The Bolton Blueprint
A Bold Vision for Beyond 2030
Bolton Council
We have sky-high ambitions for the Bolton of tomorrow and a blueprint to achieve it.

Bolton is one of the country’s largest towns, with a strong and diverse identity and a rich history. We must retain the best legacy of our past and be competitive in a fast-changing world.

Our Bolton 2030 Vision (‘Vision’) is creating an active, connected and prosperous town which benefits all our communities and citizens.

Our Vision sets out how our plans and strategies fit together, so that we can deliver the best possible outcomes and focus on what is needed to improve people’s lives.

Bolton is committed to Levelling Up to make the biggest difference to everyday life. We share Government’s priorities: fighting crime, private sector job creation, transport and digital connectivity, housing for young people, high-quality schools, skills and hospitals, investment in sport, and more attractive town centres.

Bolton has a proud past and bright future with real potential – a multi-million pound regeneration programme has started, and the town is home to a university, theatre, museum, BWFC Football Club - League One EFL and successful businesses.

We are working collaboratively with schools, colleges and the University of Bolton to match young people’s skills to the modern-day so that our workforce is attractive to employers.

Now we want to add to that momentum new elements to our plan – in life sciences, in clean, green energy and sustainable transport facilities.

In addition we are working with Greater Manchester on the Five Year environmental plan to be Carbon neutral by 2038. Targets set by The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy requires Greater Manchester to set targets aligned with or exceeding an 80% emissions reduction by 2050, and to achieve a 40% reduction between 2005 and 2030. Greater Manchester has delivered cc 26% between 1990 and 2013.

The success we seek will be made in Bolton. It will be achieved by local people working in partnership with Government, the private sector and stakeholders in Greater Manchester.

The role of Government will be critical to the realisation of the key objective of our Vision: hugely improved outcomes for the people of Bolton.

With enough government support we believe the Bolton Blueprint can be a leading model for levelling up across the North of England. The Levelling Up Fund would allow our town to reach its potential and put people at the heart of it in terms of jobs, education, housing, the environment, and health and wellbeing.
Bolton's Momentum - Initiatives and Opportunities

In partnership with private sector partners, we are delivering on our ambitious vision of building a better Bolton town centre as well as nearby district centres.

In 2016 the Council earmarked £100m to invest in the town centre’s leisure and culture, office space, and residential development, an initiative which will attract £1 billion of private investment.

Regeneration is under way to transform the town centre with new homes and offices, with the projection of 2,000 more residents in the town centre by 2030.

The Bolton Town Centre Framework sets out an interconnected set of six residential and employment districts, all easily accessible to pedestrians.

Bolton's Challenges

Bolton is economically disadvantaged, on the UK Community Renewal Fund’s list of the UK’s 100 improvement priority places.

There is an urgent need for economic growth and recovery, improved transport connectivity and regeneration. The current challenges that our town faces are significant, and we are clear that Government support is required to remove or minimise barriers to future growth in Bolton.

- 43% of Bolton’s population lives in neighborhoods among the 25% most deprived in England and Wales.
- 11% are on out-of-work benefit (NW 11% and UK average 9%)

- Bolton is ranked 4th in GM and 36th in the UK in terms of highest levels of (multiple) deprivation
- Bolton falls within the 6% most deprived local authorities in England in all measures.
- Unemployment rate of 8.3%, (around 1 in 12 of the working age population) is 75% higher than the pre-Covid level and the 4th highest in GM.
- In many parts of the Borough more than 17% of the working age population is unemployed.
- Bolton town centre had a vacancy rate of 50 in 2020
- Footfall has declined 30% over the past decade and recent retail failures have resulted in the loss of anchor stores including BHS, Arcadia and Debenhams.

- Prime retail rents have declined by 70% since 1996, most significantly following the credit crunch.

Limited public sector funding means the ability of many partners to provide universal services is very difficult, unless new sources of funding can be developed.

All of our vision partners are prioritising and targeting support to best use their limited resources.

They continue to focus on narrowing the gap between the borough’s places and with the best and worst outcomes. Investment in future projects will be evidence-based decisions assessing levels of needs and greatest impact.

