
**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Economy, Employment and Skills Overview and Scrutiny
Committee – 20th October 2010

Subject: Fallowfield and Withington District Centre Action Plans

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive (Regeneration)

Summary

Members are asked to consider and approve District Centre Plans for Fallowfield and Withington. The plans take account of views expressed by the public via consultation activity, as well as detailed baseline analysis.

Both plans include spatial plans, visions, and action plans. They aim to set out a framework for the continued success and future growth of both Fallowfield and Withington's retail areas.

Recommendations

1. Members are requested to note the findings of the Public Consultation for Fallowfield and Withington District Centres.
2. Members are requested to note and comment on the Fallowfield and Withington District Centre Action Plans

Wards Affected:

Fallowfield, Old Moat, Withington

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

South Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework, October 2007

CBRE's Fallowfield and Withington District Centre Plan - Baseline Report, January 2010

Vision Twentyone's Public Consultation Statement for Fallowfield and Withington District Centre Plans, July 2010

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The South Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) was approved in 2007. A key objective of the SRF is to define and improve the network of district centres in South Manchester. As part of this, it states that District Centre Action Plans should be prepared for the five centres of Chorlton, Levenshulme, Didsbury, Fallowfield and Withington. The plans will provide a coordinated approach for each centre to take forward improvements considering the mix of retail and service uses; opportunities for new developments; quality of public realm; crime and safety; transport and parking; and future management arrangements. Levenshulme District Centre Plan was approved in October 2009, and Chorlton District Centre Plan was approved in July 2010.
- 1.2 CBRE were appointed in September 2009 to produce a joint Baseline Report for Fallowfield and Withington District Centres, and two individual Action Plans. A Steering Group was established prior to the commissioning of CBRE to oversee development of the Baseline Report and Action Plans. Steering Group members include colleagues from MCC departments and external stakeholders, as well as one Member each from Fallowfield, Old Moat and Withington wards. Briefing meetings have taken place with all ward Members, as well as Residents Associations and Ward Coordinators. The Baseline Report, along with the SRF, public consultation and comments from local Members and stakeholders, provide the basis for the recommendations in the Action Plans.
- 1.3 The public consultation was managed by South Manchester Regeneration Team. Vision TwentyOne were appointed in February 2010 to analyse the findings of the consultation and produce a Public Consultation Report. The Consultation is outlined further below. The Executive Summary of the Public Consultation Report is provided with this Committee Report.

2.0 Baseline Information

- 2.1 The SRF identifies Fallowfield as a strong district centre which performs well as a hub for the evening economy, particularly amongst students. The centre is anchored by a large Sainsbury's store and has good transport links. However a number of issues are identified:
- Lack of a diverse retail offer, with a danger that the demand for evening use of units removes the opportunity for other retailers to move to the centre
 - Lack of a strong civic identity and community provision
 - Poor quality shop fronts and public realm
 - Traffic and parking issues, lack of pedestrian accessibility and safety concerns
- 2.2 The SRF identifies Withington as performing below its potential. It has a diverse retail offer, but is often used as a 'top up' centre where visitors spend little time. The main issues identified are:
- Poor physical environment for visitors

- Significant traffic congestion
 - Safety and security issues for shoppers
 - Lack of high quality units for retailers
 - A number of empty units, which creates a poor image
- 2.3 The Baseline Report recognises that Fallowfield and Withington District Centres serve a high proportion of students and young people, and the challenge is to capitalise on this whilst providing an effective centre for the wider local population.
- 2.4 The Baseline Report draws distinctions between the two centres in terms of the retail and service offer. Fallowfield is heavily dominant on the service sector with 66 per cent of units utilised in this way, and there is a distinct lack of comparison retail provision. The large Sainsbury's store serves much of the convenience demand and attracts residents from outside of the catchment area. The demand for retail units is strong in Fallowfield, and at the time of the report there were only 2 small units available. This is evidence of a strong centre, but it limits the opportunities for multiple comparison retailers, who generally require larger units, to move into the centre.
- 2.5 For Withington, there is more diversity in terms of retail offer than Fallowfield, however there is a need to strengthen both the comparison and convenience offer. There is a good number of independent shops which adds character to the centre and should be encouraged, however more multiple retailers would contribute positively to the offer. The service sector accounts for 35.6 per cent of units, comparable with an average UK district centre. The challenge is to ensure that the balance is maintained and the service sector does not become disproportionate. In Withington there are a relatively high number of empty units which serves to weaken the appearance of the centre. The available units are generally small, again limiting opportunities for multiple comparison and convenience retailers.
- 2.6 According to the CBRE National Survey of Local Shopping Patterns which analysed local centres and the proportion of the local catchment who use their centre for comparison goods shopping, Fallowfield captures 0.76 per cent of the catchment area's trade, and Withington captures 0.68 per cent, compared to 1.09 per cent in Chorlton. This is evidence that relatively few residents of Fallowfield and Withington shop in their local centre for comparison goods.
- 2.7 For both centres, the Baseline Report identifies a lack of good quality public realm. Fallowfield does not have a central focal point which could be used by the community as public space, Withington has a small area outside of the Library which is not used to its advantage. Both centres have poor quality shopfronts, and would benefit from a design guide for future development. Withington in particular needs to make more of its Conservation Area status in urban design.
- 2.8 In terms of transport and movement, both centres are well served by the Quality Bus Corridor, however there is traffic congestion along Wilmslow Road and the environment for pedestrians in the centres is often poor. Withington in

particular has cluttered and narrow pavements, and is a bottleneck for traffic caused by a narrow road and the regularity of buses stopping. Fallowfield has wider pavements but guard rails restrict the permeability of the centre for pedestrians. The junction at Wilbraham Road and Wilmslow Road is an accident hotspot. Withington has a relatively large public car park but this is not signposted and difficult to locate.

- 2.9 The Baseline Report highlights a number of management issues. For Fallowfield, the cumulative effect of the increase in the service sector has caused a number of problems such as antisocial behaviour, noise and littering. Many bars are open until 2am and Fallowfield has become a destination for young people in the evening. This often causes conflict between the student population and permanent residents. The problems associated with the evening economy are less acute in Withington, however there are problems associated with street drinking and vagrancy. It is important for Withington that the cumulative impact of bars seen in Fallowfield is not replicated.

