

November 2025

Department of Place

Bolton Local Plan

Direction of Travel (Reg. 18 Consultation Part 2)



Contents

Introduction..... 3

Bolton’s Places..... 9

1. Bolton 2042..... 14

2. Spatial Options.....21

3. Local Areas of Change.....36

4. Policy Areas under consideration.....54

Next Steps.....68

Appendix.....69

Executive Summary

This ‘Direction of Travel’ consultation document invites your views to help shape the borough’s Local Plan while it is still in preparation.

It sets out our fifteen-year ambition for Bolton, with six objectives for the plan. It then presents and evaluates a series of different strategy options for the distribution of development across the borough. It considers in greater detail some options for change in specific locations, and asks for your views about key local policies we are considering.

This is not the final Local Plan. It is a tool to support conversations in advance of making decisions, setting the spatial strategy (where growth will go), writing policies, and identifying development sites of different scales for different uses.



Introduction

Bolton is a proud and ambitious borough. We want it to be a place where people can find good homes, jobs that match their skills, green spaces to enjoy, and thriving town centres at the heart of community life.

The Local Plan is how we will make that future real. It will guide where new homes, jobs and services should go, how we invest in schools, health, and transport, and how we protect and enhance heritage and green spaces that matter to local people.

We are consulting on this 'Direction of Travel' document as the latest stage of the Local Plan preparation process. Our aim is to publish the Local Plan in Summer 2026 and then submit it for independent examination by the end of the 2026.

Local Plan Timetable

2025 Spring	'Call for Sites'
	'Issues & Options' (Reg.18 Part 1)
2025 Autumn	'Direction of Travel' (Reg.18 Part 2)
2026 Summer	Local Plan publication (Reg.19)
2026 Winter	Submission to Planning Inspectorate
2027	Independent examination
	Local Plan adoption

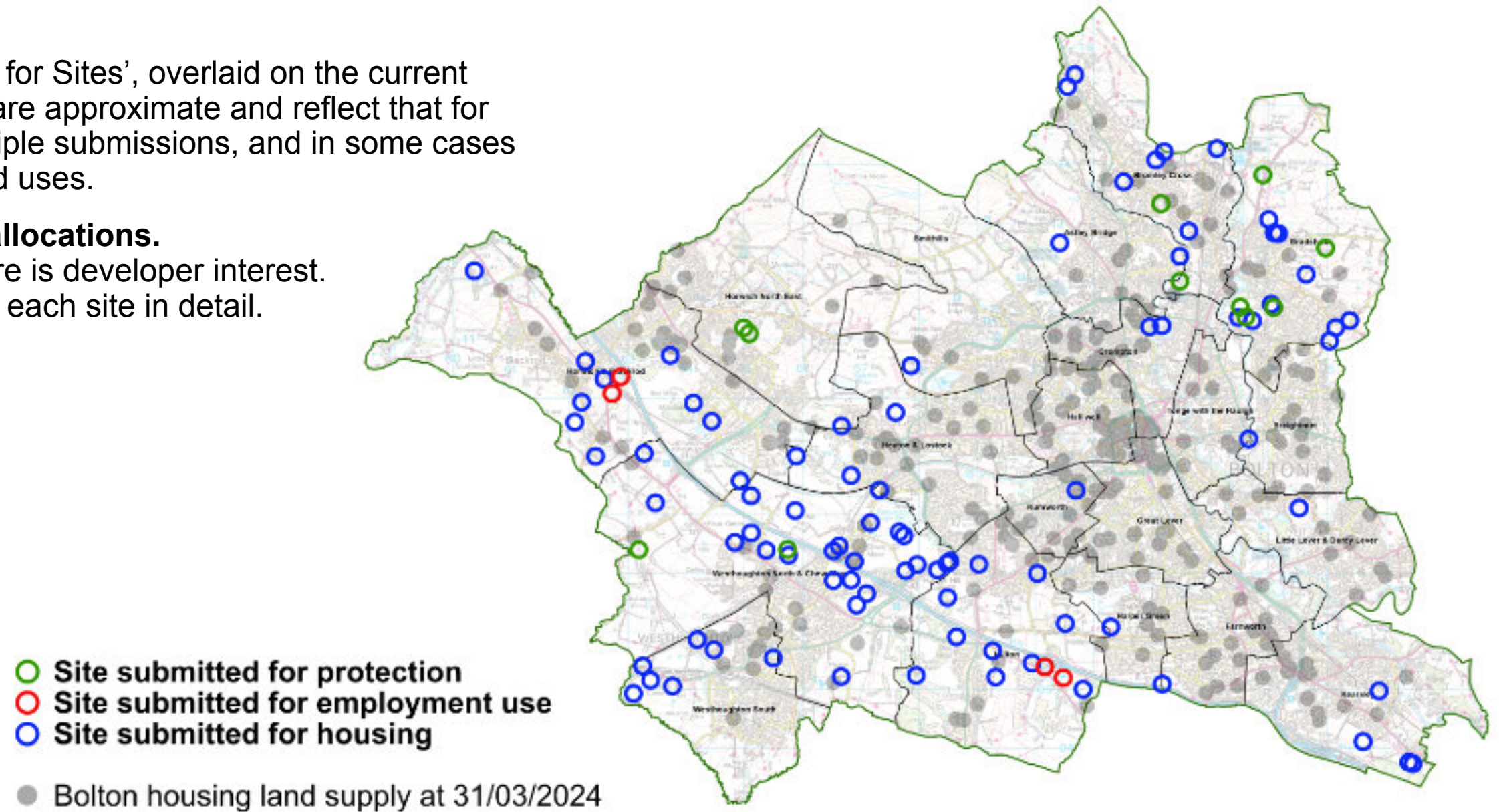
Work on the Local Plan so far

Since Spring 2025 we have been engaging continuously with local people and stakeholders on the Local Plan. In March, we invited landowners, developers, businesses and residents to propose land that could be considered for development or protection, through what is known as a 'Call for Sites'. The locations of the sites proposed are set out in Figure 1 overleaf, which we have updated to include additional sites proposed in the interim.

This has helped us identify a wide range of potential sites across the borough for housing, employment or environmental protection. These sites are still being assessed and none are confirmed for development at this stage.

Figure 1. Bolton 2025 'Call for Sites', overlaid on the current land supply. Site locations are approximate and reflect that for some sites there were multiple submissions, and in some cases these were for different land uses.

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



In August 2025 we also asked for views on our Local Plan 'Issues & Options' document. This focused on Bolton's ambition and objectives, the types of policies the plan should include, and the most suitable locations for future growth. More information about past consultation and engagement is provided in the Appendix.

Nearly half of respondents agreed the ambition set a clear and positive direction. Most supported the focus on jobs, housing, transport, local services and the environment, but wanted clearer links between them, especially how housing growth connects with jobs, transport and infrastructure.

There was strong support for growth in accessible, well-connected brownfield locations, and much less support for development in greenfield locations or in smaller settlements seen as less sustainable or already under pressure.

However, this approach will not deliver the housing that we need. The map on the previous page clearly illustrates this point:

- Many of the brownfield sites allocated in the previous Local Plan (grey circles) have remained undeveloped for many years;
- Responses to our 'Call for Sites' (blue circles) showed developer interest primarily in greenfield sites outside or on the edge of existing settlements.

The challenge for the new Local Plan will be to resolve this mismatch between brownfield availability and developer interest to achieve a balanced and sustainable plan for the borough.

‘Direction of Travel’

This Local Plan ‘Direction of Travel’ document provides a further opportunity to sense-check our ambition statement and objectives. We also want you to share your views on the different spatial strategy options for how we can accommodate development needs in our borough, before final decisions are made.

Our Plan is being prepared within a national framework of requirements too which shape what we can do locally. The Government has set a clear growth agenda with an ambition to deliver 1.5 new homes by 2030 and requires every council to have an up-to-date Local Plan. National planning policy expects our plan to promote sustainable economic growth, meet housing and other development needs in the borough, and respond to the climate emergency.

What our Local Plan needs to deliver:

- Greater Manchester’s ‘Places for Everyone’ Local Development Plan commits us to delivering **at least 13,379 homes** over 15 years.
- Early evidence indicates the need for **up to 220 hectares of industrial and warehousing land**, which allocations in ‘Places for Everyone’ will help meet. While office demand has slowed, early evidence indicates that an additional **24,500 to 37,600 square metres of office and research and development floorspace** is also needed.
- ‘Places for Everyone’ also requires **housing density** to be appropriate to the location, with higher densities near stations and in town centres.
- **New infrastructure and services** will need to be provided at the right time so that existing and new communities are not negatively impacted by new development.

At this stage, some choices are clearer, others are still very open, including the final section of sites to be allocated for development. We are continuing to assess the potential of sites submitted during the 'Call for Sites' process and through the 'Issues & Options' consultation. We are also continuing to collate evidence for the Local Plan to ensure our approach is robust and appropriate for Bolton

This Local Plan Direction of Travel is not the final plan. It is an important step that will help shape the final version. The full Local Plan will be published in summer 2026 for comment before it is examined by an independent planning inspector. You can find out more about this process in this [Local Plan Examination video](#) created by the Planning Inspectorate.

Consultation Questions

At the end of each chapter, we invite your feedback through questions shown in boxes like this.

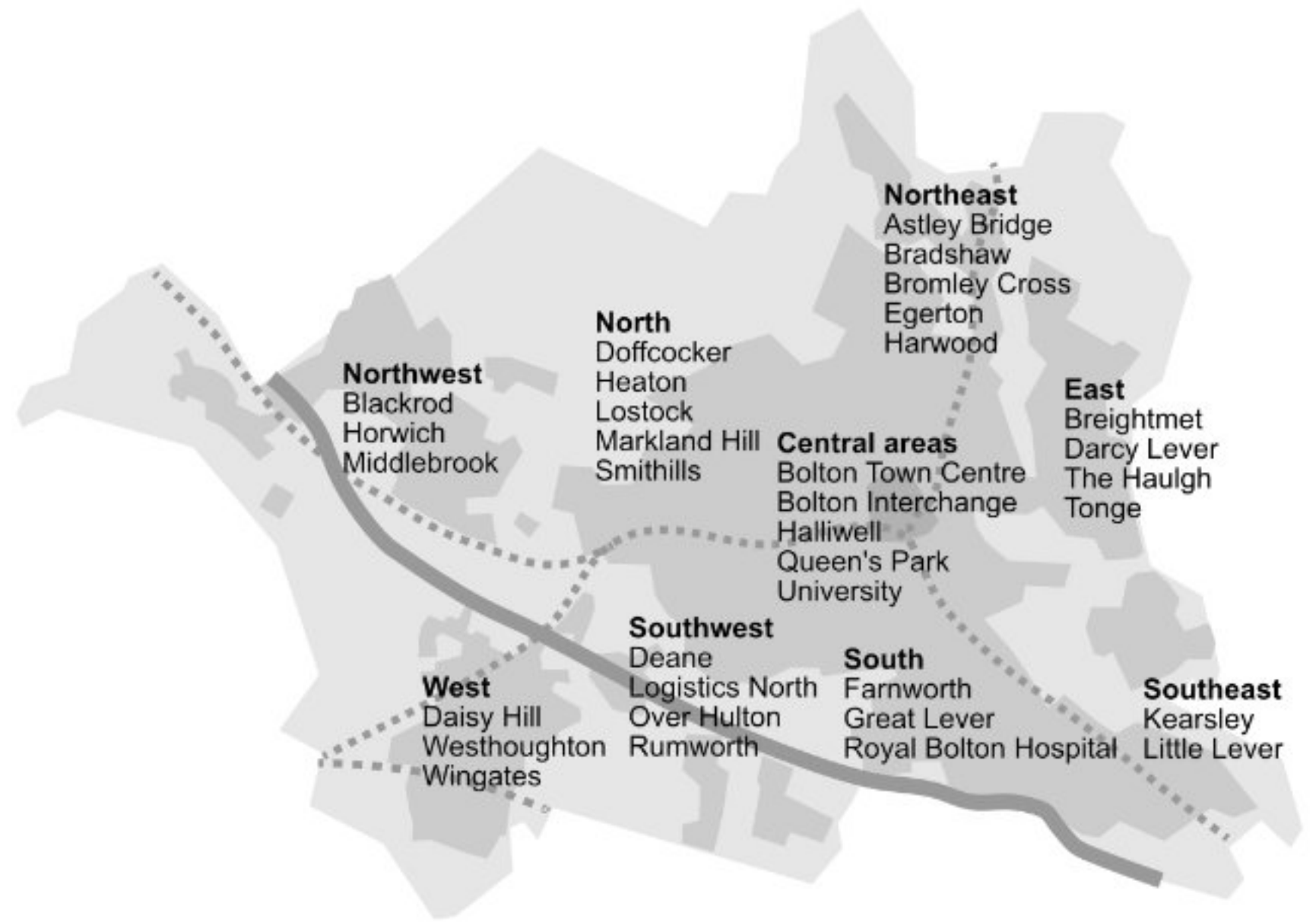


Bolton's Places

Bolton is not one place but many. It is made up of a collection of neighbourhoods, towns and villages, each with its own history, role and community identity. Together they make Bolton a diverse borough with real strengths but also distinct challenges.

