

Atom Valley Business Plan 2024 / 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

Atom Valley is a Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ), established in August 2022 with the focus being three key sites:

- Northern Gateway;
- Stakehill; and
- Kingsway Park (incorporating the Sustainable Manufacturing & Materials Centre - SMMC)

These three projects have the potential to provide 20,000 new jobs, 7,000 new homes and 1.6 million square metres of employment space through public-private partnership. This scale creates an opportunity to leverage the benefits of clustering, creating a network of innovation between companies and the research departments of local universities and the institutes which translate this work into practical, applied innovations.

ID Manchester, an area immediately next to the University of Manchester, has been designated as the Investment Zone for GM alongside Atom Valley. The proximity of these means a national leading mega-cluster of advanced materials and machinery companies can be developed, generating positive feedback to create high levels of productivity which are more than the sum of the parts of the individual companies within the cluster.

The envisioned “Advanced Materials City”, led by public sector intervention, will operate at the forefront of new technology and engineering, building on the existing manufacturing supply chains and skills base in Atom Valley.

Places for Everyone (PfE) is the long-term plan for the delivery of jobs, new homes and sustainable growth across Greater Manchester. The plan will ensure that all new developments are sustainably integrated into Greater Manchester’s transport network and supported by new infrastructure. PfE includes six Growth Locations which represent opportunities for the whole city-region to bring forward development at a scale which can drive transformational change across the whole conurbation.

The North East Growth Corridor (NEGC) is the Growth Location which includes Bury, Oldham and Rochdale local authority areas. NEGC is the single largest employment opportunity for the city-region, delivering thousands of quality jobs and thousands of new, quality, low carbon homes linked to sustainable transport. Atom Valley sits within the NEGC Growth Location.

Since the MDZ was established, six Sub-Groups (outlined in more detail in Section 4) have been formed to drive forward development, growth, and skills across the MDZ area. Their individual targets and workstreams are set out in detail in this document. The MDZ Board

coordinates these Sub-Groups to ensure that their activities contribute to the wider objectives of the MDZ and Atom Valley.

Overall, Atom Valley presents the biggest opportunity in Greater Manchester to attract inward investment and long-term economic growth, focusing on advanced materials and the manufacturing sector. This is a long-term ambition that will take significant resources and time to deliver. This document sets out what needs to be done during 2024 / 2025 to ensure real progress is made and the overall ambition is realised in years to come.

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2. VISION

The MDZ will utilise its expertise and influence to unite local stakeholders to unlock funding, drive forward progress and deliver the vision. The over-arching Atom Valley vision can be summarised across the following nine points¹.

- 1. Atom Valley's vision is to create a dynamic, interconnected manufacturing mega-cluster, blending innovative world-class industry with ground-breaking research and development.*
- 2. Unmatched in its size and scale in Greater Manchester, it will create 1.6 million square metres of employment land for industrial uses and 7,000 zero carbon homes across three development sites in Bury, Oldham, and Rochdale, creating 20,000 new good quality jobs.*
- 3. Led by a partnership of developers, industrialists, universities, and local government, Atom Valley will develop market-facing strategies to secure the public and private sector investment needed to realise the transformational opportunity.*
- 4. Taking inspiration from successful examples such as the London Docklands and Salford Quays, Atom Valley will take a long-term approach to deliver large-scale regeneration and build a nationally significant industry cluster in one of the most deprived parts of the UK, enhancing national prosperity and delivering levelling up.*
- 5. Atom Valley will attract UK and international firms who want to build new manufacturing plants, SMEs who want to scale-up into modern premises, spinouts and start-ups who are ready to move from the lab to the factory, as well as businesses and individuals who simply want to benefit from international standard R&D skills and facilities.*
- 6. Atom Valley will capitalise on existing frontier sector strengths in advanced manufacturing, materials, and machinery in the local area. It will be integrated with Greater Manchester's internationally significant concentration of R&D and innovation assets in sustainable advanced materials and industrial digitalisation which are predominantly, but not exclusively, located on the Oxford Road Corridor.*
- 7. To catalyse the Atom Valley cluster, specialist premises and facilities to deliver large-scale R&D, pilot new applications of cutting-edge manufacturing technologies, and deliver skills training will be created. These open access facilities will also accelerate the diffusion of innovative technologies and approaches to manufacturing firms across Greater Manchester and beyond.*
- 8. Strategically located on the M62 corridor, and already just twenty minutes from central Manchester and 30 minutes from Manchester Airport, major new investments into road, rail, tram-train, and bus infrastructure will enable residents from across Greater Manchester to access jobs on the sites, Atom Valley firms to recruit from one of the UK's largest labour pools, and businesses to access suppliers and markets more effectively.*
- 9. Based in a city region with industry, innovation and partnership in its DNA, Atom Valley will be a model for a new form of greener, inclusive development that drives shared prosperity for Greater Manchester, the North of England and the UK as whole.*

¹ The full Vision and more information about Atom Valley is available at www.atom-valley.co.uk.