3. Public Consultation

- 3.1 Public consultation took place between 24th February and 14th June 2010 (with a 6 week purdah for elections). Consultation was carried out through a combination of meetings and presentations to community and residents groups and local traders; promotion stands at key community venues and sites; attending school assemblies and speaking to parents at school gates; and door knocking and walkabouts around the two centres. Promotion of the consultation was included on the MCC website, where an online version of the questionnaire was available; on the MCC Libraries Facebook page; in Ward Newsletters; local press releases; and posters and flyers.
- 3.2 Officers used baseline information from the Baseline Report and the SRF to identify the main issues, visions and priorities for Fallowfield and Withington District Centres which were included in the consultation leaflet 'Have your say on the future of Fallowfield and Withington'. Within this leaflet was a separate questionnaire booklet, which listed a number of priorities for both centres. Respondents were asked to identify whether they found each priority 'very important', 'quite important', 'not very important' or 'not at all important'.
- 3.3 In total, 1288 questionnaire responses were received, and respondents were broadly representative in terms of ethnic background, age, disability and employment status. Of these, 51 per cent visited Fallowfield most often, and 38 per cent visited Withington most often, with the remainder using other centres. Detailed written responses were also received from a number of Residents Associations, Withington Civic Society, Rusholme and Fallowfield Civic Society, and Christie's Hospital.
- 3.4 The 3 priorities identified by respondents as most important were the same for Fallowfield and Withington:
- Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Increasing Security at Home and on the Street
 - Improving the Street Environment

- 3.5 For Withington, there was strong feedback that the former White Lion and Cinecity sites should be redeveloped. Also important to respondents is redeveloping Copson Street and making it more pedestrian-friendly. For Fallowfield, there was strong agreement that it is important to attract a wider range of shops to the centre.
- 3.5 Respondents were also given the opportunity to provide open-ended responses and comments. These have been provided in the appendix to the Public Consultation Report. Some examples of key themes emerging from these responses include the problems of street drinking and vagrancy in Withington; and the high number of takeaways and bars in Fallowfield and associated anti-social behaviour.
- 3.6 Given the particularly high proportion of student residents in both areas, who are generally considered a transient population, student and non-student responses have been separated for both centres. This enables analysis of any differences in priorities and consideration of the views of more permanent residents of the areas. On the whole, responses between the groups were similar. The priority with the largest divergence between students and non-students related to limiting the opening hours and number of bars and takeaways, where almost double the proportion of non-students felt this was important compared to students.

4. Fallowfield and Withington District Centre Action Plans

- 4.1 The Executive Summaries to Fallowfield and Withington Action Plans are appendices to this report. The summaries provide an overview of the findings of the baseline analysis of the centre. They set out the policy context and socio-economic background, the vision for Fallowfield and Withington, the main issues for the centres and the opportunities for change and improvement.
- 4.2 For Fallowfield, some of the key management initiatives identified include the need to use planning and licensing controls where possible to limit the cumulative impact of bars and takeaways. These initiatives will aim to rebalance the local economy to reflect the needs of the wider community. With regards to any development control decisions in Fallowfield, such as change of use to A4/ A5, the Action Plan can be a material consideration when considering planning applications. The Action Plan also recognises the impact of high numbers of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the surrounding area, and the advantages of potential planning controls that MCC may have over HMO licencing in the future. In terms of physical development, the University of Manchester intend to redevelop Owens Park and increase bedspaces. This has been identified as a major opportunity to rebalance the housing market as it could reduce demand for residential properties from students, enabling young professionals and families to move back into the area. It could also provide public space for the community and provide new retail units with larger floorplates that would be attractive to multiple comparison retailers.

- 4.3 For Withington, the key management initiatives are similar to Fallowfield in that the use of planning and licensing controls will be important to limit the impact of bars and takeaways, and prevent the centre from reaching the level of imbalance seen in Fallowfield. As with Fallowfield, the Action Plan can be a material consideration when considering planning applications. Again any licencing powers that MCC have with regard to HMOs will be important to prevent further impact of high numbers of HMOs. The main physical development opportunity is identified as Copson Street, which at present is underutilised and an unattractive environment. Options include greater pedestrian priority to allow for a regular market and community activities, and possible redevelopment of some retail units.
- 4.5 Both Action Plans identify the need to take forward improvements and development of the district centres through a strong partnership approach which will encourage business growth and investment. Options will be explored by South Manchester Regeneration Team and Ward Coordination, and will include local community representatives, traders, the Universities and public sector service providers. South Manchester Regeneration Team will lead on delivery of the action plans and will provide regular reports to Members via Ward Coordination. An annual review of the action plans will also be undertaken.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The Fallowfield and Withington District Centre Plans present a ten year strategy to guide development and management of the District Centres. The plans set out the steps needed to improve the centres for local residents and businesses, via a multi-agency partnership approach with the public, private and voluntary sectors.

6. Contributing to the Community Strategy

- 6.1 **a) Performance of the economy of the region and sub region**
The Action Plans will guide future development and investment in two important district centres in the South Manchester area. In the wider context, South Manchester is a desirable area to live within the region, and the attractiveness of this area depends upon having thriving and successful district centres which cater for the wider mix of residents.
- 6.2 **b) Reaching full potential in education and employment**
The Action Plans will encourage investment into the area and by doing so create employment opportunities, whilst safeguarding existing employment.
- 6.3 **c) Individual and collective self-esteem – mutual respect**
Fallowfield and Withington district centres serve a wide mix of residents. In particular, they are hubs of student activity which brings benefits to the areas but also causes tensions. The Action Plans aim to encourage a balance between the needs of students, and those of the wider population including more deprived communities and the more affluent.

6.4 d) Neighbourhoods of Choice

Successful district centres are at the heart of neighbourhoods of choice. They need to cater for all residents, not exclude anybody, and provide a valuable service. Fallowfield and Withington are located in a desirable area of Manchester, along the strategically important Wilmslow Road and near to major employment centres. However they are not functioning to their potential at present. Initiatives are needed to ensure that they can meet this potential, reversing where possible the imbalance of offer, preventing any decline of the centres, and making them attractive and thriving places to work and live.

7. Key Policies and Considerations

7.1 a) Equal Opportunities

The action plans recognise the diversity of the local population, and that the district centres currently do not cater for this. The action plans recommend initiatives to widen the offer of the centres to include more day time activity for families and older people; more public space for community use and public gatherings; and the need for an improved urban environment to increase accessibility.

b) Risk Management

The action plans will set out a framework which will reduce the risk of inappropriate development that might be detrimental to the health and vitality of the centres.

c) Legal Considerations

There would not be any immediate legal issues as a result of approving the action plans.

