

Please note: This is the original LUF Round 2 funding application for #OurFutureAshton, which was submitted in August 2022. Dates and financial information were estimates made at the time of the submission based on the information available. As a result of project development since the award of funding, further information has become available and timescale and funding positions have evolved. Current information regarding the projects is available at the following link: <https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Projects/Levelling-up-Ashton-Town-Centre.aspx>.

Levelling Up Fund Round 2 Application

What is the legal name of the lead applicant organisation?

Wigan Council

Where is your bid being delivered?

England

Local authority

Wigan

Enter the name of your bid

#OurFutureAshton

Does your bid contain any projects previously submitted in round 1?

No

Enter the name of any consultancy companies involved in the preparation of the bid

Inner Circle Consulting
DWF
CarverHaggard
CTS Traffic & Transportation
Commonplace

Enter the total grant requested from the Levelling Up Fund

£6,556,272

Investment themes

Regeneration and town centre 100%
Cultural 0%
Transport 0%

Which bid allowance are you using?

Full constituency allowance

How many component projects are there in your bid?

1

Are you submitting a joint bid?

No

Grant value declaration

I am submitting a bid as a single applicant and can confirm that the bid overall does not exceed £20 million grant value

Gateway criteria: costings, planning and defrayment

I confirm that some LUF grant funding will be defrayed in the 2022/23 financial year

Provide bid name

#OurFutureAshton

Provide a short description of your bid

#OurFutureAshton will support the transformation of Ashton-in-Makerfield from a declining market town to a thriving future town. The project is focused on re-balancing the built environment so that it prioritises walking, cycling and dwelling. An established, modern market square, with spaces to support independent businesses and local makers, as well as enhanced links and greening of the surrounding streets, will celebrate Ashton's mining and industrial heritage whilst firmly looking to the future in addressing its key barriers to growth: poor accessibility, sluggish economic growth, and declining perception of place.

Provide a more detailed overview of your bid proposal

#OurFutureAshton aims to transform Ashton's town centre into a welcoming, safer and adaptable environment that its residents can feel proud of. The specific interventions within this project include:-

- A multifunctional square in Ashton's historic market site that will be home to arrange of community, social and entrepreneurial activities to boost local productivity and restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging by bringing Ashton's vibrant and prosperous history back to life. This also includes improvements to the shopfront and façades along Garswood Street and entry points to the market site that will elevate the multifunctional square area, enhance the experience for visitors, preserve heritage assets, improve civic pride, property values and business confidence.
- Streetscape, greening road safety interventions on Gerard Street, to alleviate the effects from congestion, re-balance vehicular movement, improve the experience for pedestrians and cyclists moving around the town centre and increase the safety and perception of the safety of the area.
- Improved crossings and low traffic interventions at Bryan St linking into Old Rd/Wigan Rd to provide a seamless connection to the historic market site and into the town centre.

The outputs and benefits of the intervention are listed below:

- a. Outputs:
 - i. 7000 sqm public realm created or improved
 - ii. 50 new trees planted
 - iii. 5200 sqm public amenities/facilities created, improved, or relocated
 - iv. 25 sqm community centre space created or improved
 - v. 1000 sqm retail space created or improved
 - vi. 200 sqm of other commercial space (not captured elsewhere) created or improved
- b. Outcomes/Expected benefits
 - i. Change in footfall
 - ii. Change in productivity and pay
 - iii. Change in perceptions of place (business, residents, and visitors)
 - iv. Change in business investment
 - v. Change in business sentiment
 - vi. Change in consumer spending
 - vii. Change in the health of residents (physical and/or mental)

Provide a short description of the area where the investment will take place

Home to ~30,000 people, Ashton in Makerfield, is a historic market town located in the borough of Wigan, between Manchester and Liverpool. The town benefits from excellent connectivity, being served by the M6 and A580, reaching 750,000+ people within just a 30-min drive. Ashton is also home to one of the North West's largest and most successful industrial estates, the South Lancashire Industrial Estate, providing it with direct access to high-profile businesses.

Ashton is an important hub for local goods, services and independent businesses. The town also benefits from affordable housing, good quality schooling, easy access to green spaces, such as the Jubilee Park, and a strong leisure offer neighbouring Haydock Park Racecourse.

Ashton has a distinct sense of place and a rich heritage, e.g. the town has a recorded history from medieval times. Its most significant period of growth was during the 18th and 19th centuries which resulted from the expansion of coalmines, cotton mills and the manufacture of metal products. As the economy grew, the town centre developed around the traditional through route with a fine collection of Victoria commercial and public buildings.

Despite its unique offering and rich history, today, Ashton's town centre reflects the downfall driven by sluggish economic growth and limited investment in the area. Its old-time charm is suppressed by the negative impact of heavy traffic coupled with a steady drop in confidence and pride in place further accelerated by the death of the historic local market.

#OurFutureAshton focused on restoring the identity and strength of the town centre. The proposed project to address it will transform the historic market site and adjacent streets, including Gerard Street, Garswood Street and Bryn St linking into Old Rd / Wigan Rd.

The location for the proposed project was strategically selected to improve the physical access throughout the town centre and enhance Ashton's urban environment, with the ambition of maximising the impact for local businesses and residents and, as a consequence, return on investment through economic benefit.

See Section 6 for further details on the location of the proposed intervention in connection to Ashton's barriers to growth and expected benefits.

Does your bid include any transport projects?

No

Provide location information

Location 1:

Enter location postcode WN4 9AF

Enter location grid reference SJ5771599125

Percentage of bid invested at the location 100%

Select the constituencies covered in the bid

Constituency 1:

Constituency name Makerfield

Estimate the percentage of the bid invested in this constituency 100%

Select the local authorities covered in the bid

Local Authority 1:

Local authority name Wigan

Estimate the percentage of the bid invested in this local authority 100%

Sub-categories that are relevant to your investment

Sub-categories that are relevant to your investment

Commercial

Civic

Other Regeneration

Describe other regeneration sub-category Perception of place

Select one or more transport sub-categories that are relevant to your investment Active Travel

Provide details of any applications made to other funding schemes for this same bid that are currently pending an outcome

None

Provide VAT number if applicable to your organisation

152904376

Bidders are invited to outline how their bid will promote good community relations, help reduce disparities amongst different groups, or strengthen integration across the local community

The overarching ambition of #OurFutureAshton is to promote good community relations, strengthen integration across the local community and help reduce disparities amongst different groups through the delivery of a much-needed social space and improving the accessibility within Ashton.

As outlined above, the multifunctional public square in Ashton's historic market site will be home to a range of community, social and entrepreneurial activities that will boost local productivity and restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging. The multifunctional public square will provide a place for socialising and community engagement that would cater for the needs of all age groups. Detailed design works will respond to the local demographic challenges by creating a place that is vibrant and modern to appeal to young people, yet attractive and easily accessible to the elderly.

Streetscape and road safety interventions will help reduce inequality and polarisation by improving the accessibility to Ashton's town centre where detailed design works will respond to the mobility constraints of the elderly and disabled people. This in turn will increase the range of economic

opportunities for those who are currently excluded, thus contributing to reduced disparities amongst different groups.

Is the support provided by a ‘public authority’ and does the support constitute a financial (or in kind) contribution such as a grant, loan or guarantee?

Yes

Does the support measure confer an economic advantage on one or more economic actors?

No

Provide further information supporting your answer

No - Streetscape, greening and road safety interventions (£3.9m) – free and open access to the public realm). No economic activity

Yes - Shopfront and façade improvement scheme (£0.8m), but this will be a grant scheme operated under exemption (SAFA/MFA) under section 36(1) Subsidy Control Act – no economic activity to WMBC

No – Commercial / Retail / Social area on Garswood Street parking site:(£2.6m) substantial Revenue generation from retail and hospitality activities which can be justified under CMO (Commercial Market Operator) principle in section 3(2) Subsidy Control Act – no advantage to WMBC.

Is the support measure specific insofar as it benefits, as a matter of law or fact, certain economic actors over others in relation to the production of certain goods or services?

Yes

Provide further information supporting your answer

Yes (all interventions).

Does the support measure have the potential to cause a distortion in or harm to competition, trade or investment?

Yes

Provide further information supporting your answer

Yes (all interventions).

Will you be disbursing the funds as a potential subsidy to third parties?

