



# ST HELENA DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY AREA BRIEF: CENTRAL STREET PHASE



**B·O·L·T·O·N**  
**M·E·T·R·O**  
ENVIRONMENT  
DEPARTMENT

REGENERATION  
AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Town Hall, Bolton  
Lancashire BL1 1RU  
t: 01204 336246  
f: 01204 336199  
e: [richard.thresh@bolton.gov.uk](mailto:richard.thresh@bolton.gov.uk)  
w: <http://www.bolton.gov.uk>

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Council is seeking comprehensive redevelopment of land known as the Central Street site in the St Helena area of Bolton town centre, bounded by Deansgate, Knowsley Street, St George's Road and in part by Marsden Road, White Lion Brow, Chorley Street and Bark Street (see Plan1).

1.2 The initial phase for immediate redevelopment is that known as the Central Street site – at this stage the remaining land is included to ensure that any highway improvements that may be required are within the defined boundary. This Development Brief, which has been adopted by the Council, seeks to ensure that the development of the Central Street site and, subsequently, other parts of the St Helena area does not take place in a piecemeal way. A piecemeal approach to development of the area will be strongly resisted.

1.3 It is not anticipated that, at this stage, any of the remaining parts of the St Helena Development Opportunity Area should be developed in isolation. Other parts of the St Helena area outside the Central Street site will be the subject of subsequent development briefs.

1.4 The St Helena area presents an exciting redevelopment opportunity. It is not merely a collection of town centre land, but a vital framework of sites that, taken collectively, will facilitate a significant regenerative impact. The opportunity is of strategic importance in supporting the sustained growth of Bolton as a regional centre. This is supported by research undertaken by Hillier Parker in the form of retail analysis (2001 and 2004), which showed that there was a

need for additional retail floorspace in Bolton town centre.

1.5 The Central Street site is a challenging one to develop in terms of topography, possible access and servicing and land assembly arrangements. To ensure that such issues can be addressed in a comprehensive and coherent manner the Council, where required, will use its Compulsory Purchase powers to enable the assembly of sites that will meet its aspirations for the site and the objectives of this Brief.

1.6 This Brief has been prepared to assist the assembly of land for the Central Street site and in bringing it forward for development. It will also be used by the Council for planning control purposes.



The east facing frontage of the listed Victoria Hall

1.7 The Council's aspiration for the Central Street phase of the Development Opportunity Area is to see a retail-led 'landmark'

development of quality, which will add to the town centre's vitality and viability and help to sustain Bolton as a regional centre. An attractive mix of uses should prevail in this area and enable it to contribute to the promotion of a 24 hour economy, which the Council supports.

## 2.0 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

2.1 The Brief is an expansion of policies set out in the adopted Bolton UDP – the relevant policies are listed below.

Policy	Description
EM4	Contaminated land
EM5	Derelict land and buildings
EM11	Flood protection
D1	Design and the built environment
D2	Design
D3	Landscaping
D5	Public Art
D7	Conservation Areas
O6	Waterside locations
A1	Accessibility
A3	Travel Plans
A4	Developer contributions
A5	Roads, paths, surfacing and car parking
A6	Car parking standards
A7	Cycle parking
A8	Major development (access)
A9	Access for people with disabilities
A16	Pedestrians
A17	Cyclists
H1	Housing
H3	Determining planning applications
H4	Affordable housing
H5	Housing density
E1	Employment and the economy
S1	Retail and leisure
S2	Retail allocations
TC1	Town centres
TC2	Town centre living
TC10	In-town car parking

2.2 Further details of these policies can be found on the Council's website, at:

<http://www.bolton.gov.uk>

Alternatively, copies of the policies are available for viewing at Bolton Town Hall.

2.3 The UDP policies have been the subject of a sustainability assessment process. A document setting out the Sustainability Appraisal of the UDP has been produced, including all the policies indicated herein as being relevant, and can be made available upon request.

