

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 22 August 2025

Subject: Mayoral Development Corporation for Northern Gateway – Consultation Results & Approval to Designate

Report of: Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester; Councillor Bev Craig, Portfolio Lead for Economy, Business and Inclusive Growth and Tom Stannard, Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Economy, Business and Inclusive Growth

Purpose of Report

This report sets out the results of the consultation on the establishment of a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) covering the Northern Gateway sites in Atom Valley and seeks approval for the next steps in the process.

Recommendations:

The GMCA is recommended to:

1. Note the results of the consultation exercise in respect of the designation of a Mayoral Development Corporation for Northern Gateway.
2. Note the Mayor's response to the consultation.
3. Note that recommendations to support the designation of the 'Atom Valley Northern Gateway' MDC were approved by Bury and Rochdale Councils at their meetings on 9 July 2025 and 29 July 2025, respectively – **The Members for Bury and Rochdale are asked to confirm at this time if they consent to the designation of the proposed mayoral development area.**
4. Give due consideration to the proposal by the Mayor to designate an area, identified on the plan at Appendix 3, as a Mayoral Development Area and notify the Mayor within the consideration period if it proposes to reject the proposal.

5. Note that subject to the GMCA not rejecting the proposal as set out at recommendation 4 above, the Mayor shall publicise the designation, notify the Secretary of State of the designation and the name to be given to the Mayoral Development Corporation, as follows: “Atom Valley Northern Gateway Mayoral Development Corporation.”

Contact Officers

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Report authors must identify which paragraph relating to the following issues:

Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

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Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	<p>Delivery of the Northern Gateway project will provide access to homes across a range of types and tenures and high-quality employment opportunities to a part of Greater Manchester which has been relatively economically disadvantaged.</p> <p>The development will also enhance access to social and transport infrastructure for new and existing residents.</p> <p>This proposal recommends a consultation on the delivery route for Northern Gateway which gives the affected communities the opportunity to make their views known.</p>
Health		
Resilience and Adaptation	G	<p>Detailed development proposals are to be agreed but a core principle for Northern Gateway is that provision of quality open space, including blue infrastructure, is integral to place making and an essential part of the development proposals.</p>
Housing	G	<p>This proposal will support the delivery of around 3,000 new homes as part of the Northern Gateway project, a proportion of which will be affordable homes of various tenures.</p> <p>It will also support economic development with local employment benefits, enhancing access to and affordability of homes for local residents.</p>
Economy	G	<p>Northern Gateway is the is one of Greater Manchester's Investment Zones and is a site of potentially international significance. It is the largest new employment site in Greater Manchester, a 'Giga-Scale Plus' opportunity which will see over 1m sqm of employment space developed, with significant associated employment, GVA, and growth implications.</p> <p>Its strategic location has the ability to attract national and inward investment from a multitude of sectors including advanced manufacturing, distribution and logistics, with innovation at its core.</p> <p>Development activity will be complemented by a package of training and skills interventions to ensure new high-quality jobs are accessible to local people.</p>
Mobility and Connectivity	G	<p>Northern Gateway will bring significant investment in transport infrastructure in the north-east of Greater Manchester, including Strategic Road Network and Local Road Network improvements.</p> <p>Alongside this will be enhancement of existing public transport provision and creation of new public transport options and sustainable travel modes serving the new developments.</p> <p>Modern businesses, particularly those in frontier sectors, require high-quality digital connections. The development will be underpinned by provision of this digital infrastructure for both employment and residential uses.</p>

Carbon, Nature and Environment	A	Physical development has unavoidable impacts on local air quality but these will be managed and mitigated as much as possible and the most material impacts will be largely confined to the delivery phase. Mitigation against long-term environmental impacts will be incorporated into development proposals. Delivery of new low- and zero-carbon homes and commercial premises will improve the average efficiency of properties across Greater Manchester and contribute to the achievement of carbon neutrality by 2038. Detailed development proposals are not fixed but biodiversity enhancement is a mandatory requirement for all new developments.
Consumption and Production		

Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target	Delivery of new low- and zero-carbon homes and commercial premises will improve the average efficiency of properties across Greater Manchester and contribute to the achievement of carbon neutrality by 2038.
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Further Assessment(s):

Carbon Assessment

G	Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	A	Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	R	Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	RR	Negative impacts overall.
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Carbon Assessment

Overall Score

Buildings

Result

Justification/Mitigation

New Build residential		Details of development proposals are to be determined, however there is an overarching commitment to deliver in accordance with requirements for biodiversity, energy efficiency, and carbon reduction set out in Places for Everyone and GMS.
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A	
New build non-residential (including public) buildings		Details of development proposals are to be determined, however there is an overarching commitment to deliver in accordance with requirements for biodiversity, energy efficiency, and carbon reduction set out in Places for Everyone and GMS.

Transport

Active travel and public transport		Details of public transport and active travel interventions are to be determined but will represent an enhancement over existing.
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access		Details of development proposals are to be determined but principles of decreased personal vehicle use and increased sustainable transport modes as proportion of overall travel are agreed.
Access to amenities		Details of development proposals are to be determined but principles of decreased personal vehicle use and increased sustainable transport modes as proportion of overall travel are agreed. Allocations within Places for Everyone include local amenity uses alongside residential and employment development, improving access to these services by sustainable modes of transport.
Vehicle procurement	N/A	

Land Use

Land use		Development includes land currently in agricultural use being developed for residential and employment purposes. Details of development proposals are to be determined, however there is an overarching commitment to deliver in accordance with requirements set out in Places for Everyone and GMS which require enhancements to biodiversity and protection of existing environmental assets.
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No associated carbon impacts expected.		High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.	Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.	Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.	Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.
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Risk Management

None.

Legal Considerations

The Localism Act 2011, as amended by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017, sets out the parameters for creation of locally-led Mayoral Development Corporations (MDCs).

Consultation must be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation (see para 3.3). The GMCA legal team, in consultation with Bury and Rochdale counterparts, ensured the appropriate processes were followed.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

None.

Financial Consequences – Capital

None.

Number of attachments to the report: 3

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

Background Papers

1. Atom Valley, Mayoral Development Zone (GMCA approval 29 July 2022)
2. Mayoral Development Corporation for Northern Gateway – In Principle Decision (GMCA approval 12 July 2024)
3. Mayoral Development Corporation for Northern Gateway – Consultation (GMCA approval 28 March 2025)

Tracking/ Process

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution

No

Exemption from call in

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

N/A

Bee Network Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 In January 2025, GMCA endorsed the preparation of an updated Greater Manchester Strategy (GMS) (subsequently approved on 27th June 2025) and underpinning 10-year Growth & Prevention Delivery Plan ('Delivery Plan'), which brings together priority actions to be delivered over the coming years to realise the GMS vision.
- 1.2 A key focus for the Delivery Plan will be the activity required to unlock growth through the successful development and regeneration of our places, working collaboratively with our public and private sector partners. Our collective approach will need to ensure the continuation of a growing global city centre, along with a wider city region of thriving boroughs and vibrant town centres across GM. Fundamental to this will be the delivery of well-connected employment and housing sites with our growth plans benefitting all our residents over the 10-year period.
- 1.3 This paper sets out the approach as it relates to Northern Gateway, focusing on the proposed implementation of a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) to support delivery of this transformative project.

2. Mayoral Development Corporation for Northern Gateway

- 2.1. Northern Gateway is a flagship Greater Manchester development and the single largest employment allocation in the North. It is an essential component of the Atom Valley Mayoral Development Zone and one of the Greater Manchester Investment Zones. Its successful delivery is critical to realising the objectives of the Places for Everyone joint plan and the GMS.
- 2.2. In July 2024 GMCA agreed in principle to the creation of a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) for Northern Gateway and confirmed that detailed options for an MDC could be explored with officers from Bury, Oldham, and Rochdale Councils.
- 2.3.** Subsequently, on 28 March 2025 the GMCA endorsed the MDC option and the Mayor undertaking a consultation exercise in respect of the proposal, and the Mayor approved the undertaking of the consultation.

