

Longsight District Centre

Description

Longsight lies approximately 4 km to the south-east of Manchester City Centre. The district centre is mostly arranged around the crossroads of Stockport Road (A6) and Dickenson Road, with Rainforth Street, Mitre Road and Stamford Road providing additional, secondary commercial frontages.

The district centre’s convenience offer is anchored by its Asda superstore and the newer Lidl supermarket, which benefit from both an extensive residential catchment and pass-by trade from the busy A6 corridor. Longsight Market also draws footfall to the centre, with its range of specialist operators reflecting the ethnic diversity of the local community. These retailers are supported by a range of small-scale independent comparison shops. The evening economy is focussed on food and drink, with the centre containing numerous takeaways and restaurants.

Longsight benefits from the newer public services buildings concentrated in its north, which are generally attractive and perform an important role for local residents, and the greenspace in its south provided by the new Slade Lane Community Gardens.

Table 1 Longsight District Centre Floorspace Composition

GOAD Category	Floorspace at 2023 (sq.m)	Floorspace at 2023 (%)	Floorspace UK Average at 2023 (%)
Comparison	5,186	24.8%	30.1%
Convenience	9,680	46.3%	15.5%
Financial	1,120	5.4%	6.6%
Leisure	2,813	13.4%	26.3%
Retail Service	1,141	5.5%	7.2%
Vacant	988	4.7%	13.8%
TOTAL	20,928	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.

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Uses

Longsight's proportion of comparison floorspace is less than that of a typical centre in the UK. However, the seeming underprovision is primarily due to the small size of most of the district centre's non-food retailers, which largely occupy either the ground floors of converted Victorian terraced houses or parades of 1960s-era shopping precincts. In fact, Longsight's 36 comparison shops equate to 33.6% of its units, which is well above the national average of 26.9%.

With the exception of Shoe Zone, all of the comparison retailers present in Longsight are independently operated. Indeed, much of the district centre's commercial stock is of insufficient scale to meet the requirements of most national multiple non-food operators. The largest comparison unit (Kings Furniture) measures 613 sq.m, and the vast majority (83%) measure less than 200 sq.m.

A key focus of the offer is specialist fashion, with 11 of the district centre's comparison shops (31%) selling South Asian-style clothing, a reflection of the ethnically diverse community of Longsight. Another seven shops (19%) sell furniture, carpets and white goods. The remaining non-food operators in the district centre mostly represent the lower or value end of the retail market, with several operators selling discount household goods and one charity shop.

Longsight Market contributes significantly to the retail diversity of the district centre. The market operates from the permanent stalls located on the northern side of Dickenson Road. The general market is open on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays; the second-hand market is open on Tuesdays; and the mixed market is open on Thursdays. Among the non-food products available at the market are specialist Asian fabrics, clothing and jewellery, which draw customers from a wide catchment. It also sells general clothing and household goods.

The proportion of food retail floorspace in Longsight is almost three times the UK average. Notably, however, almost three quarters of this floorspace (73%) is attributable to just two retailers, these being the Asda superstore of 5,584 sq.m gross (58%) and the Lidl discount supermarket of 1,494 sq.m gross (15%). As a consequence, the district centre's share of convenience units is much lower, although still above the UK average.

In addition to the Asda and Lidl foodstores, there is national multiple representation from Farmfoods and Greggs. This is balanced with a good range of independent convenience retailers, including two butchers, a deli and greengrocers. Several operators specialise in Asian and Afro-Caribbean foods, including the Appna Continental Cash & Carry and the Manchester Superstore.

Longsight Market adds to this strong convenience offer, selling fruit and veg, fish, meat, baked goods and confectionery. The market also draws footfall and trade to the centre through a variety of events across the year, including food fairs and holiday celebrations.

There are no large-floorplate leisure uses in Longsight (such as a swimming baths), and its proportion of commercial floorspace occupied by leisure uses is around half the level of leisure floorspace provided in a typical UK centre. The proportion of units in leisure use is more in line with the UK as a whole, but remains below average.

Apart from three national multiple bookmakers (David Pluck, Paddy Power and William Hill), all of Longsight's 24 leisure operators are independent food and drink traders who generally occupy small units (92% of the centre's leisure premises measure less than 200 sq.m).

Takeaways make up the biggest proportion of the district centre's leisure users (54%), followed by restaurants (42%), and then cafés (13%). These are concentrated on Stockport Road and at its crossroads with Dickenson Road. These food and drink operators add vibrancy and contribute to the evening economy.

Financial and business services make a lower proportion of Longsight's floorspace than the national average. Again, however, the trend reverses when the proportion of units is considered. There is national multiple representation from the centre's two banks (Barclays and TSB) and one of its pawnbrokers (H&T). The remaining independent operators cater for a good variety of services to fulfil the needs of local residents, including estate agents, money exchange and a solicitor.

The level of retail services provision is below the UK average, both in terms of floorspace and units. All of the retail service operators in Longsight trade from units measuring less than 150 sq.m and the only national multiple present in the centre is the Post Office.

