



The Didsbury Plan 2020 – 2023

This is a draft of Plan which continues to be worked on and will be reformatted and reworked at a later stage to incorporate the Future Didsbury work.

We invite you to comment or propose amendments at this stage. We would like to hear from you. Please reply to info@didsburycivicsociety.org by no later than 31st January 2021

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The Didsbury Plan 2020 – 2023

Didsbury Civic Society (DCS) has been serving Didsbury for over 50 years. Our prime aim is to create and support an environment in which people feel pride in belonging to, residing in, and visiting. We should all aim for Didsbury to be a place to feel comfortable, safe, happy, relaxed and to continue to flourish with a great community spirit. DCS Trustees and Members meet as a group to review planning applications, nevertheless, the Trustees engage in many more activities alongside members to ensure that services are working for the whole of Didsbury. Much of our work is achieved with the support of the Members who are also involved in the many other voluntary groups that exist around Didsbury to make the area a successful one. Didsbury has a great network of voluntary groups; whose work continues relentlessly. The Trustees of DCS are able to do only so much. However, we need more Civic Society Members to join with lead coordinators and work with us as volunteers on areas of this Plan. This could be writing emails, supporting others in projects, see Appendix 1, to identify a number of projects we hope to work on over the next few years. We still need help including lobbying, applying for grants, running the social media and communications of the DCS.

The DCS covers all of the geographical areas, commonly known to residents as modern-day Didsbury, and whose boundaries range from Palatine Road to the West and Kingsway to the East; to Oak Road and Parkville Road in the North and the River Mersey to the South. This geographical area maps onto the MCC wards of Didsbury East, Didsbury West and Burnage (?). The wards are part of the parliamentary constituency of Manchester Withington.

This Plan builds on the original Didsbury Plan produced in 2017 which was initially agreed and signed off in conjunction with the local councillors. Originally, the Manchester City district plan for Didsbury only disappointingly focused on a restrictively small area of Didsbury, and did not consider several of the key civic issues, including the deterioration of the infrastructure fabric, its history and absentee property ownership.

Plan Purpose

The plan aims to provide illustrations of all that is good in living and working in Didsbury and the tremendous Didsbury volunteering spirit everywhere. Our aim is to develop a Didsbury Centre with reduced traffic, improved signposting, greater pedestrian footfall, reduced pollution including the stopping of vehicle idling and reduce the high levels of pavement parking. Our aim is to create a Future Didsbury. With an attractive centre to survive and thrive. DCS wants to be consulted whenever any new initiative or policy related to Didsbury is being discussed or proposed by any of the agencies who can be regarded as decision making agencies. Clearly consultation, is the key to residential planning acceptance and success in local development. This action can help to ensure that the views of Didsbury residents will be the prime consideration in Didsbury's development in the future. DCS will continue to liaise with MCC and other relevant agencies and residents' groups to promote good planning policy which conserves the best of the present environment, and ensures new development is of appropriate quality and affordability. The DCS would welcome alternatives from MCC to the widely regarded Future Didsbury project. We want to ensure that the Didsbury Centre maintains a thriving and flourishing choice of shops, services, bars and restaurants that serve both residents and visitors to the area.



Didsbury has been seen to be generally standing still, and there appears to be very little, if no plan, for taking the area into the future. The transport system is expensive for those who have to pay, overcrowded at peak times and the majority of buses mainly run north to south. As stated previously there are also serious problems with vehicle pollution and currently no legislation regarding idling vehicles near schools, doctor`s surgeries and public areas e.g. parks. DCS has strongly supported the Future Didsbury Project, first circulated in 2019 with its visionary ideas for Didsbury, alongside those of young architects, the use of new materials and concepts. Is it not time for the council to unveil its ideas for the suburbs, rather than just city centre living?

Covid-19 withstanding, we do not want to see neglect to our village. Therefore, we want matters dealt with in a more-timely fashion, and within the laid down time scales and without the need for constant chasing. We want to be communicated with and involved in projects that are run by the City Council and other agencies. Examples of past frustrations includes the haste to install a Cycleway with poor notice resulting in an unpopular and inferior design compared with cycleways elsewhere in Manchester and neighbouring boroughs namely near the Etihad Stadium and Chester Road/Deansgate. Poorly planned roadworks and the separate movements of bus stops by TfGM without any consultation happening and totally uncoordinated. A clear example of things “done to the residents of Didsbury” and not with the residents.

