

## Type of Area

Bradford District is a large area of great potential - yet we have a surprisingly low profile. We have:

- A population of nearly half a million (477,800) - making us the 6<sup>th</sup> largest urban local authority area in the UK outside London...and we have the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest youth population (103,000 under 16) of these areas.
- Over 2 million economically active people live within 60 minutes drive time of Bradford.
- A large and growing workforce – we have the 6<sup>th</sup> largest working age population (307,000), supplemented by the 40,000 who commute into Bradford every day.
- A major business centre: the 8<sup>th</sup> largest number of businesses (11,000), the 9<sup>th</sup> largest number of employees and the 4<sup>th</sup> largest number of self-employed (23,000) of urban local authority areas in the UK outside London.
- A substantial economy – £1 in every £11 of wealth in the region is created in Bradford and we account for 1 in every 11 people of working age in the region. The size of our economy in 2005 now approaches £7 billion and is larger than that of any of the Baltic States.
- Bradford has a diverse population with Black and Minority Ethnic groups accounting for 22% of the District population. We are known as a cosmopolitan city: nearly a quarter of our population (24%) was other than “white British” in 2001 (compared to 13% in England and Wales and 8% in the region).

Although we have many excellent schools, on average our educational record has been poor. It is improving – in 2005 the percentage of our 15 year-olds attaining A\* to C GCSE grades was 46%, a 17 percentage point increase on 1997 and a rate of progress much faster than the national and regional change. The area has a number of excellent schools including strong independent schools. However, we remain the fifth worst performing LEA in terms of GCSE results in the region. This challenge will be critical to ensuring our growing young population can access opportunities in Bradford and beyond and that our growing population is really attractive to business.

### Tourism

Tourism is a major industry for the District employing over 10,000 people. The District has an outstanding cultural offering: from our Victorian heritage (with over 5,800 listed buildings in the city centre and beyond) and the World Heritage Site at Saltaire, to the nationally-renowned National Museum of Photography, Film and Television – the 2nd most visited museum outside London.

Total staying visitor spend in Bradford in 2003 was £113m or just 5.1% of the regional total. Day visitor spend in Bradford was rather larger at £152m or 6.1%

of the regional total. Overall visitor spend was therefore around £300m. The area's employment in hotels and restaurants is a good proxy for the relative importance of the tourism sector: this stood at 8,500 jobs in 2003, which was 4.4% of the total compared to 6.8% in all Great Britain – so the sector is nearly 40% underrepresented. Employment has declined 1998-2002 (by 6% compared to national growth of 9%).

The retail and leisure offering in our city centre is poor, of far lower scale and quality than would be expected of an area of half a million people. Many residents of the district do not connect with and rarely visit the city centre. Yet this presents an enormous opportunity. The ratio of comparison retail expenditure (£350m in 2005 according to CACI) to district population is the lowest of all top 10 retail centres in the region.

However, Bradford has considerable potential for growth in tourism and leisure. It has good road connections across the M62 corridor, direct rail connections to Manchester and Leeds, positioned at the southern gateway to the Yorkshire Dales and a number of excellent visitor attractions.

Bradford Tourism Facts			
Staying Visitors			
	Domestic	Overseas	Total
Nights	Nos.	Nos.	Nos.
All Holidays	1,167,000	133,000	1,300,000
Business	275,000	30,000	305,000
VFR	628,000	229,000	857,000
Other	32,000	72,000	104,000
Total	2,102,000	465,000	2,567,000
Spend	£	£	£
All Holidays	46,390,000	4,966,000	51,356,000
Business	28,985,000	2,213,000	31,198,000
VFR	19,215,000	7,183,000	26,398,000
Other	1,373,000	2,995,000	4,368,000
Total	95,964,000	17,356,000	113,320,000
Day Visitors (over 3 hours, irregular trip)			
	Number of Trips	Total Spend	Spend per Trip (£)
Urban	6,417,000	151,623,000	23.63
Countryside	14,000	222,000	15.86
Total	6,431,000	151,845,000	23.61
Source: Yorkshire Tourist Board			

## **Leisure**

However, despite acknowledged weaknesses, Bradford is becoming increasingly successful at attracting people to its city centre leisure offer.

