

Draft Bolton Economic Growth **and Resilience Plan**

November 2023



Contents

Executive summary	4
1 Creating an Economic Growth and Resilience Plan.....	9
2 Building Bolton’s future economy	11
3 People.....	13
4 Business	18
5 Investment.....	22
6 Implementation.....	31
7 Actions	35
Annex: Economic Evidence Base	44
Bibliography	59

Preface

Economic Development requires bold vision, aspiration, commitment and confidence in the place and its potential to deliver successful projects and outcomes.

This plan has been produced with the strong belief that public sector interventions can lead to positive change where gaps currently exist and in facilitating collaboration, the Council and its partners, can maximise the deployment of resources from across the locality and wider city region. The projects listed in this plan are data led and aim to address significant issues that exist in our local economy. They are acknowledged and supported by key stakeholders that make up the Economic Prosperity Group - a Bolton Vision Strategic Partnership.

This report has been built over several years. It draws from work the Council commissioned in 2019 *Measuring and influencing economic prosperity in Bolton*. As such, the data cited may not be the latest available data. The Council will work across service areas to update evidence and analysis to accompany this report.

The successful delivery of projects is dependent on continued active partner engagement, collaboration and securing external funding. The accompanying action plan reflects the key priorities for Bolton and the initial projects to be implemented, along with lead partners.

The Plan is underpinned by a clear policy of identifying and pursuing external funding opportunities as, or when, they become available which will inevitably be influenced by regional / national priorities.

Executive summary

Our ambition is to create better jobs in a more productive Bolton

Bolton Council is committed to helping businesses to create new jobs and training opportunities; and to work with residents to ensure that they can access them. This is an exciting time for the Borough; Bolton is seeing a large amount of investment, over £1bn of public and private investment in recent years. Investment, including the £22.9m Town Deal, Future High Streets Fund, and Brownfield Site funding has the potential to transform the physical landscape of Bolton town centre and various District Centres across the Borough. Further opportunities are also in the pipeline. In Bolton around 600 new homes are built every year in response to the needs of our growing population. Our target is to build over 4,000 homes in the next 5 years with over 1,000 being affordable homes. Currently on site we have 1,700 new Homes in Horwich Loco works, a 68 bed Extra Care Scheme for older people in Little Lever and 82 new homes at Moor Lane in the town centre.

The Bolton-Wigan Corridor is one of six growth locations in Greater Manchester, with a focus on innovation as a driver of growth focused primarily on logistics, manufacturing and health innovation. Bolton University's new Institute of Medical Sciences (IMS) will transform healthcare teaching from Summer 2024, linked to the NHS Trust, this innovational new institute will support and attract students from Bolton and across the region providing specialist skills pathways, with the aim of growing and retaining a talent pipeline within Bolton. Bolton has also benefitted from being included in the first tranche of bus franchising in Greater Manchester – a component part of the Bee Network, which seeks to introduce a fully integrated public transport network.

These investments create an opportunity for Bolton to create access to more highly skilled and higher paid jobs. We need to ensure that the scale of investment and development across the Borough is part of a strategy for supporting and helping residents and local businesses to thrive, so all parts of Bolton benefit from this investment. This will require a refreshed approach to support and delivery, working with partners on a set of priorities covering areas such as inward investment, manufacturing, town centre diversification and moving to become a real living wage town.

Bolton is a diverse Borough with quality open space across district centres and access to countryside. For many, Bolton offers space, quality of life and links to Greater Manchester and the wider North West region. It is recognised that the needs and priorities of Bolton town centre, and the district centres of Farnworth, Horwich, Little Lever, and

Westhoughton are different, but residents in every centre should benefit as Bolton succeeds from thriving high streets, community and shared outdoor space, connectivity across the Borough to employment, and to towns and city centres in neighbouring Boroughs, Manchester and Lancashire.

As we look forward, we will refresh how we support businesses and residents, and at the same time deliver major projects that generate private sector investment and good jobs for residents. We will maximise the opportunities for Bolton from the wider city region through access to jobs, investment and local control through devolution. We will connect people from all communities to jobs, support social enterprises, micro and SMEs to grow, and develop and curate spaces, including supporting investment in all parts of the Borough.

People



Too many residents are earning low wages



Local targeted support for residents can unlock entry into the labour market



Digital and technical skills are increasingly in demand

Businesses



Low productivity is a brake on wages and good jobs



Manufacturing is a major part of the economy; this could stimulate growth in supply chains



Innovation opportunity is growing in Bolton

Investment



Significant existing and planned investment in Bolton



Potential for growth in town centre as a focus for investment



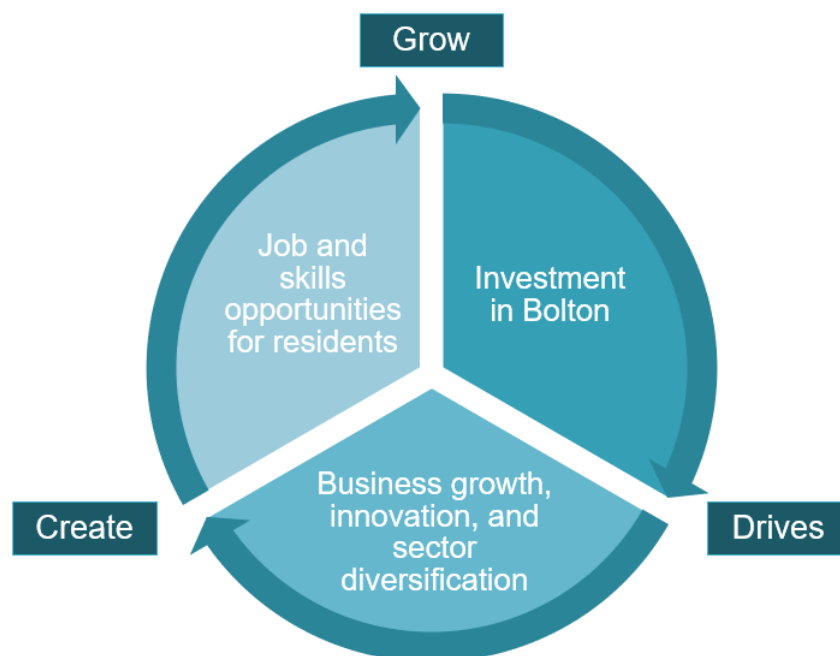
New and improved housing stock is important to attract and retain workers

This plan is being published against a backdrop of a cost-of-living crisis and a challenging economic outlook. This means we need to work harder to implement this plan, whilst at the same time tackling the poverty and hardships which residents are facing, focusing on the outcomes in the Corporate Plan around Start, Live and Age Well. We are working with a range of Council services and external partners to develop an anti-poverty strategy, and with GMCA on implementing the recommendations of the Inequalities Commission and the Greater Manchester Strategy.

This plan sets out how we intend to do it, supporting the business community to create better jobs and to boost productivity. We recognise that as the economy continues to change (in particular as we increase momentum towards net zero) we will need to update our plan to respond. We will therefore comprehensively review this Plan in five years' time.

Our priorities for action

This plan sets out 9 priorities to deliver our ten-year ambition to create better jobs in a more productive Bolton. This will require a collaborative effort by the Council and Bolton's Anchor partners. Bolton is part of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and we will work with regional partners such as MIDAS and the Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub to deliver relevant actions.



People

Over the next ten years we will support every resident to benefit from good work and healthy lives

1. **Priority One:** Raising the wage floor.
2. **Priority Two:** Supporting residents into sustainable employment.
3. **Priority Three:** Matching skills and training to employer future demand, including green economy jobs.

Business

Over the next ten years we will maximise Bolton's potential to be a leading economy in Greater Manchester

1. **Priority One:** New job creation through digital, professional services and health innovation.
2. **Priority Two:** Maximising Bolton's strength at the heart of the Manchester – Lancashire manufacturing corridor.
3. **Priority Three:** Supporting scale ups and business growth.

Investment

In ten years, we will have built thriving communities where people and businesses live and work

1. **Priority One:** Increasing investment in the Borough.
2. **Priority Two:** Bold diversification of the town centre as a major urban hub.
3. **Priority Three:** Thriving and resilient communities.

Implementation and impact

Bolton Council will lead on the realisation of this Plan in collaboration with partners, and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. The Economic Prosperity Group (a Bolton Vision priority work stream partnership), acting as the Strategic Board, will have oversight in respect of implementation, delivery and monitoring of the Plan. Implementation will have strong links and co-ordination across and between departmental strategies and commissioned work (for example with Public Health, Childrens Services, Adults Social Care and Housing).

We and our partners are committed to doing things differently, to achieve greater impact for our residents and communities. Improving communication will be important. This will

include convening wider partners across the Borough and delivering outcomes for Bolton from regional and national funding programmes and policies, including levelling up and UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and the recently agreed Greater Manchester Trailblazer Devolution Deal.

Implementation of the Plan will deliver the specific actions aligned to our priorities, phased over the short (over the next two years), medium (3-7 years) and long term (up to ten years).

We want to ensure we are monitoring progress during implementation of the following key measures:

Good employment and healthy lives	Maximize economic potential	Thriving communities
Wages	Professional jobs	Levels of investment and pipeline
Employment levels	Sector productivity	Sites in development and planning
Training and education participation	Business birth rate	Neighbourhood deprivation

1 Creating an Economic Growth and Resilience Plan

Over recent years, Bolton has seen significant regeneration development, both in Bolton town centre and district centres across the Borough, including Farnworth, Horwich, Westhoughton and Little Lever. We have successfully secured funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund, Towns Fund, Future High Streets Fund and Levelling Up Fund alongside other investment from GMCA (Brownfield Funding) to kickstart development. Our Bolton town centre regeneration masterplan, district centre masterplans and housing delivery plan are being implemented. This creates a solid platform to attract investment and create more jobs.

To capitalise on the investments and deliver maximum returns to the Borough's residents and businesses, we commissioned work to understand the opportunities and challenges in our local economy and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and Cost of Living challenges, before drawing together priorities for the Council and partners across the Borough. Focusing on these priorities will support residents and maximise the impact of development and investment in Bolton.

We have developed a 10-year Economic Growth and Resilience Plan for Bolton that looks ahead into the long term. Changing economic circumstances and recent developments around devolution mean we commit to undertaking a full review in five years' time and will maintain sufficient flexibility to add actions as need arises (for example delivery of net zero carbon).

The strategy is structured around three areas: [people, business, and investment](#). To develop an understanding of where Bolton is now, a robust evidence base was collected and reviewed, including national and regional datasets and extensive consultation with partners. This has provided key insights and the following analysis has helped to understand local strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in relation to each of the themes.

Priorities and ideas for actions with partners and stakeholders were discussed and tested, with the Economic Prosperity Group. These were then refined and shaped to produce specific actions around the short, medium and long term. We believe this has created a focused Plan which is centred on the priorities of businesses, partners, key stakeholders and the Council. Priority actions will be delivered through Council and partner programmes, where they are best placed to lead on specific actions.

During this process, we worked with the following stakeholders:

- Vision Partnership – Economic Prosperity Group
- Greater Manchester Growth Company
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Bolton College
- The University of Bolton
- Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce
- Bolton at Home
- Business Bolton
- Bolton Community and Voluntary Services (CVS)
- Skills and learning providers
- Businesses based in the Borough
- Development partners

2 Building Bolton's future economy

Bolton is the fourth largest Borough in Greater Manchester, with a growing population of over 280,000 people. This is a solid foundation and potential for significant growth, this plan will support that growth to ensure Bolton's position within GM and the North West is enhanced.

Bolton has sector specialisms with higher-than-average employment in manufacturing, logistics, wholesale and retail, and business services. It's well connected, has a dynamic business base, and is home to some major businesses and employment sites including household brands like Warburtons, AO and Greenhalgh's, cutting-edge manufacturing like MBDA; and major sites like Logistics North create a base for large multinational companies, such as Aldi, Whistl, Amazon, Green King, Costa and Komatsu.



296,000

Population
(ONS, 2021)



10,600

Businesses
(ONS, 2022)



69%

Employment rate
(ONS, 2022/3)



£6,400 mil

Bolton GVA
(ONS, 2021)



£24,700

Bolton GVA per head
(ONS, 2021)



24%

Neighbourhoods in
bottom decile for
deprivation
(IMD, 2019)



35%

Qualified to RFQ4+
(ONS, 2022)

Overall Bolton's business base is growing quickly with high business birth and survival rates. Locally, growth in high-output employment such as manufacturing is experiencing a shift towards more knowledge-based sectors, with growth in professional services such as

financial and insurance¹. In recent years fast-growing companies in digital retail, energy and financial services have emerged, including AO, Parcel2Go, and Love Energy Savings.com. Working with Innovation Greater Manchester and the University of Bolton, we plan to further accelerate this growth around health innovation, digital and creative technology.

Notwithstanding these positives, we recognise that the economy is underperforming. The size of the economy and productivity growth continue to be lower than comparators and the gap is widening between the UK and Bolton. Our insight into the Boroughs economic performance calculated a £1bn productivity gap between Bolton and the rest of the UK.² Insight findings indicated that the majority of this was due to ‘in work’ productivity issues – commuting; sector performance; and employment factors contributing to some sectors in Bolton tending to be less productive than is the case regionally and nationally.

Many residents and places in Bolton are not sharing in the prosperity that does exist. There are long term people challenges around economic inactivity and historically high levels of people unable to enter the workforce due to sickness or disability. Long term challenges are accompanied by recent and continued pressure on the cost of living, inflation, and energy prices. In this economic environment, we are committed to supporting business resilience and to continue to encourage job creation, whilst supporting residents to have the best chance of accessing jobs, welfare support and skills opportunities.

The fast-paced needs and demand for digital and technical skills will continue to grow and change in many jobs and sectors, and our businesses and talent should be supported to develop and innovate in existing and new sectors for the Borough. We must capitalise on the opportunity to create more highly skilled and paid jobs by bringing together our manufacturing cluster, growing health innovation and professional services, and by attracting more investment into the Borough and revitalising the town centre.

Our ambition is to create better jobs in a more productive Bolton.



People

Over the next ten years we will support every resident to **benefit from good work and healthy lives**



Business

Over the next ten years we will maximise Bolton’s potential to be a **leading economy in Greater Manchester**



Investment

In ten years we will have built **thriving communities** where people and businesses live and work

¹ [Business Register and Employment Survey: open access - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk), ONS, 2022.