## 3.0 PURPOSE OF THE BRIEF

3.1 This brief seeks development within the boundary of the Central Street site as shown on Plan 1, as the first phase of the regeneration of the St Helena area. It has three main purposes:

- to set out in more detail the objectives of the Council in terms of the form and content of the proposals for the Central Street site. This will provide the catalyst for other developments in the area. The key objectives for the site are:
  1. regeneration of the site and delivery of essential infrastructure
  2. the achievement of a retail-led development (including a large food store) that will secure the town's longer-term vitality and viability
  3. the achievement of a comprehensive approach to car parking on the site having regard to the exiting provision on the site and the needs of the proposed development

4. integration of the proposal with the existing town centre and its environment
5. the achievement of a co-ordinated approach to the upgrading of Victoria Hall

In order to achieve these objectives the site must be developed in a single coherent process and operation: this can only be achieved if there is certainty as to the delivery of all these elements commensurate with a coordinated and comprehensive approach;

- to give information with regard to such details as the opportunities that exist for vehicular access, egress and servicing routes, car parking, urban design principles, preferred activity, public realm and open space requirements, and issues of local distinctiveness, perception and image within the defined boundary; and,
- to establish a development context for the remainder of the St Helena area (outside of the Central Street site) to aid the process of producing further development briefs and to guide development proposals that may come forward in advance of subsequent development briefs being adopted.



McDonalds Restaurant on the south east corner of the St Helena area

#### 4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The development of the St Helena Area, as defined by this brief, is recognised by the Council as a major opportunity to add new and significant investment within Bolton town centre, and forms part of the Bolton Town Centre Action Framework (TCAF).
- 4.2 This is partly premised by the conclusions of the Bolton Retail Study (Hillier Parker, 2001) that indicated that by 2011 "*there should be capacity for about a further 16,000m<sup>2</sup> net ... durable goods floorspace in the town centre*". It adds that development on that scale "*will be unlikely to have a substantial adverse impact on the existing town centre as a whole*". The report also indicates that following a period in which there has been limited new durable goods retail development in the town centre there is now a need for "*a substantial new town centre development to help safeguard the long term future of the town centre*". The findings of the 2001 Study were reinforced by the May 2004 Study report.
- 4.3 The St Helena Development Brief area falls within two of the 'Areas of Change' identified in the Town Centre Action Framework (see Plan 2). These

are areas of townscape character where the Council is promoting development that will enhance local distinctiveness. The boundary of the site falls mostly within the St Helena 'Area of Change', although on its northern edge it overlaps with the Little Bolton Area and the western edge extends beyond the defined town centre boundary. A summary of local distinctiveness issues for the St Helena and Little Bolton areas is given at Appendix 1 - developers should have regard to these in conjunction with the other recommendations in the brief.

**4.4** Within the St Helena Area, the Central Street site offers an opportunity to:

- introduce new investment of a type and quality that will add value to the current retail offer to be found within the town centre;
- provide a retail-led landmark destination linked to the town centre's core retail area;
- develop activities that will support the town centre's evening and night time economy;
- add to the economic viability of Bolton as a major regional centre; and,
- demonstrate the Council's commitment to quality urban renaissance and design within the town centre.

**4.5** Building on earlier work that looked to the development of the Central Street site, the Council envisages a development of about 20,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail, leisure, a small element of office floor space and about 150 apartments. Specific guidance for the proposed development is given elsewhere in this brief.

**4.6** All development within the St. Helena Area must take account of:

- the potential that there may be in respect of the enhancement of the environs and setting of the River Croal, which crosses the site;
- the importance of connecting the area to the rest of the town centre and to Queens Park, both physically and visually;
- the importance of public realm and environmental quality, and the interface with adjoining buildings and sites; and,
- the relationship of the area to wider access issues; car parking, public transport and pedestrian movement.

**4.7** Fundamentally, development of the Central Street site must be of a sufficient scale and quality such that a distinctive landmark development results that is attractive to the type of town centre uses and retailers that the Council is seeking.

**5.0 THE ST HELENA AREA**

**5.1** The St Helena area in the main comprises an 'Area of Change' adjoining the main shopping district. Bolton Town Centre Action Framework identifies this area as having potential for strategically important landmark development. In terms of the physical characteristics of the area, the river is the most distinctive feature, flowing east – west in an engineered channel. The land form slopes upwards either side of the river: there is a significant change of level of around 8 - 9 metres between the northern, eastern and southern edges of the site and the river. Any development of the river sides must ensure access for future maintenance purposes.

- 5.2** The other main feature is Marsden Road, which crosses the area north-south on a raised embankment and is penetrated by the listed Marsden Bridge. Queens Park is beyond that bridge to the west.
- 5.3** In the St Helena area, the River Croal is a strategic asset that should be utilised as a 'corridor', linking open spaces either side of the town centre – Marsden Bridge acting as an important portal. Accordingly, the potential of the River corridor to provide a feature within the area should be explored. However, it is recognised that the River flows within an urban environment and that modifications may be required to facilitate development of the area, but, wherever possible, opportunities to enhance the River within its setting should be taken.



