

Wigan Borough Transport Strategy



Final version
Autumn 2024



Wigan Council

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Foreword

It is my pleasure to present Wigan Borough's latest Transport Strategy.

This Transport Strategy is a long-term commitment to strive for a better transport network and create fair opportunities for everyone. It defines our vision for the future, our key transport challenges, and our commitments to address them, as we move towards a new era for the borough, which is known as 'Progress with Unity'. Our aim is to create a more sustainable and accessible transport system to support the travel needs of everyone who lives in, works in or visits the borough.

Continuing to invest in our transport system is vital for our future, and for making all our towns and neighbourhoods flourish for those who live, work and visit them. We need to carefully consider how best to balance the wishes of drivers whilst also delivering improvements to walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport which have less environmental impact.

Tackling the environmental impact caused by emissions from road vehicles has been a key challenge we have faced in the development of this strategy. Poor air quality is considered the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. We are working with partners to support a range of measures to improve air quality so that people can live happier and healthier lives. This will include areas where people live, where children learn and play, and where transport is having the greatest impacts on the built and natural environment.

The measures include significantly increasing the use of sustainable modes of travel that are supported by a programme of major transport infrastructure improvements. This includes new east-west road infrastructure connecting Wigan town centre with the M6 and M58 to the west and the M61 to the east. This will substantially reduce congestion along the A577 corridor and provide the opportunity to transform existing infrastructure to prioritise sustainable modes of transport.

As a wider plan to support inclusive growth and respond to the environmental changes we face, the strategy will sit alongside Progress with Unity: A New Era for Wigan Borough, the Places for Everyone Plan and the emerging Wigan Borough Local Plan.

It is my pleasure to introduce this Transport Strategy, and I look forward to the work to come with partners and with our communities, to deliver the outcomes our Borough deserves.



Councillor Paul Prescott

Portfolio holder for Planning,
Environmental Services and Transport





1.

Introduction

1. Introduction

Welcome to our updated Wigan Borough Transport Strategy.

It is an exciting time for Wigan Council. As Greater Manchester (GM) plans out how to build on its ground-breaking trailblazer devolution deal with government, we too are considering what's needed locally to drive strategic economic growth and prosperity for our people and businesses. A lot has changed in the last decade, and major events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have accelerated shifts in how we live, in ways which we could never have imagined.

As our country has re-emerged from the pandemic, we are seeing a changing landscape for transport and environmental policy, framed by an increasing awareness of the urgent need to tackle climate change. Greater Manchester as a whole - the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and ten local authorities, are in the process of updating the statutory Local Transport Plan for the city region, Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 (GMTS2040). Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) is leading this work, which is due to complete in spring/summer 2025.

This Wigan Borough Transport Strategy will provide the local detail on the investment priorities that we consider to be important to us, as we seek to shape the future of our borough to enrich our communities and support people to fulfil their potential. It will exist as part of a wider family of strategies and plans which outline how we will achieve our ambitions for the borough. Specifically, the priorities and actions in this Transport Strategy are intended to complement, influence and reinforce our broader refreshed corporate policies.



Although this is the first formal update of our Transport Strategy since 2013, like all of the ten boroughs in Greater Manchester, summaries of our key local transport issues and opportunities and investment priorities are currently set out in a borough-specific Local Implementation Plan (LIP), as part of GM's five-year Transport Delivery Plan 2021-26. Together they set out the practical smaller-scale actions planned locally to deliver the GMTS2040, and achieve the ambitions of the ten GM boroughs, the GMCA and the GM Mayor, providing a coordinated approach to transport investment.

Over recent years we have benefitted from major investment in transport infrastructure including Leigh Guided Busway, Wigan Bus Station, A49 Link Road, electrification of the Wigan-Bolton rail line, and M6 Junctions 21a to 26 smart motorway upgrades. We have also benefitted from projects just outside the borough, such as upgrades to Newton-Le-Willows rail station in St Helens.

The last three years have also seen a significant increase in investment in walking, cycling and wheeling infrastructure with schemes delivered across the borough including in Wigan town centre, Standish, Pennington and Robin Park. Despite these successes, decades of under-investment in our transport networks means that much more work is required if we are to ensure our residents have access to the opportunities and services they require, and to make sure our borough continues to grow and prosper.

Looking ahead, we are now planning our next steps in the context of the environmental, health and accessibility challenges that we face. As a country, we have challenging net zero targets to meet, with transport known to be a significant contributor of polluting emissions. All ten Greater Manchester local authorities, and the GMCA, have declared a climate emergency making clear that urgent action is needed to put GM on a path to carbon neutrality by 2038.

The GMTS2040 includes a 'Right Mix' vision; a target to change the proportion of trips made by different modes by 2040. The aim is for 50% of trips to be made by sustainable modes by 2040, with no net increase in motor vehicle traffic as demand grows.

Our travel choices are also a pivotal element of how we can make progress with tackling some of the physical and mental health issues that are entrenched in society.

Reducing some of the harmful impacts of our transport systems, and making it easier for people to live more active lives, can have a substantial positive impact on our health and well-being.

Transport priorities are one of several factors being considered within the city-region at this time. We are one of nine GM boroughs that adopted the 'Places for Everyone' (PfE) Plan in March 2024. This sets out our strategic development priorities, including the 'Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor' which extends between the M6/M58 in Orrell via Wigan town centre and the M61 to Bolton town centre. We are also currently in the early stages of developing a new Wigan Borough Local Plan that will sit alongside the PfE Plan and our refreshed corporate policies under the 'Progress with Unity' banner. The Greater Manchester Mayor's new trailblazer devolution deal, and the launch of bus franchising in the borough as part of the GM Bee Network, are further reasons why it is now crucial for us to have an up-to-date clear strategic vision for transport. This will put us in the best possible position to secure the further funding we will need.

Our plan has to consider the strategic interventions that will be needed to positively change our borough. However, we have also aimed to make sure that it reflects local needs and recognises that the transport concerns that many residents and business

owners have are often, particularly on a day-to-day basis, very localised.

The location of our borough, the most westerly in Greater Manchester, differentiates it from the other GM boroughs. We have strong transport, and historical, linkages with Liverpool City Region, Warrington, and Lancashire. Our population is dispersed across the borough, with each town and locality having its own particular identity. Our transport network reflects this, and is, for example, less focused on trips to and from Manchester City Centre than is the case for the other GM boroughs. This can make it difficult to respond to some of the cross-boundary transport challenges facing the borough. But we can make things better for the borough and there are things within our gift we can change and do better.

We can work collaboratively with TfGM as a key partner, the other nine boroughs within GM, landowners, developers and our local authority neighbours, and we can influence the national and regional debate on transport.



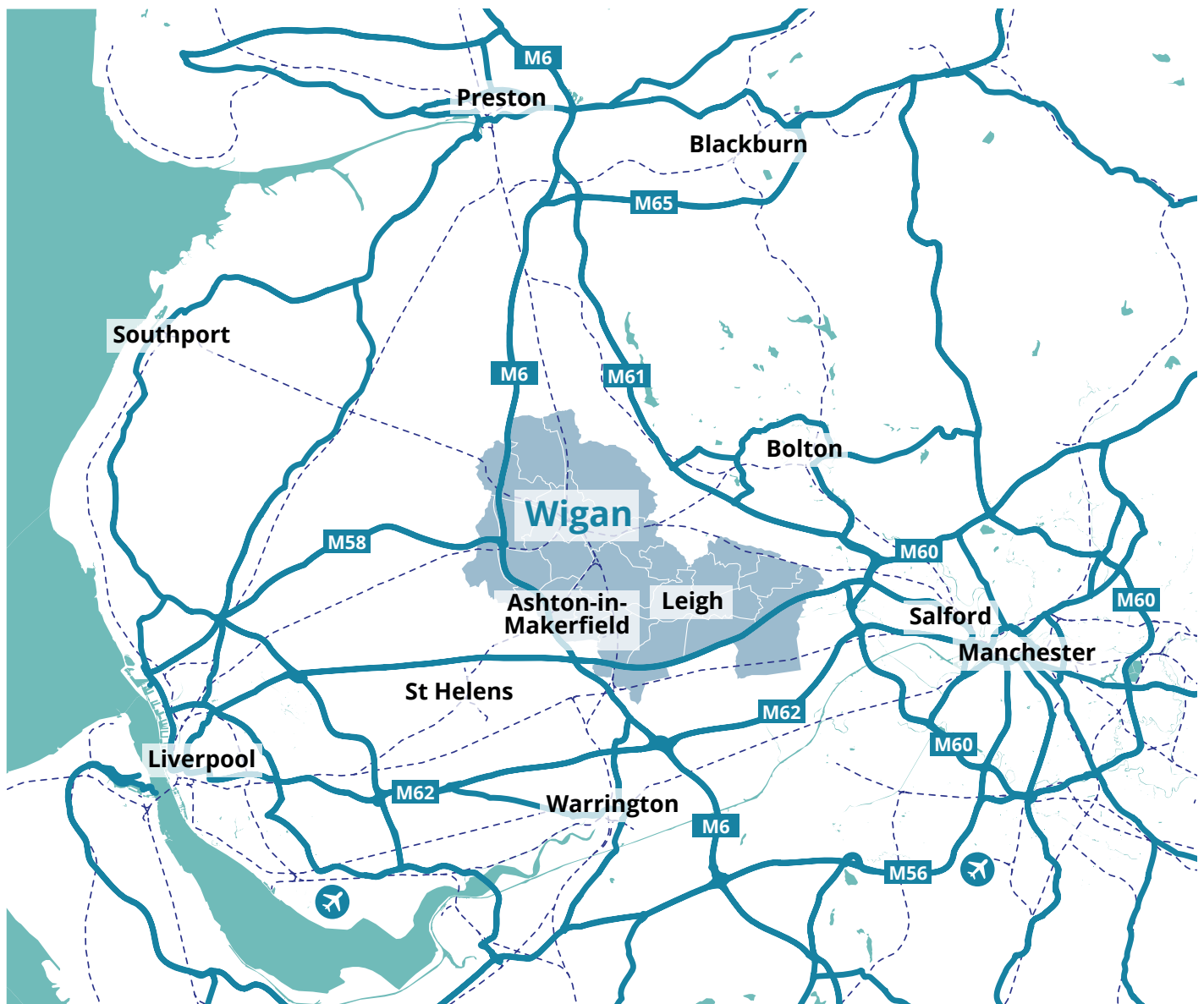
2.

**Issues,
opportunities
and challenges**

2. Issues, opportunities and challenges

Overview

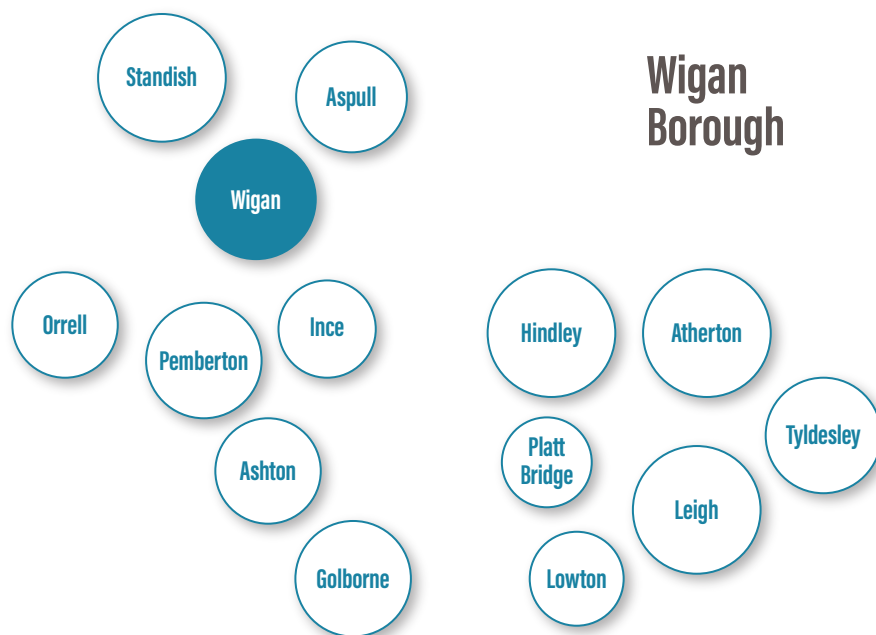
Wigan Borough is uniquely placed between the regional economies of Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Warrington and Lancashire. Although an equal partner in the GM city-region, we are located furthest from central Manchester, more closely related to the M6 than the M60.



Our strength is our excellent strategic connectivity by road (M6/M61/M58/M62/ A580) and rail, where our position on the West Coast Main Line railway means our borough has fast and direct rail access to destinations across the country, such as London, Birmingham, Warrington, Preston and Scotland, as well as regional and local links into Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region.

Our location, along with our transport connectivity, means we are a 360 degrees outward-looking borough, with the potential opportunities this brings. This is also demonstrated by TfGM analysis which estimates just 2% of all journeys made with a start or end in the borough, are to/from Manchester City Centre.

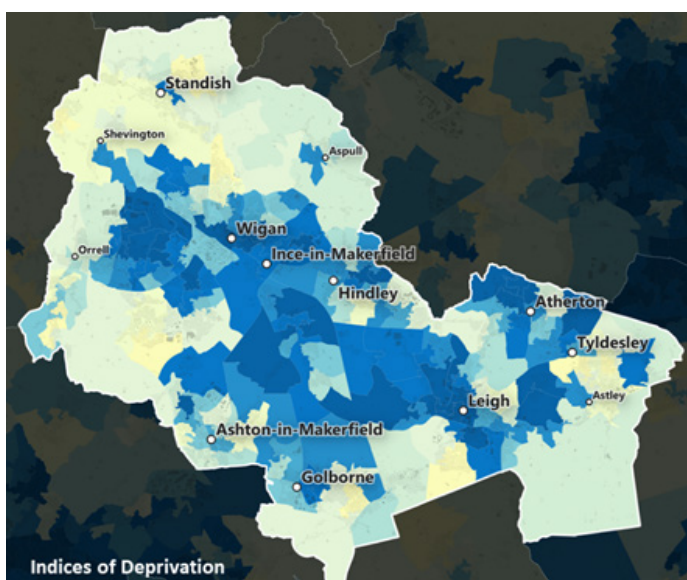
At around 75 square miles, Wigan Borough is the largest of the ten GM boroughs by land area. Around two-thirds of our borough is open and includes our many wetlands, parklands, woodlands, canal routes and other green spaces.



Our borough has a polycentric settlement pattern that differentiates us from the other nine GM boroughs and neighbouring places – with journeys between our towns and neighbouring places comprising half of all journeys made. Each of our town centres are unique in their own way and have their own sphere of influence, often overlapping to make movement patterns at a borough level complex. Alongside the larger towns of Wigan and Leigh the borough has a number of smaller towns, village centres, and high streets that each hold their local identities and sense of place.

Government analysis from 2019 shows that 29% of our residents live in neighbourhoods that rank among the 20% most deprived areas of England. This is a relative assessment taking into account income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services, and living environment.

Broadly within Greater Manchester, the southern GM areas typically have higher levels of prosperity and lower levels of deprivation (though there are still some concentrations), while the northern GM areas typically have extensive areas of deprivation and lower levels of prosperity. This points to some significant disparities across the city-region which the PfE plan seeks to address.



In Wigan Borough, the quality of our environment and our borough's strategic connectivity can be catalysts for growth. This is exemplified by the Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor proposition which is seeking to leverage the economic potential

of our existing transport infrastructure (and new investment) as part of the drive to boost the competitiveness of the northern areas of Greater Manchester. With land to accommodate c.1million sqm employment and c.13,000 homes, it will play a major role in meeting our PfE Plan requirement.

The PfE Plan, together with our corporate policies, set out our ambition to re-invent our town centres as destinations of choice within the borough. We want our town centres to be at the centre of vibrant residential communities, where people of all ages can enjoy the convenience of excellent local services. Transport has a key role to play, helping to create places which are appealing to live, work, visit and invest.

A key function of the transport system is to provide people with the means to access jobs and essential local services, including healthcare, education, leisure and retail opportunities. Given the dispersed nature of our population, this is challenging in a number of areas, with trip demands and journey attractors not always being well-aligned to the public transport routes and other modes on offer.

Recent research by Transport for the North (TfN) indicates that almost one in three (30%) Wigan Borough residents are at a high risk of experiencing transport-related social exclusion (TRSE) – the highest proportion of the ten GM boroughs. This means that they may experience difficulties in accessing public services, employment opportunities or leisure activities.

The inner ‘east-west core’ of the borough, stretching from the M6 to Tyldesley and Astley, is where most of Wigan’s economic and social deprivation appears concentrated. These are areas which typically also suffer from the most degraded environment and are most at risk of suffering from TRSE. These areas can be typified by lower paid jobs and fewer travel options. There can be challenges where workplaces are in less public transport accessible locations, or where shift patterns mean people need to travel outside the times that public transport services conventionally run. Consequently, those most in need of a car for their journey to/from work, can be amongst the people that are least able to afford one. People can be ‘forced’ into car ownership as a result, with the cost of travel significantly limiting travel horizons. Improving access to jobs and training is crucial so that transport is not a barrier to work or moving to a better job. Better transport for our residents also benefits the borough’s employers, assisting in recruitment and retention of staff.

	Vulnerability Score	Accessibility Score	Average TRSE Score
Wigan town centre	41.7	5.9	11.8
Pemberton	33.0	6.8	13.5
WARRINGTON AVE	19.2	14.9	17.3
Standish	13.5	16.3	18.3
Ashton	13.4	16.1	20.2
MERSEYSIDE AVE	36.2	11.8	20.3
GREATER MANCHESTER AVE	29.9	13.5	21.5
ENGLAND AVE	21.7	21.7	22.0
Tyldesley	16.6	21.3	24.0
WIGAN BOROUGH AVE	26.2	19.3	27.9
Hindley	25.6	22.9	34.4
Atherton	33.0	19.4	37.5
Leigh	36.1	20.9	38.3
Golborne	27.9	25.2	45.1

TfN transport-related social exclusion (TRSE) analysis

To support our understanding of how transport needs across the borough’s different townships may differ, supporting analysis has been compiled which is reported as Appendix A. This explains more about how our nine largest towns differ in terms of the socio-demographic profile of residents, travel to work patterns, and transport accessibility. In summary, Golborne, Leigh, Atherton, and Hindley are at greatest risk of transport-related social exclusion, with the result that people in need may be prevented from participating in the opportunities and communities around them because of poor connectivity.

2018 research by The Health Foundation showed 18% of unemployed people in England either turned down a job or decided not to apply for a job due to transport-related problems.

The 2024 Princes Trust Youth Index reports that 5% of young people missed school or work in the previous 12 months because they couldn’t afford transport, rising to 9% amongst young people from poorer backgrounds.

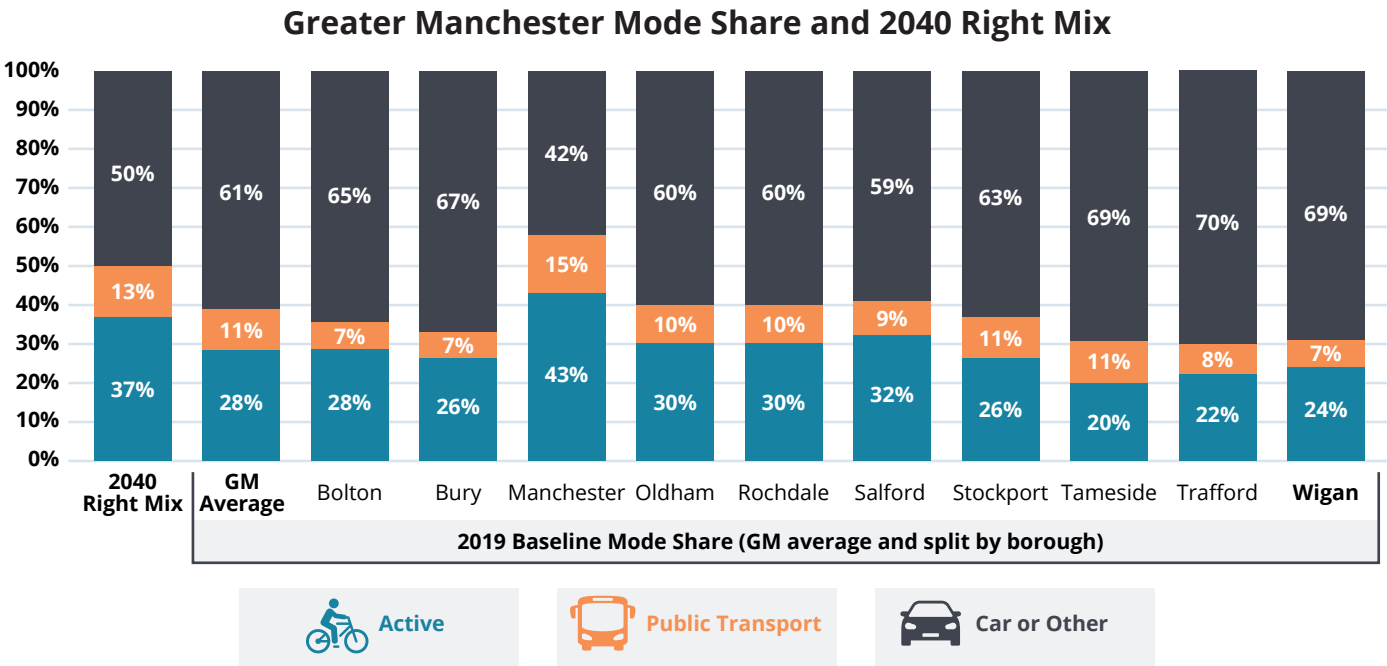
Main Issues, Opportunities and Challenges Facing the Wigan Borough

Decarbonising transport

Motorised transport has brought great benefits to society, giving us easier access to a wide range of places and opportunities. However, the impact of transport has become very damaging to the environment, contributing towards climate change which poses an unprecedented threat to societies across our planet. In the UK, transport is the largest contributor to our domestic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, accounting for 27% of emissions in 2019. By law, the UK’s emissions must reach net zero by 2050.

All ten GM local authorities, and the GMCA, have declared a climate emergency, making clear that urgent action is needed to put Greater Manchester on a path to carbon neutrality by 2038.

Through the GMTS2040, we are committed to the city region’s ambition for half of all daily trips in Greater Manchester to be made by walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport by 2040, up from 2 in 5 journeys today. Currently 69% of all trips that start in the borough are estimated to be made by car or van. 7% are made by public transport and 24% by active travel. Active travel means walking, wheeling or cycling, with the vast majority of users being pedestrians.



The percentage of trips made by public transport and active travel in Wigan Borough will need to increase if the borough, and Greater Manchester, are to meet their environmental targets. In Greater Manchester, this change in mode share is known as ‘Right Mix’.

High quality, sustainable and integrated transport alternatives are essential if we are to reduce private car use. This means that we need to make walking, wheeling, cycling, and public transport more attractive.

While new technologies such as electric vehicles (EVs) offer benefits in relation to decarbonisation and air quality issues such as Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), they will not solve issues of congestion or road danger. Some air quality issues may be worsened, for example EVs tend to be heavier than fossil fuel vehicles meaning more particulate emissions from car tyres, brake pads and road surfaces. We are also seeing more use of on-demand transport (such as car clubs, bike hire schemes, and automated vehicles) and personal mobility/micro mobility vehicles (such as e-bikes and electric scooters). These are all changing the ways in which people think about travel.

To harness the increasing range of sustainable modes of transport there needs to be better integration between travel modes, easier interchange, integrated ticketing and timetable alignment. There is also the potential to make stops and stations into places that offer a broader community value, beyond boarding and alighting. We can make them more attractive as places to use, and potentially diversify into becoming hubs for wider community use.

As we decarbonise the way we all travel, we must also take advantage of the benefits which this process can create. These include improving air quality and health, reducing congestion and noise impacts, and delivering new high-quality jobs in emerging technologies.

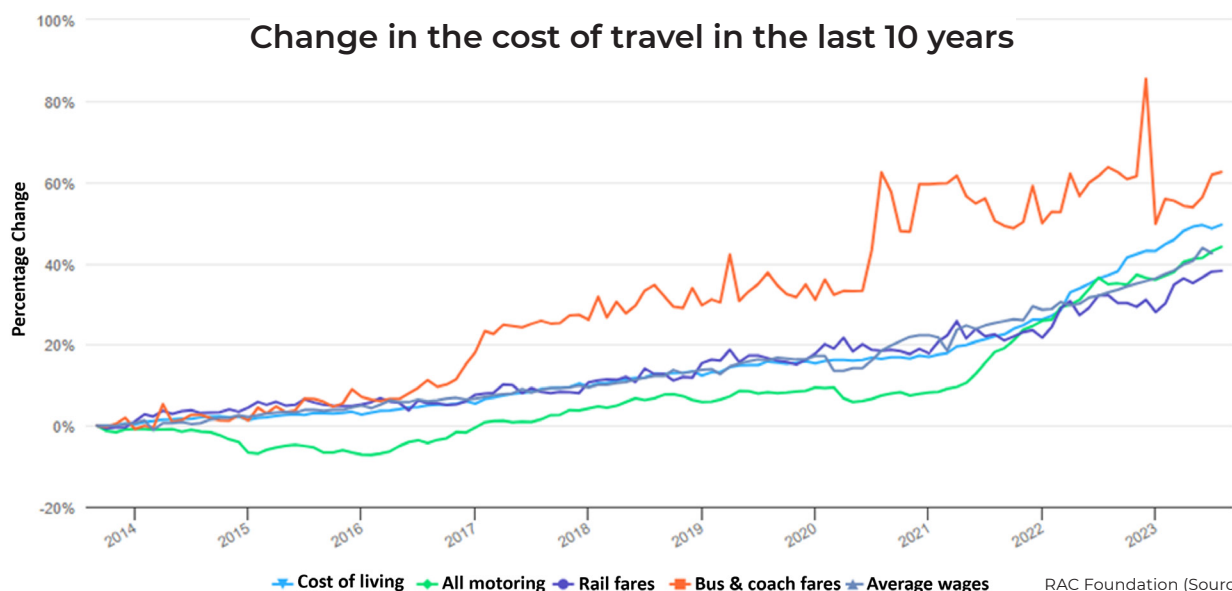
Travel choices and affordability

We know that people travel for a range of reasons and how people make their journeys is generally the result of accessibility and affordability, rather than choice. We are sensitive to how people's choices have become more difficult in recent times due to the cost of living crisis.

Census 2021 data indicated that 79% of households in Wigan Borough have at least one vehicle, and the previous Census from 2011 showed that at that time 76% of workers used a car as the main way they travelled to their job (as either a car driver or passenger)¹. We are sympathetic to the rising cost pressures felt by motorists in recent years. As well as the upfront cost of vehicles, there are annual costs for vehicle tax and insurance, then on-going costs related to fuel and parking. The council has relatively little ability to influence many of these costs but is aware of the financial pressure this can place on households. Of the 10 GM districts, Wigan has the third highest rates of car ownership (vehicles per household).

Providing an attractive, accessible and affordable public transport system that provides a genuine alternative to car travel is critical, and a basic need for people that do not have the option of driving. Research undertaken in November 2022 by Ipsos UK on behalf of the Department for Transport (DfT) found that almost half of all people surveyed (47%) agreed that it was cheaper to travel by car than use public transport. In the same survey, just over a third of all people (35%) said they were finding it 'difficult' or 'very difficult' to cope financially on their household's income, and were more likely to change their travel behaviours to reduce travel costs.

ONS data shows how the relative cost of different travel modes has changed nationally over the last decade, shown in relation to the wider cost of living increases. The graph shows how bus fares (63%) have increased quickly in real terms compared to the costs of driving (44%) and rail fares (38%). This was changed by the introduction of the capped bus fares scheme that was launched nationally in January 2023 (having started earlier in GM in



¹ Census 2021 data is accurate for car ownership data, but is not considered a reliable source for understanding current travel to work patterns as the COVID-19 pandemic was still impacting many people's commuting arrangements on the survey day.

