Greater Manchester Local Economic Assessment: Stockport

A report for

Association of Greater Manchester Authorities

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Stockport is one of Greater Manchester's strongest districts, with a robust economy, a strong quality of life offer, and excellent connectivity both with the rest of Greater Manchester and externally – sitting on the M60 motorway and West Coast Mainline, and adjacent to Manchester Airport. Stockport's position as one of the most affluent areas of Greater Manchester, alongside Trafford and Bury, is bolstered by relatively quick access to areas of Cheshire and Derbyshire, and significant train links through Stockport and Cheadle Hulme towards Manchester city centre.

1.2 Recent research by the Northern Way classified Stockport as having an 'interdependent' relationship with the rest of the Greater Manchester economy, providing a critical supply of graduate labour to the city's economy, whilst at the same time having a relatively strong economy itself.[1] Stockport has developed centres of high-value employment and attracts significant commuting flows in from the rest of Greater Manchester and its surrounding districts outside the city, leading to mutually beneficial economic relationships.

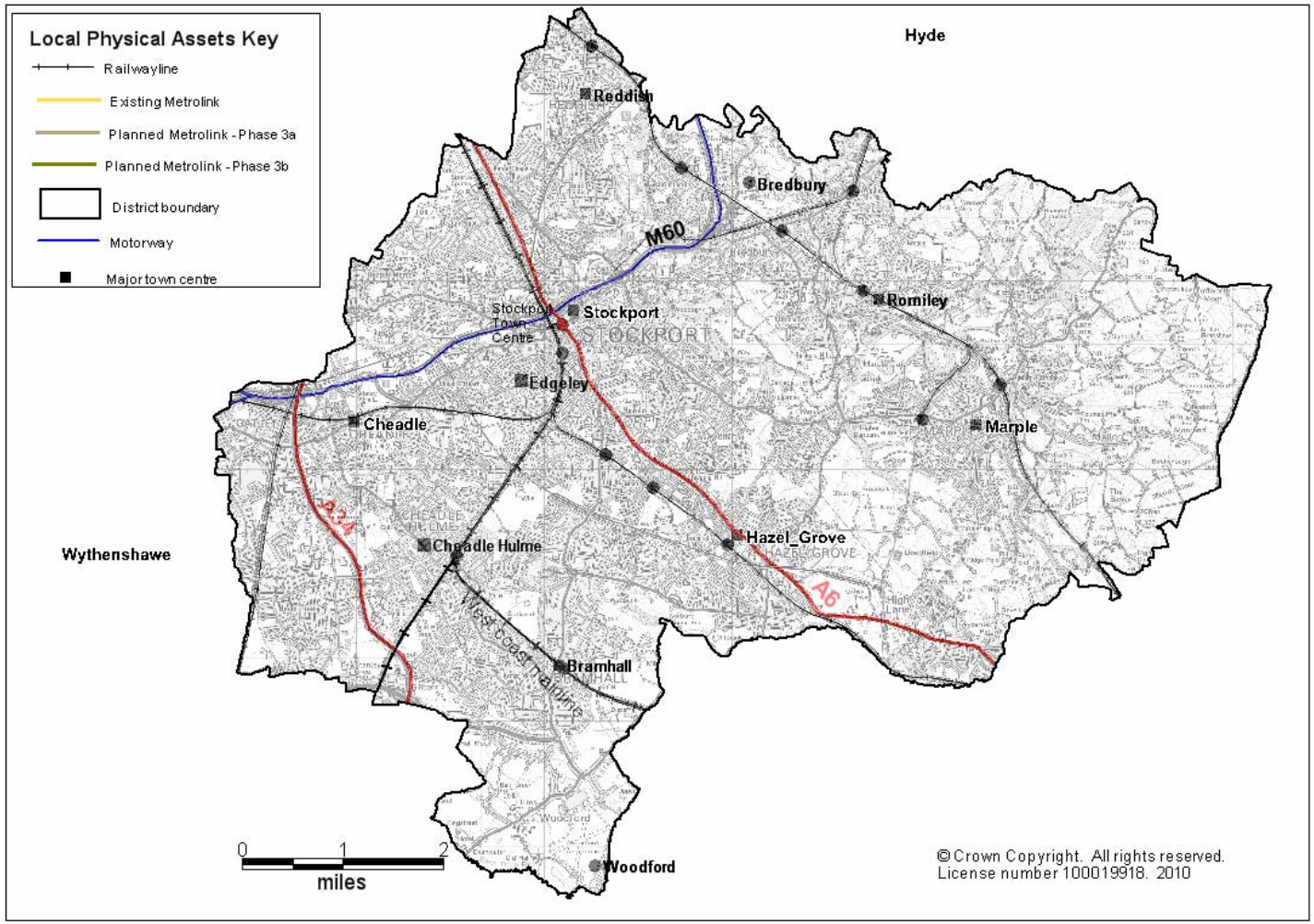
1.3 The borough has a similar industrial profile to the conurbation core and one that is likely to further benefit from the continued growth in Greater Manchester and its centre.[2] Indeed, the UK Competitiveness Index 2010 ranked Stockport marginally ahead of Manchester – showing the borough to be one of the most competitive districts in Greater Manchester (behind only Trafford) – although still ranked below many southern authorities in a UK context (Stockport is ranked 126th nationwide).[3]

[1] Northern Way: City Relationships: Economic linkages in northern city regions, November 2009 http://www.thenorthernway.co.uk/downloaddoc.asp?id=707

[2] Northern Way: City Relationships: Economic linkages in northern city regions, November 2009 http://www.thenorthernway.co.uk/downloaddoc.asp?id=707

[3] UK Competitiveness Index 2010, Centre for International Competitiveness, http://www.cforic.org/pages/ukci2010.php

Figure 1: Stockport local physical assets



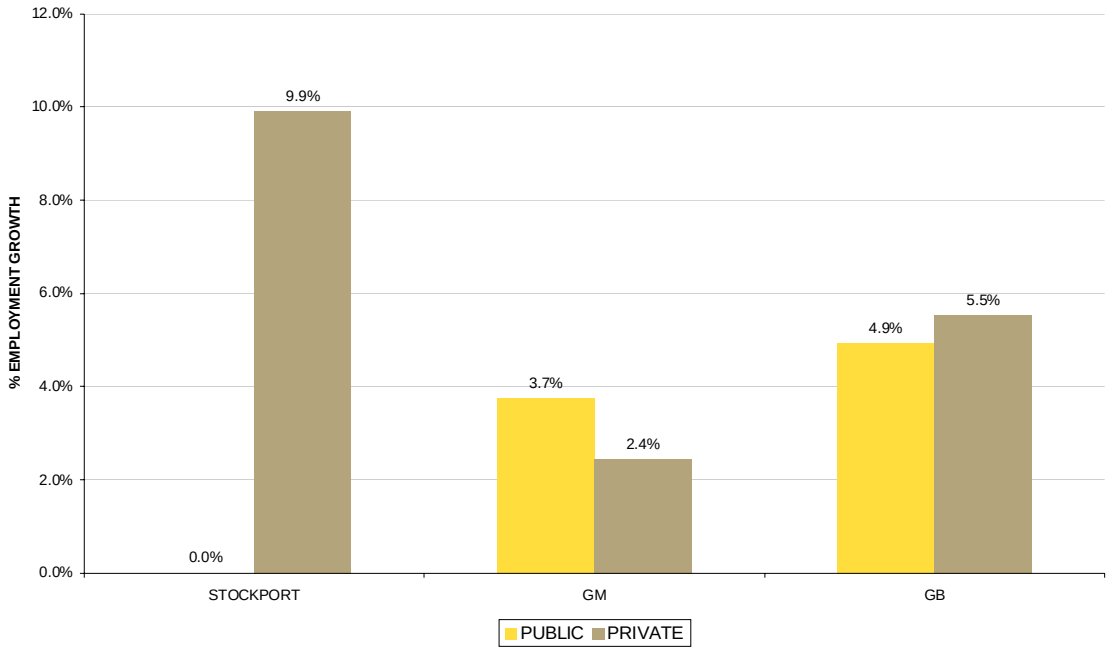
Source: GMPTE, 2010

2 BUSINESS BASE

2.1 Stockport has a strong and productive business base, which is a key driver of growth for the Greater Manchester economy, with GVA per capita far higher than the GM average. The borough sits within GM South, which has been the driver of growth in the conurbation over the last decade and is the UK's largest economic area outside London.[4]

2.2 The driver of Stockport's growth has been its strong private sector – with Stockport second only to Salford in terms of private sector-led economic growth between 2003 and 2008 (growth of 9,500 private sector jobs), well above the GM South growth of 4.3 % and significantly higher than the rate of increase in both GM (2.4%) and Great Britain (5.5%) over the same period. As a result of this economic success, Stockport has the second largest business base (10,200 registered enterprises) and the second highest proportion of private sector employment (workplace-based) in Greater Manchester.

Figure 2: Public sector and private sector growth in Stockport and Greater Manchester 2003-2008



Source: ONS Sub-regional public and private sector Estimates, 2010

[4] GM South comprises the Stockport, Trafford, Tameside and the Cities of Manchester and Salford and is the only NUTS3 area outside of London to generate GVA of over £30bn. (2007 data in ONS Regional Accounts).

2.3 In terms of the structure of its business base, Stockport has a similar sectoral profile to the city core, with above average representation of ICT/Digital Communications, Creative/Digital/New Media, and Financial & Professional Services in the borough, all contributing to higher than average earnings.

2.4 Despite its similar sectoral composition however, the size of Stockport's businesses looks different to that seen in the city core – with a larger proportion of small (1 to 10 employees) businesses; though there is also a concentration of head office activity within the district. The high presence of SMEs is highlighted by the fact that business density rates (businesses per 10,000 of working age population) are higher in Stockport than any other Greater Manchester district except for Trafford, and are significantly above Greater Manchester and national rates. This suggests that Stockport is an attractive location for SMEs – which may include those looking for lower costs than the conurbation core – and can also draw on a skilled resident population to form new businesses. The large number of smaller businesses may also reflect the growth in recent years of sectors with a high presence of SMEs, such as creative and digital industries.

2.5 The fact that business survival rates are also good in the district shows that the quality of new enterprises being formed are of a good standard – with Stockport having the highest percentage of new enterprises that survive for 5 years or beyond in Greater Manchester (46.9% cf. 44.7% in GM).

2.6 The entrepreneurial nature of the Stockport economy is further highlighted by Business Link North West data on high-growth firms[5], which shows that Stockport has the third highest presence of high-growth firms in Greater Manchester (behind the City of Manchester and Trafford) – again reflecting Stockport's strong private sector and key strategic location.

2.7 However, it is informative to note that the data on high-growth firms also shows that Stockport has a relatively low number of high-growth firms as a proportion of the overall Stockport business base. This shows that, although Stockport has a large base of highly-productive and growing firms, there is clearly scope to improve the quality of its business base as a whole, and to further take advantage of its strong transport linkages and skilled resident population.

