

TRAFFORD

UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

INSPECTOR'S REPORT
ON OBJECTIONS TO THE
DEPOSIT DRAFT OF THE PLAN

INSPECTOR: R S FOSTER MA MRTPI

INQUIRY: FEBRUARY-NOVEMBER 1994

3. THE DAVENPORT GREEN PROPOSALS

PROPOSAL E13 MAJOR HIGH AMENITY SITE - DAVENPORT GREEN

PROPOSAL C5 EXCLUSIONS FROM THE GREEN BELT - site (iii) DAVENPORT GREEN

Objections [1314 objections, as scheduled in Appendix F]

Introduction

3.1 In an advertised Proposed Change the Council reduced the area to be removed from the green belt from 135.6ha (335ac) to 36.4ha (90 ac). Subsequently, after I raised certain questions concerning the clarity of Proposal E13 at the outset of the inquiry sessions devoted to this topic, the Council brought forward a set of further 'approved amendments' which were advertised for 6 weeks during the inquiry. The effect of these was as follows:-

- * to amend the text of Proposal E13 to:-
 - clarify the particular nature of the development to be permitted;
 - simplify the terms of the proposal by introducing reference to a detailed Planning Brief, the latter being incorporated as an integral part of the statutory UDP, ie as Appendix J; and
 - introduce reference to the requirement for a legal agreement providing for the rural park to be transferred to the ownership of a trust; and
- * to amend the text of Part 1 Policy E4 to clarify the circumstances in which proposals for new technology uses/business parks may be given favourable consideration on sites outside the built-up area.

The above amendments produced only a limited response from objectors and none fundamentally altered their position.

3.2 At a later date the Council also put forward an officer-proposed amendment to paragraph 2.3 of the brief (Appendix J to the UDP).

Summary of the proposals

3.3 Proposal E13/C5 provides for the exclusion from the green belt of a development area of some 36.42ha (90 acres) bounded by Roaring Gate Lane/ Brooks Drive, Davenportgreen Wood, the M56, and the Newall Green area of Wythenshawe. This area would be allocated for the erection of a very high specification business park. Construction would be confined to 3 separate cells within precisely defined boundaries identified in the Planning Brief

and buildings would thereby be limited to a maximum of 20% of the development area, ie 7.28ha (18 acres).

3.4 The remaining 80% of the development area would be laid out as a continuous and integrated landscaped area, retaining and enhancing 10 identified key landscape features and including very substantial new planting. The buildings within the development cells would be 2 or 3 storeys high and limited to 98,000 sq.m total gross floorspace (just over 1,000,000 sq.ft.). Each cell would be developed in an architecturally integrated fashion in a manner and to a quality aiming to reflect 'the relationship between built form and landscape of a country house set in parkland'. To assist this design concept at least 95% of all car parking would be provided underground or in low level structures integrated with the architectural form of the buildings.

3.5 The object of the development would be to provide a business park of the highest possible quality in close proximity to the airport, the national motorway system and other transport facilities and capable of attracting world class inward investment of the kind for which the region cannot currently hope to compete. Occupation of the development would be limited to companies able to meet the strict qualifying criteria set out in Policy E4 and Proposal E13.

3.6 As an integral part of the development, a further 99.12ha (245 acres) of land between Ash Lane/Clay Lane and Roaring Gate Lane would be developed as a rural park comprising a viable farm, new woodland, a new lake, improved habitats and enhanced public access. The future of this land would be secured by a legal agreement providing for the transfer of its ownership to a charitable trust with 12 trustees representing local residents (4), local wildlife and recreational groups (4), the Council (3) and occupiers of the business park (1). The developers of the park would execute an extensive programme of agreed works to establish the park and provide the trust with a substantial endowment for its on-going management duties.

3.7 In addition, a technology transfer company would be established between the intended developer of the site, the four Manchester universities and, ultimately, the occupying companies. This would give the latter ready access to the universities' research, teaching and training capabilities and facilities, thus meeting the requirement of RPG4 that 'major high amenity sites' in Greater Manchester should exploit the presence of the city's higher educational institutions.

Inspector's consideration of objections

3.8 From all the submissions and representations on this issue, and from my inspections of the site and its surroundings, I consider that this proposal raises two major issues. The first is whether or not exceptional circumstances exist to warrant excluding the land from the Green Belt; the second is the effect of the proposal on the M56 and the local road network.

Issue 1 - Exclusion of the site from the green belt

3.9 The site is within the green belt as defined by the Greater Manchester Green Belt Local Plan (GMGBLP) adopted in January 1984, the Inspector at the GMGBLP inquiry having previously concluded that land at Davenport Green fulfilled green belt purposes, ie the checking of further growth of the built-up area and the prevention of neighbouring towns from merging.

3.10 In view of the land's green belt status the Council accept that it is for them to demonstrate exceptional circumstances to justify their decision now to exclude it from the green belt as defined in the UDP. In short, they sought to do this by reference to the existence of an 'economic imperative'.

3.11 I shall examine the green belt issue under the following heads:-

- * The effect of the proposal on the area's role as green belt
- * Regional planning guidance
- * The economic case for Davenport Green
- * Alternative sites
- * Sustainability considerations
- * Overall conclusions

- * The effect of the proposal on the area's role as green belt

3.12 I examine this aspect first, since the degree of any harm to the purposes of the green belt will have a significant bearing on the extent of the exceptional circumstances requiring to be shown to justify the proposal.

3.13 The Council state that a cornerstone of their approach has been to ensure (a) that the proposals do not undermine the purposes of the green belt in this locality and (b) that they secure and enhance its appearance and value. Dealing with the former, TMBC have considered the proposal against the 5 purposes set out in PPG2 and I now consider those aspects in turn. In this analysis I refer to the purposes of the green belt as set out in the former version of PPG2, current at the time of the inquiry; in my view the minor changes to these purposes set out in the revision of PPG2, issued in January 1995, make no practical difference to this assessment.

3.14 Purpose 1 - Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. In the Council's view this is not the major green belt function of the Timperley Wedge because the 'large built-up area' is the conurbation as a whole, whereas the Davenport Green area forms part of an open re-entrant penetrating the greater mass of the urban fabric. However, it seems to me that, in principle, unrestricted sprawl of a large conurbation into an open area such as the Timperley Wedge is no less undesirable than peripheral sprawl at the outer edges.

3.15 TMBC believe that the exceptional requirements and constraints of the planning brief would ensure that the development represented the antithesis of sprawl, with the buildings in each cell representing individual features within a wooded rural landscape, not visible one from another and only occasionally glimpsed from the retained green belt. However, the Concise

Oxford Dictionary defines 'sprawl' as 'the straggling expansion of an urban or industrial area', while in turn 'straggle' is defined as 'a lack or loss of compactness; being or becoming dispersed or sporadic'. Bearing in mind these definitions it seems to me that the construction of buildings within the proposed 3 cells, unrelated to any existing development, must represent a form of straggling expansion or sprawl. I acknowledge the painstakingly careful and admirably thorough 'landscape-led' approach to the master planning exercise undertaken on behalf of the Council, as well as the high quality of buildings sought by the brief, but these factors do not alter my conclusion that development within the cells would be contrary to purpose 1.

3.16 Purpose 2 - Safeguarding the surrounding countryside from further encroachment. The Council do not deny the role of this area as countryside, some of which would be lost, but in their view the enhancement measures for the rural park would fulfil a positive green belt function by providing the urban population with better access to a secure, improved and properly managed tract of countryside. In their view the new green belt boundary would be strongly defined by new and existing planting and as a result there would be no perception of encroachment into the retained green belt.

3.17 I acknowledge the evidence that the countryside in this area (like many tracts of open land on the fringe of major cities) suffers from the effects of trespass and vandalism and that these problems are making viable farming and good land management hard to achieve. To that extent there may well be doubt (as with many such urban fringe areas) about the longer term sustainability of the area's present attractive appearance without some change in the present pattern of land use and ownership. However, PPG2 makes it clear that the quality of the rural landscape is not a material factor in the continued protection of green belt.

