

# Sandbach



## Cheshire East Town Centre Vitality Plans

December 2022



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

December 2022

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## Context of the Study

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

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

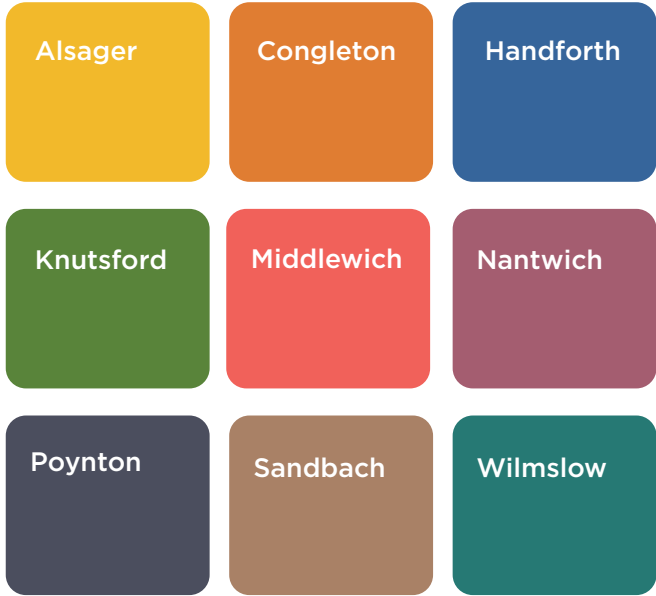
## Town Centre Vitality Plans

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

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

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

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



*The 9 Key Service Centres which form part of this study*

## Aims and Objectives

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

### The TCVPs:

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



Responding to the Impacts of COVID

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

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

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

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

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

Vitality Plan and Toolkit

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

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

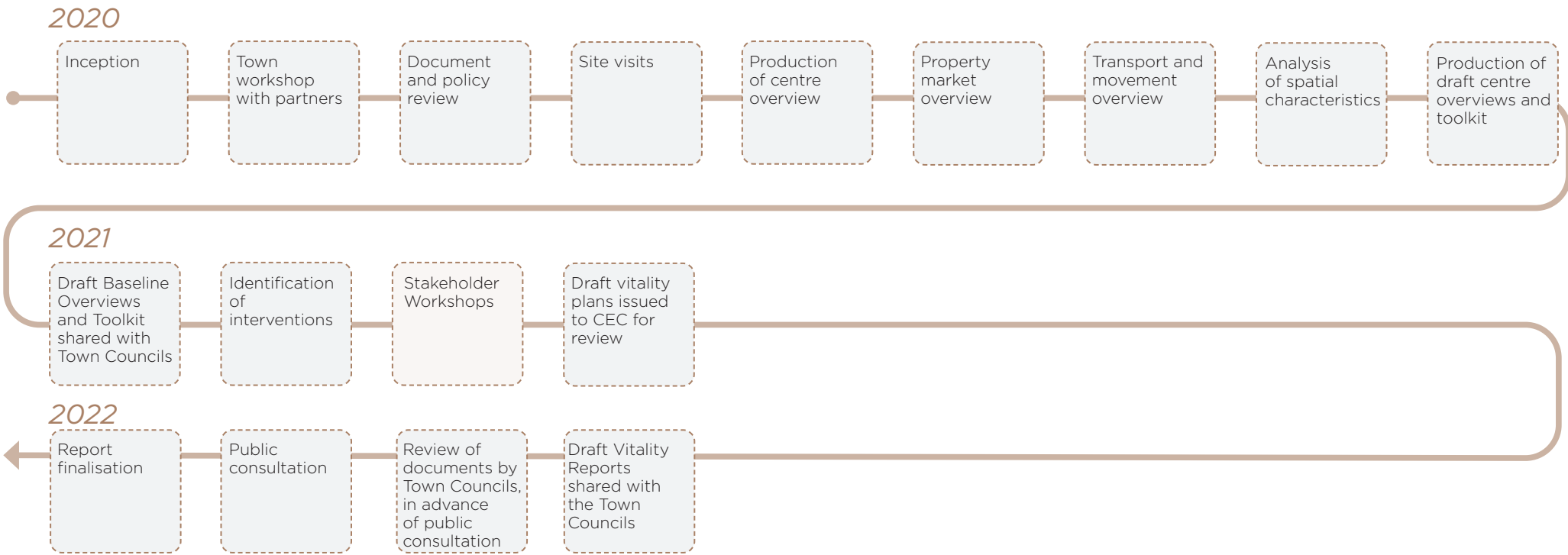
evidence and opinion in respect of the buildings, green and open spaces, access and its residents and businesses.

- 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.

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





# 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. 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 Sandbach

### Sandbach’s Location within Cheshire East

Sandbach is centrally located within the Cheshire East borough, 7 miles north of Crewe and 15 miles south of Macclesfield. The town’s proximity to the M6 provides excellent strategic road connectivity to Manchester, Manchester Airport, Birmingham and beyond. Sandbach Train Station is situated a mile from the town centre in Elworth village and has a regular daily service between Crewe and Manchester, via Manchester Airport allowing connections to London via the West Coast Main Line at Crewe. As such, the town enjoys good local, regional and national connectivity.

Sandbach is a small historical rural market town in an open countryside setting with a traditional ambiance and numerous historical buildings set within an attractive Conservation Area. The town is identified as a key service centre with the surrounding villages of Elworth and Wheelock forming part of the parish settlement. There is a strong aspiration to preserve the rural setting of Sandbach and the areas of separation and distinctiveness between its village settlements.

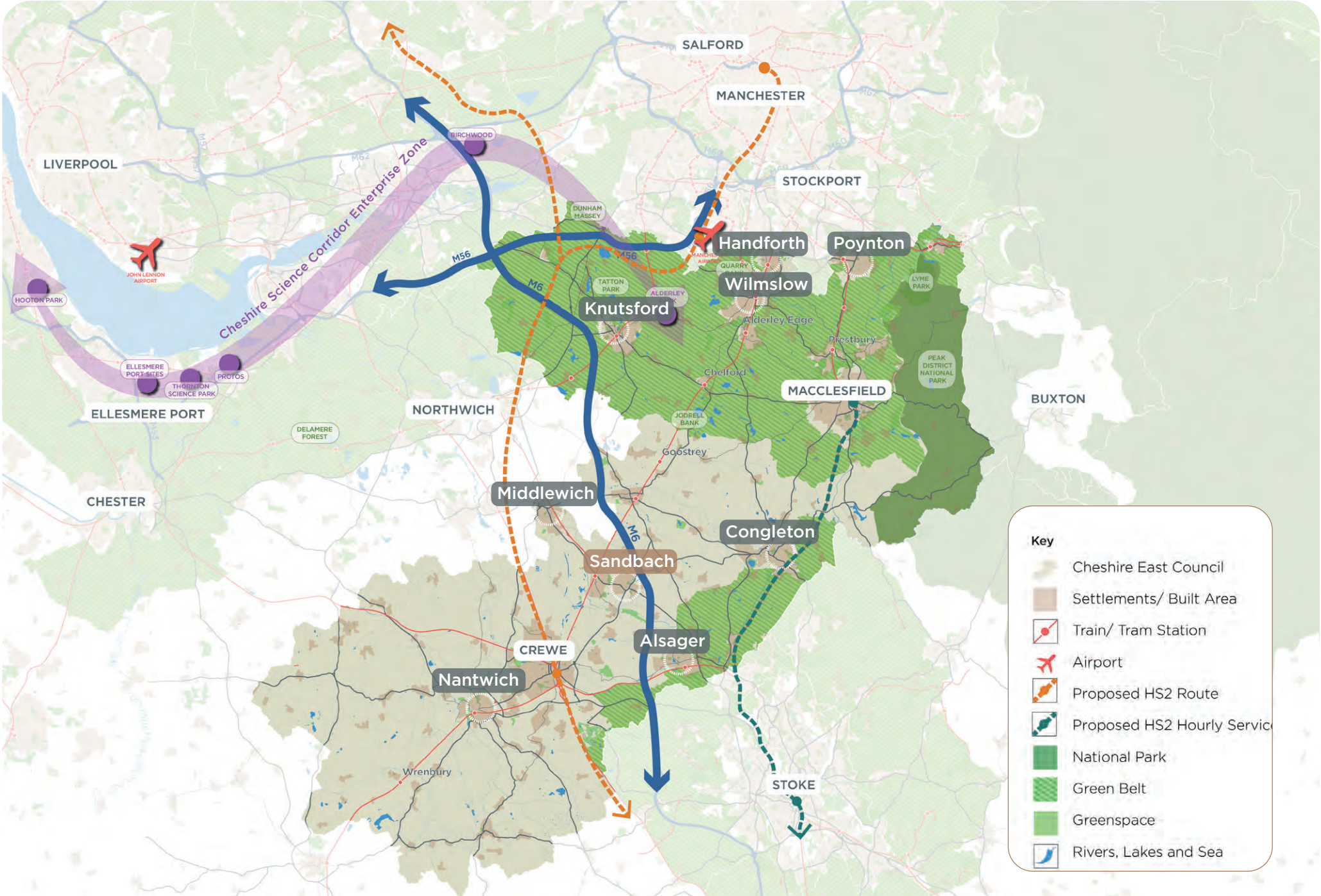
The town provides an attractive residential location offering easy commuting to employment destinations, set within open countryside surroundings and providing a vibrant historic town centre. As a result, Sandbach has witnessed significant housing growth much of which has been outside of the settlement boundary and/or on greenfield sites. Further housing development is proposed and there is concern over the ability for the town’s infrastructure including health, schools and highways to accommodate the increased demand from new housing. However, housing growth also presents an opportunity to support and expand town centre services and businesses.

Many of the homes in Sandbach are detached or semi-detached and there is a need to rebalance the housing offer away from additional family housing to provide more starter homes, affordable housing and homes for older people in order to meet local needs and changing demographics.

The main employment function is currently found on the western edge of the town at Springvale Industrial Estate in Ettiley village, with smaller employment areas in Wheelock village and business units in Elworth. Significant mixed use development is also underway at Capricorn Business Park adjacent to J17 of the M6 motorway which will provide 29 hectares of employment uses including a new business park, industrial, storage and distribution, supporting food, beverage and hospitality amenities, a sports facility and a local centre. The scheme is anticipated to enhance the town’s employment role, boost economic growth and reduce the strong prevalence of out-commuting.

Sandbach Town Centre is focused around High Street, Hightown, Congleton Road, Bold Street, Middlewich Road and The Cobbles. The town is characterised by attractive black-and-white and thatched buildings, and historical monuments, reflective of its heritage as a lively market town.

Strategic Context Plan





## 02 Introduction to Sandbach

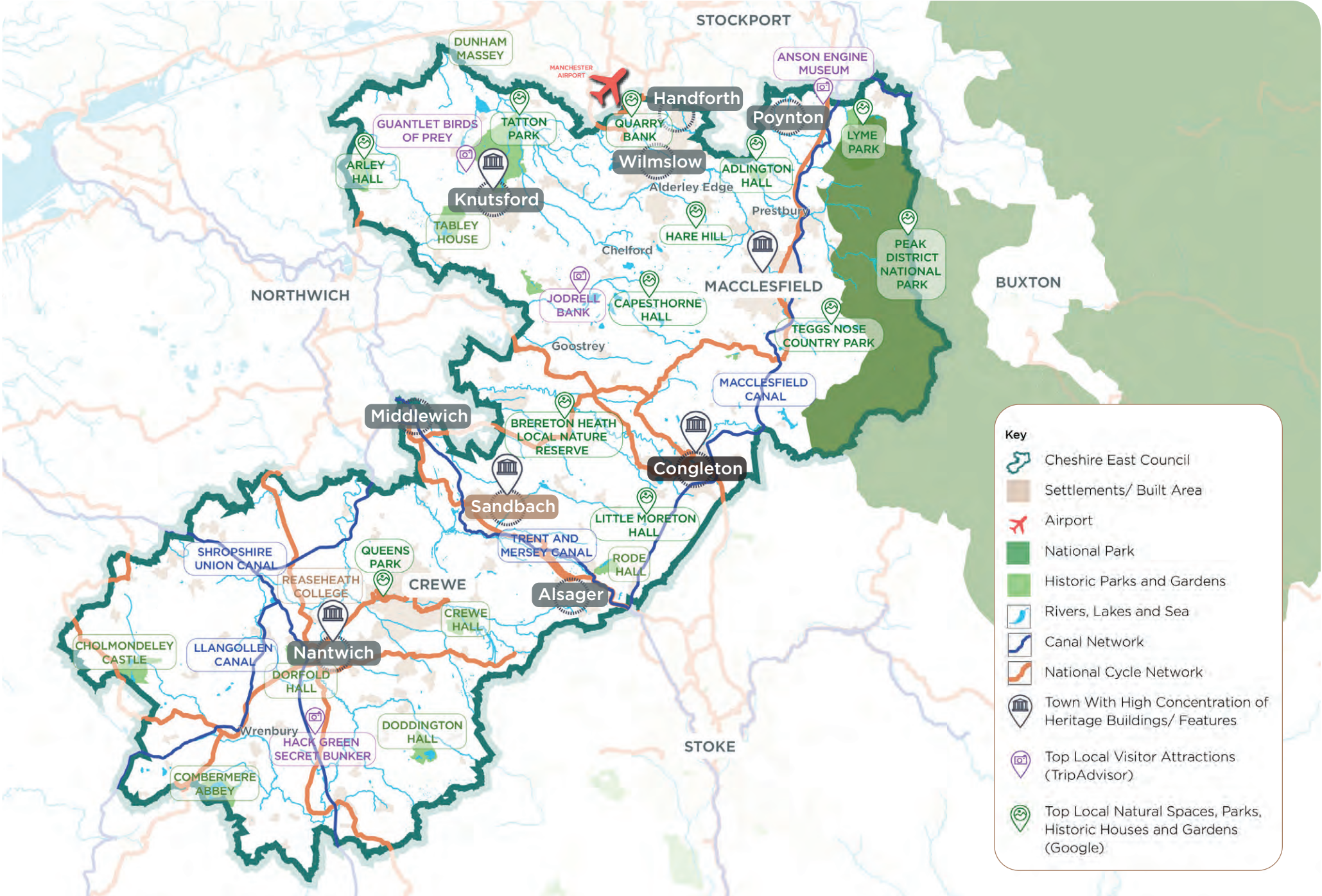
It benefits from a well-represented convenience retail offer including a Waitrose and Aldi supermarket and weekly Thursday Market on Scotch Common; together with a strong representation of independent retailers, food and beverage operators; and a low vacancy rate. The town also plays host to a range of regular events such as markets, farmers markets, festivals, open-air concerts and fairs. Sandbach has an important civic role with Cheshire East Council offices, a historic Town Hall which incorporates a community cinema and Sandbach Library.

Sandbach has a range of leisure, sports and social facilities and clubs. Sandbach Leisure Centre hosts an indoor sports hall, gym and swimming pool. Ettiley Heath has football pitches and an Academy. Sandbach also has a Golf Club, Rugby Club and a couple of Cricket Clubs.

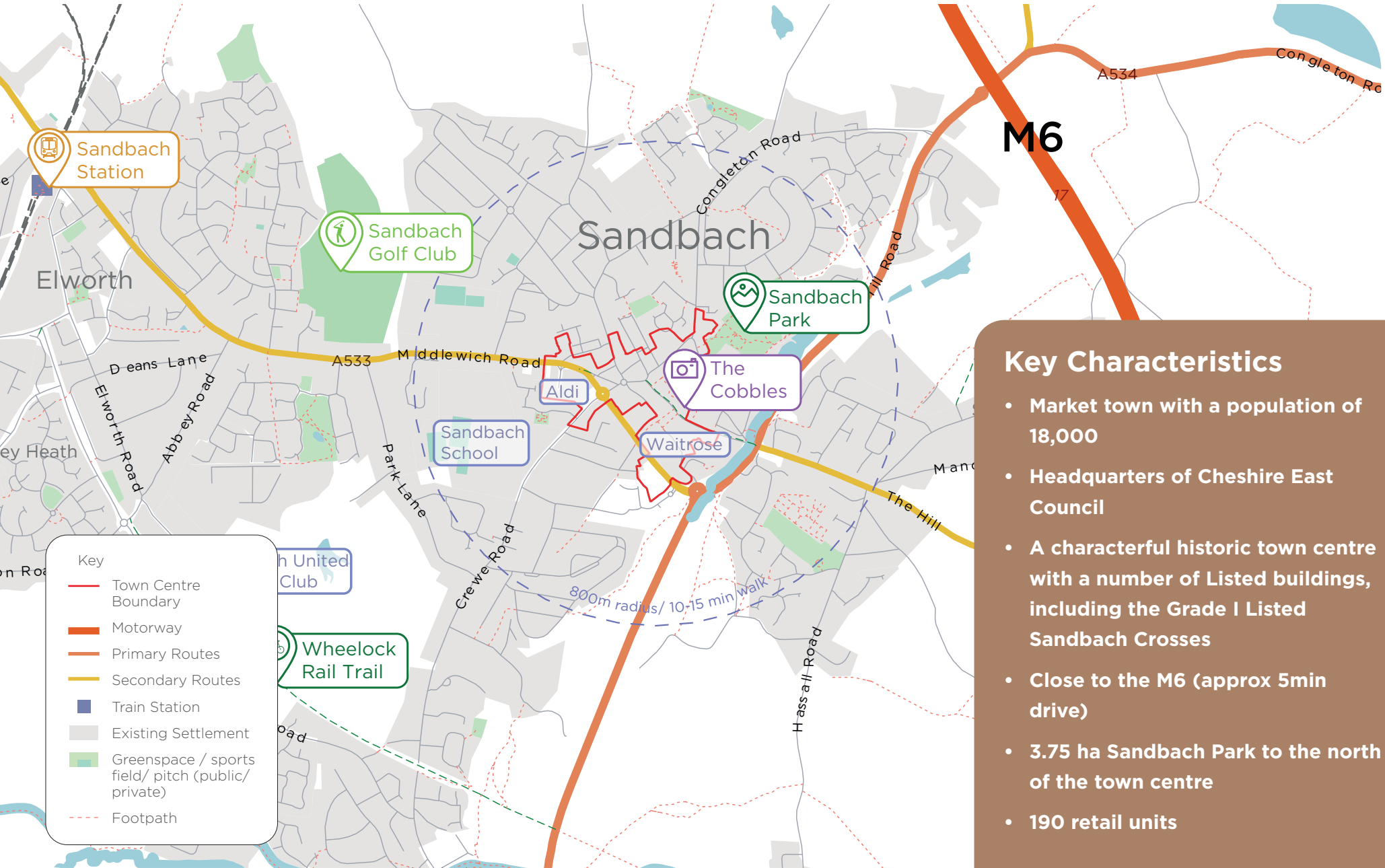
The 9 acre Sandbach Park immediately adjacent to the town centre provides an attractive and accessible open space with bowling greens, play areas, tennis courts and play areas. Slightly further afield, Wheelock Rail Trail and the Trent and Mersey Canal brings some visitors to the outskirts of the town. Beyond the villages that make up Sandbach is open countryside and much used public rights of way.