View east along the river Croal as it passes under Knowsley Street

- 5.4** Much of the area is cleared former industrial sites, currently used for

surface car parking, however, the historically important listed building of St Helena Mill is a key feature of the remaining built environment.

- 5.5** A number of historically and architecturally significant buildings edge the site along its Knowsley Street and Deansgate sides, the most important of which is the listed Victoria Hall. The Deansgate Conservation Area covers both frontages.
- 5.6** The area is one that has well known access difficulties and the amelioration or addressing of these will be an important part of any development proposals that come forward for consideration.
- 5.7** In particular, there is an urgent need to consider the capacity of the two major highway junctions at either end of Marsden Road for traffic and the ongoing need to improve pedestrian and cycle access into the area, particularly for east-west journeys.
- 5.8** The Council has a number of objectives that it wishes the regeneration of the St Helena Area to achieve. The main objective is to create developments that will add to the attraction and offer of Bolton as a regional centre and to create a high quality addition to the built fabric of the town.

**5.9** The development of the Central Street site should reflect not only these key challenges but also the following fundamental urban design principles:

- a coherent structure, which is permeable and gives shape to a legible network of routes and spaces well related to the area's context;
- strong building frontages, which provide a sense of enclosure and continuity on-street and that frame and terminate views and vistas into, through and across the area;
- a quality public realm, which is sensitively designed and provides an attractive setting for street life and that is accessible to all;
- a diverse range of uses and activities, which can support urban vitality, natural surveillance and economic viability and where activity generating uses are located within units that 'edge' the public realm;
- a density and intensity of use that reflects an urban location and where residential densities reflect the upper range of the PPG3 density scale of 30-50 dwellings per hectare;
- a clear delineation between public spaces and private areas. Public spaces should be well-defined by building frontages with private space locked within the interior of development blocks;
- an environment that is easy to move around, where traffic is managed and where pedestrian movement and needs are prioritised;
- car parking and service requirements located and



**St Helena Mill at one time was on an island in the middle of the river Croal**

designed to minimise both visual intrusion and conflict with pedestrian movement.

- a sensitivity to context, where new development is well-related to the scale, massing, siting, orientation, height and materials of the existing environment;
- building design that is resource-efficient and demonstrates a commitment to sustainable design;
- thoroughness in design that ensures attention to points of detail, promotes local distinctiveness and communicates a sense of quality;
- distinctiveness in design terms, creating landmarks in the town centre;
- building design that makes a positive contribution to the intrinsic

architectural and historic characteristics of the Deansgate Conservation Area (Plan 1);

- commercially viable developments that enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre; and,
- coherence in terms of pedestrian and vehicular movement.

## 6.0 THE CENTRAL STREET SITE

6.1 The Council is acutely aware of the need to attract 'quality' retailers that are not currently represented in the town centre. It is envisaged that for the major, retail led, development at Central Street there will be about 20,000m<sup>2</sup> of retail floor space, anchored by a major store. This will create the 'critical mass' required to attract quality retailers. Recent enquiries show that there should be provision for units of the optimum size to meet the requirements of modern retailers (500m<sup>2</sup>/1,000m<sup>2</sup>/1,500m<sup>2</sup>).

6.2 The development of both the St Helena Area as a whole, and specifically the defined Central Street site, should incorporate a mix of uses and support a range of activities, consistent with those found in the most popular parts of successful towns and cities.

6.3 One single use or user is not desirable for either the Central Street site or for future phases of the development of the area. However, retailing is the most desirable dominant use for the Central Street site. There is also significant scope for complementary uses that would enable more diverse activities to occur within the area after retail trading hours. With that in mind, consideration will be given to the integration of access to the Victoria Hall in combination with potential leisure/cultural uses.

## 7.0 DESIGN

7.1 The Central Street site provides an exceptional opportunity to create a distinctive and innovative development close to the heart of Bolton town centre. It also offers the prospect of extending town centre uses into a currently under-exploited riverside area, with the potential to create strong sight lines into the heart of the area from some of Bolton's best established retail locations.