These differences matter. Decisions about growth will play out in different ways across the borough. What works in the town centre may not be right for rural edges, and pressures in Farnworth may be very different from those in Horwich or Little Lever.

In this 'Direction of Travel' document, we are not presenting detailed profiles of every neighbourhood. Instead, we are highlighting the variety of places across Bolton and recognising that planning choices will affect them differently.



Central areas

The borough's civic, cultural and commercial heart is the Town Centre. With the largest cluster of brownfield land and regeneration opportunities, this area includes important facilities such as Queen's Park, the University and Bolton Interchange, and inner neighbourhoods like Halliwell. It has strong potential for new homes and jobs, but faces challenges in attracting investment to improve the quality of its environment and infrastructure.

Northeast

Directly north of Astley Brook, Astley Bridge is an urban residential neighbourhood with its own district centre. It enjoys a strategic position in the road network but has no train station. Bradshaw, Bromley Cross, Egerton and Harwood are largely suburban. While movement to the town centre is more constrained, there is good access to the West Pennine Moors. These areas are valued for their elevated setting and quality of life, but are more reliant on cars and have fewer sites available for growth.

East

Along the River Tonge a chain of small-scale industrial areas separates the town centre from the urban residential neighbourhoods of The Haulgh and Tonge. A series of parks and open spaces in turn divides these from the more suburban neighbourhoods of Brightmet and Darcy Lever which extend across higher ground. While there are good links eastwards to Bury, movement to Bolton town centre is more constrained due to severance along the River Tonge corridor.

Southeast

Little Lever and Kearsley are shaped by their strategic position on arterial routes — to Bury and to Salford and Manchester respectively — and support the surrounding suburban communities. Little Lever has an active town centre and Kearsley an active local centre, but they face pressures around transport and access to services.

South

The residential neighbourhood of Great Lever has numerous open spaces but its access to the nearby Bolton town centre is constrained. Farnworth's active town centre has recently attracted significant investment. Motorway and rail links offer good connections, and there are opportunities for jobs and development associated with the Royal Bolton Hospital. However, services and infrastructure will need to keep pace with change.

Southwest

The urban residential neighbourhoods of Rumworth, Deane and Daubhill extend along the mixed-use St. Helen's Road and Wigan Road. This route continues across open land along the M61 to the largely residential settlement of Over Hulton, which borders Hulton Park. To the east, Logistics North is a major employment site adjacent the motorway. Pressure to develop open land in this area must be balanced with the need to do so sustainably.

West

Westhoughton is an important settlement in the borough, with a strong town centre, and extensive employment sites located in the adjoining Wingates area. It is convenient to the motorway and is served by two train stations at Westhoughton and Daisy Hill. Pressure to develop open land in this area must be balanced with the need to do so sustainably. Local services and infrastructure will need to keep pace with change.

Northwest

Served by rail and motorway, Middlebrook is a major retail and leisure destination incorporating Bolton Wanderers Football Club stadium and Bolton Arena. Blackrod and Horwich are established neighbourhoods with important redevelopment opportunities such as the Horwich Loco Works. Horwich has an active town centre and Blackrod an active local centre. They also provide gateways to the West Pennine Moors and contain valued landscapes where balancing growth with protection will be important.

North

The urban residential neighbourhoods of Smithills, Doffcoker, Heaton, Markland Hill and Lostock extend along the mixed-use arteries of Chorley Old Road and Chorley New Road. These settled neighbourhoods enjoy good connections eastwards to the town centre and westwards across the borough and to Lancashire.



1. Bolton 2042

The Local Plan needs to be built on a shared vision of what Bolton should be like in 2042, and on clear objectives that set out how we will get there.

The Local Plan 'Issues & Options' consultation (August 2025) presented an ambition statement and six proposed objectives for the plan. This approach made health and wellbeing the 'golden thread' running through everything the plan must deliver. It was justified by a baseline assessment of current issues in the borough, and drew on the range of strategies that have been developed by the council to respond to the identified priorities.

Drawing on feedback received in the consultation, we have updated the ambition and objectives to be more comprehensive and clear. These are set out on the following pages and remain open to refinement as we continue to test choices through this consultation.

Our Ambition

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

Our goal is to improve health and well-being for people across the Borough. We aim to reduce inequalities by ensuring better access to jobs, homes, education and local services, as well as better access to clean air, restorative green spaces, and well-designed places. Together these measures can support lifelong well-being for Bolton's settled and new communities alike.



Our town and district centres will be thriving and attract investors, visitors, and people who live and work in the area and beyond.

Bolton town centre, which benefits from the transport interchange and the University of Greater Manchester, will mix homes, creative workspaces, retail, offices, education, culture and leisure. Other town centres and district centres will provide a similarly rich mix of uses at an appropriate 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 which extends from Bolton Town Centre to Wigan.

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 to Over Hulton, and from Kearsley to Blackrod, neighbourhoods will be linked by safe routes for walking, cycling, and wheeling, and by the network of buses and trains, helping people get to work and school, and to shops and leisure facilities.





Valuable ecological sites will be protected, restored and enhanced for wildlife and recreation, helping 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 rivers, and smaller green space in will give everyone access to fresh air and nature on the doorstep.

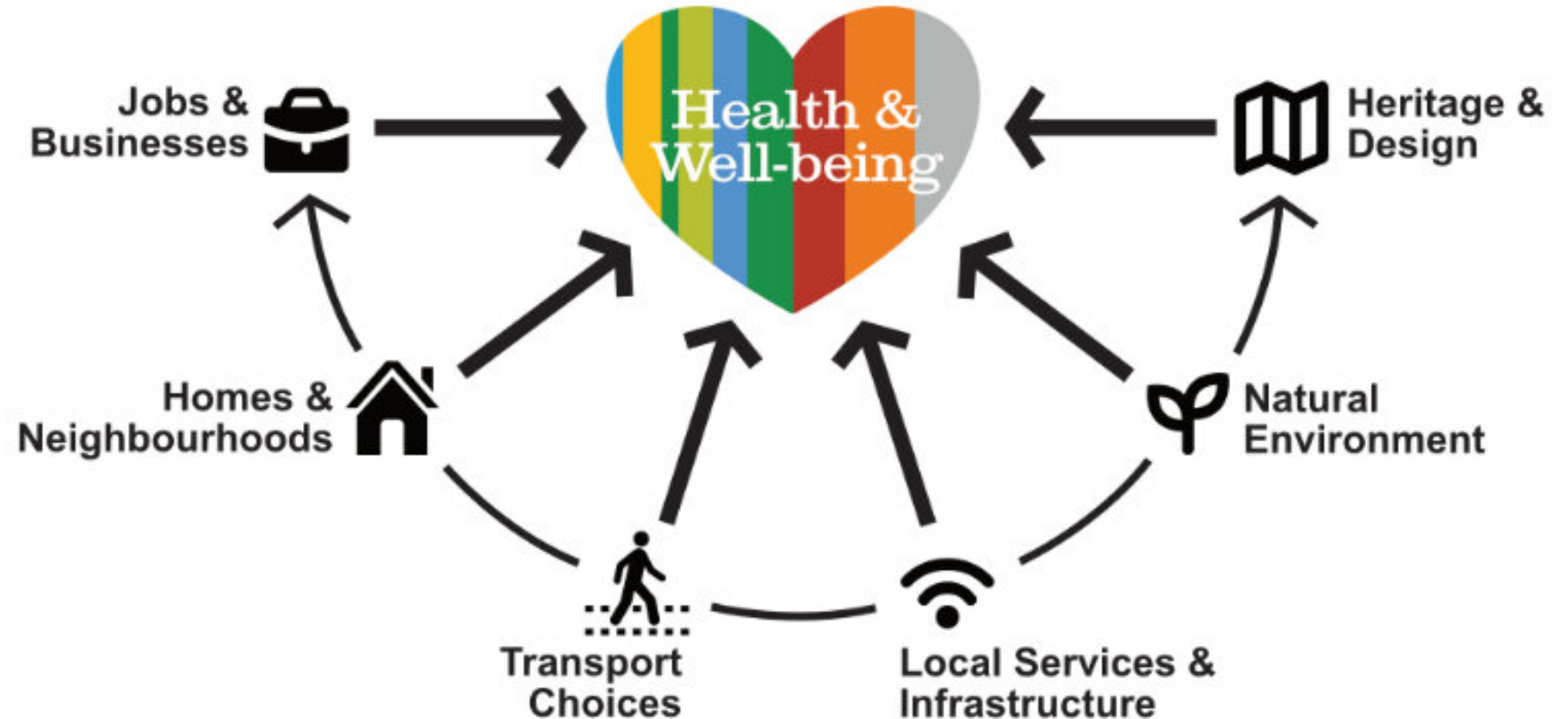
Bolton's rich heritage and cultural diversity will be protected, celebrated and enhanced across the borough.

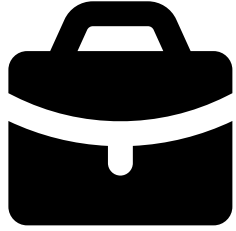
Its industrial legacy, historic architecture and unique cultural offer will be complemented with new well-designed buildings and public spaces to meet the ambitions of Bolton's communities in 2042.

Local Plan Objectives

We propose six objectives, which work together to deliver our overall goal of improved health and well-being.

The diagram illustrates the relationship between our goal of health and well-being, which lies at the heart of this plan, and the six plan objectives. The objectives are set out on the following pages and remain open to refinement in response to consultation and evidence.





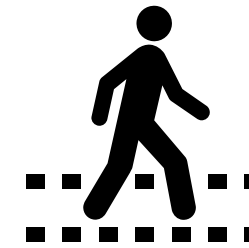
Jobs & Businesses

Grow and diversify the economy to improve the Borough's economic performance by creating more and better jobs, improving local people's access to training, raising aspirations, supporting vitality of Bolton Town Centre and other centres, reducing unemployment, and increasing household incomes and demand for local goods and services.



Homes & Neighbourhoods

Enable delivery of at least 13,379 new high-quality, energy-efficient homes that meet people's needs in terms both of cost and type, in sustainable locations, prioritising brownfield land, while making the best use of and improving the quality of the existing housing stock to create safe and inclusive neighbourhoods.



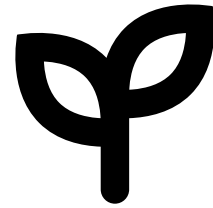
Transport Choices

Support inclusive and accessible travel, making walking, cycling, and wheeling the easy choice and improving public transport where possible to provide safe, reliable and low-carbon travel and an integrated transport offer that connects within, across and beyond the borough.



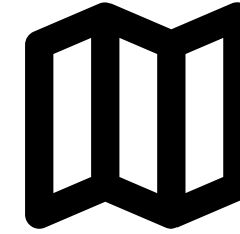
Local Services & Infrastructure

Enable the delivery of local services and infrastructure needed to support existing and new communities and keep pace with growth across the Borough: including local transport, health, education, youth, and cultural services alongside green, digital and low-carbon energy infrastructure.



Natural Environment

Conserve and enhance the Borough's landscapes, habitats and species, expand green and blue corridors, make effective use of land and resources, minimise carbon emissions, manage flood risk, and increase resilience to weather extremes.



Heritage & Design

Protect and enhance the Borough's historic environment, conserving heritage assets and their settings, and using high-quality design to sustain and strengthen local distinctiveness and sense of place.