No

Has an MP given formal priority support for this bid?

Yes

Full name of MP Yvonne Fovargue
MP's constituency Makerfield

Describe what engagement you have undertaken with local relevant stakeholders. How has this informed your bid and what support do you have from them?

Extensive stakeholder engagement was undertaken as part of the development of #OurFutureAshton. Over 400 people were engaged via one-to-one engagement sessions, roundtable events, area-based workshops, and in-person public consultation, undertaken across a six-month period in 2022. Ward Councillors engaged throughout the pre-consultation project development period and have co-developed the bid's interventions.

A. High Street Task Force Workshop

The High Streets Task Force visited Ashton-in-Makerfield in February 2022 to undertake an Unlocking Your Place Potential diagnostic visit, followed by an in-person workshop with attendees representing Ashton including councillors, local businesses, residents, youth representatives and volunteering groups.

The diagnostic process identified several opportunities for improvement in Ashton including:

- a. A need to improve the attractiveness of the town centre, with places to sit and socialise, new uses on the market site, and improved space for activity and events
- b. A need for multifunctional space for commercial activities and events. Safety improvement measures (including additional pedestrian crossings) in Ashton's town centre. Call for improvements in the public realm, street scene and greenery #OurFutureAshton was developed in response to the High Street Task Force diagnostic and in accordance with the Ashton Plan.

B. Local representative workshops /1-1 session

In June 2022 #OurFutureAshton was presented to key stakeholders, including councillors, local businesses, community members, volunteers and young professionals. This was followed by a 1-1 session with youth representatives. The open discussion enabled the attendees to share their feedback on the project. All attendees understood the needs targeted through the proposal and shared the desire for a transformation in the Town Centre.

Key remarks supported the need to:

- a. Provide an attractive offer to increase the dwell time and footfall
- b. Offer attractive spots for kids, adolescents, and young adults
- c. Bring art, culture, and food events into the Town Centre
- d. Activate the historic market site
- e. Promote and showcase local businesses
- f. Prioritise pedestrian & disabled access in and around Ashton's town centre (particularly on Gerard Street)
- g. Assess and be mindful of town centre parking provision
- h. Respond to local and national climate action ambitions

C. Ashton in Makerfield Public Consultation

On June 7th – following the stakeholder workshop, a public consultation was held at the Gerard Centre in the Town Centre where more than 200 residents were engaged face-to-face and presented with the project for the Town Centre Regeneration. This consultation was augmented by feedback gathered via online platform Commonplace.

Local residents and visitors strongly supported the ambition of #OurFutureAshton to:

- a. Promote road safety and attract a higher and younger footfall into the area
- b. Create a town square with a larger commercial offer for all age groups
- c. Maintaining and highlighting Ashton's rich culture and heritage
- d. Provide a space to hold community events

The public engagement process showed a universal desire to improve the current offer of the town centre and an overarching positive response from the community to the #OurFutureAshton works.

Has your proposal faced any opposition?

Extensive stakeholder engagement activities demonstrated wide-ranging support. However, some consultees raised concerns regarding the development of the current parking site on Garswood Street given the impact of the proposals on the existing parking supply. In response to these concerns, Wigan Council commissioned a parking survey to examine the usage of the site.

Key findings include:

- a. The site is a vibrant and valued part of the Ashton town centre during weekdays, weekends, and evenings.
- b. The car park is improperly used. Long-term stays reduce the spaces available for shoppers thus hindering economic growth.
- c. There is a disjunct use between the lower and upper part of the car park arising from the current space markings.

Detailed delivery works on Garswood Street will respond to these findings by:

- a. Minimising the reduction of car parking spaces lost through the introduction of semi-permanent structures that could be removed to revert the losses
- b. Making Albert Street site available for car parking to further mitigate losses (i.e., ~20+ additional improved car parking spaces)
- c. Improving the layout of the space through landscaping and greenery to encourage turnover and efficient mix-use.
- d. Paving the way to an improved parking demand management within Ashton's town centre through a mix of policy and follow-up investments. While consultees recognised the challenges that car parking reduction could cause, they all saw the creation of a new square in Ashton as an acceptable trade-off to promote active travel and boost local economic growth.

Do you have statutory responsibility for the delivery of all aspects of the bid?

Yes

Provide evidence of the local challenges / barriers to growth and context that the bid is seeking to respond to

Ashton-in-Makerfield is located between Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region, and four miles south of Wigan. Ashton is one of the North West's best-connected small towns, adjacent to the M6 and A580, reaching up to 750,000 people within just a 30-minute drive. The town has excellent connectivity to two international airports and Liverpool 2 Superport, and from 2027, Ashton will also be just a 10-minute train journey from regular HS2 services at the Wigan rail hub.

Ashton's strategic location on the overlap between Wigan, Manchester, and Liverpool has helped it become an established commuter town. Ashton also benefits from easy access to high-profile businesses across three of the Northwest's largest and most successful industrial estates (i.e., South Lancashire Industrial Estate, Hindley Green Industrial Estate, and St Helens & Haydock Industrial Estate).

Yet Ashton's strategic location, excellent connectivity, and direct link to high-profile businesses do not translate into growth and prosperity as the town is falling behind in terms of:

- a. Physical access: The town centre experiences high levels of congestion and noise pollution from HGV traffic, negatively impacting the environment, people, and local businesses. This, in turn, leads to high levels of environmental and health deprivation, negatively impacting the wellbeing of the residents and leading to a poor perception of place.
- b. Business / Enterprise: Ashton suffers from poor business growth, lagging Wigan, Greater Manchester, and North West figures. The local business scene is dominated by microbusinesses that

are struggling to grow in the absence of a thriving urban environment coupled with a decreased sense of place.

c. Employment / Skills: Ashton's high-quality school offering does not translate into an increase labour force competitiveness. Skills-wise (i.e., NVQ4+), Ashton is lagging borough, regional, and national comparators. Employment is skewed towards lower pay jobs, with most employees working in wholesale and retail trade, education, and manufacturing.

d. Demographics: Ashton's population is older than the borough average which leads to higher mobility issues and increased health spending.

e. Deprivation: As part of the borough of Wigan, Ashton's designation as a LUF Priority 1, reflects its concentrated pockets of high deprivation clustered around the town centre, scoring particularly high in terms of health and disability and environmental deprivation (i.e., top 30% of England).

f. Health: Ashton's town centre is among the top 30% of most health-deprived areas in England where the local prevalence of Asthma is above the borough-wide average figure.

g. Culture and heritage: Ashton's hallmarks of a traditional market town are fading along with the decline of the historic market on Garswood Street. There are ongoing calls to revive the market and support cultural/art activities and events to improve social connections and strengthen local identity and community spirit. Without direct intervention to improve the built environment and the vehicular movement throughout the town centre and boost economic growth, Ashton will fall short of its true potential of becoming a thriving future town.

Explain why Government investment is needed (what is the market failure)

Traditionally a vibrant market town, Ashton-in-Makerfield is now experiencing a sustained period of decline which can be attributed to three market failures:

A. The gradual decline of the local market (i.e., positive externality)

Ashton-in-Makerfield's market in Garswood Street was thriving for more than 100 years, offering a wide range of items and independent vendors to a loyal and relatively affluent customer base. However, the increase in high street chains and discount retailers coupled with the drop in trader occupancy, primarily due to retirement, reduced the number of visitors and led to a gradual decline in the market. The process was further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Now the site is used entirely as a free car park servicing residents, visitors, and local businesses. Despite recent petitions to bring back the market to life, the Council is lacking the finances needed to bring the site back to productive use, especially post-COVID-19, when vendors are likely to require financial incentives and additional infrastructure to kick start and sustain their activity onsite. Government investment is needed to restore the market's vibrancy, attractiveness, and positive impact on the wellbeing of the community.

B. Congestion within the town centre (i.e., negative externality)

Ashton town centre is the primary through route for access to and from the M6 Junction 24, also serving several business sites. While the proximity to the M6 is advantageous from a connectivity perspective, it has also generated high levels of congestion particularly in the town centre, along Gerard Street. This, in turn, has increased pollution and created physical barriers to movement around the local area by foot, cycle, and public transport, locking in the dominance of the private motor vehicle and contributing to negative perceptions of the town centre. Investment is needed to immediately address the congestion within Ashton's town centre, balance vehicular movement and pave the way for long term transport interventions to ensure optimal use of limited road space.

