



Bolton Employment Needs Study

Final Report

Iceni Projects Limited on behalf of
Bolton Council

September 2026

Iceni Projects

Birmingham: The Colmore Building, 20 Colmore Circus Queensway, Birmingham B4 6AT

London: Da Vinci House, 44 Saffron Hill, London, EC1N 8FH

Edinburgh: 11 Alva Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4PH

Glasgow: 177 West George Street, Glasgow, G2 2LB

Manchester: This is the Space, 68 Quay Street, Manchester, M3 3EJ

t: 020 3640 8508 | w: iceniprojects.com | e: mail@iceniprojects.com

linkedin: [linkedin.com/company/iceni-projects](https://www.linkedin.com/company/iceni-projects) | twitter: [@iceniprojects](https://twitter.com/iceniprojects)

CONTENTS

0.	Executive summary.....	4
1.	Introduction	10
2.	Policy review	12
3.	Functional economic market area.....	27
4.	Socio-economic baseline	43
5.	Property market review	62
6.	Economic forecasts.....	84
7.	Employment floorspace needs	96
8.	Employment land supply	111
9.	Conclusions and recommendations.....	122
A1.	Labour supply	125
A2.	Detailed sector breakdown – Hib scenario	135

0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 0.1 Bolton Council has commissioned Iceni Projects Limited to prepare an Employment Needs Study to inform policies and proposals for employment land in Bolton's New Local Plan.

FEMA and Economic Context

- 0.2 Analysis confirms that Bolton lies within the Greater Manchester Functional Economic Market Area, with strong economic and commuting interdependencies with neighbouring authorities including Wigan and Bury.
- 0.3 Bolton's economy is dominated by the Manufacturing, Wholesale, retail and trade, Transportation and storage and Health sectors, having seen strong GVA and employment growth over the past decade. The borough continues to face structural challenges including lower productivity, high unemployment levels and lower skills attainment when compared to the wider region and England, alongside concentrations of deprivation.

Commercial Market Signals

Office

- 0.4 The office market has seen a structural change in working patterns with an increase in remote and hybrid working which has reduced demand for traditional office space and seen a rise in demand for smaller flexible spaces.
- 0.5 In Bolton the office market vacancy rate was 11.5% in 2025, increasing from 3.9% in 2022. The rate exceeds the Greater Manchester average of 10.5%. Rental growth has been slower than across Greater Manchester and Bolton saw an average office rent of £14.37 p.s.f in 2025. Headline rents of +£18 per sq.ft are required to support viable new build office development.
- 0.6 Engagement with agents revealed that the market is spatially split, with weaker performance in the town centre due to outdated stock, contrasted with strong demand in peripheral locations where there is a shortage of good quality space. Larger occupiers which tend to locate in Manchester city centre, although Bolton remains competitive in attracting price-sensitive occupiers as a lower-cost alternative. Demand is focused on modern, well-connected offices, particularly smaller units (<500 sq.m) and flexible/managed workspace.

Existing stock is typically large, poor quality and poorly configured, with limited pipeline delivery, suggesting a need to refurbish and subdivide space rather than rely on new build development.

Industrial

- 0.7 The national industrial market has experienced a slowdown since the pandemic peak however the sector remains strong due to structural factors such as e-commerce and supply-chain reconfiguration.
- 0.8 Vacancy rates in Bolton have remained persistently low (sub-5% since 2018) and sat at just 1.7% in 2025, indicating strong demand. The sector has seen strong rental growth and average rents sit broadly in line with Greater Manchester (£8.20 per sq.ft). Net absorption of industrial space has been negative since 2022 however this is in the context of negative net deliveries and low vacancy. There is limited availability of modern space, with nearly half of available stock dated pre-1980s. In particular there is a shortage of available mid box units of 5,000 to 9,000 sq.m.
- 0.9 Agent engagement highlighted that demand is heavily influenced by logistics operators seeking lower costs, creating competitive pressure on manufacturing businesses, which are increasingly constrained by rising costs and limited availability of suitable space. The market is underprovided with incubator/start-up space and there is growing demand for mid-tech industrial space, reflecting the needs of advanced manufacturing and technology sectors, requiring modern, flexible and well-serviced units.

Employment Forecasts

- 0.10 Experian baseline forecasts suggest an overall employment growth of 6.1% over the 2025-42 plan period, equivalent to 7,800 new jobs, closely in line with the 20-year historical growth trend.
- 0.11 The most substantial sector growth is anticipated by Experian to be Professional services (+1,300 jobs); Health (+1,200 jobs); Accommodation & food services (+1,200 jobs) and Construction (+900 jobs). Land Transport, Storage and Post and ICT are forecasted to grow however at much lower levels than their 10- and 20-year historical growth rates. The manufacturing sector is forecasted to see the greatest decline at a loss of 700 jobs.

- 0.12 A regeneration scenario, which captures further growth potential where forecasts have deviated from past trends in addition to planned future development such as allocated employment land, forecasts a jobs growth of 11,952 jobs, compared to the 7,800 jobs baseline forecast. Including potential employment growth at Health Innovation Bolton increases employment growth to 14,467 jobs.
- 0.13 Labour supply-led modelling indicates that a jobs growth of 14,161 jobs could be supported by population growth associated with housing delivery in line with the Places for Everyone plan requirement of 787 dpa.

Employment Floorspace Requirements

- 0.14 The table below summarises the employment floorspace modelling undertaken. Office modelled requirements range from -52,300 sq.m to 83,500 sq.m. It is recommended that the council plan for **16,700 sq.m of office** floorspace, outside of potential office provision at HIB, based on the labour demand baseline scenario. This reflects the potential for growth in home working to reduce future office market requirements, and for the market to reinforce around stronger / higher order locations such as Manchester City Centre and Salford Quays, whilst still planning for a level of development above the negative net absorption and net completion trends.
- 0.15 The council could plan for the slightly higher regeneration scenario of 30,300 sq.m, however at the current time market signals do not support this level of office floorspace demand.
- 0.16 **Industrial and warehousing** modelling outputs range from 251,200 sq.m to 811,700 sq.m. It is recommended that Bolton plan for the upper end of the range of **811,700 sq.m** derived from the gross completions trend. This reflects the strong level of demand seen in Bolton's industrial market as supported by low levels of vacancy, increasing rental levels and take-up of all recently delivered space.
- 0.17 Demand is across a range of industrial unit sizes and typologies, including large logistics on the M61, general small and mid sized industrial space as well as space ready for higher tech and innovation that can support economic diversification.

Table 0-1: Employment Floorspace Summary 2025-42 (including margin and replacement demand (sq.m))

Floorspace (Sq.m)	Labour Demand - Baseline	Labour Demand - Regeneration	Labour Demand - Regen + HIB	Labour Supply	Gross Completions	Net Completions	Net Absorption
Office	23,900	30,300	69,100	38,500	83,500	-48,500	-52,300
Office WFH	16,700	21,200	48,400	27,000			
Industrial	72,800	113,200	127,900	103,800	205,800	78,200	342,400
Warehousing	178,400	236,900	240,600	208,400	605,900	416,500	
Industrial and Warehousing Subtotal	251,200	350,100	368,500	312,200	811,700	494,700	

Source: Iceni analysis

Demand–Supply Balance

- 0.18 Against existing supply of unimplemented permissions, PfE Allocations and vacant land on existing sites, there is a shortfall of 8,674 sq.m of office floorspace and a shortfall of 147,497 sq.m of industrial/warehousing floorspace that will need to be addressed through rolling forward existing allocations and new allocations. The shortfall in office floorspace can be met through allocations in Bolton town centre.

Table 0-2: Employment Floorspace Demand-Supply Balance 2025-42 (sq.m)

	Office	Industrial & Warehousing
Floorspace Need (sq.m)	16,700	811,700
Unimplemented Permissions	8,026	166,085
Places for Everyone Allocations	0	486,000
Vacant Land on Protected Employment Sites	0	12,145
Additional Floorspace Need (sq.m)	8,674 (shortfall)	147,497 (shortfall)

Source: Iceni analysis

- 0.19 Given the shortfall in industrial and warehousing need, additional sites may need to come forward. New sites promoted through the call for sites process have been assessed through this study. It is noted that many of the employment sites assessed are in the Green Belt, so Bolton Borough Council will need to consider the case for releasing these in the emerging Local Plan to meet employment needs.
- 0.20 Specifically regarding Health Innovation Bolton, for which proposals are continuing to be refined at spring/summer 2026, this is a Green Belt location being promoted for a cluster of health innovation related employment activities. Based on the evidence provided by the promoter it is considered to provide a unique opportunity to facilitate the expansion of an existing public research institution - Bolton Hospital – to act as a catalyst for further public and private sector investment in health innovation and related research and advanced manufacturing industries. The unique colocation and clustering of public research institutes with market commercial space is considered to be an opportunity to attract higher value employment and innovation in Bolton building on a pattern of activity seen elsewhere in the UK¹. This opportunity would support key aims in the Borough around economic resilience, diversification and regeneration in Bolton. Whilst the proposal is sector specific, it is considered that it will be suitable in meeting general employment needs in the forecast given

¹ See for example Iceni's research for Greater Cambridge on Life Science and ICT Locational, Land and Accommodation Needs which highlights the importance of institutional research anchors as well as a range of accommodation types for driving successful clusters, available at <https://www.greatercambridgeplanning.org/media/rpmogrqm/cd918-iceni-for-gcsp-sept-2024-gc-growth-sectors-study-life-science-and-ict-locational-land-and-accommodation-needs.pdf>

potential for future changing typologies in workspace demand and some uncertainty around more traditional industries in the long term.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bolton Council has commissioned Iceni Projects Limited to prepare an Employment Needs Study to inform policies and proposals for employment land in Bolton's New Local Plan.

Study Objectives

- 1.2 The scope of the Study is:

- To undertake a comprehensive and robust assessment of the need for office, industrial and warehousing floorspace in Bolton over the Local Plan period;
- To undertake a comprehensive and robust assessment of Bolton's office, industrial and warehousing supply;
- To obtain good quality information and data about current and future office, industry and warehousing needs at a local level, that will be used to inform the development of local employment strategies and policies.

- 1.3 The principal outcome of the assessment is to identify the "fitness for purpose" of the existing employment land portfolio, to identify the best employment sites that should be retained and identifying sites that should clearly be released for other uses, in addition to providing recommendations on how candidate employment sites can meet gaps in supply.

Report Status and Structure

- 1.4 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: Policy Review
- Chapter 3: Functional Economic Market Area
- Chapter 4: Socio-Economic Baseline
- Chapter 5: Property Market Review
- Chapter 6: Economic Forecasts
- Chapter 7: Future Employment Floorspace Needs

- Section 8: Employment Land Supply
- Section 9: Conclusions and Recommendations.

- 1.5 The site assessments can be found in the separate Site Assessment Appendix, which contains the individual pro-formas for all sites assessed within the Borough.
- 1.6 The analysis in this report reflects Iceni's research and analysis, engagement of key stakeholders, together with market intelligence from engagement with local commercial agents.

2. POLICY REVIEW

- 2.1 This section provides a summary of key strategies, policies and plans for Bolton and Greater Manchester. It aims to give an overview of each document's objective and content and focuses on matters of economic growth, specific urban and regional planning projects, and employment land opportunities and plans.

Bolton

Bolton Core Strategy, 2011

- 2.2 This document² was published in 2011 and 'sets out the policies for Bolton's future development up to 2026'. It sets out the spatial strategy and key policies for development in the Borough. Employment policy P1 set out the following targets:

- 'Identify a range of employment sites for new development with a total area of between 145ha and 165ha up to 2026.'
- 'Safeguard existing employment sites where they are compatible with residential amenity and contribute to the sustainability of communities in which they are situated. Where they are not compatible, mixed uses will be encouraged to retain an element of employment.'

- 2.3 This policy has now been replaced by Places for Everyone policies JP-J2, JP-J3 and JP-J4.

Bolton's Allocations Plan, 2014

- 2.4 The plan³ was adopted in December 2014 and constitutes one of the four parts of the Development Plan. It allocates specific sites for development.

² Bolton Core Strategy, Local Development Framework, 2011. Available at: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/downloads/file/666/core-strategy>

³ Bolton's Allocations Plan, 2014. Available at: <https://www.bolton.gov.uk/downloads/file/671/allocations-plan-written-statement>

- 2.5 In terms of land allocation, 'up to 145 hectares of employment sites for new development have either been allocated on the Proposals Map, or are in Bolton town centre, (...) 25- 35 hectares of land within Bolton town centre will be made available for employment use in the period up to 2026.

Table 0-3: Allocated Employment Land (Appendix 1)

Site ref	Site name	Site size (ha)	Core Strategy Location			
			M61 Corridor	Renewal Areas	Outer Areas	Bolton Town Centre
1P1.1	Bolton town centre	25-35				*
2P1.1	Barrs Fold Close	0.47	*			
3P1.1	Horwich Loco Works	15-20	*			
5P1.1	Cutacre (net development area)	80	*			
6P1.1	The Linkway, Middlebrook	0.94	*			
7P1.1	St. Peters Business Park A	0.94		*		
8P1.1	Watermead	3.79		*		
9P1.1	Mill Street	0.53		*		
10P1.1	Mill Street/Mule Street	0.74		*		
11P1.1	Stone Hill Road	0.60		*		
12P1.1	Express Industrial Estate B	0.77		*		
13P1.1	Undershore Works	0.81		*		
	Total	129.59-144.59	96.41-101.41	8.18	0	25-35

- 2.6 Appendix 2 of the Allocations Plan sets out the 23 existing employment areas which have been allocated as protected employment land.

Table 0-4: Protected Employment Land (Appendix 2)

Site Ref	Site name	Site size (ha)
1P1.2	Middlebrook Business Zone	12.24
2 P1.2	Lostock Industrial Estate (Mansell Way)	12.16
	Lostock Industrial Estate (Lynstock Way)	16.03
	Lostock Industrial Estate (Lostock Lane)	27.35
	Lostock Industrial Estate (Total)	55.54
3 P1.2	Wingates Industrial Estate	58.45
4 P1.2	The Valley	34.21
5 P1.2	Express Industrial Estate	17.28
6 P1.2	Europa Industrial Estate	12.41
7 P1.2	Lyon Industrial Estate	9.18
8 P1.2	Great Lever Employment Area	43.36
9 P1.2	Crescent Road and Manchester Road	5.29
10 P1.2	Bury Road/Breightmet Fold Lane	14.68
11 P1.2	Raikes Lane	10.91
12 P1.2	Tonge Bridge	3.27
13 P1.2	Thornbank Industrial Estate	3.79
14 P1.2	Edge Fold	7.09
15 P1.2	Station Road, Blackrod	11.38
16 P1.2	Crown Lane/Lodge Bank, Horwich	6.09
17 P1.2	Mill Hill	20.59
18 P1.2	Pearl Brook	1.06
19 P1.2	Bella Street/St. Helens Road	3.98
21 P1.2	Ox Hey Lane Industrial Estate	2.18
22 P1.2	Mayfield Avenue Employment Area	2.2
23 P1.2	Land bound by Manchester Road and St. Peter's Way	1.09
24 P1.2	Salford Road, Over Hulton	12.95
	Total	349.22

2.7 Appendix 3 of the Allocations Plan sets out the 7 mixed use allocations, which will deliver a level of employment development.

Table 0-3: Mixed Use Allocations (Appendix 3)

Site Ref	Site name	Site size (ha)	Core Strategy Location			
			M61 Corridor	Renewal Areas	Outer Areas	Bolton Town Centre
1P6AP	Moses Gate	18.34		*		
2P6AP	Halliwell Mills	8.13		*		
3P6AP	Higher Swan Lane/Sunnyside	11.54		*		
5P6AP	The Greenwood	0.58			*	
6P6AP	British Aerospace	7.46	*			
7P6AP	Crompton Way/Bolton Point	13.41		*		
	Total	59.46	7.46	51.42	0.58	0

Policy P6AP – Mixed Use Development

- 2.8 The council and its partners require proposals for sites within mixed use areas to be brought forward in the context of achieving a balanced mix of employment and housing uses over the whole area. This should achieve a comprehensive and viable development, appropriate mitigation and ensure the timely provision of infrastructure, services, open spaces and other facilities in a coordinated way.

Bolton Town Centre Framework, 2017

- 2.9 The Bolton Town Centre Framework was published⁴ in 2017 and predates the 2020 Town Investment Plan which enabled Bolton Council to secure funding from the Towns Fund, as detailed later in this section.



- 2.10 In terms of employment land specifically, this document details market opportunities in retail, tourism and leisure, and office where “a growth in financial and professional services will see demand for circa 20,000sqm of floorspace over the next 15 years”.
- 2.11 Key interventions areas include Trinity Quarter, Cheadle Square, Crompton Place, Croal Valley, and Church Wharf. For Trinity Quarter, the proposed vision target to create 10,000

⁴ Bolton Town Centre Framework. Available at: <https://investinbolton.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Bolton-Town-Centre-Framework.pdf>

sqm of office GFA in an initial phase, with a further 20,000 sqm in later stages of development.

- 2.12 For Trinity Quarter, Cheadle Square, Crompton Place, proposed plans at the time of writing could deliver a total of 107,000 square meters of employment floorspace. This is a very substantial quantum for a secondary / relatively local office market.
- 2.13 It should be noted that some schemes proposed as mixed use have now been developed without office, or proposals do not include office space.

Town Centre Framework - Trinity Update Addendum Report – May 2022

- 2.14 An updated Framework for Bolton Trinity – the framework reduces the office provision in Phase 1 from 10,000 sq.m to 6,675 sq.m, with scope for up to 5,600 sq.m in the later stages, should the Network Rail depot site become vacant in the future.
- 2.15 At the time of writing, the Trinity Quarter is not being progressed within the preparation of the new Local Plan.

Bolton Strategic Assessment (February 2023)

- 2.16 The document details Bolton's aims to transform its Town Centre with over £1 billion of investment. There is a focus on five key intervention areas plus district centres, with target completion of major projects by 2040.
- 2.17 Key details regarding the five town centre intervention areas are as follows:
- Trinity Quarter – aim to build up to 1,000 new homes, create 450 jobs and £8 million GVA annually.
 - Cheadle Square (Cultural Quarter) – aim to build up to 210 homes, create 100 jobs and £1.8 million GVA annually.
 - Crompton Place – aim to build up to 200 homes, create 1,900 to 2,700 jobs and £35 – 49 million GVA annually.
 - Croal Valley – aim to build up to 225 homes, create 40 jobs and £0.7 million GVA annually

- Church Wharf – aim to build 352 homes, create 1,000 jobs and £18 million GVA annually.

2.18 The future opportunities in Bolton are identified as the Digital City (Blackhorse Street), providing opportunities to become the digital cluster for AI and tech sectors. This area will be the 6th intervention area. Another identified opportunity is the Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor as a regional strategic growth area.

2.19 A key challenge acknowledged in the assessment is the Bolton town centre vacancy rate, which is at 33% (Q2 2022). Office vacancy rates are also identified as a challenge, with 7.7% vacancy rates across Bolton, but rents are growing 2.2% to £13.50 per square ft. Another challenge identified is the average house prices in the town centre.

Bolton Economic Growth and Resilience Plan (November 2024)

2.20 The document sets out a ten-year strategy to create better jobs, support inclusive growth and increase resilience in Bolton. The plan focuses on three main pillars: people, business and investment. The strategy sets out nine priorities guiding initiatives across public and private partners.

2.21 Key Priorities include:

- People: raising the wage floor, supporting people into employment and matching skills to jobs.
- Business: creation of new jobs, maximising manufacturing strengths and supporting scale-ups and SMEs.
- Investment: attracting and retaining investment, the diversification of the town centre and building resilient communities.

2.22 To deliver the priorities, the implementation will be phased (short, medium and long-term), with measures tracked across indicators. Delivery will involve partners including the Economic Prosperity Group, local educational institutions, healthcare providers, businesses and voluntary groups.

The Bolton Blueprint – A Bold Vision for 2040 and Beyond

2.23 The strategy sets out a long-term regeneration and economic development plan to transform Bolton, focusing on tackling deprivation, boosting employment, enhancing skills and delivering high-quality placemaking and infrastructure.

2.24 Key priorities set out in the strategy include:

- Vision and Strategic Objectives: The primary goal is creating a vibrant, prosperous and inclusive town, delivering improved outcomes for all residents through targeted regeneration, reduced inequality and stronger community cohesion.
- Economic Context and Challenges: Addressing Bolton's deprivation, town centre vacancies and failing prime retail rents.
- Regeneration and Growth Framework: A focus on six residential and employment areas and in partnership with the private sector, the council is committed to investment for the town centre.
- Economic Development and Employment: Sustaining traditional sectors, supporting rapid growth in legal, consultancy, information and communication sectors.
- Levelling Up Fund, Towns Fund and Major Investments: A broad range of projects supported by the fund, including Bolton College of Medical Sciences, Farnworth Town Centre, Brownfield Land Fund and Wellsprings Digital Hub.
- Infrastructure and Connectivity: Projects expanding and enhancing existing and new infrastructure.
- Skills, Education and Social Value: Investment into The University of Bolton and Bolton College of Medical Sciences.
- Health Innovation and Social Care: Investment into health clusters, supporting both economic growth and health equity in the borough.
- District Centre renewal: Investment into four district centres, supporting economic resilience and local quality of life.

Bolton Town Investment Plan, 2020

2.25 As announced⁵ in December 2020 and confirmed by the Budget announced by the Chancellor on Wednesday 3 March 2021: “Bolton was successfully offered up to £22.9m of funding from the central government’s Towns Fund to help regenerate the Town Centre. (...) The priorities for investment will be concentrated on Cheadle Square (the area between Bolton Town Hall and Moor Lane) which is one of our key intervention areas. Bolton’s Town Investment Plan was one of 45 town deals announced as part of the budget and is also one of only 101 towns given the opportunity to secure funding from the £3.6bn Fund.”

2.26 Bolton Town Investment Plan⁶ targets to fund four main projects:

- Improvements to Bolton Market, which would see the outdoor market refurbished, upgrades to the internal halls, and all the entrances to the building improved
- The redevelopment of Bolton Central Library, Museum and Archive, which would modernise the libraries and introduce flexible workspaces for local businesses and groups – complete
- An upgrade and refurbishment of the Wellsprings building to create an innovation hub for businesses in the creative and digital sector (now complete)
- A public realm project which would create a greener town centre, seeing footpaths and connections between key institutions improved, and new pocket parks and public spaces created.



2.27 Of relevance to the Employment Land Review, The Town Centre Masterplan identifies:

⁵ Invest in Bolton. Available at: <https://investinbolton.com/towns-fund/>

⁶ Bolton Town Investment Plan. Available at: <https://investinbolton.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Bolton-TIP-Brochure4.pdf>

- **Trinity Quarter** adjacent the Transport Interchange, where regeneration will “establish the area as a business district and Bolton’s main concentration of Grade-A office space”
- **Blackhorse Street**, an opportunity area to develop 7.8 hectares of land between the railway station, university, and Cheadle Square, with *“plans for a “Digital City” development aimed at creating a preferred location for innovative companies operating in the digital and cyber sectors, that may wish to engage with the university.”*
- **Wellspring office complex** in Bolton Town Centre where £7.24 million will be invested to “deliver flexible, purpose-built space with collaborative workspaces in the council-owned building, creating an innovation hub for Bolton businesses in the Creative & Digital sector.” (now complete)

Greater Manchester & North West

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2022 to 2039, Adopted 2024

- 2.28 The document is a strategic development plan (adopted in March 2024) by nine districts in Greater Manchester. The plan shapes housing, jobs and infrastructure up to 2039. The nine districts include Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan.
- 2.29 The key proposals set out in the document include:
- Plans for significant new housing delivery, with borough-level targets.
 - Job creation is a core objective, with new jobs and employment space proposed.
 - Major infrastructure upgrades are envisaged to support growth, including the integration of new development into Greater Manchester’s transport network or the provision of new transport links.
 - Continued promotion of brownfield development and redevelopment of town centres to foster vibrant communities while addressing the housing crisis.
 - Planned release of 2,430 hectares of Green Belt Land across Greater Manchester, with a new defined Green Belt boundary set.

- 2.30 To aid implementation, local authorities will, where appropriate, produce Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to support the delivery and implementation of the plan policies across different sites and topics.

Policy JP-J2 – Employment Sites and Premises

- 2.31 A diverse range of employment sites and accessible premises, both new and second-hand, will be made available across the Plan area in terms of location, scale, type and cost. This will offer opportunities for all kinds and sizes of businesses, including start-ups, firms seeking to expand, and large-scale inward investment, which will help to tackle inequalities.
- 2.32 A strong portfolio of prime investment opportunities for new floorspace will be brought forward in the key growth locations identified in JP-Strat1 to JP-Strat12 and in complementary locations, with many being particularly suitable for key economic sectors and specialisms. This includes the selective removal of land from the Green Belt and other land previously safeguarded for development, to provide the quality of well-connected employment land supply necessary to deliver the required scale of long-term economic growth.
- 2.33 Existing employment areas that are important to maintaining a strong and diverse supply of sites and premises in our boroughs will be protected from redevelopment to other uses, nurtured to ensure they remain competitive and their accessibility improved where necessary. This will include local employment areas as well as key growth locations.

Policy JP- Strat8 – Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor

- 2.34 This growth corridor is focussed around improved transport links, including new roads and a Wigan to Bolton Quality Bus corridor, new road infrastructure improving east-west connectivity between M6 J26 and M61 J5.
- 2.35 There are a number of development sites already identified along the corridor however to maximise the contribution of the corridor there is a selective release of Greenbelt. It is expected that the corridor will accommodate 1 million sq.m of employment floorspace and 13,600 dwellings.
- 2.36 Two significant assets within the eastern end of the corridor (and within Bolton) are Hulton Park, a proposed site for the Ryder Cup; and Royal Bolton Hospital. Further development

at the hospital will enable its evolution to provide opportunities in health technology related activities, alongside housing development.

2.37 The plan allocates three employment sites within Bolton:

- Bewshill Farm (JPA4): Providing for around 21,000 sq.m of industrial and warehousing floorspace to compliment the adjacent Logistics North development
- Chequerbent North (JPA5): Providing for around 25,000 sq.m of industrial and warehousing floorspace
- West of Wingates / M61 Junction 6 (JPA6): Providing for around 440,000 sq.m of industrial and warehousing floorspace

West of Wingates Industrial and Warehousing Strategic Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document – June 2026

2.38 The Strategic Masterplan SPD identifies land to the west of Wingates as “a strategic employment location” allocated through Places for Everyone Policy JPA6 for “around 440,000 sqm of industrial and warehousing floorspace”. The SPD states that a key priority is to “contribute towards enabling a thriving and productive economy across the northern part of Greater Manchester by ensuring there is sufficient and diverse employment land and by encouraging the growth of high-value sectors such as advanced manufacturing and logistics”.

2.39 The document further notes that the development is expected to “generate approximately 6,000 new jobs”, “provide opportunities for business growth”, and strengthen Bolton’s role as “a driver of the regional economy”. The allocation is intended to deliver a “thriving, sustainable and well-connected industrial and warehousing business destination” and is being brought forward through a phased development programme.

Greater Manchester Strategy 2025-35

2.40 The strategy sets out Greater Manchester’s long-term vision for a thriving city region, structured around 7 workstreams:

1. Healthy homes for all – building 75,000 new houses by 2030
2. Safe and strong communities;

3. A transport system for the global city region;
4. A clear line of sight to high-quality jobs
5. Everyday support in every neighbourhood;
6. A great place to do business;
7. Digitally connected places and people.

2.41 Workstreams 6 is of particular relevance to employment land matters and notes the Integrated Pipeline for Growth which will allow housing, employment, transport and infrastructure to come forward together. Six growth locations will be targeted, one of which, NorthFold, falls within Bolton. NorthFold will see 12,000 new homes and a new Health Innovation Campus linked to the Royal Bolton Hospital.

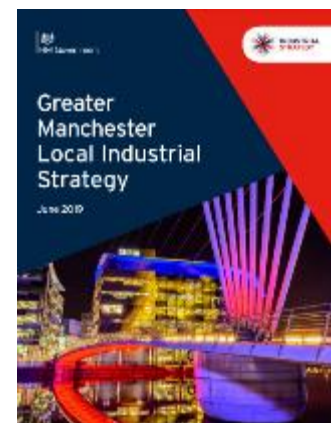
2.42 The strategy will focus on existing key sector strengths within the region which include health innovation; life sciences; advanced manufacturing and materials (R&D); digital, AI and cyber; creative and media; low carbon; financial services; and business and professional services.

Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy, 2019

2.43 The Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy, published⁷ in June 2019, is a high-level document setting the vision and targets for the area.

2.44 The strategy mentions key elements relevant to Bolton's economic growth and employment land supply. Key elements include:

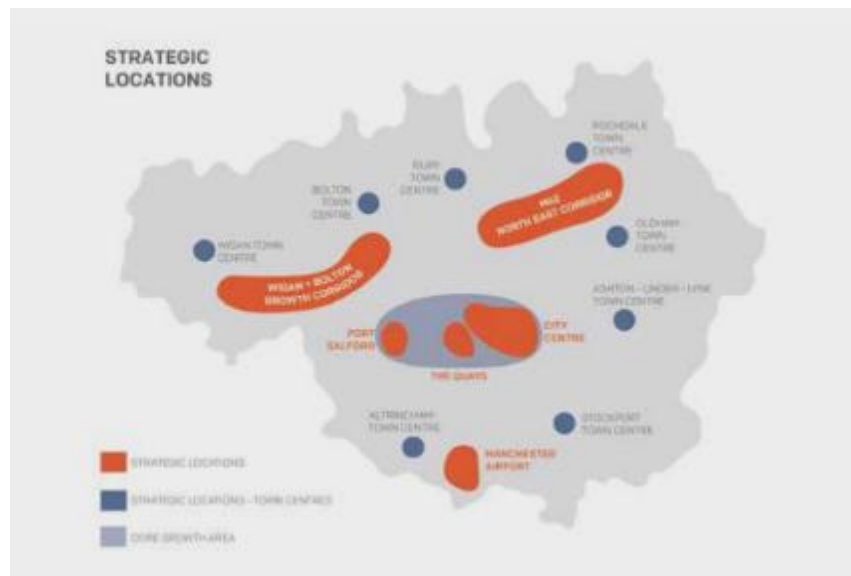
- An opportunity to leverage the growth of materials and manufacturing clusters in the city region by “ensuring ‘Graphene City’ in the former North Campus of the University of Manchester is networked with industrial and technology



⁷ Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy. Available: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/2132/gm-local-industrial-strategy-web.pdf>

parks across Greater Manchester and leading technology parks across the UK.”

- An objective to “revitalise town centres and high streets by supporting creatives, digital entrepreneurs, and innovators to start or scale a business, social or cooperative enterprise.”
- A focus on the Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor “to ensure that there are significant investment opportunities across the northern areas, helping to boost the competitiveness of all parts of the north.” It is noted that “the M6 logistics hub in Wigan (extending into Warrington, St Helens and West Lancashire) provides a major cluster of warehousing and distribution activity with easy access to the Port of Liverpool via the M58.” However, no specific intervention in this corridor is identified in the Local Industrial Strategy.



Independent Prosperity Review 2019

- 2.45 The document is a review of Greater Manchester’s local data and open data strategy, aiming to establish Greater Manchester as a leading digital city region in Europe. The report sets out 12 essential deliverables, grouped into four themes - Leadership and Governance; Standards and Quality; Capability and Skills and Infrastructure and Access.
- 2.46 The ambition is to use data effectively to drive growth and innovation, as set out in its Digital Blueprint and Local Industrial Strategy. The review assesses challenges and opportunities for public sector open data to build a stronger system.

Greater Manchester Innovation Plan 2022

- 2.47 The plan sets out a vision to harness the power of business, education and government partnerships to drive long-term innovation and inclusive economic growth across the region.

- 2.48 The strategic objectives include aims for Greater Manchester to be globally recognised for its innovation by 2030, with investment into its R&D-intensive business clusters. The plan supports UK-wide growth, with a focus on productivity, skills, high-quality jobs and reduced health inequalities.
- 2.49 Key strengths highlighted include world-class research, major businesses and innovation clusters but challenges such as fragmented support, skills shortages and finance access need addressing.
- 2.50 Collaboration among businesses, universities and public agencies is central, with emphasis on growth, talent pipelines and successful innovations regionally and nationally. The Innovation Accelerator pilot, part of the plan, works with government and businesses to pilot innovation approaches, aiming for high-quality job creation and increased private R&D investment.

Blackrod Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018 to 2033 (January 2020)

The Blackrod Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018-2033 establishes a vision of supporting prosperity and quality of life whilst maintaining Blackrod's distinctive village character, with objectives spanning housing, transport, environment, community facilities, retail, employment and heritage.

- 2.51 The Neighbourhood Plan identifies two principal employment areas within Blackrod:
- The employment area around Station Road, including Blackrod Interchange and Rivington View Business Park.
 - Blackrod Industrial Estate (Scot Lane Industrial Estate)
- 2.52 **Policy ER4 and ER5** encourages the retention/expansion of existing employment sites supporting development that helps sustain or intensify employment generating uses on established employment sites and/or supporting proposals that would not result in a loss of employment unless it can be demonstrated that the site is no longer suited to employment use or no longer viable.
- 2.53 The Plan identifies Blackrod Industrial Estate (Scot Lane) as a potential regeneration opportunity. It notes that parts of the estate comprise older and relatively low-quality industrial premises and suggests the longer-term aspiration of transforming the site into a

modern business park capable of accommodating higher value businesses and business start-ups.