The most striking challenges include:

- The need to connect our residents to opportunities for employment, in order to address poverty, inequality and deprivation – a foothold on the job ladder, or developing skills leading to better paid work.
- For example, there is an acute shortage of clinical and medical staff, exacerbated by problems in recruiting and retaining staff.
- A need to improve skills and education to ensure residents can take advantage of the opportunities that regeneration brings, securing the workforce’s knowledge base.
- An ageing population, with people living longer and needing more support as they grow older, especially around loneliness.
- Public Service Reform to deliver joined-up, effective support for key groups like looked-after children, and individuals and families with complex needs.
- Ongoing reductions in funding for the public sector – particularly in terms of council funding and the Health and Social Care funding gap.
- The effects of COVID-19 lockdowns have:
  - seen hospitality suffer a significant demand reduction
  - accelerated decline in the retail sector and its draw for consumers.
  - impacted movement across GM.
  - seen a trend towards remote working from home.
  - reduced university students due to fewer international students, and places deferred.

The framework outlined six key intervention areas to drive growth and catalyse more investment and revitalise the town centre economy:

- **Trinity Quarter** – creating a mixed-use Grade A office and residential development. A new hotel, office block and a multi-storey car park.
- **Cheadle Square** – developing housing and apartments on the former bus station, creating student housing and a mixed-use development.
- **Crompton Place** – transforming the shopping centre into a major destination for retail, commercial, residential and leisure uses.
- **Church Wharf** – a new neighbourhood with a mix of apartments and townhouses
- **Croal Valley** – re-naturalising the River Croal to create a new town centre feature, improved environment and waterside housing.
- **Digital City** – In 2019 an additional intervention area was added, to the south of the Town Centre, focussing on the creation of a high-tech, state-of-the-art connected community.
As the nation slowly recovers from the pandemic, Bolton faces:

- a lack of diversity in town centre uses along with high and increasing vacancy rates
- high construction and material costs
- low and decreasing rents and end values
- lack of confidence from investors in the market
- reliance of public funding to undertake transformational development Stalled sites and programme delays
- increasing costs of construction i.e. materials, labour

In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, these challenges, and more, mean we have to join up our planning and delivery to ensure we achieve the biggest impact for every pound spent in Bolton. We will build on the successful examples of reform already delivered, but at a greater scale and speed than ever before; so working in partnership has never been more important.

Bolton’s Current Regeneration Priorities

Bolton Council is focusing on:

1. Working with GMCA and Central Government to access funding to supplement the £100m programme of investment already underway in Bolton and surrounding town centres. Bolton Council intends to support the delivery of existing major projects, whilst also working closely with stakeholders and businesses to ensure that any future investments are suitable for the next phase in Bolton’s Town Centre transformation.

2. Driving forward major transformational projects in partnership with the private sector. Projects include Wingates, Horwich Loco Works and Bolton College of Medical Sciences.

3. Pandemic-associated support for private sector developers to deliver their schemes by identifying and potentially unblocking any supply chain issues where contractors are on site, and for those in the pre-development phase, to ensure we are being as flexible as possible to support developers to adapt to new market conditions (e.g. permitting certain changes in planning permissions).

Knowledge-intensive sector growth will provide resilience as jobs in retail go.

Bolton’s economy - Creating employment opportunities

Bolton has established strengths in its traditional sectors and growing new specialisms.

- 12% of jobs in Bolton are in manufacturing, above the national average of 8%, and the borough is home to major manufacturing and logistics companies. Recent fast-growing companies in digital retail, energy, and financial services include AO, Parcel2Go, and Love Energy Savings.com.

Moving to a knowledge economy. Jobs in professional services, information and communication are growing fast. Bolton has strengths in complex, high-value areas, including management consultancy and legal activities has been a historic source of new inventions. Bolton has been a historic source of new inventions and firms are innovative, compared to an average across Greater Manchester of 9%.

Rapidly expanding companies like AO.com and developments including Logistics North, Wingates and Hulton Park will create fantastic employment opportunities.
Greater Manchester Full Fibre Networks Programme

We are actively implementing a roll out of a full fibre programme with 78 anchor points connecting. Our participation in this will provide businesses, residents and public services with the best-in-class internet speeds.

