

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON **DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN**

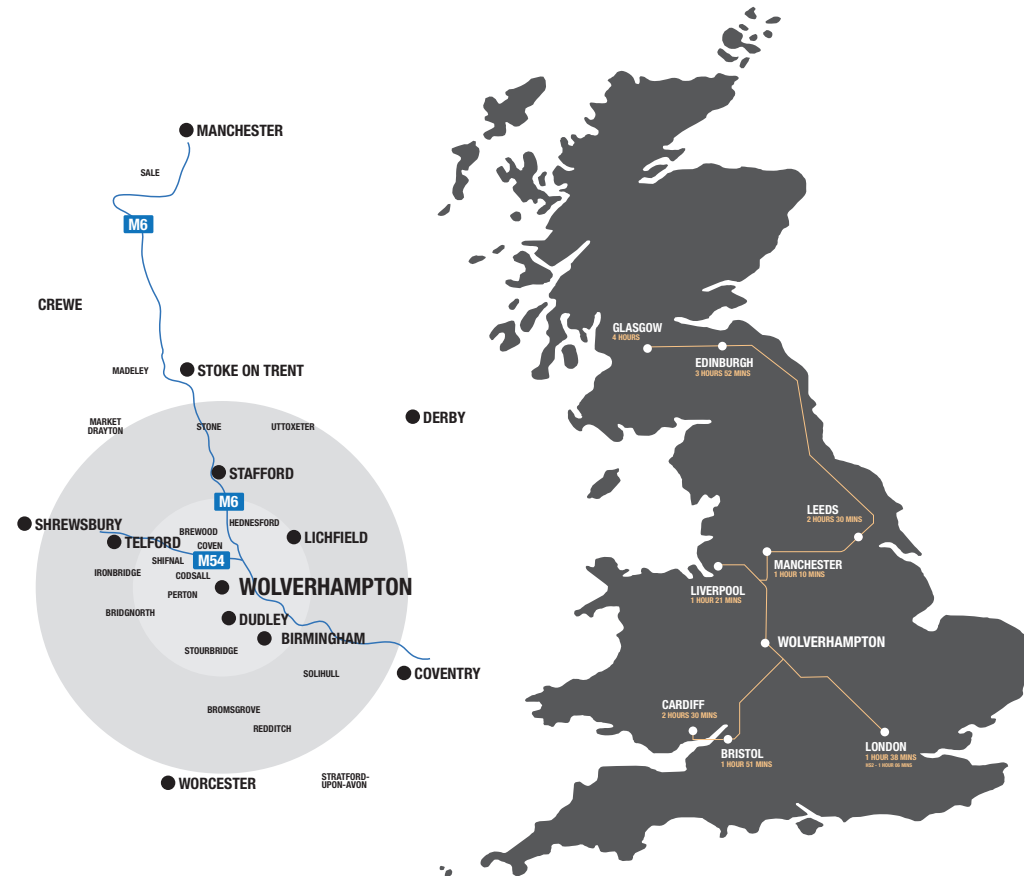


CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON

www.visitwolverhampton.com

INTRODUCTION

The City of Wolverhampton is home to 267,651 residents and has a catchment of 1.73 million people within a 30-minute drive. With enviable connectivity to the West Midlands and beyond, the city has excellent road, rail and air links that put Wolverhampton at the heart of Britain. Wolverhampton is one of the top 10 growing economies in the UK and is currently enjoying significant levels of private and public investment with £2.6 million being injected into regeneration projects citywide including extensive investment in infrastructure and the visitor economy.





Strong culture, entertainment, sport, and leisure offers underpin the city's economy which is projected to grow 2-3% faster than the national average of the next decade. The visitor economy is an important part of the economic mix for Wolverhampton, growing at a substantially faster rate than the total economic activity for the area. It is safe to say that the continued growth of the visitor economy is critical for the local economy.

Wolverhampton is already a Visitor Destination, with significant investment made in key venues including the multi-million-pound refurbishment of University of Wolverhampton at The Halls, the city's anchor music and entertainment venue operated by global entertainment giants AEG, the fantastic Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, home to the biggest pop art collection outside of London and a five-year events programme, solidifying Wolverhampton as a 'destination of choice.' The city is home to a Premier League Football Club and industry leaders such as JLR, Moog and Collins Aerospace. Wolverhampton is not only a thriving economic hub but a diverse and inclusive city, with over 90 languages spoken creating a rich tapestry of cultures and perspectives.

