

Prestwich Regeneration Masterplan Consultation Response



Walk Ride Prestwich & Whitefield, March 2023

Background

In January 2023 Bury Council and Muse began consulting local people and organisations including WalkRide Prestwich and Whitefield (WRPW) on a masterplan to redevelop the Longfield Centre. This document is WRPW’s response to the published proposals and consultation meetings and workshops.

WRPW is a campaigning group promoting improvements in active travel and is a subgroup of [WalkRide Greater Manchester](#). Active travel – walking, cycling, wheeling, scooting etc. – matters because it offers substantial benefits including:

- reducing pollution
- reducing vehicle congestion
- enhancing public health
- reducing the need for parking
- zero-emission transport
- safer, more pleasant streets and places
- more affordable & equitable transport options for all residents

– all of which must form an essential core of the Prestwich regeneration project.

Our response focuses primarily on transport issues, namely accessibility for all, walking, cycling, wheeling, interchange with public transport, deliveries, private car parking, along with the journeys to and from the Longfield and the potential for interventions on the local road network. We have limited our comments on site layout, buildings and business to those relevant to the transport aspects.

The report is organised in five sections:

1. Vision of WalkRide Prestwich and Whitefield
2. Local and national policy considerations
3. The Longfield development
4. Routes to and from the development
5. Conclusion

1. Vision of Walk Ride Prestwich & Whitefield

WRPW is pleased to see that amongst the ambitions set out in the “Your Prestwich” brochure, Bury Council and Muse have said they want “A people first approach that promotes more active and outdoor lifestyles, through new public spaces with walking and cycling routes” and “Strengthening Prestwich’s green transport infrastructure to be safe, accessible and well connected”. We cannot stress how important it is for these well intentioned words to be made a reality in the development. This is a golden opportunity to pacify the streets and transform how people think about travel and actually get around Prestwich – AND IT SHOULD NOT BE SQUANDERED!

Our vision for the regenerated Prestwich Village may be summarised as follows:

1.1 General principles

The redeveloped scheme should be couched in the broader transport context of a 15-minute neighbourhood (which concept needs to be defended and reclaimed from trolls and conspiracy theorists)! Wherever possible, the private car should be the last resort, not the default, for Prestwich residents making local journeys into and around Prestwich (naturally taking account of specific mobility needs).

It is essential to consider Prestwich in 2040–2060, and the requirements of the next generation(s), not just the immediate result of the scheme later this decade.

All walking and cycling infrastructure should be implemented to LTN 1/20 and TfGM Active Travel Guidance.

1.2 Sense of arrival: sustainable transport hub

We agree with the developers’ proposal to create a “sense of arrival” outside the Metrolink station. However, we believe that this space would be best used to create a “sustainable transport hub” that provides opportunities for onward journeys by sustainable modes including:

- We consider it essential that the [Bee Network cycle hire scheme](#) be rolled out in Prestwich prior to the completion of the regeneration project. This will provide an attractive alternative for many residents’ local journeys, enabling them to conveniently pick up a bike or ebike to make the “last mile” trip from or to their

homes and the village centre – where the transport hub would naturally feature a cycle dock.

- Similarly, e-scooters have proved a popular, low-footprint means of making short car-free trips and the initial e-scooter trial in our neighbouring borough of Salford [has now been extended to 2024](#) and should be considered here, subject to appropriate regulation. As with hire cycles, the use of e-scooters (and similar micromobility solutions) is contingent on protected, dedicated spaces for active travel separated from motor traffic and out of conflict with pedestrians.
- Further services available in the sustainable transport hub may be the existing [Prestwich car-share scheme](#) as well as a taxi pick-up point and safe cycle parking. Possibly also a local electric shuttle bus connecting the Metrolink stations with Simister, Sedgley, Butterstile etc.
- The hub area should be landscaped to provide greenery and nature to the arrival setting.



