Greater Bollin Trail - Options Assessment Report

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Cheshire East Council

Greater Bollin Trail

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Executive Summary

The Greater Bollin Trail will stretch east-west across the Cheshire Plains to the Peak District Fringe and provide a high-quality multi-use and primarily traffic-free walking, cycling, and wheeling connection to the Trans Pennine Trail at both the eastern end in Stockport and western end north of Dunham Massey. The route would provide connections between established trails, such as the Middlewood Way, Bridgewater Way and the Trans Pennine Trail, to public transport nodes and links to towns, villages and their communities and places of interest including Lyme Park, Quarry Bank Mill, the proposed Tatton Services, Tatton Park and Dunham Massey. In doing so, the trail will attract visitors to the area, boosting spend in the local economy while also providing connections to key trip attractors for local populations to walk, cycle and wheel to work, school or to enjoy the outdoors in addition to equestrian use. The route would also provide links to key employment connections such as Manchester Airport, the proposed Tatton Services, Adlington Business Park and Altrincham. The initial Business Case was positive with a benefit cost ratio of 3.5 and the total benefits were estimated at £49.3m for the entire route, made up of combined Active Mode Appraisal Tool (AMAT) and tourism benefits of £10.1m and £39.2m. There is an ambition to deliver the GBT as it will improve the attractiveness of the region which will encourage inward investment and enable businesses to prosper, it will also support local decongestion, thus improving air quality and the local environment. The Trail will also provide accessibility to rural areas and will provide access to the associated health benefits to walking and cycling. This Options Assessment Report (OAR) has been prepared on behalf of Cheshire East Council (CEC) to assess the feasibility of providing this multi-use trail, referred to as the 'Greater Bollin Trail (GBT)' due to its location in the River Bollin catchment.

A detailed evidence base was established to provide a foundation for development of the trail alignment, including consideration to where the trail may link to and through, including key elements such as existing amenities and trails, public transport and active travel networks as well as health, deprivation and disability data. Stakeholder engagement has been integral to the development of route options. Through site visits and workshop sessions, stakeholders supported development of the vision, objectives and route principles as well as emerging route options, and were engaged throughout to provide feedback as the routes progressed. Stakeholders included representatives from Local Authorities, the National Trust, Tatton Estates, British Cycling, Sustrans, Manchester Airports Group (MAG), Transport for Greater Manchester, National Highways and the British Horse Society.

The vision for the GBT has been established as:

To deliver a trail that provides a much-needed east-west connection between established trails and public transport nodes, directly linking towns, villages and their communities to tourist centres and key attractors. The trail will draw in visitors to the local area, boosting the economy and elevating the active travel offer of Cheshire East. The trail will be direct and attractive and primarily traffic-free for walkers, wheelers, equestrians, runners and cyclists; providing directional signage and barrier free sections to promote active travel and creating sustainable travel options which is accessible for all. There will also be health and wellbeing benefits for those who utilise the route.

Defining the Route

A two-stage approach was adopted to develop the proposed route alignment. Initially, route corridors were established based upon the route principles, key origins and destinations and likely use. These corridors were then split geographically into the western, central and eastern corridors due to differing characteristics.

The route corridors were assessed using a Multi-Criteria Assessment Framework (MCAF), which was developed in consultation with CEC and stakeholders. Corridors were scored based on their strategic fit and effectiveness, based

on a number of sub-criteria within each main category. The highest scoring options from each of the western, central and eastern corridors were taken forward for further assessment.

The second stage of assessment looked at sections within the corridors which reflected more specific alignments within the corridor area. The sections were identified through a number of methods including workshops, 1-2-1 meetings, site visits, previous work undertaken and desktop research. For the route sections identified, part of the investigative process was to note the key information and conditions of each section. For example, the opportunities and challenges each section presented were detailed, as was the ability for the section to meet LTN 01/20 compliance. Also noted were the existing routes and Public Rights of Way (ProW), the propensity to cycle within the area, the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, land ownership and links to the public transport network. Each section was scored for deliverability, adopting a similar MCAF.

The outcome of the MCAF resulted in a preferred route. A map of the preferred route is shown in Figure 0-1, with Figure 0-2 providing a visualisation of what the GBT alongside the River Bollin could look like, east of Wilmslow.

The Preferred Route

Western:
The route within the western corridor utilises the existing Manchester Airport tunnel, leaving the option open to link along Ashley Road or Marsh Lane. It is anticipated that Marsh Lane would be more desirable for users due to the quieter nature of the road and is part of the Cheshire Cycleway, however both options would benefit from being explored further and could require significant investment. The route provides connections from Manchester Airport to the Trans Pennine Trail, providing links to Tatton Park, the proposed Tatton Services and Dunham Massey. The route would mainly provide support to leisure use trips due to the rural nature of the area. The route would also provide some support to commuter usage for trips between Wilmslow, Handforth and Manchester Airport.

Central:
Two alignments through the central section of the route have been identified. The northern route section could be delivered as a standalone project, providing day trip opportunities that can be accessed by public transport from Handforth and Styal railway stations (as well as local buses). The northern route section would provide for utility trips as well as leisure trips as it connects to key businesses such as Handforth Dean retail park and Waters, local communities and a link to Quarry Bank Mill and Manchester Airport. Further to this, the northern route section would likely be a lower cost solution due to utilising existing infrastructure of the A555, Handforth Dean retail park or the future Handforth Garden Village. There is an option to link through Handforth Dean retail park, or through the Handforth Garden Village, which would be the preference if timescales for delivery of the GBT and Handforth Garden Village allowed.

The southern route section within the central corridor would be more suited for leisure use trips, providing a higher-quality solution, though would require significant infrastructure improvements and land acquisition or the agreement of access rights. Depending on funding available, the southern route section within the central corridor is preferred as it is more likely to draw in regional and national visitors to the local area, boosting the economy and elevating the active travel offer of Cheshire East. This would also be primarily traffic-free for walkers, wheelers, equestrians, runners and cyclists; promoting active travel and creating sustainable travel options which are accessible for all.

Eastern:
The route section within the eastern corridor connects Disley to the Middlewood Way through the National Trust site of Lyme Park, providing benefits to the community of Disley. This route section is largely functionable in its existing state, subject to landowner agreements and/ or changes to the legal status of ProW, however, has a

challenging topography and surfacing in parts, and therefore would require investment to bring it up to an accessible offer that is suitable for users of all ages.

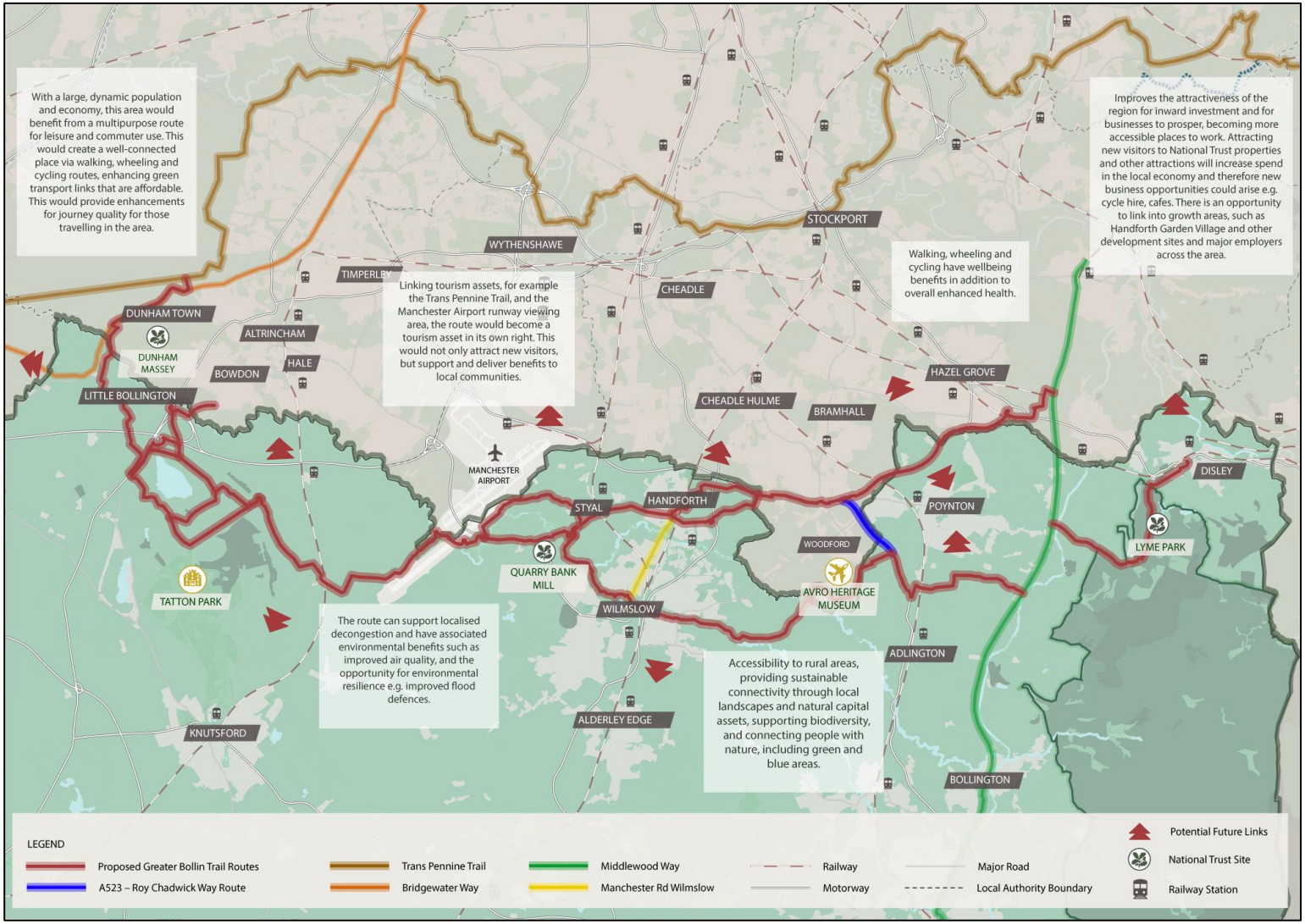

Figure 0-1 – GBT preferred route

Figure 0-2 – GBT indicative visualisation

Phasing

Phasing of the preferred route has been undertaken to establish which elements could be delivered in the short-term, medium-long term and long-term. The short-term phasing reflects the northern section option of the Central Corridor, utilising existing infrastructure and providing key links to leisure, tourism and employment opportunities. An initial high-level assessment of the anticipated benefits of this short-term phase has been undertaken. This is estimated to be approximately £12.4 million. The medium-term phasing reflects the Western and Eastern Corridors, with the Western Corridor ideally being delivered before the main construction phase of Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR). Both corridors would be subject to funding and land/ access rights. The long-term phasing reflects the southern section of the Central Corridor as further investigations into necessary infrastructure would be required, though, technical work and land access/ negotiations could be progressed during the short/medium-term to work towards the delivery of this corridor.

Next Steps

Recommended next steps include the securing of funding to further develop the scheme and scheme designs, as well as to integrate the ambitions for GBT into the next Local Transport Plan (LTP) and Local Plan via potential funding through the Local Infrastructure Plan. CEC should also continue to work alongside partners, including other Local Authorities, to deliver the preferred route and link into networks outside of Cheshire East as well as continuing the established Steering Group to work with stakeholders and progress the vision for a route.

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

This OAR documents the work undertaken as part of the project feasibility stage for the development of a multi-use trail broadly following the River Bollin in Cheshire East. The aim of the feasibility stage was to identify a preferred route alignment for the GBT that can be taken forward to the next stage of project development.

This study (stage 1 identified in Figure 1-1) was commissioned by CEC in November 2023 following a successful bid to undertake this stage of work using Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) monies. Potential future stages of project development are shown in the flowchart below.

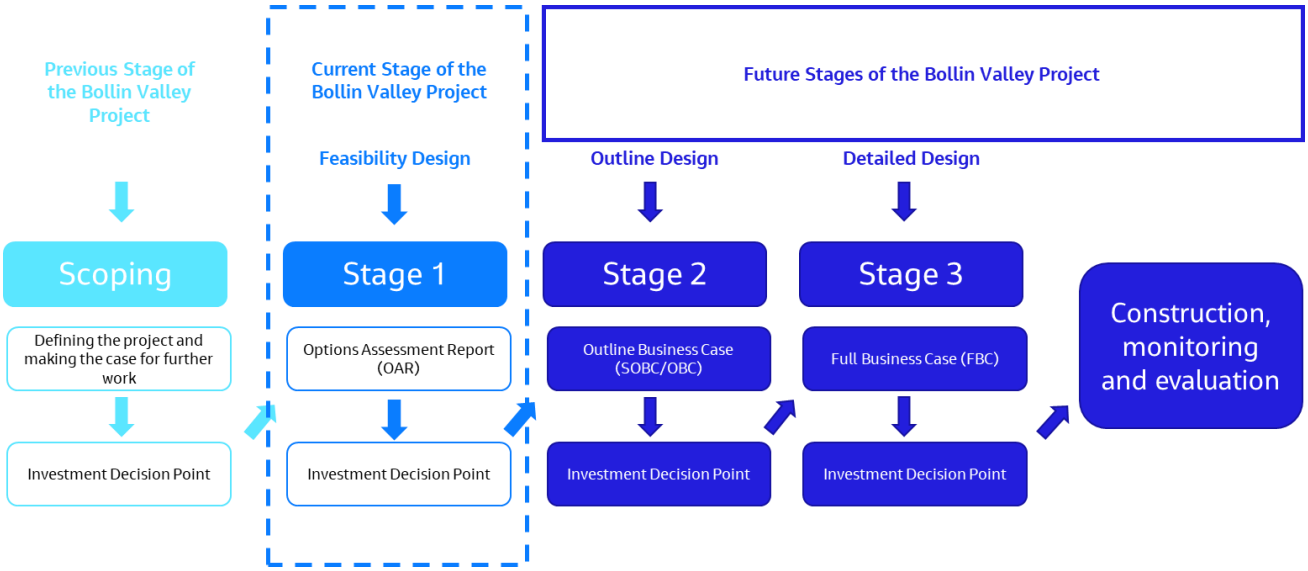

Figure 1-1: Work stages

In order to determine a preferred route alignment, various stages of work have been undertaken. This has included gaining an understanding of the existing policy context and data and evidence relevant to the GBT. Further, this included setting a vision and associated objectives to guide the GBT. Following this, various route corridors and route sections have been considered, which have been taken through an agreed MCAF where the highest scoring route section across each route corridor determined the preferred route. The route sections have then been prioritised and phased into the short-term, medium-term and long-term timescales.

1.2 Background and Project History

A desire for a high-quality walking, wheeling and cycling trail broadly following the River Bollin is not new. A scoping stage of work undertaken in Spring 2023 brought together initial development work undertaken by local stakeholders as well as information from existing routes in the area (e.g. the existing Bollin Valley Way and associated cycle trail). To aid the scoping stage, suggestions were captured from key stakeholders, complemented by a site visit and an interactive workshop. The project history is summarised below and visualised in Figure 1-2.

Figure 1-2: Project background

In recent years, the Tatton Group in partnership with the National Trust and a local volunteer/ regular cyclist have undertaken route optioneering work and tabled a potential route option, this is shown in Figure 1-3 overleaf. The scheme was known as the 'Bollin Cycle Way' and focussed on progressing a route that was considered to be deliverable, noting that significant sections of the route are to some degree already in place. The scheme was proposed to be located in the north of Cheshire East, close to the boundary with Greater Manchester. It ran between Dunham Massey in the west, past Manchester Airport and Handforth, and Lyme Park in the east.

As noted previously, in Spring 2023, Jacobs was commissioned by CEC to undertake a scoping stage of work, supported by a technical note, to draw together a summary of work undertaken to date for the development of a multi-use trail within the Bollin Valley area of Cheshire East. The aim of the scoping stage was to identify the strategic case for the scheme, including the need for intervention, the type of route and its audience, and the potential value that an active travel route could bring to the local economy. For example, across the route the combined Active Mode Appraisal Tool (AMAT) and tourism benefits for different the sections have been estimated to have a value of between £12 million and £50 million. A set of indicative route options were developed; this is shown in Figure 1-4. As part of this work, a site visit was undertaken in March 2023. Attendees included representatives from Jacobs, CEC, the National Trust, Tatton Group and British Cycling. The site visit helped determine the objectives and quality of a proposed route. A subsequent workshop was undertaken in March 2023 with various stakeholder groups including CEC, Manchester Airport, Tatton Group, Sustrans, the National Trust and local volunteers. The objectives of the meeting were to determine views on who the target audience is, what type of route is desired, key places the route could connect and why the route is needed.

The work concluded that that there are significant tourism benefits from providing the full route linking into the Trans Pennine Trail, and there are benefits to local employers such as Manchester Airport and that will prosper and become more accessible places to work. There will also be new business opportunities along the route such as cycle hire and cafes as well as rural diversification, both will attract new visitors to the area whilst supporting and delivering benefits to existing local communities. The initial Business Case was positive with a benefit cost ratio of 3.5 and the total benefits were estimated at £49.3m for the entire route, made up of combined Active Mode Appraisal Tool (AMAT) and tourism benefits of £10.1m and £39.2m. This calculation made no account of trips generated by major proposed changes such as the NPR proposal.

Following the technical note produced by Jacobs in April 2023, CEC commissioned Cheshire East Highways (CEH) to conduct a feasibility study into an improved walking and cycling route across two identified crucial sections of the planned 'Bollin Valley Way': Section 1 – Ashley Road from its junction with Rostherne Lane to the access point for Birtles Farm and Section 2 – From Birtles Farm, along Mobberley Public Footpath No.70 to Kell House Equestrian Centre, and continuing onto Smith Lane. These were chosen due to their interface with the proposed HS2 alignment. The objective of the report was to inform discussions with HS2 Limited at the time regarding measures to mitigate construction traffic and to analyse each of the sections and identify the most suitable options for the provision of a new walking, wheeling and cycling route which will ultimately provide a fundamental link in the Bollin Valley Way.

The above work and route alignments were the starting point for this OAR (stage 1).

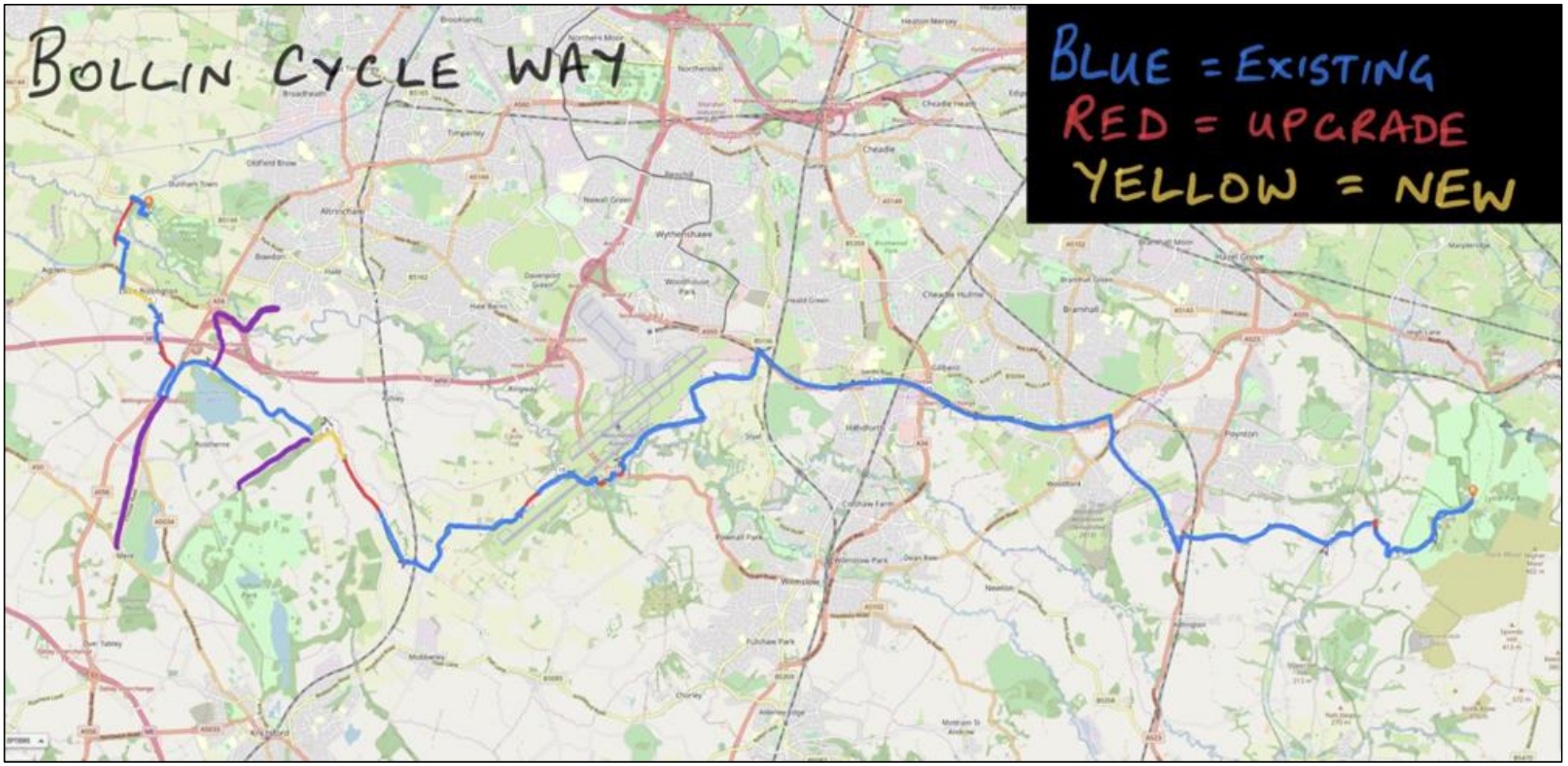

Figure 1-3: Indicative Bollin Cycle Way

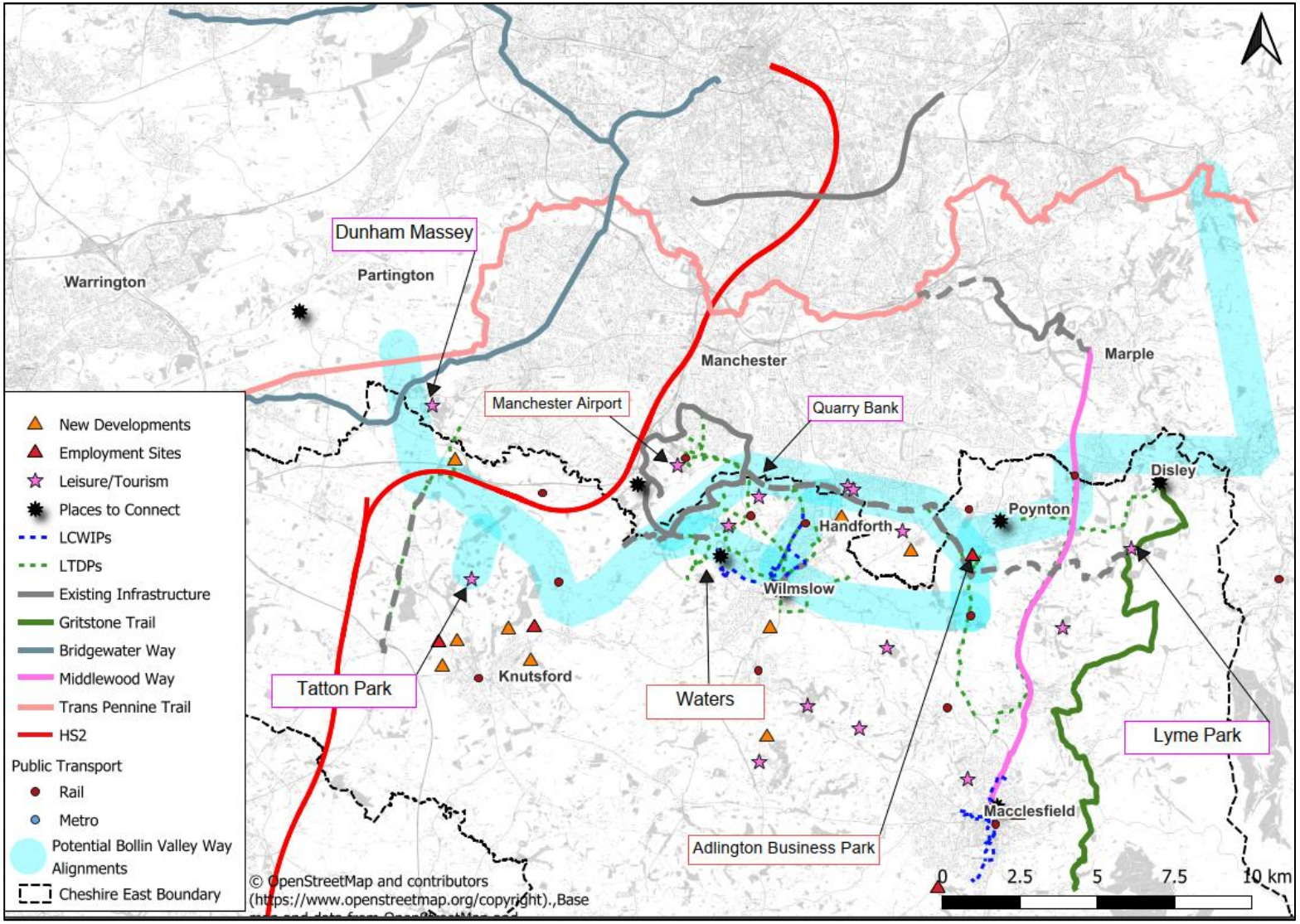

Figure 1-4 Scoping stage alignment of the GBT

1.3 Structure of the report

The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2 – Policy Review**: reviews relevant national, regional and local policy and guidance documents to gather an understanding of how the scheme would align with policy ambitions.
- **Section 3 – Evidence Base:** reviews baseline data across Cheshire East and surrounding Local Authorities to understand the area surrounding the GBT.
- **Section 4 – Vision and Objectives:** sets out the vision, objectives, and route principles of the GBT.
- **Section 5 – Options Development:** outlines the route corridors and route sections considered in each of the corridors.
- **Section 6 – Options Assessment:** sets out the Multi Criteria Assessment Framework (MCAF) and explains the results of the corridor sift and route sift to determine a preferred route.
- **Section 7 – Phasing:** establishes which elements of the route sections identified in the route sift could be delivered in the short-term, medium-long term and long-term.
- **Section 8 – Potential Funding Sources:** sets out options for future funding.
- **Section 9 – Recommendations and next steps:** details what the next steps should be regarding the preferred route and the way forward.

2. Policy Review

It is important that a strong evidence base for the project is created. As such, a review of relevant national, regional and local policy and guidance documents has been undertaken to gather an understanding of how the scheme would align with policy ambitions. As a result of this review, it is evident that this project and its objectives contribute towards several national, regional and local strategies set out below. The policy review is summarised in Table 2-1 below and the full policy review can be found in Appendix A.

Table 2-1: Policy review summary

Geography	Policy Title	Summary	Relevance
National	Department for Transport, Gear Change (2019)	Released in 2019 by the Department for Transport (DfT), this document outlines the plans to make England 'a great walking and cycling nation'. This is defined by the following quote from the document: '*Places will be truly walkable. A travel revolution in our streets, towns and communities will have made cycling a mass form of transit*'. Cycling and walking will be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030.	This policy is relevant as the GBT would create a safe, attractive and well-connected route for walking and cycling. The proposed route could be used by people to exercise and improve their health as well as support local businesses along the route as a result of increased footfall.
	Department for Transport, Cycle Infrastructure Design (LTN 01/20) (2020)	The Cycle Infrastructure Design (LTN 01/20) policy document provides guidance and good practice for the design of cycle infrastructure, in support of the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS). The standards set out in this document aim to help cycling become a form of mass transit in many more places and for it to be seen as a means of everyday transport.	This policy is relevant to the GBT as the route aims to comply with LTN 01/20 guidance. The guidance on off-carriageway routes is particularly relevant and will guide how the scheme is designed. The five core design principles and 22 summary principles will also be considered.
	The British Horse Society, Advice on Surface for Horses (July 2021)	Natural low growth vegetation and beaten earth with some stone embedded into the surface is the ideal multi-use surface for equestrian use. Drainage is also very important; the soil must drain well. To make it a good surface for equestrian use, it is important to understand horses, their physiology and the effect horses may have on a surface when choosing a surface for multi-use routes.	The route will be a multi-use scheme that could include equestrian use; therefore, this policy document is relevant to the GBT.
	The Combined Environmental Land Management Offer (January 2024)	The Combined Environmental Land Management Offer will contribute to the outcomes set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan released in January 2024 by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The range of actions within the plan will be more attractive to farmers and land managers and will help to achieve objectives such as 65% to 80% of landowners and farmers adopting nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030. The plan will also contribute to DEFRA's environmental outcomes on habitat restoration and creation, water quality and water demand, net zero, and farming in protected landscapes.	This scheme is relevant as Section 22b of the plan provides an action to "provide and maintain new permissive bridleways or cycle paths". The scheme considers improvements to existing PRoW as part of the route which is in line with this action.
Regional	Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission (2022)	The Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission was set up by the Subregional Leaders' Board in November 2020. Their aim is to build on previous progress to help Cheshire and Warrington realise its ambition of becoming 'the most sustainable and inclusive sub region in the UK'. This has led to a final report called 'Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington' being released which includes ambitious recommendations to reach this target.	This policy is relevant as the recommendations published by the commission touch on improving active travel and targeting opportunities with public investment, both of which the GBT will aim to do.
	Cheshire and Warrington LEP, Transport Strategy (2021)	The Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP) Transport Strategy is part of the sub regions Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) which covers the period up to 2040. The SEP identifies the need for growth, transport and connectivity as being central to Cheshire and Warrington's aspirations and for supporting economic development. The strategy highlights how effective transport networks will be crucial in continuing the success of the subregion's attractiveness as a place to live and do business.	This policy is relevant as the GBT will improve the attractiveness of the region and help with rural connectivity and movement across the region and boundaries. The scheme also aims to increase the levels of cycling and walking in the region all of which are objectives within the policy.
	Transport for Greater Manchester, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership, Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 (2021)	Consulted on in 2015, this strategy, led by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) on behalf of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (GMLEP), focuses on the long term challenges that Greater Manchester faces to strategise the best way forward to meet the Greater Manchester Strategy vision "*to make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world to grow up, get on and grow old*" and help create a successful resilient city region. The strategy highlights how transport is crucial to these plans and how an evidence based, long term	This policy is relevant to the scheme as some GBT route corridors could be within Greater Manchester's boundary. It also sets out how Greater Manchester will become pedestrian and cycle friendly - two modes of transport which the GBT is aiming to improve access to.

Geography	Policy Title	Summary	Relevance
Regional		vision has been used to come up with a 'right-mix' of transport modes for the network. This 'right-mix' includes 50% of journeys being made by sustainable transport and no net increase in motor vehicle journeys by 2040.	
	Manchester Airports Group, Sustainable Development Plan 2016 (2016)	The Manchester Airports Group (MAG) Sustainable Development Plan 2016 "*sets out the strategic context for the long term development of Manchester Airport*". It identifies the growth opportunities the airport has as well as the challenges it faces. This involves responsibly managing the environment and the impacts the airport has on communities nearby. The Plan also details MAG's Transformation Programme. This is its investment to create a world class airport with high quality facilities and services.	This policy is relevant as the GBT could be located nearby to Manchester Airport; therefore, it may impact upon the communities that are mentioned in the policy.
	TfGM, Bee Network (2023)	The Bee Network aims to make it easier to get around Greater Manchester by bus, tram, train, walking, wheeling or cycling. Greater Manchester buses are being franchised so that they will be controlled under the Bee Network framework which TfGM hope will improve the service and increase patronage.	The Bee Network is relevant to the scheme as the network is trying to improve cycling, wheeling and walking links in Greater Manchester. The GBT also intends to achieve this and with parts of the GBT route corridors could be within Greater Manchester, which could connect into the wider Bee Network.
	Warrington Council, Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39 (2023)	The Warrington Local Plan, adopted in December 2023, provides a statutory planning framework for the entire borough between 2021/22 and 2038/39. Within the plan is a vision, range of objectives and an overall strategy for development. Part of this is transport safeguarding.	This policy is relevant to the scheme as the proposed route could help to improve transport links towards Warrington.
Local	CEC, Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 (2017)	Adopted in July 2017, the CEC Local Plan is the most important tool the Council has for shaping development in Cheshire East. It is an overall vision for shaping strategy for development for the period until 2030. With this plan, the Council hope to maintain its reputation as the best place to live in the North West. The plan's functions include setting planning policy, allocating sites for development and providing guidance on making decisions on planning applications.	This policy is relevant to the GBT as a majority of the route will be in Cheshire East. The policy also helps to make decisions on planning applications and addresses protecting and improving important open areas. As a result, the GBT will need to be guided by this plan.
	CEC, Local Transport Plan 2019-2024 (2019)	Adopted in October 2019, the Local Transport Plan (LTP) considers all forms of transport for the five-year period between 2019-2024. It provides a framework for how 'transport will support wider policies to improve Cheshire East's economy, protect its environment and make attractive places to live, work and play'. It also outlines how transport will support the long-term goals of Cheshire East. As part of the LTP, the Council is taking a range of actions. To complement this, Local Transport Development Plans (LTDPs) have been developed which set out a range of potential schemes to improve the transport network to support towns and surrounding areas. The current LTP was prepared pre-Covid and prior to many recent changes in transport policy, numerous non-transport policies have also come forward which impact transport. CEC is now well placed to undertake a significant update of the LTP to maintain a document that is robust and relevant to national, regional and local priorities.	This policy is relevant to the scheme as the route will be located predominantly in Cheshire East, the scheme is also part of the transport network which will cover walking and cycling as potentially equestrian, and therefore the GBT will need to be developed in line with the LTP. The scheme will also hopefully increase the attractiveness of Cheshire East which links to the aims of the LTP.
	CEC, Cheshire East Council Environment Strategy 2020-2024 (2020)	The policy details how Cheshire East are committed to reducing emissions and becoming carbon neutral by 2025. Cheshire East set out a number of goals which they hope to achieve between the period 2020-2024. Since this pledge, the target year has been revised and reset for 2027, however the Council still aim for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2045.	This policy is relevant to the GBT as the proposed scheme is looking to increase active travel numbers along the route which is largely located in Cheshire East. This will directly contribute to one of the goals within the Environment Strategy to improve the availability and use of sustainable transport and increase active travel use. Increased active travel use will also in turn help to reduce emissions and create an improved environment.
	CEC, The Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the population of Cheshire East 2023 – 2028 (2023)	The Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy has three main roles. It is a recommitment to the priorities of the previous strategy which in some cases have been exacerbated by the pandemic. It has a new commitment to address challenges that have emerged since the pandemic and finally it is a pledge to different, more effective and sustainable ways of working in Cheshire East for the long-term.	This strategy is relevant to the GBT as aims to meet the visons and aspirations of the strategy. Particularly, improving physical and mental health and helping people to have a good quality of life, to be healthy and happy.
	CEC, Cheshire East UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan Overview (2022)	The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a "central pillar" of the governments Levelling Up agenda. It aims to "*advance pride in place and increase life chances across the UK*" by investing in communities and place, supporting local businesses as well as people and skills. The UKSPF allocation for Cheshire East is ~£12.4 million with a further ~£1.5 million for Adult Numeracy programme (Multiply). This funding must be spent by March 2025.	This policy is relevant as the GBT stage 1 work has been funded by the SPF and further work could be done to explore any future funding rounds. Investing in community and place and will support local businesses along the route. It may also help to improve the pride in place of the area.

Geography	Policy Title	Summary	Relevance
Local	CEC, Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy 2023 – 2028 (2023)	The strategy details the ambitions for Cheshire East's visitor economy to grow to over £1 billion, with CEC playing an important role to meet this ambition. CEC will need to ensure there is a rich cultural offer in Cheshire East to attract visitors. This is supported by Marketing Cheshire who are the local Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) and are a part of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).	This strategy is relevant as the GBT can be viewed as a visitor attraction and developing an improved sense of place and can be viewed as strengthening the pull of the area. Along the route there are also various opportunities for businesses to thrive and incentives for investment.
	CEC, Cheshire East Green Space Strategy Update 2020 (2020)	The Cheshire East Green Space Strategy Update takes the aspirations set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Plan and seeks to make them a reality. The strategy focuses on the provision of good quality green space and proactive management of existing green space to leave an important legacy for Cheshire East's communities.	This strategy is relevant as the GBT is intended to enable people to access the green spaces within Cheshire East. The route will also be a good space for people to improve their health and wellbeing through active travel, and within green spaces which has further benefits.
	CEC, Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011-2026 (2011)	Closely integrated to the LTP, the Cheshire East Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) strategy builds on the work of the previous ROWIP in partnership with many stakeholders both internal and external to CEC. Externally these include landowners, Parish Councils, community groups and the Cheshire Local Access Forum.	The policy is relevant as PRoWs are integral to encouraging people to walk, cycle and horse ride. The GBT will consider utilising and improving the PRoW network.
	CEC, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (Wilmslow) (2021)	Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) provide a strategic approach to identify walking and cycling improvements at a local level, CEC are utilising them to achieve a "step change" in the levels of walking and cycling across Cheshire East. The plan sets out ambitious plans for a high-quality walking and cycling network in Wilmslow, it sets the standards for how walking and cycling should be planned and delivered in Cheshire East in line with LTN 01/20.	This policy is relevant to the GBT as the route could provide access to Wilmslow and will contribute to the high-quality cycling and walking infrastructure of the area. The scheme aims to be designed to the standard of LTN 01/20 in parts, which is a requirement of any infrastructure relevant to the LCWIP.
	CEC, Cycling Strategy 2017-2027 (2017)	The cycling strategy sets out an ambitious vision for "*a network of high quality strategic cycle routes which connect local communities and key growth areas*", leisure opportunities and the natural environment will also be better connected.	This policy is relevant to the GBT as the trail will aim to encourage cycling in Cheshire East by providing a safe and high-quality cycle route which can better connect communities and key growth areas. The route can be used to attract more people to cycle and with a high quality design can improve the public perception of cycling.
	CEC, Carbon Neutrality Action Plan 2020-2025 (2020)	In May 2019, CEC committed to becoming carbon neutral as a Council by 2025, with a further pledge made in January 2022 to make Cheshire East a carbon neutral borough by 2045. Since this pledge, the target year has been revised and reset for 2027, however the Council still aim for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2045. Following the Notice of Motion relating to Climate Change which was agreed by Elected Members of CEC in May 2019, the CEC Carbon Neutrality Plan was commissioned and released in response. The Carbon Neutral Action Plan was approved in May 2020 which sets out the actions that should be considered to support the Council's carbon neutrality target.	This policy is relevant as reducing the number of car journeys and increasing the number of journeys by foot and cycle can help reduce Cheshire East's emissions. The scheme can provide a route with which cycling and walking are made easier and a more attractive option, which may increase the number of people using these modes.
	CEC, Local Transport Development Plans (LTDP) - Handforth, Knutsford, Poynton and Wilmslow (2022)	Following adoption of the Cheshire East Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) in October 2019, work began on developing 11 LTDPs across the borough. This included Handforth, Knutsford, Poynton and Wilmslow which the GBT could connect. For all four areas, the respective LTDP identifies transport challenges and opportunities, provides a package of transport schemes to be developed and gives a framework for the Council to seek funding for the packages of schemes that have been detailed.	This policy is relevant to the GBT as it will look to address some of the objectives within each area, for example it will look to improve transport corridors for walking and cycling and support access to certain areas. It will also improve leisure routes and access routes for rural communities.
	Town Centre Vitality Plans for Wilmslow, Knutsford, Handforth and Poynton	CEC is committed to supporting the vitality and viability of all towns in the borough, if the opportunity for funding arises CEC have proposals agreed within their Town Centre Vitality Plans (TCVPs).	This policy is relevant to the scheme as the GBT could connect these towns which can attract people to the towns and support their vitality and viability.

