

# Levenshulme District Centre

## Description

Levenshulme lies approximately 5km to the south east of the City Centre and is one of Manchester's largest district centres, in terms of both units and floorspace. The centre is elongated in nature, being focussed around the busy Stockport Road (A6 corridor) and spanning 1.5km.

The district centre mainly performs a service and convenience role for the local community, with its offer being sufficient to meet the majority of basic day-to-day needs.

Most of Levenshulme's retail operators are independent, catering for a broad range of specialist food products which reflect the ethnic diversity of the surrounding population, and there is representation from national multiple supermarkets (Tesco, Asda and Iceland).

Small-scale leisure units are dispersed throughout the centre, with food and drink uses being a particular focus. In keeping with the other sectors, the leisure offer in Levenshulme overwhelmingly comprises independent operators.

*Table 1 Levenshulme District Centre Floorspace Composition*

<b>GOAD Category</b>	<b>Floorspace at 2023 (sq.m)</b>	<b>Floorspace at 2023 (%)</b>	<b>Floorspace UK Average at 2023 (%)</b>
Comparison	5,468	15.8%	30.1%
Convenience	5,499	15.9%	15.5%
Financial	5,777	16.7%	6.6%
Leisure	9,804	28.4%	26.3%
Retail Service	5,298	15.4%	7.2%
Vacant	2,656	7.7%	13.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34,502</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*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 Levenshulme District Centre Unit Composition*

<b>GOAD Category</b>	<b>Units at 2023</b>	<b>Units at 2023 (%)</b>	<b>Units UK Average at 2023 (%)</b>
Comparison	36	14.9%	26.9%
Convenience	32	13.2%	9.3%
Financial	44	18.2%	8.7%
Leisure	63	26.0%	25.4%
Retail Service	42	17.4%	15.8%
Vacant	25	10.3%	13.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

*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

The proportion of convenience floorspace in Levenshulme is roughly in line with the national average. However, the district centre has more foodstore units than a typical UK centre. These figures reflect the fact that most of the commercial premises on Stockport Road are small in size; 84% of foodstores in Levenshulme measure less than 200 sq.m gross.

Levenshulme's largest convenience retailer is a Tesco store of moderate scale (1,250 sq.m gross), with the other national multiple foodstores being Asda (850 sq.m gross) and Iceland (700 sq.m gross). Nonetheless, convenience provision in Levenshulme is dominated by independent retailers, which occupy about 91% of its food retail units.

The range of convenience uses is good, as might be expected in a district centre of this size, including representation from bakers, butchers, convenience stores, fishmongers, grocers, a health food store, off licences and a sweet shop. Some of the specialist retailers reflect the ethnic diversity of the local community, including Arabic, Persian and Eastern European food shops.

With regard to comparison uses, Levenshulme's proportions of floorspace and units are far below the corresponding national averages. The only representation from national multiple non-food retailers is a small Cohen's chemist and The Children's Society charity shop.

The other 94% of Levenshulme's non-food shops are non-multiples. These provide a good variety of comparison uses, albeit mainly skewed towards the lower end of the retail market. The district centre's offer includes two clothing stores, three discount homeware retailers, a number of shops selling furniture and carpets, several shops specialising in electronics and white goods, two jewellers and two gift shops. There are also four non-food traders specialising in cars and car accessories, reflecting the district centre's location along the busy A6 corridor which results in a high number of vehicles passing through each day.

Previously, the centre also hosted Levenshulme Market, a community enterprise mainly selling street food/drink, arts and crafts. We understand that the Market has now closed and is unlikely to reopen.

Small-scale leisure units are dispersed throughout Levenshulme, with a slight concentration in the central area around Barlow Road and Carrill Grove East. Provision is slightly above the national average, both in terms of floorspace and units. In keeping with the other sectors, the leisure offer in Levenshulme overwhelmingly comprises independent operators, with the only national multiples being the Paddy Power and Betfred bookmakers and Subway. The majority of the leisure units recorded by Experian Goad are food and drink focussed, with the centre providing for 29 takeaways, 11 restaurants, 10 cafes, nine pubs/bars, and one fast food outlet.

