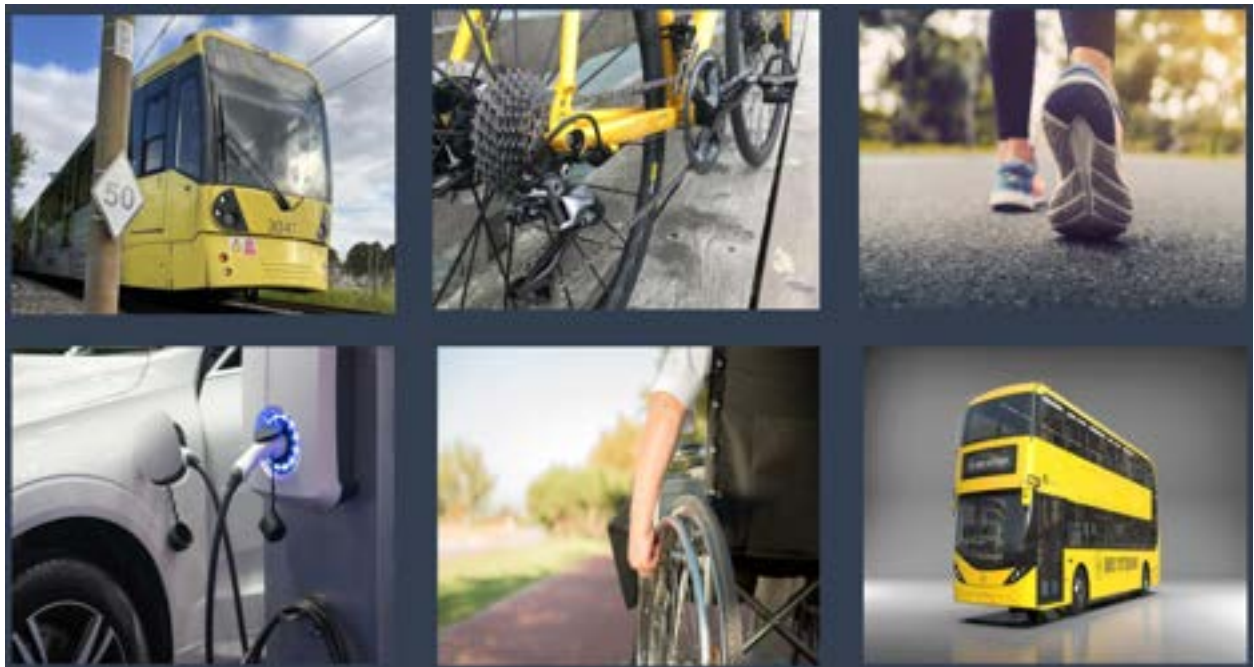


Bury Transport Strategy WalkRide Prestwich & Whitefield Consultation Response



Walk Ride Prestwich & Whitefield, June 2023

Background

In the spring of 2023 Bury Council began consulting on its Draft Bury Local Transport Strategy 2040 with the aim of defining a transport strategy fit for the coming decades. This document is the response by WalkRide Prestwich and Whitefield (WRPW) to the published proposals.

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 Bury Draft Transport Strategy.

Our report is organised into the following sections:

1. Conceptual approach
2. Vision of WalkRide Prestwich and Whitefield
3. Local and national policy considerations
4. Interface with public transport
5. Interface with highways
6. Prestwich & Whitefield
7. Conclusion

1. Conceptual approach

WRPW is heartened to see the inclusion of active travel (generally referred to in the consultation documents as “walking, wheeling and cycling”) as a central policy area in this consultation. We further welcome the investment priorities as set out in the consultation documentation.

- To create a Borough-wide active travel network
- Active travel routes to, from and within new development sites
- Secure cycle parking
- Better access to bikes
- Safer Routes to School schemes
- Connecting Blue and Green Infrastructure Networks¹

At the same time, we would urge the Council to be more confident in the language used to state its ambitions around active travel: while the documentation states a desire to “encourage” (and sometimes also more accurately “enable”) journeys by active travel, we would like to see a more courageous vision, shared by WalkRide and other active-travel advocates, whereby walking, cycling and wheeling are the natural, default choice for local journeys.

