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# The Analytical Head: Physical and Economic Context

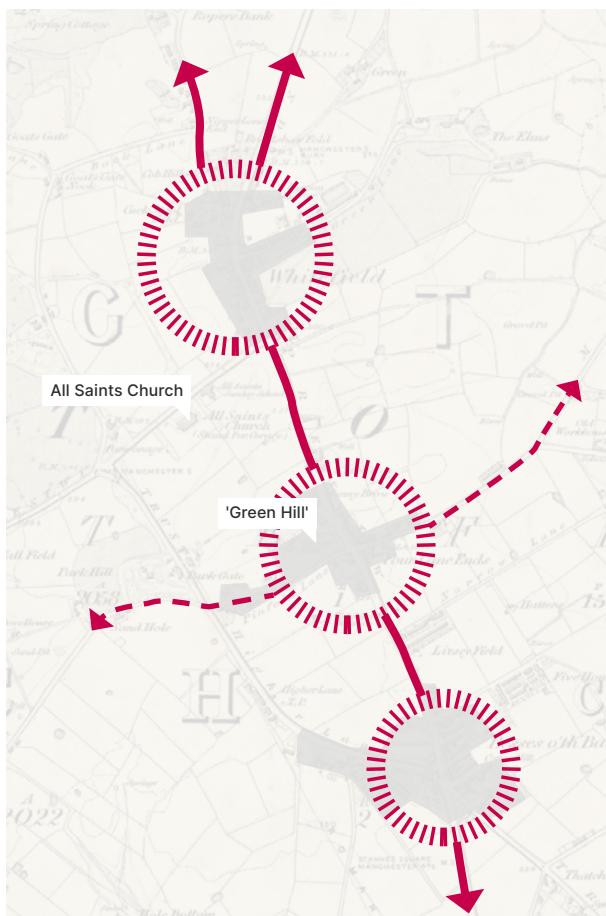
Local Scale



This section details the findings of a thorough spatial analysis of Whitefield and its surrounding context. The section flows through several scales of analysis, considering the wider strategic picture before drilling down into the study area boundary itself.

## 2.1 The Urban Morphology of Whitefield

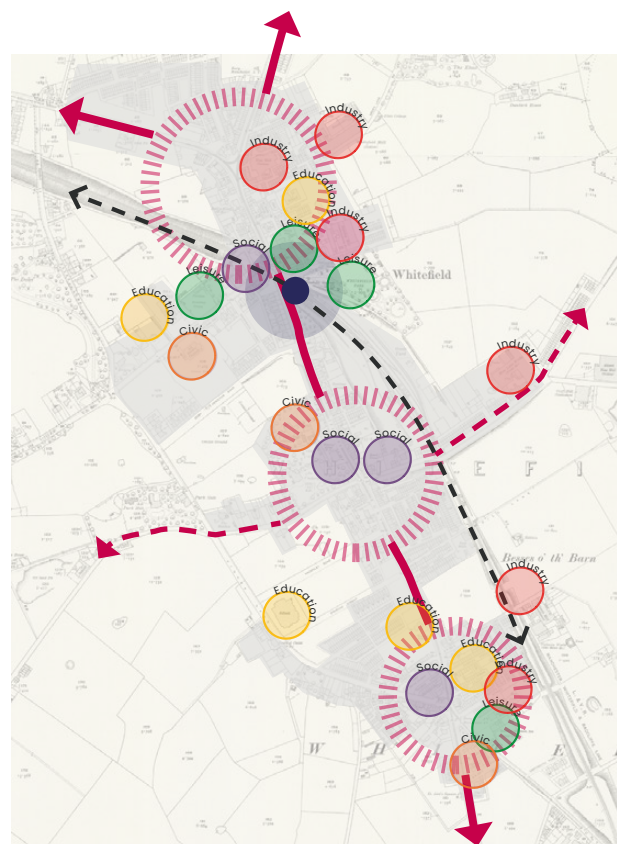
Whitefield's urban morphology provides great insight into the place we experience today. It shares clues as to why the town centre faces its challenges; provides a story behind its historic assets, and indicates a sense of where the 'heart' (or 'hearts') of Whitefield was previously located.



### 1848

Whitefield sits within a rural context, with three hamlets formed at the intersection of long distance rural lanes – at Whitefield to the north, Four Lane Ends at the centre, and Besses to the south.

