

# Harpurhey District Centre

## Description

The nucleus of Harpurhey district centre is its Shopping Centre, a purpose-built facility developed by St Modwen in partnership with Manchester City Council in the early 2000s, as part of a comprehensive regeneration scheme. The Shopping Centre contains a high proportion of national multiples and also houses the popular Harpurhey Market. The market plays an important role in supplementing and diversifying the district centre's retail provision, hosting a variety of independent traders selling a broad range of food and non-food products.

Harpurhey's convenience retail offer is strong and anchored by an Asda superstore that draws trade from a wide catchment. The district centre is located alongside several public sector services – including healthcare facilities, a youth/community centre, and educational establishments – which fulfil the needs of residents and support significant numbers of linked trips. Indeed, high footfall is one of the key strengths of Harpurhey.

North City Family & Fitness is a key leisure provider in the district centre with an excellent range of gym, swimming pool and soft play facilities.

Table 1 Harpurhey District Centre Floorspace Composition

GOAD Category	Floorspace at 2023 (sq.m)	Floorspace at 2023 (%)	Floorspace UK Average at 2023 (%)
Comparison	6,572	22.3%	30.1%
Convenience	12,555	42.7%	15.5%
Financial	242	0.8%	6.6%
Leisure	3,371	11.5%	26.3%
Retail Service	2,815	9.6%	7.2%
Vacant	3,877	13.2%	13.8%
TOTAL	29,432	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 Harpurhey District Centre Unit Composition

GOAD Category	Units at 2023	Units at 2023 (%)	Units UK Average at 2023 (%)
Comparison	13	26.0%	26.9%
Convenience	7	14.0%	9.3%
Financial	1	2.0%	8.7%
Leisure	14	28.0%	25.4%
Retail Service	6	12.0%	15.8%
Vacant	9	18.0%	13.8%
TOTAL	50	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

Convenience retailing is by far the largest use in the centre in terms of floorspace. Indeed, Harpurhey's proportion of convenience floorspace is almost three times that of a typical UK centre. The discrepancy is partly due to the relatively large size of the modern units in and around Harpurhey Shopping Centre, where most of the district centre's foodstores are concentrated. The Asda superstore alone accounts for more than half of this space (6,536 sq.m gross), and the district centre is also home to Lidl (1,397 sq.m gross) and Iceland (624 sq.m gross) foodstores which trade from units big enough to sell all or most of the operators' full offers.

Consequently, the difference in the proportion of convenience units in the district centre versus a typical UK centre is much less stark, although Harpurhey is still comfortably above the national average. In addition to its six national multiple food retailers, the centre contains Harpurhey Market (3,423 sq.m gross), which is recorded as a convenience operator in the tables above. The Market performs an important function within the district centre, both in meeting residents' needs and in differentiating its food (and wider retail) offer. It hosts a broad selection of independent traders selling a range of fruit, vegetables, meats, baked goods and deli food. Given that Harpurhey's overall vitality and viability is underpinned by its strong convenience sector, the Market is a key contributor to the district centre's health and plays a key role in attracting footfall.

In contrast, Harpurhey has a substantially lower proportion of comparison floorspace than a typical centre in the UK, although it is more in line with the rest of the country with regard to its proportion of comparison units. The focus of the district centre's comparison offer is at the lower or value end of the market, with the majority of Harpurhey's non-food retailers being charity, discount and second-hand shops. Most of its comparison operators are national multiples, with representation from Wilko, B&M, Poundland and Lloyds Pharmacy. These larger floorplate retailers occupy the modern, purpose-built retail units that make up Harpurhey Shopping Centre. The only two non-multiple comparison stores are a school uniform shop on Lee Road, and a small mobile phone shop opposite Asda's western entrance.

While the range of 'brick and mortar' comparison retailers in the district centre is somewhat narrow, this is supplemented by Harpurhey's Indoor Market. The Weekend Market operates Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and contains stalls selling homewares, flowers, electronic goods, clothing, jewellery and accessories. In addition, the district centre hosts the Mixed Market on Mondays and Thursdays, which comprises a flea market selling a mixture of new and second-hand items. The Asda in the centre also sells a broad range of comparison goods which helps meet the daily needs of local residents.