2.8 In summary therefore, it is clear that Stockport has a large business base that includes dynamic and resilient firms, but also has scope to increase its productivity further. The fact that no single industry or sector dominates the borough's economic base is a significant strength for the economy as it

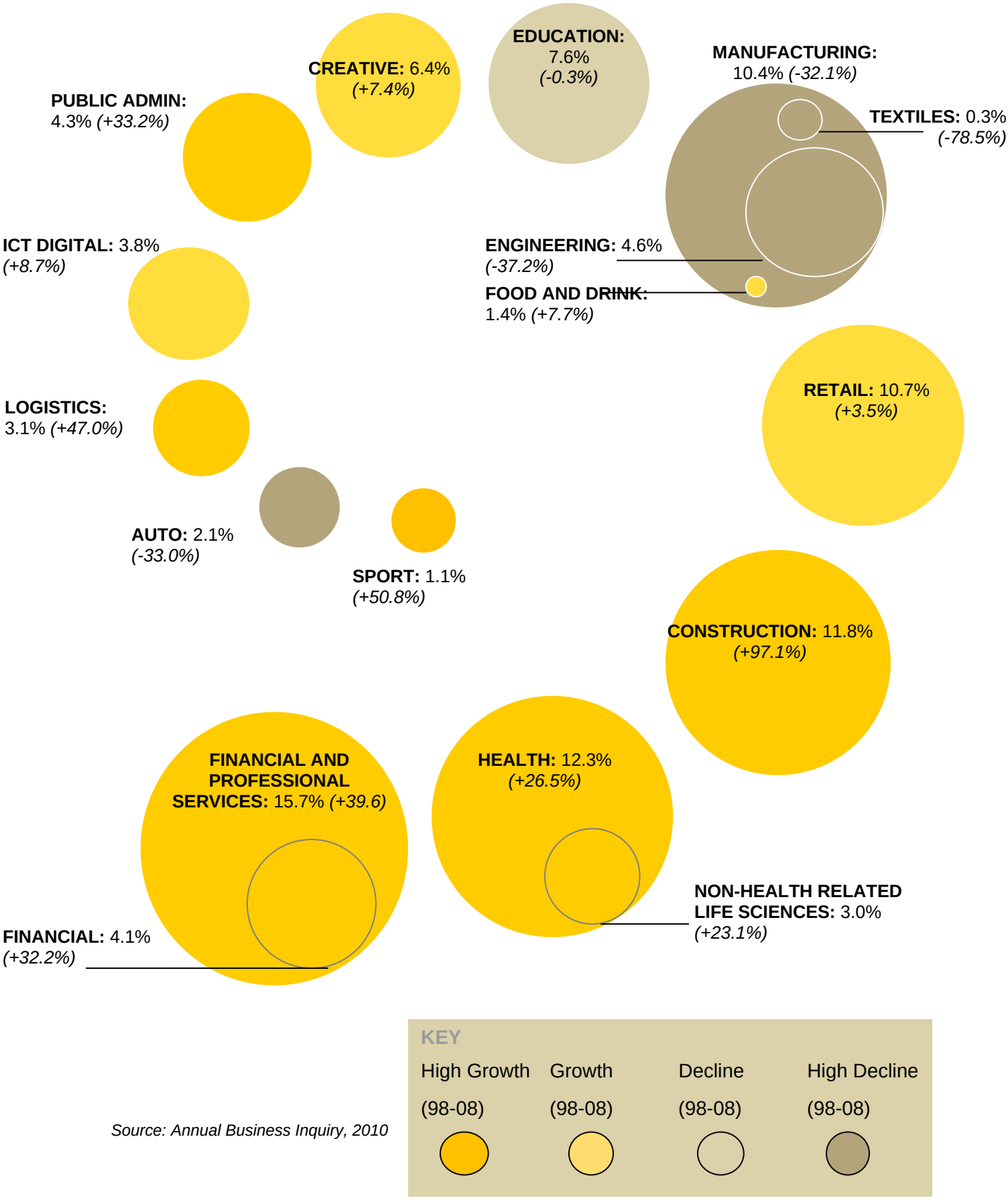
[5] Business Link define a high-growth firm as a business that:

- Is less than 10 years old and has between 10 and 249 employees (at the start of the period) with a 20 % increase in turnover or number of employees in the last year
- Has 10+ employees that has reached an annual turnover of £1M in its first 3 years and who exhibits a potential to grow by 20 % each year for the next 3 years
- Is in a "High Growth Commercial" MOSAIC type and therefore exhibits characteristics or behaviours that are known high-growth drivers.

provides diverse opportunities for growth and spreads risk. The borough is therefore in a relatively good position to cope with the challenges of the downturn and take advantage of opportunities that arise when growth returns.

2.9 Despite the recent economic downturn, which has particularly affected certain aspects of the Financial & Professional Services sector, forecasts show that Financial and Professional Services will be key to both the Greater Manchester and Stockport economies over the medium to long-term and will play a crucial part in driving the recovery.

Figure 3: Stockport employment composition, 2008



KEY

High Growth (98-08)	Growth (98-08)	Decline (98-08)	High Decline (98-08)

Source: Annual Business Inquiry, 2010

PUBLIC SECTOR

2.10 A further indication of the strength of Stockport's economy is that Stockport has the second smallest public sector in Greater Manchester. 21,700 people work in the public sector in Stockport, accounting for 17.1% of the total employment – significantly lower than proportions in GM (20.4%) and in Great Britain (20.3%).

2.11 In terms of the public sector employment, there was no overall change between 2003 to 2008 in Stockport – with employment falling significantly before returning to 2003 levels of employment by 2008, with 21,700 employees (0% overall change). In comparison, the public sector in Greater Manchester and Great Britain saw a large increase in employment, with 3.7% more jobs across the conurbation and 4.9% more nationally.

2.12 The data shows that general secondary education provides a large amount of employment in Stockport, with 3,000 employees accounting for 2.4% of total employment. This sub sector is 14% larger than the national average.

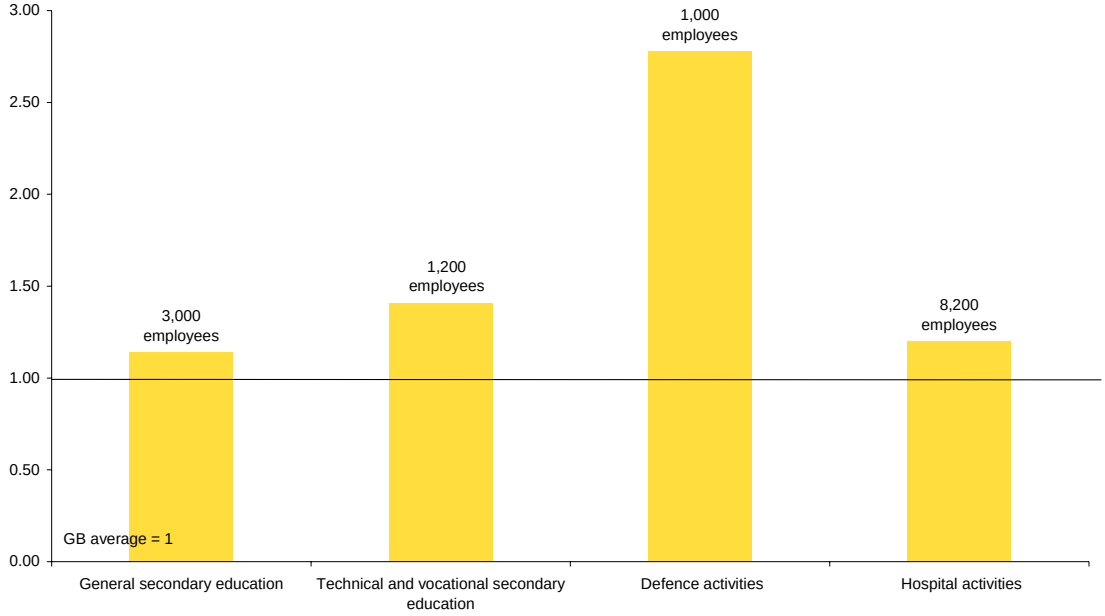
2.13 Technical and vocational secondary education is another important sub sector, accounting for 1,200 jobs. The sub-sector accounts for 1.0% of total employment and is 41% larger than the national average, indicating that it has a significantly higher level of employment than Great Britain as a whole.

2.14 Stockport has a large amount of employment in defence activities, with 1,000 people employed in the sub-sector – largely due to the presence of Territorial Army base in the borough. Stockport also has significant employment provided by BAE Systems and Thales Group. Overall, this sub-sector accounts for 0.8% of employment, but is 178% more employment than the average across Great Britain, indicating that it is a significant cluster of public sector employment which is unique to Stockport in Greater Manchester. Defence and military spending may prove particularly vulnerable to cuts in the current climate – as the planned closure of the BAE Systems site in Woodford in 2012 highlights.

2.15 In absolute terms, the largest amount of employment in Stockport's public sector is provided by the hospital services sub-sector, which employs 8,200 people, comprising 6.4% of employment, this sub sector is 20% larger than the national average. This sub-sector is likely to prove less at risk, given the fact NHS spending has been protected from the wider programme of cuts.

2.16 Primary education (5,100 employees) and general public services (2,500 employees) are also important sub sectors in Stockport, but both have below average levels of employment, indicating that they are less likely to be vulnerable to public sector cuts.

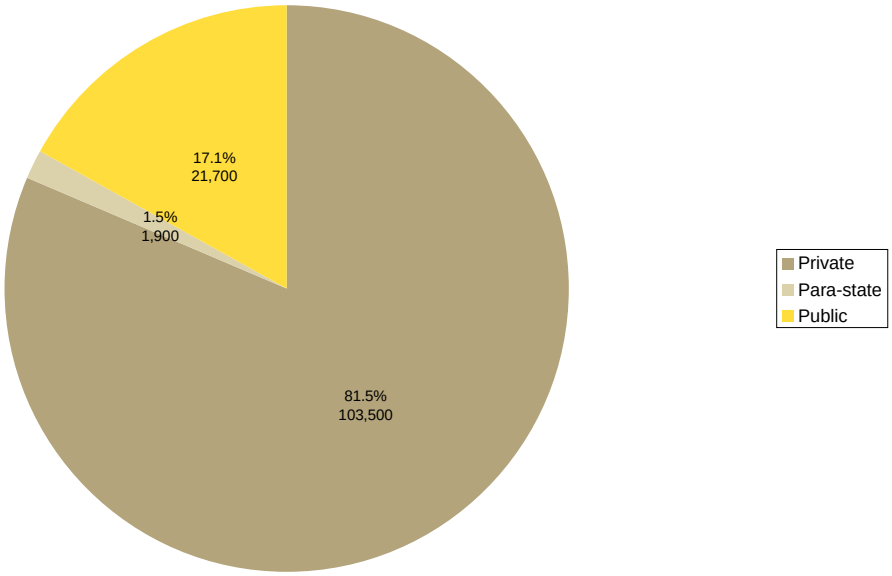
Figure 4: Sub sectors of the Stockport public sector with high levels of employment indexed against the national average



Source: ABI, 2010

2.17 Furthermore, there are an estimated 1,900 jobs (1.5% of total jobs) in the private sector in Stockport that can be classified as "para-state sector", where employment is dependent on government support. This sector is made up of activities like waste collection, the post office and certain research facilities that are heavily reliant on public sector funding and thus may be particularly vulnerable to public sector cuts. But this level of para-state employment is slightly lower than the GM (1.7%) and national (1.6%) averages.