WITHINGTON ACTION PLAN

Executive Summary

September 2010

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1. INTRODUCTION

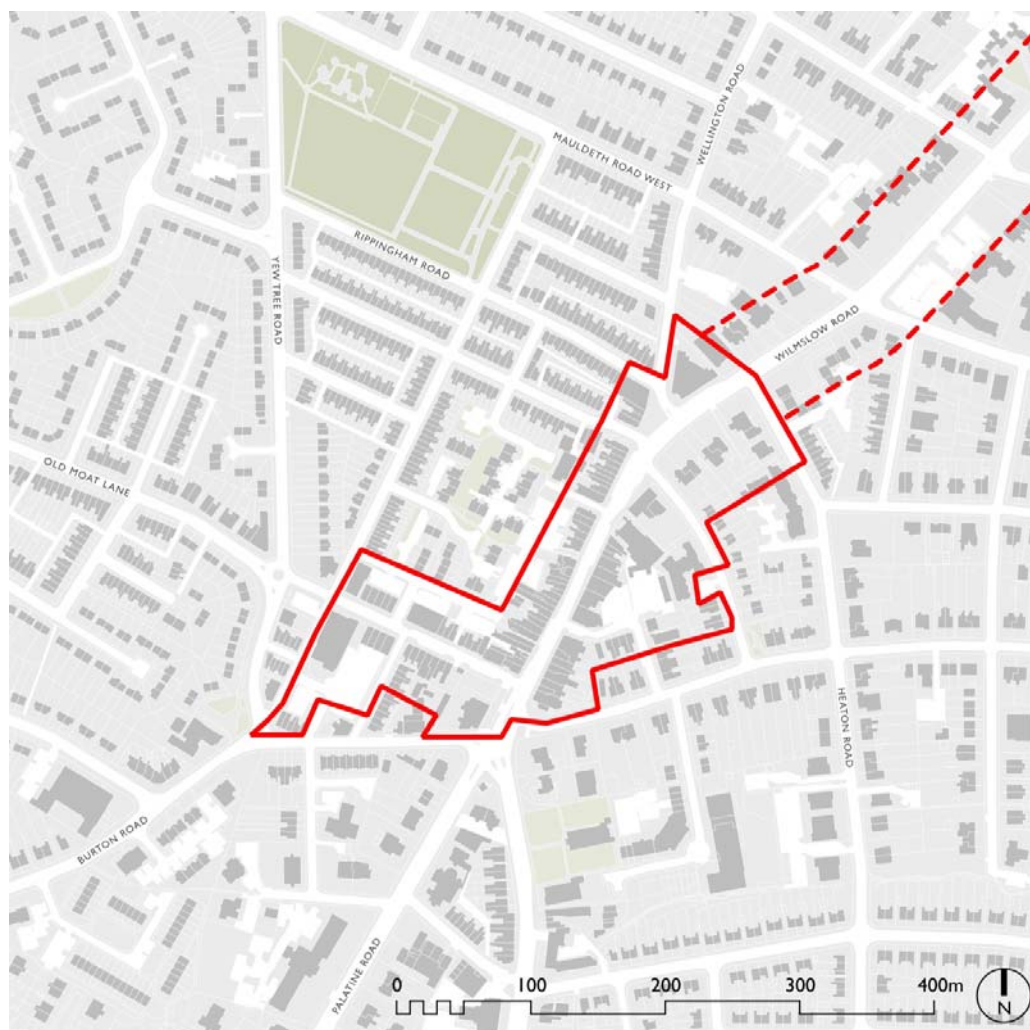
The Withington District Centre Action Plan sets out a ten to fifteen year strategy to guide future change in the centre. It is intended to inform decision making and levels of intervention to realise change, and create the platform for achieving the future vision of Withington. The Action Plan has been informed by a detailed analysis of the centre's retail and service offer, urban design, transport and movement, property, planning and management characteristics.

The core focus of the Withington Action Plan is illustrated in the (adjacent) plan. Withington district centre lies along Wilmslow Road with an additional arm along Copson Street at the Southern end. The heart of the district centre is characterised by a mix of retail and service uses.

Withington District Centre, most of which is within a designated Conservation Area, has maintained the feel of a village. A number of high quality properties offer a distinct and intimate character to the centre. The retail offer is reasonably diverse. To the north Wilmslow Road is characterised by large detached properties in a variety of uses including hotels and housing.

Ladybarn is a local shopping parade East of Withington District Centre, focussed on Mauldeth Road. It is a local centre which offers a mix of retail and service sector uses geared toward nearby residents' daily needs. At the edge of Withington District Centre, some 100 metres to the west is Old Moat Lane parade – a collection of primarily service oriented retail units. High-level overviews and actions will be identified for these areas in the full action plan.

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Policy

The South Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) advocates harnessing opportunities for regeneration in South Manchester through preparing a series of district centre Action Plans, including for Withington. A number of key actions are also identified for Withington in the SRF, relating to improving the quality and number of retail units, development and refurbishment opportunities and improving the environment.

Socioeconomics

From a socioeconomic position, there is a high representation of students. Age groups 15-19 and 20-24 account for 37.6 per cent of the population in the Withington and Old Moat wards combined, compared to England's average of 13.4 per cent. 21 per cent of the population of Withington and Old Moat are from BME groups, roughly in line with Manchester. (2007 ONS Data).

There is a very high proportion of private rented households in the area which reflects the student population - 39.4 per cent in Withington and 28.1 per cent in Old Moat,

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compared to 19.5 per cent for Manchester. The proportion of social rented housing is much higher in the Old Moat ward to the West of the District Centre than in Withington to the East (2001 Census).

Management

The Neighbourhood Focus Strategy recognises that the challenge is to determine how best to deliver an appropriate neighbourhood strategy and one which should reflect the priorities of residents and the resources available. Homes in Multiple Occupancy are a concern particularly where they are present within an area more dominated by owner occupier housing. This can cause local tension. A planning moratorium has prevented possible further problems associated with the impact of bars and take aways in Withington, especially when compared to neighbouring Fallowfield.

Urban Design

In urban design terms Withington presently offers a weak public realm and has only limited public space and focal points. Shop fronts are also uncoordinated and negatively impact on the streetscape especially along Wilmslow Road. There are opportunities to enhance the public realm, improve access and legibility as well as connections to important uses on the edge of the centre. Development opportunities although limited could also contribute to enhancing the centre's retail stock and broaden Withington's offer.

Property Market

Overall, demand for retail units in Withington is reasonable, with present demand focussed on foodstore operators and requirements from independent traders. Unit vacancy levels are however higher than the UK norm, particularly on Copson Street. Available units are generally small which may make it difficult to attract multiple retailers. Demand for residential properties in Withington is reasonable, and focuses on students and young professionals as well as families and older people. There are high numbers of Houses in Multiple Occupation across Withington.

Retail and Service Offer

For Withington increasing the range of food stuffs available will create a more robust centre. Withington will benefit from additional non food multiple retailer representation, should demand arise from both independents and multiple operators. Withington's retail and service mix is comparable to that of a typical UK centre, save for the comparison sector which is somewhat under represented. Even so, Withington offers a fairly diverse offer, especially with other community uses available such as a library, leisure centre, churches and veterinary surgery. Nevertheless, opportunities to increase the range and diversity of the offer including for comparison and convenience goods would serve to strengthen the centre further.