3. FUNCTIONAL ECONOMIC MARKET AREA

PPG Guidance

3.1 The Planning Practice Guidance⁸ provides specific guidance on defining Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMA). It notes that no standard approach is possible as patterns of economic activity vary from place to place. However, it does suggest that when defining a FEMA, the following factors are important considerations:

- The extent of any Local Enterprise Partnership within the area;
- travel to work areas;
- housing market area;
- flow of goods, services and information within the local economy;
- service market for consumers;
- administrative area;
- catchment areas of facilities providing cultural and social well-being; and
- transport network.

Administrative Boundaries

3.2 **Administrative area** – Bolton is a local government metropolitan borough within Greater Manchester. The council provides education, waste disposal and adult social care services, environmental health, and leisure facilities.

3.3 **Greater Manchester Combined Authority** – In 2011, the Combined Authority was established, managing public transport, skills development and strategic planning. Within the Combined Authority sit the business support functions, such as Invest in Manchester (MIDAS) and the Growth Company, which administer skills and training programmes.

⁸ Reference ID: 61-019-20190315

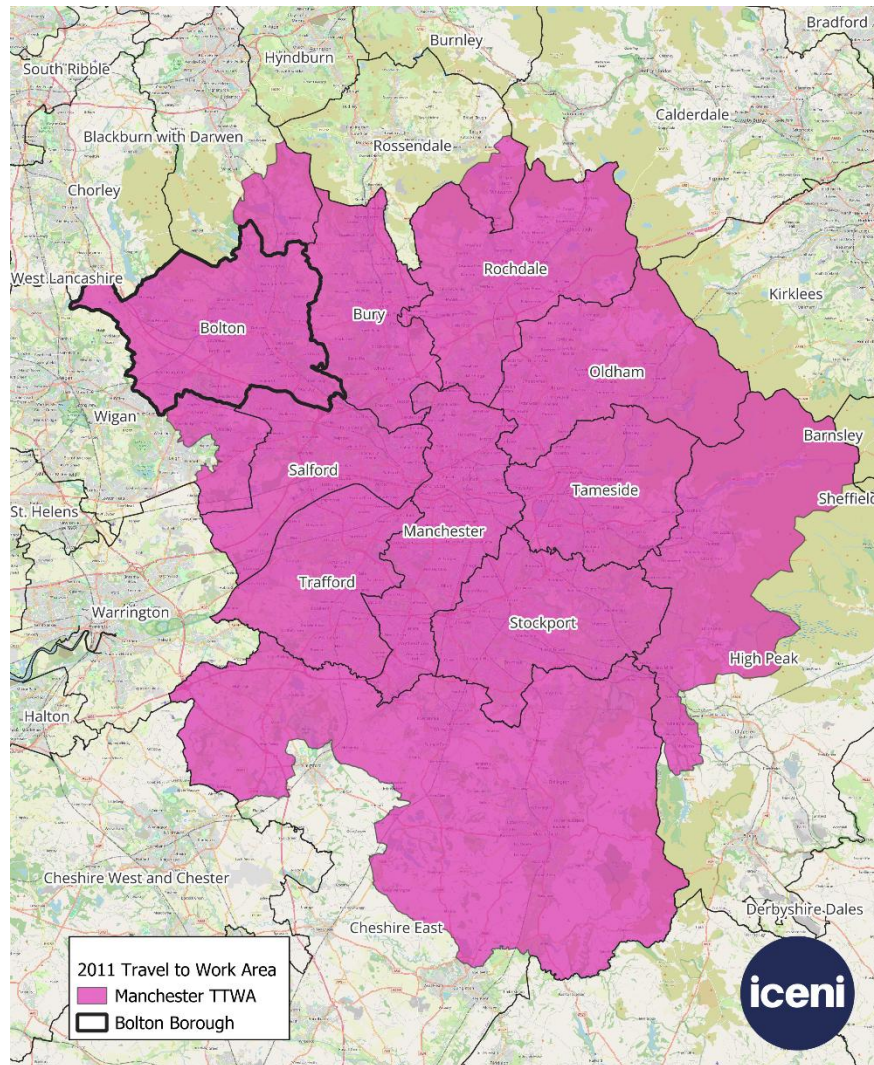
- 3.4 **Chamber of Commerce** – Bolton is served by the Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce and has its own district local president.
- 3.5 **Health Services** – The Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) plays a central role in planning and coordinating healthcare for the 10 Greater Manchester Authorities. Royal Bolton Hospital, operated by Bolton NHS Foundation Trust, provides services for the Borough.
- 3.6 **Emergency Services** – Greater Manchester Police and Greater Manchester Fire Rescue service provide emergency services at the Greater Manchester level.

Transport Network

- 3.7 The Bee Network provides a joined-up travel network of bus, tram and train covering the Greater Manchester Area. Bus services are provided by Go North West and Diamond Bus North West overseen by the Bee Network.
- 3.8 Bolton has multiple railway stations providing connections to Manchester city centre, Manchester Airport, Blackpool, Southport, Blackburn and Rochdale, operated by Northern Rail. The TransPennine Express also serves Bolton Interchange, travelling from Manchester Airport through to Edinburgh.
- 3.9 The closest major airport to Bolton is Manchester International Airport (approx. 30-minute drive).

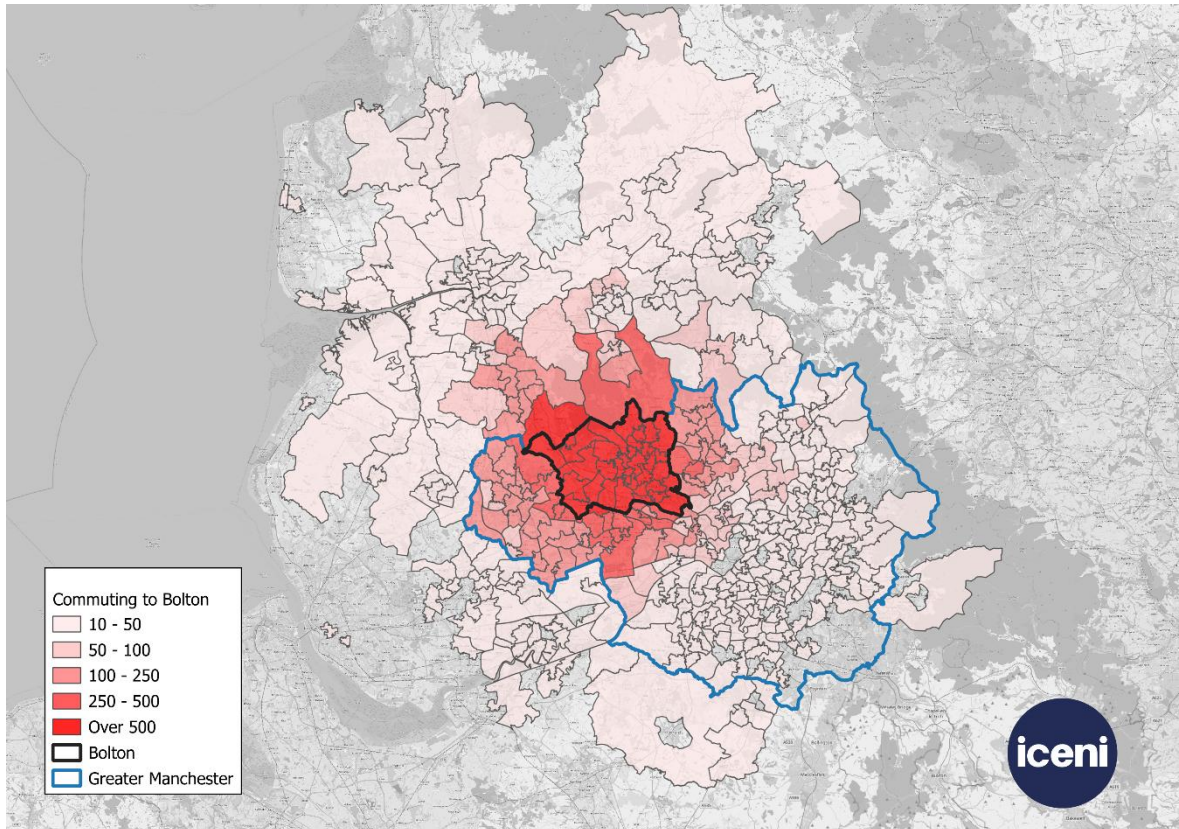
Travel to Work Area

- 3.10 In 2015, ONS produced Travel to Work Areas (TTWA) for England based on 2011 census data. These remain the latest available TTWA data set. As illustrated in the map below, Bolton Borough sits entirely within the Manchester TTWA albeit on the north west corner of the area.

Figure 3.1 2011 Manchester Travel to Work Area

Source: MHCLG

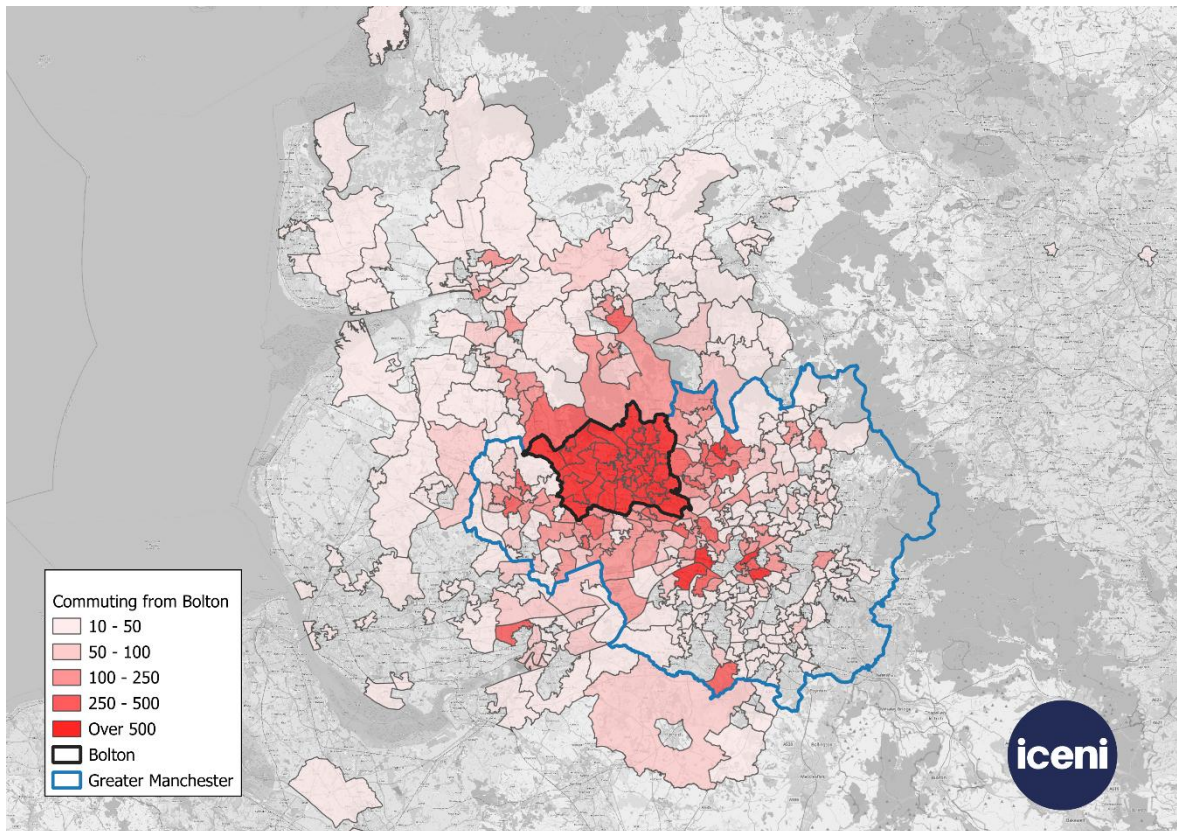
- 3.11 The Travel to Work Areas have not yet been updated to use the 2021 Census Data. However, commuting data has been published, and we have examined this for Bolton Borough. Firstly, we have looked at where the district draws its workforce from.
- 3.12 The map below shows that the Borough has a high level of self-containment but also draws labour from the immediately surrounding areas, including Wigan, Salford, Bury, Chorley and Blackburn with Darwen.
- 3.13 In general, the majority of commuters are drawn from north west Greater Manchester, with limited in-commuting from Manchester city and the eastern Boroughs. There is some commuting from Central Lancashire.

Figure 3.2 Commuting to Bolton Borough

Source: Iceni analysis of ONS Census 2021

- 3.14 The 2021 Census states that there are 125,443 jobs located in Bolton Borough (including those working from home). Of these, 94,555 are taken up by those residing in Bolton Borough (again including those working from home).
- 3.15 This is the equivalent of a jobs-based self-containment rate of 75%. This is in line with the 75% threshold used by ONS to define TTWAs and, therefore, suggests that Bolton Borough does not form part of a wider TTWA. However, it should be reiterated that this data is skewed by high levels of working from home.
- 3.16 We have also analysed where the Borough's residents find employment, as shown on the map below. It should be noted that this includes those who work from home. As shown, the highest number of commuters originating from Bolton Borough also work in the district.
- 3.17 There is also a level of out-commuting to surrounding areas, including Manchester city centre, Bury town centre, Wigan town centre, Trafford and Salford Quays.

Figure 3.3 Out-commuting from Bolton Borough



Source: Iceni analysis of ONS Census 2021

- 3.18 Commuters are travelling beyond the immediately surrounding areas, suggesting a strong relationship with Greater Manchester, illustrating the city's important economic role in relation to Bolton Borough.
- 3.19 The table below shows the total number of out-commuters from Bolton Borough to several neighbouring local authorities. It can be seen that the most significant volumes of out-commuters from the borough are to Salford, Wigan, Bury and Manchester.

Table 0-5: Out-commuting from Bolton to Neighbouring Local Authorities

Local Authority / Authorities	Out-commuting from Bolton
Bolton Borough ⁹	94,555
Salford	4,843
Wigan	4,527
Bury	4,376
Manchester	4,120
Trafford	1,585
Chorley	1,411
Blackburn with Darwen	1,277

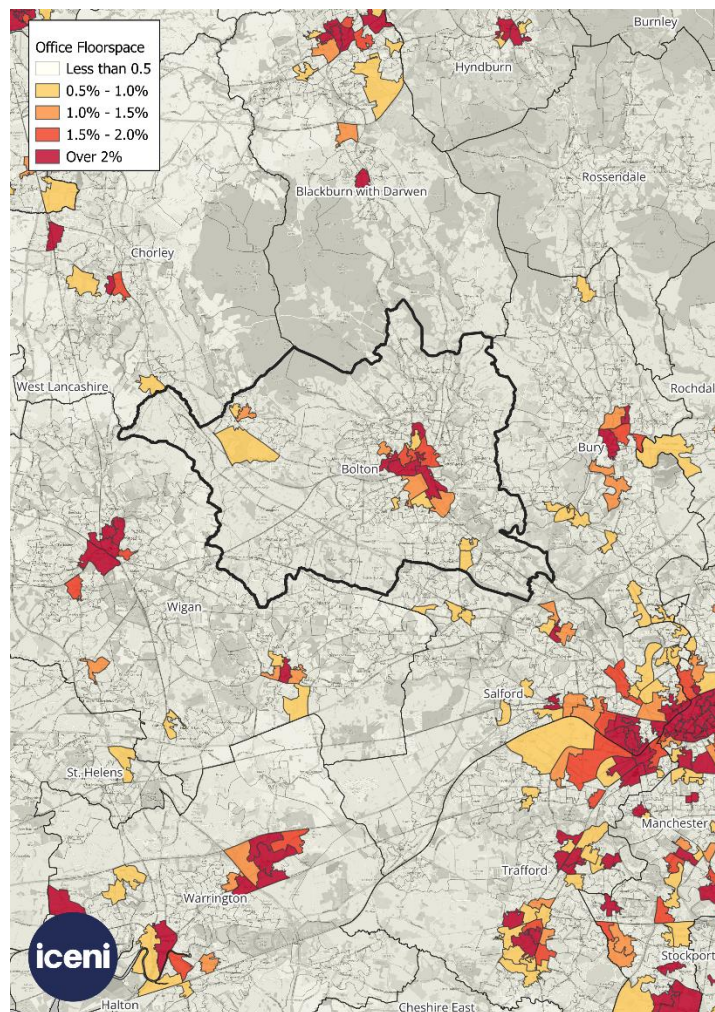
Source: ONS Census 2021

- 3.20 In total, the 2021 Census states Bolton Borough has 121,631 residents in employment . Of these, 94,555 work in the borough (including those working from home). This is the equivalent of a residents-based self-containment rate of 78%.
- 3.21 Again, this exceeds 75% threshold used by the ONS to define TTWAs, suggesting a high degree of self-containment and strong reliance on the internal workforce for the area's economy.

Flow of Goods and Services

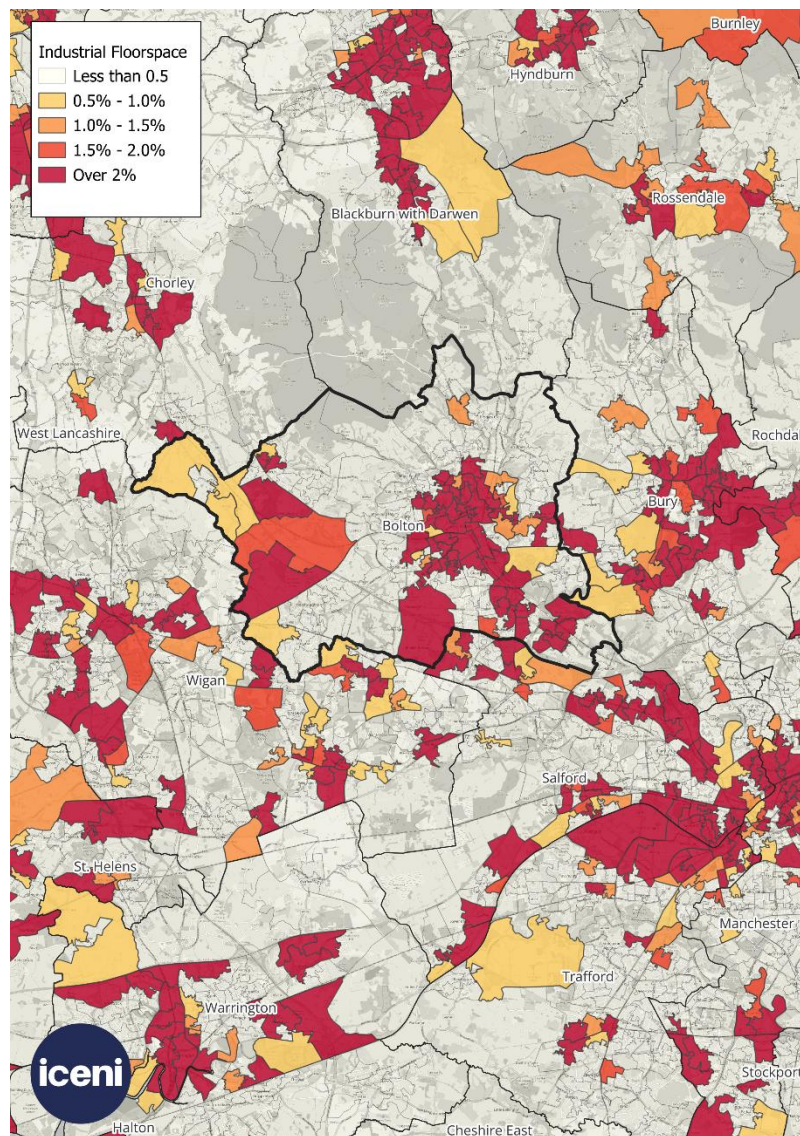
- 3.22 The flow of goods, services and information within the local economy is difficult to quantify. Our approach, therefore, is to look at office and industrial clusters across Bolton Borough and neighbouring authorities.
- 3.23 Using 2023 VOA floorspace data, we have identified the areas with the greatest concentrations of office and industrial floorspace (total floorspace as a percentage of LSOA area).
- 3.24 The figure below illustrates that the borough's significant office cluster is located in the town centre. There is also some clustering around Middlebrook and Parklands. Within close proximity to Bolton there are also concentrations of offices in most of the nearby towns, including Wigan and Bury and of course within Manchester and Salford City Centres.

⁹ Includes working from home

Figure 3.5 Office Floorspace Concentrations – LSOA (2023)

Source: Iceni analysis of VOA data

- 3.25 Industrial floorspace are slightly more widespread within the district, with concentrations seen within the town centre, and in areas with motorway connectivity in the western edge of the borough around Middlebrook and Wingates and in the south at Logistics North (Over Hulton) and Kearsley.
- 3.26 However, there are also very strong concentrations of industrial space in areas bordering the Borough, particularly in Bury, Wigan, Salford, Trafford and Manchester.

Figure 3.6 Industrial Floorspace Concentrations – LSOA (2023)

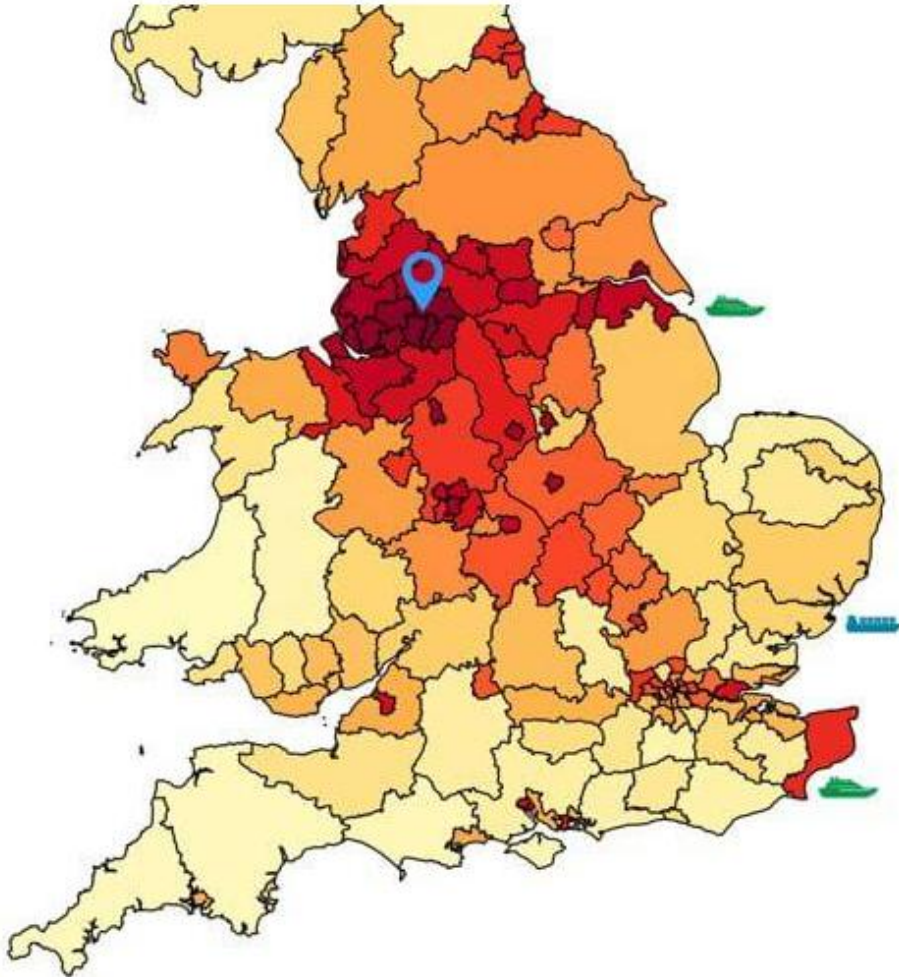
Source: Iceni analysis of VOA data

- 3.27 These strong clusters are likely to have some influence on the flow of goods and services within Bolton, but in many instances, they are likely to be regional and national hubs because of their proximity to the M61.
- 3.28 The map below, sourced from MDS Transmodal's Freight Data Hub, shows the origins and destinations of the 52 million road freight journeys per annum to and from Greater Manchester¹⁰.

¹⁰ This data is only available for upper tier authorities

- 3.29 It shows that the greatest volumes of freight travelling beyond Greater Manchester are with neighbouring areas, including Liverpool, Lancashire, West Yorkshire and across the North West and into the West Midlands.

Figure 3.7 Road freight Origin-Destination flows to/from Greater Manchester



Source: MDS Transmodal, Freight Data Hub

- 3.30 There are also notable flows to London and key ports, including Dover, Teesside, Bristol and Grimsby, again presumably for import/export.

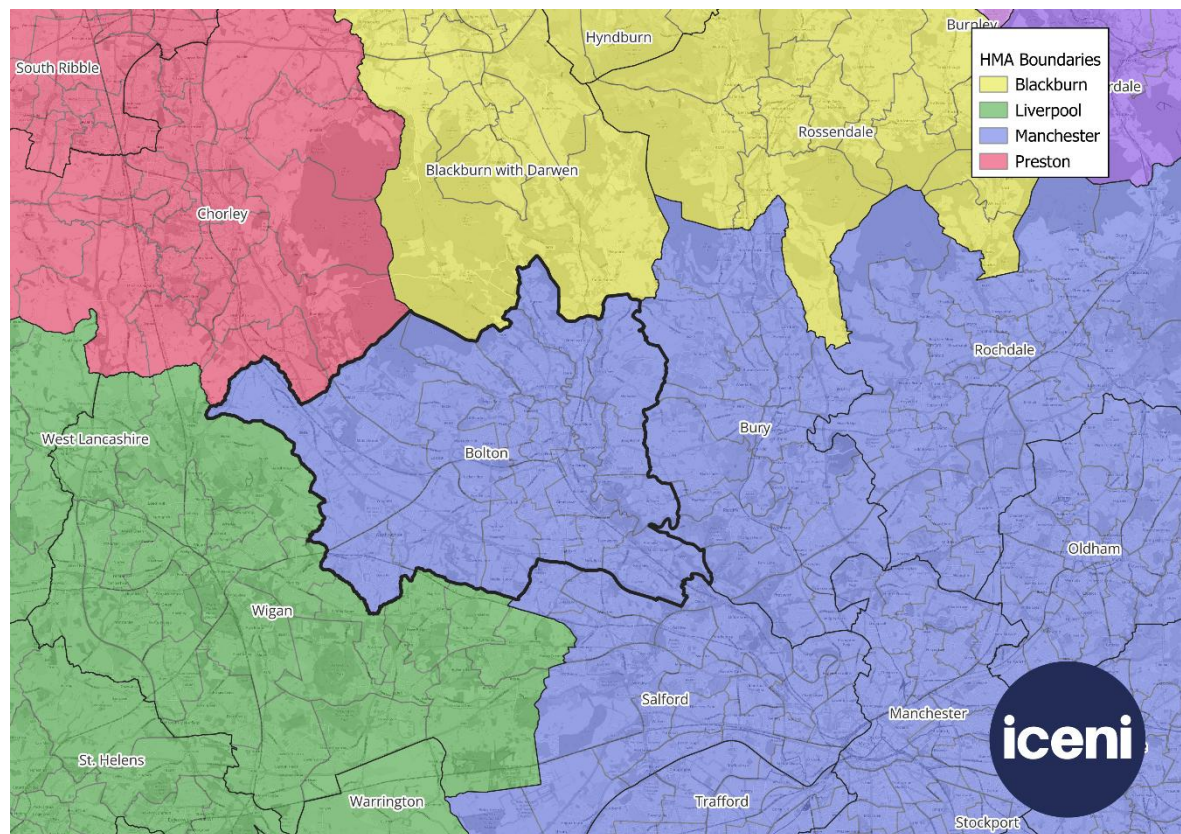
Housing Market Area

- 3.31 According to the PPG¹¹, Housing Market Areas (HMAs) are defined by examining migration and commuting trends as well as house prices. These can be taken from the 2021 census data (although this data is problematic as it was collected during a period of partial lockdown) and land registry data. The house price data is particularly useful in identifying sub-areas.
- 3.32 While functionally, HMAs will not start and stop at administrative boundaries, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Technical Advice Note¹² recognised that for pragmatic reasons, HMAs should be drawn to administrative boundaries as much of the data required for an assessment of need is only published at local authority areas.
- 3.33 Previously, the Greater Manchester Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019¹³ defined Greater Manchester as a functional Housing Market Area that Bolton falls within.
- 3.34 Alternative definitions of HMAs have also been produced at a national level by the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS) at the University of Newcastle, which identified that Bolton sits within the Manchester HMA, bordering Liverpool, Preston and Blackburn HMAs.

¹¹ Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 61-018-20190315

¹² <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/objectively-assessed-need-9fb.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1733/gm-shma-jan-19.pdf>

Figure 3.8 Housing Market Areas (2011)

Source: Iceni based on CURDs data based on ONS Census 2011

- 3.35 This data was based on 2011 data and has not been updated since the release of the 2021 census data. We can, however, examine migration patterns, which is the key determinant of HMAs from the 2021 census.
- 3.36 We have examined gross migration per head as this is, in our opinion, the best measure of the relationship between areas of different sizes. Once again, it should be noted that the 2021 Census was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore, migration figures should be treated with a degree of caution as movement was restricted during periods of lockdown.
- 3.37 As the table below, the strongest migration relationships are with Wigan, Salford and Bury, followed by Chorley, Blackburn and Manchester. The strongest relationship is with Wigan and this is particularly driven by in-migration to Bolton.

Table 0-6: Gross Migration Per Head with Bolton Borough (2021)

	Out	In	Gross Migration	Gross Migration Per 1,000
Wigan	732	1,136	1,868	2.99
Salford	801	786	1,587	2.80
Bury	534	728	1,262	2.58
Chorley	593	163	756	1.83
Blackburn with Darwen	522	252	774	1.72
Manchester	537	589	1,126	1.33
Rochdale	138	162	300	0.58
Liverpool	205	87	292	0.37
Preston	173	91	264	0.59

Source: Iceni based on ONS Census 2021

Self-Containment Rate

- 3.38 A further measure of an HMA is the self-containment rate. This is the percentage of moves from an area whose destination is elsewhere in the same area or the percentage of moves to an area whose origin was from the same area.
- 3.39 While this is no longer part of the PPG, previous guidance provides a target benchmark of over 70% when long-distance moves are removed. Long distance moves are not defined by the PPG, but it relates to student movements and people moving long distances to retire to the country/coast and this would not be expected to be within the same HMA.
- 3.40 As shown in the table below, Bolton has a self-containment rate of between 62% and 69%. However, once long-distance¹⁴ moves are excluded, the self-containment rates increase to 69% and 75%. By this benchmark, Bolton could potentially be considered an HMA in its own right.

¹⁴ Long distance moves are defined as those with origins/destinations outside of the North West.

Table 0-7: Self-containment Rates – Bolton (2021)

	Out Migration- Based Self- Containment	In Migration Based Self-Containment
All Moves	22,462	20,188
Internal Moves	13,908	13,908
Self-Containment Rates	62%	69%
All Moves, Excluding Long Distance Moves	20,247	18,498
Self-Containment Rates	69%	75%

Source: Iceni based on ONS Census 2021

- 3.41 While it could be considered an HMA in its own right, it is worthwhile noting whether this is the case for its neighbours, who then must seek to join with others. As shown in the table below when long distance moves are removed, self-containment rates of the surrounding districts do not meet the self-containment threshold individually or even when considered as a combined area.

Table 0-8: Self-containment Rates – Surrounding Districts (2021)

	Out Migration- Based Self- Containment	In Migration Based Self-Containment
Bolton	69%	75%
Wigan	72%	68%
Salford	58%	56%
Bury	60%	64%
Wigan + Salford + Bury	68%	65%

Source: Iceni based on ONS Census 2021

- 3.42 The table below reports the self-containment rates (excluding long-distance moves) for Bolton Borough and various combinations of nearby local authorities.

Table 0-9: Self-containment rates for select local authorities (excluding long-distance moves)

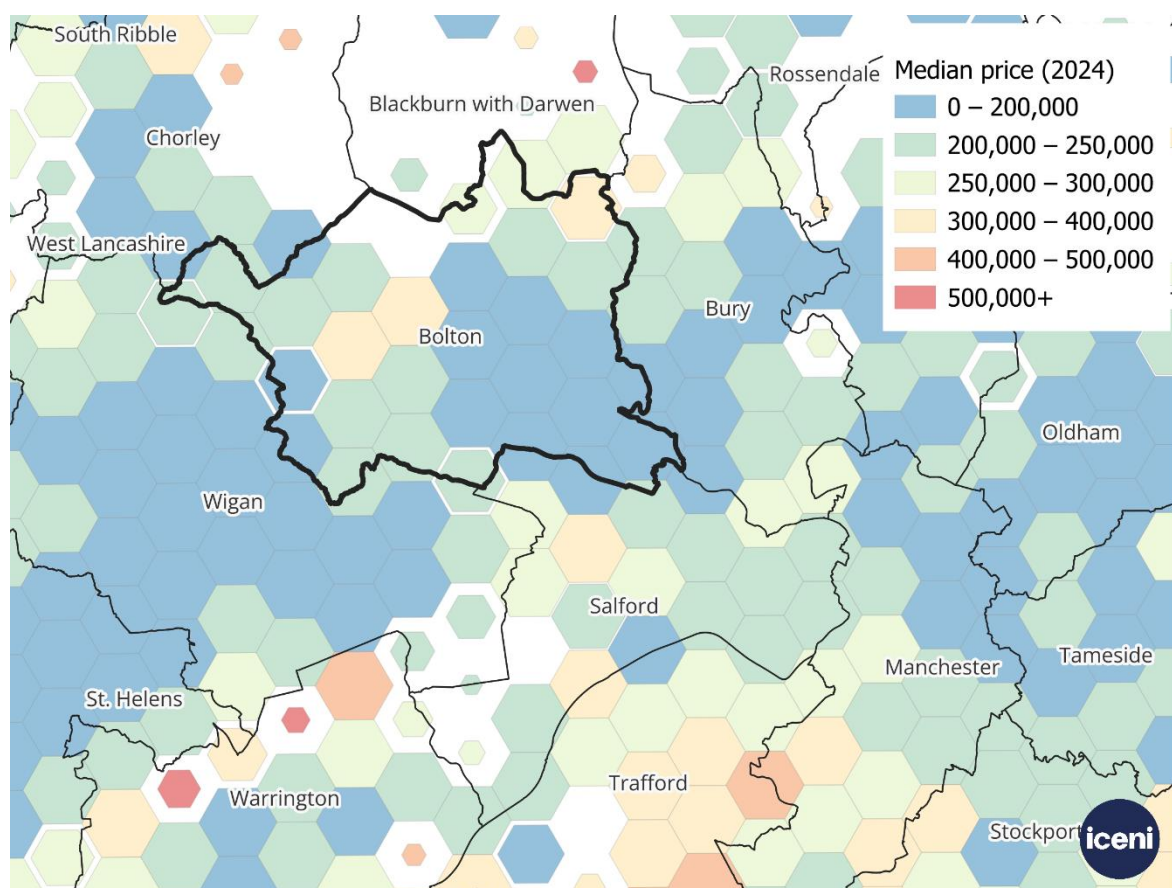
Local Authority / Authorities	Out Migration- Based Self- Containment	In Migration Based Self-Containment
Bolton	69%	75%
Bolton + Wigan	75%	76%
Bolton + Salford	66%	67%
Bolton + Bury	69%	75%
Bolton + Chorley	68%	72%
Greater Manchester	89%	92%

Source: Iceni analysis of Census 2021

- 3.43 Some of these combinations do exceed the typical 70% threshold for both in or out-migration, although only Wigan exceeds the threshold for both in and out-migration.
- 3.44 However, the currently defined Greater Manchester Housing Market Area produces the greatest self-containment rates, well exceeding the 70% self-containment threshold at 89% and 92%. This strongly suggests that the current HMA definition remains appropriate.