The city attracted more than 10 million visitors in 2023, an increase of 200,000 visitors from 2022. Our visitor economy was worth a record £458 million in 2023, up 12.8% from the previous year. Full-time equivalent jobs supported by direct and indirect tourism rose by 5.6%, from 4,310 to 4,553. These figures have helped form and shape the key priorities for the Wolverhampton Destination Management Plan.

The Wolverhampton Destination Management Plan (DMP), developed in collaboration with key partners within Wolverhampton's visitor economy, sets out our strategy from 2025 – 2030 and is aligned with city strategies that recognise the economic and social value of the visitor economy. It provides a roadmap for supporting the development of visitor economy businesses in Wolverhampton. Collaborating with our key visitor economy partners and organisations, we will clearly define Wolverhampton as a place and highlight its destination offer, raise awareness of the city's offer and change perceptions and increase visitor numbers, footfall and dwell time.

SUMMARY – DMP PLAN ON A PAGE

KEY STATISTICS

- 10 million visitors in 2023, an increase of 200,000 from 2022
- Visitor Economy worth £458m in 2023, up from £406m in 2022.
- Supports FTE jobs supported by the sector of 4,553 in 2023, up from 4,310 in 2022.*
- The Visitor Economy contributes 3.6% of GVA and 7.2% of enterprises (2020) (above England average) and 3.1% of jobs.

VISION

Our 5-year vision is for Wolverhampton is to get people thinking differently about our City by creating a vibrant destination and proposition that attracts visitors from near and far, day, evening and night, to enjoy our fantastic offer and celebrate the city's diversity and heritage.

PRIORITIES

- 1 Create a vibrant and mixed evening and night-time economy
- 2 Increase the number and quality of events
- 3 Ensure our high streets are vibrant and attractive
- 4 Develop a distinctive destination
- 5 An accessible and inclusive city
- 6 Improve the quality of Accommodation offer

* Source: STEAM report 2024

FACTS AND FIGURES

10,000,000

VISITORS IN 2023,
AN INCREASE OF
200,000 FROM 2022 *

953,000

VISITORS TO MOLINEUX
STADIUM PER YEAR

RANGE OF LOCAL EVENTS
DELIVERED BY PARTNERS
(E.G. BIDS), COMMUNITY
ORGANISATIONS AND
PRIVATE SECTOR
PROMOTERS

120,000

VISITORS TO THE RACECOURSE

ADMIRER CIVIC /
COMMUNITY EVENTS
PROGRAMME (IPW)

VISITOR ECONOMY WORTH

£458M

IN 2023, UP FROM
£406M IN 2022

THE COUNCIL'S FACILITATED
EVENTS PROGRAMME
ALONE GENERATED

364,000

VISITORS IN 2023/24

£15.6M

INDIRECT BENEFIT TO
THE CITY'S ECONOMY

SUPPORTS FTE
JOBS SUPPORTED
BY THE SECTOR OF

4,553

IN 2023, UP FROM
4,310 IN 2022 *

300,000

PER YEAR TO THE
GRAND THEATRE

200,000

VISITORS TO THE HALLS IN
THE FIRST YEAR OF OPENING

REASONS FOR VISITING

FOOD AND DRINK	32%
RECREATION	27%
Shopping	20%
TRANSPORT	13%
ACCOMMODATION	9%



THE VISITOR ECONOMY CONTRIBUTES **3.6%**
OF GVA AND 7.2% OF ENTERPRISES (2020) (AND
ABOVE ENGLAND AVERAGE) AND 3.1% OF JOBS.

* Source: STEAM report 2024

WOLVERHAMPTON'S OFFER

Wolverhampton has an abundance of quality attractions in and around the city including theatres, concert halls, galleries, parks and historic houses. We are a very walkable city which enables visitors to easily explore, visit our attractions, shopping and exciting events with six venues classified as national/ regional cultural assets and nationally significant clusters in museums, galleries and libraries and music, performing and visual arts.