Overarching principles

There are four overarching principles to the Didsbury Plan:

1. To ensure that facilities meet the needs of local residents, businesses and retailers
2. That there is a balance between all of the sectors in the economy including the independent and chain retailers
3. That the Heritage of Didsbury is maintained. We want to maintain the “village feel” with a ©21st outlook
4. Ensure green spaces are protected and enhanced to facilitate leisure activities for local residents and visitors. Especially during and hopefully after Covid-19 when a visit to a park has been seen as a lifeline to young and old to exercise or “let off steam”.

Five Sections of the Plan

The five overarching areas for improving and “future proofing” the Didsbury wards are as follows: -

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

Timelines

- A review and refresh of the original Didsbury Plan 2017, was coordinated through a meeting was been held on 4th August 2020 with key coordinators and leads.
- Trustees have seen an draft and this is a third draft will be issued prior to the DCS AGM Meeting in December 2020.



- A one-month consultation process with all Members, other resident groups, the Traders` Association and Local Councillors throughout, January 2021 with feedback.
- Feedback, amendments, commentary and inclusion of Future Didsbury is expected to be completed by the end of March 2021
- Issue and distribution of new Plan to all Members and groups.

For which the DCS wishes to thank all those who participated in contributing to and devising this Plan which will be updated again in 3 years (2023).

The newly revised Didsbury Plan is consistent with:

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”

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.”

Section 1 Transport

Didsbury has well connected transport links mainly to the city centre, national and international destinations:

- Metrolink, train station, cycle lane, buses, easy access to motorway systems and airport.

However:

These services are not totally integrated. There is a belief that the high number of buses contribute to congestion, noise, air pollution, including damage to gullies and roads. The reduction in buses during lockdown periods owing to Covid-19 during 2020 has been welcomed. Note bus timetable changes owing to greater home working.

- The high number of buses contributes to congestion, noise, air pollution and damage to gullies and roads
- There are concerns about the number of double decker buses which run through the centre at non-peak times that are often under used or are often empty. It is recognised that Didsbury is the end of the corridor running from the City centre
- There are fewer buses serving routes to the west, hence there are major roads where residents are poorly served by buses



- There is a lack of signage between the bus terminus, East Didsbury railway station and Metrolink (Interchange hub), and poor crossings with high kerbs for pedestrians across the Parrs Wood “triangle”. This is divided by the A5145 road and is not a seamless operation same site one level service
- Despite such good public transport connections, car dependency and car parking continue to cause problems such as congestion, pollution and danger to other road users
- The design of cycle ways should be such that they promote safe cycling, have clear rules, and that the design is considerate to other road users and importantly pedestrians. The poorly designed cycle lanes on occasions forces cyclists to use pavements through the shopping areas which is detrimental to pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

Our Aim is to: -

- ensure that residents are always consulted by Transport for Greater Manchester (TFGM) if buses become regulated by Greater Manchester Authority
- improve and regularly update signage/transport information and improve crossing facilities for pedestrians at the East Didsbury Transport hub.
- improve crossing timers in favour of pedestrians as opposed to vehicles
- proactively change driver behaviours by discouraging pavement parking. Including the support of any proposed prohibition of pavement parking legislation
- consider residents parking where appropriate plans are proposed
- explore 'Park and Ride' schemes for car users to use buses and Metrolink
- review the use of parking in key locations with the provision of and signing of disabled spaces and a review of taxi rank parking
- pursue digital MPH Signs on residential roads, for example, Dene Road in cooperation with GMP and Highways, MCC
- liaise with GMP regarding cyclists breaking the law, e.g. riding on pavements in Didsbury Centre
- monitor new builds to ensure there is correct and suitable parking and it is appropriately sited
- a review of good practice traffic management systems, including whether bus lanes e.g. Barlow Moor, road are still required and whether selective intelligent traffic lights and count down timers could be introduced at key points
- keep up to date with MCC plans to reduce car usage in the city.

Actions 2021 – 2023

- 1.1** lobby for local bye laws to stop pavement parking with priority for the Didsbury Centre and create a green Village Centre with long term traffic free/reduction plans
- 1.2** lobby for daily traffic warden patrols to reduce congested and illegal street parking
- 1.3** consider leafletting inconsiderately parked cars in key areas
- 1.4** lobby for digital 20 mph sign for Dene Road.



Section 2 Buildings and Historic Artefacts

There are a number of historic buildings in Didsbury, many with a rich and preserved heritage.

