

August 2025

Department of Place

Bolton Local Plan

Issues and options:
Information and scoping consultation



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Section 1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1. The new Bolton Local Plan is an important document that will guide how our borough grows and changes up to 2042. It is about more than just maps and planning policies - it is about shaping the future of the places where we live, work, shop, learn, and spend time with family and friends in Bolton. Over the coming year, Bolton Council invites you as members of the community, developers and agencies shaping the built and natural environment to prepare a new Local Plan for Bolton.
- 1.2. The Local Plan is being prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Once adopted, it will become the key document guiding how Bolton Council decides on planning applications - what gets built, where it gets built, and what the council will say “yes” to.
- 1.3. It will be used to make decisions alongside the ‘Places for Everyone’ Joint Development Plan adopted in 2024. ‘Places for Everyone’ sets a shared strategic vision for nine Greater Manchester councils including Bolton. The Joint Development Plan gives the high-level framework; our new Local Plan will add the detailed policies that meet local needs and circumstances.
- 1.4. Development will continue with or without a plan. With an up-to-date Local Plan and a clear supply of land for housing and other future needs, the council can guide and shape development. Without it, we risk losing control over where growth happens in our borough: recent appeal decisions show how easily speculative schemes can succeed. This creates uncertainty, makes it harder to plan new infrastructure and may push growth to the wrong places.
- 1.5. This consultation paper starts the work on Bolton’s new Local Plan. It explains why a new plan is needed, the legal framework we must follow, how it fits with ‘Places for Everyone’, and what we propose it should cover. It sets out the steps and timetable to adoption, and it tells you how to share your views now and what the next steps of the plan making process are.

Share your thoughts with us

- 1.6. We would welcome your thoughts as we start to collate evidence and develop plan approaches and more detailed policies. You can provide feedback by responding to our survey by 2nd October 2025. You can access the survey via [Bolton Council's 'active consultation' webpage](#).
- 1.7. We also welcome the views of residents, businesses, developers, neighbouring councils and government agencies so that technical evidence matches local

priorities. Your local knowledge and professional views matter. Sharing your insights will help us draft a deliverable strategy for development in Bolton that reflects Bolton's character, ambitions and needs.

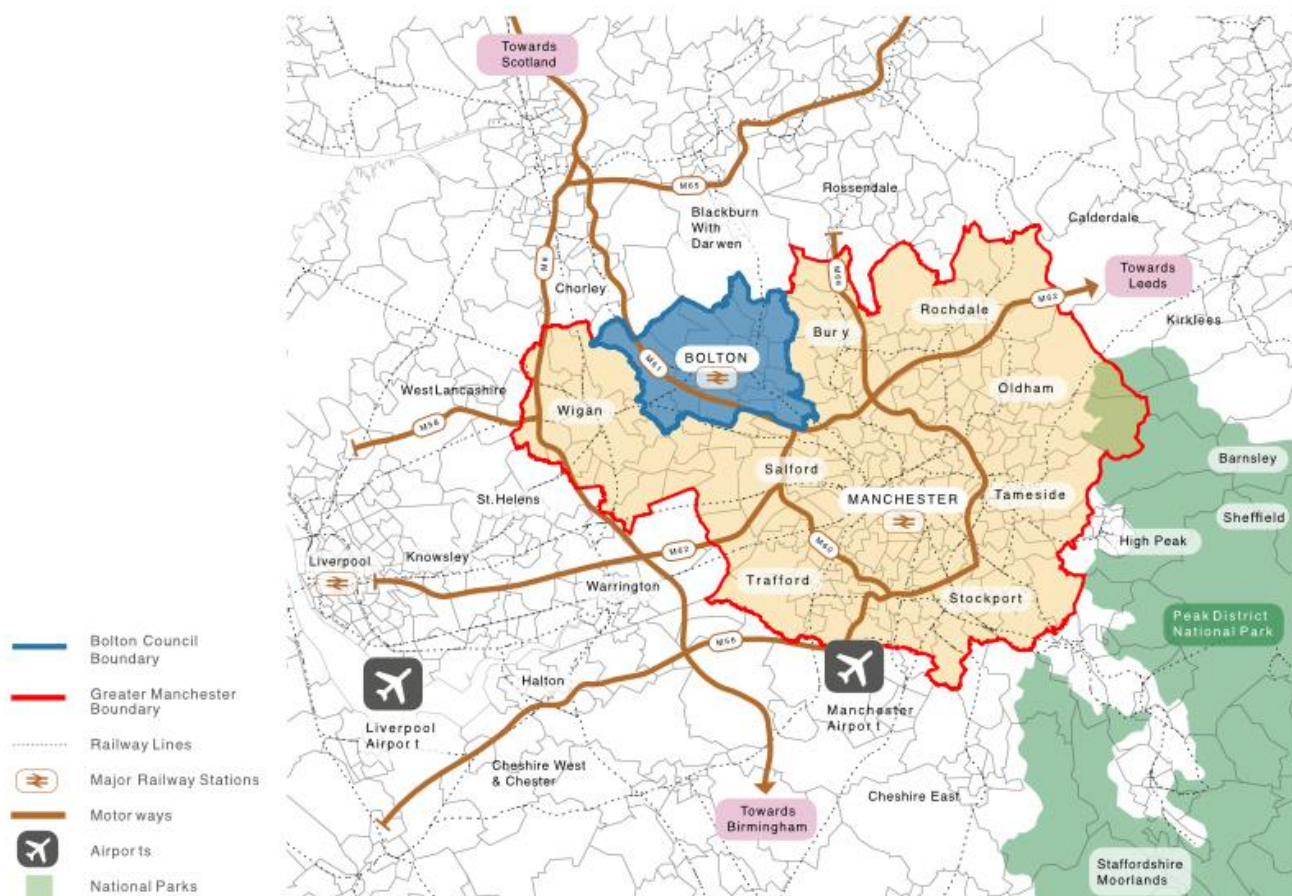


Figure 1. Bolton in the context of Greater Manchester and the wider region

Section 2. Bolton in Brief

- 2.1 Bolton sits between Manchester city centre and the West Pennine Moors. The borough ranges from urban bustle to rural calm. The town centres of Bolton, Farnworth, Horwich, Westhoughton and Little Lever each include important cultural and heritage assets such as Bolton Town Hall, Le Mans Crescent, Victoria Square, and the old Farnworth Town Hall and library. The area's industrial heritage and active communities shape its identity.
- 2.2 The Office for National Statistics estimated Bolton's population at 302,383 as of mid-2023, making it the third largest local authority in Greater Manchester by population. The majority of residents (68.8%) identify as White British. Asian communities form the largest ethnic minority group, making up around 20.1% of residents, within which largest single group is of Pakistani heritage (9.4%) followed by those of Indian heritage (8.9%) (ONS, 2021). Other communities include Black African, Caribbean,

Chinese, Eastern European and mixed-heritage groups. The Local Plan must meet the needs of this diverse population.