Harpurhey's proportion of leisure floorspace is less than half the national average. However, this trend reverses with regard to the proportion of leisure units in the district centre, which is above that found in a typical UK centre. These figures reflect the dominance, in floorspace terms, of Harpurhey's anchor convenience retailers.

Leisure units in the district centre range in scale from 46 sq.m to 887 sq.m. The smaller operators are concentrated in the northern half of Harpurhey Shopping Centre. In addition, there are numerous larger standalone leisure uses dotted around the periphery of the centre's retail core, where they are well-placed to take advantage of footfall generated by the strong range of public sector services located in Harpurhey (including health centres, a youth club, a library and the Manchester College campus).

The food and drink sector includes national multiple representation from McDonalds, KFC and Subway, together with a number of independent cafes, two social clubs and a public house. There is a good range of leisure operators for a centre of this size, although the district centre lacks restaurants, other than the fast food outlets, that could stimulate an evening economy.

In the daytime, however, Harpurhey benefits from North City Family & Fitness, a not-for-profit leisure centre established and overseen by Manchester City Council, which provides for a gym, fitness class studio, swimming pool with swimming lessons, sauna, steam room, spa pool and soft play area. The facilities at the leisure centre are excellent, having recently received £450,000 in investment to refurbish its gym and health suite, with a further £60,000 for the soft play area.

Harpurhey has only one unit falling within the financial and business services category, this being Peasgood Solicitors on Rochdale Road. The relative shortfall in financial and business services in Harpurhey compared to the rest of the UK means that it lacks uses such as banks, building societies and estate agents which would typically be expected in a centre of this size. Notably, however, the Asda superstore and Post Office do provide some financial services, including cash withdrawals, money transfers and foreign currency exchange. There is also a Lloyds bank in Moston Lane local centre, which is less than 1 km to the east of Harpurhey district centre.

Harpurhey's share of retail services floorspace exceeds the national average. However, the majority of this space (81%) is occupied by the Asda petrol filling station. The percentage of units in retail services use is actually below the UK average. The remaining retail service units comprise two opticians, a post office, tanning studio and nail bar. Thus, the centre does not support any barbers or hairdressers, and the overall retail services offer could benefit from more diversity.

## Daytime/Evening Economy

Harpurhey's daytime economy is underpinned by its strong convenience and leisure offer, together with a diverse range of public sector services which support linked trips with the commercial uses. Harpurhey Market, which is a key driver of footfall, closes at 5pm and does not open at all on Wednesdays or Sundays.

Some of the district centre's larger operators have longer trading hours, however, with Asda and the leisure centre remaining open until 10pm most nights, and with the McDonalds being open 24 hours a day. However, most of the commercial units in the central part of Harpurhey, i.e. around the Shopping Centre, are closed in the evenings, and activity generally trails off after this time.

Harpurhey does have two social clubs and one public house, all located in the western part, but these are separated by frontages that are either empty or inactive after daylight hours and this poor connectivity prevents them from being mutually reinforcing. The district centre as a whole would benefit from the introduction of evening uses, such as restaurants, to bring activity to all parts of the centre after dark.

## Vacancies

At 13.2%, Harpurhey's proportion of vacant floorspace is roughly in line with the national average of 13.8%.

Notably, 57% of this floorspace is attributable to just one empty unit, this being the former Buzz Bingo hall in the centre of Harpurhey Shopping Centre (2,194 sq.m gross). While this unit inevitably represents a large void in the heart of the district centre, the negative impact is somewhat mitigated by the terrace of small occupied units located on its western elevation, which much reduce the length of the inactive frontage and thus help to maintain a sense of activity in this part of the district centre. Moreover, the vacant building is well-maintained, with no obvious signs of deterioration, which also reduces its adverse impact on perceptions of the centre environment. Nonetheless, reoccupying or repurposing the Buzz Bingo unit should be a priority.