These include

- The Towers
- St James Parish Church
- Ex Didsbury Police Station
- The Carnegie library
- The Rhodes Clock
- The Eagle Gate
- Tesco Clock Tower
- The Old Parsonage
- Various Blue Plaques

Didsbury Civic Society coordinates the Heritage Open Days, held annually in September each year. This event attracts about 2,000 visitors to Didsbury and neighbouring wards.

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 building 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.

However:

- we realise there will always be new development, as in any urban area. Where this is carefully planned, it is to be welcomed. Design needs to be consistent with the quality and nature of the area's buildings and general environment.

Our Aim is to: -

- maintain the "village feel" to the centre as an attractive individual village, with a variety of shops, businesses, cafes, restaurants and pubs
- ensure that shop and commercial signage, its illumination and frontage security are in keeping with the "village feel" (without, metal grilles on shops / reduce their usage)
- continue to pursue the appropriate provision of housing suitable for all sectors of society
- DCS to continue to regularly monitor local planning applications to ensure appropriate development and adherence to the rules for conservation areas and maintaining the spirit in which the areas were created
- when any premises become vacant, especially in the village centre, they should be monitored by local groups, neighbourhood officers and the Didsbury Traders to ensure that owners on leaving take responsibility for rubbish removal and frontages cleared
- that their appearance does not detract from the appearance of the street scene.



ACTIONS 2021 to 2023

- 2.1** DCS sub planning group to continue to regularly scrutinise planning applications
- 2.2** DCS Trustees to lobby for a clean-up and repair of the Cenotaph at Didsbury Library, so that MCC takes up its responsibility in line with its obligations
- 2.3** identify responsibility for the Rhodes Clock and its upkeep
- 2.4** DCS to work closely with Didsbury in Bloom to reduce and get rid of graffiti and to write to the appropriate agencies/landlords to get rid of graffiti on their street equipment and premises. Seek support from Ward Councillors to support the DCS and other active groups with this action.
- 2.5** ensure that businesses are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1985 and onwards. In particular, automatic doors, incorrectly opening doors, ramps and thresholds
- 2.6** lobbying businesses and the Didsbury Traders Association to ensure the presentation of shop fronts remain in keeping with the area. Including a no roller shutters policy at the planning stage or retrospectively
- 2.7** maintain a high DCS profile and continue stimulating the HOD`s (Heritage Open Days) programme for a week/weekend. Including the introduction of a virtual programme on the DCS Website
- 2.8** continue to vigorously scrutinise Planning and Licensing Applications, including a policy on outdoor drinking utensils, bottles for outdoor public drinking and dining
- 2.9** lobby councillors and officials to work timely with the DCS



Section 3 Infrastructure

In Didsbury, the provision and maintenance of existing street lighting is in general good order following the upgrading programme.

The last replacement and increase in number of litter bins has alleviated some litter problems. The Council, in conjunction with Didsbury Civic Society, supported the "Let's talk Rubbish" litter campaign in Didsbury, sadly this has been allowed to lapse due to a lack of funding. However, Volunteer groups still participate in the regular cleaning up sessions. The occurrence of Fly Tipping is significantly on the increase, along with anti-social littering generally, and a significant rise in Graffiti with regular Tags appearing on street furniture across the Wards.

However:

- there are now improvements in waste bins in the city, including can and plastic bottle crushers but these are not yet in the suburbs
- there are still no plans to fully repair street paving, not only on main streets but also the estates. These are in an extremely poor state and patched in alternative materials not in keeping. 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 applies a very high proportion of Didsbury residents
- road infrastructure has been improved on many of the main routes, although many side roads still need improvement
- street signage is still seen as cluttered, and dirty. All unrequired and obsolete signage should be removed as discussed during the DCS Walkabout in 2017. There does not even appear to be a programme of regular cleaning. Regular Metro maintenance signage is left obsolete and attached to Didsbury street furniture for long periods. There, is also no programme of tree maintenance where trees grow and obscure street lighting. This is especially an issue around the Beaver Road School on Wilmslow Road including crumbling brickwork.
- improved regular planned street cleaning could reduce blocked gullies and improve traffic flow conditions, especially during Autumn/Winter. This could be a with stricter rules regarding the regular kerbside builder's skips with plaster and cement residue around.
- there has still been poor consultation with residents for planned work on roads and pavements by both the council and utility companies.
- concerns have been raised regarding the run-down look that several retail premises have taken, especially after sudden vacation of the property by the business for various reasons
- parking and pedestrian pinch points have been raised as problems and specific concerns during Covid-19 with little response, consultation or action taking place
- inconsiderate pavement parking and driving on pavements is still a major concern. This includes vehicles idling in residential areas.
- fly Posting is significantly on the increase around Didsbury, degrading the area and surrounds. Stricter rules are required to reduce the long- term effects of posters remaining in situ for months, with plasticised covering, over pasted, defacing property and even tied with non-biodegradable cable ties etc.



