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Campaigning for better services over a bigger rail network

please reply to:

Access Trafford
Sale Waterside
Sale
Greater Manchester
M33 7ZF

localplan.consultation@trafford.gov.uk

70 Dynevor Road
Stoke Newington
London
N16 0DX

roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk

2021-03-11

Dear Sir / Madam,

Draft Trafford Local Plan

Railfuture is Britain's leading, longest-established, national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passengers and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities.

We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in development and transport planning.

Our response below to the Trafford Consultation Draft Local Plan has a particular focus on Policy AF7 with respect to 'New Carrington' and question 13 in your consultation document.

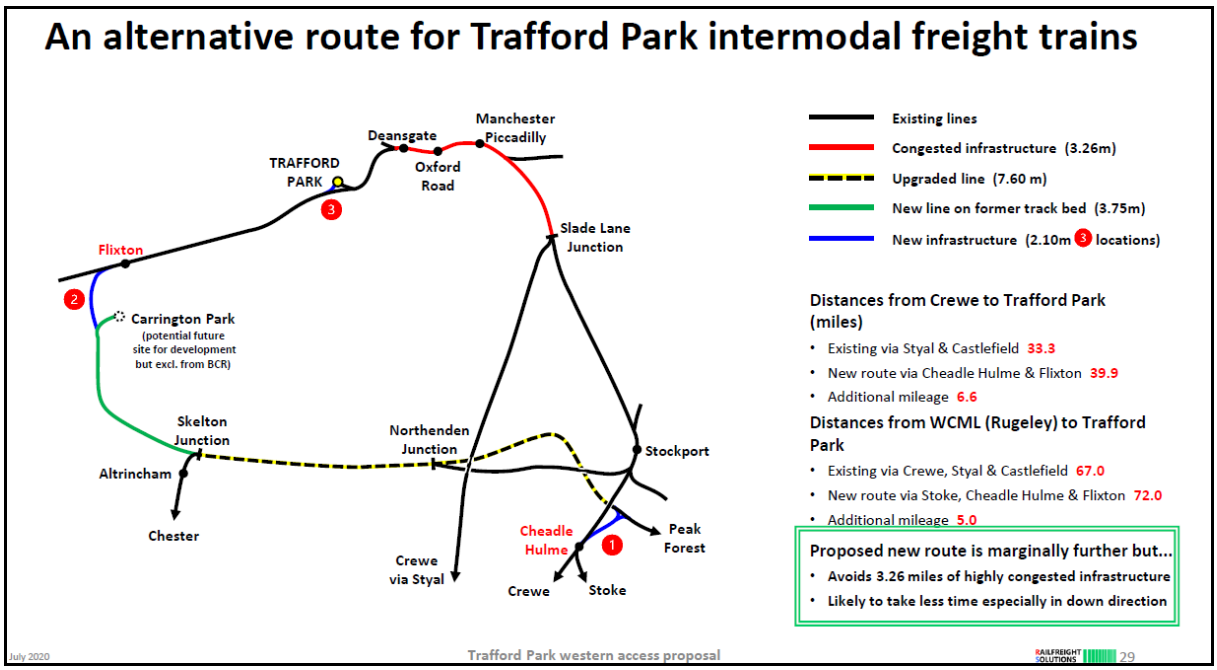
Q.13 Do you agree with the draft Sustainable Transport and Accessibility policies ST1 – ST7? If not, please explain why (providing supporting evidence where appropriate).

Railfuture does not wish to challenge either the housing or employment designations which we understand are driven by the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. Indeed these designations, especially with respect to employment uses, have the potential to complement our proposals for enhancing rail freight capacity in the Greater Manchester area. However, for this to come to fruition it will be necessary to amend a few matters of detail in the Local Plan which we set out below, but in essence will entail the protection of the route of a previous railway line through Carrington plus an additional short section of new route.

Background to the South Manchester Freight Route

Over the past year Railfuture has been working with the *Railfreight Solutions* consultancy to develop a strategy for improving reliability for passenger services on the *Castlefield Corridor* while at the same time increasing the volume of freight which can be switched from road to rail in response to the *climate emergency*. Our proposal involves creating a western access route to the Trafford Park freight terminals which re-uses the redundant line from Skelton Junction towards Cadishead, and joining the 'Cheshire Lines' route between Manchester and Liverpool near Flixton by means of the line which once served the former chemical works at Carrington.

