

**THE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF STOCKPORT (HAZEL GROVE (A6)
TO MANCHESTER AIRPORT A555 CLASSIFIED ROAD) COMPULSORY
PURCHASE ORDER 2013**

**THE METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF STOCKPORT (HAZEL GROVE (A6)
TO MANCHESTER AIRPORT A555 CLASSIFIED ROAD) (SIDE ROADS)
ORDER 2013**

THE HIGHWAYS ACT 1980

-and-

THE ACQUISITION OF LAND ACT 1981

THE HIGHWAYS (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) RULES 1994

COMPULSORY PURCHASE (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) RULES 2007

REFERENCE: LAO/NW/SRO/2013/40 and LAO/NW/CPO/2013/41

**A proof of evidence relating to the PLANNING aspect of the
A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road**

-of-

Alan Houghton

BA (Hons), DMS, MRTPI

on behalf of

The Metropolitan Borough Council of Stockport

acting on its behalf and on behalf

-of-

Manchester City Council

-and-

Cheshire East Borough Council

VOLUME 1 - PROOF OF EVIDENCE

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. My name is Alan Houghton. I am the head of Planning Regeneration North for URS Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited (URS). URS is the planning consultant acting on behalf of the applicants (Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, Manchester City Council and Cheshire East Borough Council) in relation to the planning applications submitted for the construction of the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road, and I was responsible for submission of the planning applications, and for the ongoing discharge of conditions.
- 1.2. I hold a Degree in Town and Country Planning and a Post Graduate Diploma in Management, and qualified as a chartered member of the Royal Town Planning Institute in 1982. I have over 32 years' experience working in planning, for Local Authorities and as a planning consultant.
- 1.3. I am giving evidence on behalf of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), Manchester City Council (MCC) and Cheshire East Borough Council (CEC). I have read the Statement of Case and I am therefore aware of the broad case advanced to promote the aforementioned Orders. My evidence is given in support of that case.
- 1.4. In my evidence I shall cover; Pre-application discussions; The application process; the current planning policy position relating to A6MARR; the Local Planning Authorities (LPA) assessment of the planning applications; an analysis of the issues that were considered material in determination of those applications, and how the proposal accords with relevant planning policies.

My evidence should be read alongside the evidence of:

Jim McMahon Director Major Projects, SMBC

Naz Huda Client Design Manager

Nasar Malik Director, Highways & Transportation, ATKINS

Paul Reid Director, Mouchel Limited

Paul Colclough Air Quality Team Leader, Mouchel Limited

Jamie Bardot Principal Environmental Advisor, Morgan Sindall plc

Sue Stevenson Investing in Growth Manager, SMBC Planning

Henry Church Director, CBRE

I am familiar with this evidence, and I consider that this, together with my evidence, provides a compelling case, in the public interest, to confirm the Orders.

2. Pre-planning and application processing

- 2.1. The proposed scheme has been subject to a formal process of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (The Regulations).
- 2.2. The Regulations allow the promoters of a proposed development to seek the opinion of the planning authority on the content and scope of the EIA through a Scoping Opinion and this was undertaken for the Proposed Scheme.
- 2.3. Pre-application discussions and meetings were held with the 3 LPAs throughout 2012 and 2013, identifying the detailed requirements for an application submission including the documentation required to support the application.
- 2.4. In discussion with the 3 LPAs a decision was made that a full planning application for the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road (A6MARR) ('the Scheme') should be submitted to the three relevant LPAs within which the application would fall. A single validation list for the application was drawn up and agreed by lead officers from SMBC, MCC and CEC.
- 2.5. I am of the opinion that a full application supported by an Environmental Statement to be submitted to the three LPAs for determination within their respective constituent areas was the correct and appropriate way for the scheme to progress.
- 2.6. On the 1st November 2013 a full planning application was submitted to each of the three LPAs for determination. The application was validated

on the 4th November 2013 with subsequent public consultation carried out during the determination period.

- 2.7. The full planning application submitted to SMBC (DC/053678) was reported to four Area Committees and received recommendations for approval from each. The application proceeded to the Councils Planning and Highways Regulation Committee. On 22nd January 2014, SMBCs Planning and Highways Regulation Committee (see Core Document 2102¹) recommended approval of the scheme, subject to conditions.
- 2.8. The full planning application submitted to MCC (104094/FO/2013/S2) was reported to the appropriate Area Committee and received a recommendation for approval. The application proceeded to the Councils Planning and Highways Committee and on 13th February 2014 the Planning and Highways Committee recommended approval of the scheme, subject to conditions (see Core Document 2101²).
- 2.9. The full planning application submitted to CEC (13/4355M) was reported to the Council's Strategic Planning Board. On 18th March 2014 the application was recommended for approval, subject to conditions (see Core Document 2103³).
- 2.10. The scheme had been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework and the Development Plans of the 3 Councils. It is considered to be in accordance with the policies of these documents. The decision to grant planning permission reflected the strategic importance of the Scheme and the positive impact that its implementation would bring to improving the effectiveness of the transport network around South Manchester. The Scheme would have a positive impact on congestion and traffic movements within the area and facilitate the delivery of growth. The reduction of congestion and traffic movements along the existing A6 corridor was considered to have a positive impact on air quality and movement of vehicles through the area with the Scheme delivering improved transport links and reduction in social exclusion, enhanced

¹ 'Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Planning Committee Report' Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council 22nd January 2014.

² 'Manchester City Council Planning Committee Report' Manchester City Council 13th February 2014.

³ 'Cheshire East Council Planning Committee Report' Manchester City Council 18th March 2014.

pedestrian and cycling facilities and enhanced living and working environment along the existing corridor. The potential detrimental impacts along the route were not considered to outweigh the significant benefits.

2.11. In reaching that decision, the three LPAs considered the Scheme to be acceptable in land use planning and environmental terms. Overall, and taking account of the vast history associated with the scheme (with the protected route pre-dating the Green Belt designation), the three LPAs considered that the development, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures identified within the application and suitable planning conditions, could be undertaken in a manner where the level of impact would be acceptable in accordance with policies contained within the Development Plan.

2.12. In my view, the Planning Applications were processed in accordance with current procedures and complied with the statutory requirements in respect of publicity and notification of all 3 Councils. The descriptions provided in each of the Planning Applications refer to the construction of the whole bypass route and associated infrastructure within each of the authority boundaries. The descriptions for the scheme in each of the authority boundaries are set out below:

- Within Stockport:
 - Five new road junctions
 - Modification of three existing road junctions
 - Three new rail bridge crossings
 - One new public right of way/accommodation bridge
 - A pedestrian cycle route
 - Four balancing ponds; and
 - Associated landscaping, lighting, engineering and infrastructure works.
- Within Cheshire East:
 - modifications to one existing road junction;
 - two new public rights of way/accommodation bridges;
 - one new road bridge;

- a pedestrian and cycle route for the whole length of the relief road, including retrofitting it to the existing section of the A555;
 - one balancing pond for drainage purposes; and
 - associated landscaping, lighting, engineering and infrastructure works.
 - Within Manchester:
 - one new rail bridge crossing;
 - one balancing pond for drainage purposes;
 - a pedestrian and cycle route and
 - associated landscaping, lighting, engineering and infrastructure works
- 2.13. The publicity and notification material invited interested parties to review the detailed information online or at named locations.
- 2.14. The planning application to all 3 Councils clearly sets out the details of the proposed Scheme included a comprehensive description of the elements of the Scheme.
- 2.15. The three planning applications were referred to the Secretary of State (SOS) by each of the LPAs as a Departure from the Development Plan due to the location of the proposal within the designated Greater Manchester Green Belt.
- 2.16. The applications submitted to all three LPAs were issued to the (SOS) under the 'Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009' following consideration by the appropriate committees of each authority. Following this, a Holding Direction was issued by the SOS under Article 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 to request further time to consider the applications. This directed that no decision be made for the Scheme by the three LPAs pending further direction from the SOS.
- 2.17. These holding directions from the SOS were withdrawn by letter of the SOS to all 3 LPA's on 9th June 2014.

2.18. Following this, Approval Decision Notices were issued by the 3 LPA's on the following dates:

- SMBC – 25th June 2014
- CEC – 25th June 2014
- MCC – 2nd July 2014

2.19. The Approval Decision Notices are set out in Appendix A.

2.20. Conditions were imposed by each LPA, and these are reproduced in the schedule at Appendix B.

Additional planning applications

2.21. Following submission of the three planning applications for the A6MARR, some minor discrepancies were discovered in terms of the red line plan (plan number 1007/2D/DF7/A6-MA/PALP/269) that was submitted with the applications. This triggered a requirement to submit four further minor planning applications to ensure that permission is sought for all works proposed as part of the A6MARR.

