

Part 1

Prestwich

Today

In October 2008 (Amended July 2009) we published a baseline report for Prestwich Town Centre. This is available on www.bury.gov.uk/prestwichregeneration and covers the physical condition and character of the centre, its economic health and the impact of traffic. As a starting point for the strategy the following section summarises the key points to emerge from this work.





Prestwich as it is....

There is a mismatch between the population of Prestwich, which is similar to Chorlton in South Manchester and the fact that the village centre is struggling. This is despite the substantial amount of investment that has taken place in the regeneration of the centre in the last few years. This has led to some successes but has not reversed the decline of the centre.

Prestwich Village has a population of just over 33,000 people. This population is predominantly white (92.5%) and includes the second largest Jewish community in England after Golders Green in London. The community in general is slightly more affluent than the UK average, with a 4.6% unemployment rate compared to 5.6% nationally. The population also has a slightly higher level of qualifications and a lower level of income deprivation than the Greater Manchester and national averages. The Index of Multiple Deprivation does however, highlight some problems with health, crime, poor housing, air quality and traffic accidents. The community

of Prestwich is marginally less affluent than Didsbury and Sale in South Manchester but similar to Chorlton.

The centre of the village does not reflect this affluence or indeed the aspirations of the community. The centre is run down and struggling to maintain its retail role. This is despite a significant amount of work that has been done to improve the centre in recent years. The Prestwich town centre strategy in 2001, was developed after the closure of a Sainsbury's store in the town centre. This led to the development of the Radius scheme, some improvements to Bury New Road and environmental works to the car park and the Longfield

Centre public realm. These works did everything that could be done to revive a failing centre and while they have probably stemmed the rate of decline they have not succeeded in bringing about the sort of transformation that Prestwich needs.

The Local Development Framework sets out a vision that 'by 2021 Prestwich Town Centre will become a thriving and diverse centre with improved vitality and viability arising from regeneration projects'. This report was commissioned to provide a strategy to realise this vision.





Prestwich as it was....

While probably Roman in origin the recorded history of Prestwich dates back to the 11th century when it grew up as a religious centre around the important parish church of St. Mary's. It remained a rural village until the mid 19th century when the arrival of the railway started to transform it into a suburb of Manchester. The first commuter homes were the villas of affluent merchants, however by the 1930s Prestwich had been engulfed by Manchester's expanding suburbs.

There has probably been a settlement on the Roman Road running north from Manchester (Bury New Road) since Roman times. However, the name Prestwich which means 'Priest's retreat' is Saxon in origin and the first records of a village dates back from the 11th century.

St. Mary's Church is central to the history of Prestwich. The current building dates back to the early 15th century, however, there has been a church on the site for almost 1,000 years. St. Mary's was the Parish Church for a huge area running from Radcliffe in the West to Oldham in the East. It is likely that the village

grew up to serve the needs of the church as an administrative centre rather than the other way around. Church Lane is therefore the historic heart of Prestwich and the Church Inn dates back to a law in the 18th century preventing the clergy from drinking in Church (so that an alternative was needed).

A second area of development grew up in the early 19th century at the corner of Fairfax Road and Bury New Road and a village centre also developed on Bury Old Road. The spaces between these centres remained as fields, despite the arrival of the railway in 1861. This improved access did however

make the area popular with affluent Manchester merchants who built villas around Prestwich. Prestwich Hospital dates from 1851 and was also built as an asylum for 500 patients with its own farm and gas works. By 1900 it had grown into the largest asylum in Europe.

It was not until the 1930s that the tide of suburban development sweeping out of Manchester engulfed Prestwich. At this time the remaining fields were developed and the population increased from 12,800 in 1912 to just over 31,000 by 1961 by which time Prestwich had become a suburb of Manchester.





Prestwich's character...

Prestwich's long history is not particularly evident in the quality and age of its buildings. Church Lane retains some remnants of its former rural character and Bury New Road includes elements of a Victorian High Street. The character of the village is nevertheless patchy and inconsistent.

Prestwich has two conservation areas. The Poppythorn Conservation Area was designated in March 2004 as an example of the Victorian and Edwardian residential development that characterised the early development of the area. The other conservation area is St. Mary's Park which contains the medieval core of the village around the church, the park and the 19th century residential development to the south.