A full description of these proposals can be found at https://railfuture.org.uk/article1855 and the following map gives a good summary.



This proposal has been shared with Network Rail and Transport for the North who have both shown interest in evaluating its potential as an alternative to the expensive 'Package C' which adds capacity on the Castlefield Corridor but does little to relieve the congestion between Piccadilly and Slade lane Junction. It also enjoys interest from the Rail Freight Group and at least one of the freight operators at Trafford Park.

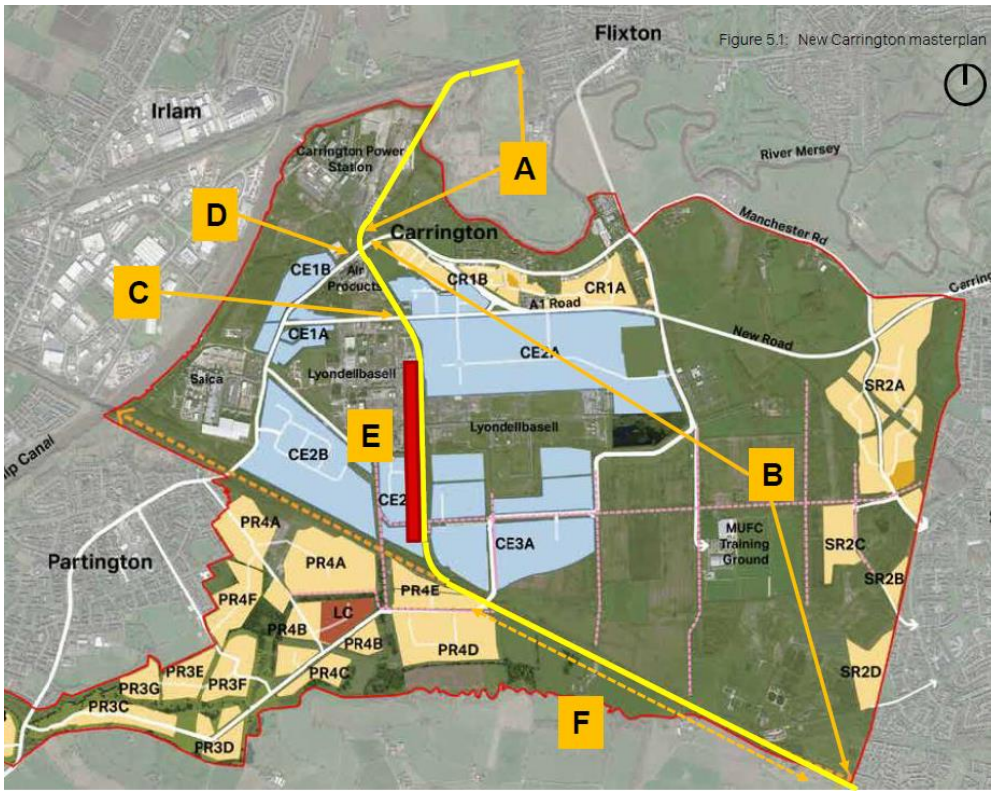
Decarbonisation benefits

A shortage of rail-served warehousing has been identified in the North West, particularly around Manchester. Trafford Park freight traffic is dominated by maritime containers from the southern ports of Southampton, London Gateway and, predominantly, Felixstowe in Suffolk. Trade from East Asia enters Europe on Ultra Large Vessels (ULV) serving a number of ports in the North Sea in a single round trip and shipping economics make calls at ports further north unattractive. Of this trade however, only about half is then brought inland by rail, the rest going by road due to insufficient capacity in the rail network, including *Castlefield*, where a crowded passenger timetable only accommodates one freight train every hour as train length and slow speed consumes track capacity disproportionately.

A western access would enable twice the number of freight trains to serve the Trafford Park terminals while improving passenger service performance between Deansgate, Piccadilly and Slade Lane.

Each container journey which switches from road to rail reduces its carbon footprint by 76%. This improves still further if the rail network is electrified, and carbon is eliminated altogether once the electricity supply grid (renewables and nuclear) is 'clean'. A vastly greater role for rail, in both economic and transport policy, will be necessary in order to meet our national obligations under the Paris Accord. For future economic growth, the North West will need to identify additional rail-served sites for manufacturing and distribution. Railfuture believes that New Carrington has the potential to attract inward investment if it were to benefit from its position on an expanded rail network.