With regard to units, the district centre's vacancy rate (18.0%) exceeds the UK average of 13.8%. Concerningly, these vacancies are concentrated in the central part of Harpurhey Shopping Centre, which constitutes a main retail frontage. Two of these units, the former Poundworld and Brighthouse stores, are relatively large in scale (measuring 568 sq.m gross and 389 sq.m gross

respectively), which increases their prominence in the street-scene. In addition, several of the vacancies were shuttered during the day, causing a negative impact on the look and feel of the centre. Overall, Harpurhey's high unit vacancy rate detracts from its vitality and viability.

## Opportunity Sites

The district centre's current form and layout are a result of a comprehensive redevelopment scheme led by St Modwen Developments, in partnership with Manchester City Council, in the early 2000s. Numerous other developments took place on vacant and underutilised sites in and around the district centre around this time, resulting in the current Harpurhey Police Station, North City Family & Fitness Centre, and Manchester College Campus. As a consequence, there are presently few opportunities for expansion and reconfiguration of the district centre in the short to medium-term, save for the vacancies detailed above.

However, the report of the Council's Strategic Director of Growth & Development and Director of Development to the Economy Scrutiny Committee of October 2022 confirms that Harpurhey district centre may be set to benefit from new residential development. The report states that:

'Several Council owned land assets suitable for housing have been identified and the Development and Strategic Housing teams are exploring options around a programme of Affordable Housing led regeneration, catering specifically to provide homes that address identified local needs.'

The Council has not yet published any detailed plans or consultation documents in relation to investment and development opportunities in Harpurhey district centre at time of writing (July 2023).

## Market Summary

With reference to CoStar data sourced in June 2023, the average annual market rent per sq.ft currently achieved in Harpurhey is £21.20, with this figure representing a 7.5% increase on the £19.72 per sq.ft average achieved in the previous 12-month period. This level of market rent is the second-highest achieved by a district centre in Manchester.

Additionally, the average market sale price per sq.ft has increased over the past 12-month period, up 3.5% to £192 per sq.ft. Notwithstanding this, Costar currently predicts market rents to remain steady, remaining at the circa £21.00 level in the period up to 2027.

In respect of yields, CoStar find that the current market yield is 7.0%, with this figure remaining being very slightly below the 7.1% market yield observed in the previous 12-month period. The market yield in Harpurhey is forecast to rise to circa 7.7% 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, Harpurhey's yields are slightly below the average recorded for all centres in Manchester (7.3%), suggesting a fairly good level of investor confidence.

CoStar does not currently hold any data relating to the probability of leasing vacant premises in Harpurhey.

## Pedestrian Flows

Harpurhey attracts high levels of daytime footfall throughout, especially around Asda and the Market, which form the anchor convenience uses. The latter was particularly busy on the day of our visit.

The pedestrianised Harpurhey Shopping Centre was observed to be compact, accessible and easily walkable, all of which encourages visits on foot. We noticed a substantial number of visitors linking their trip to one of the larger foodstores (mainly Asda) with another commercial operator within the district centre or indoor market.

That said, it was evident that a large number of visitors arrived by car and simply undertook their main grocery shop at the national multiple foodstores, without visiting the rest of the centre. Large areas of Harpurhey are given over to busy car parks, which at times inhibited pedestrian flows. In general, however, all parts of the centre appeared well-used and high footfall is clearly a strength of Harpurhey district centre.

## Accessibility

Road access to Harpurhey is good, with the district centre being located less than 5km to the north east of the City Centre and accessible via Rochdale Road, a key arterial route. Rochdale Road also links the district centre to Junction 20 of the M60. Free parking for up to 3 hours is available at the two vehicular entrances to the Shopping Centre and, while the car parks were busy, the district centre did not appear to suffer from any shortage of spaces and we did not observe any illegally parked vehicles on the day of our fieldwork visit.

Harpurhey is well-served by bus stops, with frequent services linking it to the City Centre, Trafford Centre and Manchester Royal Infirmary in the south; Cheetham Hill to the west; Langley, Rochdale and Bury in the north; and Failsworth to the east.

