

Knutsford



Cheshire East Town Centre Vitality Plans

December 2022



Prepared by Cushman and Wakefield,
Optimised Environments and Mott
Macdonald for Cheshire East Council

December 2022

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Context of the Study

Town Centres across the UK are facing unprecedented challenges. Changes in how we shop, in particular the growth in internet shopping, has significantly decreased footfall in Town Centres resulting in numerous store closures, leaving many centres struggling. Trends that have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government has stated its commitment to helping high streets and Town Centres evolve and adapt to both the structural changes that are occurring in the retail market as well as to COVID-19. It has identified a number of measures to support Town Centres at this challenging time including the Future High Streets Fund, a High Streets Task Force, changes to the planning system and direct support to local authorities and local businesses. Alongside these national measures the government has stressed the need for strong local leadership in supporting Town Centres.

Town Centre Vitality Plans

Cheshire East Council (CEC) is committed to supporting the vitality and viability of all Town Centres within the borough. Whilst acknowledging that in areas of low deprivation, there may be limited opportunity to bid for centralised funding. When funding opportunities do become available, there is generally a need to have clear proposals already agreed before bids can be submitted.

It is also recognised that there are often initiatives which can be taken to support the vitality and viability of local centres which do not require significant capital funding, but rather require the support of local volunteers and/or businesses.

In addition, the reports could be used to support discussions regarding the allocation of S106 monies resulting from development within and in the vicinity of the local centres.

With an almost overwhelming array of options and opinions on what is the best way to support Town Centre vitality and viability, CEC has commissioned Cushman & Wakefield (regeneration and property advisors), supported by Optimised Environments (urban designers) and Mott Macdonald (transport planners), to work with the Town Council's and their stakeholders to produce bespoke Town Centre Vitality Plans (TCVP) for the nine Key Service Centres (KSC):



The 9 Key Service Centres which form part of this study

Aims and Objectives

The TCVP provides a sense of direction and identify initiatives to support the nine key service centres to better fulfil their potential recognising that each centre is distinct, with its own unique opportunities and specific challenges and local groups/stakeholders. The unique characteristics of each centre is identified along with tailored solutions for each.

They

- **Are bespoke in nature, based on a thorough analysis of individual circumstances affecting the health of each Town Centre, local stakeholder views and any local specific policy considerations.**
- **Are cross functional and holistic, and recommend a practical, realistic set of priority actions for supporting the vitality and viability of each Town Centre.**
- **Are informed and tested by existing relevant national and local public policy and strategies, local stakeholder views, relevant research and a thorough understanding of commercial markets and spatial considerations.**
- **Identify a set of recommended clear priority physical and other (e.g. marketing) interventions/actions to support the vitality and viability of each Town Centre both in recovery from COVID-19 impacts and beyond to enhancement.**
- **Recommend deliverable actions including who should be involved in delivering of each action identified, to enable Town Councils, community groups, occupiers, property owners etc., to all work towards a common vision.**
- **Take account of proposals developed/being developed by Town Councils and develop such plans further.**

Responding to the Impacts of COVID

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, high streets and Town Centres were having to respond to changing consumer demands driven in part by technological changes. Many recognised the increasing importance of the consumer experience - an attractive place to dwell, shop, see friends, to eat out and be entertained. COVID-19 has led to an acceleration of changes to the reasons people visit and use local centres.

COVID-19 has not and will not be universally negative for all local centres. The requirement to stay local has supported residents to use their local facilities and where the local offer aligns with the demands of residents, local businesses have benefited. The need to work from home has also resulted in an re-evaluation of where we work going forward and it is anticipated that there has been a fundamental shift, for some, in the balance between the amount of time we spend in an office and the amount of time we work from home.

It will be some time before a clear picture emerges of the impact of new forms of working (a hybrid between office and home) have on our high streets in the longer-term. The impact will be felt

differently from place to place depending on the local economy's dependency on particular sectors. It is likely that those centres that will perform best going forward will be those able to reconnect with their communities and use them to meet local needs including access to housing, culture, leisure, health etc.

The Town Centre Vitality Plans have been prepared post the outbreak of COVID-19. The impact of COVID-19 on each of the centres has been different. The bespoke Vitality Plans provide an action plan to support recovery and future success.

Vitality Plan and Toolkit

This report builds upon the Draft Baseline Report (which was a summary of the key stages undertaken in 2020 - see below) and incorporates potential actions which have been identified in consultation with local stakeholders during 2021 to form a bespoke Vitality Plan for Knutsford.

The Vitality Report comprises of two sections:

- **Baseline** - which was undertaken in 2020 and describes the Centre in terms of its offer and key characteristics. It brings together evidence and opinion in respect of the

buildings, green and open spaces, access and its residents and businesses.

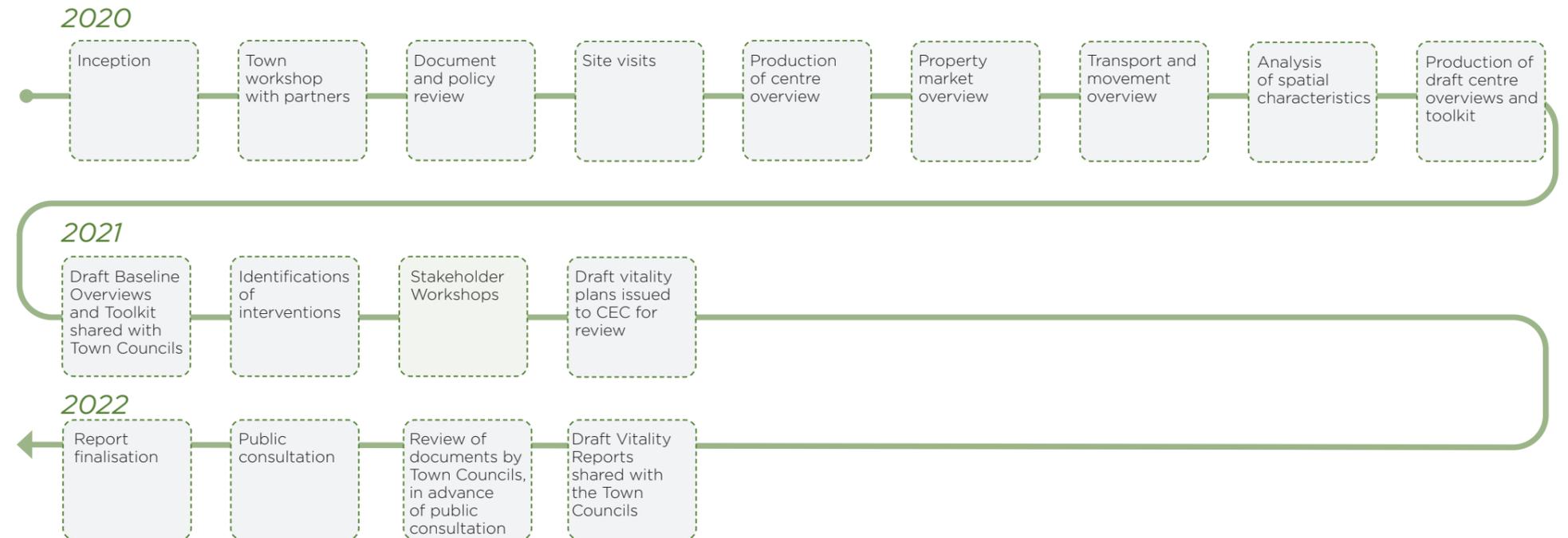
- **Action Plan** - has been prepared in collaboration with the Town Council and identifies actions which seek to support the established Vision and Objectives for the Centre responding to its challenges and opportunities. It sets out a series of actions, identifying a small number of priorities for intervention which will have the greatest impact on improving the vitality of the Centre.

The draft TCVPs went to public consultation for six weeks from September 2022. Feedback was reviewed and where appropriate amendments have been made to the final report. A summary of other key messages have been shared with key stakeholders.

The Action Plan should be read in conjunction with the Toolkit. The Toolkit presents exemplar projects from other centres (including from within Cheshire East) nationally and internationally to assist key stakeholders to determine a set of actions to support their centres to thrive. There is not a pot of money available to support the delivery of the Vitality Plan. Rather the Vitality Plan has been prepared as a resource to support accessing funding.

Approach

The preparation of the Vitality Plans has involved the following stages:



Baseline

Note:

The Baseline analysis was undertaken in 2020. The information in the Baseline was correct and the sources were the most update at that time. It is recognised that in some cases more up to date information is available. Whilst it is not possible to keep updating all the evidence where a significant change has happened, information has been updated. It should also be noted that Census 2011 data is provided for some indicators. Whilst the 2021 Census has just been completed, a release of this data will not be made available until March 2023 therefore the 2011 Census is the most recent consistent data source across the 9 centres for some key indicators.

02 Introduction to Knutsford

Knutsford's Location within Cheshire East

Whilst set within attractive countryside, Knutsford is also strategically well located, connected by road (M6) and rail to the conurbations of Manchester and Liverpool, and close to Manchester Airport. Its historic streets and buildings, surrounded by green spaces, create an attractive location to live, work and visit. (see Strategic Context Plan)

Knutsford also lies in the Meres and Mosses natural area. This landscape is recognised as being of international importance for its wetland wildlife and contains several sites designated for nature conservation. Tatton Park is within walking distance and some of the green assets come right into the heart of the Centre including The Heath and The Moor. The River Lily and the Birkin Brook provide key wildlife corridors.

Knutsford is one of the larger centre's within Cheshire East. It is a popular destination for both residents and tourists from further afield, offering an excellent range of comparison and convenience shops. The main shopping streets are Princess Street and King Street (or Top Street and Bottom Street to the locals) with more shops along Canute Place, Regent Street and Minshull Street. Whilst accommodating a number of national operators including Little Waitrose, Co-Op, Sainsbury's, Boots, Waterstones and WH Smith,

the centre also accommodates a range of quality independents including an award winning butcher and bespoke interior designer. The Market Hall, which attracts a collection of independent traders, provides food and drink as well as art and crafts goods.

A strong leisure offer of national brand and independent bars and restaurants within the Town Centre supports a good evening economy, which adds to the vibrancy and attractiveness of the Town Centre. This is further enhanced by the Curzon Cinema, Little Theatre and Heritage Centre.

Whilst the towns historic streets and buildings create an attractive place to wander through, the ability to get around by car or foot is constrained in places by its historic character - particularly its narrow streets, alleyways and pavements - creating congestion. This does lead to conflict between users especially some cars trying to park close to the shops whilst some pedestrians want to shop in a less car dominated environment.

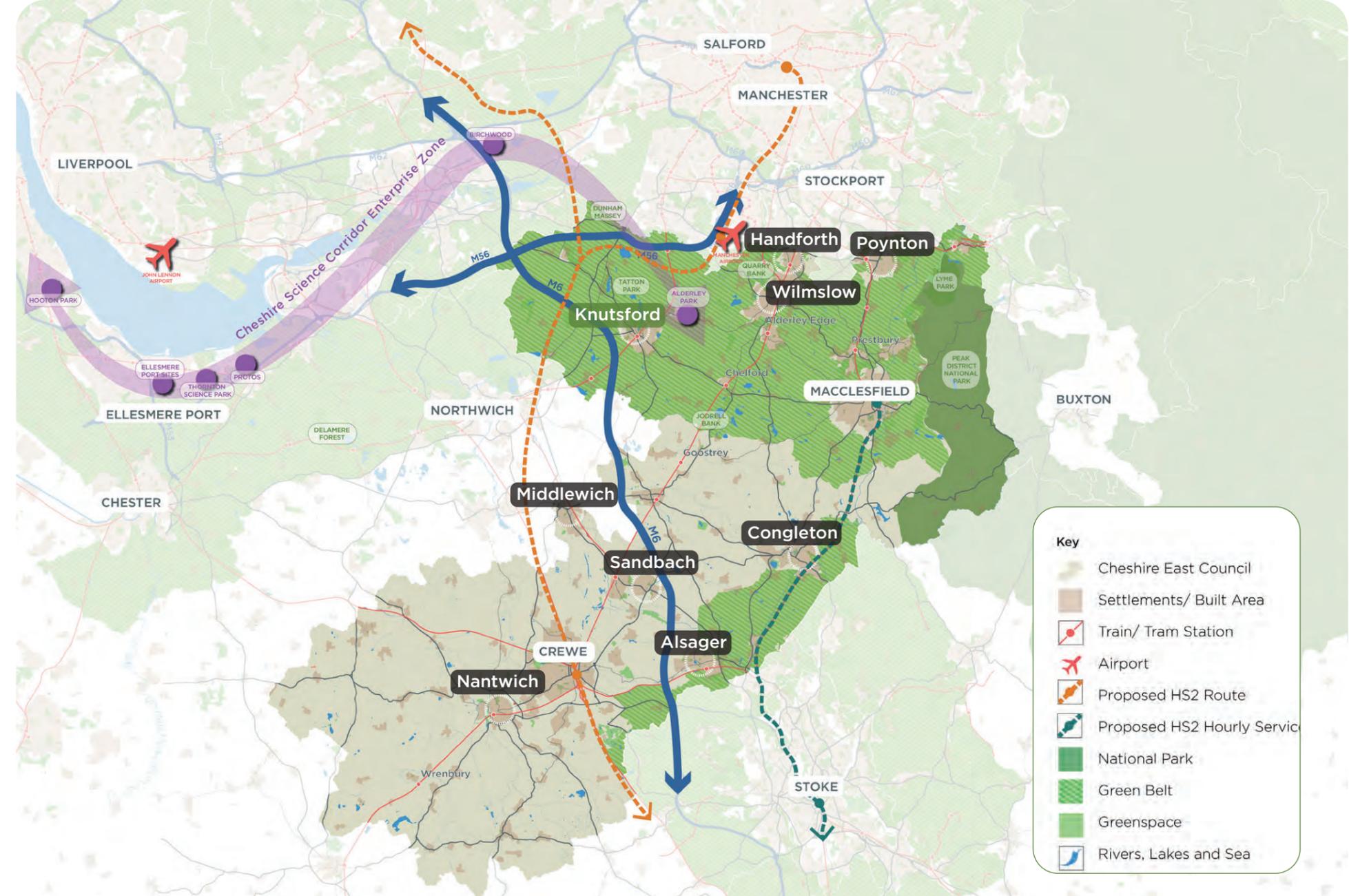
In addition to its retail and leisure offer, the town also accommodates a number of offices within the centre, many in attractive historic buildings mainly operating in property and financial sectors. Around its edges Knutsford also accommodates

a number of employment locations offering a range of office and industrial floorspace including Parkgate Industrial Estate, Knutsford Business Park and Booths Park. Whilst these do not necessarily accommodate global brands they do include a number of occupiers with strong regional reputations in key sectors including financial, ICT and property.

Knutsford provides an attractive residential offering, set within attractive countryside but well connected by rail and road (J19 of the M6 is 3 miles away and Manchester Airport is 5 miles) to employment opportunities. Its housing offer is dominated by larger houses. These attract affluent professionals making them some of the most expensive homes in Cheshire East, the North West and outside the South East - the average property value is just under £0.5m.

Knutsford enjoys a strong sense of community both in terms of residents and businesses. It has a range of active groups that work hard to protect and enhance all that the town has to offer. Members of the community have prepared a number of impressive reports to protect the towns assets and overcome some of its challenges.

Strategic Context Plan



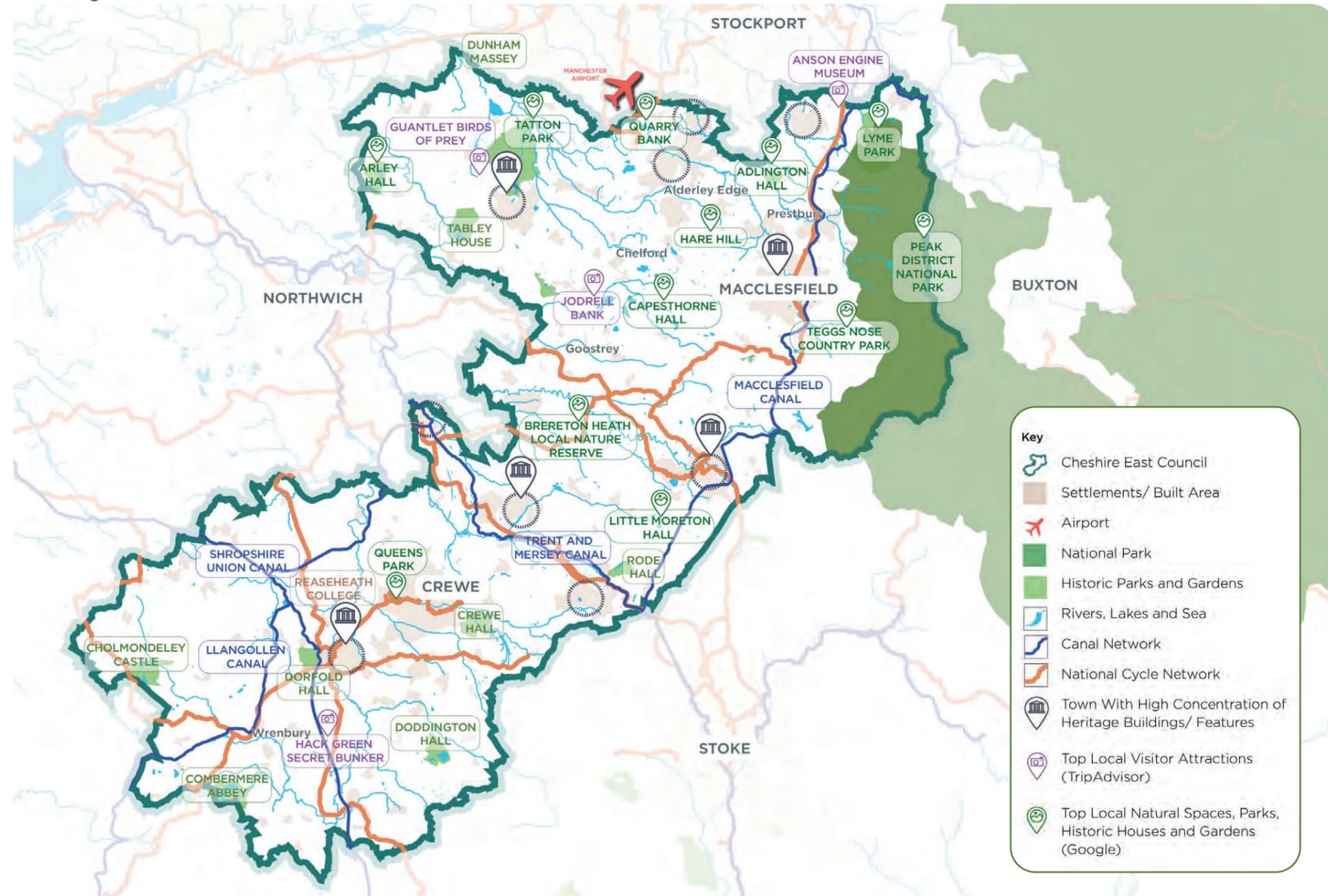
The Knutsford Town Council website and comprehensive Town Guide promotes buildings, organisations, events and surrounding attractions. The Council employs a Town Ranger - who maintains the centre's appearance - and a Town Centre Manager who regularly communicates with the businesses and promotes initiatives to encourage footfall and local spending.

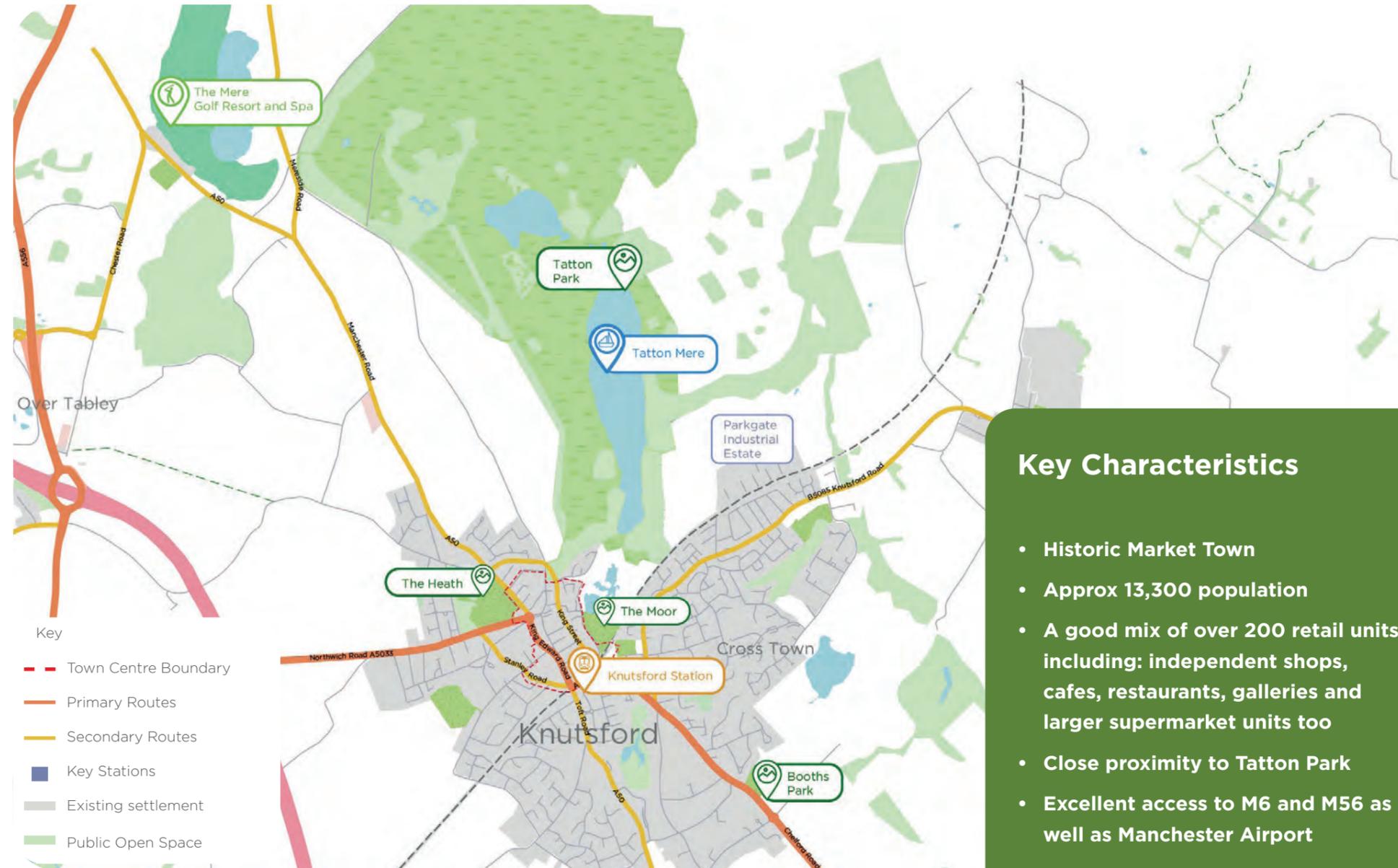
In addition to its physical attractions, the town provides an impressive programme of events to entice visitors including the annual Bunny Hop, Pumpkin Path, a range of Christmas events and a music festival. A number of these have been held for many years including the annual Royal May Day event which has been held since 1864 and attracts 1000s to parade through the town. Events held at Tatton Park, such as Tatton 10k, the RHS Flower Show and the Classic Car and Performance Show are just a number of events that are also of direct relevance to the town.

