

NEXUS  
PLANNING



MANCHESTER  
CITY COUNCIL

# Withington Village

WITHINGTON VILLAGE FRAMEWORK MARCH 2021



## Contents

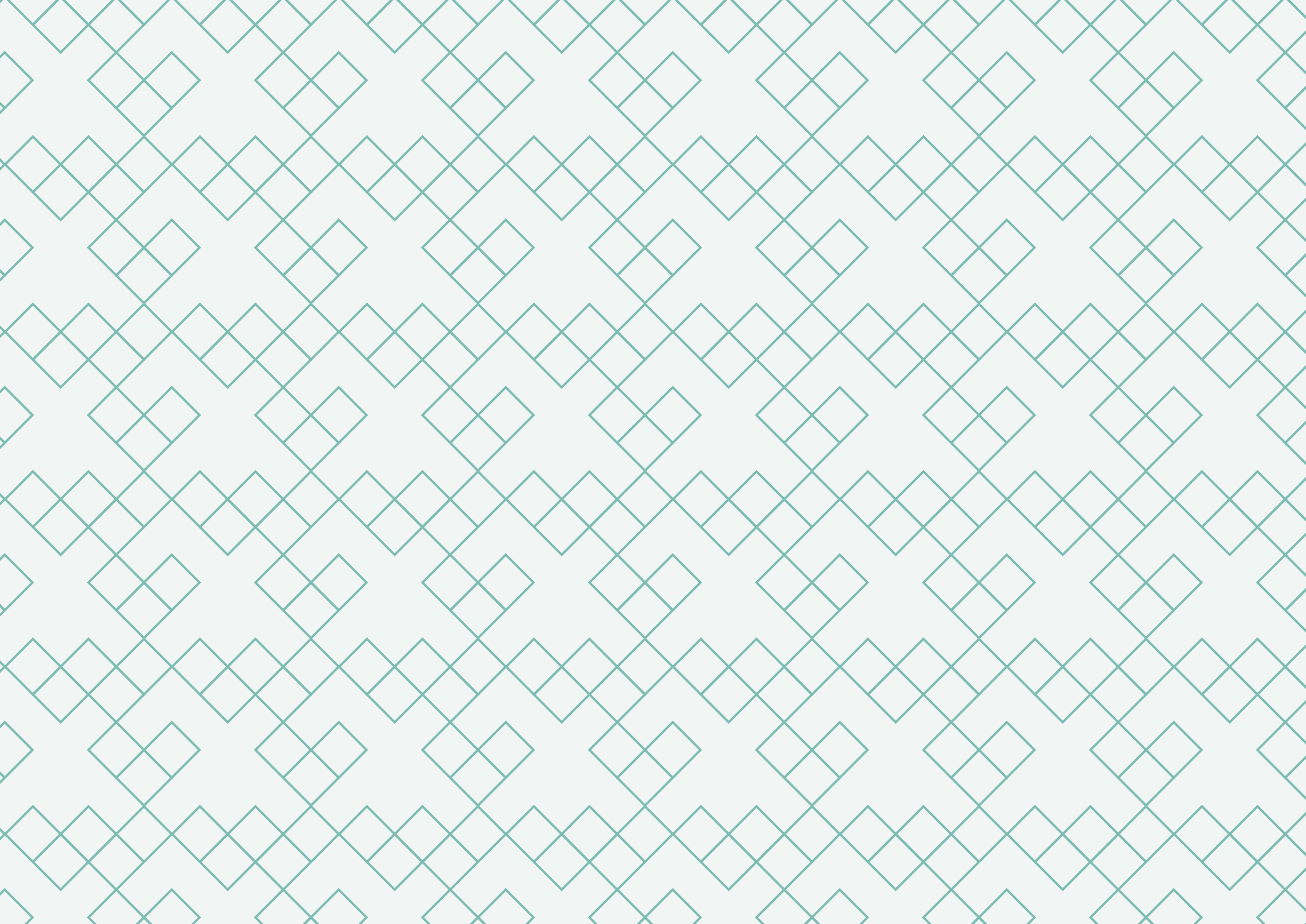
Introduction.....	7
Policy Context .....	11
Withington Village – An Overview .	19
Challenges & Opportunities .....	31
Vision 2030 .....	37
Key Spatial Principles.....	43
Projects .....	55
Recommendations & Next Steps.....	59

## Figures

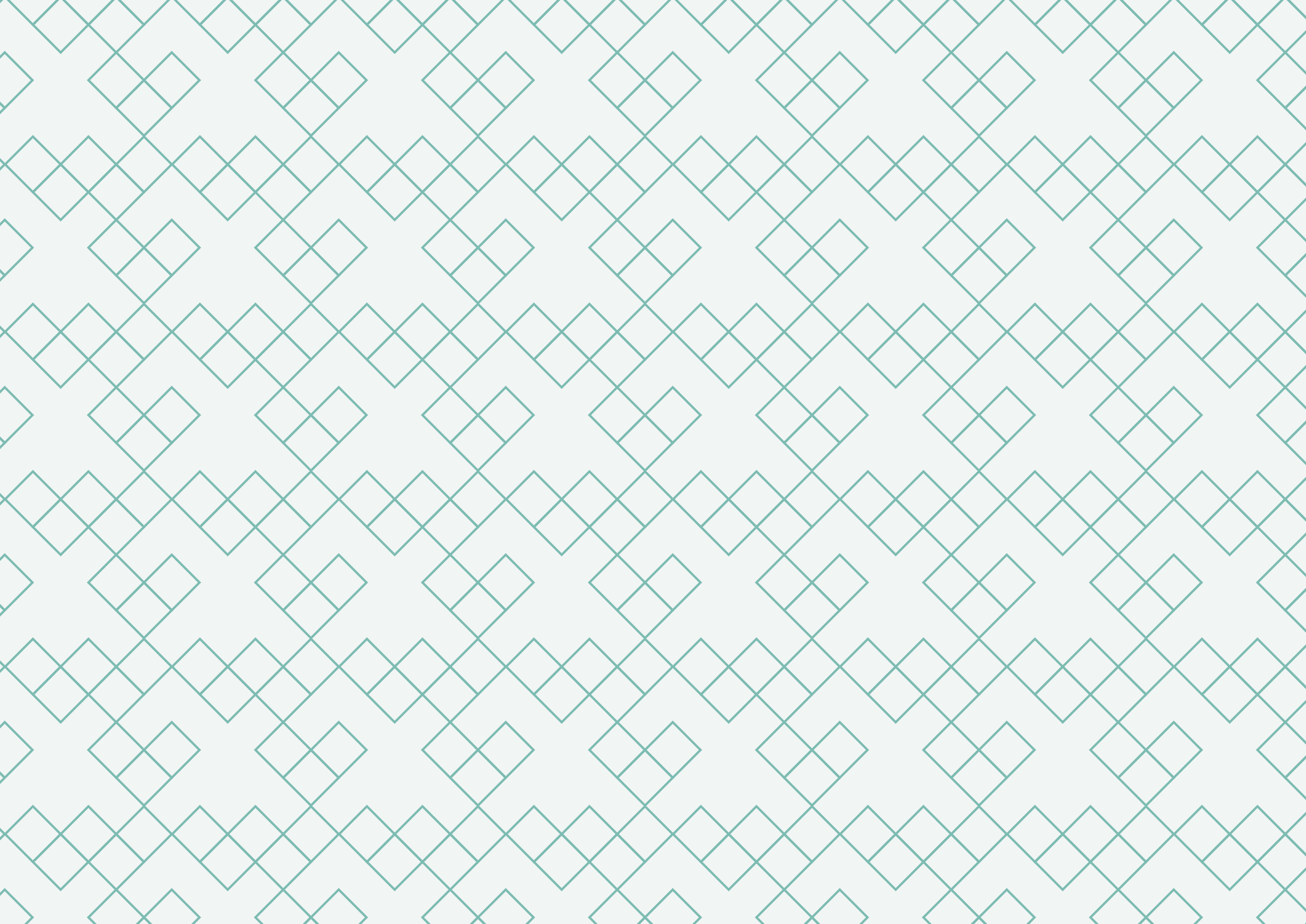
Figure 1: Withington Village Strategy Area .....	12
Figure 2: Withington Village boundaries.....	14
Figure 3: Character area analysis plan of Withington.....	23
Figure 4: Townscape Analysis of Withington Village.....	24
Figure 5: Heritage Analysis of Withington Village.....	26
Figure 6: Movement Analysis of Withington Village .....	28
Figure 7: Opportunities Plan of Withington Village.....	34
Figure 8: Withington Spatial Framework .....	44
Figure 9: Withington Movement Plan.....	49
Figure 10: Withington Public Realm Plan.....	51
Figure 11: Heritage Strategy.....	53
Figure 12: List of projects.....	57
Figure 13: Withington Opportunity Sites .....	57

## Appendix

Appendix 1: Key Projects & Precedent Images .....	63
Appendix 2: Liveable Loveable Matrix.....	65









# Introduction

## Introduction

Nexus Planning ('Nexus') was appointed by Manchester City Council, as part of a wider technical team including Broadway Malyan, WSP and BB Heritage Studio, to prepare a Framework for Withington Village.

Withington Village is a key District Centre in South Manchester and provides a focus for the community and access to retail, leisure, transport, civic, health and other services. It benefits from a distinctive environment and a number of key assets as well as engaged and active community stakeholders. However, in common with many centres and High Streets, it also faces challenges on a number of fronts. The extent of Withington Village is shown in Figure 1.

Withington Village is defined as a broader area than the commercial core, to include the gateways and routes into the core along Burton and Wilmslow Road, that house important services that form part of its offer. The northern boundary is defined by the Library and Rutherford Place. The southern boundary is defined by Withington Baths on Burton Road and the Red Lion Inn on Wilmslow Road. The boundary encompasses the commercial core on Copson Street and Wilmslow Road, the Conservation area, the public car parks, the churches, the Adult Learning Centre and Withington Village Hall.

This Framework brings together and draws attention to the relevant planning policies in order to guide the future of Withington Village. These policies underpinned the Withington Village Action Plan (2010-2020) (WVAP). Importantly, it sets out the broad vision for the Village, key policy objectives and how these could be achieved.

This is in the context of a changing social and economic context for the Village, not least the radical changes that have and continue to take place in our High Streets as a consequence of changing shopping and leisure habits. The impacts arising from the Covid-19 pandemic will also greatly influence change on our High Streets.

The Framework has been developed following a baseline survey and assessment work undertaken by the consultant team and land use data provided by the City Council as well as public consultation undertaken with local stakeholders. It reflects work undertaken by the Institute of Place Management (IPM) of Manchester Metropolitan University on stakeholder activity and place management for the City Council.

In supporting the existing planning policy, the Framework accords with objectives and ambitions of wider Council strategies.

## What is the purpose of the Framework?

At its core, the Framework seeks to deliver key environmental, social, design and economic objectives; the aim is to champion positive, lasting change in this unique, well-established neighbourhood as it continues through a challenging period of transition.

The focus of the Framework is to:

- establish a clear Vision to guide and inform development decisions in Withington Village which is supported and driven by the local community;
- provide confidence to partners in the prospects for the Village and to encourage further investment;
- illustrate through a series of precedent images and layouts how design objectives could be achieved;
- identify the focus for public sector and guide private sector investment to transform the Village and to provide a basis for funding bids; and,
- provide a focus for on-going community and public involvement in delivering the Vision for Withington Village.

The Framework sets out key design and environmental principles in response to the distinctive character and context of the centre, its challenges and opportunities.

Given the changing context and the new challenges facing our High Streets the Framework also provides, where this is consistent with policy, a consideration of Withington Village beyond a traditional 'retail-led' High Street and considers its future role as a broad-based focus for the community – a 'Future High Street'. As such the Framework considers health and well-being, the opportunities of the digital economy, the scope for community-led partnerships and plans, and responses to climate change as key themes.

The Spatial Objectives place these considerations within a physical framework, which in turn is centred on the key features of:

- Movement – how people interact and use Withington Village;
- Public realm – how the Village works primarily for pedestrians, cyclists but also bus and cars users; and,
- Streetscape – how Withington Village's unique period architecture is respected and how modern culture is expressed.



## Delivering the Objectives

The priorities that inform the Framework will provide a direction for funding bids and decisions and identify opportunities for future investment throughout the area, whether through public sector, private sector, or in partnership with the community and voluntary sector. The Framework should not be seen as inflexible or prescriptive, nor does it represent a commitment to funding by the Council.

This is intended to be the springboard which will assign priorities and timescales to a range of projects, rather than providing a specific



blueprint for interventions. The range of projects presented set out priorities and actions that will deliver significant benefits for the area, with each project first requiring greater technical development and study, consultation with relevant stakeholders and the attainment of planning consents and funding streams.

### Structure of the Framework

The remainder of the document is structured as follows:

- Policy Context – to be effective, the Framework should reflect established policy and strategies but also inform emerging strategic plans. This section considers the existing policy landscape to enable those connections to be considered.
- Withington Village, an overview - a review of the social, economic and environmental context to the Village as a basis for considering key challenges and opportunities. Wider economic and other influencing factors are also considered.
- Challenges and Opportunities – confirmation of the key issues to be addressed and opportunities to be capitalised upon.
- Vision – a shared Vision for Withington Village is established to create a basis and focus for delivery and to underpin future decisions.
- Objectives – the Vision is reflected in an overarching framework which aligns projects and priorities.
- Implementation and delivery – the scope and delivery of key development principles.
- Recommendations and Next Steps – in conclusion recommendations are made on the key action points and the next steps identified.

### A proactive community

Withington has a vibrant and engaged network of community groups and stakeholders, including the partnership groups of the Withington Village Regeneration Partnership and We Are Withington, who have contributed significantly to recent successes and are committed to the ongoing regeneration of Withington Village. Stakeholders have been engaged in the development of this Framework and will be fundamental to its effective and sustained delivery.





# Policy Context






Key  
 Withington Village Strategy proposed area

Figure 1: Withington Village Strategy Area



## Local Planning Policy

The adopted Planning Policy for Manchester comprises the Manchester Core Strategy (CS) (July 2012), and relevant Saved Policies from the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (UDP) (July 1995).

## Manchester Core Strategy 2012-2027

Manchester's Core Strategy was adopted in July 2012 and is the key document in the city's Local Development Framework. Figure 2 shows an extract from the Council's adopted Proposals Map as it pertains to Withington. The Core Strategy is based on a 2027 Vision and a number of objectives, including S04 Centres:

**'Provide a network of distinctive, attractive and high quality centres, strengthening local identity, providing essential services close to homes and local access to healthy food. Developments providing additional services and retail will be encouraged in the district centres where such development is consistent with the City's retail hierarchy. Particular emphasis will be given to development that helps to create distinctive [sic] local character.'**

Withington is defined as one of five District Centres in South Manchester (the others being Chorlton, Didsbury, Fallowfield and Levenshulme). The updated Proposal Map to the Core Strategy confirms the extent of the District Centre boundary, however this can be reviewed through the forthcoming Local Plan preparation.

Policy C6 South Manchester District Centres is the key policy relating to Withington district centre. In reference to Withington, the policy states that:

**"..development which creates more diverse centres will be supported, in particular involving improvement to the retail offer to meet the full range of residents in surrounding neighbourhoods and promoting community uses."**

Figure 2 illustrates the extent of the defined district centre, which encompasses Wilmslow Road, Copson Street and some side streets. The defined centre is broadly appropriate. It is not envisaged that the

district centre boundary needs to be extended or contracted to any significant degree. Albeit, some minor modifications would be useful.

## Conservation Area Status

Withington Conservation Area was designated by the Council in July 1983. Wilmslow Road forms a north-south spine through the area, and its boundaries are primarily found by property rather than streets. The approach to development within the Conservation Area boundary is set out in Policy EN3 'Heritage' of the Manchester Core Strategy.

The historic value of Withington Village is an integral component of its future success, and it is therefore essential that its heritage is respected, retained and enhanced in the future.

Both national and current adopted local policy is clear that development schemes, or other works, to the historic environment which do not adhere to adopted policies are not considered to be sustainable development. Indeed, the national planning guidance on 'Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres' states that appropriate policies which seek to conserve and enhance the historic environment within town centres will be vital to help secure the future of the centre.

In this context, Policy DC18 of the UDP relates specifically to conservation areas and sets out detailed policy considerations for development proposals within the designated areas. In particular, the UDP policy seeks to preserve and enhance the character of the designated conservation area, and seeks to control the future demolition of buildings within the area. The policy provides the context for the objectives in this Framework. The heritage policies are not intended to constrain the potential of Withington but to assist in driving future quality development and express its modern and cultural identity.

Development management within the Conservation Area focuses on encouraging development which will enhance the prosperity of the area, ensuring that special architectural and visual qualities are maintained.

## Manchester Unitary Development Plan

Whilst this plan was adopted in 1995, saved policies do still form part of the Development Plan. However, it of course pre-dates the National Planning Policy Framework and will be replaced by the emerging Manchester Local Plan.

Policy WB6 states that 'Further conversion of retail and commercial properties to Class A3 (food and drink) uses will not normally be permitted along Wilmslow Road within Withington Village'.

Policy WB11 of the Manchester UDP seeks to encourage the management of flow of traffic along Wilmslow Road, with the aim of improving operating conditions for road users and pedestrians. Core Strategy Policy T1 seeks to deliver a sustainable, high quality, integrated transport system to encourage modal shift away from car travel to public transport, cycling and walking. Furthermore, the policy seeks to improve access for all to transport services but also to the surrounding environment and uses.

Both policies seek to enhance the overall accessibility of the centre for all and in turn, enhancing the safety for all.

## Manchester Design Guide and Residential Quality Guidance

These two documents provide clear guidance on Manchester's ambitions for quality in all its developments. The guidance takes a holistic approach to design, placing the expectation for quality external space to sit alongside the look of a building and internal requirements. Developments should aspire to be highly inclusive, accessible, safe and respond to climate change.

## Hot Food Takeaway SPD

Manchester Council adopted this SPD in March 2017. The document sets out objectives and priorities to encourage centres and neighbourhoods that are vibrant, and contribute positively to the Council's objectives of improving the health of residents. The SPD seeks to maintain the vitality and viability of centres, avoid amenity issues resulting from hot-food takeaways and tackle health concerns around obesity. The SPD seeks to control the over concentration of hot food takeaways and to maintain and promote health.

## National Planning Policy and Guidance

### National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies and how they are expected to be applied. Central to the NPPF is the achievement of sustainable development, to which there are three dimensions; economic, social and environmental. Planning policies and decisions are to support the role that town centres play at the heart of communities by taking



- Key
- Conservation Area
  - Withington District Centre (adopted 1995)
  - Withington Village Framework Area

Figure 2: Withington Village boundaries

a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies and decisions are to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places and provide for provision of shared spaces and community facilities and enable established shops, facilities and services to develop and modernise.

### **Planning Practice Guidance**

Guidance notes the importance of creative leadership and other stakeholders to bringing forward a vision for centres. Guidance also highlights the potential role of permitted development rights to accommodate flexibility and encourage innovation and enterprise, including through 'pop-up' shops.

## **Wider Context**

### **National Design Guide**

The Guide underlines that creating high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Local authorities and communities are to use the guide in decisions and in developing local policy and guidance. The Guide establishes ten characteristics, which are considered to work together to create the character of place, help nurture and sustain a sense of community and work positively to address climate issues. These characteristics include:

- identity – attractive and distinctive
- built form – a coherent pattern of development
- movement – accessible and easy to move around
- public spaces – safe, social and inclusive
- uses – mixed and integrated

## **The Manchester Strategy**

The preparation of the Manchester Strategy was overseen by the Manchester Leaders Forum and establishes a Vision for the City to 2025. The strategy is a high-level framework for action. The detailed actions to deliver the strategy sits within other plans across the City. The Manchester Strategy is centred around the realisation of five themes, including a 2025 Vision. A reset of the Strategy is currently being undertaken with an expected adoption of the revised document in spring 2021.

The Vision for Manchester in 2025 is to be in the top flight of world-class cities, when the City will:

- 'have a competitive, dynamic and sustainable economy that draws on our distinctive strengths in science, advanced manufacturing, culture, and creative and digital business – cultivating and encouraging new idea;
- possess highly skilled, enterprising and industrious people;
- be connected, internationally and within the UK;
- play its full part in limiting the impacts of climate change;
- be a place where residents from all backgrounds feel safe, can aspire, succeed and live well; and,
- be clean, attractive, culturally rich, outward-looking and welcoming.'

