

Poynton Town Council's response to the SEMMM consultation, June 2018.

1. The Town Council strongly agrees with the SEMMM Vision and Objectives to:

- Tackle congestion and improve journey time reliability
- Improve transport capacity and accessibility to jobs and services
- Support seamless travel
- Improve connectivity – enhanced transport links
- Improve safety, security, resilience and maintenance
- Support healthy communities
- Enhance the quality of the built environment
- Use of sustainable transport – low emission future
- New technologies and innovative approaches
- Provide improved accessibility to local health, education, leisure and retail services

Additional comments

The Town Council believes that the key issues for transport are:

- Traffic congestion
- Poor public transport
- Air and noise pollution

Traffic Congestion and Poor Public Transport

Local Authorities within the SEMMM area are allowing significant development in the Green Belt without commensurate infrastructure improvements. There should be close integration of transport with land use planning. Few if any new roads are planned and most new developments are far from railway stations and often with no bus routes nearby. It is important that the SEMMM Strategy addresses this issue.

Many of these developments, including the so called East Cheshire Growth Village near Handforth and the major strategic sites around Poynton, Macclesfield, and Wilmslow, will increase traffic through Poynton and on the A34.

Numerous parties, including Poynton Town Council and many local residents, outlined the difficulties with the major strategic sites during the Cheshire East Local Plan Process. Any infrastructure improvements must be made before further development takes place.

Increasing rail services from Macclesfield, Prestbury, Adlington and Poynton (Stoke Line) and Crewe – Goostrey – Alderley Edge – Wilmslow (Crewe line) and the Knutsford – Mobberley – Altrincham - Stockport lines into Manchester may help reduce congestion. Cheshire East should consider whether subsidies to reduce fares, as used in Greater Manchester, may have a positive effect.

Air and Noise Pollution

There should be more comprehensive air quality monitoring within the whole of the SEMMM area. Cheshire East Council refuse to carry out adequate air quality monitoring in Poynton.

2. The Town Council strongly agrees with the following strategic priorities:

- Enhancing the rail network
- Continued development of the cycling and walking networks
- Close integration of transport with land use planning

Comments on Specific Proposals

SP1 - A34 corridor: The Town Council endorses the comments regarding the serious congestion on this vital route into Manchester, and the recognition that the planned massive housing developments in Cheshire East and Stockport will worsen this situation. We regret that this impact was ignored by Cheshire East during the Local Plan process.

The map (figure 7) is poorly drawn, as it lacks a key and is not scaled.

The Town Council would not support any installation of bus lanes on the A34 or other actions that would reduce the road area available to general traffic. Even when the existing road works are completed, the road will be inadequate for the huge volumes of traffic resulting from planned developments.

SP2 - Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): The Town Council would urge in the strongest terms that the new bus service between Stockport - Hazel Grove - Bramhall - Woodford - Handforth - Stanley Green – Heald Green – Manchester Airport should also call at Poynton. Indeed, the map (figure 7) clearly shows the route passing through Poynton. As noted elsewhere in the SEMMM documents, there is no direct public transport between Poynton and Handforth, Wilmslow and Manchester Airport.

If Poynton is excluded from these services, how will they fulfil the remit to “*closely integrate with proposed new development sites in ... Cheshire East ...*”?

As noted above, the Town Council does not support “On-street bus priority on the A34, northbound from its junctions with Wilmslow Road, or ... on the southbound A34 slip road at its junctions with Wilmslow Road.” This would only increase traffic jams.

We would support in principle a new offline bus only link between Woodford and Handforth. However, these should not be “guided bus lanes”, which were highly expensive when installed between Leigh and Salford. A “bus only” road, as used in Runcorn New Town, could provide the necessary dedicated link.

The Town Council would not support “*a new Park and Ride site to integrate with the Stockport - Manchester Airport BRT service, potentially alongside the A6MARR / Poynton Relief Road interchange near Bramhall*”. This location should remain as Green Belt, and any development of this type would only increase traffic through Poynton. Such facilities should be much closer to the Airport.

SP3 - Improving the major transport interchanges - Stockport Town Centre, Manchester Airport, and Macclesfield Town Centre

Poynton Town Council supports improvements in these areas.

SP4 - Enhancing the rail network: The rail service through Poynton has recently suffered from delays and cancellations. Promised service improvements have not happened. The Town Council would urge Cheshire East to consider aligning rail fares with those charged in Greater Manchester.

The location of a new station at High Lane may offer an alternative route from Poynton. However, the Town Council would be concerned about any proposed closure of Middlewood Station, which serves Higher Poynton. Any new station at High Lane must be accessible from Poynton.

Car parking is a serious problem at Poynton railway station, with overflow onto nearby residential streets. While Poynton station was used as a justification for the Woodford aerodrome development (in Stockport MBC), there was no provision for extra parking resulting from the 950 houses being built there.

Cycle storage facilities should be installed at Poynton railway station.

SP5 - Continued development of the cycling and walking networks

The Town Council supports improvements for both cyclists and pedestrians. This should include cycle lanes where feasible. The A523 between Poynton and Macclesfield is too narrow for cycle lanes on the existing route. Segregated cycle lanes should be provided as part of a general improvement of this busy and dangerous road. The Town Council strongly agrees that it should link up with the park and ride at Hazel Grove.

