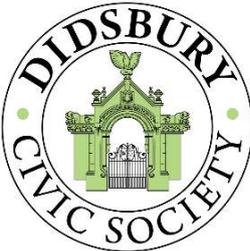


THE DIDSBURY PLAN



The Didsbury Plan 2021 – 2023

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The Didsbury Plan 2021 – 2023

1. Executive Summary

1.1 The Didsbury Plan 2021-2023 builds upon the original plan of 2017 and now incorporates Future Didsbury. As Didsbury Civic Society (DCS) has been serving Didsbury for over 60 years, there is credibility amongst Members, and the wider Community, that DCS consults and acts upon local issues that resonate with the people of Didsbury. DCS aligns itself with a great number of voluntary groups across its geographical boundary, all working to ensure that Didsbury centre has thriving and accessible shops and businesses, that ensures a unique ‘village feel’ across its geographical boundary. This support also includes those volunteers working in parks and green spaces. We proactively support the history, heritage and culture of Didsbury.

The original plan in 2017 was borne out of the frustration in reaction to the disappointing Manchester City Council (MCC) District and Ward Plans. These Plans did not reflect the many issues raised by DCS at their meetings and Ward meetings.

There must be strategic thinking in a suburb like Didsbury to modernise and plan its future. The frustration of a “make do and mend” mentality is alienating. Three important statements have resonated in devising the plan:

- 1) Involving ordinary residents, traders and businesses directly in decisions
- 2) In a democracy, we need the people of Didsbury and their priorities to be taken seriously
- 3) We aim to create a sustainable, liveable, practical environment that includes all residents and visitors to Didsbury

Appendix 1 gives a breakdown of Didsbury demographics and gives the DCS geographic boundary

1.2 The main features under scrutiny and earmarked for attention are the key civic issues, including the deterioration of multiple aspects of the local infrastructure, the fabric of the buildings and the high levels of absentee ownership in both private and business properties. In addition, a great cause of concern is the low visibility of policing combined with increasing levels of crime.

1.3 Future Didsbury appeared as a strategic option in the context of addressing much of the above with the addition of looking to the future using the four design principles of the **National Infrastructure Commission, Climate, People, Places and Value**. The appetite for a cohesive strategy has propelled Future Didsbury into working with the Manchester School of Architecture, which provided a holistic view of where ‘Didsbury’ is today, and where it needs to be tomorrow:

- This would include consideration of roads and traffic management, accommodating electric vehicles and other measures such as re-using 'grey water' under the first heading of '**Climate**'.
- The heading of '**People**' will focus on the various types of accommodation and recreation spaces in and around 'Didsbury'.
- '**Places**' refers to the addition of community spaces be they an updated concept of a 'village hall' and extensions to parks and park facilities for all age groups.
- The final heading of '**Value**' is not necessarily to do with cost; it points to the 'value' of using strategic thinking to provide an 'upgrade' to 'Didsbury' with an element of forward thinking in a way that prepares the way for further upgrades, without repeating the costs already incurred in the previous phase.

1.4 We live in the 21st century and we have to start thinking like we live in the 21st century. We need this project to be carried by Didsbury people who are looking towards the 22nd century as well! This implies that the centre of focus should point firmly at the younger generations within our community without delay.

1.5 There is no reason why MCC would do anything but fully endorse all of the above as it fits perfectly with their own '**Core Strategy 2012-2027**' where paragraph 10.2 (p132) tells us:

*10.2 Manchester City Centre and its **district centres** are places to shop, work, eat, drink, enjoy leisure activities, access services and increasingly to live.*

1.6 It is imperative that consideration of the Didsbury Plan is solely focused on the Plan without being side-tracked into other irrelevant areas, especially now that Future Didsbury has provided the appetite and momentum for change.

1.7 At this point, it is worth turning the clock back to 1991, the Silver Jubilee celebration of Didsbury Civic Society. Within the main publication to celebrate this landmark, we have pleasure and pride in offering you the prescient thinking of David Rhodes and Sydney Downs, both architects and residents of Didsbury at the time (please see below).

1.8 *A Golden Future by David Rhodes, RIBA, MRTPI*
'... I would like to see the Society involved in forward planning – co-ordinating a shop front scheme, the re-use of vacant upper floors, identification of and a formulated approach to buildings under threat, more tree and bulb planting – particularly in the heart of the village – together with a continuation of the litter campaign'

1.9 *Architecture in Didsbury by Sydney Downs*
'... It may be that we should start now campaigning for a much more traffic free village, provided that we can deal with the problem of access. This would clearly require a by-pass, the beginnings of which may lie in the motorways of the Mersey Valley.'

Some re-routing may produce lighter traffic and a narrower main road, giving wider pavements which would allow safe, comfortable shopping, albeit on one side at a time. There would be space for pubs, tables, trees, small scale lamps, litter bins – even umbrellas – but above all people.