A notable operator is the Station South Cycle Café, which opened in 2022, and trades from the refurbished Victorian building formerly used as Levenshulme South Railway Station. This refurbishment project allowed for a mixed-use development incorporating: assembly, leisure and retail space, a restaurant/café, a bar, offices, external seating and recreational areas, and a new cycle path linking the site to the Fallowfield Cycle Loop. The resulting facility appeared busy on the day of our site visit, and represents a valuable addition to Levenshulme's daytime and evening economies.

It should be noted that Experian Goad excludes the Arcadia Library & Leisure Centre at Yew Tree Avenue from its 'leisure services' category because libraries are recorded as a non-commercial use. Nonetheless, this modern purpose-built facility – which opened in 2016 and is operated by a not-for-profit organisation established and overseen by Manchester City Council – provides for a swimming pool, steam room/sauna, gym and a fitness class studio. These amenities play an important role in strengthening the district centre's overall leisure offer and in providing larger-floorplate leisure uses which are otherwise lacking.

Financial and business services are overrepresented in Levenshulme compared to the rest of the country, with both the proportions of floorspace and units being more than double the UK averages. The offer is composed entirely of independent operators, with most of these being within one of three categories: estate agents (13 units), solicitors (12 units) and printers (7 units). The remaining operators in this sector include building merchants/services, financial services, pawnbrokers and various tradespeople. Despite the abundance of financial and service users and its large size, the district centre does not contain any bank or building society.

The proportion of retail services floorspace in Levenshulme is also over double the national average. However, around 42% of this identified floorspace is attributed to just four of the district centre's 42 units. These larger-format operators comprise a valet car wash and three car repair garages, a consequence of the centre's location along a well-used arterial A road. The remaining 90% of retail service operators all measure less than 140 sq.m. Thus, in terms of units, the relative over-provision in Levenshulme in comparison to the rest of the UK is far less pronounced.

Save for the Post Office, all of the retail service providers in Levenshulme are independents. There is a wide range of facilities to meet the needs of local residents, with representation from multiple barbers and hairdressers, a dog groomer, dry cleaners and a laundrette, nail bars, an opticians, phone and computer repair shops, a tattoo parlour and travel agents.

## Daytime/Evening Economy

Services and convenience uses dominate Levenshulme's daytime economy, with the largely independent offer serving a localised catchment and passing trade from users of the A6 arterial road. The range of operators open in the daytime is sufficient to meet most of the basic needs of nearby residents, especially with regard to leisure and retail services, but there are no large foodstores and the limited comparison offer means that many people will have to travel to destinations outside of the district centre in order to purchase essential goods.

Levenshulme does have an evening economy, with its main convenience retailers generally trading until 10 to 11pm and with many of the pubs, restaurants and takeaways being open as late as the early hours of the morning. However, given that the late night operators are currently scattered throughout the elongated district centre, it would benefit from the concentration of night-time uses into a focal point or points. Greater focus would encourage these evening uses be mutually reinforcing and thus allow the evening economy to reach its full potential.

## Vacancies

Vacancy rates in Levenshulme are below the national averages, especially with regard to floorspace. Just 7.7% of the district centre's floorspace is vacant, whereas the national average is 13.8%. There are 25 empty commercial units dispersed throughout Levenshulme district centre; this equates to 10.3% of its units, again less than the UK average of 13.8%. All of these vacancies are modest in size, with the largest measuring 267 sq.m and with more than half (56%) being under 100 sq.m, so that there were no particularly prominent large-scale empty buildings.

