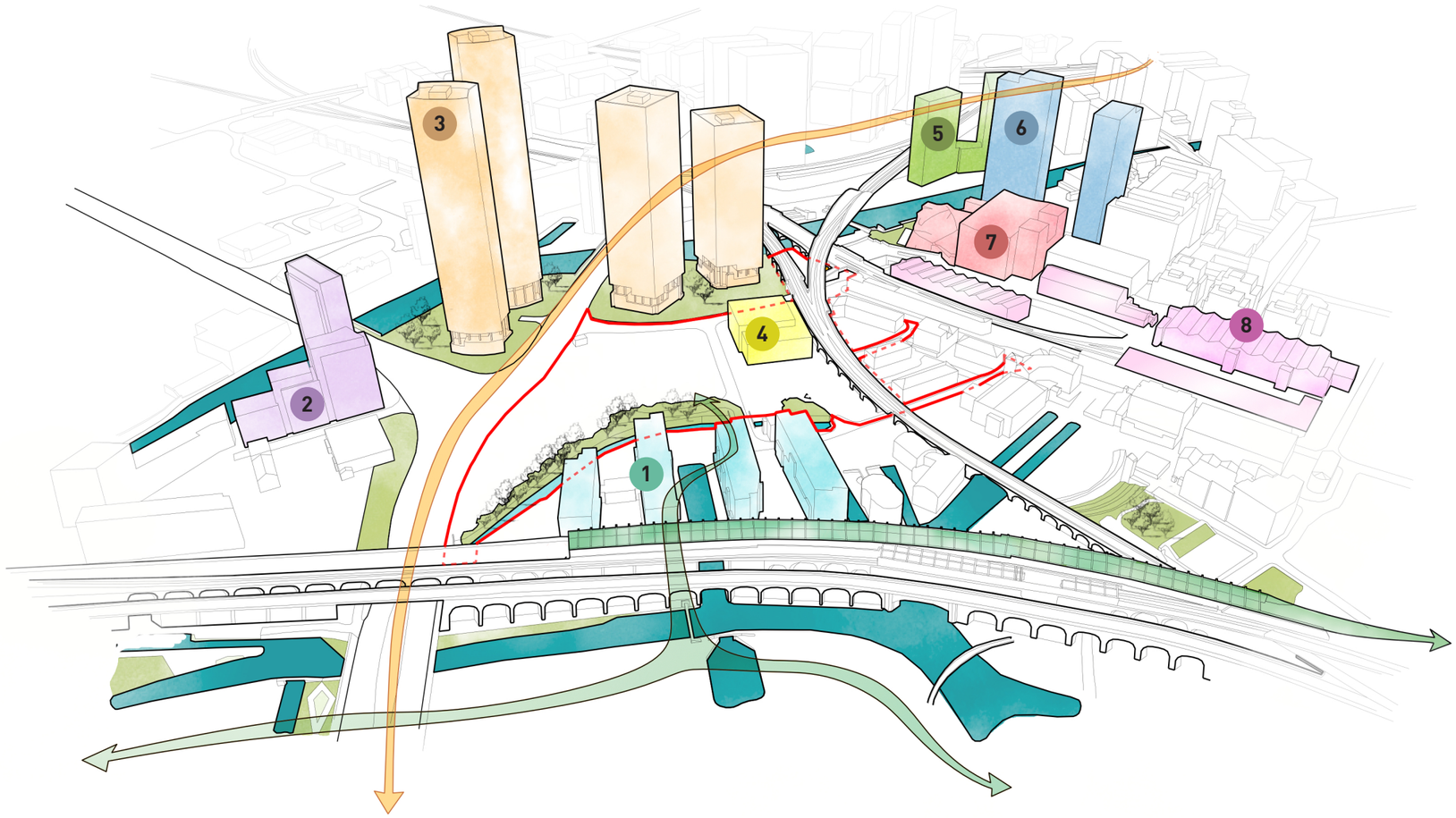
The wider Water Street area has historically been shaped by the presence of the Inner Ring Road, the River Medlock, and the extensive railway viaducts. Together, these elements have created a series of physical and perceptual barriers that have restricted movement, limited development opportunities and contributed to a fragmented townscape.

Recent large scale regeneration projects across Manchester have successfully demonstrated how development can help repair this severance by introducing active travel movement corridors, improving access under and across viaducts, delivering high-quality public spaces, creating attractive, well-lit pedestrian environments, and reinforcing east–west and north–south desire lines. The Water Street site represents the next logical step in this process.

3.3 Relationship to Key Regeneration Areas

Water Street sits at the intersection of several established and emerging neighbourhoods, each contributing to the city's broader spatial structure.

- St John's & Aviva Studios – improved walking connections will strengthen their role as catalysts for activity and support spill-over footfall.
- Trinity Islands & River Irwell Corridor – the site forms a natural extension to this emerging cluster and can reinforce the city's approach to accommodating growth along strategic routes.
- Great Jackson Street, First Street, Circle Square, Mayfield – exemplars of how higher-density mixed-use development set within quality public realm can repair severance created by the ring road.



3.4 A Gateway Location with City-Wide Influence

The site sits at a prominent gateway into the city centre, where Regent Road intersects with the Inner Ring Road. This location commands long views and creates strong impressions for those arriving from the west and south-west. Redevelopment at Water Street provides the opportunity to create a distinctive arrival point, signal the transition from metropolitan form to the urban core, enhance the visual environment along major routes, anchor the emerging skyline, and strengthen sustainable connections across the wider city centre.

Fig. 3,02
Key buildings in the vicinity of the SRF study area

Key

1. Potato Wharf
2. One Regent
3. Trinity Islands
4. Big Yellow Self Storage
5. Novella
6. Union Tower (Phase 1&2)
7. Aviva Studios
8. Science and Industry Museum

3.0 Regeneration Context

3.5 Embedding the Site within the Green & Blue Infrastructure Network

The Water Street SRF area is uniquely positioned in relation to three major elements of the city's blue infrastructure, the River Irwell to the north, the River Medlock to the south and the Bridgewater Canal and its canal basins - which project beneath the Castlefield Viaduct and onto Potato Wharf. This means that the Water Street site has the potential to occupy a pivotal position within Manchester's emerging green and blue infrastructure network. The SRF proposes a coordinated approach to stitch the site into this network by revealing and activating the Medlock, creating a new park, connecting green spaces across Castlefield and St John's, supporting pedestrian-friendly green links, and leveraging viaducts as opportunities for activity and cultural uses.

The proposals can lock into the Cyan Lines initiative, which seeks to provide a strategic structure through which the regional centre's existing and emerging public realm assets and a series of future parkland and linear routes create continuous walking and cycling corridors.

