

**Application No:** 13/3455M

**Location:** Land to the south of Stockport, adjacent to and between the A6 (Buxton Road) and land to the east of the Styal railway line, north of Styal Golf Course.

**Proposal:** Construction of the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road (whole route), incorporating:

- Seven new road junctions;
- Modification to four existing road junctions;
- Four new rail bridge crossings;
- Three new public rights of way/accommodation bridges;
- Four new road bridges;
- A pedestrian & cycle route;
- Six balancing ponds; and
- Associated landscaping, lighting 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.

**Applicant:** Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, Cheshire East Borough Council & Manchester City Council

**Expiry Date:** 24/02/2014

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Planning permission is sought to construct a new dual carriageway from the A6 near to Hazel Grove (south east Stockport) to Manchester Airport and the link road to the M56. The application spans three Authority boundaries, namely Stockport MBC, Cheshire East Council and Manchester City Council, and as such, a detailed planning application has been submitted to the three authorities for determination of the scheme which falls within each of the Authority boundaries.

This report covers in detail the proposed scheme which falls within Cheshire East. It is considered important that all decision makers are fully furnished with the whole proposed scheme and relevant facts pertaining to it, the report therefore also covers details outside of the Cheshire East boundary. Each local planning authority is responsible for the recommendation and determination of the scheme within their Authorities jurisdiction.

The report sets out that the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, for which there is a presumption against. It is also concluded that additional harm will result from the proposal in terms of landscape and visual impact, noise, localised air quality and traffic congestion, ecology and loss of agricultural land.

However, subject to an enhanced package of mitigation and conditions set out in the report, the harmful impacts of the development can be reduced to acceptable levels.

The report concludes that the proposal will result in significant benefits through the provision of much needed strategic transport infrastructure. The improved connectivity and reduction in traffic congestion will bring significant sub-regional economic, social and environmental advantages. Overall it is concluded that very special circumstances exist to allow the development and that the proposal is in general conformity with Development Plan policy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.

## **REASON FOR REPORT**

The application is to be determined by Strategic Planning Board as set out in the Council's constitution and Scheme of Delegation. The proposal is also a departure from the Development Plan.

Members are advised that following the recommendation of the Strategic Planning Board the scheme will need to be referred to the Secretary of State under The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009.

## **DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL**

The planning applications submitted to Cheshire East Council (CEC), Manchester City Council (MCC) and Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) seek full planning permission for the construction of a relief road orientated east west between the A6 near Hazel Grove via the existing A555 to Manchester Airport. The proposed relief road comprises two new sections of dual carriageway, the first section is approximately 5.1km in length, starting from a new realigned section of the A6 at Hazel Grove(Stockport) extending west to the existing A555 at Woodford Road, Bramhall. The second section is approximately 3.2km in length and is an extension to the existing A555 which currently terminates at Wilmslow Road. The route continues in a westerly direction crossing Styal Road and heads towards Manchester Airport along the line of Ringway Road West.

The scheme would connect the A6 at Hazel Grove to Manchester Airport, travelling adjacent to Handforth, Poynton, Hazel Grove, Bramhall, Cheadle Hulme, Wythenshawe District Centres and Gatley and Heald Green Local Centres.

Each of the proposed carriageways would measure 7.3m wide. The east and west bound traffic would be separated by a hard standing central reservation measuring between 1.8m and 3.9m across with a concrete central barrier. The Scheme speed limit is proposed mainly to be 50mph, however in Manchester, between Styal Road and the tie in to Ringway Road West, the central reservation is proposed to be kerbed and vary in width between 3.0m and 5.4m. At this point it is not proposed to have a central barrier due to the proposed speed restriction in this location being 40mph.

Between the A6 and Styal Road there is proposed to be a soft verge on either side of the carriageway with a shared use cycleway and footway to the north of the relief road, separated from the carriageway by a soft verge.

Between Styal Road and the tie in to Ringway Road, the shared cycleway and footway would be adjacent to the highway. A soft verge is proposed on the outside of the shared cycleway and footway with soft verge present on the opposite side of the road.

### **Detailed alignment of the proposed relief road**

The eastern end of the proposed new road starts within the Stockport boundary, to the east of Hazel Grove with a traffic signalled T-Junction located on a realigned section of the A6. From this junction the relief road moves west and passes under the existing A6 (Buxton Road) which is taken over the main alignment on a new bridge for the use of buses, cycles and pedestrians. The route continues under the Hazel Grove to Buxton railway line and continues west passing properties on Old Mill Lane to the north.

It is proposed that a Bridleway quality bridge would be provided to divert the Public Right of Way (PRoW) and farm vehicles across the relief road near Old Mill Lane.

The proposal continues west passing between Norbury Brook and to the rear of residential properties on Darley Road and Ashbourne Road. At Macclesfield Road an at-grade signalised cross roads arrangement is proposed allowing all traffic movements with facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

From the A523 Macclesfield Road the route continues west and runs to the north of Norbury Brook and associated woods and south of the residential streets of Sheldon Road and Longnor Road. The scheme then crosses authority boundaries into Cheshire East where the scheme crosses Norbury Brook via a bridge at Mill Hill Hollow. A bridleway quality bridge is proposed to divert the PRoW and farm vehicle access across the scheme at Hill Green. The route then passes in cutting under Woodford Road, which is proposed to be raised in the vicinity of the relief road, crossing back into Stockport where the road is proposed to climb on embankment over the West Coast Main Line.

A new at-grade signalised roundabout junction would provide access to the Bramhall Oil Storage Depot and a new link providing access to Chester Road is proposed. The junction is proposed to incorporate Pegasus facilities for equestrians, pedestrians and cyclists.

At the A5102 Woodford Road the existing roundabout joining with the A555 is proposed to be replaced by a new grade separated junction with the main route passing through cutting under Woodford Road. The junction configuration is proposed to be signalised to incorporate crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

A shared cycleway and footway is proposed to be constructed adjacent to the existing A555, for its entire length, within Stockport and Cheshire East. Where the A555 crosses over the A34 in Stockport it is proposed that junction adaptations be implemented to facilitate and manage the anticipated traffic flows. The junction is proposed to be signalised and provide crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

The A555/A34 is proposed to be upgraded with widened carriageways and traffic signal controls, including the introduction of controlled crossing facilities for pedestrian and cyclists. North of this junction, at the junction of the A34 and Stanley Road the roundabout is proposed to be upgraded to traffic signal control and increased lane capacity. Toucan crossing facilities for pedestrian and cyclists are proposed to be integrated into the signal controls for both junctions.

The existing A555 alignment continues west out of Stockport into Cheshire East under the existing at-grade separated dumb-bell junction linking to the B5358 (Wilmslow Road), where new west facing slip roads are proposed.

Between the B5358 Wilmslow Road, and the B5186 Styal Road, the proposal continues through Cheshire East passing through Styal Golf Course and agricultural land into Stockport. A bridleway quality bridge is proposed to divert the PRoW across the road at Yew Tree Farm. The proposal would then pass over Styal Railway Line in Stockport which

is located in a deep cutting, and head into Manchester between the airport southern rail spur and Moss Nook electricity station.

At Styal Road, it is proposed that an at-grade signalised cross road arrangement incorporating Toucan facilities, for pedestrians and cyclists would be constructed requiring extensions to the existing road over rail bridge over the northern airport spur. From Styal Road, the proposal runs parallel to the airport rail spur where it is proposed to terminate as it merges at the existing Ringway Road/Ringway Road West junction west of Shadowmoss road. Between Shadowmoss road and the proposed main alignment, Ringway road would be stopped up and a new layout arrangement with Shadowmoss Road constructed.

Overall, the proposal incorporates:

- Seven new road junction (six of which are proposed in Stockport and one in Manchester);
- Modifications to four existing road junctions (three in Stockport and one in Cheshire East);
- Four new rail bridge crossings (three in Stockport and one in Manchester);
- Three new public right of way/accommodation bridges (two in Cheshire East and one in Stockport);
- Four new road bridges (three in Stockport and one in Cheshire East)
- A pedestrian and cycle route for the whole length of the relief road, including retrofitting it to the existing A555(Cheshire East and Stockport);
- Six balancing ponds for drainage purposes (four in Stockport, one in Cheshire East and one in Manchester); and
- Associated landscaping, lighting, engineering and infrastructure works.

## **PLANNING HISTORY AND BACKGROUND**

Whilst there have been no previous planning applications for the A6MARR, the general route of the proposed relief road is well established and has been defined and safeguarded for road construction purposes since the 1930's.

In 2001 the South East Manchester Multi-Modal Strategy study (SEMMMS) was published which identified the problems with the transport system in the area and made recommendations for improvements. Amongst a package of investment in the public transport network, the study proposed that the local authorities develop roads of an appropriate scale designed to provide relief to the problems in the study area communities, but not to provide a new strategic route of regional and potentially national significance.

The content and objectives of the SEMMMS Study were endorsed across the North West at all political levels. The A6MARR was seen as a major part in delivering the

recommendations of the SEMMMS study with the scheme being prioritised by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Transport for Greater Manchester.

In its Autumn Statement 2011 and National Infrastructure Plan 2011, the Government presented its vision for the UK transport system, and later identified the A6MARR as one of 70+ major infrastructure projects aimed at addressing congestion and improving performance on the highway network.

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council and Manchester City Council have recently passed resolutions to approve the development within their respective boundaries.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

The applications as submitted to the three Local Planning Authorities are accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES) which is considered to meet the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. The Environmental Statement covers the scheme in its entirety ensuring that each of the three Local Planning Authorities is aware of constraints outside of their authority boundaries.

The ES sets out the results/findings of the EIA, including proposals of a number of mitigation measures that would be implemented to prevent and/or minimise any adverse effects. These are set out under a series of separate chapters which are as summarised as follows:

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction and description of the scheme, the methodology and approach taken in preparing the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and explains the format and structure of the ES and each of its chapters.

Chapter 2 explains the need for the scheme. This chapter states that the A6MARR is one element of the wider South East Manchester Multi Modal Strategy (SEMMMS) with the proposal intending to provide strategic connectivity to Manchester Airport and the south Manchester corridor and highlights the current transport related problems and issues within the area and the role that the proposal would make in addressing these problems.

The chapter further explains that the scheme is supported and promoted by the three local authorities: Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, Cheshire East Council and Manchester City Council with all partners and supporters committed to the efficient delivery of the scheme to ensure that the North West economy can thrive in the future.

As a key part of the wider SEMMMS strategy, the A6MARR is identified as providing much-needed congestion relief to local and strategic routes in the area, congestion that currently constrains the growth potential of the Cheshire East, Manchester and Stockport economies to the detriment of local communities.

The chapter states the underlying philosophy of the A6MARR scheme in providing priority for public transport and non-motorised modes of transport, providing a step change in the allocation of existing road space in favour of sustainable modes of transport - improving access for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists, and improving quality of life in residential areas along the south Manchester corridor.

Chapter 3 describes the principal alternatives considered for the scheme and provides an overview of development of the scheme. The alternatives considered relate to ten junction arrangements along the route, and arrangements for the proposed crossing of the West Coast Main Line.

Chapter 4 gives a general description of the existing environment, land uses and site setting for the A6MARR, along with an overview description and summary of key features/aspects of the scheme along sections of the route.

Chapter 5 details the key design components and construction activities which constitute the proposed scheme and associated operational characteristics. The chapter includes a description of the proposed route, topography, junctions, structures, cycletracks, footpaths and bridleways, lighting, drainage, watercourse diversions, earthworks and how the scheme integrates into the current network.

Chapter 6 outlines the approach to consultation prior to the submission of the planning applications. The chapter explains the history of the scheme, and the consultation with statutory and non-statutory bodies since 2009.

Chapter 7 explains the scope of the studies and assessments which have been undertaken and any modifications that have been made to the scope as the studies and assessments have progressed. It further describes the relationship between environmental impacts and their effects and terms referred to in various assessments and sets out a common format for the assessment reported to in chapters 8 – 17. The chapter identifies that The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume 11, Section 3 (DMRB) provides a framework for identifying and considering potential impacts with major road projects. The topics assessed by the EIA are as follows:

- Air Quality
- Cultural Heritage
- Landscape and Visual Effects
- Nature Conservation
- Geology and Soils
- Noise and Vibration
- Effects on All Travellers
- Community and Private Assets
- Road Drainage and the Water Environment

- Cumulative Effects

Chapters 8-17 report the findings of the studies and assessments undertaken and identify any likely significant environmental effects including cumulative effects. A common format has been adopted for the reporting of the assessments undertaken for each of the environmental aspects investigated.

Chapter 8: Air Quality – this chapters contains an assessment of the potential impacts of the scheme on air quality including impacts associated with dust generated during construction activities and associated with working areas, additional emissions from construction traffic. The assessment for air quality has focussed on:

- Local air quality with parts of the road network where volumes of traffic would be affected by the introduction of the scheme into the network;
- Changes in concentrations of oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and levels of nitrogen deposition where changes in volumes of traffic within the road network affected by the introduction of the proposed scheme into the network could potentially affect sites designated for ecological value;
- Changes in greenhouse gas emissions (regional emissions) attributable to the introduction of the proposed scheme into the local road network;
- Nuisance associated within construction related dust; and
- Impact on local air quality associated with construction traffic.

The air quality assessment has considered the effects of the proposed development upon a total of 11,036 receptors including residential properties, care homes, hospitals, schools, nurseries and businesses.

The Environmental Impact Assessment has demonstrated that Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations would fall at approximately 79% of receptors whilst 2% would be unchanged and 19% would experience an increase.

The ES further identifies that Particulate Matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) concentrations are predicted to fall at approximately 61% of receptors whilst 22% would be unchanged and 17% would experience and increase.

The EIA demonstrates that implementation of the proposed scheme is expected to result in a small increase in regional emissions associated with increased vehicular usage of the road network.

Chapter 9: Cultural Heritage – this chapter contains assessments of cultural heritage assets with the EIA focussing on:

- Archaeological assets and their setting;



- Built heritage assets and their setting; and
- Historic landscape.

The assessments have generally been focussed on known heritage assets and areas identified as having archaeological potential within 600m wide study area centred on the proposed scheme alignment. Known sites and monuments beyond this margin have also been assessed where it has been recognised that the proposed scheme may have a discernible impact on their setting, the Zone of Theoretical Visibility for the proposed scheme being adopted as a basis for determining such potential.

The EIA has identified the 29 known archaeological assets of low value will be damaged, destroyed or removed during the construction of the proposed scheme.

The assessments have demonstrated that all but one of the known and potential assets of archaeological interest would be subject to impacts which would be no greater than slight and adverse. The assessment further demonstrates that the impact on the one other asset, Norbury Mill, would be moderate and adverse.

The assessments have concluded that the proposed scheme does not involve direct impact on any listed buildings or buildings identified as being of historic or architectural importance. The loss of some of the agricultural land to the south of Norbury Hall which contributes to the setting of the farmhouse and encroachment into the curtilage of the buildings has been identified as having a moderate and adverse impact of the setting of the asset. The relationship of the site and building to its surroundings are however not proposed to be altered to an extent which would compromise the value of its cultural heritage. As such, the applicant has concluded that the impact does not constitute a significant effect.

The impacts related to historic landscapes has fully been assessed within the ES and concludes that that impacts related to historic landscape types would be no greater than slight and adverse, and as such, concluded that such impacts do not constitute a significant effect.

The overall conclusion of the assessments is that the impacts identified do not constitute a significant effect collectively either in part or in their entirety.

Chapter 10: Landscape and Visual Effects – this chapter investigates the likely impacts on the landscape character of the urban areas, urban fringe and countryside associated with the proposed scheme corridor between the A6 and Manchester Airport and assesses the visual impacts on sensitive receptors associated with the proposed scheme corridor.

The assessments have identified that whilst the proposed scheme generally integrates into the receiving landscape, there would be localised impacts to landscape character that would be significant in the long term.

Four such locations are identified:

- North of Norbury Brook
- Where the proposed scheme crosses the Ladybrook Valley
- At the Bramhall Oil terminal; and
- At the crossing of the West Coast Main Line.

Moderate and adverse effects would occur at the western end of the scheme in the short term reducing to slight/moderate in the design year (2032).

The assessment has identified that two locations would have large adverse and long term visual impacts. These locations are identified as being two receptors at the southern end of Old Mill Lane in the winter of the design year. Moderate to large adverse impacts are also identified at 13 residential receptors along the route of the proposed development in the long term during winter months, reducing to six in the summer months.

Chapter 11: Nature Conservation – the chapter assesses in detail potential impacts of the scheme on Norbury Brook Site Biological Interest, habitats and fauna. The study areas adopted for each species are as follows:

- Norbury Brook SBI – the boundary of the designated site
- Habitats – the proposed permanent land take and temporary working areas and contiguous habitat where they are extending beyond land take
- Great Crested Newts – 500m either side of the proposed permanent land take
- Badgers – 50m either side of the proposed permanent land take
- Otter – along Lady brook and Norbury Brook where two watercourses cross and land take and a further 100m along both water courses either side of the land take
- Bats – a corridor comprising the proposed land take and extending 100m either side of land take
- Bats (roost potential) – proposed land take and any temporary working areas.

The chapter identifies that the scheme would have an impact on a badger sett, 6 outlier setts, Great Crested Newt ponds, loss of ancient woodland, bat habitats and a kingfisher habitat and proposed mitigation measures to reduce potential impacts.

The ES demonstrates whilst the majority of impacts can be mitigated, the loss of the ancient woodland, as a resource, cannot be mitigated against, and as such, would constitute a significant effect at a local level. In the context of Norbury Brook SBI, it has been concluded that the scheme would not have a significant effect.

The assessment has further demonstrated that there will be a net addition of habitat types as a result of proposed planting, and whilst of benefit, could not constitute a significant benefit.

The assessment relative to fauna and protected species has demonstrated that with the proposed mitigation measures in place, there will be no significant effects.

Chapter 12: Geology and Soils – the chapter provides a description of the solid and drift geology and soils associated with the proposed scheme corridor and the assessment of potentially contaminated site where construction could involve disturbance and potential release of contaminants.

The assessment established that there were potentially ten contaminated sites within a 1km wide corridor centred on the alignment for the proposed scheme. On further investigation only one of these falls within the land take of the proposal, and lying within Manchester City Council Authority Boundary.

The applicant has identified mitigation measures for the site and identified further investigation works required.

Looking at the geology of the area, it has been concluded that it is unlikely that the proposed scheme would have any significant effects on the geology and soils of the area.

The ES further advises that there may be unknown contaminants, and therefore mitigation may be required if contamination is found.

Chapter 13: Noise and vibration – this chapter focuses on:

- A qualitative assessment of potential noise impacts in relation to sensitive receptors during construction;
- Assessment of potential traffic related noise impacts and nuisance relative to sensitive receptors following the opening of the proposal;
- Assessment of potential impacts on sensitive receptors as a result of vibration associated with construction; and
- Assessment of potential impact on sensitive receptors as a result of vibration associated with the future use.

Sensitive receptors relative to all four assessments include:

- Residential dwellings;
- Schools, colleges and childrens nurseries;
- Community facilities including sports centres;
- Places of worship;
- Hospitals, care/nursing homes, health centres and clinics;
- Laboratories containing sensitive equipment; and
- Heritage buildings.

Consideration was also given to outdoor areas commonly used by people where the ambient noise level are currently below 50dB(A).

The ES has demonstrated that there would be an increase in traffic related noise at the majority of sensitive receptors. In the short term, of the 26,034 residential receptors and 123 non residential receptors, 9,575 are likely to experience and increase in noise, whilst 6,489 are likely to experience a decrease.

Road noise has been identified as being mitigated through the use of low noise surface and acoustic barriers.

There are 55 residential properties that would potentially experience levels equal to or in excess of 68 dB(A) and a 1dB(A) increase as a result of the scheme, and thus, it may be necessary to provide noise insulation to properties.

The ES further identifies potential noise mitigation, and identifies that construction activities and noise limits should be agreed and specific contractors' method statements would be required prior to construction activities such as piling or blasting. The recommended mitigation would satisfactorily reduce the impact of such a development.

Chapter 14: Effects on All travellers – this chapter assesses the anticipated impacts on non-motorised users of the existing footpaths, PRow and road network relative to the impacts on accessibility and the amenity value on the network affected and, assess the impact on motorists using the existing network and the proposed scheme relative to driver stress.

The assessments have identified that the proposed scheme would be beneficial to non-motorised users of the public rights of way network due to the new east west footpath and cycleway connecting various local centres and existing footpaths. It does however further identify that there may be some amenity loss due to proposed diversions of footpaths.

Driver stress would generally decrease in the locality particularly for strategic traffic using the proposed scheme, however, there would be instances where driver stress would increase along specific sections.

Chapter 15: Community and Private Assets – the chapter assesses the impact of the scheme on private land take, loss of land used by the community, effects on land take on agricultural resources, and effects on development land.

The ES identifies that the proposed scheme would involve the loss of agricultural and recreational land together with residential, industrial and commercial land.

The scheme has been identified as severing and fragmenting up to 23 agricultural holdings with potential impacts for future operation.

Land take from Woodford Receptions Ground would result in approximately 12.5% of the total area being lost, the majority of which is currently scrub land with intermittent trees which bounds with the existing A555.

16 locations have been identified where residential land would be required for the scheme with the ES providing full commentary on each property and its likely impact.

Chapter 16: Road Drainage and the Water Environment – this chapter examines in full the potential impacts on the water environment focussing on surface waters, ground water and flood plains. A full flood risk assessment has been submitted with the planning application which supports the application and informs the ES.

The ES proposes mitigation both during construction and in the design of the scheme to minimise impacts.

The assessment has identified two areas of notable flood risk, one being the confluence of the Norbury Brook, Poynton Brook and Lady Brook and the second being the area related to Spath Brook in the vicinity of Stanley Green Trading Estate.

All potential impacts of the scheme have been investigated and it has been concluded that with the inclusion of the mitigation, impacts on the geomorphology, hydrology and flood risk of surface waters and on water quality, flows and levels of groundwater will be no greater than slight at specific locations, and as such, slight overall.

The scheme would not have significant effects on water quality and biodiversity at four out of five local watercourses. Mitigation is proposed on Baguley Brook.

Chapter 17: Cumulative Effects – this chapter identifies potential cumulative effects including:

- Those which arise from changes caused by a combination of impacts from existing or planned development and the proposed scheme; and
- Those which arise from a combination of impacts identified by different environmental disciplines within the ES.

