

# **From Developer Regeneration to Civic Futures**

**A new politics for foundational service provision in  
Greater Manchester**

*Julie Froud, Mike Hodson\*, Andy McMeekin, Anne Stafford,  
Pam Stapleton, Hua Wei, Karel Williams*

**September 2018**

**Alliance Manchester Business School  
University of Manchester**

\* Corresponding author: [michael.hodson@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:michael.hodson@manchester.ac.uk)

# Contents

<b>The argument in summary</b>	p.3
<b>1. Urban planning and its eclipse by developer regeneration</b>	p.9
<b>2. The experiment in developer regeneration from the 1990s onwards and its consequences</b>	p.14
<b>3. Developer regeneration systematised: the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and transport planning</b>	p.22
<i>Systematising developer regeneration</i>	
<i>Transport and developer regeneration</i>	
<i>Limits to developer regeneration</i>	
<b>4. What is to be done? Civic futures</b>	p.29
<i>Greater Manchester is re-awakening</i>	
<i>Rethinking what and who Greater Manchester is for</i>	
<i>Civic futures</i>	

## The argument in summary

This report is about how Greater Manchester's<sup>1</sup> housing and transport has been re-made by developer regeneration over the last 30 years, how that approach is failing, and how it can be re-made to support civic priorities over the next three decades.

The core argument is that, since the late 1980s, developer regeneration has been the dominant Greater Manchester (GM) approach to the future of both housing and transport. The central idea being that property-led urban regeneration can fix the problems of de-industrialisation and deliver growth and jobs for higher market incomes. **This approach has neglected the provision of foundational services (like decent housing and transport) and social infrastructure necessary to civilised life for all GM citizens.**

Our constructive aim in this report is to think critically about the limits of this approach to the future of Greater Manchester and to **contribute to alternative thinking about new forms of political organisation and new economic priorities** which could start to shape the future of the city-region as a diverse, civilized place aimed at citizen well-being: a new **civic future** for Greater Manchester. This matters because Greater Manchester faces a growing crisis in the provision of housing, transport and other foundational services (i.e. access to energy, social and health care, education etc): this is the collective consumption that provides the basis for everyday civilised life for all<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 1: The 10 Boroughs of Greater Manchester**



Source: [http://www.greatermanchesterpccelection.org.uk/info/10/your\\_area](http://www.greatermanchesterpccelection.org.uk/info/10/your_area)

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Greater Manchester' is the metropolitan region of 10 local authority areas (boroughs) around and including the City of Manchester (see Figure 1) and is home to around 2.7 million citizens. Since 1974, the 10 boroughs have had a mix of formal and informal collaborative governing arrangements. Notably, from 2011, this collaboration has been formalised in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), and, from 2017, an elected mayor. This political context of new, formalised governing arrangements is fundamental to the struggle for the future of Greater Manchester.

<sup>2</sup> For an explanation of the foundational economy concept, see: <https://foundationaleconomy.com/introduction/>

On housing, the Resolution Foundation notes that owner occupancy in Greater Manchester has declined amongst younger age groups<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, 80,000 are on the waiting list for social housing which is not being built in any quantity; and there is a growing homelessness and rough sleeping problem. In terms of transport, the city-region accounts for 37 million km per day of travel, the clear majority (77%) of which is travelled by car, with consequences for congestion, public health and air pollution which brings several thousand premature deaths each year. Indeed, of mainland towns in the UK, without steel making heavy industry, Salford scores the worst on air pollution and Manchester is close behind<sup>4</sup>.

Yet, recent strategic plans from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) demonstrate attempts to intensify this unbalanced approach<sup>5</sup> rather than to facilitate alternatives to it. There are signs of plans that run counter to this - for example, recent proposals for 1,000 miles of cycling and walking routes<sup>6</sup> - and significant opposition from civil society groups and citizens expressing concern about the intensified plans in the draft Spatial Framework. But, the large scale flat building in the central city and Salford shows that market funded developer regeneration remains dominant.

Part of the task is to better understand the problems with developer regeneration in Greater Manchester. To do this, we set developer regeneration in historical context by making the comparison with the earlier period of post-war planning in the 1950s and 1960s when progressive objectives were only part realised through technocratic, politically top-down planning that was increasingly done 'on the cheap' by the 1960s. After analysing the problems of developer regeneration and the limits to solutions in post-war planning, we develop the idea of 'civic futures' as a way of thinking about how to re-shape Greater Manchester for the coming decades and the political role its citizens can play.

This report therefore situates 'civic futures' in the context of a century of efforts to transform Greater Manchester (see Figure 2). We articulate this long historical sweep through three 'phases': 1) the era of planning from 1945-1986, which we call '**municipal plan**'; 2) the period of '**developer regeneration**' from 1986-onwards; and 3) the potential future of the city-region between now and 2045, as constituted by '**civic futures**'. Like all periodisations, this division involves stylised characterisations of each period when the transitions are blurred and untidy; for example, the early 1990s rebuilding of Hulme represented a genuine partnership between social priorities and developer profit, which was afterwards lost as the town hall lapsed into granting planning permissions where serious questions of developer profits and social contribution were often not asked.

Ultimately, in our view, **what is distinctive about each period is the specific forms of political mobilisation that define it**. By political mobilisation we mean a configuration that sets development in motion with lead actors, participants, forms of expertise and supportive finance in a defined field of action with objectives, vision and measures of success. And the point of the periodisation is that these drivers and their combination differ quite radically from one period to another. Figure 2 expands on this idea by listing 12 heterogeneous socio-economic drivers which are systematically different in successive periods.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/data/housing/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-43964341>

<sup>5</sup> GMCA, (2016) *Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework*, GMCA: Manchester. TfGM, (2017) *Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040*. Available at: [https://downloads.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/7FiejTsj68eaa8wQw8MiWw/bc4f3a45f6685148eba2acb618c2424f/03\\_GM\\_2040\\_TS\\_Full.pdf](https://downloads.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/7FiejTsj68eaa8wQw8MiWw/bc4f3a45f6685148eba2acb618c2424f/03_GM_2040_TS_Full.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.tfgm.com/press-release/beelines>

We use this analysis to make the point **that civic futures require more than a futuristic vision of participatory democracy or a 'put the clock back' return to town hall led municipalism. A new mode of political mobilisation** will require ongoing work over a period of decades. The mobilisation of civic futures as a way of re-making the future of Greater Manchester, depends on clarity about all the change drivers which would have to be modified quite radically before civic futures could be realised.

1. It requires a long-term **vision** for the city-region. It requires moving away from recent efforts to build the competitive city-region via developer regeneration. But, it should not go back to the post-war, top-down, technocratic efforts to build the modernist city of the 1950s and 1960s. Instead, the new vision for Greater Manchester in the coming decades should be about building a city-region for citizens, with public policy underpinning collective forms of consumption in key areas like housing, transport and utilities.
2. The vision needs to be aligned to fixing key problems. In the vision of the modernist city, the key problems were poor living and working conditions in a relatively culturally homogenous great industrial city. Developer regeneration came with a narrative of promoting an entrepreneurial city-region. Its key problem was fixing de-industrialisation, which required a post-industrial economic model for Greater Manchester. Civic futures must address the increasing public squalor of our city-region and a generation's neglect of collective consumption (in favour of private, market-mode consumption) while recognising geographical and cultural variety in Greater Manchester.
3. Being clear about the **focus and purpose** of transformation is critical. The transformation to a modernist city had the focus and purpose of collectivising the production and consumption of foundational services adjunct to an urban industrial economy. Under developer regeneration and the entrepreneurial city-region, the focus and purpose was to create a new, 'competitive' economic identity for post-industrial Greater Manchester. The focus and purpose of the citizens' city-region and new civic futures must be clearly articulated as using Greater Manchester's cultural and geographical diversity as the basis for co-producing place-appropriate foundational services through experimentation by public bodies and citizens' groups.
4. Collective forms of consumption necessarily require basic standards of universal service provision in respect of core **foundational services**, including housing and transport. This differs radically from the selective and prioritised provision under developer regeneration where infrastructure is narrowly defined as transport improvement rhetorically dedicated to 'making the economy work' and practically supporting profitable development of specific sites. It does resonate with post-war planned efforts to develop universal provision but recognises the historically different era in which such aspirations have to be enacted and the need for a more participatory form of politics to make it happen.
5. If civic futures is to represent a broader view of development, that requires a new commitment to generating forms of place-based **social infrastructure** - parks, the high street, community centres, sports centres, libraries, schools etc. The provision of social infrastructure was neglected under developer regeneration because it does not generate rental income or resale value. The provision of social infrastructure was top-down, according to mechanical formulae under post-war planning. In making new civic futures, social infrastructure needs to be much more generative rather than being planned from the top or even ignored. This would support a culture where multiple place-based initiatives and experiments are encouraged and supported.

6. Development of civic futures requires a shift in government and a fundamentally different relationship between the London-based central state and Greater Manchester. This relationship would be neither the centralising state of the post-war period that created frameworks for local action, nor the parsimonious central state under developer regeneration, which promotes a particular notion of 'competition' whilst constraining and conditioning local action. Instead, an **enabling central state** is needed to facilitate discretion and sufficient autonomy to act at Greater Manchester level.
7. This shift in government for civic futures has implications for the governance of Greater Manchester. **Enabling government** is important as a means of supporting and coordinating multiple experiments with place-based social infrastructure and the provision of foundational services. The result would be a new form of governance outside the state/market opposition with a critical role for civil society and grassroots groups, cooperatives, platforms and other forms of funding and managing infrastructure and services. This differs from the 'public-private partnerships' of developer-led regeneration which subordinate the public authorities that had the leading role in the post-war era of planning.
8. Civic futures depends on fusing together schematic strategic and more granular forms of place-based **knowledge and expertise**. It moves beyond both the developer knowledge and financial expertise pre-eminent in developer regeneration, and professional planning and engineering knowledge central to post-war planning. Civic futures needs to bring together formal policy knowledge and its thin simplifications with various forms of textured, granular knowledge of local circumstances and social needs.
9. The importance of this is that it is based on a politics of change where the lead actors and **changemakers** reflect a wide range of place-based social interests working together with strategic political decision makers. This is very different from the narrow growth coalition of political, business and developer interests, with developers calling the shots under developer-led regeneration which snuffed out the technocratic ambition of local authority planners and engineers from the planning era.
10. If civic futures needs multiple sources of funding, a reinvention of taxation is a basic prerequisite at national and local level; tax has also to engage with wealth - especially property - which is now grossly undertaxed. Just as the tax-based approach to **finance** in the town planning era was based on central grants (funded out of the 1940s reinvention of taxation which introduced PAYE and extended social insurance), in a very different way large scale developer generation was built on bank and market finance with net returns levered up by tax avoidance.
11. An orientation to new civic futures recognises the claims of all citizens to collectively-provided universal basics. It is the NHS writ large to encompass other foundational services such as housing and transport; without necessarily assuming services should be free at the point of use. But, unlike the NHS, it is organised for the city-region rather than the national scale. This also means a shift from prioritisation of the city centre and other space under developer regeneration and the shift to social housing in new estates in and around the built-up area. The new civic futures recognises the common requirement for economic and social infrastructure but also the difference of how that will be achieved across the **variegated geography and politics** of Greater Manchester.