- 2.3 The Office for National Statistics 2022-based population projection estimates the Bolton population will grow by around 14,000 people (4.5%) between 2025-2042. This is a lower rate of increase than estimated for Greater Manchester or England as a whole (GM 8.4%; England 7.4%). The largest changes are likely to be seen with an ageing population (nearly 9,000 more people aged 70 and over, a 23% increase) and fewer children (8,000 fewer young people aged 5-19, a 13% reduction). This is a similar pattern to that seen in Greater Manchester as a whole, and in England in general. However, the most significant factor in this population change is likely to be net international migration, which is different to the majority of areas in England, where net internal migration is likely to be most significant. At the same time, while birth rates are currently falling, they are predicted to rise from 2032 onwards (Bolton JSNA). This is a complex issue, and it is important to note that population projections at local authority level are estimates and are especially subject to limitations in the source data. Actual local population change will be strongly influenced by local economic development and housing policies.
- 2.4 You can read more about the characteristics of Bolton on the [Bolton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Website](#).

Section 3. Our Goals for Bolton

- 3.1 Based on the evidence we have gathered so far, and the main challenges and opportunities the Local Plan needs to address, we have identified a set of broad goals for Bolton. These will align with the council's wider strategic objectives, and will shape the policies and proposals detailed in the next stage of the plan.

Places for Everyone

- 3.2 The 'Places for Everyone' Joint Development Plan sets out a vision to make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world to grow up, get on and grow old:
- A place where all children are given the best start in life and young people grow up inspired to exceed expectations.
 - A place where people are proud to live, with a decent home, a fulfilling job, and stress-free journeys the norm. But if you need a helping hand, you will get it.
 - A place of ideas and invention, with a modern and productive economy that draws in investment, visitors and talent.
 - A place where people live healthy lives and older people are valued.
 - A place at the forefront of action on climate change with clean air and a flourishing natural environment.

- A place where all voices are heard and where, working together, we can shape our future.

While recognising many of the necessary actions will lie outside its scope, Places for Everyone is committed to supporting the achievement of this vision.

Bolton - Born to Perform

- 3.3 The Local Plan will set out a clear vision for the future development of our borough, shaping the future of the places where we live, work, shop, learn, and spend time. At the heart of this vision is Bolton's new place brand: 'Bolton is Born to Perform': the idea that Bolton has always been successful: on stage and screen, in sport and business, in education and events, and that success breeds more success.
- 3.4 The place brand uses bold imagery and a strong narrative to tell the story of who we are as a town and where we're headed. Key themes of the brand are that Bolton Means Business; that we are experiencing a Cultural and Leisure Renaissance; and that we are Better Connected. But the place brand isn't just a strap line or marketing message, it's a 'strategic signature' for the whole area. By integrating the place brand with planning policy, we will ensure that future development enhances our distinct identity and what makes Bolton special, whilst responding to the needs of current and future generations.

Our ambition for Bolton

- 3.5 This is a statement of our ambition for Bolton:

By 2042 Bolton will be a healthier, fairer, greener and more prosperous borough.

Our town and district centres will be thriving and attract investors, visitors, and people who live and work in the area. Bolton town centre, which benefits from the transport interchange and the University of Greater Manchester, will mix homes, creative workspaces, education, culture and leisure. District centres will provide a provide a similarly rich mix of uses on a local scale.

Modern businesses will provide higher-skilled jobs in health and other employment sectors. They will flourish across the borough, in the health innovation zone around the Royal Bolton Hospital and Bolton Institute of Medical Science, and in employment areas such as NorthFold (M61 Bolton – Wigan Growth Corridor).

Our neighbourhoods will benefit from good homes, parks, open spaces and community hubs, while transport, health, education and other community facilities will keep pace with changing needs as the borough grows. From Bradshaw in the north to Westhoughton in the south, and from Kearsley in the east to Blackrod in the west, neighbourhoods will be linked by safe walking and cycling routes and the Bee Network of buses and trains, helping people get to work and school, and to shops and leisure facilities.

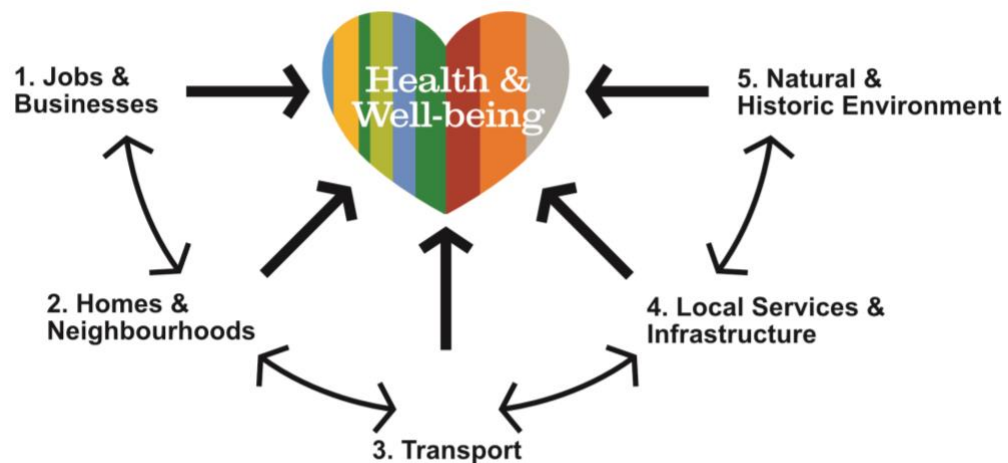
Valuable ecological sites will be protected and restored for wildlife and

recreation, and help Bolton reduce carbon emissions and respond to climate challenges such as flooding and heatwaves. Our work across the borough from the West Pennine Moors and Red Moss to the valleys of the Croal and Irwell, will give everyone access to fresh air and nature on the doorstep.

Bolton's rich heritage and cultural diversity will be celebrated across the borough. Its industrial legacy, historic architecture and unique cultural offer will be complemented with new well-designed buildings and public spaces to meet the ambitions of Bolton's communities in 2042.

Local Plan Objectives

- 3.6 The main goal of our Local Plan is to contribute to healthier, happier lives for everyone in Bolton. We propose five objectives below which can work together to deliver our goal of better health and wellbeing, from active streets and tranquil green spaces to secure jobs, warm homes and first-class local services.



1. Jobs and Businesses: Grow and diversify the economy to improve access to skills and good jobs, so that all residents can find secure, well-paid work close to home, supporting mental wellbeing and reducing poverty-related health gaps.

