

Points that could be raised in objection to GMSF Proposals

Challenging the overall vision and number predictions

- The proposals aim to expand the population of Greater Manchester, with a target of 227,000 new houses. This almost certainly goes beyond meeting recognised needs and furthermore there is little evidence that an increase of that scale would have a matching effect on productivity and economic performance.
- Projections for population growth are unreliable, especially in the uncertain climate following Brexit. Reducing the growth assumptions to a more likely, lower level would mean that pressure would be taken off the Green Belt and construction could be concentrated where it is most needed – revitalising urban centres.
- Higher population levels and increased commuting will lead to increased traffic congestion with all the resulting negative impacts on health, happiness and productivity.

Challenging the democracy of the process

- The general public and their elected representatives were largely unaware of these detailed plans until they were suddenly sprung upon them at the end of October, with a short consultation period cynically running up to Christmas. This process is neither balanced nor democratic.
- Given that developers were approaching landowners as soon as the proposals were published, it would appear that developers have had undue influence over the GMSF.

Green Belt should be protected

- Green Belt boundaries can only be changed in genuinely exceptional circumstances; high levels of projected housing growth and the need for economic growth do not in themselves justify changing Green Belt boundaries. Brown field sites should be fully explored and exhausted before any consideration is given to releasing Green Belt land.
- There is mounting evidence to support the mental and physical health benefits of time spent in the countryside. Sacrificing Green Belt in favour of more suburban and urban areas may well reduce the health, happiness and productivity of the population, which is counter to the stated aims of GMSF.
- The proposed use of Green Belt represents an easy ride for both planners and developers. More time should be taken to produce creative and well thought out schemes, capable of meeting realistic growth aspirations.
- Use of so much Green Belt land will be counter to urban regeneration. Efforts should be focussed on regeneration of areas such as Stockport town centre and include low cost, sustainable housing near to employment and amenities.

Challenging deliverability of road infrastructure and public transport

- There is already significant traffic congestion in most areas. In order to be remotely viable, the proposals will require huge changes in the road networks over a long period of time. Realistic proposals for delivering the necessary infrastructure changes should be prepared and approved before, not after, the GMSF housing proposals are finalised.
- A large proportion of the proposed development is based on new public transport infrastructure, which again will require massive investment and a lengthy timescale to implement.

Objections to Woodford Opportunity Area (OA20)

- Woodford has significant geological features that make it unsuitable for such a huge development. The land is very poorly drained and liable to seasonal flooding. No surveys have been undertaken by the planners to assess these constraints.
- The Green Belt in Woodford is a very precious resource for the wider community. People from far and wide come there to walk, ride and cycle. It should be retained for the benefit of all.
- Redrow homes already have outline approval for building 920 dwellings in Woodford and Cheshire East's draft plan includes a further 1,650 houses bordering Woodford. The local infrastructure will struggle to cope and the effect on the community of a further 2,400 homes on top of that will be disastrous.
- Woodford has smallholdings, farms and equestrian businesses, which contribute to the economy. Their viability would be adversely affected by these proposals, leading to a loss of local employment, contrary to the stated aims of the GMSF.
- The countryside in Woodford is rich in hedgerows, trees and ponds, which are good for the environment and wildlife, and their loss would be to the detriment of all.