

Manchester Digital Campus gets green light

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A major government office complex has been given planning consent to be built in Manchester.

Manchester Digital Campus will be a state-of-the-art hub constructed on the former Central Retail Park in Ancoats after the city's planning committee approved the [Government Property Agency's](#) (GPA) scheme at a meeting on Thursday 20 February 2025.

The campus will bring together a number of Civil Service departments with a focus around digital skills and create significant employment opportunities and economic benefits in the region.

Mark Bourgeois, CEO at the GPA, said: "We are delighted with the decision and are grateful for the support of the many stakeholders in Manchester. The GPA team is proud to be working on this exciting project in support of the Government's growth mission."

The GPA exchanged contracts to acquire five-and-a-half acres of the former Central Retail Park in Ancoats from the city council in May last year with a view to constructing a state-of-the-art digital campus.

Both the agency and Manchester City Council have been working together on the plans for Ancoats, culminating in a parallel proposal for the digital campus and an adjacent public park.

The council and the GPA held a joint consultation around emerging plans for the former retail site in August and September last year, inviting local residents, businesses and other stakeholders to help guide proposals to create the new government digital campus – delivered by the GPA – and a new city centre park space, delivered by the council.

Mark added: "We are pleased to be working with Manchester City Council on these regeneration plans, and look forward to creating fantastic and sustainable workplaces to support the transformation of the Civil Service.

"This proposed development, builds on the work MCC and the GPA undertook last year in putting in place

an updated Strategic Regeneration Framework, and the shared ambition to regenerate the Ancoats former retail site, creating employment and wider business opportunities, supported by the digital campus.”

New city centre park

Alongside the new campus, the new park will improve access to quality green space in Manchester city centre, creating a connection to the existing Cotton Field Park behind and through to Ancoats and New Islington.

The park space has been designed in collaboration with landscape architects Planit-IE following public consultation.

A central lawn and plaza will create a green buffer to Great Ancoats Street, with various tiered gardens navigating the different level changes across the site, alongside play areas, paths and tranquil areas to escape the noise of the city. The park has been designed to make sure that it is fully accessible.

The site will accommodate new walking and cycling routes, helping to link to other city centre active travel investment in Ancoats, Northern Quarter and out towards the Etihad Campus.

To note – development across the rest of the site will be brought forward as a later development phase. More information will be made available in due course.

Leader of the Council, Bev Craig said: “Gaining planning approval for both the GPA’s digital campus and the latest city centre park is the launchpad for the transformation of this site.

“Our ambition has long been to bring the former retail park back into active use and working in partnership with the GPA we are delivering a quality, low carbon development that will bring 7,000 civil service jobs to Manchester in the coming years.

“The new digital campus plays to Manchester’s strengths. We have fostered one of the fastest growing tech and digital communities in the UK, with a growing international reputation. The transformation of this brownfield site supports our ongoing growth in the sector, which translates into quality employment and development opportunities for our residents.

“We stand ready to work with this Government to bring forward other ambitious investments in Manchester that can continue our path of sustainable economic growth, supporting our residents to thrive.

“At the same time, the new park is a welcome addition to our city centre green spaces and a reimagining of the former retail site that has for many years acted only as a barrier to the community behind – and an eyesore in one of the most exciting parts of our city.”

For more information contact comms@gpa.gov.uk