Conversely, it is important for the Council to be truthful about the pressing need to reduce car use, car-dependency and car-dominance: as far as we can establish, there is only one explicit reference to this aspiration, buried deep in the the documentation: “This Local Transport Strategy focuses on reducing car use and enabling a switch to walking, cycling and public transport as the most effective ways to achieve air quality improvement.”² Without open, honest and transparent communication of the urgent necessity to recalibrate the balance of transport modes away from private motoring, we do not see how the optimum potential of the Transport Strategy can be achieved.

¹ Executive Summary: Investment Priorities, p. 4.

² TRANSPORT STRATEGY: HIGHWAYS AND PARKING, p. 22.

2. Vision of Walk Ride Prestwich & Whitefield

Our vision for a Transport Strategy fit for the future may be summarised as follows:

2.1 General principles

Wherever possible, the private car should be the last resort, not the default, for Bury residents making local journeys (naturally taking account of specific mobility needs). Indeed, practically everyone in the Borough of Bury is within a 30-minute cycle ride of the town centre (see Figure 1), a striking illustration of the huge potential for modal shift, subject, of course, to the implementation of a safe environment for car-free travel.



Figure 1: 30-minute walking (orange) and cycling (purple) catchment areas of Bury Town Centre (plotted with <https://app.traveltime.com/>)

It is further essential to consider Bury as it is likely to be in 2040–2060, and the requirements of the next generation(s), not just the immediate impact of the scheme on the current transport status quo.

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

2.2 Creation of a Borough-wide active travel network

We agree with the proposal for the creation of a Borough-wide active travel network. This should enable all residents of Bury, regardless of their age or ability, to choose a form of active travel for as many of their daily journeys as is feasible for them. We welcome the adoption of the GM Beeway network plan for Bury and urge the Council to expedite implementation of this network as a central plank of its transport delivery.

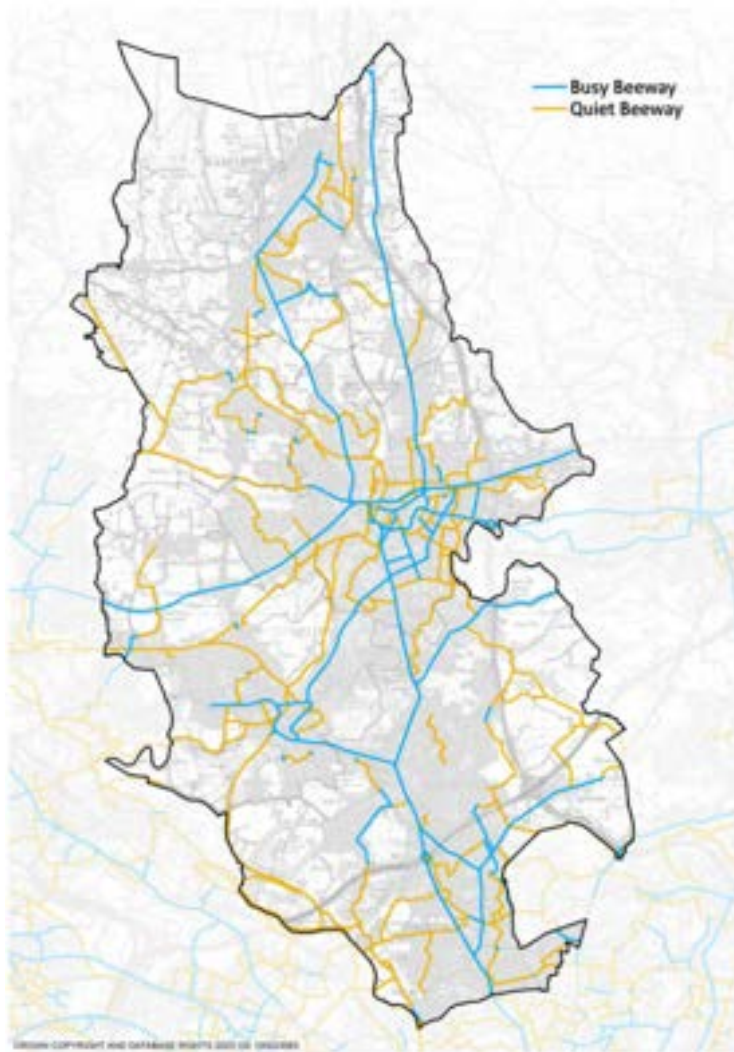


Figure 2: Proposed active travel network for Bury³

³ TRANSPORT STRATEGY: WALKING, WHEELING AND CYCLING p. 4.

