

# Handforth

## 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 will be 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, with scope to recommend a practical and 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 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 and will vary as we emerge from it. The bespoke Vitality Plans draw out the specific challenges and opportunities as a result of COVID-19 and 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 Handforth.

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.

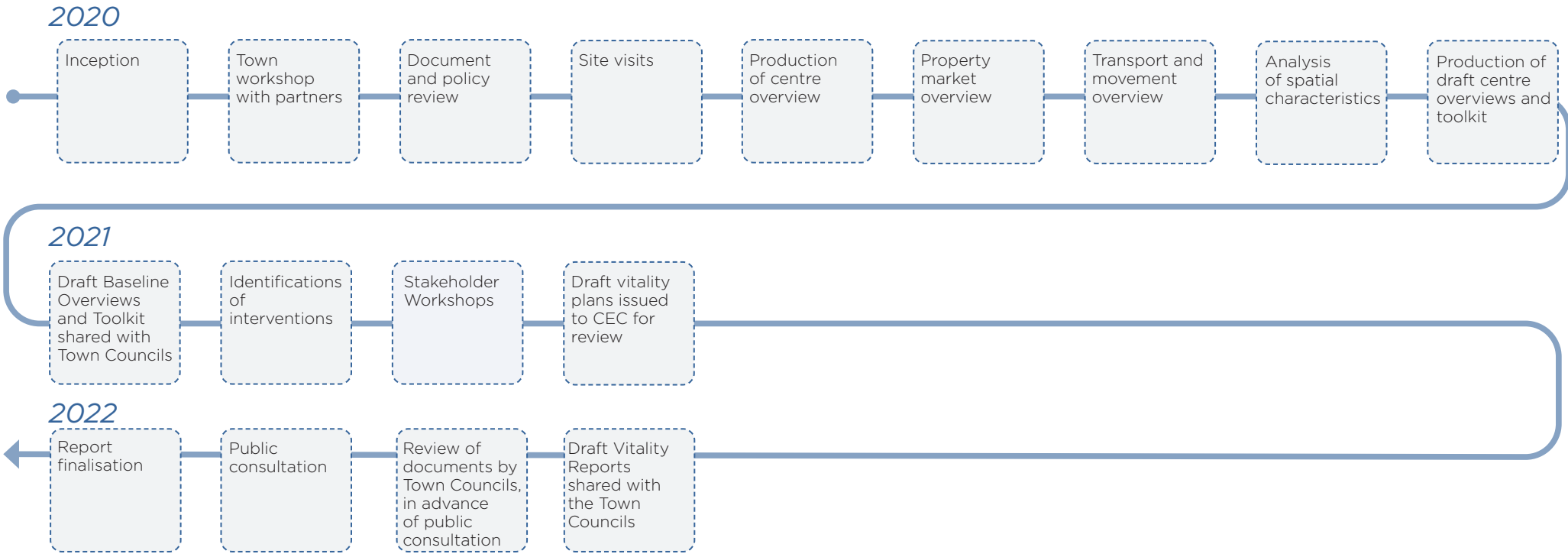
- Action Plan - has been prepared in collaboration with the Town Council and identifies actions which seek to support the established Vision and Objectives for the Centre responding to its challenges and opportunities. It sets out a series of actions, identifying a small number of priorities for intervention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





# Baseline

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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 making the 2011 Census the most recent consistent data source across the 9 centres for some key indicators.



# 02 Introduction to Handforth

## Handforth Location within Cheshire East

Handforth sits at the heart of one of the most aspirational residential areas in the region. Located between Wilmslow, Heald Green and Styal, it is well connected by road and rail. Located just 9 miles south of Manchester City Centre and linked to Manchester Airport by the A555. As well as Manchester, Handforth is within a 1-hour drive of other major cities such as Liverpool and Chester via the M56. Handforth rail station is located around a 6-minutes walk away from the Centre. The station is served by two trains per hour in each direction providing connectivity to Crewe, Alderley Edge, Manchester Piccadilly and Southport. (See Strategic Context Plan opposite)

Handforth is an attractive residential location, well served by a range of amenities, within easy access of a variety of employment opportunities, located within a rural setting but within easy reach of the City. The key retail area is focused around The Paddock which accommodates a range of retail units (including the Tesco Express and a Costa Coffee) around a square. The Centre continues along Wilmslow Road accommodating a range of convenience units as well as takeaways, betting shops, cafes and restaurants. The Centre offers a good mix of independents including specialists. In addition to retail and leisure it also accommodates homes, community facilities and offices. The Centre's scale and catchment is restricted by its proximity to Wilmslow Town

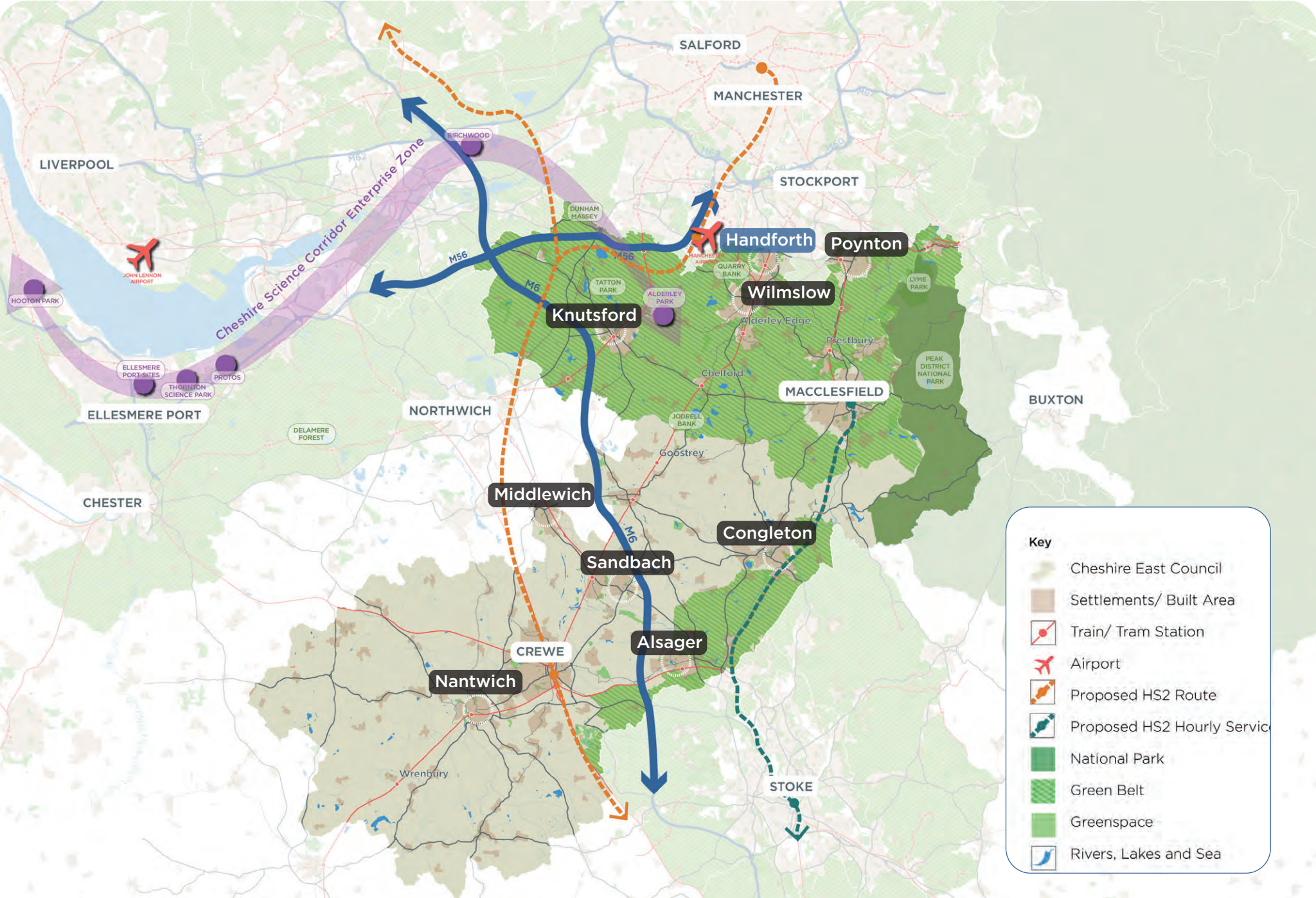
Centre and out of town retail at Handforth Dean (a little over 10 minutes walk from the centre accommodating a Tesco Extra and large format Marks & Spencers, Boots and Next stores) and Stanley Green (including B&Q, TK Maxx, Halfords and Homesense). As such it functions as a centre providing for the needs of its local catchment.

Whilst being surrounded by Cheshire Green Belt and benefiting from access to attractive countryside the centre itself offers a range of green space including a small area at The Paddock, Meriton Road Park (accommodating a multi-sport court and tennis courts and it previously used to host the Handforth Gala), Stanley Hall Park (accommodating play areas, picnic area and skate-park) and the banks of the River Dean.

At the last census Handforth accommodated 2,936 of the 159,441 households in the Borough. In terms of housing mix, Handforth offers a broad mix of homes across detached, semi-detached, terraces and flats. The area is mainly urban but some residents live in the surrounding rural hinterland. Whist this mix means there is a good choice of homes. Handforth sits in the centre of one of the most expensive residential areas in the North West. Whilst this means it is an aspirational housing area it also means it is an area where affordability can be an issue for lower paid workers and those reliant on benefits.

The population is well served by a range of retail, employment and leisure opportunities and served by three primary schools: Handforth Grange (formerly Wilmslow Grange), the Wilmslow Academy and St Benedict's RC Primary.

Strategic Context Plan





## 02 Introduction to Handforth

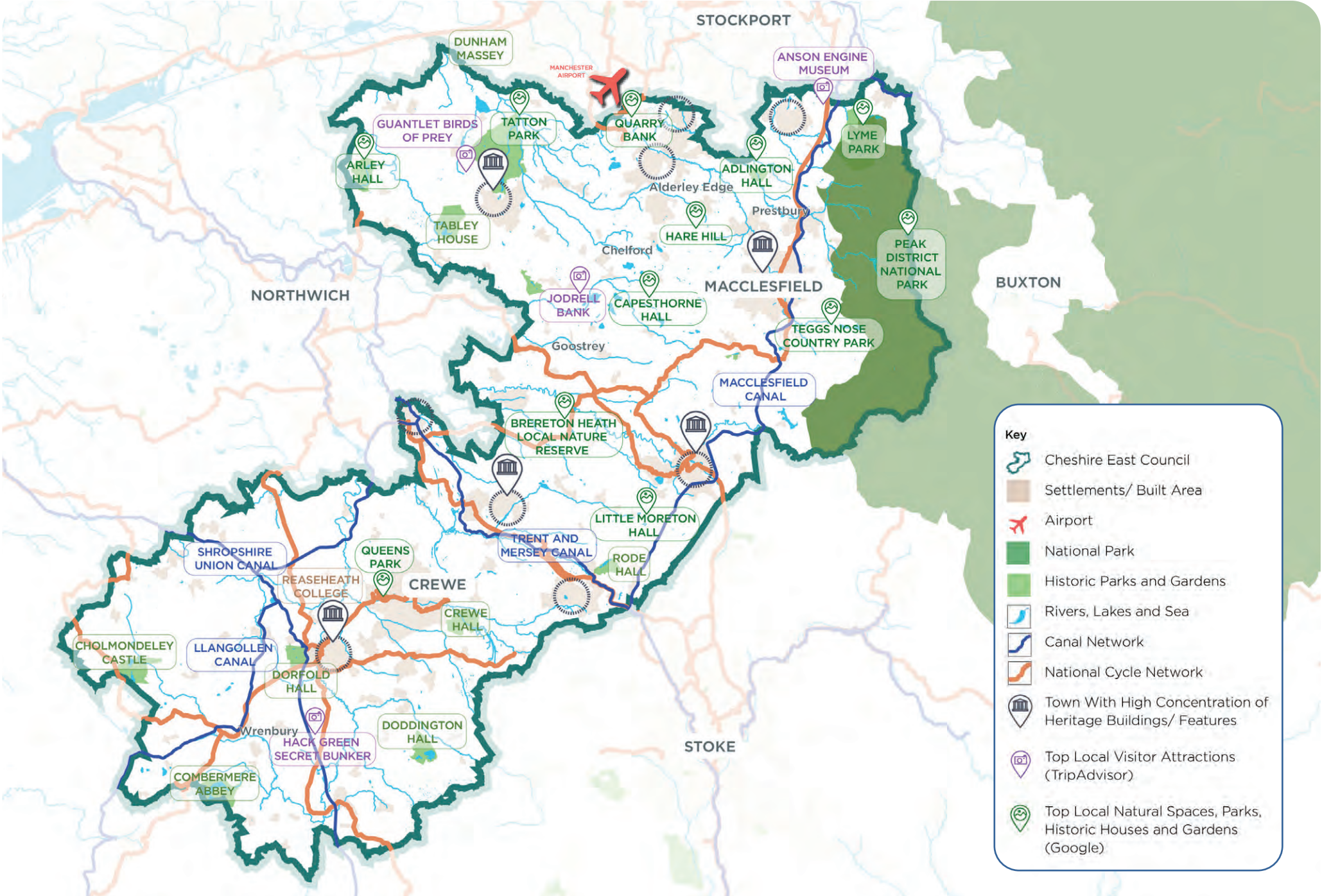
Handforth benefits from access to a wide range of employment opportunities at Airport City, the Cheshire Science Corridor and the City Region. Local employment opportunities are provided at The Deanway Business Park on Wilmslow Road, The Brooke Park industrial estate and Stanley Green Industrial Estate, as well as Handforth Dean.

The Strategic Connections and Asset Plan sets Handforth in the context of blue and green assets and tourists attractions. It demonstrates Handforth’s connectivity to a number of local tourist attractions including Quarry Bank Mill, Tatton Park and Dunham Massey as well as attractive countryside including Alderley Edge and Styal Country Park.

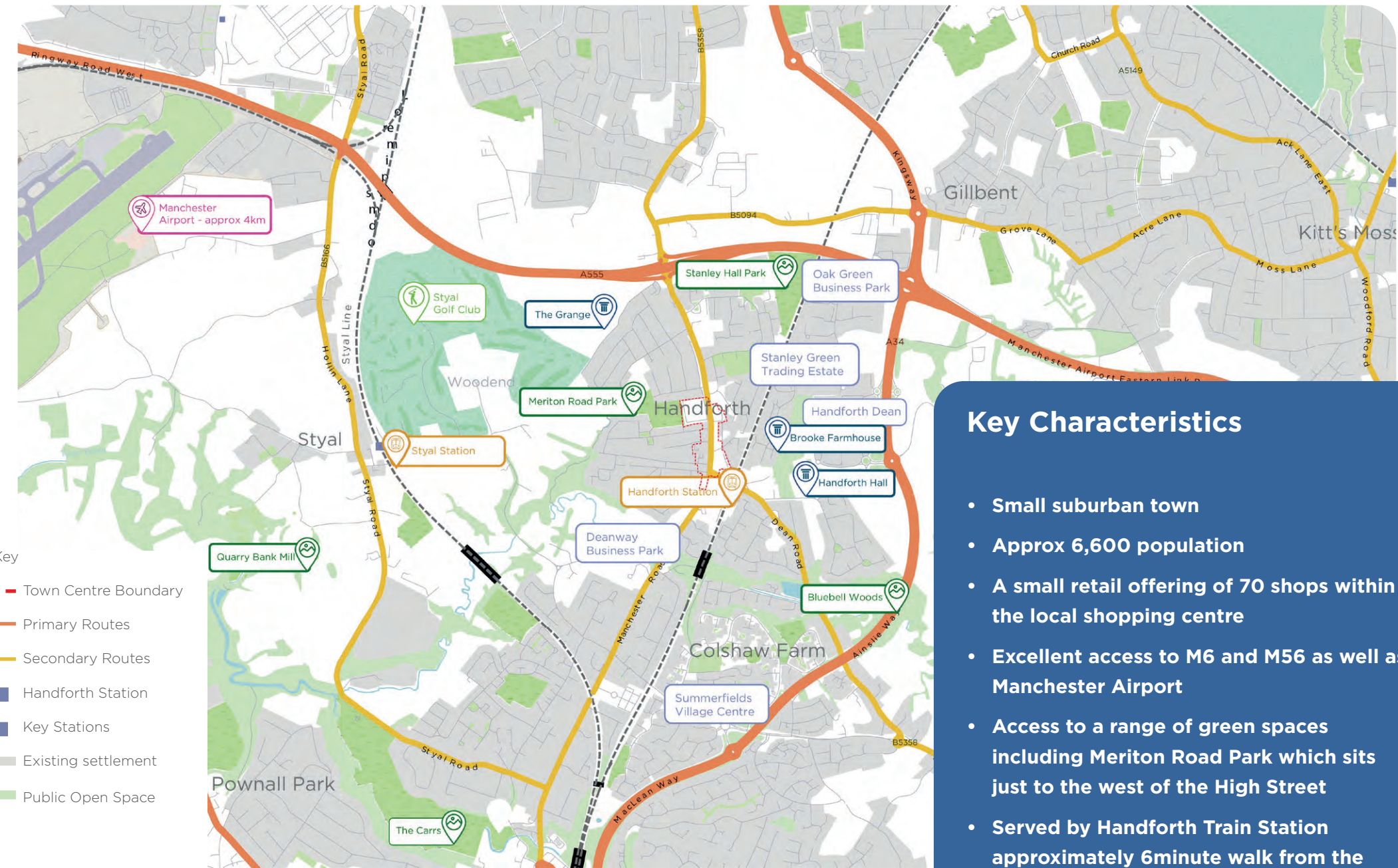
Given these assets, the Local Plan recognises the strategic growth potential of Handforth and has identified a number of strategic sites to accommodate future residential and employment growth. This includes the Handforth Garden Village (Phase 1 has the potential for 1,500 new homes and up to 12 ha of employment land). This will significantly increase the number of residents within the catchment of the centre and should support investment in local facilities. These allocations could support around another 5,000 residents living in the area by 2030.



### Strategic Connections and Asset Plan







## Handforth Neighbourhood Plan Vision and Objectives

Handforth Council is proactive and initiated the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan which was made in 2018 by the Handforth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the following vision and objectives:

### Key Characteristics

- Small suburban town
- Approx 6,600 population
- A small retail offering of 70 shops within the local shopping centre
- Excellent access to M6 and M56 as well as Manchester Airport
- Access to a range of green spaces including Meriton Road Park which sits just to the west of the High Street
- Served by Handforth Train Station approximately 6minute walk from the Town Centre

### Vision

“In 2030 Handforth will be a vibrant village. It will have extended its current strong community spirit and civic pride to new housing developments both within the Garden Village at Handforth and within the parish of Styal. It will provide for the needs of the whole community and will capitalise on its many advantages, including its location next to Greater Manchester and the Cheshire countryside. Handforth will have an improved district centre with attractive public spaces, a vibrant and varied shopping experience, a successful independent sector and a wide range of services.

