

Stretford Town Centre Masterplan Consultation Report

1. Background

- 1.1 Trafford Council invited representations on the consultation draft Stretford Town Centre Masterplan for an 8 week period from 24 July to 18 September 2013. The public consultation was subsequently extended by a further 4 weeks to 20 October 2013 to allow additional time for representations to be made.

2. Statement of Community Involvement

- 2.1 The Council adopted its Statement of Community Involvement on the 27th July 2006. This sets out the process by which the Council will consult appropriate bodies in the course of drafting all documents that are part of the Local Development Framework.
- 2.2 The Stretford Town Centre Masterplan consultation has been carried out in accordance with the principles of the adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

3. Informal Consultation

- 3.1 An informal consultation stage ran from 25 June to 23 July 2013 and included presentations to the Stretford Town Centre Partnership, Gorse Hill Action Group, Stretford M32 group and the Meadows and Trees Tenants and Residents Associations prior to full public consultation. The consultation draft Stretford Town Centre Masterplan was also discussed at the North Community Networking Event, on 15th July 2013

4. Consultees

- 4.1 The Council has formally consulted the following key stakeholder groups in relation to the consultation draft Stretford Town Centre Masterplan. These included:
 - § local resident bodies and community groups, eg. Gorse Hill Action Group, Meadows Tenants and Residents Association, Tree Tenants and Residents Association, Stretford M32 Group;
 - § town centre organisations, eg. Stretford Town Centre Partnership;
 - § local businesses;
 - § local politicians;
 - § land and property owners;
 - § developers;
 - § highway authorities;
 - § statutory consultees and agencies, eg. English Heritage, the Environment Agency;
 - § public funders, eg. Homes and Communities Agency;
 - § local service providers, eg. the Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group, registered providers of social housing;

- § utilities companies; and
- § transport providers eg. Transport for Greater Manchester.

- 4.2 Neighbouring authorities of Trafford were also invited to make representations regarding the Stretford Town Centre Masterplan in accordance with the Council's 'Duty to Co-operate' obligations.
- 4.3 In addition the Council notified consultees listed on the Strategic Planning and Stronger Communities databases.

5. Formal Public Consultation

- 5.1 A questionnaire was prepared to record feedback on the consultation draft Masterplan. This was made available on the Trafford Council website. Hard copies of the questionnaire were also made available on request from any Council library.
- 5.2 On commencement of the public consultation of 24 July 2013 a dedicated page on the Trafford Council website was launched detailing the consultation process and planned events along with links to the Stretford Masterplan document, an information leaflet and an online questionnaire. An email notification was sent to all relevant contacts within both the Strategic Planning and Stronger Communities consultation databases.
- 5.3 A display of the Masterplan proposals was located in the foyer of Stretford Library and at Stretford Hive throughout the consultation period. The Council distributed 2,000 information leaflets, summarising the Masterplan and the consultation process to community groups and all businesses within Stretford Mall and the surrounding area. The information leaflets were also made available at Stretford Library, Old Trafford Library, Lostock Library and the self-service library in Trafford Town Hall.
- 5.4 A presentation was made at a public meeting organised by the Stretford M32 Group on 24 July 2013. Over 100 people attended this event which also included small group workshops and a question and answer session.
- 5.5 Consultation drop-in sessions took place at The Hive in Stretford Mall on 24 July, 5 September, 7 September and 20 September 2013 where Council officers were available to provide information and answer any questions. Consultation material was also made available at the Lostock Community Fun Day, held in Lostock Park on 8 September 2013.
- 5.6 A Neighbourhood Forum was held at St Matthew's Church Hall in Stretford on 16 September 2013 and attended by 175 residents. The Council gave a presentation on the consultation draft Masterplan followed by a question and answer session.
- 5.7 Local schools have been offered the opportunity for workshop sessions to discuss ideas for Stretford Town Centre. A workshop was held with 60 children at Victoria Park Junior School on 16 October 2013. Pupils were asked what they think makes a good town centre, what they currently enjoy

about Stretford and what they think is currently missing from the town centre offer.

6. Inspecting the Plans

6.1 In addition to the consultation events held the consultation draft Stretford Town Centre Masterplan was made available for inspection at the following locations:

- § On the Council's website: <http://www.trafford.gov.uk>;
- § Stretford, Old Trafford and Lostock libraries;
- § The Hive in Stretford Mall; and
- § Stretford Leisure Centre.