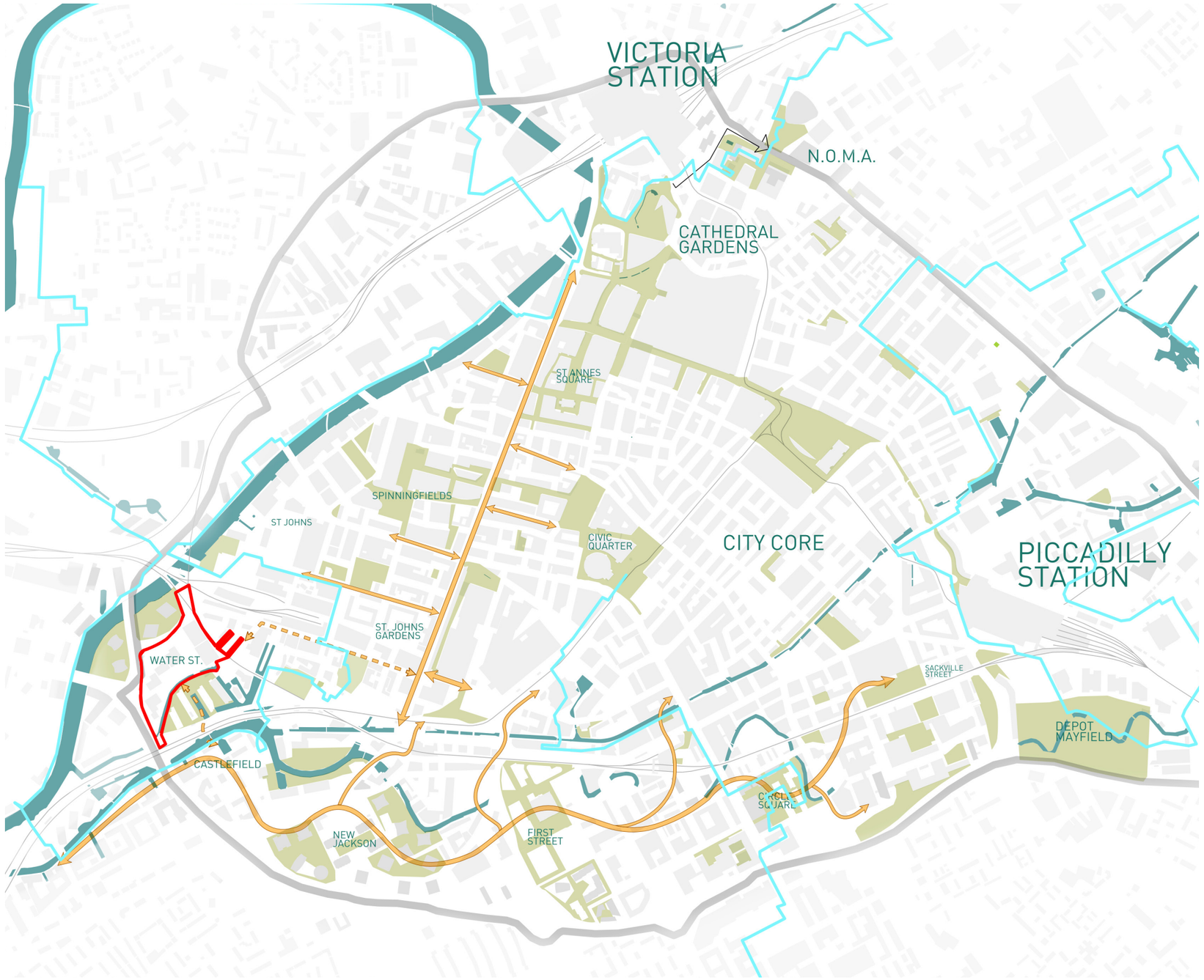


Fig. 3.03 Green and public realm links within Manchester City Centre

Fig. 3.04 Green and public realm links surrounding Water Street SRF study area

4.0 Site & Context Analysis

4.1 Site Location and Immediate Surroundings

The Water Street SRF area occupies a strategically located site at the western edge of Manchester city centre. The site is bounded by the Inner Ring Road (Regent Road) to the west, the River Medlock to the south, and a series of historic railway viaducts to the east. Water Street itself forms the northern boundary and provides a direct connection to St John's, the Science and Industry Museum, and the wider city centre.

Despite its proximity to major destinations, the site currently feels disconnected. The combination of the ring road, blocked viaduct arches, inactive edges, and fragmented urban grain limits permeability and weakens relationships within Castlefield and across to St John's and Trinity Islands.

4.2 Current Land Use and Existing Conditions

- Low-density commercial buildings.
- Extensive hardstanding with minimal landscaping.
- Overgrown river edges restricting visibility and access to the Medlock.
- Blocked viaduct arches limiting pedestrian permeability.
- Inactive frontages, particularly along the ring road and under the viaducts.

4.3 Relationship with Heritage Assets

The site sits in the Castlefield Conservation Area. The SRF identifies this heritage context as an important consideration for future design development.

The railway viaducts, canal infrastructure and surrounding townscape elements form a distinctive part of the area's character. The SRF highlights opportunities to improve visibility, access and connectivity around these features, while recognising that any proposals will be subject to the required heritage assessments at planning application stage. All massing and spatial arrangements shown in the SRF are illustrative and do not represent a determination of heritage impact, which will be evaluated at the detail design stage.

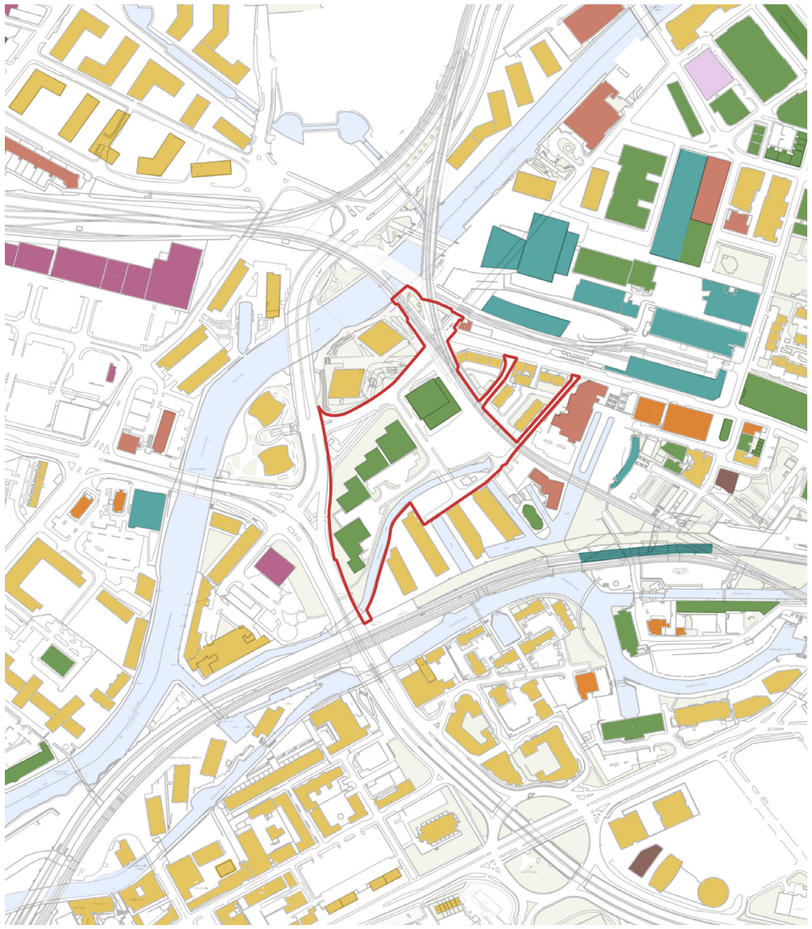


Fig. 4.01
Site Plan showing existing building uses at typical level in the locality of the SRF study area.