The Leisure Exchange is the tenth largest leisure scheme in the UK comprising 205,000 sq ft of prime leisure accommodation, anchored by a multiplex cinema, a 42,500 sq ft Gala casino and a 24 lane bowling alley. There are also a number of restaurant uses including Pizza Hut, Nandos and Frankie & Benny's.

The Centenary Square scheme, directly opposite City Hall, is the most recent leisure development in central Bradford. It comprises five units, all but one of which have been successfully let at rents of up to £21/sq ft. Tenants include Wetherspoons (trading as Lloyds No. 1) and Chino Thai.

Bradford's West End is now a well established leisure destination, predominantly underpinned by its bar offer. Rents in this area have increased to around £15/sq ft. The Alhambra Theatre attracts over 400,000 visits each year of which over 40% come from outside the Yorkshire and Humber Region

### ***Knight Frank view***

*“Bradford's leisure offer is maturing and improving”*

## **Tourism Strategy**

Improving the offer to visitors is a key element of the District's Tourism Strategy along with stimulating extra demand through the provision of new attractions. A key focus is providing attractions that are more likely to generate overnight stays and it is envisaged that a new mixed development offering a casino, restaurants and a hotel would improve the District's performance in this area and generate additional income and jobs for the District.

## **2020 Vision**

The 2020 Vision for Bradford District is economy led and aspires to a high-wage, high-skill, knowledge-based economy, which will provide appropriate jobs for everyone, creating a wealthier population with greater spending power. Despite undoubted strengths as the region's third largest economy, the District continues to under-perform in a number of key areas. The challenge remains to improve productivity, increase prosperity and to ensure that this reaches all parts of the District.

The strategic 2020 Vision for the district recognises the city centre as the natural focus for cultural activity and its potential for residential development which will then boost the retail and leisure sectors. Improving the city centre is a key priority of the Community Strategy and is one of five priorities of the District's Economic Strategy. The City Centre is one of three key strategic areas covered by Masterplans which are priority areas for regeneration under the Council's Corporate Plan and in the newly agreed economy block of the Local Area Agreement. The City Centre Masterplan is also a priority for support by Yorkshire Forward through the Regional Economic Strategy and the Sub Regional Investment Plan.

### **Bradford Centre Regeneration**

Bradford Centre Regeneration is a partnership between Bradford Metropolitan District Council, Yorkshire Forward and English Partnerships. Set up in 2003, the Company is charged with delivering the physical regeneration of Bradford City Centre. BCR was established as a response to the particular challenges facing Bradford including:

- An underperforming property market;
- Competition from other centres;
- No substantial commercial core;
- A poor retail offer; and
- Little or no speculative development.

Bradford Centre Regeneration is responsible for a clearly defined two square kilometre area in Bradford city centre. BCR's vision to regenerate Bradford is to:

- Transform the city centre as the heart of a great northern destination;
- Promote investor confidence;
- Develop and diversify the economy of the city centre;
- Create employment opportunities for the people of Bradford;
- Improve transport, parking and linkages; and
- Act as an exemplar in creating a safe and enjoyable centre

### **Broadway Shopping Centre**

This £300m Westfield development on a 16 acre site in the heart of the city centre will transform Bradford's retail offer. Phase One will introduce over 588,500 sq ft of new retail space, including Debenhams and BhS as anchors and provide the modern, high quality facilities which Bradford has previously lacked. Demolition is underway and the centre is scheduled to open in 2008.

The development also incorporates offices, apartments, a food court and car parking. Broadway will link to existing provision on Darley Street and Kirkgate and will extend the retail core towards Forster Square station and the retail park behind it, thus providing a greater cohesion to the city's shopping provision.

