

Northern Gateway MDC Consultation – Mayor’s Response

Name of the MDC

Overall, responses to the proposed name for the “Atom Valley Northern Gateway” MDC were generally supportive or neutral. A small number of comments suggested changes, including omission of “Atom Valley” or reducing the name to just “Atom Valley”.

Atom Valley has gained recognition as a brand since the launch of the Atom Valley Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ) in 2022. It’s important that the link to the MDZ is built into the proposed MDC, as Northern Gateway represents a large proportion of the planned development across the Atom Valley Zone. Northern Gateway is not, however, the only part of Atom Valley so it is important to differentiate between this project and other activity elsewhere in the Zone.

Concerns about the Costs of the MDC

Several comments expressed some concern that the MDC would introduce costly bureaucracy. In 2019, principles for MDCs in Greater Manchester were agreed, ahead of the creation of the Stockport MDC. These included commitments for MDCs to simplify decision making and not lead to significant additional costs, and these same principles apply to the proposed Northern Gateway MDC.

Concerns about Transport Infrastructure

Some feedback related to existing transport infrastructure pressures around the proposed MDC area, especially concerns about congestion on the adjacent motorways and local roads.

The first phase of Northern Gateway development, in South Heywood, has been supported by the £20m Queen Elizabeth Way, opened in 2022, linking the development sites to junction 19 of the M62.

Proposals are in development for the next phase of road infrastructure investment, to improve the link to junction 3 of the M66. The allocation of the Northern Gateway sites for development as part of the Places for Everyone joint plan (PfE) required appropriate supporting infrastructure to be delivered as part of the development. Having an MDC will actually help to ensure this is the case as development comes forward, including investment in public transport and active travel being an integral part of the proposals in line with the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040.

Concerns about the Type of Development

Some responses expressed concern about the type of development proposed for Northern Gateway, the kind of jobs that would likely be created as a result, and the provision of affordable housing as part of the development.

PfE allocates the two largest Northern Gateway sites for development; JPA 1.1 Heywood/Pilsworth, for employment-led mixed use development, and JPA 1.2 Bowlee/Simister for a mainly residential development with a local centre including appropriate retail, health, and community facilities.

Approval of detailed development proposals is a matter for Bury and Rochdale as Local Planning Authorities but one of the reasons an MDC is proposed for Northern Gateway is to maximise the

benefits for the local community arising from the developments in the area, including supporting the provision of high-quality jobs.

The MDC is intended to be tasked with maximising opportunities to deliver Advanced Materials and Manufacturing (AMM) employment space at Northern Gateway as part of a Greater Manchester focus on "frontier sectors" to create high-quality jobs and drive productivity, growth, and innovation across various industries.

Affordable housing is a matter for the Local Planning Authorities, however the allocation of the JPA 1.1 and JPA1.2 sites in Places for Everyone is on the basis that a proportion of the new homes to be delivered on each site will be affordable homes, in accordance with local policy requirements.

Objections to Development

Many consultation responses were against development at Northern Gateway, particularly the sites allocated as part of PfE. The designation of an MDC in this area, or a decision not to, will not change the allocation of those sites. Decisions to allocate the sites were made as part of the PfE process and the MDC is independent of those allocations. In addition 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.

One of the main reasons the MDC has been proposed for Northern Gateway is to ensure the development is brought forward in line with the public sector vision for the area. In this way, the sites allocated as part of PfE which will come forward in due course following these allocations in any case, will be delivered in a way that maximises the benefits to the public associated with the development.