Our Aim is to: -

- pursue the improved maintenance, repair and cleaning of pavements, roads and gullies on a regular basis and openly communicate operations and progress to the public, including clear and visible notification of planned works and street maintenance
- parking on pavements and residential streets seriously affects pedestrians, wheelchair users and people pushing prams. This especially a problem now that school walking buses are in operation
- regular inconsiderate car parking causes danger to other road users and pedestrians. This destroys pavements, blocks deliveries to businesses and creates a clear danger to those with disabilities.
- continue to request a better MCC response to Graffiti, on street rubbish, and Fly Posting
- work with MCC to improve our green credentials regarding fly-posted materials
- The aim is to implement a far-reaching Plan that improves the pedestrian and cyclist experience through Didsbury Centre for shoppers and visitors and residents. Future Didsbury provides ideas and solutions to many of the problems.

ACTIONS 2021 to 2023

3.1 meet with MCC Highways, to reduce the traffic pinch points around

- the Post Office in Albert Hill Street
- outside of Costa Coffee and NatWest on Wilmslow Road
- M&S to Santander Bank on Wilmslow Road

3.2 campaign for greater street cleaning, graffiti reduction and reduction of litter

3.3 DCS to address Street litter with Didsbury Traders Association (DTA)

3.4 work closely with Didsbury in Bloom (DiB) to assert influence with MCC and Commercial communication networks about graffiti. Influence, the DTA to get Landlords to remove graffiti on their property.

Section 4 Community

There is still a strong volunteering ethos in Didsbury, with numerous voluntary and charity groups providing support and working on behalf of the Community.

- These include:
 - Didsbury Good Neighbours
 - Didsbury in Bloom
 - The Women`s Institute
 - Mother and Toddler Groups
 - Residents` Associations
 - Churches, cafes and lunch clubs
 - The DCS
 - Friends of DCS
 - Friends of Parks Groups
 - Food Banks



- Faith communities providing communal spaces and social opportunities.
- There is still a distinct village feel about the area around the shops along Wilmslow Road strongly supported through the Didsbury Traders, Didsbury shops and the published services map.
- There are also many cultural and social activities including:
 - The Didsbury Festival
 - Didsbury Pride
 - The Didsbury Car Show
 - The Guitar Trail
 - Carols and Lights
 - The Didsbury Arts Festival
 - Heritage Open Days
 - Remembrance Sunday
 - Summer and Christmas Fayres
- Support from the Council through the Neighbourhood Investment Fund.
- Events, classes and exhibitions at the self-funding Old Parsonage community space.
- Didsbury Library remains an important public and cultural service.
- Other well used public communal spaces at the Jubilee and Library Gardens.

However:

- The Night time and Day Time economies requires a rebalancing (especially coordinating licensing policy between premises and sites).
- Security requires improving through increased GMP PCSO presence, Didsbury Traders and Shop Watch alerts regarding local shop lifting and local WhatsApp style groups warning the community.
- There are still no public toilets although it is understood Fletcher Moss Park are planning to upgrade and reopen theirs as a result the success of The Alpine Café. The shop scheme that exists is poorly promoted, with little or no signage, and now heavily restricted by Covid-19 regulations. With specific attention required to both the Aged and Parents with young children. There are also no Radar Schemes or facilities for those with disability

Our Aim is to:

- Ensure that the village feel is maintained by working in partnership with shops and businesses.
- “Public Access Schemes,” for the use and provision of toilets, will be pursued in liaison with councillors and public support.
- Support the “Age Friendly City” initiative by the integration of services and dissemination of information.
- Ensure planning and licensing decisions meet with the needs of residents and a proper balance of the day/night economy.
- Should any further increased housing be considered for Didsbury. Local NHS Doctors and Dentistry services should also be reviewed to meet the increased additional numbers requiring service.



