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Making Chorlton A Better Place

Our Vision for Chorlton

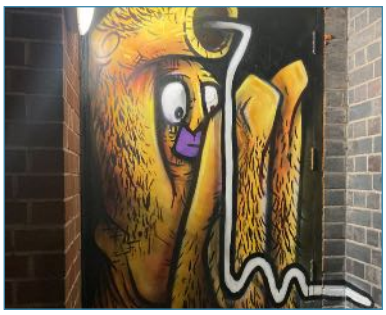
Chorlton aims to be a welcoming place for everyone, recognised for its creativity, independence and harmony. The Chorlton Vision aims to unlock our potential for:

- *Thriving businesses, which serve local people and boost prosperity.*
- *Attractive and safe shared places, where people can spend time and money sustainably.*
- *Easy access to resources that help people be healthy, caring and connected*









Chorlton's Distinctive Character

We believe it is important for Chorlton to stand apart and be recognised as a distinct place with its own attributes. These characteristics capture the essence of the sort of place we think people in Chorlton want to see:

- Creativity: Chorlton will provide space for entrepreneurs, activists and artists to pursue their passions
- Independence: Chorlton will maintain its distinctive identity and encourage development that engages local people and creates local pride.
- Harmony: Chorlton will aim to grow in a sustainable way, minimising our environmental impact and ensuring we welcome all our residents in our district centre.

Our Priorities For Action in Chorlton

In order to deliver the Vision, we believe there are five priority areas around which change needs to be organised:

- **Priority 1**
  Upgrading our PUBLIC REALM to enhance pride in our district centre.
- **Priority 2**
  Improving the quality of our local ENVIRONMENT to make Chorlton a better place in which to spend time.
- **Priority 3**
  Enhancing MOVEMENT to make it easier for more people to get around Chorlton safely and quickly.
- **Priority 4**
  Influencing PROPERTY investment to ensure it meets the needs of local residents, workers, businesses and visitors.
- **Priority 5**
  Strengthening our IDENTITY so people know what Chorlton offers.

Welcome to Chorlton











In the last 25 years, Chorlton has been one of Manchester's most desirable places to live. Many young families have been attracted to Chorlton by its social scene, housing offer and good schools. Public transport access to central Manchester is fast and convenient, and there is easy access to countryside on our doorstep, along the River Mersey.

Chorlton is one of Manchester's most vibrant district centres and attracts visitors to its independent retail, food and drink scene, led by some very well-established destination outlets like Unicorn Grocery, Barbakan Delicatessen, Out of The Blue fishmongers, Frosts The Butcher, Ken Fosters Cycle Logic, Chorlton Bookshop and Chorlton Cheesemongers.

Our evening economy draws people to our wide and constantly evolving array of bars, pubs and restaurants. Chorlton is home to The Edge Theatre and Arts Centre, which underpins a cultural scene that also boasts annual Arts and Book Festivals. Chorlton also has an energetic and active community, with many groups working to make Chorlton a better place for people to live and visit.

Despite its relatively positive reputation, Chorlton faces challenges and needs to keep pace with growing competition from district centres across south Manchester and Trafford. The commercial centre of Chorlton is affected by an increasingly tired and shabby street scene that has been neglected for too long. And, behind the apparent levels of wealth, Chorlton is home to families which experience significant, chronic deprivation and who feel disconnected from the opportunities of the growing city around them. Rocketing property prices have pushed up the cost of buying and renting a home here and also made it harder for low earners to stay in the area.

There is a general sense among all of Chorlton's communities that the changes seen over the last 25 years have not allowed the area to fulfil its potential. There is a strong local appetite among residents and traders for the community to have more influence over future investment in and management of our local district centre. The Chorlton Vision is our plan for how the area can be improved to ensure it meets the needs and aspirations of current residents and future visitors.

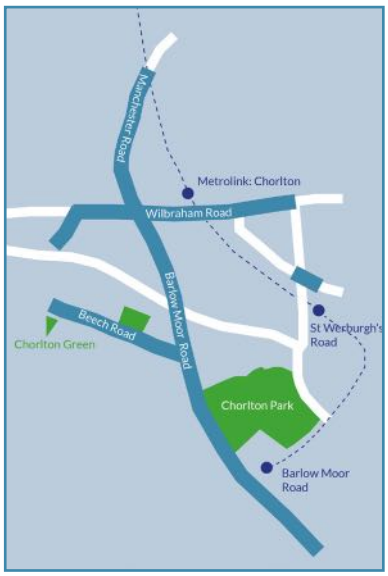
Background

Chorlton has been the subject of numerous strategies and plans and this vision has drawn on their key themes and priorities for driving improvement in our district centre. The Vision statement has also been developed with the input of local community groups and residents.