There are alternative narratives behind the naming of Whitefield, one of which suggests the name originates from the bleaching process of settled Flemish weavers as they bleached their fabric in the sun.



### 1910

Whitefield rapidly evolved as the area industrialised, catalysed by the development of the railway and a new station. Large mills and warehouses were developed, with rows of workers houses, schools and other amenities clustered nearby and fronting Bury New Road.

**Clusters of uses and activity have formed around the historic hamlets and new station – suggesting a place with 'multiple hearts'.**



## 1947

Whitefield's next stage of evolution from the rural clusters of the 19th-century aligns closely with many towns of its type across the UK, large-scale, post-war housing estates built away from the primary routes and facilities.

This represents the start of the process of urban sprawl, as **Whitefield begins to lose its compact urban form - previously structured along Bury New Road and clustered around the historic hearts.**



## 1965

The town continues to grow as more overspill estates were created to accommodate families moved out of inner Manchester as slum clearance programmes were undertaken.

By this point in history, the use of the private car as a primary means of transport would be becoming widespread. Old arterial high streets across Manchester and the UK were beginning to transform into urban highways, focused on getting cars from A to B quicker. The car and urban sprawl created the Bury New Road we see today.

## The Whitefield Timeline

Whitefield has been many different places to many different communities through its evolution.

This timeline captures this process of transition.



Whitefield hamlet - 1848

pre 1066

### A stop on the Roman road?

Scraps of evidence suggest that a Roman road from Manchester to Ribchester in the north once ran across part of the land on which the modern Whitefield is located.



Whitefield weavers cottages - date unknown

15-17<sup>th</sup> century

### Rural

A small but thriving community of weavers and farmers had developed along rural lanes. The name Whitefield is thought to have originated from Flemish weavers and their fabric dying process. Stand Grammar School, a chapel and other landmarks begin to emerge.



Whitefield Mill

18<sup>th</sup> century

### Industrialising

The first step towards modern Whitefield was made when Bury Old Road was constructed in 1755. By 1792 the population of Whitefield was 2,780. Industry started at Stand Lane where the first cotton mill was built on Peel Street (Radcliffe) in 1780.



**19<sup>th</sup> century****A compact industrial suburb**

By 1850, there were several cotton mills and a coal mine, which led to the construction of workers' housing and amenities around places of work. The construction of Bury New Road in 1827 and a train line from Bury to Manchester in 1879 catalysed this transition.



A mix of uses growing around the mills

**20<sup>th</sup> century****Suburbanising**

The commercialisation of the train line and development of the road network resulted in the suburbanisation of Whitefield. Several housing estates were built during this period (e.g. Hillock Estate) as part of urban sprawl. The population grew rapidly from 14,370 in 1961 to 21,830 by 1971.



Low-density post-war housing infill dominates Whitefield's edges

**Now****Divided**

Today, Whitefield is largely divided by the busy Bury New Road, which contributes to many of its current issues – poor walkability, a feeling of social and physical disconnect, a low-quality public realm.



Bury New Road divides the town centre

## 2.2 A bustling linear town

### Learning from the past

As Whitefield grew from a series of hamlets to a linear industrial suburb during the late-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, there was a point in time where the town appeared to be a compact and bustling urban neighbourhood – where work, home, and social facilities sat within a short walk of one another.

The 1910 plan of Whitefield highlights this diversity of activity. The development of the railway and modernisation of Bury New Road made the area more accessible, and a more logical location for industry.

A broad mix of uses and facilities such as pubs, schools, parks, shops, and other amenities all sat within a short walk from homes built around the mills. Bury New Road host many of these uses as the social spine of the town.

The prevalence of a range of shops, pubs and other facilities on Bury New Road suggests a bustling high street; a **place for social and economic exchange**, not just fast moving traffic.

This history provides great cues for how we may address the future. The dramatic increase of vehicular traffic moving along and to Bury New Road has eroded the social spine and heart of Whitefield over time, compromising the historic structure of the town.

