



Handsacre to Manchester SOBC



Handsacre to Manchester Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC)

Purpose

Investigate if changes beyond committed schemes would provide further benefits for passengers and freight

The schemes that form the baseline are:

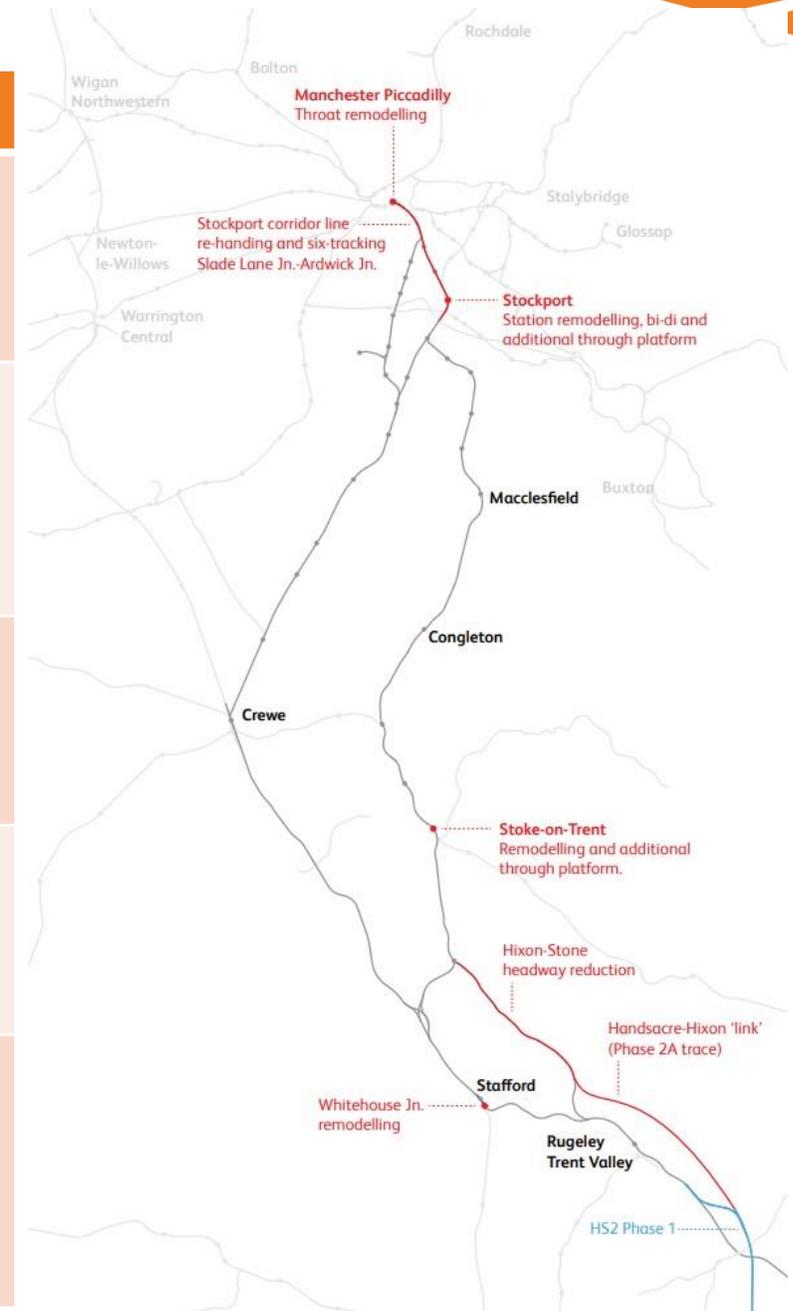
- HS2 phase 1
- Manchester North West Transformation Programme
- Transpennine Route Upgrade

2 “Strategic Advice” documents form the basis for the further changes:

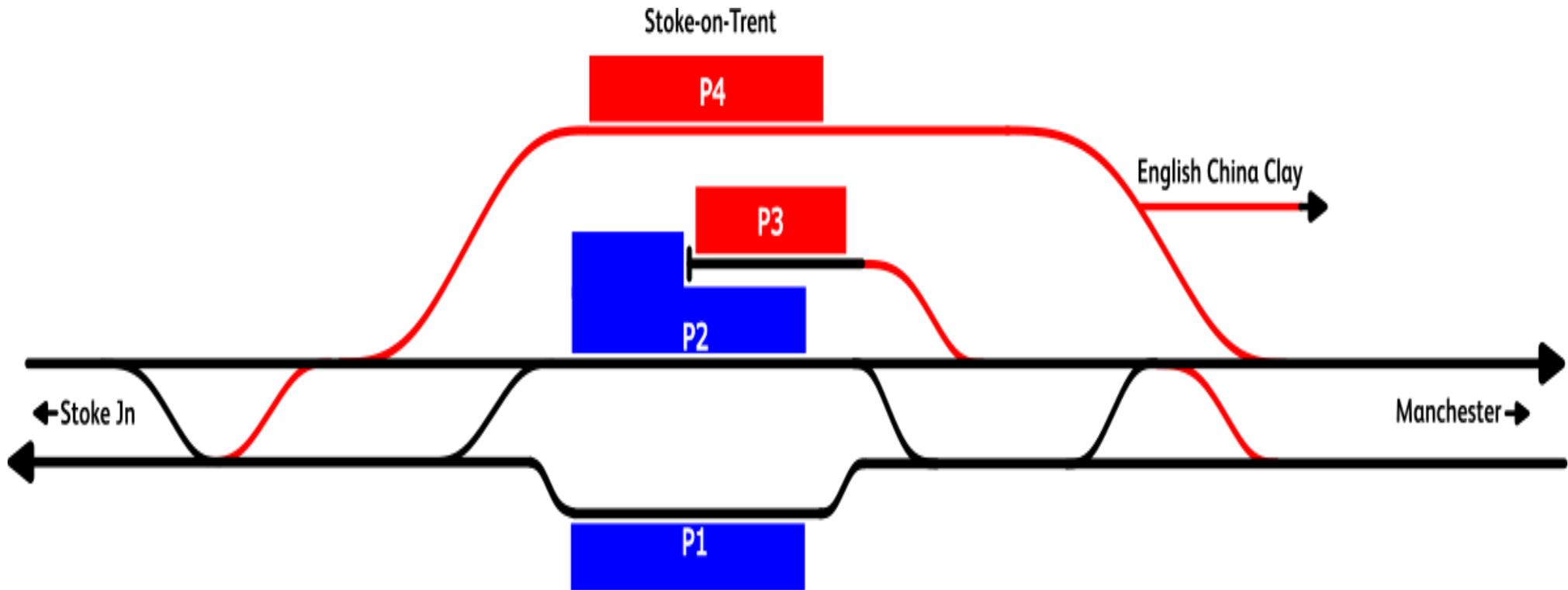
- Staffordshire
- Manchester South

Infrastructure changes for testing

Intervention	Purpose
A new line from HS2 to Hixon (south of Stone on the Stoke-on-Trent line)	Enables services bound for Manchester to bypass Handsacre and Colwich Junctions entirely
Hixon-Stone headway reductions (between Colwich Junction and Stoke-on-Trent)	Enables additional services over this line
Remodelling of Whitehouse Junction (between Colwich Junction and Stafford)	Improves freight flows through the area
Stoke-on-Trent remodelling	Enables additional trains and lengthening of services, with an additional and longer platforms
Stockport-Manchester Piccadilly remodelling	Modernised signalling and track layouts to better match current and future traffic demands, unlocking additional capacity



Stoke layout for testing



Train Service Specification Base

4 Train Service Specifications for testing

1) 'Do Minimum' baseline

Based on the current December 2025 timetable

Added are:

- HS2 Configuration State F (Final state) which has a “one for one” replacement of HS2 services for current Avanti West Coast. The 6 train per hour (tph) HS2 services are Euston-3 x Manchester / 2 x Liverpool / 1 x Glasgow
- 1 additional tph HS2 service Euston-Lancaster
- Manchester North West Transformation Programme Configuration State 3
- Transpennine Route Upgrade

Retains 2 Cross Country services between Birmingham & Manchester via Stoke, to and from Bristol & Bournemouth

Train Service Specification 2

2) Uplifted specification, based on the “Do Minimum” base

Added are:

- 1tph Euston-Manchester via Trent Valley & Crewe – adds connectivity
- 2tph Birmingham Curzon Street-Manchester via Hixon link & Stoke – new services using part of HS2 between Birmingham and Hixon
- 1tph Euston-Stoke via Trent Valley – adds connectivity
- 1 tph Stoke-Manchester stopper (to make 2 tph in total) – adds frequency
- 2 tph London-Crewe Freight trains

Changed are:

- Current 1tph Birmingham New Street-Crewe becomes a Birmingham New Street-Stoke – releases track capacity for the change below
- Current 1tph Crewe-Manchester via Manchester Airport is extended to and from Stoke via Alsager – adds connectivity to Manchester Airport