As part of this Vision, Manchester is to be:

- A thriving and sustainable city – a leading, digital city, rich in culture with a diverse, well connected economy, with support for business.
- A highly skilled city – including inspiring the next generation to upskill and succeed, providing clear pathways for residents to reach their full potential and ensuring older people continue to make a major contribution to the city.
- A progressive and equitable city – improving health and access to care, creating resilient and vibrant communities, continue to be age friendly whilst also aiming to be the UK's youth capital.
- A liveable and low carbon city – supporting attractive and cohesive neighbourhoods, encouraging walking, cycling and public transport, a cleaner city with better quality green spaces, continuing to foster the artistic and creative community, encouraging volunteering and addressing climate change.
- A connected city – a smarter, cleaner transport network, more cycling and walking.

## **Our Manchester – Industrial Strategy**

This strategy sets out actions to help to deliver the Our Manchester vision. The strategy aligns with the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy agreed between the Combined Authority and the national government but sets out the specific contribution of Manchester to delivering growth. It establishes the objective of boosting the city's productivity whilst creating a more inclusive economy.

Unique sector strengths upon which to capitalise and which have resonance in considering the future of Withington include health innovation; digital, creative and media; and clean growth.

In developing the strategy, extensive consultation was undertaken with residents, businesses and other organisations and a number of overarching themes emerged which again provide useful context to the Framework – these include transport, and the scope for improvement; skills and talent, including providing opportunities for older residents; the importance of digital; the affordability of premises and housing; and the environment and the support for the Zero Carbon 2038 ambition.

The strategy is centred around three pillars, which as they combine, promote a more inclusive economy. The three pillars are:

- People – developing skills
- Place – a city of thriving centres
- Prosperity – pay, productivity and wellbeing

Whilst all the pillars of the Industrial Strategy can inform the Framework for Withington, the key aspects of the 'Place' pillar are of particular importance – thriving centres, transport infrastructure, digital infrastructure, zero carbon exemplars, and innovative investment models to improve the environment.

The strategy notes that Manchester has a number of district centres, including Withington Village which host employment opportunities and are home to essential services for residents. Businesses are increasingly expanding into district centre venues and the strategy confirms that the refresh of the Local Plan will present further opportunities for such growth by encouraging the repurposing of buildings and driving improvements in transport and digital infrastructure. District centres often have jobs which have lower pay and productivity and so improving the quality of work, pay and career progression is part of a strategy to ensure District Centres thrive. Equally, increasing business use in Withington Village will help support a more sustainable centre and will reduce the community's carbon footprint.

Importantly, the strategy also notes that in consultation residents stressed the importance of the quality of their surroundings – their housing, nearby green spaces and local amenities – to their quality of life, and that the quality of the environment and liveability are also major factors for attracting and retaining skilled staff and investment.



## Residential Growth Strategy 2016

The Manchester Residential Growth Strategy was adopted in 2016 and sets out an ambition for Manchester to build a minimum of 25,000 homes up to 2025. This was subsequently updated in January 2019 to reflect a revised target of 32,000 new homes over the same period. The Residential Growth Strategy sets out a clear vision to ensure the right mix of housing, in the right places, to support the city's economy and maintain its success as a sustainable and liveable city. A key aspect of this strategy is to reflect on the broadening of the city's economic base and the need for the city's housing market to respond to the new nature and scale of demand by providing opportunities to support high-quality residential growth in the most sustainable locations. Withington Village can play a role in contributing to the delivery of the strategy's objectives through realisation of the vision and opportunities as described within the Withington Village Framework such as redevelopment, and new development, of new residential living in the Village where appropriate.

## Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-2025

In 2018 Manchester City Council committed to achieving Zero Carbon by 2038, which in turn reflects the 2025 Vision of the Our Manchester Strategy. The Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 and further work has seen a finalised Climate Change Framework (produced by the Climate Change Partnership) and Zero Carbon Action Plan, specifically identifying actions to be taken by the Council, agreed in March 2020. Action points of the Framework of direct relevance to the environmental objectives of this document include new buildings to generate zero emissions; the well-connected walking and cycling routes, public transport and electric vehicle charging points and the establishment of programmes to engage and support residents and communities to take action.

## Manchester – a great place to grow older

This updated strategy, published by Manchester Older People's Board, focusses on the key priorities for the City and its partners in continuing to develop an age-friendly city. The strategy notes the success of Southway Housing's pioneering Old Moat age-friendly pilot.

The strategy establishes three key priorities:

- Age-friendly community and neighbourhoods - neighbourhoods with clear age-friendly features and objectives, where older people feel safe and supported, find it is easy to get around and can access advice and services.
- Age-friendly services - all city services and strategies to be 'age-proofed', creating an environment within which people thrive as they age.
- Promoting age equality - positivity around ageing and the contribution older people can make.

## Manchester's Great Outdoors - A Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester

This strategy was published in 2015. The strategy notes the importance of green infrastructure to the wellbeing and prosperity of the city and the health of local communities. The strategy establishes four objectives for Green Infrastructure in the City:

- Improve the quality and function of existing green and blue infrastructure, to maximise the benefits it delivers
- Use appropriate green and blue infrastructure as a key component of new developments to help create successful neighbourhoods and support the city's growth
- Improve connectivity and accessibility to green and blue infrastructure within the city and beyond
- Improve and promote a wider understanding and awareness of the benefits that green and blue infrastructure provides to residents, the economy and the local environment.
- The strategy is a high-level one providing a starting point for projects at a local level. In the South Area of the City, including Withington, the key opportunities are considered to include enhancing quality and accessibility to existing parks and green spaces, the creation of green links to establish walking and cycling routes and enhancing the role of streets as part of the green network.

## Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040

Transport for Greater Manchester's (TfGM) Transport Strategy 2040 sets out its vision to have:

**“World class connections that support long-term, sustainable economic growth and access to opportunity for all”.**

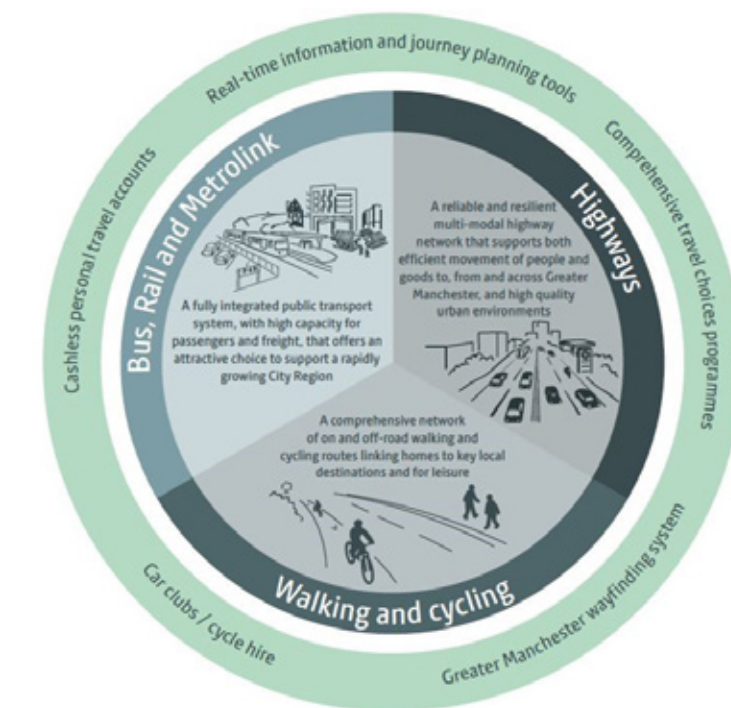
The four key elements of TfGM's transport vision are:

- Supporting sustainable economic growth
- Protecting the environment
- Improving quality of life for all
- Developing an innovative city region

For the vision to become reality, the transport system must “connect people to opportunities and information, entrepreneurs with ideas and capital, and employers with talent and skills”. It also must help create better places by supporting new development and regeneration, reducing the dominance of cars and goods vehicles, and improving the environment.

The transport strategy sets out seven reinforcing principles to meet the needs of residents, businesses and visitors. These are: integrated; inclusive; healthy; environmentally responsible; reliable; safe and secure; and well maintained and resilient.

The strategy also defines modal principles which set out aspirations for bus, rail, Metrolink, active travel and highways.



Made to Move: 15 steps to transform Greater Manchester by changing the way we get around (2018)

## Centre Management – Relevant Policies

In addition to strategic policies it is worth noting the policies on hot food takeaways (the Hot Food Takeaway SPD is noted above) and licensing, both important issues for Withington.

### Statement of Licensing Policy

The Council introduced a special licensing policy covering Withington district centre – defined as a ‘stress area’ - under section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003. The 2018 review notes that there is evidence of public nuisance and higher levels of crime resulting from the number of licenced premises in the centre. However, as at 2018, the date of review, the levels of problems did not at that time justify the implementation of a cumulative impact and saturation policy to further control additional licenced premises or extensions to existing licences. The review also noted that the Council wish to diversify the leisure economy in Withington and as such the policy shall be kept under review.

Licence applications will be considered on their individual merits. However, the special policy establishes a strong presumption against hot food takeaway premises, off-licence and alcohol-led venues open after 11.30pm. Non-alcohol venues open to midnight are encouraged, whilst alcohol led venues open to 11.30pm will be judged against established criteria.

## Other Regeneration Initiatives

### The Christie Strategic Planning Framework (SPF)

Whilst outside of the core Withington Village Framework area, the world renowned Christie Hospital is a major asset for the area and an important influence on the regeneration of Withington Village. The 2014 SPF and the more recent draft addendum in relation to the Patterson Redevelopment Project are intended to establish guiding principles, supported by the planning policy framework, to inform future development proposals.

The SPF acknowledges the relationship between The Christie and Withington Village centre and that the hospital is a major travel generator in South Manchester. In the draft addendum, the Trust commits to minimising reliance on the private car and aims to have 60% of staff using sustainable modes of travel by 2030. It also commits to improving linkages between The Christie and the Village along Wilmslow Road.

### Old Moat: Age Friendly Neighbourhood Report

Prepared by Southway Housing Trust in 2013, the ‘Old Moat: Age Friendly Neighbourhood Report’ addresses the environmental and social factors that contribute to active and healthy ageing communities, such as Old Moat, in Manchester.

The project considered matters from an urban design, planning and architectural perspective to develop an understanding of the characteristics of Old Moat and the ways in which it might develop into the future. The study identified that throughout the physical environment of Old Moat priority was given to cars, and that there were ‘clusters’ of older and younger people residing in particular areas including around the Minehead Centre and in properties owned by Southway Housing Trust. To combat this, the report outlined a number of findings for developing an age-friendly neighbourhood. Included among these are:

- Improvements to the physical environment including, but not limited to, seating and pavements;
- Reversing the perceived decline in the shopping area in Withington centre, including maintaining a diverse range of day-to-day services and facilities for residents;
- Maintaining positive attitudes towards public transport and encouraging its use; and,
- Addressing the perceived lack of community spaces and the geographical isolation of those that do exist.

Key elements of the plan included developing Copson Street as an age-friendly shopping location, including through wider improvements to the district centre, improvements to pavements and public transport along Copson Street, and providing enough seating in the area. The report recommended that the research and recommendations suggested by the ‘Age-Friendly Working Group’ be taken forward and incorporated and influence relevant action plans that come forward in the future.

## Town Centres and High Streets - the National Picture

The challenging economic context for traditional town and district centres and the high street, including the closure or restructuring of many long established high street names aligned to radical and on-going changes to consumer habits, driven in part by the growing digital economy, have combined to raise concern over the future role of town and district centres. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

has further exacerbated the challenges faced by these areas. The Government has responded through the establishment of the High Street Tasks Force and the establishment of the Future High Streets Fund. The Government is also committed to a review of business rates and in December 2019 announced a commitment to increasing the retail discount introduced in 2019 from one-third to 50%. Further support is being provided as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Conclusion

This review of national and local policy provides a clear and consistent basis within which to develop the Framework, which sets out:

- the continued importance of centres to the health of local communities, despite a changing and challenging economic context;
- the recurring and consistent policy themes of identity, accessibility, quality spaces, diversity, enterprise, an age friendly environment and the low carbon economy, and,
- the importance of community involvement and of a safe, clean environment.

In turn, the review also highlights how the Framework can contribute towards the wider objectives for the City, including its industrial strategy, zero carbon targets, health objectives and improvements in sustainable transport infrastructure as well as green infrastructure. In particular, it will contribute toward the Our Manchester Vision of a thriving sustainable, skilled and progressive city – one that is liveable, low carbon and well connected.



# Withington Village

## — an overview

## Introduction

This section of the report provides an overview of Withington Village drawing together community, socio-economic, townscape and other factors to establish a basis for understanding the drivers of change and thereby the challenges and opportunities to be addressed through the Framework and the delivery of its objectives. In doing so this review considers:

- Location and Context
- Identity and Community
- Demographics
- Land Use
- Heritage
- Townscape Analysis, comprising Streetscene, Public Realm and Movement.

This review draws on the outcomes of stakeholder consultation, which is also summarised in this section, baseline work undertaken by the consultant team, land use data provided by the City Council and in conclusion the IPM work on stakeholder activity and place management in Withington Village.

This review is drawn together in the following section – Challenges and Opportunities, which in turn forms the basis for the Vision and Objectives and how these could be achieved.

However, before considering the character and dynamics of Withington Village it is useful to place the Village specifically, and importantly, the local retail and leisure economy, in its wider context.

### The National Context – Town Centres

UK High Streets have increasingly been the subject of significant constraints and pressures, which have generally resulted in a lack of growth in High Street spend leading to a decrease in the number of retail operators and a general increase in the amount of vacant units.

The convenience goods sector has been characterised by the increasing prevalence of discounter grocers (such as Aldi and Lidl), which increasingly offer a wider range of products (including bakery goods), together with quality meat and fresh fruit produce. As a consequence, discount operators are not only competing against larger food superstores but also increasingly against smaller convenience stores and specialist retailers.

The comparison goods sector has also been the subject of fundamental structural change in the form of significant expenditure being lost to

the High Street through online retailing and through ‘polarisation’, whereby shoppers tend to shop locally for day-to-day goods but are prepared to travel a relatively significant distance when purchasing bigger ticket items.

Both of these changes are of consequence to Withington Village. The additional competition in the grocery sector puts additional pressure on convenience retailers and smaller, specialist food retailers. Changes in comparison goods shopping mean that district and local centres frequently only support comparison goods operators specialising in household goods (which may need to be sourced on a regular basis) and niche products (which shoppers may be prepared to travel to source).

Since March, and due to societal changes as a result of Covid-19, growth in internet retailing has accelerated. Further growth in online shopping is forecast over the next decade. In addition to the core retail sectors, online retailing has also expanded rapidly into services – banking, estate agency, travel agency and takeaway food delivery. All of these sectors would traditionally be represented in centres of Withington Village’s size. Having said that there is also evidence of the ‘merging’ of retail channels, with traditional retailers investing in their digital businesses whilst digital business moves into physical space. Successful businesses in Withington Village will increasingly need to have a digital presence to complement bricks and mortar.

The ramifications for the property sector are already apparent, with less retail floorspace being required in town centres and additional distribution space being needed to service the delivery of goods bought online. Town centres have to diversify to attract consumers. We are seeing a clear trend towards improving customer experience through more food and leisure uses. Allied to this is the growth in independents, micro businesses, and the creative, craft and media sectors.

This shift ties in with the general aspirations of millennials, who appear to value experiences (which are often shared across social media) over owning things and place greater value on health and well-being (evidence suggests an increasing number of young people are not drinking alcohol). CACI (Property Consulting Group)<sup>1</sup> also note a growth of ‘destination’ experience led trips over convenience trips with consumers seeking greater engagement (and spending more when there is that engagement). Thus we see more town centre gyms and yoga studios and traditional retail shops adding additional services and experiences – a juice bar in a grocers or baking lessons. We are also seeing a trend towards re-urbanisation – more people want to live in city centres to be near to these facilities and services.

Within this changing context, there are a number of drivers that offer both opportunities and challenges for Withington Village.

This shift in the role of the town centre has increasingly been recognised in planning policy to support a wider range of uses and allow for the re-use of premises.

## Location and Context

Withington Village is located in south Manchester, approximately 3 miles from the City Centre. It is at the heart of the suburban, predominantly residential areas of Withington and Old Moat. It is one of five District Centres in South Manchester and is within around 0.5 miles of Fallowfield, 1.5 miles of Didsbury and 2.5 miles of Chorlton. The internationally renowned Christie Hospital lies to the south of the centre on Wilmslow Road.

## Identity and Community

Withington Village is a vibrant, dynamic community with a diverse population. The varied population has greatly influenced the development and culture that can be found in the Village.

Independent traders are key to generating this unique identity for the centre, with their foundation and roots in the community. Withington Village is exemplified by a cosmopolitan image. This cultural vibrancy is amplified by events, festivals and pop-ups in the centre, regularly organised by vested members of the community.

As the only district centre in Manchester largely within a Conservation Area, Withington Village benefits from its Victorian period architecture and its traditional high street layout. The centre’s varied and attractive built environment results in a distinct character and identity, with important local landmarks including Withington Baths, the former Red Lion public house, NatWest Bank and Withington Library. Withington Library has recently refurbished with services extensively used by older people and school students and a computer room regularly used by school and university students and freelance/independent workers. An innovative fob access system allows all members of the community to access facilities outside core opening hours.

Withington Village’s identity has also been forged by a number of pioneering residents, including Ernest Rutherford and Billy Meredith, and local interest is also added through Palatine Road’s association with Factory Records and other music related culture.

Withington Village’s cultural identity is clearly one of its key assets which helps make it attractive to residents and visitors alike. It is important that this local character is further developed through

<sup>1</sup> CACI (Property Consulting Group) – Retail Landscape 2018



the maintenance and improvement of existing buildings and, by celebrating and supporting the local artistic and musical community.

The strength of the community and its commitment to the Village has been key to the delivery of a number of initiatives but also in developing this Framework. The 'Withington Village Regeneration Partnership' and 'We are Withington' have brought a number of community groups together and have successfully delivered on a number of actions.

In recent times, Withington has been associated with Manchester's student population. The prevalence of students living and visiting the Village has visibly influenced the types of businesses that service their needs. However, evidence suggest that the demographic is slowly changing. Over the next ten years there is likely to be a continued reduction in student numbers living in Withington which could make way for an increase in young professionals and families. This identity is something which will need to be reflected in future investment activity.

### **Withington Village Regeneration Partnership**

The Withington Village Regeneration Partnership is a collaborative organisation made up of public, private and community groups that came together in 2017 with a vision to progress the regeneration and environmental improvement of Withington Village. Key stakeholders include Manchester City Council, Southway Housing Association, The Christie, Withington Baths, Withington Civic Society and local traders and property owners.

Together, the group's achievements are significant and have included:

- Winning funding for a pocket park on land at the junction of Parsonage Road/Swinbourne Grove;
- Facilitating exciting pop up projects such as the M20 Festival, the Curious Collection markets & the Lock Inn craft ale pop up pub nights; and,
- Working with the City Council and local councillors to commission a new Framework for the Village.

The group are clearly vested in Withington Village and are viewed as the key local delivery group to take forward the ambitions of the Framework, with the support of their funders and partner organisations.

### **We Are Withington**

We Are Withington is a collection of traders and service providers in the Village including Wilderness Records, A Curious Collection, The Lock Inn, Burton Road Brewery, Withington Baths and The Christie. We Are Withington was set up in 2019 as a direct result of the community's ongoing commitment to delivering the Withington Vision. Their vision is:

**“Championing all things Withington – We are a group of traders wanting to improve our village for all our community.”**

The aim of We Are Withington's work is to act as a catalyst to further empower and encourage our community to come together and take a real pride in our area and build on some of the brilliant independent businesses and community initiatives already happening in Withington.

As of December 2019 the group has coordinated a number of community projects. This includes crowdfunding over £5,000 towards the Withington Walls community project. This aims to brighten up Withington Village and cultivate a sense of pride and identity with a programme of public art works utilising shop shutters and gable walls as a canvas for murals and street art to rejuvenate Withington.

Fundraising efforts were launched as part of the 'Withington By Night' event of Friday 4th October 2019 when Village businesses stayed opened late and put on events and entertainment. Since this time 'We Are Withington' have organised and held a further 'Withington By Night' on 6th December 2019.

A number of businesses have also extended their opening hours as a result of the evidence presented by IPM during the production of this Framework.