Nonetheless, the centre's range of retail services operators is sufficient to meet most of the basic daily needs of residents, with representation from barbers, hairdressers, opticians and travel agents.

Daytime/Evening Economy

Longsight's daytime economy is convenience-led, being anchored by Asda and Lidl, but with the centre's comparison shops and Market also drawing a substantial level of trade to the district centre.

The centre's national multiple supermarkets and its larger specialist foodstores operate fairly late into the evening on weekdays, closing between 8pm and 10pm. The opening hours of the smaller retailers and service units vary greatly but are generally shorter, with most units closing between 5pm and 7pm Monday to Saturday and earlier on Sundays.

Nonetheless, there is activity across the centre throughout the evening due to the presence of its leisure operators, with the offer being entirely composed of bookmakers and food and drink uses. In particular, Longsight's takeaways are open until the early hours of the morning. These operators are concentrated around the central and southern parts of Stockport Road, with the area around the public service uses to the north of the centre being comparatively quieter at night.

The district centre's evening economy is periodically supplemented by events held at the Market – such as its annual funfair to celebrate Chaand Raat, which lasts until 1am – which add vibrancy and variety.

Vacancies

Longsight enjoys a low vacancy rate compared to the country as a whole, both with regard to floorspace and units. Just 4.7% of the district centre's commercial floorspace is vacant, around a third of the UK average of 13.8%. The unit vacancy rate of 8.4% in Longsight is closer to the national average (also 13.8%), but still comfortably below.

The largest empty unit, which is located between the Shoe Zone and Manchester Superstore premises on Stockport Road, measures just 289 sq.m. There are further small vacancies dotted around Stockport Road, all to the north of its crossroads with Dickenson Road in the centre of Longsight. Due to their small size and the general busyness of this part of the district centre, the impact of these vacancies is limited.

There is also a small concentration of three vacant units at the corner of Dickenson Road and Rainforth Street, to the south of Longsight Market, which detract from the street-scene in this fairly prominent location.

Opportunity Sites

Whilst it will be important to reoccupy or repurpose vacant units in Longsight, there are no immediately available medium-to-large-scale development opportunities within the district centre boundary.

More generally, we are aware that planning permissions have been granted for a collective 130 dwellings (mainly in the form of apartments) to the north west of the district centre (under Manchester City Council refs:

135848/FO/2022, 128987/FO/2020, 127110/FO/2020, 117208/FO/2017, and 116582/FO/2017), with a further 6 residential apartments permitted to its south (ref: 123364/FO/2019). These developments will present an opportunity for Longsight, insofar as it will increase the population who look to the district centre to provide for their day-to-day needs.

Market Summary

With reference to CoStar data sourced in June 2023, the average annual market rent per sq.ft currently achieved in Longsight is £11.50, with this figure representing a 7.9% increase on the £10.66 per sq.ft average achieved in the previous 12-month period. This level of rent is the second lowest achieved by a district centre in Manchester, and well below the average of £17.06 per sq.ft.

The average market sale price per sq.ft in Longsight has decreased slightly over the past 12-month period, down 1.0% to £167 per sq.ft, which is also towards the lower end of what is achieved across Manchester's 17 district centres (with the mean sale price being circa £185 per sq.ft).

In respect of yields, CoStar find that the current market yield is 7.2%, with this figure remaining the same as the market yield observed in the previous 12-month period.

Increases in rents and decreases in yields are generally considered positive signs in respect of investor confidence in a given location. In this instance, Longsight's yields are roughly in line with the average recorded for district centres in Manchester (7.3%), suggesting a reasonable level of investor confidence.

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

Pedestrian Flows

Footfall was high throughout Longsight on the day of our fieldwork visit. While pedestrian activity was concentrated around the crossroads of Stockport and Dickenson Roads, the far north and south of the district centre also enjoyed a very good amount of foot traffic. The quietest commercial frontages at the time we visited were those located on the secondary streets of Rainsford Road and Stamford Road, but overall all parts of Longsight felt busy.

Despite some difficulties in traversing the busy crossroads, we observed particularly strong pedestrian flows between the Lidl store, the surrounding units on Stockport Road, and Longsight Market. In contrast, connectivity between the Asda store and the remainder of the district centre was observed to be much poorer. The Asda has limited visibility from Stockport Road compared to

the other national multiple operators in the east of Longsight, with the one footpath linkage being sandwiched between retail and service operators and easy to miss, and we observed few combined trips between the superstore and the rest of the centre.

While Longsight's busy roadside location is an important generator of the activity and footfall which underpin its most successful aspects, we note that car traffic was a noticeable impediment to pedestrian movements across the centre's two major thoroughfares of Stockport Road and Dickenson Road, although the controlled pedestrian crossing points reduced some of the negative impacts. The Asda and Lidl car parks also attracted a high volume of vehicle movements, but in general the flow of foot and car traffic in these locations was adequately managed and we observed no instances of pedestrian/vehicular conflict.