How the space in front of the Metrolink station could look if designed as a sustainable transport interchange: (image source: <https://www.intelligenttransport.com/transport-articles/120069/mobility-hubs-uk/>)

1.3 Thoroughfares and people-centred spaces

We welcome the Poppythorn Lane Metrolink bridge being identified as a key walking/riding entrance to the development. We would like to see this key access corridor form a dedicated active-travel, traffic-calmed (or indeed traffic-free) route connecting Heaton Park to the Clough and enabling Prestwich residents to travel safely, sustainably and actively into their new village centre.

While we welcome moves to create a more people-focused space on Fairfax Road, careful traffic planning must be undertaken to ensure that volumes and speeds of vehicles using that road to access the proposed multi-storey car park are controlled so as not to exacerbate the risk to pedestrians.

Sadly, existing levels of vehicle traffic already have an adverse impact on pedestrian safety and convenience: GMUTC/TfGM recently advised WRPW that pedestrian wait times at crossings on Bury New Road could not be reduced due to the congestion at the Fairfax Road junction. We therefore propose that all new and existing infrastructure be planned or reviewed so as to prioritise active travel in accordance with the Highway Code's hierarchy of road users (see part 2.1).

1.4 School streets

Full advantage should be taken of the opportunity to create a school street outside St Mary's School. We have previously liaised with the school and discussed the severe issues caused by antisocial parking at drop-off and pick-up time. We are confident that there is both a need and an appetite among the school, the children, many parents and local residents for filtering this road, initially temporarily, to enable safer, less polluted trips to and from the school.

This could additionally be a prelude to full modal filtering of Rectory Lane in due course. Given that the road is already a 20mph road with speed cushions, we understand the developers' intention to "de-engineer" the road to mean to further pacify it, reduce speeds and in time eradicate vehicles using this road as a cut-through.

School streets are a key component of Dame Sarah Storey's renewed vision for the active travel aspect of the Bee Network and funding & expertise is available at GM level. See for instance recent developments in Oldham:

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/safety-schemes-launch-around-schools-26189686>

There is no reason why this option could not be explored even before the redevelopment scheme is commenced.



School street in Hackney, London. Image from: <https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/transit/news/68299/school-streets-reduce-nitrogen-dioxide-by-up-to-23-during-morning-off-says-tfl/>

1.5 Car parking

We believe that Bury Council needs to take a bold approach to car parking as part of a broader mission to enable mode shift to more sustainable forms of local transport.

We welcome the idea that the main car park for private vehicles ought to be sited further away from the central area than more sustainable transport options, meaning that drivers have to walk further to the central zone than bus, bike, micromobility users etc. This is a common approach used in e.g. Scandinavia, where active travel mode share is substantially higher than in the UK.

The number of parking spaces should be no higher than existing provision, preferably lower. There should be no more incentives to drive into Prestwich than currently exist. Indeed, efforts must be undertaken to discourage car journeys wherever possible.

The location of and access to disabled parking spaces needs to be identified. These could and should be closer to the central zone than provision for non-disabled car users.

Fair parking charges should be applied to users of the car park. We believe that any transport subsidy applied by Bury Council to this scheme should benefit sustainable modes and not private motor vehicles. An expert parking study should be commissioned upon which an equitable, future-proof parking strategy can be based.

In any event, long-stay parking charges should be high enough to discourage use of the facility for Park & Ride. Whitefield tram stop, with the same tram fares as Prestwich and a large TfGM-provided P+R car park, should be used instead.

Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology should be deployed for enforcement. Enforcement should also take into account the possibility of antisocial parking by drivers on surrounding streets seeking to evade the charges in the central Prestwich car park.

It should also be possible to repurpose parts of the car park should the mode-shift strategy be successful and vehicle use decline in future years.

2. Local and national policy considerations

2.1 General principles

We call for all transport-related aspects of the scheme and the broader transport strategy to take into account the Highway Code’s hierarchy of road users (rules H1-H3), prioritising active modes and public transport over private vehicles. [Dame Sarah Storey’s refreshed policy priorities](#) should also form a cornerstone of design principles.