7.2 The design aims and aspirations for this site, most of which are equally applicable to development within the wider St. Helena Area, are to:

- use innovative design to create a hierarchy of building forms, culminating at the key retail site on the riverside, adjacent to Victoria Hall;
- create an interesting variety of ground floor active uses, grouped around a hierarchy of spaces, capable of generating a 'sense of place' within the site;
- provide a high quality, preferably riverside setting for the Victoria Hall with additional development integrated sensitively with the building, and, if possible, creating a complementary development, fronting onto the same focal space as the anchor retail store;



**The rear of Victoria Hall**

- physically acknowledge the presence of the river course through configuration of the focal space's features and the use of high quality public art;
- create spatial sequences through the area, using high quality design to connect linear and nodal spaces and create a central focal space at the riverside;
- create a new pedestrian experience in the area, making new connections with Deansgate and/or Knowsley Street, Bark Street and to Chorley Street and Queens Park: using public art, covered arcades or other appropriate urban interventions. The Council particularly wishes to ensure that the Central Street site is well connected into the existing shopping streets of Knowsley Street and Deansgate. This is likely to require breakthrough points onto these streets and some intervention into the historic environment. This needs to be handled with sensitivity and must ensure that the overall effect enhances the Deansgate Conservation Area. However, the Council recognises that such 'breakthrough' points are essential if the scheme is to be properly integrated in to the town

centre. Indicative locations for such breakthrough points are shown on Plan 1. These will collectively facilitate pedestrian permeation of the site, west - east along the river corridor and north - south between Bark Street and Deansgate;

- support the Council's objectives with regard to restoration of the environmental corridor along the River Croal, connecting the town centre with Queens Park and the prosperous suburbs along Chorley New Road;
- regenerate the riverside character area close to the Market Hall shopping development and key retail locations along Deansgate and Knowsley Street, and;
- minimise the negative visual impact on the area of the Telephone Exchange buildings.

## **8.0 BUILDING FORM, SITING AND DESIGN**

**8.1** Whilst it is accepted that sizable building units will be necessary in order to achieve the floor space and servicing requirements of the anticipated retail and leisure mix on the Central Street site, large monolithic blocks should not be included. The emphasis should be an active ground floor frontage to all new pedestrian areas and existing streets. the development should not 'turn its back' on the existing townscape.

**8.2** In order to create a unique new retail environment at Central Street, the Council is looking for built form that offers a stimulating setting for shopping and window shopping. The qualities of the area should be reflected: for instance, the change of level across the site; the industrial legacy visible in the robust

construction of St Helena Mill; the Marsden Road bridge; the streetscape of Bark Street; and, the River Croal.

- 8.3** Historicism should be avoided – rather, interpretation of the robust sculptural qualities of existing buildings in a contemporary style would be favoured, using complementary, traditional and modern materials – for instance steel, glass, stone and terracotta (to be found in the vicinity) would be encouraged.



**Robust sculptural quality in a contemporary style**

- 8.4** Long unbroken frontages should also be avoided. Focal points, changing

points of view and asymmetry are particularly important.

- 8.5** The siting of buildings should reflect a hierarchy; from the existing street frontage to the local space at the riverside.
- 8.6** The detailing of the openings to Deansgate, Knowsley Street and Bark Street are critical. Openings need to be of a sufficient size to allow sightlines into the development. However, maintaining existing street frontages is important and any such openings should preferably not fundamentally alter the character of the existing urban fabric.
- 8.7** The principles of sustainable development must be at the heart of any scheme proposed. Sustainable design techniques and up to date technology must be used to maximise efficiency and minimise environmental damage.



**The use of steel as a construction material can create interesting design features and reflect the area's industrial past**

- 8.8** This should include measures such as natural lighting and ventilation and the use of renewable energy sources. In addition, schemes should address issues such as waste management, water conservation and movement and transport.
- 9.0 DEANSGATE CONSERVATION AREA**
- 9.1** Buildings along the perimeter of the site fronting onto Deansgate and Knowsley Street fall within the Deansgate Conservation Area. The Conservation Area policy statement outlines buildings of note that contribute to the character of the area and identifies important views and landmark buildings. There will be a general presumption for the retention of buildings of note that contribute to the special character of the area especially as many of these buildings provide a traditional street enclosure, which characterises this part of Bolton.
- 9.2** The character of the Conservation Area should inform new development; in particular special consideration should be given to preservation and enhancement of the gentle curve of Deansgate that creates a succession of views and protects the skyline punctuated by the domes and turrets that are a feature of corner plots.
- 9.3** The tight grid network is a feature of the area with spaces enclosed by buildings that are grouped to create a continuous building enclosure. The design of the development should include connected streets that contribute to the fine grain network and, where possible, avoid creating big blocks.
- 9.4** The area's rich industrial and residential past is of great interest and whilst most of the physical evidence has long disappeared the opportunity exists to reflect the past in the use of a fine grain network and possible the reuse of historic building or street names from the past such as Ridgeway Fold, Velvet Walks, Dukes Alley and Idle Lane.
- 9.5** The buildings along Knowsley Street and Deansgate create a strong rhythm of narrow frontages, which partially reflect the former ownership patterns and add to the visual interest of the street. The design of new development should reinforce this rhythm.
- 9.6** Primary access to buildings should be from the street and should be articulated to create a statement and be both welcoming and obvious.



