



# **GREATER MANCHESTER SPATIAL FRAMEWORK**

**Friends of Walkden Station  
Consultation Response**

**January 2017**



**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

*The MBE for volunteer groups*



**F:WS**  
Friends of WALKDEN Station

## **Foreword**

Friends of Walkden Station are a group of dedicated volunteers seeking to raise the status and profile of the station in the community. As part of this work, we aim to maximise the station's potential as a multi-modal transport hub for its catchment area, and we are very much focused on future sustainable development as well as near term improvements.

We welcome the opportunity to review and comment on the draft Spatial Framework, in which a number of potential developments are mentioned that will have an effect on our station and its role in the community. Our response should be considered in conjunction with our earlier response to the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 consultation in which we set out our detailed suggestions for the short, medium and long term development of Walkden Station (this is available on our website<sup>i</sup>). We now seek to illustrate how elements of the Spatial Framework will lead to challenges and opportunities for our local transport network, and how these can be met.

## **Vision and Strategy**

Greater Manchester has huge potential and the scale of development expected to take place in the period up to 2035 underlines this. We share the desire to maximise this potential and to make Greater Manchester a world class conurbation. If we are to achieve our vision as a city region, we must be ambitious, and we must be prepared to invest heavily not just in new infrastructure, but also by making transformational improvements to our existing transport network.

Public transport is the key to sustainable development of our transport network. Improved access to the network by walking and cycling, as well as provision for car parking at stations, connectivity between modes, and accessibility for users with reduced mobility will lead to sustainable growth in travel for work and leisure. It is noted in the Framework document that all residents must be able to share in the benefits of economic growth. We agree with this aspiration, and the opportunity must be taken to spread prosperity throughout the region and not concentrate it in certain areas as can be the case now. Connectivity will be key to achieving this. Areas of Greater Manchester that are performing comparatively weakly should be supported to accelerate their growth – investment in excellent public transport networks will help to facilitate this. The benefits of modal shift are well known, reductions in road congestion, lower emissions and pollution levels leading to improved health through better air quality, helping Greater Manchester to achieve its challenging targets for reductions in carbon emissions (policies GM15 and GM17). Many families in our area do not have access to a car, and we would like to see a future where people choose not to own a car, because our public transport system provides their transport needs. This means that we must develop the network to make all new developments easily accessible by public transport, whether these are centres of employment including industrial and logistics sites, new housing developments, or centres of education, health provision and

leisure facilities. This includes the protection of our green belt and access to its facilities by sustainable transport means.

It is noted in the strategy that well connected areas have increased prosperity and higher house prices – for example those areas with good connectivity to Manchester Airport which will also benefit greatly from HS2. Walkden and its catchment area suffer from very poor connectivity by comparison, with no direct public transport links to Manchester Airport by any mode and no direct rail service to Piccadilly and the Oxford Road corridor. Road links are often gridlocked in peak periods with bus services into the City Centre caught up in severe traffic congestion. This reduces the attraction of the area for commuting and acts as a brake on increased prosperity. These problems will need to be tackled if the substantial residential developments in our catchment area go ahead.

## **Walkden and Salford**

There are a number of sites listed for development in the Spatial Framework in Walkden station's catchment area which could have a significant effect on demand for rail services and capacity:-

### **RHS Garden Bridgewater**

This development is expected to attract large numbers of visitors from all over the country, as well as being a great asset to local people and to our city region. While this will be a very welcome addition to our green infrastructure network, boosting tourism and employment locally, there will need to be a concerted effort to provide quality public transport links to this site to encourage access by sustainable means. Walkden station can provide the local rail head for the RHS site, linked by a frequent shuttle bus which would also connect the guided busway to the Garden development. This links in with the East Lancashire Road corridor developments (policy SL8).

### **Employment sites**

Substantial development is underway at the Logistics North site, providing significant opportunities for employment, with more expansion planned at this location. This needs to be linked into the public transport network including the rail network at Walkden, in order to allow residents who do not have access to a car to benefit. Plans for a country park at the site also require access by sustainable means (policy SL9).

### **Residential Developments**

Salford has the second highest total housing requirement in Greater Manchester (15%) and this is reflected in the scale of proposed residential development in our area. Much of this falls within the catchment area of Walkden station. Planned development of park and ride

facilities at the station are very welcome and will help to provide additional capacity, but there will need to be greatly improved bus links along with improved facilities for walking and cycling to the station. It is duly noted that the guided busway is expected to facilitate some of the additional demand for travel from these new developments, but this will not appeal to everyone, particularly where there may be a long walk to a stop. Many people will prefer to drive or cycle to the station and take the train into the city centre. It is expected that service improvements in the next few years will increase the number of destinations that can be reached directly by train from Walkden, meaning that residents in these new developments may have access to Wigan, Rochdale, Southport and Leeds, for example, for which rail will be the only practical alternative to driving.

Much of the proposed new development is expected to take place in areas of fairly high car ownership and usage (Astley and Boothstown for example), and although there is the requirement to develop rapid bus links into the city centre from these locations, we remain sceptical that traffic congestion will not be significantly worsened. For example, Leigh Road between Boothstown and the M60 suffers from daily gridlock yet the development planned for this part of Salford is aimed at the top end of the housing market. Though the aim to make this accessible to bus services (page 212) is laudable, in practice the development is more likely to attract multiple car households making the congestion even worse. Given that up to half of the growth in household numbers generally is expected to be in the form of single person households (page 56), a great deal of care must be taken that this does not translate into a large increase in single occupancy car usage.

