



Manchester's proposed underground HS2 station would benefit whole country, MPs told

By [Tom Lowe](#) | 14 June 2023

Delegates from city petition select committee to scrap surface station in favour of more expensive underground scheme

An underground HS2 station in Manchester would benefit the whole of the UK, a committee of MPs has been told.

Delegates from a group of Manchester councils have provided evidence to the select committee for the High Speed 2 Phase 2b bill, which will grant the power to build a high speed line from Crewe to Manchester.

The bill passed its second reading in Parliament in June last year and is now in its committee phase, which includes petitions to make changes to the proposed legislation before it receives royal assent.

The government's current proposals are for a six-platform surface station for HS2 at Manchester Piccadilly, which the railway has estimated will cost around £7bn.

But Manchester mayor Andy Burnham and the city council have repeatedly called



for a four-platform
underground
through station
despite a report by

An updated image of how Manchester's underground HS2 station could look

HS2 finding the option would cost around £12bn and take 13 years longer to build.

The calls have been backed by influential regional business leaders the Northern Powerhouse Partnership, along with London mayor Sadiq Khan and the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Four Manchester councils have banded together with Transport for Greater Manchester and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority under the name GM Partners to petition against the surface station, which they say would “squander many of the potential benefits” of the railway.

The group is arguing that an underground station would only cost between £1.75bn and £2.64bn more than a surface station and would bring in £333m a year in benefits to the local economy while supporting 14,000 jobs.

Neil Cameron KC, representing GM Partners, said the group was asking the committee to use its influence to say “there appears to be a better way”.

Cameron told the MPs the underground option, which would make it easier to travel along an east-west axis to or from Liverpool and Leeds, would be a critical boost for the government's levelling up ambitions.

“Although it'll be spending more, it wouldn't be spending it just for Manchester, it's spending more for the North as a whole and for the country,” he said.

The surface level proposal would require a viaduct up to six tracks wide to run through the centre of Manchester from Ardwick to Piccadilly, which Manchester council says will wipe out 500,000 sq m of prime development land which could be used for housing or green space.

Council leader Bev Craig said: “I don't want people in Manchester, residents or visitors alike, to look around the city and think 'what on earth were they thinking, concrete stilts cutting off sections of the city'. Not future proofing a significant investment. Wondering why when we had the chance we didn't build it once, and we didn't build it right.”

The council has also issued an updated image of how the station might look. The CGI, based on outline designs by Bennetts Associates, has been created for the council by Greig Penny Architecture and shows a large area of public realm in front of a station facade lined with tall arches.

Delegates from Manchester will be giving evidence to the committee until next week. The committee's report has the potential to be highly influential on the eventual shape of the bill. Woolwich station was added to the Elizabeth line following petitions heard during the committee stage for the Crossrail bill.