SP6 - Introducing Tram-Train, better connecting Stockport to neighbouring areas

Poynton Town Council supports the extension of Metrolink to Hazel Grove. This will provide an additional travel option for local residents. However, much of the congestion on the A6 corridor is, in part, caused by the sheer number of traffic lights. There are 30 sets of lights between the centre of Stockport and the Rising Sun at Hazel Grove.

SP7 - Multi-modal improvements to support the A6 corridor

The A6 remains highly congested and causes serious problems for Poynton residents travelling to Stockport. Despite being told that traffic would increase with the construction of the bypass and resulting housing proposed by Cheshire East, these concerns were ignored by the Cheshire East Local Plan Inspector.

The Town Council believes that Stockport Council should review the number of traffic lights and right turns across the A6. Consideration should be given to replacing major junctions with roundabouts and reducing the opportunities to turn right off the A6.

Poynton Town Council notes a reference to “Cross boundary public transport fare restructuring”. It is not clear what this means, but as noted in our comments on SP2, the higher bus and train fares from Poynton discourage use of public transport.

Poynton Town Council has no opinion on a “High Lane-Disley Relief Road” but would strongly oppose constructing such a route south of the existing A6, which would have serious impacts on the Green Belt in Higher Poynton and Middlewood. No thought has been given to the large numbers of new dwellings proposed in the Stockport, Woodford, Disley triangle. With the housing numbers proposed in this area, both the existing A6 *and* the improvements will be needed. Poynton Town Council agrees with the proposal for the M60 to A6 relief road, although is concerned about the environmental impacts of the current proposed route.

SP8 - Close integration of transport with land use planning

The Town Council would strongly support such integration, but it is too late, with this document being discussed after Cheshire East and Stockport have approved massive housing and commercial developments, with major traffic increases for local roads.

It is factually inaccurate to state: *“In Cheshire East, analysis of the transport impacts of development and identification of mitigation requirements was undertaken through the process of developing a Local Plan.”* Cheshire East failed to undertake such an analysis of the major developments in Poynton, an approach endorsed by the Planning Inspector. Please delete this sentence.

6.2: A523 corridor

Poynton Town Council agrees that *“the A523 corridor suffers from existing safety and congestion issues.”*

We strongly support restricting HGV movements through Poynton village.

However, we believe that significant improvements are required to the A523 between Poynton and Macclesfield. The poor state of the current road severely limits connections to the motorway network and the Midlands.

The existing A523 has some serious safety issues, such as the tight bend near Issues Wood, and numerous concealed access points.

As noted above (SP5), Poynton Town Council supports a segregated facility for cyclists and pedestrians alongside the existing A523 south of Poynton.

North of Poynton, the existing A523 road may be wide enough for cycle lanes, although the safety implications must be analysed carefully.

Orbital Travel

The Town Council are dubious about the supposed benefits of extending the “smart motorway” through Stockport. Journey times do not appear to decrease once they are installed, only increase. The loss of the hard shoulder reduces road safety. We would strongly urge that this idea be removed from the document.

Any improvements to the A34 Gatley junction should be very carefully considered. The major issue to this junction is a combination of the traffic exiting the M60 motorway and blocking the A34 whilst queuing to turn right towards Gatley. Any works should be carried out at night and the roads kept fully operational during commuting hours to avoid gridlocking the entire area.

7.1. Schemes for short term implementation

Comments on the schemes for short term implication:

- Increasing car parking / park and ride facilities at selected rail stations – please include Poynton in this list
- Working with TfGM on the continual improvement of the bus network, protecting and growing key routes – Poynton needs bus links to Wilmslow, Handforth and the Airport. Alternatively, a tram link running alongside the A555 from the airport with a spur off to Wilmslow, running past the Handforth growth village to Poynton connecting up with the proposed tram at the Hazel Grove Park and Ride should be considered.
- The proposed new bus service from Stockport to the Airport should call at Poynton (see comments above on SP2).
- The existing Hazel Grove bus park and ride site has suffered from an almost total lack of publicity. Many local residents are unaware of this facility.
- Improvements to Middlewood Way walking/cycling route (SP5) – it is not clear what these improvements might be, but this facility has widespread public support.
- Additional cycle storage facilities at rail stations – please provide such storage at Poynton Railway Station.
- Work closely with TfGM and partners to deliver the Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan – Cheshire East should reinstate air monitoring facilities within Poynton.

7.2. Planning now for the longer term

See comments above on the proposed new bus services and the High Lane – Disley Relief Road scheme.

7.3 Flexible Delivery

We would comment that a Poynton Bypass was first proposed in 1948 and promised by Cheshire County Council in 1960. The Poynton Relief Road is still being planned and may be completed by 2020. Is this an extreme case of flexible delivery?

3. Any other comments:

The Town Council would strongly support the restriction of HGV movements through Poynton village as set out page 68 under the heading A523 corridor.

The consultation specifically refers to the lack of public transport between Poynton and Manchester Airport, but this is not addressed in proposed East West links connecting Stockport with Manchester Airport.

All infrastructure works must be programmed and managed correctly. The recent A6MARR works have over run for nearly twice the initial contract length. This project has caused severe congestion and delays for road users and negative financial implications for businesses and the wider economy in increased journey times resulting in lost production, a reduction in fuel economy and an increase in air pollution.

It must be born in mind that in order for people to switch from the convenience of a car to public transport, journeys need to be as easy and cheap as possible. This does not mean making people change modes of transport several times to get to their end destination, nor does it mean prioritising buses over cars and reducing road space thus causing congestion.