

# Bolton Council

**Report to:** Development and Regeneration  
Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 28<sup>th</sup> January 2008

**Report of:** Director of Development and  
Regeneration

**Report No:** DRSC/ 01/08

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**Report Title:** **Assessment of Town Centre Vitality and Viability 2007 Update  
(Jones Lang LaSalle) and Pedestrian Footfall Survey 2007  
(GMTU),**

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**Non Confidential:** This report does **not** contain information which warrants its consideration  
in the absence of the press or members of the public

**Purpose:** To highlight significant variations relating to Town Centre health check  
indicators and Town Centre Pedestrian Footfall.

**Recommendations:** The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the Assessment of Town  
Centre Vitality and Viability 2007 Update Report (Jones Lang LaSalle) and  
Pedestrian Footfall Survey 2007 (GMTU).

**Background Doc(s):** Report No. DRSC 10/06.  
Town Centre Vitality and Viability Update 2006

# **Assessment of Town Centre Vitality and Viability (Jones Lang LaSalle) and Pedestrian Footfall Survey (GMTU), 2007 Update**

## **Introduction**

1. Planning Policy Statement 6 (2005) requires local authorities to monitor the Vitality and Viability (V&V) of the town centre in their area in order to provide an annual snapshot of the retail performance of the town centre, to identify any early signs of deterioration and take appropriate action. This is the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Vitality and Viability (V&V) Update for Bolton Town Centre and this year's findings have been used to build on previous V&V reports and the Bolton Town Centre Development and Regeneration Position Statement (2007). In this Vitality and Viability update Bolton was benchmarked against Manchester City Centre, Preston, Southport, Stockport, Blackburn, Bury and Wigan.
2. Bolton Town Centre is expected to generate over 5,000 new jobs over the next 10 years. The retail sector will continue to be a key driver of this planned economic growth, with major developments, including the Market Place, Central Street and Church Wharf helping to transform Bolton's retail offer over the coming years, with further planned investment expected in a re-modelled Crompton Place and renewed Bolton Market.

## **Key Findings**

### **3 Bolton and the Retail Hierarchy**

At the regional level, the Bolton Town Centre Development and Regeneration Position Statement states that Bolton Town Centre's retail offer is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the North West, competing above several significant regional competitors and that with forthcoming pipeline activity the potential exists to move up the regional ranking within the next two years. Bolton's retail ranking on the national scale is 97<sup>th</sup> ahead of Blackburn (123), Bury (130) and Wigan (154).

### **4 Pedestrian Footfall**

Pedestrian footfall across Bolton Town Centre has remained relatively constant. The locations with the highest levels of pedestrian activity are Hotel Street between HSBC and Mothercare with a factored weekly count of 112,179; Deansgate between Burtons and the Royal Bank of Scotland (100,400) and inside the Market Hall between Next and H Samuel (90,483). Of the 5 survey points with the biggest increase in pedestrian footfall, over the last 2 years, 3 were located at Newport Street, which is encouraging, given that this location is in transition. There were slight decreases in pedestrian footfall at three locations close to the Market Hall. However, these are due to the current redevelopment of the Market Hall and pedestrian footfall figures are expected to rise to, or indeed exceed, levels achieved in recent years once the Market Place is fully open by the end of 2008.

It is estimated that at least 150,000 people visit the Town Centre per week for various purposes, including employment, study, retail, tourism and services.

### **5 Current Provision**

The Experian database details around 1,434,400 sq ft of retail floorspace within Bolton Town Centre. Bolton has a high provision of convenience retail compared to the other centres. Of the comparative centres Bolton proportionally has the highest number of retail

units over 5,000 sq ft. These units are more likely to accommodate the modern requirements of retailers.

## **6 Vacancies**

Between 2006 and 2007 the vacancy rate has decreased from 13% to 12%. Bolton has a lower percentage of vacant floorspace than key competitors including Manchester, Preston, Southport and Wigan.

## **7 Prime Rents and Yields**

Prime rents have remained stable at £150 per sq ft. Of the comparative centres, Bolton has the third highest rental values behind only Manchester and Stockport. Prime yields have remained constant at 4.75%.

## **8 Retailer Demand and Development Context**

The Vitality & Viability Report 2007 and other information available to the Council indicates that there is currently 3,685,086 sq ft of development over 5,000 sq ft in the pipeline in Bolton Town Centre. Evidence of change is clear. The major schemes which will have a significant impact on the town's retail standing in the future include:

- Market Place – 80% of the 96,875 sq ft of floorspace is pre-let to tenants including Zara, H&M, and Starbucks. The Market Place has already secured 24 pre-lets, with 23 of these bringing new retailers to Bolton for the first time such as Zara and H&M. This scheme is due for completion in October 2008.
- Central Street – This scheme comprises 360,000 sq ft of retail floorspace including the Tesco anchor store, and the current anticipated start date for the development is 2010.
- Church Wharf – Work is expected to start mid-2009 on this 13-acre mixed-use site. This development will increase leisure, commercial and residential activity in the Town Centre and will therefore support and complement the town's current, and future, retail offer.
- Victoria Plaza - Costa Coffee, JJB Sports and Optical Express have recently signed up to the Victoria Plaza development.
- The Bolton Innovation Zone was launched to the Developer Community on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2007. This development alone is expected to create 4,000 new jobs and over £300 Million in new private investment. This level of investment will clearly help to strengthen the retail performance of Bolton over the coming years with more people (including students) working in, living in and visiting the Town Centre resulting in higher pedestrian numbers and higher levels of retail spend. Some 1,800 residents currently live in the Town Centre and that this is forecast to rise over the next 10 years.
- Other initiatives completed include the M&S £8M investment programme and the re-use of properties and sites in strategic locations in the Town Centre.
- The A-Grade Office accommodation that is now coming on-stream, at three key Town Centre locations is expected to help us attract/secure another 2,000 workers in the Town Centre.

- 9** In addition to this development already in the pipeline the Prefect Information Data Property Source details 37 current retail requirements for Bolton Town Centre. It should also be noted that in Bolton 75% of retail demand is for the Town Centre.

## **10 Town Centre Leadership Board**

The Council is working to establish a new Town Centre Leadership Board that will help provide the direction and focus needed to make Town Centre Marketing and Events fit for purpose, whilst ensuring that the core services delivered by the Council, which are valued

by retailers and other businesses, remain of the highest standard. The new Board will be in place by April 2008.

### **Next Steps**

- 11** In the last year, the Town Centre's retail performance has been solid especially considering that key developments are still in their early stages, and there is strong competition from other centres whilst the national economy is showing signs of slowing down. Given the market and investor demand that is currently being shown in the Town Centre, and the major developments that are taking place or in the pipeline, which are of regional significance, there is clear evidence that positive transformational change is taking place. Bolton is on track to become a key regional retail centre.

### **Recommendation:**

- 12** The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note the content of the Assessment of Town Centre Vitality and Viability (Jones Lang LaSalle) 2007 Update Report and Pedestrian Footfall Survey 2007 (GMTU),