**This can only be resolved by; creating a sense of place again along the road, reinstating the high street as a place for people.**







Map of Whitefield 1910 - a bustling arterial Town 1910



## 2.3 Local Context





















### Uses and Destinations

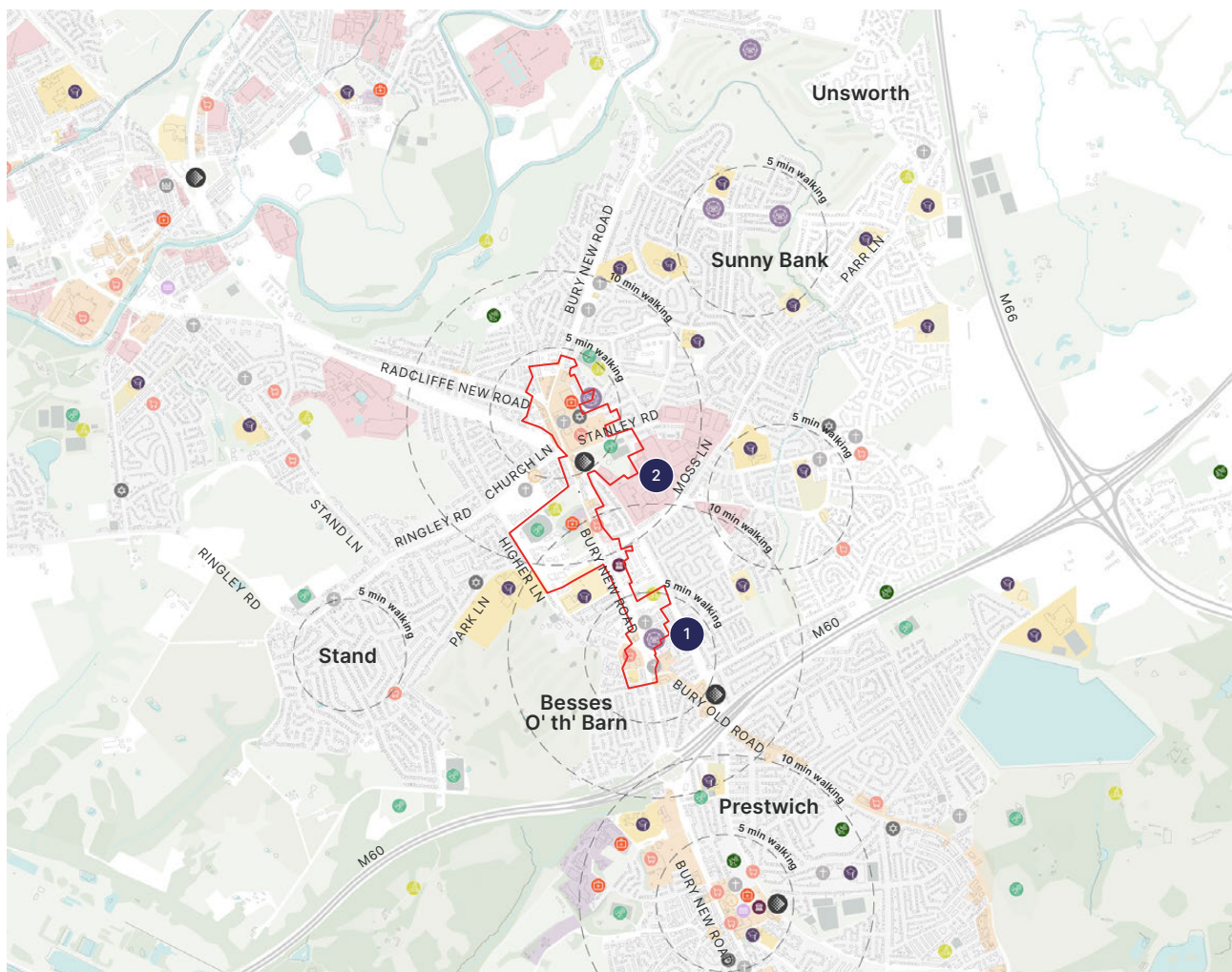
Bury New Road acts as Whitefield's 'high street', serving surrounding residential suburbs with a broad range of services and amenities. Smaller local centres can also be found at Sunny Bank and off Moss Lane, to the east.

Supermarkets, health, sport and education facilities are all located in or directly adjacent to the study area boundary – within a short walk of both Besses and Whitefield tram stations.

The area benefits from several primary schools, with six primary schools located within fifteen minutes walk of the study area boundary. Philips High School, located within five minutes walk from the town centre, is a major asset.