12. There remains the issue of how transformation should be assessed. We can again look for historical inspiration. Under the transformation to the modernist city, **measures of success** were seen through indicators such as access to foundational services in a decent house and numbers of social houses built. The success of the transformation of Greater Manchester from 1986 onwards was officially understood through a series of narrow economic metrics that included GVA growth, job creation and levels of inward investment. In making new civic futures, a people's city-region needs new wellbeing measures related to the quantity and quality of foundational services.

Practically, our report is organised into four sections<sup>7</sup>. First, we discuss the era of municipal plan and its eclipse, from the 1980s, by developer regeneration. Second, we detail how developer regeneration has worked and how the different drivers and dynamics interplay in this configuration. Third, we argue that the strategic direction of the GMCA, exemplified in the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) and the Transport Strategy 2040, has been to systematise and intensify developer regeneration but that this has produced significant tensions about internal incoherence and external political resistance. Fourth, because constructive outcomes depend on the articulation of alternatives, we propose the idea of civic futures for foundational services as the basis for a new compact between Greater Manchester's political representatives and its citizens. That will only happen if the present line of division between the political decision makers and ordinary citizens is abolished.

---

<sup>7</sup> A note on sources: this public interest report is based on research for the Alliance Manchester Business School-funded project, *Making devolution work differently: housing and transport in Greater Manchester after devolution*. The argument in this report draws on project research and also cites earlier research, such as the *Manchester Transformed* report of 2016, that is available on the foundational economy web site at: <https://foundationaleconomycom.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/manchestertransformed.pdf>

**Figure 2: Political mobilisation in three periods: a century of remaking (Greater) Manchester, 1945-2045**

<b>Driver</b>	<b>Municipal Plan (1945-1986)</b>	<b>Developer Regeneration (1986 onward)</b>	<b>Civic Futures (from now -2045?)</b>
<b>Vision</b>	Building the modernist city-region	Building the competitive city-region	Building the citizen's city-region
<b>Orientating problems</b>	Poor living and working conditions in industrial Manchester	Fixing deindustrialisation; search for post-industrial knowledge economy	Failure of collective provision in a rich society
<b>Focus and purpose</b>	Collectivise/ nationalise foundational services in the industrial economy	Cultivate new, 'business friendly' economic identity for a post-industrial city-region	Experiments with co-producing heterogeneous services
<b>Housing, transport and foundational services</b>	Work towards universal provision	Selective and prioritised provision, meeting private consumption demands of citizens with market income.	Re-discovering universal standards of collective provision in a heterogeneous context
<b>Social infrastructure</b>	Top-down, generic recipe with provision according to population	Blind spot/ invisible; rely on legacy provision which is increasingly run down	Bottom-up / generative from citizen needs
<b>Relationship between national state and 'GM'</b>	Centralising, to create frameworks for local action with central grants	Controlling, parsimonious central state, promoting 'competition', constraining local action	Need for enabling central state
<b>Governance and democratic participation</b>	Public authorities, nationalised corporations, top-down state assumed benign and competent; policy done to and for citizens	Public-private partnerships, top-down via developer priorities facilitated by repurposed state; elite monopoly of decision with citizens 'consulted' after things have been decided	Civil society and intermediary institutions in co-producer role, i.e. non- state can plan, deliver and own the collective; change via challenging elite governance and demonstrating alternatives
<b>Knowledge, expertise and participation</b>	Professional town hall-based planning and engineering	Developer-led with financial and legal expertise bought in	Granular place-based knowledge of citizens informs strategy
<b>Changemakers</b>	Local authority, planners and engineers working to a masterplan	Growth coalition (political, business and developer elites with developers in leading role)	Wide range of place-based social interests and intermediaries working with political decisionmakers
<b>Finance</b>	Public, tax-funding	Public-private with bank and market finance funding what is most profitable and state funding transport infrastructure and relinquishing social claims	Multiple sources, with public funding from reinvented taxation
<b>Geography</b>	Council estates by slum clearance in built up area and new build on edges; centre adapted to car etc	Infill of flats now over spilling an extended city centre plus new build in edge city and priority consumption spaces such as airport and Trafford Centre	Capillary networks and distributed branches across the City
<b>Measures of success</b>	Quality of connection to foundational services; no. of social houses built	Number of jobs created; GVA; levels of inward investment	Citizen wellbeing measures related to quantity and quality of services

# 1

## Urban planning and its eclipse by developer regeneration

Modernist urban planning was formally invented in the early 20th Century as a way of imposing technical order and social priorities on the city. In Greater Manchester it was built on the infrastructure of late 19<sup>th</sup> Century gas, water and sewer provision which had already networked the city to produce dramatic improvements in mortality and morbidity. Town planning added the ideal of a modernist city where planners' professional knowledge and civic intervention by local government could come together to deliver a new kind of town. If the vision was technocratic, the practical driver across Greater Manchester in mid-century was the mass politics (increasingly Labour) of an industrial city where the working class had lived in poverty and squalor and were now politically organised to press for something better in ways which empowered planning and town hall planners as never before after 1945.

Planning was an ambitious technocratic attempt at step change progress. This resulted in grand projects, half realised visions which ran ahead of resource, often producing a version of two steps forward, one step backward progress, with grand projects often not delivering. From the 1890s to the 1930s, the city was capable of grand projects for material and providential provision: the Thirlmere reservoir from the 1890s brought clean water 90 miles from the Lake District; and Wythenshawe in the 1930s was designed as a 12 square mile garden city for the working class. But, even at the high point in the 1950s and 1960s, there never was a comprehensive re-ordering of the city according to some kind of masterplan. Most obviously, planners could dream of imposing zoned order on the city centre but that central district is, was and always has been an un-zoned, jumbled, historical residue of private development.

Nevertheless, in the post-war era of reconstruction from the 1940s to the 1970s, planning had an ambition, scale and resource of an unprecedented kind. The 1945 *City of Manchester Plan*, prepared for the Manchester City Council by their Surveyor and Engineer's Department, directly covered a population of 700,000 and connected with 2 million in the surrounding conurbation. Its aims were universal and the means were to be comprehensive. The Plan was 'to enable every inhabitant of this city to enjoy real health of body and mind' which required 'radical improvements in our living and working conditions'<sup>8</sup>. After much post-War reconstruction, by the 1960s the City Planning Department was bold enough to tackle the final challenge. In 1964, 1967 and 1974 reports, planners then envisioned a zoned central city with five separate districts for activities like shopping, entertainment and education integrated by a Colin Buchanan-type modernist plan for a motorised city with cars and pedestrians separated by constructing upper level pedestrian walkways<sup>9</sup>.

From a socio-economic point of view, the most interesting of the plans is the original reconstruction plan of 1945 which has a well-developed technocratic vision of how essential foundational services (especially housing) could be supplied to communities of citizens who need social infrastructure as well as homes to live in. This is the post-war British new town vision applied to an existing conurbation. The 1945 Manchester Plan vision was of planned communities to replace an unplanned city of high density with houses jumbled alongside factories and industrial sites. Specifically, the 1945 plan covered three reconstruction priorities: first, quality social housing with hard infrastructural provision, including networked energy, water, waste and transport; second, transport

---

<sup>8</sup> R. Nicholas (1945) *City of Manchester Plan*, Norwich: Jarrold. P. 1.

<sup>9</sup> The 1960s plans were showcased in a Modernist Society exhibition of 2016. See R. Brown and M. Dodge (2016) *Making Post War Manchester: Visions of an Unmade City*.

repurposed, largely to accommodate the car; third, social and community infrastructures including schools, libraries, churches and shops. The plan was then for ideal 'neighbourhood' communities each with populations of 10,000 grouped into larger districts, all governed by new standards including an allowance of open space per 1,000 of population<sup>10</sup>.

Wholesale re-construction was required because no existing Manchester neighbourhood met these standards. Wythenshawe was criticised as a residential estate lacking community facilities and constructed on a low-density basis so that it could take no more than 36,000 of the much larger number needing re-housing. Much of the 1945 Plan was never built and the gap between technocratic ambition and achievement is symbolised for posterity by the city's half built inner ring road. Manchester City Council (like the other boroughs) took a leading role but never had the borrowing powers and capital resources to buy from private land and property owners and rebuild on the scale required. This problem was aggravated by the Macmillan Government's reactionary decision to end compulsory purchase at existing land use value, which had been the basis of post-war new town development. Some of what was built by way of council housing was high density or in the wrong place (often for reasons of cost); hence, system building as in the Hulme Crescents of 1972, or isolated edge of city developments like the Hattersley overspill estate of the 1960s. This was not what the civic planners of 1945 intended but still served to discredit the idea of town planning amongst those who could not distinguish between concept and execution.

Urban planning had, in any case, lost its intellectual prestige in the 1960s even as Manchester planners produced their ever more elaborate and unbuilt plans for zoning the city centre. In the USA, in 1961 Jane Jacobs published *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* where planners like Robert Moses in New York were the villains promoting urban freeways and mono cultural social housing developments which undermined the rich diversity of the city. In the UK in 1969, Banham, Barker, Hall and Price collaborated on a 1969 *New Society* special issue on 'Non Plan' which criticised planning as top-down and doctrinaire before asking 'why don't we trust the choices that would emerge if we let them'<sup>11</sup>. All of this was and is marvellously politically ambiguous. Jane Jacobs is now respectfully name checked by both radical community builders and liberal economists of agglomeration. Peter Hall the prophet of Non Plan in 1969 was afterwards Britain's most distinguished and respected town planner.

In Manchester, planning did not then decline slowly because of changing intellectual fashion; planning was killed off quickly in the later 1980s in a series of accidents where the death of reconstruction planning was collateral damage and part unintended consequence of Margaret Thatcher's aggressive economics and politics. Monetarist economic policies brought a high pound and high interest rates so that more than 20% of UK manufacturing jobs were lost permanently in the first recession of the early 1980s. Deindustrialisation then rolled on through the 1980s and 1990s in Greater Manchester, stripping out jobs and leaving many vacant ex-industrial brownfield sites. Political resistance from the Greater London Council and others led the Thatcher government to abolish the (Labour dominated) metropolitan counties. In Greater Manchester, the abolition of the Metropolitan County in 1986 removed the formal city-region authority and the only political frame in which city-regional urban planning could take place.

By the 1990s, the very different vision was of private developer-led urban 'regeneration', which would undo the damage of deindustrialisation and re-purpose old docklands and factory sites by building new developments which offered some locally appropriate mix of residential, retail, office and warehouse space. All this in a format which was not Victorian but conveniently up to date, so

---

<sup>10</sup> R. Nicholas (1945) *City of Manchester Plan*, Norwich: Jarrold. P. 5, 240.

