

# Questions from Greater Manchester Groups

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## Wigan MBC Area

- The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework proposes to build 22,500 new homes across Wigan borough. That would be uplift in dwellings by 16%. If the population was to increase by the same percentage it would result in over 50,000 more people migrating into the borough. Wigan councils own Joint Strategic Needs Assessment dated 2011 highlights the population of Wigan Borough will increase by approximately 7,900 people by the year 2033. Even if each newcomer to the Borough had their own house this would only require 7,900 dwellings.
  - Can we please have some realistic estimates of the expected population increases? These should be backed up with solid evidence. Only when we have realistic demand figures for can we start looking at the supply side of the equation.
- Wigan MBC is planning to Build 22,500 new homes across the whole of the Wigan Borough. Yet there are 8,500 plots already available within the borough with planning permission that hasn't been called out.
  - Why isn't this figure being deducted from the 22,500 total?
- Wigan MBC Planners have been approaching local land owners and offering to put them in contact with developers wanting to buy their land. They have also been writing to the same landowners inferring they will be compulsory purchasing the land owners land. When the council has been challenged on this behaviour, the answer the council give is 'It is common practice'.
  - What are your views on this? How are you planning to restore public confidence in the impartialness and integrity of the council planning department?

These are important questions for the planners to answer. I believe the GMSF has a lot of gaps in the evidence base and as Mayor I will press for answers

## Bamford Greenbelt Action Group Questions for Mayoral Hustings

- The GMSF identifies key strategic sites which clearly have the existing infrastructure or the ability to improve the infrastructure to deliver these sites.
  - What are the candidates' views on the smaller remote sites and the justification which has been provided for these?

I am happy to look at specific sites. The first thing I want to do is to get local knowledge to guide these decisions. The GMSF already has far too many people at the centre telling local residents what they should think about developments in their areas.

- There has been a lot of commentary and discussion recently surrounding the housing figures which have been used within the GMSF.
  - What are the candidates' views on this and the proportions which have been allocated to each local authority and how would you address these concerns?

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The numbers for each are should reflect the need for those areas. The need comes from predictions about economic growth, so we need to have a proper, open and public look at what those predictions are, how those numbers have come out and what's really needed.

- Many local residents have concerns around the lack of transparency with the process of the preparation of the GMSF. We are aware that the GMSF has been evolving for a number of years yet the public have been kept in the dark. Planners, developer and members of the combined authority have all been aware. The consultation timing was questionable being just before Christmas and was certainly not good practice. Whilst we recognise there was an extension we feel this deeply flawed democratic process, when those most affected know least about the plans.
  - How would you address these concerns?

This is one of my key reasons for scrapping the GMSF. Even Greater Manchester councillors and MPs did not see the plans until all the allocations were decided and that's not good enough. We must involve the public right from the start and make it a bottom-up process not top-down.

## **Save Middleton Greenbelt**

- Does the GMSF take into account the turnover of brownfield sites across the plan period? Turnover that could potentially see regeneration of sites and protection of greenbelt and green spaces
- What do the mayoral candidates consider sustainable development?

There is a lot more that could be done within Greater Manchester to build on brownfield sites and make better use of our town and city centres. That not only reduces the building on the greenbelt, but also leads to stronger communities and supports local shops, amenities and better public transport.

## **Tameside**

- As a candidate for Mayor does you 100% commit to being against the planned use of greenbelt land for housing under the GMSF. **Yes**
- Is there a planned strategy to solve the saturation of roads, doctors and schools- Mottram Moor Bypass being a case in point? **No – and that's a big part of the problem.**
- Can we have reassurances that all greenbelt will be protected and not just those areas listed under the GMSF The scale of development of the greenbelt being proposed under GMSF is far too high. There has always been some, limited development in the greenbelt and that can be the right thing to do, but it should be with local support.
- Can you promise to ensure councils will be forced to look at brownbelt and can powers be extended to push landowners to develop brownbelt first? **I will campaign with central government to bring this about – we need a change in national planning laws.**

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## ACTION AGAINST ASTLEY ROAD DEVELOPMENT