2. Homes and Neighbourhoods: Enable delivery of at least 13,379 high-quality, energy-efficient homes at a range of price points prioritising brownfield land first and, where required, carefully chosen sustainable sites elsewhere, creating safe, comfortable neighbourhoods that support physical and mental health.

3. Transport: Make active travel on foot and by bike the easy choice, and prioritise fast, reliable and low-carbon travel by bus and rail, reducing risk of air-pollution-related illness.

4. Local services and infrastructure: Provide timely health, education, open space, cultural and digital facilities that keep pace with growth, reduce inequality and support lifelong wellbeing.

5. Natural and Historic Environment: Reduce carbon emissions, manage flood and heat risks, and expand connected green and blue corridors that offer clean air, preserve habitats and biodiversity, provide restorative spaces for people, and protect and enhance heritage in the natural and built environment.

- 3.7 These objectives are the overall ‘game plan’: they set a clear direction before we decide on the specific tactics (for example, the spatial strategy, detailed policies and site allocations as set out). The objectives we have identified respond to the main challenges facing Bolton and reflect the priorities in ‘Places for Everyone’ and other key strategies of the Council and its partners, as explained in the rest of this section.

Our Goal: Better Health and Well-being

- 3.8 Health is influenced by many factors, as acknowledged in our Council Plan 2025-2028. Healthcare accounts for only about 20% of what keeps us healthy, and the Local Plan has an important role to play in reinforcing the other determinants of health. This is why we are putting health at the heart of our plan as the main goal.
- 3.9 Bolton has strong foundations for good health, but it also faces significant challenges. According to the latest small-area data, there is a life expectancy gap of up to 15 years between the borough’s most and least affluent areas. Overall, average life expectancy in Bolton — 76.7 years for men and 81.3 years for women — remains below the national average.
- 3.10 Health-related behaviours also present concerns. Around 70% of adults are overweight or obese, over a quarter are physically inactive, and nearly 40% of Year 6 children are above a healthy weight. Mental wellbeing is an area of concern: a recent residents’ survey found that 40% of respondents reported high levels of anxiety, and 15% described themselves as “not at all happy”. These outcomes are compounded by environmental and social factors, including poor air quality, limited access to green spaces in some neighbourhoods, substandard housing, and inconsistent active travel infrastructure.
- 3.11 In response, the council’s Active Lives programme is working in partnership with local organisations to promote healthier, more active and connected lifestyles. This borough-wide network spans leisure centres and services, active travel initiatives, and health-focused programmes, all aimed at creating opportunities for residents to be more active and engaged in their daily lives.

Key Strategies

- 3.12 'Places for Everyone' promotes development that supports active lifestyles, clean air, high-quality housing, and easy access to parks, schools, jobs, and essential services. It prioritises people's wellbeing and aims to reduce health inequalities across the city-region. Locally, Bolton's Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2022–2027) and the Council Plan (2025–2028) echo these ambitions, focusing on building resilient, inclusive neighbourhoods.
- 3.13 The Active Lives Bolton Programme is designed to make daily physical activity a natural part of life by shaping supportive environments—whether through better infrastructure, community initiatives, or local partnerships. The benefits to local people of becoming more active include improving physical and emotional wellbeing, enhancing life chances and employability, reducing reliance on health and social care services, and contributing to a more prosperous borough.

Objective 1. Jobs and Businesses

- 3.14 Bolton's economy has real strengths, and major national and international businesses have been born and bred in Bolton. More than £1 billion of public and private investment is flowing into the borough, and major sites support new jobs; Logistics North, for example, has already provided approx. 7,000 new jobs. Business birth and survival rates are healthy, and the borough is now home to around 10,600 firms, with recent growth in digital and health innovation pointing to fresh opportunities. Despite already significant investment in new employment floorspace, changing work practices and employee working patterns since the pandemic are driving continued demand for modern, flexible accommodation for small and medium-sized businesses.
- 3.15 Yet the challenges are stark. Bolton ranks 34th most deprived local authority in England. Only 67 % of working-age residents are in work, eight points below the national average; unemployment stands at 5.3 % and economic inactivity at 28%, with 40 % of inactive adults reporting long-term sickness. Skills gaps persist: just 39.3 % hold a Level 4 qualification or higher, while 11.5 % have none, and only 43.8 % of pupils achieved grade 5 or better in English and Maths GCSEs in 2023. Earnings still trail the UK average. Higher rates of deprivation are concentrated in Farnworth, Halliwell, Great Lever and inner Bolton. Access to affordable childcare can also be a significant barrier to employment across the country in general.

Key Strategies

- 3.16 'Places for Everyone' promotes inclusive, high-quality growth, backing new jobs in advanced manufacturing, digital, health innovation and logistics. It calls for flexible,

well-connected workspaces and at least 2,000,000m² of new offices and 3,570,000 m² of new industrial and warehousing space across the city-region by 2039.

- 3.17 Bolton's Council Plan 2025–2028 places “good work for all” at its core, while the Bolton Economic Growth and Resilience Action Plan (2024) targets sector growth, skills and local supply chains to widen opportunity. The Age-Friendly and Independent-Living strategies stress links between good jobs, health and ageing well. Together with the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy, these documents urge Bolton to expand modern employment floorspace, support start-ups and apprenticeships, and steer investment to neighbourhoods that need it most, helping to reduce inequality and build a stronger, more diverse economy.

Objective 2. Homes and Neighbourhoods

- 3.18 Bolton offers a varied mix of homes, from Victorian terraces and post-war suburban semis to contemporary urban town-centre apartments. A recent highlight is Farnworth Green, a mixed-use scheme led by Capital & Centric with BDP and the Council, which won the 2025 Planning Award for Regeneration. The project is bringing 97 net-zero rental homes - 85 flats and 12 family townhouses - plus cafés, bars and shops set around a new public square. The Council is working proactively to deal with stalled brownfield sites, facilitating permissions and remove barriers to building.
- 3.19 Despite clear progress, not enough homes are being built in Bolton to meet local need. The Core Strategy target of 694 net dwellings a year was not met in any year between 2011 and 2022 (see Figure 2), and early delivery since 2022 against the newer ‘Places for Everyone’ figure of 787 also falls short. Average house prices reached £198,000 in March 2025, yet local wages lag behind the national average, so affordability is stretched. Private rents have risen by almost 40% since 2020 and now outpace many household budgets. Demand for social housing is intense, with more than 300 bids for every advertised home, and the council dealt with over 2,000 homelessness applications last year.
- 3.20 Early market evidence shows rising demand for conventional family homes, and we are gathering more data to confirm this. Meeting that need will help younger households stay and raise families here. We must strike the right balance between new family housing and other uses such as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), which can eat into supply. Persistent HMO hotspots have already prompted a borough-wide Article 4 Direction, introduced in June 2025, to rein in further unbalanced growth.
- 3.21 We expect demand for age-friendly housing to rise – and quickly. Office for National Statistics projections show Bolton's over-65s increasing by about 11,000 between

2025 and 2042, an increase of 21.7%. Supply of accommodation for older people must expand and modernise to keep pace with demand.

