

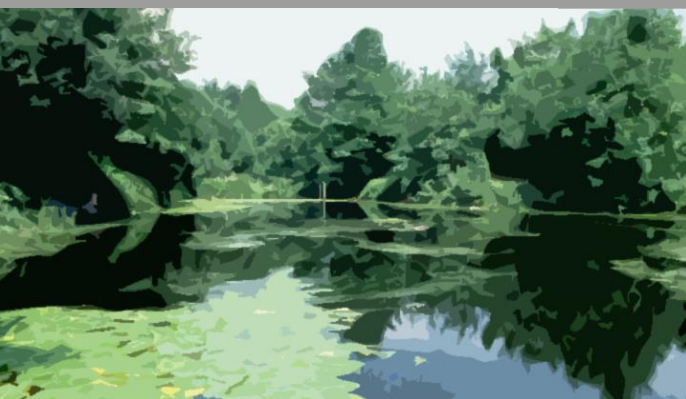


Bury Local Plan

Topic Paper 4: Centres



March 2025



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Topic Paper is one of a series that has been prepared as part of the process of evidence gathering to support Bury's emerging Local Plan. It sits alongside a range of other Topic Papers covering the following:
- Climate change and carbon reduction
 - Housing
 - Economy
 - Tourism and culture
 - Communities
 - Transport
 - Built environment and design
 - Green infrastructure
 - Green Belt
 - Water and flood risk
 - Air quality, pollution and hazards
- 1.2 The principal aim of the Topic Paper is to set out current key policies, plans and strategies relating to this topic area that forms the framework for the development of the Local Plan and to present a profile of the Borough that will highlight key issues, problems and challenges that the Local Plan should seek to address and which have helped to shape and influence the direction and focus of the Local Plan's policies and designations.

2. Background

- 2.1. Town centres are locations that sit at the heart of our communities. The vitality of town centres is largely underpinned by retail activity but recent years have seen significant challenges to this sector, particularly with the impacts of rapidly changing shopping patterns which have been escalated by the pandemic. In turn, this has presented a significant challenge to the Borough's hierarchy of centres.
- 2.2. The scale of change has meant that if they are to survive as functioning centres, many will need to adapt their role and become less reliant on retail activity to support footfall.
- 2.3. In terms of larger town centres, there is a need to ensure that they improve their resilience by becoming vibrant centres for living, culture, entertainment, leisure, shopping, business and civic activity.

- 2.4. Lower order district, local and neighbourhood centres fulfil progressively more localised functions serving the needs of their surrounding communities.
- 2.5. Town centres have developed over many years and, inevitably, circumstances change over time with new opportunities for regeneration arising on a fairly consistent basis. In order to support the vitality and resilience of these town centres and to ensure that they adapt and evolve, it is important that the redevelopment of town centre regeneration opportunities is heavily promoted.

3. Context

- 3.1. One of the key early stages in the process is to review other policies, plans and strategies which are of relevance to this particular topic area and which help to inform and influence the direction of the Local Plan. There is a need for the Local Plan to be consistent with planning policy at different levels.
- 3.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out Government policy in respect of planning matters and this is supported by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This sets out the broad planning framework within which development plans are produced.
- 3.3. Sub-regionally, the Places for Everyone Plan joint plan (PfE) establishes strategic policies and site allocations across nine of the ten Greater Manchester districts. Following its adoption in March 2024, PfE is now a key part of Bury's development plan that sits alongside the Local Plan.
- 3.4. There are also a range of other plans and strategies that, whilst not being policy, are of relevance to the Borough's centres.

National Planning Policy

- 3.5. All development plans must be prepared within the context of the Government's planning policies. These are primarily set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ which sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The NPPF provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced.

¹ [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

- 3.6. The NPPF is supported by separate policy documents related to waste² and traveller sites³ as well as more detailed information in Planning Practice Guidance⁴.
- 3.7. Central to the NPPF is the Government's objective of achieving sustainable development and it highlights that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways:
- **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
 - **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - **an environmental objective** – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 3.8. The NPPF seeks to ensure the vitality of town centres⁵ and paragraph 90 states that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should:
- a) define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters;

² [National Planning Policy for Waste](#)

³ [Planning policy for traveller sites](#)

⁴ [Planning Practice Guidance](#)

⁵ The NPPF defines a town centres as an area defined on the local authority's policies map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance. Unless they are identified as centres in the development plan, existing out-of-centre developments, comprising or including main town centre uses, do not constitute town centres.