HERITAGE

Wolverhampton has over a thousand years of history, first recorded in 985 when 'Heantun' (High Town) was granted by King Ethelred to Lady Wulfrun, a Mercian noblewoman. Wolverhampton has 30 conservation areas across the city. The city centre conservation area contains a substantial amount of leisure, cultural and civic facilities. These include Grade II* listed Art Gallery and Grand Theatre, Grade II listed Civic and Wulfrun Halls, Chubb Building, once a factory for producing safes and locks, now a media centre and soon to be home to a new cinema, Astoria and locally listed Amar House, the city's newest venue TWELVE and the Arena Theatre. Bilston Conservation area contains the Grade II listed Bilston Town Hall and Bilston Craft Gallery. Outside the city centre, Grade II listed Bantock House restored to its former Edwardian glory set within 43 acres of parkland and formal gardens and Grade I listed National Trust Wightwick Manor and Gardens a Victorian half-timbered Manor House which was home of the Mander family, with a world-class art collection and Morris and Co. interiors, and Mosely Old Hall.



MUSIC, COMEDY AND ENTERTAINMENT

Our music, comedy and entertainment venues include the newly refurbished University of Wolverhampton at The Halls, formally known as the Civic Halls, which has previously played host to rock and pop legends including Queen, David Bowie and Nirvana, hosting leading acts, business events and conferences. Newhampton Arts Centre offers a variety of live music including jazz and folk, events, shows, exhibitions, courses and classes. Other city music venues include KK's Steel Mill, a grade II listed building once home to the Star Motor Company offers a pop- up event space hosting shows, art exhibitions, product launches, and huge music events. The new Chubb cinema and TWELVE, a brand new venue in an iconic heritage building offering an program of events featuring leading events brands, international DJs, artists and live bands. In Bilston, we have the Gazebo Theatre and The Robin 2, a 700-capacity venue home to live music with a newly refurbished eight en-suite room hotel. Bilston Town Hall hosts a mix of live events including stand up comedy, music, club nights, special interest, dance and spoken word. The city hosts over 1,000 events held in the city every year, a mix of community events celebrating our diversity and commercial events.



CULTURE

The Grade II listed Wolverhampton Art Gallery boasts the largest and most significant pop art collection outside London and plays host to national and international touring exhibitions. The Grade II listed Grand Theatre stages major touring productions with capacity for 1,200 in its three tier Victorian auditorium and Arena Theatre presents a diverse theatre program populated with top-quality professional productions, local and amateur shows.



RETAIL AND HOSPITALITY

The city is well provided for retail lovers with the Mander and Wulfrun Shopping Centre. The owners of the Mander Centre (Catella APAM) are investing to transform the experience to widen the centres offer including leisure offers such as Superbowl UK offering family entertainment and competitive socialising. The city is also home to a number of small independent retailers, vibrant markets in the city centre, Wednesfield and Bilston, pubs, clubs and restaurants, productions, local and amateur shows.





SPORTS

Home to Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club, Molineux Stadium has a fantastic atmosphere on match days and houses the new Wolves Museum. Britain's first floodlit all weather racecourse, Wolverhampton Racecourse welcomes 120,000 visitors each year across 80 race fixtures, music live events and conferences with the Holiday Inn Hotel onsite. Aldersley Leisure Village home to the Grand Slam of Darts and other sporting events. Wolverhampton was the first city to host a British Kabaddi League game in April 2022 and is home to the Kabaddi World Cup in 2025, the first time it has been held outside of Asia. The city also hosted the 2022 Commonwealth Games cycling time trial.



BUSINESS TOURISM

The city is home to a number of conference venues including Grand Station sited next to the city's transport Interchange, this historic former railway station dates back to 1854 with 2 halls for corporate events, ideal for conferences, exhibitions, black tie dinners and awards evenings. The iconic music venue University of Wolverhampton at The Halls also hosts business events and conferences. Molineux Stadium home of Wolverhampton Wanderers FC, is a treasure trove of event spaces with uninterrupted views of the pitch, lending itself well to both reception-style events and more conventional theatre-style conferences. The Wolves Museum is an additional space that is available to hire for private events. Grand Palace a Grade II* listed building in the heart of the city centre with a capacity to host up to 650 guests in its main venue, along with an additional 170 in the second suite, offering space for all types of events including weddings, conferences and banquets. The Mount Country Manor, Hotel and Golf offers modern comforts, a 2 AA Rosette restaurant, gardens and conference facilities. Guests can enjoy golf and gym amenities at The Mount Golf and Country Club, just 2 miles away. Ideal for business or leisure. Wolverhampton Racecourse is ideal for corporate hire for exhibition, product activation, and shows with a range of indoor rooms and a vast amount of outdoor space located on the outskirts of the city centre with an on-site hotel.