Suggested amendments to AF7



Key to amendments

A. Transport corridor – new section of railway
B. Transport corridor – reinstatement of former railway
C. Retain overbridge (or provide bridge if rebuilding 'A1 route' New Road)
D. Bridge over line (or opportunity to stop up highway to discourage traffic through Carrington village)
E. Potential site for new freight terminal to serve local employment sites
F. 'Active travel' route to the south of reinstated rail line

The freight terminal needs to be long enough to accommodate trains of 775m in length. Currently trains serving Trafford Park can only be 500m in length due to limited terminal space, having to be divided in half in the reception sidings before moving to the unloading area. The rail industry is moving towards longer (in this case 50% longer) 750m trains (775m including the locomotive) as standard, for the exponential reduction in CO2 per container which is achieved amongst other efficiency gains. Trains of this length however absorb still more track and signalling capacity on the *Castlefield corridor*, providing further incentive to identify a western route to serve Trafford Park as well as a new 'fit-for-purpose' terminal in the Manchester area.

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Port Salford

We are aware of plans to develop a rail-served terminal near Patricroft on the *Chat Moss* line. We have discussed this alternative with our independent consultant and conclude that this site has the following weaknesses;

- The Chat Moss line carries significantly more rail traffic than either the 'Cheshire Lines' (CLC) route via Flixton or the other CLC route east of Skelton, and therefore is more difficult to timetable for additional freight trains.

- The 'Chat Moss' line is on the north side of the Manchester Ship Canal and establishing a rail route to the south is more problematic. To the east there are adverse gradients at Miles Platting and a congested network through Manchester Victoria. To the west, a non-compliant radius connection with the West Coast Main Line (WCML) through the 'Earlestown triangle' requires a replacement connection to be constructed east of Newton-le-Willows, on a section where the line reduces from four tracks to two between Golborne and Winwick junctions.

- The Port Salford terminal would not be able to accommodate 775m trains without splitting due to the limited space between the Chat Moss line and the Manchester Ship canal

- The Port Salford development is being marketed as a 'multi-modal' facility which sees access by rail, road and water. It is difficult to see what role there is for water. The size of ocean-going vessels on the East Asia route even precludes calls at the Seaforth terminal at Liverpool, and are far too large to use the ship canal. Cargo would have to be broken down onto smaller vessels, thus introducing additional handling costs. It would be cheaper to load onto lorry or rail straight from the ship.

For these reasons, we believe that Carrington offers a more marketable proposition for exploiting additional rail freight traffic to meet future demand.

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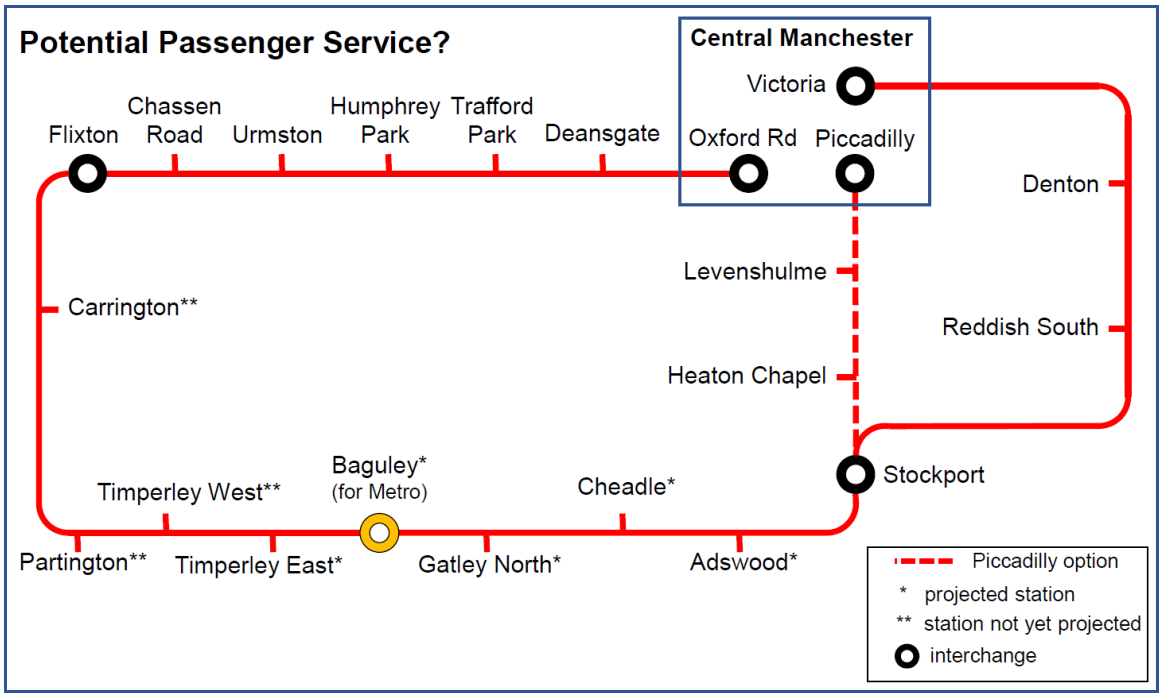
Sustainable Residential Development