Handforth will offer an excellent quality of life for its residents. The provision of new affordable housing will reduce the degree of deprivation currently found in some areas of Handforth. There will be high levels of employment and increased average incomes. There will be good access to education and important services. Handforth will have better access to sustainable transport.

Handforth will have high quality open spaces and improved access to the surrounding countryside. It will be a progressive village with its own identity, reinforced by the retention of the greenbelt areas separating Handforth from Wilmslow to the south and Heald Green to the north.”



# 02 Introduction to Handforth

Overall Aim: To promote sustainable development in Handforth Parish up to 2030. This will be achieved through the following

**Objectives**

**Housing**  
1 - To manage future housing growth so that it meets the needs of the local community whilst at the same time providing appropriate infrastructure.  
  
2 - To ensure that new housing is provided in an appropriate range of size, type and tenure to meet the strategic development needs and the needs of the local community.

**Community and Well-Being**  
3 - To protect and enhance local services, community facilities, recreational areas and Local Green Spaces within the Parish.

**Protecting the Natural and Built Environment**  
4 - To protect the quality of the existing landscape of the Parish separating it from Wilmslow to the south and Heald Green to the north.  
  
5 - To ensure existing trees are retained and ensure additional new planting.  
  
6 - To encourage high quality design and sustainability of all new development.  
  
7 - To protect both designated and non-designated heritage assets in the parish.

**Local Economy**  
8 - To support appropriate local economic development, to encourage investment and to provide improved employment opportunities for local residents.  
  
9 - To protect and enhance the district centre transforming it into a vibrant centre with a range of facilities.  
  
10 - To improve the overall quality of the district centre including public realm improvements.

**Traffic and Transport**  
11 - To improve pedestrian and cycle access throughout the designated area and to improve linkages to routes beyond the Parish.  
  
12 - To ensure that traffic and transport improvements are carried out to improve road safety and the traffic congestion that may arise from both completion of the A555 link road to the airport and from new developments within and adjacent to the parish boundaries.  
  
13 - To support the provision of sufficient car and cycle parking facilities.  
  
14 - To support the development of an integrated transport system designed to meet the current and future needs of the community whilst supporting future growth.

**Garden Village at Handforth**  
15 - To ensure that the Garden Village at Handforth is developed in a way that benefits the existing community of Handforth and creates a sustainable community.

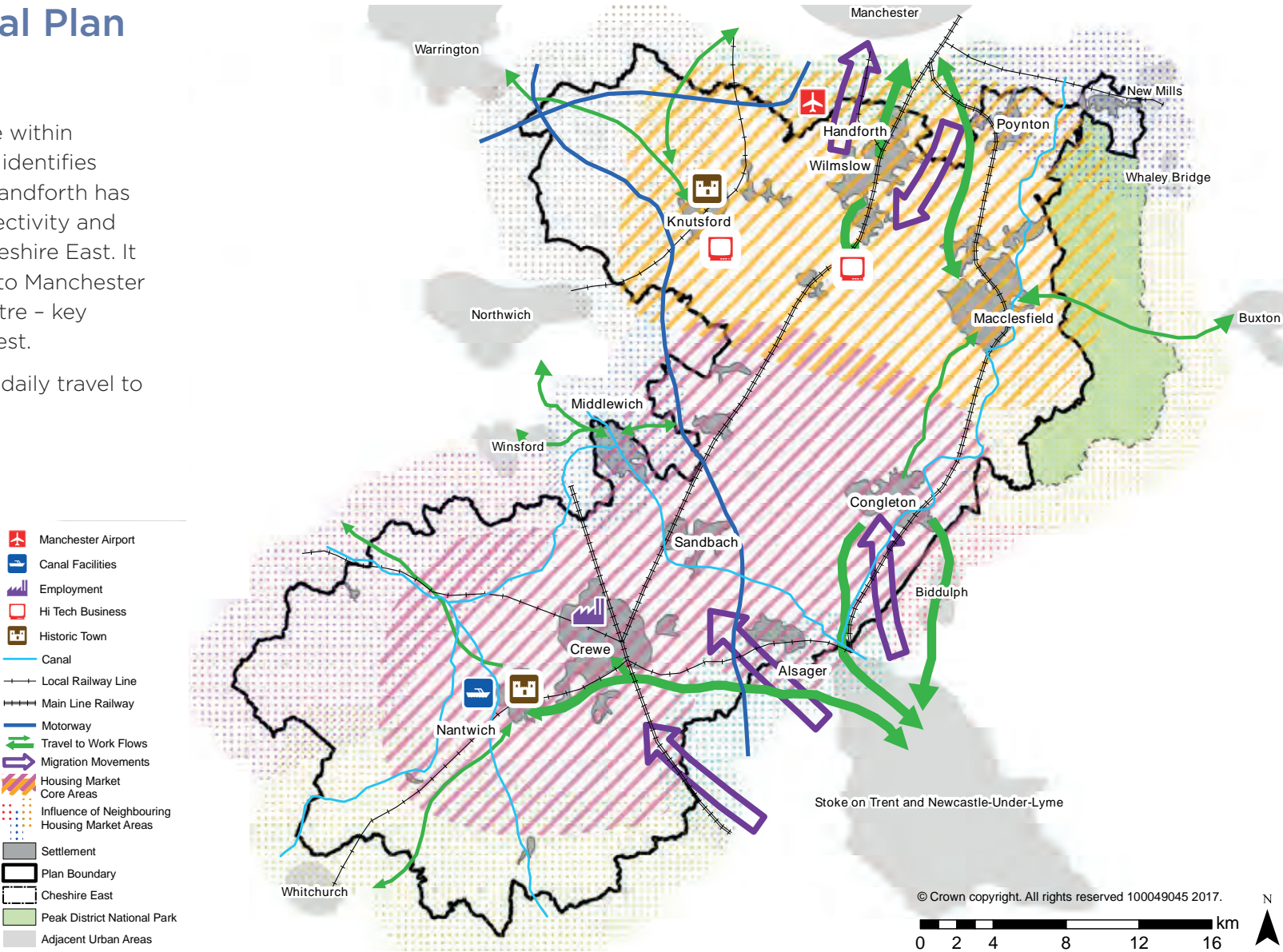




Cheshire East Local Plan

Handforth is a key service centre within Cheshire East. The plan opposite identifies the functional relationship that Handforth has with other centres through connectivity and proximity within and out with Cheshire East. It highlights the centre's proximity to Manchester Airport and Manchester City Centre – key drivers of growth in the North West.

As such the area sees significant daily travel to work flows



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

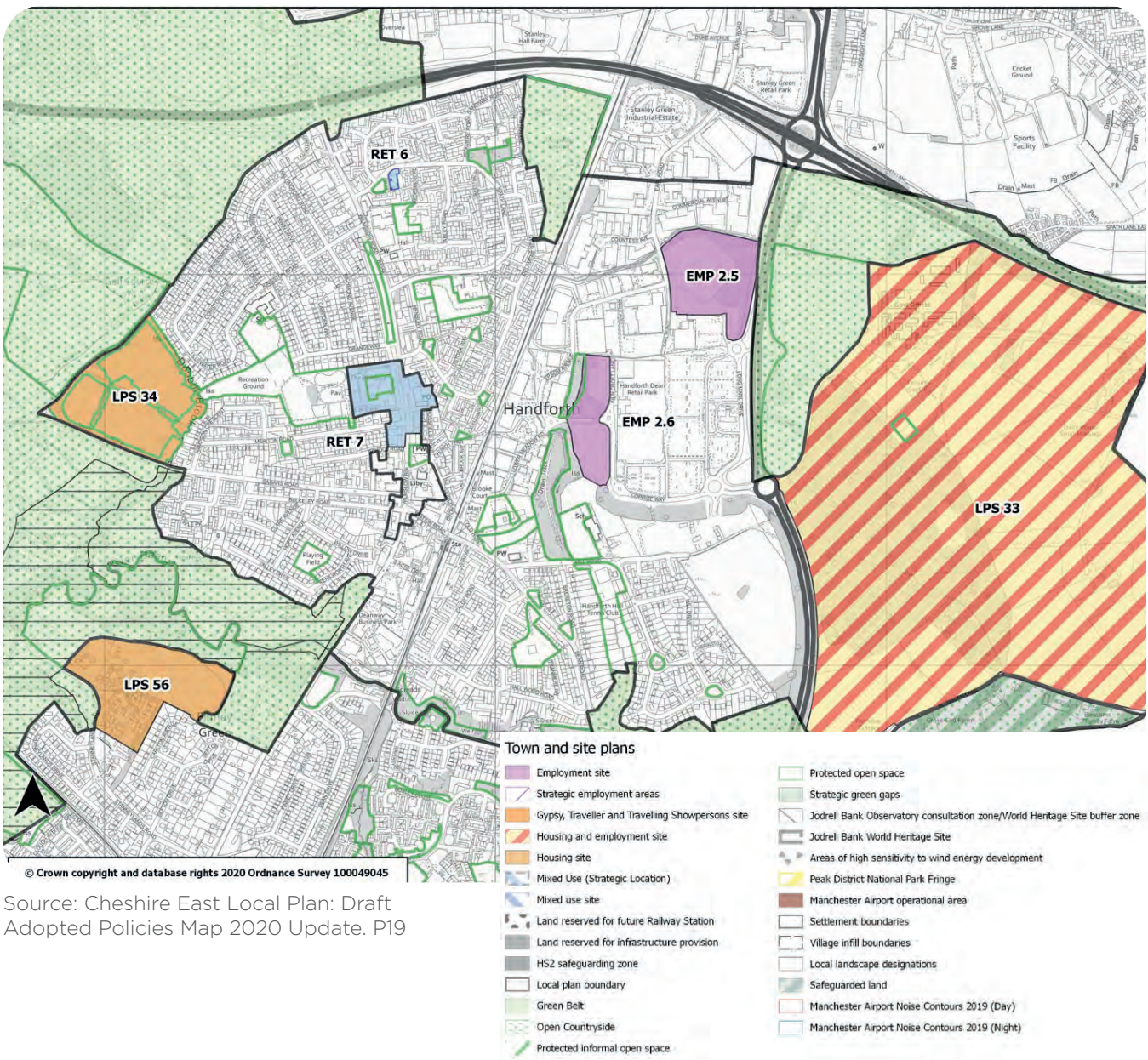
Local Plan Strategy 2017 (LPS) and Revised Publication Draft Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD) 2020

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 Handforth for growth in the future:

- Site LPS 33: North Cheshire Growth Village, Handforth East (1. Phased provision of around 1,500 new homes, including a full range of housing types and tenures; Up to 12 hectares of employment land, primarily for B1 uses; and New mixed-use local centre(s))
- Site LPS 34: Land Between Clay Lane and Sagars Road, Handforth (250 new homes)
- North Cheshire Growth Village Extension, Handforth East (14ha of safeguarded land)
- RET 7 ‘Supporting the vitality of town and retail centres’ which identifies Town Centre locations for main Town Centre uses to support their long term vitality and viability, in line with LPS Policy EG 5 ‘Promoting a Town Centre first approach to retail and commerce’.



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



Handforth Neighbourhood Plan  
February 2018

The Handforth Neighbourhood Plan was prepared on behalf of Handforth Town Council by the Handforth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (HNPSG) and was made in August 2018 following a referendum in July 2018. The plan can be accessed at: <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-plans/neighbourhood-plans-g-m/handforth-neighbourhood-plan.aspx>

The plan is used to guide planning decisions and to inform and encourage positive development across Handforth.

Based on consultation the following issues were identified as priorities in the Neighbourhood Plan:

1. The need to refurbish Handforth Centre and to maintain a good selection of retail outlets therein.

2. The need to reduce the impact of both the completion of the A555 link road to Manchester Airport, and new house building in Handforth and surrounding areas, on traffic congestion on local roads and on the A34 as a major commuter route into Manchester.

3. Improvement of car parking facilities within the village including provision of a station car park.

4. The need to achieve good connectivity between the Garden Village at Handforth (site LPS 33) and Handforth Station.

5. Improvement of car parking facilities within the Spath Lane and Knowle Park estates.

6. Improving the surfaces of roads and footpaths.

7. Maintaining and improving local bus services.

8. Maintaining existing and providing new footpaths and cycleways
9. The importance of reducing deprivation in the area of the Spath Lane estate by providing additional social housing.

10. The need to expand the current medical centre in Handforth.

11. The need to improve access to the platforms at Handforth station.

12. The importance of providing key infrastructure (e.g. new primary school and extension to health centre) at an early stage in the development of the Garden Village at Handforth.

13. Maintaining a band of greenfield/ greenbelt between Handforth and Greater Manchester.

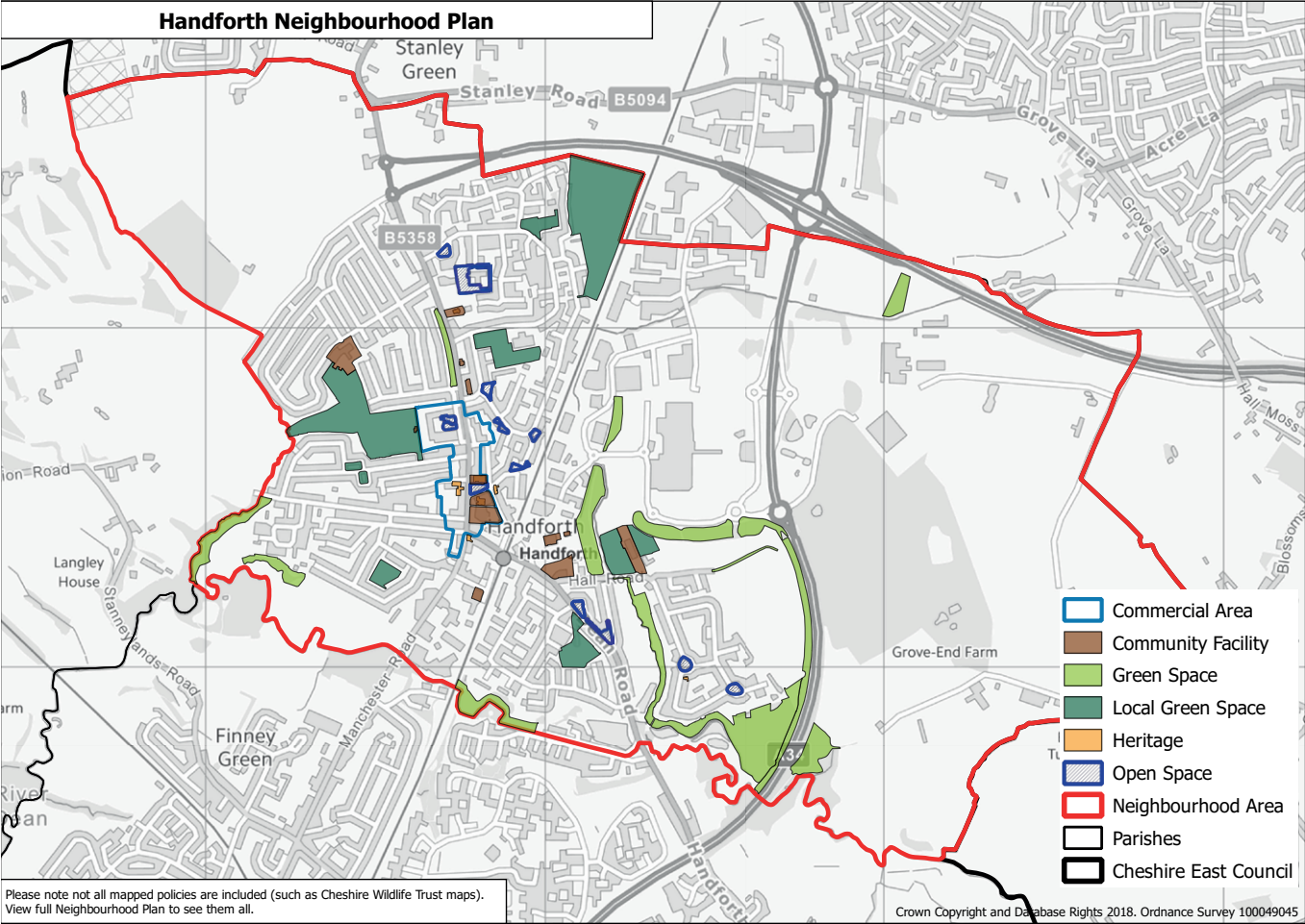
14. Maintaining Handforth's beauty spots in the River Dean Valley.

15. Conservation of Handforth's historic buildings including their settings

The Plan identifies the following policy in terms of the district centre (Policy H14).

Policy H14 seeks to:

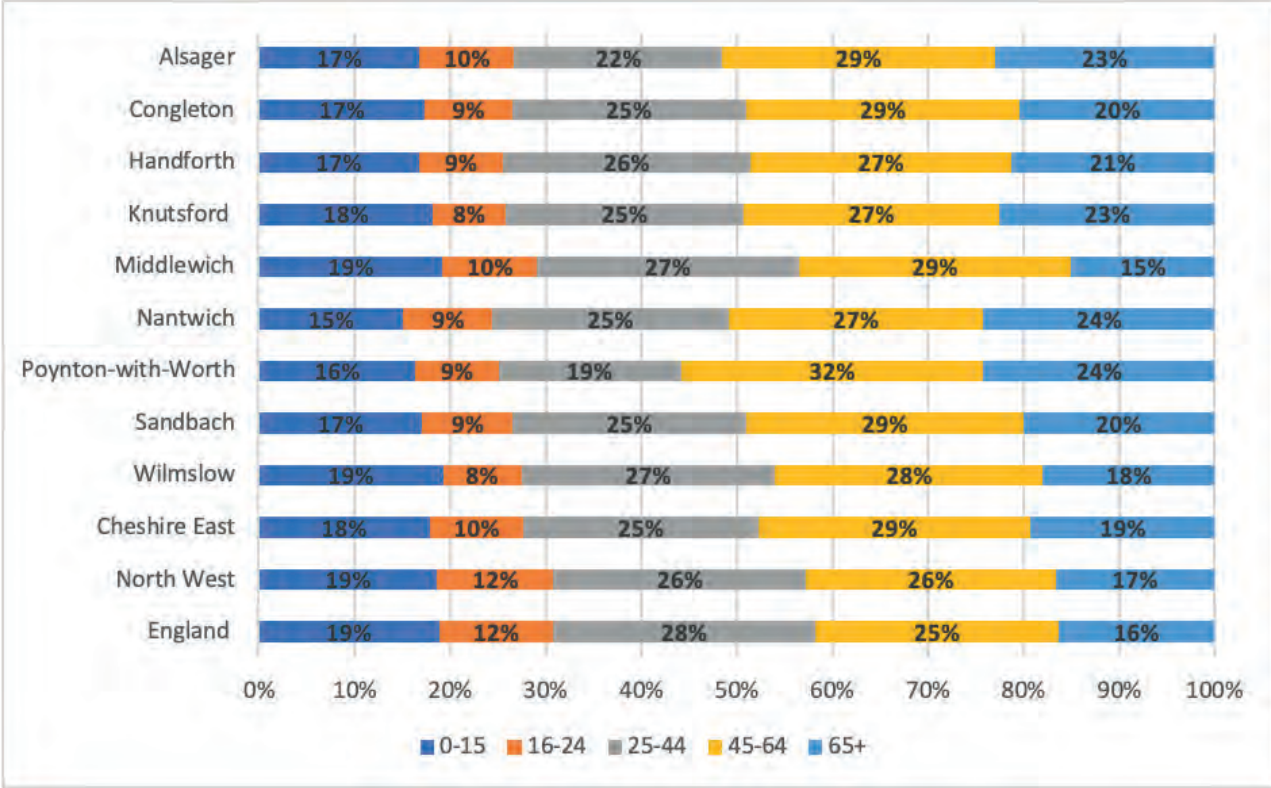
- Ensure good design and local distinctiveness to shop frontages;
- Encourage the re-use of upper floors for residential uses;
- Retain and enhance distinctive features of buildings and details;
- Provide secure screened areas for waste and cycle storage;
- Encourage new trees and other planting;
- Improve the district centre appearance, promoting a pedestrian-dominated environment;
- Ensure an appropriate approach to branding and signage;
- Retain commercial units for commercial uses where appropriate; and
- Set restrictions to apply to proposals for hot food takeaways.



