Bolton Town Centre

Description	Bolton is the principal town centre for the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton in Greater Manchester, located approximately 11 miles north-west of Manchester city centre. The town centre occupies an area broadly bounded by Marsden Road and Moor Lane to the west, Topp Way (A673) to the north, St Peters Way (A666) and Bury New Road to the east, and Trinity Street and Bolton railway station to the south. The survey area encompasses 615 retail, leisure, service and commercial units amounting to approximately 183,777 sq.m of commercial floorspace. The layout of the town centre is broadly centred on Market Place shopping centre, which opened in 1988 and anchors the principal retail offer, and the historic civic core around Victoria Square and Bolton Town Hall. Deansgate forms the main pedestrianised high street running north from the Market Place. To the south, the Bolton Shopping Park on Trinity Street provides an edge-of-centre retail offer. Bolton Market occupies a large purpose-built market hall on Ashburner Street to the north-west of the centre, complemented by the award-winning Bolton Market Food Hall. Bolton's retail core is undergoing a significant period of structural change. The Crompton Place shopping centre, which faces the Town Hall across Victoria Square, was purchased by Bolton Council in 2018 and has been progressively vacated. Primark completed its relocation from Crompton Place to a new unit in Market Place in late 2024, and Bolton Council applied for planning permission to demolish Crompton Place in 2025, with MEPC (the development arm of Federated Hermes) appointed as development partner in early 2026. Demolition and redevelopment of the site, which could deliver a mixed-use scheme that represents Bolton's flagship regeneration project.



Figure 1: Victoria Square is Bolton's principal civic space that generates good level of footfall and is flanked by the Grade II listed Town Hall, the square is set to be transformed by the demolition of Crompton Place.



Figure 2: Bolton Market on Ashburner Street is one of the largest traditional indoor markets in Greater Manchester, and serves as a key convenience and footfall anchor for the town cent



Figure 3: The Bee Network Cycle Hub and the iconic arch of Bolton Interchange is visible from Great Moor Street, illustrating the town centre's improving active travel and public transport Infrastructure.



Figure 4: Deansgate forms the principal pedestrianised retail/service corridor of Bolton town centre, with a mix of independent and national multiple operations occupying Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings, with Bolton Parish Church visible in the distance.

Table 1 Bolton Town Centre Floorspace Composition

GOAD Category	Floorspace at 2026 (sq.m)	Floorspace at 2026 (%)	Floorspace UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	51,784	28.2	28.6
Convenience	25,048	13.6	15.4
Financial & Business	7,612	4.1	6.0
Leisure	39,771	21.6	27.9
Retail Service	13,203	7.2	7.3
Vacant	46,358	25.2	14.3
TOTAL	**183,777**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Composition of Town centre based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2026; UK Average from Experian Goad Report September 2025.

Table 2 Bolton Town Centre Unit Composition

GOAD Category	Units at 2026 (no.)	Units at 2026 (%)	Units UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	129	21.0	25.9
Convenience	46	7.5	9.4
Financial & Business	40	6.5	7.8
Leisure	148	24.1	26.7
Retail Service	77	12.5	15.9
Vacant	175	28.5	14.0
TOTAL	**615**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Town centre composition based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2026; UK Average from Experian Goad Report September 2025.

Uses

Bolton's convenience offers accounts for 46 units (7.5%) and 13.6% of floorspace, which is below the UK unit average but closer to the floorspace benchmark. The convenience offer within Bolton town centre itself is limited. The larger format convenience uses are predominantly located on the edge of the town centre boundary, with Morrisons serving as the main convenience retail anchor. Bolton Market also supports this offer, opening on specific days of the week. The convenience sector also includes a range of smaller independents and specialists including Greggs (three branches), Holland & Barrett, Walsh's Ye Olde Pastie Shoppe,

Greenhalgh's bakery and a number of international food stores which collectively serve the diverse convenience needs of Bolton's catchment population.

Comparison provision accounts for 129 units below the UK average of 25.9% and 28.2% of floorspace, broadly in line with the national benchmark. The comparison offer is anchored by Primark, which relocated from Crompton Place to a new unit in Market Place in late 2024. The broader Market Place anchors a diverse range of national multiples including H&M, New Look, River Island, Next, JD, Boots, Footasylum, The Entertainer, Superdrug (Deansgate) and Blue Inc. Bolton Shopping Park on Trinity Street provides a further cluster of edge-of-centre comparison operators including Wickes, TK Maxx, Home Bargains, Next, Argos, Boots and Peacocks. The comparison offer is broadly appropriate for a town centre of Bolton's size. Independent comparison traders are in evidence on Deansgate and the side streets, though the category is dominated by the national multiple sectors.

Bolton's leisure services offer comprises 148 units (24.1%) and 21.6% of floorspace, both of which are below the UK averages. The offer is anchored by several prominent leisure venues; the Excellency Bolton on Carlton Street, the Mecca bingo hall on Trinity Street, and Grosvenor casino on Ormrod Street are the three largest leisure units by floorspace. Cultural and arts venues include the Octagon Theatre on Howell Croft South, The Albert Halls within the Grade II listed building and Bolton Town Hall on Victoria Square.

The food and beverage offer is extensive, featuring 25 takeaways, 18 pubs, 15 cafés, 10 bars, and 7 nightclubs. National brands such as McDonald's, Starbucks, and Muffin Break are prominently located on the main high street and the upper floors of the Market Place shopping centre. This is complemented by a strong presence of independent operators concentrated around Bradshawgate, Churchgate, and Nelson Square, with notable venues including The Northern Monkey, The Swan, The Northern Way, Haute Dolci, and Tapaz Ristorante.

A central component of this evening and dining economy is The Vaults, a subterranean leisure hub set within the restored 1855 Victorian basement arches of the Market Place shopping centre. This unique, atmospheric space specifically caters to the leisure and nighttime economy, accommodating major brands like Nando's alongside a vibrant mix of independent dining options, bars, and entertainment venues such as escape rooms.

Retail service provision accounts for 77 units (12.5%) and 7.2% of floorspace, broadly in line with the respective UK averages. The category is dominated by hair and beauty operators, with 23 hairdressers and 16 beauty salons recorded in the survey. Opticians are well-represented, with Specsavers (two branches), Boots Opticians, Vision Express, Opticians Direct and Cloughs Opticians all present. Travel agent provision includes

	TUI, Hays Travel and other operators. Vehicle servicing uses along Bridgeman Street and Thynne Street account for a disproportionate share of retail service floorspace. Post Office provision is maintained through two branches (Newport Street and Oxford Street). Financial and business services comprise 40 units (6.5%) and 4.1% of floorspace both below the UK averages of 7.8% and 6.0% respectively. Despite this, the banking offer is notably strong with NatWest, Lloyds, Santander, Barclays, HSBC, , Nationwide, TSB, Virgin Money, Skipton Building Society, Yorkshire Building Society and the Co-operative Bank all maintaining branches in the town centre, one of the most complete banking offers in any comparable Greater Manchester town. This is supplemented by pawnbrokers (H&T Pawnbrokers, two branches; Cash Converters; Cash Generator; Ramsdens), recruitment agencies, solicitors and estate agents.
Daytime/Evening Economy	During the day Bolton town centre fulfils a good number of retail and service needs of its sizeable residential catchment, with the Market Place shopping centre in Deansgate and the Bolton Shopping Park (out-of-centre) collectively sustaining a moderate level of footfall. The three large format convenience edge of centre anchors such as Morrisons and Bolton Market, generate significant footfall across different parts of the centre, drawing shoppers to the northern (Ashburner Street), eastern (Deansgate) and southern (Trinity Street) edges of the retail core respectively. The evening economy in Bolton is mainly focused on food and beverage as well as entertainment. Bradshawgate, Churchgate and Nelson Square are the primary concentrated areas of public activity with a cluster of bars, pubs and restaurants generating footfall into the evening and night which also boost the evening economy. The Dragonfly, Northern Monkey, The Swan, The Spinning Mule, The Northern Way Bolton, The Crown Sports Bar, The Duke of York, The Blarney Stone, Barristers, Haute Dolci and Tapaz Ristorante as well as the Vaults, are among the principal operators. The Octagon Theatre, The Albert Halls, Excellency Bolton, Mecca and Grosvenor also contribute to the evening economy. While the dispersal of evening economy uses across several streets ensures that multiple parts of the centre benefit from activity after dark, the town centre would benefit from a stronger and more concentrated evening economy focal point, which is an issue that could potentially be addressed by the regeneration scheme. The cultural and leisure events attract people to the town centre to work and live. The proposed new pedestrian route through the Trinity Quarter, along with the other mix of uses proposed, attracts relatively higher footfall during the day.
Vacancies	Vacancies represent Bolton town centre's most significant challenge. Perception is that there is a high vacancy rate across Bolton town centre. It was noted that around 175 units were received as vacant, equating to 28.5% of the total unit count, double the UK average of 14% in floorspace

	with 46,358 sq.m was recorded as vacant against a UK average of 14.3%. Both measures are substantially above national benchmarks. However, the vacancy rate is concentrated in Crompton Place with 31 vacant units and Bradshawgate with 28 vacant units, the latter having suffered from reduced footfall and a loss of anchor retailers over recent years. The Gates Shopping Centre on Mealhouse Lane also contains 11 vacant units. It is important to note that the elevated vacancy rate is in large part a direct consequence of the Crompton Place situation due to the deliberate clearance of the shopping centre's tenants as a precursor to demolition and regeneration. Bolton Council's strategy to consolidate the retail offer around Market Place, and the appointment of MEPC to deliver a mixed-use redevelopment of Crompton Place, provides a credible pathway to reducing vacancy rates materially over the medium term. The current use of the cleared Crompton Place site for events, markets and pop-up uses will also help sustain activity in this part of the town centre during the transition period.
Opportunity Sites	Crompton Place is Bolton's flagship regeneration opportunity and represents the most significant development site in any Greater Manchester town centre. The 1.55 hectare, 280,000 sq.ft former shopping centre occupies a prime location directly opposite the Grade II listed Bolton Town Hall on Victoria Square. Previously there was access to Bradshawgate from Victoria Square through the Crompton Place. This route was closed off when Primark extended their Crompton Place store in 2009. Planning permission has previously been granted for a mixed-use redevelopment. Church Wharf, a riverside site adjacent to Bolton Parish Church, is the second major opportunity site currently being brought forward Local developer Watson Homes has plans for 417 homes and a 130-bed hotel on the site, with construction underway and phased completion expected by 2029. The site will serve as a key gateway to the regenerated town centre, complementing the existing Moor Lane and Deansgate Gardens residential developments, which are part of a wider vision to attract 5,000 new residents to the town centre over 15 years. Cheadle Square is identified as a key component of Bolton's Academic and Cultural Quarter. While the area is primarily envisaged as a mixed-use destination, the proposals include several elements that would support the wider town centre economy. Central to the proposals is the creation of a new Market Square on the former bus station site. This space is intended to complement Bolton Market by providing additional space for events, markets and town centre activities. The former bus station has been developed for residential use. The Framework also promotes Queen Street as a food and drink destination, with restaurants and cafés helping to create a more active and attractive environment.