- b) define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre;
- c) retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones;
- d) allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead. Meeting anticipated needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses over this period should not be compromised by limited site availability, so town centre boundaries should be kept under review where necessary;
- e) where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for main town centre uses, allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, policies should explain how identified needs can be met in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre; and
- f) recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.

- 3.9. Paragraph 91 states that local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.
- 3.10. Paragraph 92 states that when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored.
- 3.11. Paragraph 94 states that when assessing applications for retail and leisure development outside town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500m² of gross floorspace).

- 3.12. Paragraph 95 of the NPPF states that where an application fails to satisfy the sequential test or is likely to have significant adverse impact it should be refused.

Greater Manchester Strategy 2021-2031

- 3.13. The Strategy⁶ is Greater Manchester's plan for all communities, neighbourhoods, towns and cities which make up the city-region. It is a plan for recovery and renewal following the pandemic.
- 3.14. The Strategy aims to achieve the shared vision of 'Good Lives for All: that Greater Manchester is a great place to grow up, get on and grow old; a great place to invest, do business, visit and study' and how this will be achieved.
- 3.15. The Strategy builds on the work undertaken by the Greater Manchester Strategy - Our People, Our Place (2017), by ensuring that all the people in Greater Manchester have access to safe, decent and affordable transport, accelerate plans towards carbon neutrality, creation of greener homes and communities and better jobs and skills.
- 3.16. The Strategy focuses on three key themes of:
- A greener Greater Manchester – focusing on tackling climate change and working toward our carbon neutral aim;
 - A fairer Greater Manchester – addressing inequality and levelling-up, from access to good jobs, to transport, health and housing.
 - A more prosperous Greater Manchester – delivering economic growth which is more equitable and socially responsible, bringing opportunities and prosperity to all.

Places for Everyone

- 3.17. Places for Everyone (PfE) was prepared as a Joint Development Plan Document of nine of the ten Greater Manchester local planning authorities (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan). The plan was formally adopted in March 2024.
- 3.18. PfE is the strategic spatial plan that sets out a collective planning policy framework for the nine constituent boroughs. All policies within the plan are 'strategic policies' and it forms a key part of Bury's wider development plan and is used to determine individual planning applications. As such, Bury's Local Plan will need to be consistent with PfE.

⁶ <https://aboutgreatermanchester.com/the-greater-manchester-strategy-2021-2031/>

- 3.19. As a strategic plan, Places for Everyone does not cover everything that Bury's Local Plan would. Therefore, Bury's Local Plan will set out more detailed policies reflecting local circumstances.
- 3.20. As a strategic plan, Places for Everyone only refers to the sub-regional main town centres within the plan area. Policy JP-Strat12: Main Town Centres states that the role of the main town centres as local economic drivers will continue to be developed, providing the primary focus for office, retail, leisure and cultural activity for their surrounding areas. Development here will offer a significant opportunity to reduce levels of poverty and deliver inclusive growth.

Opportunities to further increase the population catchments of these centres will be taken, including significantly increasing the resident population of the main town centres by providing a mix of type and size of dwellings supported by the necessary infrastructure and amenities including new and improved public spaces and green infrastructure. This will be achieved alongside, rather than displacing, the range of non-residential uses in the centres. Housing growth along the key public transport corridors into the main town centres will also be promoted, further increasing the population catchments of those centres.

The role of the main town centres as major public transport hubs will be developed and supported by a network of active travel routes, enabling residents to have improved access to opportunities across Greater Manchester as well as within the centres themselves.

Development will be carefully managed to ensure that the local distinctiveness of each main town centre is retained and enhanced. Opportunities will also be taken to protect and enhance natural and historic assets in the town centres.