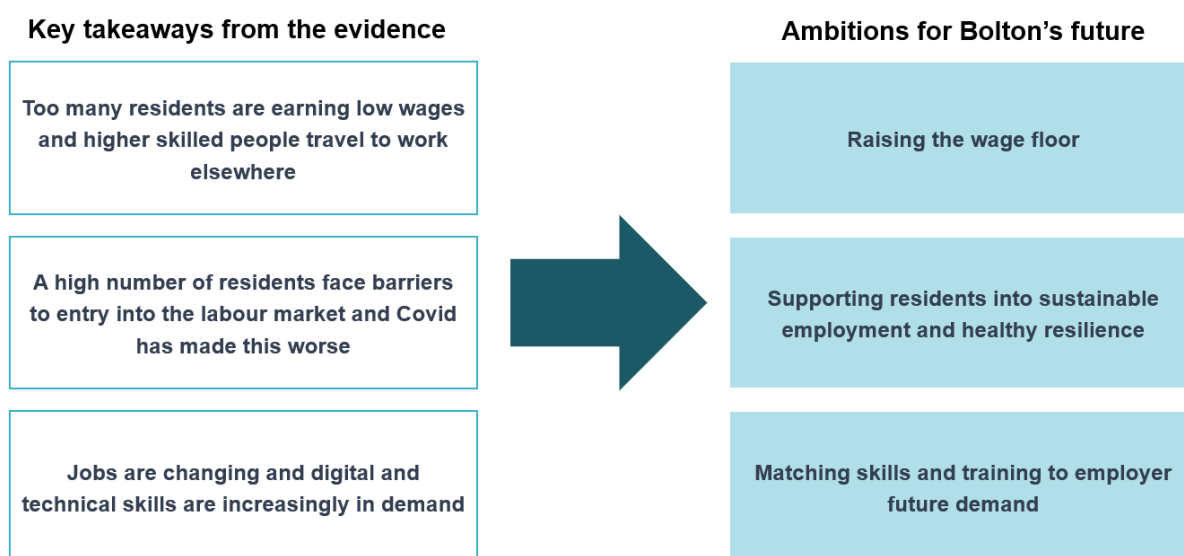
² [The Bolton Economy: Strategy for Growth 2016-2030](#), (Bolton Council, 2016).

Through excellent partnership collaboration and access to funded programmes, such as UK Shared Prosperity Funding, we will manage the process for delivering insightful and effective projects to achieve maximum impact in building an inclusive economy. Providing strong support to our local businesses that generates decent work for residents, we will support social enterprises, micro and small businesses to grow, and develop and curate the right land and space, including supporting investment in all parts of the Borough. We are and will continue to connect people from communities that face multiple barriers to accessing jobs, skills and career aspirations to a range of local support services.

This Plan sets out how we plan to do it, supporting businesses to create new employment, better jobs and enabling Bolton to be more productive.

3 People

Over the next ten years we will support every resident to benefit from good work and healthy lives



Priority One: Raising the wage floor

Raising wages across Bolton will improve residents' quality of life, have a positive impact on health and support economic growth through increased local demand. At present too many of Bolton's residents and workers earn low wages. 14% of jobs in the Borough are

earning a wage below the Real Living Wage³. If Bolton is to be a vibrant, self-sustaining local economy steps must be taken to change this, supported by the development of the Bolton anti-poverty strategy.

Bolton Council is committed to paying the foundation living wage rate for all our employed staff – this is reviewed annually in the context of national pay awards and as part of an annual pay policy statement approach. This will be a first step in promoting Bolton as a Living Wage Borough, working with Greater Manchester partners, and local employers.

We will deliver this priority by pursuing the following actions:

- Build on the local anchor institution network through the Vision Partnership, to focus on job entry and progression routes, and procurement that creates good jobs.
- Work with Logistics North and Wingates and other large employment locations and sector clusters to develop progression routes, creating links to training providers.
- Work with GMCA and local partners on the living wage region project to develop a Bolton place-based network of invested employers and an events campaign in Living Wage week.
- Promote the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter to promote benefits and opportunities for Bolton businesses.
- Ensure that foundation economy businesses in Bolton benefit from regional and national economic development programmes, by providing effective local business engagement and promotion.

Priority Two: Supporting residents into sustainable employment.

We will focus on employability, and in-work support, to ensure people are able to access and remain in employment. Major investments and job growth are mostly in the West and South of the Borough; it is important to connect all residents to these opportunities. There is a need to strengthen insight into identifying more specific, and community experienced, barriers to labour market participation for Bolton's residents; a need to inform and refresh our health, anti-poverty, skills and education policies in response to this.

Health has an impact on people's ability to secure employment and stay in work. Good work (which people feel is meaningful, pays appropriately and where they have a level of autonomy – whether paid or voluntary) has a positive impact on people's health. There is growing recognition of the need for embedded mental health support to be available for those seeking work and for those in work across Greater Manchester. Bolton's Active Lives Strategy and a joint strategic needs assessment of mental health and wellbeing led by

³ [Number and proportion of employee jobs with hourly pay below the living wage - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\), ONS, 2023.](https://ons.gov.uk/statistics/publications/number-and-proportion-of-employee-jobs-with-hourly-pay-below-the-living-wage)

Public Health, aims to shape the delivery of co-designed programmes and campaigns which will promote good health. This includes promoting and supporting activity to improve workplace wellbeing aiming to prevent sickness absence and enhance worker satisfaction, physical health and mental wellbeing

As one of the town's largest employers Bolton Council is committed to raising awareness of its many career opportunities to residents, reducing any barriers to residents applying for roles and striving for a workforce which reflects the community we serve. We have created a Digital Employment and Skills (DES) information guidance and support service to help residents find out about and access the local offer. We facilitate collaboration and consultation with Team Bolton skills, employment and careers partners, and Greater Manchester Combined Authority commissioned providers, to shape and promote the skills and employment provision offer. This includes Bolton's Job Centre Plus DWP Sector Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs), Bolton College's adult and community learning skills for work and career progression and Bolton at Home's employment and enterprise support offer. Bolton at Home also provide an extensive community investment programme at their UCAN centres – providing employment, financial and welfare support, connecting residents to local support and opportunities.

We will deliver this priority by pursuing the following actions:

- Develop and maintain an on-line business support resource to better connect business to business networking, employers to employment and skills programmes, access social enterprise and business support, grow social value investment and improve local business access to tender opportunities.
- Build an annual coordinated programme of events including job and careers fairs, skills and enterprise campaigns. Provide targeted localised activity, online and in-person, in the North and East of Bolton to highlight opportunities across the Borough and wider city region.
- Co-design, integrate and steer funded programmes to target support for economically inactive residents (or those at risk of becoming inactive due to educational absence and low levels of attainment, special educational needs, behavioural difficulties, illness or caring), raising awareness of support available by improved collaboration and informed connectivity of employment and skills provision.
- Target national and regional funding streams towards more deprived areas of the Borough – especially the East and North and identifying areas with the greatest gap in provision.

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- Influence new bus routes that connect residents across the Borough and between neighbouring Boroughs for employment opportunities, exploring opportunities for supporting job seekers and adults receiving training with free bus travel.

Priority Three: Matching skills and training to employer future demand, including green economy jobs

The Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) identifies 7 key sectors to support growth - digital and technology; financial and professional; construction and green economy skills are identified as local skill priority sectors.

Retrofit of renewable or low-carbon energy technologies is an opportunity to create new jobs and address poor energy efficiency of properties. It also presents a broader opportunity for business in general to think about upskilling workers to become environmental and sustainability leaders in their own businesses, increasing environmental awareness and develop supply chain operations leading to Net Zero and Carbon Literacy improvements.

The Bolton at Home Greenworks development will include a programme stimulating employment, business and skills in green technology at the Trinity Retail Park in Bolton. This will provide new opportunities for upskilling the existing workforce and training opportunities for residents, access and deliver green economy jobs in construction, as they develop and emerge in Bolton.

In recent years there have been positive trends in education in Bolton, participation in school, progression to Higher Education and a high proportion of graduates remain in Greater Manchester. There is an opportunity to build on this trend, engage in further aspirational education enterprise with schools, and produce a skills strategy with targeted activity aimed to increase the number of residents with Level 4+ qualifications.

Bolton College and the University of Bolton work closely with local employers and the Team Bolton Partnership to tailor their training offer to specific skill needs. The Council will work with providers, employers and anchor partners to continue to promote and support the growth of employment and training initiatives, such as apprenticeships, paid internships and T-level work placements. As new businesses move into the Borough, our education providers will continue building a responsive, dynamic and localised curriculum in collaboration with employers.

Bolton will capitalise on the opportunity to respond to and maximise investments that national strategy and funding programmes bring to support raising the ambition of careers education enterprise, development of higher-level workplace skills and in-work progression. Collaborative partnership working will be key, aligning the work of the Bolton Vision

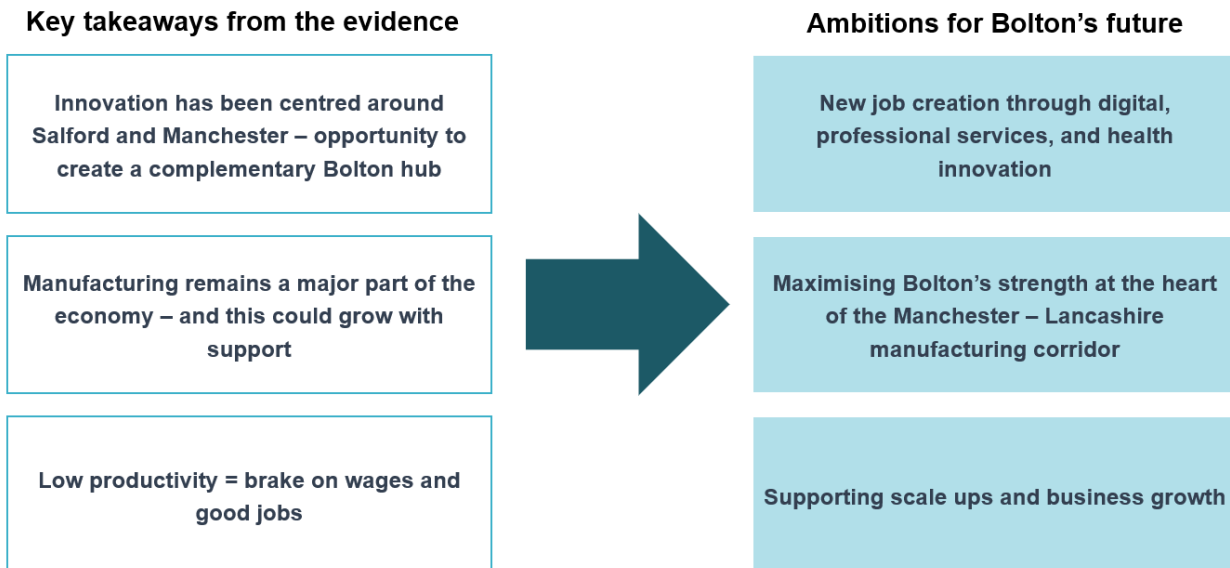
Economic Prosperity Group and Team Bolton Skills, Aspiration and Employment Strategic partnerships. To further support local skills matching, Bolton’s education and skills providers, schools, the Council, and employers will work together to produce a Bolton Skills Strategy which identifies skill gaps and priorities, provides insight into shaping the spend of the Adult Education Budget (devolved to Greater Manchester) and is informed by the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). Ensuring alignment of local employer priorities with skills resources that can be deployed in an effective and timely manner.

We will deliver this priority by pursuing the following actions:

- Aligned to the Greater Manchester LSIP (Local Skills Improvement Plan), develop a Bolton Skills Strategy to provide direction for future skills resources and programmes.
- Establish an ecosystem that connects local manufacturing, engineering, construction, and logistics firms with skill providers to inform future skill needs for sector clusters.
- Support employers to engage in Careers Education Enterprise across primary, secondary and further education provision especially if moving or growing into the Borough – raising awareness of career opportunities in the area.
- Create a major projects skills plan, identifying the construction and green jobs likely to come on stream in the next five years and work with local providers and employers to develop a local employment and skills pipeline.
- Develop a skills and talent recruitment plan for the Health Innovation Bolton (HIB) site and the University of Bolton’s Institute of Medical Sciences.

4 Business

Over the next ten years we will maximise Bolton's potential to be a leading economy in Greater Manchester



Priority One: New job creation through digital, professional services and health innovation

The professional sector is seeing sustained employment growth, and there have been recent successes in digital business growth. The acceleration of remote and hybrid work creates opportunities for local co-working spaces, serviced offices, business and innovation support to stimulate enterprise and growth in digital and professional services. Ongoing developments within the Borough, combined with knowledge and insights from our wider engagement across the city region, suggest that health innovation is fast growing and will provide an opportunity over the medium-term to transform the health and wellbeing of our residents.

We are developing our assets in Bolton to support growth of professional services and innovative businesses. Major projects include:

- A Health Innovation Campus - which will include space for health innovation businesses and the University of Bolton's Institute of Medical Sciences harnessing the transformative power of health and care, industry and academia working in partnership to address major challenges.

-
- The Wellsprings – a new business, innovation hub in Bolton town centre. Providing an agile working space, an enterprise and growth business support ecosystem and managed office space for digital, creative tech and professional businesses. Linking into the GM skills offer and the new National Cyber Force in Lancashire.
 - The Greater Manchester Business School – part of the University of Bolton Group providing access to a network of academic experts and sector specialists working with employers to support business growth, knowledge exchange, research development and innovation.

Our businesses will benefit from an extensive programme of business support from the Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub, and other partners, with access to sector specialist business support and developments in the green economy, social value and social enterprise, scale up, skills, networking and innovation.

We will deliver this priority by pursuing the following actions:

- Develop health innovation proposals with Innovation GM.
- Review and enhance account management of local and regional professional services and digital/creative businesses with MIDAS and the GM Business Growth Hub to understand potential for expansion and relocations to Bolton.
- Explore the potential for a high growth zone (for example, innovation or enterprise zones, dependent on government policy) in the Borough, linked to opportunity sectors.

Priority Two: Maximising Bolton's strength at the heart of the Manchester – Lancashire manufacturing corridor

Manufacturing is a high output sector nationally; in Bolton it remains a major part of the local economy and with support it could grow further. While Bolton is home to major manufacturing companies, there's potential to create stronger links to local SMEs and entrepreneurs. Increased emphasis on supply chain resilience and national self-sufficiency is likely to see opportunities for onshoring and a focus on local supply chains, which Bolton is well placed to exploit.

