

NEXT STOP STOCKPORT

Report of the Director of Place Management

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report highlights the centrality of Metrolink connectivity to Stockport to sustain the progress of the town centre over the last decade and catalyse its future role as a major driver of employment and housing growth for the borough and the wider conurbation. (**Next Stop Stockport**).
- 1.2. It provides an update on recent work being undertaken to translate that potential into reality and sets out what is needed to realise the ambition for Metrolink to come to the borough.

2. Context: Stockport: Greater Manchester's Southern Gateway Hub

- 2.1. Stockport is a key strategic public transport hub and the key southern gateway into Greater Manchester. To enable inclusive economic growth and the transition to sustainable travel in line with Net Zero commitments, considerable investment has taken place over recent years to develop a fully integrated public transport offer. These include:
 - The new state of the art transport Interchange is being built and will open in spring 2024 which includes accessible pedestrian and cycle ramps from the riverside to Stockport Railway station and Stockport Exchange via a park and bridgescape
 - ZEBRA funding will be transforming our bus services, replacing all Stockport based buses with an electric fleet
 - The development of an outline business case for the redevelopment of Stockport Railway Station and ongoing work to identify a funding package to allow these improvements to be delivered.
 - Investment in active travel routes linking the town centre with surrounding neighbourhoods for walking and cycling.
- 2.2. These investments, with form part of a wider £1bn public and private sector investment in the town centre, have created the infrastructure and conditions to realise the true potential of Metrolink to act as an enabler of place based transformation. Stockport's potential is undeniable – the town centre is now home to one of the fastest growing business districts in Greater Manchester and the Mayoral Development Corporation is creating an exemplar urban neighbourhood of more than 4,000 new homes. The challenge ahead is ensuring that this growth does not falter due to lack of investment in the infrastructure which will enable continued success.
- 2.3. In Stockport, Metrolink will provide a key plank of the borough's sustainable transport strategy, supporting our ambitious plans for the town centre, connecting the borough to the expanding network and employment hubs of the regional

centre and Media City and enabling our green ambitions to be fulfilled by providing a sustainable and integrated public transport offer that allows Stockport residents to access employment and leisure opportunities without requiring access to cars.

- 2.4. It will also provide additional benefits to the Greater Manchester network, strengthening the role of Stockport as the southern gateway into the conurbation, with travellers connecting to Metrolink from the national rail network on to their GM destination.
- 2.5. These benefits are set out in more detail in section 4 below.

3. Progress to date on securing Metrolink.

- 3.1. Recognising these benefits, in 2020 the GM Mayor committed to the extension of Metrolink to Stockport.
- 3.2. The ambition is for a Metrolink route from East Didsbury into Stockport town centre which could then subsequently connect into a network of tram train routes to the airport, Hazel Grove, Marple and Ashton. TfGM has also identified a potential tram train route to Marple from Manchester City Centre.
- 3.3. A review of potential routes for Metrolink from East Didsbury into the town centre is being undertaken, funded through TfGM. The review is considering the viability of previous routes and recent developments within the town centre including the new interchange and the ambitions for the Town Centre West MDC and will identify potential routes that could be protected in a future Local Plan.
- 3.4. There has also been a light touch strategic assessment undertaken for the proposed East Didsbury to Stockport Rapid Transit link that sets out the strategic and economic case of bringing Metrolink to Stockport whilst recognising the financial challenges to delivery.
- 3.5. TfGM have supported Stockport's Metrolink and tram train ambitions by earmarking investment so that the required replacement of Network Rail bridges at Stockholm Road and Greek Street are built to be compatible with the light rail network, thereby reducing future costs and disruption.
- 3.6. In order to achieve the GM Mayor's ambition, funding will need to be secured to undertake the detailed business case required for the scheme to secure the very significant funding required for construction (likely to be in the range of £500million to £1billion). TfGM have secured a limited amount of investment funding for Metrolink business case development from the government through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement.

4. Our case for Metrolink extension: Unlocking the transformational potential of the Metrolink network

4.1. Beyond the direct transport benefits, Metrolink connectivity to Stockport has the potential to deliver truly transformational economic, environmental and social benefits for the borough and beyond into southern GM and beyond:

4.2. **Regeneration of Stockport town centre**

4.2.1. Stockport Town Centre is a major economic centre for south Manchester. While the decline of high street retail in the early 2000s has posed a major challenge to Stockport over the last decade a radical transformation has begun, with over £1 billion dedicated to facilitating regeneration of the centre and support inclusive growth.