Architectural detail of Victoria Hall

**9.7** Attention should be paid to the detailing of new development with the use of quality materials; the traditional palette is of stone, glass, red brick and slate. Contemporary building forms that create visual contrast and complement the traditional building forms will be preferred. Richness/texture of detail is important for all parts of the development but particularly at ground level where frontages should be welcoming and facilitate street-level animation/activity. Quality signage will be expected which enhances the identity and legibility of the site.



View along Deansgate looking East

**9.8** Consideration should be given to improving the setting of listed buildings; in particular St Helena Mill and Victoria Hall.

**10.0 OPEN SPACE DESIGN (INCLUDING THE RIVER CORRIDOR)**

**10.1** The Council envisages a sequence of open spaces connecting the area with adjacent streets and with the river corridor, which is itself being developed as a strategic green corridor connecting with open space to the west of the town centre, though it is recognised that there are significant constraints on how the river can be enhanced. The changes in levels from the northern side to the southern side will need to be considered carefully.

**10.2** The council intends that the amenity potential of the river will be developed as far as possible from Queens Park to the Knowsley Street culvert. It is likely that development of the area will affect a proportion of the river course, but proposals should be applicable or adaptable to as much of the whole length as possible.



Successful landscaping can often be a reflection of the creative use of quality materials (and good workmanship)



Variety in the use of landscaping material can contribute towards an interesting environment

**10.3** The River Croal is a low volume watercourse: enhancing its appearance is likely to involve some modification to the engineered bed of the river. A number of techniques could be employed – weirs, riffles, etc, to reduce or alter flow velocities, disturb the flow and create visual/aural interest.

**10.4** The potential for innovative lighting or even public art within the river channel should be considered. The weir further upstream in Queens Park demonstrates the more visible water display that can be created through flow modification. Environment Agency approval is required for all works affecting the watercourse.

**10.5** The creation of a pedestrianised environment on both sides of the river will need careful consideration in relation to maintenance access requirements and seasonal river flow variations.

## 11.0 PUBLIC ART

**11.1** The Council encourages developers to think about the potential for public art within the site. Artworks should be used to reinforce the sense of place and a distinct identity for the site. Amongst many possibilities, the flow of the River Croal through the site may offer opportunities to reflect its course in the treatment of areas of adjacent public realm. No particular art form will be favoured above another, but durability and long term maintenance should be taken into consideration.

**11.2** Any artworks should be considered an integral part of the development design. This can include either architectural or public realm design provided a recognised public artist is appointed as either the main or partner designer. It is essential that all commissioned works are unique, original, and of the highest quality.



Creative use of public art can create on-street animation and focal points in the streetscape

## 12.0 TRANSPORT ISSUES

12.1 Proposals should reflect priorities set out in the draft Town Centre Transport Strategy. These priorities include:

- providing better access/facilities for people with limited mobility (including shopmobility);
- extending the pedestrianised area and develop safe key pedestrian routes from arrival points to main attractions; and,
- improving bus movement around the town centre.

### Servicing, Accessibility and Car Parking Arrangements

12.2 The site lends itself to underground and rear servicing of retail units. Proposals will have to be subject to a satisfactory traffic impact study relating to the anticipated effects on the local highway network. General access should be gained primarily

from the Topp Way/Marsden Road junction.

12.3 Access for servicing will be via an improved Central Street (with egress back onto Deansgate) and from the Marsden Road Junction of Topp Way either onto an improved Pool Street or via St Georges Road onto Duke Street and Bark Street.

12.4 The major egress from the site will be via a one way link along St Helena Road onto Chorley Street/White Lion Brow.

12.5 Some access for non-HGVs may be possible along the western section of Bark Street beyond Marsden Road.

12.6 There are still some technical issues to be resolved as to how precisely general traffic and servicing vehicle will access the proposed development. As a result there are likely to be a number of refinements to the intended approach that will require further discussions with Council officers, likely as part of a future planning application process.