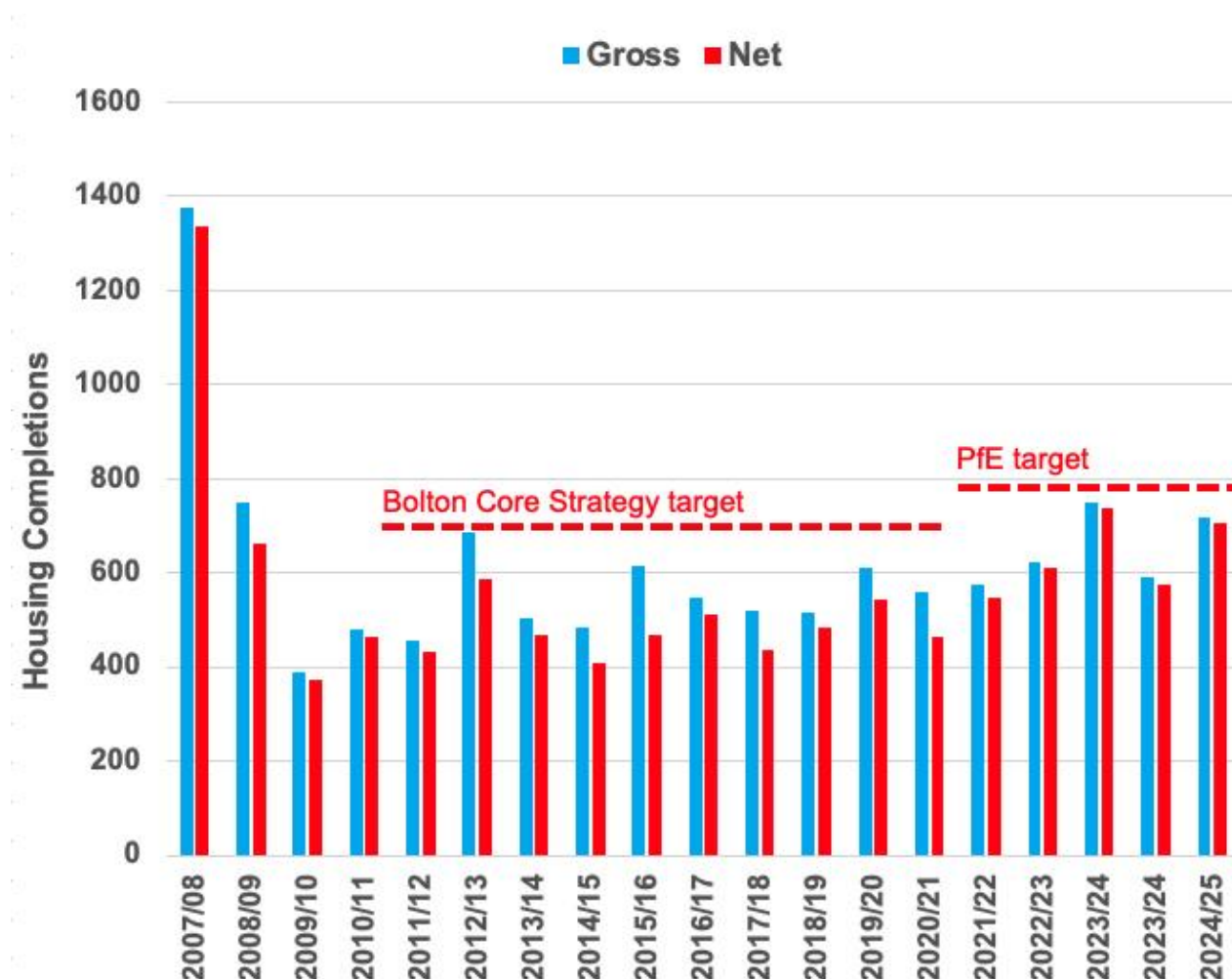


Figure 2. Graph showing rate of gross and net housing completions in Bolton 2007-2024. Source: Bolton Housing Monitoring.

Key Strategies

3.22 National policy is clear. The Government's Plan for Change pledges to build 1.5 million new homes across England during this Parliament, and the latest calculation (March 2024) lifts Bolton's figure to 1,184 net additional dwellings per year. Regional and local strategies also give a clear steer:

- 'Places for Everyone' seeks a step change in supply, and the Greater Manchester Strategy 2021 links decent, affordable housing to inclusive growth. There is a clear requirement for at least 787 units per year from 2022 to 2038.
- Bolton's Council Plan 2025-2028 highlights the need for housing quality and quantity. The Bolton Age Friendly Strategy 2025- 2028 commits to age-friendly

design in new homes and neighbourhoods. The Sustainable Design & Construction Supplementary Planning Document (2016) sets out a framework for housing design quality in the borough.

- 3.23 The Local Plan is our key tool for achieving the right mix of homes: providing social rented and affordable housing, meeting the specific needs of different groups within the borough — including older residents, residents who have disabilities, Gypsy and Traveller residents, and vulnerable residents — and, critically, reaching the ‘Places for Everyone’ (2024) target for new homes.

Objective 3. Transport

- 3.24 Bolton’s transport network and travel patterns have great potential. The first Bee Network bus services now run through the borough, signalling a move toward an integrated, lower-fare system. Registrations of ultra-low-emission vehicles have surged by 462 % in just four years, out-pacing both the UK and Greater Manchester averages though from a low base. Early indications suggest a rise in patronage following improvements brought in through the GM bus franchise. Similarly after a significant dip during the Covid pandemic, rail use is increasing.
- 3.25 Notwithstanding this progress, residents’ travel needs are complex and their journeys can involve multiple work and care responsibilities as well as leisure and recreation. In many parts of the borough, the private car is the best choice or the only choice available, and travel patterns generally remain car-dominated. The GM Travel Diary Survey 2024 shows that walking accounted for 24% of all Bolton residents’ trips but cycling less than 1% and public transport only 7%, while driving (by car or van) accounted for 68%. Similarly, only 9% of Bolton residents walked to work, while 85% travelled to work by car. The car was frequently used even for fairly short trips up to 2km (up to 25 mins walk / 10 mins cycle).
- 3.26 Commercial buses have been secured at Logistics North responding to demand from business uses. But some other sites have little or no scheduled bus service and many of our areas across the borough score below 3 on the GM Accessibility Level scale, signalling weak links to public transport. These gaps leave those without cars - about a quarter of Bolton households - cut off from jobs, education, and healthcare, reinforcing social and economic divides.

