Part 4
OPPORTUNITIES
From the baseline analysis and the various consultations that have been undertaken (see separate report) a series of key issues have been identified. The SWOT below outlines the key strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Prestwich.

**Strengths**

- Strong local catchment
- Relatively affluent local population
- Good location/links
- Strong independent retailer offer
- Marks and Spencer anchor store
- Strong local housing market
- Recent new development/investment
- Political/community commitment to improve the town centre
- Attractive park setting
- Free parking facilities
- Growing town centre population

**Weaknesses**

- Poor shopping offer
- Outdated Longfield Shopping Centre with poor quality retail units
- Falling high yield (Zone A) rents
- Few national multiple retailers
- High vacancy rates
- Decline in pedestrian footfall since 2001
- Poor supply of retail space and small poor quality retail units
- Weak comparison goods offer at 21% of total floorspace
- Poor quality environment / heavy traffic
- Limited availability of car parking at peak time
- Problems with crime against persons, vehicles and property
- Weak image

**Opportunities**

- Owner interest in redeveloping the Longfield Shopping Centre
- Proposals for a techno-park behind Tesco
- Proposed congestion charging and TIF bid schemes likely to reduce the amount of traffic on Bury New Road and improve public transport links
- The redevelopment of the Health Centre which could be located in a more prominent position
- The redevelopment of the Tesco store to bring it closer to the centre with a potential S106 contribution to fund improvements
- The relocation of the Post Office in the heart of the centre
- The schools for future proposals for the arts college
- The development of the Croal Irwell Valley Country Park

**Threats**

- The continuation of the current trend of retail decline
- Increased competition from an expanded Tesco which could weaken the centre
- The development of the Longfield Centre as an out-of-town type development
- The loss of the library and Longfield Suite as part of the redevelopment of the centre
- The lack of progress with the Longfield redevelopment leading to further deterioration of the centre
- The continued improvement of neighbouring shopping centres such as Whitefield (with the completion of the Morrisons)
- Proposed congestion charging dissuading people from coming into Prestwich centre from outside the cordon
- Negative perception of the Radius development preventing community support for further redevelopment
Prestwich Hospital
Development of Conference & Training Facilities

Tesco's Development Possible expansion and integration with Town Centre

Prestwich Arts College New Building Required Longer term need for a Secondary School in Prestwich

Health Centre Site - PCT to re-develop Health Centre

Re-development site Possible Park and Ride

Longfield Centre Re-development plans for new retail facility

Possible development for retail

Tulle Court Undergoing Re-development for 36 homes

Croal Valley Regional Facility being explored

Tesco's site for business or residential development
There is currently a significant amount of potential development activity in Prestwich including proposals by the owners of the Longfield Centre, a scheme by Tesco and a scheme by the owners of the FADs Block. These all provide opportunities for the masterplan.

**The Longfield Centre**

The Longfield Centre is the main shopping scheme in Prestwich Town Centre. It was built in the 1970’s as a shopping centre of 27 units together with the Library and Longfield Suite. The scheme is owned freehold by Bury Council and there is a long lease (99 years) dating back to the completion of the scheme. The lease has changed hands a number of times in recent years. It was acquired in 2007 by Hollins Murray.

The new owners submitted a planning application for the redevelopment of the Longfield Centre in March 2008. This application has been publicised in the local press but has not been registered at the time of writing and so is not public. The application scheme involves the demolition of the shops, library and Longfield suite and the development of a medium sized supermarket to the rear of the site, three large retail units and 800 apartments in an 8 storey block. The Health Centre, Library and Longfield Suite are reprovided off site. The scheme includes a substantial underground car park to replace both current surface car parks that would be lost as a result of the development.

The potential for investment in the centre of Prestwich is to be welcomed. The council as freeholder of the site and outright owner of the civic facilities and car park need to be a partner in the development and they will wait for the outcome of this study to determine how to respond to the scheme. A number of meetings have been held with Hollins Murray and their consultants in order to ensure that there priorities are considered within the masterplanning process.

**Tesco’s Expansion**

Tesco have developed initial proposals for the development of a new store of 110-120,000 sq.ft. to replace their current store. The new store is proposed to be located on the frontage of Bury New Road at the corner of Kingswood Road. This would involve the relocation of the post office counter and sorting office.

The proposed store would be on stilts with some parking below the store and there are proposals for a number of smaller retail units on the Bury New Road frontage. The plans also include a footbridge over Bury New Road to create a retail link to the heart of Prestwich.

Tesco also owns a site to the rear of the existing store. In earlier schemes this was proposed as a housing development but in the current proposals it is earmarked as a techno-business park.

The current store has 650 parking spaces within the current layout. The expansion would see this rise to around 900 spaces. Tesco claim that up to 30% of the parking in their town centre stores are used by people who don’t use the store but the Driver Jonas work found no evidence of this in Prestwich. Tesco would however be happy for a proportion of their parking to be used in this way.