3. Evidence Base

3.1 Introduction and Data Sources

To progress the GBT OAR, a review of baseline data across Cheshire East and surrounding Local Authority areas including Manchester, Trafford, Salford, High Peak, Warrington and Stockport has been gathered and analysed. This analysis of data provides a useful baseline to understand the area surrounding the GBT, which has been taken forward in the subsequent stages of work. To provide context and an understanding of the area being looked at, the 'previously proposed trail' corridor (as shown in Figure 1-4 as the scoping stage alignment) has been included on the maps throughout this section.

A majority of the data used in the evidence base is taken from the 2021 Census, which is the latest data available, noting its limitations due to this taking place during COVID-19.

This section provides a summary of the review of the baseline data; the full review includes the data listed below and analysis can be found in Appendix B.

- Trails
- Travel to Work
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation
- Health, Deprivation and Disability
- Propensity to Cycle Tool (PCT)
- Strava Metro
- Amenities
- Identification of Desire Lines
- Public Transport
- Road Network
- Public Rights of Way

3.2 Amenities and Existing Trails

Throughout the Local Authorities surrounding the GBT, there are multiple existing trails. The GBT also passes through many key areas such as Handforth, Wilmslow, Poynton and Styal and could provide links into development sites such as Handforth Garden Village and Woodford Garden Village, as well as amenities such as National Trust properties, Adlington Business Park and Manchester Airport. Figure 3-1 outlines the existing and proposed trails and which key areas, infrastructure, development sites and amenities the GBT could connect into.

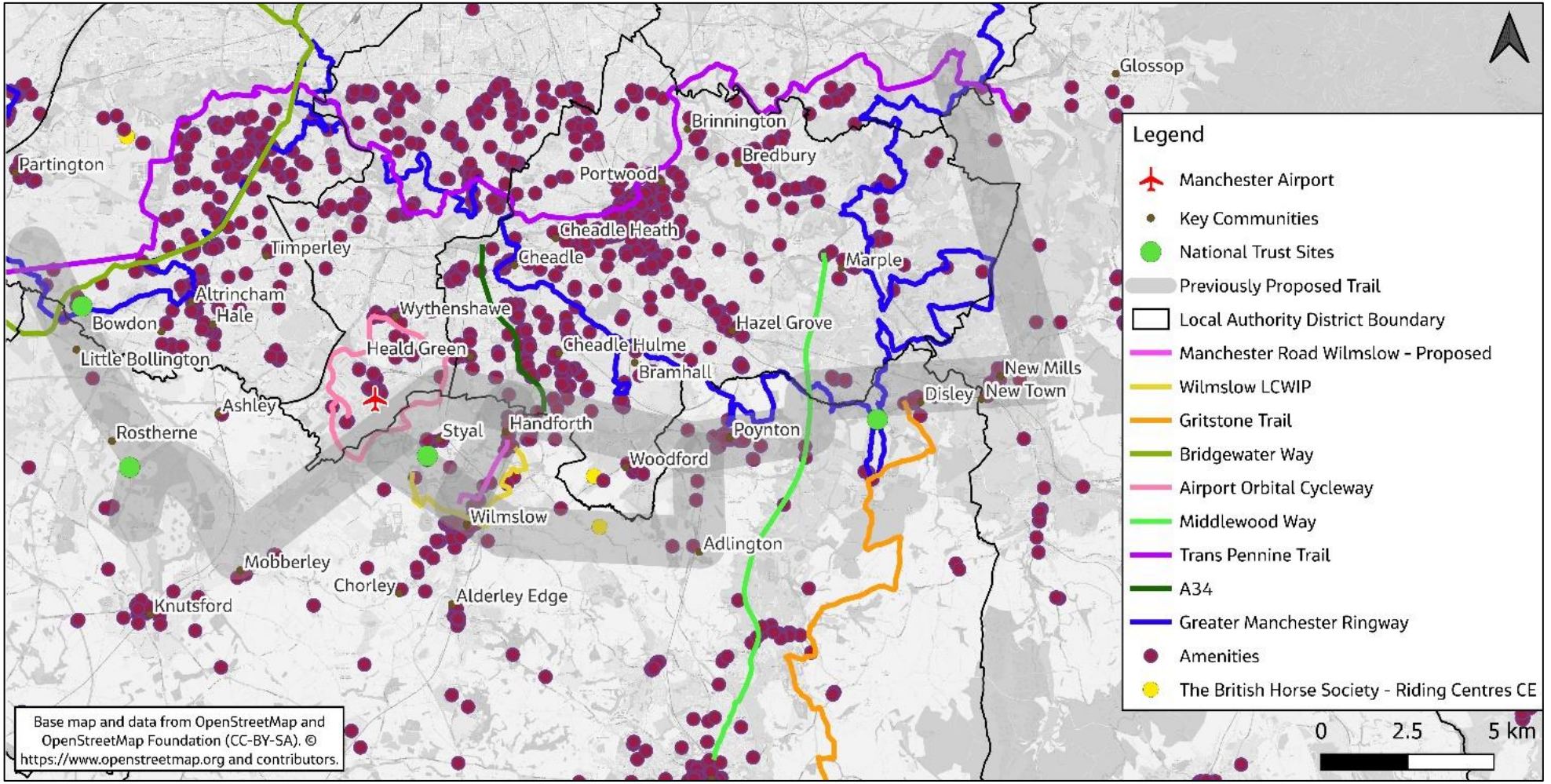

Figure 3-1: Existing and proposed trails, infrastructure, key areas, development sites and amenities

Figure 3-1, illustrates five existing trails (Gritstone Trail, Airport Orbital Cycleway, Middlewood Way, GM Ringway and Trans Pennine Trail) and one proposed infrastructure improvement (A34) alongside two proposed active travel infrastructure schemes (Manchester Road Wilmslow and Wilmslow LCWIP) within the area that the GBT could link into. The Bridgewater Way is being completed in sections, however the section of the route associated with the GBT has not yet been completed. There are also numerous key areas, and a high concentration of development sites and amenities along the route which are labelled. These include but are not limited to:

- Educational establishments;
- Healthcare facilities;
- Leisure facilities;
- Local services;
- Key businesses – such as AstraZeneca, Manchester Airport, Waters, as well as many located at Adlington Business Park;
- Development sites – such as Tatton Services, Handforth Garden Village, Timperley Wedge and Woodford Garden Village; and
- Tourist attractions - such as National Trust properties (Quarry Bank Mill, Tatton Park, Lyme Park, Dunham Massey Park), the Carrs Park, Avro Heritage Gardens and Adlington Hall and Gardens.

Therefore, it would be beneficial for the GBT to link into the existing trails and proposed schemes, and potentially provide an alternative link through Cheshire and south Manchester from the Trans Pennine Trail and the other existing trails such as the Middlewood Way. The number and variety of amenities that the proposed GBT could link into would also improve connectivity across Cheshire, both for utility and leisure users. This would create a network of routes for walking, wheeling and cycling, enhancing both the active travel and active leisure offers.

3.3 Public Transport and the Active Travel Network

Figure 3-2 below visualises the public transport and active travel network within the study area. For public transport, this includes Cheshire East bus stops and railway stations and TfGM Metrolink stops. For active travel, the map includes the National Cycle Network (NCN) and PRoW alongside cycling levels from the PCT for government target (near market). It will be important to link north into Greater Manchester, one way this can be done is through linking into the Beeways which are part of the TfGM Bee Network.

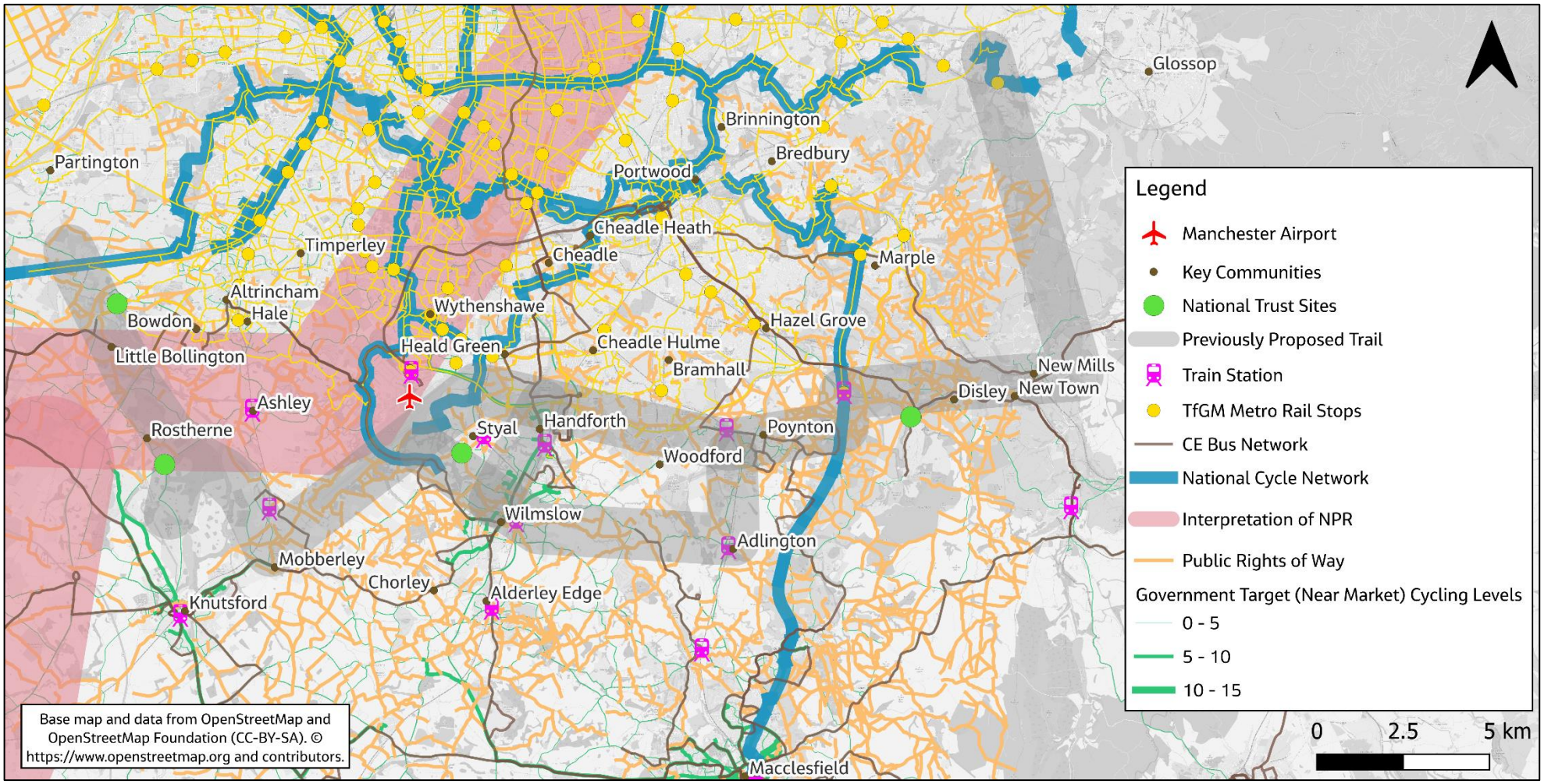

Figure 3-2: Public transport and active travel network around the GBT

Cheshire East has a public transport network that serves the area through bus and rail services. The Cheshire East bus network connects neighbouring towns to each other, including Macclesfield, Knutsford, Wilmslow, Poynton and Disley, as well as providing cross border connections between Cheshire East, Greater Manchester, Warrington, and Derbyshire. Although these Cheshire East towns all have rail stations, there is limited east to west rail connectivity. The GBT could support east to west connectivity in the borough.

TfGM have a Metrolink network that connects areas across Greater Manchester. As shown, there are various Metrolink stops in the vicinity of the GBT corridor. If progressed, it would be beneficial for the GBT to connect into public transport nodes such as Metrolink Stops, railway stations and bus stops. This would provide greater accessibility to the GBT, enabling a wider reach of people to access the trail for leisure trips.

The NPR corridor is an interpretation of the NPR corridor of interest of a possible route which has not yet been approved or confirmed as shown on Figure 3-2. However, this shows that an NPR route could interface with the GBT, therefore, consideration will need to be given to this route and CEC should work with NPR to come to a solution on the GBT alignment in its vicinity.

The National Cycling Network (NCN) is a UK-wide network of signed paths and routes for walking, wheeling and cycling. As shown in Figure 3-2 there is an opportunity for the GBT to link into the NCN and potentially become part of the NCN in the future. This link would provide greater access south further into Cheshire, north into Manchester and west towards Warrington and Cheshire West.

The PCT is a web-based mapping tool that was designed to help prioritise investments and interventions to promote cycling. Cycling potential is calculated using a function based on trip distance (people are likely to cycle a shorter trip compared to a longer trip) and the hilliness (people are more likely to cycle on flatter routes and be discouraged by trips involving slopes). Figure 3-2 shows the greatest propensity to cycle can be seen within some of the key towns within Cheshire East that are close to the proposed GBT such as Poynton, Wilmslow, Adlington and Handforth. This suggests that linking into these communities are potentially the best places to focus investment in, as they are likely to experience the greatest uptake in cycling and therefore unlock the most benefits.

PRoW are routes that allow the public to walk, cycle and ride along, depending on the legal status of the route. As shown in Figure 3-2, there is a vast network of PRoW within the area, and, whilst the majority of PRoW have the legal status of public footpath and are therefore only available to walkers and wheelers, this may present an opportunity for the GBT to link into this network and potentially upgrade the PRoW network or change the status of the type of PRoW that currently exists.

4. Vision and Objectives

4.1 Introduction

This section sets out the vision, objectives, and route principles of the GBT. Agreeing the vision, objectives and route principles early on in the project provided a foundation for the work going forward, and helped to gain a consensus around what the GBT would aim to achieve. Stakeholders were engaged on the vision, objectives and route principles at a virtual workshop held on the 7th February 2024, where stakeholders were invited to share their feedback. This feedback was considered and taken into account where appropriate.

4.2 Vision

The vision for the GBT is:

To deliver a trail that provides a much-needed east-west connection between established trails and public transport nodes, directly linking towns, villages and their communities to tourist centres and key attractors. The trail will draw in visitors to the local area, boosting the economy and elevating the active travel offer of Cheshire East. The trail will be direct and attractive and primarily traffic-free for walkers, wheelers, equestrians, runners and cyclists; providing directional signage and barrier free sections to promote active travel and creating sustainable travel options which is accessible for all. There will also be health and wellbeing benefits for those who utilise the route.

Some of the potential benefits that the trail could deliver locally include the following. These would contribute to a significant number of CEC strategies as identified in Section 2 of this report.

Accessibility to rural areas, providing sustainable connectivity through **local landscapes and natural capital assets**, supporting biodiversity, and **connecting people with nature**, including green and blue infrastrcuture.

Walking, wheeling and cycling have **wellbeing benefits** in addition to overall **enhanced health**.

With a large, dynamic population and economy, this area would benefit from a **multipurpose route for leisure and commuter use**. This would create a **well-connected place** via walking, wheeling and cycling routes, enhancing green transport links that are affordable. This would provide **enhancements for journey quality** for those travelling in the area.

Linking tourism assets, for example the Trans Pennine Trail, and the Manchester Airport runway viewing area, the route would become a **tourism asset** in its own right. This would not only **attract new visitors**, but support and deliver benefits to local communities.

Improves the attractiveness of the region for **inward investment** and for **businesses to prosper**, becoming more accessible places to work. Attracting new visitors will increase spend in the local economy and therefore new business opportunities could arise e.g. cycle hire, cafes. There is an opportunity to **link into growth areas**, such as Handforth Garden Village and other development sites and major employers across the area.

The route can **support localised decongestion** and have associated **environmental benefits** such as improved air quality, and the opportunity for environmental resilience e.g. improved flood defences.

4.3 Objectives

A number of objectives have been developed for the GBT which are set out below. The starting point for developing these objectives were those identified in the scoping stage of work. These have since been updated in light of the evidence base as well as discussions with CEC and stakeholders to understand the outcomes they would want to see from the GBT.

During a virtual workshop (7th February 2024), stakeholders were encouraged to share their feedback on a set of draft objectives. This feedback was analysed and fed into revised objectives above, where appropriate. Some feedback from the workshop was:

- Utility use of the trail should be considered as there is a need to connect communities with leisure and employment.
- The trail needs to be accessible to a mixture of abilities and communities. Examples to consider include multisensory sections and different hire schemes for different abilities.
- Some people may only want to do use shorter routes, providing shorter loops around communities within the overall route would be beneficial.

As a result of this feedback, the objectives were updated to consider utility use of the trail, providing connectivity to/ with local communities and job opportunities and key public transport nodes, as well as reflecting potential use of the trail by runners and equestrians.

4.4 Route Principles

The purpose of identifying the route principles was to provide a clear direction for the GBT options identified and the work going forward. Agreement of the route principles provided a consensus on the purpose of the route. The route was split into western, central and eastern sections to acknowledge differences across the geography of the route. A number of key aspects were considered, as listed below:

- Where would the route connect?

- What is its purpose?
- What is the target audience?
- What standard are we aiming for?
- What are we trying to deliver?
- Initial issues (challenges)
- Opportunities identified

The route has been identified to be family-friendly, high-quality and multipurpose for both leisure and commuting, however as discussed in the in-person workshop it is important to understand that different sections of the route may have different purposes and different target markets. Whilst it will be difficult to make the whole trail accessible for all abilities, the importance of accessible sections to accommodate for all users of all ages and mobilities was highlighted. Whilst walking, cycling and wheeling are the primary audience for the trail, horse riding is a popular local leisure pursuit, so for particular sections, the requirements of horse riders should be considered and integrated into the design where possible. It should be noted however that it could be difficult to achieve a route for both cyclists and horse riders unless there is sufficient space for both surfaces, as this would require a footprint of at least a width of 7-8 metres. There is potential for conflicting needs and requirements between users irrespective of national guidance and standards.

The design must also be sensitive to the local environment and surrounding area as there are currently areas which are less pleasant to use due to their proximity to busy highways such as the A555. Within the LTN 01/20 guidance, quiet ways are outlined as lanes with fewer than 1,000 vehicles per day, and these may be appropriate in some areas of the route, subject to further investigation. Incorporating lighting into the route is also preferred where feasible to provide guidance and comfort to users 24/7, though there are areas where this could not be accommodated, such as in proximity to Manchester Airport and sensitive rural countryside locations.

To develop the route principles, several datasets and documentation were utilised. This included best practice such as LTN 01/20, previous work undertaken during the scoping stage and discussions with both the client and key stakeholders. By understanding all of these principles, it provided the necessary information to gain a consensus on what the purpose of the route should be and the direction for work going forward. Table 4-1 sets out the route principles separated into the three different sections of the route: Western, Central and Eastern.

Table 4-1: Route principles

		Western (Dunham Massey to west of Manchester Airport)	Central (West of Manchester Airport to Woodford)	Eastern (Woodford to Trans Pennine Trail)
Where would the route connect?	Town/ Employment/ Residential	• Manchester Airport • Altrincham (via proposed Tatton Services near to Bowdon Roundabout) • Wythenshawe	• Waters, Manchester Airport, Amazon • Wilmslow or Handforth • Styal • Handforth Garden Village • Cheadle	• Adlington Business Park • Poynton/ Woodford • Disley • Stockport
	Leisure	• Dunham Massey • Tatton Park • Manchester Airport	• Quarry Bank Mill • Styal	• Lyme Park
	Trails	• Trans Pennine Trail • Bridgewater Way • Manchester Airport Orbital Cycleway • GM Ringway - Greater Manchester's Walking Trail	• Manchester Airport Orbital Cycleway • GM Ringway - Greater Manchester's Walking Trail	
What is its purpose?		• Leisure and access to employment (Manchester Airport) • Mitigation for NPR	• Equally leisure and commuter • Access to employment (Manchester Airport, Waters, Amazon, employment areas in Wilmslow/ Handforth) • Travel to school	• Primarily leisure, with some commuter • Access to employment (Adlington Business Park) • Travel to school
What is the target audience?		• Walking/ running / wheeling/ cycling / equestrians (where possible) • Families (including young people of all ages) • Accessible inclusive route for all types of cycle including e-bikes	• Walking/ running / wheeling/ cycling / equestrians (where possible) • Families (including young people of all ages) • Accessible inclusive route for all types of cycle including e-bikes	• Walking/ running / wheeling/ cycling / equestrians (where possible) • Families (including young people of all ages) • Accessible inclusive route for all types of cycle including e-bikes
What standard are we aiming for? What are we trying to deliver?		• Consideration of the five core design principles (coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive) and to be LTN 01/20 compliant where possible, however it may be appropriate to relax requirements in some areas given the nature of the area, noting elements such as lighting • Standards from BHS may differ to LTN 01/20 – these will also need to be taken into consideration if the trail is able to provide surfacing for horses and their riders • Off-road / away from the road for as much of the route as possible • Route to include complementary features such as benches, interpretation boards, cycle parking etc. and improve nature along the way (considering biodiversity and potential impacts on current ecosystems) • Route to connect to play spaces and picnic areas • Route to consider conservation issues, especially in terms of industrial history • Route to feel safe for a variety of users, especially those most vulnerable	• Consideration of the five core design principles (coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive) and to be LTN 01/20 compliant in in built up areas, however it may be appropriate to relax requirements in some areas given the nature of the area, noting elements such as lighting • Standards from BHS may differ to LTN 01/20 – these will also need to be taken into consideration if the trail is able to provide surfacing for horses and their riders • Off road where possible, but some will likely be alongside roads • Route to include complementary features such as benches, interpretation boards, cycle parking etc. and improve nature along the way (considering biodiversity and potential impacts on current ecosystems) • Route to connect to play spaces and picnic areas • Route to consider conservation issues, especially in terms of industrial history • Route to feel safe for a variety of users, especially those most vulnerable	• Consideration of the five core design principles (coherent, direct, safe, comfortable and attractive) and to be LTN 01/20 compliant in built up areas, however it may be appropriate to relax requirements in some areas given the nature of the area, noting elements such as lighting • Standards from BHS may differ to LTN 01/20 – these will also need to be taken into consideration if the trail is able to provide surfacing for horses and their riders • Off road where possible, but some will likely be alongside roads. • Route to include complementary features such as benches, interpretation boards, cycle parking etc. and improve nature along the way (considering biodiversity and potential impacts on current ecosystems) • Route to connect to play spaces and picnic areas • Route to consider conservation issues, especially in terms of industrial history • Route to feel safe for a variety of users, especially those most vulnerable
Initial issues identified at this early stage (challenges)		• Spodegreen Lane to Reddy Lane - Surface, permissive use • Bridgewater canal - Surface, permissive use of towpath • Bridgewater Way to Trans Pennine Trail - Surface, permissive use • Topography/ route legal status / land ownership unknowns/ engineering challenges/ maintenance/ lack of complementary facilities such as cycle storage and cycle parking	• A555 – busy route and not aimed at leisure uses/high standard route • Airport service road east of A538 - Access permission around gate • Crossing of A538 - Safe crossing of dual carriageway • Airport service road west of A538 - Access permission around barrier • Fire station path - Surface and width (footpath)	• Link from Macclesfield canal to Shrigley Road - Existing steps are too steep/narrow. • Topography/ route legal status / land ownership unknowns/ engineering challenges/ maintenance/ lack of complementary facilities such as cycle storage and cycle parking

	Western (Dunham Massey to west of Manchester Airport)	Central (West of Manchester Airport to Woodford)	Eastern (Woodford to Trans Pennine Trail)
	• If equestrian use is considered, difference in surfacing requirements and widths available may cause challenges and additional cost	• Path beyond landing system field - Surface (footpath), access past gate • Kell House Farm to Birtles Farm – Surface • Birtles Farm to South Lodge - Surface, permissive use • South Lodge to Birkinheath Lane - Surface, permissive use • Mereside Farm to Hope Cottage - Surface (footpath) • Topography/ route legal status / land ownership unknowns/ engineering challenges/ maintenance/ lack of complementary facilities such as cycle storage and cycle parking • If equestrian use is considered, difference in surfacing requirements and widths available may cause challenges and additional cost	• If equestrian use is considered, difference in surfacing requirements and widths available may cause challenges and additional cost
Opportunities identified	• Trans Pennine Trail • Bridgewater Way • A new bridge over the River Bollin at the Swan with Two Nicks in Little Bollington • GM Ringway - Greater Manchester's Walking Trail • Sustrans' aspiration to create the Greater Manchester Circular route (Route 601) • New business opportunities along the route • Potential additional spend in the local economy along the route • Localised decongestion – cultural shift • Personal affordability to travel • Promotion of cycle hire	• New bridge structure over the A34 connecting the Handforth Garden Village development and Handforth railway station (S106 funding) • High-quality cycle route from Handforth town centre alongside the B5358 Wilmslow Road connecting to the cycle network in Stockport (SEMMMS complementary measures funding). Stockport has plans to connect this to Cheadle within Greater Manchester • An upgraded crossing point on the A538 Altrincham Road at Manchester Airport fire station access road • The quiet road along the B5569 (previously A556 Chester Road), which is a lower speed lower traffic road with segregated facilities for walking and cycling • The Greenway along A538 Altrincham Road from Waters Roundabout to Nansmoss Lane • Sustrans' aspiration to create the Greater Manchester Circular route (Route 601) • GM Ringway - Greater Manchester's Walking Trail • Handforth Garden Village • Manchester Airport is a driver for regional growth • Localised decongestion – cultural shift • Personal affordability to travel • Promotion of cycle hire • Potential to be a key attractor overlooking the runway at the airport	• Middlewood Way • Gritstone Trail • Poynton Relief Road cycle path • Segregated walking and cycling facilities along the A523 Roy Chadwick Way, Poynton Bypass which link to equivalent facilities on the A555 into Greater Manchester • Sustrans' aspiration to create the Greater Manchester Circular route (Route 601) • GM Ringway - Greater Manchester's Walking Trail • New business opportunities along the route • Potential additional spend in the local economy along the route • Localised decongestion – cultural shift • Personal affordability to travel • Promotion of cycle hire

4.5 Design Principles

The route widths will be designed where possible in accordance with LTN 01/20 for cycling infrastructure as shown in Table 4-2 and Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) for equine infrastructure as shown in Table 4-3.

Table 4-2 LTN 01/20 Guidance (sourced from LTN 01/20 guidance[1])

Cycle Route Type	Direction	Peak hour cycle flow (either one way or two-way depending on cycle route type)	Desirable minimum width* (m)	Absolute minimum at constraints (m)
Protected space for cycling (including light segregation, stepped cycle track, kerbed cycle track)	1 way	<200	2.0	1.5
		200-800	2.2	2.0
		>800	2.5	2.0
	2 way	<300	3.0	2.0
		>300-1000	3.0	2.5
		>1000	4.0	3.0
Cycle lane	1 way	All – cyclists able to use carriageway to overtake	2.0	1.5

*based on a saturation flow of 1 cyclist per second per metre of space. For user comfort a lower density is generally desirable.

Type of edge constraint	Additional width required to maintain effective width of cycle track (mm)
Flush or near-flush surface including low and splayed kerbs up to 60mm high	No additional width needed
Kerbs 61mm to 150mm high	200
Vertical feature from 151mm to 600 mm high	250
Vertical feature above 600 mm high	500

[1] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ffa1f96d3bf7f65d9e35825/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf

Table 4-3 DMRB Guidance (sourced from DMRB guidance – Designing for walking, cycling and horse-riding[2])

Minimum 2-way width (where horses are expected to pass each other)	3.0 metres
Minimum single file width	2.0 metres

Coherence	Link trip origins and destinations, including public transport access points. Routes are continuous and easy to navigate.
Directness	Serve all the main destinations and seek to offer an advantage in terms of distance and journey time.
Comfort	Infrastructure meets design standards and caters for all types of user, including children and disabled persons.
Attractiveness	Aesthetics, noise reduction and integration with surrounding areas are important.
Safety	Dedicated networks and facilities not only improve pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian safety, but also their feeling of how safe the environment is. This includes access to adjacent areas, sightlines, fencing, lighting, landscaping and surveillance. It also includes avoiding opportunities for assailants to conceal themselves.

[2] 9b379a8b-b2e3-4ad3-8a93-ee4ea9c03f12 (standardsforhighways.co.uk)

The horizontal and vertical alignment of the cycle routes will be designed where possible in accordance with LTN 01/20 these are shown in Table 4-4. Existing routes that are non-compliant will be assessed and improvements and modifications will be identified.

Table 4-4 Minimum horizontal radii (left), Maximum length for gradients (centre), Stopping sight distances (right) (sourced from LTN 01/20 guidance[3])

Design speed (kph)	Minimum horizontal radius (m)
40	40
30	25
20	15
10	4

Gradient %	Desirable maximum length of gradient (m)
2.0	150
2.5	100
3.0	80
3.5	60
4.0	50
4.5	40
5.0	30

Design speed (kph)	Minimum stopping sight distance (m)
40	47
30	31
20	17

[3] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ffa1f96d3bf7f65d9e35825/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf

The construction and finishing details will be designed in accordance with the CEC Standard Details, with reference to LTN 01/20, Sustrans, Manual for Streets and existing and adjacent schemes. These are shown in Figure 4-1.

Figure 4-1 Accessibility LTN 01/20 (sourced from LTN 01/20 guidance[4])

[4] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ffa1f96d3bf7f65d9e35825/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf

The cross section palette of the route will need to be agreed and applied, this could utilise the Sustrans design specification - example cross sections from Sustrans are shown in Figure 4-2 and Figure 4-3.

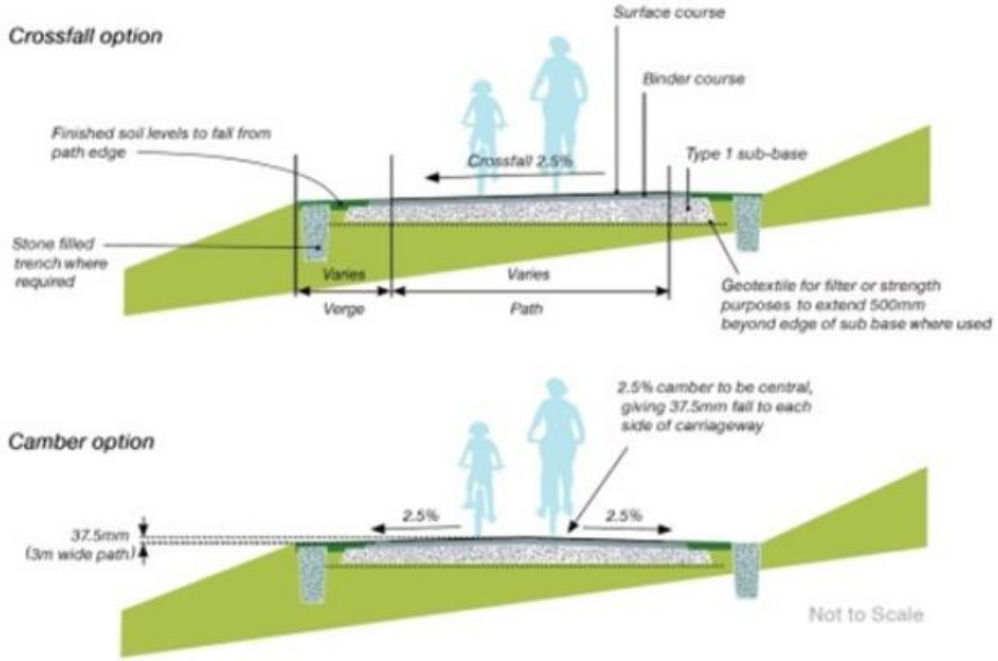

Figure 4-2 Sustrans cross section palette example (sourced from Sustrans[5])

[5] Path specification details - Sustrans.org.uk

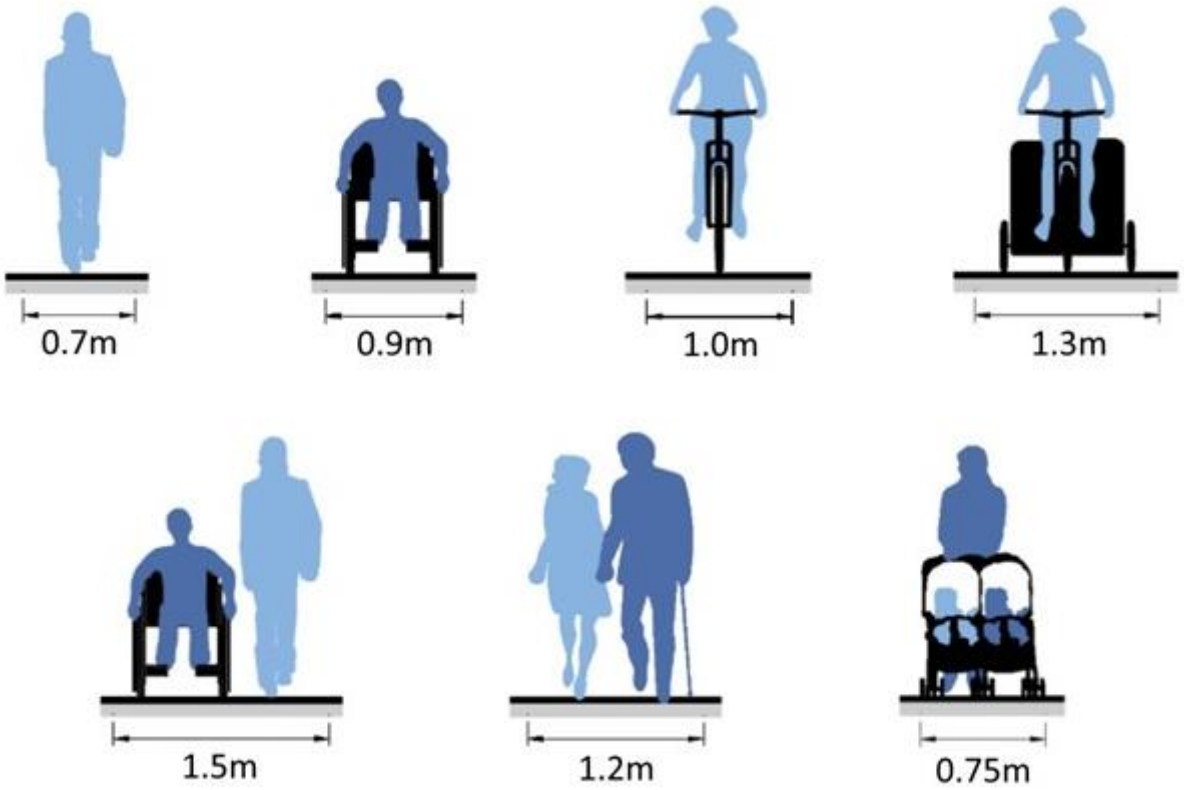

Figure 4-3 Sustrans widths required for people walking and wheeling (sourced from Sustrans[6])

[6] Space requirements - Sustrans.org.uk

The material palette for the route will also need to be agreed. Site specific design solutions may also be required, this includes 'off the shelf' products or bespoke solutions.

The existing character of the route is to be retained while providing an improved and desirable route, examples of some of the existing character along the route is shown in Figure 4-4.

Figure 4-4 Existing route (source – site visit, January 2024)

5. Options Development

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the route corridors and route section options considered in each of the corridors. The area considered for the GBT is extensive, with the east-west being approximately 32km in width. Therefore, there were many initial route sections identified.

5.2 Route Corridors

Before specific routes were identified, broader corridors reflecting key connections were developed. These were based on the route principles, key areas to connect, and key movements along the route that should be considered. The route corridors connect into key communities as well as key services and amenities such as National Trust sites, Manchester Airport, and businesses. Figure 5-1 visualises the route corridors and the key areas they could connect. The route corridors have been split into three sections: west, central, and east. These sections and key areas and attractions in each section are set out in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1: Section descriptions

Section	Definition	Description
West	Partington to east of Manchester Airport	Manchester Airport is one of the key employment centres and attractions, another attraction is the Trans Pennine Trail which the route aims to link to. Dunham Massey and Tatton Park are two National Trust parks within the section which provide an attraction to visitors.
Central	East of Manchester Airport to east of Poynton at the Middlewood Way	Waters is a key employment centre that the corridor links to, the corridor also links to the key development site of Handforth Garden Village as well as other key residential and employment areas including Wilmslow and Handforth.
East	East of the Middlewood Way to Disley and Glossop	The east section connects to the key employment centre of Adlington Business Park as well as other amenities including Lyme Park and trails such as the Middlewood Way.

The corridors identified in Figure 5-1 provided a basis for investigating specific routes within the route corridors.

Figure 5-1: Route corridors

5.3 Route Sections

Based on the route principles and route corridors identified in Section 5.2, route sections were identified and explored. Options considered within each of the route corridors were identified through a number of methods:

- **Previous work undertaken** – as set out in section 1.2.
- **1-2-1 meetings** – Meetings have taken place with stakeholders and partners of CEC to inform potential options to consider including Tatton Group, the National Trust and Manchester Airport.
- **Desktop research** – Google Maps and Google Street View were utilised to identify route sections. They were also used to understand the existing conditions of route sections. Research into the location of nearby amenities and key service centres which the route sections could provide access to was also undertaken. Understanding the connections the route options could create as well as the existing conditions of these options, helped to understand the feasibility of different route sections. Research was also undertaken to find relevant policy documents and upcoming and recently completed active travel schemes in the area. This helped in creating route principles and locating existing infrastructure which could be utilised.
- **Site visits** – Two site visits were conducted on the 25th and 30th January 2024. These were used to visit route sections, in attendance with stakeholders, to understand the feasibility and condition of certain route sections which could not be viewed on Google Maps. Stakeholders were invited to provide local knowledge and their views on the route sections. Additional route sections were also identified on site.
- **Workshops** – On the 15th February 2024, an in-person workshop was held with the client, key stakeholders and Local Authority representatives to discuss emerging route options and obtain views on the identified route sections to date, and further local knowledge of the study area. Stakeholders were also encouraged to suggest any additional route section options that had not been explored.

For the route sections identified, part of the investigative process was to note the key information and conditions of each section. For example, the opportunities and challenges each section presented were detailed, as was the ability for the section to meet LTN 01/20 compliance. Also noted were the existing routes and PRoW, the propensity to cycle within the area, the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, land ownership, links to the public transport network, and any running or cycling clubs in the vicinity of each route section.

The route sections developed are shown in Figure 5-2 below. During an in-person workshop on the 15th February 2024, stakeholders were invited to discuss the routes sections shown. The stakeholder's local knowledge and understanding of the area were considered when it came to deciding on which route sections should be taken forward to be scored within the MCAF. There was particular discussion around the southern route section and central route section within the central corridor from Wilmslow to Adlington and Styal to Handforth, as well as the impact the potential NPR route may have on the western section.