### **Residential**

Bradford city centre has witnessed the beginning of a transformation over the last two years as the city living concept has rapidly developed. Since 2003 there have been 522 apartment completions in Bradford city centre. Average prices have increased from £65,000 in Q2 2003 to £142,000 in Q2 2005, an increase of 118%. Average city centre values are currently at approximately £190/sq ft, although sales of up to £230/sq ft have been reported.

Bradford provides a unique opportunity to develop many of its historic buildings, which currently stand empty. There are 1,453 units with planning permission awaiting construction.

The vast majority of city centre residents are in the 20 – 39 age group, which demographic forecasts project will grow considerably over the next decade. Forecasts indicate an increase in the Bradford population of 41,800 over the next 10 years, a total change of 8.6%, over double that anticipated in West Yorkshire and seven times the expected UK average.

### **The Alsop Masterplan**

The Alsop Masterplan approved in March 2004 is the strategic framework for Bradford's vision for the city centre. The Masterplan envisages a reinvented, coherent city centre based on a significant degree of high quality new public open space. The signature Masterplan image is of a new water feature adjoining City Hall.



At its core, the Masterplan is about investing in the public realm to change the city's fortunes, people's perceptions and investors' attitudes. The Masterplan aims to act as a catalyst, initiating a process of change and raising the underlying value of the city property portfolio.

## Social Impact

The development of a large casino in Bradford has a number of potential social impacts. Positive impacts include:

### Job Creation

Looking at the direct employment impacts - using figures derived from a study conducted by Ernst & Young for Yorkshire Forward - it is expected that a large Casino would generate between 80 -120 full time equivalent jobs. It is also worth noting that, within the Bradford context, casino jobs are well paid. Typically 70% of jobs in casinos are above NVQ 2 level and casino operators operate good training schemes for staff.

There is also potential for indirect labour impacts through supply chain activity and induced labour created as a result of the increased wages provided by the employment created. It is acknowledged that these multiplier effects could be minimized through the displacement of expenditure from other areas of the economy, particularly on the wider leisure expenditure in the District.

Bradford District already has a very successful local job brokerage scheme in operation called jobs@ - a partnership involving the Council, Jobcentre Plus and the Chamber of Commerce - which would work with the successful operator to ensure that a large proportion of jobs were taken by people from disadvantaged groups, many of whom live close to the city centre in areas such as Manningham and West Bowling and would be expected to be the major beneficiaries of the employment opportunities created.

However we would expect a significant proportion of visitors to the casino to originate from outside the District which increase overall levels of leisure expenditure. The Ernst & Young report predicts a large casino would generate an annual income of between £10-15 million and we would expect that between 10-20% of the 300-400,000 visitors would be from outside the District. This means there is potential to generate 10,000 – 20,000 additional overnight stays in the District which in itself would justify the building of a medium size hotel.

### Regeneration

There are major opportunities for Bradford District that would accrue from being awarded a large casino licence in relation to the direct and indirect regeneration benefits that would be created.

Bradford would seek to use the licence strategically to lever large scale direct and associated development in the form of a large mixed use scheme involving hotel, retail and other uses alongside the casino. There is a very real potential for a casino licence to lever £150-250 million of development in a mixed use scheme that would help to deliver significant physical improvements to the city in line with Alsop Masterplan. The new established planning frameworks for the four city centre neighbourhoods identified in the Alsop Masterplan would guide the nature of the development and the casino licence would again be a lever to improve quality of the built environment in the city centre.

## **Cohesion**

The operation of two existing casinos in Bradford has not been a cause for concern with respect to social cohesion and because of their location in the city center there has been minimal impact on residential communities. Patronage of the existing facilities seems to be diverse with most of the Districts communities represented.