### **Demographics**

Withington Village's immediate catchment area can broadly be defined as the Old Moat and Withington wards.

Key demographic facts for the Old Moat and Withington wards include:

- As of 2011, the Old Moat ward is estimated to have a population of 14,490 and the Withington ward is estimated to have a population of 13,422;
- In terms of Index of Multiple Deprivation, areas of Old Moat are among the 10% most deprived areas in the country;
- Within the Old Moat ward 43% of households are estimated to have at least one resident aged over 60, and over 50% of social housing tenants are aged over 55;
- Conversely in the Withington ward 53% of residents are aged between 20 – 29 years (which is reflective of the large student and 'young professional' population);
- An estimated 3,600 people work within the wards of Old Moat and Withington;
- A total of 72% of households in Withington were privately rented in 2011; and,
- An estimated 79% of the population of the Old Moat and Withington wards are of working age.

## Land use

Withington Village is located within a wider residential area, and as a result it is a well-used district centre with a considerable range of service and comparison goods operators.

In total, there are 107 commercial and public units within Withington district centre.

Despite having a good variety of service and comparison goods operators, and a good level of convenience retailers, it functions as a district centre in the hierarchy of retailing in the city and there is little scope for this to expand. Accordingly, it is perhaps unsurprising to note that the National Survey of Shopping Patterns found only 0.68% of the catchment area's population relies on Withington to serve its comparison shopping needs.

In 2019, Class A1 uses accounted for 45% of stock and non-Class A1 uses accounted for 48% of stock. The proportion of stock in Class A1 use in 2019 was less than that recorded in 2015 (48%), higher than recorded in 2017 (41%) and the same level as recorded in 2013 or 2009 (both 45%). It appears from this decrease that the wider structural trends apparent in the retail sector have been of consequence to the composition of the centre.

Evidence suggests that whilst there are no established deficiencies or imbalances in the uses present within Withington District Centre, there are distinct clusters of A1 uses which are primarily located adjacent to residential areas, and a separate cluster of non-A1 uses located more primarily along Wilmslow Road. The remaining 7% of commercial stock is accounted for by vacant units. The recorded vacancy rate is around average for Withington since surveys began in 2009.

The latest (2019) data indicates that Withington Village has a limited number of Use Class B establishments, with zero B2 and B8 uses recorded in 2019. As of 2019, A4 uses (Drinking establishments) comprised just 2% of the land use in Withington, compared to 8% in Didsbury. Withington is characterised as a service and leisure based district centre rather than a business and employment based centre.

The number of Financial and Professional Services (Use Class A2) peaked in 2013 and has decreased since then, whilst Class A1 uses have comprised the single most prevalent land use across each monitoring year since 2009.

10% of units in Withington Village are occupied by Hot Food Takeaways (Use Class A5). The Hot Food Takeaway SPD (2017) states that such uses will not be supported in district and local centres where the cumulative impact would be detrimental to the vitality and viability of

the centre. Saved UDP Policy WB6 states that conversion of retail and commercial properties to Class A3 (Food and Drink establishments) will not normally be permitted along Wilmslow Road within Withington Village, which restricts the growth of food and drink uses and works to retain the existing retail and commercial properties within Withington Village.

Wilmslow Road is dominated by retail and leisure uses and is the primary thoroughfare through Withington. Unlike comparable primary routes in Chorlton, Didsbury and Burton Road, it is subject to a licensing policy that restricts opening hours and certain uses within its defined boundary, including Use Classes A3 and A4. As of 2017, A4 uses (Drinking establishments) comprised just 4% of the land use in Withington, compared to 8% in Didsbury. As the licensing policy comes up to review, the desirability of maintaining this special status will be considered in the context of the changing character and nature of the area.

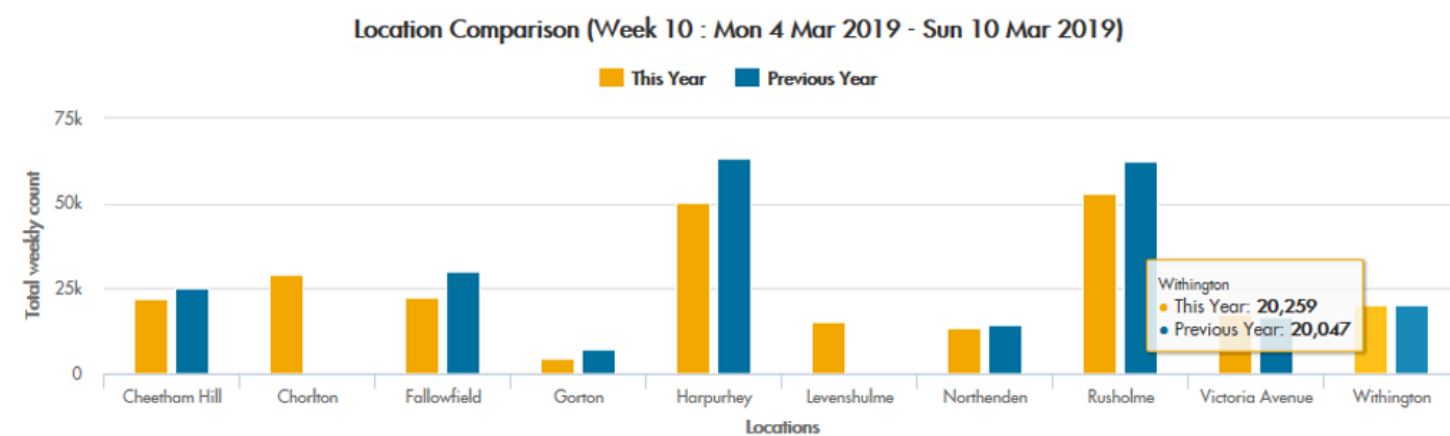
As part of their analysis, the Institute of Place Management (IPM) installed a footfall counter at a central location on Wilmslow Road in Withington Village. The data recorded from this (shown below) demonstrates that Withington is a well-used district centre, with activity levels broadly comparable to Chorlton and Fallowfield. The importance of footfall data will be identified later in the Framework.

## Impact of Covid-19

So far, it is not yet known precisely what the impact of Covid-19 will be on small businesses and local traders. However, Covid-19, rather than rendering the Framework redundant, reinforces the need to develop support for Withington Village. The footfall data demonstrates that footfall dropped in Withington by approximately 50% in the peak of lockdown compared to national and regional figures of 84%. Many people may wish to remain local for the foreseeable future when seeking out leisure and retail opportunities. The footfall will be monitored to analyse how people return to the Village as it re-opens.

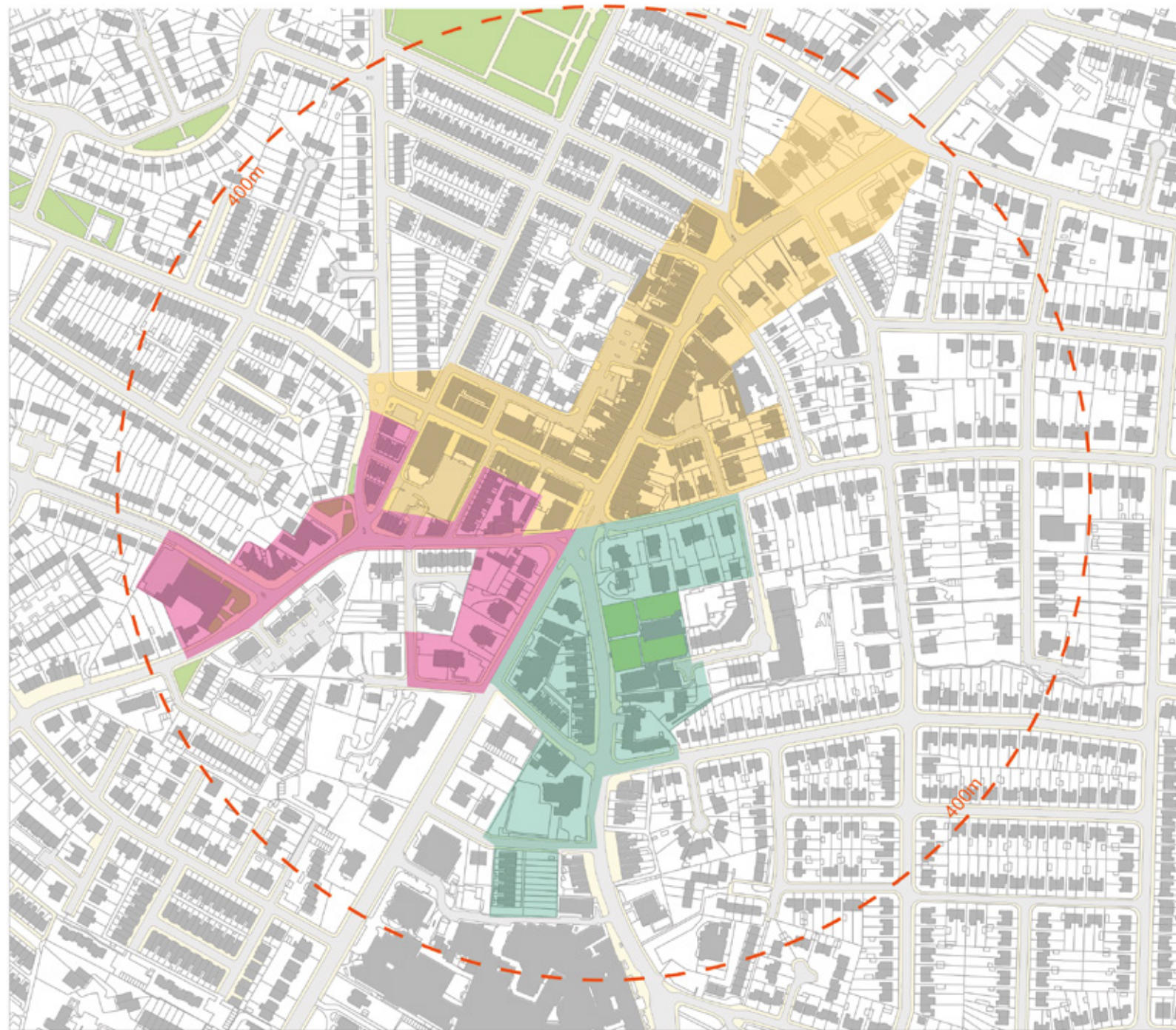
Although still a significant drop, Withington Village continued to serve its community and key stores remained open selling essential items. Independent traders experimented with new ways of trading including home delivery and internet sales. The We Are Withington Group has been proactive during this period promoting independent traders, home delivery services and signposting businesses to government grants.

The Council has supported the re-opening of the Centre with the temporary removal of the loading bays along Wilmslow Road and is bidding for Government grants to expand key public spaces in the Village in accordance with proposals identified in the Framework.



Withington Village Footfall Data recorded on Wilmslow Road





- Key
- Walking distance radius
  - Commercial core
  - Burton Road
  - Wilmslow Road

Figure 3: Character area analysis plan of Withington





Figure 4: Townscape Analysis of Withington Village

## Character areas, Public realm and Streetscape

### Townscape

This section summarises the character analysis work undertaken as part of baseline work. A broad-brush character analysis plan (Figure 3) is included in this section. This identifies three principal character areas. These are:

- Commercial core – this area comprises the historic core of the centre along Wilmslow Road as well as Copson Street. This area is in predominantly retail and leisure use. Wilmslow Road high street is well-defined and generously proportioned with a strong consistency in the heritage of principal buildings and flow in building line. The Library and former White Lion and surrounding spaces at either end of Wilmslow Road help to define vistas. Copson Street also has a well-defined building line, but the more utilitarian architecture and mix of built forms and the narrow street width detract from the sense of Copson Street as a place to dwell. There is also a lack of definition to the vista towards Old Moat Lane. Whilst there are ‘gateway’ features to this area, the Library and the former White Lion, there is little sense of arrival into the centre. There is little in the way of green infrastructure and any space is limited to the areas to the front of the Library, albeit this is somewhat cluttered.
- Burton Road – Withington Baths provides a dominant gateway into the Village from Burton Road. Alongside the Baths a number of significant public buildings are prominent along the road. This includes the former Methodist Chapel which is well used as the Adult Learning Centre and the Village Public Hall and Institute. There are opportunities for activities in these buildings to be developed and complement each other so this area plays an increased role in the functioning of the Village.
- Wilmslow Road- Between Christie Hospital and Burton/ Wilmslow Road junction contains late 19th and early 20th century buildings of two and three storeys. The uses include a mixture of commerce, housing and retail. Key historic buildings including the Red Lion Public House, the three storey neo Georgian Withington Fire Station are dominant features on the street scene. There is little to draw people from the Christie Hospital along Wilmslow Road into the retail core.

Key elements of the townscape upon which the objectives seek to address include:

- The dominance of highways in certain locations, along Wilmslow Road and at the junction of Palatine Road and Burton Road, and traffic generally which detracts from the sense of place;
- Defining gateway features to provide a clear sense of arrival into the Village;
- Lack of a clear, recognisable Village ‘centre’ or place branding;
- A large number of historic buildings that make a positive contribution to Withington’s character, albeit many are in a poor state of repair;
- Lack of a clear, physical and functional connection between The Christie and the parade of shops at Tatton Grove and onto the Retail Core;
- Lack of visibility of Copson Street from Wilmslow Road;
- Lack of green infrastructure and quality open space through the retail core of the Village.

### Public Realm

Withington Village’s public realm consists largely of streets of varying typology and one key open space outside the Library which has the unofficial title of Rutherford Place, which has been used throughout the Framework. There are also other smaller open spaces such as the seating area around the water trough in Copson Street and the Swinbourne Grove pocket park. Old Moat Park is the only green public park within walking distance of the Village centre. Notwithstanding this, key areas to address include the following:

- Narrow and poor quality paving, particularly along Wilmslow Road and Copson Street;
- Tree planting, where it exists, is in places poorly maintained and outgrowing tree grilles;
- There is a lack of street furniture in the Village, with seating solely concentrated in Rutherford Place and around the water trough in Copson Street;
- The public realm is cluttered, with A-board signs on pavements and shop displays narrowing pavements;

- Cycle hoops, bollards, guard-railing and mobile planters contribute to street clutter and obstruction of pedestrian desire lines;
- The retail core, particularly along Wilmslow Road and at the junction of Palatine Road/Burton Road, is particularly dominated by vehicular traffic;
- ‘Shared surfaces’ delineated as loading bays are frequently misused as car parking;
- There are limited areas to dwell and enjoy the district centre;
- The centre is poorly signed, making movements through the Village challenging and unclear.

### Streetscape

The focus specifically on the streetscape as it relates to ground floor frontages in the commercial core. The following key areas are considered:

- There are a number of distinctive and historic buildings that provide architectural and historic interest to the Village. These include the former White Lion Public House, the former National Westminster Bank and Withington Library. They are generally located at gateways and help to frame vistas at each end of Wilmslow Road;
- There are examples of contemporary signage and painted building facades, reflective of modern and popular culture. This adds colour and vibrancy to the high street;
- A number of poor quality shopfronts contribute to the lack of attractiveness, particularly along the busy thoroughfare of Wilmslow Road which would benefit from improvements and restorative works;
- Extant architectural detailing on the shopfronts and building facades offers a positive contribution to the area, albeit these can be hidden behind modern interventions;
- Building mounted signage is largely appended to shop front fascias, with some examples of projecting signs associated with the shops;
- Signage and shopfronts throughout the centre are disjointed and vary in condition, style, illumination and how they integrate with security shutters;
- Copson Street includes a number of shop fronts that spill onto the footway during operating hours.



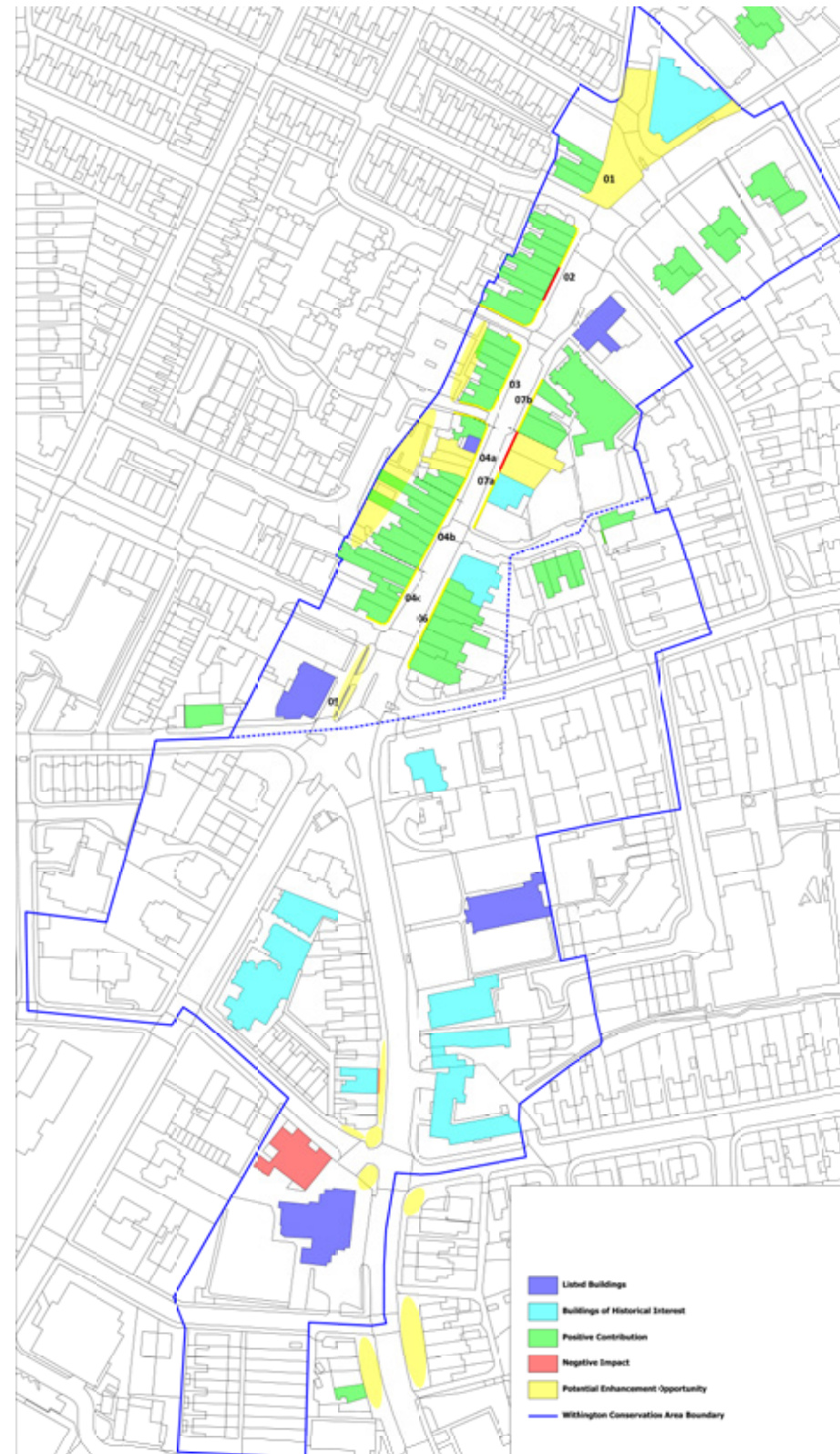


Figure 5: Heritage Analysis of Withington Village

## Heritage

Withington Village has a vibrant and dynamic history upon which to draw, and one which has left a distinctive legacy in the built environment. The Village of Withington grew rapidly from the mid-19th century centred then as now around the Wilmslow Road corridor. Reflecting urban expansion on the ground the village was incorporated into the City of Manchester in 1904.

This historical development of the Village has left as a legacy the clear urban form of the centre but also a number of listed and period buildings. Much of Withington's original and historic built environment remains intact. The Centre was designated as a Conservation Area in 1983.

Over time the quality of the Conservation Area has been affected by poor quality modern interventions, including inappropriate shopfronts, signage and clutter on building facades. A principle is to restore historic assets where buildings contribute positively to the streetscene and pursue improvements to the overall quality of the setting of the Conservation Area.