The team behind the Vision has carried out an outreach and engagement campaign, attending a series of meetings and events and running a stall at Chorlton's monthly market, talking to residents, businesses and community groups to identify the issues that they felt mattered most. An extended network was reached through project and steering group partners and supporting print materials were distributed through the area. A colourful website outlined the draft Vision, its background and rationale, as well as acting as a conduit for online responses to a series of open questions. Accompanying social media promoted the project, with Facebook advertising purchased to raise additional awareness through the area.

Scope

The Vision will set out aspirations for the physical look, feel and purpose of the places that make up Chorlton. It focuses principally on the commercial aspects of Chorlton – its shops, bars, restaurants and public services – rather than its housing and where people live.









The Vision aims to embrace the whole of Chorlton, broadly defined as the two wards – Chorlton and Chorlton Park. Our intention is to have a flexible approach and not to be restricted to a tight physical boundary. The main focus area for the project (marked in blue) runs from the bridge over the tramline at the north end of Chorlton, then goes southwards to the shops around the junction of Hardy Lane and Barlow Moor Road. We'll also take in the commercial areas along Wilbraham Road, as well as Beech Road, Manchester Road and Egerton Road South, all of which have businesses and services used by residents and visitors.

It is clear from our engagement that there are some essential parts of Chorlton that have the greatest potential to transform perceptions, but these are also the areas most in need of attention.

- **The Four Banks**: the central heart of the commercial area of Chorlton, through which most people pass as they travel around. The area has suffered in recent times, with vacant units, traffic congestion and a lack of general appeal. The proposed cycleway upgrade will see investment and change in the coming year, and it will be important to capitalise on this development to ensure the heart of Chorlton matches the aspirations of the Vision.
- **Chorlton Cross Precinct**: although still home to some well-patronised shops, the look and feel of the precinct has been falling behind that of competitor shopping areas for a long time. The office spaces and car area are also under-utilised and could make a much more positive contribution to the district centre. The precinct is currently on the market and the Picture House is under threat. Any development plans that emerge should align with the priorities set out in the Vision.
- **Wilbraham Road from the Metrolink Station to the Four Banks**: the first impressions of people arriving in Chorlton by tram are likely to be coloured by the poor roads and pavements, shabby frontages and illegal parking along this strip of outlets and shops. This essential route into the heart of Chorlton projects a poor image and is hostile to both pedestrians and unsafe for cyclists.
- **Chorlton Bus Station**: this is a long-neglected arrival point in Chorlton, which creates a poor impression for people approaching from the south or turning into Beech Road. The bus station properties need creative attention to be brought back into use to make this a more vibrant and active travel hub, and attractive gateway to key business areas.

There are many other places that could play a greater role in improving Chorlton, but these are the four which stand out. They are the ones most in need of attention, with the greatest potential to pull up the general look and feel of the district centre. The Vision is for the whole of Chorlton, but its transformation will be held back and its potential constrained unless these four areas are significantly upgraded.

Priority 1: Upgrading our PUBLIC REALM
to generate pride in our district centre

We want Chorlton's district centre to be a visually attractive place that encourages local people and visitors to explore our neighbourhood and enjoy spending time here.

To achieve this, we want to:

- *Create better open, safe spaces where people can meet, spend time and play.*
- *Brighten up our streets to create more local pride and joy.*









Our Initial Long List of Actions To Deliver Change

1.1 **A new Chorlton Public Square**: create a new public square in the district centre, where people can meet and where markets, performances and other events can be hosted.

1.2 **Reducing Barriers**: conduct an audit and remove unnecessary fences, barriers and other street clutter along roadsides and around community facilities.

1.3 **Seating and Lighting Upgrade**: ensure all the main pedestrian routes are well-lit, accessible and peppered with regular seating to allow people to stop, rest and meet.

1.4 **Fitness and Play Kit**: explore scope for facilities to encourage fitness and play while in Chorlton.

1.5 **Community Visual Arts**: consult on a developing a Chorlton-wide project for street art (walls and pavements), signage/trails and sculptures to celebrate creativity and brighten up the area.

1.6 **Alleyway Adoption**: look at creative ways to engage local residents to take more control of their alleyways to reduce litter, maintain access and create little places for mingling and play.

1.7 **Bin Charter**: ask all traders to commit to ensuring all commercial waste bins are stored away from view and shop front litter is tackled quickly.