Consultation Question 1

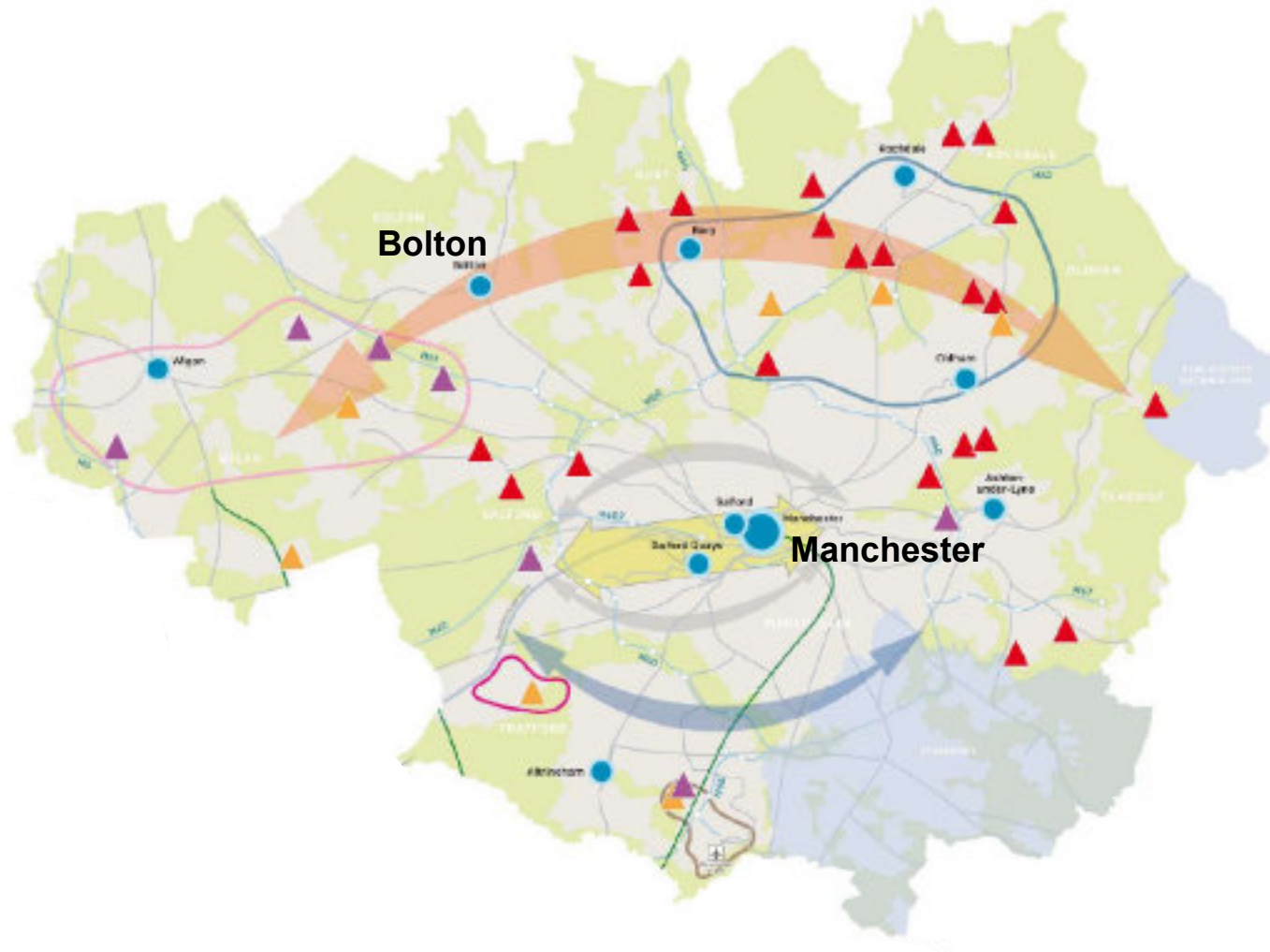
Do the Ambition Statement and these six Objectives reflect the right long-term aims for the borough?

2. Spatial Options

The 2024 'Places for Everyone' Joint Development Plan sets out a spatial strategy for the whole Greater Manchester city-region, shown in its key diagram opposite.

This strategy locates Bolton within a broad city-regional zone (orange arrow), where the priority is to 'boost northern competitiveness'.

This zone links Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale and Wigan, and focuses growth into two corridors, one in the north-east (blue bubble), and one in the west (pink bubble). The latter is designated as the 'Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor'.



Greater Manchester Spatial Strategy key diagram,
from the 2024 'Places for Everyone' Joint Development Plan

‘Places for Everyone’ specifically designates our borough as one pole of the ‘Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor’, a regionally significant zone of economic development (pink bubble) which provides for:

- Infrastructural investment in the M61 and public transport; and
- Site allocations for industrial and warehousing development (purple triangles).

This strategy is being implemented as the ‘NorthFold’ Growth Location, which extends to include Bolton Town Centre.



Introduction to the Spatial Options

With the strategic policy context in mind, we have examined five broad spatial options for how the required development could be distributed across Bolton. Each option creates a different pattern of development, with varying implications for housing, jobs, transport, the environment and infrastructure. Each has been assessed against the Local Plan objectives in Chapter 1. A high-level interim Sustainability Appraisal has also been prepared to test the likely social, environmental and economic effects.

The following pages describe each option in turn. The chapter ends with a comparison table and a summary of the implications for the Local Plan’s overall direction.

<i>Spatial Option</i>	<i>Growth Strategy</i>
A. Brownfield-only	Limited to previously developed land
B. Dispersed	Distributed evenly across the borough
C. Public Transport-led	Focused around train stations, bus corridors and town centres
D. M61 Corridor-led	Arrayed along the M61 motorway
E. Anchored	Clustered around key development sites

Option A

Brownfield-only

This option tests what would happen if all growth were directed only to previously developed land such as mills, vacant plots and redundant employment sites.



Good because: Maximises regeneration, protects countryside and greenfield locations, and puts existing places first.

Weak because: Even if every brownfield site were developed, Bolton would only deliver around 8,600 homes based on 'Places for Everyone' housing density policy. This would fall short of the required minimum housing target by around one third. Furthermore, many sites are small, fragmented and/or costly to redevelop. Delivery would therefore be slow and uncertain and rely heavily on subsidy.

Fit with objectives: Strong on the Environment objective, but weak on Homes, Jobs, Transport and Services because insufficient homes would be delivered to meet local need.

This option will not deliver the required housing numbers. The principle of 'brownfield first' will remain central to the Local Plan, as reflected in our objectives, but it must be balanced with other land to meet overall development needs.

Option B

Dispersed

This spreads growth thinly across all towns and villages, regardless of their size, role or transport connections.



Good because: Every community takes some growth, and no single part of the borough carries all the development.

Weak because: Dispersal dilutes investment everywhere, so new schools, health facilities and transport upgrades would be underfunded. It risks sprawl, traffic growth and loss of character in villages. Developers also face higher costs, making schemes less viable.

Fit with objectives: Weak across the board and fails to support any of the six Local Plan objectives strongly, and undermines transport, infrastructure and environmental goals.

This option is costly and fragmented, which will make delivery more challenging.

Option C

Public Transport-led

This focuses growth around train stations, town centres and bus corridors, supported by investment in walking, cycling and public transport.



Good because: Encourages regeneration, reduces car use, improves air quality and health, and allows more efficient infrastructure upgrades.

Weak because: Success depends on the quality of existing transport networks and/or securing major transport investment outside the Council's control. Some locations also have limited land supply or capacity in local services.

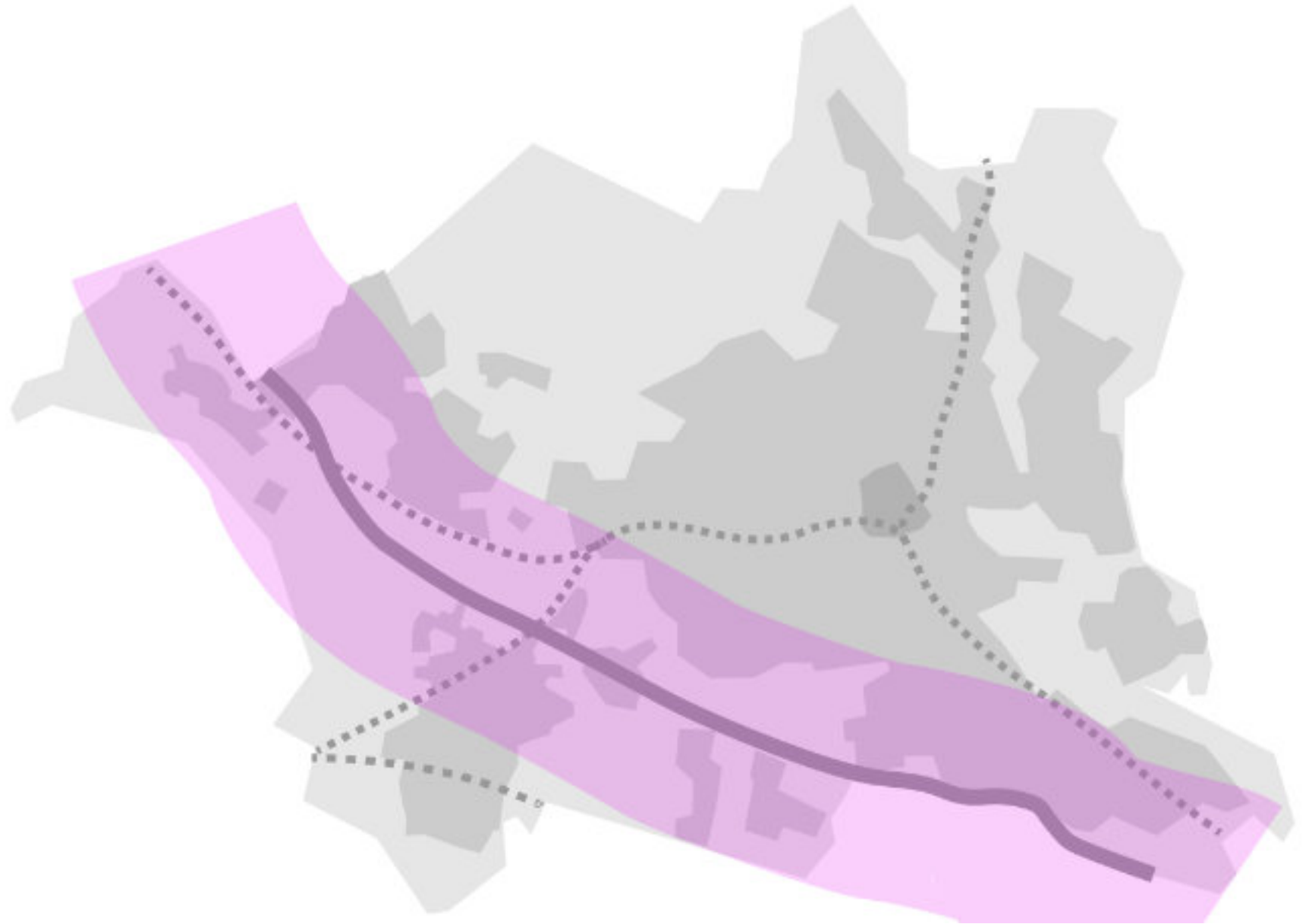
Fit with objectives: Very strong on Transport and Environment, but weaker on Homes, Jobs and Services due to deliverability risks.

This option is potentially feasible, but is dependent on public transport investment, and involves some Green Belt release in accessible places.

Option D

M61 Corridor-led

This focuses on large greenfield and Green Belt sites close to motorway junctions, with housing and logistics growth along the M61 corridor.



Good because: Sites are attractive to the market, deliverable quickly and can provide certainty on housing and jobs numbers.

Weak because: This option locks in car dependency, weakens town centres and causes major loss of greenfield and Green Belt land. It ignores the development potential and high transport access in Bolton's Town centres. It offers fewer benefits for deprived communities in the north and east of the borough. Highway upgrades may be needed which would add significant costs to developing these sites.

