

1. Introduction and background

The study

- 1.1 Manchester City Council recognises the vital role that open space, sport and recreation facilities have both on improving the quality of life for residents, and also in ensuring that the environment is attractive for workers and visitors to the City and to investors looking to relocate in Manchester.
- 1.2 PMP were therefore commissioned during December 2006 to undertake an assessment of open spaces, sport and recreation facilities within the City Council boundaries in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 (PPG17) and its Companion Guide published in September 2002. Further details of these documents are provided in Section Two. The study will provide a valuable evidence base to underpin the development of high quality open space networks and assist Manchester in its commitment to becoming Britain's Greenest City. DTZ were commissioned as part of the PMP team specifically to consider off-site contributions of open space in lieu of on-site provision and the issue of commuted maintenance costs.
- 1.3 The key aims and objectives of the study are to:
 - provide an understanding of local needs and aspirations and identify highly valued open spaces, sport and recreation facilities
 - undertake a full audit of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities across Manchester
 - develop local standards that when applied, will ensure that all households can access a broad range of high quality open space, sport and recreation facilities
 - highlight areas where there is sufficient or over provision and identify areas where there are deficiencies in either the quantity and/or quality of provision
 - provide clarity and reasonable certainty to developers and landowners with regards to contributions to new open space, sport and recreation facilities or qualitative improvements to existing facilities through S106 agreements.
- 1.4 The findings of this work will enable the Council to adopt a clear vision for the future delivery of open space, sport and recreation facilities and provide evidence for informed decision making. The study will form part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework (LDF) and portfolio of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). It will inform the development of the preferred options phase of the Core Strategy DPD, which will be the key spatial plan for Manchester.

Why public open space?

1.5 Recognition of the role that open spaces play in supporting the implementation of both national objectives and more locally in Manchester is essential if the benefits that can be derived from open spaces are to be maximised.



1.6 The profile of open spaces, sport and recreation facilities is becoming increasingly high on the national stage and the value placed on open spaces by local communities is reflected in the Park Life Report (Greenspace, June 2007), which indicates that 92% of all those questioned had visited a park within the last month.

1.7 On a national level, PPG17 states that well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives, many of which are also reflective of local priorities in Manchester. These include:

- supporting an urban renaissance
- promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion
- enhancing health and well being
- promoting more sustainable development.

1.8 The value of open space is not just recreational. The strategic contribution that open spaces can make to the wider environment includes:

- defining the local landscape character and providing an appropriate context and setting for built development and infrastructure
- helping to achieve a softer interface between urban and rural environments
- emphasising the presence of particular natural features within the landscape such as river valleys, canals
- supporting habitats and local wildlife
- promoting and protecting biodiversity and habitat creation
- adapting to climate change and reducing flood risk.

1.9 The Government White Paper¹ (May 2007) highlights minimising climate change and the protection of the environment as two of the key challenges to be addressed through the planning system in future years. Adapting Public Space to Climate Change (CABE Space 2009) states that adaptation to climate change means making towns and cities more resilient and advises that well-designed, flexible public spaces

¹ Department of Communities and Local Government, "Planning for a Sustainable Future: White Paper" 21 May 2007

offer the most effective opportunity to adapt to threats. The document goes on to highlight that

“Spaces that are softer, greener, more organic and natural will store water and are critical to modifying urban temperatures. Green spaces with a generous planting of trees link to form a network offering cooler, cleaner air..... Urban green spaces form a natural infrastructure that is as critical to support urban life as streets, railways, drainage and sewers”.

- 1.10 Manchester have approved its Climate Change Call to Action. There is a high level commitment to a new way of thinking about climate change, which fits into the context of Manchester's Community Strategy and supports taking early action on climate change to deliver an even better city in which to live and work.
- 1.11 The Call to Action describes the need to make deep cuts in Manchester's emissions, by at least one-third of current emissions, by 2020. Open space will also be essential in the delivery of these targets.
- 1.12 PPS12 highlights the importance of spatial planning in creating strong and prosperous communities. Consideration of the green infrastructure and the creation of a positive framework for the protection, development and enhancement of open space will contribute to the overall achievement of sustainable development.
- 1.13 Parks, natural spaces and other types of open space do not exist in isolation but make up the green infrastructure of the City. Green infrastructure is the physical environment within and between urban areas. It includes all open spaces, including formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees and open countryside. It comprises all environmental resources, and thus evaluations of the green infrastructure contributes towards sustainable resource management.