*Car parking is a continuing problem. But people must have the vision to see that it simply may not be possible – or ultimately desirable – to stop exactly outside the shop. Despite the problems on all sides, it has been done elsewhere both in this country and others. **Vision and determination may make it possible here.***

*The future challenge is exciting. We have to see that some of the strongest forces of our time are used appropriately for the good of the individual. Architecture and planning interface with many other considerations or our urban life and we must **avoid the temptation to sit back and do nothing.***

2. Background

- 2.1 This updated plan serves as a reference document for residents, developers, traders, councillors and MCC officers, plus anyone with an interest in the area. It is imperative that a condition of being named as an interested body, organisation or individual implies agreement to the content of this document thus, assuring DCS is automatically consulted whenever any initiative or policy relating to Didsbury (boundaries as defined in Appendix 1) is under discussion or potentially being proposed by any interested parties, individuals or decision makers.
- 2.2 **Consultation** is the key component to planning of any type, i.e., construction, highways or transport. In recent times, DCS has been frustrated by the very short consultation periods and the impenetrable documents produced by MCC.
- 2.3 Note: (Consultation periods must be of a sufficient length in order to engage with the entire community). Documents should be ‘appropriate for use’ in the context of being easily understood by residents. Our suggestion is along the lines of an online media presentation using MCC’s YouTube channel which would ensure equality standards are being met and must include subtitles and captioning.
- 2.4 In addition to the above, DCS commits to liaising with MCC plus any other relevant bodies/agencies in pursuance of the above. DCS values and fosters good relationships with MCC, Councillors and organisations and groups around the periphery of the decision-making process. Our primary concern will always be the people of Didsbury, the structure and infrastructure of Didsbury. We want to ensure that the Didsbury centre maintains a thriving and flourishing choice of shops, services, bars and restaurants serving both residents and visitors to the area.
- 2.5 There are four overarching principles to the Didsbury Plan:
- To ensure that facilities meet the needs of local residents of all ages, businesses and retailers

- That there is a balance between all of the sectors in the economy including the independent and chain retailers
 - That the Heritage of Didsbury is maintained: *we want to maintain the “village feel”*
 - Ensure green spaces and parks are protected and enhanced to facilitate leisure activities for local residents, the younger generation and our many visitors.
- 2.6 Didsbury has been neglected. There is little or no plan. The transport system is expensive for those who have to pay and it is overcrowded at peak times. There are also serious problems with vehicle pollution. The DCS has strongly supported Future Didsbury’s articles, circulated in 2019, with its host of fresh radical ideas for Didsbury using the ideas of young architects, new materials and concepts (**see Appendix 2 Future Didsbury for more details**). Now is the time for our council to unveil its ideas for the suburbs, rather than city centre and east Manchester focus.
- 2.7 DCS also recognises from its liaison with other local South Manchester Civic Societies that our findings are not unique and our problems are also experienced by adjoining wards. These problems can’t be overcome with the same old platitudes; we need early action.
- 2.8 DCS wishes to thank all those who participated in contributing and devising this Plan which will be further updated in 3 years. The seminar, held in October 2016, was pivotal in devising the themes of the Plan. There was wide consultation on the first draft, (over 400 mailings), and dissemination to a number of local groups. The final Plan was based on all the feedback from the consultation process.
- 3. Future Revisions**
- 3.1 This Plan will be updated with relevant changes as and when necessary, by a working group, comprising of DCS members and interested groups.
- 3.2 All interested parties will be notified of such revisions as they occur, later they will be embedded into the document on a rolling three-year basis. The three-year cycle is only intended as a guide as we have discovered it can be difficult to be precise on timings as we have discovered during this current pandemic.
- 3.3 The newly revised Didsbury Plan is consistent with the objectives of MCC. They are:
- 3.4 MCC Neighbourhoods Board -
 “We will continue to maintain neighbourhoods where people choose to live and visit.....ensuring that across the city our residents have access to clean, safe neighbourhoods....” “Ensuring clean, safe and green neighbourhoods that have access to good quality amenities. Creating places where people want to live and stay.”
- 3.5 Southern Regeneration –

“(Didsbury) The only other area of the city (apart from the city centre) that currently offers the opportunity to attract and retain a significant number of higher income groups”. Their presence is critical to sustaining both the city’s economic growth and the vibrancy of the local economy. Many of the area’s assets – urban character, larger family homes, and quality green spaces and so on – have attracted such households to date. These assets will need to be protected and nurtured if the area is to retain existing and attract further households.

4. THE FUNDAMENTAL FIVE

4.1 The five elements of the Didsbury Plan are shown below. Each section will cover one of the five areas and we ask readers to bear in mind the comments and other details are not exhaustive. Any aspects not discussed does not indicate they are not on the radar of DCS or Future Didsbury.

4.2 The following five sections formulate ‘the Plan’:

1. Transport
2. Buildings
3. Infrastructure
4. Community
5. Recreation and Green Spaces.

5. SECTION 1: TRANSPORT

- 5.1 Didsbury is well connected, being a close neighbour of what constitutes a global hub. It sits in the centre of the connection between Manchester International Airport (MIA) and Manchester City Centre (East Didsbury Train Station). This obviously implies that the transport links connect Didsbury to most other areas and regions effectively and efficiently and also includes the local motorway network (M56 & M60 ring road) linking to the M6 North and South.
- 5.2 In addition to the hub status in 5.1 above, Didsbury has even more connections in the context of the Metrolink (East Didsbury, Didsbury Village, West Didsbury & Burton Road) together with numerous bus routes and cycle lanes.
- 5.3 However, notwithstanding the above:
- 5.3.1 These services are **not totally integrated**.
 - 5.3.2 The high number of buses contributes to **congestion, noise, air pollution and damage to gullies and roads**.
 - 5.3.3 There is concern about the number of double decker buses which run through the centre at non-peak times that are often under used to the point of being empty. It is recognised that Didsbury is the end of the corridor running from the City centre, nevertheless, it serves as a good example of where the **strategic thinking is missing**.
 - 5.3.4 There are fewer buses serving routes to the west. There are **major roads where residents are poorly served by buses**.
 - 5.3.5 There is a **lack of signage** to assist pedestrians in linking to the bus terminus, East Didsbury railway station and Metrolink (interchange hub). The area also suffers from **poor crossings and high kerbs** for pedestrians to negotiate across the Parris Wood “triangle” which is where the A34 crosses the A5145. This is quite likely to be **one of Manchester’s busiest junctions** with numerous road traffic accidents which serve to highlight the concern of many. In the short to medium term consideration should be given to the dynamics of this junction and how they can **be improved and made safe**.
 - 5.3.6 Despite the above public transport connections, **car dependency and car parking** continue to cause problems such as congestion, pollution and danger to other road users.
 - 5.3.7 **Parking on pavements** and residential streets seriously affects pedestrians, wheelchair users and people pushing prams, especially where school walking buses are in operation.
 - 5.3.8 Regular **inconsiderate car parking** causes danger to other road users, pedestrians, destroys pavements, blocks deliveries to businesses and creates a **clear danger** to those with disabilities.
 - 5.3.9 The **design and purpose of cycle ways** should be to encourage **safe cycling**, have **clear rules**, and be designed in a way that is **considerate to other road users** and more importantly, pedestrians. **The poorly designed cycleway on Wilmslow Road** forces cyclists to use the pavements in the shopping centre,