2.3 “Busy Beeways”

One aspect of the Council’s ambition that lacks detail in the documentation are journeys that could be made along the “Busy Beeways” as depicted in blue in Figure 2. For instance, the distance between the centres of Prestwich and Whitefield is just two miles, a cycle ride of just around ten minutes. Whitefield is just three miles from Bury town centre. Radcliffe lies between the two, just a few miles from each. Prestwich is just four miles from Victoria Station in Central Manchester. All of these are potentially easily cyclable routes, but lack contiguous and safe infrastructure. The small sections of cycle lane implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic are used, so the demand is demonstrable. However, in general it is only the hardy and experienced rider using them. Safe, protected infrastructure that visibly shows Bury MBC’s commitment to reducing the domination of the car as the prime consideration for highway infrastructure improvements is required along these key arteries. While there are abstract references in the documents to road space reallocation,⁴ WRPW is very disappointed that no specific “big ticket” schemes along such direct, arterial desire lines are set out in detail that would show that Bury means business on bike lanes (such as Salford’s recent developments around Liverpool Road, Trafford Road etc.).

⁴ Cf. e.g. TRANSPORT STRATEGY: WALKING, WHEELING AND CYCLING, p. 5.



Figure 3: Liverpool Road cycleways, Salford

2.4 School streets

WRPW welcomes the focus on school streets in the Draft Consultation Strategy. Full advantage should be taken of the opportunity to create school streets outside schools wherever possible to tackle 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 many schools, children, parents and local residents for filtering such roads to enable safer, less polluted trips to and from schools.

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>.



Figure 4: School street in Hackney, London⁵

2.5 Active promotion of non-car micromobility solutions

Our society is currently experiencing a revolution in micromobility with a range of electrically assisted solutions offering appealing car-free travel options to a broader swathe of the population than ever before.

While the conventional bicycle remains one of the most efficient, sustainable and healthy ways of getting around, the advent of the electrically assisted e-bike enables less confident, less physically able and indeed less athletically inclined people to switch to sustainable two-wheeled transport. Although the consultation documentation makes multiple references to the Council's intention to promote electric cars, electric bikes are entirely neglected. WRPW considers this to be a serious omission and urges the Council to integrate e-bikes into the core of its sustainable transport strategy. E-bike loans should be offered e.g. as part of the Council's bike library programme, or ideally also specific

⁵ Image from:

<https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/transit/news/68299/school-streets-reduce-nitrogen-dioxide-by-up-to-23-during-morning--off-says-tfl/>

e-bike promotion events held in conjunction with e.g. local suppliers and cycle instructors. Indeed, if any Council representatives or officers would like to experience the benefit of the e-bike for themselves, WRPW would happily host an introductory session for them.

We further consider it essential that the [Bee Network cycle hire scheme](#) be rolled out across Bury as part of the strategy. 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 their destination.



Figure 5: Bee Bikes docked in Salford

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 in Bury, 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.

Additionally, the Council should work with businesses and other local stakeholders to set up and operate cargo bike delivery services such as [Chorlton Bike Deliveries](#) in South Manchester enabling sustainable car-/van-free local deliveries.

Also, it would be hugely helpful for signage to be erected spelling out the time to various destinations by walking, cycling or wheeling, for instance: “Prestwich: 3 minutes by bike, 10 minutes on foot” (or with equivalent symbols), embedding in people’s minds the convenience of making short journeys by active travel.