The Strategic Connections and Assets Plan sets Knutsford in the context of major visitors attractions and green and blue assets. Knutsford also enjoys excellent access to Manchester Airport.



Strategic Connections and Assets Plan





Key Characteristics

- Historic Market Town
- Approx 13,300 population
- A good mix of over 200 retail units including: independent shops, cafes, restaurants, galleries and larger supermarket units too
- Close proximity to Tatton Park
- Excellent access to M6 and M56 as well as Manchester Airport

Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan Vision and Objectives

Knutsford Town Council is proactive and initiated the preparation of the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan. It sets out the Vision and Objectives for the Town.

Vision

“The Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan should:

- Ensure that the Town thrives economically and socially as a historic market town
- Protect and enhance the Town’s character, variety of buildings and natural environment
- Support the delivery of the facilities and infrastructure the Town needs
- Maintain Knutsford’s strong sense of community as it grows allowing it to remain an attractive, healthy and safe place to live, work and visit”



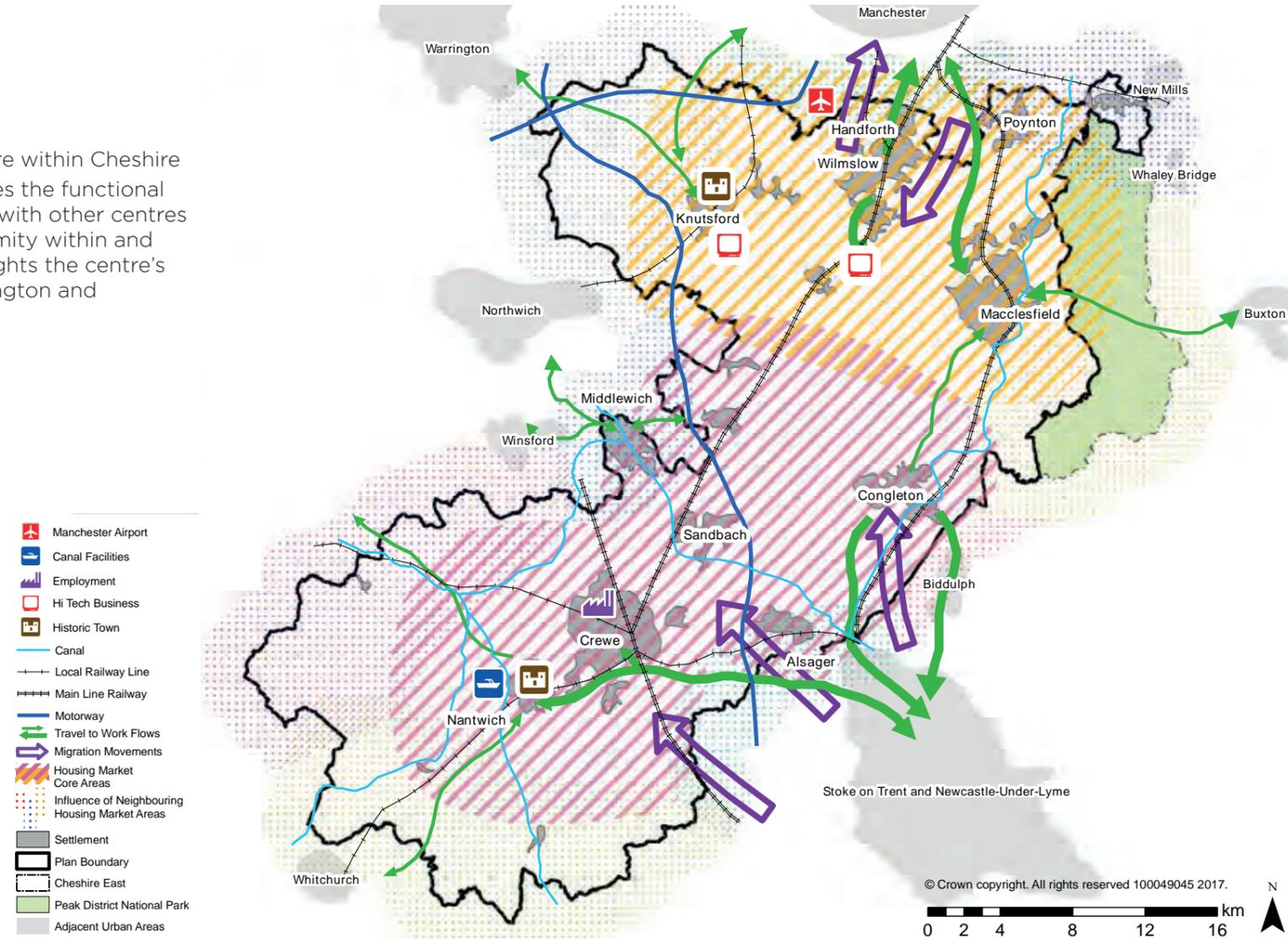
Objectives

1. **Community and Education Infrastructure**
To ensure that people of all ages and abilities within Knutsford and its wider catchment have excellent access to, and timely provision of, quality services and facilities, including schools and public meeting places.
2. **Healthy Living and Wellbeing** To achieve infrastructure supportive of the health needs of local residents and Knutsford's wider catchment, by securing an expansion of medical and social services and by promoting healthy living and general wellbeing through careful design.
3. **Sport and Leisure** To ensure provision of accessible sports and leisure facilities for all ages and abilities for Knutsford residents and those in the wider catchment area, so that various activities for improvements in individual health and wellbeing can be encouraged.
4. **Environment and Green Infrastructure**
To ensure Knutsford's green and open spaces and landscape setting are protected, retained, and enhanced by, but are not limited to, preserving views and vistas, safeguarding against pollution, and flooding, and protecting the Town's wildlife and biodiversity.
5. **Heritage** To retain Knutsford's distinctive historic character as an attractive rural market town by conserving the Town's many heritage assets and ensuring that any new development serves to make a positive contribution to the existing historic environment, including contemporary, energy efficient designs.
6. **Housing** To provide a mix of housing which meets identified local housing needs, including affordable housing, is delivered in a location where it is needed reflecting the strategy outlined in the Local Plan, and to ensure that it is sustainable and well-designed, and that it complements the character of Knutsford.
7. **Future Prosperity and Employment**
To ensure the long-term viability and prosperity of the Town by extending the diversity of services and occupations, through supporting existing employment areas throughout the Town and identifying new and varied opportunities, including mixed-use, as well as encouraging home working and local knowledge-based industries.
8. **Traffic, Transport and Movement** To promote safe, healthy, and sustainable travel for all, in and around Knutsford, linking residential, employment and community facilities, by reducing congestion and traffic pollution, and making the Town more pedestrian- and cycling-friendly, so encouraging sustainable transport modes.
9. **Town Centre** To promote a range of retail opportunities and a variety of trades and services in the Town Centre to ensure its long-term viability and prosperity and improve pedestrian movement to effectively meet the needs of residents, visitors, and local workers.

03 Policy Context

Local Policy

Knutsford is a key service centre within Cheshire East. The plan opposite identifies the functional relationship that Knutsford has with other centres through connectivity and proximity within and out with Cheshire East. It highlights the centre's proximity to the M6 and Warrington and Manchester



Source: Cheshire East Local Plan: Strategy 2010-2030 2017, Functional Diagram, pg 22

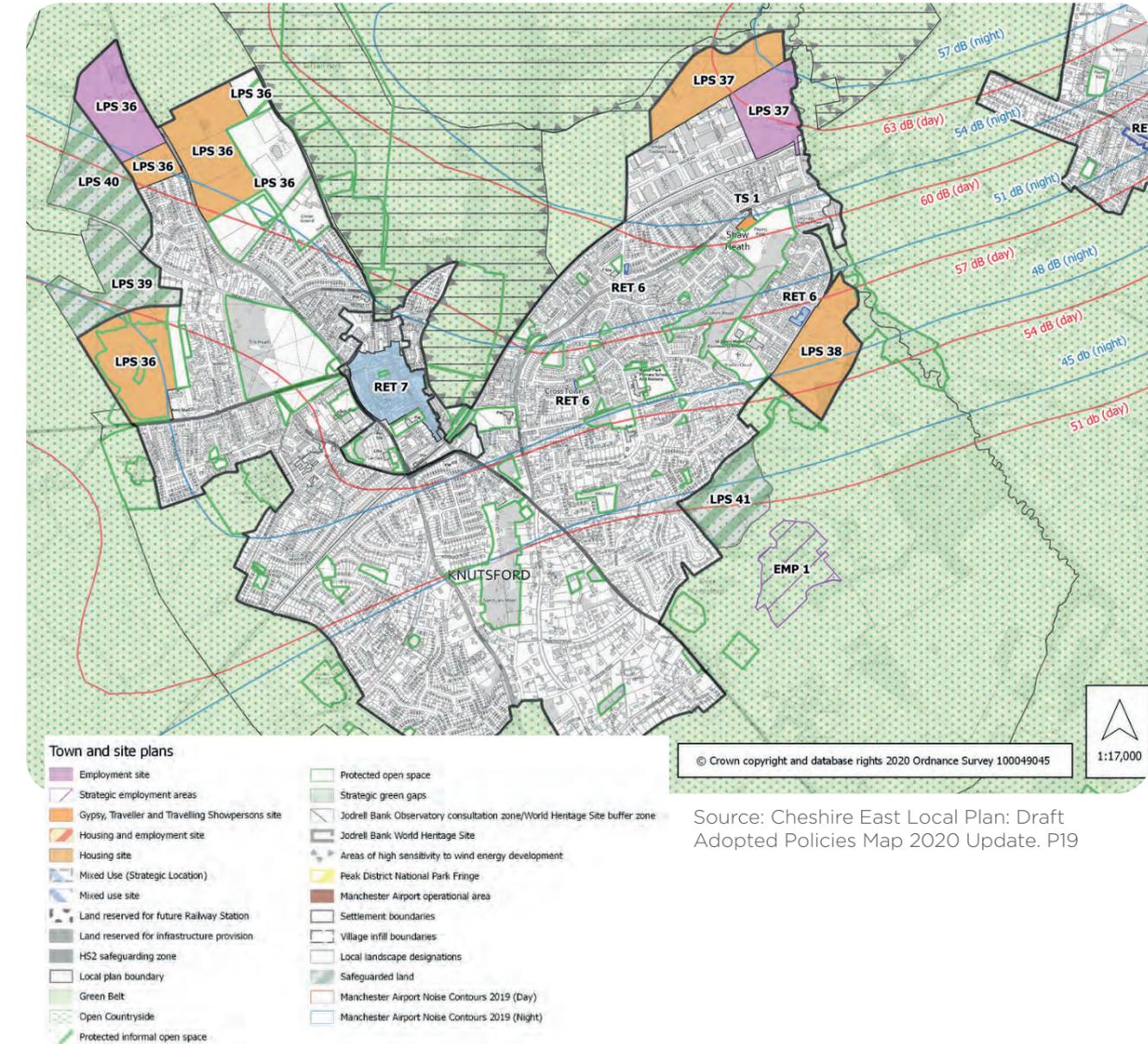
Local Plan Strategy 2017 (LPS) and Revised Publication Draft Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD) 2020

The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy was adopted in 2017 setting strategic development sites around the borough.

SADPD will form the second part of the Local Plan, supporting the policies and proposals in the LPS by providing additional non-strategic policy detail and allocating additional sites to assist in meeting the overall development requirements set out in the LPS.

The plan opposite identifies Local Plan Strategy sites in and around Knutsford for growth in the future

- Knutsford is a key service centre. Key sites close to the Town Centre which have been allocated include:
- LPS 36 North West Knutsford Phased provision of around 500 new homes and 7.5 hectares of high quality Class B1 business park development within the following sites:
 - LPS 36(A) Land North of Northwich Road (175 dwellings);
 - LPS 36(B) Land West of Manchester Road (75 dwellings and the development of a new 7.5 hectare high quality Class B1 business park; and
 - LPS 36(C) Land East of Manchester Road 250 dwellings



Source: Cheshire East Local Plan: Draft Adopted Policies Map 2020 Update. P19

03 Policy Context cont.

Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan January 2019

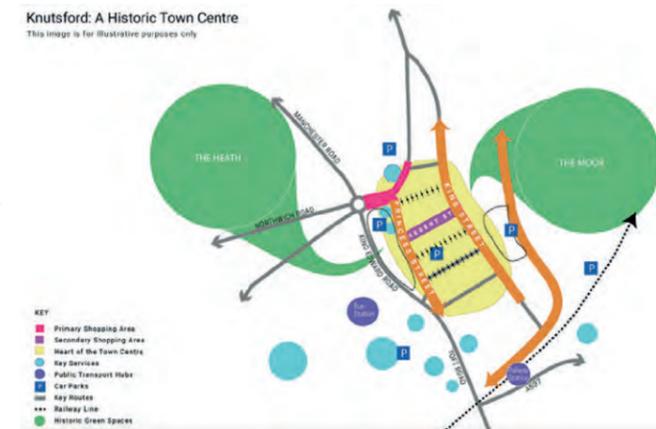
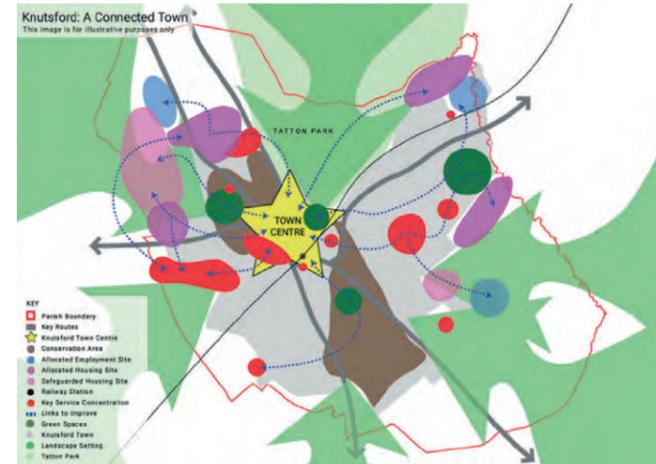
Knutsford Town Council commenced the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan in 2014 which included large scale community consultation in 2016, 2017 and culminated in the final consultation on the draft plan in 2018. A referendum was held in March 2019 and the plan was made in May 2019.

Key ambitions identified in the of the Neighbourhood Plan include:

- Ensuring that the proposed housing and employment allocations integrate well with the existing community and the landscape setting and are well designed
- Ensuring that traffic congestion is addressed, and that new development does not make the situation worse, while encouraging walking and cycling as alternatives to the private car
- Ensuring that any new development reflects the local character of the Town, key landscape and wildlife features and protects existing open spaces
- Ensuring that new development outside the allocated sites is appropriate to the local area, preserves amenity and does not result in over-development

- Ensuring that the Town is provided with community infrastructure (such as schools, healthcare, sports, leisure) to accommodate the growth proposed, including taking account of wider catchments reflecting its designation as a Key Service Centre.
- Ensuring that smaller properties are built, and not just large executive homes, to meet the needs of the elderly, first time buyers and those wishing to downsize
- Ensuring that Knutsford provides an appropriate mix of employment types including high-tech, research and development, and those working from home
- Ensuring that the Town Centre remains vibrant and seeks to deliver a wider range of shops, facilities and sporting and leisure activities, and is more pedestrian friendly.

It should also be noted that the Town Council has confirmed strategic aims of ensuring Knutsford Town Centre remains a thriving independent destination for visitors and promoting active travel/public transport and reduce the need for use of cars.



Source: Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan 2020, pages 30 and 32.

Knutsford From Top to Bottom Street

The Neighbourhood Plan identified an aspiration to deliver a Masterplan which will seek to support Town Centre living, small scale independent retail and a new outdoor Town Centre meeting place or square. As the first stage of this masterplan and in recognition of the importance of the issues around access and movement, the Neighbourhood Plan Town Centre Working Group started to explore different options for a scheme for management of vehicle access and traffic flow within the Town Centre, with the aim of redressing the over-dominance of cars within the Town Centre and giving pedestrians greater priority. A series of reports entitled 'From Top to Bottom Street' were prepared analysing the issues.

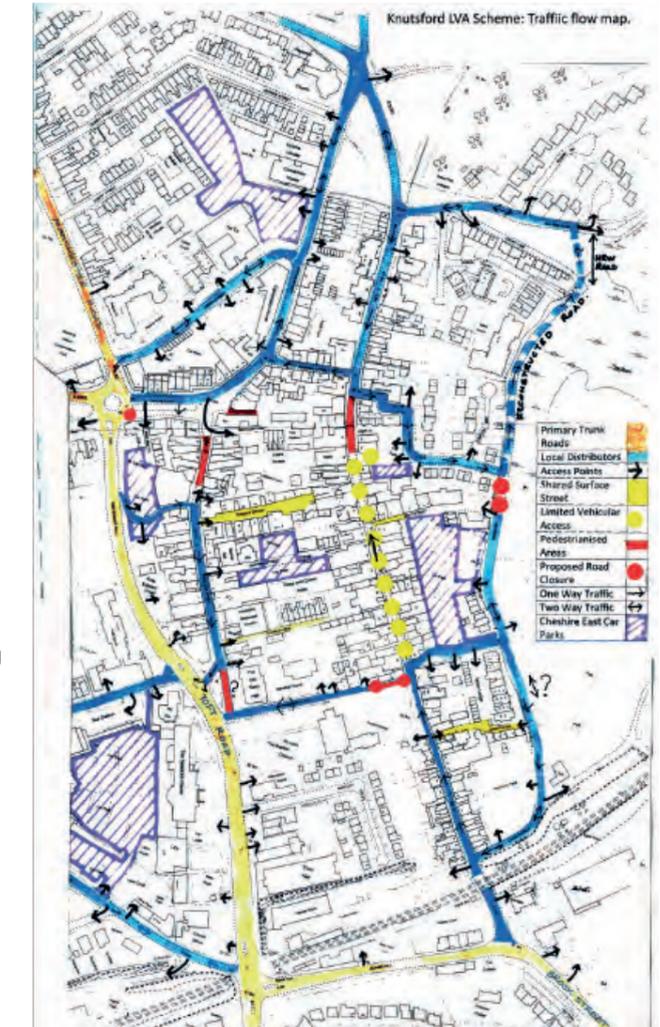
The Town Council issued a consultation report in May 2020 in respect of proposed changes to traffic flow and car parking in the Town Centre. This summarised the key findings from public consultation on proposals to change the flow of traffic in the Town Centre, and to change vehicle parking provision and regulations. The aim is to make Knutsford more friendly to pedestrians, as a first stage of a 'Masterplan' to ensure long term vitality, appeal and prosperity. The traffic and parking proposals have three inter-related parts:

- Changing Princess Street ('Top Street') and King Street ('Bottom Street') to access roads instead of through roads,

- Making better use of on- and off-road parking spaces, and encouraging the development of at least one CEC multi-storey car park,
- Reducing the number of parking bays on King and Princess Streets, reserving most for blue badge holders, and enforcing the no-parking regulations and double yellow lines.

The consultation ran for 6 weeks and 658 responses were received. The Town Council is now seeking to work with CEC to determine how to respond to the findings and to encourage recovery of the Town Centre post-Covid19, and therefore ensure that the results of the public consultation remain valid.

A series of other reports have also been prepared by local groups to protect and enhance the town including a series of urban design guides including Knutsford Design Guidance and Knutsford Character Assessment.



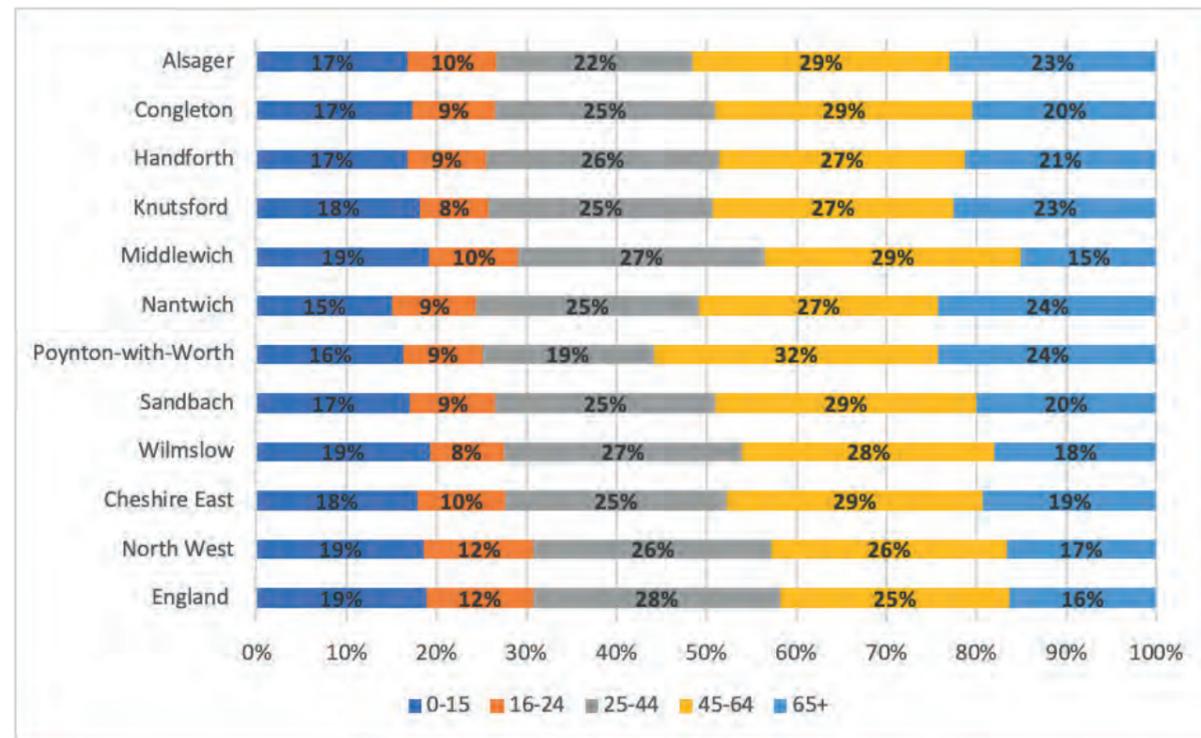
Source: From Top to Bottom Street, Knutsford Study 2020

04 Our People

Age

The 2011 Census data indicates that the Knutsford parish area had a population of 13,191 residents representing 3.6% of Cheshire East's total population (370,127). Knutsford's age profile is similar to that of Cheshire East. Knutsford sits in line with the other Key Service Centres in terms of the proportion of 25-44-year olds, the most economically active age group. Knutsford also has one of the highest average (mean) ages across the 9 KSC's at 43 years old which is higher than the Cheshire East mean age (42) and the wider geographies of the North West (40) and England (39).

