

## Mayor of Greater Manchester

Date: 23 February 2026

Subject: Proposed Bolton Town Centre Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC)

Report of: Councillor Bev Craig, Portfolio Lead for Economy, Business and Inclusive Growth and Tom Stannard, Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Economy, Business and Inclusive Growth

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### Purpose of Report

This report seeks approval from the Mayor to initiate a structured consultation process regarding the proposed establishment of a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) for Bolton Town Centre.

### Recommendations:

The Mayor of Greater Manchester is recommended to

1. Approve the undertaking of a consultation exercise in respect of the designation of a Mayoral Development Corporation for the Bolton Town Centre.
2. Note that a further report will be brought back to the GMCA and the Mayor setting out the outcome of the consultation and further investigation work.

### Contact Officers

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# Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

## Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

The GMCA is recommended to:

1. Agree in principle to the creation of an MDC for the regeneration of Old Trafford.
2. Endorse the Mayor undertaking a consultation exercise in respect of the designation of a Mayoral Development Corporation for the Old Trafford Regeneration area.
3. Agree that GMCA officers can explore with Trafford Council detailed options for an MDC to be created for Old Trafford, with these matters to be decided upon by GMCA and Trafford in due course.
4. Approve the proposal for contact to be made with the relevant Government department to outline proposals for the Old Trafford Regeneration MDC and obtain support for the proposed MDC to be decided upon by GMCA and Trafford Council in due course.
5. Request that a further report be brought back setting out the outcome of the consultation and further investigation work to a future meeting of the GMCA for approval.

## Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	Delivery of the Old Trafford Regeneration (OTR) project will provide access to homes across a range of types and tenures and high-quality employment opportunities to a part of Greater Manchester which has been relatively economically disadvantaged. The development will also enhance access to social and transport infrastructure for new and existing residents. This proposal recommends a consultation on the delivery route for OTR which gives the affected communities the opportunity to make their views known.
Health	G	Detailed development proposals are to be agreed but the OTR will support the development of high-quality homes and encourage active travel as well as provide high quality services to help improve the health and wellbeing of its residents.
Resilience and Adaptation	G	The OTR boundary covers an areas of already developed land and brownfield sites limiting the need to use greenfield land elsewhere. While the proposals are in the early stages the development will look to improve the quality of housing, green spaces and services to create a thriving community within the OTR area.
Housing	G	Detailed development proposals are to be agreed including final housing numbers. However, the proposal will support the delivery of new homes as part of the OTR project, a proportion of which will be affordable homes of various tenures. It will also support economic development with local employment benefits, enhancing access to and affordability of homes for local residents.
Economy	G	The OTR project is one of Greater Manchester's and the UK's most significant development projects and is a site of international significance. The OTR area, within Trafford Wharfside, presents a remarkable opportunity to create one of Europe's most significant investment and regeneration initiatives. This transformative project promises to dramatically enhance economic performance and quality of life for the region and beyond. It will deliver new housing and employment space with significant associated employment, GVA, and growth implications. Its strategic location has the ability to attract national and international inward investment.
Mobility and Connectivity	G	OTR area will bring significant investment in transport infrastructure to the Western Gateway, including Strategic Road Network and Local Road Network improvements. Alongside this will be enhancement of existing public transport provision and creation of new public transport options and sustainable travel modes serving the new developments. Modern businesses, require high-quality digital connections. The development will be underpinned by provision of this digital infrastructure for both employment and residential uses.
Carbon, Nature and Environment	A	The OTR area is already a significantly developed area with current heavy industrial use which will mean the regeneration of the area will have a less significant environmental impact than developing a Green Field Site. Although, any physical development has unavoidable impacts on the environment, but these will be managed and mitigated as much as possible, and the most material impacts will be largely confined to the delivery phase. Mitigation against long-term environmental impacts will be incorporated into development proposals. Delivery of new low- and zero-carbon homes and commercial premises will improve the average efficiency of properties across Greater Manchester and contribute to the achievement of carbon neutrality by 2038. Detailed development proposals are not fixed but biodiversity enhancement is a mandatory requirement for all new developments.
Consumption and Production		

Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target

Delivery of new low- and zero-carbon homes and commercial premises will improve the average efficiency of properties across Greater Manchester and contribute to the achievement of carbon neutrality by 2038.