House Prices

- 3.45 The PPG also suggests that when identifying HMAs, analysis should be undertaken regarding the “relationship between housing demand and supply across different locations, using house prices and rates of change in house prices. This should identify areas which have clearly different price levels compared to surrounding areas.”
- 3.46 The map below examines the cost of housing in Bolton and the surrounding authorities. The size of the hexagons is representative of the number of purchases within that local area – where there are no hexagons, there were very few or no purchases.
- 3.47 The east of Bolton generally sees median house prices below £200,000 and these align with those in the southern part of Bury. House prices to the west of the town generally are higher, around £300,000 to £400,000, which aligns with the northern parts of Wigan and Bury.
- 3.48 Neighbouring areas generally have similar house price levels, with property prices rising towards the southwest around Salford, Manchester and Trafford.

Figure 3.9 Median Property Prices, 2024

Source: Icen Analysis using HM Land Registry, Price Paid Data

Bolton FEMA Summary

- 3.49 While the borough has a level of migration and commuting self-containment, it is evident throughout the analysis that Bolton relies on other areas for key service provision, such as Manchester city centre.
- 3.50 With regards to administrative boundaries, Bolton tends to be included within the Greater Manchester area, reflecting its position within the GM Combined Authority and the development of the strategic Greater Manchester plan - Places for Everyone.
- 3.51 Whilst Bolton has its own chamber of commerce representative, it sits within the wider Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce. In addition, Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership oversees healthcare provision within Bolton and fire and policing services are provided at the Greater Manchester level. The public transport network is provided by Greater Manchester-wide The Bee Network.

- 3.52 In terms of commuting dynamics, the district sits in the northwest corner of the Manchester TTWA, highlighting economic relations to the south and east. The 2021 Census shows strong in-commuting from Wigan, Salford, Chorley and Blackburn with Darwen.
- 3.53 Similar patterns are seen in out-commuting, however, there are strong flows of commuters to Manchester City Centre and Salford Quays, presumably driven by commuting to key office markets.
- 3.54 Whilst Bolton has a strong town centre office cluster, Manchester, Salford, Wigan and Bury all have strong clusters. In contrast, Bolton has a strong cluster of industrial floorspace, likely to influence the flow of goods and services within Bolton but also to the wider region.
- 3.55 Whilst Bolton has high rates of self-containment which indicates that it could be considered a HMA in its own right, when considering that the neighbouring authorities would need to join with others, they do not meet the self-containment threshold.
- 3.56 Taking account of the above analysis, we therefore conclude that Bolton continues to operate as an integral component of the Greater Manchester Functional Economic Market Area, and that this strategic geography remains the most appropriate. At the same time, the evidence demonstrates that Bolton maintains strong and enduring economic and commuting interdependencies with neighbouring authorities – most notably Wigan and Bury – reinforcing the need for ongoing cross-boundary collaboration.

4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC BASELINE

- 4.1 This section provides an overview of Bolton's social and economic context in relation to Greater Manchester, the North West, and the UK as a whole. It draws on a range of data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Experian. Unless otherwise stated, all data covers the 2011 to 2025 period. It uses the latest available information at the time of writing.

Economic Size & Past Performance

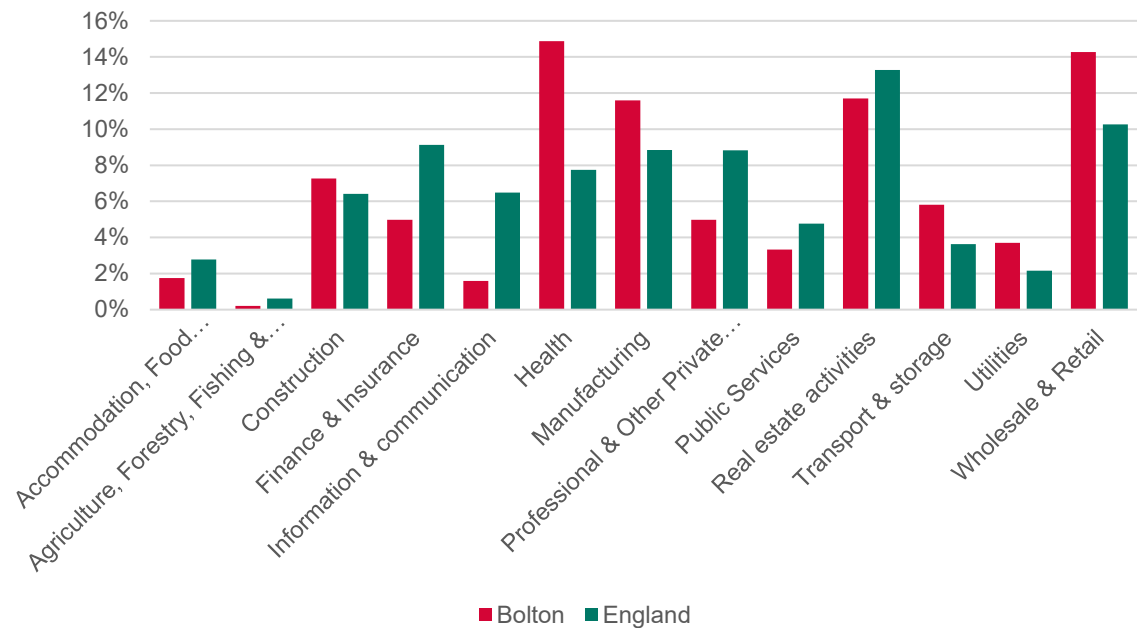
- 4.2 Bolton is part of the dynamic city-region of Greater Manchester, with a growing economy with over 100,000 business and a growing skills base, significant rises in business start-ups and major infrastructure investments planned. However, by almost any measure, Bolton's economic performance remains behind that of the wider City Region, and the Country, in terms of economic strength and resilience.

- 4.3 This section considers **Gross Value Added (GVA)**, a measure of the increase in the value of the economy due to the production of goods and services. The difference in relative GVA per sector in the following graph shows which sectors dominate in Bolton in 2023 and how that differs compared to the national average. It is clear that Bolton's economy is dominated by a distinct set of industries:

- **Manufacturing**, which represents 12% of total GVA, higher than Greater Manchester (8.0%) and England's rate (9%)
- **Wholesale and retail trade**, which represents 14% of total GVA compared to Greater Manchester (11.6%) and England's rate (10%)
- **Transportation and storage**, at 6%, higher than the Greater Manchester (4.0%) and national rate (4%)
- **Health**, at 15%, nearly double the national rate (8%)
- **Real estate activities**, at 12% but lower than the national rate (13%).

- 4.4 These five sectors account for over 58% of value added within Bolton's economy.

Figure 4.1 Proportion of GVA per sector out of total GVA, Bolton vs. England, 2023



Source: ONS, 2023

4.5 The following table details how much each sector has grown in the last two decades, from 2003 to 2023. Information and communication sectors have seen a fourfold increase, while agriculture, mining, electricity and real estate activities have also grown significantly. Some sectors like construction, utilities and manufacturing have contracted between the 10 and 20-year growth rates. Overall, Bolton’s total GVA grew by 24% reflecting mixed but generally positive sectoral performance.

Table 0-10: GVA per sector in Bolton (£ million), growth from 2003 to 2023

	2003	2013	2023	10-year change	20-year change
Accommodation, Food Services & Recreation	252.2	259.3	176	-32%	-30%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	4.6	6.5	9.6	48%	109%
Construction	402.5	347.9	496	43%	23%
Extraction & Mining	3	2.4	5.1	113%	70%
Finance & Insurance	193.2	269.7	329.9	22%	71%
Information & communication	66.4	67.3	104.5	55%	57%
Manufacturing	634.6	611.7	769.1	26%	21%
Professional & Other Private Services	1079	1534.5	1480.5	-4%	37%
Public Services	1467.4	1574.9	1786.4	13%	22%
Transport & storage	280.4	251	396.9	58%	42%
Utilities	383.1	184	253.2	38%	-34%
Wholesale & Retail	752.2	961.7	974.2	1%	30%
Total	5,306	5,829	6,587	13%	24%

Source: Experian & Iceni Projects analysis

- 4.6 Productivity, measured here as GVA per job, shows how efficient the production of goods and services is. The following table shows how productivity has evolved in Bolton over the last two decades. Bolton has made notable productivity gains especially in Finance & Insurance (rate more than doubled), Manufacturing, Wholesale & Retail and Information & Communication sectors. Productivity growth leads to higher average wages.

Table 0-11: Productivity growth per sector (GVA per job, £) - Bolton , 2003 to 2023¹⁵

	2003	2013	2023	10-year change	20-year change
Accommodation, Food Services & Recreation	28,022	31,622	19,130	-40%	-32%
Construction	45,225	39,989	57,011	43%	26%
Finance & Insurance	62,323	77,057	94,257	22%	51%
Information & communication	27,667	30,591	37,321	22%	35%
Manufacturing	36,895	47,419	53,410	13%	45%
Professional & Other Private	53,950	68,504	56,080	-18%	4%
Public Services	51,852	52,849	53,167	1%	3%
Transport & storage	62,311	37,463	40,918	9%	-34%
Utilities	239,438	131,429	211,000	61%	-12%
Wholesale & Retail	31,083	44,730	44,894	0%	44%
Total				19%	4%

Source: Experian & Iceni Projects analysis

- 4.7 Finally, the following table shows how **employment** per sector has evolved in the last two decades, expressed a proportion of total employment in the surveyed area. While many sectors have remained stable, some have seen drastic changes in their relative importance. Transport & Storage accounted for 4.5% of total employment in 2003 and increased to 9.7% in 2023, more than doubling the proportion. Professional & Other Private Services increased from 20% of total employment to 26.4% of total employment. However, some sectors have lost employment such as Accommodation & Food Services, Construction, Manufacturing, Utilities and Wholesale & Retail.

¹⁵ Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing and Extraction & Mining have not been included.

Table 0-12: Employment per sector in Bolton, 2003 - 2023

	2003	2013	2023	10-year change	20-year change
Accommodation, Food Services & Recreation	9,000	8,200	9,200	12%	2%
Construction	8,900	8,700	8,700	0%	-2%
Finance & Insurance	3,100	3,500	3,500	0%	13%
Information & communication	2,400	2,200	2,800	27%	17%
Manufacturing	17,200	12,900	14,400	12%	-16%
Professional & Other Private Services	20,000	22,400	26,400	18%	32%
Public Services	28,300	29,800	33,600	13%	19%
Transport & storage	4,500	6,700	9,700	45%	116%
Utilities	1,600	1,400	1,200	-14%	-25%
Wholesale & Retail	24,200	21,500	21,700	1%	-10%
Total	119,200	117,300	131,200	12%	10%

Source: ONS, 2025

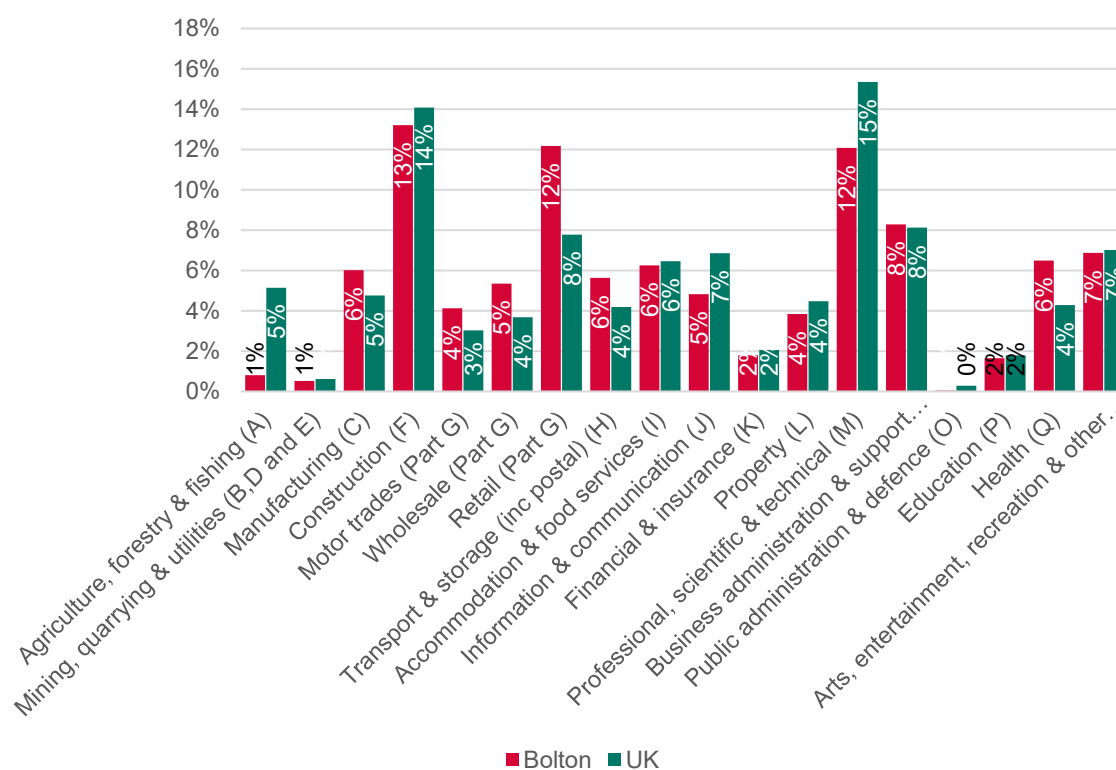
Sectoral Structure & Business Base

- 4.8 In the 19th century, Bolton was at the heart of a prosperous cotton industry and became a thriving manufacturing town. The cotton industry took advantage of Bolton's strategic location, close to large industrial cities in the North, close to ports, and with a good source of natural free flowing water, which cotton manufacturers used to power the mills and wash the cotton. The Bolton cotton industry production was boosted significantly by technological investment, such as Samuel Crompton's spinning mule for example.
- 4.9 As reported in the Town Investment Plan¹⁶, 'Bolton today is shaped by the town's history as a market and mill town, and both the retail and manufacturing sectors remain major local employers. A market town since the 1200s, the rise of the cotton industry in the nineteenth century led to Bolton's rapid growth: its mixture of market halls, municipal buildings, large squares, and retail thoroughfares are a legacy of its importance to the local population.'

¹⁶ Bolton's Town Investment Plan. Available at: <https://investinbolton.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Bolton-TIP-Brochure4.pdf>

- 4.10 Considering the business base in 2025, the construction sector is the most prominent in Bolton, accounting for 13% of businesses in Bolton, slightly lower than the national rate of 14%. The retail sector in Bolton accounts for 12% of total businesses, slightly higher than the UK as a whole (8%).
- 4.11 The Professional, Scientific and Technical sector sits at 12% of total businesses, lower than the rates shown across the UK (15%). Bolton's sectoral distribution of businesses shows a representation in Business Administration & Support (8%) in line with the 8% rate seen nationally.
- 4.12 Bolton's economy remains more dependent on sectors such as Manufacturing and Retail than the UK average. It is under-represented in knowledge-based sectors. However, high-value-added and knowledge-based sectors show growth in Bolton. The sector differences shown account for many of the broader economic impacts, shaping local outcomes in employment and wages. The figure below sets out the business count by sector for Bolton and the UK as a whole.

Figure 4.2: Business Count by Sector, 2025



Source: ONS, 2025

- 4.13 Bolton's business landscape is home to a dominance of micro enterprises, making up the majority (89%) in Bolton, in line with the national trend (89%). Small businesses are a smaller proportion, accounting for 9% in Bolton, aligning closely with the UK's rate (9%). Large firms in Bolton are at 0.4%, slightly lower than the rate seen nationally (0.5%). The balance between micro and larger firms in Bolton closely follows the patterns seen nationally.

Table 0-13: Business Count by Size, 2025

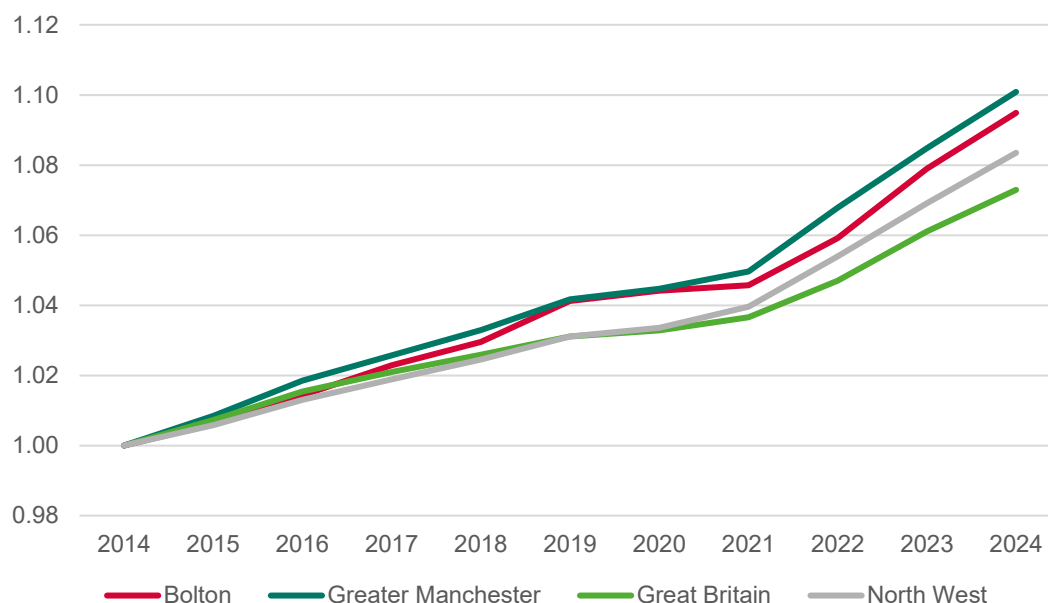
	Bolton	UK
Micro (0 To 9)	9,430 (89%)	2,437,850 (89%)
Small (10 To 49)	925 (9%)	241,185 (9%)
Medium (50 To 249)	160 (2%)	44,170 (2%)
Large (250+)	45 (0.4%)	11,415 (0.4%)
Total	10,560	2,734,620

Source: ONS, 2025

- 4.14 Bolton also benefits from a number of educational institutions such as the University of Greater Manchester specialising in gaming, design, animation, and health technologies, and the recently completed Bolton College of Medical Science, a joint venture between the University of Greater Manchester, Bolton Council, Bolton NHS Foundation Trust and Bolton College.

Labour Market

- 4.15 Bolton's growth trends show its growth trend in line with all other areas shown, however at a slightly slower rate than Greater Manchester. Both Bolton and Greater Manchester show a growth trajectory faster than the regional and national rates.
- 4.16 Between 2022 and 2024, Bolton shows a steeper upward trend, rising faster than the national and regional averages. By 2024, Bolton's rate is just below Greater Manchester's, indicating relatively strong local performance. Bolton's growth over the decade has been consistent and above-trend relative to wider regional and national benchmarks.

Figure 4.3: Population growth 2014 to 2024 (indexed 2014 = 1)

Source: ONS

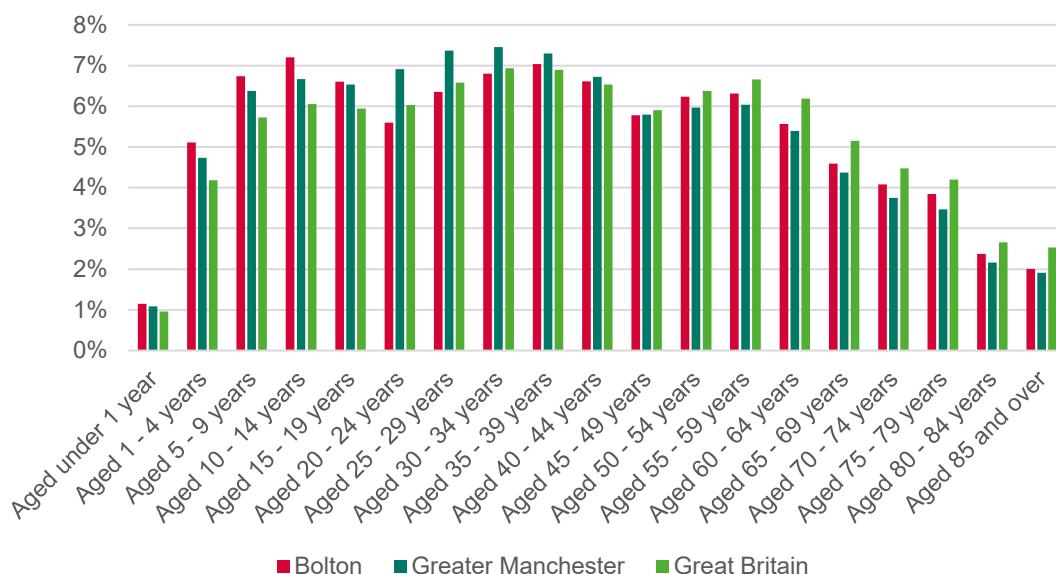
- 4.17 Between 2014 and 2024, Bolton's population grew from 283,212 to 310,085. As shown in the Table 3.5 below, the population growth between 2014 and 2024 for Bolton shows a slightly slower rate than Greater Manchester but greater than both the North West and the national average, highlighting Bolton as an area of strong population growth.

Table 0-14: Population Change, 2014 vs. 2024

	2014	2024	Net gain	% Growth
Bolton	283,212	310,085	26,873	9.49%
Greater Manchester	2,733,895	3,009,664	275,769	10.09%
North West	7,141,096	7,737,414	596,318	8.35%
Great Britain	62,775,507	67,353,582	4,578,075	7.29%

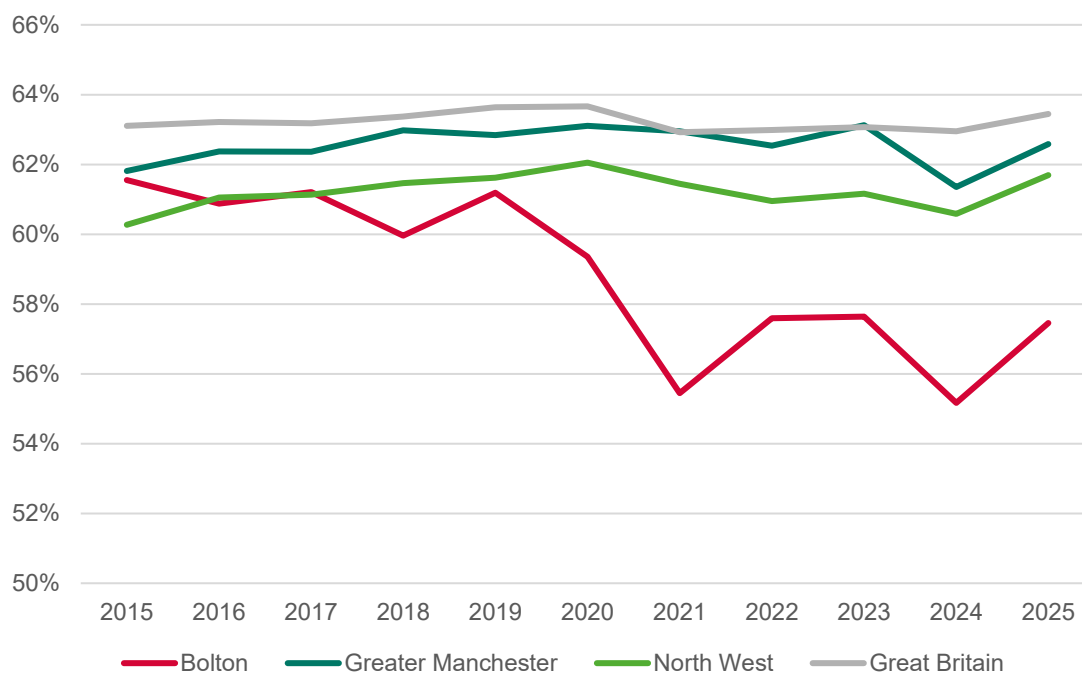
Source: ONS

- 4.18 As shown in the figure below, Bolton's population age profile broadly resembles the country for all age group, aside from children and teenagers (0-19) which are over-represented in Bolton.

Figure 4.4: Population age profile Bolton vs. Great Britain, 2024

Source: ONS, 2025

- 4.19 A key measure of an area's labour force situation is the rate of economically active population. This is defined as those in employment plus those who are unemployed. Bolton's economic activity rate started at 62% in 2015 and the most recent rates show a 57% economic activity rate, showing an overall decline of 5 percentage points. Between 2018 and 2021, Bolton economic activity rates declined steeply, hitting a low of 55% in 2021. Throughout the period, Bolton showed lower economic activity rates when compared to its wider comparators, as shown in the figure below. This may be influenced by the available local employment opportunities.
- 4.20 Post-2021, Bolton started to recover, but rates remain significantly below its pre-2020 levels and below the wider comparators shown. This may be a reflection of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Bolton rates have fallen from being roughly aligned with Greater Manchester and the North West to being below these benchmarks in recent years. The wider comparators have roughly remained consistent throughout the period.

Figure 4.5: Economic activity rate, 2015 to 2025

Source: ONS (Annual Population Survey), 2025

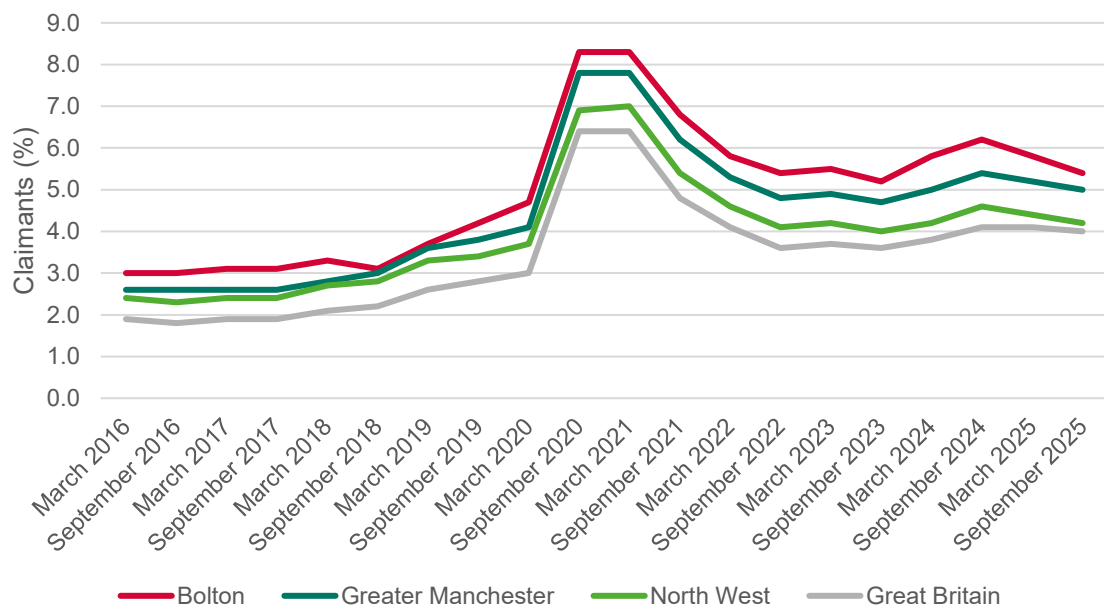
- 4.21 To complement the economic activity rate, the most universally observed figure of a labour force's dynamism is the unemployment rate. The headline measure of unemployment for the UK is the unemployment rate for those aged 16 and over. Unemployment rates are calculated as the number of unemployed people divided by the economically active population.
- 4.22 Bolton's unemployment rate has improved over the past decade, with rates falling between 2014 and 2025. Between 2018 and 2019, Bolton reached one of its lowest figures, aligning closely with the regional trend. This may have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, causing a temporary rise and staying elevated through to 2021. Post-2021, the rate began to stabilise and decline early 2024. Recent data shows Bolton's rate has declined, and is now closer in line with the Greater Manchester, regional and national averages, sitting at 5% as of the end of 2025.

Figure 4.6: Unemployment Rate, 2015 to 2025

Source: ONS, 2025

4.23

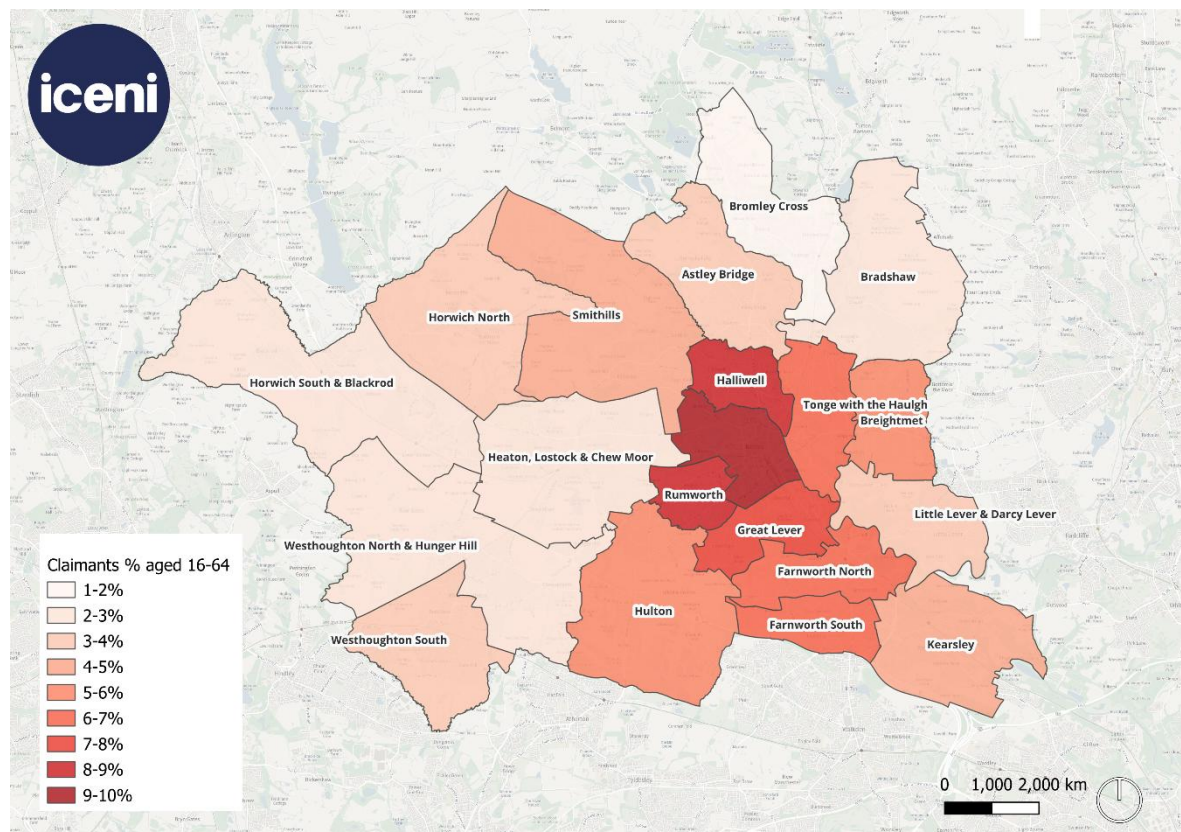
Another measure of interest to contextualise the labour force is the claimant count. The latest data available shows a rate of 5.4% for Bolton, compared to 4% for Great Britain as a whole. The chart below shows the progressive recovery from the 2019-20 period after all areas were hit by the economic recession linked to the global pandemic. As of September 2025, Bolton's rate of 5.4% remains higher than all other wider comparators shown in the figure below.

Figure 4.7: Claimant Counts, 2016 to 2025

Source: ONS, 2025

4.24

In addition, from the time series, the map below shows the location of claimants, inevitably linked to areas with population concentration. However, it must be noted that the proportion of claimants varies to a higher degree between wards than the population does, meaning wards are relatively similar in population size. Claimants vary by a factor of 8 to 1, indicating a concentration of economic disadvantages and poverty in certain areas. As shown, Halliwell, Rumworth and Great Lever show the highest proportion of claimants.

