



Investing in Bolton

How ambitious plans are transforming the heart of Bolton

Bolton Council

A special supplement produced by **IMJ**



BUILDING on your assets

Bolton is reinventing itself with £1bn plans that will transform the heart of the town. But one thing that won't change is what makes it unique – the close connection between the place and its people

Major regeneration projects can often be as important for the messages they convey as the practical benefits they deliver.

So while Bolton's eye-catching new £50m rail and bus interchange – unveiled this month – will be a boon for businesses, residents and visitors alike, it symbolises something altogether bigger.

Bolton is changing and it's a town on the up.

Delve a little deeper and you'll find the interchange is just one part of a jigsaw of projects that will transform this corner of Greater Manchester over the coming years. Bolton's a place as famous for the warmth and character of local people as it is for its proud industrial heritage. That diverse population, currently numbering more than 280,000, is growing fast in what is already one of Europe's largest towns.

Like many areas it was hit hard by the global economic downturn, but it's now creating an offer worthy of Bolton's size and which makes the most of its excellent connectivity and assets.

For example, the Market Place Shopping Centre, based in the stunning surroundings of a Victorian market hall, has created a new and unique destination thanks to a £27m refurbishment. Together with the interchange it's seen as a catalyst that will pave the



'We are committed to regenerating Bolton town centre, and doing so as soon as possible.'

Cllr Cliff Morris, leader of Bolton Council

way for everything from riverside apartments and an innovation zone next to its growing university to pocket parks and high quality public realm.

This summer Bolton Council unveiled a major regeneration masterplan. It has committed £100m to pump prime developments across five key town centre sites in a move that is expected to draw in around £1bn of private investment. It will reinvigorate the heart of Bolton, inject a sense of vibrancy and connectedness and ensure the town capitalises on Greater Manchester's emerging economic renaissance.

Rising confidence

The bold strategy that's now unfolding is being led by Stephen Young, who took up the newly created post of director of place at the start of 2016. Formerly the council's assistant director for regeneration and development, he says investor interest has never been higher and relationships with the private sector are stronger than ever.

He believes the council's clarity over what it wants to achieve and its willingness to lead by example has resonated with businesses and investors.

For example, the town's first Grade A office development came about through PSP Bolton, a partnership between the council and Public Sector Plc



to unlock a number of development sites.

Bolton Central, which sits next to the new interchange, was completed this year. Already fully let, it has effectively created a new market and a follow up office development is being planned.

'We took the bold decision to consolidate the town centre and its retail core and utilise land in and around the town for different uses,' Stephen explains.

'We have recognised that if we are going to reinvent the town centre it has to be done at size and scale in order to show a level of confidence.'

A major landowner in Bolton, the council has spent the last five years assembling sites in an effort to make them more appealing to developers. But it's a two-way street.

'By stepping in it gives us more control. We will pump in the money to show our intent and councillors have now approved our plans and allowed us to do that.'

'We want investors to come to Bolton and work with us and that's what is now happening. But we ask that whatever they come forward with has to be different to what's already here.'

The council's vision for the town reflects a deep understanding of Bolton's role in the Greater Manchester conurbation and the combined authority. With Manchester itself having become a magnet for investment and growth in recent years, the towns that surround it have each sought different ways to both draw on the city's success and complement it.

'There's real collaboration between the 10 GM local authorities and we can all see the bigger picture,' says Stephen.

Having great connections into Manchester city centre and the jobs, shops and nightlife it can offer are essential – Bolton is just 12 minutes away by train.

But as office rents in the city rocket, the towns can offer businesses a more competitive alternative.

Equally, says Stephen, other boroughs will direct



'We're revitalising existing assets and adding vibrancy by getting residential developments into the town centre. Our plans will bring a strong retail core but also reanimate the town with different communities working and living here.'

Stephen Young, director of place, Bolton Council

businesses towards Bolton if it can offer a better solution.

That's happened in the case of logistics firms looking for suitable premises around the north west. Bolton is home to Logistics North, a distribution, logistics and employment hub and the largest live commercial development in the north of England.