Policy AF7 also zones 'New Carrington' for significant housing growth of up to 4,000 new homes shared between Carrington, Partington and Sale with the majority of these to the east of Partington, which appears in consequence to almost double in size. Partington's population is 7,327 (2019) and the addition of 3,000 homes will bring this to around 14,300 (at average occupancy of 2.34 persons per household). We note the provision of an *active travel* route, to discourage use of the private car, but this is likely to have limited impact. This also appears to be at variance with proposals to provide communities at East Timperley, Baguley, Gatley North, Cheadle and Adswood with rail stations on the line between Skelton Junction and Stockport, currently served by an hourly train to Chester.

The new railway line brings the opportunity of a passenger service, with stations at Carrington (near point 'D' on the above plan) and at Partington (next to sites PR4D or PR4E, to the west of point 'F'). The original Partington station was further west but proposed development will move the centre of this settlement eastwards. This is likely to enjoy public support as well as backing from the MPs for Altrincham and Sale, and Stretford and Urmston, both of whom sponsored a recent *Restoring your Railway* bid to the DfT's 'Ideas Fund' to reopen the line between Timperley and Glazebrook via Cadishead. Our proposal achieves many of the same objectives, including the reinstatement of West Timperley station. The service would operate as a 'circle' line from Oxford Road to either Piccadilly or Victoria as shown below. With most of the capital cost already accounted for in the BCR for the freight scheme, it is more likely to attract funding.



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Conformity with other Trafford Local Plan Policies

Railfuture notes the following policies in the Trafford Local Plan:

ST5 – Freight transport network
ST5.1 The Council will safeguard and promote the improvement and development of the road, rail and water freight transport network (and associated multi-modal freight transport facilities) in Trafford to assist in the sustainable and efficient movement of goods.

ST5.2 The Council will support development that encourages the movement of freight by rail and/or water, which contributes towards the improvement and enhancement of a sustainable distribution system and reduces the reliance on goods being transported by road.

Trafford Park Railway Network and inter-modal freight facilities
ST5.3 The Council will safeguard and promote the improvement of the (freight) railway routes and inter-modal freight facilities within Trafford Park identified on the Policies Map. Development proposals that may prejudice the integrity of the existing and any future development of freight railway routes will not be supported.

The proposals advanced here by Railfuture appear to be entirely consistent with the above policies.

ST3.12 The Council will support the development of the Tram-Train Network to provide improved rapid transit links around and to the City Centre and across the city region, the following schemes have currently been identified in the Transport Strategy 2040, Draft Delivery Plan 2020-2025:
a) Altrincham to Hale, tram-train pathfinder project
b) Tram-train / Metro services on the CLC line to Warrington
c) Tram-train / Metro services, Cornbrook to Manchester Airport via Timperley

New Rail stations
ST3.13 The Council will support proposals for new rail stations which provide enhanced transport connectivity.

Although policy ST3.13 lists two stations as contenders for reopening (as ‘Tram-Train’ stops) the above diagram demonstrates how this principle might be extended to capture both ST3.13 a) and ST3.13 b) in a circular network while at the same time extending the benefits to the new communities at Carrington and Partington.

In summary, we believe that with modest changes to the proposals map, the Trafford Local Plan insofar as it relates to Trafford Park and New Carrington can become an exemplar document demonstrating long term commitment to shaping a low-carbon future for this part of Greater Manchester.

We are happy to discuss this submission with you and answer any questions you may have.

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS
Director for Infrastructure & Networks, national Board