- As you are aware the GMSF Housing numbers have been called into question, as they have not been put through 3 software models (industry standard), only 1 and as such are unreliable.
  - If you are elected GM Mayor what would your actions be? **This is one of the issues that needs to be urgently reviewed and should have been discussed in public right from the start.**
- The adoption of GMSF Option 2 which was voted on by GMSA under the chairmanship of Tony Lloyd, with no debate was inherently undemocratic.
  - If you are elected GM Mayor what would your actions be? **However we carry forward the development of plans for Greater Manchester's development, it must be an open, democratic and bottom-up approach.**
- The statistical base which has in Salford been shown to be critically flawed and our construction and logistics specialists have shown that the actual needs could be met by using brownfield sites and no greenbelt needs to be released, which must be similar in all GM Boroughs.
  - If you are elected GM Mayor what would your actions be? **I will press for this and many other similar issues to be properly reviewed in public.**
- In the Draft GMSF no area of less than 1 hectare is considered which means that there are many small developments that could easily deliver pockets of local need. This has been highlighted as a planning weakness in the new government white paper and it also opens the way to small local developers being involved.
  - If you are elected GM Mayor would you include smaller but significant sites within the GMSF plan? **I believe smaller sites should be included. There is also a weakness that the government has cut funding to help unlock smaller sites, so both elements need to be challenged.**

## Save Stockport Green Belt

### **Question to Libdem mayoral candidate**

- Two Libdem councillors, who are also likely parliamentary candidates, recently put forward a motion at two consecutive full Stockport Council meetings, to withdraw now from GMSF - this was supported by their local party - do you agree with your colleague's action to withdraw from GMSF before the second GMSF consultation?
  - If so, how do you reconcile leading the Greater Manchester Combined Authority when your colleagues in Stockport want to withdraw from the GMSF?

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Yes. The overly-secretive top-down way the GMSF has been produced is wrong for Greater Manchester. We should work together across GM where we agree and where it's in everyone's interests, but GMSF takes us down the wrong path.

## Question to Labour mayoral candidate

- The last Labour Government successfully reduced waiting lists in the NHS but they have crept up under the present conservative government. Stepping Hill Hospital is now operating at 100% bed capacity which inevitably results in cancellations - three people were cancelled and sent home in one afternoon's surgery session at SHH this last week, one of which was a cancer operation.
  - As the Labour Mayor of Manchester, but under a conservative government, do you agree that adequate NHS services and other important infrastructure should be in place BEFORE GMSF growth takes place and will you have the power, the will and the funding to make that happen.

## Save Chadderton Green Belt

- Should we not be seeking to improve access to green belt for the health and wellbeing of the local people rather than destroying the remaining environment for good and ultimately harming the local population now and for future generations? The local populations are some of the poorest, deprived and morbidly challenged in the country. Why would we deprive such people of a Green Belt area that provides recreation, wellbeing and natural stimulation? **Yes, we should.**
- Would opening up the last remaining green belt in Chadderton and Rochdale to ill-conceived 'executive' homes and an ugly and despoiling industrial park solve any of the area's perceived housing shortages? If not, then why is the proposal even being considered in such an area of outstanding natural beauty? **As Mayor, I will push for a bottom-up approach that considers local knowledge and views right from the start of the process so the people who know their own area have a real say.**
- Does it make sense to massively expand an industrial site in Middleton, Rochdale given that 45% of the site is currently empty and that warehousing often provides low pay, zero hours contract jobs? Surely our focus should be on creating high skilled well paid jobs in or around town centres, where demand is.. **This is another example of local knowledge not being taken account of enough – we must do better.**

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## Save Shaw's Greenbelt Group

- What is the candidates stance on the gmsf proposals and having seen the response of the residents of many of the areas impacted to the gmsf proposals has this changed your stance and if so how? **I believe the GMSGF is fundamentally flawed. We need more homes and we need to plan for a growing, successful city region, but the top-down secretive approach of the GMSF is not the right way to do it.**
- The existing gmsf proposals do not address the infrastructure needs to support the level of development.
  - Will you be addressing the need to provide this provision of key services, such as hospitals? **Having the right infrastructure in place is essential – as Mayor I will work to ensure that happens.**
- What can the groups do to maintain the Save the Greenbelt campaign and support the mayoral election candidates who are in support of requesting for the gmsf proposals to be reviewed and redesigned? **The future of the greenbelt may well be decided at the ballot box on May 4<sup>th</sup>. I urge everyone who wants to save the greenbelt to support my campaign.**