Transport and Movement

Withington is located on the busy Wilmslow Road corridor, and therefore experiences significant traffic congestion, causing journey delays and detracting from the

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environment. There is also a poor environment for cyclists. Even so, accessibility by bus to the centre is good. There are opportunities to improve accessibility and movement in the district centre, by creating a greater degree of pedestrian priority – especially along Copson Street. Better signage and wayfaring may also help to create a more accessible centre, particularly towards the public car park which at present is difficult to locate.

2. CONSULTATION

Wide consultation has been undertaken with Withington's traders and community to ensure the actions are reflective of their key aspirations. The main themes emerging from responses to the consultation events are:

- An improved public realm, including increasing the amount of good quality public space.
- Shop front improvements.
- Better use of Withington's existing facilities (library, leisure centre, park, adult education centre).
- Development of available sites.
- Reducing antisocial behaviour.
- Increasing security at home and on the street.

3. THE VISION FOR WITHINGTON

The vision describes the broad aim of the Action Plan, with initiatives tailored to realise this goal. Withington's vision is:

"Withington will continue to play a key role as a sustainable district centre that is an attractive location to live, work and shop. The centre will continue to be a viable retail location with a good range of shops alongside service and community provision.

The expansion of shopping opportunities will ensure the centre meets all the needs of the local population. Its Conservation Area status and buildings of good architectural quality will be promoted and enhanced to ensure a distinctive village character.

Withington will benefit from an improved street environment and offer safe and easy movement for pedestrians, cyclists and buses. Copson Street will provide an improved shopping environment. The environment of car parking areas will be improved and less of a back space. Christie Hospital, Withington Leisure Centre and Old Moat Park will be better linked to the district centre.

4. THE ACTION PLAN

The Withington Action Plan sets out a series of initiatives and site specific projects geared towards achieving the vision. The principal actions are centred around several core themes:

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- Retail and Service Offer – ensuring that the offer in the District Centre serves the wider mix of residents in the area, and where possible restricting the cumulative impact of bars and takeaways.
- Development opportunities – where identified, sites or buildings which once redeveloped or refurbished could contribute to achieving the vision for Withington.
- Urban Design Improvements – with the objective of enhancing Withington's overall environment to make it more attractive to the community and businesses, to maintain a strong village identity and in response to aspirations arising from consultation.
- Movement – facilitating ease of movement and access, which are important to enhancing the effective functioning of the centre.
- Management of the District Centre – with the objective of providing a framework which enables the key actions to be progressed, in light of often complex multi agency issues to be addressed.

At the heart of the themes and actions described is the central motive of the action plan – to improve the retail and service offer of Withington. These uses underpin the role and function of the centre and collectively determine its health, viability and overall attractiveness. The specific actions are tailored to improve Withington's offer, such as; a new market contributing to a wider range of products available; an improved public realm which is more attractive to shoppers; development sites which provide additional retail space to entice new operators, among other initiatives.

The themes are viewed as those areas which are likely to have the most positive impact on the future of Withington. The key objectives and actions also relate to the recommendations of the SRF for the centre, with broad timescales for implementation indicated for each.

Development and Refurbishment Opportunities

- **Vacant building at Wilmslow Road and Burton Road (the White Lion)** – a refurbishment and reuse opportunity. Planning permission has been granted for reuse of the building to accommodate a retail unit at ground floor and residential accommodation on the upper floors.(short term)

Benefits: reuse of good architectural quality building; improve image of Withington at key gateway site; provide space for commercial uses and for other complimentary district centre uses.

- **Land at the junction of Wilmslow Road and Copson Street (Cine City site)** – potential for redevelopment of this strategically located site (Timescale - medium/long term)

Benefits: provision of new retail space; visual improvement of Withington; potential to increase opportunities for living in district centre.

- **New Street Market on Copson Street** – a new market introduced to enhance the vitality and viability of Withington. (short term)

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Benefits: increased activity on Copson Street; increased range and diversity of goods available; foster development of local businesses; enhanced sense of place.

Wider Areas of Change (medium to long term)

- **10 – 22 Copson Street** – existing low rise retail block with possible scope to either be redeveloped, extend or amalgamate existing retail units.
- **35 Copson Street** – currently occupied by a small foodstore (The Co-Op) and surface car parking. Possible scope to provide a larger anchor store through extension or redevelopment of the existing unit.
- **Wilmslow Road Corridor** – where sites become available along the Wilmslow Road Corridor (north of Withington) opportunities may arise to redevelop buildings to bring new hotel and residential accommodation forward.

Urban Design Initiatives

- **Preparation of a public realm strategy** – to include: a coordinated approach to improving Withington's public realm; identification of priorities for improvements to public space/focal points; location for street furniture, hard and soft landscaping; improving signage/wayfaring; timescales for delivery and strategy for implementation. (short term)

Benefits: more coordinated and higher quality public realm; creating a stronger sense of place; enhanced Conservation Area environment; more attractive centre for residents, shoppers and traders; increased ease of accessibility and legibility to wider Withington facilities.

- **Shop front design guide and improvement scheme** – preparation of a shop front design guide to present a more coordinated approach to shop fronts and improvements. (short term)

Benefits: enhanced quality of shop fronts, historic buildings and Conservation Area; creating a stronger sense of place.

Movement

- **Greater pedestrian priority along Copson Street** – to include improving the public realm along this road together with facilitating a new street market. (short term)

Benefits: improved public realm; enhanced shopper and visitor mobility; accommodating a new street market.

- **Stopping up of Wellington Road/Wilmslow Road junction** – to provide increased public space in front of the library and create a good quality public focal point. (mid term)

Benefits: improved public realm; creating a good quality public realm focal point.

- **Improve signage and access to, and the environment of, public car parks** – provide signposting along Wilmslow Road to increase usage of the public car parks and improve the condition and layout of the car parks (short term)

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Benefits: improved accessibility for visitors to the centre

Supporting Businesses

- **Explore** opportunities to support existing businesses and entice new operators to the centre. To include: branding opportunities; shop front strategy; shop local campaigns; promotional events focussing on retailers in centre; promoting positive stories about Withington; improving the range of information available about services on offer via the internet; business advice(ongoing)

Benefits: strengthening awareness of Withington's offer; business support for existing traders; attracting new operators to the centre.

Key Management Initiatives

- **Planning policy** – use of development control to limit, where possible, further expansion of A4 (bars) and A5 (take aways) representation. (short term)

Benefits: potential to maintain existing retail diversity.

- **Licensing controls** – Coordinated approach with the City Council's licensing unit to agree strategy to limit where possible the impact of licensed premises. (short term)

Benefits: limiting future cumulative impact of bars and take aways; controlling potential contributor uses to antisocial behaviour.

- **Conservation Area Enforcement** – coordinated approach between South Manchester Regeneration Team, other interested parties and the City Council's Planning department to ensure that policies relating to Withington's Conservation Area are enforced. (ongoing)

Benefits: Enhancement of Conservation Area; more attractive centre for shoppers and visitors.