There are, however, small clusters of vacant premises at numerous points in the Stockport Road frontage. One such concentration is at the southern end of the district centre near Hume Street, another is opposite the Tesco store near Delamere Road, and a third is in the central part near Albert Road. Moreover, a number of Levenshulme's businesses, particularly its takeaways, are shuttered during the day. Stretches of apparently inactive frontages can give the perception of that certain parts of the centre lack vibrancy; whereas, in fact, Levenshulme enjoys relatively few vacancies.

## Opportunity Sites

While it will be important to repurpose or reoccupy the identified vacant units, the majority of commercial premises in Levenshulme are limited in scale and individually owned/leased. Thus, without land assembly exercises, there are few short-term opportunities for conversion or expansion into the larger-scale units fit for most modern retailers, especially the non-food national multiples that the district centre lacks.

Nonetheless, we are aware of planning permission reference 128698/FO/2020 (granted February 2022), relating to vacant land bounded by Stockport Road, Swallow Street, Siddall Street and Pennington Street. This consent allows for the construction of 39 new residential units with eight ground floor retail/commercial units ranging in size from 33 sq.m to 82 sq.m and represents an opportunity to strengthen its vitality and viability.

In addition, there is an area of vacant, overgrown scrubland around the Tony's Barbers premises at 913 Stockport Road, which may represent a suitable site for development to benefit the district centre. This land is within the defined boundary of Levenshulme and once formed part of a wider site subject to planning application ref: 088984/OO/2009/N2 for 38 dwellinghouses and 107 apartments. However, that application was withdrawn in April 2014 and there have been no subsequent proposals submitted to the Council relating to the vacant land, nor is the site being actively marketed.

## Market Summary

With reference to CoStar data sourced in June 2023, the average annual market rent per sq.ft currently achieved in Levenshulme is £18.67, with this figure representing a 1.7% increase on the £18.36 per sq.ft average achieved in the previous 12-month period. This level of rent is above the average level achieved by Manchester's 17 district centres, which is £17.06 per sq.ft.

Additionally, the average market sale price per sq.ft has increased slightly over the past 12-month period, up 1.2% to £154 per sq.ft. Notwithstanding this, Costar currently predicts market rents to remain fairly steady, staying at around £19.00 per sq.ft in the period up to 2027.

In respect of yields, CoStar find that the current market yield is 8.0%, with this figure remaining the same as the market yield observed in the previous 12-month period. The market yield in Levenshulme is forecast to rise again, to just over 8.5% 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, Levenshulme's yields are the highest recorded for a district centre in Manchester, which suggests that other areas are considered a safer investment.

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

## Pedestrian Flows

Footfall throughout Levenshulme was fairly light, but consistent, on the day of our site visit. Some notable spots of higher pedestrian activity were the Tesco store and Arcadia building. Few linked trips were observed between any of the district centre's operators, and it was evident that many of the users of the Tesco and Asda supermarkets who arrived by car did not visit the rest of Levenshulme.

Much of the footfall and activity enjoyed by Levenshulme comes as a result of its location along the A6 road and associated connection with the successful regional centre of Manchester. The slight downside of this busy location is that Stockport Road can, at peak times, present a barrier for those seeking to traverse the centre from east to west, albeit that this issue is somewhat mitigated by the numerous controlled crossing points provided throughout Levenshulme.

## Accessibility

Given that the A6 corridor is a key arterial route between Manchester City Centre to the north and Stockport to the south, Levenshulme is easily accessible by road. The centre is well-served by buses, with multiple stops and frequent services running between these destinations. In addition, bus stops on Cromwell Grove, one of the centre's side streets, provide access to Gorton and Newton Heath in the east and north-east, and to Chorlton in the west.

Levenshulme Railway Station lies to the immediate west of the district centre, providing rail connections with the City Centre, Blackpool North, Alderley Edge, Chester, Crewe, Hazel Grove, and Stoke-on-Trent.

Although there are Sheffield stands for bicycle parking dotted around Levenshulme, there are no dedicated cycle lanes.

