Part 1
URBAN ASSESSMENT
The People

The population of the Prestwich area in 2001 was 33,447 contained in 13,599 households within the electoral wards of Holyrood, Sedgley and St Mary’s. The nature of this population is as follows:

- The population is predominantly white (92.5%). The largest ethnic group is Asian at 4.3%. However it is home to the second largest Jewish community in the UK after Golders Green in London.

- Economic activity rates are similar to the UK average (76%) while unemployment rates are lower with 4.6% unemployed compared to 5.6% nationally.

- A slightly higher proportion of people are employed in professional and managerial occupations than the national average and a slightly higher proportion with level 4/5 qualifications.

- Out-commuting levels are high with 48.4% of Bury residents working outside the Borough. This is the highest rate of out-commuting in Greater Manchester.

- There are a lower proportion of residents on low incomes compared to the Borough as a whole. The Index of Multiple Deprivation does however highlight problems with health, crime (burglary, theft, criminal damage and violence), poor housing in the social and private rented sectors, air quality and road traffic accidents.
Prestwich is situated approximately 4 miles north of Manchester and just
over 5 miles south of Bury Town Centre. Prestwich started life as a village
and grew rapidly as a suburb of Manchester in the early 20th century,
popular for its convenience and setting.

Prestwich is made up of electoral wards Holyrood, Sedgley and St. Mary's.
It shares administrative boundaries with Manchester City Council, Salford
City Council and Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council. For the purpose of
this study URBED have concentrated on the village centre at the Longfield
Precinct and a ten minute walk from the centre. However, we have also
prepared a wider analysis of Prestwich in order to inform the study.

Regional Planning Policy

The Northern Way was launched in February 2004 by the then Deputy
Prime Minister John Prescott to push “the renaissance of the North”. The
project is led by the three northern Regional Development Agencies with
the close engagement of other local, regional and national partners.

The Northern Way Growth Strategy (“NWGS”), published in September
2004, set out a strategy for the Northern Way together with funding of £100
Million over three-years. The aim was to close the £30 Billion gap in GDP
between the North and the English average. It was recognised that this
would require a transformational change in both how Northern England’s
economy operated and how it’s institutions worked. The investment
priorities identified in the Northern Way document include:

- Bringing more people into work
- Driving innovation
- Building entrepreneurship
- Capturing more global trade
- Meeting employers skills and needs
- Improving connectivity
- Building quality homes and places
- Marketing ‘The North’ to the world

Regional Spatial Strategy: The Draft Regional Spatial Strategy was
submitted in January 2006. This sets out a strategy to see Manchester and
Liverpool firmly established as world class cities by 2021 thanks to their
international connections, highly developed service, knowledge sectors
and flourishing culture, sport and leisure industries.

Manchester City Region: At the core of the Northern Way Strategy lies
a recognition of the importance of City Regions, particularly Leeds and
Manchester. The Manchester City Region Sub-regional Action Plan 2008-
2011 was published in September 2007 and its vision is for the city’s GDP
to match London’s by 2025. To do this it sets out an action plan to:

- Enhance competitive advantage through innovation
- Integrate carbon efficiency objectives
- Alignment of economic development with spatial policy
- Focus on the maintenance and development of the transport system

These documents emphasise the importance of places like Prestwich to
the success of the Greater Manchester City Region. Of particular relevance
are the quality of life sections in the report and references to the creation
of good places to live in sustainable communities. The strategies also
emphasise the importance of new regional parks and regional forestry
frameworks to improve the environment and change the image of the city.
The Croal-Irwell valley also has been put forward by Bolton, Bury and
Salford Councils as a potential regional park which would have Prestwich
at its heart.

Northwest Regional Economic Strategy: This is translated into the
Planning Policy

Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

Planning policy for Prestwich is set out in the Bury Unitary Development Plan published in 1997. The improvement and development of the borough’s town centres is a key borough-wide objective of the UDP which sets the following key priorities:

- To expand and diversify the retailing and economic base of the borough’s town centres to enable them to compete more effectively.
- To bring about environmental and traffic management improvements in order to make centres more attractive, user-friendly and accessible.
- To encourage the improved provision of facilities to develop the role of town centre’s as focal points for local community and visitor needs.

The Bury UDP is supported by a Town Centre Inset Proposals Map for each of the town centres. The Prestwich town centre policy covers the area from St. Mary’s to Chester Street/ Fairfax Road. The Tesco site and Prestwich Hospital fall outside the UDP Town Centre boundary and would therefore be treated as ‘out of town’.