**Mountheath Employment Area**

To the south of Prestwich there are plans for the development of the Mountheath employment development area on George Street. This currently includes the Fairways Hotel on the main road frontage with three areas of industrial units and an office block in use as managed work space. Plans are being developed for a number of schemes including a 20,000 sq ft office development, a much larger scheme capable of generating over 1,000 jobs, retail space and a hotel. It is possible that this area could become a major employment site serving Prestwich but further investigation will be necessary to improve access to the site and unlock the site’s development potential.
Smaller Developments

There are a series of other schemes and opportunities at various stages of development in and around Prestwich:

- **Tulle Court/ Abbots Place**: Tulle Court is an ex-local authority housing estate taken over by Manchester Methodist Housing association (MMHA). The site lies between Derby Street and Church Drive. Most of the estate has been demolished and is being developed by Richardson Homes. The development which has been named Abbots Place consists of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties. The smallest block on Tulle Court has been retained and is being refurbished in conjunction with Manchester Methodist Housing Association and will be offered for rent and sale. The development is due for completion in autumn 2008 with prices ranging from £159,950 to £224,950.

- **Land off Poppythorn Lane and Heys Lane**: A planning application was made in February 2008 for the development of 12 residential properties.

- **415-419 Bury New Road**: Cartwright and Cross are currently preparing a planning application for improvements to the existing retail unit on the ground floor, and development of 2 floors of apartments above with a mix of 1 and 2 bed units.

- **421-425 Bury New Road**: Currently being developed with ground floor retail and 6 apartments on 2 upper floors.

- **Land Behind Sherbourne Court**: An application for 5 special needs apartments on land behind Sherbourne Court was recently submitted to Bury Council.

- **HPL car sales site**: An approach has recently been made by agents acting on behalf of a supermarket company whom where keen to explore the development of the site for food retail.

- **440-442 Bury New Road**: This site has been vacant for over 20 years. Due to its prominent location on Bury New Road the strategy will need to address the site and include it in any development proposals.

- **Warwick Street**: There is currently a building on Warwick Street which has been vacant for a number of years and is in a poor state. The site could be developed for possible infill housing or workspace.

- **468-472 Bury New Road**: The site on the corner of Fairfax Street is occupied by Fads, Lloyds TSB and the Village Optician. The current block is relatively new but is unattractive with poor parking and servicing arrangements at the rear which faces the Radius scheme. This site could also provide an opportunity to improve the Fairfax Street junction. The owners have engaged architects and are looking at the possibility of redevelopment for a mixed use scheme on the site of the existing building and the car park to the rear.

- **Fairfax Road car park**: This car park is bound by the Tramline, Our Lady of Grace Church and residential properties. In the Hollins Murray scheme for the Longfield Centre this site is proposed as a location for the new Health Centre.

- **Land off Heys Road**: This land is on the eastern side of the tram line and has been looked at by GMPTE as a possible site for a Park and Ride car park. This site is allocated for this in the UDP.
Health Developments

Prestwich Hospital

Prestwich Hospital is located to the north of Prestwich town centre next to the M60 motorway on the west side of Bury New Road. The hospital is the largest local employer with 1200 staff employed on the site and around 300 social workers based at the hospital that work within the community. Most staff drive to work and the hospital issues 800 parking permits each year.

The hospital is a specialist mental health hospital and in April 2003 became the headquarters of Bolton, Salford and Trafford Mental Health NHS Trust. The Trust manages integrated health and social care service in Bolton, Salford and Trafford and works in partnership with the three local authorities and four Primary Care Trusts and provides a range of specialist and secure mental health services supporting all of Greater Manchester. Prestwich Hospital takes patients from the wider UK when beds are available.

The facility is made up of secure and medium secure units including Adult Forensic Mental Health Services, Young Persons and Substance Misuse Services, specialist drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre, a specialist ward for deaf mentally ill patients, and a school facility for mentally ill young people. There is a Creative Living Centre which is a day facility for patients currently on and off site.

The hospital is undergoing a major investment programme over next 15 years. This will mean the release of blocks near Bury New Road for commercial development with the blocks to the rear of this redeveloped as a training and conference facility. The NHS Trust has also recently submitted plans for the extension of the Elderfield Site. This is a secure unit for mentally ill prisoners at the western side of the hospital. Further proposals include a specialist school facility for deaf patients to be run by Bury Council, an administrative building and a satellite treatment centre.

LIFT Centre

There are proposals to redevelop the health centre to create a modern facility. This is part of a programme of new health centres being developed under the LIFT programme by the Bury, Tameside & Glossop LIFT Company. The Radcliffe health centre has recently been completed under this programme and the Bury scheme is about to start on site. The Prestwich LIFT is planned to open in 2009 and will include office accommodation, GPs surgeries, a pharmacy and health services for the acute trusts.

The PCT have appointed consultants and are keen to agree a site by Autumn 2008. Ideally this will be different to their current site so that the old health centre can continue to operate until the new one is ready. The PCT has indicated that it is willing to explore the inclusion of other services within the building such as a new library, community centre and possibly accommodation for the police, job centre and youth services.