2.22. The four minor applications were for the following proposed development:

- Earthworks drainage required adjacent to the Hill Green Accommodation Bridge proposed as part of the A6MARR consisting of: proposed highway drainage (150Ø pipe); a proposed outfall location incorporating a drainage headwall; and a proposed manhole (submitted to CEC);
- Construction of 2no. headwalls located on land 60 metres north of Mill Hill Hollow (**applications submitted to both CEC and SMBC** as the application site straddled the two authority areas); and
- A portion of the shared use footway/cycleway located on land towards the north of the A555 and east of the A34, incorporating Spath Lane (application submitted to SMBC).

2.23. I can confirm that the applications have been approved by the relevant planning authority. Decision Notices for the above planning application approvals are included as Appendix C.

- 2.24. During the contractor procurement process, design refinement has been progressing and resulting from this a further small area of land outside the approved red line boundary (land north west of Woodford Road) has been identified for the development of a bund. The development of a bund in this location represents a sustainable method of managing earthworks across the route of the scheme, avoiding the need to dispose of land/soil off-site.
- 2.25. The formation of a soil bund is the subject of a further planning application which was submitted to SMBC on 28th August 2014. At time of writing the application was yet to be validated and determined.
- 2.26. It is my opinion that the overall benefits of the development proposed as part of the bund planning application outweigh its negative impacts and that if the LPA is minded to approve it, the wider Scheme will be improved. However, the wider Scheme is not dependent on this approval, and remains capable of implementation (subject to CPO confirmation) irrespective of the LPA's decision.
- 2.27. The table below shows the key dates for the applications:

Application	LPA	Application Number	Date validated	Application approved by LPA
Installation of earthworks drainage.	CEC	14/2251M	08/05/14	21/07/14
Construction of 2no. drainage headwalls	CEC	14/2265M	08/05/14	21/07/14
Construction of 2no. drainage headwalls	SMBC	DC/055432	08/05/14	30/06/14
Construction of a pedestrian and cycle route.	SMBC	DC/055439	07/05/14	30/06/14
Construction of a bund	SMBC	Submitted 28 th August 2014.	At time of writing, not yet validated.	

Oil Pipeline Planning Application

- 2.28. Further to these applications, a further relevant planning application which at time of writing is ongoing is the realignment of a Ministry of Defence oil pipeline at land south of Bramhall Oil Depot and north of A5149 Chester Road/Woodford Road.
- 2.29. The proposed development seeks consent for the realignment of part of the existing Ministry of Defence oil pipeline (managed by the Oil and Pipelines Agency) to facilitate the implementation of the A6MARR. The proposed realignment would extend for 760m west and 1242m east, with additional temporary working area around the pipeline site.
- 2.30. The scheme is currently out for consultation and was recommended for approval at Bramhall Area Committee in early August 2014. It will be decided by the Planning and Highways Regulation Committee, target date is 11th September 2014.
- 2.31. The Bramhall Area Committee report stated that having considered the overall proposal there are no considerations of weight which would justify refusal of the oil pipeline application, with archaeological and ecological mitigation proposed.

3. Planning Policy

- 3.1. During the Scheme design, proposals have been prepared in the light of the relevant planning policy framework at national and local level. In this context it should be noted that the Planning Permission is fully compliant with national and local planning policy.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.2. The NPPF (March 2012) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and is a material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. For decision taking this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay; and
- where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole; or specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted.

- 3.3. Consequently, proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved and development that conflicts should be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 3.4. In considering each application for planning permission, there is a requirement to take into consideration the full range of planning policy, including national policy and guidance and local policies set out within the respective development plans.

- 3.5. The main policies/statements set out in the NPPF which were relevant to the Scheme are as follows (summarised):

Building a strong, competitive economy

- 3.6. The NPPF (para 19) highlights that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country's inherent strengths, and to meeting the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future. Furthermore, the NPPF states that:

“The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.”

- 3.7. Key objectives of the proposed development are to increase employment and generate economic growth. This will be achieved through providing efficient surface access and improved connectivity to, from and between Manchester Airport, local, town and district centres, and key areas of development and regeneration (e.g. Manchester Airport Enterprise Zone). A further objective of the proposed development is to boost business integration and productivity through improving the efficiency and reliability of the highway network, reduce the conflict between local and strategic traffic, and provide an improved route for freight and business travel.
- 3.8. The economic impacts of the proposed development are explored in more detail within the socio-economic assessment and summarised in section 7.4 of the planning statement.

Ensuring the vitality of town centres

- 3.9. The need for planning policies to promote competitive town centre environments and ensure the vitality of town centres is set out within the NPPF. The proposed development should contribute towards ensuring the vitality of town centres as it aims to enhance the environmental conditions within the district and local centres along the south Manchester corridors through relieving congestion within these locations. Furthermore, the proposed development aims to reduce severance and improve

accessibility to, from and between key centres of economic and social activity.

- 3.10. Furthermore, a series of complementary and mitigation measures are proposed alongside the proposed development. The delivery of these measures should help to ensure that the vitality of areas surrounding the application site is protected and where possible enhanced. Further details relating to the proposed measures are set out within section 4.4 of the Planning Statement.

Promoting sustainable transport

- 3.11. The NPPF sets out the need to deliver a transport system throughout the country that is balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes. As part of the proposed development, new and existing footpaths/cycle links will be provided/upgraded, linking the new development to neighbouring villages and the wider green infrastructure in the area. This will ensure that people living and working within the area are encouraged to walk/cycle when accessing areas adjacent to the proposed development.
- 3.12. The proposed development will improve the safety of road users, pedestrians and cyclists through reducing the volume of through-traffic from residential areas and retail centres. The proposed development also aims to decongest the highway network and free space for buses to travel more quickly.

Requiring good design

- 3.13. The NPPF emphasises the importance of delivering good design as part of new development, which contributes positively to making places better for people. Details of the design of the proposed development are set out in more detail within the Design and Access Statement and the plans that accompany the planning applications. Furthermore, the proposed development has also been awarded a CEEQUAL Excellent Score (88.6%).

Promoting Healthy Communities

- 3.14. The important role that the planning system can play in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities is emphasised

within the NPPF. Key positive health and wellbeing impacts identified within the Health Impact Assessment are as follows:

- *Economic and employment potential:* Both during the construction and operation phases through construction jobs building the A6MARR and jobs in construction-related businesses that supply the A6MARR and creates the potential for attracting new businesses into business areas around the A6MARR e.g. Airport City development because of the improved road connectivity.
- *Improved accessibility and connectivity:* Through the construction of the A6MARR and the new bridle, cycle and foot path alongside it that enhances the existing road and bridle, cycle and foot path networks.
- *Traffic and associated pollution:* The reductions in traffic flows, congestion, noise, air pollution and visual intrusion and likely increased social capital/community cohesion in some residential areas.

Protecting Green Belt land

3.15. The NPPF highlights that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The NPPF states that Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3.16. A large proportion of the application site is designated as Green Belt. Figure 3.2 from the planning statement shows the position of the Green

Belt in relation to the route of the proposed development. A discussion of how the proposed development relates to the five purposes of the Green Belt is set out below:

Purpose 1: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

- 3.17. While the proposed development is located within Green Belt, it is not considered to encourage further development within the area of Green Belt. The Green Belt land to the south and north of the route would still retain its strategic importance as an integral part of the openness of Green Belt.

Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

- 3.18. It is not considered that the proposed development will lead to the merging of any nearby settlements into one another. Therefore, this purpose is not at risk.

Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 3.19. It is accepted that the proposed development would be harmful to openness and would not safeguard existing areas of the countryside located within the application site. However, the proposed development has been sympathetically designed to follow the contour of land and is partially located within cutting, limiting the visual impact of above ground structures.

Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 3.20. It is considered that the proposed development will not impact upon the setting and special character of any historic towns. The proposed development will not damage or destroy any designated built heritage assets but will change the setting of built heritage and archaeology assets as well as the historic landscape character. The effect upon setting and historic landscape character is not considered significant.

Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

- 3.21. It is considered that the proposed development will contribute towards urban regeneration through removing traffic congestion from surrounding areas and enhancing access to important destinations within close proximity. The Complementary and Mitigation Measures (see section 4.4 of the planning statement) will further contribute towards improving the public realm within surrounding areas.

Further Discussion

- 3.22. As highlighted above in relation to Purpose 3, it is accepted that the proposed development would be harmful to openness and would not safeguard existing areas of the countryside located within the application site. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt. However, harm to the Green Belt arising from the proposed development is clearly outweighed by the benefits arising from the A6MARR and it is considered that these are very special circumstances. These very special circumstances are explored in further detail below, and focus on the socio-economic benefits.