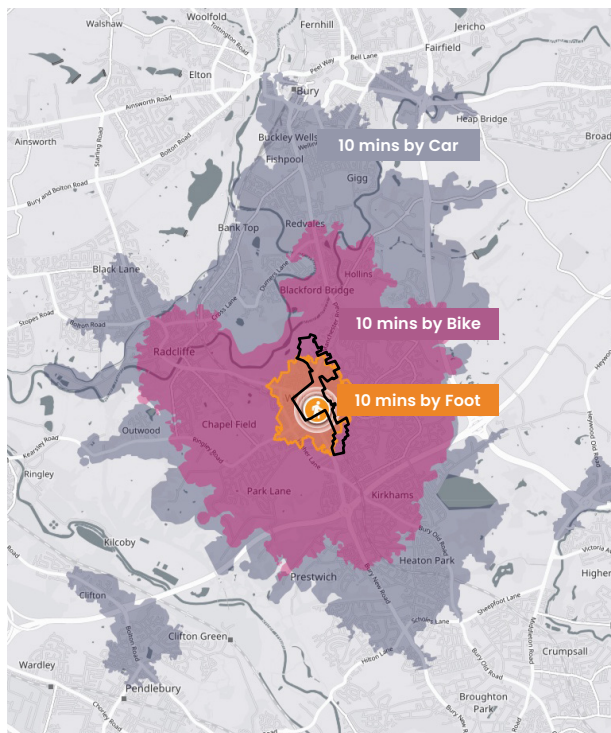
#### Key

 School	 Playground	 Church	<b>Land Use</b>  Predominantly Residential  Industrial  Retail  Education  Healthcare  Green Space		
 Healthcare	 Allotment	 Mosque			
 Supermarket / Groceries	 Library	 Synagogue			
 Community Hub	 Art Centre	 Metrolink Station			
 Playing Fields / Sports	 Institution				



Land Uses and Destinations Plan





### Who does Bury New Road serve?

The services and amenities located on Bury New Road are incredibly accessible on foot or bike – with the residential neighbourhoods of Stand and Unsworth located within a 10-minute cycle.

Despite this, the town centre contains a significant amount of car parking, which are not always used to their capacity; these are dispersed across the Town Centre in an unplanned manner. This suggests that short shopping trips and others short journeys are undertaken using the car.

This requires further testing and analysis, with limited data available under the scope of this study.

1



Victoria Square Shopping retail Centre

2



Industrial estate next to Whitefield Tram Station

### Key Findings and Messages



- Whitefield is well provided by local amenities such as schools, healthcare, and groceries;
- There are many facilities catering for the needs of the community, but largely located within places of worship;
- Walkability and cycling accessibility are key, which would enable people to make short trips – such as school run, groceries, playground dates – without a car within the neighbourhood; and
- There is opportunity to create a highly walkable / accessible, compact and vibrant town centre in Whitefield – where active travel, crossings and associated facilities.



## 2.4 Local Context

### Movement and Connectivity (Roads)

Bury New Road runs through the of Whitefield Town Centre, carrying high volumes of vehicular traffic, with Department of Transport statistics highlighting 30,000 vehicle trips a day, within particular locations in 2016.

- Bury New Road severs Whitefield Town Centre from north to south. The route connects Whitefield with Bury to the North, Radcliffe to the Northwest, and Manchester City Centre to the south.
- The A56 suffers large volumes of vehicular traffic, with strategic routes linking into the town centre at its northern and southern gateways. The constant presence of traffic negatively impacts sense of place, resulting in wide road carriageways and large junctions.
- A lack of pedestrian crossings across Bury New Road and Higher Lane prevents permeability from east to west through the town centre.
- Whitefield Metrolink station is located at the heart of the town centre, with Besses O' th' Barn station within a 15-minute walk.
- There are several bus stops serving the area; however residents consider that the connectivity is poor and bus services deficient.



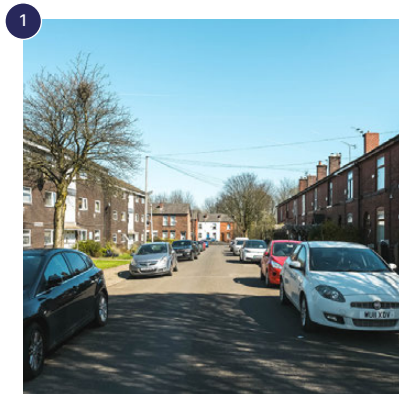


Car Parking Facilities Plan

## Car Parking

There are several larger car parking areas around the town centre, which provide a significant number of spaces. Unfortunately, it is not considered by businesses and shoppers to be in the right places and people do not feel encouraged or safe enough to walk from it to their destination. Existing facilities include:

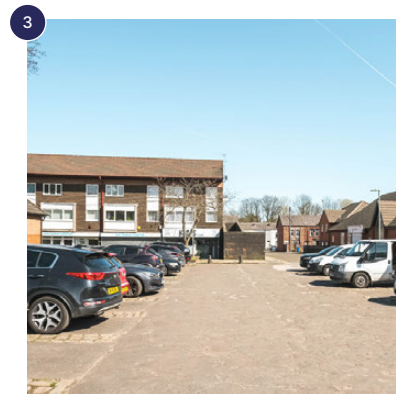
- Two large multi-storey car park facilities are located close to the Metrolink station, including a three-storey park and ride facility at the metrolink station and at Morrisons.
- Parking courts at Victoria Square local centre and at the southern gateway detract from the quality of the streetscene.
- Cars park in undefined spaces across the town centre, in side alleys, residential streets, to the rear of businesses, and along the edges of footways.



Residential streets are inundated with cars parked along kerbs



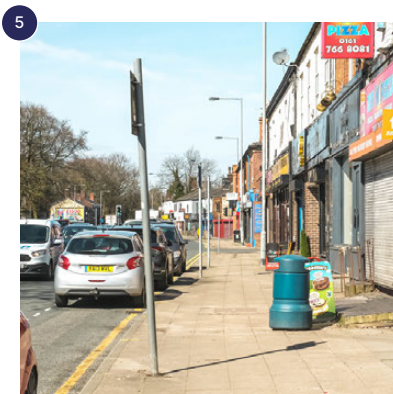
The tram station park and ride provides a large capacity facility



Large hardstanding parking area at Victoria Square local centre



Cars are parked along the kerbs of minor streets and alleys

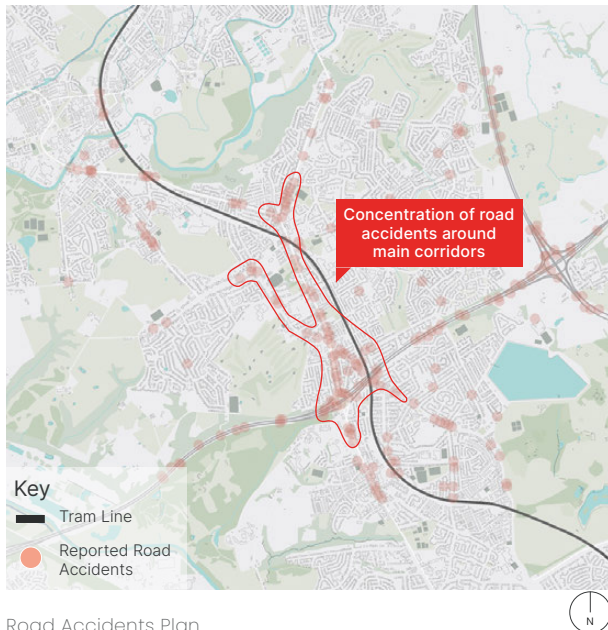


Short-stay parking along the A56 is poorly integrated



Hardstanding parking courts dominate the front of shops along the A56





## Road Accidents

- High traffic counts and accidents are predominately located along Bury New Road and Higher Lane, with junctions acting as accident hot spots.
- Bury New Road acts as a major barrier to pedestrian movement, with crossings concentrated around large road junctions.
- The area around Bury New Road/ Higher Lane/ Bury Old Road junction is highlighted in the emerging Bury Transport Strategy as having major issues with safety and design.



The junction of Bury New Road is highlighted as being prone to road accidents, and presents a convoluted crossing environment for pedestrians



The junction at Bury New Road and Pinfold Lane / Moss Lane is also highlighted as an issue, with no signalised crossing, narrow footways and wide road carriageway.



Air Quality Plan



### Air Quality

- Air Quality Management Area's cover significant sections of the Bury New Road corridor through the town centre, where the local air quality is unlikely to meet the Government's national air quality objectives.
- Poor air quality areas in Whitefield are concentrated in the Bury New Road corridor and the motorways M60 and M66.
- Reflects the poor environment and heavy car traffic in the motorway and main corridor.



5548 high-polluting vans, LGVs and HGVs passed along Bury New Road through the town centre in a single day in 2016 – reducing air quality and negatively impacting sense of place along the high street (Department for Transport, 2016)

What you've said...