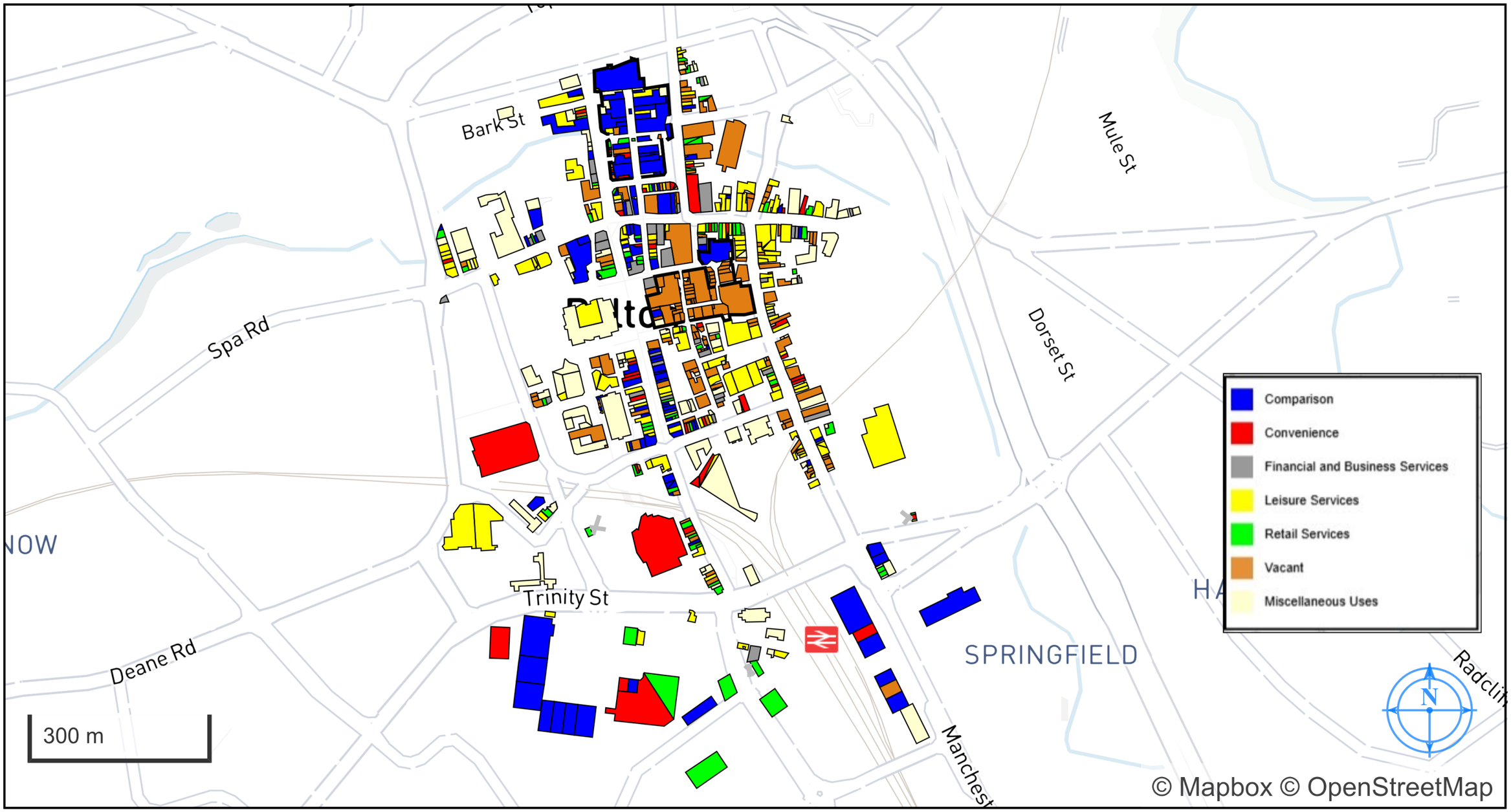
	The former Victoria Plaza on Oxford Street and the broader Mawdsley Street corridor represent a further area of opportunity with a notable cluster of vacancies that could benefit from active placemaking and investment Bolton Council's Town Fund-backed investments including the award- winning Bolton Market Food Hall, the renovation of Bolton Central Library, Elizabeth Park and the Wellsprings Innovation Centre which has already delivered significant public realm and community improvements that provide a positive context to further private-sector investment.
Pedestrian Flows	During the study it was found that the footfall in Bolton town centre was moderate and broadly concentrated around the Market Place shopping centre and the main pedestrianised stretches of Deansgate and Newport Street. The Market Place, and particularly the Primark unit, which had recently opened in its new location generated the highest levels of pedestrian activity, drawing shoppers from across the centre. Morrisons on Black Horse Street and the Bolton Shopping Park also attract significant car and foot traffic. The pedestrian activity was observed to be the most active around the market square, , pedestrian pathway of Victoria Square along with the junctions where Deansgate and Hotel Street meet Oxford Street. In contrast, the Crompton Place area and Bradshawgate experienced lower footfall, with extensive stretches of vacant and shuttered frontage contributing to a reduced sense of activity and vitality. Victoria Square itself is relatively quiet, with the civic space and Town Hall providing an attractive setting but without sufficient active uses immediately fronting the square to drive footfall at the time of our visit. The northern part of the centre around Bolton Market, Ashburner Street and Churchgate generated its own distinct footfall pattern, with the market hall and adjacent convenience operators sustaining a level of activity that was somewhat separate from the main retail circuit. Connecting the northern and southern parts of the centre more effectively particularly through the reactivation of Bradshawgate and the Crompton Place site, is identified as a key objective in the regeneration masterplan.
Accessibility	Bolton town centre is well-served by both road and public transport. By road, the town centre is accessible via the A666(St Peters Way) and A673, with the M61 motorway junction 5 (Horwich) providing regional connections approximately 3 miles to the west, and junction 6 approximately 2.5 miles to the south-west. Town centre car parking is available at a number of council-operated and NCP multi-storey facilities. Bolton Interchange, located on Newport Street adjacent to the town centre, combines the Bee Network bus station with Bolton railway station, connected by a purpose-built Skylink pedestrian footbridge. Bolton railway station is served by Northern Trains and provides frequent services to Manchester Victoria (approximately 30 minutes), Manchester

	Piccadilly, Preston, Wigan, Clitheroe, Blackburn, Barrow-in-Furness and Blackpool North. Bolton was one of the first areas in Greater Manchester to be brought within the Bee Network bus franchising scheme (September 2023), with Bee Network services now operating across the borough providing comprehensive links to Manchester city centre, Bury, Wigan, Leigh, Chorley, Radcliffe, Rochdale and surrounding areas. Bolton Interchange also benefits from a Metro shuttle free circular bus service linking the interchange with Bolton Market and key town centre destinations. Cycling provision in the town centre is limited but is being improved as part of wider Greater Manchester active travel investment. The town centre is broadly flat and walkable, with the pedestrianised core of Deansgate, Newport Street and the Market Place area providing good pedestrian connectivity. The Skylink bridge and the proximity of Bolton railway, add to the easily accessible transport factor of the centre.
Perception of Safety	Bolton town centre has a generally adequate level of natural surveillance in and around the Market Place, Deansgate and the Interchange during the daytime, with the presence of shoppers, students and workers providing a sense of activity and passive security in the busier parts of the centre. The recent public realm improvements around Victoria Square and the Town Hall contribute positively to the safety and attractiveness of the civic core. The concentration of vacancies along Bradshawgate and within Crompton Place, however, reduces the sense of safety and activity in that part of the centre particularly after trading hours. The extent of inactive frontage on Bradshawgate and around the periphery of the centre is a concern, and the regeneration of Crompton Place which will reopen the pedestrian link between Victoria Square and Bradshawgate, is expected to be highly beneficial in this regard.
Environmental Quality	The environmental quality of Bolton town centre is mixed but has several genuine strengths. The Grade II listed Bolton Town Hall and the adjacent Victoria Square provide a handsome civic setting of genuine quality, and the concentration of listed and locally significant buildings in the historic core including the Octagon Theatre, The Albert Halls, Bolton Parish Church and the Victorian commercial architecture of Deansgate gives the town centre a distinctive and attractive character. The main pedestrianised streets of Deansgate and Newport Street are generally well-maintained, with good paving, street furniture and lighting. The award-winning Bolton Market Food Hall is a positive recent addition to the townscape. Conversely, the Crompton Place shopping centre's brutalist 1971 exterior is widely regarded as a blot on the streetscape, and its forthcoming demolition will be a significant environmental improvement for Victoria Square and the wider centre. Several shopfronts in the peripheral areas and along Bradshawgate are in need of maintenance or improvement, and the extent of vacant and shuttered