Bury Local Development Framework (LDF)

The Bury UDP is currently being replaced by a Bury Local Development Framework. The Core Strategy Issues and Options Report was produced in July 2007 and the Preferred Option Report will soon be available. The Core Strategy will be submitted early in 2009 with a view to adoption by July 2010.

The Core Strategy and Options Report states the following key objective for Prestwich Town Centre:

“By 2021 Prestwich Town Centre will become a thriving and diverse centre with improved vitality and viability arising from regeneration projects”

The Prestwich Village Strategy that will emerge from this study will be incorporated into the emerging LDF. The strategy will be adopted by the council as planning policy for the area but will not form a statutory Area Action Plan or Supplementary Planning Document. This is the approach that has been taken by Bury on its other town centres and it has the advantage of being quick and flexible and able to respond to the opportunities that present themselves in each of the centres.

Other policies and strategies

The regeneration of Prestwich town centre is also a key objective in the Bury Community Strategy (2005-2025). This seeks to promote thriving and diverse town centres at the heart of Bury’s communities. This is reflected in the Prestwich Local Community Plan 2005-2008 that sets out an Action Plan for Prestwich with specific targets to be met.

Prestwich Renewal Commission Vision Report

In February 2008 the Prestwich Renewal Commission published a report titled ‘Pride in Prestwich – Establishing a vision for Prestwich Town Centre’. The Commission is an informal group brought together by Ivan Lewis, the local MP for Bury South. The report outlines the key issues facing Prestwich, sets out objectives for addressing these issues and expresses the Vision for the future development of the town. Their report does not have any formal status, but we have been in discussion with the commission, along with many other local groups, as part of this study and hope that our strategy will complement their work.
Prestwich town centre improvement plan
Prestwich Town Centre has seen major investment in the last five years as a result of the Prestwich Town Centre Improvement Plan. This aimed to regenerate the centre following the closure of the Sainsbury’s and has resulted in an environmental improvement programme.

The Prestwich Village Improvement Plan concentrated on the heart of the Town Centre and has included the following works:

- Development of ‘The Radius’ scheme on the site of the former Sainsbury’s store. This was built by Countryside Properties and includes apartments over retail space.
- Improvements to the metrolink station approach
- Public realm strategy to improve pedestrian movement pattern through the Village Centre, including improvements to Bury New Road
- A fountain in the new square adjacent to the Radius Development named ‘The Retreat’
- Improvements to the highway environment along Bury New Road with new and repositioned pedestrian crossings and on street parking.

These improvements have had some impact on the town centre. The development of the Marks and Spencers store was a welcome investment and the sale of most of the Radius scheme properties has created confidence in the area and attracted a lot of new residents. Perhaps most telling is the opening and success of the Croma restaurant in the Radius scheme (the other Croma outlets being in Boston (US), Manchester, Leeds and Chorlton).

However, the improvements have proved controversial. ‘The Retreat’ fountain did not work well in its original form and has had to be extensively remodelled, and the Radius scheme is generally seen to be too large and overbearing by local people. The retail units have not let well and the overall improvement to the area has not regenerated the retail centre as a whole. This is partly because a variety of schemes proposed for the refurbishment of the Longfield Centre have not come to fruition. Consequently, the centre as a whole has gradually become more run down and neglected.
Historical Development

Recently described in Lancashire Life as ‘the North West’s best kept secret, Prestwich is a village that retains much of its historic character despite its proximity to the centre of Manchester.

There has probably been a settlement in Prestwich since Roman times and Bury New Road follows the course of the old Roman road between Manchester and Ribchester. However, the name Prestwich derives from the Saxon meaning ‘Priests Retreat’. The original settlement centred around the site of St. Mary’s Church which dates back to the 12th century although the current building was built in the early 18th century. St. Mary’s was the Parish Church for the Radcliffe and Prestwich Parish that covered a huge area to the north of Manchester extending as far east as Oldham. The church was therefore far more important than Prestwich Village and it is likely that the church was the reason for the growth of the village. The Church Inn also dates back to the 18th century and was built to provide a drinking in response to laws preventing the clergy from drinking in Church.

Prestwich remained a small village until the middle of the 19th Century when affluent merchants from Manchester began to develop villas such as those that can still be found in the Poppythorn Lane conservation area. During this time Prestwich became known as a comparatively healthy place to live with the benefit of easy access to Manchester and other industrial towns such as Radcliffe. Due to these attributes Prestwich was chosen for the development of the largest mental asylum in Europe at that time, Prestwich Hospital.
The Growth of Prestwich

The plans to the left chart the growth of Prestwich from 1848. At that time the village was concentrated on Church Lane and the Long field, apparently with a fabulous Dorothy Buntlings Pie Shop. There is a second village centre on Bury Old Road and Whittaker Lane and Rectory Lane are dotted with villas.