C. Limited investment in the physical make-up of the town centre (i.e., public goods)

The streetscape within Ashton's town centre is of poor quality, lagging in terms of private and public sector investment. Public consultation highlighted the need to improve greenery, street crossing and lighting, public seating and shelter areas in and around Ashton's town centre. Similarly, residents actively called for more spaces for leisure and social interactions that cater for the needs of all ages (i.e., vibrant modern spaces that can attract youth but also respond to the elderly's limited mobility and resources). Public sector investment is needed to improve the current quality and offer of the physical make-up of the town centre and strengthen Ashton's standing as a place to live, work and visit.

Explain what you are proposing to invest in and why the proposed interventions in the bid will address those challenges and barriers

#OurFutureAshton will address Ashton's key barriers to growth linked to poor accessibility, a sluggish economy, challenging demography, and a declining perception of place. The project will transform Ashton's town centre by:

I. Re-balancing the built environment around the historic market site (on Garswood Street).

The multifunctional public square on Garswood Street will accommodate a range of retail and commercial activities that will support local entrepreneurs, drive footfall, business investment, and consumer spending. This, in turn, will translate into increased local economic growth and productivity.

The re-activation of the historic market site will be further elevated by a shopfront and façade improvement scheme on Garswood Street inspired by Ashton's rich heritage. The joint works will improve perceptions of the town centre, enhance the experience for visitors, preserve heritage assets, improve civic pride, property values and business confidence.

The multifunctional public square will provide a place for socialising and community engagement that would cater for the needs of all age groups. The investment will respond to the local demographic challenges by creating a place that is vibrant and modern to attract young people and improve their perception of the place. Detailed design works will also factor in the accessibility requirement of the elderly along with their mix-use preferences.

II. Improving physical access in and around Ashton's town centre

Investments in the public realm and road safety improvements on Gerard Street will help strike the right balance between vehicles and pedestrians, providing a safe environment for pedestrians and cyclists whilst still supporting the excellent road links that currently serve the area. The planned works will not only improve physical access and provide an uplift to the urban environment but will also support existing businesses and create the right conditions for new investment.

Improved crossings and low traffic interventions on Bryn Street/Old Road/Wigan Road will provide a seamless connection to the historic market site and into the town centre and promote the uptake in active travel which will translate in turn into increased local air quality and improved residents' health.

Detailed design works will respond to the mobility constraints of the elderly and disabled people and pave the way for medium to longer interventions that will assist with reducing the volume of traffic in the heart of the town centre.

How will you deliver the outputs and confirm how results are likely to flow from the interventions?

#OurFutureAshton works aim to transform Ashton's town centre through a bundle of investments that will enable Ashton to become a thriving, inclusive and sustainable future town. The £7,28M investment in a multifunctional square at Ashton's historic market town and adjacent streetscape, greening and road safety improvements will deliver:

- a. 5200 sqm of new public amenity through the transformation of the current parking site on Garswood Street
- b. 27 sqm of new community centre space on the existing parking site
- c. 750 sqm of improved retail space created via shopfront/façade scheme on Garswood Street and 250 sqm of new retail space created on the current parking site
- d. 200 sqm of new pop-up space (i.e., other commercial space) created on the current parking site
- e. 7000 sqm public realm created or improved; and
- f. 50 new trees planted in and around Ashton's town centre

The regeneration of Ashton's town centre will drive footfall and support local businesses which in turn will improve productivity and pay. The proposed interventions will improve perceptions of place among businesses, residents, and visitors which in turn will lead to an increase in consumer spending, business investment and business sentiment further supporting a boost in local productivity. Finally, the creation of new spaces for community and social engagement coupled with improvements in the public realm and greenery will boost the physical and mental health of the residents.

Set out how other public and private funding will be leveraged as part of the intervention

#OurFutureAshton will leverage a total of £0.79M match funding contribution from the public sector including:

- £0.69M from the Mayor's Cycling and Walking Challenge Fund Tranche 5 to fund crossing facility upgrades and improved permeability works in the residential area bounded by Old Road and Wigan Road

- £0.03M match Wigan Council for CCTV upgrades to increase the safety and perception of safety in and around Ashton's town centre

See Section 8 for further details on match funding.

Explain how your bid aligns to and supports relevant local strategies and local objectives for investment, improving infrastructure and levelling up

#OurFutureAshton works help to deliver:

- a. Ashton Plan's vision to enhance the quality of the urban environment, strengthen local enterprises, empower local people, and improve existing infrastructure to connect people, places, and enterprises together.
- b. Deal 2030's ambition to create vibrant town centres, empower local communities, promote inclusive economic growth, and improve connectivity in the borough.
- c. Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy's ambition to improve the ease and attractiveness of travelling within the borough and the quality of the built and natural environment to help change the image and perception of place.
- d. Wigan's Economic Vision Strategy's economic ambition to create economic centrepieces, that prioritise walking and cycling and foster local business growth.
- e. TfGM 2040 Transport and Wigan Transport Strategy's ambition to create better places by reducing the dominance of cars and improving the environment.
- f. The Deal for Wigan Principle of a Well-Connected Place through the provision of safe and accessible routes for walking and cycling.
- g. Made to Move Strategy's goal of improving streets for walking, ensuring high levels of design quality to maximise safety and attractiveness.
- h. Greater Manchester Moving Strategy's ambition to enable greater physical activity through increased cycling and walking.
- i. Wigan's Population (Adults) Health Strategy's key themes of improving health outcomes for adult residents, reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, and making the healthy choice attractive and easy.
- j. Wigan Outline Climate Change Strategy's ambition of increasing the ease of walking and cycling in Ashton's town centre and encouraging mode shift.
- k. Wigan Borough Historic Environment Strategy's core theme of valuing and celebrating the historic environment by improving the quality of shopfronts that distract from Ashton's town centre heritage buildings.
- l. Fire Within: Wigan Cultural Strategy's ambition to elevate pride and celebration of place.

Explain how the bid aligns to and supports the UK Government policy objectives

#OurFutureAshton objectives are closely aligned with the government's strategic objectives to:

- a. Unlock growth and opportunity, support the stewardship and rebirth of centres (i.e., alignment with HM Treasury (2020) National Infrastructure Strategy).
- b. Regenerate key local sites to support innovation and growth-enhancing infrastructure (i.e., alignment with HM Treasury (2020): Plan for jobs).
- c. Improve the public realm to facilitate walking and cycling, accelerate a transition to a low carbon future and help meet the 2050 net-zero target. OurFutureAshton interventions will provide green space to improve air quality, facilitate the uptake of active travel, and stimulate behavioural change at a local level (i.e., alignment with DfT (2020): Gear Change. A bold vision for cycling and walking and HM Government (2020): The Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution).
- d. Promote social, economic and cultural regeneration to overcome the challenges created by Covid-19 (i.e. alignment with HM Treasury (2021): Building Back Better: Our plan for Growth).
- e. Restore a sense of community, pride, and belonging (i.e., alignment with (2022): Levelling Up White Paper).

Alignment and support for existing investments

Where applicable explain how the bid complements or aligns to and supports existing and/or planned investments in the same locality

#OurFutureAshton represents the first step in the implementation of Wigan Council's Tranche 5 (T5) of The Mayor's Cycling and Walking Challenge Fund (MCF) Scheme Section 8: A49 Wigan to Ashton - Junction improvements and active neighbourhoods. #OurFutureAshton works will focus on reducing traffic movements in the residential area bounded by Old Road and Wigan Road through a series of active neighbourhood measures including crossing facility upgrades and improved permeability works. #OurFutureAshton will supplement the works MCF T5 works by streamlining the connection between Ashton's active neighbourhood, the historic market site, and the town centre.

As part of the Deal 2030, and Wigan Councils' commitment to helping people feel safe where they live, #OurFutureAshton will introduce CCTV positioned at strategic points, which will improve the safety and the perception of safety in Ashton's town centre. The introduction of the latest CCTV cameras based on AI technologies will enhance the existing service by enabling the use of ANPR technology and the ability to provide 24/7 high-quality images. On Garswood Street, towards the rear of Sir Thomas Gerrard Public House, CCTV improvements will respond to the recent reports of youth-caused anti-social behaviour-related crimes.

During the next stages of development, the Council will look to find synergies in funding opportunities, in particular, the Shared Prosperity Fund.