The existing casinos have operated over a number of years without any serious problems – the police view is that the casinos have very good operating procedures and function in a strict regulatory environment. The casinos generate much less crime than other equivalent leisure uses such as night clubs. Discussions with the police have indicated they would be happy to support the development of a new large casino.

The City Centre location of the existing and proposed casino will have minimum impact on the District residents whilst traffic generated is outside peak hours and thus the existing transport infrastructure is more than adequate to cope with the traffic that would be generated and indeed would be welcomed as bringing more life and activity into the city centre.

With respect to city centre management, city centre wardens operate to the early evening and centre also has good Community Safety Officer support. CCTV coverage in the city centre is also very good.

Looking forward, if a new casino were to be developed we would work with the police through the Public Safety Liaison Committee to monitor any impacts on incidence of crime, nuisance or traffic issues. However we would not anticipate any problems given that we already have two small casinos operating.

## Need for Regeneration

Bradford city centre does not punch its weight within the region and the current leisure offer in the city centre does not reflect the size of its catchment area. On a number of measures the economy of Bradford district has been underperforming for many decades. These include:

- GVA per head of around £12,800 in 2003 was 5% below the regional average and 18% below the UK average.
- Bradford residents, on average, had gross annual earnings in 2004 of £17,700, or 9% below the regional and 19% below the national averages; however, workplace based average earnings were rather higher at an average of £19,600 and were similar to the regional average and only 12% below the national average.
- Employment rates in Bradford District are significantly lower than the national and regional averages. The evidence of the last decade shows that, despite a growth in the overall number of jobs and significant falls in unemployment, an increasing proportion of the workforce are not in work. In a number of wards less than half the working age population has a job while there is significant and persisting labour market disadvantage for some ethnic minority groups, lone parents, people with disabilities and older workers. This pattern of disadvantage is clearly reflected in levels of deprivation across the District.
- 43% of Bradford population live in 20% most deprived areas of England according to the 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation. Bradford has second highest concentration of deprivation in the region and much of this deprivation is in areas in and around the city centre. Bradford is also ranked the fifth most employment deprived local authority in England.

It is clear that developing a new casino as part of a large mixed use scheme has the potential to impact on an area of high deprivation and low levels of worklessness.

As already discussed, the major regeneration impact would be supporting the realisation of the Alsop Masterplan for the city centre. Currently there is £1.8 billion of investment planned with a further £1 billion expected. There are 37 development sites included in the current Bradford Centre Regeneration Business Plan, some of which are currently being developed but many are subject to discussions with owners and potential developers. Gaining a casino licence is very likely to be instrumental in bringing forward one of a number of large schemes and would help create the momentum for bringing other development sites to fruition.

In addition to the construction value of the proposed projects, it is important to note the wider impact of regeneration. Regeneris Consulting have produced an initial estimate of the economic value of BCR's programme to the Bradford economy which takes account of both the significant construction proposed and

the new employment generated by office and retail developments. Regeneris found that:

- The £1.8bn programme and the other smaller projects are estimated to collectively lead to the creation of the equivalent of between 12,000 and 17,000 permanent jobs in Bradford (largely in the city centre). This is equivalent to a 6% to 8% increase in the employment base of the whole of the local authority area.

It is important to recognise that the casino application is considered to be a significant part of the development offer that Bradford needs to make to lever in the significant levels of private sector development that will be needed to affect the ambitious masterplan for the city and will be an integral part of the city regeneration.

## **Willingness to Licence**

Bradford Council is fully supportive of the bid for a large casino licence and the subsequent development of a large casino in the District. A meeting of the Housing & Regeneration Executive Committee held on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 2006 recommended:

- (1) That the Regeneration and Housing Director is requested to submit a detailed and evidenced expression of interest in having a large casino located in the District to the Casino Advisory Panel**
- (2) That, having regard to the fact that expressions of interest only are required at this stage and the deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006 for the submission of expressions of interest, this matter be treated as urgent within the meaning of paragraph 6.7.4 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.**

The Council's intention to make a submission for a casino licence has been reported widely in the local press and to date we have not received any correspondence objecting to the submission.