3. BUSINESS PLAN KEY OBJECTIVES

This Business Plan sets out the activity that the Atom Valley Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ) Board will oversee during 2024 / 2025 to deliver the long-term ambitions and vision for Atom Valley. The following items are priority workstreams that will accelerate delivery and enable tangible progress to be realised:

1. Endorsement of the Atom Valley SOBC;
2. Start on Site for the SMMC Project;
3. For Northern Gateway:
 - a. Implementation of a detailed Business Plan for Northern Gateway complementary to this MDZ Business Plan;
 - b. Agree and implement an appropriate delivery strategy;
 - c. Agree the Development Framework, including transport, phasing, and infrastructure, and adopt SPDs reflecting the same; and
 - d. Develop and implement a strategy for government engagement, including creation of business cases for increased strategic infrastructure investment.
4. For Stakehill:
 - a. Completion of the Stakehill Outline Business Case; and
 - b. Progress and adopt an Infrastructure-Led Spatial Masterplan

The preparation of the items 3 to 7 above will also play a key role in understanding how to best prioritise funding allocations to ensure maximum delivery of outcomes.

4. ATOM VALLEY MDZ BOARD GOVERNANCE

The Atom Valley MDZ Board oversees the alignment and agreement of long-term aspirations and strategy for the sites within the MDZ, whilst developing and maintaining strategic relationships with key external stakeholders. In addition, it provides a centralised and consistent forum for the resolution of high-level issues encountered during the delivery of the three sites programmes and projects that have been escalated from the Project Boards.

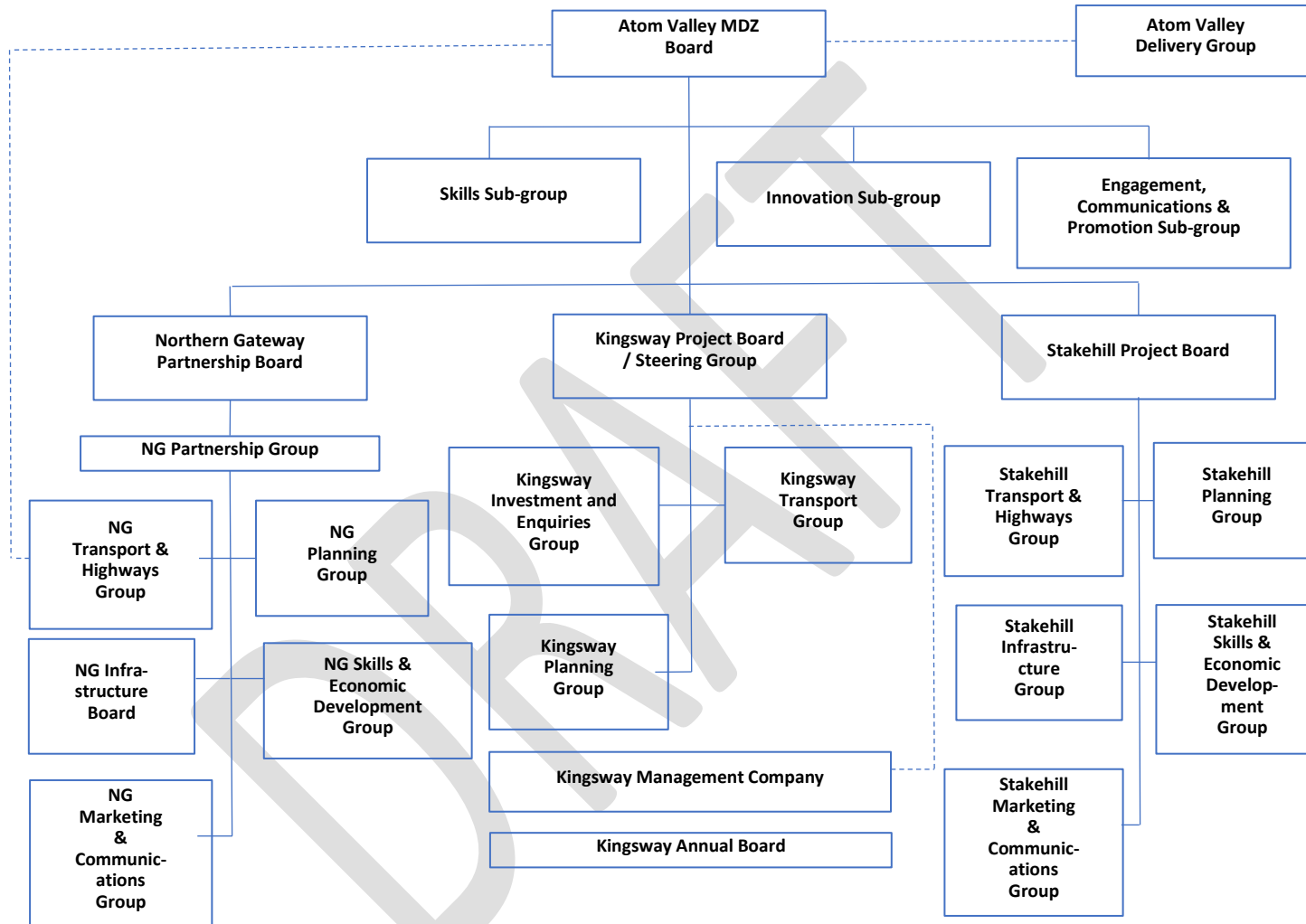
The main purpose of the MDZ Board is to:

- Set in place a time-limited but long-term structure and business plan that would sit outside other organisational contexts and pressures. This will ensure that there are committed and certain resources in place to underpin its investment strategy
- Assist in strategically focussing development activity across the area which takes account of interdependencies, between the various components of the development process and assets in operation and the significance and timing of these components.
- Deliver the single institutional mechanism for land assembly, masterplanning, development facilitation, site preparation, infrastructure and place creation; and the ability to harness the resources of local and national government to secure maximum impacts and efficiency.
- Have the profile and ability to create a diverse mix of investment propositions to take to the market.
- Have the profile to procure development partners, where this is required, underpinned by land sale agreements or joint ventures between public and private sector partner.
- Be able to bring together appropriate experience and capacity in development and place-making from across the public sector, and at Board-level to create the momentum to support delivery of a long-term and complex change programme.
- Direct the development of project briefs and business cases.
- Provide a regular forum for considering and resolving key strategic issues.
- Provide a clear direction and steer to project.
- Clarify and set programme requirements and direction.
- Remain focused on key principles deferring detailed analysis to sub groups.
- Monitor high level risks and issues.

The MDZ Board has formed the following Sub-Groups that are tasked with the delivery of Atom Valley:

- Northern Gateway
- Kingsway Park (incorporating SMMC)
- Stakehill
- Engagement, Communications and Promotion
- Skills
- Innovation

An organogram of the Atom Valley groups structure is set out below:



5. NORTHERN GATEWAY DELIVERY SUB-GROUP OBJECTIVES FOR 2024 / 2025

5.1 Overview

The Northern Gateway development comprises two land parcels allocated in PfE; JPA 1.1 at Heywood/Pilsworth, a nationally significant proposal for employment-led development, and JPA 1.2 at Bowlee/Simister, a large residential development. The site straddles the border of Bury and Rochdale and occupies a strategic location adjacent to the M60, M62, and M66. Market analysis considers that this, together with the scale of the opportunity, will attract high quality businesses and employment opportunities.

The Northern Gateway site is now firmly engrained within several Greater Manchester strategies and plans, with support from the Combined Authority. It has the potential to be genuinely transformational and to be a key driver in rebalancing the Greater Manchester economy by boosting the competitiveness of the northern districts. The extent of the site presents a complex delivery challenge on a huge scale.

5.2 Governance

The Northern Gateway Partnership Board will provide strategic support and direction to the project, with a particular focus on the interface between public and private sector interests including the Local Authorities, Combined Authority, the Northern Gateway Delivery Vehicle (NGDV). The Partnership Board will provide a centralised and consistent forum for the resolution of high-level issues where public and private sectors intersect in the delivery of Northern Gateway.

The main purpose of the Partnership Board is to:

- Provide a regular forum for considering and resolving key strategic and delivery critical issues collaboratively across the public and private sectors;
- Provide clear direction to Northern Gateway activities with a public/private interface, recognising the needs and priorities of relevant stakeholders;
- Monitor high level risks and mitigating actions in response to the same; and
- Report into the Atom Valley MDZ Board.

Membership comprises:

Lynne Ridsdale - Chief Executive, Bury Council (Chair)
Steve Rumbelow - Chief Executive, Rochdale Council
Simon Noakes - Executive Director, GMCA
Linda Shillaw - Chief Executive, Harworth Group
Andrew Russell - Chief Executive, Russell LDP
Hollie Good (Minutes / Administration) - Bury / Rochdale Council

Representatives of other key stakeholders will attend as appropriate, based on requirements for additional support and knowledge. It is likely that private sector membership of the Partnership Board will be expanded to include representatives of other major land interests as the project matures.