which is extremely dangerous for pedestrians of any age or ability, with the Police not taking appropriate action.

5.4 Aims

- 5.4.1 Ensure that residents are always consulted by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) when buses become regulated by Greater Manchester Authority. (Ref para 2.3 for guidance on acceptable methods of consultation).
- 5.4.2 With careful consideration **improve and update signage to transport links**. Attention should be given to avoiding adding to pavement obstructions.
- 5.4.3 **Improve crossing facilities for pedestrians** at the East Didsbury transport hub. Improve crossing timers (with added **countdown timers**) in favour of pedestrians as opposed to vehicles.
- 5.4.4 Proactively change driver behaviours by **discouraging pavement parking**, including the support of any proposed anti-pavement parking legislation/by-laws.
- 5.4.5 Consider **residents' parking** where appropriate plans are proposed. (On-site, off-road parking should become a pre-requisite to Planning Approval to avoid on-street nuisance parking).
- 5.4.6 Explore the use of '**Park and Ride**' schemes for car users to encourage use of the buses and Metrolink.
- 5.4.7 Review the use of **parking in key locations** with the provision and signing of **accessible parking spaces** and a review of **taxi rank parking**.
- 5.4.8 Pursue **volunteer monitoring**, in cooperation with GMP, of **speeding enforcement** on the 20 and 30 mph restrictions on residential roads.
- 5.4.9 Liaise with GMP regarding **cyclists and electric scooters breaking the law**, e.g., riding on pavements in Didsbury centre.
- 5.4.10 **Monitor new builds** to ensure there is correct and **suitable parking** that is appropriately sited.
- 5.4.11 **Revisit traffic management systems**, including whether bus lanes e.g. Barlow Moor Road are still required/fit for purpose/safe. There could be selective intelligent traffic lights and countdown timers introduced at key points.
- 5.4.12 MCC to commit to updating localities with **plans to reduce car usage** in the City (in digestible accessible formats; see para 2.3).

5.5 Actions 2021- 2023

- 5.5.1 Lobby for Traffic Wardens/Enforcement Officers/PCSOs to regularly patrol congested and **illegal street parking** on a daily basis.
- 5.5.2 Lobby for local **by-law protection to prevent pavement parking** and the problems it causes with priority given to Didsbury centre (also important to local traders).
- 5.5.3 Consider **leafletting inconsiderately parked cars** in key areas.
- 5.5.4 Create a green village centre by lobbying for **long term solutions to reduce the volume of through traffic**.

6. SECTION 2: BUILDINGS AND HISTORIC ARTEFACTS

- 6.1 There are a number of **historic buildings** in Didsbury, all with a rich and preserved heritage. To name a few, these include The Towers, St James` Parish Church, Didsbury`s former Police Station, the Carnegie Library, Rhodes Clock, Eagle Gate, Tesco Clock, the Old Parsonage and the Cenotaph, the latter will be 100 years old July 2021.
- 6.2 Didsbury Civic Society coordinates the Heritage Open Days, **known locally as Didsbury Open Doors**, held annually in September. These attract about **2,000 visitors to Didsbury and neighbouring wards**.
- 6.3 We aim to **build on the historic assets** of Didsbury, including the many listed buildings, **foster community pride** and **encourage appropriate new development**. The mixture of listed buildings and structures, Victorian and Edwardian property and appropriate new development gives the area a distinctive feel. The loss of older properties directly **impinges on the area`s individuality**. This individuality creates a **sense of `place`** which is vital for engendering pride in the area. There are three highly valued **Conservation Areas**; Blackburn Park, St James Park and Albert Park.
- 6.4 DCS accepts there will always be **new development**, as in any urban area. If this is **planned with care** it is more likely to be welcomed. It needs to be designed to be consistent with the quality and nature of the area`s buildings and general environment.
- 6.6 Aims**
- 6.6.1 **Maintain the `village feel`** to the centre as an attractive individual village, with a variety of shops, businesses, cafes, restaurants and pubs (see para 1.5 re MCC Core Strategy).
- 6.6.2 Enforce **tighter control on shop and commercial signage** and its illumination, together with incompatible frontage security (shutters).
- 6.6.3 Continue to pursue the **appropriate provision of housing** suitable for all sectors of society.
- 6.6.4 Regularly **monitor local planning applications** to ensure **appropriate development** and adherence to the rules for **conservation areas**, maintaining the spirit for which the **historical nature of Didsbury** centre is renowned.
- 6.6.5 **As premises become vacant**, especially in the village centre, they should be scrutinised by local groups, local councillor teams and the Didsbury Traders to monitor their appearance in an effort to ensure any future change does not detract from the appearance of the streetscape.
- 6.7 Actions 2021– 2023**
- 6.7.1 Continue to regularly **scrutinise planning applications**.
- 6.7.2 The DCS has lobbied for a cleaning and repair of the Cenotaph at Didsbury Library. By lobbying, MCC has taken up its responsibility through the Realms