Function and benefits of open space

- 1.14 Open spaces fulfil a range of functions, for example, the provision for play and informal recreation, a landscaping buffer within and between the built environment and/or a habitat for the promotion of biodiversity.
- 1.15 Almost all open spaces have both primary and secondary functions. For example outdoor sports facilities frequently function as amenity areas and many cemeteries are also havens for wildlife and biodiversity. Provision of a balance of different types of open space is essential to meet local aspirations. These aspirations may vary from place to place and change over time.
- 1.16 Changing social and economic circumstances, changed work and leisure practices, more sophisticated consumer tastes and higher public expectations have placed new demands on open spaces. They have to serve more diverse communities and face competition from various developers. While the provision of open spaces can be challenging, open spaces can also promote community cohesion, encourage community development and stimulate partnerships between the public and private sector.
- 1.17 Parks and open spaces are more accessible to a wider range of people than some sport and leisure facilities and are therefore better able to realise the aims of social inclusion and equality of opportunity. The provision of open spaces and recreation facilities is key to an ideal, sustainable and thriving community. The Park Life Report (Green Space June 2007) highlighted that 83% of those surveyed feel that parks are

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

the focal point of a community. Provision of parks and other open spaces can therefore contribute to the integration of varying sectors of the community.

1.18 Of particular note is the historical benefit of open spaces. Many larger sites define the character of an area and are key components of the urban landscape. The English Heritage Register of Park and Gardens of Special Historic Interest lists five open spaces in Manchester, specifically:

- Heaton Park
- Philips Park
- Alexandra Park
- Wythenshawe Park
- Queens Park.

1.19 The benefits of open space are further outlined in Appendix A.

The local context

1.20 Manchester is the focus of commercial, educational, sports and cultural activity in the North West Region of England and has a population of 451,984 (2006 ONS mid year estimates). The Council continues to work to ensure that Manchester becomes a world class location for people to live, to invest, to visit and to work. Green space is central to the achievement of this objective.

1.21 Following decades of decline, the population has steadily increased since 2001. This increase is projected to continue over the LDF period, reaching a total population of 520,000 by 2021.

1.22 Population growth is not anticipated to be even across the City, and many areas, including the City Centre and East Manchester will see high increases in the number of people living in the area. This will have significant implications on the provision of and demand for open space, sport and recreation facilities. Furthermore, population growth places great pressures on land for development. Changes in the type and density of housing provided will also impact on the demand for open space, sport and recreation facilities.