1) The proposed new road facilitates important economic benefits

- 3.23. There is a need for the relief road to be constructed to boost economic growth for the region through enhancing access to Manchester airport and other key destinations for employment and increasing the potential for investment in Manchester Airport and Airport City as well as areas of Stockport, Cheshire East and Manchester. The proposed development will address existing high levels of congestion on local roads in surrounding areas such as Gatley, Bramhall, Heald Green, Hazel Grove, Poynton, Wilmslow, Handforth and Cheadle Hulme, which leads to delays to public transport and affects accessibility. The delivery of the proposed relief road will also lead to: shorter journey times for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users, car drivers and freight; and improved road safety, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists by reducing the volume of traffic passing through residential areas.
- 3.24. The economic benefits of the proposed development have been identified within the Socio Economic Impacts Report submitted as part of the

planning applications. The following section provides a summary of the findings reported within the socio-economic impacts report.

a. Economic appraisal

- 3.25. The majority of scheme benefits will be generated in the form of time savings to highway users. The remaining benefits will be generated largely from accident savings and savings in Vehicle Operating Costs.
- 3.26. Benefits are expected to be greatest for traffic travelling to/from local centres adjacent to the route of the scheme such as Bramhall, Cheadle, Hazel Grove, Marple, Wilmslow, Styal and Handforth among others. Significant benefits are also expected for trips originating and destined for the central Stockport area. These benefits are accrued due to traffic using the proposed A6MARR as an attractive and viable alternative for access to these local centres and enabling longer distance through trips to re-route away from these local centres and the existing congested local road network.

Employment and GVA

- 3.27. According to the GVA and employment modelling undertaken in May 2012, quoted in the Socio-Economic Impact Report (see Core Document 2080⁴) which accompanied the Planning Applications, The net additional employment impacts of the scheme are estimated to be around 1,800 jobs by 2017 and 3,600 jobs by 2032.

Productivity Impacts

- 3.28. Improvements to the transport network reduce journey times (hence reducing business costs) and bring businesses closer to each other (in terms of reduced and more reliable journey times) resulting in agglomeration benefits. The productivity benefits from the A6MARR are estimated to be worth up to £168 million (GVA) over the 60-year appraisal period (2002 prices and values). These benefits are net of time savings already implicitly assumed within the transport economic efficiency business user benefits.

⁴ 'Socio-Economic Impact Report' 1007/4.16/173, Atkins, October 2013.

Socio-economic impacts

- 3.29. This project would support 554 construction person years. Using the figure of 10 employment years equating to one full-time equivalent (FTE) job the construction phase of the scheme would generate approximately 55 direct FTE jobs.
- 3.30. Some disruption to local residents and businesses is likely during the construction phase of the scheme. Businesses within the area may experience air quality, noise and vibration, visual or construction traffic impacts as a result of the construction of the scheme. Taken in combination, these residual effects may amount to a change in amenity which leads to a possible loss of economic activity for the affected businesses. However any such impacts will be temporary and are likely to be offset by the long-term benefits the scheme will deliver during its operational phase.
- 3.31. Beyond the economic benefits outlined above, the A6MARR is expected to contribute to the regeneration of local communities by reducing severance and improving accessibility to, from and between key centres of economic and social activity.
- 3.32. A6MARR will have a positive impact on a number of local areas. The regeneration of local, district and town centres and improved accessibility to employment, facilities and services will support those in deprived communities. Furthermore, deprived communities will also benefit from a wider range of opportunities for social networking which can boost social cohesion. A6MARR is therefore expected to have a positive impact on breaking down barriers to opportunity by providing improved transport accessibility and reducing congestion.

b. Building the new road ensures the delivery of a key component of the SEMMMS

- 3.33. The A6MARR has been identified by Central Government as one of a number of nationally important infrastructure projects, which are required to revitalize the economy and £165 million of Central Government funding has been allocated for its delivery. The A6MARR is one of 70+ major infrastructure projects aimed at addressing congestion and improving

performance on the road network. This is part of the Government's initiative to 'keep Britain moving' through improving the capacity, performance and resilience of roads. The proposed development is an integral component of the wider SEMMMS and will assist to deliver the long term objectives of the strategy alongside national objectives and local aspirations for growth, employment and connectivity. Furthermore, the delivery of the A6MARR is part of an overall programme of major highway and public transport projects planned for Greater Manchester, and will play a key role in helping to achieve the objectives set out in the Local Transport Plan and Greater Manchester Strategy.

c. The proposed development within the Green Belt is considered to be the only option for the A6MARR road component of the SEMMMS

3.34. The line of the A6MARR has been identified for a number of years. As highlighted in section 2.2 of the planning statement, the original SEMMMS study developed and tested six separate strategy options in order to arrive at a preferred strategy of interventions. The six strategy options consisted of a mix of road, heavy rail, light rail and quality bus interventions along with non-infrastructure options to address the transport problems of the study area. This assessment led to the development of a recommended strategy that incorporated a substantial public transport investment in new infrastructure and services and also the construction of all the road scheme but to a lower standard of provision. In addition to the infrastructure interventions proposed, the strategy included recommendations for road space reallocation, transport change measures and urban regeneration proposals.

3.35. Having assessed a wide range of public transport interventions, the SEMMMS study recognised that many of the serious traffic congestion problems would only be addressed through the construction of the remitted road schemes, which included the A6MARR. Subsequently, this led to the development of proposals for the relief road, which is the subject of the planning applications. The proposed A6MARR has thus been developed following an extensive examination of six separate strategy options.

- 3.36. Options for the alignment of the proposed road have been carefully considered, including junction arrangements and impacts on neighbouring communities. Notwithstanding this, there is no viable alternative route for the proposed road that avoids passing through the Green Belt.
- 3.37. Furthermore, figure 3.2 from the planning statement demonstrates that a significant proportion of land located towards the south of Manchester is within the Green Belt and therefore by definition, any road alignment in this location would lie within the Green Belt. The route of the proposed development is protected within the Development Plans for the three LPAs and the Greater Manchester and Cheshire East Local Transport Plans. In particular, the route of the A6MARR is safeguarded by: Policy ST2.2 (Protection for Major Road Schemes) of the Stockport UDP (May 2006); and Policy T7 (Safeguarded Routes) of the Macclesfield Local Plan (see below).

d. Conclusion – Green Belt

- 3.38. It is concluded that although the proposed development represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt, this is clearly outweighed very special circumstances. The proposed development is an integral component of the wider SEMMMS and is critical to delivering the long-term objectives of SEMMMS. This balance, is consistent with paragraph 90 of the NPPF, because of the impact, albeit limited, that the road will have on openness of the Green Belt.

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

- 3.39. The important role that planning plays in helping to shape places in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and provide resilience to the impacts of climate change and in supporting the delivery of renewable energy and low carbon energy infrastructure is emphasised within the NPPF.
- 3.40. The proposed development identifies the need to provide/upgrade new and existing footpaths/cycle links. This will help to promote sustainable travel, which would contribute towards cutting greenhouse gas emissions through reducing dependence on the private car by households in and around the route of the proposed development.

3.41. The NPPF highlights that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk, but where development is necessary, making it safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere. A flood risk assessment (FRA) was submitted as part of the applications, which provides a full assessment of the potential impacts upon and effects of the proposed development in terms of flood risk. Furthermore, the drainage proposed as part of the development has been designed to be flood resilient.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

3.42. The NPPF highlights that the planning system should conserve and enhance the natural and local environment. More specifically, the NPPF highlights that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
- recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
- minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and
- remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

3.43. The proposed development has been designed to ensure any potentially significant adverse effects on noise and biodiversity are mitigated and enhancement measures included wherever possible. Full details relating to the effects/impacts on the natural environment (including the local landscape, noise, air and nature) and how these would be mitigated are provided within the Environmental Statement (ES) (Volume 1).

- 3.44. The NPPF highlights that when determining planning applications, LPAs should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by refusing planning permission for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including Ancient Woodland unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss. Although the proposed development will lead to the loss of an area of ancient woodland at Carr Wood, this loss only represents a small proportion of the woodland.
- 3.45. Furthermore, the NPPF states that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, LPAs should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality. As part of the proposed development, agricultural land that is classified as grades 3 and 4 with some areas of grade 2 is required. Land located towards the south east of Manchester is the only location for the proposed A6MARR and the relief road could not be located in an alternative location. Therefore, some high grade agricultural land will be required for the proposed development.

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

- 3.46. The NPPF emphasises the need to conserve and enhance the historic environment. In determining applications, the NPPF highlights that LPAs should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.