Figure 4.8: Claimant counts by Ward, 2025

Source: ONS and Iceni Projects mapping

4.25 The labour force analysis now turns to evidence related to skills, occupation, qualifications, and earnings. The first observation concerning the workforce is the split per occupation. Bolton exhibits similar proportion of workers in certain occupational groups, but it shows some key differences with the regional and national average such as:

- A lower proportion of professional occupations compared to Greater Manchester, the North West and England
- A higher proportion of administrative and secretarial and skilled trade occupations than the comparator areas
- Higher proportion of the workforce in the bottom three occupational groups (i.e. Sales And Customer Service, Process Plant & Machine Operatives, and Elementary Occupations).

4.26 Inescapably, these discrepancies in the occupational landscape have implications in terms of earnings, productivity and job security, all linked to higher unemployment rates and a

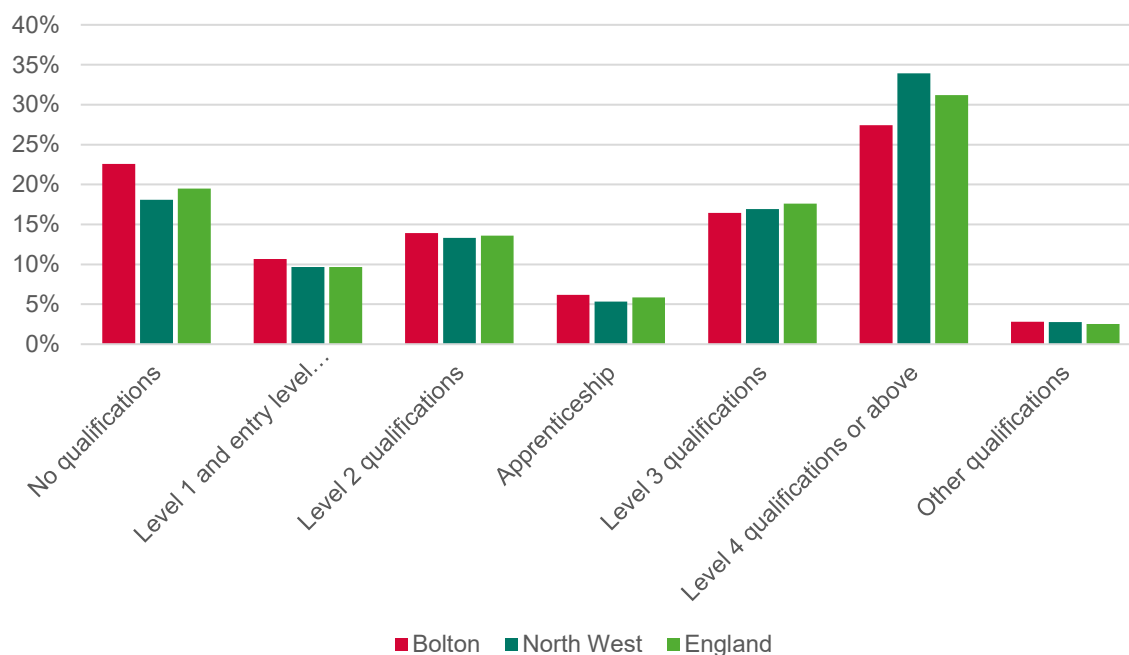
lagging economic performance. Lower professional occupations are likely a reflection of commuting from parts of the Borough towards the Regional Centre and Salford.

Figure 4.9: Occupation (2021 Census)



Source: ONS, 2021

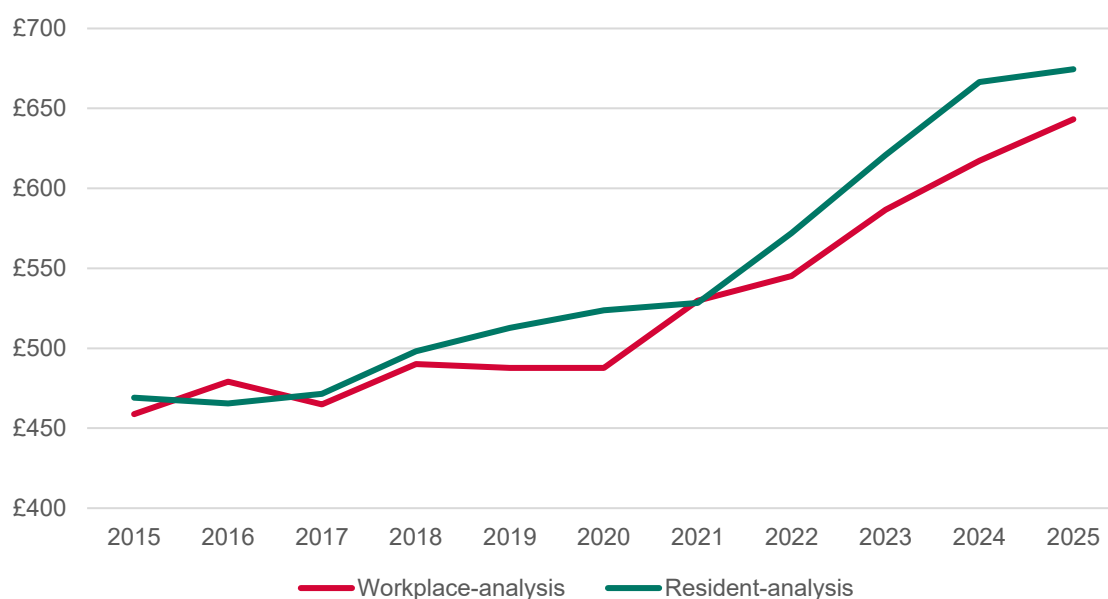
- 4.27 These disparities are closely tied to the educational level. The table below sets out the qualifications in Bolton, compared to its wider comparators. In Bolton, a higher proportion of the population has no qualifications (23%) compared to both the regional (18%) and national rate (19%). The proportion of residents with Level 4 qualifications or above is significantly lower in Bolton (27%) than in the North West (34%) and England (31%). This emphasises the importance of skills investment to transforming economic performance.

Figure 4.10: Education level, Bolton vs. Great Britain, 2021.

Source: ONS, 2021

- 4.28 Finally, we consider earnings data for Bolton. Throughout 2015 to 2025, resident earnings in Bolton have consistently been higher than workplace-based earnings, indicating that people living in the area tend to receive more pay than those working locally. The gap between resident and workplace earnings has widened over time, with resident earnings rising from £10 above workplace earnings in 2015 to £32 higher in 2025.
- 4.29 Resident earnings have increased more sharply since 2021, which may have been influenced by people commuting to higher-paid jobs outside Bolton.

Figure 4.11: Earnings by place of residence vs. Earnings by workplace - Bolton, 2015 to 2025.

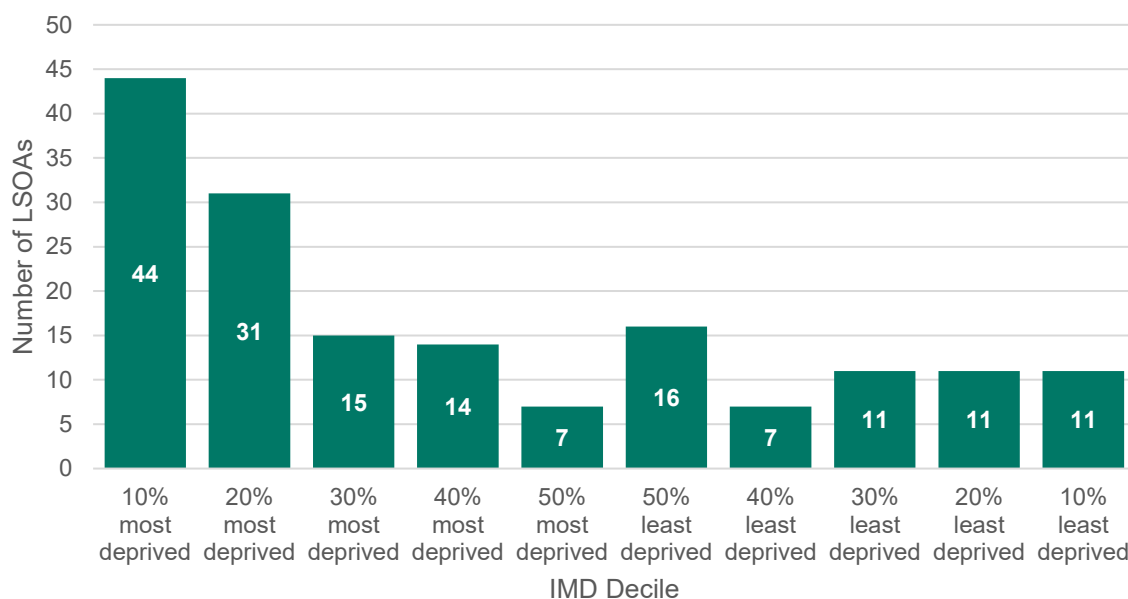


Source: ONS, 2025

Deprivation

- 4.30 This section aims to give an overview of Bolton's relative economic and social condition based on the official Index of Multiple Deprivation¹⁷ (IMD) 2019, which is a national indicator of relative prosperity and poverty of an area. The Index combines information from seven domains to produce an overall relative measure of deprivation. The domains are Income; Employment; Education; Skills and Training; Health and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing Services; Living Environment.
- 4.31 Bolton is split into 167 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), out of which 44 (22%) are ranked within the top 10% of most deprived areas in the country, highlighting concentrations of deprivation in the Borough. As of 2025, Bolton was ranked the 43rd most deprived local authority in the country (out of 317).

¹⁷ English indices of deprivation, 2019. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

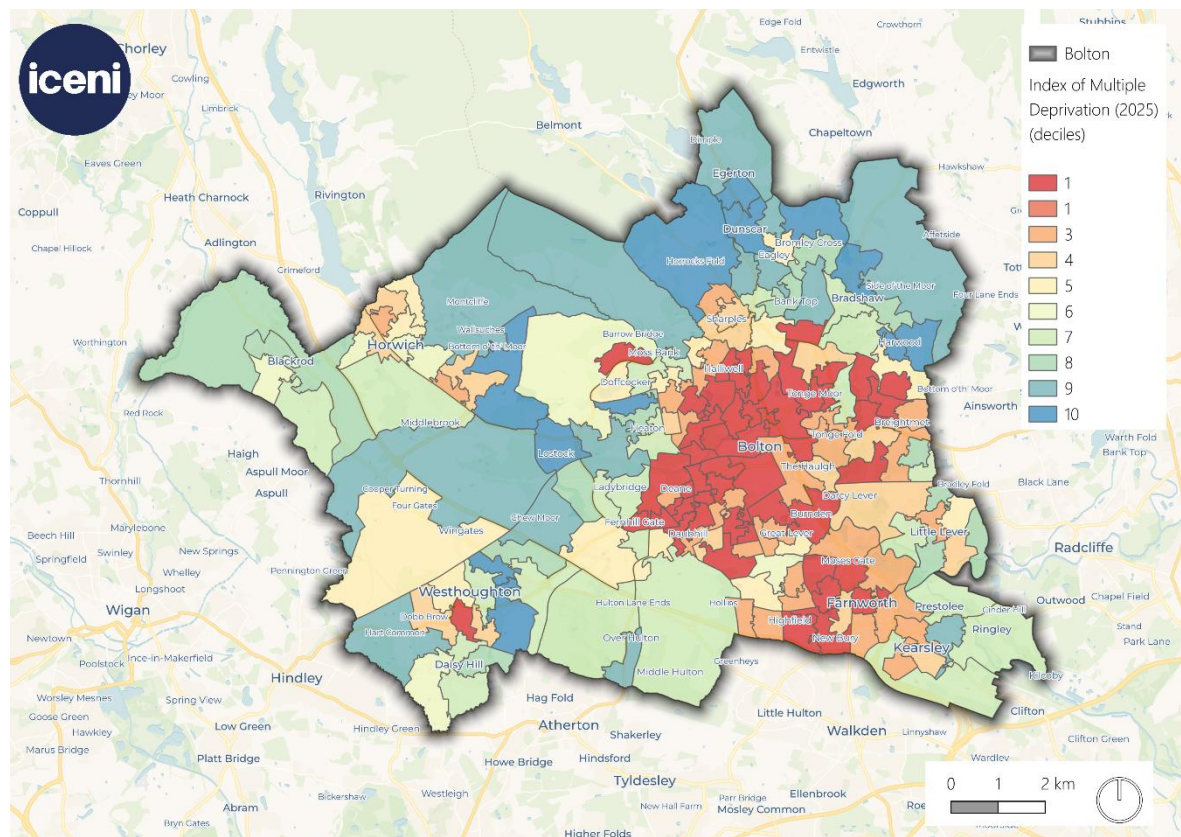
Figure 4.12: LSOA Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) by decile for Bolton, 2025

Source: MHCLG, 2025

4.32 As analysed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment¹⁸ (JSNA) and using mid 2022 LSOA population estimates, '28% of the Bolton population live in an area that is among the 10% most deprived nationally, while 48% of the population live in an area that is among the 20% most deprived nationally.' and:

- Compared to the overall measure, Bolton is relatively worse for income (43), barriers to housing (170) and particularly Health and Disability (53). The authority ranks notably better for employment (32) and crime (13).
- Of Bolton's LSOAs (neighbourhoods) 44 (26%) rank within the 10% most deprived areas in the country. From the 2019 IMD, Bolton had 42 (23.7%) LSOAs rank within the 10% most deprived areas in the country
- There have been few changes regarding the most deprived neighbourhoods and deprivation remains at its greatest in the Wards of Halliwell, Crompton, Brightmet, Great Lever, Smithells, Harper Green, Tongue with the Haulgh, Rumworth, and Farnworth.

¹⁸ Bolton JSNA. Available at: <https://www.boltonjsna.org.uk/deprivation>

Figure 4.13: Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2025

Source: IMD and Iceni Projects mapping

4.33

Deprivation is best curbed by investment in businesses, employment land and infrastructure but physical investment needs to be coupled with that which enables residents to access employment opportunities through addressing skills and aspirations. Large developments such as West of Wingates in the west are however less likely to have a positive impact on deprived communities in the East, at least in the short term.

Conclusion - SWOT analysis

- 4.34 This section is concluded by a situational assessment using a standard Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) Analysis.

Strengths

- Sector strengths in manufacturing, transport & storage, alongside wholesale & retail and health sectors.
- Recent productivity improvements in high-value sectors (finance & insurance, manufacturing and IT).
- Strong population growth.
- Educational and health innovation assets

Weaknesses

- High unemployment & low economic participation
- Lower wages, & educational attainment and risks of low skill/wage equilibrium persisting
- Lower productivity driven by out commuting and sectoral structure/performance.
- Concentration of deprivation

S

W

O

T

Opportunities

- Employment land pipeline includes , West of Wingates, Chequerbent North and Bewshill Farm
- Fostering a warehousing & logistics cluster to serve the North West and further afield.
- Urban regeneration opportunities supported by Towns Investment Fund
- Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor economic opportunities including Health Innovation Bolton
- Micro-business density offering a base for entrepreneurship.

Threats

- High levels of deprivation potentially inhibiting enterprise creation, employment & GVA growth
- Potential loss of business and development opportunities due to incomplete connectivity links within the Greater Manchester area
- Competition from Regional Centre within the Digital sector
- Ongoing skills gap and low educational attainment.
- Low business scale-up rate, lack of large firms may limit high-value employment growth

5. PROPERTY MARKET REVIEW

- 5.1 This chapter provides an assessment of the commercial property market in Bolton, benchmarked against Greater Manchester, the North West and England. It is split into two sections – one on the office market and one on the industrial market (where industrial refers to general industrial, light industrial and warehousing).
- 5.2 The assessment combines quantitative analysis with qualitative elements to build up a picture of the level and nature of demand. The quantitative analysis uses CoStar data - one of the UKs largest providers of commercial property data.
- 5.3 Valuation Office Agency data has also been used which provides the best indication of the amount of commercial floorspace in the area. The qualitative analysis has been informed by stakeholder engagement with local agents including Nolan Real Estate, in addition to business organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce and public sector bodies such as MIDAS and the Growth Company.

National Office Market Dynamics

- 5.4 The global pandemic has accelerated the rise of remote and hybrid working models, and many companies have since discovered the benefits of offering flexible working arrangements. As a result, many businesses no longer require large, centralized office spaces to accommodate their staff. Many employees now work from home or in co-working spaces, which has led to a decreased need for conventional office leases.
- 5.5 Cost-cutting pressures by businesses have also been a significant driver of reduced demand for office space. Given volatile economic conditions in recent years, many organisations, particularly small to medium-sized businesses, are seeking ways to reduce operational costs. Office rent is often one of the highest overhead expenses for companies, so many have opted for smaller, more flexible spaces, or are shifting towards remote operations altogether. This trend has led to rising vacancy rates in the office market, and in larger office buildings in particular.
- 5.6 The rapid digital transformation across industries has meant that many tasks traditionally carried out in office spaces can now be done remotely or through virtual platforms. Businesses are embracing technology for collaboration, communication, and document management, reducing the need for physical office environments.

- 5.7 Shifting corporate priorities are also an important driver. Many businesses are also focusing on employee well-being, sustainability, and cost efficiency. The need for physical office space has therefore diminished, especially for companies that do not require constant in-person interaction. In response to these changing priorities, companies are prioritizing flexible spaces that can be adjusted based on real-time needs.
- 5.8 At Autumn 2025, CoStar reports that take-up has seen a resurgence and demand turned positive, with more firms occupying space than vacating it. However, the UK vacancy rate remains at 8.7%, still at a 13-year high and higher than the 4.5% level when the pandemic struck.
- 5.9 The overarching theme of recent years has been for firms to take less space when signing new leases. However, there have been some notable expansions recently, as business confidence improves and the return-to-office trend gains momentum. Data from Remit Consulting shows that office attendance is at its highest level since the pandemic began.
- 5.10 Recent deals and aggregate net absorption data show an ongoing preference for high-quality space as firms commit to space decisions. Landlords and developers of best-in-class buildings have felt limited pain throughout the past few years as prime rents in popular city centre locations continue to rise. However, older offices in secondary locations will likely remain highly challenged in a polarised market.

Manchester Office Market Outlook

- 5.11 The Manchester office market has shown strong momentum in the first half of 2025, achieving its best leasing performance since pre-pandemic 2019 across the city centre and out-of-town markets. The vacancy rate has edged down marginally to 10.7%, supported by positive net absorption and a slowdown in new completions, having risen steadily over several years from a cyclical low of 5.2% in 2020. Notably, secondary and out-of-town space have seen two consecutive quarters of positive absorption—an encouraging shift after years of pandemic-driven weakness.
- 5.12 Leasing activity has been diverse. Warner Bros signed the largest deal of Q2, taking 4,500 sq.m at 75 Trafford Wharf Road, Old Trafford. Moreover, Salford Quays and Trafford recorded their highest quarterly take-up in two years. Education providers have also been active, repurposing second-hand space. Recent examples include Elizabeth School of London and UK Management College, while Arden University expanded further in

Spinningfields at £35/ sq.ft. Corporate occupiers continue to favour top-tier space: Following Autotrader's large deal in January, No. 3 Circle Square has attracted firms like Havas, and Puma—the latter relocating its UK HQ from London.

- 5.13 Manchester's office market has been a hive of new construction for the past ten years, as an average of 65,000 sq.m of offices has been delivered annually.
- 5.14 Construction starts have slowed over the past two years as viability remains challenging but significant schemes continue to break ground. Around 70,000 sq.m is underway, including Landsec's 21,600 sq.m Republic and the 28,000 sq.m Rylands redevelopment. Life sciences are also expanding, with Bruntwood SciTech delivering new lab space in the Knowledge Quarter, off Oxford Road.
- 5.15 Average market rents in Manchester are currently sitting at £22.00/ sq.ft. Of the Big Six markets, this places it second behind Bristol (£25.40/ sq.ft) and slightly ahead of Edinburgh (£21.55/ sq.ft) and Birmingham (£20.60/ sq.ft). Landlords are adapting to hybrid work trends by offering plug-and-play and CAT A+ fit-outs, commanding premiums of £5–£10/ sq.ft. Although growth has moderated, prime rents have reached £45/ sq.ft and refurbished buildings like Quoin and Bond are achieving rents of £36–£37/ sq.ft.
- 5.16 Investment activity remains subdued, with volumes at £248 million over the past 12 months, which compares to the five-year average of £627 million. Notable deals include M&G's sale of 101 Embankment for £75 million and 1 Portland Street for £7.5 million. Conversion-led acquisitions are increasing, such as Broad Street's £30 million purchase of Barclay House for residential redevelopment.

Bolton Office Market Overview and Outlook

- 5.17 The Bolton submarket is a mid-sized submarket of Greater Manchester that has seen relatively low activity both on the supply and demand sides in recent years.
- 5.18 The Borough's office market can be segmented into three broad categories:
- Middlebrook particularly Parklands, focused around M61 Junction 6 which is the only location with Grade A space;

- Bolton Town Centre where office floorspace demand is currently limited, affected by the wider public realm, struggling retail and limited leisure offer;
- Chorley New Road – where a mid-market offer which has grown underpinned by professional services occupiers seeking Grade B stock in converted premises.

- 5.19 The Bolton borough office market has a vacancy rate of 14.0% in 2025. This vacancy rate is 3.4% higher than it was this time last year. There was 12,000 sq.m of negative absorption and 350 sq.ft was removed from inventory due to demolition.
- 5.20 Rents have increased by 0.8% in the past 12 months and are currently around £14.40/ sq.ft. CoStar reports that no new build office space is under construction in the Bolton office submarket. In the past year, there have been 3 sales, which traded for approximately £1.5 million in volume.
- 5.21 Vacancy is 3.0% in 4 & 5 Star buildings, and absorption has been flat in this asset class over the past year. Within 3 Star buildings, vacancy is 17.1% and there has been 11,000 sq.m of negative absorption. Around 10.7% of 1 & 2 Star space is vacant, and there has been 16,000 sq.ft of negative absorption over the past year.
- 5.22 Current vacancy is higher than its trailing three-year average of 11.0%, which is higher than the 9.9% trailing three-year average of the Manchester market as a whole. The Bolton market is approximately 8,000 SF smaller than it was three years ago. Demolitions have accounted for the entirety of this decrease. Rents have increased by 8.0% over the past three years, higher than the wider Manchester market average of 7.7%. There have been 18 sales over the past three years, amounting to £7.4 million in volume and 160,000 SF of inventory.

Office Market Analysis

- 5.23 We drill next into detailed statistics on office market performance. The Valuation Office Agency¹⁹ provide information on the number of office properties and the amount of floorspace by administrative area. From 2002 onwards, the total office floorspace began to

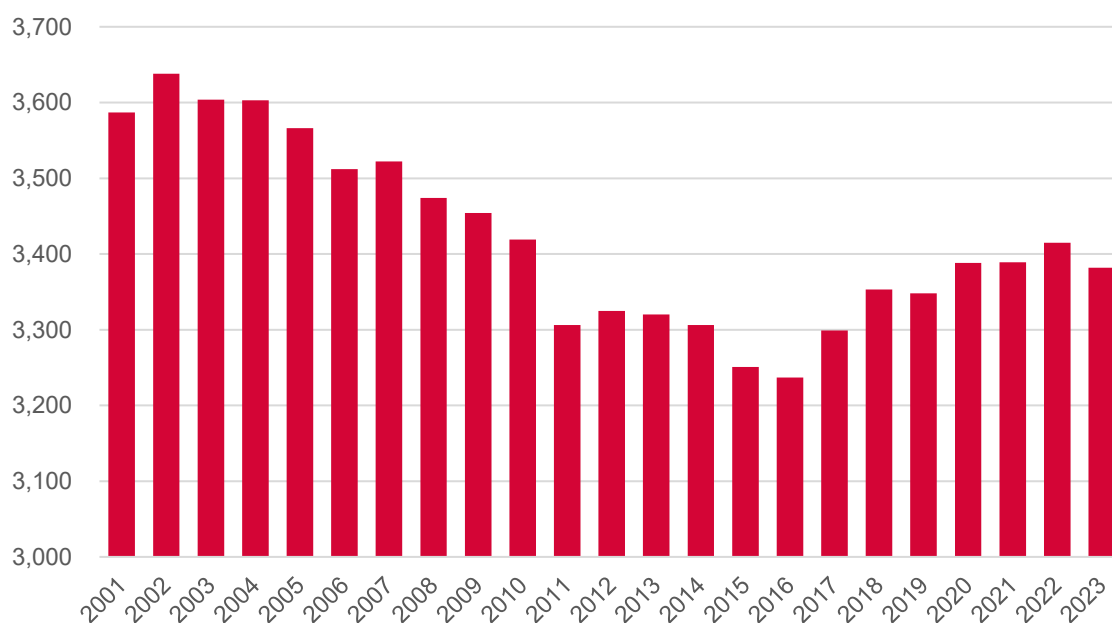
¹⁹ Valuation Office Agency NDR Business Floorspace Tables, 2020, available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/non-domestic-rating-stock-of-properties-2020>

decline up until 2016, which was followed by an increase until 2022. Recent data in 2023 shows a slight decline. The recent rise in total office floorspace aligns with broader trends of commercial regeneration and planned developments in Bolton's town centre and business sectors.

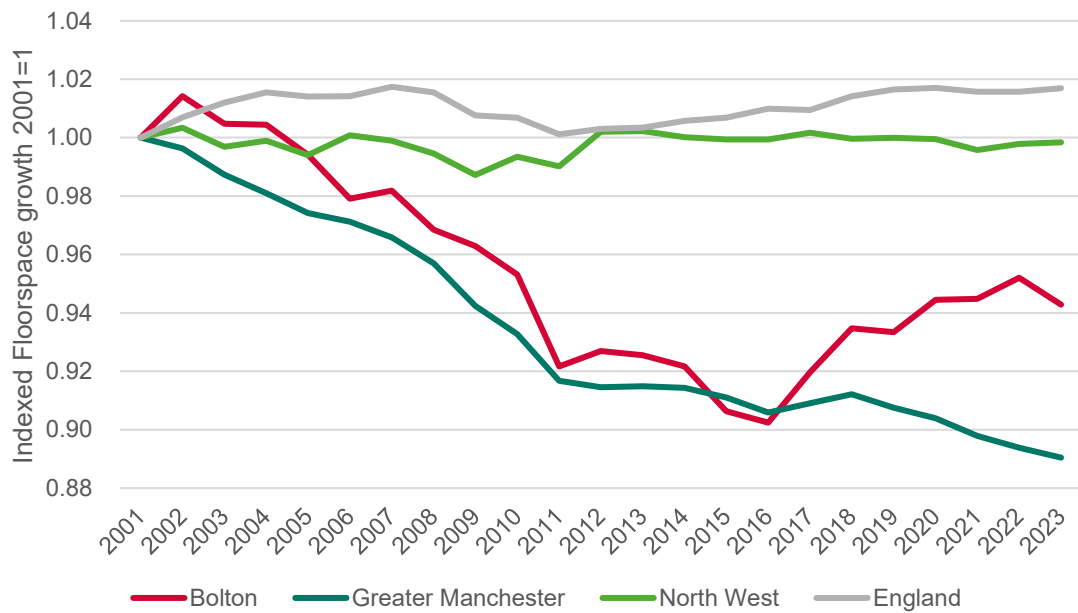
5.24 However VOA monitoring data needs to be treated with caution as it represents rated properties which can be subject to fluctuations due to vacancy and voids data, derelictions or reclassifications. Analysis of CoStar deliveries suggests very little new space has come forward in recent years and non since 2019.

Figure 5.1: Total Office Floorspace (sqm)



Source: Valuation Office Agency, 2025

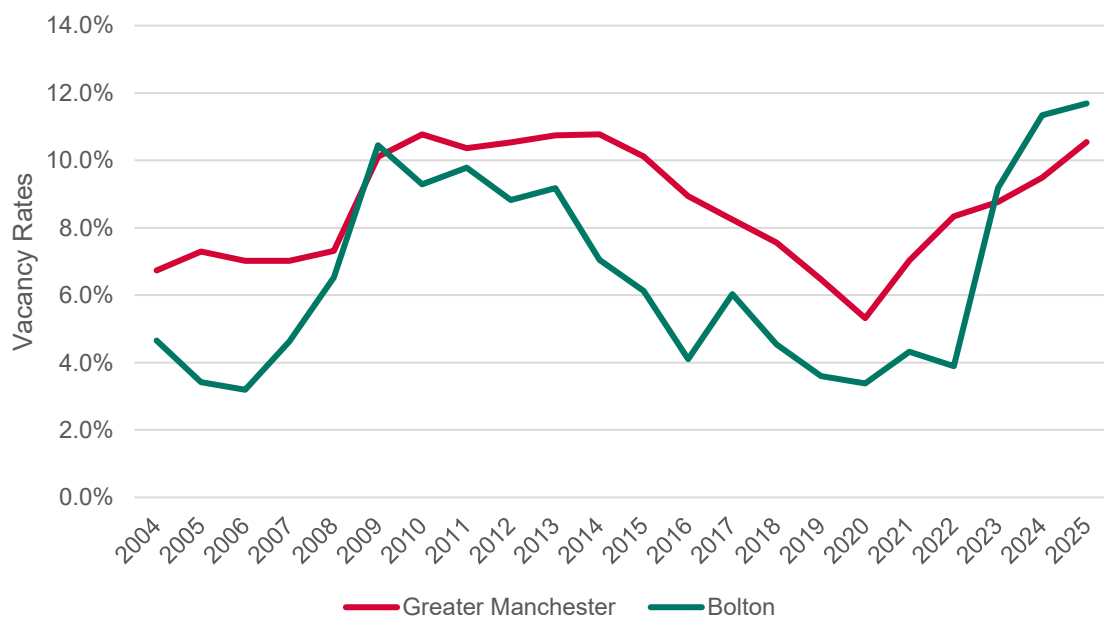
5.25 The figure below shows the amount of floorspace change in Bolton compared to Greater Manchester, the region and England. From 2007 onwards, Bolton experienced a steep decline in floorspace growth until 2016, when the floorspace began to increase. In comparison to Greater Manchester, Bolton has shown higher growth in office floorspace from 2016 onwards.

Figure 5.2: Indexed Office Floorspace Growth, 2001 = 1

Source: Valuation Office Agency

5.26

The figure below shows how the vacancy rate in Bolton has changed over time compared to Greater Manchester. Bolton's vacancy rate surged from 3.9% in 2022 to a historical high of 11.7% in 2025. This rate exceeds the Greater Manchester average of 10.5%.

Figure 5.3: Office Vacancy Rates

Source: CoStar, 2025

5.27

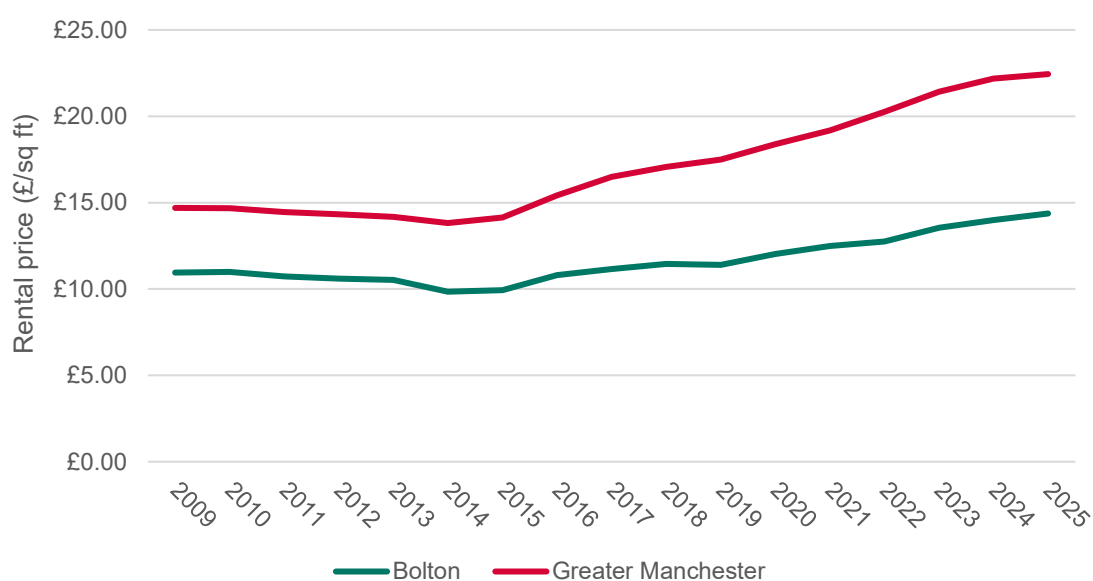
Figure 4.4 shows how the average rental price has evolved over the last 15 years or so. Greater Manchester has experienced rental growth, with prices rising from around £14 sq.ft

in 2004 to approximately £22 sq.ft by 2025, representing a roughly 60% increase. Bolton has seen slower growth from approximately £11 to £14 sq.ft over the same period, an increase of 31%.

5.28 When considered alongside vacancy rate trends, Bolton has experienced an increase in vacancy rates and gradual increases in rental prices, but at a slower rate than Greater Manchester. This suggests Bolton may be experiencing challenges attracting tenants despite relatively more affordable pricing.

5.29 Recent lease deals points to rental values of around 7 to £11 per sq.ft. Middlebrook/Parklands which offers higher quality space, has seen average rents of around £11 per sq.ft, with a high of £16.25 per sq.ft at 1A Parklands (NatWest). Headline rents of £18 p.s.f are insufficient for new speculative office development to be brought forward and make viability of new-build office development challenging. Rents would have to grow to c. £18 p.s.f + to make office development commercially viable.