Key heritage assets in the Village are shown in Figure 5 and include:

- Grade II Listed Former National Westminster Bank
- Grade II Listed Church of St Paul
- Grade II Listed Former White Lion Public House
- Grade II listed 456 Wilmslow Road (constructed in the early 19th century, the building and one of the oldest surviving buildings in Withington)

## Movement and Accessibility

Baseline work on movement and access is identified. It also reflects in a number of ways on the streetscene and public realm assessment. These are shown in Figure 6 and include:

- Wilmslow Road is a key vehicular route into and out of the City and is heavily trafficked by cars and buses. At busy times, principally the morning and evening rush hour, this can dominate the environment of the centre.
- Footways in the centre are of a variable quality and width and in some places are in a poor state of repair. Access roads leading into the principal routes on Copson Street and Wilmslow Road dissect

the pedestrian thoroughfares, further reducing the quality and sense of safety of the pedestrian experience.

- Street furniture, ad hoc signage and other clutter further reduce the quality of the pedestrian environment in parts of the centre.
- Gateway signage and wayfinding is poor.
- Controlled crossing points in the heart of the centre on the busy Wilmslow Road are limited to the north (near the Library) and toward the southern end of the centre at Copson Street. The 'desire line' from Parsonage Road toward Sainsbury's is not catered for.
- The centre is well served by bus services with bus shelters provided either side of the road at the northern end of the centre.
- Parking surveys have suggested that there is a significant amount of 'non-shopper' parking taking place for long periods during the day both in local streets and car parks.
- Gledhill Street Car Park is the principal off-street car park serving the centre, but it is poorly signed and lacks profile from both Wilmslow Road and Copson Street. Safety and security is also an issue.
- There is no day-time on-street parking (7am to 7pm -Mon to Sat) on Wilmslow Road, although there are three on-street loading areas which appear to be used for the majority of time for parking of private vehicles, restricting the use of loading (or other related purposes).
- There is some one-hour and disabled on-street parking on Copson Street.
- Cycling appears to a popular mode of transport, however cycle linkages could be improved into and around the centre, as could the security and attractiveness of cycle parking facilities.

## Stakeholder Engagement

At its core, the primary aim of the Framework is to provide an aspirational vision for the residents and business community of the Village. Community engagement with a range of key stakeholders took place over Spring and Summer 2019. Consultation took place through a combination of meetings with stakeholders and presentations and workshops with the community, resident groups and local traders including representatives from:

- Withington Village Regeneration Partnership

- Withington Civic Society
- Southway Housing
- Step Places
- Local Traders
- Local Ward Councillors
- Residents Groups
- Manchester City Council Officers

Workshops occurred in September 2019 with a primary focus on design, movement and public realm. Strategies were shared with those present, with their feedback being requested and noted. Stakeholders were overwhelmingly positive to the proposals, and it was clear that the aspirations of the Framework are widely supported by residents, traders and community groups, indicative of the strong, collaborative approach the local community has towards their Village. These sessions identified a number of ambitions that will inform the framework and its implementation. The top priorities that emerged from the workshop events included:

- Enhancements to the public realm throughout the Village, including Copson Street
- A coordinated approach to promotion of the Village, including through the We Are Withington Group.
- Restoration of historic buildings and shopfronts
- Improved pedestrian links, especially to surrounding residential areas and support for an age-friendly strategy
- Better accessibility through the Village, including ease of crossing Wilmslow Road
- A focus on community-driven projects, such as at Withington Baths.

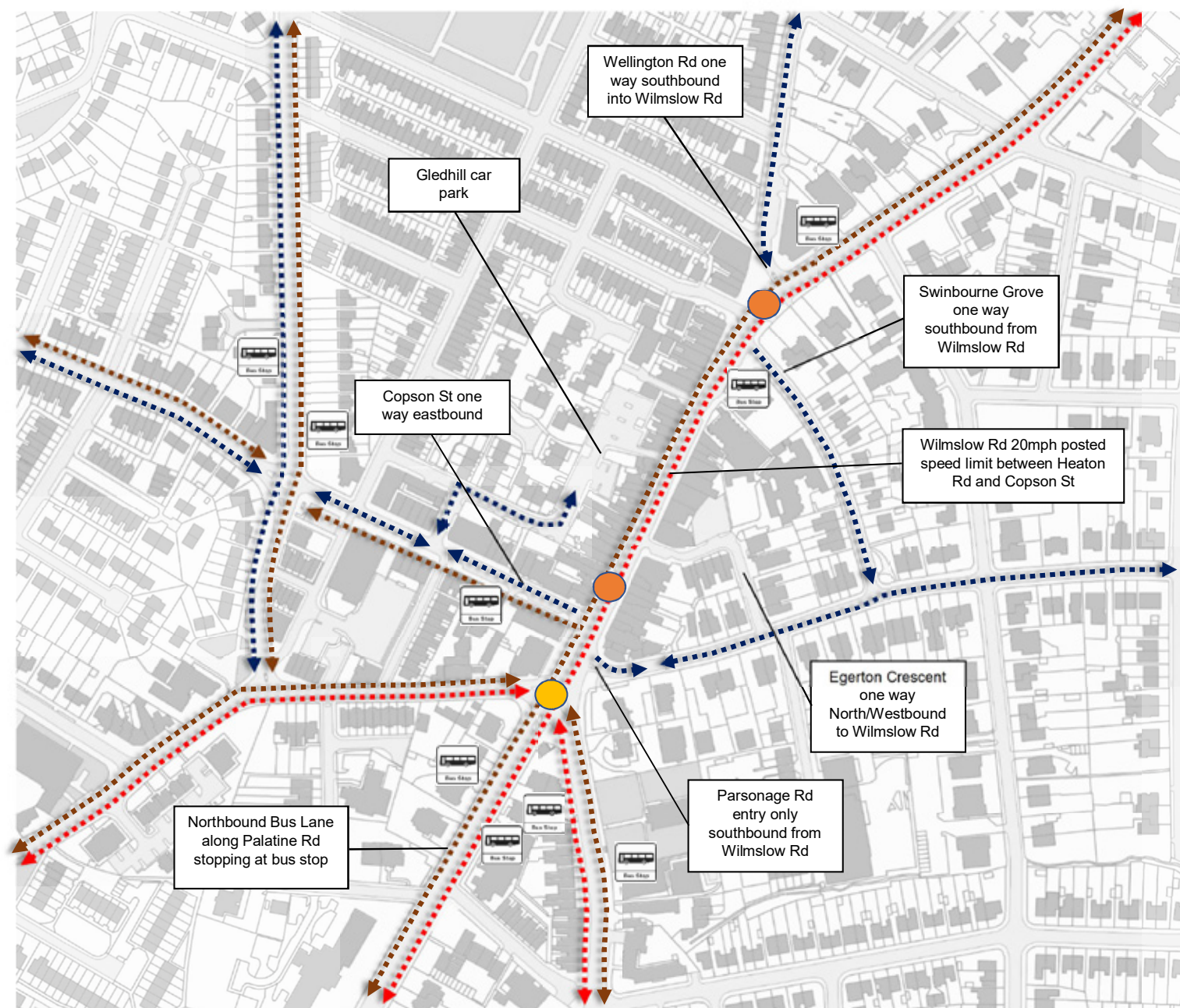


Figure 6: Movement Analysis of Withington Village





## Vital and Viable Withington

On behalf of Manchester City Council, the Institute of Place Management (IPM) produced the 'Vital and Viable Withington' Report in July 2019.

Based on comparative footfall analysis Withington Village is identified by IPM as a convenience/community centre. Such centres have a steady footfall profile throughout the year and are focused on their local community. They are places that offer a convenient mix of goods and services.

The report advised on a number of interventions for the Village, including:

- Improving the appearance of the centre
- Developing connectivity to nearby attractors, such as The Christie
- Major improvements to the public realm
- Encourage people to dwell and linger in the Village
- Improve walking routes into and within Withington

IPM found that Withington to be a well-connected, liveable place that possesses a unique identity and heritage. This is complemented by a distinct evening economy and a range of independent traders. However, the report noted a need for investment in Withington and a number of vacant units in the Village that offer scope to broaden the diversity of the offer and appeal of the district centre to a wider audience.

IPM's recommendations for Withington focus on four main areas, referred to in Withington as the '4Rs' Framework. These include:

### Repositioning

The centre has a discernible evening economy, however there are opportunities to reposition the centre to increase its appeal to a wider local catchment. Temporary events, markets and pop-ups (including the Lock Inn pub which has occupied Withington Baths and the former NatWest bank) have proven effective in widening the appeal of the district centre.

### Reinventing

Withington is a liveable place, with a wide range of services providing everyday necessities and convenience. Although there are many qualities apparent in Withington, issues such as visual appearance need to be addressed. The centre itself lacks sufficient public space which might encourage people to dwell and linger.

### Rebranding

Overall Withington possesses a strong identity, but the district centre currently lacks a single strong attractor. However, there is scope to capitalise on the success of recent temporary interventions, which suggest potential to diversify the centre's offer to appeal to a wider local catchment.

## Restructuring

Withington possesses an existing collaborative network of local stakeholders, with a proven record of achievement, which is working well in terms of building a shared vision or consensus about a future vision for the Village. The general appearance of the centre, lack of quality pedestrian realm and civic space, however, are currently barriers to the development of the centre.

Nexus Planning's research and analysis of Withington Village is consistent with the findings of IPM. Collectively, the analysis has informed the production of the key objectives and principles of the Framework.





# Challenges & Opportunities

## Challenges and Opportunities

The preceding review of Withington identifies a number of challenges and opportunities which are considered in this section and for the basis for developing the Vision and Strategy for the Withington Village Framework.

The analysis of Withington points to a well-used, well regarded centre with a number of evident opportunities for further improvement.

However, a number of challenges exist that should be tackled to address on-going issues and enable the centre to build on previous successes. The following SWOT analysis, incorporating the findings of the IPM work, provides a summary of these opportunities and challenges.

Consolidating the analysis of the physical opportunities, Figure 7 illustrates the type of intervention required in specific locations. This provides the basis for establishing the principles within the Spatial Framework.

## Strengths

- A diverse local population, with an active and engaged community evidenced through a number of successful initiatives;
- The Village's Conservation Area status with the retention of the Victorian urban form and historic setting;
- The centre is relatively compact;
- Recent commercial and residential development,
- Commitment of community members including Withington Village Regeneration Partnership and Civic Society;
- The proximity of Christie Hospital to the immediate south of Withington Village;
- High proportion of self-employed and business owners;
- Activity hours extend beyond the 9-5 with evidence of an evening economy; and,
- The community hub role of the Swimming Baths.

## Opportunities

- Recent pop up events have created a sense of vibrancy which can be built on;
- Reduction in student population provides opportunity to encourage more families and young professionals to live in Withington;
- Repurposing the Village Centre, with an offer focused around attracting enterprising bars and cafés that recapture spend and increase footfall in Withington;
- Maximise the community enthusiasm, participation and investment that exist within the Village;
- Physical interventions, including public realm projects;
- Investment at the former NatWest Bank;
- Encouraging further community and cultural activity, building on strong community engagement;
- De-cluttering and simplifying the public realm to 'reveal' architectural assets; and,
- Identifying land/property as development/investment opportunities.



## Weaknesses

- Congestion on Wilmslow Road and at key junctions reduces Withington's appeal as a place to dwell;
- Gradual increase in vacancy rates and reduction in 'quality' retail occupiers;
- Unsympathetic shop frontages and modern amendments to Victorian buildings;
- Natural wayfinding/navigation is unclear, reducing the usability of the site;
- Inappropriate and overcrowded parking;
- Overall a poor public realm with narrow pavements;
- There is a lack of public space and places to dwell;
- Dominated by traffic movement, pedestrians marginalised;
- The centre lacks any clear anchors to drive footfall into the centre apart from The Christie Hospital; and,
- The centre possesses a relatively narrow range of basic retailers and services for the local catchment, providing basic groceries, food/ beverages, household items, and healthcare services.

## Threats

- Challenging economic climate and likely continued contraction;
- Ongoing and emerging situation linked to Covid-19;
- Popularity of neighbouring district centres, each of which have a unique and discernible offer;
- An increase in the number of takeaways with the associated environmental and community issues;
- Ongoing fall in the Village's student population, and the need to maintain an increase patronage and spend on the centre;
- The challenging environment for High Street businesses and high turnover of commercial units; and,
- In parts an unattractive environment and street scene, with poor management and maintenance contributing to a negative perception and poor user/visitor experience.

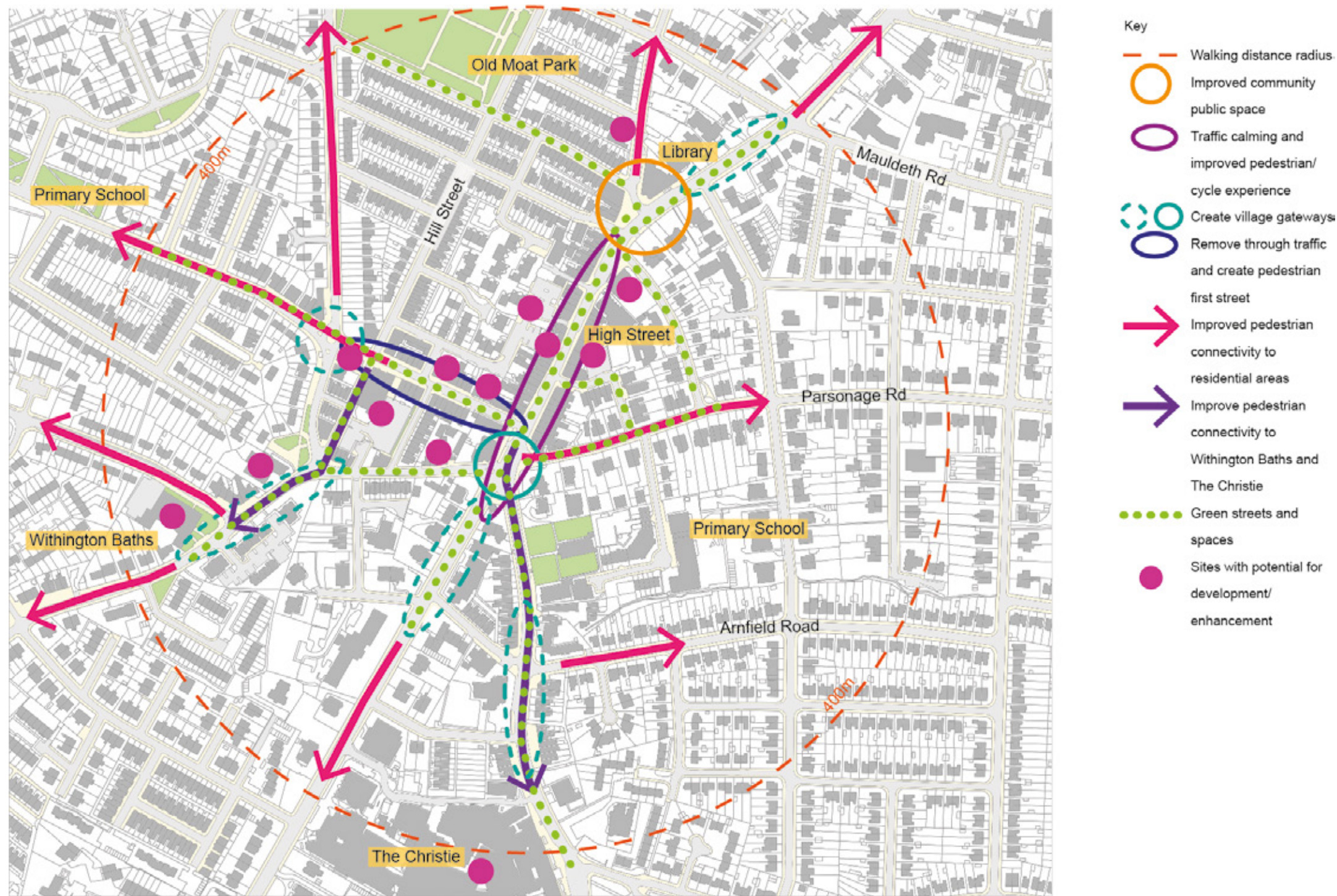


Figure 7: Opportunities Plan of Withington Village





TO LET  
3 BED 1 BATH  
1000 SQ FT  
CALL 01457 444 444

MCT  
TRAVEL  
MCT  
TX60DYB

style  
KHANS  
FREE DELIVERY  
0191 848 2700

BEAUTY  
TONIC

FINGER  
LICKING CHICKEN

J.P. & Brimble  
LETTINGS SALES

J.P. & Brimble  
RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGES  
BUY TO LET  
FREE LEGAL  
FEE FREE LANDLORD

20  
ZONE



RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGES  
BUY TO LET  
FREE LEGAL  
FEE FREE LANDLORD









# Vision 2030

**“In 2030, Withington Village will be a liveable, loveable place that meets all the needs of a diverse local community.**

**Withington’s popular cultural heritage and conservation area status will be celebrated and promoted through place branding, physical investment and community collaboration.**

**Withington Village will play a key role as a sustainable district centre – a cultural community centre that is an attractive place to live, work and visit. The centre will be a viable retail and leisure location with a good range of shops, community services, activities and an attractive evening economy. Linkages with The Christie will be strengthened as will partnerships with other stakeholders. The Village will become an increasingly popular location for families and young professionals, whilst continuing to thrive as a centre for the whole community.**

**New spaces will be created, with an improved street environment, an age-friendly strategy, and safe and easy movement for pedestrians and cyclists. Investment will focus on supporting climate change, health and well-being and the digital economy.”**

## Themes

Withington Village is proud to be the home of a strong, diverse yet established community, unique independent traders, The Christie, and a culture and heritage that is to be celebrated.

In Withington, the cross-cutting themes that are a thread throughout the Framework and its Objectives:

- A Cultural Community Centre – heritage, place, space, identity, celebration
- Environmentally Friendly – climate change, access, public transport, flood risk, reducing carbon emissions, air quality
- Health and Well-Being – ‘moving the nation’, health care, age-friendly, community support
- Digital Economy – digital infrastructure, flexible co-work spaces, education, skills and learning

These cross-cutting themes are aligned with the aspirations of existing policy.

## Regeneration Aims

A series of aims are established to deliver the Vision. These are borne from the Institute of Place Management’s (IPM) research report ‘Vital and Viable Withington’ (July 2019) and recommendations in their ‘4Rs’ framework, which include:

1. Repositioning
2. Reinventing
3. Rebranding
4. Restructuring

The Withington aims comprise the following:

### Repositioning

- Support an attractive evening economy and extended activity hours which does not adversely impact on residential amenity
- Continue to support the young and student population whilst increasing the appeal to families and professionals

- Widen the appeal of the district centre by improving the offer (quality and diversity) and by delivering temporary events, markets and pop-ups where appropriate develop Withington Village as a local centre for cultural activities
- Work with The Christie Hospital to attract visitors and staff at the Hospital into the Village through footfall generation
- Enhance the quality of the Conservation Area
- Establish Withington as a location with quality digital infrastructure
- Establish Withington as an environmentally-friendly community

### Reinventing

- Maintain and improve Withington as a liveable place with a wide ranging local offer and services for all ages
- Strengthen the independent offer along Copson Street and Wilmslow Road
- Significantly improve the visual appearance of the centre
- Create destination places and spaces for people to meet and dwell

### Rebranding

- Promote Withington’s strong identity and qualities as a loveable district centre
- Deliver projects that will transform the perception of place, focusing on key projects that will deliver the greatest impact
- Engage local stakeholders to collectively develop and deliver an attractive brand proposition for the centre through innovative physical and technological mediums
- Create an identity for Copson Street and Wilmslow Road that appeals to different people
- Celebrate Withington’s distinct identity

### Restructuring

- Nurture and develop existing local networks and partnerships
- Deliver a programme of physical regeneration consistent with the Framework
- Provide new public spaces, enhanced street environments and gateways
- Improve the accessibility of the centre by providing environmentally-friendly transport options and prioritising walking, cycling and buses

- Implement an age-friendly strategy, including the Old Moat action plan
- Positively address climate change and a greener, healthier community through physical change and partnership working
- Implement a programme of historic building restoration and shopfront improvements
- Deliver new and/or improved homes in the Village to support the needs of a changing community
- Support the reuse and enhancement of existing buildings for uses consistent with the Framework
- Support new build development that is consistent with existing Core Strategy and UDP policies and helps deliver the objectives in this Framework.