Levenshulme benefits from a substantial walk-in catchment, being well-connected with surrounding residences via the public footpath network. Nonetheless, accessibility for those with mobility impairments is hampered in places by uneven pavements and street clutter from A-board signs. On the day of our visit, we also observed some cars illegally parked on double yellow lines in the centre's side streets, which could potentially cause difficulties for those seeking to travel on foot from north to south. In general, however, the topography is fairly flat and Levenshulme is considered to be reasonably good in terms of its accessibility for those with mobility requirements.

## Perception of Safety

During our site visit, the district central felt generally safe due to the consistent foot traffic and the good amount of natural surveillance provided by the linear layout.

As noted above, there were some clusters of shuttered units resulting in stretches of inactive street frontages, but these weren't large or prominent enough to materially undermine the overall impression that the centre was reasonably busy and secure. Similarly, the heavy traffic could feel mildly threatening, especially when attempting to cross Stockport Road, but the adverse impacts were mitigated by the relatively wide pavements and the controlled crossing points.

## Environmental Quality

Levenshulme's streetscape comprises a mix of building styles and scales, but predominantly two-storey former terraced houses with retail and services uses at ground floor and residential flats above. There are some attractive individual buildings, together with tree planting and other decoration scattered throughout the centre. The new Ascent development is a particular bright spot in the street-scene.

Owing to the eclectic mix of independents, there is little consistency in the district centre's shopfronts. This creates a visually interesting street-scene, but a significant proportion of the commercial premises would benefit from better maintenance or the replacement of poor-quality signage. Graffiti is present throughout the centre, especially on those units which are shuttered during the day, and litter and other street clutter are also fairly prevalent. There is an opportunity to significantly enhance the environmental quality of Levenshulme through a co-ordinated programme of shopfront works and other measures to ensure cleanliness and tidiness.

The centre's location along the busy Stockport Road underpins many of its most successful aspects, generating trips, activity, footfall and spend. The drawback of the high levels of vehicular traffic, however, is that Levenshulme can feel car-dominated at peak times. There is potential to provide a focal point or multiple pedestrianised areas, which would allow visitors to gather away from the cars while still allowing Levenshulme to capitalise on its excellent road connections to the city centre.

