Part 2
PROPERTY MARKET
Retail Health

As part of this study a review of the health and performance of Prestwich Town Centre has been undertaken by AGD. This was based on the Drivers Jonas Retail Study completed in September 2007, supported by the GOAD Centre Report and Plan surveyed in March 2007 as well as by street surveys and discussions with local agents and officers of Bury MBC. Since the completion of the first draft of this report Drivers Jonas have produced an update of their Retail Capacity Assessment for Prestwich Town Centre (April 2009) and their findings are reflected in the material in this section.

Diversity of use

The town centre provides a mixed offer of retail, leisure, public services and residential uses. The GOAD Centre Report (March 2007) recorded 105 outlets within the town centre providing 245,700 sq.ft of floorspace. Of this approximately 12% of the units were for convenience shopping, 32% for comparison shopping, 39% for service and leisure and 14% were vacant units. The vacancy figure is likely to have risen since the survey was complete.

The prime retail offer is located around the Longfield Centre which provides a mix of convenience and comparison outlets, financial and retail services and public facilities, including a library and health centre. The GOAD report states that the centre has been strengthened by the completion of the Radius scheme with its mix of residential and commercial uses. However since that time more vacancies have appeared in the Longfield centre, due to uncertainty over the owner’s intentions for the building. To the south of the Longfield Centre secondary retail and commercial uses dominate including restaurants, takeaways, offices and specialist independent outlets.

Retailer representation

The representation of national multiple retailers is often used as an indicator of the relative health and confidence of a centre (even though the people of Prestwich would probably prefer independent retailers). The GOAD Centre Report indicates that the town is under-represented by key multiple retailers relative to the size of centre and catchment with only 27 multiple retailers or 25% of the total number of outlets, below the UK average. Of these national multiples only two are categorised as major retailers and include Superdrug and Marks and Spencer.

The main convenience goods offer within the town centre is provided by Marks and Spencer and Iceland and is supported by a number of independent retailers. The Tesco supermarket located on Valley Park Road to the north of the town centre is the main food store close to the town centre with some 77,000 sq.ft of convenience and comparison goods floorspace.

The comparison goods offer within the town centre comprises of 34 outlets or 32% of the total, lower than the national base average of 45%. Analysis of the total floor space of comparison goods outlets shows that the town centre provides approximately 51,000 sq.ft net floorspace of comparison goods, which accounts for only 21% of the total retail floor space within the town centre, significantly lower than the national average of approximately 50%. In terms of retailer representation the comparison goods offer is dominated by small independent retailers with Carpet Right, Fads and Superdrug representing the only national comparison goods multiple retailers.

The retail offer is supplemented by a strong retail service sector with a total of 44 outlets that account for 40% of total outlets, higher than the national average of 33%. These include a range of banks and financial services, estate agents, restaurants and takeaways, hairdressers and travel agents.

Rents

In terms of rental the town centre achieves Zone A rents in the larger units around the Longfield Centre of around £20 - £25 per sq. ft. Agents for the Radius scheme indicate that rents of around £30 - £35 per sq.ft are currently being achieved. These rents are comparable with those of other town centres of a similar profile locally including Urmston (£30 per sq, ft) and Eccles (£35 per sq. ft.). Larger town centre’s such as Sale town centre with a more comprehensive retail offer is achieving Zone A rents of around £50 per sq. ft.

Vacancy

Empty retail units are often but not necessarily an indicator of poorly performing centres and consequently headline vacancy figures (i.e. number of units) should be used with care. A more useful indicator is often location/distribution, type/nature and concentration of vacant units. Vacant units are often representative of market turnover. At present for example many leading retailers are seeking to move to larger units which creates vacancies.

Vacant units as identified by GOAD in March 2007 were approximately 14% of the total number of outlets with 15 vacant units compared to the national average of 11%. This has almost certainly risen since then. In terms
Views of Prestwich Centre: The Longfield underpass, The Longfield centre precinct and the adjacent pedestrian crossing on
of floorspace, vacant units accounted for approximately 10% of the total floorspace, slightly above the national base average of 9%. Vacancies have fluctuated over the last 13 years. There were lower vacancies before the Tesco opening in 1995 (11%). Immediately after the store opened vacancies rose to 18% in 2001 but the situation has since improved. The majority of vacant units in 2007 were situated in the secondary retail frontages south of the Longfield Centre. Indeed 47% of vacant units were south of Church Lane. The other vacancies were located in the recently completed Radius Scheme. This is because of its slightly off-pitch location and the level of rents that are being charged. In March 2007 there were only 2 vacant units in the Longfield Centre. Since then a number of retailers have vacated units in the Longfield Centre so that there are now 8 vacant units because of uncertainty over the owner’s intentions.