7. Representations Received

- 7.1 The deadline for comments to be made was 18 September 2013. This was subsequently extended by a further 4 weeks to 20 October 2013.
- 7.2 The consultation questionnaire was available for completion online on the Trafford Council website. Hard copies of the questionnaire were also made available on request at any Trafford library.
- 7.3 Written Correspondence was sent to: Economic Growth, Trafford Council, Waterside House, Sale Waterside, Sale, Greater Manchester, M33 7ZF.
- 7.4 Representations by e-mail were sent to: stretfordmasterplan@trafford.gov.uk
- 7.5 In total 242 representations were received during the consultation period via both the questionnaire and stand-alone responses. Consultation responses and the identity of those making them are matters of public record and open to public scrutiny.
- 7.6 The local Labour Party also carried out its own consultation exercise on the draft Masterplan during the public consultation period with 200 people taking part in its survey.
- 7.7 A summary of the main issues raised by the respondents is set out below.

Overall Approach

- 7.8 The majority of the responses received have been positive. A majority have stated that they agree with the proposed approach to the regeneration. There is a recognition that Stretford Town Centre needs to be significantly improved if it is to meet the needs of the community.
- 7.9 However there is some disagreement as to how this can be achieved. There is a general concern expressed that there is too great a focus on new residential accommodation within the Masterplan as currently drafted and not enough commitment to the provision of new amenities, particularly in respect of growing the evening economy, providing a broader retail offer and the need for supporting community facilities. There are also concerns around the

amount of public investment available to kick start the regeneration of Stretford and the Council's influence over privately owned sites/buildings in the Masterplan area.

- 7.10 The inclusion of sustainability principles within the Masterplan has been welcomed. However it is suggested that these principles should more clearly underpin the proposals with the social, economic and environmental elements of sustainable development considered and balanced in the Masterplan.

Vision and Objectives

- 7.11 50% of respondents agreed with the vision and objectives, with 31% disagreeing and 19% responding with don't know. Whilst there is some agreement with the visions and objectives concern was expressed that the ambition for Stretford does not go far enough. Furthermore there should be a clearer linkage between the vision and objectives within the Masterplan and the identified projects. Some concern was also expressed around the ability to deliver the vision and objectives in the Masterplan given the current public funding and financial climate.

Masterplan Boundary

- 7.12 A clear majority supported the proposed Masterplan boundary. However a number of comments were made that identified areas where the boundary could be extended. The Barton Road shops were highlighted as a retail location outside the Mall that could be linked more effectively to the town centre. Some views were expressed that the boundary should include additional gateways into the area such as Stretford House and the Barton Road/Kingsway junction. It was noted that the inclusion of additional surrounding residential uses would contribute to the desired mix of uses. There were several comments focused on the need to create stronger connectivity with both Victoria Park and Longford Park. It was also suggested that potential longer-term opportunity sites along the A56 between the town centre and the M60 could be included.

What Stretford Town Centre Needs

- 7.13 The three improvements that would most encourage people to spend more time in the town centre are identified as an improved selection of food and drink outlets, an improved range of shops, and more attractive outside spaces. There is a clearly expressed view that Stretford Town Centre needs to provide a broader offer if it is to compete effectively with other centres and attract people to stay for longer periods of time. In general people would like the ability to do day-to-day shopping in their local area. A number of comments focus on the need to develop more evening attractions and provide town centre activity after 5pm. An improvement in the quality of the public realm, mitigation of the negative impact of the A56 and provision of more attractive pedestrian routes throughout the town centre are also all identified as improvements that would encourage people to use Stretford Town Centre more regularly.

Stretford's Assets

- 7.14 Stretford's historic buildings are identified as its best asset in the consultation responses. The library and old Post Office building on King Street are both identified as important historic buildings in the town centre in addition to Stretford's listed buildings. With regards to Stretford's historic buildings there is some concern expressed around their future use and ownership. There are a number of comments made that both the library and Stretford Public Hall should be kept in public ownership and/or developed with local residents and the community in mind.

Development Sites

- 7.15 There are a number of different views around the ten development sites and their proposed uses and also whether the extent of intervention proposed in the consultation draft Masterplan is sufficient to address the problems facing Stretford. A summary of these views by development site is set out below.

Stretford Mall

- 7.16 The majority see the future of the Stretford Mall site as critical in revitalising the town centre but there is concern around how it will be delivered given the current ownership and that the proposals are not radical enough. There is strong support expressed for a more comprehensive redevelopment of the Mall site if this is a feasible option. The improvements that are strongly supported for the Mall are a better mix of shops, more food and drink outlets, cheaper car parking, regular markets and more attractive frontages.
- 7.17 Edinburgh House Estates, who act on behalf of the lender and receiver of Stretford Mall, note in their representation that a range of occupiers and users have been approached to take up floorspace, especially food and drink outlets along Chester Road. Whilst there has been some interest from local occupiers the interest received is limited. They note initiatives that would help occupiers to take space including aid with business rates, contribution to fit out and guaranteeing of leases.