Office in line with its obligations. **DCS has made a significant matched funding contribution for this work.**

- 6.7.3 Identify responsibility for the **Rhodes Clock** and its upkeep obligations.
- 6.7.4 To write to the appropriate agencies/landlords to erase **graffiti** from their street equipment and premises. DCS seek support from MCC and other active groups in this action. Whilst the equipment belongs to third parties, they are all installed on MCC property and the agencies should have a **regular clean up policy**.
- 6.7.5 Ensure that businesses are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and the **Equality Act 2010**, in particular to automatic doors, incorrectly opening doors, ramps and thresholds.
- 6.7.6 Lobbying businesses and the Didsbury Traders Association to ensure the presentation of shop fronts remains in keeping with the area, including a '**no roller-shutters**' policy at the planning stage or retrospectively.
- 6.7.7 Maintain a high DCS profile and continue stimulating the **Heritage Open Days** (HODs) programme for a week/weekend, including the introduction of a virtual programme for DCS website.
- 6.7.8 Continue to robustly **scrutinise licensing applications**, including a policy for managing the clearing up of **outdoor drinking/dining paraphernalia** such as glasses, bottles and utensils.
- 6.7.9 To improve the **coordination of actions between DCS and councillors** regarding the timely introduction/completion of official works.

7. SECTION 3: INFRASTRUCTURE

- 7.1 Every aspect of the **infrastructure of Didsbury** (defined by the boundaries in Section 1, see para 1.1) is **under constant scrutiny** detailed item by item below. This section should be read in conjunction with Appendix 2, '**Future Didsbury**' which describes the future pathway for strategic upgrades which have been developed and expanded by the work undertaken by the 5th year students of the Manchester School of Architecture.
- 7.2 In Didsbury, the provision and maintenance of existing **street lighting**, is in general, good after the upgrading programme.
- 7.3 The last replacement and increase in number of **litter bins** has alleviated some litter problems. The Council, in conjunction with DCS, supported the "Let's talk rubbish" litter campaign in Didsbury; sadly, this has been allowed to lapse due to a lack of funding. Nevertheless, volunteer groups still participate in the regular cleaning up sessions. The occurrence of **fly tipping** is significantly on the increase, together with anti-social littering generally, along with a significant rise in **graffiti with regular tags appearing** on street furniture across the wards.

7.4. Aims

- 7.4.1 Improvements to City Centre **waste management** by using the introduction of **can and plastic bottle crushers** is laudable, but MCC have not expanded this initiative to include the suburbs. Action is required.
- 7.4.2 There are still no known plans to fully repair **street paving**, not only on main streets, but also on the estates, which is **extremely poor and patchy** and is a mishmash of materials not in-keeping and visibly different. Poor paving can and does lead to isolation and restrictions for those of limited mobility, who are often, but not exclusively the older population, which covers a very high proportion of Didsbury residents. Investigation and consultation required.
- 7.4.3 **Road infrastructure** has been improved on many of the main routes, although many **side roads still need improvement** including being worn centrally, as well as in the gutters. Action required.
- 7.4.4 **Street signage** is still seen as **cluttered** and dirty. Any found to be unneeded and/or obsolete should be removed when out of date as discussed during the DCS walkabout in 2017. There does not appear to be a programme of regular cleaning. Maintenance signage is regularly left obsolete and attached to Didsbury street furniture for long periods. There is also no programme of **tree maintenance** where the growth **obscures street lighting and road signage**. This is especially noticeable alongside Beaver Road School on Wilmslow Road. Urgent action required.
- 7.4.5 Improved regular planned **street cleaning** could reduce **blocked gullies** and improve traffic flow conditions, especially during autumn/winter (with large puddles forcing traffic to circumnavigate out of lane). MCC should also apply and enforce stricter rules regarding the regular **kerbside builders` skips** due to the overflow of the contents such as plaster and cement.

- 7.4.6 Consultation with residents has generally been regarded as poor in the context of **planned works on roads and pavements** by both the council and utility companies (see para 2.3). Although the recent relay of Gillbrook Road and surrounding street has seen a measurable improvement, including the fast-remarking lineage work.
- 7.4.7 Concern is growing about the **deterioration of several retail premises** which have been vacated. Vacating businesses disappear quickly, and in the wake of their departure, the **buildings are allowed to progressively dilapidate**. Urgent **scrutiny required** especially in the context of the pandemic and the impact on many businesses. A strategic view needs to be considered in the sense of repurposing/reimagining the use of certain premises.
- 7.4.8 Parking and **pedestrian pinch points** have been raised as problems with concerns during Covid-19 (social distancing) with negligible responses received.
- 7.4.9 Inconsiderate **pavement parking and driving on pavements** is still a major concern. This problem also extends to include vehicles regularly standing with their **engines idling in residential areas**. This problem is exacerbated during hot and cold weather conditions. Action required with the hope of engaging with the PCSOs and Enforcement Officers.
- 7.4.10 **Traffic pinch points cause significant congestion** around the Post Office in Albert Hill Street, outside of Costa Coffee, NatWest on Wilmslow Road, M&S and Santander Bank on Wilmslow Road which is clearly marked for traffic turning left onto Barlow Moor Road. There needs to be a long overdue review of traffic flows in this location.
- 7.4.11 **Fly posting** is showing a significant increase around Didsbury tarnishing the immediate area and beyond. **Stricter rules are required** to reduce the long-term effects of fly posting which remains in situ for months. Posters are being plasticised and are often over pasted **defacing property** and clumsily zip-tied with non-biodegradable cable ties etc.
- 7.4.12 **Road layouts** should be reviewed. Particular examples of this are Sandhurst Road which is too narrow for two-way traffic, with speeds well in excess of 20mph and vehicles regularly driving on the pavement to pass. This is dangerous, especially considering this is the walking bus route to Beaver Road School. Barlow Moor Road bus lanes are outmoded due to route changes and again not reviewed.