	premises has a noticeable impact on environmental quality in parts of the centre.
Conclusions	Bolton is a significant town centre serving the wider Metropolitan Borough of Bolton, with a diverse retail, convenience, leisure and cultural offer and one of the most complete banking and financial services provisions in any comparable Greater Manchester town. The Market Place shopping centre, the large-format edge of centre convenience anchors (Morrisons, Bolton Market), the Bee Network Interchange and the cluster of cultural and civic venues around Victoria Square are all genuine assets. The principal challenge facing Bolton town centre is its very high vacancy rate of 28.5% of units and 25.2% of floorspace, nearly double the UK averages. However, this is in large part of a structural consequence of the deliberate clearance of Crompton Place in preparation for regeneration, compounded by longer-term challenges on Bradshawgate and at the Gates Shopping Centre. While the elevated vacancy figures are therefore somewhat misleading in isolation, they reflect a real and visible loss of vitality across parts of the centre that requires sustained action to address. The regeneration of Crompton Place, Bolton's flagship project, is now decisively in motion. The appointment of MEPC (the developer behind NOMA Manchester, Wellington Place Leeds and Paradise Birmingham) as Bolton Council's development partner signals genuine momentum, and the planned mixed-use redevelopment could deliver transformational change to the heart of the town centre over the coming decade. The Church Wharf development, the ongoing residential schemes at Moor Lane, and the already-delivered Towns Fund investments Bolton Market Food Hall, Deansgate Gardens, Elizabeth Park, the Wellsprings Innovation Centre and Bolton Central Library together represent a credible and maturing regeneration framework. Our overall conclusion is that Bolton is a town centre in the midst of a challenging but necessary structural transition. The short-term disruption and elevated vacancy associated with the clearance of Crompton Place should be viewed in the context of a longer-term regeneration trajectory that, if delivered successfully, has the potential to substantially improve Bolton's vitality, viability and environmental quality over the medium to long term.

Bolton Town Centre

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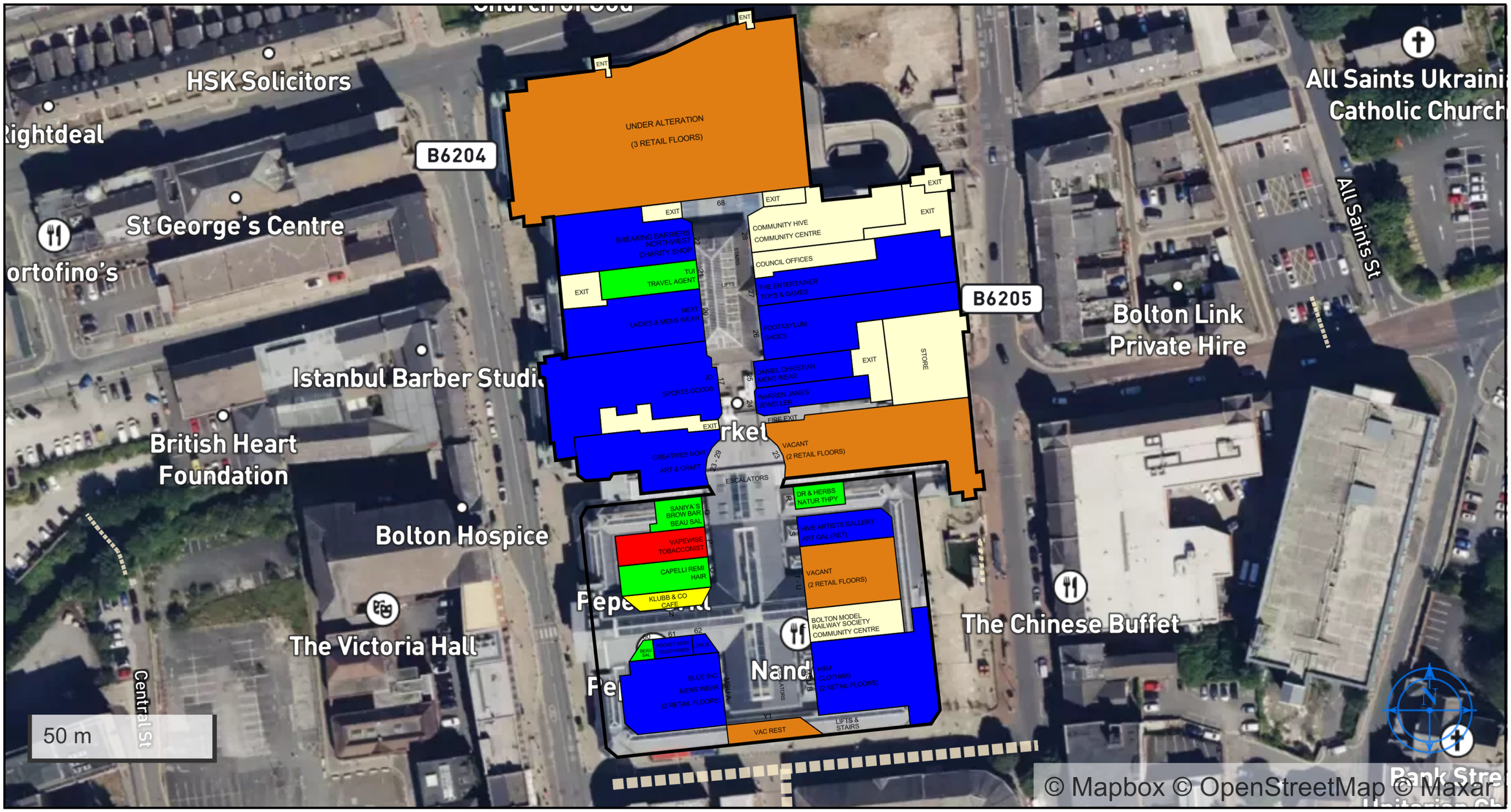
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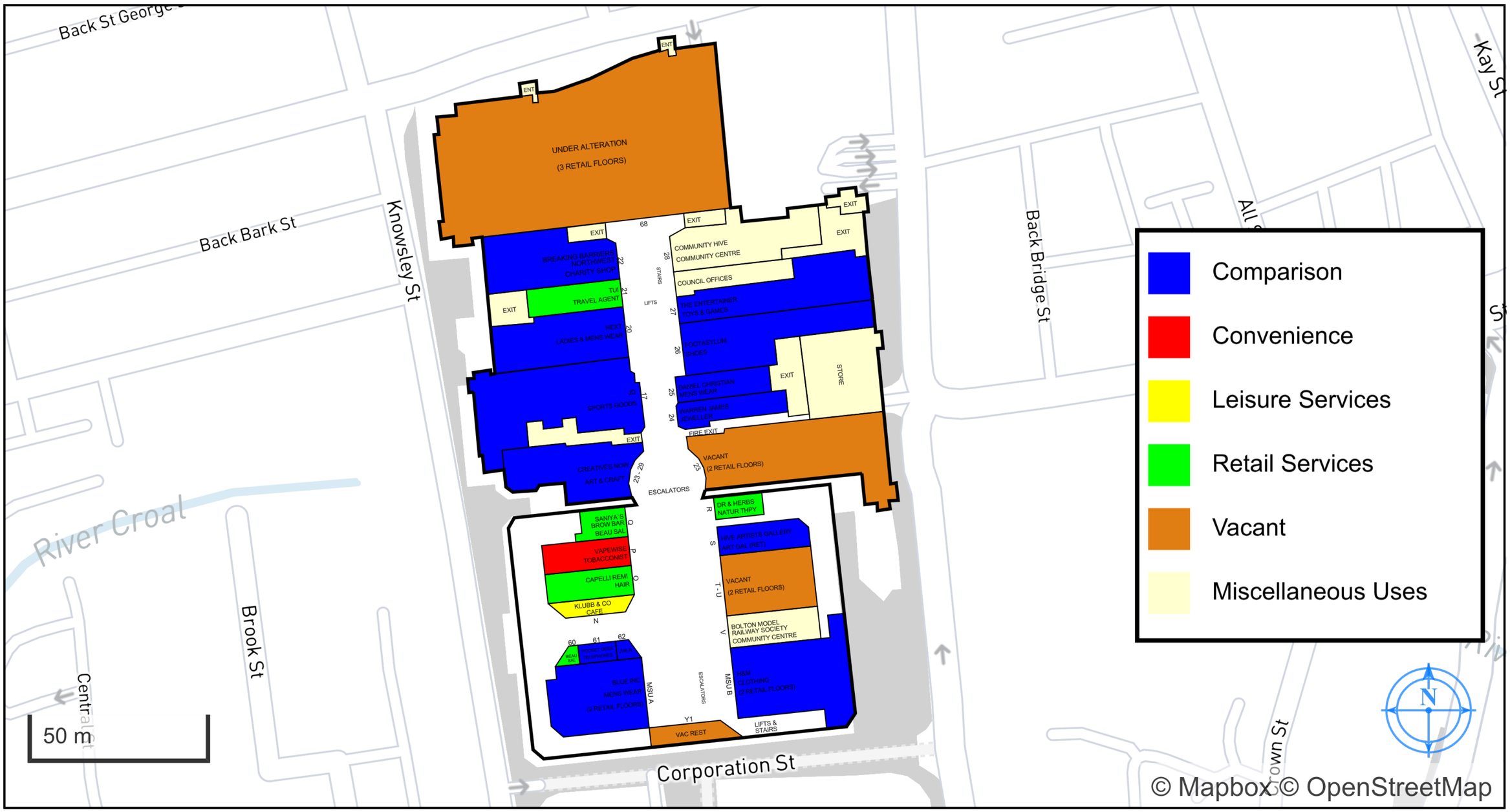


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Farnworth Town Centre

Description	Farnworth is a key town within the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton, located approximately 2.2 miles southeast of Bolton. The town benefits from strong transport connectivity, with the A6053 and A575 running through the centre and Junction 3 of the M61 motorway situated around 0.72 miles to the south. Public transport links also provide convenient access to surrounding centres and the wider northwest region. The town centre has a predominantly linear and compact form, focused on Market Street, which functions as the traditional high street. Retail provision is anchored by Asda and Lidl. The remaining retail offer is made up of a limited number of national retailers alongside a large proportion of lower-order independent businesses, resulting in a comparatively weak overall retail offer and limited diversity within the town centre. Leisure provision within the centre is relatively strong in quantitative terms; however, this is heavily focused around takeaway uses. While in the day there are a good mix of cafes these close before 6PM. Therefore, there is potential to strengthen the evening economy through the introduction of a broader range of restaurants and bar uses, helping to diversify the leisure offer.