### Strategic Connections and Assets Plan







## Sandbach Neighbourhood Plan Vision and Objectives

The Sandbach Neighbourhood Development Plan was proactively prepared by the Sandbach Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group, comprising members of Sandbach Town Council and the local community. The Plan was adopted in April 2016 and identifies the following vision and overarching aims:

### Vision

“Over the Plan period, Sandbach will continue to be a distinctive rural parish, whilst evolving and expanding in a way that respects and reflects the views of the community. It will retain its distinctive character of a rural market town formed by villages intersected by open countryside. There will be a wide range of community facilities and businesses that will both expand and prosper within an attractive environment. Current and future generations will enjoy a strong sense of community, a high quality of life, and a flourishing natural environment”

### Aims

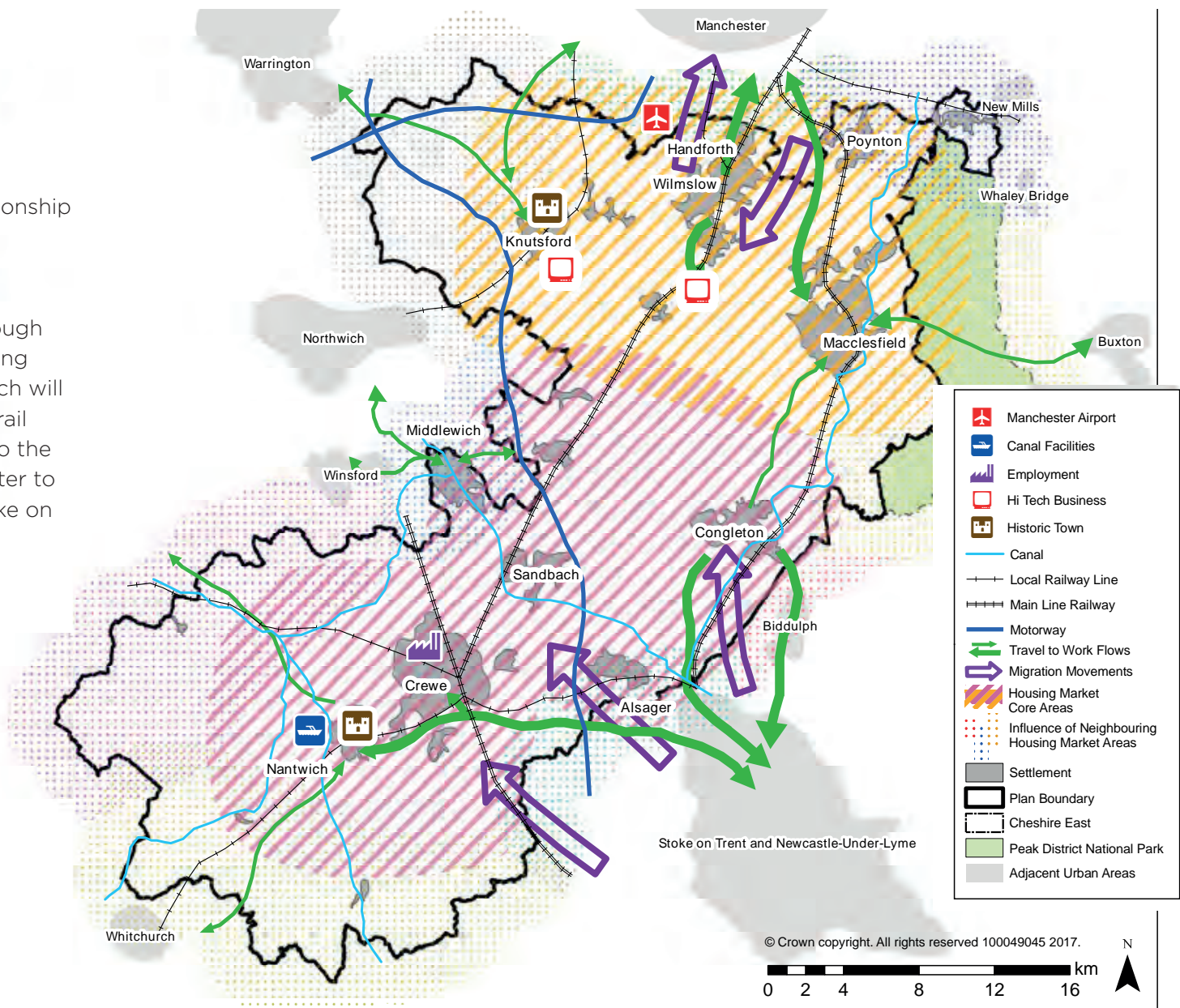
- **Protecting the Countryside** - To protect and enhance the open countryside setting of Sandbach including its Local Green Gaps, green spaces, canals, amenity land and wildlife areas
- **Preserving Heritage and Character** - To preserve and enhance the heritage and character of the Parish of Sandbach
- **Managing Housing Supply** - The Sandbach Plan housing policies are designed to provide a framework which will enable the parish of Sandbach to grow at a sustainable rate which will satisfy the identified future local housing need during the Plan period. The Plan does not attempt to establish an appropriate level of future housing or employment growth or identify specific sites to accommodate future growth, rather it focuses on how new development will be managed, relying primarily on existing permissions and future windfall proposals on sustainable sites to cater for future needs, together with any subsequent allocations made through the Cheshire East Local Plan
- **Promoting Local Economy and Jobs** - To promote and maintain a thriving local economy to ensure that jobs and enterprise opportunities are available for local people of all ages. There will be a strong customer base for retail and hospitality businesses, enabling the community to maintain a prosperous town centre
- **Improving the Infrastructure** - To develop a safe, efficient and sustainable transport system that contributes to the social, environmental and economic well-being of the residents, businesses and visitors to Sandbach. To provide equal opportunity for everyone to access key services whilst maximising the use of ‘green’ alternatives to vehicular movements
- **Community and Well-Being** - To protect and maintain existing community amenities, buildings, facilities and services throughout Sandbach. New services and facilities should be added as appropriate in the future
- **Adapting to Climate Change** - To encourage sustainable development and moves towards a low-carbon economy, which includes high standards of energy conservation and the use of renewable energy; and to encourage better use of green infrastructure assets such as ponds, swales and wetlands which will not only meet local green space needs but also address existing and/or future surface water/ climate change issues



# 03 Policy Context

## Cheshire East Local Plan

The plan opposite identifies the functional relationship that Sandbach has with other centres through connectivity and proximity within and beyond Cheshire East. It highlights Sandbach’s central positioning within the southern part of the borough and its proximity to Crewe, a key driver of housing and employment growth in the North West which will be driven by the arrival of HS2. Good road and rail connectivity also illustrate strong connections to the adjoining borough’s of Cheshire West and Chester to the west and the Staffordshire boroughs of Stoke on Trent and Newcastle Under Lyme to the south.



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

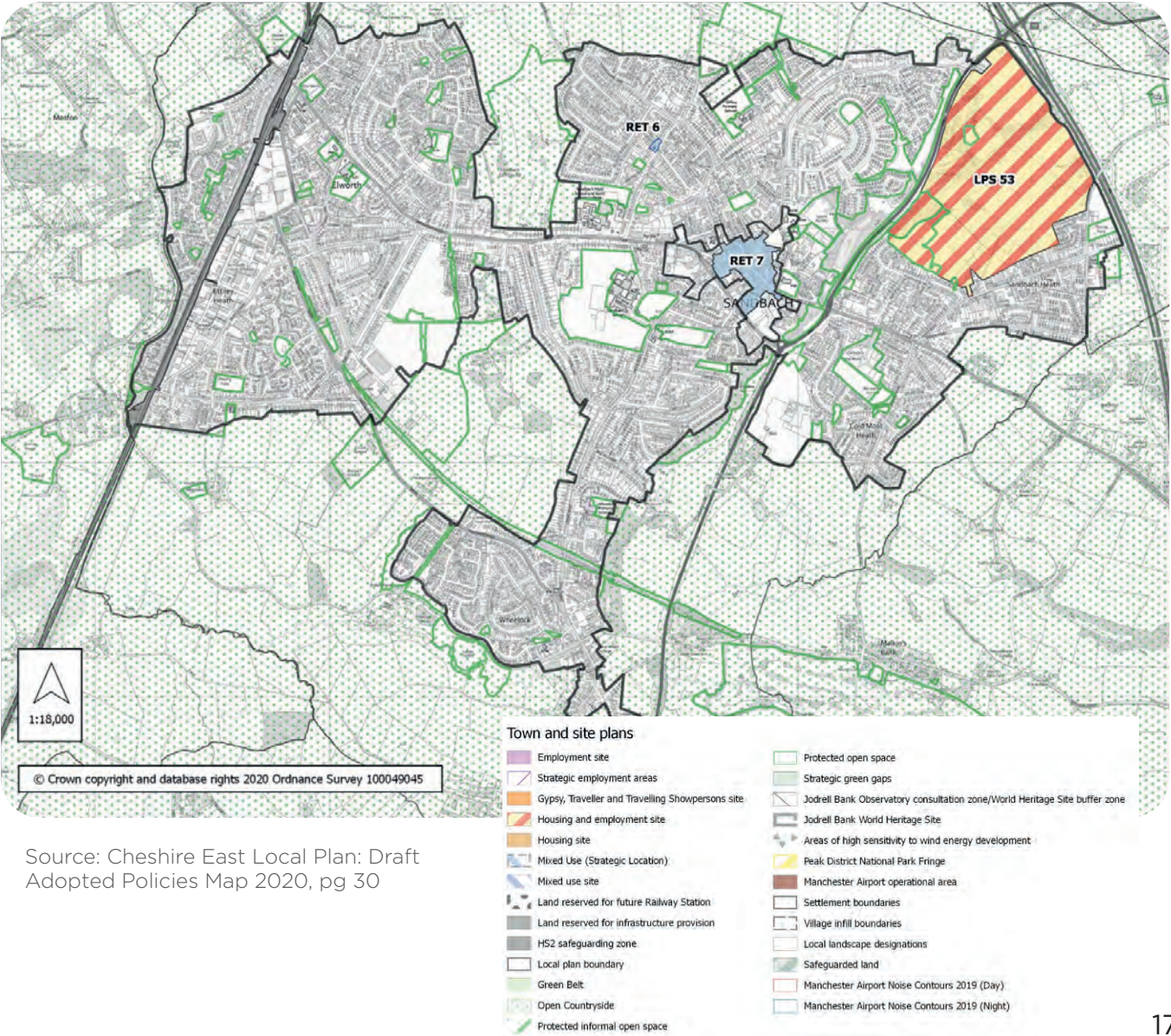
## Local Plan Strategy 2017 (LPS) and Revised Publication Draft Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD) 2020

The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy was adopted in 2017 setting strategic development sites around the borough. The 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 both Local Plan Strategy sites in and around Sandbach and draft allocations in the SADPD.

Sandbach is identified as a key service centre within the town centre hierarchy. Sandbach and the neighbouring village of Elworth are surrounded on all sides by open countryside.

Key sites close to the town centre which have been allocated for development include:

- LPS 53 ‘Land Adjacent to J17 of M6’ to the north east of the town centre, which can accommodate 450 homes and 20 hectares of employment land (B1 and B2), plus retail and leisure uses
- 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, pg 30



## Sandbach Neighbourhood Development Plan 2010-2030, January 2016

The Sandbach Neighbourhood Development Plan was prepared by the Sandbach Neighbourhood Development Plan Working Group and adopted in April 2016. The Group was made up of skilled and enthusiastic members of Sandbach Town Council and volunteer residents who actively engaged with the local community resulting in a referendum result of Yes 96%, No 4%.

The plan can be accessed at: <https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/neighbourhood-plan/sandbach-ndp-modified-plan.pdf>

The Neighbourhood Development Plan forms an important document in informing and encouraging positive development within Sandbach and will be used to influence individual planning decisions as they come forward.

The report specifies -

- A need to protect the town centre and viability of the shops and services throughout the town, which are one of the town’s strongest assets, whilst preserving and enhancing its appearance and conservation area which is fundamental to the traditional market town ‘feel’.

- There is a lack of car parking facilities in the town centre to serve both the medical centre and shopping areas.
- More speed reduction measures are required throughout the town.
- Need for housing suitable for an ageing population
- Policies relevant to the town centre include:
  - POLICY HC2 - Change of use for ground floors to Class A5 hot food takeaway will be resisted where the proportion of units in A5 use exceeds 10% of the total number of units
  - POLICY HC3 - Shopfronts and signage is expected to preserve a traditional appearance (as defined in the Sandbach Town Council Street Signage Design Policy
  - POLICY HC4 - Development and expansion of viable outdoor and indoor markets will be supported
  - POLICY JLE3 - Alterations and improvements to Market Hall should take into account the need to sustain and enhance the heritage asset of Sandbach Town Hall

A review of the Neighbourhood Plan took place in May 2021 and can be found here: <https://sandbach.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Sandbach-NDP-Phase-2-Reg14-draft.pdf>



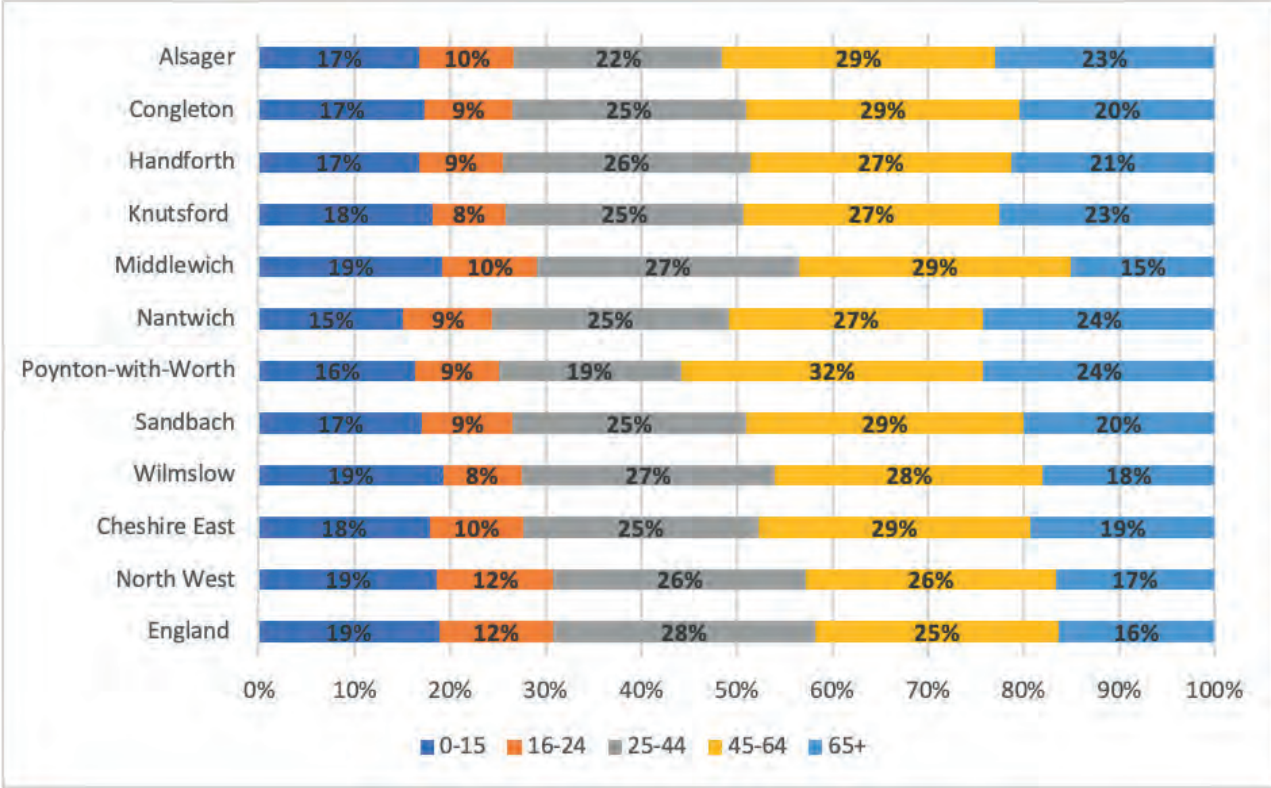


Age

The 2011 Census data indicates that the Sandbach parish area had a population of 17,976 residents representing 4.9% of Cheshire East’s total population (370,127). Sandbach’s age profile is very similar to that of Cheshire East with a quarter of the population (25%) within the most economically active 25 to 44 year old age group.

Sandbach has a fairly mid-range average (mean) age compared to the other 9 KSCs at 42.5 years old, however this is higher than the Cheshire East figure (42) and the wider geographies of the North West (40) and England (39).

It is anticipated that when the 2021 Census data is available it should show an increase in younger residents given the number of family homes that have been delivered in the area over the last decade.



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 Cheshire East is predominantly white at 96.7% which is a higher proportion than the wider geographies of the North West (90.2%) and England (85.4%).The vast majority of the population in Sandbach is also white (98.1%) – one of the least ethnically diverse of the Cheshire East KSCs with just 349 people from none white ethnic groups.

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%
<b>Sandbach</b>	<b>98.1%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>
Wilmslow	92.6%	1.7%	4.4%	0.5%	0.7%
Cheshire East	96.7%	1.0%	1.6%	0.4%	0.2%
North West	90.2%	1.6%	6.2%	1.4%	0.6%
England	85.4%	2.3%	7.8%	3.5%	1.0%

Population by Ethnic Group  
Source: Census 2011, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres

Occupational Profile

At the time of the 2011 Census, a similar proportion of Sandbach residents were employed in higher order occupations including ‘managers, directors and senior officials’ (12.6%) and ‘professional occupations’ (19.9%) to that of Cheshire East, representing a higher rate than the wider regional and national benchmarks.

Conversely, just 15.6% were engaged in manual or elementary occupations – lower than the Cheshire East rate of 16.7%, together with that of the North West (19.8%) and England (18.3%). The occupational structure of Sandbach suggests a skilled workforce, which will in turn attract businesses (who want to attract highly skilled employees) seeking to locate in the borough.