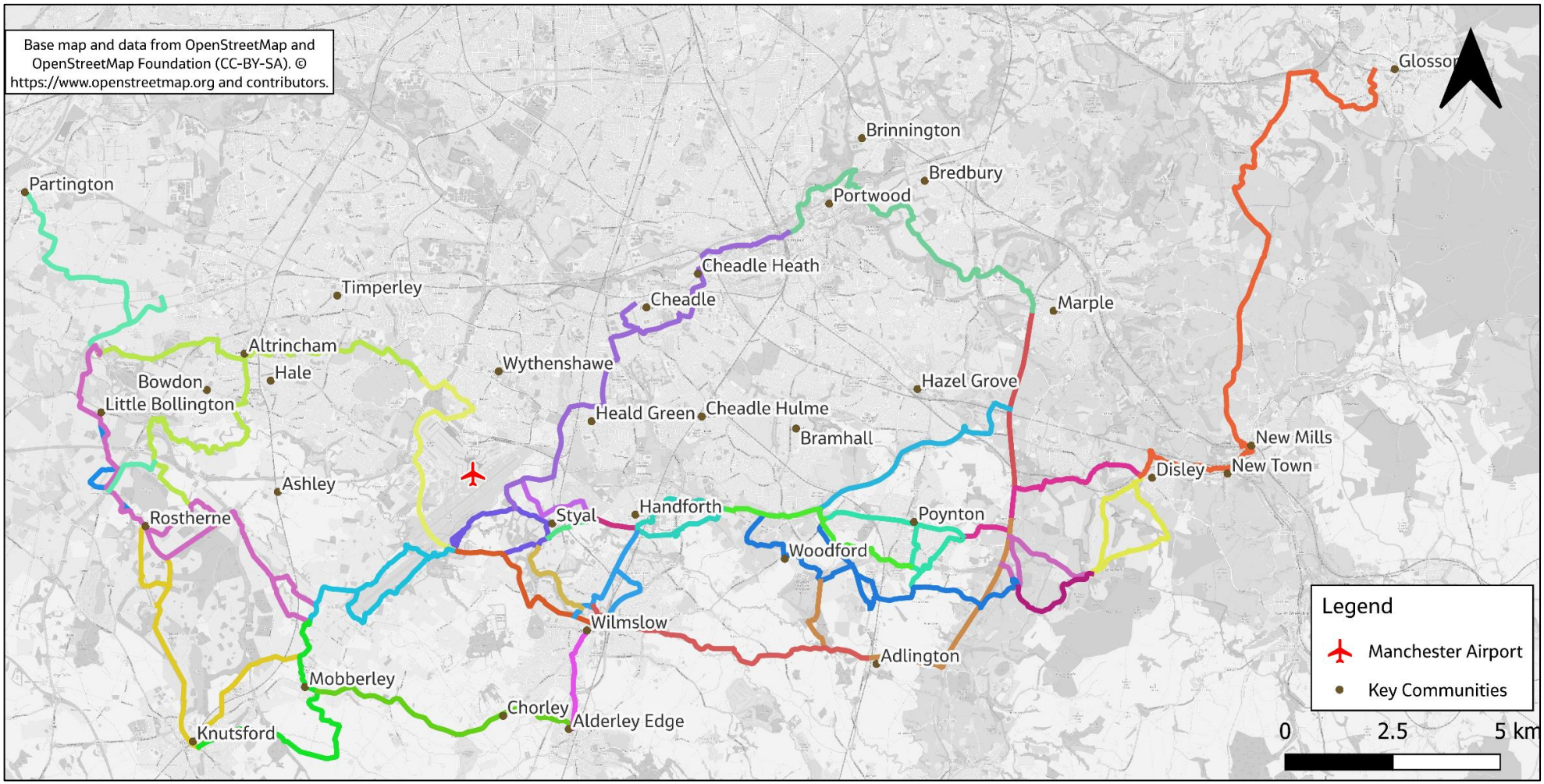

Figure 5-2: Identified route sections discussed with stakeholders

6. Options Assessment

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to set out the MCAF and the results of the route corridor sift and route section sift. At the end of this section, the preferred route is identified.

6.2 Multi-Criteria Assesment Framework (MCAF)

In order to determine the preferred route, the route corridors and route sections have been assessed against an agreed set of criteria using a MCAF. The MCAF has been developed in consultation with CEC and stakeholders via the virtual workshop undertaken on 7th February 2024, where views were taken into consideration to understand what is most important to the route and thus how it should be scored.

Within the MCAF there are three main categories and 19 subcategories. The three main categories are as follows:

1. Strategic Fit;
2. Effectiveness; and
3. Deliverability.

The three categories are summarised below, detail on how each category has been scored is set out in more detail in Appendix C.

Route corridors were scored based on their strategic fit and effectiveness as it was expected that there would be limited variation between individual route sections across these two main categories. It also filtered out any route corridors that would not work towards a coherent east-west route. The route sections were then scored for deliverability, and ultimately the route sections within each route corridor which scored highest overall form the preferred route.

In addition, input has been sought from disciplines in relation to land and environment that has also fed into the scoring. An Environmental Technical Note can be found in Appendix D.

Stage 1 - Strategic Fit

Within the strategic fit category there are six subcategories, five of which are aligned to the project objectives set out in Section 4.3 of the report. These consider whether the section will provide east to west connectivity as well as connecting to surrounding areas including links to key services, amenities and businesses. Also, whether the section would provide a high-quality route which is accessible to all and considers the impact of major infrastructure schemes on walking, wheeling, equestrians, runners and cycling. The third sub-category enquires whether the section would improve access to leisure routes, green space and countryside that enhances the natural environment. The fourth subcategory questions whether the option would increase the number of people walking, wheeling, and cycling for everyday journeys, and the fifth questions whether the section would increase the value of the borough's visitor economy by attracting additional users and supporting the growth of new and existing users. Finally, the sixth subcategory questions the sections alignment to local policy. The strategic fit of the routes was scored at a corridor level only.

Stage 2 - Effectiveness

Within the effectiveness category there are four subcategories which look at the number of residents, employment areas and visitors / leisure users expected to benefit from the intervention. The fourth subcategory looks at the number of existing trails the intervention links with. The effectiveness category was scored at a corridor level only.

Stage 3 - Deliverability

In the deliverability category there are nine subcategories which look at the design challenges, potential benefits, costs for comparison, funding/ affordability, acceptability, land, environmental considerations, existing facilities, and the ability to have a phased delivery. Unlike the other two categories, deliverability was scored at a route specific level.

A majority of the criteria have been scored on a 0-5 basis, where 5 is the best score. Weighting has also been applied to the criteria: design challenges, potential benefits and acceptability where scores have been doubled as they provide a key differentiator between the routes. The full MCAF scoring matrix and criteria can be found in Appendix C.

6.3 Corridor Sift

As set out in section 6.2, the corridor sift was undertaken for strategic fit and effectiveness categories. Following the corridor sift, the highest scoring corridors were taken forward to the next stage. The route corridors are shown in Figure 6-1 below and the corridor sift results are shown in Table 6-1.

Figure 6-1: Route corridors

Table 6-1: Corridor sift results

		Strategic fit						Effectiveness				Outcome	
Section	Ref	Provide east-west connectivity across the borough as well as linking to other surrounding districts and boroughs where possible, including links to/ with local communities and job opportunities, key public transport nodes, providing both leisure and utility use of the trail	Provide a high-quality route, accessible to all, which considers the impact of potential major infrastructure schemes on walking, wheeling, equestrian, runners and cycling	Improve access to leisure routes, green space and the countryside that enhances the natural environment including green/ blue infrastructure where possible	Increase the number of walking, wheeling and cycling for everyday journeys, supporting decarbonisation across the borough and improving health and wellbeing	Increase the value of the borough's visitor economy, attracting additional users and supporting the growth of new and existing businesses	Local Policy alignment	Number of residents expected to benefit from the intervention	Number of employment areas expected to benefit from the intervention	Number of visitors/ leisure users expected to benefit from the intervention	Number of existing trails the intervention links with	Corridor Total Score	Corridor Rank
West	WN	4	3	3	4	2	4	5	5	2	5	37	2
	WC	4	3	5	3	5	4	3	3	5	3	38	1
	WS	3	3	4	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	35	3
Central	CN	2	3	1	4	1	4	5	5	1	4	30	3
	CC	4	3	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	4	33	2
	CS	4	3	5	2	5	4	2	3	5	4	37	1
East	ER	3	2	3	2	4	4	3	2	3	3	29	2
	SR	4	2	4	2	4	4	1	2	5	3	31	1

Western

In the western section there were three corridors, the northern (WN), central (WC), and southern (WS) alignments as shown in Figure 6-1.

It was agreed that the central corridor of the western section (WC) would progress to the next stage as it was the highest scoring out of the three corridors. This is due to WC providing both a utility service, connecting key employment sites and communities such as Partington, Rostherne and Mobberley and Manchester Airport, and a leisure service as the corridor passes predominantly through green space and countryside with links to other trails such as the GM Ringway and Bridgewater Way. The north and south corridor scored lower as they were better located to provide a utility service through key towns, however this reduced how effective they would be as attractive leisure routes.

Central

In the central section, there were also three corridors that were scored, the northern (CN), central (CC) and southern (CS) alignments as shown in Figure 6-1.

In this case, the highest scoring corridor was the southern corridor of the central section (CS), this was because it has good connections to communities such as Wilmslow and Adlington and also provides access to green and blue spaces in Cheshire East. CS is also attractive as a leisure route as it mainly follows the River Bollin. Whilst this corridor is very attractive, it has a large risk associated with it due to the significant amount of investment and land acquisition or access rights (including landowner agreements and legal status changes) that would be required to provide the infrastructure needed to create a route.

Given the risks associated with CS, it was decided that the second highest route corridor would also be taken forward, this was the central corridor (CC) of the route. CC provides access to key employment sites, and some leisure attractions such as Quarry Bank Mill and the Avro Heritage Museum. However, it is more limited in its attractiveness as a leisure route as it would largely follow the road network, and therefore it would likely not provide as significant contributions to the visitor economy. The northern corridor of the central section (CN) scored low and was ruled out as it had poorer access to leisure routes and the countryside.

Eastern

In the eastern section there are two corridors, an extended route (ER), and a short route (SR) as shown in Figure 6-1.

The SR corridor was taken forward as there were more positives associated with the SR corridor compared to the ER corridor. Negatives associated with the ER corridor included the length of the corridor which may deter users such as families with younger children, and the lack of off-road walking and wheeling infrastructure further along the route. The majority of the SR corridor also runs through green space such as Lyme Park which is more attractive to visitors using the route as a leisure route. In the absence of the ER there is also the opportunity to connect to the Trans Pennine Trail in Stockport via the Middlewood Way.

In summary, corridors WC, CC, CS and SR were taken forward to the route sift stage. These corridors are shown below in Figure 6-2.

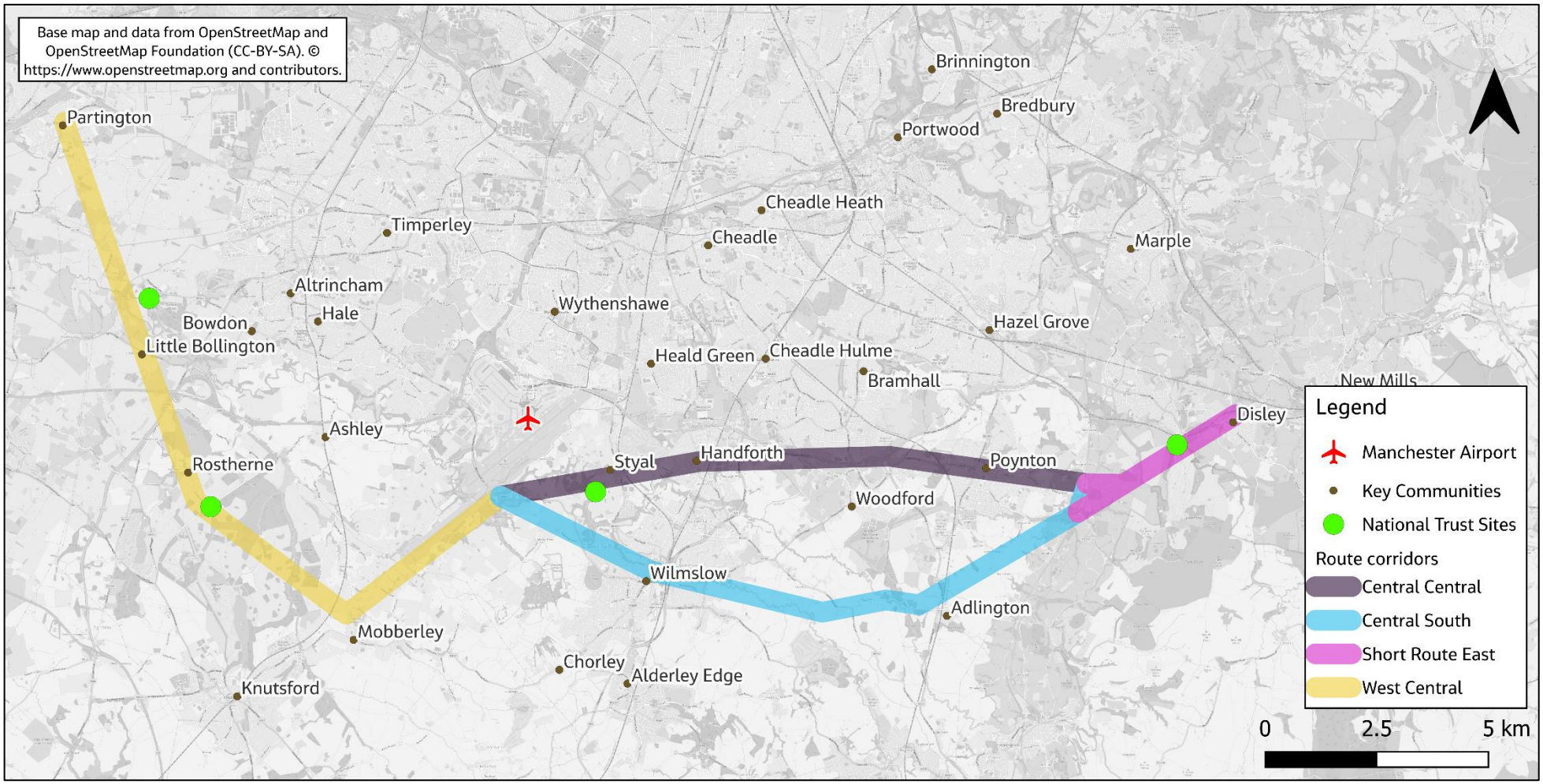

Figure 6-2: Highest scoring corridors

6.4 Route Sift

6.4.1 Route Options Considered

Following the corridor sift, the route sections were developed. Any route sections that fell outside of the highest scoring route corridors, and any smaller route sections that did not form part of a coherent route were ruled out at this stage. The route sections that have been considered are shown in Figure 6-3 below. Figure 6-4 shows the six options considered in the western section, Figure 6-5 shows the 10 options considered in the central section and Figure 6-6 shows the four options considered in the eastern section. Table 6-2, Table 6-4 and Table 6-7 explain where each route connects to.

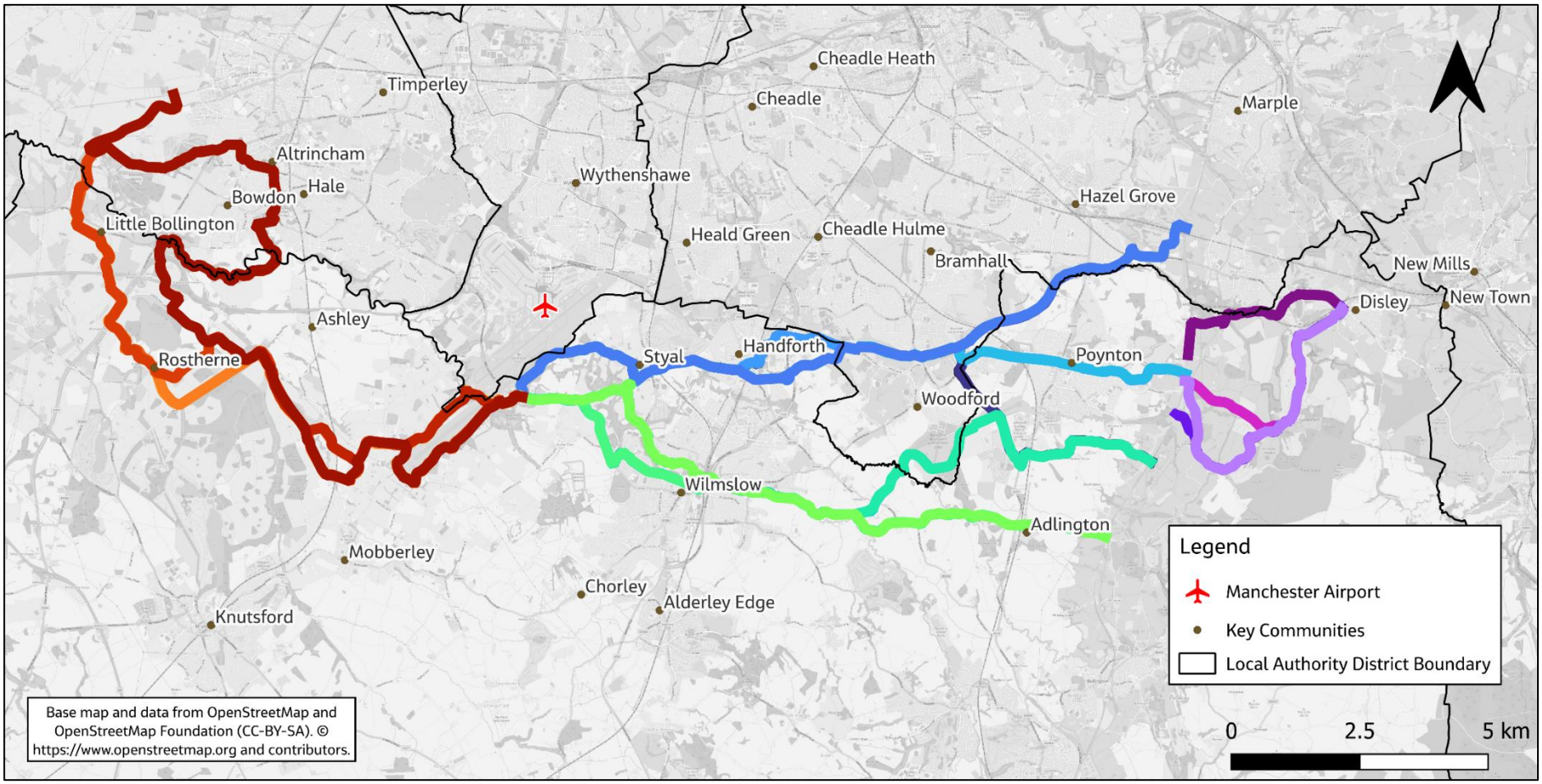

Figure 6-3: Route sections scored within the MCAF

6.4.2 Western

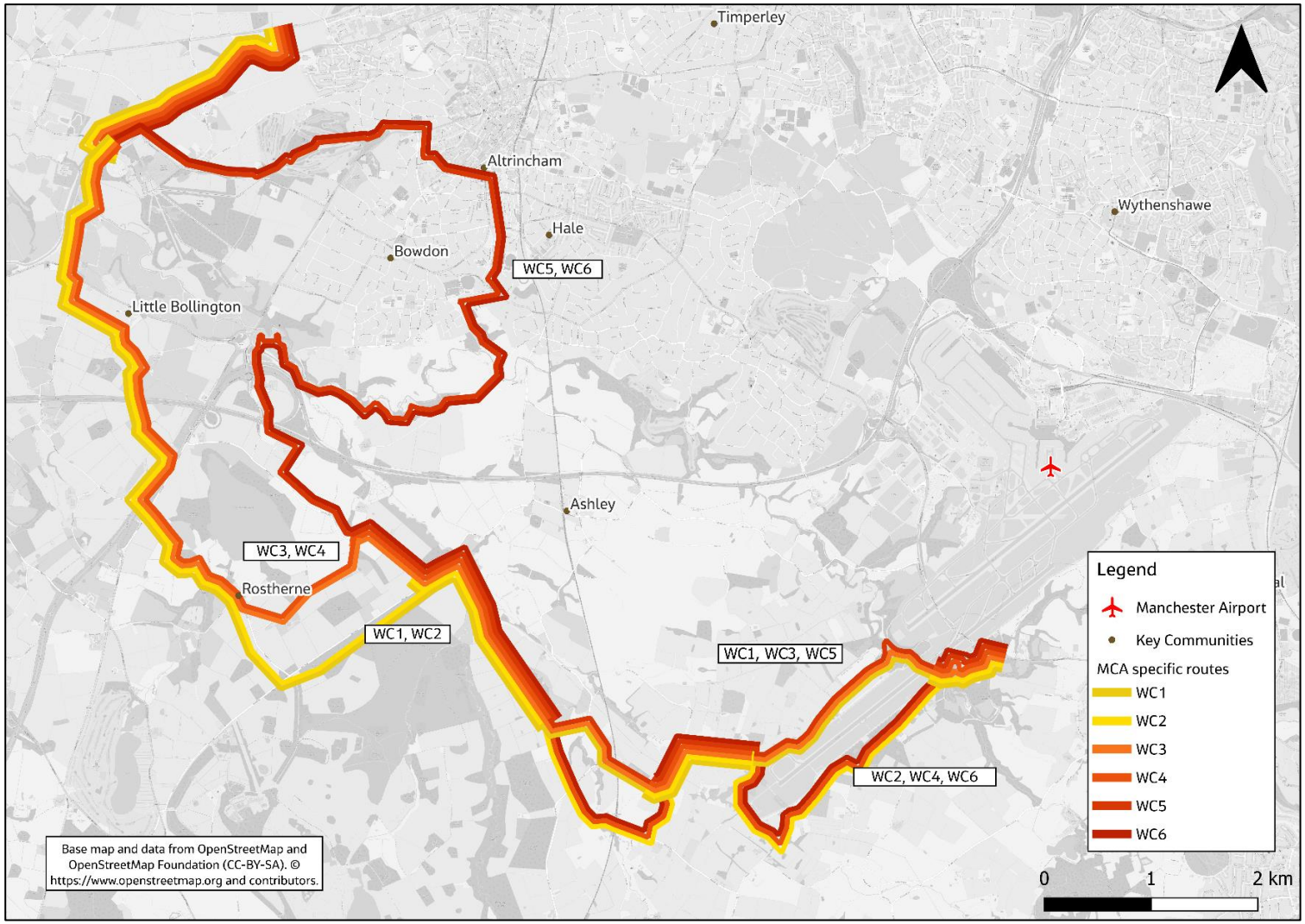

Figure 6-4: Western route sections

Table 6-2: Western route section descriptions

Route reference	Route description
WC1	This option begins by connecting to the Trans Pennine Trail, Bridgewater Way and Greater Manchester Ringway before connecting south past the National Trust site Dunham Massey and through Little Bollington, over the M56 towards Rostherne. From here the route connects to the CEC-managed National Trust site Tatton Park entrance and routes along Ashley Road before heading southeast past Birtles Farm. Past Mobberley, it routes to the north of the airport runway and utilises the walking and cycling tunnel underneath the airport runway where it connects to the National Cycle Network and the Airport Orbital Cycleway at the A538.
WC2	This option begins by connecting to the Trans Pennine Trail, Bridgewater Way and Greater Manchester Ringway before running south past the National Trust site Dunham Massey and through Little Bollington, over the M56 towards Rostherne. From here the route connects to the CEC-managed National Trust site Tatton Park entrance and travels along Ashley Road before heading southeast past Birtles Farm. Past Mobberley, it routes along the southern perimeter of the airport runway, past the Southside Viewing Area, where it connects to the National Cycle Network and the Airport Orbital Cycleway at the A538.
WC3	This option begins by connecting to the Trans Pennine Trail, Bridgewater Way and Greater Manchester Ringway before running south past the National Trust site Dunham Massey and through Little Bollington, over the M56 towards Rostherne. From here the route follows Marsh Lane before heading southeast past Birtles Farm. Past Mobberley, it routes to the north of the airport runway and utilises the walking and cycling tunnel underneath the airport runway where it connects to the National Cycle Network and the Airport Orbital Cycleway at the A538.
WC4	This option begins by connecting to the Trans Pennine Trail, Bridgewater Way and Greater Manchester Ringway before running south past the National Trust site Dunham Massey and through Little Bollington, over the M56 towards Rostherne. From here the route follows Marsh Lane before heading southeast past Birtles Farm. Past Mobberley, it routes along the southern perimeter of the airport runway, past the Southside Viewing Area, where it connects to the National Cycle Network and the Airport Orbital Cycleway at the A538.
WC5	This option begins by connecting to the Trans Pennine Trail, Bridgewater Way and Greater Manchester Ringway before running east past the National Trust site Dunham Massey. From here, the route connects into Altrincham, then south through Bowdon and Hale before connecting to the proposed Tatton Services at the M56. Routing south, the route crosses Ashley Road and runs past Birtles Farm and past Mobberley. The route then links north of the airport runway and utilises the walking and cycling tunnel underneath the airport runway where it connects to the National Cycle Network and the Airport Orbital Cycleway at the A538.
WC6	This option begins by connecting to the Trans Pennine Trail, Bridgewater Way and Greater Manchester Ringway before running east past the National Trust site Dunham Massey. From here, the route connects into Altrincham, then south through Bowdon and Hale before connecting to the proposed Tatton Services at the M56. Routing south, the route crosses Ashley Road and runs past Birtles Farm and past Mobberley. The route then runs along the southern perimeter of the airport runway, past the Southside Viewing Area, where it connects to the National Cycle Network and the Airport Orbital Cycleway at the A538.

The results of the sift for route sections within the western corridor are shown in

Table 6-3 below and refer to routes shown in Figure 6-4. The table shows that route sections WC1 and WC3 scored the highest, ranking first, and WC6 scored the lowest, ranking sixth. Below is an analysis of each route and how they scored within each criterion.

Table 6-3: Western sift results

	Deliverability									Outcome	
Ref	Design challenges	Potential Benefits	Costs for comparison	Funding / Affordability	Acceptability	Land	Environmental considerations	Existing Facilities	Ability to have a phased delivery	Route Section Total Score	Route Section Rank
WC1	6	10	1	2	8	2	3	3	2	75	1
WC2	6	10	1	2	6	2	3	2	2	72	3
WC3	6	10	1	2	8	2	3	3	2	75	1
WC4	6	10	1	2	6	2	3	2	2	72	3
WC5	4	10	0	3	6	2	2	3	3	71	5
WC6	4	10	0	3	4	2	2	2	3	68	6

Design Challenges

WC1, WC2, WC3 and WC4 scored higher than WC5 and WC6 for design challenges as they have fewer challenges associated with them. WC5 and WC6 connect through Altrincham and Hale, which provides an additional design challenge as there are existing residential properties and likely on-street parking, which could cause challenges in terms of achieving suitable widths. WC5 and WC6 also indicatively link into Dunham Forest Golf and Country Club, which could be challenging and would require discussions with the landowner.

Key challenges that all the routes face includes the topography which is steep in places and poor existing surfacing around the Manchester Airport runway, in particular to the south. In addition, having a route that is lit may be a challenge, for discussion with Manchester Airport, as this may not be possible so close to the Airport's runways. Another security element which needs considering across the western route sections is the potential use of drones in close proximity to Manchester Airport. Another challenge associated with all of the route options is the security risk associated with users being close to Manchester Airport and the runway. Whilst this is an existing path, this would need to be investigated further with Manchester Airport especially given the anticipated increased usage post investment. If NPR is introduced, this development could interface with the route sections in this area, however the impact of this is not fully understood at time of writing. In addition, the canal towpath is poorly surfaced along the Bridgewater Way towards the Trans Pennine Trail which would need to be addressed; this may also have limited space for increased widths in parts, this would impact all of the routes.

Another challenge impacting routes WC1 and WC2 is that Ashley Road is a long, straight road which has no footway and is known to experience high speeds by drivers. There is also limited space for a facility without acquiring land or going behind existing properties. WC3 and WC4 follow Marsh Lane instead of Ashley Road, this approach may be suitable due to low traffic flow, however this needs to be investigated further.

Potential Benefits

All of the routes scored the maximum of five on this criterion due to the total potential benefits from AMAT and tourism benefits equalling circa £48 million for routes WC1, WC2, WC3 and WC4, and circa £50 million for routes WC5 and WC6. A majority of these benefits were tourism related benefits given that these routes were anticipated to be primarily used for leisure/ tourism as opposed to commuter/ everyday use. The route will also provide a link to the proposed Tatton Services as well as Altrincham and potential future development, this will provide both potential tourism and utility benefits. Further work is required to better understand the benefits and benefit cost ratio (BCR) of the routes once there is a better understanding of the investment costs.

Costs for comparison

As route interventions and costs have not been developed at this stage, a 0-5 score was given for costs to compare the routes. Routes WC1, WC2, WC3 and WC4 scored higher on the costs for comparison. It was expected that routes WC1 and WC2 would have high costs associated with passing through the residential areas of Hale and Altrincham. Investment generally in this area is expected to be high due to the infrastructure required at Manchester Airport, through Birtles Farm, within Little Bollington and along Ashley Road (for routes WC1 and WC2).

Funding/Affordability

WC1, WC2, WC3 and WC4 scored lower for funding/ affordability as whilst they provide a connection between NCN routes, Manchester Airport and National Trust sites which could attract sources of funding, they provide limited connectivity into residential areas of Greater Manchester. WC5 and WC6 connect to Hale and Altrincham which would likely attract funding due to the increased use for everyday purposes, rather than primarily tourism/ leisure.

Acceptability

It is expected that all six routes would be acceptable due to their non-controversial nature (subject to landowner agreements). A leisure focused route may also be more acceptable for this trail which has resulted in other routes scoring higher than WC5 and WC6. In addition, WC1, WC3 and WC5 all score well as they utilise the walking and cycling tunnel under the airport which is an attraction and quality piece of existing infrastructure. WC6 scores lowest as it does not utilise the advocated airport tunnel and is less leisure focused.

Land

All the route options scored equally on this criterion. There are large sections of the western routes which are understood to be Tatton Group land, an organisation which is enthusiastic about the potential to have the GBT pass through its land, subject to further discussion and agreements. There are sections that do not follow existing footpaths that may be privately owned and there are multiple farms along the route such as Kell House Farm and Birtles Farm which require further investigation. Some sections of the routes utilise adopted highways such as Wood Lane, Small Lane, Station Road, and Smith Lane which are anticipated to be more straightforward. There may also be the need to change the status of some PRoW to include cyclists, for example past Birtles Farm and along the Bridgewater Canal the routes are currently footpaths which would need to be upgraded to bridleway or cycle track status or have permissive rights for cyclists and potentially equestrians agreed. Additional space could also be required in some areas where highway widths are narrow, for example along Ashley Road and residential roads through Hale and Altrincham.

Environmental Considerations

Routes WC1, WC2, WC3 and WC4 all scored marginally higher than WC5 and WC6 on this criterion. All of the routes pass through Dunham Massey which has ancient trees, and they run through areas of Flood Zone Risk 2 and 3 near the River Bollin and ancient and deciduous woodland around Manchester Airport which could be a challenge. However, WC5 and WC6 run through Dunham Forest Golf Course and Country Club which means the routes pass

through wood pasture and parkland, deciduous woodland, and ancient trees through this area. Further information is provided in Appendix D, and these environmental considerations would need to be considered further in future stages of work.

Existing facilities

Routes WC1, WC3 and WC5 scored higher than the other three routes on this criterion, this is because they utilise the walking and cycling tunnel under the Manchester Airport runway which provides an existing high quality facility. Conversely, routes WC2, WC4 and WC6 encounter the steep and boggy, lower quality facilities south of Manchester Airport which would require significant improvement. Some of the higher quality existing facilities along all the routes includes the wide bridge over the M56 (though note that existing parapets are low) and a separate facility from Mereside Farm to Millington Lane alongside the A556. A lot of this section is existing PRoW and can mostly be utilised today, however significant upgrades to the quality of these facilities is needed for the trail to function as an attractive route that is family friendly, as well as changes to the legal status of the PRoW, or the agreement of permissive access for equestrian and cyclist users.

Ability to have a phased delivery

It is important to consider whether the routes can have a phased delivery. WC1, WC2, WC3 and WC4 all scored lower than WC5 and WC6 This is because WC5 and WC6 can be split into four phases, whilst WC1, WC2, WC3 and WC4 can only be split into three phases.

Summary

As two routes scored highest (WC1 and WC3), both options should be taken forward at this stage. This western section could also be marketed as a standalone product if desired as it provides access from the Trans Pennine Trail through key areas to the airport which may be an attractive leisure route. And useful to provide an alternative to any NPR construction traffic / opportunities. There may also be a benefit to linking to the proposed Tatton Services.

6.4.3 Central

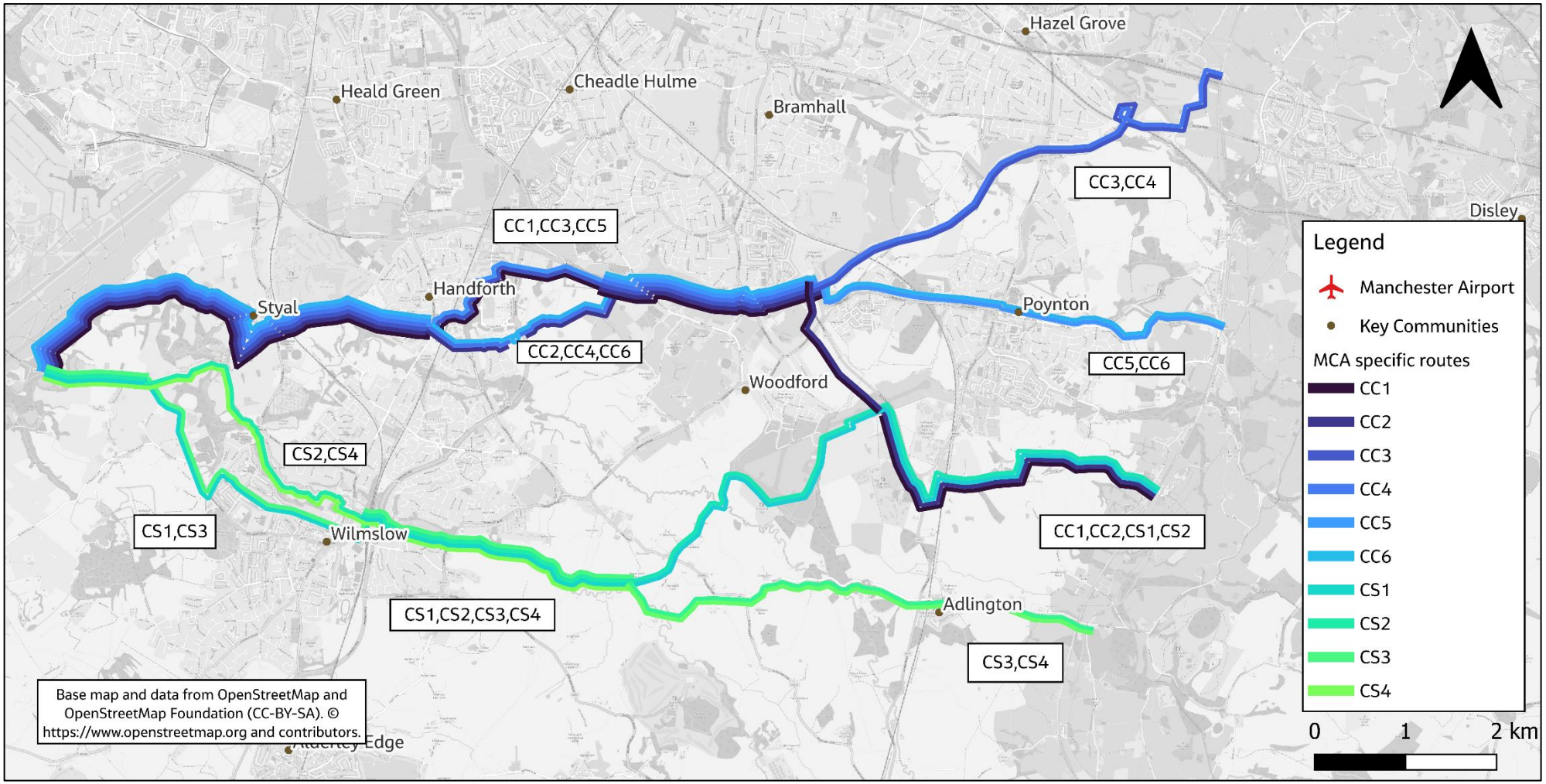

Figure 6-5: Central route sections

Table 6-4: Central route section descriptions

Route reference	Route description
CC1	This option begins south of the airport connecting to the Airport Orbital Cycleway and National Cycle Network at the A538. From here the route runs east through Styal and past the National Trust site Quarry Bank Mill. The route connects to Handforth and the proposed Manchester Road Wilmslow scheme. The route then runs along the A555. The route follows the recently completed Roy Chadwick Way, before heading south to Adlington Business Park, then east to the Middlewood Way and National Cycle Network.
CC2	This option begins south of the airport connecting to the Airport Orbital Cycleway and National Cycle Network at the A538. From here the route runs east through Styal and past the National Trust site Quarry Bank Mill. The route connects to Handforth, the proposed Manchester Road Wilmslow scheme and through the proposed Handforth Garden Village to the A555. The route follows the recently completed Roy Chadwick Way, before heading south to Adlington Business Park, then east to the Middlewood Way and National Cycle Network.
CC3	This option begins south of the airport connecting to the Airport Orbital Cycleway and National Cycle Network at the A538. From here the route runs east through Styal and past the National Trust site Quarry Bank Mill. The route connects to Handforth and the proposed Manchester Road Wilmslow scheme. The route then runs along the A555 to Hazel Grove, the GM Ringway and the Middlewood Way.
CC4	This option begins south of the airport connecting to the Airport Orbital Cycleway and National Cycle Network at the A538. From here the route runs east through Styal and past the National Trust site Quarry Bank Mill. The route connects to Handforth, the proposed Manchester Road Wilmslow scheme, and through the proposed Handforth Garden Village to the A555. The route continues along the A555 to Hazel Grove, the GM Ringway and the Middlewood Way.
CC5	This option begins south of the airport connecting to the Airport Orbital Cycleway and National Cycle Network at the A538. From here the route runs east through Styal and past the National Trust site Quarry Bank Mill. The route connects to Handforth and the proposed Manchester Road Wilmslow scheme. The route then runs along the A555 connecting to Poynton before reaching the Middlewood Way and National Cycle Network.
CC6	This option begins south of the airport connecting to the Airport Orbital Cycleway and National Cycle Network at the A538. From here the route runs east through Styal and past the National Trust site Quarry Bank Mill. The route connects to Handforth, the proposed Manchester Road Wilmslow scheme, and through the proposed Handforth Garden Village to the A555. The route continues along the A555 connecting to Poynton before reaching the Middlewood Way and National Cycle Network.
CS1	This option begins south of the airport connecting to the Airport Orbital Cycleway and National Cycle Network at the A538. From here the route continues along the A538, past Waters, to Wilmslow. The route connects through the centre of Wilmslow, under the A34, then along the course of the River Bollin for a considerable distance. The route then continues further northeast through Woodford Garden Village and Adlington Business Park, then along the southern part of Roy Chadwick Way. The route continues along quiet routes before connecting to the Middlewood Way and National Cycle Network.

Route reference	Route description
CS2	This option begins south of the airport connecting to the Airport Orbital Cycleway and National Cycle Network at the A538. From here the route runs towards Quarry Bank Mill and through the Carrs Park, before heading into Wilmslow connecting to the proposed Manchester Road, Wilmslow scheme. The route continues under the A34, then along the course of the River Bollin for a considerable distance. The route then continues further northeast through Woodford Garden Village and Adlington Business Park, then along the southern part of Roy Chadwick Way. The route continues along quiet routes before connecting to the Middlewood Way and National Cycle Network.
CS3	This option begins south of the airport connecting to the Airport Orbital Cycleway and National Cycle Network at the A538. From here the route continues along the A538, past Waters, to Wilmslow. The route connects through the centre of Wilmslow, under the A34, then along the course of the River Bollin for a considerable distance. The route continues through Adlington before connecting to the Middlewood Way and the National Cycle Network.
CS4	This option begins south of the airport connecting to the Airport Orbital Cycleway and National Cycle Network at the A538. From here the route runs towards Quarry Bank Mill and through the Carrs Park, before heading into Wilmslow connecting to the proposed Manchester Road, Wilmslow scheme. The route continues under the A34, then along the course of the River Bollin for a considerable distance. The route connects through Adlington before connecting to the Middlewood Way and the National Cycle Network.