"Bury New Road feels polluted from all the fast and heavy traffic passing through."

Whitefield Resident

### Key Findings and Messages



- The volume of vehicular traffic along Bury New Road has a major impact on place, permeability, and safety across the corridor;
- Parked cars dominate the street scene and secondary spaces across the study area, further detracting from sense of place;
- There are opportunities in large sites at the periphery of the town centre that could be used to consolidate parking in the long term, creating more space for people and nature along the corridor;
- There is a major opportunity to repair the severance caused by Bury New Road as part of a place and people focused approach to street design;
- Pedestrian experience must be considered going forward; and
- There is potential tie into TfGM strategies to improve public transport services serving the centre as part of long-term future plans.



## 2.5 Local Context

# Walking and Cycling

Whitefield is surrounded by parks, open spaces and major strategic green and blue corridors. Despite this, the network of active-travel linkages breaks down as routes meet residential areas surrounding the town centre – where cars dominate the street environment.

The pedestrian environment along the main corridor is low-quality, – and comprises with convoluted crossings isolated to major junctions. Bury New Road acts as a barrier to east-west movement between residential neighbourhoods; this affects wider permeability.

Both tram stations offer cycle parking, and improved junctions for cyclists are proposed at Higher Lane at the junction with Pinfold Lane, as well as Church Lane. The National Cycle Route runs through Philips Park and the Irwell corridor, presenting a major opportunity regarding wider active travel connectivity.

### Key

- Metrolink Station
- Pedestrian linkages (fully pedestrianised and / or quality pedestrian environment)
- Open Space
- Bee infrastructure proposals
- Tram Line
- Areas where strategic pedestrian / cycle linkages end
- National cycle route 6





There is limited cycle parking provision at the tram station – and existing facilities are poorly overlooked

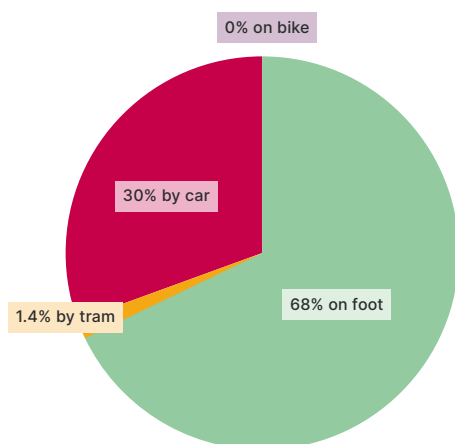


Bury New Road acts as a major barrier to east-west pedestrian movement, with pedestrian crossing facilities isolated to major junctions



There are little-to-no cycle lanes along streets around the town centre – and lanes along the corridor are narrow and unsegregated

## How do people reach the town centre?



The survey responses reveal that a large majority travel to the Town Centre on foot – suggesting they live in close proximity. Over a quarter of journeys are made by car.

## Key Findings and Messages



- The active travel network breaks down as strategic linkages meet residential neighbourhoods leading into the town;
- Missing or insufficient cycle infrastructure across the area deters people from using bikes to get around, creating more short journeys via car;
- Disruptions in pedestrian movement and overall low-quality of public realm have a detrimental effect on the pedestrian experience;
- There is an opportunity to repair and enhance the pedestrian permeability of the town centre, especially crossing Bury New Road; and
- Over half of respondents said that they walk to Whitefield town Centre which demonstrates the importance of creating safe and pleasant pedestrian linkages, crossings and public realm.





## 2.6 Local Context

# Public Open Space

Whitefield has several parks and green open spaces, creating rich and green areas off the A56.

Hamilton Road Park – photo source: David Dixon



Existing parks within and abutting the study area are varied in their quality. Whitefield Park, which has been a key feature and focal point to the town since the late 19th century, is a major asset, presenting a mature and varied character. Parks elsewhere across the town centre are with a limited range of facilities. Springwater Park and Hamilton Road Park are holders of Green Flag for well-managed green outdoor spaces.

### 1. Whitefield Park



- Small urban local community park established in 1890.
- Size: 2.01 hectares
- Edges: Metrolink Station, Park and Ride, industrial estate, and residential development.