A unique brand

One thing that's noticeable about projects across Bolton is they carry the same eye-catching branding. It even has its own font, Bolton Character.

The brand was developed by the council on behalf of the Vision Partnership and indicates the fact that whatever shape, size or nature of the initiative, it should link back to Bolton's biggest asset: its people.

It symbolises the sense of place and pride among Boltonians and their strength and dependability. But it also has a flexibility about it that reflects the need for Bolton to embrace change, adapt and move forward.

When the brand was being developed one of the overriding messages that emerged was how the lack of certain facilities and variety of stores in the town centre was holding Bolton back.

The town centre regeneration masterplan comprehensively addresses that. The council's £100m investment will be borrowed over a 50 year period and paid back using externally generated income which will protect council budgets and services.

When he announced the plans, council leader Cllr Cliff Morris said the move would 'facilitate the redevelopment and growth of our town'. He added:

'We know that town centres have changed due to factors such as the shift to online shopping and this masterplan will reflect that.' Cllr Morris told The MJ: 'We are committed to regenerating Bolton town centre, and doing so as soon as possible.'

The key word that Stephen uses is 'consolidate'. The traditional town centre dominated by shops is a thing of the past – it needs to be a place where people live, shop, work and play, he says.

'We're revitalising existing assets and adding vibrancy by getting residential development into the town centre. Our plans will bring a strong retail core but also reanimate the town with different communities working and living here.'

TRINITY QUARTER

Making the connections

The most complex and strategically important site in Bolton, Trinity Quarter is already taking shape. As the name suggests, it will act as a gateway into the town centre and incorporates the new £50m transport change.

It brings bus, rail and cycle services closer together with a 100m skylink bridge connecting the interchange to the train station, which itself has gained an extra platform and will benefit from faster services via electrification by the end of the year.

The council has acquired a number of sites in and around the interchange and plans to create a much-needed car park, 450 homes, a hotel and it is estimated it will deliver 15 years worth of new office supply.

Bolton Central, a £6.5m five-storey Grade A office development on the edge of Trinity Quarter, reflects the rising confidence in the town and is an indication of the high quality, modern development to come.

It was developed speculatively through an innovative partnership between Bolton Public Sector Plc (PSP) and the council - and all 30,000 sq ft of space have been snapped up by the University of Bolton to house its new Institute of Management.

What they say:

'I think the interchange is really one of the best examples out there of how a council is using transport to pivot regeneration and transform the town.'

'This is about rebuilding town centres and making sure they have connectivity to allow them to succeed in their own right. It helps define its place and is helping to re-centre and re-position the town.'

Jon Lamont, chief executive, Transport for Greater Manchester



Riverside living where old meets new

Church Wharf has long been an area of untapped potential that needed the right intervention at the right time to take it forward.

Its collection of largely derelict industrial sites and buildings have gradually been acquired and cleared by the council and now there is growing interest from development partners. Situated close to the successful Market Place Shopping Centre, Church Wharf lies next to one of Bolton's underused assets - the River Croal. The council's masterplan has earmarked the area for riverside townhouses and apartments, offices, leisure developments and a hotel, all woven together by open public spaces. It will be a place where old meets new, with repurposed historic buildings standing by

new modern architecture. There are even plans to reinstate an old road dating from the mid-19th century.

What they say:

'What has been encouraging in the last 12 months is Bolton as a town centre is showing signs of resurgence. You have the investment in Market Place Shopping Centre, which really is a great job, and the interchange and the offices and linkages between that area and Church Wharf.'

'With all those things coming together we can see how something could now be done with Church Wharf.'

Mark Caldwell, chief executive, Bluemantle Group

CHURCH WHARF

CROMPTON PLACE

Revitalising the retail core

One of the primary goals of the masterplan is not only to rejuvenate the town centre but also to do so in a way that knits different areas together to allow a seamless journey for those walking around Bolton.

Crompton Place sits in the centre of Bolton and over time different generations of development have made it less and less accessible.

Existing shops will be reconfigured and extended and plazas and public spaces improved to rectify this.