- **Homes in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)** – greater enforcement of maintenance of HMOs. Expansion of programme to sign up landlords to voluntary agreements. Investigation of discretionary HMO licensing schemes in areas of high student accommodation through Planning, potentially through an Article 4 Direction. (short term)

Benefits: improvement maintenance and standards of HMOs; possible limit on the cumulative impact of high numbers of HMOs

- **Improve safety and security in Withington** – examining opportunities to improve safety and security in Withington, and reduce antisocial behaviour. Partnership approach with the Council and key partner agencies to identify and implement safety and security measures. Key approaches to include: student safety and security awareness; prevention and control of antisocial behaviour associated with late night drinking and HMOs; security by design; and targeting existing areas of low/no natural surveillance. (ongoing)

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Benefits: improved safety and security both physical/design related and personal.

District Centre Management

- **Management of Withington District Centre** - South Manchester Regeneration Team and Ward Coordinators will explore options based on a strong stakeholder partnership approach to meet aims. Key parties to include the Council, local community representatives, service providers (police, health, etc) as well as University representatives. Allied to this could be supporting business (short term)

Benefits: development of greater community involvement; creation of a management network to meet specific challenges; heightened sense of community ownership, responsibility and awareness; forum for progressing and implementing actions.

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Figure 1: Withington Action Plan
Key Diagram

- DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES:
- Main development opportunity
 - Potential for change
 - Intensification along Wilmslow Rd if sites become available
 - Street market on Copson Street
- URBAN DESIGN INITIATIVES:
- Area for inclusion within public realm strategy
 - Increase size of public space in front of library
 - Potential for shop front improvement scheme
 - Improved pedestrian environment to Copson Street
 - Conservation area enforcement (see key management initiatives)
 - Street tree planting along major routes to the centre
 - Key community buildings
- MOVEMENT:
- Removal of pedestrian barriers
 - Stopping up of Wellington Road / Wilmslow Road junction
 - Greater pedestrian priority along Copson Street
 - Improved walking links to local destinations
 - Environment and access of car parks improved

FALLOWFIELD ACTION PLAN

Executive Summary

September 2010

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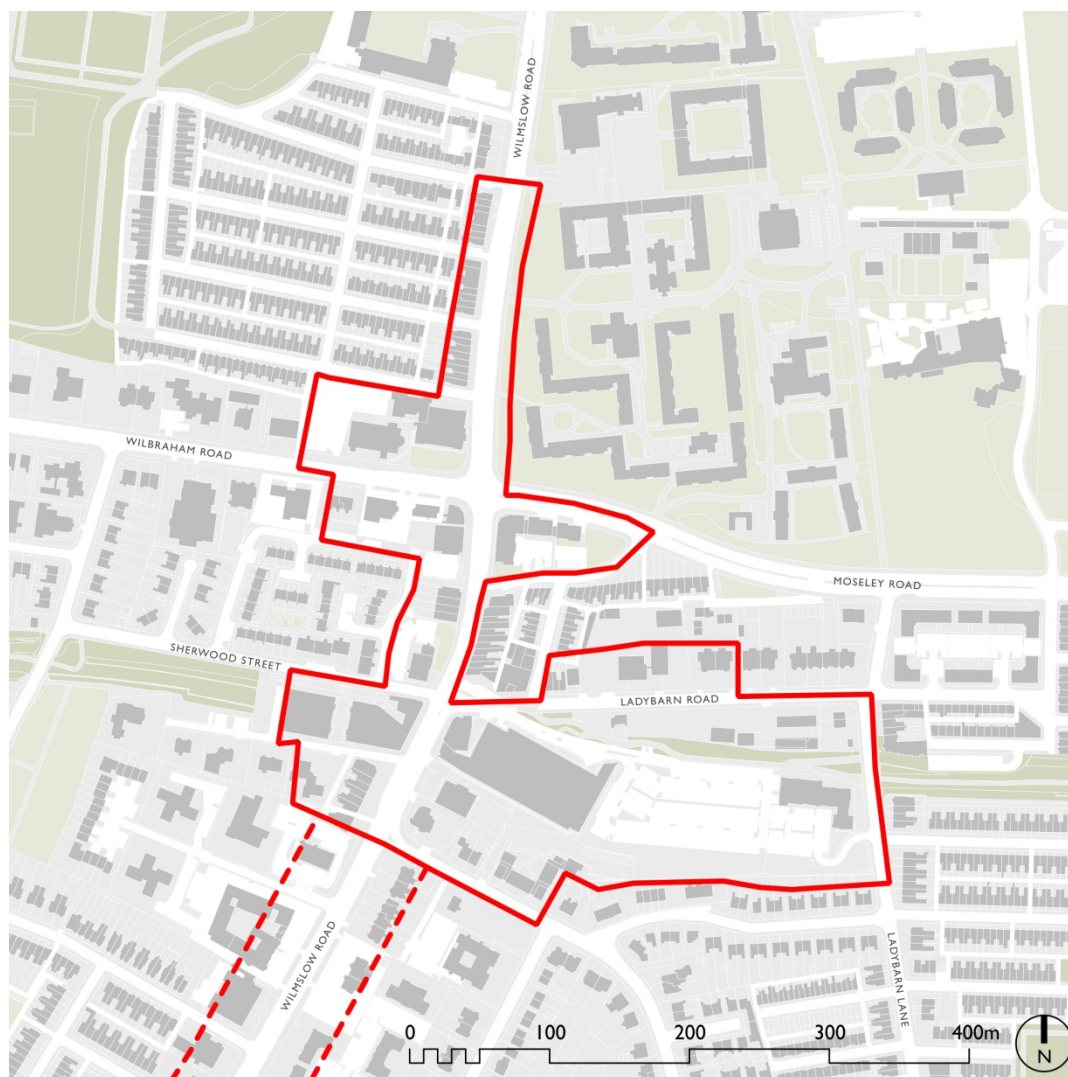
1. INTRODUCTION

The Fallowfield District Centre Action Plan sets out a ten year strategy to guide future change in the centre. It is intended to inform decision making and levels of intervention to realise change, and create the platform for achieving the future vision of Fallowfield. The Action Plan has been informed by a detailed analysis of the centre's urban design, transport and movement, retail and service offer, property, planning and management characteristics.

The core focus of the Fallowfield Action Plan is illustrated in the plan below. Fallowfield district centre lies along Wilmslow Road, running in a north/south direction. The heart of the district centre is characterised by a mix of retail and service uses.

Fallowfield has developed as a student hub for South Manchester. Although this contributes to the centre's strength and vibrancy – in particular in relation to evening economy activities – it has a much more limited representation of other types of retailers than might be expected, and does not currently provide the range of services required to meet the needs of the wider mix of residents in the area. To the south Wilmslow Road is characterised by large detached properties in a variety of uses including hotels and housing

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Policy

The South Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) advocates harnessing opportunities for regeneration in South Manchester through preparing a series of district centre Action Plans, including for Fallowfield. A number of key actions are also identified for Fallowfield in the SRF, relating to widening the mix of uses, development and refurbishment opportunities and improving the environment and accessibility.

