

Manchester City Council Report for Resolution

Report to: District Centres Subgroup – 21 January 2020
Subject: Climate Change and District Centres
Report of: Strategic Director (Growth and Development)

Summary

The report considers the role of district centres in contributing to the zero carbon targets by 2038. It covers key issues that will need to be considered in future policy development, particularly with respect to the new Local Plan. It also considers the role of the revised Climate Change Action Plan and the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Climate Change Sub-group in determining how district centres may contribute towards a zero carbon city by 2038.

Recommendations

To note the report and to agree that:-

- officers carry out further analysis into the role of district centres in contributing to the zero carbon targets by 2038 to inform the development of policies in the new Local Plan; and
 - future reports are brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Climate Change Sub-group for their consideration on emerging policies in the new Local Plan.
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Wards affected: All

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Background

1.1 In November 2018, the City Council agreed to the establishment of science-based carbon reduction targets for Manchester. This requires the city to become zero carbon by 2038 at the latest. The targets are based on work undertaken by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research which established a carbon budget of 15 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) for the city up to 2100. A draft Zero Carbon Framework was published in February 2019 and will be followed by a more detailed plan in March 2020. In July 2019, Manchester City Council declared a climate emergency. This declaration recognises the need for the Council and the city as a whole to do more to reduce its carbon emissions and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change and demonstrated the Council's commitment to be at the forefront of the global response to climate change and to lead by example.

1.2 This report considers in brief how district centres might contribute to zero carbon targets for Manchester. The main areas covered are as follows:

- The key issues to consider in how district centres link to the climate change agenda;
- Future opportunities for climate change adaptation and mitigation in district centres;
- What can the new Local Plan bring forward in terms of new policies; and
- How can the revised Climate Change Action Plan for the Council influence policy approaches in district centres.

2.0 District Centres – Key Issues

2.1 Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) has recently published a report for the Greater Manchester Transport Committee (GMTCC) that sets out the challenge ahead for the transport sector to contribute towards meeting zero carbon targets by 2038. The report states at the UK level, "*In 2017, transport emissions had reduced by just 3% on 1990 levels (road transport emissions have in fact increased 6%). In 2017, transport overtook energy as the sector emitting the largest amount of CO₂e.*" The report includes analysis of road transport patterns in Greater Manchester since 1996 highlighting that GM Motorway traffic has continued to increase over the past two decades, whilst traffic on roads within the M60 and within Manchester city centre has fallen significantly over the same time period. The report attributes this pattern to the following reasons:

- The change toward a "digital economy" in which some shopping trips and commuting trips may have been replaced by e-commerce (i.e. online shopping) and an increase in home working respectively.
- A strong increase in rail-based public transport, which can partly be explained by improved services and extensions to the Metrolink network.
- A cultural shift towards urban living means population densities in the urban centre have increased, which has changed travel preferences and in turn travel demand for some, e.g. ability to walk to desired destination.
- Transport and land use policy, with minimal new road construction and a gradual shift towards pedestrian and cycling infrastructure improvements and prioritisation on local roads.

- 2.2 The above factors, whilst focusing in part on the land use and travel issues within the City Centre, can be considered within the context of the district centres in Manchester.

Digital Economy

- 2.3 The report from the Institute of Place Management (IPM) on district centres that is discussed on the other item for this sub-group agenda¹, provides some information and discussion on the impacts resulting from the increasing use of the digital economy on retail spending patterns. The IPM report highlights that, *“In 2018, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), it accounted for 18% of UK retail spend, with this figure rising to 18.7% in November 2019 (ONS, 2019). It is further predicted that online shopping will account for more than 50% of all retail spend by 2028 (Retail Economics, 2019). This masks the fact that food retailing online is only 6.5% whilst non-food is 26.5% (CRR, 2018), which must also be considered.”*
- 2.4 There is potentially a challenge and opportunity for district centres with respect to the digital economy. The challenge largely revolves around the increasing market share of goods sold online and how this impacts on high street stores. This in turn has potential impacts for climate change in terms of how deliveries are undertaken for example. An alternative issue to consider is the potential opportunities for local businesses to undertake aspects of their trade online, and the potential climate change impacts of doing so. This clearly will depend on the nature of businesses within district centres, and what goods and services could be offered in this manner.

Public Transport and Accessibility

- 2.5 All of the district centres in Manchester have bus route connections. Some also have the benefit of nearby Metrolink stops or rail stations. These provide a link into the district centres for the surrounding communities that they serve whilst also connecting the district centres to the city centre. Increasing the usage of public transport links into the district centres can contribute to potential positive impacts for climate change through a reduction in the use of the car.
- 2.6 Beyond the provision of public transport, the district centres can be accessed by walking and cycling. The Council is investing in a number of cycle route improvements through the Beelines network including routes that pass through district centres. This will provide additional improved opportunities for people to access district centres either by walking or cycling.