#### Heritage, Tourism and Local Amenities

Our part of Salford has a rich heritage, with its industrial and mining connections and canal system offering tourist potential, especially when linked in with the RHS Garden. This has been recognised with the establishment of the Walkden Heritage Trail. The potential for the area to become a destination in its own right should be maximised – this will bring in extra income and employment for the area and provide an economic boost, and of course it is imperative that as many visitors as possible arrive by sustainable transport. Walkden also boasts a large retail development in its centre, a thriving college less than 500m from the station, and other local amenities providing leisure and healthcare facilities, all of which will see an increase in demand when the new residential developments that are set out in the Spatial Framework are delivered.

#### Accessibility

Walkden has great potential to improve its local and sub-regional accessibility by making the best use of its rail capacity (policy GM6). This requires multi-modal integration, including the availability of smart ticketing valid across all modes. The network must be fully accessible to all residents including those with reduced mobility, and accessibility improvements to our station should be an urgent priority given its high level of usage and growth potential. We must also be very mindful that we have an ageing population, and the network needs to be

fully accessible to them and easy to use and understand. Improving access to and through our regional core, to the airport and the south side of the conurbation, to a wider range of education, healthcare, employment and leisure opportunities, will be key to improving social inclusion.

Opportunities to increase densities of economic activity are at their greatest in the best connected areas – hence the importance of public transport hubs. We believe that Walkden station can be a catalyst for this economic growth in our area. However we also firmly believe that these improvements need to be delivered before the developments outlined in this Spatial Framework come to fruition.

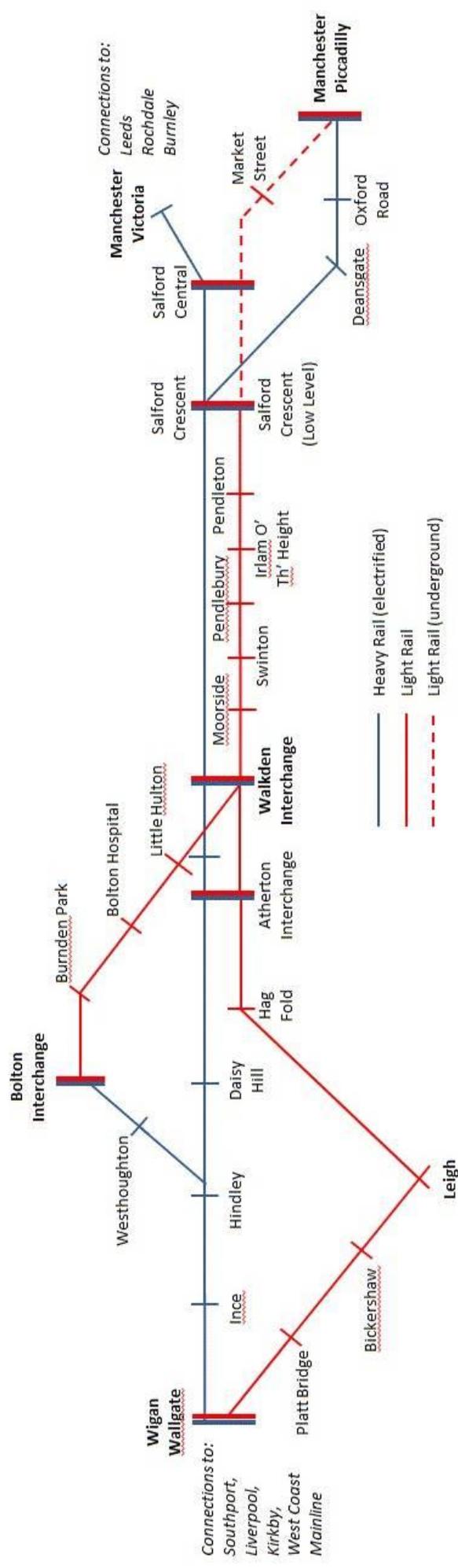
### **Future of our Transport Network**

Looking forward to the later years of the Spatial Framework strategy aligns well with our developing concept of the Walkden Hub. This was outlined in our 2040 Transport Strategy consultation response, and represents our proposal for how the local rail network might look in the longer term, given the required level of strategic development and investment.

We aspire to maximise the potential of each mode – heavy rail, light rail, bus, park and ride, cycling and active travel, with Walkden Station acting as the focal point for our area. The plans leverage the ability of light rail in particular to compliment the heavy rail system and be used to open up new corridors, especially where rapid transit provision is poor or does not exist.

We do not support the replacement of existing heavy rail services by light rail (for example tram-train) which we believe to be the wrong solution. However we do see great potential for an interchange at Walkden (and also at Atherton) feeding a complimentary light rail system along with connectivity to other modes. This concept could be used to develop rapid transit feeder branches off the system to major areas of development under consideration.

A schematic diagram of our Walkden Hub proposal is shown overleaf.



## **Conclusion**

Greater Manchester can look forward to an exciting future as it develops its position as a leading global city, but it must foresee and tackle many challenges to develop a transport system that will help fulfil its potential. This will require a bold vision, and the determination to make very substantial improvements to our public transport network. The scale of proposed developments in our local area demonstrates the importance of getting this right. Our ideas and proposals are all about connectivity, modal shift, regeneration, economic development, and transforming the quality of life for the area's residents, and the travel experience of visitors.

Friends of Walkden Station will continue to press for the investment needed to turn our vision for our community into a reality, and we look forward to working closely with all of our partners in Greater Manchester to deliver this.

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## **Footnotes**

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.walkdenstation.org.uk/documents/FOWSTfGM2040StrategyResponse.pdf>