

Wythenshawe District Centre

Description

Wythenshawe district centre is located approximately 10km to the south of Manchester City Centre. The defined centre is broadly triangular in shape, surrounded by a mix of residential and commercial uses and wider greenspaces. The centre itself is surrounded by residential neighbourhoods of predominately traditional two-storey family homes. However there are some high-to-medium rise apartments in the immediate vicinity.

The centre is anchored by the Wythenshawe Civic Centre, which is formed around pedestrianised areas running east to west and north to south. To the west is the Forum Centre which is an integrated service building including community and business uses such as the leisure centre, library, health centre and areas to hire for events. The transport interchange is also situated in between the Civic Centre and the Forum, which connects Wythenshawe with wider Manchester areas via tram and bus, and links directly to the airport.

The Wythenshawe Town Centre Development Framework was published in late 2022, and seeks to enhance the town centre through improvements to the public realm, improved diversification of the offer and provision to enhance the independent food offer, whilst creating new residential uses on otherwise redundant brownfield sites. The Framework is an integral tool to help secure the viable future of the district centre.

Table 1 Wythenshawe District Centre Floorspace Composition

GOAD Category	Floorspace at 2023 (sq.m)	Floorspace at 2023 (%)	Floorspace UK Average at 2023 (%)
Comparison	14,858	35.6%	30.1%
Convenience	6,089	14.6%	15.5%
Financial	1,203	2.9%	6.6%
Leisure	8,048	19.3%	26.3%
Retail Service	3,867	9.3%	7.2%
Vacant	7,712	18.5%	13.8%
TOTAL	42,626	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Composition of District centre based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of February 2023; UK Average from Experian Goad Report February 2023.

Table 2 Wythenshawe District Centre Unit Composition

GOAD Category	Units at 2023	Units at 2023 (%)	Units UK Average at 2023 (%)
Comparison	33	29.5%	26.9%
Convenience	13	11.6%	9.3%
Financial	7	6.3%	8.7%
Leisure	15	13.4%	25.4%
Retail Service	13	11.6%	15.8%
Vacant	31	27.7%	13.8%
TOTAL	113	100.0%	100.0%

Source: District centre composition based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of February 2023; UK Average from Experian Goad Report February 2023.

Uses

Overall, Wythenshawe accommodates 113 commercial units and a total of 42,626 sq.m of commercial floorspace. As such, Wythenshawe is one of the larger district centres in the authority area, particularly in terms of the level of commercial floorspace it provides. The centre provides a good retail offer meeting the local catchment's needs, principally focused on convenience and the discount comparison provision.

Wythenshawe has a good overall comparison offer, with a number of larger national multiple operators present. Its comparison provision exceeds the UK averages in terms of both floorspace and units. The offer includes both national multiples such as B&M, Sports Direct, Boots and Superdrug and a range of independent operators. The comparison offer is principally focused on the discount end, with B&M, Home Bargains, Pound Stretcher and Poundland all occupying units large than 550 sq.m (gross). As such, the comparison offer within the centre does not include a variety of fashion retailers, with Sports Direct, JD Sports and Wynsors Shoes being the principal clothing and footwear operators.

The proportion of floorspace occupied by convenience operators within Wythenshawe district centre falls just below the national average, but above the national average in terms of the number of units. Key convenience operators within the district centre include Asda, Iceland, Farmfoods and Heron Foods, amongst a range of smaller operators such as Pound Bakery, Wilshers Market Butchers and a small independent fruit and veg kiosk.

Wythenshawe's leisure offer in terms of both units and floorspace falls below the national average. The leisure offer is predominantly focused around cafes, takeaways and other fast food operators and the largest leisure unit is the Wythenshawe Leisure Centre, which forms part of the Forum complex. Key leisure operators include McDonald's, KFC, Costa and Subway. There are no restaurants or bars within the centre, which limits the leisure offer, particularly those opening into the evening.

The proportion of units and floorspace occupied by financial and business operators falls below the national average in both cases. Wythenshawe's financial and business offer includes two banks (Halifax and TSB), a pawnbrokers and a Cash Generator, amongst other financial services.

Looking at Wythenshawe's retail service sector, the offer includes opticians, hairdressers, nail bars, and a tanning shop. In addition, the Asda also includes a Post Office kiosk.

