

Manchester Local Plan Integrated Appraisal (IA)

Non-Technical Summary (NTS) for the Regulation 19 IA Report

August 2026

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Introduction

Manchester City Council is preparing a new Local Plan to guide how the city will grow and change over the coming years. The Local Plan will sit within the wider strategic planning framework established by the Places for Everyone Plan, which guides growth and development across most of Greater Manchester, while providing a more detailed planning framework for Manchester itself. It sets out where homes, jobs and infrastructure will be located, how the environment will be protected, and how wider priorities, such as health, equality and climate change, will be addressed through planning decisions.

To support the preparation of the Local Plan, Manchester City Council has commissioned AECOM to carry out an Integrated Appraisal (IA). The purpose of the IA is to assess the likely effects of the Local Plan and any reasonable alternatives, helping to ensure that the plan promotes sustainable development, avoids unnecessary harm and maximises potential benefits for communities and the environment. This is the non-technical summary (NTS) of the Regulation 19 IA Report.

The IA brings together several assessment requirements into a single, coordinated process. This includes the legally required Sustainability Appraisal, as well as assessments that consider impacts on equality, health and wellbeing. By integrating these assessments, the process provides a more complete picture of how planning policies may affect different people and places (whilst reducing duplication of effort).

The IA plays an important role in shaping the Local Plan. It helps identify strengths, risks and trade-offs, informs choices, and ensures that wider objectives - such as reducing health inequalities, supporting inclusive growth and responding to climate change - are taken into account at each stage of plan making. Consultation with statutory bodies and other stakeholders, including public health specialists, has informed the appraisal process and its findings.

This report accompanies the Local Plan and explains how the Integrated Appraisal has been carried out, what it has found, and how the results have influenced the plan-making process.

Scoping

The scoping stage is an early step in the Integrated Appraisal process. Its purpose is to decide what issues the appraisal should focus on and how the assessment will be carried out. This helps ensure that the appraisal concentrates on the most important social, environmental and economic topics that are relevant to the Local Plan.

Informed by data collection and review of the evidence, the scoping stage involves establishing a set of sustainability objectives. These objectives act as a framework for assessing the Local Plan.

Legislation requires that key organisations with environmental responsibilities are asked for their views on the scope and level of detail of the appraisal. For this Local Plan, these organisations include the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. The Scoping Report was shared with them, as well as being made available to the wider public through the Council's website.

Feedback received during consultation was carefully reviewed and used to refine and update the scope of the appraisal. This helped ensure that the Integrated Appraisal is focused, relevant and based on up-to-date evidence before progressing to assess the Local Plan.

An initial scoping report was published and shared with consultees in July 2021. Focused updates were undertaken in October 2023 to ensure that the scope remained appropriate in light of significant changes to national policy and to reflect new evidence and data. The framework was consolidated at this stage to allow for a more proportionate assessment process.

Summary of key issues

Natural environment

Development can place pressure on Manchester's wildlife, rivers, trees and green spaces, but also offers opportunities to improve them. Protecting important habitats, water environments and urban nature, while achieving biodiversity net gain, is a key issue.

Land resources

Manchester is largely built up, with much development taking place on brownfield land. Making efficient use of land, prioritising the reuse and clean-up of previously developed and contaminated sites, and protecting limited mineral and soil resources are important considerations.

Housing

Strong population growth has increased demand for homes, particularly affordable and varied housing. Ensuring that there are enough good quality homes of different sizes and tenures, while addressing homelessness and housing inequalities, is a key challenge.

Community

Some parts of the city experience poorer access to local services, facilities and green space. Creating safe, inclusive neighbourhoods that are well connected to jobs, services and open space is a key issue.

Sustainable growth

Manchester continues to be a focus for economic growth. Supporting this requires enough land for jobs, good transport connections and reliable infrastructure, while ensuring growth benefits all parts of the city.

Equality

The city has a diverse population but also high levels of deprivation in some areas. Reducing inequalities and improving access to housing, services, jobs and infrastructure for all communities is central to the plan.

Health and wellbeing

Health outcomes in Manchester are poorer than regional and national averages, particularly for mental health and life expectancy. Planning can help by improving air quality, access to green space, active travel, good housing and healthcare facilities.

Flooding

Parts of Manchester are at risk from river flooding and surface water flooding, with risks expected to increase due to climate change. Managing flood risk through careful planning, site selection and sustainable drainage is essential.

Water quality

Manchester's rivers and canals are sensitive to pollution and currently have broadly moderate water quality. Development needs to avoid worsening water quality and should support river restoration, efficient water use and better waterside environments.

Air quality

Air quality has improved but nitrogen dioxide levels remain too high in some areas, mainly due to traffic. The location and design of development, along with support for cleaner and more sustainable travel, are important for further improvement.

Climate change

Although carbon emissions have fallen, transport and homes remain major sources. The Local Plan must support emission reductions, renewable energy, energy efficiency and measures to help the city adapt to increased flooding and heat in particular.

Travel and transport

Access to public transport, walking and cycling varies across the city. Reducing reliance on private cars, improving sustainable transport options and ensuring new development is well connected are key issues.