Pedestrian Flows

Analysis of pedestrian flows provides a useful indicator of the level of usage of a centre as well as a measure of its vitality. Consideration of pedestrian counts undertaken by GMTU over a 10 year period show that footfall is at its lowest since 1997 with a 27% decline in weekly footfall since 2001 and 30% Between 1997 and 2005. This indicates that fewer people are visiting the centre as a consequence of increased competition, changing shopping habits, weaker offer and a poor environment. The marked decline in pedestrian flows from 2001 can in part be attributed to the closure of the Sainsbury Supermarket in June 2001 which had been a major anchor for the town centre.

The layout and orientation of the retail offer and location of key retail anchors and car parks has a major influence on pedestrian flows and the overall attractiveness of a shopping centre. The layout of the retail offer is focused in two locations either side of the Bury New Road and within the Longfield Centre.

Bury New Road: The retail offer along the Bury New Road is linear in nature running north south through the town centre with Marks and Spencer the key anchor to the north leading to a small stretch of prime retail frontage close to the Longfield Centre and more peripheral secondary retail and commercial uses to the south. The linear nature of the offer and the high volumes of traffic do not encourage strong pedestrian flows south of the Longfield centre where there is a high percentage of vacant units.

The environmental quality of Bury New Road is weak with poor quality paving and lighting and a mismatch of building and shop frontages exacerbated by heavy traffic flows and standing traffic at peak times.

The Longfield Centre: The Longfield Centre is the only shopping centre within Prestwich, comprising of 20 outlets, a public library and community facilities located off a L-Shaped pedestrian mall with direct access to Bury New Road. The layout and orientation of the centre fails to make the best use of the frontage to the Bury New Road with a limited retail frontage to the high street and poor signage and branding. The main anchor to the centre is Iceland located to the rear of the centre with no visible frontage to Bury New Road.

The mix of uses reflects the design and quality of the retail environment with a high proportion of lower order discount retailers located within small and outdated premises with poor quality public realm and lighting. The recent development of the Radius scheme has partly helped to improve the public realm and footfall to the centre although in reality a major restructuring is required to secure its future over the long term and help contribute to the regeneration of Prestwich town centre as a whole.

Car Parking

The car parking to the town centre consists of two public car parks located to the east of the Bury New Road that serve both users of the town centre and commuters using the Metrolink system as well as long stay parking for those working in the town centre. Additional private car parking is provided for customers of the Marks and Spencer and Carpet Right stores fronting the Bury New Road. No charge is levied for parking in the town centre.

The location of the car parks to the east of the town centre serves to focus pedestrian flows in and around the prime retail pitch concentrated on the Longfield Centre while the lack of any parking to the west of the Bury New Road limits pedestrian flows to the western side of the Bury New Road.

The existing car parks are well used throughout the day with few free spaces available at peak times but this is mainly due to a high proportion of vehicles using the parking facilities for long stay use in order to access the Metrolink station.

Competing Centres

In terms of competition from nearby centre’s the town suffers primarily from leak of spend to Bury Town Centre, Manchester City Centre and the Trafford Centre, encouraged by the excellent road and public transport links. The main local competition is from the Tesco located to the north of the town centre and Whitefield where a new large format Morrison’s supermarket has recently opened.
Shoppers Views

A summary of shoppers' views in the Prestwich area based on a telephone and street shopper survey commissioned by Drivers Jonas (conducted in June 2007) as part of the 2007 Borough-wide Retail Study is provided below.

- The most common mode of travel for undertaking the main food shop is by car (83%) with only 6.6% travelling by bus, 7.2% walking, 2.6% travelling by taxi and 0.5% by home delivery.

- Only 4.5% of respondents combined a shopping trip at the Tesco store with further spending in Prestwich Town Centre.

- The majority of additional (top-up) food shopping trips are also undertaken at the Tesco store (16.5%) with ‘other’ shops accounting for 10% of trips, most of which were at the existing Marks and Spencer food hall.

- Respondents living within the Prestwich area undertake the majority of their comparison goods shopping within other centres with Bury Town Centre, followed by Manchester City Centre the preferred comparison goods shopping destinations.