We know that buses are the most widely used public transport mode, typically used by people on lower incomes more than higher earners (who are more inclined to use cars or trains).

We understand that bus travel has been unattractive proposition for some people in recent years, and car dependency (including forced car ownership) have dramatically increased in some areas, partly in response to the limitations of public transport alternatives. Greater Manchester, like many other parts of the country, was caught in a vicious circle, where falling bus passenger numbers and increasing fuel costs meant operators were forced into increasing ticket prices and reducing services. The poorer quality of service in turn put off potential users, leading to patronage and revenues falling further.

Run well, the bus network can be a cornerstone of the public transport network and there are examples we can look to from across Europe, London, and outlier cities in the UK such as Nottingham, Brighton & Hove and Reading, where buses have become established as the mode of choice for a wide cross-section of people, including those that have a car available.



The issues with the bus network led local leaders to conclude that Greater Manchester could not afford to ignore the opportunity to go ahead with bus franchising. Greater Manchester was already financially supporting almost a quarter of bus services that were running. Affordable fares will be critical to increasing the attractiveness of bus services, and bus franchising provides TfGM with greater control over setting fares, ticket products and payment platforms.

Our network has shrunk

In 1977, buses in greater Manchester travelled

137 million km 

In 2022, buses in greater Manchester travelled

85 million km 

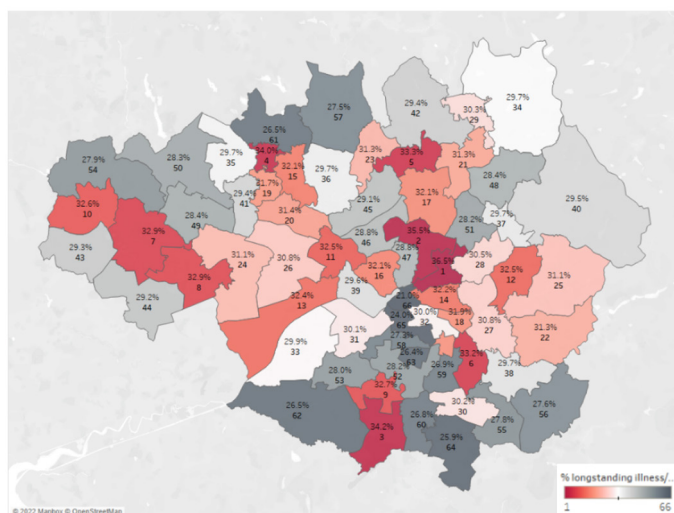
What is Bus Franchising and how is it helping?

The Greater Manchester bus network is now operating under a franchised model. This means that GMCA are in control of the bus network. They can decide where and how frequently buses run, and how much tickets will cost. For passengers, this provides benefits including simpler fares and ticketing. It also means prices can be capped across buses and trams (and in the future, trains) so that users do not pay more than a fixed amount for daily, weekly or monthly journeys. Bus franchising also means timetables can be better joined-up between buses and other public transport services so passengers can more quickly and easily change between them. It also means TfGM can deliver a 'one-stop shop' for travel information and customer support, all presented under the single yellow Bee Network transport brand which is easy for passengers to recognise and understand.

We are also sensitive to the rising costs of rail travel and how these impact our residents and workers that travel by train. As a local authority we have little influence on rail fares as pricing is set generally through government and the train operating companies. We continue to engage with these bodies through TfGM to seek more affordable rail travel and TfGM is seeking greater influence over local rail ticket products and pricing as our devolution powers evolve.

Encouraging active lifestyles to support health and wellbeing

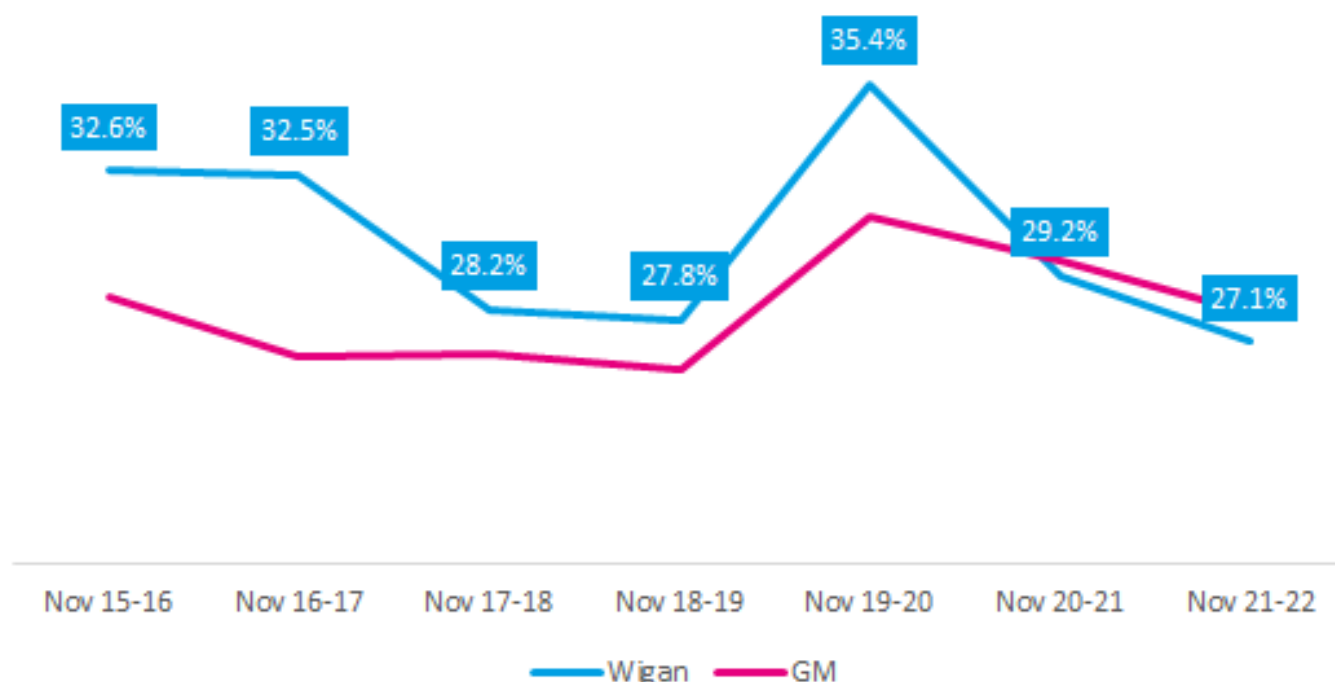
The council is always working to improve public health across the borough. Life expectancy data shows GM residents currently live almost two years fewer than the England average, reflecting the challenges faced within the city-region. We see health and wellbeing as the foundation of a prosperous and thriving society, so must take every action we can to support our residents.



Clearly transport can play a key role in providing access to health services and this is important to help people get treatment and the support they need.

Changing people's transport choices also has the potential to positively impact physical and mental health. In particular, we know there can be impactful physical and mental health benefits for people that are encouraged to live more active lifestyles.

Sport England's 2021/22 Active Lives surveys reported that over a quarter of the GM population (28%) is classed as 'inactive', defined as completing less than 30 minutes of activity a week. Residents of the Wigan Borough reported a lower level of inactivity (27.1%), albeit still to a level which is higher than the England average (25.8%).



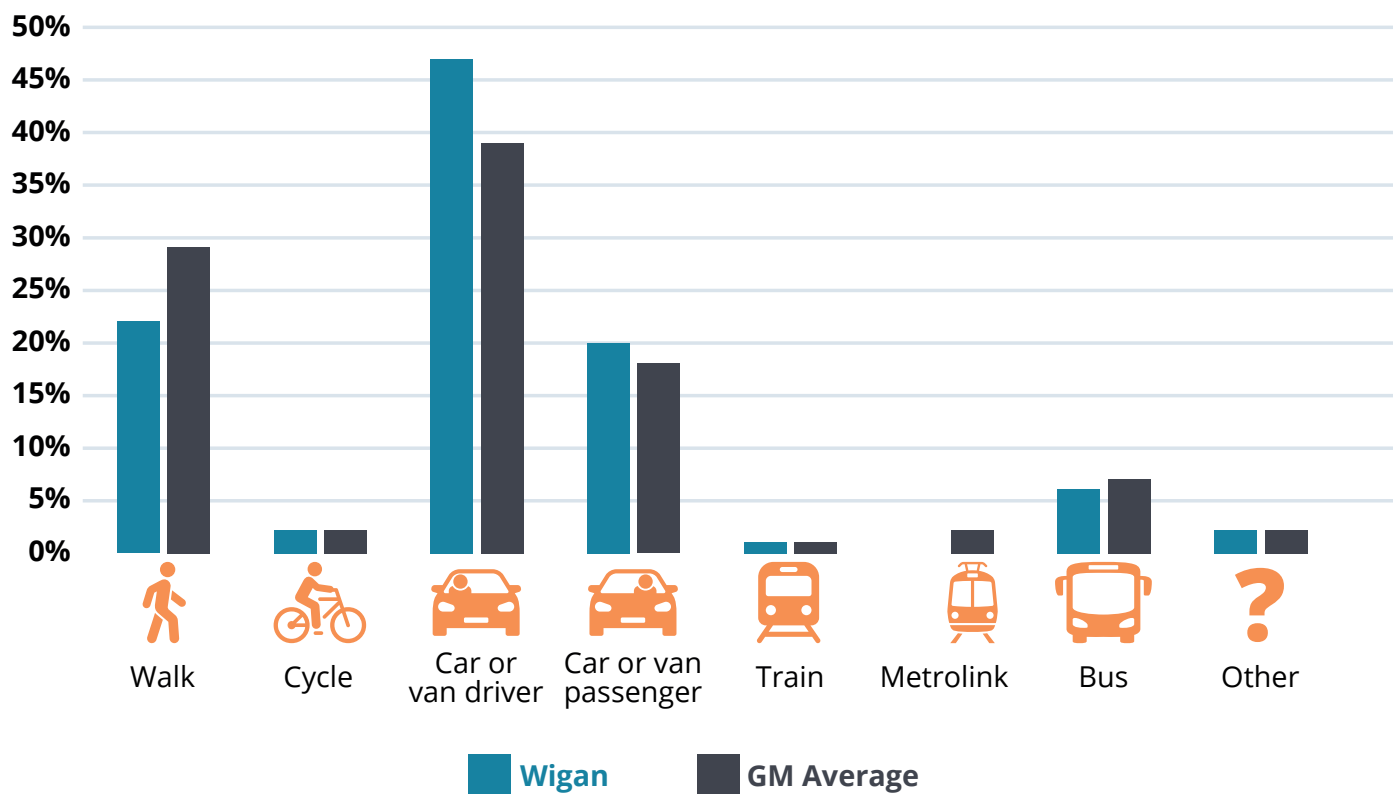
Inactivity is a serious concern. Coronary heart disease and obesity are local public health priorities and can both be linked to inactivity. Government advice recommends adults undertake at least 2.5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity per week. Inactivity is estimated to add £26.7 million of costs to local health services each year, related to the main chronic diseases (heart disease, diabetes and cancer) that could be prevented by people being more active and making other lifestyle changes.

The effects of inactivity were also shown in a University of Cambridge study, published in 2020, which used data collected from over 300,000 commuters in England and Wales. Their work showed that, compared with those who drove, people who cycled to work had a 20% lower risk of death overall. They also had a 24% lower risk of dying from cardiovascular disease and a 16% lower risk of dying from cancer. Walking to work was associated with a 7% lower risk of cancer diagnosis compared with driving.

Wigan Borough is currently estimated to have a lower proportion of trips made by active travel (22%), compared to the GM average (29%). We understand this is in part, a reflection of the more dispersed pattern of development across our borough. However, we consider encouraging more active travel to be a win-win for us and we are keen to use it as a key tool in our public health strategy. We know that improvements are needed in the quality and extent of walking and cycling infrastructure around our neighbourhoods, to make routes accessible and to feel enjoyable and safe to use. If we can make the infrastructure better, then we hope to make active travel, and in turn, exercise, a more common part of more people's everyday lives.

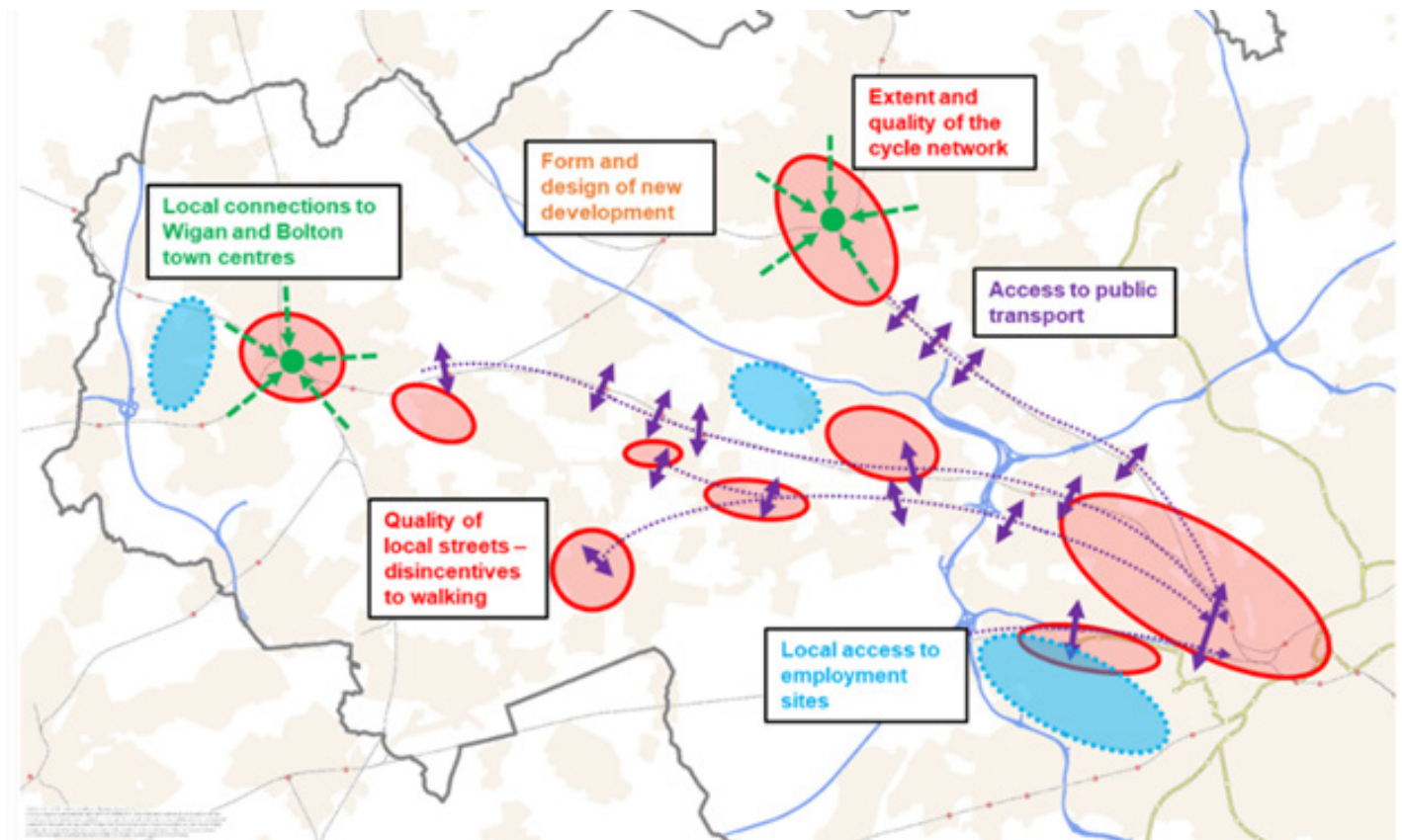
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Wigan's Current Mode Share Compared to GM Average (2019)



Connected neighbourhoods

TfGM analysis estimates around half (46%) of all journeys that start in the borough are less than 2km in length (classified as 'neighbourhood trips'). This is a slightly higher proportion than the GM average of 44%. Of these short trips, around 50% are estimated to be currently made by car or van, which is also higher than the GM average. The plan below was presented as part of the evidence base which underpins the GMTS2040. It highlights issues which impacts connectivity within the north-west of the city-region.



In recent years, through publications such as Gear Change², the government has set out how significant economic, environmental and health benefits can be unlocked by supporting people to make more of these shorter-distance journeys by active modes (meaning “walking, wheeling and cycling”). We are therefore looking closely at the barriers that stop people using these modes and seeking to reduce the challenges where we can.

The Walking and Cycling Index research, commissioned by Sustrans, reported the following for GM residents, which gives some insights into the types of changes which

people may support:

- 37% of people feel GM is good as a place to cycle and 73% feel it good as a place to walk or wheel.
- 62% of people agreed that GM would be a better place if there was more high street space for people to socialise, walk, wheel and cycle.
- 82% of people agreed that GM would be a better place if there were more measures to reduce antisocial behaviour on the streets.
- 60% of people supported more cycle lanes alongside roads which are separated from motorised vehicles.
- 75% of people said more road crossings with reduced wait times would help

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-plan-for-england>

Central to how we will improve walking and cycling facilities is the implementation of the GM Active Bee Network, which, as part of the Streets for All vision, is striving to make Greater Manchester the first city-region in the UK to have a fully joined-up walking and cycling network. The desired outcome is for walking and cycling to be the first and natural choice for short distance neighbourhood journeys for as many people as possible. In line with the vision of the GM Active Travel Commissioner, Dame Sarah Storey, all strategies, plans and developments will have this principle at their core.

Over the last five years we have already started to deliver a bold programme of infrastructure improvements in line with the national Cycle Infrastructure Design guidance (Local Transport Note LTN1/20), Manual for Streets, and the GM Streets for All Strategy. We are proud of Wigan Borough's record as one of the best achieving boroughs in GM for Bee Active Network delivery. However, there is a lot more infrastructure improvements that we still want to deliver.

We also know that we must focus on antisocial behaviour, and make sure people feel safe when travelling around their neighbourhood areas. This can be a major concern for various types of people and can limit the journeys people are willing to make. CCTV and lighting can help to reduce, if not remove, concerns about personal safety.

Our focus on neighbourhood travel is also important to encourage more public transport use. Local connections to and from rail stations, bus stops and key interchanges are sometimes difficult to navigate which becomes a barrier to patronage. Addressing these local issues can help support more sustainable neighbourhood journeys. To maximise sustainable travel from new development, there is also a need to promote sites that are well connected to public transport services, build-in high enough densities to create a critical mass of demand and provide walkable connections to integrate new development sites with the surrounding area. Lighting, and levels of footfall should be considerations when designing neighbourhood facilities to ensure attractive connections are provided.

Lastly, we sometimes hear from residents that cycling and walking around some neighbourhoods is not possible because of local topography. We know that parts of our borough are hilly and always seek to design and signpost the most accessible routes possible. We are also seeing an increase in the use of new vehicle technologies, such as electric bikes, which make previously more difficult journeys much easier.

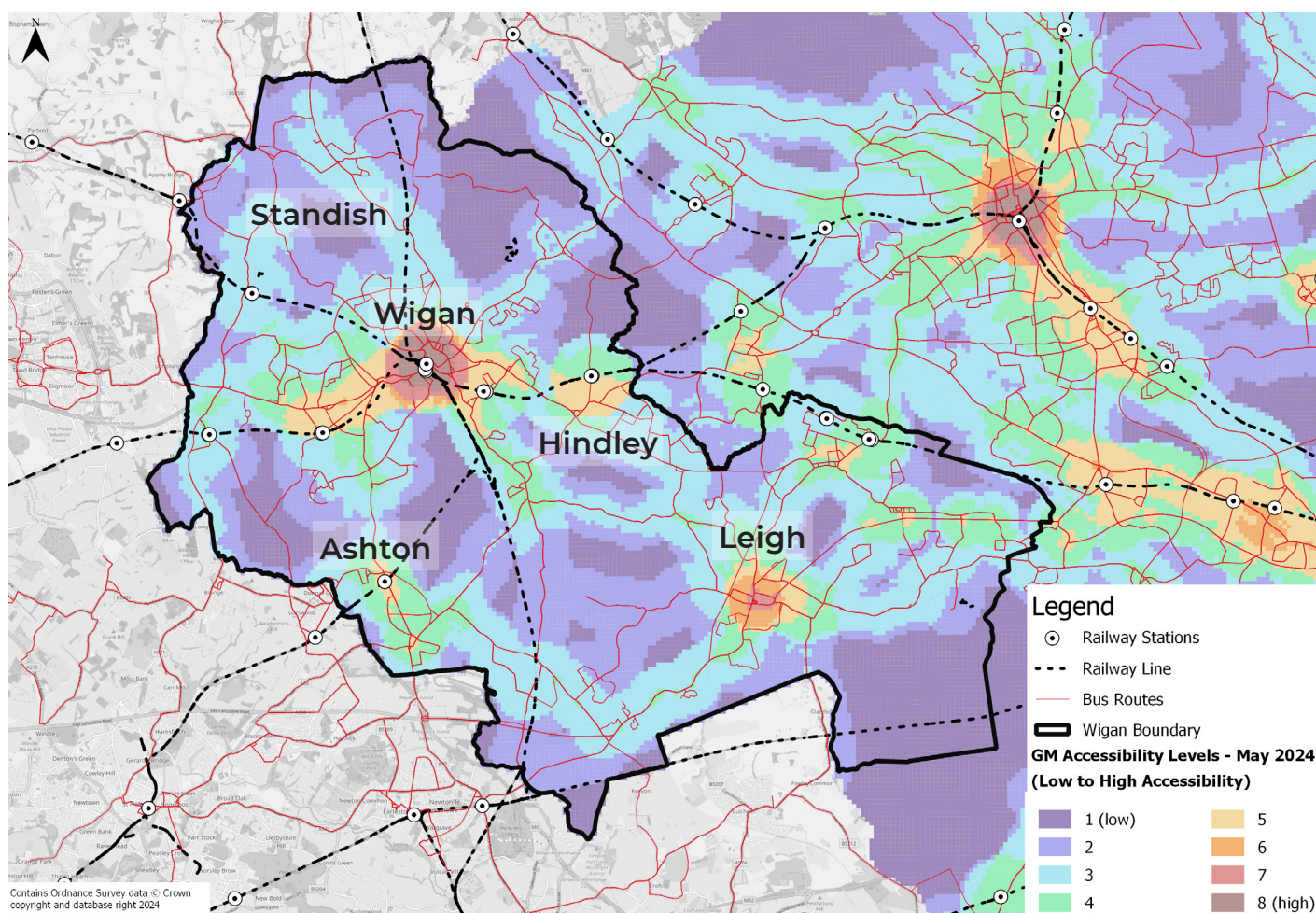


Strengthening public transport

Current provision

The patterns of development that make up Wigan Borough have historically been spatially distinct, in a way that is unique amongst the ten GM boroughs, creating many townships of varying size and character. This population pattern is called 'polycentric' (or 'many centres'), which can be challenging to accommodate by public transport.

To illustrate this, the plan below presents a TfGM analysis of the current levels of public transport accessibility across the borough. Higher scoring areas, such as Wigan town centre, are those well served by public transport, while lower scoring areas, such as Golborne and Standish, suffer from a lack of public transport service options.



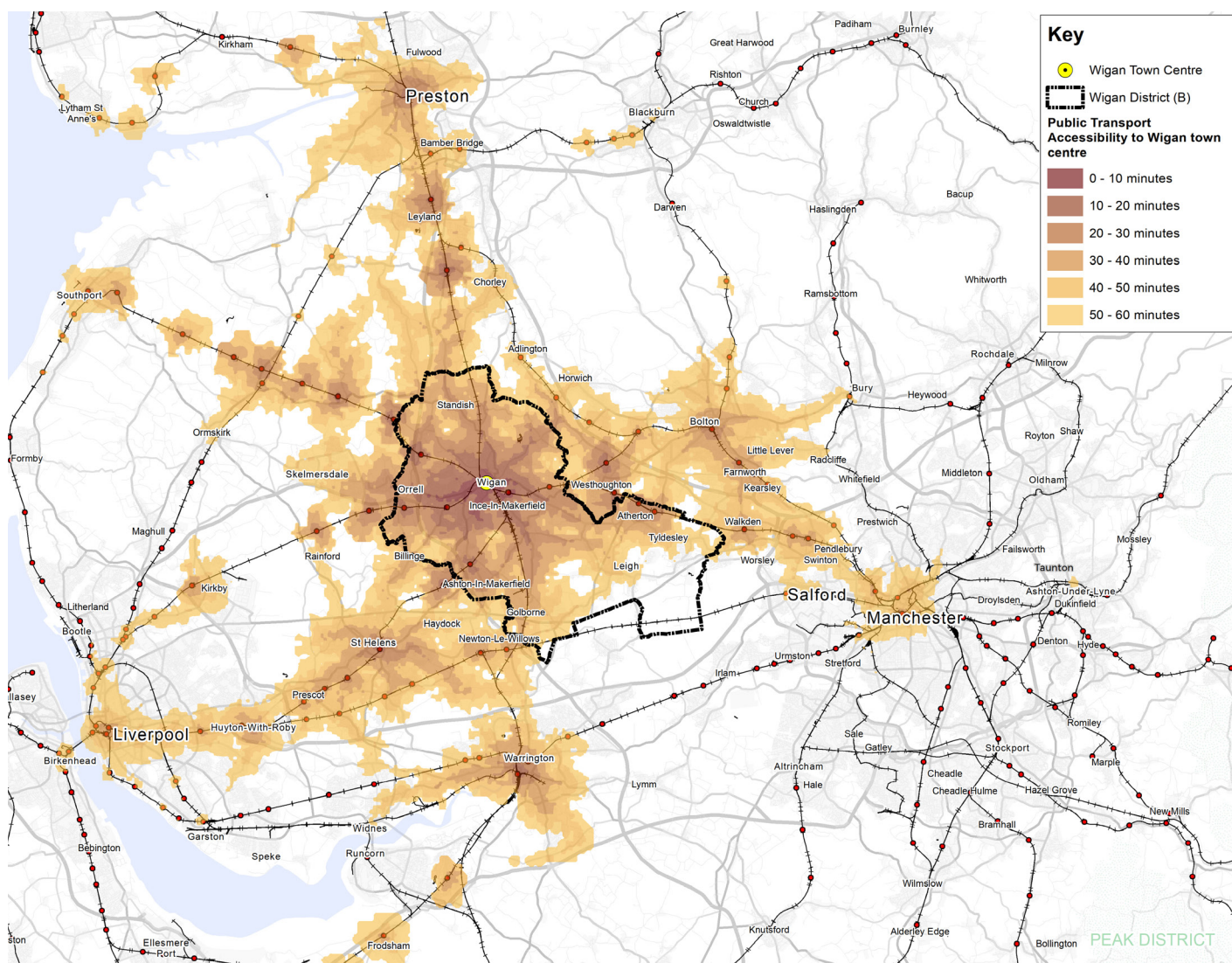
The public transport network serving the borough comprises bus and rail services.

Wigan Borough is served by an extensive network of bus services which provides connections between residential areas and towns across the borough and beyond our boundary. We have towns such as Standish, Golborne and Leigh which do not have a rail connection, and so are reliant on their bus connectivity. The highest profile bus routes are the Guided Busway services, which operate from Leigh and Atherton, and connect to Salford and Manchester City Centre.

