

Questions from Greater Manchester Groups to Sean Anstee

[responses from Sean Anstee are in red]

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. **A response will be formed as part of the next iteration of the publication draft of the GMSF. As I outlined at the meeting, objectively assessed housing need, population and economic growth forecasts and the resulting implication for land allocation will be tested when the plan is submitted for inspection. If elected, I will continue to engage with all local groups to transparently outline the methodology used to derive the numbers. I have provided a summary from the GMCA of the methodology applied to date and future work being undertaken.**
- 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? **The number of new homes required in the GMSF is to accommodate additional growth and should already take into account a Borough's existing identified land supply.**
- 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? **This is a matter for Wigan Council to respond to directly. There are strict rules that apply to when CPO powers can be exercised. The Mayoralty does not remove any of the existing powers to determine planning applications that rest with individual Local Planning Authorities today – it is absolutely right that there should be openness and transparency in the planning system.**

Bamford Greenbelt Action Group Questions for Mayoral Hustings

Questions from Greater Manchester Groups to Sean Anstee

- 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? **My view on any site allocation is that unless the associated supporting infrastructure can be provided, it cannot be brought forward.**
- 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? **A response will be formed as part of the next iteration of the publication draft of the GMSF. As I outlined at the meeting, objectively assessed housing need, population and economic growth forecasts and the resulting implication for land allocation will be tested when the plan is submitted for inspection. If elected, I will continue to engage with all local groups to transparently outline the methodology used to derive the numbers.**
- 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? **I will ensure the next publication draft of the GMSF learns lessons from the most recent experience and commit to an easy to use, accessible consultation process. As I have done in my role as Leader of Trafford Council, I will take personal responsibility for the next stage of the draft across Greater Manchester, if elected.**

Save Middleton Greenbelt

- Does the GMSF take into account the turnover of brownfield sites across the plan period? **Yes. Allowances have been made for what are known as windfall sites. In other words, sites that are not available today but it could reasonably be assumed will be available based on previous knowledge and the land required to be allocated has been reduced accordingly.** Turnover that could potentially see regeneration of sites and protection of greenbelt and green spaces
- What do the mayoral candidates consider sustainable development? **Development that a) supports the regeneration of urban areas b) is located in a sustainable location c) has supporting infrastructure in place d) has taken into account amenities such as parks and green spaces e) has a tenure mix of homes from those available for social rent through to open market sale f) contains appropriate provision of affordable housing g) is well planned and designed to promote active and healthy lifestyles**

Tameside

Questions from Greater Manchester Groups to Sean Anstee

- As a candidate for Mayor does you 100% commit to being against the planned use of greenbelt land for housing under the GMSF. **I support the present green belt policy in that it is protected space, only available to being used in exceptional circumstances.**
- Is there a planned strategy to solve the saturation of roads, doctors and schools- Mottram Moor Bypass being a case in point? **My view on any site allocation is that unless the associated supporting infrastructure can be provided, it cannot be brought forward.**
- Can we have reassurances that all greenbelt will be protected and not just those areas listed under the GMSF? **All of green belt land and open spaces today are at risk of speculative planning applications being submitted by landowners across Greater Manchester and so not afforded their deserved protection- I think this is wrong and we need to determine where development proceeds in future. I have set out in my policy the need for phased and controlled release of land, of a desire to have a sustainable and more accessible green belt and open spaces, of a brownfield first approach and this accompanies this reply.**
- 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? **Yes**

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? **A response will be formed as part of the next iteration of the publication draft of the GMSF. As I outlined at the meeting, objectively assessed housing need, population and economic growth forecasts and the resulting implication for land allocation will be tested when the plan is submitted for inspection. If elected, I will continue to engage with all local groups to transparently outline the methodology used to derive the numbers. I will take on board this comment and ensure it is responded to fully.**
- 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?

I understand this is referring to the Strategic Growth Options consultation carried out in November 2015 not the most recent consultation and then the subsequent paper to GMCA in August which recommended Option 2 (the Accelerated Growth Scenario) was still the most appropriate approach even in the light of Brexit. Option 1 was the GMFM baseline which is significantly below SNPP in terms of population/household growth and Option 3 the Higher Growth option (effectively the Housing the Powerhouse option). The GMCA voted to put the draft out to consultation. I am committed to responding in an open and transparent manner.

- 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

Questions from Greater Manchester Groups to Sean Anstee

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? **A response will be formed as part of the next iteration of the publication draft of the GMSF. As I outlined at the meeting, objectively assessed housing need, population and economic growth forecasts and the resulting implication for land allocation will be tested when the plan is submitted for inspection. If elected, I will continue to engage with all local groups to transparently outline the methodology used to derive the numbers. The assertion made in the question will need to be revisited should numbers decrease.**
- 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 will look into this in detail – the rationale behind fewer, larger scale sites is that planning policies would then require infrastructure that is greater than smaller schemes. E.g. one site of thousand or ten smaller sites of one hundred produce the same total number of homes, but the larger site is then accompanied with extra infrastructure opposed to adding pressure to existing public services. However, the balance struck needs to be right and there will be a need to increase the number of smaller sites from a deliverability perspective also.**