Figure 5.4: Average Office Rental Costs (£/sq.ft)



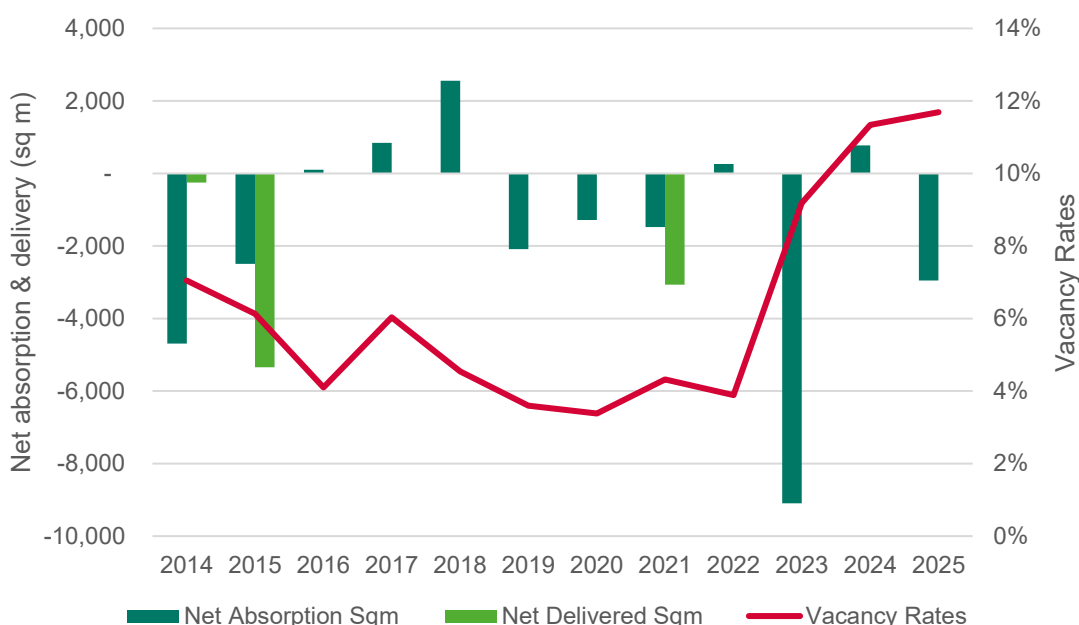
Source: CoStar, 2025

5.30 CoStar provides data on net absorption. This is the balance between the amount of space moved into and moved out of (i.e. Net absorption = Move ins – Move outs). It provides an indicator of the strength of demand. Net deliveries are the difference between floorspace delivered (i.e. constructed and brought onto the market) and demolished (or otherwise taken out of use and removed from the market).

5.31 A positive net absorption figure indicates stronger demand and leads to a falling vacancy rate (unless it is outweighed by net deliveries). On the other hand, a negative net absorption figure indicates weaker demand and leads to a rising vacancy rate (unless it is outweighed by negative net deliveries).

5.32 In Bolton, vacancy rates, which had improved from 7% in 2014 to 4% in 2019, have since increased to 12% in 2025. In 2023, there was negative absorption of over 9,000 sqm, indicating significant changes in space being vacated. New deliveries have increased by 8,655 sq.m m over the period, suggesting decreased occupier demand rather than oversupply.

Figure 5.5: Office Net Absorption & Delivery (sqm)



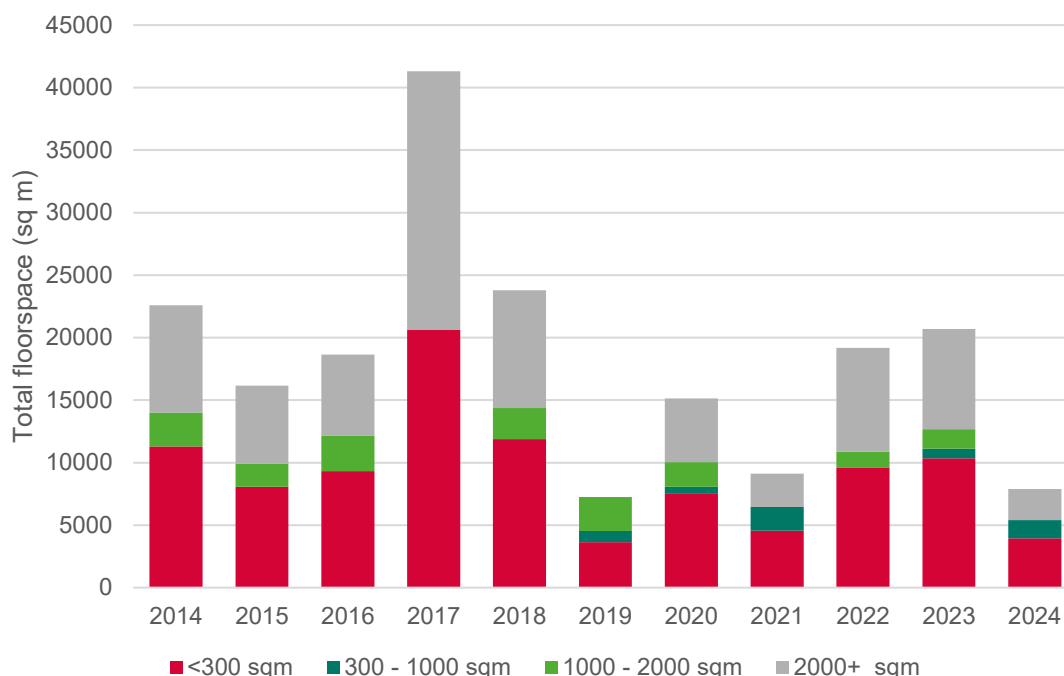
Source: CoStar, 2025

5.33 The amount of leasing activity which has occurred in various size bands has been assessed to provide an indication of demand by size. However, it should be remembered that leasing activity can be constrained by the size of available stock. Therefore, our assessment of demand by size has been considered together with information from stakeholders. Leasing activity differs from absorption in that it refers to the amount of space which is leased (i.e. signed for rather than physically moved in to).

5.34 As seen in Figure 4.6 leasing activity in Bolton is driven primarily by spaces above 2,000 sqm in size. Smaller sites show more shorter-term variations. The 2000+ sqm category

begins to show decline post-2019. The <300 sqm and 2000+ sqm categories show spikes in 2017.

Figure 5.6: Office Leasing Activity by Size Band (sqm)



Source: CoStar

5.35 Several projects mentioned in the policy review have the potential to deliver significant office space and contribute to the town's office supply²⁰ including:

- **Blackhorse Street**, an opportunity area to develop 7.8 hectares of land between the railway station, university, and Cheadle Square, with *“plans for a “Digital City” development aimed at creating a preferred location for innovative companies operating in the digital and cyber sectors, that may wish to engage with the university.”*
- **Crompton Place** the former Crompton Place shopping centre, identified as a town centre key intervention area, with proposals for a mixed-use redevelopment to provide residential, hotel, and around 10,500 sq.m office floorspace.

²⁰ Bolton Town Investment Plan. Available at: <https://investinbolton.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Bolton-TIP-Brochure4.pdf>

Engagement

- 5.36 Engagement with commercial agents and stakeholders points to an office market which is split between the town centre and peripheral areas across the Borough. The town centre performs less well, reflecting the outdated style and quality of much of its stock. In contrast, the peripheral office market is strong, characterised by high demand and an undersupply of good quality space.
- 5.37 The Wellsprings Centre, owned by Bolton Council and operated by Oxford Innovation provides incubator space for digital and creative businesses in the centre of Bolton. Given Bolton's location on the fringe of Manchester, there is a risk that these businesses are drawn into Manchester as they grow and expand, looking for a stronger pool of talent.
- 5.38 Typically larger occupiers with a Greater Manchester wide requirement will opt for space within Manchester City Centre. However Bolton's office market has remained buoyant due to capturing more price-sensitive occupiers, offering a cheaper alternative to Manchester, Trafford and Salford.
- 5.39 In Bolton modern, well-connected offices in the sub-500 sq.m range are particularly sought after by occupiers. Demand for managed office space has been strong run by flex-space operators such as Regus. Any speculative office development should target the smaller end of the market, no larger than 200 sq.m units.
- 5.40 Existing available stock is often poor quality and large floorplates; there is scope to refurbish existing office stock to provide high quality, sub-divided units. Stakeholders were uncertain of delivery of new office space within the town centre given the lack of progress in recent years.
- 5.41 Viability is a challenge in the office market for new build stock with prevailing rents well below the £35-40/sqft required, meaning bringing forward quality stock will be challenging without strong prelets, cross subsidy or funding support.

National Industrial Dynamics

- 5.42 The UK industrial property market has experienced a slowdown in demand due to high inflation and interest rates, but the sector remains strong due to structural factors such as e-commerce and supply chain reconfiguration.
- 5.43 Despite rising vacancies, the overall rate remains relatively low. Construction activity has begun to ease, but larger developers are still pressing ahead with significant schemes, driven by their superior purchasing power, large customer bases, and the ability to deliver best-in-class warehouses that satisfy the demands of increasingly ESG²¹-conscious occupiers.
- 5.44 Tenant appetite for greener buildings is supporting rental growth, although rent gains have decelerated due to rising vacancies and occupiers facing growing cost pressures. Overall, landlords are expected to continue to hold the balance of negotiating power, especially owners of newer and more energy-efficient schemes that are in relatively short supply.

Greater Manchester Industrial Market Outlook

- 5.45 Greater Manchester is the North of England's largest industrial market. It contains around 19 million sq.m of industrial space, about two-thirds of which is logistics. Major industrial nodes include the M62 and M61 corridors to the north of Manchester's city centre, Trafford to the west and Manchester Airport to the south. There are fast connections to major population centres such as Leeds, Birmingham and Glasgow. In addition, the Humberside ports can be reached in around two hours.
- 5.46 Demand for industrial space in the Manchester City Region is at 2025 relatively subdued. While the vacancy rate sits about halfway among CoStar's 54 markets, at 5.1%, it has increased from a low base of 1.6% three years ago, when it was one of the lowest in the country. Several logistics schemes have been delivered and negative net absorption has been pronounced in recent quarters. However, the vacancy rate sits well below the previous high of over 9% in 2012.

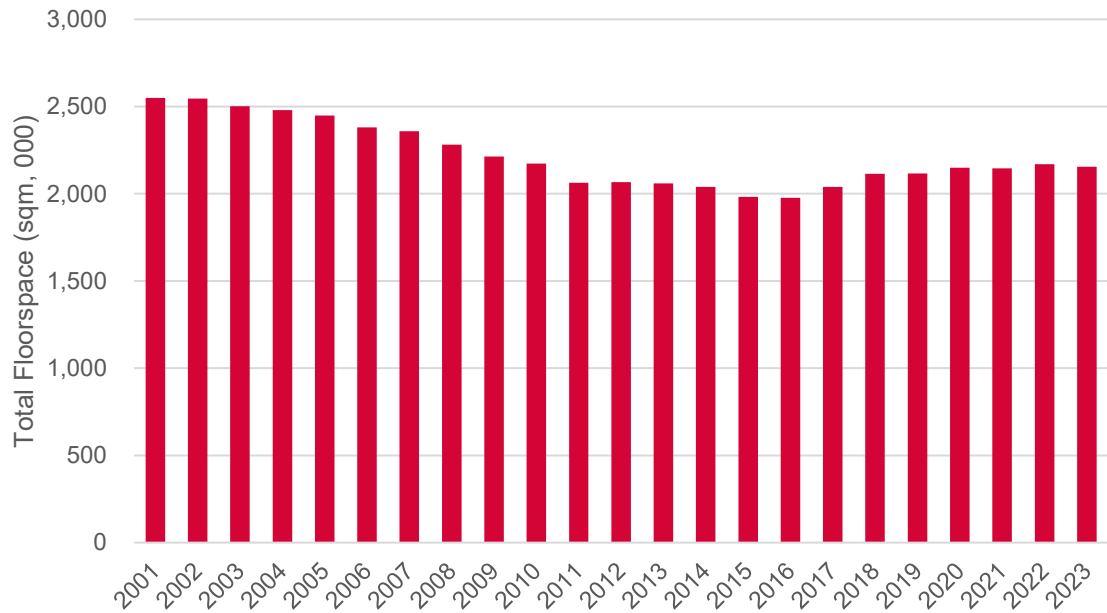
²¹ Environmental, Social, Governance

- 5.47 There has been a steady level of lettings of more than 9,000 sq.m in recent months, including Whistl taking 13,000 sq.m at PLP Astley in Wigan and Sterling Event Group taking further new space, 9,500 sq.m at Icon 4 at Icon Logistics Park, Manchester Airport. This is one of the few larger deals in South Manchester, with Oldham topping industrial leasing volumes across Greater Manchester's 11 submarkets in recent quarters breaking the dominance of Rochdale and Trafford, which have traditionally had the busiest leasing activity over the medium to long term. While leasing activity has slowed in the Manchester mid-box market in recent quarters, new and refurbished space continues to receive interest, such as Indurent's scheme at Oldham Broadway Business Park.
- 5.48 Construction starts remain relatively steady and there remains about 73,400 sq.m of industrial space underway in the Manchester City Region . Most of this is speculative, such as 31,000 sq.m Bolt 330, Little Hulton and PLP's mid-box scheme at Middleton, near Oldham. Data centre development is also increasing in Greater Manchester. Specialist developer and operator Kao Data has commenced construction of its new £350 million 40megawatt data centre in Reddish, Stockport and Peel Waters' £250 million data centre at Halo West in Eccles has also recently been approved by Salford Council.
- 5.49 The slowdown in recent demand has resulted in annual rental growth tapering to 5.6%. This has been a gradual slowdown from the peak of the cycle of 9% at the beginning of 2022, after several years of robust demand and low vacancy. Despite this, Manchester remains a relatively inexpensive market in which to rent industrial property. Its average asking rent of £8.20/ sq.ft is less than neighbouring Cheshire (£8.45/ sq.ft) and the national average of £9.30/ sq.ft.

Bolton Industrial Market Analysis

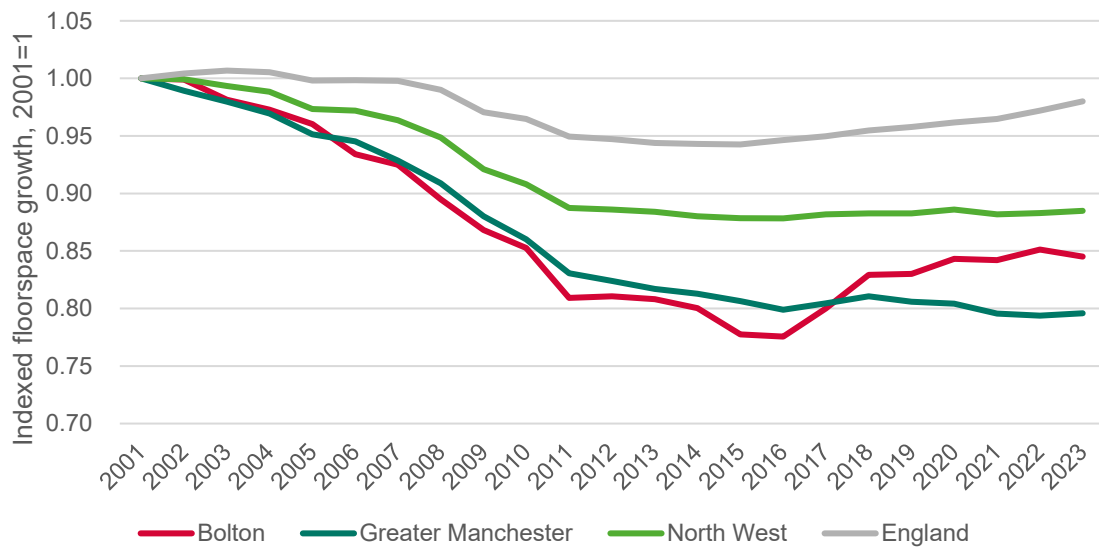
5.50 Between 2001 and 2011, there was a downward trend of floorspace from 2,549,000 to 2,063,000 sqm followed by stabilised figures until 2016. From 2017 onwards, there was an increase of floorspace until 2023, where there was a slight dip.

Figure 5.7: Total Industrial Floorspace (sqm ,000)



Source: Valuation Office Agency, 2023

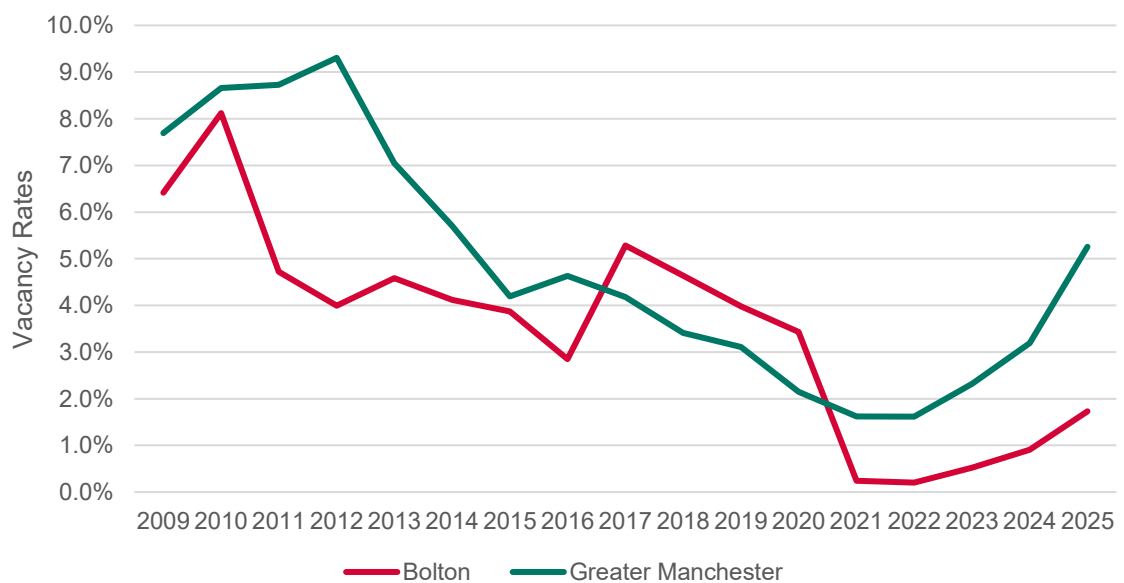
5.51 The figure below shows how the amount of floorspace has changed in Bolton compared to Greater Manchester, the region and England. In every geography, the relative industrial stock has decreased when indexed based on 2001 as a start year for the analysis. All areas show gradual stabilisation after 2016. Bolton's figures are consistently below the regional and national average but above the Greater Manchester average since 2018.

Figure 5.8: Indexed Industrial Floorspace Growth, 2001 = 1

Source: Valuation Office Agency, 2023

5.52

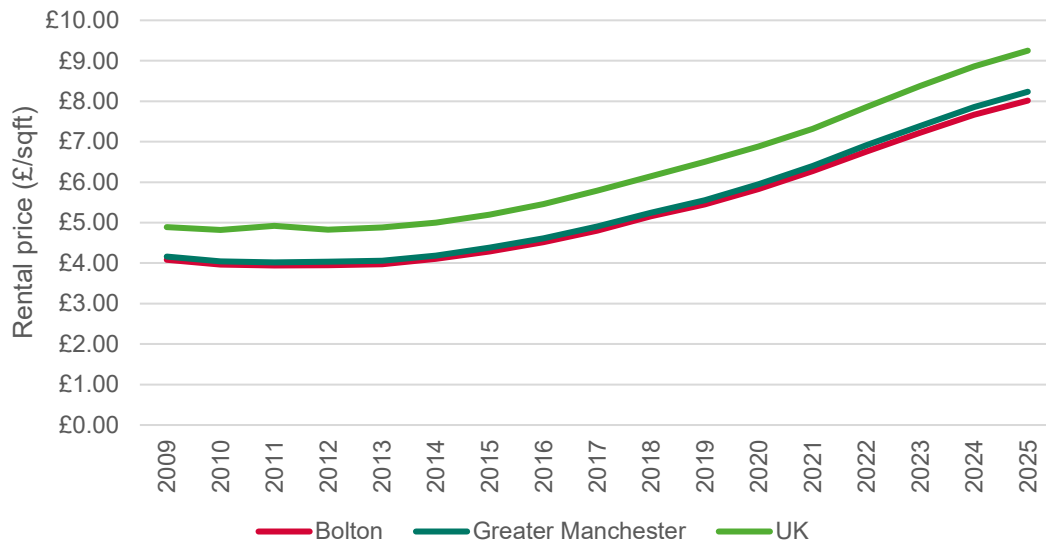
The figure below shows how the vacancy rate in Bolton has changed over time compared to Greater Manchester. Both areas show a sharp decline in rates from 2009 to 2016, followed by fluctuations and gradual increases from 2021 onwards. Bolton's rates peaked in 2010 and fell consistently until 2016, followed by a rebound, driven by initial delivery at Logistics North. The lowest rates for Bolton are between 2021 to 2022, likely reflecting pandemic effects. Recent years show a gradual rise but far below the peak in 2010.

Figure 5.9: Industrial Vacancy Rates

Source: CoStar, 2025

- 5.53 The figure below shows how the average rental price has evolved between 2009 and 2025. Bolton's average rental price for industrial space broadly aligns with Greater Manchester's average. There is steady growth throughout the period for both areas. Growth accelerated slightly in the post-2015 period for both areas.

Figure 5.10: Average Industrial Rents (£/sq. ft)



Source: CoStar

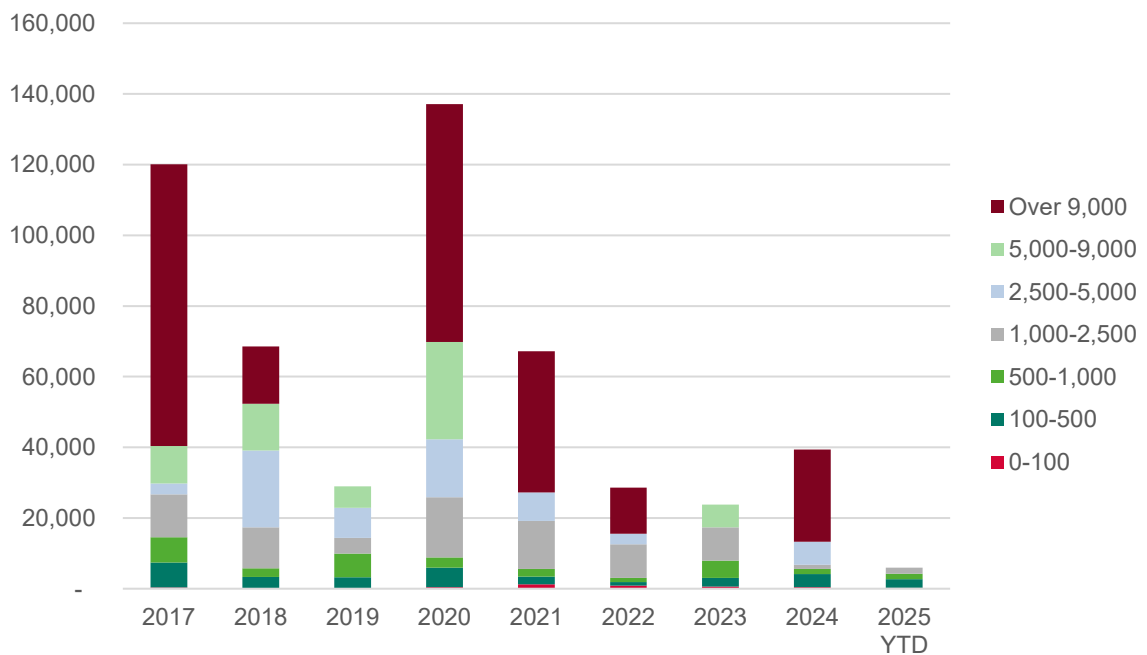
- 5.54 From 2015 onwards, Bolton delivered significant new supply at Logistics North, peaking in 2018 and is matched with strong net absorption as units were swiftly absorbed by the market. There have been limited net deliveries across the Borough since 2021.
- 5.55 This period was subsequently matched with negative net absorption, as potential occupiers were restricted by sub-5% vacancy, with existing businesses unable to expand and new occupiers unable to move into the borough. This market dynamic strongly indicates that Bolton's industrial and warehousing market take-up has been suppressed by a lack of available supply.

Figure 5.11: Net Absorption & Deliveries of Industrial Space (sqm)

Source: CoStar, 2025

5.56

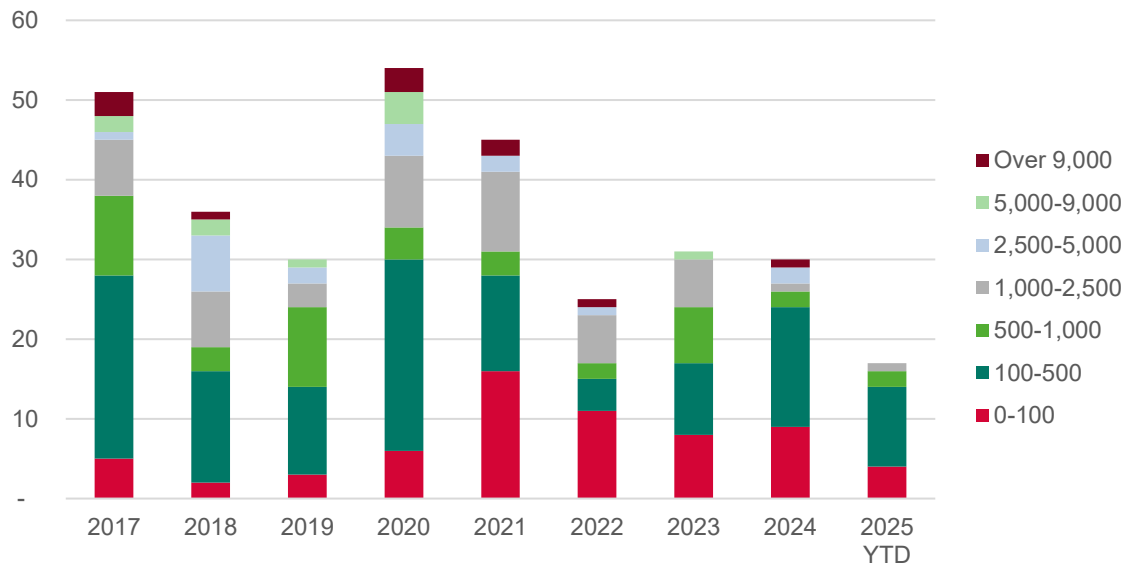
Leasing by size band provides a crucial indicator of market dynamics in Bolton. As seen in Figure 5.12, industrial leasing activity has seen significant activity in the +9,000 sq.m (+100,000 sq.ft) size band. Leasing activity has been subdued since 2020 however this may be due to a lack of supply rather than a lack of demand.

Figure 5.12: Industrial Leasing Activity by Size Band (sqm)

Source: CoStar

5.57 In terms of the number of deals, activity is focussed at the smaller end of the market, particularly in sub-2,500 sq.m units. A majority of deals have been in the 100 to 500 sq.m market, indicating the importance of continuing to provide smaller units alongside big box deliveries.

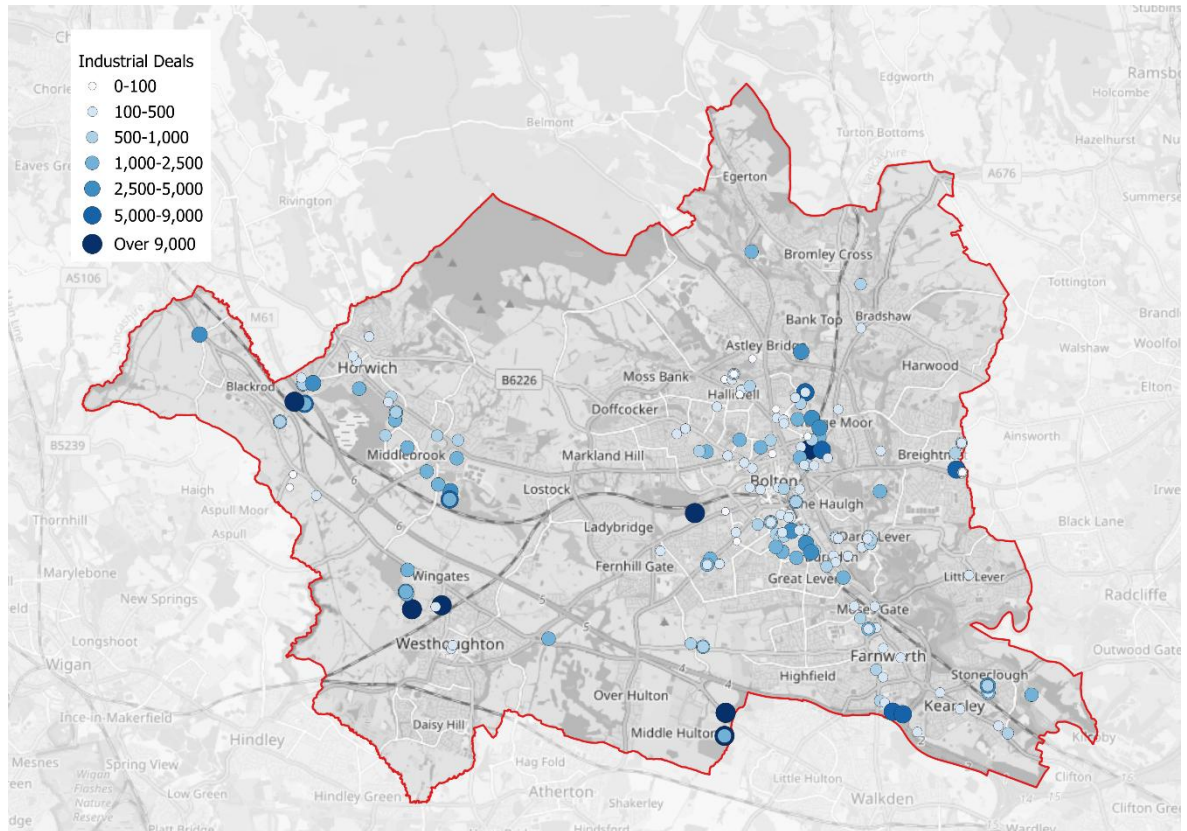
Figure 5.13: Number of Deals by Size Band (sqm)



Source: CoStar

- 5.58 The map below shows the spatial distribution of deals. Larger deals for strategic units have typically been located on the M61 at Wingates, Logistics North and Blackrod Industrial Estate.

Figure 5.14 Industrial Deals 2017-25 YTD



Source: CoStar 2025

Availability

- 5.59 The table below shows industrial availability by age band as of November 2025. Overall there is 148,000 sq.m of industrial floorspace available across 42 properties, however only 38,300 sq.m of this floorspace is existing, with a majority proposed. It is of note, that of the existing available floorspace nearly half (47%) is within pre-1980s stock, indicating that there is a lack of modern stock ready to move in to.

Table 0-15: Availability by Age (sq.m) - Bolton

Age Band	Available floorspace (sq.m)	No. of properties
Pre-1980s	17,896	8
1980-90	4,220	6
1990-2000	2,738	3
2000-10	3,851	5
Post-2010	9,564	6
Proposed	109,766	14
Total	148,035	42

Source: Iceni analysis of CoStar 2025

- 5.60 The table below shows available industrial floorspace by size band. It is of note that there is no availability within existing properties for units of 5,000 to 9,000 sq.m i.e. mid-box units, with only a further two available in the pre-let pipeline. Similarly, there is only one big-box unit (+9,000 sq.m) existing and immediately available, however available pipeline supply at West of Wingates should alleviate this shortage in the short to medium term.

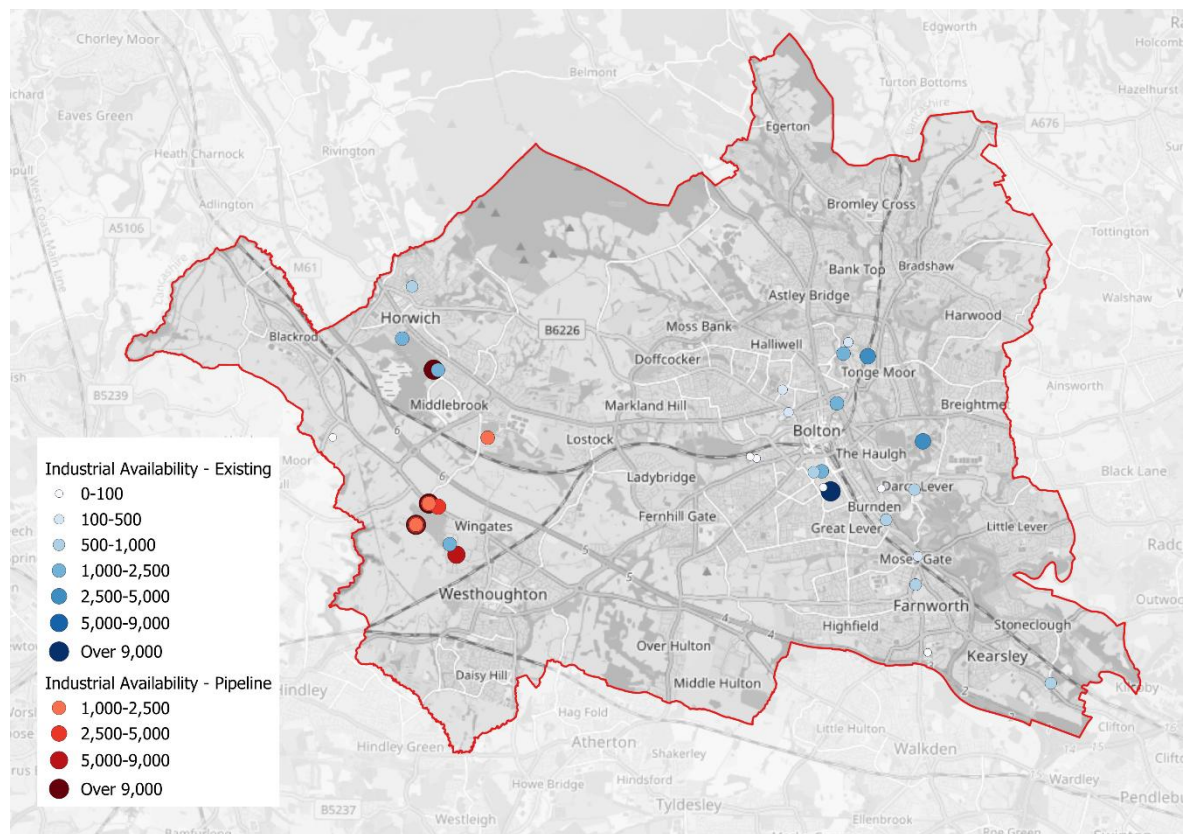
Table 0-16: Availability by Size Band (sq.m)

Age Band	Existing		Proposed	
	Available floorspace (sq.m)	No. of properties	Available floorspace (sq.m)	No. of properties
0-100 sq.m	491	7	0	0
100-500 sq.m	972	5	0	0
500-1,000 sq.m	4,239	6	0	0
1,000-2,500 sq.m	9,704	6	9,478	5
2,500-5,000 sq.m	13,517	3	12,077	3
5,000 – 9,000 sq.m	0	0	15,329	2
Over 9,000 sq.m	9,347	1	72,882	4

Source: Iceni analysis of CoStar 2025

- 5.61 Pipeline industrial space advertised as available includes:
- **West of Wingates / M61 Junction 6 (Phase 1 marketed as Hexagon Park):** consisting of a mix of large-scale warehousing and advanced manufacturing. Phase 1 is advertised as available for pre-let;
 - **Platinum Business Park – Lostock Industrial Estate:** 4 industrial and warehousing units of 1,173 to 2,160 sq.m

- 5.62 The map below shows the spatial distribution of available industrial premises.