### 2. Victoria / Besses Park



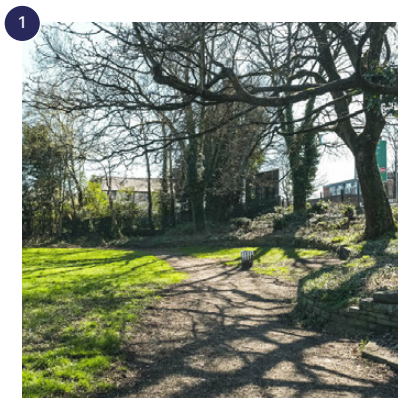
- Small local park established in 1990 catering for sports and outdoor exercise.
- Size: 1.1 hectares
- Edges: predominantly residential with retail near the high street.

### 3. Hamilton Road Park



- Small park with tennis court and toddler's area.
- Size: 0.98 hectares
- Edges: Residential, healthcare facility, sports facility, and religious grounds.

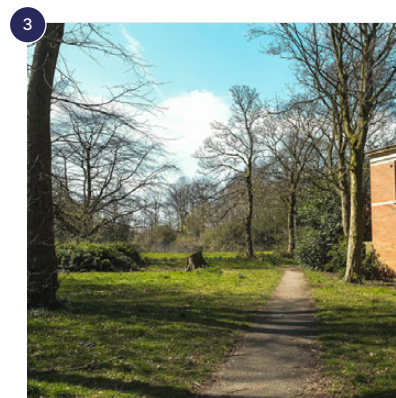




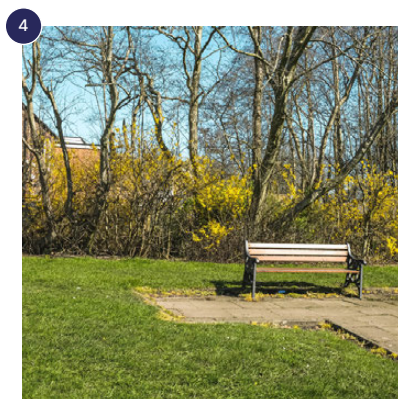
Victoria Park – poor overlooking from the street and impermeable edges



Hamilton Road Park – there is an opportunity to diversify activity and planting



Green space adjacent to Slattery is currently poorly overlooked



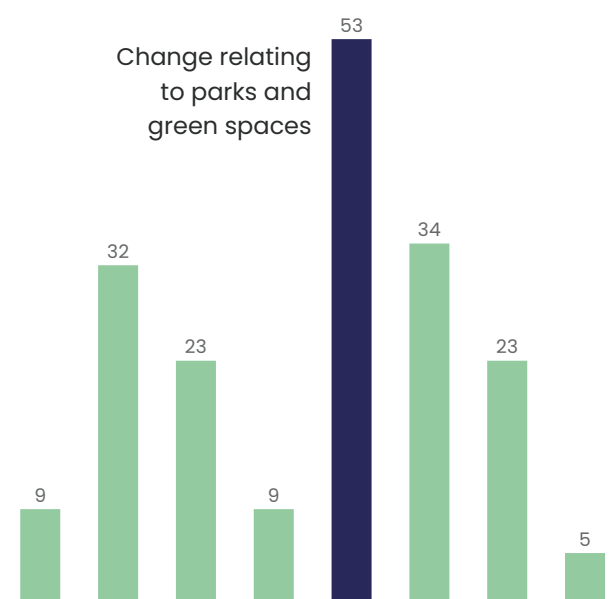
Poorly defined amenity green spaces are scattered across the town centre



Pockets of amenity green space with limited function at Victoria Square



Whitefield Park – a verdant oasis at the heart of the town



Respondents of surveys received to date highlight changes and improvements to park as a major area of focus

## Key Findings and Messages



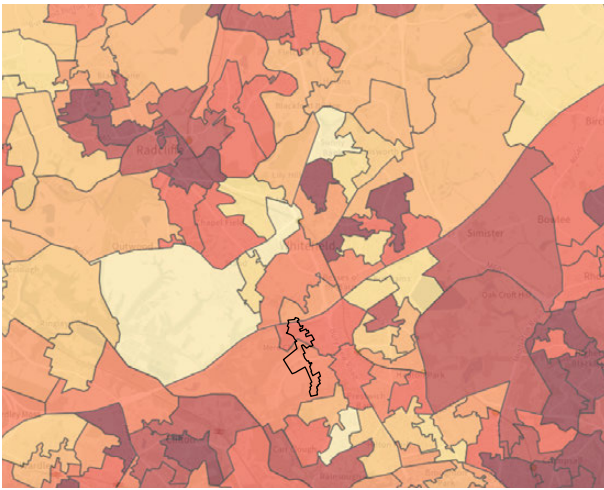
- Existing parks vary in quality, and there is potential to further activate and diversify; these spaces as part of the plan, as well as creating more access points to better integrate spaces into the wider neighbourhood;
- There is an opportunity to draw the green character of the parks and surrounding green residential streets onto the A56 corridor; and
- Opportunity to improve cycle infrastructure and pedestrian environment to encourage the use of active travel for short trips within the neighbourhood, including bike parking around shops and other amenities.



