

Luton

Is it still a "Crap Town"?

In 2004, Luton was voted the
No.1 Crap Town in the UK*

".....it offers a sense of other-worldly,
neglected isolation"

* Crap Towns II Boxtree 2004

Has anything changed in 14 years?

The Local Authority, led by its Leader, Cllr Hazel Simmons, boasts a massive £1.5bn investment programme to facilitate a major transformation of the town.

However this investment has a number of drawbacks that demonstrate that the programme is hardly dramatic - in fact her words are little more than "spin".

The investment is over a 20 year period - hardly dramatic

Over 60% of the investment requires planning permission

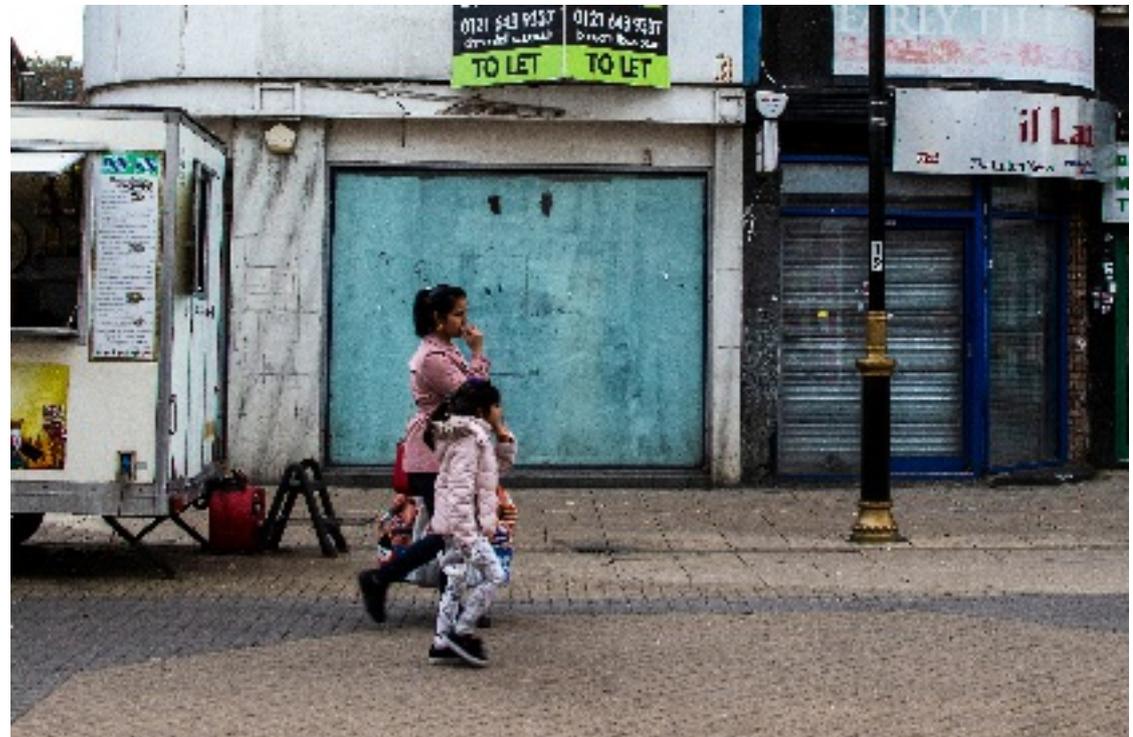
A number of the so-called "Key Developments" are in dispute with each other

The Town Centre

George Street, the main thoroughfare, is hopelessly neglected with more than half the shop premises closed and a once proud cinema boarded up for many years



Six Fast Food vans
ply for trade and
despite the sign
clearly banning the
drinking of alcohol,
the ubiquitous "milk"
or "soft drink" bottle
is always in evidence



What the Local Authority says

Hightown

"Hightown will be transformed into a *vibrant neighbourhood*".

However it does not say when and all the so-called plans are subject to planning permission.. Meanwhile the shops are boarded up and it is a mess





What the Local Authority Says

Marsh Farm

The investment of £25m is said to be the cost of developing a new shopping facility including a new library



WEEKDAYS - PUBLIC LIBRARY
IS CLOSED UNTIL 2.00 PM

APART FROM THURSDAY WHEN
IT OPENS AT 10.00 AM

It is only open 4 hours a day -
hardly worth it - perhaps it is
assumed that people on Marsh
Farm don't read much.