Key Strategies

- 3.27 National Planning Policy Framework guidance calls for a “vision-led” approach, focussing on delivering outcomes rather than forecasting demand, with Local Plans aligning land use and transport so that development is genuinely served by sustainable travel. Greater Manchester’s 2040 Transport Strategy reflect that ambition, aiming for world-class connections that drive inclusive growth while cutting

carbon and pollution. 'Places for Everyone' translates the regional vision into spatial principles, requiring new sites to prioritise public transport and active travel from the outset.

- 3.28 Bolton's Transport Strategy 2024 adopts a clear "modal hierarchy"; this means people firstly having the opportunity to safely walk, wheel and cycle, then buses and trains, with private vehicles last. The strategy's priorities include Bee Network franchising, quality bus transit corridors, and safe cycling infrastructure. The Council Plan 2025-2028 also highlights connectivity as essential for economic resilience and fair access to opportunity. Aligning the new Local Plan with this strategy will be critical to shift trips onto cleaner modes, unlock growth areas, link deprived communities with job opportunities, and improve health and equality across the borough.

Objective 4. Local Services and Infrastructure

- 3.29 Across the borough there are 146 education establishments which includes 98 maintained primary and 20 maintained secondary schools, 9 independent schools, 6 maintained special schools, 3 SEND post-16 colleges, 2 general colleges and the University of Greater Manchester. Ten branch libraries, ten council youth centres and more than 50 GP surgeries in nine Primary Care Networks add to this public infrastructure, alongside the Royal Bolton Hospital and its elective-care centre. Everyday life is anchored by a hierarchy of centres that bring shops and public services together in walkable hubs. Bolton town centre is the main focus, supported by Farnworth, Westhoughton, Horwich and Little Lever, four district centres and nine local centres. The £1.5 billion Bolton Blueprint will deliver new homes, jobs and extensive public-realm upgrades, while linked masterplans will refresh high streets, add housing and create greener spaces in the four other town centres. But provision of local services is uneven across the borough.
- 3.30 One in four households has no car, yet walkable access to fresh-food shops, libraries and family hubs is limited in parts of the borough. Some inner areas also lack high-quality green spaces within a short walk. In contrast, some of the more affluent outer suburbs benefit from good access to green space and private leisure facilities such as golf clubs but often have fewer community venues and limited youth provision. The Office for National Statistics projects a significant rise in the over-65 population, increasing demand for health, social care and community hubs close to home. Local centres must also adapt to the rise of online retail or risk losing the everyday shops that anchor them.
- 3.31 Additionally, new homes will increase demand on local services. Demand for school places, particularly at secondary schools is already high. This in combination with housing growth is likely to give rise to a need for additional school places in some areas of the borough, which could result in the need for new schools. Demand on

health services is also anticipated, as well as other community services and amenities for people of all ages and backgrounds, such as parks, sport, recreation and informal open spaces. We will be working on infrastructure planning over the coming months to better understand existing supply model demand as we prepare the plan, and ensure funding enables its delivery at the right time.

Key Strategies

- 3.32 The National Planning Policy Framework expects us to plan for healthy, inclusive places with community facilities that are easy to reach. 'Places for Everyone' demands early, coordinated planning and fair developer funding so new schools, health care, shops, parks and utilities are delivered in step with development. The use of developer contributions is highlighted noting that must be fair and proportionate, using Section 106, Community Infrastructure Levy and future levies.
- 3.33 Local ambitions echo the national and regional agenda. Bolton's Council Plan 2025-2028 promotes fair, close-to-home access to learning, health and social spaces. The Age Friendly Strategy 2025-2028 calls for more services within easy reach of older residents. Our emerging Green Space Strategy [2025-2040] provides a commitment to clear quality and access standards for open space. The Local Plan cannot deliver everything, but it will provide a framework for working with developers and infrastructure providers to get the right infrastructure in the right place at the right time.

Objective 5. Natural and Historic Environment

- 3.34 Bolton's moorlands and river valleys, together with its rich legacy of mills, terraces, and Victorian centres, combine to shape local identity, support wildlife and influence climate resilience. Recent progress is clear: 67 sites of biological importance (SBIs) are registered, 17 Local Nature Reserves are protected, and tree-planting is accelerating. Across the three Bolton parliamentary constituencies, there are over 5,000 solar energy installations with a total installed capacity of 17 megawatts.
- 3.35 Historic England has registered five of Bolton's parks and open spaces: Farnworth Park, Hulton Park, Queen's Park, Smithills Hall and Tonge Cemetery. It has also listed 355 buildings, of which 3 are Grade I and 17 are Grade II*. The council has designated 26 Conservation Areas, and conducted detailed appraisals to guide change in these historic areas.
- 3.36 The Council's strategic priorities for open space focus on safety for users, the protection of amenity and nature, and equality of access. However, between 2020-24 the proportion of Bolton's population living in close proximity to greenspace has remained largely unchanged.

- 3.37 Pressures, however, are mounting. Annual emissions still hover around 1.2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. Urban tree cover averages only 16% and habitats remain fragmented, with tree losses driven by stress and disease, and ‘Ash Dieback’ a significant issue. Heritage is also vulnerable: fourteen assets are on the national at-risk register.

Key Strategies

- 3.38 National Planning Policy Framework requires Local Plans to conserve and enhance both natural and historic assets. National law commits the UK to net-zero carbon by 2050 and mandates 10 % Biodiversity Net Gain from 2024. ‘Places for Everyone’ reinforces this and calls for carbon-neutral growth, nature recovery, and the safeguarding of Greater Manchester’s heritage. Greater Manchester’s ambitious carbon neutrality target by 2038 is set out in the Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan (2025 - 2030). Greater Manchester’s Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (2025-2035) identifies Bolton’s priority habitats, opportunity areas and planned habitat links, including in the West Pennine Moors, Red Moss, and the Croal–Irwell corridor.
- 3.39 Bolton’s Climate Change Strategy (2021) clearly sets out the framework for climate action, highlighting the urgent need for integrated measures that enhance resilience to flooding, reduce carbon emissions, and improve air quality. The strategy recognises sustainable development and improved infrastructure planning as essential tools in achieving these goals. Our Green Space Strategy 2025 sets out a vision and an action plan for working with partners to deliver a well-connected green-and-blue network across the borough, with watercourses and green spaces interconnected to boost health, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

Section 4. Scope of our Local Plan

- 4.1 The final version of our Local Plan will need to address the requirements of national planning policy and align with the policies already set out in the ‘Places for Everyone’ plan. In addition to a vision – our ambition statement - and objectives, it will include:
- A spatial strategy illustrated by a key diagram;
 - Development management policies; and
 - Site Allocation Policies.
- 4.2 National policy already sets many of the rules for what our Local Plan must do, and ‘Places for Everyone’ sets the strategic direction. There is a national mandate from the Government to get complete Local Plan coverage across England as quickly as possible to facilitate growth. Two further changes are on the horizon which will have implications for our Local Plan:

- **National Development Management Policies (NDMPs):** These will introduce a set of standardised policies that apply across England, covering common planning issues such as heritage, design, flood risk and green belt. Local Plans will only be able to include local policies where they are clearly justified and do not duplicate national policy.
- **Spatial Development Strategies:** Combined Authorities will be required to prepare a new form of strategic plan, setting out priorities for housing, economic growth and infrastructure across their area. This will be different in scope and form to the 'Places for Everyone' plan — it will be broader and more strategic, not a detailed planning framework for individual districts.

