Part 3
TRANSPORT

Travel Patterns

The earliest history of Prestwich is inextricably linked with the original Manchester to Ribchester Roman Road which followed the Bury New Road alignment. Other minor roads in the area of early historical significance include Rectory Lane, Whittaker Lane, Bury Old Road and Fairfax Road, all of which added to the pre-industrial road network in the area.

During the 1800's the population of Manchester grew rapidly and locations such as Prestwich became popular settlements for people working in the area. The introduction of the East Lancashire Railway in the 1840's between Manchester, Radcliffe Central, Whitefield, Prestwich and north to Accrington greatly improved rail connections between Prestwich and Manchester. As the population grew further, residential streets within the Prestwich area were added to the historical street network until the existing road network was formed.

The existing highway network plan demonstrates that the area is at present a predominantly residential neighbourhood with a high proportion of the highway dedicated to serving as access routes to residential zones and individual homes. There are excellent highway connections between Prestwich and other areas within the Manchester conurbation through the local road network, and connections to other areas outside the Greater Manchester region are also good particularly due to nearby road connections to the motorway at junction 17 of the M60.

The table below gives some 'travel to work' statistics from the 2001 census data demonstrating the travelling patterns of the working population related to similar towns in the Greater Manchester area, such as Chorlton, Didsbury and Sale. This shows a slightly higher percentage of the total population working in Prestwich but a considerably lower proportion working within the Borough of Bury when compared to the other listed, comparable settlements in Greater Manchester.

	Working within the town (%)	Working within the Borough (%)
Chorlton	12	32.4
Didsbury	14	30.1
Sale	9.1	17.7
Prestwich	15.4	6.2