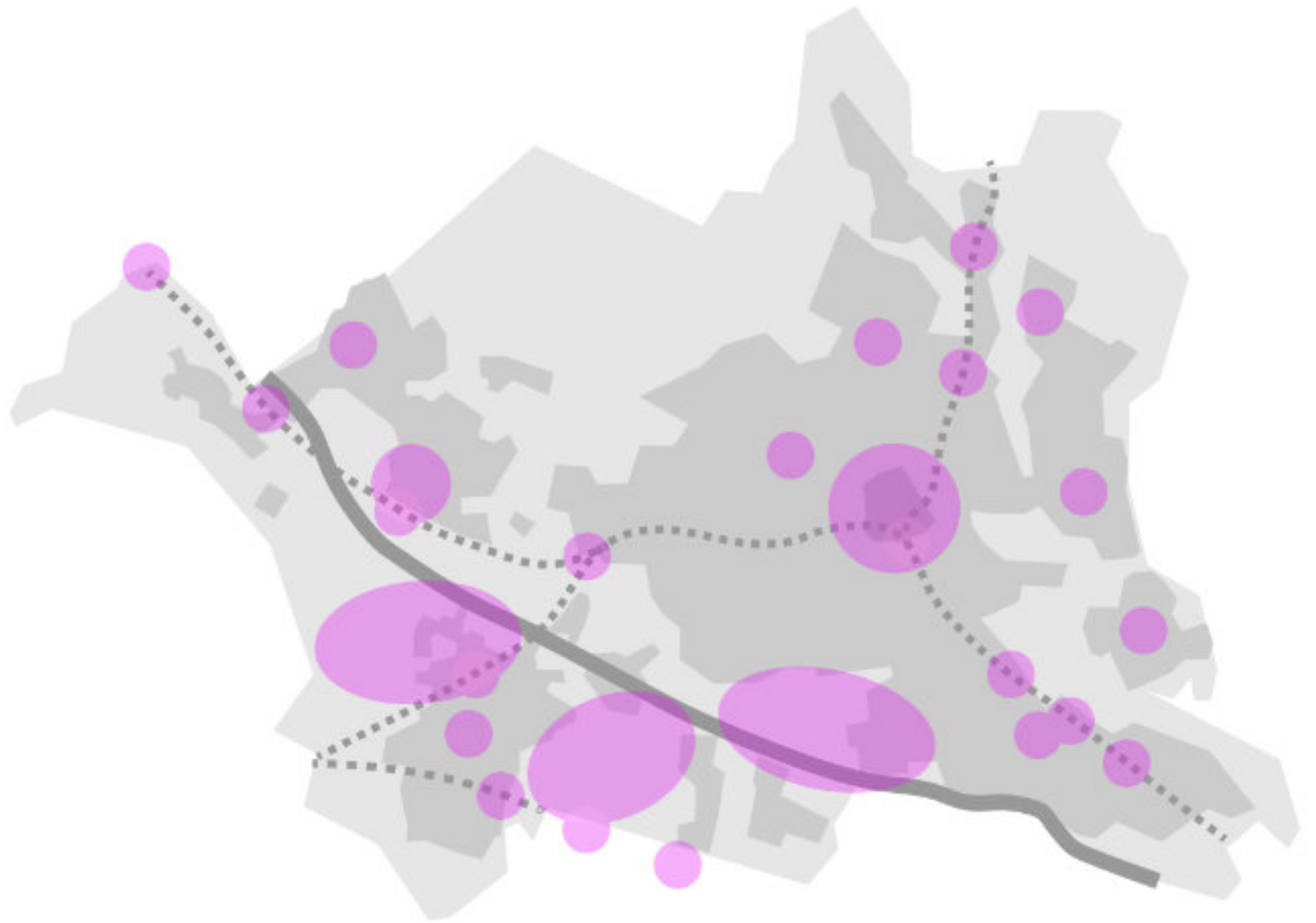
Fit with objectives: Strong on Homes and Jobs, but weak on Transport, Services and Environment.

This option is highly deliverable and meets targets in the short term, but creates long-term costs for climate, health and equality.

Option E

Anchored

This option anchors development in Bolton Town Centre, the Royal Bolton Hospital area in Farnworth, and the Wingates/M61 Corridor, with supporting roles for Middlebrook and Chequerbent, and smaller-scale growth in other town and district centres and near train stations.



Good because: Balances regeneration with market demand, strengthens town centres, supports jobs, and spreads risk across a mix of sites.

Weak because: Still requires some Green Belt release as well as careful planning of infrastructure and environmental mitigation.

Fit with objectives: Aligns well with all six Local Plan objectives — delivering jobs, homes, transport improvements, services and (with mitigation) environmental gains.

This option is feasible and balanced. While it is likely to involve some Green Belt release in accessible places, it avoids the weaknesses of the brownfield-only and dispersed approaches. It also manages transport related risks more effectively than the public transport-led and M61 corridor-led approaches.

<i>Spatial option:</i> <i>Option summary:</i>	A Brownfield-only	B Dispersed	C Public Transport- led	D M61 Corridor-led	E Anchored
Fit with Plan objectives:					
Jobs & Businesses	Weak	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Strong
Homes & Neighbourhoods	Weak	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Strong
Transport Choices	Weak	Weak	Strong	Weak	Moderate
Local Services & Infrastructure	Weak	Weak	Moderate	Weak	Strong
Natural Environment	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak	Moderate
Heritage & Design	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak	Moderate
Deliverability	Weak	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Strong
Sustainability	Weak	Weak	Moderate	Weak	Moderate
Conclusion	Principled, unrealistic	Fragmented, unsustainable	Feasible, contingent	Deliverable, unsustainable	Feasible, balanced

Options conclusion

At this stage we have not made a final decision on the spatial strategy. We are considering options. The final spatial strategy will be set out in the Local Plan we publish in Summer 2026.

The assessment already shows that a brownfield-only or dispersed pattern of growth would perform weakly across most objectives and would not be realistic to deliver. The Local Plan will therefore still prioritise brownfield land, while also considering sustainable greenfield sites and limited Green Belt release to meet overall needs.

The public transport-led and M61 corridor-led options perform better, but each has limits if taken alone. The public transport-led option depends on major transport investment, and the M61 corridor-led option risks car-dependent, unbalanced growth and greater environmental impact.

The anchored option performs more strongly across all objectives, offering a balance of stronger growth, infrastructure and environmental outcomes. It has potential to provide a strong foundation for the Local Plan strategy.

Consultation Question 2

Do you think Anchor-led growth is a realistic and appropriate option for Bolton?

What are the challenges and opportunities of delivering this approach?

<i>Local Areas of Change</i>	<i>Character of Change</i>
a. Central Bolton	Mixed-use urban regeneration
b. Renewal Areas	Neighbourhood housing regeneration
c. Health Innovation Bolton (HIB)	Health-led mixed-use development
d. Chequerbent & Hulton Park	Leisure-led mixed-use development
e. Wingates	Employment-led mixed-use development
f. Middlebrook	Mixed-use intensification

3. Local Areas of Change

In the Spatial Options set out in the previous chapter, and through consideration of the council’s corporate priorities and wider responsibilities, six locations consistently emerge as the most important Local Areas of Change.

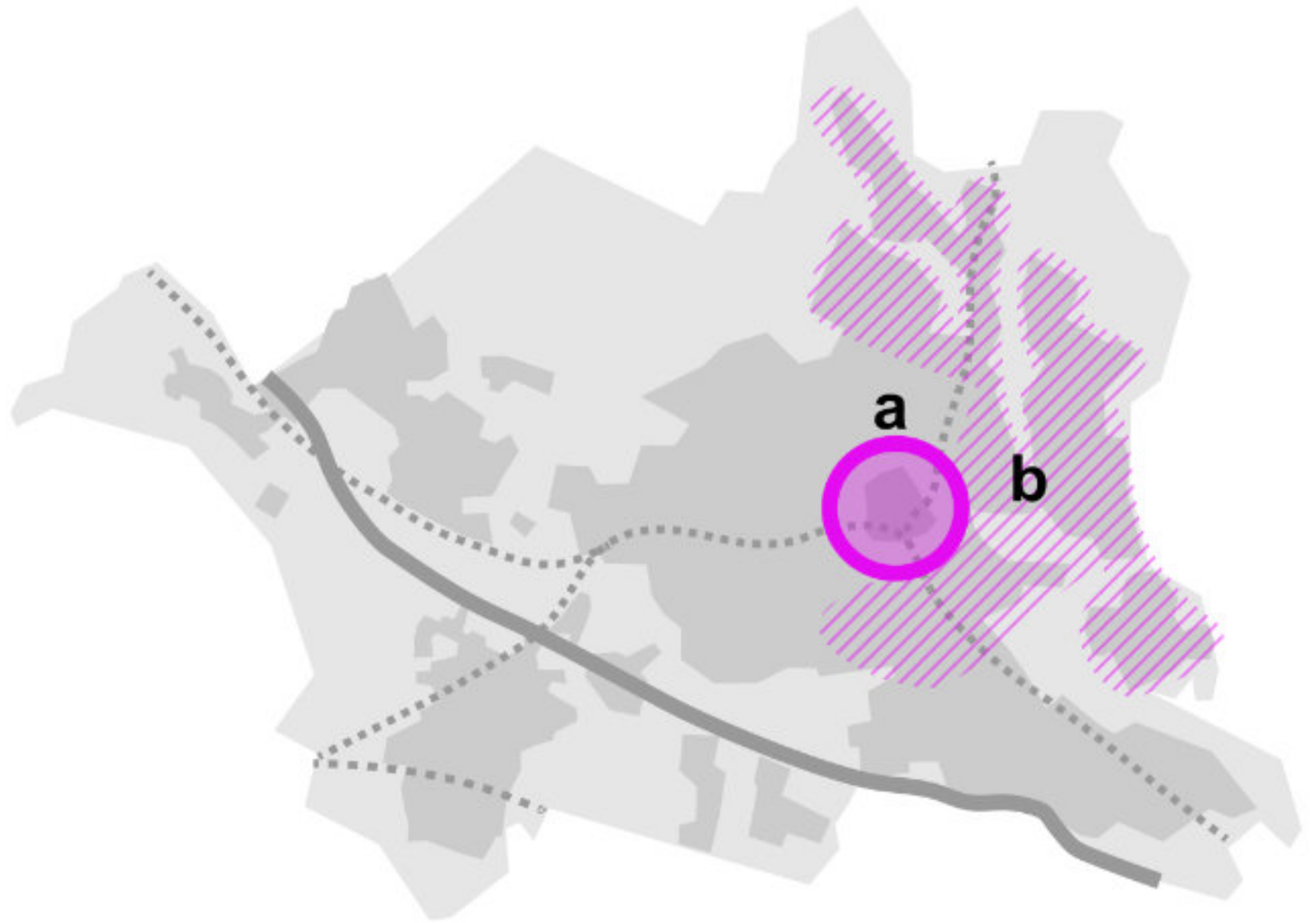
Listed in the accompanying table and set out on the following pages, these locations stand out because they:

- Unlock the greatest benefits for Bolton, by offering the largest clusters of development;
- Play a strategic role in the borough, for example due to their accessibility;
- Address a council priority, such as creating better jobs, meeting housing need and reducing homelessness.

The six Local Areas of Change have the potential to act as anchors, and each plays a different role.

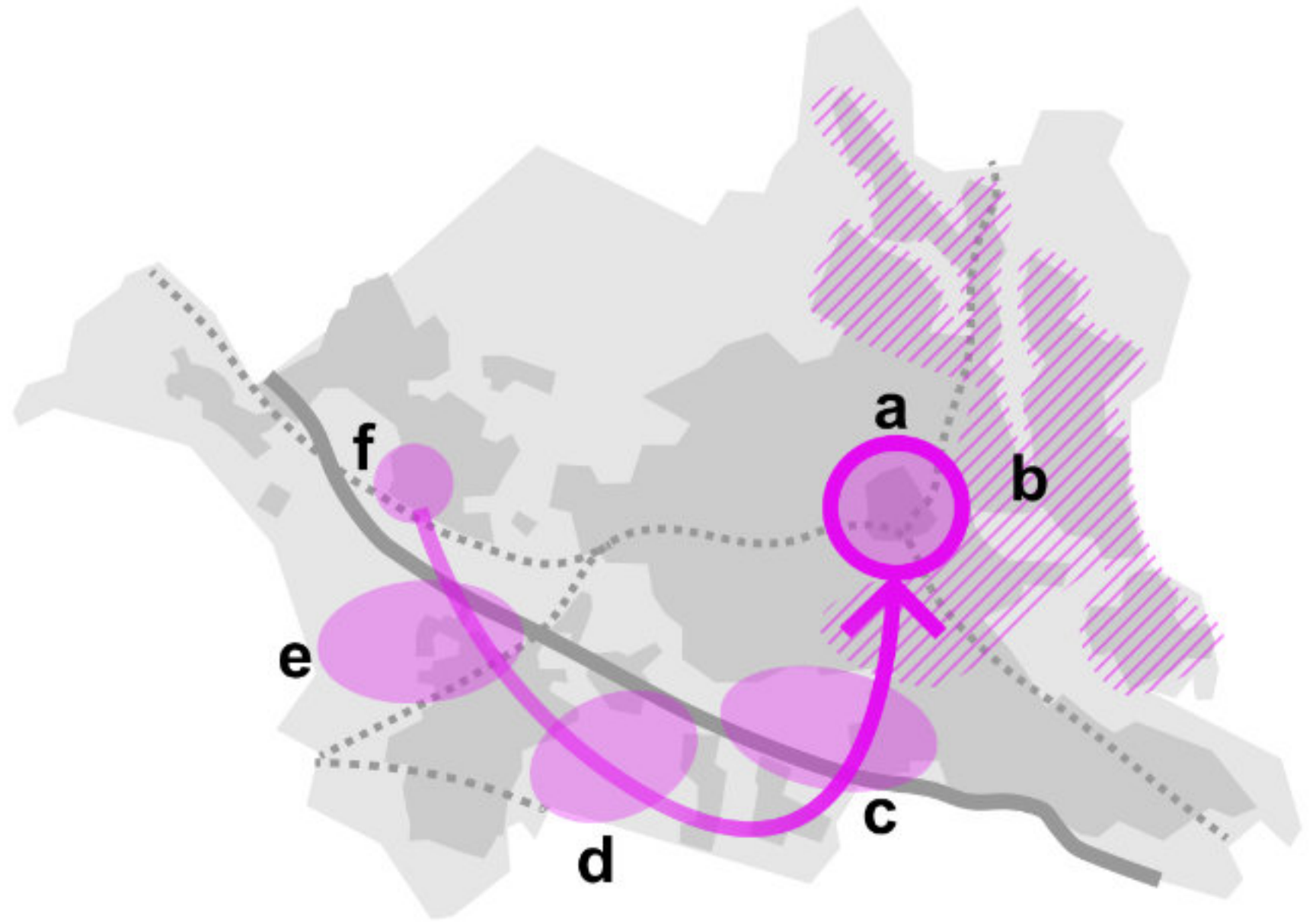
Firstly, **Central Bolton** (a) is the primary linchpin, bringing together the civic, cultural and economic activity to drive regeneration across the borough.