The bus network is complemented by the rail offer with ten rail stations currently in use within the borough, served by four rail lines: West Coast Main Line (Wigan North Western), Southport – Manchester Line (Gathurst, Wigan Wallgate, Ince, Hindley, Hag Fold, Atherton), Kirkby Headbolt Lane – Wigan Line (Orrell, Pemberton, Wigan Wallgate), Liverpool – Wigan Line (Garswood, Bryn, Wigan North Western), Wigan – Bolton Line (Wigan Wallgate, Hindley). Notably, the borough does not benefit from any rail stations on the Chat Moss (Liverpool to Manchester) rail line with the closest rail station being Newton-le-Willows in St Helens Borough. There are also rail stations located outside of the borough boundary which are important for our residents. These include Appley Bridge and Daisy Hill on the Southport – Manchester Line, and Garswood on the Liverpool – Wigan Line.

The borough is not currently connected to the city-region’s Metrolink network, with the closest stop being in Eccles.

Wigan town centre’s 360 degree reach is illustrated by the public transport accessibility plan (inset) which shows its 60 minute catchment. Places across the North West are accessible, including Liverpool and Manchester City Centres, Preston, Warrington, Southport and even south Cumbria. It also highlights the poor public transport connections between Wigan and Leigh, the borough’s two largest towns.

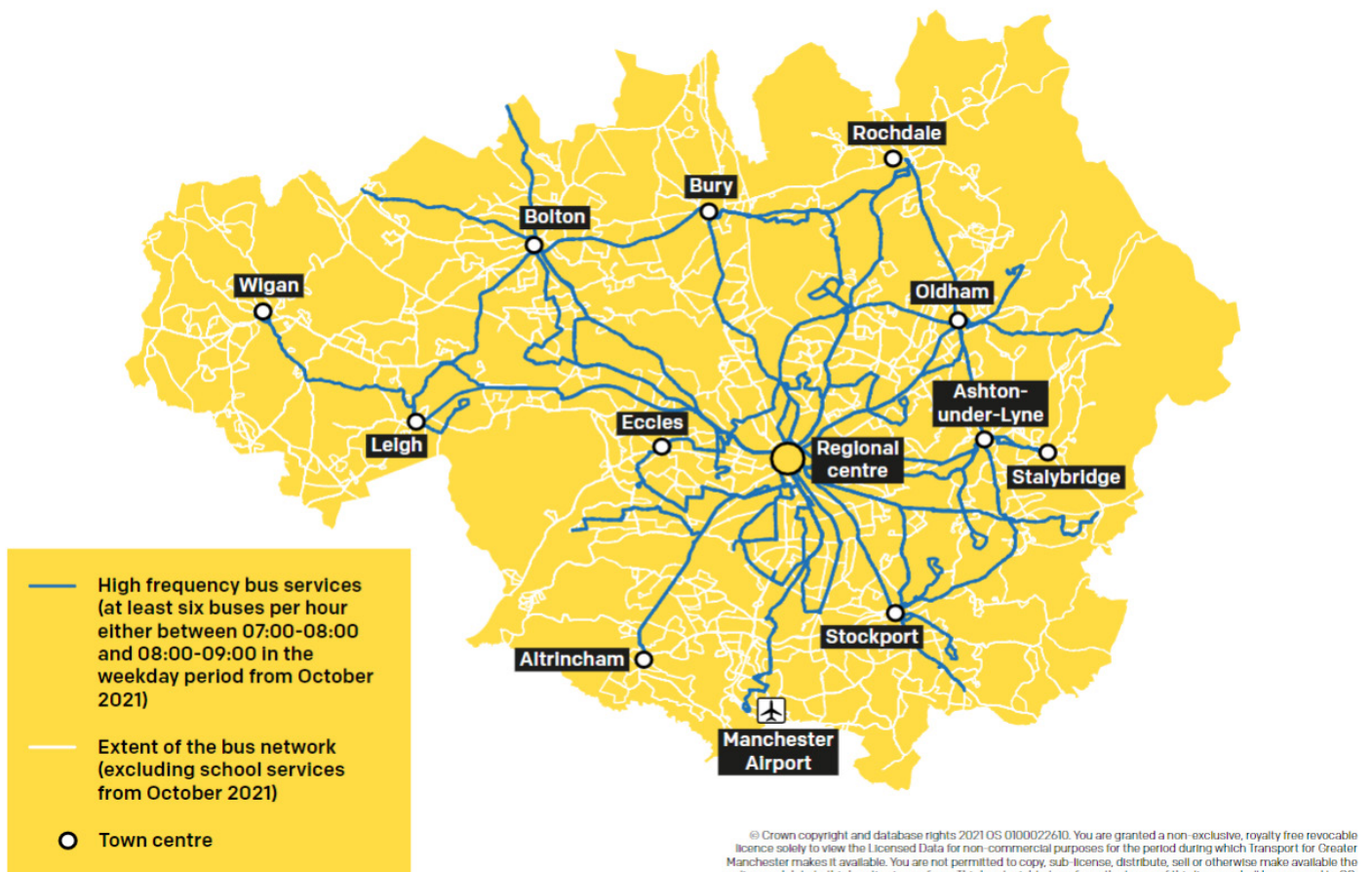


Bus in focus

Buses are, by some way, the most important element of Greater Manchester's public transport network, accounting for four out of every five public transport trips. In any given year, over half of the GM population will travel by bus. It is a highly versatile transport mode, which has the ability to serve more people than any other mode of public transport. As a result, we have historically known buses to be used for all types of journeys and with a fairly even split in journey purposes such as commuting, education, shopping and leisure.

Generally, TfGM has sought to plan the Bee Network so that bus is the most obvious public transport choice for people making short and middle-distance trips (up to 6km). For longer journeys, bus usually becomes less attractive as in-vehicle journey times become an increasing factor, often compounded by highway congestion. For example, a journey by bus between Wigan and Westhoughton may be expected to take 32 minutes compared to 10 minutes by train and 16 minutes by car outside of peak hours.

The density of the bus network across the city-region is not uniform. The densely populated area inside the M60 motorway is better served by more high frequency bus routes, including several which use radial routes to operate into Manchester City Centre. Other than the Guided Busway services from Leigh and Atherton (via Tyldesley), our borough does not have any high frequency City Centre bus connections. Instead, our bus routes are more focused on connections to Wigan or Leigh bus stations, as hubs for urban services. These services include wider inter-urban routes to places beyond our borough boundary, such as Bolton, St Helens and Warrington.



Existing timetabled bus network, as reporting in the GM Bus Service Improvement Plan (October 2021)

We recognise there are cross-boundary connections which are not currently well served by bus routes, such as with Haydock and Newton-le-Willows. It may be possible to explore new bus routes to form better connections to these places through bus franchising, although it will also require collaboration with St Helens Borough Council.

Bus franchising is now live in the Wigan Borough following the launch of the Bee Network in September 2023. This gives TfGM control to shape the bus network and should mean service routes change over time to better address connectivity gaps in areas that are currently less accessible or most at risk of transport related social exclusion.

Prior to the launch of franchising, GM set out its plans in the GM Bus Strategy. This sets an ambitious initial target to increase bus patronage by 30% by 2030 from 2022/23 levels. This would mean almost 50 million more journeys being taken by bus each year, giving a total of around 200 million. In addition, by 2030 the aim is to run more high frequency services with at least five buses per hour on key radial and orbital routes. Another aim is to provide 90% of GM with a 30-minute frequency bus (or Metrolink) service on weekdays within 400m of their home. Where this is not possible, other service options will be considered as part of the integrated Bee Network (such as a demand responsive service like Local Link). The future development of the Bee Network will present us with opportunities to improve services and we are in a strong position to benefit as part of the first tranche of the city-region to be transitioned to bus franchising.

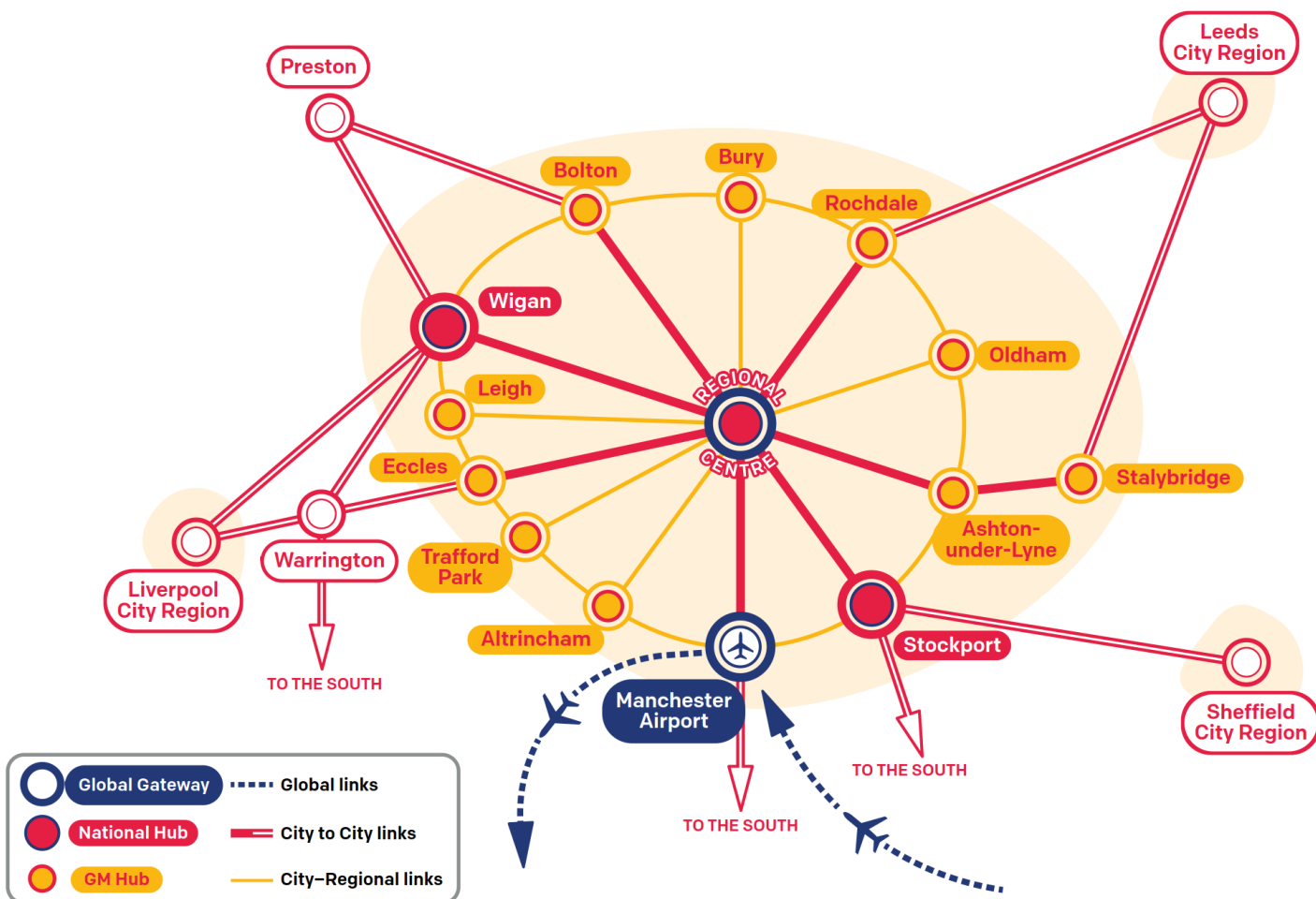
The challenge locally will be to establish bus service patterns that better connect all parts of the borough to each other and to neighbouring places. Franchising presents the opportunity for bus service planning to be undertaken in a more equitable way, for example, providing routes which address connectivity gaps and provide travel choices to people who live in less accessible areas. With these powers, the bus network can evolve to be more socially inclusive, with local people having a say, which was not the case previously where operators focused on routes which offered higher commercial returns and profits, leaving Greater Manchester to subsidise “socially necessary” services.



Rail in focus

The West Coast Main Line (WCML) linking London to the North West and onwards to Scotland, is a major strategic asset to our borough, positioning Wigan town centre as a national transport hub and providing direct, mainline city-to-city rail connections. The WCML is, however, the busiest mixed-use 125 mph railway in Europe.

The line is under considerable stress because there is more demand for train services than there are train paths available. This limits capacity and means there are trade-offs in deciding which longer distance, local stopping and rail freight services can run. The pressure on the WCML north of Birmingham underpinned the strategic case for High Speed 2 (HS2).



A significant element of the council's rail network planning over the last decade has been based around preparing for HS2. In October 2023, the government cancelled the northern sections of HS2 (Phase 2a & 2b). Uncertainty remains as to how new HS2 services will be accommodated on the WCML north of Birmingham, alongside other service patterns. Notwithstanding, we expect the new HS2 rail service to operate services to Wigan North Western station. We see this is a major opportunity and want to be well prepared to capitalise so that Wigan town centre, and areas across the borough, can benefit.

Wigan town centre's role as a gateway to the North West currently comprises two popular rail stations very close to one another. Wigan North Western is on the WCML and generally serves longer-distance routes, with Wigan Wallgate offering local services, with both stations carrying roughly the same number of passengers.

Because Wigan North Western and Wigan Wallgate operate as separate stations the interchange, for people switching services between stations, is not as good as it

could or should be, and can be confusing for rail users when planning their journey. As a result, the full potential of the town (and the borough) is being constrained. Addressing the connectivity between Wigan Wallgate and Wigan North Western would be an important objective in helping us develop the rail offer for the borough and beyond.

Wigan town centre's rail access, no matter how integrated, is not the only issue. Although Wigan North Western is on the WCML, there is demand for intermediate stops, at Golborne and Standish as a more sustainable alternative to the M6 motorway, and our residents would benefit from a more accessible station on the Chat Moss (Manchester to Liverpool) line south of Leigh, along with stronger public transport connections to Newton-le-Willows. We would also like much better services to run on the Kirkby and Southport lines to better connect with the Liverpool city region and Lancashire.

We know the rail line from Manchester Victoria to Atherton and Wigan town centre is also highly popular with our residents. Service frequency on this line was reduced in December 2022 as a recommendation of the Manchester Recovery Task Force. We accept this was to help provide a more deliverable timetable through Central Manchester, where the Castlefield Corridor (between Deansgate station and Manchester Piccadilly platforms 13 and 14) is a longstanding capacity constraint. The track through Castlefield cannot reliably accommodate the amount of local, regional and inter-regional services which are funnelled onto a two-track section of railway.

Service frequencies on several routes, including the Atherton line, were reduced to relieve this pressure as a short-term measure and we want previous services to be reinstated as soon as possible. If rail capacity was added in Central Manchester, so that the current challenges with service reliability and frequency were eased, the Atherton line could, in the future, provide an opportunity for even greater service provisions to encourage mode shift from



Cross-boundary markets

Despite strong cross-boundary labour market relationships with Warrington, St Helens, Skelmersdale, Merseyside and Central Lancashire, the public transport offer for travel is still relatively underdeveloped. For example, Wigan, Warrington, St Helens and Preston are all covered by different transport authorities, and as a result the ticketing options, service levels and customer facilities vary. Rail fares are also usually more expensive when travelling beyond the Greater Manchester boundary. If someone owns a car, the proximity of the motorway network means that they are highly likely to drive as comparative journey times and immediate cost differences are huge. If people don't own a car such differences mean that they often aspire to own one, even if they can not easily afford one or would prefer not to. A further area that we are looking closely at is the coach market, to explore whether coaches could help enhance connections to locations beyond our borough. This may be a particular opportunity due to our excellent links to the motorway network. Coach travel is a relatively underexplored area across much of the North of England, but a mode which could aid resilience. Schemes like the 'Oxford Tube' and 'City Link' in Scotland have shown that well targeted coach schemes can work effectively where they fill public transport network gaps.

Managing the impacts of road traffic and highway congestion

Highway congestion and unreliable journey times are a key source of traveller frustration. Whether driving your car, sitting on a bus, or driving a lorry, delays have a severe impact and time wasted through queuing has a negative impact on the economy and quality of life.

Our borough benefits from good strategic road access, given our proximity to the M6, M58 and M61 motorways, as well as benefitting from the former trunk road A580 East Lancashire Road (connecting Liverpool and Manchester) passing through the south of the borough. The manner in which our local road network has evolved over time, however, has meant that many of our busiest routes have residential and retail frontages immediately adjacent to the street, limiting our ability to add extra road capacity. The historic nature of our local road network has also led to a road network that is relatively complex with poor legibility. Finding alternative routes through the borough can be a challenge for drivers unfamiliar with the area, even those with in-vehicle navigation systems, leading to unnecessary additional vehicle mileage.

The GM Bus Strategy sets a target for bus routes outside the M60 motorway ring-road to have an average journey speed of 12.4 mph. Data collected in May 2021 on bus services running on the Wigan to Leigh corridor (service numbers 8 and 9) showed an average speed of 11.5 mph in the morning peak period – 4% below the BSIP target. Similar data for bus journeys running on the Wigan to Bolton corridor show an average speed of 10.8 mph – 22% below the BSIP target.

Enhanced east-west connectivity, between the M6 and the M61 motorways, is a longstanding strategic priority for the borough, due to the capacity limitations of the A577 and A58 routes, while journey times between our two largest towns of Wigan and Leigh are slow and unreliable. There are highway capacity problems in several other parts across of the borough at peak times including: the Hindley “Bird l’th Hand” junction (A577/A58); radial approaches into Wigan town centre; the A580 at Lane Head; and A577 and A49 corridors. Traffic congestion in Ashton is impacted by HGVs using the M6 (across J23-25) and the A580.

Road congestion has a direct impact on bus service reliability, especially where there is no bus priority. This can create the impression that bus travel is slow and unreliable and lead people with a private vehicle available to choose to drive instead, thus increasing congestion further (bearing in mind a typical GM bus can carry up to 62 passengers, which could be the equivalent of more than 40 vehicles using the road). Parts of the borough where bus reliability can be particularly affected include services between Leigh and Wigan at peak times, and routes through the Ince-in-Makerfield area. Travel between Orrell and other western parts of the borough, as well as Lancashire and Merseyside, can also be impacted at peak times. Bus services tend to be most impacted where the road network is historical and constrained by properties in close proximity to the street.

Addressing congestion on our key corridors, by making it easier for people to walk, cycle or take public transport rather than drive, will have a direct impact on the ability of the transport network to provide more efficient connectivity and access to markets and jobs.

Delivering a safer and more inclusive transport system

Safety is a key pillar in any transport system – to be appealing and attractive, users must feel safe and secure while making their journey. Greater Manchester's Vision Zero goal is that no one should be killed or seriously injured on our roads. This can be achieved by adopting the Safe System approach to road safety. A Safe System is one where people, vehicles and the road infrastructure interact in a way that secures a high level of safety for all. Good progress has been made in reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured, but more can be done.

Safety must always be a fundamental consideration in the design of all new transport schemes, and guidance such as Local Transport Note (LTN1/20: Cycling infrastructure design) help to promote infrastructure which more vulnerable users require to feel safe in a busy highway environment.

Public transport is a very safe way to travel, but some people are deterred from using it by the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, particularly in the evening, which we must continue to tackle. For example, since the launch of the Bee Network in September 2023, more TravelSafe Officers are being introduced across the transport network as a deterrent.

It is also important that the needs of all new infrastructure, including public transport stops and services, are designed to consider the needs of all potential users, taking account of differences in the needs of people of all ages, genders, levels of mobility, accessibility and health. There have been substantial improvements during the past decade, including the conversion of all buses in Greater Manchester to offer low floors, making it easier for people to get on and off. This has been of particular benefit to people with a wheelchair, pram or pushchair or with mobility restrictions. However, there is more which can be done to make services more accessible. Across the rail network, step-free access to platforms is still a significant issue as some stations in Wigan Borough are not fully accessible. We also want to look at lighting around rail stations to ensure people feel safer using services when it is dark.



Getting the right balance between ‘movement and place’

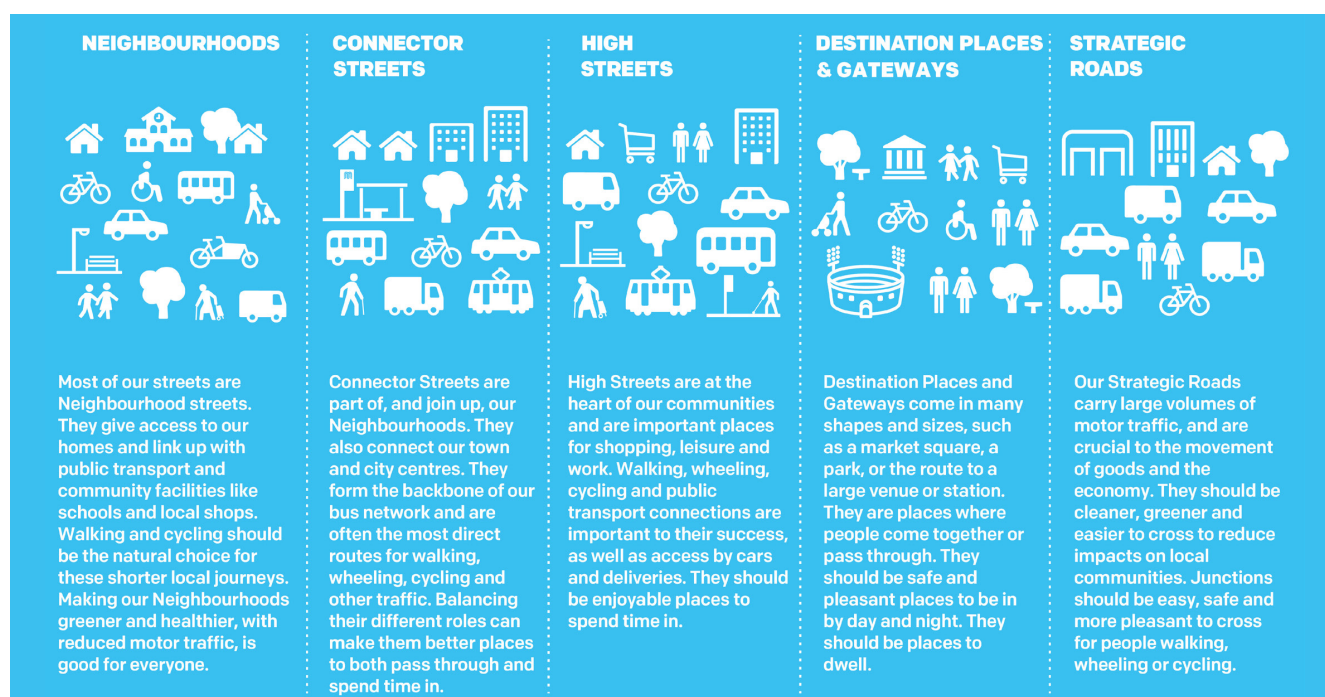
Transport not only connects places, but also plays a supporting role in creating places which are appealing to live, work and spend time.

The designers of new transport schemes must carefully consider how to balance creating attractive “places” with ensuring a required minimum level of “movement” is still facilitated. For example, a busy road through a local centre may be seen to provide good access but will make it harder for people to cross to access services. Ashton-in-Makerfield town centre is an example of this, where road capacity appears to take priority over pedestrian facilities and wider place-making.

The use of kerbside space is another consideration. We know our towns and local centres require convenient car parking, but on-road car parking on busy roads adds to congestion, particularly where it is not controlled effectively. We can be smarter in our street design to make it clear where vehicles can be safely parked or where businesses can safely load from. Street design can also help show where pedestrians have priority to move. Much of this is about delineation of space, maximising the value of what is a finite resource.

In short, the quality of our streets needs to be improved wherever opportunities arise. They need to be designed and managed to make a significant positive contribution to the quality of place and support high levels of walking, cycling and public transport. This is referred to as a ‘Streets for All’ approach and we are supportive of the design principles set out in the GM Streets for All Design Guide, recognising that there are instances where space does not allow full standards to be met, and that there are funding constraints for both scheme delivery and subsequent maintenance if costs would increase.

Central to this is enabling people to switch more of the short journeys that are currently made by car – to walking, wheeling, or cycling, and longer trips to bus and rail. We will continue to support necessary car trips, but if we want more people to spend more time on streets, travelling sustainably, we need a more people-centred approach to the decisions we make about how streets are designed and managed. This will be essential for delivering a high quality of life, meeting our climate action objectives, supporting social inclusion and enabling us to compete with cities across the country for skilled workers and tourists.



Providing the networks that are required to facilitate the better movement of freight and goods

Freight is essential to our economy, supporting a broad range of sectors including manufacturing, retail and waste management, as well as being an important sector in its own right. Logistics sites in the borough, however, are reliant on road-based freight, taking advantage of our strategic location alongside the motorway network and close to major areas of consumer demand. This makes freight a large contributor to carbon emissions in the borough.

The M58 motorway provides a direct connection between Wigan and the Port of Liverpool. There is need, however, for enhanced east-west connectivity between M61 and the M6/M58 that builds on the A49 Link Road. Multi-modal freight sites such as Parkside could form a major source of employment for our residents. It will therefore be important that these sites are accessible by sustainable modes. While Wigan is not within the Liverpool Freeport area itself, we have the chance to work with partners to maximise its value for Wigan, and to add to the success of that proposition for the benefit of the North West and UK economy.

Logistics and local deliveries are also now a routine consideration in everyday life due to the increase in internet shopping, food deliveries, and demands for same or next day deliveries. The growth in online retailing and 'just-in-time' approaches to manufacturing is increasing the number of smaller scale deliveries, contributing to congestion and pollution particularly in urban areas.

Higher population and employment densities in locations such as the town centre will exacerbate these pressures. It will be important to manage such deliveries in a way that minimises their adverse impacts. This could be through developing centralised facilities where national and regional deliveries are consolidated, with low- and zero-emission vehicles (including electric vehicles, cargo bikes and e-cargo bikes) then used to travel the final 'mile'. There is also work we can do to change procurement practices, and reduce behaviours where carriers make repeat delivery attempts.

While road haulage is likely to remain the predominant mode for the movement of freight, future development will be expected to show that more sustainable options have been actively considered.



Targeting the adverse environmental impacts of transport

Transport-related local air pollution, carbon emissions and noise all impact adversely on public health and the environment, and transport is acknowledged as a major part of the environmental challenge facing the country. The government's All Our Health³ papers published in February 2022 set out how poor air quality is considered the largest environment risk to public health in the UK.

In Greater Manchester, transport is the most significant source of air pollution. Areas of Wigan Borough are included in the GM Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), though our borough records lower levels of particulate air pollution than the other nine GM boroughs. GMCA, TfGM, and the 10 GM boroughs have been involved in developing a Clean Air Plan in response to a directive from government. The proposition has evolved from initial proposals for a charging Clean Air Zone, due to considerations associated with the pandemic such as vehicle availability, and the Cost of Living Crisis, to a proposal for a non-charging investment-led approach. Discussions with government are on-going as of summer 2024.

Nevertheless, the council and partners are continuing to support a range of measures to improve air quality, including in areas where people live, where children learn and play, and where transport is having the greatest impacts on green infrastructure.

As part of our commitments to reduce harmful pollutants and improve air quality, we are also increasingly liaising with developers and looking at how we improve internal practices to reduce our own contribution to air pollution.

According to 2022 data, there are two locations in the borough where nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels were reported higher than the 40µg/m³ 'acceptable' threshold set by government. There is a longstanding issue on A579 Winwick Lane, Lane Head, near to its junction with A572 Newton Road. The other exceedance is on Wallgate in Wigan town centre, where targeted monitoring was being undertaken for the first time. As well as these locations, we know several of our town centres have historically formed around junctions where major roads meet. While we try to manage the impacts that this can have on these towns, we are aware that places such as Hindley, Ince and Ashton in Makerfield suffer from poorer air quality impacts as a result of high vehicle volumes.



³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-pollution-applying-all-our-health>



3.