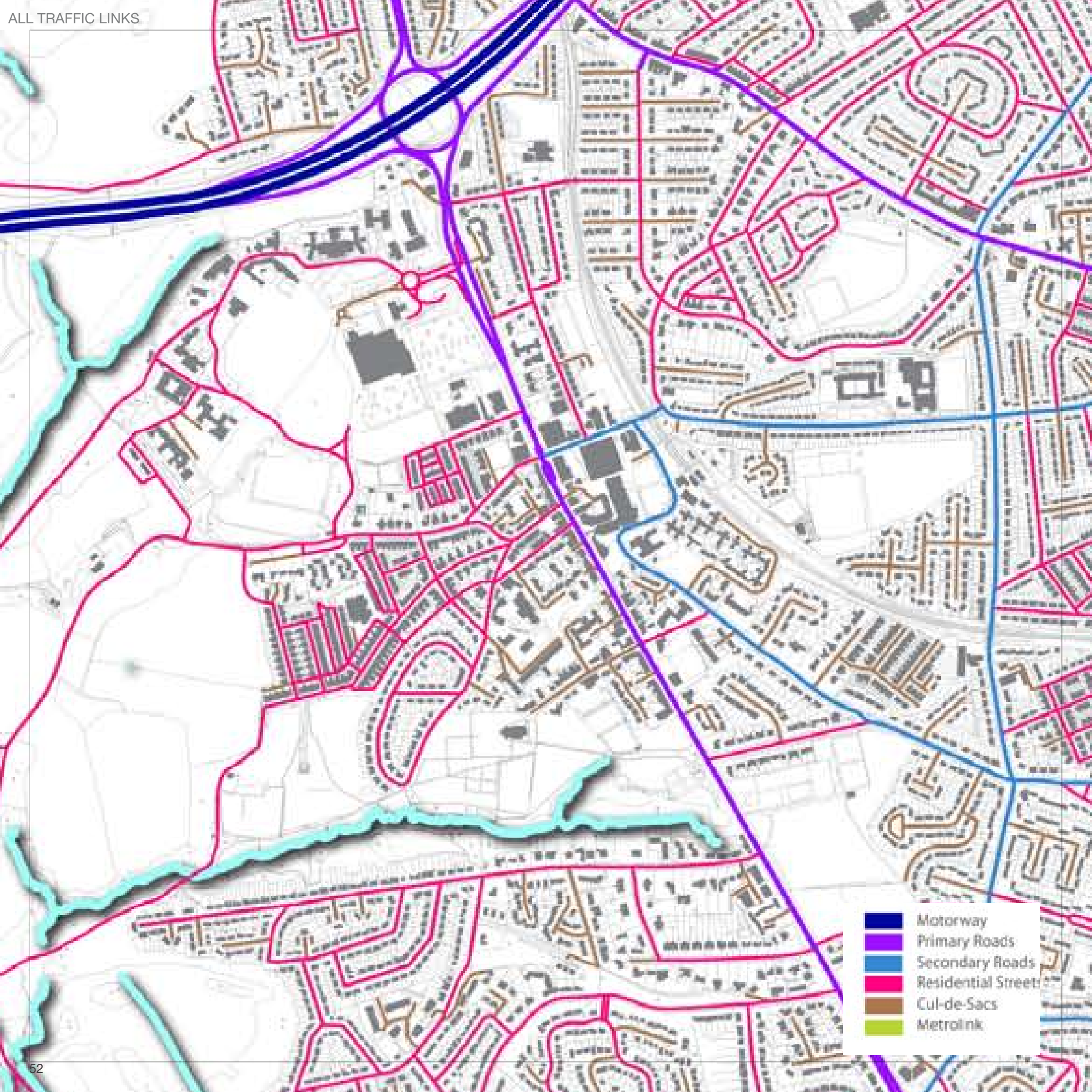
Travel to work ratios (2001 census

Bury New Road, Prestwich ▲

Rectory Lane ▲

Bury New Road ▲

ALL TRAFFIC LINKS



Traffic

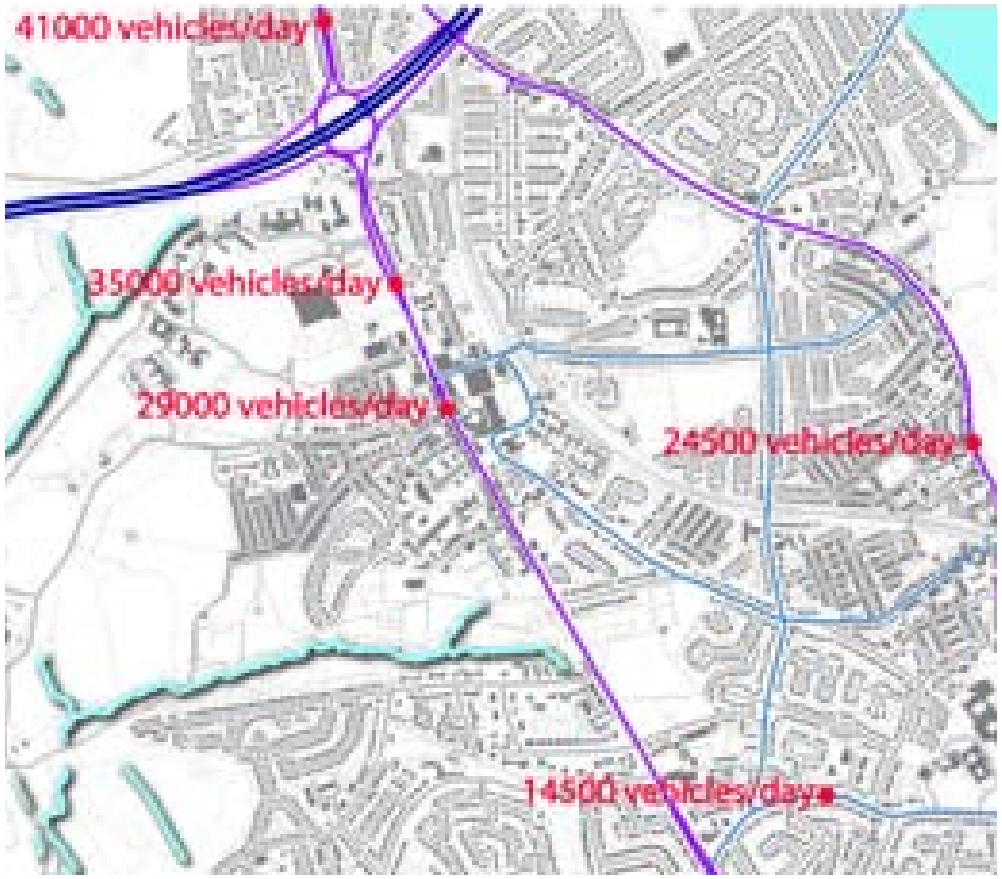
Bury New Road

The present Bury New Road alignment crossing through Prestwich centre currently performs the important strategic role of allowing vehicular access between Manchester city centre, the M60 orbital motorway and the north of Greater Manchester . Vehicle flows along Bury New Road to the north of junction 17 of M60 are at approximately 41,000 vehicles/weekday (average two-way weekday traffic flows in 2006) but this reduces to 35,000 vehicles between the motorway and the Bury New Road / Fairfax Road junction and decreases further to 29,000 vehicles south of Fairfax Road. Bury Old Road lies parallel and to the east of Bury New Road, allowing additional access through Prestwich and over the M60 orbital motorway to northern areas of Greater Manchester and Bury. Approximately 25,000 vehicles/weekday use this route and significant amounts of traffic cut through between these two primary routes along secondary, predominantly residential roads such as Rectory Lane/Whittaker Lane and Heys Road/Fairfax Road.

Bury New Road and it's traffic presently provide an unwelcoming route for pedestrians and cyclists wishing to live, work or shop within Prestwich centre and there is little indication of the facilities Prestwich centre provides from the road. Vehicle volumes passing through Prestwich cause significant severance issues for other road users close to Prestwich centre but it is the unpredictable behaviour of these vehicle numbers that also creates a poor environment for pedestrians and cyclists even where facilities are good.

Localised traffic congestion was found to be caused by traffic conditions and signal times at the Fairfax Road junction and due to unpredictable traffic behaviour by bus movements, traffic conflict from minor roads and parking vehicles along the route. To the south of Fairfax Road junction there are a number of existing parking spaces and facilities for use during off-peak times but vehicles also park within the highway during peak times, causing significant unpredictable disruption to vehicle movement.

Vehicles exiting from junction 17 of the motorway onto Bury New Road and travelling close to Prestwich centre at a higher than appropriate speed also greatly reduce the perceived quality of the high street environment and increase the perceived likelihood of accidents. Road accident records between 1998 and 2007 show that accident rates were not high or severe close to Prestwich centre, but a high proportion were identified as slight accidents at priority junctions along Bury New Road with Warwick Street, Poppythorn Lane and Church Lane or were close to the signalised Fairfax Road/Bury New Road junction.