Confirm which Levelling Up White Paper Missions your project contributes to

Select Levelling Up White Paper Missions (p.120-21) Living Standards Health Wellbeing Pride in Place

Write a short sentence to demonstrate how your bid contributes to the Mission(s)

Living standards: Improved connectivity, accessibility, and dynamism in and around Ashton's town centre to unlock opportunities for economic growth.

Health: Interventions to encourage active travel and improve air quality in and around Ashton's town centre.

Wellbeing: New public square and greening within Ashton's town centre to promote social and community interaction.

Pride in Place: Shopfront/façade improvements and activation of the historic market site to elevate the local heritage offer and boost pride in place.

Provide up to date evidence to demonstrate the scale and significance of local problems and issues

A. Physical access

- i. High congestion within Ashton's town centre, primarily on Gerard Street. (JIU Wigan Council District Centres Data Profile, 2019)
- ii. Ashton's population is older than the borough average, leading to higher mobility issues. (Wigan Council's Service Delivery Footprint profile, 2018 and ONS, 2022)
- iii. In the Makerfield constituency, the average time to travel to the nearest employment by car, cycle, public transport, or walking is above all borough-wide figures across Greater Manchester. (DfT, 2019)

B. Economy / Business

- i. Ashton suffers from slow business growth i.e., 6% vs. 9% in Wigan, 16% in Greater Manchester and 11% in the North West region. (ONS, 2021)
- ii. Local business scene is dominated by micro-businesses (i.e., 89.27% vs. 88.98% in Wigan, 89.15% in Greater Manchester and 89.01% in the North West region) which are more susceptible to poor perception of place. (ONS, 2022)

C. Employment / Skills

- i. Reduced labour force competitiveness due to a low proportion of highly skilled workers. In 2021, in the Makerfield constituency, only 32.5% of those aged between 16-64 had higher education certificates (NVQ4+) compared to 37.4% in Wigan, 38.5% in the North West region, and 43.5% nationally (ONS, 2021)
- ii. Employment is skewed towards lower pay jobs, with most employees working in wholesale and retail trade (19%), education (14.3%) and manufacturing (10.7%) (ONS, 2021)

D. Demography

- i. The share of the older population (i.e., 65y+) is higher in Ashton compared to the borough, regional, and national figures (i.e., 23.03% vs. 19.17% in Wigan, 18.79% across North West region, and 18.70% across Great Britain). (ONS, 2022)
- ii. Ashton's population is ageing rapidly; the share older population (65y+) has increased by 1.76 percentage points between 2015 to 2020 (vs. 0.74 pp change in Wigan, 0.65 pp change across North West region and 0.8 pp change across Great Britain). If unaddressed, this demographic trend will tighten the local labour market. (ONS, 2022)
- iii. Lack of proactive measures to increase the share of the economically active population within the district (Local consultation, 2022)

E. Deprivation

- i. As part of the borough of Wigan, Ashton's designation as a LUF Priority 1, reflects its concentrated pockets of high deprivation clustered around the town centre. Notably, Ashton's town centre scores high in terms of health and disability and environmental deprivation i.e., top 30% in England (IMD, 2019)

F. Health

- i. The prevalence of Asthma in Ashton is above the borough-wide average figure. (Wigan Council's Service Delivery Footprint profile, 2018)

Demonstrate the quality assurance of data analysis and evidence for explaining the scale and significance of local problems and issues

The data underpinning the bid is drawn from a range of robust, up to date and unbiased sources:

A. Physical access

Average travel time to nearest employment centre with 500 to 4999 jobs available by public transport or walking, cycling and drive (Travel time, DfT2019). Data available at a parliamentary constituency level and above.

B. Economy / Business

IDBR records the number of enterprises, broken down by employment size band, detailed industry, and legal status (Annual business growth & Business size, ONS -IDBR 2021). Data available from the country down to mid-layer super output area.

C. Employment / Skills

Residence-based labour market survey encompassing population, economic activity/inactivity and qualifications broken down by gender, age, ethnicity, industry, and occupation (Qualifications level & Employment by industry, ONS2021). Data available at a parliamentary constituency level and above.

D. Demography

Population estimates - small area based by single year of age (Population break by age group, ONS 2020). Data available at a super output area level and above.

E. Deprivation

English Indices of Deprivation measuring relative levels of deprivation at lower-layer super output area level (Deprivation across seven distinct domains, IMD2019). Data available at a lower-layer super output area level.

F. Health

Report covering the health and social care aspects of Wigan Council's population (Disease prevalence, Wigan Council's Service Delivery Footprint profile 2018). Data available at the service delivery footprint area of Wigan Council.

Demonstrate that the data and evidence supplied is appropriate to the area of influence of the interventions

As outlined above, the data selected for the analysis of need has been based, where possible, at the Lower Super Output Area level, particularly in relation to local economy/business, demographic trends, and deprivation. Parliamentary constituency-wide and service delivery footprint data has been used where relevant to the project and not available at the Lower Super Output Area level, particularly, in relation to employment /skills, health and transport.

Provide analysis and evidence to demonstrate how the proposal will address existing or anticipated future problems

#OurFutureAshton aims to respond to Ashton's key barriers to growth namely:

- i. Constrained physical access: The high levels of congestion within Ashton's town centre are negatively impacting the environment, the people, and the local businesses and in turn, contribute to a poor perception of the place.
- ii. Sluggish economy: Poor business growth coupled with reduced labour force competitiveness are hindering Ashton's economic development.
- iii. Challenging demography: Ashton's population is ageing rapidly further tightening the local labour workforce.

- iv. Deprivation: Ashton town centre has pockets of health and disability and environmental deprivation. This, in turn, contributes to a poor perception of the place.
- v. Unrealised culture & heritage offer: Ashton's identity is fading along with the decline of the historic market on Garswood Street.

There are ongoing calls to strengthen local identity and community spirit.

The development of a multifunctional square in Ashton's historic market site coupled with streetscape, greening and road safety interventions in and around Ashton's town centre will:

- i. Improve physical access in and around Ashton's town centre - Public realm and road safety improvements will create a safe and accessible environment for residents and visitors and encourage the uptake of active travel.
- ii. Support local businesses and boost productivity and pay via the creation /improvement of commercial and retail spaces coupled with an elevated perception of place among businesses, residents and visitors that will drive footfall, increase business investment and consumer spending.
- iii. Help address local demographic challenge - The multifunctional public square on Garswood Street will improve the local offering for young people incentivising them to remain in the area. Furthermore, public realm and road safety investments will respond to the mobility issues experienced by older residents
- iv. Improve the health of residents – Streetscape and road safety interventions will encourage modal shift from cars to active travel. This, in turn, will reduce air pollution and improve the health of the residents.
- v. Help realise Ashton's unique culture & heritage offer – By bringing back to life the historic market site and investing in a façade improvement scheme that will celebrate Ashton's rich history.

The quantifiable impacts of the project are:

- a. Land value uplift (£0,34M): The creation of commercial and retail space on the current parking site on Garswood Street will lead to an increase in land value
- b. Wider land value uplift (£4,97M for residential properties and £2,13M for commercial properties): Public realm improvements coupled with the new public square on Garswood Street will increase the footfall, dwell time, and attractiveness of the area thus enhancing neighbouring residential and commercial real estate values
- c. Improved amenity value (£1,02M): The #OurFutureAshton interventions will increase the amenity value of the historic market site through the creation of a multifunctional public square.
- d. Active travel benefits (£6,52M): Public realm improvements lead to an increase in active travel which in turn will generate benefits in terms of health outcomes, air quality, road congestion and journey quality.

Details on data sources, assumptions and non-quantifiable benefits are captured in further responses within Section 7.

Describe the robustness of the analysis and evidence supplied such as the forecasting assumptions, methodology and model outputs

From an economic perspective, there is a range of evidence linking perceptions, improved public realm and high-quality public spaces to increased high street footfall, local expenditure and local land value. These arguments have been endorsed by the Institute of Place Management and embedded in its 25 key factors for town centre vitality which underpinned recent guidance for the government's Future High Street Fund.

The quantifiable impacts of the #OurFutureAshton project are:

A. Land Value Uplift

The land value uplift benefits (£0,34M) are derived by computing the value of the land in its new use minus the value of the land in its existing use for a period of 30 years post 2022. The land value uplift calculation is derived based on the number of commercial units (i.e., 16 semi-permanent commercial containers plus 3 flexible spaces) and baseline assumptions occupancy, size, rent, fix and variable costs.