The chapter identifies that separate developments or environmental disciplines and associated impacts may not be significant, however, when considered together may become significant.

In order to assess the impacts, the applicant undertook an assessment to identify potential developments looking at proximity to the proposed scheme, type and size of development and proximity to known environmental receptors.

Those considered to be of note all relate to the application submitted to Manchester City Council, and identifies Airport City, Manchester Airport Metro Link extension and a car park to the north of Ringway Road West with the ES identifying that there would be cumulative impacts upon landscape and visual impacts in these areas.

Members should be aware that the proposed strategic site, Handforth East, in the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan has not formed part of the cumulative assessment. There is no requirement for this to take place as it is not “committed development”. The infrastructural requirements for Handforth East would need to be considered separately in the future.

The ES further identifies that for a number of properties adjacent to the proposed scheme, and in some areas distant from the application site, there will be significant and adverse cumulative impacts, however, the proposed scheme would also result in significant beneficial effects in areas outside of the immediate scheme corridor in relation to air quality and traffic related noise. Mitigation measures relating to individual impacts have been proposed.

Chapter 18: Schedule of Environmental Commitments – this chapter identifies the key mitigation measures reported throughout the ES and which form the mandatory schedule of commitments under the contracts for construction. The commitments and mitigation are best appreciated through the submission.

Overall, it is concluded that no significant cumulative impacts are anticipated for the scheme provided all the mitigation measures and commitments detailed within the ES are adopted and implemented.

**Non-technical summary** – this document gives a brief overview of the main findings of the ES in an easily understandable and accessible format.

## **SITE AND SURROUNDINGS**

The proposed alignment of the scheme traces the southern fringe of the Greater Manchester conurbation from the A6 in the east to Manchester International Airport. The corridor of the scheme comprises a sequence of open space and countryside, much of which is designated as Green Belt and identified as a Landscape Character Areas of Lady Brook Valley and Woodford. The route of the scheme has been protected from development that would prejudice a road scheme within the corridor since the 1930's.

The land use pattern along the route is predominantly agricultural, however there is recreational and sports areas, institutional grounds and residential properties together with industrial and commercial uses.

From the A6 to the A555/Woodford Road Junction the corridor is characterised by open agricultural land used for grazing, the wooded valleys of Norbury Brook and Lady Brook

and the urban areas of Hazel Grove to the north, Poynton to the south and Bramhall to the west.

The development is proposed to occupy the southern extent of Hazel Grove Golf Course (land outside of the operational golf course but within its ownership) and crossing Ox Hey Brook. The highway boundary and landscaping areas are proposed to abut a number of residential properties adjacent to the existing A6. From the A6, the alignment crosses the Hazel Grove Railway Line and runs through open fields passing between Norbury Brook and the southern extent of Old Mill Lane where it would pass in close proximity to residential dwellings. The proposed cycle path would abut with the boundary of the southern most residential property on Old Mill Lane. The scheme would pass to the south of residential properties on Darley Road and Ashbourne Road and would cross Macclesfield Road abutting with Brookside Garden Centre. The topography along this part of the route is gently undulating and at Norbury Brook the land is incised and slopes steeply downwards. A section of the wooded valley created by Norbury Brook is classified as ancient woodland.

The development would continue west through open pasture in parallel with the Ladybrook Valley Interest Trail and Norbury Brook and in close proximity to residential properties on Longnor Road, Sheldon Road, Norbury Hall, Mill Hill Hollow and Barlowfold Farm.

Ladybrook Valley is characterised by relatively steep sides. The scheme continues through open countryside and agricultural land of undulating topography, passing several public footpaths to the north and south before crossing Woodford Road and the West Coast Main Line. The scheme passes Hill Green Farm and Bramhall Golf Club to the north and Distaff Farm to the south.

The scheme continues south west through open agricultural land crossing several footpaths and the access road to Bramhall Oil Terminal and Ashmead Farm. The aforementioned are immediately to the north of the proposal with the settlement of Bramhall beyond the depot.

The proposal seeks consent to cross the northern extent of Moorend Golf Course before joining with the existing A555. There are residential properties to the north and south of Woodford Road and on Albany Road in close proximity with the scheme together with Queensgate School lying immediately to the north of the site.

The route continues along the existing A555 passing through relatively flat pasture with urban areas of Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme to the north. The scheme abuts with Woodford Recreational Ground to the north and Londfield Poultry Farm and Andertons Nurseries to the south. The existing A555 crosses closely with residential properties associated with Hall Moss Lane. Between Hall Moss Lane and the A34 the A555 is mainly surrounded by open fields and Chester's Park Croft, a residential caravan park.

The scheme continues past the Stanley Green Trading Estate, the community of Handforth and residential properties on Stanley Road and Stanley Road Farm before passing under Wilmslow Road and approaching land currently occupied as Styal Golf Club. In the location is outlying infrastructure associated with Manchester Airport, areas of pasture and the settlements of Handforth, Heald Green and Moss Nook.

Immediately to the west of Wilmslow Road the proposed alignment crosses an existing airport storage facility and passes immediately to the south of Little Acorns Day Nursery. The proposal then continues back into open fields currently used for grazing livestock and the residential properties of Bolshaw farm.

A large residential dwelling known as 'The Grange' sits to the south of the proposed alignment with a large commercial nursery and two farms: Yew Tree Farm and Outwood Farm. Continuing west the proposal crosses a footpath before crossing the northern extent of Styal Gold Club. The scheme emerges to the west of the golf course into open fields used for grazing. The final section of the scheme within Stockport is where the scheme crosses the Styal Railway line. All land to the west of the Styal Railway Line falls within MCC jurisdiction, with the scheme predominantly tracing the Manchester Airport Railway line spurs through open fields near to residential and commercial properties in Moss Nook. The scheme terminates at the Junction of Ringway Road/Ringway Road West.

Members will appreciate that whilst their remit is to determine the element within Cheshire East, the proposal weaves in and out of SMBC, CEC and MCC and it therefore important to appreciate the siting of the whole scheme and not just that within its own boundary.

The full details of the proposed route alignment and location of existing structures is best appreciated from the plans submitted with the planning application.

### **POLICY**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications/appeals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for Cheshire East comprises:

- Policies set out in the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan 2004 which have been saved by direction under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004;

*(note: the development plan also comprises saved policies of Congleton Borough Local Plan and Crewe & Nantwich Borough Local Plan which are not relevant to this proposal)*

Paragraph 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stipulates that the degree of weight given to the relevant Development Plan policies should be based on the



degree to which they are consistent with the NPPF, with those policies closest to the framework given the greatest weight.

Paragraph 216 of the NPPF then states that weight may be given to emerging plans from the day of publication, with the weight to be given dependant on the stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies and according to the degree of consistency with the NPPF.

#### Macclesfield Borough Local Plan 2004 (saved policies)

NE2 The Borough Council will seek to conserve and enhance the diversity of landscape character areas and ensure that any development respects local landscape character.

NE7 The Borough Council will seek to retain and enhance existing woodlands by woodland management. Development which would adversely affect woodlands will not normally be permitted.

NE11 The Borough Council will seek to conserve, enhance and interpret nature conservation interests. Development which would adversely affect nature conservation interests will not normally be permitted.

NE14 Development proposals which involve the loss of ponds, wetlands, heathlands, ancient woodlands or ancient grassland together with newly created habitats will not normally be allowed and their conservation will be encouraged.

NE17 In major developments in the countryside, the borough council will seek improvements for nature conservation, tree planting and landscaping

BE1 Sets out the design principles and standards for new development.

BE2 The Borough Council will seek to preserve, enhance and interpret the historic fabric of the environment. Development which would adversely affect the historic fabric will not normally be permitted.

BE16 Development which would adversely affect the setting of a listed building will not normally be approved.

BE21 The Borough Council will promote the conservation enhancement and interpretation of sites of archaeological importance and their settings. Development which would adversely affect archaeological interests will not normally be permitted.

GC1 Green Belt – new buildings.

RT7 The Borough Council will seek to create a network of cycleways, bridleways and footpaths.

T1 Sets criteria to judge new transportation schemes

T3 Improve conditions for pedestrians

T5 Development proposals will make provision for cyclists in accordance with policy IMP2

T6 The Borough Council will support other highway improvement schemes which reduce accidents and traffic hazards.

T7 Land along the routes of the following road schemes will be safeguarded from other development (includes a safeguarded route for the airport link road - MAELR).

T8 The council will seek to introduce traffic management measures and environmental improvements on and adjacent to the roads which will be relieved of heavy traffic as a result of the new road schemes referred to in policies T7

IMP2 Infrastructure requirements from new developments

DC1 The overall scale, density, height, mass and materials of new development must normally be sympathetic to the character of the local environment, street scene, adjoining buildings and the site itself.

DC3 Development, including changes of use, should not significantly injure the amenities of adjoining or nearby residential property or sensitive uses

DC6 – Circulation and access

DC8 where appropriate, applications for new development must include a landscape scheme which should meet the following criteria:

DC9 – Tree protection

DC13 Noise generating developments which cumulatively would increase the ambient noise level to an unacceptable level, will not normally be permitted.

DC15 In cases where new infrastructure is required before development can proceed, a condition will be imposed to ensure that the development proceeds in accordance with the provision of new infrastructure and facilities.

DC17 Water Resources

DC18 Sustainable Urban drainage systems

DC63 Contaminated Land

### Emerging Cheshire East Local Plan

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version

Paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise, decision-takers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced the preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

In view of the level of consultation already afforded to the plan-making process, together with the degree of consistency with national planning guidance, it is appropriate to attach enhanced weight to the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy - Submission Version in the decision-making process.

At its meeting on the 28th February 2014, the Council resolved to approve the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version for publication and submission to the Secretary of State. It was also resolved that this document be given weight as a material consideration for Development Management purposes with immediate effect.

The proposal is fully in line with Strategic Priority 1 of the pre-submission Core Strategy. This priority seeks to promote economic prosperity by creating the conditions for business growth. The objective is to be delivered in part by capitalising on the accessibility of the Borough, including improved transport links with the Manchester City Region and Manchester Airport.

Strategic priorities 2, 3 and 4 seek to create sustainable communities, protect and enhance environmental quality, reducing the need to travel, promoting more sustainable modes of transport and improving the road network.

Policy CO2 - Enabling Business Growth Through Transport Infrastructure – specifies that support will be given for schemes identified within the current Infrastructure Delivery Plan. The airport relief road is included in the current Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

## National planning guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) (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 Framework 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 Framework as a whole; or
  - specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.

The main policies/statements set out in the NPPF which are relevant to this proposal are as follows (summarised):

Paragraph 31 states that Local Authorities should work with neighbouring authorities and transport providers to develop strategies for the provision of viable infrastructure necessary to support sustainable development, including large scale facilities such as rail freight interchanges, roadside facilities for motorists or transport investment necessary to support strategies for the growth of ports, airports or other major generators of travel demand in their areas. The applicant in this case SMBC, CEC and MCC have worked positively together and with neighbouring authorities to ensure the proposal is viable and meets the aims of the paragraph. The scheme would promote economic growth, relieve existing congestion on the highway network and promote sustainable transport.

Paragraph 32 states that all developments that generate significant amounts of movements should be supported by a Transport Statement or Assessment.

Plans and decisions should take account of whether:

- the opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up depending on the nature and location of the site, to reduce the need for major transport infrastructure;
- safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people; and

- improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development.
- Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

The proposed development has been supported by a Transport Assessment (TA )which identifies the impacts of the development. The TA includes mitigation measures, and complementary mitigation measures which are proposed to mitigate impacts of the development and increase sustainable transport choices.

Paragraph 41 – Local Planning Authorities should identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to wide transport choice. The proposed development runs along a route protected within CEC under Policy T7. The route deviates slightly from the safeguarded route at the western end of the proposed road within Cheshire East. The proposed route is further South at the approach point to the railway line crossing at Styal than the safeguarded route shown on the proposals map under policy T7. However, the principle of the scheme clearly accords with para 41.

Paragraph 79 – The Government attaches great importance to Green Belt, The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belt are their openness and their permanence.

Paragraph 80 – Green Belt serves five purposes:

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

Paragraph 87 – States that as with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. This policy reiterates previous Green Belt policy and continues in Paragraph 88 which states that when considering planning applications, LPAs should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, and that 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 further states that development may not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and 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 the Green Belt. The applicant has given considerations to paragraphs 87, 88 and 90 of the NPPF, and the purposes of the Green Belt and considers that the proposed development would be harmful to openness and would not safeguard existing areas of the countryside located within the application site, and as such, considers that the proposed development would represent inappropriate development within the Green Belt. The applicant has therefore submitted very special circumstance which they believe clearly outweighs any harm to the Green Belt. To avoid repetition, full discussion on the Green Belt can be found later in the report.

Paragraph 103 advises that determining planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere and only consider development appropriate in areas at risk of flooding where, informed by a site-specific flood risk assessment following the Sequential and Exception Test, it can be demonstrated that:

- within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location; and
- development is appropriately flood resilient and resistant, including safe access and escape routes where required, and that any residual risk can be safely managed, including emergency planning; and it gives priority to the use of sustainable drainage systems.

As part of the planning submission the applicant has provided a Flood Risk Assessment prepared in accordance with the NPPF technical guidance. Full commentary and responses from statutory bodies can be found in the body of the report.

Paragraph 109 – 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.

Full discussion on the natural and local environment can be found within the report, however, on balance it is considered that the scheme accords with the general principles of para 109.

Paragraph 112 – Local Planning Authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality land. Full discussion can be found within the analysis section, however, in summary, the scheme does not result in the loss of best and most versatile land, although a significant amount of agricultural land would be lost and severed. The benefits and need for the scheme are considered to outweigh the potential harm.

Paragraph 118 – When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:

- if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- proposed development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) likely to have an adverse effect on a SSSI (either individually or in combination with other developments) should not normally be permitted. Where an adverse effect on the sites notified special interest features is likely, an exception should only be made where the benefits of the development, clearly outweigh both the impacts that it is likely to have on the features of the site and any broader impacts;
- opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.

Opportunities for mitigation and biodiversity have been taken where possible to ensure that the impacts of the development are acceptable. It is considered that the ES fully assesses the impacts, and with mitigation the scheme will ensure compliance with para 118.

Paragraph 120 – To prevent unacceptable risks from pollution and land stability, planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate for its location. The effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, the natural environment or general amenity, and the potential sensitivity of the areas or proposed development to adverse effects from pollution, should be taken into account.

Paragraph 123 – Planning policies and decisions should aim to:

- avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse effects on health and quality of life as a result of new development;
- mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and

- quality of life arising from new development, including through the use of conditions;
- recognise that development will often create some noise and existing businesses wanting to develop in continuance of their business should not have unreasonable restrictions put on them because of changes in nearby land uses since they were established; and
  - identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.

Paragraph 124 – Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas is consistent with the local air quality action plan.

Paragraph 128 – In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Where a site includes or has the potential to include heritage assets within archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation. The applicant has provided in full an assessment of the potential impacts, which is considered to be sufficient to determine the proposal.

Paragraph 132 – When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important and asset, the greater the weight should be. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Within Cheshire East, no such harm is identified as a result of the proposed development.

Paragraph 135 – The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

Paragraph 139 – Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.

Paragraphs 186 and 187 – Local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development and should look for solutions



rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. Local planning authorities should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Paragraph 215 – states that 12 months after the publication of the NPPF (March 2012) due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the framework the greater the weight that may be given).

### **PRE-APPLICATION PUBLIC CONSULTATION BY THE APPLICANT**

The planning application has been supported by a Statement of Community Involvement which identifies the full history and engagement of the public and stakeholders throughout the process.

The applicant has undertaken the following consultation prior to the submission of the application:

- Statutory and non-statutory consultees were engaged in 2009;
- Views and opinions from statutory and non-statutory consultees were sought in February 2010 on the revised scope of the Environmental Statement (ES)
- A series of forums for statutory and non-statutory consultees and interest groups were held between February 2012 and June 2012.
- Phase One Consultation - 18 public exhibitions were held throughout October, November and December 2012 across the length of the scheme. Exhibitions lasted for 2 days at each location, and were advertised via local radio, newspaper adverts, notifications on the website and leaflet drops to local residents. The purpose of the exhibitions was to engage with local residents and interested members of the public. Phase One asked broader questions about the proposed development in order to gauge overall support and preferences on the layout of six junctions along the proposed route.
- Specific consultation with affected land owners was undertaken throughout the summer of 2012.
- Phase Two Consultation - Following the first phase of public consultation, a revised scheme was prepared, taking into account the feedback received from the first phase of consultation, in particular in relation to the various junction options that had been previously consulted on. This was the subject of a further public consultation in June 2013. This phase provided feedback on the results of Phase One and sought views on the proposed development after taking on board the comments given in Phase One. Phase Two also

provided feedback on proposed mitigation measures and highlighted the interventions that have taken place to amend the Scheme in response to the feedback received, or where a change has not been possible, why this is the case.

The information and data captured by the applicant as part of the consultation process demonstrates that there was overall support for the proposed A6MARR. 69% of overall respondents supported the proposals with approximately 50% of respondents specifying that they are strongly in favour of the proposals. 13% of overall respondents specified that they were not in favour or definitely not in favour of the proposed development.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

The planning application was advertised by the direct notification of 548 properties, the display of 13 site notices and publication of 2 local press notices on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> November 2013. The application was advertised as a departure from the development plan due to the location of the development within the Green Belt, a major development, development affecting Public Rights of Way and development affecting the setting of a listed building.

In response to the consultation carried out by the Local Planning Authority, 67 individual responses were received from 60 properties. In addition to individual letters, a petition with 33 signatures against the scheme was received.

The responses are summarised in this report. All of the detailed comments are available to view on the application file online.

Of the 67 individual responses:

3 letters of support were received which raise the following points:

- 10 years ago SEMMMS reinforced the need for improved traffic flow through Poynton. The benefits far outweigh any shortcomings
- Recent residential development on Woodford BAE site will further impact on traffic problems. The A555 will significantly reduce east/west through traffic.
- Cycling should be promoted through good design of the cycling/walking path.
- Footpaths should be upgraded to cycleway or bridlepath status to improve linkages
- Please help get this project moving to improve the lives of children and adults in residential areas.

5 letters of general comment advising the following:

- Traffic congestion around Bramhall and Poynton means the road must be finished sooner rather than later, but concern about the raised embankment parallel to Woodford Road to cross the railway line which.
- The road surface should be of the best sound deadening as possible and there should be as much protection from noise pollution as possible.
- Field behind Clay Lane is waterlogged most years. The road will require the removal of one of the ponds in the field. Concern that properties need to be protected from flooding or subsidence in the future.
- Consideration be given to type and age of tree planting
- Acknowledged benefits of the scheme but critical that properties nearby are properly screened from the new road and junctions.
- Concern about Poynton Sharded Space scheme being unable to cope with increased traffic unless Poynton By-pass is implemented.

59 letters of objection from 52 properties have been received, raising the following matters (summarised):

- Insufficient time was given to the general public to make comment on the proposal;
- The proposed scheme would have a major impact on traffic congestion in Poynton, Disley, High Lane, New Mills and Furness Vale
- The application is based on unproven and incomplete data;
- The traffic modelling that has been used is flawed;
- Will result in greater congestion;
- Speed limit at Handforth near the new junction should be reduced to 30mph;
- Irreplaceable damage to precious countryside and wildlife habitat, including ancient woodland;
- Destruction of Kingfisher nesting site
- Damage to SBI's, bats, badgers, great crested newts;
- New roads always create extra traffic ;
- It is not a relief road, it is to support house building, and big business;
- Flooding;
- Increased noise pollution
- It will generate an unacceptable volume of traffic on the A6, which is the major route into the Peak District, one of the busiest roads in the country and which has many HGVs using it already.
- Increased pollution and serious harm to air quality, particularly in the Disley Air Quality Management Area. Damage to health of residents.
- You cannot trade off one person's air quality against another's.
- It does not fit with Cheshire East Council Air Quality Strategy and is a breach of European Air Quality law.
- Reduction in open countryside and impact on Green Belt;
- It is harming the precious and narrow band of Green Belt.

- Detrimental impact on visual amenity;
- The lighting of the scheme will have an adverse impact;
- Impact of new bridges and structures in the rural setting;
- The road bridges should be constructed underneath the railway line, it is a cost saving exercise only to the detriment of the landscape and amenity.
- The level of the road should be lowered and cut into the landscape to reduce the impact. The road and embankments are too high.
- Impact on property values;
- The scheme is not needed and will not benefit residents;
- Impact and uncertainty on the land required for the development to be implemented;
- It does not fulfil the SEMMMS objectives and is a waste of public money;
- It is a road to nowhere.
- The scheme cannot work in isolation and can only work with the Poynton By-pass
- No provision for the acquisition of land required for the Poynton Bypass;
- The scheme does not work without a link to the M60 at Bredbury.
- Traffic emissions;
- Loss of agricultural and recreation land;
- Consultation has not been listened to;
- Details of accommodation bridges, junctions and layouts not acceptable;
- Unacceptable diversion of footpaths;
- Money should be spent on sustainable transport measures;
- Object to the current location of noise mitigation;
- It should be determined through a public inquiry
- Breach of planning policy;
- Alternative scheme should have been considered;
- The scheme does not promote sustainable transport;
- Character of the area will be severely and adversely impacted;

With regard to the petitions:

One petition has been signed by 33 people and raises concern with regard to the erection of a bridge over the West Coast Main Line close to Woodford Road. The petition states that they are concerned about the impact on visual amenity and feel that the bridge is out of keeping in the rural area. They are concerned that the structure will detract from the current views. They wish to see the scheme go underneath the railway (*note this bridge is outside the Cheshire East boundary*).

It is stated that a number of residents purchased their properties following seeing plans showing the scheme going under the railway.

Of the 59 letters of objection, 12 are from landowners/businesses affected by the development. Most of these objections have been submitted by professional land agents or

legal firms representing their clients. The letters largely object over issues such as rights of way and access. A summary of the interested parties and issues is set out below (except where they have been covered by the objections noted above):

#### Beech Farm, Styal

- The proposal has not taken account of consultation and the preferred route has not been explained. It has been stated by the Councils that the line taken is to avoid woodland (further North) of local importance. However, this woodland is of no ecological value.
- It is unresolved how severed land will be accessed during and post construction period and how the Vodafone mast will be maintained.
- The bridge height is 3 metres higher than necessary resulting in unnecessary land take and increased harm the Green Belt.
- Natural drainage patterns will be altered resulting in potential for water-logging of grazing land.