Figure 1: Farnworth Green showing an improved public realm and an enhanced town centre.



Figure 2: A cluster of vacant shops at 90–94 Market Street.

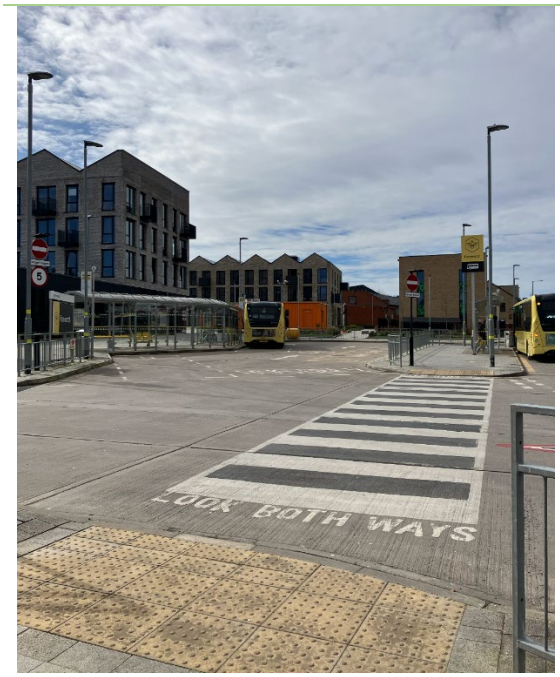


Figure 3: Farnworth bus station on King Street improving the towns accessibility.



Figure 4: Litter on Market Street contributing to a negative perception of the town centre.

Table 1 Farnworth Town Centre Floorspace Composition

GOAD Category	Floorspace at 2026 (sq.m)	Floorspace at 2026 (%)	Floorspace UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	9,759	26.6	28.6
Convenience	9,705	26.5	15.4
Financial & Business	1,036	2.8	6.0
Leisure	9,773	26.7	27.9
Retail Service	4,324	11.8	7.3
Vacant	2,026	5.5	14.3
TOTAL	**36,623**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Composition of Town centre based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2026; UK Average from Experian Goad Report September 2025.

Table 2 Farnworth Town Centre Unit Composition

GOAD Category	Units at 2026 (no.)	Units at 2026 (%)	Units UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	41	22.0	25.9
Convenience	29	15.6	9.4
Financial & Business	11	5.9	7.8
Leisure	46	24.7	26.7
Retail Service	40	21.5	15.9
Vacant	19	10.2	14.0
TOTAL	**186**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Town centre composition based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2026; UK Average from Experian Goad Report September 2025.

Uses

Farnworth's convenience offer is above average in terms of both floorspace and unit numbers. The provision is strong and well distributed throughout the centre, with Asda and Lidl serving as the anchor supermarkets. These larger national multiples are supported by Heron

	Foods, Iceland, and a range of smaller independent food retailers, including bakeries, butchers, and delicatessens. Convenience stores, tobacconists/vape shops, and shoe/key repair shops are also present adding further range to the convenience mix. Comparison provision is anchored by Home Bargains and supported by national multiples such as the Card Factory. However, the offer is otherwise dominated by independent retailers. These cater for a broad range of day-to-day shopping needs, with Farnworth's non-food retailers selling goods including clothing and footwear, specialist equipment, furniture, DIY products and homeware, toys and games, health and beauty products, textiles, and pharmaceuticals. While the comparison sector falls below the national average in terms of units and floor space, we consider the overall offer to be good for a centre of Farnworth's size and role, although an increase in national multiple representation could further strengthen the sector. Regarding the leisure offer, Farnworth Leisure Centre provides a range of facilities including fitness suites, swimming pools, exercise classes, and sports courts. The centre is also served by the sizeable Kings Gym alongside health clubs. In addition, Farnworth Little Theatre, an amusement centre, and betting offices contribute to the diversity of the leisure offer, while food and drink uses account for most of the remaining leisure provision. There are seven pubs, six cafés, nineteen takeaways, and four restaurants located throughout the centre. Except for KFC, most of these operators are independent businesses. Considering the high proportion of takeaways there may be scope to improve diversity through the introduction of more family-focused leisure facilities and a greater range of higher-quality restaurants and bars. Retail services are well represented in Farnworth, with both the proportion of occupiers and floor space above the UK average. Health and beauty operators account for the majority of retail service traders. However, the town centre also benefits from other service uses, including dry cleaning, travel agents, vehicle repairs, a car wash, and a filling station. The variety of financial and business services is below average, comprising an insurance office, a building contractor, a pawnbroker, three accountants, safe deposit facilities, solicitors, and estate agents. While there is some diversity within the sector, there remains an opportunity to strengthen provision, particularly given that there are currently no operational banks in the centre and two former bank premises that remain vacant.
Daytime/Evening Economy	During the day, Farnworth fulfils a good number of the retail and service needs of local residents, with its anchor supermarkets also attracting a degree of trade from further afield. These supermarkets remain open until 10pm on most evenings (and until 4pm on Sundays). Farnworth Leisure

	Centre also remains open until 9:30pm on most days, ensuring that there is usually some footfall and activity in the western part of the centre into the late evening. Kings Gym typically closes between 10pm and 11pm depending on the day, while Home Bargains remains open until around 8pm (and 4pm on Sundays), helping to maintain some activity across other parts of the centre after daylight hours. However, the majority of Farnworth's retail and service operators close by around 6pm. That said, the town centre's public houses, restaurants, and takeaways do have operating hours that extend into the evening and night-time period. These uses are scattered throughout the centre, primarily along Market Street. However, these late-opening uses lack a focal point that would allow them to become more mutually reinforcing. Moreover, the lack of diversity in the offer limits Farnworth's evening economy from being as developed as it could be.
Vacancies	Farnworth enjoys relatively low vacancy levels compared with UK averages, particularly in terms of floorspace. Where vacancies do occur, they are generally small in scale and dispersed rather than clustered, which helps to limit their overall visual impact and maintain an active street environment. However, there is a small concentration of vacant units at 90–94 Market Street which should be monitored closely. While these vacancies are not extensive, their grouping creates a more noticeable break in active frontage within this part of the centre.
Opportunity Sites	Whilst reoccupying and repurposing the vacant floorspace identified in Farnworth is an important priority, as noted above, the town centre contains relatively few unoccupied units and most of these are small in scale. Consequently, there are few opportunities for large-scale redevelopment within the centre boundary. Despite this, it would be useful to ascertain the degree to which the warehouse units to the southwest of the centre are being used, as these occupy a substantial footprint along with associated parking. The significant mixed-use development at Farnworth Green, which, upon our visit, appeared to have increased footfall and helped to establish Brackley Street as part of the core of the centre where Asda and other operators are located.
Pedestrian Flows	During the study it was found that footfall in Farnworth town centre was moderate and broadly concentrated along Albert Road and around the centre's primary supermarkets. Brackley Street also appeared to benefit from its role as a key movement corridor to and from the Farnworth Green development, where the new bus station has improved accessibility

	and helped to concentrate pedestrian activity within this part of the centre. In contrast, the periphery of the centre, at both ends of Market Street was noticeably quieter as the retail offer is more fragmented and less strongly anchored by national multiples. Further west surrounding Lidl, despite high footfalls, also presented barriers to pedestrian flows by being dominated by cars making it a less attractive part of the centre to walk around.
Accessibility	Farnworth Town Centre is well served by both road and public transport. It is located along the A6053 and A575 and is approximately 0.72 miles from Junction 3 of the M61 motorway, providing strong regional connections. The centre benefits from its own bus station on King Street, which provides regular services to Bolton and surrounding centres. Farnworth Station, approximately 0.4 miles to the east, and Moses Gate Station, approximately 0.6 miles to the northwest, further extend access to destinations further afield. Cycle provision is good, with bicycle parking provided as part of the Farnworth Green development. However, there is limited signage indicating cycle routes, which may discourage greater use of cycling as a mode of transport. In terms of pedestrian accessibility, the streets are generally wide, well maintained and the topography is relatively flat, gently sloping along Market Street. On the day of the visit, numerous users with pushchairs and mobility scooters were observed moving through the centre without apparent difficulty. However, seating provision along Market Street and the periphery is more limited, which may reduce comfort for some users. These areas, particularly parts of the centre to the west around Lidl, feel less pedestrian-friendly and more car-dominated, giving the impression of reduced accessibility.
Perception of Safety	Farnworth benefits from generally good levels of natural surveillance during the day, supported by a partly linear street structure and a concentration of active uses around Brackley Street, the southern part of High Street, and around the primary supermarkets. This helps to maintain a reasonable sense of activity and passive surveillance across different parts of the centre, contributing positively to perceived safety. However, the western edge of the town centre is somewhat fragmented, with weaker links to the primary retail area. This disjointed layout and more car-orientated environment results in lower levels of pedestrian movement. The northern part of High Street, where vacancies are higher

