

# A Response Guide to the “Our Manchester” Consultation

*Manchester City Council is consulting on their core strategy, ‘Our Future Manchester’: the road to 2025. It is via a short web-based survey, which you can access here:*

*<https://surveys.manchester.gov.uk/s/OurFutureManchester/>*

*We offer our perspective and some suggestions for your response in this guide. Of course you can respond how you choose, but do take a look at our criticisms of the assumptions involved and our suggestions for issues you might want to highlight.*

*Consultation closes Wednesday 23 Sept.*

*Below, we've reproduced the questions in the Our Manchester survey with suggestions for how you might complete them.*

## **2. Our Manchester will be a thriving, forward-looking place** *(this is labelled “2” - there is no number 1)*

“Our Manchester will be a thriving, forward-looking place, creating good jobs and healthy businesses in new modern industries that all Manchester people have the skills to benefit from.”

*Comment: We'd all want Manchester to be a thriving place. As for “forward looking”, it rather depends what that means – it could look forward to the completely wrong kind of future. Good jobs and healthy businesses makes sense, but again the devil's in the detail. New modern industries – yes they have a part to play but is that all? What about the old, traditional sectors? What about unglamorous “foundational” activities and industries that use existing fairly simple technology to meet basic needs and employ a large number of low to medium-skilled people?*

**In 2015, you told us that these six goals will help make Manchester more thriving. Rate them in order of how important they are to you:**

*The following table is problematic since it asks you to place in order things that are not necessarily comparable. The final goal is loaded: to pick environmental and climate saety you are expected to commit to the economic growth that actually feeds environmental and climate damage.*

Extremely important    Very important    Important    Not very important    Not important at all

Strong economy creating job chances for all

*“Strong economy” could be code for the growth-orientated boosterism that has dominated city strategy and which prioritises inward investment (often rent-seeking and unethical, as with the Abu Dhabi schemes) and expansion of material consumption, seemingly at any cost.*

Good support for new and established businesses

*This needs qualifying – support to do what? Any businesses, or are there criteria and requirements such as Living Wage, local procurement and employment and carbon reduction actions?*

Being well connected transport-wise and with technology

*We need the right kind of connections – not open veins that channel wealth away. Local interconnectivity is critical.*

A leading digital city

*X – see our more nuanced comments on digital below.*

Rich in culture

*Yes, but that needs to be rooted in a strong popular culture not merely the consumption of cultural offerings.*

Growth that protects the environment and reduces the impact of climate change

*An inappropriately loaded goal. We need ecological and climate safety without the growth that causes the damage.*

## **2. To make Manchester more of a thriving, forward-looking place, what do you think are the most important goals?**

(free text box)

*Here you get a chance to suggest some alternative goals. These could include*

- *greater localisation of production and distribution in the city region and its hinterland,*
- *prioritisation of local neighbourhoods and their centres along the lines of the “15 or 20 minute city”,*
- *massive reduction of private car use via judicious application of restrictions and levies – the latter being used to support alternative active and public travel,*

- *prioritisation of refurbishment and use of existing buildings and a moratorium on high rise buildings with high proportions of steel, glass and concrete,*
- *managed contraction of Manchester Airport and a plan for a just transition away from the city's economic dependence on aviation, and so on.*

### **3. Our Manchester will be highly skilled**

"Our Manchester will be highly skilled - full of talent that is both homegrown in all our local communities, as well as the world's best, attracted to live and work here."

*This section is not particularly problematic. However, the free text box is a place to suggest the prioritisation of skills for living and working in a low carbon economy and for resilience in the face of the environmental, economic, and climate crisis that will only get more severe in the coming years. The importance of educating in the following areas could be stressed: low-tech (e.g. repair and restoration, growing, useful handicrafts, ....), social (organising and mutual support, conflict resolution) and environmental (minimising ecological and carbon footprints, ecological restoration and protection).*

### 3. In 2015, you told us that these eight goals will make Manchester more skilled. Rate them to show how important they are to you:

	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all
Workers earning a real Living Wage	X				
Above average school results					
People being inspired by opportunities to succeed					
Every young person having a good work placement		X			
Older people contributing and being valued	X				
Residents having the skills to reach their full potential					
Businesses and education together picking up on creative ideas in new, modern industries					
Companies developing and training their staff.					

*This buys into a "zero sum" gain. If we win, who has to lose? Instead, it is more appropriate to emphasise a good quality education that prepares young people for life in an increasingly challenging society. Qualifications are important as an aid for that, not as a primary goal.*

*This is a meaningless platitude but the aspiration to not waste people's lives and aptitudes is a good one.*

*Again we see an emphasis on the new and the glamorous at the expense of the basic and fundamental dimensions of Manchester's economy and society.*

*Yes.... but for what?*

### 4. To make Manchester more of a highly skilled city, what do you think are the most important goals?

Free text box ([see above for suggestions](#))

### Our Manchester will be a fairer place

"Our Manchester will be a fairer place where everyone has the same opportunities to unlock their potential, no matter where in our city they are born, or live."