- When residents were asked what would make them use Prestwich Town Centre more often, a significant proportion of people responded ‘nothing’ (56.8%), however, 18.1% said a better choice/range of shops/facilities and 15.9% would like to see the environment enhanced and cleaned up.

A summary of the shopping patterns of the residents within the Prestwich area, based on a further telephone shopper survey commissioned by Drivers Jonas (conducted in February 2009) as part of the April 2009 Prestwich Town Centre Retail Capacity Assessment is provided below.

- The majority of main food shopping in the Prestwich area continues to be undertaken at the Tesco store on Valley Park Road (44.3%) with some trade now also drawn to the Morrison’s at Stanley Road in Whitefield (15.4%). The Sainsbury’s at Heaton Park and ASDA stores at Radcliffe and Pils worth also continue to draw shoppers from the area with a combined market share of 22.8%.

- Less than 10% of people surveyed indicated that they currently used shops within Prestwich Town Centre for their main food shop including 3.1% shopping at Iceland and 1.5% at Marks and Spencer. This would suggest that the Town Centre performs poorly in terms of attracting convenience goods spending.

- Only 18% of residents within Prestwich conduct their non-food shopping in the area. The main non-food shopping locations for residents in this area continue to be Bury Town Centre and Manchester City Centre. This would suggest that Prestwich also performs poorly in attracting comparison (non-food) goods spending.
Retail Capacity

The April 2009 Drivers Jonas Prestwich Town Centre Retail Capacity Assessment calculates the retail capacity of Prestwich and the scope for additional retail floorspace. They have calculated a Primary Catchment Area (PCA - the area from which Prestwich will draw most of its trade) for Prestwich Town Centre based on the telephone shopper survey undertaken as part of the previous study and then rationalised into postcode areas to allow further survey work to understand the shopping patterns of residents in this area.

The resulting PCA is shown opposite and in 2009 is home to around 54,230 people. Based on the telephone shopper survey it is estimated that the catchment area has a spend, in 2009, of £85.11m on convenience goods of which 71% is spent within the area. For comparison goods the 2009 expenditure is £149.60m of which only 18% is spent in the area.

The telephone shopper survey shows that £29.27m of the £85.11m convenience goods spend from within the PCA is captured by the Tesco store and £13.14m by the Morrison’s in Whitefield. The convenience goods spend in stores within Prestwich Town Centre from within the PCA is £10.08m. The main centres that capture comparison goods spending are Bury Town Centre and Manchester City Centre. The telephone shopper survey indicates that the local stores within Prestwich capture £15.91m in comparison goods spending and the Tesco Store captures £7.94m.

In determining capacity for future retail floorspace in the area, the study looks at two possibilities; first that the total spend within the catchment area rises (both through an increasing population and increasing spend per head) and second that the centre captures an increasing proportion of this spend (i.e. improves on the 71% and 18% market share figures derived from the shopper survey).

The population projections show the population of the primary catchment area increasing to 58,579 by 2021. Taking into account increases in spending per head this would create convenience retail capacity in Prestwich of £2.3m by 2013, rising to £5.4m by 2017 and £9m by 2021 (just a little more than the benchmark turnover of the Marks and Spencer). If we assume that Prestwich increases its share of the PCA spend (which is reasonable if new stores are to be built) these figures rise to £12.8m with a 75% share and £17.5m with an 80% share. Even these most optimistic figures do not show capacity for an additional medium-sized supermarket in the area.

For comparison goods the same assumptions show more capacity. On current market share (18%) there is additional capacity of £5.5m in 2013 growing to £22.2m in 2021. If market share were to grow to 25% the equivalent figures would be £18.2m in 2013 growing to £41.4m in 2021 and at 30% the 2021 figure would grow to £55.1m.

In strict capacity terms, to accommodate all convenience goods Planning Permissions and current Town Centre proposals, the Prestwich area would require a food goods market share of 90%. However, consideration must also be given to the characteristics which Prestwich Town Centre requires in order to meet with Policy objectives to maintain and enhance its overall long term health (termed “Qualitative Considerations”). These point to a need for a larger food store in the Centre than the amount of available expenditure would indicate.