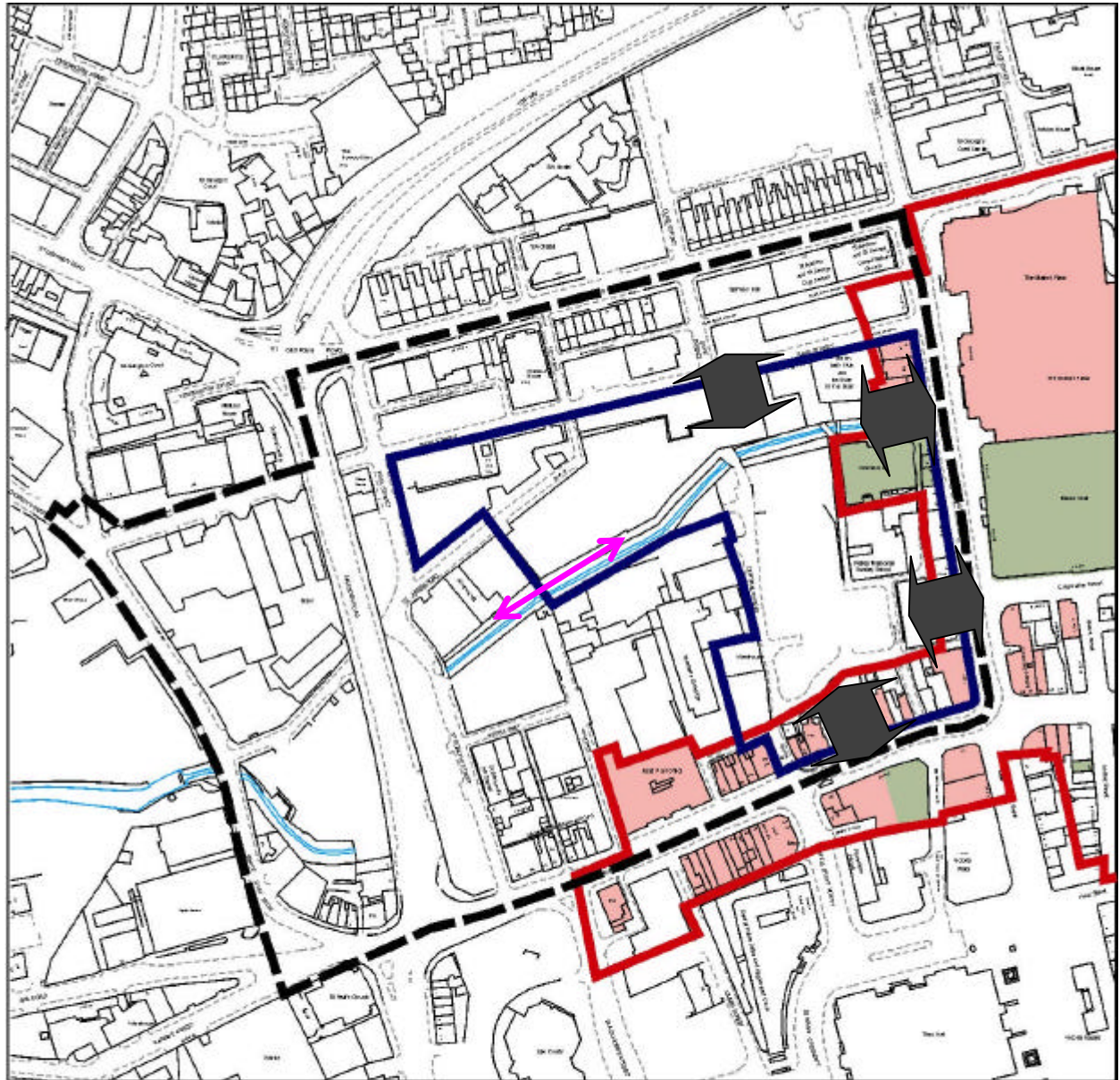
12.7 Whichever refinement of the option is finally approved, it will be necessary to protect the limited vehicular capacity of the local highway network by preventing undesirable rat-running through the area, in particular on Le Mans Crescent.

12.8 The Council's current parking standards – contained in Planning Control Note No.1: 'Car and Cycle Parking Standards', are applied as *maxima*. Given the town centre location of the proposed development site, and its proximity to good public transport interchange facilities, any provision above the standards will be resisted. There is no expectation that the new development should replace those

existing public car parking spaces that will be lost to the development.