The LIFT Centre requires approximately 4,000m² excluding other services. It needs to have an easily accessible ambulance drop off and space for 2 or 3 further drop-off vehicles such as mini buses or taxis. Disabled parking is also required close to the entrance and staff and visitor parking is required nearby. Ideally the health facilities would be on the ground floor but it would be possible to be on a number of floors. However, the centre works best on large floor plates to allow for fire escape since some patients will not be able to go outside in the event of a fire. The pharmacy would connect to the health centre but would also need a shop frontage so that it can be independently accessed.
Educational facilities

The Children’s Services Department is currently carrying out reviews into the future of both primary and secondary education which will inform long term future planning both in respect of asset management and capital investment. The outcome of these reviews is expected in the early summer. The following priorities have been identified as opportunities which could contribute to the wider regeneration proposals for Prestwich Town Centre.

- **St Mary's Primary School:** This school is located next to the Longfield Centre on Rectory Lane. The current building is aging and in need of investment. There are also issues with the safety of pedestrians walking from the school into the Longfield Centre as the school is located on a sharp bend. If the school site provides an opportunity to link with broader developments in Prestwich, Bury Education Department will consider redeveloping the school.

- **Sedgley Park:** A Children’s Centre is shortly to be developed on this site alongside Sedgley Park Primary School. As with St Mary’s, the school is not likely to be a priority for rebuild but would be refurbished under longer-term plans.

- **Prestwich Arts College:** The school is a specialist performing arts college for pupils aged 11-16. This school was identified in the last strategic review of educational facilities as one of five across the borough that requires a new building. In 2001 OFSTED expressed concern for the lack of investment for such a key school in the area and it is known that the demand for places can not be met in the current building. The Prestwich arts college board of governors have a redevelopment plan for the school on its current site, which would open the school children from the ages 3 to 16 years old. The school is keen to link this with the plans for Prestwich and may be able to provide facilities for local people.

Irwell Valley Regional Park

In April 2006 Locum Consulting where jointly commissioned by Newlands, and the Metropolitan Boroughs of Bolton, Bury and Salford to do a Feasibility Appraisal for the potential development of a Regional Park within the Irwell Valley. The Croal Irwell Regional Park is included in the Greater Manchester Action Plan for 2008 to 2011. A preliminary study identified the northern end of Prestwich Forest Park as a suitable site for a major attraction in the park. Access would be via J17 on the M60 using the Tesco service road with the potential to connect through to Clifton Road. There is also the prospect of accessing Philips Park by the same route avoiding the narrow bridge over the M60.

The council was exploring the development of a new racecourse in the area as an alternative to the proposal by Peel for a course at Worsley. This has been dropped following news that Salford were on the point of granting Peel planning permission.

UK Sports Parks plc has shown interest in the site and is looking for potential clients. The development of a regional sports facility would have potential benefits for Prestwich making it a key destination within the region and this strategy provides the opportunity to develop a joint framework with other key stakeholders in which these proposals can be developed further.

**Prestwich Tennis and Cricket Club**

The Prestwich Tennis Club and Cricket ground is shared by the Prestwich Arts College. It is situated to the rear of housing on Heys Road with access to the site currently via a narrow alleyway of Heys Road. The club is keen to improve access as part of the wider movement strategy for Prestwich by creating a link to the tram station.
Conclusions

The review of the urban environment, health and performance of Prestwich Town Centre highlights the need for major improvements to both the retail and leisure offer and physical environment in the light of competition from the Tesco store and other shopping destinations.

Analysis of the profile of the local catchment and existing retail and leisure offer would suggest good potential for additional national multiple retailers and quality niche independent retailers/leisure uses.

The key to unlocking the potential of the town centre is the quality redevelopment of the outdated and under performing Longfield Centre that builds on the recent Radius scheme to establish a quality shopping, leisure and community destination that meets the needs and aspirations of the local and wider community.

The redevelopment of the Longfield centre should be supported by high quality integrated highways and public realm improvements to the Bury New Road and associated routes to include shop front improvements, formalized on street parking/loading, crossing points, improved paving, lighting, seating and street furniture.

The issue of Tesco expansion should be treated sensitively. The improvement of Bury New Road and redevelopment of the Longfield Centre should be prioritised in order for the retail offer on Bury New Road and within the Longfield Shopping Centre to be re-established. Local businesses will need to be supported through the transition period and a strong business strategy needs to be in place to ensure that they are able to exploit the opportunities in Prestwich.

In the next stage of the Development Strategy for Prestwich Town Centre we go on to explore the key concerns and expectations of local people through the round table workshop. With key stakeholders we develop the vision for Prestwich, then go on to explore development options. We end the process with the Love Prestwich: Town Centre Development Strategy which provides more detail on how we move from the vision to reality, with a Physical Masterplan to guide future development.
This report sets out the baseline information for the strategy for Prestwich Village. It has been prepared by URBED working with ADG in collaboration with the community, stakeholders, Bury Council, the Local Area Partnership and local developers. We welcome feedback so please send comments to Bury Council:

web site: www.bury.gov.uk/prestwichregeneration
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Other reports available:

Consultation Report 2008
Options Report 2008
Town Centre Development Strategy Adopted July 2009
Prestwich Town Centre Retail Capacity Assessment (Drivers Jonas) 2009