Further Assessment(s):

Carbon Assessment

<b>G</b> Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	<b>A</b> Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	<b>R</b> Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	<b>RR</b> Negative impacts overall.
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Carbon Assessment				
Overall Score				
Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation		
New Build residential		Details of development proposals are to be determined, however there is an overarching commitment to deliver in accordance with requirements for biodiversity, energy efficiency, and carbon reduction set out in Places for Everyone and GMS.		
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A			
New build non-residential (including public) buildings		Details of development proposals are to be determined, however there is an overarching commitment to deliver in accordance with requirements for biodiversity, energy efficiency, and carbon reduction set out in Places for Everyone and GMS.		
Transport				
Active travel and public transport		Details of public transport and active travel interventions are to be determined but will represent an enhancement over existing.		
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access		Details of development proposals are to be determined but principles of decreased personal vehicle use and increased sustainable transport modes as proportion of overall travel are agreed.		
Access to amenities		Details of development proposals are to be determined but principles of decreased personal vehicle use and increased sustainable transport modes as proportion of overall travel are agreed. Allocations within Places for Everyone include local amenity uses alongside residential and employment development, improving access to these services by sustainable modes of transport.		
Vehicle procurement	N/A			
Land Use				
Land use		The majority of the land being developed is land which has already had significant previous development including industrial use. New green spaces will be created		
No associated carbon impacts expected.	High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.	Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.	Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.	Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.

## Risk Management

Stakeholder engagement: Risk of insufficient involvement from key partners.

Mitigation: early engagement with the Bolton Towns Board, GMCA and the Council influencing all partners to engage in the consultation process

Statutory compliance: Risk of non-alignment with MDC regulations.

Mitigation: ensure legal oversight and adherence to agreed standards throughout the process

## Legal Considerations

Consultation must be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation including Part 8 Chapter 2 (Mayoral Development Corporations) of the Localism

Act 2011 as amended by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017.

The below table details the process which must be followed to designate an area of land as a Mayoral development area and for the establishment of an MDC.

<p><b>Statutory Consultation</b></p>	<p>Prior to the Mayor designating land in the GMCA's area as a Mayoral development area the Mayor must consult with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the members of the GMCA who are appointed by the constituent councils;</li> <li>• each MP whose parliamentary constituency contains any part of the area;</li> <li>• the district/ county council whose borough contains any part of the area;</li> <li>• a National Park authority if any part of area is within a National Park; and</li> <li>• any other person the Mayor considers it appropriate to consult.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Report to GMCA</b></p>	<p>The Mayor must put forward a report to the GMCA proposing to designate an area as a Mayoral development area and gain approval of the GMCA.</p>
<p><b>Publicity &amp; Notification to Secretary of State</b></p>	<p>The designation must be publicised, and the Secretary of State must be notified of the designation and the name of the MDC.</p>
<p><b>Establishment</b></p>	<p>Once notified the Secretary of State will, by an order, establish the MDC. The order establishing an MDC is a statutory instrument which is subject to the negative procedure. This means it will automatically become law without a debate by either of the Houses of Parliament provided there is no objection from either House within a 40 day period.</p>

## **Financial Consequences – Revenue**

None

## **Financial Consequences – Capital**

None

**Number of attachments to the report: 1**

## **Background Papers**

- Greater Manchester's Approach to Delivering Growth Ambitions – 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025
- GMCA - Mayoral Development Corporation for Bolton Town Centre – In Principle Decision – 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026
- Bolton Council Cabinet – Bolton Town Centre MDC Report – 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026

## 1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 This report seeks formal approval to initiate a structured consultation process regarding the establishment of a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) for Bolton Town Centre. If approved, the consultation will test key elements of the proposal, including the defined boundary for the MDC and the proposed name and governance structure, to inform subsequent decision-making by the GMCA and the Mayor. The consultation will focus on two critical elements:
- A) The proposed geographical boundary (commonly referred to as the “red line boundary”) within which the MDC will operate; and
  - B) The governance framework that will underpin the MDC, including its name, principles, and decision-making arrangements.
- 1.2 Bolton’s Town Centre regeneration has to date focused on 6 key intervention areas as set out in its Town Centre Framework and securing land interests within these locations and bringing them forward as part of a residential led delivery programme. Most notably Central Street and the majority of Moor Lane have been delivered, and Church Wharf commenced fully in January. The Crompton Place demolition has been publicly announced, and the developer selection is moving into its final stages. Crompton Place has also been identified as the Councils priority project for targeted financial intervention via GMCA.
- 1.3 Work to explore the potential for an MDC for Bolton Town Centre was approved by GMCA in January 2026. Subsequent work has been undertaken and it has been concluded that establishing an MDC represents the preferred delivery vehicle for Bolton Town Centre’s development programme. Accordingly, this paper sets out the next steps required to progress the process.

## 2. Mayoral Development Corporations

- 2.1 Development Corporations can be important tools for delivering large-scale development, including mixed-use regeneration, transformational urban extensions, and new settlements.
- 2.2 In the right circumstances, these powerful vehicles can bring a number of advantages to complex projects including:

- The focus, coordination, and consistent delivery from a dedicated body with a specific purpose to develop and deliver a strategic vision for a defined area;
- Highly visible public sector commitment coupled with broad public and private sector expertise at board level as a driver for private investment; and
- Broad powers to facilitate delivery of the project.