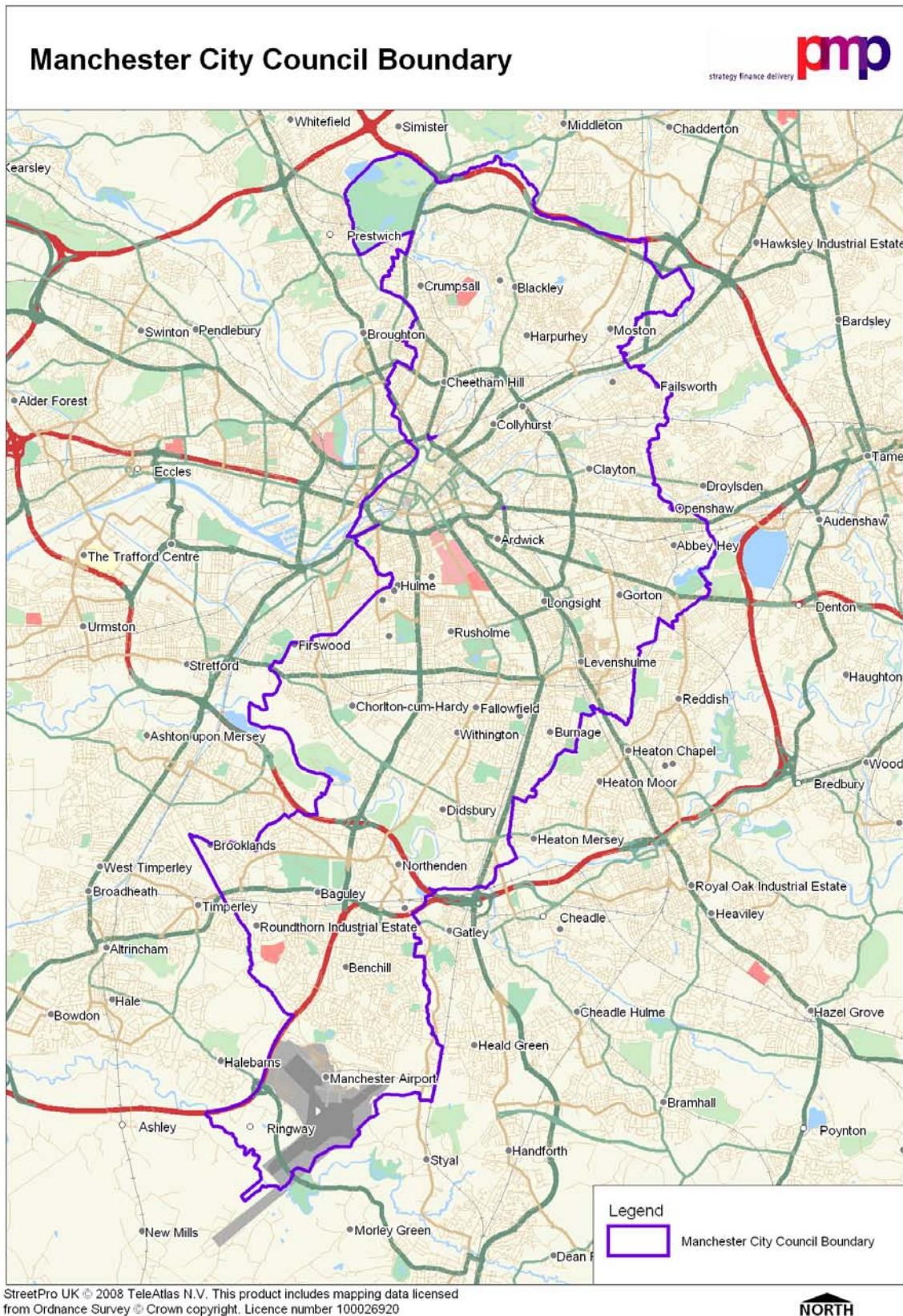
1.23 Manchester is characterised by a variety of different types of housing and landscapes ranging from areas of high density terraced housing in Central Manchester where residents have limited, if any gardens, to the greener, more affluent and less dense areas in South Manchester where tree coverage is higher and houses have large gardens. The recommendations and priorities developed as part of this assessment take into account the varying characteristics of different areas of the city.

1.24 According to the 2001 census, the population density is 33.97 people per hectare. This compares to an average of below 5 people per hectare both nationally (3.77) and within North West England (4.77). The density of the population and represents a key challenge in the provision of open spaces citywide. The existing spread of provision is not considered to be even and it is in many of the more densely populated areas where provision is most sparse. The characteristics of individual neighbourhoods will drive the solutions and strategy developed to address some of the issues identified in this report.