2.6 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 proposal to reduce the amount of car-parking in Bury town centre, which suggests that car use here is stable and not expected to increase. We are, however, critical of the proposal to increase parking in Ramsbottom: “Some areas such as Ramsbottom are facing acute car parking capacity challenges and there is a need to secure investment in additional car parking so as not [to] restrict economic growth and prosperity in the town but at the same time promoting sustainable travel.”⁶ This speaks to a worryingly obsolete attitude to the link between private cars and economic prosperity: traffic is not trade; cars do not spend money, people do.⁷ Improving provision for cars often merely generates further car use (a phenomenon known as “induced demand”⁸) and risks exacerbating Ramsbottom’s already acute congestion and air-quality issues. In a nutshell: if the Transport Strategy’s aim truly is to reduce dependency on cars, then any measure that is likely to have the opposite effect of generating more vehicle traffic, such as increasing car parking, should be avoided. There should be no more incentives to drive within Bury than currently exist. People should be (en-)able(-d) to access their local centres without resorting to the car.

2.7 Electric cars

We must further be careful not to end up with a one-to-one replacement of internal combustion cars with electric ones. While tailpipe emissions from electric cars may be lower than from ICE vehicles, they still require parking, still cause congestion and wear and tear on roads, still pose a serious danger to people outside cars, and still emit harmful particulates into the air we breathe. While e-cars will inevitably play a part in a

⁶ TRANSPORT STRATEGY: HIGHWAYS AND PARKING p. 2.

⁷ For more detail see <https://www.livingstreets.org.uk/media/3890/pedestrian-pound-2018.pdf>

⁸ Defined as “the increment in new vehicle traffic that would not have occurred without the improvement of the network capacity,”

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/762976/latest-evidence-on-induced-travel-demand-an-evidence-review.pdf

future transport mix, it must be stressed in the Transport Strategy that the proportion of private cars within the overall modal share will be substantially reduced compared to current levels.

2.8 Getting the balance right

The Executive Summary sets out a target for “half of all trips to be made by public transport, walking, wheeling, or cycling by 2040.”⁹ However, we cannot locate a further breakdown of this figure within the documentation and propose that the Council set a target at least in line with “GM 2040 transport targets to double and double again the number of trips cycled and increase walking trips by a third”¹⁰ to enable progress on active travel delivery to be properly measured and not subsumed within increases in public transport use.

2.9 Vision Zero

WRPW applauds Bury Council’s support for Greater Manchester’s Vision Zero approach to road casualties.¹¹ A combined approach to highways design that includes “roadway design, speeds, behavio[u]rs, technology, and policies”¹² intersects with multiple aspects of this broader Draft Transport Strategy and the adoption of a zero-casualty roads policy will make a profound contribution to a safe, appealing, equitable and sustainable transport network.

3. Local and national policy considerations

3.1 General principles

We welcome the Transport Strategy’s integration of key policy standards and call for the Council 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.

⁹ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, p. 2.

¹⁰ GMTC Walking and Cycling Update and Forward Look Report, <https://democracy.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/documents/s16106/08%20GMTC%2020210820%20Walking%20and%20Cycling%20Programme%20Update.pdf>

¹¹ SUMMARY DOCUMENT, p. 3.

¹² <https://visionzeronetwork.org/about/what-is-vision-zero/>

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 that any scheme’s design should take into account:



3.2 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 Transport Strategy. 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.

3.3 Commonplace 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 to residents' attitudes to road safety and potential improvements. We were disappointed that no reference to this survey appeared in the consultation documentation and would like to take this opportunity to remind the Council of its existence.

Common issues flagged up included:

- Complaints about dangerous rat-running
- Excessive waits at pedestrian crossings
- Dangerous junctions
- Desire for safe cycle lanes on Bury New Road.