Arndale House

- 7.18 There are limited comments made on Arndale House. Those comments that have been made are supportive of the proposed refurbishment of this site for commercial or residential use.
- 7.19 Edinburgh House Estates note in their representation that a number of potential affordable housing providers have been approached in relation to this site, with feedback universally negative driven by the lack of space available to make projects viable.

Stretford Public Hall

7.20 There are a number of comments made around the future of Stretford Public Hall which is viewed as a key asset that makes a positive contribution to the town centre. Whilst some people are supportive of plans to use the building for a hotel or new office space others have expressed the view that some community use would be more preferable. There is a concern by some respondents that the receipts from any disposal of this publicly owned building would not be used to benefit the future regeneration of Stretford. There are also some representations from residents on Dorset Street with concerns over the implication of these proposals on the immediate vicinity.

The Essoldo

7.21 There is strong support for the proposal to use the Essoldo for leisure uses. The idea of opening up the rear of the site and making use of the canalside setting is also supported. It is broadly recognised that the building could be an asset for the area but there is frustration that it has been vacant for a long time. There is some concern over what influence the Council has in securing the active re-use of this building. It is also requested that the implications of any development at this site on residents of nearby properties is fully considered.

7.22 A number of comments have been made in relation to the empty office units on Edge Lane adjacent to the Essoldo and identified in the Masterplan for residential development. These are often referred to as the Edge Lane shops, although the units in question were formerly used as office floorspace by the NHS. A planning application was granted for the conversion of the five vacant office units on Edge Lane to residential in 2012 although this conversion has not started on site. There is strong support for these units being used for retail/leisure uses supporting an attractive route between the Mall site and the Metrolink Station/Bridgewater Canal.

Lacy Street/Newton Street Car Park

7.23 The representations received are broadly supportive of the redevelopment of the Lacy Street/Newton Street car park site. There is some support expressed for a landmark building at this location with a development that opens onto the canal and provides a mix of uses including restaurants and cafes. The existing car park is largely used by commuters travelling by Metrolink and there is some concern around the potential loss of car parking and the subsequent effect on surrounding residential areas.

7.24 Royal Mail have emphasised that should the area of the site occupied by their sorting office come forward for redevelopment then it is essential that a viable and commercially attractive re-provision / relocation of Royal Mail's operation is secured prior to the redevelopment. They also note that, should they remain in situ and any land surrounding the sorting office is redeveloped, any new uses should be designed and managed in a way that is sensitive to Royal Mail operations.

7.25 If the existing sorting office and office uses are relocated from this site there is a desire expressed to keep them in the surrounding area.

Former Boatyard, Edge Lane

- 7.26 This site is recognised as providing an opportunity to increase the attractiveness of this section of the Bridgewater Canal and function as an enhanced gateway to the town centre from the Metrolink Station. There is some concern in relation to the development of this site solely for residential use. A number of respondents would like to see new bars and restaurants developed which face onto the canal and make this area a destination. There is also concern expressed around extra traffic that may be generated in the vicinity of the Metrolink Station. Some would prefer to see a canal-themed attraction with boat moorings opening this area up to the wider community and tourists.
- 7.27 The site is in the ownership of the Bridgewater Canal Company who have welcomed and supported its inclusion as a potential site for residential development.

Royal Canal Works, Edge Lane

- 7.28 The representations made in respect of the Royal Canal Works site are broadly the same as those made in respect of the former boatyard site. Whilst there is some support for residential development a number of respondents would prefer a more mixed development with some canalside bars and restaurants provided. There are also some concerns raised around access to the site from Edge Lane and the potential impact on existing residential properties on the opposite side of the Metrolink line.
- 7.29 The landowner of the Royal Canal Works site strongly supports its identification as a development opportunity. It is suggested by the landowner that the site identified in the Masterplan be enlarged to accommodate additional adjoining land controlled by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) that could be brought into the development. It is also requested that the Masterplan have greater flexibility in respect of the types of land use that could be accommodated on the site including bar and restaurant uses and purpose built student accommodation.

Stretford Library and Mitford Street Clinic/Bennett Street Surgery

- 7.30 There is considerable opposition expressed to the relocation of Stretford Library into the Mall as part of a new combined facility. The library building itself is seen as a valuable part of the streetscape and offers potential to create a more effective link across Kingsway. The library site was identified alongside the former Mitford Street Clinic/Bennett's Street surgery site for future residential development if the library were to be relocated.