7.5 Actions 2021– 2023

- 7.5.1 Pursue the improved maintenance, repair and cleaning of pavements, roads and gullies on a regular basis and openly communicate operation and progress to the public, including clear and visible notification of planned works and street maintenance.
- 7.5.2 Continue to request a better MCC response to graffiti, on street rubbish, and fly posting.
- 7.5.3 Work with MCC to improve our green credentials regarding fly-posted materials.

8. SECTION 4: COMMUNITY

- 8.1 There remains a **strong volunteering ethos** within Didsbury. There are numerous voluntary and charity groups providing support in the community in various forms. The appearance of the Didsbury centre is mainly sustained by the strong community ethos of volunteer groups. The general perception is that the centre of **Didsbury is 'looked after'**, nevertheless, the appearance of the village is sustained by these groups thus leaving more reliance on their intervention. **MCC must do more to prevent community decay.**

Examples of thriving **local community groups** [not exhaustive]: Didsbury **Good Neighbours**, Didsbury in **Bloom**, The **Women`s Institute**, **mother and toddler** groups, **Residents` Associations**, **church** cafes and lunch clubs, The **DCS**, Friends of DCS, Friends of **Parks` Groups**. **Faith communities** also provide communal spaces and social opportunities.

- 8.2 To a large extent, the above provides a **distinctive village feel** amongst the shops along Wilmslow Road. In turn, this fosters a **strong sense of community** supported throughout by the tireless **Didsbury Traders** and the accompanying **map of shops in Didsbury**.
- 8.3 The above groups also provide the **hours of dedication** that produce the many and various **cultural and social activities**, for example: Didsbury **Festival**, Didsbury **Pride**, Didsbury **Beer Festival**, the **Car Show**, the **Guitar Trail**, **Carols and Lights**, the Didsbury **Arts Festival**, **Heritage Open Days**, Summer and Christmas **Fayres** to name but a few.
- 8.4 Events, classes and exhibitions held at the **self-funding Old Parsonage** 'community space' provide 'cultural' activities and experiences. Didsbury **Library** also remains an important public space and cultural service provider. There are many other excellent examples of space for community activities.
- 8.5 There are serious concerns around the **long-term economic sustainability** of Didsbury centre, threatened by online shopping and landlords` business rates.
- 8.6 **Shoplifting and common theft** remain serious points of concern. The low profile of **GMP officers** (including PCSOs) is a serious problem which traders believe needs addressing on a daily basis, the traders suffer the anger and anxiety of steadfastly holding back the onslaught and rightly believe more can be done to **prevent escalation** of an already difficult situation. **Security improvements are essential** through increased GMP PCSO presence, who should liaise with Didsbury Traders who, in turn, would inform their own members of the impending visits of shoplifters.
- 8.7 Didsbury village is still **devoid of public toilets** although it is understood Fletcher Moss Park are planning to **open their toilets** for customers as a result of the success of the **Alpine Café** and **Emmanuel Church** will unveil its '**Changing Places**' facility in the late spring. Irrespective of the above good news, the general situation of having a village

lacking basic amenities is of concern as the lack of such facilities will make the village **less accessible to older people and parents with young children**.

8.8 Aims

- 8.8.1 DCS will continue to make certain that the village is appropriately maintained by **working in partnership with shops and businesses**. Any **promotional activity** would be encouraged, especially following the Covid-19 pandemic period.
- 8.8.2 'Public access', i.e., the **provision of toilets**, etc., for the Didsbury community will be developed in liaison with councillors and public support.
- 8.8.3 **DCS supports MCC initiatives** such as the '**Age Friendly City**' initiative. The aim of DCS would be to **signpost the integration of services** and assist with the **dissemination of information**.
- 8.8.4 DCS aims to ensure any **planning and licensing decisions** meet the needs of Didsbury residents and a reliable route to **balancing the day/night economy**.
- 8.8.5 In the event of any **further housing** being proposed for Didsbury, local GP and Dentistry services should also be **reviewed to meet the additional pressures** generated by future requirement for these services. Infrastructure relating to drainage and sewers also needs to be assessed as being able to meet these additional demands.

8.9 Actions 2021 to 2023

- 8.9.1 DCS to **contact with local charities**, such as 'Reach Out to the Community' and other agencies **supporting people who are homeless**.
- 8.9.2 DCS to maintain a **high profile as the 'civic body'** in order to continue its role. This would involve **maintaining its connection** through the provision of a DCS stall at local events such as Didsbury **Festival**, Didsbury **Pride** and be part of any promotional events relating to the **Future Didsbury Project** and how DCS can collaborate where there are **shared objectives**.
- 8.9.3 DCS Trustees will continue to **further the alliances** with Didsbury Traders, Didsbury Good Neighbours, community church groups, Heritage Open Days Groups, active online groups and South Manchester Civic Society Network.
- 8.9.4 DCS Trustees to **approach corporate bodies** such as **banks and traders** to report issues of concern and actively encourage their community engagement. This will also include the support of **DCS's collaboration with the Future Didsbury Project** to develop the increasing possibility of published plans relating to the various stages of the **Future Didsbury concepts**.
- 8.9.5 DCS agreed to work with the Didsbury Traders Association and compile a list of landlords for the purpose of organising meetings to discuss matters appertaining to the village ethos.
- 8.9.6 Establish links with MCC and agencies in respect of pursuing the aim of a '**Green Travel Plan**' and discuss the ways of **managing the effects of climate change** by reducing vehicle usage, providing better and cheaper public transport with incentives to leave cars at home. At the same time introducing

a balanced traffic management system through Didsbury centre that allows all transport users to access shops and businesses.