- 12.9** There should be a direct pedestrian and cycle access route across the site from Deansgate at the south east end of the site to Bark Street. The Council also requires a new pedestrian and cycle route from Knowsley Street along the side of the River Croal and across Chorley Street to the west. Pedestrian links to Deansgate and Knowsley Street should also be improved.
- 12.10** Pedestrian accessibility between the development and its car parks and between the site, its car parks and the rest of the town centre should be given full consideration within the proposals. The particular needs of disabled motorists should also be taken into account when designing the car parking areas and their links with the entrances to the development.
- 12.11** The Council's cycle parking standards will be applied as minimum standards. These are contained also in Planning Control Policy Note No.1. Secure cycle parking facilities should be provided within the site for customers and staff.

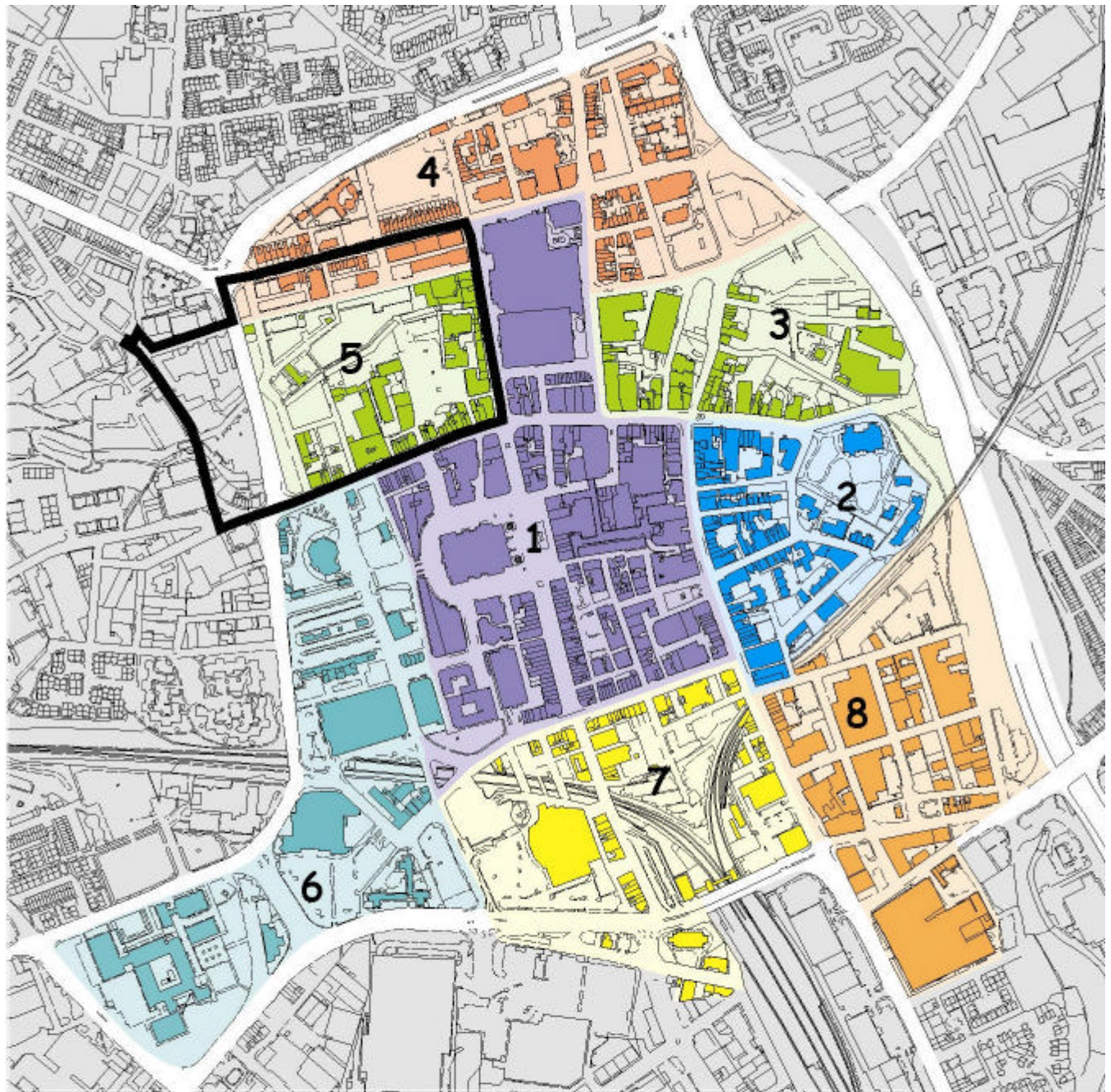
**PLAN 1: DEVELOPMENT BRIEF BOUNDARY, SHOWING THE CENTRAL STREET SITE, DEANSGATE CONSERVATION AREA, RIVER ACCESS CORRIDOR AND APPROXIMATE BREAKTHROUGH POINTS**