Figure 5: Public sector, para-state sector and private sector employment in Stockport



Source: ONS Sub-regional public and private sector Estimates, 2010

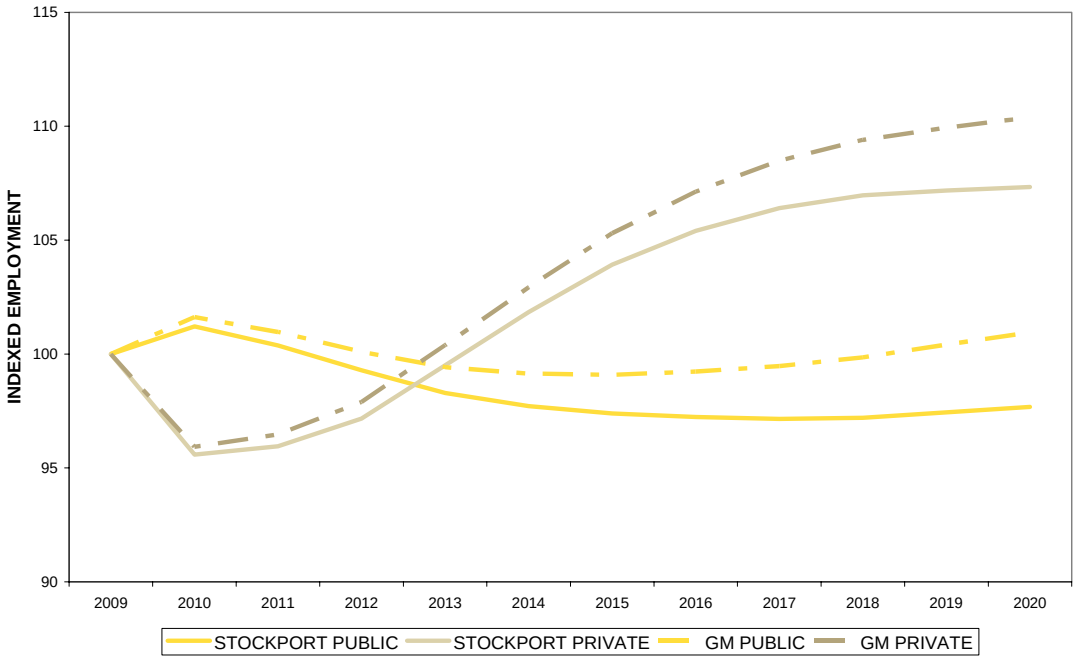
2.18 A recent study into the third sector in Stockport estimated that there are around 3,000 people in paid employment in this sector in Stockport – representing a larger proportion of the workforce than estimated for the wider North West and the rest of England.[6] Whilst this sector is sure to become more important in the coming years, due to cuts in the provision of public sector services and the current administrations Big Society agenda, the sector is also sure to face increased pressures from cuts in funding and loss of public sector contracts.

2.19 The Greater Manchester Forecasting model provides an indication of the likely employment growth in both the private and public sector in the future. As Figure 5 show, public sector employment is likely to decline from 2010 onwards, with a reduction of 1,400 jobs by 2015. This equates to a 4.3% reduction, higher than both GM (3.2%) and the UK (3.4%) – albeit a lower base.

2.20 Whilst the private sector in Stockport is also forecast to decline in the short-term, with employment falling by 3.3% between 2009 and 2011, private sector employment is forecast to see a strong recovery in the long term, with 7.2% employment growth between 2010 and 2015 (6,700 new jobs). This forecast private sector growth is above the UK average of 6.9%, but below the likely GM rate of 8.9% growth.

[6] Stockport Council and New Economy, *Value and Economic Impact of Stockport's Third Sector*, August 2010

Figure 6: Indexed public and private sector in Stockport growth forecasts 2009-2020



Source: GMFM, 2010

BUSINESS BASE: SUMMARY

- Stockport has a diverse, strong and productive economy that has strength in a **variety of sectors**, particularly creative & digital industries, financial & professional services and construction. Stockport has a similar industrial profile to the conurbation core, and one that is likely to benefit from agglomeration economies.
- Despite the recent economic downturn, which has particularly affected certain financial and business services, forecasts show that these services will be key to both the Greater Manchester and Stockport economies over the medium to long-term, and will play a crucial part in driving the recovery.
- The strength of Stockport's private sector is illustrated by the fact that the district has a higher stock of **registered enterprises** than any other Greater Manchester district apart from the City of Manchester, with over 10,200 registered enterprises. There is also a concentration of head office activity within the district.
- **Business density rates** (businesses per 10,000 of working age population) are higher in Stockport than any other Greater Manchester district except Trafford, and are significantly above Greater Manchester and national rates, reflecting its strong business base and attractiveness of Stockport as a location for companies.
- Stockport has a proportionately larger presence of **small businesses** (1 to 10 employees) than Greater Manchester or national averages, again highlighting the enterprising nature of the local economy.
- This may also reflect the growth in recent years of sectors structured around smaller businesses, such as the creative & digital industries.
- Overall Stockport has a smaller **public sector** than the Greater Manchester average and has experienced above average private sector growth over the last five years, offering a foundation for strong private sector employment growth in the future.
- Looking forward, Stockport is in a good position compared to the rest of Greater Manchester in regards to **public sector cuts**. Stockport's public sector employment is concentrated in hospitals, which are likely to be less vulnerable than other parts of the sector, with the coalition government committed to minimising cuts to health. Moreover, forecasts indicate high private sector growth in the future, which should compensate for any public sector cuts.

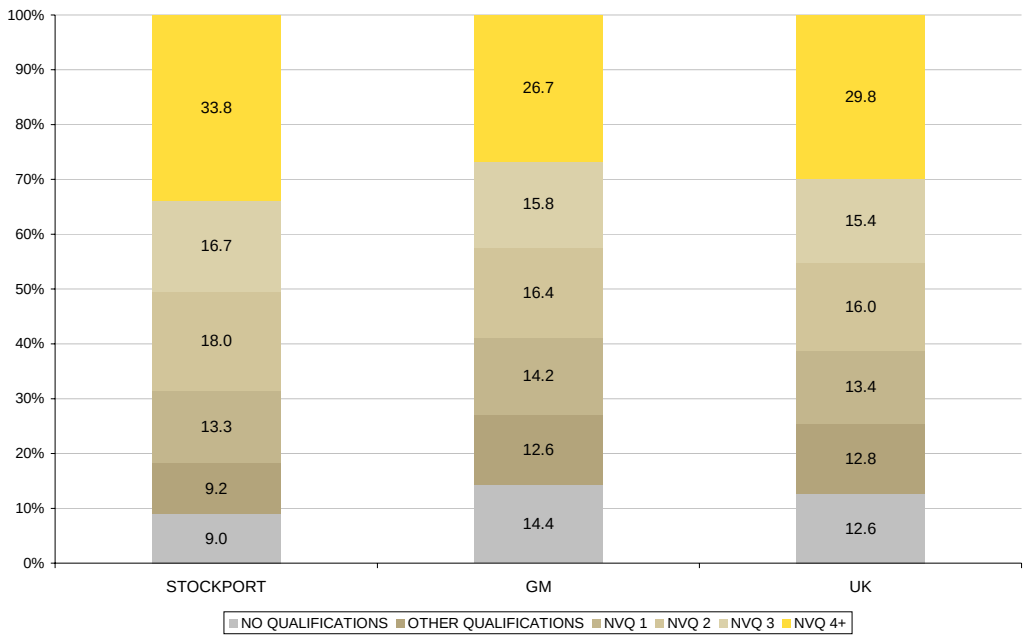
3 PEOPLE

3.1 Stockport is home to a highly skilled, productive labour force, which has played a leading role in helping Stockport to succeed as a business location. The borough is one of Greater Manchester's most populous districts, with a population of over 280,000 people, and represents the second largest economically active population in Greater Manchester.

3.2 Stockport's role as an attractor of skilled labour, and its interdependent relationship with the rest of the conurbation is highlighted by the fact that each day over 41,500 commuters travel to Stockport from elsewhere in Greater Manchester and surrounding districts outside the conurbation to join the workforce. Significantly, the highest number of these commuters hold jobs as 'managers and senior officials' as well as 'associate professional and technical workers'. Stockport is therefore a key exporter of jobs and skills to the rest of Greater Manchester, whilst also being a provider of skilled and knowledge-based employment for residents from the rest of the city.