The full consultation with comments may be viewed at:

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

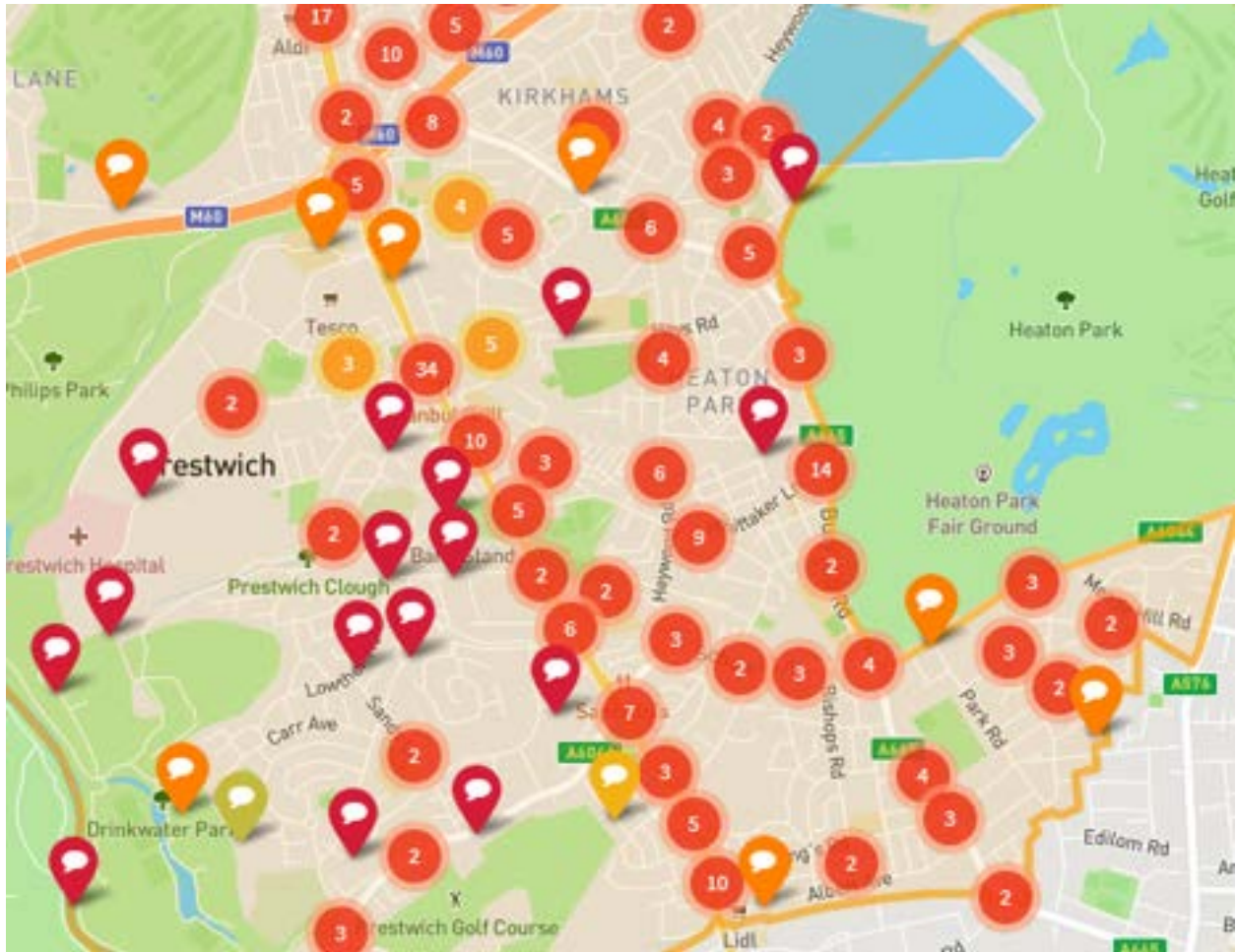


Figure 6: The Bury Commonplace survey

4. Interface with public transport

WRPW welcomes the various mentions of enabling more people to use active travel as a “last-mile” option between public transport and their destination and we broadly agree with the proposals set out in the documentation, such as improved routes to and from public transport stops and more secure cycle parking.

Additionally, we would urge the Council to publicly back the proposed trial of cycles on trams, which we understand is to be launched later in 2023.¹³

5. Interface with highways

5.1 General matters

It is this part of the consultation documentation that gives us most cause for concern. While the rhetoric across much of the documentation concerning active travel strikes the right tone, the proof of the pudding will be how these purported ambitions dovetail with Bury's approach to managing motorised traffic on its roads. Places that are convenient for vehicles are hostile to people; places that seek to be accommodating to people need to restrict movements of vehicles to the greatest possible extent. However, many schemes claiming to prioritise active travel in Bury have historically been implemented with the minimal possible disruption or inconvenience to motorised road users, with the inevitable outcome that vehicles continue to dominate.