What they say:

'The council has been very proactive in getting to a position where they can deliver - as shown by the fact that they are investing £100m in the town centre. There's a proper plan in place and they listen to you. That's why we like working with them.'

Tim Vaughan, Moorgarth Group, owner of Market Place Shopping Centre





Centre of attention

By investing £100m across five key sites, the council is transforming Bolton town centre and unlocking its true potential. From the brand new state-of-the-art interchange to high quality office development to plans for riverside homes, the heart of Bolton is being reshaped for the 21st century. The town is generating unprecedented levels of private sector interest and more than £1bn will be invested over the next decade. Here we look at the major developments that will turn the council's vision into reality...

A place to live, work, learn and play



The expansion of the University of Bolton is leading to growing demand for student accommodation and the Cheadle Square area sits between the main campus, Queens Park and the centre. While an academic village and student homes – including serviced apartments – are planned, the emphasis is very much on ensuring town centre living caters for a mixed population. High end homes are in the pipeline and the movement of the bus station from Cheadle Square to the new interchange will allow the old site to be cleared and used for supported housing.

But to convince students to stay in Bolton rather than nearby Manchester – and make town centre living more appealing – there will also be a focus on reanimating areas such as the historic Le Mans crescent with the introduction of bars and restaurants in the vicinity.

By enabling the footprint of the university to grow towards Queens Park via carefully planned development, the park will effectively be drawn into the town and made more accessible.

The area also takes in the Innovation Zone, one of the largest regeneration projects in the town centre, which is expected to create 4,000 jobs and £300m of private sector investment. It includes the development of a cultural quarter, a £90m Knowledge Campus, a £31m health, leisure and research centre called Bolton One and the expansion of the University of Bolton. *(Find out more on pages 10-11)*

What they say:

'City living in Manchester has worked because it's created communities within the centre and that spawns a night-time economy around it. We want to make that market in Bolton stronger. These aren't going to be gated communities. They have to be accessible and animated so that people can walk straight through the various parts of the town centre.'

Stephen Young, director of place, Bolton Council

CHEADLE SQUARE

The green town centre neighbourhood

CROAL VALLEY

Before drawing up the town centre masterplan, the council looked at places including Liverpool and Manchester to discover the factors that made their city centres successful. A key learning point was the importance of creating genuine communities by getting the right mix of residential development, offices, key amenities and great green spaces.

That's precisely what is planned for Croal Valley, where 360 riverside apartments will be complemented by pocket parks and high quality public realm.

The area is already adjacent to the award-winning Queens Park and some 55 townhouses will be built as a gateway development to the park.

What they say:

'We're excited by residential development in the town centre. More and more people are moving back into town centres having previously drifted out to the suburbs. We are working on a pilot small residential scheme for Croal Valley using a modular housing delivery method delivering housing where the market might not. If it works we could create a model that we can take forward.'

Adam Cunningham, managing director, Public Sector Plc



BOLTON

'Bolton is a great place to do business with a good pool of labour and local stakeholders who are willing to work with you to make your business move to the area a success.'

Gareth Hughes, director of procurement, Whistl

BOLTON means business...

It's not hard to understand why Logistics North is one of Bolton's major success stories. Straight off the M61 and just three miles from the M60 and M62, it's ideally located – particularly for the logistics and distribution sector.

Built on a former mining site west of Bolton and launched in 2013, Logistics North is the biggest development of its kind in the north of England and home to the distribution hubs of major employers such as Aldi, Lidl, Joy Global and MBDA.

Whistl became the latest company to locate there this summer into a state-of-the-art 'super depot' that's expected to create 500 jobs.

A global retailer is currently in the process of building large development there and within the next two years the site is likely to be full.

Bolton Council, which developed the site with Harworth Estates, is now working on plans for a further employment site close by.

But the success of Logistics North is a reflection of the approach that's being taken by the council throughout the borough. It's about being proactive, spotting the opportunities, offering employers a wide range of options and helping them every step of the way.