<sup>11</sup> Banham, Barker, Hall and Price (1969) 'Non Plan: an experiment in Freedom', *New Society*, 20 March 1969, p. 437.

users would buy or rent (mostly) new build property. This was all a huge shift from reconstruction planning where the priority nationally and in Manchester was social housing. As the Conservative manifesto of 1951 put it, housing is 'the first of the social services'. The 1945 City masterplan (to be built out in stages) was irrelevant because the activity within the conurbation had changed: the post-war priority was reconstruction with new build to remedy overbuilding of densely packed residential terraces; the new priority was regeneration with infill on derelict brownfield industrial sites.

Politically also, it was all change. The rebuilding of the 12 square km Trafford Park industrial estate as a warehouse district between 1987 and 1998 was the harbinger of a new order because it was undertaken by a new style development corporation (outside local government control, as in the London Docklands). Equally significant was the granting of planning permission for the out of town Trafford Centre mall where the dominant regional developer, Peel Holdings, fought the opposing Borough Councils and won on appeal by a House of Lords decision in 1996. The political signals were that resistance was futile: local authorities had lost their leading role and blocking powers so that in the era of regeneration they should accept their diminished status as junior partner in so called public-private partnerships.

Local authorities were junior partners in regeneration because it was private developers who had the capital and had to be incentivised to rebuild on specific sites. The City and Boroughs Councils were starved of resources under national rules which obliged them, for example, to sell council houses at a discount without rebuilding; planning and architect functions decayed when there was nothing for Councils themselves to build. Increasingly, the role of the local authority was facilitation: find out what the private developers want to do and make it easier. This involved assembling parcels of land for 'district' development, making developer-friendly zoning decisions and putting in infrastructure before giving out planning permissions which made money for developers (without requiring anything in return, such as social housing). The measure of success was whether developers put up buildings. What the buildings were used for and how they contributed to neighbourhood or community was seemingly irrelevant.

It is interesting to relate this outcome of the 1990s back to the intellectual assumptions and arguments of the anti-planners of the 1960s. Jane Jacobs in the USA and Peter Hall *et al.* in the UK were right about the undesirability of town hall planners imposing a top-down vision without regard to citizen priorities and activities. Cut price high modernism with system-built flats of the Wilson and Womersley type at Hulme was a brutal waste of money because families could not live there and the flats had to be knocked down within 25 years. Planning without citizen participation and deliberation becomes doing policy to citizens, which is bound to fail because no technocrat can be unfailingly benign and competent.

But, after the town halls were disempowered and regional government was dismantled in 1990s Greater Manchester, power did not pass to citizens, it was handed to property developers. The developers built, site by site, in districts where they could construct what made money and target customers with disposable income. This approach paid little regard for the priorities and activities of the majority of citizens of the conurbation. Furthermore, property developers (and their lenders) tend to back proven money-making formulae for turning plots into rentable space. Through imitation and absence of imagination, developers' blocks of flats or mixed-use developments can then be just as much a mono culture as a 1960s social housing development.

And what then happens to the foundational goods and services whose provision made Manchester a civilised place between the 1880s and 1960s? Like all large city-regions, Greater Manchester depends on collective consumption of foundational goods and services. Piped water, parks, schools and adult care all require tax revenue and some kind of planned provision (with or without town

planning as the frame). But rising market incomes from employment do not secure the collective provision and renewal of this essential social and economic infrastructure; and private developers will not want to contribute to the costs of provision because this would reduce their profit margins. So, after nearly 30 years of promoting developer-led regeneration, Greater Manchester has a serious problem about decay and underinvestment in its social infrastructure including parks, surgeries and care as well as in the hard economic infrastructure of housing and transport including cycling provision and transport interchange. The material fabric of Greater Manchester is sadly as ill-adapted to the current pattern of family needs and citizen mobility in 2018 as it was in 1945.

The problem is that we do not have a 2018 (Greater) Manchester Plan. This may seem a wilfully perverse statement. Since 2012 under various city-region deals, symbolically sealed by the election of a city-region mayor in 2017, if Greater Manchester has not recovered significant powers, it has recovered the institutional capacity to think and plan at regional level. Thus in 2016-17 we had publication of a Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) and a Greater Manchester Transport Strategy. But these documents are disappointing in ways which indicate the prevalence of developer-led regeneration. Economically there is no serious questioning of the relevance of the jobs and growth agenda formulated in the 2009 Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER) and subsequently reinforced by the Treasury sponsored Greater Manchester City Deal in 2012<sup>12</sup>. Politically, this is because developer-led regeneration has calcified into a growth coalition which unites key figures in local government with the property developers.

The draft GMSF for city-region development over the next 20 years is not the solution but another instalment of the problem. It does not reinstate planning but reinforces developer regeneration because the GMSF is about formatting the city-region for developer priorities. There is to be more of the same flat building on brownfield sites in the city centre, plus greenfield, edge city developments of housing estates and warehouse districts. The GMSF does not address citizen needs, but answers the developers' question about where they go next after they have built on the ex-industrial sites in the city centre. The GMSF gives them outline permission for site by site, city centre infill and edge city development.

Transport policy is in an impasse primarily because economic policy is fixated on growing GVA and creating jobs. Infrastructure is then narrowly defined as transport infrastructure which ignores social infrastructure. Moreover, the role of transport is narrowly defined as travel-to-work, which extends the labour market and ignores the larger number of journeys made for other purposes. Greater Manchester's growth coalition has then compounded confusion by investing in a radial tram system in a car-based city region, where orbital commuting is very important. The urgent priority is for paradigm shift in economic thinking away from growth and jobs via skills training and (transport) infrastructure. Instead, we need a fusing of social and economic policy and a re-engagement with the old 1880-1980 problem of deficiencies in the provision of foundational goods and services.

But, if we are not to repeat the old mistakes of urban planning, we need new approaches to constituting civic futures in Greater Manchester. Crucially, this would add a participative, deliberative element so planning was less about the top-down insensitive imposition of generic solutions. In terms of actors, we need a planning which does not put blind faith in a benign and competent state or an efficient market, but draws on the diversity of civil society and intermediary institutions as legitimate actors in collective provision. As for aims, we need to call time on the 30 year experiment in regeneration for competitive success. It is time to think again about the capability of citizens and community well-being in a new and different world. We need to rediscover

---

<sup>12</sup> GMCA (2012) Greater Manchester City Deal. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/406275/Greater-Manchester-City-Deal-final\\_0.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/406275/Greater-Manchester-City-Deal-final_0.pdf)

the universal and collective ambition of the 1945 Manchester Plan and deliver it in a new way for all the citizens of 2045.

## 2

### The experiment in developer regeneration from the 1990s onwards and its consequences

The shift from urban planning and reconstruction to developer-led regeneration meant a change of focus. All forms of planning must privilege particular sites because everything cannot be changed at once. But urban planning aims to relate parts to the whole, classically with the concept of the masterplan for a city or town that is developed in phases. This big picture ambition is lost in private development whose concern is with the site that can profitably be developed, sometimes with a collection of adjacent sites branded as a district. There were many ex-industrial brownfield sites available all over Greater Manchester and developers in the 1980s and 1990s prioritised Manchester city centre and Trafford Park/ Salford Quays. Outside these central areas, motorway connections defined strategic outer sites, principally the Trafford Centre (opened in 1998) on Manchester Ship Canal land at Dimplington, and the area around Manchester Airport.

There was also an experiment with new forms of governance without city-region government. In 1986 Greater Manchester County Council was abolished by the Thatcher government. Formal, metropolitan government was replaced by a mix of voluntary metropolitan cooperation through the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) in some areas including waste and transport, and the devolution of other responsibilities back to Greater Manchester's boroughs. By the 1990s, the empty political space was occupied by an entrepreneurial form of urban governance where political and business elites worked together in 'partnerships' to promote transformation of selected areas through regeneration.

If local government was 'getting out of the way' and subsidising private developers, this was rhetorically wrapped into a narrative that Greater Manchester was 'open for business', entrepreneurial and bought into current thinking on urban development<sup>13</sup>. Political symbolism acquired a new importance as Greater Manchester had now to show that it was business-friendly and outward-facing to attract investment and the 'right' kind of people, whether as knowledge workers or shoppers. Thus, bidding to host mega events, showpiece transport infrastructure and the regeneration of a few central districts were all performatively important in demonstrating Greater Manchester's aspiration and achievement.

- The first, vaunted public/ private success was the hosting of the 2002 Commonwealth games after previous unsuccessful bids to host the Olympic Games.
- The showpiece transport investment was the Metrolink tram system inaugurated in 1992 and subsequently extended.
- The rebuilding of the central shopping district after the 1996 IRA bomb and the new central business district at Spinningfields showed how public-private partnership could regenerate a district.

In all of this, local government was subordinated but could not be displaced. In the new era of developer regeneration, from the 1980s to the 2010s there was no strategic spatial plan at metropolitan scale but multiple plans at various smaller scales had to be produced. Such plans were absolutely essential to district regeneration and to unlocking central government funding which local government increasingly had to bid for under New Labour. Local government could then incentivise

---

<sup>13</sup> Harvey, D., (1989) From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism, *Geografiska Annaler. Series B*, Vol. 71, No. 1, pp. 3-17.

developers via site assembly through throwing in freeholds it owned, providing road infrastructure and even offering loans so developers could get things done. The City Pride initiative in 1994 sought to address how the logic of competitive, individual urban regeneration initiatives could be strategically corralled through coordination across local authorities and different partnerships<sup>14</sup>. In practice Manchester City and Salford competed to offer sites for prestige developments like BBC North. The establishment in 2003 of Manchester Enterprises (subsequently New Economy), did though see an economic development agency that, importantly, covered all ten Greater Manchester authorities.

All this meant that Greater Manchester was uniquely well placed from the late 2000s to take advantage of central government's increasing interest in 'devolution', a kind of responsabilisation, which involved delegating modest powers and intractable problems to city-region governments<sup>15</sup>. Greater Manchester not only had a history of 'partnership' working but also, through Manchester Enterprises/New Economy (ME/NE) had committed to a Treasury approved model of economic development through the publication of the Manchester Independent Economic Review (MIER) in 2009<sup>16</sup> which ostentatiously bought into the new agglomeration theory – articulating the motors of urban densification, clustering and expansion with economic growth and productivity gains - that conveniently rationalised city centre development. Partly because they had begun to believe their own publicity about a city transformed by enterprise and hoped to out manoeuvre other Northern conurbations, the local growth coalition eagerly seized whatever government offered as 'devolution'. Elements of the city-region government abolished in 1986 were progressively reinstated after 2009 but with business in a much more prominent role.

The 2009 UK Budget announced that Greater Manchester was to be given statutory city-region status<sup>17</sup>. The establishment of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) followed in 2011. GMCA signified the formal establishment of governing arrangements at city-regional scale to deal with economic development and transport issues. Just as significant, in 2010 the incoming Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition abolished New Labour's nine English regional development agencies. They were followed by the establishment of 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). This saw a further infusion of business interests and urban entrepreneurial thinking into governance.