It is anticipated that when the 2021 Census data is available it should show an increase in younger residents given the number of family homes being delivered in the wider area.



Age Structure.
Source: Census 2011, Office for National Statistics (ONS)
Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres

Ethnicity

Broken-down by ethnic group the Census 2011 (latest) shows the resident population across the Cheshire East is predominantly white at 96.7% which is a higher proportion than the wider geographies of the North West (90.2%) and England (85.4%). The majority of the population in Knutsford is also white (96.5%), however compared to other KSC's Knutsford has the third highest proportion of Asian/Asian British residents (1.8%/ 233 people).

Area	White	Mixed/ multiple ethnic groups	Asian/ Asian British	Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	Other ethnic group
Alsager	97.6%	1.1%	1.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Congleton	98.0%	0.6%	1.1%	0.2%	0.2%
Handforth	93.1%	1.5%	3.9%	0.9%	0.7%
Knutsford	96.5%	1.2%	1.8%	0.3%	0.3%
Middlewich	98.5%	0.8%	0.6%	0.1%	0.1%
Nantwich	98.1%	0.7%	0.7%	0.3%	0.1%
Poynton-with-Worth	98.0%	0.5%	1.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Sandbach	98.1%	0.7%	0.9%	0.2%	0.2%
Wilmslow	92.6%	1.7%	4.4%	0.5%	0.7%
Cheshire East	96.7%	1.0%	1.6%	0.4%	0.2%
North West	90.2%	1.6%	6.2%	1.4%	0.6%
England	85.4%	2.3%	7.8%	3.5%	1.0%

Population by Ethnic Group
Source: Census 2011, Office for National Statistics (ONS)
Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres

Occupational Profile

At the time of the 2011 Census, a large proportion of Knutsford residents were employed in higher order occupations including 'managers, directors and senior officials' (17.2%) and 'professional occupations' (26.2%) - a much higher rate than the wider Borough, regional and national benchmarks.

Conversely, just 12.0% were engaged in manual or elementary occupations. This is much lower than the North West (19.8%) and England rate (18.3%). The occupational structure of Knutsford suggests a highly skilled workforce, which will in turn attract businesses (who want to attract highly skilled employees) to locate in the area.

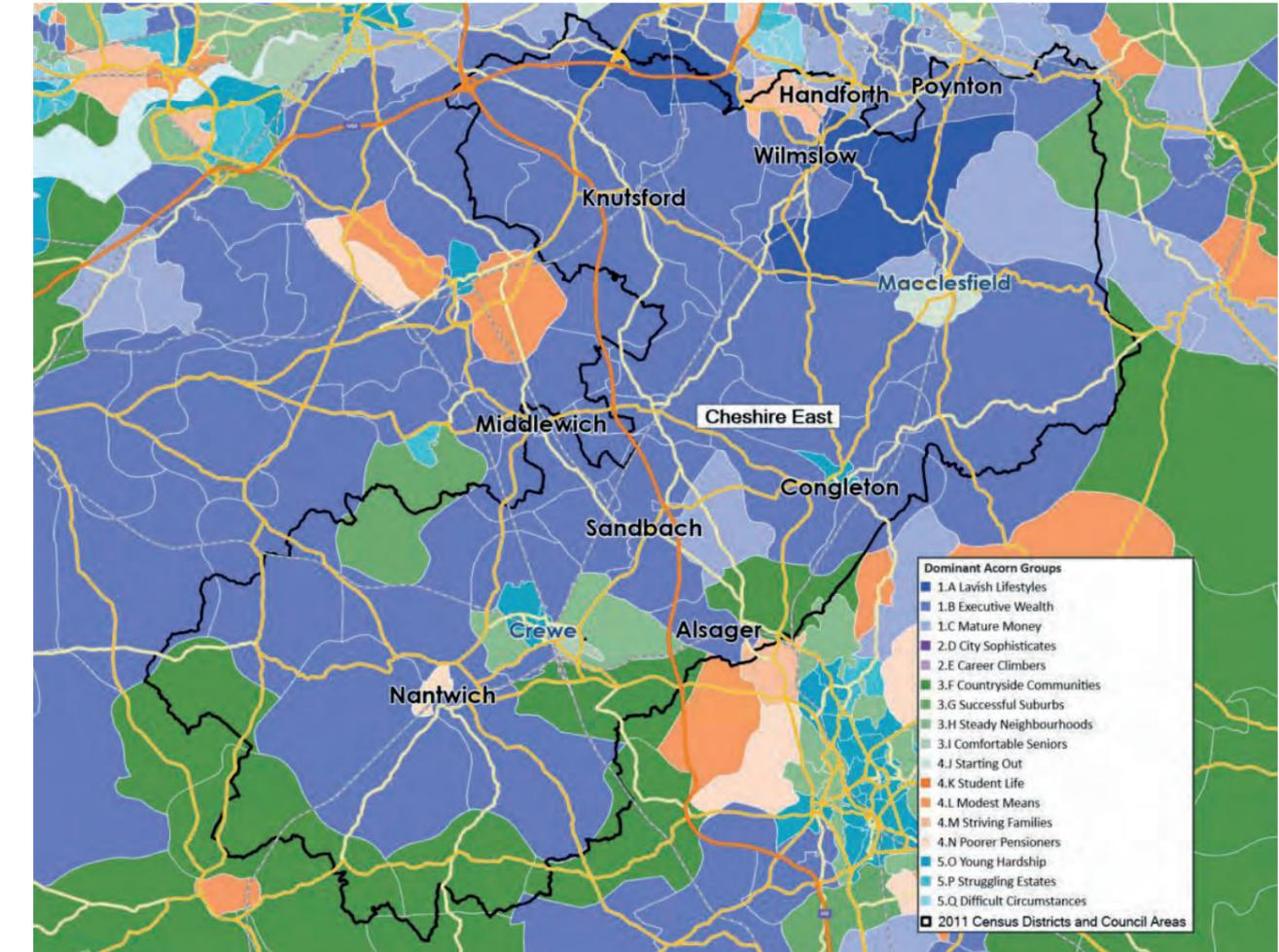
Built Up Area	Alsager	Congleton	Knutsford	Middlewich	Nantwich	Poynton	Sandbach	Wilmslow	Cheshire East	North West	England
Managers, directors and senior officials	12.8	11.7	17.2	11.9	14.3	14.9	12.6	18.3	13.6	9.9	10.9
Professional occupations	22.3	18.9	26.2	15.8	21.8	24.0	19.9	24.6	19.6	16.3	17.5
Associate professional and technical occupations	12.6	13.2	15.1	13.4	12.3	15.1	13.3	16.3	13.0	11.5	12.8
Administrative and secretarial occupations	11.4	10.3	9.4	11.8	10.0	12.2	11.0	9.9	10.4	11.7	11.5
Skilled trades occupations	10.1	11.6	6.4	11.0	9.8	8.6	10.2	6.6	10.4	11.3	11.4
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	8.7	9.5	8.0	9.9	8.2	7.7	9.2	7.8	8.9	10.1	9.3
Sales and customer service occupations	7.5	7.0	5.7	7.4	8.3	8.0	8.2	6.9	7.5	9.4	8.4
Process, plant and machine operatives	5.8	7.9	3.8	8.5	6.0	3.3	6.6	3.0	6.5	8.1	7.2
Elementary occupations	8.8	9.9	8.2	10.4	9.3	6.3	9.0	6.6	10.2	11.7	11.1

Occupational Profile
Source: Census 2011
Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres

Demographic Characterisation

CACI Acorn classifications of local postcode geographies provide precise information and an in-depth understanding of different consumer types by analysing significant social factors and consumer behaviour. Demographic analysis of Cheshire East area demonstrates diverse segmentation groups across the area. The dominant Acorn group in Knutsford and its wider surrounding area is Executive Wealth, affluent professionals with families living in large homes.

- Dominant Age Groups
- 1. A Lavish Lifestyles
 - 1. B Executive Wealth
 - 1. C Mature Money
 - 2. D City Sophisticates
 - 2. E Career Climbers
 - 3. F Countryside Communities
 - 3. G Successful Suburbs
 - 3. H Steady Neighbourhoods
 - 3. I Comfortable Seniors
 - 4. J Starting Out
 - 4. K Student Life
 - 4. L Modest Means
 - 4. M Striving Families
 - 4. N Poorer Pensioners
 - 5. O Young Hardship
 - 5. P Struggling Estates
 - 5. Q Difficult Circumstances
 - 2011 Census Districts and Council Areas

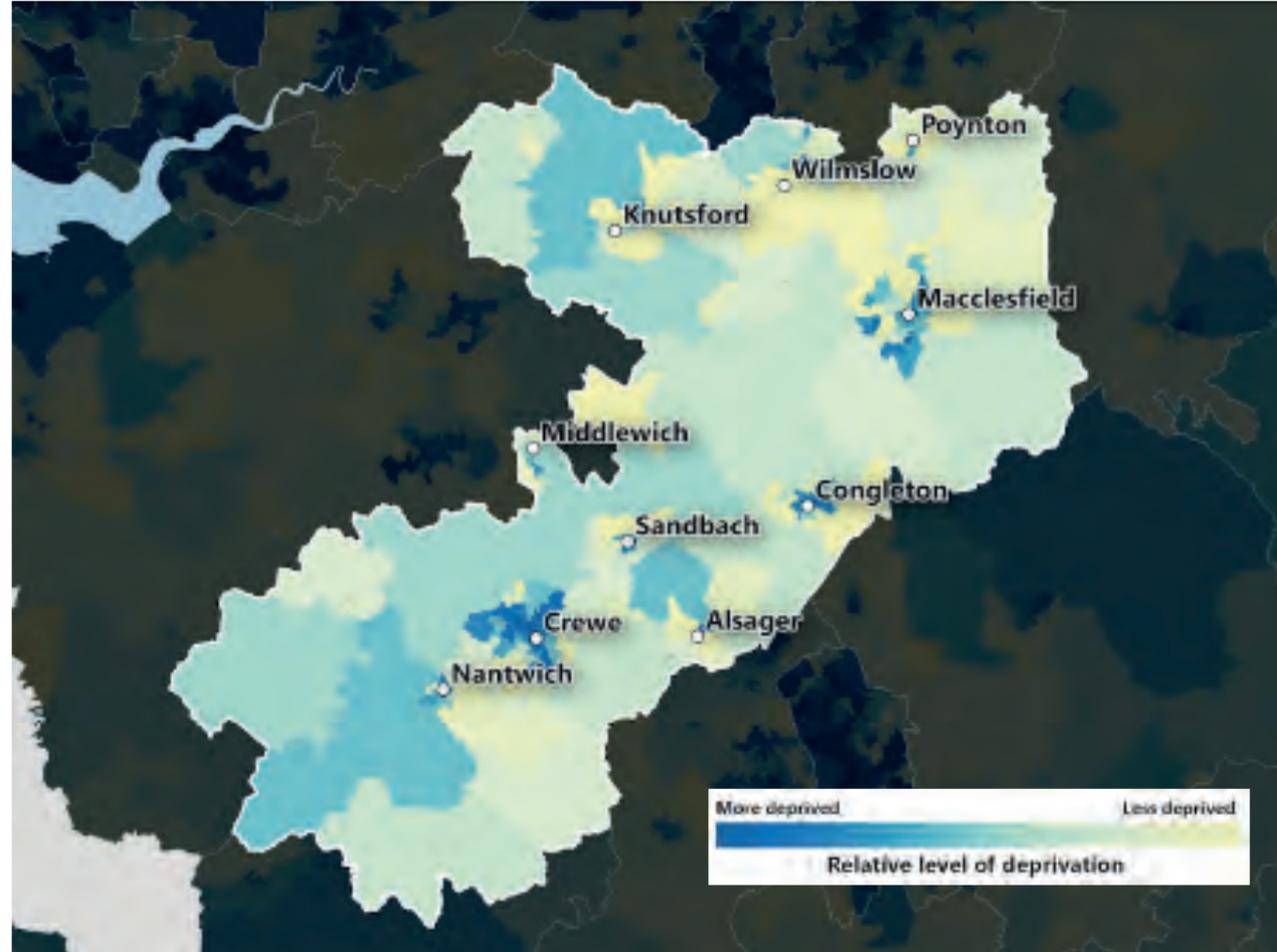


CACI Acorn Classifications
Source: CACI
Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres

Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 illustrates the spatial distribution and pockets of deprivation relative to national averages. Cheshire East ranked 228th most deprived out of 317 local authorities in 2019 indicating relatively low levels of deprivation. Just 1.7% of the Borough is within the top 10% most deprived areas in England, with these most deprived areas being concentrated around Crewe and to a lesser extent, Macclesfield. Knutsford is within the 20% least areas of deprivation nationally. However it should be recognised that there is a pocket of local deprivation which is within the 30% most deprived neighbourhoods (dark blue)

It should be recognised that this could cause challenges for accessing centralised funding, as such funding is often prioritised to the most deprived areas.



Source: MHCLG, IMD 2019



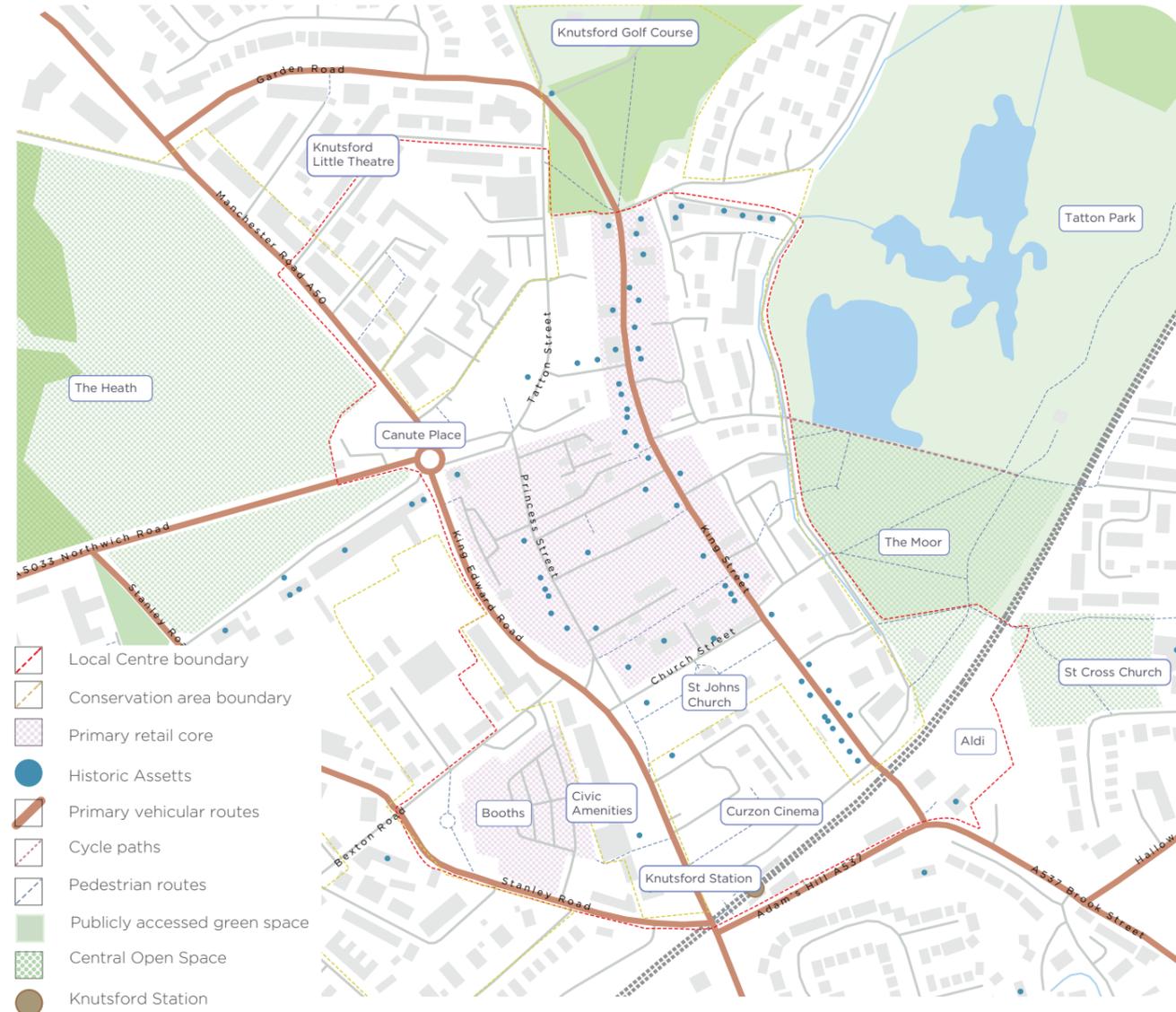
Local Context

Knutsford continues to provide a vibrant Town Centre and remains a popular destination for both residents and visitors from further afield

The Town Centre is steeped in rich heritage which creates a unique market town character. This unique character provides an attractive environment and continues to benefit from a strong leisure offer which extends the centres' opening hours into the evening.

The Town Centre is surrounded by good quality green space such as The Heath, The Moor and Knutsford Golf Course, however Tatton Park, which is National Trust owned hosts the primary green space and recreational offer in Knutsford.

Knutsford has excellent links to the strategic transport network with its surrounding A roads providing direct access to the M56 motorway, Manchester City Centre and Manchester Airport. Manchester Airport is accessible from Knutsford within less than 20 minutes drive time.



Spatial Review

An analysis of the experiential quality of the Town Centre is provided over the next few pages. The review is based on information gathered from a number of site visits to the Town Centre during September / October 2020 and is assessed by the key vitality indicators listed below:

- Quality of the place
- People
- Sense of Community
- Accessibility
- Gateways
- Wayfinding
- Attractions
- Amenities
- Sense of a Centre
- Character
- Public realm
- Green space
- Derelict Sites/ Vacant units
- Housing
- Covid measures

05 Our Place cont.

Visit information

	Visit 1	Visit 2
Date of visit:	Sunday 6th September 2020	Monday 26th October 2020
Time of day:	12-3pm	3-4pm
Weather:	Sun, Light drizzle	Heavy rain and sun
Mode of transport:	Car	Car
COVID 19 Lockdown Status	Eased restrictions, rule of six indoors and outdoors	Tier Two - rule of six indoors and outdoors

Quality of the place

- Medium sized, well kept market town
- Rich in historical character
- Little residential offer within Town Centre
- Good range of shops and services



People

- Population on day of visit mostly included families, elderly couples or groups of teens
- Quite a heavy footfall for a Sunday and Monday when site visits were undertaken



Sense of Community

- Noticeboards seem up to date
- Lots of planters
- Local markets
- Cycling events



05 Our Place cont.

Accessibility

- 10 minute walk from train station at Toft Road
- On street parking and designated car parks to rear of building as well as larger surface parking
- No segregated cycle routes but a few people cycling
- Narrow paving along King Street
- Lots of alleys and through routes for pedestrians to cut through.