Raising skills levels and growth in further and higher education

Over 9,000 students study close to the town centre at the University of Bolton and at Bolton’s college and sixth form. The university and the colleges are investing in new facilities and expanding, adapting their curriculum to new business requirements. We want to connect our ambitious young people to Bolton’s growing innovative businesses. Bolton 6th Form College is one of England’s top ten performing 6th form colleges.

The University of Bolton has sectoral teaching specialisms in computer gaming, design, animation, and health technologies, particularly assisted living. New proposals, such as GM Health Innovation Cluster, will draw on these local specialisms of the university, hospital, the Bolton College of Medical Science, plus the health technology industry and housing.

Iconic cultural institutions, heritage and events

Bolton’s cultural assets sit within a historic town centre, alongside the iconic Le Mans Crescent and Town Hall.

Bolton’s popular events animate the town centre and attracts outside visitors. The Octagon Theatre was recently the recipient of a £11m redevelopment, mostly funded by Bolton Council and The Arts Council. It is popular across the region; 60% of its annual visitors come from outside Bolton. One of a declining number of producing theatres, it has attracted numerous Greater Manchester awards for originality and quality. It makes its own scenery and costumes, a catalyst for Bolton’s cultural economy.

The Central Library, Museum and Art Gallery houses one of the UK’s foremost Egyptology collections. In the 12 months after reopening following a £3.8m refurbishment, Bolton Museum attracted 275,000 visitors within six months of this investment.

Bolton hosts an extensive range of world class events throughout the year; including Bolton Food and Drink Festival which attracted over 400,000 visitors in 2019; the IRONMAN UK triathlon, hosted here for 11 years, attracting 2,500 competitors from 42 countries in an epic swim, cycle and run and Ironkids – the world’s largest fun run with over 3,500 children taking Part. The RLWC2021 is also making an appearance in Bolton as The University of Bolton Stadium is hosting two Rugby League World Cup 2021 games, a significant England game and a Quarter Final.

Rolling out Regeneration

We’re creating a ripple of regeneration across Bolton by also transforming our district centres; creating strong, engaged and economically prosperous places for people to live, work, study and visit.

In addition to our vision for the town centre up to and beyond 2030, we have allocated £16m from the £100m town centre strategy fund to progress ambitious plans for our four main district centres in Farnworth, Little Lever, Westhoughton and Horwich.

At the heart of these plans sits the creation of Bolton College of Medical Sciences (BCMS) in Farnworth, a truly unique £30m centre of excellence to train a new generation of health professionals which will inject £150m into the local economy. A proposed £250m investment in Royal Bolton Hospital and in a wider Bolton GM Health Innovation Cluster, will further help encourage further innovative developments in the Health sector.

As we pursue our strategy of continually seeking access to additional income streams, we’ve also secured government funding for Farnworth through Future High Street Bids, Towns Fund and Brownfield Land Fund.

Farnworth Future High Streets Fund

Bolton will receive £13.3m from the Future High Street fund for the transformation of Farnworth Town Centre into a vibrant, high quality place to live, work and visit. Work on site starts later this year.

Farnworth is the second largest town in Bolton and has excellent connectivity (including direct rail links) to Bolton and Manchester.

Farnworth is ranked amongst Bolton’s worst performing areas. The town centre is in poor condition, with low investment, a small population, low property values, and an oversupply of homes; deliver a high quality, flexible community hub from which a range of services can be delivered; new community hubs can be delivered; new commercial floorspace to activate the town and deliver job opportunities; a new public square and improved pedestrian and cycle connections; and deliver an extended and improved Leisure Centre to support health and wellbeing outcomes for the community.
GM Brownfield Land Fund

Bolton has bid for and been awarded £10.73m for five sites. Delivery of enabling works has begun, accelerating the delivery of 610 new homes in Bolton town centre.

Safer Streets

£5m funding has been made available through the GM Mayor’s Cycling and Walking Challenge Fund as part of the ‘Safe Streets Save Lives’ campaign. Bolton’s proposals are being developed but will include measures to facilitate walking and cycling into the town centre. In addition, GM’s £28m proposed Beeline cycle network includes four schemes in Bolton which will transform cycle routes across the city region over the next ten years.