Bolton has a great location and manufacturing heritage; we need to maximise our location close to major manufacturers in Lancashire and the research and development around the Oxford Road Corridor. The success of Logistics North has brought an influx of new businesses and jobs to the Borough, where they benefit from the location at the centre of the Lancashire-Manchester corridor. We will continue to build on this success with the development of the Wingates site and the allocation of employment sites in 'Places for Everyone' (the long-term plan of nine Greater Manchester districts Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan for jobs, new

homes and sustainable growth) to deliver more space for manufacturing, engineering, and logistics companies to move and grow here.

Transition to net zero will be a major priority for manufacturing, engineering, and logistics, and their supply chains. Activity to grow and diversify those sectors in Bolton will also be an opportunity to support energy transition and supply chain development, connecting businesses to our skills providers and knowledge exchange, and helping to source the right business space and facilities.

We will deliver this priority by pursuing the following actions:

- Establish a network of manufacturing and engineering firms supported by the Council and key partners to grow local sector clusters, starting by mapping local supply chain opportunities, with health and health-tech focused links to reflect the University of Bolton's Institute of Medical Sciences development
- Develop the relationship between the Council and the Greater Manchester Civic University Network to understand what opportunities could connect research and development around advanced materials and graphene with manufacturing in Bolton
- Develop an inward investment proposition with MIDAS focused on manufacturing, linked with a focus on health and healthtech, and advanced materials and graphene, liaising between MIDAS and site owners to maximise the number of successful enquiries which deliver new jobs in Bolton.

Priority Three: Supporting scale ups and business growth

With high numbers of micro-businesses and high business birth and survival rates, Bolton's employees are less likely to be employed by large companies than the UK average. Encouraging local businesses to grow, whilst attracting more large and high growth businesses could help increase productivity and build an economy more resilient to economic shocks. Providing the right support at the right time can help our businesses to scale up and become more productive, providing decent work for residents.

Partners in the Borough share an ambition to proactively support and enable more start-ups and small independent businesses to prosper and grow in Bolton. Supporting start-ups, particularly those with young founders, will help diversify Bolton's business base and support the retention of local talent from our Colleges and University. This includes the Business Support offer via the University of Bolton Centre for Entrepreneurship, the GM Business Growth Hub and the Council. The GM Local Access Partnership project 'Proper Good' is supporting the development of the social enterprise network and, in conjunction with Bolton CVS, will help to identify the needs of local social enterprises and offer free-to-

access business support, networking and training led by entrepreneurs who know how to run proper businesses that do good in their communities.

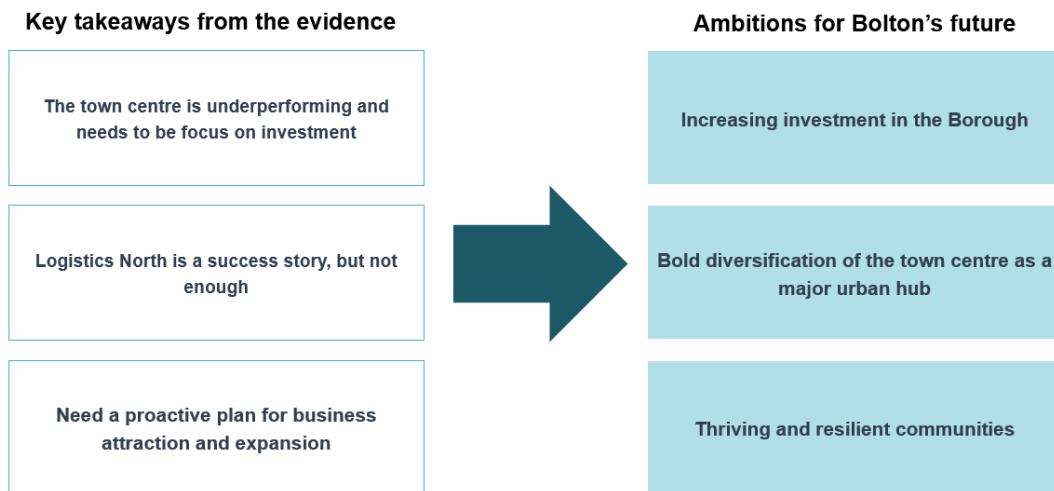
The Economic Prosperity Groups Business Support Network will continue to develop its reach, facilitating collaboration to prioritise and maximise resource to connect businesses and social enterprises to the business support offer – for example, the University of Bolton’s free business legal and accountancy advisory clinic for start-ups and small businesses; Business Bolton navigation of networking and tender opportunities; Proper Good social enterprise, UKSPF Build-a-Business and the GM Business Growth Hub. The University of Bolton’s Research and Knowledge Exchange Framework is being designed to connect students with small business to benefit from their expertise and spur innovation.

We will deliver this priority by pursuing the following actions:

- With the Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub create a business relationship programme for businesses with high growth potential or strategic size
- Develop new incubation space on a hub and bespoke model across Bolton, including Wellsprings.
- Develop social value ways of working a framework to grow investment and collaboration and improve opportunity for local supply chains to ensure this maximises local spend and supports businesses who pay Real Living Wage or higher, SMEs and social enterprises.
- Explore and build a business case for investigating the feasibility of expanding the Bolton Council industrial unit stock to promote local growth and employment opportunities.
- Review empty or underused premises across the town centre for meanwhile use spaces

5 Investment

In ten years, we will have built thriving communities where people and businesses live and work



Priority One: Increasing investment in the Borough

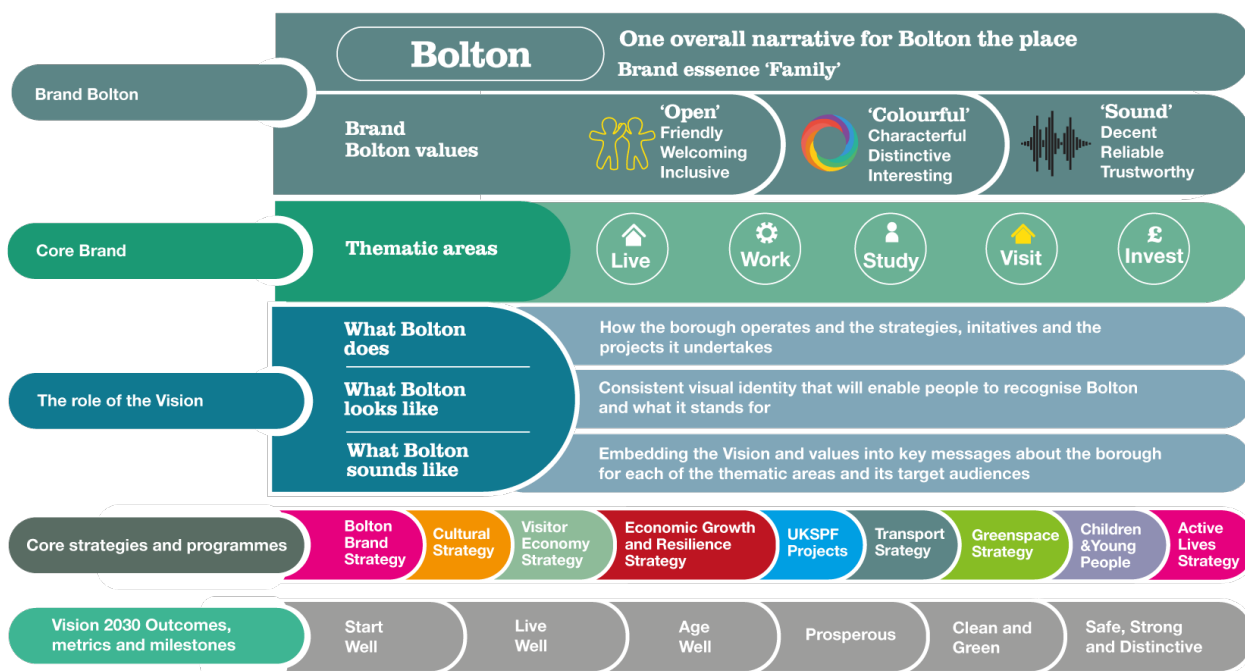
The Borough is seeing development: the Bolton town centre masterplan, housing delivery plan, Town Deal and Future High Streets Fund projects, the health innovation campus, Wingates development, Greenworks, and district town centre regeneration plans in Farnworth, Horwich, Little Lever, and Westhoughton. We continue to work proactively with MIDAS and the Department for International Trade on future inward investment opportunities, building on the success of Logistics North.

Bolton needs a proactive plan for attracting and retaining business and for delivering new investment, both from new businesses and to support existing businesses to grow in the Borough.

The new 'Brand Bolton', set to launch in Spring 2024, will provide one strong overall narrative for Bolton that leads the direction for a clear and coherent place-brand identity. The brand will cover key areas of live, work, study, visit and invest. This will ensure the story of Bolton can be identified by its residents and communities, whilst sharing the unique attributes that make our town distinct to wider stakeholders, investors and visitors.

Brand Bolton will establish a consistent place-brand narrative in Bolton as depicted in the graphic below:

Brand Bolton Hierarchy - Plan on a page



The new Brand for Bolton will:

- Reinforce place identity – re-energise the Bolton place brand with a new narrative driven from the community and key stakeholders. The USP will encapsulate not just the personality of the place, but also the vision for what it wants to become.
- Celebrate Bolton and surrounding town's assets and communities – quality architecture and spaces, character areas, communities and their differences, diversity and heritage; the sum of all the things that make Bolton distinctive and differentiate it from other places.
- Raise awareness of the offer – the attractions and cultural assets, shopping, food and beverage, countryside, employment, investment, location, connectivity, education/University.
- Develop a framework for the promotion of Bolton along with a set of 'products'.
- Promote active collaboration and partnership working through the establishment of a new Place Board and the activation of an ambassador programme.

The established brand identity for Bolton will act as an anchor to promote Bolton to existing and new businesses and investors. By changing thinking and doing things differently, Bolton can better utilise its assets: radiating influence, building confidence, cultivating and encouraging strong leadership, developing new relationships, bringing business and place together.

Essential to this drive for growth in business investment is the expansion of the visitor economy. This has economic benefits in and of itself, but also has wider positive implications for perceptions of the Borough which is essential in attracting new businesses and instilling confidence in existing businesses wishing to expand.

With almost 2,000 local businesses already operating within the visitor economy, employing almost 10,000 people, and a pre-pandemic peak of almost 750,000 overnight visitors to Bolton annually, the visitor economy in Bolton has solid economic foundations. This is due to a diverse range of visitor attractions; an annual programme of high-profile, international events (including Ironman UK and Bolton Food & Drink Festival); a strong retail base, including one of the largest retail parks in the UK; a 28,000-seat stadium (40,000 for concerts) with onsite hotel; and an unparalleled green space offer (over a third of Bolton is covered by greenspace or woodland).

Bolton has numerous strengths and opportunities that position the Borough well in harnessing wider growth in the visitor economy sector. However, much more can be done to respond to national and global trends within this sector to ensure that Bolton can compete effectively with other towns and cities also seeking to grow their visitor economies.

Specifically, due to a comparatively young demographic within Bolton and the wider region, and a marketing campaign with a strong emphasis on families, Bolton can tailor experiences to capture family-oriented markets, fostering longer and repeat visits. An existing and well-established events programme also places Bolton in a strong comparative position when attracting new and repeat visitors, showcasing the Borough's ability to curate an engaging calendar of activities that draw an international, national, and local audience.

Bolton's emerging Visitor Economy Strategy must be positioned as an essential element of Bolton's long-term Economic Growth and Resilience Plan. This strategy can harness the benefits seen in the unparalleled growth of the visitor economy in Manchester and aligns particularly well with developments as part of Greater Manchester's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), especially in terms of growing creative, culture, and sport sectors and further developing the extensive supply chains which these sectors rely on.

Brand Bolton will act as a business tool to promote existing cultural, leisure and business assets, and aim to attract new businesses and investors into Bolton. Our engagement suggests that there is inward investment interest, but businesses may have specific demands, or they are unsure about what type of businesses Bolton wants to attract.

We can do more to connect opportunities provided by Bolton's large businesses to other parts of the Borough and ensure that the benefits of investment flow to those areas with challenges around deprivation. Whilst not every part of Bolton has the land or demand for

major new employment sites, it is important that all parts of Bolton benefit from inward investment and new job creation, including using the rollout of bus franchising which means that we can inform and influence bus routes and services for residents to connect to centres across the Borough and to neighbouring town and city centres.

We will deliver this priority by pursuing the following actions:

- Work in collaboration with Brand Bolton to promote key benefits for businesses and inward investors and look to build profile through events and social media
- Work with TfGM to understand the potential for Orbital transport to connect GM North
- Create a prospectus pack to promote sites and investment opportunities across the Borough, feeding into Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review (IER) and for use in regular Invest in Bolton events
- Explore the potential to build funding proposals in areas of the Borough where it can have most impact, including looking at what is possible for the East and North of the Borough
- Convene a dedicated group including the Council, local developers, contractors and potential investors with MIDAS, to advise / lead on the development of opportunities for inward investment, business expansion, testing national investor demand, promoting Bolton the place and developing a package of support for key inward investors moving into the Borough
- Convene a group of developers and landlords to work with the Council to better understand where new opportunities to collaborate may exist and to support the private sector in getting things done quicker, building on the existing pre-planning consultation facility
- Establish a business events programme, targeted at investor development and showcasing opportunities in Bolton
- Proactive engagement with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) opportunities with MIDAS and Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and promotion of Bolton as major urban hub in Manchester-Lancashire corridor
- Seek to deliver buildings, homes and transport targets as set out in Bolton's Climate Change Strategy (2021-2030) delivery plan through investment and development projects and partnerships
- Deliver key employment land development sites
- Deliver town centre and district centre masterplans and associated projects

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- Review National Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for expanding businesses to promote growth to support sites with barriers to delivery, such as refurbishing derelict buildings or building greenfield access roads
 - Deliver the private sector housing programme, which assists people with home improvement measures to make their home safe, warm and dry whilst improving energy efficiency

Priority Two: Bold diversification of the town centre as a major urban hub

The town centre – with its size and heritage - is an opportunity for Bolton. The size of the town centre presents multiple opportunities for development, with a major regeneration drive underway through the Bolton town centre masterplan, that aims to increase the population of the town centre⁴ and renew the commercial offer. Meanwhile demand for workspace is shifting and developing services tailored towards hybrid workers will help to accelerate the town's regeneration. Attracting these workers to live, work and spend in the local economy, and to use local services and amenities, can raise productivity, build healthy places, address inequality, and increase demand in the local economy. This presents an opportunity for a bold reimagining of the town centre.