Following the establishment of formal city-regional governing arrangements through GMCA, national government sought a deal to redefine relations between the centre and Greater Manchester<sup>18</sup>. First, in 2012, came a City Deal, a bespoke set of decision making powers and funding agreed with central government.<sup>19</sup> By November 2014, UK central government and the leaders of Greater Manchester local authorities agreed a package of 'devolution' measures that included an elected mayor for Greater Manchester plus greater planning powers and new policy responsibility for local transport, housing development, skills and further education. This would be controlled by a

---

<sup>14</sup> Deas, I., (2014). The search for territorial fixes in subnational governance: City-regions and the disputed emergence of post-political consensus in Manchester, England, *Urban Studies*, 51(11), 2285-2314.

<sup>15</sup> DCLG, (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities: the Local Government White Paper*, HMSO

<sup>16</sup> McKillop, T., O'Neill, J., Glaeser, E., Coyle, D., and Kestenbaum, J., (2009) *Manchester Independent Economic Review. The case for agglomeration economies*.

<sup>17</sup> HM Treasury, (2009), *2009 Budget - Building Britain's Future*.

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100407203659/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/bud09\\_complereport\\_2520.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100407203659/http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/bud09_complereport_2520.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Pike, A., Kempton, L., Marlow, D., O'Brien, P., and Tomaney, J., (2016) *Decentralisation: Issues, Principles and Practice*, CURDS: Newcastle.

<sup>19</sup> GMCA, (2012) *Greater Manchester City Deal*.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/221014/Greater-Manchester-City-Deal-final\\_0.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/221014/Greater-Manchester-City-Deal-final_0.pdf)

(locally long-resisted) mayor for Greater Manchester<sup>20</sup>. With a series of infrastructure and development project ‘sweeteners’, including an extension of the Metrolink tram system, the deal was reckoned to be worth more than £1 billion. By February 2015 agreement had been reached to devolve NHS spending for the city-region to Greater Manchester.

In May 2017, the newly elected Mayor took responsibility for a Greater Manchester which had been (selectively) transformed by 25+ years of developer-led regeneration and whose public-private governance, sources of funding and profitability were opaque to ordinary citizens. So, what was and is the nature of the transformation?

**1. *Developer-led regeneration has repopulated Manchester city centre whose population has increased from a few hundred people in the 1980s to 30,000 by bringing in young singles and couples.***

Developers built where it was profitable to do so and increasingly they built-up in high rise with 1-2 bed flat units on brownfield sites in Manchester city centre and Salford Quays because planners allowed them to do so and that maximised profit. As the *Manchester Transformed* report demonstrated, the large scale flat building was hugely concentrated in these two boroughs, with the outer boroughs typically building modest numbers of family houses for owner occupancy. From 1991-2011, the number of flats in Greater Manchester increased from 156,000 to 227,000; and Manchester City and Salford (two of the ten boroughs) accounted for 43,000 of that increase<sup>21</sup>.

The 1-2 bed flats were aimed at a particular demographic, 25-34 year old junior white collar workers, who were increasingly populating the city centre (see Figure 3) and working in the office blocks also being built on brownfield sites. Between 2001 and 2014, the population of 25-34 year olds increased by 47,000 in the two boroughs of Manchester City and Salford and actually declined in all the eight other boroughs of Greater Manchester<sup>22</sup>. The junior white collars typically rented flats from buy-to-let landlords who were buying property as a form of long term investment. Social infrastructure to support these developments was not immediately an issue because the tenants were young, could walk to work and after work could use city centre cultural amenities such as cinemas and cafes. A post-student demographic largely did not need facilities such as schools and surgeries.

The building of tower blocks has seen the once Victorian and Edwardian Manchester city centre of 6 or 7 storey buildings increasingly become like any other world city where developers have political influence and get a free hand. As elsewhere, this begets a competition to build ever taller blocks regardless of their appropriateness in the historic heart of the city. The difference from London is that the Manchester tenants of the flats are earning modest white collar salaries and the new flats are mostly basic in size and fittings, including cheap to install electric panel heating, despite the estate agent language about ‘high quality’, ‘plush’, ‘premium’, ‘luxury’, ‘upmarket’, ‘exclusive’ and the marketing of features such as rooftop gardens and sports facilities. Many of these apartment

---

<sup>20</sup> HM Treasury/GMCA, (2014) *Greater Manchester Agreement: devolution to the GMCA and transition to a directly elected mayor*.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/369858/Greater\\_Manchester\\_Agreement\\_i.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/369858/Greater_Manchester_Agreement_i.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Folkman, P. et al (2016) *Manchester Transformed. Why we need a reset of city regional policy*. P. 16.

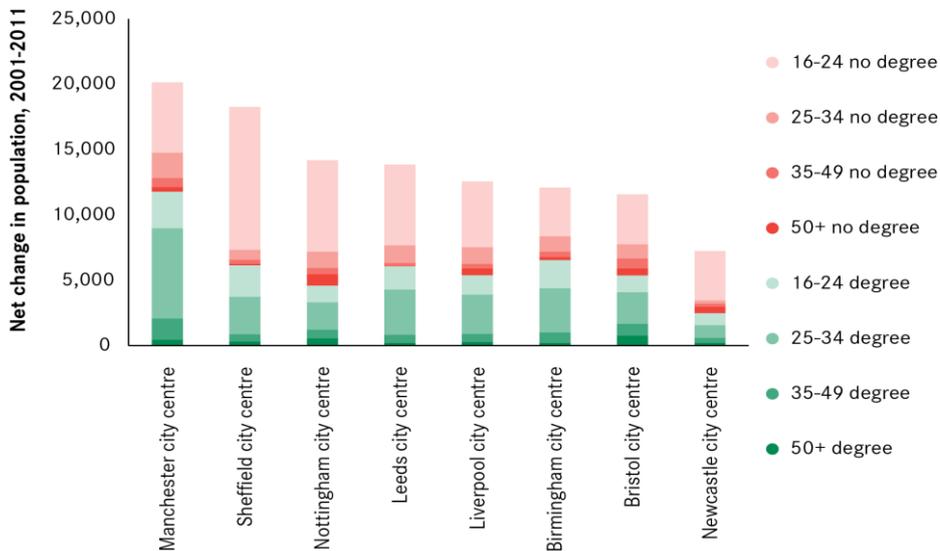
Available at: <https://foundationaleconomycom.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/manchestertransformed.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> Folkman, P. et al (2016) *Manchester Transformed. Why we need a reset of city regional policy*. P. 129.

Available at: <https://foundationaleconomycom.files.wordpress.com/2017/01/manchestertransformed.pdf>

developments are presented as part of wider ‘mixed use’ development schemes for ‘new communities’, which means retail, office, entertainment and hotels.

**Figure 3: Net change in population, UK cities, 2001-2011**



Source: Centre for Cities<sup>23</sup>

- 2. Developer-led regeneration now means whole ‘districts’ - from New Islington to Salford Quays and from Middlewood Locks to Angel Meadow - are named and parcelled for the construction of thousands more apartments which will create an urban mono culture of private-rented blocks.**

The ‘pipeline’ of planned, approved and under construction apartments involves a relatively small number of developers and land owners (see Figure 4) using the same professional advisers again and again. Major developers inside the central city have a close relation with Manchester City Council sometimes through joint ventures; and/or through the City Council setting the area development framework and, in some instances, providing loans from the Greater Manchester Housing Fund.

**Figure 4: Developers Making the ‘New’ Manchester: number of apartments under development**

Developer	Under Construction	Groundworks	Approved	Planning application	Total Active
Renaker	2320	0	600	0	2920
Select	263	0	1180	0	1443
Peel Land & Property	164	0	477	0	641
Scarborough	571	0	0	0	571
X1	1061	0	741	0	1802
Fortis	466	0	533	0	999
Urban Splash	44	171	0	105	320
Allied London	0	0	57	534	591
Manchester Life	426	158	229	0	813
English Cities Fund	261	0	0	0	261

Source: Manchester Development Update (August, 2016)<sup>24</sup>

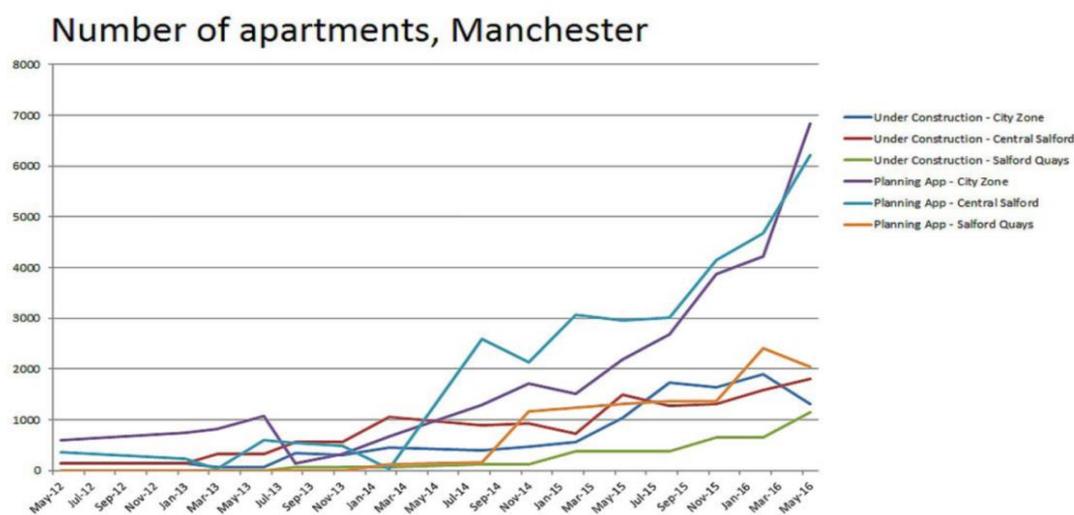
<sup>23</sup> <http://www.centreforcities.org/blog/the-return-of-city-centre-living-in-manchester/>

<sup>24</sup> Manchester Development Update, August 2016 <https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Ed-Howe-August-Development-Update.pdf>

The transformative power of the developers is hugely magnified by the capital market and ready availability of syndicated funds to finance development of blocks ahead of sale and then by high street lenders who provide retail mortgages for individual purchasers. As capitalist lenders never know when to stop, for Minskian<sup>25</sup> reasons the inevitable pattern is one of credit fuelled boom and bust according to whether syndicated lenders are in risk on or risk off mode. This is aggravated by the developers' use of limited liability special purpose vehicles which insulate possible losses on their equity in the next block from the profits made on all its predecessors. Thus, the funding for flat development was cut off for three or four years after the 2008 financial crisis before it resumed in huge volume.

The growth in the number of residential apartments, planned and under construction in Manchester city centre since 2014 (see Figure 5), has been spectacular. Not only has there been increasing densification of Manchester city centre but a march of apartment blocks towards neighbouring Salford, and outwards into east and north Manchester which stretches the boundaries of the central city area. According to Deloitte Manchester Crane Survey<sup>26</sup>, 1,784 residential units were completed in 2017 and 11,135 residential units are currently under construction, with 5203 anticipated to complete in 2018.