Daytime/Evening Economy

Wythenshawe's daytime offer is good, with a number of operators trading throughout the day which attract footfall into the centre.

However, the evening offer in Wythenshawe is limited, with the majority of operators closing at 5pm or 6pm and the Civic Centre closing in its entirety at 8pm.

The limited leisure offer, particularly in terms of the restaurant and bar operators results in reduced activity into the evening, and there is a lack of an obvious evening economy.

Vacancies

At 18.5% and 27.7% respectively, the proportion of vacant floorspace and units exceeds the national average (of 13.8% and 13.8% respectively). The significantly higher proportion of vacant units indicates that a number of these units are small, with 23 of the 31 vacant units measuring less than 200 sq.m.

Wythenshawe's vacancy rate is the highest of all of the district centres within the authority area, both in terms of the proportion of floorspace and units.

The largest vacant unit within Wythenshawe measures 2,500 sq.m, which comprises approximately 32% of the total vacant floorspace in the district centre. The unit, formerly occupied by Buzz Bingo, is located to the east of the Civic Centre. Other key vacant units include the former Wythenshawe Market to the north of the centre and units adjacent to it. The closure of the market has resulted in a quieter northern part of the centre, reducing footfall and general activity.

Although the vacant units are not necessarily concentrated to one specific area of the centre, their presence and associated detracting to the aesthetics of the centre due to their closed shutters and inactive shop frontages do not benefit the overarching vitality and viability of the centre.

Opportunity Sites

The Wythenshawe Town Centre Development Framework was published in 2022, and focuses on the opportunities within the town centre, including the development opportunity sites.

The Development Framework identifies a series of sites across the centre for a mix of redevelopment opportunities. In particular, both the Old Forum car park and the Shell Site have been identified for residential uses, and areas within the heart of the centre identified for a mix of commercial and residential uses at both ground and upper floors.

The redevelopment of some of the otherwise redundant brownfield sites within the centre provide significant opportunities to not only improve the overarching aesthetics of the centre, but also to bring additional footfall into the centre and thus increasing activity and available expenditure to support businesses.

Further opportunities include the repurposing and reoccupation of the larger vacant units within the centre, which may provide instances to increase the leisure and particularly the food and drink offer within the centre. Encouraging uses which open into the evening could be supported by an increased residential population within the centre.

The interventions and future development opportunities outlined in the approved Development Framework will guide future investment in Wythenshawe, and be a material consideration when determining planning applications within the district centre. However, a number of the identified interventions are longer term and could take some time to be realised. As such, in the shorter term, it will remain important to reoccupy or repurpose the existing vacant units in Wythenshawe and help to diversify the centre.

Market Summary

With reference to CoStar data sourced in June 2023, the average annual market rent per sq.ft currently achieved in Wythenshawe is £11.83, with this figure representing a 7.7% increase on the £10.99 per sq.ft average achieved in the previous 12-month period.

Additionally, the average market sale price per sq.ft has increased slightly over the past 12-month period, up 1.7% to £172 per sq.ft.

In respect of yields, CoStar finds that the current market yield is 7.1%, with this figure remaining consistent over the past 12 months. However, yields in Wythenshawe are forecast to increase to around 7.8% over the period to 2027.

Increases in rents and decreases in yields are generally considered positive signs in respect of investor confidence in a given location. In this instance, Wythenshawe's yields are slightly lower than the average recorded across all centres in Manchester.

Insufficient data is available to identify trends in respect of the leasing of vacant premises.

Pedestrian Flows

Wythenshawe attracts relatively high levels of daytime footfall throughout the centre, especially around the Asda and commercial uses fronting onto the car park off Simonsway. Although well linked to the transport interchange, limited footfall was observed travelling between the interchange and the commercial units at the Civic Centre.

The pedestrianised Civic Centre was observed to be relatively compact, accessible and easily walkable, all of which encourages visits on foot. Principal levels of footfall were observed between the car parks and retail units, and therefore consideration must be given to how footfall can be encouraged throughout the wider centre. In this regard, the northern end of the centre which includes some of the larger vacant footprints had a lower footfall at the time of our visit.

Efforts have been made to encourage footfall, particularly through the pedestrianised areas within the Civic Centre. The presence of Wilko to the north does encourage footfall north and south and the Forum to the west also encourages footfall east to west.