4.3 Even so, we want to push as far as we can within this evolving framework and produce a Local Plan that reflects the local priorities for our communities and those who will have a role in delivering the plan such as developers and registered providers of affordable homes.

Developing a spatial strategy for Bolton

4.4 Every Local Plan includes a spatial strategy to deliver the local plan vision and objectives. This short narrative, supported by a key diagram, sets out where new homes, jobs and businesses, and other facilities and amenities will go, and explains why. It guides all later policies, helps infrastructure providers plan ahead, and gives residents certainty about how growth will be managed. In practical terms, it answers questions such as:

- Where will new development go? How much growth belongs in existing centres, on brownfield land or in new sustainable neighbourhoods?
- Which corridors need better walking and cycling links, bus and rail services and road infrastructure?
- Where should green space be protected or expanded to meet climate, access and health goals?

4.5 We are still developing options for the strategy and will seek your views when we consult again. But a broad direction to 'boost northern competitiveness' in Greater Manchester is already set by the 'Places for Everyone' Joint Development Plan (2024). Figure 3 below reproduces the 'spatial' strategy shown in 'Places for Everyone'.

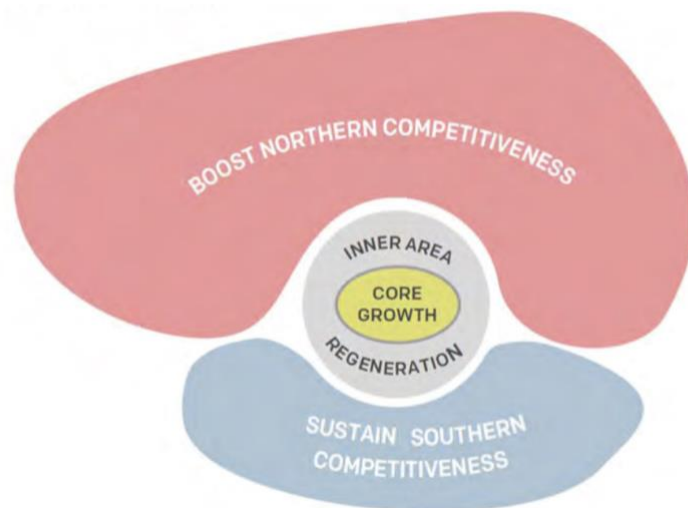


Figure 3. 'Places for Everyone' spatial strategy diagram (PfE 2024).

- 4.6 'Places for Everyone' also identifies the following place-based policies which we will need to reflect in our Local Plan spatial strategy:
- **JP-Strat 6 Northern Areas:** A significant increase in the competitiveness of the Northern areas of Greater Manchester, including Bolton, will be sought. There will be a strong focus on making as much use as possible of brownfield land, enhancing the role of town centres and diversifying the residential offer.
 - **JP-Strat 8 Wigan–Bolton Growth Corridor:** A corridor along the new M6-M61 link, quality bus transit and rail upgrades providing about 13,600 homes and 1 million sqm of employment floorspace.
 - **JP-Strat 12 Main Town Centres:** Bolton town centre is one of eight 'main' town centres identified in the 'Places for Everyone' plan. The role of these 'main' town centres as local economic drivers will continue to be developed, providing the primary focus for office, retail, leisure and cultural activity for their surrounding areas. Opportunities will also be taken to increase the resident population of the 'main' town centres.
 - **JP-Strat 13 Strategic Green Infrastructure:** Establishes a conurbation-wide green network linking rivers, mosslands and uplands, with a duty to enhance any Green Belt land that is lost.
 - **JP-Strat 14 Sustainable & Integrated Transport Network:** Sets rapid-transit priorities and the "Streets for All" design approach to reduce car dependency.

- **JP-H1 Scale, Distribution & Phasing of housing development:** Total need of 175,185 dwellings for the plan period (2022-2039); Bolton's minimum share is 13,379 for the same period.
- **JP-J3 Office Development & JP-J4 Industry and Warehousing Development:** 'Places for Everyone' states that at least 2,019,000 sqm of office floorspace, and 3,513,000 sqm of industrial and warehousing floorspace will be provided over the plan period (2022-2039). The Bolton Local Plan will identify specific requirements for Bolton.

4.7 The direction set by 'Places for Everyone' aligns closely with our own vision set out in the [Bolton Blueprint](#) which sets out ambitious plans for growth and investment across the borough. The Local Plan will play a key role its delivery of a "Bold Vision for 2040 and beyond". Our Local Plan strategy for where new homes, jobs and businesses go will need to reflect and support the Bolton Blueprint, including:

- Ambitious plans for regeneration in the town centre (delivery of which will be accelerated through the Mayoral development Corporation), with projects such as Moor Lane, Trinity Quarter and Crompton Place bringing 5,000 new residents and new cultural, green and mixed-use spaces.
- Realisation of NorthFold (the M61 Wigan–Bolton Growth Corridor) will support major employment and housing growth, including around the hospital and at sites like Rivington Chase and Farnworth Green.
- Unlocking and enabling of planned investment in low-carbon infrastructure and digital planning tools reflects a wider ambition for a greener, better connected and more resilient borough.

Policies for managing development

4.8 Our Local Plan will contain detailed policies that sets standards for the use and design of development known as development management policies. 'Places for Everyone' already provides a part of the planning policy framework for Bolton, covering a range of planning issues as summarised below:

Housing (JP-H 1 to 4)

- Seeks a major uplift in affordable homes with a balanced tenure mix.
- Calls for a wide mix of adaptable homes built to national space standards.
- Sets higher minimum densities around centres and public transport routes.

Economy and jobs (JP-J1 to 4)

- Aims for inclusive, productivity-led growth and expansion of high-value sectors and skills.
- Safeguards existing employment land while allocating new strategic sites.
- Directs most office development to city and town centres and rapid-transit nodes.
- Meets modern logistics demand and encourages rail-freight with good design.