Weekday Traffic Flows 2006

Existing Parking Facilities

The main public parking facilities serving Prestwich centre are accessed from Rectory Lane or Fairfax Road and are located east of the Bury New Road high street and the main retail centre, but within close proximity of Prestwich Metrolink station. Very little designated on-street parking facilities exist to support the centre and, due to a limited number of roads located between Bury New Road and the metrolink line, there are few opportunities to introduce on-street retail parking in this area at present. Existing parking surveys have shown that many commuters and shoppers instead park in residential streets such as Rectory Lane and Highfield Road within walking distance of the Longfield Centre.

Approximately 170 spaces currently exist in the main car park directly to the east of the Retail Centre with a further 130 spaces along the west side of the Metrolink line to the north of Fairfax Road. Other significant parking facilities exist on the corner of Bury New Road and Fairfax Road (approx. 35 spaces) and as part of the medical centre to the south of Fairfax Road (approx. 18 spaces). However, analysis of these main parking facilities has demonstrated that a low proportion of people using these parking spaces go on to use facilities within Prestwich centre itself.

These existing parking facilities take up a significant proportion of land within walking distance of the retail centre and, despite improvements to the public realm through the main parking area between the Metrolink station and the main retail hub, the surface parking facilities contribute to a poor environment for pedestrians and cyclists in particular.

Stockport Road, Levenshulme ▲

Wilbraham Road, Chorlton Village ▲

Wilmslow Road, Didsbury Village ▲

Cheetham Hill, Cheetham Hill Road ▲

Traffic Benchmarking

In order to determine the present and future potential of Prestwich centre as a place to support activities for local residents and attract people from other areas it is necessary to determine the effect of traffic congestion and other traffic related issues in the area and compare existing conditions with other comparable sites. As stated in the traffic chapter above, just under 25,000 vehicles/day (average two-way weekday traffic flows in 2006) travel along Bury Old Road passed Heaton Park metrolink station and approximately 29,000 vehicles/day travel on Bury New Road pass through Prestwich adjacent to the retail centre. Analysis shows that traffic flows have reduced to this level on Bury New Road since peaking in 2004 but the number of vehicles still remains high and traffic queuing is particularly prominent northbound during the weekday evening peak, creating a physical barrier for pedestrians and cyclists and contributing to a poor environmental close to Prestwich centre.