Accessibility

The Wythenshawe transport interchange opened in 2015 and provides good public transport access and egress at the very heart of the Civic Quarter district.

The Interchange provides stops for a number of bus services, linking Wythenshawe to the surrounding residential areas and further afield to Manchester city centre and the Airport. Buses run throughout the day and evening and are regular.

The district centre is well connected by public transport, with easy links to Manchester Airport, Wythenshawe Hospital, Gatley train station and Heald Green train station.

Car parking dominates the centre, with a large multi-storey and level car park to the south and a level car park to the west of the Forum Centre. Whilst this is useful for those travelling by car, the car parks detract from the wider quality of the centre and do not encourage sustainable modes of

transport. However, the centre is easily accessible on foot from surrounding residential areas, with good links and safe crossings across main roads.

The Wythenshawe Development Framework identifies a series of improvements to help connectivity and accessibility within the centre, including measures such as:

- Redesigning routes to ensure they are barrier free and fully accessible;
- Provision of a new public square to include community events;
- Reordering and consolidating car parking; and
- Provision of a mobility hub in proximity to the Interchange.

Perception of Safety

Overall, and particularly throughout the day, the centre has a relatively good perception of safety with active ground floor frontages and some busy commercial operators, particularly the convenience operators.

Those areas with lower levels of footfall, and the disused areas on the periphery of the centre do feel less safe, and the overall effect was to reduce the perception of vibrancy and the opportunities for bystanders to observe any potential anti-social behaviour or criminality.

Environmental Quality

The environmental quality of the centre is relatively good, with modern purpose-built buildings, pedestrianised areas and good provision of street furniture. The Forum, Interchange and surrounding buildings are of high quality and provide improvements to the streetscape within the centre.

However, the vacant premises do detract somewhat from the aesthetics within the centre, particularly in the northern and eastern parts. Furthermore, the large multi-storey car park and expanse of level car parking also reduce the visual quality.

The retail core remains very inward looking with the boundaries of the site comprising of car-centric retail, drive throughs, a petrol station and larger scale retail and leisure uses. Consequently, the fringes of the district centre are blighted by poor permeability and public realm which add to the negative perceptions of the area.

It is also considered that the gateway into the Civic Centre is not of high quality, with poor wayfinding particularly if travelling from the Interchange and the Forum.

Conclusions

Wythenshawe district centre is anchored by the Wythenshawe Civic Centre, which is formed around pedestrianised areas running north to south and east to west. To the west is the Forum Centre which is an integrated service building including community and business uses such as the leisure centre, library, health centre and areas to hire for events. The transport interchange is also situated in between the Civic Centre and the Forum, which connects Wythenshawe with wider Manchester areas via tram and bus, and links directly to the airport.

The retail offer in Wythenshawe is dominated by operators falling within the discount end of the market, including B&M, Home Bargains, Pound Stretcher and Poundland. The southern end of the centre, fronting onto the main car park is anchored by the Asda store and to the north by Wilko. The centre lacks a diverse leisure offer, which also results in there being a very limited evening economy and most operators closing by 6pm.