Figure 5.15 Available Industrial Properties by Size (sq.m)

Source: CoStar

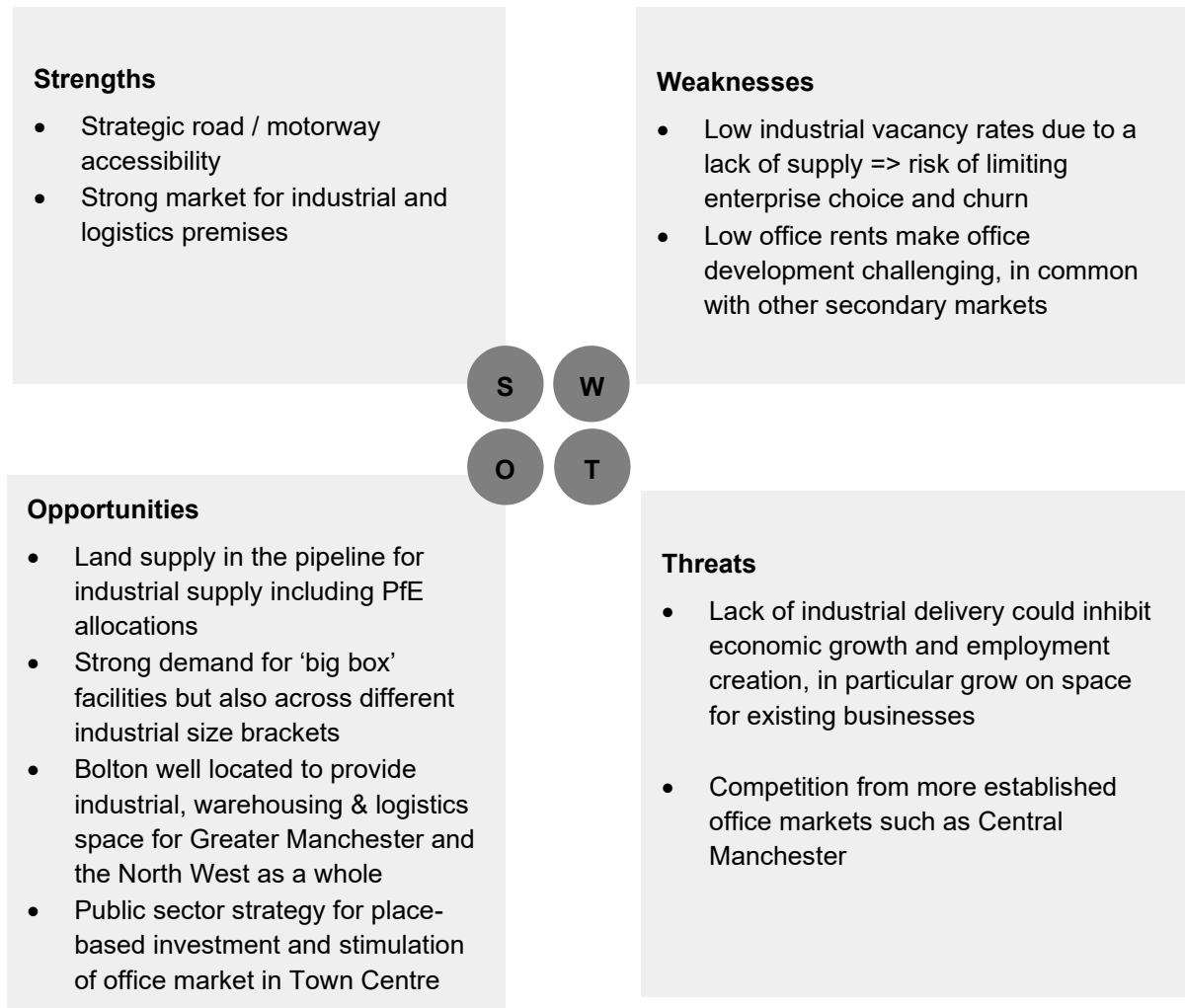
Engagement

- 5.63 The industrial market continues to see strong activity, with the strongest demand for units of 200 to 2,000 sq.m driven by local businesses looking to expand. The industrial market within Bolton remains buoyant, benefiting from a good stock base and well-located spaces such as along Waters Meeting Road.
- 5.64 Much of the demand comes from logistics operators seeking lower operating costs, while manufacturing businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to secure suitable accommodation due to competition with logistics operators. Rising power and labour costs are adding further pressure, making affordability a key challenge for many manufacturers.
- 5.65 Larger occupiers looking for strategic units tend to have a Greater Manchester or even North West search area. Newly delivered space at Logistics North has helped Bolton in building its aerospace and defence clustering, securing investment such as the MBDA expansion, building on PSD Aero's existing presence.

- 5.66 There has been a mismatch in employment development spatially, with new development recently focused in the west but a requirement for new jobs in the deprived areas of the borough in the east.
- 5.67 Stakeholders recognised a lack of incubator and start-up units, noting that there are pockets across the borough but not a designated offer. These smaller units should be focused in the east and the south of the borough near population with more intensive larger uses focused in the west.
- 5.68 Mid-tech units are increasingly popular – units that are modern, flexible industrial spaces designed for technology-based businesses, research and development and advanced manufacturing. They are characterised by high ceilings, robust power supplies and adaptable layouts that can accommodate specialist infrastructure such as cleanrooms, labs and large scale equipment.
- 5.69 Regarding datacentres, a large plot with a sizeable and confirmed power connection could be suitable for a datacentre within Bolton, meeting sub-regional requirements arising from Atom Valley around Rochdale, Oldham and Bury.

Summary

5.70 This section is concluded by a situational assessment using a standard Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) analysis.

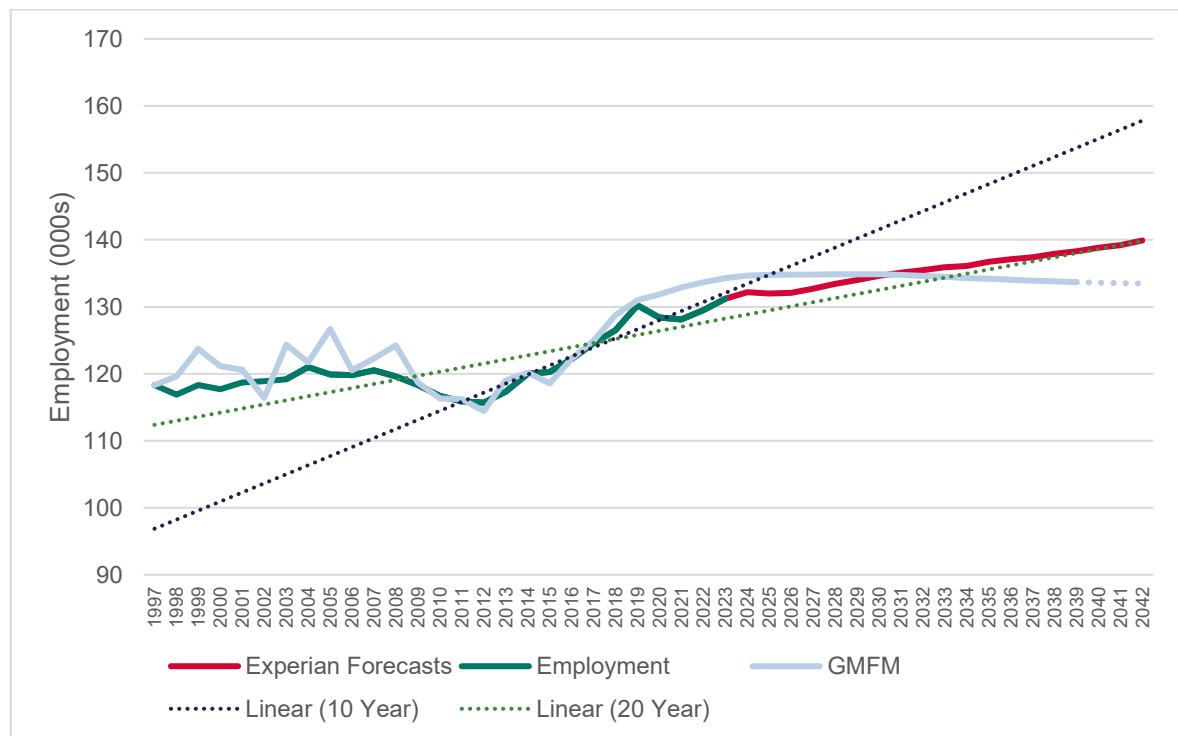


6. ECONOMIC FORECASTS

- 6.1 This section of the report examines the forecast employment growth. To do this, we draw on forecasts produced by Experian, comparing these to the Greater Manchester Forecasting model baseline and Accelerated Growth Scenario, in addition to past trends.

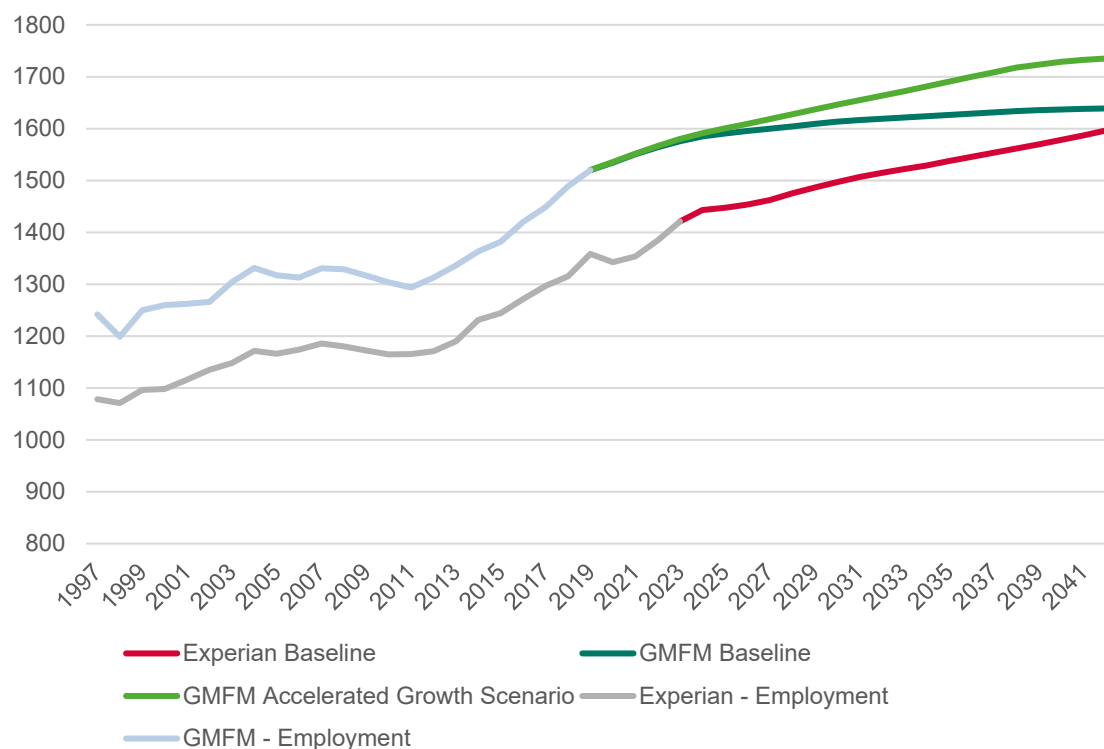
Baseline Growth

- 6.2 As illustrated in the chart below, the Experian forecasts for Bolton show a growth in employment of 7,800 jobs over the 2025-42 plan period, which equates to 6.1% and an average of 471 jobs per annum.
- 6.3 The Experian forecasts are closely in line with the 20-year historical trend which has been projected forward, however significantly below the 10-year historical trend which is driven by strong employment growth from 2013-19.
- 6.4 This has been compared to the baseline Greater Manchester Forecasting Model (GMFM), which has been extrapolated forward to 2042, having only been run to 2038 previously. The GMFM is produced by Oxford Economics who use a different methodology for calculating employment, hence the difference in historical employment level across the two sets of forecasts. The GMFM model forecasts a loss of -1,287 jobs over the 2025-42 period, forecasting consistent employment losses from 2031 onwards.

Figure 6.1 Experian and GMFM Projected Baseline Growth (2000-2042)

Source: Experian 2025

- 6.5 As part of the evidence base of Greater Manchester Places for Everyone Plan, an Accelerated Growth Scenario was developed to illustrate ‘a future where improvements to the skills base, innovation, and transport connectivity boost GVA, employment, and productivity growth across the North’. This has been compared to the Experian forecasts for the Greater Manchester Area. Despite starting at a lower employment base estimate, the baseline Experian forecasts estimate a higher employment growth (+153,600 jobs across Greater Manchester), than the Accelerated Growth Model (+143,900 jobs).
- 6.6 This sets useful context for developing an alternative ‘Policy-On’ scenario for Bolton, acknowledging that the baseline Experian forecasts are more optimistic than previous employment forecast modelling.

Figure 6.2 Greater Manchester Employment Forecasts

Source: Experian, Oxford Economics

Sectoral Analysis

- 6.7 This section considers the sectoral breakdown of the Experian forecasts and compares the forecast to historical growth trends.
- 6.8 Experian forecasts employment growth in Professional services (+1,300 jobs); Health (+1,200 jobs); Accommodation & food services (+1,200 jobs); Construction (+900 jobs) and Education (+900 jobs). Whilst these are forecasted to grow, this is however at much lower levels than their 10 and 20 year historical growth rates.
- 6.9 The manufacturing sector is forecasted to see the greatest decline albeit at a modest loss of 700 jobs. The sector has grown over the past 10 years, however in the longer term has seen a general decline (-0.9% per annum). Forecasts typically have a pessimistic outlook on the manufacturing sector, due to forecasted productivity improvements driven by increased automation and mechanisation. However jobs losses does not mean the sector is forecasted to decline in terms of economic output and manufacturing businesses will still require additional floorspace to support business growth.

- 6.10 Public administration and defence, Insurance and pensions; Retail and Telecoms have seen losses historically however are forecasted not to see any further losses and in some cases, employment growth.

Table 0-17: Bolton Forecast Employment Change / Historical Growth Rates (2025-42)

	2025 Employment	2025-42 Employment Change	Baseline CAGR**	10-year Historical CAGR	20-year Historical CAGR
Professional Services	10,000	1,300	0.7%	2.1%	2.8%
Health	13,100	1,200	0.5%	2.7%	2.4%
Accommodation & Food Services	5,800	1,200	1.1%	1.2%	-0.4%
Construction	9,100	900	0.5%	0.0%	-0.1%
Education	10,900	900	0.5%	0.8%	0.5%
Land Transport, Storage & Post	9,700	700	0.4%	3.8%	3.9%
Finance	4,000	500	0.7%	0.9%	1.4%
Administrative & Supportive Services	10,100	400	0.2%	2.0%	0.6%
Residential Care & Social Work	7,100	300	0.2%	1.1%	1.5%
ICT	2,000	300	0.9%	4.7%	3.3%
Public Administration & Defence	3,700	300	0.5%	-1.7%	-2.5%
Wholesale	9,400	300	0.2%	1.3%	0.3%
Real Estate	2,300	200	0.5%	-0.4%	2.5%
Other Private Services	3,100	200	0.4%	1.0%	-0.4%
Recreation	2,900	100	0.2%	1.1%	1.3%
Retail	12,300	100	0.0%	-0.7%	-1.1%
Media Activities	600	-	0.0%	0.0%	-0.8%
Insurance & Pensions	100	-	0.0%	-12.9%	-7.7%
Utilities	1,300	-200	-1.0%	-1.5%	-1.4%
Manufacturing	13,000	-600	-0.3%	1.2%	-0.9%

*Sectors with no employment have been omitted from the table²²

** Compound Annual Growth Rate

Source: Iceni analysis of Experian

²² Agriculture, forestry and fishery; Air & Water Transport; Extraction & Mining; Fuel Refining

Regeneration Scenario

- 6.11 Iceni has developed a 'regeneration' scenario which uplifts the Experian baseline forecasts to reflect where there is further sector growth potential where forecasts have deviated from past trends, in addition to employment growth that will be generated from planned development such as the West of Wingates allocation. Growth arising from the Health Innovation Bolton proposals are considered separately in an additional scenario below.
- 6.12 Bolton has a strong industrial and warehousing pipeline, including the Places for Everyone strategic employment allocations. This planned development will generate a level of employment that is not necessarily captured within the baseline forecasts. Later within the report, within Section 7, it is recommended that Bolton plan for 811,727 sq.m of industrial and warehousing floorspace, derived from the gross completions trend.
- 6.13 The table below seeks to align employment forecasts arising from this level of development and indicates that an additional 4,667 jobs could be supported including taking into account displacement.
- 6.14 These jobs have then been apportioned to sectors based on historical industrial and warehousing take-up by occupier sector²³.

Table 0-18: Net Additional Jobs Supported by Planned Industrial & Warehousing Development

	Floorspace (sq.m)
Recommended Industrial and Warehousing Requirement (sq.m)	811,727
Adjustment for 8% frictional vacancy ²⁴ (sq.m)	746,789
Jobs Supported @ 80 jobs per sq.m ²⁵	9,225

²³ Land Transport 41%; Manufacturing 28%; Wholesale 13%; Construction 6%; Retail 5%; Arts & Recreation 1%; Professional Services 1%; Admin 1%; Utilities 1% and Information & Computing 1%. Source: Analysis of CoStar data 2015-26

²⁴ In an optimal market 8% of floorspace will be vacant to allow for occupier choice and market churn and therefore not generating employment

²⁵ Average of logistics (95 FTE per sq.m) and industrial (36-60 FTE per sqm) – HCA Density Guide 2015

Jobs Supported including 50% Displacement Rate ²⁶	4,667
--	-------

Source: Iceni analysis

6.15 Hulton Park is a mixed residential and commercial proposal, including an 18-hole golf course in addition to other practice and adventure courses; hotel; other accommodation (cabins and lodges); recreation and wellbeing facilities and other retail and dining options. The development of the site is dependant on securing the rights to host the Ryder Cup. Uplifts have been applied to the accommodation and food and recreation sector to reflect this potential opportunity²⁷.

6.16 Other adjustments to reflect strong historical sector growth activity include:

- Administration and support – baseline CAGR has been uplifted by 25%;
- Computing & Information Services - baseline CAGR has been uplifted by 25%;
- Finance – uplifted in line with 10-year growth trend;
- Professional services – baseline CAGR has been uplifted by 25%;

6.17 The table below summarises the regeneration scenario, indicating an employment growth of 11,952 jobs over the 2025-42 period, compared to the baseline forecast of 7,800 jobs. This is equivalent to a total growth of 9.0% over the 17-year period.

Table 0-19: Regeneration Scenario 2025-42 - Employment

Sector	2025	Baseline 2042	Regen Scenario 2042	Baseline Change	Regen Scenario Change	Notes
Accommodation & Food Services	5,800	7,000	7,110	1,200	1,310	10 yr trend
Administrative & Supportive Services	10,100	10,500	10,602	400	502	+25% CAGR
Chemicals (manufacture of)	700	600	661	-100	-41	Supply-led Adj.
Civil Engineering	1,800	1,900	1,953	100	151	Supply-led Adj.

²⁶ 50% of jobs generated will be filled by the existing workforce

²⁷ Total of 280 FTE across Wigan and Bolton cumulative impact 2021-40 – Economic Impact Report (Deloitte) 2021 – submitted alongside 12218/21 application

Sector	2025	Baseline 2042	Regen Scenario 2042	Baseline Change	Regen Scenario Change	Notes
Computer & Electronic Products (manufacture of)	200	200	226	-	25	Supply- led Adj.
Computing & Information Services	1,900	2,200	2,282	300	382	+25% CAGR
Construction of Buildings	2,600	2,800	2,874	200	272	Supply- led Adj.
Education	10,900	11,800	11,800	900	900	
Finance	4,000	4,500	4,680	500	680	10 yr trend
Food, Drink & Tobacco (manufacture of)	4,100	3,900	4,260	-200	148	Supply- led Adj.
Health	13,100	14,300	14,300	1,200	1,200	
Insurance & Pensions	100	100	100	-	-	
Land Transport, Storage & Post	9,700	10,400	11,544	700	1,781	Supply- led Adj.
Machinery & Equipment (manufacture of)	500	300	353	-200	-149	Supply- led Adj.
Media Activities	600	600	600	-	-	
Metal Products (manufacture of)	2,600	2,700	2,937	100	329	Supply- led Adj.
Non-Metallic Products (manufacture of)	1,600	1,400	1,532	-200	-73	Supply- led Adj.
Other Manufacturing	2,000	2,200	2,376	200	370	Supply- led Adj.
Other Private Services	3,100	3,300	3,300	200	200	
Printing and Recorded Media (manufacture of)	400	400	400	-	42	Supply- led Adj.
Professional Services	10,000	11,300	11,649	1,300	1,649	+25% CAGR
Public Administration & Defence	3,700	4,000	4,000	300	300	
Real Estate	2,300	2,500	2,500	200	200	
Recreation	2,900	3,000	3,051	100	151	+50% CAGR
Residential Care & Social Work	7,100	7,400	7,400	300	300	
Retail	12,300	12,400	13,042	100	317	Supply- led Adj.
Specialised Construction Activities	5,000	5,600	5,742	600	737	Supply- led Adj.
Telecoms	300	300	300	-	-	
Textiles & Clothing (manufacture of)	500	400	453	-100	-49	Supply- led Adj.
Transport Equipment (manufacture of)	700	500	561	-200	-141	Supply- led Adj.
Utilities	1,300	1,100	1,145	-200	-157	Supply- led Adj.
Wholesale	9,400	9,700	9,983	300	563	Supply- led Adj.
Wood & Paper (manufacture of)	600	600	653	-	51	Supply- led Adj.
Total	132,100	139,900	144,231	8,000	11,952	

*Sectors with no change in employment have been omitted from the table ²⁸

Source: Iceni analysis of Experian

Health Innovation Bolton + Regeneration Scenario

- 6.18 An additional scenario has been developed to account for proposals for Health Innovation Bolton (HIB), within the wider NorthFold regeneration corridor. The new masterplan HIB developed in July 2026 including non-residential floorspace, including office, R&D, industrial and warehousing and health and community uses. Of this total, around 198,400 sq.m is expected to come forward during the Plan Period, of which c.39,000 sq.m is office/R&D and 41,000 sq.m is industrial and warehousing, with the remaining floorspace for health and community uses.
- 6.19 The HIB site has been assessed by Iceni (see section 8) and considered as potentially suitable in meeting additional employment land needs in Bolton. That employment land demand (section 7) and balance are set out later in this report. Given the potential for inclusion in the emerging Plan, and the scale and type of floorspace being proposed, it is considered appropriate to take into account the implications of job growth arising at HIB should it come forward.
- 6.20 Whilst at early stages, initial work indicates that the site could support the existing Royal Bolton Hospital operation through relocation of services away from the main hospital; accommodate wider growth in hospital services; expand research and innovation capacity; and strengthen integration with the University of Greater Manchester. Potential sector demand for space for office, R&D and industrial uses includes food and agri-tech, dermatology, paediatrics and women's health, sports science and medicine, dental and advanced manufacturing, as identified in as yet unpublished research by Savills presented to Iceni.
- 6.21 An economic benefits assessment by Savills (Summer 2026) indicates that HIB could generate 6,200 direct jobs of which 3,200 are expected to be filled by Bolton residents. Overall, once accounting for displacement, leakage and multiplier effects approximately 3,300 net additional jobs are expected on and off-site within Bolton. Based on the proportion

²⁸ Agriculture, forestry and fishery; Air & Water Transport; Extraction & Mining; Fuel Refining; Manufacture of Pharmaceuticals

of floorspace to be delivered within the Plan Period, it is estimated that 2,515 net additional jobs will be generated before 2042.

6.22 It should be noted that these figures are based on proposals subject to change as the scheme evolves, particularly given the dynamic interaction between the emerging Plan and sector specific demand assessments being undertaken by the promoting team. Net additional jobs are categorised in the impact assessment provided as being Health Innovation, Employment-led Health, Health and Community, self-employed homeworkers and expenditure-induced jobs. Iceni has sought to sift these into the relevant sectors in the table below and these jobs are added on to the regeneration scenario above. Whilst there could be potential for double counting, the specific nature of HIB means there is limited cross over between past trends modelling in Bolton and this project on scenario.

6.23 Including employment growth associated with HIB increases the regeneration scenario employment growth to 14,467 jobs, equivalent to 11.0% over the 2025-42 period.

Table 0-20: HIB + Regeneration Scenario – Employment (2025-42)

Sector	HIB Employment 2025-42	HIB + Regen Change	HIB+Regen 2042
Accommodation & Food Services	53	1,363	7,163
Administrative & Supportive Services	120	622	10,560
Computing & Information Services		382	2,282
Construction		1160	10,569
Education		900	11,831
Finance & Insurance		680	4,780
Health	133	1,333	14,433
Land Transport, Storage & Post	67	1,848	11,548
Manufacturing	616	1,130	15,030
Media Activities		-	600
Other Private Services		200	3,300
Professional Services	1,286	2,935	12,935
Public Administration & Defence		300	4,000
Real Estate		200	2,500
Recreation	80	231	3,131
Residential Care & Social Work	80	380	7,480
Retail and Wholesale	80	960	22,660
Telecoms		-	300
Utilities		-157	1,143
Total	2,515	14,467	146,567

*Sectors with no change in employment have been omitted from the table ²⁹

Source: IcenI analysis of Experian / Savills impact assessment of HIB, unpublished

Labour Supply

- 6.24 The labour supply-led scenario seeks to model the inter-relationship between potential housing and demographic growth and potential employment that could be supported by this. Invariably this will be influenced by decisions on a future housing requirement within the Local Plan however it is useful to consider how an indicative labour supply scenario relates to other scenarios modelled.
- 6.25 The modelling is based on the Places for Everyone housing requirement of 787 dwellings per annum. Demographic modelling, which can be found in Appendix 1, calculates the implications of this for labour supply growth in Bolton. The resultant net growth in employment over the Plan Period is shown below.

Table 0-21: Jobs supported by demographic projections (2025-42) – Bolton – PfE Target

	Total change in economically active	With allowance for double jobbing	Allowance for net commuting (= jobs supported)
2021 commuting	14,871	15,190	14,937
2011 commuting	14,871	15,190	14,161
1:1 commuting	14,871	15,190	15,190

Source: IcenI analysis

- 6.26 Given the influence of the Covid-19 lockdown on commuting patterns during the 2021 Census, we consider that the data from the older 2011 Census is more likely to be indicative of commuting dynamics across Bolton and Greater Manchester. This indicates a labour supply growth of 14,161 jobs, compared to the regeneration scenario of 12,096 jobs and the HIB inclusive scenario of 15,190 jobs.
- 6.27 This indicates that the level of growth forecasted within the regeneration scenario could be supported by population growth associated with PfE housing delivery target delivery. Whilst

²⁹ Agriculture, forestry and fishery; Air & Water Transport; Extraction & Mining; Fuel Refining; Manufacture of Pharmaceuticals

the jobs supported within the labour supply scenario is below to the level of growth forecasted under the HIB+Regeneration scenario, it is important to note the fluidity of labour market patterns within the Greater Manchester conurbation. Employment growth over the labour supply-supported level will be supported by labour drawn in from other parts of the region.

- 6.28 Under the labour supply scenario, the baseline employment growth by sector is assumed (+8,000 jobs) but then employment is uplifted to align to the higher 14,161 figure. The residual 6,161 jobs not accounted for within the baseline forecast are apportioned to sectors based on the 2023 sector percentage split i.e. as of 2023, 4.7% of employment is within the accommodation and food services sector and so an additional 290 jobs ($6,161 \times 4.7\%$) are added onto the baseline forecast.

Economic Forecasts Summary

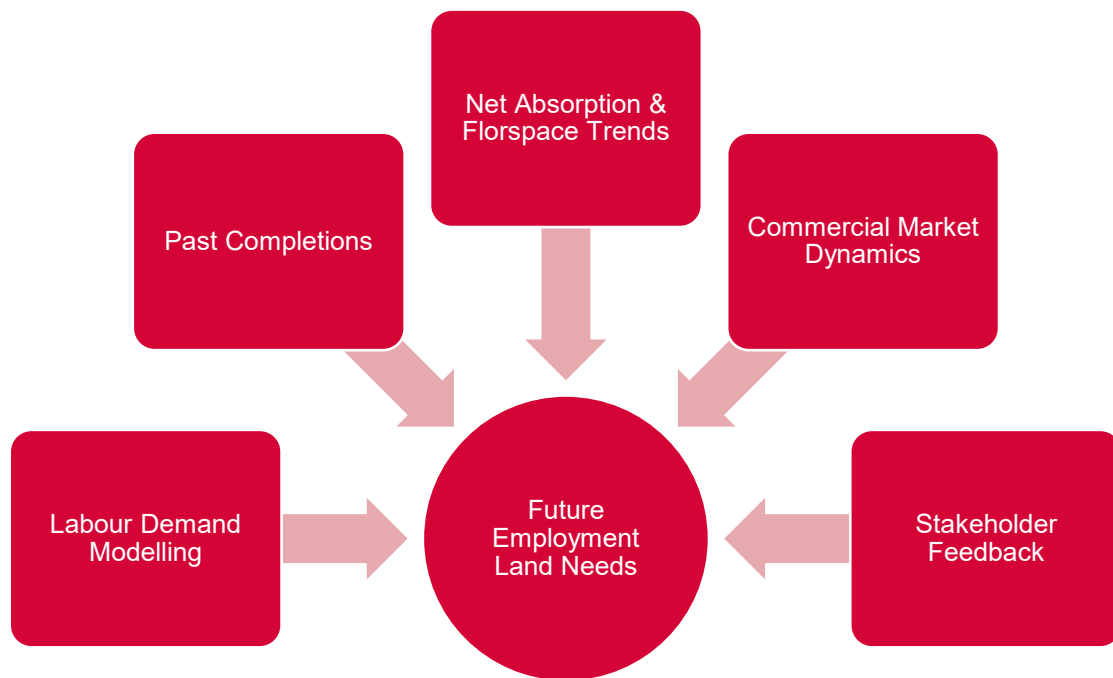
- 6.29 Experian baseline forecasts suggest an overall employment growth of 6.1% over the 2025-42 plan period, equivalent to 7,800 new jobs, closely in line with the 20-year historical growth trend.
- 6.30 The most substantial sector growth is anticipated by Experian to be Professional services (+1,300 jobs); Health (+1,200 jobs); Accommodation & food services (+1,200 jobs) and Construction (+900 jobs). Land Transport, Storage and Post and ICT are forecasted to grow however at much lower levels than their 10- and 20-year historical growth rates. The manufacturing sector is forecasted to see the greatest decline at a loss of 700 jobs.
- 6.31 The regeneration scenario forecasts a jobs growth of 11,952 jobs, compared to the 7,800 jobs baseline forecast. When including potential employment growth at Health Innovation Bolton increases employment growth to 14,467 jobs. This reflects the strongest possible outlook for Bolton, taking into account planned and potential development as well as continued strong performance as seen historically.
- 6.32 Labour supply-led modelling indicates that a jobs growth of 14,161 jobs could be supported by population growth associated with housing delivery in line with the Places for Everyone housing target. This exceeds the highest job demand modelling indicating good potential self containment for Bolton.

7. EMPLOYMENT FLOORSPACE NEEDS

7.1 In this section we consider future needs for employment land and floorspace over the plan period 2025-42. The analysis considers the need for office (E(g)(i) / (E(g)(ii), industrial (E(g)(iii) / B2) and warehouse/distribution (B8) uses.