Gateways

- No clearly defined gateway that is suitable for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists
- Canute Place
- Princess Street / Toft Road Junction
- King Street / Brook Street junction

Wayfinding

- Lots of signage which complements the historic nature of the town



05 Our Place cont.

Attractions

- Lots of cafes and restaurants, signs of outdoor seating
- Local makers market
- Tatton Park
- Cheshire cycling events
- Knutsford Heritage Centre
- Brook Street Heritage Site

Amenities

- Library, town council, community club, churches, health centre
- Independent Cinema
- Booths and Aldi supermarkets, Sainsburys Local, Coop, and local Waitrose

Sense of a Centre

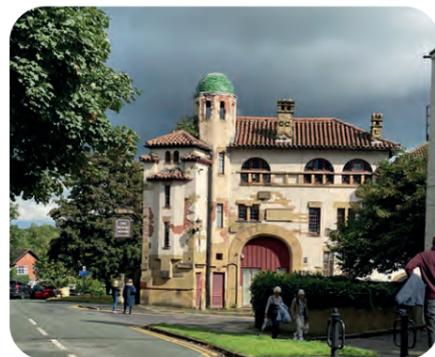
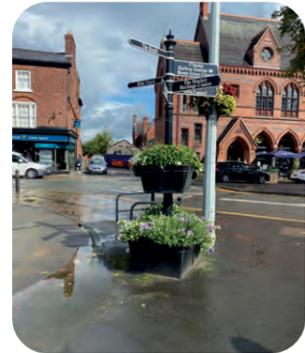
- Disconnect between areas leads to no real sense of centre
- Opportunity to create a centre at Canute Place or Princess Street / Toft Street Junction
- Retail core perhaps acts as a larger central space



05 Our Place cont.

Character

- Town Centre steeped in historical character
- Lots of listed buildings
- Narrow streets create sense of enclosure
- Shop fronts maintain character and are well kept



Public Realm

- Pavement and road surfaces are tired and worn in places
- Some newer areas of hard landscaping, along Regent Street
- Narrow paving is not adequate for prams or wheelchairs or other mobility issues

Green space

- Tatton Park is less than 10 mins walk from the Town Centre
- Wallwood Park provides a nice pocket space to the north of the town
- Disconnect between green spaces - The Moor, Knutsford Heath and Tatton Park



05 Our Place cont.

Derelict Sites/ Vacant units

- Quite a few vacant units, which detract from the vibrancy of the Town Centre



Housing

- Little to no local housing within the immediate Town Centre, however as we move out of the retail centre, houses are usually terraced, cottages or apartments

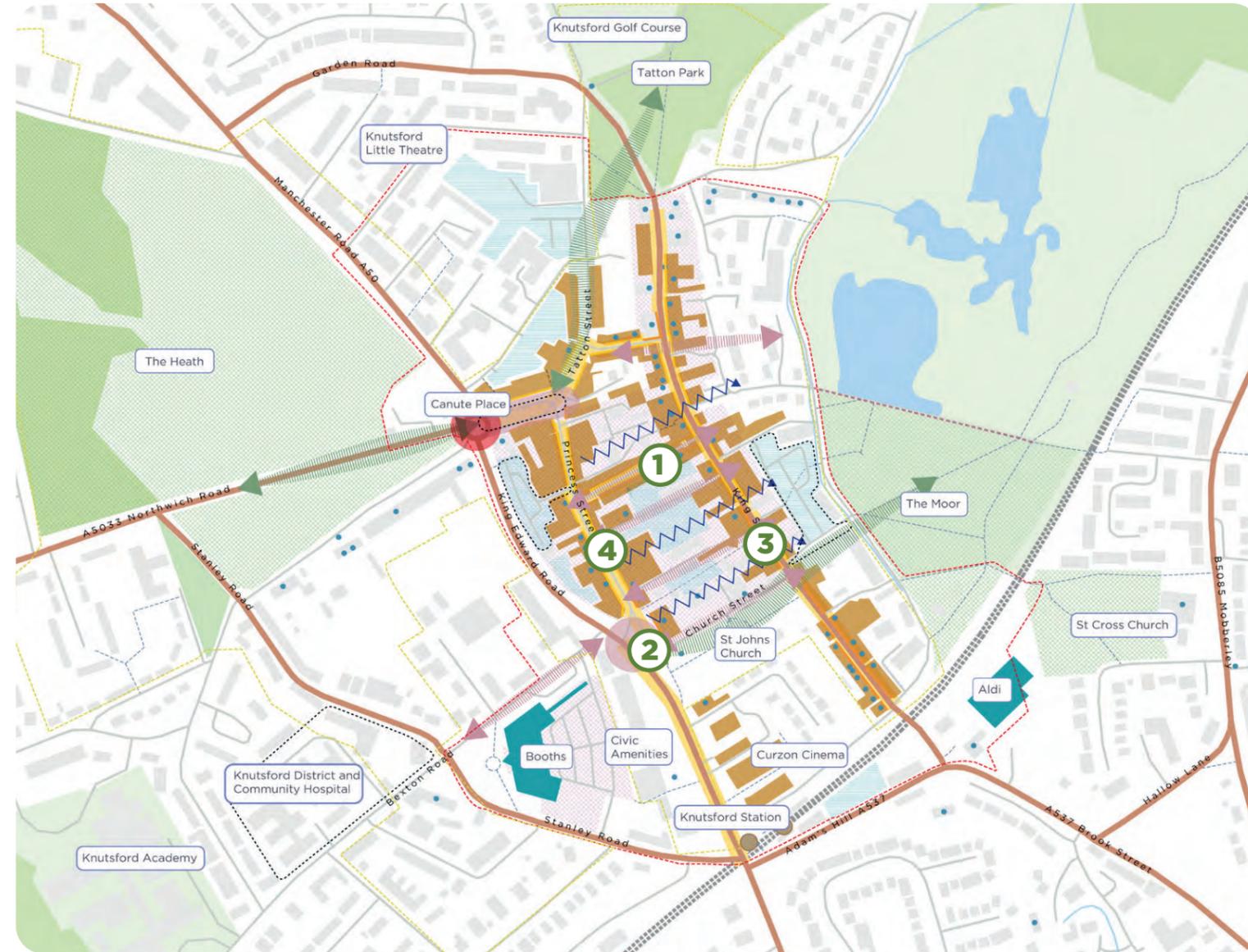


05 Our Place cont.

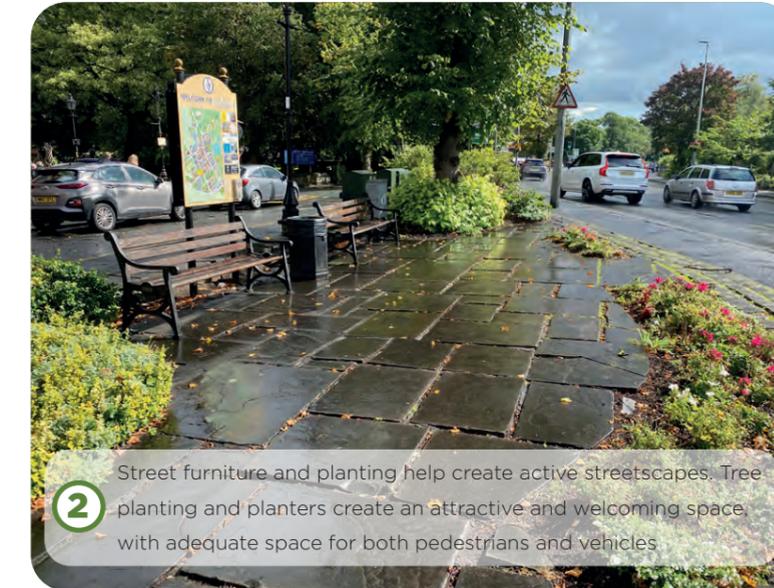
Positive Features

Positive spatial elements are identified on the plan:

- Key
- Local Centre boundary
 - Conservation area boundary
 - Primary retail core
 - Positive space/arrival space
 - Potential to enhance community square
 - Historic Assets
 - Positive streetscape with active uses
 - Active ground floor uses (some reducing in number)
 - Anchor Retail
 - Primary active frontage onto streets
 - Secondary active frontage onto streets
 - Key sight lines
 - Publicly accessed green space
 - Potential Development sites for (Neighbourhood Plan in 2016)
 - Primary routes
 - Key connections
 - Key pedestrian connections
 - Potential key routes
 - Cycle paths
 - Pedestrian routes
 - Central Open Space
 - Knutsford Station



1 Regent Street combines the old with the new enhancements to the public realm modernise the area but also link by to the historic nature of the town



2 Street furniture and planting help create active streetscapes. Tree planting and planters create an attractive and welcoming space with adequate space for both pedestrians and vehicles



3 Small entries and passage ways remain throughout the Town Centre and provide interesting through routes for pedestrians allowing them to explore the heritage of the town.



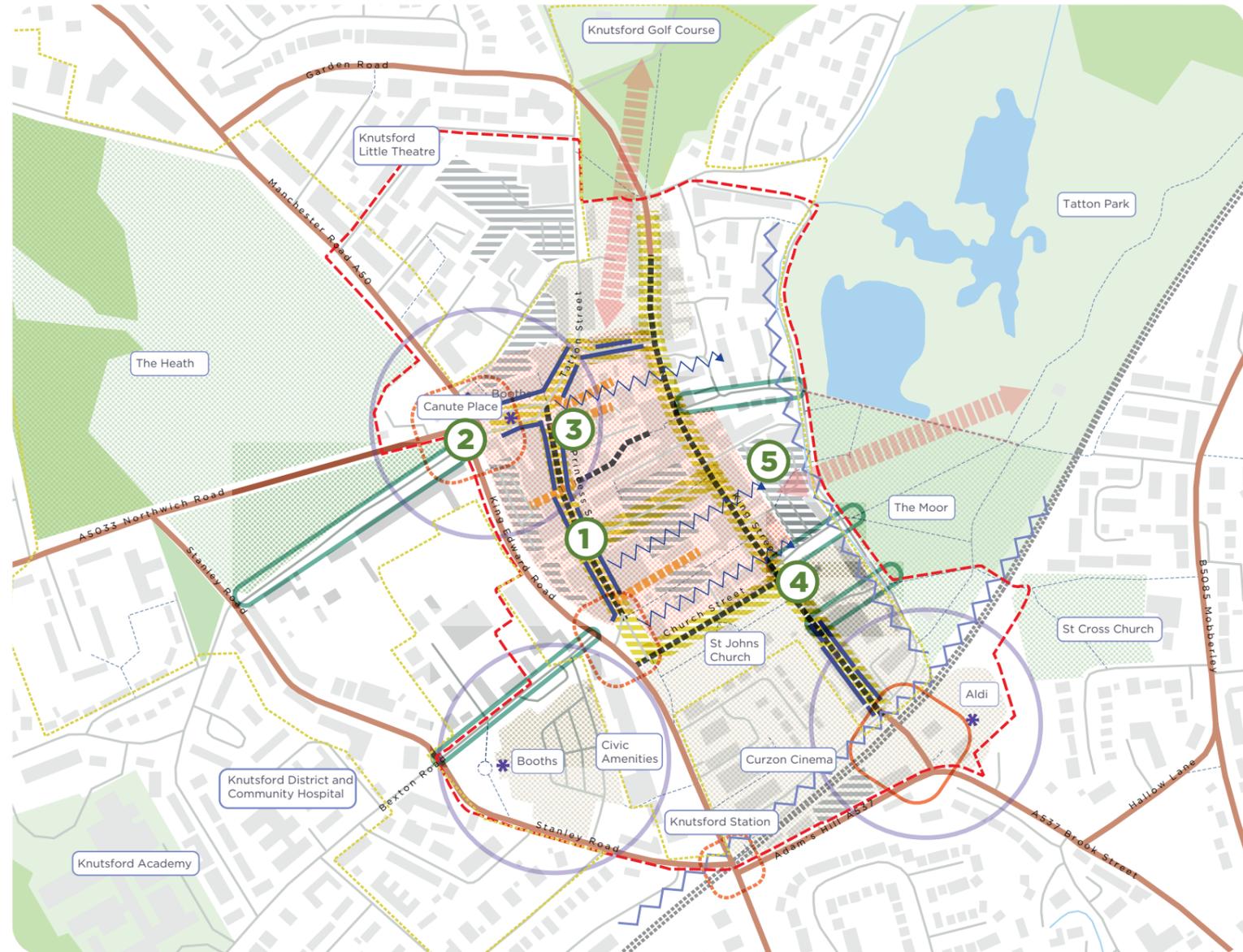
4 Princess Street provides designated 'high street' within the Town Centre which helps to build the heart of Knutsford. It is also pedestrianised once a month for a local Sunday market

Negative Features

Negative spatial elements are identified on the plan:

Key

-  Local Centre boundary
-  Conservation Area boundary
-  Streets and spaces dominated by car parking
-  Streets with narrow footways / poor pedestrian provision
-  Arrival gateways with a low quality arrival experience
-  Arrival gateway constrained by railway over-bridge and narrow footways
-  Areas of poor quality public realm (primarily low grade / aged materials, lack of street furniture and tree planting)
-  Low quality frontages
-  Arrival destinations
-  Links with poor legibility to and from the town centre
-  Local streets leading to cul-de-sacs or unclear where they connect to
-  Extent of area which reads as part of the Town Centre
-  Areas which feel beyond the extent of the Town Centre
-  Key assets which feel disconnected from the Town Centre
-  Land slope
-  Areas of severance



1 Narrow pedestrian footpaths and vehicular routes can be difficult to navigate



2 The junction at Canute place creates an area of low quality public realm. The area is heavily dominated with cars and an aging streetscape



3 A number of vacant units and dated shop frontage lower the aesthetic quality of the streetscape



4 King Street poses similar issues to Princess Street, within narrow and uneven footpaths, creating a low quality experience with little definition



5 Large areas of surface car parking detract from key pedestrian links to neighbouring amenities.

Summary of Spatial Elements

The table below and on the opposite page identifies the key positive and spatial attributes for the Town Centre:

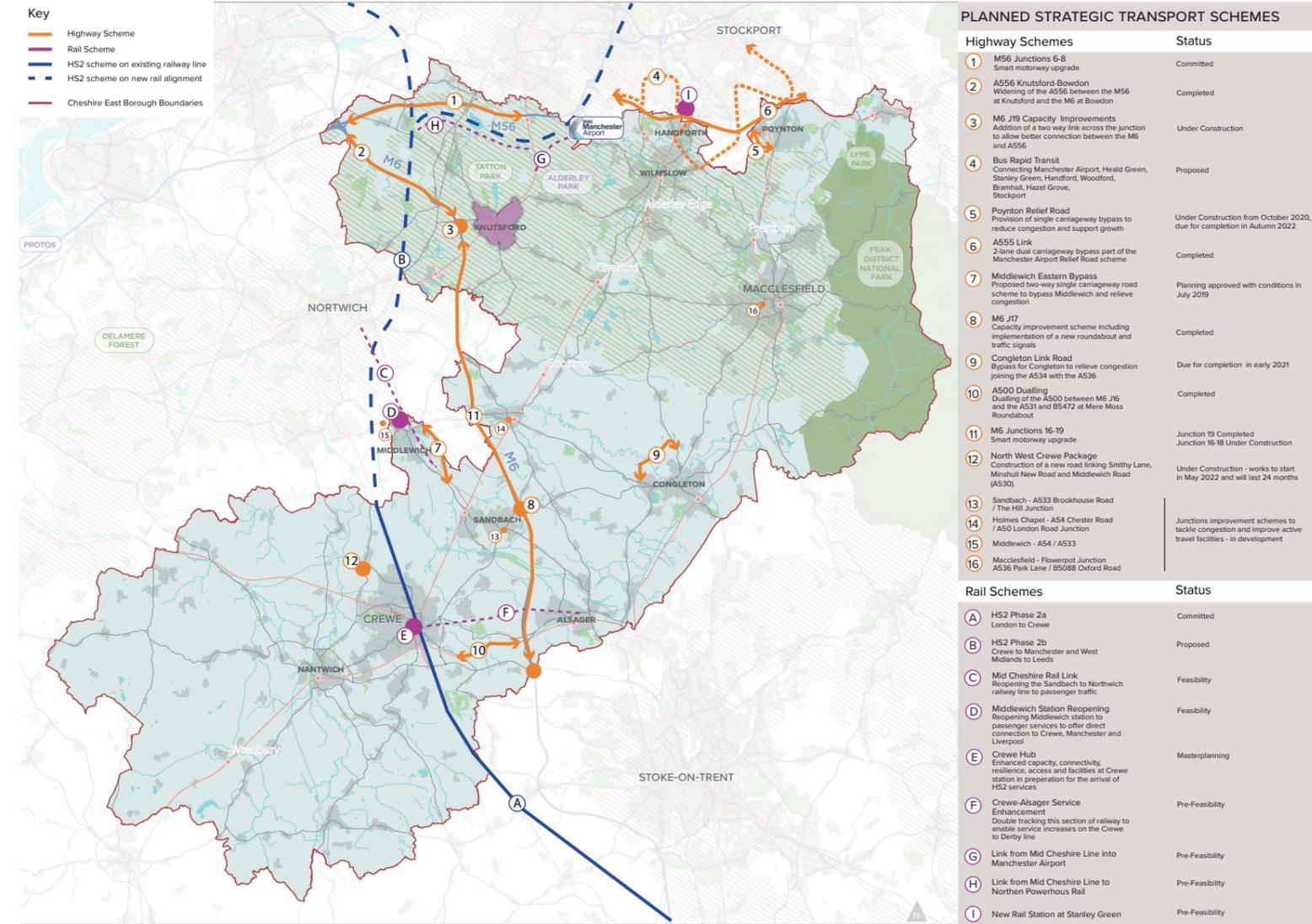
Public Realm	Gateways	Open Space	Heritage	Townscape Quality	Legibility
Positives					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some newer areas of hard landscaping, along Regent Street Street furniture and tidy planters are well maintained throughout the Town Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walkable distance (c. 10 mins) from the train station Residential housing within walking distance from the centre Potential for an enhanced gateway at Canute Place and to the south of the town at the train station 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tatton Park is less than 10 mins walk from the Town Centre Wallwood Park provides a nice pocket space to the north of the town Opportunity for better links between Tatton Park, The Heath and The Moorswell used 'Donkey routes' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knutsford has an attractive townscape along it's primary routes within the Town Centre, characterised by well kept period villas and terraces with many original features and which address the street Tatton Park also hosts a National Trust Property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mix of Victorian and newer shop fronts adds to variety Active frontages along key retail areas Booths and Aldi supermarkets are located south of the Town Centre, with primarily independent retailers throughout the Town Centre Shop fronts mostly well kept 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fairly compact and linear nature of the main centre means it is easy to navigate Lots of signage which complements the historic nature of the town

Public Realm	Gateways	Open Space	Heritage	Townscape Quality	Legibility
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pavement and road surfaces are tired and worn in places Narrow paving is not adequate for prams or wheelchairs or other mobility issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No clearly defined gateway that is suitable for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disconnect between green spaces - The Moor, Knutsford Heath and Tatton Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage could be better celebrated No sense of proximity to Tatton Park within the Town Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disconnect between areas leads to no real sense of centre Opportunity to create a centre at Canute Place or Princess Street / Toft Street Junction Retail core perhaps acts as a larger central space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Centre heavily dominated by on street parking and designated car parks to rear of buildings as well as larger surface parking and doesn't read as a pedestrian friendly town No segregated cycle routes

06 Connectivity and Accessibility

Knutsford has excellent links to the strategic transport network with its surrounding roads providing direct access to the M56 motorway, Manchester City Centre and Manchester Airport. Manchester Airport is accessible from Knutsford within less than 20 minutes drive time making it an attractive place to live, work and invest. As well as Manchester, which is readily accessible by both road and rail, Knutsford is within a 1-hour drive away from other major cities such as Liverpool and Chester via the M56.

Knutsford Planned Strategic Transport Schemes



Town Centre Transport Baseline Analysis



Car Parking

Car parking within the centre of Knutsford is a mixture of dense on-street parking provisions within the main retail areas and off-street surface car parks. Off-street car parks are all pay and display with parking tariffs inconsistent between the various locations. The On-street parking provided is limited to a 1 hour stay between 8am and 6pm Monday to Saturday.

On-street parking along the pedestrian routes of King Street and Princess Street combined with the narrow highway widths and pavements often causes conflicts with pedestrians. Roads also often become blocked as a result of this lack of available space creating issues for emergency and service vehicles. A high level of car ownership amongst residents (only 17% of households do not have access to a car) and limited active travel infrastructure presents the need for car parking to be carefully considered. Opportunities to reduce car parking within these streets should therefore be considered in order to enhance the environments for pedestrians and improve access for service vehicles.

The TCVPs consider the role of car parking in relation to the vibrancy and vitality of each town centre. However, any proposals to review or modernise car parking provision and management will be considered on a town by town basis as part of the Council's approach to travel demand management. Therefore the delivery of any car parking proposals is outside the scope of the TCVPs.

Town Centre	Car Park ID	Parking Spaces	Duration	Pricing
Knutsford	Tatton St Car Park	144	Long Stay	Pay & Display
	Canute Place Car Park	27	Long and Short Stay	Pay & Display
	Old Market Place Car Park	11	Long Stay	Pay & Display
	King St Car Park	125	Short Stay	Pay & Display
	Princess St Car Park	54	Long Stay	Pay & Display
	Silk Mill Car Park	45	Short Stay	Pay & Display
	Knutsford Station Car Park	90	Long Stay	Pay & Display
	TOTAL	496		

In addition there are privately operated car parks on Green Street and Northwich Road

Public Realm

Public realm around Knutsford generally consists of aging infrastructure. A poor standard of footways can be seen within the main pedestrian areas of King Street and Princess Street presenting uneven surfaces with trip hazards and narrow footway widths creating significant conflict between pedestrians and vehicles.

As the main visible area from the surrounding highway network, the area around the Princess Street / Toft Road junction would benefit from public realm enhancements to increase the sense of arrival in the Town Centre and enhance sense of place.

Aside from surrounding parks and green spaces, the Town Centre itself lacks public spaces including shade and shelter, and spaces where people can stop and rest. Opportunities for new public spaces including meeting spaces and pocket parks, as well as general improvements to public realm should therefore be considered across the centre of Knutsford as a whole.

Road Safety

A number of junctions within the vicinity of Toft Road have been identified as collision hotspots which may indicate a potential road safety issue. The Town Centre may therefore benefit from improved crossing facilities along Toft Road to enable safer access to the Town Centre for pedestrians and cyclists from areas to the west.

Clusters of collisions can also be seen around the Princess Street/Church Street junction and around the Stanley Road/ King Edward Road junction in the vicinity of the station. As a key route for pedestrians accessing the station and facilities within the Town Centre, junction improvements at this location should be considered to enhance safety for all road users.

Active Travel

One of the key pedestrian routes between King Street and Princess Street along Church Hill comprises a steep cobbled street for vehicles. The removal of traffic from this small stretch of street would contribute towards prioritising pedestrians and cyclists in the Town Centre over vehicles enhancing sense of place and encouraging dwell time.

Knutsford Town Centres location in proximity to key attractions and green spaces such as Tatton Park provides a good opportunity to enhance levels of walking and cycling in the area. However, links to Tatton Park from the Town Centre could be strengthened.

Active travel infrastructure within the Town Centre is also limited with facilities for cyclists and a lack of secure cycle parking. Opportunities to enhance the provision of cycle parking should therefore be considered. This could include the rethink of the existing provision of on-street parking bays or a vacant shop unit to provide secure and sheltered cycle parking. In regard to the Knutsford Revolution Cycle route, the LTDP suggests improvements to it such as improved crossing points on the A50.