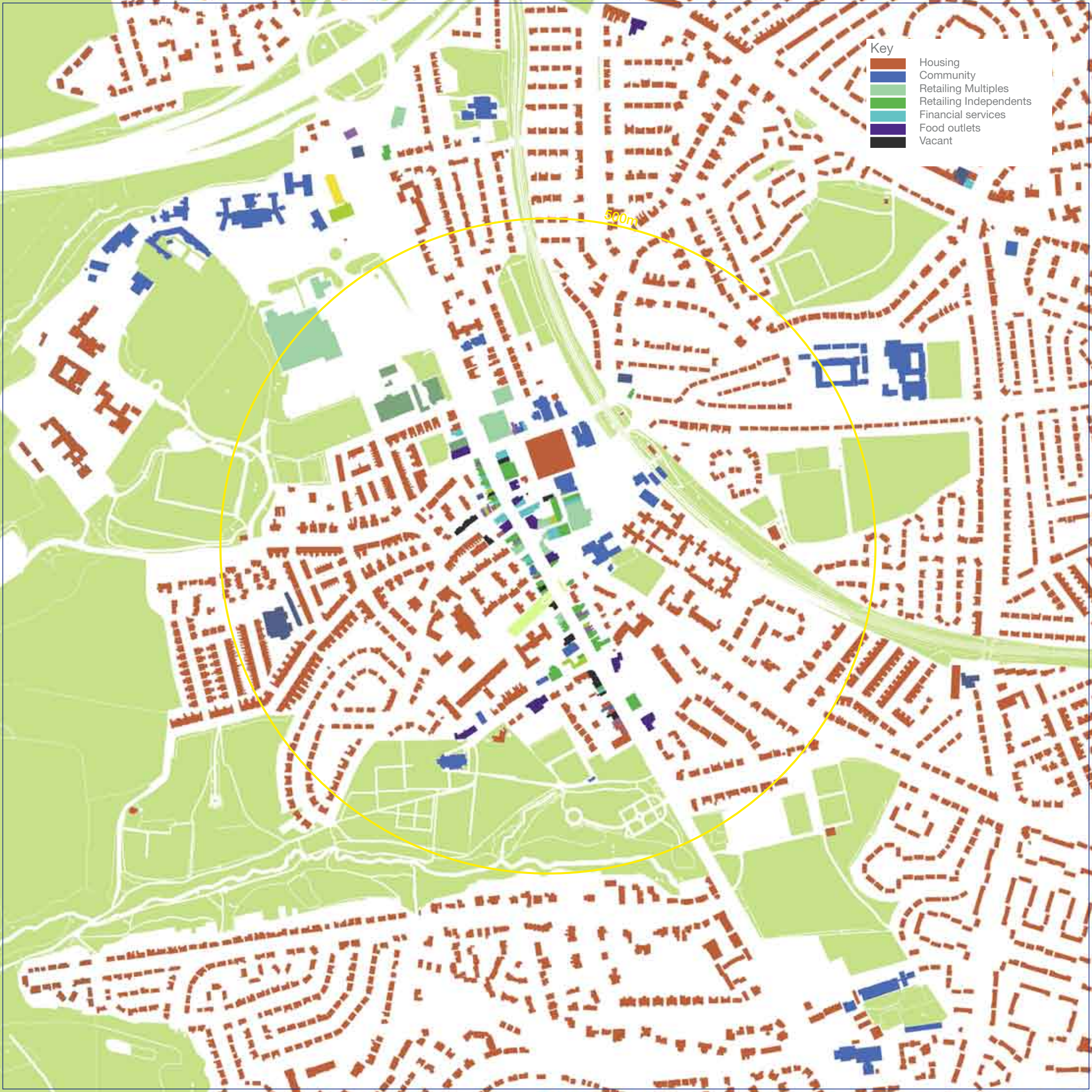
St. Mary's Church is a Grade I Listed building and is by far the most important building in the Village. The tower was built by the Earl of Derby in the late 15th Century, on the site of what is thought to have been an Anglo-Saxon place of worship. The main body of the church was built in the early 16th century and the chancel in 1889. For the last forty years the church has been the setting for Granada

television's Coronation Street where it has become Weatherfield parish church.

Other notable buildings are shown in blue outline on the plan. The only other listed building in the town centre is the Church Inn. There are however a number of notable unlisted buildings within the study area which add significant value to the townscape and character of Prestwich.

The plan to the left shows the contribution of the buildings of Prestwich to the appearance and character of the centre. The buildings in yellow are those that contribute most positively to townscape quality. These include a cluster of buildings in the heart of the village, the Barclays and Nat West Banks and the pubs. It also includes St. Mary's Church,

the Church Inn as well as a series of institutional buildings such as the Liberal Club, churches and the former school on Church Lane. At the other end of the spectrum the dark brown buildings contribute negatively to the townscape of the area including the Tesco store and Health Centre and, to a lesser extent the Longfield Centre, and the council estates around the centre. The positive buildings on this map are scattered and fail to form a coherent characterful core to the village



- Key
- Housing
 - Community
 - Retailing Multiples
 - Retailing Independents
 - Financial services
 - Food outlets
 - Vacant

500m



Prestwich's economy...