5.3 Workstreams and Objectives

Focus will be directed towards:

- a. Implementation of a detailed Business Plan for Northern Gateway complementary to this MDZ Business Plan;

- a. Agreeing and implementing an appropriate delivery strategy;
- b. Agreeing the Development Framework, including phasing, infrastructure, and funding models, and adopt SPDs reflecting the same;
- c. Identifying the transport interventions, including public and active travel options, required to support project delivery and creating strategies for the delivery of the same, including the preparation of business cases for early investment in transport infrastructure; and
- d. Developing and implementing a strategy for promotion of the project, with a focus on government engagement, including creation of business cases for increased strategic infrastructure investment.

There needs to be a refocusing of the existing operational arrangements for Northern Gateway to better drive delivery of the project. A range of options are under consideration, including a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC). Subject to the outcomes of the appraisal of the available options, and securing the appropriate approvals, it is envisioned the preferred approach will be implemented in the forthcoming 12 months.

PfE requires development at Northern Gateway to be in accordance with a comprehensive masterplan, design code and infrastructure phasing and delivery strategy that has been agreed with the local planning authorities (LPAs) to manage the phasing and type of delivery. A Development Framework will be developed for Northern Gateway by Bury and Rochdale Councils, working in partnership with the Northern Gateway JV and other relevant stakeholders as the basis of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to be adopted by the Councils. SPDs are a material consideration in decision-making for planning applications so the Development Framework is an essential enabler for the timely determination of applications for Northern Gateway. The first planning application is expected to be submitted within the next 12 months.

Transport is a significant enabler for the successful delivery of Northern Gateway. The following transport-focused work will be undertaken to underpin a robust case for the overall scope, cost and importance of transport interventions at Northern Gateway:

- **Transport and Highways Delivery Plan:** Coordination of all Transport and Highways work streams (SRN, Public Transport, Active Travel, Tram-Train and Local Highways) to provide a fully integrated plan to assess priorities and assist in the allocation of both revenue and capital funding;
- **Strategic Road Network (SRN) Improvements:** Preparation of options and business cases to support required improvements to provide augmented SRN access into Northern Gateway. This includes engagement with National Highways and their Project Control Framework (PCF) process; and
- **Local Highways Mitigation:** Continuation of modelling, design and project management to ensure the Local Highways Network can adequately support the Northern Gateway ambitions, including finalisation of Western Access designs and commencement of works, supported by Investment Zone funding.

Northern Gateway is a transformational, nationally significant, project, with dependencies on substantial infrastructure enhancements with associated sizeable costs which will exceed the current capacity of the public sector in Greater Manchester to support. As such it is necessary to advocate to national government, making the case for the required investment ahead of end users being identified to enable attraction of major private investors. This will form part of the GM input to the Autumn 2024 Spending Review and process that follows.

6. KINGSWAY BUSINESS PARK / SMMC DELIVERY SUB-GROUP OBJECTIVES FOR 2024 / 2025

6.1 Overview

Kingsway Business Park is managed by the Kingsway Partnership, which comprises Rochdale Council, Rochdale Development Agency, Homes England and Wilson Bowden Developments (development partner).

Located next to J21 of the M62 and with its own Metrolink stop, it covers an area of 420 acres (169 hectares), of which 275 acres (117 hectares) are development land, with the remainder being primarily environmental green space. Some 75% of employment land has already been developed out, supplying just under 4m sq ft of employment space and in the region of 5,000 jobs.

The SMMC proposals form a key element of the Kingsway Park and wider Atom Valley vision. SMMC is being brought forward by Rochdale Council and the Rochdale Development Agency (RDA) in partnership with the National Physical Laboratory (NPL) and is seen as a catalyst for the creation of an innovation district within Rochdale. SMMC's main activities will include the development of new innovations in advanced machinery and manufacturing processes.

SMMC will also have a significant educational component which hopes to “level up” the local area with skills and training in the advanced machinery industry, and foster deeper links between higher education facilities and industry leading businesses.

6.2 Governance

The Kingsway Project Board (known as Kingsway Steering Group) will oversee the alignment of long-term aspirations and strategy for Kingsway Business Park whilst developing and maintain strategic relationships with key external stakeholders. The Project Board will provide a forum for the resolution of high-level issues encountered during the delivery of the Kingsway programme and projects. The main purpose of the project board is to:

- Direct the development of project briefs and business cases
- Provide a regular forum for considering and resolving key strategic issues
- Provide a clear direction and steer to projects
- Clarify and set programme requirements and direction
- Remain focused on key principles deferring detailed analysis to sub groups
- Monitor high level risks and issues
- Report in to the Atom Valley MDZ Board.