- Residential
- Employment
- Culture/Entertainment
- F&B
- Retail
- Hotel
- Education
- Health
- Place of Worship
- Car park

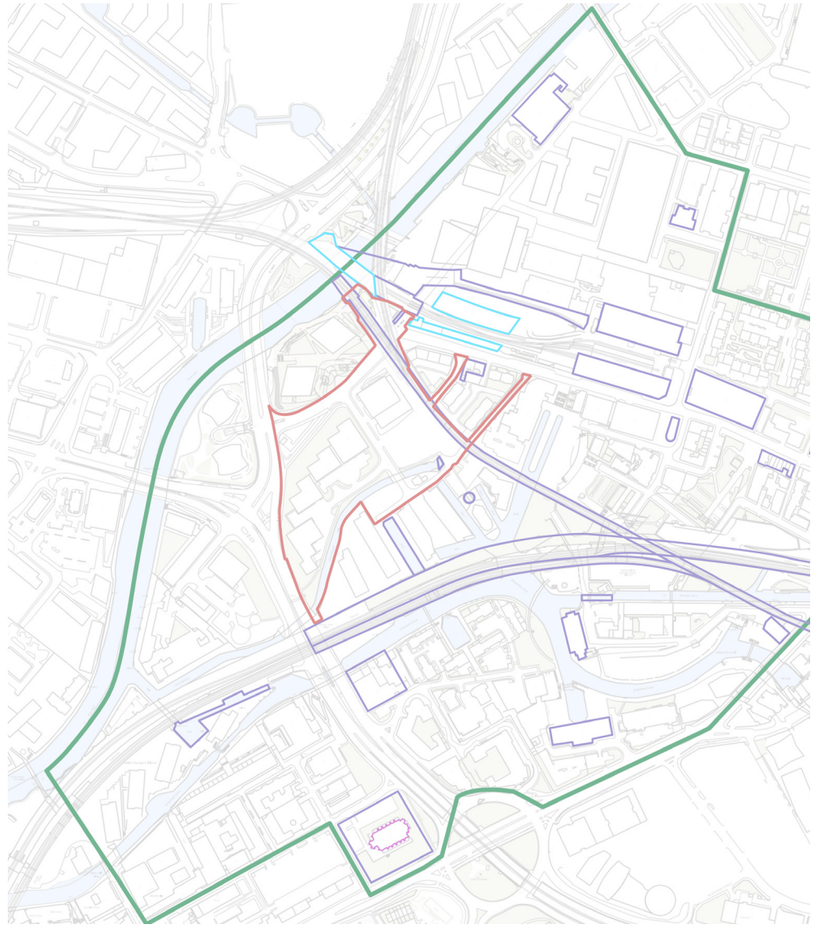


Fig. 4.02
Listed buildings within the Castlefield Conservation boundary.

- SRF
- Grade I — Grade I listed assets highlighted in light blue
- Grade II* — Grade II* listed assets highlighted in pink
- Grade II — Grade II listed assets highlighted in purple
- Castlefield Conservation area boundary

4.0 Site & Context Analysis

4.4 The Medlock and the Landscape Opportunity

The Medlock presents a strong opportunity for placemaking. The SRF proposes revealing and celebrating the river; creating a generous, well-designed riverside park; improving ecological value and biodiversity; connecting to wider green and blue networks; and establishing a strong landscape identity for the neighbourhood.

The riverside location does mean that a small part of the site, at the north eastern edge of the proposed park, is within flood zone 2. The sites proposed for new residential developments are outside of the flood zone. Planning applications for sites within the SRF area should consider the flood risk, alongside all other environmental constraints, in detail.

4.5 Movement and Permeability Constraints

Movement is limited by viaducts, the ring road and increasing traffic levels, an unclear street pattern and vehicle movement /access plan and a lack of frontage activity. The SRF proposes a network of new and enhanced routes to increase permeability and create more legible, welcoming connections.

4.6 Opportunities for Activation and Reuse of Viaduct Arches

Many arches are blocked or underutilised, they offer the potential to deliver a characterful identity for the neighbourhoodthrough re-use and / or opening.

4.7 Townscape and Character Considerations

The site sits at a transition between large-scale contemporary developments, mid-scale residential blocks and fine-grain historic townscape. This SRF adopts a principle-based approach that allows taller elements to be located at appropriate edges with building forms arranged to shape generous and usable public space and development that identifies character areas and reinforces legibility and place identity.

Fig. 4.03 Selection of photgraphs of the site, or the approach to it.

Image 1 : Approach from Castlefield Basin over the bridge - no markers for site are visible
Image 2 : Site, as viewed from Potato Wharf
Image 3 : Approach view from Potato Wharf showing overgrowth on site, no visibility of the RIver Medlock
Image 4 : View from inside Science and Industry Museum
Image 5 : Site, as viewed from Potato Wharf
Image 6 : View down Regent Road twards the site, showing Trinity Islands under construction.