**Figure 5: The Rapid Growth of Apartments in Manchester City Centre**



Source: Manchester Development Update (May, 2016)<sup>27</sup>

**3. Developer-led regeneration has done very little for the vast majority of the Greater Manchester population which lives and works elsewhere and only visits or passes through the privileged sites.**

The new 1-2 bed apartment can be afforded by young professionals, recent graduates and affluent students, especially if they share. A recent report by the lettings agency, Ascend<sup>28</sup>, suggested that the average costs of buying and renting apartments in Manchester city centre are as follows: an average one bedroom apartment to buy, £184, 758 and two bedroom, £269,564; with an average one bedroom rental, £844pcm and two bedroom, £1,128pcm. Ascend also suggested that we are seeing the emergence of 'aspirational

<sup>25</sup> Hyman Minsky, American economist of investment, financial crises and boom-bust cycles.

<sup>26</sup> Deloitte Real Estate, (2018) Living for the city: Manchester Crane Survey, January.

<sup>27</sup> Manchester Development Update, May 2016 <https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Manchester-Development-Update-May-2016-Ed-Howe.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> The report ('Ascend in the City' by Ascend Properties) is undated but its material suggests it may have been produced sometime in late 2016 or early 2017.

renters', where, in a context where many struggle to find a deposit to buy a house, a new property ladder is emerging where existing tenants of private rented property seek to climb up the rental ladder (by finding an apartment, for example, that is closer to the city centre, that provides larger living space, that is a higher floor apartment, or one with improved amenities).

The implicit notion was that the development in Manchester city centre was justified because the employment benefits of central rebuilding would spill over to outer boroughs like Oldham through commuting and training. In reality, Oldham has not prospered because the city-region's secondary town centres suffered competition from the post-IRA rebuilt city centre, the Trafford centre, and various edge city developments. By the mid-2000s they looked much the same as 20 years previously only with more estate agents and coffee chains. The policy hope that the outer boroughs could benefit from commuting to the centre was undermined by Treasury-mandated high fares to cover tram operating costs and relatively cheap dormitory flats in the centre. Small apartments in the centre have little or no connection with the housing needs of the majority of citizens who want family housing and at much lower rents. Families want two or three bedroom property, which is more child friendly than city centre apartment blocks. The rents on new private apartments are at least twice the £350 per month or so that social housing landlords typically charge in Greater Manchester. As we have noted, more than 11,000 one to two bed flats are currently under construction for private rent in the centre; but construction of social housing has basically stopped. This is despite the waiting list for social housing reaching 80,000 by the early 2000s and staying above that level since; and despite policy effort to shorten the list by changing application criteria.<sup>29</sup>

Developer regeneration has produced an expanding new town in the centre whose shiny external appearance impresses London journalists on a day return rail ticket. But it offers very little to most Greater Manchester citizens beyond more choice of city-region shopping destination, a Saturday night in the centre or a holiday flight from the airport. This regeneration has done nothing to remedy the painful inequalities within and between Manchester boroughs, including shockingly low life expectancy in poorer neighbourhoods<sup>30</sup>. Southern parts of the city-region are generally relatively affluent while the former mill towns to the north appear to be in managed decline, which does not attract the kind of developer who puts up blocks of flats. The wider context of this is that buy-to-let and commercial investors need yields in excess of 6% on individual properties; and these landlords have (with Minskian irresponsibility) been including unsustainable property price appreciation in their calculations of yield. Commercial yields are in decline<sup>31</sup> whilst buy-to-let varies hugely by postcode,<sup>32</sup> with Greater Manchester featuring both high and low spots.

***Developer regeneration meant that in planning-related areas local authorities lost their public service compass and came to serve property developers not citizens; under post-war reconstruction planning they had provided foundational goods and services by replacing slums with family housing that had indoor toilets, fitted out kitchens and bathrooms. In developer regeneration they became a facilitator for private firms making a retail offer to***

---

<sup>29</sup> Foster, D. (2016) 'Why council waiting lists are shrinking despite more people in need of homes', *Guardian*, 12 May 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2016/may/12/council-waiting-lists-shrinking-more-need-homes>

<sup>30</sup> Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit (2017) *Patterns of Poverty in Greater Manchester's neighbourhoods* <http://hummedia.manchester.ac.uk/institutes/mui/igau/growthmonitor/GM-MSOA-poverty-briefing-note.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.savills.co.uk/research\\_articles/229130/239042-0](http://www.savills.co.uk/research_articles/229130/239042-0)

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.totallymoney.com/buy-to-let-yield-map/>

**consumers with the right kind of income which through division of labour became the buy to rent landlord and young tenants.** It would be wrong to condemn local authorities out of hand because they have been placed in a difficult position by successive national governments. In some areas they have retained statutory responsibilities for foundational services like adult care, which they try to fulfil despite gross underfunding. The Thatcher and Blair governments deliberately stripped local government of activity and functions before the Coalition government added austerity funding cuts. Local authorities were forced to become writers of outsourcing contracts which quite predictably they often did badly, as in the case of the Greater Manchester waste contract. Under New Labour, social housing tenants were transferred to Housing Associations as part of a new order where there would be a systematic disregard of the needs of low income citizens (who were now to be disciplined into labour market participation).

And in planning-related areas, developer regeneration was a disaster for local public services because borough authorities like Manchester City and Salford came to serve the interests of property developers against their citizens. This is not harsh if we consider how Manchester City and Salford Councils got little back from developers while providing them with various kinds of financial support including loans. When faced with developer spread sheets showing that development would not go ahead if social housing were included, the figures were unquestioningly accepted so that only token amounts were obtained in social compensation<sup>33</sup>; there was no audit of developer profits afterwards, nor any discouragement of the use of special purpose vehicles (SPVs) and intra group loans to reduce profits and tax liability. Ironically, some of these profits were assisted by public loans. Manchester City Council acted as lender of last resort on the Spinningfields development to bail out the developer Allied London after the 2008 financial crisis. More recently, substantial sums of public loan funding have been put into private developments such as the building of apartments on Pomona<sup>34</sup>.

**4. Underpinning this has been the development of highly complex governing structures over the last three decades where lines of accountability to Greater Manchester citizens have often become difficult to follow.**

Prior to the election of the first Mayor of Greater Manchester in 2017, none of the restored Greater Manchester governing institutions had directly elected members. Planning developments in the city centre have been under the remit of Manchester City Council but transport has been under the overall governance of Transport for Greater Manchester. As we will see in the next section, in relation to transport the result has been a policy mess which is not simply determined by the privileging of private interests. For example, orbital commuting by car produced problems of congestion and chronic air pollution that are likely to be accentuated by edge city development of housing and warehouses envisaged over the next two decades. But these problems are largely ignored because they are not relevant to property developers whose business model is to bank the profit and move on. Meanwhile, very few citizens could explain who is responsible and what those responsible could or should do about it at city-region level.

The overarching consequence, by 2017, was that developer regeneration was an experimental but increasingly solidified complex; one that had produced and continues to produce highly uneven development, focusing on limited parts of the Greater Manchester

---

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/no-affordable-housing-being-built-14332101>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/development-giants-handed-100m-taxpayer-12834573>

population and producing little supporting social infrastructure. This is inherent in the dominant model based on the search for developer profits facilitated by narrowly constituted governing capacity that is democratically weak and has limited accountability. We are seeing the widespread and systematic re-making of the city centre of Manchester as a new town of private-rented apartments, offices and luxury hotels. This is a city centre that is being re-made, in many ways, for developer-profit and the aspirational renter with a gross mismatch between the wider social priorities of the majority of Greater Manchester's population.

### 3

## Developer regeneration systematised: the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and transport planning

### *Systematising developer regeneration*

With a new apparatus of city-region government in place, Greater Manchester produced documents like the 2016 draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) and the 2017 Transport 2040 Strategy. These documents use the language of planning which is confusing. 'Framework' and 'Strategy' in 2016-17 means not the return of urban planning but a systematisation of developer regeneration because the whole of Greater Manchester is now to be formatted to meet the long-term needs of private developers through public zoning of future areas of development and some back-up public funding of transport improvement.

The draft GMSF of 2016 offers a publicly sponsored vision of the conurbation's development over the next 20 years under the GMCA<sup>35</sup>. It is the first such Greater Manchester-wide spatial vision since 1981. It envisages population growth of 294,800, informing an additional 199,700 jobs and requiring 227,200 net new homes. Investment in transport infrastructure and services 'will enable Greater Manchester to act as a strong focal point for the UK outside London'<sup>36</sup>. It represents a purposive and ambitious attempt to reformat the city-region and its housing, land-use, employment and associated infrastructure over a 20 year period on the basis of 'planning to meet levels of growth well above baseline forecasts'<sup>37</sup>.

Attempts to crown Manchester as the centre of the North of England are underpinned by efforts to develop an urban core that is dense with apartments and offices and that also stretches the city centre's boundaries. Office space and the needs of media, digital and knowledge industries and workers are prioritised and so is transport infrastructure that connects these interests to the city centre, the North, nationally and globally. The GMSF projection is for development on a scale which will create social problems and feed political opposition. Notably:

- The multiplication of the size of the city centre with an extra 46,000 flats and an expansion of office space, with the associated in-migration of (young) workers to Manchester city centre and Salford now spilling over into adjacent low income areas with the social conflicts about gentrification that will entail.
- Edge of city development will dwarf this with large scale development of housing and warehouse estates. Large numbers of new homes and business/employment space are being built often proximate to motorway junctions and intersections and close to railway stations. Though proximity to road and rail connections vary, developments are planned or underway at multiple sites including at Irlam/Chat Moss, Simister, around Stakehill Business Park in Rochdale, Ashton Moss, Chequerbent in Westhoughton and Rivington Chase in Horwich. But, there is no mention of social housing and little commitment to affordable housing. In the Rivington Chase development of 1,700 houses, for example, there are no plans for affordable housing on the basis that 'the full provision of affordable housing

---

<sup>35</sup> GMCA, (2016) *Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework*, GMCA: Manchester.

<sup>36</sup> *Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework*, p.11.

<sup>37</sup> *Draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework*, p.6.

required... would make the scheme financially unviable'<sup>38</sup>. The aim that more than a quarter of planned housing under the GMSF would be built on greenbelt sites has predictably been the focus of significant public opposition. Public consultation produced 27,000 responses, a subsequent 'pause' and re-drafting of the GMSF with the stated aim 'to make the most of Greater Manchester's brownfield sites and reduce the impact on greenbelt'<sup>39</sup>.

- The draft GMSF recognises that edge city developments require new road junctions, access points and 'smart' infrastructure. It suggests squeezing and adapting existing transport infrastructure but does not propose a road building programme. Without any substantial increase in road capacity from new roads, the draft GMSF makes optimistic assumptions about the potential of technical fixes through intermodal interchanges, 'smart' regulation of traffic flows and such like. Without more radical thinking on the kind of transport infrastructure needed, large scale edge city development, as envisaged by the draft GMSF, will contribute to gridlock in a car-dependent city-region, where 60-70% of current inter-borough commuting movement is by car. If gridlock is averted by some form of road pricing, how will this affect the motoring poor who often must make orbital commutes where there is no public transport substitute?