Given economic circumstances, at least for the immediate term, together with the planning policy emphasis upon “Town Centres First”, the Borough Council should arguably approach the issue of how and where need / capacity should be met with care. In this regard planning policy directs that opportunities to accommodate future retail needs and expenditure capacity within Prestwich in line with the Government’s “Sequential Approach”, should be directed towards sites within the current Town Centre as a first option, particularly within the first five years of the period of this document.
Impact of Tesco

One reason that has been suggested for the problems that Prestwich is currently experiencing is the development of the Tesco store on the edge of the town centre. This opened in 1996 and shortly after this, vacancy levels within the Town Centre increased. The Tesco arguably reduced footfall in the Town Centre when it began trading and therefore had a negative impact on the centre. This may have encouraged the Sainsbury’s unit that stood on the site of the Radius scheme to close which took away the main anchor for the Town Centre further reducing the amount of footfall in the Town Centre and creating a cycle of decline that is still evident today.

Tesco have recently put forward proposals to redevelop their store. The current store is 77,000 sq.ft and the proposal is to build a large format Tesco Extra store of between 100,000 sq.ft and 120,000 sq.ft. If this were to go ahead it would be realised through either an extension to the existing store or a new store located on the site of the post office (which would be relocated) bringing the store onto Bury New Road and closer to the Town Centre.

The strategy that should be adopted towards the Tesco Store has been a major issue as part of this study. The proposed expansion of the store would be entirely comparison rather than convenience goods. As the capacity assessment shows, there is very little capacity for additional convenience floorspace, but further comparison capacity is identified which would appear to give scope for a larger Tesco although this capacity could also be accommodated within the centre which would be sequentially preferable. The Drivers Jonas analysis indicates that there would not be sufficient comparison goods capacity for both the Longfield scheme and the enlarged Tesco until much later in the study period (which runs until 2021). Moving the store closer to the centre would be of some benefit in encouraging linked trips.

However, there will not be any linked trips unless there is something to link to. Currently Prestwich Town Centre is in such a weakened state that there are virtually no linked trips from the Tesco Store (except for those to Marks and Spencer). The strategy to regenerate the centre of Prestwich therefore depends on new attractions in the heart of the centre and the proposed supermarket within the Longfield Centre would provide this.

While there is limited additional convenience capacity for such a store, the operator would aim to take part of the Tesco store’s market share which is currently overtrading and also meet an identified qualitative need within the centre. This is exactly what the centre of Prestwich needs to do which is the justification for the store as part of the Longfield scheme which is in a sequentially better location than the existing/possible new Tesco store.

There is an argument that the new Longfield store and the expanded Tesco store could both proceed, because the additional space in the Tesco store would be for comparison goods. The capacity figures show that this may well be the case in the much longer term. However advice from AGDR is that the Longfield Centre scheme would in all likelihood not proceed if the Tesco scheme were to be developed. Since the Longfield scheme is the sequentially preferable project and will be a catalyst for the regeneration of Prestwich Town Centre, the prudent approach in accordance with Drivers Jonas’ advice that floorspace to meet additional capacity should be directed towards the Town Centre, is therefore to do nothing that jeopardises this incentre scheme.
Wilmslow Road, Didsbury Village high street

Sale town centre
The future potential of Prestwich town centre has been benchmarked against Sale and Didsbury town centres. Both these towns are similar to Prestwich in terms of their location, size and catchment populations. They are also much more successful and show what could be achieved. The table below provides a comparison of the main retail indicators identified in the latest GOAD Centre Reports for each town.

**Didsbury Village:** Located on the A36 Wilmslow Road approximately five miles from Manchester City Centre, Didsbury is a diverse centre with national multiple and independent retailers together with a strong leisure and evening offer. 34% of the outlets are national multiple retailers and 46% are service outlets of which 17% are restaurants, cafes and bars. The centre’s vacancy rate is just 3.6%.

Didsbury is a linear centre with no major anchors or off street car parks acting as key arrival points. Parking is mainly on-street with limited off-street parking other than that associated with the recent leisure development to the south of the town centre. Office space is limited to the upper floors above the shops with the main office location, the Towers Business Park, located 1 mile south of the town centre.

The town centre has seen major improvements to the public realm, lighting and parking facilities. The centre caters for local convenience and comparison retail needs and on the whole is performing well with a good mix of shopping, service and leisure uses, few vacant outlets and an attractive and welcoming environment.