3.18 I also accept that the creation of the rural park and the terms of the agreement would offer the opportunity for the creation of a better resourced and more viable agricultural holding coupled with a means of managing the park in such a way as to achieve gains in terms of recreation and nature conservation. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the area of the proposed rural park is already protected green belt land crossed by a number of rights of way, while the proposed development area (and the Timperley Wedge generally) are clearly appreciated by many local people for the opportunities which they afford for quiet walks and relaxation away from the nearby urban areas. In my view the presence of very substantial new buildings close to the park would inevitably encroach to some extent on the rural character and green belt function of this land.

3.19 In my judgement the development would also be very apparent from the M56, from the Thorley Lane bridge and from 'The Prospect' south of Newall Green and would be perceived as representing a substantial encroachment onto what is now seen as attractive open countryside, the present value and significance of which is considerably enhanced by the firm contrast which it presents with land on the other side of the motorway where large scale buildings have necessarily been constructed on green belt land at Manchester Airport.

3.20 Purpose 3 - preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another. The Council regard this as the principal green belt function of

the Timperley Wedge area and they recognise that it is one upon which the GMGBLP Inspector placed great weight. While they point to the variable width of the wedge and the degree to which the perception of separation between Well Green/Hale/Hale Barns to the south and Newall Green to the north is affected at different points by the presence or absence of buildings and interconnecting roads, they accept the importance of ensuring that development at Davenport Green does not appear to bring the two built-up areas closer together. In their view no built development would be visible from the narrowest and most vulnerable part of the wedge near Dobbinetts Lane.

3.21 Having viewed the site from many points, I consider that the development would have the clear effect of bringing about the virtual linking of Hale and Newall Green via a necklace of development along the Brooks Drive/Roaring Gate Lane corridor. The ribbon of houses in Brooks Drive already extends continuously into open country for about 0.75km and at its northern end is not greatly separated from the pocket of houses at Shay Lane. There is then a gap of only about 1km between the northern end of these houses and the urban area of Newall Green. According to the planning brief, and from the illustrative master plans discussed at the inquiry, buildings within the 3 development cells would occupy most of this undeveloped gap, leaving spaces only 200m or so wide between each other and the nearest existing buildings at both ends of the present open area.

3.22 It was suggested on the Council's behalf that any coalescence here would not be observable on the ground and would be perceptible only in terms of mathematical measurement or view from the air. I recognise that the proposed dense planting and other measures intended to soften the visual impact of the buildings would, over the course of time, provide considerable screening of the buildings. However, in my view users of the Brooks Drive/Roaring Gate Lane corridor would not perceive the existence of any significant gap between Hale Road and Newall Green.

3.23 Purpose 4 - preserving the special character of historic towns. I agree with the GMGBLP Inspector that the land has no role in this respect.

3.24 Purpose 5 - assisting in urban regeneration. The Council accept that the GMGBLP Inspector saw the tight drawing of the green belt boundary as part of a strategy for assisting urban regeneration, even though that aim was not then an overtly specified green belt purpose. However, they refer to one of the conclusions of a piece of research commissioned by the DOE ('The effectiveness of green belts'), viz that mere denial of development opportunities does not in itself secure regeneration but has to be seen as part of a wide range of policies, including positive provision for development at appropriate and acceptable locations.

3.25 The above point is undeniable and gives rise to the need to examine the adequacy or otherwise of such alternative provision, a factor which forms an important part of the Council's case to which I shall turn later. However, I conclude at this point that the proposals would cause significant harm to purposes 1, 2 and 3 of the green belt.

* Regional planning guidance

3.26 RPG4 (December 1989) provides two key objectives for Greater Manchester:- revitalising the economy and promoting urban regeneration. Special attention is also to be paid to the promotion of Manchester as an international centre of excellence. Councils are jointly asked to identify opportunities in strategic locations for the provision, or creation, of major high amenity sites for high technology industry, preferably in existing urban areas, and with good access to motorways and public transport. Such provision should seek to exploit the presence within the conurbation of major higher educational institutions. As a complementary part of this strategy, Councils are advised that they should seek to incorporate the Greater Manchester Green Belt into their UDPs.

3.27 There was some difference of opinion between objectors and the Council as to how far the proposal would be in line with the above strategic guidance. While objectors preferred to stress RPG4's reference to the incorporation of the Greater Manchester Green Belt, the Council pointed out that the advice does not specifically rule out green belt locations for the major high amenity sites and drew attention to the SOSE's decision concerning land at Ashton Moss (Tameside) in which the importance of providing a strategic employment site in accordance with RPG4 was found to represent a very special circumstance justifying development in the green belt.

3.28 In my view RPG4 cannot be interpreted as imposing a complete bar on the exclusion of land from the green belt; the terms of its advice leave open the possibility of exceptional cases being made out in order to meet the revitalisation/regeneration aims for the conurbation. However, the GMGBLP left a good deal of undeveloped peripheral land outside the green belt to meet future development needs and it therefore does not follow that if major high amenity sites cannot be found 'in existing urban areas' then such sites necessarily have to be located in the present green belt. In this respect the strategic guidance for Greater Manchester is distinctly different from that for the West Midlands which recognises the inevitability of land release from the green belt for high technology industry and housing. In addition, I consider it relevant to bear in mind that in the specific case of Trafford the SOSE recognises the particular force of green belt (and other) constraints in the housing provision figures which he sets in RPG4.

3.29 The regional perspective is taken forward in an as-yet draft fashion in the advice submitted to the SOSE by the North West Regional Association (NWRA) in March 1994 ('Greener Growth'). At this stage such advice can be afforded very little weight since it remains to be seen how far it may be taken on board by the SOSE. However, it is relevant to note what the NWRA have to say with regard to the green belt and the economy. Referring to the former, the green belt is described as a fundamental mechanism for guiding development well into the next century although it is stated that beyond 2001 (ie after the expiry of the current RPG guidance) consideration will have to be given to future boundaries. The draft suggests that revisions to the green belt should only be considered if non-release would prejudice aims for revitalisation of the region by seriously restricting development that could not be accommodated on redevelopment sites or elsewhere.

3.30 In terms of the economy, Greener Growth refers to the continuing employment problems of the region - its relatively poor record in new business formation and the attraction of inward investment and its dependence on industrial sectors likely to experience strong international competition. A key objective is therefore seen to be the ability to offer an attractive and varied selection of sites to attract investment in all sectors, particularly from outside the region.

* The economic case for Davenport Green

3.31 In the Council's view there is an 'economic imperative' for the proposal which may be summarised in the following indented paragraphs.

1. The economy of the North West region performed poorly in the 1980s by comparison with the UK as a whole and potential growth sectors are under-represented. Manufacturing jobs have been lost at a faster-than-average rate by national standards while service jobs have been gained at a lower-than-average rate. The region's record in investment, in the growth of small firms, in the local presence of company HQ and R&D functions and in the attraction of inward investment is also relatively weak. Published forecasts indicate that the region will continue to fall further behind if no effective strategy for change is adopted, a situation which would not be in the best interests either of the North West or of the nation as a whole.

2. In this continuing era of restructuring due to factors such as the Single European Market and the globalisation of economic activities, there are opportunities to take advantage of the economic stimulation that can be caused by the international relocation of business functions. Parts of the UK have in the past been favoured by Japanese and American businesses seeking to relocate operations, including 'high-level' activities, to Europe. However, in the recent past the UK has lost some of its comparative advantages and other European locations, eg Sophia Antipolis and Roissypole (France) and Transpolis Schipol (the Netherlands) are now competing strongly. Manchester has been, and is still, unknown or little known to many international investors. The city is often perceived as a peripheral location with a poor image as an outworn centre of defunct and declining industries. Under current conditions it will remain even more difficult for the North West to overcome its geographical and perceptual disadvantages and compete for high quality inward investment without a project of exceptional quality and stature.