The draft GMSF is an intensification of developer regeneration; it is about the selective reformatting of Greater Manchester for developer regeneration. The double aim is to: first, prioritise the city centre for office space, housing and connectivity; and, second, prioritise and select corridors and zones of space outside of the city centre, adjacent to motorways, waterways and rail heads for warehousing and logistics. As always with developer regeneration, the GMSF is unclear about what happens to spaces, towns and neighbourhoods that fall outside these prioritised areas.

What seems to be happening is that developer regeneration is being applied 'internally' within some areas of persistent social deprivation, such as Hattersley, on the eastern edges of Greater Manchester where in the 1960s local government had designed and provided homes and social infrastructure. Part of the rationale for post-2000 development in Hattersley was to address some of the deprivation issues through the physical regeneration of parts of the estate. This has involved transfers of social housing stock, demolition of some of that stock and the parcelling of land for some new housing. Additionally, there have been upgrades to existing properties and the development of a large Tesco and new community hub. But local public transport has seen few improvements.

Looking forward 20 years, developers anticipate that ex-industrial brownfield land in the city centre will be built on, implying that the zoning of areas for future development is to be extended onto greenfield sites on the edge of the city. And for that reason, as the protests show, for the first time the alliance of local government and developers faces significant citizen opposition<sup>40</sup>.

Some or much of this development is economically unlikely and the revised GMSF is likely to recognise this. The draft GMSF implausibly envisages accelerated city region economic growth for Greater Manchester in a context of relatively low economic growth in western national states since the financial crisis of 2007/8. The assumption is that through policy interventions Greater Manchester can outperform the pack and produce 2.5% year on year of GVA growth. If this vision is predicated on unreal rates of annual growth, that arguably does not matter, because the draft GMSF

---

<sup>38</sup> Bolton Council, Planning Applications Report, Planning Committee, 11 September 2014, p.43.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/GMSF>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greenbelt-masterplan-protest-albert-square-12832166>

is about formally identifying zones and the granting of outline planning permission which developers may or may not use.

The continuing difference between developer regeneration since the 1990s and state-led, planned developments of the period between the 1950s and the 1970s is clear: developer regeneration involves absent or limited social infrastructure provision with the definition of economic infrastructure narrowed down to transport infrastructure. Transport infrastructure strategy is privately required as part of developer regeneration. And this is socially rationalised when the promotion of 'sustainable economic growth' becomes the primary aim of transport strategy because new transport links are seen to be needed to 'unlock growth areas'<sup>41</sup>.

#### *Transport and developer regeneration*

Greater Manchester's Transport Strategy 2040 was published in February 2017<sup>42</sup>. It sets out a long-term strategy for transport in Greater Manchester to 2040. Running through the strategy is the idea that enhanced transport connections are necessary for the promotion of growth. The strategy recognises that the fruits of economic growth are unevenly distributed across Greater Manchester, that many residents do not have access to a car and rely on public transport to connect to public services such as education, healthcare, shopping and recreation.

An overriding stated concern of the strategy is the integration of transport with spatial planning. Here the ambition is that increased levels of population, housing and employment from the growth of Greater Manchester can occur without significant increases in traffic and congestion. Promoting compact forms of development in the city centre is part of the answer alongside public investment in transport infrastructure, including recent cross-city extensions of Metrolink, plans to upgrade cycling infrastructure, the development of the Ordsall Chord connecting Piccadilly and Victoria rail stations and also planned upgrades to Manchester Piccadilly rail station to accommodate new inter-city links and plans to develop the area around the station. The aim is threefold:

1. ***To strengthen transport connections within Manchester city centre.*** There is awareness that current levels of congestion are significant and that future growth plans could lead to further congestion unless demand can be managed and public transport, walking and cycling capacity is increased. The plan does not effectively engage with actual patterns of movement, the diversity of journey purposes and the claims of different communities; instead, transport that connects within and into the city centre is prioritised. Plans to for up to 50,000 more homes by 2040 and potentially up to 110,000 more jobs in central Manchester means that if peak hour car trips are to remain at current levels, by 2040 around 68,000 additional trips need to be made by public transport, walking or bike<sup>43</sup>.
2. ***To enhance transport connections between Manchester city centre and London and other cities in the north of England.*** 'Big' transport infrastructure is fundamental to the strategy of positioning Greater Manchester at the centre of the Northern Powerhouse; in particular trying to speed up journey times on rail and road between the big cities of the North. The

---

<sup>41</sup> TfGM, (2017) Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040, p.5. Available at: <https://downloads.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/7FiejTsj68eaa8wQw8MiWw/bc4f3a45f6685148eba2acb618c2424f/03. GM 2040 TS Full.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> TfGM, (2017) Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040. Available at: <https://downloads.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/7FiejTsj68eaa8wQw8MiWw/bc4f3a45f6685148eba2acb618c2424f/03. GM 2040 TS Full.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> TfGM, (2017) Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040, p.79 Available at: <https://downloads.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/7FiejTsj68eaa8wQw8MiWw/bc4f3a45f6685148eba2acb618c2424f/03. GM 2040 TS Full.pdf>

premise is that benefits to the Greater Manchester economy result from time reductions in train journeys. The £600m Northern Hub rail development and £400m electrification programme are set out as *aspirations* for faster services between Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Manchester Airport. In addition, the issue of new lines and rail by-passes are being explored, particularly between Manchester and Leeds and between Manchester and Sheffield. There are also aspirations for a single, 'smart' ticketing system across the North. There has been the establishment of Transport for the North (Northern City Regions, Department for Transport, Highways England and Network Rail) and Rail North - a partnership of 29 Local Transport Authorities and DfT - to attempt to develop a more strategic approach to transport between the urban areas of the North. The Strategy also highlights the case for HS2 to be extended from Birmingham, up to Manchester, as soon as possible.

- 3. To develop transport connections that link Manchester city centre to the airport and, through this, to wider global networks.** Transport infrastructure is presented as being critical to building Manchester's global connectivity in pursuit of growth. With its emphasis on growth, the Strategy sets out the importance of enhanced global connectivity of people and goods, primarily through Manchester airport but also through connections to global trade circuits via the Manchester Ship Canal and the port of Liverpool. The ambition of the transport strategy is to support growth at and around the airport in the Enterprise Zone (GMEZ). The strategic promotion of Airport City highlights the aim of doubling passenger growth through the airport over 20 years and building the logistics, warehousing and office infrastructure around the airport which will consolidate Greater Manchester's position in global flows. This argument extends to enhanced Port Salford facilities as a connection point to global flows. As well as the GMEZ, the Atlantic Gateway corridor is mobilised conceptually as not only an economic growth corridor but also as the basis for transport connections. In particular, a new super container facility in Liverpool is claimed to be 'a game-changer', allowing it to receive much larger deeper water container vessels that will operate on trans-Atlantic routes following the widening of the Panama Canal<sup>44</sup>. All of this at Airport City and Atlantic Gateway is about facilitating leisure travel and goods imports in a country with a trade deficit of around 5% of GDP, but that is surreally not registered; and another key indicator of the blindness of developer-led regeneration.

Transport infrastructure plans across the city-region, outside of the city centre, are less well developed. There is recognition of the diverse mix of town centres across Greater Manchester and the employment, public service and commercial functions they provide. The Strategy highlights that the main town centres in Greater Manchester are hubs of public transport networks and accordingly outlines past or planned investment in public transport infrastructure, particularly new interchanges. But there is no big picture concept of how a multi centred city does work or could be made to work better.

#### *Limits to developer regeneration*

Developer regeneration of privileged sites pervades the transport strategy. But the scale of development at privileged sites envisaged in the GMSF and the role of the Transport Strategy in relation to this raises five key implications about the long run consequences of developer regeneration:

---

<sup>44</sup> TfGM, (2017) Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040, p.66 Available at: [https://downloads.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/7FiejTsj68eaa8wQw8MiWw/bc4f3a45f6685148eba2acb618c2424f/03\\_GM\\_2040\\_TS\\_Full.pdf](https://downloads.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/7FiejTsj68eaa8wQw8MiWw/bc4f3a45f6685148eba2acb618c2424f/03_GM_2040_TS_Full.pdf)

1. ***The critical question is: how much more developer regeneration can/ should the city centre take?*** According to the Deloitte Manchester Cranes Survey, 2018 will be a record-breaking year for Greater Manchester as more than 5,000 residential units will be delivered, far exceeding the pre-2007 peak<sup>45</sup>. The city centre is being overbuilt with condensed, vertical dwellings for young people whose buy-to-let landlords have factored in property price increases into their calculations of return. The availability of cheap credit for developers and buy-to-let landlords is clearly unsustainable so, as new build sales stall and flat prices come under pressure, the cranes will start to disappear. This kind of boom and bust flat building is no way to develop a city centre which can serve different age and income groups in a way that would earn the approval of Jane Jacobs.
  
2. ***This rapid growth is seeing the city centre overspill onto adjacent infill sites, expanding the boundaries of the city centre in all directions which will create tensions about social clearances.*** Blocks of flats are now being developed on sites long held as peripheral waste land or used as edge of city car parks by developers. In areas where the city centre is being extended, up from Angel Meadow through the Lower Irk Valley to Collyhurst for example, this has the potential to create tensions as developer regeneration intrudes on existing communities, many of them in areas of social deprivation, raising the prospect of social clearances.
  
3. ***There is no clear plan for the development of the secondary town centres of Greater Manchester, where retail can be expected to contract sharply as chains shuffle their store portfolios with the advance of online shopping and the backdrop of edge retail centres over the last two decades.*** What happens to vacant stores and town centre properties is not accounted for. Subsequent work by the Mayor, Andy Burnham, through his 'town centre challenge', suggests some recognition of the problem but promotes regeneration as the answer<sup>46</sup>. However, that raises the question of whether what will happen is a refocusing of the developer regeneration approach to adapt town centre retail sites to new leisure uses. This is the first best option of the landlords who have been renting shop space and dream that new leisure users will pay them the same rents; even as the casual dining chains are manifestly in retreat. In existing GM plans, there is no recognition that fragmented private ownership and absentee owners with unrealistic rent expectations are the central high street problem as retail inexorably contracts.
  
4. ***Edge of city (sometimes greenfield) residential development is the novelty. This is being promoted in transport corridors where developers market corridor connections to the city centre and other towns although investment in transport improvements and local social infrastructure are limited and piecemeal.*** New edge developments along the M61 Corridor and elsewhere are promoted in this way. Yet, the marketing representation of transport connectivity has been regularly challenged by local residents and groups on the basis that road and rail are already congested. At development sites, multiple developers delivering small blocks piecemeal (rather than delivering a masterplan) mitigates risks for developers but results in a lack of social infrastructure (schools, doctors, etc). It also places financial responsibility for critical infrastructure on public authorities. Plans for the Rivington Chase development, part of the M61 Corridor, were built around a spine road running through the development: the £12m cost of this essential infrastructure has, in 2018, been met by UK national government<sup>47</sup>.