Environment and climate (JP-S 1 to 6; JP-G 1 to 9)

- Promotes sustainable development and climate-resilient design.
- Requires net-zero operational carbon by 2028, whole-life-carbon assessment and on-site renewables.
- Protects landscape character, extends green infrastructure links and restores key habitats such as mosslands and uplands.
- Sets a minimum 10 % biodiversity net gain for major schemes and re-draws the Green Belt to include three strategic employment sites with compensatory improvements. These three strategic employment sites are JPA4 (Bewshill Farm), JPA5 (Chequerbent North) and JPA6 (West of Wingates).

Transport and connectivity (JP-C 1 to 8)

- Aligns land use with the Bee Network and GM 2040 Transport Strategy.
- Requires full-fibre and 5 G-ready development.
- Prioritises rail, Metrolink, bus rapid transit and high-frequency bus corridors.
- Protects the strategic road network and introduces people-centred street design, comprehensive walking-and-cycling routes, managed freight, and strict parking maxima.

Implementation (JP-D 1 to 2)

- Ties development to timely delivery of utilities, transport, and social infrastructure.
- Sets a common Greater Manchester approach to developer contributions.

4.9 We will be developing policies to extend and complement these and are collecting evidence to help inform them. The development of national development management policies may impact what we cover, but at this stage we anticipate our new Local Plan policies will include:

Jobs & Businesses

- Office and industry/warehousing floorspace (sqm) requirements for Bolton, plus details on where development will be focused and the sectors that will be the focus of development.

- Setting more detailed policies to support health innovation and growth, especially around Northfold in the M61 Wigan–Bolton Growth Corridor and at Royal Bolton Hospital.

Homes and Neighbourhoods

- Setting clear targets for the mix of tenures, such as social rent, shared ownership, and market housing, and types of affordable homes, to help meet local needs and ensure new developments are financially realistic.
- Giving guidance on housing for older people, including extra-care schemes (homes with on-site care and support), and on self-build homes where individuals build or commission their own home.
- Introducing rules to manage Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) which are homes where several people from different households share facilities like kitchens or bathrooms.
- Defining minimum green space standards and requirements for children's play in new developments, so that developers know what is expected and residents have good access to open space and recreation.
- Setting out requirements for using design codes which are detailed guides on the look and feel of new development on key sites, where these can speed up or support delivery.

Transport

- Setting local standards for car parking and cycle storage.

Local Services and Infrastructure

- Making clear our priorities for developer contributions (financial contributions or land that developers are required to provide as a result of impacts of new development) to support things like schools, open space, play provision, healthcare or roads – C. This includes use of Section 106 agreements (legal agreements between the Council and a developer linked to a planning permission) and possibly a Community Infrastructure Levy (a fixed charge per square metre of new development).

Natural and Historic Environment

- Creating flexible policies to help town centres adapt to structural changes in the retail sector, including the rise of online shopping and changing consumer habits,

and to support the varied ambitions for different locations and their specific roles in the borough and wider city-region.

Sites for Development (Site Allocations)

4.10 The new Local Plan will also identify sites for development and include 'Site Allocation' policies. Each policy will state the intended use, the scale of development (for example, the expected number of homes) and any key constraints or opportunities. We have not identified sites for development yet, but we have collated information about possible sites to enable our assessment to begin.

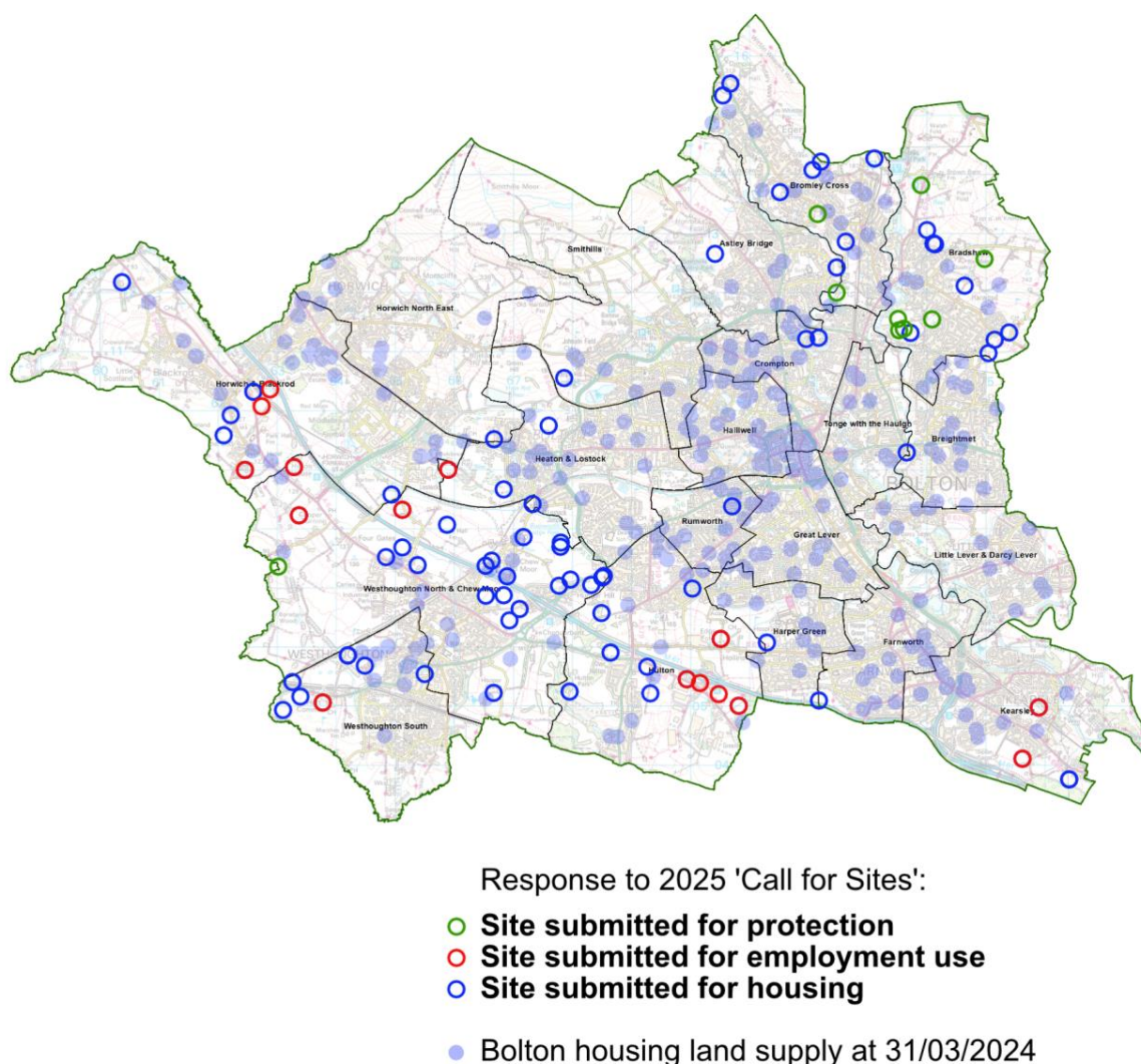


Figure 4. Bolton's Housing Land Supply as of 31/03/2024, overlaid with sites submitted to the Bolton 2025 'Call for Sites'. Site locations are approximate and reflect that the submissions for some sites proposed more than one use for the same site.