A worrying indication of a continuation of this approach appears already in the summary document: "Whilst our strategy aims to reduce the number of journeys made by car, it also seeks to provide more capacity on the highway network".¹⁴ Increasing network capacity is likely to induce greater vehicular demand and consequently to decrease the attractiveness of non-car forms of travel (cf. footnote 8).

The Council's ambition for active travel is spelled out as "Wherever feasible, we will therefore prioritise active travel movements over motorised traffic and we will target road safety improvements on streets with high actual and/or perceived levels of collisions/danger for vulnerable road users."¹⁵ We would therefore like the Council to clarify precisely when it would consider it "feasible" to prioritise active travel and whether and in what circumstances it would be willing to implement measures that in fact reduce vehicle capacity in order to prioritise the movements, and enhance the safety, of those travelling by walking, wheeling or cycling.

Indeed, we have a real concern following the experience of the failed Heaton Park Active Travel Neighbourhood proposals that "wherever feasible" is shorthand for procrastination and will actually continue to mean "put on the too hard to do list" for

¹³ Cf.

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/metrolink-bikes-andy-burnham-error-24761534>

¹⁴ SUMMARY DOCUMENT, p. 3.

¹⁵ TRANSPORT STRATEGY: WALKING, WHEELING AND CYCLING, p.5.

Bury MBC. We hope sincerely that these fears are unfounded and that a more robust attitude to the feasibility of active travel interventions comes to be adopted with the new Transport Strategy.

5.2 Pavement parking

A further acute issue on which we would like to see considerably more focus is pavement parking. Pavement parking is the very epitome of anti-social driving: in order to keep the carriageway clear for other vehicle users and to protect one's own vehicle, many drivers encroach into pedestrian areas with their vehicles. In many parts of Bury, it is not uncommon for pedestrians to be forced to walk in the road due to cars parked on the pavement, which is particularly onerous for e.g. parents with pushchairs, wheelchair users and visually impaired people. While again there is just one buried reference to this topic,¹⁶ we would like to see much more concerted action and enforcement around such disruptive behaviour.

5.3 Active neighbourhoods

We welcome the proposals for the Fishpool and Pimhole Active Travel Scheme with its “controlled crossings, cycle facilities, road closures, traffic calming and one-ways”¹⁷ and advocate for similar active neighbourhoods/15-minute catchment areas to be rolled out across the Borough. At the same time, a number of active travel schemes for Bury have been mooted in the past and not progressed by Bury Council, including local active neighbourhoods, cycle lanes on Bury New Road, cycle lanes on Stand Lane and similar. WRPW urges Bury Council to reconsider such schemes in the context of the Transport Strategy.

5.4 Speed limits

We are disappointed by the almost complete absence of consideration of speed limits in the consultation documentation. Although mention is made of a few isolated schemes where 20mph limits have been introduced, there is no discussion whatsoever of a broader review of speed limits across the Borough. This is in stark contrast, for example, to current proposals by the Welsh Government to introduce a default 20mph speed limit on “restricted roads [...] in residential and built-up areas where there are lots of people.”¹⁸ Closer to home, Manchester City Council has also been looking into default

¹⁶ “Many areas are also blighted by having vehicles parked on pavements, which restricts footway space for people walking”, LOCAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES, p. 10.

¹⁷ TRANSPORT STRATEGY: WALKING, WHEELING AND CYCLING, p. 8.

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.wales/introducing-default-20mph-speed-limits>

20mph limits.¹⁹ We would therefore urge Bury MBC to consider the broader introduction of 20mph speed limits as part of its road danger reduction (Vision Zero) measures as well as its promotion and enabling of greater participation in active travel.

As an aside, WRPW considers the claimed road safety achievement of “Hollins Lane, pedestrian refuges”²⁰ to be only partially beneficial to active travellers because such refuges narrow the carriageway and create pinch/conflict points between drivers and cycle users. As far as possible, these should be avoided and proper pedestrian crossings implemented instead. Cycle users and pedestrians should not be pitted against one another in this manner.