The results of the sift for the central section are shown in Table 6-5 and Table 6-6 and refer to routes shown in Figure 6-5. Results of CC are provided first, and then CS. As set out in Section 6.3, both the central (CC) and southern (CS) corridors were taken forward to this stage. The tables show that route sections CC4 and CS2 scored the highest, ranking first. CC1, CS3 and CS4 all ranked lowest. Below is an analysis of each route and how they scored within each criterion. Results for CC are provided first, and then CS.

Table 6-5: CC sift results

	Deliverability									Outcome	
Ref	Design challenges	Potential Benefits	Costs for comparison	Funding / Affordability	Acceptability	Land	Environmental considerations	Existing Facilities	Ability to have a phased delivery	Total Score	Rank
CC1	4	4	2	2	6	3	3	3	5	65	6
CC2	4	4	2	3	8	3	3	2	5	67	4
CC3	8	2	4	2	6	3	3	4	5	70	2
CC4	8	2	4	4	8	3	3	3	5	73	1
CC5	4	6	2	2	6	3	3	3	5	67	4
CC6	4	6	2	3	8	3	3	2	5	69	3

Design Challenges (CC)

CC3 and CC4 scored higher than the other routes for design challenges. CC3 and CC4 utilise more existing walking and cycling infrastructure, particularly along the A555, however there are challenges at the eastern extent from the A6 to the Middlewood Way to address. CC5 and CC6 that link through Poynton have challenges such as narrow roads, for example, on Chester Road near Poynton railway station, and also east of Poynton on Park Lane which is narrow, and Coppice Road which has no existing footway. Therefore, it could be difficult to find a design solution on these alignments. CC1, CC3 and CC5 pass through Handforth including its residential areas, which would need to include finding a solution to improve the existing route under the railway line. CC2, CC4 and CC6 would require working closely with developers in regard to Handforth Garden Village and delivery of this is likely to be dependent upon this development coming forward. Key challenges that all route options face include narrow roads with limited space for dedicated facilities in the Styal area such as Altrincham Road and Station Road. Whilst dedicated facilities are in place on the A555, these may not be attractive to a leisure market, which the GBT is aiming to target.

Potential Benefits (CC)

The scores varied for this criterion. CC5 and CC6 scored the highest due to the total potential benefits from the AMAT and tourism benefits equalling £18 million. CC1 and CC2 scored benefits of £16m, and CC3 and CC4 had the lowest estimated benefits at £12 million. A majority of these benefits were AMAT benefits rather than tourism related benefits given that for this alignment it is expected that a majority of the users from this route would be commuters/ everyday use, rather than tourism, resulting in lower benefits overall. In addition, for the tourism benefits within the western section to be realised there needs to be route connectivity through the central section to link to the Middlewood Way and Trans Pennine Trail. This is not to say that the routes would not be value for money; though further work is required to better understand the benefits and BCR of the routes once there is a better understanding of the investment costs.

Costs for comparison (CC)

As route interventions and costs have not been developed at this stage, a 0-5 score was given for costs to compare the routes. CC3 and CC4 scored highest as a significant amount of existing infrastructure would be utilised along the A555 so therefore these options would likely be lower cost than the alternatives. The other four routes scored lower as they would require investment through Poynton to link into the Middlewood Way (CC5 and CC6), and CC1 and CC2 would require investments on roads east of Roy Chadwick Way e.g. Street Lane. All other sections of the route from the airport to Handforth are likely to have similar investment costs.

Funding/Affordability (CC)

CC1, CC3 and CC5 scored lower for the funding/ affordability as whilst they provide a connection between NCN routes, Manchester Airport and a National Trust site (Quarry Bank Mill) which could attract sources of funding, they do not provide connectivity into Handforth Garden Village which is likely to unlock additional funding opportunities for options CC2, CC4 and CC6. CC4 scores highest as in addition to linking through Handforth Garden Village, the route utilises the pre-existing walking and cycling route along the A555 for a larger proportion of the route and would therefore be expected to cost less and therefore be more affordable. Overall however, these routes generally serve more of an everyday use/ commuter market than tourism and will therefore less likely to attract tourism related funding sources.

Acceptability (CC)

It is expected that all six routes would be widely acceptable due to their non-controversial nature (subject to landowner agreements). CC2, CC4 and CC6 all scored higher as the routes go through Handforth Garden Village and would utilise the proposed footpath/ cycleway through the development. As all route options follow the existing A555 route and CC1 and CC2 follow Roy Chadwick Way, this would be acceptable and sensible to use existing infrastructure. However, as these routes are parallel to busy roads, these may be less acceptable and attractive to a leisure/ tourism market. For all routes, work would be required with National Trust to progress proposals on their land at Quarry Bank Mill.

Land (CC)

All the route options scored equally on this criterion as there are sections across all routes that are anticipated to be owned by Manchester Airports Group or National Trust and therefore it is essential to continue to work with these landowners. Sections of the routes follow adopted highway which should be more straightforward, such as the A555, however work may be needed with neighbouring Local Authorities due to the route being on the Cheshire East/ Greater Manchester boundary. There may also be the need to change the status of some PRoWs to include cyclists and equestrians, and to obtain clarification on highway status, for example in relation to Sagars Lane between Clay Lane and Hampson Crescent. Close working is needed with the developer for Handforth Garden Village in regard to routes CC2, CC4 and CC6. The eastern extent of CC3 and CC4 are anticipated to include private land at their eastern extent close to the tie in to Middlewood Way.

Environmental Considerations (CC)

All the routes scored equally on this criterion. All the routes pass through Northern Wood which has ancient woodland, which could be challenging, and some lowland meadows, and all connect through areas of Flood Zone Risk 2 and 3 either on Hall Lane, Lower Meadow Road or the A523 and A555 and a traditional orchard at Oak Farm. Further information is provided in Appendix D, and these environmental considerations would need to be considered further in future stages of work.

Existing facilities (CC)

Route CC3 scored highest on this criterion and CC2 scored lowest, this is because CC3 utilises the most existing facilities along the route and CC2 the least. Whilst all routes utilise the A555 existing facilities, CC3 follows the A555 for the greatest length. CC4 also follows the A555 for a large extent however links through the proposed Handforth Garden Village which has no facilities at present, and therefore scores slightly lower (this also applies for CC2 and CC6). CC2 scores lower as towards the eastern end of the route the route is on-road and lacks existing facilities for walking and cycling, this also applies for CC1, however both of these utilise the Roy Chadwick Way. There is also a lack of facilities for CC5 and CC6 through Poynton.

Ability to have a phased delivery (CC)

It is important to consider whether the routes can have a phased delivery. All of the routes scored highly for this criterion as they can all be easily delivered in multiple phases.

Table 6-6: CS sift results

	Deliverability									Outcome	
Ref	Design challenges	Potential Benefits	Costs for comparison	Funding / Affordability	Acceptability	Land	Environmental considerations	Existing Facilities	Ability to have a phased delivery	Total Score	Rank
CS1	4	8	1	3	8	3	3	2	3	72	2
CS2	4	8	0	3	10	3	3	3	3	74	1
CS3	2	10	2	2	4	3	3	1	2	66	3
CS4	2	10	1	2	4	3	3	2	2	66	3

Design Challenges (CS)

CS1 and CS2 scored higher than CS3 and CS4 for design challenges. CS3 and CS4 connect through Adlington which provides an additional design challenge as Wilmslow Road and Mill Lane have a national speed limit which will make it a challenge to find a suitable design solution. CS1 and CS2 utilise the recently completed Roy Chadwick Way which has a good quality facility for walkers and cyclists, despite being alongside a busy road. These two routes also connect through Woodford Garden Village which would require further investigation. A challenge across all routes is the need to improve the underpass at the A34 which needs widening and lighting. West of Wilmslow along the River Bollin needs significant investment to provide a high-quality facility however the natural landscape could provide an attraction to the area. Potential issues need to be considered such as erosion of the river bank. CS2 and CS4 connect through the Carrs Park to Quarry Bank Mill which is steep in parts and includes a bridge over the River Bollin which may need upgrading. The route between the A538 and Quarry Bank Mill is also anticipated to be challenging in parts due to stepped access and private properties which needs further investigation.

Potential Benefits (CS)

All routes scored high for this criterion. For routes CS1 and CS2, the potential benefits from the AMAT and tourism benefits equalled £36.5 million. For CS3 and CS4, the benefits are estimated at £46 million. A majority of these benefits were tourism related benefits given that these routes were anticipated to be primarily used for leisure/

tourism as opposed to commuter/ everyday use. Further work is required to better understand the benefits and BCR of the routes once there is a better understanding of the investment costs.

Costs for comparison (CS)

As route interventions and costs have not been developed at this stage, a 0-5 score was given for costs to compare the routes. Investment generally in this area is expected to be high due to the infrastructure required and challenges that need to be addressed as set out in design challenges. CS2 scored low due to the extremely high costs associated with the infrastructure required along the River Bollin, the Carrs Park, through Florence Farm and Lumb Farm and the connection into the Middlewood Way. CS3 scored relatively higher as this route only has costs associated with the infrastructure required along the River Bollin and through Adlington connecting into the Middlewood Way.

Funding/Affordability (CS)

Whilst the ability to attract funding is likely to be similar for an attractive flagship route along the River Bollin, CS1 and CS2 have scored higher due to their connectivity into Woodford Garden Village which may attract more funding streams.

Acceptability (CS)

CS1 and CS2 score highly for acceptability and is expected to be widely accepted by the public due to the non-controversial nature of the route. These options, particularly the sections along the River Bollin have the ability to become an attraction not only for local residents but regionally and potentially nationally too, in particular for CS2 which utilises the Carrs Park in Wilmslow as well. Many of the routes utilise the ProW network, and therefore there is a need to liaise with landowners for any improvements or change of status. CS3 and CS4 score lower due to these options routing along Wilmslow Road and Mill Lane at their eastern extents, which could be a challenge for acceptability without a high quality solution put forward, which could be challenging.

Land (CS)

All the route options scored equally on this criterion. It is likely that there would be the need to change the status of some ProW to include cyclists and equestrians along all options, in particular along the River Bollin. All route options would require a crossing of Wilmslow Park South Road which is private land. In addition, there are sections along all routes that are located on private land, for example the route from Hollies Farm to Newton Farm. The route adjacent to the River Bollin is likely to be privately owned in part, and the land at the A34/Bollin Valley Roundabout is privately owned. On CS2 and CS4, work would be required with the National Trust for routes within their ownership at Quarry Bank Mill.

Environmental Considerations (CS)

All the routes scored moderately on this criterion, as they all have minor impacts across multiple environmental considerations. For example, all the routes pass through Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3 in significant sections along the River Bollin, Mill Lane and Quarry Bank Mill which would require careful consideration. There is deciduous woodland along the majority of the route and there is good quality grassland near Newton Hall Farm. Further information is provided in Appendix D, and these environmental considerations would need to be considered further in future stages of work.

Existing facilities (CS)

Route CS2 scored highest on this criterion. This is because CS2 utilises Quarry Bank Mill routes, the recently completed Roy Chadwick Way and the Carrs Park in Wilmslow which is a relatively high-quality bridleway owned by CEC and is part of the NCN. CS4 also utilises routes through Quarry Bank Mill and the Carrs Park, and CS2 also

utilises Roy Chadwick Way. CS1 and CS3 utilise the recently completed A538 Altrincham Road infrastructure, however this is not an attractive leisure route, but more suited for everyday purposes. Routes CS3 and CS4 have limited facilities at their eastern extent along Wilmslow Road and Mill Lane which are busy routes and a challenge for design as described previously. A large proportion of these routes are PRoW, with significant upgrades to the quality of these facilities being needed for the trails to function as an attractive route that is family friendly.

Ability to have a phased delivery (CS)

It is important to consider whether the routes can have a phased delivery. Routes CS1 and CS2 scored moderately as these routes can be delivered in four phases and CS3 and CS4 scored slightly lower as these routes could be delivered in three phases.

Summary

Within the northern route of the central section, CC4 scores highest and therefore should be taken forward, largely due to the extent of existing facilities that could be utilised and therefore it would be expected to have a lower cost and lower levels of funding required. CC3, scoring the second highest should also be considered given that the Handforth Garden Village timescales may not align with this project which could hinder delivery of CC4. However, this alignment through the central section is more aligned to an everyday use market rather than a leisure market which could limit its attractiveness.

The southern route section CS2 scored the highest. This is likely to be a longer term solution that would be more suited for leisure use trips, providing a higher-quality solution, though would require significant infrastructure improvements. This option would have the ability to draw in regional and potentially national visitors to the local area, boosting the economy and elevating the active travel offer of Cheshire East. This would also be primarily traffic-free for walkers, wheelers, equestrians, runners and cyclists; promoting active travel and creating sustainable travel options which is accessible for all.

6.4.4 Eastern

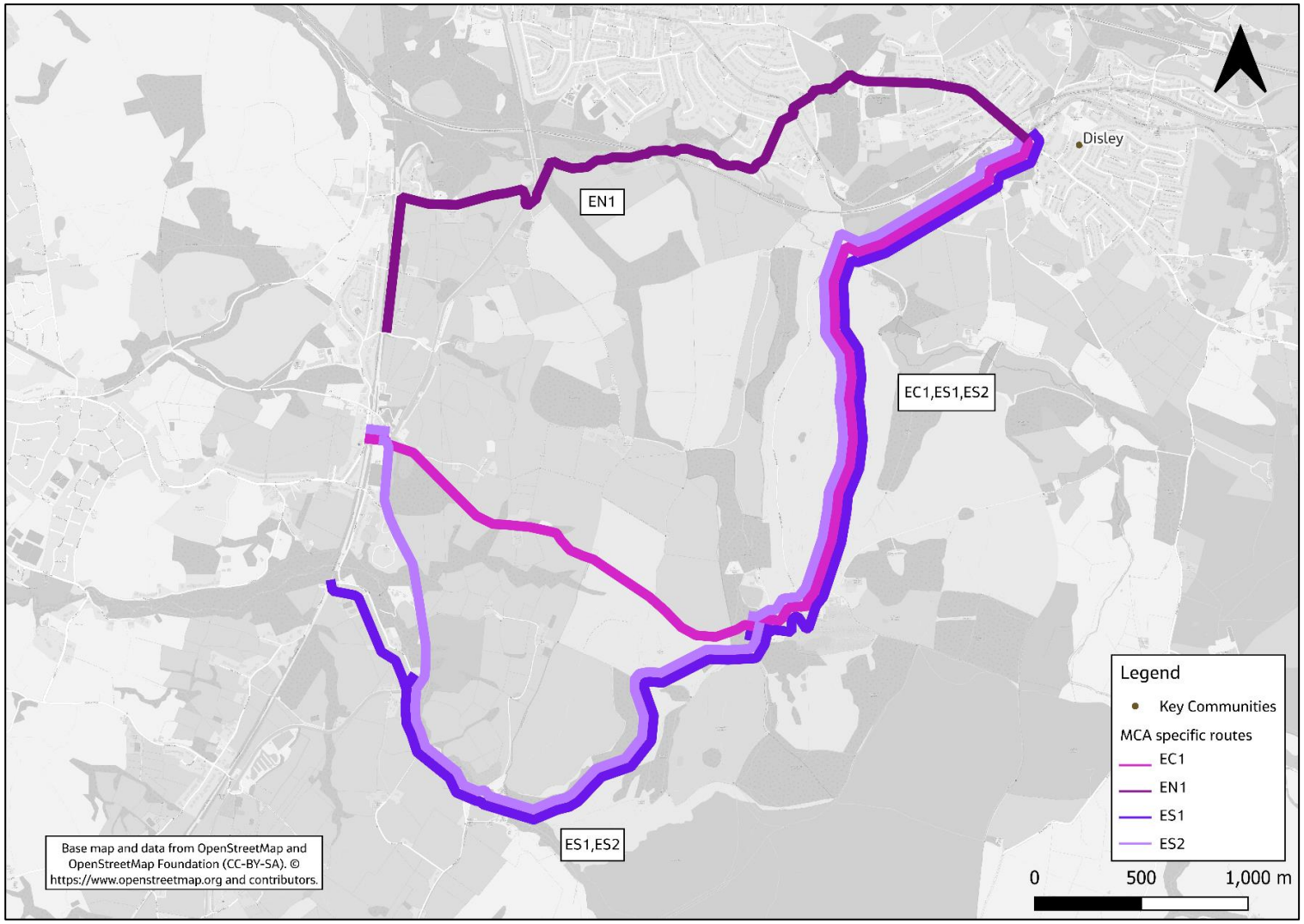

Figure 6-6: Eastern route sections

Table 6-7: Eastern route section descriptions

Route reference	Route description
EC1	This option begins on the Middlewood Way near Nelson's Pit Visitor Centre, before heading east along PRoW, through Lyme Park to Lyme Park car park, where the route connects to the Gritstone Trail, before heading north to connect into Disley.
EN1	This option begins on the Middlewood Way, connecting through High Lane, before continuing east into Disley.
ES1	This option begins on the Middlewood Way before heading southeast along quiet roads, through Lyme Park, past The Knot and Lyme Park car park, where the route connects to the Gritstone Trail. From here the route heads north to connect into Disley.
ES2	This option begins on the Middlewood Way near Nelson's Pit Visitor Centre, before routing along the canal and quiet roads. The route then continues through Lyme Park and back up past The Knot and Lyme Park car park where the route connects to the Gritstone Trail. From here the route heads north to connect into Disley.

The results of the sift for the eastern section are shown in Table 6-8 below and refer to routes shown in Figure 6-6. The table shows that route section EC1 scored the highest, ranking first, and EN1 scored the lowest, ranking fourth. Below is an analysis of each route and how they scored within each criterion.

Table 6-8 Eastern sift results

	Deliverability									Outcome	
Ref	Design challenges	Potential Benefits	Costs for comparison	Funding / Affordability	Acceptability	Land	Environmental considerations	Existing Facilities	Ability to have a phased delivery	Route Section Total Score	Route Section Rank
EC1	6	6	4	2	8	1	3	3	1	65	1
EN1	4	2	4	1	8	2	3	3	1	59	4
ES1	6	6	2	2	8	1	2	3	1	62	2
ES2	4	6	2	2	8	1	2	2	2	60	3

Design Challenges

EC1 and ES1 scored higher than EN1 and ES2. EN1 faces challenges in relation to providing a high quality route over the canal and also the railway crossing south of High Lane. In addition, the route follows residential streets in High Lane and Disley which may be difficult to provide widths that meet LTN 01/20 guidance. All other routes utilise the access road to Lyme Park and Red Lane, which is a private road that could result in some challenge. Routes ES1 and ES2 utilise both quiet roads and an access point to Lyme Park further south, however the routes through Lyme Park need further investigation to what could be done to improve these to be aligned to LTN 01/20 standards. EC1 follows existing ProW, however surfacing would need upgrading. All options have challenging topography that would be difficult to overcome for family-friendly use.

Potential Benefits

The scores varied for this criterion. EC1, ES1 and ES2 all scored equally due to the total potential benefits from the AMAT and tourism benefits equalling £18 million. EN1 had benefits of £13m and therefore scored lower. A majority of these benefits were tourism related benefits given that these routes were anticipated to be primarily used for leisure/ tourism as opposed to commuter/ everyday use. This lower scoring is not to say that the routes would be

poor value for money; though further work is required to better understand the benefits and BCR of the routes once there is a better understanding of the investment costs.

Costs for comparison

As route interventions and costs have not been developed at this stage, a 0-5 score was given for costs to compare the routes. Routes EC1 and EN1 scored higher on the costs for comparison than ES1 and ES2. It was expected that routes ES1 and ES2 would have higher costs as a result of the infrastructure on Shrigley Road requiring improvements and potentially routes through this area of Lyme Park. EN1 would require investment to overcome the design challenges described above. EN1 would also need investment to improve surfacing and fund legal changes to the PRoW, subject to landowner agreement.

Funding/Affordability

These routes primarily cater for leisure/ tourism purposes and therefore would likely only attract leisure/ tourism related funding. Whilst it is expected that routes through Lyme Park are more likely to attract leisure funding, EN1 does not pass through Lyme Park and also would not be expected to cater for a significant number of everyday trips, therefore, is less likely to attract funding.

Acceptability

It is expected that all four routes would be widely accepted by the public due to the non-controversial nature of the routes and the routes already being provided along the Middlewood Way and through Lyme Park in particular for walking purposes. However, there is some concern relating to ES1, EC1 and ES2 which follow a private road (Red Lane) which could provide a challenge regarding securing cyclist and equestrian access. EC1 follows the PRoW which goes through Harestead Farm which is a working farm and therefore landowners would need to be on board with any proposed changes. For routes passing through Lyme Park, work would be required with the National Trust to progress proposals on their land.

Land

All the route options scored low on this criterion. As mentioned, all routes apart from EN1 utilise Red Lane which is a private road and has public footpath status (though securing cyclist and equestrian access would be challenging). In EC1, the land between the canal to Harestead Farm near Shrigley Road North is private land however is an existing PRoW. The land through Lyme Park is owned by National Trust and therefore partnership working would be required to enable improvements.

Environmental Considerations

Routes EC1 and EN1 scored marginally higher than ES1 and ES2 on this criterion. EC1 encounters ancient woodland at Elm Wood and Bens Wood and woodland pasture and parkland through Lyme Park, as well as ancient woodland at Coalpit Clough. EN1 encounters ancient woodland at Ryles and Middlecake Woods and a local nature reserve at Jackson's Brickworks. ES1 and ES2 encounter deciduous woodland north of Shrigley Road and west of Macclesfield Canal respectively and woodland pasture and parkland through Lyme Park, they also encounter a Flood Risk Zone around Shrigley Road/Mitchell Fold from the Macclesfield Canal. Further information is provided in Appendix D, and these environmental considerations would need to be considered further in future stages of work.

Existing facilities

Routes EC1, EN1, and ES1 scored marginally higher than ES2 for this criterion. This is because all the routes apart from EN1 utilise routes through Lyme Park and the PRoW on Red Lane. ES2 scored lower as it follows the narrow canal towpath. EC1 and ES1 utilise the wide smooth paved access road up until the cattle grid and farm track and

the private access road into Disley. EN1 utilises the Ladybrook Valley Interest Trail, Middlewood Way and the footpath along Jackson's Edge Road.

Ability to have a phased delivery

It is important to consider whether the routes can have a phased delivery. Routes EC1, EN1 and ES1 score low as these routes could be delivered in two phases only. ES2 scored slightly higher as it is expected that this route could be delivered in three phases.

Summary

Route EC1 scored the highest within the eastern section which connects from the Middlewood Way to Lyme Park and Disley. An improved leisure connection in this location could provide benefits. However, this eastern section of the GBT is less of a strategic route as it does not connect into the Trans Pennine Trail and also has topographical challenges, which damages the marketability of the route as a family-friendly scheme.

6.4.5 Preferred route

Following the MCAF sift set out in the above sub-sections, the preferred route is shown in Figure 6-7 below, followed by Figure 6-8 which shows some of the wider context and benefits that the route could unlock.

The preferred route will provide a connection from the Trans Pennine Trail close to Partington in the west to Little Bollington via the GM Ringway and the National Trust site Dunham Massey. After connecting over the M56 and going through Rostherne, the route connects to the Cheshire East operated site Tatton Park. Initial engagement with stakeholders has resulted in a spur towards the proposed Tatton Services and Altrincham also being included. From here, the trail connects further east to reach Manchester Airport. Here the preferred route splits into two options. The northern alignment which would be more deliverable in a shorter term due to more existing infrastructure provides access to Quarry Bank Mill, Handforth and potentially Handforth Garden Village before running along the A555 utilising existing infrastructure to reach the Middlewood Way and the NCN and could then link up to the Trans Pennine Trail via Stockport. The southern option in the central section provides access to the National Trust site Quarry Bank Mill, Wilmslow, Woodford Garden Village and Adlington Business Park before reaching the Middlewood Way and NCN to the Trans Pennine Trail via Stockport. From the Middlewood Way, there is the potential to link to Lyme Park before reaching Disley.

If the route was to be delivered in full it would provide an accessible multi-use trail attractive to both leisure and utility users. It would provide connectivity to key existing trails in the area and provide the ability to attract visitors locally, regionally, and nationally if connected to the Trans Pennine Trail.

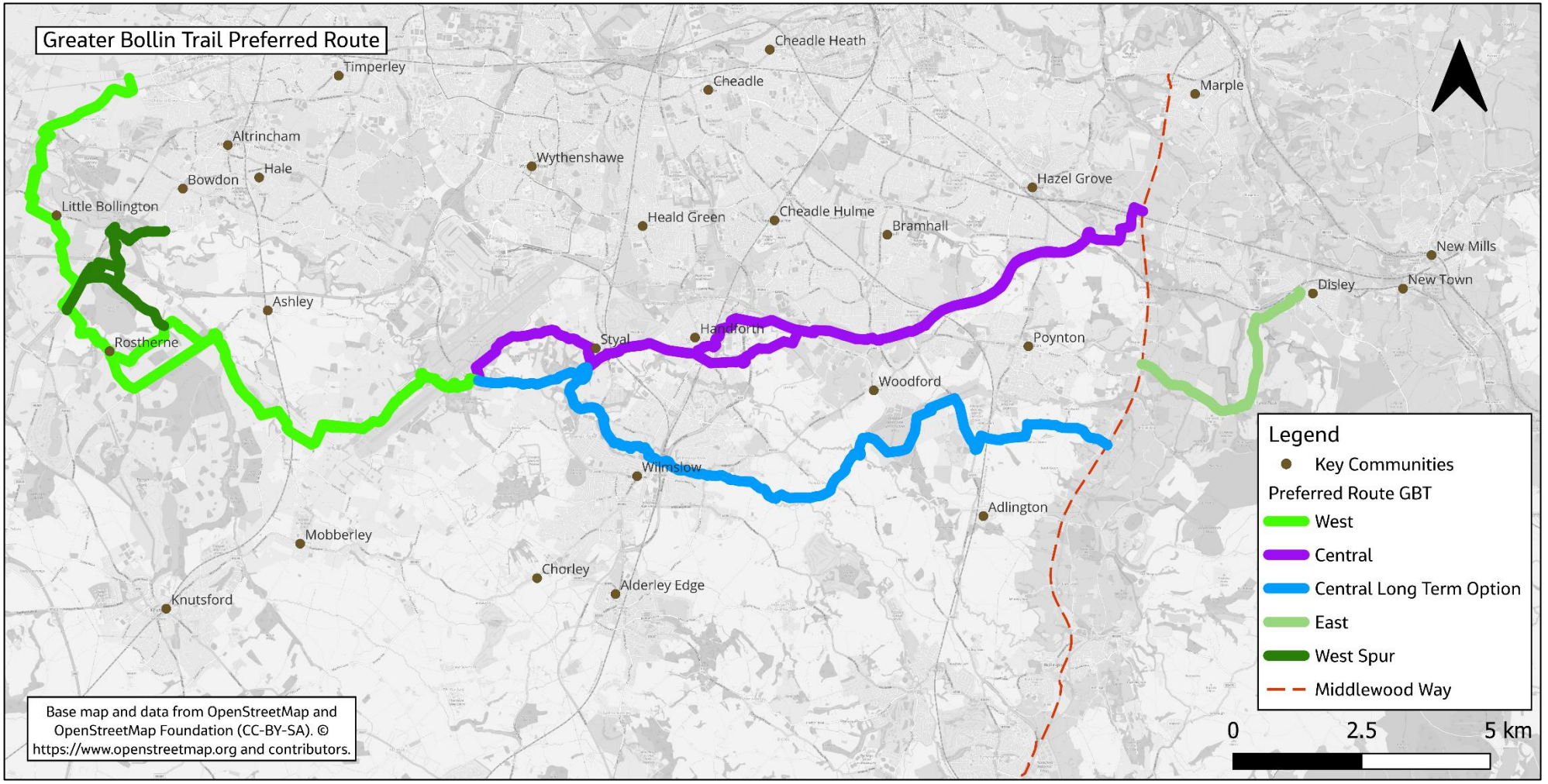

Figure 6-7: GBT preferred route

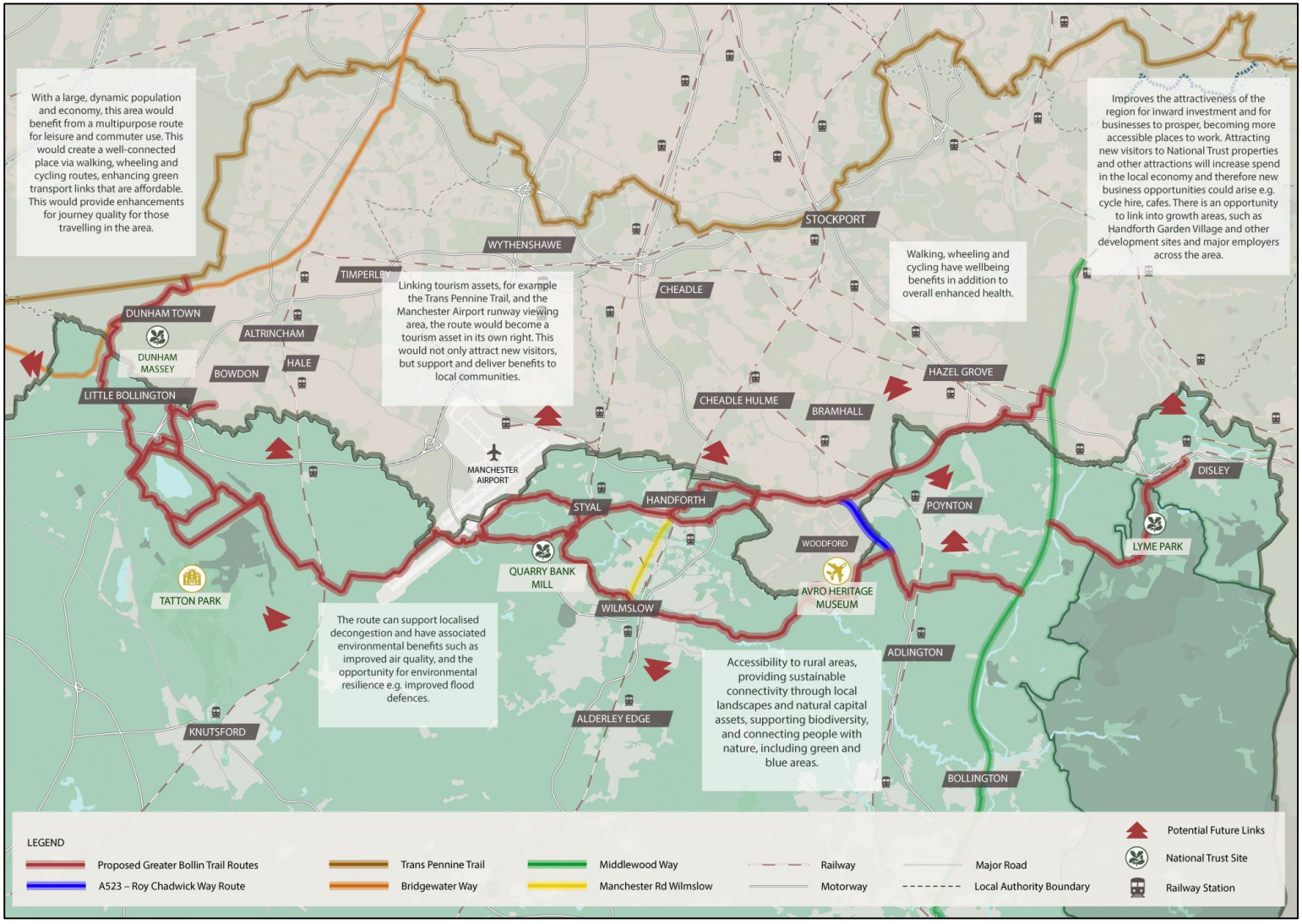

Figure 6-8 GBT preferred route

7. Phasing

Phasing of the preferred route identified in Section 6.4 has been undertaken to establish which elements could be delivered in the short-term, medium-long term and long-term. However regardless of the phasing, the vision for the project acts as an overarching support for the GBT, moving towards the project's aims in the meantime. Elements which have been taken into consideration to assist in determining the phases of the preferred route included:

- Whether the route section has existing infrastructure in place;
- Whether the existing infrastructure in place needs improving;
- Whether it is anticipated that significant land acquisition or access rights are required;
- Whether there are design challenges which will be difficult to overcome;
- Whether the origin and destination of each phase of the route sections is accessible via public transport;
- Whether key local communities will be accessible and could be connected with other settlements/ attractions/ green and blue infrastructure within the proposed phase, subsequently benefiting the community and positively impacting larger numbers of potential users;
- Whether the proposed phase could, at a future date, provide shorter sections/ loops of the route section; and
- Whether the proposed route can provide links to local communities/ attractions/ green and blue infrastructure on its own.

Table 7-1 provides an overview of the rationale and key risks/ challenges for delivery associated with each corridor.

In summary, the short-term phasing reflects the northern section option of the Central Corridor, utilising existing infrastructure and providing key links to leisure, tourism and employment opportunities. It should be noted that the option would either route via Handforth Dean or Handforth Garden Village (which would be subject to delivery as part of Handforth Garden Village if this option were chosen). An initial high-level assessment of the anticipated benefits of this short-term phase has been undertaken. This is estimated to be approximately £12.4 million, made up of £7.7 million of benefits from the AMAT[7] and £4.7 million of tourism benefits. Further work is required to understand the cost of this investments and therefore the BCR of the route. Ahead of the medium and long-term phases being delivered, there may be an opportunity for shorter loops/ routes to be followed by users, through links to public transport nodes across the short-term route. This would enable a leisure offer in the short-term ahead of the full GBT being delivered and allow tourism related benefits to be unlocked in the short-term.

The medium-term phasing reflects the Western and Eastern Corridors, with the Western Corridor ideally being delivered before the main construction phase of NPR. This phasing would provide a comprehensive GBT, enabling connections to the Trans Pennine Trail at the concluding extents of the preferred route for onward travel. Further, this phase would provide key links to National Trust sites such as Dunham Massey and Tatton Park in the west, and Lyme Park in the east as well as a connection to Manchester Airport. As such, delivering this in the medium term

[7] AMAT monetises benefits related to congestion, infrastructure maintenance, accidents, air quality, noise, greenhouse gases, reduced risk of premature death, absenteeism and journey ambience

would provide not only benefits to leisure users, but also utility trip options. Both corridors would be subject to funding and land/ access rights.

The long-term phasing would provide an alternative southern section to the Central Corridor that would be an attractive facility locally, regionally and nationally due to its alignment alongside the River Bollin. Though this phase would require significant new infrastructure and is comparatively long compared to other potential phases. As such, further investigations into necessary infrastructure would be required. Though, technical work and land access/ negotiations could be progressed during the short/medium-term to work towards the delivery of this corridor.

Table 7-1 Phasing rationale

Proposed phase and associated corridor	Rationale	Risks/challenges for delivery
Short-term (Central Corridor, northern section)	▪ Links areas of Handforth to Styal, Quarry Bank Mill and Manchester Airport and has the potential to link with Handforth Garden Village dependent on which route option is chosen providing a connection to leisure, tourism and employment opportunities. ▪ Public transport provision is provided within Handforth and Styal that the route could link to (Handforth railway station, Styal railway station and multiple bus stops). ▪ Utilises existing infrastructure on the A555.	▪ One of the route options is subject to delivery as part of Handforth Garden Village. ▪ Access under the railway line from Lower Meadow Road, Handforth Dean, to Brooke Avenue, Handforth is required. ▪ Determination of highway status of Sagars Road is required. ▪ Limited to no footway along Altrincham Road which would require improving and the lack of a crossing point onto Station Road in Styal. Narrow footways along Station Road which may also be difficult to address. ▪ The possibility of lighting alongside Manchester Airport runway would need to be assessed and any lighting would need to be of a suitable type. ▪ Wellington Road is a private road that continues onto a footpath through Hazel Grove Golf Club which is likely private land and will require discussion for potential improvements and change of legal status/ access rights.
Medium-term (Western Corridor)	▪ Anticipated to mainly benefit leisure users and provides a final link at the west of the GBT to the Trans Pennine Trail where users can continue into areas such as Warrington and Greater Manchester, and also links to the Bridgewater Way trail. However, there is the potential for this phase to serve utility trips between Knutsford, Altrincham, and Manchester Airport partly along the GBT. ▪ Comparatively long and fairly rural with limited public transport connections which may make it more difficult to secure funding.	▪ Topography near Manchester Airport and that the possibility of lighting alongside Manchester Airport runway would need to be assessed and any lighting would need to be of a suitable type. ▪ The possibility of lighting alongside Manchester Airport runway would need to be assessed and any lighting would need to be of a suitable type. ▪ Security risks of additional footfall near Manchester Airport would require agreement and consideration. ▪ Potential NPR development interface. ▪ Change of status of ProW/routing through farms likely to be required. ▪ Environmental considerations such as ancient woodland near Manchester Airport, as set out in Appendix D.

Proposed phase and associated corridor	Rationale	Risks/challenges for delivery
Medium-term (Eastern Corridor)	▪ Anticipated to mainly benefit leisure users and provides a connection from the existing Middlewood Way trail through the National Trust site of Lyme Park and into the local community of Disley.	▪ Subject to funding and land/ access rights. ▪ Steep topography and therefore design challenges would be difficult to overcome for family-friendly use, surfacing and lighting could be challenging. ▪ Upgrades to existing ProW though farmland and agricultural buildings will need to be explored, as well as upgrading the existing surfacing. ▪ Red Lane is a private road in parts, with the remainder adopted highway. It is also a footpath and a recent addition to ProW (footway) with residential dwellings with private rights of access.
Long-term (Central corridor, southern option)	▪ Provides an additional link between Styal and Manchester Airport. ▪ Progression of the route alongside the River Bollin which requires significant new infrastructure and is comparatively long compared to other potential phases. ▪ Would be an attractive facility locally, regionally and nationally. ▪ By delivering this final phase, this enables the full route benefits to be realised.	▪ Follows access to a private property/ recent housing development which would need exploring. ▪ Bridge over the River Bollin may pose a challenge for upgrading to suitable widths as well as potential erosion issues alongside the River Bollin, new infrastructure requirements and investigation into land ownership. ▪ Under the A34 underpass could require substantial infrastructure for widening and lighting. ▪ Linking with Woodford Garden Village. ▪ Improvements to Street Lane.

8. Potential Funding Sources

Key to delivery of the GBT will be securing external funds. CEC have an annual programme of transport infrastructure delivered through the Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport Block and it is recommended a portion of this is used to conduct design work for the initial phases of the GBT to develop 'ready to go' schemes to seek external funding. Potential external funding sources are set out below.

Table 8-1: Funding sources

Funding Source	Description	Link	Opportunities
Handforth Garden Village (S106)	Approval has been granted to secure Section 106 contributions from the Handforth Garden Village developer towards local highways, education, and healthcare.	It could be possible for the central section of the route to link into the Handforth Garden Village to provide a connection for residents to employment and leisure opportunities and improve walking and cycling accessibility across the site.	By linking Handforth Garden Village into the route it may be possible to utilise some of the Section 106 funds to provide high quality infrastructure in the area that would benefit the GBT e.g. connection over the A34 at Handforth.
Local Transport Fund (LTF)	Cheshire East have been provisionally allocated £180m of funding for the LTF. The LTF funding priorities are to: • Drive better connectivity within towns, suburbs and cities • Drive better connectivity between towns and cities • Improve everyday local journeys for people	This funding allowance is to be allocated for Cheshire East schemes in line with the funding priorities, therefore there is potential that this funding could be used to deliver parts of the GBT.	As the principles of the trail include every day and utility journeys, there is the opportunity for the LTF to be a source of funding. The route will look to drive connectivity between towns and improve everyday journeys.
National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)[8]	The NLHF is the largest funder for the UK's heritage. Over the next decade the NLHF are strategising to take a longer-term view, investing in heritage for the future as well as for the present. They will invest in places to	The NLHF looks to provide funding to projects including helping to connect people to nature in their daily lives and areas that are connected to history and heritage. This could be applicable to sections of the proposed GBT.	As the trail will connect into historical and heritage sites and will provide access to nature, there could be potential to apply for this funding.