Planning strategically across local boundaries

- 3.47. The NPPF highlights the need to plan strategically across local boundaries. It states that public bodies have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those which relate to the strategic priorities.
- 3.48. SMBC, CEC and MCC have worked closely with each other in developing the proposed development and the wider SEMMS. Furthermore, other neighbouring LPAs have been consulted as part of the consultation that has taken place prior to submission of the main scheme planning application (see Statement of Community Involvement for further details).

Pre-application engagement and front loading

- 3.49. The NPPF highlights that early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties and that good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community. Pre-application discussions have taken place with each of the three LPAs in preparing the planning applications. Members of the local community and stakeholders have also been consulted during the design of the proposed development. Further details of these pre-application discussions are presented within the Statement of Community Involvement.

Strategic Level Policy

Prosperity for All: The Greater Manchester Strategy (2009)

- 3.50. The Greater Manchester Strategy, which was published by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) in 2009 sets out the key priorities to enable the conurbation to achieve its economic potential. The Greater Manchester Strategy recognises the need to improve surface access to Manchester Airport and emphasises the key role that the A6, A523 and A34 in Stockport and Cheshire play both locally and strategically. These links provide access routes into the North West and links to the M60 and Manchester Airport for traffic from the West Midlands and Wales.

The Local Development Plans

- 3.51. The proposed development corridor spans the three local authority areas of SMBC, MCC and CEC. Therefore, the development plan for each LPA is of relevance.

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council Development Plan

- 3.52. As of 1st April 2013, the development plan for Stockport for the purposes of determining the application submitted to SMBC currently consists of the following documents:

- Stockport Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (March 2011);
- Stockport Unitary Development Plan (May 2006) – Policies which still apply from 1st April 2011 onwards (post Core Strategy adoption);
- Greater Manchester Joint Waste DPD (Adopted April 2012); and
- Greater Manchester Joint Minerals DPD (Adopted April 2013).

3.53. The Greater Manchester Joint Waste DPD sets out the spatial planning framework to deliver sustainable waste management. The Greater Manchester Joint Minerals DPD provides a minerals spatial planning framework for Greater Manchester. Neither of these DPDs is of specific relevance to the proposed development.

3.54. SPDs provide detailed guidance on specific sites and topic areas to supplement the formal policies of the statutory development plan. The SPDs prepared by SMBC that are of relevance to the proposed development are identified below:

- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (Adopted 8th November 2010, revised April 2012); and
- Sustainable Transport SPD (Adopted December 2007).

Stockport Core Strategy DPD

3.55. The Core Strategy was adopted in March 2011 following the Examination in Public. The Core Strategy is part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for the Borough and provides the overall spatial strategy for the LDF. It sets down why change is needed; what should be done; and where, when and how it is going to happen, including the provision of supporting infrastructure. The Core Strategy covers the period from its adoption to 2026.

3.56. A series of objectives are set out within the Core Strategy. The objectives that relate to the proposed development are set out below:

- Objective 1 (Sustainable Development: Addressing Inequalities and Climate Change) highlights that 'The Core Strategy will support, enable and encourage development that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable'. More specifically, the objective sets out the need to maximise the economic benefits that development can bring. A key objective of the proposed development is to increase employment and generate economic growth through providing efficient surface access and improved connectivity to, from and between Manchester Airport, local, town and district centres, and key areas of development and regeneration.
- Objective 5 (Safeguarding and Improving the Borough's Environment) emphasises the importance of safeguarding and improving Stockport's natural and built environments. The impact of the proposed development on the natural and built environment is set out within the Environmental Statement.
- Objective 6 (Transport) of the Strategy set out within the Core Strategy for the future of the Borough relates to transport. The objective states that *'The Core Strategy will seek an efficient and extensive transport network which enables services and opportunities to be accessible by all, whilst also reducing congestion and minimising the environmental impact of transport.'* In order to achieve this, objective 6 identifies the need to implement the SEMMMS relief road (the first part of the relief road forms the proposed development).

3.57. The Core Strategy incorporates a series of Core Policies that identify the broad approach in relation to different issues and different forms of development. Under each Core Policy is a collection of Development Management Policies which are used to ensure that development contributes towards achieving the Core Policy and the overall vision and objectives of the Core Strategy. The Core and Development Management Policies that are of relevance to the proposed development are identified below:

Core Policy CS1 (Overarching principles: Sustainable development – addressing inequalities and climate change)

- 3.58. Core Policy CS1 highlights that the Core Strategy will have regard to enabling social progress, which recognises the needs of everyone. The policy also highlights the need for proposals to provide access for all to housing, employment, education, training, health, social, other services and facilities and identifies the importance of using high quality and inclusive design.
- 3.59. The proposed development will contribute towards: increasing employment and generating economic growth; boosting business integration and productivity; the regeneration of local communities (through reducing severance and improving accessibility to, from and between key centres of economic and social activity); reducing the impact of traffic congestion on local businesses and communities; and supporting lower carbon travel (through the provision of improved facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport).
- 3.60. Development Management Policy SD-1 (Creating Sustainable Communities) states that the Council will look favourably upon development that seeks to achieve a high rating under CEEQUAL (for public-realm development). A CEEQUAL assessment has been undertaken for the proposed development and a CEEQUAL Excellent Score (88.6%) has been achieved.

Core Policy CS8 (Safeguarding and Improving the Environment)

- 3.61. Core Policy CS8 highlights the need for development proposals to be of a high standard and to make a positive contribution to a sustainable, attractive, safe and accessible built and natural environment. The policy highlights the need for development to:
- Protect, develop and enhance an integrated network of high quality and multi-functional green infrastructure;
 - Safeguard the permanence and integrity of strategic and local open space;
 - Preserve and enhance the landscape and character of Stockport's countryside;

- Make a positive contribution to the protection and enhancement of Stockport's natural environment; and
- Conserve areas of heritage value.

3.62. Development Management Policy SIE-1 (Quality Places) highlights the need for development to be designed and landscaped to the highest contemporary standard, paying high regard to the built and/or natural environment within which it is sited. The policy states that specific account should be taken with regard to:

- Use of materials appropriate to the location;
- The site's characteristics including landform, landscape, views or vistas (including to/from The Peak District National Park), landmark or gateway features, biodiversity and micro-climate as well as the site's context in relation to surrounding buildings and spaces (particularly with regard to the height, density and massing of buildings);
- Potential to incorporate appropriate landscaping and nature conservation features; and
- Potential to incorporate the qualities and local distinctiveness of the historic environment.

3.63. Development Management Policy SIE-3 (Protecting, Safeguarding and enhancing the Environment) sets out the need for proposals for new development to protect the natural environment, control pollution (through impacts on air quality, noise and vibration, light and water quality) manage flood risk and protect the historic environment.

3.64. A full appreciation of the impacts that the proposed development has on the natural and historic environment is set out within the ES and a Flood Risk Assessment is also submitted as part of the planning applications, which highlights flood risk issues and mitigations relating to the proposed development.

3.65. Development Management Policy SIE-5 (Aviation Facilities, Telecommunications and other Broadcast Infrastructure) highlights that development that would adversely affect the operational integrity or safety of Manchester Airport will not be permitted. Details relating to airport

safeguarding are submitted as part of the applications and satisfy these requirements.

Core Policies CS9 (Transport and Development) and CS10 (An Effective and Sustainable Transport Network)

- 3.66. Core Policy CS10 further supports the delivery of the proposed development as it states that:

'In order to facilitate the removal of through traffic from several District Centres and Local Centres in the Borough, including Heald Green, Bramhall and Hazel Grove, and to improve access to Manchester Airport, the Council proposes to construct the SEMMMS A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road from the A6 at Hazel Grove to the M56 at Manchester Airport, which will also incorporate a new shared footway and cycle path adjacent to the new road and retrofitted next to the existing A555.'

- 3.67. Furthermore, the A6MARR (including cycle route) and the A34/A555 junction improvements are identified as key infrastructure required to deliver this core policy in the first 5 years of the Core strategy.
- 3.68. Core Policy CS9 and CS10 emphasise the need to develop the walking and cycling network within Stockport. The proposed development will contribute towards this as new and existing footpaths/cycle links will be provided/upgraded, linking the new development to neighbouring communities and towns and the wider green infrastructure in the area.

Stockport Unitary Development Plan (May 2006) – Policies which still apply from 1st April 2011 onwards (post Core Strategy adoption)

- 3.69. Following the adoption of the Core Strategy in March 2011, a number of policies included within the Stockport Unitary Development Plan (UDP) still apply. Land incorporating the route of the A6MARR is safeguarded for use as a major road scheme within the UDP under policy ST2.2 (Protection for major road schemes). The policy highlights that the Council will protect the alignment of the Manchester Airport Link Road (along with other road schemes identified within the SEMMMS) as long as they are to be developed in line with the other policies within the plan. Furthermore,

the UDP emphasises that the council considers that the schemes are necessary in order to complete the Strategic Road Network, providing through traffic routes for high levels of non-local traffic which cross the Borough, and to remove extraneous traffic from many shopping centres and residential areas.