- 3.21. In addition, Policy JP-P4: New Retail and Leisure Uses in Town Centres states that the upper levels of the hierarchy of centres for retail and leisure uses will be maintained and enhanced. These are:
- A. City Centre (within Manchester and Salford)
 - B. Main town centres:
 - 1. Altrincham (Trafford)
 - 2. Ashton-under-Lyne (Tameside)
 - 3. Bolton (Bolton)
 - 4. Bury (Bury)

5. Oldham (Oldham)
6. Rochdale (Rochdale)
- 7 Salford Quays (Salford)
8. Wigan (Wigan)

The boundaries of the centres and detail of other centres at lower levels of the hierarchy are defined in district local plans. Appropriate large-scale retail and leisure development will be accommodated within the centres in the upper levels of the hierarchy. The need for the expansion of any existing centres, or the provision of new centres, will be identified in district local plans.

Bury's 'Let's Do It!' Strategy

- 3.22. Bury's Let's Do It Strategy is a ten-year vision and strategy for the Borough. It seeks to build upon a shared sense of local pride and act as a call to arms for progressing the local vision of achieving *'faster economic growth than the national average, with lower than national average levels of deprivation'*.
- 3.23. It is a single strategy for the council, police, health, other public services, the voluntary, community and faith sector and business communities and some of its key aims are to:
 - Develop every township in the borough to be better and stronger than before the Covid-19 pandemic;
 - Tackle the causes of inequality and ensure that our children have a better start in life, with access to improved education and broader horizons;
 - Help every adult to have the opportunity to be their very best through access to high quality, local work and to help our older residents stay connected and independent;
 - Support local businesses as they seek to recover and thrive; and
 - Deliver net zero emissions and a cleaner environment for all.
- 3.24. Bury's Local Plan will play a key role in delivering the vision and aims of the Let's Do It Strategy and, as such, it is important that there is alignment between these two key local strategies.

Bury town centre masterplan

- 3.25. The Bury Town Centre Masterplan recognises that Bury town centre offers an opportunity for transformative change over the next 20 years - building on the exciting developments that will be forthcoming, such as the redeveloped Interchange and reimagined Bury Market which includes a new flexi-hall venue, and the unique cultural and heritage assets that Bury already benefits from.



- 3.26. Its key objective is for Bury to be an attractive, thriving, healthy and forward-looking town where people aspire to live, work and study and where everyone can enjoy the Bury experience.
- 3.27. The masterplan sets out an ambitious but deliverable vision for Bury town centre which recognises that it cannot stand still. To remain a vibrant and thriving centre, Bury needs to adapt to the changes in the UK's retail market, be attractive and open to inward investment, and encourage high-quality, mixed-use development as well as retain the key businesses and communities that make Bury the place that it is today.
- 3.28. The masterplan provides a clear plan, vision, and objectives to ensure the future sustainability of the borough's principal town centre between now and 2040. A vision which will secure the long-term economic growth of the town.
- 3.29. The masterplan seeks to address the issues and challenges that Bury Town Centre currently faces and sets out a long-term vision for the growth and development of the town centre over the next 15 to 20 years. This includes:
- a transformational revamp of the heart of the centre; and
 - setting out proposals to transform the Mill Gate Shopping Centre with new shops, leisure, residential and business opportunities.
- 3.30. Alongside this, the masterplan identifies other development opportunities across the town centre that will complement the Mill Gate proposals and help

to sustain Bury as one of the top town centres within Greater Manchester and beyond. These opportunities include proposals for:

- an improved market;
- a new re-arranged transport interchange; and
- a new Flexi Hall, which will comprise a large, state of the art, carbon neutral, multifunctional events space that can support market stalls, 'pop-up' trading, live performance, and community events.

3.31. Sites have also been identified for new town centre residential development as well as wider innovation, education and employment opportunities.

3.32. It is proposed that these developments will be supported and linked by a high-quality public environment which is attractive, easy to navigate and safe, to allow pedestrians and cyclists to move around easily.

3.33. The masterplan puts forward key development proposals including:

- the transformation of the Mill Gate and introduction of new uses, including residential, leisure, a broader food and beverage offer and a potential location for a new leisure centre;
- an improved Bury Market with a new Flexi-Hall and also include a café bar, an area dedicated to office functions, and space dedicated to the provision of workshops, co-worker space or small business start-ups;
- the creation of new homes (including affordable) to encourage town centre living;
- the introduction of new, high-quality public realm, including the creation of a new Station Square in Bolton Street;
- the development of new employment space, encouraging innovation and collaboration, with a particular focus on new space for small and medium sized businesses; and
- a redeveloped Bury Interchange, providing a highly connected and accessible new gateway into the town centre.