Urban Living

- 2.7 Clearly the city centre has been the focus of much of the increase in population with respect to urban living in recent years. Notwithstanding that point, there are potential opportunities for considering how district centres

¹ Institute of Place Management (December 2019), Vital and Viable Manchester District Centres

might diversify to include additional residential and other uses beyond the traditional retail offer. The IPM report includes a reference to this point within its recommendations stating, “*Future proofing centres is essential to maintain centre resilience. As IPM research demonstrates, this will require many centres to reduce their dependence on retail, and to consider new functions (commercial, residential, leisure), to create multi-functionality.*” The diversification of uses in district centres can potentially bring in beneficial impacts with respect to climate change in encouraging a locally based mix of uses that mutually strengthen the resilience of a centre. Current planning policy, set out in the Core Strategy, recognises the need for a diverse mix of uses in Policy C2:

“Development will support thriving district centres, with distinct local character, providing a good range of accessible key services, including retail, health facilities, public services, leisure activities and financial and legal services. Housing will also be considered an appropriate use within District Centres, providing it supports the vitality and viability of the centre...”

Transport and land use policy

- 2.8 The current Core Strategy already includes a number of policies that specifically deal with climate change (SP1, EN4 to EN8). Moreover, there are policies (C2 to C7) that cover the 17 identified district centres within the city. There is therefore a significant planning policy framework in place that seeks to direct development in a manner that responds to the climate change agenda. The Council is at the early stages of preparing a new Local Plan that will, where appropriate, refine existing planning policies and develop new planning policies that address climate change as a key strategic issue. The Council will be commencing its consultation on the Issues Stage of the new Local Plan in February for a period of eight weeks. This will provide an initial opportunity to consider what should feature in the new Local Plan.

Climate Change Adaptation/ Mitigation

- 2.9 The physical character of each district centre can be considered in terms of how each centre might be capable to adapt to or mitigate the impacts of climate change. This may involve innovative design solutions to ensure each district centre is resilient to changes in climate and the resultant weather patterns that may occur (greater variation of temperatures/ dealing with potentially weather events including more rain or dryer periods etc). The current Core Strategy states in Policy EN4 what is expected from new developments and retrofits of existing development in reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Moreover, design considerations for residential development are already incorporated into current guidance produced by the Council². The Residential Quality Guidance incorporates a section on how residential development can respond to considerations of zero carbon developments.

² Manchester City Council (2016), Manchester Residential Quality Guidance

- 2.10 Other adaptation and mitigation measures include the need to deal with potential flood risk that might be exacerbated by climate change; the use of green infrastructure to assist in cooling areas; and the provision of green spaces to enhance natural habitats. These points are already covered in existing Core Strategy policy EN8.
- 2.11 The current planning policies noted above will be reviewed as part of the new Local Plan process. This will enable any additional policy guidance to be developed in the light of new evidence.

3.0 Policy Options

Local Plan

- 3.1 Examples of existing planning policy noted above that are set out in the current Core Strategy demonstrate that the Council already has a framework to build from in terms of any future planning policies to address climate change. Moreover, the Core Strategy has policies focussing specifically on district centres.
- 3.2 Future planning policy for the new Local Plan will need to consider how district centres can further play their part in adapting and mitigating against the effects of climate change. This can be split into two main areas covering specific district centre policies in the first instance; and thematic policies relating to climate change that will also pertain to district centres. To assist in the development of these policies, an appropriate evidence base will need to be assembled. Evidence can be drawn on from the existing work developed by the Tyndall Centre that is informing the revisions to the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

Other Policy Areas

- 3.3 The Council is updating the Climate Change Action Plan with the intention that a new plan will be brought to Executive this March. The current Action Plan which covers the period 2016 to 2020 includes various actions that relate to district centres including, for example, embedding carbon reduction objectives in policy-making. The Council has set up an Overview and Scrutiny Climate Change Sub-group which will scrutinise forthcoming work by the Council on climate change. There will be an opportunity therefore to consider how any future climate change related work on district centres, including work undertaken for the new Local Plan, can be considered by the Climate Change Sub-group for comment and debate.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 The report has considered some of the key issues with respect to the role of district centres in contributing to the zero carbon targets by 2038. It is clear that the new Local Plan will have an important part to play in setting out land use policies that further develop the approach to climate change already established in the current Core Strategy. Further analysis will be required to

assess the role of district centres in contributing to the zero carbon targets by 2038 to inform the development of policies in the new Local Plan. The evidence base already developed by the Tyndall Centre will be invaluable in this work; alongside the analysis recommended by the IPM in their work. Alongside this will be the continuing work for the Climate Change Action Plan driven by the climate emergency declaration. The Overview and Scrutiny Climate Change Sub-group will scrutinise forthcoming work by the Council on climate change. There will be an opportunity therefore to consider how any future climate change related work on district centres, including work undertaken for the new Local Plan can be considered by the Climate Change Sub-group for comment and debate.