Membership comprises:

- Steve Rumbelow, CEO Rochdale Council (Chair)
- Mark Robinson, Director of Economy and Place, Rochdale Council & Chief Executive of Rochdale Development Agency
- Levi Rickell, Managing Director, Rochdale Development Agency

- Richard Duddell, Senior Project Manager, Rochdale Development Agency
- Christine Buckley, Kingsway Team Administrator, Rochdale Development Agency
- Nick Richardson, Managing Director, Wilson Bowden Developments
- Henry Henson, Development Director, Wilson Bowden Developments
- Dave Ellis, Construction Director, Wilson Bowden Developments
- Ian Smith, Planning Manager, Wilson Bowden Developments
- Simon Herring, Homes England.
- Ross Nicolson, Homes England

The Kingsway Project Board meets every 3 months.

Three groups sit below the project board:

- The Transport Group – meets every three months. Purpose: to discuss Transport and Travel matters relating to Kingsway Business Park
- The Investment and Enquiries Group - meets every month. Purpose: to discuss current position with regard to properties at Kingsway and to seek to link them to known investment enquiries.
- The Planning Group – meets every month or as required. Purpose: to discuss current and future planning matters

The Kingsway Management Company is a separately constructed legal entity which manages the communal areas of the business park, by way of applying service charges to all owners and occupiers. It meets every three months.

6.3 Workstreams and Objectives:

The on-going design and delivery of SMMC is the main priority of the Sub-Group. A planning application is anticipated to be submitted in Summer 2024 and a start on site within the 2024 – 2025 financial year.

Discussions around Subsidy Control, gap funding options and operational management structures will also be worked on in parallel with the property development elements. The operational management structure will include the integration of NPL's new metrology function which will see ten staff members based at SMMC.

The success of SMMC is closely linked to the upskilling and reskilling of local communities across Atom Valley to ensure they have the skills required from future businesses associated with SMMC and its industry clusters. As well as working with Hopwood Hall College to increase the chances of local residents to access current employment opportunities across the Estate, work will continue alongside the Skills and Innovation Sub-Groups to develop a programme of requisite activities and interventions. This will be closely linked to the Greater Manchester Integrated Technical Education system being brought forward across the sub-region. More detail on the Skills Sub-Group proposals for SMMC and Atom Valley is outlined in Section 9 below.

Aside from SMMC, ongoing development and asset management of the Kingsway Estate will continue.

7. STAKEHILL DELIVERY SUB-GROUP OBJECTIVES FOR 2024 / 2025

7.1 Overview

Stakehill Industrial Estate was developed in the 1970s and is located at the end of the A627M Spur, with access from the M62 at Junction 20. The Estate is currently around 90% occupied. Stakehill provides c. 2.9m sq ft of floorspace, spread across some 65 units with a total employment of approximately 3,000 people.

The existing Stakehill is a cross-boundary allocation in PfE (JPA2) which falls within Oldham and Rochdale. Part of the allocation is designated Green Belt and will be allocated for:

- 150,000 sqm of high quality, adaptable, employment floorspace within a 'green' employment park setting, with a focus on suitable provision for advanced manufacturing and other key growth sectors.
- 1,680 high quality homes, including larger, higher value properties, to support the new jobs created within the Atom Valley Growth Location and create a sustainable and high-quality extension to the urban area.

7.2 Governance

The Stakehill Project Board will oversee the alignment and agreement of long-term objectives and strategy for the Stakehill zone, whilst developing and maintaining relationships with key external stakeholders.

The Stakehill Project Board will provide a centralised and consistent forum for the resolution of high-level issues encountered during the delivery of the Stakehill programmes and projects.

The purpose of the Stakehill Project Board is to:

- Direct the development of project briefs and business cases linked to the objectives described above.
- Provide a regular forum for considering and resolving key strategic issues.
- Provide a clear direction and steer to projects.
- Clarify and set programme requirements and direction.
- Remain focused on key principles deferring detailed analysis to sub-groups.
- Monitor high level risks and issues.
- Nominate leads on each of the 5 sub-groups who would co-ordinate and report to the Stakehill Project Board.
Report into the Atom Valley MDZ Board.

The Stakehill Project Board Objectives are:

- Support, assist and deliver strategy, programmes and projects which are aligned and consistent with the remit of the Atom Valley MDZ.
- Deliver development and create employment opportunities at Stakehill for residents.
- Identify priorities for investment to support new development.
- Improved and sustainable transport links.
- Create and retain employment.

- Offer better jobs with access to higher skilled employment opportunities.
- Improve training and skills development for residents.
- Create and facilitate new residential communities.