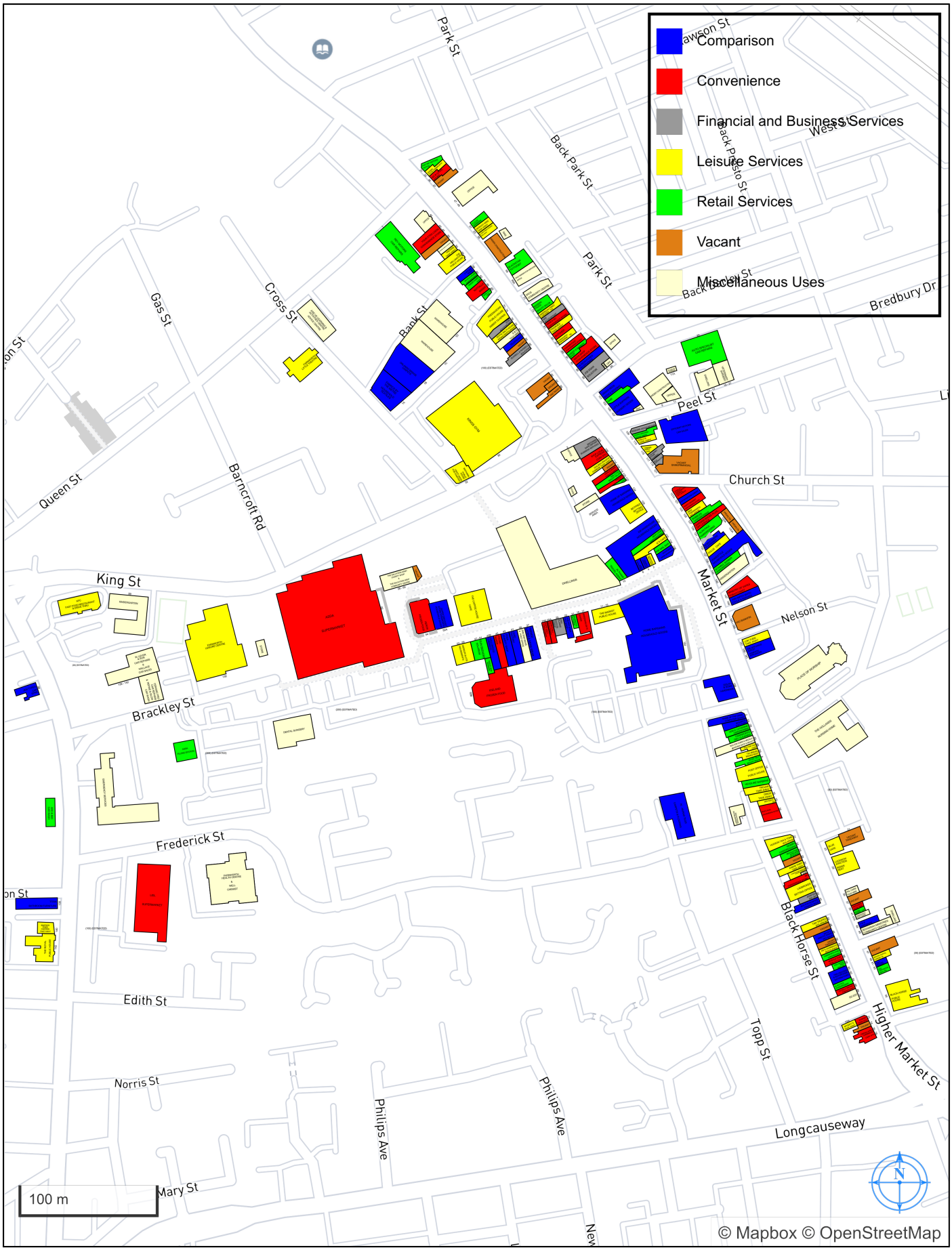
	also experiences reduced levels of natural surveillance, creating a weaker sense of safety compared with the main core of the centre. Given that footfall generally drops off after 6pm, when the majority of retail and service traders close, the perceived threat of crime is likely to increase during the evening. This is particularly true in quieter peripheral areas of the centre. As noted above, there is scope to increase the scale and diversity of Farnworth's evening economy and reduce vacancies which would help to address this potential issue.
Environmental Quality	Farnworth's environmental quality is moderate overall, with several notable strengths. The Farnworth Green development provides a more attractive and modern environment, with seating, landscaping, and public realm enhancements contributing positively to the town centre experience. In contrast, much of the traditional high street retains a more functional character, with limited green infrastructure and fewer public realm improvements. Shopfront quality is inconsistent across the centre, particularly along Market Street, where well-maintained units sit alongside dated or poorly presented frontages. This variation detracts from the overall visual coherence of the centre and weakens the sense of a unified town centre identity. During the site visit, there was some graffiti and litter observed in parts of the centre particularly along Market Street. Therefore, there is an opportunity to better integrate the older and newer parts of the town centre through further public realm and environmental improvements. Additionally, while green space within the core of the centre is relatively limited, this is partially offset by the presence of Farnworth Park located just beyond the town centre boundary.
Conclusions	In summary, Farnworth Town Centre benefits from a compact and accessible form, strong road connections, and good public transport accessibility, helping to support day-to-day activity and footfall within the centre. The presence of key anchor retailers, including Asda and Lidl, provides an important draw and helps maintain the town centre's role in serving the surrounding population. While the centre contains many independent businesses, the overall retail offer is relatively limited and lacks diversity, which impacts on the centre's wider attractiveness and appeal. Leisure provision is similarly concentrated around takeaway uses, highlighting an opportunity to diversify the evening economy through the introduction of cafés, restaurants, and bar uses that would support a broader range of daytime and evening activity. Accessibility and pedestrian movement within the core of the centre perform well overall; however, there is scope to improve connectivity and movement around the outer edges of the town centre. There are also

opportunities to enhance the quality and consistency of the public realm, particularly within the older parts of the centre, to ensure these areas better reflect and integrate with more recently developed sections.

Overall, we consider that Farnworth is a vital and viable town centre with a number of clear strengths, although targeted improvements to the retail offer, leisure diversity, pedestrian connectivity, and public realm would further strengthen its overall performance and attractiveness.

Farnworth

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Horwich Town Centre

Description	Horwich is a key town centre within the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton, located approximately 6 miles to the north-west of Bolton. The Horwich Parkway Station approximately 1.5 miles away provides connections to Manchester, Preston, Bolton, and the wider Northwest. The layout of the centre is compact with 171 retail, leisure and service units amounting for 19,881 sq.m focussed on Lee Lane and Winter Hey Lane. The retail offer is strong and diverse, being anchored by supermarkets Aldi and Iceland at the end of Winter Hey Lane on Mason Street. In addition, the independent led convenience and comparison provision further adds to the towns offer. Leisure provision in the town centre is primarily independent and focused on food and drink uses along with restaurants and cafes. While these uses support a reasonable level of activity, the centre would benefit from increased diversity in the form of more health-focused and family-focussed facilities or the introduction of more upmarket restaurants to strengthen its role as a local destination.



Figure 1: Winter Hey Lane with West Pennine Moors in view, contributing to the town's character.



Figure 2: Narrow pedestrian pavements and inconsistent shop frontages along Winter Hey Lane



Figure 3: The public hall on Lee Lane with visible efforts to improve the public realm by introducing planting, bike parking and seating.



Figure 4: An alleyway to the rear of Sainsbury's that has graffiti and low footfall, negatively impacting the perceived safety and environmental quality of the area.

Table 1 Horwich Town Centre Floorspace Composition

GOAD Category	Floorspace at 2026 (sq.m)	Floorspace at 2026 (%)	Floorspace UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	3,458	17.4	28.6
Convenience	5,082	25.6	15.4
Financial & Business	1,222	6.1	6.0
Leisure	5,645	28.4	27.9
Retail Service	3,317	16.7	7.3
Vacant	1,158	5.8	14.3
TOTAL	**19,881**	**100**	**100.0**

Source: Composition of Town centre based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2026; UK Average from Experian Goad Report September 2025.

Table 2 Horwich Town Centre Unit Composition

GOAD Category	Units at 2026 (no.)	Units at 2026 (%)	Units UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	37	21.6	25.9
Convenience	21	12.3	9.4
Financial & Business	14	8.2	7.8
Leisure	46	26.9	26.7
Retail Service	42	24.6	15.9
Vacant	11	6.4	14.0
TOTAL	**171**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Town centre composition based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2026; UK Average from Experian Goad Report September 2025.

Uses	Horwich enjoys a strong convenience retail offer anchored by Aldi and Iceland on Mason Street. Other national multiple food retailers include Co-op Food and Sainsbury's Local. Complementing these national brands is a variety of independent and specialist shops which add character and diversity. These include bakers, butchers, greengrocers, delicatessens, confectioners, and convenience stores which add character and diversity. Overall, Horwich performs well in meeting the everyday grocery shopping needs of its local catchment. Comparison retail is below the national average in the number of units and the amount of floor space they occupy. However, the offer provided led by independents does cover a range of needs, selling a range of goods. These include clothing, footwear, records, DIY, homeware, flowers, gifts, pet supplies, beauty products, books, antiques, electricals, and pharmaceuticals. Representation from national multiples is much more limited, largely comprising charity shops. Overall, we consider that the comparison offer is of moderate quality with scope to improve the presence of national brands and higher quality independent shops. Horwich's leisure offer is above the UK average in terms of units and the amount of floor space they occupy. This is focused on food and beverage operators with three pubs, six bars, seven cafés, twelve takeaways, six restaurants, and a social club, mainly independents. In addition to these offerings there are three betting shops, three solariums, and five health clubs. While this offer is of good quality and range the increase of family-focused facilities and upmarket sit-down restaurants could diversify provision more, given the current focus on takeaways. Horwich's retail service provision exceeds UK averages in both units and occupied floor space. Despite this, 83% of service units are health & beauty, suggesting scope to diversify. However, there is also a drycleaner, a launderette, upholsterers, opticians, a pet groomer, a post office, and a travel agent meeting other needs. There is also a Post Office Banking Hub. Financial and business services include accountants, contractors, advisers, solicitors, estate agents, and a print shop. While there is no national bank or building society, the available scale and mix of services fit Horwich's size and needs.
Daytime/Evening Economy	During the day, Horwich fulfills a good range of the retail and service needs of residents, with anchor supermarkets attracting a degree of trade from further afield. On most days the Co-operative remains open until 11PM and Aldi and Sainsbury's closes at 10PM while Iceland closes at 8PM. Several convenience stores also remain open into the evening, ensuring that there is generally some activity within the centre beyond normal trading hours. However, Aldi and Iceland on the periphery of the centre, and the majority of Horwich's independent shops and service traders close by 6pm, resulting in reduced activity across much of the center during the evening.