4.0 Site & Context Analysis

4.8 Constraints and Opportunities

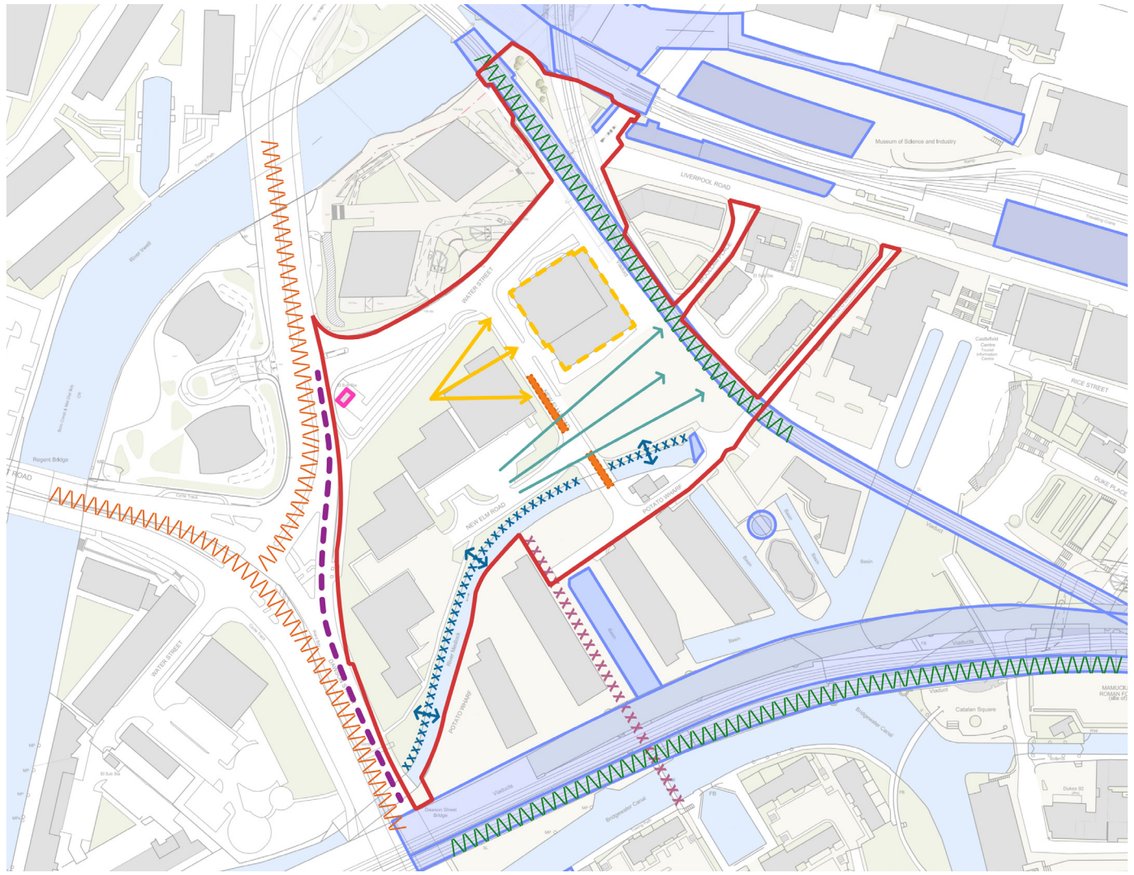


Fig. 4.04
Site constraints within the SRF study area.

Key Constraints include the area's fragmented land ownership and the issues highlighted below:

- Severance created by the ring road
- Limited permeability due tio viaducts and inactive edges
- Sensitive heritage context
- XXXX Overgrown Medlock edges and level changes
- Existing Substation
- The viaduct bounding the North of the site restricts views to St. John's at ground level.
- Lower Air Quality
- Views of Big Yellow Storage
- Existing coach parking on New Elm Road

Fig. 4.05
Opportunities within the SRF study area.

The key opportunity at Water St lies in the potential for delivering a new mixed tenure neigbourhood in a highly sustainable location and using this to strengthen the character and identity of Water St and the wider area. Other opportunities are highlighted below:

- Creating a major new park centered on the Medlock.
- Activating / opening up of viaduct arches
- Establishing new strategic pedestrian and cycle routes.
- Create a visual Gateway in and out of Manchester
- Encourage greater permeability across SRF
- Enhance and create visibility of the River Medlock
- Utilise density to provide the new park a buffer from the ring road.

5.0 Vision & Objectives

5.1 Vision

Water Street will become a distinctive, vibrant and connected new neighbourhood at the western edge of Manchester city centre. Anchored by a generous public park shaped around the River Medlock, the area will transform from an underutilised and fragmented site into a high-quality residential community that enhances sustainable movement, celebrates heritage, and contributes to the city's evolving skyline.

The neighbourhood will improve the relationship between the site and the wider city centre by strengthening pedestrian and cycle links, opening up viaduct arches and reconnecting historic routes long disrupted by viaduct infrastructure. A landscape-led approach will reveal the Medlock as a central public asset, creating a green heart for the neighbourhood and forming part of Manchester's wider network of green and blue infrastructure.

New development is envisaged to respond to its surrounding context, reflecting both the site's position within the Castlefield Conservation Area and the larger scale urban form emerging along Manchester's gateway routes. The SRF illustrates how buildings could be arranged to support delivery of a new public park and a well connected neighbourhood, with detailed assessments of massing, scale and form to take place at planning application stage. A cluster of taller elements at the western edge, near the Inner Ring Road and Trinity Island, demonstrates how this approach could release land for high quality public realm and create an illustrative skyline arrangement.

The SRF envisions a place where new homes, active frontages, cultural activity, green spaces and enhanced routes work together to create a welcoming and well-connected piece of city, which supports Manchester's long-term ambition for a more liveable, walkable and climate-resilient urban core.

5.2 Strategic Objectives

- Gateway Presence. Position taller elements at strategic edges to demonstrate how a gateway identity could be created and how land could be released for high quality public realm and aid in delivering the largest park possible.
- A Landmark Park locked into the city's green and blue infrastructure and supporting health and well being. Deliver a flexible, inclusive public park on the Medlock, improving access to nature and biodiversity.
- Seamless Connectivity and Active Travel. Position buildings to promote permeability. Create clear east–west and north–south routes, open/active arches and prioritise walking and cycling.
- Sustainable Urban Living. Enable high-density homes in a highly accessible location with active ground floors in appropriate places.
- Heritage-Led Placemaking. Recognise the Conservation Area context and other designated and non designated assets, support improved connections to heritage features, and reflect the viaduct and canal character in the design approach.

Fig. 5.01
Concept sketch

6.0 Development Aspirations

The Development Aspirations set out below provide high-level guidance to shape the form, character and structure of development within the Water Street SRF area. These aspirations establish the overall approach to built form, public realm, connections and landscape without prescribing fixed parameters or introducing planning policy. They are intended to guide the development of future planning applications and ensure that Water Street evolves coherently and sensitively within its wider context.

6.1 Spatial Structure

- Place a major public park at the centre of the neighbourhood.
- Establish strong, direct movement corridors between Castlefield, St John's, Trinity Islands and Salford that prioritise walking, wheeling and cycling and enable access to public transport.
- Respond to the alignment of the River Medlock and the historic viaducts.
- Front development onto public space to create a welcoming, active and safe environment.
- Reinforce Water Street as a link in the city centre network.

6.2 Built Form and Massing

- Define edges and frame spaces – position buildings to form strong edges to streets, the park and the Medlock.
- Support a permeable neighbourhood – enable views and routes between key destinations.
- Allow flexibility – guide future proposals without prescribing storeys, density or quantum.
- Relationship to established and emerging clusters – locate taller elements where they read as part of the western city corridor.
- Frame and protect the public park – consolidate height at appropriate edges to free up land and shelter the park.
- Mark a strategic gateway – signal arrival into the city. Show how a cluster of taller elements at strategic edges could help establish the site's gateway identity while also releasing more land for public realm. The acceptability of height, scale and massing will be assessed through the appropriate planning processes
- Release space for green and public realm – prioritise high-quality open space at ground level.
- Respond carefully to adjacent residential developments and consider the impact of taller , high density developments on these communities.