[8] National Lottery Heritage Fund

Funding Source	Description	Link	Opportunities
	bring about benefits for people, places and the natural environment. The NLHF can provide funding for projects between £10,000 and £10 million.		
National Highways	The GBT will look to connect into the proposed Tatton Services which will be located off the M56 and will interact with National Highways infrastructure.		There is a need to work closely with National Highways to investigate options of how to take this section of the GBT forward.
Private Sector Investment	Along the route there are multiple private businesses that may benefit from both utility and leisure users of the GBT.		There may be an opportunity to discuss the benefits of the route to the private sector and leverage funding for the GBT.
UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)	The UKSPF is a central pillar of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda. The Fund aims to improve pride in place and increase life chances across the UK investing in communities and place, supporting local business, and people and skills. This project has been funded by UKSPF.	The UKSPF Cheshire East allocation is circa £12.4 million and must be spent by March 2025. CEC have developed an investment plan for the UKSPF allocation. Five priority local opportunities are identified within this including active travel, making more of natural assets and green spaces and boosting the visitor economy and cultural offer to drive town centre footfall.	The GBT will aim to increase footfall into town centres through the use of the trail, which will encourage active travel and make use of the natural assets and green spaces within Cheshire East. There may be potential for future stages of work to be funded by SPF.
Local Transport Plan (LTP)	CEC have an adopted LTP for the period of 2019-2024. The strategy considers all forms of transport over the plan period, providing a framework for how transport will support wider policies to improve the economy, protect the environment and make attractive places to live, work and play. Associated with the LTP, CEC have an annual programme of transport infrastructure delivered through the Local Transport Plan Integrated Transport Block.	There is potential for the LTP Integrated Transport Block funding to be utilised to conduct design work for the initial phases of the GBT to develop ready to go schemes to seek external funding.	There is an opportunity to use the LTP Integrated Transport Block funding to progress the GBT.

Funding Source	Description	Link	Opportunities
Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR)	The potential NPR infrastructure could interface with the western corridor of the GBT.		There may be opportunities for funding related to NPR to contribute towards delivery of the western sections of the GBT as well as utilising any surplus land.
Land owners	Landowners receive grants to support project work, plant new woodland and build countryside cycle trails, create wildlife habitats, manage coastal landscapes and to protect historic sites across the UK. There are various land owners across the route.		For land owners who could benefit from the GBT or are supportive of the scheme, there may be options to investigate around dedicating land as permissive route as a benefit in kind. Further, the approach undertaken in Somerset ('The Strawberry Line') experimenting with permitted development rights and volunteers should be investigated further with land owners.
Sport England	Each year Sport England invest more than £250 million to help people play sport and take part in physical activity.	The GBT aims to provide an opportunity for people to be physically active and to connect communities.	The Sport England 'Small Grants Programme' helps to fund opportunities for communities to get more physically active. Further consideration should be given to this funding source.
Sustrans	Sustrans are investing funds in improving the quality of the NCN to achieve a higher standard of provision.	CEC have engaged with Sustrans on this piece of work to date and the route utilises the NCN.	Continue to engage with Sustrans to identify and progress improvements on the NCN across the GBT.
Future CEC Local Plan Opportunities	The Local Plan Strategy sets out strategic priorities for the development of the area, along with planning policies and proposals to make sure that new development addresses the economic, environmental and social needs of the area. The existing Local Plan was adopted in July 2017.	The GBT could be integrated into the next Local Plan as it could enhance walking and cycling connectivity to development sites.	There is potential for funding through the Local Infrastructure Plan associated with the next Local Plan.

9. Recommendations and next steps

This OAR has detailed the options assessment process for the proposed GBT. Work undertaken as reported in this document including route investigation and options development and assessment has determined a preferred route as shown in Figure 6-7 and Figure 6-8 in Section 6.4.5. Feedback from stakeholders and site visits have also informed the preferred route.

As set out in Section 7, the short-term phases would link the A555 existing infrastructure through Handforth and Styal to east of Manchester Airport, with a long-term ambition to deliver the entire GBT. The short-term phase is expected to deliver benefits in the region of £12.4 million. A crucial element of this is to address topography east of the Manchester Airport runway, which is a significant design challenge that needs to be overcome to provide accessibility around Manchester Airport. This would link into existing infrastructure within the Central Corridor and unlock access to future route sections within the Western Corridor. In order to achieve the entire GBT, the recommendations create a long-term investment programme that will need sustained investment to deliver the route and associated step change in levels of walking, wheeling and cycling.

Work as part of the MCAF has suggested that sections of the route would provide benefits, however further work is required to better understand the expense of the investment and understand the benefits in more detail to determine a BCR.

As such, key recommended next steps include:

- Securing of funding to further develop the scheme;
- Understanding any issues or constraints in further detail;
- Understanding the benefits and benefit cost ratio and wider business case;
- Developing plans for promotion and marketing of the scheme;
- Engaging local businesses to seek their investment to capitalise on opportunities and develop the wider offer for users;
- Developing scheme designs and progressing discussions on land access or acquisitions for the short-term phase and develop cost estimates;
- Preparing bids to other external funding opportunities as appropriate;
- Integrate the ambitions for the GBT and leisure routes for walking and cycling into policy documentation e.g. Local Transport Plan and Local Plan;
- Consideration of future long-term maintenance funding for the route;
- Continue to work alongside partners, including other Local Authorities, to deliver these ambitions and link into networks outside of Cheshire East; and
- Continue to work with and alongside stakeholders who will be important to the delivery of the scheme, including landowners. Discussions with landowners have not taken place across the entire route and these discussions will be key to firming up route options ahead of any delivery. The Steering Group will be a valuable mechanism for ensuring continued support and enabling delivery.

Appendix A. Policy Review

A.1 National Policy/Guidance

Department for Transport, Gear Change (2019)[9]

Gear Change is a policy document released in 2019 by the Department for Transport aimed at outlining the plans to make England 'a great walking and cycling nation'. It is split into four main themes of actions and includes the benefits and opportunities the proposals will create.

The document begins by describing the benefits associated with a 'step change' in cycling and walking, these include 'improving air quality, combatting climate change, improving health and wellbeing, addressing inequalities and tackling congestion on our roads', there are also health benefits from the physical activity and thus reduced NHS costs. This is followed by highlighting how there is an opportunity to embed the changes in travel behaviour since COVID-19 and the rise in popularity of cycling and walking which can change how people move around in towns and cities.

'A great walking and cycling nation' is defined by the following quote from the document: "*Places will be truly walkable. A travel revolution in our streets, towns and communities will have made cycling a mass form of transit. Cycling and walking will be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030.*" If this outcome is to be achieved, it will create places that people want to live and work in, they will be better connected and more sustainable communities. It will also help to deliver clean growth which will support local businesses and ensure prosperity across the country and level up the nation.

The document outlines four main themes of actions that are required to reach its goal. These are listed below:

1. **Better streets for cycling and people –** streets will become safer to cycle and walk with separated pedestrian and cycle routes and direct and intuitive routes designed by cyclists.
2. **Putting cycling and walking at the heart of transport, place-making, and health policy –** appropriate infrastructure provisions will be made for cycling and walking with an increase in spending and budgets.
3. **Empowering and encouraging Local Authorities –** Local Authorities will receive increased funding; however, this will only be given to schemes that meet the standards set out in the LTN 01/20 (reviewed below). Funding applications will be examined by a soon to be established commissioning body called Active Travel England (now established) who will enforce standards and improve the performance of active travel schemes. Local authorities will also gain new powers to enforce against moving traffic offences previously only done by the police.
4. **We will enable people to cycle and protect them when they cycle –** every adult or child who wants cycle safety training will be able to access it, and proposals are in place for cycling to be prescribed as an intervention for poor health. A nationally established e-bike support programme is proposed, and legal changes will be made to protect vulnerable road users.

According to the document if these themes of actions are implemented, then the country can become a great walking and cycling nation which will help to address the issues around climate change, air quality, health and wellbeing, inequalities and congestion.

[9] Department for Transport (2019) *Gear Change* [Online] Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f1f59458fa8f53d39c0def9/gear-change-a-bold-vision-for-cycling-and-walking.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

This policy is relevant to the GBT as this would create a safe, attractive and well-connected route for walking and cycling. The proposed route could be used by people to exercise and improve their health as well as support local businesses along the route as a result of increased footfall.

Department for Transport, Cycle Infrastructure Design (LTN 01/20) (2020)[10]

The Cycle Infrastructure Design (LTN 01/20) policy document provides guidance and good practice for the design of cycle infrastructure, in support of the Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. The document begins by outlining how key cycling is to the future of the transport system and that to facilitate this the quality of cycle infrastructure must improve to encourage people to use it. The standards set out in this document aim to help cycling become a form of mass transit in many more places and for it to be seen as a means of everyday transport. All schemes must be built consistent with the guidance and if they are not or if the scheme takes too long to be built then requests can be made for funding to be returned.

The document identified that inclusivity is key as people of all ages must be considered. It is also important to view cycling as a form of leisure and tourism as well as transport. The document notes that the benefits of cycling can extend further than just physical and mental health improvements. The document also highlights the opportunity for modal shift: reducing the number of people doing short journeys in the car and taking advantage of the high numbers of school children who live nearby to secondary schools. This is highlighted in Figure 9-1.

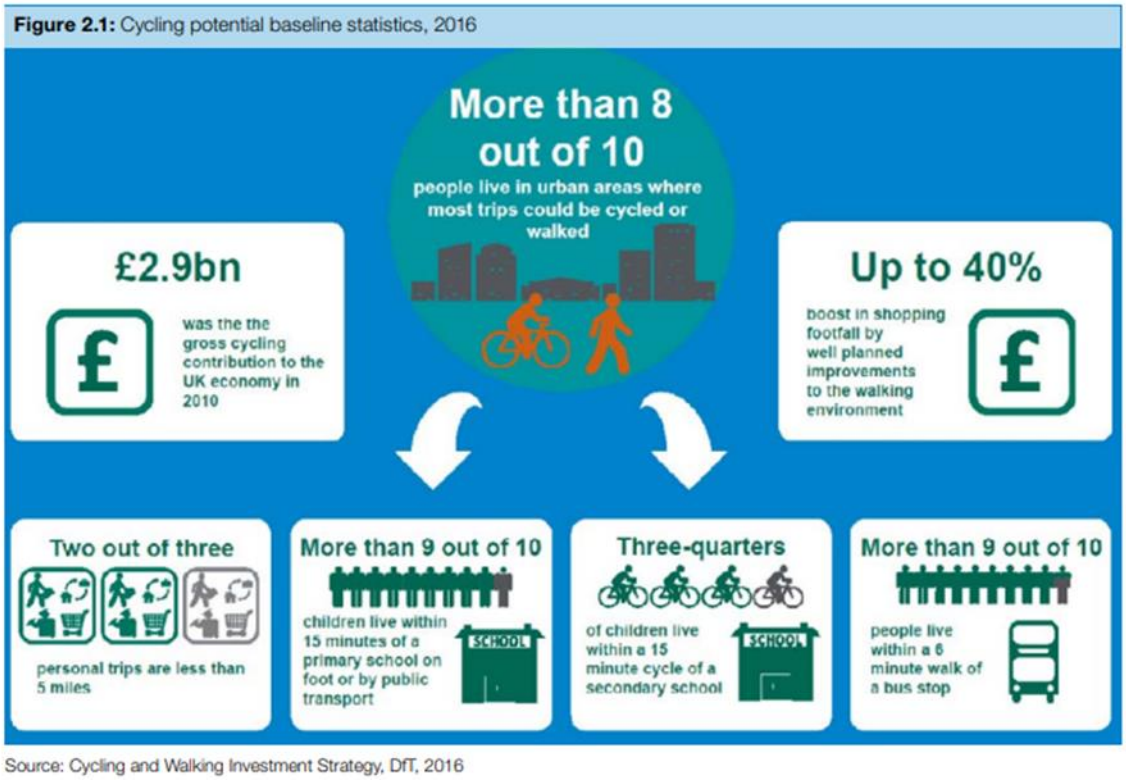

Figure 9-1: Cycling potential baseline statistics

[10] Department for Transport (2020) *Cycle Infrastructure Design (LTN 01/20) 2020* [Online] Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ffa1f96d3bf7f65d9e35825/cycle-infrastructure-design-ltn-1-20.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

Five core design principles for cycle infrastructure have been set out to ensure cycling is accessible for all. These are listed and shown in the Figure 9-2 below.

- **Coherent –** must be simple to navigate;
- **Direct –** at least as direct – and preferably more direct – than those available for private motor vehicles;
- **Safe –** infrastructure should be and is perceived to be safe;
- **Comfortable –** good quality, well-maintained smooth surfaces with an adequate width for the volume of users and there must be minimal stopping and starting, avoiding steep gradients; and
- **Attractive –** should be places that people want to spend time using.

Figure 9-2: Core principles for design

These are followed by 22 summary principles which form an integral part of the guidance.

The document highlights the need for cycling to be accessible all, referencing The Equality Act 2010 which "*places a duty on public sector authorities to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty in carrying out their functions*". Plans for cycling should provide a network on and/ or off the carriageway, which is suitable for all abilities, the aim is to create a densely spaced network with between 250m and 1km between routes. These routes will fulfil various functions which together will create an integrated network.

- Primary routes – between major trip generators;
- Secondary routes – connections into local centres;
- Local access to streets and attractors; and
- Long distance and leisure routes.

Motor traffic free routes away from the highway can be important links for everyday trips, they are attractive as they avoid motor traffic. However, they need to be designed and maintained to a high quality, particularly in terms of surfacing, accessibility, and lighting. Additional maintenance also needs to be done to keep them clear of seasonal challenges such as leaf debris, snow, and ice as well as other hazards that aren't cleared by cars. These routes can be mixed use; however, it is preferable to provide separation between pedestrians and cyclists. Some of the key considerations for traffic free routes are:

- Suitable width and surfaces.
- Integration with the wider network – clear signing and properly constructed links.
- Good level of social safety.
- Sealed surfaces and good lighting for year-round utility cycling – loose gravel surfaces can be difficult or inaccessible for people in wheelchairs and some types of adapted cycles.
- Provide separate routes for walking and cycling where budget and space allows.
- Comfortable and coherent transitions between on and off carriageway routes.
- Cycle parking.
- Public cycle hire schemes.
- Clear signing with information about distances, destinations and directions – a consistent approach to design and branding will assist with this.

This policy is relevant to the GBT as the route aims to comply with LTN 01/20 guidance where possible. The guidance on off-carriageway routes is particularly relevant and will guide how the scheme is designed. The five core design principles and 22 summary principles will also be considered

The British Horse Society, Advice on surface for Horses (July 2021)[11]

Natural low growth vegetation and beaten earth with some stone embedded into the surface is the ideal multi-use surface for equestrian use. Drainage is also very important the soil must drain well. To make it a good surface for equestrian use, it is important to understand horses, their physiology and the effect horses may have on a surface when choosing a surface for multi-use routes. Different surfaces cause different risks for horses the greatest risks include slippery tarmac or other sealed surfaces, and the ideal surface is well drained, non-slip resilient surfacing. The highest preference is given to short, firm, well-drained turf and the least preferable is formally constructed paths with firm, non-slip surfaces.

The route will be a multi-use scheme that could include equestrian use; therefore, this policy document is relevant to the GBT.

The Combined Environmental Land Management Offer[12] (January 2024)

The Combined Environmental Land Management Offer will contribute to the outcomes set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan released in January 2024 by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The range of actions within the plan will be more attractive to farmers and land managers and will help to achieve objectives such as 65% to 80% of landowners and farmers adopting nature friendly farming on at least 10% to 15% of their land by 2030. The plan will also contribute to DEFRA's environmental outcomes on habitat restoration and creation, water quality and water demand, net zero, and farming in protected landscapes.

This scheme is relevant as Section 22b of the plan provides an action to "*provide and maintain new permissive bridleways or cycle paths*". The scheme considers improvements to existing PRoW as part of the route which is in line with this action.

A.2 Regional Policy

Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission (2022)[13]

The Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission was set up by the Subregional Leaders' Board in November 2020. Their aim is to build on previous progress to help Cheshire and Warrington realise its ambition of becoming '*the most sustainable and inclusive subregion in the UK*'. This has led to a final report called *'Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington'* [14] being released which includes ambitious recommendations to reach this target. Some of these recommendations include:

[11] The British Horse Society (July 2021) *Advice on Surfaces for horses* [Online] Available from: https://www.bhs.org.uk/media/mr2b1udi/surfaces-0721.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

[12] Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2024) *The combined environmental land management offer* [Online] Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-transition-plan-2021-to-2024/technical-annex-the-combined-environmental-land-management-offer (Accessed: April 2024)

[13] Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (2022) *Promoting a just transition to a green, fair and growing economy* [Online] Available from: https://cheshireandwarrington.com/what-we-do/sustainability-inclusion/sustainable-and-inclusive-growth-commission/ (Accessed: December 2023)

[14] Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission (2022) *Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Cheshire and Warrington* [Online] Available from: https://cheshireandwarrington.com/media/kpgb5ni5/lep220718-p1_a4d_01r.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

- A fair employment charter for Cheshire and Warrington;
- The decarbonisation of dairy;
- The full decarbonisation of all transport by 2035;
- Building the UK's First Net Zero industrial cluster around the area's large hydrogen and net zero projects;
- Public investment to address disadvantage and target opportunities;
- Improve active travel and public transport;
- Provide new infrastructure/ support for electric cars and zero-emission vehicles to make them cost effective and accessible;
- Work with businesses, public sector and agriculture to speed up the transition to a circular economy;
- Retrofitting insulation and clean energy to housing, particularly for social housing and disadvantaged households;
- Access to digital for all; and
- Making current land use net zero.

This policy is relevant as the recommendations published by the commission touch on improving active travel and targeting opportunities with public investment, both of which the GBT will aim to do.

Cheshire and Warrington LEP, Transport Strategy (2021)[15]

The Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP) Transport Strategy is part of the sub region's Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) which covers the period up to 2040. The SEP identifies the need for growth, transport and connectivity as being central to Cheshire and Warrington's aspirations and for supporting economic development. The strategy highlights how effective transport networks will be crucial in continuing the success of the sub region's attractiveness as a place to live and do business. Whilst the sub region is well connected transport wise, improving connectivity, to unlock strategic and wider development sites for housing and employment and relieving congested areas, is a central theme of the SEP. The strategy highlights ten key challenges for the transport network which are listed below:

1. Accommodating development growth;
2. Congestion on strategic routes;
3. Sub regional movement;
4. Cross boundary movement;

[15] Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (2021) *Strategic Economic Plan Draft Transport Strategy* [Online] Available from: https://www.warrington.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2019-10/appendix_11_-_cheshire_and_warrington_transport_strategy.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

5. Rural connectivity;
6. Dominance of car for mode share;
7. Low bus use;
8. Modernising local rail services;
9. Increasing levels of cycling and walking; and
10. Digital connectivity.

This policy is relevant as the GBT would improve the attractiveness of the region and help with rural connectivity and movement across the region and boundaries. The scheme also aims to increase the levels of cycling and walking in the region all of which are objectives within the policy.

Transport for Greater Manchester, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership, Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 (2021)[16]

This strategy, led by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) on behalf of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (GMLEP), focuses on the long term challenges that Greater Manchester faces to strategise the best way forward to meet the Greater Manchester Strategy vision *"to make Greater Manchester one of the best places in the world to grow up, get on and grow old"* and help create a successful resilient city region. 2040 has been selected as a target year as devolution has allowed for strategy to be bolder and viewed more long term. The strategy highlights how transport is crucial to these plans and evidence based, long term vision has been used to come up with a 'right-mix' of transport modes for the network. This 'right-mix' includes 50% of journeys being made by sustainable transport and no net increase in motor vehicle journeys by 2040.

Priorities for the strategy include fast east-west connections, Greater Manchester becoming a modern pedestrian and cycle friendly city region which includes the Bee Network and town centre regeneration through new sustainable transport connections and bus networks improvements. Every five years a transport delivery plan will be released describing the progress that has been made in delivering the strategy.

This policy is relevant to the scheme as some of the GBT is proposed to be within Greater Manchester boundaries. It also sets out how Greater Manchester will become pedestrian and cycle friendly - two modes of transport which the GBT is aiming to improve access to.

Manchester Airports Group, Sustainable Development Plan (2016)[17]

The Manchester Airports Group (MAG) Sustainable Development Plan 2016 *"sets out the strategic context for the long term development of Manchester Airport"*. It identifies the growth opportunities the airport has as well as the

[16] Transport for Greater Manchester, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (2021) *Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040* [Online] Available from: https://assets.ctfassets.net/nv7y93idf4jq/01xbKQQNW0ZYLzYvcj1z7c/4b6804acd572f00d8d728194ef62bb89/Greater_Manchester_Transport_Strategy_2040_final.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

[17] Manchester Airports Group (2016) *Sustainable Development Plan 2016* [Online] Available from: https://assets.live.dxp.maginfrastructure.com/f/73114/x/51cd0d6f10/man_sdp_summary-masterplan_online-2016_v2-lr-29716.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

challenges it faces. This involves responsibly managing the environment and the impacts the airport has on communities nearby. The Plan also details MAG's Transformation Programme. This is its investment to create a world class airport with high quality facilities and services. The plan also has a list of objectives it hopes to meet. These are:

- Explain the long-term opportunities for the growth and development of Manchester Airport and its contribution to the northern economy;
- Set out our vision for the development of the airport site;
- Provide the framework for capitalising on the benefits of the airport's development and for managing and minimising local disturbance and environmental impact;
- Explain our plans to enable a constructive dialogue with our customers, neighbours and business partners;
- Inform the plans and strategies of others across the north west region and beyond; and
- Provide evidence to help Government understand the implications of making best use of Manchester's capacity.

This policy is relevant as the GBT could be located near to Manchester Airport; therefore, it may impact upon the communities that are mentioned within the policy.

TfGM, Bee Network (2023)[18]

The Bee Network aims to make it easier to get around Greater Manchester by bus, tram, train, walking, wheeling or cycling. Greater Manchester buses are being franchised so that they will be controlled under the Bee Network framework which TfGM hope will improve the service and increase patronage. On 24th September 2023 the first bus services in Bolton and Wigan and parts of Bury, Salford and Manchester were brought under control. By 5th January 2025, every Greater Manchester bus service will be part of the Bee Network. The Bee Network will become a 'one-stop-shop for all local journeys' as trains, trams, buses and bikes will become integrated into one network and ticket. This they hope will make public transport and active travel more accessible, cheaper, simpler, more reliable and more sustainable.

The Bee Network is relevant to the scheme as the network is trying to improve cycling, wheeling and walking links in Greater Manchester. The GBT also intends to achieve this and with parts of the route proposed to be located close to or within Greater Manchester, this could connect into the wider Bee Network.

Warrington Council, Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39 (2023)[19]

The Warrington Local Plan was adopted on the 4th December 2023. It provides a statutory planning framework for the entire borough between 2021/22 and 2038/39. Within the plan is a vision, range of objectives and an overall strategy for development. Part of this is transport safeguarding. A scheme that may be relevant to the GBT is the

[18] Transport for Greater Manchester (2023) *Say yellow to the Bee Network* [Online] Available from: https://tfgm.com/the-bee-network?utm_source=Web&utm_medium=MPU&utm_campaign=Bee+Network+&utm_id=Bee+Network (Accessed December 2023)

[19] Warrington Council (2023) *Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39 Adopted December 2023* [Online] Available from: https://www.warrington.gov.uk/LocalPlan (Accessed December 2023)

Warrington East Multi-modal corridor. This will connect Birchwood to Central Warrington via Birchwood way. This will help support future highways and public transport improvements.

Additionally, there are multiple main development areas that may be relevant to the GBT. These are listed and described below.

- **South East Warrington Urban Extension –** runs north of the M56 and east of the A49, the extension will provide a minimum of 4,200 homes and also includes local centres and open spaces.

- **Thelwell Heys residential development –** greenbelt land east of Grappenhall and south of Thelwell will be allocated for a minimum of 300 new homes.

- **Culcheth residential development** – land to the east of Culcheth allocated to provide a minimum of 200 new homes. This development will provide ease of access to existing local services and facilities in Culcheth as well as employment opportunities at Taylor Business Park and Birchwood.

- **Hollins Green residential development –** land southwest of Hollins Green will be allocated for residential development to provide 90 new homes and ease of access to local facilities and services and employment opportunities at Birchwood.

- **Lymm residential developments**

    - **Pool Lane/ Warrington Road –** land to the west of Lymm will be allocated for a minimum of 170 new homes which will provide ease of access to local facilities and services and employment opportunities in Warrington Town Centre.

    - **Rushgreen Road –** land east of Lymm will be allocated for a residential led mixed use development providing a minimum of 136 new homes and a new health facility.

This policy is relevant to the scheme as the proposed route could help to improve transport links towards Warrington.

A.3 Local policy

CEC, Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 (2017)[20]

Adopted in July 2017, the CEC Local Plan is the most important tool the Council has for shaping development in Cheshire East. It is an overall vision for shaping strategy for development for the period until 2030. With this plan they hope to develop Cheshire East to maintain its reputation as the best place to live in the North West. The plan's functions include setting planning policy, allocating sites for development and providing guidance on making decisions on planning applications. The plan also addresses "*issues such as the amount and locations of new housing and employment development, discussed the provision of new infrastructure, ensures that there is protection and improvement of important open areas, as well as the improvements required for town centres and community facilities*".

This policy is relevant to the GBT as a majority of the route will be in Cheshire East. The policy also helps to make decisions on planning applications and addresses protecting and improving important open areas. As a result, the GBT will need to be guided by this plan.

CEC, Local Transport Plan 2019-2024 (2019)[21]

Adopted in October 2019, the Local Transport Plan (LTP) considers all forms of transport for the five-year period between 2019-2024. It provides a framework for how *"transport will support wider policies to improve Cheshire East's economy, protect its environment and make attractive places to live, work and play"*. It also outlines how transport will support the long-term goals of Cheshire East. As part of the LTP, the Council is taking a range of actions. To complement these, Local Transport Development Plans (LTDPs) have been developed by the Council. These LTDPs set out a range of potential schemes to improve the transport network to support towns and surrounding areas. They identify ways to deliver the aspiration of coordinated and integrated transport networks within the borough, covering all forms of transport, including walking, cycling, buses, rail and road traffic.

The current LTP was prepared pre-Covid and prior to many recent changes in transport policy including, but not limited to: Gear Change (2020), The Transport Decarbonisation Plan (2021), Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy (2022) and Bus Back Better (2021). Numerous non-transport policies have also come forward which impact transport including the Levelling Up White Paper (2022) and Clear Air Strategy (2019) for example. The decision to stop HS2 from Birmingham to Manchester will also further impact the borough, particularly Crewe as there is potential for alterative schemes to be introduced in lieu of HS2. CEC is now well placed to undertake a significant update of the LTP to maintain a document that is robust and relevant to both national, regional and local priorities.

This policy is relevant to the scheme as the route will be located predominantly in Cheshire East, the route is also part of the transport network which will cover walking and cycling as potentially equestrian, and therefore the GBT will need to be developed in line with the LTP. The scheme will also hopefully increase the attractiveness of Cheshire East which links to the aims of the LTP.

[20] Cheshire East Council (2017) *Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030* [Online] Available from: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/planning/local-plan/local-plan-strategy-web-version-1.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

[21] Cheshire East Council (2019) *Local Transport Plan 2019-2024* [Online] Available from: https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s72327/Local%20Transport%20Plan%20-%20app%201.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

CEC, Cheshire East Council Environment Strategy 2020-2024 (2020)[22]

The policy details how Cheshire East are committed to reducing emissions and becoming carbon neutral by 2025. Since this pledge, the target year has been revised and reset for 2027, however the Council still aim for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2045. Cheshire East set out a number of goals which they hope to achieve between the period 2020-2024, these are listed below:

- Cheshire East will be a Carbon Neutral Council by 2025 (now updated to 2027)[23];
- Waste and pollution will be reduced;
- Air quality will improve;
- The availability and use of sustainable transport and active travel will increase;
- New development will be sensitive and sustainable; and
- CEC will manage the environment to restore nature, conserve heritage and enhance the beauty of our landscapes.

The strategy summarises the key strategies and action plans to deliver these goals will be through their *"service delivery, regulatory activity, projects, and partnerships".* A policy framework is also provided for the Council to evaluate all emerging strategies, policies, action plans and projects on how they impact on the environment and climate change. The framework will help the council understand how they can contribute positively to the above goals so they can provide strong leadership and stewardship.

This policy is relevant to the GBT as the proposed scheme is looking to increase active travel numbers along the route which is largely located in Cheshire East. This will directly contribute to one of the goals within the Environment Strategy to improve the availability and use of sustainable transport and increase active travel use. Increased active travel use will also in turn help to reduce emissions and create an improved environment.

CEC, The Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the population of Cheshire East 2023 – 2028 (2023)[24]

The Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy has three main roles. It is a recommitment to the priorities of the previous strategy which in some cases have been exacerbated by the pandemic. It has a new commitment to address challenges that have emerged since the pandemic and finally it is a pledge to different, more effective and sustainable ways of working in Cheshire East for the long-term. The strategy also sets out high level visions and aspirations for Cheshire East, these are listed below:

- "*Reduce inequalities, narrowing the gap between those who are enjoying good health and wellbeing and those who are not;*

[22] Cheshire East Council (2020) *Cheshire East Council Environment Strategy 2020-2024* [Online] Available from: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/environment/environment-strategy-2020-24-final.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

[23] Cheshire East Council (2019) Carbon Neutral Council [Online] Available from: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/environment/carbon-neutral-council/carbon-neutral-council.aspx (Accessed December 2023)

[24] Cheshire East Council (2023) *The Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the population of Cheshire East 2023-2028* [Online] Available from: https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s102075/The%20Joint%20Local%20Health%20and%20Wellbeing%20Strategy%20Cheshire%20East%202023.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

- *Improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all of our residents; and*
- *Help people to have a good quality of life, to be healthy and happy*".

This strategy is relevant to the GBT as aims to meet the visons and aspirations of the strategy. Particularly, improving physical and mental health and helping people to have a good quality of life, to be healthy and happy.

CEC, Cheshire East UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan Overview (2022)[25]

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a *"central pillar"* of the governments Levelling Up agenda. It aims to "*advance pride in place and increase life chances across the UK"* by investing in communities and place, supporting local businesses as well as people and skills. The UKSPF allocation for Cheshire East is ~£12.4 million with a further ~£1.5 million for Adult Numeracy programme (Multiply). This funding must be spent by March 2025. There have been some projects put in place already, for example Lyceum Square in Crewe has been upgraded to provide a new community and cultural event space. Cycle ways have also been funded in Crewe and Macclesfield and grants for cost-of-living impact reduction. This Feasibility Study has been funded through the UKSPF.

This policy is relevant to the GBT as this initial stage of work has been funded by the SPF and further work could be done to explore any future funding rounds. Investing in community and place and will support local businesses along the route. It may also help to improve the pride in place of the area.

CEC, Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy 2023 – 2028 (2023)[26]

The strategy details the ambitions for Cheshire East's Visitor economy to grow to over £1 billion, with CEC playing an important role to meet this ambition. CEC must provide *"strong leadership and providing the catalyst for growth; creating the conditions to thrive, setting the planning context, investing in infrastructure, improving skills and incentivising inward investment".* CEC will need to ensure there is a rich cultural offer in Cheshire East to attract visitors. This is supported by Marketing Cheshire who are as the local Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) and are a part of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). They act as a link between local businesses and Visit England, the national tourist board. The DMO provides a Destination Management Plan which is supported by this strategy document. Cheshire East can find opportunities for growth in developing the place image and supporting brands to strengthen the pull of the area and access to suitable transport will improve the conditions for the visitor economy to grow.

This strategy is relevant as the GBT could be viewed as a visitor attraction and developing an improved sense of place and can be viewed as strengthening the pull of the area. Along the route there are also various opportunities for businesses to thrive and incentives for investment.

CEC, Cheshire East Green Space Strategy Update 2020 (2020)[27]

[25] Cheshire East Council (2022) *Cheshire East UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan Overview* [Online] Available from: https://preview-chesheast.cloud.contensis.com/pdf/business/business-and-growth/summary-of-ce-investment-plan.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

[26] Cheshire East Council (2023) *Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy 2023-2028* [Online] Available from: https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/documents/s100440/CE%20Visitor%20Economy%20Strategy%202023%202028.pdf / https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/business/cheshire-east-visitor-economy-strategy-2023-2028.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

[27] Cheshire East Council (2020) *Cheshire East Green Space Strategy Update 2020* [Online] Available from: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/planning/spatial-planning/research_and_evidence/green_space_strategy.aspx (Accessed December 2023)

The Cheshire East Green Space Strategy Update takes the aspirations set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy and Corporate Plan and seeks to make them a reality. The strategy focuses on the provision of good quality green space and proactive management of existing green space to leave an important legacy for Cheshire East's communities. The strategy aims to deliver green space so that all local and visitor communities have the opportunity to access green space for health and wellbeing. It takes all the green space elements of CEC (Open Space, The Countryside Service, PRoW, Landscape and Biodiversity) and feeds them into an evidence base for the strategy. The strategy is a tool to:

- "*Promote green space in the creation of sustainable communities;*
- *Co-ordinate the various partners to make sure that resources are effectively used, and benefits are maximised; and*
- *To make an effective case for investment*".

This strategy is relevant as the GBT is intended to enable people to access the green spaces within Cheshire East. The route will also be a good space for people to improve their health and wellbeing through active travel, and within green spaces which has further benefits.

CEC, Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011-2026 (2011)[28]

The Cheshire East Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) strategy builds on the work of the previous ROWIP in partnership with many stakeholders both internal and external to CEC. Externally these include landowners, parish councils, community groups and the Cheshire Local Access Forum. The ROWIP is closely integrated to the LTP and aims to:

- Assess the extent to which local PRoW and other countryside access resources meet the present and likely future needs of the public;
- Assess opportunities for exercise and other forms of open air recreation and enjoyment of the authority's area; and
- Assess the accessibility of local PRoW and other routes to blind or partially sighted people and others with mobility problems.

The ROWIP begins by outlining an assessment of the PRoW network and wider countryside access in Cheshire East, followed by an assessment of the level of demand for the network now and in the future. These assessments then lead to the policy and strategy which will help to bridge the gap between demand and the existing network.

The policy is relevant as PRoWs are integral to encouraging people to walk, cycle and horse ride. The GBT will consider utilising and improving the PRoW network.

CEC, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (Wilmslow) (2021)[29]

[28] Cheshire East Council (2011) *Cheshire East Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2011-2026* [Online] Available from: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/public-rights-of-way/rowip%20final%20accessible%20for%20web.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

[29] Cheshire East Council (2021) *Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan: Congleton, Macclesfield and Wilmslow* [Online] Available from: https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s83625/Local%20Cycling%20and%20Walking%20Infrastructure%20Plans%20-%20app%202%20NE.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) provide a strategic approach to identify walking and cycling improvements at a local level, Cheshire East Council are utilising them to achieve a *"step change"* in the levels of walking and cycling across Cheshire East. The Council have committed to delivering a local action plan to tackle the climate emergency and have stated walking and cycling will play a large part in this. The plan sets out ambitious plans for a high-quality walking and cycling network in Wilmslow, it sets the standards for how walking and cycling should be planned and delivered in Cheshire East in line with LTN 01/20.

This policy is relevant to the GBT as the route could provide access to Wilmslow and will contribute to the high-quality cycling and walking infrastructure of the area. The scheme aims to be designed to the standard of LTN 01/20 in parts, which is a requirement of any infrastructure relevant to the LCWIP.

CEC, Cycling Strategy 2017-2027 (2017)[30]

The cycling strategy sets out an ambitious vision for *"a network of high quality strategic cycle routes which connect local communities and key growth areas",* leisure opportunities and the natural environment will also be better connected. These strategic cycle routes will enable more people to cycle safely for everyday and leisure journeys. The strategy will shape the Council's policy and inform the planning and design of streets, communities and green spaces in Cheshire East.

The strategy outlines six main objectives for the strategy:

1) *"Create and maintain safe, attractive, cohesive, direct and adaptable networks and infrastructure;*
2) *Ensure cycling is integrated with other transport modes, transport networks, the public realm and new developments;*
3) *Ensure high quality facilities are in place to support people who cycle and to attract people to live and work in the area;*
4) *Use targeted cycle promotion, education and training;*
5) *Integrate and align policies, procedures and practices to encourage cycling; and*
6) *Deliver cycle-friendly infrastructure in partnership with the community, officers and organisations of Cheshire East."*

The strategy hopes that these objectives can help CEC achieve its targets of doubling the number of people cycling once per week for any purpose (against a 2014 baseline) by 2027, and improving the public perception cycling within the borough, ensuring satisfaction is improving on an upward trend.

This policy is relevant to the GBT as the trail will aim to encourage cycling in Cheshire East by providing a safe and high-quality cycle route which can better connect communities and key growth areas. The route can be used to attract more people to cycle and with a high quality design can improve the public perception of cycling.

[30] Cheshire East Council (2017) *Cycling Strategy 2017-2027* [Online] Available at: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/highways/cycling/cheshire-east-council-cycling-strategy-march-2017.pdf (Accessed: December 2023.

CEC, Carbon Neutrality Action Plan 2020-2025 (2020)[31]

In May 2019, CEC committed to becoming carbon neutral as a council by 2025, with a further pledge made in January 2022 to make Cheshire East a carbon neutral borough by 2045. Since this pledge, the target year has been revised and reset for 2027, however the Council still aim for the borough to be carbon neutral by 2045. Following the Notice of Motion relating to Climate Change which was agreed by Elected Members of CEC in May 2019, the CEC Carbon Neutrality Plan was commissioned and released in response. The Carbon Neutral Action Plan was approved in May 2020 which sets out the actions that should be considered in order to support the Council's carbon neutrality target.

This policy is relevant as reducing the number of car journeys and increasing the number of journeys by foot and cycle can help reduce Cheshire East's emissions. The scheme can provide a route with which cycling and walking are made easier and a more attractive option, which may increase the number of people using these modes.

CEC, Local Transport Development Plans - Handforth, Knutsford, Poynton and Wilmslow (2022)[32]

Following adoption of the Cheshire East Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) in October 2019, work began on developing 11 Local Transport Development Plans (LTDPs) across the borough. This included Handforth, Knutsford, Poynton and Wilmslow which the proposed GBT could link to. To develop the LTDPs a two-stage approach was taken. The first stage was to develop a *'Transport Issues and Options report'* for each area. This report developed a set of provisional local transport objectives and a *'long list'* of schemes for each area. Following public consultation, the second stage of the LTDP is presented in the documents. The LTDP for each area sets out the local transport objectives. For all four areas, the respective LTDP identifies transport challenges and opportunities, provides a package of transport schemes to be developed and gives a framework for the council to seek funding for the packages of schemes that have been detailed.