#### Robinsons Nurseries Limited

- Construction of road will impact business operations on the site without accommodation works to provide mitigation;
- The construction of the road scheme and its subsequent use will have a detrimental effect on the tomato growing and bedding plant business by virtue of dust, pollution and detrimental air quality.

#### Little Acorns Nursery

- The proposed land take involves the loss of part of the playing field at the nursery, which is critical to the functioning of the business which employs 57 staff.

The other 9 representations, predominantly from agricultural holdings can be summarised as:

- Concern about position of accesses and rights of way resulting in potential safety issues and conflict with farm traffic;
- Unnecessary land take through road bridges, bunding, environmental mitigation, new foot/cycle/ equestrian routes;
- Compromises future use of land;
- Unsatisfactory access arrangement to the retained land;
- Impact on equestrian and agricultural business.

In addition to the individual responses identified above, letters have also been received from the following interested parties:

- Friends of the Earth Manchester;
- North West Transport Roundtable and the Campaign for Better Transport;
- Cheshire East Green Party;
- Stockport Friends of the Earth;
- Prestbury Parish Council;
- Poynton Against Unnecessary Link-roads to the Airport (PAULA) Residents Group;
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
- Cheshire Badger Group
- Cheshire East Local Access Forum
- Manchester Airport

The grounds of response from the aforementioned interested parties include:

**Friends of the Earth Manchester:**

Does not support the scheme as they do not believe that the case has been made for the economic, environmental and transport benefit claims as put forward in the planning application.

They consider the scheme would have a wide range of detrimental environmental, economic and social impacts that contradict national objectives and legal obligations and believe that the three Local Planning Authorities have a legal obligation under European and UK air quality and climate change legislation to refuse planning permission for the scheme.

They question the scope of the proposed scheme and believe that it is unacceptable that alternative options including a public transport improvement and cycling and pedestrian infrastructure only option, without the A6MARR, have not been considered.

They consider that there are flaws in the traffic modelling and traffic generation forecasts and question why significant sums of public money should be spent on a scheme which they do not believe would contribute towards lowering carbon emissions, and would in their opinion lead to an increase.

Manchester Friends of the Earth raise concern with regards to air quality and air pollution in general, state the requirements of the UK as a whole and highlight areas of the scheme which are of concern. They highlight the PM2.5 have not been assessed in the EIA. Air quality impacts have been cited as a reason when the Highways Agency are not proposing to allow hard shoulder running on the M60 J8-18.

The response highlights the levels of traffic and states that ‘the A6MARR scheme does little to reduce AM and PM peak congestions – in fact the scheme makes peak congestion worse and has major increases in some specific areas – which raise serious concerns in relation to air pollution’.

The response further identifies climate change legislation and questions the accuracy of traffic modelling and further state that they believe CEC, MCC and SMBC have a legal obligation under European and UK air quality and climate change legislation to refuse planning permission for the proposed road scheme.

### **North West Transport Roundtable and the Campaign for Better Transport-**

State that the plan to build this road runs contrary to all good sense and a mounting volume of evidence. They advise that the concept has no environmental credentials and will have any number of negative effects that will impinge on quality of life in south east Manchester/north east Cheshire. In their submission in objecting to the scheme they consider that they demonstrate:

- Traffic growth has been flattening out and falling both nationally and in the wider SEMMMS area for some years, cancelling out the argument for road building;
- There are flaws in many of the assumptions behind the transport forecasts;
- There are many questionable aspects to the modelling which did not examine a sufficiently wide geographical area and failed to model walking and cycling;
- Economic modelling has been overly optimistic and speculative and the economic case is still unproven;
- The health benefit assessment is wrong to assume there would be more benefits than disbenefits from the scheme based on assertions about economic opportunities;
- Properly conducted tests on alternative road building were not carried out
- The scheme will not meet its objectives;
- Modal split in the target area is already dominated by car and will not be helped;
- Insufficient attention has been paid to air pollution and knock-on health impacts;
- Overall, harmful emissions will rise, breaching EU standards;
- Building the road will, in effect, drive a horse and cart through sustainability and carbon reduction plans & policies the promoting authorities are signed up to;
- The impact of increased noise and pollution as well as air pollution is likely to have a real detrimental effect on people’s health;
- The big population within easy access to rolling countryside would lose a precious and very convenient resource on the urban fringe;
- The Green Belt will be breached between Greater Manchester and Cheshire East.

### **Cheshire East Green Party:**

Objections are based on the premise that they don’t believe that the proposal is compatible with the principles expressed in statutory local and national planning documents.

They point out in their objection that the benefits as identified are by no means certain and raise four objections:

1. Despite the relief road being included in SEMMMS, its proposed construction at this time is in contradiction to the SEMMMS recommendations given the onus on implementing these as a whole;
2. A planning application has been submitted despite the lack of specific mitigation measures having been put forward for the A6 in Disley and High Lane, which is predicted to experience a large increase in motor vehicle traffic, and hence congestion;
3. The proposed relief road is contrary to the NPPF principles in that it:
  - a. Does not jointly and simultaneously achieve economic, social and environmental gain;
  - b. Does not align with several NPPF core planning principles, in particular by effectively implementing the least sustainable SEMMMS recommendation before those which are sustainable transport modes; and damaging the natural environment including destruction of ancient woodland.
  - c. Does not secure reductions in greenhouse gas emissions;
  - d. Is not based on up to date and relevant evidence about the economic, social and environmental characteristics of the area and country.

#### **Stockport Friends of the Earth:**

Raise objection to the scheme and concern that the proposal could attract fracking into the area.

Concern that the scheme would increase air pollution and its impact on wildlife, especially pollinating insects.

Proposes that an alternative approach to the scheme would recognise the merits of local transport networks.

A public inquiry should be held.

#### **Prestbury Parish Council:**

Do not support the way in which road building is being carried out contrary to governmental guidance on how transport infrastructure should be appraised. The Parish Council raise concern with regards to the scheme and wish to understand what the full impact on the parish would be if:

- 1) The A6MARR is built
- 2) The A6MARR and Poynton Bypass is built
- 3) All the SEMMMS roads are built; and
- 4) All the SEMMMS roads and all the other strategic routes in the Cheshire East pre submission Core Strategy are built.



They raise concern with regards to the Local Enterprise Partnerships and the impacts that development could have on Prestbury. They advise that new roads invariably attract development along them, and state that all the SEMMMS schemes are within the Green Belt.

The state that it has been apparent for some time that if any part of the SEMMMS network is constructed, it would automatically trigger the building of the remainder of the network, part of which is scheduled to pass through Prestbury.

They raise concern that the SEMMMS Study endorsed the road schemes based on a very high growth rate in traffic which they advise has not materialised, and have in fact flattened out and since declined.

Concern is raised that no business case of traffic modelling is available for the remaining SEMMMS schemes or other schemes proposed in Cheshire East.

They consider that the Department for Communities and Local Government should call in the planning application for the A6MARR and hold a Public Inquiry in order that all issues surround this and the connecting roads and nearby settlements can be properly and exhaustively examined.

#### **PAULA Residents Group:**

State that:

The scheme needs to demonstrate that when the road opens air quality is not worsened in areas of poor air quality and pollution levels are within the Limits determined by the EU Air Directive.

PAULA questions the method that the applicant has used and identifies that they believe that there is contradictory evidence in their application.

They identify that the SEMMMS method involves counting the number of houses that see improved or worsened air quality and states that there are however other methods based on the EU Air Quality Directive which identifies representative locations near to source of the pollutant. PAULA state that although they may use the same limit values the SEMMMS method will always be less sensitive to rises in total air pollution and more people will be affected to a greater degree.

They state that there are contradictory conclusions in that in one report the houses flanking the existing A555 which sees a 100% increase in traffic shows an acceptable air quality whereas another SEMMMS report show exceedancies along the cycle track that runs parallel to the road.

They consider there are significant weaknesses in the SEMMMS method with less than 10% of the total number of houses being assessed.

They consider that the modest improvement on the A6 where terraces flank the road will overestimate the benefits compared to the significant worsening in Disley.

PAULA questions the locations of where the NO2 sensors were placed and which they believe lead to anomalies.

PAULA further express concern that the applicant has not followed the DfT advice note on assessment on air quality.

They further raise concern that the proposal is intended to go through Carr Wood, an ancient woodland and consider that they could of easily realigned the road to avoid the wood and at less cost. They state that contrary to the current assessment at least half the wood would be adversely affected.

They consider the scheme need to comply with the EU Air Quality Directive and that Carr Wood needs to be protected by diverting the road around the wood.

PAULA concludes by stating that the existing A555 should probably have been declared an air quality management area in 2009.

An email was sent to all members from a representative of PAULA covering these issues on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014.

**Cheshire Wildlife Trust (CWT)** – In general CWT does not wholly object to the proposal. However, there are certain elements about which the Trust has serious concerns and it is considered that these should be addressed by the applicant prior to the determination or in response to a planning condition, whichever is more appropriate. The comments of CWT set out, in relation to specific habitats and species, that they consider the applicant has undervalued the ecological impacts and that further compensatory and mitigation measures are required. Theses measure must be part of a long term 25 year Management Plan delivered by the applicant.

**Greater Manchester Ecology Unit** – Whilst acknowledging that significant information has been provided regarding ecological impacts and that some additional information on both the surveys carried and extent of proposed avoidance and mitigation has been provided, nevertheless we would advise further information is required.

NOTE: The applicant provided a full response and clarification on the comments received from GMEU. GMEU have confirmed that they are satisfied with the level of detail provided, however are concerned regarding when some of the surveys were carried out. They advise that some of the surveys were carried out when temperatures were regarded as too low, however do state that from 'The implications from a planning perspective are probably not critical as we can cover any shortfalls in the survey through pre-cautionary measures'.

The applicant has since rebutted the comment of GMEU stating 'due to seasonal constraints in early 2013 some surveys were undertaken in sub-optimal temperatures, but yet within the accepted survey window, and it is therefore important for the ecologists who are undertaking the survey works to use their experience and judgement in whether the conditions are a constraint.

**Cheshire Badger Group** - A comprehensive wildlife survey must be undertaken in partnership with concerned wildlife groups and wildlife trusts for example Cheshire Wildlife trust and Cheshire Badger Group.

Tunnels should be incorporated into the road structure and banking in order to allow passage of wildlife for example foxes and badgers thus preventing the many road casualties killed in crossing the road.

**Cheshire East Local Access Forum** – The forum welcomes the inclusion of pedestrian/cycle lanes along the entire route of the new road.

The Forum welcomes the construction of new bridleways, particularly in Poynton where none existed before, but note that at present, these are stand alone and do not make sense as through routes unless adjoining footpaths are 'upgraded' into bridleways. If the situation remains as present then we would want barriers erected at each end of the proposed bridleways so that horse riders do not use the existing footpaths causing damage and potential danger to walkers.

They also raise an issue in relation to crossings at the Pegasus oil terminal. (note: this element is in Stockport and not for determination in this application).

### **Manchester Airport (not safeguarding)**

The Airport express their strong support for the scheme. They also make some recommendations in respect of the road alignment, but this relates to the section of road within Manchester City Council area only.

They state they were active participants in the South East Manchester Multi Modal Study which recommended a wide package of transport investment and interventions. They state that not only did they support this package but that they have been actively investing to deliver it, most notably with substantial investment in public transport improvements, the airport inter-change, third rail platform and a £50 million contribution to the extension of Metrolink to serve the airport. They state that the highway scheme is one of the missing pieces of that transport jigsaw and they are very pleased to see it coming forward.

At the root of this consistent support, it is their belief that safe, convenient and reliable access from all parts of the Airport's catchment area is a necessary pre-requisite to fully

exploiting the potential that the Airport brings. Those very substantial benefits already exist and further growth of the Airport will increase the scale of those benefits.

Manchester is the major international air gateway for the UK, outside London, and serves much of northern Britain: it is developing as a major regional public transport interchange (air, light and heavy rail, road, bus and coach) and it is a major employment site in its own right (circa 19,000 people on site) as well as being one of the most significant catalysts in the North West.

They state this road scheme will significantly improve access to the Airport from the east for all airport users. All users need high quality access and that is fundamental to the Airport's competitive position. It will also enable the economic benefits to be spread across a wider area.

They state that airport traffic is part of the problem that the road is designed to solve – namely congestion, pollution and disturbance caused by strategic traffic having to use unsuitable local roads.

They consider that this scheme can play an important part in securing economic growth in south Manchester, Stockport and North Cheshire. Given the current growth agenda they urge the LPA to grant planning permission.

The above is a summary of all the pertinent points of support and objection. Copies of all letters are available for viewing online.

### Overview

All objections have been evaluated to look at the main topics of concern:

57% of objections were concerned about increased traffic congestion;  
50% of objections were concerned about Green Belt and countryside;  
44% of objections were concerned about nature conservation;  
40% of objections were concerned about pollution;  
39% of objections were concerned about Air Quality;  
34% of objections considered the scheme unnecessary;  
31% of objections were concerned about noise;  
25% of objections were concerned about outlook and visual impact;  
17% of objections were concerned about accessibility and linkages;  
14% of objections were concerned about highway safety;  
10% of objections were concerned about emissions and climate change.

Of the responses received, the following is an indication of location of objections:

42% - Poynton

11% - Handforth / Wilmslow

8% - Disley

4% - Styal

35% - other (predominantly Stockport and Greater Manchester)

### **Consultee Responses**

**Highways Agency** - Having given the application due consideration the Agency can inform that it would not wish to raise any objections to the principle of the A6 to Manchester Airport Relief Road planning application being granted planning permission.

The Agency has now received further information from Stockport Council in relation to the proposed scheme and its impact on the strategic road network and can confirm that the Agency does not wish to make any further comments in relation to the application. A formal TR110 form under the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2010 confirming the Secretary of State for Transport TR1 offers no objection.

As you are aware the Secretary of State for Transport currently has made line orders under the Highway Act to construct the A6(M) Stockport North South Bypass. This made line order overlaps with the extent of the A6MARR planning application.

The A6(M) Stockport North South Bypass scheme was dropped from the strategic roads programme in 1998 and as such the Highways Agency on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport (as set out in Article 26 (32)(B)) does not propose to issue any direction in respect of the proposed A6MARR application.

As it was agreed that the Agency would maintain its Highway orders along the line of the SEMMMS route to provide opportunity for a local scheme to be worked upon and it is now clear a local scheme is sufficiently advanced, the Agency will now formally start the Highway Order revocation process. The process will start with the publication of a draft revocation order (and associated revocation orders) on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2014.

The line of the proposed A6MARR also overlaps with the current route in place under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for Poynton Bypass and Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road West.

Under article 26 b (iv) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2010 the Agency can confirm on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport it does not propose to issue any direction with respects to this planning application. The agency will liaise with the relevant Planning Authorities to agree a mutually convenient date for these Route Protects to be formally removed.

**Network Rail** – No objection

**Canal and River Trust** – No comment

**Environment Agency** – No objection in principle and they set out a series of conditions required in respect of flood risk, contaminated land and biodiversity. Advice notes are also provided in respect of waste management and other matters.

**Manchester Airport (safeguarding)** - Despite making references to aerodrome safeguarding in the supporting documentation, it is not clear within the material how these matters have been addressed in the design of the scheme. Therefore a considerable amount of additional detailed information will be required to enable full aerodrome safeguarding assessments of the proposal. We therefore provide comments on the basis of what is currently presented. These are in relation to the whole route but where a particular feature is identified we have stated which section of the route is being referred to.

In the absence of fully detailed safeguarding assessments, we require conditions to be attached to any permission granted, as per the recommendations set out in our response. The informatives that we have provided, and details of the further information that is required will help the applicant understand which safeguarding aspects require further consideration, and the additional details that the Safeguarding Authority for Manchester Airport will require for assessment prior to the approval of certain aspects of the scheme.

**Coal Authority** – I have reviewed the proposals and confirm that the part of the proposed A6 Relief Road located within the Cheshire East Council area falls outside the defined Development High Risk Area. Accordingly, The Coal Authority has no specific comments or observations to make on this planning application.

**Health & Safety Executive** – No major hazard site in Cheshire East that impacts the development.

**Sport England** - No objection to the Cheshire East proposal

**United Utilities** – No objection subject to conditions. They make comment on the protection and diversion of their assets which must be met at the developer's expense and require conditions in respects of easements of sewers and service reservoirs, flood risk and drainage, landscaping and planting.

**National Grid** – No comment

**High Peak Borough Council** – No comment

**Manchester City Council** – No comment

**Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council** – No comment

**Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service** – No comments to make

**Peak District National Park** – The Peak District National Park has assessed the impact of the proposed road on the National Park and considered that it would not have a significant impact on the National Park.

**Natural England** - Natural England does not consider that this application poses any likely or significant risk to those features of the natural environment for which we would otherwise provide a more detailed consultation response and so does not wish to make specific comment on the details of this consultation.

**English Heritage** – Do not wish to comment in detail on the planning application but offer general observations in that the impact of the relief road on the setting and visual amenity of historic assets should be considered and in making a decision your authority establishes to its satisfaction the impacts of the proposed relief road upon the setting of listed buildings, schedule ancient monuments, registered landscapes and conservation areas. We do not believe that the relief road causes harm to the setting of highly graded listed buildings or registered parks or gardens or the site of schedules monuments within the zone of visual influence. Any harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the scheme.

The relief road is likely to have direct physical impacts along the proposed route. The county archaeologist should be consulted to assess the archaeological potential of the route and in the preparation of archaeological mitigation strategy.

We recommend that the application should be determined in accordance with national and local guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice.

### **Town and Parish Councils**

**Poynton Town Council** - Recommend no objection in principle, but wish to reaffirm long standing position that the Relief Road be built in conjunction with the Poynton/Woodford Relief Road. Members were also aware that the proposed underpasses could attract anti-social behaviour, and request that such potential trouble spots be designed out.

**Wilmslow Town Council** – The Town Council’s Planning Committee expressed concern that the junction of the A555 and A34, which is currently a serious bottleneck for traffic, should have sufficient capacity to accommodate the increased traffic flows, thus discouraging the use of ‘rat runs’ in the area.

**Handforth Parish Council** - Handforth Parish Council cannot support this application because the disadvantages to residents outweigh the advantages, primarily of better road links to Manchester Airport.

The impact of the proposed and approved developments in Handforth East have not been taken into consideration. Up to three thousand new homes are detailed in the CEC Local Plan for Handforth and Wilmslow, and if built will very significantly increase vehicle numbers in this area, causing serious congestion and delays for residents of Handforth Wilmslow and Alderley Edge. Should this application be approved Handforth Parish Council would like to see a 50 mph speed limit imposed to minimise noise and improve road safety.

**Styal Parish Council** – Styal Parish Council is concerned that the consultation and decision-making processes have been flawed.

There are two specific concerns regarding the plans which are currently to be put forward to the Strategic Planning Board.

*Location 1 – Styal Road Junction*

This is the only junction on the proposed road that affects land within Cheshire East, and therefore has been the subject of significant review by Styal Parish Council.

Two options were presented to the public as part of the initial consultation.

<b>Option 1 –Traffic lights controlled cross roads over airport spur rail lines</b>	<b>Option 2 – Traffic lights controlled cross roads to the north of the airport spur line</b>
Requires less land	Requires the use of more land than Option 1
Requires widening of existing bridge over the railway lines	Requires an additional bridge over the airport spur rail line
Has lower construction cost	Is simpler to construct than Option1
	Has a higher construction cost
	Has greater environmental impact in relation to nature conservation due to loss of locally-significant area of woodland

Option 1 was chosen by the SEMMS project team, and from the points made above that would appear to be reasonable decision. However, Styal Parish Council believes this decision to be flawed, for the following reasons:

- The woodland in question is not remotely locally-significant – it is scrappy woodland of no local importance or environmental benefit, indeed it was purchased in the 1950s explicitly in the knowledge that the road was planned to go through it



- Styal Parish Council established in December 2013 from the Chief Design Engineer that the costs of both schemes were not significantly different. The cost difference should not have been used as a differentiating factor
- Omitted from the factors presented above was the significantly greater incursion into greenbelt that Option1 represented. Option 2 would have a significantly smaller impact on the green belt
- Also omitted from the factors above was the impact of the junction siting on traffic flows to and from existing and future airport parking sites. Option 1 would have traffic exiting from current parking sites within yards of the junction, which would appear to be a recipe for chaos at busy times.

Option 2 is clearly the better solution, in terms of greenbelt impact, and traffic flows, and with no significant cost or environmental impact over Option 1. We believe that had these facts been presented at the time of the consultation, Option 2 would and should have been chosen.

We would respectfully request that this decision is reviewed in the light of these material errors in presentation.

#### *Height of road through greenbelt near Styal Road junction*

In the current design, the road is raised around 2m above ground level through the greenbelt in Styal, with the ensuing cost and environmental impact. We believe the road is at or below ground level for the rest of the scheme. Styal Parish Council understand that the design rationale for this is driven by a Network Rail requirement for clearance above track and catenary level where the road crosses the railway.

Styal Parish Council has made strenuous efforts to meet with Network Rail to understand this requirement but to no avail, all attempts to establish a meeting at the request of Styal Parish Council and the SEMMMS team have been rebuffed.

Our concern is that it would appear that previous bridges over the railway, at the same location, have not required such a significant clearance. Two bridges over the railway have been built by Network Rail over the past 20 years have had significantly lower clearances.

We would respectfully request that the design decision to have such a significant stretch of road above ground level, with the ensuing environmental and cost impact, is reviewed.

Please note, Styal Parish Council is not against the road but firmly believes that more time and consideration should be given to ensure the resultant road is the most appropriate for taxpayers, motorists, and the residents of Styal.

## **Disley Parish Council**

Disley Parish Council recognises that SEMMMS will improve the future economy, connectivity and employment opportunities across Cheshire East including Disley & Newtown. However, Disley and Newtown is dissected by an already heavily used major road which is projected to have a significant % increase in traffic flow as a result of the SEMMMS proposals. Given the geographical location of Disley, the A6 touches no other part of East Cheshire. From the outset of the consultation process, Disley Parish Council has consistently expressed serious concerns about the predicted increases in traffic through the village and its consequential impact on the quality of life for residents.

This increase is estimated to be in the region of 30%, resulting in 25,600 vehicles per day. Due to enhanced mitigation measures which have subsequently been factored in, this predicted increase has been reduced to between 11 and 16%. However, this figure still results in 22,900 vehicles per day, 3,100 more than the 2017 estimated increase without SEMMMS. It is vital therefore that enhanced mitigation is carried out to keep any increase in traffic to a minimum.