- 3.70. An account of how the proposed development relates to other UDP policies is provided below.

Landscape character

- 3.71. Policy LCR 1.1 (Landscape Character Areas) states that development in the countryside will be strictly controlled and will not be permitted unless it protects or enhances the quality and character of the rural areas. The impacts of the proposed development on the local landscape are explored in detail within Chapter 10 of the Environmental Statement (Volume 1).

- 3.72. Avoidance of impacts (wherever possible) related to landscape character and visual impacts has been an integral part of the planning and design process for the proposed development. Where possible, this has involved:

- Integration into the local environment, and the screening and filtering of low level visual clutter and vehicle movements as far as practical;
- The design of earthworks, both screening and functional in such a manner as to create a smooth transition into the existing topography;
- The creation of a strong, unified landscape utilising tree, shrub and scrub planting, grassland and coordinated hard surface treatments;
- Exploring the opportunities for habitat creation and enhancement, use of local native species and the protection and enhancement of areas of existing vegetation as far as practical within the design requirements of the proposed development; and

- 3.73. The proposed development would generally integrate into the receiving landscape. However it is acknowledged that there would be significant local impacts to landscape character in the long term. These would occur

north of Norbury Brook, Ladybrook Valley, Woodford oil terminal and the crossing of the WCML. Other impacts of a lesser magnitude would occur at the western end of the proposed development.

- 3.74. Once the road is built large adverse long term visual impacts would remain, in the winter, at 2 residential receptors at Old Mill Lane. Moderate to large adverse impacts would remain at 13 residential receptors, at different locations throughout the proposed development, in the long term during winter, reducing to 6 in the summer.
- 3.75. A single footpath at the northern extent of Norbury Brook and making up part of the Ladybrook Interest Trail will receive long term large adverse visual impacts during both winter and summer. Three further PRow will receive moderate long term adverse impacts in winter reducing to one in the summer.

Protection of the natural environment

- 3.76. The UDP emphasises the need to protect and enhance the natural environment as part of new development. The need to ensure that development is avoided which would destroy or adversely affect, directly or indirectly, the natural or wildlife value of a Site of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserve and Local Nature Reserve is set out within policy NE 1.1 (Sites of special nature conservation importance).
- 3.77. Furthermore, policy NE 1.2 (Sites of nature conservation importance) highlights the need for proposals for development on Sites of Biological Importance (SBI), geological conservation sites and local wildlife sites to demonstrate that there is a justification which overrides any harm to the nature conservation value of the site. The impacts of the proposed development on the natural environment are explored in detail within Chapter 11 of the ES (Volume 1). These impacts are summarised below;
- Chapter 11 of Volume 1 of the ES includes an assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed development relating to ecology and nature conservation. Measures have been taken to ensure that statutory obligations regarding the conservation and protection of protected species would be satisfied.

- Beneficial impacts would occur from ecological enhancements and there would be a net increase to the following habitats:
 - species rich hedgerows;
 - ponds capable of supporting great crested newts;
 - semi-natural broad-leaved woodland; and
 - semi-improved grassland.
- The proposed development will require the removal of 0.08 hectares of Ancient Woodland at Carr Wood and vegetation within a SBI. The removal of the Ancient Woodland is considered significant at the local level, whereas the proposals do not affect the viability of the SBI and are therefore not considered significant.
- The EIA has established potential impacts upon bats, badgers and Great Crested Newts and mitigation measures have been proposed to provide compensatory habitats. There would therefore be no significant adverse effects on these species as a result of the proposed development.

Green Belt

- 3.78. Policy GBA 1.1 (Extent of Green Belt) identifies the broad areas located within the Green Belt in the Stockport Borough. Policy GBA 1.2 (Control of development in Green Belt) highlights that within the Green Belt, development will not be permitted unless it maintains the openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. The route of the proposed development that passes through Stockport is located entirely within the Green Belt. The relationship of the proposed development with Green Belt policy is outlined within paragraphs 3.15 to 3.38 above.
- 3.79. Policy GBA2.1 (Protection of agricultural land) emphasises that development which involves the permanent loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land will not be permitted unless it can be

demonstrated that the agricultural value of the land is outweighed by other factors. The NPPF states that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, LPAs should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality. As part of the proposed development, agricultural land that is classified as grades 3 and 4 with some areas of grade 2 is required. Land located towards the south east of Manchester is the only location for the proposed A6MARR and the relief road could not be located in an alternative location. Therefore, some high grade agricultural land will be required for the proposed development.

Recreation routes and new development

- 3.80. Strategic Recreation Routes are located on the route of the proposed development in close proximity to Bramhall oil terminal and Old Mill Lane (Ladybrook Valley Interest Trail). Policy L1.8 (Strategic recreation routes) highlights that the Council will safeguard and enhance the network of strategic recreation routes shown on the proposals map. Furthermore, policy L1.9 (Recreation routes and new development) identifies the need to address any impacts on existing PRow or other recreation routes where a proposed development could have an impact. Both these routes will need to be diverted as a result of the proposed development.
- 3.81. The impact of the proposed development on PRow is identified within Chapter 10 of the ES, The proposed development would be beneficial to Non-Motorised Users of the Public Rights of Way network due to the new east to west footpath and cycleway connecting various local centres and existing footpaths and inclusion of footpath diversions / overbridges in the scheme design to mitigate for severance. However, diversions of footpaths would lead to some loss of amenity value.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Sustainable Design and Construction SPD

- 3.82. The Sustainable Design and Construction SPD provides up to date guidance to reflect the provision of information and resources to support

delivery of sustainable design and delivery of buildings in the Borough. In particular it provides support in terms of compliance with the energy and climate change related policies in the Stockport LDF Core Strategy DPD. The SPD covers ten topics, which include: Location and Transport, Site Layout and Building Design, Materials, Waste, Energy, Water, Landscape and Biodiversity, Health and Wellbeing, Operations and Management as well as Marketing.

- 3.83. The guidance set out within the SPD has been considered in the design of the proposed development. The submitted Design and Access Statement sets out further information in relation the detailed design of the route. Furthermore, the sustainability statement provides responses to the questions outlined within the sustainability checklist contained within the SPD.

Sustainable Transport SPD

- 3.84. The purpose of the Sustainable Transport SPD is to help developers understand the full range of possible interventions for the mitigation of effects of additional traffic that can result as a consequence of new development. The encouragement of a range of transport modes as suggested in this document is a means of addressing congestion, environmental issues, and improving infrastructure to support economic growth, increase social inclusion and address issues surrounding human health.
- 3.85. A Transport Assessment (TA) is provided that is consistent with guidance set out in section 2 of the SPD. A composite Stage 1 Road Safety Audit for the proposed development is incorporated within the TA, which is consistent with guidance set out in section 3 of the SPD. The traffic impacts of the proposed development are explored within the TA in detail.

Cheshire East Council Development Plan

- 3.86. Prior to the development of documents within the new Cheshire East Local Plan, the statutory development plan for Cheshire East currently consists of saved policies from the:

- Congleton Borough Local Plan (adopted on 27th January 2005);
- Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan (adopted on 17th February 2005);
- Macclesfield Borough Local Plan (adopted on 8th January 2004);
- Cheshire Minerals Local Plan (adopted in 1999); and
- Cheshire Waste Local Plan (adopted June 2007).

3.87. The Cheshire Minerals Local Plan and the Cheshire Waste Local Plan provide specific detailed policies and guidance on minerals and waste development within Cheshire respectively. Neither of these Local Plans is of specific relevance to the proposed development.

3.88. The SPDs prepared by CEC that are of relevance to the proposed development are identified below:

- Nature Conservation Strategy SPD (Adopted 2006); and
- Designing Out Crime SPD (Adopted January 2006).

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan

3.89. The route of the proposed development is located entirely within the former Macclesfield Borough. Therefore, the Macclesfield Local Plan is the relevant development plan. The Macclesfield Borough Local Plan was adopted as an altered plan on 8th January 2004 and covers the period to 2011. A number of policies from the Local Plan have now been saved to form part of the LDF.

3.90. The Local Plan sets out a strategy for the Macclesfield Borough. Key components of the strategy and how the proposed development relates to it are set out below:

- *To support the strong local economy* – the proposed development aims to increase employment and generate economic growth through providing efficient surface access and improved connectivity to, from and between

Manchester Airport, local, town and district centres, and key areas of development and regeneration.