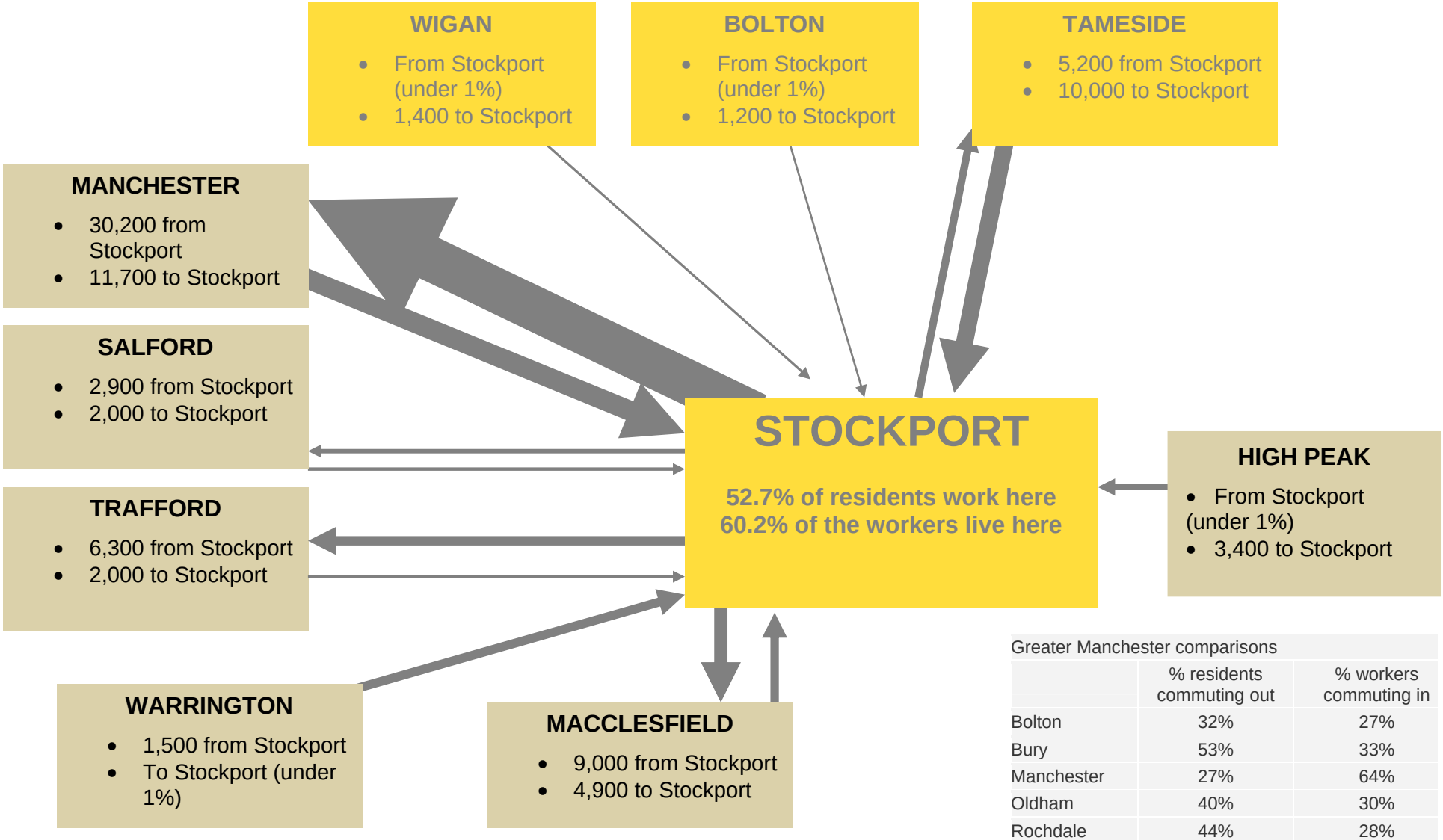
3.3 A significant reason behind the success of the borough's economy is that Stockport has more residents qualified to degree level (Level 4+) than Greater Manchester and national averages. Over one third (33.8%) of Stockport's residents are qualified to degree level or equivalent – above the Greater Manchester average (26.7%), and higher than all other Greater Manchester districts except for Trafford (37.3%).

Figure 7: Stockport resident skills profile, 2008



Source: Annual Population Survey, 2010

Figure 8: Travel to work flows for Stockport, 2008



Greater Manchester comparisons		
	% residents commuting out	% workers commuting in
Bolton	32%	27%
Bury	53%	33%
Manchester	27%	64%
Oldham	40%	30%
Rochdale	44%	28%
Salford	52%	50%
Stockport	47%	40%
Tameside	51%	30%
Trafford	59%	49%
Wigan	41%	21%

Source: ONS Annual Population survey
N.B. Only flows of 1% or more are shown.
Figures have been rounded.

Net exporter of labour to Manchester

3.4 The occupational structure of employment for Stockport residents reflects this high skills base, with the largest group of occupation being managers and senior officials (18.3%), whilst process, plant and machine operatives (6.2%) make up the smallest proportion of employees. A consequence of its highly-skilled resident population is that Stockport's employment rate (74.9%) is the highest in Greater Manchester and is above the UK average (72.8%).

3.5 The ability of its skilled residents to access employment opportunities is highlighted by the fact that Stockport residents have comparatively high-income levels compared to Greater Manchester and national averages, as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Resident and workplace earnings, full-time workers, median wages, 2009

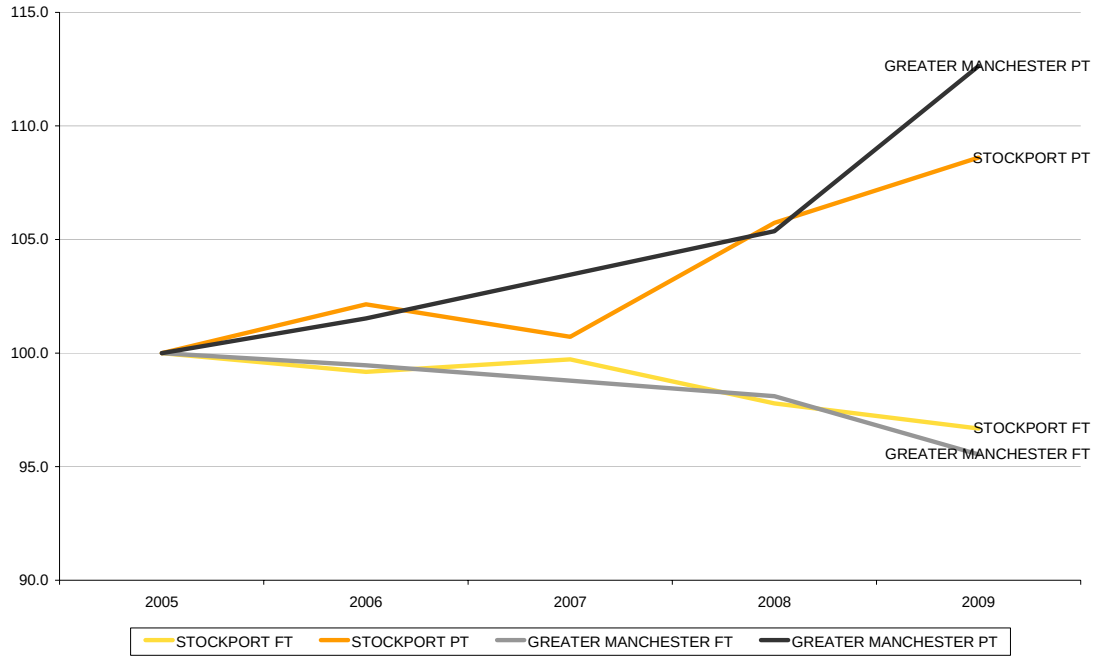
	RESIDENCE			WORKPLACE		
	ANNUAL	WEEKLY	PT HOURLY	ANNUAL	WEEKLY	PT HOURLY
BOLTON	23,164	423	7.5	21,447	408	7.3
BURY	26,056	505	7.8	24,558	448	7.0
MANCHESTER	23,054	448	7.1	26,674	514	8.1
OLDHAM	21,497	433	7.5	20,788	401	7.2
ROCHDALE	23,754	469	7.1	21,115	407	6.6
SALFORD	22,954	432	7.2	23,759	462	8.1
STOCKPORT	25,973	477	8.3	26,368	481	7.9
TAMESIDE	22,814	434	7.4	22,436	431	8.4
TRAFFORD	27,745	537	7.5	27,080	499	6.9
WIGAN	23,152	445	7.1	22,539	424	7.2
GREATER MANCHESTER	**24,016**	**460**	**7.4**	**23,676**	**447**	**7.5**
ENGAND	**26,148**	**496**	**7.9**	**26,138**	**495**	**7.9**
GREAT BRITAIN	**25,931**	**491**	**7.9**	**25,909**	**490**	**7.9**

Source: ASHE, 2010

3.6 Furthermore, Stockport also has amongst the lowest unemployment levels in Greater Manchester – being consistently below national rates. The borough has the lowest spend per resident on Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants in Greater Manchester (£318 compared to £406 in GB) as well as the lowest level of Child Poverty in Greater Manchester at 15.5% (England average is 21.6%).

3.7 However, an issue that is worthy of consideration is that the recession has led to an increase in part-time working, as many workers have been obliged to take on less hours or change their terms of employment in order to stay in work. Whilst the shift from full to part-time work has been lower in Stockport than for Greater Manchester as a whole over recent years (as illustrated in Figure 8 overleaf), part-time work continues to be a larger part of overall employment and this trend is likely to further suppress wage levels going forward.

Figure 9 Resident full-time and part-time workers, 2005 to 2009 (2005 = 100)

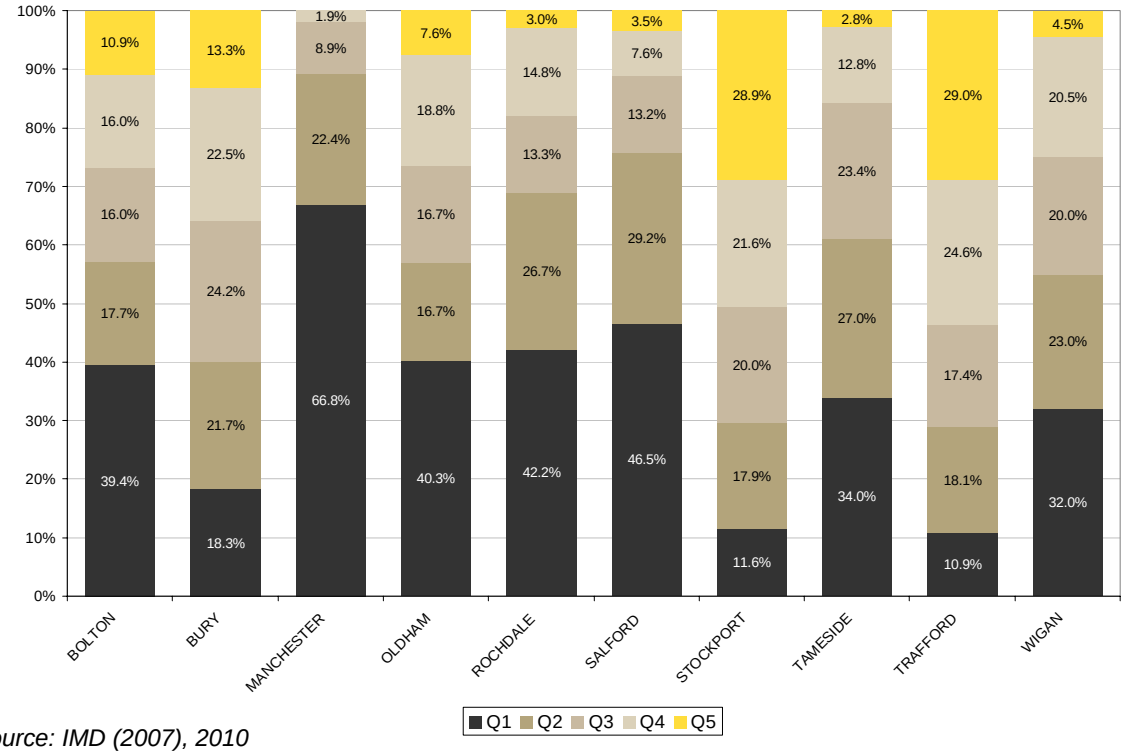


Source: APS, 2010

DEPRIVATION

3.8 Despite Stockport being a prosperous borough – with almost a third of LSOAs in the top 20 least deprived areas – affluence is not spread entirely through the borough, and significant areas of deprivation are apparent within certain neighbourhoods, including Brinnington, Town Centre, Lancashire Hill, and Adswood & Bridgehall, as shown in Figure 9. Indeed, although less than 12% of the district's LSOAs are in the top 20 most deprived, the persistent pockets of deprivation that exist in Stockport mean that it has been ranked as the third most polarised local authority within England (IMD 2007). Stockport has identified numerous priority areas for action within the district – in Brinnington, Adswood and Bridgehall, Lancashire Hill and Heaton Norris as well as in the Town Centre.