Disley Parish Council has been working with the Cheshire East SEMMMS team to ensure that adequate and approved mitigation measures for Disley & Newtown are identified. The overarching objectives are to slow vehicles travelling through the village, improve traffic flow and air quality. Some options for mitigation, which require further study and assessment have been put forward for discussion. These include:

- Removing the village centre traffic lights, creating a roundabout and enlarging the village centre space.
- Considering a shared space scheme to reduce vehicle speed and keep traffic flowing.
- Narrowing the width of the carriageway in both directions which could facilitate the provision of cycle routes, widening of footpaths or parking bays
- The introduction of village gateways
- Improving and encouraging the use of public transport in order to reduce the number of vehicles on the A6 corridor as part of the 'Multi Modal' element of the proposed scheme

We note that the Health Impact Assessment undertaken by the Parish Council is referred to in the Transport Assessment document 1007/6.15.2/186 sections 8.8, 8.9 and 8.10 and request that this information is used to inform mitigation measures. In particular, the Parish Council wishes to highlight Disley Primary School which is located on the A6 and accessed from the village centre in a designated air quality management area.

In commenting on this application therefore, Disley Parish Council makes the following proposals:

- That conditions be attached to any approval of this application requiring a comprehensive range of mitigation measures to be applied along the A6 road corridor and that these should be in place prior to the new road being open for traffic.
- That quantifiable mitigation measures are applied and designed to keep the percentage increase traffic flow levels along the A6 corridor to a level no greater than the projected increases in traffic without SEMMMS being in place as referred to in the Transport Assessment 1007/6.15.2/183.
- That mitigation measures are designed to reduce the use of cars accessing SEMMMS via the A6 through improved public transport and facilitating other alternatives to car use.
- That mitigation measures are well informed and designed to enhance the public realm both within the Disley village centre and for the communities along the A6 in general thereby improving quality of life for these communities.
- Appropriate funding is made available in advance of the SEMMMS project to enable a thorough assessment of mitigation measures and to implement the agreed measures in advance of the SEMMMS project completion.
- Appropriate traffic management systems and conditions are in place for Junction 6, Macclesfield Road to prevent traffic congestion for those travelling east bound along the A6 from Hazel Grove to Disley.

### **Internal Consultee Responses**

**Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service** – The application is supported by an Environmental Statement, Chapter 9 of which considers archaeological issues, including archaeology. This has been informed by data held within the Historic Environment Record and information gained from a study of the historic mapping, aerial photographs, and readily-available secondary sources. It also considers the material contained in the desk-based assessments and evaluation reports prepared in connection with earlier versions of the scheme.

Much of the scheme will affect land beyond the boundaries of Cheshire East and advice on this aspect of the project is being provided by the relevant local authority's specialist archaeological advisor. Within Cheshire East a number of sites and features will be affected by construction and will require further archaeological mitigation.

In the case of Site 148 (Area of Ancient Field Systems), geophysical survey prior to construction is recommended followed by targeted trial trenching and further mitigation where anomalies are detected. With regard to Sites 39, 88, 89, 144, 145, and 155 (post

medieval buildings, township boundary, ridge and furrow, agricultural earthworks) a variety of mitigation measures are proposed including a watching brief during construction, survey, and the recording of sections through boundaries. It is advised that the above programme outlines an appropriate scheme of archaeological mitigation, although it should be noted that where work is required prior to the start of construction, arrangements will need to be made to allow sufficient time for its completion before development starts. A report on the work will be required and the programme may be secured by condition.

**Public Rights of Way** – The proposals set out in the application documents are considered to adequately accommodate the existing Public Rights of Way affected by the proposed scheme.

The proposed pedestrian/cyclist facility alongside the road would appear to accommodate the request of those user groups, subject to their previous comments regarding multiple stage crossings of adjoining roads for non-motorised users. The proposed additional routes within the highway boundary would offer additional options for leisure and active travel.

The proposals relating to Public Rights of Way within the Complementary and Mitigation Measures Package described in the Transport Assessment include aspirations registered under the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011-2026.

The PRow team also set out the developers responsibilities in respect of the existing Public Rights of Way.

### **Strategic Highways & Transportation Manager -**

The A6 MARR is a 2 lane dual carriageway scheme, it is approximately 10 kilometres long and runs from the A6 near Havel Grove to Manchester Airport linking to the existing A555. The A6 MARR scheme will provide a bypass to local centres such as Bramhall, Cheadle Hulme, Hazel Grove, Handforth, Poynton, Wythenshawe and Heald Green. It will provide important connectivity to Manchester Airport and other strategic routes in the North West, Cheshire, Derbyshire and beyond.

The Poynton Bypass is not included in the scheme, the design of the A6 MARR will allow the Poynton Bypass to be linked to the scheme in the future. The tie-in would be at the proposed A6MARR/Bramhall Oil terminal/A5149 Chester Road Link Junction.

The A6 MARR scheme is effectively two new sections of road, the western section will connect to Ringway Road at its western end and then extend to the existing A555 Eastern Link Road. At the eastern end it will continue from the A5102 Woodford Road to the A6 Buxton Road at Hazel Grove. There are a number of junction improvements proposed along the length of A6 MARR scheme including improvements to the existing junctions on the A555 Manchester Airport Eastern Link Road. The scheme will have a number of speed limits along its length, the initial section from Ringway Road to the Styal Road junction will

be 40 mph and then 50 mph to the existing A555. The national speed limit will remain on the A555 but then reduce down to 50mph from the A5102 to the A6.

The scheme includes new cycle and pedestrian routes along its length and these will be integrated with the existing local cycle and pedestrian network to maximise access to the new route. A shared cycleway / footway is to be introduced adjacent to the existing A555 to provide a continuous route along the A6MARR.

The need for the road scheme has been identified by Central Government as a nationally important infrastructure project that is required to revitalise the economy and provide congestion relief to local communities. There is currently no direct transport link that runs east to west through south east Greater Manchester and Cheshire East, this lack of infrastructure contributes to congestion on the major and minor road network..

The A6 MARR scheme will seek to address the following issues:

- i) Relieve existing traffic congestion and address poor connectivity.
- ii) Address the poor access to Manchester Airport.
- iii) Improve transport links in communities throughout south Manchester.
- iv) Reduce traffic using residential streets and local town centres.
- v) Improve existing environmental conditions in local communities.
- vi) Relieving congested conditions for pedestrians and cyclists and improve safety.
- vii) Provide a suitable termination / link to the proposed Poynton Bypass.

## **Scheme Description**

At the eastern end the A6 will be realigned for approximately a kilometre to the north east of the existing A6 Buxton Road. Half way along this realigned road a new signal junction to provide access to the A6MARR would be constructed. From the new A6 junction the route will pass under the existing Buxton Road and then goes under the Manchester to Buxton railway line.

The A6MARR intersects the A523 Macclesfield Road at a new at grade signal junction. From the A523 the A6MARR runs to the north of Norbury Brook and south of the residential streets of Sheldon Road and Longnor Road before it crosses Norbury Brook at Mill Hill Hollow.

There is no junction at Woodford Road, Poynton as the A6MARR will pass under Woodford Road and then over the WCML via a new road bridge.

There will be a new at grade signalised junction gyratory at Bramhall Oil Terminal that includes a new link road to connect back to the A5149 Chester Road. Additionally, there will be a new signal T junction to the south of the new A6MARR to connect with a realigned A5149 Chester Road. This new junction arrangement will allow for the link to a future Poynton Bypass.

To the west of Bramhall Oil Terminal, the A6MARR crosses Moorend Golf Course that is located immediately east of the houses fronting A5102 Woodford Road.

A new road bridge is proposed for the A5012 Woodford Road with the A6MARR scheme passing underneath, there will be signalised junctions on the top of the slip roads with the A5102.

At the existing junction of the A555/A34 there is a major upgrade of the junction that includes additional lanes on all approaches, additional circulatory lanes and full signalisation of the roundabout. The nearby A34/ Stanley Road junction will also be improved by providing signalisation of the roundabout.

At Handforth, the existing A555/B5358 junction will be upgraded by the provision of west facing slip roads that will allow all movements to occur. Between the B5358 Wilmslow Road and the B5166 Styal Road, the A6MARR passes through Styal Golf Course before crossing the Styal railway line.

The A6MARR scheme intersects the B5166 Styal road by providing a new all movement at grade signal junction to be constructed over the Manchester Airport spur railway line. From the Styal Road the scheme will run parallel to the Manchester Airport rail spur and then tie in to a revised layout of Ringway Road and Ringway Road West.

### **Traffic Assessment and Modelling**

In order to assess the traffic implications of the A6MARR scheme a strategic transport Saturn model was constructed, the model represents all roads that carries traffic in Stockport, South Manchester, the north of Cheshire East and High peak area of Derbyshire and the remainder of Greater Manchester.

The Saturn model provides two levels of detail

**Simulation network**, which represents the operation of junctions in detail where capacity restraint is based on gap acceptance and the impact of traffic signal timings applied to the interaction between different movements at junctions;

**Buffer network**, which represents the road network in terms of links rather than junctions, and capacity restraint is based on flow-delay curves for each individual link.

There are three models created to represent the following time periods:

Morning peak (07.00 – 10.00)

Inter peak average hour (10.00 – 16.00)

Evening peak (16.00 – 19.00)

The A6MARR model has used a base year of 2009 and then modelled a predicted opening year of 2017 and then a future year of 2032 for use in preparation of the major scheme business case. The future year models were produced for the following scenarios:

Without the A6MARR in place but includes all committed developments and committed transport schemes across the study area to 2032.

With the A6MARR in place, but includes all committed developments and committed transport schemes across the study area to 2032.

Clearly, the A6MARR Saturn model is complex and the main issue is whether the model will accurately predict future traffic flows. In view of the fact that it has been calibrated and validated using observed traffic count and journey time data collected in 2009 and then passed the DfT criteria for model validation I have no reason to raise issues concerning the accuracy of the model predictions. A full model validation report was produced and submitted with the application.

One of the important factors to be considered is the amount of committed development that has been added into the traffic flow figures and although there are numerous schemes added I have concentrated specifically on schemes that have been included for Cheshire East.

### ***Woodford Aerodrome Redevelopment***

This scheme has been included on the basis of 250 residential units constructed at 2017 at Woodford and a maximum of 950 units modelled in 2032.

### ***Handforth East New Settlement***

The development of land to the east of the A34 has been identified for a potential residential development consisting circa 1,800 dwellings and also possible employment development. These proposals have not been included in the A6MARR traffic model. Clearly, the proposed improvements to the A34 have been based upon the absence of this development and should it come forward it would have a major impact on the A34 and the junction of the A34/A555 without alternative highway mitigation.

### **A6MARR Scheme Mainline Traffic Flows**

The applicant has provided details of the predicted traffic flows using the A6MARR in 2017. The hourly capacity of roads is defined in the Design Manual for Road and Bridge Works (DMRB). The A6MARR scheme is categorised as a UAP1 road type (a high standard single or dual carriageway road carrying predominantly through traffic with limited access). The capacity thresholds for this road in terms of one-way hourly traffic are:

1,590 vehicles per hour for a single carriageway

3,600 vehicles per hour for a dual two lane carriageway.

The design year 2017 traffic flow forecasts from the model for the A6MARR are shown below:

**Highest Hourly Directional Flow**

Man Airport Styal Rd, Wilmslow Road, A34 Handforth Bypass, Woodford Rd, Bramhall Oil terminal, A5123 Macc Rd, Buxton rd

East	2250	2275	2275	3200	2400	1850	1150
West	2350	1825	2450	3025	2225	1525	1075

The above figures show that the predicted traffic flows are within the link capacity for a dual 2 lane carriageway and as such I raise no issues with the proposed standard of road for the A6MARR scheme.

**Junction Assessments and Performance**

As indicated in the scheme description there are a number of new junctions and improvements proposed with existing roads, the overall A6MARR strategy has been to provide at-grade signal controlled junctions and safe crossing facilities for non-motorised users wherever possible. The SEMMMS strategy has been to cater for traffic flow at opening year, rather than the usual ‘predict and provide’ approach to junction design.

The majority of the junctions proposed fall within Stockport MBC with the exception of the B5358 Wilmslow Road Handforth. The assessment and acceptability of the proposed junctions both in design terms and capacity will be undertaken by Stockport as they are the responsible Authority. The B5358 Wilmslow Road junction is considered an acceptable design and is forecast to operate within capacity in 2017 and I raise no concerns regarding this junction.

**Styal Road, Styal**

A new junction is proposed at A6MARR/B5166 Styal Road to be constructed over the existing railway line, the junction improvement will require additional structures either side of the existing bridge and also to span the existing railway. All left turn lanes have associated filter islands that act as safe pedestrian/cyclist reservoirs for the Toucan crossing facilities. The capacity assessment has been undertaken using a Linsig model the output is below:

Linsig Link	Lane Description	Morning Peak	Evening Peak
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		DoS	MMQ	DoS	MMQ
1/1	B5166 south all movements	92%	17	98%	15
1/2					
2/1	A6MARR west (left)	63%	23	79%	33
2/2	A6MARR west (Ahead)	89%		99%	
2/3	A6MARR west (Ahead)	84%	24	96%	38
2/4	A6MARR west (Right)	95%		98%	
3/1	B5166 north (Left)	97%	14	99%	22
3/2	B5166 north (Ahead)	97%		99%	
3/3	B5166 north (Ahead & Right)	95%	12	92%	11
3/4	B5166 north (Right)	95%		92%	
4/1	A6MARR east (left)	96%	35	91%	21
4/2	A6MARR east (Ahead)	96%		91%	
4/3	A6MARR east (Ahead)	96%	32	94%	26
4/4	A6MARR east (Right)	77%		98%	

The above capacity assessments indicate that the junction will be operating at capacity levels at the opening of the new road with no headroom for additional traffic growth.

The traffic modelling does however predict that the B5166 Styal Road will experience a reduction in flow as a result of the scheme. The Styal Road does currently provide a popular route to Manchester Airport from Handforth, Wilmslow and other areas, but with the scheme in place traffic is reassigned onto the A34 through Handforth.

### B5358 Wilmslow Road Handforth

The existing A555/B5358 dumb-bell junction arrangement will be upgraded to cater for all movements through the provision of west-facing slip roads. Minor works will be carried out to the existing east facing slips.

	Morning Peak		Evening Peak	
	RFC	Max Queue	RFC	Max Queue
<b>Northern dumb-bell roundabout</b>				
B5358 north	0.47	1	0.55	2
B5358 south	0.71	3	0.63	2
A6MARR off-slip west	0.49	1	0.43	1
<b>Southern dumb-bell roundabout</b>				
B5358 north	0.82	5	0.81	5
A6MARR off-slip east	0.45	1	0.25	1
B5358 south	0.67	3	0.74	3
Clay lane (from A6MARR on-slip)	0.07	1	0.03	0

The above table indicates that the junction will operate within capacity in 2017.

### A34 Handforth Bypass / A555 Junction Handforth

The existing junction is grade separated with a roundabout at the lower level and the mainline for the A555 crossing over on two highway bridges. The western bridge currently spans two lanes of traffic and the eastern bridge spans three lanes. The western bridge has sufficient space available to facilitate an additional third lane. The A6MARR scheme proposes significant upgrades to the junction as follows:

### A34 north (southbound)

- § Approach widened to four lanes on entry
- § Dedicated 3.7m wide left turn lane onto the A555 approx 100m in length
- § Remaining three 4m wide running lanes extended back to the upstream Stanley Green junction and separated from the left turn by a 3.0m wide island that provides a safe reservoir for a Toucan crossing.

### A555 east (westbound)

- § Approach widened to four lanes on entry
- § Two 4.6m wide left turn lanes for the A34 southbound movement
- § Two 3.65m wide right turn lanes for the A34 northbound movement

### A34 south (northbound)

- § Widening to incorporate four 3.65m wide lanes, comprising dedicated left turn for the A6MARR eastbound merge and three ahead lanes for movements onto the roundabout circulatory
- § Gantry with signals and signage will span this location

### A555 west (eastbound) diverge

- § Widened from two to three lanes each 4.0m wide
- § Flared nearside lane is a dedicated left turn onto the A34 approx 30m in length.

The assessment of the junction has been carried out using Linsig and the capacity assessments are as follows:

Linsig Link	Lane Description	Morning Peak		Evening Peak	
		DoS	MMQ	DoS	MMQ
J1: 1/1	A555 off slip west (left)	65%	5	69%	4
J1: 1/2	A555 off slip west (left & ahead)				
J1: 1/3	A555 off slip west (right)	41%	3	41%	3
J1: 2/1	Gyratory at A555 west (ahead)	73%	8	77%	9
J1: 2/2	Gyratory at A555 west (ahead)	61%	4	65%	5
J1: 2/3	Gyratory at A555 west (ahead & right)	67%	6	66%	5
J2: 1/1	A34 north (left)	66%	9	92%	19
J2: 1/2	A34 north (ahead)	78%	10	71%	10
J2: 1/3	A34 north (ahead & right)				
J2: 1/4	A34 north (right)	62%	9	71%	10
J2: 2/1	Gyratory at A34 north (ahead)	32%	3	34%	3
J2: 2/2	Gyratory at A34 north (ahead & right)	32%	2	51%	5
J2: 2/3	Gyratory at A34 north (right)	32%	1	17%	1
J3: 1/1	Gyratory at A555 east (ahead)	68%	4	71%	5
J3: 1/2	Gyratory at A555 east (ahead)	68%	5	65%	2
J3: 1/3	Gyratory at A555 east (ahead & right)	70%	5	66%	2
J3: 2/1	A555 off slip east (left)	53%	4	33%	2
J3: 2/2	A555 off slip east (left)	53%		32%	
J3: 2/3	A555 off slip east (ahead)	64%	6	64%	6
J3: 2/4	A555 off slip east (ahead)	71%	7	60%	6

J4: 1/1	Gyratory at A34 south (ahead)	21%	3	14%	2
J4: 1/2	Gyratory at A34 south (ahead & right)	56%	3	60%	3
J4: 1/3	Gyratory at A34 south (right)	47%	1	48%	1
J4: 2/1	A34 south (left)	33%	4	28%	3
J4: 2/2	A34 south (ahead)	80%	13	78%	13
J4: 2/3	A34 south (Ahead)	80%	13	79%	13
J4: 2/4	A34 south (ahead)	80%	13	78%	13

The operational assessment of the junction will for the majority of links operate within capacity although importantly for Cheshire East it can be seen that the northbound A34 towards the A555 is approaching capacity levels. There is an interaction between the A555 and the Stanley Road roundabout as both junctions are situated close together, the assessment of the Stanley Road junction indicates that queues northbound are not predicted to block back to the A555 junction.

Although the applicant has dealt with Departures from Standard in the Transport Assessment it has not considered the weave between the northbound merge from Long Marl Drive onto the A34 as it approaches the A34/A555 junction. It is proposed to provide a four lane approach to the A555 junction, traffic merging from the slip would have to cross three lanes in order to turn right, this manoeuvre is particularly difficult given the very limited length of carriageway between the slip road and the A555 stop lines. In addition to potential Safety issues, this arrangement will be likely to reduce the predicted capacity of the junction.

It has been recognised in the analysis that Coppice Way Roundabout that provided access to the Handforth Dean retail park may be impacted by the scheme although no analysis of the junction has been undertaken in the TA. Given that this junction is currently operating at capacity levels and that the predicted increases in traffic flow from the A6MARR scheme are between 11% to 19% on the A34 between Dean Row Road and the A555 junction, I am concerned that the Coppice Way roundabout junction will be materially impacted upon by the scheme.

With regard to mitigation, it is recognised by the applicant that the A34 will be an attractive route and that that some traffic would travel through Handforth town centre and they are proposing that traffic management and traffic calming be introduced along the B5358 Station Road / Dean Road. There are no specific details of the measures proposed but that the scheme is provided by Cheshire East.

### **A6MARR / A5102 Woodford Road Junction**

A new junction arrangement is proposed where the A6MARR intersects the A5102 Woodford Road, as this junction falls within Stockport the assessment of the junction will be undertaken by Stockport MBC in their report of the application.

### **A6MARR/Bramhall Oil Terminal Gyratory Junction and A6MARR Link Road/ A5149 Chester Road Junction**

The A6MARR scheme incorporates a new at grade signalised gyratory at Bramhall Oil Terminal, including a new signalised link road connection to the A5149 Chester Road and a signalised on demand link to Bramhall Oil Terminal. The operational assessment of the junction has been carried out using Linsig and the results indicate that it would operate within capacity at 2017. The design does allow for a future Poynton Bypass to be linked into junction.

### **A6MARR/A523 Macclesfield Road Junction**

The A6MARR scheme will intersect the A523 Macclesfield Road via an at-grade all movement signalised cross roads junction. The access arrangements to the Brookside Garden centre and Miniature Railway has been combined into one single access instead of the current two accesses. A right turn lane is to be provided for vehicles wishing to enter the site from the south. Access to Norbury Hall and Norbury Court will remain unchanged by the scheme proposals. The operational assessment of the junction has been carried out using Linsig and includes the nearby junction with the A5143 Dean Lane ‘Fiveways junction’ to assess the potential for blocking back between the two junctions. The results indicate that the A6MARR junction is approached capacity in 2017 with queues forming, the Fiveways junction operates with capacity and there is predicted queuing interaction between the two junctions.

### **Realigned A6/Buxton Road (Western Tie-in Junction)**

The western tie-in of the realigned A6 is to be constructed west of Yew Tree Avenue. Access to the realigned A6 from Yew Tree Avenue and Occupiers Lane will be via priority junctions. Each priority junction will have right turn lanes and refuge islands and between the junctions a new Toucan crossing will be provided to replace the existing facility.

### **Realigned A6/Buxton Road (Eastern Tie-in Junction)**

At the eastern tie-in there is a new signal junction that is approximately 500m from the A6MARR junction, Norbury Hollow Road will tie-in to the existing A6 via a remodelled priority junction. The operational assessment of the junction has been carried out using Linsig and the output is shown below:

Linsig Link	Lane Description	Morning Peak		Evening Peak	
		DoS	MMQ	DoS	MMQ
1/1	A6 north (ahead)	81%	23	93%	43
1/2	A6 north (right)				
2/1	A6 south (Ahead & left)	85%	31	70%	19
3/1	Buxton Road	82%	7	52%	3

The above table indicates that the junction does operate within its theoretical capacity in 2017 although there are queues being formed on the A6. The co-ordination of signal timings between this junction and the A6MARR junction will be explored during the design process to create ‘green-wave through the junctions for the dominant traffic flows.