**Sale:** Located off the A56 Chester Road approximately 6 miles to the west of Manchester City Centre, Sale maintains a strong convenience and comparison goods offer. National multiple retailers account for 36% of the total outlets including Argos, Boots, Dorothy Perkins, Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury, Tesco, WH Smith, Wilkinson and Vodafone. The service sector includes 41% of outlets of which 15% are restaurants, cafes, bars and fast food take-aways. 9% of units are vacant below the national average of 11%.

The town centre is based on a traditional high street now pedestrianised and is anchored by the Square Shopping Centre, including Tesco, and to the north by Sainsbury Supermarket and a cluster of civic and leisure uses including Sale Town Hall, library and Arts Centre. It is accessible via the busy A56 Chester Road but the retail units on this road have largely been converted to service uses with the main retail centre away from the traffic. Like Prestwich the centre has good public transport and a Metrolink station. Car parking is located in the major supermarket and shopping centre car parks.

The town is a major office destination with a number of large offices around the town and civic uses around the Town Hall. The town has seen substantial investment with the completion of the Waterside mixed use development including office space, library, arts centre, theatre, bars and restaurants and a high-density apartment scheme. The Square Shopping Centre has also seen investment with refurbished retail units and public realm. The town centre is performing well with a good mix of convenience and comparison goods retailers.

The profile of the populations of Didsbury and Sale are slightly more affluent than Prestwich but not by much. Both centres are thriving and the contrast with Prestwich is stark. They demonstrate that the performance of Prestwich is far worse than its catchment population would suggest. Both town centres demonstrate what it is possible to achieve in similar circumstances.

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<th>Total Outlets</th>
<th>Vacant Outlets</th>
<th>Multiple Outlets</th>
<th>Convenience Outlets</th>
<th>Comparison Outlets</th>
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<td>Sq.ft</td>
<td>No (%)</td>
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<td>3,400 (2.3%)</td>
<td>38 (34%)</td>
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Market Overview

**Housing**

Bury has exceeded the RSS requirement of 1,150 new dwellings for new completions by 159% since 1997 with over 2,500 net completions resulting in a major over supply of housing. Restrictions on the further release of land for housing have been imposed other than for affordable housing/special needs housing and to support specified regeneration areas/programmes such as Prestwich Town Centre.

Housing completions in the Prestwich area over the last 5 years total 325 units 75% of which were flats with the Radius scheme, accounting for almost 50% of total completions since 2001. Housing by type in the Prestwich area comprises 50% semi detached, 19% terraced, 19% flats and 12% detached.

House prices have seen large increases across all the postcode areas that cover the Prestwich area with the largest increase and highest prices identified in the M25 postcode areas located to the south of Prestwich Town centre. The average price (in 2006) in these areas of approximatley £180,000 compared with £142,335 for the Borough as a whole.

The Prestwich area maintains some of the highest price to income ratios with average house prices approximatley 4-5 times average incomes. An urban potential study of 2004 identified potential for approximatley 7000 new residential units over a 15 year period with approximately 4000 already delivered, leaving an existing potential of around 3000 new units. The Prestwich area can maintain approximatley 8.0% of the potential supply with identified capacity of approximatley 240 units as measured by existing schemes on site and extant planning approvals. An affordable housing provision of 25% of new properties is required on sites of over 25 or more units.

Prestwich does have pockets of deprived areas. The need to retain a supply of affordable housing remains a key priority for Bury Council. The masterplan for Prestwich Town Centre will need to promote a healthy mix of tenure within the town centre and could promote affordable housing initiatives such as Homebuy or Shared Ownership to ensure that those on lower incomes can still be encouraged to benefit from the regeneration of the Town Centre. Areas such as Shearborne Court will continue to play an important role in meeting the demand for social housing and it is envisaged that future improvement schemes will improve the quality of the housing estate through a programme of internal and external works.

**Commercial**

There is a good demand in Bury for employment premises, both office and industrial, across a number of sizes ranges and for both new and second hand premises, mainly for freehold tenure.

In relation to offices, demand is predominantly for small units in the 185 sq.m to 557 sq m range, mainly for freehold tenure. Although there is a healthy demand for both office and industrial accommodation, there is a shortage of land and premises to accommodate this demand.

Government policy guidance advocating development to take place on previously-developed land is resulting in many of the Borough’s existing employment sites coming under considerable pressure from higher value uses, such as residential and retail.

The Borough has the characteristics to attract a number of identified growth and target sectors including the digital and creative industries, finance and professional services, healthcare, bio-technology and public sector offices.