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.25 Manchester's population is made up of many diverse groups. This diversity means that the provision of open space, sport and recreation facilities that meet the needs and aspirations of all sectors of the population is challenging. Well-designed and managed open space can be instrumental in the integration of communities.
- 1.26 Despite an increase in employment opportunities in Manchester over the last decade, the legacy of 20 – 30 years of economic decline remains. According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004, Manchester is the third most deprived of all authorities in England, and 60% of neighbourhoods fall within the 10% most deprived areas nationally. The challenges in these communities are enormous: high levels of unemployment, poor skills levels, continuing poor educational attainment for children at school, high levels of crime, poor health and housing that is frequently in poor condition, in low demand and not offering the range of house type and quality to retain residents.
- 1.27 As a consequence, the City is undergoing a significant programme of regeneration. Regeneration provides an important opportunity to tailor the provision of open spaces to meet the needs of local residents whether that is through quantitative, qualitative or access improvements, or a combination of all three. The appropriate provision of open space, sport and recreation provision can be instrumental in addressing these issues and enhancing quality of life for residents as well as re-integrating local communities.
- 1.28 Historically, improvements to open space, sport and recreation facilities have been a key corporate priority and the quality and amount of green spaces is perceived to shape the overall character of the City. The Annual Monitoring Report (2006) highlights that 45% of open spaces in Manchester are managed to green flag standards, reinforcing the high quality of existing sites.
- 1.29 Manchester City is surrounded by 12 greater Manchester authorities, all of which are densely populated areas. Many residents of neighbouring authorities travel to central Manchester for employment and leisure. This means that the open spaces, sport and recreation facilities must cater for workers and visitors as well as local residents. Furthermore, there is an abundance of large sites in close proximity to the boundaries of the city. The planned Irwell Park development in Salford for example will further enhance the variety of provision that residents in Manchester City have access to. A degree of cross border travel in both directions (in and out of Manchester) is assumed within this study as residents do not stop at local authority boundaries.
- 1.30 Map 1.1 overleaf illustrates the City Council boundaries and the surrounding neighbouring authorities.

Map 1.1 – Geographical location of Manchester City Council



SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.31 For the purposes of analysis in this report, the city has been subdivided into the six regeneration areas, specifically:

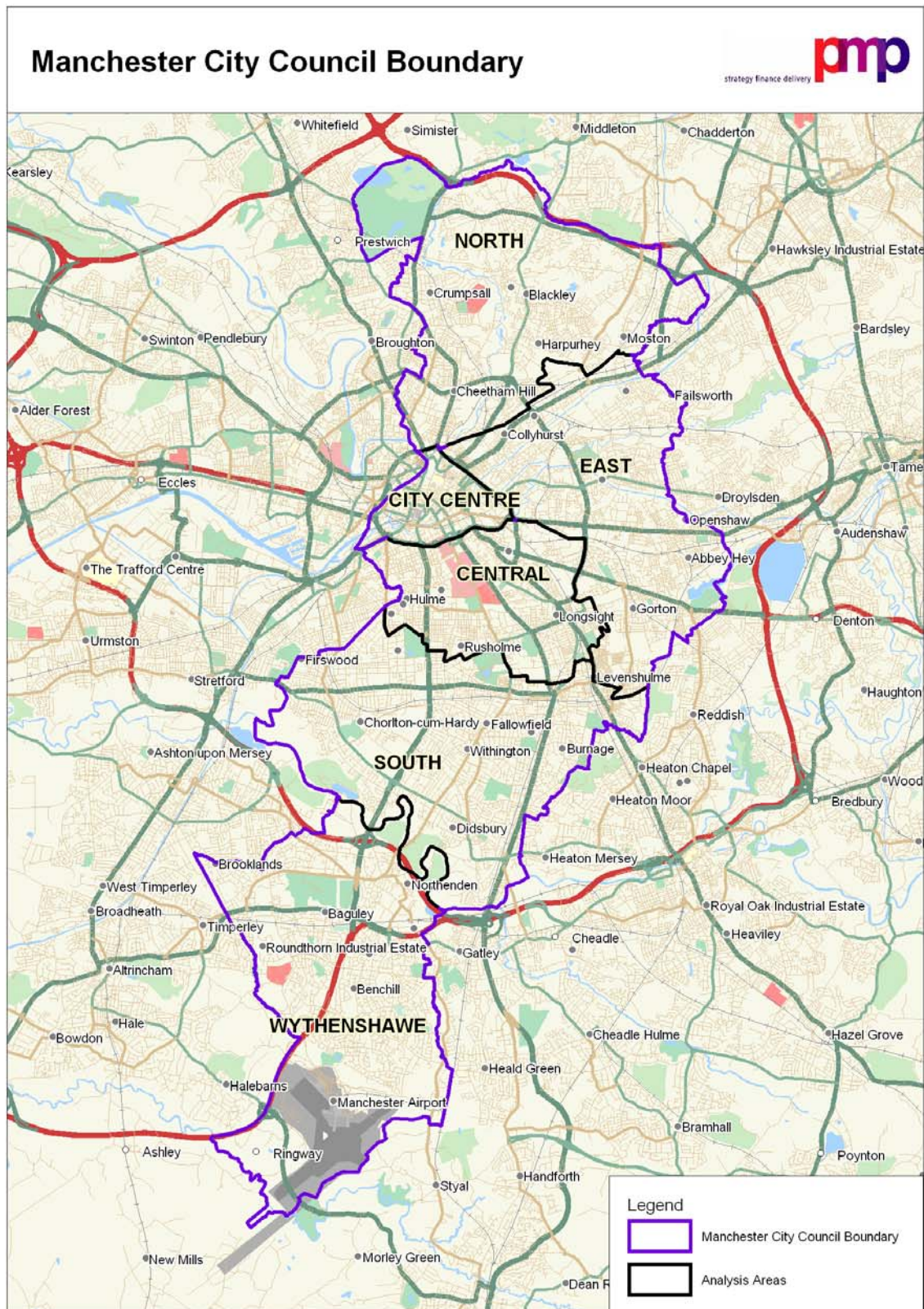
- Central Manchester
- City Centre
- East Manchester
- North Manchester
- South Manchester
- Wythenshawe.