Public Transport

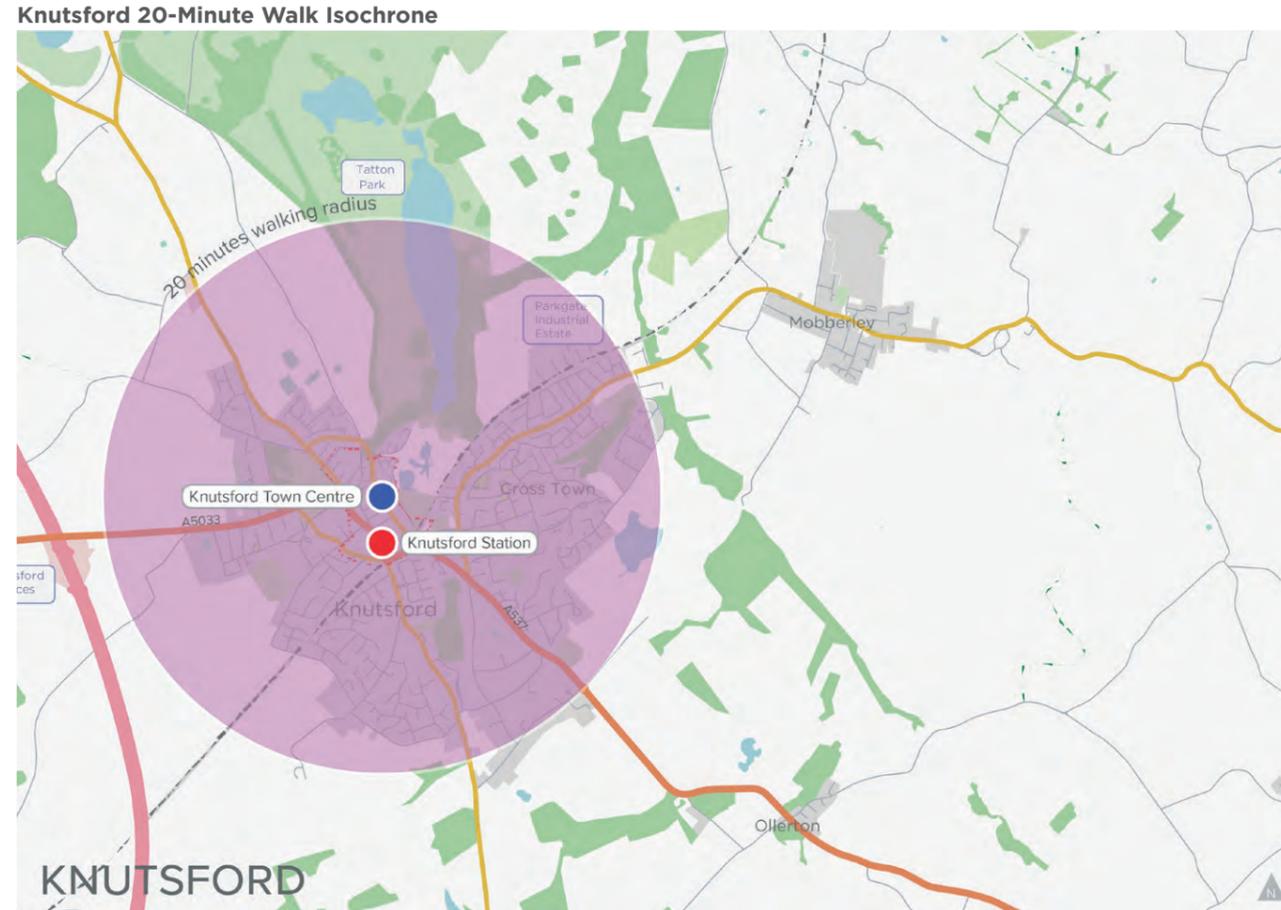
Knutsford is served by a rail station located within 8 minutes of the Town Centre which provides 1 train per hour in each direction, northbound towards Manchester and southbound towards Chester. However, the quality of services provided from Knutsford rail station is perceived as poor by local stakeholders. Particularly the frequency, reliability and crowding - which limits opportunities for rail commuting and discourages business growth within the Town Centre.

Bus connectivity to the area is also poor with low frequency services (1 bus per hour) offering connectivity to Altrincham and Macclesfield.

Movement Trends

The majority of residential areas, the rail station and Tatton Park are all accessible within a 20-minute walk of the centre. This presents significant opportunities to increase the levels of walking and cycling and mitigate parking issues evident within the Town Centre.

74% of people living in Knutsford travel to work outside of the town predominately to other towns across Cheshire East such as Macclesfield and Wilmslow and within areas towards Manchester.



Local Aspirations

An ambitious movement plan has been developed by the Town Council and is set out within the Town Council commissioned report 'From Top to Bottom Street'. The aim of the strategy is to make Knutsford more friendly to pedestrians, as a first stage of a masterplan to ensure long term vitality, appeal and prosperity.

The traffic and parking proposals include:

- Changing Princess Street and King Street to access roads instead of through roads.
- Making better use of on- and off-road parking spaces and encouraging the development of at least one Cheshire East Council multi-storey car park.
- Reducing the number of parking bays on King and Princess Streets prioritising blue badge holders - and enforcing the no-parking regulations and double yellow lines.

-  Only 7% of Knutsford residents work within the Town Centre
-  42% of residents travel more than 10km to work, the average distance travelled to work is 19km
-  Public transport accounts for 5% of commuter trips
-  Only 17% of households in Knutsford do not have access to a car, 35% have access to two or more vehicles
-  74% of residents in Knutsford in employment drive to work by car
-  5 minute walk between Town Centre and railway station
-  Active travel accounts for 15% of commuter trips

Source: Census 2011, Office for National Statistics (ONS)
Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres

06 Connectivity and Accessibility cont.

Cheshire East Council has approved Local Transport Development Plans (LTDP) for its principal towns, key service centres and surrounding rural areas. The table opposite summarises the potential transport schemes included in the LTDP relating to the town centre at the point they went out to public consultation. Please note the majority of schemes are at concept stage, subject to feasibility work and must be viewed as potential schemes. Therefore the LTDP are live documents and this list of schemes is subject to change and will evolve as further work is undertaken.

In Knutsford, the LTDP focuses strongly on active travel interventions to improve conditions for those on foot and cycle. There are also several 'highways' schemes set out for exploration across the central area.

The table contains detail on the schemes set out in the LTDP.

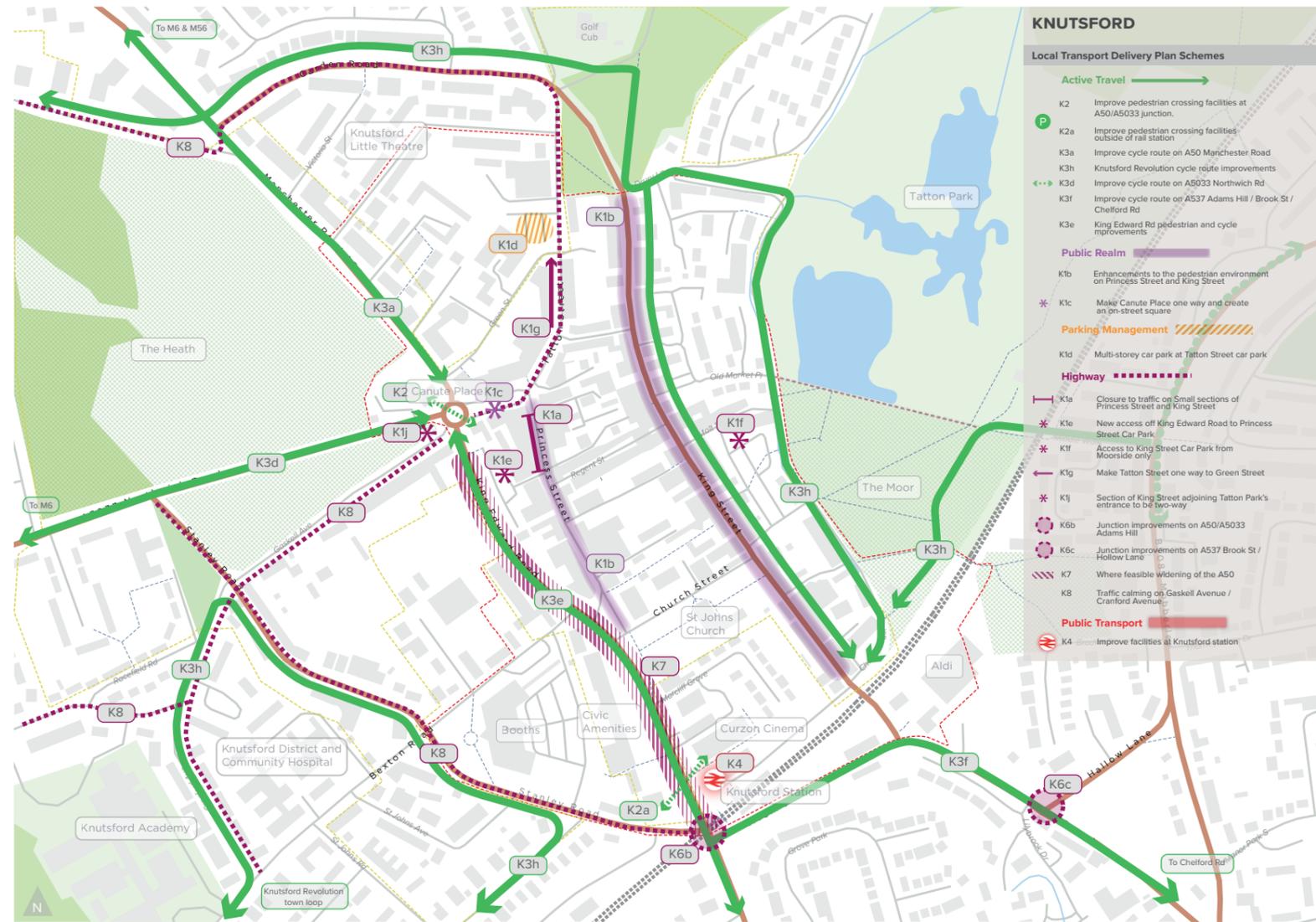
For full information on LTDP and the latest version of the LTDP please refer to the Highway pages of the CEC website.

Knutsford LTP and LCWIP Schemes

Type	Ref	Scheme	Description	Costing ¹
Active Travel	K2	Improve pedestrian crossings at A50/A5033 junction	Improve pedestrian crossing points at A50 / A5033 roundabout.	<£1m
	K2a	Improve pedestrian crossing facilities outside of rail station	Improve pedestrian crossing facilities on the A50 outside of the train station.	<£1m
	K3a	Improve cycling links on A50 Manchester Road	Improve cycling routes including schemes identified within the CycleKnutsford Infrastructure Delivery Plan: A50 Manchester Road / Toft Road / Holmes Chapel Road.	£1m-£5m
	K3d	Improve cycling links on A5033 Northwich Rd	Improve cycling routes including schemes identified within the CycleKnutsford Infrastructure Delivery Plan: A5033 Northwich Road.	£1m-£5m
	K3e	Improve walking and cycling route on King Edward Rd	Improve cycling routes including schemes identified within the CycleKnutsford Infrastructure Delivery Plan: A50 King Edward Road.	£1m-£5m
	K3f	Improve cycling links on A537 Adams Hill / Brook St / Chelford Rd	Improve cycling routes including schemes identified within the CycleKnutsford Infrastructure Delivery Plan: A537 Adams Hill / Brook Street / Chelford Road.	£1m-£5m
Public Realm	K1b	Enhance the pedestrian environment on Princess Street and King Street	Enhance the pedestrian environment on Princess Street and King Street to limit vehicle accessibility, review current traffic management regulations, improve public spaces and redevelop existing car parks.	£1m-£5m
	K1c	Make Canute Place one way and create an on-street square	Enhance the pedestrian environment on Canute Place implementing a one-way scheme, creating an on-street square and adding on-street parking spaces.	£1m-£5m
Parking Management	K1d	Multi-storey car park at Tatton Street car park	Introduce a multi-storey car park at Tatton Street car park.	£5m-£10m
Highway	K1a	Close small sections of Princess Street and King Street to traffic	Close small sections of Princess Street and King Street to traffic to limit vehicular accessibility and improve pedestrian environment.	<£100k
	K1e	Open a new access off King Edward Road to Princess Street car park	Open a new access off King Edward Road to Princess Street Car Park and increase on-street parking spaces.	<£1m
	K1f	Set access to King Street car park from Moorside only	Set access to King Street car park from Moorside only.	<£100k
	K1g	Make Tatton Street one way to Green Street	Make Tatton Street one way to Green Street and increase on-street parking spaces.	<£1m
	K1j	Make sections of King Street adjoining Tatton Park's entrance two-way	Make sections of King Street adjoining Tatton Park's entrance two-way.	<£100k
	K6b	Junction improvements on A50/A5033 Adams Hill	Implement junction's enhancements to improve traffic flow at A50/A5033 Adams Hill roundabout.	£1m-£5m
	K6c	Junction improvements on A537 Brook St /Hollow Lane	Implement junction's enhancements to improve traffic flow at A537 Brook Street / Hollow Lane.	£1m-£5m
	K7	Widening of the A50	Widening of the A50 - where feasible - between Adams Hill junction and Canute Place.	£1m-£5m
Public Transport	K8	Traffic calming on Garden Road, Tatton Street, Gaskell Ave, Stanley Street, Westfields Drive	Implement traffic and speed calming measures on residential streets: Stanley Road, Gaskell Avenue/Cranford Avenue, Westfield Drive up to Tabley Grove, Ladies Mile/Tabley Road/Garden Road/Tatton Street and Mereheath Lane.	<£1m
	K4	Improve facilities at Knutsford train station	Improving facilities at Knutsford Station including provision of street lighting within the car park, CCTV within the station and on platforms, cycle parking, and cycle hire.	<£1m

¹ The costs presented are indicative only at this stage. Costs will depend on type and level of interventions delivered - and should be revised at subsequent design stages.

Knutsford Local Transport Development Plan Schemes



07 Our Offer

Retail and Leisure

Cheshire East Council recognises the importance of monitoring key information to assess and respond to issues in its centres and commissions regular reviews of the retail and leisure market across the Borough. The latest partial update of the Retail Study Report generally paints a positive picture for Knutsford in terms of performance since the last Report (2016).

Knutsford is identified as one of the larger Key Service Centre's within Cheshire East that is a popular destination for both residents and tourists from further afield. Overall, the centre continues to have low vacancy levels and all the retail and service sectors continue to be well represented, including a significant number of comparison goods outlets. A strong leisure offer of bars and restaurants within the Town Centre enables a good evening economy, which adds to the vibrancy and attractiveness of the Town Centre.

Overall, the centre provides 203 units (Experian Goad Plan, January 2019) which are primarily located along Princess Street and King Street – known locally as Top and Bottom Street.

Whilst represented by some national operators, Knutsford convenience goods offering are all smaller scale operations including a Little

Waitrose, Co-Op and Sainsbury's Local. The convenience sector offering by number of units is slightly below the UK average (6% compared to 9% UK average), whilst the proportion of floorspace is almost half the UK average (8% compared to UK average of 15%). The provision in the town is also enhanced by the edge of centre Booths and Aldi stores, as well as The Market Hall which offers a collection of independent traders. The Market Hall provides food and drink as well as art and crafts goods.

The comparison goods offering in Knutsford is strong, with the proportion of units higher than the UK average (39% compared to UK average of 29%). The proportion of floorspace is in line with the national average (33% and UK average of 34%) and therefore lends to comparison goods offering in the Town Centre being in relatively small sized units. Knutsford has a significant number of national comparison stores including Boots, Waterstones, WH Smith and Carphone Warehouse as well as a range of quality independents including an award winning butchers and bespoke interior designers.

Leisure operators include a good range of national occupiers including Pizza Express, Costa Coffee

and Domino's, along with independent operators of take-aways, bars and restaurants. These contribute to the strong night-time economy of the town and it being seen as a popular eating and drinking destination. The leisure offer is supported by a number of cultural assets such as the Curzon Cinema, Little Theatre and Heritage Centre, a number of attractive green spaces and a strong events programme which attract visitors from a wide catchment.

Following the same pattern as 2016, whilst the proportion of leisure units remains just above the national average (25% to UK average of 21%), the floorspace is much higher owing to the leisure units being of a large size in the town. Retail provision has remained fairly stable compared to 2016 in regard to the number of units and floorspace, and both above the UK averages.

Vacant units are fairly dispersed around the Town Centre with the total reducing from 12 to 10 units since 2016. The proportion of units and floorspace are both below the UK averages. However, since the Goad survey was undertaken there have been some significant units become vacant including Topps Tiles and Tesla car showroom on Canute Place. Positively, Knutsford is home to

20 financial/ businesses service uses, and has retained its national operators including HSBC, Lloyds, Natwest and Nationwide, strengthening the Town Centre's offering.

At this stage, it is unclear what the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic will be on Knutsford's operators, however with a strong mix of national occupiers, especially in the comparison goods sector, it is likely that Knutsford will still remain a key centre in Cheshire East. Additionally, the strong night-time offering, and relatively affluent catchment population should provide some buffer to the continued challenges facing many of the national high street brands. Whilst there may be some short-term impacts on Town Centre occupiers therefore, in the longer term, Knutsford should remain as an attractive location for both residents and visitors alike.

Diversity of Uses in Knutsford Town Centre in January 2019
 Source: Experian GOAD Survey, January 2019. UK Average from the Experian GOAD Category Report (February 2020)
 The finance and business space identified in the table only relates to ground floor offices floorspace within the Town Centre. The office market is considered further on p57



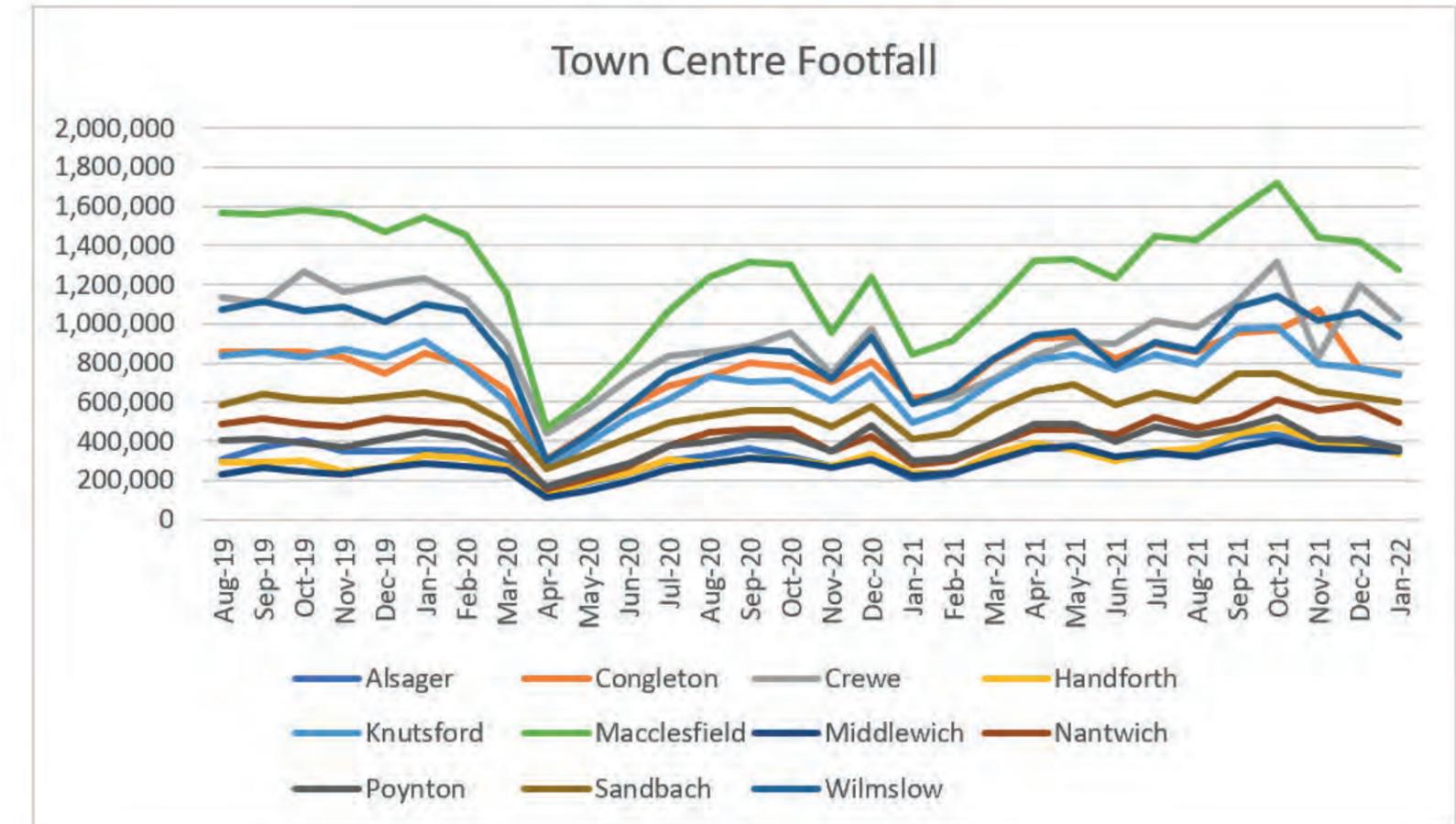
	Units			Floorspace		
	No.	%	UK Average (%)	Sq.m	%	UK Average (%)
Convenience	12	6	9	2,400	8	15
Comparison	80	39	29	9,240	33	34
Retail Service	39	19	15	3,620	13	7
Leisure Service	42	21	25	9,120	32	26
Financial and Business Service	20	10	10	2,980	11	7
Vacant	10	5	12	1,000	4	11
TOTAL	203	100	100	28,360	100	100

Footfall

In recognition of the important relationship between footfall and vitality, CEC is now commissioning regular monitoring of footfall across the centres. The following graph shows the footfall in all the key centres between August 2019 and December 2020. It starkly shows the impact of Covid on footfall, across Cheshire East particularly in March and November last year (during national lockdowns) and some bounce back in December.

Knutsford was the fifth most visited centre in Cheshire East in August 2019 and retained this position alongside Congleton throughout the period to December 2020 - with in the region of 908,000 visitors per month at its peak. Positively, whilst the largest monthly footfall in Knutsford fell by 30% on the year previously to 603,000 in November 2020, this was below the national average benchmark rate of 40% suggesting many working from home were choosing to shop locally.

Covid has had a significant impact on footfall, both during enforced lockdowns but also in further accelerating online retail use. The ability of a centre to attract a wide range of visitors (rather than just relying on shoppers) will have a significant impact on how centres emerge from Covid.



Source: Visitor Insight Baseline Report: August 2019-January 2022



Source: Visitor Insight Baseline Report: Knutsford Town Centre: October 2019-2020
Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres

Employment

The main employment offering in Knutsford can be found on the northern edge of the town; Parkgate Industrial Estate which comprises both office and industrial units. The B2/ B8 industrial units are largely average quality and predominantly contain local occupiers within the manufacturing, transportation and wholesale sectors. The estate also contains some office buildings such as Egerton Court, occupied by a variety of local businesses. South of the estate is Knutsford Business Park containing five two-storey office buildings. These are occupied, again by local businesses within sectors such as ICT and property.

Another large office offering is Booths Park, south west of the town and based just off the A537. The site contains several large office buildings of average-good quality. No national occupiers are on site but local businesses within the financial, ICT and property sectors are found within the office premises. The site offers a range of serviced office space and leased office space of 200-17,000 sq ft, meeting rooms available for up to 200 people, as well as gym facilities and a restaurant/ café.

As of the latest data from 2019, there are 24 office use class premises within Knutsford Town Centre. Whilst spread throughout the Town Centre, the majority are located on King Street. These mainly comprise office premises above retail units and single-storey buildings, occupied by local businesses mainly in the property and financial sectors.



Location of offices in Knutsford Town Centre
Source: Experian GOAD Survey

Residential Market Context

Knutsford provides an attractive residential offering, with easy commuting to employment destinations via J19 of the M6 (3 miles) and Knutsford train station in the centre of the town.