The Local Transport Objectives for each area are shown in the table below:

Table 9-1: Local Transport Objectives

Area	Objectives
Handforth	**Objective 1:** Strengthening the transport network to accommodate the Handforth Garden Village and other development sites included within the Local Plan **Objective 2:** Improve transport connections along key corridors to and from Wilmslow, Macclesfield and wider Cheshire East and Greater Manchester, including access to key services such as hospitals **Objective 3**: Improving access to Handforth to protect and enhance the village centre

[31] Cheshire East Council (2020) *Carbon Neutrality Action Plan 2020-2025* [Online] Available at: https://moderngov.cheshireeast.gov.uk/ecminutes/documents/s76206/Carbon%20Neutral%20Action%20Plan%20-%20appendix.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

[32] Cheshire East Council (2022) *Handforth, Knutsford, Poynton, Wilmslow Transport Development Plan* [Online] Available at:
Handforth: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/public-transport/local-transport-plan/brj10654-handforth-ltdp-may-2022-rev4.pdf
Knutsford: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/public-transport/local-transport-plan/brj10654-knutsford-ltdp-july-2022-rev5.pdf
Poynton: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/public-transport/local-transport-plan/brj10654-poynton-ltdp-may-2022-rev2.pdf
Wilmslow: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/public-transport/local-transport-plan/brj10654-wilmslow-ltdp-may-2022-rev2.pdf (All accessed December 2023)

Area	Objectives
	Objective 4: Supporting access to education and employment sites including Wilmslow High School, Manchester Airport, Stanley Green Business Park, and Handforth Dean **Objective 5:** Supporting access from Styal and other rural communities to key services and employment
Knutsford	**Objective 1:** Improving access to the town centre and the train station to support a thriving town centre **Objective 2:** Supporting access to education and employment sites such as Booths Park, Radbroke Park, Alderley Park, Manchester Airport and Jodrell Bank **Objective 3:** Supporting access from Mobberley and rural communities around Knutsford to key services and employment centres **Objective 4:** Improving access on key travel corridors such as the A50 **Objective 5:** Improving connectivity to leisure and tourism locations such as Tatton Park and Jodrell Bank **Objective 6:** Strengthening the transport network to accommodate development sites within the Local Plan such as Northwest Knutsford, Parkgate Extension and Land South of Longridge
Poynton	**Objective 1:** Improve transport connections along key corridors to and from Poynton and Disley to Macclesfield, Wilmslow, Handforth, the Peak District and wider Cheshire East and Greater Manchester **Objective 2:** Strengthening the transport network to accommodate development sites such as the Adlington Business Park extension and potential developments in Greater Manchester **Objective 3:** Complementing Poynton Relief Road with measures around the town centre to further improve the environment for residents and visitors **Objective 4:** Reducing the impact of the A6 on Disley **Objective 5:** Improving leisure routes and access from rural communities around Poynton and Disley to key services and employment **Objective 6:** Supporting access to education and employment including both Poynton and Adlington Industrial Estates
Wilmslow	**Objective 1:** Improving access to Wilmslow and Alderley Edge centres to support a thriving economy **Objective 2:** Supporting access from Alderley Edge and rural communities to key services and employment **Objective 3:** Improve transport connections along key corridors to and from Handforth, Manchester Airport, Macclesfield, Knutsford, and Greater Manchester, including access to key services such as Macclesfield District Hospital **Objective 4:** Supporting access to education and employment sites including Alderley Park, Waters, the Royal London Campus, and Manchester Airport **Objective 5:** Strengthening the transport network to accommodate development sites such as the Royal London Campus in the Local Plan

This policy is relevant to the GBT as it will look to address some of the objectives within each area, for example it will look to improve transport corridors for walking and cycling and support access to certain areas. It would also improve leisure routes and access routes for rural communities.

CEC, Wilmslow Town Centre Vitality Plan (2023)[33]

CEC is committed to supporting the vitality and viability of all towns in the borough, if the opportunity for funding arises CEC already have proposals agreed within their Town Centre Vitality Plans (TCVPs). Wilmslow is one of the towns with a TCVP, the plan '*provides a clear sense of direction for supporting town centre vitality and viability*'. The vision for Wilmslow is to "*sustain and enhance a dynamic community within Wilmslow which protects its special built and natural character, and which promotes a user friendly and green environment with an increasingly attractive and thriving Town Core*".

This policy is relevant to the scheme as the GBT would run through Wilmslow which could attract people to the town, sustaining and enhancing a dynamic community within the area.

CEC, Knutsford Town Centre Vitality Plan (2023)[34]

CEC is committed to supporting the vitality and viability of all towns in the borough, if the opportunity for funding arises CEC already have proposals agreed within their TCVPs. Knutsford is one of the towns with a TCVP, the plan '*provides a clear sense of direction for supporting town centre vitality and viability*'. The vision for Knutsford is that the plan should:

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

This policy is relevant to the scheme as the GBT could run through Knutsford which can attract people to the town ensuring it thrives economically and socially, whilst maintaining the strong sense of community.

CEC, Handforth Town Centre Vitality Plan (2023)[35]

CEC is committed to supporting the vitality and viability of all towns in the borough, if the opportunity for funding arises CEC already have proposals agreed within their TCVPs. Handforth is one of the towns with a plan, the plan '*provides a clear sense of direction for supporting town centre vitality and viability*'. The vision for Handforth is:

"In 2030 Handforth will be a vibrant village. It will have extended its current strong community spirit and civic pride to new housing developments both within the Garden Village at Handforth and within the parish of Styal. It will provide for the needs of the whole community and will capitalise on its many advantages, including its location next

[33] Cheshire East Council (2023) *Wilmslow Town Centre Vitality Plan* [Online] Available at: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/business/major-regeneration-projects/town-centre-vitality-plans/m00244-wilmslow-r06-reduced.pdf (Accessed: December 2023)

[34] Cheshire East Council (2023) *Knutsford Town Centre Vitality Plan* [Online] Available at: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/business/major-regeneration-projects/town-centre-vitality-plans/m00244-knutsford-r03-reduced.pdf (Accessed: December 2023)

[35] Cheshire East Council (2023) *Handforth Town Centre Vitality Plan* [Online] Available at: https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/business/major-regeneration-projects/town-centre-vitality-plans/m00244-handforth-r03-reduced-v1.pdf (Accessed December 2023)

to Greater Manchester and the Cheshire countryside. Handforth will have an improved district centre with attractive public spaces, a vibrant and varied shopping experience, a successful independent sector and a wide range of services.

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

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

This policy is relevant to the scheme as the GBT could run through Handforth which can attract people to the area, this will help ensure a wide range of services and attractive public spaces are maintained. Also, Handforth will be better accessed by sustainable transport in terms of walking and cycling with improved access to the surrounding countryside.

CEC, Poynton Town Centre Vitality Plan (2023)

CEC is committed to supporting the vitality and viability of all towns in the borough, if the opportunity for funding arises CEC already have proposals agreed within their TCVPs. Poynton is one of the towns with a plan. The vision for Poynton is:

"Over the next 15 to 20 years development in Poynton will be of a high quality, sustainable and matched by the provision of infrastructure and services. This development will enable Poynton to retain its character and heritage as 'a small town with a village feel', bounded by Green Belt.

Community activities and the current mix of businesses will expand and prosper within attractive surroundings. Poynton will maintain a strong and inclusive sense of community, good access to neighbouring towns and villages and a positive sense of wellbeing making Poynton a healthy, happy and fulfilling place to live."

This policy is relevant to the scheme as the GBT could run through Poynton which would attract people to the area, this will help ensure a wide range of services and attractive public spaces and character are maintained.

Appendix B. Evidence Base

B.1 Introduction and Data Sources

To progress the GBT OAR, a review of baseline data across Cheshire East and surrounding Local Authorities including Manchester, Trafford, Salford, High Peak, Warrington, and Stockport has been gathered and analysed. This analysis of data provides a useful baseline to understand the area surrounding the GBT.

A majority of the data used in the evidence base is taken from the 2021 Census, which is the latest data available, noting its limitations due to this taking place during COVID-19.

B.2 Trails

Throughout the different Local Authorities within the area, there are many different existing trails. Figure 9-3 below shows the different trails within the area. Background information on the trails and their usage is detailed below the figure.

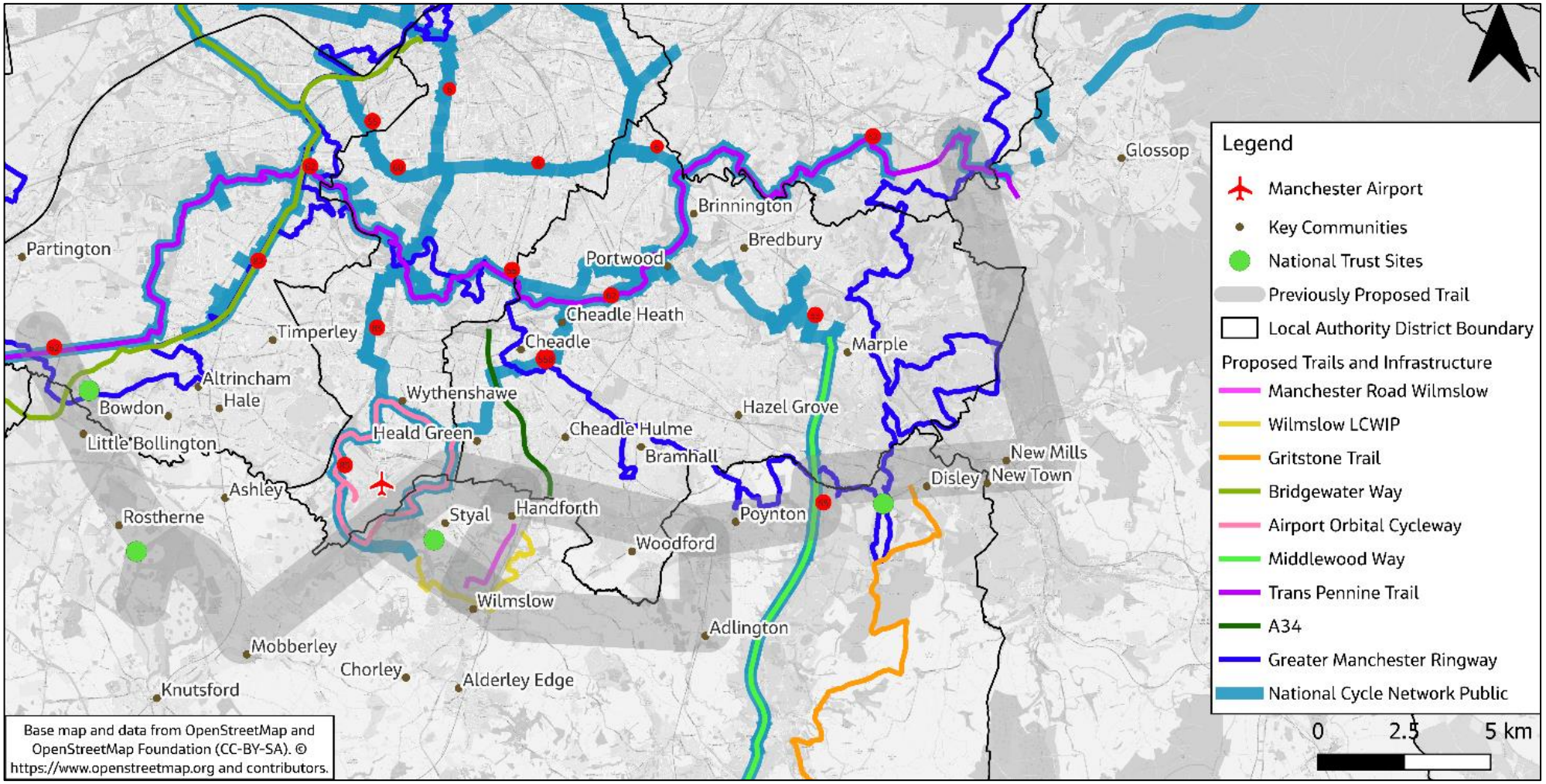

Figure 9-3: Existing trails

Proposed

Manchester Road, Wilmslow

CEC has been developing a highly detailed and quality active travel, walking, and cycling route along Manchester Road between the areas of Wilmslow town centre and Handforth. The main funding for the project is by Active Travel England who have awarded £1.3 million for the Council to deliver the Northern section. The middle section of the route has also been funded by a £673,000 grant; however, the southern section is still awaiting funding.

Wilmslow Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

An LCWIP for the town of Wilmslow has been proposed and approved on the basis of future development for the area and the planning and sustainable transport within Cheshire East. This LCWIP will play an important part in Cheshire East's Local Transport Plan and their Cycling Strategy.

Existing

Gritstone Trail

The Gritstone Trail is located on the edge of the Peak District and starts at Disley railway station and links all the way to Kidsgrove railway station near Stoke-on-Trent. The trail has been extended so that it is more accessible by public transport meaning it is easier for people to access the trial. Along the trail there are amenities such as pubs, cafes and shops.

Airport Orbital Cycleway

The Airport Orbital Cycleway is an eight-mile cycle route that provides an off-road cycle route along Runger Lane to Wilmslow Road, around Manchester Airport. This trail is also part of the NCN Route 85. It also provides a way to get to the popular Runway Visitor Park south of the airport. This is where you can watch arrivals and departures from Manchester Airport, providing a unique cycleway. The cycleway also forms part of the core commuting access points for the airport.

Middlewood Way

Middlewood Way provides a ten-mile trail for walking, cycling and horse riding. In 1985, Middlewood Way was constructed utilising an unused railway line. This trail is part of the NCN Route 55, providing good links to surrounding areas. Horse riders can use the trail on a seven-mile route from Adlington Road to Rose Hill in Marple.

Trans Pennine Trail

The Trans Pennine Trail provides a rail for walking cycling and horse riders and allows essential links to the north, and through historic towns and cities in the north of England. This route is so popular due to the signs throughout the trails, traffic free routes, easy gradients and surfaced paths. This makes the trail suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs, meaning there are no barriers stopping people from using the trail.

GM Ringway

The GM Ringway is Greater Manchester's walking trail, it covers all ten boroughs of the city region. It is a 300km trail split into 20 stages that can be easily accessed by public transport. It visits some of the region's most iconic landscapes and provides visitors the opportunity to explore Greater Manchester's rich cultural heritage.

Bridgewater Way

The Bridgewater Way will create a 39-mile leisure route for walking and cycling along the Bridgewater Canal. Thus, will include improving the canal towpath to make it a safer and more appealing route for all. Some sections of the route have been completed, however the section associated with the GBT has not yet been completed.

The National Cycle Network (NCN)

The NCN is a UK-wide network of signed paths and routes for walking, wheeling, cycling. In Cheshire East, there are two sections of the NCN connecting through the area, one to the west of Handforth and Route 55, along Middlewood Way.

Creating the GBT will ensure Cheshire East is well connected to the rest of the NCN routes and ensure active travel accessibility throughout the local area.

It would be beneficial for the GBT to link into the existing trails and proposed schemes and potentially provide an alternative link through Cheshire and South Manchester from the Trans Pennine Trail and also link into the Middlewood Way. These links across the area would create a network of routes for walking, wheeling and cycling across the area.

B.3 Travel to Work

Figure 9-4 below shows the percentage of employed people within Cheshire East and surrounding Local Authority areas that cycle to work. This data is taken from the 2011 Census, this is due to the 2021 Census being carried out during the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore data may be skewed and not reliable as many people had to work from home. Therefore, the 2011 provides a more accurate representation on the percentage of the employed population that cycle to work.

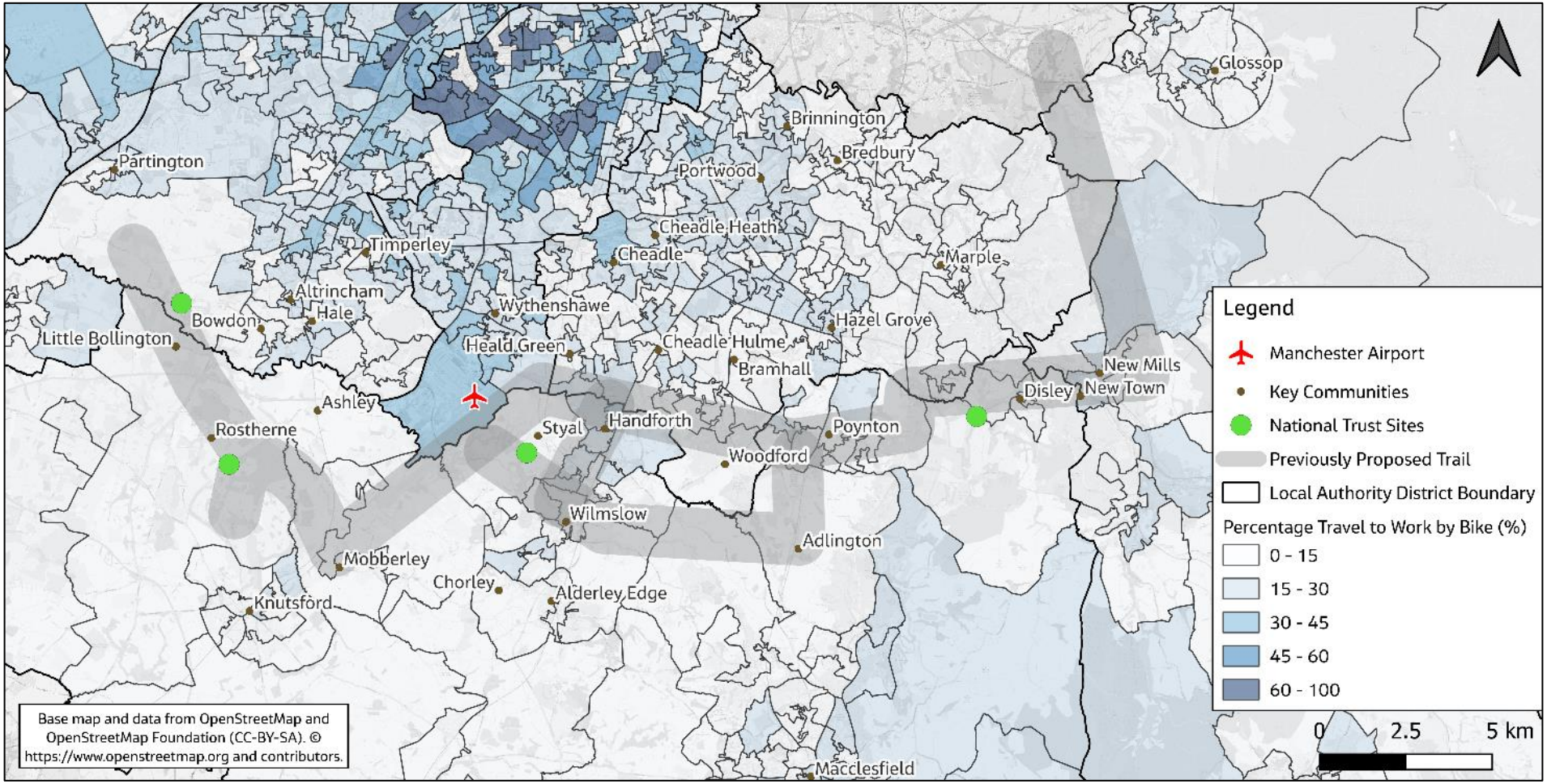

Figure 9-4: Travel to work by bike (%)

As shown, the area with the highest employed population cycling to work is in and around Manchester city centre, having over 60% of the employed population cycling in some areas. Travel to work by bike may be higher in these areas due to urban areas having higher densities of workplaces, therefore individuals have shorter distances to travel to work, therefore cycling is a viable and sometimes quicker option.

Within the vicinity of the GBT corridor, many of the areas have between 0-15% of their employed population cycling to work. This may be due to these areas being located further away from employment opportunities and too far of a distance to cycle, therefore individuals often choose to use their personal vehicles to travel to work.

The low rate of percentage of employed population cycling to work could be a result of a lack of a high quality network connecting people with where they want to go throughout the areas of Cheshire East and surrounding Local Authority districts. By creating the GBT, walking and cycling can be used for leisure but also would provide the opportunity for residents to cycle to work via a high quality route.

B.4 Indices of Multiple Deprivation

Figure 9-5 below illustrates the 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation for Cheshire East and surrounding Local Authority districts including, Manchester, Trafford, Salford, High Peak, Warrington and Stockport. The Index of Multiple Deprivation measures relative levels of deprivation by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) boundaries. The Index of Multiple Deprivation tool measures many different factors, such as, income, health, crime, living environment and barriers to house and services. As shown in Figure 9-5, the IMD decile score has been mapped, where the score of 1, represents the most deprived LSOAs and a score of 10 represents the least deprived LSOAs.

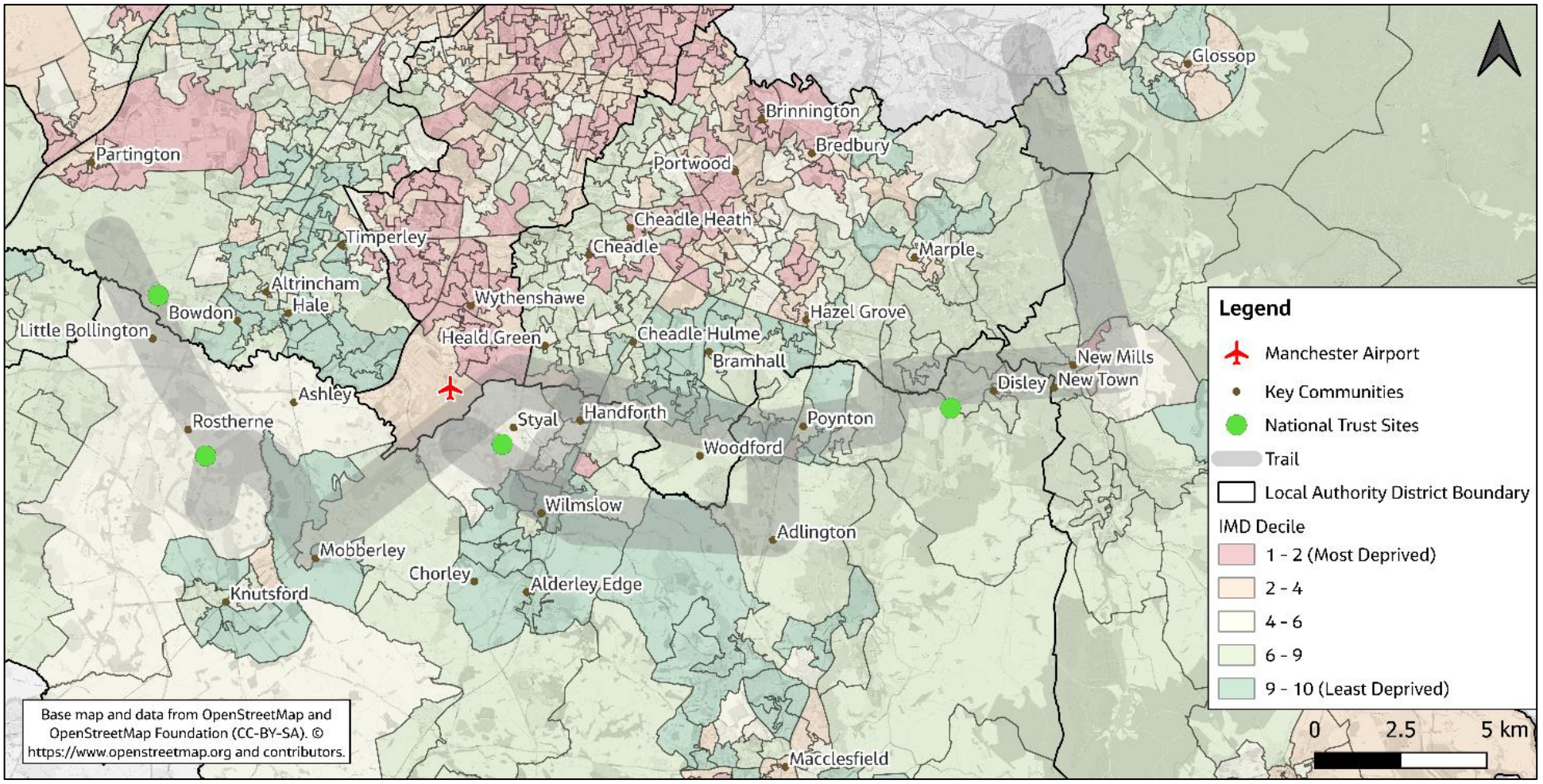

Figure 9-5: Index of multiple deprivation - decile score

As shown in the map, there is a high concentration of LSOAs in the Decile score of 1-2 most deprived around areas such as Stockport city centre, Partington, South Manchester and north of Macclesfield. Within these areas in particular, it is important to improve connectivity to employment opportunities, healthcare and education to reduce these inequalities and ensure these towns and areas with higher deprivation levels do not become isolated.

The areas with the lowest levels of deprivation in the category of 9-10 can be seen in Wilmslow, Altrincham, Alderley Edge and east of Stockport in areas such as Marple Bridge.

Similarly to the overall IMD Decile Score, the Health, Deprivation and Disability Score measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical and mental health. Figure 9-6 visualises this score across the study area.

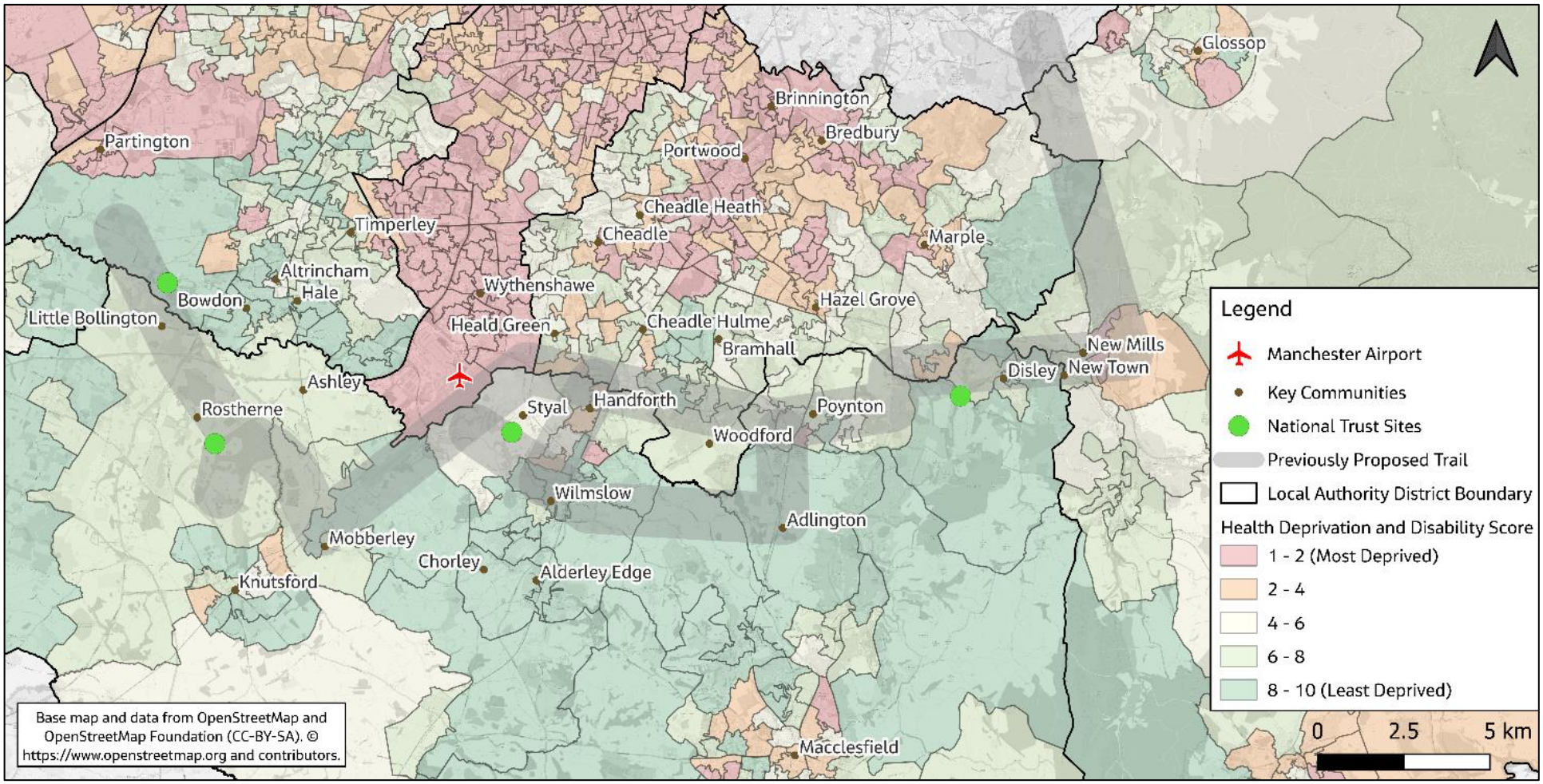

Figure 9-6: IMD health, deprivation and disability score

Figure 9-6 shows the majority of areas around Cheshire East, High Peak, south of Stockport and south of Trafford all can be seen to have low deprivation scores for health deprivation and disability. This may be as a result of these areas having the healthcare facilities needed as well as being situated in less congested, rural areas, therefore air quality issues are not as prevalent in these areas compared to more urban areas surrounding them.

The figure shows the most deprived in terms of health deprivation and disability are many LSOAs in Manchester, especially south Manchester, areas around Stockport city centre, areas around Salford and east of Macclesfield. It is important that these areas are provided with the provision of walking and cycling routes, so individuals can be encouraged to travel via active travel instead of using private vehicles, in turn addressing air quality issues and therefore improving the health deprivation and disability score of these areas. Furthermore, with the provision of walking and cycling routes, individuals will be able to exercise by means of active travel, hence improving mental and physical health and wellbeing.

B.5 Propensity to Cycle Tool

The PCT is a web-based mapping tool that was designed to help prioritise investments and interventions to promote cycling. Cycling potential is calculated using a function based on trip distance (people are likely to cycle a shorter trip compared to a longer trip) and the hilliness (people are more likely to cycle on flatter routes and be discouraged by trips involving slopes).

The PCT tool has been used for the scenario of Government Target (Near Market). This scenario models a doubling of cycling nationally, corresponding to the proposed target in the DfT's Cycling Delivery Plan, to double cycling in England between 2013 and 2025. The Government Target (Near Market) models the increase as occurring as a function of trip distance and hilliness, plus sociodemographic and geographical characteristics. This includes age, ethnicity, income deprivation and more. Figure 9-7 visualises the PCT for the area surrounding the GBT.

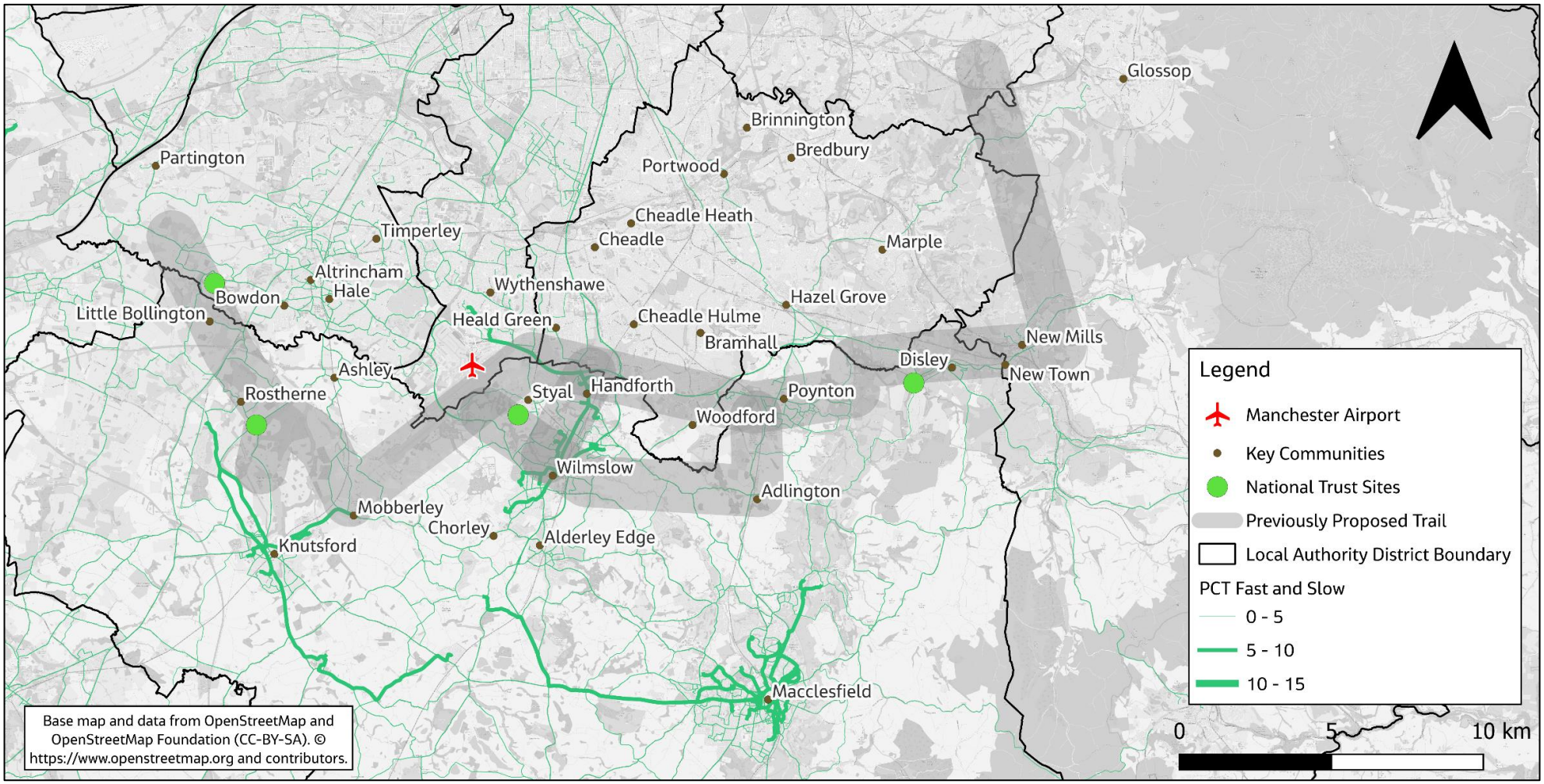

Figure 9-7: PCT - Government near market fast and slow routes

Figure 9-7 shows the areas with the highest propensity to cycle, these can be found within some of the key towns in Cheshire East that are closer to the GBT. In Macclesfield there are between 15 to 23 cyclist flows throughout the town, showing that many people may cycle in and around the town to get to work or for leisure purposes. In Wilmslow, there are around 5-10 cyclist flows going from Wilmslow town centre, north through Handforth and into Manchester. This shows that linking into these towns are potentially the best places to focus investment in, as they are likely to experience the greatest uptake in cycling and therefore unlock the most benefits.

B.6 Strava Metro

Strava Metro is an online tool which analyses data taken from Strava users who track their rides, walks and runs with Global Positioning Systems (GPS) on their phones to evaluate and improve bicycle infrastructure. Due to Strava Metro relying on individuals to track their activities on the app, it does not cover the entire population and is typically more associated with leisure activities due to individuals using the app to track their runs, walks or cycle trips. Despite this being 'opt-in' data, some independent academic studies have analysed this relationship, and it has been found to be representative of the overall population. Figure 9-8 shows the number of leisure walking trips taken across Cheshire between 2019 and 2023.

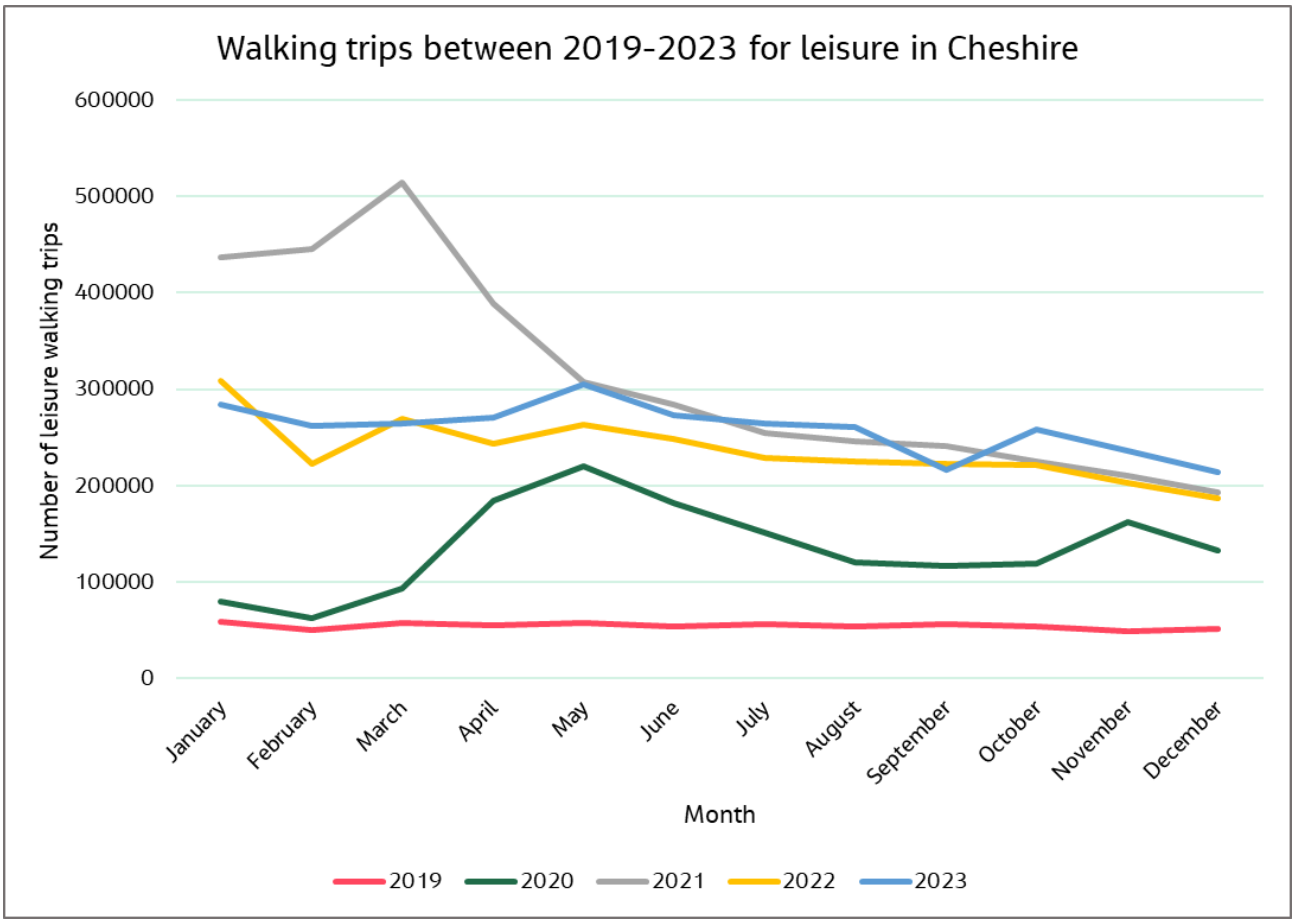

Figure 9-8: Number of leisure walking trips for Cheshire between 2019-2023 - Strava Metro

As shown in Figure 9-8, pre COVID-19 Pandemic walking levels for leisure in 2019 were low at below 60,000 trips. However, when the COVID-19 Pandemic occurred and the whole of the UK was placed in a lockdown in March 2020, walking trips rose at a significant rate from 92,828 in March 2020 to 184,505 in April 2020. The number of

trips per month stayed at a high rate until May 2020 where levels started to drop off but walking levels still remained high, above 115,000 trips in a month. Therefore, was a much higher number of trips between the months of January to March of 2021 compared with 2020, this may be a result of better weather, encouraging more individuals to get out and walk. However, it can be seen from the graph that walking trips for leisure have not increased at a significant rate, therefore more needs to be done regarding the accessibility of the walking network within Cheshire East to encourage the population to walk more and walk instead of using their private vehicle.