3. The North West Regional Economic Strategy (drawn up by the North West Regional Association and the North West Business Leadership Team) sees a particular need for a small number (3-4) of flagship sites 'which can, on their own, act as an incentive to overseas and UK investors to locate in the North West, aimed at high-tech, B1 and headquarters functions'. According to the strategy such sites should be capable of housing at least 3000 jobs, be within 5 minutes drive of a

motorway junction and 1 hour of Manchester Airport, and offer a first-class environment. Candidate zones identified in the strategy include the central industrial corridor, (perhaps near Warrington), a marine technology site in Merseyside, and the Greater Manchester area, the latter possibly airport-related.

4. The Greater Manchester Economic Strategy and Operational Programme, drawn up by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) seeks to tackle this issue of knowledge and perception by promoting the city as a European Regional Capital, turning it into an outward looking centre which is internationally competitive for inward investment and re-establishing it as an international centre for production and trade able to function as a growth pole for economic recovery in the wider North West region. Central to the achievement of this aim is the need for the provision of sites which are competitive in their ability to attract highly mobile national and international corporate developments of the very highest calibre. Examples of comparable sites elsewhere in the UK would be Stockley Park, Hursley Park and Birmingham Business Park.

5. Davenport Green has exceptional qualities which would readily satisfy the demanding locational and environmental criteria of major companies by providing:-

- a fine parkland setting in which firms can occupy purpose-built premises reflecting their international status;
- immediate proximity both to the expanding international airport (in the world's top 20 in terms of passenger numbers) and to the regional and national motorway network;
- an exceptional location at the edge of the conurbation and equally accessible to the urban lifestyle of Greater Manchester and the rural/country town lifestyles available in North Cheshire, thus making available a large and varied labour supply;
- a high level of accessibility to the City Centre where there is a wide and appropriate range of services and facilities.

6. Davenport Green should be developed as a flagship site of the type referred to in the Regional Economic Strategy. As such it would raise the standing of Manchester in national and international business investment circles. The development would be expected to house key business functions such as UK and/or European headquarters and training establishments, and research and development of new products and processes. No other site in Greater Manchester can provide the right combination of circumstances to fulfil this flagship role and, if Davenport Green were not to be developed, companies carrying out these functions would be unlikely to come to Manchester. On the other hand, initial marketing appraisals of the Davenport Green project have elicited early (though admittedly

highly-qualified) expressions of interest from a number of major US and Japanese companies.

7. The total number of jobs on site could be about 3500. Furthermore, because the site could attract high-level functions to Manchester, the region would then rank high in the list of options considered by occupying companies when decisions came to be made on the location of further rounds of investment in areas such as manufacturing and distribution. Indirect and induced job gains and other economic spin-offs to the sub-regional economy could therefore also be expected.

8. A possible skills mix at Davenport Green would be about 2000 managers and professional workers, 1000 other non-manual workers and 500 manual workers, the majority having some form of skill. Because of the accessibility of the site these jobs would be available to people over a wide area, but nearby districts with concentrations of social and economic needs such as Wythenshawe, Hulme and Moss Side could also benefit. Various schools, colleges and training agencies in these areas have already expressed a positive response to the idea of using Davenport Green as a catalyst for training.

9. Greater Manchester would not be alone in bringing forward a peripheral site for this purpose; the central belt of Scotland and the West Midlands provide other examples. A survey of the attitudes of Urban Development Corporations shows that many regard high quality business parks on city peripheries as being complementary to their efforts to regenerate inner city areas provided that such developments attract new profile-raising economic activity which forms an additional element in the sub-regional economy. In this case the two Urban Development Corporations for Trafford Park and Central Manchester respectively have withdrawn their original objections to the proposal provided that Policy E4 and Proposal E13 are clarified and tightened up as set out in the advertised Proposed Changes.

10. The Council concludes that Proposal E13/C5 meets a need which has been recognised for many years and would transform the image of Manchester. Current European and international restructuring make it a timely concept, but there may come a time when different investment priorities emerge. They therefore believe it important that Greater Manchester should seize hold of this current opportunity, through the Trafford UDP, to help restore the exporting base of the conurbation.

3.32 In general the above analysis of Greater Manchester's economic problems was not greatly challenged by objectors except for (i) many doubts expressed about the real level of demand for such a development on the part of inward investors and (ii) considerable disagreement with the claim that Davenport Green is the only, or the best, place in the conurbation where a flagship site of international standard can be located. There can be no certainty about the former but I accept that the provision of such a high quality development would afford Manchester the opportunity to market

itself to companies which would not otherwise place it on their shortlists. As to the latter, I return to this matter below.

3.33 Some objectors also considered the economic benefits to the people of Wythenshawe to be overstated in that only a minority of jobs at Davenport Green would be likely to be relevant or open to its residents. However, while it is certainly true that the specialised skills required by the target occupiers would extend the employment catchment of Davenport Green over a wide area, I do not consider that the potential jobs and training opportunities available to Wythenshawe residents should be regarded as a negligible factor.

* Alternative sites

3.34 As the Council accept, PPG2 requires that if an alteration to the green belt boundary is proposed the SOSE will wish to be satisfied that the authority has considered opportunities for development within the urban areas contained by and outside the green belt.

3.35 Many objectors feel that Greater Manchester is full of alternative opportunities because it has a large number of empty office buildings and a substantial over-supply of existing and potential employment sites of all kinds. In my view this overall picture of land supply is indisputable and the presence within the conurbation of two Development Corporations is ample evidence in itself of the scale of vacancy and dereliction which has to be addressed across Greater Manchester as a whole.

3.36 However, the basis of the Council's case is that Davenport Green would fulfil a very highly specialised need for a site at the pinnacle of international attractiveness to attract footloose companies of the very highest standard. A 'requirement' for the provision of such a site is not specifically expressed in RPG4, as opposed to the need for 'major high amenity sites' in general, but it is clearly well recognised by the regional and Greater Manchester Authorities (eg in the North West Regional Economic Strategy, the Greater Manchester Economic Strategy and Operational Programme, and 'Greener Growth') that there is a real need for Greater Manchester to have at least one flagship site capable of competing on the world stage.

3.37 The question of alternative sites was addressed at the inquiry mainly by reference to a collaborative study carried out by AGMA in furtherance of the invitation in RPG4 for authorities in Greater Manchester jointly to identify opportunities in strategic locations for the provision or creation of 'major high amenity sites for high technology industry'.

3.38 The resulting AGMA report does not attempt to define the term 'major high amenity site for high technology industry'. Instead it identifies 29 'strategic sites', defined as medium-to-large sites with good accessibility to motorways and public transport and with high existing or potential environmental quality. Such sites are expected to meet the needs both of high technology industry and of other indigenous and inward-investing industries and businesses. The scope of the AGMA report is therefore wider than the requirement of RPG4 and in my view it follows from this difference of terms that at least some of AGMA's 'strategic sites' are unlikely to meet the narrower requirement of RPG4 for 'major high amenity sites', still

less the yet more exacting standards for a site aiming to meet the specific objectives of the Davenport Green proposals.

3.39 The Council's position (supported by details of their views on the developability and marketability of all the AGMA sites) is that none of the other 28 fulfils the criteria necessary to provide a site attractive enough to overcome Manchester's poor image and attract high-technology/R & D/HQ office activities of international standing in competition with the best sites elsewhere in the UK and Europe. In their view, an equivalent contribution towards the city's revitalisation and regeneration could not be made by any other site.

3.40 In view of the importance of this matter, I have carefully studied the representations made on all the AGMA sites (as well as others mentioned at the inquiry) and I have visited all but a small number of the more distant sites in Greater Manchester. I have also visited the developments at Birmingham Business Park and at Stockley Park and Bedfont Lakes near Heathrow, since these were quoted by the Council as examples of the types of development with which Davenport Green would be expected to compete. I saw that all three of these non-Manchester sites offer a very high quality environment although in my view none reach the standard that would be achievable at Davenport Green with its parkland setting and proposed absence of surface car parking. On the matter of the necessary standard of the external environment (ie beyond the site itself) I saw that both of the sites near Heathrow were set in ordinary suburban/urban fringe areas of no particular character or attraction although I accept that (compared with Greater Manchester) West London is currently very much more attractive in marketing terms to the target companies.

