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Build it right! Manchester makes case in Parliament for underground NPR (Northern Powerhouse Rail)-HS2 Piccadilly station

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Manchester City Council Leader Bev Craig will today (Monday 12 June) make the case in Parliament for HS2 and the Government to rethink their plans to ensure the best form of high-speed rail to the city – with a new underground NPR-HS2 station.

Cllr Craig will be giving evidence this afternoon on behalf of the city to the High-Speed Rail (Crewe-Manchester) Bill Select Committee calling on it to amend the current plan for a surface turnback station, which would squander many of the potential benefits, and keep the alternative option of an underground through station firmly on the table.

The Council, along with other Greater Manchester partners, will argue that building the right solution at Piccadilly, with an underground through-station, is pivotal if it is to deliver transformational connectivity north-south and east-west, and unlock economic growth for generations to come.

Manchester Piccadilly, at the heart of the network, will be central to capturing the opportunities of both HS2 and NPR. Analysis suggests that an overground station would be at full capacity once NPR services start running, undermining reliability and giving little scope to add more services as populations grow or new opportunities arise.

An underground NPR-HS2 station also provides a unique opportunity to level up the Piccadilly area, supporting 14,000 jobs, new housing, green space and adding £333 million A YEAR more in benefits by 2050 to the local economy than the overground proposal.

By contrast an overground station would require a huge concrete viaduct, up to six tracks wide, running from Ardwick (where it would emerge from a tunnel) to Piccadilly, cutting a swathe through communities.

Councillor Bev Craig, Leader of Manchester City Council, said: "We are urging the Government to learn from mistakes elsewhere and build the right station for Manchester that will better serve us for the next century. Our railway system needs investment now and for the future. HS2 will provide muchneeded extra capacity on our already congested rail network, improve connections between the north of England, West Midlands and London and act as a catalyst to wider economic growth.

"But the current plan for an overground station that travels into the city on concrete stilts, with limited resilience and likely to be at full capacity from day one, is the wrong one. It might be cheaper in the short-term but this penny-wise, pound-foolish approach will cost the city and the North much more in missed opportunities.

"We need to 'build it right and build it once' with an underground station, which increases capacity and connectivity for the whole of the North, while providing a world-class welcome to the heart of our city-region. Cities across the world are future proofing their cities by building their new stations underground, just like in London.

"An underground through-station is the only way to deliver Northern Powerhouse Rail in full and, by having it underground, we get to create more jobs and put more money back into the Manchester and UK economy. It also means we avoid unsightly concrete viaducts, the height of three double-decker buses, cutting through communities and prime city centre development land being swallowed."

Ahead of the Council Leader's appearance, the Mayor of London, the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Northern Powerhouse Partnership and Greater Manchester's Federation of Small Businesses backed the calls for an underground Piccadilly station – with a consensus that the right solution is critical to the nation's economic ambitions.

Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, said: "Manchester Piccadilly will be at the heart of the country's high-speed network but if we fail to invest in Manchester's rail links, we risk continuing to repeat the mistakes of the past.

"Getting better east-west connectivity is the single biggest transport policy priority not just in the North of England, but the whole country. Government needs to look at the bigger picture here, because this is a decision which shapes our future and they are at risk of getting it seriously wrong.

"We stand shoulder to shoulder with Cllr Craig's call for an underground station at Piccadilly because if we get the wrong solution, it will limit economic growth, limit opportunities for local businesses and people, and to leave us with the wrong railway for another century would be a hammer blow to Levelling Up our country."

Watch the High Speed Rail (Crewe-Manchester) Bill Select Committee from 4pm [here](https://parliamentlive.tv/Committees)
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