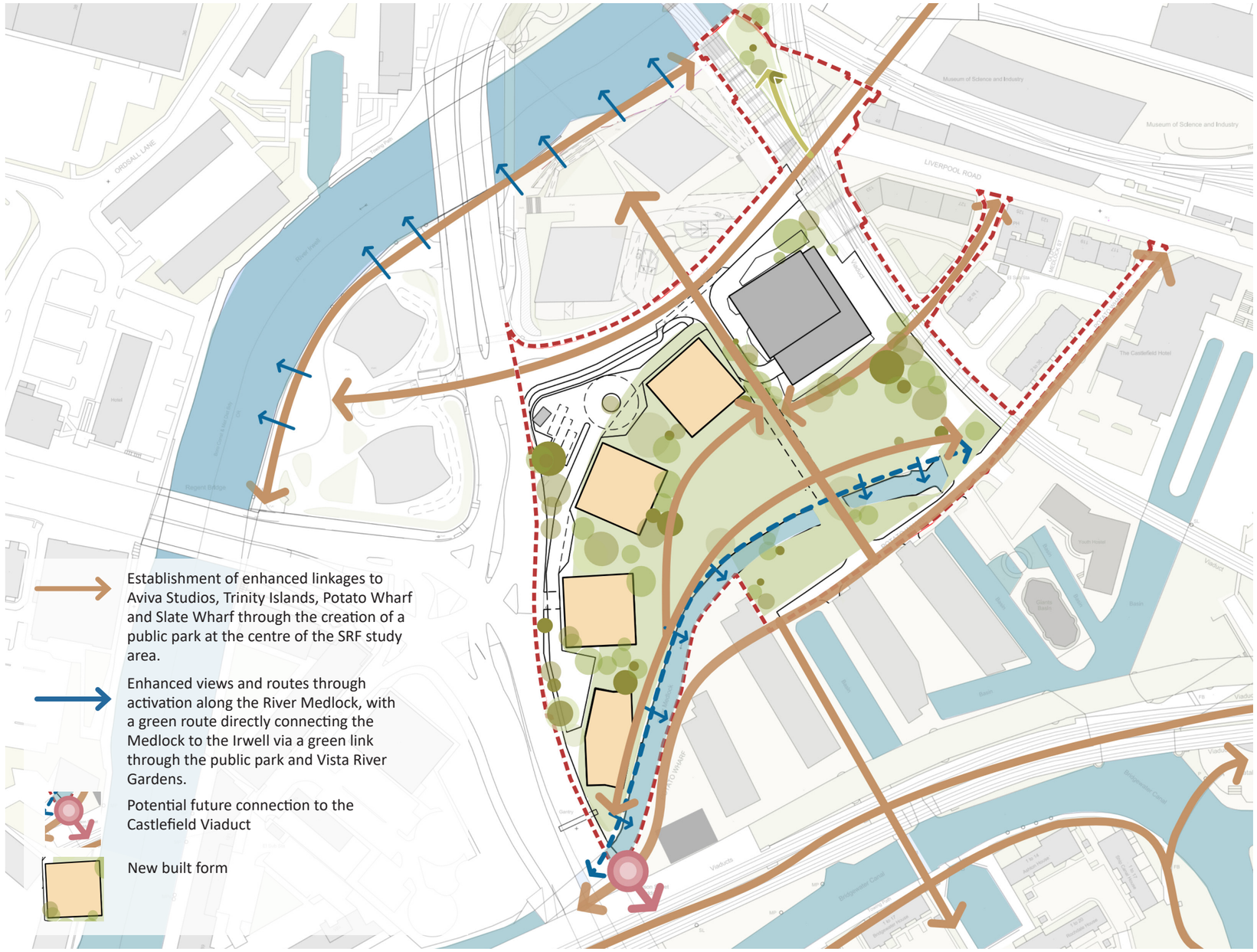


Fig. 6.01
Enhanced linkages through the creation of a public park alongside activating views onto the River Medlock and Irwell.

6.0 Development Aspirations

6.3 Use, Activation and Public Realm

- Identify character areas which respond directly to site specific conditions and which create clearly identifiable and distinctive urban places.
- Provide active and engaging frontages along primary routes and park edges. Develop appropriate strategies for the lower floors of buildings and for the public realm that recognise the importance of safety and natural surveillance.
- Focus on community amenities, small-scale retail, leisure, cafés and cultural uses where appropriate.
- Create pedestrian-priority streets and spaces which integrate SuDS and nature-based solutions
- Prioritise inclusive design, the use of coherent materials and lighting, and an emphasis on microclimate comfort and biodiversity enhancements.

Fig 6.02
Sketch view of the new park showing the buildings defining its edge in the background.
Buildings and landscape shown are illustrative only in terms of materiality and design,
all subject to detailed assessment at planning application.

7.0 Illustrative Masterplan

The Illustrative Masterplan sets out how the Water Street SRF area could be developed in accordance with the Framework's vision, objectives and development aspirations. It demonstrates how a coordinated approach to movement, landscape and built form can collectively deliver a distinctive, connected and sustainable new neighbourhood.

The masterplan is based on a landscape-led strategy, with the River Medlock providing the organising structure from which built form, routes and public spaces emerge. Development is arranged to maximise access to green space, improve permeability and respond to the site's varied townscape context, heritage assets and strategic location.

7.1 Masterplan Overview

- At the heart of the illustrative masterplan is a central public park - a substantial new place anchoring the new neighbourhood around the River Medlock
- A network of active and secure enhanced routes improve permeability and make better connections between Water St and the surrounding areas by walking, wheeling, cycling, and public transport.
- Residential development frames the park. New buildings create active frontages to the park and a strong urban edge to the site.
- Activated viaduct edges create a vibrant pedestrian zone with potential for small-scale uses within arches.

Fig. 7.01
Illustrative Masterplan

7.0 Illustrative Masterplan

7.2 Spatial Structure and Key Moves

- Consolidate the built form: New buildings are located along the northern and western edges of the site acting as a buffer to, and providing shelter from, the busy inner ring road.
- Transitions in the scale and height of development proposals should respond appropriately to the conservation area and to existing residential developments.
- The positioning of buildings creates the space for a generous central park that expands access to nature in the urban core.
- This masterplan arrangement unlocks the River Medlock – which is made more visible and accessible and can be celebrated through terraced landscapes and walkways.
- The ordering device of the park can improve permeability – allowing new routes and crossings to be developed, connecting to key destinations.

