THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND | CHURCH FOR A DIFFERENT WORLD
Diocese of Manchester

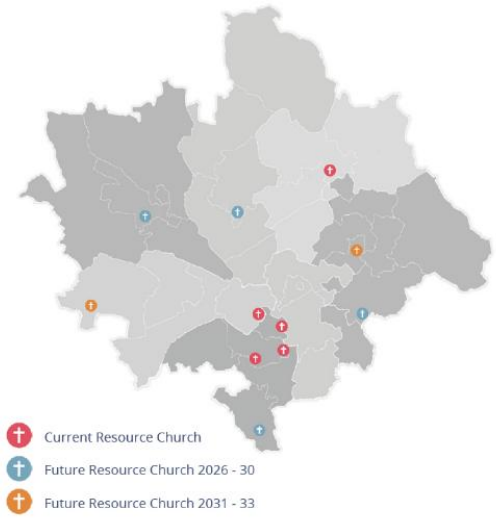
Consultation Document

A Resource Church for Bolton

Vision and background paper to accompany the Bishop's Mission Order October 2026

1. A Mixed Ecology

The Church of England's national vision invites us to become a diocese where "mixed ecology" is the norm: flourishing parishes, revitalised congregations and church plants working together to live out a Christian presence at the heart of every community.



Over recent years our work with **Resource Churches** has been part of this. Since 2020 Nelson Street Rochdale, St Werburgh's Chorlton and Fabric Church Manchester have been part of our Resource Church journey, coming alongside the more established presence of Holy Trinity Platt and St Philip's Salford in the engine room of church planting in the diocese.

Funding support from the national church now means we can invest in six new Resource Churches to ensure comprehensive coverage across the Diocese. This new season of work began in 2025 with the Resource Church of William Temple Wythenshawe (in conjunction with St Werburgh's), and in 2026 with St Thomas Bury (in conjunction with Nelson Street). In spring 2027 we are working towards a Resource Church for Bolton.

Resource Church: a church called to repeated parish revitalisation through sending leaders and teams to plant or graft into other localities. As they pursue this calling in the Church of England, resource churches will characteristically:

- Work with their bishop in intentional partnership.
- Be part of their diocesan strategy to revitalise mission across a wider area.
- Have the vision and capacity to revitalise and plant other churches.
- Have a culture of growth through evangelism, discipleship and leadership development.
- Connect with a wider network of churches which supports this task.

See 'Resourcing the Church: Resource Churches in the Church of England' (CCX, Faith in the North and Bede Centre, 2025)

2. A Vision for Bolton

Bolton is a town of rich heritage, cultural diversity, civic pride and deep community resilience. The areas around the town centre in particular bring together established neighbourhoods, new homes, places of work and a university community. Alongside existing church life – Anglican and ecumenical - we seek to work towards the flourishing of the whole church across the whole town of Bolton.

(a) Leader

The Revd Joshua Openshaw is currently Pioneer Minister at St Peter's Halliwell. He brings experience of parish ministry, worship, evangelism and cross-cultural mission. His recent formation includes the Camino Resource church course, and the practical experience of developing vision and team within a sending church.

(b) Partnerships

St Peter's Halliwell will be planting partners for this new Resource Church. Working with Revd Alan Saunders (Vicar, St Peter's Halliwell), a team of nearly 30 adults and children are seeking to be part of the new enterprise. They would be commissioned and sent out by St Peter's Halliwell as the Resource Church begins its life more formally.

(c) Location

Bolton Lads and Girls Club (Spa Road, Bolton, BL1 4AG) has been identified as the initial Sunday venue for Bolton Resource Church, alongside some midweek usage. Situated on the western side of Bolton town centre this has been recognised as being close to the university, with good walking and transport links, and a venue known and trusted by those in Bolton.

We have explored use of existing church buildings in Bolton. However, no building has emerged in the right location with the capacity and flexibility needed for this developing mission.

We recognise this as a first "home" for Sunday and some midweek ministry, giving space for this new enterprise to grow and develop. Beginning in shared accommodation therefore allows resources to remain focused on people and mission, while encouraging creative midweek work in a range of third-party spaces where relationships and networks can be formed naturally. We will continue to monitor suitable locations for lease which may provide a more permanent base within the Bolton property market. Should a strategically located building become available for purchase, we will explore that possibility in consultation with diocesan partners, local churches and national funders.

(d) Team

Alongside the plant team, funding from the national church allows for the employment of lay staff roles during the set-up phase of church life. Most likely this will be specialist support in community mission, and in operations/comms. The church will also work with the diocese towards a training curate as a core part of future planting expectations.

(e) Missional Design

The vision for the Resource Church describes a four-part journey of faith: “find community”; “explore faith”; “follow Jesus”; “grow and go”. An initial focus will be on students, young adults and local residents not currently connected with church. The university community includes people of many ages and circumstances, including mature and part-time learners. Lunchtime and early-evening Alpha, shared meals, board-games nights, a pop-up café and study space, and creative events will help people belong, ask questions and grow in faith.

As the Resource Church grows and develops, its ongoing shape and vision will continue to emerge through prayer, reflection and careful listening. Church growth is not always predictable and will develop as part of a wider vision for the Bolton deanery, with active partnership, in particular with Bolton Parish Church and the West Bolton Team in whose parish the initial venue sits. Together, we will seek ways of reaching new people in new places, adapting activity where needed and sharing learning, leaders and resources for the flourishing of the whole Church across Bolton.

3. A Bishop’s Mission Order

A Bishop’s Mission Order is the Church of England’s recognised framework for endorsing and governing a mission initiative whose life and ministry cross or sit alongside ordinary parochial boundaries. Nelson Street Rochdale and Fabric Church Manchester are similarly established by BMO. In this case it provides a clear legal and ecclesial home for the Resource Church, giving it clear accountability and responsibility to the Bishop and within the vision of the wider deanery and diocese:

- It authorises the Mission Initiative and its leaders, defines the area and purpose of ministry, and requires regular consultation and co-operation with those who have the cure of souls in local parishes.
- It allows the Resource Church to play its full part within deanery life and the mission community.

- It sets clear expectations around safeguarding, good governance, and Anglican identity, and creates the conditions in which relationships can remain strong, communities can flourish, and new church life can grow.
- It provides for a Visitor (in this case the Archdeacon of Rochdale) to review the work of the mission initiative.

Alongside the BMO a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) is being established as a charitable body, enabling trustees to manage the business of the Mission Initiative with proper accounting records, annual accounts, and regular reporting through diocesan governance.

4. Next Steps

This more formal process of consultation allows all interested parties to explore the proposal for the Bishop to grant a BMO to Bolton Resource Church.

(1) A meeting open to all will take place on **Thursday 12th November 2026** at 7.00 pm at St Paul and Emmanual Centre, Vicarage Street, Deane, Bolton BL3 5LE
(2) The consultation will conclude on Monday 30th November 2026.

Subject to consultation, approval and readiness, it is hoped the Resource Church will begin formally in Spring 2027.