Towns Fund

The £22.9m Town Investment Plan for Bolton is a vital, complementary part of the overall plans for the town centre. Business cases are being prepared for sign off later this year and delivery will begin in early 2022. The projects result from extensive collaboration with residents, MP’s and private and public sector partners and will reinforce our collective ambition, vision and commitment to regenerating Bolton town centre.

Wellsprings Digital Hub

Towns Fund support will enable a comprehensive upgrade and refurbishment of a council owned office complex in Bolton town centre. The improvements will create a modern, highly flexible working environment in the council-owned building, creating an innovation hub for Bolton businesses in the Creative and Digital sector, supporting them to innovate, grow and reach their full potential. In a central location, close to the University of Bolton and good transport links, it can become a hub for innovation in all areas of the Bolton economy. The adaptive reuse of this building, providing highspeed connectivity, will become the centre of an ‘innovation ecosystem’ for the whole town, drawing upon key strengths in the local economy. It will increase the amount of high-quality office space, increasing affordable commercial floorspace.

Bolton Library, Museum, and Aquarium Upgrades

The Towns Fund will also enable the refurbishment and upgrade of Bolton Library, Museum and Aquarium, enhancing one of Bolton’s most popular cultural institutions. Bolton Library Museum and Aquarium has been at the centre of civic and cultural life in Bolton for almost 90 years. This redevelopment will transform and reconfigure all three floors of the building to form an exciting new creative and cultural space.

Reimagining and opening up under-utilised spaces will expand the aquarium, upgrade the central library and redevelop the children’s library as well as create flexible workspace for creative businesses, education, and community groups.

Bolton Market

Finally, in addition to a wider public realm improvement programme, The Towns Fund will also facilitate a comprehensive upgrade and modernisation of Bolton Market.

The project will expand the outdoor market to enable the diversification of trading, improve the entrances and the building fabric, and upgrade vacant office space on the first floor for commercial uses.

The market will provide a new offer for younger people, new jobs in the renovated office space above the ground floor and become a meeting place in the evening. These upgrades will increase the appeal of Bolton Market to new audiences, particularly students from the nearby university and college campuses, whilst improving the experience for regular customers who rely on the market for their shopping and day-to-day social interactions.

Public realm and connections

Public realm upgrades, new public parks, and wayfinding improvements within the Cultural and Civic Quarter will create and expand attractive public spaces for pedestrians. This will attract visitors and residents to the area’s institutions and businesses whilst increasing the quality of life in the town centre. This will also support the redevelopment of the former bus station site into a new residential neighbourhood with the delivery of 200 new homes.

Levelling Up Fund

Bolton Council, with the support of local MPs, submitted a successful bid to the first round of the government’s Levelling Up Fund for Bolton College of Medical Sciences.

The bid highlights the council’s priorities and support our Vision for the borough, bringing leading employers into the town centre and training new generations of health professionals. Their objective is to bring new jobs into the area and boost our local economy by creating additional demand for retail, hospitality and leisure services.

Achieving a successful outcome for this bid, and bids currently being prepared for round two of the Levelling Up Fund, is essential to our future levelling up plans.

In the meantime, we will continue to take every opportunity to secure additional funding for projects across Bolton and we are now developing a number of exciting projects such as the Bolton GM Health Innovation Cluster, which we believe will be worthy of future Government support.
Active Levelling Up Fund Bid

£20m contribution towards the building of the Bolton College of Medical Sciences (BCMS).

Developed on brownfield land, BCMS is projected to create over 20,000 apprenticeships over its lifetime and help train 60,000 medical professionals. The project is led by the University of Bolton alongside the council, Bolton College and Bolton NHS Foundation Trust.

BCMS is a proposed state-of-the-art vocational and professional skills and training facility. BCMS will give people a direct route into clinical and medical healthcare employment and provide unrivalled training opportunities for existing hospital staff to upskill and further their careers. When open, the facility is expected to bring £150m to the local economy, an outcome making Bolton fit for the future, by helping to drive innovation and grow businesses.

**Bolton GM Health Innovation Cluster (GMHIC)**

With a focus on wellness and preventative medicine, Bolton GM Health Innovation Cluster offering will be complementary to the wider innovation network across GM.