Mill Gate Regeneration Framework

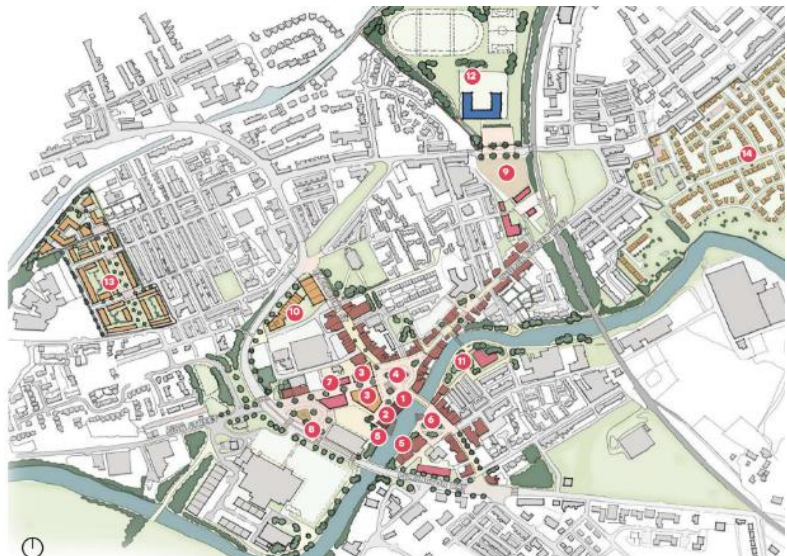
- 3.34. The Council is working alongside Bruntwood to create a multi-million pound plan to transform the Mill Gate shopping centre and the surrounding areas, as well as enhancing the existing character of the town centre.



- 3.35. Spanning 15 acres, it will become a vibrant and dynamic mixed-used development incorporating retail, leisure, hospitality and residential, with sustainability, education and wellness at its heart. It will also provide workspace, bringing co-working facilities directly to the high street.
- 3.36. Following consultation with residents, retailers and stakeholders, the Council has adopted a Regeneration Framework which provides a clear long-term vision for the Framework area.
- 3.37. The Framework provides a strategic basis to guide the coordinated delivery of future development phases to maximise the environmental, economic and social potential of the town centre.

Radcliffe Strategic Regeneration Framework

- 3.38. The Radcliffe Strategic Regeneration Framework is the guide that is shaping the direction of Radcliffe's growth over the next 15 years with a series of realistic short, medium, and longer-term actions. It is also shaping the direction of future council investment,



supporting bids for central governmental funding and providing certainty for third parties wanting to invest in town.

- 3.39. The purpose of the Strategic Regeneration Framework is to provide the Council with a single integrated plan for the strategic redevelopment of Radcliffe. It identifies a clear set of interventions and wider strategies to guide growth and to help deliver the transformational change that is required through regeneration in the town.



- 3.40. This Framework focuses on interventions within the core of the town and its immediate periphery to reactivate and attract investment into Radcliffe with the aim of creating a sustainable and successful town.
- 3.41. The Framework recognises that for Radcliffe to be successful the priority must be to create a distinctive core. This must be focused on new market creation which reflects Radcliffe's unique qualities in order to attract visitors, encourage investment and facilitate growth. Radcliffe has a very distinctive location on the River Irwell. There is a real opportunity to maximise this key environmental asset and develop Radcliffe's strengths to create a new core that is thriving and promotes healthy lifestyle choices.
- 3.42. Its vision is for Radcliffe to be a prospering community, based upon a thriving and distinctive town centre, incorporating sustainable transport and growth, promoting healthy lifestyle opportunities, a good range of homes, along with a strong education, employment and leisure offer, for all residents.

Prestwich Village Regeneration

3.43. Bury Council and nationwide placemaker Muse are working together to create a new beating heart for Prestwich Village that appeals to everyone. Together they have formed a Joint Venture, Prestwich Regeneration LLP, to advance the £100m+ regeneration of the Longfield Centre site.