- *To improve access and movement in and around the borough to benefit pedestrians, public transport users, private road users and other mobility groups, with special emphasis on reducing the need to travel, especially by car and reducing the environmental costs of transport* – the proposed development will help to improve access and movement between areas located within and around the relief road.
- *To maintain the present Green Belt, to support an attractive and healthy rural area and to protect the countryside for its own sake* – a full account of the impact of the proposed development on the Green Belt is provided within paragraphs 3.15 – 3.38 of this planning statement.

Transport

- 3.91. Part of the strategy set out within the Local Plan is to improve access and movement within the Borough to benefit pedestrians, public transport users, private road users and other mobility groups, with special emphasis on reducing the need to travel. Land located on the route of the proposed development within Cheshire East is safeguarded for the MAELR west road scheme within the Local Plan. Policy T7 (Safeguarded Routes) highlights that the route will be safeguarded from other development.
- 3.92. Policy T1 (Transport) highlights that the council will seek to enhance the integration of modes of transport through encouraging the use of public transport. Furthermore, policies RT7 (Cycles, Bridleways and Footpaths) and T5 (Provision for Cyclists) highlight the importance of creating a network of cycleways and footpaths
- 3.93. As part of the proposed development, new and existing footpaths/cycle links will be provided / upgraded, linking the new development to neighbouring settlements and the wider green infrastructure in the area. This will help to ensure that sustainable transport methods are available for people living and working adjacent to the proposed development to utilise, which will in turn support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and congestion.

Natural Environment

- 3.94. There are a number of policies within the Macclesfield Local Plan that highlight the need to protect and enhance the natural environment within the area. Policy NE2 (Protection of Local Landscapes) identifies the need to ensure that development respects the local landscape character. A full account of the impacts of the proposed development on the local landscape character is provided within Chapter 10 of the ES (Volume 1).
- 3.95. Policy NE11 (Nature Conservation) and NE12 (SSSI's SBIs and Nature Reserves) emphasises the importance of avoiding development which would adversely affect nature conservation interests and SSSI's, SBIs and Nature Reserves. A full account of the impacts of the proposed development in relation to nature conservation is provided in Chapter 11 of the ES (Volume 1).

Built environment

- 3.96. Policy BE1 (Design guidance) highlights the need for new development to meet a number of design principles, including the following:
- Reflect local character;
 - Respect form, layout, siting, scale and design of surrounding buildings and their setting;
 - Contribute to a rich environment and add to the vitality of the area; and
 - Use appropriate materials.
- 3.97. A full account of the design of the proposed development and how it meets the design principles set out in Policy BE1 is provided within the Design and Access Statement.
- 3.98. Through Policies BE2 (Historic fabric) and BE16 (Setting of Listed Buildings), the Local Plan highlights the need to avoid development which would adversely affect the historic fabric of the Borough. The impacts of the proposed development on local historic assets are presented within Chapter 9 of the ES (Volume 1).

Protection of the Green Belt

- 3.99. The route of the proposed development that passes through Cheshire East is located entirely within the Green Belt. The strategy identified within the Local Plan is to maintain the present Green Belt. A full account of the relationship of the proposed development with Green Belt policy is outlined within paragraphs 3.15 – 3.38 above.

Recreation and Tourism

- 3.100. Policy RT7 (Cycleways, Bridleways and Footpaths) highlights that the council will seek to create a network of cycleways, bridleways and footpaths. Footpaths that cross the application site will be amended to ensure that they are retained as part of the proposed development. Furthermore, new footpaths/cycle links will be provided as part of the proposed development, linking it to neighbouring settlements.

Development control policies

- 3.101. The Local Plan sets out a range of development control policies, which proposals for new development must adhere to. Policy DC1 (New Build) highlights that the overall scale, density, height, mass and materials of new development must be sympathetic to the local environment. The design of the proposed development and an account of how it is sympathetic to the local environment is detailed within the Design and Access Statement.
- 3.102. A number of policies within the Local Plan seek to protect the amenity of residential occupiers including Policies H 13 (Protecting residential Areas) and DC 3 (Amenity). Policy DC 3 states that development should not significantly injure amenities of adjoining or nearby property due to matters such as loss of privacy, overbearing effect, loss of sunlight and daylight, traffic generation and car parking. The proposed development has been designed to minimise the impacts on properties located within close proximity to the route. Where possible, the road has been designed to be within a cutting. Where this is not possible, the use of landscaping, earth mounds and/or acoustic fencing has been introduced to mitigate noise and visual impacts. Photomontages have been submitted as part of the proposed development that show how the proposed development has been designed to minimise visual impacts.

3.103. Policies DC 17 and DC 18 highlight the need for new development to: protect the quality of existing water courses; avoid development in areas liable to flooding; avoid loss of the natural flood plain; or cause the loss of access to watercourses. The impacts of the proposed development in relation to water are presented within Chapter 17 of the ES (Volume 1) and the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment submitted as part of each planning application.

Supplementary Planning Documents

The Nature Conservation Strategy SPD

3.104. The strategy is both a policy and an action document. It provides information on the different elements which make up the natural environment of the former Borough of Macclesfield and sets out policies and actions to protect, manage and enhance these resources. The former Macclesfield Borough's natural assets provide an attractive and stimulating setting for work and play, with social and health benefits contributing much towards the quality of life for local people.

3.105. The document is broadly reflective of policies relating to the Natural Environment that are set out within the Macclesfield Local Plan, which are addressed earlier within this Chapter.

Designing Out Crime SPD

3.106. The Designing Out Crime SPD has been prepared to help assess and determine planning applications, and provides advice to developers on the use of design to reduce crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. The way in which 'designing out crime' has been considered and addressed as follows.

3.107. The proposed layout will increase movement (pedestrian, cycle and vehicle), creating more activity and providing additional surveillance of routes. The applicant appreciates that there is a balance to be achieved between permeability, perceived and actual safety, and an unacceptable proliferation of routes that might reduce safety.

3.108. Appropriate locations along the route will be well lit (please refer to the Street Lighting Design Assessment and the proposed lighting plans

submitted as part of the planning applications), and spaces and landscape designed and maintained in order to avoid 'hidden' or shaded areas that might encourage anti-social behaviour or the perception of crime or threat to public safety. These spaces will be managed over time so that planted areas remain in keeping with the vision and also to ensure that overgrown vegetation does not create undue visual barriers and the potential for people to be hidden. Consideration will also be given to the connections with the wider landscape and views into that space, in terms of the safety of people using footpaths and cycle routes.

- 3.109. In combination, these approaches provide both real and perceived safety for nearby residents and users.

Emerging Local Plan for Cheshire East

- 3.110. CEC is currently developing a new Local Plan which will be the Development Plan for Cheshire East and form the basis of planning decisions until 2030. It will contain the planning strategy, policies and site allocations. It will be accompanied by an infrastructure plan that will set out transport, social and other infrastructure required to support development. The Local Plan will look at the social, economic and environmental needs of each town within Cheshire East.
- 3.111. The Council consulted on the Development Strategy and Emerging Policy Principles of the forthcoming Cheshire East Local Plan between January and February 2013. The document sets out the policy directions for the proposed local plan, including the level of growth and the emerging policy principles. The Council submitted its Local Plan Strategy to the SOS for Communities and Local Government on 20th May 2014 in preparation for independent examination, which is scheduled for 16th September 2014
- 3.112. The Development Strategy is based on providing jobs growth and ensuring that the character of Cheshire East is retained. A key part of the strategy is to deliver infrastructure improvements through improving the road infrastructure within Cheshire East. Policy CS 10 (Infrastructure) within the strategy identifies a number of infrastructure projects that are seen as key to improving connectivity within the Borough. One of the projects identified within the policy is the A6MARR.

Manchester City Council Development Plan

3.113. There are a number of planning policy documents which set out the Council's approach to development in the city. These are:

- Manchester Core Strategy DPD (Adopted 11th July 2012);
and
- UDP for the City of Manchester (Adopted 21st July 1995) – Policies which still apply from 11th July 2012 onwards (post Core Strategy adoption).

Manchester Core Strategy DPD

3.114. The Core Strategy was adopted on 11 July 2012 and is the key DPD in the LDF. It replaces significant elements of the UDP as the document that sets out the long term strategic policies for Manchester's future development and will form the framework that planning applications within the MCC boundary will be assessed against.

3.115. The Core Strategy is a key document in Manchester's LDF and covers a period of 15 years from 2012 to 2027. It describes Manchester today and outlines the Council's vision for Manchester in 2027 along with the planning policies which will be used to deliver that vision.