Socioeconomics

From a socioeconomic position, the large resident student population means that the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 account for 39.9 per cent of Fallowfield ward's population, compared with an England average of 13.4 per cent. 31.4 per cent of the population are from BME Groups. (2007 ONS data).

A quarter of housing is rented from private landlords compared to one fifth for Manchester as a whole. 42.6 per cent of housing is social rented, slightly higher than the Manchester average (2001 Census).

Management

Fallowfield – Executive Summary

The Neighbourhood Focus Strategy recognises that the challenge is to determine how best to deliver an appropriate neighbourhood strategy and one which should reflect the priorities of residents and the resources available. Key concerns relate to an increased proportion of bars and take aways which has resulted in a shift towards the service sector retail mix and associated anti social behaviour, litter, noise and air pollution. The dominant student population and its need for accommodation has also generated concerns about Homes in Multiple Occupancy. For Fallowfield many of the management issues are cross related. The high proportion of students has for example undoubtedly influenced the increased presence of bars and take aways and Homes in Multiple Occupancy. In turn, this has resulted in environmental concerns. To address these inter related issues will need a range of measures, rather than a single strand approach.

Urban Design

In urban design terms Fallowfield presently offers a poor public realm and a lack of public space. Shop fronts are also uncoordinated and negatively impact on the streetscape. There are opportunities to integrate the Owens Park Campus better into the centre, as well as improved linkages to Platt Fields Park – a good quality open space.

Retail and Service Offer

The retail offer is dominated by service sector uses, accounting for 66 per cent of units. A much lower percentage of comparison (ie. non-food) retailers are present, with these occupiers only accounting for around 13 per cent of units. More typically comparison retailers contribute over 40 per cent of a retail mix in an average UK centre. There are only a handful of independent and multiple comparison retailers present, and increasing representation in this sector would serve to strengthen Fallowfield. Broadening Fallowfield's community services and improving accessibility to these would diversify the centre's offer further.

Property Market

There are low vacancy rates in commercial property in Fallowfield, with a constrained supply of units. Where development sites exist, this could accommodate future occupier demand, and potentially through higher density development. To diversify the retail offer Fallowfield would benefit from additional multiple retailers (i.e. operators who operate in a range of High Street locations across the UK, such as Wilkinsons or Greggs). These retailers are likely to require larger modern units which are currently lacking in the centre. Demand for residential properties is also good in Fallowfield, with the market strongly influenced by students. Presently community provision is also limited, focussed only on services of doctors and dentists. Development opportunities are however limited in Fallowfield, and maximising the benefits of those available will be important.

Transport and Movement

Fallowfield offers good accessibility, particularly with Wilmslow Road designated as a Quality Bus Corridor. Even so, the centre suffers from congestion at peak periods and Fallowfield experiences a high number of pedestrian and cyclist accidents.

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There are opportunities to improve the pedestrian environment, to create a more coherent and shopper friendly place.

2. CONSULTATION

Wide consultation has been undertaken with traders and the community to ensure the actions are reflective of their key aspirations. The main themes emerging from responses to the consultation events are:

- Public realm improvements, including increasing the amount of good quality public space
- Attracting a wider range of shops
- Management of the impact of students and the evening economy
- Reducing antisocial behaviour
- Increasing security at home and on the street

3. THE VISION FOR FALLOWFIELD

The vision describes the broad aim of the Action Plan, with initiatives tailored to realise this goal. Fallowfield's vision is:

"Fallowfield will keep its position as a vibrant centre known for its evening economy and as a hub for student activity. However, the impact of students will be less with more students living in purpose built accommodation, thus reducing pressure on local terraced streets.

The centre will be an attractive destination during the day, underpinned by a good food offer and shopping opportunities. It will also benefit from a better street environment and be a safe and secure destination throughout the day and night.

It will continue to benefit from excellent bus connections and will be an easy place to walk around. Owens Park should be open to everyone and link better with the district centre. There will be more public open space."

4. THE ACTION PLAN

The Fallowfield Action Plan sets out a series of initiatives and site specific projects geared towards achieving the vision. The principle actions are centred around several core themes:

- Retail and Service Offer – re-balancing the offer in the District Centre so that it serves the wider mix of residents in the area, and where possible restricting the cumulative impact of bars and takeaways.
- Development opportunities – where identified, sites which once redeveloped could contribute to achieving the vision for Fallowfield, such as widening the mix of uses and reducing pressure on existing housing for student accommodation.

Fallowfield – Executive Summary

- Urban design improvements – with the objective of enhancing the overall environment of the centre to make it more attractive to the community and businesses, and in response to aspirations occurring from consultation.
- Transport and movement – facilitating ease of movement and access, which are viewed as important to enhancing the effective functioning of the centre.
- Management of the District Centre – with objective of providing a framework which enables the key actions to be progressed, in light of often complex cross functioning issues to be addressed.

At the heart of the themes and underlying actions is the central motive – to improve the retail and service offer of Fallowfield. These uses determine the function, attractiveness, health and vitality of the centre. Thus, as a whole, the described actions aim to improve Fallowfield's retail and service offer by providing a more attractive retail space for operators; an improved environment leading to an enhanced perception of the centre and more shoppers visiting the centre; greater demand from operators to locate there; enhanced mobility and ease of access, among other initiatives.

The themes are viewed as those areas which are likely to have the most positive impact on the future of Fallowfield. The key themes and actions also relate to the recommendations of the SRF, with broad timescales for implementation indicated for each.

Development Opportunities

- **Owens Park Campus, Wilmslow Road** – The University of Manchester intends to redevelop Owens Park Campus to provide increased student accommodation through higher density development. Possibility of other uses, perhaps including new modern retail space fronting Wilmslow Road as part of a development anchoring the northern end of Fallowfield. (Timescale - medium term)

Benefits: A more balanced and sustainable residential community; assist in longer term reduction of HMOs; a larger more vibrant district centre; larger retail units; scope to improve the pedestrian and cyclist environment; increased access to community facilities; improved urban quality of the area.

Wider Areas of Change (longer term opportunities)

- **Boland Drive Car Park and Open Space, Wilmslow Road** – opportunity to improve this area, possibly either through public realm improvements or perhaps in conjunction with developing the car park (and possibly the neighbouring Sherwood Centre) for ground floor retail uses and residential above. (medium term)
- **Wilmslow Road south** – where sites become available along the Wilmslow Road corridor (south of Fallowfield) there may be opportunities to redevelop buildings to bring new hotel and residential accommodation forward.