What the Local Authority says

Butterfield

"Butterfield is a high quality, new build business park"

The reality is that it is soulless and half empty and already under new ownership. It is 3 miles from the town with neither eating nor shopping facilities nearby. The Facilities Manager of the University of Bedfordshire told me that no one wanted to work there, so they moved nearer the town.



What the Local Authority says

The Football Stadium

The planned move of this ancient stadium to Power Court is highlighted in the Luton Investment Framework (LIF), published by the Local Authority





Despite the £200m development cost being included in the LIF, Power Court is still awaiting planning permission. Objections from the owners of The Mall as well as luke warm support from the Local Authority allows this blot on the landscape to continue

What the Local Authority says

The Mall

A planned £200m investment (subject to planning permission) in this tired shopping complex is (again) included in the LIF but ongoing objections by its owners, Capital and Regional, to Power Court has evolved into a stalemate.

Meanwhile the signs of neglect are
obvious



What the Local Authority says

Manor Road Park

This is the official image of the re-opening of the park after its regeneration as printed in the Authority's newsletter.

The official statement reads - "Local residents flocked to Manor Road....."





This is the reality

There is little doubt that Luton has problems.

Its airport was voted as the UK's worst for passenger experience for the third year in a row despite the huge investment that the local authority ploughs into it - at the expense of other priorities

Its reputation as Jihadi hotbed is well documented and a worrying embarrassment

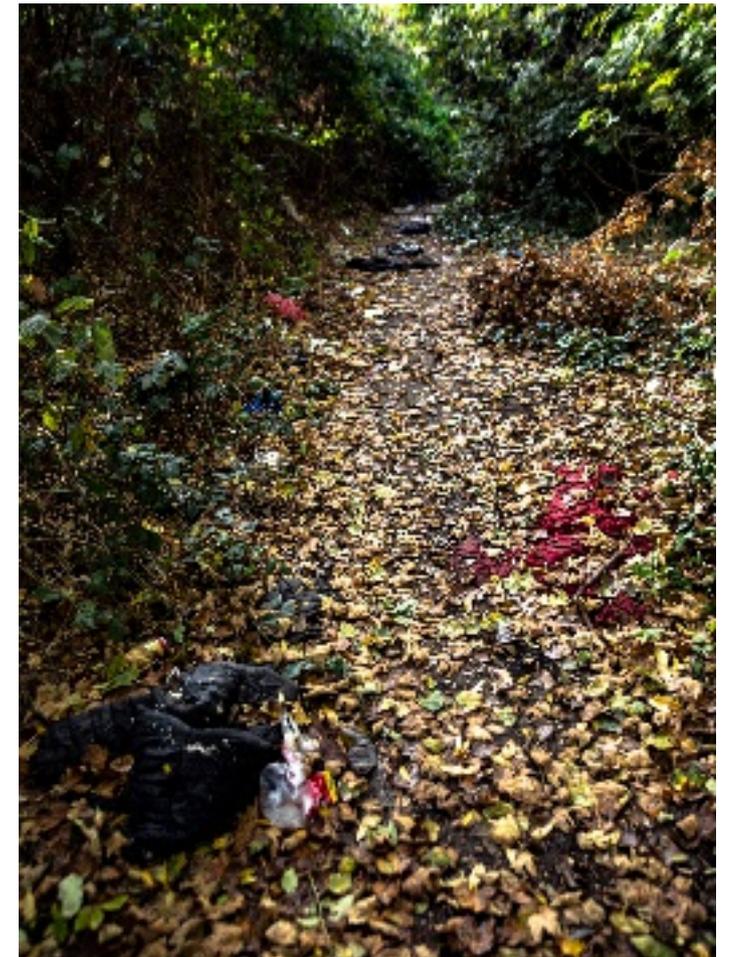
Its motor industry is in terminal decline

The current regeneration plans seem more "spin" than reality and in fact are like "The King's New Clothes"



This public convenience has been boarded up for over 40 years

This public footpath, close to the town centre sums up the issues of "spin" versus reality



References

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