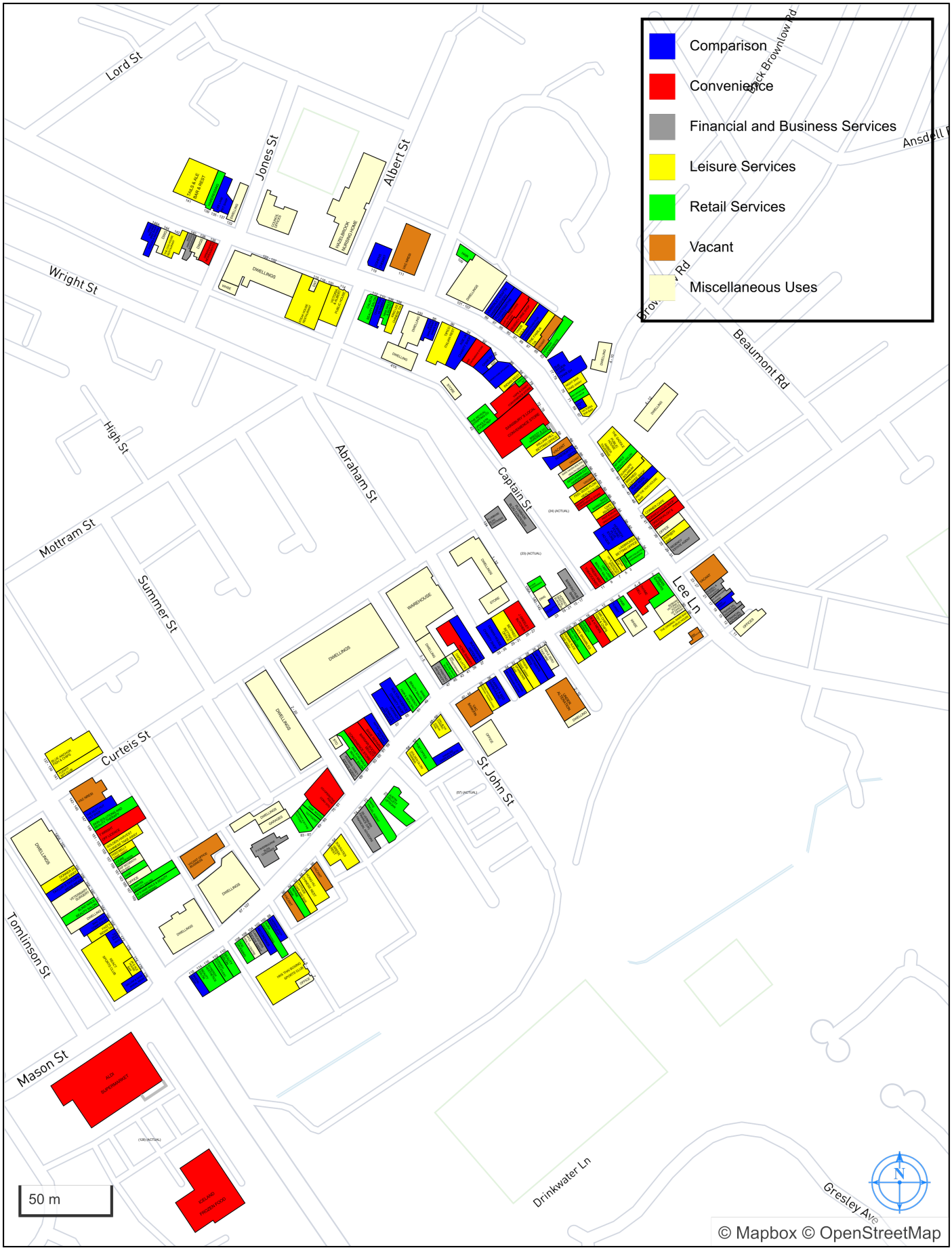
	That said, the town center's pubs, bars, restaurants, and takeaways do have operating hours that extend into the night. These uses are dispersed throughout the center, ensuring that several areas benefit from some level of activity after daylight hours. However, as they lack a focal point which would allow them to become more mutually reinforcing Horwich's evening economy isn't as well-developed as it could be.
Vacancies	Horwich benefits from relatively low vacancy levels compared to the UK average. Whilst most vacant units are small-scale and spread out their lack of maintenance negatively impacts the overall perception of the centre. Therefore, vacancy levels should continue to be monitored to ensure units are reoccupied or repurposed appropriately, maintaining the centre's vitality going forward.
Opportunity Sites	Given the established nature of Horwich town centre, the density of the surrounding residential development and the relatively limited level of vacancy within the centre, there are few opportunities for large-scale redevelopment within the defined town centre boundary. The Council's regeneration strategy instead places greater emphasis on public realm and connectivity improvements. These initiatives provide opportunities to improve perceptions of the town centre and increase footfall supporting Horwich's longer-term viability.
Pedestrian Flows	During our visit, pedestrian flows were highest in the area around Aldi and Iceland, with noticeably lower levels elsewhere in the town centre. Due to these supermarkets being at the edge of the centre the extent to which they can support or benefit from trips linked with the primary high street area is limited. However, footfall increased along Lee Lane later in the day, particularly as schools finished, with increased visits to convenience stores and takeaways and the use of local transport services. This pattern further reinforces the earlier points regarding the strong reliance on takeaways within the town centre's leisure provision and the need to diversify the mix with healthier alternatives. A key barrier affecting pedestrian flows is the narrowness of pavements along Winter Hey Lane, which forms the main route between the primary supermarkets and Lee Lane. As this is an issue on only part of the road it does not pose a significant constraint. However, it does reduce overall ease of movement.
Accessibility	Horwich town centre is well served by both road and public transport. By road, the town centre is accessible via the A673 (Chorley New Road) and the M61 motorway junction 6 (Horwich interchange) approximately 1.5 miles to the south. This provides direct connections to Bolton to the north-east, Chorley to the northwest and the wider northwest. Multiple car parks operate throughout the centre with the most central being the

	free St John car park (57 spaces), Captain Street car park (24 spaces) and Wright Street car park (23 spaces). Regarding public transport, the town centre has bus stops which provide regular services to nearby areas including Bolton. Additionally, Horwich Parkway located approximately 3.5 miles away provides regular services to Manchester Piccadilly, Blackpool North, and Bolton. Aside from bike parking stands outside the public hall, there is limited provision for cycling in the town centre which may deter users from this form of transport. The layout of the town centre with narrow pavements on Winter Hey Lane can also cause challenges for pedestrian accessibility, and particularly for those with mobility impairments. In general, however, Horwich is reasonably walkable, with Lee Lane only gently sloping and pavements and roads being generally well maintained.
Perception of Safety	Horwich is generally well focused on the main town centre area, with activity concentrated along Lee Lane and Winter Hey Lane. These streets benefit from good natural surveillance, with active frontages from surrounding retail, service, and food-and-drink uses, which contribute to a generally safe and well-used environment during daytime hours. However, during our visit, some peripheral areas felt less secure even during the day. This included Captain Street car park, St John's Street car park, and side streets off Winter Hey Lane, where lower levels of activity and limited overlooking from surrounding uses reduced the sense of safety compared to the main streets. Although street lighting is present, it was observed to offer limited added reassurance in these quieter or more enclosed locations. As a result, the sense of safety in these areas is likely to reduce further during the evening and nighttime period when activity levels decline across the centre.
Environmental Quality	The environmental quality of Horwich town centre is moderately good. The visible West Pennine Moors and environmental enhancements along the main streets, including street planning and some street seating contribute positively to the town character and appearance. However, these features are relatively limited, meaning there remains potential to further expand such provisions across the town centre. Along Lee Lane and Winter Hey Lane, shopfront quality is uneven, featuring well-maintained units contrasted with others that appear outdated or visually out of place. Nevertheless, relatively low vacancy rates help to maintain an active streetscape. Environmental quality is weaker in peripheral areas. During our visit graffiti was observed around the rear of the Sainsbury's area and within the Captain Street car park, although this was limited in extent. Some

	minor litter was also present throughout the centre, but not to a significant degree.
Conclusions	Our overall conclusion is that Horwich is a healthy town centre. It is performing well when compared against several key indicators and enjoys low vacancy rates both in terms of the number of units and proportion of floorspace. The compact nature of the town centre means that services are well connected. The convenience, retail and leisure offers are particularly strong with a good range of operators supporting local services and evening activity. However, the food and drink sector would benefit from the presence of healthier and more upmarket options. Likewise, the service provision would benefit from increased diversity as it is currently dominated by hair and beauty services. Regarding comparison shopping it is below the UK average and is largely made up of independent operators. While this supports local character, shopfront quality is variable, which affects the overall attractiveness of the centre. Horwich is well served by public transport and is accessible by road. The centre is walkable and the public realm is actively being improved with some planting evident. However, it would benefit from improvements to improve perceptions of safety and enhance streetscape quality strengthening the overall environment. Overall, while Horwich performs well, there remain clear opportunities to improve environmental quality, diversify the retail and leisure offer, and strengthen the public realm to enhance its long-term viability.

Horwich

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Little Lever Town Centre

Description	Little Lever is a key centre in the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton. It is located approximately 2.5 miles southeast of Bolton and is easily accessible via the A6053, which runs through the centre, and the nearby M61. The centre has a linear form focused along Market Street. Retail provision is anchored by Tesco on Crossley Street, while the remaining retail offer is made up primarily of independent businesses. There is a clear lack of an evening economy in the town centre. While it meets the day-to-day needs of residents, largely centered around its café culture, it does not extend beyond this, limiting the development of a fully active and diversified town centre.



Figure 1: The towns war memorial and library adding to the character of the town.



Figure 2: The Market Hall on Market Street provides a space for independent businesses to trade.



Figure 3: Little Lever Health Centre and Library with greenery and benches outside.



Figure 4: Memorial Garden contributing to the centres environmental quality and character.