In the case of Logistics North there are design and build

Major regeneration projects along the M61 corridor are complementing plans in Bolton town centre and building on the borough's reputation as a place to do business

opportunities ranging in size from 20,000 to one million sq ft. As the council's director of place, Stephen Young, puts it: 'It's the size of a city in its own right!'

And to ensure a smooth transition for Whistl, the company was helped by the Team Bolton Partnership – a group of organisations led by the council and including Job Centre Plus – to assist with recruitment.

Also in the M61 corridor is Rivington Chase, the site of the former Horwich Locomotive Works and now a 183-acre development that in time will create a brand new neighbourhood with employment space, 1,700 homes and local amenities based around a 'heritage core' using

some of the existing buildings. Some 50 acres of open space, including pedestrian and cycle routes, will link the site to nearby Middlebrook – the biggest leisure and shopping centre in Europe where Bolton Wanderers FC is based.

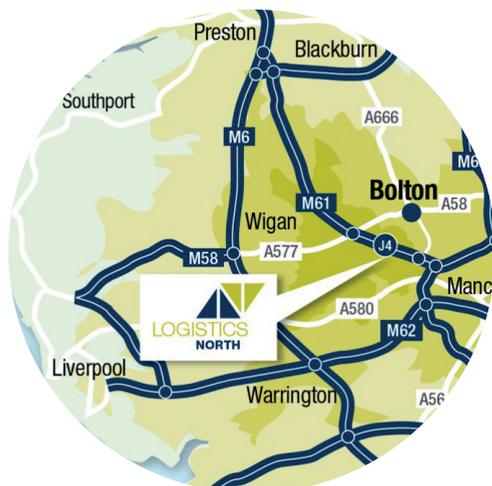
The council, Homes and Communities Agency and developer Bluemantle Group have come together to drive forward what is a highly complex site in order to unlock its clear potential. The first plans for housing and employment space are now coming through.

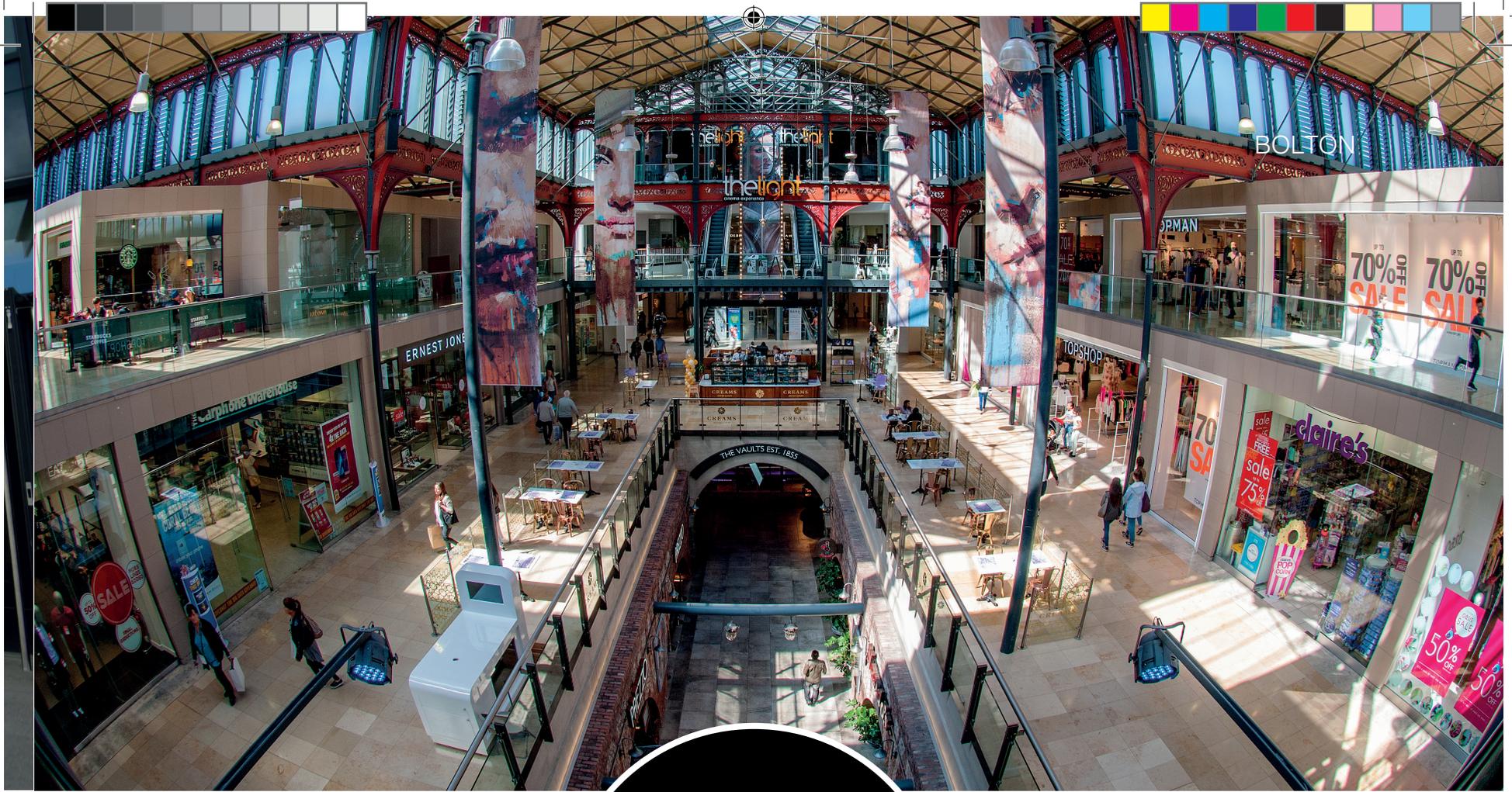
Similarly, the regeneration of the town centre is opening up new opportunities for businesses to locate in Bolton and capitalise on its excellent connectivity by road and rail.