Note: This map shows where there is development interest. These are not proposals for site allocations. We are currently assessing each site in detail.

- 4.11 We ran a 'Call for Sites' from 4 March to 15 April 2025, inviting landowners, developers, businesses and residents to propose land for development or protection. This exercise helps us see what land might be available across the borough. The call generated 108 submissions, of which 85 (79%) were for housing. Figure 4 shows their location along with earlier, still-undeveloped allocations from the current Bolton Local Plan (as of 2024). Most of the housing sites submitted by developers lie outside existing urban centres. Under the same 'Call for Sites', 19 sites were also submitted for employment use – including office use, industry and warehousing – and 17 sites were submitted for amenity protection.
- 4.12 'Places for Everyone' also highlights two significant assets that will need to be considered in decisions on site allocations. It references Hulton Park which is the proposed site for a Ryder Cup golf course. It also highlights Royal Bolton Hospital as significant and notes: *"Further development of land at the hospital will enable its evolution and provide additional opportunities, including new health technology related activities, which would benefit from this location, alongside new housing development to be dealt with through the Bolton Local Plan"* (Places for Everyone, paragraph 4.59).

Section 5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Please complete our short survey by 2nd October 2025 which you can access via [Bolton Council's 'active consultation' webpage](#).
- 5.2 Your feedback will help us build a Local Plan that guides new homes, jobs and infrastructure to the right places and benefits everyone in Bolton and its neighbouring communities.
- 5.3 Over the coming months we will continue to gather and collate evidence to shape the next stages of the plan. At each stage we will also conduct a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to assess the social, environmental, and economic impacts of the emerging plan's policies and proposals.
- 5.4 Here is our route map to Local Plan adoption:

Stage	What happens	Timing
Consultation on Plan Scope (Stage: Local Plan Regulations 20212 Reg. 18)	We set out the main issues and the outcomes the Local Plan should deliver. Your comments will help to refine the scope.	Now

Draft Plan: Direction of Travel (Stage: Local Plan Regulations 2012 Reg. 18)	We will share our progress on developing a strategy and options for the plan, and how we have tested and refined them. Your views and insights will be used to guide the preferred approach.	Autumn 2025
Publication Local Plan (Stage: Local Plan Regulations 2012 Reg. 19)	We will publish the full draft, including the chosen strategy, site allocations and detailed policies, and invite formal comments. We will then send the Plan, the evidence base and all comments to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination.	Summer 2026
Submission for examination	The Local Plan will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for an independent examination. If the Inspector(s) finds it sound - meaning it meets national policy requirements for a sound plan - it can then be formally adopted.	Winter 2026

- 5.5 The Local Plan examination will take place in public. Anyone may observe the proceedings, and for those who object to aspects of the plan can be part of the discussion if invited by the Inspector. The Planning Inspectorate controls the process and the timetable. You can find out more about this in this video (figure 5):

[The Local Plan Examination video](#)

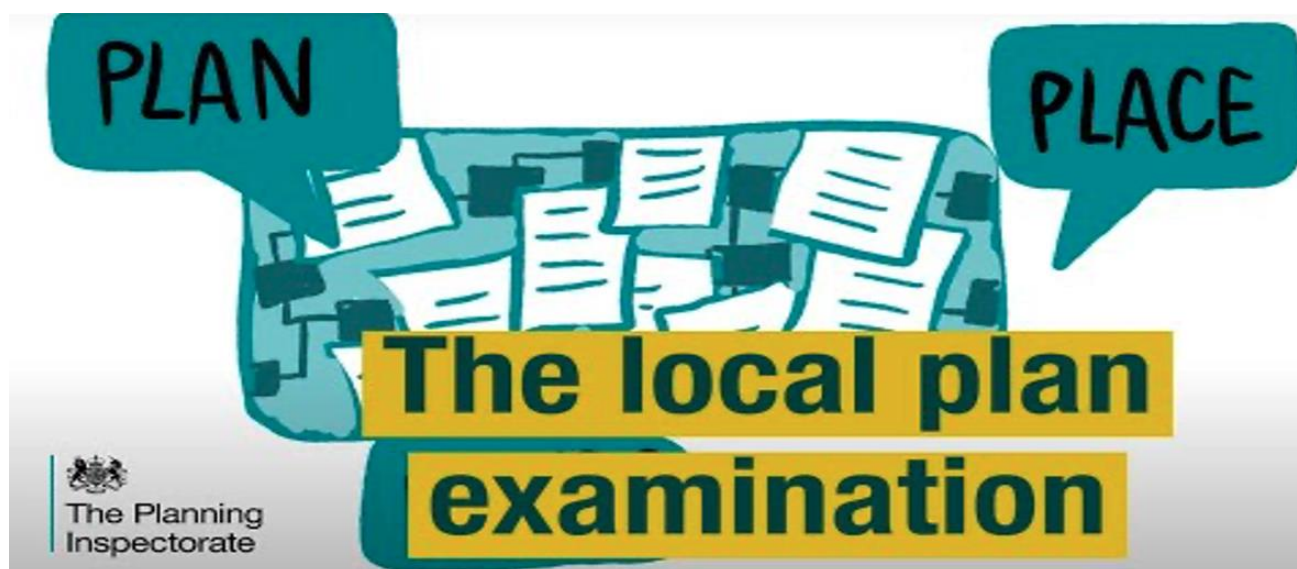


Figure 5. The Local Plan Examination. Source: Planning Inspectorate, You Tube

- 5.6 Alongside this early engagement, we are gathering the evidence needed to support the Local Plan and ensure it reflects the local needs and issues highlighted in this document. The approach we take must be justified by evidence, and the examination

will look closely at whether the choices we make are supported and are deliverable. We will also carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which is a legal requirement. The SA helps us assess the likely environmental, social and economic effects of different options. It ensures that sustainability is considered from the outset and plays a key role in shaping the strategy, including how to reduce or avoid any harmful impacts. We will share an interim SA report at the next stage of consultation to help inform choices about the direction of the plan. A full assessment will accompany the final draft to support decisions on the proposed strategy, sites and policies.

- 5.7 We warmly invite your views. With your help we can shape a plan that can meet our need for new development while recognising what makes Bolton a great place to live and work.

Department of Place

Bolton **Local Plan**

Issues and options:
Information and scoping consultation

August 2025

www.bolton.gov.uk