## Probability of Implementation

Invest in Bradford, the Districts investment agency, has already been contacted by developers who have expressed in interest in developing a casino as part of mixed use schemes and there are a number of sites in the city centre already identified through the City Centre Masterplan and Planning Development Frameworks where such developments could occur.

The City Centre Masterplan has generated an unprecedented level of developer interest and there are number of schemes are in development, the most significant of which are list below.

### **Broadway Retail Scheme, Phase One** (*£300m development*)

The construction of 585,000 sq ft of retail space, 200 apartments and 40,000 sq ft of offices is currently being undertaken and is expected be completed 2008-09. The scheme will provide the high street shopping provision needed to begin to tackle the retail spend leakage currently experienced by the city centre and will be attract more leisure trips to city centre from within and outside the District.

### **Former Yorkshire Water Depot** (*£80m development*)

A proposed redevelopment of Yorkshire Water's former depot site in the city centre and adjacent office buildings as a mixed use residential/office scheme.

The redevelopment of this prominent gateway site will substantially enhance perceptions of the city centre and compliment developments taking place in Little Germany. The scheme will also attract additional residents into the URC area and provide high quality office space close to the city centre.

### **The Odeon** (*£60m development*)

The redevelopment of the former Odeon Cinema site to create a new mixed use office development (together with associated residential, retail and leisure uses). The replacement of the existing vacant/derelict cinema with a new high quality commercial building will help change perceptions of the city centre, provide new high quality office and residential space and reconnect the city centre with the Higher Education precinct.

### **The Channel Urban Village** (*£300m development*)

Redevelopment of former Furniture City Warehouse, Arnold Laver property and surrounding land into new mixed use residential development incorporating retail, leisure uses office space and a new car park. The scheme will also facilitate construction of a new canal basin, which will form the terminus of the re-instated Bradford Canal.

### **Bradford Canal**

Construction of a new canal between the city centre and the Leeds/Liverpool Canal at Shipley which will transform perceptions of the Canal Road corridor, provide jobs for local people and stimulate up to £900m of new investment.

### **World Mile**

The creation of a new cosmopolitan shopping and leisure destination stretching from the Ivegate in the city centre to White Abbey Road in Manningham. Bradford is currently failing to maximise the opportunities associated with its culturally diverse population and its excellent reputation as a location to sample international cuisine. The project also offers the opportunity to more fully integrate Manningham with the city centre.

### **Bradford Interchange** (*£100m development*)

Redevelopment of the Interchange station to provide a new high quality public transport hub, high quality office space and replacement multi storey car park. The current station provides a poor gateway to the city.

## Feasibility Studies

Over the last two years BCR has commissioned a number of technical studies to test the feasibility of the key concepts in the Alsop Masterplan. The studies include:

- **Transport Study;** to consider traffic movement and management aspects of implementing the Masterplan.
- **City Centre Management Study;** looks at the function of the city centre and examines current and future management requirements.
- **City Centre Balanced Housing Market Study;** to develop proposals for a balanced city centre residential market to evolve over the next 20 years.
- **Bradford Canal Study;** looking at the technical aspects of reintroducing the canal from Shipley back into the city centre.

## Planning

In addition to the studies described above, Bradford Metropolitan District Council has commissioned work which will shape Bradford's future planning regime, and therefore help ensure the integrity of the Masterplan as it is implemented. The key elements are:

- **The City Centre Design Guide;** sets out principles and codes of urban design to be followed in Bradford and is being adopted as a supplementary planning document.
- **The Four Neighbourhood Development Frameworks;** translate the visionary Masterplan into a language that private sector developers and investors are able to engage with. These documents will form the basis of Bradford's new city centre local development framework which will replace the current Unitary Development Plan as the city's statutory planning document.