The Borough and Prestwich itself maintains the conditions to promote the knowledge economy with excellent links, access to a high skilled labour pool, high business formation rates, good educational attainment levels and clusters of knowledge-intensive public sector organisations and specialist textile businesses.

Existing demand for commercial space is limited due to the availability of quality office space although there have been a number of recent planning approvals for change of use from retail to office use along Bury New Road.
The Longfield Suite & Library

This section looks at the current provision of Civic Leisure services in Prestwich and explores the potential future provision of these services within Prestwich.

The Longfield Suite

The Longfield Suite is a Civic Hall built in 1974. It is situated above the retail units of the Longfield Shopping Centre and is adjacent to the Prestwich Library. The two buildings currently operate as separate facilities with a separate access point for both venues. Access is from the ground floor foyer by lift or stairs to the Halls at first floor level via a tunnel linking the Longfield Car Park to the Longfield Shopping area.

The Main Hall can accommodate up to 400 people and has a large stage and dressing rooms. There is a registered war Memorial built from funds raised in memory of the people whom lost their lives fighting in the Second World War. The Memorial Hall holds up to 70 people.

The Longfield is used for a variety of community activities and functions. The main hall is one of the few sprung timber dance floors in the area and the venue is a popular choice for Ballroom Dancing with people coming from all across the region to compete in competitive Ball Room Dancing.

The venue is the most well used venue of all the Civic Suites in the borough with 1,257 bookings made for the period of 01/04/07 to 31/03/08. The total number of people coming through the doors to participate in a charged activity during this period was 96,725. Although this figure is high, the Longfield Suite is running at an occupancy deficit of 58% with only 42% occupancy in the period of 2007-8.

According to a survey of Leisure services done by Bury Metropolitan Borough Council in 2008 the Longfield Suite;

- Has the second highest proportion of respondents aware of it.
- Has the second highest proportion of good/very good ratings of its value for money.
- Has the highest proportion of good/very good ratings of the variety of activities/events held at the venue.
- Has the highest proportion of good/very good ratings of the publicity of the activities/events held at the venue.

Overall, there was widespread support for retaining the functions of the four civic venues in the Borough and for their activities/events to be advertised more in the local community.

In October 2007 Bury Council’s Venue Services Department published a Best Value Review of Civic Halls in Bury. The report highlighted major issues with the running of the Longfield and other Civic Venues in the borough.

Key issues with the Longfield Suite;

- Operational deficit of all the Civic Halls in the borough of around £135,000 a year although Longfield Suite breaks even (although it does not generate sufficient surplus to reinvest in the building)
- Lack of strategic direction in relation to the running and the function of all Civic Suites in the borough
- Charging policy and outstanding debts
- Backlog of maintenance
- Outdated décor
- Poor quality building, particularly the entrance.
- Poor quality food and drink experience
- Low average spend per customer
- High running costs
- Occupancy Levels of 42% in 2008, less than half of its overall capacity.

Of the 4 Civic Suites in the Borough of Bury the Longfield Suite is 64th from the top of the list for improvement works up to the value of £60,000.

Options for the future running of the Longfield Suite

The review team assessed civic halls against 4 future options:

Option 1 - Continue to operate 4 civic halls at current levels of subsidy
Option 2 - Continue to operate 4 civic halls at reduced level of subsidy
Option 3 – Closure of facilities / change of use
Option 4 – Develop partnership approach to service delivery

Other active Leisure Facilities in Prestwich

In September 2005 Strategic Leisure Ltd. wrote a strategy for Bury for the development of sports and leisure facilities within the borough. The report identified the governments agenda to have a healthier nation by providing communities with access to sports and leisure facilities. The report also
highlighted the positive social and health benefits of encouraging active citizens from a young age.
In the report the south of the borough was identified as being in most need of swimming pools and sports halls and that there was also an unmet need for these facilities for use by local schools. There was also an unmet need for other active leisure facilities despite there being a vast amount of open space in the area and there is the need to explore active outdoor leisure facilities. One of the options currently being explored is a ‘Go Ape’ high wire forest adventure course of rope bridges, tarzan swings and zip slides up to 40 feet up in the trees. Other emerging activities which people expressed an interest in during the consultation where dirt bike tracks, skate parks and the potential for roller skating areas in St. Mary’s Park.
There was seen to be satisfactory provision of health and fitness facilities with Total Fitness and Fitness First located in Whitefield and Village Leisure Club and Peak Health and Fitness located in Prestwich. Local people have however expressed desire to have a fitness suite for Prestwich Town Centre for use by businesses and residents. This could have positive benefits when linked to the emerging plans for improved health services for Prestwich. There are a number of potential opportunities in Prestwich to explore health, education and leisure facilities to get the maximum benefit for the community.