As part of early consultation work produced at the roundtable workshop, attendees identified a number of similar retail centres as benchmarks to be compared with Prestwich, including places such as Didsbury,Chorlton and Ramsbottom within the Manchester city region. Analysis of comparable traffic data for each of these retail centres showed that traffic levels along Bury New Road were larger than those travelling through Didsbury and Chorlton, with Wilmslow Road, through Didsbury Village, attracting approximately 17,400 vehicles/weekday and Wilbraham Road in Chorlton around 15,300 vehicles/weekday. Vehicle flow figures through Ramsbottom in the north of Bury were also found to be at around 16,300 vehicles/weekday. These centres are all located along their predominantly single lane high streets but they have significantly less vehicles running through them and so in traffic terms can not be directly compared with existing conditions on Bury New Road.

However, further investigation has identified a number of routes in Greater Manchester that accommodate between 25,000 and 33,000 vehicles/weekday on roads that comprise a predominantly wide single lane carriageway while maintaining good traffic journey times. In Bury, Manchester Road south of Dumers Lane accommodates more than 30,000 vehicles/weekday on wide single lanes in both directions without causing significant delay to traffic. Cheetham Hill Road is also a good example and was suggested as a retail centre with a thriving market at the roundtable workshop. Vehicle flows have been identified at 25,200 vehicles/weekday in this area and improvements to Cheetham Hill Road, including the widening of pavements, have enhanced the public realm for shoppers and pedestrians and supported the existing retail mix while retaining traffic flows. Stockport Road through Levenshulme also accommodates similar traffic flows (between 26,000 and 29,000 vehicles/weekday) to Bury New Road through Prestwich on a predominantly single lane carriageway. Stockport Road also perfoms a similar strategic traffic role as Bury New Road and has recently undergone significant public realm improvements to enhance the highway environment whilst accommodating existing high traffic volumes.

An alternative approach would be similar to that found around Sale town centre in South Manchester. During the roundtable workshop, Sale town centre was also suggested as an example of a successful centre to be compared with Prestwich. Analysis of traffic data close to Sale centre demonstrated that approximately 16,000 vehicles/weekday used Northenden Road close to the main centre and so was not considered to be directly comparable with Bury New Road in traffic terms. Washway Lane, however, acts as the main radial route through the centre between Manchester city centre and Sale town centre, attracting approximately 33,800 vehicles/day, higher than figures for Bury New Road. Sale town centre has managed to combine large to medium size units with the existing smaller independent units located on Washway Lane and Northenden Road. This is an alternative development/transport future model for Prestwich which, along with improvements to the configuration and public realm of the centre, could also work well with current traffic levels in Prestwich without further harming the character of the town. The Cheetham Hill/Levenshulme or Sale examples all provide traffic/development model alternatives for Prestwich and Bury New Road by tackling the fundamental issue of congestion and vehicle movement, but it will also be necessary that the nature of Bury New Road as the main arterial route through the area supports development in the Prestwich village centre.

Future traffic flows on roads within Prestwich and in particular on Bury New Road are likely to be affected by plans for the increase in transport innovation funded public transport services and the introduction of congestion charging proposals should they be implemented. Whether these plans are to come into fruition will have a significant effect on the volume and characteristics of traffic flow in and around Prestwich and any transport related proposals within the masterplan will need to take account of this effect. However, the examples within Greater Manchester above demonstrate that Bury New Road in particular is unlikely to require a reduction in traffic flows in the future with the congestion charge scheme in place.