Source: <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/neighbourhood-plan/made-np-policy-maps/handforth-made-policy-map.pdf>

Age

The 2011 Census data indicates that the Handforth parish area had a population of 6,600 residents representing 1.8% of Cheshire East's total population (370,127). Handforth broadly mirrors the age profile of Cheshire East, with a slightly smaller proportion of under 24 year olds and working aged (25 – 64) and slightly higher proportion of over 65s. Handforth has a slightly higher average (mean) age at 43 years old which is just above that of Cheshire East (42) and higher than the wider geographies of the North West (40) and England (39).



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 (96.7%) which is a higher proportion than the wider geographies of the North West (90.2%) and England (85.4%). After Wilmslow, Handforth is the most diverse of the KSCs with 93.1% of the population being white.

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

For the purposes of occupation profile, Handforth is included within the Built Up Area (BUA) of Wilmslow (along with Alderley Edge). At the time of the 2011 Census, a large proportion of Wilmslow BUA area residents were employed in higher order occupations including ‘managers, directors and senior officials’ (18.3%) and ‘professional occupations’ (24.6%) – a much higher rate than the wider Borough, regional and national benchmarks.

Conversely, just 9.6% were engaged in manual or elementary occupations. This is around half the North West (19.8%) and England rate (18.3%). The occupational structure of Wilmslow BUA 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

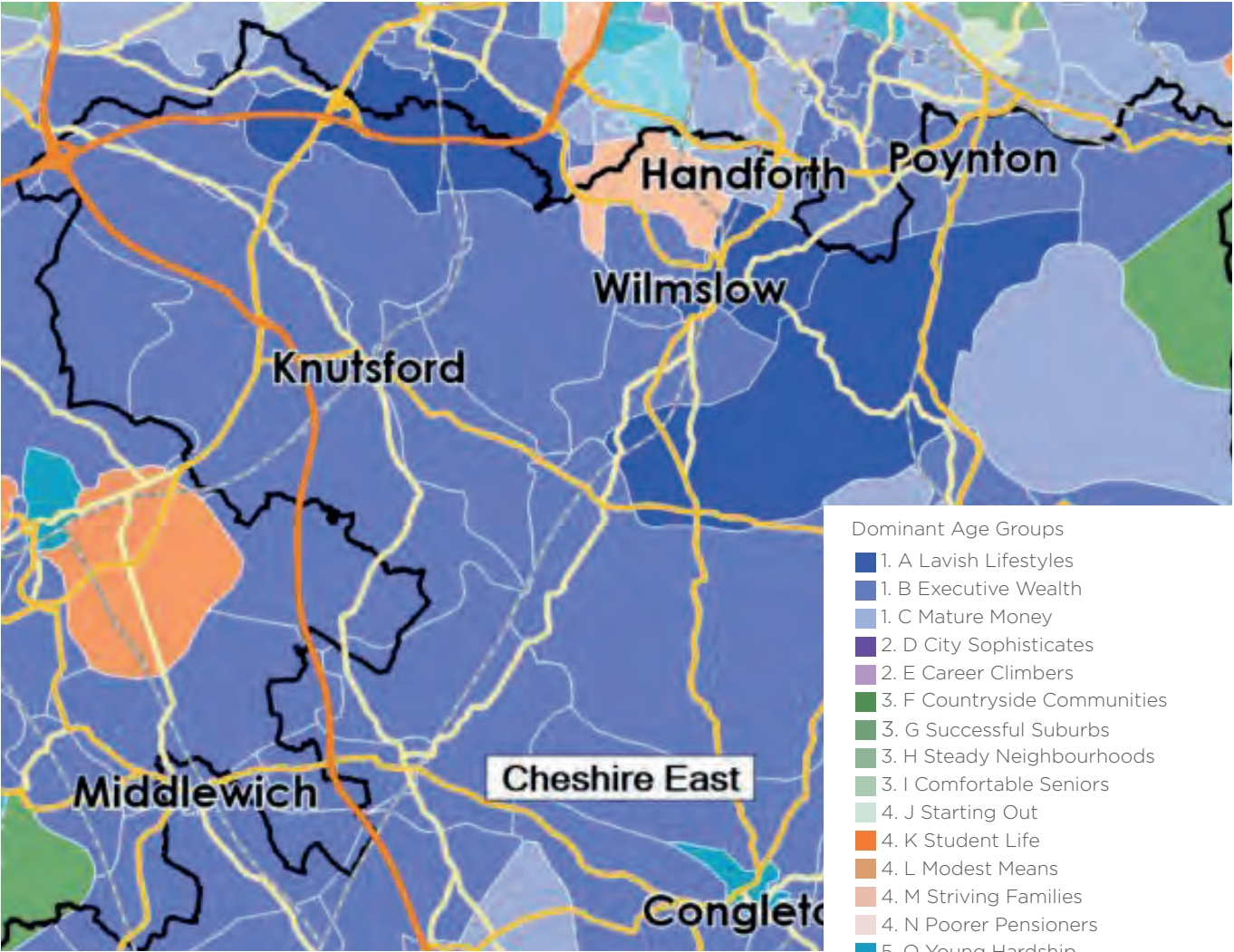
Occupational Profile  
Source: Census 2011  
\*Wilmslow BUA includes Alderly Edge and Handforth  
Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres

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.

Demographic analysis shows that the dominant demographic profile across the majority of the Cheshire East local authority is ‘Executive Wealth’ (mid blue). Attributed to Cheshire East’s desirable settlements and commutable distance to Manchester City Centre as well as its wider connectivity links, a high proportion of these people are employed in managerial and professional occupations with generally well above average incomes. This group of financially successful people live in wealthy, high status rural, semi-rural and suburban areas. While these are generally family areas there are also some empty nesters and better-off retired couples.

The dominant Acorn groups in Handforth are Striving Families (low income families living on council/housing association estates, general lack of educational qualifications) and Mature Money (older more wealthy residents in rural/semi-rural locations) but its wider catchment area is dominated by Lavish Lifestyles (most affluent people in the UK, high earners in very large homes) and Executive Wealth (affluent professional with families in large homes).



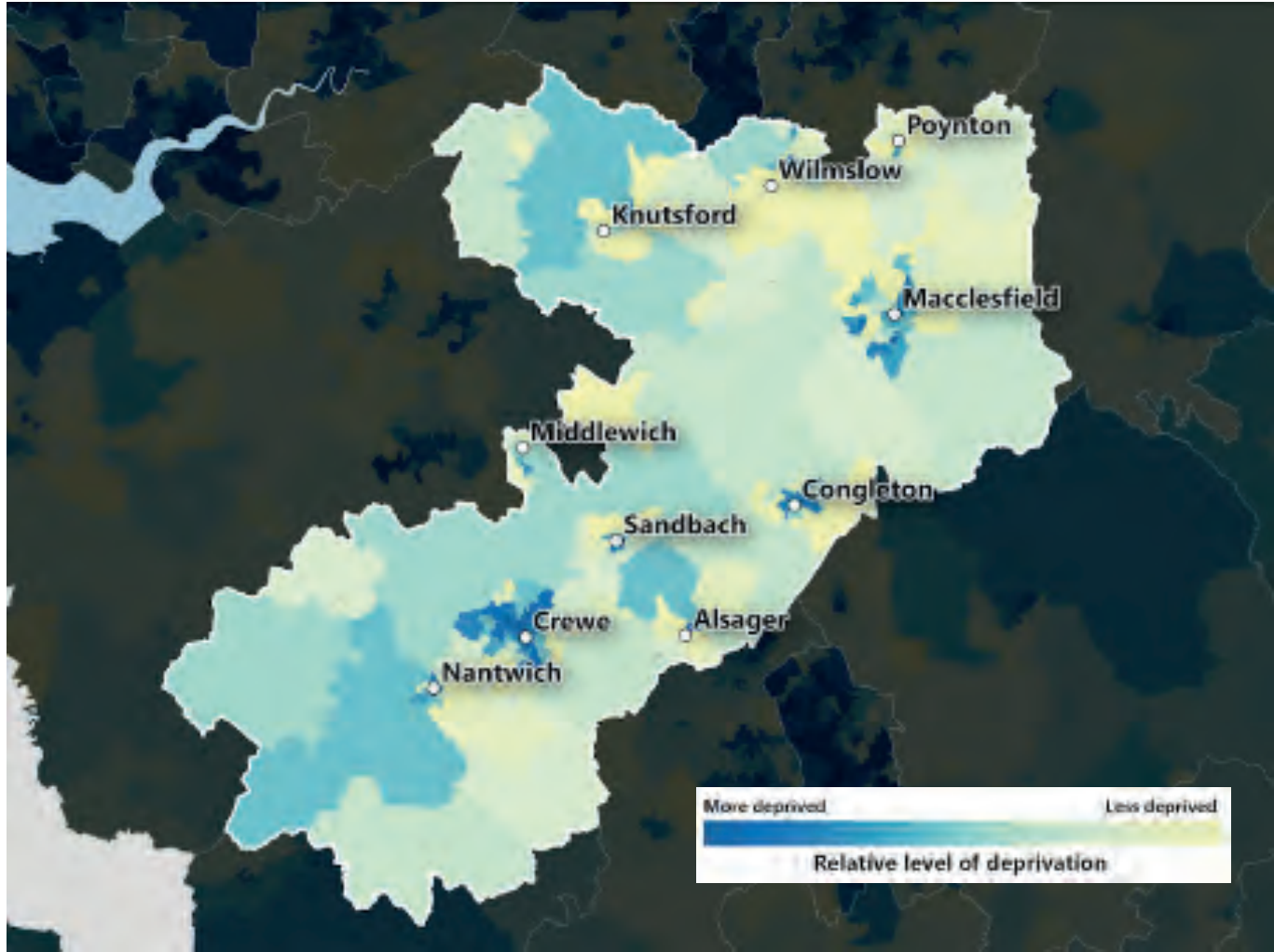
CACI Acorn Classifications  
Source: CACI  
Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres



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. The majority of Handforth is within the 10% least deprived areas of deprivation nationally.

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  
Most recent consistent data available  
across the 9 centres





Local Context

Handforth sits at the heart of one of the most aspirational residential areas in the region. Located between Wilmslow, Heald Green and Styal, it is well connected by road and rail. Located just 9 miles south of Manchester City Centre and linked to Manchester Airport by the A555.

Handforth is an attractive residential location, well served by a range of amenities, within easy access of a variety of employment opportunities, located within a rural setting but within easy reach of the City. The key retail area is focused around The Paddock which accommodates a range of retail units around a square. The Centre continues along Wilmslow Road accommodating a range of convenience units as well as takeaways, betting shops, cafes and restaurants. The Centre offers a good mix of independents including specialists. In addition to retail and leisure it also accommodates homes, community facilities and offices.



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



Visit information

	Visit 1	Visit 2
Date of visit:	Saturday 5th September 2020	Monday 26th October 2020
Time of day:	12-1pm	11-12pm
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

- Small, well kept town
  - Locally centre
  - Range of shops and services - takeaways, beauty, car repairs, local supermarket
- The Town Centre is dominated by the Wilmslow Road corridor which has an impact on the overall quality of the place



People

- Mostly elderly / middle aged observed using the Town Centre during our site visits
- People popping to Tesco and convenience shopping



Sense of Community

- Noticeboards seem up to date
- Lots of well kept planters
- Historical signage - railway station
- Interpretive signage around the station explaining the town's rail heritage





Accessibility

- Under 10 minute walk from train station
- Designated parking within the local centre - free for up to 2 hours
- Although the Wilmslow Road corridor as a whole is wide, pedestrian and cycle accessibility is constrained due to wider vehicle lanes, parallel lanes and traffic islands
- Some narrow paving which is not ideal for wheelchair or pram access
- Poor pedestrian and cycle connectivity between Town Centre and Stanley Green Business Park due to the railway line



Gateways

- Quite car dominated at Wilmslow Road / Station Road junction, but pedestrian crossing at each road
- The station arrival is a gateway to the town but the quality of the environment means the station feels disconnected from the town

Wayfinding

- No memorable signage but town quite small and easy to navigate but the linear and compact layout of the town means it is relatively easy to find your way
- Wayfinding to surrounding community assets and infrastructure is limited and disjointed
- There is a disconnect between Meriton Road Park and the Paddock





Attractions

- As a commuter service town, the majority of attractions are those which provide local and daily services to local residents.
- Some cafes and restaurants, signs of outdoor seating
- Meriton Road Park is not well sign posted



Amenities

- Library, Paddock Shopping Centre, churches, health centre, takeaways and some local pubs
- Tesco Express
- Office space, and some local employment / commercial units



- Larger employment sites to the east of the railway line (Stanley Green Business Park)
- Larger retail offer is also located close by at Handforth Dean



Sense of a Centre

- Paddock Shopping Centre provides a central point to Handforth, however the area is car dominated and under-utilised.





Character

- Flat Town Centre
- Some heritage buildings, but no listed buildings within the study area
- Dated façades and inconsistency in shop frontage appearances
- Varied building height, but generally low sense



- of enclosure along Wilmslow Road due to wide corridor width and low rise surrounding buildings
- Mix of apartments and terrace housing along Wilmslow Road / Dean Road.
- Larger detached units on Meriton Road, Grangeway etc

Public Realm

- Pavement and road surfaces are tired and worn in places
- Newer areas of paving such as the Paddock are falling into disrepair
- Larger areas of public realm and civic space are inflexible and have no clear function or purpose.



- Many residual spaces along Wilmslow Road have no function. Some are typically hard paved and impermeable, whilst others are grassed but with little biodiversity or landscape use



Green Space

- Meriton Road Park is well kept and has a number of play facilities / outdoor gym and miniature railway
- Plenty of incidental green space however maybe over provided in part as there are a number of areas with no real use
- Central green of the Paddock seems under used due to the few direct connections it has with the rest of the centre





Derelict Sites and Vacant units

- Some vacant units in the Town Centre, large unit opposite library and clinic.
- For a smaller town, not as many vacant or derelict sites as expected?



Housing

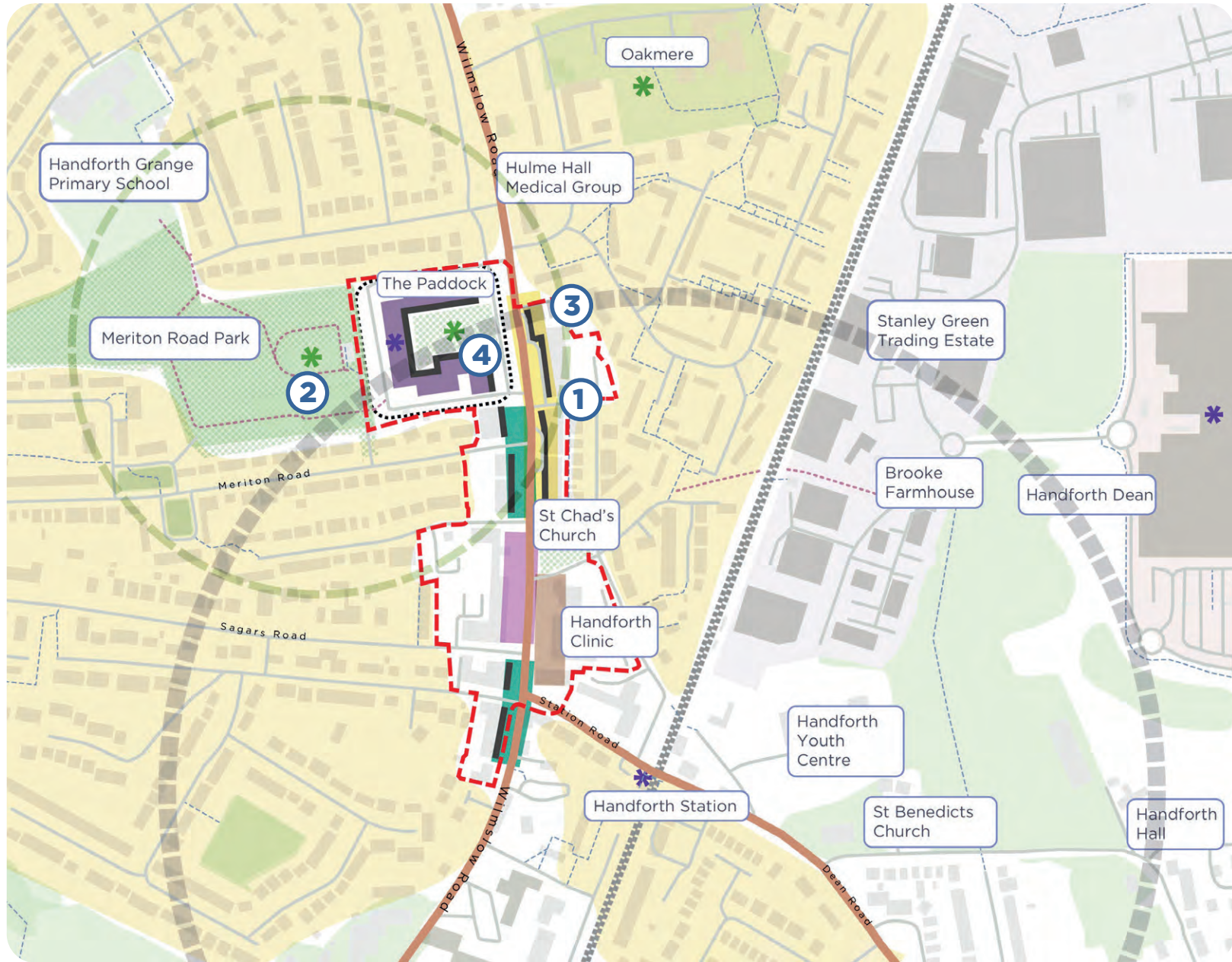
- Signs of new housing development to the south of the town on Wilmslow Road
- Mostly apartments or terraces throughout the centre
- Well kept properties on streets adjacent to Wilmslow Road