Highway Code Hierarchy of Road Users	Design hierarchy	Dame Sarah Storey - Five Priorities
Pedestrians	Wheelchairs / buggies	Infrastructure Delivery
Cyclists, motor cyclists, horse riders	Pedestrians	Home to School Travel
Car and van drivers	Cyclists	Cycle Hire and Access to Cycles
Bus and Lorry drivers	Buses	Integration with Public Transport
	Deliveries	Road Danger Reduction
	Cars / Vans / HGVs	

This image from

<https://etsc.eu/uk-puts-vulnerable-road-users-first-in-new-highway-code/> visually expresses the hierarchy the scheme’s design should take into account:



2.2 Streets for All - TfGM 2040 Strategy

The [Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040](#) sets out the Streets for All Essentials which relate to the challenges and ambitions for Greater Manchester’s streets. These principles must be applied to the Prestwich project. TfGM want to create:

- Green, vibrant streets that are welcoming and safe places to spend time in;
- An attractive and inclusive walking environment;
- A safe and connected cycling experience;
- A reliable, integrated and accessible public transport network;
- A network where goods are delivered on time with minimal impacts on local communities;
- Streets that enable people to drive less;
- A future-proofed street network.

2.2 Commonplace Survey and WRPW Clough Day survey

In 2020 WRPW facilitated a Commonplace survey in conjunction with Bury Council in the context of the #SafeStreetsSaveLives campaign to support social distancing and enable more walking and cycling as we were coming out of lockdown.

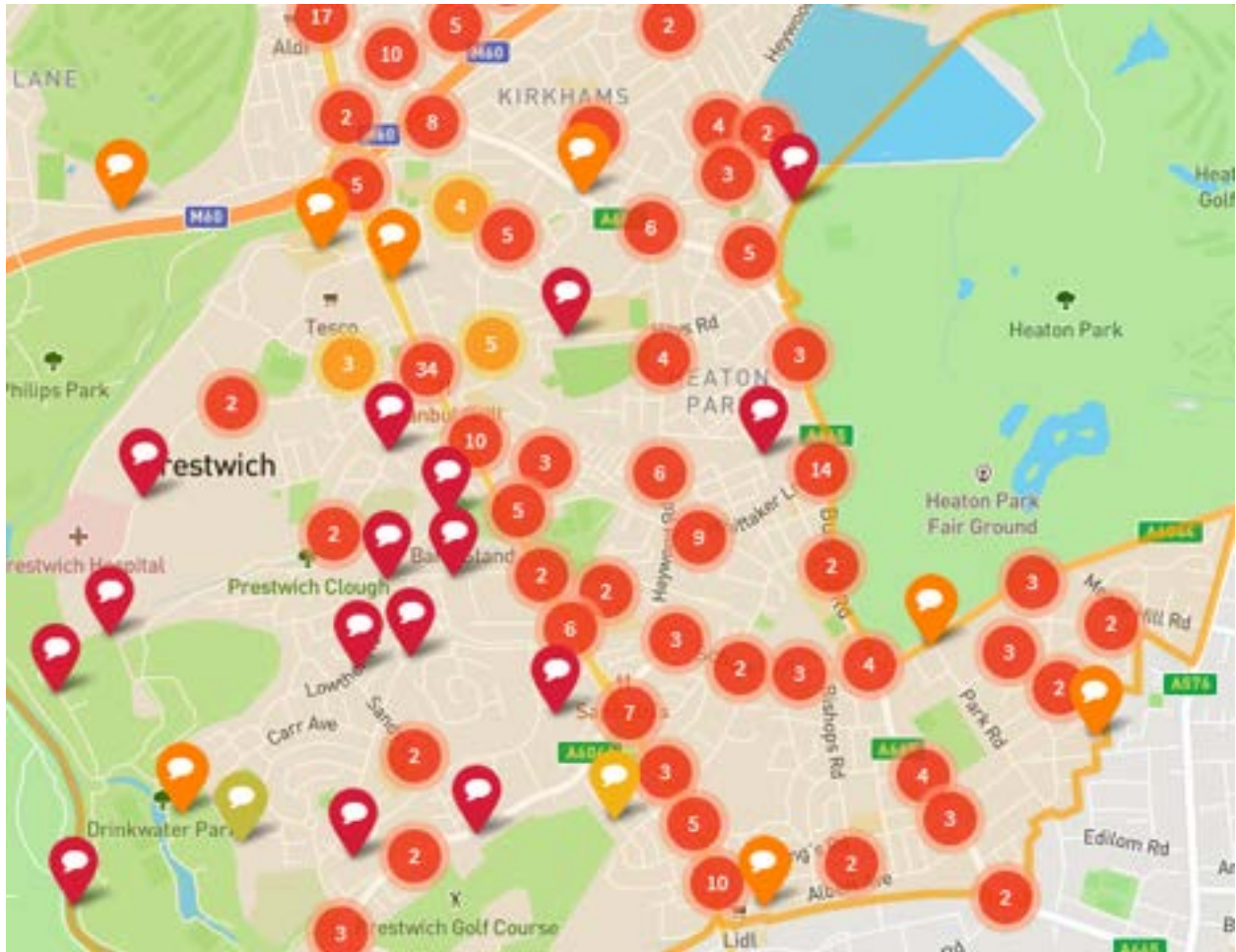
The results provide important background for the Longfield development and should be taken on board.