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

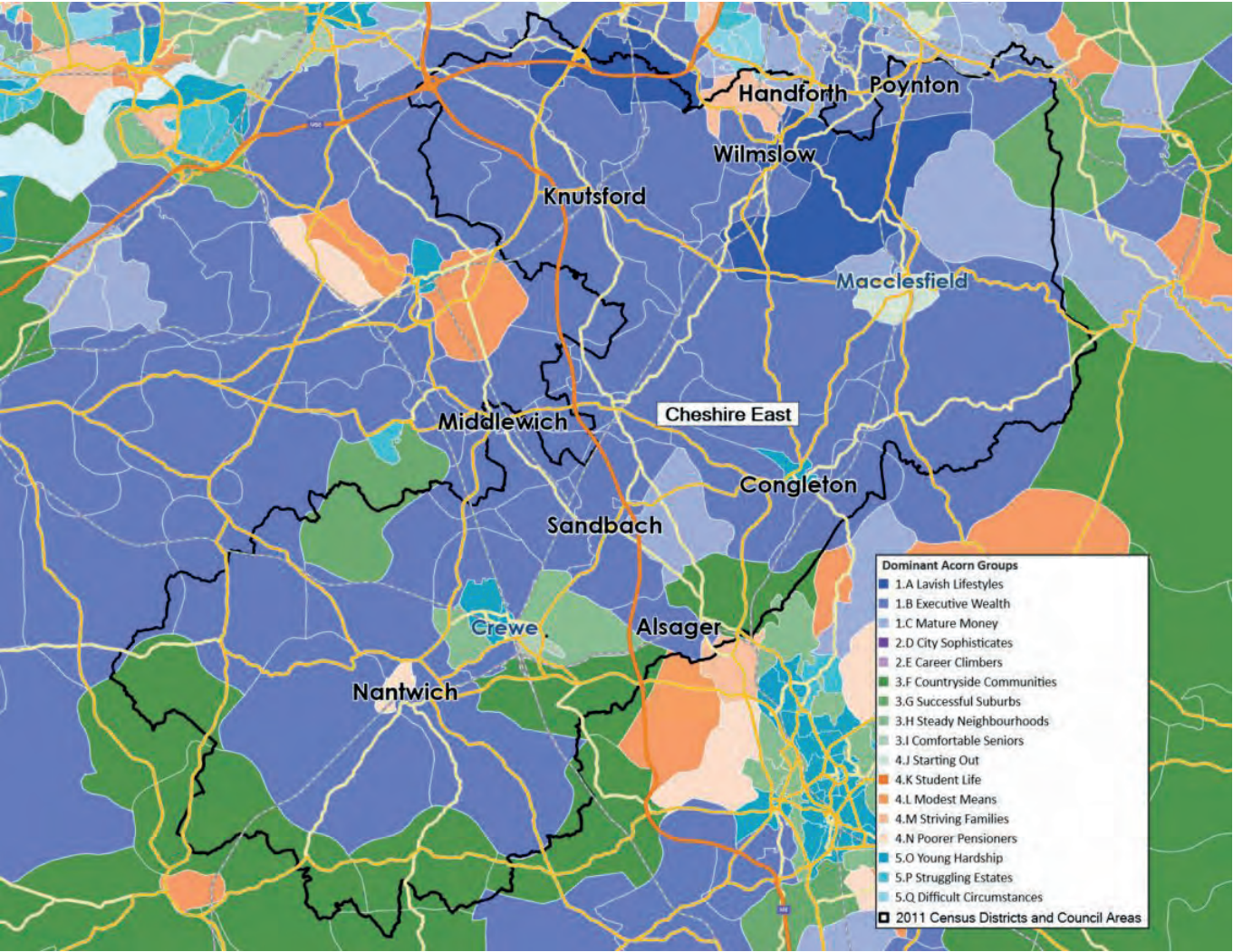
Occupational Profile  
Source: Census 2011  
\*Wilmslow BUA includes Alderly Edge and Handforth  
Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres



### 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. The dominant Acorn group in Sandbach is Executive Wealth (Affluent professionals with families living in large homes) with some Mature Money (Older more wealthy residents in rural/semi-rural locations) to the east of the town.

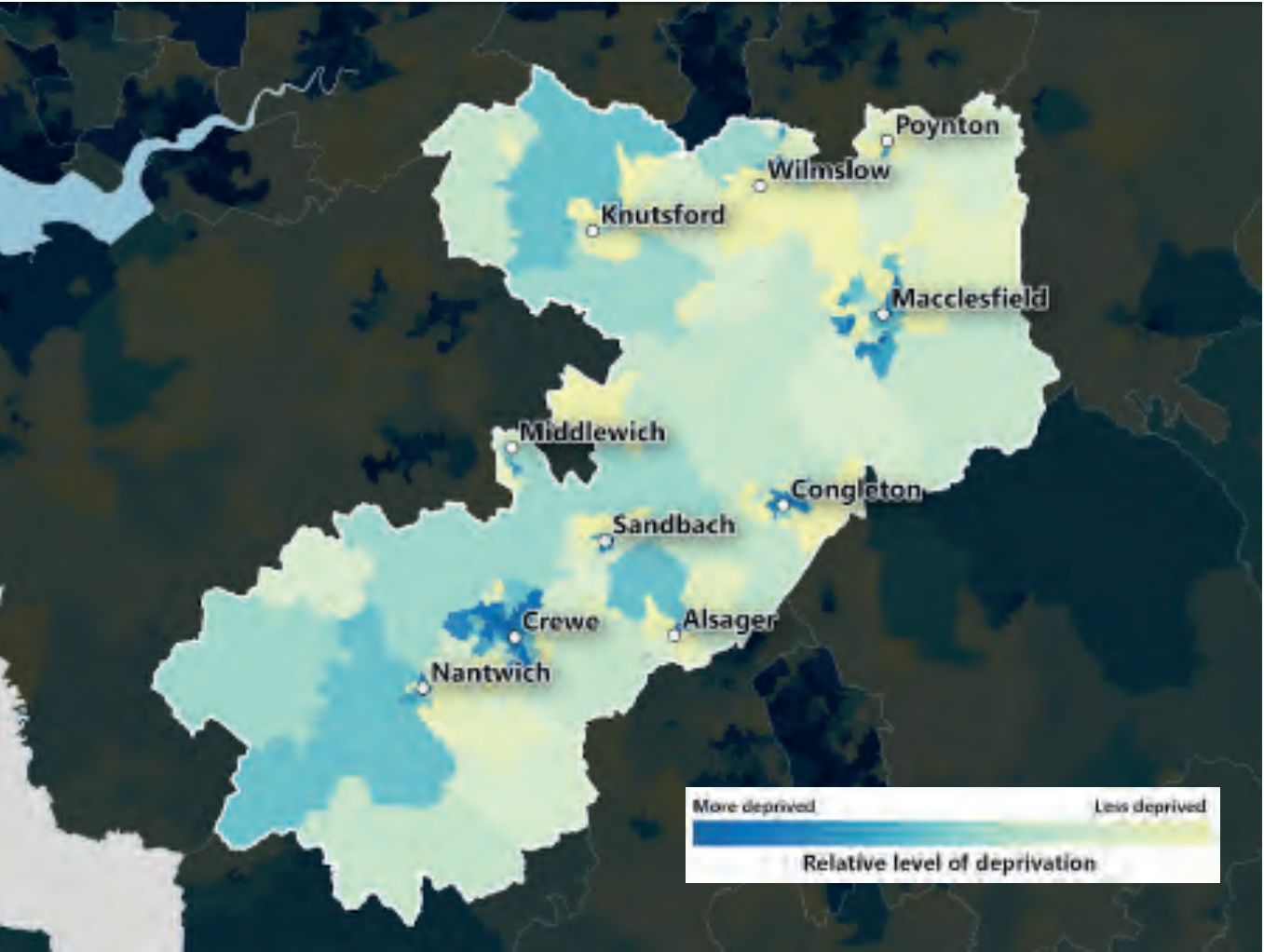
- Dominant Age Groups
- 1. A Lavish Lifestyles
- 1. B Executive Wealth
- 1. C Mature Money
- 2. D City Sophisticates
- 2. E Career Climbers
- 3. F Countryside Communities
- 3. G Successful Suburbs
- 3. H Steady Neighbourhoods
- 3. I Comfortable Seniors
- 4. J Starting Out
- 4. K Student Life
- 4. L Modest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



CACI Acorn Classifications  
Source: CACI

### 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 Sandbach is within the 20% least deprived areas of deprivation nationally.



Source: MHCLG, IMD 2019



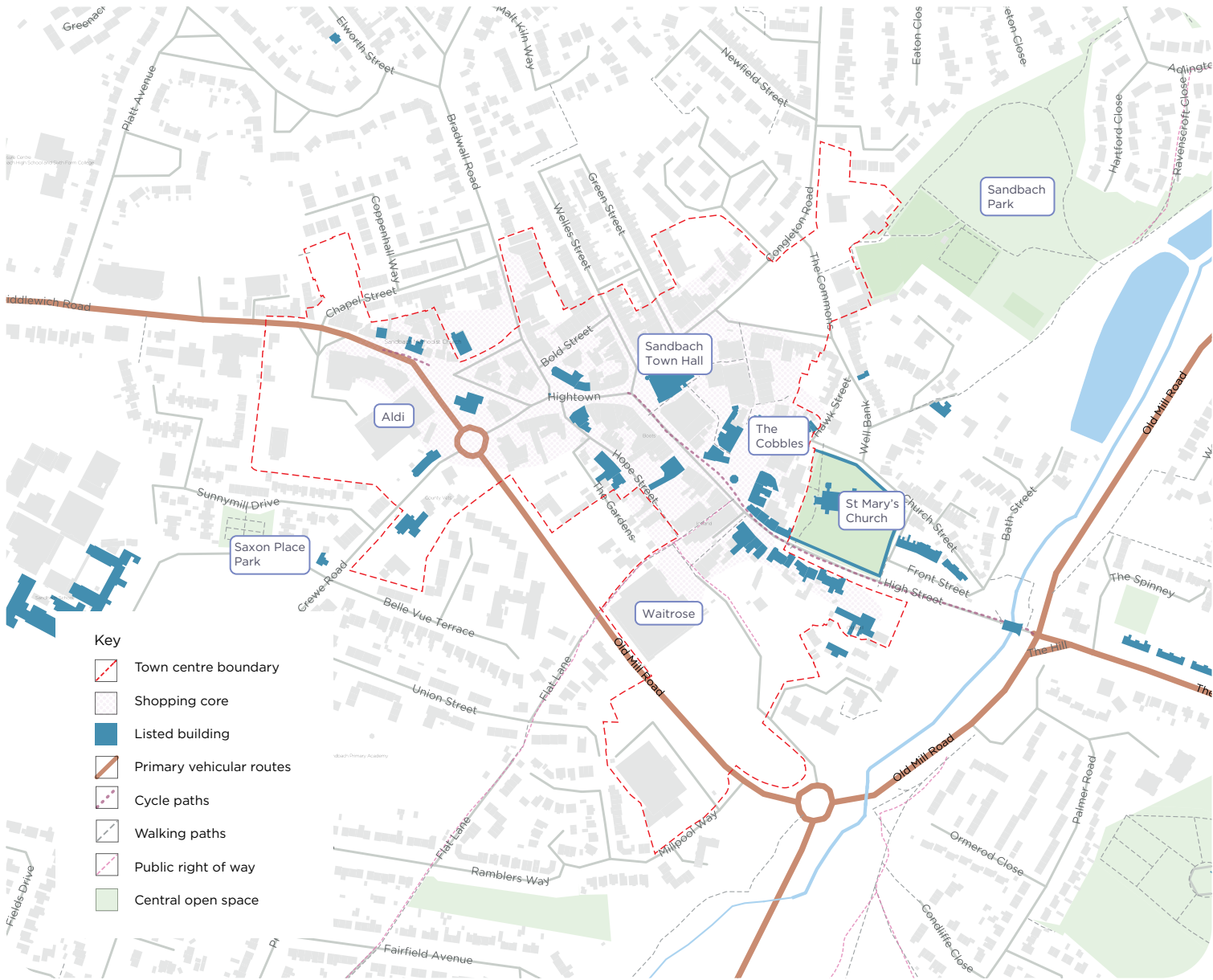
## Local Context

Sandbach is located within a mile (4-5 minute drive) of the M6. Sandbach Train Station is located in the village of Elworth, a 25-30 minute walk west of the town centre.

Sandbach is located within the Cheshire Plain, which consists of salt related landscapes, and the surrounding area is typical of Cheshire (flat/rolling) farmland and woodland.

Within the town centre there are a number of traditional style buildings. The centre of the town has a cobbled square and houses ancient Saxon Crosses.

There is evidence of historic salt brine pumping. Brine extraction without replacement and the existence of a number of underlying brine runs, means that significant areas of the parish are potentially subject to ongoing ground movements.



## 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 October and September 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 12th September 2020	Wednesday 28th October 2020
Time of day:	12-1pm	3-4pm
Weather:	Sunny, dry, clouds	Sunny, drizzle
Mode of transport:	Car	Car
Covid lockdown status:	Eased Lockdown Restrictions	Three Tier Restrictions in Place

Quality of the place

- Historic town with a range of attractive listed heritage assets
- Busy at time of first visit (Saturday afternoon)
- Strong sense of history and medieval character



People

- Visit on Saturday coincided with Artisan Market in town square - very busy with people visiting the market and visiting shops, pubs, cafés
- Chatty stall holders
- Cyclists stopping and passing through



Sense of Community

- Strong sense of community on market days with local residents and stall holders using their town centre
- Sandbach Park had local families and teenagers using the space in the early evening
- Some civic buildings were closed due to Covid during our site visits but they were advertising events and inviting people in to explore and use, particularly the Town Hall
- Flowers and planters well kept





Accessibility

- Train station 25 min walk away from centre
- Free parking at Scotch Common - large car park, but busy
- Entry into town dominated by highways and roundabouts - The A553 forms an infrastructure barrier along the southern extents of the town centre
- Road markings and signage suggests priority for cyclists towards eastern end of High Street
- Lack of coherent routes around the back of the Market and Town Hall, dark, narrow shopping precinct, but active ground floor windows help



Gateways

- Series of roundabouts framed by historic buildings enhance sense of arrival, but the environment is still car / highways dominated - it is difficult to move comfortably and fairly directly to the centre as a pedestrian
- The Cobbles area, accessed from High Street is full of character and a significant central gathering space. The cobbled square is framed by a variety of listed and attractive heritage buildings and is a key gateway to the town
- Gateway from Middlewich Road confusing for pedestrians where A533 re-routes at Crewe Road roundabout





Housing

- Smaller houses integrated into centre
- Signs of apartments and conversions under construction
- Apartments above ground floor retail uses creates some higher density accommodation within the town centre
- Residential areas within immediate walking distance of centre



Wayfinding

- Good signage
- Consistent style which respects the historic townscape character in locations
- Signage to community anchors such as the Library and Sandbach Park could be improved



Attractions

- Indoor market and monthly Artisan market busy (even during Covid restrictions)
- Variety of independent and chain stores
- Sandbach Park, which offers a huge variety of outdoor uses for a number of age groups
- The historic setting and history of the town in itself could be considered an attraction and reason to visit
- Sandbach Leisure Centre located to the western edge of the Town Centre but is less accessible by foot / cycle





Amenities

- Library by entry to Sandbach Park
- Waitrose and Aldi
- Other national chain retailers are present such as Costa Coffee and Domino’s pizza
- Markets selling fresh produce
- Cheshire East Council offices
- Wesley Community Centre



Sense of a Centre

- The Cobbles/Market Square area feels like a natural centre, with regular outdoor markets, spill out space and monuments
- From the west, visitors are drawn through a series of interesting spaces, framed by historic buildings - around Hightown Drinking Fountain, the front of the Market Hall and into the Cobbles
- The historic town centre is very compact and walkable (extents of the town centre can be reached within a 10 minute walk), but more recent development does not follow desire lines and may require crossing busy roads (e.g. Aldi, Waitrose, Sandbach Library)





Character

- Very much a market town feel, retaining historic identity and an intact historic core which is the focus of the town’s place character
- Well kept shops, with products displayed outside on occasion, drawing footfall and creating variety
- High quality building stock and variety of historic buildings including Elizabethan and Tudor style
- Strong building line down main shopping parade
- Shops spill into side streets, creating sense that centre is larger than it is



Public Realm

- Public realm treatments around the ‘The Cobbles’ town square add to the historic character and enhance space for pedestrians (as well as slowing down vehicles)
- Block paving quite consistent in other parts of the centre, but more recent materials have been added which support vehicles and detract from clear, good quality paved pedestrian routes



Green space

- Sandbach Park larger than expected and well kept, but feels disconnected from Town Centre
- The entrance to the park from the town could be improved - it is currently constrained by the library building and adjacent access to the Fire Station





**Derelict Sites**

- A few vacant units in the town centre
- Signs of contraction of high street along secondary streets leaving some derelict units as businesses close
- Opportunities for residential conversions
- Few derelict sites within proximity to the Town Centre

Update 2021: Since the site visit in 2020, the units circled below have now been occupied: the former Debra Shop on Bold Street is under refurbishment as a health clinic, Cubar on the High street is now up and running and the former takeaway on Congleton Road is undergoing refurbishment.