3.41 However, before turning to examine alternative sites in detail I deal with the view advanced by a number of objectors (notably Manchester City Council) that even if Proposal E13/C5 were to be deleted from the UDP and the site retained in the green belt, the scheme could (if suitable potential occupiers were to be firmly identified) be considered under the 'very special circumstances' provisions of paragraph 13 of PPG2. This may in theory be the case, but I consider it improbable that many potential occupiers (still less highly footloose international companies) would be prepared to invest the substantial amounts of time and resources necessary to assess a site option thoroughly if the site concerned were in the green belt, with the consequent likely implication that a planning refusal would result. In my view it is important to the success of a planning-led system that sufficient 'major high amenity sites' of the type required by RPG4 should be supported by positive UDP allocations. I also consider that sufficient case has been made out on economic grounds that one or more of these should be capable of development to international standards.

3.42 In assessing the AGMA sites I have concentrated mainly on the sites within a 30 minute drive time of Manchester Airport since both the AGMA report and the Council recognise the existence of different markets on the northern and southern sides of the conurbation. In my view only 'major high amenity sites' in the southern part of the conurbation meeting the specific criteria listed below could realistically hope to attract companies of the type sought by the Council at Davenport Green:-

- a) within 30 minutes drive time of Manchester Airport, as measured by the isochrone at Figure IM2 (Mr McDonald's evidence).

- b) on a major road within 5 minutes of a motorway junction and with reasonable existing or potential access to public transport,
- c) able to offer a first-class attractive environment, either as the site exists now or with improvement/enhancement measures in scale with those proposed at Davenport Green,
- d) on a site free of incompatible lower-level employment uses and without existing buildings likely to act as a disincentive to international investors because of the standard of their design and appearance.

3.43 I do not consider it necessary to assess sites individually against RPG4's requirement that provision should be made for exploitation of the presence within the conurbation of major higher educational institutions; as objectors pointed out, this could be achieved anywhere within reasonable reach of Central Manchester and is primarily a matter of setting up the right administrative/management arrangements. Having said this, it is clear to me from the evidence presented that this aspect has been particularly well developed in the preparation of the Davenport Green proposals.

3.44 I have not given further detailed consideration to the AGMA sites listed below since they are beyond the 30 minute isochrone and therefore could not currently meet criterion (a) above. However, from the information made available to me and from my inspections, I consider some of them capable of meeting the requirement of RPG4 for 'major high amenity sites' and I recognise that inward investors' perceptions could change in time if Manchester's image were to be improved.

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| 2. Pemberton Colliery, Wigan | 3. Westwood Park, Wigan |
| 5. Martland Park, Wigan | 6. Red Moss, Bolton |
| 7. Wingates, Bolton | 8. Tonge Valley, Bolton |
| 9. Lee Hall, Bolton | 10. Bury Ground, Bury |
| 11. Kingsway, Rochdale | 12. Ashfield Valley, Rochdale |

3.45 Turning to the sites within the 30 minute isochrone, I consider that (for the reasons summarised below) the following do not meet the criteria set out at paragraph 3.42, although again a proportion could be capable of meeting the RPG4 requirement for major high amenity sites.

- 1. Hope Carr (Leigh Business Park) - the image established by the present phases of development is one of a modern industrial estate with a wide mix of uses; the environment/potential environment is not of adequate quality.
- 13. Oldham Broadway - as for (1) above.
- 15. Ashton Moss, Ashton-under-Lyme - the approved indicative layout does not suggest sufficiently high environmental quality; the mix of intended uses is too wide.
- 16. Dewsnap Sidings, Dukinfield - the environment/potential environment is not of adequate quality; the mix of uses is too wide; the site fails the access criteria.

18. Trafford Wharfside - this is described in the AGMA assessment as capable of attracting HQ offices, but is embedded in surroundings with an established heavy industrial image and a very mixed spread of proposed uses, with some of the best waterside sites already given over to ordinary industrial purposes; the nearby roads can be congested.
20. Giants Field, Trafford Park - this is now being developed with large buildings for B2 and B8 use.
21. Pomona Strand/City Park - mainly as for (18) above.
22. The Village, Trafford Park - mainly as for (18) above; in addition, the site is intended to fulfil a completely different market role.
23. Carrington Business Park - the site is embedded in an established heavy industrial area with a completely unsuitable image.
25. Agecroft Colliery, Salford - the environment and access are currently poor; the intended mix of uses is too wide, with the initial phase of development setting an inappropriate image for the target range of high-tech/R & D/HQ office uses.
26. Eastlands - this area is embedded in the inner city; the environment and access are not of sufficient quality; the mix of uses is likely to be wide.
28. Birley Field, Hulme - this is embedded in the inner city; the environment and access are not of sufficient quality for the target sector.

3.46 The above conclusions leave 6 AGMA sites worthy of further consideration against the criteria above, together with four other sites referred to at the inquiry - Dumplington, Salford Quays, Oak Farm, and Simonsway (Wythenshawe). I examine these in turn.

3.47 Stonecross Lane, Golborne (Site 4) - This site is just on the margins of the 30 minute isochrone, but has good access to the A580/M6. According to the assessments in the First Monitoring Report of the AGMA survey many of its characteristics (eg size, environmental quality, road access and potential access to bus and rail) are remarkably similar to Davenport Green, but the site does not have the disadvantage of being in the green belt. I have no doubt that if the decision were made to do so, this site could physically accommodate a highly attractive development comparable in standard with that planned for Davenport Green. However, there appear to be no provisions in the relevant UDP to reserve it for the tight range of occupiers specified for Davenport Green and I understand that planning consent has been granted for Class B1 use, plus hotel and other high technology business park related uses. In addition, the site has the disadvantage of being considerably to the west of the centre of Manchester in an area with an unfashionable image which in my view would make it difficult in marketing terms for it to prove sufficiently attractive to the target sector and thus fully meet the role of an international flagship site for Greater Manchester.

3.48 Kingswater Park (Site 14) - This site lies at the end of the M66 well within 30 minutes drive time of the airport, while after 1998 it will also

be highly accessible northwards when the orbital motorway is completed. It also scores well in the AGMA survey on potential access to bus and rail. The area of the site is greater than that of Davenport Green and it has a highly attractive parkland environment with a semi-rural atmosphere within which, in my view, a scheme of similar standard and character to that of Proposal E13/C5 could be accommodated. However, the site is located in the presently less fashionable eastern sector of Greater Manchester, and in my view marketing would be a considerable challenge initially - especially until improvement of access through completion of the motorway - even though the site would be close to City Centre facilities and the emerging Eastlands as well as having reasonably good access to facilities elsewhere in the conurbation.

3.49 Cheadle Royal (Site 17) - The AGMA survey affords this site equivalent scores to those of Davenport Green on environmental quality, access and potential access to bus and rail and in my view Cheadle Royal can clearly fulfil the role of a major high amenity site. However, I agree with the Council that if the scheme were built as shown in the permitted layout (for B1 use and a hotel) it would not reach the same international standards of quality and exclusivity as those proposed at Davenport Green. Moreover, since the site is located between the 50 NNI contours, noise and perceived safety risks from (mainly descending) aircraft on the flightpath could be a deterrent to some discriminating occupiers.

3.50 Barton (Site 24) - This is a very large site allocated in the Salford UDP as a strategic site for high technology industry. The environmental standard of the area is currently not high and the site lies directly across the canal from the Davyhulme Sewage Works. However, the size of the site makes it potentially capable of substantial improvement, given the right level of investment and master planning. Nonetheless, I agree with the Council's assessment that from a marketing viewpoint it would be hard to attract major national and international companies in the target sectors to this location at the present time.