Issues flagged up in that consultation in the vicinity of the proposed development included:

- Complaints about dangerous rat-running on Rectory Lane
- Excessive waits at pedestrian crossings on Bury New Road (though this is partially improved following intervention from WRPW)
- Need for a cycling thoroughfare through the precinct (where a bike ban is currently in force)
- Desire for safe cycle lanes on Bury New Road.

The full consultation with comments may be viewed at:

<https://safestreetsbury.commonplace.is/>



The Bury Commonplace survey

In a similar vein, WRPW ran a stall at Prestwich Clough Day 2021 with the regeneration in mind and asked residents how they imagined their 15-minute Prestwich to look. On transport issues, the following asks stood out:

- Better cycling infrastructure (protected lanes)
- Improved cycle parking, especially for people who live in smaller houses or flats with no space to store a cycle
- Better pedestrian crossings
- Improve the quality of pavements
- Tackle pavement parking
- More pedestrianised areas.

Our Clough Day responses thus underline once more the appetite for a more sustainable, safer, and more equitable approach to a transport policy for Prestwich.

3. The Longfield Development

To facilitate the prioritisation of sustainable transport modes, the redevelopment of the Longfield area itself needs to take the following into account:

- The utmost priority should be a central development that is pedestrian-friendly, people-centred and traffic-free.
- At the same time, the space should welcome people on cycles: there should be no “cyclists dismount”/“cycling banned” signs as are currently found in central Prestwich, but instead considerate sharing of space should be encouraged as for instance on St. Peter’s Square in Manchester.
- Car parking needs to be managed carefully so as not to encourage more driving, while naturally enabling those with mobility needs to be able to access public services like NHS.
- Transport options need to take into account the full range of potential uses and visitor types: commuters at rush hour, shoppers in the daytime, as well as what could be a vibrant night-time and weekend economy in Prestwich Village.
- Secure cycle parking needs to be provided for those travelling in by bike (no bike parking on the central square, but sufficiently close).
- The Metrolink station should be a sustainable tram/bus/bike/micromobility etc. interchange with drop off and taxi options in line with the integrated Bee Network, which will be in place by this time.
- Limited parking spaces should be provided for new residences. One option: car users in the new dwellings could buy or rent spaces in the proposed new car park as is often the case in newbuild apartment developments.
- The Council should work with businesses and other local stakeholders to set up and operate a cargo bike delivery service such as [Chorlton Bike Deliveries](#) in South Manchester enabling sustainable car-/van-free local deliveries.