**Prestwich Library**
Prestwich Library is situated to the right of the Longfield Suite and has a ground floor entrance off from the Radius Square. The Library is 959.6sq m and takes two floors. There is a Council information and payments counter at ground level and all the books are kept at ground level. On the upper floors there are training rooms from which a variety of adult education courses are run from, computer rooms with free internet access, a Jewish Museum and a Heritage Museum with various displays. There are also a number of offices. The library and Leisure Services have stated a preference for the museum and heritage centre to be on the ground floor to make the facilities more accessible to the public. The Library building is out of date and does not reflect current aspirations of the local community although the venue is popular and well used.

**Conclusions**
The Longfield Suite is a popular community facility within the heart of Prestwich and attracts large numbers of people to the Centre of Prestwich. Although the Longfield Suite caters for various functions and activities for the area the Suite is not officially a Community Centre. The Library is also a well used key facility for the residents of the surrounding area and functions as an important Community hub and cultural centre.

Despite sharing the same site as the library the two facilities are run as two separate facilities and yet are closely related in the functions they provide to the community. It is recognized that the two facilities combined have over 400,000 people coming through their doors each year.

The recent public consultation exercise has shown an overwhelming majority of the community would want to retain the Longfield Suite and the Library in the Centre of Prestwich and value both facilities. There was a strong preference for the option to retain the Longfield Suite and the Library in its current location but for the rest of the Longfield Centre to be demolished or refurbished.

It is recognised by Bury Council that a radical change to the running and provision of the Longfield Suite is needed to be able to continue to provide a civic suite in Prestwich. The type of facilities should be modern and high quality and provide;

- A large hall that is flexible and dividable for multi functions for a wide range of community events
- A separate function room that is adaptable into a health/sports studio and adult learning facility
- A central bar and lounge that services all usable rooms (not just the main hall)
Shared facilities with the library and health centre such as reception, information points, lift, with a sense of arrival
- New toilets and kitchen and development of a modern, attractive cafe for day time use
- Look at re-branding and re-naming of the suite that appeals to all ages
- Partnership with Prestwich Arts College and other schools in the area to develop as an arts and performance facility and to encourage use of the hall.

**Options for Development**
Both the Library and the Longfield both require a more modern, cost effective, sustainable facility which appeals to the aspirations of local people. Hollins Murray are keen to develop the Longfield Centre into a more modern retail complex, and this creates the opportunity to replace parts of the Library and the Longfield to make better use of space and to improve the relationship between people using the Community Facilities, parking facilities, transport nodes and people shopping in the Centre of Prestwich. There is also a proposal to develop a new LIFT Centre and walk in Centre to replace the existing Walk In Centre in Prestwich. With 2 major development opportunities there is huge potential to explore the joint partnership delivery approach with the developer, the PCT, Bury Council's Library and Leisure Services and Civic Suites Department and other community organisations.

1. **Redevelop the Library and Longfield Suite in a different location**
   This option would involve substantial investment and the current feeling is that it would be difficult to replace the existing Longfield Suite and that the replacement facility would not be as large as the existing facility. Most people indicated that community facilities needed to be retained in the current location.

2. **Retain the Longfield Suite in its Current Location and redevelop the Longfield Shopping Centre around the Longfield Suite and Library.**
   The Longfield Suite and Memorial Hall could be kept in the existing location but the space below and around it could be refurbished. A new Entrance Lobby could be provided and shared by a re-provided Library. This could be positioned opposite the new Radius development opposite the retail units. The new Library could be set back to widen the route and to open up a new civic square onto the area around the existing Retreat Fountain. If the PCT decide the develop on the Longfield Car Park site adjacent to the existing Health Centre the three public facilities would create a community hub in the centre of Prestwich surrounded by an improved shopping and leisure environment. There is the potential to explore the shared service management of all three facilities to get the best use of space and the most cost effective solution to the provision of these services in Prestwich.

The vision and development strategy explores these options further and develops a masterplan which pulls together the aspirations for a Community hub knitted into the retail core of Prestwich Town Centre.