3.51 Woodhouse Park (Site 27) - This site scores well on the AGMA assessments of environmental quality, road access and potential access to bus and rail and is described in the City of Manchester UDP as a 'major strategic site' capable of attracting 'high quality B1 business uses which might otherwise not locate within the City or the conurbation'. However, the site is elongated and has long boundaries to the north and south, the former immediately adjoining housing and the latter next to the airport and its busy approach roads. In addition, the southern part of the site may be affected by the line of the proposed A6(M) - M56 Link Road, while a further factor acting against this site is that it is crossed by the 40, 50 and 60NNI noise contours.

3.52 Although the site has the advantage of unrivalled proximity both to the airport and to its public transport facilities, and I believe it could be developed as a major high amenity site, it seems to me that the factors outlined above would make it very difficult for a developer to achieve the same standards of physical quality and marketing focus as at Davenport Green.

3.53 Manchester Business Park (Site 29) - This site is an attractive area of former parkland set in a pleasant, but unexceptional, suburban area near junction 2 of the M56 and scoring high on the AGMA assessments of

environmental quality, road access, and potential accessibility to bus and rail. Like Woodhouse Park, the site is identified in the Manchester UDP as a 'major strategic site' and planning permission has been granted for B1 use. I note that the site is being marketed as a potential location for HQ buildings and, given the necessary level of commitment to high quality master planning and an appropriate marketing focus, I believe that the site could be attractive to some occupiers meeting the criteria of Policy E4/ Proposal E13. However, I have no evidence of any intention to reserve the land for these special purposes and as the site is less than half the size of Davenport Green I do not consider that the same atmosphere of exclusivity and international attraction could be generated.

3.54 Oak Farm - This site comprises agricultural land within the green belt and (as in the case of Davenport Green) the land fulfils green belt purposes. Apart from this constraint the City of Manchester UDP identifies the site as land which should be safeguarded in order not to prejudice the possible development needs of the airport after 2005. Since the airport plays such a vital role in the regional economy I consider that it would be imprudent to contemplate any action which could put at risk important future options for its growth. In addition, the site is crossed by the 40, 50 and 60NNI contours.

3.55 Simonsway, Wythenshawe - This comparatively small existing industrial site is not recognised as a 'major strategic site' in the City of Manchester UDP which proposes that it be redeveloped for a mix of uses, i.e. business, industry, ancillary warehousing and/or a hotel. In my view the site does not meet the criteria at paragraph 3.42 above because it is not on a major road and could not offer an environment of the required standard.

3.56 Salford Quays - This is a large area of mixed urban redevelopment not identified as a strategic site in the AGMA survey. There is much vacant new office space here but the evidence shows that this area generally serves the regional market, rather than national or international markets. While the internal environment within the Quays is generally attractive, the surrounding area appears unlikely to encourage international investors in the target sector. There is only one remaining undeveloped site large enough to accommodate a development similar to that proposed at Davenport Green, but I understand that this is planned to form the focus of a new cultural/leisure centre for the city - the Millennium Project.

3.57 Dimplington - This site lies immediately adjacent to junction 3 of the M63. The Council have indicated that, should the proposed retail development not take place, they would wish to see the land developed for 'major industrial purposes or other significant employment generators'. In their view the site's surroundings make it unsuitable for development for high technology/R & D/office users. However, I find this a somewhat pessimistic appraisal of the potential of this large tract of land. The site lies immediately between the M63 and modern high quality Class B2/B8 development being built at Giants Field and with skilful master planning and appropriate levels of investment in planting and other site improvements, I believe there to be sufficient space here to create a very high quality environment which would be perceived (by those either passing by on the motorway or leaving the M63 to enter the site) as having a distinctive character quite distinct from the heavy industrial ambience of Trafford Park beyond. However, the situation with regard to the proposed

retail development is as yet finally unresolved so this option cannot currently be regarded as a true alternative.

* Sustainability Considerations

3.58 Although some 7.3ha of undeveloped land would be lost to development, the scheme as a whole would provide the means for what in my view would represent substantial improvements within the overall estate of 142ha. Within the development area east of Roaring Gate Lane/Brooks Drive the great majority of natural features would be retained and thereafter managed more sympathetically than has proved possible in recent years under the 3 small land tenures. Within the rural park the 3 further land tenures would be combined to create a single, more viable farm holding based on Clayhouse Farm and provided with modern farm buildings. The whole area outside the actual development cells would be brought under one unified management system, allowing the landowning trust to manage existing habitats properly and to create new ones, in both cases using the wide local knowledge and experience of relevant groups and individuals. As a result, the overall value and diversity of habitats would increase. In particular, tree cover on the estate would very greatly increase (to about 24ha), in tune with the concept of the Red Rose Forest and adding to the ecological and recreational value of the land.

3.59 Some objectors were concerned at the possibility that the development could be carried out without the rural park being established or managed in the way described in the UDP. However, I am satisfied that the further Proposed Changes described in paragraph 3.6 above (including the draft agreement which was produced at the inquiry) would ensure (i) the hand-over of the land to a charitable trust forming a widely representative body of local interests and (ii) the provision of sufficient funds to equip the farm, establish the park and endow the trust. I am also satisfied that these provisions would allow the park to be managed sympathetically with the accent on agriculture, nature conservation, and appropriate public access and recreation, rather than being an excessively manicured area devoid of rural interest as some objectors feared.

3.60 As objectors pointed out, the Davenport Green site is not well served by public transport at present, although about 12,000 people live within a mile of the site and 105,000 within 3 miles. However, GMPT's proposals for the extension of Metrolink would, if implemented in their present proposed form, link the site directly to Central Manchester and the Airport as well as providing connections to the various bus and rail routes serving those two locations. Future extensions of Metrolink would further increase the accessibility of the site over wider areas of the conurbation. Even if the City Centre-Airport Metrolink extension were eventually to follow a route entirely different from that now planned (but to which objections have been made), the potential would still exist for a short continuation of the line from the Airport to Davenport Green via the current planned link across the M56.

3.61 The terms of the Planning Brief (proposed Appendix J to the UDP) require that the development 'shall be served by public transport' and that the Council shall be satisfied that there is a strategy to meet at least a minimum requirement as soon as any part of the development is open. This requirement is for links to Central Manchester, Fallowfield, Newall Green,

Wythenshawe, Sale, Altrincham, Hale, Timperley and the Airport with an agreed capacity to meet projected demands throughout the day. The brief also provides for the flexible application of the car parking standards set for the development if public transport services rise above these minimum standards.

3.62 In my view the above factors would make the development compatible with the general aims of PPG13 to reduce growth in the length and number of motorised journeys, encourage alternative means of travel with less environmental impact, and reduce reliance on the private car.

* Overall Conclusions - Issue 1

3.63 As I have already concluded (at paragraphs 3.12 - 3.25 above), the development of 7.8ha of land within the 3 cells would contravene purposes 1-3 of the green belt, despite the mitigating factors represented by the permanent securing and enhancement of the 99.12ha rural park within the green belt and the much improved long term management of the extensive woodlands and meadows which would remain within the area to be excluded from the green belt.

3.64 Nonetheless in my view the special economic case for this development represents an exceptional circumstance which is capable, in principle, of outweighing the importance of retaining the site within the green belt. From the evidence, and from my inspections, I have concluded that there is a range of sites across Greater Manchester capable of meeting the requirement of RPG4 for 'major high amenity sites'. However, I have not found any site equally as capable as Davenport Green of fulfilling on all counts the exacting standards which would be required (in the words of the North West Regional Economic Strategy) to provide a 'flagship site which can, on (its) own, act as an incentive to overseas and UK investors to locate in the North West, aimed at high-tech, B1 and HQ functions'. By contrast, I consider that the outstanding standards of layout, design and landscaping incorporated into the Planning Brief (proposed Appendix J to the UDP) would be able to provide Manchester with a unique opportunity to enter this internationally competitive market at a reasonably early date in a manner which would not be at odds with the principles of sustainability.