3. MDC Consultation

- 3.1 As noted above, the designation of Mayoral Development Corporations is governed in Greater Manchester by the Localism Act 2011 Part 8, Chapter 2, as modified by the Schedule to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017 ("The Act").
- 3.2 This provides that the Mayor may designate a Mayoral development area only if consultation has been concluded, and responses considered, in accordance with the Act.
- 3.3 The Act requires the Mayor to consult with members of the GMCA; MPs whose parliamentary constituency contains part of the proposed area; and each district council whose areas are within the proposed boundary, in this case Bury and Rochdale.
- 3.4 The Mayor may also consult with any other person who he considers it appropriate to consult. In this case, as for the Stockport MDC, the Mayor decided to make the consultation accessible to the public, with this hosted on the 'GM Consult' engagement platform. Supporting information about MDCs and the reasons one is proposed for Northern Gateway accompanied the consultation questions.
- 3.5 Consultation on the Northern Gateway MDC allowed statutory and additional consultees to provide a response to the proposals, and for these responses to be reflected as part of subsequent work to progress the implementation of the MDC.

- 3.6 The consultation was launched on 25th April 2025 and closed on 8th June 2025, a period of 35 days.
- 3.7 All residents and businesses located in the proposed MDC area were written to, inviting them to participate in the consultation. In addition, a press release and social media posts highlighted the consultation process and informed people how they could participate.

4. Consultation Results

- 4.1 In summary, the consultation received 85 responses through the GM Consult platform, plus four letters. Of the online responses, 76.47% were from respondents who indicated they live in Bury or Rochdale. Organisations provided 6 of the online submissions and 3 of the letters; all of these organisation responses supported the proposal.
- 4.2 Responses to individual questions can be summarised as follows:
- 4.2.1 28% of respondents agreed with the creation of an MDC for Northern Gateway;
- 4.2.2 36% of respondents strongly agreed, agreed, or were neutral that an MDC for Northern Gateway would support development, growth, and improvements across the wider areas of Bury, Heywood, Middleton, and Rochdale;
- 4.2.3 13% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the proposed “Atom Valley Northern Gateway MDC” name. A further 28.24% neither agreed nor disagreed.
- 4.2.4 The online consultation allowed respondents to identify on a map where they thought areas should be added or omitted from the proposed MDC area. This was used by 40 respondents. Many of the responses appear to indicate that most or all of the area should be excepted. A further 7 text responses listed the following areas for exclusion:
- Simister, Bowlee and Unsworth
 - Simister and surrounding area
 - Bowlee down to Rhodes
 - ‘None of the area should be included’

- 'Exclude the vast majority of the area'

4.2.5 Respondents could provide text responses to explain their suggested changes to the MDC boundary and make any other comments relating to the overall proposal. Responses broadly fell into the following categories:

- Costs of the MDC;
- Transport Infrastructure;
- Type of Development; and
- Objections to development.

4.3 Appendix 1 to this report sets out the specific consultation questions and responses in more detail. Responses will be published on GM Consult and be publicly available where respondents did not choose to make their responses confidential.

The webpage for consultation responses is

<https://www.gmconsult.org/development/mdc/>.

4.4 Many of the responses received identified concerns or objections associated with the development of sites within the proposed MDC boundary. However, the decision as to the creation, or otherwise, of an MDC in this area will not change the allocation of sites for particular purposes. The matter of allocation was determined as part of the separate Places for Everyone (PfE) joint plan adoption process. That process included several rounds of consultation as part of which representations were received and considered in relation to JPA 1.1 and JPA 1.2, including many expressing similar concerns to those raised as part of this exercise, and a formal examination at the end of that process concluded the plan was sound.

4.5 One of the purposes of the proposed MDC is to provide public sector strategic leadership for Northern Gateway, ensuring development in the area is in alignment with the GMCA's, the Councils', and Transport for Greater Manchester's shared vision. It will also be tasked with ensuring benefits from the developments to new and existing residents and businesses in a location that has been amongst the most economically deprived in GM are maximised. That being the case, on the assumption that development will take place in any event, the creation of the MDC would actually be intended to address, or at least mitigate, many of the concerns raised as part of this consultation.