3.44. The proposals are intended to cement Prestwich as one of the best places to live and spend time in the North West.

3.45. In July 2024, a hybrid planning application was approved by the Council for the regeneration of the Longfield Centre with a scheme that includes:

- a community hub;
- a new village square;
- a market hall;
- flexible retail and leisure spaces;
- landscaped outdoor and green spaces;
- a new travel hub off Fairfax Road; and
- around 200 homes.



Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan

3.46. The Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan sets out a vision for the town centre which will support the town's ongoing success and guide future interventions in the short, medium and long term. The vision is supported by a series of high-level proposals and concepts that look to enhance the town centre for local residents, the businesses community and visitors.

3.47. All the proposals in the plan will require further detailed work and surveys where necessary, which would be subject to further engagement and consultation with stakeholders before being implemented.



3.48. The vision for the Plan is that, over the next few years, Ramsbottom town centre will have built on its reputation as one of the best places in the region to live, visit and work. It will be an even more attractive and vibrant destination for its residents, visitors, and workers, supported by the East Lancashire Railway, a high-quality restaurant scene, a good range of independent retailers, a popular annual events programme and high-quality workspace for those wishing to base their businesses locally.

3.49. To support this, the town centre environment and experience of its users will be improved with new and enhanced areas of public realm and event space, improved linkages and better car parking arrangements that will encourage active travel and improve movement and circulation throughout the town.

4. Local Profile

4.1. Issues connected to main town centre uses are intrinsically linked with the vitality and viability of town centres being heavily dependent on the attractiveness of these key town centre activities. This section sets out a broad profile of the Borough in terms of its town centres and the key uses that support their vitality and viability. It initially provides a broad overview of each town centre before looking into current and future trends in retailing, leisure and tourism and culture.