Membership Comprises:

- Emma Barton - Deputy Chief Executive, Oldham Council (Chair)
- Steve Rumbelow – Chief Executive, Rochdale Council
- Paul Clifford - Director of Economy Oldham Council
- Mark Robinson - Director of Economy and Place, Rochdale Council
- Representatives from Oldham Council, Rochdale Council's Planning, Investment, Employment, Regeneration and communications teams (i.e. the 5 sub-groups of transport, planning, infrastructure, skills, and communications) and Rochdale Development Agency
- Membership of the Stakehill Project Board to be extended when appropriate to include or have consultation roles for representatives from TfGM, DfT, National Highways, Transport for the North, DLUC Regional Director of Levelling Up and Representative Education and skills and the Stakehill Industrial Estate Business Improvement District

The Stakehill Project Board meets every 6 weeks.

7.3 Workstreams and Objectives:

The main focus will be the continuation of the on-going Business Case process for the Stakehill proposals and infrastructure-led masterplanning. The Strategic Outline Business Case has been completed. The Project Team are now undertaking a review with the intention of moving on to commissioning a full site-wide infrastructure Masterplan and Outline Business Case over the next 12 months. The Masterplan work will include an assessment of options to accommodate advanced manufacturing options (in line with Places for Everyone aspirations).

One of the main priorities is to improve transport links to Stakehill to ensure local residents have the ability to gain access to new employment opportunities. A firm base has been established to date in respect of Active Travel and Bus Connectivity options modelling with wider transport connectivity modelling to be undertaken.

Over the next 12 months, the Stakehill Project Board will strive to build on the Strategic Outline business case to further enhance the deliverability of the site. This will include a further assessment of enabling infrastructure requirements, site access and establishing the appropriate delivery framework.

The Stakehill Project Board will develop an infrastructure-led spatial masterplan for the site. This will inform planning applications to be considered by Oldham and Rochdale Councils for the site and be an enabler for development delivery.

To ensure consistency of approach and maximise opportunities across a wide range of activity, the Stakehill Sub-Group will liaise and co-ordinate with the Engagement, Communications and Promotion, Skills, and Innovation Sub-Groups.

8. ENGAGEMENT, COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTION SUB-GROUP OBJECTIVES FOR 2024 / 2025

8.1 Overview

The role of this group is to support the Atom Valley Mayoral Development Zone, advising on the development and delivery of effective engagement, communications, and promotion of Atom Valley.

To enable this, the Sub-group will:

- Develop marketable value proposition(s) tailored to different audiences, for example: government/funding bodies, potential inward investors into the UK, and existing / near businesses.
- Develop an understanding of critical supply and demand inputs including development time, constraints and opportunities, infrastructure requirements, occupiers (including large) and sector clustering and specialisation opportunities.
- Utilise existing and commissioned relevant local and global economic research, analysis etc. and identify any gaps in knowledge that will need to be filled to facilitate a robust approach.
- Participate in shaping the distinct market focuses for Atom Valley
- Ensure alignment with the other Atom Valley Sub-groups. The local authority and developer representatives will ensure links with the three site-based sub-groups. Sarah Porru will ensure linkages with the Skills Sub-group and Neil Eccles with the Innovation Sub-group

8.2 Governance

Membership comprises:

- Mark Hughes (Chair), Group CEO, the Growth Company
- Neil Eccles, Head of Innovation, Rochdale Development Agency
- Alison Salas, Marketing Manager, Rochdale Development Agency
- Emma Barton, Executive Director for Place & Economic Growth, Oldham Council
- Sarah Porru, Assistant Director – Regeneration Delivery, Bury Council
- Karen Johnston, Head of Communications, Engagement & Marketing, Bury Council
- Iain Griffin, Development Director, JV – Russell LDP
- Dan Needham, Development Director, JV – Harworth Group
- Dawn Sexton, Atom Valley PM
- Justin Bentham, Strategic Lead, Growth Company
- Sheona Southern / Victoria Braddock, MD / International Marketing Director, Marketing Manchester
- David Hilton, Business Development Director, MIDAS
- Eleri Roberts, Senior Account Manager, Growth Company Business Growth Hub.

The Engagement, Communications and Promotion Sub-group meetings are held monthly.

Three task groups have been established for agreed priority areas to progress actions in between the monthly Engagement, Communications and Promotions Sub-group meetings. They are:

- Marketing & promotion
- Inward investment
- Business engagement.