5. Response to the Consultation

- 5.1 Development Corporations can be important tools for delivering large-scale development, including mixed-use regeneration, transformational urban extensions, and new settlements.
- 5.2 In the right circumstances, these powerful vehicles can bring a number of advantages to complex projects, including:
 - 5.2.1 A focus on coordination and consistent delivery from a dedicated body with a specific purpose to develop and deliver a strategic vision for a defined area;
 - 5.2.2 Highly visible public sector commitment coupled with broad public- and private-sector expertise at board level as a driver for private investment; and
- 5.3 Powers to facilitate the delivery of the project.
- 5.4 As outlined at 4.4 and 4.5, many consultation responses related to the developments within the proposed MDC area, expressing concerns about the location and type of development; the impact on local infrastructure; and the associated loss of green space.
- 5.5 The designation of an MDC in this area, or a decision not to, will not change the allocation of those sites and the existence of an MDC is not a prerequisite to the developments being delivered so deciding not to designate an MDC will not prevent development being brought forward.
- 5.6 One of the principal motivations for proposing an MDC for Northern Gateway is to ensure the development that is brought forward is brought forward in line with the public sector vision for the area and delivered in a way that maximises the benefits to the public, including ensuring that many of the concerns expressed as part of the consultation are mitigated as much as possible.
- 5.7 For this reason, while the consultation results were not wholly supportive of the MDC proposal, the Mayor is of the view that the MDC will deliver better outcomes from developments that are likely to be brought forward in any case, he is satisfied that designation of the area is expedient for furthering economic development and regeneration in Greater Manchester and he is minded to proceed with the process for designation of the Atom Valley Northern Gateway MDC.
- 5.8 Where the Mayor does not accept consultation responses from certain specified consultees, the Localism Act (as amended) requires the Mayor to publish a statement giving the reasons for that position. Although none of the responses

expressing concerns/objections were from those specified consultees the Mayor has nonetheless decided to publish a response to the main themes highlighted in the consultation. This response is therefore attached to this report as Appendix 2.

6. Next Steps

6.1. The Mayor may designate the Atom Valley Northern Gateway mayoral development area if he is satisfied that designation is expedient for furthering economic development and regeneration of the area and after:

6.1.1. The Mayor has carried out a consultation in accordance with the Act and had regard to any comments made in response by the consultees; and

6.1.2. The expiration of the 21 day consideration period where the GMCA has not rejected the proposal.

And with the consent of the Members of the GMCA representing Constituent Councils of Greater Manchester within whose boundary the proposed mayoral development area will sit.

6.2. Once the designation is made, the Mayor must:

6.2.1. Publicise the designation; and

6.2.2. Notify the Secretary of State of the designation and the name to be given to the MDC.

6.3. Once the Secretary of State has received notification of the designation, they will prepare and lay the appropriate Orders before Parliament under the negative procedure, which means the Orders will come into force and the MDC formally created, subject to no motion from either house to reject the Orders within a specified period, usually 40 sitting days. Engagement with MHCLG officials indicates that subject to the above, it may be possible for the MDC to be created later this year.

6.4. Further to previous reports and approvals in relation to this matter, work has been ongoing to develop all of the things the MDC will need if it is established such as the rationale for intervention; purpose, aims and objectives of the MDC; governance and decision-making; financial considerations; risks and resources for the MDC. This work is now well developed and it has strongly informed the Mayor's response to the consultation and his decision to propose the designation process set out at paragraphs 6.1 – 6.3.

- 6.5. This work has also informed the draft business plan for the MDC. It is envisioned that the MDC will prepare an annual performance report that will be put to Bury and Rochdale Councils and GMCA at forthcoming meetings. The MDC will also produce a 5-year business plan and annual delivery plan which will be subject to approval by Bury and Rochdale Councils and GMCA at forthcoming meetings.