At the time of the 2011 Census the dominant house type across the Cheshire East area was detached housing (35.6%) which is a much higher proportion than the North West (18%) and England (22.4%). The Knutsford parish area had a total of 5,671 households, representing 3.6% of Cheshire East's total residential stock (159,441). Knutsford is strongly characterised by larger housing types of detached (38.8%) and semi-detached (34.2%). Together these two property types make up almost three quarters of the total housing stock in the town. This suits the dominant residential group of the town of affluent professionals with large families. However, there is always a need to rebalance the offering to provide more start homes, affordable housing and elderly accommodation to suit future changing demographics.

Over the last year Knutsford has achieved an average property value of £499,900. This is one of the highest average values within the towns of Cheshire East and the North West.

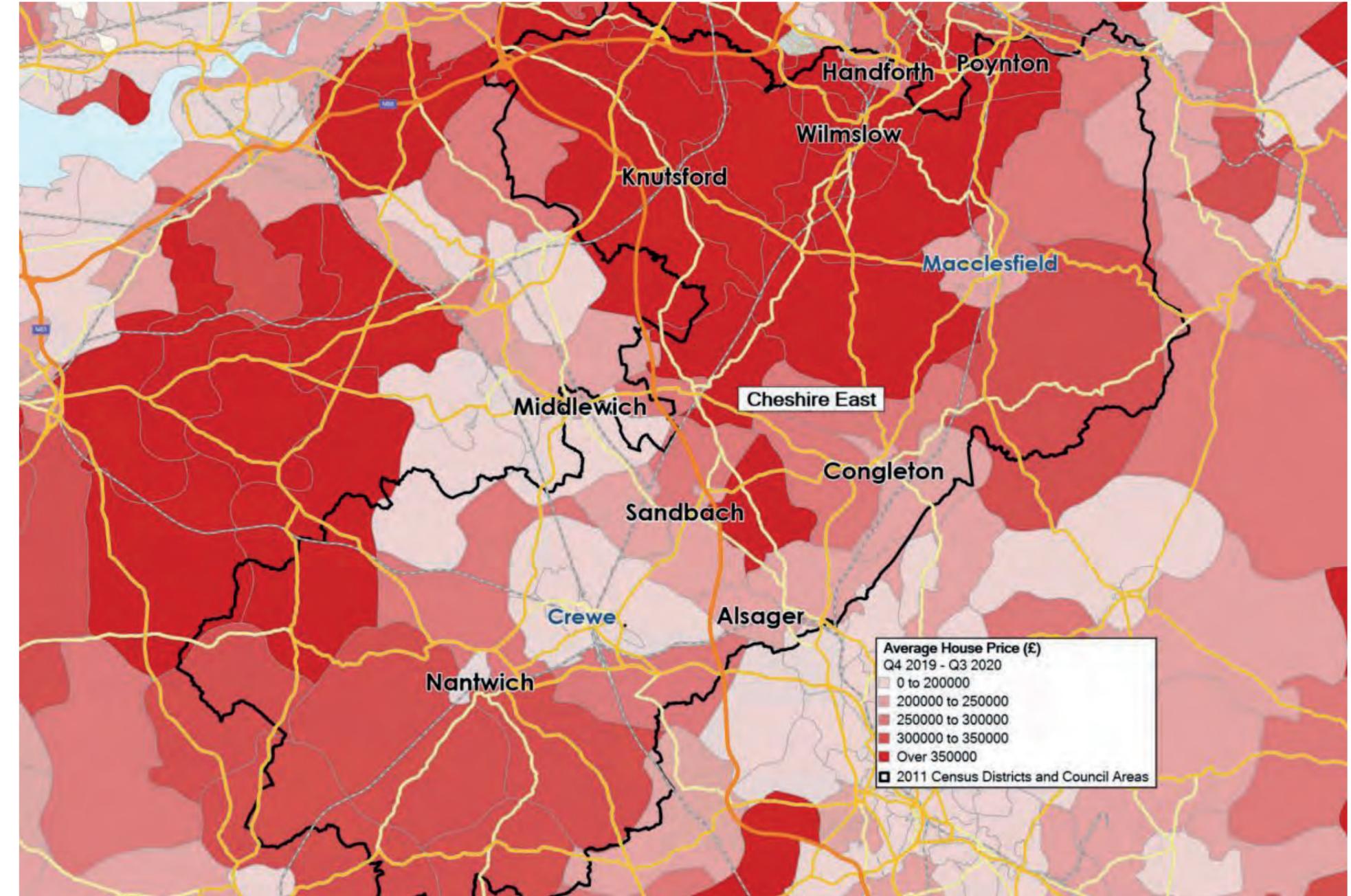
There are currently two major residential developments taking place to the North West and North East of Knutsford comprising 190 and 236 homes respectively. A further site for 60 houses in the North West of Knutsford has outline planning permission whilst applications for outline consent for two further developments, 250 at the North

West of Knutsford and 225 houses to the East of Knutsford, have been submitted.

McCarthy and Stone are also in the process of developing Centennial Place located on the northern edge of the town. This development will feature 46, 1 and 2-bed apartments and will aid in meeting the needs of the ageing population.

Dwelling Type/Area	Detached	Semi Detached	Terrace	Flat	Other	Total Households
Alsager	39.9%	40.4%	11.6%	8.1%	0%	5,183
Congleton	36.3%	35.4%	19.3%	8.9%	0.2%	11,561
Handforth	26.1%	23.1%	27.9%	22.8%	0.1%	2,936
Knutsford	38.8%	34.2%	19.7%	7.0%	0.4%	5,671
Middlewich	39.0%	26.0%	19.7%	15.3%	0%	5,910
Nantwich	20.8%	30.6%	26.8%	21.6%	0.2%	6,710
Poynton-with-Worth	42.7%	39.2%	10.5%	7.2%	0.3%	6,024
Sandbach	39.1%	36.1%	17.6%	6.8%	0.3%	7,840
Wilmslow	39.5%	26.6%	19.5%	14.3%	0%	10,615
Cheshire East	35.6%	32.6%	21.2%	10.2%	0.5%	159,441
North West	18.0%	36.3%	29.8%	15.4%	0.5%	3,009,549
England	22.4%	31.2%	24.5%	21.2%	0.7%	22,063,368

Housing Stock by Type.
Source: Census 2011, Office for National Statistics (ONS)



08 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats

This SWOT is based on the analysis of the consultant team and discussions with the Town Council and other local partners including councillors.

Strengths

- Historic Market Town, buildings maintain a lot of character and the amenity offer appeals to a wide demographic - such as Elizabeth Gaskell Link and architecture of Richard Harding Watt
- The Heath, The Moor, Tatton Park and Golf Club mean the town is surrounded by green space - places of nature, rest and play that can accommodate a range of events
- At present it is relatively easy to access the Town Centre on foot or in a car
- Lots of open space and incidental spaces with benches etc that local community use
- Strong food and beverage offer within the town
- Mixed and attractive architecture
- Strong, resilient and active community
- Well maintained street planting and signage
- Well connected by infrastructure - Train
- Town Centre Ranger and dedicated Town Centre Manager
- Cultural assets such Heritage Centre, Curzon Cinema and Little Theatre and strong regular events programme draws from a wide catchment
- Town Council website and others promote offer
- Differs from the surrounding service centres as it is more of a country market town
- Tatton Hall and other tourist activities in close proximity
- Golden triangle association - good and bad
- Despite the current COVID -19 pandemic, community events still continue such as Makers Market, Tatton 10k and cycling events

Weaknesses

- Narrow streets make it difficult to cater for cyclists, pedestrians and vehicles comfortably - difficult pedestrian movement. Especially when distancing measures are necessary
- Tension between different users of the Town Centre - pedestrians vs. car. Car dominant Town Centre
- On street parking and parking charges within the centre
- Traffic flow through the Town Centre and narrower streets such as Princess Street and King Street
- Public transport links could be stronger - currently difficult to reach the Town Centre via bus or train and therefore travel by car prevails. Holds back business investment compared to places like Altrincham
- Cobbled streets remain as a historic link however could be improved to enhance public realm
- Poor links between Knutsford Town Centre and Tatton Park
- Lack of congregation space or town square
- Disconnect/weakness in communication between Knutsford Town Council, Cheshire East and the community. Need more joined up thinking
- No clearly defined gateways
- Temporary COVID barriers have had negative feedback from local businesses and residents. 90% of shops do not want them. Although acknowledged that the presence of barriers may be making visitors, especially older ones, comfortable visiting the centre
- Few public toilets available? Some feel these are sufficient (2 blocks with 3 toilets in each). More signs to create awareness of what is already available

Opportunities

- Potential opportunities to create a 'town square' space to build upon the social elements of the town allowing small groups to gather - Heritage Centre, Red Cow Yard, Lost and Found - potential areas for this. Better understanding of ownership and responsibility required. Could allow for more alfresco commerce opportunities which are limited due to narrow streets
- Greater connection between The Moor and The Heath and the Town Centre which currently feels disconnected - part of the Masterplan
- Review of parking fees while COVID measures are in place to help boost local business and footfall into the Town Centre
- Improved links to Tatton Park - at present it seems the public visit either the park or the Town Centre and not both together. Potential for a hop on hop off bus connection with Tatton Park - similar to Chester and Chester Zoo. Small land train or E-Bike hire and trail between the two?
- Regular Market showcasing local produce
- Make more of the Market Hall
- Make more of attractions in the local area to draw more people into the centre
- Better discussions between Cheshire East, Knutsford Town Council and local community groups to identify the needs of the Town
- Strong cycle lobby. CE to introduce the necessary actions to increase the cycling infrastructure in line with the Knutsford Cycle Plan. Need more TC cycle parking
- Use existing on-street bays?
- Empty shop units as cycle hub?
- COVID measures to reduce the traffic within the Town Centre have shown the potential of what could be achieved especially for monthly market
- Large number of small "pocket" car parks which are privately owned for business and residential could offer an opportunity for infill development however need to be retained for the buildings they serve
- Improved transport links with Tatton Park should be Town Centre based and should provide linkage to/from railway station

Threats

- Current move away from shopping in shops to shopping online
- Surrounding service centres implementing the same improvements potentially might detract from the offer within Knutsford - Altrincham improvements already pull visitors away from Knutsford
- Target market of some shops does not meet the local demographic profile needs - threat to local residents and those local businesses
- Recognition that car ownership in town and district is very high. Perhaps fighting losing battle on public transport
- Wider Cheshire East proposed road schemes in the pipeline may prevent some Town Centre improvements being made
- Long term impacts of COVID-19 restrictions - will this deter footfall within the Town Centre and have longer impacts for local business?



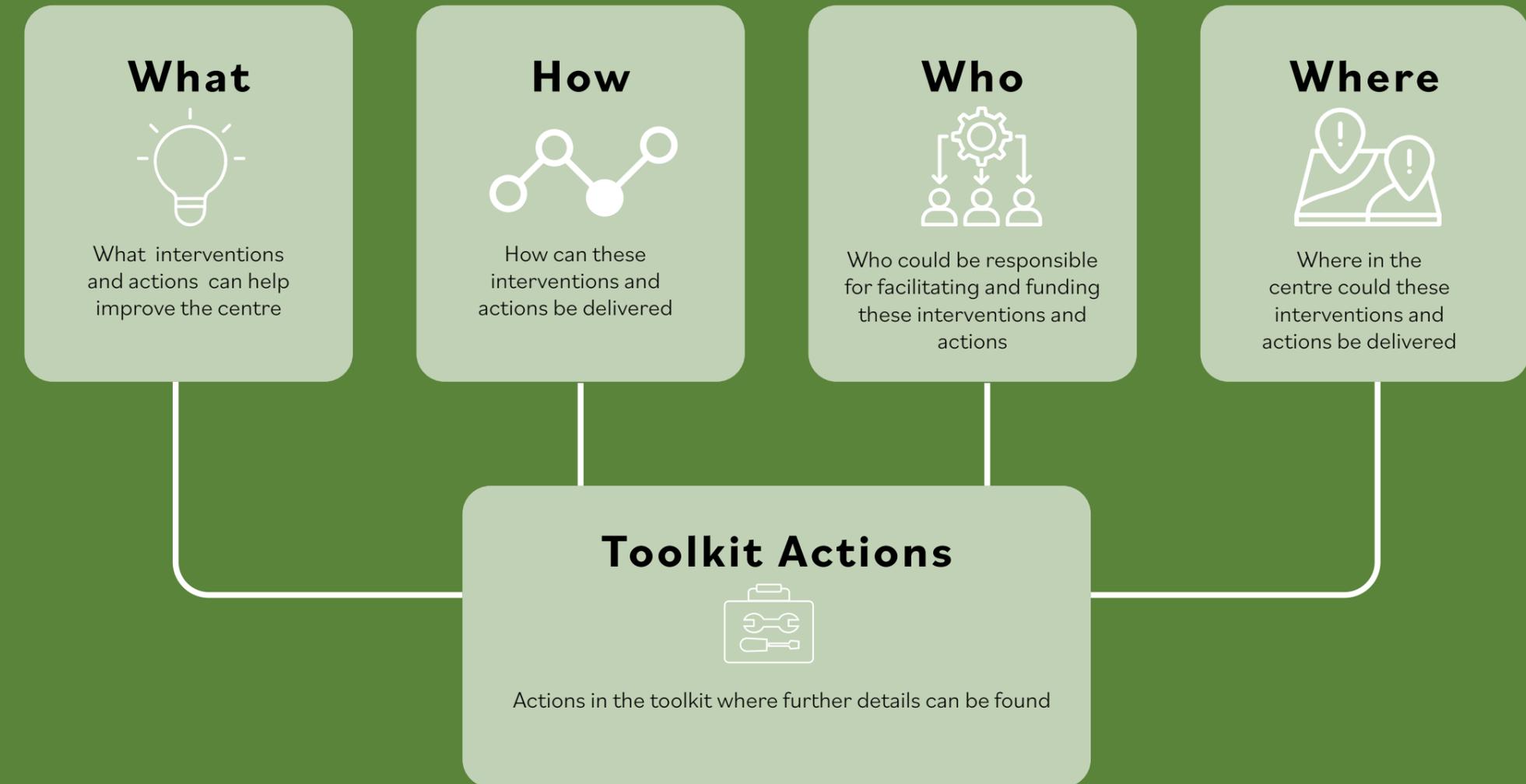
KNUTSFORD ACTION PLAN

09 Priority Areas for Intervention

The Action Plan has been prepared in collaboration with the Town Council and its Partners and identifies actions which seek to support the established Vision and Objectives for Knutsford responding to its challenges and opportunities. It sets out a series of actions, identifying a small number of priorities for intervention which will have the greatest impact on improving the vitality of the Centre.

For each of the actions further details are provided in terms of what, how, who and where (see Box for further details).

The Action Plan is supported by a Toolkit which provides a wide range of actions across 25 intervention areas (which align with the High Street Task Force recommendations) which can be undertaken by a range of stakeholders.



Vision and Objectives

Vision Statement

To ensure that Knutsford thrives economically and socially as a historic market town, whilst protecting and enhancing the town's character, variety of buildings and natural environment. The delivery of the facilities and infrastructure that the town needs will be supported whilst also maintaining Knutsford's strong sense of community to remain as an attractive, healthy and safe place to live work and visit.

Objectives

- **To improve access to community and education infrastructure**
- **To support healthy living and well-being**
- **To support provision of sport and leisure opportunities**
- **To protect, retain and enhance environment and green infrastructure**
- **To protect heritage**
- **To provide a mix of housing that meets local needs**
- **To ensure long-term viability and prosperity**
- **To promote safe, healthy and sustainable travel for all**
- **To ensure long term prosperity of the Town Centre**

Role of the Centre

Knutsford plays a number of important roles:

- A local centre serving the needs of its local residents
- An employment hub offering a range of job opportunities
- A visitor destination offering a range of heritage assets, visitor attractions (including access to Tatton Park) and other leisure amenities

The Vitality Plan seeks to support Knutsford to fulfil its potential across these important roles.

Areas for Intervention

The following have been identified as areas for intervention. Priority interventions identified through the public consultation are highlighted with a white border.

Potential actions are identified in Section 10.

These actions align with the Town Council's objective of ensuring Knutsford Town Centre remains a thriving independent destination for visitors and residents alike and the need to promote active travel/public transport and reduce the need for use of cars.



Spatial Action Plan

The Spatial Action Plan illustrates key features of the Centre and identifies where proposed actions could be delivered. It highlights the significant green and blue assets (including Tatton Park, the Moor and the Heath) around the Town Centre. It also highlights key local assets including the Station, Cinema and Hospital and the strong grid of streets.

The top priority actions which have emerged from the public consultations are:

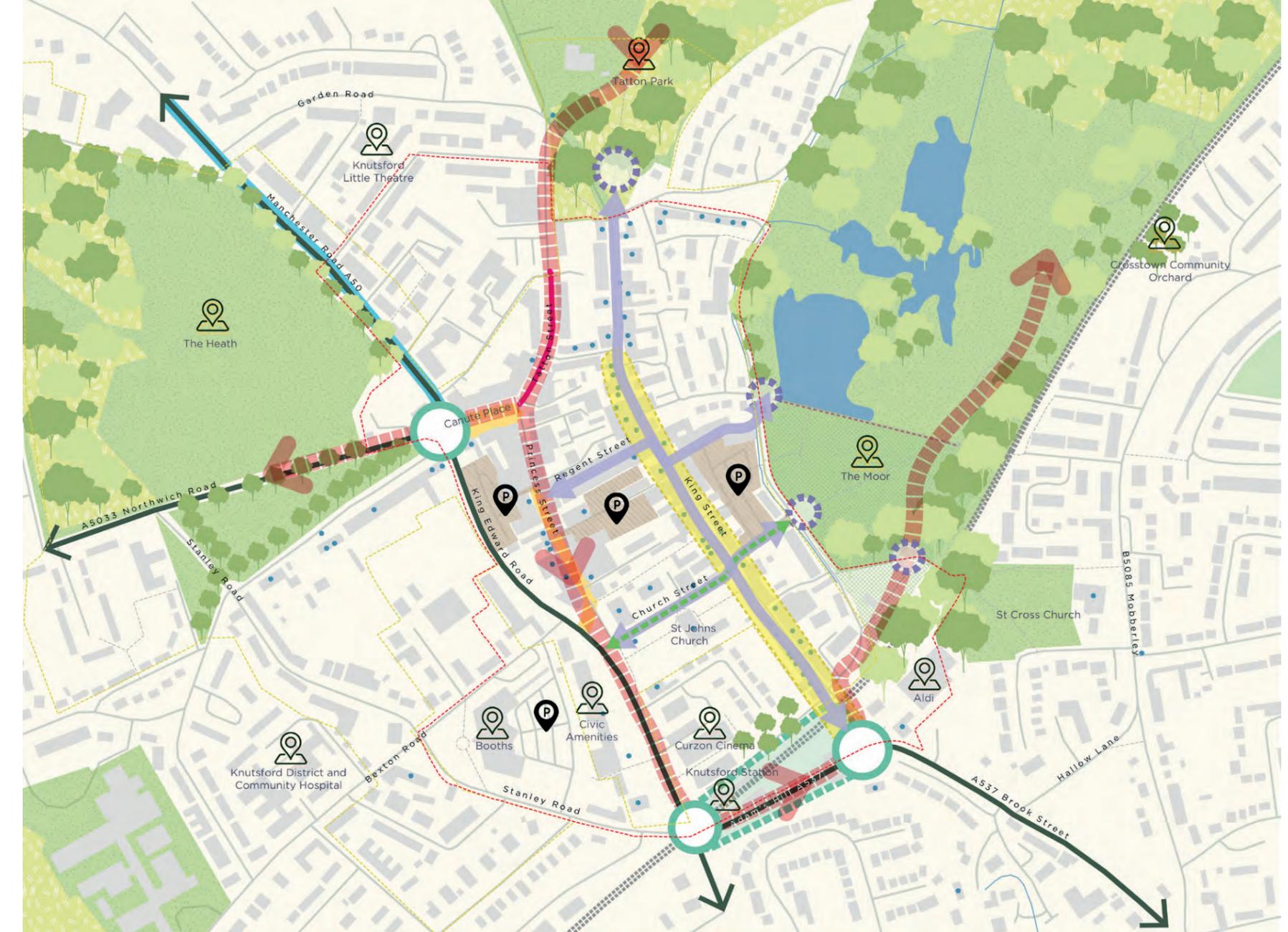
- Action 3: Prioritising more cycling and walking**
- Action 5 Showcasing Knutsford's Tourism and Heritage Assets**
- Action 7 - Better Management of Car Movement**
- Action 8 - Public Transport Strategy**

Key

- Local centre boundary
- Local services and attractions
- Listed building
- Primary routes through local centre
- Existing car parks
- Existing woodland
- Existing play / sports area
- Existing open space
- Proposed area for parking management
- Key junction gateways
- Pedestrian access points to parks
- Public realm enhancement
- Improved public transport route
- Active travel routes

- Action 1**
Reducing the dominance of cars along King Street
- Action 2**
Connecting green assets
- Action 3**
Encouraging walking and cycling

Knutsford Strategy Plan



Movement Action Plan

Building on the transport schemes suggested in the LTDP, additional Town Centre transport schemes are suggested as likely to be beneficial in supporting Town Centre vitality and viability. These additional schemes, which place a strong emphasis on public realm and enhancing the street environment are set out in the table and plan opposite.