Use of resources

Growth will increase demand for energy, water and materials. Using resources more efficiently, reducing waste, increasing recycling and supporting low carbon development are important sustainability considerations.

Heritage

Manchester's historic buildings, conservation areas and industrial heritage are central to its character. Managing change so that development conserves and enhances heritage assets, while supporting appropriate reuse, is a key issue.

The IA Framework

The IA Framework consists of 14 objectives, each accompanied by a range of supporting criteria to help guide the assessment process. The objectives are listed below for reference.

Natural environment

To protect and enhance the natural environment, including biodiversity (habitats and species), geodiversity and soils.

Land resources

Ensure the efficient use of land resources and reduce the environmental and health impacts of contaminated land.

Housing

Promote the sustainable growth of the city's population.

Community

Provide safe, attractive, inclusive neighbourhoods, which include, or are well connected to centres and other amenities.

Sustainable growth

Promote the sustainable growth of the city's economy, accommodating indigenous and inward investment.

Equality

Reduce poverty and social deprivation and secure economic inclusion.

Health and wellbeing

Improve the health and wellbeing of the population and reduce health inequalities.

Flooding

Reduce the risk of flooding to people and property.

Water quality

Protect and improve the quality, availability and sustainable access to water resources.

Air Quality

Improve air quality and reduce the impact on human health.

Climate Change

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve resilience to climate change.

Travel and transport

Reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable and active modes of transport.

Use of Resources

Protect natural finite resources, minimise waste and promote the efficient use of energy and materials.

Heritage

Protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment, reflecting Manchester's industrial, cultural and natural heritage.

Exploring Options

The IA considers whether there are alternative ways of addressing the key strategic issues in the Local Plan. The focus is on matters where different approaches could lead to significantly different environmental, social or economic effects. Not all policies require alternatives to be tested, and appraisal should be undertaken in a proportionate way.

In identifying reasonable alternatives, the Council has considered:

- The evidence base supporting the Plan
- Feedback from consultation and stakeholders
- Whether an issue is strategic in nature
- Whether alternative approaches would result in materially different effects
- Whether alternative approaches are realistic and deliverable

Where the Council has concluded that there are no reasonable alternatives, the reasons are clearly explained.

Housing growth

The overall level of housing growth for Manchester is set by the Places for Everyone Plan, which requires 60,061 homes between 2022 and 2039. This level of growth reflects Manchester's role as a key growth location and is considered ambitious but achievable.

Although newer national methodology could indicate a lower housing figure, the Council does not consider it reasonable to reduce housing delivery given the recent adoption of the Places for Everyone Plan. The Local Plan therefore focuses on where and how homes are delivered, rather than increasing or reducing overall housing numbers.

Why no reasonable alternatives were identified

Housing numbers are fixed through an adopted strategic plan (Places for Everyone). Reducing or increasing the requirement would conflict with that plan and national transitional arrangements.

Employment and office growth

The Local Plan supports continued economic growth, with a strong focus on the City Centre and Core Growth Area, supported by the Inner and Southern Areas. This reflects existing concentrations of jobs, major institutions and transport infrastructure.

Office development is directed to locations that are highly accessible and well served by public and active transport, helping to reduce the need to travel by car. Existing employment land is also protected to support job retention and growth.

Why no reasonable alternatives were identified

Employment growth builds on existing economic assets and infrastructure. Alternative approaches would undermine established investment patterns and risk poorer accessibility and sustainability outcomes.

Growth locations

The Plan identifies broad locations where most growth will be focused, building directly on the spatial strategy of the Places for Everyone Plan. These locations are the most sustainable and realistic areas to accommodate growth, taking account of land availability, infrastructure, constraints and long-standing regeneration frameworks.

Why no reasonable alternatives were identified

The growth locations reflect adopted strategic policy, available land, infrastructure capacity and long-term regeneration plans. Other locations and alternative approaches were considered but were not found to be suitable or deliverable.

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People

Evidence identifies a need for additional pitches and plots. The Local Plan is proposing to take a criteria-based approach rather than identifying specific sites. This approach allows flexibility while still planning positively to meet identified needs.

Why no reasonable alternatives were identified

A criteria-based approach is appropriate at this stage where site availability is uncertain, while still reflecting clear identified need from the evidence.

Affordable housing

Manchester has a significant need for affordable housing. The Plan includes a 30% affordable housing target on major schemes, reflecting evidence of need and the Council's Housing Strategy.

Lower targets have been considered, but differences between targets mainly relate to development viability, which is addressed through separate viability evidence. At a strategic level, different targets would perform similarly in the IA.

Why no reasonable alternatives were identified

Differences between affordable housing targets relate primarily to viability rather than strategic sustainability impacts and are addressed outside the IA process.

Manchester Airport growth

Growth at Manchester Airport is driven by national policy and supported through the Places for Everyone Plan. The airport is a critical economic asset, and expansion is largely unavoidable in this context.

While airport growth presents climate challenges, these are addressed through national aviation policy, the Places for Everyone Plan and airport specific strategies. The Local Plan focuses on managing impacts and supporting mitigation.