Secondly, to the east and south of Central Bolton are **Renewal Areas** (b) for targeted housing and neighbourhood investment.



Thirdly, to the south and west of Central Bolton, a series of potential **growth anchors** along the M61 corridor (c,d,e,f) highlights the importance of the Bolton-Wigan connection, reflecting its strategic role in the 'Places for Everyone' framework and extending links towards Manchester and Lancashire.

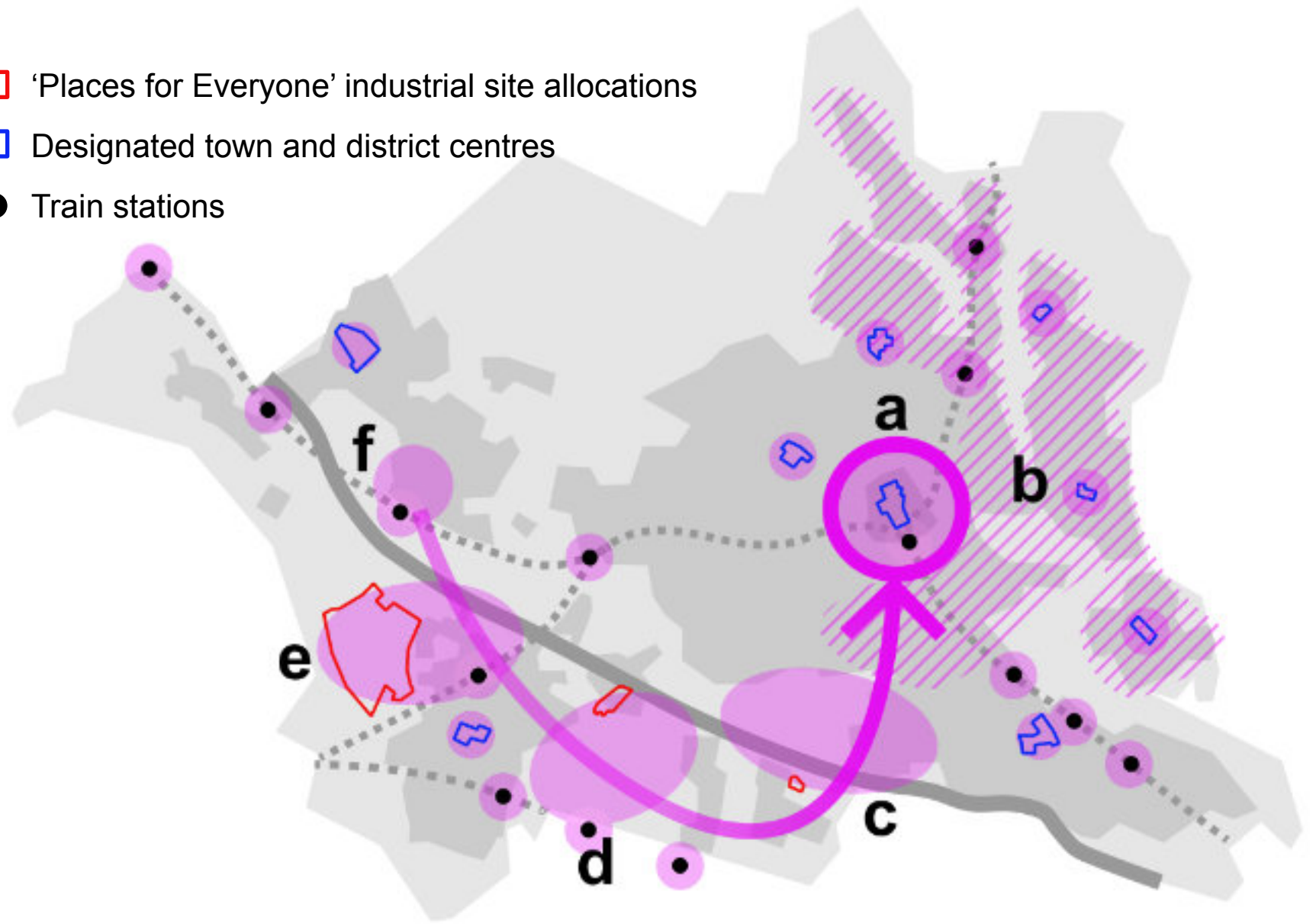
Together, these areas can form the basis of a bold and connected vision for Bolton, one that links people, places and prosperity across the borough and beyond.



These six Local Areas of Change (a-f) also complement the 2024 'Places for Everyone' site allocations for industrial and warehousing land (in red).

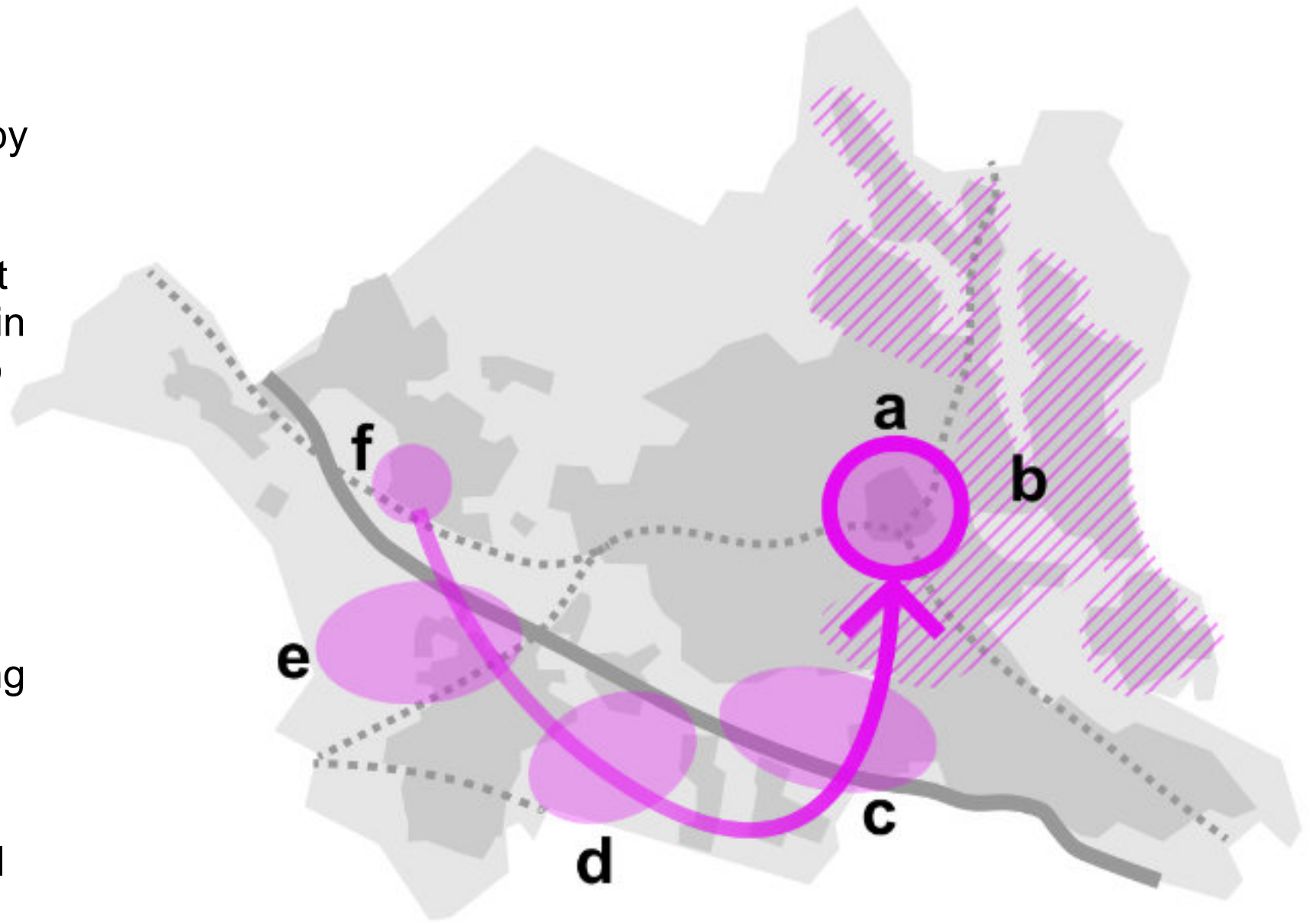
This does not mean zero development in other parts of the borough, as development in sustainable locations will be needed to meet housing targets and may be needed to meet employment targets. For example, growth will also be supported in designated town and district centres (in blue). There may also be opportunities for development near train stations (in black).

-  'Places for Everyone' industrial site allocations
-  Designated town and district centres
-  Train stations



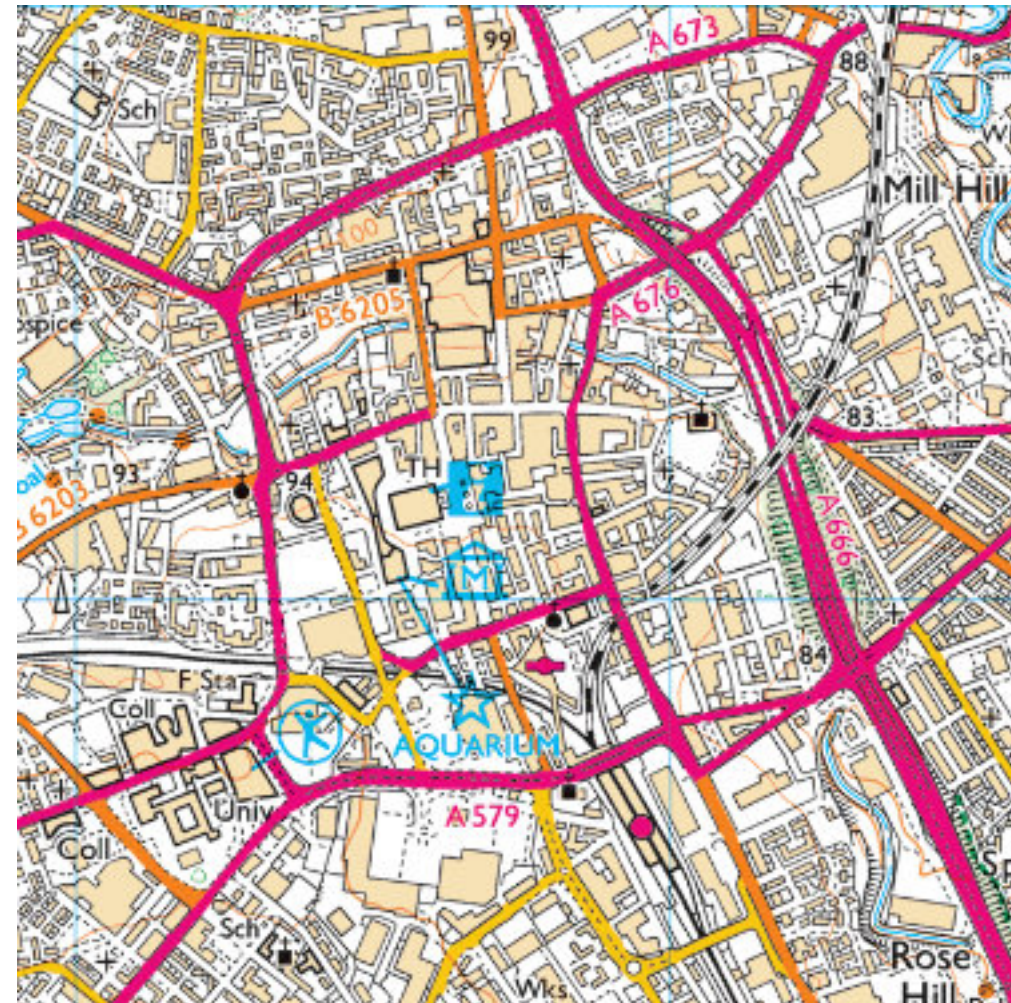
Each 'Local Area of Change' is presented in more detail on the following pages, illustrated by Ordnance Survey mapping showing their locations. Some of these locations, including parts of Health Innovation Bolton, Chequerbent & Hulton Park and Wingates, include land within the current Green Belt. These are presented to enable public and stakeholder engagement and inform the next stage of plan-making.