The Drum

- 7.31 The Drum site was identified in the draft Masterplan for residential development. The owner of this site is currently pursuing the development of a drive-thru restaurant which is now subject to a planning application

(81449/FULL/2013). There have been mixed views expressed in relation to this with some supportive of the scheme and others strongly opposed.

Highways and Public Realm

- 7.32 The proposals to make the town centre more pedestrian friendly and reduce traffic speeds are largely supported but some concerns are expressed around how this will work in practical terms.
- 7.33 Chester Road is specifically identified as a major barrier where a narrower road and lower speed limit may be appropriate. There are mixed views as to whether the subways should be closed and replaced with pedestrian crossings or left in situ and improved. There are some representations that would prefer to see the A56 tunnelled underground as it passes through the town centre.
- 7.34 There is broad agreement that improving the public realm and pedestrian environment is vital to securing the successful regeneration of Stretford Town Centre, but this needs careful design and a comprehensive approach if it is to work effectively.

Priorities for Investment

- 7.35 The three priorities where people would most like to see investment are in redeveloping Stretford Mall, developing the evening economy and securing new uses for the Essoldo. The next three most cited priorities are all in relation to highways and public realm, namely, improving landscaping and quality of outside spaces, reducing the impact of traffic on the town centre, and replacing the subways with pedestrian crossings.
- 7.36 A number of respondents noted that given the scale of change needed in Stretford Town Centre it was extremely difficult to select three priorities. The detailed comments made here largely reflect the comments made in earlier sections.

8. Modifications and Next Steps

- 8.1 Following the close of the public consultation the Council will prepare a revised draft of the Stretford Town Centre Masterplan. All consultation responses received will be fully considered and taken into account in making modifications to the Masterplan.
- 8.2 It is recommended that the following modifications be made to the Consultation Draft of the Stretford Town Centre Masterplan:
- § There will be a clearer link made between the vision and objectives and the proposals for each development site.
 - § The sustainability principles underpinning the Masterplan will be brought forward in the structure of the document to form part of the 'vision and objectives' section.
 - § The boundary of the Masterplan area will be amended to include the units at the Barton Road/Kingsway junction.

- § A new section will be added on Stretford's assets reflecting the comments made in the consultation.
- § Within the challenges and opportunities section additional detail will be added on the performance of the national economy, the town centre, the local office market and the residential market to add clarity to the approach being taken.
- § Further information will be added to the Masterplan to explain why additional residential development is required and how supporting community facilities, such as schools, is currently being planned for.
- § Additional detail will be added to the 'development options' section to clarify how options have been developed and the reasons for selection.
- § The proposed development for Stretford Mall will be clarified to provide additional detail around what this could entail and the mechanism for delivery.
- § A section will be added to the proposed option for Stretford Public Hall explaining the rationale behind the Council disposing of the building. Its future use will also be made more flexible to enable use as an arts/cultural facility if there is a viable/self funding scheme.
- § The reference to the vacant office units along Edge Lane will be amended to reflect the fact that the residential proposal for this location have not progressed and the recent interest expressed in using some of these units for retail/leisure use.
- § Additional detailed will be added to the proposed option for the Lacy Street/Newton Street car park to clarify how the Post Office sorting depot would be dealt with.
- § Clarification will be added that any closure of the Lacy Street/Newton Street car park would be considered alongside a wider review of car parking provision for the town centre as a whole.
- § The proposed development for the Royal Canal Works site will be amended to provide for the potential to include restaurant/bar use as part of a residential scheme.
- § An amendment will be made to the Stretford Library and Mitford Street Clinic/Bennett Street Surgery site with the library remaining in situ.
- § The proposed development for The Drum site will be amended to reflect the recent planning application that has come forward for the development of a drive-thru restaurant.
- § The proposals for improvements to pedestrian movement and highways will be moved to a stand alone section to reflect their importance in the Masterplan. Additional detail will be added relating to how these will be taken forward through a more detailed piece of work.
- § The illustrative Masterplan will be amended to reflect the proposed changes to the development sites and also included clearer reference to the creation of green linkages to both Victoria Park and Longford Park.
- § A delivery strategy will be prepared to support the implementation of the Masterplan.

Background Documents

Background Document 1: Consultation questionnaire

Background Document 2: Summary of consultation responses data

Background Document 3: Feedback from M32 Group Public Meeting

Background Document 4: Feedback from Neighbourhood Forum

Background Document 5: Feedback from workshop with Victoria Park Junior School

Background Document 6: Local Labour Party consultation findings

Background Document 7: Full record of consultation responses received