**Planning for
the future**

3. Planning for the future

Our Transport Strategy provides a plan for tackling the issues of today but also looks towards the future. As a borough, we want the ways that we travel to support and enable inclusive economic growth, as well as support the cleaner and greener future which we must all seek to achieve for our planet.

Transport to support inclusive growth

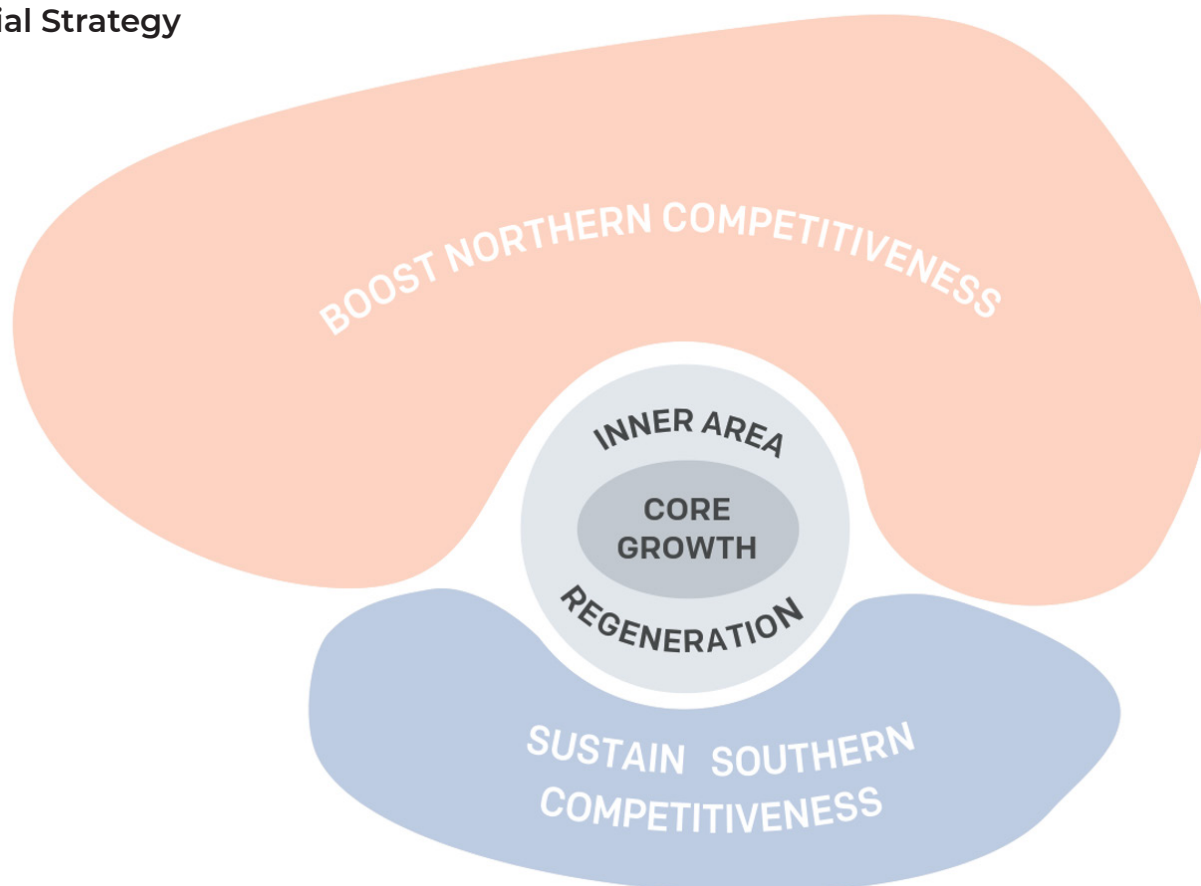
Places for Everyone (PfE)

We have been preparing this Transport Strategy in the context of the PfE Plan and our emerging Wigan Borough Local Plan. Together, these documents will set out a policy framework to facilitate the delivery of sustainable, inclusive growth in the borough, including meeting identified housing and employment land requirements.

In Greater Manchester, nine of the boroughs, including Wigan Borough, have worked together to agree a strategic development plan which cohesively considers the needs of the conurbation as one, rather than as individual places. The PfE Plan took effect on 21st March 2024 and sets out future housing and employment needs and sites in the Wigan Borough as well as the adjoining boroughs of Bolton and Salford. The principles of the plan include making the most of key assets, addressing disparities in the city-region, making efficient use of available land resources, and facilitating inclusive economic growth.

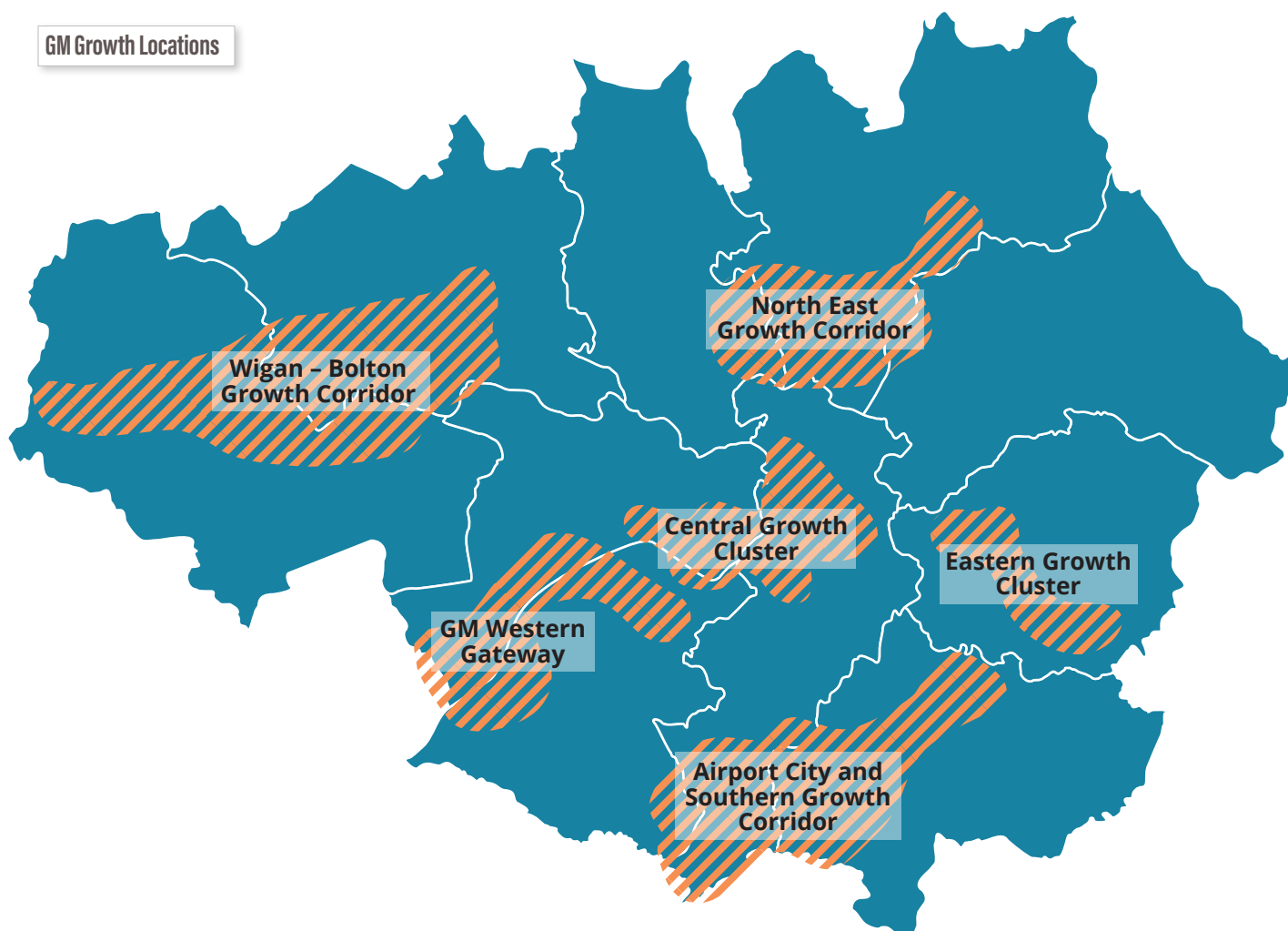
A key opportunity of the plan is to boost the competitiveness of Wigan Borough and the other northern boroughs which may have historically been less economically successful than the regional centre and southern areas of the city-region. The plan is underpinned by the need to create more places that are more resilient to climate change.

Spatial Strategy



Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor

The Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor proposition, one of six GM Growth Locations, is seeking to leverage the economic potential of existing major transport infrastructure assets (and new investment) to boost the northern competitiveness of the city-region. This aligns to the strategic objectives of the joint PfE Plan.



With land to accommodate circa 1 million sqm of new employment floorspace and circa 13,000 new homes, it will play a major role in meeting our requirement for 16,527 new homes in Wigan Borough over the plan period to 2039. The majority of this new development will be on previously developed land in the urban area although some green belt reallocation is required to further support the success of the growth corridor.

A critical component of each GM Growth Location is the delivery of supporting sustainable, accessible transport infrastructure. This is needed to ensure that people are connected to the employment and skills opportunities that are created. This will help to address social inclusion and provide wellbeing benefits throughout our wider borough.

Transport access requirements are still in development but will require new east-west road infrastructure between Wigan and Bolton that could extend to connect M6 J26 and M61 J5. Providing new strategic road links will give the ability to reallocate space on existing corridors like the A577, towards sustainable modes and placemaking in line with the Streets for All approach. Opportunities include bus improvements along the A577 in support of Wigan-Bolton services, and a works package along the A577 between Wigan town centre and the M6/M58, including through Pemberton.

Wigan Borough Local Plan

A new Local Plan is being developed by Wigan Council, that will sit under the PfE Plan. It will replace remaining policies in the council's adopted Unitary Development Plan (2006) and in the Core Strategy (2013).

We intend the Local Plan to be ambitious for the future of the borough as far forward as 2040. It is a key stage for people to get involved and influence what it is in the Local Plan.

There have been two main stages of consultation to date, on 'Issues and Opportunities' and on 'Options and Preferences'. There will be a further consultation before the final full draft Local Plan is published (intended for summer 2025). A public examination will then follow before the Local Plan can be adopted in 2026.

Our Town Centres

Investment in Wigan Borough's town centres is vital in supporting sustainable and inclusive growth. We have placed a strong focus on prioritising the re-use of brownfield land through urban regeneration. Sites must be complemented by enhanced sustainable transport infrastructure and close access to public transport. Responding to the move away from retail led town centres is critical to their future success. Transport changes to reflect the needs of different uses are important to implement in parallel to wider development and place alterations.

Creating "Vibrant Town Centres" is one of the ten priorities set out in The Deal 2030.

Strategic Regeneration Frameworks (SRFs) for Wigan and Leigh Town Centres have already been instrumental in securing investment, in particular from public sector funds where demonstrating a robust 'strategic case' for intervention is essential as part of the Treasury's Green Book business case approach. The strategic priorities and action plans established in both SRFs continue to guide the approach to regeneration in our two largest town centres.

The Atherton and Ashton Town Plans articulate the broad ambitions for both centres, highlighting the strengths of the centres and the opportunities to enhance the town centre environment, strengthen enterprise and address connectivity.



Neighbouring Authorities

As well as accommodating our own growth plans, we know Wigan's transport network also carries large numbers of trips to and from neighbouring areas and will, to some extent, also be impacted by their growth and development ambitions. There are also many journeys that pass through the borough but don't stop – not just on the M6 or on rail services, but often on local roads. Bolton and Salford's plans are included in the PfE Plan, with Wigan working closely with these authorities to ensure the plan is joined up to maximise benefits to the GM city-region as a whole.

To the south, Warrington Borough Council adopted their new Local Plan in December 2023. The Plan sets out proposals to build 816 new homes per year alongside 168 hectares of employment land through to the horizon year of 2038/39. The Plan includes the release of large green belt sites to the south of Warrington where the borough will need to ensure that sustainable alternatives to driving are available given the area has convenient access to both M56 and M6 motorways which will help the sites appeal to car owners.

The St Helens Borough Local Plan was adopted in July 2022. The Plan commits to delivery of 7,784 new homes and 173 hectares of new employment development by 2037. The proposals for Parkside and Haydock Point employment site remain a concern to us as a neighbouring highway authority, with particular issues associated with heavy goods vehicle traffic on the A579 Winwick Lane through Lane Head. We recognise there is a significant crossflow of labour between the boroughs and we continue to work collaboratively with St Helens Borough Council to consider enhancements for all residents.

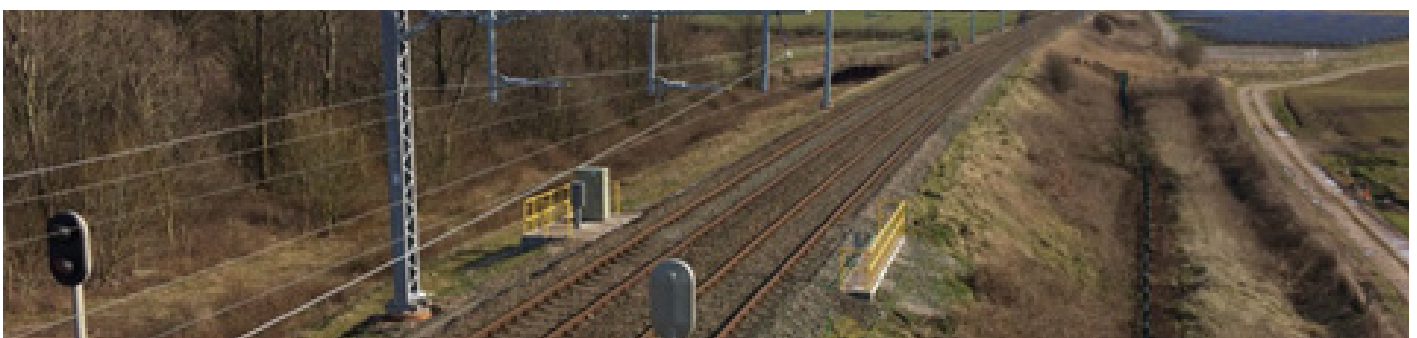
Existing investment commitments

At the time of updating this Transport Strategy, some major transport investments are already being delivered.

Wigan-Bolton rail electrification

On the railways, the largest on-going project in Wigan is the £78m electrification of the line which joins Wigan North Western and Lostock Junction in Bolton. Key works include new signalling systems, and the installation of new overhead line equipment that will carry over 25,000 volts of electricity. Platforms at Hindley, Westhoughton and Ince stations are being lengthened and 17 structures are being reconstructed or replaced to raise their height to allow the overhead wires to be accommodated. The works will ensure the route can accommodate longer, electric-powered trains in the future. Benefits of the electrified railway will include reduced noise, cleaner emissions and the potential for a wider range of services in the future.

The platform lengthening at these stations follows the works completed in 2019/20 to extend the length of the platforms at Hag Fold, Atherton and Daisy Hill rail stations on the Wigan to Manchester railway line (Atherton Line).



Bus franchising

Bus users in the borough will have noticed a significant change since the end of September 2023, when services in Wigan and Bolton became the first in the city-region to operate under the new franchising model. Franchising effectively means the GM Mayor (administered through TfGM) has been handed additional powers to determine where bus routes operate, timetabling including service frequencies, and fare structures. Some initial timetable changes have included the retiming of some morning journeys and the reinstatement of the full V2 Guided Busway service from Atherton. During the initial months of franchising, TfGM is gathering information on how the network runs to inform larger service changes that will follow. The move to this more publicly-controlled system represents a major shift in policy and should open up many opportunities to better provide a more convenient and affordable service for people over time.

The Greater Manchester area is the first in the country to put these powers into action. As one of the first boroughs to have franchised services in operation we look forward to understanding more about how this can benefit our residents and businesses into the rest of the decade and beyond.

M6 smart motorways (J21a-J26)

Supporting strategic road connectivity for our borough, National Highways are delivering a major smart motorway upgrade along the M6 motorway between J21a and J26. The works started in 2021 and will deliver 'all-lane running' through this 10 mile section of the motorway to the west of the borough, to smooth the flow of traffic and improve journey times and journey time reliability.

Improving walking, wheeling and cycling facilities

An area that we have invested heavily in over the last five years is active travel; we have quickly built new infrastructure and upgraded existing facilities that are used by people to walk, wheel or cycle. We have been successful in being awarded funding through various government funds as well as securing private sector contributions from developers where new development has been approved. We have already completed many projects including in Wigan, Leigh and Standish, and are continuing to bid for future funding to develop a network that will benefit all communities across the borough. We have also implemented 'School Streets' initiatives with schools including in Pemberton, Leigh, Golborne, Ince, Ashton and Abram.



The future of the transport system

We live in a time of unprecedented change in the transport system. Changes in the nature of working and shopping, new technologies and behaviours – such as automation, vehicle electrification and the sharing economy – are already having an impact on how the transport system functions. Throughout the lifetime of this Transport Strategy we will need to continually monitor and respond to future travel trends and transport challenges as they emerge – some examples of these are outlined below.

Long-term trends arising from the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic clearly had a massive impact, including on transport. There have been some profound impacts on the type and frequency of journeys that are being made and the way people travel.

There have also been changes in working arrangements for workers in some sectors, with many businesses adopting more flexible working practises. Data from the ONS shows a huge rise in the amount of remote working that is now happening in many employment sectors. In turn, this is having an impact on where people will consider living as commuting journeys to a physical office may now only need to be made once or twice a week rather than every day.

The pandemic also led to a large reduction in the use of public transport. People were encouraged not to use services due to concerns about social distancing and hygiene. This had a major impact on revenues and while lots of demand for these services has returned it is still not to the same levels (on either bus or rail services) than were typical before the pandemic, particularly at former peak times on Mondays and Fridays. This is having a long-term impact on the operating model of these services and is causing severe financial pressures for many operators. Indeed, government provided subsidies through 2023 to keep certain public transport services running, including the GM Metrolink network. Changes to working patterns described above will be one of several factors in this reduction in demand, albeit we also understand that more use of cars has been a factor. Should this continue for a prolonged period, it will make meeting environmental targets more challenging and will risk Greater Manchester failing to meet its 'Right Mix' mode share targets in the short- to medium-term. We need to keep working with partners to identify ways in which we can respond to changes. One example is ensuring that discounted public transport ticket options offer enough travel flexibility to match the changing needs of people

- The Office for National Statistics found that in interviews conducted during the period Sept 2022 to Jan 2023, 16% of working adults reporting working from home only, and 28% reported hybrid working arrangements.
- Workers in the highest income band, those who were educated to degree level or above, and those in professional occupations were most likely to report home only or hybrid working.
- Self-employed workers were twice as likely to work from home only (32%) compared with employees (14%).
- This data can be compared to the Jan to Dec 2019 12-month period when only 12% of working adults reporting working from home at any point during the week.

Climate change influence

The impacts of the climate crisis are becoming starker, and it is expected that there will be increasing importance on policies which will help to reduce the impact which transport has on the environment. This has been demonstrated in recent years through policies such as the ban on the sale of new diesel and petrol vehicles in the UK from 2030.

For political leaders, it is expected that policy and funding will be increasingly targeted at interventions which have the ability to reduce these impacts. There is however of course sensitivity required to ensure that changes are only implemented in ways that do not make worse the cost-of-living pressures which people are facing. It is also desirable to not have too much of a disruptive impact on the free choices people make about how to live their lives. Locally, there has been much debate about the GM Clean Air Plan. It was initially planned to bring in a charge for older and more polluting vehicles, but this is no longer scheduled to come into operation. The aim was to encourage people to more quickly 'trade in' older more polluting models but there are concerns about the cost and availability of newer vehicles.

Although it is likely that people and businesses will have to make compromises if national and regional commitments are to be met, it remains uncertain how and when further climate policies will be enacted and how these could further impact the ways which people can travel. In the short-term, we are continuing to promote measures which will increase the use of sustainable travel modes. We are also seeking to help enable more people to use low emission and electric vehicles across the network by supporting the expansion of the necessary off-road and on-street charging network infrastructure. We know that the transition from our use of fossil fuels will be a tough challenge, particularly as residences and businesses have been developed to prioritise car travel over the last 50 years. We must however strive to do what we can to help people adopt different behaviours where they are able to.

Over the lifespan of this Transport Strategy, we expect new policy initiatives to come forward in response to the climate crisis and it will be important that we are open to and responsive to the ideas which the government of the day are promoting, where they can be of benefit to the Wigan Borough and our local approach to tackling climate



How might innovations continue to change the way we might travel

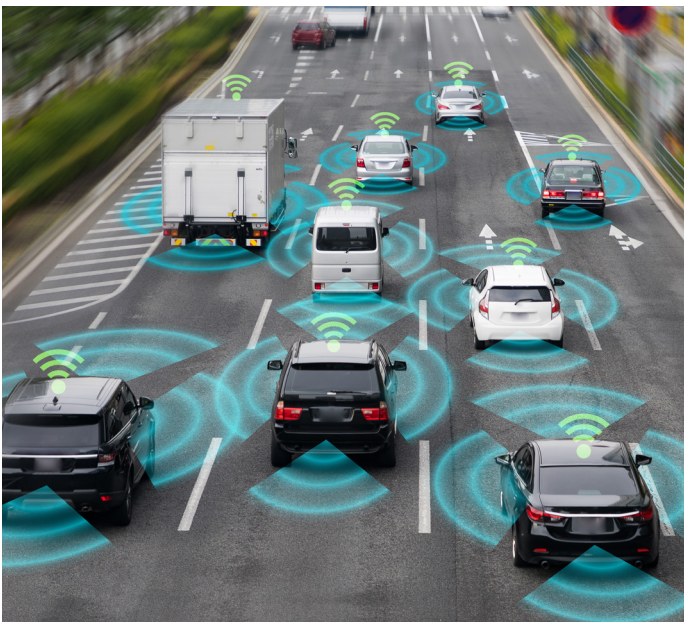
While we can plan measures to respond to the challenges we see across our transport systems today, we also recognise that things do not stand still, and our transport networks are changing. This can be driven by a range of underlying factors such as changes to consumer preferences, the emergence of innovative technologies, and the impact of shifts in demographics.

We can see how quickly things can evolve by drawing on the example of how technology has opened new avenues for transport providers. Everyday things such as accessing real time travel information and ticketing on a smartphone, or messaging an operator through social media, are new behaviours which have only developed over the past 15-20 years. These are now fundamentals of how the system works. The ability for transport providers to engage directly with passengers has transformed the way that these organisations think about their users.

Similarly with home deliveries, people have always had items posted to them since the early days of the internet. E-commerce has however expanded to a scale which was hard to predict 10-15 years ago. People are no longer just shopping online for certain items but for almost anything. This includes takeaway food which has given rise to new business models (such as UberEats and Deliveroo), and added a different profile of users to our roads and cycle infrastructure.

In looking to the future, there are visible trends we can point towards albeit with an element of uncertainty on how they might evolve next. A good example is with connected and autonomous vehicles (CAV). CAVs are no longer a hypothetical option. Early-stage CAVs are here and in use across the UK road network today. In fact, many new cars sold in the last five years include driver automation features such as self-parking, assisted lane control and cruise control.

What remains unclear is which new features will be added to the market and when, and how quickly vehicle specification will evolve into the next stages of automation and connectivity such that manual driver inputs are reduced. Industry experts anticipate there will be phases of vehicle autonomy, with only a small proportion of the vehicle fleet carrying the latest technologies initially before features are adopted more widely across the market. There is also on-going research about how the increased use of CAV technology will impact other factors related to car ownership, such as insurance liabilities in the case of collisions. Should CAV technologies become more commonplace, the road network will have to adapt and different challenges are likely to present themselves - including those which we are not yet able to understand.



A Transport Strategy that is adaptive and flexible to change

In presenting this Wigan Transport Strategy, we acknowledge that we are reflecting the current moment of time and our thinking will require review, reflection and adaption as things progress.

History tells us that the transport system and wider influencers are changing constantly. We have grounded this Transport Strategy around travel as we understand it today, the direction being set by TfGM in the GMTS2040, and GM's trailblazer devolution deal. We must however be adaptive and flexible, and ready to respond quickly to the new environmental, social and technological changes and trends which will arise. Existing norms are not those of even five years' time and tensions need to be managed between those who resist change and those who want it to provide the best outcomes for all.

Our Strategy Objectives and Priorities should therefore be regularly reviewed and be





4.

**Strategy
objectives**

4. Strategy objectives

We have defined six objectives to provide the framework for the new Wigan Borough Transport Strategy. These are the centre of our focus as we push towards a more sustainable and accessible transport system to support the travel needs of everyone who lives, works and visits the borough.

01

A better connected and more affordable transport network that creates the right conditions to support sustainable economic growth, improves quality of life for people, and helps to protect the environment by making a meaningful contribution to Wigan Borough's response and resilience to the climate emergency.

02

Strengthen Wigan's role as a national and regional transport hub, supported by the reconfiguration of Wigan North Western and Wigan Wallgate rail stations to create a fully integrated and modern multi-modal transport hub.

03

Significantly enhance accessibility to and within the Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor, to promote regionally significant economic growth and regeneration, and to secure active travel and public transport benefits.

04

Improve public transport connectivity between the borough's towns and with its neighbourhoods, and also with neighbouring cities and towns – including Liverpool, Preston, St Helens, Warrington, and Bolton, and with the regional centre of Manchester/Salford, creating a better balance of accessibility across the borough.

05

Provide a joined-up network of active travel infrastructure that enables walking, wheeling, and cycling to become the natural choice for short distance journeys within, and between, neighbourhoods, to local centres and schools, and to nearby town and district centres.

06

Ensure that Wigan Borough can take advantage of its proximity to the M6, M61 and M58 Motorways, the West Coast Main Line and the Port of Liverpool for jobs in logistics and related businesses, while minimising the negative impacts of freight on local communities and the environment.

The six objectives seek to align to the principles of the most recent GMTS2040 and our refreshed corporate policies under the 'Progress with Unity' banner, as well as being in line with the emerging Wigan Borough Local Plan. These objectives shall be reviewed in light of any future changes to these supporting strategies.



5.

**Our transport
priorities**

5. Our transport priorities

Introduction

Our vision is that the transport system should offer a high-level of accessibility for everyone that wants to travel within, to, and across the borough, and there should be opportunities for people to make their journeys using a range of modes to travel.

Central to our transport challenge is the fact that much of our road network is under pressure. Demands across many times of the week are higher than the capacity which our roads were designed for. This means we must try to encourage some people to make different choices. Our view is not to be 'anti-car use', more like 'pro-essential car use' with an emphasis on redefining 'essential' by providing better alternatives and more viable choices. For those people that can only use a car, we want the network to be as reliable and robust as possible. For people that could use a different travel mode, we want to make sure the alternative options are easy to use.

To meet our transport and wider policy objectives, there must be a transition towards reducing people's dependency on cars in favour of more sustainable travel modes such as walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport, and integrating journeys between these modes at key hubs. Our commitment to support that is to keep investing in maintaining and improving these options to make sure they are attractive and usable when a journey needs to be made.

It will be important to take a balanced view across different parts of the borough, ensuring that transport provisions match up to local needs. We want to take a multi-modal approach, where different travel options are joined up and easy to switch between. This accounts for swapping between a bus and a train service, or driving to a park and ride site to catch an onward connection. Our approach fits well with the key themes and general approach of the GMTS2040 which covers the whole city-region, and policies locally developed by Wigan Council when refreshing The Deal and preparing the emerging Wigan Borough Local Plan.

This chapter explains the key features of the interventions package which will be promoted through this Transport Strategy. It must be recognised that the funding and delivery of key interventions would require extensive further investigations of delivery constraints, an evaluation of value for money, and a funding plan. We present 16 transport priorities that we combine into an integrated package of measures intended to meet our transport objectives in accordance with regional and national guidance. Each intervention put forward would be subject to further development and public consultation once information is sufficiently detailed.