7.3 Use

- The proposals are anchored by new residential developments within the perimeter buildings, supporting a mixed tenure city-centre living neighbourhood.
- Active ground floor uses, including retail and residential amenity spaces should animate the public realm along primary routes and around the park.
- There are opportunities for new hospitality, retail or commercial uses to be located within the viaduct arches to the east of the site, activating the edges of the new public park and encouraging footfall to and from St John's, Aviva Studios and the Science and Industry Museum.

7.4 Illustrative Massing Concept

The illustrative massing shows one way in which taller buildings could be arranged along the northern and western edges of the Water Street site to reflect the broader development pattern emerging in this part of the city. This approach demonstrates how height might be distributed to help structure the neighbourhood, define key edges and release land for an expanded public realm. The arrangement is indicative and is intended to illustrate potential spatial relationships with surrounding areas, including Trinity Islands, Potato Wharf and the Castlefield Conservation Area.

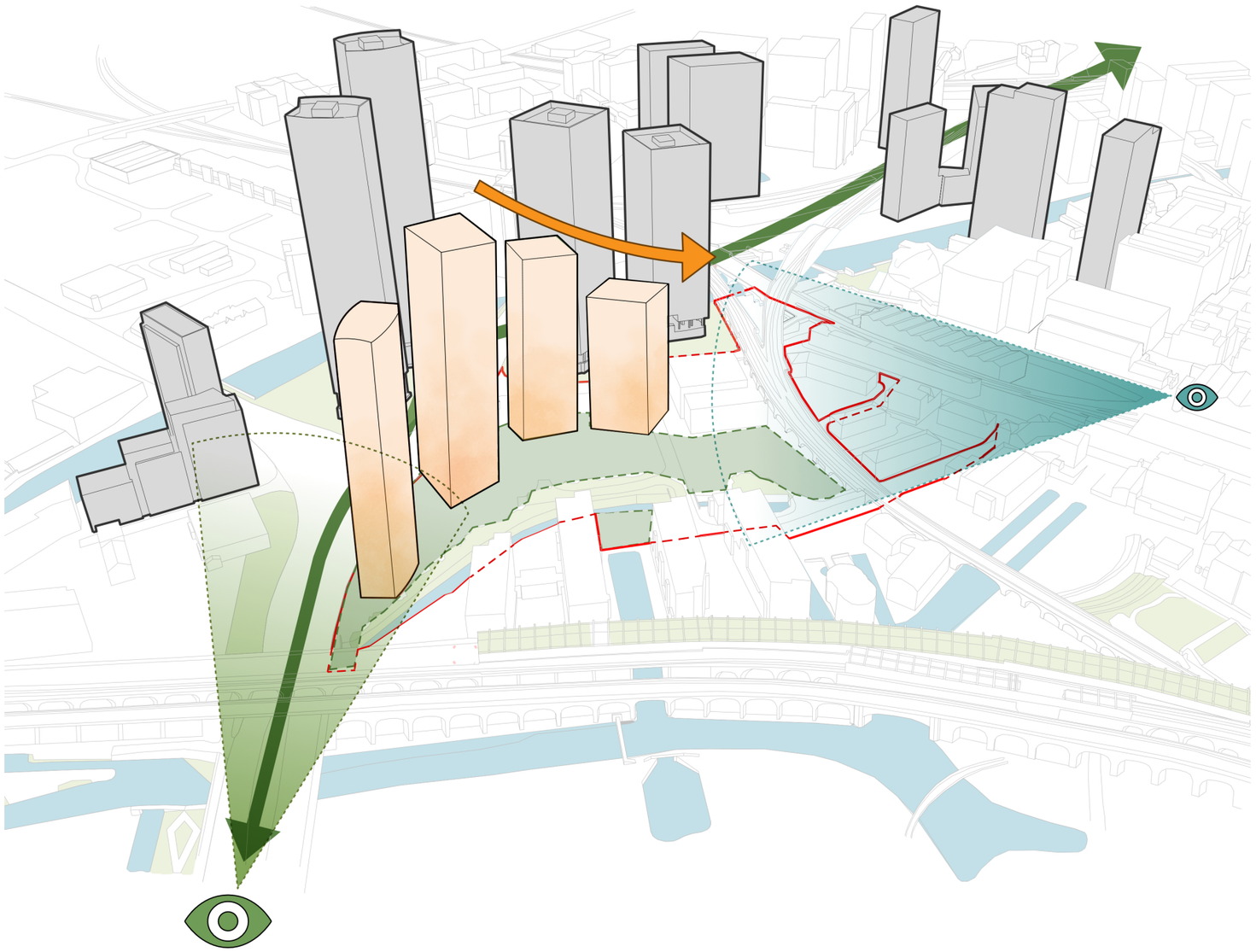


Fig. 7.02
illustrative strategic placement of the buildings.
Illustrative only, subject to detailed assessment at planning application

7.0 Illustrative Masterplan

7.4 Illustrative Massing Concept (cont)

The massing arrangement frames the new park and, through creating a space with a southern aspect and maintaining significant separation of buildings, will allow comfortable microclimate/daylight conditions to be maintained in the new public realm.

Inllustrative views adjacent show the way in which new buildings would be read in conjunction with the Trinity Islands development.

Fig 7.04
Indicative view from Science and Industry Museum looking towards the SRF study area.

Fig 7.06
Indicative view from Castlefield Basin looking towards the SRF study area.

Key

Line of Sight

Viewpoints

Trinity Islands

Water St Massing

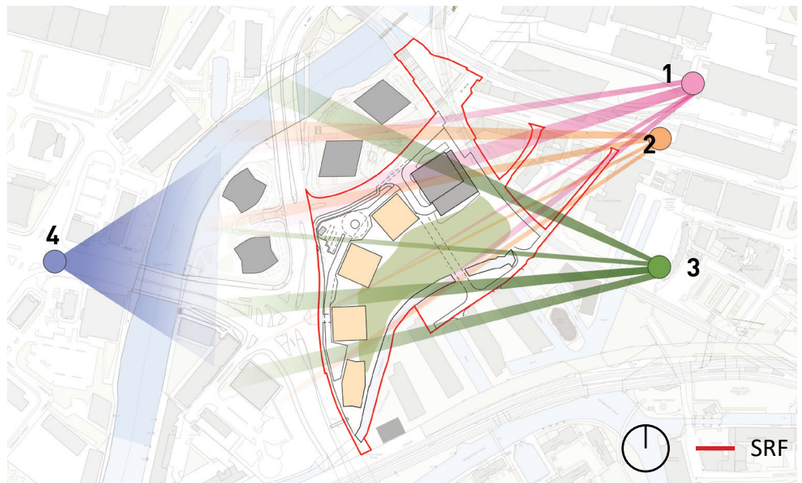


Fig. 7.03
Proposed spacing between the towers to optimise views from cultural and heritage areas within the proximity of the SRF study area.