Net change is +6 tph each way through Stoke and +3 tph each way through Crewe

Train Service Specification 4

3) Further Uplifted specification, based on TSS2 “Uplifted specification”

Added are:

- 1 tph Euston-Manchester HS2 via Stoke, just calling at Stockport – train capacity and faster journey time

Changes are:

- 1 tph Euston-Manchester HS2 via Crewe diverted via Stoke, just calling at Stockport (this makes 4tph Euston-Manchester via Stoke, with 2 just calling at Stockport) – train capacity and faster journey time
- 1tph Cross Country Bournemouth to Manchester diverted via Crewe – enables changes above by swopping the train routing

Removed are:

- 1 tph Stoke-Manchester stopper (reverts to 1 tph)

Retains same number of trains via Stoke and Crewe as TSS2

Train Service Specification 5

4) Hixon link only

Other 4 infrastructure changes are not included

TSS to be created, based on the outputs of the other work

Table of changes between the Train Service Specifications

Service	Routing	Base TSS	TSS 2	TSS 4
Euston - Glasgow	HS2	Y	Y	Y
Euston - Lancaster	HS2	Y	Y	Y
Euston - Liverpool	HS2	Y	Y	Y
Euston - Liverpool	HS2	Y	Y	Y
Euston - Manchester	HS2 & Crewe	Y	Y	
Euston - Manchester	HS2 & Stoke	Y	Y	Y
Euston - Manchester	HS2 & Stoke	Y	Y	Y
Euston - Manchester	HS2 & Stoke			Y
Euston - Manchester	HS2 & Stoke			Y
Birmingham Curxon Street - Manchester	HS2 & Stoke		Y	Y
Birmingham Curxon Street - Manchester	HS2 & Stoke		Y	Y
Euston - Manchester	Trent Valley & Crewe		Y	Y
Euston - Chester	Trent Valley & Crewe	Y	Y	Y
Euston - Crewe	Trent Valley	Y	Y	Y
Euston - Stoke	Trent Valley		Y	Y
Birmingham - Glasgow / Edinburgh	Crewe	Y	Y	Y
Birmingham New Street - Liverpool	Crewe	Y	Y	Y
Birmingham New Street - Liverpool	Crewe	Y	Y	Y
Birmingham New Street - Crewe		Y		
Birmingham New Street - Stoke			Y	Y

Service	Routing	Base TSS	TSS 2	TSS 4	
Cardiff - Manchester	Crewe	Y	Y	Y	
Bristol - Manchester	Stoke	Y	Y	Y	
Bournemouth - Manchester	Stoke	Y	Y		
Bournemouth - Manchester	Crewe			Y	
Derby - Crewe	Stoke	Y	Y	Y	
Stoke - Manchester		Y	Y	Y	
Stoke - Manchester			Y		
Crewe - Manchester		Y	Y	Y	
Stoke - Manchester	Crewe & Manchester Airport		Y	Y	
Crewe - Manchester	Manchester Airport	Y			
Crewe - Chester		Y	Y	Y	
Crewe - Shrewsbury		Y	Y	Y	
Wembley to Crewe (Freight)	Trent Valley	Y	Y	Y	
Wembley to Crewe (Freight)	Trent Valley	Y	Y	Y	
Wembley to Crewe (Freight)	Trent Valley		Y	Y	
Wembley to Crewe (Freight)	Trent Valley		Y	Y	
Bescot to Crewe (Freight)		Y	Y	Y	
Bescot to Crewe (Freight)		Y	Y	Y	
Crewe to Trafford Park (Freight)		Y	Y	Y	
Total trains at Stoke			6	12	12
Total trains at Crewe			21	24	24

Northern Powerhouse Rail

January 2026 announcement by Government

NPR will be delivered in three phases:

Phase 1: Investment on the Sheffield–Leeds–Bradford axis to enable faster, more frequent services

Phase 2: A new Liverpool–Manchester route via Manchester Airport, using parts of the former HS2 Phase 2b route. Work on delivery is due to start in the 2030s

Phase 3: Better connections from East of Manchester across the Pennines, building on the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU). This will follow phase 2

Long-term goal to create a new route from NPR Phase 2 towards Birmingham, tackling West Coast Main Line constraints after HS2 Phase 1. As currently planned, this will be prioritised after the NPR phases listed above

This means the capacity constraint following the completion of HS2 phase 1 still needs to be investigated

Next steps

Planning for the task to be funded in April

Draft programme has a 10-11 month timescale

Provide updates on progress

Produce a Strategic Outline Business Case