## 2.7 Local Context

# Socio-Economic / Demographics

Whitefield's population is diverse in terms of age, culture and habits. This reflects in the need to create an inclusive environment that tends to all of the population, creating a vibrant town for all.

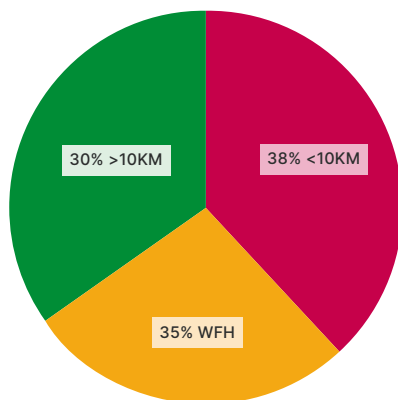


Indices of multiple deprivation (Census, 2019)



### Deprivation

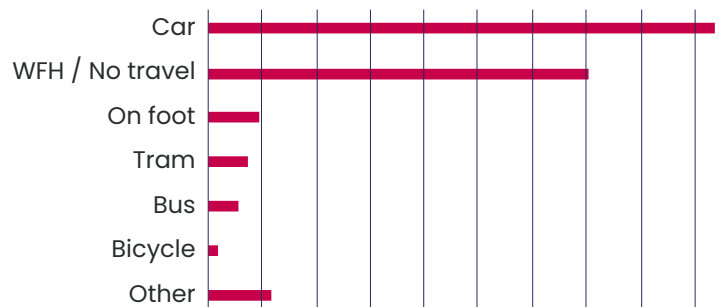
Communities to the east of Whitefield Town Centre are amongst the most deprived in the UK, whilst areas to the south and southwest in the Besses and Pilkington Park Wards also show high rates of deprivation.



Commuting habits (Census, 2021)

### Work

Over a third of those employed in Whitefield work from home, suggesting there is a large number of people at home and in the area throughout the week. Of those who do travel, many prefer car as their preferred commuting method.

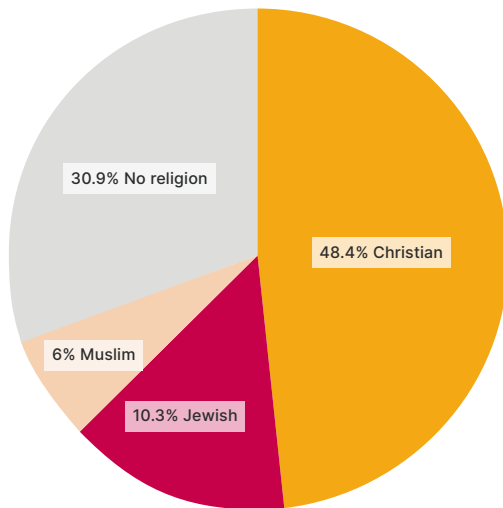


Modes of travel to workplace

What you've said...

"Neighbourhood is disconnected by major roads which also mark socio-economic barriers."

Whitefield Resident



### Identity\*

The wider Whitefield area is truly multi-cultural and multi-faith, as captured in the adjacent graph

\*Median % figure for each of the predominant religious groups using 2021 census data for Whitefield East, Whitefield West and Park Lane, Besses and Unsworth.

### Population

**42.5**

Median Age in Whitefield

**20.2%**

of population is 65 years old and over

**19.4%**

School children or full-time students

### Key Findings and Messages



- There is a rich cultural mix within Whitefield; this should be supported by local facilities to enable cooperation;
- A third of Whitefield's population works from home; this means that they could form an opportunity to increase local trips to the Town Centre, enhancing the local economy;
- Children of school age and students make up 1/5 of Whitefield's population and the local area has to support their needs;
- East of Bury New Road is significantly more deprived than the west – need for reconciliation and support the growth.