There are dedicated cycle lanes along much of Rochdale Road, and bicycle parking is provided throughout the centre in the form of Sheffield stands. Nonetheless, the lack of cycle infrastructure on the other roads around Harpurhey, and the potential for conflict with vehicles on the car parks, may deter some users from travelling to the centre by bike.

The high levels of footfall experienced in the district centre are partly due to the fact that it lies a short walk from a substantial residential catchment and is well-connected to the surrounding network of pedestrian footpaths. As consequence, the centre is easily accessible for those travelling on foot.

Harpurhey also performs very well in terms of accessibility for people with mobility impairments or those using pushchairs, etc. The purpose-built district centre is compact and legible, with good signage and plenty of seating areas for those needing to stop and rest. The topography is flat and the pedestrianised streets are even. A potential area of concern is the two large car parks adjacent to the Asda store and leisure centre. However, these are well-maintained, so that they are largely free of clutter, and measures such as zebra crossings and speed bumps mean that the traffic is generally slow enough that pedestrians can navigate without difficulty.

## Perception of Safety

For the most part, the layout of Harpurhey district centre allows for a good level of natural surveillance. The exceptions to this general are at the periphery of the centre, particularly to the south and east, where the rear elevations of the Shopping Centre units create stretches of inactive street-facing property. Overall, however, the busyness of the centre and the high number of passing cars make it feel safe and secure during the day.

In the evenings, however, the majority of the centre's operators are closed, and the consequent lack of activity is likely to deter footfall and increase the perceived threat of crime, particularly in those parts of Harpurhey Shopping Centre which are under cover.

The introduction of more uses with later opening times, particularly restaurants, is one potential way to stimulate the centre's evening economy and increase feelings of safety and security at night.

While we note that the Shopping Centre does provide street lighting and visible CCTV cameras, and that there are lampposts along all of the surrounding roads, a comprehensive scheme of improved lighting and monitoring for safety purposes may also go some way towards providing reassurance for potential visitors.

**Environmental Quality** While becoming somewhat dated in appearance, for the most part Harpurhey Shopping Centre is well-maintained and free from litter and graffiti. Street furniture in

the form of benches, bins and planters adds visual interest and contributes to the pleasantness of the environment in the main shopping frontages.

The fairly high levels of unit vacancy, and the resulting clusters of empty premises within the Shopping Centre, have a negative impact on the look and feel of Harpurhey. The large post office unit is another prominent feature that detracts from the centre environment, with the two-storey building being in fairly poor condition and out of keeping with the surroundings.

Our overall conclusion with regard to the appearance and quality of Harpurhey is that the centre is functional in nature, with its environment being adequate to enable it to perform its primary role as a convenience destination that meets the basic needs of its residents.