Early evidence indicates that meeting Bolton's housing and employment needs may require limited Green Belt release in the most sustainable locations. However, this is still being assessed in line with national planning policy, and no decisions have been made. Further testing, including a full and robust Green Belt assessment, will be undertaken to inform Local Plan decisions.



a. Central Bolton

Bolton Town Centre is the single most significant concentration of brownfield land in the borough. It is central to almost all growth options, whether as a regeneration anchor, a transport hub, or a location for higher-density housing and jobs.



© Crown Copyright and database right 2025 AC0000850551.
Note: Ordnance Survey mapping may not show all recent developments.

Key considerations include:

- Continuing the successful regeneration of the Town Centre and extending it to former industrial sites around its fringes;
- Conserving and enhancing heritage assets, and making the most of their renewal to support wider regeneration;
- Balancing residential, retail, office, commercial, cultural and educational uses to create a vibrant mixed-use core attracting residents and visitors alike;
- Ensuring the heights of new buildings across the area respect

the historic Town Hall clock tower as the town centre's primary urban landmark; and

- Supporting the University of Greater Manchester as a civic and economic anchor.

Central Bolton is therefore pivotal: it combines housing capacity with opportunities for jobs, culture, education and regeneration.

b. Renewal Areas

The residential neighbourhoods to the east and south of the Town Centre offer an important opportunity to support health and well-being and strengthen existing communities through neighbourhood renewal and targeted housing investment.



© Crown Copyright and database right 2025 AC0000850551.
Note: Ordnance Survey mapping may not show all recent developments.

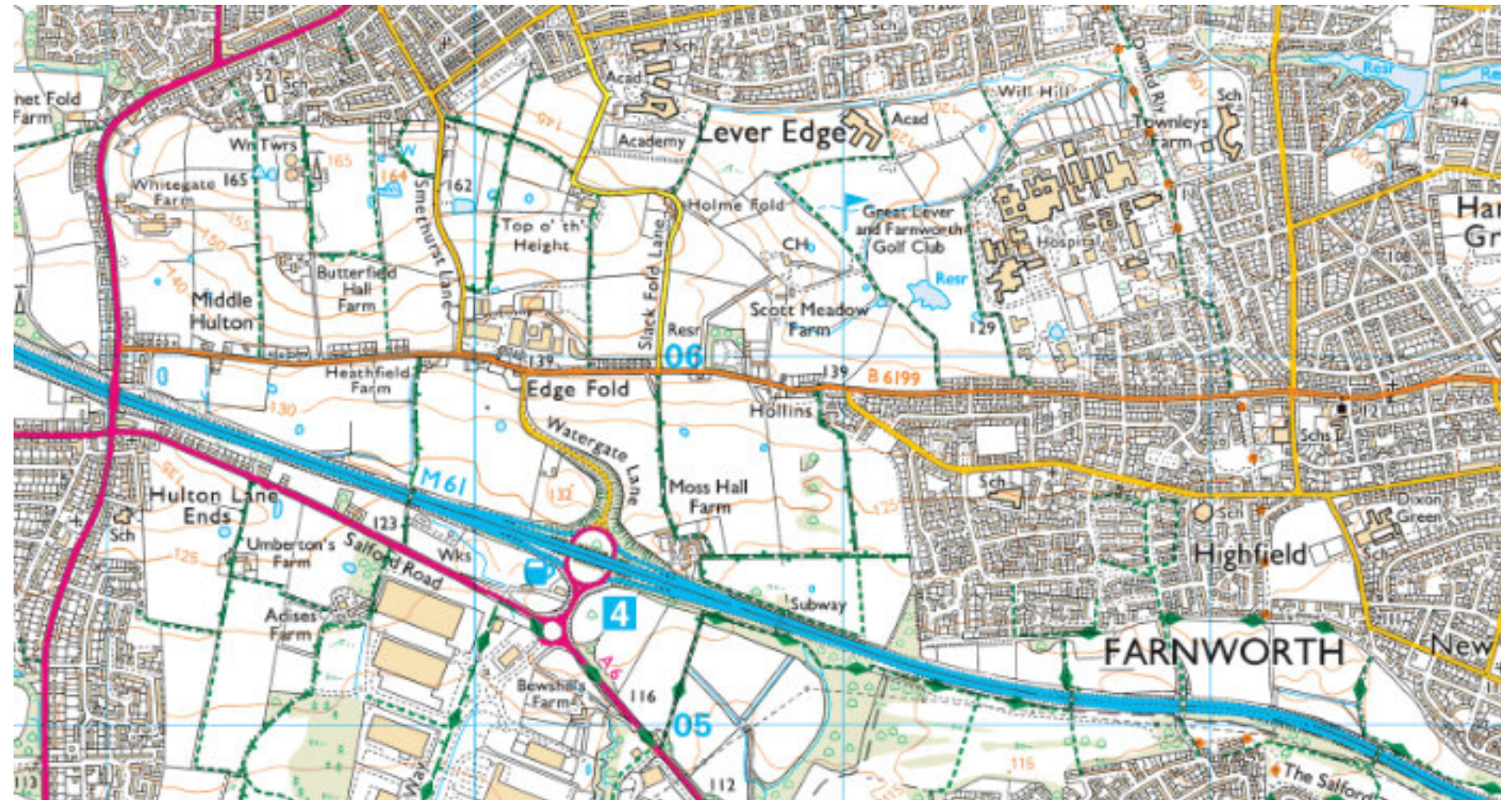
Key considerations include:

- Enabling an appropriate level of housing growth and renewal in neighbourhoods where investment can drive regeneration;
- Enhancing open space around Longsight Park to protect local character and provide community benefit;
- Supporting the long-term remediation and reuse of employment land in the area, where appropriate and practical; and
- Improving the quality and continuity of walking and cycling routes into the town centre.

These Renewal Areas offer potential for coordinated housing investment, open space enhancement and stronger connections to the town centre.

c. Health Innovation Bolton

The Royal Bolton Hospital and University of Greater Manchester form a distinctive cluster of health and innovation assets. This location has potential to become a wider Health Innovation District, creating employment use centered on healthcare, research, training along with a new residential neighbourhood. It can also contribute addressing health inequalities and regeneration in Farnworth town centre and its surrounding neighbourhoods.



© Crown Copyright and database right 2025 AC0000850551.
Note: Ordnance Survey mapping may not show all recent developments.

Key considerations include:

- Opportunities for improved or expanded health and research facilities and strengthening links between healthcare providers and research institutions;
- Creating pathways for skills and training linked to health innovation, including opportunities created by University of Greater Manchester;
- Improving public transport and active travel connections and highways infrastructure between the hospital, Farnworth and Central Bolton;
- Guiding the delivery of a new high-quality residential neighbourhood of homes designed around healthy and active lifestyles, extending to adjacent land at Anchor Lane;
- Enabling delivery of a broad mix of tenures to meet local housing needs, including for key worker, older people and those requiring supported living; and
- Providing new natural and green spaces and leisure and community facilities, including new school provision and local shops.

This area could act as a regional growth hub for jobs and skills, but will require careful planning to integrate new development with existing communities.

d. Chequerbent & Hulton Park

The 'Places for Everyone' Joint Development Plan allocates Chequerbent North for around 25,000 sqm of industrial and warehousing floorspace.

Chequerbent South has potential as a sustainable urban neighbourhood extending Westhoughton. The adjacent Hulton Park, currently the subject of bid to host the Ryder Cup, also has potential to become a major leisure anchor for the borough, conserving and enhancing its heritage and landscape assets.



© Crown Copyright and database right 2025 AC0000850551.
Note: Ordnance Survey mapping may not show all recent developments.

Key considerations include:

- Managing proposals for Chequerbent South to form an appropriate housing mix and density, and delivering community facilities, retail facilities, services and open space;
 - Tackling infrastructure challenges, including limited public transport services, Chequerbent Roundabout, poor active travel routes to Daisy Hill station, and over-reliance on private cars; and
 - Protecting and enhancing habitats, watercourses, air quality, and green infrastructure
- Integrating the delivery of a golf course and new residential development to enable improvements to the historic Hulton Park and support a bid to host the Ryder Cup.

The Chequerbent & Hulton Park area has strong market appeal; infrastructure and environmental challenges that must be addressed to ensure development is sustainable.

e. Wingates

Wingates is already a strong commercial location, strategically positioned near Junction 6 of the M61. It contains a significant cluster of industrial and business parks and has attracted major investment interest. The 'Places for Everyone' Joint Development Plan has already allocated land to the west of the existing Wingates Industrial Estate for 440,000 sqm of industrial and warehousing floorspace.



© Crown Copyright and database right 2025 AC0000850551.
Note: Ordnance Survey mapping may not show all recent developments.

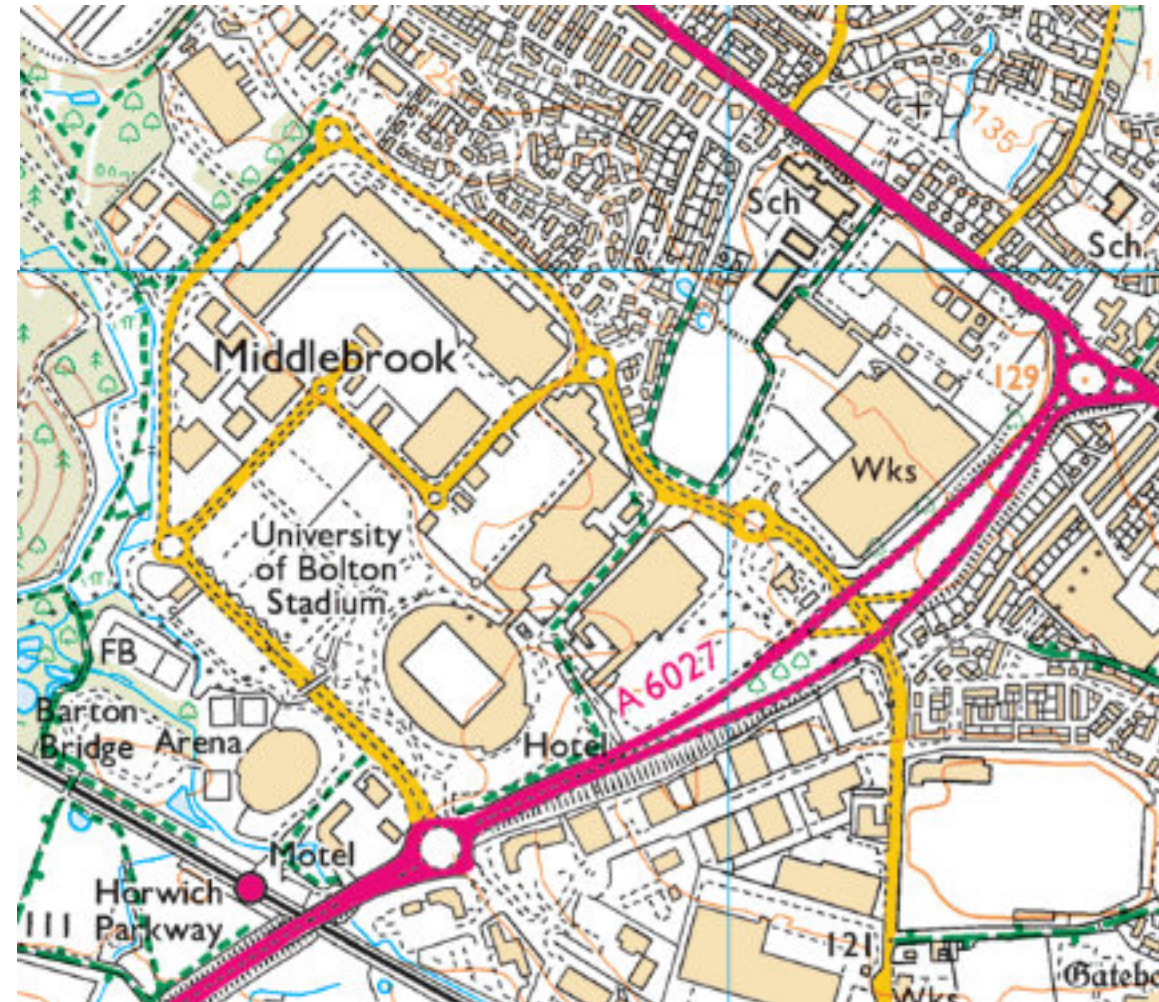
Key considerations include:

- Integrating the West of Wingates employment allocation JPA6 (around 440,000 sqm of industrial and warehousing floorspace in 'Places for Everyone') with Local Plan priorities for design, skills and climate resilience;
- Enabling new housing outside of employment allocations, including potentially at Ditcher's Farm, while providing community facilities and open space;
- Expanding services such as health, retail and leisure to meet the needs of a growing community;
- Addressing the impacts of heavy goods vehicular traffic on local roads and residential amenity;
- Tackling infrastructure challenges, including limited public transport and poor pedestrian and cycling connections to Westhoughton station and town centre; and
- Protecting and enhancing habitats and green infrastructure.