9. Section 5: Recreation and Green Spaces

9.1 'Spaces' are now more valued than ever following the lockdown periods of the Covid pandemic, prompting the **discovery of parks and other recreation areas**. Didsbury has a number of recreational and green spaces, **some of which are of national importance**, shown below:

- Fletcher Moss Park (circa 90 acres)
- Didsbury Park (circa 9 acres)
- Fletcher Moss Botanic/Rockery Gardens (circa 1 acre)
- Fog Lane Park (circa 40 acres)
- Stenner Woods, the Meadows
- Mersey valley/flood plain
- Didsbury Sports Ground
- Allotments (including Bradley Fold)
- Marie Louise Gardens (circa 2 acres)
- Jubilee gardens (1/10 acre)
- Library Gardens
- Old Parsonage & Gardens (circa 2 acres)
- East Didsbury/Kingsway green space (1/2 acre)
- Associated leisure activities e.g. Fletcher Moss tennis courts, Sports Club/ground, RSPB activities, Cafes in parks
- Parrswood Environmental Centre – Rural Studies

9.2 In order to **prevent these spaces falling into decay** and disrepair the community of Didsbury has responded with varying levels of success by establishing a **strong volunteer community**. Strong voluntary groups such as **Didsbury in Bloom** and **'Friends' of Parks** have enabled regular and continued maintenance and have championed green causes. Such work has been rewarded by the **Royal Horticultural Society's (RHS) 'It's your Neighbourhood'** awards. Didsbury in Bloom has achieved **'Best in North West (Urban Category)'** for the past 6 years and the **"Best Urban Community in the UK"** in 2018.

9.3 Essential to the post pandemic recovery are the valued attractions of Didsbury, notably the **Parsonage Gardens and Fletcher Moss Rockery** which **attract many visitors from outside the immediate area**. This in turn helps in adding potential to the **revival of the high street** in Didsbury and, by definition, **supporting the traders** which together suggests that **maintaining the 'village feel'** is still possible irrespective of the move towards 'online everything'.

9.4 The infrastructure in many green spaces relating to **footpaths and drainage** is in a poor state. Other examples of poor maintenance causing safety concerns include:

- The **lack of maintenance of roadside trees** and their borders, especially along Wilmslow Road where the pavements are already narrow.
- The condition of the area opposite the new St James` Park development on Wilmslow Road.

- There is no overarching campaign to address **dog fouling** issues. The policing of the stated dog control by-laws is inadequate to the point of being invisible. Individual initiatives such as the ‘free doggy bags’ provided by the Friends of Didsbury Park is having some effect - *more evidence of Didsbury working as a community.*
- The area of **green space around the River Mersey** requires significant attention if it is to be an attractive green space for the community of Didsbury and beyond. The **Ford Lane car parking area** is particularly in need of attention.
- Regular **walkways leading to green spaces** are neglected, overgrown and dirty. However, there are some exceptions such as the example of the **Poppy Path** where the community have initiated a project to turn a dirty, overgrown, track containing fly-tipping waste into award winning attractive green space - *more evidence of Didsbury working as a community.*
- MCC tends to fund one-off projects only, however, there is a need to **recognise the work of volunteers by providing a budget for their activities.**
- The levels of **litter/waste** left in green spaces, by residents and visitors alike, is at an unacceptable level. DCS believes a new campaign is needed to educate residents and visitors to alleviate this problem covering the short, medium and long term.

9.5 **Didsbury Civic Society agree and endorse the view that the world faces the consequences of the climate change emergency.** In doing so, the Didsbury Plan identifies Didsbury’s responsibility to respond to a situation, in which urgent action is required to reduce or halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it. The climate emergency should be a consideration in every policy and objective of the Didsbury Plan and community involvement is key to the success of our community’s response to the climate crisis.

9.6 Aims

Produce a **greenspace and recreational review** of Didsbury which looks at short, medium and long-term aspirations for green spaces in Didsbury rather than a ‘fix it when it fails’ approach. The DCS will work to ensure that green spaces and parks cannot be sold off for any development. We are engaging with Fields in Trust and South Manchester Civic Society Network.

9.7 ACTIONS 2020 to 2023

- 9.6.1 Encourage Ward Councillors to be more focused on the **need for the maintenance and repair** of infrastructure of green spaces.
- 9.6.2 Discuss, review and pursue with MCC the production of a **specific strategic plan** for the River **Mersey Valley** in Didsbury.
- 9.6.3 Review the scope of and pursue the maintenance and repair of **roadside infrastructure and trees/green spaces**, e.g. the embankment on Wilmslow Road opposite St James Park

- 9.6.4 Campaign for Ward Councillors to **influence a council plan** to enforce the law regarding **dog fouling** in the parks and streets of Didsbury.
- 9.6.5 Work with MCC to identify and address the **neglected pathways** in Didsbury.
- 9.6.6 Work with MCC to formulate a process for **supporting volunteer groups** who are maintaining green spaces.
- 9.6.7 Support the **new recreational woodland** created adjacent to the new Beaver Road School extension.
- 9.6.8 Review visitors' **accessible parking provision** to all parks and green spaces.
- 9.6.9 Provide an **arborist's report** on the general health and required maintenance of the trees in Didsbury, including pollarding where necessary.
- 9.7.9 Work alongside MCC to realise their ambitions and scrutinise their actions in responding to the climate emergency.
- 9.7.10 To preserve and safeguard carbon capture assets such as trees and landscaping.
- 9.7.11 Both MCC owned as well as privately owned development should commit to an objective of net growth tree coverage across Didsbury.
- 9.7.12 Strong community engagement events to raise awareness and agree actions that individuals and community groups can do to meet the objectives of MCC's climate action plan.
- 9.7.15 Lobby for clean air monitors and carbon budget calculations for neighbourhood areas.