4. The routes to and from the Longfield

4.1 General remarks

In the words of the leader of Bury Council, there is no point building an attractive village centre if no one can get to it. For that reason, attention needs to be paid to the routes around the Longfield redevelopment to ensure that its proposed sustainable, people-centred principles radiate outwards and that active travel and public transport are prioritised for the wider Prestwich area.

WRPW welcomes the focus on pedestrian access to the development, but it must be remembered that the Bury New Road “strip” from Aldi to Tesco is important to the economic well being of Prestwich and should not be regarded as in competition with the Longfield. Active travel access should benefit Prestwich Village in its entirety and not merely the new development.

The Bury transport strategy, which we understand is also due to be consulted on in the summer of 2023, must align with the stated principles of this redevelopment project and be sufficiently bold to facilitate mode shift away from private cars and towards more active forms of transport on a scale befitting 21st-century transport needs.

Pacifying the main pedestrian and cycle routes to and from the Longfield should be a key objective in this process. By this we mean routes should be signed, safe and well lit; without footpath obstructions (including parked vehicles); and appealing for cycling.

It is hoped that area traffic modelling is being carried out to understand the traffic demands and changes that will be caused by the development. Of particular concern is the bottleneck of Fairfax Road. Such modelling should consider a network from Scholes Lane to Junction 17, and this should include potential signalisation at the St Mary’s Road / Bury New Road junction to cater for displaced traffic from Rectory Lane, and turning movements to/from Clifton Road.

TfGM’s Bee Network concept should be embraced by the development. For the routes to and from the Longfield this should include:

- Walking routes for the 15-minute catchment area should be clear and well maintained. Double buggy and wheelchair-friendly with unambiguous and clear crossing points (zebras and pelicans).

- Ideally, pavement parking on key routes to the Longfield should be banned and the ban enforced. A minimum pavement width of 2 metres (1.4 metres at restrictive points – <https://beeactive.tfgm.com/walking/anti-social-parking/0>) must be ensured at all times. Bury Council should provide for enforcement of these and similar parking offences.
- Providing high class cycle-parking provision will be of limited value if there are poor quality routes that are perceived to be unsafe by the general public (as is indeed currently the case at Prestwich Metrolink station).
- Bee Bike (and other micromobility) hire will be attractive if a full network of docking stations in the 15-minute cycle catchment area is implemented – it must be ensured that all Prestwich residents have a cycle dock within a short walk of their homes, facilitating mode shift for short journeys to the village centre, transport hubs or other destinations.
- 20mph default speed limit across the whole of Prestwich (as for instance Manchester City Council has recently vowed to introduce: <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/speed-limits-cut-20mph-throughout-26187582>)
- We strongly advocate for engineering features for reducing speed on surrounding roads using chicanes to slow vehicle speeds and wherever possible modal filters to eliminate through traffic. Ideal would be the adoption of the Dutch Woonerf/living streets model, for example on Heys Road on the approach to Prestwich Village (subject of a recent, unsuccessful mini-Holland bid).



Principles of a Dutch “living street”. Image from <https://www.humankind.city/post/woonerf-inclusive-and-livable-dutch-street>

- A number of active travel schemes for Prestwich have been mooted in the past and not progressed by Bury Council. These include local active neighbourhoods, cycle lanes on Bury New Road and similar. WRPW urges Bury Council to reconsider these schemes in the context of the Longfield redevelopment and the coming transport strategy.

4.2 Heaton Park to the Longfield

For the route from Heaton Park to the Longfield (and on to the Clough), a designated traffic-calmed route/quietway should be implemented along Heys Road enabling safe and appealing active travel access to Prestwich Village. Consideration should be given to making the short section outside Heys School one way (westbound) except for cyclists – with eastbound traffic routed on to Poppythorn/ Nursery/ Glebelands (cf. Bury’s mini-Holland application). Reducing traffic to one lane on this section of Heys Road would create space for e.g. a Woonerf street with dedicated parking bays forming chicanes in contrast to the current chaotic situation of pavement-parked vehicles.