3.116. A series of strategic objectives (SO) are set out within the Core Strategy. The proposed development relates to a number of the SO's, as identified below:

- *SO2 Economy* – the proposed development will support further improvement of the City's economic performance as it aims to increase employment and generate economic growth and boost business integration and productivity.
- *SO5 Transport* – the proposed development will help to improve physical connectivity with Manchester Airport through the delivery of the proposed development will be improved, and this enhance the contribution of the Airport to the city region and beyond.

- *SO6 Environment* – the way in which the proposed development relates to the natural environment is detailed within the ES.

3.117. Policy T 1 (Sustainable Transport) highlights the need to deliver a sustainable, high quality, integrated transport system, which encourages cycling and walking. The proposed development provides improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists along the route of the relief road, which should encourage cycling and walking.

3.118. Furthermore, the policy also identifies the need to improve and develop appropriate road freight transport routes in order to assist in the sustainable and efficient movement of goods. The proposed development will provide a new route between the A6 at Hazel Grove and Manchester Airport for freight transport. This will help to reduce the level of traffic travelling within and around existing local centres and residential areas, which will in turn reduce congestion levels within these areas.

3.119. Policy EC 11 (Airport City Strategic Employment Location) identifies the area to the north of Manchester Airport as a significant opportunity for employment development. The policy makes reference to the proposed development as it highlights that development should take full advantage of the SEMMMS road scheme. The supporting text for this policy also highlights that connectivity to the site will be enhanced by the proposed highway improvements (which includes the proposed development), helping to spread the benefits of the strategic employment location to wider communities.

3.120. A series of key spatial principles which will guide the strategic development of Manchester to 2027 are set out within the Core Strategy (Policy SP 1 – Spatial Principles). The policy highlights that the growth of Manchester Airport will act as a catalyst for regional development. The delivery of the proposed development will enhance access to Manchester Airport, which will support the economic development taking place at the airport.

3.121. Policy EN 1 (Design Principles and Strategic Character Areas) identifies the need for development in Manchester to have regard to the strategic

character area in which the development is located. The proposed development is located within the 'Airport & urban fringe Character Area'. The policy highlights the need for development in this area to accommodate the future operational needs of the Airport, whilst retaining the area's open character. An account of how the proposed development is consistent with this policy is outlined within the accompanying DAS.

3.122. Through Policy DM 1 (Development Management), the Core Strategy requires all development to have regard to a number of specific issues, including the following:

- Appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail;
- Impact on the surrounding areas in terms of the design, scale and appearance of the proposed development. Development should have regard to the character of the surrounding area;
- Effects on amenity, including privacy, light, noise, vibration, air quality, odours, litter, vermin, birds, road safety and traffic generation. This could also include proposals which would be sensitive to existing environmental conditions, such as noise;
- Accessibility: buildings and neighbourhoods fully accessible to disabled people, access to new development by sustainable transport modes;
- Community safety and crime prevention;
- Design for health;
- Adequacy of internal accommodation and external amenity space;
- Effects relating to biodiversity, landscape, archaeological or built heritage;
- Flood risk and drainage; and
- Existing or proposed hazardous installations.

3.123. The way in which the proposed development addresses these specific issues is explored within the Design and Access Statement accompanying the applications, and is summarised as follows.

- The overall rationale for the scheme design is explained and justified within the Design and Access Statement, which accompanies the applications. The Design and Access Statement plays a particularly important role in linking general development principles to the final design, and providing for a direct and meaningful translation of the wider SEMMMS, adopted policies and supplementary guidance.
- The Design and Access Statement explains how the applicant has considered the proposal against constraints and opportunities, assimilated consultation feedback, and shows that the applicant understands what is appropriate and feasible for the site in its context and how these affect the design and access components.

3.124. There are a range of policies within the Core Strategy that address the importance of protecting and enhancing the local environment. The policies that are of relevance to the section of the relief road proposed within the MCC boundary are as follows. These include the following:

- *Policy EN 3 Heritage* – identifies that the Council will encourage development that complements and takes advantage of the distinct historic and heritage features within the City.
- *Policy EN 4 Reducing CO2 Emissions by Enabling Low and Zero Carbon Development and Policy EN 8 Adaptation to Climate Change* – these policies emphasise the importance of: ensuring new development is adaptable to climate change in terms of the design, layout, siting and function; and reducing CO2 emissions. This is explored in more detail within the sustainability statement.
- *Policy EN 13 Green Belt* – part of the route for the proposed development that passes through Manchester lies within Green Belt. The relationship of the proposed development with Green Belt policy is outlined within paragraphs 3.15 – 3.38 above.

- *Policy EN 14 Flood Risk* – the Flood Risk Assessment provides a full account of the flood risk impacts associated with the proposed development.
- *Policy EN 15 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* – the policy highlights that the Council will seek to maintain/enhance sites of biodiversity and geological value throughout the City. The policy also highlights that any adverse impacts on biodiversity will need to be justified against the wider benefits of the proposal.
- *Policy EN 16 Air Quality* – the need to improve air quality within Manchester is highlighted by policy EN 16. The air quality impacts are set out in more detail within Chapter 8 of the ES (Volume 1).
- *Policy EN 17 Water Quality* – this policy highlights that development proposed within the Manchester area should avoid any adverse impacts on water quality, including during the construction phase and wherever possible should seek to enhance water quality, both chemical and ecological.
- *Policy EN 19 Waste* – in accordance with this policy, a draft Site Waste Management Plan has been prepared for the proposed development.
- *The scheme and related mitigations satisfy the policy requirements of the Core Strategy*

UDP for the City of Manchester (Adopted 21st July 1995) – Policies which still apply from 11th July 2012 onwards (post Core Strategy adoption)

3.125. The UDP was adopted in 1995 and a number of policies from the Plan were ‘saved’ in 2007 by the SOS. The Council is currently in the process of developing a number of Local Development Documents (LDDs) as part of the LDF for the area. Until the appropriate LDD is adopted, the ‘saved’ policies of the UDP will continue to be used for development control decision-making. A number of ‘saved’ UDP policies have been superseded by the policies within the adopted Manchester Core Strategy

(Manchester City Council, 2012). The full list of superseded UDP policies is set out in Appendix C of the Core Strategy (Manchester City Council, 2012).

- 3.126. Following the adoption of the Core Strategy, a number of City Wide Development Control policies remain in place. The policies of relevance to the proposed development include:
- 3.127. Policy DC 22 Footpath Protection – the policy highlights the need for development proposals to have regard to the effect on existing pedestrian routes and development which would result in unacceptable inconvenience to local pedestrian movement will not normally be allowed. The impact of the proposed development on PROW is set out within Chapter 15 of the ES (Volume 1).
- 3.128. Policy DC 26 Development and Noise – the need to consider the effect of new development and noise is set out within this policy. Noise impacts relating to the proposed development are explored in detail within Chapter 14 of the ES (Volume 1).

Supplementary Planning Documents

- 3.129. The Guide to Development in Manchester SPD (April 2007) is of relevance to the proposed development. The proposed development has been designed in line with the Guide to Development in Manchester SPD. Further detail on this is provided within the Sustainability Statement.

Local Transport Plans

- 3.130. The current LTPs for Greater Manchester and Cheshire East and how they relate to the proposed development are outlined below.

Greater Manchester's Third Local Transport Plan 2011/12 – 2015/16

- 3.131. Building on the work undertaken to date by AGMA, the core objectives for Greater Manchester, as defined in the Greater Manchester Third Local Transport Plan 2011/12 – 2015/16 (LTP3), are as follows:

- To ensure that the transport network supports the Greater Manchester economy to improve the life chances of residents and the success of business;
- To ensure that carbon emissions from transport are reduced in line with UK Government targets in order to minimise the impact of climate change;
- To ensure that the transport system facilitates active, healthy lifestyles and a reduction in the number of casualties, and that other adverse health impacts are minimised;
- To ensure that the design and maintenance of the transport network and provision of services supports sustainable neighbourhoods and public spaces and provides equality of transport opportunities; and
- To maximise value for money in the provision and maintenance of transport infrastructure and services.

The way in which the scheme meets the objectives of LTP3 are discussed in the Proof of Mr Nasar Malik.

3.132. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and the ten Greater Manchester councils aim to deliver the strategy set out within LTP3 through the implementation of projects, service improvements and initiatives, across the full range of transport modes. The strategy aims to bring forward these improvements to strengthen the economy, whilst simultaneously encouraging people to use active and sustainable modes of transport.

3.133. The strategy is clear in advocating the construction of a limited number of new roads where it can be demonstrated that they benefit the economy, which includes the A6MARR.

3.134. Moreover, the Complementary Mitigation Measures included as part of the wider scheme (referred to in section 4.4 of the planning statement), and the improved facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, mean that it will also deliver those elements of the strategy aimed at reducing the dependence on car travel – particularly for short-distance trips. By delivering the A6MARR, the GMCA has the opportunity to meet its strategic objectives

for the highway network, namely: to improve the reliability of strategic routes and to maximise the efficiency and reliability of the network.