3.65 I therefore reach the provisional view that the Davenport Green proposals should be supported as far as Issue 1 is concerned. However, before reaching a final conclusion I must consider another important matter raised by many objectors, ie the adequacy of the proposed controls upon the occupancy of the scheme, as set out in Proposal E13. I regard this as a crucial factor because in my view there would be no gain from surrendering this green belt area if it were merely to provide opportunities for highly profitable image-conscious companies to move to what they may perceive as a more attractive location from premises either in Greater Manchester or elsewhere without meeting the objectives behind the release of the site.

3.66 Before I consider this matter I look first at the clarity of the terms in which these controls are expressed in Policy E4/Proposal E13 (as proposed for change). According to these tests any development here would be required to:-

(i) (From Proposal E13) - be restricted to use for high quality science based/high technology industry, research and development of (sic) headquarters office activities that fall within Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987;

(ii) (From Policy E4) - be a major prestige project for an occupier or occupiers of national or international importance proposing investment-generating substantial new employment opportunities that would otherwise be lost to Greater Manchester

3.67 Examining these tests, I do not consider it helpful to the clear understanding of Proposal E13 to incorporate reference to the test in Policy E4 since this would introduce the need for judgements about 'major prestige projects', a nebulous concept which I consider very difficult to apply in terms of planning control. Leaving aside that phrase, I believe the intentions behind the Proposed Change could better be reflected by expressing the criteria in Proposal E13 in the following terms:-

'(i) the development is restricted solely to use for the following activities within Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987:-

- high quality science based/high technology industry;
- research and development activities;
- headquarters office activities;

(ii) the occupation of the buildings is restricted to an occupier or occupiers of national or international importance who would create substantial new employment opportunities that would otherwise be lost to Greater Manchester;

(iii) the development complies in all respects with the Planning Brief forming Appendix J to the UDP.'

3.68 I now return to the question of whether or not a proposal expressed in such terms would be adequately enforceable in the final outcome. Looking generally at criteria (i) and (ii) above it is clear that, in the spirit of paragraphs 67-76 of Circular 1/85 and paragraph 12 of Circular 13/87, it would normally be inappropriate for development plans to contain policies and proposals which can be implemented only through planning permissions which are granted subject to conditions limiting the permitted use either to specified activities within a single use class or to certain categories of company. However, Circular 1/85 admits the possibility of imposing such conditions when special planning grounds can be demonstrated and planning permission would otherwise need to be refused.

3.69 In my view the uniqueness of this case makes it one in which a highly detailed degree of permanent control of use is essential. I reach this conclusion for two main reasons:-

1. I agree with objectors that there is, in general, a superfluity of business/industrial/office development sites in Greater Manchester and I would therefore not recommend the retention of Proposal E13/C5 unless I were convinced of (a) the potential economic benefit to Greater Manchester and the North West arising from the provision of a site likely to be able to attract this narrow band of user-companies and (b) the unlikelihood of a

similarly attractive and competitive site being provided elsewhere at present.

2. The admittance of users not complying with these criteria (either at first or subsequent letting/occupation of the building) would be likely to undermine the international competitiveness of the site and prejudice the build-up and retention of a critical mass of companies of the target group as well as leading to an eventual cumulative undermining of the reason for releasing the site.

3.70 I therefore consider it appropriate not only that the relevant UDP proposal should be framed in the restrictive terms set out in paragraph 3.68 above but also that criterion (ii) should require the occupation of the buildings to be at all times restricted by legal agreement to companies meeting the qualifying terms.

3.71 The very challenging detailed judgements as to whether or not particular potential occupiers meet the criteria will be for the Council to make if and when the proposal is implemented. Clearly these decisions will (in combination) be all-important in determining the ultimate success or otherwise of the proposal measured against the objective of bringing new high-quality inward investment to Greater Manchester. For my part I have not placed any weight on the interest in the scheme expressed by a multi-national company with an existing regional base in Trafford since on the face of the evidence available to me it does not appear that such a move would meet the criteria discussed above (and therefore the exceptional justification for the Davenport Green proposal).

3.72 I am very aware that my decision on this issue will be unwelcome to a large number of local residents, but I conclude that the necessary exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated and I therefore support Proposal E13/C5 provided that it is modified in the way recommended below.

3.73 I also appreciate that some objectors fear the proposal would present a precedent for the release of other green belt land in Trafford generally and the Timperley Wedge in particular. I well understand the pressure for development in this locality; the number of objections to the UDP's green belt boundaries from landowners in other parts of the wedge provides clear proof of this. However, the circumstances supporting this case are unique and I do not consider that retention of Proposal E13/C5 would set a compelling precedent for wider land releases or for the gradual erosion of the Timperley Wedge in general. For example, I have not recommended in this report that modifications be made to the green belt status of any other part of the wedge.

Issue 2 - Traffic Considerations

3.74 As pointed out by a number of objectors (as well as the Council themselves), examination of the transport implications of the Davenport Green proposals is not assisted at this particular time by the considerable uncertainty concerning the rate of growth of Manchester Airport and the form and timing of provision of its associated transport and road infrastructure; these matters should become clearer after the Secretaries of State have reached a conclusion on the current proposals for a second runway (R2). A further cause of uncertainty is the proposed extension of

Metrolink from the City Centre to the Airport, due to be the subject of an inquiry into objections to an Order under the Transport and Works Act in summer 1995.

3.75 Both these schemes (and the timing of their implementation, if approved) would have a significant bearing upon access to Davenport Green, although in the case of Metrolink it would no doubt be possible (as discussed at paragraph 3.60 above) to create a short extension of the line from the Airport to Davenport Green even if the eventual route from the City Centre were to follow a completely different alignment from that now proposed.

3.76 Other factors which appear to me likely to have a material influence on traffic conditions on this section of the M56 are (i) the decision on whether or not to build the western section of the planned A6(M)-M56 Link Road (acknowledged to be a controversial scheme) and, if it is to be built, its precise form, (ii) the nature of the proposals which come forward for the Woodhouse Park site, and (iii) the expected completion of the Manchester Motorway Ring in 1998. The latter could have the effect of reducing the capacity of the M56 by increasing the flow of longer distance traffic, especially HGVs which currently represent a low proportion of the total.

3.77 The association of Davenport Green with the M56 and the network of access roads to the airport is especially strong because the UDP requires that the scheme should have no connection with the road network on the west side of the motorway but rather take all access (except that for emergency vehicles and certain buses) from the eastern side via an improved Thorley Lane bridge. This means that the development will be dependent on the Runger Lane route south to junction 6 (J6) and the Hasty Lane routes north to J5 and J4, all routes whose future roles and capacities are subject to uncertainty in the context of the R2 proposals. Naturally, Manchester Airport Plc are concerned that development at Davenport Green should not proceed on the basis of using up the additional capacity that will be provided on these routes at their expense as a pre-condition of T2 and R2 and thereby render the roads inadequate for the proper service of the airport up to its permitted limits.

3.78 The Council recognise the present concerns of the Highways Agency (HA), the Airport and the other objectors but believe that the mechanism of a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) is the best means of identifying and weighing the transport issues at the proper time. In their view proposed Appendix J to the UDP (which requires that any application for Davenport Green be accompanied by a full TIA) accords with the principles of Annex B of PPG13 and will allow an appropriate judgement to be made about the scheme in the light of all relevant factors at the time when an application is submitted.

3.79 However, the Davenport Green proposals are a major component of the UDP and in view of the lack of suitable sites for a development of this type and the potential importance of the scheme to Greater Manchester I consider that it would be inappropriate, in a planning-led system, to include Proposal E13/C5 within the UDP if it can be shown with certainty now that any application made within the plan period would have to be rejected on irresolvable traffic grounds. If this were so it would be

important to identify a suitable alternative site elsewhere in South Manchester.

3.80 Alternatively, if it can be shown that provision of a particular piece of infrastructure would be a prerequisite for the development of Davenport Green then it would be appropriate for such works to be included in the UDP proposal (see paragraph 6.14 of PPG13). However, although the HA produced sketches of alternative segregated highway links from Davenport Green (a) to Runger Lane and (b) to J6 west of the M56, as well as a third option of a direct link independent of J5, they did not suggest that the UDP proposals should specify the provision of any such links. In any case all 3 would be (in different ways and to different extents) at odds with the principles of the scheme set out in Appendix J and therefore inconsistent with Proposal E13, while two would also involve land outside Trafford. As for the HA's suggested amendments to the Brief, these would (as they themselves state) be so far removed from its present content as to be tantamount to a reiteration of the Agency's objection.