Town Centre Movement Schemes suggested in addition to LDTP potential Schemes

Type	Ref.	Scheme	Description	Costing ¹
Active Travel	K_AT1	Improve wayfinding across the town centre at key gateways	Improve signage and wayfinding across the town centre at key gateways and landmarks	<£100k
	K_AT2	Introduce safe, secure cycle parking	Consider the location of cycle hubs linked to improved green routes and provide safe secure cycle parking throughout the town centre and at the railway station.	<£100k
	K_AT3	Improve walking and cycling route on Church St to The Moor	Improve pedestrian and cycling connections between Knutsford town centre and The Moor.	<£1m
Public Realm	K_PR1	Enhance the pedestrian environment on Tatton Street	Extend the public realm scheme for King Street and Tatton Street (K1b) to Tatton Street to upgrade the current underwhelming pedestrian environment and tired materials.	£1m-£5m
Parking Management	K_PM1	Parking management measures to reclaim highway space and improve access for all on Canute Pl, Princess St and King St	Introduce parking management measures on Canute Pl, Princess Street and King Street to reduce supply of on-street parking and length of stay, in order to reclaim highway space, utilise space more productively and enhance access for all (i.e. increased footway widths to improve access for the mobility impaired or those with pushchairs).	<£100k
Public Transport	K_PT1	Undertake viability study for a shuttle short service to Tatton Park	Consider the viability of a free park and ride shuttle short service between the town centre and Tatton Park.	Revenue funding

¹ The costs presented are indicative only at this stage. Costs will depend on type and level of interventions delivered – and should be revised at subsequent design stages.
cheshireeast.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=48d6af7045d2495c81a1850a2c8a72c1



Bath – Parklets could be trialled on King Street (Photo Credit: MottMacDonald)

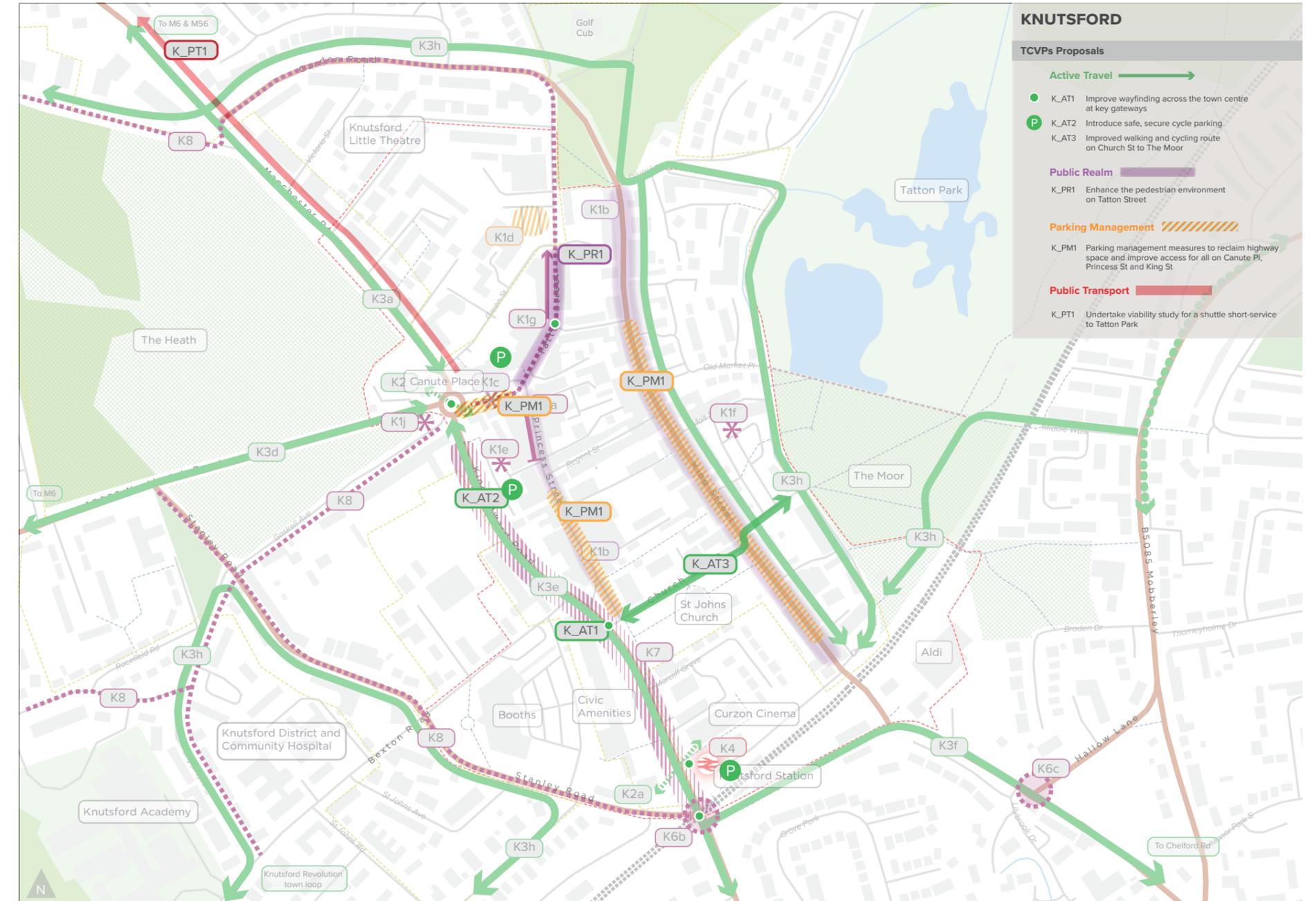


Frodsham Street, Chester Better managing the space dedicated to vehicles and pedestrians, with narrow historic street environments. (Photo Credit: MottMacDonald)



Paradou, France Streets across the Town Centre should be designed with good quality materials and to create low speed environments. They should be well lit during hours of darkness. (Photo Credit: MottMacDonald)

Town Centre Vitality Plan Highways Proposals



10 Potential Actions



Action 1: Reducing the Dominance of Cars Along King Street

What

Reducing the dominance of cars on King Street to better showcase its historic buildings and encourage visitors to be able to dwell in the heart of the town creating a safer and more pleasant place to shop and relax. If some parking is removed, shoppers will be able to browse more comfortably without worrying about cars passing by. Other businesses are in turn likely to benefit from the increased footfall and dwell time in a more pleasant street environment. Shop fronts are also more visible when not hidden behind a large vehicle. Equality of access is also important – many of the footways are currently too narrow to be used by those with mobility impairments or pushing children in buggies. This means that people have to use the carriageway at times and should be able to do so comfortably.

This action supports the findings of The From Top to Bottom Street report. The report proposes to reduce the dominance of cars across the town centre, not solely from King Street. Whilst the TCVP suggests that the initial focus should be on King Street but reconsiders the need to consider other areas such as Princess Street, Canute Place and Minshull Street

How

Reducing the amount of car parking spaces outside some of the shops and using it as a spill out areas for cafes and restaurants. This does not need to involve significant investment and can be done on a temporary basis over a small area to test the impact. Whilst it is acknowledged that the red and white barriers used during COVID to manage traffic and pedestrian movement were not well liked, the use of planters to create al fresco seating areas outside of some of the cafes and restaurants on King Street would provide a number of benefits. It would animate the street and allow visitors to browse more safely and appreciate the street’s heritage. Whilst some car parking would be removed, there are plenty of car parking spaces within a very short walk. Space can be used more productively, for instance one parking space outside a restaurant can comfortably seat three tables of two.

Introduce temporary planters to bring greenery to the street and to separate car parking from seating areas. This does not need to be really expensive. A scheme has just been implemented in Macclesfield. CEC covered £1000 for licences etc and local businesses paid for furniture/planters. Animating the street, with businesses expanding out into the street, offering places to dwell and explore what the shops have to offer.

Consideration would need to be given to temporary measures to show they would not impact on businesses and some could remain as just temporary such as the space outside Lost and Found which is used for some events. Provide some examples from towns with affluence of how such interventions have supported transformation.

Consideration should also be given to how servicing could be done out of core hours. A Concept Design Study should be progressed, working with businesses to develop a phased and costed strategy for improvements to King Street. Consideration should be given to create attractive outside space linked to cafes, bars and restaurants.

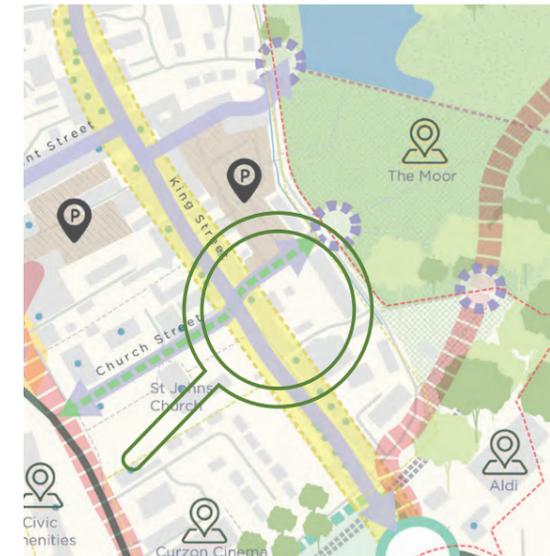
A review of the car parking strategy/ parking management for the town should be recommended, which includes stakeholders, businesses and the general public.

Who

- Town Council
- Businesses on King Street
- CEC

Where

- Part of King Street (priority)
- Wider town including Princes Street, Canute Place and Minshull Street



Location of Priority Action 1



Action 1 supports the following objectives:

- To support healthy living and well-being
- To protect heritage
- To ensure long-term viability and prosperity
- To ensure long term prosperity of the Town Centre
- To promote safe, healthy and sustainable travel for all



Toolkit Actions

- 1a Improve evening economy 1b Programme of events
- 1c Enable autumn and winter al-fresco dining
- 1d Use lighting
- 4a Provide pop up seating
- 4d Planting in pots to define space for certain uses
- 5a Upgrade public realm
- 5b Redesign existing shop fronts
- 5d Instant greening
- 9a Repurposing assets
- 9c Enable a café culture
- 14a Quick-wins and temporary interventions to manage traffic speeds and create more pedestrian friendly spaces – e.g. planters, parklets and street furniture
- 18c Implement road closure
- 18b Provide new places to sit
- 18e Prioritise environmental considerations in the design of new public spaces



Action 1: Reducing the Dominance of Cars Along King Street

Priority Action 1: Reducing the dominance of cars along King Street



Before image (copyright of Google Street View 2022)

Refreshed and consistent shop signage will create an identity for the street

Subtle variation of paving will enhance the experience of pedestrians and cyclists

Plant boxes and hanging boxes will improve the aesthetic of the street

Temporary and flexible planters allow for expansion of the footway

Reduced number of parking bays will allow for expansion of public realm

A wider footway will allow for flexible and spill out space for cafes and restaurants

Addition of awning to shop fronts helps to frame and activate the streetscape



Avignon, France Planters to trial pedestrian priority and road closure interventions. (Photo credit: MottMacdonald)



Frodsham Street, Chester Better managing the space dedicated to vehicles and pedestrians, with narrow historic street environments. (Photo Credit: MottMacDonald)



Action 2: Connecting Green Assets

What

Knutsford has a unique characteristic in that it is surrounded by a number of rich, high quality green spaces, such as Tatton Park, the Moor and the Heath. All three present a great opportunity for recreation, allowing locals and visitors to walk, play, sail, learn and explore all that the parks have to offer. However, there is a slight disconnect between the Town Centre and these green assets in terms of wayfinding and signage. Knutsford has an opportunity to create well signposted cycling and walking connections that sustainably link the surrounding green assets into the Town Centre. This will create a sustainable, safe and direct links that encourage local residents and visitors to walk or cycle between the Town Centre and the neighbouring parks. These routes could be supported by a wayfinding strategy to support these recreational journeys across the area and connecting into other surrounding walking and cycling routes.

How

As noted above the importance of the Centre's green assets are already recognised. Actions could be focused on both the connections from Tatton Park to the Town Centre as well as from the Moor and the Heath. These routes could be enhanced by clearer signage, street lighting, street furniture, cycle storage and parking and consistent paving to visually distinguish the route to and from the Town Centre. Along walking and cycling routes, bicycle and scooter parking / storage could be provided to encourage use by all ages. Improved green routes should also be connected to other community spaces such as sports and leisure centres and cinemas and school.

Other actions could include:

- Engage with local artists to install more public art in parks and on key routes linking them to target local community funds
- Further support to local groups to assist with maintenance and delivery of events multiple parks and greenspaces- prioritise the worst connections initially particularly those that are unusable in the winter months.
- Create more attractive and comfortable dwell spaces at the Moor and the Heath
- Princess Street could be better orientated towards pedestrians and cyclists with consistent paving, improved lighting and signage and hints of greenery.
- The junction of Princess Street and Toft Road could be enhanced with street lighting, street furniture, to create a dwell space along this active route.

- Knutsford Station could include better signage and information points that direct towards the green assets of the town and additional cycle /scooter storage.
- Exploring the potential for cycle and e scooter hire at Tatton Park with parking facility in the town centre/at gates of Tatton Park (on private land off the highway) adjacent to Town Centres to enable linked trips.
- Creation of a cycle path from the Moor to the Dog Wood entrance to Tatton Park. This would create a cycle/pedestrian loop and is an ambition in the Knutsford Cycle Plan.

Who

- Town Council
- National Trust / Tatton Park
- Groundwork
- Friends of the Heath
- Friends of the Moor
- Tatton Estates
- CEC/ANSA

Where

- Connecting The Heath, The Moor and Tatton Park into the Town Centre.

Priority Action 2: Connecting Knutsford with its Green Assets



Action 2 supports the following objectives:

- To improve access to community and education infrastructure
- To support healthy living and well-being
- To protect, retain and enhance environment and green infrastructure
- To promote safe, healthy and sustainable travel for all
- To ensure long term prosperity of the Town Centre



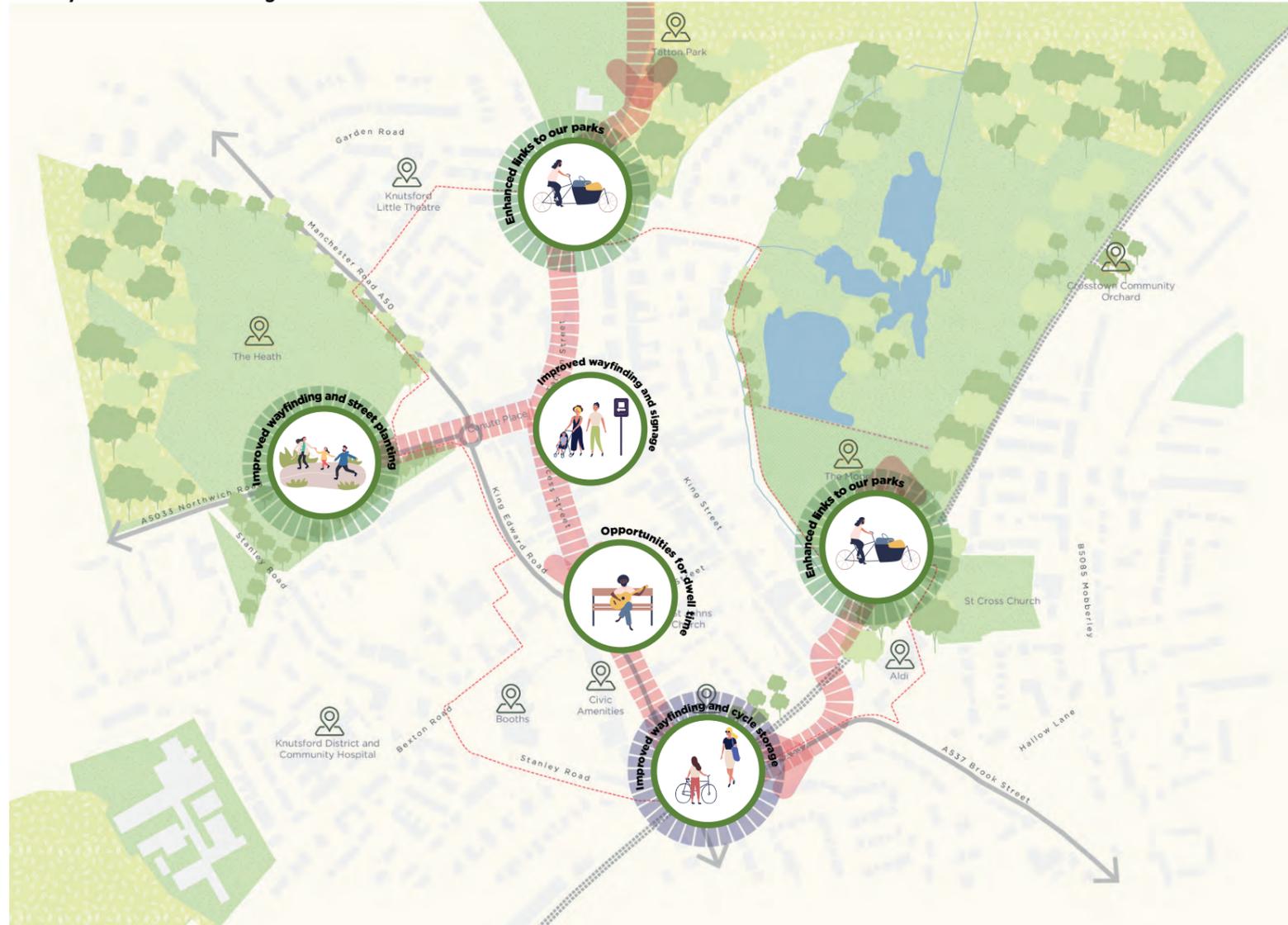
Toolkit Actions

- 4a Provide pop up seating 4b Better signage
- 4d Planting in pots to define space for certain uses
- 4e Enhance gateway sites
- 7a Parklets
- 7e Bike and Scooter Parking
- 20b Use space and activities to attract people to a forgotten part of Town Centre and create new place identity/ Reinvigorated alleyways
- 25a Meanwhile uses



Priority Action 2: Connecting Green Assets

Priority Action 2: Connecting Knutsford with its Green Assets



Priority Action 2: Connecting Knutsford with its Green Assets



Cycle path (Source: Getty Images)



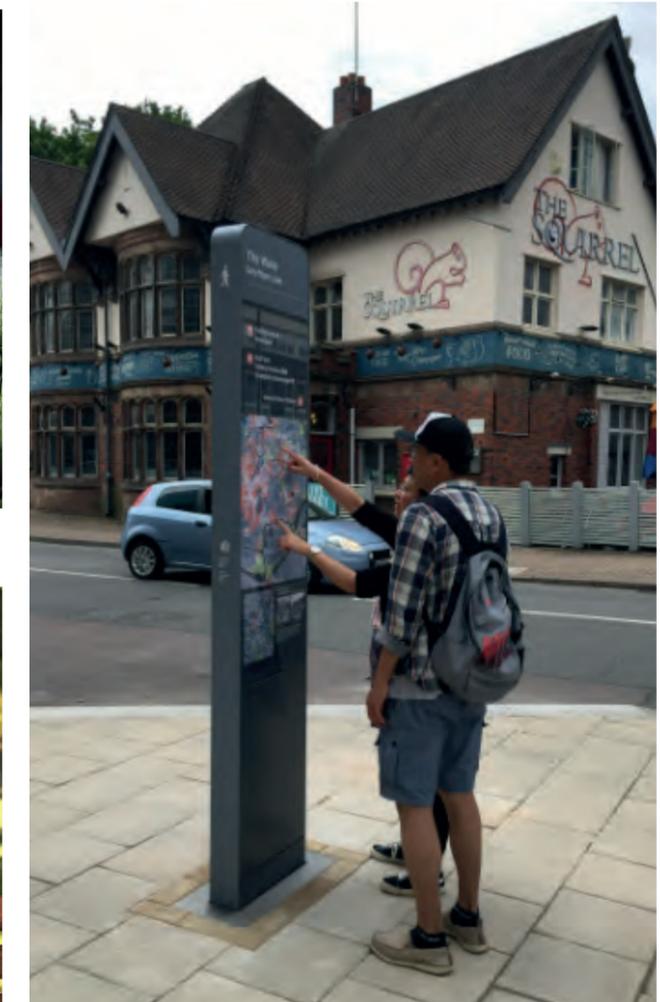
Street planting (Source: Getty Images)



Pathfinding (Source: Getty Images)



Chatty benches (Source: Getty Images)



Frodsham Street, Coventry. Interactive wayfinding (Photo Credit: Richard Wolfestrome)



Action 3: Prioritising more Cycling and Walking (PRIORITY)

What

Knutsford is a small town in terms of its size and population – though it’s Town Centre punches well above its weight. The small footprint of the town, its narrow historic streets, and proximity to Tatton Park, make it more attractive to walking and cycling for short trips than many others. However, with an affluent population and large retail/leisure catchment, car use remains high for trips to the town centre – and severance from the A50 can discourage choosing active travel modes to access to town centre. This will also support wider objectives to improve the health and wellbeing of the community.

Several proposals are set out in the Local Transport Deliver Plan (LTDP) and neighbourhood Plan (NP) for improving conditions for journeys on foot and cycle within the town centre and along key corridors such as King Edward Rd and Toft Rd. These proposals should be supported and progressed, helping build confidence for those who presently feel less comfortable on foot or cycle than in their car. Knutsford Town Council has recently signed off a cycling infrastructure strategy. This will also support wider objectives to improve the health and wellbeing of the community.

How

- Consider the location of cycle hubs to improve green links and provide safe secure cycle parking throughout the Town Centre and at the railway station.
- Explore design options for routes identified as key active travel connections in the Local Transport Development Plan (LTDP). This includes Manchester Road, Northwich Road and Brook St.
- Prioritise upgrades of Knutsford Revolution, which could be an even greater asset to the town through quiet street treatments, surfacing upgrades and removal of barriers not compliant with EA2010.
- Improve signage and wayfinding across town especially at key gateways and along corridors linking green assets. Different colours for different routes works well to aid navigation.
- Implementation of measures identified in the Knutsford Cycle Infrastructure Plan to promote cycling across the whole town to enable residents to be able to cycle to the town centre.

Who

- CEC
- Town Council
- CycleKnutsford

Where

- Knutsford Town Centre
- Knutsford Revolution

Priority Action 3: Encouraging cycling and walking

The design of streets across Knutsford is generally significantly weighted towards the movement of vehicles, often to the detriment of other modes. To create a more walkable, cycle-friendly and attractive Knutsford, we need to rethink the balance of streets at all scales.

On narrow historic streets with significant existing activity, streets should prioritise people on foot and offer places to dwell and enjoy – as per the example from Seville. This includes King St and Princess St. Access and servicing can be maintained, whilst street texture treatments reduce the carriageway dominance prioritising the public space.

Other streets will require different approaches, low traffic streets would benefit from simple changes to footways, levels and materials (such as the example from Paradou, France). Busier main roads, and sometimes residential streets, will require wider footways and segregated cycle tracks to create more comfortable conditions for people on foot or cycle.



Seville, Spain Reducing the dominance of cars will allow existing businesses to use the street for outdoor dining in locations like King St. (Photo Credit: MottMacDonald)



Paradou, France Many smaller streets within Knutsford could be improved to create a better walking environment. (Photo Credit: MottMacDonald)



Opportunities for bicycle and scooter rentals would encourage visitors and residents to cycle to different destinations within the town (Photo Credit: Getty)



Park Lane, Liverpool Streets with higher flows of traffic will require segregated cycle tracks if they are to attract use by people of all ages and abilities (Photo Credit: MottMacDonald)



Action 3 supports the following objectives:

- To support healthy living and well-being
- To support provision of sport and leisure opportunities
- To protect, retain and enhance environment and green infrastructure
- To ensure long-term viability and prosperity
- To promote safe, healthy and sustainable travel for all
- To ensure long term prosperity of the Town Centre



Toolkit Actions

- 1a Improve the evening offer
- 4b Better signage
- 4e Enhance gateway sites
- 7e Bike and scooter parking
- 11a Design holistic public realm scheme
- 25d Raise awareness of public realm



Action 4: Mobilising Knutsford's Business Community

What

Knutsford Town Centre and its surrounding employment areas including Parkgate Industrial Estate, Booths Park and Knutsford Business Park accommodate a range of businesses critical to the prosperity of Knutsford and its community. Supporting these businesses to thrive will support the prosperity of the centre as well as encouraging them to directly support the actions identified for the Town.