## Spatial Objectives

The following outlines how the design and environmental objectives could be achieved:

- Create a new public space at Rutherford Place.
- Upgrade and give priority to pedestrians on Copson Street.
- Enhance the public realm on Wilmslow Road, prioritise public transport, pedestrians and cyclists, reduce congestion and improve air quality.
- Reinvent Gledhill Car Park for parking and community activity into a safe and attractive space with potential for comprehensive re-development.
- Create new village centre gateways to the north and south of Wilmslow Road.
- Deliver a series of gateway, streetscape and environmental enhancements at key spaces around the centre.
- Make walking and cycling the viable choice for local people wanting to access the Village centre and surrounding neighbourhoods.
- Enhance linkages and footfall to/from the centre with The Christie, Withington Baths, Old Moat estate and wider neighbourhood.
- Deliver Age-Friendly improvements along the main connecting routes from surrounding residential neighbourhoods.
- Deliver a programme of investment in the restoration of the Conservation Area.
- Renew or enhance shopfronts along Wilmslow Road and Copson Street.
- Illustrate Withington's identity through improvements in the built environment including street art.
- Support appropriate residential living in the Village centre, where appropriate (but not at the expense of business vitality and viability). This could include redevelopment.





SHAKE DOWN









# Key Spatial Principles



Figure 8: Withington Spatial Framework

The following provides an overview of how potential physical investment and activity could be focused in Withington Village centre. Further detail on specific projects are provided in Appendix 1.

This section comprises:

- An overview of themes, key principles and character areas
- Development opportunities and enhancement areas
- Strategies for Movement, Public Realm, Heritage and Streetscape

The Framework includes the defined commercial centre, the Withington Conservation Area and the gateways and routes into the core, along Burton and Wilmslow Road, that house important services that form part of its offer. This is illustrated in Figure 8.

## Spatial Principles

The Framework sets out the guiding principles for those looking to invest in Withington. Withington's identity is its strongest asset in terms of harnessing energy to create a thriving centre. Heritage, art, music and design of differing forms should contribute to place-making and improving people's perceptions by creating a more attractive place to visit, whether that be through heritage restoration or new, contemporary interpretations of Withington's identity and place-branding.

### The Village Centre

Within the Village centre (the retail core) the character primarily comprises:

- Wilmslow Road – anchored by the Library and Sainsbury's
- Copson Street – anchored by Sainsbury's and Co-op

### Wilmslow Road

Wilmslow Road is the historic heart of the Village. A key aim is to restore the quality of the Conservation Area. A key focus is the enhancement of Rutherford Place. Such improvements could include public realm enhancements and clearer gateway signage.

In terms of identity, whilst this area is the historic core, Wilmslow Road is the area where some more modern independents have established over recent years. It is the 'trendy', youthful hub and this character should be reflected in part in the modernisation of the

area. There may be an opportunity to include an increase in higher quality food and drink establishments, and uses/activities that attract families.

An objective of the Framework is to establish an environment in which new uses can thrive; there is limited opportunity for redevelopment and in the main improvement would be through reuse, renovation or extension.

Sections, or building blocks, along Wilmslow Road have been identified to benefit from historic restoration. BB Heritage's Analysis and Strategy outlines which buildings and blocks are potentially suitable for historic shopfront improvements and enhancement of upper facades.

In addition, units along Wilmslow Road (for example 458-462 and 455-469) present an opportunity for contemporary design. This should be of high quality design and is of appropriate height and density informed by this part of the Village and the Conservation Area consistent with policies set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies from the UDP.

Development along and near Wilmslow Road should support the aims and objectives of the framework, including contributing to the delivery of key projects.

### Copson Street

Copson Street is where more modern, late 20th century development is located. There is scope to improve the streetscene through redevelopment and/or intensification of blocks and enhancement of existing building facades and shopfronts consistent with policies set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies from the UDP.

In terms of future uses, Copson Street should continue to serve the local population, particularly those of Old Moat. The quality of the environment should be improved to address access issues, safety and general attractiveness, including Age Friendly initiatives. It should be a space where the community can gather. This means addressing vehicle access. Once public realm enhancements are delivered, it is a potential location for a regular market.

Development along and near Copson Street should support the aims and objectives of the framework and contribute to improvements to the public realm and delivery of the Age Friendly strategy.

Further details can be found in the list of potential projects at Appendix 1.

## Development and Enhancement Opportunities

To achieve the design objectives scale, height and massing of new development should reflect the character of their area consistent with policies set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies from the UDP.

As a district centre, Withington Village is identified as an appropriate location for residential development of appropriate density. Significant development opportunities with the Village are limited, as shown at Figure 13. An increase in residential living around the centre would increase the level of available expenditure to support local businesses. However, new development should not be to the detriment of the sustainability of district centre's commercial operations.

### Restoration of the Conservation Area

Investment in buildings, shop fronts and areas of public realm have been identified with heritage merit that would benefit from enhancement.

Please refer to the Heritage Intervention Area on the Spatial Framework and the Heritage Streetscape Strategy for further detail.

### Reuse

The greatest opportunity in the Village is for existing buildings to be repurposed for new uses or a higher quality offer. Proposed uses should complement and support the vitality of those character areas.

### Extensions

There is potential scope within the centre for an appropriate level of intensification. These are likely to entail upper floor extensions or extensions to the rear (which in certain locations could be larger than the frontage, depending on the context). Sites identified on Copson Street could deliver appropriate schemes. On Wilmslow Road, there are limited opportunities for upper floor extensions on the street frontages. Opportunities may exist to the rear of properties.

### Reconfiguration

Where buildings are not fit for purpose and would benefit from internal renovation or the occupation of more than one ground floor unit, there may be opportunities for proposals that would assist in delivering the Vision and are undertaken in a sympathetic manner in keeping with the Heritage and Streetscene Strategy. In such cases, shop frontages on Wilmslow Road should not lose the rhythm of

the building façade. In addition, there may be opportunities for extensions or reconfigurations that support uses that do not need a ground floor public shop frontage but would contribute to increasing footfall and activity, including residential, flexible/co-work spaces or community uses. However, there should not be a significant cumulative loss of active frontages along the high streets. Inactive frontages for high footfall uses should be minimal (which could contribute to the detriment of street activity).

### **Redevelopment**

There are potential sites within the Village centre that could offer redevelopment opportunities. These have been identified as indicative only. Any development would need to be of an appropriate height and density and demonstrate how it would contribute to the area both in terms of use and townscape consistent with policies set out in the Core Strategy and saved policies from the UDP. The opportunities on Wilmslow Road are limited. Where they do exist, they are infill plots. On Copson Street, a single storey block is identified which could benefit from comprehensive redevelopment. Use, scale, height and design parameters would apply that are consistent with the existing character, certainly on street frontages.

### **New build**

There are a limited number of sites in the Village centre suitable for new build development. Gledhill Street Car Park is currently an uninviting space backed onto by properties on Wilmslow Road and the Strathblane Close and Easthope Close Housing Estate. It is heavily used for long stay as well as short stay parking. The space has an opportunity to be reconfigured so that it becomes a valuable public space within the Village. Opportunities to include the Strathblane Close and Easthope Close housing estate should be explored as a part of a wider design. Pedestrian linkages to this space could be enhanced, including improving the state of the ginnels along Wilmslow Road.

## **Development Activity**

Notable development projects are likely to come forward. These include:

- Withington Baths
- Former NatWest Bank

### **Withington Baths**

Withington Baths & Leisure Centre is run by Love Withington Baths, a local charitable organisation. The organisation consists of local community members who saved the Baths from closure in 2014 and since has successfully operated the Baths as a multi-purpose community asset for the benefit of all members of the community. Withington Baths is being supported by the National Heritage Fund to restore architectural features and repair the envelope of the building. It has ambitious plans to further develop the site with an additional multi-function arts and cultural space with potentially an associated residential offer.

### **Former NatWest Bank**

The former NatWest Bank is a listed building. The building is currently vacant but has been successfully used for a range of pop up cultural activities and community events. Planning permission has been approved for a four storey residential block to the rear of the site, with a change of use to the former NatWest Bank. Importantly the scheme offers the opportunity to attract a high quality food outlet to the Village.







## Movement Strategy

### Access and Connectivity

The Movement Strategy specifically focuses on improving the accessibility of the Village centre for the local population, of all ages and needs and is shown in Figure 9. It acknowledges that there is a high proportion of older residents and residents with health care needs living in the area, particularly around Old Moat to the west of the centre. The Movement Strategy therefore focuses on improving key routes that provide main connections between the surrounding residential areas and encourage more trips to be made on foot or by cycle, thus reducing those that were made previously by private car, promoting an increased participation in physical activity and reducing Withington's carbon footprint.

Priority projects that will help to address this include:

- Bee Network enhancements
- Age-Friendly Strategy, including the Old Moat Action Plan
- Village Gateway improvements

A series of recommendations that will assist in delivering the Movement Strategy includes crossing improvements, decluttering, lighting improvements and a Wayfinding Strategy linked to the Public Realm Strategy.

Access and servicing of existing and future businesses will be required. This will need to be considered in more detail as part of any scheme, including improving access to the rears of Wilmslow Road and along Copson Street.

Establishing Withington as a location with quality digital infrastructure is a key aim. Improving digital connectivity will be beneficial to existing and future businesses and will support a rise in flexible, co-worker space. In turn, this will enable Withington in becoming a 'smarter' district centre, a place where young professionals and families can thrive, inspire the next generation to upskill and succeed, as well as support the older generation to stay an active part of our communities.

### Village Gateways

A number of village gateways are identified for improvement. These will enhance access and connectivity with the surrounding neighbourhood and for people travelling to the centre. The townscape analysis has identified that schemes are required for the following gateways.

- Wilmslow/Palatine/Burton/Parsonage Road Junction
- Burton Road (Withington Baths)
- Old Moat/Yew Tree Lane/Copson Street
- Mauldeth Road/Wilmslow Road

By doing so, Withington Village will be able to better rebrand and reinvent itself.

Improving connectivity between the Village centre and The Christie is an aim of the Framework, and is identified in The Christie SRF (2019) report.

### Walking and Cycling

Walking and cycling (and the principles of 'get Greater Manchester moving') are critical to the movement strategy and to creating a healthier community.

Key interventions required (as part of delivering key projects) include:

- Implementing physical changes to the character of streets to discourage through traffic, including measures on Wilmslow Road and Copson Street;
- Reassigning space taken up by the carriageway to pedestrians and cyclists (and public realm), including loading bays;
- Introducing traffic management;
- Improving crossings along Wilmslow Road and including the junction and route to The Christie, Parsonage Road and Old Moat Lane;
- Exploring the potential to reconfigure junctions along Wilmslow Road (at Wellington Road, Parsonage Road, Egerton Crescent, Swinbourne Crescent, and Davenport Avenue) as part of the Bee Network.

### Car Parking Management

Gledhill Street and Egerton Crescent car parks become full during daytime and are used for long stay parking. Management of the current on and off street supply is required for use by residents and visitors/shoppers to the Village centre. This is a core transport issue. Redressing the imbalance in usage is therefore a priority, as well as improving signage, wayfinding and quality of the public realm.

An extension of The Christie parking zone scheme is being proposed which will limit the length of parking allowed in Gledhill Street and Egerton Crescent Car Parks. This would change movement patterns and behaviour. As well as people accessing the Christie, it is likely that there are also other long stay car park users, such as employees of local businesses and residents of the Village centre. Improvements to more sustainable modes of transport will assist in addressing car parking need.

To future proof the centre and to respond to the Council's climate change agenda, charging points should be encouraged. This would need to take account of TfGM's Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040.

Improving cycle parking, pedestrian facilities and age-friendly provision should also be integral to any external works to the public realm or development environment.

### Relationship with the Public Realm

A key environmental objective is improving movement through the area in conjunction with the aims for Public Realm, Heritage and Streetscape. These are clearly interrelated issues and there are opportunities to address these matters.

There is the potential for highways interventions for public realm improvements in Withington, particularly along Wilmslow Road, Copson Street, and the Wilmslow/Palatine/Burton/Parsonage Junction. Each indicative project has outlined high, medium and low levels of intervention that can be undertaken as phased projects as funding becomes available and delivery partners are identified.

## Highways Intervention Areas

The following indicative interventions have been identified and demonstrate how design and environmental objectives could be achieved: this would all require more in depth analysis.

### Wilmslow/Palatine/Burton Road junction

- Reconfiguration of the junction, through changes to signal timings and/or the junction layout to rebalance towards ease of pedestrian movement.



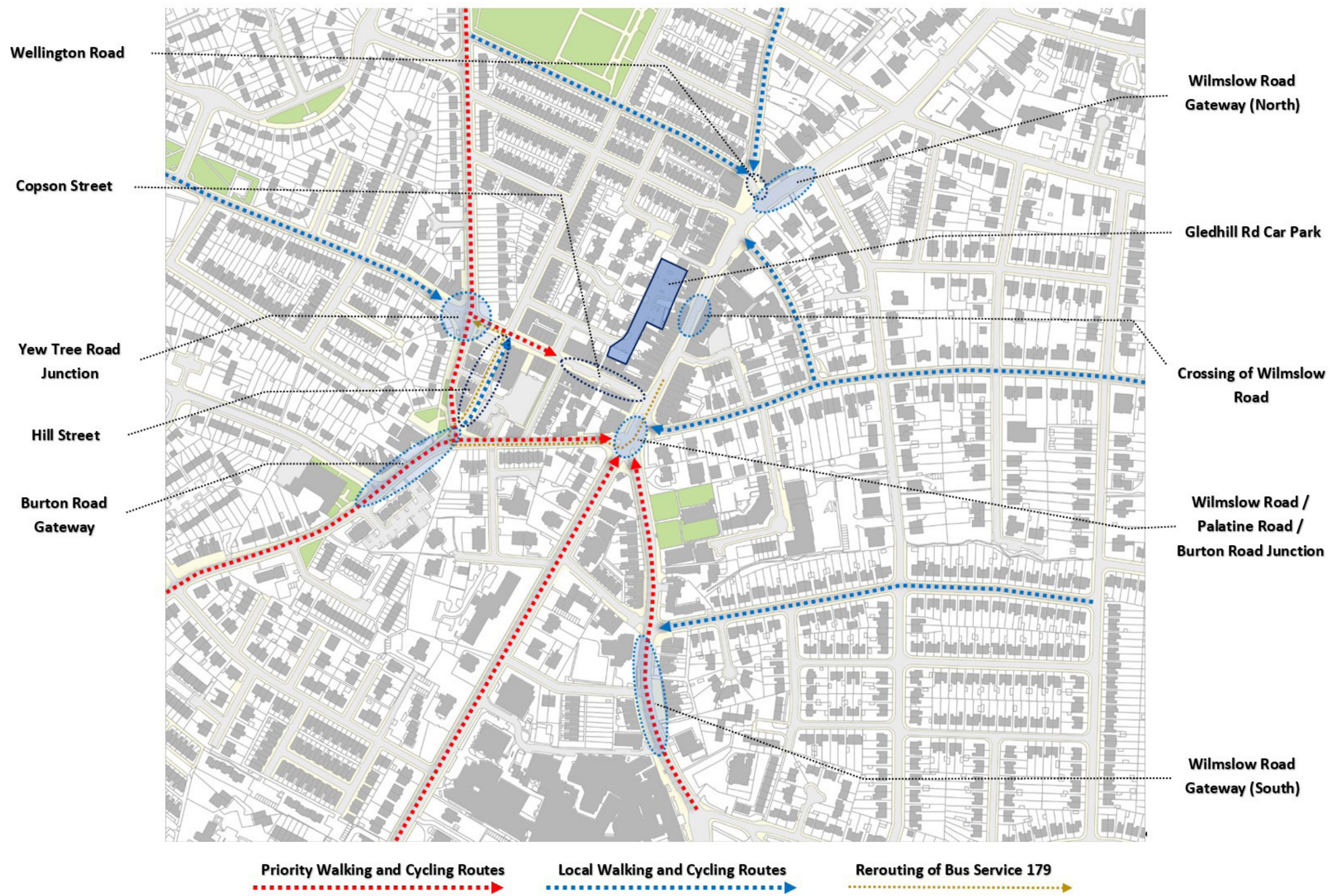


Figure 9: Withington Movement Plan

### **Copson Street/Re-routing of bus service 179**

- Closure of Copson Street to through traffic between Wilmslow Road and Patten Street on a permanent or occasional basis to create a pedestrian focused area.

### **Hill Street**

- On-street parking removal, footway widening, and closed to southbound traffic

### **Old Moat Lane/Yew Tree Road roundabout and village gateway**

- Improvements for pedestrians and cyclists at this junction to remove an identified barrier to movement.

### **Wilmslow Road/Burton Road gateways**

- Introduction of measures including raised table junctions, low kerbs, carriageway narrowing and landscaping and signage to provide a recognisable entrance to the Village.

## **Public Realm**

The public realm objective is focused around three themes and illustrated in Figure 10. These are:

- Distinctive identity
- Heritage revealed
- Attractive and active

### **Distinctive Identity**

The public realm strategy encourages positive expressions of character. This could be delivered in imaginative ways, and could reflect the artistic nature of the local population. For example, gateways need not be about traditional signage, but could be an opportunity for an expression of identity.

Colour, lighting, materials and public art should be considered as features of the public realm. Greenery should be considered in appropriate locations and respond to the wider Green and Blue Infrastructure Plans ambitions.

Historic restoration is considered later in this section. Interventions could be temporary (for example, as part of a short-term event or activity) or permanent. Modern interventions should be complementary and sympathetic to the setting of the Conservation Area but not stifle creativity.

Historic and modern interventions have been indicatively identified. The objective should be to create focal points, attractive destinations, and place-brand.

In addition, renewal of the public realm (and streetscape) should consider what elements could provide dual functions. For example, cycle parking or bus stops could be a public art feature. Lighting displays could use existing settings (buildings, spaces or streets) to support rebranding. In this vein, attempts should be made to maximise impact using limited additions (and therefore assist with decluttering streets or spaces). Bespoke art work will contribute to expressing Withington's identity, for example wall art (pictures or installations) or shop windows displays.

The Framework seeks an enhancement of Wilmslow Road and Copson Street.

The enhancement of Rutherford Place is also key public realm objective. It is a key gateway to the Village.

### **Heritage Revealed**

A key aim is to restore the quality and setting of the Conservation Area. The public realm strategy has been developed to complement the heritage and streetscape strategy.

### **Attractive and Active**

The Public Realm strategy specifically draws together many of the aims and objectives of the Framework into a possible physical form to demonstrate how these can be achieved. Public realm overlaps with proposed improvements to movement, heritage and streetscape. In Withington Village, it is the transformation of the public realm that will act as a catalyst and provide the platform from which other environmental, social and economic benefits can be delivered.

In this regard, the public realm should not be viewed as new spaces alone. It includes the streets and connections between people, businesses and potential development/investment sites. It represents a place-led approach for Withington, with healthy streets, a connected core, and active and vibrant spaces. This approach supports the integration of movement and infrastructure into any scheme. Moving away from highways domination, it puts people at the heart of Withington Village centre's revitalisation, and is to support a more liveable, loveable Withington. In order to do so will

require a rebalance of traffic movement to prioritise the experience of pedestrians, cyclists and the local businesses that will attract the footfall and encourage people to dwell.

### **Public Realm Components**

Specific components that would be required as part of any scheme should include:

- Decluttering
- Wayfinding
- Connectivity
- Materials
- Lighting
- Green infrastructure
- Public art

### **Priority Projects**

Key public spaces identified as priority projects are:

- Rutherford Place (library)
- Copson Street
- Gledhill Street Car Park
- Village Gateways

These areas are identified in Figure 10.





- Key**
- Walking distance radius
  - Key public spaces
  - Village gateways
  - Pedestrian First streets
  - Widened footways
  - Improved bus stop environment
  - Improved ginnels
  - Improved pedestrian crossings
  - Improved pedestrian connectivity to residential areas
  - Potential opportunities for GI/ Street trees/ Integrated GI
  - Existing trees retained (where possible)
  - Car park & public realm improvements
  - Parklet/pocket park

Figure 10: Withington Public Realm Plan

## Heritage and Streetscape Strategy

The key heritage and streetscape priorities are illustrated at Figure 11. These include:

- Withington Conservation Area enhancement
- Withington's Contemporary Culture
- Shopfront Guidance

Some of which has been touched on in other sections of this report.

### Withington Conservation Area Enhancement

Enhancements to the Conservation Area are to be driven by the heritage action projects including restoration of historic shopfronts and enhancement of upper building facades.

Buildings in the Village retain historic shopfront elements, with extant features behind (sometimes unattractive) modern shop fascias. Opportunities for more appropriate signage and shopfronts, masonry repairs and reinstatement of metalwork should be explored.