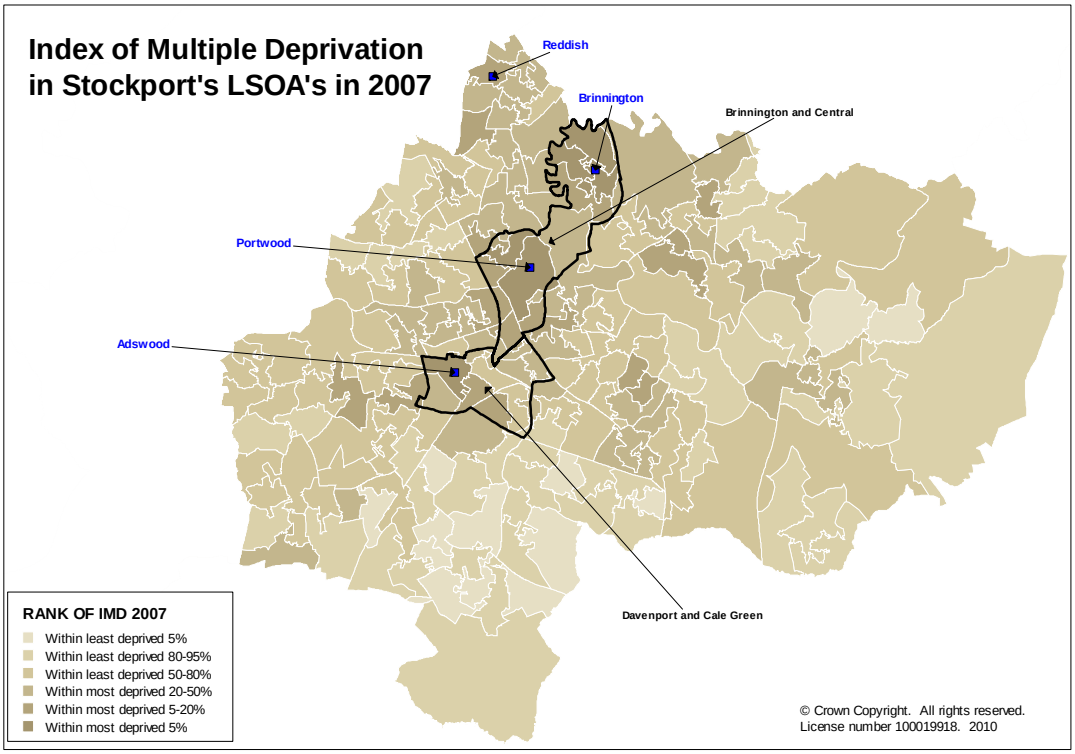
Figure 10 Deprivation in Stockport 2007



Source: IMD (2007), 2010

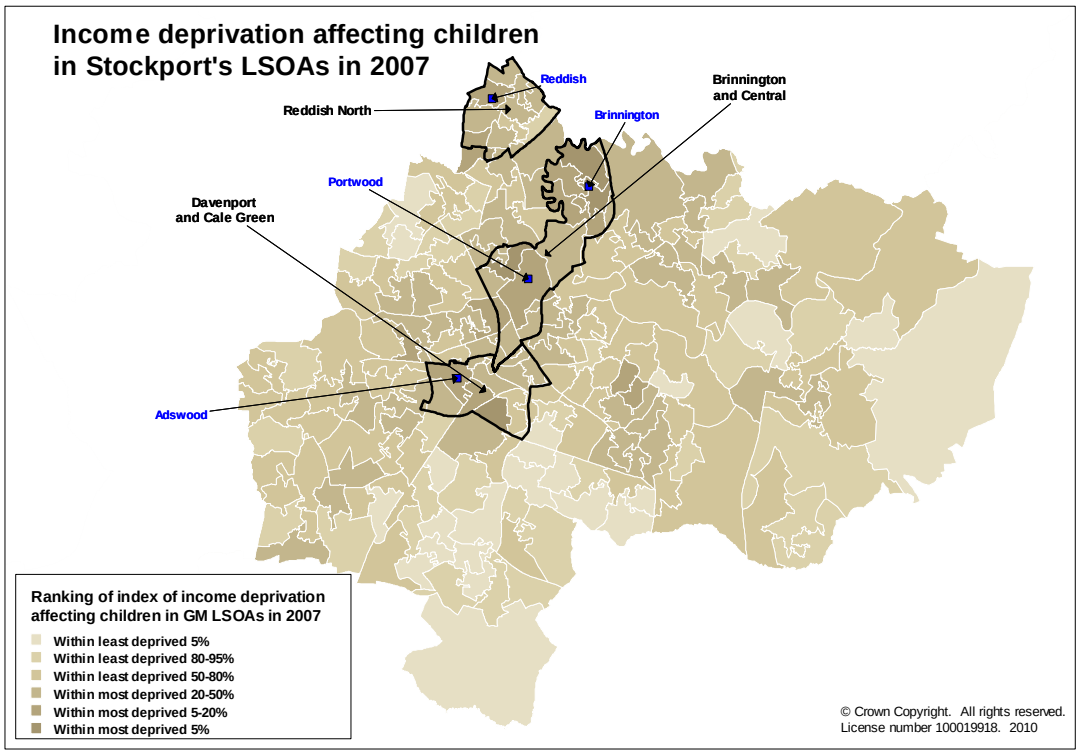
3.9 In terms of income deprivation affecting children, Stockport performs relatively well once more, with just seven of the LSOAs in the most deprived decile nationally. There are 50 LSOAs in the second least deprived decile. Only 36% of Stockport's LSOAs are in the deprived half of the index – the first five deciles.

Figure 11: Stockport IMD, 2007



Source: IMD (2007), 2010

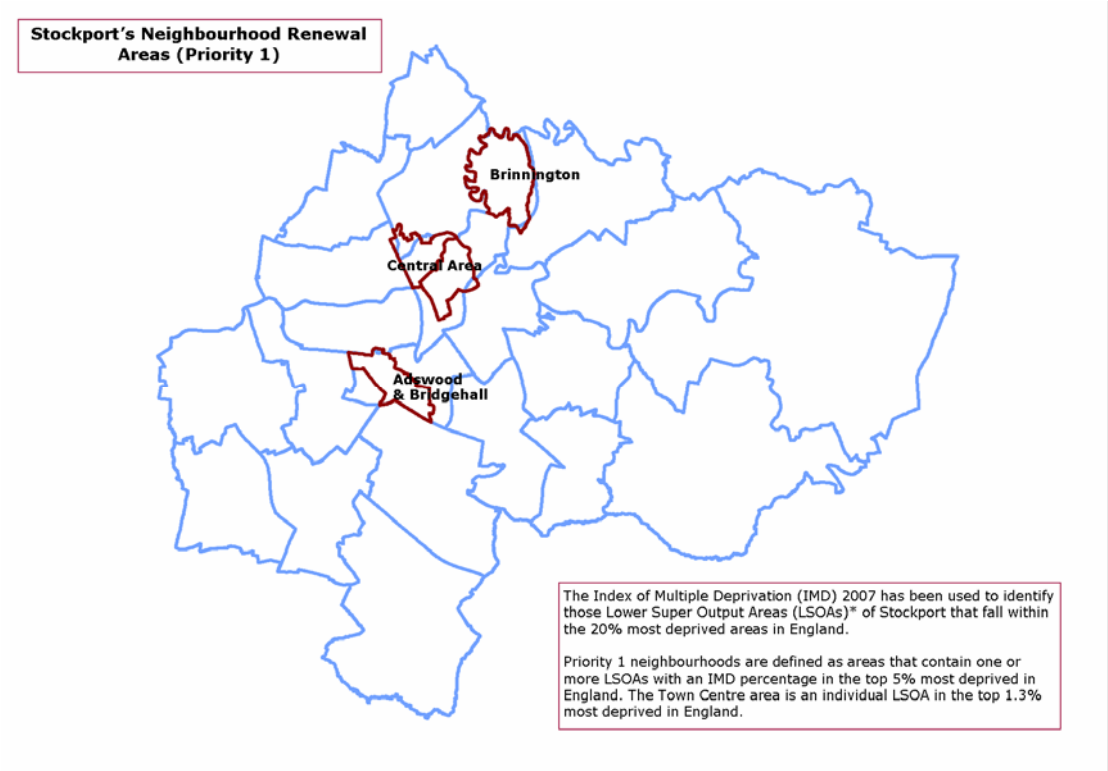
Figure 12: Income deprivation affecting children



Source: IMD (2007), 2010

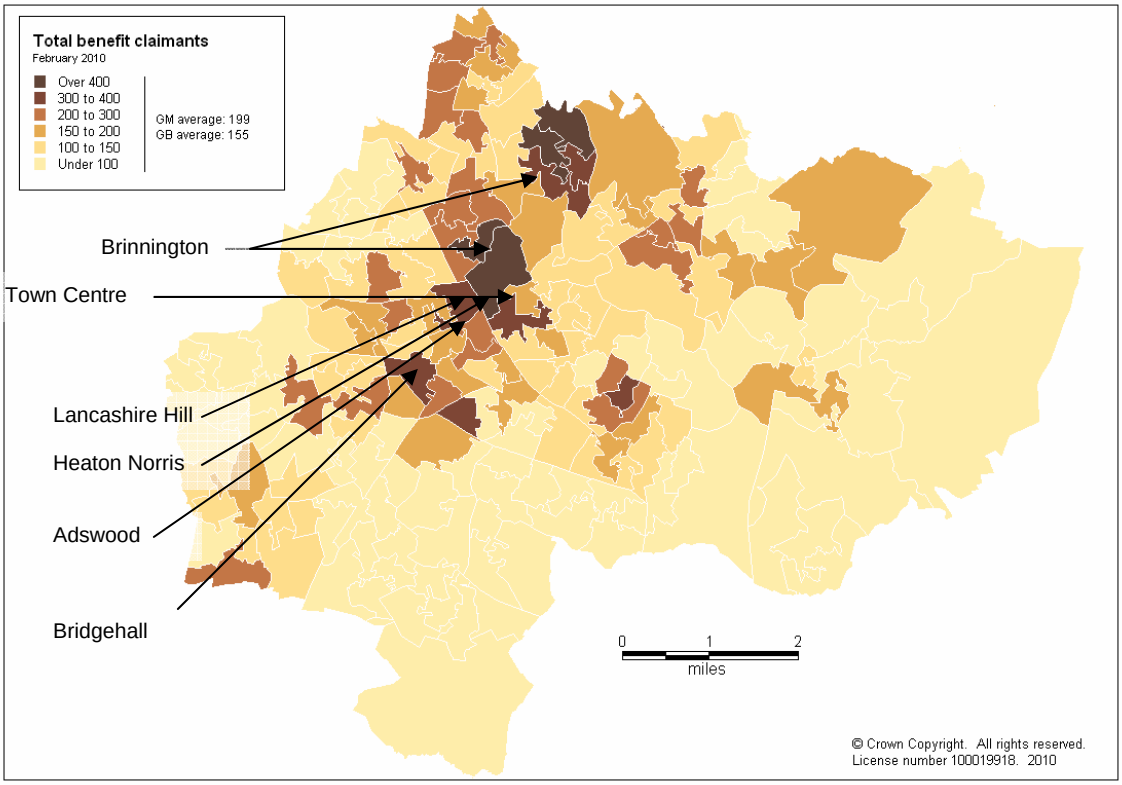
3.10 Whilst polarisation partly reflects the success of Stockport in fostering some very prosperous neighbourhoods and highly-productive enterprises, it also reflects the significant challenges that remain in parts of the borough. Over 5% of Stockport's working-age population still lack basic skills – particularly residing in the most challenging neighbourhoods – and high employment rates in Stockport may serve to mask the increasing problem of youth unemployment in the borough, as well as significant pockets of worklessness in particular deprived neighbourhoods (Stockport's priority neighbourhoods highlighted in Figure 13).