Just two of the council's five intervention areas alone – Trinity Quarter and Church Wharf – account for 840,000 sq ft of office, leisure and retail space. That includes the town's first Grade A office development in a generation, Bolton Central.

Mark Caldwell, chief executive of Bluemantle Group, says there is growing confidence in Bolton as a place to invest.

'It's tangible and you can see through developments at Middlebrook, the town centre and the university that things are happening. Assets are being created and from an investment perspective it gives people confidence.'





When you're situated within easy reach of a major shopping destination like Manchester, you have to be able to offer something different.

Bolton's response has been to create a retail centre that provides unique settings, easy access and a balance between big high street names and independent shops.

As shopping destinations go, they don't come much more memorable than the Market Place pictured above. Based in the town's former Victorian market halls, it has undergone a £27m refurbishment that Stephen Young, the council's director of place, describes as 'a game-changer' for Bolton.

Not only a success in its own right, it has boosted investor confidence and brought people back into Bolton. In the space of four years, annual footfall has risen from 3.8 million to 6.5 million.

Its impressive – and previously unused – vaults have been transformed into what can only be described as an eating and drinking experience that includes a real ale bar and restaurants. A cinema and jungle themed adventure play area for children have also been added and there are plans to extend the centre further.

The uniqueness of the building, a clear gap in the market and the support and strong vision of the council were crucial factors in owner Moorgarth Group taking Market Place on in 2013, says chief executive Tim Vaughan.

'The key thing is we wouldn't have done it without the support of the council and its vision for what they wanted to do in Bolton. Lots of local authorities put a regeneration strategy in place but don't deliver. Bolton Council was already delivering on its strategy and had a clear idea of how they wanted to improve the town.'

'We've created a destination within the town centre and a really attractive environment in this unique building where people can have a coffee, watch a film, have a meal, shop and have plenty to entertain the kids.'

'You can't get what we have got anywhere else. It's a really nice alternative to say Manchester city centre.'

It's also enabling Bolton to provide an alternative to one of the borough's other big success stories – Middlebrook, the UK's largest retail and leisure park.

