



Manchester Local Plan

Response from Manchester and Salford Ramblers

As a part of Britain's leading walking charity, we offer comments on matters concerned with access, walking infrastructure and recreational routes.

We have no specific remit or expertise in other aspects of the plan.

Spatial and Development Principles

Policy SP1 (P22) Key spatial principles

We welcome the recognition of the importance of the city's network of green and blue infrastructure and the commitment that access to them will be improved, these principles also need to take account of the development of the Cyan Lines project to recognise the importance of walking, wheeling and cycling connections between new developments and green spaces.

We also welcome the specific principle that new developments will promote walking and cycling but believe that there should be a specific reference of the relevance of the network of public rights of way.

SP2 (P 23) Development principles

We welcome the principle that developments should assist in addressing health inequalities. The clear link between enabling the increase in physical activity, of which walking is a key activity, and the reduction in health inequalities should be specifically referenced in these principles so that developers will get a clear understanding of the City's priorities.

Strategic Growth Locations

We welcome the general commitments to enabling active travel and have the following specific comments:

SGL 2 (P30) Manchester City Centre

We strongly agree that the Plan should ensure development enhances and relates well to existing areas of open space and improves quality and public access to areas of open space, the plan should also require development to contribute to the connections between them.

SGL3 (P38) City Centre Areas

The particular focus on canals and access to the Medlock and the Irwell is welcomed as is the priority to improve sustainable connections to Eastern Gateway across Great Ancoats Street

In addition, the plan should promote development that contributes to better connections to Mayfield from the adjacent neighbourhoods

The further development of Noma should protect the tranquillity of Angel Meadows and the heritage of St Michaels Flags and prioritises access to the Irk Valley and the Victoria North public realm and linear park

SGL 4 (P30) Victoria North

We strongly agree that Development should contribute to an enhanced and extended green and blue infrastructure network comprising a new City River Park, green spaces, green links and public realm. Including new or enhanced safe access to the River Irk.

Improvements to east west links and routes beyond the area should be incorporated in the requirements. A particular example would be from adjacent to the schools and Irish Centre to link in with FP/BW90 via Smedley Fields to the Abraham Moss Centre and thence to NMGH.

SGL 5 (P47) Holt Town

We endorse the need to improve the Lower Medlock Valley and enhancing the setting of the Ashton Canal and its towpath. The plans should also include improved east west links connecting Ancoats and New Islington with Sport City.

SGL 6 (P50) Sport City

We strongly support opening up the culverted River Medlock and ensuring public access

SGL 7 (P54) Central Park North

Development should enhance existing rights of way and well used leisure routes in Moston Vale and provide green connections to the Victoria North Development

SGL 8 (P57) Strangeways

Development should feature permeability, legibility, and improved walking and cycling routes.

SGL9 (P60) NMGH

We welcome the expectation that the campus will integrate into the surrounding neighbourhood to ensure local people can walk, cycle and use public transport to access the site and that proposals should make provision for green space, footpaths and cycle ways.

SGL 10 (P 63) Wythenshawe Centre

There is no reference in this section to the network plan that has been produced, and the policy should include, in addition to the network of high-quality public realm and landscaped spaces, permeable and legible routes through connections and links to other parts of Wythenshawe.

SGL 11 (P68) Wythenshawe Hospital

We agree that developments should deliver new and enhanced pedestrian, cycle routes and public transport and highways links.

Particularly to the immediate neighbourhood, it is important that public transport choices are good ones. The plan should also recognise the neighbouring Davenport Green Development with the enhancement of Fairy Brook and Brooks Drive and provide pedestrian and cycle access to those developments.

SGL 12 (P70) MIX

It is important that the development will make provision for access to cycling and walking networks and improved sustainable transport links to surrounding areas, it should also respect the existing public rights of way.

SGL 13 (P73) Airport

The text says that any developments should “Seek to avoid, mitigate and compensate any harm to the nearby locally designated assets of nature conservation and ecological value, in particular, Sites of Biological Importance”, given the requirements of the mandated Nature Recovery Strategy this is unacceptable. Developments should not be permitted that harm nearby nature habitats.

The requirement for the provision of a network of cycling and walking routes, is welcome but the ambition should be for high quality and the enhancement of existing PROWs. For example, FP250/R3 links to the Black Path and eventually could provide a walking route to the Airport transport interchange.

Environment

Policy EN 1 (P142) Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure

The recognition of the Irk, Irwell, Medlock, Mersey and Bollin River valleys; the Chorlton, Platt, Gore, Gatley and Moston Brooks, and the Rochdale and Ashton Canals, which together with the adjoining land provide multiple functions including flood management, biodiversity and recreation. The plan also acknowledges in the next section the Bridgewater Canal that is within the city of Manchester on the approach to Castlefield, and other tributaries of the Mersey including the Fallowfield Brook, Cringle Brook, Baguley, Gatley and Fairywell Brooks.

This policy also contains references to Manchester Strategic recreational Routes that are shown in the policy map. The Map includes a number of recreational trails

TPT and GM Ringway

Fallowfield Loop and Yellow Brick Road

Wythenshawe Green Way

Irk Valley and Medlock Valley Way

It is not clear what the methodology was in selecting the routes but the plan notes that they enhance accessibility to green spaces for people and provide corridors for

wildlife and says that development proposals should enhance accessibility to green spaces for people and provide corridors for wildlife.

The Manchester Green Trail, which is a partnership between MCC, Manchester Active, TfGM and Ramblers should be included as a strategic recreational route. The developing Cyan Lines network should also be referenced.

We strongly agree that it is important to incorporate green and blue infrastructure early in the design stage, and that should include PROWs and other walking routes.

The policy also says that “Where the benefits of a proposed development are considered to outweigh the loss of an existing element of green or blue infrastructure, the developer will be required to demonstrate how this loss will be mitigated in terms of quantity, quality, function and future management.” The wording should be strengthened to make clear that any mitigation should only be the very last resort and any outweighing economic benefits should be very soundly based and very clearly spelled out.

Policy EN2 (P 145) River Valleys and Waterways

We strongly agree that any development would be required to use existing waterways as a key component in creating a sense of place, by considering how to increase physical access to the waterways early in the design stages of the development. We believe that this principle should also be applied to existing PROWs and other walking routes.

Strongly agree that the Plan should seek to promote continuous links from the city centre through Victoria North, Heaton Park along the Irk Valley. Similarly, we are strongly in favour of further opportunities for walking along Moston Brook. The policy also seeks a continuous link from the City Centre to Oldham and Tameside via the Medlock Valley. It also identifies links to the city centre from the Lower Medlock Valley and this must include improvements to the quality of the access routes on foot to the Mayfield Park.

Transport

We recognise the importance given to active travel and the Network Plan set out in the MATSIP. It would be useful to add into TP 1 or 2 a specific requirement for developments to use as a key component in creating a sense of place existing PROWs and other walking routes early in the design stage. (P186)

Planning Obligations

Policy DC 1 (p213) Developer Contributions

We believe that building on the development of the Cyan Lines project and the existing network of recreational routes, then attractive green and blue infrastructure routes connecting new developments with other new developments and/or existing green spaces and routes should be added to the list of investments that the council may seek contributions from developers towards.

November 2025