The town centre hosts a wide range of cultural, heritage and historic assets as well as a number of architecturally attractive buildings. Footfall in Bolton's town centre was declining pre-pandemic and residents surveyed reported a lack of diverse night-time amenities, particularly in the early evening - addressing this will encourage more people to visit the town centre.

Culture plays a vital role in shaping our places, increasing footfall, and encouraging people to visit, and in this regard the Economic Growth and Resilience Plan compliments Bolton's Cultural Strategy, 'A Cultural Renaissance' and support's the strategic cultural vision:

'We want culture to be the heartbeat of Bolton, we want it to cut through everything that we do because we believe that Culture characterises us as people, links us to a place, and connects us in a community. It provides inspiration and entertainment. It is the context for interaction and cohesion.'

Bolton's Cultural Strategy has identified six priority areas for development which will be addressed in the strategies delivery plan:

Programmes & Partnerships

- Improving cross-sector communication and collaboration.

⁴ Bolton Town Centre: Investor Prospectus. Deloitte, 2020

-
- Developing a more joined-up approach to cultural and creative programming.
 - Building on Bolton’s excellent events offer.

Place & Space

- Driving more visitors and footfall to Bolton’s town and district centres through culture.
- Completing Bolton’s cultural “jigsaw”.
- Establishing a central cultural hub for Bolton’s creative community.
- Unlocking access for artists, organisations and communities to affordable creative spaces.
- Infusing wider regeneration schemes with culture and creativity.

Young People & Emerging Talent

- Developing a “golden thread” of creative talent and career pathways for Bolton’s youth.
- Improving Bolton’s offer for young people, linked to a vibrant grassroots music scene.
- Providing cultural education and engagement opportunities for children and their families.

Stakeholders & Resources

- Raising confidence and ambition through renewed cultural leadership, vision & investment.
- Establishing an inclusive Cultural Compact for Bolton.
- Improving and extending access to funding for culture and creativity.
- Building capacity and resilience in Bolton’s cultural and creative organisations.
- Leveraging the growing value of TV, film and creative technology to Bolton.

Advocacy & Inclusion

- Shifting perceptions of culture and creativity through evidence-based advocacy.
- Building a better brand for Bolton that can be embraced by all.
- Promoting accessibility, equality, diversity and inclusion throughout Bolton’s cultural life.

Health and Wellbeing

- Developing the Bolton Creative Health Network to deliver networking meetings for arts, culture, health and voluntary sector organisations across Bolton.
- A shared understanding of needs, developing collaborative approaches to commissioning, funding, and evaluation.
- Develop capacity and will support shared approaches to developing work in the priority areas of Social Prescribing and Mental Health.

Bolton's Cultural Strategy provides an ambitious vision for developing creativity in the Borough and outlines how the identified cultural priority areas will be addressed. Bolton has a growing reputation as a creative town, from our amazing cultural assets such as Octagon Theatre, Bolton Library and Museum, Bolton Albert Halls to our world class events which sees visitors flocking to the town to enjoy Bolton Food and Drink Festival, major music concerts, and the Bolton Film Festival.

We will deliver this priority by pursuing the following actions:

- Building on the success of events (Bolton Food and Drink Festival, Iron Man UK) we will develop an annual events programme in both town and district centres by working with the community and independent event organisers
- Market Bolton's offer, promoting town centre commercial space, events programme, and filming programme
- Implement Bolton's Cultural Strategy and bring together cultural institutions and venues, businesses, event organisers and suppliers, and funders e.g., Arts Council to enable culture to drive Bolton town centre's night time and weekend economy, and grow local creative businesses
- Support community led nighttime economy – celebrating and enabling space for diverse cultural events and a food/drink offer from Bolton's diverse communities

Priority Three: Thriving and resilient communities

We want all our residents to benefit as Bolton's economy grows. The need for housing in Bolton is significant and growing. Our plans for residential growth are outlined in our Housing Delivery Plan 2019. Our new residential offer in development, in Bolton and district town centres, will provide mixed use housing with more open and shared spaces and attractive greenspace. Future investment must address housing and neighbourhood deprivation, tackle barriers to accessing opportunities and services, and support healthy living. In Bolton we have partnerships that work closely together on the housing offer and

quality of supply – we will continue to work together to identify long term needs for intervention in ensuring good quality housing.

Housing quality can be a challenge, with many Victorian-era terraces requiring substantial retrofit especially within the context of rising energy prices. Bolton’s population is ageing, and many residents are ageing in homes that are increasingly unfit for purpose.

Independent Living, Bolton’s Housing Strategy for Older People, recognises the challenges Bolton faces as our population ages and sets out priorities for action. Challenges also exist for people requiring more specialist / supported housing. Our Housing with Care & Support 10 Year Prospectus outlines our ambitions here.

We aim to deliver new net zero homes that are more energy efficient and reduce energy costs for our residents. Working with our Greater Manchester Partners and locally with our Bolton Community Homes Partnership, we are implementing plans to retrofit homes across the Borough and across all housing tenures.

We will deliver this priority by pursuing the following actions:

- Implement homes, natural environment, and open space actions in Bolton's Climate Change Strategy (2021 – 2030) delivery plan
- Deliver the Housing Delivery Plan
- Deliver the Housing with Care & Support 10 Year Prospectus
- Support older residents with independent living through the Housing Strategy for Older People.
- Improve existing housing and neighbourhoods via a range of policies / opportunities including:
 - Bolton Council Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2021, delivering Adaptations and Energy Improvements
 - Greater Manchester Retrofit Group delivering schemes such as: ECO4, NHS Warm Homes project and GMCA Retrofit Portal Bolton Community Homes (BCH) Asset Management Group to develop bids and programmes to improve energy efficiency and achieve net zero in social housing stock. This builds on recent success to secure Decarbonisation funding.
 - Work with Homes England and GMCA to secure funding to regenerate our more deprived neighbourhoods and poorest quality housing
- Utilise stock condition data available through GMCA and Bolton’s own data to target resources and identify those homes that are the most energy inefficient

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- Promote and implement zero carbon approaches to new build homes, in line with Places for Everyone, the long-term plan of nine Greater Manchester districts (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth.
 - Build on partnerships for long term housing quality stock strategy including with GMCA and Government on potential future retrofit and clearance support.

6 Implementation

This plan sets out 9 priorities to deliver our ten-year ambition to create better jobs in a more productive Bolton. Bolton Council will lead the implementation of this Plan. The role of partners, including Greater Manchester Combined Authority, cannot be understated and collaboration is key to future success. Bolton is a key stakeholder and beneficiary of the new Trailblazer Deal devolution arrangements, which offer a variety of positive opportunities. The deal provides new levers and powers for Greater Manchester on skills and employment support, but also important enablers for Bolton's residents like transport and housing (which will also have associated work force implications). Bolton will have an important role to play in implementation and achieving improved outcomes for its residents.

The Council has a unique place leadership role in enabling and overseeing the delivery of economic and social outcomes, with a democratic mandate, and statutory control over planning, public health and trading regulations. The Council invests substantially in the Borough, is a large employer, commissioner of services, and purchaser, with its own direct impact on local employment and supply chains.

At the same time, the Council will work with the Economic Prosperity Group (EPG) as the main strategic partnership in delivering the Plan. We are committed together to doing things differently to secure maximum impact for our residents and communities. This will include convening wider partners across the Borough, building on existing collaboration such as the Civic University Agreement with University of Bolton, and delivering outcomes for Bolton from regional and national programmes, funding and policies, including Levelling Up and UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Through implementation of the Plan, we will deliver specific actions (detailed in Section 7) aligned to the key priorities and phased over the short (next two years), medium (3-7 years) and longer term (up to ten years).

Within the Council, we will build this Plan into our core business activities going forward, so that every Council policy supports the priorities and outcomes set out in this Plan.

The Economic Prosperity Group, acting as the Strategic Board, will have oversight in respect of implementation, delivery and monitoring of the Plan and be responsible for collaboration with business leaders, large employers, anchor partners and VCSE (Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise sector) in respect of Plan delivery, specifically:

- Act as ambassadors of Bolton – supporting promotion of the town and the Borough
- Provide strategic direction supporting the Bolton Business Support Network to facilitate collaboration to better reach, link-in and support the Bolton business base, connecting with university programmes, the Bolton Family Social Value Partnership and business mentorship, innovation and growth programmes offer

- Provide oversight for the coordination and development of sector support and business networks – anchor institutions, manufacturing and engineering, independent businesses and night-time economy, social enterprises.

Measuring impact

The Council will track progress against the detailed actions, reporting progress to the Economic Prosperity Group. Many of these metrics are regularly available at Bolton or neighbourhood level through national statistics, but others, like investment pipelines, will require collaboration and input between partners.

We want to ensure we are monitoring progress during implementation of the following measures:

Good employment and healthy lives	Economic potential	Thriving communities
Wages	Professional jobs	Levels of investment and pipeline
Employment levels	Sector productivity	Sites in development and planning
Training and education participation	Business birth rate	Neighbourhood deprivation

Linking to other council strategies

Bolton2030

Bolton2030 is the long-term vision to achieve an Active, Connected and Prosperous Borough. Underpinning this, the partnership agreed six outcomes:

Start Well - The happiness and wellbeing of our residents is improved, so that they can live healthy, fulfilling lives for longer.

Live Well - Older people in Bolton stay healthier for longer and feel more connected with their communities.

Age Well - Businesses want to work and invest in the Borough and through their corporate social responsibility maximise social value opportunities, whilst creating good inclusive and sustained employment across the system.

Prosperous - Stronger, cohesive, more confident communities in which people feel safe, welcome, and connected.

Clean and Green - Our environment is protected and improved, so that more people enjoy it, care for it and are active in it.

Safe, Strong and Distinctive - Stronger, cohesive, more confident communities in which people feel safe, welcome, and connected.

These six outcomes clearly articulate the ambitions for the Borough and underpinning each are key partnership groups leading on delivery. Partners have the ability to refine where to put efforts, reflective of current position and what matters, to then be firepower to drive delivery of outcomes including those highlighted with the Economic Growth and Resilience Plan. These partnerships are rooted in principles of equity, equality and fairness, in support of our broader ambitions for the Borough.

Corporate Plan

Bolton Council's Corporate Plan sets out the Council's strategic ambitions for the next two years, providing a clear picture of the national, regional and local context impacting the Council and how it will operate around these.

The intention of the corporate plan is not to capture everything we do as a council. Instead, it acts as an overarching plan to provide strategic oversight and direction on what we will focus on during that two-year period, shaping and aligning Council activity. Underpinning the Corporate Plan is the Economic Growth and Resilience Plan which will play a role in delivering our strategic ambitions.

Climate Strategy

Recognised as one of the key strategies within the clean and green outcome as part of Bolton2030, Bolton's Climate Change Strategy sets the economic, environmental and social imperative for the Borough and wider region as part of the transition to net zero. More broadly Greater Manchester Combined Authority has set an ambition to be a carbon neutral city region by 2038. To support this vision a 5-year environmental plan was launched in 2019 to identify the urgent actions that are needed to ensure Greater Manchester can follow the required pathway for carbon neutrality.

Housing and Planning

This plan is designed to complement existing regeneration work and housing strategies. Providing safe and secure homes for people who have specific needs assists those people

to maintain and increase their independence, thrive and contribute to their communities. Bolton has two strategies which focus on providing new housing and making better use of existing assets for people with specific needs. Where necessary care and support can also be provided to assist independent living.

Bolton's Housing Delivery Plan, published in July 2019, identifies the number of new homes required in Bolton to meet national requirements, and the plan proposed disposing of Council development sites to accelerate housing delivery (note as of January 2023 national requirements may have changed). Consequently, Bolton Council have disposed of over 80 development sites, most of which were deemed suitable for residential development. However, if we are to create a resilient economy, it is equally important for the Council to encourage development of employment sites and supports the development of quality housing stock.

Bolton Council has commissioned an Employment Land Study, which proposes a series of next steps in respect of interventions and incentives designed to encourage the right type of development in the right place at the right cost for growing businesses; and specific site proposals for recommended future development sites, with site details and locations identified.

Inequalities

The recent review of Bolton 2030 (partnerships and plans) has enabled an enhanced focus on wellbeing and equity, together with a clear focus and commitment to social value. There is an increasing focus on asset-based community development approaches be that through Community Champions, Family Hubs or Community Alliances for example.

In the last independent Director of Public Health Annual Report, there was a clear recommendation to develop an anti-poverty strategy and this work is underway, building on the existing work that has provided a coherent, joined up approach to cost of living pressures in the Borough.

Finally, Bolton Council has a well-established Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy ensuring compliance with the Equality Act but also allowing the development of innovative Equalities Allies Networks to guide the delivery plans. This sits alongside a strong connection to the equalities work that is emerging now through the GMCA.

7 Actions

The Council is committed to working with partners to deliver the following specific actions aligned to our priorities phased through the short (over the next two years), medium (3-7 years) and long term (up to ten years). It is accompanied by a detailed action plan which sets out resourcing, next steps and who will lead what activity. The Council will oversee and report progress to the Economic Prosperity Group.

Named partners have made a commitment to the delivery of the Bolton Economic Growth and Resilience Action Plan. The Growth Company, as the major funded business support provider, has pledged to target support aligned to the Plan, to local businesses at all stages of their growth journey with a broad range of services including expert one-to-one and sector expertise support, events, specialist programmes all of which will help Bolton businesses to start, grow and thrive. The Growth Company will co-locate staff resources and seek opportunities of cohesion and collaboration in shared facilities.