Situated west of the town, its 200 acres include more than 60 high street stores, a 12-screen cinema, bowling alley, Bolton Wanderers FC's Macron Stadium, Bolton Arena, and the head offices of firms such as AO.com, Axa

Bolton is attracting shoppers back into the town centre in their droves as investment creates an altogether different experience

Its £3m regeneration of Newport Street with new shop frontages, improved lighting, trees and public realm has created a modern and welcoming gateway that links the new interchange and the town centre.

And a sign of the growing confidence in Bolton is summed up by two projects brought forward by local investors.

The Link will transform what was a disused multi-storey car park into a haven for boutique and artisan shops, cafés and a micro-brewery as well as an aparthotel above.

Two local entrepreneurs have taken one of Bolton's best loved historic buildings with the aim of creating a food

Back in the market

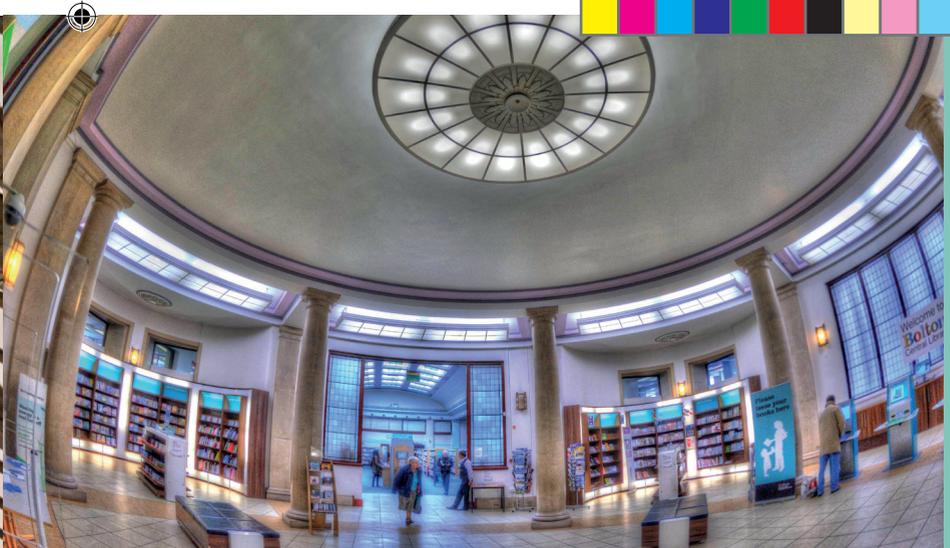


and RBS, not mention some 700 homes.

The council's aim is to complement that out-of-town shopping experience with something altogether different in Bolton itself, as demonstrated by its wide-ranging plans across five town centre intervention areas.

and drinks destination in the town.

Little Bolton Town Hall, built in 1826, will include well-known restaurant chains and a craft beer & wine bar while an adjacent building is being turned into offices and boutique style co-working office space.



A place where ancient h

In its work to build a 'strong and distinctive' town, Bolton Council is absolutely clear that harnessing its cultural assets will be essential for future success.

Over the last few months it has been working with residents and other stakeholders to build a vision for Bolton in 2030.

Investment in culture is already well underway. The grade II* listed Bolton Albert Halls reopened with a new programme this year following an award-winning £6.5m refurbishment that's created a modern multi-purpose venue within a much-loved historic landmark.

And in 2019, a transformed and expanded Octagon Theatre will open following £10m of investment.

But perhaps most exciting of all is the £3.8m redevelopment of Bolton Museum to create a new Egyptology gallery. The museum's extensive array of artefacts from Ancient Egypt has made it a magnet for experts from all over the world for many years.

But that collection will be brought to life to create an innovative international tourist



From world-class exhibitions to a packed programme of activities, Bolton is carving out a reputation as a place to visit. Substantial investment is ensuring the town's cultural offer is an economic and social driving force

attraction based around one of the world's most significant collections.

Due to open next year, visitors will be taken on a journey designed to both explain Bolton's long connection with Egyptology and animate life in Ancient Egypt – culminating in full size reproduction of a pharaoh's tomb.