3.81 As previously indicated at paragraph 3.8, the traffic-related objections to the proposals centre around two topics:- (i) the impact of the scheme on the M56 and (ii) its implications for the local road network. I consider these matters separately below. However, before doing so I must make clear my conclusion that in the current state of uncertainty in relation to the factors mentioned above, particularly the airport, it is unprofitable (and unnecessary in the UDP context, as opposed to the planning application stage) to attempt to delve into the issue in the same degree of long-term detail as was contained in the evidence produced by the HA.

* Impact on the M56

3.82 The principal objector pressing this issue was the HA. Other objectors concerned with the matter (including the implications for access to the Airport) were Manchester Airport Plc, Manchester City Council, Central Manchester Development Corporation, Cheshire County Council, Macclesfield Borough Council and Trafford Green Belt Action Group. A number of individual objectors also associated themselves with the HA's views.

3.83 The HA pointed to the role of motorways as confirmed in Circular 6/91 and PPG13, viz to provide for the safe and expeditious movement of long distance traffic and to ensure the free flow of traffic on such routes. Judged against that background the Agency were concerned that traffic generated by the Davenport Green proposals would harm the motorway's ability to fulfil its proper role. Traffic from the site would be using junctions 4-6 (J4-6) of the M56; these are the same junctions used by airport traffic and by the proposed Woodhouse Park employment site. Although it is the Department of Transport's policy to seek to negotiate to reach a situation in which objections to proposed developments next to motorways/trunk roads can be overcome, this has not proved to be possible in this case, despite discussions over a long period.

Traffic flows on the M56

3.84 Over the past decade traffic flows on the M56 in the vicinity of Davenport Green have increased by 70% (compared with a 49% increase nationally in the same period). Flows now exceed the 24hr assessment flow levels set out in TD20/85 and are forecast by the Greater Manchester Transportation Unit (GMTU) to grow by 2013 as set out below, even without any traffic from Davenport Green or Woodhouse Park and allowing only for the traffic expected to be generated by a single-runway Airport then operating at 22.8 million passengers per year (mppy):-

		TD20/85 Assessment flows	1992 16hr Traffic flows	2013 16hr forecasts
J4-5	Dual 4-lane	77,000 & above	106,000	162,000
J5-6	Dual 4-lane	77,000 & above	104,000	165,000
J6-7	Dual 3-lane	50-79,000	76,000	146,000

3.85 The current daily flow profile contains high tidal peaks of short duration, inbound to Manchester in the morning and outbound in the evening. The GMTU forecasts set out below anticipate only modest future growth at these peaks, compared with the overall increases in daily flows, mainly because the additional traffic is likely to be accommodated by peak spreading. Thus while the M56 now has spare capacity at off-peak periods, this will reduce over time so that the present troughs between AM and PM peaks would become substantially filled. The M56 could therefore become more comparable with present conditions on the M62 (J12-J14) where existing 2-way peak flows are already comparable with the forecast for the M56 in 2013 and where peak spreading is already under way. Motorways can be prevented from fulfilling their national role if long distance traffic cannot avoid conditions normally associated with the peak hour by travelling at quieter periods outside those hours.

	1992 2-way AM peak	2013 2-way AM peak
J4-5	10,850	11,400
J5-6	11,100	12,000
J6-7	8,170	11,400

3.86 It is noteworthy that, in fact, the annual growth in morning peak hour traffic in the period 1990-93 was only 0.33%, compared with the 2% pa. growth forecast in the model; this could indicate that AM peak hour growth was already constrained by congestion both here and on the network generally.

Traffic generated by Davenport Green

3.87 Based upon TRICS data the Council have calculated that 85.7% of journeys to the site would be by car. Taking all vehicle generation into account, (ie cars, goods vehicles, taxis and buses) the AM peak hour inbound flow is calculated by the Council at 1882 (1810 cars) and the PM

peak outbound flow at 1614 (1583 cars), with the origins of such traffic being about 57% from north/east and about 43% from south/west. The HA accept that this represents a 'reasonable' scenario but not a 'worst case' one. In their view trip generation rates could be up to 35% higher if the employment densities achieved at Davenport Green were higher than the relatively low densities predicted by the Council (on the basis of Stockley Park near Heathrow, an ICI office and research centre at Alderley Edge and a Barclays office and computing centre at Knutsford). I note, however, that the surveyed employment densities at Stockley Park (probably a reasonable comparison for this type of development) are lower than those assumed for Davenport Green.

3.88 Proposed Appendix J to the UDP requires (para 2.6) that there be an approved strategy for promotion of bus services to the site, envisaging the diversion of local services and the provision of a shuttle service from the airport bus station. This fact, together with the general modal split of work journeys in Greater Manchester (which is considerably more weighted towards public transport than the above figures indicate) leads the Council to believe that car trips could be reduced to some 66% of journeys without the Airport Metrolink and about 59% with it. If this were so the inbound AM peak of private cars would be reduced to 1450 without Metrolink and 1330 with it.

3.89 Both the HA and TGBAG accept that future public transport initiatives could reduce car traffic to Davenport Green but consider there to be too many uncertainties inherent in the Council's assumptions to justify their adoption in this form. I agree with objectors that past trends and present usage of public transport in Greater Manchester in general and Trafford in particular do not support the view that, at least in the short term, car-commuting to Davenport Green would be reduced to the extent indicated above; however, the future public transport opportunities highlighted and pursued in proposed Appendix J certainly provide scope for reducing private car usage below the level referred to in paragraph 3.87. I accept that PPG13 recognises that levels of parking provision can be an important determinant of means of travel and advocates reduced standards at locations accessible to public transport, but in my view the proposed amendment to Appendix J goes as far towards limiting the numbers of car parking spaces provided at the site as would be wise at this particular point. Drastic reductions in parking provision on the scale suggested by some objectors could in my view run the danger of causing airport access roads east of the motorway and country lanes west of the M56 to become clogged with parked commuters' vehicles.

Effects of Davenport Green traffic on M56 links and junctions

3.90 I refer first to the submissions made at the inquiry by the HA and the Council on whether or not it is necessary to assess the impact of the scheme against traffic conditions in 2013, ie 15 yrs after a notional completion date of Davenport Green in 1998. I fully understand the HA's references to Circular 6/91 and PPG13 but as I have already indicated I consider circumstances in this area to be in a particularly unusual state of flux. Consequently, I do not believe it practically possible at present to make a reliable examination of the medium/long term impact of the scheme until the shorter term context has become clearer. In the circumstances I consider that the Council are adopting a reasonable approach in paragraph 2.9 of proposed Appendix J in allowing for the forward assessment year at

planning application stage to be settled in the light of then appropriate circumstances, including Government policy.

3.91 I therefore concentrate upon consideration of the shorter-term effects of the scheme at 2001 (a date by which, in my view, it could reasonably be expected that Davenport Green would be approaching full occupation). Such analysis was undertaken by the HA in Figs 2.3(1) & (2) of THA/7 and by the Council in Figs MJS 10 & 11 of P/TMBC/181. However, the analyses adopted by the HA and the Council are not fully consistent with each other because the latter favours subsuming Davenport Green traffic into the modelling process whereas the former prefers to add it manually to the modelled base scenario. While an element of subsumption should no doubt be allowed for, I am not convinced that the Council's approach here is altogether appropriate for assessing the effects of a development which is intended to bring completely new activities to the Greater Manchester area (although I accept that such activities may not necessarily result in completely new 'journeys').