## Conclusions

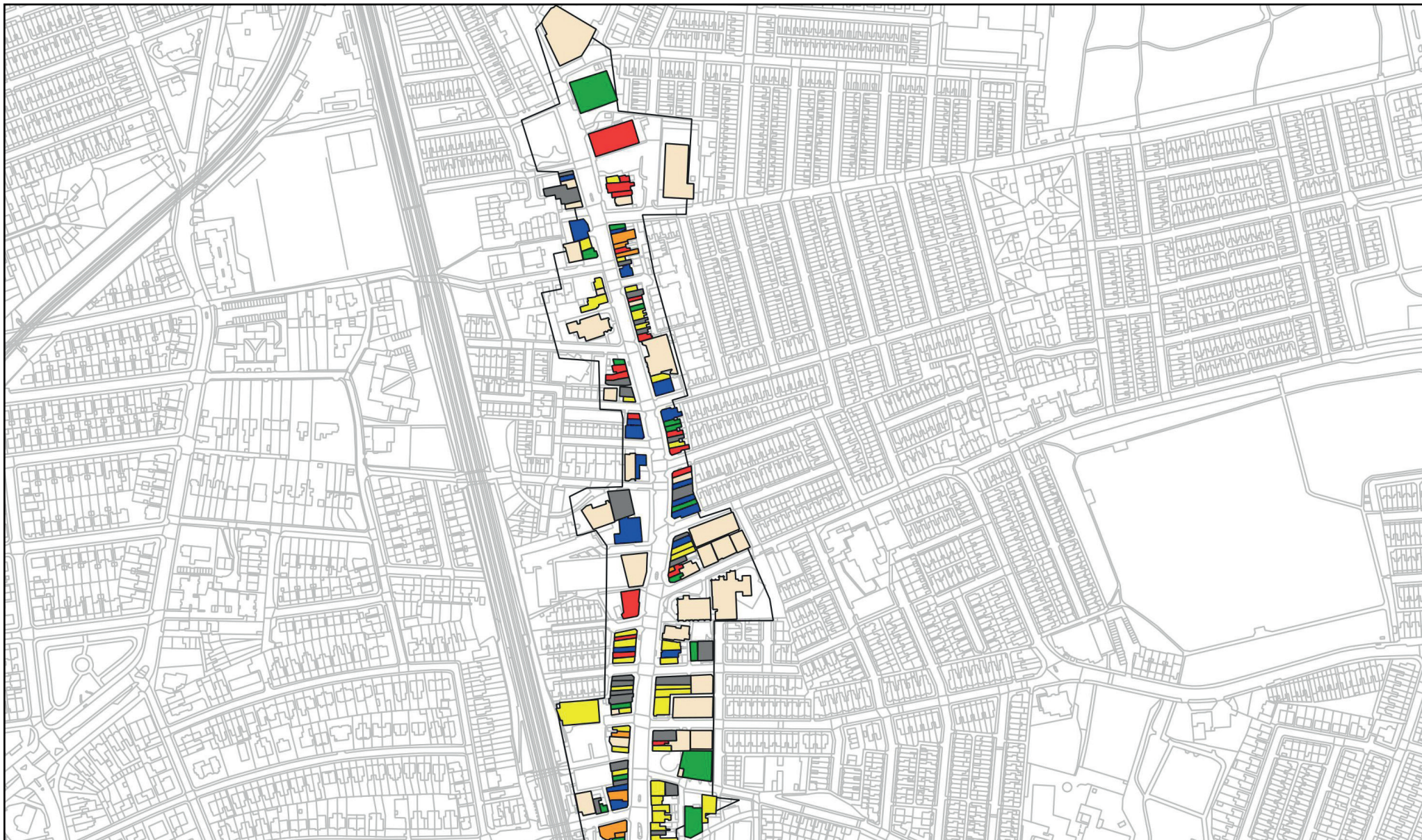
Levenshulme performs well as a convenience and service centre that meets the majority of its residents' needs. Leisure provision is boosted by the Arcadia Library & Leisure Centre at Yew Tree Avenue and some good quality café operators. Various pubs, restaurants and takeaways contribute to the centre's evening economy, which could be developed further through the introduction of a focal point or points that could encourage these uses to become mutually reinforcing.

Overall, although there are some national multiples present, particularly in the convenience sector, the retail, leisure and service businesses in the district centre are overwhelmingly independent. This results in a vibrant and diverse mix of operators, many of which are specialist, but also means that Levenshulme lacks some uses that might be expected in a centre of its size, particularly larger-format comparison retailers. There are therefore opportunities to redress the balance between independent and multiple stores, in line with paragraph 006 of the Planning Practice Guidance on Town Centres and Retail.

There is also potential to significantly enhance the environmental quality of Levenshulme. A co-ordinated programme of shopfront works and other measures to ensure cleanliness and tidiness could significantly boost those parts of the district centre which currently appear run-down. In addition, provision of a focal point or multiple pedestrianised areas would allow visitors to gather away from the car traffic along Stockport Road, while still allowing Levenshulme to capitalise on its excellent road connections to the city centre.

Taking all of these factors into account, our overall conclusion on the health of Levenshulme district centre is that it is reasonably vital and viable.