Positive Features

Positive spatial elements are identified on the plan:

- Key
- Local centre boundary
  - Local street network
  - Primary vehicular route
  - Arrival destinations (car parks/ train stations/ bus stops)
  - Key pedestrian links
  - Positive arrival experience
  - Anchor retail locations
  - Anchor open space / recreational areas
  - Open space / recreational areas
  - Wildlife Corridor/ walking route
  - Areas with a concentration of F&B uses
  - Areas with a concentration of retail uses
  - Well defined building frontages with active ground floor uses
  - Buildings of historic or townscape quality that help reinforce character
  - Local businesses within close proximity to the town centre
  - Local residential areas within immediate proximity to the town centre
  - 400m radius from centre (approx 5 minutes walk)



1 Independent shops activate ground floor spaces with produce and displays



2 Town square - The Cobbles offers a unique, flexible space for events and partly lined with outdoor eating space and monuments - Sandbach Crosses



3 Inviting indoor market



4 Series of spaces anchored by high quality historic buildings create an impressive arrival into the town, but dominated by highway infrastructure

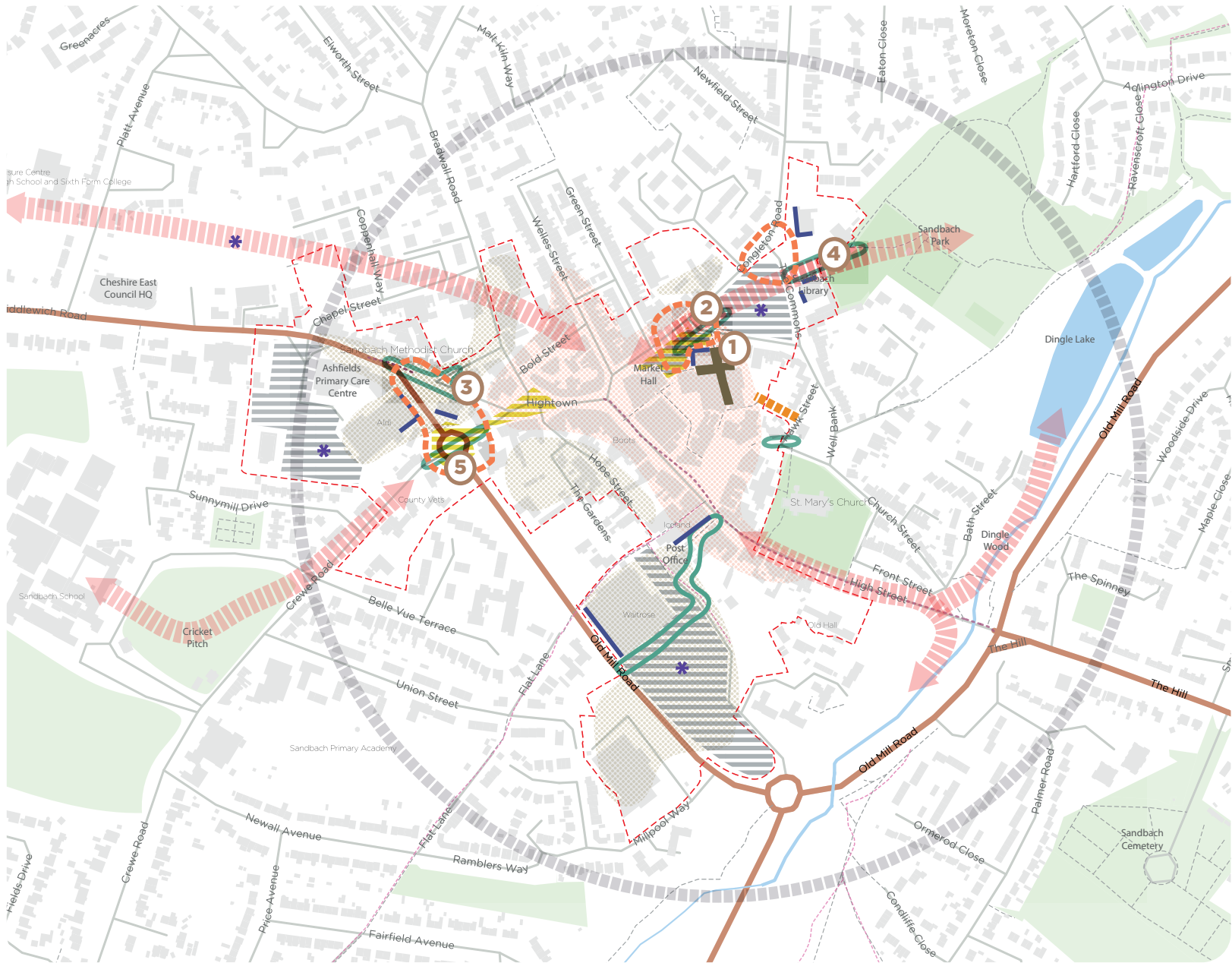




Negative Features

Negative spatial elements are identified on the plan:

- Key
- Local centre boundary
- 
- Local street network



1 Dated pedestrianised section along Pendle Way funnels pedestrians from Scotch Common



2 Car parking dominates area behind the Market Hall, reducing the experience and creating a low quality setting for the outdoor market and confusing routes for pedestrians



3 Some vacant shop units across the town centre



4 Sandbach Park is hidden behind the Fire Station and Library, with pedestrian permeability confused by Fire Station access.



5 Middlewich Road highway infrastructure is difficult to cross and dominates the space



## Summary of Spatial Elements

The tables below and on the following page identify the key positive and negative spatial attributes for the town centre:

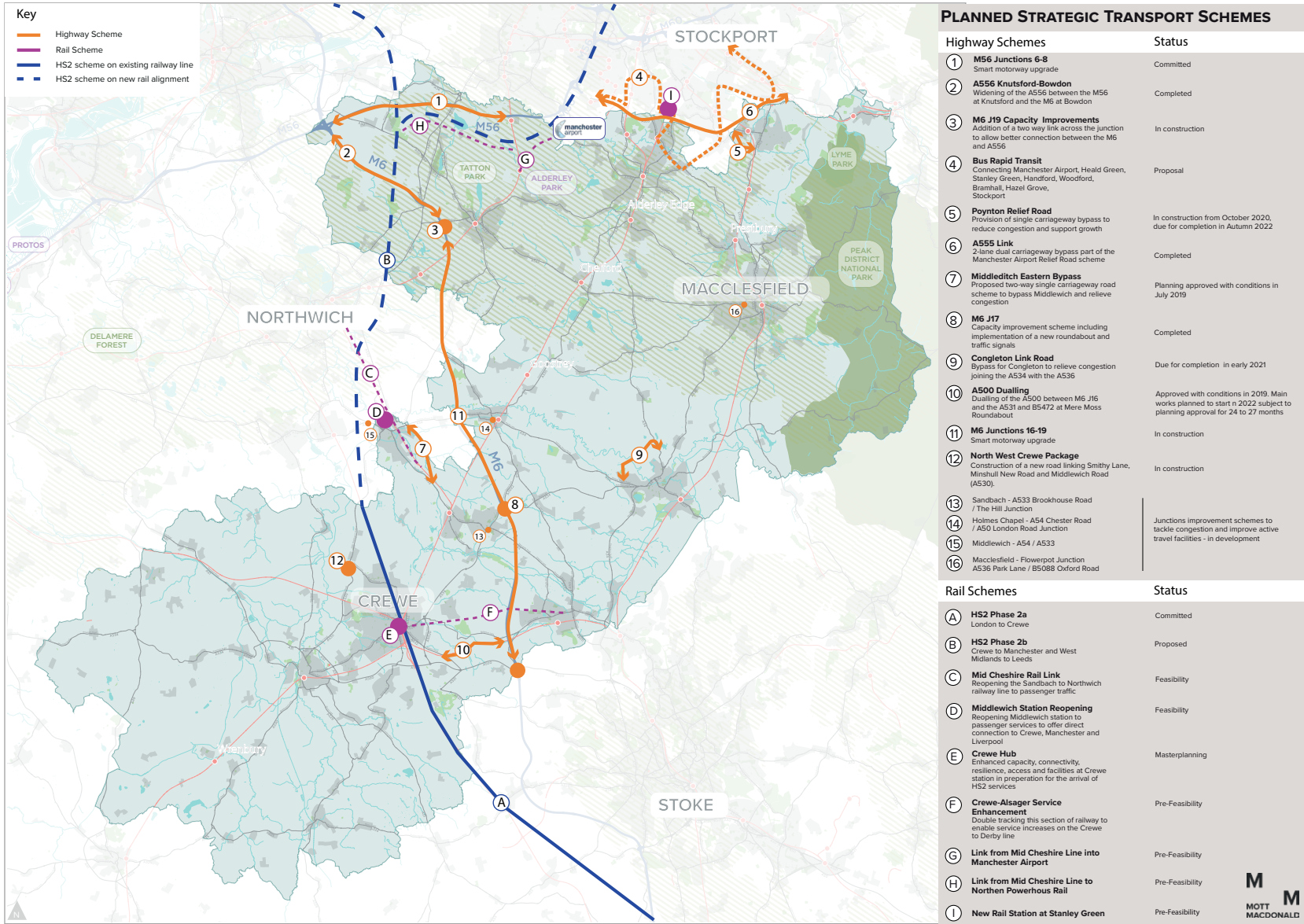
Public Realm	Gateways	Open Space	Heritage	Townscape Quality	Legibility
Positives					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Cobbled area around square and on High Street helps to define central space and frame heritage buildings</li><li>Well used public spaces - thriving Artisan market on The Cobbles, even during Covid partial lockdown</li><li>The space outside Market Hall is well used with stalls to attract trade and footfall</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Historic street patterns and large heritage buildings help define key gateways into the town centre, particularly from the east</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sandbach Park is a diverse and well maintained large public park within walking distance of the centre</li><li>Trees along High Street, in St Mary's Church graveyard and opposite gardens in the Old Hall add interest at the eastern end of the town centre</li><li>The wildlife corridor (along Old Mill Road) is in close proximity to the Park and offers a green route into the town</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Well maintained Elizabethan buildings. Town Council and Market Hall building are impressive heritage buildings at key gateways</li><li>In addition to significant listed buildings and statues there are also areas of intact heritage townscape which help reinforce the visual character of the Town Centre</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Distinct market town with large historic buildings</li><li>Unique series of spaces defined by historic building pattern and ending in a picturesque market square 'The Cobbles' housing the Sandbach Crosses</li><li>Change in levels around St Mary's Church compliments areas of historic townscape</li><li>Some recent infill development works with the existing heritage context</li><li>The immediately adjacent terraced residential streets contribute to the townscape character</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Well defined shopping street along High Street, draws visitors toward The Cobbles square</li></ul>

Public Realm	Gateways	Open Space	Heritage	Townscape Quality	Legibility
Negatives					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Disjointed public realm materials across the Town Centre overall make parts of the centre feel disconnected from others</li><li>Large areas of open surface car parking disrupt desire lines to some important surrounding community assets</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Gateways to the west of the town centre are heavily dominated by vehicular infrastructure and movements into the town</li><li>Gateways from Scotch Common car park to High Street are dominated by parking</li><li>Limited opportunities for dwell time to the west and north of the Town Centre</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Access to Sandbach Park is constrained by Fire Station</li><li>Lack of links to St Mary's Wood, Dingle Wood and watercourse to the east of the town centre</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Setting of some historic buildings dominated by cars meaning it is difficult to admire buildings if there is traffic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Tight urban grain falls away to the back of the Market Hall</li><li>The town centre and Sandbach Park, which are key attractors, lack clear pedestrian connections between them</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Routes from Scotch Common to High Street are confusing around the back of the Market Hall</li><li>Routes from Middlewich Road to Wesley Avenue are dominated by vehicular traffic and it is not clear where the shopping area ends around Wesley Avenue/ Bradwall Road</li></ul>

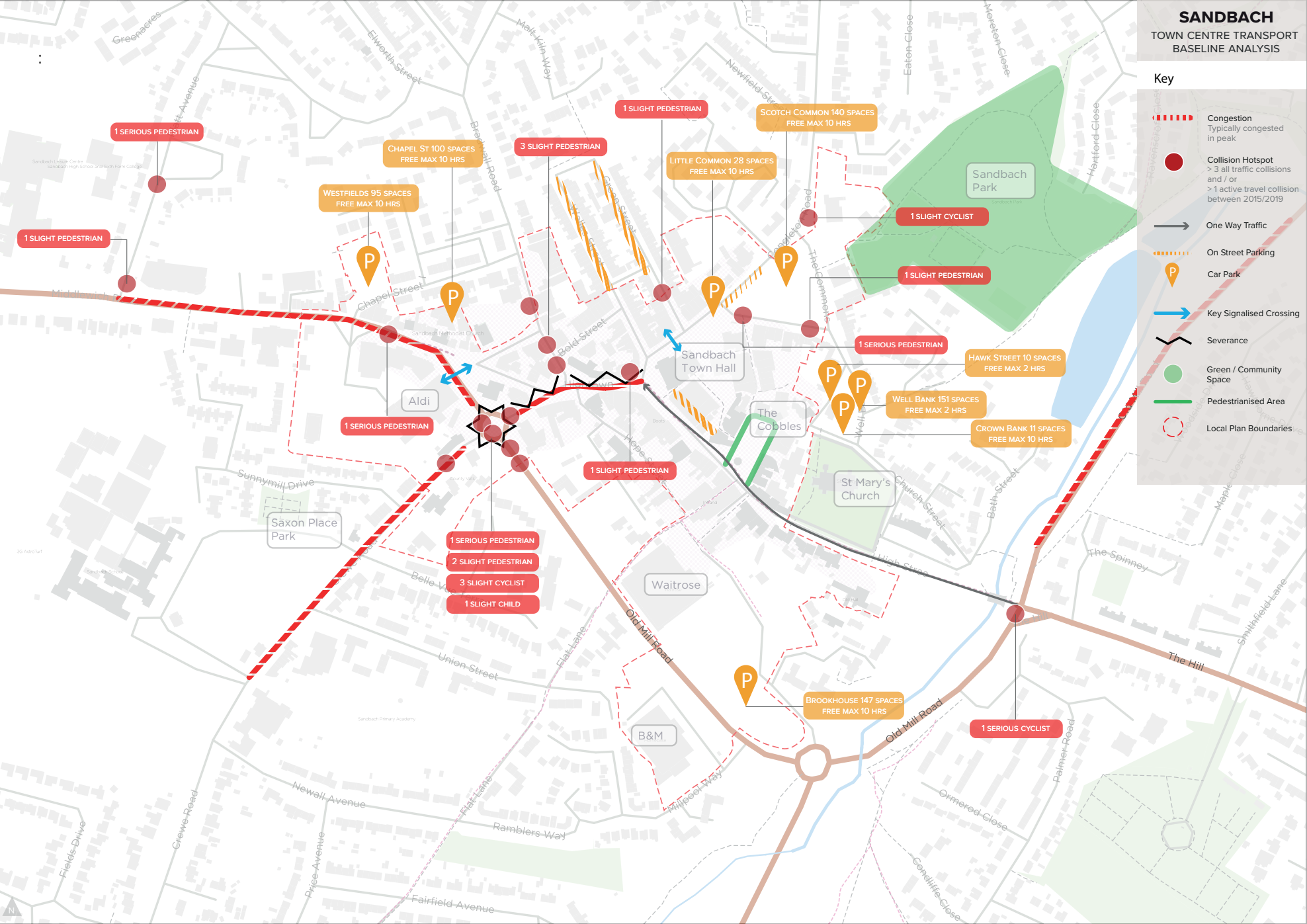


# 06 Connectivity and Accessibility

Sandbach is located directly adjacent to the M6 Junction 17 and is therefore well positioned on the strategic road network, offering direct highway connectivity to Warrington, Wigan and Preston to the north and Stafford and Birmingham to the south. However, stakeholders have also identified this as a major threat due to the amount of through-traffic this generates on key routes through the town. Sandbach Railway Station provides hourly stopping services to Manchester and Liverpool as well as two services per hour to Crewe for most of the week. Sandbach is located around 10-minutes drive from Crewe Station, which is a major strategic rail hub providing faster direct connections to both Liverpool and Manchester.



Sandbach Planned Strategic Transport Schemes



Sandbach Transport Baseline Analysis



Car Parking

Car parking across Sandbach is predominantly made up of six free long stay off-street car parks which are located in close proximity to the town centre. On-street parking provision is also provided along Congleton Road with provision of disabled parking bays along High Street. Connectivity between car parks and the key areas of the town centre should however be considered as routes are currently unclear and require pedestrians to navigate across busy highways with few crossing facilities. Several car parks require movement across major junctions which present road safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists such as the Old Mill Road/Hightown/ Crewe Road junction.

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

Town Centre	Car Park ID	Parking Spaces	Duration	Pricing
Sandbach	Westfields Car Park	95	Max 10 hours	Free
	Chapel St Car Park	75	Max 10 hours	Free
	Little Common Car Park	28	Max 10 hours	Free
	Scotch Common Car Park	140	Max 10 hours	Free
	Crown Bank Car Park	11	Max 10 hours	Free
	Brookhouse Car Park	147	Max 10 hours	Free
	Well Bank Car Park	15	Max 2 hours	Free
	Hawk Street Car Park	10	Max 2 hours	Free
	TOTAL	521		

Public Realm

Sandbach is a market town with distinct heritage and character which is evident within the existing public realm and important to be maintained. Although the town centre provides a range of planting, seating, and gateway features the majority of the public realm across the town is in need of upgrades and maintenance as pavements present uneven surfaces in a number of areas.

The Cobbles area of the town centre adjacent to the High Street provides a high-quality public space offering opportunity for people to stop, rest and spend time, as well as accommodate more formalised events.

Road Safety

There are a number of junctions and areas across the centre of Sandbach which have been identified as collision hotspots (p47) which present road safety concerns particularly for vulnerable road users. This includes the Old Mill Road/Hightown/ Crewe Road junction where 7 collisions have occurred over the last 5 years resulting in a pedestrian seriously injured and a further 3 pedestrians (including a child) and 3 cyclists slightly injured. As a central point of the town centre this creates a major barrier to pedestrian and cyclists activity and reduces the safety of movements made between key areas and facilities. Intervention should be considered in this area to rethink this large format junction.

Active Travel

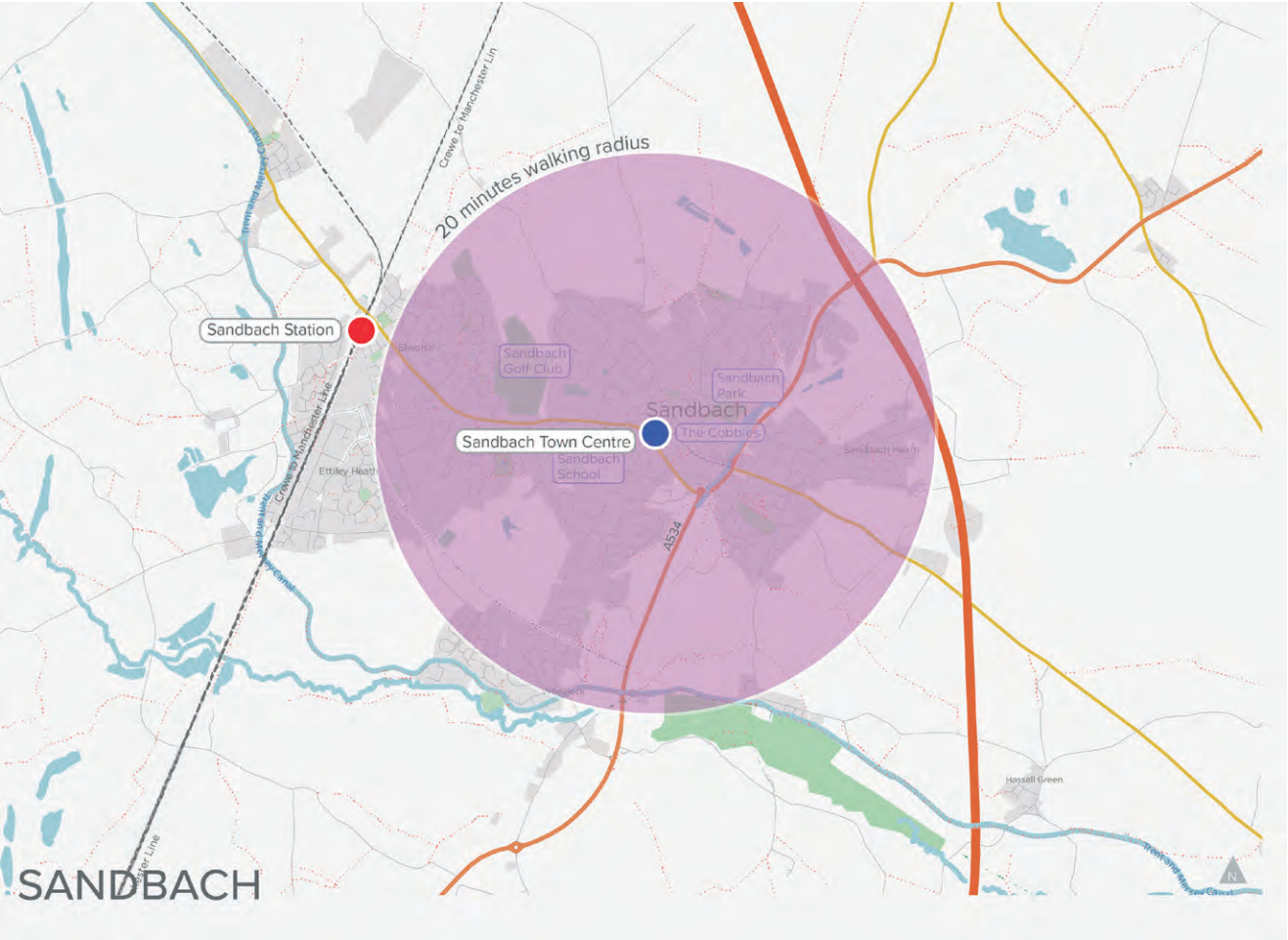
As noted above, areas of road safety concern within the town centre of Sandbach currently create severance for pedestrians and cyclists between key areas of the town centre. This is likely a result of the number of roundabouts within the main area of the town centre with limited crossing facilities and a lack of safe crossing along other key pedestrian routes such as High Street and Middlewich Road.