## A6MARR Realigned A6 Junction

This junction is situated approximately half way along the realigned A6 and is a signalised T junction arrangement and will incorporate a free flow left turn lane into the A6MARR from the A6. The operational assessment of the junction has been carried out using Linsig and the output is shown below:

Linsig Link	Lane Description	Morning Peak		Evening Peak	
		DoS	MMQ	DoS	MMQ
1/1	A6 north (ahead)	81%	23	93%	43
1/2	A6 north (right)				
2/1	A6 south (left)	64%	7	54%	7
2/2	A6 south (ahead)				
3/1	A6MARR (left)	8%	1	10%	1
3/2	A6MARR (right)	74%	23	87%	33

The above table indicates that the junction does operate within capacity in 2017 but the right turn lane from the A6MARR to the A6 is becoming under pressure during the evening peak period.

### Overall Scheme Benefits

As a result of the A6MARR scheme there will be changes to traffic flow patterns with traffic that currently uses local roads transferring onto the new A6MARR. Future year traffic flows are forecast to reduce on local roads namely, Heald Green, Bramhall, Hazel Grove, Cheadle and Cheadle Hulme to the north of the A6MARR and Styal, Wilmslow, Woodford and Poynton town centre to the south. With regard to traffic using the primary routes and strategic roads traffic is forecast to reduce on:

- § A6 between the eastern terminus of the A6MARR and the M60 motorway
- § A532 between the A6 Rising Sun and Poynton cross roads
- § A538 between the M56 motorway and Wilmslow and between Wilmslow and Prestbury
- § A560 between Gatley and Cheadle
- § A5102 between junctions 1 and 2
- § M56 between junctions 1 and 2 and between junctions 4 and 5

However, there are primary routes and strategic that will see traffic increase as a result of the A6MARR scheme, these are:

- § A6 between through High Lane and Disley
- § A34 between the A555 and Dean Row Road
- § A555 between the B5358 (at Handforth) A5102 (at Woodford/ Bramhall)
- § M56 between junctions 5 and 7

There will be some local routing increases on Gillbent Road, Cheadle Hulme, Torkington Road and Threaphurst Lane, Hazel Grove and potentially Clifford Road, Poynton.

In regards to actual numbers, the following table indicates flows in terms of AADT (Annual Average Daily Traffic) at 2017. I have only provided details of roads that are in or affect Cheshire East.

A6MARR Forecast AADT Base Year, 2017 Without A6MARR, 2017 With A6MARR plus Mitigation

Site	Description	Forecast AADT				
		2009 Base	2017 Without A6MARR	2017 With A6MARR	2017 impact of A6MARR	2017% impact of A6MARR
1	A6MARR (west of Styal Rd)	n/a	n/a	51000	n/a	n/a
2	A6MARR (between Styal Rd and Handforth)	n/a	n/a	37700	n/a	n/a
3	A555 between A34 Woodford Rd and A5103	23800	28800	57100	28300	98%
4	A6MARR between Oil terminal and A523	n/a	n/a	31400	n/a	n/a
5	A6MARR between A523 Macc Rd and A6	n/a	n/a	22400	n/a	n/a
6	A6 Buxton Rd (east of A523 Macc rd)	26800	28000	12200	-15800	-56%
7	A6 Buxton Rd between (Threaphurst rd and Windlehurst rd)	24500	25900	29300	3400	13%
8	A6 Buxton Rd between (Windlehurst Rd and Andrew Lane)	20900	22100	24500	2400	11%
9	A6 Buxton Rd between Andrew Ln and Jacksons edge rd	18700	19800	22400	2600	13%
10	A6 Buxton West between Buxton Old Rd and Redhouse Ln	18700	19800	22900	3100	16%
11	A6 Buxton Rd between Greenshall Ln and A6015 Albion Rd	18300	20700	22700	2000	10%
12	A34 (south of A555)	53600	58600	69600	11000	19%
13	A34 (between Coppice Way and Dean Row Rd)	52900	58400	64900	6500	11%
14	A34 (between Dean Row Rd and A538 Manchester Rd)	43400	50500	53000	2500	5%
15	A34 (south of A538 Prestbury Rd)	29600	38200	36800	-1400	-4%
16	A34 Alderley Edge bypass south west of A535	n/a	21200	20800	-400	-2%
17	A523 Macclesfield Road (south of A6MARR)	22100	20500	16700	-3800	-19%
18	A523 London Road (Adlington Park south of Poynton	18100	18400	20300	1900	10%
19	A523 London Road (south of Bonnis Hall Ln	28500	30900	31700	800	3%
20	B5166 Styal road (north of Ringway Rd)	17000	22200	18300	-3900	-18%
21	B5166 Styal road (South of Holly Ln)	16100	17900	16400	-1500	-8%
22	B5166 Styal road (west of Cliff Rd)	11600	14300	13100	-1200	-8%
23	B5358 Wilmslow Rd (between station and spath lane	13400	15800	14200	-1600	-11%
24	B5358 handforth rd (north of Dean Row Rd)	6800	7200	6600	-600	-8%
25	B5358 Bonnis Hall Ln (south of Mill Ln)	12700	14700	14700	0	0%
26	Poynton Clifford Rd	4300	7100	7500	400	6%
27	Poynton Park Ln (east of A523 London Road)	9000	8100	8300	200	2%
28	Poynton Woodford A5143 Dean Lane and Meadway	7600	8800	5100	-3700	-42%
29	Wilmslow – Alderley Road North of A34	17200	19400	18100	-1300	-7%
30	Wilmslow Dean Row Rd east of A34	9000	9000	8800	-200	-2%
31	Wilmslow Dean Row Rd east of Manchester Rd	8800	8900	7200	-1700	-19%
32	Wilmslow Manchester Rd north of Dean Row Rd	6700	8300	6700	-1600	-19%
33	Wilmslow Stanneylands Rd	3300	2900	1100	-1800	-62%

## Scheme Impact

It is clear that the A6MARR scheme impacts are predominately on the A6 through Disley and on the A34 Handforth with smaller impacts in Poynton.

## A6 through High Lane and Disley

There is a predicted significant increase in traffic flow on the A6 through High Lane and Disley, this is a result of both traffic growth and the reassignment of longer distance traffic as a result of the introduction of the A6MARR scheme. The applicant states that the nature of the A6 through High Land and Disley means that it is neither possible or desirable to significantly increase network capacity through along the A6 corridor and a enhanced package of mitigation measures is proposed to manage the predicted level of traffic on the A6.

The predicted level of impact of the A6MARR scheme without enhanced mitigation measures was for traffic to increase by up to 30% on the A6 through High Land and Disley. Although it is now predicted through the introduction of enhanced mitigation measures that the increases will be between 11% and 16%. The reduction in flows have been based upon the introduction of the following measures:

- Better managing traffic flows for local residents at the A6 Buxton Road/Windlehurst Road junction through a local junction improvement scheme.
- Enhancing the local district centre environment in Disley village through the introduction of a shared space scheme.
- Limiting the attractiveness of the A6 to longer distance traffic which would otherwise switch from other cross country routes with the A6MARR in place. This is to be achieved through a combination of gateway treatments and reduced speed limits.

There are also a number of traffic management measures that improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists on sections of the A6.

### **Clifford Road, Poynton**

There is a predicted increased traffic levels on Clifford Road as a result of the A6MARR, Clifford Road could act as an alternative route for through traffic between the A5149 Chester Road and the A523 London Road South. It is proposed that prior to and following the completion of the A6MARR that the traffic flows are monitored to assess whether additional material traffic is attracted to Clifford Road.

In the event that traffic does increase traffic management measures are proposed to be implemented to discourage rat running traffic, the design of the measures would be undertaken by CEC.

### **A34 Handforth**

As indicated earlier, the traffic model predicts a significant increase in traffic flows along the A34 Handforth Bypass following completion of the A6MARR. The predicted level of increase is between 11% to 19% on the A34 and due to existing capacity issues it is predicted that some traffic will route through Handforth Town Centre on the B5358 Wilmslow Road.

In order to discourage inappropriate routing through Handforth town centre, whilst retaining the proposed west facing slip roads at the B5358 Wilmslow Road/A6MARR junction. It is proposed that district traffic management and traffic calming along the B5358 Station Road/Dean Road is introduced, the design of the measures would be undertaken by CEC.

### **Complementary and Mitigation Measures**

A package of measures is proposed to address the change in traffic flow, it is anticipated that most mitigation measures will be implemented prior to the opening of the A6MARR scheme, although the implementation of some measures may be subject to monitoring the effects the scheme. The contributions being provided by the A6MARR will not in many cases fund the full cost of implementing the mitigation schemes and it will fall on the respective Local Authorities to deliver and fund the works.

### **Conclusions of Strategic Highways Manager**

The A6MARR scheme is intended to deliver benefits for communities and the local economy and these benefits have been identified as follows:

- § Economic growth generating additional economic output for the region and the creation of new jobs.
- § Better access to Manchester Airport and other key destinations for employment, education, health, leisure and retail.
- § Less traffic on local roads – reducing congestion on local roads.
- § Shorter journey times for cyclists, public transport users, car drivers and freight.
- § Improved road safety, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists by reducing the volume of traffic passing through residential areas.

With regard to the traffic impact of the A6MARR scheme it is recognised that this is not a developer promoted scheme; there is no new development associated with the scheme and the impacts of the scheme are from the redistribution of traffic from existing routes. As a result of the proposed introduction of the A6MARR scheme the traffic model predicts some negative traffic impacts on certain routes but also, importantly substantial reductions in traffic flows on other local roads. Across the highway network as a whole there are journey time savings with the A6MARR in place.

The applicant has submitted specific model details of the new junctions to be implemented with the A6MARR scheme, the assessment of these junctions in terms of their capacity to accommodate future traffic flows on opening in 2017 fall upon Stockport MBC as all of the junctions are within Stockport. However, the results submitted indicate there are a number of junctions are approaching capacity levels at 2017 when the scheme opens. This approach is consistent with the original SEMMMS strategy.

One of the impacts identified in CEC from the A6MARR scheme is on the A6 through Disley and High lane, the original forecasts was that these routes would see a 30% increase in flows and this has subsequently been reduced down to between 11% and 16% as a result of enhanced mitigation measures. This reduction has mainly been based upon managing speeds to more constant levels on the A6 corridor and the introduction of a shared space / traffic management scheme in the centre of Disley. I am concerned whether these substantial reductions in traffic flows can actually be achieved through the



introduction of these measures especially as no specific details and extent of the shared space scheme / traffic management scheme has been submitted.

However, I do recognise that traffic flows would increase in any event through general traffic growth on the A6 corridor and also that it is not possible (or probably desirable) to create significant capacity improvements to the A6. It is accepted in principle that as a result of the A6MARR scheme that traffic levels will increase on the A6 and that this can be mitigated with enhanced safety measures, traffic management measures and improved facilities for both pedestrians and cyclists provided along the A6. However, it is considered that further detail, supported by detailed traffic modelling is required to evidence the revised traffic flows predicted on the A6 – and importantly, the impact of these measures through Disley village.

The A34 in Handforth is also identified as having significant increases in traffic flows - up to 19% to the south of the A555. Junction improvements are proposed at the A6MARR/A34/A555 junction and at the nearby Stanley Road roundabout. The submitted capacity assessments have indicated that these improvements can accommodate this increase in predicted traffic. However, the nearby roundabout junction of Coppice Way has not been assessed even though it is currently operating at capacity levels and I am concerned that there will be increased queues at this junction as a result of the A6MARR scheme. As the northbound approach to the A555 junction is to be increased to four lanes, it will be difficult for vehicles exiting the northbound merge from Long Marl Drive to cross the lanes to turn right especially if queues have formed. This problem has not been dealt with in safety audit submitted with application nor reflected in the traffic capacity analysis of the junction. Should the application be approved, I would suggest that this issue is dealt with by condition, requesting further detailed analysis and supporting traffic management proposals.

In summary, the A6MARR scheme does provide significant overall benefits to reduce the use of local urban roads, it will reduce current congestion and in many cases reduce the traffic flows on the local roads. The scheme would also reduce journey times both for local trips and strategic trips and providing better access to Manchester Airport. There are negative impacts of the scheme for Cheshire East and these are focused on the A6 through Disley and in Handforth where traffic flows will rise. This is as a result of the scheme causing the re-distribution of traffic from other routes

To address the impacts a package of complementary and mitigation measures have been proposed to address the predicted change in traffic flow on the local highway network following completion of the A6MARR scheme. A contribution to these measures has been proposed by the A6-MARR scheme. The mitigation measures are aimed at ameliorating the impact on local communities and to provide measures to encourage walking, cycling and sustainable travel choices.

Therefore, overall it is my view that the A6MARR scheme is an integral component of the South East Manchester Multi-Modal Strategy (SEMMMS) and is critical to delivering the national objectives for growth, employment and connectivity. There are some identified disadvantages to the A6MARR scheme such as the increased traffic flows on some routes but the wider benefits of the scheme outweigh these concerns and I do not raise objections to the scheme subject to the delivery of the proposed mitigation measures and further supporting information on the operation and impact of the A34 merge from Long Marl Drive.

**Environmental Health** - the comments are set out in respect of Noise, Air Quality and Contaminated Land.

### Noise and vibration impacts (Public Protection and Health)

The proposed road scheme is predicted to cause adverse noise impacts at sensitive receptors adjacent to the new route. These would be initially from the construction phase which would be greater but short term impacts and subsequently, long term impacts from the operational phase.

Vibration impacts from the construction activities have the potential to cause significant impacts at those properties closest to the proposed road and where the more extensive engineering works would be required and in particular, piling operations. The vibration impacts from the operational phase are not expected to cause any adverse impacts

The exact noise and vibration impacts from construction activities are not assessed at this stage as it is stated that the exact methods and locations are not yet known. The details of this and proposed levels and mitigation should form part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan on which we would seek agreement by use of planning condition.

The potential noise impacts from the introduction of the proposed road as a new noise source would be the most significant issue of the scheme. The noise assessment has used the methodology in DMRB to predict the noise impacts in the long term period (2032) at sensitive receptors. It predicts that in Cheshire East District there would be major and moderate noise impacts (daytime and night) at residential properties in north western areas of Handforth and northern Poynton. The most significant of these impacts in Cheshire East would be felt at properties on Clay Lane in Handforth and Bolshaw Farm.

The noise calculations include proposed mitigation in the form of vertical alignment cuttings, earth mounding, low noise road surfacing and acoustic barriers.

It is proposed that properties in northwest Handforth would benefit from all of the above mitigation methods. Given the magnitude of the proposed impacts at these properties it is considered essential that further mitigation measures are reviewed for feasibility and effectiveness in this area. The review should include consideration of:

- Increased barrier / mounding / cutting
- Absorptive barriers (particularly as dual barrier reflection may be a factor in this area)
- Decrease in maximum speed
- Regular road resurfacing programme

If it is shown that such measures are not unfeasible from a wider design perspective and could realise further noise reductions then the measures should be implemented in addition to the current proposed measures.

A construction phase Environment Management Plan will need to be conditioned to address environmental health issues during construction.

### Air Quality

The Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) process is set out in Part IV of the Environment Act 1995. It places an obligation on all Local Authorities to regularly review and assess air quality in their areas, and to determine whether or not the air quality objectives are likely to be achieved.

Where exceedences are likely, an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) must be declared and an Action Plan produced outlining the measures it intends to put in place to work towards achieving the objectives. In Cheshire East, there are currently 13 AQMA's, all of which are as a result of transport emissions.

The A6, Market Street, Disley is designated as an AQMA as concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) exceed European, health based Limit Values. The study area of the ES encompasses the AQMA.

Dust emissions, which would be expected during construction, are proposed to be mitigated by a number of measures such as water suppression, wheel washing and cleaning. These measures would be contained within a Construction Management Plan (CEMP).

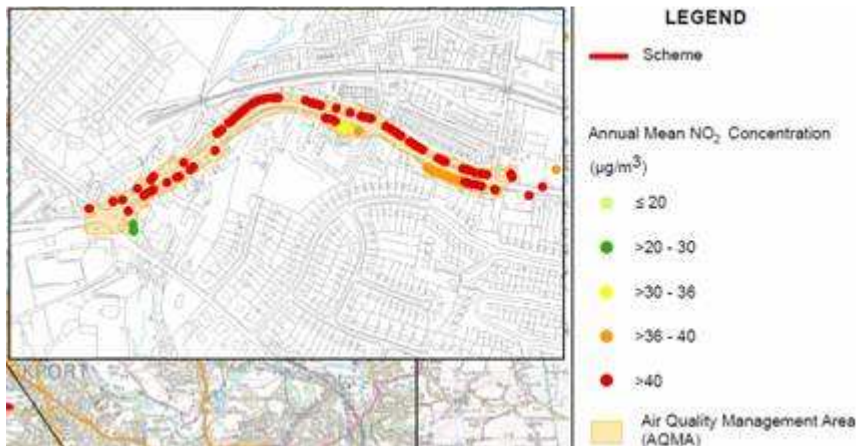
During the operational phase of the road, the report confirms

There will be three new exceedences of the NO<sub>2</sub> limit value at properties within the AQMA.

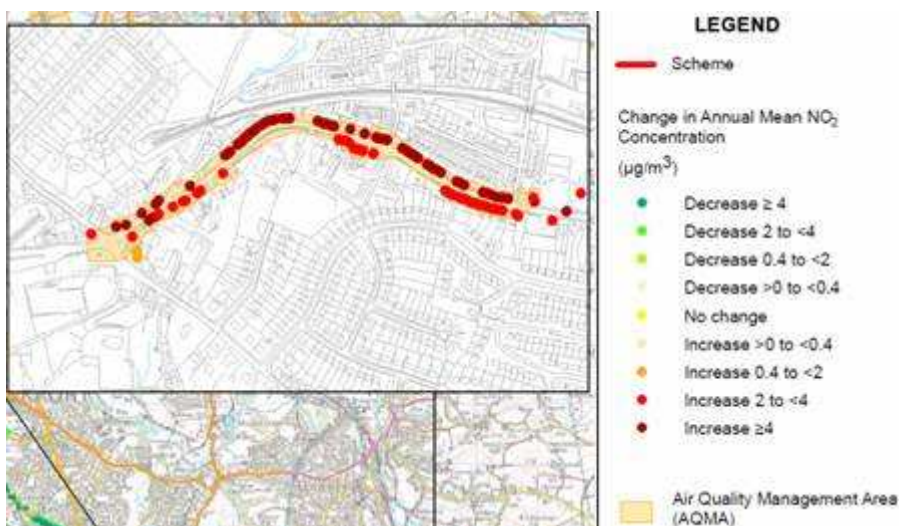
- 95 properties in all will have a significant worsening of Air Quality (> +4 ug.m<sup>3</sup>). (fig 1 and 2 below)
- Of these 63 are in the Disley AQMA (66%).
- 49 properties will experience a worsening of air pollution between 2 and 4 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (fig 1 and 2 below)
- Of these 41 (84%) are in the Disley AQMA.
- The scheme is likely to result in the authority having to declare an additional AQMA for a breach of the hourly objective for NO<sub>2</sub>.

- Overall this is considered a significant **negative** impact on public health for the residents of Disley.

Without Scheme (figure 1):



With Scheme (figure 2):



Properties within the AQMA will experience an overall increase in PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations as a result of the scheme; however the model does not predict any exceedences of the air quality objective.

It is therefore disappointing to read the proposed mitigation measures, which do not consider any mitigation with respect to increased exposure to Nitrogen Dioxide and PM<sub>10</sub> in Disley.

However, further information and discussions with the applicant and representative suggested that, with an enhanced mitigation package for the scheme and in particular Disley the air quality situation outlined above would be improved slightly. The enhanced mitigation discussed included:

- A 30 MPH speed restriction

- Some form of Signal Control to smooth traffic flows
- Some form of Shared Space scheme for Fountain Square junction

It is suggested these mitigation measures would have two main impacts. Firstly the projected increase in vehicle numbers (~ 30%) is reduced to ~ 11-16% (because the road becomes less “attractive” to users). Secondly (partly due to the above) vehicle emissions are reduced from the tailpipe and as such there would be a commensurate reduction in air pollution.

**In summary:**

The planning application as submitted does not adequately address the predicted negative impact on Air quality in Disley. Further, it is considered that the proposed SEMMMS scheme is not in compliance with the Cheshire East Air Quality Action Plan (2011), the draft Disley Air Quality Action Plan (2013), and the broader aims of the Cheshire East Air Quality Strategy.

There must be further consideration of mitigation against the significant negative impact on air pollution within the AQMA.

This office has serious concerns about the scheme however recognizes there are wider benefits in other areas (not necessarily in Cheshire East).

As such, if the application is to be approved it is ESSENTIAL that funding is provided from the applicants to put in place the enhanced mitigation package as outlined above. The mechanism of funding is not within the scope of this response but must be suitably robust such that the traffic number reduction and emission reductions outlined above are realized.

Contaminated Land

The Contaminated Land team has no objection to the application with regard to contaminated land:

- The application area has a history of mixed use and therefore parts of the route may be affected by contaminated.
- This site is within 250m of a number of known landfill sites or area of ground that has the potential to create gas.
- The application is for new road and associated landscaping which is not considered to be a significant sensitive end use.

In accordance with the NPPF, the section has recommended conditions that would need to be applied if planning permission is granted.

----- **END OF CONSULTATION SECTION** -----

**OFFICER APPRAISAL**

The proposed development seeks consent for the construction of a relief road between the A6 in Stockport and Manchester Airport. The scheme is located within three local authority areas, and as such, the elements of the scheme falling within each authority jurisdiction will be assessed against their own development plan policies. Each local authority has carried out their own consultation and will determine their own application.

In addition to the consultation responses outlined above, the assessment also incorporates the views of the Council's Nature Conservation Officer, Conservation Officer, Officer for Arboriculture and Landscape Architect.

**Development in the Green Belt**

The application site lies within the North Cheshire Green Belt as defined by the Development Plan.

The fundamental aim of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, with their essential characteristics being their openness and permanence.

The NPPF highlights that the Government attaches great importance to the Green Belt with paragraph 87 identifying that 'inappropriate development' is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The Councils own policies seek to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development and align with those stated in the NPPF.