---

<sup>45</sup> Deloitte Real Estate, (2018) Living for the city: Manchester Crane Survey, January.

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/article/227/new\\_drive\\_to\\_regenerate\\_town\\_centres\\_across\\_greater\\_manchester](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/article/227/new_drive_to_regenerate_town_centres_across_greater_manchester)

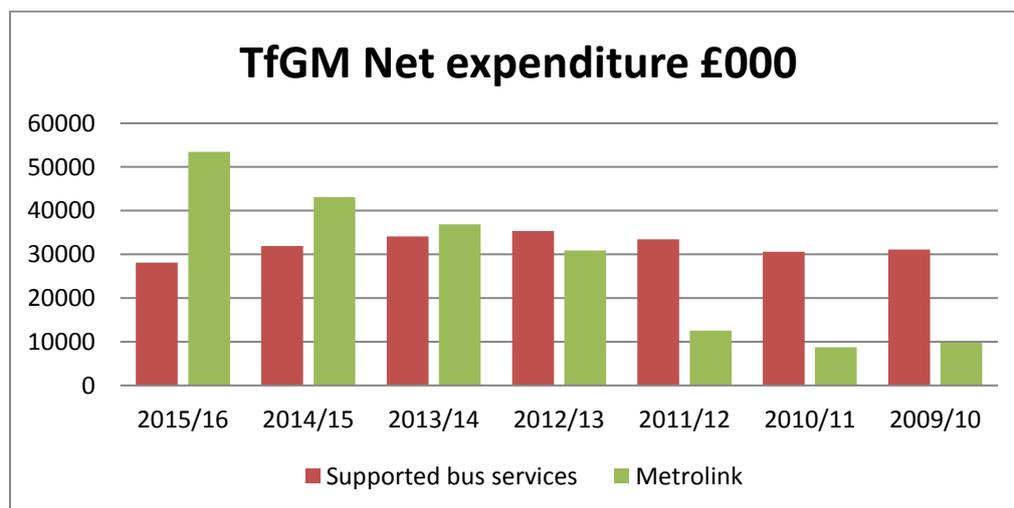
<sup>47</sup> <http://www.bolton.gov.uk/website/news/pages/12millionawardforRivingtonChase.aspx>

5. **Isolated communities in Greater Manchester with poor transport connections and marginalised groups are likely to receive very little from the systematisation of developer regeneration.** As we have noted, a regeneration approach has been applied to communities such as Hattersley, where there have been attempts, through the transfer of local authority housing stock and the parcelling up of land, to create opportunities for private developers. The issue is that, given the unfairly stigmatised legacy of such places and the poor social and transport infrastructures, it is not clear how developer regeneration in such places is attractive to developers and, even if it was, it is even less clear how this would benefit existing residents.

Developer regeneration is underpinned by transport strategy premised on the idea that investment in transport is publicly funded without significant contribution from developers who benefit (and where patterns of public transport investment and subsidy aggravate matters because they often do not engage local realities). There is an unreasonable focus on travel-to-work as an organising principle for the transport system and infrastructure investment. This prioritises radial movement into and out of the city centre in to a city centre prioritised by strategic decision makers and reinforces the spatial prioritisation of the city centre.

Transport investment has promoted the extension of a showpiece radial tram system which is high fare and subsidy hungry in a context where subsidies for buses are being squeezed. The point being that the 34 million annual journeys on Metrolink are still dwarfed by the approximately 200 million bus journeys that account for most public transport movements in Greater Manchester<sup>48</sup> and that public subsidy to buses and coverage provided by the bus network is being radically reduced<sup>49</sup>. Figure 6 illustrates the gradually declining subsidy for supported bus services since 2012/13. By way of contrast the right hand column shows the steadily rising costs of Metrolink that are not covered by fares and therefore subsidised by TfGM.

**Figure 6: TfGM’s support for Bus and Metrolink travel**



Source: extracted from TfGM financial statements

<sup>48</sup> TfGM, (2017) Greater Manchester Transport Strategy Evidence Base. [https://assets.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/300Akf1PSgQGQqiseGcOol/09e308f5cb7e0013674e79ee7a74fa1c/04\\_GM\\_2040\\_TS\\_Evidence\\_base\\_-\\_Published\\_Feb\\_2017.pdf](https://assets.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/300Akf1PSgQGQqiseGcOol/09e308f5cb7e0013674e79ee7a74fa1c/04_GM_2040_TS_Evidence_base_-_Published_Feb_2017.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-42749973>  
<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/33-bus-services-cut-curtailed-14371157>

Alongside this, notwithstanding an ambitious and increasing commitment to the provision of cycling and walking infrastructure<sup>50</sup>, there is no compelling policy for alternatives to cars for shorter journeys in Greater Manchester, outside of the public transport-rich city centre. This is a critical issue as the vast majority (88%) of all trips in Greater Manchester are under 10km. Much travel (76%) is not only short distance but within individual districts<sup>51</sup>. Furthermore, given the focus on edge city developments at motorway intersections and developments outside of the city centre it is likely that an already overloaded M60 will be clogged with further substantial orbital movements. All this takes place in a context where there is a huge maintenance backlog on the roads and where European and national targets for cleaner air are not being met<sup>52</sup>.

The conclusion is that Greater Manchester is being remade as a city-region with islands of private affluence, underpinned by selective transport connections; where much of the city-region is reliant on poor internal connections and weak social infrastructure. And, through poisonous air, it recreates the dilemma of the 19th Century middle classes which now as then cannot insulate themselves from the public health consequences of the mess that piece meal private developers create.

---

<sup>50</sup> [https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/article/242/chris\\_boardman\\_calls\\_for\\_15bn\\_over\\_a\\_decade\\_to\\_make\\_greater\\_manchester\\_a\\_world\\_class\\_region\\_for\\_cycling\\_and\\_walking](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/article/242/chris_boardman_calls_for_15bn_over_a_decade_to_make_greater_manchester_a_world_class_region_for_cycling_and_walking) <https://www.tfgm.com/press-release/beelines>

<sup>51</sup> TfGM, (2017) Greater Manchester Transport Strategy Evidence Base. [https://assets.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/300Akf1PSgQGUqiseGcOol/09e308f5cb7e0013674e79ee7a74fa1c/04.GM\\_2040\\_TS\\_Evidence\\_base\\_-\\_Published\\_Feb\\_2017.pdf](https://assets.contentful.com/nv7y93idf4jq/300Akf1PSgQGUqiseGcOol/09e308f5cb7e0013674e79ee7a74fa1c/04.GM_2040_TS_Evidence_base_-_Published_Feb_2017.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/how-bad-pollution-greater-manchester-13011073>

## 4

### What is to be done? Civic futures

Greater Manchester is at a turning point. We are coming to the end of a 30 year period, a period when city-region politics had effectively been abolished and the future of Greater Manchester, our city-region, could be decided privately by local elite conversations between confident private developers and amenable town halls in Manchester and Salford.

#### *Greater Manchester is re-awakening*

As the limits of developer regeneration are becoming more obvious, Greater Manchester's citizenry and political decisionmakers are beginning to realise that what we have is the wrong kind of transformation. The 2016 draft GMSF is being revised after it provoked 27,000 responses<sup>53</sup>. Greater Manchester's political decisionmakers are, for the first time, publicly and awkwardly caught between developers and their citizen electors. Their dilemma is that major concessions to citizens on edge city incursions into the greenbelt or over building in the centre will upset the developers.

Councillors in Greater Manchester's de facto lead authority, Manchester City Council, were acquiescent under the leadership of Richard Leese and Howard Bernstein. With a new chief executive in Manchester City Council, 'increasingly irritable councillors'<sup>54</sup> are questioning the failure to construct social housing and the town hall's long-standing failure to get any significant social benefit from developments which made private profit. New academic research shows that no affordable housing is being built in new developments in Manchester city centre<sup>55</sup>. And, with local media reporting of the issue, the Council is under pressure to publish developers' calculations used to support claims that the provision of social and affordable housing in new developments is not financially unviable.

Though critique is growing, the issues are narrowly defined. So far, the flashpoint is housing but the issue of housing is being narrowly constructed as one about what kinds of houses and flats are built where. The growing opposition to the mono culture of young renters in the city centre does raise issues about community, but some of the opposition to edge city development is NIMBYish. There is, as yet, no significant public discussion of how the GMSF plan for large-scale housing development over the next two decades will contribute to the transport and air quality problems of the city-region. If citizens and councillors increasingly do not like what they see, there is no broader and compelling vision of what the alternative to developer-led regeneration might look like.

This is partly because of the long-standing weakness of independent research and media reporting and the absence within Greater Manchester of strong intermediary institutions which can promote the public good and the citizen interest. In political terms, developer regeneration is, in the first instance, the consequence of a growth coalition of property developers and Manchester political elites. But, it has historically worked in the context of limited independent research<sup>56</sup> and informed

---

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/GMSF>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/no-affordable-housing-being-built-14332101>

<sup>55</sup> Silver, J., (2018) *From Homes to Assets: Housing Financialisation in Greater Manchester*.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, for exceptions to this: Ward, K., (2003) Entrepreneurial urbanism, state restructuring and civilizing 'New' East Manchester, *Area*, 35:2. 116-127; While, A., Jonas, A., and Gibbs, D., (2004) The Environment and the Entrepreneurial City: Searching for the Urban 'Sustainability Fix' in Manchester and Leeds, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28:3, 549-569; Haughton, G., Gilchrist, A., and Swyngedouw, E., (2016) 'Rise Like Lions After Slumber': Dissent, Protest and (Post-)Politics in Manchester, *Territory, Politics and Governance*, 4:4, 472-491.

media reporting; this is reinforced by the way in which the growth coalition has enlisted local institutions in its project. Thus, the workings of developer regeneration and the priorities gap between ordinary citizens and the political classes appears to be nobody's business.

Many, though not all, university researchers bought into or did not challenge agglomeration theory, as propounded by New Economy, which provided a superficial rationale for developer-led regeneration. Some were beguiled by the axis of town hall and developers, which was presented as a new form of urban governance resolving problems which held other cities back and had produced a Manchester Miracle<sup>57</sup>. Corporatized, marketized universities are dominated by senior leadership teams which naturally ally with local elites not the citizenry. Thus, the University of Manchester has offered honorary positions to Howard Bernstein and George Osborne. Meanwhile the national media generally copied out the locally unchallenged narrative of Manchester's transformation and progress.

We owe a considerable debt to the reporting of a few individuals, most notably Jennifer Williams at the *Manchester Evening News* and to the exemplary *Salford Star* which has for years called-out the way in which in that borough developers are being served with political favours and public money at the expense of ordinary citizens. As Greater Manchester is awakening, their efforts are now being reinforced by new academic research<sup>58</sup> and questioning by mainstream media<sup>59</sup>. The volume of criticism can be expected to increase when the current boom in city centre flat construction collapses. If buy-to-let property values decline significantly, the fragility of the city centre model will then be visible for all to see.