4.3 Bury New Road

Every single consultation on active travel in Bury ever conducted has highlighted the urgent need for protected cycling/micromobility space on this key route. Indeed, plans for protected lanes were drawn up during the pandemic but ultimately not implemented, and these should be revisited in the context of this scheme. Even if there are negotiations to be had about continuing the lanes over the border with Salford, implementing safe lanes between Prestwich Village and Sedgley would open up the option of active/sustainable modes for a significant number of journeys between those key parts of Prestwich.

In addition to enhancing the safety of cycle provision, the following should also be considered:

- Implement turning assistance (e.g. Toucans with cycle detection for turning movement and ease of cycling access to cycle parking)
- Refurbish and sign shared space lanes near Tesco and approaching M60 J17.
- Remove cycle ban on paths across junction 17
- Ensure that pedestrian/cycle wait times at crossings are quick/compliant with the relevant standard for pedestrian priority.



Bury New Road as it is (left) and as it could be with safe cycle/active travel lanes (right) courtesy of [@InfraCGI](#) on Twitter

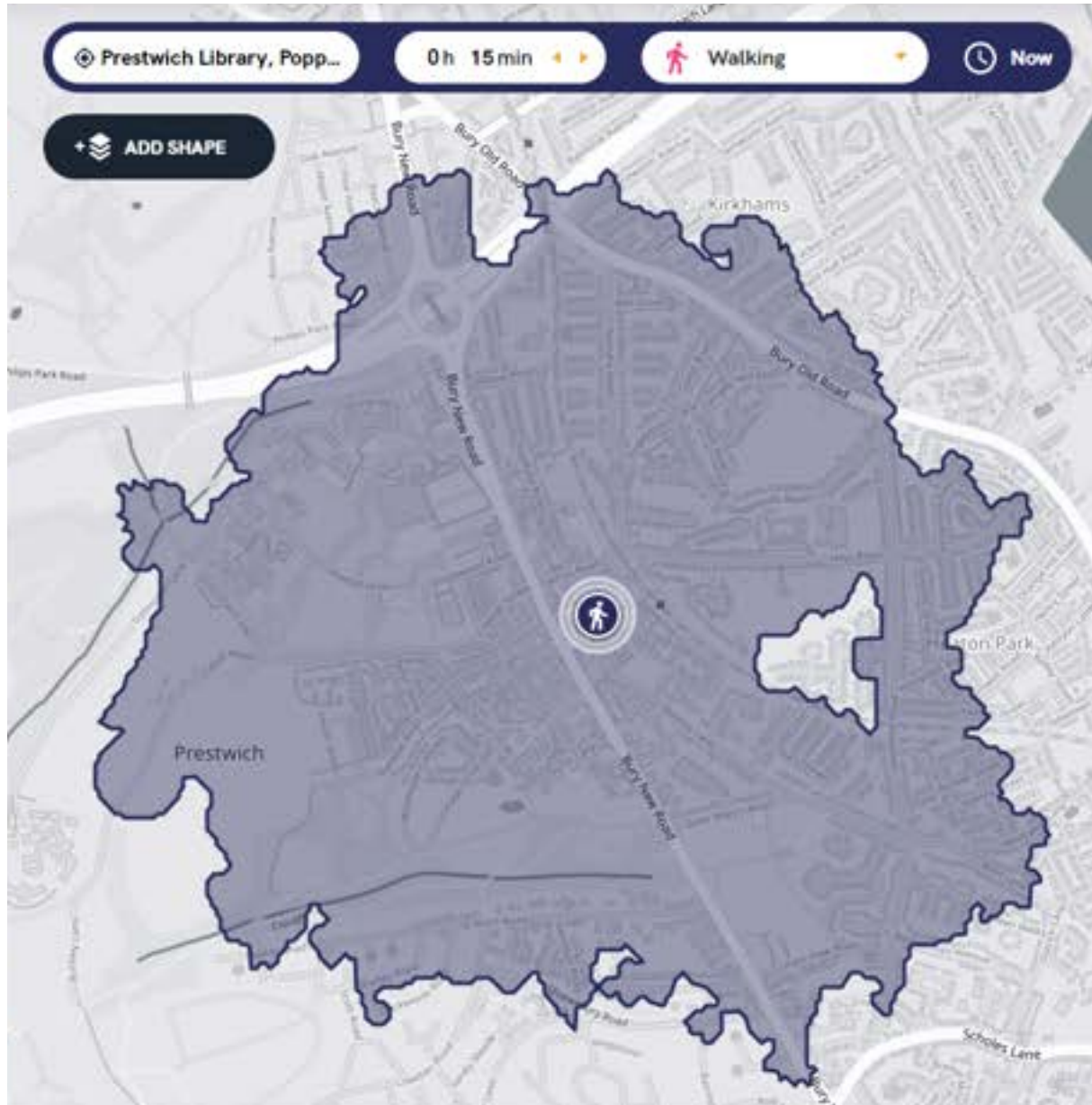
4.4 Broader programme of quietways

Additional quietways should be implemented as part of a sustainable transport strategy, for example on Highfield Road – Longfield – Rectory Lane to create safe environments for active travel. These should be considered as part of a network plan under the upcoming transport strategy.