When considering any planning application, LPAs should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstance' 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.

The NPPF para. 90 further states that certain forms of development are not inappropriate development provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. The forms of development specified include both 'engineering operation' and 'local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location'.

There is no doubt that the proposed development represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The road, ancillary development and engineering works required will reduce the openness of the Green Belt. The development also introduces an urban form into a

rural landscape and thereby amounts to encroachment in the countryside, which conflicts with one of the five purposes of the Green Belt.

The proposed development is also located in a sensitive area of Green Belt which separates settlements in North Cheshire from the Greater Manchester conurbation. This band of Green Belt is relatively narrow in places and the introduction of the road into this band of Green Belt could also arguably conflict with a second purpose of including land in the Green Belt which is to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another. On balance, however, it is considered there is no conflict with this purpose due to the nature of the development. The road will create a strong physical boundary on an east/west axis with open Green Belt remaining to the north and south of the proposed road, which therefore does not act to merge the nearby towns together.

The proposed road brings with it features in the landscape that will have an adverse impact on the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt. The road bridges, embankments as the road is raised above the railway lines and the lighting columns that will be required. The landscaping conclusions are dealt with in more detail in the relevant section of this report, but in short there will be adverse landscape impacts sustained over a long period of time resulting from the development.

The weight to be given to the harm to the Green Belt is substantial, according to national guidance. Harm exists by virtue of inappropriateness, loss of openness, adverse impact on visual amenity and conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt (encroachment).

For this scheme to be granted planning permission the identified harm to the Green Belt (and any other harm) must be *clearly outweighed* by other considerations. These conclusions should therefore be drawn following assessment of any other identified harm resulting from the proposal and the “other considerations” which are set out in the rest of this report.

### Need

The land for the road scheme is safeguarded under the existing adopted Macclesfield Borough Local Plan, policy T7. The reasoning for the policy states that the schemes listed in policy T7 are subject to investigation as part of the South East Manchester Multi Modal Studies.

Objections received from local residents and interested parties have cited that there is no need for the scheme and that the money earmarked for the scheme would better be spent on sustainable transport measures. They further identify that the business case behind the scheme is flawed and that the expected increase in congestion has not materialised. It is further argued that the scheme will not meet with its objectives, and therefore should be refused. Letters of support have also been received which state that the scheme is long

overdue, all the remaining SEMMMS schemes should be introduced and that the scheme is vital for the local and regional economy.

On assessment of the submitted application and in taking account of the representations lodged, the A6MARR is considered to be an integral component in the delivery of a twenty year integrated transport strategy for the area which is aimed at addressing transport problems in the locality. The lack of a direct east to west transport link across south-east Greater Manchester and Cheshire East is contributing to traffic congestion on major and minor roads and resulting in constraints to people and goods which cannot move easily, directly or efficiently. The existing situation is considered to be constraining the local economy, affecting air quality in local areas and reducing access to key destinations. The existing problem needs addressing and A6MARR has been identified as the best solution as part of the overall SEMMMS Strategy.

In 2001 The SEMMMS study identified that traffic congestion was the biggest single problem with the transport system of South East Manchester, and whilst there were many other problems, one of the recommendations of the study was that a road be designed to provide relief for the study area communities.

The A6MARR is considered critical in delivering the long-term objectives of the SEMMMS study and has been designed to alleviate:

- poor connectivity along the south Manchester Corridor;
- congestion on the local and strategic network;
- poor environmental conditions; and
- unsatisfactory conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

Whilst objections have been received which suggest that alternatives to the A6MARR should be implemented such as widening other existing routes and increasing facilities for non-motorised transport and sustainable transport, it is recognised that the A6MARR is only one element/project of the wider SEMMMS and its construction would not prevent or negate any of the other recommendations. It should also be noted that over the past ten years SEMMMS has delivered a range of public transport and sustainable transport measures to local communities across south-east Manchester in accordance with the long-term objective.

Whilst key benefits of the A6MARR would be to deliver improvements in road infrastructure and help to relieve congestion on the current highway network, the proposal would also improve the pedestrian and cycle network through the provision of a new dedicated cycleway/footpath along its entire length and provide links to existing facilities in the area. The retrofitting of a cycleway/footpath to the existing A555 is also supported as a benefit. Despite the objections received, the A6MARR would not adversely affect or jeopardise the delivery of improvements for other non-motorised modes of transport as promoted by the SEMMMS.



Concerns regarding flaws in the proposed business case are not a material consideration in the assessment of the planning application. The role of the Local Planning Authority is to assess the acceptability of the scheme as submitted, and although parts of the community may not agree with the business case, the business case has been through assessment by DfT prior to the submission of the application. With regards to concerns highlighted by objectors that the scheme is not needed as the expected increase in traffic has not materialised, the application has been submitted with a transport assessment which had assessed traffic conditions for a 12 year period from 2000. The proposed assessment of the scheme is therefore being carried out against current relevant data.

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 as part of the Governments initiative to 'Keep Britain Moving'.

Members of the public have further advised that this scheme should not be implemented without the Poynton Bypass, and as such the scheme is premature. It is considered that the applicant has demonstrated the need for the scheme, as a standalone route, which is supported by the relevant data. The application as a whole provides at length the justification for the current route and how the proposal has been developed. However, as the comments of the Strategic Highways Manager highlight, the road has been designed to enable the Poynton Bypass to be integrated in the future.

In conclusion on the need for the scheme, it is considered that there is a compelling case for the road as necessary sub-regional infrastructure to relieve existing traffic problems and that significant weight should be given to the need for the road.

The proposal is considered to be in accordance with policy T7 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

#### The proposed route of the road

The route of the road is largely constrained by the existing Green Belt gap between the built up areas of Greater Manchester and Cheshire East. This is the safeguarded route within the Development Plan (MAELR), with the exception of the western section on the approach to Styal Road which is located slightly further North on the Proposals Map. Certain options for the route at particular sections of the road have been put forward by the applicant during pre-application consultation. The concerns of objectors, and of Styal Parish Council, are noted, however it is the route proposed as part of this application which must be considered on its merits. The stated concerns about the process by which the proposed route has been arrived at is not a material consideration for the determination of this planning application.

The applicant has confirmed that the woodland referred to is of little ecological value, but it is still of some value. Furthermore they state this was not the key consideration for the

chosen route. They confirm that the chosen option requires less land, has a lower construction cost and was the preferred option following consultation (52% of respondents favouring Option 1 in comparison to 7% of respondents favouring Option 2).

It is important to note that the alternative route preferred by Styal Parish Council would not reduce the land take within the Green Belt. It would reduce the amount of the road within the Cheshire East boundary, but the additional road that would be required within the Stockport boundary would also be in the Green Belt. There would therefore be no benefit to the Green Belt by an amended route on the approach to the Styal Road junction.

Concern has also been raised about the height of the bridge as the proposed road crosses Styal rail line. This bridge would be outside the Cheshire East boundary and is therefore not considered as part of this planning application, although the height does affect the level of road in the 'run up' to the bridge which does include development with Cheshire East. The design of the bridge has been stated as meeting requirements from Network Rail and officers have no evidence to question to the height of the bridge and clearance level being required by engineers.

Following the recent concerns raised by Styal Parish Council, the applicant's agent has confirmed that a representative from Network Rail advised that:

*"To achieve a 'compliant' OHLE design Network Rail requires a minimum clearance dimension of 600mm from the lowest point of the bridge soffit to any existing OHLE equipment classified as live. It is important to note that 'live OHLE equipment' refers not only to the contact & catenary cables but also to any insulated infrastructure supporting the same."*

### Use of Public Money

Objectors to the scheme have cited that public money should not be used for the scheme, however this is not considered to be a matter which can be dealt with through the planning application process. As previously discussed there is considered to be an established need, and the scheme has gained Government Funding.

### Economic benefits and jobs growth

The socio-economic assessment submitted with the application projects that the scheme will generate significant economic benefits. This includes increasing employment in Greater Manchester and Cheshire by up to 3,800 jobs by 2032 and generating around £147 million of GVA per annum (in 2006 prices). The estimate is that 3,600 of the new jobs will be net additional to the sub-region.

In addition the scheme is estimated to generate a further 600 jobs by 2032 through enhancements to Manchester Airport as a gateway to international connectivity. The construction phase would also generate approximately 830 jobs during that period.

The report has used other link road schemes across the country to benchmark cost/benefit and evidence the likely socio-economic benefits arising from this scheme.

Whilst objectors to the scheme has raised issue that the scheme is required only to serve commercial interests, there is no evidence to suggest the projected economic benefits are unlikely to be realised if this scheme is built.

It is considered that very substantial weight should be given to the sub-regional economic benefits arising from the development.

### Water Environment and Flood Risk

The NPPF and Local Plan policies DC17 and DC18 all seek to ensure development does not impede the risk or flow of flood water or increase the risk of flooding elsewhere and that development proposals include measures to safely manage surface water run-off derived from them and encourage the use of sustainable urban drainage systems. Policies DC19 and DC20 also seek to protect the quality of watercourses and ground water resources. They highlight the need to adapt to the impact of climate change and identifies that development on greenfield land must not increase the rate of surface runoff.

The ES contains a detailed assessment of the potential impacts of the development on the water environment including surface waters, groundwater and flood risk. The ES also reports the finding of the Flood Risk Assessment(FRA) which was submitted as part of the application and which assesses the potential risks of flooding to and from the development and identifies the measures to be taken to mitigate and manage any risks arising from the development.

The application also identifies the measures to be adopted to manage surface waters derived from the bypass and to protect groundwaters during both the construction and operational phases. Such measures include the provision of compensatory flood storage areas, construction of a dedicated Sustainable Urban Drainage System(SUDS), carrying out of all construction works in accordance with best practice standards and culverting of watercourses which currently cross the proposed alignment of the bypass.

The Environment Agency have confirmed that they have no objections to the development subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions to ensure that the mitigation measures that have been identified as part of the development are secured. This would include limiting the surface water run-off generated by the proposed development so that it will not exceed the run-off from the undeveloped site and mitigating and remediation works for dealing with known and unknown contamination.

The Council's Flood Risk Manager has also been consulted on the proposal and raises no objections subject to conditions. It is considered that, subject to the conditions set out, the proposal complies with policies DC17 – DC20 of the Local Plan.

### Cultural Heritage

Policy BE16 of the Local Plan seeks to prevent development which will adversely affect the setting of a listed building. Policy BE21 seeks to promote and protect archaeological interests. These policies are in accordance with objectives and policies in the Framework.

The sections of the proposed road within Cheshire East have a relatively limited impact on heritage assets and archaeological interests.

The proposed road will pass to the North of The Grange at Handforth, which is a grade II listed building. The Council's conservation officer has stated that the proposed route is sufficiently far from the building and its curtilage not to directly affect its setting and therefore will be acceptable to the building. This is in accordance with policy BE16.

In terms of archaeology, the detailed comments from the Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service do not raise any objections to the scheme. Where potential archaeological features could be affected within the Cheshire East boundary a programme of archaeological work is required which can be secured by condition. This is in accordance with policy BE21.

### Ecology and Nature Conservation

The NPPF and Local Plan policies NE2, NE7, NE11 and NE14 seek to protect sites of nature conservation interest (including SSSI's, SBI's and locally designated sites), local wildlife and protected species. Policy NE17 seeks improvements for nature conservation, tree planting and landscaping for major developments in the countryside. Concerns and objections to the scheme have been made by members of the public and interested groups due to the proposed impact on the natural environment, impact on wildlife habitats, ancient woodland, bats, badgers, Great Crested Newts, Kingfishers and damage to SBI.

The proposed development although being designed to as far as possible to minimise the impacts on ecology and the natural environment, the development would result in the inevitable loss and severance of a number of different habitats which support a range of flora and fauna. Its alignment would also have impacts upon locally designated sites of nature conservation importance, the most significant of which being Norbury Site of Biological Importance(SBI) and ancient woodland at Carr Wood (*these sites cross the boundary between SMBC and CEC*). The ES submitted in support of this application contains an assessment of the potential impacts of the relief road and identifies mitigation

measures that would be incorporated as part of the development to minimise, off-set and compensate for them.

### *Woodland and Ancient woodland*

The scheme as proposed would initially result in the loss of 3.5ha of fragmented areas of predominantly woodland, would result in the permanent loss of 0.08ha of ancient woodland at Carr Wood and would introduce a corridor of woodland comprising of 14.5ha of native species. The development within Cheshire East does not directly lead to the loss of any ancient woodland, but given the close proximity it is considered that members should give consideration to the loss of the ancient woodland that would result.

It is acknowledged in the ES that the loss of ancient woodland as Carr Wood cannot be mitigated. The ES values the ancient woodland as significant at a local level. The Council's ecologist considers this should be considered of district level importance. Due to the nature of ancient woodland there is no mitigation which would outweigh the harm, and as such, members should make a judgement whether the overall benefits of the scheme outweigh the loss of 0.08ha of the ancient woodland. Paragraph 118 of The Framework states that planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland (and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland) unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss. That is the test which is to be applied in the planning balance.

The ES identifies that significant planting and mitigation is proposed to offset the loss of existing planting and woodland and concludes that following the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures the significance of the pre-mitigation adverse impacts would be reduced. However, due to the nature of the development it is accepted that some adverse impacts would remain even with the proposed mitigation measures in place.

### *Protected Species*

Article 12 (1) of the EC Habitats Directive requires Member states to take requisite measures to establish a system of strict protection of certain animal species prohibiting the deterioration or destruction of breeding sites and resting places.

In the UK, the Habitats Directive is transposed as The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. This requires the local planning authority to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive so far as they may be affected by the exercise of those functions.

It should be noted that since a European Protected Species has been recorded on site and is likely to be adversely affected by the proposed development, the planning authority must consider the tests in respect of the Habitats Directive, i.e. (i) that there is no satisfactory alternative, (ii) that the development is of overriding public interest, and (iii) that the

favourable conservation status of the species will be maintained. Evidence of how the LPA has considered these issues will be required by Natural England prior to them issuing a protected species license.

Current case law instructs that if it is considered clear, or very likely, that the requirements of the Directive cannot be met because there is a satisfactory alternative or because there are no conceivable “other imperative reasons of overriding public interest” then planning permission should be refused. Conversely if it seems that the requirements are likely to be met, then there would be no impediment to planning permission in this regard. If it is unclear whether the requirements would be met or not, a balanced view taking into account the particular circumstances of the application should be taken.

The ES includes full assessment with regards to protected species and habitats. It is considered that there is sufficient information provided by the applicant to enable the determination of the application.

The ES has assessed the impact upon:

- Badgers
- Bats (European Protected Species)
- Otters
- Hedgehogs
- Brown Hares
- Great Crested Newts (European Protected Species)
- Common Toads
- Common reptiles
- Kingfishers; and
- Breeding birds

Whilst the Council’s ecologist has raised concerns in respect of further information being desired, the outstanding issues can be adequately dealt with by planning condition. The ecological surveys have provided sufficient information to be able to quantify impact of the proposal. Conditions are required to refine, enhance and secure the mitigation strategies proposed.

#### Badgers

Detailed information regarding the location of badger sets has been made available to the Local Planning Authority for the determination of the application. This information is confidential relating to the protection of the species under the Protection of Badgers Act and as such has not been released to the general public.

The studies and surveys carried out along the whole route identified:

- 3 main setts;
- 2 annex setts;

- 3 subsidiary setts; and
- 13 outlier setts

Additional evidence of badger activity was also recorded including snuffle holes (indicating foraging areas, latrines (making edge of territories), runs and paw prints (commuting routes) and hairs on fences.

It is noted that the proposed scheme could result in potential loss or injury of badgers during construction works by virtue of inadvertent encroachment of individuals into the construction area. In addition, should planning permission be granted for the main alignment there would be certain loss of one main set and six outlier setts. There would also be potential for disturbance of a main sett, two annex setts and five outlier setts outside of the main working areas as a result of construction activities.

The ES identifies mitigation measures to both avoid potential death, injury or disturbance during construction and to mitigate the loss of the main sett.

The applicant proposes that in mitigation for the loss of the main sett, an artificial sett would be formed and the existing sett would be closed, both of which would require a license from Natural England.

The applicant is proposing that all findings would be clarified by additional field surveys prior to construction. Construction would therefore occur against up to date knowledge of habitats.

Natural England has raised no objections to the scheme, and it is considered that the applicant has satisfactorily clarified the position with regards to badgers. Whilst unfortunate that the scheme impacts on the badger population, it is considered inevitable on such a large site, and that the mitigation proposed and protection afforded to them under Act would result in an acceptable outcome. It is therefore recommended that conditions are placed on any decision notice to require the mitigation works as proposed.

### Bats

The survey work for bats has identified that along the whole route there would be a loss of 35 trees which have bat roosting potential, there would be disruption to the population as a result of construction related noise and vibration, disturbance of known and potential roost sites and severance of commuting routes. The ES has identified that the scheme would have a potentially significant effect on local pipistrelle populations by virtue of loss and fragmentation of established roosts and habitat and severance of established commuting corridors and access to roosts.

Design and construction measures have been incorporated into the proposed scheme in light of the impacts, and mitigation measures proposed.

Concern was raised by GMEU regards to the potential impact of the lighting scheme on the bat population to inform the location of potential bat hops. The applicant in their response made reference to the locations within the report that the information was available, and have clarified that given the location of the proposed scheme within the urban fringe where there is significant existing light pollution that there is unlikely to be a significant effect upon bats as a result of lighting. The lighting scheme as included within the application is constrained to the junctions as required by safety requirements. The location of bat hops has been informed by the presence of existing vegetation on site and the applicant has stated that they will endeavour to place bat hops as close as possible to the original vegetation line.

Further concern was raised that the bat survey did not cover all structures impacted by the scheme, and that the survey had not assessed the building to be lost. The applicant has clearly stipulated that all structures (buildings and bridges) that lie along the route of the scheme have been assessed and have not identified any that are suitable for bat roosts. They were therefore scoped out of roost survey.

The conclusions and mitigation measures as proposed are considered to reduce any negative impacts on bats such that they will not be significant. The information available is considered appropriate to enable determination of the scheme, with conditions attached to any planning permission requiring the mitigation measure to be implemented, and where required, additional surveys carried out.

It is considered that it can be concluded that the 'tests' of the Habitats Regulation would be reasonably met by this proposal and there is no impediment to granting planning permission subject to conditions.

#### Great Crested Newts (GCN)

The scheme as a whole would result in the permanent loss of 8 ponds occupied by Great Crested Newts, the loss of terrestrial habitats including grassland and hedgerows and the fragmentation of habitat.

There is also a risk that GCN and common toad may be killed during clearance works as they use the habitat to forage and find refuse. As a linear structure, the proposed scheme will split hedgerows and grasslands preventing breeding migrations.

The ES has identified mitigation to reduce impacts of the proposed scheme including:

- Ring fencing ponds (if works proceed in the GCN breeding season Feb - June);
- Catching and moving common toad;
- Creation of new ponds;
- Fencing of the working width of the scheme;
- Vegetation manipulation;
- Recording of number of animals caught; and



- Works undertaken under licence from Natural England.

The Council's ecologist raised concern that there were no compensation proposals to address the loss of amphibian terrestrial habitat and the further information is required to determine the application. The applicant has responded by confirming that the amphibian terrestrial habitat mitigation areas are shown on the landscape proposals (located at the far east of the scheme, to the south of Albany Road, and north and south of the scheme in the vicinity of Styal Golf Course). They have a combined area of 8.6ha. Furthermore, they consider that the net increase in 11ha of native woodland should be taken into account. Collectively it is considered that suitable and adequate mitigation for impacts upon amphibian terrestrial habitats has been provided.

It is considered that the mitigation measures proposed are acceptable taking account of the impact, and planning conditions should be attached to any planning decision ensuring the mitigation is implemented. Natural England will also be fully involved in the process due to the requirement for GCN to be moved under license.

Overall, the 'tests' of the Habitats Regulations are considered to be met by the proposal. There are no suitable alternatives to accommodate the road which is along a safeguarded route in the Development Plan (any scheme of this size through the Cheshire countryside will inevitably affect the habitat of GCNs and bats). The need for the development can reasonably be stated as being in the overriding public interest. The mitigation proposals will ensure the favourable conservation status of the species will be maintained.

#### Breeding Birds

The removal of trees, scrub, hedgerow and other habitat will risk killing breeding birds or damaging nests. The applicant has therefore advised that any habitats to be lost would be cleared outside of the breeding bird season. Areas where there are GCN habitat, clearance is proposed outside of the nesting season with handtools.

Any clearance work to be undertaken within the bird nesting season would require the habitats to be first netted and an ecologist to be onsite during works.

Standard practice relating to breeding birds is to condition the timings of the clearance works and/or ensuring the habitats are netted. It is considered that breeding birds will not be impacted due to mitigation.

#### Otters

With regard to Otter, a report in January 2012 identified that a potential resting site is present along the route of the scheme, at Lady Brook. A camera trapping survey was carried out, however, as stated within the ES, a 3 month survey provided no evidence of otter on the proposed scheme.

No mitigation is therefore proposed.

### Barn Owl

With regard to Barn Owl, it has been presented within the Environmental Statement that a Barn Owl has been identified during survey works and as a result the applicant has proposed additional planting in the form of a low-flight prevention screen along the section of the scheme near Woodford Road.

The screen will comprise a hedgerow planted on the roadside 2m from the edge of the carriageway and grown to 3m in height to prevent low flight of barn owls over the carriageway. This installation of the low flight screen in the Woodford Road area would be secured through the imposition of a planning condition.

Based on the information provided, it is considered that the mitigation measures for the Barn Owl are acceptable.

### Kingfisher

Kingfishers are a specially protected bird under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The submitted ES includes proposals to mitigate the risk of nesting kingfishers being disturbed during the proposed works however no compensation is provided for the loss of the identified breeding site. Third party comments also raise concern about the impact on Kingfishers.

The Council's ecologist recommends that if planning consent is granted a condition be attached requiring the submission of a detailed design for a replacement artificial kingfisher nesting bank to be incorporated into the proposed development.

The applicant considers that there is no need to provide a replacement habitat given that sufficient habitat already exists along the Lady Brook where other burrows and habitat are present. They state that as closure of the known burrow will be undertaken outside of the nesting season there are no significant impacts upon Kingfishers and therefore there is no justification to incorporate the requested nesting bank into the proposed development.

It is considered that, to optimise the potential for Kingfisher re-nesting, the condition requested by the Council's ecologist should be imposed if planning permission is granted.