PARKS, GREEN SPACES AND NATURE RESERVES

Wolverhampton has some wonderful green spaces with six parks with Green Flag award including Bantock Park, East Park, West Park, Pendeford Mill Nature Reserve, Phoenix Park and Fowlers Park. Its three nature reserves, Smestow Valley, Pendeford Mill and Northcote Farm offer a haven for wildlife and visitors. The city has a number of open spaces that are part of the UNESCO Black Country geopark, a place of internationally important geological heritage and outstanding industrial heritage. It's canal network includes one of the longest lock flights with 21 locks and the iconic Meccano bridge spans the Staffordshire and Worcester canal which is over 250 years old.



VISION AND PRIORITIES

OUR 5-YEAR VISION

TO GET PEOPLE THINKING DIFFERENTLY ABOUT OUR CITY BY CREATING A VIBRANT DESTINATION AND PROPOSITION THAT ATTRACTS VISITORS FROM NEAR AND FAR, DAY, EVENING AND NIGHT, TO ENJOY OUR FANTASTIC OFFER AND CELEBRATE THE CITY'S DIVERSITY AND HERITAGE.

OUR DMP FOCUSES ON 6 PRIORITIES THAT WERE IDENTIFIED AS THE MOST IMPORTANT BY STAKEHOLDERS:

1. CREATE A VIBRANT AND MIXED EVENING AND NIGHTTIME ECONOMY: transforming our city into an exciting, vibrant and inclusive evening and nighttime destination for all. The city already has some serious after dark attractions including the West Midlands' premier live music and comedy venue, The Halls, where 200 artists and comedians play every year. The city's arts and culture offer continues after dark with 'lates' at Wolverhampton City Art Gallery and over 200+ major theatrical and musical shows a year at the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre. Premier league football and events are provided by Wolverhampton Wanderers. These anchor attractions are supported by a host of smaller spaces including cutting-edge underground music at KK's Steel Mill and folk, world and community arts at the Wolverhampton Arts Centre and Arena Theatre. The planned re-launch of the city's arthouse cinema, the opening of family restaurants and new live music spaces will be the glue around our anchor attractions. Investment in the city's public space, public realm and lighting provision, has, and will further, provide a fabulous and well-connected setting, making it a delight to move safely from one part of the city to the another after dark. This

plan needs to put the visitor experience at the forefront of what we do by ensuring visitors feel welcome and safer in the evening and at nighttime. The need for greater quality and quantity of offer including restaurants and accommodation is also an essential part to improve our city offer, increase visitor numbers, spend and dwell time, activating our city's evening and nighttime economy.



2. CREATE A VIBRANT 'EVENTS CITY' JOINT PROGRAMME:

owned by all partners, this vibrant events and festival offer will make Wolverhampton a 'destination of choice' for visitors, ensuring the right balance of free and paid for events, celebrating our diversity and unique city strengths. Wolverhampton is already an 'Events City' with 1,000+ events a year including 300,000 visitors each to the Grand Theatre and the Halls with a range of local events delivered by partners, communities and commercial promoters. Our aim is to increase the economic and social benefit and value from events, enhancing our profile and reputation nationally and internationally and attract higher profile partners from across the private sector.



3. ENSURE OUR HIGH STREETS ARE VIBRANT AND ATTRACTIVE: city and town centres are critical parts of our local economy offering spaces where people can socialise, connect and celebrate identity through events and activities, attracting people to spend time on our high streets. Building on our strong cultural and leisure offer, events programme and investment in public realm, we will create attractive places for visitors and events, improving the appearance and vibrancy of our high streets, maximising the role of culture and improving our offer. Vibrant and attractive high streets help to create a memorable experience for visitors and encourage visitors to stay longer, spend more and generate more return visits. Key to this is to support stakeholder and business engagement and participation.