7.2 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Housing and economic needs assessment provides broad guidance on assessing future needs, and outlines in Para 2a-027 a number of different approaches:

- sectoral and employment forecasts and projections which take account of likely changes in skills needed (labour demand)
- demographically derived assessments of current and future local labour supply (labour supply techniques)
- analysis based on the past take-up of employment land and property and/or future property market requirements
- consultation with relevant organisations, studies of business trends, an understanding of innovative and changing business models, particularly those which make use of online platforms to respond to consumer demand and monitoring of business, economic and employment statistics.

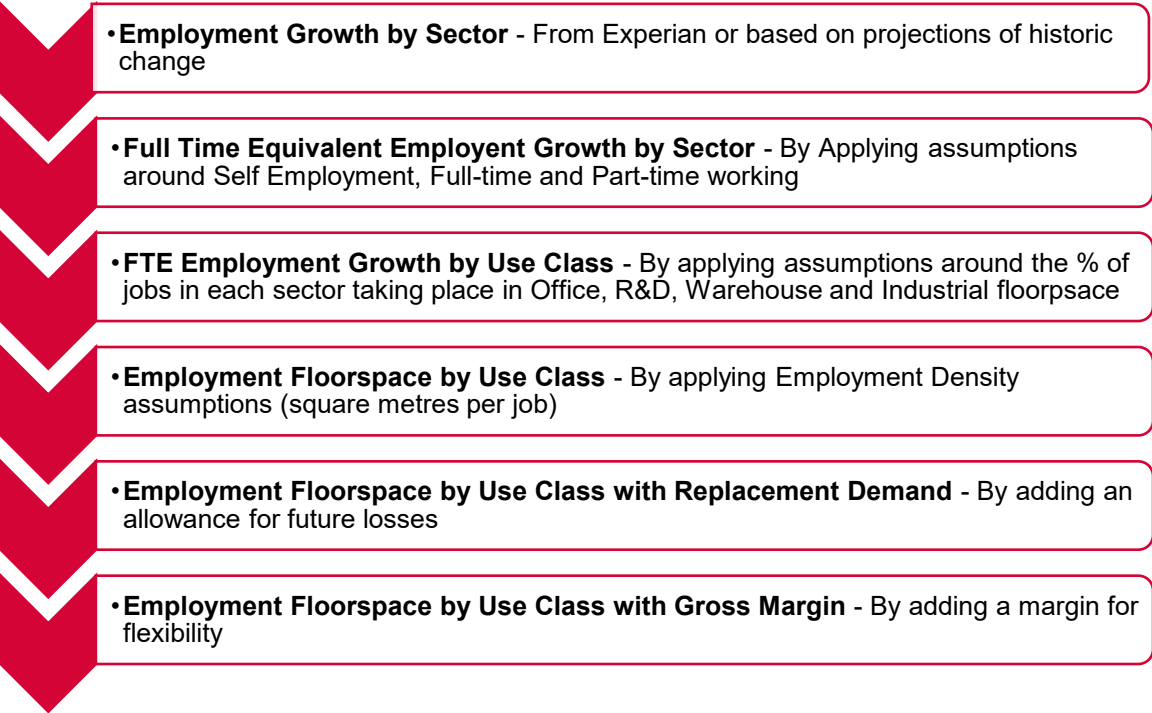
Figure 7.1: Triangulating Different Forecasting Approaches

- 7.3 Different forecasting techniques have their advantages and disadvantages. Econometric forecasts take account of differences in expected economic performance moving forward relative to the past. However a detailed model is required to relate net forecasts to use classes and estimate gross floorspace and land requirements. For office-based sectors consideration needs to be given to the impacts of trends in home working. For industrial sectors however the relationship between floorspace needs and employment trends may be weak – influenced by productivity improvements – meaning that a decline in employment does not necessarily mean a reduction in space requirements. In contrast, past take-up is based on actual delivery of employment development; but does not take account of implications of housing growth and the associated growth in labour supply nor any differences in economic performance/ trends relative to the past. It is also potentially influenced by past land supply and/or policies.
- 7.4 Ultimately therefore an appropriate approach is therefore to utilise a range of different forecasting techniques alongside local intelligence and an understanding of the merits of different approaches in drawing conclusions. This approach of triangulating different approaches and testing findings, which Iceni adopts, is consistent with the PPG.

Labour Demand Model for Floorspace and Land Needs

7.5 Iceni has a standard model which considers how sectors relate to use classes which is used to estimate the proportion of employment in different broad use classes – offices (Eg(i) and E(g)(ii)), industrial (E(g)(iii) and B2) and warehousing (B8). We attribute changes in jobs to use classes first, using BRES data to estimate the sector-specific relationship between net changes in total employment and that for Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs. Employment density assumptions are then applied to generate net floorspace change. We then include adjustments including a margin for choice and flexibility and a replacement adjustment to account for future losses. The modelling is segmented to consider office and industrial/warehouse development separately.

Figure 7.2: Overview of Labour Demand Modelling



7.6 The first step is to translate forecast employment growth into full-time equivalent (FTE) employment growth. This is required as the employment densities used relate to FTE jobs rather than total jobs. Iceni has used the current BRES ratios of part-time and full-time employment to generate the FTE outcomes. Table 5.1 shows the forecasted FTE jobs growth over the period from 2025 to 2042.

Table 0-22: Total Jobs and FTE Jobs Growth by Model, 2025-42

Model	Total Jobs	FTE Jobs
-------	------------	----------

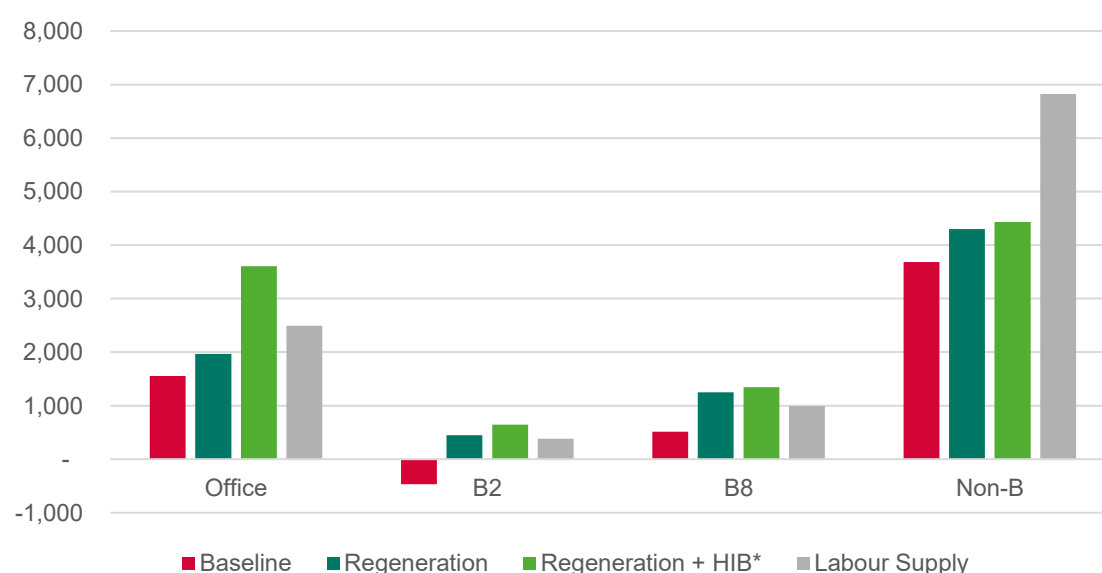
Baseline	7,800	5,292
Regeneration	11,952	7,873
Regeneration + HIB	14,467	9,550
Labour Supply	14,161	9,482

Source: Iceni analysis of Experian / BRES data

7.7 The next step translates FTE employment growth by sector into FTE employment growth by use class. For the purposes of this study, we have proportioned the number of FTE jobs in each sector into jobs in Industrial, Warehouse and Office floorspace and non-employment space. The baseline, regeneration and labour supply scenarios do not include any R&D growth given the absence of existing R&D space. Around 34% of office FTE employment growth under the HIB scenario is attributable to R&D use.

7.8 The labour demand modelling envisages that employment growth will be focused in sectors which typically do not require employment land such as health, education, and accommodation and food. Manufacturing employment is expected to contract under the baseline forecasts - influenced in particular by productivity improvements. Growth however is expected in sectors which require office and warehousing space. R&D employment growth is only forecasted within the HIB scenario, due to the nature of the proposals.

Figure 7.3: Change in FTE Jobs by Use Class, 2025-42



*34% of office employment is attributed to R&D sector

Source: Iceni analysis of Experian

7.9 The next stage in the modelling is then to apply employment densities to estimate the net change in floorspace. The employment density assumptions used are set out below, based on the HCA Employment Density Guide 2015³⁰. These relate to the Gross External Area (GEA):

- Office – 14 sq.m per FTE job
- R&D – 60 sq.m per FTE job
- Industrial – 40 sq.m per FTE job
- Warehousing/ Distribution – 70 sq.m per FTE job

Home Working

7.10 We have also undertaken a sensitivity analysis for office space with greater levels of working from home. This is informed by Iceni Projects review of information published by real estate agency Savills, Remit Consulting and RICS on the occupancy of in-use office floorspace pre and post-pandemic.

7.11 The pandemic has seen an increase in home working – in particular in office-based sectors – as well as hybrid working, whereby workers spend part of the week in the office and part at home, with the emergence of 3/2 and 2/3 working patterns.

7.12 Office market trends are responding and will potentially reinforce around good quality space designed to facilitate interaction and collaboration between staff; and locations which support social and leisure activities.

7.13 Offices may contain specific spaces for teams/zoom calls and businesses may need to consider floorspace needs on the more popular, mid-week days.

7.14 ONS 2023 data showed that 40% of all UK working adults work from home at some point in the week with 16% solely working from home. Based on this information Iceni Projects has concluded that post-pandemic office occupancy is around 30% of pre-pandemic levels.

³⁰https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/planning-policy/pdf/examination/national-evidence/NE48_employment_density_guide_3rd_edition.pdf - Section 4

Therefore, we have reduced levels of employment growth and replacement demand in the 'Post-Pandemic Working from Home' scenario by a 30% factor.

- 7.15 Data released by ONS³¹ in 2023 indicates that in Q4 2022 around 44% of workers nationally were either working from home (16%) or on a hybrid basis (28%). When looking at the North West specifically this figure was 36% with a slightly lower 15% only working from home and 21% hybrid.
- 7.16 More recent data from ONS³² covering the period from January to March 2026 indicates that this figure has reduced slightly across the UK with 40% of workers across the UK working from home all or some of the time (11% only at home, 29% hybrid). There has been a slight decrease in the North West to 34% working from home all or some of the time, impacted by growth in hybrid working to 30% and a decline in home only working to 4%.
- 7.17 Further data on days worked from home³³ indicates that of hybrid workers across Great Britain, approximately 60% of working days are spent working from home. If this is applied to the hybrid statistics mentioned above it results in an overall home working rate of 30/31%.
- 7.18 Reflecting this evidence, a 30% downwards adjustment has been applied to the forecasted office floorspace requirement.

Margin for Flexibility

- 7.19 The need calculations also take into account a 'margin for flexibility.' This allows for the allocation of sufficient land to cover inaccuracies in forecasting, helps to provide a choice of sites to facilitate competition and allows for delays in any sites coming forward.
- 7.20 Based on experience and industry standards, we recommend that a 'margin for flexibility' equivalent to 10% for offices and 20% for industrial and warehousing should be used.

³¹ [Characteristics of homeworkers, Great Britain - Office for National Statistics](#)

³² [Public opinions and social trends, Great Britain: working arrangements by personal characteristics - Office for National Statistics](#)

³³ [Home and hybrid working, Great Britain - Office for National Statistics](#)

Replacement Demand

- 7.21 The modelled labour forecasts are net changes and do not take account of replacement demand, such as from existing companies requiring upgraded floorspace or for existing or allocated sites for employment lost to other uses such as residential. In considering how much employment land to allocate, it is therefore appropriate to consider this as an additional influence.
- 7.22 We consider historic gross floorspace losses to be a good predictor of future losses. However, we do not recommend that replacement demand should be assumed to be at the full rate of historic gross losses as: a) some gross losses will be able to be re-provided on the same plot; and b) some gross losses will be due to structural changes in the economy which mean that less floorspace is required to accommodate the same number of jobs and/or economic activity.
- 7.23 We have therefore assumed that industrial losses will occur at 50% of previous rates, given the lack of supply. This is equivalent to 93,300 sq.m for industrial and 135,300 sq.m for warehousing. In contrast, given office market dynamics and the dampened demand profile we do not think a replacement demand component is appropriate.

Summary of Labour Demand Requirements

- 7.24 The table below draws together the various components to provide a full recommendation on labour demand-based modelling. The impact of the margin and replacement demand components are significant within the labour demand and supply modelling, given the strong gross completions and losses trends, in particular in industrial and warehousing, which typically aren't driven by employment growth but the need for modern premises.

Table 0-23: Labour Demand Modelling (2025-42) (sq.m)

	Experian Baseline	Experian - Regeneration	Experian – Regen + HIB	Labour Supply
Office	21,700	27,600	62,800	35,000
Office - Post Pandemic WFH 30%	15,200	19,300	44,000	24,500
Industrial	-20,500	16,600	28,800	8,800
Warehouse	25,900	84,700	87,700	61,000
Including margin for flexibility (10% for office and 20% for industrial/warehouse)				
Office	23,900	30,300	69,100	38,500

Office - Post Pandemic WFH 30%	16,700	21,200	48,400	27,000
Industrial	-20,500	19,900	34,600	10,500
Warehouse	43,1000	101,600	105,300	73,200
Including replacement demand @ 50% for industrial and warehousing				
Office	23,900	30,300	69,100	38,500
Office - Post Pandemic WFH 30%	16,700	21,200	48,400	27,000
Industrial	72,800	113,200	127,900	103,800
Warehouse	178,400	236,900	240,600	208,400

Source: Iceni analysis of Experian

Past Completions Trends

7.25 Next we consider evidence of past development trends. Historical completions, based on Council monitoring data, have been considered and projected forward to indicate future floorspace needs. Both gross and net historic completions have been considered:

- **Gross completions** are useful as they inherently take into account replacement demand. However, using gross completions may actually overestimate replacement demand given some historic gross completions may have been on plots where the previous use was the same (i.e. re-development for the same use)
- **Net completions** inherently take into account replacement demand as it includes both losses and gains.

7.26 The table below shows the 10-year average trend of gross completions and losses for the 2015/16 to 2024/25 period by use class, which is then used to derive the net completions trend.

7.27 It should be noted that monitoring data only provides a total for B1 / E(g) and therefore what is assumed to be office completions may include some light industrial (E(g)(iii)) completions. Reviewing CoStar data on offices reports that only 4 office units have been built in the last decade, in 2016 (Parklands, Middlebrook / Wigan Road), 2017 (Bolton Central) and 2019 Blackburn Road. This reinforces the slow office market in the area facing viability challenges. It is assumed that there have no R&D (E(g)(ii)) completions based on Bolton's existing stock profile and therefore has not been included in future needs modelling.

Table 0-24: Bolton Average Completions Per Annum (2015/16 to 2024/25) (sq.m)

	Average Gross Completions	Average Losses	Average Net Completions (Gross – Losses)
Office	4,466	-7,317	-51,309
Industrial	10,088	-10,975	-15,964
Warehousing	29,703	-15,915	248,175

Source: Iceni analysis of Council Monitoring Data

- 7.28 The historic average completion rate for both gross and net completions has been projected forward over the 2025-42 period to estimate employment floorspace requirements. The results of the historic completions-based projections are presented in the table below.
- 7.29 As with the labour demand model, the **net completions** trend includes an allowance for replacement demand for industrial and warehousing and both models include a margin for flexibility equivalent to 10% for office and 20% for industrial and warehousing.
- 7.30 For industrial outcomes, there is a reasonable level of comparison, whilst net results for offices are negative, reflecting the scale of loss in recent years.

Table 0-25: Employment Floorspace Requirements by Completions Projection 2025-42 (sq.m)

	Gross Completions	Net Completions
Office	75,900	-48,500
Industrial	171,500	-15,100
Warehouse	505,000	234,400
Including margin for flexibility (10% for office and 20% for industrial/warehouse)		
Office	83,500	-48,500
Industrial	205,800	-15,100
Warehouse	605,900	281,300
Including replacement demand @ 50% for industrial and warehousing (net completions model only)		
Office	83,500	-48,500
Industrial	205,800	78,200
Warehouse	605,900	416,500

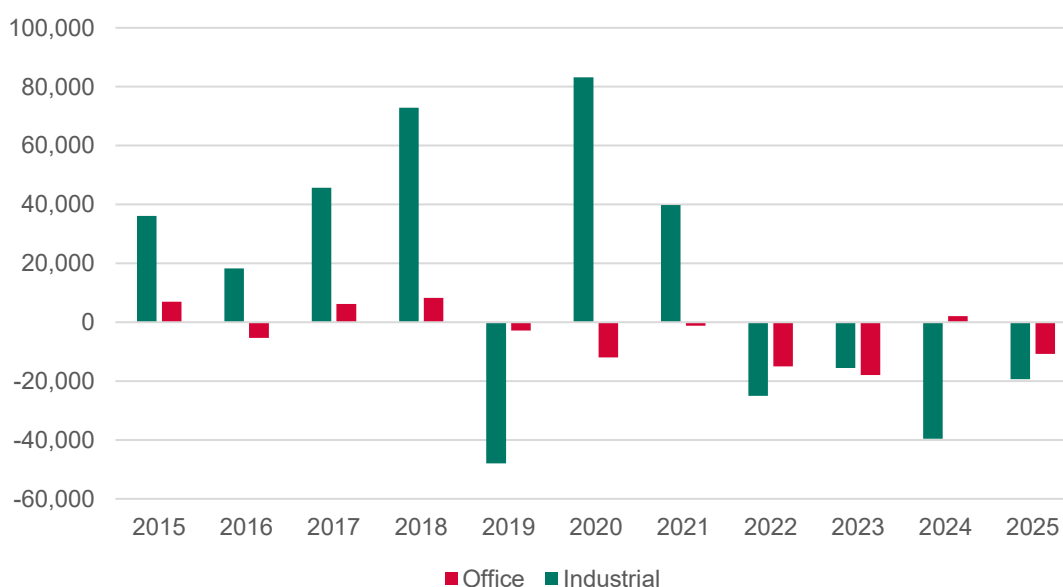
Trends in Net Absorption

- 7.31 A third demand-based calculation looks at past take-up of space occupied (rather than floorspace delivered) measured by net absorption using CoStar data. This is the balance

between the amount of space moved into and moved out of (i.e. Net absorption = Move-ins – Move outs) equating to the change in occupied space.

- 7.32 This differs from the net completions-based projections in that it predicts future floorspace requirements directly based on demand for floorspace rather than past completions of floorspace (which is a proxy for floorspace demand).
- 7.33 The figure below the annual net absorption for office and industrial [and warehousing] - CoStar does not differentiate between B2 and B8 use classes. The table below presents the 10-year average annual trend to be projected forward.

Figure 7.5: Bolton Net Absorption (sq.m)



Source: CoStar

Table 0-26: Average Net Absorption (sq.m)

Time Period	10-year average: 2015-25
Office	-3,100
Industrial and Warehousing	16,800

Source: CoStar

- 7.34 Projecting forward the 10-year trend and applying a margin for flexibility results in a negative need for office floorspace of -46,400 sq.m and a substantial industrial and warehousing floorspace need of 536,500 sq.m.

Table 0-27: Employment Floorspace Requirement by Net Absorption Projection 2025-42 (sq.m)

	Net Absorption Trend
Office	-52,300
Industrial and Warehousing	285,400
Including margin for flexibility (10% for office and 20% for industrial/warehouse)	
Office	-52,300
Industrial and Warehousing	342,400

Source: CoStar

Bringing the Evidence Together

- 7.35 We have undertaken a range of detailed modelling scenarios to consider the future employment land needs for Bolton. The tables below summarise the total employment land need 2025-42 for each broad-use class across the various models discussed above.

Table 0-28: Employment Floorspace Summary 2025-42 (including margin and replacement demand (sq.m))

Floorspace (Sq.m)	Labour Demand - Baseline	Labour Demand – Regeneration	Labour Demand – Regen + HIB	Labour Supply	Gross Completions	Net Completions	Net Absorption
Office	23,900	30,300	69,100	38,500	83,500	-48,500	-52,300
Office WFH	16,700	21,200	48,400	27,000			
Industrial	72,800	113,200	127,900	103,800	205,800	78,200	342,400
Warehousing	178,400	236,900	240,600	208,400	605,900	416,500	
Industrial and Warehousing Subtotal	251,200	350,100	368,500	312,200	811,700	494,700	

*WFH for labour demand models

Source: Iceni analysis

Office

- 7.36 The office market has been performing poorly since the pandemic, with home and hybrid working impacting occupiers office leasing activity. Ongoing negative absorption, as more space is released onto the market than leased, has resulted in the vacancy rate consistently rising since 2022.
- 7.37 The rise in hybrid working has resulted in occupiers having a stronger preference for higher quality premises with a good amenity offer. There is therefore a need to bring forward some new high quality space within the plan period to retain businesses that would otherwise find this higher quality space in Manchester. Demand is likely to be for smaller, flexible spaces rather than large HQ offices.
- 7.38 The labour supply scenario is not demand driven and therefore not suitable model to plan for. The Regeneration + HIB scenario signals a significantly higher office floorspace requirement however due to the circularity of the model - a majority of this will be provided for within HIB. Whilst this could be considered as a 'policy-on' position, there is no indication that the market would want this scale of space away from HIB and any employment uplift modelling for jobs that aligns to past performance is not a pattern that has seen delivery of more office space.
- 7.39 In regards to planning for office outside of HIB, it would be appropriate to plan for **16,700 sq.m** based on the labour demand baseline scenario, assuming a discount for home working. It reflects the potential for growth in home working to reduce future office market requirements, and for the market to reinforce around stronger / higher order locations such as Manchester City Centre and Salford Quays, whilst still planning for a level of development above the negative net absorption and net completion trends.
- 7.40 Viability is likely to continue to be a challenge for offices in Bolton and mixed use or potential funding / subsidy strategies may be needed.

Industrial and Warehousing

- 7.41 We treat the needs of industrial and warehousing together given the similarities in respect of site requirements and increasing prevalence of flexible B2/B8 schemes.

- 7.42 The labour demand and supply models are ill-suited to considering future needs of manufacturing, where productivity improvements mean that there is a weak relationship between floorspace requirements and changes in employment. Equally demand is influenced by the need for better quality premises and businesses seeking to move at lease events.
- 7.43 In the warehousing and logistics market, replacement demand is a key driver of modern floorspace requirements, reflecting the need for large-scale, modern warehousing capable of supporting automated picking and packaging systems associated with online retailing. Increasing levels of automation, including the need for cross-dock facilities and electric vehicle charger infrastructure are also shaping occupier requirements and driving greater power capacity and higher-quality premises. Similar trends are evident within manufacturing facilities. In addition, Environmental, Social, Governance (ESG) considerations are becoming an increasingly important factor influencing demand for new premises. There are also changing spatial patterns with some historical locations less connected to the road network seeing a weaker demand profile in favour of others.
- 7.44 The industrial market in Bolton has seen low levels of vacancy, with sub-5% vacancy rates since 2018, indicating strong market demand. This is reinforced by consistently increasing rental levels (above inflation). Recently delivered space has been fully absorbed by the market and there is limited availability.
- 7.45 Whilst the net completions and absorption rates are broadly aligned, forecasting forward this level of development is likely to build in further market suppression. As such it is appropriate to plan for the upper end of the modelling range, derived from the gross completions trend. While there is a range of potential outcomes which could reasonably be planned for, the strength of recent market demand suggest that Bolton should plan for the upper end of the range of **811,700 sq.m** derived from the gross completions model.
- 7.46 In terms of qualitative needs, section 5 considers a range of market requirements and past take up data which includes:
- large logistics units on the M61
 - more modest or mid box market units
 - units for smaller businesses from 200 to 2,000 sqm

- start ups and incubators nearer population in the south and east of Bolton
- units suitable for more technologically advanced activities - research and development and advanced manufacturing
- potential data centre requirements with access to significant power

7.47 Prescribing a specific proportion of floorspace to meet these typologies and sizes is hazardous as market conditions may evolve and not reflect those specifically of the past. Notwithstanding it is of note that past take up suggests approximately:

- Around 45% of floorspace take up for the largest units 'big box' over 9,300 sqm
- Around 40% of floorspace take up for mid size units from 1,000 to 9,000 sqm
- Around 15% of floorspace take up for smaller units up to 1,000 sqm

7.48 What is important in meeting future need is that sufficient space is planned for that can support economic resilience, diversification and regeneration in Bolton, including for units that can develop higher value added R&D and tech activities where demand exists. In particular, this helps to respond to the Bolton Economic Growth and Resilience Plan aims around creating better jobs and increase economic resilience in Bolton. With long term uncertainty around more traditional industries there is a need to capture investment in future growth market sectors and support diversification in the economy.

8. EMPLOYMENT LAND SUPPLY

- 8.1 This section draws together Bolton's employment land supply based on existing employment allocations, unimplemented and under construction planning permissions and vacant land on protected employment sites identified through site assessments.
- 8.2 Iceni has undertaken site assessments of protected employment sites, existing allocations, extant permissions and potential employment sites (call for sites). The site assessment methodology and full suite of site assessments can be found in the separate Appendix 1: Bolton Employment Site Assessments.
- 8.3 These have been undertaken by professional staff in Autumn 2025 and consider the quality of individual sites, their performance and any development potential within them. The commentary on individual sites sets out recommendations on how Iceni consider that they should be treated in policy terms, based on the evidence available.

Employment Land Supply Position

- 8.4 The Borough's employment land supply is made up of the following:
- Unimplemented permissions – Details on unimplemented permissions have been collated by Bolton Council. This includes permissions for new development schemes, extensions to existing buildings and changes of use and includes permissions that are under construction.
 - Allocated sites in the adopted Site Allocations Plan – Bolton Council have provided estimates of the amount of floorspace each site will accommodate. Iceni have assessed the suitability, availability and deliverability of each of these sites. Where not deemed to constitute a reliable supply or sites are not commercially attractive, these have been discounted from the supply calculation and recommended for deallocation.
 - Unitary Development Plans Sites – A handful of small sites from the Unitary Development Plan (which preceded the adopted Local Plan) but were below the threshold for inclusion in the adopted Local Plan. Bolton Council have provided estimates of the amount of floorspace each site will accommodate (assumed to be in terms of sqm of Gross Internal Area). Iceni have assessed the suitability, availability and

deliverability of each of these sites. Where not deemed to constitute a reliable supply, these have been discounted from the supply calculation.

- Places for Everyone Joint DPD (PfE) Allocations – Floorspace figures have been taken directly from the Plan
- Vacant land on existing protected employment sites – These have been identified by Iceni Projects through site visits and desk-based research.

8.5 The tables below set out the supply/demand position for offices and for industrial and warehousing development in the Borough and summarise the recommendations made within the Site Assessments (see separate Appendix).

8.6 Not all unimplemented permissions have been assessed – change of use permissions, extensions and schemes under 500 sq.m have been omitted from site assessment but included within the supply.

Office

8.7 It can be seen in the table below that around 8,026 sqm of office floorspace has been permitted but as of yet unimplemented.

Table 0-29: Office Unimplemented Permissions (April 2025)

Site Type	Site Reference	Site Name	Gross Floorspace (sq.m)	Recommendation
Allocated Employment Site with planning permission	11P1.1_10051/20	Stone Hill Road	410	Under construction – Protect
Planning Permission	15184/22	Ground Floor 109-111 Bradshawgate	440	
Planning permission	15840/23	120 St Georges Road	162	
Planning permission – change of use	17070/23	2 Deansgate	818	
Planning permission	17859/24	Basement Ground And First Floors 8 Bank Street	131	
Planning permission	10438/21	194-196 BLACKBURN ROAD	144	
Planning permission – change of use	13527/22	Iron Church	1,559	
Planning permission	13647/22	3 The Parklands	3,681	Within Protected Employment Site
Planning permission	15044/22	Part Ground Floor Pindoria Superstore	36	
Planning permission	16264/23	102 Lee Lane	124	
Planning permission	16874/23	St Andrews Place	331	
Planning permission	17002/23	343 Church Street	48	
Planning permission	17702/24	71 Market Street	142	
Total			8,026	

Source: Iceni analysis of Bolton Council data

- 8.8 The table below shows existing allocations and the Town Centre Regeneration masterplan. St Peters Business Park A application dates back to 2002 and whilst there has been a technical start, no further progress has been made. Construction of the housing element of the Rivington Chase allocation has commenced however no progress on the employment component.
- 8.9 Both of these applications were consented pre-pandemic and since then market conditions have changed, particularly for large scale offices. Therefore an adjusted office supply has been calculated removing these sites from the supply, assuming that these sites will not

come forward for office development. As such, the adjusted office allocated supply is 13,000 sq.m.

Table 0-30: Office Local Plan Allocations

Site Type	Site Reference	Site Name	Gross Floorspace (Sqm)	Recommendation
Allocated Employment Site (Town Centre)		Bolton town centre – Crompton Place	10,500	Allocate as a mixed-use site
Allocated Employment Site with planning permission	7P1.1_6142 2/02	St Peters Business Park A	0	Release
Mixed Use Allocation with Planning Permission	3P1.1_9135 2/14	Rivington Chase	0	Retain as mixed use allocation – unlikely to yield office
Mixed Use Allocation with Planning Permission	3P1.1_9221 4/14	Rivington Chase	0	Retain as mixed use allocation – unlikely to yield office
Mixed Use Allocation	89159/12	Burden Way, Middlebrook	2,500	Allocate for mixed use development
Total			13,000	

Source: Iceni analysis of Bolton Council data (Town Centre Masterplan Framework)

- 8.10 The office supply position is summarised in the table below. It can be seen that there is around 24,633 sqm of office floorspace supply.

Table 0-31: Office Supply Summary

	Floorspace (sq.m)
Unimplemented permissions	8,026
Allocations	13,000
Total	21,026

Source: Iceni analysis of Bolton Council data

Industrial

8.11 It can be seen in the table below that around 166,000 sqm of industrial floorspace has been permitted but is currently unimplemented. The table also includes policy recommendations for each site (which would apply if the planning permission were not to come forward).

Table 0-32: Industrial Unimplemented Permissions

Site Type	Site Reference	Site Name	Gross Floorspace (sq.m)	Recommendation
Allocated Mixed Use Site with planning permission	3P1.1_91352/14	Rivington Chase	7,008	Under construction – do not retain
Allocated Employment Site with planning permission	5P1.1_Plots G1/G2	Plot G1 And G2, Logistics North	92,751	Under construction – Protect
Allocated Employment Site with planning permission	11P1.1_10051/20	Stone Hill Road	450	Under construction – Protect
Allocated Mixed Use Site with planning permission	7P6AP_14751/22	Crompton Way	4,855	Protect with The Valley employment area
Planning permission	07088/19	Land at Platinum Business Park	7,259	N/A – within protected employment site
Planning permission	11878/21	Old Station Park Buildings	1,401	Do not allocate
Planning permission	12787/21	Builders Yard Opposite 51 Valletts Lane	600	Do not allocate
Planning permission	11552/21	Land at Farnworth Industrial Estate	166	N/A – within protected employment site. Under construction
Planning permission	14461/22	Land at Shepherd Cross Street Industrial Estate	370	Do not allocate
Planning permission	14541/22	Lever Bridge Mills	1,637	Protect
Planning permission	17785/24	Burnden Works	565	Do not allocate
Planning permission	17818/24	Nelson Mill	908	Do not allocate
Planning permission	17157/23	Land To The Rear Of Jangro House And Land At Storebox Self - Storage	1,070	N/A – within protected employment site

Planning permission	16393/23	Albion Mill	65	Do not allocate
Planning permission	16449/23	Shepherd Cross Street Industrial Estate	163	Do not allocate
Planning permission	16276/23	57 - 61 Tonge Bridge Way	262	Do not allocate
Planning permission	10438/21	194-196 BLACKBURN ROAD	144	Do not allocate
Planning permission	14518/22	Vil Resins Ltd	104	Do not allocate
Planning permission	16901/23	Unit 1 Lostock Park Industrial Estate	900	N/A – within protected employment site
Planning permission – extension	17114/23	Maxilin	937	Do not allocate
Planning permission	15899/23	Northern Garage	44	Do not allocate
Planning permission	15766/23	Unit W3 Union Road	472	Do not allocate
Planning permission	16709/23	462 Manchester Road	107	Do not allocate
Planning permission	12614/21	Metal Solutions Limited	174	Under construction
Planning permission	15719/23	Bolton Enterprise Centre	4,555	N/A – within protected employment site
Planning permission	18890/24	Essity UK	30,448	N/A – within protected employment site. Under construction
Planning permission	16894/23	Land Adjacent To London Street And High Street	256	Do not allocate
Planning permission	18292/24	Land Adjacent to Unit 1, 68 Chorley Street, Bolton BL1 4AL	216	Do not allocate
Planning permission	18479/24	Lodge Bank	178	Do not allocate
Planning permission	18408/24	Orlando Bridge	4,800	N/A – change of use
Planning permission	18409/24	RBS Parklands	2,231	N/A – change of use
Planning permission	19089/24	Tyrers Works	149	Do not allocate
Planning permission	17165/23	135-137 Higher Bridge Street	840	Do not allocate
Total			166,085	

Source: Iceni analysis of Bolton Council data

The Places for Everyone allocations provide 486,000 sq.m of industrial supply. This includes the 100,000 sq.m of permitted floorspace at phase 1 West of Wingates.