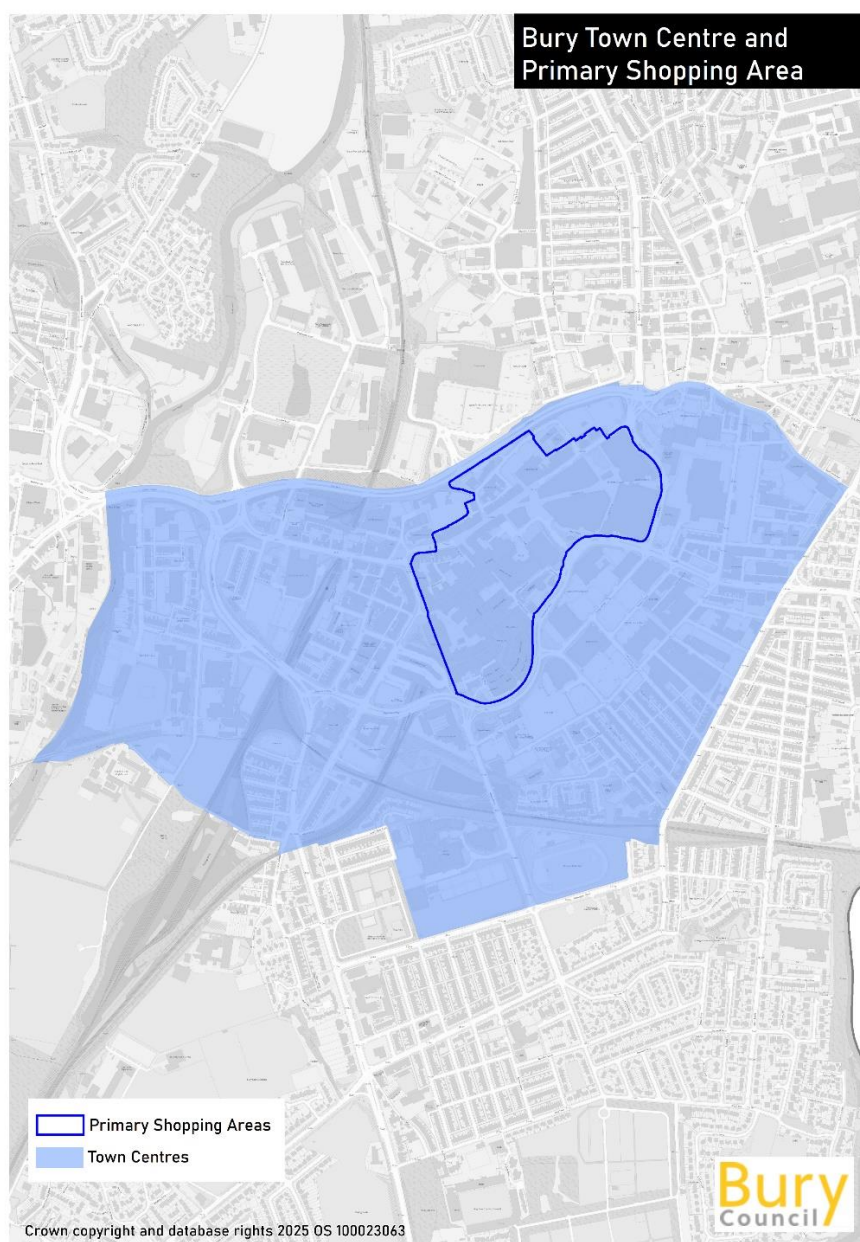
Town Centres

- 4.2. The Borough is host to a diverse hierarchy of centres ranging from the sub-regionally significant town centre of Bury which acts as the Borough's key focal point, to smaller local and neighbourhood centres which serve the day-to-day needs of their local area.
- 4.3. The Borough's town centres are the most significant centres within the hierarchy. These centres are at the heart of the Borough's communities and represent the Borough's most sustainable locations, being readily accessible by a variety of transport modes. They are host to a wide range of facilities and functions that serve community needs and enable people to access shopping and other services in a single trip. They are an essential and integral part of the Borough's local economy.
- 4.4. Paragraph 90(b) of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation and that planning policies should define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre.

Bury

- 4.5. Bury, as the sub-regional centre, has managed to attract significant levels of investment in recent years – most notably with the Rock development and there are further regeneration opportunities in the pipeline with proposals for residential development at Pyramid Park; the redevelopment of the Mill Gate; the new Flexi Hall and market regeneration; the ongoing redevelopment of the former police station; and the residential conversion of Humphry House being particularly high profile projects.
- 4.6. Plan 1 below shows the extent of the Primary Shopping Area for Bury town centre within the context of the wider town centre boundary.

Plan 1 – Bury town centre and its Primary Shopping Area



Ramsbottom

- 4.7. Ramsbottom, with its attractive character, has been able to develop and adapt into a strong centre with an element of specialist retailing able to capitalise on the town's assets as a tourist destination. In support of this, the town has seen an increased reputation for food and drink-related businesses although recent years have seen several closures as a result of economic conditions.
- 4.8. Plan 2 below shows the extent of the Primary Shopping Area for Ramsbottom town centre within the context of the wider town centre boundary.