- 4. DEVELOP A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION:** transforming the awareness and perceptions of Wolverhampton by strengthening our city brand, marketing the city by working in partnership with a consistent, joined-up approach and clear message creating a strong voice for the visitor economy. We will put visitors at the heart of our approach, improving our visitor facing offer and visitor welcome through delivering on our key priorities.





- 5. AN ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE CITY:** Wolverhampton prides itself on being a fair, equal and inclusive city: home to Deaffest the UK's leading Deaf Film and Arts Festival and a range of other events and activities celebrating our diversity including Pride, Diwali and Vaisakhi. We need to ensure that our city, venues and visitor offer is accessible, building on our strengths with Wolverhampton crowned the most 'wheelchair accessible city in the UK' in 2022 based on the percentage of accessible restaurants, cafes, pubs, hotels and parking spaces. With an ageing population and 18% of Wolverhampton's population and 22% across the UK having a disability, we must not only improve physical access to spaces but create activities to meet the needs of those with physical and non-physical disabilities and improve our marketing to ensure our visitor offer is open to all.

- 6. IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF ACCOMMODATION OFFER:**
grow the capacity and quality of our hotel offer especially within the city centre to encourage more visitors to make use of weekend and overnight stays in the city. Currently, the city has insufficient good quality hotels and demand is being displaced to hotels outside of the city. Attracting an international/major hotel brand to the City of Wolverhampton is key to growing our visitor economy with a wider economic impact in the city including a positive influence on the evening and night-time economy.



STRATEGIC CONTEXT

NATIONAL

Tourism is one of the UK's most important industries, directly responsible for 3.8 million jobs, attracted 40.9 million overseas visitors and contributing £24.8 billion into our economy in 2019 (Visit Britain 2019). A review of the tourism delivery landscape in England, the de Bois review, recommended England's Destination Management Organisations landscape be restructured into a tiered formation, to create a national portfolio of high performing and strategic destination organisations.

Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) are a vital part of England's tourism landscape. VisitEngland will play a key part in the delivery of these recommendations, including administering a new accreditation scheme for the highest performing DMOs, supporting England's visitor economy to be resilient, sustainable and worldclass through the creation of the new structure for DMOs, Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) and Destination Development Partnerships (DDPs) unlocking benefits to local visitor economies.

REGIONAL

The Destination Management Partnership will have a significant role locally in working with and influencing the work of the emerging Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) being developed at a regional level. Wolverhampton is a partner in the Birmingham, Solihull and Black Country LVEP.

In the West Midlands, a top tier Destination Development Partnership (DDP) will focus on activities that ensure destinations remain sustainable, competitive and responsive to challenges such as boosting skills and accessibility. DDPs will set regional priorities for the visitor economy and receive government funding partnering with LVEPs to demonstrate the case for direct government investment in the sector.

West Midlands Growth Company (WMGC), the region's Destination Management Agency, aims to raise awareness of the region's destinations in international markets, change perceptions in the domestic market and nurture partnerships to unlock regional tourism growth with the aim of growing our tourism economy by £1 billion over the next 10 years (2019-2029). They have established the Tourism & Hospitality Advisory Board to align the industry, give a high-profile voice for tourism and hospitality in the region, consult on proposals and champion the local tourism sector. Their priorities are to enhance the profile and reputation of the region, create and sustain good jobs for local people, facilitate the regeneration of the built environment and create and sustain vibrant destinations.

WOLVERHAMPTON VISITOR ECONOMY STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK





OUR CITY, OUR PLAN

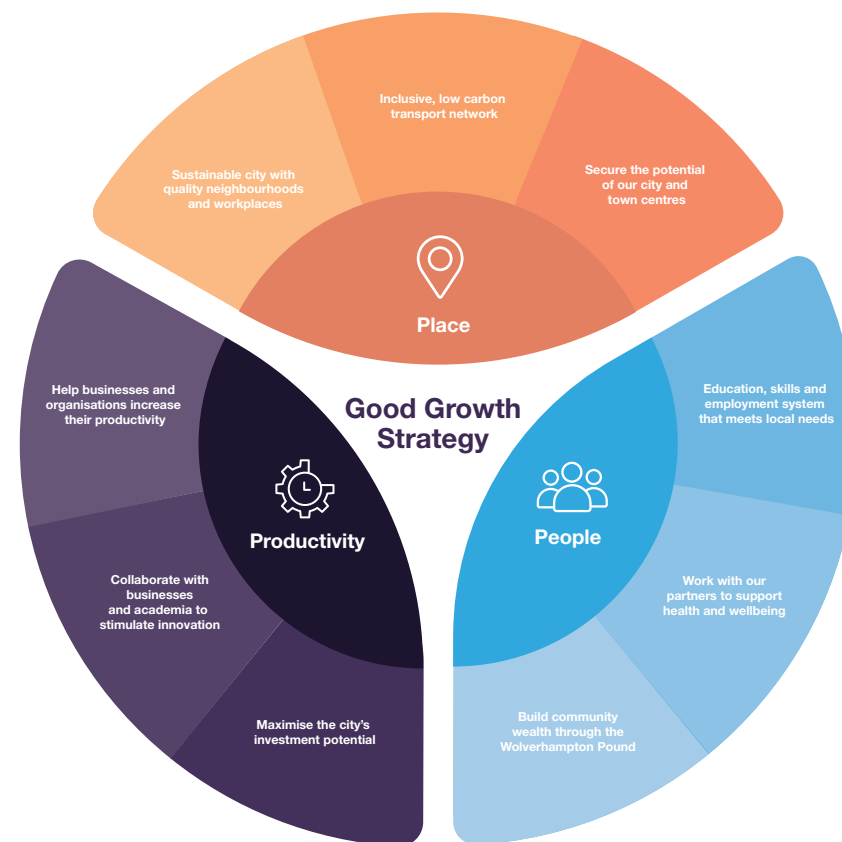
Thriving economy in all parts of the city to deliver vibrant high streets with a quality culture and leisure offer:

- Securing and delivering investment in our high streets and town centre to help them thrive including public realm events, meanwhile uses arts and culture
- Support and deliver a range of events in the city, from sport at the Molineux, music festivals in our parks, through to activities in our libraries and culture in venues across the city

GOOD GROWTH STRATEGY

City and town centres are critical parts of our local economy offering spaces where people can socialise, connect and celebrate local identity through events and festivals providing a more balanced offer which attracts people to spend time on our high streets:

- Diversify our city and town centres through a blended approach which includes retail and hospitality supported by events and activities in quality public space, as well as city centre living and working.
- Maximise the benefits of our unique qualities of diversity and identity, heritage, leisure and arts to boost our visitor, cultural and creative economy
- Develop our evening and nighttime economy providing diverse and vibrant events, safe and welcoming public spaces, accessible and inclusive high streets, supported by a range of transport options.





WOLVERHAMPTON DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE VISITOR ECONOMY

5-YEAR EVENTS PLAN

Grow a vibrant events programme boosting footfall, increasing economic and social benefit and transforming the reputation of the city.

- Changing perceptions of the city by enhancing its profile and reputation nationally and internationally;
- Increasing the social benefit and value by creating opportunities for employment and skills development;
- Increasing the economic benefit and return by generating significant new direct and indirect spend.

WOLVERHAMPTON'S CULTURAL STRATEGY

Develop a city-wide approach through partnerships and collaboration

Sustaining and growing the cultural and creative offer

Growing the talent pipeline and support growth in creative industries

Develop and grow culture's role in attracting visitors, and maximising economic benefit and pride

Increasing Participation in Arts and Culture

WOLVERHAMPTON'S EVENING AND NIGHTTIME ECONOMY STRATEGY

Developed by local stakeholders and informed through a Purple Flag audit, focusing around key themes:

1. Strategy, policy and governance: a common vision for Wolverhampton after dark.
2. Wellbeing: safe, welcoming and clean Wolverhampton after dark.
3. Movement: a Wolverhampton that's easy to get to, from and around after dark.
4. Appeal: creating a Wolverhampton with rich mix after dark.
5. Place: creating a functional and beautiful civic realm for Wolverhampton after dark.