	Priority	Action	Short, medium or long term
People	Raising the wage floor	Build on anchor institution network through the Vision Partnership, to focus on job entry and progression routes and good job procurement	Short term - now to next 2 years
		Work with Logistics North and Wingates and other large employment locations and sector clusters to develop progression routes, creating links to training providers.	Short term - now to next 2 years
		Work with GMCA and local partners on the living wage region project to develop a Bolton place-based network of invested employers and an events campaign in Living Wage week	Short term - now to next 2 years

	Priority	Action	Short, medium or long term
		Promote the GM Good Employment Charter to promote opportunities and benefits for Bolton businesses	Short term - now to next 2 years
		Ensure that foundation economy businesses in Bolton benefit from regional and national economic development programmes, by providing effective local business engagement and promotion.	Short term - now to next 2 years
	Supporting residents into sustainable employment	Develop and maintain an on-line business support resource to better connect business to business networking, employers to employment and skills programmes, access social enterprise and business support, grow social value investment and improve local business access to tender opportunities.	Short term - now to next 2 years
		Build an annual coordinated programme of events including job and careers fairs, skills and enterprise campaigns. Provide targeted localised activity, on online and in-person, in the North and East of Bolton to highlight opportunities across the Borough and wider city region.	Short term – now to next 2 years
		Target national and regional funding streams towards more deprived areas of the Borough – especially the east and north, and identifying areas with greatest gap in provision	Short term – now to next 2 years
		Influence new bus routes that connect residents across the Borough and between neighbouring Boroughs for employment opportunities, explore opportunities for supporting job seekers and adults receiving training with free bus travel.	Short term – now to next 2 years

	Priority	Action	Short, medium or long term
		Co-design, integrate and steer funded programmes to target support for economically inactive residents (or those at risk of becoming inactive due to educational absence and low levels of attainment, special educational needs, behavioural difficulties, illness or caring), raising awareness of support available by improved collaboration and informed connectivity of employment and skills provision.	Medium term – over 2-5 years
		Aligned to the Greater Manchester LSIP (Local Skills Improvement Plan), develop a Bolton Skills Strategy to provide direction for future skills resources and programmes.	Short term – now to next 2 years
		Establish an ecosystem that connects local manufacturing, engineering, construction, and logistics firms with skills providers to inform future skills needs for sector clusters.	Short term – now to next 2 years
	Matching skills and training to employer future demand, including green jobs	Create a major projects skills plan, identifying the construction and green jobs likely to come on stream in the next five years and work with local providers and employers to develop a local employment and skills pipeline.	Short term – now to next 2 years
		Develop skills and talent recruitment plan for the Health Innovation Bolton (HIB) site and The University of Bolton's Institute of Medical Sciences.	Short term - now to next 2 years
		Support employers to engage in Careers Education Enterprise across primary, secondary and further education provision especially if moving or growing into the Borough – raising awareness of career opportunities in the area.	Medium term - over 2-5 years

	Priority	Action	Short, medium or long term
Business	New job creation through digital, professional services, and health innovation	Develop health innovation proposals with Innovation GM.	Short term - now to next 2 years
		Review and enhance account management of local and regional professional services and digital/creative businesses with MIDAS and the Growth Company to understand potential for expansion and relocations to Bolton.	Medium term - over 2-5 years
		Explore the potential for a high growth zone (for example an innovation or enterprise zone, dependent on government policy) in the Borough, linked to opportunity sectors.	Medium term - over 2-5 years
	Maximising Bolton's strength at the heart of the Manchester – Lancashire manufacturing corridor	Establish a network of manufacturing and engineering firms (looking at the Advanced Machinery and Productivity Institute in Rochdale as an example) supported by the Council to grow local sector clusters, starting by mapping local supply chain opportunities, with health and health-tech focused links to reflect the University of Bolton's Institute of Medical Sciences development.	Short term - now to next 2 years
		Develop the relationship between the Council and the whole Greater Manchester university network to understand what opportunities could connect research and development around advanced materials and graphene with manufacturing in Bolton.	Short term - now to next 2 years
		Develop an inward investment proposition with MIDAS focused on manufacturing, linked with a focus on health and healthtech, and advanced materials and graphene, liaising between MIDAS and site owners to maximise the number of successful enquiries which deliver new jobs in Bolton.	Medium term - over 2-5 years

	Priority	Action	Short, medium or long term
	Supporting scale ups and business growth	Develop new incubation space on a hub and spoke model across Bolton, including Wellsprings.	Medium term - over 2-5 years
		Develop social value ways of working a framework to grow investment and collaboration and improve opportunity for local supply chains to ensure this maximises local spend and supports businesses who pay Real Living Wage or higher, SMEs and social enterprises.	Medium term - over 2-5 years
		Review empty or underused premises in the town centre for meanwhile use spaces in town centre.	Medium term – over 2-5 years
		With the Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub create a business relationship programme for businesses with high growth potential or strategic size.	Short term – now to next 2 years
		Explore and build a business case to expanding the Bolton Council industrial unit stock to promote local growth and employment opportunities.	Medium term – over next 2-5 years

	Priority	Action	Short, medium or long term
Investment	Increasing investment in the Borough	Create a prospectus pack to promote sites and investment opportunities across the Borough, feeding into Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review (IER) and for use in regular Invest in Bolton events.	Medium term – over next 2-5 years
		Build a 'Stronger Bolton' brand and look to build profile through events and social media.	Short term – now to next 2 years
		Establish a business events programme, targeted at investor development and showcasing Bolton opportunities.	Short term – now to next 2 years
		Work with TfGM to understand potential for Orbital transport to connect GM North.	Long term – up to 10 years
		Explore the potential to build funding proposals in areas of the Borough where it can have most impact, including looking at what is possible for the East and North of the Borough.	Medium term – over next 2-5 years
		Convene a dedicated group including the Council, local developers, contractors and potential investors with MIDAS, to advise / lead on the development of opportunities for inward investment, business expansion, testing national investor demand, promoting Bolton the place and developing a package of support for key inward investors moving into the Borough.	Medium term – over next 2-5 years
		Convene a group of developers and landlords to understand where there are more opportunities to collaborate and for the private sector to help get things done quicker building on the existing preplanning facility.	Medium term – over next 2-5 years

	Priority	Action	Short, medium or long term
		Implement buildings, homes and transport targets in Bolton's Climate Change Strategy through investment and development projects and partnerships.	Medium term – over next 2-5 years
		Deliver town centre and district centre masterplans and associated projects.	Medium term – over next 2-5 years
		Deliver key employment land development sites.	Medium term – over next 2-5 years
		Deliver the private sector housing programme, which assists people with home improvement measures to make their home safe, warm and dry whilst improving energy efficiency.	Short term – now and to next 2 years
		Proactive engagement with Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) opportunities with MIDAS and the Department for Business and Trade (DBT) and promotion of Bolton as major urban hub in Manchester-Lancashire corridor.	Medium term – over next 2-5 years
		Review National Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for expanding businesses to promote growth to support sites with barriers to delivery, such as refurbishing derelict buildings or building greenfield access roads.	Short term – now and to next 2 years
	Bold diversification of the town centre	Building on the success of events (Bolton Food and Drink Festival, Iron Man) we will develop an annual events programme in both town and district centres by working with the community and independent event organisers.	Short term - now and to next 2 years

	Priority	Action	Short, medium or long term
	as a major urban hub	Implement Bolton Culture Strategy and bring together cultural institutions and venues, businesses, event organisers and suppliers, and funders e.g., Arts Council to enable culture to drive Bolton town centre's night time and weekend economy and grow local creative businesses.	Short term - now and to next 2 years
		Work with local organisers to hold more frequent cultural events and festivals in town centre venues and outdoor spaces.	Medium term - over next 2-5 years
		Market Bolton Borough's offer, promoting town centre commercial space, events programme, and filming programme.	Short term - now and to next 2 years
		Support community led night-time economy - celebrating and enabling space for diverse cultural events and food/drink offer from Bolton's diverse communities.	Short term - now and to next 2 years
	Thriving and resilient communities	Implement homes, natural environment, and open space actions in Bolton's Climate Change Strategy (2021 – 2030) delivery plan.	Short term - now and to next 2 years
		Deliver the Housing Delivery Plan.	Long term - up to 10 years
		Deliver the Housing with Care & Support 10 Year Prospectus.	Medium term - now and to next 10 years

	Priority	Action	Short, medium or long term
		Support older residents with independent living through the Housing Strategy for Older People.	Medium term - over next 2-5 years
		Improve existing housing and neighbourhoods via a range of policies and opportunities.	Medium term - over next 2-5 years
		Link with Bolton Community Homes (BCH) Asset Management Group to develop bids and programmes to improve energy efficiency and achieve net zero in social housing stock.	Medium term - over next 2-5 years
		Utilise stock condition data available through GMCA and Bolton's own data to target resources and identify those homes that are the most energy inefficient.	Short term - now and to next 2 years
		Promote and implement zero carbon approaches to new build homes, in line with Places for Everyone, the long-term plan of nine Greater Manchester districts (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth.	Long term - up to 10 years
		Build on partnerships for long term housing quality stock strategy including with GMCA and Government on potential future retrofit and clearance support.	Long term - up to 10 years

Annex: Economic Evidence Base

The Current Economic Crisis and Bolton

Following the Covid-19 pandemic the UK has had to deal with several economic challenges, including the tight labour market, pressures of rising inflation, hike in energy prices, and the end of the period of ultra-low interest rates that followed the 2008 financial crisis. Alongside the rest of the country, the residents, businesses and institutions of Bolton are experiencing, and will likely continue to experience, a rise in wage rates alongside a faster rise in the cost of goods, services, and energy, as well as a rise in interest rates.

An increasingly tight post-pandemic labour market

During the pandemic the amount of job vacancies decreased dramatically, with the Institute for Fiscal Studies reporting that vacancies in almost every occupation fell by at least 20% nationally.⁵ However, the recovery of consumer demand post lockdown restrictions has been swift, resulting in an uptick in demand for labour, with national vacancies reaching an increase of 65.5% upon pre-pandemic levels by January 2022⁶; in Bolton this constrained demand has facilitated above average job growth, with the number of jobs between 2020 and 2021 increasing by 5.2%, compared to the yearly 1.69% average job growth since 2015.⁷

Bolton historically has always seen high levels of economic inactivity for its working age population compared to regional and national averages. Prior to Covid-19 this was the equivalent of around 1 in 4 working age people in Bolton, compared to around 1 in 5 nation-wide. During the height of the pandemic this increased to almost 1 in 3; however, from approximately 2022 onwards economic inactivity stabilised to levels shown previously (which remains around 30% higher than the UK as a whole). It continues to be the case that the vast majority who reported as economically inactive in Bolton did so as a result of long-term sickness or disability⁸.

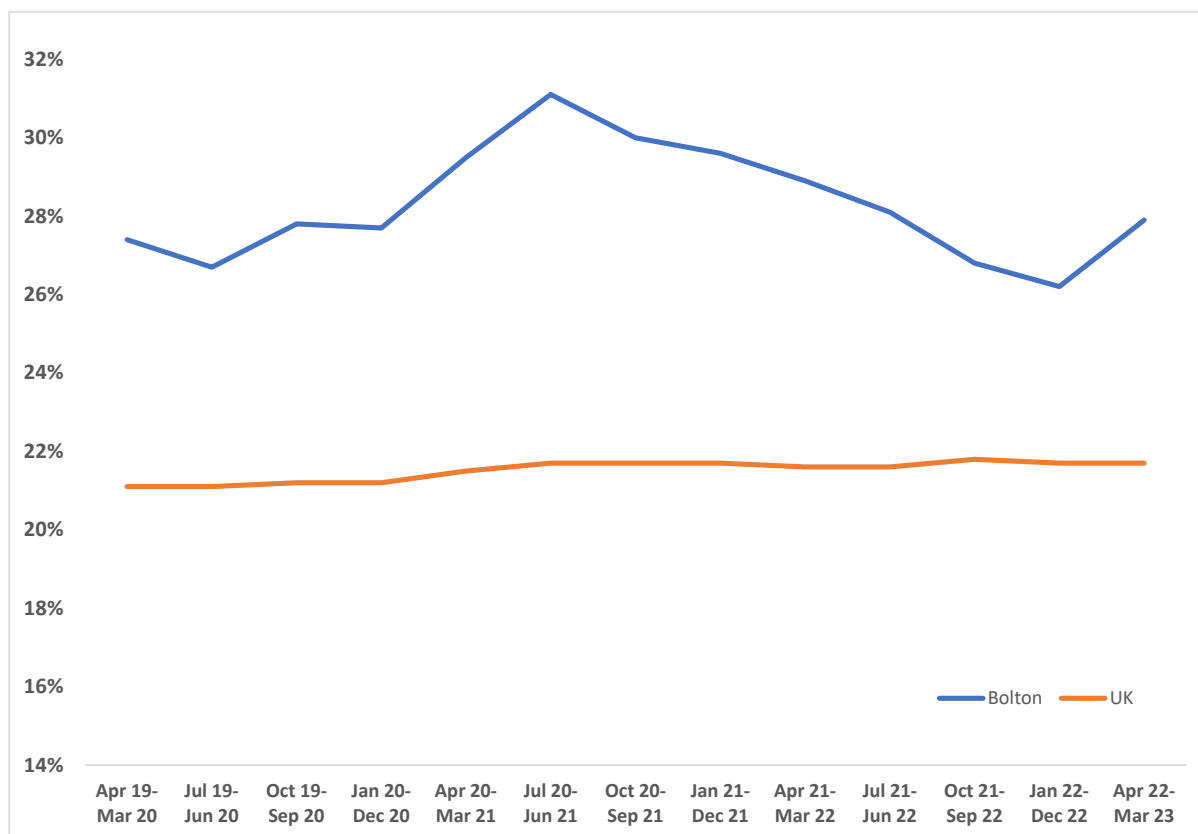
⁵ [Job Opportunities during the Pandemic](#), Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2021

⁶ [How has the pandemic affected industries and labour in the UK?](#), House of Commons Library, 2022