There is also a lack of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure across the town. Most footways are narrow and adjacent to wide and busy highways with little traffic calming, for instance in areas such as Hightown. That said, the contraflow lane along High Street is one of the better pieces of cycle infrastructure noted across the nine centres. This route could be further upgraded (including physical or light segregation) and extended beyond the town centre.



Cycle parking is evident in a number of locations around The Cobbles and High Street however is of a sub-standard quality. The level of provision in terms of the number of cycle parking spaces and its lack of shelter and security is also unlikely to encourage cycling.

Enhancing the provision of walking and cycling infrastructure across the town, giving more space and priority to pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles and increasing the ease and attractiveness of active modes should be a key consideration of the study to encourage access to, from and around the town centre by more sustainable modes.



Sandbach 20-Minute Walk Isochrone

Public Transport

Public transport services to the train station and nearby population centres and facilities are generally uncoordinated. As a result, the vast majority of journeys are made by private car contributing towards the low levels of air quality seen in areas such as Middlewich Road.

Sandbach rail station is located around a 25-minute walk away from the town centre. Bus services provided at the rail station on London Road provide 3 buses per hour towards the centre of Sandbach and also offer connectivity to Northwich, Crewe and Alsager. The station therefore remains relatively disconnected to the town with infrequent bus services and limited provision of walking and cycling provision to support connectivity on foot or bicycle. Long walking times from the station to the centre are not only unattractive but are also unfeasible for people with reduced mobility therefore reducing access for all.

Sandbach rail station is served by two trains per hour to Crewe southbound, one per hour to Manchester Piccadilly and one per hour to Liverpool Lime Street northbound. As over 5,000 residents of working age in Sandbach commute to work outside the area each day, the rail station plays an important role in providing connectivity to strategic destinations.

Movement Trends

The majority of people (65%) living in the area of Sandbach travel to work outside of the area, predominantly towards Crewe. With high car ownership in the area (85% of residents with access to a car) and a 25-minute walk to the nearest train station from the area travel to, from and around Sandbach is likely to be dominated by private car use. This is the case for commuter trips amongst residents where car travel accounts for 74% of travel to work journeys.

**Only 2% of people living in Sandbach work within the town centre**

**55% of residents travel between 5 and 30km to work**

**Public transport accounts for 5% of commuter trips**

**Only 15% of households in Sandbach do not have access to a car, 34% have access to 2 or more vehicles**

**74% of residents in Sandbach in employment drive to work by car**

**25 minute walk between town centre and railway station**

**Active travel accounts for 10% of commuter trips**

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



06 Connectivity and Accessibility cont.

Cheshire East Council has approved Local Transport Development Plans (LTDP) for its principal towns, 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 Sandbach the LTDP sets out a wide range of actions that CEC are exploring. In Sandbach, the LTDP focuses strongly on active travel interventions to improve conditions for those on foot and cycle – particularly on key corridors such as Old Middlewich Road, Crewe Road and Flat Lane. Highway design enhancements are also a key focus and several junctions improvements are set out across the TCVP area to tackle congestion.

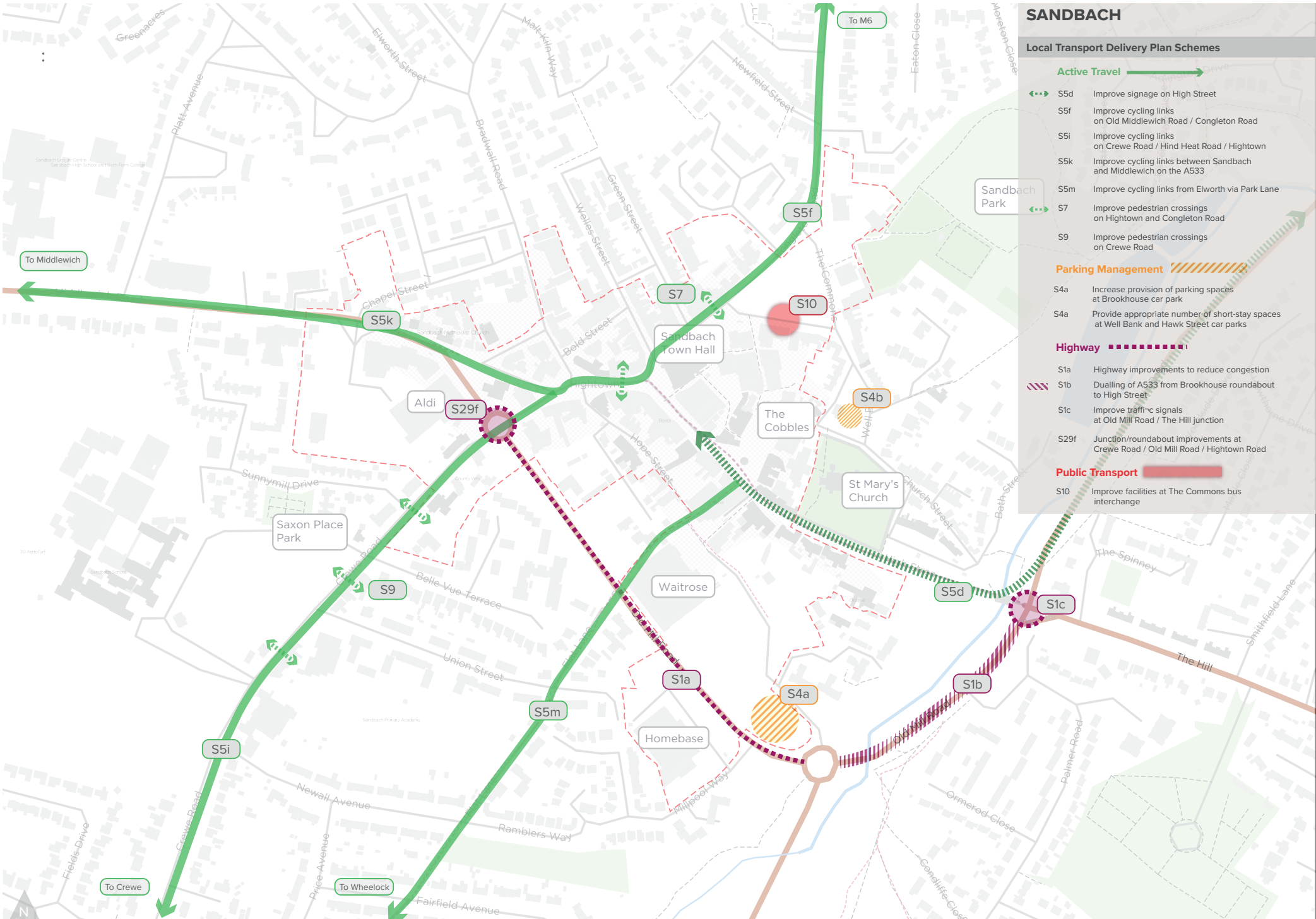
The table contains detail on the schemes set out in the LTDP.

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

Sandbach LTP and LCWIP schemes

Sandbach Local Transport Development Plan - Schemes				
Type	Ref	Scheme	Description	Costing <sup>1</sup>
Active Travel	S5d	Improve signage on High Street	Improve signage on High Street to enhance cycling links into the town centre.	<£100k
	S5f	Improve cycling links on Old Middlewich Road / Congleton Road	Improve cycling links on Old Middlewich Road / Congleton Road to improve cycle connections to the town centre.	<£1m
	S5i	Improve cycling links on Crewe Road / Hind Heat Road / Hightown	Improve cycling links on Crewe Road / Hind Heat Road / Hightown to improve cycle connections to the town centre.	<£1m
	S5k	Improve cycling links between Sandbach and Middlewich on the A533	Improve cycling links on the A533 London Road via Cookesmere Lane to enhance the cycle connection between Sandbach and Middlewich on the A533.	<£1m
	S5m	Improve cycling links from Elworth via Park Lane	Improve/introduce cycling links from Elworth via Abbeyfields development/Park Lane towards Waitrose area.	<£1m
	S7	Improve pedestrian crossings on Hightown and Congleton Road	Improve pedestrian routes in the town centre improving/introducing crossing points on Hightown and Congleton Road.	<£1m
	S9	Improve pedestrian crossings on Crewe Road	Increase the number of crossing points along Crewe Road.	<£1m
Parking Management	S4a	Increase provision of parking spaces at Brookhouse car park	Increased provision of designated parking spaces at Brookhouse car park.	<£100k
	S4b	Provide appropriate number of short-stay spaces at Well Bank and Hawk Street car parks	Review of current parking management at Well Bank and Hawk Street car parks of appropriate number of short stay car parking.	<£100k
Highway	S1a	Highway improvements to reduce congestion	Tackle congestion on the A533 Middlewich Road and Old Mill Road: introduce highway improvements on Old Mill Road and Middlewich Road to reduce congestion.	£1m-£5m
	S1b	Dualling of A533 from Brookhouse roundabout to High Street	Tackle congestion on the A533 Middlewich Road and Old Mill Road: dualling of A533 from Brookhouse roundabout to High Street.	£5m-£10m
	S1c	Improve traffic signals at Old Mill Road / The Hill junction	Tackle congestion on the A533 Middlewich Road and Old Mill Road: improve the traffic signals at The Hill / High Street junction to smooth the flow of traffic and to provide an improved crossing point for cyclists linking between High Street and the shared path along Old Mill Road.	<£1m
	S29f	Junction/roundabout improvements at Crewe Road / Old Mill Road / Hightown Road	Junction/roundabout improvements at Crewe Road / Old Mill Road / Hightown Road to improve transport connections across Sandbach.	£1m-£5m
	S1a	Highway improvements to reduce congestion	Tackle congestion on the A533 Middlewich Road and Old Mill Road: introduce highway improvements on Old Mill Road and Middlewich Road to reduce congestion.	£1m-£5m
Public Transport	S10	Improve facilities at The Commons bus interchange	Improve facilities at The Commons bus interchange.	£1m-£5m

<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.



Sandbach Local Transport Development Plan Schemes



Retail and Leisure

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

Sandbach, alongside Nantwich and Poynton, is identified as one of three KSCs in Cheshire East that is performing particularly well as a vital and viable centre. The centre is considered to have a good convenience goods and service offer and continues to provide important facilities for its local population. Its mix of national multiple and independent store offering and markets act as key attractors, and a good evening economy adds to its vibrancy. Sandbach is an attractive town centre with good levels of environmental quality.

Overall, the centre provides 156 units (Experian Goad Plan, September 2019) which are primarily located around High Street, Hightown, Congleton Road, Bold Street, Middlewich Road and The Cobbles.

The convenience sector continues to be well represented, with the proportion of units in the

centre being broadly in line with UK average (10% compared to UK average of 9%) and the proportion of floorspace being significantly above the UK average (27% compared to UK average of 15%). The centre is anchored by a Waitrose food store and edge of centre Aldi store which are understood to be trading well. Sandbach also continues to provide valuable indoor and outdoor markets which help to diversify and differentiate the retail offering from other centres.

Whilst slightly lower than the national averages, the proportion of comparison goods units and floorspace in Sandbach is considered reasonable having regard to its local service and shopping catchment role. Most comparison retailers in the centre are independent operators, however, there remains a small number of national multiple brands including M&Co, WHSmith, Savers and Boots. B&M Home Stores also took occupancy of the edge-of-centre former Homebase store in June 2019.

Particular improvements were noted in the leisure service provision since the 2016 report, with the increase of three units. Most leisure units are occupied by independent food and beverage operators providing a range of take aways, bars, restaurants and cafes, with national operators limited to McDonald’s and Costa. However, whilst

the proportion of leisure units remains above the national (27% to UK average of 24%), the floorspace falls below owing to the primarily small units in the town.

The vacancy rate continues to be low representing just 7% of units compared to the national average of 12% and there are no long-term vacant units present in the centre. The loss of two national banks (Barclays and RBS) since the last survey has however weakened the town centre service offer.

At this stage, it is unclear what the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic will be on Sandbach’s retail and leisure occupiers. Town centre spend will have been, in part, compensated for by more people working from home and using local facilities. In the future, more flexible working habits should mean that Sandbach benefits from its commuter town role.

The strength of Sandbach’s independent, market and food and beverage offer, aligned with its civic role and a relatively affluent catchment population, should provide some buffer to the continued challenges facing many of the national high street brands. Therefore, whilst there may be a short term impact on some occupiers, longer term the centre should return to being an attractive location for predominantly independent retail and leisure occupiers but may be constrained by the lack of available premises.



	Units			Floorspace		
	No.	%	UK Average (%)	Sq.m	%	UK Average (%)
Convenience	15	10	9	7,110	27	15
Comparison	42	27	29	7,830	30	34
Retail Service	30	19	15	2,060	8	7
Leisure Service	42	27	24	6,070	23	26
Financial and Business Service	16	10	10	2,350	9	7
Vacant	11	7	12	1,230	5	11
Total	156	100	100	26,650	100	100

Diversity of Uses in Sandbach Town Centre  
Source: Experian GOAD Survey, September 2019. UK Average from the Experian GOAD Category Report (February 2020)

Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres  
The finance and business space identified in the table (derived from the GOAD survey) only relates to ground floor office floorspace within the town centre. Sandbach’s office market in considered further on p 57



# Footfall

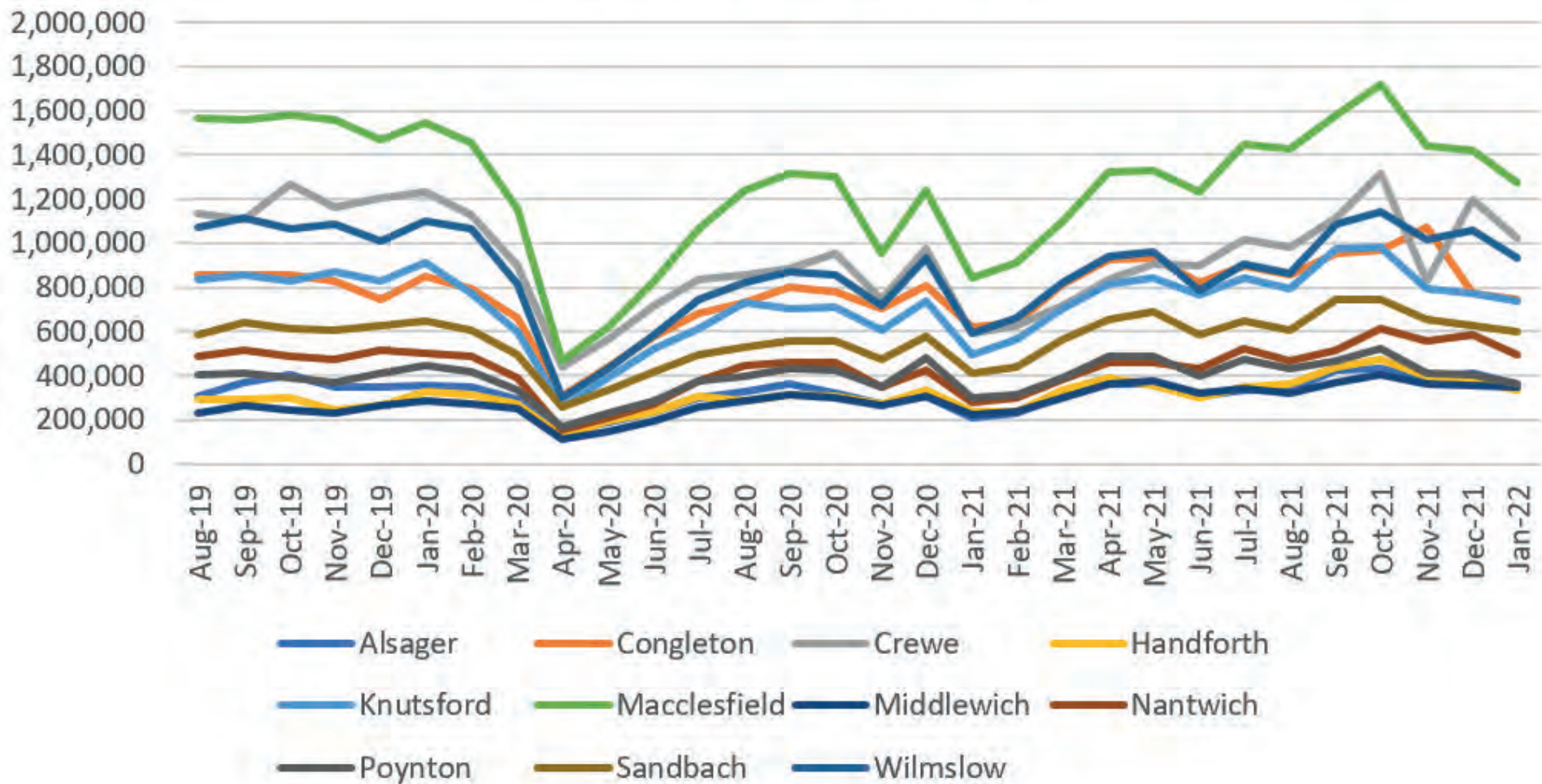
In recognition of the important relationship between footfall and vitality, Cheshire East Council is now commissioning regular monitoring of footfall across the centres. The following graph shows the footfall in all the key centres between August 2019 and December 2020. It starkly shows the impact of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

Reflective of the town’s relative scale, Sandbach was one of the Cheshire East’s mid-performing centres in terms of visitors in August 2019 and retained this position throughout the period to December 2020 with in the region of 600,000 visitors per month. Positively, whilst monthly footfall in Sandbach fell by 10% on the year previously to 556,000 in October 2020, this was around a quarter of the national average benchmark rate of 40% suggesting many working from home were choosing to shop locally.



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

Town Centre Footfall



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





Source: Visitor Insight Baseline Report:  
Sandbach Town Centre: October 2019-2020

Most recent consistent data available across the 9 centres

## Employment

As a result of the closure of many factories and businesses over time in Sandbach, and the proximity to the M6 motorway making it an accessible location to a wide range of employment opportunities within the surrounding Crewe and Stoke-on-Trent area, many residents now commute to work outside of Sandbach each day.