B. Wider land value uplift

The wider land value uplift benefits (£4,97M for residential properties and £2,13M for commercial properties) are derived using HMT Green Book guidance for a period of 5 years post opening. A 2019 CBRE study identified that regeneration areas within up to 750m buffer experience on average an additional 1-3.6% uplift in value per annum over and above wider growth from the start of the regeneration. In line with the 2019 CBRE study, the wider land value benefit calculations conservatively assume a 2% uplift in residential & commercial property values (including retail and office spaces), a 200 buffer around the historic market site and 10% displacement. Geographic Information System (GIS) data was used for the number of neighbouring residential properties along with local land registry average house price information. CoStar data was used for the number and values of neighbouring commercial properties.

C. Amenity Value

Amenity benefits (£1,02M) are derived based on DCLG appraisal guide for a period of 30 years post-2022 assuming 0.52 hectares of new urban core amenity created.

D. Active travel

Active travel benefits (£6,52M) are derived via DfT active mode appraisal toolkit for a period of 30 years post-2022 assuming 30% increase in walking & cycling from year-on-year baseline trends for walking (computed via Datscha) and cycling (using via Propensity to cycle data).

Explain how the economic costs of the bid have been calculated, including the whole life costs

The total cost of the project is £7,284,747, where the total LUF request is £6,556,272 and the total match funding is £728,475.

Costs have been developed by Appleyard & Trew LLP cost consultants based on a review of industry precedents and market assessment. Economic cost figures been aligned closely with Wigan Council's precedent figures.

The total project cost includes:

A. Cost risk & uncertainty

Extensive cost modelling has already been undertaken across the project, both by an external quantitative surveyor and by Wigan Council. The modelling includes 10% contingency to account for cost risk and uncertainty. The project costs have also been adjusted for inflation based on BCIS guidance, which provides estimates for tender price inflation for 2022-2023 (i.e., 7%) and 2023-2024 (i.e., 3%). Assuming that project costs will be locked in through tender between Q2 2022 and Q4 2023, we included a 5.26% cost margin to account for inflation.

B. Optimism bias

In light of the extensive planning undertaken to deliver this stream of works and based on Wigan Council's extensive experience in delivering capital projects, the risks associated with #OurFutureAshton are low. As such, we have assumed a 10% optimism bias applied to requested LUF funding and public sector match funding.

C. Discounting

Project costs have been adjusted to reflect the base year and discounted according to standard guidance within DCLG's Appraisal Guide and within the Levelling Up Fund Technical Guidance and FAQs. The level of discounting appropriate to this bid is deemed to be minimal as all project delivery is intended to start within six months of receiving the Levelling Up Fund grant funding (in Q3-Q4 2022).

Describe how the economic benefits have been estimated

The economic benefits of the intervention have been assessed to account for the cumulative impact of the project. We have focused our assessment on the areas immediately adjacent to the interventions as they will experience the most attributable impact. Quantifiable economic benefits include:

A. Land Value Uplift

Land value uplift is defined as the value of the land in its new use minus the value of the land in its existing use. In appraisal terms, the difference between this new land value and its previous land value represents the net private benefits of the development. This is the final value of the site, less development costs, less the value of the land in its “old” use.

For the semi-permanent commercial structure on historic market site, we based the land value uplift calculation on the total number of commercial units (i.e., 16 semi-permanent commercial containers plus 3 flexible spaces) and conservative high-level assumptions on a fixed cost, maintenance cost, retail/commercial rent, and occupancy, informed by the local market and recent experience on similar schemes.

Based on the number of commercial units and in line with conservative assumptions linked to operational cost, occupancy and rent, the land value uplift associated with the #OurFutureAshton works over a 30-year period post-2022 is £0,34M.

B. Wider land value uplift

Throughout the public consultation, residents were overwhelmingly in favour of bringing back to life the historic market site given its historic relevance and potential impact on community cohesion. Based on the consultation results and considering the unique offering of the new multifunctional public square Garswood Street we anticipate that the re-development of the historic market site will have a high regeneration benefit likely impacting every resident in Ashton.

Based on the public consultation results, and in line with the 2019 CBRE study, the wider land value benefit calculations conservatively assume a 2% uplift in residential and commercial property values, allowing for a 200m buffer around the historic market site and 10% displacement.

Based on GIS data there are ~443 homes located within a 200m buffer from the parking site on Garswood Street, where the average residential property value is ~£147,960. Similarly, based on CoStar data there are 64 commercial units identified in the 200m-buffer zone neighbouring Ashton's historic market site, where the average commercial property value is £413,470. This in turn translates into £4,97M wider land value uplift for residential properties and £2,13M wider land value uplift for commercial properties.

C. Amenity value

The amenity value of the redeveloped parking site is calculated using DCLG Appraisal Guide estimate for the real annual amenity benefits for urban core land (i.e., £109,138 per hectare in 2016 real prices). We applied a GDP deflator to compute the corresponding figure in 2022 prices and discounted the benefits over a 30-year period starting from 2022. Assuming #OurFutureAshton works will create 0.52 hectares of new amenity, which will take the form of a multifunctional public square within Ashton's urban core, #OurFutureAshton will generate £1,02M in increased amenity value.

D. Active travel

The proposed works will improve the public realm, strengthen connectivity, and promote the uptake of walking and cycling within Ashton's town centre.

The benefits of active travel on health outcomes, air quality, and road congestion are well documented. Several studies link public realm improvements to increases in active travel e.g., People

& Places' longitudinal study (2021), Arup's Overview of evidence on increasing active travel (2019), and the Pedestrian Pound Living Streets (2018). The case studies included in the abovementioned reports suggest that improvements in the public realm can increase walking in an area by 30%-50% and cyclists by up to 60%. Based on Council's experience and given the scale and the ambition of the interventions proposed by #OurFutureAshton works, we assume a 30% improvement in walking and cycling post-intervention. Based on the current year-on-year trend for walking, derived via Datscha and cycling, via Propensity to cycle, we estimate that the increase in active travel will generate a total of £6,52M benefits derived through mode shift and improved health and journey quality.

Provide a summary of the overall Value for Money of the proposal

The project demonstrates a high and robust value for money for both Government and the wider public sector captured by a benefit to cost ratio (BCR) of 2.18.

As outlined above, the BCR has been calculated in accordance with MHCLG's Appraisal Guidance by applying appropriate economic modelling methodologies and conservative assumptions. In line with the guidance provided by MHCLG, the BCR calculation is based on real discounted net costs to the public sector. Hence the final BCR value is given by the present value of the total economic benefits derived through #OurFutureAshton (i.e., £14,99M) divided by the present value of the Levelling Up Funding and wider public sector funding associated with #OurFutureAshton (i.e., £6,86M where the undiscounted total cost of #OurFutureAshton is £7,28M).

Have you estimated a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)?

Yes

Estimated Benefit Cost Ratios

Initial BCR 2.18

Adjusted BCR 2.18

Describe the non-monetised impacts the bid will have and provide a summary of how these have been assessed

The non-monetised benefits of #OurFutureAshton stem from the regeneration of Ashton's town centre resulting in more attractive spaces that support socio-economic growth, better environment and improved residential health. Explicitly, non-monetizable benefits include:

- **Boost in local economy, productivity, and employment:** The regeneration of Ashton's town centre will drive footfall, support local businesses, and improve perception of place. This in turn will translate into improved economic growth, productivity, and employment. Furthermore, during the construction period, #OurFutureAshton works will boost employment on site.
- **Community cohesion:** #OurFutureAshton has a strong focus on restoring a sense of community and local pride. The multifunctional public square in the historic market site will be home to a range of community and social activities which will improve community cohesion and restore the pride in place.
- **Volunteering opportunities:** The shopfront and façade improvement scheme will create volunteering opportunities for Ashton residents to contribute to the development of their town (e.g., through murals inspired by the local context and heritage).
- **Enhancing Green Space:** #OurFutureAshton works will improve the greenery within Ashton's town centre which in turn will increase the wellbeing of the residents.
- **Reduced levels of inequality and polarisation:** #OurFutureAshton work will improve accessibility into Ashton's town centre, increasing the range of economic opportunities for those who are currently excluded.
- **Attitudinal changes to active travel:** Streetscape and road safety interventions are expected to impact residents' attitudes towards active travel, bettering their understanding of the importance of sustainable travel choices.