Cheshire East Council Local Transport Plan 2011 – 2026

- 3.135. The CEC Local Transport Plan (LTP) (2011-2026) is the first LTP to be developed by the Council following the re-organisation of local government in Cheshire in April 2009. The LTP relates directly to the seven priorities of the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) to illustrate how transport contributes to the achievement of wider aspirations and ambitions for the area over the next 15 years (2011-2026).
- 3.136. A key priority set out within the SCS is the need to create conditions for business growth. The LTP incorporates a priority policy in relation to this key priority which is to work with neighbouring authorities, appropriate regional/sub-regional organisations, public transport operators and providers to enhance cross-boundary and strategic investment opportunities in transport (Policy B1 – Strategic Partnerships for Economic Growth). A key initiative for delivering this policy is to ‘Continue to work with local authority partners to investigate affordable ways of delivering the SEMMMS major road scheme.’

4. Conditions

- 4.1. On assessment of the Planning Applications, and whilst the proposal was considered to fully accord with the Development Plans for the three LPAs, it was considered that there was a requirement for conditions to be placed upon the Planning Permission in accordance with Circular 11/95. The conditions attached to Planning Permissions (SMBC – DC/053678, CEC - 13/4355M and MCC – 104094/FO/2013/S2) (submitted document in Statement of Case) were considered appropriate to ensure the acceptable implementation of the Scheme.
- 4.2. Following withdrawal of the Article 25 Notice by the SOS on 9th June 2014, the 3 LPA's have each approved their relevant application (as set out in paragraphs 2.1 – 2.18 above).
- 4.3. The conditions imposed by each LPA are reproduced in the schedule at Appendix B.
- 4.4. The applicant has been working with the three LPAs in the discharge of these conditions, especially relating to pre-commencement conditions so that progress can be quickly made towards implementation of the scheme in the event that the Order is confirmed.
- 4.5. The additional planning applications referred to in para 2.21 – 2.27 above have conditions imposed, and these are contained within Appendix C.
- 4.6. Good progress is being made towards discharge of conditions.

Conclusion

Summary of planning applications

- 5.1. The A6MARR is a key highways project for Stockport, Manchester City and Cheshire East local authorities and represents a significant investment in Greater Manchester. The proposed development is an integral component of the wider SEMMMS, a twenty year integrated transport strategy for the study area aimed at addressing transport problems in the area (chiefly congestion) on a multi-modal basis. The SEMMMS and the A6MARR component of it have been identified for some years and the planning applications represent the culmination of this work.
- 5.2. The A6MARR is considered critical to delivering the long-term objectives of SEMMMS. Once constructed and operational, the A6MARR development will alleviate a number of existing social and economic constraints, including:
- Poor connectivity along the south Manchester corridor; with a fragmented east-west highway network and lack of surface access to Manchester Airport, which currently acts as a barrier to economic growth and regeneration;
 - Congestion on the local and strategic network; in particular along the A6 and in the urban centres of Gatley, Bramhall, Heald Green, Hazel Grove, Poynton, Wilmslow, Handforth and Cheadle Hulme;
 - Poor environmental conditions in the District and Local Centres along the south Manchester corridor, caused by the high volume of traffic passing through these towns to reach other destinations;
 - Unsatisfactory conditions for pedestrians and cyclists through busy urban areas along the extent of the south Manchester corridor, with all non-motorised transport users facing severance and problems of safely accessing education, employment and leisure facilities.

5.3. The impacts and benefits associated with the proposed development as outlined within this planning statement are summarised below:

- Delivery of the scheme is supported and enshrined within the Development Plans for the three LPAs and the Greater Manchester and Cheshire East Transport Plans. In particular, the route of the A6MARR is safeguarded by: Policy ST2.2 (Protection for Major Road Schemes of the Stockport UDP (May 2006); and Policy T7 (Safeguarded Routes) of the Macclesfield Local Plan. The need for the proposed development is also identified within the Manchester Core Strategy.
- The proposed development has been subject to a high level of pre-application consultation and engagement. This includes extensive consultation with the local community and key stakeholders. Feedback received during the consultation, has been considered and, where appropriate, feedback incorporated into the design.
- A CEEQUAL Assessment has been undertaken that provides an assessment of the sustainability of the proposed development. The proposed development has achieved a CEEQUAL Excellent Score (88.6%).
- A package of measures, has been proposed within the TA submitted as part of the planning applications to address the predicted change in traffic flow on the local highway network following completion of the A6MARR.
- Although existing PROW will be altered as part of the proposed development, existing linkages to the surrounding areas via these routes will be maintained through re-routing existing PROW.
- New areas of open space have been provided in exchange for land taken by the proposed development.
- The ES has demonstrated that implementation of the proposed development is expected to result in a small increase in regional emissions associated with increased vehicular use of the road network.

- The proposed development would generally integrate into the receiving landscape. However the ES acknowledges that there would be significant local impacts to landscape character in the long term. These would occur north of Norbury Brook, Ladybrook Valley, Woodford oil terminal and the crossing of the WCML. Other impacts of a lesser magnitude would occur at the western end of the proposed development. The ES has established potential impacts upon bats, badgers and Great Crested Newts and mitigation measures have been proposed to provide compensatory habitats. There would therefore be no significant adverse effects on these species as a result of the proposed development.
- Where noise issues prevail, these have been mitigated through the use of low noise surfacing and acoustic barriers.
- An approximate total area of trees and woody vegetation, (including hedgerows) to be removed as part of the proposed development is 168,951m². This will be replaced by a total of 202,087m² of new planting (incorporating a mixture of trees and shrubs) and 5,100 lin.m of new hedges.
- Approximately 0.08ha of Ancient Woodland is expected to be impacted by construction.
- The proposed surface water drainage strategy has been developed to manage surface water from the highway in a manner which ensures that the highway itself is adequately protected from flooding, whilst also ensuring that the scheme will not cause an increase in flood risk elsewhere.
- A large proportion of the application site is designated as Green Belt. The NPPF (paragraph 87) reiterates previous Green Belt policy. It highlights that 'inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.' Furthermore, paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that 'When considering planning applications, LPAs

should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.'

- Paragraph 90 of the NPPF states that development that may not be inappropriate in the Green Belt includes 'engineering operations' and 'local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location', 'provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt'. Consideration has been given to paragraphs 87, 88 and 90 of the NPPF with regard to whether or not the development constitutes inappropriate development.
- As highlighted above in relation to Purpose 3, it is accepted that the proposed development would be harmful to openness and would not safeguard existing areas of the countryside located within the application site. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt. However, harm to the Green Belt arising from the proposed development is clearly outweighed by the benefits arising from the A6MARR and it is considered that these are very special circumstances.


Overall Conclusion

- 5.4. Circular 06/2004 issued by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister provides guidance as to circumstances where it may be appropriate to use compulsory purchase powers. The essential test set out in 06/2004 is whether there is a compelling case in the public interest for, in this case the compulsory acquisition of the land contained in The Metropolitan Borough of Stockport (Hazel Grove A6 to Manchester Airport A555 Classified Road) Compulsory Purchase 2013 and the highway alterations in The Metropolitan Borough of Stockport (Hazel Grove A6 to Manchester

Airport A555 Classified Road) (Side Roads) Order 2013 to support the highway alterations to facilitate the A6 to Manchester Airport relief road.

- 5.5. This evidence clarifies the processes by which the planning applications were processed and determined including reference to the publicity, consultation and notification procedures. The evidence confirms that the applications were considered in accordance with the three Council's procedures and the Planning Permissions, and that the SOS has declared himself happy for the applications to be determined locally.
- 5.6. The Planning Application was considered and determined in accordance with current NPPF policy requirements and the relevant Development Plan Policies and is consistent with the relevant Local Transport Plan. The planning permission issued will facilitate the delivery of strategic transport objectives.
- 5.7. The Scheme benefits from full planning permissions enabling its construction and operation as well as delivering key policy objectives within the Development Plan. Subject to confirmation of the Order there is no planning impediment to the delivery of the Scheme. In planning terms there is a compelling case in the public interest to confirm the Order.
- 5.8. In summary, I am of the view that I have advanced a compelling case to justify the Orders being confirmed in the public interest to ensure that the Council, acting on its behalf and on behalf of the partnering authorities, will be able to use compulsory purchase powers, should the use of such powers be required as a last resort, to acquire all the land needed to promote, deliver and facilitate the proper construction and opening of the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road.

I Alan Houghton believe the matters set out in my evidence to be true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed.....

Dated.....18th September 2014