Fig. 7.05
Indicative view from Liverpool Road looking towards the SRF study area.

Fig 7.07
Indicative view from Regent Road looking towards the SRF study area.

Images illustrative only, subject to detailed assessment at planning application

7.0 Illustrative Masterplan

7.5 Public Realm & Landscape Framework

The public realm and landscape strategy establishes a unified network of green and blue infrastructure that supports biodiversity, climate resilience, place identity and inclusive everyday use and places the River Medlock and a new central park at the heart of the Water Street neighbourhood.

Approximately half the site is dedicated to the park, pedestrian routes and landscape spaces and the public realm created is approaching the scale of that created around the River Medlock at Mayfield at the eastern edge of the city centre.

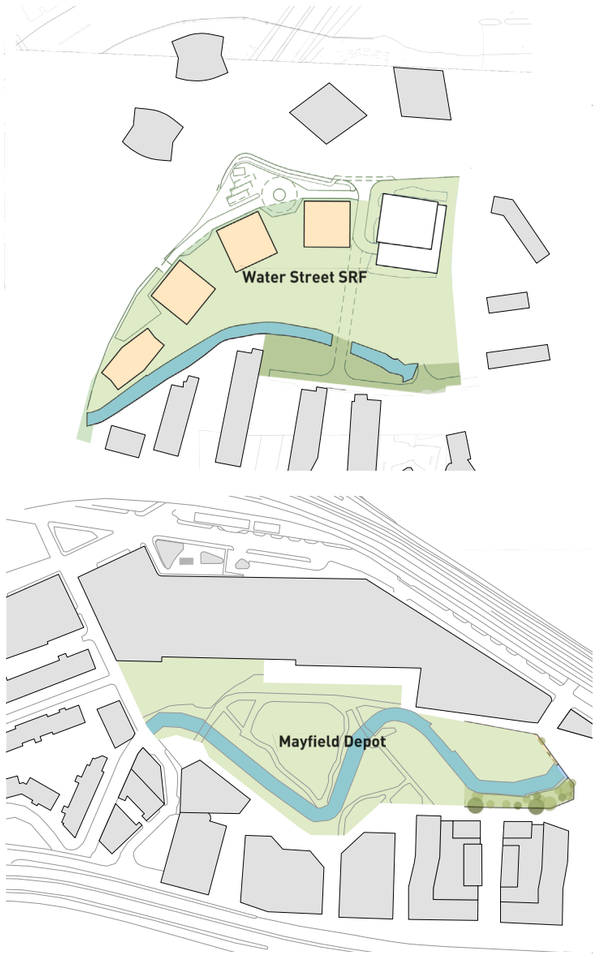


Fig. 7.08
Comparison between the public realm/park area proposed at Water St and the park provided at Mayfield

Aspirations for the Public Realm include:

- Developing a landscape-led approach with the park and the river as the organising element.
- Creating a connected sequence of green and blue spaces.
- Creating safe, inclusive, human-scale streets and public spaces.
- Using cohesive materials and lighting to create identity.
- Integrating climate resilience: Nature based solutions such as SuDS, the strategic use of shade and planting, the use of permeable surfaces and the provision of habitat areas will improve environmental comfort, reduce runoff and strengthen the neighbourhood's ecological value.

Fig. 7.09
Sketch of the promenade along the RIver Medlock
Illustrative only, subject to detailed assessment at planning application

7.6 Character Areas

The illustrative masterplan proposes the creation of the following clearly identifiable and distinctive character areas:

- The Medlock Park – green and open, defined by new developments to the perimeter and with the river running through its heart, biodiverse and social. Providing:
    - a diverse and interesting public realm, using high quality materials and high quality wayfinding signage
    - a riverside walkway
    - seating and places to rest
    - a variety of landscaped spaces appropriate to a variety of uses, including childrens' play
    - planting and habitat creation which respects, improves and increases biodiversity
    - flexible open spaces for a variety of uses, which could include events associated with Aviva Studios
    - Shaded Terraces and Waterside Steps – terraces descending towards the river and connected into wider networks
    - seamless paths to Castlefield, Aviva Studios and the Irwell.
- The Viaduct Quarter – intimate pedestrian routes, activated arches, characterful, arch-lined lanes and spaces supporting smaller scale uses and reflecting the rich industrial heritage of the area
- The Gateway Edge – a high quality development with a strong urban frontage and robust interface with Regent Road that reinforces the gateway condition and uses space, built form and planting to provide an environmental buffer between the ring road and the park.

Fig. 7.10
Diagram of indicative character areaa

Fig. 7.11 / 7.12 / 7.13
Precedent images representing the Medlock Park, Viaduct Quarter and Gateway Edge

7.0 Illustrative Masterplan

Fig. 7.14
Sketch of the railway viaduct and potential retail spaces

Fig. 7.16
Sketch of the new connection from Woollam Place looking into the park

Fig. 7.15
Sketch of the promennade along the RIver Medlock
Images illustrative only, subject to detailed assessment at planning application