Policy Context and Strategy Objectives

We have identified 16 transport priorities in the Transport Strategy. These cover a range of travel modes and intervention types, each making a contribution towards our aims to provide greater accessibility, promote sustainable transport, reduce social exclusion and support economic growth.

- Wigan Station Gateway - A modern and unified rail hub in Wigan Town Centre
- West Coast Main Line (WCML) rail capacity and service improvements
- Wigan-Bolton east-west strategic route
- Lane Head South Bypass
- Improving rapid transit services in Leigh
- Enhancing the bus network, including growing into the opportunities of bus franchising
- Helping our town centres to thrive
- Comprehensive borough-wide local active travel network
- Enhanced rail service provision, broadening access to rail
- Improved integration between transport modes
- Cost of travel
- Sustainable infrastructure that unlocks and facilitates delivery of existing land supply and new sites
- Travel demand management measures to encourage sustainable travel options and uptake
- Reduce the environmental impact of transport, including through supporting the transition towards and uptake of zero-emissions vehicles
- Invest in and maintain a safe, secure and resilient transport network
- Support sustained investment in freight networks and infrastructure



Wigan Station Gateway - A modern and unified rail hub in Wigan Town Centre

A long-standing issue that prevents Wigan town centre from reaching its full potential as a national rail hub is that services are split between two popular but separate rail stations that are very close to one another. Even though the northern sections of HS2 have been cancelled, HS2 services are still planned to use the West Coast Main Line to operate north of Birmingham and some services will route to Wigan North Western station. We see this is a major opportunity and want to be well prepared to capitalise on the benefits so that Wigan town centre, and areas across the borough, can benefit.

How we plan to deliver this priority



Wigan Station Gateway - Reconfiguration of Wigan North Western and Wallgate Rail Stations

Our long-term aspiration is for a single 'Wigan Station' serving the town centre which would replace the two separate stations of today with a fully integrated and modern multi-modal transport hub.

Access to all rail platforms and services would be unified within a single station at the heart of the town and with a design that forms better connections to the public realm and access routes which surround it.

Beyond the rail station footprint itself, we are committed to promoting a broader package of improvements which will make the new hub a 360-facing centrepiece for transport interchange and a central place in the town centre in its own right. It will be important to strengthen the connectivity to the site from surrounding areas, and make it as seamless as possible to move between the rail terminal and bus services to enable more convenient journey interchange. For the project to really succeed it will also need to look more broadly at how the site is linked with other parts of the town centre and wider borough, including new town centre developments such as Eckersley Mill and Wigan Pier.

The potential of the Station Gateway project is huge. With the right strategic thinking and vision we are confident that this can lead to a long-term enhanced environment for Wigan town centre within the North West region, acting as a centrally located transport hub that benefits all of our residents, as well as people from West Lancashire, Southport and parts of north Merseyside that will visit us more often as part of their journeys.



West Coast Main Line rail capacity and service improvements

The WCML is the busiest mixed-use 125 mph railway in Europe. The line is under considerable stress because there is more demand for train services than there are train paths available. Enhancing WCML rail capacity and service improvements remain a priority despite the cancellation of northern sections of HS2.

How we plan to
deliver this priority



West Coast Main Line rail capacity and service improvements

In order to strengthen the role of the borough as a national and regional rail hub we will work closely with partners in the rail sector and stakeholders along the WCML to secure significant rail capacity improvements and new rail service opportunities, such as Crewe-Warrington-Wigan-Preston, stopping also at intermediate stations such as Golborne, and potential new station opportunities such as Standish.

Wigan-Bolton east-west strategic route

Enhanced east-west connectivity by road, between the M6 and the M61 motorways, is a longstanding strategic priority for the borough, due to the capacity limitations of the A577 and A58 route. This new route would form the infrastructure spine for the Wigan- Bolton Growth Corridor.

How we plan to
deliver this priority



The Wigan-Bolton east-west strategic route proposal connects the M6 Junction 26/M58 in Wigan to the M61 Junction 5 in Bolton.





Recent data from suggests that Wigan is the fifth most congested urban area in the UK. This indicates that something needs to be done to relief congestion across the borough, particularly along the A577 corridor through several areas including Pemberton, Wigan, Ince and Hindley. The scheme will achieve this and also be the cornerstone for our borough's ambitious growth plans as the spine around which the Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor strategic development allocation is formed (as set out in the PfE Plan).

M58 Link Road

The M58 Link Road is the westernmost part of the proposed east-west strategic route, connecting M6 J26/M58 to the new A49 Link Road via Smithy Brook Road. The scheme includes an expansion and extension of Leopold Street and a new bridge crossing over the Wigan-Kirby railway line near to Pemberton Rail Station.

Planning approval for the scheme was granted in May 2018, with a separate application for the bridge and revised junction layout at A571 Billinge Road approved in 2021. The scheme was first identified as a priority scheme in the Greater Manchester Growth Fund programme in the 2013, and continues to be of leading importance to us. The eastern section of this scheme connecting into Smithy Brook Road has been constructed by Peel/Northstone, as part of the Tulach housing development on the former Pemberton Colliery site. The remaining length is still in the process of securing funding approval from GMCA and/or government.

Wigan-Hindley Link Road

This section of the east-west route is subject to an active bid for Large Local Majors funding from the DfT. It connects the A49 Link Road at Westwood Park to the A58 Liverpool Road at Hindley, and includes a much needed new bridge over the West Coast Main Line and a new junction with the A573 Warrington Road. This scheme gained programme entry into the Large Local Majors programme in summer 2019, chosen as one of a small number of strategic northern priority road schemes by TfN. Since then, we have continued to discuss the scheme funding with government and other partners. We believe the case for the scheme to unlock and enable regeneration and house building priorities has only strengthened since our initial submission. Further profile was given to the scheme when it was mentioned in the government's Network North announcements in October 2023 and we remain optimistic that a complete funding package can be secured.

South Hindley

This section, which connects the A58 Liverpool Road to the A578 Leigh Road and the wider Wigan-Bolton east-west strategic route, is essential for the full delivery of the South Hindley development site. This is a major strategic development allocation within the Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor which would regenerate brownfield land, including around 1,700 new homes, new shops and local services.

North Leigh Park

This section connects the A578 Leigh Road to the A579 Atherleigh Way passing through the major North Leigh Park development site, which is planned to deliver a further 1,200 new homes in addition to the 200 already delivered.

Gibfield Park Way extension

This section involves the extension of Gibfield Park Way northwards towards the



Atherton railway line, as part of the West of Gibfield strategic PfE Plan allocation. This site is proposed to deliver around 500 homes and 45,500 sqm of employment floorspace, as well as a new bridge across the Atherton railway line and improved connectivity to the M61 Junction 5 as part of the Hulton Park development (where there are ambitions to develop a new Ryder Cup standard golf course and associated leisure and tourism facilities). The delivery of new east-west road infrastructure has the potential to also support faster bus services operating along the existing A577 between Wigan and Orrell/Skelmersdale to the west and between Wigan, Hindley and Atherton to the east. Improved bus connections with Leigh to the south, and between Hindley and Bolton (using part of the A58) may also be achievable. As the individual sections progress through their design and approval phases, opportunities to enhance the bus network will be considered. The opportunity to implement a much improved, rapid bus transit service between Wigan and Leigh (as the two largest towns in our borough) is a key priority, as is providing sustainable transport connectivity to the areas of new development.

Opportunities for complementary works on the A577 to better support other modes such as walking, cycling and bus services

The new east-west road infrastructure should result in traffic reductions on existing routes, primarily the A577 corridor which currently provides the main east-west road connectivity. We know there are pressures along this route, including within Pemberton town centre to the west of Wigan and within Hindley town centre to east.

We are working with partners to explore how any complementary works could look and will share information with the public when ready. This could include reallocating existing carriageway space to provide better infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists.

Lane Head South Bypass

Traffic congestion at Lane Head is a significant environmental challenge facing the borough. The area is the meeting point of three major roads – the A580 East Lancashire Road, A572 Newton Road and A579 Winwick Lane – with the community adversely affected by the impacts of traffic travelling along these routes. As a result, there is a need to deliver congestion relief within this area.



Lane Head South Bypass

Initial feasibility work has considered an option to divert traffic away from the A579 Winwick Lane and A572 Newton Road junctions by providing an alternative route to the A580 East Lancashire Road. Pressure in this area is likely to further increase as there is significant development proposed at Parkside. In response, the council has put the scheme forward to TfGM and Transport for the North for round 2 of the Major Road Network funding programme to ensure that existing and future traffic does not continue to adversely affect the Lane Head South community. The council is committed to working with key stakeholders such as St Helens Council, Warrington Council, TfGM, Transport for the North and National Highways to secure a sustainable solution to these issues.

Improving Rapid Transit Services in Leigh

Building on the success of the Leigh – Salford – Manchester Guided Busway to maximise the benefits for Leigh and the east of the borough.

How we plan to
deliver this priority



Enhancing Guided Busway Services

The Leigh–Salford–Manchester Busway has proved highly successful since it first opened in 2016. With 3 million trips in the year 2019/20 prior to the pandemic and over 2.6 million trips in 2023/24, patronage continues to recover and grow.

In the short term, the potential of the busway should be fully exploited now that it is part of the franchised Bee Network. This will include consideration of service routes, frequencies and stopping patterns as part of the structured and transparent area-based ‘Network Reviews’ process that is set out in the GM Bus Strategy. We hope the recommendations could include services running with improved journey times to and from the city centre, by reducing the number of stops used by busway services along the A580 East Lancashire Road.

We are also promoting the potential for other services to use parts of the busway and/or north-south bus services to interchange with busway services at key locations (such as at Astley Street and Sale Lane in Tyldesley). This would broaden the reach and connectivity of the busway, may allow increased services frequencies, and deliver more park and ride opportunities too, where applicable, such as in Atherton town centre.

The V1 Guided Busway service has been included in TfGM's pilot scheme to trial the operation of 24/7 bus services. Night services along this route began in September 2024 and the results of this pilot will be used to consider the expansion of these services elsewhere across GM.

Opportunities for Metrolink

In addition to continuing to ensure the busway is delivering maximum benefits for Leigh and surrounding area, we are keen to explore whether there is a case to bring Metrolink to Leigh in the future. There may be an opportunity to connect a route from Leigh town centre to the Atherton rail line and run as a tram-train service. This could benefit a population catchment that is in an area of the borough not currently well-served by rapid transit options.

As well as the complex local infrastructure which would be needed, additional city centre Metrolink capacity would also be required. Given the great difficulties of expanding the existing on-street Metrolink network, we understand this could require new underground Metrolink capacity (as is being explored by TfGM to deliver a step change in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity).



Enhancing the bus network, including growing into the opportunities of bus franchising

Bus franchising brings the bus network under public control for the first time since deregulation in the 1980s. Franchising presents the opportunity for bus service planning to be undertaken in a more equitable way, for example, providing routes which address connectivity gaps and provide travel choices to people who live in less accessible areas.

How we plan to
deliver this priority



Wigan-Leigh and Wigan-Bolton Quality Bus Transit (QBT) Corridors

We've been working with TfGM on infrastructure improvements along two popular bus corridors:

- Wigan – Leigh (A577 east of Wigan to Hindley Green and A578 to Leigh)
- Wigan – Bolton (A577 east of Wigan to Hindley and A58 Hindley to Bolton).

Under the Bee Network, these improvements will be delivered as 'Quality Bus Transit' (QBT) corridors. The aim of the QBT programme is to improve service reliability and improve access to, and at, bus stops along some of the busier bus routes in the city-region. This is in line with the city-region's 2021 Bus Services Improvement Plan (GM BSIP). The works on both corridors will be funded through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) programme.

Both corridors pass through Hindley where there are proposals to redesign the Bird l'th Hand crossroads junction to improve safety and add capacity.

New Mosley Common Guided Busway stop, Travel Hub, and additional bus services

We are developing plans for a new stop on the Guided Busway in the Mosley Common area.

This is linked to the application for around 1,100 new homes at the North of Mosley Common strategic PfE allocation. It has also been agreed that the development will fund an additional vehicle which will be introduced to improve capacity.

The new stop will also include a Travel Hub, which would provide integration between the Guided Busway services and other travel modes.





Bee Network - Improved bus service frequencies, extended bus hours and an expanded rapid transit network

The success of Bee Network bus services in the borough will depend on reliable services that run on time. The GM Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) has several improvement themes including Services (frequencies) and Network Management (journey times and reliability). These are crucial themes alongside improving the customer experience, network infrastructure, the vehicle fleet, fares and ticketing.

Bus franchising means TfGM now have more control over how the finite bus resources are used so that more protection can hopefully be afforded to routes that fill essential roles but are less profitable. In time, this should help to reduce transport related social exclusion across the borough.

For example, a new '615' service is being launched in October 2024, operating between Wigan, Whelley, Horwich Parkway and Middlebrook. This is an early demonstration of the franchising powers being used to run additional connections for the benefit of communities that were previously underserved.

We are keen that bus franchising provides higher service frequencies on more of our key bus corridors. The 2023 GM Bus Strategy states an ambition to run buses at least every 12 minutes on key radial and orbital routes, which we support.

Through the Bee Network, we are also keen to see the operating hours of more services extended to provide a better network coverage into evenings and at weekends. We know service cutbacks have impacted many residents for many years and we will push TfGM to use the new Bee Network powers to expand timetables so that more of our communities are served well. Night services on the V1 Guided busway service began in September 2024 and we are keen that the findings of that pilot lead to further routes benefitting from extended operational hours.





What else could we do?

The following interventions also relate to how we plan to strengthen the bus network for residents:

- **Bus stop improvements:** TfGM are responsible for the management and maintenance of bus stops in GM. Audits have taken place along several bus corridors during 2023 to record which stops require upgrades, including to meet the requirements of the Equality Act. TfGM manage a programme of upgrades each year and we continue to engage with them to ensure Wigan routes are fairly included in these programmes.
- **Cross-boundary routes:** We know some residents are highly reliant on services which are run by operators based outside of Greater Manchester. We have services operating into St Helens, Warrington and Lancashire, but also connections we would like to see improved such as to Haydock and Newton-le-Willows. To capitalise on the opportunities provided by bus service franchising, we will work in partnership with TfGM and our local authority neighbours to ensure cross-boundary services are made as seamless as possible with the franchised network, including services connecting with Chorley, Skelmersdale, St Helens and Warrington.
- **Cost of travel:** The simpler and cheaper that bus tickets are sold will encourage more use of services. To signify the importance of this, cost and journey integration are presented as their own priority matters in this Transport Strategy.



Helping our town centres to thrive

Our ambition is to reinvigorate our town centres as destinations of choice within the borough. We want our centres to be at the heart of vibrant residential communities, where people of all ages can enjoy the convenience of excellent services. Transport has a key role to play, helping to create places which are appealing to live, work, visit and invest. Wigan is our principal town centre, recognising its important sub-regional role, Leigh is the main town centre in the east of the borough, while Ashton-in-Makerfield, Atherton, Golborne, Hindley, Pemberton, Platt Bridge, Standish and Tyldesley are important town centres for their respective parts of the borough. Our main focus is on Wigan and Leigh and Ashton as our third largest town – but supporting work will go on to ensure that the other town centres around the borough, as well as 48 identified local centres also get as much investment as possible to help them thrive.

How we plan to deliver this priority



Wigan town centre

We are seeing substantial investment coming into Wigan town centre, building on the Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) which was finalised in January 2019. This includes work at The Galleries, the redevelopment of the former Council Civic Centre building on Millgate and Eckersley Mill, which is located at the Pier Quarter. There is also Wigan's High Street Heritage Action Zone that focuses on King Street. The SRF identified a set of interventions to support the further growth and regeneration of the town centre and to build on earlier investments such as at the Wigan Life Centre, Believe Square and Wigan Bus Station. It observed how the town benefits from its good rail connectivity but highlighted concerns that potential benefits to the wider town centre have not been maximised. The setup of the two rail stations in the town centre could constrain further growth should they not be improved. The SRF also highlighted how road congestion means car access for the town centre is generally poor.

Managing the conflicts between traffic routes and non-motorised users is a challenge that every town centre faces. We feel there are opportunities to make this work better in several places within Wigan. In particular, we want to develop the ring road into a more balanced space and not just accept it as a distributor of traffic which divides the town centre from neighbouring residential areas.

There will be opportunities to re-draw the way that traffic accesses and circulates around the town centre. The Wigan-Bolton east-west strategic route will reduce traffic flow in the town centre by providing an alternative route across the West Coast Main Line. This could enable carriageway widths on existing roads into and around the town centre to be reduced, one-way systems returned to two-way, junctions simplified, and some roads closed to general traffic when it doesn't need to be there.

A key aspect of traffic circulation is the placement and form of car parking. We are also aware that parking provision is important to making sites attractive for development. We will review the provision of parking and, over the medium-term, seek to ensure that higher-quality car parking is available around each gateway to the town centre. This will be balanced with the need to ensure that parking in itself does not disrupt sites that have higher potential regeneration value.

Another main focus in the town centre will be on improving walking routes and public spaces. Connections between key assets such as the bus and rail stations,



Life Centre, Galleries and Pier Quarter could be improved to provide better legibility and permeability. Access for cyclists also needs to be improved with many routes being heavily trafficked and general traffic restrictions such as one-way systems limiting cycle access. There are several pedestrian and cycle routes into and through the town centre where better infrastructure, including more controlled crossing facilities, are required to help make travel safer for users.

In designing our public spaces, we want to focus on better showcasing the historic and cultural assets of the town's historic core. This could include building on the existing street pedestrianisation, reducing the impact of traffic on the streetscene where possible, that could be closed to general traffic. We also know that people need to feel safe and we will further consider how signage, lighting and landscaping can be used to assist with orientation, movement and safety. This is particularly important as we look to support the shift towards a more vibrant night-time economy and increased residential population in the town centre.

Whilst the northern sections of HS2 have been cancelled, HS2 trains will still run into Wigan North Western station and economic opportunities remain to be seized. The Wigan Station Gateway project will be key to securing the full benefits from these transport assets.





Leigh town centre

The development of Leigh town centre will build on the Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) which was approved in December 2021. It calls for several transport-related improvements to work with its regeneration goals, including enhancing pedestrian routes in the town centre, improving the Civic Square and providing a Youth Hub (which is now operating from Leigh Sports Village).

We are placing specific attention on the regeneration of Leigh, seeking to improve the retail and hospitality offer in the town to bring it more in line with its standing as the second largest town in the borough.

One of the local complexities of Leigh's Road network is its one-way systems which restrict vehicle movements, leading to additional vehicle mileage as motorists circulate to find a parking space. We plan to review the provisions of car parking around the town centre to ensure that spaces are provided in the most effective locations.

We also plan to review the layout of the B5215 Market Place which runs north-south through the town centre, creating severance between the Town Hall and the main retail core to the east. We believe this barrier could be lessened through a more balanced road layout.

We are also working with residents to the west of Leigh town centre to propose new measures that will enhance their residential area. This could include measures to make it safer for pupils and parents travelling to schools around Windermere Road.

A further element of any studies will be bus access. Leigh bus station is now becoming outdated. We are keen to work with TfGM to update the facility to a modern Interchange to help ensure bus services to and from Leigh are as attractive as possible. The Guided Busway service has been a big success and we are exploring further routes and connections which could add greater integrated connectivity with the Guided Busway services to broaden their offer and appeal. Key to this could be the introduction of rapid transit service provision once the busway services are on the highway (A580), which would mean significantly reducing the number of stops that are served.

In October 2023, the government announced that Leigh is one of 55 towns to benefit from £20m of new funding over ten years through the 'Long-Term Plan for Towns' programme. A new Town Board has been established to lead on how this funding will be used. The town was also confirmed for Levelling Up Funding (LUF) of £11.4m.



Illustrative Image





Ashton town centre

A new Ashton town centre transport study is underway to assess options to improve access to, and around, the town centre, including exploring opportunities which could be offered by adapting the current road layout. We are keen to understand if this arrangement could be more efficient for cars and buses and resolve some of the existing safety and severance issues which impact the town.

We are also aware of particular concerns related to loading facilities and taxi ranks which could be simplified. We are keen to introduce more pedestrian facilities in Ashton including at the Liverpool Road/Warrington Road junction, although this is a constrained junction meaning some car journeys could be slowed as a result.

Working with the community, we will also explore options to improve local accessibility. We have secured funding to design new pedestrian crossing facilities on A49 Wigan Road and will listen to local views on other locations where measures are needed. We understand that local interventions, such as the calming scheme along Alexandra Road can have a meaningful impact on network conditions.

The Ashton road network is impacted by heavy goods vehicle traffic (due to the nearby industrial estates) and access to M6 J24 and J23. The future operation of the motorway junctions could also form part of a wider review of M6 access.

We are supportive of plans to introduce north-facing slip roads at M6 J25, which could relieve some of the pressure at M6 J24 including providing alternative routes for HGVs which avoid Ashton town centre. In the future, it could be appropriate to consider upgrades at J23 also, which may facilitate the closure of J24. This would require the support of National Highways who are responsible for the strategic road network, and St Helens Council as the neighbouring authority.

The M58 Link Road will improve access to M6 J26 which will also provide an alternative option to using junctions 23 or 24 and so may deliver some benefits for Ashton town centre.

Existing plans that are already progressing for Ashton include the £6.6m funding we secured from government in 2023 to deliver the #OurFutureAshton project. This will deliver town centre regeneration including improvements at the historic market site to bring it back into use for a wider range of purposes. A new grant scheme will help local businesses improve shop fronts.

Ultimately, Ashton is a place where accommodating traffic has come at a cost to the town centre environment and where we want to seek a better balance so that Ashton town centre is more of a place that people want to dwell and enjoy, rather than use solely as a functional centre.





Supporting improved access to and around our smaller town centres

As well as our three largest centres, there are many other town centres around the borough which are important hubs for their communities. The emerging Wigan Borough Local Plan identifies seven 'town centres' (Atherton, Golborne, Hindley, Pemberton, Platt Bridge, Standish, Tyldesley) and numerous smaller local centres. While these towns may not have the same number of businesses or scale of economic activity, transport access and parking are still important issues in each place to help them to thrive and prosper.

We are regularly looking at measures which can improve conditions in these centres, including keeping records of safety, accessibility, parking, servicing and maintenance issues.

Additionally, we are seeking funding to deliver improvements works which includes measures in all of our town centres. In Standish, and Golborne and Lowton, we have established an Infrastructure Assessment mechanism which places funding contributions secured from developers into a central pot. This enables more impactful infrastructure improvements to be developed and delivered.

Examples of interventions we have delivered or are developing around our towns include:

- Atherton – Consider the benefits of traffic restrictions and the potential for the full pedestrianisation of Market Street to create a more attractive town centre with improved walking, wheeling and cycling routes to Atherton rail station.
- Golborne - A new rail station and complementary walking, cycling and public realm measures. Infrastructure Assessment proposals intended to mitigate the adverse impact of development in the area.
- Hindley - Bird l'th Hand junction improvements to support improved bus services and active travel movements. A new Travel Hub in Hindley is also being considered by TfGM. These schemes would both help to improve active travel connections with surrounding residential communities, including to Hindley rail station.
- Pemberton – Town centre redevelopment options to be proposed as part of an A577 corridor complementary corridor package (to follow the M58 Link Road scheme).
- Standish - Standish Mineral Line active travel route improvements and Infrastructure Assessment proposals intended to mitigate the adverse impact of development in the area. This will include improving the quality of the street-scene and making it more pedestrian friendly at Pole Street, Market Place and Cross Street.
- Tyldesley – New Travel Hub at the Guided Busway park and ride, additional capacity along the Guided Busway, and improved walking and cycling links to the Guided Busway and to Shakerley.



Comprehensive borough-wide local active travel network

In the context of encouraging less car travel and promoting a healthier society, walking, wheeling and cycling is a natural choice. We have made a considerable effort in the last five years to increase the quality of active travel infrastructure around the borough and will continue to invest in better facilities as part of the integrated Bee Network.

How we plan to deliver this priority



Recently completed schemes

The council has delivered a range of active travel projects in the last five years which is already having a positive impact in different parts of the borough.

Examples include:

- Victoria Street/Warrington Road (Wigan town centre)
- Road to Wigan Pier (Wigan town centre)
- Riverway junction improvements (Wigan town centre)
- Standish Mineral Line improvements (Standish)
- Bridgewater Canal towpath improvements (“the Muddy Mile”, Astley)
- Leeds and Liverpool Canal towpath improvements (Wigan town centre to Appley Bridge, via Martland Park)
- Wigan to Standish Phase 1 works (Spencer Road West, Buckley St, Kenyon Road)
- Worsley Mesnes neighbourhood improvements and Poolstock (Worsley Mesnes)
- Pennington Flash/Leigh Sports Village access improvements (Leigh)
- Smithy Brook Road (Goose Green)
- Robin Park Road and Saddle Junction (Wigan town centre)
- Active travel facilities included within the A49 Link Road (Worsley Mesnes)

On-going investments and pipeline

Alongside our on-site works, we have also been working hard to create a pipeline of schemes which we aim to complete over the coming years. We already have secured funding to build some of these, while for others we are waiting for further funding opportunities to arise. We have tried to be balanced in our approach and develop schemes across different areas of the borough. Our schemes pipeline all fits within the TfGM Active Bee Network long-term plan which is for an inter-connected network of high-quality infrastructure to be expanded to over 1,000 miles in total across Greater Manchester (including routes in Wigan).