Figure 13: Stockport's Neighbourhood Renewal Areas



3.11 As Figure 14 illustrates, the area east of Stockport town centre holds the greatest density of benefit claimants, with a concentration of social housing. The area from Lancashire Hill through to Heaton Norris has high numbers of total benefit claimants, whilst numbers are also high within the town centre. Simultaneously, areas bordering Tameside – particularly Brinnington, with high numbers of jobseekers, and on the other side of the Tame, East Reddish – also experience concentrations of benefit claimants.

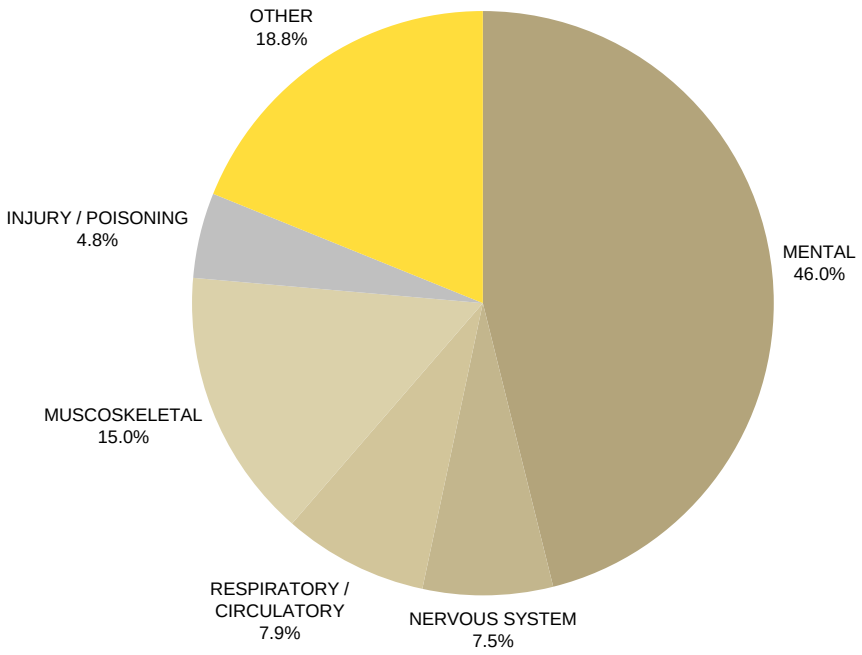
Figure 14: Total benefit claimants in Stockport by neighbourhood, 2009



Source: DWP, Work and Pensions Longitudinal Survey, 2010

3.12 Moreover, although Stockport has seen a relatively small increase in claimants with mental conditions over the last ten years, with 315 new claimants accounting for a 7.4% increase between 1999 and 2009 (GM saw an increase 8.3%), the borough has an above average number of benefit claimants with mental conditions, with 4,565 claimants accounting for 46% of the total. By comparison, 46.1% of Greater Manchester claimants have mental conditions.

Figure 15: Incapacity Benefit Claimants by medical condition in Stockport



Source: DWP, 2010

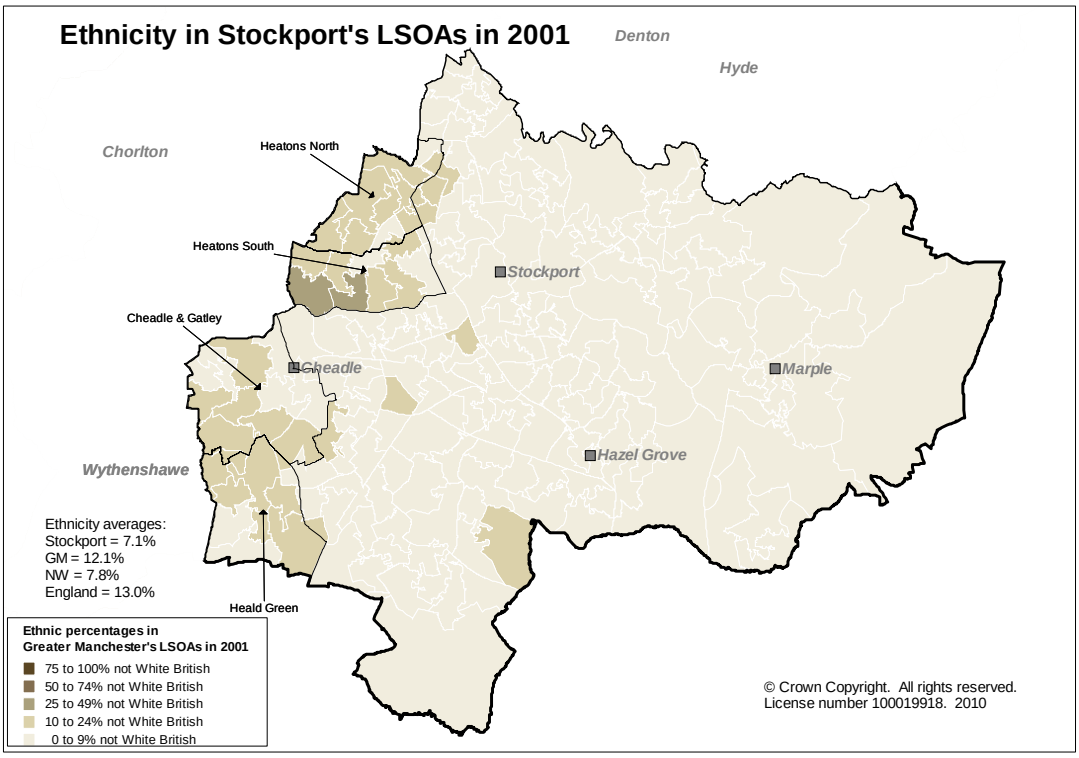
3.13 Of further concern are persistent levels of youth unemployment – 16-to-19 year old residents who are classed as being not in employment, education or training (NEET). Despite its strong overall labour market, Stockport has the fourth highest proportion of NEETs in GM (7.1% in 2008) – with absolute numbers having remained the same between 2006 and 2008.

3.14 Therefore, as for Greater Manchester as a whole, Stockport has significant economic assets in its highly-skilled population and productive business base, but residents in the most deprived neighbourhoods have not fully benefited from economic growth. Low skills, worklessness, and dealing with the consequences of recession remain important issues for the future which growth alone will not solve.

ETHNICITY

3.15 Stockport has a relatively low rate of ethnicity (7.1% of resident population). Only in four wards is the ethnicity rate above 10%. These are: Heatons South (16.8%), Cheadle and Gatley (13.4%), Heatons North (12.7%) and Heald Green (12.6%) – all wards bordering south Manchester.

Figure 16 Ethnicity in Stockport's LSOAs in 2001



Source: Census (2001), 2010

PEOPLE: SUMMARY

- Stockport is home to a **highly skilled, productive labour force**, which has played a leading role in helping Stockport to succeed as a business location. The borough is one of Greater Manchester's most populous districts, with a population of over 280,000 people, and represents the second largest economically active population in Greater Manchester.

- Stockport's **employment rate** (74.9%) is significantly above that of Greater Manchester (68.9%) and the UK (72.8%). It is currently the highest employment rate in the conurbation – highlighting the resilience of its economy and the quality of its skills, though levels have declined during the current downturn.

- Similarly, Stockport has amongst the **lowest unemployment levels** in Greater Manchester – being consistently well below national rates. However, this may mask the problem of youth unemployment in the borough (with relatively high numbers of young people not in education, employment or training), as well as significant pockets of worklessness in deprived neighbourhoods.

- The occupational structure of Stockport reflects the changing industrial structure of the economy, with the movement towards employment in **knowledge-based sectors.** Stockport is at the forefront of this change, with higher levels of Level 4+ skilled residents than Greater Manchester and UK averages. Indeed, more than one third (33.8%) of Stockport's working age residents are qualified to degree level or equivalent – above Greater Manchester (26.7%), and higher than all other Greater Manchester districts except for Trafford (37.3%).

- **Managers and senior officials** (18.3%) make up the largest group of employees, against process, plant and machine operatives (6.2%) comprising the smallest proportion.

- Stockport is a broadly prosperous borough, with comparatively **high-income levels** when compared to Greater Manchester and national averages. Almost a third of LSOAs are in the top 20 least deprived areas.

- However, affluence is not spread entirely through the borough, with significant areas of deprivation also apparent within certain neighbourhoods – a result of this, Stockport has been ranked as the **third most polarised local authority in England** as part of the IMD 2007. Stockport have identified numerous priority areas for action within the district – in Brinnington, Adswood and Bridgehall, Lancashire Hill and Heaton Norris as well as in the Town Centre.