10. CONCLUSION

- 10.1 This revision of the Didsbury Plan is intended to cover the period from January 2021 through to the end of December 2023. Part of the plan is to develop closer ties with the Future Didsbury Project due to both organisations sharing the same fundamental aims, with a large emphasis on accessibility relating to people with disabilities and older people. Developing a more strategic plan is the overall aim of the collaboration between the two organisations and we certainly hope that MCC will recognise the efforts and collaborative prioritisations of issues that are important to the people of Didsbury, and respond and contribute to our Plan with an equally positive approach.

Appendix 1

A1 Population (2011 census. MCC website) states:

- A1.1 Didsbury East and Didsbury West Wards which the “Village” serves, have a total population of 26,700 which represents 5.2% of Manchester’s population whilst covering 2.3% of its land.
- A1.2 Didsbury East’s population is described as “Older professionals in suburban houses and converted flats”. West Didsbury is “Prosperous young professionals living predominately in flats”.
- A1.3 Both contain homes which pay higher council tax bands than other areas of Manchester. This will increase with the building of new, high end homes on the site of MMU. 91% of housing is privately owned compared to 68% in the rest of Manchester. (However, this does not show how much is owner occupied and how much is rented). The average cost of a house is more than a third more expensive than the rest of the city. Therefore, Didsbury is relatively less deprived than other wards. However, deprivation can be counted in other than economic terms, e.g., Didsbury has more over 85s living alone with a higher level of dependency than any other ward in Manchester.
- A1.4 There are more people aged 20-39 and over 85 than the rest of the City, but fewer in the 20-30 age group.
- A1.5 Data concerning mental health issues was not available.

The agreed general geographical area of Didsbury Civic Society is: -

- Palatine Road to the West,
- Kingsway to the East,
- Oak Road and Parkville Road to the North and
- the River Mersey to the South.

Appendix 2

A2 FUTURE DIDSBURY

- A2.1 The infrastructure in Didsbury leaves a lot to be desired. The overall picture in the context of roads and pavements is still disappointing; Didsbury residents and those with businesses in Didsbury deserve more consideration. Almost everything visible seems to be deteriorating and deteriorating at a rapid rate. Nothing but a total review will provide a strategic plan for Didsbury against the background of moving into a different era of electric vehicles, the charging points they need, taking more measures to reduce pollution and providing more local community green spaces.
- A2.2 Future Didsbury emerged from a desire to improve accessibility and the inclusion throughout the village and the routes into the village particularly in consideration of the still poor condition of the roads and with pavements still more so. There is no doubt both were considerably neglected over a significant period of time. Some parts of Manchester have seen large investment. However, it seems that South Manchester is largely omitted on the basis of a perception of affluence which doesn't seem to be a fair and balanced approach, neither is it true to suggest that ALL the residents of Didsbury fall into the 'affluent category'.
- A2.3 On January 9th, 2020 a private meeting was called in order for local councillors and those significantly involved in infrastructure within MCC to have first sight of the Future Didsbury proposals (this meeting was held at the behest of the local Ward Manager). The general reaction amongst the assembled was considered very positive with comments offering support. However, the positive attitude around the meeting seemed to simply evaporate as the efforts of Future Didsbury to continue the contact were ignored by MCC. This not only seems curious, but also remains a conundrum to which we don't have an answer.
- A2.4 We feel the above is representative of a genuine example of the absence of a real intention to look at the problems specific to Didsbury and the immediate area despite the huge amount of work that was brought together to present to those in the above meeting. Future Didsbury and DCS have continued with establishing relationships with the different communities around the village in the hope of trying to influence change, but the kind of change that really matters, i.e., full consultation with all the interested and associated bodies of Didsbury Civic Society and Future Didsbury.
- A2.5 **Points to note:**
Future Didsbury came into being to improve access and inclusion to Didsbury Village and the surrounding areas.
- A2.6 Future Didsbury and Didsbury Civic Society have the joint aim of following the route laid down by the National Infrastructure Commission, 'Climate, People, Places, Value'.