⁷ [Labour Market Profile – Bolton](#), ONS, 2022

⁸ [Labour Market Profile – Bolton](#), ONS, 2023

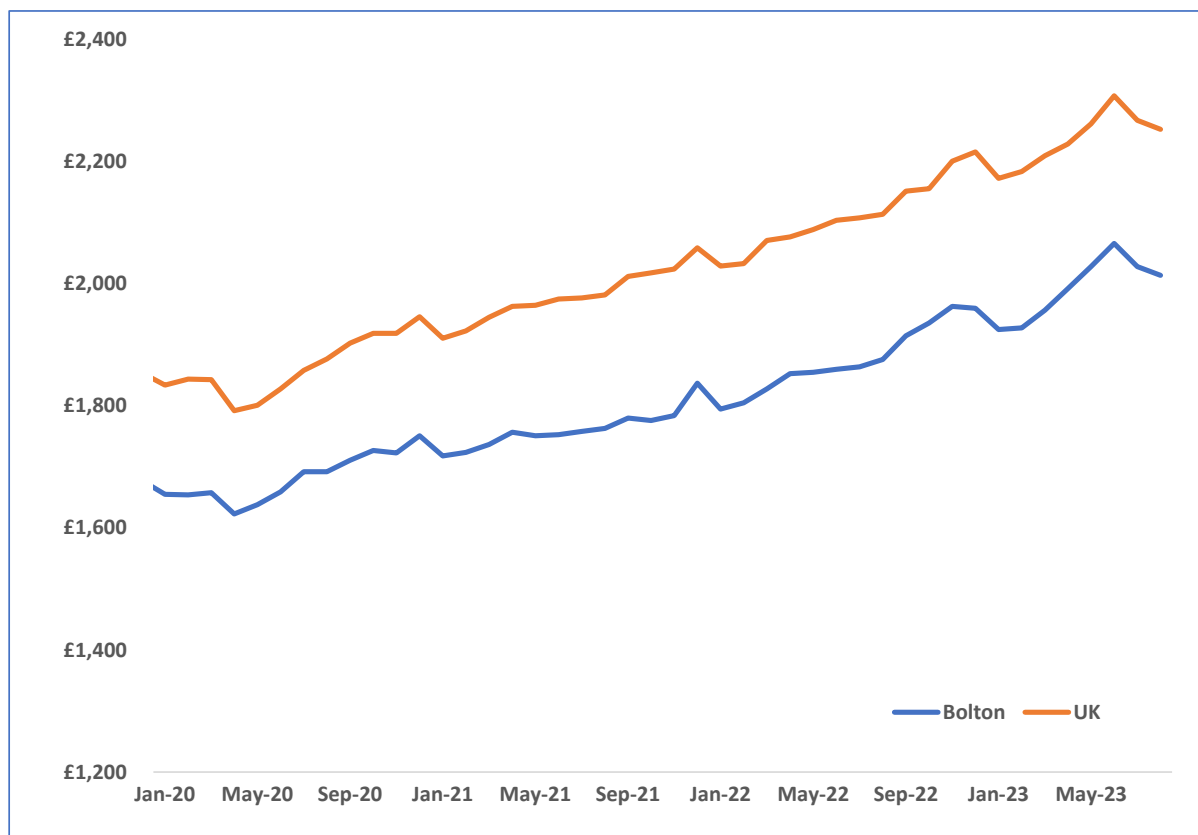
Figure 1. Economic Inactivity rates In Bolton (Annual Population Survey, ONS, 2023)



Recent labour market changes can be seen in the fluctuating wage growth in Bolton in the previous few years as well. Historically wages for Bolton workers tend to be between 15-20% lower than the national average. During the pandemic Bolton’s median wage levels increased at a faster rate than regional and national average. However, it is likely that this was a result having a larger number of lower paid employees who lost their jobs or were furloughed, pushing up average wages at that time of the remaining (slightly higher waged) workers. Following on from the pandemic, wage growth has now stabilised and is on a par with the national average once again. However average wages for Bolton as a workplace remain low; Bolton has the third lowest average wage for full-time workers in Greater Manchester, and is in the bottom 12% of all local authorities for wages in the country⁹.

⁹ [Annual survey of hours and earnings - workplace analysis - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk), ONS, 2023

Figure 2. Median pay, Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, (ONS, 2023).



Debt and interest

The rise in interest rates, following price rises, and volatility in financial markets is a challenge. In addition to making it harder for businesses to take out loans, higher interest rates will mean homes owners' mortgages will increase. In 2021 28% households were owner-occupiers with a mortgage/loan (a further 33% owned their home outright). A total of 18% lived in private rented accommodation; 16% through a private landlord or letting agency, 2% privately rented from 'other'¹⁰. This raises the concern that rental costs could increase if landlords pass on future mortgage increases onto tenants when contracts allow.

¹⁰ TS054 - Tenure - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk), ONS, 2023.

People

Too many residents are earning low wages and higher skilled people travel to work elsewhere

The population of the Borough has grown steadily over recent years, increasing by 7% between the 2011 and 2021 Censuses¹¹. Median wages are higher for residents than for jobs based in the Borough, suggesting that the Borough's higher paid residents are more likely to work outside the Borough¹². Commuting data shows that Bolton is a net importer of workers from Northern GM Boroughs, and a net exporter to more productive Southern GM Boroughs.¹³

Bolton's residents earn less than their Greater Manchester neighbours and national counterparts, with lower median wages; 14% of jobs in the Borough earn a wage below the Real Living Wage¹⁴. Low wages, productivity and high levels of economic inactivity contribute to high levels of deprivation, particularly in the town centre and to its east. Median wages in Bolton have been rising alongside national trends since 2014 and have recovered from the Covid changes but remain lower than in comparator towns.¹⁵

Levels of relative deprivation are high in Bolton, and over 50% of the Borough's neighbourhoods are among the three most deprived deciles of neighbourhoods in England (23% of Bolton's neighbourhoods are in the most deprived decile). Figure 3 is a map of relative deprivation in the Borough, it shows clear concentrations of deprivation around the town centre and in the East.¹⁶

¹¹ [Census - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk), ONS, 2023.

¹² [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings - Data Sources - home - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk), ONS, 2023.

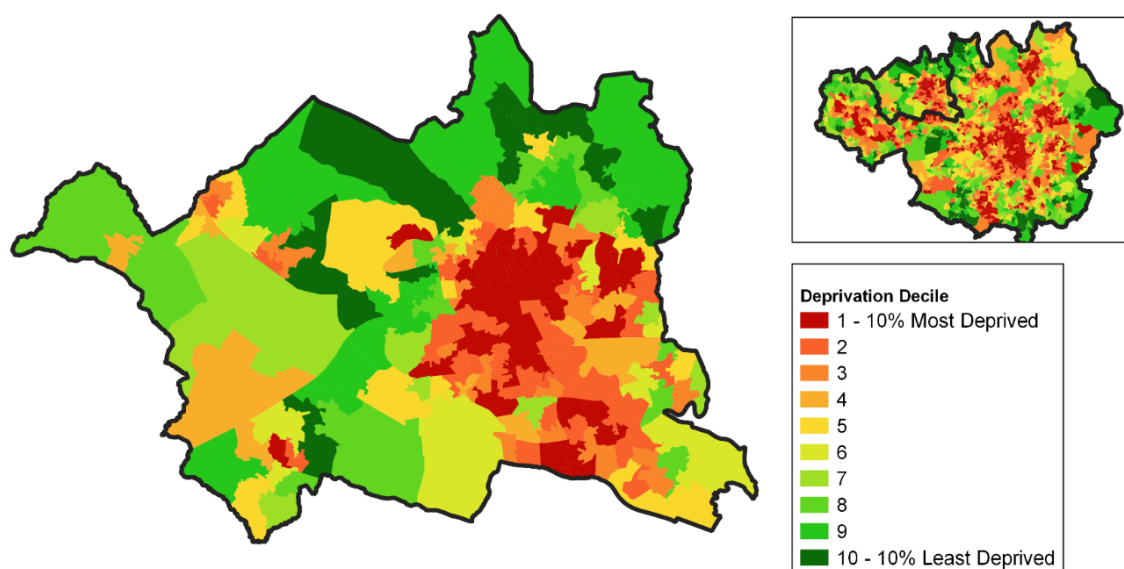
¹³ [Location of usual residence and place of work by method of travel to work - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk), ONS, 2023.

¹⁴ [Number and proportion of employee jobs with hourly pay below the living wage - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk), ONS, 2023.

¹⁵ [Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings - Data Sources - home - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://nomisweb.co.uk), ONS, 2023.

¹⁶ [English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk), IoD 2019

Deprivation across Bolton and GM relative to the UK



A high number of residents face barriers to entry into the labour market and Covid has made this worse

Many of Bolton's residents face barriers to employment, with health inequalities, access to employment and rising economic inactivity. The working age population (people aged 16-64) makes up 61% of Bolton's total population, slightly lower than the national level of 63%. This is, in part, because Bolton's population skews younger with significantly higher birth rates and more dependent children than the national average¹⁷. The labour force participation rate is also below the national average, 72% compared to 79% for Great Britain.¹⁸

Unemployment in Bolton peaked during the height of the pandemic, with approximately 8.5% of the working age population claiming an unemployment benefit in late 2020. Levels have now decreased to around 5.6% from mid-2022 onwards; however, reaching the rate of March 2020 (pre-pandemic) of 4.9% has yet to be achieved. Unemployment has affected all age groups, but younger age groups have shown marked improvement compared to middle-aged workers, especially older males¹⁹.

Economic inactivity has shifted over the past few years, however historically economic inactivity has been around 20-30% higher in Bolton than the national average. The

¹⁷ [Population estimates - local authority based by five-year age band - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](#), ONS, 2023.

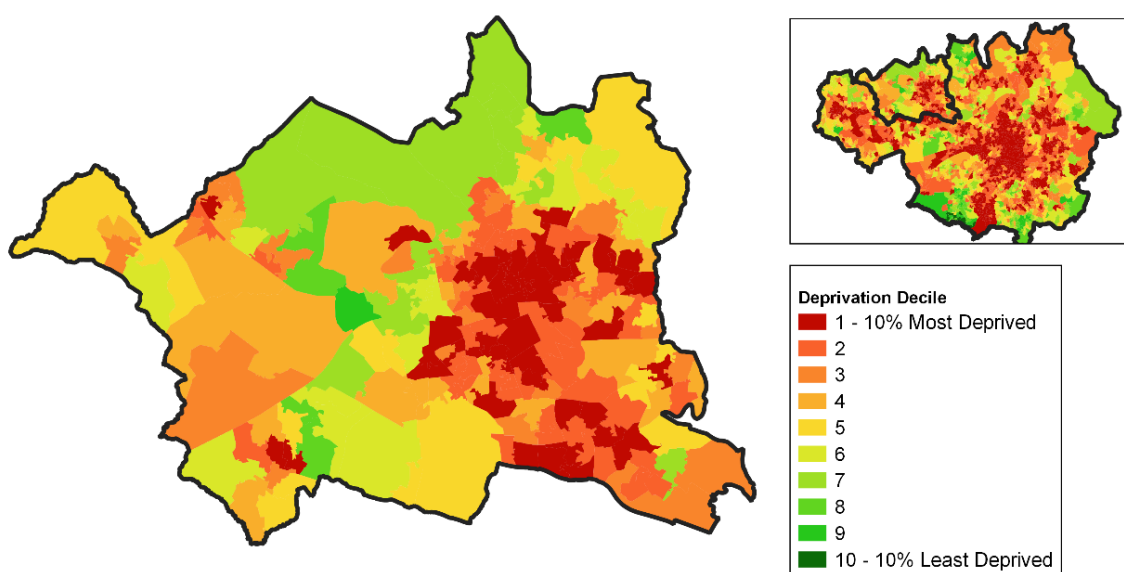
¹⁸ [Labour Market Profile - Bolton, ONS, 2023](#)

¹⁹ [Claimant count by sex and age - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](#), ONS, 2023.

proportion of people who are not in work or actively looking for work rose sharply in Bolton during the pandemic, although levels have now fallen roughly in line with what was seen prior to 2020 it remains extremely high compared to regional and national average. This rise was distinct from national trends and comparators and further analysis shows it has been particularly pronounced among men aged over 50 and younger people. This is a concerning trend. For young people, prolonged periods outside of work or education have lasting impacts on lifetime earnings and for older people, changes to skill requirements can make re-entering the labour force difficult. Economic inactivity due to ill health has risen sharply and the percentage of people citing care responsibilities as a reason for economic inactivity is higher than nationally and in comparators²⁰.

Bolton experiences particularly high levels of relative deprivation in health. In health, over 53% of Bolton’s neighbourhoods are among the three most deprived deciles in England (over 80% are in the bottom five deciles). Figure 4 shows a map of health deprivation in Bolton; the greater level of relative deprivation is evident throughout the Borough but again we see concentration of deprived neighbourhoods around the town centre and in the east. Challenges around health in Bolton are evident from estimates of healthy life expectancy. Estimates of the number of years to be spent in good health for those born between 2018 and 2020 are 62.4 for women and 60.3 for men (compared to 62 and 60.7 nationally)²¹.

Health deprivation across Bolton and in relation to Greater Manchester



²⁰ [Labour Market Profile – Bolton, ONS, 2023](#)

²¹ [English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\), IoD 2019](#)

Jobs are changing and digital and technical skills are increasingly in demand

The nature of work is changing, and traditional skills provision is increasingly ill-suited to the accelerating automation of work. The Greater Manchester Independent Prosperity Review highlighted that transferable skills and lifelong learning would take increasing importance in the future and found that preparedness for a digital future in the city-region is low with the area lagging national comparators in skills.²²

However, in recent years there have been several positive trends in education in Bolton. Participation in schools has been strong and there are high progression rates into higher education, indicating that, for recent cohorts of young people, there is good social mobility. However, the resident population in Bolton has lower skill levels, with 35% qualified to RFQ level 4+ compared with 45% nationally. More positively, residents are less likely to have no or low qualifications and more likely to be qualified up to level 3 than in comparator towns.²³

Investments and developments need to plan for and support future innovation and working practices in high output sectors transitioning to net zero and automation. In Bolton a high proportion of jobs, within the green economy will need upskilling to net zero than nationally and across Greater Manchester.²⁴ A slightly higher proportion of Bolton's jobs are at high risk of automation than nationally, although this is lower than the Greater Manchester average²⁵. Bolton's residents are more likely than most to make the most of the energy transition and the shift to automation.

Business

Low productivity is a brake on wages and good jobs

Bolton has sector specialisms with higher-than-average employment in manufacturing, logistics, wholesale and retail, and business services. Bolton's business base is growing more quickly (12%) than across England & Wales as a whole (7%)²⁶ – with a large proportion of micro businesses and higher than average employment in medium sized firms²⁷. Bolton has high business birth rate and survival rates.²⁸ Major local employers tend to cluster in the town centre and Horwich to the west. This is an opportunity to help

²² [Greater Manchester Independent Prosperity Review - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk), GMCA, 2022.