8.3 Workstreams and Objectives

- **Web Development:** Key vehicle to engage, communicate and promote the vision to key audiences and investors. There is scope to further develop web presence and related social media throughout the year.
- **Production and Agreement of Sub-Group Delivery Plan:** This will include market analysis and focus to ensure successful engagement as well as identifying key priorities for the Sub-Group. Furthermore the Development and promotion of the Atom Valley proposition will occur in relation to target markets & Contestable and Viable Market Segments

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9. SKILLS SUB-GROUP OBJECTIVES FOR 2024 / 2025

9.1 Overview

The Skills Sub-group is central to the delivery of the Atom Valley Vision, which includes attracting new firms and investment and encouraging innovation by existing firms – both of which will require a strong supply of technical skills at a range of levels.

It is essential to the inward investment and innovation aspects of the Atom Valley project:

- Skills will be an essential component in ensuring that the new opportunities brought to Atom Valley are accessible to, and do benefit, existing residents.
- Having a strong skills supply, and a flexible support system for responding to skills demand, will be an attraction to potential investors.
- The engagement of further and higher education, working together to engage business into an innovation infrastructure, will be central to ensuring the alignment of skills strategies with the emerging needs of businesses located in Atom Valley.

The Skills Strategy in Atom Valley will present an opportunity to test, on a local scale, linked to a strategic gateway project, the concept of an integrated technical skills system. This is more complex than just a matching of supply and demand.

On the supply side, the creation of clear occupational pathways through to Level 4 and above opportunities will involve:

- Engaging with current curriculum reforms, in both work based and classroom routes, therefore including T levels and higher technical qualifications, alongside apprenticeships – to make sure these are aligned with demand and are clear in terms of progression for learners.
- Strong direct engagement between employers and providers to design, adapt and deliver curriculum in flexible and relevant ways.
- Recognition of the obstacles presented for learners seeking to progress into technical occupations, by the low levels of achievement in the area, and the need for significant improvements to literacy and numeracy to ensure opportunities are open to all.
- Supporting a culture of technical expertise among partner colleges and training providers, to support the recruitment, development and retention of outstanding staff, and securing their dual expertise as subject specialists and expert teachers.

On the demand side, this will involve:

- Building strong and direct relationships between providers and employers, to undertake training needs analyses, linked to strategies for business growth, and to support a growth in demand for skills in this context.
- The provision of strong careers, advice and information for young and adult learners, so that they understand the current and emerging opportunities in Atom Valley, and the pathways to taking advantage of them.

9.2 Governance

There is a wide range of expertise within the Skills Sub-group, and there is a commitment to updating and extending this, by bringing in additional stakeholders and partners as the project progresses.

However, the core of the expertise will be provided by the three local further education colleges and the University partners.

The group is chaired by Julia Heap, Principal and Chief Executive of Hopwood Hall College.

Meetings will initially be quarterly, but this may change, and there may be the addition of further working groups, on a task and finish basis, as the project develops.

9.3 Workstreams and Objectives

- **Roadmap Skills Strategy:** Working with Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce as they develop the Learning and Skills Improvement Plan for Greater Manchester, the existing College skills analysis processes, and linking across the other Atom Valley sub-groups, as they develop their proposals, to establish a coherent strategy for skills for Atom Valley. This would potentially serve as a pilot for the Greater Manchester Integrated Technical Education system, operating below the City Region, but above the level of the three individual local authorities.
- **A Study of Skills Needs/Gaps:** with the aim of preparing a route plan that would cover all key stages of education through to CPD.
- **Employer Support Programme:** To be developed in conjunction with the Innovation Sub-group, a programme to support employers to engage with Innovation and understand their current and future skills needs.
- **Promoting Technical Learning:** A campaign to raise the profile and importance of technical skills, including new areas of curriculum development, to ensure that all stakeholders in the relevant areas are aware of the opportunities presented by technical learning and the emerging opportunities in Atom Valley.

10. INNOVATION SUB-GROUP OBJECTIVES FOR 2024 / 2025

10.1 Overview

Innovation is a central part of the vision for Atom Valley, as articulated at the first meeting of its board: “*Atom Valley must aim to become a location of international significance doing innovative, high level, high value added, high wage work*”. The support and promotion of innovation and R&D will be a key mechanism by which the vision of Atom Valley will be realised. This will involve developing a network of innovation through extensive links with the city-region’s universities, translational research institutes such as the Royce and the GEIC and the creation of new research centres in Atom Valley, focusing, not on pure research, but on industry engagement, process innovation, the wider diffusion of existing innovations, and, in partnership with existing institutions such as the region’s FE colleges and universities, on skills development.

10.2 Governance

The Innovation Sub-group will:

- Devise, own and drive an innovation strategy for Atom Valley to boost the economy so successful businesses can create products using sustainable methods.
- Identify, understand and support the existing business base, including the barriers that prevent further growth, to help businesses to take advantage of new opportunities.
- Describe the environment required to attract new companies.
- Develop ways to connect with start-ups that want to scale up.
- Embed the Innovation Accelerator programme for the Sustainable Materials Translational Research Centre (SMTRC) into Atom Valley
- Support the development of the GAMMA Centre concept.