### Hedgerows

Hedgerows are a biodiversity Action plan priority habitat and hence a material consideration. The proposed development will lead to the loss of a significant length of species rich hedgerow. The proposed landscaping scheme for the site proposes the establishment of native species hedgerows as part of the development, however there will be a net reduction in the total length of hedgerows and the Council's ecologist has advised that the newly planted hedgerows will take a number of years to mature before they have any significant nature conservation value. It is recommended that the proposed length of newly planted hedgerow be increased so that it is at least be equal to that lost.

The applicant has emphasised that there will be a permanent loss of 6325m of species poor hedgerow and the permanent loss of 578m of species rich hedgerow. However, there is a commitment to adding 5825m of species rich hedgerow and whilst there is a net fall in total hedgerow as a result of the proposed scheme, the ecological value of the replacement hedgerow is a net benefit. Notwithstanding this viewpoint submitted by the applicant it is considered that further hedgerow planting should be secured by condition.

#### *Common Toad and Reptiles*

The Council's ecologist has advised that the mitigation scheme for the GCNs will also serve to prevent any adverse impact to these species.

#### *Ponds*

17 ponds will be lost across the entire development, and 34 replacement ponds are being proposed. This ratio of 2:1 replacement is in line with current best practice.

#### *Trees*

The proposed route requires the loss of a significant number of individual / groups of trees and sections of woodland. This includes a 0.8ha of Carr Wood ancient woodland, the majority of which is located on the Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council side of the boundary, and trees (2 Groups & 3 Individual trees) protected as part of the MBC (Poynton – Lower Park Road) TPO 1974.

The loss of individual trees can be mitigated by a proposed replacement planting scheme in terms of numbers, but the period of time it will take to re-establish a presence in terms of maturity will take many years (over fifty years).

The supporting documentation contains Tree Protection details which accord with the requirements of current best practice BS5837:2012

Overall, subject to conditions, the ecological impacts are considered to be in accordance with Local Plan policy NE11 and NE17. The nature conservation impacts can be adequately mitigated for. Further hedgerow planting is required than currently proposed to ensure compliance with policy NE17, which seeks improvements for nature conservation for major developments in the countryside.

The loss of ancient woodland, although a very small area within Cheshire East, is not compliant with policy NE14. However, it is considered that the test of paragraph 118 of the Framework is met as the need for, and benefits of, the development in its location outweigh the loss.

## Landscape and Visual Impact

Local Plan policy NE2 of the Local Plan seek to conserve and enhance landscape character areas and protect and enhance woodland. Policy DC8 sets out the requirements of landscaping schemes for new development.

Concern has been raised by local residents that the scheme would unduly impact on the character and visual appearance of the area and detrimentally impact on view and property values.

Comments regarding individual loss of view are not a material consideration in the assessment of a planning application, however, the impact on the open countryside, landscape character and visual amenity are.

With regard to property values, they are not a material consideration in the assessment of a planning application, and as such cannot be considered.

There are two separate sections of the proposed road that run within the boundary of Cheshire East, the first from just to the north of Mill Hill Hollow to Woodford Road along the eastern section of the route, just to the north of Poynton, and another section from the western end of the A555 just to the north of Handforth to the western edge of Styal Golf Club. An existing section of the A555 also follows the boundary of Cheshire East from the junction of the A34 to Dairy House Lane. In addition there are a number of bridge structures proposed along the route that although not within Cheshire East, may have an impact on Cheshire East, including the proposed bridges carrying the existing A6 at Hazel Grove and the Network rail bridge carrying the Hazel Grove to Buxton railway.

The ES covers the entire route. The ES states that it has been carried out in accordance with the Highways Agency Interim Advice Note 135/10, and Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact assessment, 3rd Edition 2013.

Although the statement covers the full length of the dual carriageway across the three separate authorities, the Western part within Cheshire east is located within the Lower farms and Woods Character Type and specifically LFW 3: Arley Character Area. The Eastern part is located within the Higher farms and Woods Character Type, specifically HFW 3 Adlington Character Area.

The ES identifies the landscape character areas as LLCAs (Local Landscape Character Areas) and bases the landscape sensitivity and evaluation of the value and susceptibility of change on these. For the visual impact a zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) has been identified as well as visual receptors, including residential receptors and public rights of way.

The section from north of Mill Hill Hollow to Woodford Road is identified as being within the section 'A6 Hazel Grove to A555/Woodford Road (A51102)' in the assessment (4.2). This identifies this section as being in a corridor that is characterised by open agricultural land used for grazing, with some wooded valleys and near to the urban edges of Hazel Grove to the north and Poynton to the south. The woodland in this area is visually very prominent. The easternmost section in Cheshire East, from north of Mill Hill Hollow to Woodford Road is agricultural land and is located within the boundary of the Cheshire East Green Belt.

There are a number of footpaths associated with the easternmost section of the A6 Relief Road within the Cheshire east boundary, namely FP 21 Poynton with Worth, FP 31 Poynton with Worth, FP 31 Poynton with Worth and FP 3 Poynton with Worth.

The Lady Brook, which is located on the boundary of Cheshire East will have a new 19.6m span bridge that will carry the new carriageway, the dual carriageway will then continue in a 6-7m deep cutting as it passes housing at Hill Green on the Woodford Road, this cutting reduces to 1-2m at which point a false cutting will be introduced to increase the height of the earthworks, this will be approximately 7m above carriageway at the highest point, with a bridge for pedestrians and farm vehicles. The dual carriageway then passes beneath Woodford Road in a 5m deep cutting. Woodford Road itself will be raised on a low embankment of 3m, carried across the new dual carriageway on a new clear span skew bridge. The dual carriageway will then rise at a gradient of 1:25 as it curves to the southwest on embankment as it spans the West Coast Main Line on a new clear span bridge, this latter bridge will be in close proximity to the boundary of Cheshire East Council.

The westernmost section within Cheshire East, from the north of Handforth to the western edge of Styal Golf Club is identified as being with the section 'A555/Wilmslow Road (B5358) to Shadowmoss Road (4.4). The western section from the western end of the A555 just to the north of Handforth to the western edge of Styal Golf Course is open agricultural land and further to the west, Styal Golf Course. Both these sections are located within the boundary of the Cheshire East Green Belt. There are also a number of footpaths located adjacent or across the westernmost section, namely FP7 Wilmslow, FP 10 Wilmslow and FP 119 Wilmslow.

The statement indicates that the proposals will not require any modification to the alignment of the existing dual carriageway (A555). At the junction of the existing A555 and the Wilmslow Road B5358 the proposed dual carriageway will be a continuation, with the Wilmslow Road beneath the existing dumb bell roundabouts. To the west of the B5358 the new carriageway will be in a cutting from 6-7m through to 3m at the eastern boundary of Styal Golf Club. Footpath 119 Wilmslow will have a 28.6m bridge over the new road on embankments of approximately 5m in height. As the dual carriageway crosses the Golf course it moves out of a cutting and onto an embankment of approximately 2m as it approaches the new bridge over the Styal railway.

There will also be lighting associated with a number of the new junctions, those specifically close to or within the boundary of Cheshire East include 56 new 10m high lighting columns adjacent to the dumb bell junctions.

The landscape assessment does include a good analysis of the baseline landscape character and identifies that much of the area, especially in Cheshire East, represents an important area in terms of the clear delineation between the countryside and adjacent urban settlements, while acknowledging the lack of cohesiveness that exists because of the intrusion of major roads and transport corridors into the area. The landscape assessment distinguishes six separate 'Local Landscape Character Areas – LLCAs) along the route and uses these, rather than the Cheshire LCA to determine the characteristics and sensitivity, and the predicted impacts and mitigation. On the whole the Council's Principal Landscape Architect agrees with the assessment.

There are a number of footpaths adjacent to and that cross the proposed route, but the majority of visual receptors along the route are residential properties, although these are fewer in number along the section of the route from Mill Hill Hollow to the Woodford Road and the section to the west of the A555 in Cheshire East is an area that has a number of existing transport corridors crossing it already. The assessment does identify both the principal residential receptors and the footpaths that will be affected. The summary of visual impacts indicates that there will be a range of adverse effects for the majority of receptors along the route. These adverse effects will decrease over the long term, although the visual effects will remain slight to moderately adverse even after 15 years for a large number of receptors.

In terms of the visual impact on the Public Rights of Way along the proposed route, the ES also indicates that there will be adverse effects for a number of these receptors in the short term. The effects will remain adverse for a number even in the longer term.

The assessment indicates that the proposals will result in a significant effect on the landscape character in the short term, and that this will remain the case even in the longer term and that there will be visual effects that will reduce for most receptors over the longer term, nevertheless they will remain significant for a number of receptors.

Along the eastern section especially there will be major modifications to landforms, with some elevated features near the Woodford Road and although mitigation will be partially effective, the structures will remain visible, even with the proposed mitigation measures. The route that is located to the west of the A555 in Cheshire East is in a generally flat landform, but there will be the loss of hedgerows and a number of mature trees and despite mitigation, the landscape impact of the route will remain slight adverse even after a number of years, remaining as a perceptible new element in the landscape. The Council's Principal Landscape Architect does not consider that any additional mitigation would significantly change the landscape and visual effects that the assessment identifies.

The mitigation measures that are proposed, in terms of landscaping and planting, will need to be subject to condition to ensure the appropriate high specification and future management of the landscaped areas.

Conditions would be required to ensure the street lighting scheme serves its purpose for highway safety whilst minimising light pollution.

The proposed development will have an adverse visual and landscape impact which will remain for some receptors even in the long term. However, it is considered that overall, subject to conditions, the impacts have been mitigated to an acceptable level. The proposal is considered to comply with Local Plan policies NE2 and DC8 and advice in the Framework.

### Community and Residential Amenity

#### *Noise and vibration*

Policy DC3 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan seeks to prevent development which would result in a significant injury to residential amenity, including through noise, vibration, smells, fumes and dust. Policy DC13 states that development should not normally be permitted if noise generating developments would cumulatively increase ambient noise level to an unacceptable level. Policy T1 sets out criteria for judging new transportation schemes, one of which is that noise, congestion and pollution are reduced in residential or shopping areas.

Objections have been received from local residents living close to the proposed A6MARR route with the main focus of these objections being the potential impacts resulting from increased traffic noise, reduction in air quality and visual impacts from the development, together with increased congestion. Objections have also been received from properties further away from the proposed road itself, for example along the A6 in Disley, where the predicted traffic flows are to increase as a result of the new road.

The ES covers in full impacts of the scheme relating to noise and vibration and air quality and the Councils Environmental Health department has assessed the scheme and made comments, which are fully set out earlier in this report.

The concerns from noise and vibration can be divided into two issues: the construction phase and the operational phase/use of the new road.

The noise impacts would be initially from the construction phase, which would be greater but short term. Subsequently there would be long term impacts from the operational phase.

Vibration impacts from the construction activities have the potential to cause significant impacts at those properties closest to the proposed road and where the more extensive

engineering works would be required and in particular, piling operations. The vibration impacts from the operational phase are not expected to cause any adverse impacts.

The vibration and noise impact during the construction phase must be fully controlled through a Construction Environmental Management Plan, which can be secured through condition.

The potential noise impacts from the introduction of the proposed road as a new noise source would be the most significant issue of the scheme. In terms of the impacts associated with traffic noise once open, the ES identifies that 85% of properties within the study area would experience a negligible/minor noise impact, with 11% anticipated to experience a moderate/major increase to traffic noise.

The noise assessment predicts that in Cheshire East Borough there would be major and moderate noise impacts (daytime and night) at residential properties in north western areas of Handforth and northern Poynton.

The noise calculations include proposed mitigation in the form of vertical alignment cuttings, earth mounding, low noise road surfacing and acoustic barriers.

It is proposed that properties in northwest Handforth would benefit from all of the above mitigation methods. The EHO has recommended further mitigation to reduce the impacts in the most sensitive areas. These include:

- Increased barrier / mounding / cutting
- Absorptive barriers (particularly as dual barrier reflection may be a factor in this area)
- Decrease in maximum speed
- Regular road resurfacing programme

Decreasing the maximum speed or setting road resurfacing programmes are not measures that could be applied as a condition.

To ensure that the proposed mitigation measures put forward in the ES are suitable and effective, a condition could be placed on any decision requiring further details for noise mitigation to be submitted for approval of the Local Planning Authority. In particular, further mitigation could be applied to the stretch of road as it passes north of Clay Lane in Handforth. There is scope to introduce further mitigation measures and this will be achieved by condition.

Along the entire route there are 55 residential properties which may potentially qualify for noise insulation under the Noise Insulation Regulations 1975(Amended 1988) based on the modelling and predicted noise levels.



The impact of the development for some properties will be significant. Subject to mitigation measures proposed and conditions it is considered that overall the proposal will comply with policies T1, DC3 and DC13 of the Local Plan and paragraph 17 of the Framework which seeks to maintain a good standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers of buildings.

### *Air Quality*

In respect of impacts on air quality the ES has identified the potential risks and impacts associated with the A6MARR proposal. Concern has been raised by local residents with regards to potential increase in pollution and reduction in air quality at both residential properties and at the primary school in Disley.

The comments of the EHO provide a thorough evaluation of the planning application submission in respect of air quality.

Across the entire scheme the assessments have concluded that approximately 79% of receptors within the study area are predicted to experience a reduction in annual mean NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations as a result of the implementation of the proposed scheme, 2% of receptors will be unchanged and 19% will be subject to an increase in annual average NO<sub>2</sub>.

Adverse and beneficial changes in NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations are greater than the upper guideline bands provided in the guidance. However, the number of receptors in exceedance benefiting from the scheme outnumbers those adversely affected by a factor of over 20.

The large, medium and small improvement in annual average NO<sub>2</sub> objective exceedances at 548, 446 and 3033 receptors respectively, compared with the large, medium and small adverse changes of 95, 49 and 31 receptors respectively. Consequently, far more receptors which are already in annual average NO<sub>2</sub> objective exceedance will benefit from the scheme than will be adversely affected by it.

The study shows that 83% of sensitive receptors either benefit or are unchanged in terms of PM<sub>10</sub> particulates as a result of the implementation of the proposed scheme.

With existing guidance on long term trends, adverse and beneficial changes associated with the scheme will continue over extended periods.

Dust emissions, which would be expected during construction, are proposed to be mitigated by a number of measures such as water suppression, wheel washing and cleaning. These measures would be contained within a Construction Management Plan.

Within Cheshire East, the main area of concern with respect to air quality is within Disley. The A6, Market Street, Disley is designated as an AQMA as concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) exceed European, health based Limit Values. The study area of the ES encompasses the AQMA.

As submitted, the traffic modelling forecast was originally for 30% increases in traffic flows through Disley. The ES accounts for this level traffic increase and the associated pollution.

During the operational phase of the road, the ES confirms:

- There will be three new exceedences of the NO<sub>2</sub> limit value at properties within the AQMA.
- 95 properties in all will have a significant worsening of Air Quality (> +4 ug.m<sup>3</sup>). (fig 1 and 2 below)
- Of these 63 are in the Disley AQMA (66%).
- 49 properties will experience a worsening of air pollution between 2 and 4 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (fig 1 and 2 below)
- Of these 41 (84%) are in the Disley AQMA.

The scheme is likely to result in the authority having to declare an additional AQMA for a breach of the hourly objective for NO<sub>2</sub>. This is considered to be a negative impact on public health for those residents affected. This is also contrary to objectives with the Framework (paragraph 124).

Properties within the AQMA will experience an overall increase in PM<sub>10</sub> concentrations as a result of the scheme; however the model does not predict any exceedences of the air quality objective.

As the EHO, Disley Parish Council and local residents have identified these overall impacts for the Disley AQMA and residents within it are severe. To try and address this the applicant has proposed a package of enhance mitigation aimed at reducing the traffic congestion.

The enhanced mitigation would include:

- A 30 mph restriction on the A6
- Improved signal control to smooth traffic flows
- Junction improvements at Fountain Square, with possibility of a shared space scheme.

The modelling undertaken by the application indicates that with enhanced mitigation the projected increase in vehicle numbers is reduced from a 30% increase to an 11-16% increase.

The mitigation measures would be targeted at two main impacts, firstly reducing the numbers of vehicles and secondly reducing emissions through improved traffic flow.

Disley Parish Council, whilst recognising the wider benefits of the scheme, have expressed real concern about the impact on the residents of Disley. In their view it essential that the enhanced mitigation measures are implemented to reduce traffic increases to a minimum. The comments of Disley Parish Council are included in full earlier in this report.

The comments of Disley Parish Council are well aligned with the views of the Council's EHO, who is also of the view that securing the enhanced mitigation is essential.

Subject to mitigation achieving reduced projected traffic flows indicated, the overall impacts on air quality are not considered to be so significant to warrant a refusal of planning permission. **This is on the basis that a comprehensive mitigation package is secured and that the measures are implemented and in place at the time the new road is opened for use.**

Objectors are questioning whether the traffic levels will fall from a 30% increase to a circa 11-16% increase. This is the best evidence we have before us, and there is no reason to dispute the 16% figure anymore than there is reason to dispute the initial 30% figure which uses the same modelling methodology.

However, as the modelling is based on the altered traffic patterns resulting from a change in speed limit to 30 mph, it is important to the practical application of that modelling that the 30 mph are realistically achieved. Changing the speed limit may be unlikely to be effective without proper enforcement. A scheme to ensure speed limits (such as average speed checks) then needs to be considered as part of the mitigation package.

Objectors to the scheme have identified that PM2.5 levels should have been assessed in the ES. The assessment of PM2.5 levels is not a statutory requirement, and although it may be considered to be good practice, the evaluations of PM2.5 are usually based upon a percentage contribution of PM10 values. PM10 values in the vicinity of the scheme are approximately 50% of the Air Quality Standard, and on no affected links are PM10 concentrations greater than 30ug/m3.

The predicted increase in pollutants, and taking account of the strong bias towards beneficial reductions compared to adverse increase, it is considered that the proposal scheme would overall be beneficial in relation to levels of NO2 and PM10's arising from the scheme.

In conclusion, the concerns and objections of local residents are fully taken into account and it is considered that appropriate mitigation measures can be adopted which would help to minimise the adverse impacts of the development. However, even with mitigation measures the scheme will have an adverse air quality impact within an existing AQMA within Cheshire East. This is contrary to policy 124 of the Framework which seeks planning decisions to be consistent with the local air quality action plan within an AQMA. This is considered to be a negative impact which carries moderate weight against the proposal. In

the absence of a robust enhanced mitigation package being secured by condition, it is considered this weight against would be significant.

### *Visual amenity*

The impact on visual amenity is considered in the *landscape* section of this report. Subject to the mitigation measures proposed it is considered overall that the proposal will not significantly injure the residential amenities of the occupiers of nearby residential properties. As such it is in general accordance with policy DC3 of the Local Plan.

The application has been submitted with cross sections and landscape mitigation proposals so that the relationship of the road and adjoining land uses can be viewed. Some of the closest relationships to properties in Cheshire East include individual farmsteads and properties on Mill Hill Hollow (Poynton), Woodford Road / Chester Road (Poynton) and Clay Lane (Handforth).

For some properties in these areas there will be significant changes in their outlook and environment. A road of this scale could not be built (within reason) along the safeguarded route without significant changes for certain properties.

For properties such as Coppice End, on Mill Hill Hollow the new road would be approximately 90 metres from the dwelling itself and close to the southern end of the long garden. Landscaping mitigation is proposed to minimise the impacts, including bunding / cuttings / fencing and tree planting. A proposed attenuation pond on the Northern side of the road reduces the capacity for screening towards Mill Hill Hollow, a landscaping condition will be required to ensure the maximum possible screening is achieved for these properties. Subject to a condition it is considered that residential amenity, whilst adversely impacted, would not be so significant to warrant a refusal of planning permission and that the proposal would on balance comply with policy DC3 of the Local Plan.

Where the road passes properties on the southern side of Woodford Road it will be in a cutting and the the visual impact is acceptable. Woodford Road itself has to be raised on an embankment to accommodate the new road. This does not significantly injure the amenities of nearby property due to adequate distances involved.

A petition has been signed by 33 people in respect of the concern that the road is carried over the west coast mainline, causing an adverse visual impact from properties on Woodford Road. This proposed structure is within the Stockport boundary and is therefore not part of the application to be considered by the Strategic Planning Board.

Residential properties on Clay Lane in Handforth have rear elevations that face away from the road and also sufficient distances exist from the front of those properties to prevent any significant injury to outlook. The property known as The Grange, which is a Listed Building, has approximately 200 metres distance to the road. There are no residential properties in

particularly close proximity in Styal, Beech Farm being approximately 300 metres south of the proposed road.

### Impacts on Agriculture and Other Land-Uses

Concerns have been raised that the proposed scheme would involve the loss of a substantial amount of agricultural and recreational land which should be protected.

On assessment of the data, it would appear that the route of the scheme is classified as grade 3 with some areas of grade 4. There is an area classified as grade 2 (within the Cheshire East Council boundary) located south of Norbury Brook. However, this area will not be lost as part of the proposed development.

The ES confirms that the majority of the route is agricultural land, with 23 agricultural holding being impacted by the scheme, the majority of which has a land classification of 3, with some areas of grade 4 to be lost.

Whilst unfortunate that the delivery of the scheme would lead to the loss of grades 3 (and 4) agricultural land, the proposed development within the specified corridor is considered to be the only option for the A6MARR road component of the SEMMMS. Within this corridor, options for the alignment of the proposed road have been carefully considered, including junction arrangements and impacts on neighbouring communities. It is considered that there is no viable alternative route for the proposed road that avoids passing through areas of grade 3 (and 4) agricultural land.

Objections to the scheme have been received from interested parties whose land and/or business would be impacted by the scheme. The applicant has been in close discussions with all interested parties affected. There are, however, a number of concerns outstanding, the majority of which relate to proposals to provide continued access to land but perhaps not always to the level wanted by landowners.

The ES identifies 21 individual commercial properties and 16 residential properties along the entire route which would be subject to landtake which would compromise, but not preclude existing use.

Following the representation from Little Acorns Day Nursery, the agent acting on their behalf has been contacted by the planning department. There appears to be no evidence before us to suggest that the Day Nursery cannot continue to operate with the scheme in place.

Properties along the route have identified individual site circumstances to enable the future release of land along the route for housing. As previously mentioned, it is not the intention that the location of the scheme would open up development land or land for future housing development. It is therefore advised that should any landowners wish to pursue this matter

it should be taken through due process and not attached to this planning application. The application before Members is to assess the merits of the proposed scheme, and not to look at future development which may or may not be forthcoming.