## Marketing

It is accepted that negative perceptions of Bradford have acted as a real barrier to the city's progress on a number of levels. A major part of the strategy to regenerate the city has been to invest in a comprehensive marketing campaign which began in November 2004. Following a gradual building of positive momentum in Bradford, the main marketing campaign based on the theme of "The Birth of a New City" was launched in September 2005 using the imagery set out below. Bradford also had a major presence at the MIPIM conference in Cannes in March 2006 which has yielded a number of positive contacts with potential developers and there an increasing awareness of the market opportunities in Bradford.

The current marketing campaign contract concludes in October 2006. Having reviewed progress to date, the client group is considering extending the campaign city and will work closely with an enhanced Invest in Bradford to increase resources to market the city as investment location and alongside current tourism marketing and City Centre Marketing to attract more visitors to the City Centre.



### Existing Casino Operations

Bradford has two existing casinos in operation. They are:

Operator	Name	Location	Estimated Tables
Gala	Gala Casino	Leisure Exchange	15
A&S Leisure	Napoleon's	Bolton Road	11

Additional provision would have an impact on existing operations but given the regeneration imperative we would wish to be granted a licence and then let the market decide whether there was scope to grow the market in Bradford as well as improving the current offer by introducing a degree of new competition.

### Support

Bradford Council is fully supportive of the bid for a large casino licence. Maud Marshall, Chief Executive of Bradford Centre Regeneration, would also be supportive of a new casino and would wish to see it as part of a larger scheme that would deliver elements of the Alsop Masterplan

Sandy Needham, Chief Executive of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce is also supportive of the submission and the submission is also backed by the Bradford District Economic Development Partnership.

## Regional Context

### Regional Economic Strategy

The updated 2006 - 2015 draft RES submitted to Government notes the progress being made in Bradford District, saying that “exciting plans are transforming the city centre” and that “Bradford now really is bouncing back”.

The 2006 - 2015 draft RES states: “Our vision of Yorkshire and Humber as a great place to live, work and do business is driving us forward”. Six objectives have been set to translate the vision into action, being:

- More Businesses;
- Competitive Businesses;
- Skilled People;
- Good Jobs;
- Transport, Infrastructure and Environment; and
- Stronger, Cities, Towns, and Rural Areas.

The objectives are underpinned by the principles of quality and pride of place, sustainable development, diversity and leadership and ambition. All of these principles are relevant to the 2020 Vision for Bradford District and will be essential to securing the whole scale regeneration of the city by attracting people to live, work, shop and spend leisure time here.

### The Northern Way and Leeds City Region

The RES links to the Northern Way which seeks to close the £33bn productivity gap with the South and establish the North of England as an area of exceptional opportunity with a world class economy and a superb quality of life. Bradford’s role in the Northern Way is as part of the Leeds City Region.

- The vision for the Leeds City Region, articulated in the 2005 Development Programme, is to “Work together differently: to develop an internationally recognised city region; to raise our economic performance; to spread prosperity across the whole of the city region, and to promote a better quality of life for all of those who live and work here”.

Bradford’s role in the city region is to complement Leeds whilst developing its own unique characteristics. In the context of casino development it is recognised that Leeds would be a potential location for a regional casino. Bradford Council recognises that this would compete with casinos in Bradford District but our view is that awarding the District a licence would allow the market to decide the appropriate level of provision within the city region. We have every expectation that were a licence to be made available, developers would apply to develop the new casino.

## **Regional Spatial Strategy**

Bradford's proposal for a new casino licence in accordance with Draft Regional Spatial Strategy – The Yorkshire and Humber Plan.