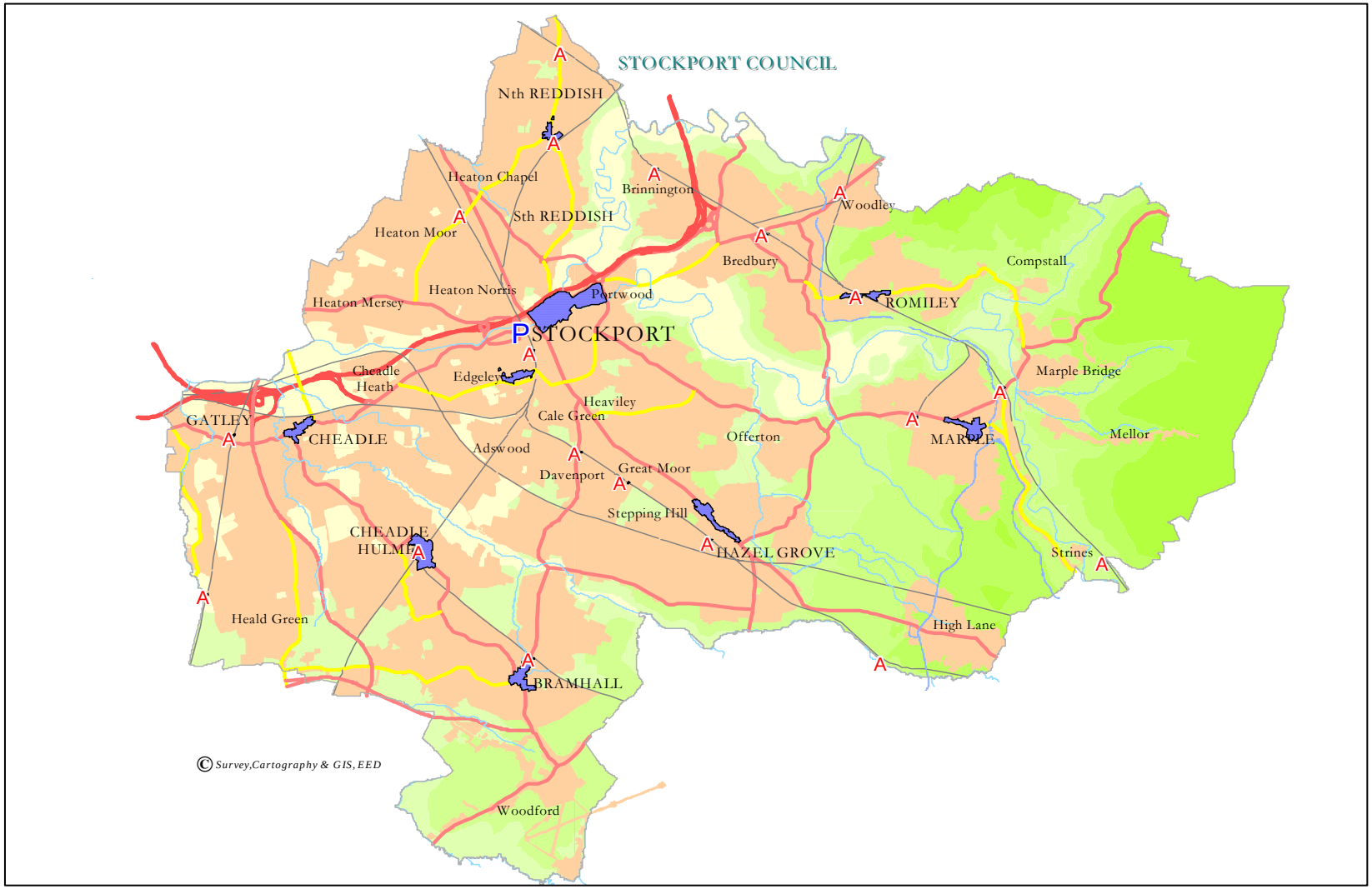
- Stockport has a relatively low rate of ethnicity (7.1%). Only in four wards is the ethnicity rate above 10%.

4 PLACE

4.1 The role of Stockport as an attractor of skilled labour and its interdependent relationship with the rest of GM (especially the conurbation core) is in large part due to its excellent transport links, with the M60 and Manchester Airport in close proximity, as shown in Figure 12. Furthermore, the M56 and west coast mainline provide easy access to central London and the South East.

4.2 The town of Stockport itself is closely located to the M60, providing easy access for commuters to the town, and to other areas of Greater Manchester. This is typically highlighted through high volumes of rush hour traffic in the district around the Stockport junctions of the M60.

Figure 17 Stockport transport assets



Source: Stockport Transport Policy Unit, 2010

4.3 Stockport is extremely well-connected with the rest of Greater Manchester and externally. Close and well connected to the conurbation core and with excellent access to motorway, rail and airport links, this is central to its offer as a key economic hub of Greater Manchester, and is key in its attractiveness as a place to live and do business. Stockport's location presents significant growth potential for the borough.

4.4 Stockport's position as one of the more affluent areas of Greater Manchester, alongside Trafford and Bury, is bolstered by relatively quick access to areas of Cheshire and Derbyshire, and good access to London and the South East, as well as significant train links through Stockport and Cheadle Hulme towards Manchester city centre.

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY MARKET

4.5 Stockport forms part of the successful South Manchester office market, acting as a Tier 2 location for Greater Manchester.[7] The Stockport office market is characterised by a diverse mix of business occupiers, giving Stockport a more consistent five-year take-up than other Greater Manchester districts. There has been an upward pressure on Grade A units in recent years, reflecting the lack of Grade A space available on the local market.

4.6 Town Centre office accommodation is mainly located to the west of the town centre and includes a number of major occupiers, such as BSkyB, the Co-operative Bank and the Inland Revenue.

4.7 However, office development over recent decades has mainly been focused outside Stockport town centre – Cheadle Royal is one of the conurbation's most successful business parks and centres like Cheadle Hulme and Bramhall provide quality office accommodation in attractive district centres.

4.8 A recent study[8] on Stockport's town centre office market found that a variety of challenges exist in terms of making the boroughs office offer more competitive. The study found that existing stock is dated and inadequate for modern occupiers – with a more proactive role for the Council and public sector in terms of realising improvements in terms of the perception of the offer, the infrastructure and the public realm offer.

4.9 Stockport's retail offer is an important complement to the city centres offer and provides a source of diversity, revenue and employment (employing over 10% of Stockport employees in 2008). Indeed, the Greater Manchester Town Centres Study produced by Drivers Jonas in December 2009 highlights that Stockport is one of only two Greater Manchester town centres that currently offer the scale and diversity needed for sustainable growth.

[7] Jones Lang LaSalle (2010) *Identification and Market Demand-led Assessment of Large Employment Sites within Greater Manchester*
[8] DTZ Pieda Consulting, *Future Stockport – Office Market Study*, 2010

4.10 Further opportunities may exist in terms of improving the leisure and entertainment offer in the town centre – to better take advantage of the potential spending power of the relatively prosperous local residents. Furthermore, it may be that hotels may be better able to take advantage of their close proximity to Manchester City Centre and Manchester Airport.

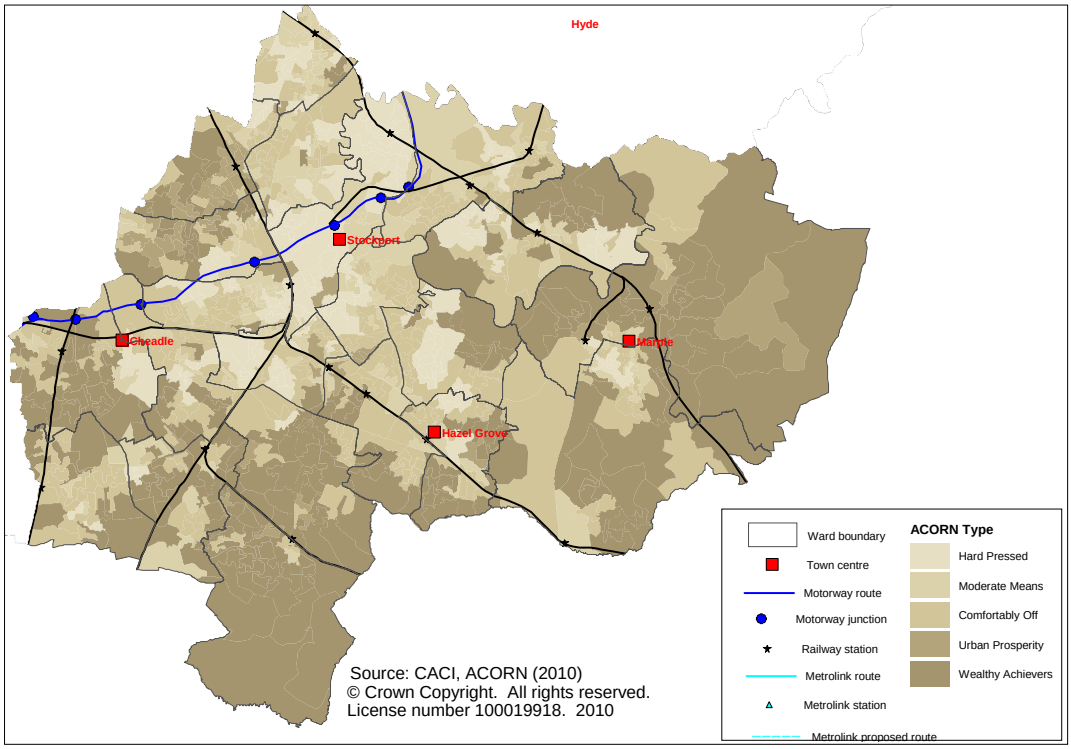
4.11 Stockport also has a number of industrial sites, though values are lower than the central districts of Trafford or the Cities of Manchester and Salford, reflecting a need for further development and improvements. Existing well populated industrial locations include Bramhall Moor Technology Park, Birdhall Lane and Bredbury Employment Area. Opportunities for a range of employment uses are currently being explored in sites such as Gorsey Bank, Melford Road, S:park on the M60 and Woodford Aerodrome.

HOUSING

4.12 In terms of housing, the borough has a good lifestyle offer, with low-levels of crime and many prosperous neighbourhoods. Despite its strong economy and the fact that it is a well-populated borough, more than 45% of the borough's land area is greenbelt and there is a rich cultural, spiritual and sporting tradition, making it an attractive place to live and work.

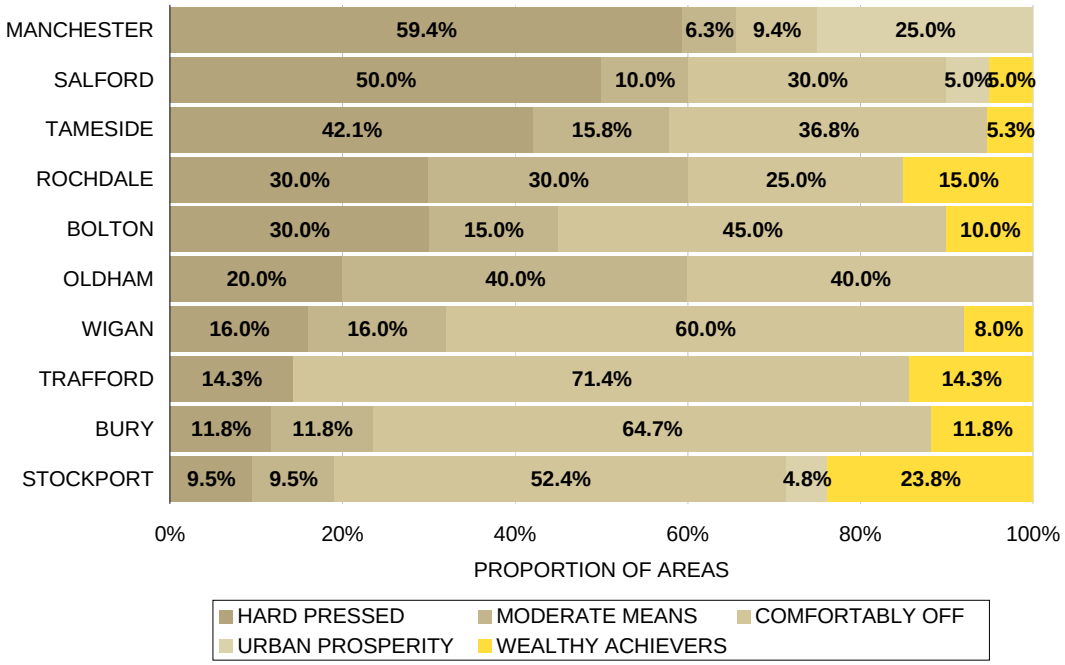
4.13 This is reflected in Stockport's desirability as a location of choice for people with skills within Greater Manchester. Mapping ACORN profiles of the resident population, as in Figure 18, shows that large proportions of the population, particularly towards the more rural southeastern side of the borough, are classed as "wealthy achievers" or at least "comfortably off".