- Boundary of Development Brief
- Boundary of Conservation Area
- Buildings with character\*
- Listed Buildings\*
- Boundary of Central Street site
- River Corridor Access Point
- ↔ Approximate 'breakthrough' points

\* Within the Conservation Area

**PLAN 2: TOWN CENTRE ACTION FRAMEWORK 'AREAS OF CHANGE' SHOWING DEVELOPMENT BRIEF BOUNDARY**



- |   |                                   |          |                                    |          |                        |
|---|-----------------------------------|----------|------------------------------------|----------|------------------------|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>Retail/Civic Core</b>          | <b>4</b> | <b>Little Bolton</b>               | <b>7</b> | <b>Trinity</b>         |
| <b>2</b>  | <b>St.Peters</b>                  | <b>5</b> | <b>St.Helena</b>                   | <b>8</b> | <b>Bridgeman Place</b> |
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Churchwharf</b>                | <b>6</b> | <b>Cultural/University Quarter</b> |          |                        |
|  | <b>St Helena development area</b> |          |                                    |          |                        |

## **APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS ISSUES FOR LITTLE BOLTON AND ST HELENA 'AREAS OF CHANGE'**

### **Little Bolton**

Little Bolton developed as a separate corporate entity to Greater Bolton, with its own town hall and parish church (both of which still stand). The communities were divided by the Croal Valley, which was originally more conspicuous in the townscape than it is today.

The administrative distinction disappeared in the 19th century, as part of the same centralising process that created the civic core around Victoria Square. The area retained a distinct architectural identity, however, providing an inner suburban residential area of some quality Regency terraces, churches and other buildings along St Georges Road, which forms the visual and functional spine of the area, are evidence of its former status. The use of red brick and stone dressings reinforces its identity.

The pattern of existing uses is mixed modern business units, a hotel complex, small casino and professional/office uses in the terraces along St Georges Rd, a college building and live/work space. However, some key buildings are in a neglected state, and the visual integrity of the area is threatened by gap sites and the vehicle access requirements generated by redevelopment of the St Helena site. The proximity and volume of traffic on Topp Way blights the northern edge of the area and separates it from the residential areas to the north.

Conservation objectives are seen by the Council as being key to the regeneration of this area. The Little Bolton Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme, a bid for Heritage Lottery funding, will secure funds for the restoration of key buildings such as Little Bolton Town Hall.

Working with the building owners, historic structures that have become dilapidated or fallen out of use altogether will be restored and brought back into use, securing economic growth, the future of the buildings, diversifying the local economy and improving the general townscape.

Given the proximity of development sites at St Helena, Churchwharf and the Market Hall, and the area's gateway location for the town centre, the prospects for this area are good, and the objective is to manage change in a way that protects its unique identity.

### **St Helena**

St Helena is the upstream counterpart of Churchwharf and shares similar characteristics – it has an interesting history (the town's oldest industrial building still stands on the site) though partly obliterated through wholesale clearance, the diversion of the river into a culvert under the Market Place and the use of vacant land for surface car parking. After years of under investment in the area, a large residential development is nearing completion on the Queens Park boundary and detailed proposals for the comprehensive mixed use redevelopment of the area are being considered. The scale of the new proposals is likely to make a significant contribution to the quality and variety of the towns overall retail offer.

The objective is to seek to maximise the economic potential of the site, particularly in terms of its retail capacity, whilst retaining longstanding strategic objectives in particular the retention of the river corridor, the connection with nearby Queens Park, and respecting the well established frontages to Deansgate and Knowsley Street. Connections through these frontages will enhance the existing streetscape and support existing uses in the retail core.

There are also proposals for the Victoria Hall venue, one of Bolton's landmark buildings, to be renovated, with a new façade facing a public space that will be created at the heart of the new development.

As in other town centre areas, there is an imperative for combining innovative design with well established conservation objectives, aimed at protecting the unique qualities of Bolton's townscape.