How

External support to engage with businesses - Wilmslow have worked with Groundwork

The Knutsford website could have business profiles introducing individual workers to make it more personal.

Businesses could also come together to established loyalty schemes to support shoppers to stay local. This has worked well in Belper <https://lovebelper.co.uk/>

Engage with local businesses in and around the Town Centre and those based in surrounding area (and business partners) to give back to Knutsford. Many, particularly larger ones, are being encouraged to support their local communities. If engaged around issues/opportunities that relate to their core function, businesses could be encouraged to provide the following to support the Town's aspirations:

- Sponsorship
- Materials
- Technical support
- Volunteers

In Wilmslow Groundwork has been appointed by the Town Council to supporting local business engagement and to test the appetite to establish a Business Improvement District (BID).

The Town Council employs a Town Centre Manager to lead on business engagement and communication and through this we already undertake a number of initiatives such as our Taste Knutsford food tours, operating a local gift voucher scheme and some targeted events to promote local business.

Who

- Town Council
- Local businesses especially larger and dynamic/innovative/creative businesses including Bruntwood and Tatton Estate Management
- Further work to engage with businesses - Wilmslow is working with Groundwork

Where

Across Knutsford including Parkgate, Booths Hall and Knutsford Business Park



Action 4 supports the following objectives:

- To ensure long-term viability and prosperity
- To ensure long term prosperity of the Town Centre



Toolkit Actions

- 3b Appoint Town Centre Champions
- 6a Establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID)
- 13a Business profiles
- 13b Community wealth building
- 19a Affordable Start ups
- 25e Prioritise more sustainable businesses



Action 5: Showcasing Knutsford's Heritage and Tourism Assets (PRIORITY)

What

Knutsford boasts a number of high quality heritage buildings along its main shopping streets. The Heritage Centre already promotes the town's heritage but there is scope to expand upon this and to link better to wider tourism, arts and culture attractions and opportunities

How

Whilst the Heritage Centre showcases the town's heritage assets and organised tours, the potential to embrace technology to broaden the appeal of the town should be considered. The use of QR codes or apps means more insight can be offered to more visitors. Trails could also be themed such as pub trails. Consideration should be given as to how to use these to encourage visitors to venture into other parts of the town including Tatton Park, Brook Street Heritage Site the grave of Mrs Gaskell and other areas of interest.

Other actions proposed should enhance the setting of the heritage buildings and encourage people to be able to dwell more around those in King Street and appreciate them. (see Action 1)

Better signage could also help direct visitors to these assets. Make more of other assets in the centre such as the cinema to host local exhibitions.

A number of the other local centres are also looking to make more of their heritage assets and it would be worth engaging with them to share best practice and also to consider whether there is scope to collaborate

with them and other organisations to encourage linked trips for visitors. More events focused around heritage should also be considered with scope to link to showcasing the towns other assets

Considerable potential exists for Tatton Park to encourage more of its visitors to go on to visit Knutsford Town Centre. Improvements to their physical connections would support this.

Looking at a number of the actions in the round (Actions 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6) and engaging with the team at CEC preparing the Visitor Economy Strategy should provide a new impetus to enhance Knutsford's profile as a visitor destination.

Explore options for improving visitor coach parking.

Who

- Knutsford Heritage Centre and associated support groups/volunteers
- Town Council
- CEC
- Local businesses
- Other towns with heritage and tourism assets
- Volunteers
- Tatton Park

Where

- Across Knutsford and link to Tatton Park



Action 5 supports the following objectives:

- To protect heritage
- To ensure long-term viability and prosperity
- To ensure long term prosperity of the Town Centre



Toolkit Actions

- 1a Improve the evening offer
- 1b Introduce a programme of events which open-up and connect different parts of the centre for a limited time
- 1c Enable autumn and winter al-fresco dining
- 1d Use lighting
- 3a Managing assets
- 4f Open up heritage buildings as venues or for visitors/ events
- 9b Curated events focused on historic buildings, public spaces, gardens and parks
- 15a Annual/ regular events
- 16a Self guided heritage tours



Action 6: Raising Knutsford's Profile

What

Knutsford has a number of websites – Town Council, Business and Community – showcasing the town and whilst this is a great start there are lots of ways in which the town's offer could be promoted to attract more local residents, workers, visitors and tourists.

How

Consideration should be given as to whether these existing websites could be combined into a single platform providing information for local residential, businesses and visitors. The website could also be linked to other partner websites including CEC and Visit Chester and Cheshire. Content could be added to really showcase the town including profiles of local businesses (including individuals to make it more personal), local walks, cycle routes etc.

Knutsford has considerable scope to further enhance its profile as a tourist destination linking into marketing campaigns and social media in respect of Tatton Park and other local visitor attractions. Tatton Park should work with CEC and the Town Council to support this

Physical improvements in particular enhancements to walking and cycling connections should encourage better linked trips attracting more visitors from the Park into the Centre and also visitors from other heritage centres such as Nantwich and Chester. Consideration should be given to the introduction of more seating at key locations in the town to encourage people to dwell for longer.

To support increased footfall on the website it would be worth considering which other websites it could be linked up with. Such as other centres in the area or with centres that are linked by cycling or walking and local visitor attractions.

Wilmslow has just launched a new website and brand for the town Wilmslow's Way Better (www.wilmslowswaybetter.co.uk). It showcases many exciting aspects of the town its wellbeing, F&B, cinema, businesses, shopping and how to explore the wider area.

The website was created by local businesses who wanted to support Wilmslow.

Other mechanisms to raise the profile of the centre could include:

- Improved signage (physical and virtual via app/ QR code) to stop people just passing through
- Establish Town Ambassadors
- Expand the already impressive programme of events to attract as wide an audience as possible and use this to raise awareness of businesses. Hitchin held special events to showcase individual streets to encourage people to explore other parts of the town not just where they usually visit
- Turning the heritage leaflet into an interactive trail around the town showcasing buildings of historic value or interesting people or historic events. This can be real or virtual embracing technology (Apps or QR codes)
- Ensure that key messages from the Vitality Plan is fed into the Visitor Economy Strategy that is being prepared for Cheshire East
- Start a Parkrun in Tatton Park near the Knutsford entrance to raise the profile of both destinations

Who

- Town Council
- Marketing Cheshire
- Local Businesses
- Knutsford Hosts

Where

- N/A



Action 6 supports the following objectives:

- To ensure long-term viability and prosperity
- To ensure long term prosperity of the Town Centre



Toolkit Actions

- 1b Use events to open up new areas
- 2a Create a smarter High street
- 3b Appointment of Town Centre champions
- 3c Destination management plans
- 4b Better signage
- 10a Independent shop guides
- 12a Create an App
- 12b Creation of Local Brand
- 12c Set-up an online platform
- 12d Introduce WIFI/ digital high street/ Town Centre app
- 15a Annual/ regular events



Action 7: Better Management of Car Movement (PRIORITY)

What

Knutsford would benefit from a targeted car parking strategy which means better balancing between short-stay high turnover parking (which supports retail/leisure) and longer-stay worker parking.

Better management will also help facilitate aspirations for change in other parts of the Town Centre, including Top and Bottom Streets.

On-street parking should be clearly limited to loading or very short stay only (30min max providing those needing to pop into the Centre with a short option close to the shops with a higher turnover). Higher turnover of on-street bays can offset any reductions in overall numbers. The bulk of car parking should be provided off-street with a timescaled pricing structure.

The LTDP sets out the potential for a MSCP at Tatton Street, which requires further assessment of viability and delivery models alongside traffic, air quality and noise implications.

How

- Consider recommendations made by CEC Parking Strategy determine an appropriate car parking pricing and timing strategy
- To be considered in parallel with Action 1
- Reduce on-street parking supply and length of stay
- Explore viability of MSCP at Tatton Street
- Explore options for improving visitor coach parking
- Aligned to wider proposals to respond to the climate crisis consider scope for introducing more electric charging points across the centre

Who

- CEC
- Town Council

Where

- Town Centre



Action 7 supports the following objectives:

- To promote safe, healthy and sustainable travel for all
- To ensure long term prosperity of the Town Centre



Toolkit Actions

- 14a Quick-wins and temporary interventions to manage traffic speeds and create more pedestrian friendly spaces – e.g. planters, parklets and street furniture.
- 14e Decked and multi-storey car parks
- 14f Better managed car parking
- 20a Remove clutter from key pedestrian routes and simplify crossing points
- 25c Facilitate modal shift



Action 8: Public Transport Strategy (PRIORITY)

What

As a small town Knutsford struggles to support a fully integrated and high frequency public transport network. However the railway station is a major asset. There is scope to improve its connections to the Town Centre and overall accessibility and lobby for improved services.

The CEC Bus Service Improvement Plan seeks to build on previous collaborative working between CEC, bus operators, public transport user groups and rail stakeholders.

How

The public transport offer of Knutsford could be strengthened in several ways:

- Improve facilities at Knutsford Station including provision of street lighting within the car park, CCTV within the station and on platforms, cycle parking, and cycle hire.
- Improve pedestrian connections to Knutsford Station, including improved crossings at the Adam's Hill junction.
- Consider the viability of a free park and ride shuttle between the Town Centre and Tatton Park in peak periods. This could be trialled to test the impact and determine whether it was good value for money.
- Explore options for improving visitor coach parking.

- CEC to continue to lobby with other local authorities for improvements to the rail service across in the North.
- Investigate the potential of improving local provision through local community transport schemes such as Rivington example.

Who

- CEC
- Northern Rail
- Bus Operators
- Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership

Where

- Railway Station



Action 8 supports the following objectives:

- To promote safe, healthy and sustainable travel for all
- To ensure long term prosperity of the Town Centre



Toolkit Actions

- 4c better bus stops
- 7e bike and scooter parking
- 14a –Quick-wins and temporary interventions to manage traffic speeds and create more pedestrian friendly spaces – e.g. planters, parklets and street furniture
- 14c Enhanced crossings
- 14d Digital timetable signage for public transport

Centre Wide Actions

In addition to the specific actions identified for Knutsford, a number of actions have been identified that are relevant to all of the nine centres. These are:

1. Appointment of CEC Centre Champion

The identification of a nominated officer (go to person/ champion) within CEC management team for each of the Centres who would understand local priorities for the Centre and would support them to access appropriate officers within key departments and also would seek to unblock issues. It is understood that this is something CEC is currently considering. This would be supported by an providing each of the centres with a clear organogram (including contact details) of who within CEC is responsible for what to make engagement easier.

2. Creation of a Centres Forum

Establishment of forum where key representatives from each of the centres could come together on a regular basis to receive updates from CEC about common issues/opportunities would be beneficial. It is also recognised that during the preparation of the Vitality Plans that a number of the centres are making great progress overcoming specific issues. By coming together and sharing progress and discussing issues it is considered that the centres would be better able to share best practice and to identify actions where they could collaborate with other centres to drive economies of scale/value for money. Some meetings may just be held between the centres (without representation from CEC officers) whilst others could include CEC and/or other partners such as C&W LEP, Groundwork etc.

3. Centre Focused Meetings in CEC - The process of preparing the Vitality Plans has involved internal workshops with relevant department leads within CEC to ensure that all departments are considering challenges and opportunities in the round rather than just in terms of their individual responsibility. It would be beneficial to continue to hold more regular Centre focused workshops. The best decisions for the centres will be taken when the implications of proposals are considered in the round taking into account both potential investment and long term maintenance.

Centre Wide Actions

4. Streamlining maintenance of public realm and greenspace

- in light of the local desire for improved maintenance combined with recognition that CEC budgets are under severe pressure, to ensure maintenance of public realm can be optimised, it is recommended that further engagement would be beneficial to agree how the resources of CEC, the Town Council and wider stakeholders could be targeted to support maintenance. Work to establish a more comprehensive schedule of local assets in each centre and who is responsible for their maintenance should be the starting point of drive for improved maintenance. Going forward any future capital investment must be supported by appropriate consideration as to how assets will be maintained over their lifetime. It is also important to recognise that better maintenance does not necessarily just relate to grass being cut regularly. In recognition of the importance of biodiversity, going forward it is anticipated that consideration will be given to allocating parcels of land to the “wild” to support biodiversity.

5. Increasing importance of sustainability

- sustainability is now a critical issue for many organisations and important for local residents both in terms of operational implications (for example energy costs) but also in terms of local impact on the local community and the planet. As such sustainability can no longer be positioned as another priority action but rather must be a concept that is considered in every aspect of proposed actions to minimise their carbon footprint and maximise their positive benefits for the local area and its community.

6. Improved platform for communicating activities

- the preparation of the Vitality Plans has demonstrated that all of the Town Councils are proactively trying to improve their centres. However it is recognised that many stakeholders will not be aware of all these efforts. Consideration therefore needs to be given as to how to amplify to more local residents, shoppers, visitors and businesses what is going on. Recommendations are made under Action 6 as to how Knutsford websites could be improved. This should include adding more content and sharing this through a variety of channels and to ensure that these are also linked to other key partners for example CEC and the other centres (so collectively they reinforcing each other’s profiles)

7. Enhanced engagement with local businesses

- many of the centres benefit from having a range of national, and in some cases international businesses, many of which are innovating in their specialist areas. There is a significant benefit to the centres and their businesses to collaborating. Whilst restrictions on public sector revenue budgets is putting pressure on what CEC can support there is an increasing recognition by businesses, especially corporates, for the need to support their local communities (Corporate Social Responsibility). This can be in the form of grants, offering expertise or encouraging their employees to volunteer. Even smaller businesses often want to give back to the communities in which they operate. This can be in the form of materials and/or specialist expertise (e.g. as has been achieved by Wilmslow in setting up the Wilmslow’s Way Better brand and website). All centres should seek to better engage with their local businesses to determine how they can collaborate to support each other’s objectives. This type of collaboration can give centres a significant boost particularly when it happens around public realm (investment and maintenance), marketing and branding.

8. Greater ownership of community assets

- a couple of Town Councils have taken responsibility for their community assets (both in terms of ownership and/or management). CEC is willing to engage with each of the Town and Parish Councils to discuss whether there could be benefits from greater local ownership of local assets. A process is in place to support this to happen. There is also scope for centres who are already doing this to share pro and cons with other centres (via the proposed Centres Forum)

11 Delivery

Governance and Delivery

Knutsford Town Council is responsible for supporting Knutsford to fulfil its potential. Going forward the Town Council will continue to be a major driver in the delivery of the agreed actions emerging from the Vitality Plan.

Having established a range of potential projects that will support Knutsford to thrive, further detailed work is now required to determine a detailed action plan setting out who will do what and by when.

It is recommended that dedicated working groups are set up to drive specific short term priority actions forward. The action focused working groups will be responsible for:

- Defining the details of the proposed action
- Considering how it could be funded
- Determining who needs to be involved in supporting its delivering and what their role will be
- Seeking funding - this might require support from other partners
- Determining the timetable for intervention
- Monitoring and evaluating progress against key performance indicators and refining actions if agreed outcomes are not being met.
- Reporting progress to relevant partners

including the Town Council and CEC

- Recommending that CEC, Town Council and any other key local stakeholder groups be invited to adopt the TCVP as a shared common plan. This would allow easy demonstration to potential funders that there is a consensus of approach and buy in from the local community

The makeup of the working groups will vary depending on the specific actions they are focused on. It is important to ensure that the same people are not tasked with getting involved in all the working groups as this will impact on progress. As such the number of working groups and pace of delivery will depend on the number of stakeholder partners that can be engaged with and encouraged to get involved.

Consideration should be given as to whether specific stakeholders need to be invited to be involved to provide technical support. For example CEC, national organisations like the Canal and River Trust or local businesses with specific expertise around specific actions. CEC Connected Community officers may be able to provide development support.

Progress will be reported into the Town Council who will in turn also report regularly to CEC. Where issues regarding progress/delivery are identified discussions will need to be taken to

determine the required refinements to get progress back on track.

It is acknowledged that partners will need to determine their appetite and ability to deliver the proposed actions. Depending on resources it may be determined that additional staff may need to be recruited to support the pace of delivery of the Vitality Plan and supporting Action Plans.

Communication and Engagement

There is scope to expand on the current website to use it to engage more effectively with a wider range of residents, visitors, workers and businesses. There is a need to begin to share important messages with key stakeholders including:

- Recent and proposed investment in the centre
- Projects that are being worked up
- Funding that is being sought and accessed
- How to get involved

The key partners to be engaged with on a regular basis include:

- Local businesses
- Residents
- Local community and interest groups
- Other towns centres generally and specifically

those who are focusing on common actions for example centres looking to better promote the heritage of their Centre.

Quality engagement should generate potential volunteers to get involved in the delivery of specific actions and potentially resources to support their delivery.

The following mechanisms should be used to engage with key partners:

- Further enhancement of the website and strengthen profile on social media
- Public engagement consultations – the draft Vitality Plan will be consulted upon and this be used to continue the dialogue with local residents
- Piggybacking Events – for example a stall at markets showcasing what’s on and how to get involved
- Existing and enhanced business networking events – to share emerging ideas, test support and encourage ideas to refine and support their delivery
- Identification of a team of local ambassadors – ambassadors could be trained and then kept up to date about what it going on in the Centre and then they can showcase positive messages to their contacts. Ambassadors can be proactive local independent businesses

leaders and other individuals who come into contact with lots of local people e.g. taxi drivers.

Consideration could be given to the appointment of a part time marketing officer for the centre as Wilmslow has just done.

In addition, as set out in Section 10, it is important for enhanced communication and engagement between CEC and Knutsford Town Council.

Funding

There is not a pot of money available to support the delivery of the Vitality Plan. Rather the Vitality Plan has been prepared as a resource to support discussions with potential funders. As such it provides a useful tool with which can be used to:

- Articulate priorities for Knutsford to CEC - the Vitality Plan will be used to articulate local priorities to CEC to guide them in their negotiations with developers in respect of contributions linked to planning applications (especially to support improvements in cycling, public realm and public transport) and also in determining their own capital budgets. Formal adoption of the TCVP by key stakeholder organisations can help demonstrate common objectives and priorities for any party submitting funding bids.

- Support external funding bids – having a clear action plan which provides an evidence base and priorities that have been consulted upon is now essential for most funding bids. It is important to recognise that often funding bids have specific funding leads. In some cases this may be CEC or Cheshire & Warrington LEP in others it might need to be a community group. Whoever may be responsible for leading and submitting a specific funding application, demonstration of collaboration between stakeholders and community support is essential.

- Engage with local businesses – to determine whether there are actions that they can get involved in which align with their priorities for supporting their local communities.

Another approach to generating more revenue to spend locally is for the Town Council to take responsibility for owning or managing assets with any surpluses being generated being invested back into the local centre.

It is important to note that when determining potential interventions consideration must be given to both initial capital investment and longer term revenue implications such as maintenance. In proposing capital investment the whole life of a project must be considered to ensure that appropriate revenue is available for ongoing costs such as maintenance.

11 Delivery continued

Phasing

The actions identified in Section 10 range from projects which are already being progressed to long term aspirations which will require feasibility and funding before they can be delivered. The

Vitality Plan identifies 8 actions which support the established vision and objectives for the Centre. The Town Council is proactive and a number of the identified actions are already being pursued. The public consultation identified the following as priority interventions:

- Improving public transport
- Better management of car movement
- Prioritising cycling and walking
- Making more of the heritage and tourism assets

Partners now need to determine a detailed action plan related to funding that they are able to access and the resources that they have available or can access to support delivery.

It is important to acknowledge that this indicative programme is not fixed and if specific sources of funding are identified the programme should be adapted to respond to the opportunity.

Covid has taught us important lessons about testing new approaches. For example temporary road closures to gauge whether reducing car access to encourage cycling or to provide



Phasing Key
 Ongoing
 Short Term
 Medium Term

outside dining space would benefit local centres. This approach should be continued so that rather than a public realm project having to be worked up in huge detail and then significant resources found to deliver it, more temporary solutions can be tested in terms of their impact and determine whether a more permanent solution is required or desirable. Changes are much more likely to be embraced by businesses and supported by local residents if they know that ideas are being tested and monitored and if they do not work can be reverted back to how they were.

A broad phasing plan for the identified actions is identified opposite where short term relates to 1-2 years and medium 3-5. The following should be noted:

- A number of interventions will require further feasibility and this can be ongoing but intervention on the ground is likely to be a few years off whilst planning permission and funding is sought
- A number of interventions are interrelated in particular strengthening green links and expanding the events programme

Monitoring and Evaluation

As noted above the programme and the action plan will not be set in stone but must be capable of responding to new opportunities or challenges. As such it will be important to monitor impact to determine whether the established vision and objectives are being met. Suggested key performance indicators (KPIs) and how they could be measured and how often are identified opposite.

KPI	How measured	Frequency
Footfall	External provider	Monthly
Number of vacancies	Town Council	Quarterly
New units opening	Town Council	Quarterly
New businesses	Town Council to keep a list	Ongoing
Area of greenspace/open space/cycleways and footpaths improved	CEC	Annually
Hits on website	Traffic on social media	Quarterly
Improve air quality	CEC	Quarterly

Note: CEC has recently commissioned monthly footfall data to end Sep 2026. Recommend all those involved regularly share useful monitoring data with other parties so that all can be aware of progress.

Glossary

Term	Explanation
Comparison Goods Sector	Retail that stocks higher value goods that are purchased infrequently e.g. furniture
Convenience Sector	Retail that stocks everyday items such as groceries, newspapers, toiletries, confectionery
F&B	Food and Beverage
Green Belt	A designated area of countryside, protected from most forms of development to help stop urban sprawl but can be used for agriculture, forestry and outdoor leisure
Greenspace	Parks, public gardens etc
HS2 route	The UK's new high speed rail network
KSC	Key Service Centres
Linkages	The connections between two or more places/sites within the Town Centres
Public Realm	Space between and within buildings that is publicly accessible for everyone
S106 monies	Money that developers can use towards the development of community and social infrastructure
TCVP	Town Centre Vitality Plans
Wayfinding	The ways in which people orient themselves in a physical space and navigate from place to place
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
Dwell time	The time a person may spend in a particular place or area. For example, the length of time spent sat on a public bench.



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