Table 1 Little Lever Town Centre Floorspace Composition

GOAD Category	Floorspace at 2026 (sq.m)	Floorspace at 2026 (%)	Floorspace UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	1,405	14.3	28.6
Convenience	4,701	47.7	15.4
Financial & Business	446	4.5	6.0
Leisure	1,454	14.8	27.9
Retail Service	1,538	15.6	7.3
Vacant	306	3.1	14.3
TOTAL	**9,851**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Composition of Town centre based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2026; UK Average from Experian Goad Report September 2025.

Table 2 Little Lever Town Centre Unit Composition

GOAD Category	Units at 2026 (no.)	Units at 2026 (%)	Units UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	8	15.1	25.9
Convenience	8	15.1	9.4
Financial & Business	3	5.7	7.8
Leisure	13	24.5	26.7
Retail Service	18	34.0	15.9
Vacant	3	5.7	14.0
TOTAL	**53**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Town centre composition based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2026; UK Average from Experian Goad Report September 2025.

Uses

Little Lever's retail offer is strongly focused on meeting the day-to-day needs of local residents. Convenience retailing forms the backbone of the centre, anchored by Tesco on Crossley Street and supported by a number of smaller convenience retailers and independent food businesses. This provision generates a significant proportion of footfall and reinforces the centre's role as a local shopping destination.

Comparison retailing is relatively limited and consists primarily of independent businesses. Whilst the range of comparison goods on offer is modest, this is consistent with Little Lever's role within the Borough's retail hierarchy and reflects the proximity of larger centres, including Bolton and Farnworth, which provide a wider range of higher-order shopping opportunities.

Retail service uses are particularly well represented and form an important component of the centre's overall offer. Health and beauty operators account for a substantial proportion of units, supported by a range of other personal and day-to-day services. These businesses help to generate regular footfall throughout the week and reinforce the centre's function as a local service hub.

Leisure provision is relatively modest and is focused primarily on cafés, takeaways and other small-scale food and drink operators. The cafés in particular contribute positively to activity during the day and help create a focal point within the centre. However, the leisure offer remains limited in

	comparison with larger centres and there is little evidence of a developed evening economy. Whilst this is not unusual for a centre of Little Lever's size, there may be opportunities to broaden the leisure offer and encourage greater levels of activity beyond traditional shopping hours. Financial and professional services are present but limited in number, which is broadly reflective of the centre's scale and local function. Overall, the mix of uses is appropriate for a centre of this size and role, with a strong emphasis on convenience shopping and local services that support the everyday needs of the surrounding community.
Daytime/Evening Economy	During the day, Little Lever fulfils a good number of the retail and service needs of local residents, with Tesco, it's anchor supermarket also attracting a degree of trade from further afield staying open until 10pm most evenings (and 4pm) on Sundays, ensuring that there is usually some footfall and activity in the centre until late evening. However, the majority of Little Lever's shops and service traders are closed by 6pm. The limited evening leisure uses further limits the town centre from being as developed as it could be.
Vacancies	Little Lever experiences very low vacancy levels compared with national averages, with only a small number of vacant units identified during the survey. Vacancies are dispersed throughout the centre rather than concentrated in any particular location and, as a result, have little impact on the overall vitality or appearance of the town centre. The low level of vacancy reflects the centre's established role in serving local day-to-day shopping and service needs, with active frontages maintained along much of Market Street. Vacant units generally appeared well maintained and did not contribute to any significant areas of inactivity or visual decline. Given the centre's compact form and predominantly residential surroundings, opportunities for large-scale redevelopment are limited.
Opportunity Sites	Given its linear layout with residential surroundings there are few opportunities for large scale redevelopment within and on the edge of Little Lever.
Pedestrian Flows	Our visit took place at lunchtime on a weekday. We noted high footfall around the range of cafés at this time. Given the small size of the centre, this contributed to an overall increase in pedestrian activity. Given the compact nature of Little Lever, we observed few significant barriers to pedestrian movement. The one exception is the link between the memorial gardens and Tesco, where the area becomes busier with vehicles accessing the supermarket, resulting in a less pedestrian-friendly crossing environment.

Accessibility	Little Lever is highly accessible by road and public transport. The A6053 acts as the main route connecting Moses Gate and Farnworth to Radcliffe, passing through the town centre. The M61 motorway Junction 3 is located approximately 7 miles to the southwest, providing access to the wider Northwest region. Little Lever has many bus stops along Market Street, which provide regular services to Bolton, Bury, Radcliffe and smaller surrounding towns. The nearest stations are Moses Gate Station, approximately 2 miles southwest; Hall i' th' Wood, approximately 3 miles northwest of the town centre; and Bolton Interchange, approximately 3 miles to the northwest. While there is some cycle provision in the town centre, this is limited, with a lack of bike parking stands. Little Lever's linear centre and relatively flat topography make it somewhat suitable for cyclists. However, the lack of infrastructure may deter users from this form of transport. Regarding pedestrian accessibility the streets are wide with plenty of benches for those needing to stop and rest.
Perception of Safety	Little Lever is compact in nature, and all parts enjoys at least a moderate level of footfall during the day. This meant that on the day of our visit the centre appeared to have good natural and passive surveillance with cars and buses regularly passing through leading to a feeling of safety. Given that footfall generally drops off after 6pm when the majority of retail and service traders are closed, the perceived threat of crime is likely to be increased at night. This is particularly true for the less busy parts of the centre, including the memorial park. As noted above, there is scope to increase the scale and diversity of Little Levers evening economy which would help to address this potential issue.
Environmental Quality	The environmental quality of Little Lever is moderate, with some key assets including the public library, which features benches and surrounding greenery, the health centre with similar public realm features, and the memorial gardens. Low vacancy rates also contribute positively, helping to maintain an active streetscape. No graffiti was observed during our visit. However, some signage is inconsistent with the rest of the street, particularly around the precinct on Market Street, where litter also increases.
Conclusions	Our overall conclusion is that Little Lever is a moderately healthy town centre particularly during the daytime, around key café and service locations. This activity does likely decline in the evening due to limited leisure provision and early closing times. Overall, Little Lever performs well as a local centre with clear opportunities for enhancement. These lie in improving the public realm, strengthening the evening economy and addressing inconsistencies in the

	streets signage and appearance to improve overall attractiveness and cohesion.

N

0 50 100 m

District Centre Boundary
Comparison
Convenience
Financial & Business Service
Leisure Service
Retail Service
Vacant
Excluded

NEXUS PLANNING

Little Lever District Centre

Bolton Retail and Leisure Study

Westhoughton Town Centre

Description	Westhoughton town centre is a key centre in the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton. It is located between Bolton approximately four miles to the northeast and Wigan approximately 5 miles to the west with the A58 running through its core and providing direct links to both. It is also easily accessible from M6 motorway, Junction 5, approximately 1.62 miles to the northeast. The centre has a predominantly linear form, focused along Market Street, with additional services extending into adjoining side streets and Pavilion Square. Retail provision is anchored by the Aldi on Bolton Road and Sainsburys on Cricketers Way. The remaining retail offer consists of a mix of other national retailers and a strong presence of independent business. Leisure provision in the town centre is primarily independent and focused on food and drink. While the provision may benefit from more health-focused leisure options, the existing range is of a high quality, making a strong contribution to the centre.



Figure 1: The Market, on Market Street occupied by independent operators on a permeant basis**.**



Figure 2: Green space such as Ditchfield Gardens enhance the overall environmental quality of the centre.



Figure 3: Market Street, around the Town Hall shows visible ongoing improvements to the centre.



Figure 4: Features such as the town's grade II listed war memorial contributes to its historic character.

Table 1 Westhoughton Town Centre Floorspace Composition

GOAD Category	Floorspace at 2026 (sq.m)	Floorspace at 2026 (%)	Floorspace UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	4,842	24.0%	28.6%
Convenience	8,275	40.9%	15.4%
Financial & Business	734	3.6%	6.0%
Leisure	3,976	19.7%	27.9%
Retail Service	1,787	8.8%	7.3%
Vacant	602	3.0%	14.3%
TOTAL	**20,216**	**100%**	**100.0%**

Source: Composition of Town centre based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2025; UK Average from Experian Goad Report September 2025.

Table 2 Westhoughton Town Centre Unit Composition

GOAD Category	Units at 2026 (no.)	Units at 2026 (%)	Units UK Average at 2025 (%)
Comparison	25	23.4%	25.9%
Convenience	10	9.3%	9.4%
Financial & Business	6	5.6%	7.8%
Leisure	31	29.0%	26.7%
Retail Service	28	26.2%	15.9%
Vacant	7	6.5%	14.0%
TOTAL	**107**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Source: Town centre composition based on boundary as defined by Experian Goad and derived from Nexus Planning Survey of March 2025; UK Average from Experian Goad Report September 2025.

Uses

Westhoughton benefits from a strong convenience retail offer particularly in terms of floorspace, anchored by Aldi on Bolton Road and Sainsburys on Cricketers Way. These larger format national multiples are supported by the Co-operative Food and a range of smaller, independent food retailers. This includes a bakery, a delicatessen, and convenience stores. There is also a Lidl, located at the western edge of the centre, at the junction of Wigan Road and The Fairways. It adds to the choice of discount food retail, although its position away from Market Street means it functions largely as a standalone destination with limited linkage to the wider centre.

Comparison provision is concentrated around Pavilion square where B&M, Pep&Co, and Card Factory are located. It also extends into other parts of the town centre with independent and charity shops selling clothing, DIY and household goods, flowers, jewellery, crafts, pet products, and pharmaceuticals. While below the UK average in terms of units and floorspace we consider that the comparison offer is good for a centre of Westhoughton's size and role.

Westhoughton's retail offer reflects its heritage as a market town. The Market located on Market Street provides a permanent location for traders offering a range of services alongside both food and non-food products.