²³ [Labour Market Profile – Bolton](#), ONS, 2023

²⁴ [Tracking local employment in the green economy: The PCAN Just Transition Jobs Tracker | Place Based Climate Action Network \(pcancities.org.uk\)](https://pcancities.org.uk), PCAN, 2021.

²⁵ [Which occupations are at highest risk of being automated?](#) - Office for National Statistics, ONS, 2019.

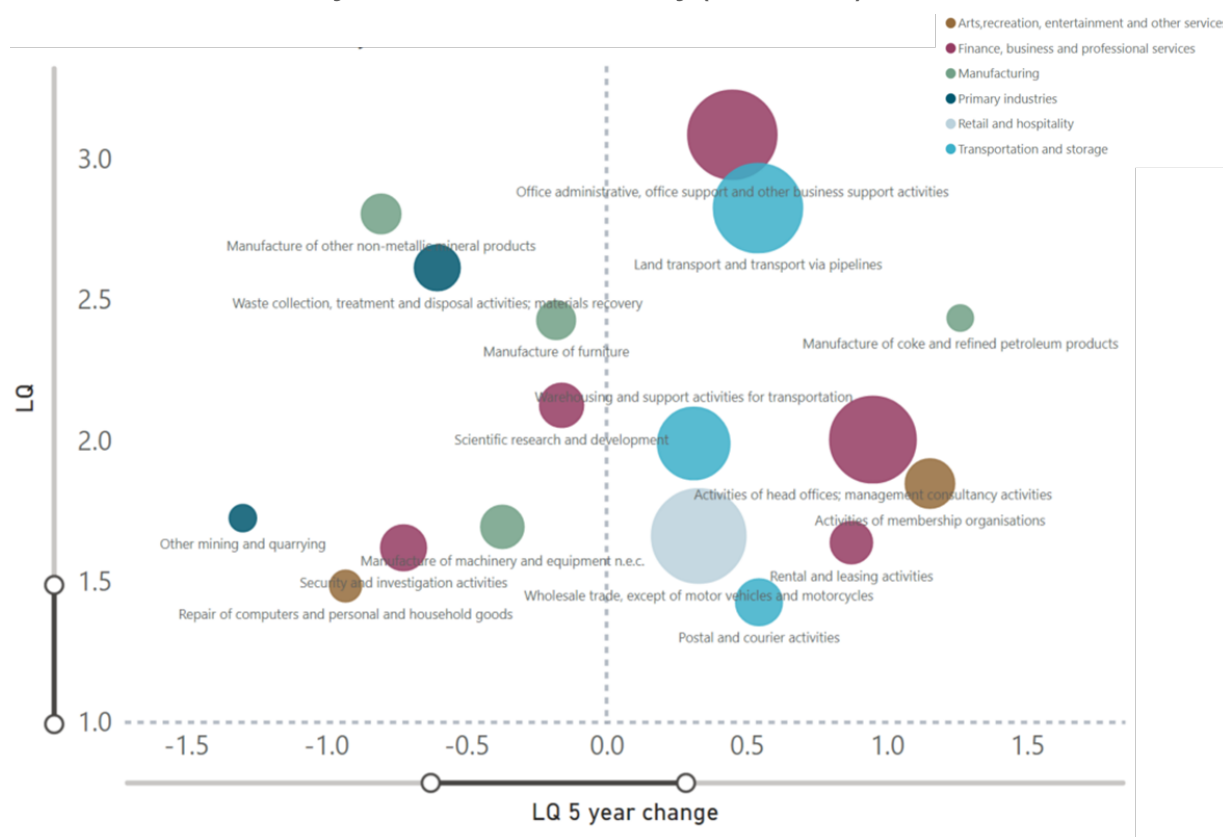
²⁶ [Business Register and Employment Survey: open access - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](#), ONS, 2022.

²⁷ [UK Business Counts - local units by industry and employment size band - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](#), ONS, 2023.

²⁸ [Business demography, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#), ONS, 2022.

businesses scale up and become established. Given recent trends, large sectors such as retail and the night-time economy will need to adapt to post Covid demands.

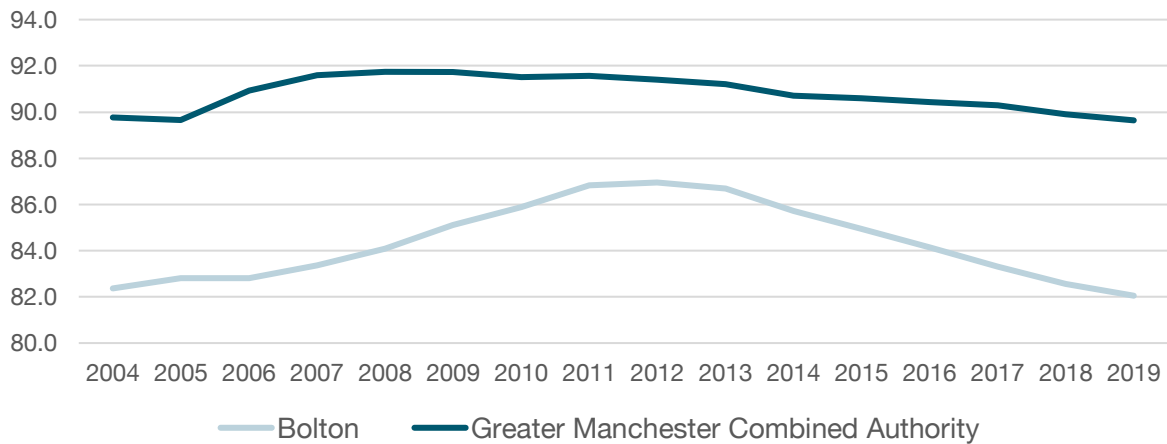
Location Quotient Analysis of Bolton's Economy (ONS, 2020)



Despite 10.6% growth in the number of jobs in Bolton since 2010, GVA per job rose slowly before declining.²⁹ This mostly follows national and regional trends; however, Bolton's rate remains significantly below the national average, with steeper decline into 2019. This may suggest that growth in jobs is mainly in lower paid roles; jobs have grown significantly in transport and storage as well as retail and wholesale before 2020.

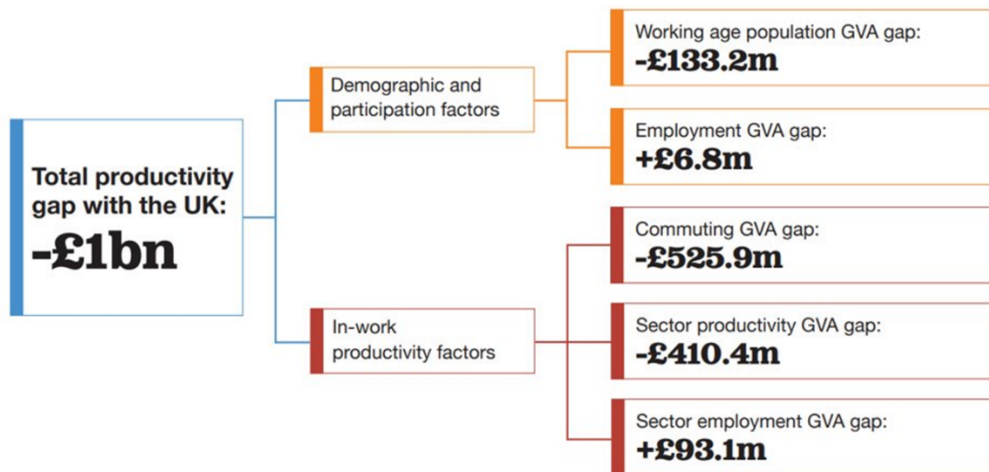
²⁹ [Regional economic activity by gross domestic product, UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk), ONS, 2023.

GVA per hour worked (index where UK = 100)



Bolton was in the process of closing the productivity gap with the rest of the UK up until the early 2010s, where the process began to reverse.³⁰ In the context of a national productivity stagnation following the financial crisis, this is concerning; productivity growth is closely linked to living standards improvement. An earlier exploration of Bolton's productivity suggested that Bolton's sectoral composition was a net benefit, this includes higher concentrations of manufacturing than elsewhere – but that productivity within sectors lagged behind national comparators.³¹

Productivity analysis taken from The Bolton Strategy for Growth



Manufacturing remains a major part of the economy, this could stimulate growth in supply and value chains with support

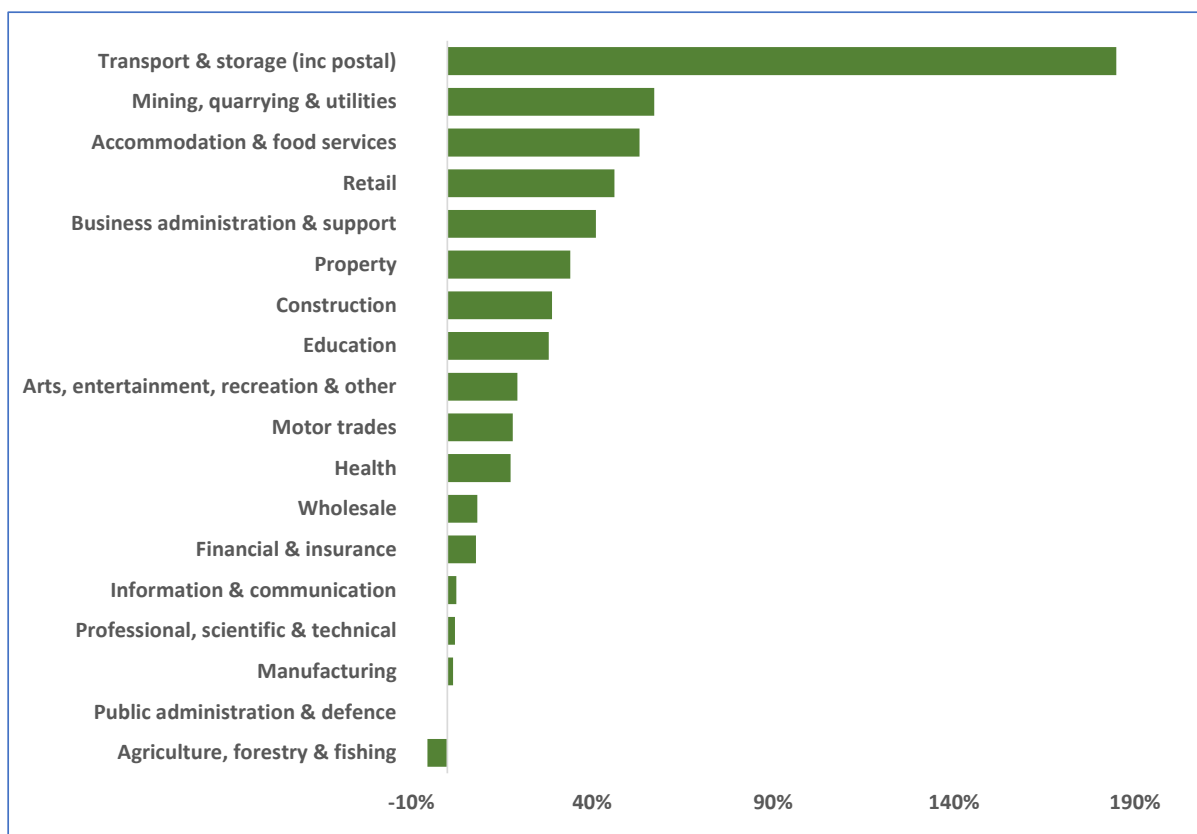
Looking forward, manufacturing is predicted to increase output but further decrease in employment levels. Bolton has seen an overall decline in manufacturing employment but

remains more concentrated than UK average with a broad range of specialisms in areas such as food products, textiles, wearing apparel, rubber and plastic products, chemicals and chemical products, fabricated metal products and furniture.

Manufacturing has decreased in employment and GVA over the long term (1991-2016), and while overall employment in manufacturing has grown over 2015-2020, certain specialisms have lower employment concentration now.³² The last five years have seen a moderate revival, potentially linked to local success stories like the MBDA investment in Logistics North.

Bolton is home to major companies, including household brands like Warburtons and Greenhalgh's, and cutting-edge manufacturing like MBDA. However, these appear to have limited impact on local small businesses, with our engagement suggesting that there is limited clustering and links with local resources. The missed opportunity to develop the links between and across large local business is reflected in the composition of Bolton's employment base; Bolton's employees are less likely to be employed by large companies than the UK average, with high numbers of micro-businesses.

Business Base Growth by Sector 2015-2022 (UK Business Counts, ONS, 2023)



³² [Measuring and influencing economic prosperity in Bolton | Steer Economic Development \(steer-ed.com\)](#), Steer, 2019.

Bolton is seeing rapid growth in businesses in the logistics sector, building on a prime location and the development of Logistics North. Logistics North on the town's outskirts is a base for large multinational companies, such as Aldi, Lidl, Green King, Costa and Komatsu. There has been a 185% growth in the number of businesses in the transport and storage sector, complemented by rapid growth in the number of jobs.³³ It is likely that the sector is likely to play a major role in Bolton's future economy; even before the substantial acceleration of online retail trends in the past few years is taken into account.

