

# **Exploring Greater Manchester**

a fieldwork guide

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## 1.2 Urban change: Walking Urban Manchester

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**Aims:** To give you a feel for the kind of city Manchester is, and was, (and perhaps might be) by following a walk through a part of the city centre. The walk should act as a stimulus for you to engage with the city, whether through leisure, work or as a student of geography. You should be able to evaluate the links between the built environment and social, economic, cultural and political processes.

**Starting point:** Piccadilly Gardens.

**Estimated time:** 2 hours.

**Further Information:**

O' Conner, J. and Wynne, D. (1996) *From the margins to the centre: cultural production and consumption in the post-industrial city*. Aldershot: Arena

Peck, J. and Ward, K. (eds.) (2002) *City of revolution: restructuring Manchester*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Taylor, I., Evans, K. and Fraser, P. (1996) *A tale of two cities: global change, local feeling and everyday life in the North of England. A study in Manchester and Sheffield*. London: Routledge.

[www.manchester2002-uk.com/buildings](http://www.manchester2002-uk.com/buildings)

**Date of Last Revision:** December 2002.

**Before you start:**

The questions to be considered might include:

- What do you think about 'this' Manchester?
- Is this walk representative of the whole city?
- Did you get a positive or negative image of the city?
- Were there signs of the destruction of the local manufacturing base and of the growing role of the service sector?
- What do you think the amount of re-development says about local politics?

**Starting point: Piccadilly Gardens**

Consider the role of open 'green' space in cities. How do English cities compare with their European counterparts? Who uses this space? Is it important for cities to continue to have areas that are 'free' and 'accessible'? Why? For example, would there be anything wrong with putting up a fence and charging people to use the space? What about the new offices in the Gardens? How do the 'needs' of business shape how cities evolve?

*Walk along Market Street, past Debenhams. Then turn right at the traffic lights into High Street. The Arndale Centre is on your left.*

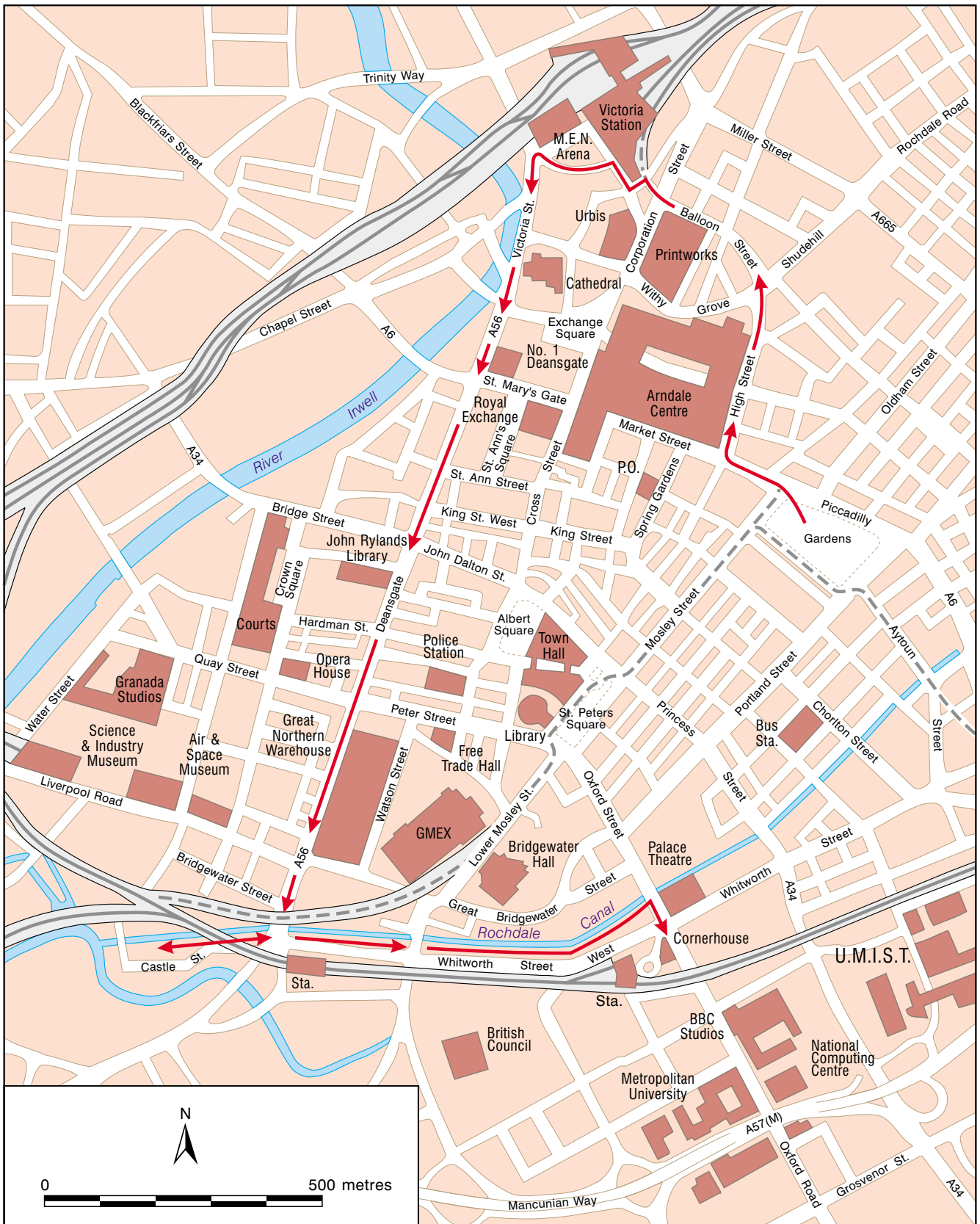
Do you know (roughly) when the Arndale Centre was built? What do you think of it? What do you feel it

