



Manchester City Centre Transport Strategy:

Submission by Manchester and Salford Ramblers

Introduction

This submission is on behalf of the Manchester and Salford Ramblers. We are the local organisation of the national walking charity, the Ramblers, and we help everyone, everywhere, enjoy walking and protect the places we all love to walk.

The Vision and Ambition

We support the vision of a zero-carbon city that is “a great place to work, live and visit”, and agree that to make this a reality then there has to be less cars in the city to rebalance street space enabling walking to be the main mode of travel for getting around.

It is important that this Transport strategy is seen in the wider context and we particularly welcome the explicit references to the plans and strategies on Green and Blue Infrastructure, Greater Manchester Moving and the Bee Network/Made to Move.

We endorse and share the ambitions of the Strategy and would like to add the following comments:

Ambition 1: Walking is the main way of getting around the City Centre

We agree that Walking should be prioritised as the most important mode for getting around the city centre, more street space needs to be allocated to walking. We need high-quality well-maintained walking networks with clear and informative signage. More green space and attractive public realm is needed and space needs to be planned and managed to avoid clutter, with well placed street furniture, clear limits on pavement cafes and the use of A-Boards.

To encourage and enable more to walk it is essential that road crossings should be as safe and easy as possible, with priority for walkers at key junctions and crossing points, even if that would cause some delay to motorised traffic.

Ambition 2: A cleaner and Less Congested City

It is essential that motorised traffic is significantly reduced at all times, not just at the morning peak, so that road space can be permanently reallocated to pedestrians.

Ambition 3: More chose to cycle

It is vital that cycling is a safe and attractive choice to encourage more people to switch from cars to sustainable travel, but we would agree that there are challenges in, “delivering segregated cycling facilities through pedestrian priority streets and how the pedestrian/cyclist conflict is handled”. However, clear standards are available, for example in Cycle Design Guidance LTN 1/20 and in the Governments recent policy statement, “Gear

Change”, it states that shared use routes in streets with high pedestrian flows should not be used.

Ambition 4: Better Public Transport

We agree that more efficient bus usage is important and that giving buses and on street trams priorities over other traffic will be essential. Walking routes should be integrated with public transport hubs.

Ambition 5: Reduced parking in the city centre

This is essential if we are to release significant road space and to support the proposed reduction in car journeys. This needs to be planned to avoid simply displacing the parking problem to the areas immediately around the city centre area.

Ambition 6: Movement of goods and deliveries

We agree that the timing of deliveries be managed so as to give pedestrians greater priority in the city centre. It is also essential that the movement of construction traffic is also managed to minimise disruption, particularly to existing walking routes and infrastructure.

Ambition 7: Innovation

It is clearly desirable that innovation is, “embraced where it benefits the city centre and its users”, there are however we do have concerns about the use of some micro mobility options and scepticism about the ultimate value of for example autonomous vehicles in city centres.

Committed Interventions and Programmes

We have already commented in detail on a number of these and wish to be engaged in their further development and will not repeat those comments in this submission.

Future Transport Interventions

In the main we welcome the commitments to future interventions, and believe that Pedestrian Priority Zones should be linked to each other and to green and quiet spaces. We strongly support the Breathing Places project that is under development by Manchester City Council.

Standards should be adopted so that walking routes are not severed by long wait times to cross traffic corridors, nor cluttered or obstructed by pavement cafes, A-boards, street furniture, docking stations for bikes and micro mobility hire schemes and there should be proper segregation from other traffic, including cycles and scooters.

More walking will be achieved by high quality walking routes in the city centre that use the green and blue infrastructure and particularly connect to routes around and out of the city, such as the Manchester Green Trail and the Salford Trails. More details on these and related routes are set out below.

The Salford Trail

The Salford Trail crosses Chapel Street and takes a route around the Sacred Trinity Church to reach the River Irwell (some diversions are currently required due to building works). From the riverside path the trail connects with Peel Park and the Salford University Campus and Salford Crescent Station. From here there are routes to the Kersal Wetlands and further afield to Clifton Country Park, Worsley and the new RHS Bridgewater. From the opposite direction there is a mainly traffic free route from Salford Quays.

The Salford Trail provides 50 miles/80 kilometres of footpaths within the boundaries of the City of Salford. Starting from the cityscape of Salford Quays, the Trail passes beside rivers and canals, through country parks, fields, woods and moss lands. It uses footpaths, tracks and the loop lines.

<https://www.manchesterandsalfordramblers.org.uk/walks/salford-trail.html>

The Manchester Green Trail

The Manchester Green Trail connects with the area of the City Centre Strategy in the North, East and South. It links the Irk Valley with Angel Meadows, crosses the Northern Quarter to New Islington and then runs from the Medlock Valley to Ardwick Green, close to the new Mayfield Park development. From Whitworth Park in the south of the Strategy Area, the Green Trail leads towards the Mersey Valley and the south and connects with the Fallowfield Loop.

The Manchester Green Trail is a walking circuit made of 14 routes which circumnavigate the City of Manchester and connect many of the city's parks, woodlands and open spaces.

<https://www.manchesterandsalfordramblers.org.uk/walks/manchester-green-trail.html>

GM Ringway

The first section of the proposed GM Ringway long distance route starts from Albert Square and follows a mainly traffic free route from the city centre, through Castlefield and Old Trafford to Sale Water Park and the final section comes back into the city centre via the Bridgewater Canal, Salford Quays, the Ship Canal and the River Irwell.

<http://gmringway.org/>

Trans Pennine Trail

Sections of the Manchester Green Trail and the GM Ringway lead south to the Trans Pennine Trail, the long-distance walking and cycling route linking the North and Irish seas, passing through the Pennines, alongside rivers and canals and through some of the most historic towns and cities in the North of England.

<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/find-other-routes/trans-pennine-trail/>

Existing Bee Network proposals and their links to wider routes

In addition, in Manchester city centre, the proposed Northern Quarter and Northern and Eastern Gateway walking and cycling route proposals also provide links, for example to the Rochdale canal basin and routes to the north, including the proposed improvements to the Rochdale Canal Tow path from Ancoats out towards Oldham. There is also access to the long-distance path, the Cheshire Ring Canal Walk. On Ducie Street to the east of Navigation House, there is an important access point for the Ashton Canal and a network of significant routes, for example, to Clayton Vale, the Etihad stadium, Debdale and the new West Gorton Community Park

The Northern and Eastern Gateway route crosses the historic Union Bridge, and will provide the key link to the River Irk, the proposed City River Park and the whole Northern Gateway Development.

Climate Change, Zero Carbon, Walking and Our Commitment

It is vital that we meet our zero carbon targets, the projections for modal shift in the strategy are particularly challenging for increasing public transport usage. In the short term the impact of the pandemic is reducing confidence in public transport and the existing capacity constraints will be difficult to address in the medium term.

Therefore, a much more significant increase in walking and cycling is needed.

To achieve that increase we need to see all the current commitments as part of the Bee Network implemented and for the network to be clearly linked to existing routes and trails and Manchester and Salford Ramblers are committed to working with the City Councils of Manchester and Salford and TfGM in order achieve these ambitions.