2.3 The Localism Act 2011 set out the parameters for creation of locally-led Mayoral Development Corporations (MDCs), where elected mayors designate MDCs in consultation with their combined authorities. These powers were conferred on the Mayor of Greater Manchester by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017.

2.4 The powers that can be conferred upon an MDC comprise:

- The provision of new infrastructure.
- Powers to hold, acquire, develop, improve, or regenerate land and buildings.
- Powers to provide financial assistance.
- Subject to a decision of the relevant LA, plan-making and development control powers can be delegated to an MDC, resulting in its own Planning Committee.
- Subject to a decision of the relevant Local Authority, powers can be delegated to grant discretionary Business Rates relief.

2.5 These powers were used by the Mayor of Greater Manchester in September 2019 to establish an MDC for Stockport Town Centre West, which has gone on to deliver the ambitious regeneration programme for that part of the town in collaboration with Stockport Council and Homes England.

### **3. A Mayoral Development Corporation for Bolton Town Centre**

3.1 A number of challenges exist in Bolton Town Centre and a delivery vehicle is required to address existing challenges to delivery which act as a current blocker to inward investment and the realisation of the town centre's full regeneration potential.

3.2 The Bolton Town Centre Development Programme is well established. There is a requirement to build on the momentum created by recent development activity and investment across the town centre to accelerate delivery of the pipeline.

3.3 A range of Delivery Vehicles aligned to differing levels of public and private

involvement were considered as part of an options assessment undertaken by Deloitte. That exercise identified a shortlist of 3 options that warranted further consideration, which was undertaken following approval in January 2026. An MDC has now been selected as the preferred option for Bolton Town Centre. It is felt that an MDC for Bolton will be required to address blockers to delivery and drive the Town Centre Development Pipeline forwards, accelerating Bolton Town Centre regeneration and following best practice in the Greater Manchester City Region as a potential flagship delivery vehicle.

- 3.4 An MDC would develop funding solutions and development opportunities to provide focus and allow partners to secure financial and other resources. The aim would be to prioritise funding locally and via GMCA, Homes England and the Government to support the ongoing regeneration aims and Vision.

Specifically, the MDC would:

- Amplify the profile of Bolton's town centre programme both regionally and nationally to attract future investment, demand and growth.
- Coordinate activity across the Council on the delivery programme, enabling the appropriate shaping of investment to deliver optimal outcomes.
- Provide a long-term strategic vision and programme for the Town Centre, demonstrating commitment to delivery to provide developer / investor confidence and certainty.
- Encourage local buy-in and support for the programme, including from local developers.
- Deliver benefits beyond the MDC boundary, with positive impacts on surrounding communities.
- Act as a single institutional platform for regeneration activity across the Town Centre and front-door for engagement with stakeholders, developers and investors.
- Additional expertise and powers to support delivery of the Town Centre programme (including to assemble and hold land).
- Stream-line decision-making processes to accelerate delivery of the Town Centre programme.

- 3.5 The creation of a dedicated, long-term yet time-limited organisation for Bolton Town Centre ensures focused delivery with proper governance and resources, maintaining democratic accountability to the Mayor and the Council while spanning multiple

political cycles. This approach provides certainty, attracting public and private sector investment.

- 3.6 A single body would set the strategic vision for Bolton Town Centre, pooling resources and powers across the public sector to support delivery tasks such as land assembly, master planning, site preparation, and infrastructure development. The MDC team and dedicated resource could apply new thinking, capacity and skills to find new opportunities across the town centre sites. This would include collaborating with key stakeholders across the public and private sector, including public sector service providers, to innovate and be dynamic to new opportunities that would deliver town centre residential opportunities at scale, but also create activity across the town centre.
- 3.7 It is proposed that the MDC would collaborate with the Council as Local Planning Authority as a key stakeholder from a plan making and development control perspective. The MDC would be a key stakeholder to all planning applications submitted in the Bolton Town Centre boundary.
- 3.8 Plan making within Bolton town Centre boundary would also be a joint endeavour with the LPA. Bolton would remain the Local Planning Authority and retain plan making and development management responsibility.
- 3.9 The proposed governance structure for the MDC includes a Board chaired by an independent expert (to be appointed), providing strong leadership and accountability. It is also proposed to include representation from Bolton Council, GMCA, the private sector and the Towns Board to ensure a balanced and inclusive governance model. A shadow arrangement is also proposed to provide direction ahead of the formal establishment of a statutory MDC.
- 3.10 A transition plan would be developed to set out the arrangements for moving from the shadow board to the statutory entity, including indicative Year 1 costs and funding sources. The overall governance framework will be designed to provide strong strategic oversight, ensure effective and efficient operations, and build confidence among stakeholders.
- 3.11 If a decision is taken to proceed with an MDC, the GM Mayor will be required to designate an area of land in the GMCA's area as a Mayoral development area. In considering such a designation the GM Mayor must consider the designation to be expedient for furthering economic development and regeneration of the area. The

proposed area of the Bolton Town Centre MDC is included at Appendix 1.