## Save Newhey and Milnrow Villages

- How are the candidates going to avoid urban sprawl with the proposals put forward? **We can't – that's one reason I am opposed to the proposals.**
- The green belt is the oxygen mask of our villages and is about to be removed by the proposed plans.
  - What provisions are going to be put into place to protect our villages' air quality, especially villages that are already affected by the proximity of the motorway network? **Air pollution is already a major issue across Greater Manchester, costing many lives. We must do more to tackle it. I will be bringing forward proposals**
- The topography of the proposed land to be built on will cause even more flooding in areas that are already designated as flood plains. What can be done to address this. **The GMSF approach needs a complete review, and the plans should be based on a bottom-up approach that involves local people far more right from the start.**
- If the 10 Council Leaders vote to go ahead with the current GMSF proposals, would you, if elected as the new Mayor, have the courage to vote against the proposals if you thought these plans were going down the wrong route regarding building on Green belt land and how would you approach this situation? **Yes**

## Questions from SOS-Save Our Slattocks

Can you say that your position on this issue [the Greenbelt] will not change once elected in order that the electorate can make an informed decision? **Yes**

Are you aware of any of the councils or councillors been offered "incentives" by development companies and if so what or how much? **No, I am not aware of that happening.**

The draft GMSF makes much of the need to greatly expand distribution warehousing. Would you agree that this approach is flawed as Gtr Manchester should not be focusing on HGV-type transportation but looking to moving the vast majority of goods, at least across the Pennines, via a speedily improved and electrified rail network?

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We absolutely need to improve the rail network and to electrify and improve rail links across the North.

What is your understanding of what will happen if one of the ten Councils votes to pull out of the GMSF in favour of a local plan/approach?

The legal position is clear: the GMSF can only proceed if all ten councils – and the mayor – agree. Of course, if the GMSF falls there is nothing stopping some or all councils collaborating on an alternative plan.

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## Save Timperley Wedge Greenbelt (all for Andy Burnham)

- Your campaign manager, Andrew Gwynne MP told me on Thursday that he was, and I quote, "totally opposed to the GMSF Greenbelt grabbing exercise" because of the impact on his constituents. Other MPs like Angela Rayner, Graham Brady, etc. have made views public.
- We know the GMSF proposals are built on inaccurate Brownfield site data, a fact demonstrated recently again by Andrew Gwynne MP. We know that the CPRE have proven that the population projection figures upon which the GMSF Housing Needs Assessment is based are significantly overblown. We know that land developers are land banking and are in cahoots with councillors - a convenient relationship where the decommissioning of Greenbelt creates huge profits of 900% for the former and top band Council Tax receipts for the latter. The people of Greater Manchester want a Mayor who is able to put forward a GMSF that provides a vision and plan for environmentally sustainable housing and economic development on solely Brownfield sites; a Mayor that resists the short term greed of the private sector and always champions sustainable solutions to the problems we face.
  - So, my question to you Mr Burnham is will you commit to ensuring that future iterations of the GMSF remove any suggestion of decommissioning Greater Manchester's Greenbelt?

## Save Stalybridge Green Belt

- Stalybridge Town is dying, there is no investment there and you are proposing to build 650 executive houses i.e. Not affordable on a stunning greenbelt site out of town, which is already struggling with its infrastructure, flooding and air pollution already, This build would impact these further and people are feeling a real disconnect with the council, councillors and MP. We are not being listened too.
  - What is your response to that? **One reason I oppose the GMSF is that it has not involved local residents, or even local councillors, in drawing up the plans. We can and must do better.**
- Theresa May has said protected spaces 'are safe in the governments' hands, is Sidebottom Fold Stalybridge safe in your hands? **The decisions about local areas should involve local people. It shouldn't be up to the Mayor to decide what happens to Sidebottom Field.**
- How would you respond to a feeling by many that while some within the Greater Manchester establishment show great ambition when it comes to have streets named after them ...they show no interest in the concerns of thousands of residents regarding the destruction of local greenbelt they relentlessly pursue a 'build now' 'worry later' policy on local infrastructure and, for some reason, appear hell bent on the shameful investment in high value property instead of being committed to the building of much needed affordable housing on huge areas of neglected brown-field sites. **We need to do much more to bring about the right development on brownfield sites and to protect our greenbelt. I believe we can do that.**
- A lot of Stalybridge's infrastructure was put in place at the time the cotton mills were running. The infrastructure (roads, air pollution, traffic) is struggling to cope already. The town is limited by bridges. How is that infrastructure expected to cope with the demands that the GMSF plan proposed by Tameside council is imposing on Stalybridge? I

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don't think it can. We need to ensure that any new developments come with the infrastructure they need and I don't think the GMSF achieves that.