Urban Design Initiatives

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- **Preparation of a public realm strategy for Fallowfield** – to include: a coordinated approach to improving Fallowfield's public realm and walking links to Platts Field Park; identification of public space/focal points; location for street furniture; hard and soft landscaping (including street tree planting); improving signage/legibility; timescales for delivery and strategy for implementation. (short term)

Benefits: a more coordinated and higher quality public realm; creating a stronger sense of place; more attractive centre for residents, shoppers and traders; increased ease of access and legibility.

- **Shop front design guide and improvement scheme** – preparation of a shopfront design guide to present a more coordinated approach to shop fronts and improvements. (short term)

Benefits: enhanced quality of shop fronts, historic buildings and urban environment generally; creating a stronger sense of place.

Movement

- **Wilmslow Road – Moseley Road and Wilmslow Road/Ladybarn junctions** – greater pedestrian priority at these key junctions, including the reduction in the amount of guard rails. (short term)

Benefits: improved public realm; enhanced pedestrian mobility and ease of movement

- **Wilmslow Road throughout core shopping area** – measures to increase ease of crossing for pedestrians, potentially through a continuous central refuge. (medium term)

Benefits: enhanced pedestrian mobility; improved pedestrian safety.

Supporting Businesses

- Explore opportunities to support existing businesses and entice new operators to the centre. To include: branding opportunities; shop front strategy; promotional events focussing on retailers in centre and promoting positive stories about Fallowfield improving the range of information available about services on offer via the internet; business advice. (ongoing)

Benefits: Strengthening awareness of Fallowfield's offer; business support for existing traders; attracting new operators to the centre.

Key Management Initiatives

- **Planning controls** – use of development control to limit, where possible, further cumulative impact of increasing A4 (bars) and A5 (takeaways) representation. (short term)

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Benefits: limiting future cumulative impact of bars and take aways; maintaining and enhancing diversity of retail mix.

- **Licensing Controls** – coordinated approach with City Council’s licensing department to agree strategy to limit where possible the impact of licensed premises. (ongoing)

Benefits: limiting impact of bars and take aways; controlling potential contributors to antisocial behaviour.

- **Homes in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)** – greater enforcement of maintenance of HMOs. Expansion of programme to sign up landlords to voluntary agreements. Investigation of discretionary HMO licensing schemes in areas of high student accommodation through Planning, potentially through an Article 4 Direction. (short term)

Benefits: improvement maintenance and standards of HMOs; possible limit on the cumulative impact of high numbers of HMOs

- **Improved safety and security in Fallowfield** - Examining opportunities to improve safety and security in Fallowfield, and reduce antisocial behaviour, through partnership approach between Council and key stakeholders. Key approaches to include: student safety and security awareness; prevention and control of antisocial behaviour associated with late night drinking and HMOs; security by design. (ongoing)

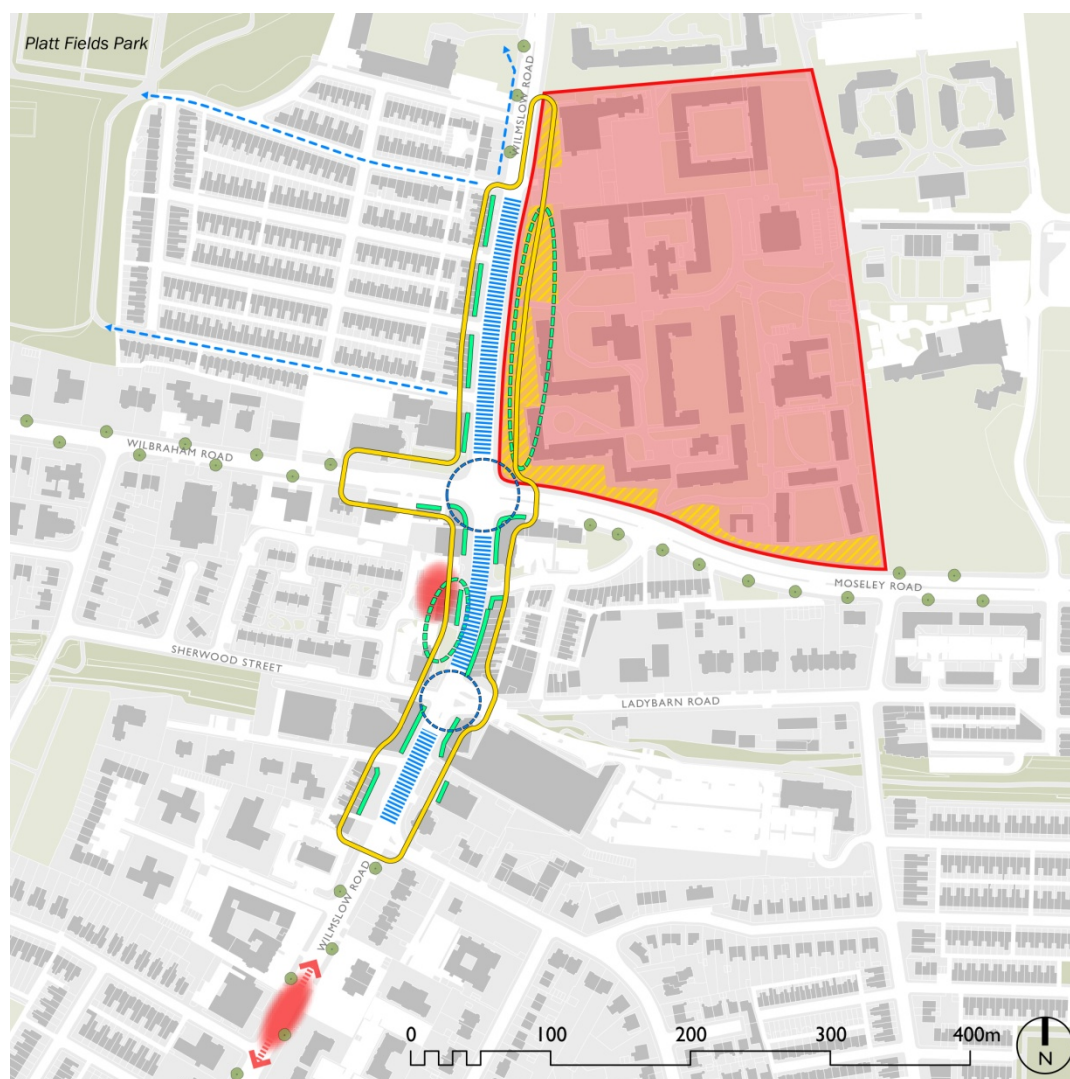
Benefits: improved safety and security, both physical/design related and personal.