4.2.2. Stockport MBC have actively pursued an ambitious vision to make Stockport the best town in the north of England to live, learn, work, and play. Flagship redevelopments such as the creation of a new business district at Stockport Exchange and the thriving leisure offer at Redrock are contributing to the delivery of this vision.

4.2.3. The vision for the town centre seeks to build upon its existing strengths as a retail, leisure and commercial destination whilst balancing these with the ambition to establish the town centre as a residential location of choice and an important service hub for surrounding communities.

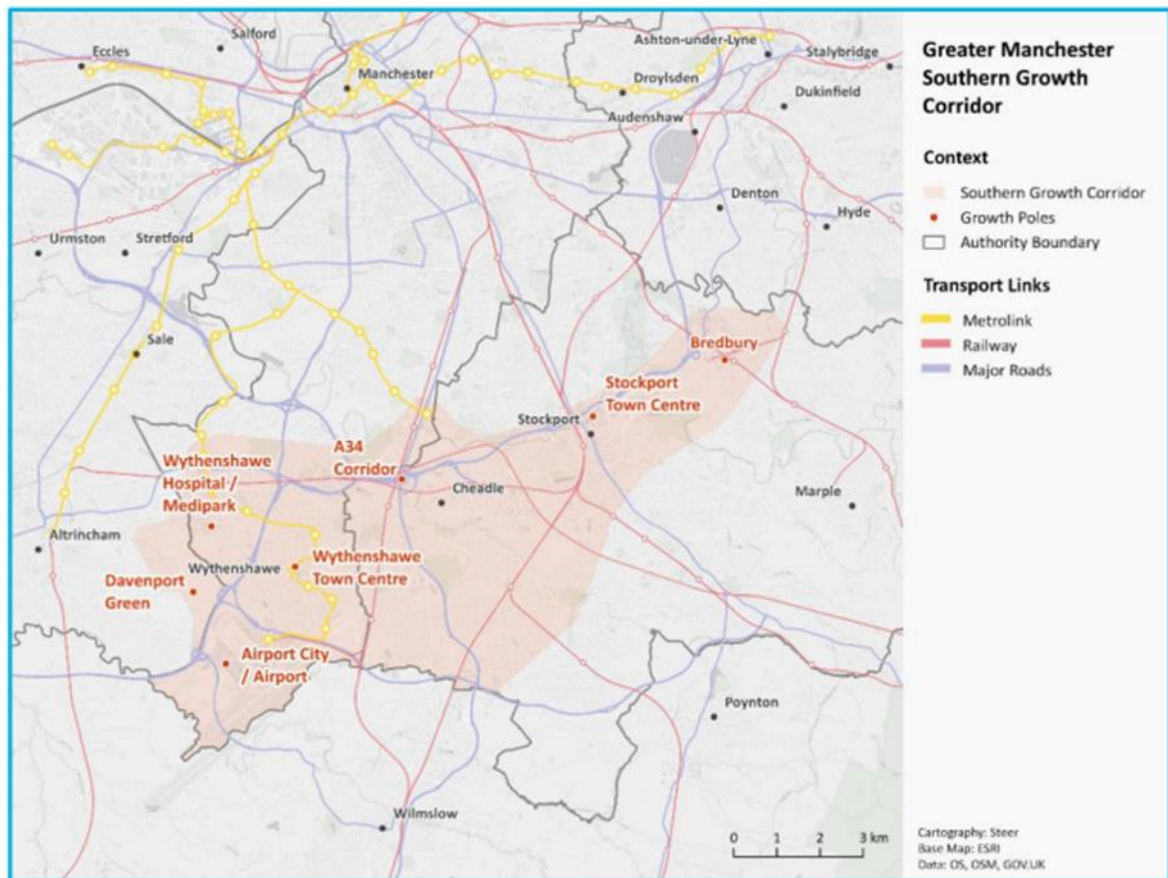
4.2.4. Bringing Metrolink to the town centre is a key element of the transformation, as a sustainable transport network supports the expected growth in the town centre and surrounding areas including the Town Centre West Mayoral Development Corporation.

4.3. **The Southern Growth Corridor**

4.3.1. The economic significance of the town centre extends beyond the borough's boundaries. GMCA has identified six strategic Growth Locations – defined as those areas with the capacity to power long term economic growth, that are focal points for economic activity and that have the capacity for development at a scale that can drive transformational change. The Southern Growth Corridor is one of these six.