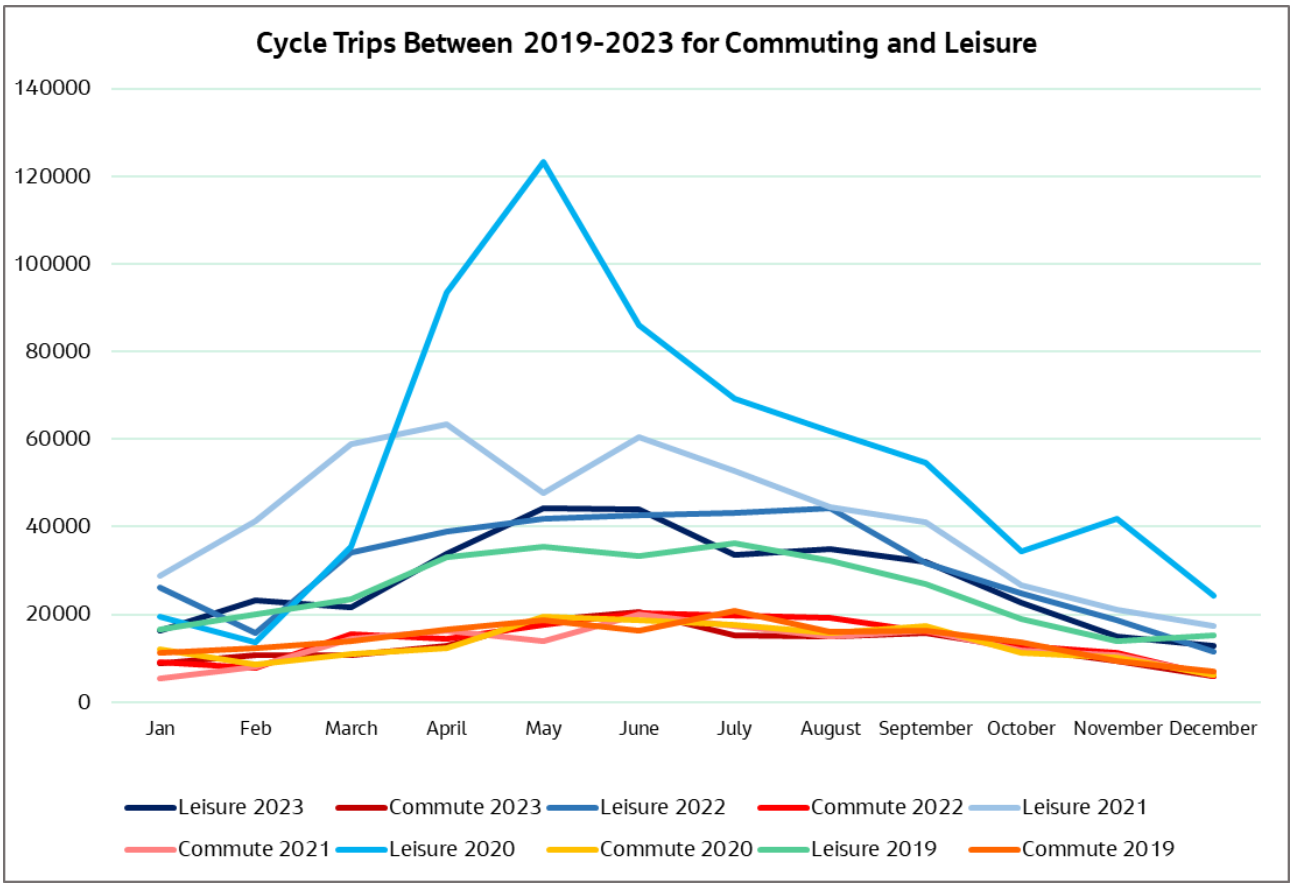

Figure 9-9: Strava Metro data for cycle trips for commuting and leisure in Cheshire, 2019-2023

Figure 9-9 shows the number of cycle trips taken across Cheshire between the years 2019 and 2023 for leisure and commuting purposes. The data is not broken down to a Cheshire East level. The graph shows a significant peak in leisure trips in Cheshire in May 2020. This coincides with the COVID-19 Pandemic, when there was better weather, and more individuals were leaving their homes and exercising. This peak in the summer months, shows a relationship between cycling and the time of year. Leisure cycling levels recorded significantly decreased between September 2020 and May 2021 over winter. Commuting levels recorded in Strava have stayed very similar over the past four years with there being a slight increase during the summer months which is likely a result of the better weather encouraging more to cycle.

B.7 Amenities

The proposed trail passes through many key areas and provides a link into development sites and amenities such as National Trust sites, Adlington Business Park and Manchester Airport. Figure outlines which key areas, infrastructure, development sites and amenities the proposed trail could connect into.

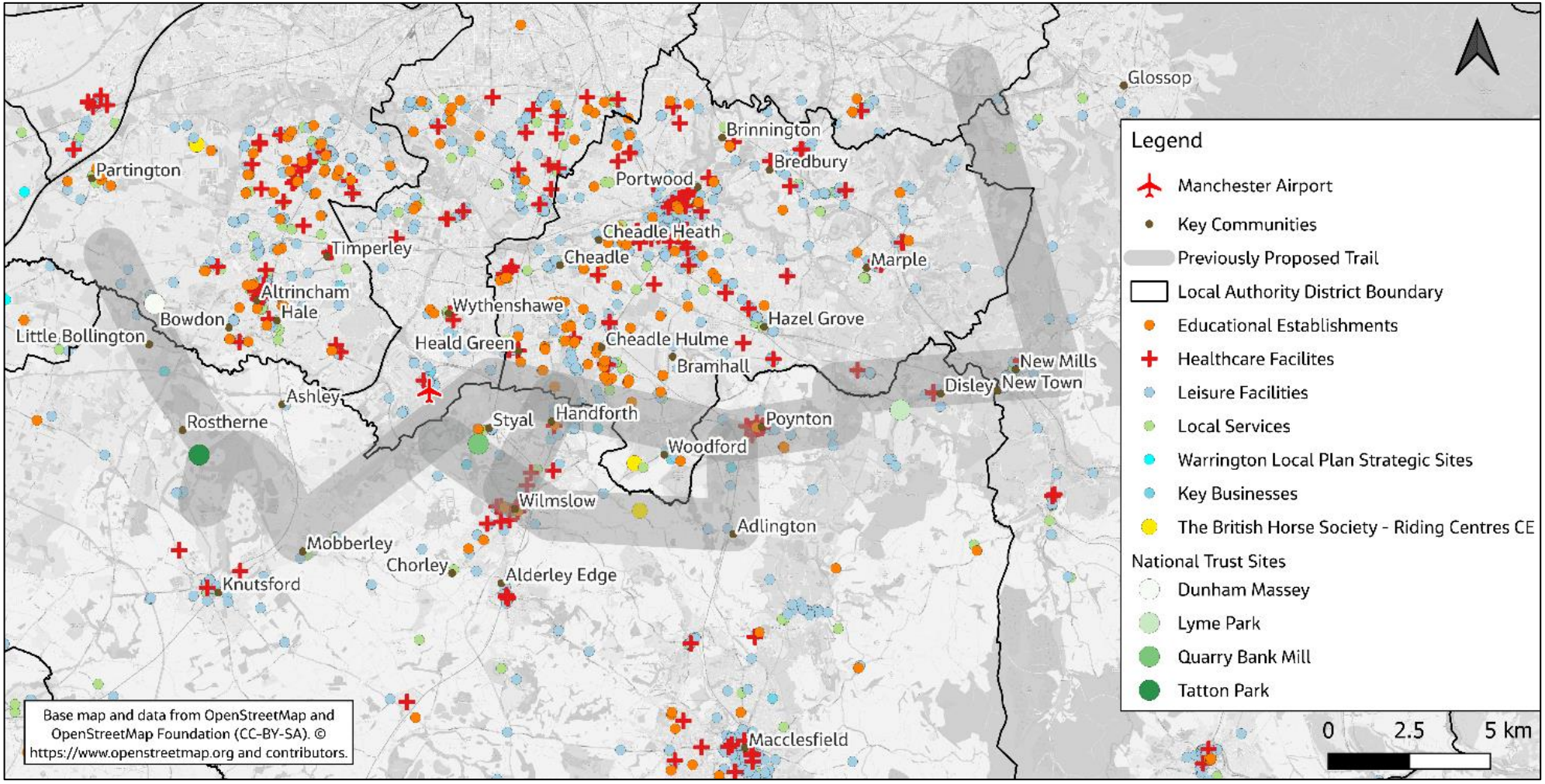

Figure 9-10: Amenities, key businesses and National Trust sites

As shown in Figure 9-10, there are numerous key areas, and a high concentration of development sites and amenities along the route which are labelled. These include:

- Educational establishments;
- Healthcare facilities;
- Leisure facilities;
- Local Services;
- Key businesses – such as AstraZeneca, Manchester Airport, Waters, as well as many located at Adlington Business Park;
- Development sites – such as Tatton Services, Handforth Garden Village, Timperley Wedge and Woodford Garden Village; and
- Tourist attractions such as National Trust sites (Quarry Bank Mill, Tatton Park, Lyme Park, Dunham Massey), The Carrs Park, Avro Heritage Gardens, and Adlington Hall and Gardens.

The number and variety of amenities would benefit the trail as it could improve connectivity across Cheshire East both for utility and leisure users. These links across the area would create a network of routes for walking, wheeling, and cycling.

B.8 Identification of Desire Lines

Following identifying the key amenities and businesses within Cheshire East and the surrounding Local Authorities, desire lines have been identified to show the most popular trips within the area. Amenities such as leisure facilities, educational establishments and healthcare facilities were mapped and then amenities near each other were grouped together to provide destination 'clustering'. This gives an indication of where people may be ending their journey, due to the amenities within the area and provides an insight into the most popular destinations throughout the area.

Once destination clustering has been identified, desire lines were created to reflect the most popular origin and destination trips throughout the area, these are shown in Figure 9-11. The PCT was used in conjunction to identify the routes with higher cycling levels. This gives an indication of where more people are cycling to and from and therefore indicates where there is higher demand for amenities. It is essential that these areas are well connected via active travel routes due to them being of high travel demand.

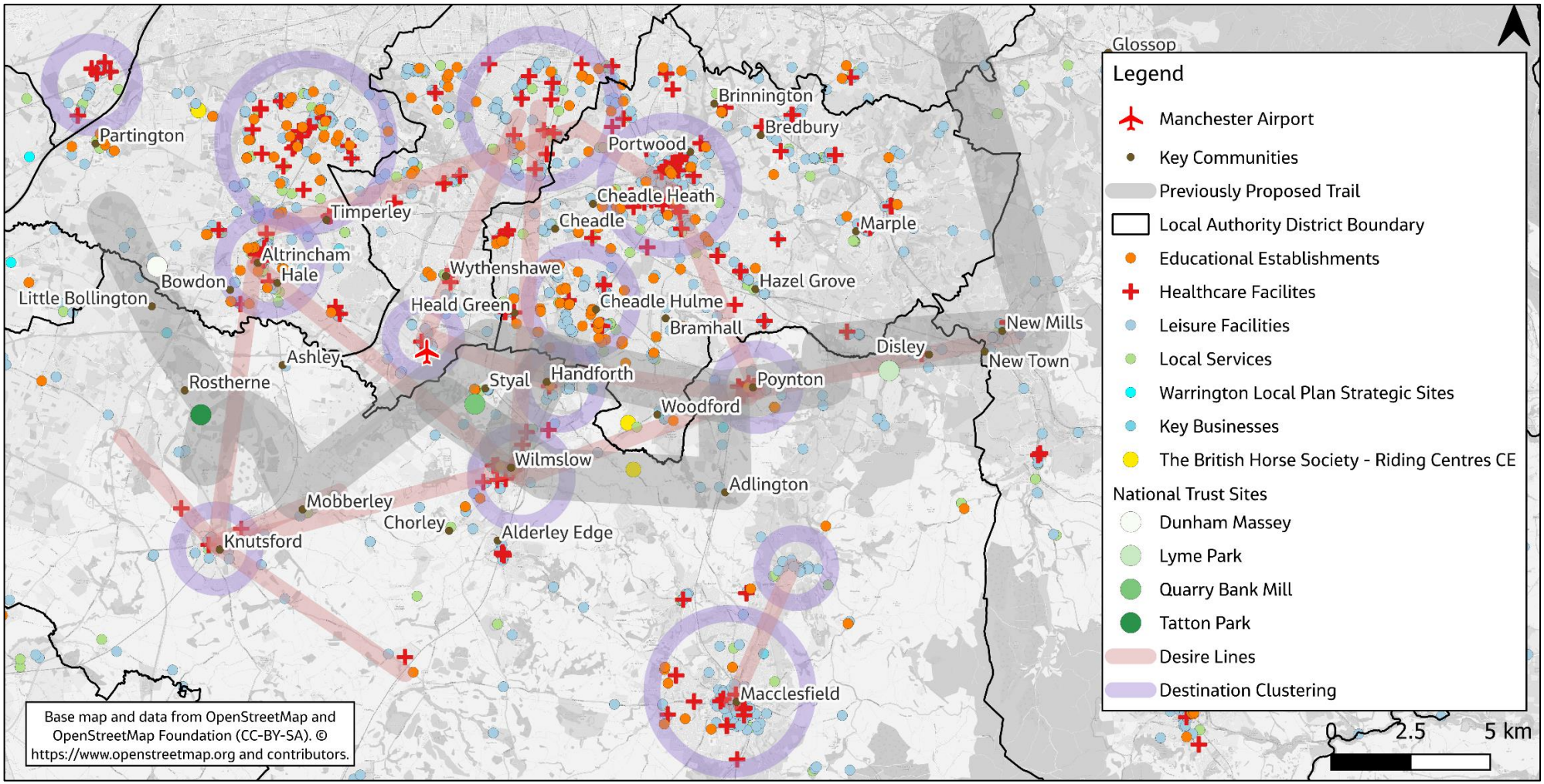

Figure 9-11: Cycling desire lines

B.9 Public Transport

Figure 9-12 below visualises the public transport network across the area. For public transport, this includes the Cheshire East bus stops and railway stations and TfGM Metro Rail Stops. Cheshire East has a public transport network that serves the area through bus and rail services. The Cheshire East bus network connects all neighbouring towns to each other including, Macclesfield, Knutsford, Wilmslow, Poynton and Disley. Although these towns all have rail stations, none of them link east to west. The GBT could support east to west connectivity in the borough.

TfGM have the Metrolink Network that connects areas across Greater Manchester. As shown, there are various metro stops in the vicinity of the GBT. If progressed, it would be beneficial for the GBT to connect into public transport nodes such as Metrolink stops as this would provide greater access for those wanting to access the trail for leisure trips or as part of a commute to work.

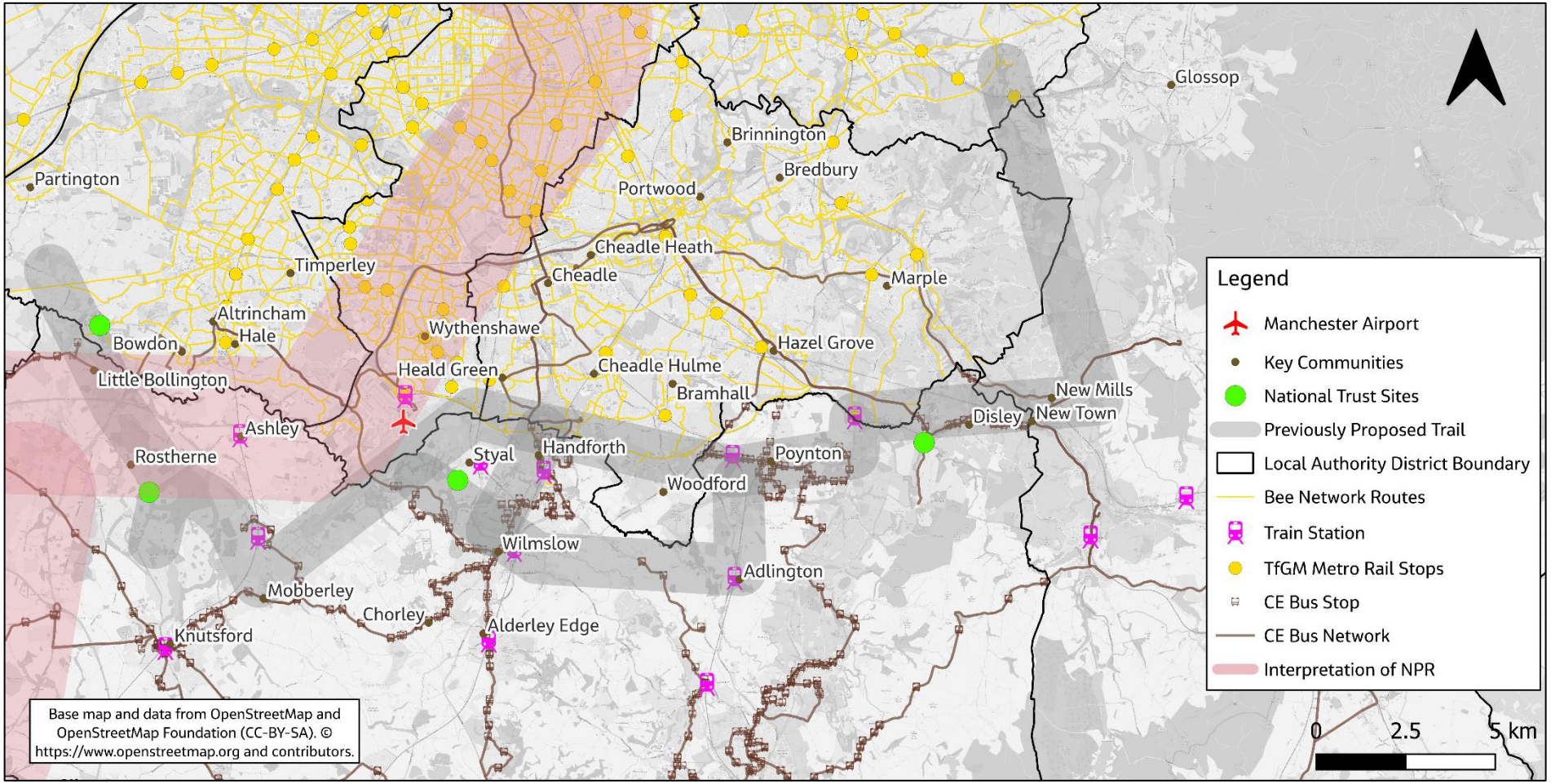

Figure 9-12: Public transport network

B.10 Road Network

Figure 9-13 overleaf shows the existing road network in and around Cheshire East which include:

- Motorways - M56, M60 and M6 – provides important strategic connectivity with the GBT area and connections to the rest of the UK;
- A Roads - major roads intended to provide large scale transport links;
- B Roads - roads intended to connect different areas and to feed traffic between A Roads and smaller roads on the network;
- Classified Unnumbered - smaller roads intended to connect unclassified roads with A and B Roads; and
- Not Classified/ Unclassified – local roads intended for local traffic – most roads in the UK fall into this category.

The majority of the road network in Cheshire East and surrounding Local Authority areas consists of B Roads and Unclassified roads. This can benefit the GBT as it could take advantage of suitable quiet routes within the area to provide cycle facilities. The GBT could also benefit from utilising any existing cycle infrastructure such as the cycle route along the A555.

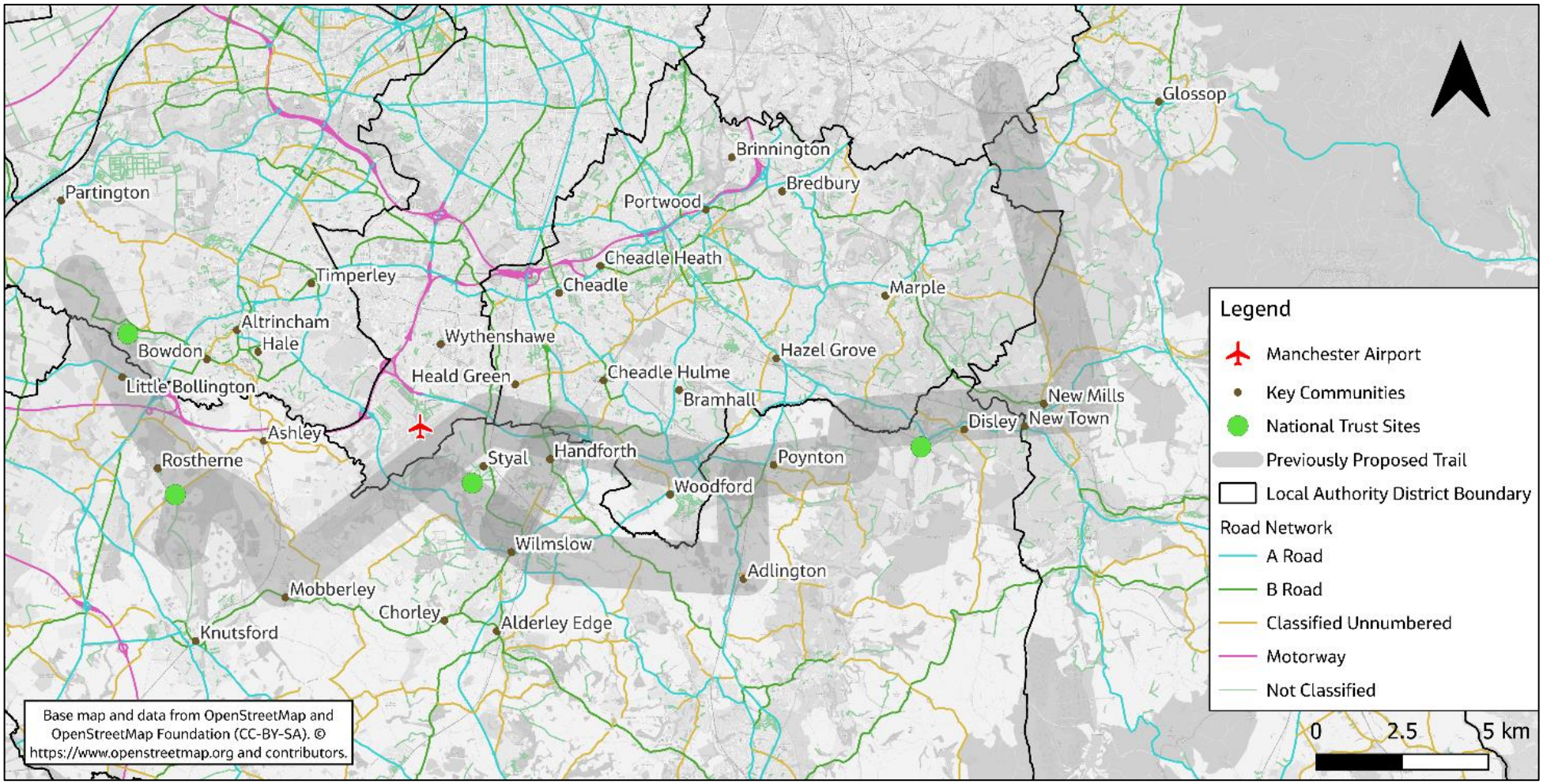

Figure 9-13: Road network

B.11 Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

PRoW are routes that allow the public to walk, wheel, cycle and horse ride along. As shown in Figure , there is a vast network of PRoW within the area. This presents the opportunity for the GBT to link into this network and potentially upgrade the PRoW network or change the status of the type of PRoW that currently exists.

PRoW are split into four different categories;

1. Footpaths – for walking, running, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs.
2. Bridleways – for walking, horse riding, bicycles, mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs.
3. Restricted byways – for any transport without a motor and mobility scooters or powered wheelchairs.
4. Byways Open to All Traffic (BOAT) – for any kind of transport, including cars.

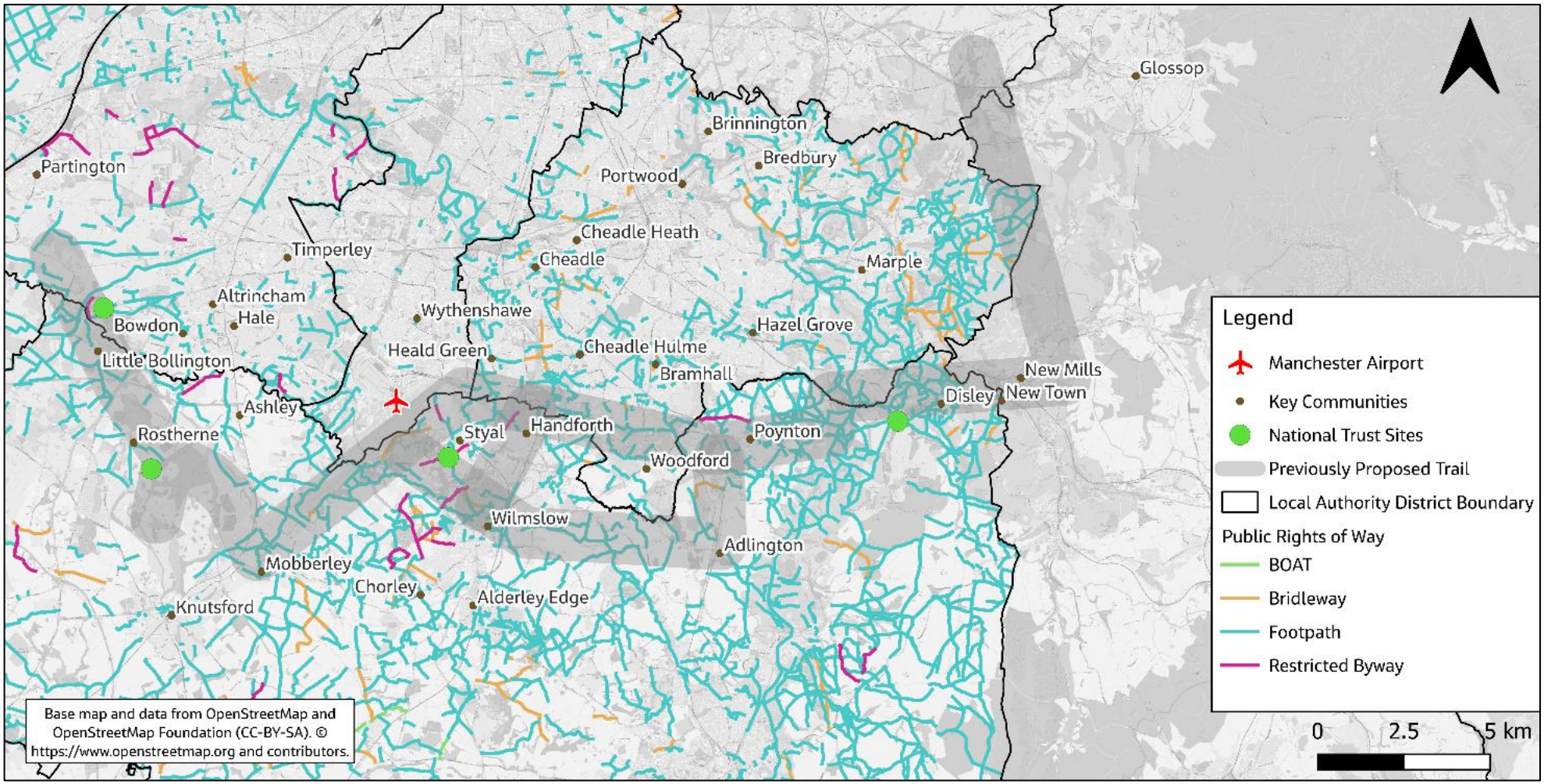

Figure 9-14: Public rights of way

Appendix C. MCAF Scoring Matrix

CATEGORY	CRITERIA	0	1	2	3	4	5
Strategic fit	**Objective 1** *Ability to meet objective*	Does not meet objective	Marginally meets objectives	Moderately meets objective	Majorly meets objective	Significantly meets objective	Fully meets objective
	Objective 2 *Ability to meet objective*	Does not meet objective	Marginally meets objectives	Moderately meets objective	Majorly meets objective	Significantly meets objective	Fully meets objective
	Objective 3 *Ability to meet objective*	Does not meet objective	Marginally meets objectives	Moderately meets objective	Majorly meets objective	Significantly meets objective	Fully meets objective
	Objective 4 *Ability to meet objective*	Does not meet objective	Marginally meets objectives	Moderately meets objective	Majorly meets objective	Significantly meets objective	Fully meets objective
	Objective 5 *Ability to meet objective*	Does not meet objective	Marginally meets objectives	Moderately meets objective	Majorly meets objective	Significantly meets objective	Fully meets objective
	Local Policy alignment *Contribution towards CEC's Local Policy ambitions*	Does not contribute towards CEC's Local Policy ambitions	Marginally contributes towards CEC's Local Policy ambitions	Moderately contributes towards CEC's Local Policy ambitions	Majorly contributes towards CEC's Local Policy ambitions	Significantly contributes towards CEC's Local Policy ambitions	Fully contributes towards CEC's Local Policy ambitions
Effectiveness	**Number of residents expected to benefit from the intervention** *Analysis based on nearby populations expected to benefit from the investment*	No residents will benefit	A low number of residents will benefit	A moderate number of residents will benefit (scoring of either 2 or 3 dependent on potential number of residents positively impacted)		A majority of residents will benefit	All residents will benefit
	Number of employment areas expected to benefit from the intervention *Analysis based on nearby employment areas expected to benefit from the investment*	No employment areas will benefit	A low number of employment areas will benefit	A moderate number of employment areas will benefit (scoring of either 2 or 3 dependent on potential number of employment areas positively impacted)		A majority of employment areas will benefit	All employment areas will benefit
	Number of visitors/ leisure users expected to benefit from the intervention *Analysis based on nearby green spaces (such as National Trust parks) expected to benefit from the investment*	No visitors/ leisure users will benefit	A low number of visitors/ leisure users will benefit	A moderate number of visitors/ leisure users will benefit from the route (scoring of either 2 or 3 dependent on potential number of visitor/ leisure users positively impacted)		A majority of visitors/ leisure users will benefit	All visitors/ leisure users will benefit
	Number of existing trails the intervention links with *Analysis based on the number of existing trails the proposed route could 'link' into*	Does not link with existing trails	Links with one other existing trail	Links with two other existing trails	Links with three other existing trails	Links with four other existing trails	Links with more than four other existing trails
Deliverability	**Costs for comparison** *Analysis based on professional judgement regarding the likely infrastructure required to provide the route*	£££££	££££	£££	££	£	No required costs
	Funding / affordability *Analysis based on the likeliness for match funding to be available or attracting funding from other funding sources*	No match funding or other funding sources available	Match funding or other sources of funding anticipated to be available in the future for application	Match funding or other sources of funding could be applied for	Match funding and other sources of funding likely	Match funding and other sources of funding highly likely	Match funding and other sources of funding guaranteed
	Land *Analysis of whether land is required or is within LHA boundary*	Land required which cannot be purchased	Land required which will likely have a high cost and will require support from the land owner (60-100% of route requires land)	Land required which will likely have a moderate cost and will require support from the land owner (40-59% of route requires land)	Land required but can be purchased at a moderate or low cost and will require support from the land owner (20-39% of route requires land)	Land required but can be purchased at a moderate or low cost and obtains required support from the land owner (1-19% of route requires land)	Land required is within LHA boundary
	Environmental considerations *Analysis of whether the proposed route impacts the environment such as protected species, habitats, woodland, water*	Detrimental impacts across multiple environmental considerations	Significant impacts across multiple environmental considerations	Moderate impacts across multiple environmental considerations	Minor impacts across multiple environmental considerations	Minor impacts across few environmental considerations	No impact across any environmental considerations
	Existing Facilities *Extent to which existing infrastructure is in place that can be utilised*	No existing facilities	0-20% of the route has existing facilities	21-40% of the route has existing facilities	41-60% of the route has existing facilities	61-80% of the route has existing facilities	81% + of the route has existing facilities
	Ability to have a phased delivery *Analysis of whether the proposed route can be delivered in phases*	Route could not be phased	Route could be delivered in two phases	Route could be delivered in three phases	Route could be delivered in four phases	Route could be delivered in five phases	Route could easily be delivered in multiple phases
		0	2	4	6	8	10
	Design challenges *Analysis based on whether the proposed scheme is feasible through a design solution*	Design challenges cannot be resolved	Design challenges can be resolved with significant interventions	Design challenges can be resolved with moderate interventions	Design challenges can be resolved with minor interventions	Design challenges can be resolved	No design challenges
	Potential benefits *Expected benefits of the route (utilising AMAT)*	Benefits between £0mill and £10mill	Benefits between £10.01mill and £14mill	Benefits between £14.01mill and £18mill	Benefits between £18.01mill and £22mill	Benefits between £22.01mill and £40mill	Benefits greater than £40.01mill
	Acceptability *Professional judgement of whether the proposed route will be accepted by the public and/or politically*	Will not be accepted by the public or politically	Significant unlikeliness to be accepted by the public or politically	Anticipated public or political opposition and criticism of the intervention	No anticipated public and political opposition to intervention, some public by-in from advocacy groups, support from at least one councillor	Some public and political buy-in, active support from advocacy groups, stakeholders and a number of councillors/local government	Large public and political buy-in, active support for project

Appendix D. Environment Technical Note

D.1 Introduction

Jacobs UK Ltd. was commissioned by Cheshire East Council in January 2024 to prepare a high-level desk-based ecological constraints assessment for a new multi-use cycleway, the Bollin Valley Way (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Scheme'). Situated in Cheshire, the Proposed Scheme broadly between the outskirts of Altrincham and Disley. The route is divided and identified by western, central, and eastern sections. Of note, is the western route that directly impacts Rostherne Mere (Ramsar site, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserve (NNR)), located at (OS) Grid Reference: SJ 74388 84311.

The Proposed Scheme is predominantly surrounded by agricultural fields with some residential properties in the villages and towns of Altrincham, Dunham Town, Ashley, Wilmslow, Handforth, Poynton and Disley. It is understood that much of the route will utilise existing tracks, pathways, and Public Rights of Way (PRoW).

The study objective is to undertake a high-level, desk-based, rapid ecological constraints assessment to inform an optioneering process in respect to the most appropriate route. A detailed desk study has not been undertaken at this stage and no fieldwork was undertaken as part of this study.

Please note that this report has been prepared to inform the optioneering process only and is not considered sufficient to support a planning application.

D.2 Methodology

D.2.1 Desk Study

This ecological constraints assessment was undertaken in consideration of good practice guidance detailed in the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) current guidelines on Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM, 2017).36

This desk-study involved a review of four datasets that were identified as representing features of the highest ecological value such as designated sites, Habitats of Principal Importance (HoPI, NERC 2006) or 'irreplaceable habitats' under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2023)37 as follows:

- Statutory designated sites of nature conservation interest for an area extending to 1km from the Proposed Scheme, obtained from MAGIC38 [accessed March 2024]. The sites included within this desk-study are defined in Table 9-2.

Table 9-2: Statutory Designated Site Definitions

Ramsar sites	Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance designated by Ramsar Convention. Sites proposed for selection are advised by the relevant statutory nature conservation body within the UK.

[36] CIEEM (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. Winchester.

[37] National Planning Policy Framework - 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

[38] Version MAGIC v3. available online: https://magic.defra.gov.uk/Metadata_for_magic/SSSI%20IRZ%20User%20Guidance%20MAGIC.pdf [Accessed March 2024]

Special Protection Areas (SPA)	SPA are sites designated under the European Union's Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) The aim of SPAs is to safeguard the European bird species considered to be of particular importance and therefore listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, as well as regularly occurring migratory bird species which are not necessarily listed in Annex I. The Birds Directive also applies to birds' eggs, nests and habitats.
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)	SACs are protected areas in the UK designated under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Under these Regulations, sites must make significant contribution to conserving the habitats and species identified in Annexes I and II. The listed habitat types and species are those considered to be most in need of conservation at a European level (excluding birds).
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	The statutory nature conservation agencies have a duty under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, to notify any area of land which in their opinion is 'of special interest by reason of any of its flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features'. Such areas are known as SSSIs
National Nature Reserves (NNR)	NNRs in England are designated by Natural England as key places for wildlife and natural features in England. They were established to protect the most significant areas of habitat and of geological formations.
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	LNRs are a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by principal Local Authorities. LNRs are for people and wildlife. They are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally.

- Habitats of Principal Importance (HoPI) as listed on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC), within 50m of the Proposed Scheme, obtained from the MAGIC[3] [accessed March 2024].
- Ancient Woodland within 50m of the Proposed Scheme, obtained from MAGIC[3] [accessed January 2024].
- Records of ancient and veteran trees within 50m of the Proposed Scheme were obtained from the Woodland Trust [39] [accessed March 2024].

D.2.2 Limitations

It should be noted that this exercise is intended to provide a high-level ecological constraints assessment only. A desk-based study for statutory designated sites/notable habitats can only highlight the potential presence of priority habitats that may be present in the study area. As such, further ecological study will be necessary to verify the presence/absence of priority habitats and species and their locations.

This assessment has been informed by desk study results. In the absence of the additional desk study data outlined above, and field surveys to inform habitat and species data, this study can only offer a preliminary assessment at this stage. This document is not considered sufficient to support a planning application.

[39] Woodland Trust https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/[Accessed March 2024]

D.3 Results

A summary of the relevant ecological features identified within the study area are provided below. More detailed results and descriptions are shown in Table 9-3. Accompanying figures illustrating the Proposed Scheme and ecological features can be found in Section D.5.

D.3.1 Statutory Designated Sites for Nature Conservation

Nine statutory designated sites for nature conservation were recorded within 1km of the Proposed Scheme, these are listed below in terms of their biological importance, starting with the most valuable:

- Rostherne Mere Ramsar Site, SSSI and NNR;
- Dunham Park SSSI;
- Cotteril Clough SSSI;
- Lindow Common SSSI;
- Poynton Coppice LNR;
- Lindow Common LNR; and,
- Jackson's Brickworks LNR.

In addition, SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for Rostherne Mere (IRZ) and Tatton Mere (IRZ) and Matley Moor Meadows (IRZ) were located within 1km.

D.3.2 Ancient Woodland

Ancient Woodland is considered an irreplaceable habitat under the NPPF. The desk study records identified 11 parcels of ancient woodland:

- Harpers Bank Wood
- Bank Wood
- Oversley Farm Wood
- Carr Wood
- Elm Wood
- Bens Wood
- Ryles and Middlecale Woods, and
- Four unnamed ancient woodlands.

D.3.3 Veteran Trees

Four veteran trees were identified from within 50m of the proposed route. Veteran trees are considered an irreplaceable habitat under the NPPF (2021; NPPF). [40]

D.3.4 Habitats of Principal Importance

Habitats of Principal Importance within the study area included lowland mixed deciduous woodland, wood-pasture and parkland, lowland fens, lowland meadows and traditional orchards. Good quality semi-improved grassland was also identified, and this habitat may also qualify as a HoPI.

[40] National Planning Policy Framework - 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Table 9-3: Ecological Features recorded within the study area of the Proposed Scheme

Name and	Distance from Proposed Scheme (at the closest point)	Description
Ramsar, SSSI and NNR Sites within 1km		
Rostherne Mere Ramsar, SSSI, NNR	Located underneath the Proposed Scheme	Designated as a Ramsar site for Criterion 1; Rostherne Mere is one of the deepest and largest meres of the Shropshire-Cheshire plain. Its shoreline is fringed with common reed (*Phragmites australis*). The following overwintering bird species occur at levels of national importance; great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo carbo*), bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*), and water rail (*Rallus aquaticus*). Designated as a SSSI primarily as forming part of a nationally important series of open water and peatland sies. The NNR features of interest cite that it is primarily important for wintering wildfowl, particularly pochard (*Aythya ferina*), other species include mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), teal (*Anas crecca*), pintail (*Anas acuta*), shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*), gadwall (*Mareca strepera*) and goosander (*Mergus merganser*). The surrounding reed beds support a large breeding population of reed warblers (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*), and bittern is a visitor during the winter. The surrounding woodland and scrub also support a good assemblage of breeding birds. Mammals include otter (SPI) and a population of harvest mouse (*Micromys minutus*, SPI) which are uncommon in Cheshire. The reserve supports several butterfly species, most notably white-letter hairstreak (SPI).
Dunham Park SSSI	23m south from the Proposed Scheme	The majority of Dunham Park is pasture-woodland or park-woodland and has been managed as such since mediaeval times. The main tree species are pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). A large number of the oak and beech trees are ancient, with some dating back to the 17th Century.
Cotteril Clough SSSI	173m west from the Proposed Scheme	The majority of the site is woodland with associated stream habitat and is the most diverse clough woodland on base rich soils in Greater Manchester. This grades into ash-wych elm woodland with sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and pedunculate oak also commonly found. Cotteril Clough also has an interesting bird fauna.