Enhancement of the Conservation Area setting (in conjunction with the public realm and movement strategies) could be delivered through the following projects:

- Rutherford Place
- Wilmslow Road corridor
- Wilmslow/Palatine/Burton/Parsonage Road Junction
- Village Gateways (primarily the Wilmslow Road link to the Christie)

### Withington's Contemporary Culture

In addition to being a Conservation Area, where buildings maintain a historic importance for the community, Withington is also a people's place. Another element of Withington's identity is the character of its diverse community – the people who have lived and loved Withington, who are creative and artistic, joyful and forward-looking. Withington's community spans all ages, but the youthfulness of the 'Manchester' influence is a subtle yet apparent factor. It is evident in those businesses and community members that are living and working in the Village. It is engrained in their persona and explicit on their buildings and shopfronts, albeit the appearance of the physical environment does not do the community justice. It is perhaps more strongly visible on social media. The objective is to complement this online activity and translate this expression into the physical environment, and by doing so widen the appeal. This will

help to support repositioning and rebranding Withington over the next ten or more years.

Local initiatives that groups such as the Withington Village Regeneration Partnership and We Are Withington have implemented and are further promoting include:

- Street art – wall murals and shutter art
- Cultural 'Hub' – the potential for cultural organisations in Manchester to establish in the district centre
- Pop-up events in underused/vacant buildings, such as the Former Working Men's Club

### Heritage and Community Funding Bids

The local community is working in partnership, opening opportunities to capitalise on a village-wide vision that extends beyond the bricks and mortar of one business or building, to provide a shared, loveable offer for all the community.

This means that there is opportunity to continue to work together on a comprehensive identity strategy – a place-making brand for the Village – that encompasses design influence for buildings and public realm; facades and shopfronts; a place-led vision that will improve the qualitative offer, type and number of independents; PR, place-led marketing and social media. This will be the basis for achieving the repositioning aims of this Framework.

### Shopfront Guidance

Withington's distinct identity has been touched on in the Public Realm Strategy section. Expression of identity can take numerous forms. In this instance, it should include the design approach to buildings and shopfronts of the areas identified in this Framework.

Consideration is being given to the possibility of guidance for new shop fronts which could address:

- Copson Street (service centre and pedestrian realm)
- Wilmslow Road (contemporary design)

Reflective of Withington's modern identity, contemporary shopfronts can contribute to the character of the Conservation Area. Façade treatment including potential for street art should be located in areas that would create impact, including on landmark buildings/spaces and on key views and vistas.

BB Heritage Studio has prepared outline Heritage Shopfront illustrations for sections of Wilmslow Road. This is informal guidance and not planning policy. Owners and public and private sector bodies could use this as the basis for funding applications and the implementation of heritage restoration works.

Street art is already a feature of Withington. It contributes to the village identity. Further opportunities should be sought. The Framework strongly supports Withington's desire to express identity in this form. Innovative pieces can be commissioned and can extend beyond wall murals or 'traditional' interpretations of history or place-identity. Additions should be implemented in accordance with a comprehensive approach and should be of quality. This means that detailed design projects (as recommended in this Framework) should consider street art within a wider public realm, streetscape and movement plan, to be delivered in a cohesive and comprehensive manner. The impact of the artwork on the Conservation Area, including designated and non-designated heritage assets should be considered.



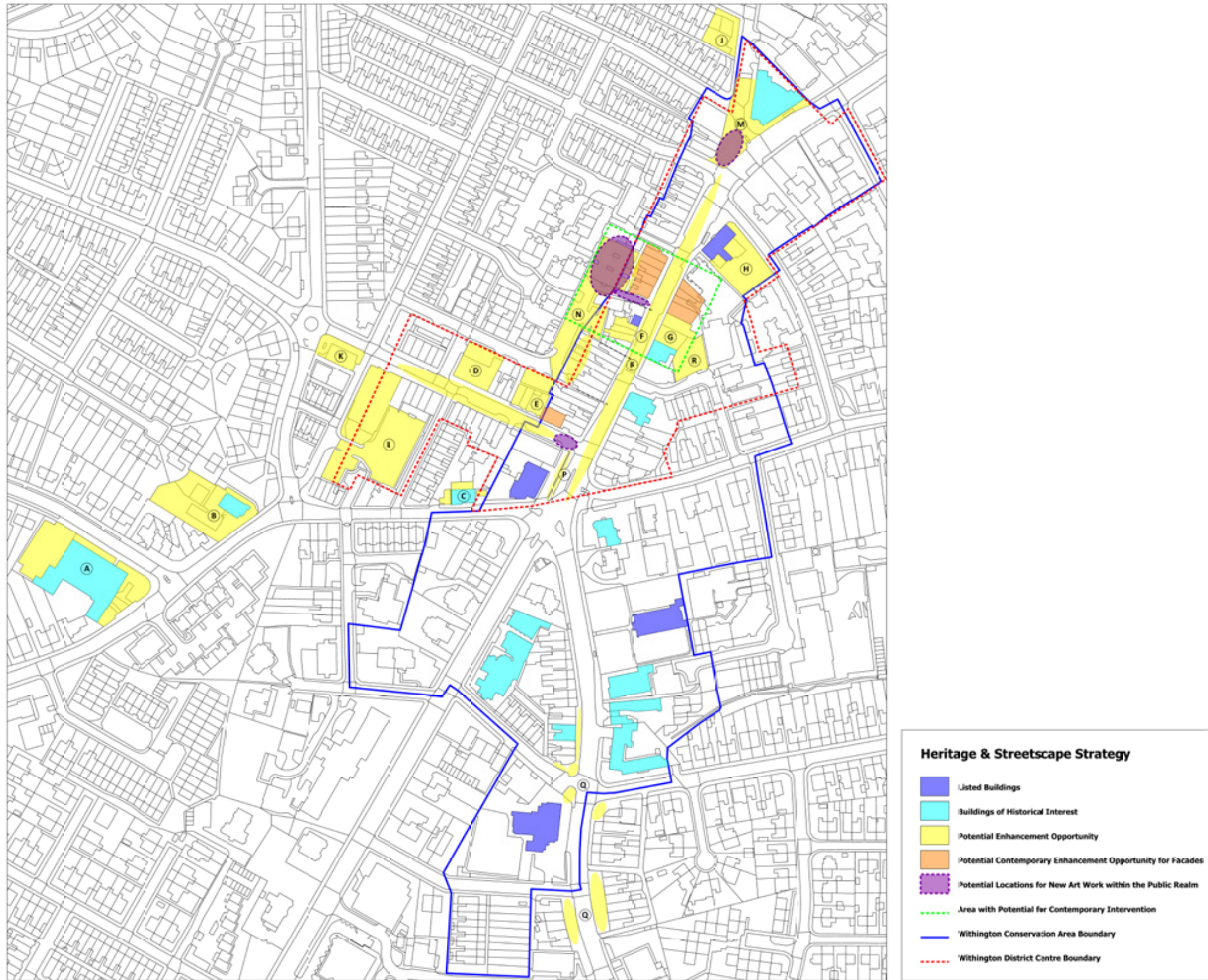


Figure 11: Heritage Strategy





# Projects

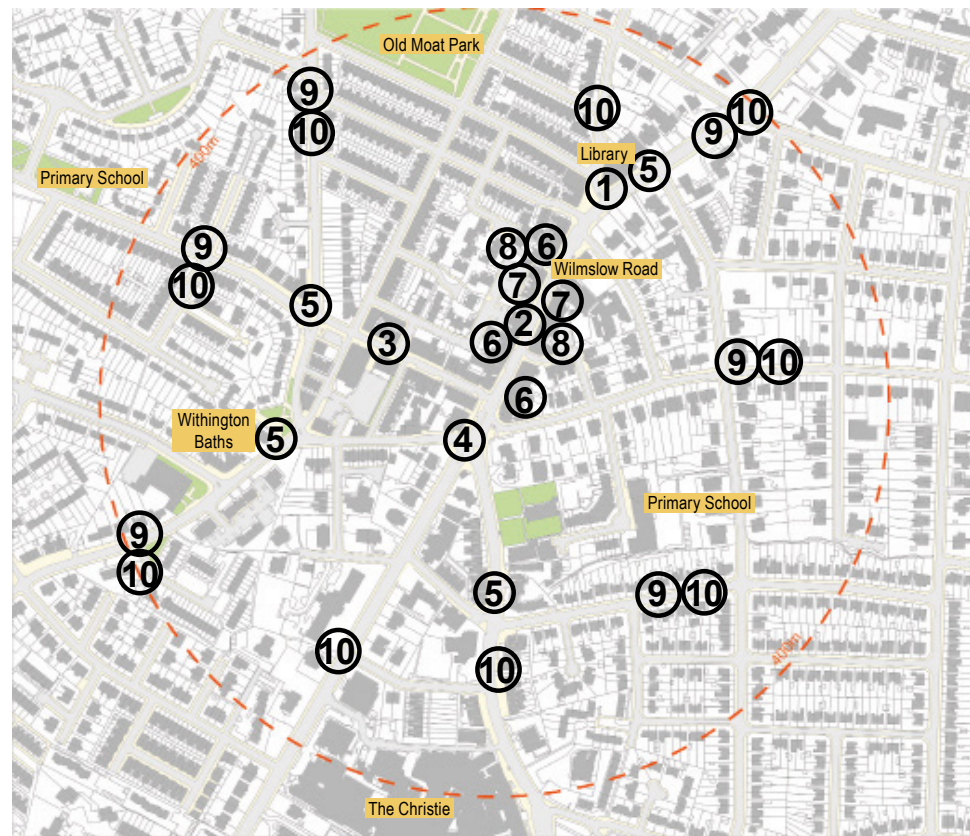
This section identifies indicative projects that could support the delivery of key objectives. This is for illustrative purposes only.

## Development Opportunities Projects

Figure 13 illustrates a range of development of enhancement sites that have been considered during the production of this Framework.



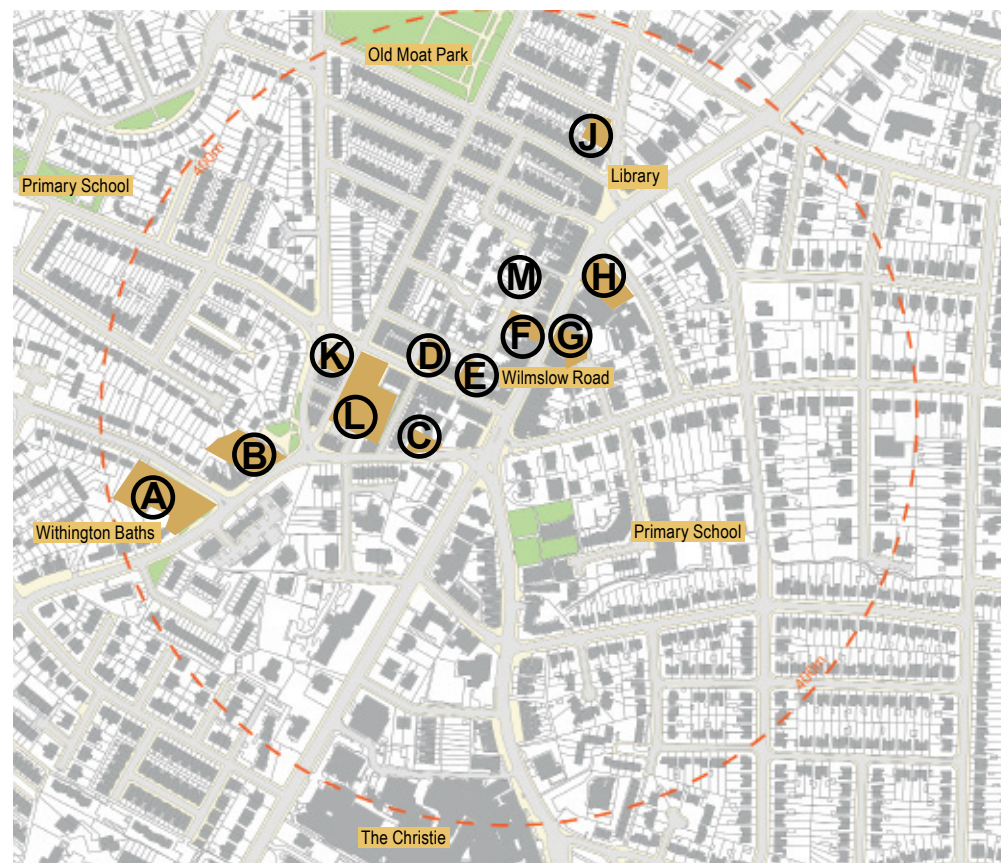




Key

1. Rutherford Place (library)
2. Wilmslow Road Corridor
3. Copson Street Pedestrianisation
4. Wilmslow Road / Palatine Road / Parsonage Road Junction
5. Village Gateways
6. Heritage Projects
  - a. Restoration of Historic Shopfronts
  - b. Enhancement of Building Facades
7. Contemporary Streetscene Projects
  - a. Contemporary building/facade design
  - b. Street art
8. Gledhill and Egerton Crescent Car Parks
9. Walking and Cycling Routes / Bee Network
10. Age Friendly Strategy
11. Withington Cultural 'hub' (not shown on Figure)
12. Development or Enhancement Opportunity Sites (see Figure 13)

Figure 12: List of projects



Key

- A. Withington Baths
- B. Withington Adult Learning Centre
- C. Former Working Men's Club
- D. 18-22 Copson Street
- E. 4-6 Copson Street
- F. 458-462 Wilmslow Road
- G. 455-459 Wilmslow Road
- H. Former Nat West Bank site
- J. Withington Garage site
- K. Hill Street Car Park
- L. Coop Car Park
- M. Gledhill Street Car Park

Figure 13: Withington Opportunity Sites



# Recommendations & Next Steps



This section of the Framework provides an overview of the approach to realising the Vision and objectives for Withington. The Framework identifies key design and environmental objectives to help shape and deliver projects and developments. Moving forward, there will need to have a constant focus on delivering the aims and objectives of the Framework.

The Framework is about physical development activity. However, it identifies cross-cutting themes that need to be coordinated with the implementation of wider policies and strategies and neighbourhood initiatives to ensure that education, skills, learning, health, business support, climate change, economic growth and other initiatives are improved in tandem.

## Early Intervention

The Vision will not be realised overnight. The Objectives will be delivered over at least the next ten years. Early actions will however be key to delivering early wins and to build momentum towards the delivery of longer-term projects.

These early actions will be critical. There is clearly potential, not least in the energy, commitment and vested interest of the local community, to deliver the Vision. Recent activity by individuals and local groups such as the Withington Village Regeneration Partnership is testament to the ability of the Withington community to work together to achieve further successes – with an agreed Vision in place, partner support and a viable delivery plan.

The approach to delivery is therefore focussed on:

- Maintaining and building momentum;
- Working closely with key stakeholders, partners and the community;
- Delivering short-term projects and enabling investment (or ‘meanwhile’ interventions) to underpin the virtuous cycle of growing interest and confidence in the Village;
- Supporting the Framework and the Vision to deliver a higher quality offer and standard of design and development

Moreover, given the response to the Covid-19 pandemic the necessity of the actions identified above has been heightened. Many of the recommended projects set out in the proceeding sections support and reflect the initial phases of the response to the pandemic, with improvements to accessibility, walking and cycling among the primary interventions.

Investors are remaining interested in the Village and the Withington Village Regeneration Partnership will continue to meet to drive change and realise the opportunities for the Village. With strong and effective local collaborative networks in place, Withington can begin rebuilding momentum that had existed before lockdown and augment its vision in the light of the broader impact of Covid-19.

Ensuring that this Framework is delivered will help to underpin the response to the pandemic for Withington Village.

## Local Partnership

The Withington Village Regeneration Partnership (WVRP) is well represented by a number of partner organisations, local groups and stakeholders. With an appropriate constitution, the WVRP is well positioned to lead on the delivery of elements of the Vision, and is already positively impacting on the vitality and viability of the Village centre.

WVRP should continue to make funding applications that will assist in delivering projects, including applications for funding for short-term interventions, albeit as part of a comprehensive plan to deliver longer-term projects.

## Withington Village Framework

The Withington Village Framework is a live document that will need to be updated on a regular basis to reflect ongoing work and delivery achievements. The Framework includes spatial actions to support the delivery of the Framework's Vision and Objectives.

A series of recommendations are set out in this report that will help to facilitate the delivery of the Framework and wider Manchester agenda.

## Conclusion

The Framework has been prepared in consultation with a number of local stakeholders and partner organisations. It establishes the Vision for Withington to 2030 and supports the policy framework to seek improvements in the Village centre and immediate surroundings.

Fundamentally, the Vision is about improving the village centre in a way that engenders community pride and celebrates Withington's identity. A series of aims and objectives underpin the Vision and the Framework providing a physical basis for guiding, promoting and implementing investment in the centre. This is focused around movement, access,

public realm, streetscape and heritage, with overarching regeneration aims to reposition, reinvent, rebrand and restructure.











# Appendix 1: Key Projects & Precedent Images



# Rutherford Place

Priority - High

Description - Create a new public space in Withington Village

Purpose - To create a useable public space, a clear gateway to Withington Village and improve the setting of Withington Library.

Baseline - Rutherford Place contains a range of street furniture including benches, bins, bollards, cycle hoops, guard rails, traffic lights and signs, and raised planters, which obstruct pedestrian desire lines and views of the square and the historic library building. They often contribute to a cluttered appearance of the public realm.

Project Outline - The following measures are to be considered for the square:

A new community hub fronting the library building,

An enhanced setting for the heritage assets surrounding the square,

A space to stop and stay with opportunities for spill-out for businesses,

Closing of Wellington Road enables a seamless public square and pedestrian movement, and

Opportunities for public art.

Low Intervention - Placement of temporary measures to stop use of Wellington Road by vehicles but allow cyclists. Remove unnecessary street furniture.

High Intervention - Full closure of Wellington Road, stopping up and physical removal of the section of highway to incorporate into Library Square.

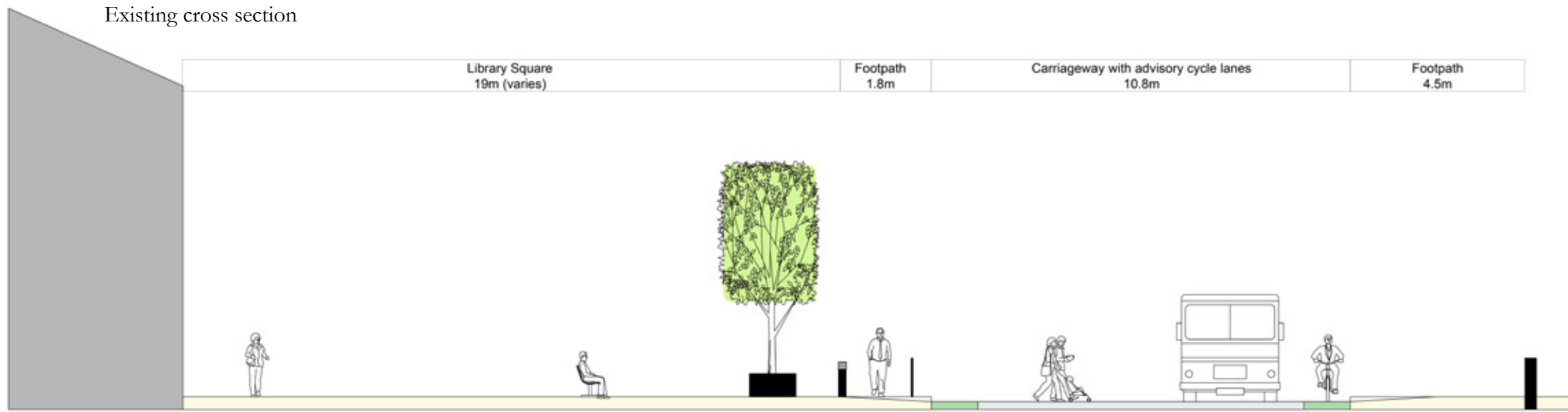


Precedent images

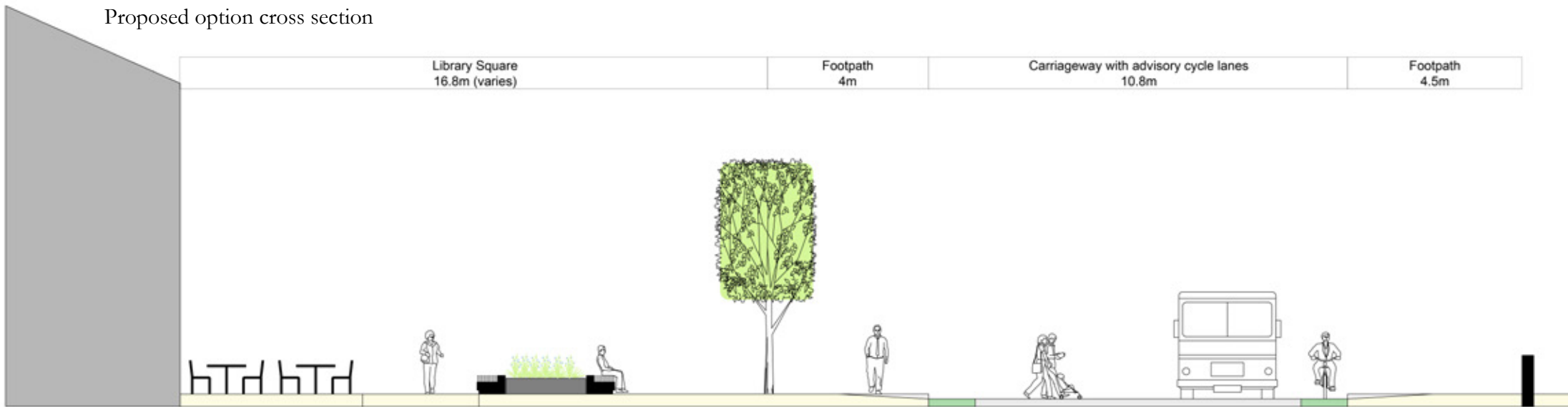


# Rutherford Place

Existing cross section



Proposed option cross section





# Wilmslow Road

Priority - High

Description - Create a more pedestrian friendly environment along Wilmslow Road.