Currently, the main employment offer in Sandbach is situated on the western edge of the town at Springvale Industrial Estate in Ettiley village. The 13 hectare estate is well occupier by a mix of industrial occupiers. Other small employment areas include the Zan Industrial Park in Wheelock village and business units in Elworth.

Significant employment development is underway at Capricorn Business Park adjacent to J17 of the M6 motorway. The first phase of the mixed use site has planning permission for a drive-through Costa Coffee, McDonald's restaurant, hotel, pub and a further 2.6 hectares of business park use. Phase 2 provides a further 26 hectares of development land for a commercial park including offices, industrial, storage and distribution, a sports facility and a local centre. The scheme is anticipated to enhance the town's employment role, boost economic growth and reduce the strong prevalence of out-commuting.

Whilst the scale of office use within the town centre is limited, the importance of retail, leisure and tourism as an employer and economic driver in Sandbach is well recognised and will be encouraged. The town is also likely to benefit from the shift in working habits that have emerged during COVID-19 and are likely to continue. It's residential and associated offer are likely to attract workers going forward who want to live in an attractive town, well serviced by local amenities and well connected to larger employment locations where they may work a few days a week. This will further support the vitality and viability of the town centre.



Location of Offices in the Town Centre.  
Source: GOAD



# Residential Market Context

Sandbach provides an attractive residential location offering easy commuting to employment destinations, set within open countryside surroundings and providing a vibrant historic town centre.

At the time of the 2011 Census the dominant house type across the Cheshire East area was detached housing (35.6%) which is a much higher proportion than the North West (18%) and England (22.4%).

The Sandbach parish area had a total of 7,840 households, representing 4.9% of Cheshire East’s total residential stock (159,441). In terms of housing mix, Sandbach is characterised by larger family housing types with 39.1% being detached and a further 36.1% being semi-detached – together making up over three quarters of the housing stock.

There is a need to rebalance the housing offer away from additional family housing to provide more starter homes, affordable housing and homes for older people in order to meet local needs and changing demographics.

Average achieved house prices in Sandbach were in the order of £200,000 to £250,000 in the twelve months to September 2020. This is

relatively affordable compared to many parts of Cheshire East.

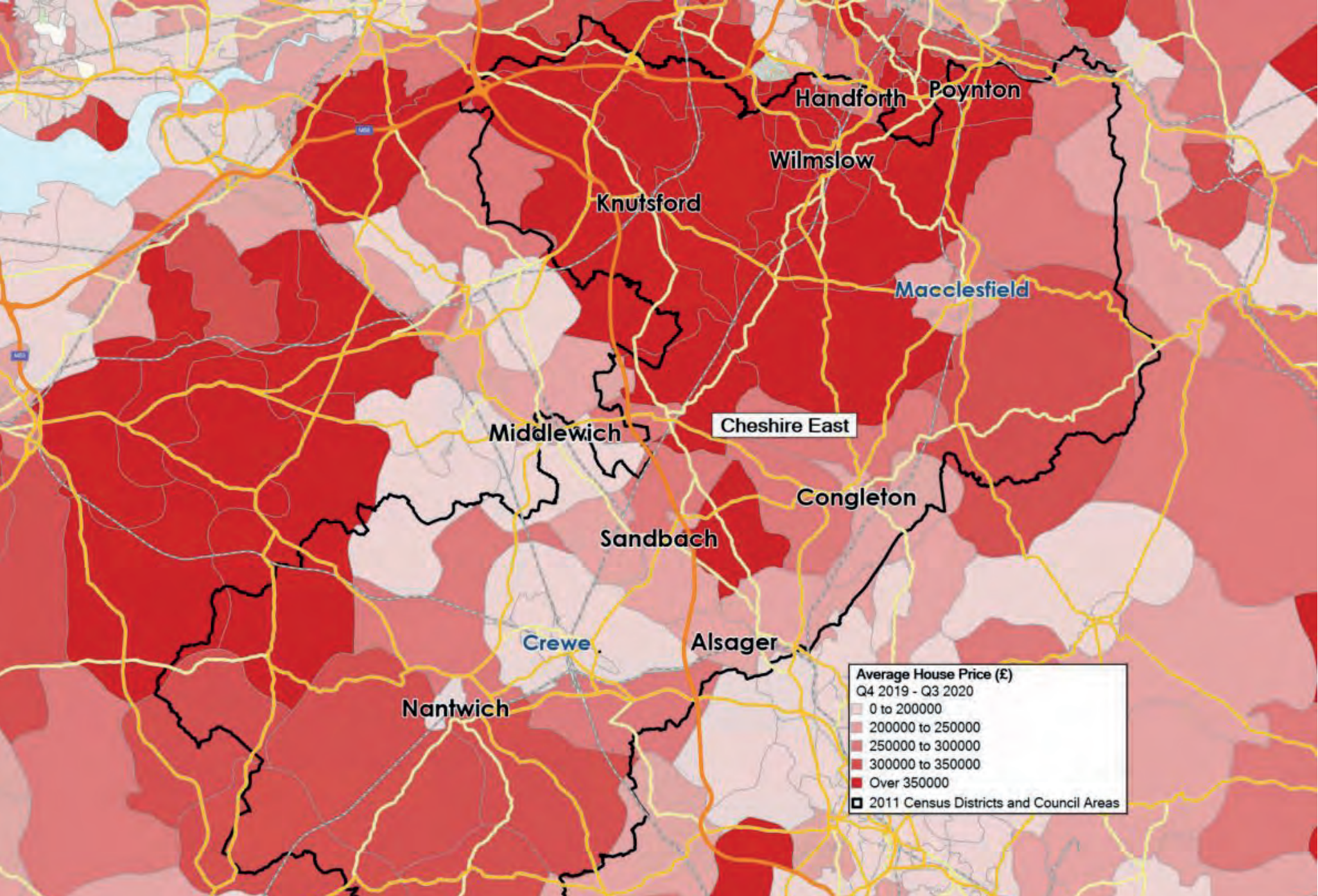
Currently active new housing developments include The Heath on Hawthorn Drive by Persimmon Homes; and Barratt Homes’ J One Seven scheme on Old Mill Drive. Both have 4 bed homes available ranging from £256,000 for a terrace to £262,000 for a detached. The Holies is a conversion of a historic town centre building

offering 1 bed apartments from £125,000 to £135,000.

Sandbach has witnessed significant housing growth over recent years and further development is planned. Whilst this presents an opportunity to support and expand town centre services and businesses, it also presents challenges in respect of the ability for the town’s infrastructure including health, schools and highways to accommodate the increased demand generated from new housing.

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

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





# 08 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats

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

### Strengths

- Good accessibility to the M6 and a train station providing national transport linkages
- Attractive historical market town with numerous heritage buildings, conservation areas and open spaces including Central Park
- Flat terrain with pleasant outlook within a rural setting
- Generous and charitable local community, shop and market traders (Thursday market, indoor market and makers market)
- Compact, central and relatively vibrant town centre, providing retail, service and hospitality sectors with a high level of local independent proprietors
- Good business retention and low void rate
- Free parking
- Unique series of spaces defined by historic building pattern and ending in a picturesque market square ‘the cobbles’ housing the Sandbach Crosses
- Variety of shops and services to provide a full day of activities

### Weaknesses

- Acts as a commuter town - Close to the M6 J17 access point and rail links to Manchester and Crewe resulting in issues with car sharing and all day parking but not using the town centre
- Lack of integrated transport links, particularly to the Railway Station a mile from the town centre
- Traffic and congestion, particularly passing through the town centre, resulting in environmental and air quality issues - it is considered that this is a result of positioning between Crewe, Congleton and Middlewich together with the infrastructure having not caught up with the scale of residential development and influx of new residents
- Too many fast food outlets on the high street and shop fronts with inappropriate fascias, signages and illumination
- Insufficient pedestrianisation of the high street and inadequate access/support for disabled people
- Insufficient signage for pedestrians
- Lack of adequate investment to maintain the building stock and town centre e.g. Literary Institute, ex William Deacons Bank opposite Iceland is an eyesore
- Blights on the traditional building landscape e.g. Post Office sorting office on the cobbles.
- Issues around waste management and street environment
- Limited town centre employment beyond retail and the Council - would like to encourage more
- Legibility issues around the back of the market hall/ scotch common car park

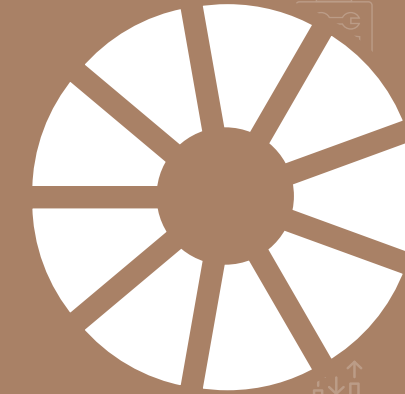
### Opportunities

- Adopted Neighbourhood Plan in place and policies within are in the process of being reviewed, updated and strengthened
- Diversification to support offices, services, leisure, cultural and residential uses in appropriate locations (as per Neighbourhood Plan)
- Maintain and improve the choice of retail offering, through increasing the vibrancy of the markets and supporting local independent and small/medium outlets (services and hospitality are adequately served) but ensuring suitable balance with national shops
- Develop a larger public transport network to integrate the new housing estates and the railway station including interconnected footpaths and cycleways that encourage walking and cycling across and through the town
- Environmental improvements including increased tree planting and more protected green spaces
- Encourage more tourism e.g. links to historic centre and surrounding countryside through historic walks
- Opportunity for more events to complement existing - weekend Transport Festival linked to Sandbach’s truck heritage; Town Crier Competition; annual Christmas Market
- Use of upper floors for residential or business use
- Opportunity to improve quality of space behind the town hall, where the outdoor market takes place and public realm along the high street
- Opportunity to improve links from Sandbach Park, through to High Street

### Threats

- Parking is currently free. Understand need to review charges but “harmonisation” across the borough will discourage people from visiting Sandbach and risk displacement of parking onto many surrounding residential streets (as happened when Sandbach Station started charging £3 per day)
- Further increase in traffic through and around the town e.g. resulting from the forthcoming Middlewich Eastern Bypass and/or more non-strategic/unplanned housing developments. “30-40%” increase in population under local plans (Sandbach already exceeded 2030 housing figures) but limit/no improvements to transport infrastructure.
- Threat of on-line and out of centre shopping (e.g. Muller housing development and the “new crosses”)
- High levels of unemployment following COVID 19 crisis - further reduction in local job opportunities for local people
- New planning rules regarding change of use i.e. shops to residential
- Residents are attracted to nearby shopping towns with better shop selection / parking facilities
- Relatively high level of rents and Business Rates for Town Centre properties (Sandbach far higher than Congleton for example)
- Older and ageing population - need to consider their requirements including housing and accessibility
- Anticipate future issues around EV charging for historic properties with no off-street parking.
- Many stakeholders - but apathy and some do not get on e.g. Sandbach Traders and Retailers (STAR)
- Heritage buildings, which can require more maintenance may fall into disrepair if vacant for longer periods of time





# SANDBACH ACTION PLAN

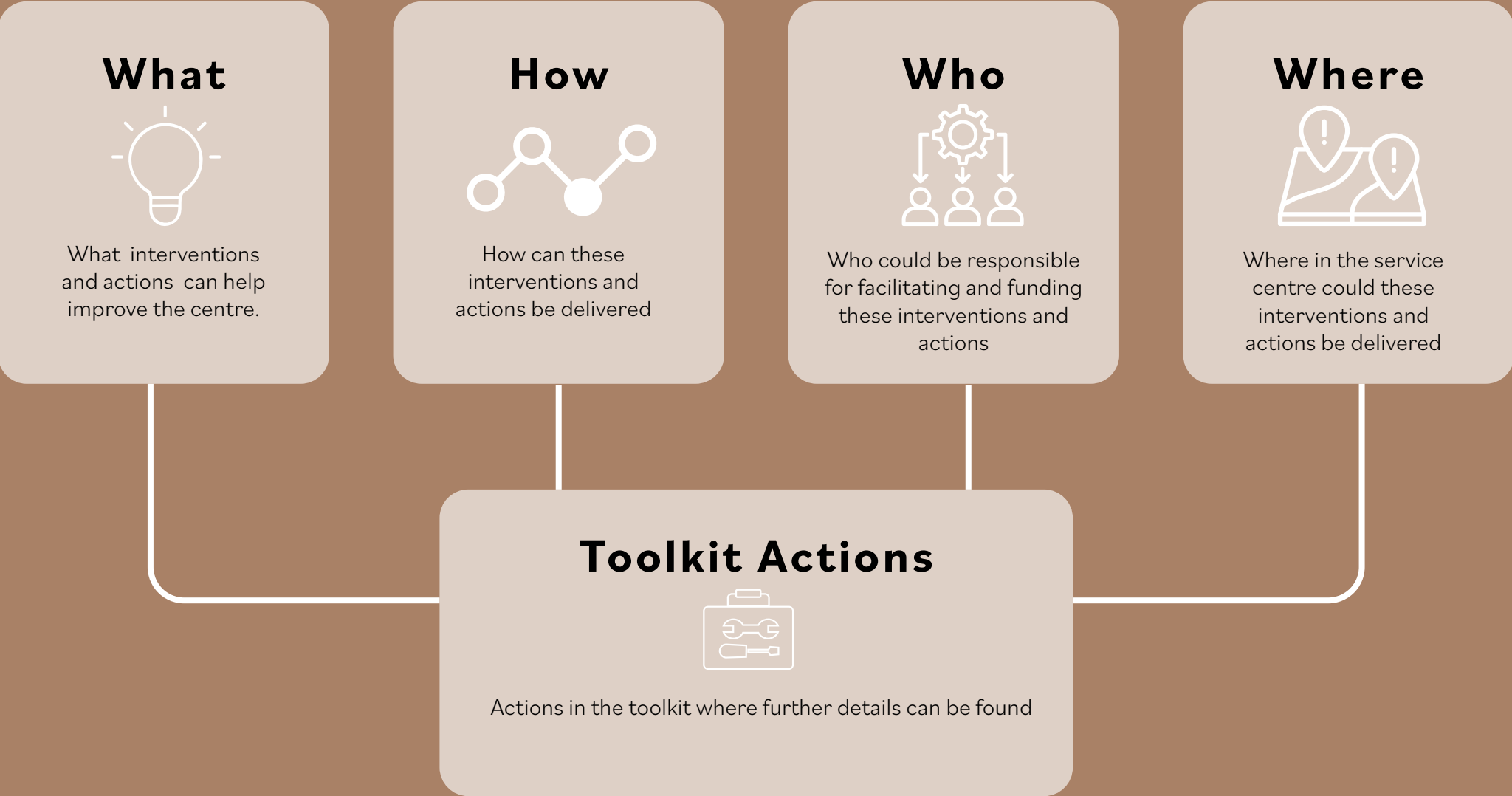


# 09 Priority Areas for Intervention

The Action Plan has been prepared in collaboration with the Town Council and identifies actions which seek to support the established Vision and Objectives for Sandbach 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

Sandbach will continue to be a distinctive rural market town formed by villages intersected by open countryside. There will be a wide range of community facilities and businesses that will prosper and expand as the town evolves and expands in respect of the views of the community. This will ensure that current and future generations enjoy a strong sense of community, a high quality of life and a flourishing natural environment.

## Objectives

- **To protect and enhance the open countryside setting**
- **To preserve and enhance the heritage and character of Sandbach**
- **To manage housing supply at a sustainable rate and satisfy local housing need**
- **To promote and maintain a thriving local economy and employment**
- **To develop a safe, efficient and sustainable transport system**
- **To protect and maintain existing community amenities and add appropriate new services and facilities**
- **To adapt to climate change through sustainable development and low carbon economy**

## Role of the Centre

Sandbach plays a number of important roles:

- A local centre serving the needs of its local residents
- A civic hub comprising Cheshire East Council offices and Town Hall comprising a library and community venue
- A visitor destination offering a range of heritage assets, events and leisure amenities
- An employment hub offering a range of job opportunities

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

# Areas for intervention

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

Potential actions are identified in Section 10:





# Spatial action plan

The Spatial Action Plan illustrates key features of the Centre and identifies where proposed actions could be delivered.

It highlights the opportunities to reduce car dominance around the market hall and improve connections to key green assets in the centre such as Sandbach Park.