- Improved safety and perception of safety: Road safety investments will improve the perception of safety amongst residents and visitors. Furthermore, the addition of new and improved CCTV cameras strategically placed around Ashton's town centre, will also contribute to improved safety and perceptions of safety amongst locals.

At this stage the assessment of the non-monetised impacts is based on broader economic literature and Wigan Council's recent experience. A thorough assessment of the non-monetisable impacts will be part of the monitoring and evaluation activities that will kickstart in Q3/Q4 2022.

Provide an assessment of the risks and uncertainties that could affect the overall Value for Money of the bid

The risk and uncertainties that could affect the overall VfM of the bid are:

Increased programme costs – Contingency and optimism bias were included in the #OurFutureAshton budget to account for potential cost increases. Further mitigation actions include early engagement with contractors to confirm the likely costs of the proposed works and value engineering.

Lower than projected levels of active travel - Modelling on the uplift in active travel has been conservative, hence, there is a strong degree of confidence that the projected figures are realistic.

Remaining economic uncertainty relating to the pandemic and wider macroeconomic context - The programme is designed to respond directly to these uncertainties, increasing the attractiveness and relevance of Ashton's town centre.

Unforeseen environmental/ physical conditions or regulatory requirements affecting the ability of the project to deliver within the set budget – Mitigation actions include early engagement with statutory consultees regarding regulatory requirements, value engineering, and/or alternative design solutions.

To test the benefits of the scheme, we included an initial sensitivity analysis on the initial/adjusted BRC for the scheme allowing for an up to 20% plus minus variation in PVB and PVC. While the BRC figure is sensitive to changes in costs and benefits, the analysis captures BRC figures of above 1.31 and up to 3.64 (i.e., mostly medium to high BRC figures, supporting the robustness of the proposal).

Confirm the total value of your bid

Total value of bid £7,284,747

Confirm the value of the capital grant you are requesting from LUF

Value of capital grant £6,556,272

Confirm the value of match funding secured

£728,475

Where match funding is still to be secured please set out details below

The match funding for the project is £728,475 including:

- a. £697,000 match funding from MCF Section 8a & 8b secured subject to Full Business Case which will be completed and approved in 2022/2023.
- b. £31,475 secured match funding for CCTV as part of the Deal 2030, and Wigan Councils' commitment to improved safety and perception of safety within the Council.

Land contribution

If you are intending to make a land contribution (via the use of existing owned land), provide further details below

A - no land contribution.

Confirm if your budget includes unrecoverable VAT costs and describe what these are, providing further details below

The budget does not include any allowance for irrecoverable VAT as it is assumed that all VAT will be recoverable. If any VAT does become irrecoverable, then it will be a cost borne by Wigan Council.

Describe what benchmarking or research activity you have undertaken to help you determine the costs you have proposed in your budget

Costs have been developed by Appleyard & Trew LLP cost consultants based on a review of industry precedents and market assessment aligned closely with Wigan Council's precedent figures.

Appleyard and Trew's experience in the public realm sector ranges from open green spaces to street works and have developed their cost modelling techniques to cater for the evolving results of stakeholder and community consultation being fully committed to the creation of sustainable developments. Past projects include Burgess Park - London Borough of Southwark (£4.5M), Eltham High Street - London Borough of Greenwich (£6M), and Silkstream and Montrose Parks - London Borough of Barnet (£5M).

The following assumptions have been included within the project Cost Plan are listed below:

A. Multifunctional square in Ashton's historic market site

- a. Garswood St - CCTV remains; BT column remains
- b. Commercial site - CCTV column remains in place
- c. Garswood St Shopfronts - No works to above shopfronts

B. Streetscape, greening and road safety interventions

- a. Gerard St/Wigan Rd Junction - Traffic lights to remain in place
- b. Gerard St trees and furniture - Only minor relocations of existing street furniture; small allowance for service diversions
- c. Bolton Road corner and crossings - Traffic lights remain in place. Warrington Rd Junction - Traffic light comms cabinet remains in place; traffic lights remain in place.

Details on margins and contingencies are outlined in further section 8 responses.

Provide information on margins and contingencies that have been allowed for and the rationale behind them

Appropriate levels of margins and contingencies have been allowed based on a detailed assessment of the level of risk associated with the proposed works and informed by Wigan Council's recent experience:

- a. Preliminary costs: 10%
- b. Overhead & Profit: 8%
- c. Contingency: 10% for the multifunctional public square works & 35% for streetscape, greenery and road safety interventions (reflective of Wigan Council's Major Projects team's recent experience)
- d. Tender price to inflation: 5.26%
- e. Professional fees: 15%
- f. Optimism bias: 10% Full details of costs and contingency amounts are provided in earlier attached - LUF Single Project Costings and Planning Workbook Our Future Ashton.

If you are intending to award a share of your LUF grant to a partner via a contract or sub-grant, please advise below

Not applicable, Wigan Council is not delegating the delivery of any part of the bid to any partner.

What legal / governance structure do you intend to put in place with any bid partners who have a financial interest in the project?

Not applicable, no bid partners.

Summarise your commercial structure, risk allocation and procurement strategy which sets out the rationale for the strategy selected and other options considered and discounted

COMMERCIAL STRUCTURE & RISK ALLOCATION

Wigan Council will be the accountable body and hold the delivery risk for the entirety of the funding £7,284,747 comprising all components of the project (i.e., Multifunctional square in Ashton's historic market site and Streetscape, greening, and road safety related work in and around Ashton town centre)

PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

Wigan Council has an extensive track record of capital project procurement; procurement and delivery of #OurFutureAshton works will be led by Wigan Council's dedicated procurement team.

The procurement strategy identifies the best way of achieving the optimum programme outcomes, considering key procurement objectives, constraints, funding, and risk. As a fundamental element, the choice of contract structure(s) will determine the level of integration of design and construction for the project and support the main scheme objectives in terms of risk allocation, incentivisation and delivery.

Wigan Council's Procurement Strategy seeks to ensure that the Council has the best commercial arrangements in place in order to:

- a. Procure innovative and flexible works, services and quality goods that are responsive to the needs of our community and deliver optimum value for money.
- b. Ensure that the Council gets maximum value from every pound that is sent through best value and innovative procurement practices.
- c. Drive Social Value from our procurements, including making a positive commitment to addressing climate change and supporting the local economy.
- d. Respond to the nature and climate emergencies in a way that improves environmental performance and awareness of our suppliers and users.
- e. Ensure a consistent approach to procurement.
- f. Maintain, strengthen, and develop strong relationships with suppliers who are proactively managed in full transparency and understanding of the risks involved.

The proposed approach to secure the necessary services includes:

- i. A single procurement exercise across all proposed works to save time, cost and resources.
- ii. Design & Build (D&B) approach to enable the contractor(s) to take ownership earlier in the process and reduce project risk.

Existing procurement frameworks can provide the Council with access to a range of local and regional contractors who would hold the necessary experience, record of accomplishment, capacity and financial standing to deliver the proposed interventions.

The Council's dedicated Procurement team also utilises the following third-party systems:

- a. The Chest is an e-procurement portal used to advertise new tenders and for suppliers to submit bids for our tender opportunities;
- b. Contracts Finder advertises contracts generally worth over £25,000 which are subject to a public advertisement. It is also used across the public sector in England;
- c. Find a Tender is used to advertise details of higher value tenders above certain thresholds. Find a Tender has replaced the EU's Tenders Electronic Daily for high-value contracts in the UK; and
- d. Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) is a central purchasing consortium group offering a wide range of Framework Agreements through which goods and services can be procured. Wigan Council also has access to other framework providers.

Wigan Council will pro-actively use pre-market engagement to inform procurements, better understand current and potential suppliers, ensure a good response from suppliers, and to encourage innovation that drives best value.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

Effective Contract Management can mitigate against financial risks within contracts, as well as deliver a range of non-commercial benefits such as high-quality services and outcomes for service users, lower service risk and additional social value during the life of the contract.

Clear and measurable performance indicators will be established for each contract executed alongside a social value tracker to ensure commitments are delivered. Fee payment, where possible will be linked to the performance indicator and key milestones in delivery.