Plan 2 – Ramsbottom town centre and its Primary Shopping Area



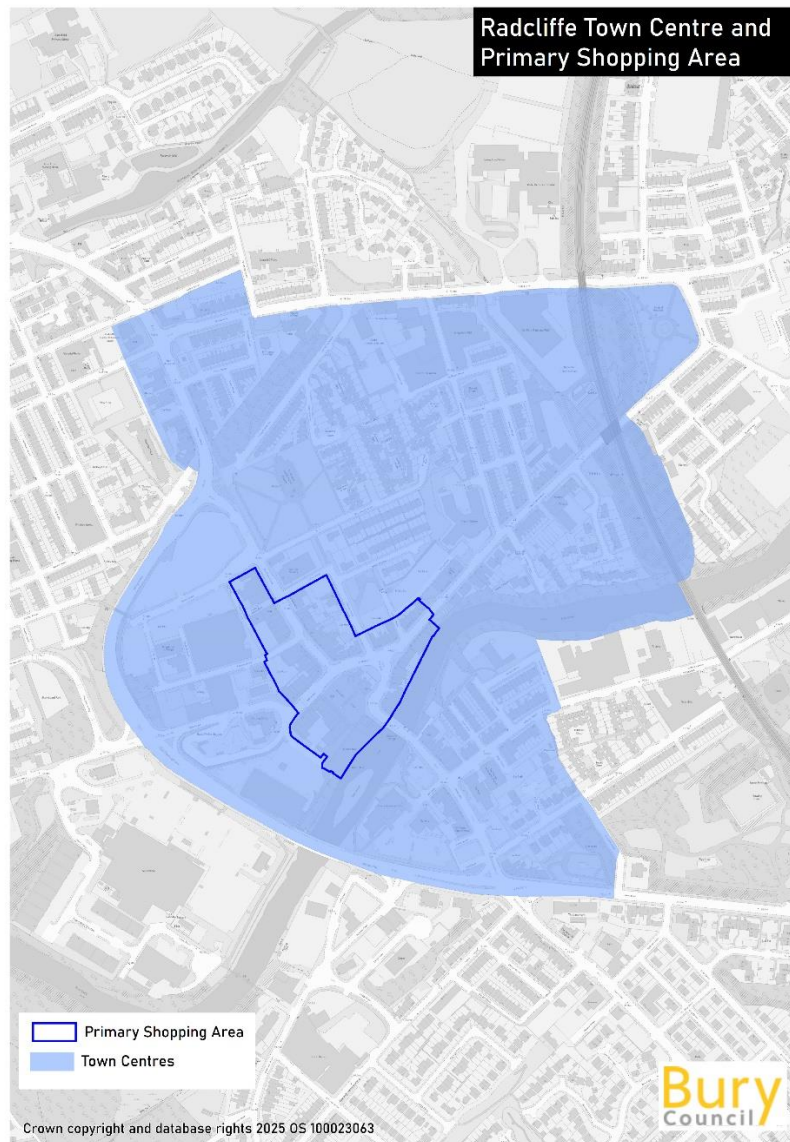
Radcliffe

- 4.9. After a period of decline, there have been significant regeneration efforts in the heart of Radcliffe town centre including the ongoing construction of the new Radcliffe Hub; renovation of Radcliffe Market and basement; refurbishment of Market Chambers; a link building between the Market Chambers and Market basement; and the Radcliffe Enterprise Centre. This will be supported by significant new residential development in and around the town centre and the construction of the new Radcliffe Star Academy high school. These regeneration projects will significantly improve the vitality of

Radcliffe town centre, increasing confidence and investment into the town and increasing footfall.

- 4.10. Plan 3 below shows the extent of the Primary Shopping Area for Radcliffe town centre within the context of the wider town centre boundary.