Wingates has strong market appeal but also significant infrastructure and environmental challenges that must be addressed if further growth is to be sustainable.

f. Middlebrook

Middlebrook is a significant retail and leisure hub. It has regional reach and already attracts large numbers of visitors, jobs and investment. There is an opportunity to explore the future role of this location its scope for intensification and diversification, to create a healthy place with the right environment and a sustainable mix of uses.



© Crown Copyright and database right 2025 AC0000850551.
Note: Ordnance Survey mapping may not show all recent developments.

Key considerations include:

- Exploring opportunities to add more housing and employment uses alongside recognition of its important retail and leisure role in Bolton and beyond;
- Managing the provision and reprovision of parking spaces and the associated impacts on the local and strategic road network – recognising the existing highway network issues that will need to be addressed;
- Improving public transport and walking and cycling environment to better connect Middlebrook with nearby neighbourhoods and

rail services;

- Managing any further development at Middlebrook including its scale, range of uses and character to ensure it has no significant negative impact on Bolton town centre, or any other centre; and
- Exploring opportunities to extend the area's focus on sports and leisure to shape a lifestyle offer around health, activity and participation that can enhance Middlebrook's placemaking identity.

Middlebrook can become a balanced, healthy and sustainable place in its own right, with a high-quality street-based setting accommodating the right mix of uses and the transport infrastructure necessary to sustain it.

<i>Local Areas of Change</i>	<i>Scale / Scope of Development</i>
a. Central Bolton	1,000+ homes Town centre uses
b. Renewal Areas	Smaller-scale infill housing
c. Health Innovation Bolton (HIB)	2,000+ homes Health innovation/employment uses
d. Chequerbent & Hulton Park	1,000 - 2,000 homes Commercial/community uses
e. Wingates	1,000+ homes Employment uses
f. Middlebrook	Mixed-use intensification

Local Areas of Change summary

These potential growth areas, if pursued in the Local Plan, would have major impacts on the future of Bolton's places and communities, as set out in the accompanying table. These locations can provide a focus for development, but will not on their own be sufficient to meet the housing and employment needs of the borough in full. Therefore development will also be planned in other sustainable locations, with a focus on town and district centres and near train stations.

Consultation Question 3

What is needed to make sure development in these locations is of high quality and sustainable?



4. Policy Areas under consideration

The Local Plan will also include policies to shape development. These policies must align with national planning policy, and will complement existing policies in ‘Places for Everyone’.

A new set of National Development Management policies is expected to be published soon by the Government. We will need to review and consider its impact on our local planning policies. For this reason we are not presenting a full suite of policies here, but focussing on policy areas that reflect key local concerns.

From our review of responses to the 'Issues & Options' consultation (see Appendix), as well as from our wider conversations and previous public engagements, we know the following planning policy issues are particularly important to local residents and stakeholders:

- a. Affordable Housing;**
- b. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs);**
- c. Density of Development;**
- d. Open Space Standards;**
- e. Transport and Parking; and**
- f. Planning Obligations & Infrastructure Delivery.**

On the following pages, we set out thinking on how to approach these policy areas in the Local Plan. You can share your reflections on these to help us develop these policies in detail for the next stage of the Local Plan.

a. Affordable Housing

Purpose

To ensure new development provides more homes people can genuinely afford to rent or buy and to ensure housing needs are met in particular for older people.

Current position

Core Strategy Policy SC1 (2011) sets Bolton's requirement for housing development of 15 homes or more to provide affordable housing. Brownfield sites must provide 15 % of the homes as affordable, whereas greenfield sites must provide 35%. National Planning Policy now also requires 'grey belt' sites within the Green Belt to provide a further 15% of the homes as affordable.

Evidence in preparation

Work on a new Local Housing Need Assessment and

Viability Assessment is underway to help identify the type of affordable housing (and other housing types such as for older people needed) in the context of higher build costs compared to previous years.

Policy direction

The new policy will continue to require affordable housing but is likely to focus provision on social-rented homes, reflecting the greatest local need. We also need to explore ways to increase delivery while also recognising that build costs and other factors affecting viability need to be taken into account

Why this approach?

Finding somewhere to live that's genuinely affordable is one of Bolton's biggest challenges. Private rents have gone up and demand for affordable and social housing has never been higher, with an average of 360 bids for

council properties. Delivering more social-rented homes depends on a steady pipeline of new development, so the policy aims to balance ambition with deliverability.

Some of the questions we are considering:

1. Should the Council focus primarily on social rent, or should a small proportion of other affordable tenures remain acceptable?
2. Should we reduce from 15 to 10 homes for provision of affordable homes?
3. Is the greenfield (35% requirement) and brownfield (15% requirement) split for affordable housing levels right? Should different zones be considered.
4. In what circumstances, if any, should off-site provision or financial contributions be accepted instead of on-site homes?

5. How can planning policy best support housing associations and developers to deliver more social-rented homes?

Consultation Question 4a

We want to know your thoughts on Affordable Housing. Not sure what to say? You can tell us what it's like trying to rent or buy a home in Bolton (for example, if prices or rents feel too high, or if you think building more homes could help people find somewhere affordable).

b. Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

Purpose

To maintain balanced neighbourhoods and good living standards.

Current position

There is currently no specific HMO policy in the Core Strategy. Decisions rely on general design and amenity policies, and a clearer framework is now needed to guide future applications.

Evidence in preparation

The Council is reviewing local licensing and housing data to confirm thresholds and spatial data on existing HMOs.

Policy direction

We want to better manage the location and quality of HMOs to maintain balanced communities and protect amenity. We are exploring how to tackle over concentration of HMOs in some parts of the borough and how to ensure HMOs accommodation, where it is allowed is of a good quality and does not lead to adverse amenity or environmental impacts.

Why this approach?

Shared houses can be valuable in providing lower-cost homes, but if too many cluster in one area, they can create problems including parking, waste and noise pollution. The policy aims to keep choice while protecting neighbourhood quality.

These are some of the questions we are considering:

1. How can we manage and, where appropriate, avoid concentration? For example, we could limit HMOs where more than 10% of properties within the immediate areas are HMOs, or limit the number of HMOs directly adjacent to one another.
2. What standards should HMOs have to meet for good layout, daylight and ventilation?
3. In locations where HMOs are acceptable, what additional management requirements be included to protect residential amenity?
4. How could monitoring or enforcement be strengthened to ensure HMOs remain well-managed?

Consultation Question 4b

We want to know your thoughts on Housing in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Not sure what to say? You can tell us how shared houses affect your area (for example, if parking or rubbish is an issue in your areas, or if you think HMOs help people find more affordable rooms).

c. Density of Development

Purpose

To use land efficiently while keeping the character and quality of Bolton’s neighbourhoods.

Current position

‘Places for Everyone’ Policy JP-H4 ‘Density of New Housing’ sets out minimum residential densities for development in and around designated centres, public transport and other locations. Bolton’s Core Strategy has no specific density policy; decisions are based on ‘Places for Everyone’, general design policies (such as CG3) and national guidance on efficient use of land.

Evidence in preparation

We are reviewing sites submitted as potential development sites and the appropriate densities.

<i>Min. net residential density (dwellings per hectare)</i>	<i>within location</i>	<i>within 400m</i>	<i>within 800m</i>
Designated town centres	120	70	50
Other designated centres	70	50	35
Bolton station	—	120	70
Other train stations	—	70	50
Locations with GMAL 6, or equivalent*	50	35	35
All other locations	35	—	—
<i>*Greater Manchester Accessibility Level, calculated by TfGM</i>			

Policy direction

Development should use land efficiently, reflecting accessibility, character and infrastructure capacity. Density expectations will continue to use Places for Everyone matrix as its starting point. This will be used and, where appropriate, additional policy provided for Bolton's centres, corridors and suburban areas.

Why this approach?

Bolton's neighbourhoods range from compact town-centres to suburban estates and rural villages. Clear guidance on density helps focus new homes where transport and services can support them, making best use of land.

What do you think?

1. 'Places for Everyone' sets out indicative minimum densities for development (see table opposite). Should

higher densities be encouraged near public-transport hubs, even if this changes existing built form?

2. Are there specific instances or locations where lower densities are justified where character or other factors limits capacity?

Consultation Question 4c

We want to know your thoughts on development density. Not sure what to say? You can tell us how you feel about the size and spacing of new housing (for example, if new estates feel crowded, or if some areas could fit more homes without losing character).

d. Open Space Standards

Purpose

To secure high-quality, accessible and well-maintained open space for all communities.

Current position

Places for Everyone addresses open space at a strategic level including JP-G2 Green Infrastructure Network, JP-G3 River Valleys, JP-G5 Uplands, JP-G6 Urban Green Space and JP-G7 Trees and Woodland. Core Strategy Policies CG1 and CG3 protect and enhance open space but do not set quantitative standards.

Evidence in preparation

The 2010 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study and 2016 Planning Contributions SPD have guided decisions effectively but are now being reviewed to reflect new

priorities for health, biodiversity and climate resilience. We also recently consulted on a Green Infrastructure Strategy which will inform our plan approach.

Policy direction

The Local Plan will establish clear, deliverable open-space standards for provision, improvement and long-term maintenance.

Why this approach

Good parks, play areas, green corridors and other space are essential for health and community life. Clear standards will ensure every new development plays its part in creating and maintaining quality spaces.

What do you think?

1. We want to set clear standards for open space including parks, play areas, natural greenspace, allotments and civic spaces. Should open-space standards vary by density and location, or be applied consistently borough-wide?
2. What policy is needed to make sure new open spaces are well designed – are there specific measures needed for sustainable drainage etc ?
3. How can developer contributions best support long-term management and maintenance of existing spaces?

Consultation Question 4d

We want to know your thoughts on open space standards. Not sure what to say? You can share what you think about parks and green spaces (for example, if there is enough space for children to play, places to walk dogs or well-kept seating areas).

e. Transport and Parking Standards

Purpose

To match parking and travel expectations to accessibility, and promote active, low-carbon movement.

Current position

The Core Strategy and 2013 Accessibility SPD set transport principles and parking standards. National and regional policy on public transport, active travel, electric vehicle charging and parking for disabled people has since advanced.

Evidence in preparation

The Council is preparing new accessibility mapping and a Transport and Movement Study to identify sustainable-travel corridors, define parking zones and test the practicality of Electric Vehicle and cycle-parking

<i>Typical location</i>	<i>Indicative approach for housing</i>	<i>What does this look like?</i>
Town Centre	Lower parking provision	Car-free or low-car schemes encouraged, with disabled and servicing access maintained.
Urban Accessible	Moderate parking provision	Shared, communal or unallocated parking may be suitable where there are good public transport and walking or cycling options.
Edge / Suburban	Standard parking provision	Reflects moderate accessibility and some car reliance.
Rural / Village	Higher parking provision	Recognises limited public transport and greater reliance on private vehicles.

requirements. A Bolton Transport Strategy has been prepared, and technical work is ongoing about parking and establishing a walking and cycling network

Policy direction

Local Plan policies can be important tools to enable active travel, public transport use and the transition to electric vehicles. Key to this is parking standards. We think there is potential to identify accessibility zones and clear parking ranges within these. It will support car-free or low-car development in the town centre and other locations with good public transport accessibility, by applying maximum standards in accessible areas and requiring layouts that enable Electric Vehicle charging.

What do you think?

1. Should we adopt a zoned approach, as set out below, to parking provision in different locations across the

borough? Why or why not?

2. How can EV-charging and cycle-parking standards be applied most effectively, especially on small and mixed-use sites?
3. Should the policy promote shared or pooled parking where land is constrained?

Consultation Question 4e

We want to know your thoughts on transport and parking standards? Not sure what to say? You can tell us what it's like getting around Bolton (for example, if there's enough parking, if buses are reliable or if cycling feels safe).

f. Making Growth Deliverable and Sustainable

Whichever approach is chosen, delivery will rely on land being available, developers being willing to invest and early funding for transport, schools, health and utilities. It will also depend on strong partnerships between the Council, communities, developers, infrastructure providers and other partners.