The project sums up Bolton Council's approach. It's investing in cultural assets but in a way that engages people and complements the town's wider regeneration and aspirations.

Its cultural and heritage strategy will focus on four 'impact areas' between now and 2020: engagement through an ever more packed events programme and community activities; education in the shape of work with schools and a new Bolton Cultural Education Partnership; a focus on health that links with early intervention work to





history is part of the future

use culture as a gateway to improved wellbeing; and promotional activities designed to ensure the town's cultural offer plays its part in boosting the local economy.

Of course, Bolton's cultural offer extends far beyond the town centre.

Bolton at Home's groundbreaking Percent for Art scheme engages people in their neighbourhoods and in recent years has sparked a wide variety of projects involving everything from visual arts and performance to film-making.

The town boasts one of the largest voluntary and amateur arts communities in the country, which goes some way to explaining Bolton's huge range of cultural events. They include the Bolton Food and Drink Festival, which this year attracted more than a quarter of a million people and has been running for the last 12 years.

Bolton has hosted the Ironman UK race for nine years and is also the venue for the world's largest Ironkids race. Both events, held in July, attract thousands of visitors from across the world and global media coverage.

A VIEW OF BOLTON

Roddy Gauld,
Octagon Theatre
chief executive



On Bolton as a place...

Bolton is an incredibly friendly place. We employ people from across the UK to come and work in Bolton – as actors and artists and so on – and they always remark how welcome they feel in the town. There is a huge sense of collective good and collaboration. In my five years working in Bolton, I can honestly say I've never found a closed door.

On the town's advantages...

We can make ideas happen, and often quickly and easily. I think one of the advantages Bolton has over other large towns and cities is how well connected the public, private and charitable sectors are. Partnership working and collaboration are over-used buzzwords, but they seem very natural here in Bolton. That friendliness lends itself well to building relationships and seeking out opportunities.

On Bolton as a place to do business...

From my perspective, business has never been better. Our box office takings are at a record high, and our turnover has increased by nearly a third in five

years. There's a growing confidence in the town, which although it has been through hard times, is ambitious for the future. You can see and feel regeneration having an effect. The leisure and cultural offer is expanding, and that's surely part of a virtuous circle that people want to live, work and do business here. It's a good sign and contributor of economic growth.

On working with the council...

I think Bolton Council is very focused on getting results. There's not the same ego dynamics I've seen in other authorities. It's about getting what's best for Bolton. It's rare to find an authority as committed to culture as they are. Their support for the Octagon is literally transforming for our future, and they've invested heavily in other venues too. The Bolton Food and Drink Festival is a massive success. The sports events are fantastic. It all tells the story of a council that places real value on people's quality of life.

On Bolton's future...

There's a sense of optimism about the future. There's confidence and investment happening in Bolton, which I know is going to have a long-term effect. Plus, there's a huge array of opportunities for the town to embed and grow in the devolved Greater Manchester. Naturally, my hope is to see the Octagon prosper as part of that – not just as a destination, but as an innovative contributor to education and health too. In Bolton, it's quite possible to make a difference!



BOLTON

Bolton's status as a university town has taken major strides in recent years. Exciting plans to further expand the University of Bolton are making it a powerful force for regeneration



Centre of learning

The University of Bolton is one of the fastest growing higher education institutions in the country and its expansion is playing a critical role in the town's transformation.

Through multi-million pound investment in the town centre and its expanding student population, the university is having a major impact. However, what sets it apart is the way in which the university is embedded in the life of the town and its regeneration plans.

Close links with Bolton College and Bolton Sixth Form College have recently taken a step further after the three institutions formed a partnership to create one of the largest education providers in the country. It's a natural step with the university and colleges already co-located in a £90m Education Zone in the town centre.

The aim, according to university's vice-chancellor Professor George Holmes, is to create a model akin to Cambridge where the university and its students are very much an active part of the town. A new £40m student village behind the historic Le Mans Crescent will help to turn that vision into reality.