#### *Rethinking what and who Greater Manchester is for*

Yet, beyond critique, what might an alternative to developer regeneration look like? Before an alternative can be politically articulated, two fundamental questions must be answered: what is Greater Manchester for? And, who is Greater Manchester for?

Answers to these questions are not simple because of the absence of class project and cultural identity in our city-region. Organised (working) class politics frame the 1945 *City of Manchester Plan* for remaking the city, after the Second World War, to offer labour decent living and working conditions<sup>60</sup>. But the union organised workforce is now a public sector fraction of a larger workforce drawn from a multiply divided society. The problems are compounded because cultural identity provides no answer. Greater Manchester is not a Celtic nation and there are fewer regional cultural signifiers than in Cornwall, for example. In short, very few people self-identify as 'Greater Mancunians'.

Rather than being driven by class politics or cultural identity, what Greater Manchester can draw upon is a fragmented counter culture of diverse small groups centred on places or issues. These groups are voluminous and varied<sup>61</sup>. They include a wide range of re-localisation and other grassroots initiatives, with diverse visions pursuing various logics. They often address foundational

---

<sup>57</sup> Harding, A., Harloe, M., and Rees, J., (2010) Manchester's Bust Regime? *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 34:4, pp.981-991.

<sup>58</sup> Silver, J., (2018) *From Homes to Assets: Housing Financialisation in Greater Manchester*.

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/mar/06/the-0-city-how-manchester-developers-dodge-affordable-housing>

<sup>60</sup> City of Manchester Plan, (1945), Printed and published for the Manchester Corporation by Jarrold and Sons Ltd: Norwich and London.

<sup>61</sup> Hodson, M., Burrai, E., and Barlow, C., (2016), Remaking the Material Fabric of the City: Low Carbon Spaces of Transformation or Continuity? *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions*, vol.18, pp.128-146.

services such as energy, transport, food, buildings and green space. They deal in political advocacy and education and have a range of substantive concerns including experimenting with forms of local democratic control, bringing old industrial assets into modern use, producing local green infrastructures and spaces, experimenting with developing local food systems, and new forms of energy generation. They are scattered around all parts of Greater Manchester, from the Goyt Valley in the south to Affetside in the north and from Saddleworth in the east to Wigan in the west. That said, further analysis is necessary to understand the uneven geography of these groups and to understand their distributed capability across the city-region.

The issue these kinds of groups have always had has been about how their influence and the lessons learned from them can spread beyond their immediate locality<sup>62</sup>. In the context of Greater Manchester, their problem is twofold. First, the issue of *scalability*; mainstream developer regeneration is able to throw huge weight and mobilise billions of pounds to reshape the city-region. These major changes are done to a template which developers understand and only require planning consent plus funding from banks or capital market which is readily available in the up phases of every cycle. By contrast, local experiments in food, energy, transport and so on are mainly providing small scale alternatives in one small corner of provision in one single site or place. Second, and related, is the prevalence of a form of *political puritanism* and differentiation of a kind rather like the factionalism of the old left; where often ideas generated fail to move beyond the site of the experiment because the experimenters do not have a shared language and common concepts which could form the basis of productive pragmatism.

We can get beyond these fragmented logics and multiple visions by going back to the future. *The City of Manchester Plan* of 1945 offers us a guide, in terms of priorities, but not a prescription of how to get there. We need to re-engage with universalism and restate Greater Manchester's *collective consumption priorities*. These priorities should include:

- Better housing for the large number who do not have sensibly priced, quality housing.
- Repurposing transport which now means managing the car not accommodating it.
- Prioritising wider social infrastructures and building community assets.

This involves going beyond public policy as 'what's good for growth' and prioritising jobs which give market income. It means finding not only a new language to talk about the development of Greater Manchester but also new metrics beyond GDP and GVA and policy targets for personal consumption.

### *Civic futures*

The logic of developer regeneration is differentiation and segregation according to effective private demand with very little done for most of the population. Planning reinvented for the 2020s would be on the basis of 'civic futures' rather than developer regeneration.

Specifically, it would focus on the collective provision of foundational goods and services which we have cumulatively neglected in the last 30 years; and it would rediscover universalism which means the claims of all citizens and districts. It would not only address the need for more family housing, but it would recognise that building dormitory boxes is not enough and that we need to consider housing in the context of its social and economic infrastructure. Under a focus on civic futures, local government can rediscover its commitment to universal basic services (redefined for the current time to include for example, parks, adult care, fast broadband) available to all.

---

<sup>62</sup> Evans, J., Karvonen, A., and Raven, R., (eds) *The Experimental City*, Routledge: Abingdon.

On service provision, civic futures would represent a break with the past as it should start from consulting the citizenry. From national and local evidence (the People's Plan<sup>63</sup>), there is a priorities gap between what citizens' want and the jobs and growth agenda of policymakers. As an approach to constituting the future of the city-region, civic futures needs to encourage diverse experiments for the provision of foundational services. Because even if we know what the problem is, we may well in particular cases not know what the answer is. Policy too has, to some extent, to be experimental. This is different from the current model of fast policy<sup>64</sup> in pursuit of developer regeneration. Genuine policy experimentalism needs to take processes of learning and feedback seriously as crucial to achieving success (or at least avoiding the mistakes of an earlier generation of town planners).

Civic futures needs to recognise that a commitment to localism is not enough because ambitious strategies for enhanced foundational provision need to be related to funding, which requires immediate changes in national rules (e.g. about fare subsidies on public transport). The broader issue of how to increase tax revenues and shift borrowing constraints is a national level concern in a centralised state like the UK. Funds will not arrive on a condition-free conveyor belt from central government<sup>65</sup> and constraints can only be shifted by a reinvention of taxation which, amongst other things, would require property developers to pay their fair share.

In starting out to make new civic futures, the big issue is not setting the 30 year targets, which are easily formulated, but taking the difficult first steps to curb developer regeneration which operates in the financial interests of some parts of Greater Manchester business. The process of reasserting social priorities will be fiercely resisted because it is a game spoiler for the property interests. But, the longer developer regeneration survives, the more difficult it is to rectify the deficiency of collective provision and set collective goals.

There is however a need for a long-term plan: the GMSF (draft or revised) is a poor substitute for making civic futures which would articulate in practice what kind of collective fabric and social infrastructure Greater Manchester requires. The principles of civic futures need to be set out to inform how we talk about and communicate it. In short, a focus on civic futures would:

1. Prioritise foundational provision and universal basic services for the citizenry whose wellbeing depends on collective consumption;
2. Be genuinely participative after inquiring into what citizens want;
3. Address issues of tax and funding which are more than local;
4. Recognise the importance of tangible first steps as much as long-term targets.

The immediate problem is where and who are the political actors and informed citizens who could lever change? The elected Mayor has very limited powers, which means that despite good intentions, the Greater Manchester Mayor has limited political capacity to act in the face of inter-borough disagreements or borough non-compliance. On crucial issues like air quality, it is hard to see the Mayor being able to deliver very much, unless and until, the political decisionmakers in the boroughs organise and behave very differently. Despite the manifest excesses of developer

---

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.peoplesplangm.org.uk/>

<sup>64</sup> Peck, J., and Theodore, N., (2015) *Fast Policy: Experimental Statecraft at the Thresholds of Neoliberalism*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis.

<sup>65</sup> Hodson, M., Evans, J., and Schliwa, G., (2018) Conditioning experimentation: The struggle for place-based discretion in shaping urban infrastructure, *Environment and Planning C* (available online).

regeneration, neither Manchester City nor Salford has yet produced a reform cluster within its controlling Labour council group; and the outer boroughs have failed to work effectively together to challenge the central boroughs. As we have noted, in another political world, the alternative radicals produce small scale experimental challenges to developer regeneration which represent good deeds in a bad world. But they remain fragmented and pursue various alternatives without recognizing what they have in common.

As an approach to making the future of Greater Manchester, civic futures depends on political mobilisation and the alignment of the 12 drivers identified in the opening summary section. In that section we contrasted the drivers active in three separate periods (post-war planning, developer-led regeneration and civic futures). Here we need only lay out the necessary positive elements as a kind of heuristic for civic futures.

1. The long-term vision for the city-region should be about building a city-region for citizens, with public policy underpinning collective forms of consumption.
2. The vision needs to be aligned to fixing the key problem of the public squalor of our city-region and a generation's neglect of collective consumption (in favour of private, market-mode consumption) while recognising geographical and cultural variety in Greater Manchester.
3. The focus and purpose of the citizens' city-region and new civic futures must be clearly articulated as using Greater Manchester's cultural and geographical diversity as the basis for co-producing place-appropriate foundational services through experimentation by public bodies and citizens' groups.
4. Collective forms of consumption necessarily require basic standards of universal service provision in respect of core foundational services, including housing and transport; this resonates with post-war planned efforts to develop universal provision but recognises the historically different era in which such aspirations have to be enacted and the need for a more participatory form of politics to make it happen.
5. If civic futures is to represent a broader view of development, that requires a new commitment to generating forms of place-based social infrastructure - parks, the high street, community centres, sports centres, libraries, schools etc. and doing so in a way which encourages and supports multiple place-based initiatives and experiments.
6. This requires a shift in government and a fundamentally different relationship between an enabling central state that will facilitate discretion and sufficient autonomy to act at Greater Manchester level.
7. The result of enabling government would be a new form of governance outside the state/market opposition with a critical role for civil society and grassroots groups, cooperatives, platforms and other forms of funding and managing infrastructure and services.
8. Civic futures needs to bring together formal policy expertise and its thin simplifications with various forms of textured, granular knowledge of local circumstances and social needs.

9. This is based on a politics of change where the lead actors and changemakers are a wide range of place-based social interests working together with strategic political decision-makers.
10. If civic futures needs multiple sources of funding, a reinvention of taxation is one basic prerequisite for civic futures at national and local level where tax has now to engage with wealth- especially property – which is now grossly undertaxed.
11. An orientation to new civic futures recognises the claims of all citizens to collectively provided universal basics. It is the NHS writ large to encompass other foundational services such as housing and transport; without necessarily assuming services should be free at the point of use. But, unlike the NHS, it is organised for the city-region rather than the national scale.
12. There remains the issue of how transformation should be assessed. In making new civic futures, a people's city-region needs new well-being measures related to the quantity and quality of foundational services.

Thus, new civic futures is not about either a statist model or a market model. It is a commitment to doing city-regional politics, policy and governing differently than has been the case for a generation. It is based on building a city-region for the people of Greater Manchester. One that genuinely involves the citizens of Greater Manchester in that process, but that does so as part of a new political configuration.

The call for new civic futures is not a naïve call for participatory democracy. It is a call for a new political mobilisation in Greater Manchester; a call that is based on citizens' needs for and access to foundational services, their engagement with and involvement in the process of shaping these services, but also linking this up to formal policy and expertise. This is a multi-decade process, but one which should start now.