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## Save Flixton Greenbelt

ANDY BURNHAM & JANE BROPHY

- Considering the disastrous impact in the heart of the village of Flixton, that the proposed of removal of green belt status as part of the GMSF will inflict on a much used and well-loved public greenspace. Plus the added environmental issues already being felt by this community with a papermill, power station and Europe's largest Industrial area within a 2 mile radius of the village.
  - With this in mind can I please ask if you would be prepared to come and meet with our residents to discuss their concerns as part of your mayoral campaign??  
**Yes, very happy to meet.**

**SEAN ANSTEE** -To realign the greenbelt boundary Trafford Borough Council have to justify 'exceptional circumstances' (Paragraph 83 of the NPPF).

Trafford Councils own 'Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment' published in 2014 plus the 'GMSF Call for Sites' document and Traffords own 'Brownfield Registry' as part of the GMSF which contains 77 possible sites (dated 1-7-2016) with maybe more to be included highlight potential areas for housing, which whilst spread out across the borough show that the 750 homes could be accommodated without developing on Flixtons Greenbelt, a beautiful community open space with 7 highly utilized football pitches, a much loved municipal golf facility with mature trees and shrubs which is surrounded by houses.

- In fact even your own head of the planning committee planning Councillor Viv Ward has said and I quote 'Green Belt Land can only be built on where special circumstances apply and where all other options have been exhausted. Therefore I am unable to understand the Flixton elements of the GM Spatial Framework proposals to develop on Green Belt Land as I was not convinced that alternative land sight options had been considered'.

Taking the views of your the head of your planning committee on board, why have you not supported her opinion that 'exceptional circumstances' have not been met? Is this not undermining the position of someone better qualified in this field than you?

- Now we've been told all along that it is proposed to remove the 'Green Belt status' is to be removed and REPLACED by 'protected open space'. As a group we are against building on the whole of Flixton green belt full stop, but in this instance I find this action to remove the highest protective status (Green Belt) and leave the other (protected open space) contradictory.

So bearing that in mind why is the greenbelt status being removed at Flixton Park, Flixton House and playing field? Can you also confirm that once 'Green Belt Status' is removed and replaced by the so called 'protective open space' that an executive meeting could hear a motion to remove it and council support would be all it needs for the order to be removed?

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## Longdendale Community Group

- The office of mayor comes with “new powers”. Will these powers loosen protection for Green Belt land? Will these powers affect regulations relating to Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs)?
  - Will local communities be part of the decision-making process, or will devolution merely strengthen the hand of those with executive powers? **My aim as Mayor is to use my CPO powers to bring more brownfield sites into use, and so take the pressure off the greenbelt, and to involve local people in decision making.**
- Consultations are typically undertaken after the main planning decisions have been made. Will the GM Mayor introduce reforms to the consultation process so that communities can have a significant influence on developments affecting their areas? **Yes – this can be done now, for example with neighbourhood plans, and we should be using them to involve local people right from the start.**
- **For Sean Anstee** - Why are you not championing the Green Belt policy that is part of his Party’s election manifesto?
- Are the mayoral candidates willing to critically examine the demographic information presented by the planners? The consultation process is providing alternative perspectives relating to post-Brexit immigration to the area, household sizes, and the capacity of brownfield sites to accommodate the anticipated growth in population. **Yes**
  - If these alternative perspectives are valid, do you agree that the process has to start again with the focus on brownfield sites? **Yes**

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## Woodford Group

1. Two economic experts, Andrew Lilico, Executive Director of Europe Economics and Ian Mulheirn, Director at Oxford Economics (the organisation which prepared the Accelerated Growth Scenario for GMSF) have recently carefully analysed the data on populations and housing and published their conclusions that there is not a shortage of housing. These opinions are in stark contrast to the widely propagated notion that there is a housing crisis.

Given the vastly differing opinions about new housing requirements, could you confirm that there will be a thorough examination of the methodology used to predict growth and calculate housing need? **Yes**

2. Do you believe in 'Brownfield First' as a policy? **Yes, but having just a policy is not enough. We also need the Government to give us planning powers to genuinely protect greenbelt sites while there is brownfield available.**
3. Are you aware that, if this was applied strictly to the build figures in GMSF, then there would be no need to build on any Green Belt site until 2029? This means that you could safely put off taking a decision on declassifying Green Belt land until perhaps 2025. By then, the Council would have a far more accurate estimate of the growth until 2035 and beyond. **One of the real problems with the GMSF is that by planning 20 years ahead we open up the greenbelt to development that might not be needed. We need to find ways to genuinely protect greenbelt while there is still brownfield development available.**