Figure 18 Stockport resident ACORN profiles



Source: CACI ACORN, 2010

Figure 19 Dominant ACORN categories at ward level in Stockport, 2010



Source: CACI ACORN, 2010

4.14 Average house prices in Stockport are relatively high reflecting the quality and type of housing available, as well as the quality of life offer. There is a significant proportion of detached and executive homes, the majority of which are owner occupied. This makes Stockport one of the least affordable areas within Greater Manchester, with house prices in 2010 just under five-times income (4.9 cf. GM 4.5).

4.15 The MIER also identified numerous transit neighbourhoods within Stockport – young, newly established households coming from more comfortable backgrounds and starting on the housing ladder. A similar housing and quality of life offer extends across the south of Greater Manchester and as a result those with high-status occupations tend to choose to live there. This also serves to strengthen the district's labour market relationships with Greater Manchester's economic centre by reinforcing Stockport's role as a centre of high-skilled labour.

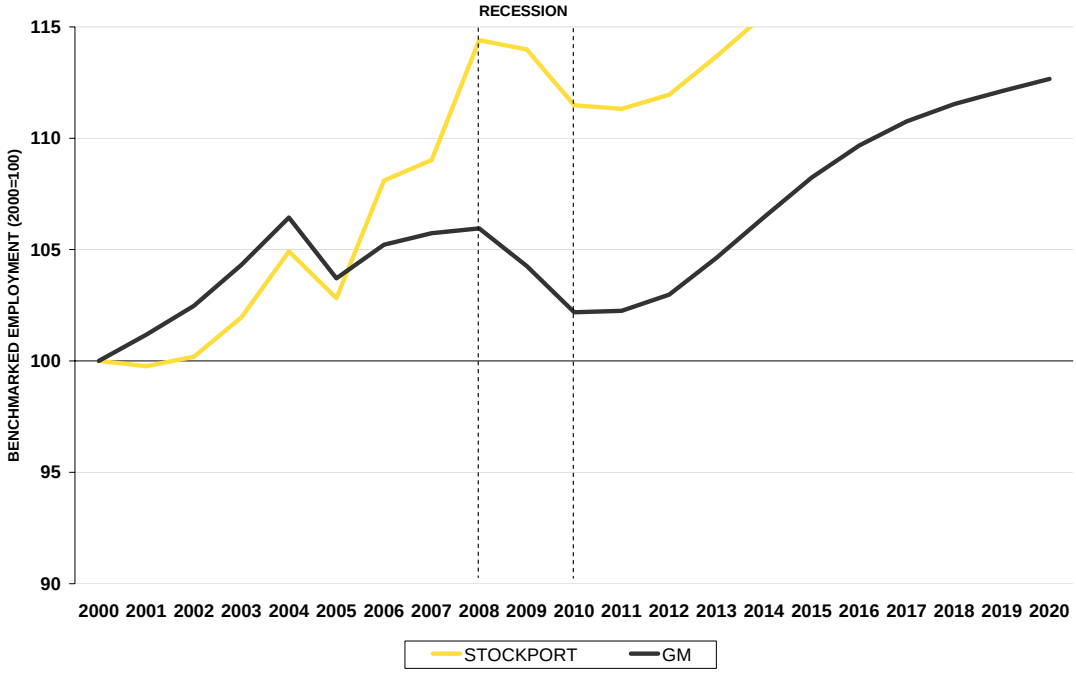
4.16 However, it is important to note again that not all of Stockport neighbourhoods are similarly prosperous or attractive, and significant areas of deprivation exist in the district. Indeed, the disparity between the affluent and most deprived areas in Stockport, with regards to health, crime and quality of life is the highest for any Greater Manchester authority.

5 FORECASTS

5.1 Whilst the recession has been undoubtedly challenging, falls in employment and GVA have been less severe in Stockport than most other Greater Manchester districts – with Stockport forecast to experience a relatively quick return to growth (employment and GVA). Stockport has seen The 2008 ABI suggest a continuation of the recent strong employment growth within Stockport, taking the overall level of employment within the area above 150,000 for the first time.

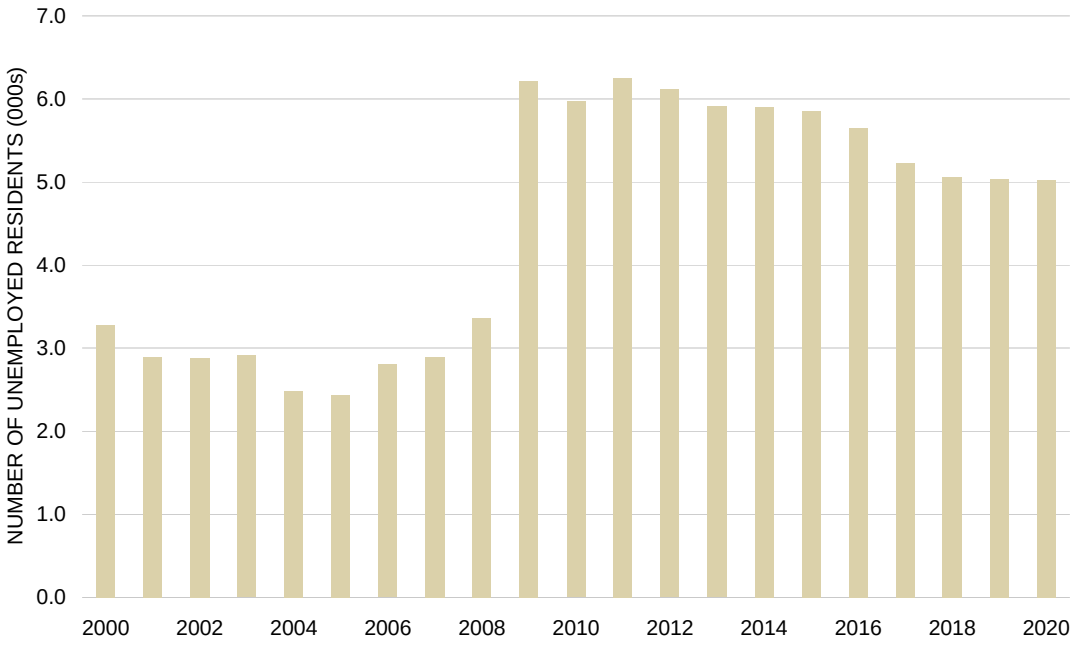
5.2 The resident employment rate is also expected to continue to rise over the decade ahead, peaking slightly above 80% towards the end of the forecast period. Unemployment is forecast to remain above the recent historical lows over the decade ahead, at a level close to 5,000. This is similar to the levels experienced towards the end of the 1990's. GVA growth is expected to remain below the national average in the decade ahead.

Figure 20 Benchmarked employment (2000 = 100) for Stockport and Greater Manchester, 2010 - 2020



Source: GMFM, 2010

Figure 21 Unemployment in Stockport, 2000–20



Source: GMFM, 2010

5.3 Stockport's historical performance in the decade to 2008 was extremely impressive with finance and business and construction leading the way. The outlook is slightly more challenging with only financial and business services expected to contribute significantly to jobs. Construction employment is expected to remain fairly flat over decade ahead, failing to offset its recessionary job losses, unless investment from other business growth sectors is sought.

5.4 In common with most of the conurbation it is natural increase that provides the growth in population, migration remaining roughly in balance, down from recent highs of over 500 net inflows.

Table 2: Key forecast indicators for Stockport and Greater Manchester, 2010 - 2020

INDICATOR	STOCKPORT		CHANGE (2010 - 2020)	
	2010	2020	STOCKPORT	GREATER MANCHESTER
POPULATION (000s)	284.6	292.5	2.8%	6.0%
EMPLOYEES (000s)	122.0	132.1	8.3%	10.7%
SELF-EMPLOYED (000s)	24.3	25.5	5.2%	6.6%
EMPLOYMENT (000s)	146.3	157.7	7.8%	10.3%
UNEMPLOYMENT (000s)	6.0	5.0	-15.8%	-15.0%
RESIDENCE EMPLOYMENT (000s)	126.0	137.5	9.1%	9.6%
RESIDENCE EMPLOYMENT RATE (%)	73.4	80.3	7.0	4.8
NET COMMUTING (000s)	6.1	4.8	-22.5%	15.6%
TOTAL GVA (£M)	5,040.8	6,548.8	29.9%	33.0%
HOUSEHOLDS (000s)	125.3	134.8	7.6%	9.5%

Source: GMFM, 2010

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Stockport has an interdependent relationship with the conurbation core, since it has its own strong economy. Over recent years Stockport's economy has enjoyed a sustained period of growth and success – evidenced by the fact that it currently has the highest employment rate and the lowest level of unemployment in Greater Manchester, and over a third of the population are qualified to degree level or above.

6.2 However, although Stockport has strong business growth and high levels of employment overall, the borough remains polarised, with significant levels of deprivation in parts of the borough, in neighbourhoods such as Brinnington – which has the second highest unemployment rate in Greater Manchester. Furthermore, despite the success Stockport has had, it still lags other UK districts in many measures of competitiveness or success, especially those in the Greater South East.

6.3 Therefore, although Stockport has seen sustained economic growth and increased prosperity in recent years, there remains a challenge in ensuring all residents are able to gain benefits from this growth. Stockport's skilled labour market, lower costs and higher availability of office space compared to the city centre, and strong connectivity all provide it with the conditions to continue to play a leading role in Greater Manchester's growth, particularly amongst knowledge-based sectors and within small & medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

6.4 In doing all this, it is clear that Stockport Town Centre provides a number of opportunities – in terms of improving the offer and availability of quality office space to attract more companies to the area, as well in terms of providing better retail and leisure facilities for Stockport residents (thereby ensuring more of their money is invested back in the local economy). It may also be possible to make better use of the borough's close proximity to Manchester Airport through improved hotel and leisure facilities. In this regard, an area of particular interest going forward must be providing job opportunities to the more deprived areas of the borough.

6.5 These findings therefore suggest that Stockport must continue to make the most of its strong linkages with the conurbation core – a relationship that clearly benefits both Stockport residents and the city centre – whilst also maximising the opportunities that exist within the borough, in order to better connect Stockport residents with job opportunities and growth locally.