6. Prestwich & Whitefield

Unfortunately, the detailed treatment of the various townships speaks to a certain lack of ambition, certainly in the past but seemingly also in the present, when it comes to active travel in WRPW’s core areas.

6.1 A56 as a key cycle route

The glaring omission in the Draft Transport Strategy is the consideration of protected cycling infrastructure on the A56 between (in Bury’s control) the Salford border and Bury town centre. While the new cycle lanes outside Bury Town Hall are a tentative start, with a few metres of kerb-protected lanes on the very northern tip of this essential artery, the lack of any discussion of these being continued is concerning. Every single consultation on active travel in Bury ever conducted has highlighted the urgent need for protected cycling/micromobility space on this key route. In fact, plans for protected lanes were drawn up during the pandemic but ultimately not implemented, and these should be revisited in the context of this Draft Transport Strategy. Even if there are negotiations to be had about continuing the lanes over the border with Salford, implementing safe lanes between, say, 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, and should ultimately be extended all the way to the centre of Bury. Additionally, the recently redesigned junction of Bury New Road/King St./George St. in Sedgley Park needs to be urgently reviewed to make it safe for cycling. The latest iteration of this junction is a powerful testament to the fact that optimising spaces for

¹⁹

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/speed-limits-cut-20mph-throughout-26187582>

²⁰ TRANSPORT STRATEGY: HIGHWAYS AND PARKING, p. 15.

cars makes them hostile to people, deterring countless potential cycle journeys along this important artery.



Figure 7: Bury New Road as it is (left) and as it could be with safe cycle/active travel lanes (right) courtesy of [@InfraCGI](#) on Twitter

6.2 Sample quietway for Prestwich: Heaton Park to the Longfield

We have drawn up plans for a sample quietway for the route from Heaton Park to the Longfield (and on to the Clough) in Prestwich whereby 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”-style traffic-calmed street with dedicated parking bays forming chicanes in contrast to the current chaotic situation of pavement-parked vehicles.

6.3 Reducing severance between Prestwich & Whitefield

As neighbouring townships, travelling actively between Prestwich and Whitefield should be a matter of course. However, the reality is starkly different: points of severance over the couple of miles between the two places include the heavily trafficked A56, the M60 motorway and the horrific five-lane junction at Besses, which deter all but the bravest rider. While it is heartening that the latter junction has been flagged up in the

documentation,²¹ a network approach needs to be taken to enable smooth access between the two centres: protected cycle lanes on the full length of the main road, better navigation over the motorway, complete redesign of the Besses intersection.

WRPW approves of the proposals for the walking and cycling route to Parrenthorn and urges the Council to implement this before the next school year starts.

7. Conclusion

WRPW broadly welcomes the vision and ambition of the Draft Transport Strategy in respect of active travel. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a sustainable, people-focused transport network across the Borough of Bury 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 a sustainable transport policy 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. opens 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 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. The choice is ours.

The options we have highlighted in this response are neither new nor radical: a network of high-quality protected cycle lanes is emerging across e.g. 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 transport vision will yield more positive results. Everything we have mentioned here exists somewhere

²¹ TRANSPORT STRATEGY: HIGHWAYS AND PARKING, p. 6.

very close to us. Transposing them on to Bury in the context of a future-proof Transport Strategy ought to be a matter of course.

The Draft Transport Strategy contains many excellent, forward-looking ideas: continuous footways, school streets, reallocation of road space, filtered neighbourhoods, protected cycle lanes. At the same time, it appears to want to achieve such a prioritisation of active travel while also catering for ever-growing transport volumes – adding new car parking, increasing the overall capacity of the vehicle network, supporting the Simister Island motorway expansion, which itself is likely to induce significant vehicular demand – and as such risks perpetuating the historical tension between aspirations for active travel and de facto promotion of motor vehicles.

This is a unique opportunity to create a Bury 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 – prioritise people over cars – so please let's get it right.

WalkRide Prestwich and Whitefield, June 2023