The Hospital opened in 1851 on 37 acres of land purchased in 1847 from the Prestwich Wood Estate. The hospital was initially built for 500 patients and was self sufficient with its own farms and gas works. Over the years it was extended and by 1900 had become the largest asylum in Europe with a population of around 3,000, including staff and workers.

The railway arrived in 1861 bringing more people to the area and the growth of Prestwich accelerated. Prestwich Village grew with the addition of terraced streets and a series of local institutions. However, it remained separated by fields from Bury Old Road until the 1930s when suburban development, spreading out from Manchester, engulfed the original villages. The train service became more frequent and a tram service was introduced on Bury New Road. The population grew from 12,839 in 1902 to 34,191 people by 1961. Since that time the population has stabilised, indeed has fallen slightly as household size has decreased.
Heritage

Prestwich has two conservation areas. The Poppythorn Conservation Area was designated in March 2004 because of its fine Victorian and Edwardian streets and provides a number of good examples of high quality residential development introduced following the development of the railway and the turnpike roads. St Mary’s Park Conservation Area contains the medieval core of the town where St Mary’s Church, a Grade 1 listed building stands. The boundary captures the 19th century residential development of large mid 19th Century houses with large gardens and tree lined avenues. The western side of St Mary’s Park is also within the conservation area.

Prestwich also has a number of listed buildings which add to the historical character of the area.

- 12 - Church of St Mary
- 78 - North Lodge
- 79 - Charlton House
- 88 - Wrenwood and Rookwood
- 91 - Heaton Park Congregational Church
- 92 - Greater Manchester Police Training School
- 93 - Manor Park Rest Home
- 94 - Nazareth House
- 197 - Church Inn
- 201 - Church of St Gabriel
- 202 - Heaton Park Reservoir Pumping Station
- 203 - Church of St Hilda
- 204 - Church of St George
- 205 - Church of St Margaret

All are Grade II listed except St. Mary’s Church which is Grade I. There are also a number notable unlisted buildings within the study area which add significant value to the townscape and character of Prestwich. The key buildings are:

- **St. Mary’s Church**: Located at the end of Church Lane to the south of the village. The church was the original heart of Prestwich and there has been a church on the site since circa 1200. This is the most important and architecturally and historically important building in the area. The tower was built by the Earl of Derby in the late 15th Century, on the site of what is thought to have been an Anglo-Saxon place of worship, with the main body of the church being built in the early 16th century. The present chancel was built in 1889, to a design by the architects, Paley and Austin of Lancaster. For the last forty years the church has been the setting for Granada television’s Coronation Street where it has become Weatherfield parish church. It has been the setting for many story lines - including Mike Baldwin’s funeral, the remarriage of Steve and Karen McDonald and the winter wonderland wedding of Ashley Peacock and Claire.

- **197 - Church Inn**: One of Prestwich’s many local pubs situated at the gate of St. Mary’s Church. The building is Grade II listed and the pub has been commended by the Caledonian brewery and Wells & Young on its excellent upkeep and sales of Deuchars and Bombardier.

- **203 - Church of St Hilda**: Located on Whittaker Lane between Bury New Road and Bury Old Road, this Church dates from 1904. The present building replaced a temporary ‘Iron Church’ dating from 1887. The church remains at the heart of a lively parish.

- **94 - Nazareth House** (formally High Bank): Located along Scholes Lane this large house was built in the 18th century and is now a care home situated in beautiful gardens. It is owned and managed by the Sisters of Nazareth as a residential care home.

- **Our Lady of Grace Church** situated along Fairfax Road: This impressive building dates from 1931 and was built to accommodate the congregation from the Our Lady of Grace parish who until then had to use the Co-operative Hall in Prestwich.

- **White Horse Inn**: The White Horse Inn on Bury New Road is a former coaching inn.

- **The Railway & Naturalists Inn**: During the 19th Century this pub was the meeting point of walkers and naturalists and once boasted a botany library.
Open Space

Prestwich has an abundance of open space within walking distance of the village centre. With Heaton Park to the east and Phillip Park and Prestwich Clough to the west, the town is sandwiched between beautiful natural areas and formal parkland.

- **St Mary’s Park** stretches across Bury New Road on the southern approach to the village. The park is divided by Bury New Road into the flower park on one side and the playing field on the other. The flower park was opened in the 1920s and still contains some of the original horticultural features. The playing field on the other side of the road contains tennis courts, bowling greens, a large recreational area and a playground. St Mary’s Park leads into Philips Park and won the Green Flag award for 2005, the national standard for parks and green spaces. Although the area of St Mary’s Park to the east of Bury New Road has seen major investment over the last few years the area to the west leading to the Clough has declined significantly in quality. This area in particular was identified by local residents as a location within the village in need of improvement.