Accessibility

Longsight is well-connected by road, being located along Stockport Road (A6), a key radial north-south route between Manchester City Centre and Stockport, and Dickenson Road (A6010), another A road that runs west to east between Rusholme and Gorton district centres. Bus stops are located along both routes, with frequent connecting Longsight to the City Centre, Stockport, the Trafford Centre, Cheetham Hill and Pendleton in Salford.

Cycle provision could be significantly improved. The only dedicated bicycle lanes are in the north of Longsight rather than where vehicle traffic is most congested, i.e. around the busy crossroads or near the Market. Cycle parking is dotted throughout the centre in the form of Sheffield stands.

Longsight's residential catchment is extensive, and the district centre is well-connected to nearby dwellings via the public footpath network.

In terms of the accessibility of the centre for those with different impairments or health conditions and older people, some of Longsight's pavements are badly-maintained and uneven, especially in the secondary streets such as Rainforth Street and Stamford Road. The accessibility of Rainforth Street, in particular, is also negatively impacted by having numerous cars parked over its already narrow footpaths, making traversing this part of the centre particularly challenging for people with mobility issues.

While the footpaths along the main commercial frontages of Stockport Road and Dickenson Road are wider and generally suffer less from poor maintenance, Longsight as a whole suffers from cluttered streets. A key issue is retailers which display their wares outside their shopfronts, but this is compounded by A-board signs and other advertising, rubbish piled up for collection, and (at times) illegally parked cars.

While we recognise that Longsight's roadside location is a key factor in generating footfall and activity which help sustain the centre, we note that congested vehicular traffic can also be a barrier to accessibility in the centre at peak times, with the two main roads being particularly busy and wide. Controlled pedestrian crossing points with tactile paving are provided at the central crossroads and at other intervals on Stockport Road, which help to alleviate some of the impacts of traffic.

Perception of Safety

The high footfall throughout all parts of Longsight, and the good level of natural and passive surveillance afforded by the linear layout, make it feel generally safe in the daytime. The largest source of perceived threat comes from the car traffic which dominates the centre, with the controlled crossing points partially mitigating this concern.

Streetlighting is provided throughout the centre and, as outlined above, Longsight's food and drink operators bring a level of activity to the central and southern parts of the district centre in the evenings. However, we notice graffiti on the day of our visit, especially around the public services uses in the north of the centre where there are no commercial operators with late opening hours. This finding suggests that Longsight would benefit from additional measures to deter anti-social behaviour and crime, such as visible CCTV cameras or enhanced lighting, which would make the district centre look and feel safer to visit after dark.

Environmental Quality

Longsight's street-scene is varied, comprising a mix of red brick former Victorian terraced houses converted to commercial use, parades of 1960s-style shopping precincts, modern purpose-built units such as the Lidl store and the Longsight Library & Learning Centre building, and the 1970s-era pedestrianised covered marketplace. This lack of uniformity is also reflected in the district centre's shopfronts, a significant proportion of which are poor in quality and badly-maintained. Shuttered units, cluttered streets and graffiti also detract from the environmental quality in parts of the centre, particularly its less well-monitored side streets.

Other parts of Longsight are higher in environmental quality, especially the newer public services buildings in the north of the centre, which also benefit from mature tree planting at their frontages. Slade Lane Community Gardens in the south of the district centre is another bright spot which provides welcome greenspace. This triangular piece of land, formerly known as Pigeon Park, was previously underutilised and blighted by litter and vermin. However, between 2022 and 2023, local volunteers, with support from Manchester City Council, transformed the land into a community garden with wildflowers to support butterflies, bees and ladybirds. This project has had a noticeably positive impact on the southern part of the district centre and provides an opportunity for visitors to gather away from the effects of the car traffic along the major roads.

Conclusions

Longsight is a large centre which provides an important retail function for its extensive residential catchment. Its offer is convenience led, being anchored by the Asda superstore and Lidl supermarket, but the strong independent comparison offer and specialist operators on Longsight Market also draw a substantial level of trade. The evening economy is focussed on food and drink, and periodically supplemented by events held at the Market. The district centre also benefits from the newer public services buildings concentrated in its north, which are generally attractive and perform an important role for local residents, and the greenspace in its south provided by the new Slade Lane Community Gardens.

The key opportunities for improvement in Longsight relate to the quality of its public realm, which has been boosted by the development of the new public services buildings and the Slade Lane Community Gardens project, but which requires further intervention to ensure that the centre reaches its full potential. Another issue is the poor connectivity between the Asda store and Stockport Road, which means that currently the rest of the centre does not fully capitalise on the footfall attracted to the supermarket in the form of linked trips.

Nonetheless, Longsight benefits from high footfall and low vacancy rates, and on the whole the district centre is performing well in meeting the day-to-day needs of the local community. Our overall conclusion is that Longsight is reasonably vital and viable.



Longsight district centre

Manchester Retail and Leisure Study

Survey Date - February 2023

Key

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