represents? What sort of shops do you think are located in the Arndale Centre? Is it accessible? As you walk alongside it, does it feel 'friendly'? Do you know why it was kept after the 1996 Bomb?

*Walk along High Street. The road then becomes Nicholas Croft at the end of the Arndale Centre. Cross over the road into Bradshaw Street.*

Note the renovated car park on the left that bears more than a resemblance, in style if not in form, to the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao! The main building on the skyline is the CIS tower that acquired listed building status in the 1990s. What does its continued presence say about the relative power of money in contemporary Manchester? Are there signs of re-development around it? Note how the city at this point 'opens up', and how the tram feeds into previous transport channels. Note the new Metrolink station; why has it been added?

*At the end of Bradshaw Street continue down into Balloon Street. On the left is the Co-operative Bank headquarters, the first national bank to locate its headquarters outside London. The chairman, Terry Thomas, is influential in the politics of re-development in the city and the region. On the right is the Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd. Also note the back of the recently completed 'Printworks' complex.*



*At the end of Balloon Street cross over to Victoria Station.*

What does the name of the station say about the historic role of the city of Manchester, in relation to London? Do you know what role Manchester played under the Commonwealth? Which countries are mentioned at the

front of Victoria Station? From Victoria Station what evidence can you see of the return of urban parks to Manchester? Who funds the development? What does the City Park mean for urban citizenship in Manchester?



*At the top of Walker's Croft is the Manchester Evening News Arena.*

Can you think of developments that have corporate sponsorship? What do you think of the architecture?

*Turn left, up Victoria Street towards the Cathedral.*

What is the area around the Cathedral like? Is there evidence of development at this end of the city centre? What is the commercial make-up of this end of the city?

*Keep walking up the gradual incline and the road becomes Deansgate.*

What do you think of 'No 1 Deansgate'? Does it fit in with the surrounding architecture? Who is likely to live here?

*On your left are new retail developments.*

What do you think of the development? Given the Marks & Spencer's recent corporate performance is it fit to be a flagship site for Manchester? Why does Selfridges now occupy half of the building?