Positive Features

Positive spatial elements are identified on the plan:

- Key
- Local Centre boundary
  - Local street network
  - Primary Road Network
  - Arrival destinations
  - Anchor retail locations
  - Anchor open space / recreational areas
  - Areas with a concentration of F&B uses
  - Areas with a concentration of retail uses
  - Areas with a concentration of office uses
  - Areas with a concentration of local amenities
  - Well defined building frontages with active ground floor uses
  - Local businesses within close proximity to the town centre
  - Local residential areas within immediate proximity to the town centre
  - Handforth Station 400m proximity to the town centre (5 minutes walk)
  - Meriton Road Park within 200m proximity to the town centre (under 5 minutes walk)





Negative Features

Negative spatial elements are identified on the plan:

- Local Centre 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 and narrow footways
- Areas of requiring maintenance of public realm
- Low quality frontages
- Arrival destinations
- Links with poor legibility to and from the town centre
- Extent of area which reads as part of the Town Centre
- Key assets which feel disconnected from the Town Centre
- Area of severance / disconnect





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"><li>• Pedestrianised area within the Paddock has potential to offer genuine dwell space and outdoor event space</li><li>• Some temporary and retrofitted street greening and planting as well as good opportunities to sit</li><li>• Potential opportunities for alfresco activity at the Paddock</li></ul>	<p>2 potential vehicular gateways into the town:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wilmslow Road/ Dean Road Junction</li><li>• The Railway Station as well as Station Road / Wilmslow Road junction have an opportunity to become well defined and welcoming gateways to the town</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meriton Road Park is well kept and has a number of play facilities / outdoor gym and miniature railway</li><li>• Plenty of incidental spaces across the Town Centre which could be better utilised</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A small number of heritage buildings are dotted throughout the town such as St Chads Church however there are no listed buildings within the Town Centre</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retail and F&amp;B offer along Wilmslow Road and at The Paddock.</li><li>• Small centre which is easily accessible by foot to local residents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Paddock offers an anchor retail destination which provides a focal point to the town</li><li>• Information boards dotted across the centre</li><li>• Some street-side wayfinding signage at the Station and other locations helps with wayfinding</li></ul>

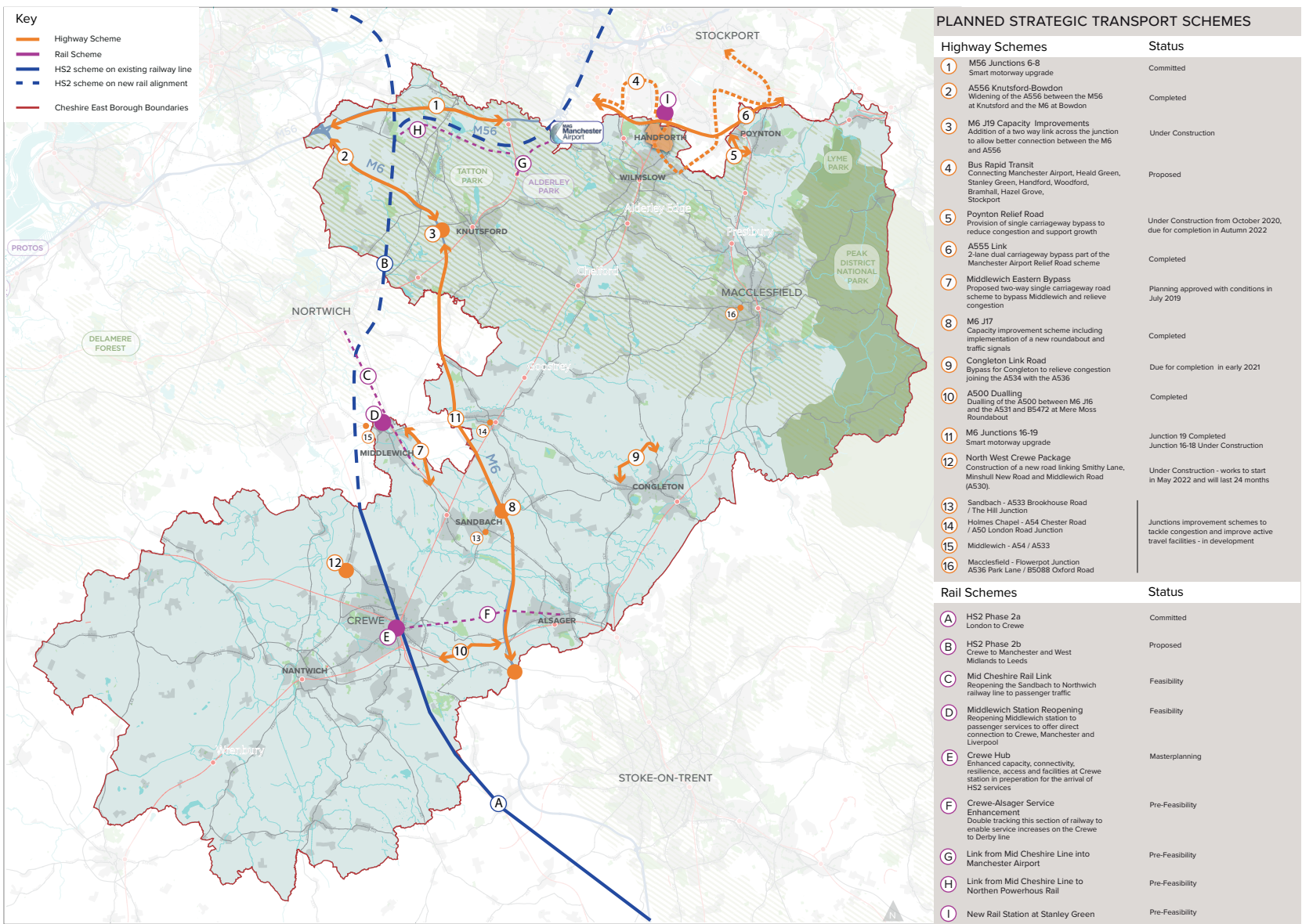
Public Realm	Gateways	Open Space	Heritage	Townscape Quality	Legibility
Negatives					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pavement and road surfaces are tired and worn in places</li><li>• Disconnect of public realm due to variation of materials and textures</li><li>• Number of left over / residual spaces linked to highway infrastructure which have no public realm function and which serve as pedestrian and disabled movement barriers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Car dominated Wilmslow Road Corridor</li><li>• Built environment does not frame the gateways adequately</li><li>• Sense of arrival could be strengthened, with more defined destination points</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor signage to areas of open space at Meriton Road Park</li><li>• Larger spaces are over-designed meaning it lacks the ability to be flexible and support a variety of functions linked to the surrounding ground floor uses and commercial spaces above</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No listed buildings within Handforth study area and those that do have historic charm aren't celebrated or well known within the Town Centre</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Centre is dominated by surface car parking which takes away from the overall aesthetic of Handforth</li><li>• The Centre has been subject the various periods of infill and redevelopment creating an incoherent and mix townscape character. The dated appearance and design of some visually prominent buildings negatively impacts upon the townscape.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor signage makes it difficult to navigate from the station and to Meriton Park</li><li>• Varied mix of old and new therefore hard to distinguish an identity for the town</li><li>• Poor pedestrian links to the adjacent Stanley Green Business Park from the Centre and train station.</li></ul>



# 06 Connectivity and Accessibility

Handforth 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 Handforth within less than 10-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, Handforth is within a 1-hour drive from other major cities such as Liverpool and Chester via the M56.

Handforth Transport Baseline Analysis



Handforth Transport Baseline Analysis





Car Parking

Car parking within the centre of Handforth is predominantly provided in the form of on-street parking adjacent to retail frontages. Two long stay car parks are provided free of charge within the Town Centre and an additional car park is provided at Handforth Dean. Wide stretches of pavement parking create obstructions along Wilmslow Road and therefore reduce opportunities and the quality of the environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Due to the high level of car ownership amongst residents within the area (79%, Census 2011), parking management needs to be considered alongside attractive walking and cycling links and infrastructure to reduce the number of people driving to the Town Centre to reduce vehicle dominance and emissions.

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.

Public Realm

The layout of the highway network and footways within Handforth presents a number of opportunities with wide footways and lots of available space adjacent to retail frontages. However, this space is currently dominated by on-street parking and presents poor quality outdated public realm. Reconsidering the level of provision and layout of on-street parking within Handforth presents significant opportunities to enhance the space for pedestrians and create new public spaces where people can dwell and spend time.

Town Centre	Car Park ID	Parking Spaces	Duration	Pricing
Handforth	Handforth Dean Car Park	1500	5 hours max	Free
	Handforth Library Car Park	50	3 hours max	Free
	School Rd Car Park	48	/	Free
	Wilmslow Rd Car Park	56	/	Free
	TOTAL	1604		

A consolidation of on-street parking along Wilmslow Road in front of The Paddock would open up the main retail facilities and increase visibility from the main road network.

Roads and footways in and around Handforth are also in need of maintenance in terms of surfacing. This would improve the quality of the environment and ensure all areas are fully accessible particularly for people with reduced mobility.

Road Safety

A number of junctions along Wilmslow Road have been identified as collision hotspots reducing the safety of pedestrian and cyclists as well as access to main retail facilities in The Paddock. The Town Centre may therefore benefit from improved crossing facilities along Wilmslow Road to enable safer access to the Town Centre for pedestrians and cyclists travelling from areas to the west.

Improvements have been made at Wilmslow Road / Dean Road junction in recent years, complementary to the South East Manchester Multi Modal Strategy (SEMMMS) scheme. However, this junction is of particular concern within the Town Centre as total of 5 collisions have occurred in the last five years: 2 slight, 2 severe, 1 fatal. Two collisions (one slight and one severe) happened between 2019-2020 (after improvements). As this junction is located along the main route between the station and the Town Centre, improvements to safety provisions for pedestrians and cyclists such as enhanced

crossing facilities should be considered at this location.

Active Travel

Key pedestrian desire lines within the centre of Handforth include the routes between the station, along Church Road towards the high street and along Hall Road towards Handforth Dean. These routes currently present poor walking and cycling environments comprising poorly lit streets with a lack of natural surveillance and a poor sense of wayfinding particularly for those unfamiliar with the area.

There is a lack of cycling infrastructure provision across the centre of Handforth in relation to cycle lanes and crossings along key routes such as Wilmslow Road. This is evident within the collision data across the area where a number of collisions have resulted in slight or serious injury to cyclists. There is also a lack of secure cycle parking within the vicinity of the high street. The wide pavements and space for enhanced public realm in the area presents a good opportunity to not only enhance public realm but also to enhance the level of provision and quality of facilities provided to support pedestrian and cyclist movement to, from and around Handforth.

Four key schemes are currently being progressed

to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists across Handforth Town Centre:

- Access for All scheme at the rail station to install lifts and improved pedestrian links;
- Light segregation scheme on Manchester Road to provide a connection with the Tranche 1 scheme along Hawthorn Lane and the walking and cycle route currently under construction between Wilmslow Rail Station and Alderley Road;
- Design of shared use cycle path linking Handforth village centre northwards to the A555 and to Stanley Road linking further northwards into Greater Manchester;
- Design of pedestrian / cycle route from Handforth station to the Handforth Garden Village development including a new structure across the A34.

With the right infrastructure in place, there is likely to be a demand for walking and cycling within Handforth as the surrounding residential areas are all within 20 minutes walking time from the Town Centre. Enhancing the quality of the environment for pedestrians and cyclists through the provision of facilities such as cycle lanes and secure cycle parking will be essential to reducing the impact

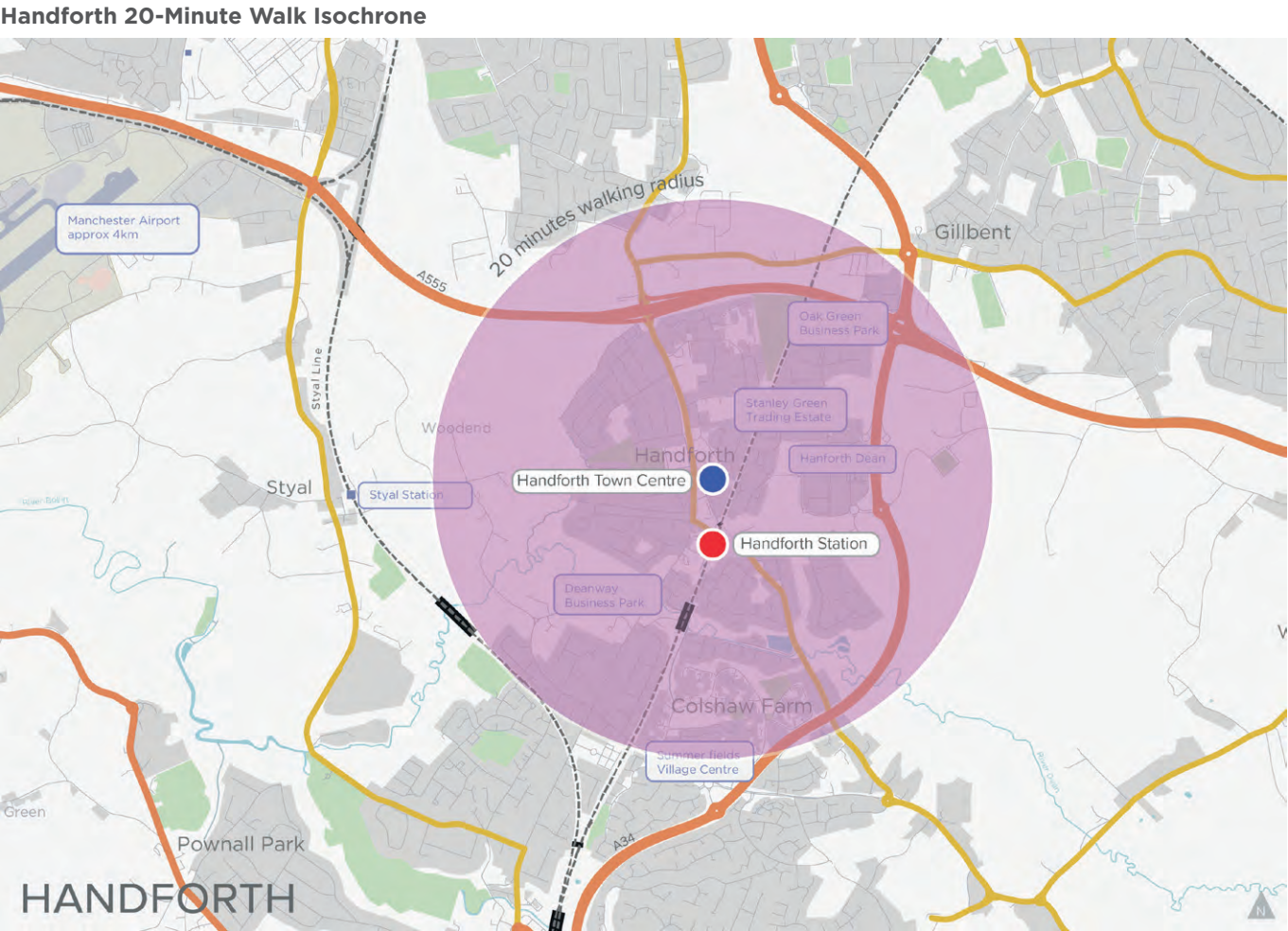


of traffic and congestion within the centre of Handforth through encouraging a shift towards more sustainable modes

Public Transport

Handforth rail station is located around a 6-minute walk away from the Town Centre and around a 10-15 minute from the retail park at Handforth Dean. The station is served by two trains per hour in each direction providing connectivity to Crewe, Alderley Edge, Manchester Piccadilly and Southport. Although the station is in close proximity to the Centre, routes between the station and key facilities require upgrades in terms of signage, lighting and natural surveillance to enhance the safety and attractiveness of the route. The lack of car parking at the station also increases the need to ensure the station is well connected by walking and cycling links and provides adequate secure cycle storage. This will support access to the rail network from surrounding areas and provide opportunities to increase rail mode share for travel to work journeys.

Bus stop facilities are provided adjacent to The Paddock retail area. However, this provides a service limited to 1 bus per hour to Wilmslow,



Alderley Edge and Macclesfield and therefore is unlikely to be an attractive alternative to private car use for commuters, visitors and shoppers. Such infrequent services are unlikely to require dedicated lay-bys – removing these would prove more space for public realm/active travel as well as help traffic calm Wilmslow Road.

Movement Trends

75% of people living in Handforth travel to work outside of the Centre predominately to other towns across Cheshire East such as Wilmslow and Alderley Edge and towards Manchester. The Centre therefore predominantly serves residents in the surrounding areas with leisure and retail opportunities. Around 21% of households do not have access to a car, which is the highest of all nine TCVP areas.

Walking isochrones suggest that the edge of the town is well within 20-minute walking time of the Town Centre. If facilities and infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists in the Town Centre are enhanced, there will be significant opportunities to increase levels of walking and cycling.

11% of people living in Handforth work within the Town Centre.

48% of residents travel more than 5km to work

Public transport accounts for 8% of commuter trips

21% of households in Handforth do not have access to a car, 28% have access to 2 or more vehicles

68% of residents in Handforth in employment drive to work by car

6 minute walk between Town Centre and railway station

Active travel accounts for 12% of commuter trips

Station served by one service per hour in each direction to Crewe and Manchester

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



Cheshire East Council has approved Local Transport Development Plans (LTDP) for its principal towns, keys 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 Handforth the LTDP sets out a wide range of actions that CEC are exploring. In Handforth, the LTDP focuses strongly on active travel interventions to improve conditions for those on foot and cycle. There are also other strategic actions focused around improving access to the railway station and connections to the proposed Garden Village site.