But the linkages run far deeper. The university's goal is to build on its success and to become 'a teaching intensive, research informed higher education institution' with close

Bolton: the university town

- 25,000 students across the university and college
- University of Bolton is number one for student satisfaction in Greater Manchester
- More than 30 of the university's courses are professionally accredited
- University of Bolton is ranked in the top 40 for teaching excellence by both The Sunday Times and The Guardian

links to employers. Along with Bolton Council, it is a key partner in Manchester Knowledge Capital – a strategic partnership designed to drive innovation and economic transformation across Greater Manchester.

The university's ambition is to be 'a local resource, a regional asset and a national and international centre of excellence as well as a byword for exemplary vocationally focused undergraduate and postgraduate programmes'.

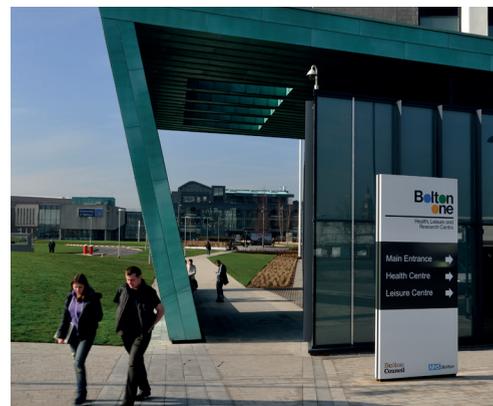
Bolton One exemplifies that vision.

Opened in 2012, it's a £31m health, leisure and research centre developed by a partnership involving Bolton Council, NHS Bolton and the university. It provides a base for students to study – including the university's Centre for Research for Health and Wellbeing – and facilities for the local community such as a competition standard swimming pool, a gym and GP services.

The scale of the university's expansion is breathtaking. A new law school and business school have opened in the last five years, it now has the Queens Campus catering for subjects connected to dentistry and biomedical science and it's developing the Institute of Management at Bolton Central, a brand new development close to the new interchange.

In 2015, the University of Bolton announced a £13m





development to house the next step in the evolution of motorsport education in the UK. The National Centre for Motorsport Engineering, scheduled for completion in 2017, will be home to the Centre for Advanced Performance Engineering.

Stephen Young, the council's director of place, regards the university and the town's two colleges as crucial partners. They are a major part of Bolton Innovation Zone, a major regeneration initiative that includes the

Education Zone and Bolton One.

The university has the potential for even greater impact, he says, on the council's aspirations to encourage town centre living and inject a sense of vibrancy.

'The university has expansion plans and that will bring in more students,' he says. 'We need to create a more vibrant offer for them and, equally, they will create greater vibrancy.'

It's a sentiment echoed by the

university. 'The University of Bolton and the council enjoy a strong, positive relationship, focused on creating a mutually beneficial co-operation for the benefit of the community that develops year-on-year,' says a spokesperson. 'The university's strategic vision includes building on its already major contribution to the town's economic development while continuing its active role in the Bolton community.'



Being part of the 'Bolton family'

Bill Webster, interim principal of Bolton College

I am fairly new to Bolton, but the thing that immediately strikes you is how friendly everyone is.

Amongst the education sector there's a real sense of purpose and an increasing spirit of co-operation. It's described locally as the 'Bolton family' and it does very much feel like that.

Bolton is compact and well connected – it's easy to get around and also easy to join into well-established networks of key groups.

In terms of location, for an educational institute it has some real advantages. The Education Zone

has managed to co-locate the fast growing university with the local FE college, which has led to the recent agreement to merge.

Also adjacent is the new University Technical College. This partnership now has the opportunity to work closely with the schools and sixth form networks in Bolton to give clear 'line of sight' for all young people's progression and development of their aspirations.

Working with the council has been and continues to be a very positive experience and forms a close

partnership. The college operates the council's provision for adult and community education across the borough.

The key partnerships facilitated by the council such as the Vision Partnership have been key in bringing stakeholders together and developing a common purpose to the town's development.

My hopes for the future are to see closer partnerships in the local education sector and to establish Bolton College as an outstanding Ofsted rated college in the next five years.

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