The next batch of active travel schemes we are implementing or will seek to develop include:

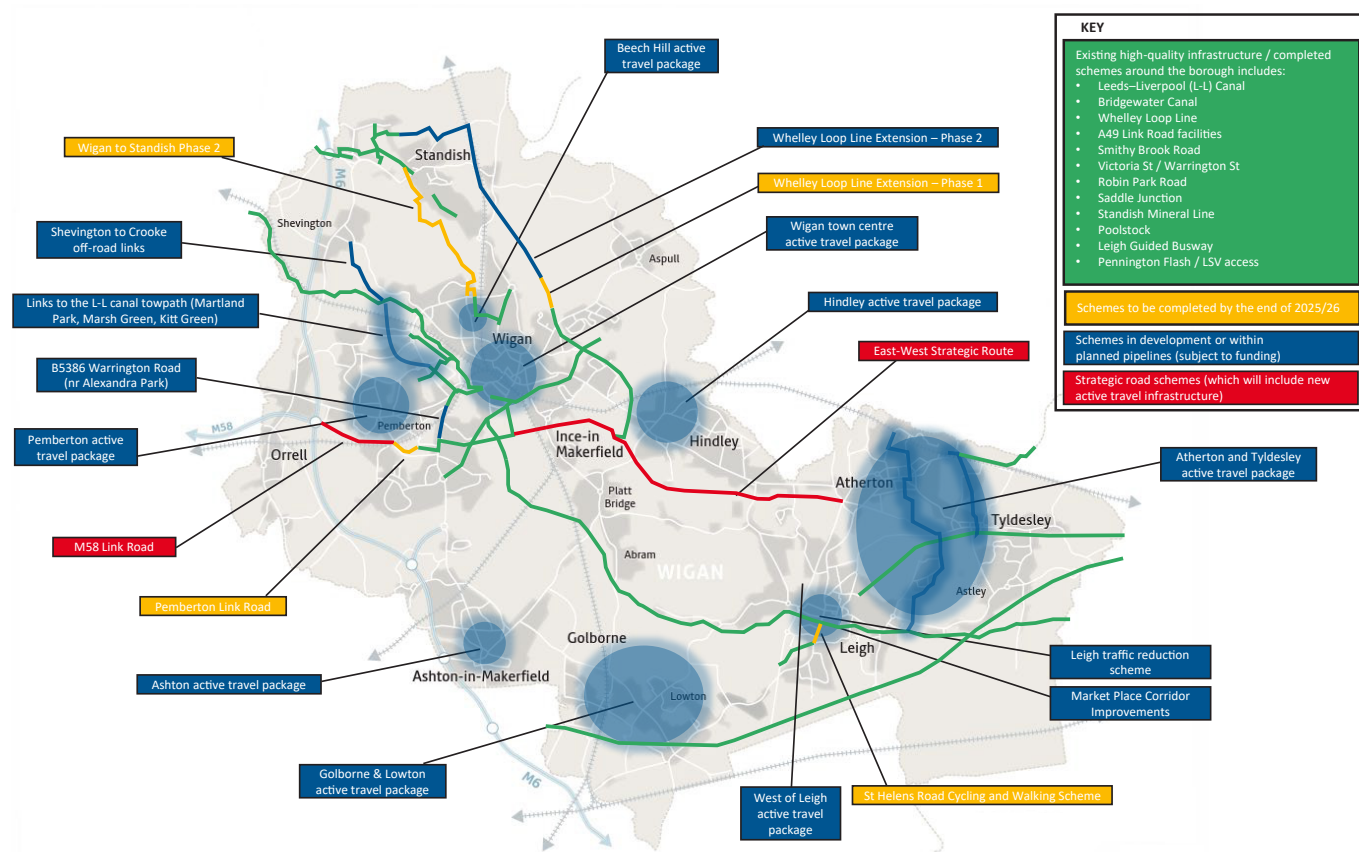
- St Helens Road Cycling and Walking Scheme (Leigh)
- Leigh traffic reduction scheme
- Wigan to Standish Phase 2 (Gidlow Lane to Standish)
- Whelley Loop Line improvements (initial extension to Hall Lane, with the ambition to continue further northwards in the longer-term, supports improved access to Haigh Hall)
- Atherton and Tyldesley active travel package (including links to Atherton rail station and to Logistics North, a route through Shakerley, and connections to the Guided Busway)
- Ashton active travel package (including upgrading the market site, public realm improvements, and wider connections)
- Active travel facilities included as part of all new strategic east-west road infrastructure (including M58 Link Road and other east-west routes)
- Beech Hill active travel package
- Improved links to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal towpath (including from Marsh Green, Kitt Green and Martland Park)
- Market Place Corridor Improvements (Leigh)
- B5386 Warrington Road (near Alexandra Park, Worsley Mesnes)
- Road to Wigan Pier scheme extensions (towards Saddle junction, Wigan town centre)
- West of Leigh active travel package (Leigh)
- Smithy Brook Road scheme extension (towards Pemberton Link Road, Goose Green)
- Shevington to Crooke off-road links (including better links to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal)
- Hindley active travel package (including links to the rail station)
- Pemberton active travel package
- Golborne and Lowton active travel package

The locations of these schemes are shown in the plan overleaf.





Other places around the borough, including Orrell and Aspull, will have schemes developed when funding opportunities allow, as part of our long-term planning for a fully integrated borough-wide network.



Consultation on some of these development schemes has already taken place.

In Standish, and Golborne & Lowton, we have established an Infrastructure Assessment mechanism which places funding contributions secured from developers into a central pot, to be spent on impactful infrastructure improvements. This is a potential source of local funding for walking and cycling infrastructure improvements as well as highway mitigation schemes where these are considered necessary due to development traffic.

We are also undertaking longer-term planning, looking at the active travel investments that we would like to pursue next as part of the TfGM Active Bee Network plan. There are routes across the borough that we want to improve, and we have ideas for infrastructure improvements in each part of the borough. We continue to listen to resident and councillor feedback, and use this to shape our future programme planning.



School travel and 'School Streets'

Wigan is leading the way with 8 School Streets already in place. These have been well received where they have been delivered and are making a significant difference for pupils and parents in the streets around those schools.

These schemes generally work by closing roads outside of school entrances during drop-off and pick-up times, to create safer car-free environments and reduce pollution levels for children arriving at, and leaving, school.

We are looking to expand the number of these schemes to provide these benefits to more schools.

School Streets complement our network of crossing patrols. Where possible we want to enhance infrastructure so these crossing patrols can operate more safely - for example in Worsley Mesnes we have installed new zebra crossings to make it easier to access St Jude's Catholic Primary School and St James Church of England Primary School.



School Streets trial on Windermere Road, Leigh



Residential area interventions

Our active travel work has also included efforts to make positive changes in our residential neighbourhoods. In areas where residents have complained that they suffer as a result of 'rat-running', where traffic leaves more strategic routes to cut through side streets or shortcuts to bypass traffic queues, roadworks and other obstacles. It is often done in an attempt to save time, but it can also be dangerous and disruptive to local residents. The increase in use of satellite-navigation systems has led to more rat-running as drivers are re-routed into streets they are not familiar with to save minutes off their journeys. It creates safety issues but it can also worsen congestion for residents and add to harmful emissions. We can work with communities to develop measures which help to ensure streets and road layouts are designed to prioritise the needs of local people.

This could include installing additional crossings, lowering speed limits, improving junctions, adding double yellow lines to prevent unsafe parking, or closing certain routes to make the traffic shortcuts no longer possible. This can work alongside educating drivers about the dangers they may be creating, to form a better overall environment.



First/last mile travel

Reducing the number of short distance journeys made by car is a challenge, and this includes short journeys to public transport stops and stations. Trips at the beginning or end of a longer journey are referred to as first or last mile travel. It includes a walk to the rail station or a walk from a bus stop to your place of work. Making it easier for people to walk, wheel or cycle for these short connecting journeys is crucial, so that the need for short distance car travel around neighbourhoods is reduced. We want more local destinations to be more easily accessible for people on foot, wheeling or by bicycle, and make sure that end-to-end travel by sustainable modes is achievable for more and more people so that dependency on car use reduces.

What else could we do?

The following interventions also relate to how we plan to improve facilities for walking, wheeling and cycling across the borough:

- **Rights of Way Improvement Programme:** There are many kilometres of designated Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) across the borough which are popular with walkers, and where designed as bridleways, with cyclists and horse riders too. The condition and status of these routes is monitored through our parks and greenspaces teams and they co-ordinate an annual programme of resurfacing and other maintenance works to ensure routes keep in a safe and usable condition. Where possible, improvements to these routes are delivered which can include the provision of lighting in more remote settings to improve safety in darkness hours.
- **Canal Towpath Improvements:** Canal towpaths are popular routes for pedestrians and cyclists, for leisure as well as commuter travel. There are many constraints along the towpath network which mean it is not always easy to secure funding (as routes are not easy to make compliant with cycle infrastructure design standards) but we have been proactive in working with partners, including the Canal and Rivers Trust, to bring forward enhancements where possible.

In the last three years we have completed improvements along both the Bridgewater Canal (the 'Muddy Mile' near Astley) and the Leeds to Liverpool Canal (Wigan town centre to Appley Bridge).

There are more upgrades we would like to deliver, and we will continue to work with partners to find opportunities to fund schemes. We know that on towpath routes in particular, there can be historic gates and other forms of barriers and we are keen to work with partners to identify where these can be replaced with more accessible forms of access control.





- Cross-boundary routes: There are several locations where walking and cycling routes cross into adjoining authorities. Where possible, we work with our neighbours to deliver improvements which provide route continuity. The Leeds to Liverpool Canal works to Appley Bridge is a good example with West Lancashire Borough Council delivering similar works on the adjacent section of towpath within their own area, which make the enhancements effective through to Parbold. Another interface is the A580 East Lancashire Road, where St Helens Council is developing plans to improve the shared use path which runs parallel to the highway (as identified in their Local Cycling and Walking Implementation Plan).
- Exploring the opportunities of disused railway lines: Around the borough we have a few former rail corridors which are no longer in use but are also not converted into a new use. While we do have routes that have been brought into use for active travel (for example, the Whelley Loop line between Amberswood Common near Hindley and Whelley in Wigan, and the bridleway from St Helens Road to Pennington Flash in Leigh), there are others which have not been utilised. We keep the potential to open these up under review and will look to introduce new links where possible without preventing other uses or developments happening in the future, which could take advantage of the former rail alignments.



Enhanced rail service provision, broadening access to rail

The West Coast Main Line (WCML) linking London to the North West and Scotland is a major strategic asset for our borough, positioning Wigan town centre as a national transport hub location. Despite the cancellation of HS2, we are still ambitious about the potential growth of rail patronage and the opportunities that rail connectivity can provide to help us deliver our economic growth ambitions. While many of the barriers to better rail services require investment outside of our boundary, we continue to seek means of improving access to services alongside our Station Gateway project in Wigan town centre.

How we plan to deliver this priority



New Golborne Rail Station

Working with TfGM as lead developers, we are committed to delivering a new rail station on the West Coast Main Line at Golborne, which will be one of the first new rail stations to be opened in Greater Manchester since 1999.

Golborne had a station until 1967 and with no direct bus, train or tram services to Manchester from this part of the borough, the new rail connection has the potential to unlock significant benefits for sustainable travel and regeneration of the town centre.

An Outline Business Case was submitted to government in Spring 2024. All partners now feel there is a realistic chance of the new station being operational by 2027, with a funding plan developed with the support of GM CRSTS funding.





Potential other new rail stations around the borough

We wish to explore with TfGM to the potential for new stations to serve areas of the borough where there is currently no access to rail locally. Potential sites that we would like to be considered include new stations at Little Hulton on the Atherton line, Standish on the WCML and Glazebury on the Chat Moss line (which could link to Leigh using existing bus services). It is often challenging to make a strong positive case for new rail stations as they are complex to develop and can be difficult to introduce into service timetables without having knock-on negative impacts on existing rail users. Nevertheless, we are keen to continue to push to secure wider rail access for Wigan residents, and neighbouring communities.

Manchester Recovery Task Force Proposals (Configuration States 1-5)

The longstanding issue of congestion in Central Manchester has become even more urgent since Network Rail designated the Castlefield Corridor as 'congested infrastructure' – one of only a small number of sections of railway nationally to have such a designation. In response to the pressing need, DfT has established a Manchester Recovery Task Force (formed of representatives from the DfT, Network Rail, Northern, TransPennine Express, TfN and TfGM) to identify a co-ordinated long-term service and infrastructure solution for the corridor across five Configuration States (1-5).

Configuration State 1:

The rail network is now in Configuration State 1 following the implementation of the December 2022 timetable, which introduced service changes aimed at easing congestion, particularly through the Castlefield Corridor, and improving train service performance across the North. The changes in December 2022 saw service groups amended with compromises needed, including changes to origins and destinations, frequencies and stopping patterns, so there was capacity to operate a robust service that passengers could rely on. These compromises impacted detrimentally on rail services in Wigan Borough to a greater extent than most other locations, with reduced service frequencies towards Manchester. Most services to Manchester Piccadilly were cut, and all direct services to Manchester Airport removed.

The December 2022 timetable change was delivered alongside £84m of infrastructure enhancements, including commissioning of the former Manchester International Depot for servicing and stabling of Northern's electric fleet and operational control enhancements on the Chat Moss route. Additionally, work has been undertaken at Salford Central to reduce the stepping distance from platform to train, improving accessibility.

Configuration State 2:

£72.3m has been secured from the DfT for the delivery of Configuration State 2, with the intent for works to take place from 2025 onwards, including:

- A third platform at Salford Crescent station
- Turnback sidings to the east of Manchester Victoria station
- Turnback sidings near Salford Central



- Station access/flow improvements at Victoria station

Following the completion of the work, timetable changes can be implemented which will see additional services able to operate through North Manchester, increasing capacity while providing added resilience to the network.

The options for timetable changes aligned to the implementation of each configuration state will be identified through the Manchester Recovery Task Force, and the Rail North Committee will be asked to provide direction on priorities, continuing to balance the need to maintain performance while providing additional capacity and connectivity. We are committed to pushing for the return of services to pre-pandemic frequencies patterns, including faster services from Wigan to Manchester and restoring direct services to Manchester Airport. Our firm position is that services across Wigan Borough should be returned to at least pre-December 2022 levels as a priority, once the necessary infrastructure is in place. This includes reinstating direct services to Manchester Airport.

Configuration State 3 to 5:

This includes longer-term infrastructure enhancements required in Manchester and the North West from the late 2020s through to early 2040s. Interventions include those that are required to enable more services to be introduced but where further development and design work is required.

Configuration State 3:

This is focused on central Manchester and east-west services. Options are being developed at pace and are expected to include platform extensions at Manchester Airport to accommodate longer trains and a complete remodel of the station buildings, platform lengthening and track layout at Manchester Oxford Road and increased platform capacity likely to be at Manchester Piccadilly.

The Manchester Recovery Task Force has supported delivery of the outline business cases for each of these schemes in 2024, and is progressing activities that are needed to move forward from design to delivery.

Configuration State 4:

Schemes require refinement but are likely to include the introduction of European Train Control Systems (ETCS) on the WCML North and on the Castlefield corridor, as well as the grade separation of Ordsall Lane.

Configuration State 5:

This was due to reflect a post Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) state, which included Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) and HS2 Phase 2b. This Configuration State is now under review by the Recovery Task Force in light of the cancellation of HS2 Phases 2a & 2b.



Atherton Line improvements

Our ambition is for high service frequency and capacity on the Atherton Line, recognising the wider capacity limitations associated with the Castlefield Corridor for heavy rail and Manchester city centre more widely for light rail.

Our firm position is that services on the Atherton Line should be returned to pre-December 2022 timetable change levels (as a minimum) as a priority, once the necessary infrastructure is in place. This must include the reinstatement of services to Manchester Airport.

In the future, the Atherton line could be used to bring Metrolink to Leigh using tram-train.

This would require additional city centre Metrolink capacity. Given the great difficulties of expanding the existing on-street Metrolink network, we understand this could require new underground Metrolink capacity (as is being explored by TfGM to deliver a step change in Regional Centre rapid transit capacity).

Station accessibility

To make rail services as accessible as possible, we will continue to seek funding through TfGM and Network Rail to complete accessibility improvements at stations which still do not have step-free access routes. The GM Mayor and TfGM have been vocal with government about the importance of addressing this key issue, and have sought more devolution powers to take local ownership of stations. We know that a lack of step-free access creates a barrier to travel for many people and falls short of the standards of the Equality Act 2010. Across Greater Manchester, only 38 of 93 stations were assessed to be fully accessible in 2021.

Appley Bridge, Atherton, Bryn, Gathurst, Hag Fold, Hindley, Ince, Orrell and Pemberton stations all require improvements to better provide for passengers, including accessibility, advice, comfort and safety. We have identified Hindley and Bryn stations as our priority stations for improvements when funding can be secured. These were the 3rd and 5th busiest rail stations in the borough during the 2022/23 year, being used by a combined total of almost 300,000 passengers over the 12 month period. We will continue to promote our requirements to TfGM and fund holders, such as through the government's 'Access for All' programme, which is a fund provided to help areas address this issue and create obstacle-free and accessible routes from station entrances to platforms.





Cross-boundary rail network opportunities

As well as working closely with TfGM on rail planning, our location means we should also look towards partners to the south, west and north to assess how Wigan can become a more integral rail hub for travellers moving across the North West and beyond. We are seeking to be involved at the heart of the 'Rail North-West Regional Business Unit' or any alternative body set up to collaborate more closely on strategic rail planning, and work with TfN to make the case for investment to government.

Southport to Wigan connections

The Southport to Manchester line is critical to the profile of the Sefton town but has struggled to maintain its service frequency due to constraining factors, including within Manchester City Centre. Securing the electrification of the Southport line to take full advantage of the electrification of the Bolton-Wigan line is a necessary step. Opportunities for other service connections between Southport to Wigan should be explored too, including the potential opportunity for connections at Burscough. This could significantly increase connectivity for people across parts of West Lancashire and North Sefton.

Chat Moss Line and West Coast Main Line (WCML) Study Improvements

The 'Chat Moss' route from Manchester towards Liverpool carries electrified services from Manchester Airport, Piccadilly and Victoria to Newton-le-Willows and Liverpool as well as the North Wales coast service from Manchester Piccadilly to Warrington and Chester. Only small sections of the Chat Moss line actually run within the Wigan boundary (it mainly runs through Warrington), though we know that many residents in the south-west of Wigan Borough travel to Newton-le-Willows to access services on the Chat Moss line. As part of the Manchester Recovery Task Force Configuration State 1 plans, £41.5m has been invested into depot improvement and platform extension works across the railway, including on the Chat Moss line.

The borough also benefits from its connectivity to the WCML, which runs through Wigan town centre. We are aware that Network Rail have plans to undertake significant replacement and renewals works throughout the rail corridor over the next decade, which has the potential to impact Wigan town centre services when works take place. Upgrades should include some track layout changes between Warrington and Carlisle to improve efficiency, and the modernisation of the rail signalling systems. We will be working closely with all partners to ensure that service disruption is kept to a minimum when works are taking place and information will be communicated clearly in advance of any periods when timetables will be impacted.

Different initiatives do not need to be in conflict with one another – for example an improvement to bus services between Leigh and Newton-le-Willows wouldn't need to undermine the case for Golborne Rail Station or a rail station to the south of Leigh, since they could each serve different and complementary markets.

Extension of Merseyrail from Kirkby to Wigan Wallgate

The Kirkby route was formerly a through line between Manchester and Liverpool but was severed with end-on connections at Kirkby between Northern and Merseyrail services. Extension of the Northern service towards Liverpool would be difficult due to the frequency of Merseyrail and the lack of a suitable terminating point, and an alternative service exists between Wigan and Liverpool via St Helens.



The new station at Headbolt Lane recently opened, extending the Merseyrail network. Northern Rail services from Manchester and Wigan now operate to and from the new three-platform station at Headbolt Lane.

An extension of Merseyrail network could provide direct connectivity from Wigan to Liverpool removing the need to interchange at Kirkby (Headbolt Lane) but would require changes to the track layout approaching Wigan Wallgate station together with additional platform capacity, which are currently constraints. Ultimately the link could provide greater accessibility to and from key parts of north Merseyside and Liverpool City Centre, making better use of what is an underused infrastructure resource. The change could be similar to that which was effected by the extension of Merseyrail from Hooton to Chester over 10 years ago, which is now widely recognised as a significant success.

The other potential conflict is aspirations for a new station at Skelmersdale, which is the largest town in West Lancashire. A rail link has been a long-term aspiration given its proximity to Liverpool, Wigan and Manchester, but a new Skelmersdale station would require a new rail infrastructure connection from the town into the Kirkby line. It could operate as a terminus/interchange between Merseyrail and Northern services, similar to Headbolt Lane. Any extension of Merseyrail services through to Wigan, that also runs into and out of Skelmersdale, would be likely to result in longer journey times between Kirkby/north-east Liverpool and Wigan.

There are other opportunities that relate to this rail line – for example increased access from the Wigan area to and from Edge Hill University at Ormskirk. This rail connection could also reduce pressure at each end of the M58 (Switch Island and Orrell).

Wapping Tunnel

The Wapping Tunnel scheme is one which formed part of the Liverpool City Region Long-Term Rail Strategy. It proposes re-use of a tunnel that links the Northern Line, just south of Liverpool Central station to the City Lines at Edge Hill. Those City Lines include the route from Wigan, via Bryn and St Helens to Liverpool. In effect this tunnel would create the opportunity to link Wigan Town Centre and the South side of the borough into areas of Merseyside that it is currently difficult to travel between, without changing trains and stations. It could re-enforce Wigan as a 'Hub' in the centre of a network, and with the advent of the new Merseyrail trains potentially allow better service patterns to occur. While this scheme is an expensive and long-term one, wider benefits beyond Merseyside need to be part of that equation – including to Wigan, where it has the potential to help provide cross-borough alternatives to car routes.

Taking trains away from the Edge Hill Tunnels and into Liverpool via the Wapping Tunnel could contribute significantly to freeing up train paths for Northern Powerhouse Rail to enter Liverpool.





Cost of rail travel

The simpler and cheaper that rail tickets are sold will encourage more use of services. To signify the importance of this, cost and trip integration are presented as their own priority matters in this chapter.

We strongly opposed proposals to close rail ticket offices when this was put forward during 2023 and were pleased that this did ultimately not proceed. We will continue to promote the importance of our ticket offices and are keen to see a continued presence of staff at all rail stations in the borough to support users, including those that may be more vulnerable, to safely and seamlessly access services.



Improved integration between transport modes

While the concept of integration is not new, the delivery of a truly integrated transport system has, in the last 30 years, been beyond our reach due to regulatory and institutional barriers. To make public transport more appealing, we need to stop viewing different modes of transport as separate networks, with individual asset management, service planning, and fares and ticketing regimes. We are working closely with TfGM to provide a more seamless and integrated transport system for our residents and businesses, under the Bee Network. This includes making it simpler to interchange between modes, and making sure people can easily walk or cycle to their nearby public transport stops in order to access services in the first place.

How we plan to deliver this priority



Tyldesley Travel Hub

We are working with TfGM to improve facilities for users of the Guided Busway stop in Tyldesley, through the construction of a new Travel Hub facility. This will improve access to the Guided Busway by all modes and reduce the reliance on private car for longer distance trips along the corridor.

Leigh Interchange

Leigh is the main town centre in the east of the borough, and one of the largest towns in Greater Manchester not to have a rail station or Metrolink stop. The success of the Guided Busway and plans for new quality bus transit/rapid bus transit services to Wigan (via Hindley) and Newton-le-Willows (via Golborne), brings into focus the need for a modern high-quality transport interchange.

Working in partnership with TfGM we will look to build on the success of new transport interchanges delivered elsewhere across the city-region over recent years, whether that is a new site in Leigh town centre or an upgrade of the current site on Market Place.

Integrated timetables and ticketing

A key long-term goal of devolution is to integrate the timetables between bus and rail. Buses in Wigan Borough are now under local control, and local rail is set to be devolved by 2028. This will make a broader, cross-platform ticketing system possible.

What else could we do?

The following interventions also relate to how we plan to make it easier for people to change between modes in other parts of the borough:

- Interchange opportunities are optimised, including between bus services, between conventional bus services and the Guided Busway in the east of the borough, and with rail such as at Hindley and Atherton.
- Selectively providing enhanced park-and-ride opportunities at our rail stations where this would genuinely reduce car journeys and not compete with existing services upstream. This could be through an expansion of sites or by constructing storeys for parking above current surface car parks.



Cost of travel

We know that cost is a significant factor in how people choose to travel. During the period that we have been planning this Transport Strategy, the cost of living has been a prominent issue for the country. We know that affordability of transport is an important issue, particularly for residents on limited incomes, many of whom depend on public transport.

How we plan to deliver this priority



Public transport fares

The GM Mayor now has the powers to set and cap fares on buses and trams. Plans are progressing to also bring local rail ticketing under mayoral control.

Affordable fares will be critical in increasing the attractiveness of public transport, and delivering the increases in public transport patronage that are required, including those committed for buses in the GM Bus Strategy.

Key recent announcements related to fares include:

- Maintain the £2 single and £5 daily adult bus fare within Greater Manchester.
- From Jan 2025, reduce the weekly adult bus fares to £20, and the monthly adult bus fares to £80. An annual bus ticket will also be introduced for £800 (with credit options available to help spread costs).
- Make Pay-As-You-Go ticketing available to customers from March 2025, enabling people to simply 'tap and go' across both bus and Metrolink, with a daily or weekly cap.
- Introduce a single 'hopper' fare from January 2025, allowing users to use multiple buses within an hour, for the cost of a single fare.
- Make paying for travel in advance much simpler, ensuring customers can choose which product best suits their needs.
- Continue to support existing national and local concessionary schemes (including Our Pass) as we transition into franchising.





- Undertake a review of proposed new concessions to support people who need access to the bus network and ensure the most effective use of limited resources.
- Over time, standardise fare levels and remove anomalies to ensure fairness and consistency across the city-region. TfGM will work to understand the implications and complexities of any change before making it.
- Continue to make the case that taking the bus is an attractive and viable option for many people and cheaper than using and maintaining a car.

The GM Bus Strategy commits to various measures to make bus travel affordable, which is very much welcomed and supported.

Greater flexibility to transfer from one service to another, or from one transport mode to another, is also critical in achieving a joined-up transport network. Fares need to be integrated between modes to provide customers with better value and set at the right level to safeguard the financial sustainability of the bus system.

A similar commitment to reducing fares is needed from the rail industry and government. Proposals to bring local rail services into local control within the Bee Network by 2030 will be a significant step forward.

We also need to consider how we can eradicate the fare penalisation of crossing transport authority boundaries, which is a particular issue in Wigan as we share boundaries with Lancashire, the Liverpool City Region and Warrington. These often make a difference to people's choice of mode and can mean people drive further to access certain park and rail stations that offer lower rail fares.

Parking charges

For car owners, we have little control locally over tax, fuel and insurance costs. We will take and apply a balanced and fair approach to setting parking charges and time restrictions across our council-owned parking facilities, to cater for demand and support our sustainable and inclusive economic growth ambitions.

We must ensure our towns are accessible and open to business, but limiting demand for parking to appropriate levels, where good sustainable choices are available.



Sustainable infrastructure that unlocks and facilitates delivery of existing land supply and new development

The PfE Plan and the emerging Wigan Borough Local Plan set out the housing and employment growth plans which we wish to deliver to ensure Wigan Borough stands out as an economically attractive and prosperous destination within the North West. As any new development is approved, it will be critical to ensure that sites are integrated into our transport systems in an effective way, and that any adverse impacts which are foreseeable are planned for and managed through the planning system.

How we plan to deliver this priority



Local Plan policies and how they promote sustainable development

As any new development is presented, it is critical that we work alongside the developers to put sustainability at the core of each site. Developers are required to assess the impact of their developments on the road network through transport statements and transport assessments. This process ensures that developments do not severely impact the highway network, and that they are accessible by sustainable modes of travel.

When developments are proposed in locations where the highways network is over-capacity – or where there is a limited supply of active travel infrastructure – we will seek funding contributions from developers through the planning process. This provides funding to deliver off-site improvements in the vicinity of the scheme. However, we will also mandate developers to produce travel plans, as a condition, of planning permission, as applicable. Travel plans look at ways to reduce people's reliance on private cars and influence behaviour towards more sustainable forms of transport. Where developments are of a significant scale, we will encourage developers to consider travel demand measures that they can implement, which will serve to mitigate the impact of their proposals.

Through our Local Plan, we will be updating many of our planning policies which include details on how developers must consider transport as part of their planning of a new site. Key policy positions in relation to sustainable development include:

- Adopting a vision-led rather than forecast-led approach, recognising the importance of shaping the future. This offers the opportunity for more positive and integrated transport and land use planning with more meaningful application of the modal hierarchy, making sustainable modes central to achieving the vision for development rather than a residual consideration.
- Ensuring that sites are accessible by public transport, including considering how close the nearest bus stops and rail stations are. For more significant developments, it could be appropriate for the promoter to contribute towards additional bus services or route changes to increase sustainable access to their development site.
- Considering the number and type of parking spaces carefully to not promote excessive car ownership or dependency. Appropriate provisions should be included to ensure electric vehicle charging capability is embedded and as appropriate, other parking provisions such as for business loading are safety accounted for.



- The design of local roads in quiet neighbourhoods should follow local, regional and national design standards. This places emphasis on creating low-speed spaces which are designed for the needs of all people, not just people in cars. Greater emphasis is therefore given to permeability and priority for pedestrians and cyclists.
- To ensure new development promotes sustainability, it is a requirement that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are included to support the efficient management of surface water run-off back to watercourses. This can be incorporated into effective street and landscaping designs to provide additional value in the design of attractive streets and spaces.