- **Philips Park** is part of a local nature reserve that runs from Prestwich to Whitefield and consists of rich woodland and grassland habitat. It is home to an assortment of wildlife which makes it the most important park in the borough of Bury. The park is part of the wider Prestwich Forest Park and is also home to the Barn Countryside Centre, where activities such as pottery, weaving, pond dipping and woodland management training courses take place. Local residents have expressed concerns over the use of quad bikes in the park and the general lack of modern facilities in the park.

- **Prestwich Clough** is also part of the wider Prestwich Forest Park. This ancient wooded valley flows from St Mary’s Flower Park towards St. Mary’s Church with some dramatic views of the village. It links Prestwich town centre to the Irwell Valley and such recreational routes as the Irwell Sculpture Trail. It provides excellent routes for walkers and cyclists and is a non-statutory site of biological importance. Prestwich Clough together with Philips Park, Mere Clough, Waterdale Meadow and Drinkwater Park make up Prestwich Forest Park and covers approximately 200 hectares of land.

- **Heaton Park** is the largest municipal park in Europe and is located to the east of Prestwich village within Manchester. The park contains Heaton Hall, a farm, gardens, a golf course, pitch and putt area, a boating lake and the Heaton Park Reservoir.

- **Hilton Park** and Prestwich Golf Club are located to the south of Prestwich to the west of Bury New Road.

- **Sedgley Park** is on the opposite side of the road to Hilton Park, is relatively small, but still an important piece of open green space.

- **Sports pitches** are an important part of Prestwich life. There are a number of active bowling leagues that use bowling greens located throughout Prestwich, notably off Church Lane. There is also a cricket ground, football pitches and tennis courts recreation area to the south of Heys Road, home to the Prestwich Cricket, Tennis and Bowling Club.

- Prestwich also contains three allotment sites, most of which are for the growing of fruit, vegetables and flowers, but a few are available for keeping livestock.
The black areas on the plan to the left show the public realm of Prestwich - that is the areas that the public can walk without trespassing onto private land. The public realm includes all of the open space described in the previous section. Our concern here is with the spaces between the buildings - the streets, squares and other public areas of the village.

In ‘healthy’ urban areas, a legible network of streets that are easy and convenient to use are formed, creating a clear definition between private spaces and the public realm. The residential areas around Prestwich Village largely conform to this pattern and generally work well. The public realm of the village centre however performs less well.

As the plan shows, around the Longfield Centre virtually all of the open areas are public. This includes the grounds of the Sherbourne Court and Rectory Green Housing Estates as well as the car park to the rear of the Longfield Suite. The problem with the public realm in this area is that it feels neglected and windswept and in many cases the views are of the back of unattractive buildings.

On Bury New Road the public realm remains tightly defined by the buildings and varies from 21m wide in the south to a pinch point of just over 17m at Poppythorn Lane. The problem with this area is that it is dominated by traffic which runs in two lanes in both directions. The result is that the pavements become very narrow and unfriendly in places, creating a hostile public realm for pedestrians.

The public realm around the Longfield Suite was subject to extensive improvements in 2006. This included resurfacing of public areas, the improvement of the car park, tree planting and the creation of a new public square with a major piece of public art. This significantly improved the quality of the centre but has not led to its regeneration. Some parts of the public realm, particularly the underpass through the Longfield suite feel unsafe. Indeed crime figures show that there is a concentration of crime in and around this area.
Unlike most of Manchester, Prestwich has the distinctive character of being set amongst a number of hills. St. Mary’s was reputedly the highest point in this part of Manchester for a long part of it’s history. Stand as we did at the top of the tower of St. Mary’s Church, built on a hill overlooking the valley of Prestwich Clough, and you have a strong sense of being within a wooded valley. Prestwich centre stands on a shelf of land above the steep sides of this valley. Bury New Road dips through the valley as it crosses the parks to the south of the centre and then rises gently through the heart of the village. The streets to the west of Bury New Road slope away gradually before dipping steeply into the tributary valleys to the Irwell Valley. On the whole, development clings to the more gentle slopes creating the impression of a village ‘island’ within a ‘sea of trees’. To the east of Bury New Road the land again rises to a high point on Bury Old Road. Beyond this Heaton Park provides a local landmark.