3.92 Within the areas subject to the main effects of Davenport Green, the HA's analysis indicates the following main problems for traffic approaching from the south:-

- (A) J7-J6 link; flows exceeding capacity by 23% in the northbound AM peak and 8% in the PM southbound peak;
- (B) J6 west roundabout; motorway slip road approach operating at a flow to capacity ratio (RFC) of 1.08 with a queue of over 70 vehicles back to the motorway itself and the Hale Road approach operating at an RFC of 1.01 with a queue of 20 vehicles;
- (C) J6 east roundabout; segregated left filter lane from Wilmslow Road required to accommodate the AM peak;
- (D) Runger Lane/Cargo Terminal junction; signalised T-junction promoted under the Airport's proposed roadworks for the permitted expansion of Terminal 2 operating with an AM peak RFC of 0.89 and a northbound queue of 10 vehicles.

3.93 For traffic approaching from the north, the HA's analysis indicates the following main problems:-

- (E) Airport Spur; flows operating at 83% of capacity in the eastbound AM peak and 77% of capacity in the westbound PM peak.
- (F) Terminal 1 roundabout; approach from the Airport Spur operating at an RFC of 1.0 with a queue of over 35 vehicles.

3.94 Referring to B, C, D, and F above, these junctions are all included within a list identified by the Council on a preliminary basis for DG-related improvements. The Council consider that the GMTU-predicted flows may be too high but in my view they have shown that there is a reasonable prospect (assuming the necessary land can be obtained in all cases) that appropriate works would allow the junctions to operate to a satisfactory standard, even at GMTU-modelled flows for 2001 and 2005. However, the workability of each set of improvements would need to be tested in detail at TIA stage, taking account of then current conditions, including the

permitted growth limits for the airport and the need to protect capacity added specifically to meet that purpose by the Airport Plc. In the case of B, consideration would need to be given to the reasonableness of the model's assumption that predicted flows on the Hale Road approach to the J6 west roundabout would fall significantly below their present level.

3.95 Turning to A above, the Council point out that flows are within the Department of Transport's congestion thresholds. While there would be some decline in service, flows would be lower than the existing (1992) northbound flow on the section J5-J6. In relation to E, these flows are still below capacity.

3.96 Looking beyond 2001/2005, I agree with the Council that (a) there are a number of opportunities for further improvement of the means of access to Davenport Green and (b) it would be logical to pursue these through the medium of a TIA in the clearer light of options then seen to be available in conditions pertaining at that time.

* Impact on local roads

3.97 Whereas the Council estimate that some 83% of vehicles would travel to Davenport Green via the M56, the Trafford Green Belt Action Group (TGBAG) take the view that only 64% would do so, leaving 36% using local roads - ie 15% travelling by Ringway Road, 9% by Bailey Lane, 8% by Hale Road and 4% by Wilmslow Road.

3.98 TGBAG are principally concerned with the effects on Hale Road, a road fronted by houses with direct access, shops, schools etc; they point out that recorded peak hour flows in 1992 exceed the capacity of the road as assessed under TA 20/85. Applying NRTF factors, they estimate that the overloading will amount (even without Davenport Green) to 27% and 18% in 1996 at the AM and PM peak hours respectively and to 66% and 54% at the 2013 AM and PM peak hours.

3.99 However, the Council consider it unrealistic to apply these factors because growth in peak hour traffic flows has, in common with trends on principal roads throughout Greater Manchester, been far below NRTF levels in recent years. In their view constraints on the wider network make it unlikely that any significant peak hour traffic growth will occur on Hale Road. Their estimate of the peak hour effect of Davenport Green is:-

- 63 vehicles in the AM peak hour and 55 in the PM peak (2-way flow), generated by the development itself (c3%);
- 175 vehicles in the AM peak hour (and 140 in the PM) resulting from the closure of Thorley Lane (c8%).

3.100 Thus in their view the overall effect would be an addition of about 11% to current observed flows, whereas TGBAG estimate the effect at 1996 at 14.7-16.5% based both upon their expectation of a slightly higher proportion of Davenport Green traffic using Hale Road (8% compared with the Council's estimated 4%) and NRTF factoring.

3.101 As the Council point out (and as is very often the case with roads of this kind), the practical capacity of Hale Road is considerably greater

than the design flow based upon TD20/85 and the road accident records show it to be safer-than-average for its type. Whatever would be the precise effects of Davenport Green, the evidence presented to me does not lead me to conclude that Proposal C5/E13 should not remain in the UDP. The Council have stated that the possibility of minor improvements to assist the functioning of Hale Road is under consideration and that while they would not normally merit high priority it may be that some works could be advanced as a result of the development. In my view this is a matter for consideration in the context of the TIA.

3.102 Other objectors referred to possible effects on particular local roads on the west side of the motorway, Cheshire County Council mentioning Wilmslow Road (A538) and Styal Road (B5166)

* Overall conclusions - Issue 2

3.103 My overall finding on this issue is that the information currently available does not lead me to any certain conclusion that the scheme would impose such intolerable strains on the road network as to justify the deletion from the UDP of Proposal E13/C5. For one thing, the date of first occupation of any development could well be later than was assumed at the inquiry; for another, the date of final occupation (and therefore full effect) may not occur until the end of the UDP period or beyond, bearing in mind the stringent occupancy tests necessary to ensure that the development fulfils its intended purpose. By the time any planning application is submitted it should be possible (through preparation of the TIA) to assess the implications of the scheme in the light of more certain information about what the configuration of the network and its junctions is likely to be.

3.104 While I do not consider it appropriate to delete the proposals, I acknowledge that a range of issues raised by objectors would require very careful scrutiny at TIA stage. Moreover, I cannot rule out the possibility that planning permission may have to be refused, for example because the highway implications prove this to be necessary or because the eventual developers are unable to acquire the land to carry out necessary works. This being so, I recommend that Proposal E13 should contain a specific criterion making it a pre-requisite of permission being granted that it can be demonstrated that the scheme would not (a) have an adverse effect on the efficient functioning of the M56, (b) prejudice the operation or permitted expansion of Manchester Airport, or (c) have a harmful effect on conditions on other local roads. This should bring some reassurance to those objectors who feel that the terms of paragraph 2.9 of proposed Appendix J (relating to the TIA) suggest a preconception in favour of permission (or at least that they may not adequately allow for the possibility of refusal) and could thereby bring undue pressure to compromise standards.

RECOMMENDATION

3.105 >>>> Modify Proposal E13 as follows:-

'The Council will permit the development of a strategic high amenity employment site on 36.4ha (90ac) of land within a 135.6ha (335ac) estate at Davenport Green, Hale, (both areas

of land being as defined on the Proposals Map) provided that:-

- (i) the development is restricted solely to use for the following activities within Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987:-
 - high quality science-based/high technology industry;
 - research and development activities;
 - headquarters office activities;
- (ii) the occupation of the buildings is at all times restricted by legal agreement to companies of national or international importance whose occupation of the scheme would give rise to substantial new employment activities which would otherwise be lost to Greater Manchester;
- (iii) all elements of the development (including the concurrent provision of the rural park) comply with the Planning Brief forming Appendix J to the plan; and,
- (iv) it can be demonstrated (by means of a detailed Traffic Impact Assessment as provided for in Appendix J to the plan) that the development would not:-
 - (a) have an adverse impact on the efficient functioning of the M56;
 - (b) prevent the free operation of the approach roads to Manchester Airport in a manner which would prejudice the operation or permitted expansion of the Airport;
 - (c) have a harmful effect on conditions on other local roads.

The 36.4ha of land comprising the development area is excluded from the green belt, but green belt policies will be strictly applied except in the case of planning applications complying with this proposal.'

>>>>> Modify paragraph 2.3 of Appendix J in accordance with the Council-approved amendment.

>>>>> Modify the Justification to Proposal E13 in accordance with the Council-approved amendment (but correct the discrepancy in the stated area of the rural park as between the present final sentence of paragraph 3 and the additional sentence).

>>>> Modify the Proposals Map in accordance with the advertised Proposed Change.

>>>> No modification of Proposal C5 (but see my recommendations in Chapter 8 of this report concerning non Davenport Green aspects of the proposal).