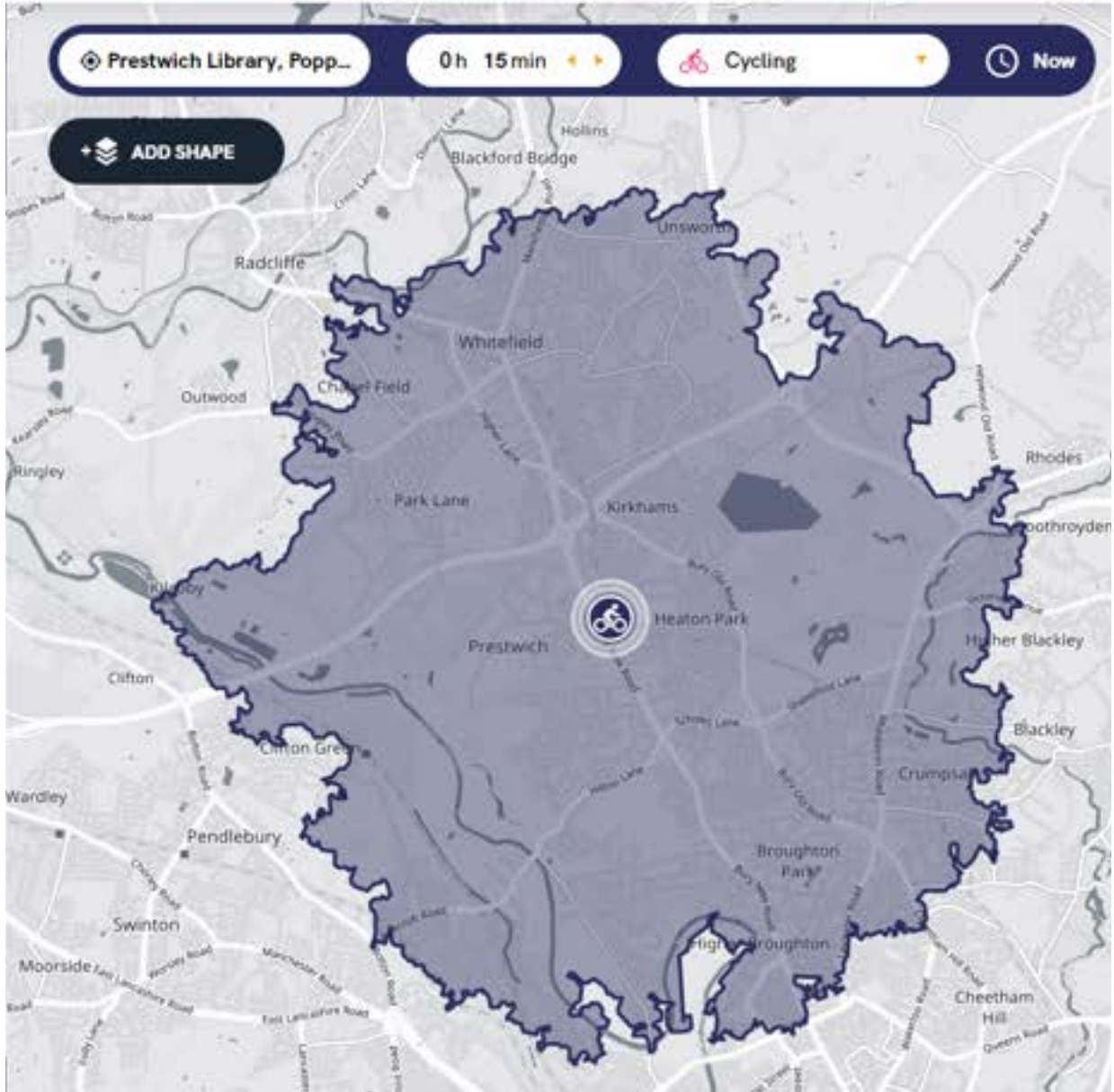
4.5 15-minute catchment areas

Below are two 15-minute plots, one for each of a 15-minute walking and cycling journey to the Longfield. The plots show very clearly how much of Prestwich's population lives within a 15-minute active journey of the village centre. The catchment area covered by the cycle plot is particularly extensive, highlighting how important safe routes to and safe cycle storage at the new development will be.

It was encouraging to see similar ideas in the development material presented and we strongly support the regeneration project being unashamedly developed in accordance with the 15-minute neighbourhood principle.



15-minute walking catchment area, created with the TravelTimeAPI (<https://app.traveltime.com/>)



15-minute cycling catchment area, created with the TravelTimeAPI (<https://app.traveltime.com/>)

5. Conclusion

WRPW welcomes the vision and ambition of the scheme. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a village centre – and broader area – that is fit for the next decades and the opportunities and challenges they will bring. This demands bold choices, political courage and transparent communication of the objectives of the scheme and the requirements of future generations. We need to accommodate a changing world that will be simultaneously increasingly digitally connected yet also exposed to the risks of climate change. We see transport patterns changing as increasing numbers of people work from home or via a hybrid model. We see transport modes changing as the electrification of bicycles, tricycles, scooters, mobility aids etc. open up the opportunities to travel actively and/or with a low footprint to almost all demographics. Conversely, decades of procrastination have led to an unhealthy over-reliance on the private car: gridlock, poor air quality, dangerous and unpleasant vehicle-dominated streets, vast (often subsidised) tracts of land required for the parking of vehicles during the long periods of their disuse. The case for active travel is a straightforward and a strong one: we either do nothing and watch the volume of cars on the roads steadily rise, or we take action and create better, healthier, calmer, more efficient spaces in our local streets and centres. What's stopping us?

The options we have highlighted in this response are neither new nor radical: a network of high-quality protected cycle lanes is emerging across Manchester, Salford and Trafford. The Bee Bike cycle hire scheme operates in those areas, too. E-scooters are commonly seen in Salford. Safe, attractive pedestrianised areas are relished in central Bury. Quiet, filtered streets are emerging across GM and the UK more broadly. While there has been caution in Bury with the implementation of Active Neighbourhoods to date, it is to be hoped that deploying such measures within a broader vision of a Prestwich for people would yield more positive results. Everything we have mentioned here exists somewhere very close to us. Transposing them on to Prestwich in the context of a forward-looking regeneration project ought to be a matter of course.

At the same time, to our knowledge a sustainable transport hub as we are proposing that draws together multiple sustainable transport modes would be unique in Greater Manchester and a true jewel in Prestwich's regenerated crown. This is a unique opportunity to create a Prestwich that we want to enjoy for years to come, that works for and appeals to future generations and that avoids the mistakes of the past. We know what needs to be done to achieve that, so please let's get it right.

WalkRide Prestwich and Whitefield, March 2023