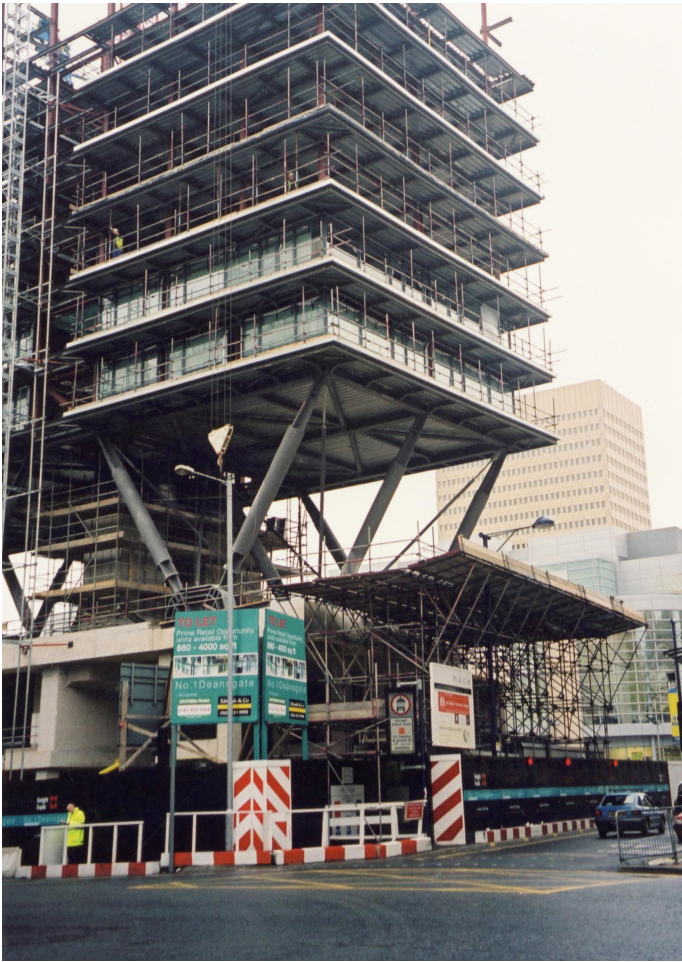
*Stop at the end of Long Millgate and Todd Street, which runs along the front of Victoria Station. Look up towards Manchester cathedral.*

What are the main buildings that stand out? What does the 'landscape' reveal about Manchester's past? Consider how social values are invested in buildings - what type of development is most likely to be built in Manchester at present? What do you think of URBIS? What is it? Was it worth the £28 million it cost to build?

*Walk along the front of Victoria Station and look out for a set of steps on the left. Take these down to Walker's Croft. Walk up the road.*

How does this historic road, with the Chetham School of Music at the side, fit into contemporary Manchester? Since it was built do you think the Music School has always been this well maintained? If not, what is it about the specific type of re-generation process currently active in the city that seeks out 'historic' buildings and re-presents them?





*Pass Quay Street and St Johns Street on the right.*

Note how the architecture changes again past Quay Street – there is a small financial and legal district around the Georgian St Johns Street. On the left is the Great Northern Warehouse, which has recently been renovated. What do you think of the new ‘open’s space? What about the water feature? What function did the building used to perform? In a city like Manchester how much of the space is accessible? Is ‘accessibility’ easy to measure? What stops you entering a building or an area of ‘open’ space? Is the city being slowly privatised?

*Reach the end of Deansgate*

There is a series of specialist shops (INTOVIEW etc.) and a number of galleries. Compare this end of Deansgate with the other end - where do you feel most comfortable? Why? How important were CMDC in re-developing the area?

*Continue under the bridge by Deansgate railway station. On the right is Castle Street, which runs parallel with the canal. Walk along by the canal (access is 20 yards along Castle Street), by Nowhere Bar and keep walking until you come to Barça cafe bar. In what condition are the canal walkways and the surrounding area? Have they always been this well maintained? Do you know who owns Barça? What is being re-created and why? (Hint: Catalan Square)*

*Walk straight along Deansgate. On the left are St Ann’s Street and King Street. Walk up both and return to Deansgate.*

Compare this shopping area with the Arndale Centre. Do the different ways in which space is used reflect the different shoppers who visit the areas? Are there any ‘keep-out’ signs in King Street? Are they easy to spot? Do you feel comfortable? Why do you/don’t you? Did you manage to walk up both without spending any money?

*Keep walking along Deansgate*

Note the building of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester on the right of Deansgate, and the office of the Manchester Evening News next door. As you walk along Deansgate note the changing architecture from Hardman Street. Do different rounds or circuits of development, or re-development, shape the city? What is the effect of the re-development you have seen so far on the social polarisation within Manchester?

*Walk across the bridge*

Compare the surroundings with the flats on the skyline. What sorts of people use the new bars? To what extent is the success of cities like Manchester ‘sustainable’?

*Walk left along the canal towards town and Oxford Road.*

As you walk along the canal read the signs that are by the side and think about how and for what the canals used to be used. What used to be transported by water? What are the canal-side developments now used for? Is this indicative of a broader shift from the city as manufacturer to the city as consumer? What evidence is there of residents moving back into the city centre?

*Leave the canal by the diversion and you are in Whitworth Street. Turn left and finish the walk at the Cornerhouse.*