Name and	Distance from Proposed Scheme (at the closest point)	Description
Lindow Common SSSI	490m south from the Proposed Scheme	Lindow Common has been selected to represent one of the few remaining areas of lowland heath in Cheshire. The site consists of a mixture of wet and dry heath, bog, open water and scattered scrub and woodland.
Local Nature Reserves within 1km		
Poynton Coppice	2m north of the Proposed Scheme	Main habitats include running water, broadleaved woodland and meadow.
Lindow Common	190m south of the Proposed Scheme	The importance of Lindow's heathland is such that it has been designated a SSSI and an LNR. As well as areas of heather, other habitats, which add to the Common's richness – a fringe of woodland, wet mires and Black Lake.
Jackson's Brickworks	Adjacent to the Proposed Scheme	Mosaic of grassland, woodland, scrub and ponds on former brickworks site.
Irreplaceable Habitats within 50m		
Ancient Woodland	The closest site is located under the footprint of the Proposed Scheme	Eleven parcels identified. Ancient Woodland is considered an irreplaceable habitat under the NPPF.
Ancient / veteran trees	The closest veteran tree is located under the footprint of the Proposed Scheme	Four veteran trees were identified from within 50m of the proposed route.
Habitats of Principal Importance within 50m		

Name and	Distance from Proposed Scheme (at the closest point)	Description
Deciduous Woodland	The closest is located under the footprint of the Proposed Scheme	Extensive deciduous woodland HPI cover within 50m, returning over 227 records.
Woodpasture and Parkland	The closest is located under the footprint of the Proposed Scheme	Five areas of wood-pasture and parkland.
Lowland Meadows	The closest is located under the footprint of the Proposed Scheme	One area identified.
Traditional Orchard	The closest is located under the footprint of the Proposed Scheme	Nine traditional orchards within 50m.
Lowland Fens	The closest is located under the footprint of the Proposed Scheme	Two parcels one adjacent to the eastern section of the Proposed Scheme.
Semi improved grassland	The closest is located under the footprint of the Proposed Scheme	Three parcels adjacent to the western section of the Proposed Scheme.

D.4 Recommendations

The information contained within this report in respect to 'high value' ecological features should be used to inform the location and design of the Proposed Scheme i.e., use of the mitigation hierarchy to 'avoid' impacts on these features in the first instance.

The next stages of the optioneering process should incorporate the review of more detailed ecological information to ensure further avoidance of ecological features. This should include:

- Detailed desk study;
- Field surveys i.e. ground-based verification of Habitats of Principal Importance, ancient woodland and veteran trees, UK Habitat Classification surveys and protected species surveys;
- Identification of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designated for bats (as a qualifying interest feature) within 30km from the Proposed Scheme;
- Identification of all SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) in which the Proposed Scheme is located.
- Consultation with the stakeholders;
- A request of non-statutory sites data, comprising Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), held by the Local Biological Records Centre for the Cheshire Region within the Zone of Influence of the Proposed Scheme;
- Where relevant, obtain licences for European Protected Species (EPS) extending within the Zone of Influence of the Proposed Scheme;
- Identification of waterbodies within 250m of the Proposed Scheme;
- A request of records for protected or notable species (including NERC Act, 2006, Section 41 SPI) held by the Local Biological Records Centre for the Cheshire Region within the Zone of Influence of the Proposed Scheme, and
- Identification of Biodiversity Net Gain requirements for the Proposed Scheme.

D.5 Figure A.1 Statutory Sites within 1km of the Proposed Scheme

N

Carrington
Partington
Sale
Altrincham
Dunham Town
Lymm
Davenport Green
Booth Bank
High Legh
Ashley
Manchester Airport
Handforth
Wilmslow
Over Tabley
Tatton
Mobberley
Knutsford
Lindow End
Alderley Edge
Mottram Saint Andrew
Pickmere
Ollerton
Little Warford
Prestbury
Plumley
Lostock
Chelford

Rixton Clay Pits
Brookheys Covert
Broad Ees Dole
Chorlton Ees & Ivy Green
Chorlton Water Park
Highfield Country Park
Heaton Mersey Common
Stenner Woods and Milgate Fields, Didsbury
Mersey Vale Nature Park
Wythenshawe Park
Gatley Carrs
Abney Hall
Mersey Vale Nature Park
Wrights Wood
Dunham Park
Rostherne Mere
Rostherne Mere
Cotteril Clough
The Mere, Mere
Midland Meres & Mosses
Tatton Meres
Lindow Common
Lindow Common
Tabley Mere
Alderley Edge

0 2.5 km

Esri UK, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, Foursquare, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, Esri UK, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS

Legend

- Initial Bollin Valley Way/Greater Bollin Trail routes
- 1km Buffer
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation
- Local Nature Reserves
- Ramsar
- Rostherne Mere National Nature Reserve
- Peak District Moors Special Protection Area

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Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Check'd	Rev'd	Appr'd
0	3/13/2024	Initial Issue	KM	SK	ZC	LP

Scale @ A3 | Scale: 1:71,000 | DO NOT SCALE

Jacobs No. BRJ10676

Jacobs

Client: Cheshire East Council

Project: BRJ10676 Bollin Valley Way/ Greater Bollin Trail

Drawing Title: Statutory Sites within 1km of the corridors
Sheet 1 of 2

Drawing No.: N/A

Drawing Status: FINAL

FIGURE 1

\\gblon0vs01\GISProj\BRJ10676_BollinValleyWay\ArcGIS\002_EnvironmentalData\002_EnvironemntalData.aprx

N

Heaton Mersey Common
Stenner Woods and Milgate Fields, Didsbury
Mersey Vale Nature Park
Reddish Vale
Crookilley Woods
Compstall Nature Reserve
Etherow Country Park
Dark Peak
Ludworth Intake
Tangshutts
Chadkirk Country Estate
Poise Brook
Woodbank Park
Mersey Vale Nature Park
Abney Hall
Wrights Wood
Happy Valley
Jackson's Brickworks
Watford Lodge
Mousley Bottom
Matley Moor Meadows
Hayfield
Bluebell Woods
New Mills
Goytside Meadows
Stubbins Park
Brookfield Pond
Whaley Bridge
Whitehough Head
Combs Reservoir
Millennium Wood, Disley
Toddbrook Reservoir
Goyt Valley
Poynton Coppice
Riverside Park, Macclesfield
Alderley Edge

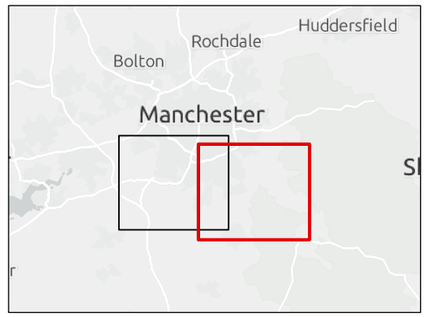
Stockport
Poynton
Middlewood
Disley
Handforth
Wilmslow
Mottram Saint Andrew
Pott Shrigley
Bollington
Prestbury
Ginclough
Rainow
Calrofold
Whirley Grove
Henbury
Macclesfield
Buxton
Chapel-en-le
Breckend

0 2.5 km

Esri UK, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, Foursquare, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, Esri UK, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS

Legend

- Initial Bollin Valley Way/Greater Bollin Trail routes
- 1km Buffer
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation
- Local Nature Reserves
- Ramsar
- Rostherne Mere National Nature Reserve
- Peak District Moors Special Protection Area



Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Check'd	Rev'd	Appr'd
0	3/13/2024	Initial Issue	KM	SK	ZC	LP

Scale @ A3 | Scale: 1:71,000 | DO NOT SCALE

Jacobs No. BRJ10676

Jacobs

Client: Cheshire East Council

Project: BRJ10676 Bollin Valley Way/ Greater Bollin Trail

Drawing Title: Statutory Sites within 1km of the corridors
Sheet 2 of 2

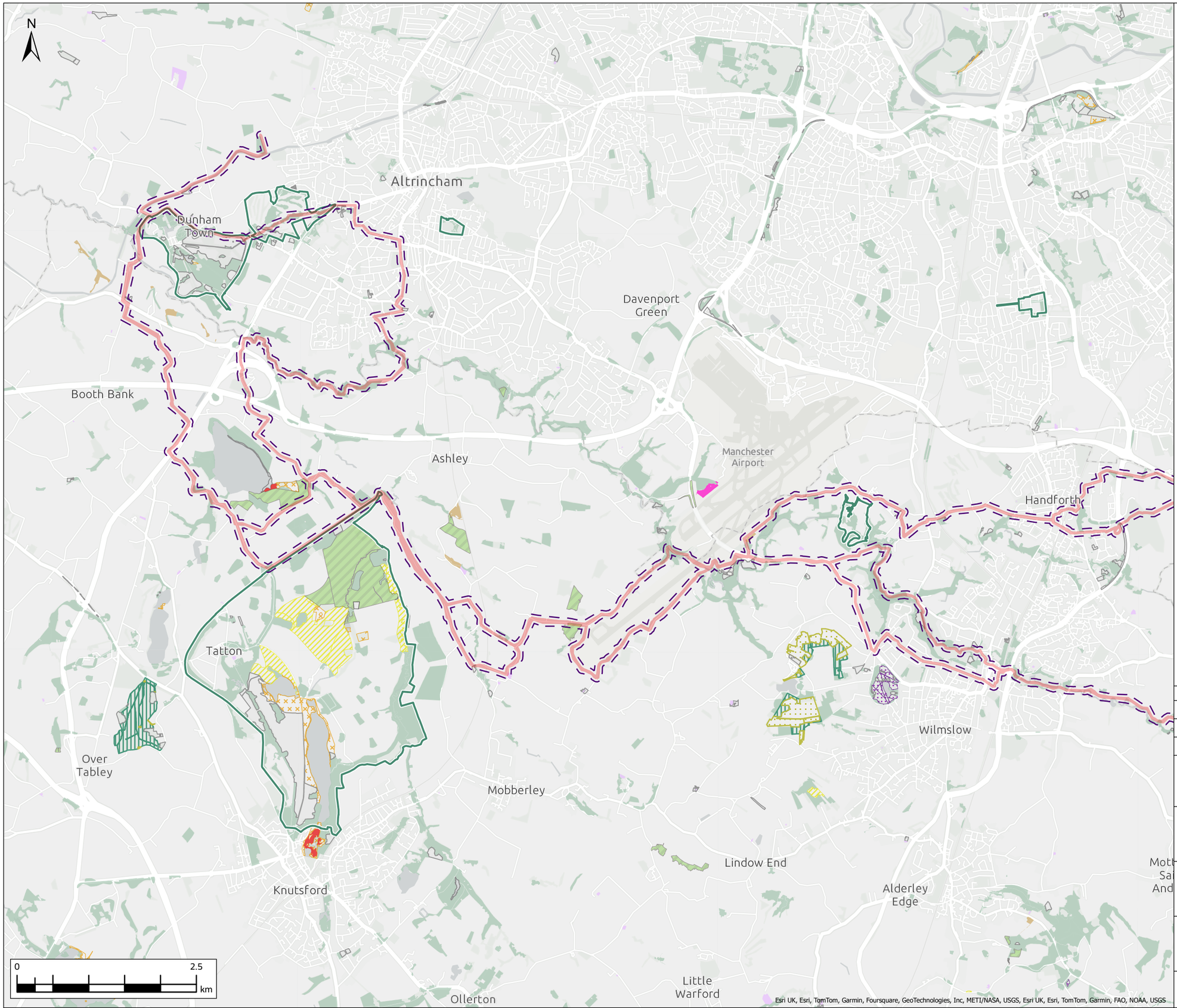
Drawing No.: N/A

Drawing Status: FINAL

FIGURE 1

\\gblon0vs01\GISProj\BRJ10676_BollinValleyWay\ArcGIS\002_EnvironmentalData\002_EnvironemntalData.aprx

D.6 Figure A.2 Habitats of Principal Importance within 50m of the Proposed Scheme



Legend

- Initial Bollin Valley Way/Greater Bollin Trail routes
- 50m Buffer
- Wood Pasture and Parkland Habitat

Habitats that may qualify as Habitats of Principal Importance

- Good qualify semi-improved grassland

Habitats of Principal Importance

- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Deciduous woodland
- Deciduous woodland,Lowland raised bog
- Good quality semi improved grassland
- Grass moorland
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland fens
- Lowland raised bog
- Lowland heathland
- Lowland meadows
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- No main habitat but additional habitats present
- Purple moor grass and rush pastures
- Reedbeds
- Traditional orchard
- Fragmented heath
- Blanket bog
- Upland flushes fens and swamps
- Upland heathland

Rev.	Date	Purpose of revision	Drawn	Check'd	Rev'd	Appr'd
0	3/13/2024	Initial Issue	KM	SK	ZC	LP

Scale @ A3 | Scale: 1:51,000 | DO NOT SCALE

Jacobs No. BRJ10676

Jacobs

Client: Cheshire East Council

Project: BRJ10676 Bollin Valley Way/ Greater Bollin Trail

Drawing Title: Priority habitats within 50m of the corridors
Sheet 1 of 2

Drawing No.: N/A

Drawing Status: FINAL

FIGURE 2

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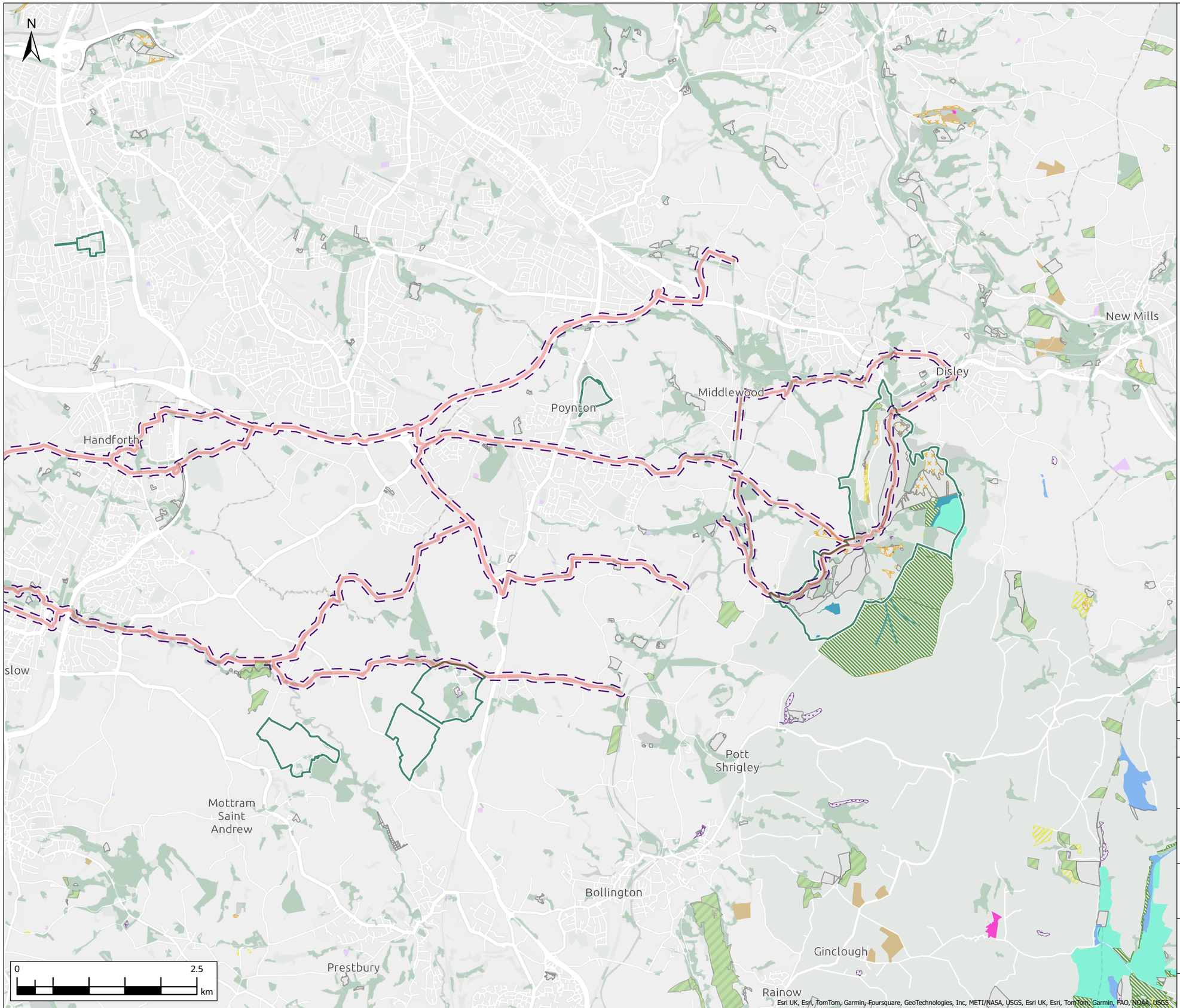

Legend

- Initial Bollin Valley Way/Greater Bollin Trail routes
- 50m Buffer
- Wood Pasture and Parkland Habitat

Habitats that may qualify as Habitats of Principal Importance

- Good qualify semi-improved grassland

Habitats of Principal Importance

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- Fragmented heath
- Blanket bog
- Upland flushes fens and swamps
- Upland heathland

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Jacobs No. BRJ10676

Jacobs

Client: Cheshire East Council

Project: BRJ10676 Bollin Valley Way/ Greater Bollin Trail

Drawing Title: Priority habitats within 50m of the corridors
Sheet 2 of 2

Drawing No.: N/A

Drawing Status: FINAL

FIGURE 2

\\gblon0vs01\GISProj\BRJ10676_BollinValleyWay\ArcGIS\002_EnvironmentalData\002_EnvironemntalData.aprx

D.7 Figure A.3 Ancient woodland and ancient veteran trees within 50m of the Proposed Scheme

N

Altrincham
Dunham Town
Davenport Green
Booth Bank
Ashley
Manchester Airport
Handforth
Tatton
Over Tabley
Mobberley
Wilmslow
Knutsford
Lindow End
Alderley Edge
Little Warford
Ollerton

0 2.5 km

Esri UK, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, Foursquare, GeoTechnologies, Inc, METI/NASA, USGS, Esri UK, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS

Legend

- Initial Bollin Valley Way/Greater Bollin Trail routes
- 50m Buffer
- Ancient and Veteran Tree Inventory
- Ancient Woodland, including Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland and Ancient Replanted Woodland

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Jacobs No. BRJ10676

Jacobs

Client: Cheshire East Council

Project: BRJ10676 Bollin Valley Way/ Greater Bollin Trail

Drawing Title: Ancient Woodland and Ancient trees within 50m of the corridors Sheet 1 of 2

Drawing No.: N/A

Drawing Status: FINAL

FIGURE 3

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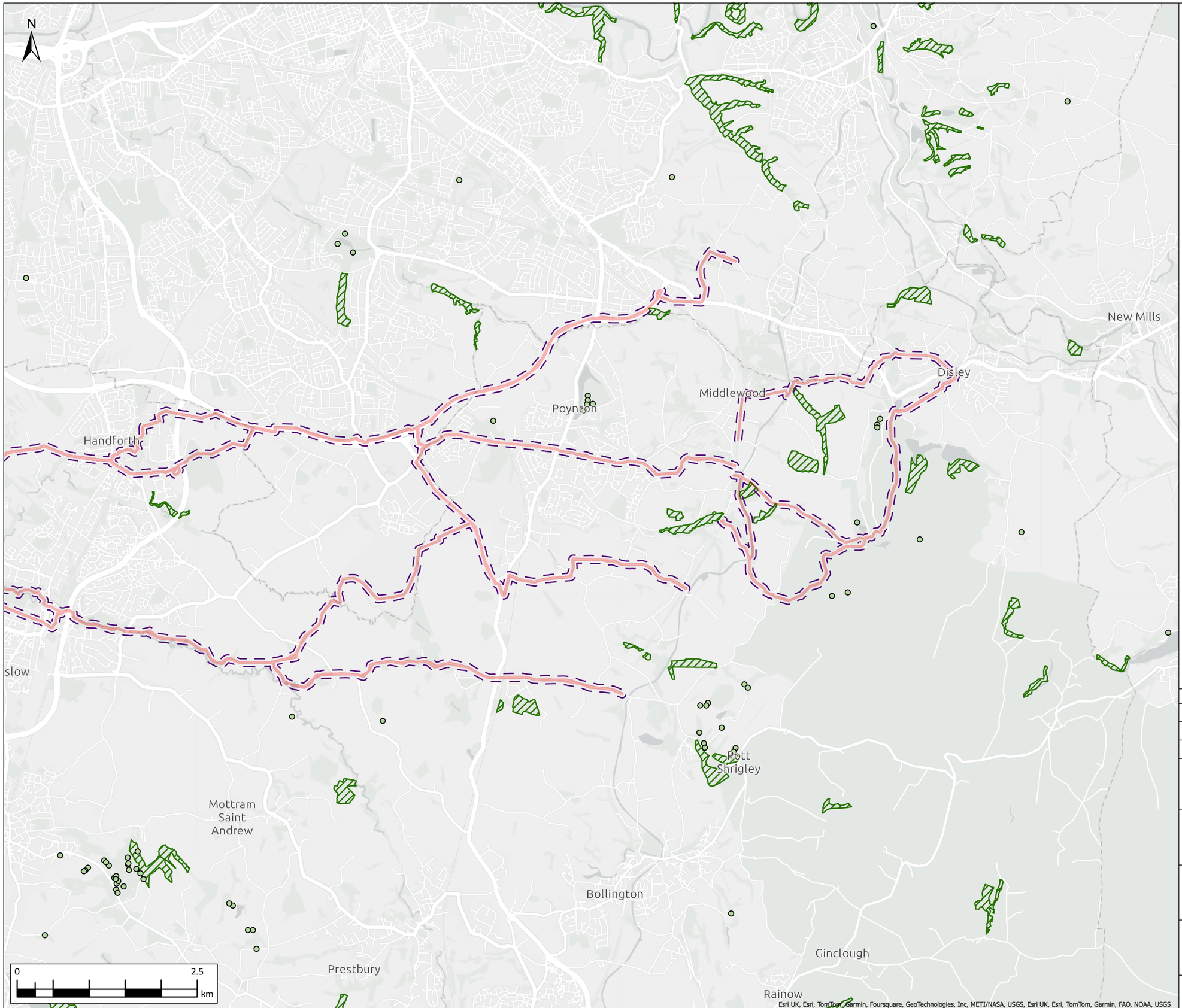
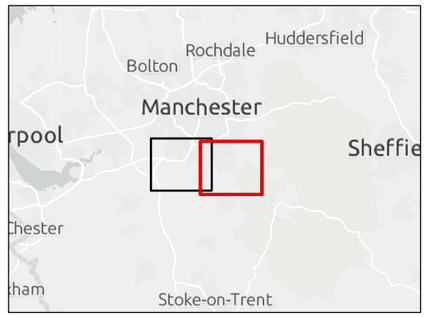


Legend

- Initial Bollin Valley Way/Greater Bollin Trail routes
- 50m Buffer
- Ancient and Veteran Tree Inventory
- Ancient Woodland, including Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland and Ancient Replanted Woodland



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Jacobs No. BRJ10676

Jacobs

Client: Cheshire East Council

Project: BRJ10676 Bollin Valley Way/ Greater Bollin Trail

Drawing Title: Ancient Woodland and Ancient trees within 50m of the corridors Sheet 2 of 2

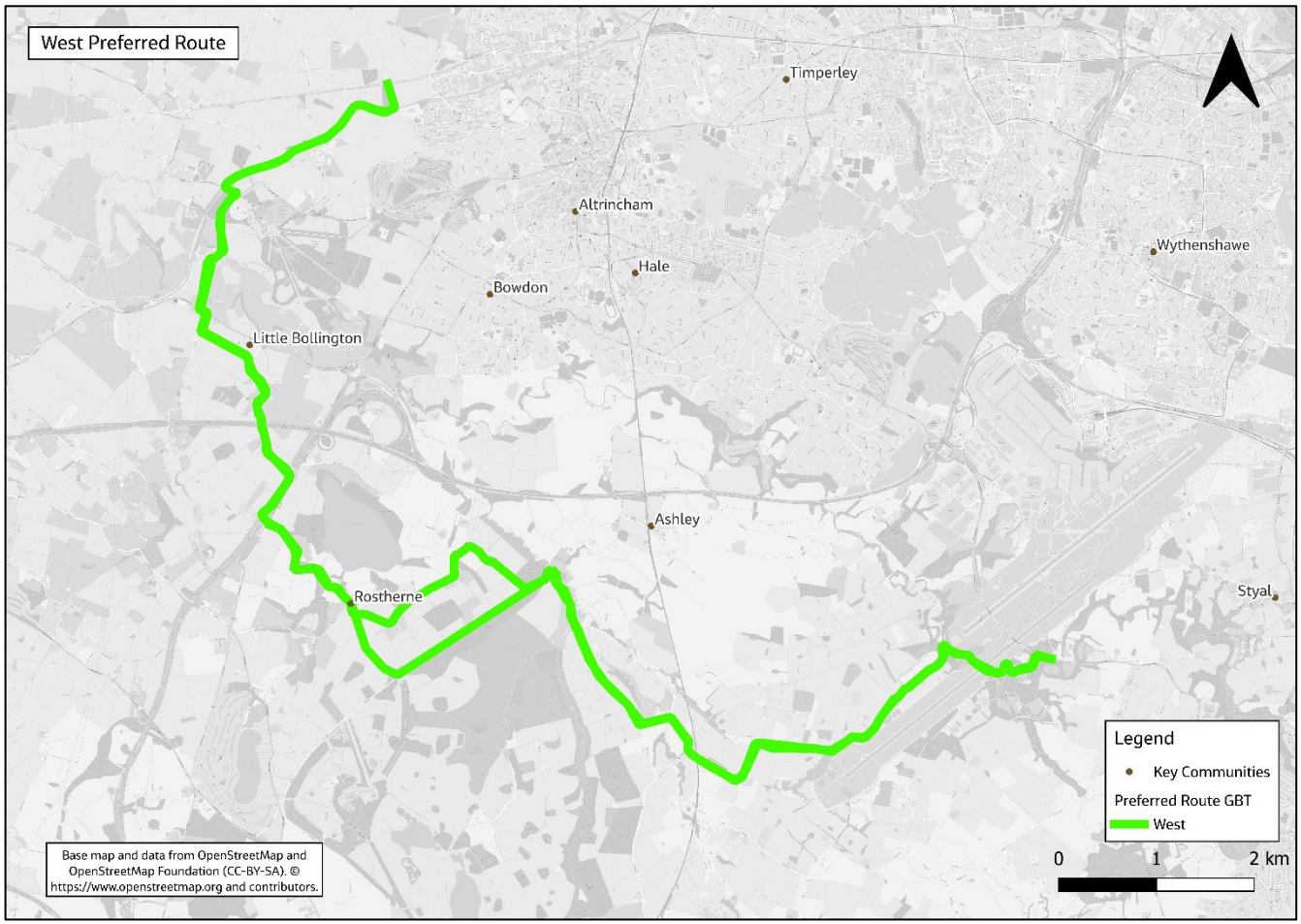
Drawing No.: N/A

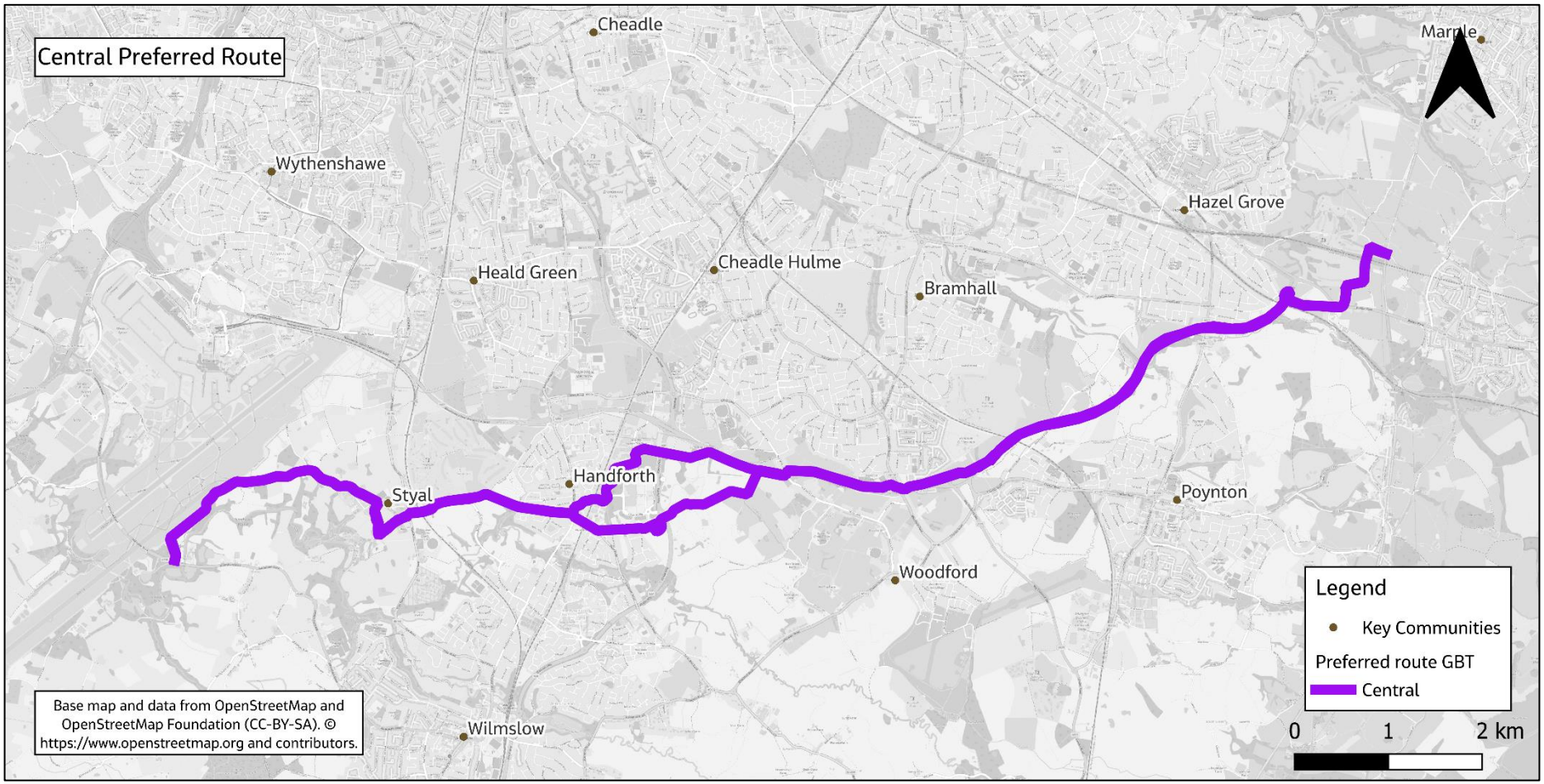
Drawing Status: FINAL

FIGURE 3

\\gblon0vs01\GISProj\BRJ10676_BollinValleyWay\ArcGIS\002_EnvironmentalData\002_EnvironemntalData.aprx

Appendix E. Route Sections




Central Preferred Route
Cheadle
Marple
Wythenshawe
Hazel Grove
Heald Green
Cheadle Hulme
Bramhall
Handforth
Styal
Poynton
Woodford
Wilmslow
Legend
Key Communities
Preferred route GBT
Central
0
1
2 km
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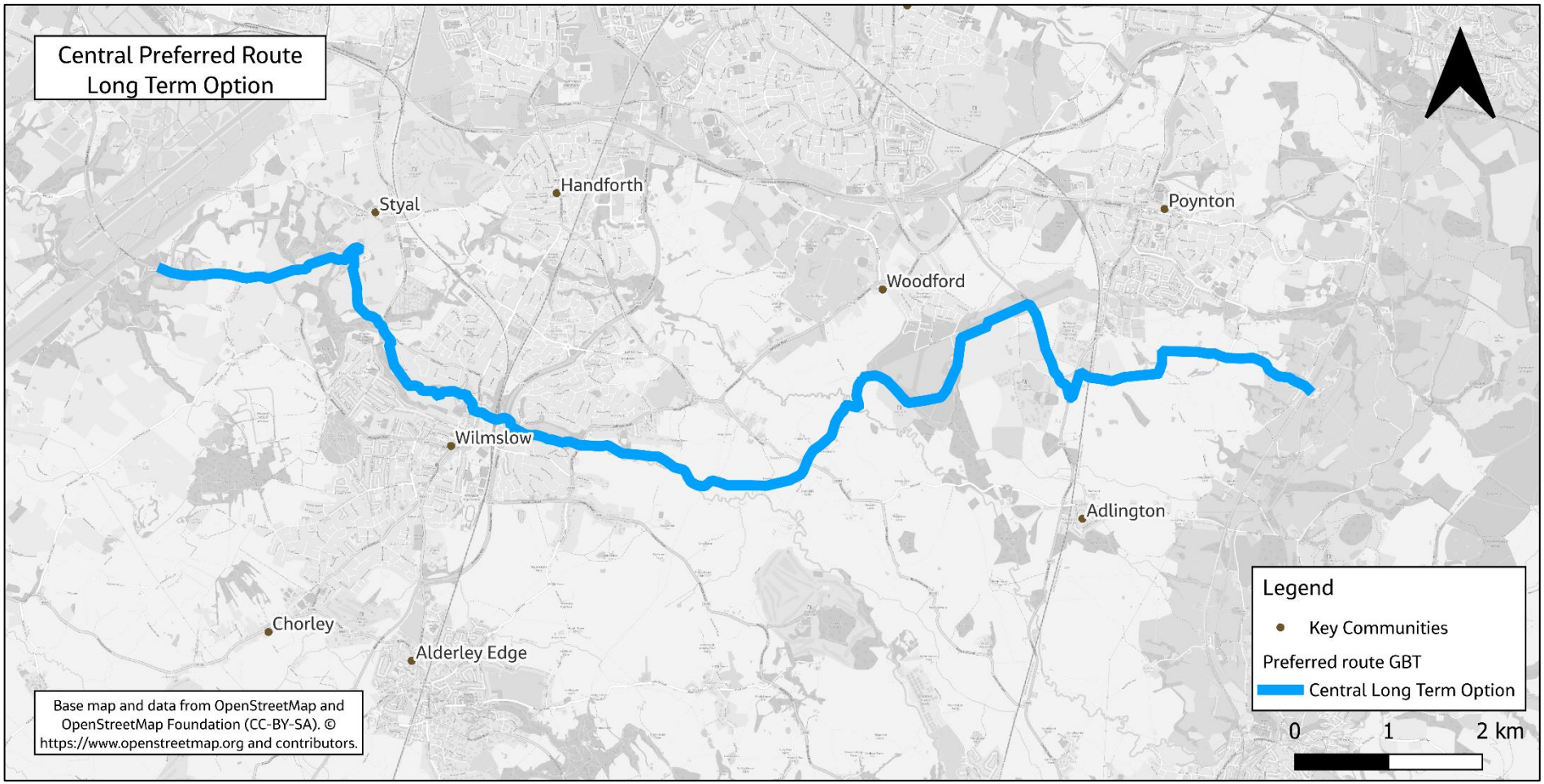
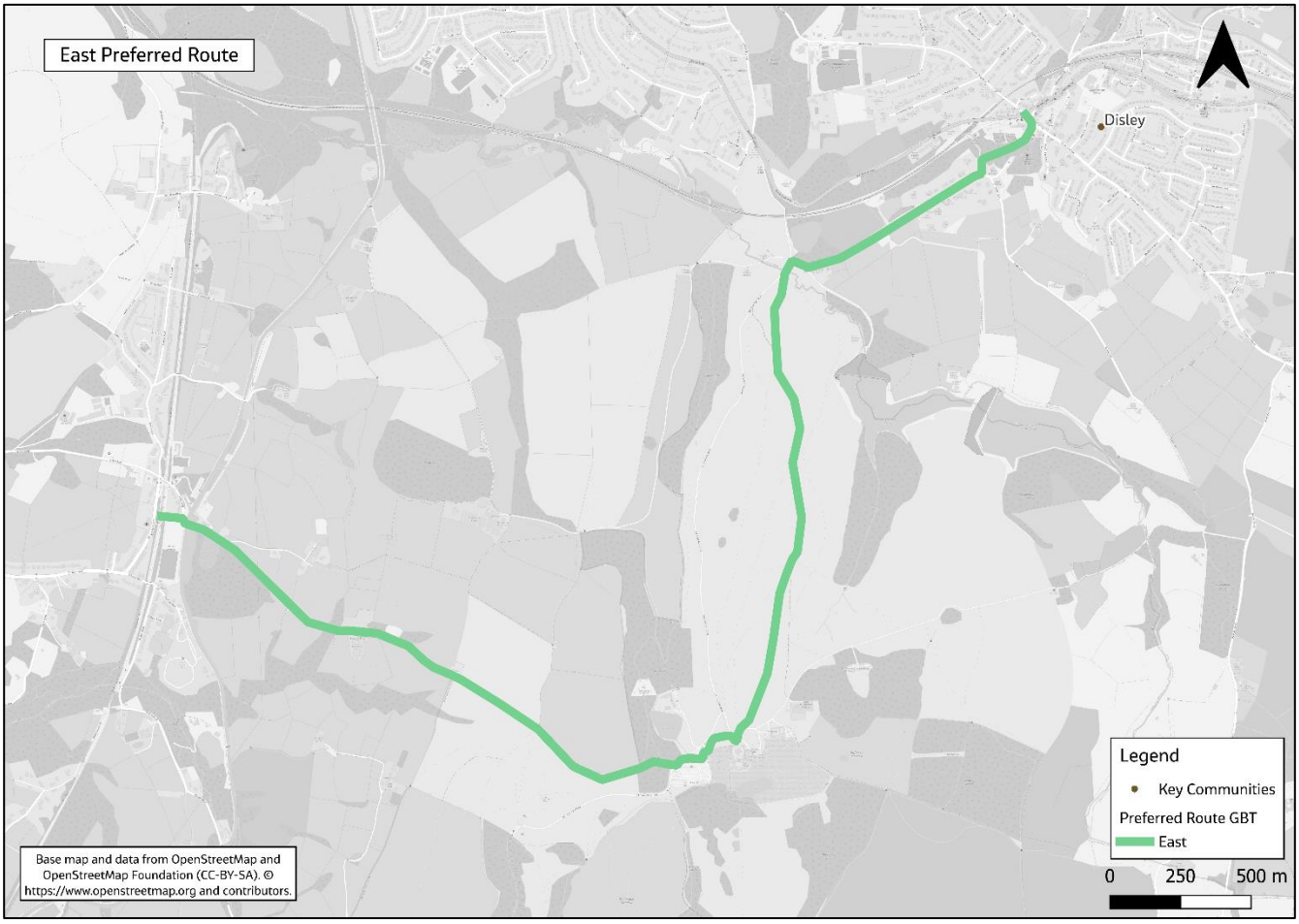

Central Preferred Route
Long Term Option
Styal
Handforth
Poynton
Woodford
Wilmslow
Adlington
Chorley
Alderley Edge
Base map and data from OpenStreetMap and OpenStreetMap Foundation (CC-BY-SA). © https://www.openstreetmap.org and contributors.
Legend
Key Communities
Preferred route GBT
Central Long Term Option
0
1
2 km


East Preferred Route
Disley
Legend
Key Communities
Preferred Route GBT
East
0
250
500 m
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