Plan 3 – Radcliffe town centre and its Primary Shopping Area

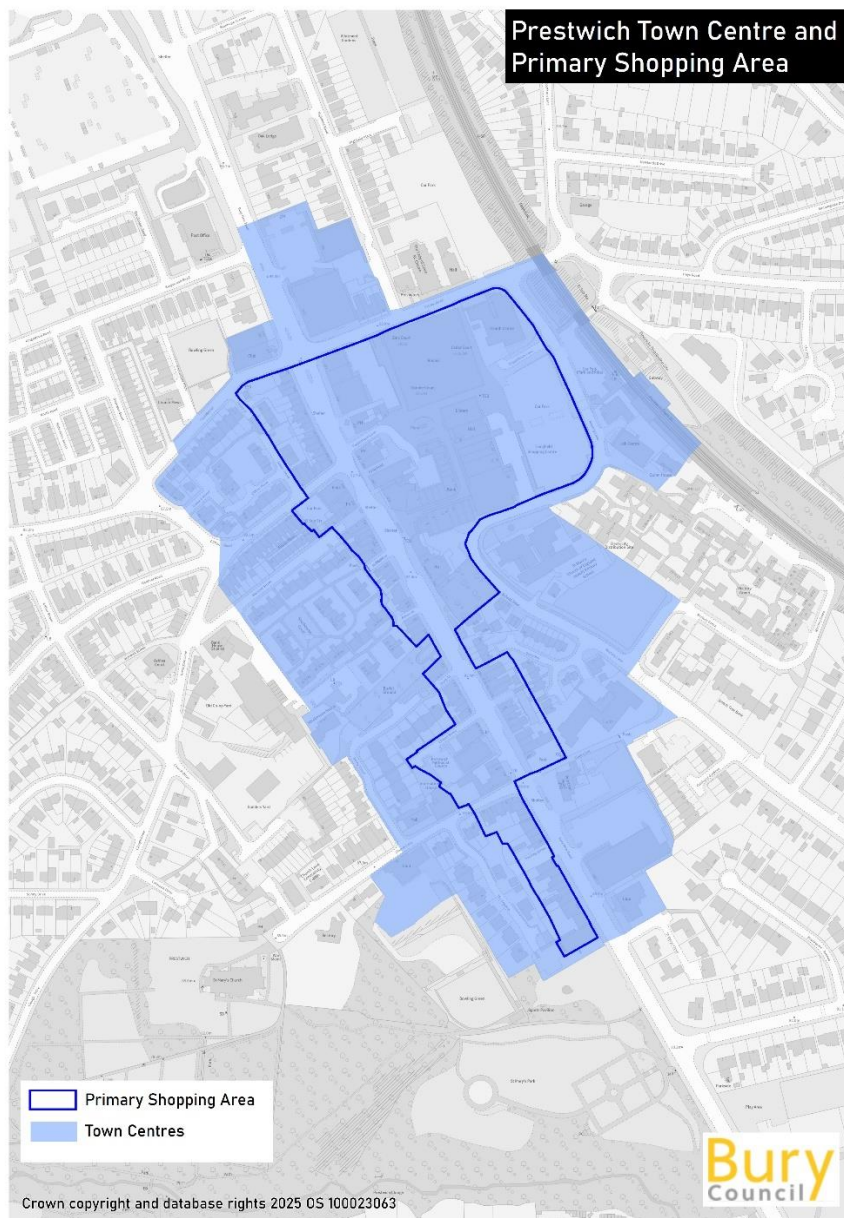


Prestwich

- 4.11. Prestwich town centre has also witnessed significant improvements in recent years on the back of it becoming an increasingly popular residential destination and its thriving food and drink scene which was recently recognised as the winner of the 2025 Foodie Neighbourhood of the Year at the recent Manchester Food and Drinks Awards.

- 4.12. The vitality of Prestwich town centre will be further boosted by the £100m+ regeneration of the Longfield Centre site in the heart of the town centre involving:
- A new village square including space for pop-up events like markets, food festivals, art exhibitions and live performances.
 - A market hall providing smaller spaces for local retailers and food hall for local food operators.
 - Flexible retail and leisure space, which will complement the high street and help to cater for Prestwich's diverse business community.
 - Public realm improvements, including green spaces, trees and public art installations.
 - An enhanced arrival experience from the tram by delivering landscaping which connects with the new public spaces in the village.
 - A new travel hub off Fairfax Road, which will contain electric vehicle charging points, cycle storage and parcel lockers.
 - Around 200 new homes, including a mix from affordable homes to homes for first-time buyers, growing families and downsizers.
- 4.13. Plan 4 shows the extent of the Primary Shopping Area for Prestwich town centre within the context of the wider town centre boundary.

Plan 4 – Prestwich town centre and its Primary Shopping Area



Other centres

- 4.14. The Borough includes the district centres of Tottington, Whitefield and Sedgley Park as well as an extensive range of local and neighbourhood centres which serve as essential hubs for their surrounding communities, providing residents with convenient access to everyday retail and services.
- 4.15. In addition to the existing local and neighbourhood centres, the allocations within the Places for Everyone Joint are of a scale that necessitates the provision of new supporting infrastructure including new local centres. Where such provision is necessary, there is a requirement within the allocation policies for these to be provided as part of the wider development.

5. Summary of Key Issues

5.1. This Centres Topic Paper has highlighted a number of Key Issues that need to be considered in taking the Local Plan forward. These Key Issues are considered to be as follows:

- The need to support the roles and maintain and enhance the vitality of the Borough's hierarchy of centres;
- The need to support the vitality and resilience of Bury's town centres and to ensure that they adapt and evolve by capitalising on and promoting regeneration opportunities;
- The need to ensure that proposals for main town centre uses are in an appropriate location and that proposals for retail, leisure and office development are of a scale that would not have significant adverse impacts;
- The need to maintain retailing as the predominant use at ground floor level within the Primary Shopping Areas of town and district centres; and
- The importance of local retail facilities within the Borough's Local and Neighbourhood Centres.

Bury
Council