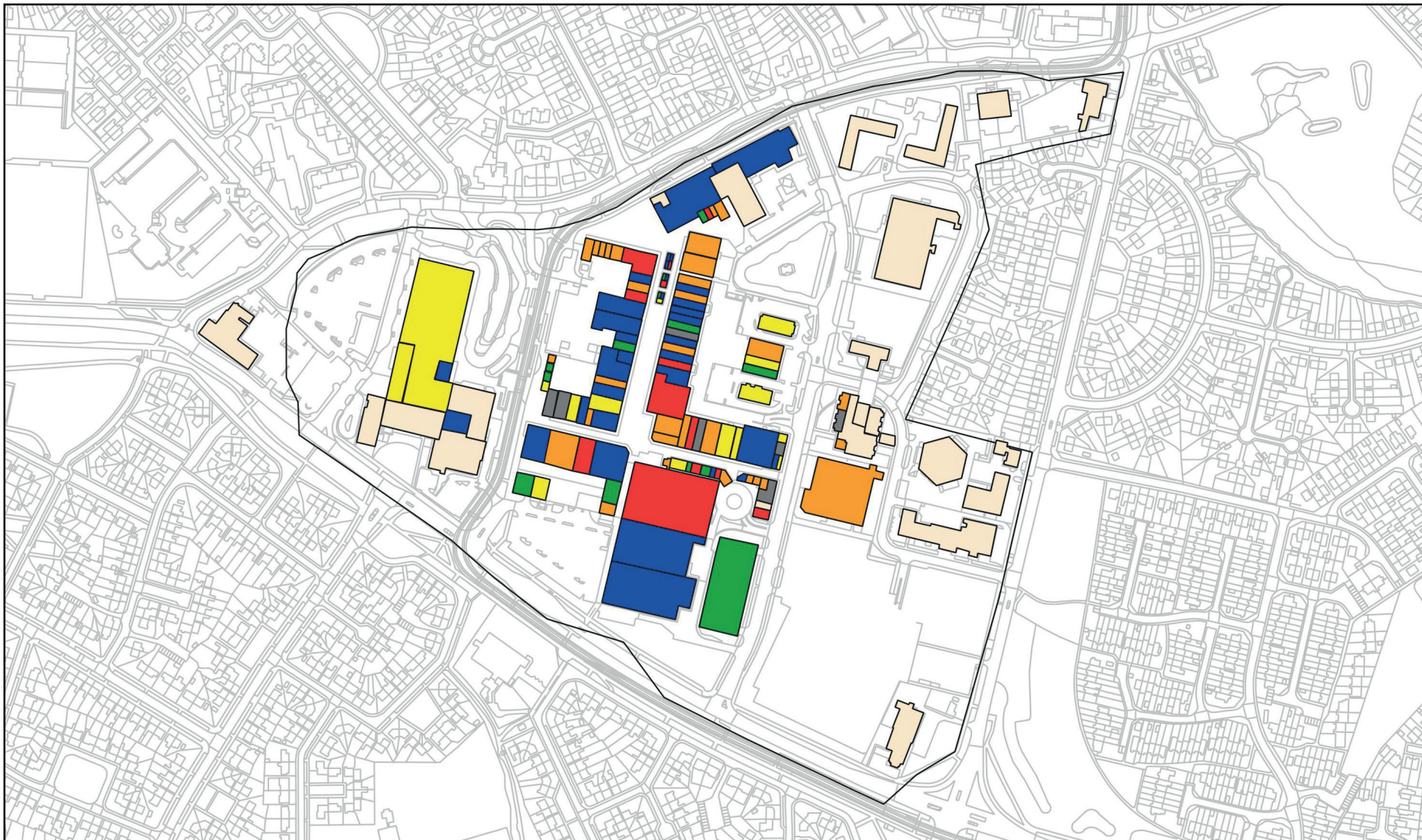
Wythenshawe's vacancy rate is the highest of all of the district centres within the authority area, both in terms of the proportion of floorspace and units. Some of the vacant units are large and detract from the overarching environmental quality and aesthetics of the centre.

Although the centre is accessible, with the presence of a new Interchange connecting it to surrounding residential areas and further afield, the expanse of car parking still dominates, which detracts considerably from the overarching vitality and viability.

At present, the centre provides for day-to-day needs of the local catchment through the provision of key retail, leisure and service operators. However, we consider that interventions are required to improve the perception of the centre in relation to a number of areas, including: the high vacancy rate, lack of footfall throughout, dominance by cars, and lack of diversity in the offer.

To this end, the Council published the Wythenshawe Town Centre Development Framework in 2022. The Development Framework identifies the current weaknesses of the centre but also provides for achievable opportunities which will considerably enhance its vitality and viability.

Such improvements include diversification of uses, particularly in the leisure sector, improving permeability and accessibility, and also encouraging additional residential and commercial uses into the centre on the key development sites. Realising the interventions set out within the Framework will help to secure the future of the district centre and ensure that it fully meets the needs of its local community. As a consequence, we conclude that Wythenshawe is currently undergoing a transformation which offers substantial opportunity for the revitalisation of the centre's overall health.



Wythenshawe district centre

Manchester Retail and Leisure Study

Survey Date - February 2023

Key

Comparison	Leisure Service
Convenience	Retail Service
Financial & Business Services	Vacant