- A2.7 Climate: We all know about climate change and strenuous efforts are being made to reach a carbon-neutral status which has become the new 'gold standard'. More recent news points to more electric vehicles being on the road in vastly increasing numbers following the government announcement of a revised timeline for 'going electric' to 2030. In itself, this presents an opportunity to look at the huge operation of digging large utility trenches along high streets and use it as an opportunity to extend what that might bring.
- A2.8 People: The demographic within and around Didsbury shows that the predominant age groups exist up to the age of 20 and more than an average number of 85 years and over. In itself, this implies a need for more accessible services whether that relates to local shops, dentists, and health related surgeries (GP surgeries and physiotherapy treatment services). For such services to be truly accessible to all age groups, the local infrastructure, plus the buildings themselves, need to meet the minimum access requirements. Most of the improvements required fall into local government hands in the context of the maintenance of roads and pavements, together with providing suitable parking options. To illustrate the point, there is absolutely no point in buildings being made accessible if the roads and pavements remain impassable to those people with any kind of mobility or sensory deficits.
- A2.9 Younger people: In addition to the above, younger people feel that they are underrepresented making it essential for Future Didsbury to openly welcome the thoughts and ideas of that specific age group. Contact has been made with all of the local primary and secondary schools with encouraging responses. The points being raised are the lack of 5 a side football pitches and skateboarding/BMX facilities (both of which are now Olympic sporting events). The lack of options for young people in this regard are thought by some to contribute to the oversized assembling of younger people to the levels capable of creating a public nuisance.
- A2.10 Pregnant women and young families: It is fact that one thing above most others is frequently commented on with little or no consideration given, i.e., parents are known to struggle on congested pavements, entrances to trading premises, the interior of trading premises and other similar facilities due to a general lack of accessibility. They also have to contend with very few options in the sense of local amenities and play areas although, it has to be said that those spaces, where available, are suitably cared for by MCC ... we just need more of them.
- A2.11 Places: Whilst accepting not every home has ready access to recreational space, the general feeling is that more social spaces can be made in the heart of the village. The architecture students included in their proposals a number of options to improve the amounts of green spaces with 'resting points' for people with mobility difficulties and an updated idea on a 'village hall' to include such things as table tennis and other indoor sports/pastimes. Such a building would also cater for local groups and their meetings, become a focal centre for self-help groups and maybe the local radio and T.V. stations? The above describes a yawning gap in provision which doesn't seem to

be considered in the overall strategic view of what Didsbury can become and what Future Didsbury aims to make possible.

- A2.12 Value: The National Infrastructure Commission use the term 'Value' to discuss the principle of 'value for money' to some extent. However, they are also keen to stress that 'Value' equates to maximising the benefits to be taken from large projects. One gigantic project we are about to see unfold in front of our eyes is the installation of electrical charge points for the oncoming electric vehicle extravaganza! As advised, this will involve giant trenches being dug in our roads which may provide the opportunity to completely rethink what these trenches can provide by way of 'multipurpose' access points for all of the main utilities in order to avoid the continual assault on our pavements and roads in a frenzy of uncoordinated and unchecked simple maintenance, further damaging the infrastructure.
- A2.13 Fiduciary Responsibility: Following the financial crash of 2008/9 'austerity' became one of the most used broadcast words in the English language. It produced cutbacks in Town Halls and public services all over the country meaning that the outcome was always going to be that some areas will suffer from neglect. No matter how much that is true, local authorities have always had opportunities to think about their own budgets in the sense of how they portion the 'financial cake' in front of them.
- A2.14 Expectations: There is no doubt that local councillors have a responsibility to try and balance the distribution of funds to wherever they are needed but it is also true that spending vast sums refurbishing the Town Hall and developing projects such as 'Mayfield' Park to the tune of £1.4 billion seem to be out of place when the fabric of our communities is at rock bottom! It is incumbent on our elected representatives to ensure that their distribution is dealt with fairly and that includes micro to macro timescales and location. Unfair amounts of money being spent in many of the deprived areas of Manchester isn't an excuse for leaving those communities who take care of themselves without hardly a penny spent year on year.
- A2.15 Covid: There has been no doubt that Covid has and will continue to change many things as we move away from what we hope is the worst of the pandemic. Equally, there is no doubt that both large and small communities will adapt and take advantage of opportunities that Covid creates. But by far and away the most important point has been the realisation of how important our local community is given the way it has pulled together to maintain a semblance of camaraderie. Although the effects on cancer diagnosis and treatments, hearts, lungs, hip and knee joints etc. has still to be assessed, along with the new "please do not come to the surgery" and the new telephone triage. Not to mention a further new problem of low/nil cost high speed broadband to all houses for home schooling.
- A2.16 The entire army of voluntary groups within Didsbury have been, and continue to be, the glue keeping Didsbury together although the voluntary groups can't take on the challenge alone. Fixing the various elements of infrastructure is however the role of our elected representatives and their relationship with the various relevant internal

and/or external bodies. With or without Covid we need more from our elected representatives.

A2.17 Mental Health: From the early lockdown stage of Covid there has been much talk about the impact on mental health during the pandemic. Awareness of isolation and loneliness seems to have come to the fore of mental health, and rightly so.

A2.18 The concern about mental health will no doubt be with us for a long time. The interesting thing about the above evolving into so much current concern is that pre Covid, and after-Covid, has gone those people stuck within their own four walls week after week, month after month and year after year will be left in the same position, i.e., left isolated with all that implies. Hopefully, the moment when alarm bells started to ring during 'lockdown 1' will be sustained way beyond this current pandemic state of living and those people who were isolated pre Covid will benefit from the continued understanding of the mental health issues surrounding isolation.

A2.19 A strategic approach is needed to consider all aspects of life in Didsbury village, the people of Didsbury village and the surrounding area and those with mobility or sensory deficits. The above is intended to span across all age groups with particular focus on those young people and their much-needed facilities, families, and the green spaces they need, older people and the support they need, plus the many visitors who enjoy shopping and dining in the village.

A2.20 Future Didsbury is looking to develop different ways of engaging with our elected representatives which could possibly become much easier to achieve with Zoom and Teams, etc. Also, we expect that the people representing us would support the Didsbury Plan and the objectives of Future Didsbury as they form part of the same picture for all residents. With the same level of strategic intervention to halt or at least slow down the fundamental deterioration of the core of our community, which is gradually evaporating the soul/life from our village!

A2.21 **Conclusion**

Future Didsbury was born out of concern relating to the lack of access to Didsbury Village and the various routes taking us there. Most people would automatically assume that the obvious thing to do is to make life easier and simpler for all of us when we go into the village and come out again, without the still major concerns surrounding parking and gaining access to many of the shops, cafes, restaurants, etc., so they simply have no choice but to go elsewhere or online.