It will address the health inequality barriers to economic prosperity in Bolton and in GM whilst embedding health as an employment and training sector accessible to local people. 12 capital projects have been identified as central to the development of Bolton Health City concept.

The wellness and preventative medicine focus addresses the health challenges faced in Bolton.

**It will include:**
- Encouraging healthy lifestyles.
- Management of preventable disease.
- Assistive technology to support aging populations.
- Providing a positive start to life through maternity and paediatric care.

**The Benefits:**
- Addressing health barriers to economic growth.
- Establishment of Bolton as the hub of health and social care skills and training in GM.
- Delivery of enabling infrastructure.
- Contributes to wider GM and NW health innovation network.
- Supports the delivery of new service delivery methods to manage health outcomes.
- Supports Royal Bolton Hospital status as a centre of excellence in GM.
- Ensures presence of a major hospital site in Bolton, maintaining high value jobs and reduces NHS estate costs.
- Supports Farnworth and Bolton town centre regeneration programme
- Contributes to competitiveness of the northern part of GM and will drive economic growth in Bolton.
- Will deliver range of employment opportunities and place innovation at the heart of a community.
- Delivery of new residential development.

**Schools and Health Hubs**

GMHIC will be an innovation cluster that places health at the centre of a community to support wellbeing and positive health outcomes, creates skills and training opportunities for young people, contributes to Covid-19 recovery and supports provision of new models of health and social care.
Potential for Bolton 2040

To illustrate Bolton’s growth potential over the next twenty years, a range of growth projections have been applied to present levels of economic performance.

Projection figures have been calculated based on data sourced through ONS and the Greater Manchester Forecasting Model. The accelerated growth projections are based on the planned interventions going ahead in accordance with the existing programme plus the application of higher growth rates.

Opportunity for Growth Bolton 2040

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The Bolton Blueprint

A toolkit for regenerating towns and cities

Our aim is simple – to level up the town and borough and improve our residents quality of life now and in the future will require full support from Government.

- Encouraging investment in facilities used by education and skills training providers since, in many cases, these facilities have large backlog maintenance issues or need to be replaced at the earliest opportunity. Education and skills training providers should also be encouraged to invest in new state-of-the-art facilities that will reduce current skill shortages within the economy. A good example of this is the planned Bolton College of Medical Science, which will produce thousands of qualified health sector practitioners on an annual basis.

- Securing more sustainable outcomes through improved efficiency and effectiveness of government funding streams, by; reducing the number of funding pots, reducing the amount of competitive bidding needed to secure funding and, potentially, allocating funding on a block basis against a clear plan and on use-it-or-lose-it basis.

- Encouraging development and regeneration by bringing non-productive land into use, investing in infrastructure and extending Brownfield Funding schemes related to both housing and non-housing development sites, and using joint local government/national government guarantees to help to close the viability gap that exists in low value areas of the Country.

- Encouraging the National Health Service to achieve better/quicker outcomes in relation to Integrated Care, by agreeing and implementing the speedy introduction of more effective integrated care structures, at a locality level.

- Local Government finances – a more comprehensive sustainable finance model (maintain and allocate mainstream funding) to oversee regeneration and growth to level up the ‘place’

- The ability to create alternative transport infrastructure utilising hi-tech solutions ensuring cost effectiveness for all stakeholders
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<tr>
<th>Logistics North</th>
<th>Housing development</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rivington Chase</td>
<td>Logistics North - largest distribution and logistics site in the North West</td>
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<td>£50m transport interchange development</td>
<td>£4.4bn economic output per annum</td>
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<td>£100m sustainable investment to pump prime the market</td>
<td>280,000 residents</td>
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<td>£16m investment in District town centres</td>
<td>4655 new homes</td>
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<tr>
<td>£12m Rivington Chase</td>
<td>£412m GVA (incl. £56m household expenditure)</td>
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<td>Second highest employee base in Greater Manchester</td>
<td>1m people live within 45 minutes.</td>
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<td>Direct access to the M61, M60, M62 and M6</td>
<td>£1bn</td>
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<td>60% of UK businesses within a 2-hour drive</td>
<td>£12m Transport interchange development</td>
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<td>Town centre investment in residential, commercial space, retail and public realm</td>
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