ACTIONS 2021 to 2023

- 4.1** DCS Chairperson to maintain the high profile of the DCS. Continue to provide DCS Stalls for Didsbury Pride, Didsbury Festival and hold other promotional events for Future Didsbury Project and promote the work of DCS.
- 4.2** Each DCS Trustee to continue to build alliances with Didsbury Traders, Didsbury Good Neighbours, Community Churches, Faith groups, Heritage Open Days Groups, Internet Active Groups and South Manchester Civic Society Network.
- 4.3** Proactively write to corporate bodies such as banks and traders to report issues of concern, and actively encourage their community engagement. This will also include our support for Future Didsbury.
- 4.4** Compile and update the list of Landlords with Didsbury Traders Association. Plan a meeting to examine the approach to rents, ensuring a more vibrant uptake with traders and MCC Councillors
- 4.5** Build additional links with Manchester City Councillors involving Council programmes, such as a Green travel plans, and importantly an acceptable plan to manage Climate Change, vehicle use reductions and cheaper public transport with better incentives to leave cars at home.

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Section 5 Recreation and Green Spaces

Didsbury has a rich variety of recreational and green spaces, some of which are nationally important:

Didsbury Park (circa 9 acres),
Fletcher Moss Botanic/Rockery Gardens (circa 1 acre),
Fog Lane Park (circa 40 acres)
Stenner Woods, and Meadows
Mersey Valley/flood plain,
Didsbury Sports Ground,
Allotments (including Bradley Fold)
Marie Louise Gardens (circa 2 acres)
Jubilee gardens (1/10 acre) and Library Gardens,
Thornbank Wood (Wilmslow Road)
The Old Parsonage Gardens (circa 2 acres)
Continued:
Parrswood Environmental Centre – Rural Studies
The East Didsbury/Kingsway green space (1/2 acre).
Associated leisure activities e.g. Fletcher Moss tennis courts
Other Sports Club/grounds,
Cafes in parks.
RSPB activities

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 issues. Such work has been rewarded by the RHS “It’s your Neighbourhood” awards. Didsbury in Bloom has achieved “Best in North West (Urban Category)” for the past 6 years. Southway Housing Association and the RSPB also taking an active interest in green spaces in Didsbury.

The Parsonage Gardens and Fletcher Moss Rockery attract many visitors from outside the immediate area.

However:

- The infrastructure in many green spaces related to footpaths and drainage is in a poor state.
- Maintenance of roadside trees and their borders especially along Wilmslow Road is extremely limited. The state of the area opposite the new St James Park development on Wilmslow Road is a good example of poor maintenance.
- There is no overall campaign to address the issue of dog faeces. The policing of the dog control policy is inadequate. Individual initiatives such as the free doggy bags provided by the Friends of Didsbury is having some effect
- The area of green space around the River Mersey requires significant attention if it is to be a major attractive green space for the community of Didsbury and beyond. Though well walked, cycled and run during the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- Some regular walkways leading to some green spaces are neglected, overgrown and dirty. However, there are some bright exceptions such as 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.

- Lack of any effective process for MCC to adequately support regular maintenance budgets for volunteers. The Council process is only focussed on one-off projects.
- the level of litter and waste left behind in green spaces by residents and visitors alike is at an unacceptable level.

Our Aim is to:

Produce a greenspace and recreational review of Didsbury which looks at short, medium and long term, aspirations for green space in Didsbury rather than a “fix it when it fails” approach. We aim to promote the newly launched campaign and to raise awareness amongst residents and visitors to take their litter home and stop litter dropping in the short, medium and long term.

ACTIONS 2021 to 2023

5.1 ensure that Ward Councillors are focused on the need for the maintenance and repair of infrastructure in green spaces

5.2 Discuss, review and pursue with MCC and the Environmental Agency the production of a specific strategic plan for the River Mersey Valley in Didsbury.

5.3 Review the scope of and pursue the maintenance and repair of roadside infrastructure and trees/ green spaces.eg embankment on Wilmslow Rd opposite St James Park.

5.4 Campaign for Ward councillors for MCC to have a plan to enforce the law regarding the clearing of dog faeces in the parks and streets of Didsbury.

5.5 Work with MCC to identify and address neglected pathways in Didsbury.

5.6 Work with MCC to formulate a process for supporting volunteer groups who are maintaining green spaces.

5.7 Review parking for visitors and disabled parking provision to all parks and green spaces.

5.9 Pursue a rigorous campaign to reduce litter.

6.0 Review the health and maintenance condition of the trees in Didsbury.



Appendix 1

Population (2011 census. MCC website) states:

- 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.
- 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”.
- Both contain homes which pay higher council tax bands than other areas of Manchester. This will increase with the new, high end homes on the site of MMU. 91% of housing is in 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.
- There are more people aged 20-39 and over 85 than the rest of the City, but fewer in the 20-30 age group.
- Data concerning mental health issues was not available. Though will be influenced by Covid-19.