District Centre Management

- **Management of Fallowfield District Centre.** South Manchester Regeneration Team and Ward Coordinators will explore options based on a strong stakeholder partnership approach to meet aims. Key parties to include the Council, local community representatives, private sector, University representatives, service providers (police, health, etc). Allied to this will be exploring opportunities to support businesses (short term)

Benefits: development of greater community involvement; creation of a management network to meet specific challenges; heightened sense of community ownership, responsibility and awareness; forum for progressing and implementing actions.

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DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

- Main development opportunity
- Potential for change
- Intensification along Wilmslow Rd if sites become available

URBAN DESIGN INITIATIVES:

- Area for inclusion within public realm strategy
- Area with potential to deliver new public space
- Potential for shop front improvement scheme
- Mature trees retained where possible
- Street tree planting along major routes to the centre

MOVEMENT:

- Greater pedestrian priority at key junctions
- Measures to improve ease of crossing
- Improved walking links to Platt Fields Park

Figure 1: Fallowfield Action Plan key diagram

CONSULTATION STATEMENT – FALLOWFIELD AND WITHINGTON DISTRICT CENTRES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

- Manchester City Council is in the process of developing plans for Fallowfield and Withington District Centres. The plans will help to implement the South Manchester Strategic Regeneration Framework and be used to guide future investment decisions made by the public and private sectors.
- To inform development of the district centre plans, the Council undertook a comprehensive programme of consultation and public engagement. Vision Twentyone, an independent research and consultation company were commissioned to analyse the consultation responses received and produce this consultation statement.
- Over a four month period (between 24th February and the 11th June 2010), the consultation invited local people, students, shoppers, traders and businesses to help shape the future of their area.
- The primary focus of the consultation was to gather feedback on a number of potential priorities and improvements the Council has identified for Fallowfield and Withington. This report details the consultation strategy and results and will feed into the district centre plans.

1.2 Strategy and methods

- A suite of consultation materials was designed in order to provide consultees with access to all the relevant information, including: a consultation booklet, exhibition boards, webpage, questionnaire and a point of contact at Manchester City Council.
- Various methods were employed to publicise the consultation process. This included:
 - Posters, delivered to various locations
 - Letters to stakeholders, including residents local traders and businesses
 - Press releases to local papers
 - Information in local publications
 - Distribution of the consultation booklet.
- The team received a total of 1,288 completed response forms. In addition to this, the team gathered feedback by organising/attending a number of local events and meetings. The full programme included:
 - Focus groups with traders
 - Meetings with stakeholders and local groups

- Attendance at community meetings and events
 - Drop-in events at various locations in the local area
 - School visits
 - Hosting of a children's storytelling event
 - Activities targeted at engaging seldom-heard groups.
- In addition to the completed response forms, a number of written representations were received from local organisations including Christies Hospital; Rusholme and Fallowfield Civic Society; Withington Civic Society; South East Fallowfields Residents Group; and St. Paul's Parish Church Withington.

1.3 Key findings – Fallowfield district centre

1.3.1 Key priorities

- For all of the key priorities identified for Fallowfield, the majority of respondents think they are either 'very important' or 'quite important'.
- The four key priorities with the highest proportion of respondents noting that they are 'very important' are:
 - Reducing antisocial behaviour (75%)
 - Increasing security at home and on the street (73%)
 - Attracting a wider range of shops to the centre (65%)
 - Improving the street environment (63%).

1.3.2 Key priorities – Differences between students and non-students

- In general, a lower percentage of students feel that the priorities are important compared to non-students. However, the same four key priorities are most important for students and non-students alike.
- The largest difference in opinion is around the issue of 'exploring the potential to limit the number and operating hours of takeaways and bars'. Whilst the majority of non-students (69%) agree with this priority, most students (62%) disagree.

1.3.2 Additional improvements

- Respondents suggested a number of improvements to Fallowfield district centre. The main issues included:
 - Litter, refuse and graffiti
 - More variety of shops
 - Takeaways and bars
 - Crime and community policing
 - Antisocial behaviour
 - Attractive shopping areas
 - Trees, flowers, green spaces and benches
 - Traffic congestion and parking
 - Roads, pavements, pedestrians
 - Cycling
 - Community cohesion
 - Provision for young people
 - Community facilities
 - Student housing.

1.4 Key findings – Withington district centre

1.4.1 Key priorities

- For all of the key priorities for Withington, the majority of respondents think they are either 'very important' or quite important'.
- The four key priorities with the highest proportion of respondents noting they are 'very important' are:
 - Reducing antisocial behaviour (78%)
 - Increasing security at home and on the street (73%)
 - Improving the street environment (69%)
 - Developing the former White Lion and Cine City area (66%).

1.4.2 Key priorities – Differences between students and non-students

- In general, a slightly lower percentage of students feel that the priorities are important when compared to non-students
'Reducing antisocial behaviour', 'increasing security at home and on the street' and 'improving the street environment' remain the top three priorities for both students and non-students .
However, 'improving community facilities' and 'increasing the amount of public space' are slightly more important for students, than 'developing the former White Lion and Cine City sites.'
- The largest difference in opinion is around the issue of 'exploring the potential to limit the number and operating hours of takeaways and bars'. Whilst the majority of non-students (66%) agree with this priority, most students (58%) disagree.

1.4.3 Additional improvements

- Respondents suggested a number of improvements to Withington district centre. The main issues included:
 - Clean streets: litter, refuse, fly-posting and graffiti
 - More choice of shops
 - Improving shop frontages
 - Greenery trees and flowers
 - Creating attractive public spaces
 - Public art
 - Street drinking, begging and drugs
 - Takeaway
 - Crime and community policing
 - Pavements
 - Pedestrians and cyclists
 - Traffic congestion and parking
 - Provision for young people
 - Student housing
 - Community buildings/ community centre
 - Cine City/ White Lion
 - Copson Street
 - Christmas tree.

1.5 Improving other shopping parades

- Respondents suggestions for improving other shopping parades reiterated comments specifically relating to Fallowfield and Withington district centres. The main themes included:
 - More choice of shops
 - Attractive shopping areas
 - Clean streets.

1.6 Traders

1.6.1 Fallowfield trader session

- The main issues raised at the Fallowfield district centre trader session were:
 - The impact of students
 - The impact of the Sainsbury's store and shopping
 - Appearance and the environment.
- The top priorities for action identified were:
 - Improve the street environment and have wider pavements
 - Create an actual centre to the district centre between Tesco Express and the Orange Grove pub
 - Do not permit any new bars and open existing bars to the local community
 - Increase accessibility to the Sherwood Centre by allowing a right turn from Wilmslow Road onto Sherwood Street.

1.6.2 Withington trader session

- The main issues raised at the Withington district centre trader session were:
 - The appearance and layout of the area
 - The types of shops and amenities
 - Parking
 - Street drinking, homelessness, begging and security
 - Student presence.
- The top priorities for action identified were:
 - Improve the general appearance of the centre with better paving, lighting etc.
 - Minimise the impact of on-street drinking by the homeless.