Innovation has been centred around Salford and Manchester but there's an opportunity growing in Bolton

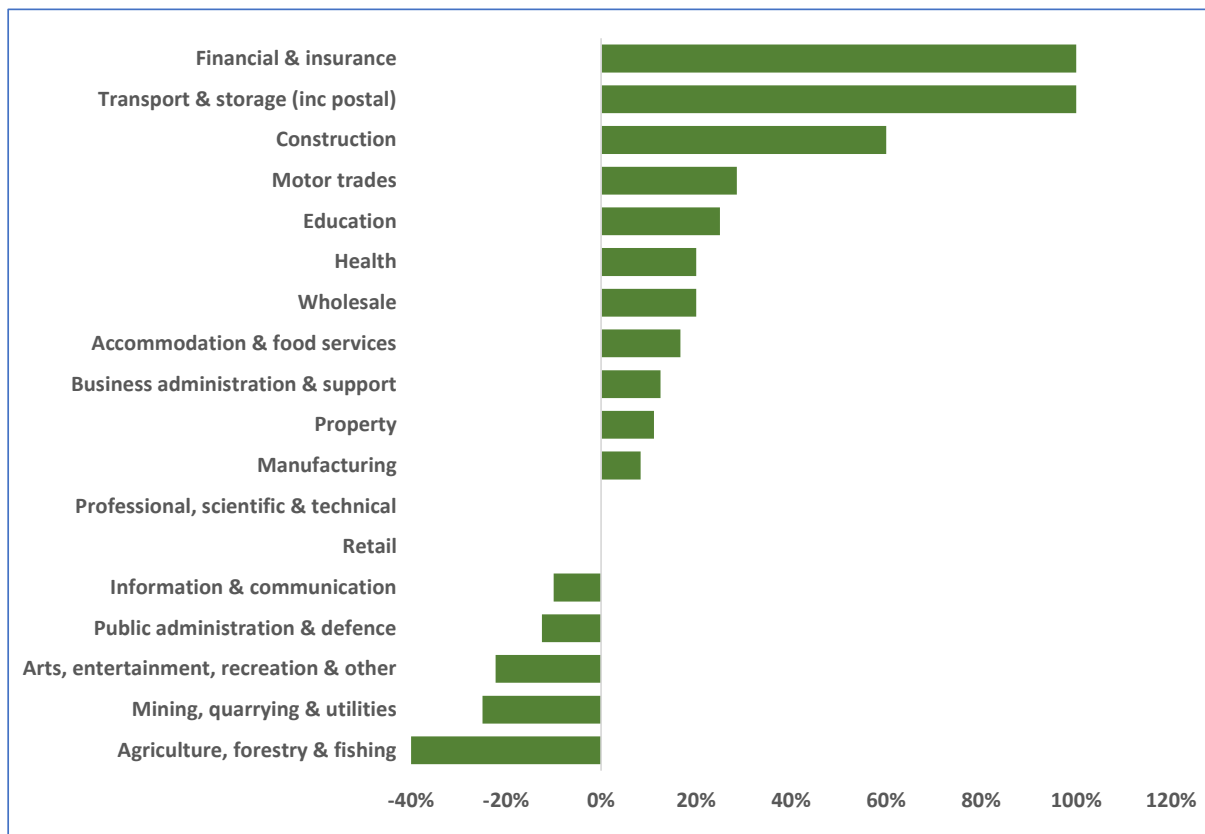
Bolton is seeing growth in professional services sector, both in businesses and jobs³⁴. Projected growth sectors in GVA and employment include professional services, IT and digital, real estate, and administration. Manufacturing, as said above, is expected to remain a major part of the economy, but automation and other efficiencies mean it is expected to require fewer jobs.³⁵

³³ [UK Business Counts - enterprises by industry and employment size band - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](#), ONS, 2023.

³⁴ [Business Register and Employment Survey: open access - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](#), ONS, 2022.

³⁵ [Measuring and influencing economic prosperity in Bolton | Steer Economic Development \(steer-ed.com\)](#), Steer, 2019.

Percentage change in Number of Jobs by Sector 2015-2021 (BRES, ONS, 2023)



Locally, growth in high-output employment such as manufacturing is experiencing a shift towards more knowledge-based sectors, with growth in professional services such as financial and insurance. In recent years fast-growing companies in digital retail, energy and financial services have emerged, including AO, Parcel2Go, and Love Energy Savings.com. This trend may accelerate, with Bolton working with Innovation Greater Manchester and the University of Bolton to develop plans for around health innovation.

Currently, Bolton has low economic complexity, but adjacency to high complexity innovation centres in Manchester and Salford. Economic complexity is a measure of the process of knowledge creation and accumulation in a local economy and is associated with productivity and innovation. Supporting diverse and complex sectors, such as specialised manufacturing, professional services and the emerging opportunity around health innovation is key to establishing a more complex economy; with the economic benefits that follow from specialisation.³⁶

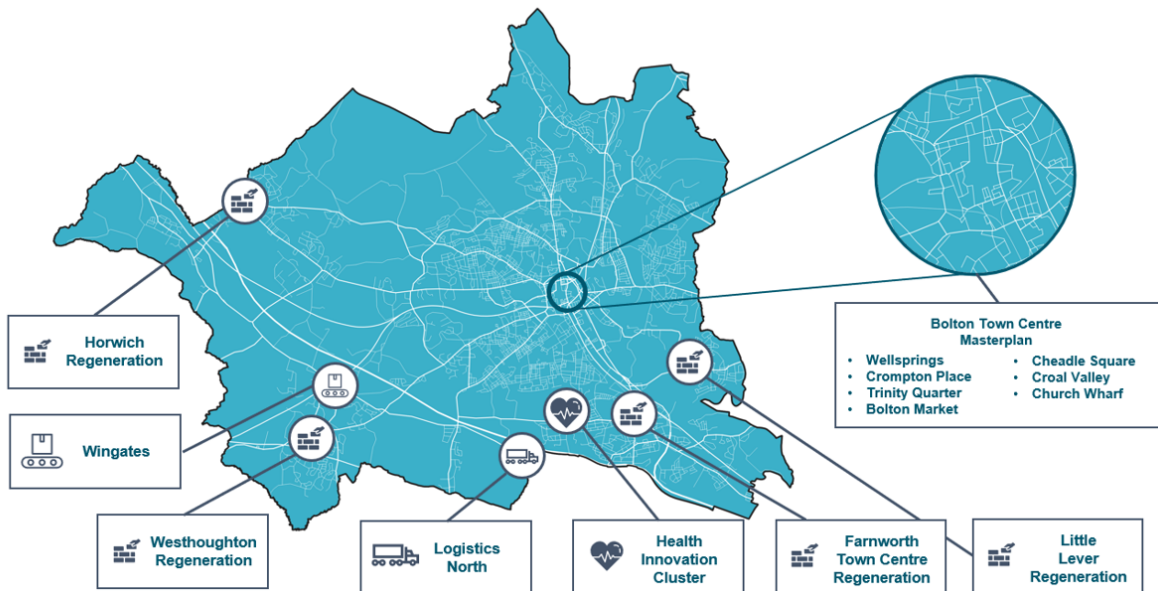
³⁶ [To them that hath: economic complexity and local industrial strategy in the UK - Bennett Institute for Public Policy \(cam.ac.uk\)](https://www.cam.ac.uk), University of Cambridge, 2019.

Investment

Major planned and existing investment in Bolton, but not in all parts of the Borough

Bolton is seeing a large amount of investment - £1bn of public and private investment in recent years. New investment, including confirmed £22.9m Town Deal, Future High Streets Fund, and Brownfield Site funding has the potential to transform the physical landscape of Bolton town centre, Farnworth, Horwich, and across the Borough, through a number of projects. The Bolton-Wigan Corridor is a growth and innovation priority for Greater Manchester, focused primarily on logistics, manufacturing and health innovation. Bolton was one of the first places to benefit from Greater Manchester bus franchising.

Examples of regeneration and development projects across Bolton Borough



The delivery and growth of Logistics North has attracted businesses, creating jobs and substantially strengthening Bolton’s out-of-town commercial business space proposition. Securing investment. However, many of the associated jobs are relatively low wage and low output. Our engagement suggests that there is additional inward investment interest, but some will have specific demands that Bolton may not be equipped to fulfil.

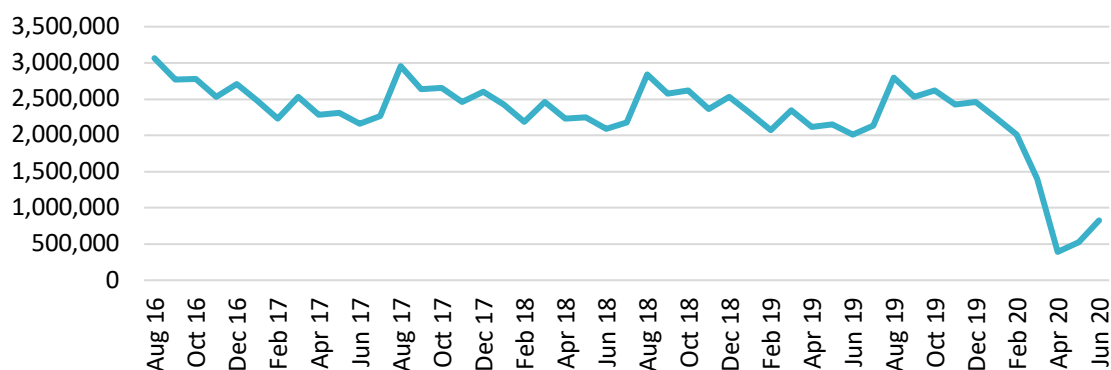
Current investment has also followed a distinct spatial pattern based around connectivity strengths. Major economic developments are taking place in the south and the west of the local authority, especially along the M61 corridor with the growth of Logistics North and Wingates. However, there is a comparative lack of investment in the North and East of the district.

The town centre is underperforming and needs to be a focus of investment

Bolton has strong cultural, heritage, and greenspace assets in the town centre and good connectivity regionally, nationally and internationally. The town centre regeneration masterplan has been agreed. This aims to strengthen the commercial and residential density of the town centre and early wins have been secured through the Towns Fund investments, Brownfield Land Funding, investments in local walking and cycling infrastructure provision.

However, town centre footfall remains low and hasn't recovered to pre-pandemic levels. The exception of this is when key events are held in the Town Centre as this is when we see an increase in footfall year on year and this is what we need to build on. The Town Centre is poorly connected, with many of the key gateway routes requiring investment. The town centre nighttime economy is predominantly drinking establishment and we need to encourage investment to diversify this offer.

Monthly Footfall: Bolton Town Centre



Overall Bolton has low commercial and office space rents, which combined with low footfall in the town centre signals low demand. Bolton's office space market price per square foot is 36% less than Greater Manchester average and 74% less than the UK average. Both were increasing though before Covid and at the time of writing industry projections show commercial rents in Bolton returning to sustained positive annual growth in 2024. This model predicts that Bolton and Manchester City will follow similar recovery timelines and lag the UK as a whole, which is projected to return to sustained growth in 2022³⁷.

New and improved housing stock is important to attract and retain workers

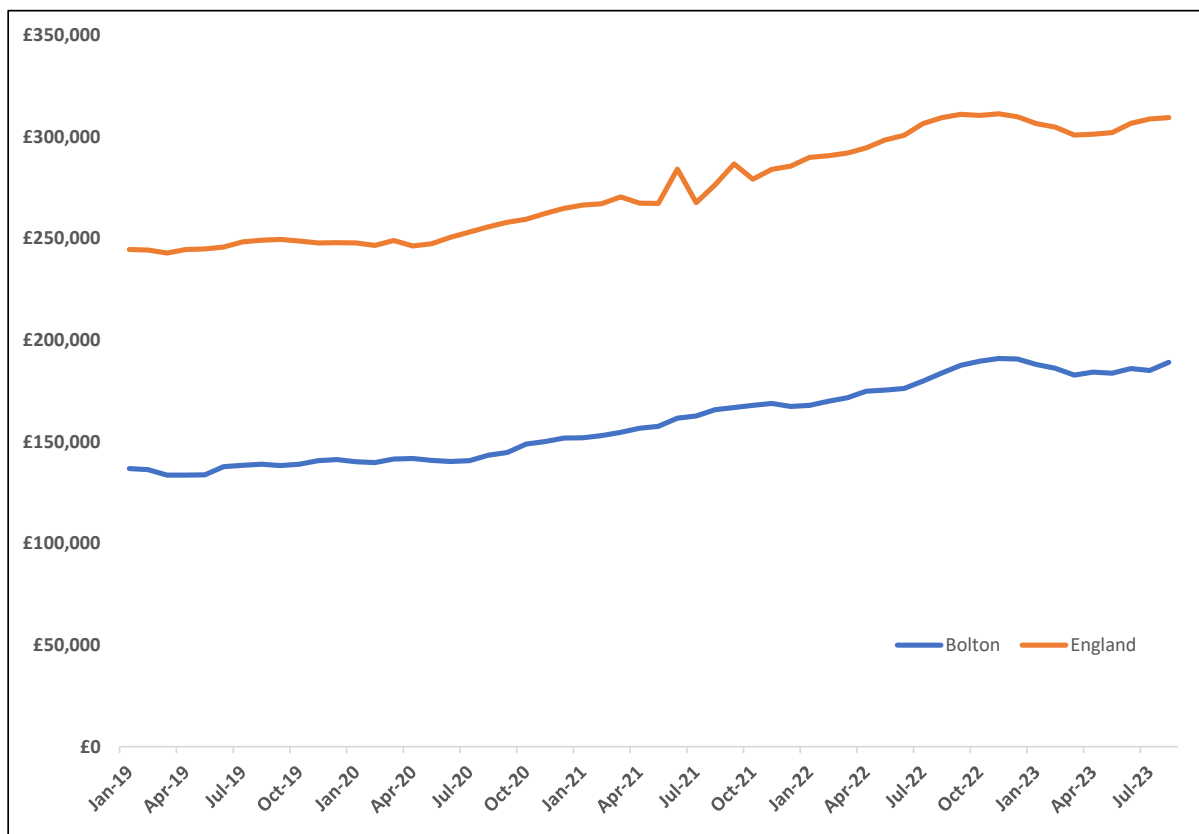
Bolton also has low housing costs, reflecting in part the age and type of housing stock prevalent in the Borough, in particular an abundance of older terraced housing³⁸. In the context of the current property market, especially in non-urban Greater Manchester, this is a potential asset as well as a drawback for the housing equity of residential homeowners.

³⁷ CoStar | # 1 Commercial Real Estate Information Company, CoStar, 2021.

³⁸ HM Land Registry Open Data, Land Registry, 2022.

The town centre needs to attract more visitors and residents with disposable income; housing stock quality and connectivity are key for the latter to take full advantage of the town’s relative affordability. In terms of affordable housing in Bolton across the Borough the demand is significant and increasing.

Average Price: All property types. Jan 2019- Aug 23. (Land Registry, 2023).



The rise in energy costs is a particular concern for Bolton; in 2021 15% of households were classified as fuel poor, compared to 13% in England as a whole³⁹. The 58% of households in Bolton with homes classed at EPC D-G will effectively pay a penalty through increased energy bills for the poor energy efficiency of their properties⁴⁰.

³⁹ [Sub-regional fuel poverty in England, 2023 \(2021 data\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-in-england-2023-2021-data) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk), DESNZ, 2023.

⁴⁰ [Energy efficiency of housing in England and Wales](https://ons.gov.uk/government/statistics/energy-efficiency-of-housing-in-england-and-wales) - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk), ONS, 2023.

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