1.8: **Community Stewardship**: encourage volunteer groups of gardeners to adopt more pocket parks, planters and other spaces to maintain green assets and carry out regular litter picks.

1.9 **Place Management Commitment**: request that Manchester City Council establish and promote a minimum guarantee for street cleaning, unblocking drains, tackling graffiti and addressing traffic issues such as problem parking. This should be accompanied by accessible reporting mechanisms where problems emerge, that allow councillors and officers to secure remedial action.

1.10 **Make Toilets Public**: explore scope for new public toilet facilities and request traders to sign up to a commitment to allow local passers-by to use their toilet facilities.

Priority 2: Improving our local ENVIRONMENT

to make Chorlton a better place to spend time

We want Chorlton to be recognised as a sustainable community that encourages local people and businesses to adopt low-carbon and low-emission ways of moving around and keeping warm.

To achieve this, Chorlton will need:

- *Carbon-neutral new building development and a programme of retro-fit to meet emerging eco-standards.*
- *More well-managed green features around the district centre.*
- *Continued efforts to rebalance local traffic towards cycling and walking to reduce emissions.*









Our Initial Long List of Actions To Deliver Change

2.1 **Pocket Parks**: identify unadopted places for more mini green spaces with seating and greenery

2.2 **Business Green Benchmarking**: secure resource for a student project to measure eco-credentials of traders' operations and publish scorecard/rating systems based on energy consumption, supply chains, product range and delivery channels.

2.3 **New Build Standards**: request that Manchester City Council require all new commercial developments to adopt the next generation of building standards and aim for net zero immediately.

2.4 **Retro-fit Grant**: explore scope for a small grants programme to incentivise landlords to retrofit properties.

2.5 **Planter Programme**: sponsor streets, or groups of business in a block, to introduce and manage planters along kerb sides to reduce pavement parking and encourage traders to manage plant baskets around the district centre. Also consider workshops to help people make suitable planters.

2.6 **Local Green Energy**: test demand for local solar and heat pump programmes with shared generation and storage facilities between businesses.

2.7 **Green Roofs and Walls**: secure funding to implement and maintain green roofs and walls on bus stops and public buildings.

2.8 **Air Quality Sensor Network**: monitor air quality from traffic and domestic emissions around Chorlton and publish data to help identify places of exceedance and facilitate action on issues such as idling.

2.9 **Better Cycle Storage**: require all businesses and public space to provide secure cycle lockups to encourage more visitors to travel by bike.

2.10 **Discreet Vehicle Charging Points**: require all on-street charging points to avoid taking up vital pavement space and creating new sources of clutter in our streets.

2.11 **Green Bins**: lobby for a new generation of separate litter bins (green, brown and blue) around the streets of Chorlton.

2.12 **Repair Cafe**: encourage community activities to make use of the local Repair Cafe, establish a lending Library of Things and set up Maker Spaces to make better use of tools and equipment.

Priority 3: Enhancing MOVEMENT

to make it easier for more people to get around Chorlton safely and quickly

We want Chorlton to be safe and offer easy ways to get around, which would help create a more vibrant place where more people meet, shop, work and enjoy our neighbourhood.

To achieve this, we want to:

- *Rebalance local traffic towards walking and cycling and reduce traffic congestion in the centre*
- *of Chorlton.*
- *More firmly encourage positive behaviours that create a safer and more welcoming environment for pedestrians and cyclists.*
- *Explore creative solutions to parking problems.*









Our Initial Long List of Actions To Deliver Change

3.1 **Pavement Upgrade**: Improve the quality of pavements and introduce minimum width and quality standards in the district centre to ensure they are visually appealing and safe for everyone to use.

3.2 **Road Rule Enforcement**: request that authorities actively enforce speeding and parking rule violations.

3.3 **Twenty is Plenty**: introduce a default 20mph speed limit on all Chorlton roads.

3.4 **Tackle Pavement Parking and Idling**: provide local communities with tools to encourage responsible parking that helps pedestrians and buggy/wheelchair-bound travellers and reduces air quality.

3.5 **School Streets**: support creative solutions to reduce school trips by car, such as walking buses and lift shares.

3.6 **Next-Generation Cycle Lane**: advocate for the next wave expansion of segregated cycle lanes to extend the network to more streets, especially along Wilbraham Road.

3.7 **Car-Free Taster Days**: implement a series of test events for no-car days on key streets in Chorlton

3.8 **Creative Parking Solutions**: undertake a programme to test low-traffic and parking solutions in busy streets which could include temporary road closures, one-way systems and resident parking.

3.9 **Support Car Sharing**: encourage local streets to adopt electric car-sharing clubs to reduce the number of vehicles stored on Chorlton streets.

