

Westhoughton Town Centre Regeneration Project

What is it?

2019 Capital Investment project to boost Westhoughton Town Centre and make Market Street more attractive stimulating economic growth and increasing footfall, and to improve and expand community provision (Library building). Regeneration Consultants working with Bolton Council Officers and a Steering Group have been overseeing the project.

Why is it needed?

Town Centres are in decline generally – regeneration projects help to reverse this. Civic Buildings are now under-used due to changes in how services are accessed and delivered (internet) and expectations/requirements for modern buildings (old buildings design limitations).

How much money is involved?

Unlike previous Town Centre projects (2006, 2012) this one has attracted significant capital funding: a share of £12m + £4m (based on generation of Capital Receipts) to implement needs-based Key Development Priorities of the Westhoughton Town Centre Masterplan; Town Hall/Library: £2.6m (Civic Building refurbishment from a separate council capital allocation). Whilst generous this remains a tight budget in now a high inflation environment. Executive Cabinet Member approved Strategy and Masterplan 9/11/20 and delivery of Phase 1 works 15/3/21. Work on Market Street has begun.

What are the priority areas?

1. Improving pedestrian links to the Town Centre from Ditchfield Car Park, Marsden Street and Library Street
2. Car Parking Strategy
3. Remodelling Market Street
4. Improvements to Central Park*
5. Civic Buildings (Town Hall and Carnegie Hall/Library)
6. Future Development sites

*Central Park was included after privately owned Gaiety and former Mill Street Car Park sites taken out of Masterplan. Gaiety site was considered for civic/community use but now has a planning application for a 2-block 'Special Needs' apartments supported by Bolton Council Adult Services. Mill Street site still being considered for car parking.

Who is on the Steering Group?

Regeneration Consultants, Bolton Council Officers (Growth & Regeneration), all 6 Westhoughton Councillors and some Westhoughton Town Councillors, representatives from local businesses on Market Street and Community stakeholders including Westhoughton Community Network. The process has involved meetings and updates as well as workshops.

Has the community been involved?

Yes. Proposals and vision for the scheme were brought forward in 2020 through the press, online and two consultation events where local residents could view plans and discuss them with officers. Presentations were also made at the Area Forum and at WCN meetings...

Future Use of Civic Buildings: Phase 2 plan for Library/Carnegie Hall and Town Hall developed and put forward more recently; to be formally put on show to the public for their thoughts. Plans are in line with expectations of initial consultation that proposed a mixed-use scheme.

What changes will we see?

Changes to Town Centre access routes: new paving on Library Street and Marsden Street, and general ambiance uplift including Town Hall lighting reflecting building status. Market Street to be made more pedestrian friendly with extended pavements in some places. Traffic access maintained but cycling provision added. End (gateway) junctions to be remodelled. Central Park: new seating and picnic benches installed and works to trees and shrubbery; further improvement works and enhanced community provision subject to funding.

What is happening at the Library/Carnegie Hall?

Heating system replaced/new windows installed to bring it up to latest eco standards. Building seen as a Community Hub that could be better used. Independent access and better booking system to allow any-time use of upper floor. Plans: stairs removed from library to allow creation of large room/community space suitable for events, meetings and functions. Town Clerk moving back to Town Hall frees more space. Library ground floor is enlarged by stairs removal. Historical artefacts will need to be moved around - discussions ongoing.

Carnegie Hall refurbishment work will see a large meeting room created. Kitchen available. Lift access. Bar to be moved. Possible to have multiple events going on at the same time.

What is happening at the Town Hall?

Unused since 2018 - services moving out/redeployed (One-Stop-Shop support to Library) - significant investment into fabric of building to 'save' it – roof, windows, asbestos removal, heating. An old building that needs to be remodelled inside for fit-for-purpose modern-day use. New lease of life for Town Hall to boost footfall on Market Street; intended use is mix of Civic (with refurbished Town Council Chamber; clerk's office), Commercial (small business) and retail. Must be commercially viable and sustainable. Formal plans to be revealed in due course; invites for commercial occupancy to follow – local businesses given priority.

What is the timescale?

Market Street ongoing: 'Streets for All' design by Sept 2022; Works Jan to Oct 2023. Town Hall urgent remedial work compete; internals Phase 1 Early Works package starts March 2023 and Phase 2 main contract works to start July 2023, completion 2024. Library/Carnegie Hall dependent upon Town Hall progress and funding - dates to be confirmed.

Where can I find out more information?

Westhoughton Community Network website - details of community involvement, project progress and key official documentation available for download: bit.ly/TCRegen

Official 'Invest in Bolton' website: investinbolton.com/development/westhoughton | email