The built-up areas of Prestwich on the whole contain two to four storey buildings and St. Mary’s Tower to this day still has views over the nearby low hills and across to Manchester City Centre and Salford Quays. Its local landmark status has however been challenged by the Radius scheme that is about the same height and has a dominating impact on many local views.
The two plans to the left demonstrate the quality and condition of buildings in Prestwich in relation to the appearance and character of the centre as a whole. The far left townscape quality plan indicates how individual buildings contribute to the urban character and form of the village centre by virtue of their height, appearance and position. The left plan indicates the level of repair and condition of these buildings.

**Townscape contribution:** St. Mary’s Church (and a number of other churches in the area), the Church Inn and a number of institutional buildings such as the Liberal Club and the former school on Church Lane all contribute most positively to the quality of the townscape. Buildings of quality in the heart of the village centre include The Railway and Naturalist Inn, the White Horse pub, and the Barclays and Nat West Banks but many of the good quality buildings shown on this map are scattered throughout the area and fail to form a coherent characterful core to the village.

At the other end of the spectrum the buildings coloured dark red on the plan contribute poorly to the townscape, including the Tesco development and health centres and, to a lesser extent, the Longfield Centre and the social housing blocks around the retail core.

**Condition:** Many relatively new buildings within the study area that have been identified as contributing poorly to the townscape of the centre (such as the Tesco) are in very good condition. The buildings in poor condition are the Longfield Centre, the adjacent social housing and a number of small units along the high streets. Overall the building condition within the centre is reasonably good.
In order to achieve a walkable neighbourhood it is vital that a sufficient range of facilities and amenities are situated within a 400 metre ‘walk-in’ distance of a centre. Based on sustainability guidance there should be food stores, a general store and post office, bank, chemist, school, medical centre, leisure centre, community centre, public house and library within a 400 metre radius area to achieve this.

The plan opposite indicates the location of the facilities and amenities within a 400 metre radius of the centre of Prestwich. This illustrates that it largely passes the sustainable urban neighbourhood test. This is a positive asset to build upon and a key theme to be developed in the masterplan process which aims to promote reduced car journeys and encourage more cycling and pedestrian movement in Prestwich. The key facilities are outlined below.

- **Prestwich Health Centre:** Just behind the Radius development, the existing health centre includes eight general practitioners.

- **Dentist:** Located next to the Forresters Arms pub on Bury New Road the facility serves as the town’s dentistry with around 3 or 4 registered dental practitioners.

- **The Longfield Suite and Prestwich Library / Community Centre:** At the heart of Prestwich is the Library, the adjacent Further Education facilities and the Longfield Suite. The Library is very well used, attracting around 400,000 people a year. (Looked at in more detail on page 45).

- **The Metrolink Station:** Located alongside Rectory Lane behind the radius centre lies the Metrolink station. It provides links to Bury, Manchester city centre and beyond to Eccles and Altrincham.

- **Banks:** There are a number of bank facilities in the town centre, including Lloyds TSB, Halifax and NatWest outlets and a cash dispenser outside the Radius development.

- **The Job Centre:** Located next to the Metrolink station to the east of Rectory Lane.

- **The Post Office:** Located on the corner of Bury New Road and Kingswood Road. If Tesco’s proposed move to the street frontage is approved, the Post Office would have to make way and relocate to another site. This could be in the centre of town, in a similar position, or elsewhere; ideally it needs to be kept as close to its current position as possible.

- **Police Station:** Prestwich’s local police station is conveniently located on Fairfax Road, in between Our Lady of Grace Church and the Marks and Spencer store, close to the heart of the town centre.

- **Hospital:** Located to the north of Prestwich just south of the M60 the hospital is an important psychiatric facility serving the Greater Manchester area.

- There are a number of places of worship serving Prestwich, each of which house community facilities and meetings halls.

- **Liberal School of Dancing:** This is located next to Rileys and provides all types of dance lessons including IDTA (International Dance Teachers Association) registered Ballroom, Latin, Classical Sequence, Modern Sequence, Freestyle, Cheerleading, Salsa, Street and Rock ‘N’ Roll.

- **Schools:** St Mary’s Primary School is a successful local school with a capacity for 250 student. It is situated on the corner of Rectory Lane behind the Longfield Shopping Centre and is in a prime location for the centre. The main secondary school is the Prestwich Art College in the eastern part of Prestwich and is looking to renew its facilities through the Schools for the Future Programme.

- **Shops:** There are a wide range of independent and chain retail units along Bury New Road and within the Longfield Shopping Centre, as well as many takeaways.

- **Public Houses:** There are a number of prominent pubs and inns situated along Bury New Road close to the centre, as well as a number of establishments elsewhere in the town.