## Conclusions

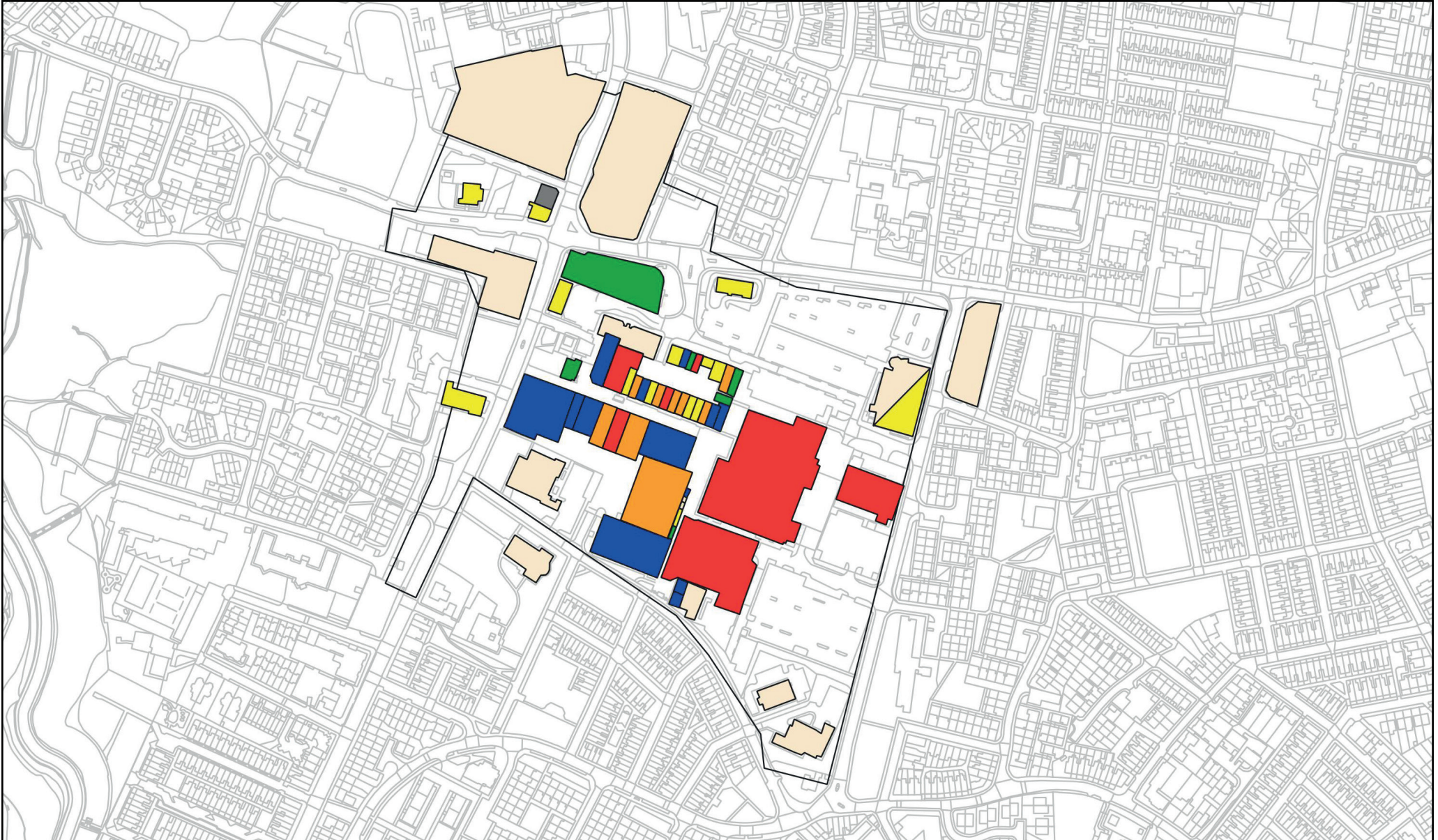
Harpurhey's commercial core is its Shopping Centre, which comprises modern units and a popular market hall. The district centre is anchored by its Asda superstore and an excellent range of large-format national multiple retailers, albeit focussed at the lower or value end of the market. The market brings welcome diversity to the retail offer by catering for a variety of independent traders selling food and non-food goods. The retail function of the district centre is supported by its daytime leisure offer, which has been strengthened by recent investment in the North City Family & Fitness leisure centre, and a number of public sector services that generate footfall and linked trips.

The accessibility and walkability of Harpurhey, together with its proximity to a substantial residential catchment, support high levels of footfall throughout the centre. While the appearance of the centre is somewhat dated, it is generally well-maintained and functional.

Nonetheless, there is clear room for improvement in respect of Harpurhey's unit vacancy rate, which currently results in prominent stretches of empty and shuttered units that detract from the centre environment. The introduction of new operators with longer opening hours represents a key opportunity area for the district centre, given the potential to further develop the evening economy in order to encourage activity in all parts of the centre and ensure feelings of safety and security at night. Given the increasing importance of food and drink outlets in helping to support resilient centres, Harpurhey could benefit considerably from the introduction of new restaurants or similar uses.

Overall, we conclude that there is opportunity to improve Harpurhey's vitality and viability, especially with regard to its vacancy rate and the associated inactive frontages, especially in the evenings.





**Key**

Blue	Comparison	Yellow	Leisure Service
Red	Convenience	Green	Retail Service
Grey	Financial & Business Services	Orange	Vacant