- The three priority actions which have emerged from the public consultations are:
- **Action 2 : Deliver a movement plan, reduce car dominance**
  - **Action 6 Mobilising the business community**
  - **Action 7 Improve connections between key destinations and the centre**

**Action 1: Opportunity for physical change: around Market Hall**  
Area for short term enhancement using meanwhile uses and tactical urbanism (pop-up seating, planting, parklets) to better balance space used by outdoor market and vehicles

**Action 2: Deliver a movement plan/ reduce car dominance**  
Focus area for public realm works to better balance the movement of pedestrians and cyclists over vehicles, and enhance the setting of heritage buildings in the town centre

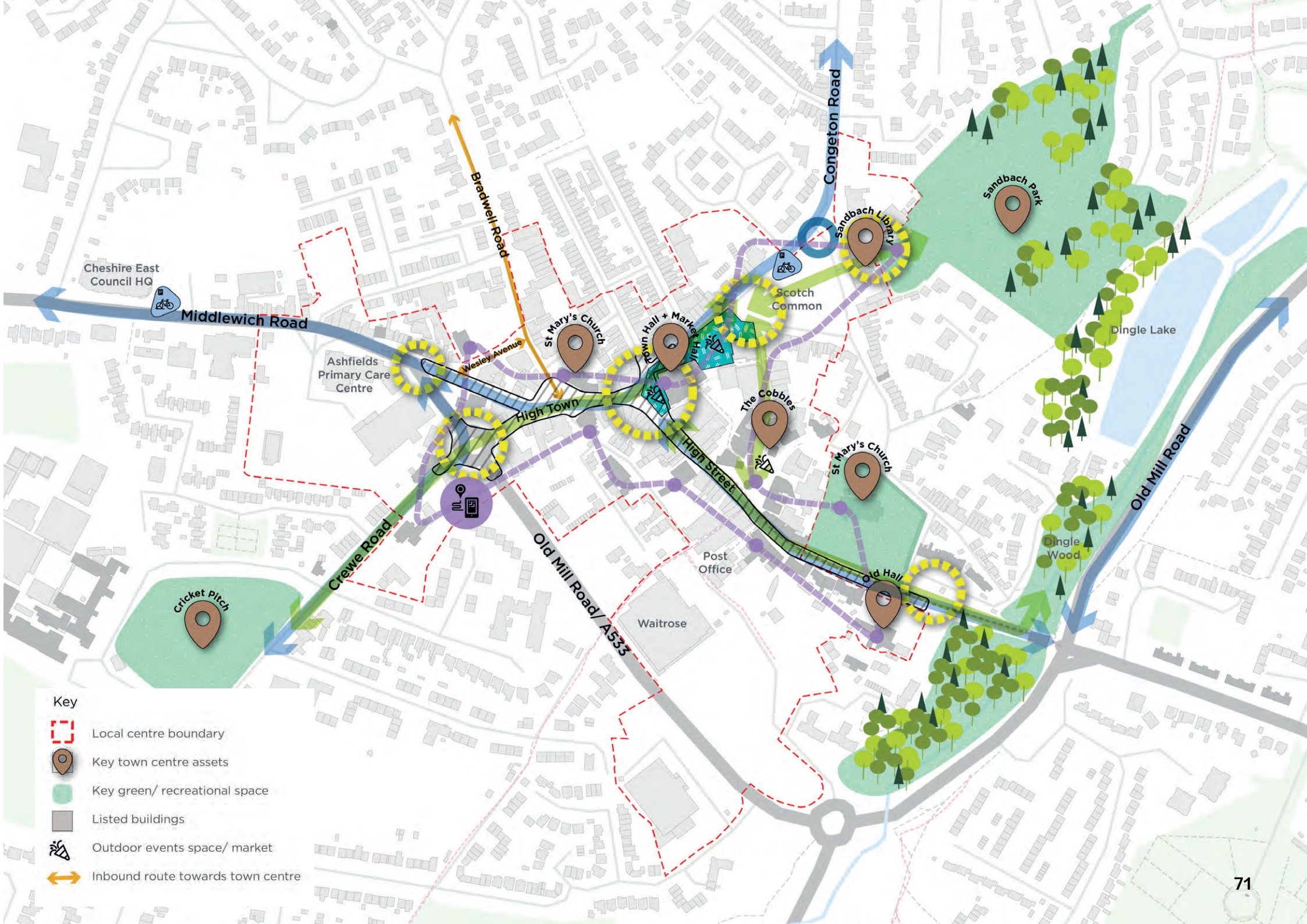
**Action 3: Encourage walking and cycling**  
Key roads for active travel corridors

Key locations for new cycle hubs

**Action 4: Showcasing Sandbach's Heritage and Tourism Assets**  
Conceptual route for an online or self guided heritage trail

**Action 7: improve connections between the key destinations and the centre**  
Enhanced walking routes to town centre/ key assets/ local greenspaces

Priority gateway for signage/wayfinding/artwork, to provide a clear sense of arrival into Nantwich town centre





# Movement action plan

A series of schemes have been identified through the TCVP process, building upon those set out in the LTDP. They are intended to strengthen and expand the existing LTDP proposals – with a stronger emphasis on active travel and public realm to enhance the street environment.

## Town Centre movement schemes suggested in addition to LTDP potential schemes

Sandbach TCVP Proposals				
Type	Ref	Scheme	Description	Costing <sup>1</sup>
Active Travel	S_AT1	Improve pedestrians and cyclists' crossings at Crewe Road / Old Mill Road / Hightown Road	Reduce severance and provide safer and better crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists at Crewe Road / Old Mill Road / Hightown Road roundabout.	<£1m
	S_AT2	Improve walking and cycling route between the town centre and Sandbach Park	Improve walking and cycling route between the town centre and Sandbach Park to to remove current pedestrian barrier through car park.	<£1m
	S_AT3	Improve signage and wayfinding across the town centre	Improve signage and wayfinding across the town centre to enhance visitor experience and signpost existing attractive assets.	<£100k
	S_AT4	Improve pedestrians and cyclists' crossings at Old Mill Road / Flat Ln	Aim to reduce severance and provide safer and better crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists at Old Mill Road / Flat Ln junction	<£1m
	S_AT5	Improve pedestrians and cyclists' crossings at Old Mill Road / High St / The Hill	Aim to reduce severance and provide safer and better crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists at Old Mill Road / High St / The Hill junction	<£1m
Public Realm	S_PR1	Enhance the pedestrian environment on Hightown	Enhance public realm along Hightown between the existing roundabouts to improve the pedestrian environment and access to the town centre, including pavement surface improvements and exploration of pedestrian priority.	£1m-£5m
	S_PR2	Enhance gateway and public realm in front of the Town Hall	Enhance gateway and public realm at the Town Hall including improvements to pavement materials, street furniture and planting which is currently tired and underwhelming.	£1m-£5m
	S_PR3	Enhance market area to the back of the Town Hall	Enhance public realm within the market area to the back of the Town Hall to improve pavement materials and upgrade street furniture and planting - which is currently tired and underwhelming. Undertake a review of parking management measures to explore opportunities for better use of space.	<£1m

<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



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

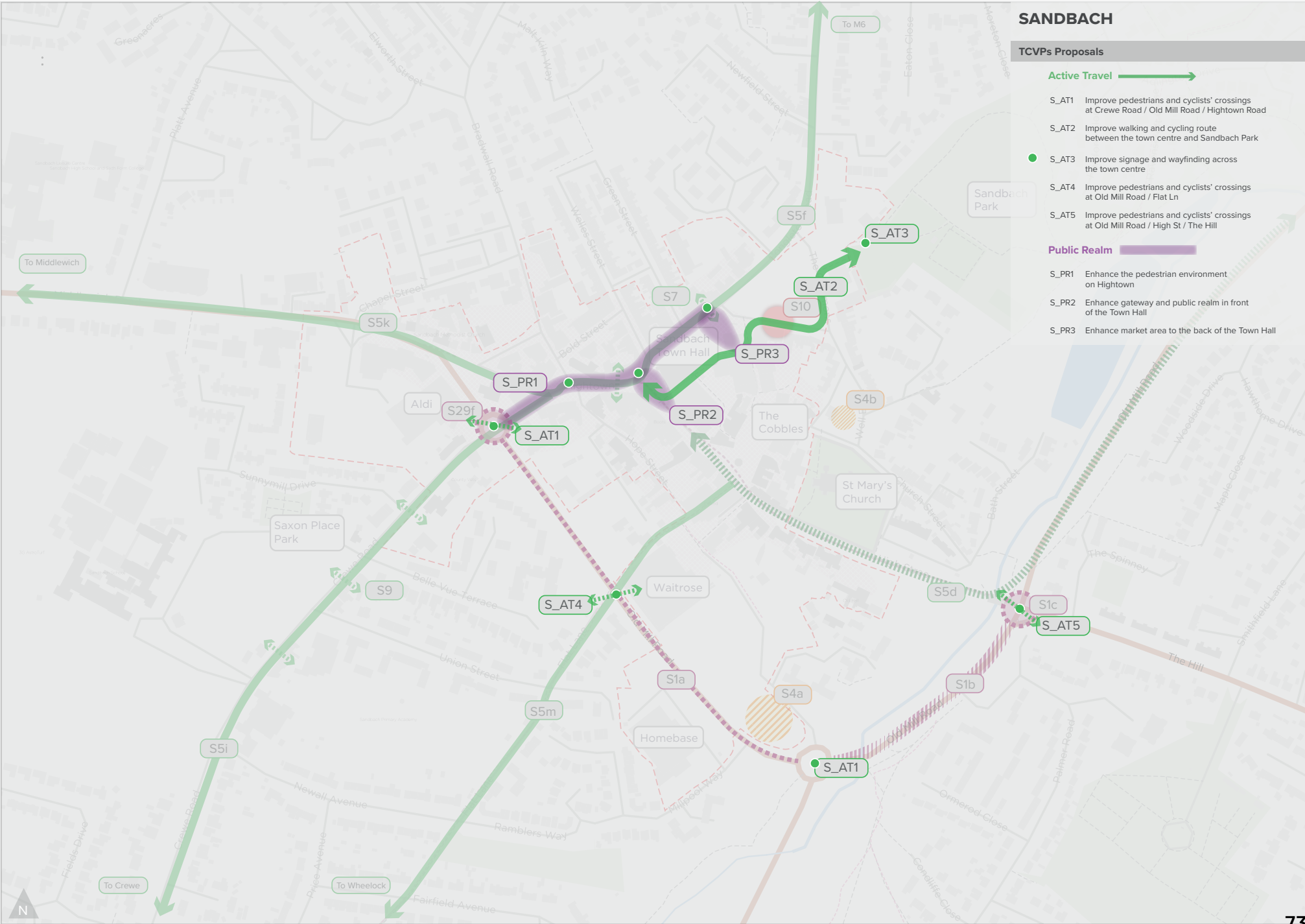


Poynton, Cheshire Informal street treatment at roundabout – applicable at key town centre junctions as Crewe Rd/Hightown roundabout and Hightown Drinking Fountain. (Photo credit: MottMacdonald)



Maid Marian Way, Nottingham Supercrossing – direct, wide crossing and integrated green features. A similar approach could be considered at the A533/ Crewe Road junction. (Photo credit: MottMacdonald)

## Town Centre Viability Plan Proposals





# 10 Potential actions



## Action 1: Opportunity for physical change around the Market Hall

**What**

Sandbach benefits from a number of interesting heritage buildings and attractive public spaces reflecting its market town status and creating a unique identify for the town. The Town Hall in particular has benefited from significant refurbishment by Sandbach Town Council and is a thriving hall hosting many events. However, the area around the Market Hall and Town Hall is surrounded by roads which detract from their profile and key gateway location, creating a less pleasant environment than their setting deserves. Underutilisation on non-market days creates an opportunity for new uses. This could be on a interim basis or on event days to test how such a scheme could work in the longer term if successful.

This action seeks to enhance the setting of the Town Hall, Market Hall and Outdoor Market to improve the experience of both market and non-market days and increase footfall by encouraging visitors to dwell in a more attractive urban environment.

It must be recognised that significant physical change would be very costly and whilst this may be a longer term aspiration, more modest interventions may be more realistic in the current economic climate.

### How

Physical change around the Market Hall could be implemented through the following actions:

- Claim more space (from roads and highways) in front of and behind the Town Hall/ Market Hall building, to increase dwell time and create a more vibrant atmosphere - with pop-up seating areas, lighting installations, art installations, moveable planting
- Open up the Town Hall for events and activities
- Encourage pop up activity spaces e.g. planters on wheels

- Use lighting and artwork to enliven space and better frame market spaces
- Use Town Hall frontage in ‘smarter’ ways - e.g. ‘Good Ideas Shop’ to provide space for online business advertising: [https://www.facebook.com/business/m/good-ideas-shop?content\\_id=8dxdnW5laCGdmVb](https://www.facebook.com/business/m/good-ideas-shop?content_id=8dxdnW5laCGdmVb)
- Consider potential for pop up food events in Market Hall on none-market days e.g. Altrincham and Crewe Food Halls
- Use Town Hall frontage in ‘smarter’ ways - e.g. ‘Good Ideas Shop’ to provide space for online business advertising: [https://www.facebook.com/business/m/good-ideas-shop?content\\_id=8dxdnW5laCGdmVb](https://www.facebook.com/business/m/good-ideas-shop?content_id=8dxdnW5laCGdmVb), but always ensuring the heritage character of the area is protected

### Who

- Town Council
- Market team
- CEC

### Where

- Around Town Hall and Market Hall



## Action 4 supports the following objectives:

- To preserve and enhance the heritage and character of Sandbach
- To promote and maintain a thriving local economy and employment
- To protect and maintain existing community amenities and add appropriate new services and facilities



## Toolkit Actions

- 1b - Introduce a programme of events
- 1d - Use lighting
- 4a - Provide pop-up seating
- 4d - Planting in pots to define space
- 4f - Open up heritage buildings as venues
- 14a - Tactical urbanism to manage traffic speeds and create more pedestrian friendly space
- Markets





## Action 1: Opportunity for physical change around the Market Hall

### Re imagining the approach to Market Hall

Sandbach's wonderful Grade II listed Town Hall and Market Hall presents a fantastic opportunity to revitalise an important cross route within the town. The space immediately adjacent to the building is currently cluttered by street furniture and dominated by roads.

By reconsidering how this space functions, a more equitable and flexible space could be used to support the functions of the Market Hall and the surrounding businesses.

Initially, pop up uses, temporary installations and programme of activities can change perceptions of the space. Longer term, more interventionist reconfiguration of the highway can free up spaces for community and civic use allowing the space to be active more of the time.



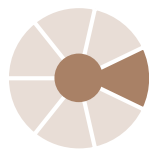
Opportunities to create new crossing facilities that re-connected both sides of the street and encourage more informal pedestrian crossing trips

Reclaim the space around the Market Hall and remove conflicts with other users by creating clear areas. Temporary, moveable planters, seating and other elements can help to safely divide the space

More opportunities for spill out space on flexible spaces - cafe seating, performance space linked to a town festival, dwell space or seller space.

Reduce the dominance of the highway by narrowing carriageways and increasing foot-way widths where its practical to do so - this creates spaces for businesses to occupy with their produce, seating etc and encourages more people to walk comfortably into and around the town centre. A host of temporary, easy win measures can be used to begin to change the use of the space - recycled timber parklets, low cost reclaimed timber seating, moveable but secure box planter build outs and seating, cycle parks.





## Action 2: Deliver a movement plan/ reduce car dominance (Priority from public consultation)

### What

Reducing the dominance of cars in the heart of the town centre to encourage visitors to be able to dwell, creating a safer and healthier environment. Re-prioritising pedestrians and reducing the space for cars provides town centre visitors with a more pleasant place to shop, relax and to browse more comfortably, which in turn benefits businesses through increased footfall, dwell time and linked trips across previously dominant roads. Shop fronts are also more visible when not hidden behind large and/or heavy vehicle movements.

### How

The streets within the town centre are predominantly focused around the movement of vehicles, with the movement and experience of people on foot an after-thought. Creating streets that value and welcome pedestrians are essential ingredients to successful town centres. Car dominance could be reduced in a number of locations across the town centre:

- Hightown Drinking Fountain to High Street – the existing roundabouts at the drinking fountain and outside the Town Hall should be reimagined as a new high-quality public space. Further work is required to understand the options available, but it is likely vehicle access would need to be retained through the space, but with greater priority given to pedestrians.
- High Street and The Cobbles – The Cobbles is a good quality civic space and focal point for the town. The treatment of High Street, as a key connector to The Cobbles, should be improved using natural stone to match.
- Review access & movement to the Town Centre – alongside the above schemes, a review of movement issues and options should be undertaken. One issue identified is that cars use High St and the town centre to bypass traffic lights, especially at peak times.
- A533 Middlewich Road Roundabout – this is a major barrier to the safer movement of pedestrians from the west of the town, and better pedestrian facilities are required at this junction. There is concern amongst local stakeholders that the new Middlewich Eastern Bypass (MEB) could induce or redirect higher levels of traffic into this area. CEC will review the work done to date on MEB and consider whether any additional mitigation is required in Sandbach.
- Old Mill Road – explore design options to address congestion and improve access into Sandbach town centre whilst ensuring conditions for cyclists and pedestrians are also enhanced

Ideas can be soft-tested as temporary measures to review any impact on businesses, e.g. by using planters to increase

pavement width and parklets, sponsored by local businesses in on-street parking bays.

### Who

- Town Council
- CEC

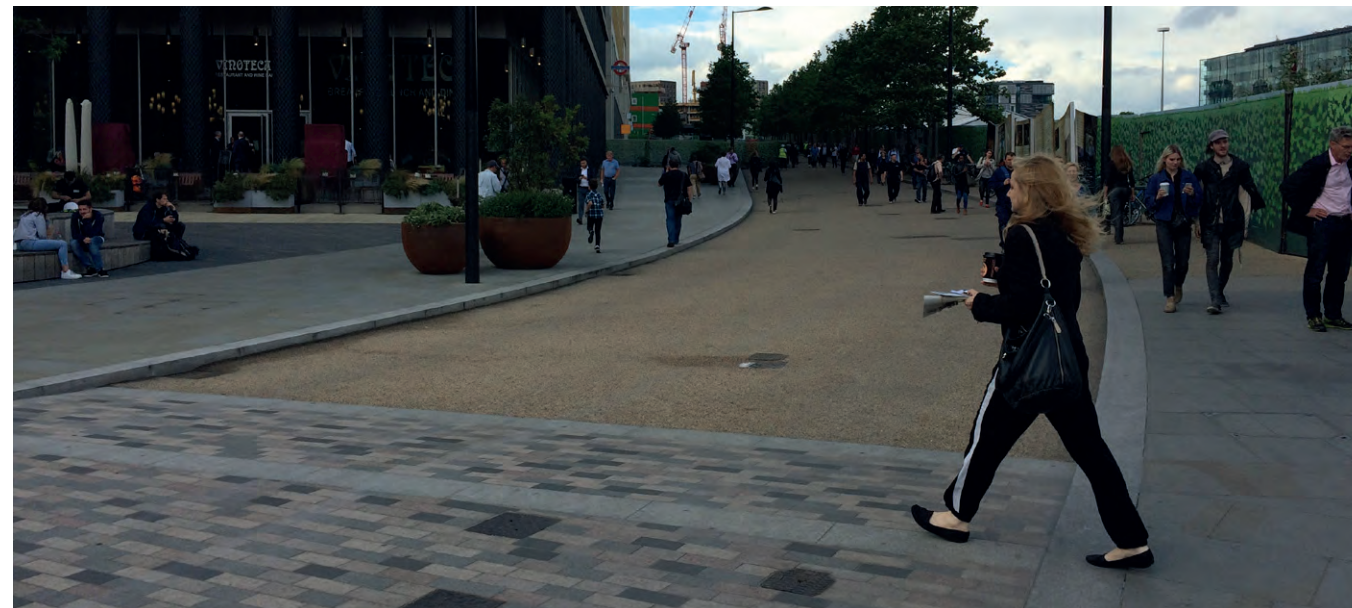
### Where

Across the town centre but focused upon:

- Hightown Drinking Fountain to High Street
- High Street and The Cobbles
- Old Mill Road
- A533 Middlewich Road Roundabout



Source: Civic Engineers <https://civicengineers.com/project/poynton-cheshire/>



Benchmark Location: King Cross Arena



### Action 2 supports the following objectives:

- To preserve and enhance the heritage and character of Sandbach
- To develop a safe, efficient and sustainable transport system
- To adapt to climate change through sustainable development and low carbon economy



### Toolkit Actions

- 4c – Better bus stops
- 4d – Planting in pots to define space for certain uses
- 9c – Enable a café culture
- 14a – Tactical urbanism to manage traffic speeds and create more pedestrian friendly spaces
- 14c – Enhanced crossings
- 18e – Prioritise environmental considerations in the design of new public spaces
- 25c – Facilitate modal shift





## Action 3: Encourage walking and cycling

### What

On the main roads outside of the town centre core, conditions for people on foot or cycle can be challenging, with high vehicle flows, high design speeds, narrow footways, and limited safe crossing points. An example of this is the connection between the town centre and railway station along A533 London Road/Middlewich Road.

Several proposals are set out in the Local Transport Development Plan (LTDP) and Neighbourhood Plan (NP). These proposals should be supported and progressed, helping build confidence for those who presently feel less comfortable on foot or cycle than in their car.