1.32 Map 1.2 illustrates the boundaries of these areas, providing an indication as to the wards that are contained within each analysis area. This information is also summarised below in Table 1.1. The population figures are derived from Office of National Statistics revised ward based population statistics 2005 and 2006 mid year estimates by age and sex.

Table 1.1 – Analysis areas of Manchester City Council

| Area name | Population (2006 mid year estimates) | Wards included |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Central | 74,761 | Ardwick, Hulme, Longsight, Moss Side, Rusholme |
| City Centre | 11,437 | City Centre |
| East | 72,407 | Ancoats and Clayton, Bradford, Miles Platting and Newton Heath, Gorton North, Gorton South. |
| North | 89,026 | Charlestown, Cheetham, Crumpsall, Harpurhey, Higher Blackley, Moston |
| South | 139,112 | Burnage, Chorlton, Chorlton Park, Didsbury East, Didsbury West, Fallowfield, Levenshulme, Old Moat, Whalley Range, Withington |
| Wythenshawe | 71,923 | Woodhouse Park, Northenden, Sharston, Brooklands, Baguley |

Map 1.2 – Geographical areas of Manchester City Council



Report structure

1.33 This report is split into 20 sections. The first sections outline the methodology adopted to undertake the study and the methods of interpretation used, while sections 14 - 19 evaluate the key issues in each of the strategic regeneration areas in detail. For ease of reference, sections are split as follows:

- Section Two - Methodology
- Section Three – Strategic Context
- Section Four – Parks and Gardens
- Section Five – Natural and Semi Natural Open Space
- Section Six – Amenity Green Space
- Section Seven – Provision for Children and Young People
- Section Eight – Outdoor Sports Facilities
- Section Nine – Indoor Sports Facilities
- Section Ten – Allotments
- Section Eleven – Cemeteries and Churchyards
- Section Twelve – Civic Spaces
- Section Thirteen – Green Corridors
- Section Fourteen – East area
- Section Fifteen – Central area
- Section Sixteen – South area
- Section Seventeen – North area
- Section Eighteen - Wythenshawe
- Section Nineteen – City Centre
- Section Twenty – Planning Overview.