

LAND OF OPPORTUNITY

With four town centres and four prominent business locations, Trafford has billed itself as the most competitive area in the North West of England. **Alex Bell** reports

There is a borough in the land of opportunity named Trafford.

But Trafford, near Pittsburgh in the US state of Pennsylvania, doesn't seem to pack the same punch as its namesake within England's Northern Powerhouse.

With town centres Stretford, Altrincham, Sale and Urmston all sitting within the borough, Trafford is now home to more than 13,000 businesses. It seems at present that if you blink you miss announcements regarding its economic development.

From international sporting stadia – plans are afoot to develop Manchester United's Old Trafford ground and the immediate surrounding area – to Europe's first industrial estate and the potential HS2 Airport Station.

Trafford is marching forward. The opportunities within its land boundaries are plentiful, with Trafford Park, Carrington, Broadheath and Old Trafford regularly billed as leading business destinations.

Global brands housed at Trafford Park – one of the largest industrial estates in Europe – include Adidas, ITV, Amazon, Procter & Gamble, Kellogg's, L'Oréal and Unilever.

Throw in the 30 million-plus visitors to the Trafford Centre every year and the picture of economic power becomes clear.

Richard Roe, corporate director of place at Trafford Council, tells *Insider*: "Trafford is an attractive place to live and work. We've got a long history of positive development and the council is trying to build on that."

"We have good transport infrastructure with Metrolink, the train and bus network, really good schools and a very buoyant housing market which has advantages but also challenges in terms of affordable housing. But it gives us a good starting point as an attractive proposition for developers."

So what is brand Trafford? And which developments are coming to fruition?

"Both grounds [Manchester United's Old Trafford and Lancashire County Cricket Club's Emirates Old Trafford] are international sporting venues and are a key element of the Trafford offer and the Trafford brand," says Roe. "They bring a lot of visitors in, not



just on match days but for stadium tours and the club shop at Manchester United. We have just approved the Civic Quarter plans which is our planning policy for the area around the town hall and cricket ground. That will see the development of around 4,000 residential units plus retail and commercial space."

Glenbrook, having lodged plans in late 2022, is aiming to start on-site with the £250m mixed-use Lumina Village in the coming weeks. It's the first stage in the

delivery of Trafford's wider Civic Quarter masterplan and consists of a redevelopment of the former 12-acre Kellogg's site.

Designed by Sheppard Robson and landscape architect Re-form, there will be six apartment blocks containing 639 homes, four acres of public realm, 5,300 sq ft of retail space on the ground floor and 200 parking spaces.

Peel's two decade-long £1bn Trafford Waters scheme is under way in the heart of TraffordCity. Once complete it will boast 3,000 homes and 950,000 sq ft mixed-use commercial and retail space spanning 63 acres.

Roe adds: "We are finalising the Trafford Wharfside masterplan, which we jointly commissioned with Peel, Manchester United and Salford City Council, for the area around Manchester United's football ground and the Wharfside, on the opposite side to MediaCity."

"There's going to be significant change from industrial and commercial to something more leisure and residential-led. We want to get on the front foot with that so we can see development come forward in an appropriate way. In a way that helps United now their stadium plans have emerged."

Pinpointing one of its four town centres, Roe says: "There's very much a focus for us on Stretford Mall and Stretford town centre. It lacked investment for a number of years and didn't work for a modern economy and retail environment."

"We are bringing forward our development plans having acquired Stretford Mall jointly with Bruntwood. We've got outline planning permission for the redevelopment of the whole site which includes the Lacy Street car park. That involves bringing 800 units of residential accommodation into Stretford but more importantly reshaping the mall and the retail heart of Stretford and reintroducing King Street as the old retail centre by taking the roof off the mall and bringing in new public realm and green space."

Importantly, during the course of 2022 and 2023, Trafford Council is on target to

provide around 1,300 homes. And it appears no stone is being left unturned. "We're working with Wain Estates and other landowners on the former Shell Petrochemical works at Carrington," says Roe. "It's a key brownfield development with plenty of commercial and residential development opportunities."

"We continue to invest in Altrincham and are working with Bruntwood on the Stamford Quarter. We've seen Sale town centre improve over the last two or three years following investment into Stanley Square. The key assets we have are ones we are trying to build around and include Trafford Park."

Although Manchester Airport sits just outside the Trafford boundary, Roe says Trafford

Council is working very closely with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, TfGM and Manchester City Council on the HS2 Airport Station proposals. He adds: "If it goes ahead, the station would sit in Trafford and would be an important economic driver for the south Manchester conurbation."

Slater Heelis solicitors has been operating out of Trafford for more than 100 years. Managing partner Chris Bishop, says: "While we've been here for over a century, we've recently invested in our Trafford infrastructure, rationalising two offices into one. Having a green-rated building at Crossgate House enables better business efficiencies, both with the buildings' capabilities and more

collaborative working and also solidifies our commitment to the borough, too."

"As a committee member of Uniquely Sale, a voluntary committee focused on the exciting ongoing regeneration of Sale, I, along with several other local business leaders, are helping to shape the town and provide input on how it's developed. This is an example of how we can demonstrate the firm's commitment to supporting the communities in which it operates."

"I believe the town has shaped itself into a cosmopolitan borough with a strong commercial and leisure offering that suitably complements those available in Manchester city centre. ■

TRAFFORD'S FUTURE-PROOFING BUSINESS BASE

Having launched this year, the Green Skills Academy has been hailed as the front line in terms of how it helps businesses, individual households and communities play a key part in the fight against climate change

"We want to enable change and are looking at working with people and businesses in the way they might want to," says Dave Wills of the newly launched Green Skills Academy at Trafford Park.

The Green Skills Academy has been established by the Growth Company and boasts a list of partners including AirEx, BPEC, Cadent, Daikin, En+, EnergyAce, Enviroheat, Evergreen Energy, Freeflush and K Systems.

The academy is also supported by Nibe which has donated ground and air-source heat pumps. Polypide, Resideo, Solen, Stelrad, Sunamp, The UNICO System, Warmer Energy, Wetherby, and Worcester Bosch Group are also partners.

Courses cover ground and air-source heat pumps installation, solar photovoltaic/thermal installation, wind turbine technology, electric vehicle charging point installation, external wall insulation and more.

Wills adds: "We're not saying that you come to us and this is what you get. If you want to

suggest a course we're open to incorporating that into our training programme."

Greater Manchester has ambitions to reach net-zero carbon by 2038. The UK national target is 2050. To strike back against climate change the academy has built a number of real-world work environments, including a model low-energy smart home.

"The house is just one of the critical parts of what we are doing," says Wills. "It has heat recovery and cooling systems, automated technology and

many more green technologies that people can see, touch and feel. The practical side of learning new skills is so important."

Training at the academy can cater for up to 100 people per day and is open to apprentices, sole traders and micro businesses through to SMEs and larger organisations. And Rothwell Plumbing Services Group (RPS Group) has already appointed the academy as its 'Centre of Excellence for the North of England'.

Graham Rothwell, chief executive of RPS Group, says: "Our sector is facing a green skills shortage but, by working in collaboration across Greater Manchester and beyond, we can help to plug the green skills gap, create jobs for local people and provide new training opportunities."

Wills adds: "The centre is a one-stop shop, genuinely open to everyone and highly practical."

"I sometimes found in my earlier career that employees didn't get listened to but lot of great ideas come from the people that are actually doing the job. With that in mind we see listening as a very important part of what we are trying to achieve."



Dave Wills (left) at the Green Skills Academy