The route of the scheme cuts through the Northern section of Styal Golf Course. Planning permission has been granted for the remodelling of the golf course which will result in no net loss of recreational facilities. Sport England have confirmed they have no objection to the proposals within Cheshire East.

It is considered overall that the loss of agricultural land and the impact on other land uses carries limited weight against this proposal.

### Sustainability

The applicant has therefore submitted a sustainability statement, based on the general standards of the sustainability checklist and demonstrates the applicant's adherence to sustainability principals, including gaining an initial verification of 'Excellent' CEEQUAL accreditation.

Representations have been made which object to the principle of the scheme due to carbon emissions and climate change, stating that the proposal is not in line with legislation to reduce carbon emission.

The sustainability statement submitted with the application confirms that the proposed scheme is predicted to lead to an increase in carbon emissions over a 60 year period of approximately 10,300 tonnes. When valued in the overall sustainability appraisal this has been given a neutral impact. It is considered that this impact, in planning terms, is an adverse impact of the scheme which carries some weight against the proposal. However, it is not considered to be sufficient to warrant a refusal of planning permission.

### Congestion and Transport Implications

Policy T1 states that the Borough Council will seek to enhance the integration of modes of transport, encourage the use of public transport and ensure that a balance is maintained between safety and movement and the need to protect and enhance the natural and built environment. Proposals for new transportation schemes will be judged against the following criteria:

1. Significant integration within and improvements to the transport system are achieved
2. Non-essential traffic is discouraged from residential areas
3. Safety is improved for pedestrians, cyclists and road users
4. Noise, congestion and pollution are reduced in residential or shopping areas
5. Protection and enhancement of the environment.

6. The extent to which it integrates with land use.

Policy T3 seeks to improve the conditions for pedestrians. Policy T6 gives support for highway improvement schemes which reduce accidents and traffic hazards.

Policy T7 safeguards the route for the airport relief road. Policy T8 states that the Council will aim to introduce traffic management measures and environmental improvements on and adjacent to the roads which will be relieved of heavy traffic as a result of the new road schemes referred to in policies T7.

The comments from the Strategic Highways Manager provide a detailed analysis of the proposal. That detail is not repeated here but does form part of the assessment of the application.

Concern has been raised by objectors that the proposed scheme is flawed, that the scheme should not gain planning permission or be implemented as the impacts are too great and there is no need for the scheme. Specific highway matters relating to detail design have also been raised by members of the public. The element relating to need has been covered at the start of the analysis section, it is not therefore considered necessary to reiterate these comments.

The application, as submitted, has been accompanied by a full Transport assessment which has taken account of the proposed scheme and potential impacts.

The strategic highway traffic modelling carried out in relation to the Relief Road has been carried out using the SATURN modelling software, an industry approved tool for area wide modelling. SATURN (Simulation and Assignment of Traffic to Urban Road Networks) is a model which predicts route choices and resulting traffic flows on road networks, based on the generalised costs of travel. The model was developed jointly between Transport for Greater Manchester and consultants and was created to cover three periods of the day, 0700-1000, 1000-1600 and 1600-1900. The model is fully compliant with national guidance, and has been validated and subjected to review by the Department for Transport as part of the business case for the scheme. The A6MARR scheme has secured entry level approval from the Government.

Concern has been raised by local that data for 2032 has not been provided for the scheme, and whilst the business case assessment for the scheme has included upto 2032, traffic modelling has not been provided. Due to the overall philosophy of the scheme, the applicant has primarily used modelling to predict traffic movement in the forecast opening year of 2017. The over-arching SEMMMS Philosophy is not to provide a road intended to release development opportunities, it being to, inter alia, stimulate local economic growth, reduce congestion in local areas and improve transport links, accessibility and safety. Whilst it is typical practice to produce a model for a design year 15 years post opening, this would not accord with the overall SEMMMS strategy. The data provided is considered to be

acceptable to enable the application and its impacts to be determined in accordance with policy.

The local junction modelling assessment confirms that the A6MARR scheme is able to accommodate 2017 future year traffic forecasts and is in-line with the SEMMMS design philosophy and strategy recommendations for a more appropriate scale road proposal to provide relief to local communities affected by inappropriate through traffic, but not to provide a new strategic route of regional and potentially national significance.

The A6MARR would improve access to south-east Manchester and Cheshire East, result in less traffic on local roads providing for a safer environment and shorter journey times for vehicular traffic.

A package of Mitigation and Complementary Measures are proposed to address the predicted change in traffic flow on the local highway network.

Whilst mitigation measures are proposed as part of the application, it is expected that following the issue of any planning approval, further extensive consultation would be required to ensure that the mitigation measures as proposed are acceptable and fully consulted upon with the general public. It is reasonably anticipated that most mitigation measures would be implemented prior to the opening of the A6MARR, although some of the complementary measures on the existing highway network would be best placed to be completed once the scheme is operational, thereby reducing impact on the network further.

The comments of the SHM go through all of the impacted areas in Cheshire East. It is clear that the greatest impacts are the increase in traffic flows on the A6 through Disley and the A34 through Handforth.

The traffic modelling predicts significant increases in traffic flow by up to 30% on the A6 through Disley, both in terms of background traffic growth and the reassignment of longer distance traffic as a result of the introduction of the A6MARR.

The A6 Buxton Road is part of the National Primary Route Network and performs an important role for the Greater Manchester City Region carrying a mix of general and freight traffic from the Peak District and beyond into Greater Manchester and providing a strategic link between Greater Manchester and North Derbyshire. Extensive improvements have already been undertaken however the constant high level of traffic movement creates a potentially intimidating environment for vulnerable road users. The nature of the A6 through Disley means that it is neither possible nor desirable to significantly increase network capacity along this corridor thus it is considered that the package of measures on the A6 corridor through Disley should incorporate non-motorised user facilities.

Following a second phase of pre-application consultation, further analysis was carried out with the strategic A6MARR SATURN highway model. This identified residual junction 'hot-



spots' following completion of the A6MARR scheme as well as junctions expected to receive congestion relief. On the basis of this evidence it was determined that enhanced measures were required along the A6 corridor.

The enhanced mitigation measures involve:

- Improvements in managing traffic flows for local residents at the A6 Buxton Road/Windlehurst Road junction through a local junction improvement scheme;
- Enhancing the local district centre environment in Disley village through the introduction of a shared space scheme.
- Limiting the attractiveness of the A6 to longer distance traffic which would otherwise switch from other cross country routes with the A6MARR in place. This is to be achieved through a combination of gateway treatments and reduced speed limits.

There are also a number of traffic management measures that improve facilities for pedestrians and cyclists on sections of the A6.

Taking account of the introduction of enhanced mitigation measures the increase in traffic flow is reduced from 30% to between 11% and 16%.

Objectors highlight that they do not believe that the measure as proposed would reduce the potential impact to such a degree. Whilst there may be some scepticism from the public, the traffic modelling and impacts have been verified, and as such members should balance the data before them, especially taking account of the benefits of the wider scheme.

It has also been cited by objectors that the applicant should introduce a 30mph limit on the A6 prior to the determination of the application to prove whether or not the mitigation would work. Whilst the concerns are appreciated, the mitigation measure would only be required if the A6MARR were to be introduced, and therefore the introduction of a 30mph speed limit prior to the determination of the application would not inform the application.

With the A6MARR in place, the A6 through Hazel Grove and Stockport Town Centre is predicted to experience reduced traffic levels (below 2009 base year levels), resulting in journey times over this section of A6 markedly improving.

Therefore whilst there may be some junction delay at particular locations on the A6, through Disley and into Stockport through High Lane, these delays are considered to be offset to a degree by reduced junction delays elsewhere along the A6.

The other noticeable "hotspot" in terms of traffic flows resulting from the scheme is the A34 through Handforth, with a 19% increase south of the A555. Traffic management measures are proposed to discourage traffic re-routing through Handforth town centre. This is to be secured as part of the mitigation measures.

In terms of the A34 itself the junction improvements at the A555 junction and the Stanley Road roundabout in Stockport are acceptable to improve traffic flow. However, the SHM is not satisfied that capacity assessments have not included the Coppice Way junction. Whilst this is considered to be an omission, it is considered that the level of impact can be mitigated for on this junction. This work will need to be carried out and secured by planning condition.

The SHM has also noted an omission of the safety audit, with a potential issue for vehicles merging onto the A34 from Long Marl Drive that wish to turn right onto the A555. The junction improvements will mean an increased lane for those cars to have to travel across in order to turn right. These manoeuvres would take place in queuing traffic during peak periods. A condition is therefore recommended to ensure this is designed to a safe standard taking account of this issue.

Overall, the proposals will lead to some areas of Cheshire East highways experiencing an increase in traffic flows and congestion. However, the wider benefits of reducing congestion on less suitable roads is a significant benefit. Notwithstanding the wider benefits, the enhanced mitigation is very important in ensuring that the dis-benefits are kept within acceptable levels of tolerance.

#### *Accessibility and movement for non-motorised users*

Alongside road construction, an essential part of the SEMMMS strategy, and by definition for the A6MARR is promoting and improving accessibility and movement for non-motorised users. The focus is on encouraging modal choice, reducing journey times and improving safety of those most vulnerable.

There is an extensive network of footpaths, cycleways and bridleways in the vicinity of the proposed A6MARR scheme alignment, a number of these are near to or will be affected by the road construction.

A comprehensive survey of non-motorised users on routes altered or impacted by the A6MARR scheme was undertaken by TfGM to establish indicative levels of use for each route. There is a broad spectrum of users and for differing purposes, both for formal in terms of commuter trips or informal/recreational. The amenity value of these routes is high and needs to be retained.

The proposal delivers a comprehensive package of pedestrian and cyclist improvements in the form of maximising the provision of controlled crossing facilities and other crossing facilities at strategic junction and on the adjoining network alongside provision of a shared footpath/cycleway/bridleway along the full extent of the A6MARR. The design of the route and crossing facilities are in accordance with relevant DMRB Standards and will deliver shorter journey times for pedestrian and cyclists.

During construction works, public rights of way will need maintaining where possible with upgrade works undertaken sensitively. Necessary diversions and closures would also be required to go through a due legal process in advance of implementation.

The opening of the A6MARR provides a good opportunity for new or rerouted bus services to use the new road which will result in reduced journey times and improved accessibility.

#### *Poynton Bypass*

Member of the public, including interest parties have identified the scheme should not be implemented without the Poynton Bypass. As previously explained, the scheme before Members is one section of a wider strategy, and whilst individual sections of the community may give greater weight to certain proposal, an assessment on the acceptability of the current scheme and its benefits needs to be made. Weight therefore should not be given to objections which seek additional schemes. However, the design of the scheme does allow for the future development of a Poynton Bypass.

#### *Road Safety Audit*

A Stage 1 / Feasibility Road Safety Audit has been submitted alongside the application. This is an essential requirement for any new or amended road or junction layout and has been undertaken in accordance with DMRB Standards. The Audit has raised a number of issues, none of which are fundamental to the design and can be addressed as detailed design is progressed.

However, particular concern is raised on the A34 Northbound approach to the A555 junction, with traffic merging from Long Marl Drive need to cross lanes to turn right. This particular issue has not been addressed in the safety audit and a condition will be required to provide more details to assess and mitigate this.

In the event that planning permission is granted process requires the submission of further Safety Audits which appraise in further detail the proposed road scheme, for example constructions specs, markings, lighting, signage etc.

Subject to conditions, it is considered that the scheme is compliant with policy T1 of the Local Plan, integrated transport policy. Significant integration and improvements to the transport system will be achieved. Non-essential traffic is discouraged from residential areas. Improvements are made for pedestrians cyclists and road users. Noise, congestion and pollution are reduced in residential/shopping areas and adequate protection for the environment is in place. There is some tension with criteria 4, as the proposal will also increase noise, congestion and pollution in particular areas but overall the scheme is considered in general conformity with policy T1.

Paragraph 32 of the Framework advises that consideration is given to whether improvements can be made to the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be refused on transport grounds

where the residual cumulative impacts of the development are severe. In this case it is considered that whilst there are residual cumulative impacts of some magnitude, they will be limited to the extent that they are not severe. On that basis a refusal on transport grounds could not be substantiated.

Overall, it is considered that the highway and transportation impacts of the development are acceptable and compliant with Local Plan policy and the Framework, subject to conditions.

#### Right to determine

Concern has been raised by members of the public, and interested parties alike that the three local authorities should not be determining the planning applications, and that the decision should either be 'called in' or should have been determined as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) and therefore determined by the Secretary of State.

Under the Planning Act 2008 and subsequently The Highway and Railway (Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project) Order 2013, it is clear that the Local Planning Authorities have the right to deal with the planning applications in accordance with normal practice. The proposal at no point exceeds or meets the criteria thresholds at which the scheme would need a Development Consent Order, and therefore be classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and determined by the Secretary of State.

Once a recommendation has been made by the Strategic Planning Board and as the proposal has been advertised as, and is being determined as a 'Departure' due to the nature and scale of development within the Green Belt, the Local Planning Authority must inform the Secretary of State under The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009 if they intend to approve the application.

Once notification of the application has been received by the Secretary Of State, they have 21 days in which to decide whether to call in the application. The local authority cannot grant planning permission until that time is up unless notified before the expiry of 21 days that the application will not be called in.

If the Secretary of State decides that no involvement is necessary then the local planning authority is advised that it may determine the application.

If the Secretary of State decides to 'call in' the application, then the application will be considered at a public inquiry, led by a planning inspector who will then make recommendations to the Secretary of State.

Due to the extent of plans submitted with the application it is not feasible for all plans to be included at the end of the report. Members are therefore advised that all plans are available for viewing on the application file online and the A6MARR website ([www.a6marr.stockport.gov.uk](http://www.a6marr.stockport.gov.uk)).

## **Balance of harm against other considerations**

Referring back to the Green Belt section of the report a conclusion must be made on whether very special circumstances exist to allow planning permission for inappropriate development in the Green Belt

In addition to the harm by inappropriateness, it has been identified that there is harm by a loss of openness and by conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt (encroachment). Substantial weight is attached to this harm.

It is considered that further harm exists by virtue of impact on landscape character and visual impact. This harm is moderated to a large extent in the long term by the landscaping proposals, but will still persist for a number of receptors in the long term. It is considered that the landscape and visual impact carry moderate weight against the proposal.

The ecological and biodiversity impacts of the development can be mitigated for, and enhanced in some cases. Exceptions to this include the loss of an area of ancient woodland. Although this loss is limited in scale (and the loss is not directly within the CEC boundary) it is irreplaceable and therefore carries weight against the proposal. Overall it is considered that moderate weight against should be given to the ecological impact.

The localised traffic congestion and air quality concerns in Disley carry weight against the proposal. Subject to the enhanced mitigation proposed it is considered that the weight to be attributed to air quality is moderate against.

The noise impacts arising from the scheme for a number of receptors, notwithstanding mitigation proposals with the application, will remain harmful to a number of properties which will require specific insulation as a result. This is considered to carry moderate weight against the proposal.

In terms of climate change and sustainability it is considered that overall this should be given slight adverse weight in the balance. As a new road it will generate and encourage car travel and lead to an increase in carbon emissions, but the scheme also improves the non-motorised transport network.

The loss of agricultural land and impact on other land uses is considered to carry only limited weight against the proposal.

Against this harm there are other considerations which carry weight in favour of granting planning permission.

The need for the scheme has been identified over a long period of time and the road has a safeguarded route in the existing statutory development plan. Whilst the alignment of the

road differs slightly from the road on the Proposals Map under policy T7, none of the impacts noted above would be ameliorated to any materially greater degree when compared to the adopted route in the Local Plan. Significant weight in favour is given to the need for and delivery of a long term infrastructure project aimed at meeting the SEMMMS objectives.

The socio-economic benefits of the proposal, identified in the application and summarised in this report, are very substantial. Key benefits are the economic gains that will be achieved through job growth and improved connectivity. The significant social benefits also include improved journey times and journey quality through congested areas that will be relieved by the new road. It is considered that these benefits carry more than substantial weight in support of the proposal.

Whilst there are localised areas which benefit from air quality, mainly outside of Cheshire East, it is considered that this carries only limited weight in favour when considering some of the localised issues in other areas such as Disley.

In conclusion, it is considered that the totality of the harm identified is clearly outweighed by the considerations in favour of the development. This is considered to be sufficient to amount to the very special circumstances needed to allow inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

## **RECOMMENDATION AND REASON FOR THE DECISION**

The proposed road is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. For the reasons outlined above it is concluded that very special circumstances exist to allow planning permission to be granted.

A scheme of this scale will result in lasting impacts, some of which are negative. A comprehensive scheme of mitigation ensures that these impacts are kept to a minimum. Taking account of the mitigation the impacts on ecology, landscape, residential amenity, noise, flood risk, air quality and traffic congestion are considered to be acceptable. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with Development Plan policies NE2, NE7, NE11, NE17, BE1, BE2, BE16, BE21, RT7, T1, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, DC1, DC3, DC6, DC8, DC9, DC13, DC15, DC17, DC18, DC19, DC20, DC63.

The proposal results in some tensions with Development Plan policies, most notably in terms of protecting green belt (GC1), ancient woodland (NE14) and criteria 4 of policy T1 due to increased noise and traffic congestion in some residential areas. Overall, however, the proposal is in accordance with the relevant policies of the Development Plan.

The proposal is generally in accordance with the policies within the National Planning Policy Framework. There is conflict with paragraph 124 due to the impact within an Air Quality

Management Area. Subject to conditions, however, this impact is not considered to be so significant to warrant a refusal of planning permission.

The proposal is in general accordance with policies of the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version.

The proposal is in accordance with Chapter 4 of the Framework, Promoting Sustainable Transport. Of particular relevance paragraph 31 states that local authorities should work with neighbouring authorities and transport providers to develop strategies for the provision of viable infrastructure necessary to support sustainable development, including large scale facilities such as transport investment necessary to support strategies for the growth of ports, airports or other major generators of travel demand in their areas. This scheme is entirely in accordance with these objectives.

Overall, subject to conditions, the proposal meets the definition of sustainability economically, socially and environmentally. Whilst it must be recognised that the proposal will result in some localised environmental and social dis-benefits, overall the proposals will lead to the creation of jobs, will provide mitigation for environmental harm over the medium-long term and will generally improve the conditions in which people live and travel.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Very special circumstances have been demonstrated to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm.

It has been demonstrated that the proposal is in general conformity with the Development Plan. Where there are tensions with the existing Development Plan it is considered that the balance of material considerations lies in favour of granting planning permission. In accordance with section 38(6) and in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development planning permission should be granted.

Members are advised that following the recommendation of the Strategic Planning Board the scheme will need to be referred to the Secretary of State under The Town and Country Planning (Consultation) (England) Direction 2009.

It is recommended that the application be approved and planning permission be granted subject to conditions:

Application for Full Planning

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve subject to following conditions

*Plans, materials and commencement*

1. Development to commence within 3 years.
2. Development to be in accordance with the approved plans and documents
3. Development in accordance with Environmental Statement.
4. Details of materials for structures, lighting columns and fencing.
5. Further details of bridges, structures, underpasses, bridge wing walls, abutments and crossings.
6. Full construction details of proposed pedestrian and cycleway, footpaths and bridleways.
7. Phasing plan for the construction of the development to be submitted and agreed.

*Mitigation (highways and air quality)*

8. Prior to the new sections of the scheme hereby approved being brought into use a scheme detailing a package of mitigation measures (intended to restrain, alleviate and manage traffic flow increases at locations identified and to levels indicated through enhanced mitigation as shown in figures 9.6 and 9.7 in the submitted Transport Assessment) has been submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Such scheme shall include details of and a methodology and timetable for delivery of the measures, a programme for review, surveys and monitoring of the impact of the measures and if required reappraisal of an addition to the agreed package of measures. The new sections of road shall not be brought into use until the measures have been implemented in accordance with the approved details unless the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority has been obtained. *(note: this includes mitigation measures for Disley Village Centre, the A6 corridor, and B5358 Station Road / Dean Road Handforth)*
9. Prior to commencement of development details of a scheme to assess and mitigate the impacts of the development on the northbound merge to the A34 from Long Marl Drive shall be submitted to the LPA for approval.
10. Within 18 months of the new sections of road hereby approved being brought into use a package of complimentary measures shall have been implemented in a scheme which has previously been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
11. Prior to the commencement of development an agreed scheme of speed and traffic monitoring on Clifford Road, Poynton both prior and post development for a minimum of 3 years to monitor the impact of the A6MARR.
12. Prior to commencement details of scheme to assess and mitigate impacts of the development on Coppice Way / A34 junction shall be submitted to the LPA for approval. Programme of implementation to be agreed prior to opening.



13. Construction Method Statement

*Manchester Airport Safeguarding*

14. Lighting details (permanent)

15. Lighting details (during construction)

16. Bird hazard management plan during construction

17. Details stating how the landscaping and ecological mitigation schemes and the drainage schemes are designed to minimise risk to aircraft.

*Floodrisk / drainage and contamination*

18. Foul and surface water drainage in accordance with submitted details. Development in accordance with Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Report.

19. Easement from public sewer and existing service reservoirs

20. Contaminated land – Phase II investigation and remediation strategies

*Ecology*

21. Method statement for the translocation of ancient woodland soils from the areas of ancient woodland affected by the proposed development.

22. Submission and implementation of a barn owl mitigation method statement.

23. Safeguarding breeding birds.

24. Submission of a detailed design for the provision of an artificial king fisher nesting bank.

25. Detailed design for the reinstated Norbury Brook

26. Detailed design of the proposed replacement ponds.

27. Method statement for control and eradication of invasive species (e.g. Japanese knotweed)

28. Submission of a 10 year management plan for the approved landscaping and ecological mitigation

*Landscaping and Trees*

29. Landscaping scheme (note to include planting hedgerows so there is no net loss)

30. Landscaping implementation

31. Tree and hedgerow retention
32. Tree protection
33. Tree pruning / felling specification

*Noise, vibration and dust control*

34. Construction Environmental Management Plan submitted and approved prior to commencement.
35. Enhanced noise mitigation scheme submitted and approved prior to commencement.
36. Hours of construction

*Archaeology*

37. No development within specified area until a programme of archaeological work is secured and implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation to be submitted and approved.

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Strategic Planning Board's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Interim Planning and Place Shaping Manager has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.