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? **Yes.** 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? **As part of any allocation, provision would need to be made for accessible recreation space. I am also keen the GMSF looks at existing communities and how we can make them greener and how we make more green spaces accessible across in local communities.**
- 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? **This will continue to be debated over the coming months and I would commit to working with you as detailed plans are brought forward.** If not, then why is the proposal even being considered in such an area of outstanding natural beauty? **Land allocations will have been put forward by individual local authorities, following the Call for Sites process.**
- 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

Questions from Greater Manchester Groups to Sean Anstee

or around town centres, where demand is... **A number of alternatives have been suggested and need to be analysed.**

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 think the GMSF is critical to enable planned growth in new homes and jobs across Greater Manchester for our existing population, but also our children and grandchildren. There are consequences for not planning for growth, but that does not mean all of the proposed allocations are set in stone. I am open to change if it can be accommodated.**
- 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? **Yes. My view on any site allocation is that unless the associated supporting infrastructure can be provided, it cannot be brought forward.**
- 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? **Groups need a Mayor who understands the GMSF, will have an open, transparent and honest discussion and is committed to finding a way forward. I am committed to being that Mayor.**

Save Newhey and Milnrow Villages

- How are the candidates going to avoid urban sprawl with the proposals put forward? **We must work through the plan if we want a green belt that affords greater protection that that which we can offer today. Having a plan will help avoid urban sprawl in future. I am open to a discussion on allocations where it can be accommodated.**
- 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? **Any planning application on land eventually allocated in future will need to take into account this point. The Environment Agency will continue to be involved in the next iteration of the GMSF. I am also keen to promote good planning design that encourages active and healthy lifestyles and to see significant progress on air quality matters across the city-region.**
- 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? **Any planning application on land eventually allocated in future will need to take into account this point. The Environment Agency will continue to be involved in the next iteration of the GMSF.**
- 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, but I believe we can find a solution to the issues raised.**

Questions from Greater Manchester Groups to Sean Anstee

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? **I'm not aware of any incentives being offered.**

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? **I want to see significant improvements to East/West rail connectivity and the motorway network. I am committed to bringing forward a plan to significantly increase investment in the local transport network.**

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 adoption of the GMSF requires to unanimous consent of the ten local authorities and the Mayor. However the requirement to have a plan will not be removed, if each local authority does its own it will require significantly higher numbers and would make transport planning more difficult. I am keen to find a resolution to the issues raised in the GMSF first consultation.**

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? **The GMCA voted to put the draft out to consultation. There has been an ensuing debate across Greater Manchester with over 20,000 people responding to the consultation. We owe it to all those who have taken the time to submit representations to have an open and transparent response in the next iteration. I am committed to that.**
- Theresa May has said protected spaces 'are safe in the governments' hands, is Sidebottom Fold Stalybridge safe in your hands? **I support the present green belt policy in that it is protected space, only available to being used in exceptional circumstances.**
- 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. **There needs to be an open and transparent process and I am committed to 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

Questions from Greater Manchester Groups to Sean Anstee

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?

My view on any site allocation is that unless the associated supporting infrastructure can be provided, it cannot be brought forward, the next stage of any allocation would be detailed master-planning to demonstrate where and how new infrastructure would be introduced.

Save Flixton Greenbelt

I continue to engage extensively with the Save Flixton Green Belt group, responding to correspondence with detailed replies. I am committed to continuing to do so, and this is the same offer made to all groups.

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? **No, it cannot be removed simply by a motion and a new Local Plan would need to be prepared.**

Longdendale Community Group

- The office of mayor comes with "new powers". Will these powers loosen protection for Green Belt land? **No.** Will these powers affect regulations relating to Compulsory

Questions from Greater Manchester Groups to Sean Anstee

Purchase Orders (CPOs)? **Yes, new powers are being received to make the CPO process more easily actionable.**

- Will local communities be part of the decision-making process, or will devolution merely strengthen the hand of those with executive powers? **There are no changes to the process for determining planning applications and that responsibility will continue to rest with local Councils.**
- 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. I will ensure this is the case for the GMSF, noting reply above regarding determination of applications themselves resting with local Councils.**
- **For Sean Anstee** - Why are you not championing the Green Belt policy that is part of his Party's election manifesto? **I support the present green belt policy in that it is protected space, only available to being used in exceptional circumstances.**
- Are the mayoral candidates willing to critically examine the demographic information presented by the planners? **Yes.** 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.
 - If these alternative perspectives are valid, do you agree that the process has to start again with the focus on brownfield sites? **I have set out policies that will encourage brownfield sites being regenerated.**

Questions from Greater Manchester Groups to Sean Anstee

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. I support the present green belt policy in that it is protected space, only available to being used in exceptional circumstances in some cases where this will help to release brownfield sites for development.**
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. **I have already announced a policy that would seek a power to control the release of allocated land so that we have flexibility to respond to housing need over the plan period.**

Note – a few questions were directed to the other candidates in particular. These are featured in the responses given by those candidates, in a separate document.