The Innovation Sub-group reports to the main Atom Valley MDZ board. The members of the sub-group are:

- Richard Jones (Chair) Vice-President for Regional Innovation and Civic Engagement & Professor of Materials Physics and Innovation Policy, The University of Manchester
- Peter Thompson, Chief Executive Officer, NPL
- Bill Sampson, Chief Scientific Officer, Graphene Engineering Innovation Centre (GEIC) & Professor of Materials Modelling, Department of Materials, The University of Manchester
- Neil Eccles, Head of Innovation, Rochdale Development Agency
- Paul Clifford, Director of Economy, Oldham Council
- John Wrathmell, Director - Strategy, Research & Economy, Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Mike Murray, Chief Technical Officer, the Vita Group
- Luke Vardy, Chief Executive Officer, Cygnet Texkimp
- Yvonne Grady, Head of Innovation, The Growth Company
- Dawn Sexton, Atom Valley Project Manager

Where necessary, further businesses may be invited to join the group, particularly from within the Atom Valley boroughs.

The sub-group meets monthly.

10.3 Workstreams and Objectives

The first workstream to be delivered in 2024/25 will be the further development of the Atom Valley Innovation Roadmap.

The Roadmap will draw on national strategy documents and the GM Innovation Plan. The document will be tailored to the existing industry bases of Rochdale, Oldham and Bury, together to realise the strategic goals of GAMMA within Atom Valley and associated programmes such as the Advanced Machinery and Productivity Institute, the ambitions of the region to host a Sustainable Materials Translational Research Centre (building on the pilot programme funded through the GM Innovation Accelerator), Made Smarter and the wider Net Zero goals of the city region.

The Atom Valley Innovation Roadmap should be regarded as a living document that will continue to evolve in-line with the wider strategy of Atom Valley MDZ.

The following deliverables are proposed:

1. Appointment of delivery resource / consultancy
2. Review of existing plans and roadmaps to design and facilitate a full day workshop, with key stakeholders to create a roadmap for up to four themes that are linked to the vision for Atom Valley (this could include machinery, materials, modular construction etc.);
3. Design and delivery of further theme development to refine and prioritise actions and outline the scale of opportunity and feasibility for each;
4. PowerPoint report of programme findings with associated Excel Appendices
5. Preparation of a formal document for publication that can be used by the wider Atom Valley Sub-Groups.

Funding has been allocated to various programmes within Atom Valley such as SMMC and SMTRC and each will have associated road mapping exercises that can contribute towards this work.

The Atom Valley Innovation group will support the development and delivery of a number of key innovation programmes that can have an impact on the local area, maximising their impact for the Boroughs of Bury, Oldham and Rochdale.

NPL have instructed the University of Huddersfield to lead on Industrial Engagement on SMMC Strength in Places programme. RDA has a member of staff to work on this aspect of the programme and the objective of the Innovation Group will be to increase levels of participation in the programme from companies located across Atom Valley.

The Strength in Places programme will in late 2023, launch a competition for the remaining funding within the programme. The Atom Valley Innovation Group will identify ways to support businesses within the area to access this funding, alongside accessing expertise that is available through programmes like Innovation for Machinery (I4M).

Similarly, working with partners on the Pilots for Sustainable Materials Translational Research Centre, the Atom Valley Innovation Group will support to link businesses within the Atom Valley area to access the resources that are available through the

Innovation Accelerator programme, support the development of a further revision of the business case for the SMTRC, ensuring businesses within Atom Valley and institutions in the region are able to contribute towards the plans production. This will support the plans to develop a permanent facility in Atom Valley.

Finally, the Atom Valley Innovation Group will monitor and inform the work to build the advanced materials cluster within the North of England, which is being carried out through the p-SMTRC Innovation Accelerator programme, working alongside STFC.

Collectively, work on this programme and joining up activities with GAMMA, will support the development of the business case for the GM Advanced Manufacturing Centre at Kingsway Business Park. The GM Advanced Manufacturing Centre will focus on the “GAMMA triangle” of activities which are the key to GAMMA’s strategy: Sustainable Materials in Manufacturing; Industrial Digitalisation; Advanced Machinery; all underpinned by AI/Machine Learning.

The main focus of the work of the Centre will be the diffusion of innovation which aligns with activities of the Innovation Group.

Collectively, this work to diffuse innovative technology into companies in Atom Valley which will have the most immediate and direct impact on enabling businesses to compete more effectively and create well-paid jobs. And it is this which will play a key role in increasing productivity not just in the Atom Valley boroughs, but throughout Greater Manchester.