Strategic housing and employment allocations

There are four strategic housing and employment allocations in the PfE Plan and each will require their own detailed transport assessment and local mitigation packages. To date, the following information has been publicised for each strategic allocation:

- The M6 Junction 25 site offers the potential for around 140,000 sqm of B2 and B8 employment floorspace. Site access requires developers to provide new road access from the M6 and A49 junction. As part of the connection to the M6, land will be safeguarded to ensure an all-movements junction at M6 J25 is possible in the future. This site was granted planning permission in June 2021, following call-in by the Secretary of State and a subsequent Public Inquiry.
- The North of Mosley Common site offers the potential for up to 1,100 new homes close to the existing Guided Busway. A new stop and Travel Hub on the Guided Busway is planned in addition to one extra bus service to improve and increase operational capacity. Highway capacity improvements are also needed at nearby junctions, such as the A577/A580.
- The Pocket Nook site can deliver up to 600 homes and 15,000sqm of employment space. Developers will be asked to be the primary contributors to funding a new road linking A579 Atherleigh Way and A572 Newton Road (via Enterprise Way). Site plans will also seek to ensure there are strong pedestrian linkages into Lowton. The first phase of this development was granted planning permission in early 2024.
- The West of Gibfield site can provide up to 500 new homes and 45,500sqm of employment floorspace (as an extension to the existing Gibfield Park Industrial Area). Supporting infrastructure will include an extension of Gibfield Park Way northwards as part of the Wigan-Bolton Link Road, as well as safeguarding of a route further northwards as far as the railway as part of the Wigan-Bolton east-west strategic route. Convenient and safe access will be provided for pedestrians and cyclists to local bus services and nearby rail stations, with improvements to the rail stations also to be sought.

The emerging Wigan Borough Local Plan also includes housing and employment allocations, which will each require local assessments and measures to mitigate their adverse impacts on the transport network.

Travel demand management measures to encourage sustainable travel options and uptake

As well as accommodating more journeys through our transport systems, it is also important to ask if there are some journeys which people may not need to make, or could make in a different way with the right support. We will be continuing our work delivering programmes which help people to learn about new travel options available to them, and supporting people making positive changes to their behaviours, where it is in the interests of the overall transport system.

How we plan to deliver this priority



Behaviour change programme

Our work to promote walking and cycling is currently supported by an ‘activation’ programme. These are activities that enable people to experience the new infrastructure that we provide, and helps address other barriers which might stop people from walking and cycling more often. We offer training and advice around bike riding and maintenance, run a cycle library for people that don’t have a cycle or other safety equipment, and arrange social walks and rides to bring people together around healthy activities. We know that these initiatives can be effective in helping people think differently about their travel choices. With the support of our many delivery partners (including The Brick’s Gearing Up, The Ramblers, British Cycling, GM Moving, and Cycling UK) we already see great results highlighting the success of these programmes.

We will also be working with TfGM and across internal council teams to develop further behavioural change programmes, which may include School and Workplace Travel Planning initiatives.

New Travel Plans Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

We have adopted a new Travel Plan SPD that includes a new approach to travel plans for residential development. Other than the requirement for ‘travel packs’, the developer will effectively hand over responsibility for implementation to the council, thus resolving an acknowledged issue with engaging effectively with housebuilders once the developments have been built out.

Expansion of GM Bee Bikes hire scheme to Wigan

TfGM, working in partnership with Manchester City Council, Salford City Council and Trafford Council, has launched GM’s first publicly operated, self-service, 24/7 cycle hire scheme. The scheme is managed and funded by TfGM, and operated on a day-to-

day basis by Beryl, an experienced bike-share company that also operates schemes in other cities and regions, such as London, Watford, Bournemouth, Norwich and Hereford.

The scheme is currently focused on the regional centre but as the scheme matures, we will engage with TfGM on the potential to expand the scheme to Wigan Borough.





Car Clubs

We are exploring the possibility of offering more Car Clubs in the borough. Delivery would be targeted initially, at least, to key developments and Travel Hubs.

Parking strategy and policy

We will look to develop a parking strategy and policies that:

- Provide appropriate parking provision (type, quality and quantity) for all modes of travel which may be bespoke to different places.
- Encourage sustainable travel through the design and supply of parking and through the inclusion of high-quality parking for low-emission and non-car users.
- Provide accessible parking arrangements which meet the needs of all users.
- Deliver parking solutions that are safe, efficient, protect highway safety and local amenity.

Cycle training initiatives

We want more people across the borough to feel like they could ride a bike, and for people that do not feel confident about doing so our message is “it is never too late to learn”.

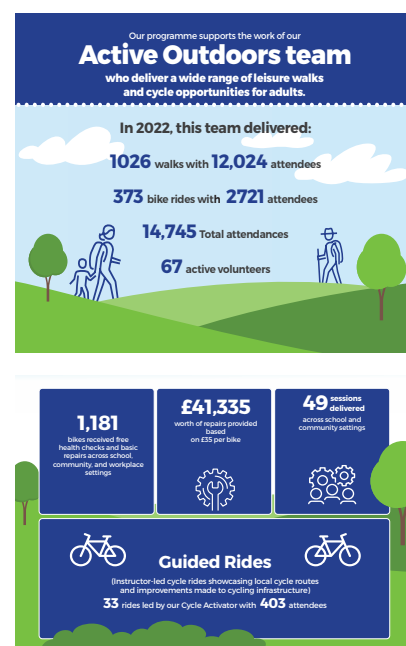
We work with TfGM to promote a cycling proficiency training programme that offers classes for people of all abilities, from complete beginners to experienced cyclists. There is also training offered for professional drivers who want to get more cycle-aware. Available programmes include:

- Cycle proficiency training
- Cycle training using quiet roads
- One-to-one sessions
- Family confidence training
- Women-only courses
- Bike maintenance courses
- Safe urban driving for light goods vehicles and passenger carrying vehicles

These activities supplement our popular ‘Active Outdoors’ cycle programme which delivered 373 guided rides from nine locations in the borough in 2022, attended by 2,721 people.

Cycle maintenance and skills training is provided in partnership with the Gearing Up Cycle Workshop. They work in schools, workplaces, at community groups and at events to provide free bike checks and repairs, as well providing cycle maintenance training and cycle skills sessions, amongst other initiatives.

An example of our work is the Cycle Three Sisters events in Ashton. More than 1,300 people attended in 2023, with more than 100 children using the Balance Bike track. These types of initiatives will continue and grow over the coming years, to support more people into cycling.



Reduce the environmental impact of transport, including supporting the transition towards and uptake of zero-emissions vehicles

It is widely understood that we must reduce the impact that transport and travel has on the planet. As detailed earlier, transport is a large contributor to the nation's greenhouse gases emissions, and at a local level also can have a damaging impact on resident health through air pollution. For the UK to achieve its legally binding commitment to Net Zero by 2050, we must change and decarbonise how we travel as a society. As Wigan Borough, we need to make our own local contribution to progress towards achieving that goal. We understand that motorised vehicles will continue to play a significant role in how people choose to travel, but we are committed to reducing the adverse impact of these trips and improving more environmentally friendly alternative modes so that people have more choice in how they can travel.

How we plan to deliver this priority



Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan

Like many areas across the country, Greater Manchester has levels of air pollution on some local roads across all ten local authority areas that exceed legal limits. Poor air quality affects people's health, particularly the most vulnerable people in society. It is estimated to contribute to nearly 1,200 premature deaths in Greater Manchester every year.

In response to a legal direction, a GM Clean Air Plan proposal was developed that proposed a GM-wide category C charging Clean Air Zone (CAZ). Following the pandemic, the GM Mayor asked government to reconsider, and it was subsequently accepted that the planned introduction of the CAZ should be delayed.

Discussions continue with government regarding what actions are most appropriate to improve air quality in the city-region and the funding that is needed to help motorists transition to cleaner vehicles. Greater Manchester's latest proposal is for a non-charging investment-led approach which focuses on Bee Network enhancements, taxi upgrades and traffic flow improvements.

Air Quality monitoring and Air Quality Action Plans (AQAPs)

As part of our commitments to reduce harmful pollutants and improve air quality, we are liaising with developers and devising strategies to combat future air pollution issues; improving internal practices to reduce our own contribution to air pollution; and undertaking actions to reduce traffic, increase walking, wheeling and cycling, and develop alternative travel solutions.

Local air quality around the borough is closely monitored. There is a GM-wide Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) which is reviewed centrally by GMCA which carries its own Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP).

Within the borough there are two locations where nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) levels were recorded to be higher than the 40µg/m³ legal threshold set by government in 2022; at A579 Winwick Lane (Lane Head) and Wallgate (Wigan town centre). The council has put in place Air Quality Action Plans (AQAPs) to address these issues and further consultation will take place with residents as these plans progress.

The GM AQMA designation has some associated funding which has helped support local air quality improvement measures such as new cycle parking at schools. A Youth Travel Ambassador pilot programme is also being implemented – including at



Hawkley Hall High School in Wigan – to help student travel ambassadors to devise and implement their own campaigns to encourage more students to cycle, walk or scoot to school in support of cleaner air.

Lower emission vehicles – buses and taxis

As part of the initial roll out of bus franchising, GMCA agreed to purchase 50 new Zero Emission Buses for deployment across the Wigan and Bolton areas from September 2023. This has provided an immediate benefit on routes where these vehicles are in service.

Additional funding was subsequently secured for a further 170 electric buses which will be added to the GM bus fleet during 2025. TfGM will continue to push for more funding to secure additional new lower and zero emission vehicles to include in the franchised fleet.

We are working towards a fully emission compliant private hire and hackney carriage fleet in line with the Minimum Licensing Standards. The aim is that by April 2026 all vehicles will comply with our age and emissions policy.

Expansion of electric vehicle charging infrastructure

We have established a Wigan electric vehicle charging infrastructure (EVCI) working group that meets monthly. The group are currently working towards increased offering of EVCI across the borough which will include an increase in off-road charging places, and initial pilots of potential kerbside charging technologies which could provide facilities for residents that do not have driveways and rely on parking in their street.

We are exploring public and private partnerships that can help us deliver more on- and off-road charging capacity and will look to trial different technological solutions to ensure that the Wigan Borough is well placed to roll-out more charging facilities as soon as practically possible and affordable to help people that want to transition to electric vehicles.

At present we have secured some funding to add new charge point infrastructure through TfGM's CRSTS fund and also from the DfT Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund.

Street lighting column replacement programme

Wigan Council delivered a programme of street lighting replacements during 2014-2017 to replace the borough's 36,500 street lighting units. These were formerly standard street lighting lanterns but were replaced by newer LED lighting units which are significant more energy and carbon efficient. This has resulted in a saving of at least £1m a year through reduced energy and operating costs. We will continue to maintain our assets and upgrade technologies to save further energy where possible.

Clean air and climate communications

We have set up a communications working group dedicated to promoting environmental messaging with wellbeing elements across all social media platforms. This covers key topics including how we must address air quality, climate change and physical/mental wellbeing.

We are also delivering a Defra-funded educational campaign, targeted mainly at



secondary school children, for the next two years. This will provide information on how poor air quality impacts health and changes that people can make to have a positive impact.

Retrofit or upgrade local authority fleet

The council owns and maintains a fleet of vehicles to deliver essential council services, including refuse and recycling collection, street cleaning highway gritting, highway infrastructure maintenance and health, social care and school transport services.

We are committed to ensuring that the vehicles we use are not high polluting and have planned an accelerated replacement of the fleet to significantly reduce the emissions generated as we deliver our services.

We recently partnered with Michelin Connected Fleet to install innovative onboard telematics technology across our vehicle fleet – this has been shown to have reduced engine idling by 29%, as well as reducing the number of harsh driving events recorded.

The project has clearly helped us to save time and money and has had a positive cultural impact on the organisation as we get serious about the next stage of tackling our corporate footprint on the environment.

Local Plan polices to promote the use of EVCI and other zero emission vehicle facilities

We will:

- Require all development that has on-site parking (and new and redeveloped fuel stations) to have electric vehicle charging points (including disabled access points) which will meet expected demand and for infrastructure (e.g. ducting and cable routes) to be installed to allow additional charging points to be provided in the future as demand increases.
- Require developments without on-site parking to fund the provision of public charging facilities to meet expected demand and/or fund the provision of car club vehicles.
- Ensure that new developments are responsive to advancements in zero emissions vehicle technology and provide suitable and flexible infrastructure as demand grows.



Invest in and maintain a safe, secure and resilient transport network

As well as improving our transport systems, it is also important that we keep investing in maintenance and renewals for the assets which we already have. Our active travel infrastructure, roads, railways and bridges all require upkeep, as do the buses and train carriages which keep our public transport services going. We must also give increasing thought to climate resilience as we design new schemes and plan our maintenance activities. As the impacts of severe climate events intensify, we need to make sure our infrastructure is better prepared to deal with higher rainfall, and greater extremes in hot and cold temperatures, as this can impact the materials that are used across our roads, pavements, structures and railways. We will continue to lobby for more funding to deliver these essential functions through our annual maintenance programme.

How we plan to deliver this priority



On-going asset maintenance

As the highway authority, we are responsible for the on-going maintenance of the adopted highway. Each year, we produce a rolling three-year works programme that outlines our maintenance, repair and improvement plans. This includes carriageway resurfacing, footway remediation, street furniture replacement, street lighting works and upgrades, lining remarking, drainage clearance and vegetation clearance.

We have limited funding to target works to the areas which are considered to be most critical, based on our own asset inspections and information provided by the public and stakeholders. Most works are typically undertaken using a Highways Capital Maintenance Allocation provided annually by DfT, which was £2.67m in 2022/23. We have also been successful in bidding for additional funding to further support maintenance activities, including £2.13m through DfT's Pothole Action Fund, £1.68m through TfGM's Integrated Transport Block funding and £400k from Wigan Housing.

To ensure that we react promptly to concerns, we have a commitment to respond within 13 working days to any damage reports submitted through the council website.

There is a separate programme developed for structures-related maintenance, which includes safety inspections, repairs, and strengthening works across road bridges, footbridge and retaining structures across the borough.

It may be noted that where we are able to apply for funding to deliver new infrastructure schemes, additional money is rarely also offered within these funding packages to support the maintenance and upkeep of these assets. This means there is a continual pressure on how much maintenance we can afford within the limited budgets we get.

Further information on our activities can be found in the annual Asset Management Report we publish.



Network management, minor works & road safety interventions

Our Network Management Team is responsible for the day-to-day management of the road network. This not only includes how we respond to network incidents and emergencies, but also how we administer our responsibilities for Traffic Regulation Orders and in the co-ordination of roadworks.

We regularly engage with local councillors and stakeholders to understand network issues which are emerging and seek to explore potential opportunities to deliver improvements where funding is available. These can relate to safety issues, parking problems, and dangers for pedestrians and cyclists. There is the provision through the council website for residents to submit parking issues near their home.

Annually, we can deliver a limited number of improvements through grant funding or private sector funding where this can be secured through a Section 106 agreement should a new development add further pressure to an existing issue.

We also deliver on road safety. Fundamental to the management of the transport network is continually seeking the goal of making transport safer. We are a partner in Greater Manchester's Vision Zero which is a commitment to aim to eliminate all road fatalities and serious injuries. It is estimated that around 3,800 fatalities and severe injuries could be prevented across the city-region by 2040.

Traffic Regulation Orders and the enforcement of Moving Order violations

Local authorities already have the powers to enforce stationary Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO), such as double yellow lines and parking restrictions.

In May 2022, the government granted powers to enable local authorities to enforce moving TRO offences as well. These were previously only enforceable by the police under criminal law and include instances such as where vehicles take banned turns or use restricted and one-way streets, bus and taxi only lanes, and yellow boxes at junctions contrary to TRO restrictions publicised on street signs. The new powers will allow us to manage Moving Order offences ourselves, where we are aware of repeated violations that impact residents or businesses.

To date, we have been granted powers to enforce the following offences:

- Winwick Lane, Lane Head: the 7.5 tonnes southbound weight limit is regularly contravened, and the area suffers from poor air quality.
- Market Street, Atherton: the prohibition of driving except for buses Monday to Saturday 10.30am to 4.00pm is regularly abused, which causes pedestrian safety concerns.
- King Street, Wigan: the no left turn, except buses, taxis and cyclists onto Wallgate is regularly abused and enforcement supports our recent King Street improvement scheme by reducing vehicle movements on this road.

Two further sites in Leigh were consulted on in April/May 2024 and we will continue to review where it may be appropriate for us to apply for further moving vehicle enforcement powers.



Co-ordination of roadworks

We understand how disruptive roadworks can be to motorists. However, it is often essential that utility companies – such as water, energy, telecommunications - have access to maintain or repair assets which they have buried below the carriageway. Roadworks are also essential when we are delivering improvements on the network to keep construction workers and motorists safe.

In the last decade, roadworks in Greater Manchester have become better planned and coordinated. We know disruption still happens but there is an increasing level of collaboration between the GM boroughs and TfGM to minimise impacts on road users as much as possible. TfGM co-ordinate the Greater Manchester Road Activities Permit Scheme (GMRAPS), which follows statutory guidance in requiring organisations to apply for permission to close the carriageways or footways in advance and sets conditions which must be followed to avoid major disruption occurring. We continue to play a proactive part in the delivery of GMRAPS and work closely to co-ordinate and time works as well as we can.

Flood risk mitigation and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)

We are responsible for flood management and mitigation in the borough and have produced a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy to set out our approach. The strategy covers local flood risks from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses and includes planning for how we work with other authorities including United Utilities and the Environment Agency to improve our flood management systems and approaches.

Key to the strategy is the broader adoption of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). In practical terms, SuDS refers to a 'sequence of management practices and control structures designed to slow the flow of surface water drainage to a more natural rate than previous convention where pipes and sewers were used to channel water quickly into nearby watercourses. SuDS help to reduce surface water flooding, improve water quality and enhance the amenity and biodiversity value of the environment. These techniques are increasingly commonplace across the UK, helping to free up capacity on established drainage networks and providing amenity and biodiversity benefits.



Support sustained investment in freight networks and infrastructure

Transport is crucial to the efficient movement of goods as well as people, and freight is particularly important to some of the most prominent industry sectors in the borough. The convenient access to the Strategic Road Network (SRN) available in many parts of the borough, as well as our relative proximity to the Port of Liverpool, means that Wigan Borough is ideally situated to support and benefit from national and global distribution networks. While this presents opportunities to exploit there are also related challenges that we face. Delays on our road networks both discourage businesses from locating in the borough, and adversely affect other road users.

Our plans include major infrastructure proposals which will help to support the movement of freight. For road, our proposals to improve east-west road links is seen as fundamental to unlocking potential growth in manufacturing and will improve HGV access to the SRN. The proposed Strategic Rail Freight Interchange at Parkside in St Helens is also a potentially significant economic asset for Wigan Borough.

How we plan to deliver this priority



Parkside Strategic Rail Freight Interchange

The proposed Strategic Rail Freight Interchange at Parkside East, near Junction 22 of the M6, is immediately adjacent to our borough boundary to the south of Lane Head in Lowton. Once developed, it will be a significant asset for businesses in the borough, allowing them to transport goods by rail much more easily than it is possible to do in the region now.

This will have significant benefits locally, regionally and nationally in reducing HGVs and their environmental impacts. However, it is likely to generate additional HGV movements around the interchange, including within Wigan Borough. It is therefore essential that the right highway infrastructure is in place, including a bypass for Lane Head South, to improve access for vehicles wanting to access the A580 East Lancashire Road.

Locating businesses close to the Key Route Network

Where businesses will generate considerable amounts of traffic, including HGVs for longer distance travel, they should be located adjacent to the Key Route Network, and as far as possible, the Strategic Route Network.

The Council's priority for a new Wigan-Bolton strategic east-west route is in part to keep HGVs out of town centres and residential areas, and to give the borough a better chance to secure and grow businesses and generate jobs.

Freight consolidation centres and micro-consolidation hubs

The huge growth in e-commerce and just-in-time deliveries has seen increases in numbers of light commercial vehicles on our roads. DfT estimated in 2015 that by 2050, light goods vehicle traffic will have more than doubled.

We will look to support and enable the provision of area and local consolidated distribution centres and encourage shared facilities to allow for consolidated deliveries and dispatches, if and when it becomes realistic and feasible to do so in comparable locations in England.



What else could we do?

The following interventions also relate to how we plan to support the development of more effective plans for the movement of freight to and around the borough:

- Promote the involvement of businesses in Wigan Borough in the GM Freight Forum to explore issues, opportunities and innovative solutions in the freight and logistics sector.
- Ensure development proposals that include freight or logistics operations, or which are likely to generate increased freight or logistics traffic, to provide sustainable logistics plans and utilise sustainable modes of transport, where appropriate, and include such a requirement in the emerging Wigan Borough Local Plan.





6.

**Five-year delivery
plan (2025-2030)**

6. Five-year delivery plan (2025-2030)

This chapter provides more detail on the activities we must progress in the next five years to deliver on our plans. We have also set out some guiding delivery principles in relation to governance, monitoring, funding, and social value.

Delivery Plan activities

A large amount of work will be required in the next five years as we continue to bring our plans for the transport system to reality. We have been able to attract investment to make transport improvements in the borough in recent years and we are keen to maintain momentum.

Some schemes are already well-developed or are underway on site. These will be completed in the next few years. This includes many of our active travel projects. In the short-term, we are also prioritising the need to fund works to improve accessibility around bus stops and rail stations, and make it easier for people to switch to lower emissions vehicles.

For other measures identified in this Transport Strategy, further work is required before we could start construction. We must however be proactive in the short-term in speaking to stakeholders and ensure that initial funding is secured that will enable us to progress with the scheme optioneering, assessment and engagement work that is needed to find the best performing and best value schemes – and perhaps line these up for construction towards the end of this decade or early into the 2030s.

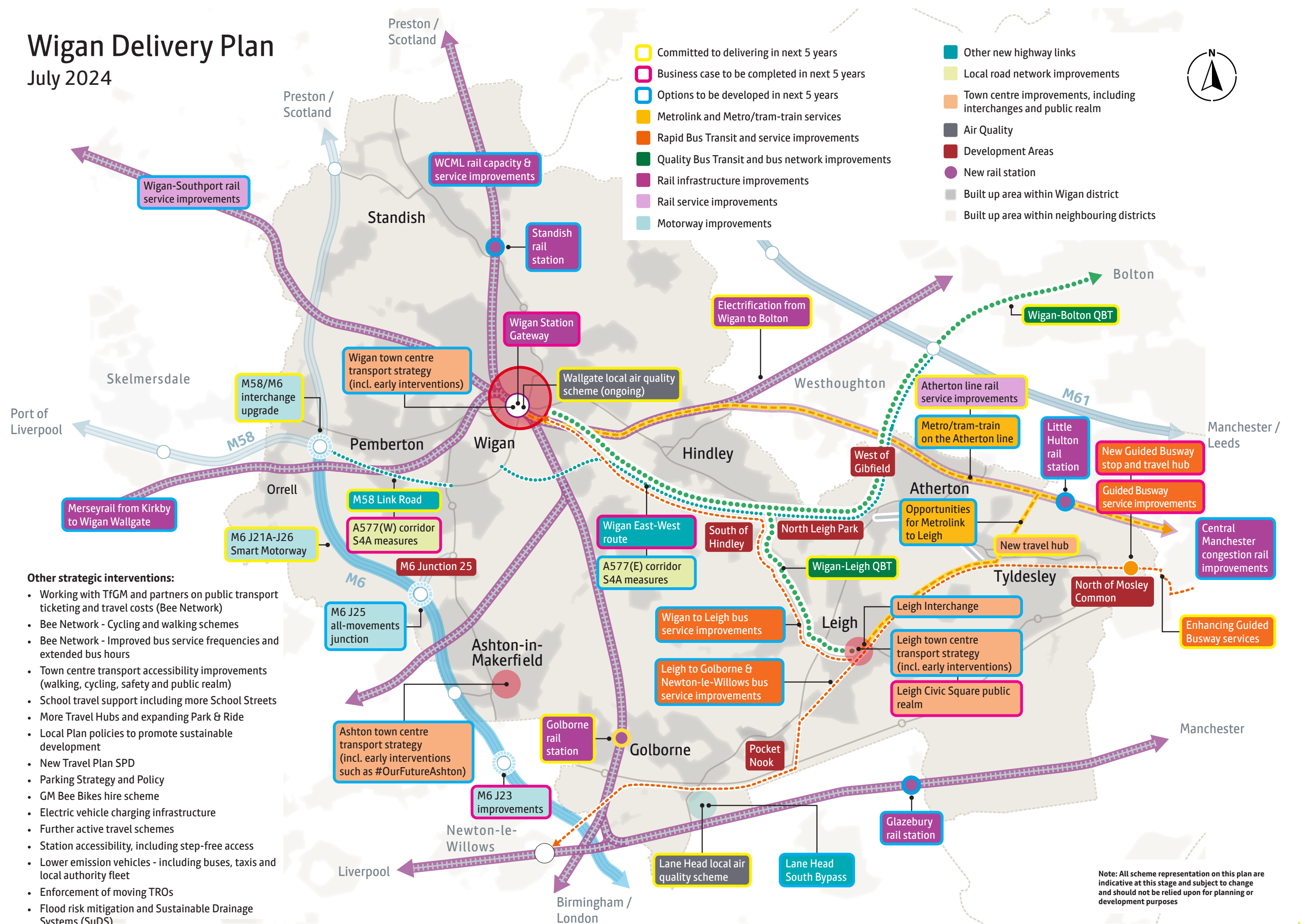
Many of the proposals in this strategy align with those in the GM Transport Strategy 2040 and we have chosen to present our Implementation Action Plan using a similar format to the GM Delivery Plan for consistency. This framework categorises interventions as:

- A. Interventions that we aim to complete within the next five years.** These interventions have significant funding allocated and the case for change has already been demonstrated, although final funding arrangements and approval of business cases may still be needed.
- B. Interventions that we aim to complete the scheme development and funding approvals for in the next five years, and may start to implement.** Funding is normally secured through the approval of a business case. These interventions are those with potential to be delivered by 2030 subject to scheme development funding, prioritisation, capital and revenue funding for construction or implementation and approval of a business case which demonstrates value for money.
- C. Interventions that we will develop options for in the next five years, but are less likely to start to implement in this period.** These are the interventions which need further investigation or development to identify future options and determine feasibility. This work may identify interventions that could be delivered by 2030, and we will aim to achieve that wherever possible, but most are longer-term projects that would only be realised in later years.
- D. Interventions that relate to on-going activities so apply in the short-term and will continue into future years.**

The Delivery Plan overview summarises our leading transport priorities for the borough and beyond, based around these four categories.

Wigan Delivery Plan

July 2024



The following table provides a further description of the activities that are needed to progress each suggested intervention.

Priority	How we might deliver	Category	Five-Year Plan Activities
Strategic schemes already under construction	Wigan-Bolton rail electrification	A	Completion of on-going construction works (led by Network Rail)
	M6 J21a-J26 smart motorway	A	Completion of on-going construction works (led by National Highways)
Wigan Station Gateway - A modern and unified rail hub in Wigan Town Centre	Wigan Station Gateway - Reconfiguration of Wigan North Western and Wallgate Rail Stations	B	Complete design and optioneering studies to identify preferred design option and progress through approvals including Network Rail processes with a view to delivering before 2040.
West Coast Main Line (WCML) rail capacity and service improvements	WCML rail capacity and service improvements	C	On-going discussions with government and key partners about infrastructure improvements which may be required on the WCML, north and south of Wigan, to ensure the protection of existing routes and enhanced services, as well as the addition of future HS2 services.
Wigan - Bolton east-west strategic route	M58 Link Road	A	Completion of design and business case processes with a view to secure funding to complete delivery before the end of 2029.
	Wigan-Bolton East-West Link	B	Completion of design and business case processes with a view to secure funding to start delivery of publicly-financed sections as early as possible. Engagement with developers regarding the viability of regeneration sites which will facilitate the start of the delivery of developer-led sections as early as possible.
	Opportunities for complementary works on the A577 - to better support other modes such as walking, cycling and bus services	B / C	Develop complementary works packages for routes that will carry reduced traffic once new east-route routes are available, including extended lengths of the A577 on either side of Wigan town centre.