Support cycle and walking routes from the town centre to the Train Station in Elworth. The Town Council and Community Rail Partnership are already working towards match funded community projects to support this aspiration.

Whilst seeking to encourage walking and cycling it is acknowledged that not all people are able to do so and therefore car use will continue to be required in some circumstances.

### How

- Explore design options for routes identified as key active travel connections in the Local Transport Development Plan (LTDP). This includes Congleton Road, Crewe Road and Park Lane.
- Deliver enhanced pedestrian/cycle crossing facilities at key junctions and pedestrian routes including the Crewe Road/Highton Road roundabout, High Street/ The Hill junction, Park Lane, between B&M and Waitrose, at Bradwell Road and near the Heath Road Co-op.
- Consider the location of cycle parking linked to improved green links and introduce secure, safe cycle parking in central retail areas such as Welles Street, Green Street and Bold Street
- Raise awareness and improve pedestrian/cycle connections to existing provision for walking and cycling including Sandbach Park, St Mary's Dell, Dingle Wood and the Woodland Corridor
- Support cycle and walking routes from the town centre to the Train Station in Elworth
- Improve signage and wayfinding across the town
- Consider linkages with local cycling clubs, walking groups and relevant volunteer organisations e.g. Sandbach Footpath Group to encourage walking and cycling
- Disabled access to platforms at Sandbach Station
- Ensure foot and cycle paths are safe and well maintained including removing overgrown trees and hedges, ensuring even surfaces and are well lit

### Who

- CEC
- CEC Cycling Champion
- Town Council
- Local cycling and walking organisations
- Community Rail Partnership

### Where

- Town centre and edges but with a focus on key routes



Benchmark Location: Leys Ave, Letchworth Garden City



Benchmark Location: Cannon, Preston



### Action 3 supports the following objectives:

- To protect and enhance the open countryside setting
- To develop a safe, efficient and sustainable transport system
- To adapt to climate change through sustainable development and low carbon economy



### Toolkit Actions

- 7e - Bike and scooter parking
- 11a - Design a holistic public realm scheme that improves pedestrian provision





# Action 4: Showcasing Sandbach’s Heritage and Tourism Assets

## What

Sandbach boasts a rich heritage including a number of high quality buildings and monuments along its main central streets. he Town Council and other groups already promote the town’s heritage, including through a series of major annual events such as the Transport Festival, and by enhancing the setting of heritage assets through the work of its rangers, floral displays etc. There is scope to expand upon these assets and link with wider attractions, to increase visitor and tourism opportunities that would benefit the town centre as a whole.

This Action relates closely to Action 5 Raising the Town’s Profile and could contribute towards expanding the visitor economy of Sandbach.

## How

Advancements in technology have opened up lots of new opportunities to showcase heritage assets in new and exciting ways. The use of QR codes, apps and interactive information points means more insight can be offered to more visitors. Interactive walking and/or heritage trails could be prepared and tailored to themes such as the town’s buildings and monuments, key historical figures or local pubs. Consideration should be given as to how to use these to encourage visitors to venture into other parts of the town and surrounding green/attractive areas including Sandbach Park. Other actions proposed should enhance the setting of the Town’s heritage assets and encourage people to dwell more around those at the Market Hall and The Cobbles and appreciate them. Better signage could also help direct visitors to these assets.

A number of the other local centres including Knutsford and Middlewich are also looking to make more of their heritage assets and it would be worth engaging with them to share best practice and also to consider whether there is scope to collaborate with them and other organisations to encourage linked trips for visitors.

Better utilisation of Sandbach Park and The Cobbles for events, markets and outdoor seating for bars and restaurants should also be considered, alongside more heritage focused events such as a May Day Market, with scope to link to showcasing the towns other assets.

There could be scope to engage with local businesses in local relevant events e.g. Bentley for a Transport Festival or Faders Brass Band. Local businesses may also be willing to provide expertise to support the Town to develop a local app or QR codes.

## Who

- Town Council
- CEC
- Local businesses
- Other towns with heritage and tourism assets
- Volunteers and community groups
- Marketing Cheshire

## Where

- Across Sandbach



Some of Sandbach’s heritage and tourism assets



## Action 4 supports the following objectives:

- To protect and enhance the open countryside setting
- To develop a safe, efficient and sustainable transport system
- To adapt to climate change through sustainable development and low carbon economy



## Toolkit Actions

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





# Action 5: Raising the town’s profile

## What

Create a platform from which to promote Sandbach’s great assets and numerous events to ensure that residents, visitors and local businesses are aware of what is on offer in the centre. This should support the centre to be recognised as the heart of the community.

## How

Whilst Sandbach already has a well-supported and reasonable profile proportionate to its size and offering, a number of actions could be considered to further raise the profile of the town:

Currently the Town Council provides basic information about Sandbach, key policy documents and meetings, local services and events/things to do on its website. However, many centres now have their own websites to showcase what their centres have to offer.

A new website for Sandbach has been approved by the Town Council and planned for launch in 2023. It will provide an improved single point for information that is relevant to existing and new residents; local businesses; community groups; and visitors. It should also provide information on:

- The existing offer in terms of shops, bars, restaurants etc
- Events programme
- 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

Consideration could be given, as has just been done in Wilmslow, to work with a local marketing company to develop a brand linked to their website and other media channels - [www.wilmslowswaybetter.co.uk](http://www.wilmslowswaybetter.co.uk). It showcases many exciting aspects of the town such as it’s wellbeing, Food and beverage offer, cinema, businesses, shopping and how to explore the wider area. The website was created by local businesses who wanted to support Wilmslow.

Next steps could include linking up with other partners’ websites such as CEC, other market centres with a similar profile and local visitor attractions in the wider area to enhance “footfall” on the Sandbach pages. The Cheshire Vibe business directory is already starting to do this for Sandbach.

Further, whilst Sandbach has a page on the Visit Chester and Cheshire website that promotes the town, additional content could be added to really showcase the town including its assets and facilities together with profiles of local businesses (and individuals to make it more personal), local walks, cycle routes etc. Links to relevant websites including community groups could also be provided.

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

- Wider promotion of the Town’s established programme of popular events – a “what’s on” in Sandbach
- Improved signage (physical and virtual via app/QR code) to stop people just passing through
- Establish Town Ambassadors and encourage brand loyalty
- Promotion through positive PR and good news stories
- Ensure that key messages from the Vitality Plan are fed into the Visitor Economy Strategy that is being prepared for Cheshire East
- Link in with Marketing Cheshire to see if there are any opportunities for collaboration
- Engage with other similar market towns and see if there is scope to showcase each other’s assets to broaden the appeal of the town to attract new visitors e.g. Leek, Buxton etc.
- Promotion of Sandbach via dedicated social media channels
- Provide information on things to do in Sandbach within the Library
- Engage with established community, volunteer and sporting groups to promote things to do and special interests

## Who

- Town Council
- Marketing Cheshire
- Local Businesses

## Where

- N/A



## Action 5 objectives:

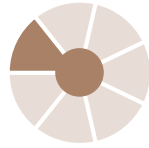
- To protect and enhance the open countryside setting
- To preserve and enhance the heritage and character of Sandbach
- To promote and maintain a thriving local economy and employment



## Toolkit Actions

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





## Action 6: Mobilising the business community (Priority from public consultation)

### What

Sandbach already has a strong network of local community groups who support the town and its events and amenities. It is recommended that this energy is harnessed and extended to the business community (those in the centre and in employment locations around its edges including at the new Capricorn Business Park). Engaging and consulting with these local stakeholders and businesses with these local stakeholders and 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

Whilst it is recognised that it is challenging without financial incentives, local stakeholders and businesses should be encouraged to collaborate and generate new opportunities to share customers, cross sell etc. Groundwork have recently been appointed by 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 Sandbach 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
- Promotion

Business networking could also identify "themes" where businesses can drive opportunities forward for example retailer and food and

beverage, hosting a fashion show or beauty event. This should not just be focused on retailers but should also target businesses on the local employment areas. It could also generate opportunities for business to business referrals.

This action could be supported through the establishment or reinstatement of business groups such as Traders and Retailer Group, Sandbach Partnership or Chamber of Commerce. In the interim, the Town Council is keen to work with the business community to build linkages and develop this action.

Other ways to engage local retailers and businesses could be through bringing them into events and initiatives such as extended opening hours for key events or window display competitions.

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

### Who

- Town Council
- Local businesses especially larger and dynamic/innovative/creative businesses. It is recognised that some retailers may be struggling but other local businesses may be keen to get involved and support their community
- Groundwork?

### Where

- Across Sandbach including the growing Capricorn Business Park



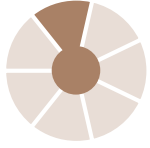
### Action 6 supports the following objectives:

- To promote and maintain a thriving local economy and employment
- To protect and maintain existing community amenities and add appropriate new services and facilities



### Toolkit Actions

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



## Action 7: Improve connections between key destinations and the centre (Priority from public consultation)

### What

Improving connections across the town and between key assets in the town centre, particularly by walking and cycling, to enhance the experience of the Sandbach and encourage activity between different town centre assets. The town has several assets located on the edge of its centre that are currently disconnected (both visually and perceptually). Improvements to the links which connect these assets to the town centre are already being identified by the Town Council's Access Working Group and will require working jointly with CEC to seek funding to deliver. Improved connections across Sandbach will encourage more sustainable movements as well as encouraging more trips back into the town centre.

### How

Improved connections can be achieved by the following

- Enhanced walking route from Sandbach Park, through Scotch Common and onto High Street
- Greening of Scotch Common - to provide a clear walking route but retaining car parking provision
- Provide better co-ordinated directional signage and maps, with distances where appropriate, between town centre locations and surrounding assets to ensure locals and visitors understand direction and time between key destinations
- Improve crossings adjacent to key assets to improve pedestrian accessibility
- Promote trails and linked activities across wider outdoor recreational destinations to encourage families to undertake cycle trips and outdoor activities

### Who

- CEC
- Town Council

### Where

- Connecting Sandbach Park and other key housing and employment assets to the centre.



### Action 7 supports the following objectives:

- To protect and enhance the open countryside setting
- To promote and maintain a thriving local economy and employment
- To develop a safe, efficient and sustainable transport system
- To protect and maintain existing community amenities and add appropriate new services and facilities
- To adapt to climate change through sustainable development and low carbon economy



### Toolkit Actions

- 4b - Better signage
- 4d - Planting in pots to improve space
- 14a - Tactical urbanism to manage traffic speeds and create more pedestrian friendly spaces
- 14c - Enhanced crossings





# Centre wide actions

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

**1. Appointment of CEC Centre Champion**

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

**2. Creation of a Centres Forum**

Establishment of forum where key representatives from each of the centres could come together on a regular basis to receive updates from CEC about common issues/ opportunities would be beneficial. It is also recognised that during the preparation of the Vitality Plans that a number of the centres are making a 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, it is recommended to ensure maintenance of public realm can be optimised that further engagement would be beneficial to agree how the resources of CEC, the Town Council and wider stakeholders could be targeted to support maintenance. Work to establish a more comprehensive schedule of local assets in each centre and who is responsible for their maintenance should be the starting point of drive for improved maintenance. Going forward any future capital investment must be supported by appropriate consideration as to how assets will be maintained over their lifetime. It is also important to recognise that better maintenance does not necessarily just relate to grass being cut regularly. In recognition of the importance of biodiversity, going forward it is anticipated that consideration will be given to allocating parcels of land to the “wild” to support biodiversity.

**5. Increasing importance of sustainability**

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

**6. Improved platform for communicating activities**

The preparation of the Vitality Plans has demonstrated that all of the centres are proactively trying to improve their centres. However it is recognised that many stakeholders will not be aware of all these efforts. Consideration therefore needs to be given as to how to amplify to more local residents, shoppers, visitors and businesses what

is going on. Consideration should be given as to how to enhance the current websites for example 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. marketing which has been harnesses by Wilmslow in setting up the Wilmslow’s Way Better brand and website). All centres should seek to better engage with their local businesses to determine how they can collaborate to support each other’s objectives. This type of collaboration can give centres a significant boost particularly when it happens around public realm (investment and maintenance), marketing and branding.

**8. Greater ownership of community assets**

A couple of Town Councils have taken responsibility for their community assets (both in terms of ownership and/or management). CEC is willing to engage with each of the Town and Parish Councils to discuss whether there could be benefits from greater local ownership of local assets. A process is in place to support this to happen. This is an area where centres who are already doing this could share pros and cons with other centres looking to take greater responsibility in their areas.



# 11 Delivery

## Governance and Delivery

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

Having established a range of potential projects that will support Sandbach 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 delivery 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 need to be recruited to support the pace of delivery of the Vitality Plan and supporting Action Plans.

## Communication and Engagement

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

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

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

- Local businesses
- Residents
- Local community and interest groups
- Other towns centres generally and specifically those who are focusing on common actions

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

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

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

Consideration could be given to the permanent appointment and role expansion of your currently part time temporary Market Manager to include wider marketing and engagement for the town.

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



Funding

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

- Articulate priorities for Sandbach to CEC - the Vitality Plan will be used to articulate local priorities to CEC to guide them in their negotiations with developers in respect of contributions linked to planning applications (especially to support improvements in cycling, public realm and public transport) and also in determining their own capital budgets. Formal adoption of the TCVP by key stakeholder organisations can help demonstrate common objectives and priorities for any party submitting funding bids.
- Support external funding bids – having a clear action plan which provides an evidence base and priorities that have been consulted upon is now essential for most funding bids. It is important to recognise that often funding bids have specific funding leads. In some cases, this may be CEC or Cheshire & Warrington LEP, in others it might need to be a community group. Whoever may be responsible for leading and submitting a specific funding application, demonstration of collaboration

- between stakeholders and community support is essential.
- Engage with local businesses – to determine whether there are actions that they can get involved in which align with their priorities for supporting their local communities.

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

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

Some local centres have raised the need for some support in both the identification of funding sources and writing of business cases to secure funding for your aspirations for the town, for example in respect of delivering a much enhanced public realm. There are various organisations that can both support this task and may offer some capacity including CEC, the LEP and bodies such as Groundwork UK who work with local partnerships.

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:

- Deliver a movement plan/reduce car dominance
- Mobilising the business community
- Improve connections between key destinations and the centre

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.

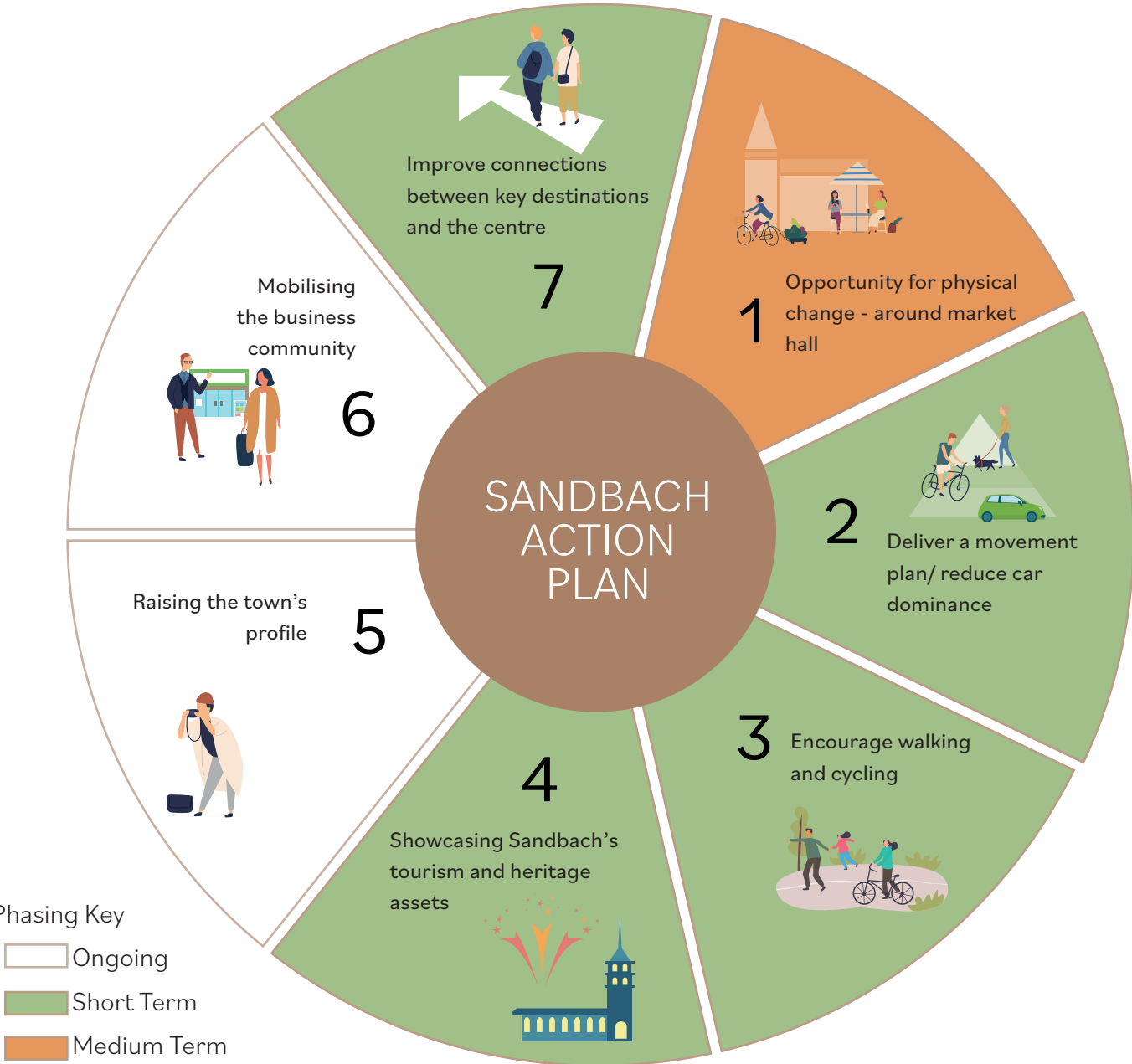
It is important to acknowledge that this indicative programme is not fixed and if specific sources of funding are identified the programme should be adapted to respond to the opportunity.

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 more temporary solutions can be tested in terms of their impact and determine whether a more permanent solution is required or desirable. Changes are much more likely to be embraced by businesses and supported by local residents if they know that ideas are being tested and monitored and if they do not work can be reverted back to how they were.

A broad phasing plan for the identified actions is identified below where short term relates to 1-2 years, medium 3-5 and long 5+ years.

- 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 reducing car dominance and encouraging walking and cycling





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 they arise. As such it will be important to monitor impact to determine whether the established vision and objectives are being met. Suggested key performance indicators (KPIs) and how they could be measured and how often are identified below:

KPI	How measured	Frequency
Footfall	External provider	Monthly
Number of vacancies	Town Clerk	Quarterly
New businesses opened	Town Clerk	Quarterly
Businesses engaged	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

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
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 particular place or area. For example, the length of time spent sat on a public bench.





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