Purpose - To improve the environment for pedestrians and improve the setting of the Village and the ease of crossing major routes

Baseline - Wilmslow Road has a high traffic volume, creating a strong barrier to pedestrians. There are only a few options to cross this road corridor safely. The junction with Palatine Road creates a multi-stop crossing experience which may influence routes taken by pedestrians who want to enter the village centre from the south.

Proposals - Wilmslow Road functions as a key link between Withington Village centre and The Christie. Enhancements to the footways and Green Infrastructure (e.g. street tree planting) will create a pleasant pedestrian route for visitors. Stop and stay opportunities within the public realm on the way provide a draw along this link. Improvements to the pedestrian crossing experience at the junction of Wilmslow Road and Palatine Road will shorten walking times and put pedestrians first.

Low Intervention - Amendment to the signal timings / phasing to provide more time and opportunities for pedestrians to cross and allow for crossing of an arm in one movement.

High Intervention - Reconfiguration of the crossing to the benefit of pedestrians including:

Remove specific movements

Reduce lane widths / numbers at the stop line to reduce distances pedestrians must cross an arm

Provision of a diagonal crossing movement(s) / all red phase for pedestrians to cross

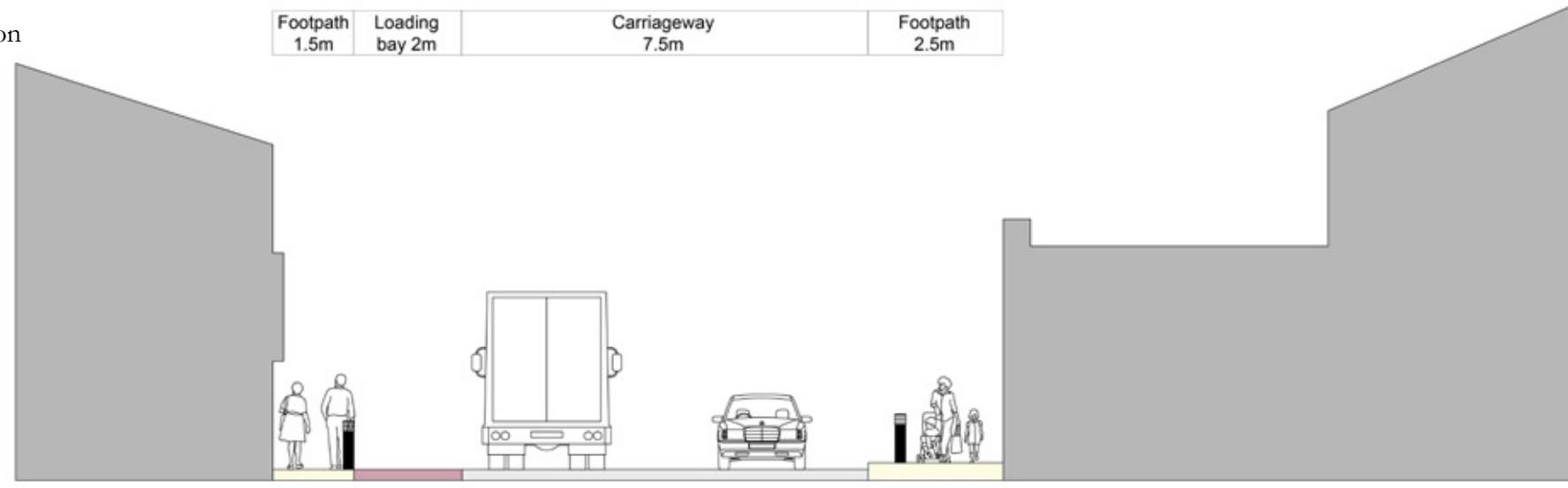


Precedent images

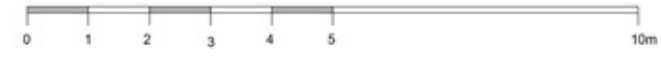
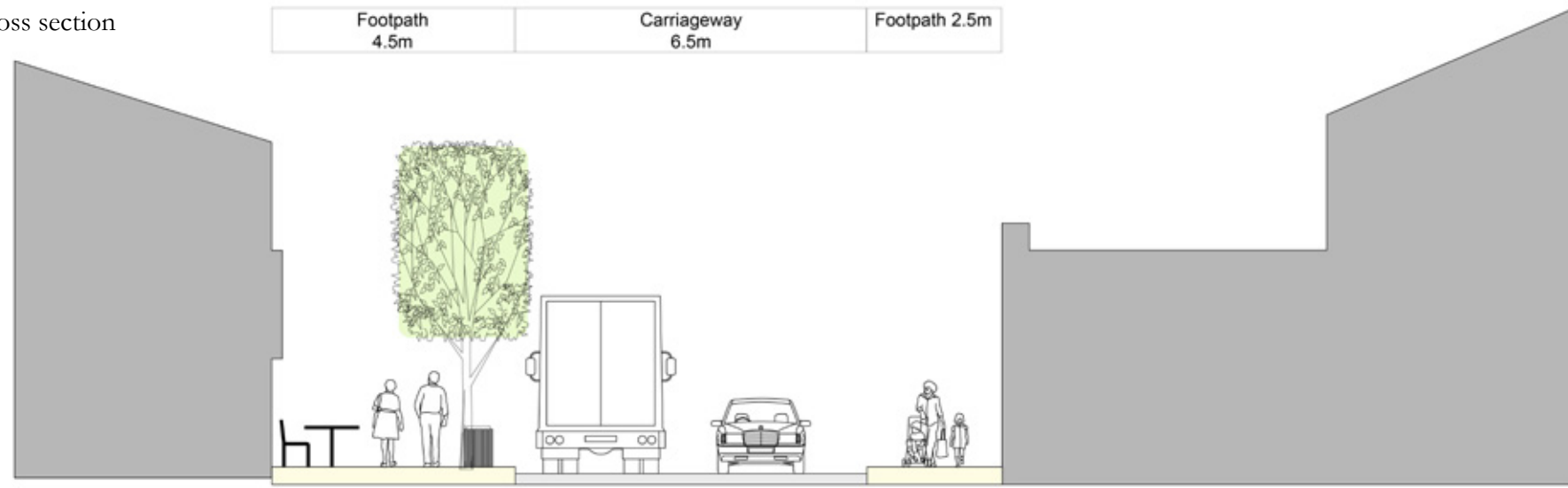


# Wilmslow Road

Existing cross section



Proposed option cross section





# Copson Street

Priority - High

Description – Reorganise Copson Street into a pedestrian priority area

Purpose - To develop the public realm and environment for pedestrians along Copson Street

Baseline - Copson Street seems to be used by through-traffic and bus routes contributing to a low quality public realm experience. Parked vehicles contribute to this impression. Large areas of the public realm along Copson Street is also dedicated to loading.

Proposals - Pedestrianising Copson Street will be achieved through creation of a linear community space and pedestrian first street that provides space for regular community events (e.g. markets). This will provide an enhanced shopping experience in a car-free environment.

Low Intervention - Temporary closure of the road to through traffic (access only and bus service 179) at specific times day / days of the week. Restrict servicing to specific hours e.g. before 10am / after 7pm or allow in designated areas. Maintain access for businesses located in Surcon House. To support public realm aspirations for Copson St bus service 179 will be diverted via Burton Road & Hill Street back to Copson Street. The bus stop on Copson St to be moved to the western end.

High Intervention - Permanent closure of Copson Street to traffic with servicing & access restricted to specific hours e.g. before 10am / after 7pm. Access to Surcon House via new link from Burton Road (demolition of public toilets). Provision of shared surface (removal of identifiable carriageway)



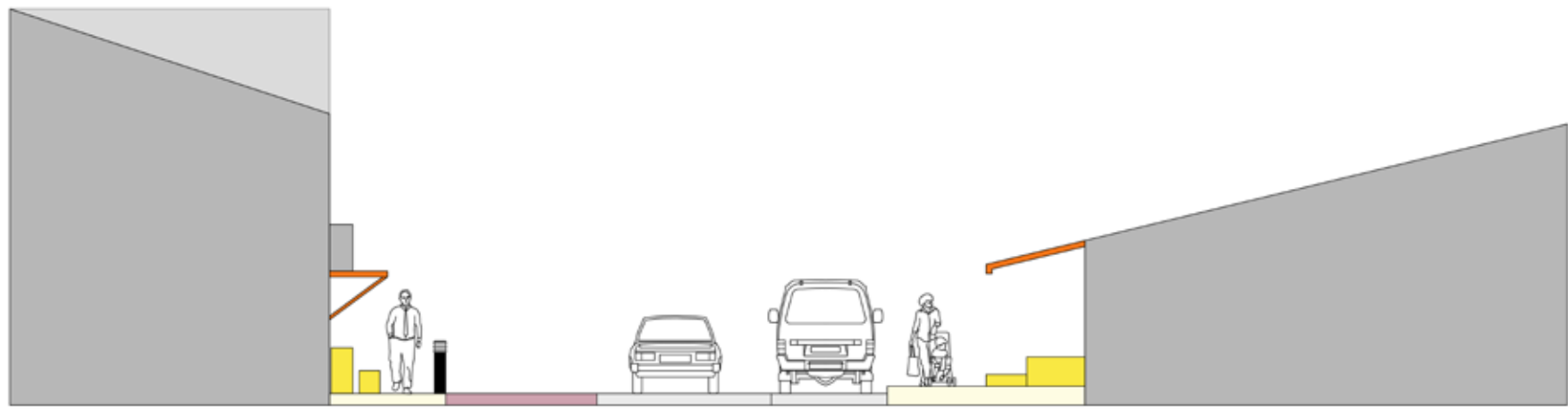
Precedent images



# Copson Street

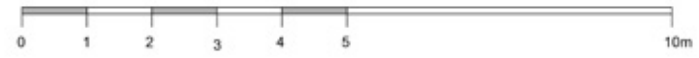
Existing cross section

Footpath 2m	Loading bay 2.6m	Carriageway 3m	Parking bay 2m	Footpath 3.4m
----------------	---------------------	-------------------	-------------------	------------------



Proposed option cross section

**Pedestrians first street**  
with space for spill out, markets, street furniture, tree planting 13m





# Wilmslow Road junction

Priority - Medium

Description - Reduce crossing times for pedestrian at the junction of Wilmslow Road/Palatine Road/Burton Road and Parsonage Road.

Purpose - To make pedestrian movement easier throughout the Village

Baseline - Pedestrian desire lines are determined by key attractors and access to public transport. Currently the provided pedestrian crossings do not follow those lines for positive pedestrian experience.

Proposals - Pedestrian connectivity between residential areas and the Village Centre are essential to its success as a community core and heart of the village. Short distance journeys on foot and cycle are proposed to be encouraged by improved pedestrian experience and cycle environment. This will include repairing and decluttering footways, providing resting opportunities and greened streets.

Low Intervention - Signs and on road markings, traffic calming measures and dropped kerb crossings (tactile paving) at key crossing points. Cyclist and pedestrian priority across side roads using markings and signs, improved lighting and provision of regular rest places

High Intervention - Provision of segregated cycle lanes & crossings, raised tables / shared surfaces at junctions & across sideroads. Restrict traffic and reassign road space for cyclists / pedestrians (where appropriate. Comprehensive wayfinding strategy, improved lighting and provision of rest places linked to smaller scale public realm improvements



Precedent images



# Village Gateways

Priority - Medium

Description - Provide attractive and distinctive gateways into the Village

Purpose - To provide a gateway into Withington Village at key entrance points

Baseline - A lack of signposting at key entrances into Withington Village minimises the sense of 'arrival' onto the Village when approached along key routes.

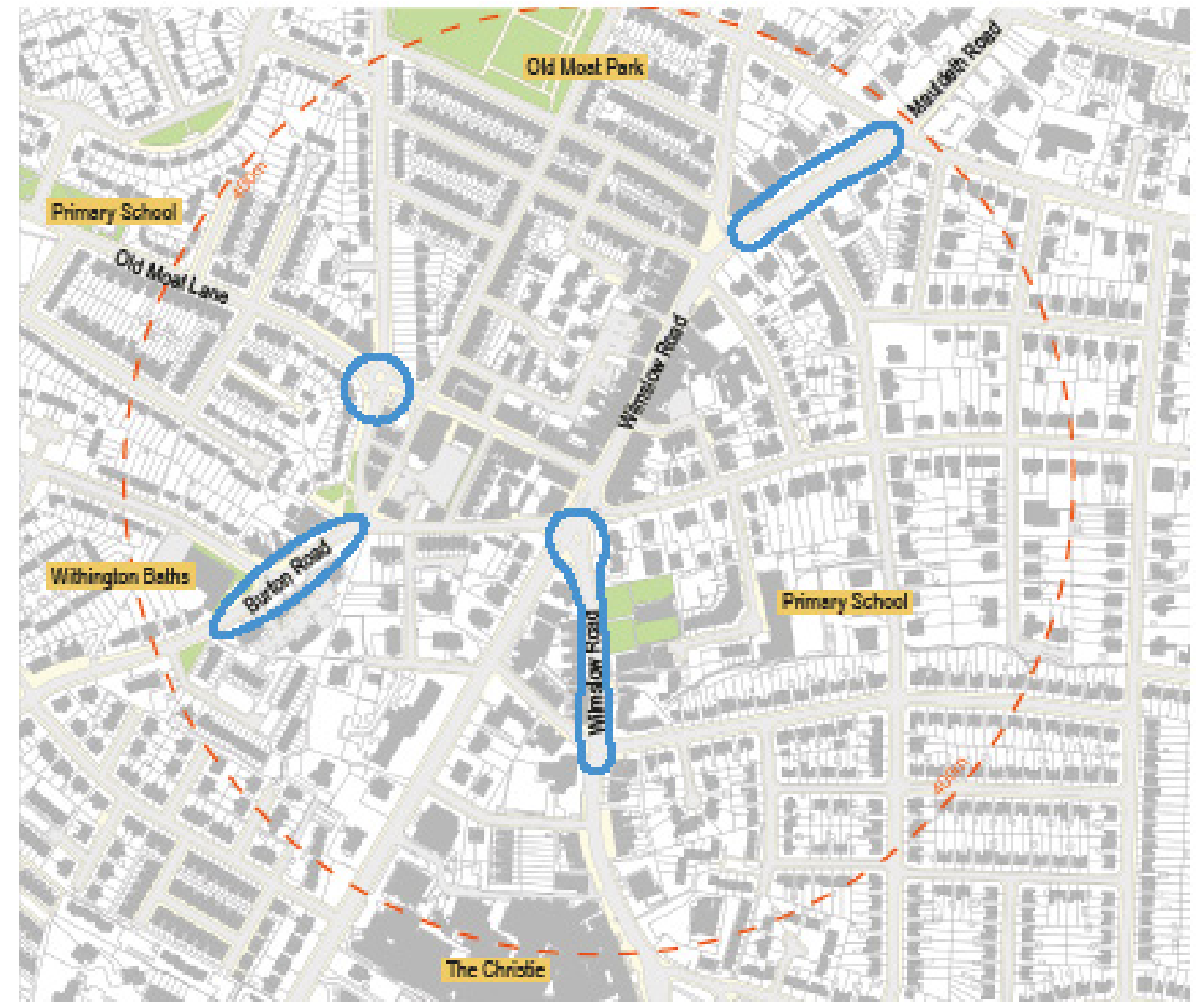
Proposals - It is proposed that the extent of the Village Core be defined at the entrance gateways into the Village Centre. Interventions could include traffic calming measures, public art, changes in materiality and street tree planting.

Low Intervention - Reduce the width of the carriageways to shorten the crossing distance. Provision of tactile paving at the crossing points. Provide a raised table across the mouth of the junctions. Provide raised uncontrolled crossings at gateways. Carriageway surface treatment different to approaches through the gateway section

High Intervention - Reduce width of carriageway at key entrances to shorten the crossing distance. Provision of a raised table or reduced height curbs through the gateway section. Carriageway surfacing / materials to be different to approaches through the gateway section.



Precedent images





# Restoration of shopfronts

Priority – High

Description - Invest in shopfronts to ensure façades are high quality and characterful

Purpose - To ensure that shopfronts are befitting and respectful of the Conservation Area

Baseline - A number of buildings within the Village have been identified as retaining their historic shopfronts, however there is potential that extant features remain beneath modern shopfront fascias and may be suitable for restoration.

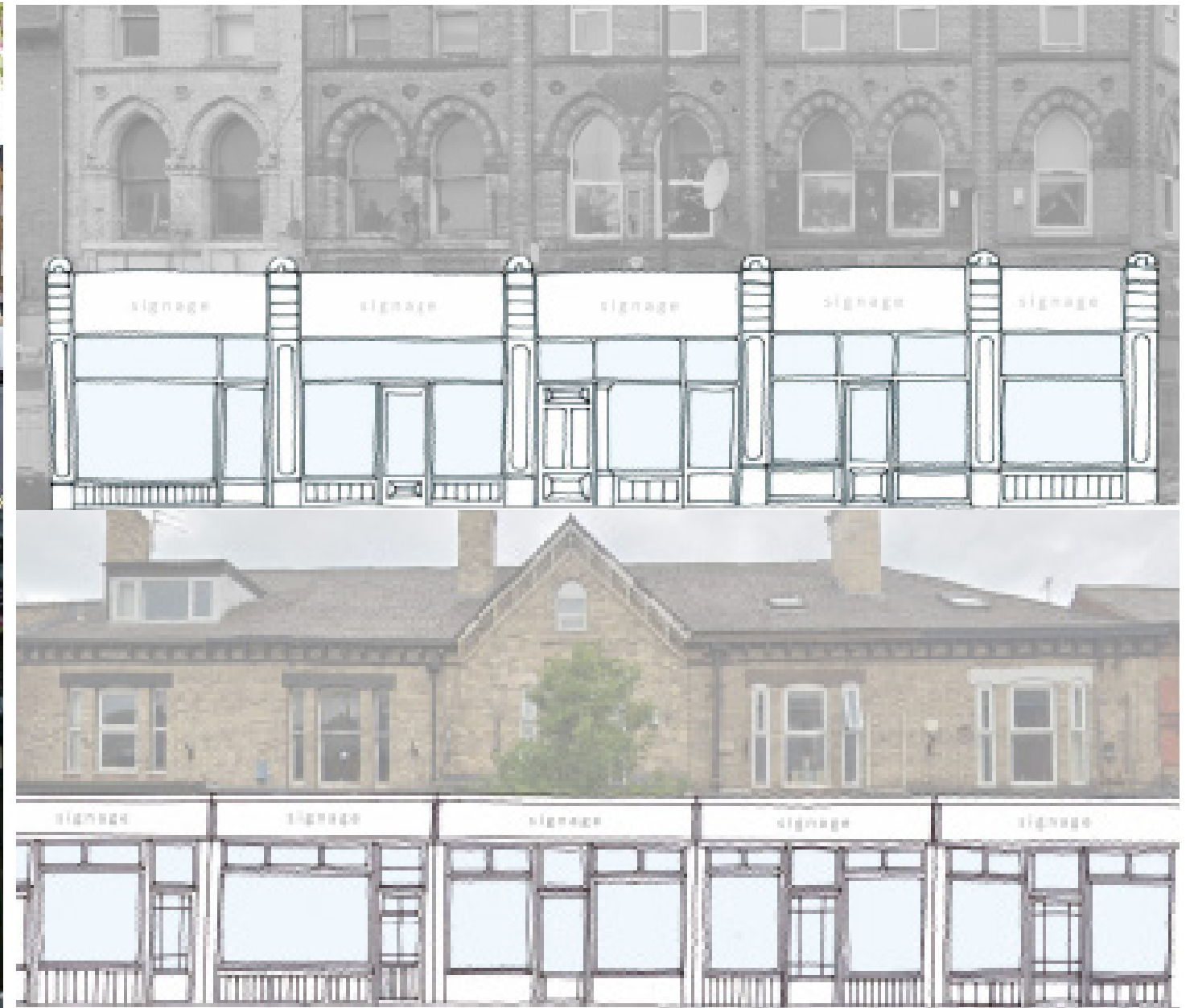
Proposals - Reinstatement of appropriate shopfronts and signage and provision of appropriate shopfronts. Replacement doors, windows and shopfront windows. Repair of decorative masonry where appropriate. Cleaning and repair to historic shopfront details.