3.10 **Road Care Reporting**: create better ways for people to report potholes, tree root incursion and other danger spots, and to progress-chase responses from the City Council.

3.11 **Leave As Found Charter**: request Manchester City Council to require utility companies to restore pavement and roads to their previous state following street works.

Priority 4: Investing in PROPERTY

to ensure it meets the needs of local residents, workers, businesses and visitors

We want Chorlton to have well-designed, appropriate property development that enhances the quality of the built environment for local residents and further strengthens our reputation as a place where people want to live, work and visit. To achieve this, we want:

- *A bigger and earlier local say in the investment, planning and development process to ensure balanced development that meets local needs and complements the character of the area.*
- *Greater local ownership of sites, premises and businesses managed for local community benefit.*
- *To extend the work done by local businesses to help make Chorlton a better place.*









Our Initial Long List of Actions To Deliver Change

4.1 **Local Planning Voice**: require all commercial planning applicants to have engaged the Chorlton Vision Board in meaningful dialogue on plan options and to demonstrate their contribution to the Vision as a requirement of planning consent.

4.2 **Neighbourhood Planning**: explore appetite for a formal Neighbourhood Plan with Manchester City Council. This would aim to embed the principles of the Vision in the planning process and deliver sustainable, balanced development and growth in Chorlton.

4.3 **Licensing for Balance**: require Manchester City Council to consult Chorlton Vision Board on all licensing applications and agree a plan for new businesses which balances daytime and night-time uses, alongside retail / leisure / services.

4.4 **Secure the Picture House**: this is a vital asset at the heart of the district centre with huge potential to unlock additional footfall, create new jobs and sustain more small, independent businesses.

4.5 **A New Market Place**: identify an appropriate home for a flourishing and regular street market.

4.6 **Champion Arts Venues and Festivals**: support The Edge and Chorlton Arts Festival to become firmly established local attractions.

4.7 **Rethink Chorlton Library**: use the refurbishment to explore longer-term opportunities for the library to be a learning and knowledge hub for local people.

4.8 **Co-operating Chorlton**: support steps to establish a local body to help create new local ownership of assets and businesses which can help retain wealth locally, create local jobs and serve local residents.

4.8 **Open for Business**: work with groups of local businesses to enhance the attractiveness, consistency and quality of their frontages, shutters and signage to create a stronger sense of pride and identity across the district centre.

4.9 **Workspace**: ensure a good supply of local office, studio and workshop spaces for people to work flexibly in Chorlton.

4.10 **Captured Carbon Assessments**: require Manchester City Council to receive a report on contribution to their net zero climate crisis for any proposed building demolition in Chorlton.

4.11 **Meanwhile-use**: work with Manchester City Council and landlords to develop an approach to allow quick uptake pop-ups to make use of properties that are due to become, or already are vacant.

4.12 **Quality Service Venues**: work with relevant organisations to ensure Chorlton offers easy access to quality premises for health, learning, recreational sport and the arts. This could include exploring scope for new types of flexible work and studio space.

Priority 5: Strengthening our IDENTITY
so people know what Chorlton offers

We want Chorlton to have a strong identity, based on a reputation for being welcoming, independent, creative and harmonious. We want Chorlton to be widely recognised as a premier quality destination for local shopping and leisure across Greater Manchester and for the district centre to live up to its reputation and the expectations of local residents.

To achieve this, we want to:

- *Develop a clear brand that can be used by businesses, local groups and the City Council to develop a stronger shared identity within and beyond Chorlton.*
- *Promote Chorlton's values and offer to prospective visitors, potential investors and future residents.*









Our Initial Long List of Actions To Deliver Change

5.1 **Chorlton Brand**: secure resource from Manchester City Council, landowners and local traders to create a fresh brand identity for Chorlton that reflects the better place we want to create. The brand should be used by businesses, groups and the city to amplify a clearer identity to residents and visitors and promote our offer. The brand identity should include a clear set of standards for how it should be used and involve a set of minimum standards of operation for those organisations that use it to ensure its integrity and alignment with our shared Character Features.

5.2 **Chorlton Trails and Signs**: establish a network of pathways and roll out a programme entry-point and way-finding signs to help people find venues and destinations and provide fun activities to find their way around. The trails and signs should help strengthen a coherent sense of place around Chorlton.

5.3 **Chorlton Online**: establish a Chorlton web presence for residents and businesses to learn about and promote developments and events around the district centre.

