

Stockport Green Party - Response to SEMMMS Refresh Draft Strategy Report Consultation May 2018

Executive summary

The Executive Summary states 'The continued growth and development of northern cities is anchored by the increased prominence of Greater Manchester as a national focal point and Global Hub. Manchester Airport is central to this'.

- It is our belief that to achieve Andy Burnham's carbon neutral target, combat Global Warming and Climate Change, and to improve air quality in South-East Manchester that the growth of Manchester Airport should be halted.

The Executive Summary also references the 'ambitious growth plans as set out in the consultation raft of the Greater Manchester's Spatial Framework'.

- Many of the proposals in Stockport, in particular for housing on Green Belt land in Heald Green, Cheadle Hulme, Woodford and High Lane, were vociferously opposed and are expected to undergo major changes in the revised GMSF due soon. It seems disingenuous not to wait for the revised Spatial Framework before revising the SEMMMS strategy.

The vision for the Refreshed SEMMMS Strategy is: 'A transport network that creates conditions for sustainable economic growth, improving quality of life and protection of the environment'.

- An excellent vision, but it would seem to be at best contradictory to be protecting the environment by proposing to 'add capacity to the road network' and by building on green belt land.
- We also need to ensure that any growth such as at the airport truly sustainable and is measurable as such.
- The 10 key actions are broadly acceptable, but increased capacity should not include more roads, and should not be in support of Manchester Airport growth. Increased capacity should be achieved with no increase in road surface but with more public transport; more provision for cyclists; smaller, more efficient cars and car-sharing.

Section 1. Introduction and Background.

In 1.1 Setting the scene, certain prioritised measures not yet in place are highlighted including the A6 to M60 Link Road.

- We would challenge the benefit case stated, especially challenging the 'moderate adverse' rating that has been given for environmental impact, and the predicted costs given the overrun on the A6MARR build.
- We would also argue that the increase in capacity provided by the A6 to M60 Link Road will result in increased traffic due to latent demand, causing more congestion and pollution.

Section 2. Understanding the transport issues, opportunities and challenges.

We would broadly agree with the assessment of the issues, opportunities and challenges in Section 2. We would highlight the following: -

- 'lack of comprehensive bus routes'.
- excessive car journeys to school.
- car journeys 'to access services from stations in Stockport to save money, adding to congestion on local roads'.
- 'balance of travel demands, and opportunity is skewed towards a car reliant population'.

Section 3. Planning for the Future

As stated previously the reliance on the vehemently opposed housing development plans from the GMSF are unwise, and we cannot understand why the SEMMMS Refresh has not been delayed until the new version of the GMSF is available.

As stated previously the Manchester Airport growth plans will be a serious impediment to meeting Andy Burnham's carbon neutral, combatting Global Warming and Climate Change, and to improving air quality in South-East Manchester.

Section 4. Vision and objectives. See comments regarding the Executive Summary.

Section 5. Developing the interventions.

The preferred approach is the 'Balanced multi-modal programme with an emphasis on sustainable transport'.

- This is consistent with the original strategy, however to date the amount of money spent on 'Enhanced highways' has dwarfed the spending on sustainable travel. We see nothing in this SEMMMS refresh that will produce a different outcome.

In section 5.4 Understanding the potential benefits – subsection 'Findings' – it states 'the modelling suggests that mode shift on its own is unlikely to be enough to address key congestion issues in the main movement corridors'.

- We would suggest that as a society we need to be far more ambitious in achieving behaviour change, if we are to combat Global Warming and Climate Change. The 'Greater Manchester's cycling and walking infrastructure proposal (Beelines)' states, 'We need thousands of Greater Manchester residents to look out of their car windows and think: "That appeals to me." In the few places where we have safe, attractive infrastructure, that is exactly what has happened'. The SEMMMS strategy needs to reflect this ambition.
- The promotion of the A6 to M60 Relief Road is misguided. Whilst pollution may be improved on the A6, the pollution would simply be relocated to Bredbury and Disley. Additionally, the consequent recommendation for further by-pass building will only increase the environmental impact).
- Building the A6 to M60 relief road would also result in the following: -
 - o Devastation of the Lower Goyt and Poise Brook Valleys
 - o Loss of the green space between Offerton Estate, Bosden Farm and Hazel Grove
 - o Reduced air quality at 5 schools in Offerton next to the bypass, and homes in Offerton, Lower Bredbury, Bredbury Green and Torkington next to the bypass
 - o Three congestion-creating bypass junctions in and around Offerton
 - o Another stage in traffic escalation: more roads = more traffic = more roads (though urban A-roads have been stable since the 90s and traffic on the A6 north of Hazel Grove has reduced).

- The huge cost of the road should be spent on 'greening' Stockport and encouraging green businesses and technologies.

Section 6. Recommended Interventions.

- We agree that 'The success of the future transport system relies upon reducing people's dependency on cars in favour of increased walking, cycling and use of public transport'.
- We would add that we need to be more ambitious in trying to achieve behaviour changes and that this should include 'congestions zones' and 'low emission zones', and road pricing could be considered.
- We would also stress that transport infrastructure should be designed to give priority to walking, cycling, public transport, and then cars and freight in that order. We need to embrace the ambition of 'Greater Manchester's cycling and walking infrastructure proposal (Beelines)' and challenge the self-entitlement that car owners feel. The residents of Stockport have a right not to have to breathe polluted air.