Low intervention - Cleaning of and repairs to historic shopfronts throughout the Conservation Area, including reinstatement of metalwork details and reinstatement of appropriate glazing.

High intervention - Cleaning of and repairs to historic shopfronts throughout the Conservation Area, including reinstatement of metalwork details and reinstatement of appropriate glazing. Reinstatement of appropriate shopfronts and signage, repair of masonry and more appropriate ground floor security shutters.



Precedent images



Opportunities for shopfront restoration identified in Withington

# Enhancement of buildings

Priority - Medium

Description - Implement a programme of restorative works within the Conservation Area

Purpose - To restore the fabric of the Conservation Area and remove poor quality modern additions

Baseline - There are a number of poor quality modern shopfronts and additions that detract negatively from the historic fabric of the Conservation Area.

Proposals - The restorative works are to include repairing and redecorating gutters and eaves, reinstating historic details including roofing and windows, removal of paint to masonry/stone cills and removal of redundant fittings/signage and tidying and removal of wires and cabling on front elevations.

Low intervention - Removal of redundant fittings and signage, including tidying and/or removal of wires and cabling where necessary. Removal of inappropriate paint and graffiti.

High intervention - Consideration be given to potential for a unified paint scheme for features in Conservation Area, removal of paint to masonry and stone cills. Reinstatement of original windows, doors and similar features.



Enhancement opportunities identified in Withington



# Building facade design

Priority - Medium

Description - Identify suitable, contemporary interventions in Withington Village

Purpose – To express Withington’s cultural identity through contemporary and appropriate design interventions

Baseline – Opportunities have been identified throughout Withington Village where contemporary shopfronts exist in the village and how this is representative of the popular culture style within the Withington Village.

Project Outline – Building on existing locations of contemporary shopfronts that have been identified as making a positive contribution to the character of the conversation area.

Low Intervention - A set of parameters for proposals in these locations is to be established to ensure any proposals do not adversely affect the setting of the conservation area and/or the adjacent heritage assets.

High intervention - The buildings occupying 458-462 and 455-459 Wilmslow have been identified as potential development opportunity sites and present the opportunity for high quality contemporary design within the commercial core area



Contemporary facades in Withington



# Street Art

Priority - High

Description - Explore opportunities for public art throughout Withington Village

Purpose – To provide support to street art projects in Withington Village

Baseline – Existing mural art pieces have been identified within the conservation area, which is predominantly within the commercial core and contributes positively to the street scene.

Project Outline - Artwork is representative of the popular culture style within Withington village the impact of the artwork on the conservation area, designated and non-designated heritage assets should always be considered with regards to locations of future artwork as to not adversely affect the setting of the conservation area and/or heritage assets.

Low Intervention – Building on the crowdfunding project of We Are Withington, further community initiatives to secure additional community public art projects throughout the Village core.

High intervention - A set of parameters for opportunity sites for potential artwork are to established, this will consider site location for example not siting art work on listed building or positive contributor buildings, and is to be reviewed further following site investigation with all potential locations subject to consultation.



Precedent images



# Car Parks

Priority - Medium

Description – Improvements to the environment of the public car parks, so that they become attractive public spaces within the Village. There may be scope for facilitating development (particularly on Gledhill Street Car Park) provided that parking and servicing needs can be met as part of the Frameworks wider movement strategy.

Purpose – To improve the environment of surface level car parking in the Village so that they can be attractive public spaces.

Baseline - There are public, semi-public, and private off-street car parks in the Village. The car parks are unattractive spaces which deter from the appearance of the Village and used by businesses to store waste receptacles currently attracting fly tipping.

Low Intervention – Renovation and repair to existing surfaces, provision of bin stores, removal of graffiti and enhancement of landscaped borders. Introduction of cycle parking and vehicle charging points. Limiting length of stay during the day would free up space for visitors.

High intervention – Reconfiguration of spaces to provide a higher quality public realm. Potential for supporting and facilitating development and wider cultural events as well as providing for parking needs and servicing of businesses.



Precedent images

# Bee network

Priority - High

Description - Create an enhanced network of pedestrian and cycle routes around Withington

Purpose - To improve the cycle network and pedestrian access throughout Withington

Baseline - Pedestrian and cycle access is restricted throughout Withington, with vehicular movement and poorly located crossing points inhibiting movement. The major routes through the centre and on-road car parking reduce the ease of cycling through the Village.

Proposals - Development of segregated pedestrian/ cycle lanes and routes, possibly including pedestrian first streets partially or completely closed to through traffic, removal of on-street parking to provide opportunities for spill-out by businesses, and encouragement of integrated cycle movement.

Low Intervention - Signs and on road markings and traffic calming measures. Dropped kerb crossings (tactile paving) at key crossing points. Cyclist and pedestrian priority across side roads using markings and signs. Improved lighting and provision of regular rest places will also be a priority.

High Intervention - Provision of segregated cycle lanes & crossings and raised tables / shared surfaces at junctions & across sideroads. Restrict traffic and reassign road space for cyclists / pedestrians (where appropriate). Comprehensive wayfinding strategy, improved lighting and provision of rest places linked to smaller scale public realm improvements



Precedent images





# Age Friendly Strategy

Priority - Medium

Description - Improve accessibility for all users

Purpose- To make the Village centre readily accessible to all residents within Old Moat and Withington areas

Baseline - Connections to and from Withington Village to surrounding residential areas are challenging due to busy vehicular routes, such as Yew Tree Road and Wilmslow Road, that restrict pedestrian movement. Accessibility is therefore challenging to those who are less mobile or older.

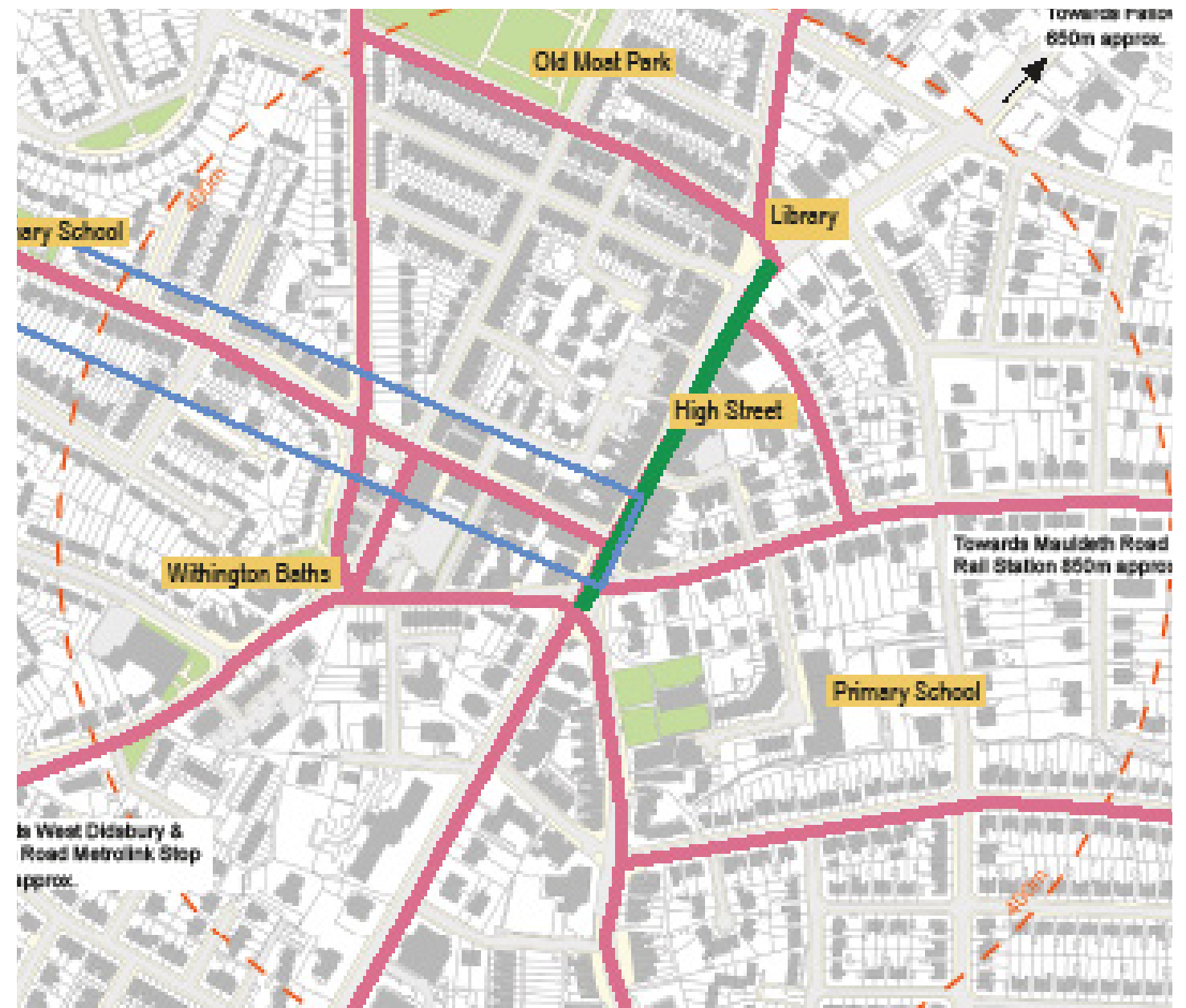
Proposals - This will include the introduction of street furniture, providing users the opportunity to 'stop and stay', improvements to the pavements to reduce the narrowness of them and improve connections between the residential areas, particularly Old Moat, and the Village Centre.

Low Intervention - Raised crossings at each key junction to allow level access of pedestrians and calming feature for vehicles at junctions, especially at Yew Tree Road roundabout. Dropped kerb crossings (tactile paving) at key crossing points and provision of regular rest places.

High Intervention - Raised tables / shared surfaces at junctions and across sideroads, including traffic restrictions and reassignment of road space for pedestrians where appropriate. Increase footway widths on corners of the junction. Provision of rest places linked to smaller scale public realm improvements.



Opportunity sites in Withington





# Withington Cultural 'hub'

Priority - Medium

Description - Promote Withington as a cultural destination

Purpose - To promote cultural activities in the Village in collaboration with the established cultural offer in the City Centre.

Baseline - Withington has a strong cultural background and heritage. It has made a number of contributions to popular culture.

Proposals - Encouragement will be given to pop-ups in vacant/ underutilised spaces in the Village Centre. Collaboration with the city's cultural organisations should be explored outside of the City Centre. This should be synergistic with Withington's cultural and heritage offer.

Low intervention - Development of local cultural events, markets, pop up events and activities utilising the centre's public spaces and underutilised buildings. Using artwork to promote the Village's cultural heritage.

High intervention - To collaborate with the city's cultural organisations to develop in the Village a distinct cultural offer outside of the City Centre. Consideration should be given to utilising Withington Village Hall, the Baths & Leisure Centre and other public buildings in the Village to develop the Village as a cultural hub.



Precedent images



# Opportunity Sites

Priority - Medium

Description - Explore suitable opportunities for development or enhancement of existing buildings

Purpose – To revitalise Withington Village centre through suitable opportunities for development or enhancement of existing buildings

Baseline – Withington village is a historic urban centre with a tight urban grain, with limited opportunity sites for development or enhancement.

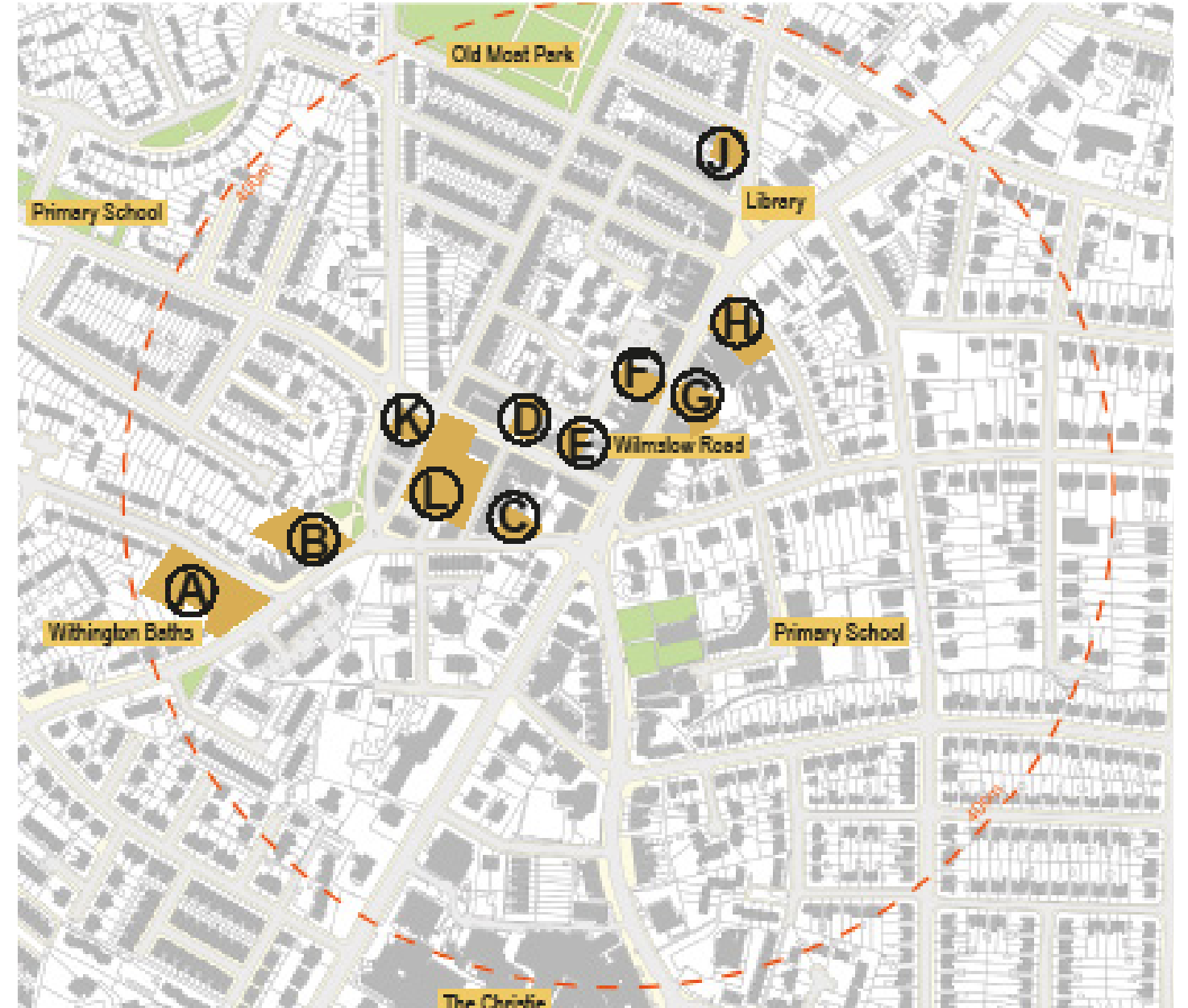
Project Outline - The baseline analysis of Withington Village has identified the possibility of targeted interventions in terms of smaller scale development opportunities and physical investment. Significant structural changes are not proposed, and are unlikely to be supported.

Low Intervention – Opportunities for restoration and reuse of buildings in the Conservation Area, through investment and repurposing existing buildings should be explored. There is also scope within the centre for an appropriate level of intensification.

High intervention - Where buildings are not fit for purpose, reconfiguration of existing buildings may be supported that would assist in delivering the Vision. Sites that come forward for redevelopment or new build proposals are not identified in the Plan and will be considered on a site by site basis in accordance with relevant planning policies.



Opportunity sites in Withington







# Appendix 2: Liveable Loveable Matrix

## **Appendix 2: Liveable Loveable Matrix**

Through their research, IPM have identified two key aspirations for district centres in Manchester. This is that they should meet functional needs, and be liveable, and meet affective needs, and be loveable. High Street UK 2020 research identified the following criteria as to whether a centre met liveable and loveable criteria:

### Liveable

- Does the offer meet the everyday, ‘convenience’ needs of the catchment?
- Are shops and other services open at suitable times?
- Is the centre clean and welcoming?
- Is the centre accessible (by a variety of transport modes), compact and walkable?

### Loveable

- Is there a central, spatial focus to the centre, like a market or attractive public realm?
- Are there community events and festivals that activate the centre?
- Are there unique attractions or businesses that add character to the centre?
- Is there a place management partnership that takes responsibility for the centre?

The following list provides an overview of key loveable and liveable priorities and assesses Withington against these.

<b>A liveable centre will contain the following:</b>		<b>A loveable centre will contain the following:</b>	
A food supermarket or concentrated food offer	✓	✓	Independent shops
Market provision	×	✓	Independent cafes
Augmented food offer (butcher, bakers, greengrocers)	✓	✓	Independent bars / pubs
Some comparison goods (e.g gifts, clothing, shoes, technology)	✓	✓	Independent restaurants
Household / DIY products	✓	✓	Individual attractions (businesses or natural assets) that ‘stand out’ on social media
Newspapers, magazines, tobacco, vaping	✓	×	Community Centre
Bank or building society and post office	✓	✓	Community events
Stationery and photocopying	✓	×	Community festivals
Beauty, hairdressers, barbers	✓	✓	Community groups
Public space and sporting facilities	×	✓	Residents groups
Facilities for children and young people	×	✓	Trade association(s)
Library	✓	✓	Sporting clubs (running groups, football etc)



Healthcare facilities (doctors and dentists etc) and pharmacy	✓	✓	A place management partnership
Professional services (accountant, solicitors etc)	✓	✓	Facebook groups / pages
Schools / Colleges	×	✓	Twitter accounts
Places of worship	✓	✓	Instagram content
Offices or other shared working space	✓	×	Local newspaper / radio / newsletter
Permeable centre with walking and cycling routes that connect the surrounding community to the centre (no barriers)	×	×	Cultural institutions
Public transport (buses, trains, trams)	✓	×	Performance venues
Be clean, tidy and free from litter	✓	×	Have a centre – a square, green-space, market, high street or some other physical ‘heart’ of the place
Feel safe and welcoming	✓	×	Have signs or apps to orientate people to a range of different attractions
Compact with the centre easily walkable	✓	✓	Evidence of community groups and other activities that activate the centre (e.g community noticeboard)
The centre should be connected to walking, cycling and public transport stops	✓	✓	Cues that people are taking care of the place – flower displays etc.

Assessed against the liveable/loveable priorities, it is clear that Withington meets many of the criteria to be considered as a liveable centre and is capable of meeting the convenience needs of the community. The centre benefits from public transport connections, and is easily walkable however it would benefit from improvements to the permeability of the Village. This would include the removal of barriers to pedestrian and cycle movement, particularly with surrounding residential areas including Old Moat.

Similarly Withington has many features commensurate with a loveable centre, including a range of independents, community events and groups, active Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts that advertise events and services in the Village and a trade association, We Are Withington. However the matrix does demonstrate that Withington would benefit from creation of a distinct ‘centre’, such as a public square and improved signage and orientation.

However it is clear that Withington does have many of the features that can identify a centre as being both liveable and loveable.