The shopping centre of Prestwich is similar in size to many suburban centres in Manchester with just over 100 units. There is however a lower level of convenience shopping and a higher rate of vacancies than similar centres, largely because much of the retail spend has been captured by the Tesco store, or leaked to competing centres.

Data from the retail research organisation GOAD records that Prestwich had 105 retail outlets in the town centre in 2007 with just over 24,500m² of space. Of these units 12% were convenience shopping, 32% were comparison, 39% were service and leisure and 12% were empty. The core of the retail area is the Longfield Centre that the GOAD figures showed had been strengthened by the completion of the Radius scheme. Although this had also put vacancy levels up. The retail offer declines markedly on the southern part of Bury New Road and there is a cluster of vacant units in the south of the centre.

Of these units there are 27 multiple retailers, below the national average, with the only two major retailers being Superdrug and M&S. The GOAD counts Tesco as not being in the centre. The

number of service and leisure units is higher than the national average although this reflects the number of take-aways on Bury New Road. There are also 6 charity shops in the centre. Because of the quality of the retail offer Prestwich is currently losing a significant proportion of its retail spend to competing centres such as Manchester and Bury. The Tesco store has also taken trade from the centre as will the recently opened Morrisons in Whitefield which opened in late 2008.

A survey of shoppers undertaken by Drivas Jonas confirms Tesco accounts for more than half of the main food shopping spend in Prestwich with just 2% in the village centre. Tesco also takes 16.5% of the top-up food spend with 10% in the village centre (mostly M&S). 83% of people arrive by car and only 4.5% of those shopping at Tesco also shop in the village centre.

A benchmarking exercise comparing Prestwich with Didsbury and Sale showed just how far Prestwich has fallen behind other suburban centres in Manchester. While the population of Prestwich is not quite as affluent as these other centres the centre is doing significantly worse. Prestwich, for example has slightly more retail units than Didsbury but has four times the vacancy rates and its retail rents are around half those of Didsbury.





Prestwich's greenspace...

Prestwich's location on the edge of the steep Irwell Valley means that it is richly endowed with open space. It is surrounded by good quality parkland including St. Mary's Park, Philips Park, Heaton Park and Prestwich Clough.

Unlike most of Manchester Prestwich has the distinctive character of being hilly. Standing at the top of the tower of St. Mary's Church you have a strong sense of being within a wooded valley. The centre stands on a shelf of land above the valley. The streets to the west of Bury New Road slope away gradually before dipping steeply into the tributary valleys to the River Irwell Valley creating the impression of a village, island surrounded by a sea of trees.

The steep slopes and inaccessibility of the valley account for the abundance of open space around Prestwich including Heaton Park to the east and Phillips Park and Prestwich Clough to the west:

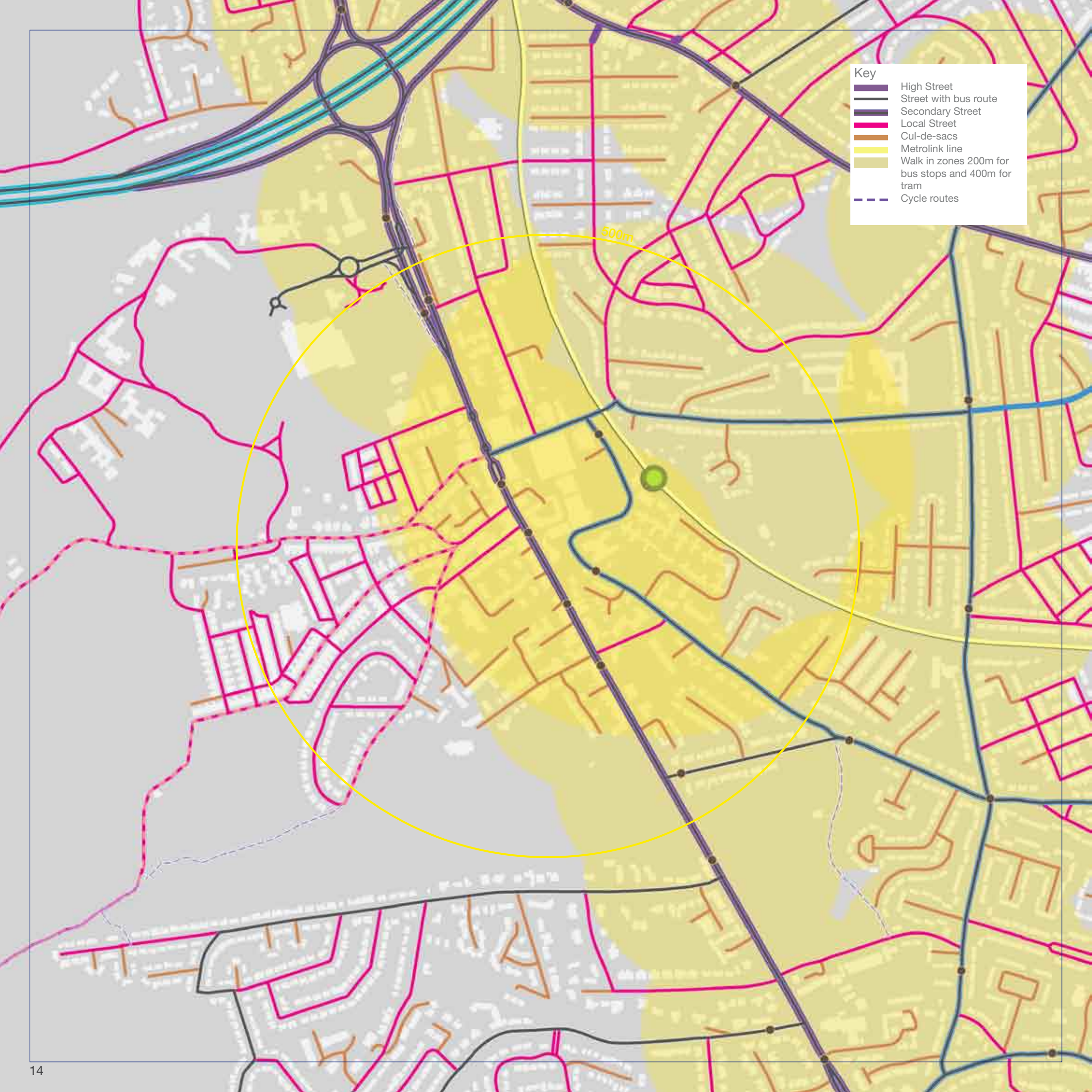
St. Mary's Park lies on either side of Bury New Road on the southern approaches to the village. To the west of the road is the Flower Garden on one side and the playing fields on the other. St Mary's Park has won the Green Flag (The national standard for parks and green spaces) for four consecutive years since 2005 .

Philips Park lies between Prestwich and Whitefield and is a former estate. It is a rich woodland habitat and is also the location of the Barn Countryside Centre which runs events and activities.

Prestwich Clough is also part of the wider Prestwich Forest Park. This ancient wooded valley runs from The Flower Garden to the Irwell Valley and provides routes for walkers and cyclists

as well as being a non-statutory site of biological importance. Together Prestwich Clough, Philips Park, Mere Clough, Waterdale Meadow and Drinkwater Park make up Prestwich Forest Park which covers 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 a hall, farm, gardens, golf course, pitch and putt, a boating lake and the Heaton Park Reservoir.



Key

- High Street
- Street with bus route
- Secondary Street
- Local Street
- Cul-de-sacs
- Metrolink line
- Walk in zones 200m for bus stops and 400m for tram
- Cycle routes



Prestwich's connections...

Prestwich has excellent connections by road, tram and bus. This however can be a double edged sword because it allows people to travel out of the centre to work and shop. The amount of traffic generated by the motorway junction on Bury New Road is also the main problem faced by the centre.

Prestwich's great advantage and burden is its connectivity. It has excellent connections by road via the M60 Junction and Bury New Road and is also well served by buses and the Metrolink service into Manchester and Bury. This connectivity is a major factor attracting people to live in Prestwich. However, it also means that they can get out easily to shop and work elsewhere. Travel to work figures show that three quarters of people in Prestwich travel out of Bury to work and the retail data shows that more than half of the retail spend also leaks out of the centre.

However, the biggest transport issue facing Prestwich is the traffic on Bury New Road. This is an important link between Manchester City Centre and the M60 via junction 17. As a result of this Bury New Road carries 29,000 vehicles a day through the heart of the village rising to 35,000 vehicles a day to the north of the centre. This is higher than the traffic numbers in many other suburban centers in Manchester (Didsbury and Chorlton for example are below 20,000 vehicles a day). The only example of a high street with similar levels of traffic is the A6 through Levenshulme. The situation is however perceived to be worse in Prestwich because traffic coming

off the motorway is travelling at higher speeds. As a result Bury New Road creates severance at the heart of the centre and a poor environment for pedestrians and the shops.

The centre of Prestwich has around 350 parking spaces with the two main surface car parks being the Longfield Centre (170 space) and Fairfax Road (130 spaces). Usage surveys have shown that a significant proportion of this parking is used for park and ride on the Metrolink.

The centre is also well connected by bus and cycle routes as illustrated on the plan opposite.