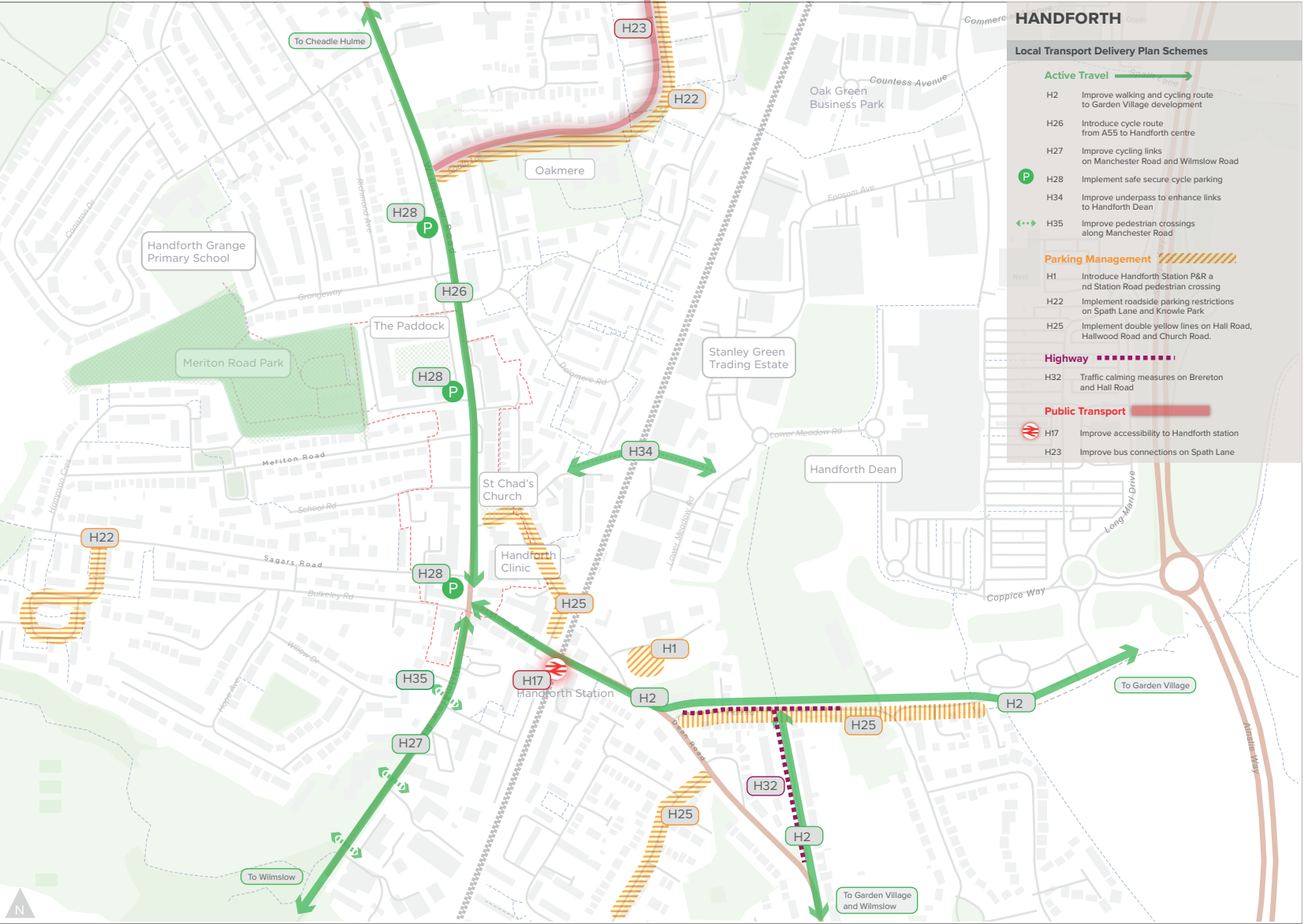
The table contains detail on the schemes set out in the LTDP

Handforth LTP and LCWIP Schemes

Type	Ref	Scheme	Description	Costing <sup>1</sup>
Active Travel	H2	Improve walking and cycling route to Garden Village development	Walking and cycle route between Handforth and the Garden Village development.	£1m-£5m
	H26	Introduce cycle route from A555 to Handforth centre	Introduce a cycle route from A555 to Handforth village centre along Wilmslow Road.	£1m-£5m
	H27	Improve cycling links on Manchester Road and Wilmslow Road	Improvements to cycle routes on Manchester Road and Wilmslow Road connecting Handforth to Wilmslow.	£1m-£5m
	H28	Implement safe secure cycle parking	Introduce secure, safe, cycle parking within the town centre.	<£100k
	H34	Improve underpass to enhance links to Handforth Dean	Improvements to underpass to enhance links to Handforth Dean.	<£1m
Parking Management	H35	Improve pedestrian crossings along Manchester Road	Increase the number and quality of pedestrian crossing points along Manchester Road between Wilmslow and Handforth.	<£1m
	H1	Introduce Handforth Station P&R and Station Road pedestrian crossing	Work alongside partners to introduce a Handforth Station Park and Ride Car Park, and provide a pedestrian crossing on Station Road.	£1m-£5m
	H22	Implement roadside parking restrictions on Spath Lane and Knowle Park	Consider introducing roadside parking restrictions on Spath Lane and Knowle Park to ensure roads can be accessed.	<£100k
Highway	H25	Implement double yellow lines on Hall Road, Hallwood Road and Church Road.	Implement double yellow lines on Hall Road, Hallwood Road and Church Road.	<£100k
	H32	Traffic calming measures on Brereton and Hall Road	St Benedict's School pedestrian access and traffic calming improvements on Brereton and Hall Road.	<£100k
Public transport	H17	Improve accessibility to Handforth station	Improved accessibility to Handforth Station through provision of lifts to both platforms, as currently there is no step-free access, and widening the footway on Station Road.	<£1m
	H23	Improve bus connections on Spath Lane	Improve bus connections to Spath Lane.	Revenue funding

<sup>1</sup> 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

Handforth Local Transport Development Plan Schemes





## Retail and Leisure

Handforth is one of the smallest of all the centres with less than 10,000 sq m of retail and leisure floorspace across 69 units. The key retail area within Handforth is focused on The Paddock – which accommodates a range of retail units around a square including the Tesco Express and a Costa Coffee. The Centre continues along Wilmslow Road accommodating a range of convenience units as well as takeaways, betting shops, cafes and restaurants. Approximately 80% of occupiers in Handforth are independents with a small number of multiple operators (including Tesco and Spar store which act as important anchors for the centre). For its size and local service role, and the location of nearby retail parks, the balance of independent and multiple stores is considered to be reasonable. The range of comparison stores is quite wide and includes specialist uses (fishing equipment, security cameras, cycle shop). These types of uses bring their own customers to the Centre and it is a sign of strength that the centre can support them.

Its scale and catchment is restricted by its proximity to Wilmslow Town Centre and out of town retail at Handforth Dean (a little over 10 minutes walk from the centre accommodating a Tesco Extra, a large format Marks & Spencer's ,

Boots and Next stores) and Stanley Green (B&Q, TK Maxx, Halfords and Homesense). As such it functions as a centre providing for the needs of its local catchment in particular in terms of convenience but also accommodates homes, community facilities and offices

CEC recognises the importance of monitoring key information to assess and respond to issues in its centres commission regular reviews of the retail and leisure market across the Borough. The latest partial update of the Retail Study Report (2020) generally paints a positive picture for Handforth in terms of performance since the last Report (2016). In particular at the time of the update in 2020 there were no vacant units in the centre. Increased occupation has been recorded by more comparison (up 7 units), retail services (up 4 units) and leisure (up 7 units). These positive messages are supported by evidence of increasing footfall (see below section). The reduction in vacancy levels is primarily due to a number of units with The Paddock Shopping Centre being reoccupied which has helped improve vitality and in turn perceptions.

In addition, for its size, the centre is still reasonably well represented by convenience stores including a Tesco Express and Spar convenience store. Convenience goods provision in the centre remains above the UK average. The increase in comparison stores is also encouraging given competition from out of town retail parks.

The centre has also seen growth in the retail service sector - dominated by health and beauty uses - which aligns to wider trends particularly in affluent catchment. There is significant under-provision in the number of financial and business services when compared to the national average. The leisure sector appears buoyant with numerous food & drink outlets, including a few restaurants. However, there are large numbers of take-away units which account for nearly half of the leisure offer in the Centre.

There are three main Hotels in Handforth. The Hallmark Manchester Airport Hotel is located at the northern extremity of the village. The Best Western Plus Pinewood Hotel is closer to the village centre. The Premier Inn Manchester Handforth is linked to the Bull's Head public house and is situated at the southern end of the village. Handforth Lodge offers bed and breakfast accommodation.





The results of the retail update are encouraging and resulted in the recommendation that there was no longer a need for the Centre to be downsized, though it was recognised that the environmental quality of the Centre would benefit from enhancement. It was also acknowledged that the Centre’s evening economy offer would benefit from improvement to help extend the opening hours of the Centre. It will also be important to stay alert to further potential competition from further retail development at Handforth Dean

Given its affluent and growing catchment and its performance during lockdown there should be scope for more opportunities for more bars and restaurants to support extended hours of operation. It is clear that this potential need to be supported by ensuring the delivery of high quality pedestrian/cycling links with new development in particularly at the Garden Village and appropriate car parking.



## Diversity of Uses in Handforth Town Centre

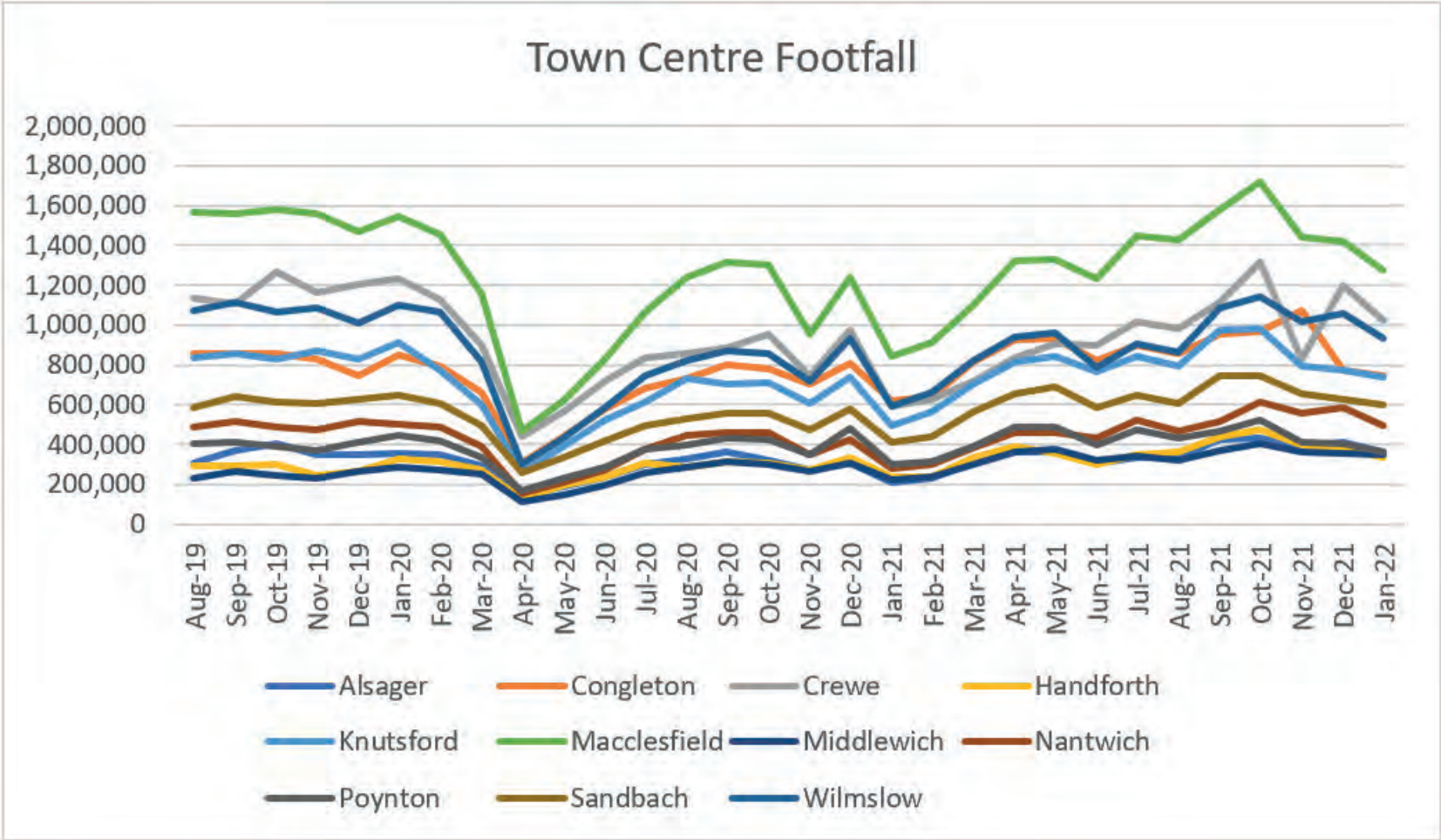
	2015						2020		
	Units (2015)			Floorspace			Units		
	No.	%	UK Avenue (%)	Sq m	%	UK Average (%)	No.	%	UK Avenue (%)
Convenience	8	12	9	1524	28	15	9	13	9
Comparison	13	20	32	1790	27	36	20	30	29
Retail Service	10	15	14	651	12	8	14	20	15
Leisure Service	16	24	23	1892	22	23	23	33	25
Financial and Business Service	4	6	11	223	6	8	3	4	100
Vacant	15	23	11	1617	5	9	0	0	12
Total	66	100	100	7697		100	69	100	100

Source: WYG Survey, 2015 and Cheshire East Council Survey (March 2020)  
UK average from the Experian Goad Category Report (2015, 2020)  
Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres



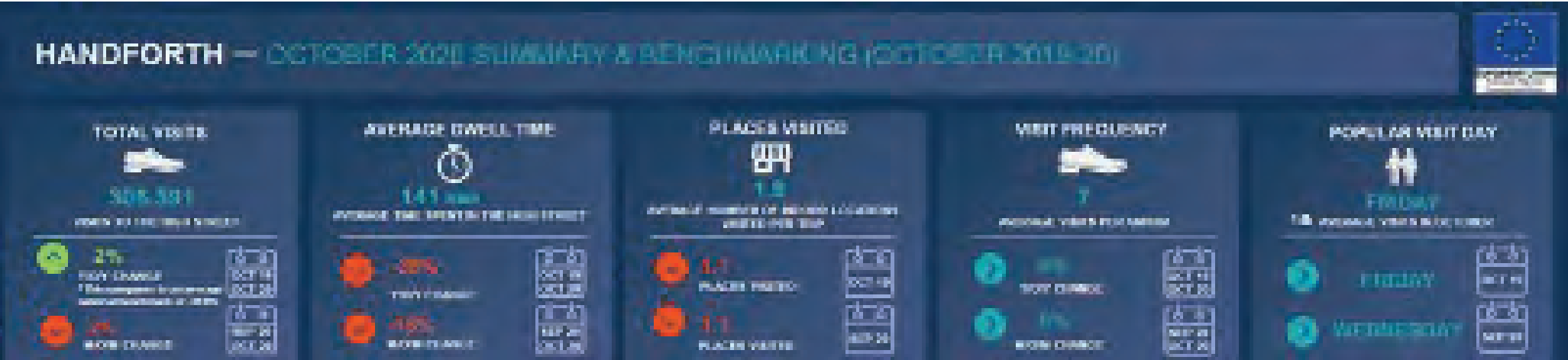
Footfall

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. In August 2019 Handforth had the second lowest footfall of all the centres in Cheshire East (just under 300,000) however over the period the Centre suffered much less fluctuations than most other centres. Indeed, in terms of year on year change, unlike most other centres, it has seen year on year increases (25.8% increase from December 2019 to December 2020). The ability of Handforth to support its local catchment has been a key strength during lockdown and its ability to retain and attract residents from its growing catchment will be critical to its recovery coming out of the restrictions



Source: Visitor Insight Baseline Report: August 2019-2022





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

## Employment

Handforth also sits within a high-quality employment growth area which benefits from excellent locational advantages close to key transport routes, the Greater Manchester conurbation and the Airport City Enterprise Zone and Cheshire Science Corridor. As well as being accessible to a range of employment opportunities across the City Region, Handforth accommodates the following key employment areas:

- The Deanway Business Park on Wilmslow Road – accommodates a range of occupiers including award-winning pies and a vehicle repair company and a number of luxury car dealerships including Ferrari, Porsche and Rolls-Royce
- The Brooke Park industrial estate, Lower Meadow Road/Epsom Avenue - contains a number of finance houses, car body workshops, the offices of Pets at Home and a John Lewis depot. However, because of a lack of appropriate industrial tenants, a number of sites have been re-designated for leisure purposes (e.g. a trampoline centre and a fitness centre)

- Stanley Green Industrial Estate- bought by Schroders in 2020 with historic consent in place for an additional 48,000 sq ft of industrial space, in addition to the current 14 unit scheme already on site. Schroders plan to commence development on the additional units towards the end of 2021, creating further employment opportunity and adding to their already strong occupier mix, which includes Howdens, Toolstation and Screwfix.

The allocation for the Garden Village provides for up to 12 ha of employment for B1 uses.

Existing office space within these industrial estates and within the centre have in recent years struggled to attract tenants. It will take some time to determine whether changes in working habits will have an impact on demand for such space, close the smaller centres. It is considered that in contrast to recent years where there was a flight to vibrant city centres, corporate occupiers may going forward seek to have portfolio of office space – including collaboration space in larger centres and touch down space closer to workers’ homes. Handforth, given its location in and aspirational and growing housing area, may benefit from this trend if business do take up this new working model.

The large out of town retail centres at Handforth Dean and Stanley Green also provide a range of flexible employment opportunities



Residential Market Context

Handforth is an attractive residential location, well served by a range of amenities, within easy access of a variety of employment opportunities, located within a rural setting but within easy reach of the City.

At the last census Handforth accommodated 2,936 of the 159,441 households in the borough. In terms of housing mix, Handforth offers a broad mix of homes across detached, semi-detached , terraces and flat. The offer is much more similar to the national composition than any of the 9 other centres. It has the second lowest percentage of detached homes (after Nantwich). The area is mainly urban but some residential live in the surrounding rural hinterland

Whist this mix means there is a good choice of homes, as set out in the residential values map, Handforth sits in the centre of one of the most expensive residential areas in the North West with average house prices in excess of £350,000. Whilst this means it is an aspirational housing area it also means it is an area where affordability can be an issue for lower paid workers and this reliant on benefits.

The population is well served by a range of retail, employment and leisure opportunities

and accommodates 3 primary schools - served by three primary schools: Handforth Grange (formerly Wilmslow Grange), the Wilmslow Academy and St Benedict’s RC Primary.