Delivering The Vision

The team behind the Vision is exploring the scope to establish an oversight Board that will take the Chorlton Vision forward. No final decisions have yet been made and we will be engaging with Manchester City Council to secure their recognition and support for the Board. The likely functions for Chorlton Vision Board are:

1. **Priority action planning/setting**: assembling a short-list of priority actions from the long list set out here, that should be implemented in the short /medium term.
2. **Issue highlighting and progress-chasing**: picking off day-to-day issues of concern that crop up and advocating action among stakeholders.
3. **Grant decision-making**: advising local grant makers on applications for funding (for example the Neighbourhood Investment Fund).
4. **Influencing planning/licensing**: advising Manchester City Council on planning and licence applications for commercial schemes in Chorlton.
5. **Supporting suitable development**: working with developers and advising on best approaches to community-friendly, people-focused development that supports the Vision.
6. **Bid lead**: acting as primary partner for grant applications for development in Chorlton that are aligned to the Vision (where no other, more appropriate body exists).
7. **Engaging local residents and businesses**: undertaking consultation/information gathering exercises to assemble local opinion on issues relevant to the Vision.
8. **Acting as a secretariat for local traders groups**: providing administrative support to a Chorlton-wide traders group to drive up membership and explore future options such as a Business Improvement District (or similar).
9. **Commissioning marketing and public artwork**: leading on the design of commissions and decision-making for materials to promote Chorlton.
10. **Monitoring change**: reporting on data and intelligence on footfall, vacancy rates, trading conditions etc to measure progress in delivering the Vision.
11. **Refreshing local strategic priorities**: an annual review will allow changes to the Vision, reflecting emerging local opportunities, threats and aspirations.
12. **Supporting and facilitating strategic projects**: providing backing to others, including community groups, commercial organisations and developers that support the objectives of the Vision.

Attributes of Successful Governance for Chorlton Vision

The composition of the Board would be agreed in the coming months if we get the backing we seek from the City Council. We anticipate that the Board will have between nine and twelve places and membership will be built around the following principles:

- **Representative of Local Interests**: the Board would need to have balanced membership that can represent the main stakeholder constituencies behind the Vision ie
    - Employers: traders based in Chorlton
    - City Council: elected councillors and city council officers
    - Community: community groups and (potentially) resident/neighbourhood groups
    - Service Providers: housing providers, schools and GP/health practices
- **Reflective of the Vision Issues**: the Board needs to be able to draw on insights across the spectrum of the issues it engages with and be able to involve beneficiaries affected by its projects/initiatives.
- **Recognised Authority and Status**: the Board and its members need to be able to engage with and influence investors and organisations delivering schemes and services in Chorlton, and have the backing

of Manchester City Council and local groups to secure resources and influence decisions that deliver the Vision.

- **Intelligent Decision-making**: the Board needs to be able to receive information on local matters and be able to use the data/intelligence to make objective decisions that support the Vision.
- **Ability to Operate Independently in the Best Interests of Chorlton Vision**: board members need to be able to contribute to debate and decision-making for the benefit of the whole of Chorlton and the priorities set out in the Vision (and be ready to declare interests where they represent a potential conflict with the Board).

Measuring Success

It is vital that the Vision has an impact and makes a difference to Chorlton and the issues highlighted. Each action supported under the Vision will be expected to provide reporting on its progress and achievements against an agreed set of measures. The Chorlton Vision Board will also track change on a set of key indicators that reflect the central goals of the Vision.

Proposed Vision Indicators

A series of core indicators will be monitored to track the central impacts of the Vision:

- Number of empty units
- Number of businesses trading locally
- Footfall in the district centre
- Investment secured in new development and upgrades
- Air quality in the district centre

Steps should also be taken to explore scope for a wider indicator of local sentiment to be established, that provides regular insight into local people's views of the progress Chorlton is making against its Vision.

Next Steps

The Steering Group that has created this draft Vision will now:

1. Move to become a shadow Chorlton Vision Board and establish longer-term governance arrangements for the oversight and delivery of the Vision.
2. Engage Manchester City Council to secure adoption of the Vision and recognition of the Chorlton Vision Board as its guardian.
3. Undertake a project prioritisation exercise to identify the relative urgency with which the long list of actions in the Vision will be progressed.
4. Agree a further programme of local community and business engagement to build additional buy-in for the Vision and refine its focus to ensure it reflects local priorities and opportunities.

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The Chorlton Vision project is being led by representatives from:
Beech Road Traders, Chorlton Alliance, Chorlton Climate Action Partnership (Our Streets Chorlton), Chorlton Community Land Trust, Chorlton Traders and Manchester City Council.

Funded by Manchester City Council's Neighbourhood Investment Fund.