PARTNERSHIP APPROACH FOR THE WOLVERHAMPTON DMP

The DMP has been developed in partnership with local stakeholders active within the local visitor economy. Stakeholders included leaders from local BID's, retail, University of Wolverhampton, entertainment and leisure, cultural venues, Wolverhampton Wanderers FC, hoteliers, Youth Council, food and beverage sector, West Midlands Growth Company and City of Wolverhampton Council.

A new Destination Management Partnership Board with members representing the city's visitor economy sector and stakeholders with interests in the city will oversee delivery and monitoring of the DMP, chaired by a local industry leader and supported by the City of Wolverhampton Council.

Wolverhampton DMP will feed into the Local Visitor Economy Partnership which is led by WMGC and VisitEngland and align with the West Midlands Regional Tourism Strategy delivery between 2019-2029.



SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Growing visitor economy with 10 million visitors in 2023, an increase of 200,000 from 2022, worth £458m in 2023 supporting 4552 FTE jobs in 2023.
- Home to The Halls is the largest entertainment and concert facility in the Black Country operated by global entertainment giants AEG attracting 300,000 visitors per year.
- A thriving music and cultural scene, home to the historic Wolverhampton Grand Theatre and five Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations.
- Home to Wolverhampton Art Gallery, a leading contemporary arts venue, with the biggest pop art collection outside London and one of the most significant collections of Black British Art, hosting national and international touring exhibitions and shows.
- Strong industrial heritage and historic venues including Bantock House and Wightwick Manor.
- Premier League Football club, racecourse and home to Grand Slam of Darts.
- Growing business conference offer with unique and diverse venues.
- Walkable compact city with city centre university campus.
- Excellent transport links (train, tram and bus) centred around Transport Interchange.
- Friendly people and welcoming city.



WEAKNESSES

- Not considered a traditional visitor destination with low awareness / negative perception of visitor offer.
- Spread of venues so combining offer challenging.
- Quantity and quality of accommodation.
- Variety of bars and restaurant offer for people visiting shows at The Grand and The Halls.
- Concerns around safety for visitors and staff in the city centre impacting on evening and nighttime economy.
- Timing of public transport not aligned to when events finish.
- One of the least welcoming Premier League clubs for away fans tarnishes perception of the city.
- University attracts 90% local population impacting on demand for ENTE.
- Lack of places for young people.
- Car parking experience including use of digital apps impacting on older audience.



- Lack of clear city brand and identity.
- No joined up approach to city marketing.
- Empty units.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Strong culture, entertainment, sport, and leisure offers underpin the city's economy which is projected to grow 2-3% faster than the national average of the next decade.
- The visitor economy is an important part of the economic mix for Wolverhampton, and it has grown at a substantially faster rate than the total economic activity for the area.
- Large catchment area within reach of 1.73 million people within a 30-minute drive and 3 million within 20 miles.
- Excellent connectivity to the West Midlands and beyond, the city has excellent road, rail and air links.
- Significant investment in key venues including multi-million pound refurbishment of The Halls, the city's anchor music and entertainment venue.
- Strong music heritage with the iconic venue The Halls.
- 5-year events programme, emerging Cultural and Evening and Nighttime Economy Strategies.
- Potential use of Molineux for large concerts.
- Emerging offers including new cinema, venue TWELVE and Superbowl.
- Enhanced public realm events spaces and city centre living linked to large regeneration schemes.
- Visit Wolverhampton Website and joined up programming and marketing approach.
- Proximity to Birmingham so can benefit from spill out from large scale events e.g. Commonwealth Games.

THREATS

- Competition from towns and city neighbouring cities.
- Council budget pressures necessitating a move towards attracting commercial events, funding and sponsorship.
- Capacity of venues for events, press and VIPs may result in successful events moving elsewhere if can't accommodate growth.
- Restrictions on use of events space in the city centre with growth of housing development impacting on licenses and permissions.
- Restrictions on number and nature of events that could be held in parks including site restrictions preventing growth in space available.
- Impact of cost-of-living crisis on consumer spending and cost of doing business and changing consumer trends.
- Larger pubco's are shifting from management of venues to Tennant.





**CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON**

www.visitwolverhampton.com



**Funded by
UK Government**



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**

**Commonwealth Games
Legacy Enhancement Fund**

**CITY OF
WOLVERHAMPTON
COUNCIL**