Each contract will be assigned a responsible officer from within the project team structure to monitor the delivery of the contract ensuring timely and quality work is produced in line with the contract specifications and programme.

Consultant team members notably from the Property and Landscape consultants will support the performance management of the construction contracts through the role of the QS and contract administrator under the selected form of contract.

For each major contract including the construction contract a risk and performance workshop will be held on appointment with a risk and performance register established, maintained, and monitored through the contract period. Risk and performance will be reported as standard to the project board where performance issues will be escalated through the project governance structure.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

In line with Wigan Council's Outline Climate Change Strategy, and procurement undertaken by the Council needs to make sure that spending decisions consider and minimise whole life cycle CO₂e emissions associated with the delivery of goods, works and services, recognising that in some cases this will need to be reflected in budgets.

The Climate Emergency section of the Procurement Plan will then clearly set out the following agreed actions:

- a. Pre-qualification – How we will use the standard selection questionnaire (SSQ) to ensure that all suppliers who bid for the contract meet the required standard in terms of their own overall environmental performance?
- b. Specification – How environmental benefit will be considered in the design of the service/goods being procured, and the specific requirements that the supplier will be contractually obliged to deliver?
- c. Tender Evaluation – What tender questions will we ask of bidders so that they make specific proposals to consider environmental factors, and what weighting will be allocated to these questions?
- d. Social Value – How we will use Social Value to secure commitments from bidders that are focused on our own desired environmental outcomes.
- e. Contract Management – The actions above should provide the mitigation for many of the risks identified in the Risk Assessment process. Residual risk will be managed through strong contract management.

Who will lead on the procurement and contractor management on this bid and explain what expertise and skills do they have in managing procurements and contracts of this nature?

Wigan Council has a long history of successfully managing significant schemes involving external suppliers that are underpinned by stringent governance and internal controls.

Wigan Council operates a dedicated team who manages any procurements, including Procurement, Finance and Legal, under the Deputy Chief Executive (Director Resources & Contracts) who is also the Council's Section 151 Officer.

The scheme delivery will be the responsibility of the Council's Ashton-in-Makerfield LUF Project Board lead officer, which will report internally to a Levelling Up Fund Programme Board. This Board has the role of overseeing and scrutinising delivery of the LUF programme. This falls under the responsibility of the Council's Senior Management Team.

Are you intending to outsource or sub-contract any other work on this bid to third parties?

The Council will engage the services of specialist consultants and contractors to support the development and delivery of the projects. The Council has already commissioned preparatory work and has committed resources to take each project component forward via the procurement of professional teams and the development of concept stage designs.

The project's governance structure sets out the role of the project board, the relationship between the subgroups where the project detail is progressed and the reporting routes through to Wigan Council governance. The award of key contracts will be managed in line with this reporting structure and within the financial regulations of the Authority.

Legal support is also provided to each contract team structure to ensure legal frameworks appropriate for the type and scale of works being procured are established as an output of the defined procurement route and that any contractual matters are addressed through the delivery of the contract packages, these include but are not limited to Warranties, extension of time, claims and disputes.

Clear and appropriate professional services contracts are to be executed as an output of the procurement tasks to engage the full team. The professional services contracts will establish clear performance indicators and fee invoicing profiles linked to outputs. The Programme manager and the Procurement officer will lead on the performance management of the consultant team and will be responsible for the certification of fee valuations.

Set within the remit of each project's contract package team is technical project management and contract administration support. The appointed roles will lead on the management of the construction contracts.

The construction contracts alongside professional services contracts will establish clear social value outputs as detailed within the tender proposals from the selected consultant teams. The outputs will be converted into tracker with progress against the delivery of the commitments made visible to the project board on regular intervals. The programme managers will be responsible for the monitoring of social value across the procured contracts.

How will you engage with key suppliers to effectively manage their contracts so that they deliver your desired outcomes

The effective management of consultants and contractors will commence with thorough procurement process that ensures through cost and quality criteria that the most appropriate teams are engaged to support the project. The quality criteria will assess the resources to be applied to the project regarding

skills, experience, and time allocation. Selecting the most appropriate team lays the foundations for effective project delivery.

The procurement process will also include a thorough analysis of the financial standing of the tendering consultants, contractors, and suppliers. This will be extracted through a tender evaluation process. Financial checks will be carried out prior to the confirmation of the preferred team member to mitigate financial risk.

Wigan Council has recognised the need to resource the client function. The project lead will carry the responsibility for the management of the consultant team employed to support each contract. Each contract will take the form of an industry-recognised form of contract such as the RIBA standard professional services contract 2020 or equivalent. Each contract will have clear fee payment schedules aligned to the programme and specific output from the consultant team member. Payment will be certified by the project lead following a check on progress against the defined milestone output.

The project programme will be further developed as the project moves into the delivery stage. Each consultant/contractor/supplier will be required to develop their programme to co-ordinate with the master programme and demonstrate progress against the programme responsibilities within the reporting structure set out in the project governance.

The project governance structure is designed to enable the check and challenge of progress across all workstreams (i.e., a) re-activation of the parking lot / public square creation / parking restructuring / semi-permanent building introduction, b) shop fronts and facade improvements around Garswood St/ Town Centre, and c) pedestrian / cycling / landscape improvements along Gerard St / Garswood St and adjacent streets). Each workstream will be resourced with the right level of professional officer support from within the Council to ensure that the consultant /contractor/supplier performance is effectively monitored and challenged where required. Non-performance or risk will be reported to the Project Board for further escalation and resolution.

The project team structure is designed to embed specialist advice and consultancy support into the project at the earliest opportunity. This will ensure that the procurement processes for contractors and suppliers are informed from the outset drawing upon the experience and expertise held within the appointed consultancy teams.

Each construction and supply contract will be informed by sector recognised forms of contract namely the JCT standard form of agreement for the construction packages. Where sector recognised contracts are not available bespoke forms will be drawn together by the Council's Legal team.

Set out how you plan to deliver the bid

PROGRAMME

#OurFutureAshton works began in April 2022 and will conclude by March 2025:

Regeneration of parking lot (Gerard Ct) Semi-permanent building introduction – Capital works will start in October 2023 ending in December 2024

Shop Fronts Improvements + Culture & Green Trails – Capital works will start October 2023 ending in September 2024

Pedestrian / Cycling / Landscape improvements – Capital Works will start in October 2023 ending in September 2024

A project programme has been developed for a phased delivery of the scheme. The attached Costing and Planning Workbook plan defines the key project milestones, task durations, and contingencies.

The scheme is not reliant on the prior completion of other programmes or projects to enable it to proceed.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS, ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The scheme will follow Wigan Council's established project governance and management structure. The governance, project management and monitoring for the scheme are based on PRINCE2 principles. Existing Wigan Council project procedures and structures will be used to deliver the scheme, with sub-groups established for individual elements as required. This structure will ensure that the projects can be delivered to budget, programme, and quality.

Corporate Management

The Council will have overall responsibility for the strategy and direction of the scheme. The corporate management structure included in the Town Centre Strategic Board, the Corporate Property Board and the Major Projects Board. Wigan Council's Senior Management Team sits above the abovementioned boards and provides strategic corporate management. The Portfolio Holders, Places Scrutiny Committee and ultimately the Cabinet provide members of the Council with the ability to exercise overall strategic governance.

Project management

AIM Project Board will project manage #OurFutureAshton on a day-to-day basis with dedicated support from Wigan Council's Legal, Finance, Procurement, Communications and Planning teams provided as and when needed.

Project delivery

Two working groups will deliver the project on a day-to-day basis i.e., one focused on the multifunctional square in Ashton's historic market site and one focused on the streetscape, greening, and road safety interventions in and around Ashton's town centre. The lead officer(s) will be responsible for ensuring accurate and timely reporting of project performance. The working group will be supported by a professional services team. Construction works to deliver the facilities will be provided by the contractor(s) (to be procured) which will be supported by appropriate professional services required to undertake and complete the development.

DELIVERY PARTNER MANAGEMENT

Delivery contracts will then be managed in accordance with the Contract Management Plans outlined above, by the corresponding responsible officer from within the project team structure. Key Performance Indicators will be specified and reported on a regular as part of the contract management process to ensure the delivery of services on time and within budget, as well as to support the overall achievement of project outcomes. Necessary action will be implemented should the data show that the #OurFutureAshton project performance is below the thresholds agreed at project initiation. Social Value will also be delivered and measured through the National TOMs Framework for each contract, to be monitored by LUF Working Groups, AIM Project Board and Wigan Council Procurement team.