Handforth is identified in the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy as an area for strategic growth, through the allocation of The Garden Village at Handforth to the east of the Centre and the land

between Clay Lane and Sagars Road (Site LPS 34) to the west of the village. The latter development is located in Styal; however, access will be from Handforth. Planning permission has been granted for a care village (108 residences) on land adjacent to Handforth Hall, for 175 new houses on land to the east of Hill Drive, and for 10 town houses adjacent to Handforth Station. Planning

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
<b>Handforth</b>	<b>26.1%</b>	<b>23.1%</b>	<b>27.9%</b>	<b>22.8%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>2,936</b>
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

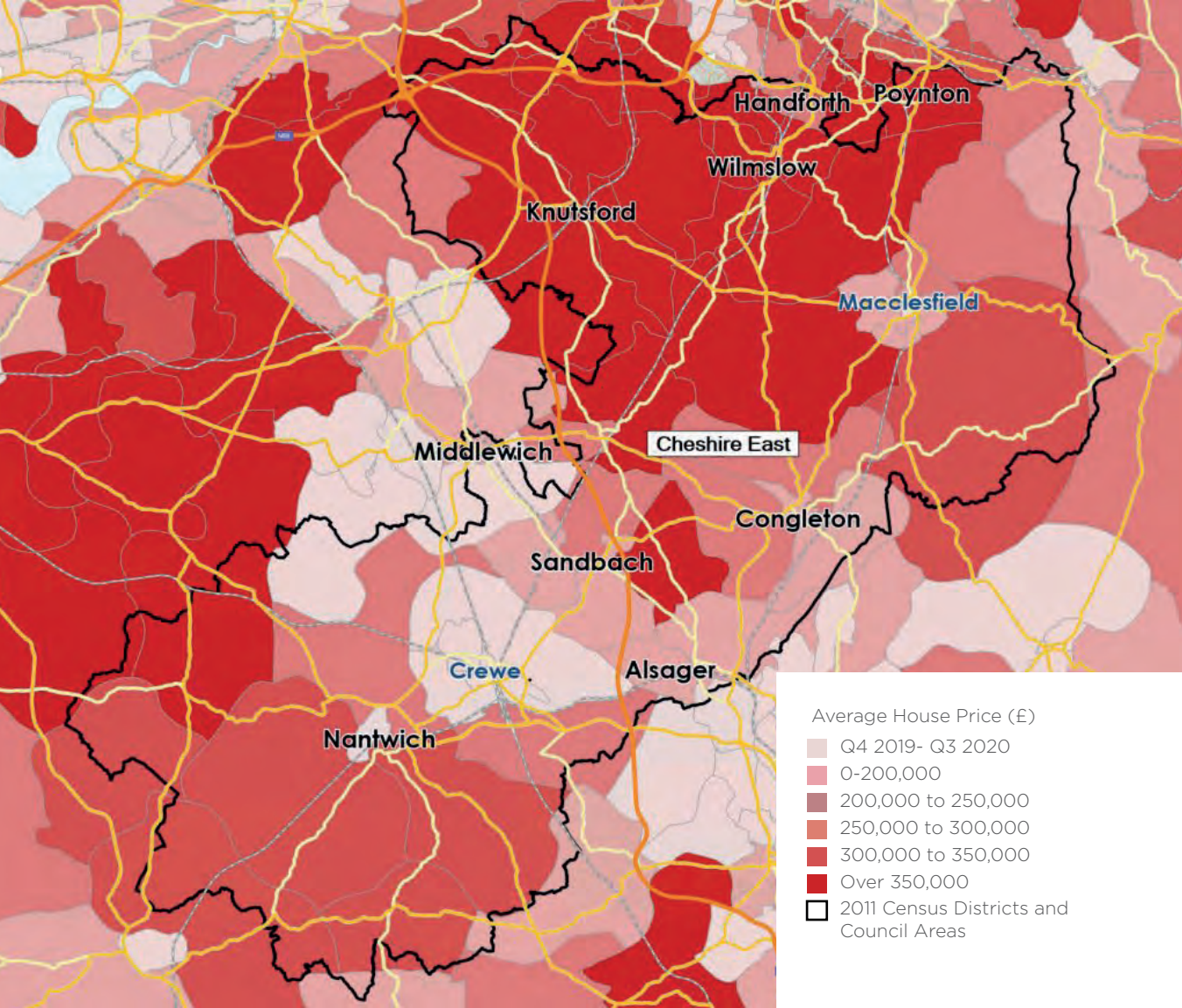
Housing Stock by Type.  
Source: Census 2011, Office for National Statistics (ONS)  
Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres

permission has been requested for 44 apartments on the site occupied by Cypress House.

Currently active new housing schemes include Anwyl Homes The Fairways Development and Jones Homes’ The Sanctuary. Homes are currently available ranging from £320,000 for a 2 bed to £559,995 for a 4 bed property.

The population of Handforth could rise by approximately 1000 persons even before the house building proposed in the Local Plan commences. The 250 houses planned for land between Clay Lane and Sagars Road (Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Site LPS 34) and the 1500 (approx.) houses planned for the North Cheshire Growth Village (Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Site LPS 33) could result in an increase to the population of Handforth of around 5,000 by 2030. This will significantly increase the catchment of the centre.

Once delivered these scheme will significantly enhance the supply of modern, energy efficient homes in the area and guided by the Neighbourhood Plan planning contributions from these schemes should be available to support some of the priorities of the area including improved infrastructure.





# 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

- Strong community spirit in Handforth that needs to be maintained
  - Friends of Handforth Station - active and well organised community group with a track record of accessing funding
  - Handforth Town Council
- Compact centre offering a wide range of facilities and amenities for the local community
- Good food/drink offer - 26 food outlets in the centre (pre COVID-19)
- Greenbelt setting and proximity to good quality open spaces - River Dean and access to countryside
- Meriton Road Park - used for Mayfest, model railway.
- Stanley Hall Park - MUGA and skate-park
- The Paddock offers a local hub, with space for community events as well as local shopping
- Well maintained street planting and signage and public art
- Well connected by infrastructure - close to airport, motorway and train links to Manchester from Handforth Station
- Accessible to attractive countryside - including National Trust attractions include Quarry Bank Mill, and Styal Country Park and amenities such as Styal Golf Course
- Surrounding residential of high standard and good choice of homes
- Local catchment has supported the centre during COVID lockdown/stay local restrictions

### Weaknesses

- Traffic - congestion is an issue in the Town Centre
- Car dominant centre with heavy on street parking
- Car-parking - recent parking study identifies a shortfall in car parking spaces. Passing trade is lost because people cannot park. A management strategy (including enforcement) is required to ensure car-parking is efficient and effective and provides parking for residents, shoppers and workers.
- A34 bypass road has resulted in a decline in passing trade - centre needs better gateways/sign posting
- Competition from Wilmslow, Stockport, Handforth Dean and Cheadle Royal with plentiful free parking
- Public transport - access to the centre is limited, especially in the evenings
- No joint marketing of the town and its businesses/assets
- Apathy amongst business owners to get involved in initiatives for the centre - many businesses are franchises and few businesses own the premises
- Dated frontages of shops and restaurants
- Deterioration in the appearance of the Town Centre - buildings and public space in need of investment. Refurbishment may attract more visitors and businesses
- No sporting facilities within the parish boundary
- Severance caused by railway line that disconnects centre with Handforth Dean
- Limited pedestrian linkages e.g. between Handforth centre and Handforth Dean and no link between the Paddock and Meriton Road Park
- Lack of public toilets. Facilities within the town (such as in Costa) that are open to public use are not well advertised
- Poor presence on-line. There is no coordinated website for the centre and no Wi-Fi hotspots

### Opportunities

- North Cheshire Garden Village (1,500 new homes), Fairways, Stanneylands and Heathfield Farm developments - will expand the catchment of the centre need to entice new residents into Handforth which will attract new investment/businesses shops and make services more sustainable e.g. library and potential support for an enhanced evening economy/food and drink offer
- Associated Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will provide funding sources for local infrastructure improvements e.g. footpaths, cycling, public space and sports facilities for example football pitch at Stanley Hall Park
- New park and ride proposed at the train station would create additional parking spaces in the centre and with bus linking station to Handforth Garden Village. Will also improve capacity in the vicinity of the health centre and library
- Review current car parking strategy so that it supports use of the Town Centre - e.g. short stay car parking and affordable long stay for local workers
- Encourage train station users to visit the Town Centre - improve signage, widening of footpath
- Raise profile of the what the centre has to offer - encourage engagement from local business owners
- Expansion at Handforth Dean - additional local investment and jobs, prestige occupiers (BMW)
- Investment in the Paddock - scope for residential conversions?
- Improve communication with Cheshire East decision making and implementation officers. Better engagement to assist with car parking management and enforcement strategy and usage of community facilities under control of Cheshire East (library, youth centre, Handforth Hall etc.)
- New primary and secondary school facilities within the Garden Village at Handforth. This will reduce the demand of Handforth pupils for places at Wilmslow High School.

### Threats

- New homes will add to existing congestion and could have an impact on some existing facilities in particularly healthcare and schools
- Cheshire East Council assets - unclear intentions for the CEC owned buildings in the Town Centre
- Expansion at Handforth Dean - could further detract from the Town Centre
- Lack of outward facing initiatives in terms of marketing the towns retail, food and drink or events offer
- Inconsistent management of Meriton Road Park
- Loss of business and prosperity due to inadequate supply and management of car parking and traffic congestion
- Excess charges at pay and display car park do not move commuter parking from existing streets and public car parks





# HANDFORTH ACTION PLAN

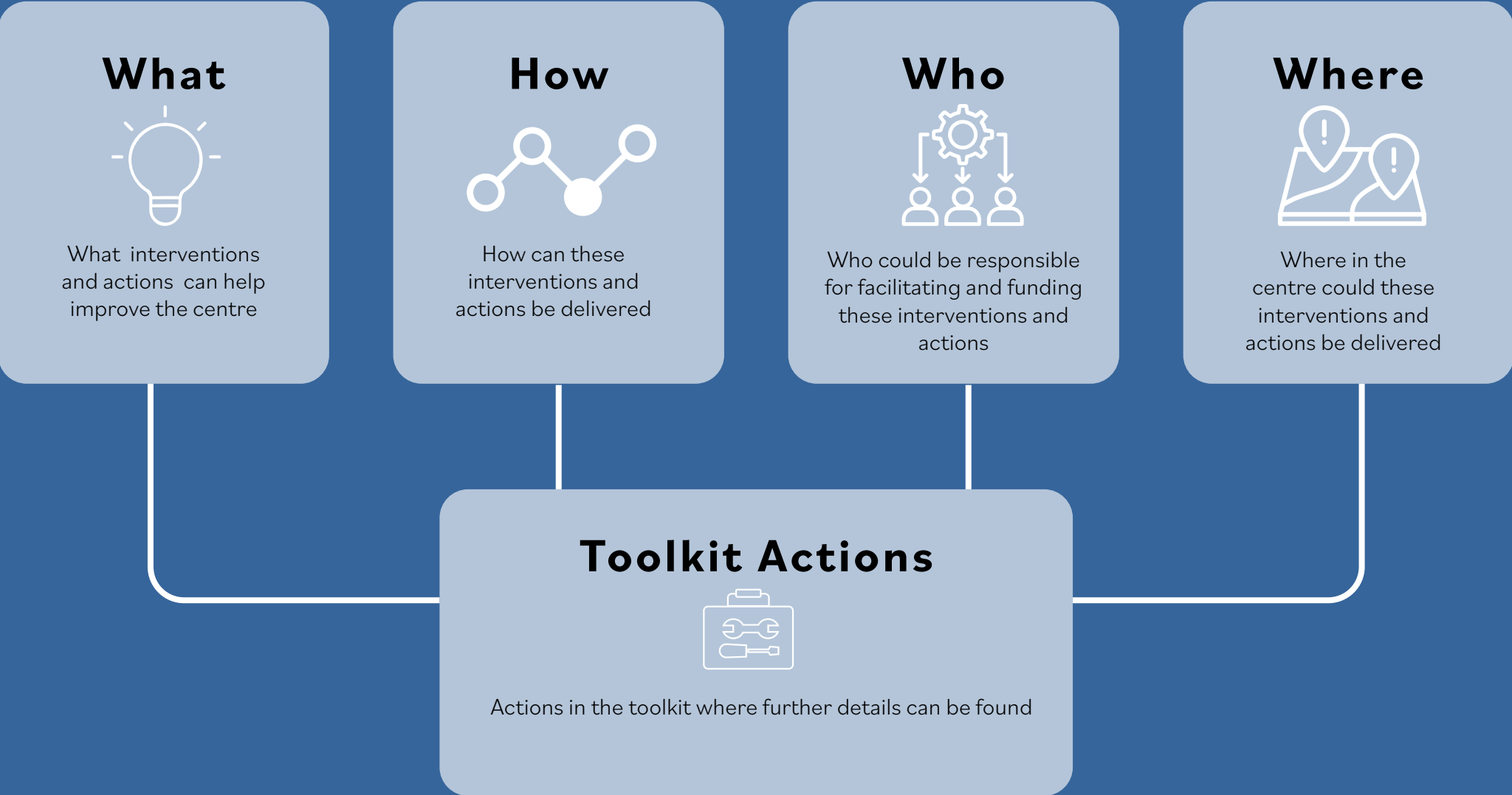


# 09 Priority Areas for Intervention

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 Handforth 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

In 2030 Handforth will be a vibrant village, extending its strong community spirit to new housing developments both within the North Cheshire Growth Village and the parish of Styal. It will capitalise on its advantages of being located next to Greater Manchester and the Cheshire countryside. Handforth will have an improved district centre with attractive public spaces and a successful independent sector. Through the provision of new affordable housing, Handforth will reduce the degree of deprivation found in some areas, as well as providing high levels of employment, increased average incomes and good access to education. Handforth will have high quality open spaces through the retention of Green Belt areas.

## Objectives

- **To protect and enhance Community and Well-Being**
- **To protect the Natural and Built Environment**
- **To support the Local Economy**
- **To improve active travel and manage traffic and parking**
- **To ensure the Garden Village at Handforth benefits the existing community**

## Role of the Centre

Handforth plays a number of important roles:

- A local centre serving the needs of its local residents
- A community focus – offering a range of amenities including attractive parks and home to a number of active community groups
- Supporting a growing catchment with significant number of new homes proposed at Handforth Garden Village and Styal

The Vitality Plan seeks to support Handforth to respond to the opportunities that the proposed growth will offer whilst also supporting the needs of its existing local community.

# 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:





# Spatial Action Plan

The Spatial Action Plan illustrates key features of the Centre and identifies where proposed actions could be delivered. It highlights the Centre’s significant green assets and how these could be better connected and gateways strengthened. It also highlights how the Boulevard could be enhanced to support visitors to dwell more in the Centre supporting vitality.

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

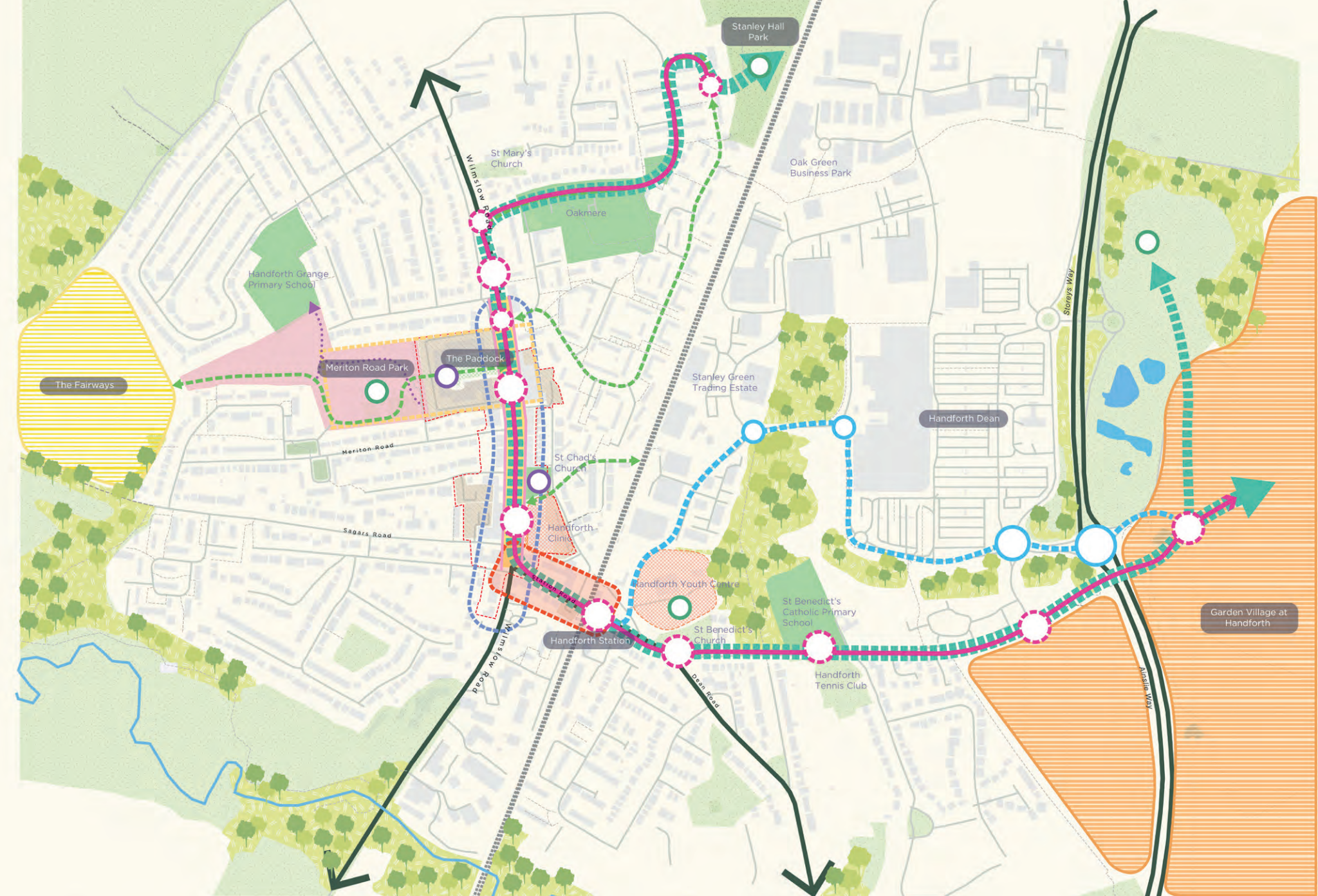
- **Action 2 : Enhance the street environment along Wilmslow Road**
- **Action 3 Making more of The Paddock and Meriton Park**
- **Action 7 Public Transport**

**Action 1**  
Delivering strong cycle and walking connections between the Garden Village at Handforth, the Station and the Centre.