Bus Route
Metrolink
Bus Stop
Metrolink Stop
Cycle Path - Traffic Free Route
Cycle Path - On Road Route with Cycling Facilities
Cycle Path - On Road Route without Cycling Facilities

Other Modes

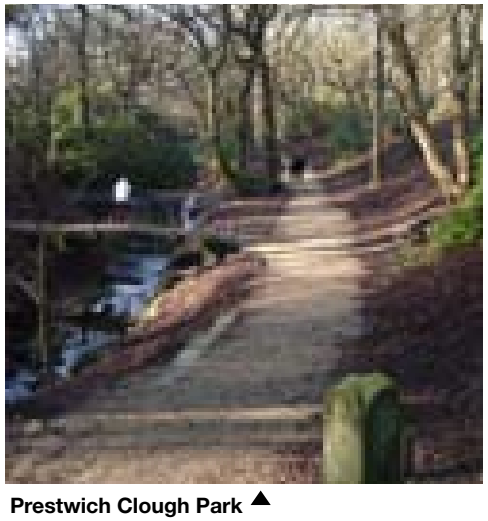
Prestwich as a whole is well connected in terms of non-vehicular modes of transport, especially when compared to centres of a similar population size. The Metrolink service runs from Bury to Victoria Station in Manchester, through Manchester city centre to connect with Piccadilly station and through to the original rail alignment between Manchester and Altrincham. The Metrolink service provides a reliable alternative to the car for commuters in Prestwich who wish to travel to other locations on the line but the service can suffer from a lack of capacity during weekday peak periods. Eight new trams are currently being constructed and will be added to the Bury to Altrincham tram fleet in 2009 to improve capacity during these busy periods. As part of the proposed transport innovation fund bid for Greater Manchester the metrolink will also be subject to significant extension throughout the city region, increasing the accessibility of other parts of Greater Manchester by tram.

Prestwich tram station is located within close proximity (approximately 200 metres east) of Bury New Road and Prestwich centre with large residential areas located either side of the line to the north east and south. Along with the Metrolink station itself dedicated parking facilities of approximately 35 parking spaces are provided directly west of the Metrolink station. The rail line curves through Prestwich on an embankment that causes significant severance between the east and west of the residential areas within the village but there are a number of routes available underneath the embankment, including the station entrance, that provide links for both road users and pedestrians.

A number of bus routes run through or alongside Prestwich centre, including services to and from Manchester, Bolton, Bury, Pendleton, Simister, Stubbins, North Manchester Hospital and Salford Royal Hospital and express services between Manchester and Nelson or Accrington along Bury New Road. Both bus links on Bury New Road and Bury Old Road have been designated Quality Bus Corridors (QBC) and have been subject to targeted improvements since 1999 in order to provide a reliable transport alterative for passengers, improve bus journey times, enhance comfort for passengers at bus stops and in transit, improve travel information systems for passengers and cycle and pedestrian facilities. It is important that any proposals within the Prestwich masterplan contribute to the QBC strategy and help to encourage interchange between sustainable transport modes. In particular, any improvements in the public realm and signage within Prestwich Centre can help to encourage connectivity between bus facilities on Bury New Road and Prestwich Metrolink station.

The existing pedestrian and cycle network is made up of a number of on-street and traffic free links that provide accessibility to services and opportunities throughout Prestwich. However, there are a number of issues that the baseline work has identified that need to be addressed to improve the quality of this network. Severance is a particularly issue within Prestwich where wide roads with large volumes of traffic such as Bury New Road cause significant physical barriers, create a poor environment and restrict pedestrian and cycle use. Bury New Road presently acts as a poor pedestrian environment with narrow pavement widths in places and poorly designed street furniture within the public realm that reduces the effective width of the pavement further. This is particularly the case along the western edge of Bury New Road but poor quality pedestrian links also exist along other sections of the highway. Despite recent improvements to the strategically important pedestrian link from Prestwich metrolink station, through the Longfield centre to Bury New Road, it still fails to provide a well-defined, secure route and instead form a relatively quiet, poor quality space for pedestrians and cyclists, especially at night.

There is the potential for Prestwich centre to greatly improve it's public realm quality for all pedestrians and cyclists (including vulnerable users), provide gateway facilities adjacent to Prestwich metrolink station, improve signage and provide good cycle links and cycle parking facilities in the area, all to support local non-vehicular movements and allow Prestwich to become an important gateway to the Croal Irwell Valley park to the west of the masterplan area.



Prestwich Clough Park ▲

Prestwich Metrolink Station ▲