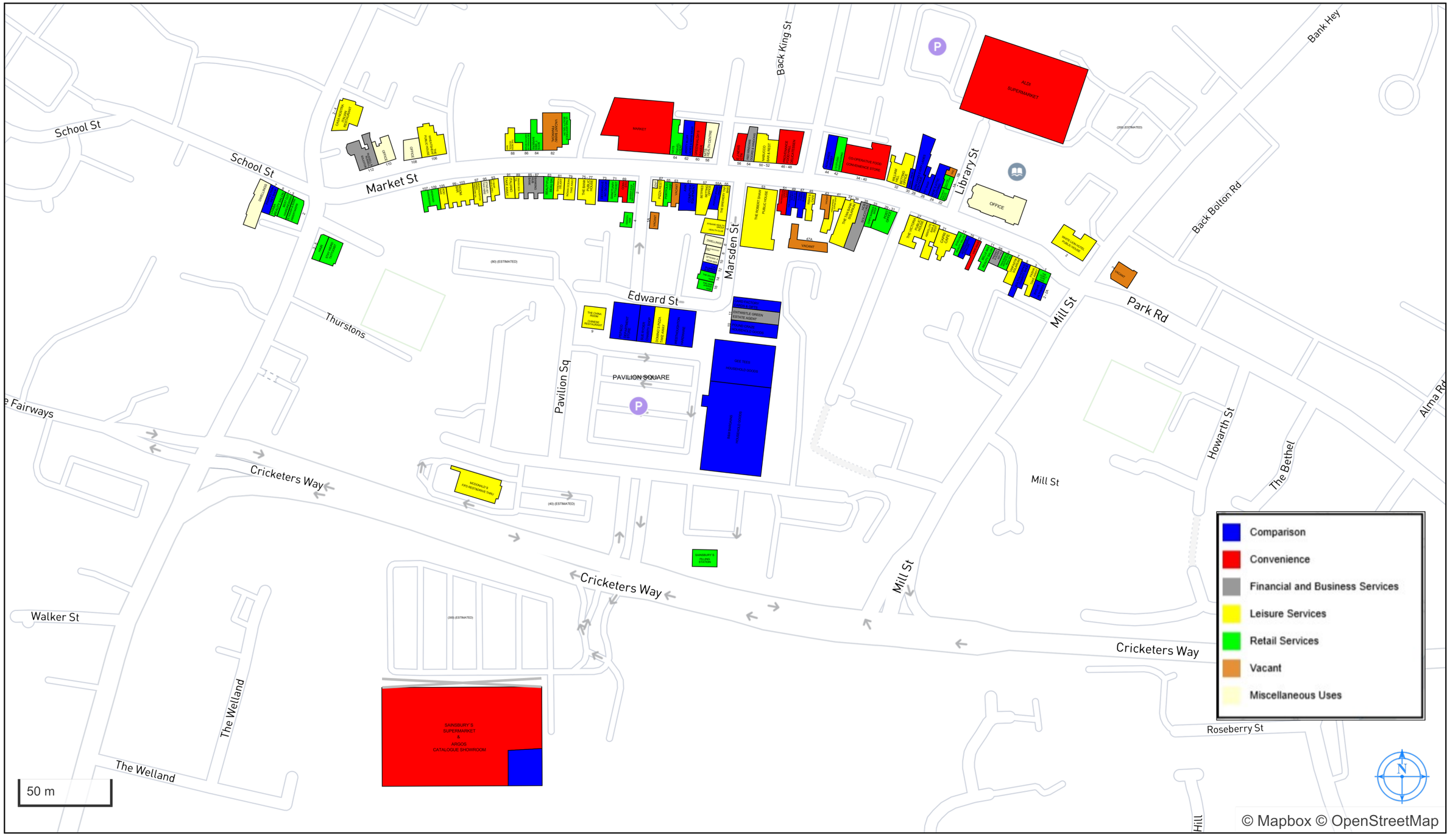
	Westhoughton's leisure provision exceeds the UK average in terms of the number of units, although the small size of many operators means that the proportion of floorspace occupied by these users remains below average. The offer comprises one gym, two solariums and two betting offices. However, the centre is predominantly characterised by food, and beverage uses, including five pubs, four bars, three cafés, eight takeaways and six restaurants. Most of these venues are independently operated, except for McDonald's, Domino's and Wetherspoons. Overall, the offer is of generally good quality and contributes positively to the town centre's vitality and evening economy. Retail services in Westhoughton are above the UK average in both the number of units and floor space. Health and beauty operators account for most of these units, but there is representation from other uses including an undertaker, a travel agency, a post office, and an optician. The Post Office offers Banking Hub facilities. Regarding financial and business services uses provision is limited with two solicitors, two estate agents, and one building services shop. This is below the UK average in terms of units and floorspace representing an area for potential growth.
Daytime/Evening Economy	During the day, Westhoughton meets many of its residents' retail and service needs, with its anchor supermarkets drawing customers from both the immediate area and further afield. Aldi, Sainsbury's, and Co-operative Food remain open until 10pm on most evenings, which helps sustain evening footfall. However, most other shops and service providers close by 6pm. That said, the town centre's public houses, bars, restaurants and takeaways operate into the evening and night-time hours. With leisure representing the largest proportion of units compared to other sectors, this helps ensure that much of the centre retains activity after daylight hours.
Vacancies	Westhoughton experiences a very low vacancy rate compared with the UK average, particularly in terms of floorspace. Vacant units are small in scale, dispersed rather than clustered, and generally well maintained. This limits their overall impact on the appearance and vitality of the centre. However, these units should be subject to ongoing monitoring to ensure they are reoccupied or appropriately repurposed in the future.
Opportunity Sites	Westhoughton's low vacancy rates and the surrounding residential context mean there are limited opportunities for large-scale redevelopment within and around the town centre. The council's regeneration framework identifies the restoration of the Town Hall red-brick building as the largest project, valued at

	approximately £3.9 million, alongside bringing vacant sites back into use and assessing opportunities for additional car parking provision.
Pedestrian Flows	During the study, footfall in Westhoughton town centre was found to be moderate and broadly concentrated around the centre's primary supermarkets, Aldi on Bolton Road and Sainsbury's on Cricketers Way. Market Street also appeared to benefit from its role as the key movement corridor through the centre. It links the bus stops with regular services to Bolton, the Co-op Food store and the concentration of food and drink uses, which helps to concentrate pedestrian activity within this part of the centre. In contrast, the periphery of the centre at both ends of Market Street, around Ditchfield Gardens and the Town Hall, was noticeably quieter, as the retail offer is more fragmented and less strongly anchored by national multiples. Further south, the area around Pavilion Square and the side streets leading to it was also less suitable for walking. Despite relatively high activity levels, it is influenced by car parking and vehicle movements (Pavilion Square, Pavilion Gardens and Aldi car parks), and pedestrian links back to Market Street are weaker, which makes it a less pleasant environment for pedestrians.
Accessibility	Westhoughton town centre is well served by both road and public transport. By road, it is accessible via the A58, which runs through the centre and connects the town to Bolton to the northeast and Wigan to the west. In addition, Junction 5 of the M61 motorway (Horwich), approximately 1.6 miles to the northeast, and Junction 6, approximately 2.2 miles to the northwest, provide wider regional connections. The town centre is served by several car parks, with Pavilion Square (110 spaces) and Pavilion Gardens (80 spaces), being the most centrally located and offering up to two hours of free parking. Aldi also provides around 200 spaces for shoppers, while other smaller car parks further contribute to overall parking provision. In terms of public transport accessibility, the centre is well served by bus stops with regular services to Bolton and surrounding centres. Westhoughton railway station, located approximately 0.47 miles from the town centre, provides services to Manchester, Bolton and Southport. While there are cycle routes in and around the centre, the limited provision of secure bicycle parking may discourage greater use of cycling as a mode of transport. Regarding pedestrian accessibility the streets are wide, and the topography is mostly flat with plenty of benches for those needing to stop and rest. As a result, on the day of our visit we observed numerous visitors with pushchairs and mobility scooters traversing the centre without apparent difficulty.

Perception of Safety	Westhoughton is compact in nature, and all parts enjoy at least a moderate level of footfall. Consequently, the town centre has a good degree of both natural and passive surveillance and feels safe and secure during the day. While strong evening leisure uses mean there is still some footfall on the main Market Street after dark, footfall likely drops off in the areas to the south where there is less of this provision and where shops close by 6pm. As a result, the perceived risk of crime is likely to increase at night. Although street lighting is provided, reduced natural surveillance makes this particularly noticeable on the more enclosed side streets leading towards Pavilion Square. Therefore, there remains scope for improvement in terms of perceived safety in this part of the centre.
Environmental Quality	The environmental quality of Westhoughton town centre is generally high with several notable strengths. The Grade II listed buildings, 110 and 112 Market Street, together with the adjacent Grade II listed war memorial and the Grade II listed St Bartholomew's Church directly opposite, provide a quaint and historic character to this end of Market Street. This is further enhanced by the green space offered by Ditchfield Gardens. Similarly, the Grade II listed White Lion public house, located adjacent to the red-brick Town Hall, gives the opposite end of the high street a distinctive character. Together, these heritage assets contribute positively to perceptions of the town upon arrival at either end of the town centre. The frontages of shops, including those that are vacant are mostly well-maintained and, overall, make for a pleasant shopping environment. Moreover, there was no visible litter or graffiti in the town centre on the day of our visit.
Conclusions	In summary, Westhoughton Town Centre performs well against several key indicators and benefits from low vacancies, both in terms of the number of vacant units and the proportion of vacant floorspace. The compact nature of the centre also creates an attractive and accessible environment, supporting healthy levels of footfall and contributing positively to its overall viability. The evening economy is particularly well established along Market Street, creating a mutually reinforcing destination. However, there is scope to broaden the leisure offer further, particularly through uses that diversify activity beyond food and beverage provision. Accessibility represents a major strength of the centre, with strong road and public transport links to Bolton and the wider area, with the town also benefiting from its own railway station. In addition, the town benefits from a strong environmental quality, enhanced by green spaces and ongoing public realm improvements.

Despite these strengths, opportunities remain to improve connectivity within the centre, particularly by strengthening pedestrian links between Market Street and the southern areas, including Pavilion Square.

Overall, we consider that Westhoughton is a vital and viable town centre with a number of clear strengths.



Ordnance Survey
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