## 4. Alternatives to an MDC

4.1 Aside from an MDC for Bolton Town Centre, there were a number of other potential approaches available to support the delivery of this programme of development. Deloitte were commissioned to consider different delivery vehicles and through a longlist options analysis, considered the following:

- Private sector-led development
- Strategic Partnership.
- Public Sector Company (limited by shares or guarantee)
- Local Authority Asset Backed Vehicles
- Joint Venture
- Local Authority Direct Delivery
- Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ)
- Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC).
- Unitary Development Corporation (UDC)
- Locally-led Urban Development Corporation (LLUDC).
- New Town Development Corporation
- Locally-Led New Town Development Corporation

4.2 A shortlist was created from the longlist above to be further assessed against Bolton's objectives and requirements. The shortlist included a Mayoral Development Zone, Mayoral Development Corporation and a Locally-led Urban Development Corporation. It was determined that an MDC is in line with the defined requirements, strategic vision and objectives for a delivery vehicle for Bolton Town Centre for the reasons outlined above.

## 5. MDC Consultation

5.1 As noted above, the designation of Mayoral Development Corporations is governed in Greater Manchester by the Localism Act 2011 Part 8, Chapter 2, as modified by the Schedule to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2017 ("The Act").

5.2 This provides that the Mayor may designate a Mayoral development area only if consultation has been concluded in accordance with the Act. Authorisation is sought within this Report to endorse the Mayor carrying out this consultation.

- 5.3 It is proposed that the consultation is carried out in accordance with the Act, which stipulates the following statutory consultees:
- Members of the GMCA;
  - MPs whose parliamentary constituency contains part of the proposed area
  - Each district council whose areas are within the proposed boundary (in this case Bolton); and
  - Any other person whom the Mayor considers it appropriate to consult.
- 5.4 For Bolton Town Centre it is proposed that the consultation will be undertaken jointly by Bolton and GMCA and will be in compliance with the MDC requirements and regulations. It will cover statutory consultees and residents, businesses, and Council Members for the proposed MDC area. It is proposed that the consultation will be publicly accessible through the GM Consult engagement platform, providing information about the proposal and appropriate supporting materials.
- 5.5 The name and boundary of the MDC will be included as part of the consultation, as follows: Bolton Town Centre Mayoral Development Corporation.
- 5.6 At the end of the consultation if the Mayor wishes to proceed, and designate the area as an MDC, the Mayor will notify the Secretary of State, who will then make the Order to establish the MDC.
- 5.7 The following is the indicative timeline:
- Bolton Cabinet paper 2nd February 2026 – Setting out red edge, name and intention to consult
  - Report to the Mayor February 2026 – Seeking permission to consult
  - Consultation to start on Monday 2nd March 2026
  - Subject to the consultation responses, final Local Authority Approvals on the 8th June 2026
  - Subject to the consultation responses, final Combined Authority Approvals on the 21st August 2026
  - If approved, Mayor submission to the Secretary of State - September 2026

## **6. Next Steps**

- 6.1 Subject to Mayoral approval to the undertaking of the consultation exercise as set out in this report, statutory consultation will be opened on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2026 on the proposals for an MDC as outlined in section 5 as required for formal designation by

the Mayor of Greater Manchester and subsequent establishment by the Secretary of State.

- 6.2 The consultation will run for six weeks and after the consultation has concluded, responses will be analysed and a report developed outlining the results from the consultation process.
- 6.3 In accordance with the Act, the Mayor must have regard to any comments made by the consultees and, in the event any comments received are not accepted by the Mayor, the Mayor must publish a statement as to the reasons why not.
- 6.4 In alignment with the consultation, a Business Case will be developed to further define the detail of the key matters for determination if an MDC for Bolton Town Centre was to be pursued following consultation. This work will include details of a developed rationale for intervention; purpose, aims and objectives of the MDC; governance and decision-making; financial considerations; risks and resources. These will be set out in a report to GMCA and Bolton Council alongside the consultation responses.
- 6.5 If designation does proceed then consultees responses will also contribute to subsequent work to progress the implementation of the MDC, including the development of a constitution and confirmation of resources.

## **7. Recommendations**

Recommendations are as set out at the beginning of the Report.

# Appendix 1 – Proposed boundary

