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Plans made for city 'Whitehall'

The government is looking at the possibility of a "Whitehall" for north-west England.

Plans have been drawn up for a civil service "campus" at the abandoned Mayfield railway station, close to Piccadilly, in Manchester city centre.



The site is a disused railway station

In total, more than 5,000 civil servants could be based on the Mayfield site by 2014, the government said.

The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats questioned why the move out of the capital would take so long.

Regional Minister Beverley Hughes and the city council's leader Sir Richard Leese unveiled the plans on Friday.

The plans are part of a wider push to relocate 24,000 civil servant posts outside London.

“ Given the way the government's finances are at the moment it's not a dead cert is it? ”
Simon Ashley, Liberal Democrat councillor

Government Office for the North West, the Highways Agency and the Training and Development Agency are already due to move into Piccadilly Gate, close to Mayfield, next year.

The new proposal would expand this into a campus.

Sir Richard Leese, leader of Manchester City Council, said: "We are delighted with the announcement today, particularly at a time when good news is in short supply.

"Manchester City Council and its partners will play a full and constructive role in working with Government to ensure this initiative is bought to fruition as quickly as possible."

The new development would be built to the highest environmental standards and will be in a parkland setting, the government said.

Ms Hughes said the plans were a

"really exciting opportunity" to create a "hub for Whitehall for the region".

"The government is committed to moving civil service jobs away from London and the development of the site alongside Piccadilly Station presents a real opportunity for the city to seize the initiative," said Ms Hughes.



The disused station will be transformed into a "Whitehall" campus

"This also opens up the possibility of regenerating an important part of the city centre."

Liberal Democrat councillor Simon Ashley said his local party welcomed any jobs devolved from London to Manchester, but questioned the 2014 date.

Government 'waste'

"Until then there are no jobs being devolved. In five years governments can change their capital programme and how much they spend on these things," said Mr Ashley.

"My question is why have we not to wait another five years? There



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My question is why have we got to wait another three years? There might be two general elections before that happens.

"Given the way the government's finances are at the moment it's not a dead cert is it?"

Councillor Faraz Bhatti, Conservative councillor for Whalley Range, said the decision was "long overdue".

"The government has been promising to move civil servants out of London for 12 years," he said.


"Only last year we learned how £320m is being wasted on 122 acres of space in empty government office buildings.

"At a time when most of us are feeling the pinch, this kind of waste must stop."

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