## Levenshulme district centre (north)

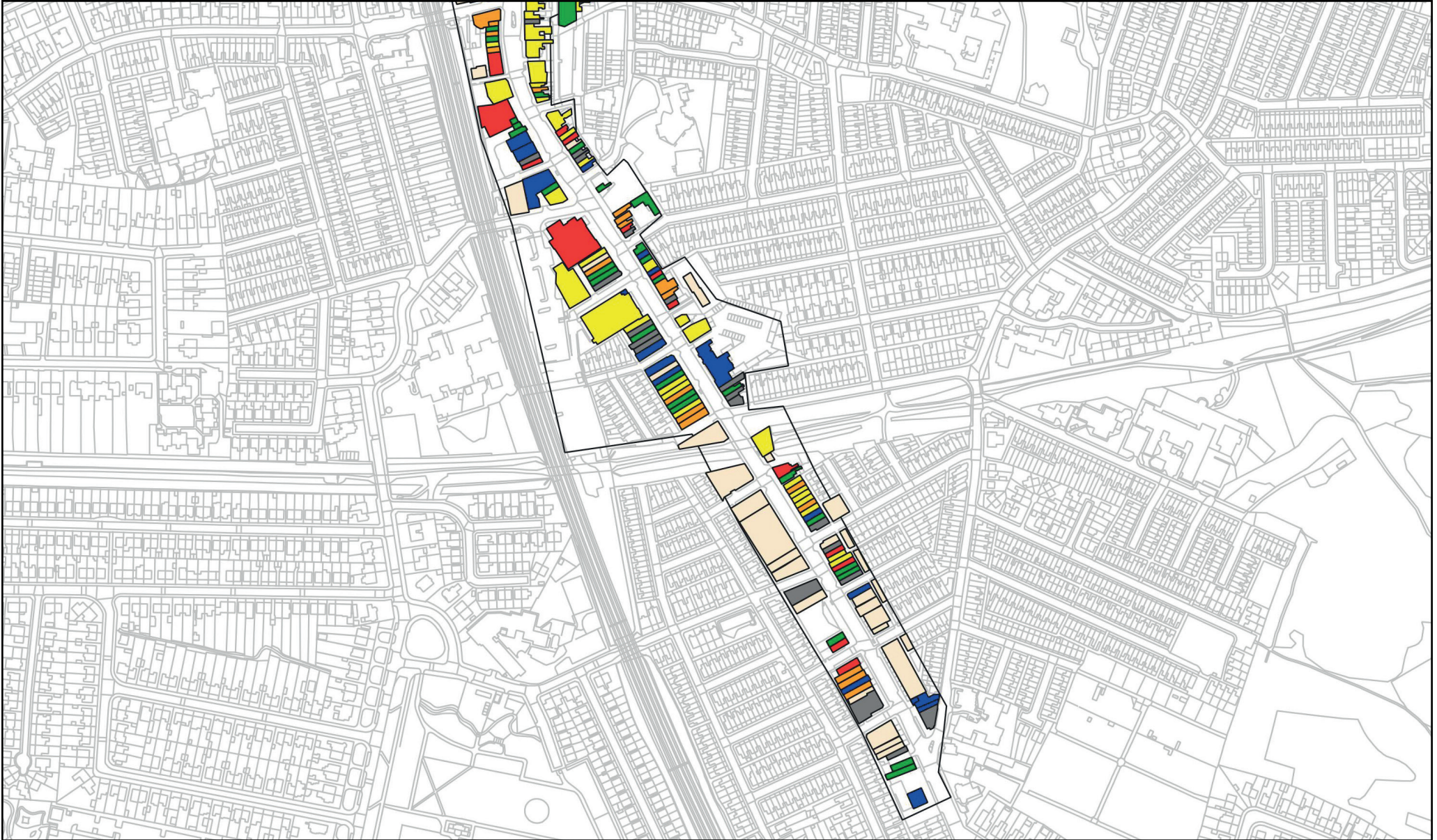
### Manchester Retail and Leisure Study

Survey Date - February 2023

#### Key

Comparison	Leisure Service
Convenience	Retail Service
Financial & Business Services	Vacant





## Levenshulme district centre (south)

### Manchester Retail and Leisure Study

Survey Date - February 2023

#### Key

Comparison	Leisure Service
Convenience	Retail Service
Financial & Business Services	Vacant