6.1 Strategic priorities: -

- We should prioritise the removal of cars from the road to relieve the congestion on the A34 corridor.
- We would support BRT, with the use of electric buses, but would not support offline bus only roads where they mean the destruction of the green belt.
- We support the suggested cycling improvements along the A34 corridor. We would urge the early progression of all 'Beelines' in the A34 corridor, in particular the improvements to be made to all existing A34 overpasses and underpasses to aid cycling flow, and traffic flow by reducing the need for crossings on the A34. We would also advocate the development of overpasses at Stanley Green. We are concerned that improvements may involve the removal of mature trees and this should be avoided except where totally impossible.

- We support the opening of new rail stations but are sceptical of the ability of the current franchises and Network Rail to accommodate and run these efficiently. The only way that we can see that this may be possible is if the rail network is re-nationalised.
- We could only support the creation of park and ride facilities at Stanley Green if these were built on brownfield sites.
- We support the electrification of the Buxton Rail Line and re-introduction of regular passenger services through Reddish South.
- We would **not** support more car parking at local stations in Stockport because as previously stated this will add to local congestion.
- We support the continued development of the cycling and walking networks and would like to see a higher proportion of spending in these areas.
- We would support tram-train developments but if these are not available in similar timescales to tram developments then tram developments should be prioritised.
- **We oppose** the proposed road development in the A6 Corridor because of the environmental impacts, and generated traffic effects.
- We agree that more needs to be done to encourage greater use of the under-utilised facilities such as the bus park and ride site in Hazel Grove.
- We support the need for full, joined-up thinking and a collective approach to land-use planning and transport services, and that sustainable transport must be closely integrated into the planning and delivery of new development sites.

6.2 Other Key Elements: -

- We agree that it is critical to ensure that existing bus connections (which provide a majority of east-west connections currently) are sustained and strengthened wherever possible.

- We support the re-allocation of road space in Stockport Town Centre and improved walking and cycling connections across the M60, and from neighbouring areas.
- We support the development of a network of electric bicycle and vehicle charging points. This should include charging points for taxis at railway stations. Incentives should be provided to local businesses to shift to electric delivery vehicles. Solar panels should be installed to offset additional electricity used by vehicles. There are many examples of solar canopies over existing car parks and new charging stations which have integrated solar.
- We support targeted travel planning programmes, these should be mandatory for schools (as part of a strategic education plan), and should be monitored for effectiveness. Local firms should provide incentives for employees to walk, cycle or use public transport.
- We support better traffic and network management including signal optimisation and junction improvements and the encouragement of more environmentally friendly vehicles.
- **We oppose** new road building (as a method of tackling air quality) precisely because of the environmental issues referenced. The further work to the business case should be to correctly assess the cost of (in our opinion) the very large adverse environmental impact, as this is lacking at present. The focus should be on encouraging people to use their car less often, investing in new and improved public transport, and using promotional campaigns and travel planning. Congestion and emission zones should also be introduced.
- It would also seem a lot of investment to achieve 2 or 4 minutes faster travelling time on the A34 corridor. Priority should be given to improving the air quality.

Section 7. Our Early Priorities

- As previously stated we would not support more car parking at local stations in Stockport because this will add to local congestion.
- We support the continual improvement of the bus network and additional promotion of the Hazel Grove bus park and ride site.
- We support cycling improvements on the A34 Corridor, across the M60 in Stockport, and for district/local centre public realm improvements.

- We support the need for Travel Planning and Behaviour Change Promotions, and recommend that these should be ambitious.
- We would not support some of the A34 corridor junction improvements, many of which have already been remodelled with A6MARR.
- We support the extension of the tram network, better marketing of existing bus services, and the opening of new rail stations.
- We oppose the building of the A6 to M60 link for reasons previously detailed, and other road building required/proposed as a result.
- We support the proposal for integrated Smart Ticketing for public transport.
- Consideration should be given to providing shuttle buses between Cheadle and the tram stop at East Didsbury.

In summary.

Public transport in the Stockport area needs to be improved in general, including the extension of the metro-link to Stockport, and extend as far as possible. The East / West radial links from Stockport Town Centre are currently inadequate. The aim must be to eliminate all short car journeys.

The refresh is too concerned with improving links to the airport. The growth of the airport will reduce our ability to combat climate change and pollution and will prevent Andy Burnham from reaching his carbon neutral targets.

Bus and train improvements are hampered by the current regulatory framework, and local authority funding, so will be difficult to achieve until the regulatory framework is amended, this will be fiercely resisted by the bus and train franchises which would be likely to cause further delays

Extension of the tram network will be the preferred (and most popular) way to improve the public transport network. Currently road building is seen to be cheaper, but this is primarily due to the fact that no financial cost is put on the environmental impact of new roads on green belt. If this was properly reflected in the business case then the cost of extending the tram network is likely to be cheaper.

Behaviour change needs to be a priority, currently the bus network and Hazel Grove park and ride are under utilised, and this may be attributed in great part to the lack of promotion. We need a step change in the way that public transport is promoted, and this should include the promotion of changes to cycling and walking infrastructure.

The opportunity that 'Beelines' provides to improve the walking and cycling infrastructure, and to achieve the behaviour change necessary to remove cars from the road needs to be embraced.

We need a step change in the way that Stockport Council thinks about growth and quality of life. Quality of life is not improved by greater economic growth (which mainly benefits the few) and poorer air quality and the stress of congestion. Walking and cycling improve quality of life in so many ways.