4.3.2. The Corridor extends from Davenport Green via Manchester Airport to Stockport Town Centre and to Bredbury in the east (see map below). The Corridor crosses Trafford, City of Manchester, and Stockport local authority areas. Within the Corridor seven 'Growth Poles' - key locations harbouring the capacity to stimulate economic development - have been identified. Stockport Town Centre is one of these.

4.3.3. A map of the Growth Corridor is set out at Figure One below:



4.3.4. In 2022, Transport for Greater Manchester, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and participating local authorities jointly commissioned an analysis of the growth potential of the corridor that found:

- Analysis and modelling of the employment and GVA potential of the development pipeline estimated that the strategic developments within the Corridor have the potential to support an additional 22,000 direct FTE jobs, plus 9,500 in the wider GM economy
- In current prices, the additional employment has the potential to contribute £617 million in GVA per annum to the economy, a total £9.1bn additional GVA by 2040 (base GBP 2021).
- Most of the benefits are to be accrued in the medium- and long-term, and Stockport Town Centre and Airport City developments are major drivers of impact.

4.3.5. In summary, the report concluded that:

“The overarching Corridor opportunity is to become a major driver of employment and productivity growth in the City Region and national economy. The potential to combine and co-locate world class connectivity assets and new infrastructure investment with knowledge intensive sectors offers a significant opportunity to encourage the clustering and high-density interaction that has been shown to drive productivity in advanced economies”.

4.3.6. The report noted that the Corridor benefits from connectivity provided by the M60/M56, as well as Manchester Airport as an international and domestic transport hub. However, other than the motorways, there is poor orbital connectivity by road and public transport, stating:

“There is a strong vision for the area and the development market has momentum, short term potential is being realised but needs further action to manage/mitigate growth challenges and opportunities. [However] the opportunity for the creation of a sustainable mixed-use centre may falter without further investments including local public transport connectivity”

4.3.7. Through the planned transformational scale of investment, attractive mixed-use redevelopment, and significant connectivity improvements, it is anticipated that the Corridor will support the sustained competitiveness of southern Greater Manchester (GM), delivering:

- Town centre employment growth and transformation of the housing, retail, and cultural offer through the mixed-use redevelopment of Stockport and Wythenshawe Town Centres and Davenport Green, featuring major, high quality and affordable housing growth.
- Improved affordable public transport linkages between housing and employment sites, driven by the completion of the Metrolink Western Loop via Medipark and Davenport Green and further Metrolink extension.

5. Next Steps

5.1. A number of steps are recommended to continue to set out Stockport’s case and to secure the funding to move to the next stage:

- The Leader of the council and Chair of Mayoral Development Corporation seek to meet with GM Mayor to set out case for Metrolink and seek commitment to attend roundtable with Stockport business leaders in December
- Set out why Stockport is the greenest town centre in the region and the need for Metrolink at the October GM Green Summit to support the next steps.
- Hold a Stockport roundtable in December with business leaders and the GM Mayor to discuss the growth potential of borough and the role Metrolink plays linking business communities
- Reinforce the national profile of the campaign with a piece in regeneration and highway press on mutual benefits for both the GM transport network and Stockport of extending Metrolink to the Stockport

5.2. The Leader and Chair of Stockport MDC host a Next Stop Stockport summit with business leaders in December, inviting the GM Mayor to hear the powerful case for funding the business case work for the Stockport extension to the Metrolink network.

5.3. Stockport to demonstrate at October’s GM Green Summit the environmental benefits of the Metrolink adding to our integrated public transport offer.

5.4. Officers need to continue to develop the economic and climate work with TfGM and Network Rail to ensure that the replacement structures at Greek Street and Stockholm Road support the future development of tram train schemes.

6. Recommendations

6.1. Members of the Scrutiny Committee are requested to comment on this report and support the following recommendations to Cabinet.

6.2. It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- a) Request this report is considered by the MDC Board at its next meeting.
- b) The Leader and Chair of the MDC meet the Greater Manchester Mayor and invite him to a business leader roundtable to discuss the benefits of **Next Stop Stockport** and how funding can be secured to deliver these ambitions.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none.

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Sue Stevenson on Tel: 0161-474-4351 or by email on sue.stevenson@stockport.gov.uk