**Action 2**  
Improving the experience of green spaces, public realm and links along Wilmslow Road

**Action 3**  
Making more of The Paddock and Meriton Road Park

- Key
- Local centre boundary
  - Existing car parks
  - The Garden Village at Handforth
  - The fairways housing development
  - Meriton Road Park - masterplan in progress
  - Local centre main street
  - Primary routes through Handforth
  - Proposed multi nodal route from Garden Village to Handforth station
  - Council owned buildings for potential consolidation
  - Potential events space within green space
  - Existing woodland
  - Existing play / sports area
  - Existing open space
  - Key points along wayfinding strategy
  - Potential wayfinding strategy between the centre and Garden Village
  - Better connection and use of the centres public spaces for local events
  - Active travel routes
  - Ehnanced gateway at Wilmslow Road / Handforth Station





# 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 <sup>1</sup>
Active Travel	H_AT1	Improve wayfinding across town centre at key gateways	Improve signage and wayfinding across the town centre at key gateways and landmarks.	<£100k
	H_AT2	Improve pedestrian crossings along Wilmslow Road	Increase the quality and frequency of pedestrian crossings along Wilmslow Road and implement pedestrian courtesy crossing across key side roads.	<£1m
	H_AT3	Improve walking and cycling route on Church Rd towards Handforth Dean	Improve cycling and walking links along Church Rd – connecting to the planned improvements to the underpass (H34) which aim to enhance links to Handforth Dean.	<£1m
	H_AT4	Improve walking and cycling route to Meriton Road Park	Improve cycling and walking links to Meriton Road Park as current routes are narrow and dark, running across a carpark. There is an existing masterplan in place for the park – allowing the opportunity to improve its connection to Wilmslow Road.	<£1m
	H_AT5	Improve walking and cycling route on Delamere Road to Stanley Hall Park	Improve cycling and walking links on Delamere Road to Stanley Hall Park including improved wayfinding, lighting and footways surfaces.	<£1m
	H_AT6	Improve walking and cycling route on Spath Lane to Stanley Hall Park	Improve cycling and walking links on Spath Lane to Stanley Hall Park including improved wayfinding, lighting and footways surfaces.	<£1m
Public Realm	H_PR1	Greening the street along Wilmslow Road	Formalise existing temporary planters with permanent rain gardens and semi-mature street trees on Wilmslow Road. Introduce more street tree planting to reduce the visual and physical barrier of on-street parking.	<£1m
	H_PR2	Enhance gateway at Wilmslow Road / Station Road	Enhance Wilmslow Road / Station Road link as it strategically connects Handforth train station and the town centre – introducing pedestrian priority at Wilmslow Road junction and creating a high-quality gateway space	<£1m
Highway	H_H1	Traffic calming measures on Wilmslow Road	Consider interventions to slow through-traffic on Wilmslow Road e.g. removal or scaling down of the existing bus laybys and/or removal of centre line along Wilmslow Road.	<£100k

<sup>1</sup> 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



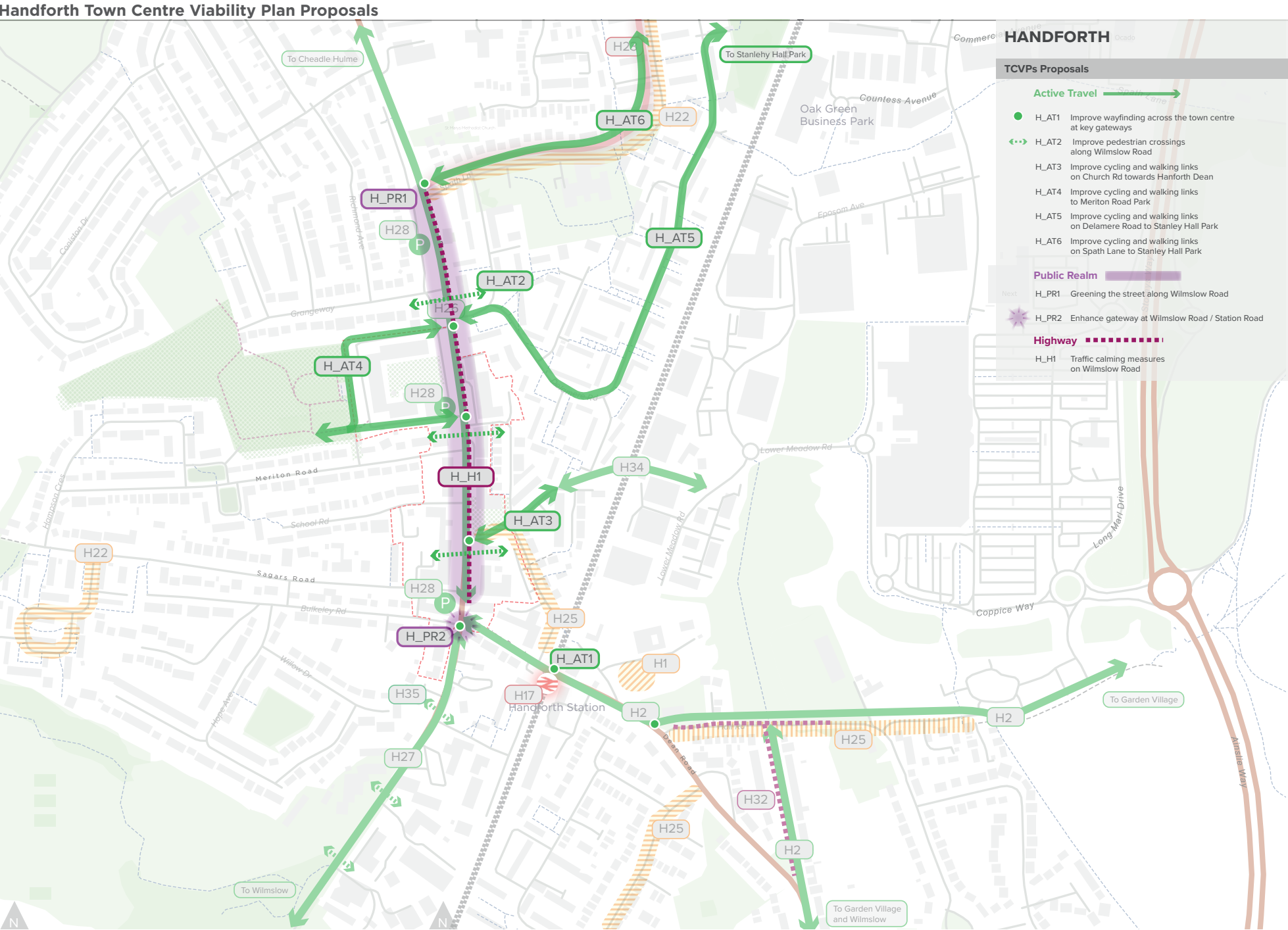
Newport Street, LB Lambeth  
Street Greening – rain garden  
Source: Urban Design London, Designing Rain Gardens: A Practical Guide (Photo sourced by: MottMacDonald)



King Cross Arena  
Side Streets - pedestrian crossing texture treatment  
(Photo Credit: MottMacDonald)

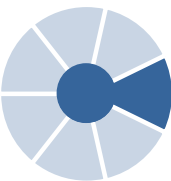


Pedestrian Wayfinding  
Example of gateways' wayfinding  
Source: Fabrik Brands  
(Photo sourced by: MottMacDonald)





# 10 Priority Areas for Intervention



## Action 1: Deliver Strong Cycling and Walking Connections, Including from the Garden Village into the Centre of Handforth

### What

Creation of a designated and well signposted cycling and walking network that sustainably links the planned Garden Village to both Handforth Station and into the centre of Handforth. This will create a sustainable, safe and direct link between local amenities and the new residential community, encouraging local residents to walk or cycle into the Town Centre or via the train station. This walking and cycling route could be supported by a wayfinding strategy to encourage more recreational journeys across the area and connecting this link to other surrounding walking and cycling routes. There are also potential links to be established between the Town Centre/ Station Area and the River Dean - via links adjacent to the Garden Centre and Stanneylands/ River Dean.

High-quality walking and cycling connections are essential to support thriving Town Centres and successful new places. The Local Transport Development Plan (LTDP) identifies several routes for specific focus:

- Development of a new greenway connection between the proposed Garden Village and Handforth Town Centre
- Delivery of improved cycle facilities on Wilmslow Road. A ‘pop-up’ scheme is intended to be implemented between Handforth and Wilmslow by Spring 2022
- Connections to Handforth Railway Station

### How

A co-ordinated route designed to be integrated with the existing streets as well as the planned development structure of the Garden Village. An opportunity to ‘plan in’ the space required to accommodate a commuter and recreational walking and cycling route and to identify where development contributions can be focused along the existing street network to ensure a high quality, safe, cohesive and consistent link is delivered. This link could also include 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 signage (physical and virtual via app/QR code) to encourage people to pause and discover.
- Develop design options for the proposed new and improved walking and cycling routes.
- Introduce secure, safe cycle parking within the Town Centre.
- Improve underpasses and pedestrian crossings.

Funding to deliver these improvements should be supported in part by planning contributions from new homes being developed.

### Who

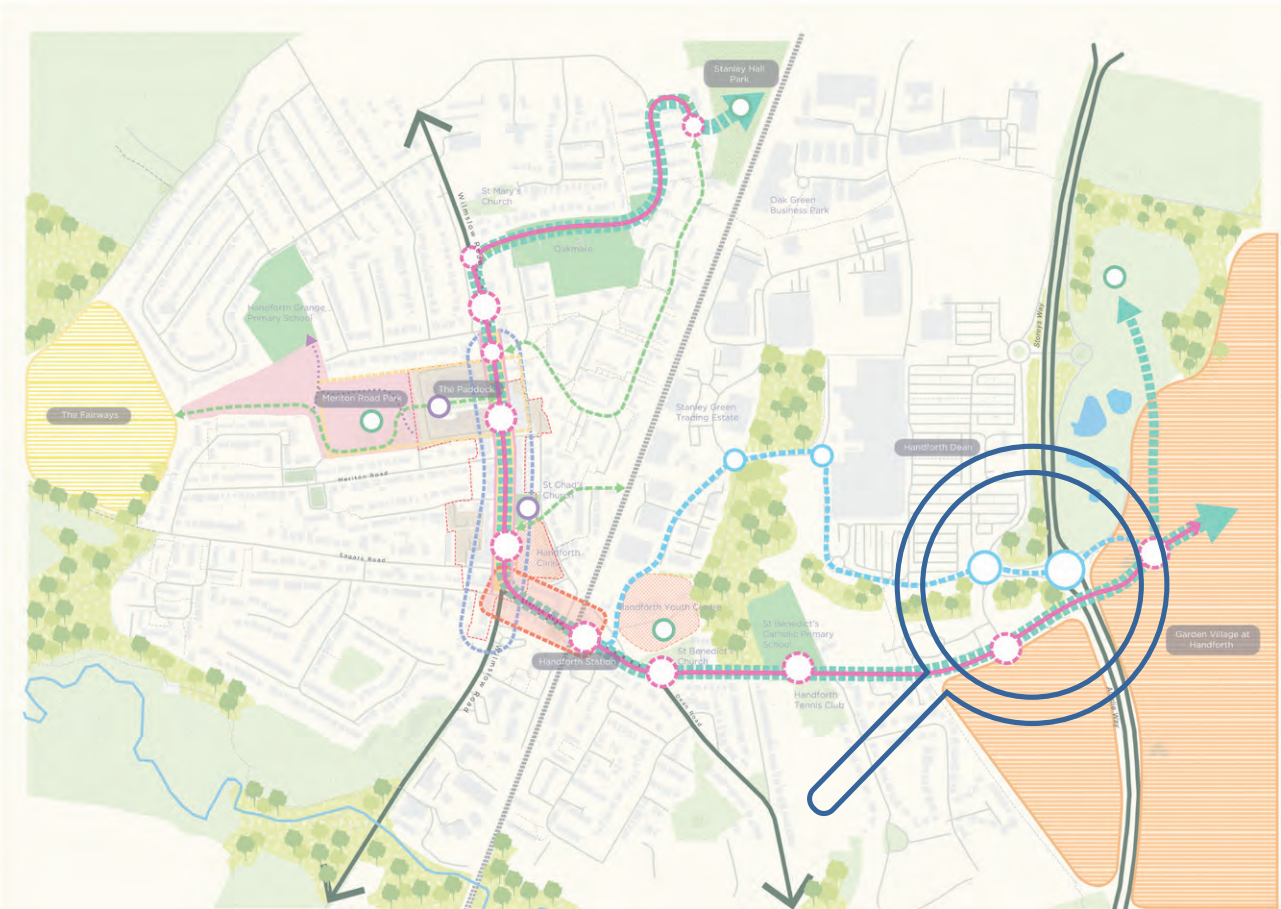
- Handforth Town Council
- CEC including Cycling Champions

### Where

Initial focus should be on the following space and improving the connections between them:

- Garden Village
- Stanley Hall Park
- Wilmslow Road

Longer term other locations could be added.



### Action 1 supports the following objectives:

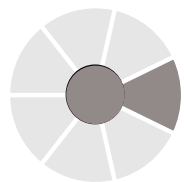
- To protect and enhance Community and Well-Being
- To protect the Natural and Built Environment
- To support the Local Economy
- To improve active travel and manage traffic and parking
- To ensure the Garden Village at Handforth benefits the existing community



### Toolkit Actions

- 1a Improve the evening offer
- 4b Better signage
- 4e Enhance gateway sites
- 7e Bike and scooter parking
- 14c Enhanced crossings





## Action 1: Deliver Strong Cycling and Walking Connections, Including from the Garden Village into the Centre of Handforth

Action 1 aims to create a designated and well signposted cycling and walking network that sustainably links the planned Garden Village to both Handforth Station and into the centre of Handforth.

The route will encourage more sustainable travel into the centre of Handforth, making local amenities and residential communities more accessible.

This walking and cycling route could be supported by a wayfinding strategy to support more recreational journeys across the area and connecting this link to other surrounding walking and cycling routes. This would be supported by various points of interest and playful signage to make the route more interactive.



### Precedent Images

As Handforth aims to deliver strong cycling and walking connections through the Town Centre and towards Garden Village – Liverpool's Princes Avenue segregated cycle lane offers an example of cycle infrastructure integrated with public realm enhancements.



Princes Avenue, Liverpool – Green active travel corridor  
(Photo sourced by: Mott MacDonald)





# Action 2: Enhance the Street Environment Along Wilmslow Road

## (Priority from public consultation)

### What

- Handforth benefits from a wide street profile (building to building) along Wilmslow Road, and much of this space is dedicated to pedestrians, as well as some on-street parking. There is clear potential to improve the quality of the street environment, primarily through:
- Formalising existing temporary planters with permanent rain gardens and semi-mature street trees. More planting (including wild flowers) will not only improve the appearance of the road but will also reduce pollution and increase biodiversity
  - Review current crossing arrangement to enhance the ability to cross the road without creating inappropriate congestion
  - Implement pedestrian courtesy crossing across key side roads
  - Consideration of the options to calm through-traffic e.g. removal or scaling down of the existing bus lay-bys, removal of centre line

### How

Proposals for Wilmslow Road should be progressed to concept design, to understand the range of potential interventions and associated costs.

As noted above the importance of the Centre’s green assets are already recognised. In addition to Meriton Road Park, Spath Lane Residents Association and Friends of Stanley Hall Park have raised grant funding for around £400,000 over the past few year and £85,000 for a skatepark to Invest in Stanley Hall Park. There has also been a successful bid to Central Government which has just accessed £558,000 for cycle route from Handforth to Wilmslow.

- Other actions could include:
- Engage with local artists to install more public art in parks and on key routes linking them target local community funds such as Tesco and Big Local Lottery Fund
  - Consideration could be given to expanding the Friends of Stanley Hall Park model to support maintenance of parks and greenspaces
  - More street tree planting – greening can be introduced to reduce the visual and physical barrier of on-street parking
  - Expansion of existing crafts programme and extend stations “platform for art”.

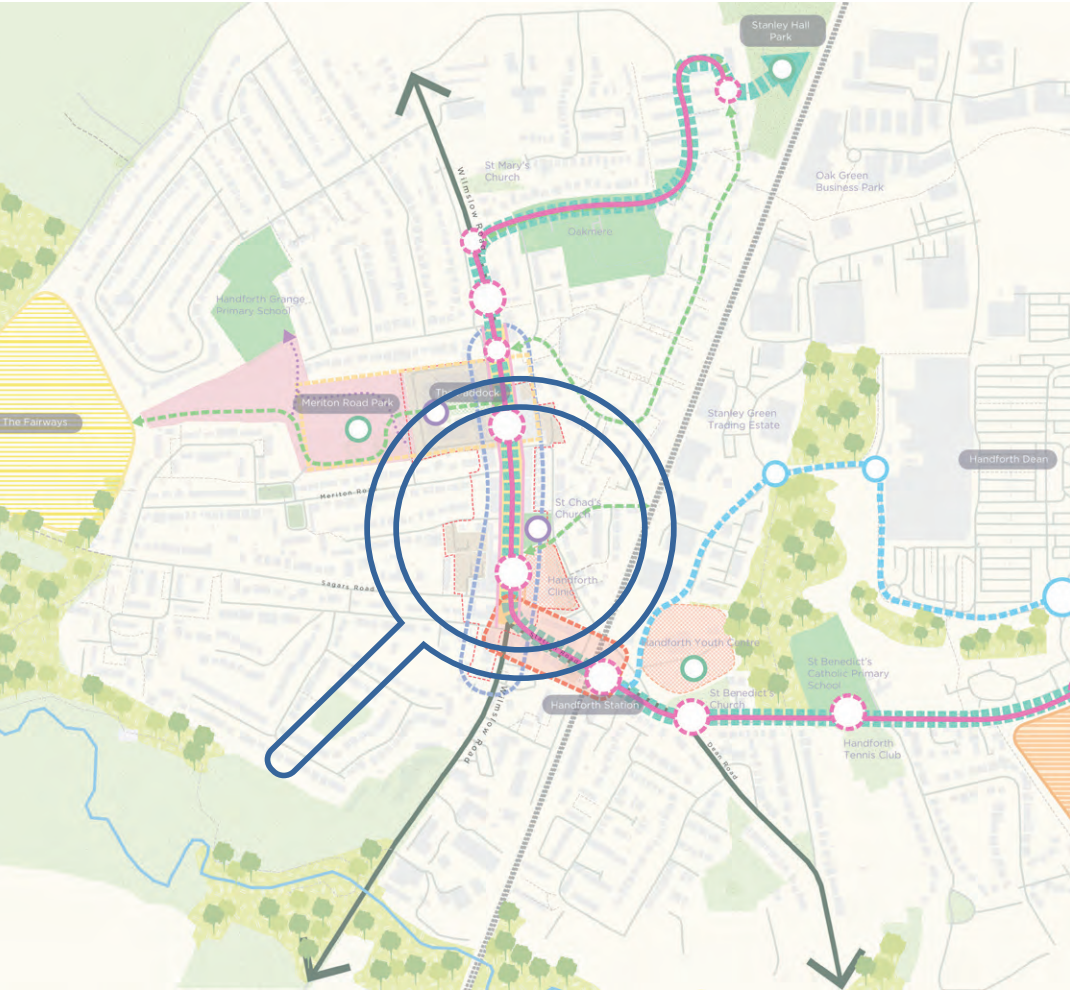
In parallel to improvements to the public realm, local businesses should be encouraged to invest in their premises. Working together to agree a more consistent palette of material or brand for the Centre.