Policy H2 – Town Centres and Major Facilities states:

*“The role and performance of existing city and town centres will be strengthened”*

The policy states:

*“City and town centres will be the main focus for office, comparison shopping, health, education, casino, leisure, recreation, entertainment, cultural, public services, business services and other uses which generate a high level of people movements. These uses should not be located outside of these centres if they would undermine the delivery of the Plan’s Core Approach (YH1 – YH8)”*

Specific reference is also made to the Bradford suitability as location for a large casino in policy H2 Biii which states:

**“Sub-regional centres will be the preferred locations for any large or small casinos”**

Bradford is identified as a sub-regional centre in the plan and as such we expect that the Regional Spatial Strategy would be regarded as supportive of our submission for a new large Casino Licence



## Community Benefits

In terms of capturing community benefit, there a number of benefits we would see occurring in addition to the employment and regeneration impacts already discussed.

The Council view is that a new licence would be subject to competition from developers and potential operators and we would expect this to generate a financial benefit to council through section 106 agreements and an annual licence fee that would be used to help fund community benefits through improved city centre management resources, physical improvements to the environment, provision of social housing and increased provision for community safety to mitigate any adverse impacts if they occur.

It also possible that with respect to large scale developments such as the re-instatement of the Bradford Canal that planning gain could be used to help bring private sector investment to fund elements of the Canal programme.

## Unique Characteristics

Bradford has been the **sleeping giant** of the Yorkshire and Humber economy. It has faced considerable economic and social challenges in the past, yet the economy has been quietly transforming itself. Recent years have seen significant change:

- The proportion of the population in work has risen dramatically: another 7000 residents found work between 2002 and 2004, closing the gap on employment rates in the region and the UK.
- The unemployment rate has fallen rapidly, from 8% in 2000 to just 5% in 2004 (from nearly 40% above to less than 10% above the national rate)
- The rate of business start-ups is rising: 1,200 new businesses were registered in 2003, a 13% increase – faster growth than regionally (12%) or nationally (8%). At 6% the proportion of our households thinking about starting a new business is the highest in the region and nearly double the regional average. Bradford has a long tradition of entrepreneurs from the textile entrepreneurs and industrialists of Titus Salt and Samuel Lister in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to more recently Ken Morrison in retailing and Jonathan Silver in electronics.
- Property prices are responding to the new prosperity: average house prices rose 35% between 2003 and 2005, compared to 31% in the region as a whole. Bradford has been identified as a national property investment hotspot.
- Commercial rents are also catching up: Grade A office rentals rose in Bradford by 39% 2000 to 2004, a rate of growth far outstripping Leeds (4%) and Manchester (20%).

- And business perceptions are changing: 36% of the region's businesses believe Bradford is really "beginning to turn the corner".

There is, however, a cautionary note to sound in that Bradford District has experienced growth in population numbers over recent years. ONS has produced population projections that show continued, but more rapid, growth in population in the District. Looking at these projections to 2011, the District's population of working age is anticipated to grow by around 24,000. Furthermore, the working age population will contain an increasing proportion of younger people.

Such a distinctive demographic shift marks Bradford out from much of the rest of the UK. It presents the District with clear opportunities, in terms of a growing workforce. However, it also presents challenges, in that activity to address worklessness and skills shortages may have a larger target market with which to work.

What is clear is that Bradford is currently poised to benefit from a significant level of regeneration investment and activity that makes it one of the largest city centre regeneration programmes currently being undertaken in the UK. Bradford has great prospects for the future driven by our rapidly-expanding population:

We are the fastest-growing metropolitan area outside London, with a forecast population growth of 8.5% (42,000) 2005 to 2015, well over double the region average rate (3.0%).

The population growth stems from our ethnic mix with its youthful population and high birth rates, coupled more recently with in-migration.

We are forecast to be the fastest-growing economy in the region by some way in terms of GVA, employment and population.

***Knight Frank view***

*"Bradford city centre is poised to capitalise upon the regeneration initiatives currently proposed. There are several schemes in the pipeline which will greatly improve the city's retail and leisure offer and will assist in providing an infrastructure suitable to the city living dweller by providing a vibrant community to which potential purchasers will aspire".*