Table 0-33: Places for Everyone Allocations

Site Type	Site Reference	Site Name	Gross Floorspace (sq.m)	Recommendation
Places for Everyone Allocation	JPA4	Bewshill Farm	21,000	Retain allocation
Places for Everyone Allocation	JPA5	Chequerbent North	25,000	Retain allocation
Places for Everyone Allocation	JPA6	West of Wingates / M61 Junction 6	440,000 ³⁴	Retain allocation
			486,000	

Source: Iceni analysis of Bolton Council data

The table below shows that existing allocations (and UDP sites) could accommodate around 19,460 sqm of industrial and warehousing floorspace. The table also includes policy recommendations for each site. Where it is recommended to remove an allocation, this is because the land does not constitute reliable supply. This is reflected in the gross floorspace figure.

Table 0-34: Industrial Adopted Local Plan Allocations (and UDP sites)

Site Type	Site Reference	Site Name	Gross Floorspace (sq.m)	Recommendation
Allocated Employment Site	10P1.1	Mill St/Mule St	0	Release allocation
Allocated Employment Site	12P1.1	Express Industrial Estate B	2,695	Retain allocation
Allocated Employment Site	13P1.1	Undershore Works	0	Release allocation
Allocated Employment Site	2P1.1	Barrs Fold Close, Wingates	1,645	Retain allocation
Allocated Employment Site	8P1.1	Watermead	13,265	Retain allocation
Allocated Employment Site	9P1.1	Mill St	1,855	Retain allocation
Mixed Use Allocation	1P6AP	Moses Gate	0	Release
Mixed Use Allocation	2P6AP	Halliwell	0	Release

³⁴ Of which Phase 1 has planning permission (16776/23) for 100,000 sqm

Mixed Use Allocation	3P6AP	Higher Swann Lane/Sunnyside	0	Release
Mixed Use Allocation	5P6AP	The Greenwood	0	Release. Complete – no E(g)/B-class delivered on site
UDP site (below Core Strategy threshold)	33E	Express Industrial Estate C	0	Do not allocate
UDP site (below Core Strategy threshold)	7E	Long Lane	0	Protected within existing employment site.
Total			19,460	

Source: Iceni analysis

Vacant Land on Existing Protected Employment Sites

- 8.12 In addition to the above, we also need to consider vacant land on existing protected employment sites. The table below summarises the additional development potential of these vacant plots. These sites are included within the industrial and warehousing supply for long term development. Overall, there is around 3.5ha of vacant land within development potential on protected land, equivalent to 12,145 sq.m of potential floorspace.

Table 0-35: Safeguarded Employment Site Supply

Name	Plot Size (Ha)	Floorspace Potential (sq.m)*
Europa Trading Estate	0.4	1400
Greater Leaver – Plot 1	0.15	525
Greater Leaver – Plot 2	0.33	1155
Bury Road/Brightmet Fold Lane	2.2	7700
Long Lane (UDP – 7E)	0.4	1,365
Total	3.	12,145

*based on plot ratio of 35% for industrial & warehousing

Source: Iceni analysis

- 8.13 The industrial supply position is summarised in the table below. It can be seen that there is around 683,690 sqm of industrial floorspace supply, including the extant allocations recommended to be rolled forward in the new Local Plan.

Table 0-36: Industrial Supply Summary

	Floorspace
Unimplemented permissions - Gross gains	166,085
Place for Everyone Allocations	486,000
Vacant Plots	12,145
Subtotal	664,230
Bolton Extant Allocations to be Rolled Forward	19,460
Total	683,690

Source: Iceni analysis

- 8.14 Given the shortfall in supply against demand, the Borough should consider the suitability of allocating further land for the next plan period, both to meet the quantitative shortfall but also to ensure that the qualitative requirements are met.

Further Sites

- 8.15 Iceni's assessment of sites submitted through the 'call for sites' process, which can be found in a separate Appendix, identifies a number of sites that could accommodate the residual employment need. This assessment also considers potential office sites identified by the council. These sites could potentially be allocated for office development however further assessment and engagement with landowners would be required.
- 8.16 The table below summarises the recommendations for sites assessed and potential floorspace capacity based on a plot ratio of 0.35.

Table 0-37: Summary of Call for Sites Assessment

Ref	Site Name	Recommendation	Potential floorspace capacity
CFS404	Land to the south of Leigh Tenement Farm and east of Blackrod Bypass (A6), Blackrod, Bolton.	Consider allocating	21,000
CFS434	Land off Moss Lane, Blackrod	Not recommended	0
CFS450	Land southeast of Junction 4 of the M61, Farnworth	Consider allocating	30,000 ³⁵
CFS449	Land southwest of Junction 4 of the M61, Farnworth	Consider allocating	10,850
CFS041	Harrowby Mill	Not recommended	0

³⁵ Based on planning application 00563/26

CFS154	Breightmet Bleachworks	Not recommended	0
CFS353	Darwen Road	Not recommended	0
CFS372	University of Bolton Arena	Consider allocating – wider mixed-use	Dependant on mix of uses
CFS374	West of Dicconson Lane	Consider allocating long term, post completion of JPA6 West of Wingates	201,110
CFS376	Hulton Park	Not recommended for employment - other uses promoted	0
CFS377	Health Innovation Bolton	Consider allocating	Notional capacity based on draft masterplan: total non-residential floorspace of 198,400 sq.m of which Office/R&D: 39,000 sq.m Industrial and warehousing: 41,000 sq.m
CFS383	Ormstons Farm #2	Longer-term option, dependant on spatial strategy	99,750
CFS386	Between Europa Way and Hulme Road	Not recommended	0
CFS388	Kearsley Golf Range	Not recommended	0
CFS398	Scot Lane / Blackrod Industrial Estate	Site is protected within Blackrod Neighbourhood Plan	19,950 (gross - redevelopment)
CFS401	North of Salford Road	Consider allocating	50,000
CFS413	North Car Parks	Consider allocating	21,350
CFS420	Ormstons Farm #1	Do not allocate for employment, potential wider mixed-use development dependant on spatial strategy	0
CFS421	Leigh Tenement Farm #1	Consider allocating	23,800
CFS422	North of Dogholes Farm	Do not allocate	0
CFS423	Regent Park Golf Course, west	Do not allocate	0
CFS424	Salford Road, north	Do not allocate	0
Potential Office Sites			
OFF1	Former Argos	Suitable for retrofit	Up to 2,500 sq.m*
OFF2	Former Courthouse PH	Suitable for retrofit	Up to 1,000 sq.m*

OFF3	Former Ikon Site	Standalone new build office unviable - potential mixed-use development	840 ³⁶
OFF4	Former M&S	Suitable for retrofit / mixed-use redevelopment	Up to 10,000 sq.m*
OFF5	Former Yates PH	Suitable for mixed use conversion	250 ³⁷
OFF6	Le Mans Crescent	Suitable for mixed use conversion	Up to 8,700 sq.m*

*Based on existing floorspace

Source: Iceni analysis

³⁶ Ground floor – based on 0.6 plot ratio

³⁷ Based on planning application (04462/18) – ground floor commercial

9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 This chapter assesses the balance between need and supply for industrial and office floorspace and presents recommendations to inform policy development. The assessment for office floorspace/land is presented first followed by the assessment for industrial and warehousing floorspace/land.

Office

- 9.2 As set out in chapter 7 it is recommended that Bolton plan for 16,700 sqm of office floorspace. This has been compared to unimplemented permissions to identify a supply-demand balance. Against a supply of 8,026 sq.m there is a shortfall of 8,674 sq.m. Within the supply chapter, a further 13,000 sq.m of supply is identified at Burden Way Middlebrook, a proposed mixed-se allocation with planning permission and Crompton Place, part of the previous Bolton town centre allocation. This would sufficiently meet the identified office shortfall below.
- 9.3 Due to the methodology of the labour demand modelling, this requirement reflects the baseline office outcomes excluding Health Innovation Bolton.

Table 0-38: Office Supply-Demand Balance 2025-42

Floorspace Need (sq.m)	16,700
Floorspace Supply (sq.m)	8,026
Additional Floorspace Need (sq.m)	-8,674 (shortfall)

Source: Iceni analysis

- 9.4 As stated in the supply chapter, there are uncertainties in the office supply position. It is recommended that the status of permissions and allocations be closely monitored to determine the likelihood of their development. If sites are identified as being unlikely to come forward, further land supply will need to be identified and allocated. The office market in Bolton and the UK remains challenging outside of prime (city centre) locations, in terms of viability but also demand, so in most instances office delivery will be best channelled through mixed use development.

Industrial and Warehousing

- 9.5 Bolton has a sizeable industrial sector. Its strategic accessibility, afforded in particular by the M61 motorway, make it an attractive location for strategic warehousing and logistics development. There has been strong recent take-up of industrial and warehousing premises in the Borough, and a need for modern floorspace combined with the growth in e-commerce (and associated implications for logistics floorspace needs) mean that the market is and can be expected to remain strong for industrial premises.
- 9.6 Iceni's analysis concludes in identifying a need for 811,700 sq.m of industrial and warehousing floorspace in Bolton over the 2025-42 plan period. This is based on the gross completions trend including a 20% margin to provide flexibility and choice.
- 9.7 To determine net additional floorspace need, floorspace supply from extant commitments, PfE allocations and vacant plots within protected employment land has been deducted. This deduces a residual requirement to allocate around a further 147,497 sq.m of industrial and warehousing floorspace. This does not include the extant capacity of Allocations Plan allocated sites (recommended for retention) which would provide a further 19,460 sq.m if rolled forward in the new Local Plan.

Table 0-39: Industrial and Warehousing Supply-Demand Balance 2025-42

Gross Floorspace Need (sq.m)	811,700
Unimplemented permissions - Gross gains	166,085
Place for Everyone Allocations	486,000
Vacant Plots	12,145
Additional Floorspace Need (sq.m)	-147,497 (shortfall)

Source: Iceni Analysis

Employment, Regeneration and Health Innovation Bolton

- 9.8 Baseline forecasts have been obtained from Experian to consider the future employment outlook for Bolton. These suggest an overall employment growth of 6.1% over the 2025-42 plan period, equivalent to 7,800 new jobs, closely in line with the 20-year historical growth trend. A regeneration scenario has also been developed which looks at sector strengths, opportunities and past strong sector performance to create a more optimistic outlook, with a scenario reporting jobs growth of 12,096 jobs.

- 9.9 Labour supply-led modelling indicates that a jobs growth of 14,161 jobs could be supported by population growth associated with housing delivery in line with the Places for Everyone requirement.
- 9.10 It is noted that many of the employment sites assessed are in the Green Belt, so Bolton Borough Council will need to consider the case for releasing these to meet employment needs which are set out in this study.
- 9.11 Health Innovation Bolton is a major development proposition associated with Bolton Hospital and the University of Greater Manchester bringing forward specialist commercial space related to a wider group of health employment and research. Should this development come forward alongside the regeneration scenario, the proposal could assist in achieving, employment growth including Health Innovation Bolton increases to 15,190 jobs.
- 9.12 Whilst proposals continue to be refined at summer 2026, HIB has been identified as a unique opportunity to expand existing public research institutions, namely Royal Bolton Hospital, alongside generating a wider innovation platform and catalyst for private sector investment in health innovation and related research, development and advanced manufacturing industries. Research by the promoting team for the site has identified potential demand from a range of public research institutions that can also attract wider market interest and demand for commercial space, with the location having a unique capability of collocating public and private R&D opportunities and synergies. This should be an opportunity to attract higher value employment and innovation in similar tech / research parks in the UK. This would support key aims in the Borough around economic resilience, diversification and regeneration in Bolton, given uncertainty around more traditional industries in the long term.
- 9.13 Whilst HIB would be a sector specific opportunity, it would deliver a range of employment space including industrial and warehousing development, meeting some of the forecast need as set out in the demand side modelling. Whilst historic development patterns are not health sector specific, using HIB as a supply response to the trend based need model creates an opportunity to refocus Bolton's economy and employment towards higher value employment and regeneration activities and it is considered suitable as a prospect for meeting Bolton's objectively assessed employment needs here.

A1. LABOUR SUPPLY

Introduction

- A1.1 The analysis to follow looks at the potential growth in the labour-supply in Bolton if additional dwellings are provided in line with the Places for Everyone Plan (i.e. what level of population growth and change in the age structure might occur and how might this impact on the economically active and working population). To provide a baseline, data has also been drawn from the latest ONS subnational population projections (SNPP) which take a 2022 base.

Demographic Implications of the Places for Everyone Plan

- A1.2 A demographic model has been developed to look at the potential implications of delivery of 787 dwellings per annum in the 2025-42 period. This considers the levels of migration likely to be needed to fill homes and also the possibility of seeing higher levels of household formation in younger age groups (where there is evidence of a historical constraint in formation). The key assumptions in the modelling are:
- Taking the 2022-based subnational population projections (SNPP) as a start point – this includes data on birth and death rates as well as migration;
 - Updating this projection to take account of mid-year population data to 2024 (looking at more recent data about births, deaths and migration);
 - The base position for 2025 is taken from this updated projection, rolled forward for a further year;
 - Data about the communal population and household formation is taken from the 2021 Census with the formation rates held constant at 2021 levels (consistent with the approach used by ONS in their subnational household projections (SNHP);
 - It is assumed that around 3% of new stock will be vacant at any time (to allow for movement within the stock and based on 2021 Census data). This means that for 787 dpa it is assumed there would be household growth of approximately 764 per annum; and

- Modelling then flexes migration estimates so there is a sufficient population to fill the additional homes (i.e. population required to generate 764 additional households per annum over a 17-year period).

A1.3 In developing this projection the population is projected to increase by 13,400 people over the 2025-42 period, with this increase being particularly strong in the 16-64 age group, although the highest proportionate change is projected in the 65 and over age group, with this group increasing by 15%.

Table A1: Projected population change 2025 to 2042 by broad age bands – Places for Everyone Plan (787 dwellings per annum)

	2025	2042	Change in population	% change
Under 16	66,800	60,038	-6,762	-10.1%
16-64	192,140	204,505	12,365	6.4%
65 and over	52,973	60,773	7,801	14.7%
Total	311,913	325,316	13,403	4.3%

Source: Iceni analysis

A1.4 For reference, this data can be compared with the 2022-based SNPP which shows a similar level of projected population change (13,700 additional people) but with a slightly different age structure; including a more modest increase in those aged 16-64.

Table A2: Projected population change 2025 to 2042 by broad age bands – 2022-SNPP

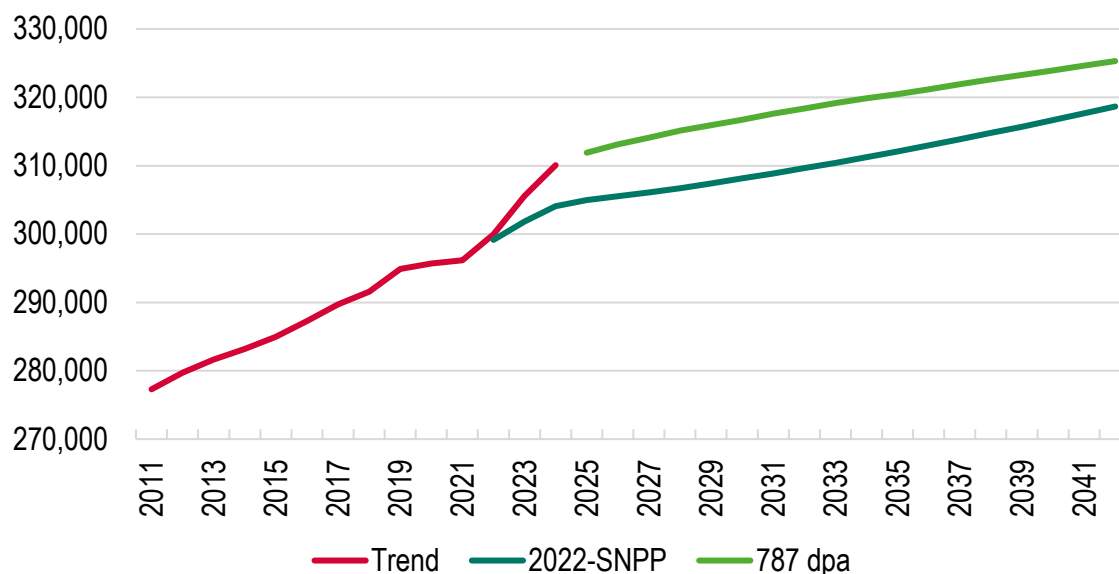
	2025	2042	Change in population	% change
Under 16	63,137	57,088	-6,049	-9.6%
16-64	188,796	199,559	10,763	5.7%
65 and over	53,054	62,018	8,964	16.9%
Total	304,988	318,666	13,678	4.5%

Source: Iceni analysis

A1.5 Below are a series of charts showing past trends and projected population growth and key components of change for each the projection linking to the Places for Everyone Plan. For comparison, data has also been provided from the 2022-based SNPP. The first figure looks at overall population growth, before considering natural change and net migration.

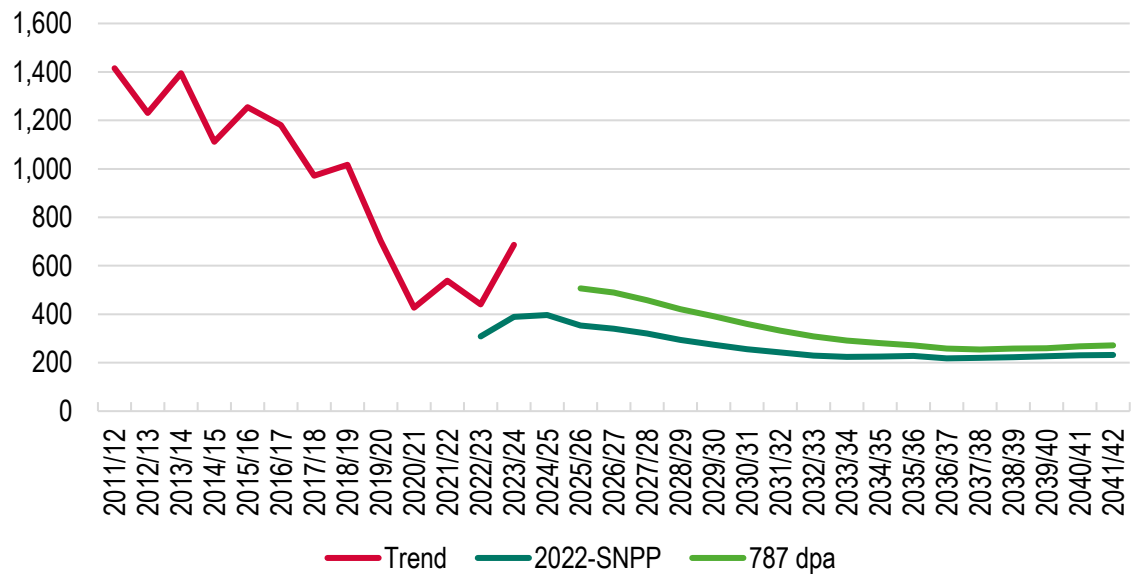
- A1.6 The analysis suggests the population of Bolton could rise to 325,300 by 2042 (up from 311,900 in 2025 (estimated)) a 4.3% increase, or 0.3% per annum. For comparison, between 2014 and 2024 the population increased by an average of around 0.9% per annum and so the Places for Everyone Plan would be projected to provide a lower level of population growth than recent past trends.

Figure A1.1 Past trends and Projected Population – Bolton

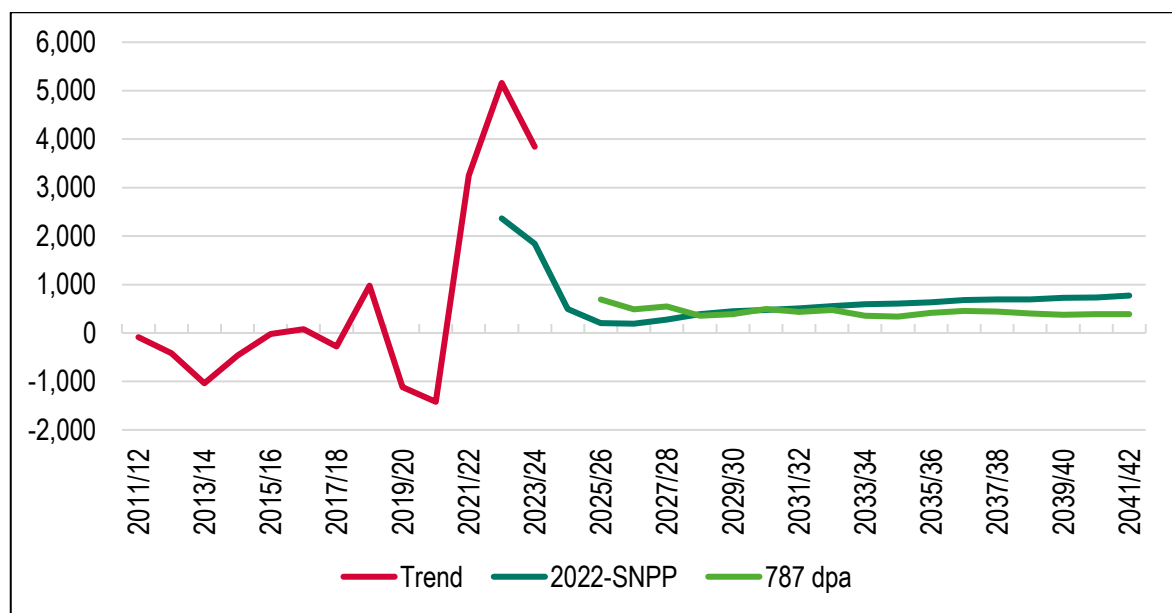


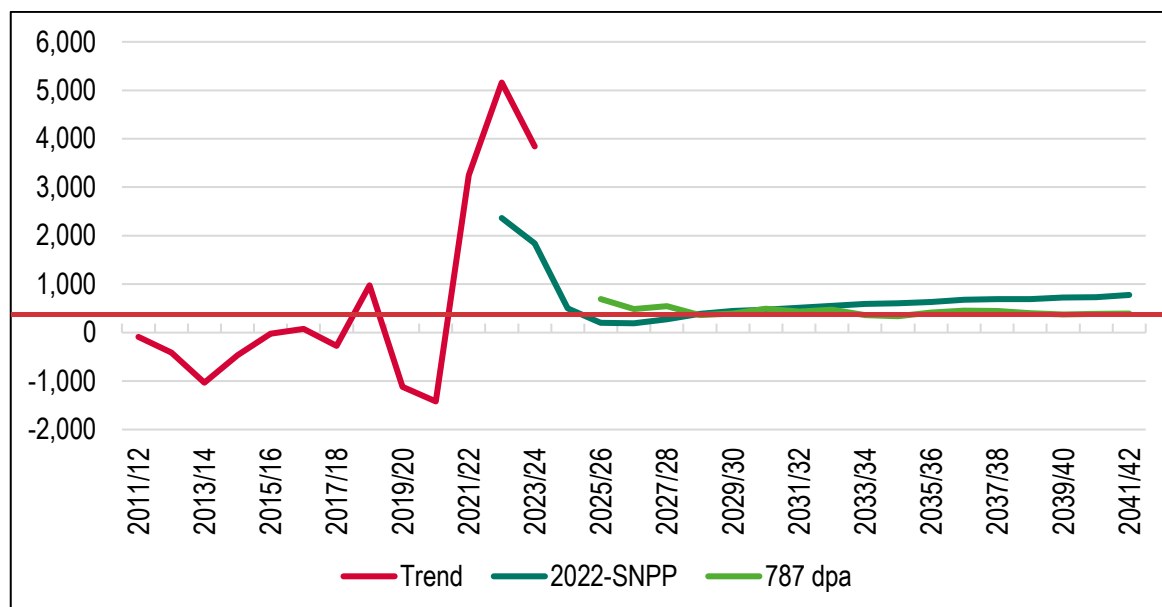
Source: ONS and Iceni analysis

- A1.7 The main reason for population growth would be due to net in-migration, with the decline in natural change (births minus deaths) projected to level off moving forward to 2042. Regarding net migration, the analysis suggests with delivery linked to the Places for Everyone Plan net migration would generally be at a level similar to typical longer-term past trends – although notably lower than seen in each of the past three years for which data exists (2021-24). Levels of net migration are projected to be very similar to those in the latest (2022-based) ONS subnational projections

Figure A1.2 Past trends and projected natural change – Bolton

Source: ONS and Iceni analysis

Figure A1.3 Past trends and projected net migration – Bolton



Source: ONS and Iceni analysis

Relationship Between Housing and Economic Growth

A1.8 The analysis to follow considers the relationship between housing and economic growth; seeking to understand what level of jobs might be supported by changes to the local labour supply (which will be influenced by population change). To look at estimates of the job growth to be supported, a series of stages are undertaken. These can be summarised as:

- Estimate changes to the economically active population (this provides an estimate of the change in labour-supply);
- Overlay information about commuting patterns, double jobbing (i.e. the fact that some people have more than one job) and potential changes to unemployment; and
- Bringing together this information will provide an estimate of the potential job growth supported by the population projections.

Growth in Resident Labour Supply

A1.9 The approach taken in this report is to derive a series of age specific economic activity rates and use these to estimate how many people in the population will be economically active as projections develop. This is a fairly typical approach with data being drawn in this instance aligned to the Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR's) March 2025 Economic and Fiscal Outlook. The OBR data shows changes in economic participation by age over

time. The incremental changes forecast have been applied to the 2021 Census data on economic participation (by age) for Bolton to forecast future changes for the Council area.

A1.10 The OBR forecasting approach uses a cohort-based model to take provide an initial baseline for how population participation rates could evolve over time and data on historical changes to economic participation for men and women from the ONS Labour Force Survey. It additionally takes account of changes in State Pension Age which may result in changes to the timings of workforce exits as people leave the labour force changing relative to historical behaviour; but models that the impacts of this will be greater for those cohorts which are further from retirement as the changes are implemented. The result is a forecast for the participation rate which sits midway between assume no state pension age changes; and a full impact of state pension age changes on participation.³⁸ OBR then applies a number of sense checks in drawing conclusions including considering trends in inactivity (including long-term sickness) which mean for instance that its implied changes to participation rates for those aged 50-64 remain below its pre-pandemic forecasts. The figures also forecast higher numbers of women in the workforce linked to falling birth rates and policy measures to support childcare provision.

A1.11 The table below shows the resultant assumptions on changes to economic participation by age for the Council area. The analysis shows that the main changes to economic activity rates are projected to be in the 65-69 age group – this will to a considerable degree link to changes to pensionable age, as well as general trends in the number of older people working for longer (which in itself is linked to general reductions in pension provision).

³⁸ See <https://articles.obr.uk/forecasting-participation-trends-the-cohort-model/index.html>

Table A3: Projected changes to economic activity rates (2025 and 2042) – Bolton

	2025	2042	Change
16-19	30.9%	31.4%	0.5%
20-24	72.3%	70.7%	-1.6%
25-29	78.6%	77.3%	-1.2%
30-34	79.3%	77.5%	-1.8%
35-39	77.4%	76.6%	-0.8%
40-44	76.9%	77.8%	0.9%
45-49	81.0%	81.8%	0.8%
50-54	78.9%	81.4%	2.5%
55-59	72.3%	75.6%	3.3%
60-64	60.8%	66.9%	6.1%
65-69	26.5%	38.0%	11.4%
70-74	7.7%	14.1%	6.4%
75+	3.0%	4.1%	1.1%

Source: Based on OBR and Census (2021) data

- A1.12 Working through an analysis of age specific economic activity rates, it is possible to estimate the overall change in the number of economically active people in the area – this is set out in the table below (linking to the 2022-based SNPP and the PfE housing target).
- A1.13 The analysis shows that the SNPP results in growth in the economically-active population of 14,500 people – a 10% increase. With the PfE Plan, the increase in the economically active population is projected to be very slightly higher at 14,900 (10%).

Table A4: Estimated change to the economically active population (2025-42) – Bolton

	Economically active (2025)	Economically active (2042)	Total change in economically active	% change
2022-SNPP	140,926	155,390	14,464	10.3%
Places for Everyone	143,399	158,270	14,871	10.4%

Source: Iceni Analysis

Linking Changes in Resident Labour Supply to Job Growth

- A1.14 The analysis above has set out potential scenarios for the change in the number of people who are economically active. However, it is arguably more useful to convert this information

into an estimate of the number of jobs this would support. The number of jobs and resident workers required to support these jobs will differ depending on three main factors:

- Commuting patterns – where an area sees more people out-commute for work than in-commute it may be the case that a higher level of increase in the economically active population would be required to provide a sufficient workforce for a given number of jobs (and vice versa where there is net in-commuting);
- Double jobbing – some people hold down more than one job and therefore the number of workers required will be slightly lower than the number of jobs; and
- Unemployment – if unemployment were to fall then the growth in the economically active population would not need to be as large as the growth in jobs (and vice versa).

Commuting Patterns

- A1.15 The table below shows summary data about commuting to and from Bolton from the 2011 and 2021 Census. Data from both sources is used as the 2011 data is quite old, but the 2021 data could be influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- A1.16 Overall, from both sources the data shows a level of net out-commuting (around 7% more people living in the Council area and working than work in the Council area in 2011, with a lower figure of 2% in 2021). This is shown as the commuting ratio in the final row of the table and is calculated as the number of people living in an area (and working) divided by the number of people working in the area (regardless of where they live).
- A1.17 When comparing the two sources it is worth reflecting on a large increase in the number of home workers (or those of no fixed workplace) recorded in the 2021 Census data. This will have been affected (at least in part) by the time of the Census during a Covid-19 lockdown. In 2011, a total of 19,900 people were recorded as home workers or with no fixed workplace; in 2021 this figure had increase by two and a half times (to 49,400). As the country has moved away from the pandemic, it is possible this figure has reduced with possible implications on commuting dynamics.

Table A5: Commuting Patterns – Bolton

	2011	2021
Live and Work in local authority	62,464	45,145
Home Workers or No Fixed Workplace	18,930	49,410
In Commute	34,022	28,805
Out Commute	42,409	30,888
Total Working in LA	115,416	123,360
Total Living in LA and Working Anywhere	123,803	125,443
Commuting Ratio	1.073	1.017

Source: Census 2011, 2021

- A1.18 The analysis below looks at both sets of Census data with a further sensitivity of a balanced (1:1) commuting ratio (i.e. the increase in the number of people working in the area is equal to the number of people living in the area who are working)

Double Jobbing

- A1.19 The analysis also considers that a number of people may have more than one job (double jobbing). This can be calculated as the number of people working in the local authority divided by the number of jobs. Data from the Annual Population Survey (available on the NOMIS website) for the past 5-years (for which data exists) suggests across Bolton that typically about 2.1% of workers have a second job. It has therefore been assumed that around 2.1% of people will have more than one job moving forward – this means the number of jobs supported by the workforce will be around 2.1% higher than workforce growth. It has been assumed in the analysis that the level of double jobbing will remain constant over time.

Unemployment

- A1.20 The last analysis when looking at the link between jobs and resident labour supply is a consideration of unemployment. Essentially, this is considering if there is any latent labour force that could move back into employment to take up new jobs. The latest model-based unemployment data from the Annual Population Survey (for January 2025-December 2025) puts unemployment at around 5.0% which is a level only slightly above the national average of 4.5%. On the basis of this data it is considered there is unlikely to be any significant latent labour supply and so no further adjustment is made to the data to take account of unemployment.

Jobs Supported by Growth in the Resident Labour Force

A1.21 The tables below show how many additional jobs might be supported by population growth under the different projection scenarios. It is estimated under the 2022-based SNPP that between 13,800 and 14,800 additional jobs could be supported over the plan period (2025-42) and with the PfE Plan this range is slightly higher (between 16,100 and 15,200 additional jobs).

Table A6: Jobs supported by demographic projections (2025-42) – Bolton – 2022-SNPP

	Total change in economically active	With allowance for double jobbing	Allowance for net commuting (= jobs supported)
2021 commuting	14,464	14,774	14,529
2011 commuting	14,464	14,774	13,773
1:1 commuting	14,464	14,774	14,774

Source: Iceni analysis

Table A7: Jobs supported by demographic projections (2025-42) – Bolton – PfE Plan

	Total change in economically active	With allowance for double jobbing	Allowance for net commuting (= jobs supported)
2021 commuting	14,871	15,190	14,937
2011 commuting	14,871	15,190	14,161
1:1 commuting	14,871	15,190	15,190

Source: Iceni analysis

A2. DETAILED SECTOR BREAKDOWN – HIB SCENARIO

Table A8: HIB Scenario 2025-42

Sector	HIB Employment 2025-42	HIB + Regen Change	HIB+Regen 2042
Accommodation & Food Services		1,310	7,110
Administrative & Supportive Services		502	10,602
Chemicals (manufacture of)	348	310	1,010
Civil Engineering		153	1,953
Computer & Electronic Products (manufacture of)	348	374	574
Computing & Information Services		382	2,282
Construction of Buildings		274	2,874
Education	31	931	11,831
Finance		680	4,680
Food, Drink & Tobacco (manufacture of)		160	4,260
Health	15	1,215	14,315
Insurance & Pensions		-	100
Land Transport, Storage & Post	155	1,998	11,698
Machinery & Equipment (manufacture of)	348	201	701
Media Activities		-	600
Metal Products (manufacture of)		337	2,937
Non-Metallic Products (manufacture of)		-68	1,532
Other Manufacturing		376	2,376
Other Private Services		200	3,300
Printing and Recorded Media (manufacture of)		44	400
Professional Services	1,485	3,134	13,134
Public Administration & Defence		300	4,000
Real Estate		200	2,500
Recreation		151	3,051
Residential Care & Social Work	15	315	7,415
Retail		324	13,042
Specialised Construction Activities		742	5,742
Telecoms		-	300
Textiles & Clothing (manufacture of)		-47	453
Transport Equipment (manufacture of)	348	210	910
Utilities		-155	1,145
Wholesale		583	9,983
Wood & Paper (manufacture of)		53	653
Total	3,094	15,190	147,290