### Who

- Handforth Town Council
- CEC/ANSA
- Community Groups – investigate rolling similar model to “Friends of the Stanley Hall Park” to other green spaces
- Seek support from local businesses - materials, expertise and volunteers
- Engage with specialist groups such as City of Trees who seek to support tree planting across Greater Manchester and the wider area and Incredible Edible which supports greening projects by supporting communities to grow food
- Volunteers – Canal and River Trust can share their expertise of supporting the establishment of volunteer groups particularly expertise in encouraging active travel, biodiversity, health/wellbeing and heritage

### Where

- Stanley Hall Park and Wilmslow Road corridor



## Action 2 supports the following objectives:

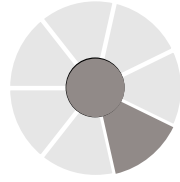
- To protect and enhance Community and Well-Being
- To protect the Natural and Built Environment
- To support the Local Economy
- To improve active travel and manage traffic and parking
- To ensure the Garden Village at Handforth benefits the existing community



## Toolkit Actions

- 1b Introduce a programme of events which open-up and connect different parts of the centre for a limited time
- 1d Use lighting
- 4d Planting in pots to define space for certain uses
- 5a Upgrade the public realm with high quality materials
- 5d Instant greening
- 7a Parklets
- 7b Multi-generational play space
- 15c Community food growing
- 18d Provide allotments and concrete gardens on leftover space
- 25d Raise awareness in the public realm





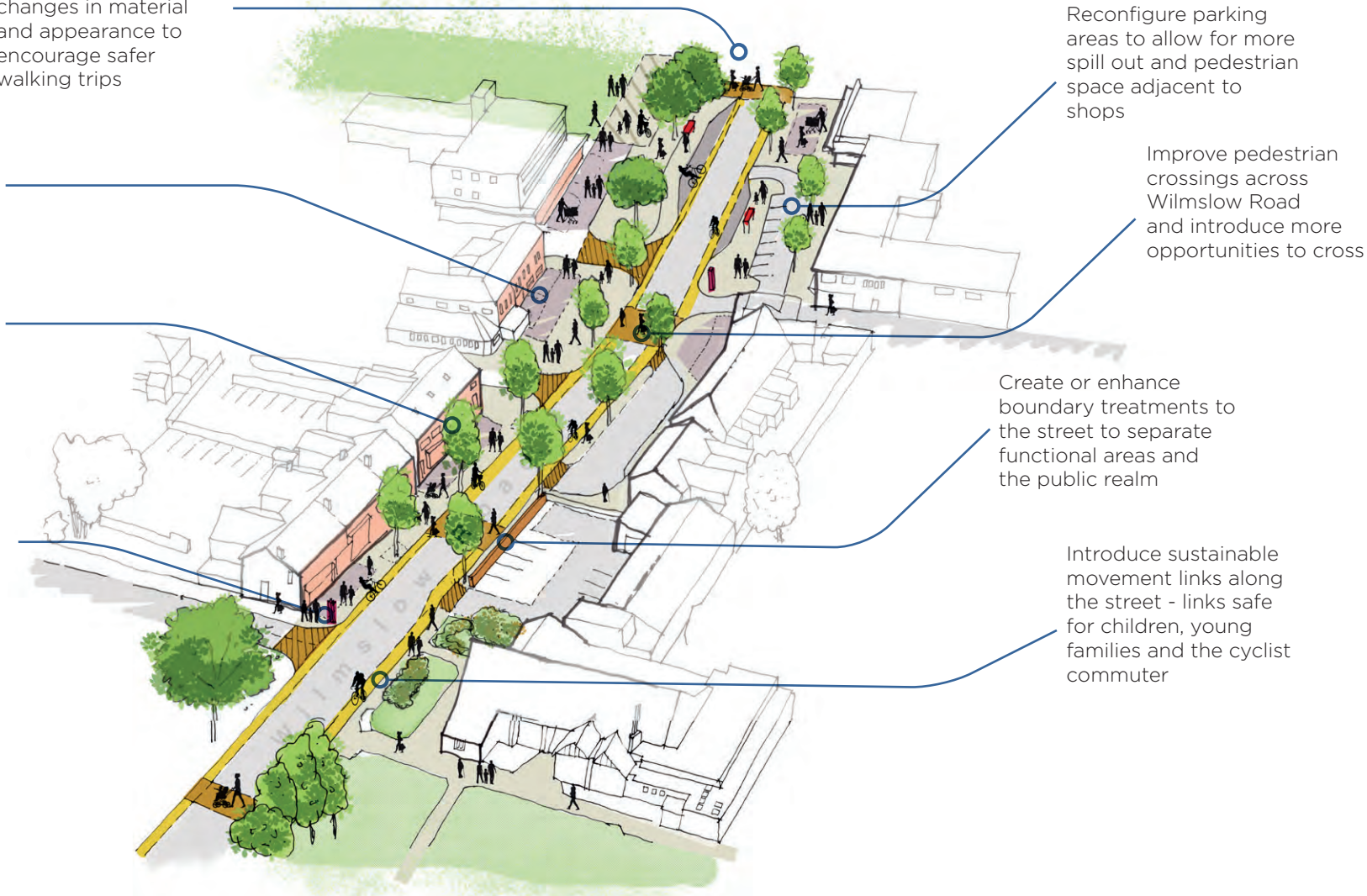
## Priority Action 2: Enhance the Street Environment Along Wilmslow Road (Priority from public consultation)

Allow businesses to spill out onto the footway when weather permitting to help activate the street

Street greening through tree planting, moveable planters and seating helps to create a more inviting environment which encourages dwell time

Introduce directional signage and wayfinding, sharing what's on and where to find it

Reinforce pedestrian desire lines through changes in material and appearance to encourage safer walking trips



Reconfigure parking areas to allow for more spill out and pedestrian space adjacent to shops

Improve pedestrian crossings across Wilmslow Road and introduce more opportunities to cross

Create or enhance boundary treatments to the street to separate functional areas and the public realm

Introduce sustainable movement links along the street - links safe for children, young families and the cyclist commuter

### Precedent Images

While Handforth's Wilmslow Road presents a wide profile, the street environment is generally grey and underwhelming for pedestrians. The Eastcote Town Centre refurbishment scheme presents a great example of how to improve the look and feel of the street introducing:

- SuDS to green the street space and mitigate water flooding;
- New quality paving surfaces;
- New street furniture and street trees;
- Improved street lighting.

All these elements provide aesthetical and practical benefits that could be applied on Wilmslow Road improving the quality of the street environment.

Other interventions to improve pedestrians' experience and reduce car dominance may include further planting infrastructure like the green bus shelters in Manchester (right) and the parklets installed on Bold Street, Liverpool.



Manchester, green bus shelter - Source: designweek.co.uk  
(Photo sourced by: MottMacDonald)



Manchester, green bus shelter - Source: designweek.co.uk  
(Photo sourced by: MottMacDonald)



Bold Street, Liverpool, Parklets - Source: placenorthwest.co.uk  
(Photo sourced by: MottMacDonald)





## Action 3: Making more of the Paddock and Meriton Park (Priority from public consultation)

### What

Encouraging visitors to stay longer in a local centre increases the potential of them to spend more money in the centre encourage them to visit the town more often, staying for longer. The Paddock and Meriton Park are important assets at the heart of Handforth Centre and should be harnessed to encourage visitors to dwell longer in the centre.

### How

The Paddock:

- Making better use of the external space of the Paddock, by removing the fixed and dated furniture to allow for a more expansive and flexible space. This could be used more frequently to host local markets, provide performance space for community and youth groups or host local exhibitions and accommodate art installations before etc etc.
- The materiality of the space could be stronger and further enhanced to create an inviting and welcoming space that is accessible. Creating clearer areas of spill out space for ground floor businesses can help to improve the vitality to the edges of the Paddock, creating activity and sense of centre.
- Extend the square eastwards towards Wilmslow Road to improve its visual impact and to allow for more uses and functions to be incorporated Opportunity to enhance and reinforce some of the existing greenspaces within the square through a public realm and landscape strategy for the space - finding opportunities to make the space do more - for example creating local grow spaces, wild flower areas, a variety of planting to create structure and scale.

- Expansion of the existing events programme
- Add lighting and heaters to extend hours of operation
- Work with the landlord to investigate whether upper floors of the Paddock could be better utilised.

Meriton Park:

The proposed Park Masterplan looks to enhance the quality and walkability of the park. There is the opportunity to ensure this work is fully capitalised upon and supported. The wrap of car parking to the west of The Paddock creates a barrier to Meriton Road Park. A clearer and more direct route between these two important assets could be established, improving the visibility and connection to Meriton Park from The Paddock. Improved signage at existing entrance points as well as a new connection would support existing routes into the park as well as establishing a new clear desire line.

### Who

- Emerson Group (owner of the Paddock)
- Handforth Town Council
- Local community groups – Friend of Stanley Hall Park and Friends of Meriton Road Park
- Local businesses in the vicinity of the area
- Other landlords

### Where

- The Paddock and Meriton Park



### Action 3 supports the following objectives:

- To manage future housing growth
- To protect and enhance Community and Well-Being
- To protect the Natural and Built Environment
- To support the Local Economy
- To ensure the Garden Village at Handforth benefits the existing community



### Toolkit Actions

- 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
- 4a Provide pop-up seating
- 5b Redesign existing shop fronts to provide a fresh and consistent
- 7b Multi-generational play space
- 9a Repurposing of assets
- 9b Curated events focused on historic buildings, public spaces, gardens and parks
- 15a Annual/ regular events
- 19a Affordable start-up space to help new businesses establish themselves
- 20b Use space and activities to attract people to a forgotten part of Town Centre and create new place identity/ Reinvigorated alleyways
- 21a Managed activation of underutilised space
- 21b Flexible office space
- 21c Empty unit exhibitions
- 22b Brining vacant buildings back into residential use



Making more of the Paddock and Meriton Road Park with all year round events; Foodie markets, outdoor cinema, performances etc







# Action 4: Raising Handforth’s Profile

## What

Create a platform from which to promote the Centre’s assets to ensure that existing residents are aware of what is on offer in the Centre and that the offer is promoted to residents looking to move into the proposed new homes. This should support the Centre to be recognised as the heart of the community

## How

Currently the Town Council provides basic information about Handforth and information about Council meetings on its website. Many centres now have their own websites to showcase what their centres have to offer. Wilmslow has just launched a new website and brand for the town Wilmslow’s Way Better ([www.wilmslowswaybetter.co.uk](http://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.

As a first step a revamped website for Handforth should provide a single point for information relevant to:

- Existing and new residents
- Local businesses
- Community Groups
- Visitors

Providing information on:

- The existing offer in terms of shops, bars, restaurant etc
- Events programme - expand existing programme to offer a range of events including community events

- How local businesses can get together to identify collaboration opportunities
- How to get involved in local groups
- What’s on offer in the local and surrounding area including tourism attractions

Next steps could include making links to other partners’ websites such as CEC, Town Council and Marketing Cheshire to enhance “footfall” on the pages

Further actions that could be considered to raise awareness of the Centre include:

- Establish Town Ambassadors
- Link in with Marketing Cheshire to see if there are any opportunities to collaborative
- Link into the proposed Visitor Economy Strategy that is being prepared for Cheshire East
- Appointment of a part-time communication officer to support the Town Council as has been done by Wilmslow or see if local businesses can support

## Who

- Town Council
- Local Businesses
- Engage with Wilmslow to hear about their experience of developing a brand and website

## Where

- N/A



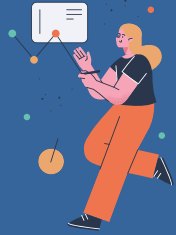
## Action 4 supports the following objectives:

- To support the Local Economy
- To ensure the Garden Village at Handforth benefits the existing community



## Toolkit Actions

- 2a Create a smarter High street
- 3b Appointment of Town Centre champions
- 3c Destination management plans
- 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



# Action 5: Mobilising the Business Community

## What

Handforth has a number of local businesses within the centre and around its edges. Engaging with these businesses and encouraging them to collaborate more effectively will support the economic growth of the area. In addition many businesses are considering how they can add value to their local communities.

## How

Groundwork have recently been appointed by the Wilmslow Town Council to support local business engagement and to test the appetite to establish a Business Improvement District (BID). However a lighter approach could be pursued in Handforth by supporting local businesses to network and understand how they could get involved in supporting the actions identified in the Vitality Plan. If actions can be identified around issues/ opportunities that relate to their core function, businesses may be able to provide the following to support the Town’s aspirations:

- Sponsorship
- Materials
- Technical support
- Volunteers

It is recognised that there was a business group a number of years ago but it stalled however many corporate businesses now set targets to support their local communities and therefore it would be

worth trying to re-establish. Businesses networking should identify “themes” where businesses can drive opportunities forward for example clothes shop and F&B hosting a fashion show or beauty event. 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/>

Local businesses could also collaborate to offer work experience and apprenticeships to encourage local people to work locally rather than believing they need to work elsewhere.

## Who

- Town Council
- Groundwork
- Local businesses especially larger and dynamic/innovative/creative businesses although it is recognised that many retail occupiers are franchises so other businesses should be targeted

## Where

- Across Handforth



## Action 5 supports the following objectives:

- To protect and enhance Community and Well-Being
- To support the Local Economy
- To ensure the Garden Village at Handforth benefits the existing community



## Toolkit Actions

- 10a Independent shop guides
- 13a Business profiles
- 13b Community wealth building
- 25f Tap into local talent







## Action 6: Making more of Community Assets

### What

There are a number of community assets in the Centre including buildings and parks. Consideration should be given as to how these assets would be better utilised to attract footfall into the Centre and serve the needs of the local community

### How

- The Town Council is currently in talks with CEC about getting more involved in a number of local assets. Initially the focus is on whether the Youth Centre could be converted into a community centre
- In addition a number of community groups are actively seeking to harness local green assets and considerable progress is being made (see Action 3).
- There is strong local support for the Pavilion in Meriton Park to be brought back into active use to provide a range of your activities to support young people who currently live in Handforth as well as those who are likely to move into the Garden Village. This will ensure that there is a programme of activities to provide young people with more things to do locally.

### Who

- Town Council
- CEC
- Community Groups

### Where

- Youth Centre
- Pavilion
- Library
- Parks



### Action 6 supports the following objectives:

- To protect and enhance Community and Well-Being
- To protect the Natural and Built Environment
- To ensure the Garden Village at Handforth benefits the existing community



### Toolkit Actions

- 3a Managing Assets



## Action 7: Public Transport (Priority from consultation)

### What

Handforth is served by bus route 130 at hourly intervals with no Sunday or late night bus services – connecting to Wilmslow and Macclesfield. Contributions to supporting bus services have been made by local Parish Councils.

Enhancing the bus network remains an important issue locally as it was identified through feedback at the Local Transport Plan (LTP) consultation in 2018. It is proposed to provide passenger transport services between the town centre and Garden Village, and at the proposed Park & Ride site for Handforth Railway Station to provide better public transport interchange.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, Office for Rail and Road statistics had seen the number of passengers using the Handforth Railways Station increase by 6.5% between 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 with a decrease of almost 4% in 2018-2019. The new P&R site will assist in strengthening this asset, as should improving accessibility to the station.

### How

Deliver bus-only greenway connection to Garden Village.

- Improve accessibility to Handforth station - provide lifts to both platforms, as currently there is no step-free access.
- Widen the footway on Station Road.

### Who

- CEC
- Town Council
- Network Rail
- Northern Rail

### Where

- Handforth train station
- Garden Village



### Action 7 supports the following objectives:

- To protect and enhance Community and Well-Being
- To support the Local Economy
- To improve active travel and manage traffic and parking
- To ensure the Garden Village at Handforth benefits the existing community



### Toolkit Actions

- 14a Tactical urbanism to manage traffic speeds and create more pedestrian friendly spaces
- 14c Quick wins and temporary interventions to manage traffic speeds
- 14e Decked and multi-storey car parks
- 14f Better managed car parking
- 20a Remove clutter for key pedestrian routes and simplify crossing points
- 25c Facilitate modal shift



# Centre Wide Actions

In addition to the specific actions identified for Handforth, 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 each 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 has been 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 (within out 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.

**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 to drive 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 what is going on to more local residents, shoppers, visitors and businesses. Recommendations are made under

Action 4 as to how Handforth’s website 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 number of local organisations in Handforth have or are keen to take 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 pros and cons with other centres (via the proposed Centres Forum)



Governance and Delivery

Handforth Town Council is responsible for driving the aspirations of the Handforth Neighbourhood Plan forward and good progress is being made. A number of stakeholders have been actively seeking funding and has been successful with accessing funding for a range of projects including new cycleways and investment in local parks.

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 Handforth to thrive, further 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 WIP 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 already. CEC Connected Community officers may be able to provide development support.

Progress will be reported into the Town Councils 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 Plan. For example Wilmslow has recently appointed a part time communication officer.

Communication and Engagement

Given the potential growth of Handforth which will result from the delivery of the Garden Village and other housing schemes, it is essential that Handforth’s offer is clearly articulated to support new residents and businesses to move to the area and importantly to encourage them to use its local shops and services

A single platform which showcases the Centre should be established. 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 strengthen their programme of sport related events to

support a stronger coordinated borough wide programme of events

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:

- Enhanced 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 to people e.g. taxi drivers.

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



# 11 Delivery continued

## Funding

Whilst there is not a pot of money available to support the delivery of the Vitality Plan, given the scale of new development around Handforth contributions will be available and the Vitality Plans can support discussions with CEC and developers on where resources should be focused to ensure that the new homes and jobs are linked to the centre of Handforth and its existing social infrastructure.

In addition the Vitality Plan will be a useful tool with which the Town Council can use to:

- Articulate priorities for Handforth 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, walking 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 generated being invested back into the local centre. You are currently in discussion with CEC about how you could take greater responsibility for local assets.

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.

## 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 7 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:

- Making more of The Paddock and Meriton Park
- Public Transport
- Enhancing the environment along Wilmslow Road

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 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, 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, medium 3-5 and long 5+ years. 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

Phasing Key

- Ongoing
- Short Term
- Medium Term





# 11 Delivery continued

## 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 impacts 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 Clerk	Quarterly
New units opening	Town Clerk	Quarterly
New Businesses	Town Clerk to keep a list	Ongoing
Area of greenspace/ open space/cycleways and footpaths improved	CEC	Annually
Hits on website	Traffic on social media	Quarterly
Increase 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.

## Technical Terms

Term	Explanation
Comparison Goods Sector	Retail that stocks higher value goods that are purchased infrequently, such as 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 UKs 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 particle place or area. For example, the length of time spent sat on a public bench.





### **Optimised Environments**

86 Princess Street | Manchester | M1 6NG

t 0161 696 7550

Optimised Environments Ltd. Registered in Scotland SC359690.

Registered address: Quatermile Two | 2 Lister Square | Edinburgh | EH3 9GL

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