Priority	How we might deliver	Category	Five-Year Plan Activities
Lane Head South Bypass	Lane Head South Bypass, providing development access and congestion relief	B	Development of initial options with a view to achieving programme entry status, confirming a funding strategy, and progressing with business case processes with the aim of starting to deliver as early as possible.
Improving Rapid Transit Services in Leigh	Enhancing Guided Busway services	A	Engage with TfGM through their bus 'Network Review' processes to secure beneficial service changes that continue to enhance the connectivity provided by the Guided Busway.
	Opportunities for Metrolink	C	Undertake options study to assess the potential for a rapid transit connection to be brought to Leigh, potentially as a tram-train service connecting from the Atherton Line.
Enhancing the bus network, including growing into the opportunities of bus franchising	Wigan-Leigh and Wigan-Bolton Quality Bus Transit (QBT) corridors	A	Complete scheme development, secure funding, and complete delivery of CRSTS bus interventions to support the Wigan-Leigh and Wigan-Bolton corridors, including works in central Hindley.
	New Mosley Common Guided Busway stop, Travel Hub, and service improvements	B	Subject to planning permissions, complete scheme development and secure funding for the new Guided Busway stop with Travel Hub. A new bus will be introduced to the Guided Busway to increase service capacity.
	Bee Network - Improved bus service frequencies, extended bus hours and an expanded rapid transit network	A / C	We are working closely with TfGM through their bus 'Network Review' processes to understand how the network is operating and where there is scope to make improvements to how bus resource is used. We would like options to include new rapid bus transit routes connections from Leigh (including towards Wigan and Golborne).

Priority	How we might deliver	Category	Five-Year Plan Activities
Helping our town centres to thrive	Wigan town centre (town transport strategy)	A / B / C	Undertake a town centre transport study to determine local transport interventions to align with SRF planning, focused on traffic circulation and the parking needs of the town centre of the future. There may be some early interventions for delivery.
	Leigh town centre (early delivery)	A	Continue to develop and then deliver pipeline schemes including the Leigh traffic reduction scheme (including Windermere Road School Street), Civic Square improvements, and the St Helens Road Cycling and Walking Scheme towards Pennington Flash and Leigh Sports Village.
	Leigh town centre (town transport strategy)	A / B / C	Undertake a town centre transport study to determine local transport interventions to align with SRF planning, focused on traffic circulation and the parking needs of the town centre of the future. There may be some early interventions for delivery. Develop and implement an interventions plan under the £20m 'Long- Term Plan for Towns' programme, as announced by government in October 2023.
	Ashton town centre (early delivery, including the #OurFutureAshton project)	A	Continue to develop and implement interventions that formed part of successful Levelling Up Ashton bid, intended to make streets more attractive, greener and safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
	Ashton town centre (town transport strategy)	A / B / C	Undertake a town centre transport study to determine local transport interventions, to align with The Plan for Ashton, focused on traffic circulation and the use of town centre road space. There may be some early interventions for delivery. Linked to the transport study, we will engage with National Highways on the future operation of the M6 corridor near to Ashton with a view to potential upgrades and amendments to Junctions 23, 24 and 25.
	Supporting improved access to and around our smaller town centres	A	Delivery of identified walking, cycling and public realm interventions across our towns including in Atherton, Ashton, Golborne, Tyldesley and Standish.

Priority	How we might deliver	Category	Five-Year Plan Activities
Comprehensive borough-wide local active travel network	On-going investment programme and pipeline	A / B / C	<p>Complete the delivery of active travel schemes currently under construction and secure the approvals and funding required to deliver schemes currently in development. These include measures across the borough, such as near Leigh, Standish, in Wigan town centre, and on the Whelley Loop Line.</p> <p>Continue to design and engage on future schemes where development funding is secured. Our funded pipeline includes the development of improvements in the Atherton, Tyldesley, Hindley, and Pemberton areas, as well as further works in Wigan town centre.</p> <p>Engage with TfGM on longer-term active travel network planning to identify future tranches of walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure in support of the Active Bee Network.</p>
	School travel and 'School Streets'	A	<p>Introduce more School Streets in areas that request them and consider the transfer of enforcement powers to the local authority to support the enforcement of schemes.</p> <p>Continue to invest in travel planning to support sustainable journeys to schools and all other types of education organisation.</p>
	Residential area interventions	A	<p>Continue to develop and deliver local area interventions to support safety, walking and cycling in residential areas. Measures may typically include traffic calming, crossing facilities, accessibility measures, parking restrictions and enforcement.</p>

Priority	How we might deliver	Category	Five-Year Plan Activities
Enhanced rail service provision, broadening access to rail	New Golborne Rail Station	A	Completion of design and business case processes with a view to complete delivery of the new station and complementary measures before the end of 2027.
	Potential other new rail stations around the borough	C	Engage with TfGM on the potential to build a strategic and financial case for new rail stations at Standish and/or south of Leigh.
	Manchester Recovery Task Force Proposals (Configuration States 1-5)	C	Engagement with TfGM and partners on the development of the Manchester Recovery Task Force Proposals, including regarding live and future Configuration States where there may be impacts on service patterns through Wigan Borough and investment priorities which will impact the North West rail network.
	Atherton Line improvements (service reinstatement)	A	Engagement with partners and train operating companies over the return of previous service frequencies on the Atherton Line as a minimum including reinstating direct services to Manchester Airport (likely could only be implemented in a future Recovery Task Force Configuration State).
	Atherton Line improvements (tram-train)	C	Continued development of potential tram-train options for the Atherton Line in the context of TfGM's Rapid Transit network planning.
	Station accessibility	A	Seek funding to deliver step-free accessibility improvements at Wigan Rail Stations, including Bryn and Hindley as the next priority works tranche.
	Cross-boundary rail network planning	C	<p>Wigan Council to engage with TfGM, as a partner in the North West Regional Business Unit setup to improve collaboration on rail planning across the region.</p> <p>Engagement with Liverpool City Region over future plans for the potential extension of Merseyrail from Kirkby to Wigan Wallgate, and Wapping Tunnel, to explore opportunities for long-term interventions which would benefit both areas.</p> <p>Engagement with Liverpool City Region and train operating companies regarding Wigan-Southport service patterns, seeking potential service increases which would benefit both areas.</p>
	Cost of rail travel	A	Continue to work with TfGM on rail ticketing products and ticket pricing, to ensure affordability, simplicity and accessibility. This is expected to include the integration of rail into the GM ticketing ecosystem beyond 2025 to enable easier ticketing purchasing and cheaper travel.

Priority	How we might deliver	Category	Five-Year Plan Activities
Improved integration between transport modes	Tyldesley Travel Hub	A	Completion of design and business case processes with a view to secure funding to complete delivery of the Travel Hub before the end of 2025.
	Leigh Interchange	C	Work with TfGM to develop options for a modern, high-quality transport interchange in Leigh town centre to replace the current bus station.
	Other transport integration measures	B	Develop options for further new interchanges around the borough, such as in Hindley.
Sustainable infrastructure that unlocks and facilitates delivery of existing land supply and new sites	Local Plan policies and how they promote sustainable development	A	We will continue to work with existing Policies and SPDs to support sustainable housing and employment development. Further to the adoption of a new Wigan Borough Local Plan, we will work with new Policies which should further strengthen our policy positions with respect to accessible development, parking requirements, SuDS, and the provisions of EVCI.
	Strategic housing and employment allocations	A	We will work with the private sector and partners to ensure forthcoming developments including the strategic allocations in the PfE Plan are brought forward to suit the communities they will border and with sustainable transport embedded as far as possible to promote greener and less car-dependent travel.
Travel demand management measures to encourage sustainable travel	New Travel Plans SPD adoption	A	Develop and adopt a new Travel Plans SPD that includes a revised approach to residential development.
	Parking strategy and policy	A	Review and update the council's strategy and policies in relation to parking, including types of parking provisions, design principles for parking, and accessibility arrangements.
	Expansion of GM Bee Bikes hire scheme to Wigan	B	Engage with TfGM on the potential to expand the GM Bee Bikes hire scheme to Wigan as soon as practical.
Support sustained investment in freight networks and infrastructure	Freight consolidation centres and micro-consolidation hubs	B	We will work with TfGM and partners to understand the potential role and benefits of new and emerging freight solutions in the wider sector planning for GM and the North West.

Priority	How we might deliver	Category	Five-Year Plan Activities
Reduce the environmental impact of transport, including through supporting the transition towards and uptake of zero-emissions vehicles	Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan and air quality mitigation measures	A	We will continue to work with GMCA on any local application of a Clean Air Plan and air quality mitigation measures, to help the region meet its legal obligations for air quality in a way which is practical and affordable for residents.
	Lower emission vehicles – buses and taxis	A	We will continue to support TfGM make the case for additional lower emission vehicles to be secured for entry into the franchised bus fleet in the fastest possible time. For the private hire and hackney carriage fleet, we're working to ensure that by April 2026 all vehicles will comply with our age and emissions policy.
	Expansion of electric vehicles charging infrastructure (EVCI)	A	We will explore public and private partnerships that can help us deliver on-road and off-road charging capacity and will look to trial different technological solutions.
	Clean air and climate communications	A	Working with our communications working group to promote environmental messaging with wellbeing elements and engagement with Defra to secure additional funding to expand campaigns.
	Retrofit or upgrade local authority fleet	A	Continue to upgrade vehicles in the local authority fleet to reduce the environmental impact of our services, and draw on the learnings of the Michelin Connected Fleet technology to further improve driver behaviours to save more emissions.
	Local Plan policies to promote the use of EVCI and other zero emission vehicle facilities	A	We will continue to work with existing Policies and SPDs to support the provision of EVCI within new developments. Further to the adoption of a new Wigan Borough Local Plan, we will work with new Policies which should further strengthen our policy position.
Invest in and maintain a safe, secure and resilient transport network	Traffic Regulation Orders and the enforcement of Moving Order violations	A	Apply the powers we have secured from government to enforce selected moving Traffic Regulation Orders and request further enforcement powers are transferred to the council at appropriate sites around the borough as the programme expands to help with network management.
	Flood risk mitigation and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS)	A	We will adopt the latest design principles and work with policies to ensure the wider consideration and inclusions of SuDS in schemes and new development.

The additional table below presents the interventions grouped into category D; on-going activities involving the council.

Priority	How we might deliver	On-going Activities
Enhancing the bus network, including growing into the opportunities of bus franchising	Bus network supporting measures	<p>Continue to work with TfGM on on-going programmes of bus stop improvements.</p> <p>Continue to work with TfGM to ensure dedicated school bus services are provided.</p> <p>Continue to work collaboratively with partners to provide cross-boundary bus services and identify opportunity to expand/strengthen routes.</p> <p>Continue to work with TfGM on bus ticketing products and ticket pricing, to ensure affordability, simplicity and accessibility.</p>
Comprehensive borough-wide local active travel network	Active travel supporting measures	<p>Continue to implement on-going programmes of PRow footpath and bridleway upgrades, and canal towpath upgrades (with partners).</p> <p>Continue to explore the potential for disused railway lines to be opened to support active travel, and to engage with neighbouring authorities on their active travel planning and potential synergies for cross-boundary routes.</p> <p>Support TfGM in on-going engagement with government to allow side road zebra crossings to be implemented in the Wigan Borough.</p>
Enhanced rail service provision, broadening access to rail	Manchester Recovery Task Force proposals (Configuration States 1-5)	Manchester Recovery Task Force Proposals Configuration States is an on-going programme which is focused on the co-ordinated operation of the North West rail network. Council to engage with TfGM and partners as Configuration State 2 is implemented, and to discuss Council's priorities for later Configuration States (including the return of previous service frequencies on the Atherton Line as a minimum).
Improved integration between transport modes	Integrated timetables and ticketing	Continue to work with TfGM on the better integration of bus and rail ticketing products to ensure simplicity and accessibility. Bus franchising enables TfGM to make changes to bus service timetables to provide greater synergy with rail timetables to reduce time lost when interchanging between modes.
Cost of travel	Public transport fares	Continue to work with TfGM on bus and rail ticketing products and ticket pricing, to ensure affordability, simplicity and accessibility. Bus franchising has enabled changes to bus ticketing in recent months and the integration of rail and the provision of multi-modal ticketing is expected beyond 2025.
	Parking charges	Continue to promote town centre parking, promoting pricing strategies which strike a balance between ensuring towns are accessible and open to business, but limiting demand for parking to appropriate levels, where good sustainable choices are available.

Priority	How we might deliver	On-going Activities
Travel demand management measures to encourage sustainable travel options and uptake	Behaviour change programme	We will continue to work with TfGM and across internal council teams to deliver behaviour change programmes including the promotion of School and Business Travel Planning.
	Cycle training initiatives	We will continue to work with TfGM and across internal council teams to promote cycle training initiatives including cycling proficiency training, bike maintenance classes, and officer-led rides.
Reduce the environmental impact of transport, including supporting the transition towards and uptake of zero-emissions vehicles	Air quality monitoring and Air Quality Action Plans (AQAPs)	We will continue to undertake annual monitoring of air quality across the borough, and maintain Air Quality Action Plans (AQAPs) for areas with the most critical concerns including Winwick Lane and Wallgate.
	Street lighting column replacement programme	We have made considerable progress with providing energy efficient LED technology across the street lighting units across the borough. We will continue to maintain our assets and upgrade technologies to save further energy where possible.
Invest in and maintain a safe, secure and resilient transport network	On-going asset maintenance	Continue to deliver our rolling programmes of network maintenance including works to maintain roads, footways, cycle tracks, vegetation and drainage. A separate programme is maintained annual for structures including road bridges, footbridges, and retaining structures.
	Network management, minor works & road safety interventions	Continue to deliver an annual programme of local network management interventions and minor works which can be in any part of the borough.
	Co-ordination of roadworks	Continue to engage with TfGM on the application of the GMRAPS programme.
Support sustained investment in freight networks and infrastructure	Freight focused activities	Continue to work as part of the GM Freight Forum to support GM-wide initiatives for the greener and more efficient movements of goods to support businesses and economic growth, and to manage the impacts of major industrial sites near the Wigan boundary.

Delivery partnerships

The Transport Strategy has many elements and will require strong governance and leadership. While this is our plan, success will only be possible by working closely with delivery partners. Many of our interventions will require the support of TfGM, and there is a much wider set of other partners that we must also closely engage with.

As one of the ten boroughs in the GMCA area, we already have strong links and collaboration with TfGM. The Wigan Borough is captured by the Greater Manchester Local Transport Plan (LTP) and we already work closely with TfGM on the development of almost all aspects of transport planning in the borough. This includes investments made in roads, public transport and active travel infrastructure. TfGM will have a key role in supporting delivery of this Transport Strategy, with many of our interventions also included in the GM Delivery Plan which accompanies the GM Transport Strategy 2040. We must continue to build strong and collaborative working relationships with TfGM; this is crucial to securing the investments that Wigan needs to move forward.

Some of the main delivery partners we will be working with are:

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)	Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)	Department for Transport (DfT) and other government departments	Transport for the North (TfN)	Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
Active Travel England (ATE)	National Highways	Network Rail	Great British Railways (GBR)	Train Operating Companies
London and Continental Railways (LCR)	Bus service operators (working under bus franchising)	Coach companies	Neighbouring Planning and Highway Authorities	Private developers



Engagement and communication

We want our plans to have a positive impact on the lives of our residents and businesses so feel it is critical that we work with our communities to inform the choices and decisions we make. We follow the principle that our plans should be developed for and with the people of the borough and developed in ways that prioritise your needs. We also are working to make sure all engagement is as inclusive and accessible as possible, so that everybody is able to contribute and help shape our plans. We are seeking more ways to be proactive in our engagement, making sure that all segments of the population are reached by our communications and the necessary means are provided for feedback to be gathered.

As we develop individual schemes further, we commit to engaging openly with project partners, stakeholders and the public. We know it can be hard to please everybody, but we commit to listening to views from all sides of our communities and place the views we hear at the heart of what we do. We also recognise the importance of clear communication and commit to ensure that information about our transport projects is provided clearly, regularly and openly as soon as we have news to share. We also want to work more effectively with our communities and local leaders to ensure information is presented in a way that is easier to find, interpret and respond to, and will always welcome feedback on how we can improve the ways we communicate.

Funding

Given the complexity of the strategy, there will be several sources of funding required to deliver our interventions over many years, and potentially decades. Our Strategic Transport Board will ensure that resource is allocated appropriately towards securing funding where opportunities arise.

In recent years we have seen funding allocated through a blend of locally devolved opportunities and central government funding competitions. We were successful in several of these, such as the Levelling Up Fund and Local Authority Capability Fund, but were also unsuccessful on occasions, such as with Active Travel Fund 4, and this has restricted our ability to progress schemes as quickly as we would have liked. The government has indicated they are re-considering the way that centralised funding is allocated to local authorities to spend in areas such as transport, and we wait to understand what this might mean in terms of the delivery of our transport schemes. As we have seen under consecutive governments, funding streams and delivery mechanisms regularly change and it is reasonable to expect new opportunities to emerge as we deliver on this strategy.

It is an exciting period for Greater Manchester due to the new trailblazer devolution deal that is coming into force. This deal devolves a range of new powers and funding to the GM Mayor and should create the potential for longer-term funding strategies to be put in place that will help bring more clarity to how the local transport system can be maintained and invested in.

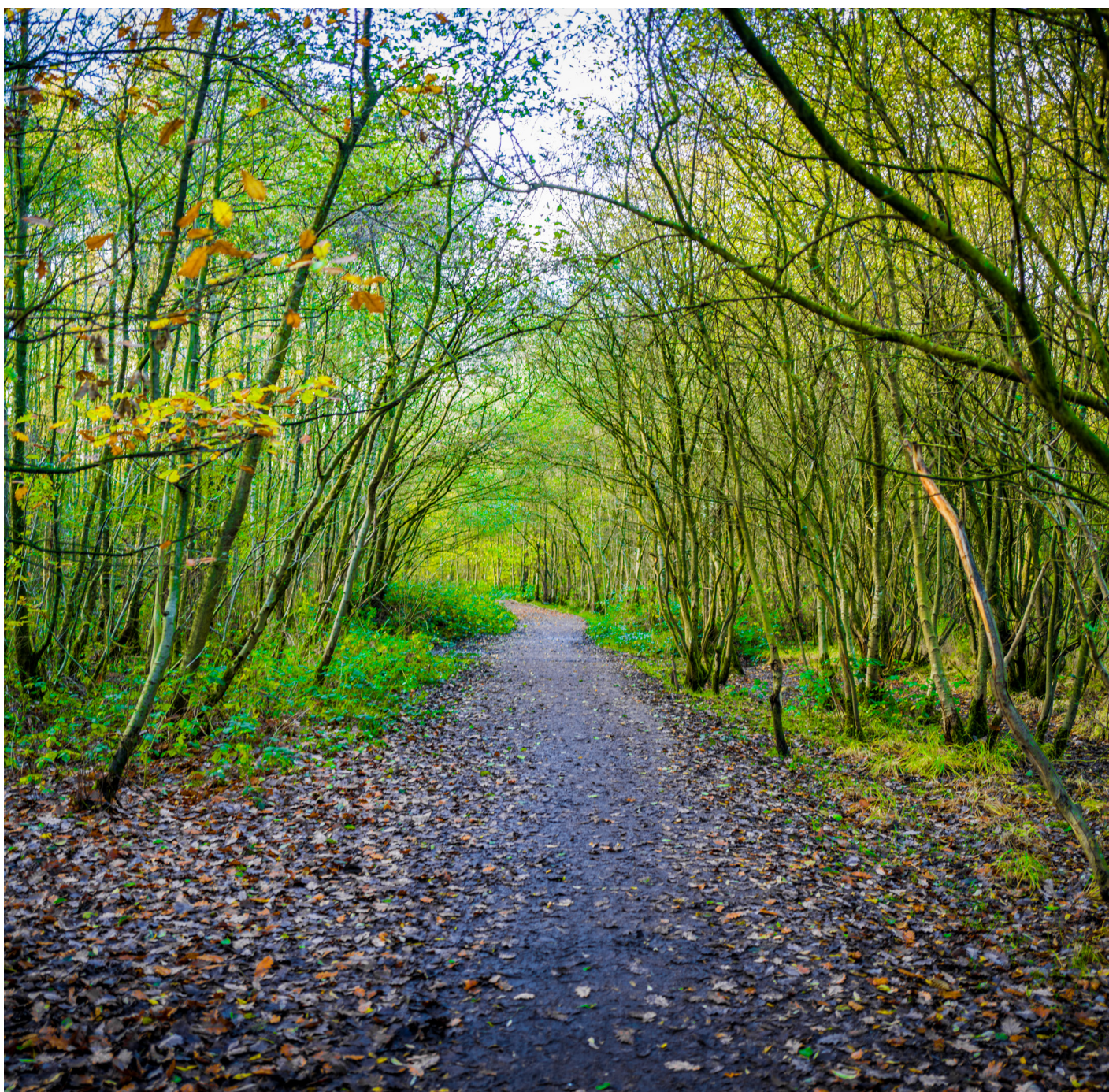
We understand there are pressures on any funding that is devolved with TfGM covering a range of responsibilities, including the on-going costs of operating the Metrolink system. Since 2022, TfGM and the GM districts are delivering the CRSTS programme. CRSTS 1 covers 2022-27, with CRSTS 2 set to cover 2027-2032. We will be seeking to promote as many of our priorities as possible in CRSTS 2.

As it currently stands, there are several public funding sources that are helping us deliver our transport priorities:

- **CRSTS1 2022-27:** Greater Manchester agreed a £1.070bn settlement with government in April 2022 which is now being used to fund the city-region's transport priorities for the 2022-27 period. For Wigan, this includes Wigan-Leigh and Wigan-Bolton Quality Bus Transit Corridor routes, an air quality scheme at Lane Head, and the planned new Golborne Rail Station. Discussions over CRSTS2 (2027-32) are on-going with Greater Manchester having been indicatively allocated £2.474bn for this period.
- **Large Local Majors (LLM) Fund:** Our east-west road infrastructure proposals to connect Wigan town centre and the M61 are within the DfT's LLM programme. The scheme is a wider GM priority which has been endorsed by TfN.
- **Growth Deal:** The Growth Deal was a funding settlement awarded to Greater Manchester through the LEP in the mid 2010s. It has facilitated the delivery of several schemes in the city-region during the last decade (including our Road to Wigan Pier, Riverway, Smithy Brook Road and Poolstock schemes) and is positioned to part-fund the M58 Link Road scheme which is part of our east-west road infrastructure proposals.
- **Levelling Up Fund (LUF):** The LUF was established by the government in 2020 through the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Following several competitive funding rounds, Wigan have secured £20m for works at Haigh Hall and £6.6m for transport improvements in Ashton town centre.
- **Active Travel Fund (ATF):** Wigan have been successful in several rounds of the ATF which first emerged in 2020 to support temporary measures installed at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic to make it easier for people to socially-distance as they travelled. This funding has supported works now completed in Worsley Mesnes.
- **Active Travel Mayor's Challenge Fund (MCF):** The MCF programme was set up in Greater Manchester in 2017/18 to support the ten GM boroughs develop walking, cycling and wheeling interventions with the aim of building an integrated 1,800 mile network of higher-quality routes. Funding was provided through a Transforming Cities Fund (TCF) funding award secured by GMCA. Wigan have already developed and delivered several schemes through MCF including in on Scot Lane, Buckley Street and near Pennington Flash. On-going MCF projects include works in Leigh, Atherton and Ashton.
- **Capability & Ambition Fund:** This fund was established in 2021 as an evolution of the Access Fund which ran for the period 2017-21. The fund is available to enable local authorities design walking and cycling proposals (but not fund the delivery) and Wigan secured a share of the £2.8m awarded to TfGM. The funding is supporting the preparation of designs for the Hindley and Pemberton areas.

We expect further funding opportunities to be presented in the coming months and years, which could include a further phase of the Major Road Network (MRN) programme which has previously offered funding to local authorities for major interventions which impact economically important A-roads. We are engaging with Transport for the North to promote Wigan's interest in being shortlisted for the next phase of this funding.

We are also alert to ensuring that where the private sector stands to financially benefit from new development, they should also be making their contribution towards any transport infrastructure that is needed to support the additional journeys that will be created. We recognise this can be a contentious issue in local planning decision-making and are always striving to secure a fair and direct funding contribution from developers. This is usually through a Section 106 agreement which is attached to planning permission. This is another area that we are aware is being looked at by government and so may evolve as the strategy is being delivered. We will take advantage of any changes in policy that allow the local authority to secure additional private sector funding towards transport enhancements.



Governance and monitoring

This strategy is endorsed by Wigan Council's Portfolio Holder for Planning, Environmental Services and Transport, and will be monitored by our Strategic Transport Board that meet bi-monthly. This group will monitor our progression on the actions and investments set out in the plan and ensure that delivery programmes are on-track and that the intended outcomes of this strategy are being realised. Monitoring the strategy will also help to ensure that benefits are maximised, and co-ordinated and efficient delivery occurs wherever practically possible.

Maximising social value

A few years ago, GMCA established the 'Greater Manchester Social Value Framework 2020' which sets the agenda locally on how added social value can be pushed across all organisations in the city-region. The aim of the framework is to look to how to use social value to tackle the inequalities and make things good, fair and sustainable by encouraging every organisation in Greater Manchester to carry out its primary activity, managing the resources that it controls and drawing in investment, in such a way that it encourages them to create lasting benefits for the people of Greater Manchester, improve the local economy, while positively contributing (or at least minimising damage) to the environment.

As a leading organisation in the city-region, we have made a clear commitment to supporting this Framework and ensuring that social value is secured through our procurement and commissioning processes. Realising our transport priorities provides opportunities to make a meaningful contribution towards the larger goals.

Building on this, we have also introduced a 'Community Wealth Building' programme, developed in response to feedback received to the Big Listening consultation programme. Community Wealth Building is all about how we will locally help to tackle economic inequality and create a fairer borough with greater opportunities for all. Through the ways which public money is allocated, we know we can have a positive impact and create a fairer and more equal economy and society.

The council alone spends

£350m



on goods and services, employs 4,500 people and owns 20% of the borough's land.

.....

40% of that is spent with Wigan based businesses. If we increase it by 11% that would mean an additional

£30m



spend on Wigan businesses

.....

These businesses in turn would spend approximately another

£13m with their own suppliers and employees in the borough

.....

An increase of 12% in Wigan and neighbouring borough suppliers would equate to an approximate

£33m

additional spend with local businesses

Planning with Flexibility

Whilst this strategy reflects our current thinking, the nature of planning and securing funding for schemes means a flexible and agile approach should always be taken.

The Strategic Transport Board will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of this Transport Strategy and the timely delivery of the interventions in the Delivery Plan. Given the competition for scheme funding, we are aware that our scheme development teams must continue to progress at pace, and our Board may be required to take a dynamic and flexible approach as we implement the Strategy, particularly should a funding opportunity arise which enables a scheme to progress more quickly than we currently expect to be possible. It is also the case that as scheme development work is completed, we may conclude that a proposed intervention is not viable, affordable or deliverable and in this instance we will not be afraid to consider alternative approaches that can achieve our Strategy objectives and outcomes.

We also recognise that there are studies and programmes which are under development or would be led by other organisations (such as TfGM, Network Rail, and National Highways) which may have an influence on the implementation of the proposals set out in this strategy. The Strategic Transport Board will be responsible for promoting the best interests of local measures and our priorities with these partners as a part of any wider programme discussions.