**In 2015, you told us that these ten goals will help to make Manchester fairer. Rate them in order of how important they are to you:**

	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all
Everyone has the same life chances, no matter where they're born or live					
Improvements in health and access to health services					
Voluntary and community groups able to help communities					
Children getting the best start in life					
Older people's experience and skills being valued and used					
Supporting people into work					
Supporting homeless people					
Making the cost of heating and cooking affordable for all					
Increase affordable, low- and zero-carbon energy					
Building new homes to high standards.					

*Obviously*

*X*

*Important but beware the dumping of responsibilities and expectations on the VSC sector without adequate support. Also let's get away from the contract culture.*

*Obviously*

*X*

*Depends what that means – is this via the government's regimes of sanctions and benefit reductions? Too vague to rate.*

*Should read "end homelessness, including hidden homelessness"*

*X*

*X*

*Too vague. Aim for zero carbon (passivhaus equivalent) in operation and full lifecycle transparency and reduction of embodied carbon, as minimum. Minimum space requirements and*

**6. To make Manchester more of a fairer place, what do you think are the most important goals?**

Free text box *Do use this!*

**5. Our Manchester will be a great place to live**

“Our Manchester will be a great place to live — with loads to do, leading the way to a low-carbon future that creates new opportunities for work and better living conditions for our residents.”

**7. In 2015, you told us that these nine goals will make Manchester a great place to live. Rate them in order of how important they are to you:**

*See comment beneath the table*

	Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all
A choice of good quality housing in clean, safe, attractive places where people get on and are proud of their diverse neighbourhoods					
Investment in walking, cycling and public transport					
A cleaner city, with more recycling and less litter,					
Better parks and greenspaces					
Clean, attractive and well used rivers, canals, lakes and ponds					
Using technology to connect us better and improve our city's future					
Investing in sport for residents' benefit					
Being proud of cultural institutions which reflect Manchester's broad audience					
An artistic community that benefits from new art being performed, produced and commissioned.					

*The above isn't a bad list but you could add some other suggestions.*

*Radical reduction in motor traffic (it isn't enough just to encourage the alternatives), increase in the amount of green cover, including tree canopy, wild areas, and reduction in hard surfaces (for water management), and so on, are examples. The cultural dimensions are all consumer-based so you might want to add something on supporting and enhancing "people's ordinary culture, community arts, protect libraries, and so on).*

**8. To make Manchester more of a great place to live, what do you think are the most important goals?**

Free text box *(see suggestions in last comment)*

**6. Our Manchester will be better connected**

"Our Manchester will be better connected with world-class transport and brilliant broadband that put all Mancunians in touch with chances to get ahead."

*The council thinks this is a huge priority. We agree insofar as equitable access to digital resources is important (there is still a huge digital divide in the city and Covid19 has exposed this starkly). However, we are sceptical about the claims for ever faster and "smarter" digital technology which can reduce people's autonomy, increase the risk of surveillance and manipulation (as seen with the facebook and google scandals recently) and divert attention from the importance of personal, face to face, convivial relationships. We do acknowledge though, that digital technology has a role to play in reducing travel demand, throwing prestige projects like HS2 and the growth of aviation into question.*

*Do fill in the following sections with these points in mind.*

**9. In 2015, you told us that these five goals will help Manchester to become better connected. Rate them to show how important they are to you:**

Extremely important	Very important	Important	Not very important	Not important at all
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An integrated, smart, clean transport network that supports our aim to reduce carbon pollution

More cycling and walking, with the improved roads, paths, street design, cycleways and and signage needed

Having a city at the centre of first class transport networks – locally, regionally, nationally and internationally

Long-term investment to radically improve transport connections across the North

Using digital technology to transform how we live.

**10. To make Manchester a better connected place, what do you think are the most important goals?**

Free text box

**11. Do you have other goals for Manchester's future that aren't mentioned here? We'd love to have your ideas for keeping our city moving on to become the place where anyone can be everything they want to be — and where nobody is left behind.**

Free text box

*Here's your chance to re-imagining Manchester as it could be. For inspiration, [see this piece where we let our imaginations run freely.](#)*

**12. Please help us to finish this sentence... 'Our future Manchester will be....**

Their example

*Our future Manchester will be a place where everyone can be everything they want to be.*

Free text box.

***Consultation closes Wednesday 23 Sept.***

<https://steadystatemanchester.net/>

*September, 2020.*