

# MARPLE CIVIC SOCIETY

## Response to SMBC Consultation on Core Strategy

### Introduction

The committee of the Civic Society has informally discussed the Core Strategy and consulted members through the society's website.

The Society's response is primarily concerned with the effects of the Core strategy on Marple, its residents, businesses and visitors.

The society supports the overarching principles of sustainable development, reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and reduced social and economic deprivation – but then who wouldn't!

### Key Issues

#### Climate Change and Inequalities

The development of Brownfield land that is accessible for walking, cycling and public transport is supported as is the raising of building standards.

#### Housing

The core strategy calls for only modest new housing development in the town. However **any** development (bearing in mind the extensive housing developments already agreed) will exacerbate an already dire transport situation.

The 50/50 balance between houses and apartments does not appear to be based on any research evidence regarding the needs of Marple.

The Society supports the proposals for affordable housing in Marple but such property should have restrictions imposed to prevent future extensions that take the houses outside the "affordable" category.

The Society would not look favourably on developments in the green belt around Marple.

#### Economic Development

The Society supports the promotion of employment in Marple, for example by providing more office space. The improvement of existing employment sites (such as Goyt Mill) would increase their appeal to businesses. Houldsworth Mill in Reddish is a good example of what can be achieved in this respect.

One benefit would be a reduction in the burden on the local transport system by reducing the number of residents commuting into Stockport and Manchester.

However it is clear that developers can make more money, more easily by building houses. The society has recent experience of a developer arguing that there is no demand for office space in Marple in order to promote a housing development.

## Retail and Services

The Society believes that the encouragement of local shopping should be a priority. Local shopping brings “life” into the town centre leading to better shops and more visitors which in turn increases the prosperity of the town.

The Society would oppose any large scale retail developments. Such developments may bring short term benefits in terms of choice, price (perhaps) and convenience (free parking!) but would destroy the existing shops and town centre.

Whilst the Core Strategy seeks to encourage walking and cycling there will always be a significant number of residents who choose to travel to Marple by car. Whilst Marple is well provided with car parking the parking charge remains an issue. Whilst Sainsbury’s and other large supermarkets, some only a few minutes drive from Marple, offer free off road parking to their customers, many residents will be disinclined to shop in Marple.

Marple has fewer leisure facilities than other areas. The current economic climate presents challenges to both the swimming baths and the cinema. The Society is anxious to retain both as integral parts of the community and to develop other facilities where possible.

## Environment

The Society supports the aim to protect and enhance areas of open space within and around Marple. We also support the aim to protect and enhance the built heritage in and around Marple.

However “street clutter” and the balance between pedestrians and motor vehicles in Marple centre both need attention if we are to protect and enhance our environment.

The Society is particularly concerned with our built heritage. We would welcome the extension of conservation areas where appropriate, including the introduction of Management plans for conservation areas.

## Transport

The society supports the aim to reduce the need to travel by private car by encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking. To achieve this we believe the plan needs to examine traffic control measures and a tram/rail link to Stockport. Marple has better links to Manchester (by rail) and Buxton and Macclesfield (by road) than to Stockport.

## Conclusions

Marple Civic Society seeks to make Marple a better place to live and work. We have assessed the plan against these criteria and in general the Society supports the main proposals

in the Council's Core Strategy as they affect Marple. However, as with all such plans, the devil is in the detail. Many of the proposals are subject to different interpretations, some of which may adversely affect Marple.

Key areas of interest to the Society are:

- Improved public transport around Marple and in particular to Stockport – this means some sort of fixed rail/tram link to Stockport.
- There is a need to rebalance road priorities in favour of pedestrians and cyclists. Traffic control measures including a general 20mph speed limit, weight restrictions and traffic calming measures would all help make Marple a better place to live and work.
- Heritage – Marple has over 120 listed buildings, a canal heritage of national significance and is surrounded by exceptional countryside. The society is concerned to defend, and enhance this heritage.

The society urges the council to continue to consult with Marple Civic Society and others as the strategy evolves.

The strategy documents are detailed and highly technical making them difficult to understand for the lay person. It would be helpful if, before the strategy is adopted, the council published a précis of the final Core Strategy highlighting how each area and district centre will be affected.

Alan Postill  
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