Developer contributions secured through Section 106 agreements will remain an important way of funding the transport, services and spaces needed to support growth. These contributions need to be realistic so that development remains viable.

<i>Indicative approach to contributions</i>	
All development	Site-specific mitigation such as access, public-realm or environmental improvements.
Housing	Contributions to affordable housing, open space, transport and local infrastructure where necessary, such as schools and health facilities.
Employment or commercial	Support for local skills, transport and active travel.
Strategic sites / areas with multiple sites	Area-wide funding for transport or other improvements to deal with localised cumulative impact.

Funding from a range of public and private sector sources will also be needed to unlock the infrastructure the borough needs. The Council is also exploring a Community Infrastructure Levy, known as CIL. This is a fixed charge on new development which operates alongside section 106 and helps fund infrastructure. If taken forward, it would require a separate process and formal consultation.

We are also preparing an Infrastructure Delivery Plan which will set out the transport, schools, health services, utilities, green spaces and community facilities needed to support growth, together with likely costs, responsibilities and funding routes. It also recognises that delivery of some infrastructure sits outside the Council's control and that needs for services, and how they are delivered, may change over time. This will help developers and infrastructure providers to plan ahead and give residents a clearer understanding of what is proposed.

Consultation Question 4f

What do you think are the main factors that would help ensure new development is supported by the right infrastructure at the right time? Not sure what to say? You can tell us what matters to you when new development is proposed.

Next Steps

Your responses to this consultation will help refine the vision, objectives, spatial strategy and inform key policy areas.

Over the coming months we will continue to gather and collate evidence, including a Green Belt assessment, transport modelling, viability testing and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and a range of other economic and environmental assessments.

The next stage will be the Publication Local Plan in Summer 2026. At that point we will set out the final spatial strategy and detailed policies, including site allocations. A site allocation is a specific piece of land identified in the plan for a particular use, such as new homes, jobs, open space or community facilities. We will also publish the full evidence base, including a full Sustainability Appraisal report.

Responding to the Consultation Questions

We welcome your response to any and all of the consultation questions set out in this document. Please visit our webpage for the Local Plan consultation:

<https://www.bolton.gov.uk/directory/13/consultations/category/195>

Here you can find a **consultation response form**, which you can fill in and return to us by email by 22nd January 2026.

Here you can also find out information on the **public consultation events** we are running across the borough in December 2025 and January 2026, where you can drop in and talk to a planner about this document and provide your response in person.



Appendix: Engagement & Consultation

Introduction

Between 21 August and 2 October 2025, Bolton Council carried out the Regulation 18 Part 1 'Issues and Options' consultation for the new Local Plan. A total of 103 responses were received, through a combination of surveys and detailed submissions from residents, developers, landowners, statutory consultees, infrastructure providers and civic organisations.

That first consultation marked the start of a two-stage Regulation 18 process to shape Bolton's Local Plan to 2042. It sought views on the borough's ambition and objectives, options for distributing growth, and the types of planning policies needed to support sustainable development. The purpose was to gather views early, before any decisions are made on preferred options or site allocations.

The responses have directly informed the preparation of this 'Direction of Travel' document (the Regulation 18 Part 2 consultation). It re-shares the updated ambition and objectives for further comment before the Council begins to finalise the Local Plan, ensuring everyone has another opportunity to help shape the strategy and emerging policy directions.

Engagement was mainly conducted through the Council's online consultation platform, supported by social media, local press coverage and direct contact with statutory consultees and community networks.

Who took part

Around 70% of responses came from residents and community groups, and 30% from developers, landowners, planning agents, infrastructure providers, civic and representative organisations. Resident participation was strongest in the north of the borough, particularly Bradshaw, Harwood and Bromley Cross, with further contributions from Farnworth, Westhoughton and Horwich. Most resident respondents were aged 35–64 and homeowners, with a smaller number renting privately or through housing associations. Developers and land interests included regional and national housebuilders, land promoters and planning consultants, providing views on housing numbers, land supply, and deliverability. Infrastructure respondents represented utilities, health, transport and recreation providers, focusing on capacity, service integration and funding.

Overview of findings

Across all responses there was broad agreement on the ‘ambition’ of the Local Plan, but strong views on how its priorities should be delivered.

Residents largely supported a brownfield-first approach, asking for clear limits on any greenfield or Green Belt release. Many linked protection of open land with health, climate and local identity.

Developers and land interests also supported prioritising brownfield sites, but stressed that some sustainable greenfield land may also be required to meet overall housing and employment needs and maintain deliverability. Developers also wanted housing numbers recalculated using the Government’s standard method, extending beyond the ‘Places for Everyone’ plan period to provide a longer-term supply.

There was broad support from both groups for a more balanced pattern of growth, with regeneration and investment reaching the north and east as well as the M61 corridor. Residents framed this as fairness and renewal; developers saw it as flexibility to deliver across a range of sustainable sites.

Town-centre renewal was a shared priority. Residents focused on improving appearance, safety and shops, while developers and businesses emphasised flexibility for mixed-use regeneration and investment confidence.

All groups supported a diverse housing mix. Residents prioritised affordability and family housing; developers identified the need for housing to attract higher income residents, and sought flexibility in housing type and tenure in response to market conditions; and health and community organisations emphasised accessible homes for older and disabled people.

Almost all resident respondents (over 80%) highlighted the need for early and coordinated infrastructure delivery such as schools, health services, transport to ensure new development benefits new and existing communities and does not overload infrastructure. Developers and service providers echoed this, focusing on certainty and forward funding.

Developers also raised concerns about viability, asking that emerging expectations on affordable housing, design, open space and sustainability be tested carefully to ensure they remain achievable in different market areas.

Overall, respondents wanted growth managed carefully, supported by infrastructure, and underpinned by deliverability and recognition of development viability issues.

Overleaf is a summary of the main issues raised. The percentages relate to the survey results of 92 respondents, which was predominantly completed by residents and community groups (around two-thirds of all respondents).

Summary of Main Issues

Ambition & Objectives

Survey data: 85% of respondents supported the overall ambition for Bolton, but wanted clearer milestones and measurable delivery. Many residents asked for a fairer spread of growth across the borough, particularly in the north and east. Developers and infrastructure bodies sought more information data behind housing and employment targets. Some stakeholders flagged the need for sustainability and climate change to be embedded throughout the plan.

Homes and Land Supply

Survey data: 75% of respondents opposed development on greenfield land and 90% supported a brownfield-first approach. Residents emphasised affordability, family housing and accessible design; for example, one

respondent suggested modular homes and more bungalows for older and disabled residents. Several respondents raised concerns about HMOs and their impact on health and cohesion. Developers supported brownfield first but argued that some sustainable greenfield land may be needed to maintain deliverability. They requested that housing numbers follow the Government's standard method and that the plan period extend beyond 2039 to provide a longer-term supply.

Economy, Employment and Town Centres

Survey data: A large majority of respondents described Bolton town centre as unsafe and underused, seeking better shops, cafes and public spaces. They called for stronger action to revitalise Bolton town centre and support local business, citing long-term decline, empty units, accessibility issues and poor parking. Developers and business interests supported mixed-use

regeneration, stronger links between housing and employment, and faster delivery of town-centre projects.

Transport, Infrastructure and Utilities

Survey data: In the survey, 28% of respondents explicitly raised transport as a key concern, with detailed comments around congestion, lack of Metrolink, parking and active travel. Infrastructure and service delivery were among the top five topics mentioned in open-ended comments. Developers and utilities emphasised the need for early and coordinated delivery of roads, schools, utilities and healthcare, with clear funding mechanisms.

Green Space, Environment and Climate

Survey data: Over 70% of respondents mentioned protection of green space, countryside or biodiversity as a key concern. Environmental and infrastructure bodies such as United Utilities,, and Sport England supported

the inclusion of measurable environmental standards, calling for explicit policies on biodiversity net gain, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), tree planting and green–blue infrastructure. They asked that these standards be set out clearly within the Local Plan to secure long-term maintenance and climate resilience. Developers and their agents, including major housebuilders and land promoters, agreed in principle with these aims, but emphasised that any new requirements for biodiversity net gain, carbon reduction or SuDS should be tested for viability and applied flexibly to ensure that development remains deliverable.

Design, Heritage and Place Quality

Survey data: Several respondents referred to the quality and character of new development in their comments, calling for higher standards, reuse of older buildings and protecting distinctive townscape and for protection of

village identity and local character. While not a dominant view, concern about high-rise apartments in the town centre was cited. Developers supported design codes, but asked for proportionate and flexible application. Heritage groups highlighted opportunities to reuse historic buildings, especially in the town centre.

Community Wellbeing and Local Services

Survey data: Around two-thirds of respondents linked wellbeing to clean, safe neighbourhoods, health facilities and access to youth and community spaces as well as other amenities such as public toilets. Health partners asked that healthcare infrastructure be treated as essential and funded through developer contributions.

Site Proposals and Locations

Survey data: Many residents supported regeneration within existing towns and opposed expansion onto open

land, citing traffic, infrastructure and landscape impacts. Developers promoted a wide range of sites across the borough and sought flexibility for sustainable growth beyond existing settlements. Sports and recreation organisations asked that playing fields and sports land be protected in future allocations.

Delivery, Viability and Monitoring

Survey data: Around half of respondents raised concerns about deliverability, funding and monitoring in their open-ended comments, questioning whether the plan's objectives could be achieved. Some also raised concern about the slow or stalled pace of previous regeneration activity, and some asked for clearer evidence of delivery and follow-through in future plans. Developers and landowners stressed the importance of policy flexibility and proportionate requirements on affordable housing, design and sustainability to maintain viability.

How the Council has responded

Ambition and Objectives

The overall ambition has been clarified and elevated to the introduction of the 'Direction of Travel' document to give it greater prominence. The six inter-linked objectives have been refined, with health and wellbeing established as the "golden thread" running through the plan. A distinct Heritage and Design objective has been added, and the Natural Environment objective has been broadened to include biodiversity, landscape and climate resilience. The Town and other centres are now explicit reference in the objectives as well as the vision. The Local Services and Infrastructure objective now brings together transport along utilities and community services, (previously it was covered under Transport Choices which is focused on modal shift to sustainable travel for example, choosing the bus or cycling over the driving a car).

Evidence preparation is ongoing. The full suite of technical evidence will be published at the Regulation 19 stage, once complete. Engagement with residents, developers and infrastructure providers is built into every stage of this process to ensure that the evidence is as robust and representative as possible. For example, the Local Housing Needs Assessment includes both resident surveys and engagement with developers to understand market conditions, while the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is being prepared in close collaboration with infrastructure providers to confirm capacity and future investment needs.

Distributing Development (spatial options)

Five spatial options test alternative patterns of growth to achieve a more balanced borough. The Council agrees that previously developed land should remain the starting point for new development, reaffirming a brownfield-first approach. However, early evidence shows that brownfield sites alone, even at higher densities, will not meet Bolton's housing and employment needs. On some sites, there are also significant delivery challenges. The 'Direction of Travel' document therefore explains that sustainable greenfield locations may also be required.

Housing Requirement and Mix

The ‘Direction of Travel’ document confirms that Bolton must meet the housing requirements established through ‘Places for Everyone’, while also planning beyond that period to ensure a continuous supply. Work on the Local Housing Need Assessment and Viability Assessment is under way to test both the overall requirement and the mix of homes needed – including the need to provide a balanced range of tenures and deliver housing suitable for older and disabled people.

Considerations for emerging policies is short and focused in the consultation document noting we expect announcement on national development policies – but key considerations related to now cover affordable housing, HMOs, development density are highlighted for views.

New Sites and Site Assessment

All sites submitted through the Call for Sites process and those received during Issues and Options are being assessed against planning, environmental and infrastructure criteria. This work is ongoing, and no decisions have yet been made on preferred allocations. However, six potential growth areas have been identified where significant change is considered most likely to deliver regeneration and infrastructure benefits: Central Bolton, Renewal Areas, Health Innovation Bolton, Chequerbent & Hulton Park, Wingates and Middlebrook.

These locations align with the spatial options being tested and reflect areas where new development could support the plan’s objectives of balanced growth, improved connectivity and sustainable placemaking.

Delivery and Viability

The section on ‘Making Growth Deliverable and Sustainable’ sets out how Local Plan policies will remain proportionate, viable and evidence-based, supported by ongoing viability testing and infrastructure planning. The Council is exploring how developer contributions, infrastructure funding and phasing can be coordinated to ensure new development is supported by timely investment in transport, education, health and utilities – while recognising viability challenges. We are undertaking a full viability assessment of the plan and will engage with developers to ensure this is robust.

Department of Place

Bolton Local Plan

Direction of Travel

(Reg. 18 Consultation Part 2)

November 2025

www.bolton.gov.uk