Fig. 7.17
Sketch of the Medlock Park character area

7.0 Illustrative Masterplan

7.7 Movement & Connectivity Framework

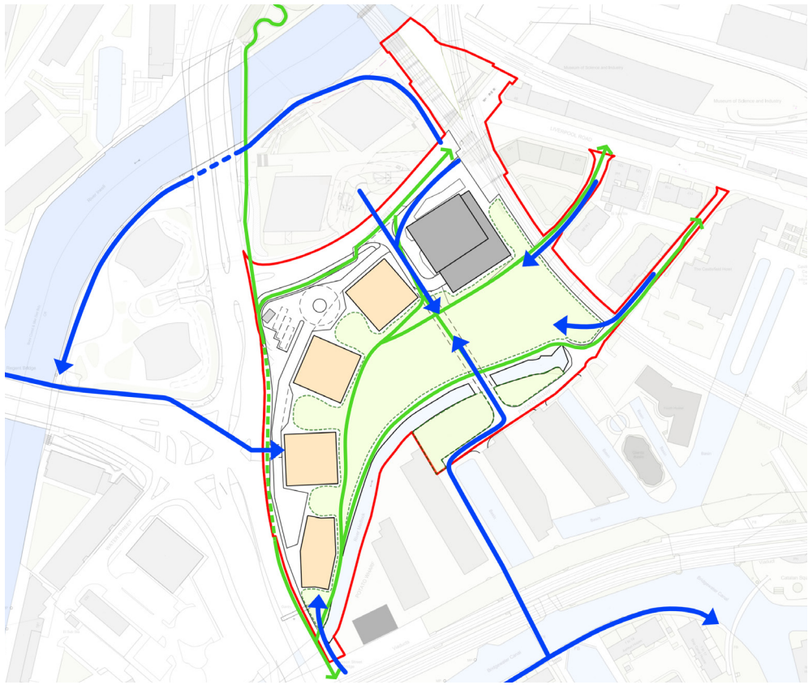


Fig. 7.18
Proposed Pedestrian and Cycle Movement Plan

Park
Pedestrian Access
Cycle Routes

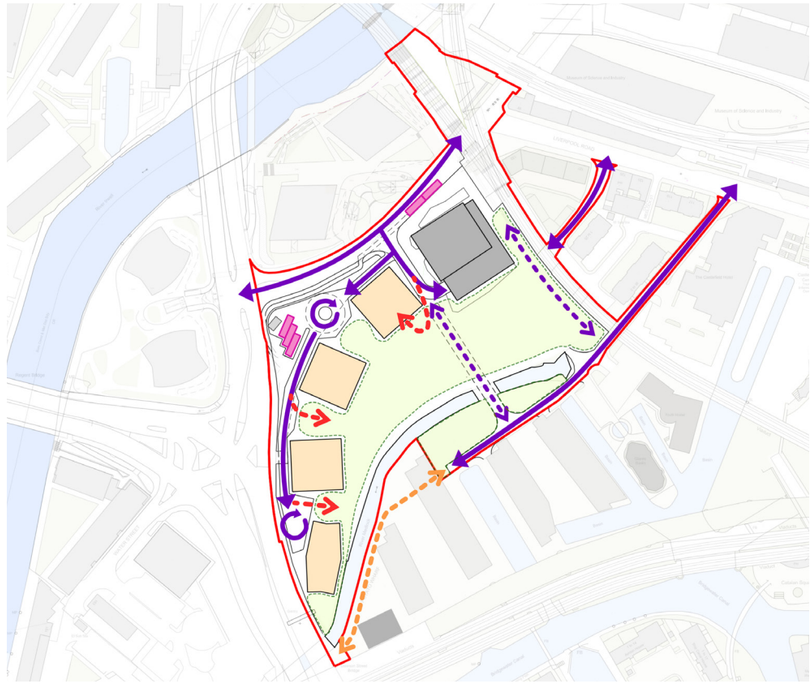


Fig. 7.19
Proposed Access Plan

Park
Vehicular Routes
Emergency Acces Only
Coach Parking Spaces

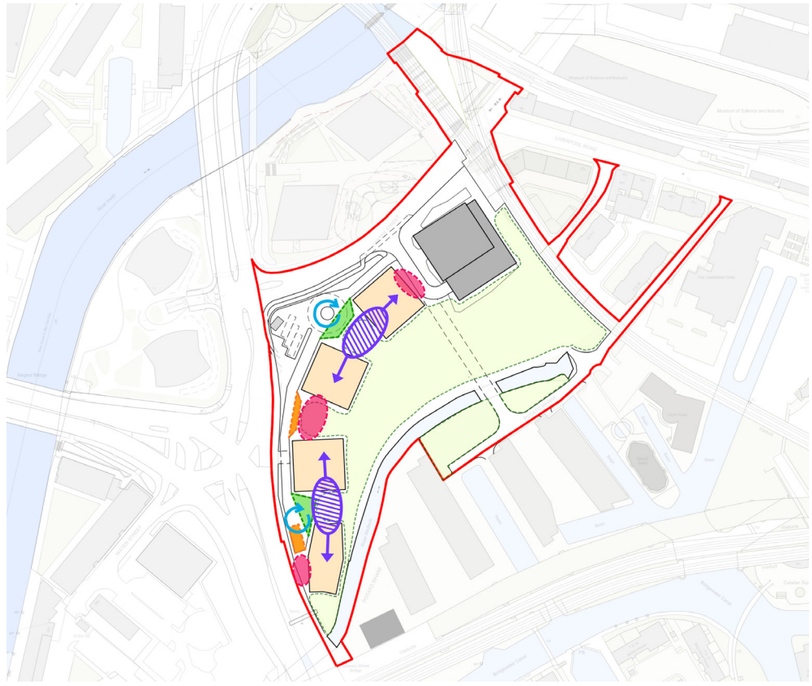


Fig.7.20
Proposed Vehicle Movement Plan

Park
Back Of House
Entrances from Park
Service Drop Off Point
Drop Off Point
Turning Area

The Movement & Connectivity Framework establishes a coherent structure for how people will move into, through and around the Water Street neighbourhood. It addresses long-standing barriers created by the ring road, viaducts and fragmented streets, and defines a set of routes and connections that will help integrate the site with Castlefield, St John's, Trinity Islands and Salford.

The strategy prioritises walking and cycling, improves permeability, and positions Water Street as a crucial connector within an increasingly walkable, active-travel-focused city centre. The framework supports the creation of an inclusive public realm, where streets and spaces are intuitive, safe, well-lit and appealing for all ages and abilities.

- People first: walking and cycling are prioritised; streets and spaces are safe, legible and well lit.
- East–west spine: routes between Castlefield Basin, the park, St John's and the city centre.
- North–south links: permeability under/around viaducts via open/ activated arches.
- Medlock as armature: the river forms a unifying public realm corridor.
- Public transport: strong access to Deansgate-Castlefield and Cornbrook Metrolink/rail and frequent bus services.
- Wayfinding: clear sightlines, landmarking at nodes, coherent signage

No alterations are proposed to the Water St/Trinity Way junction and vehicular access to and from the inner ring road to the site will be maintained. Vehicular access via Water St and Liverpool Rd needs to be carefully considered in relation to trafiic flows.

The new buildings will be serviced from a new access road which is located between the development and the ring road. Coach parking spaces could be provided within this zone if required as indicated on the plans adjacent. the illustrative masterplan suggests the closure of New Elm Rd to general traffic as it crosses the site in order to maximise the benefits of the new park, although access could be maintained for emergency situations through the provision of a shared surface.

8 Next Steps

The next stage is to publish the draft Strategic Regeneration Framework for public consultation. This will allow residents, stakeholders, partners and landowners to comment on the updated spatial vision and provide feedback to help refine the Framework before it is finalised.

The key next steps are:

1. Executive Approval to Consult
   The draft SRF will be submitted to Manchester City Council's Executive in early March 2026 for approval to publish for consultation.

2. Public Consultation Period
   A formal consultation will be undertaken, typically running for 4-6 weeks.

3. Review of Consultation Feedback
   All comments received will be reviewed and summarised. Feedback will inform any refinements to the SRF, including movement, public realm, heritage, development aspirations and the illustrative masterplan.

4. Preparation of the Final SRF
   A revised, final version of the SRF will be prepared following consultation, reflecting feedback where appropriate and ensuring continued alignment with the City's strategic priorities.

5. Executive Approval of the Final SRF.
   The final SRF will be reported back to Executive for adoption.

6. Ongoing Use of the SRF
   Once adopted, the SRF will guide future planning applications, inform early conversations with developers, and support coordination of public realm, infrastructure and place-making across this part of the city centre.

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