Why no reasonable alternatives were identified

Airport growth is set by national policy and an established strategic framework. Alternative strategies would not be realistic or within the scope of the Local Plan.

Overall conclusion on options

In many cases, particularly where growth levels and locations are set by adopted strategic plans or national policy, there is limited scope for reasonable alternatives. The Integrated Appraisal therefore focuses on how potential impacts can be avoided, reduced or mitigated, rather than testing alternatives that would not be realistic, deliverable or policy compliant.

Appraising the Local Plan

Approach

The Integrated Appraisal has assessed the Manchester Local Plan as a whole, considering how it supports sustainable growth and addresses key challenges facing the city.

The appraisal focuses on the likely significant social, economic and environmental effects of the Plan. Policies have been assessed collectively, recognising that they work together to reinforce positive outcomes, mitigate potential adverse effects and deliver the Plan's overall objectives. Consideration has also been given to cumulative and longer-term effects.

Summary of findings

The table overleaf presents a visual summary of the sustainability effect of the Plan, revealing a generally positive performance across most topics.

The strongest benefits are anticipated for sustainable growth and heritage, with major positive effects arising from directing development to accessible locations, supporting employment and education opportunities, improving the public realm, and protecting and enhancing historic assets through design and regeneration frameworks. However, minor negative effects on heritage may occur in some locations where development could affect the setting of heritage assets, although these impacts are expected to be mitigated through the Plan's policies and development management processes.

Moderate positive effects are predicted for the natural environment, equality, health and wellbeing, and flood risk management. These benefits are linked to biodiversity enhancement, climate resilience, inclusive development, improved health infrastructure, active travel opportunities, and the use of green and blue infrastructure alongside sustainable drainage measures.

Minor positive effects are expected for land use, housing, community wellbeing, climate change, transport, and resource use, reflecting the focus on brownfield redevelopment, efficient land use, sustainable patterns of growth, improved connectivity, and support for low-carbon and resource-efficient development.

The assessment identifies some areas where potential adverse effects remain. Water quality effects are uncertain due to potential pressures on wastewater treatment infrastructure, while air quality is expected to be broadly neutral, with mitigation measures balancing the impacts of growth.

Additionally, minor negative effects are noted under Health and Wellbeing, Equality and Heritage, suggesting that while the overall direction of the Plan is positive, careful

implementation will be required to avoid unintended consequences. These could include impacts associated with increased noise, density and pressure on services, as well as the potential effects of regeneration and redevelopment on existing communities, such as displacement or changes to local amenity. In some locations, there may also be adverse effects on the setting of heritage assets.

Overall, the Plan is predicted to have a predominantly positive effect, supporting sustainable growth while enhancing environmental quality, community wellbeing, resilience and the historic environment, with identified risks largely capable of being managed through policy and mitigation measures.

Sustainability Topic	Overall Effects	Overall Effects
Natural environment	Moderate positive	
Land resources	Minor positive	
Housing	Minor positive	
Community	Minor positive	
Sustainable growth	Major positive	
Equality	Moderate positive	Minor negative
Health and wellbeing	Moderate positive	Minor negative
Flooding	Moderate positive	
Water quality	Minor positive	
Air quality	Neutral effects	
Climate change	Minor positive	
Transport and travel	Minor positive	
Use of resources	Minor positive	
Heritage	Moderate positive	Minor negative

Recommendations and Monitoring

Recommendations

The Integrated Appraisal has helped shape the Manchester Local Plan throughout its preparation. As draft policies were developed, the appraisal identified areas where the Plan could be strengthened and recommendations were provided to the Council. In response, a number of changes have been made to improve the Plan and address potential risks.

Key improvements include stronger policy support for green and blue infrastructure, additional measures to address land contamination on previously developed sites, and clearer requirements relating to flood risk, water quality and air quality. The Plan has also been refined to ensure that new development promotes inclusive and accessible places for all communities.

The appraisal highlighted the importance of understanding the impacts of development on different groups, and the Council has committed to undertaking more detailed assessments as individual development proposals come forward. Further work is also continuing to address the accommodation needs of Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show people communities.

In relation to climate change, health and infrastructure, the appraisal concluded that many issues are already addressed through wider Local Plan policies, the Places for Everyone framework and supporting evidence studies. Additional policy references have nevertheless been included where appropriate to strengthen the Plan's approach.

Overall, the appraisal process has had a positive influence on the evolution of the Plan, helping to ensure that environmental, social and health considerations are embedded within the final policy framework and that potential adverse effects are avoided or reduced wherever possible.

Monitoring and next steps

Monitoring will be used to check how the Local Plan performs over time and whether it is delivering the outcomes it is intended to achieve. This is important both to confirm that expected benefits are being realised and to identify any unexpected issues that may emerge as the Plan is implemented.

A range of indicators will be used to track progress across the topics considered in the Integrated Appraisal, including environmental, social and economic matters. These will help the Council understand how conditions are changing and whether any action may be needed in response.

The proposed monitoring measures have been identified using existing Local Plan monitoring arrangements wherever possible, helping to make use of information that is already collected and reported. Some measures may be refined further once it has been confirmed that the necessary information can be collected reliably.

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