CONSENTS

Formal consents for the interventions that have been received/remain to be are summarised below:

Regeneration of parking lot (Gerard Ct) / Semi-permanent building introduction

Planning Permission (consent expected by Q3 2023)

Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (consent expected in Q3 2023 (Previous to Planning Permission))

Traffic Management Orders (consent expected in Q3 2023 – Previous to Planning Permission)

Further Traffic Mgt. Orders (consent expected in Q3 2023 – Previous to Planning Submission)

Utilities Approvals (consent expected in Q3 2023 – Previous to Planning Submission)

Highway Authority Permits (consent expected in Q3 2023 – Previous to Planning Submission)

Structural Approval in Principle (consent expected in Q3 2023 – Previous to Planning Submission)

Shop Fronts Improvements + Culture & Green interventions on vacant walls around the parking square / town centre

The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (consent expected in Q4 2022 / Q1 2023)

Utilities Approvals (consent expected in Q4 2022 / Q1 2023)

Structural Approval in Principle (consent expected in Q4 2022 / Q1 2023)
Pedestrian / Cycling / Landscape improvements along Gerard St / Garswood St / Active Neighbourhood (It is suggested that the delivery of consents for all works tie into the dates for the planning submission of the parking regeneration so the change of use works can take place within the same period of time)
Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (consent expected in Q3 2023).
Highway Authority Permits (consent expected by Q3 2023)
Further Traffic Mgt. Orders (consent expected by Q3 2023)
Traffic Management Orders (consent expected by Q3 2023)
Utilities Approvals (consent expected by Q3 2023)
Structural Approval in Principle (consent expected by Q3 2023)

BENEFITS REALISATION

A Benefits Realisation Plan will be developed for the scheme to define how benefits will be delivered and when a measurement of achievements of all the scheme's benefits can be made. The plan will relate to the project outcomes and will assume all outputs will be delivered in line with the agreed project approach.

This Plan will be overseen by the AIM Project Board and the corresponding LUF Working Group lead who will ensure that the project achieves the vision set out by the Council and other key stakeholders.

A baseline for an evaluation and benefits monitoring framework will be established in Month 0 to enable an objective evaluation of the impact of the investment.

A logic model will be developed to identify potential metrics for evaluation & benefits monitoring. This approach will facilitate an assessment of the project delivery and benefits against success factors and acceptance criteria. The ongoing monitoring will also allow for deviations and appropriate corrective actions to be identified, enabling Wigan Council and its partners to respond promptly.

Demonstrate that some bid activity can be delivered in 2022-23

Early mobilisation work is underway across the interventions in preparation for securing LUF grant in the Autumn.

All interventions - Pedestrian / Cycling / Landscape improvements /Regeneration of parking lot (Gerard St) / Shop Fronts Improvements + Culture & Green Trails, will make significant progress in their feasibility / design submissions within this financial year with construction scheduled to begin in the Shop Fronts Improvements + Culture & Green Trails intervention as early as March 2023.

Intervention:

A. Regeneration of parking lot (Gerard St) / Semi-permanent building introduction

- a. Procure and appoint design team – Before end of 2022
- b. Design Work Completed – By June 2023
- c. Procurement of works contractors – July / September 2023
- d. Change of use works - October 2023 / December 2024

B. Shop Fronts Improvements + Culture & Green interventions on vacant walls around the parking square / town centre

- a. Procure and appoint design team – Before end of 2022
- b. Design Work Completed – By June 2023
- c. Procurement of works contractors – July / September 2023
- d. Construction works – October 2023 / September 2024

C. Pedestrian / Cycling / Landscape improvements along Gerard St /Garswood St/ Active Neighbourhood

- a. Procure and appoint design team – Before end of 2022
- b. Design works completed – By June 2023
- c. Procurement of contractor – July / September 2023

- d. Accessibility / capacity expansion works - Jan / August 2023
- e. Construction works – October 2023 / September 2024

Risk Management: Set out your detailed risk assessment

A risk assessment for the programme has been undertaken at a high level and appended to this bid. Further risk assessment will be carried out as detailed design progresses. The risk assessment has been informed by real / realised risks, lessons learned from previous projects, engagement with the market and other operators, stakeholder, and community engagement.

Wigan Council corporate project and risk management processes will be used to mitigate risk and ensure that projects are progressed in a logical sequence, ensuring the Council is not exposed to unacceptable risk.

Working Group leads will be responsible for tracking and monitoring the risk register reporting to AIM Project Board, Corporate leads and DLUC on a regular basis. The risk register will also explore and capture opportunities which can drive efficiencies, cost and programme savings, realise wider community goals and social value.

An overview of the key project risks and associated mitigations are outlined below:

A. Financial Risks

The highest risk within the bid relates to the LUF funding being unsuccessful. To mitigate this risk, Wigan Council has procured external consultant support to ensure that the proposals fit with the Levelling Up application requirements and overall LUF agenda. Additional financial risk relates to cost increases and overruns impacting the delivery of the programme. Mitigation of this risk has allowed for contingency allocated in the budgets to account for unexpected costs. External cost consultants will be in place to advise on each stage of the design, providing oversight of costings and potential value engineering.

B. Resource Risks

Insufficient in-house resources to deliver the projects. In anticipation of potential capacity constraints, Wigan Council has reviewed its internal resources and identified personnel with the capacity and capability needed to deliver the #OurFutureAshton project if the bid is successful. The use of external resources to provide further expertise and support has also been accounted for.

C. Delivery risk

Implementation of schemes may conflict with other projects within Wigan Council. AIM program board will be in constant engagement with all relevant local authority colleagues to align the #OurFutureAshton outputs and delivery dates with conflicting delivery programmes.

D. Reputation risks

There is a risk that residents and stakeholders may oppose the proposed programme of interventions. To mitigate this, a significant and proactive approach to public and stakeholder engagement has taken place to develop the project proposals within this bid. Further public and stakeholder engagement will be set up to inform the final design and delivery stages of the #OurFutureAshton project, ensuring involvement throughout the journey, minimising risk of opposition and creating lasting positive impact for the delivered schemes.

Provide details of your core project team and provide evidence of their track record and experience of delivering schemes of this nature

Wigan Council has significant recent experience in delivering:

- a. Infrastructure projects including the A49 and M58 link road (£50m), cycling and walking infrastructure (£3m) and public realm enhancements (£1.5m).
- b. A range of grant programmes, including the Wigan Townscape Heritage Initiative (£1.2m) and the King Street Heritage Action Zone (£1.35m). Both schemes had bespoke governance structures and processes prescribed by the funder (National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England, respectively), but have common elements in terms of processes to ensure transparency, accountability, compliance, quality and to ensure delivery within timescales and budget. These elements are reflected in the programme design of the proposed Shopfront and Building Grant scheme.

Furthermore, the Council's Capital Projects team has delivered an £11-12 million programme of new build, refurbishment, and repairs to civic and school buildings over each year of the last decade. This includes the refurbishment of Leigh Town Hall completed in 2020 for £5.9m which was part funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The teams have expertise in project and budget management including oversight of professional teams and monitoring delivery of contracts against requirements. This includes managing a bespoke contractor framework through which it procures its contractor partners to provide a range of professional services, such as architects, structural engineers, and Clerk of Works during the delivery of such projects.

#OurFutureAshton will be delivered by Wigan Council in full (i.e., there are no other delivery partners involved). The key roles and responsibilities are outlined below:

The Corporate Management Board, including the Town Centre Strategic Board, the Corporate Property Board and the Major Projects Board will have overall responsibility for the strategy and direction of the scheme. The Town Centre Strategic Board is chaired by the Director of Growth and Economy in the role of Senior Responsible Officer, together with the 'senior suppliers' comprising key senior officers within (or providing services to) the Council in respect of regeneration, legal services, and finance. The 'Board' will have responsibility for the success of the project, provide direction to the project managers, provide and control resources to the project, and ensure effective communication between the AIM Program Board Team, the LUF Working Group Teams and external stakeholders.

The AIM Project Board will oversee the #OurFutureAshton on a day-to-day basis. The project management will be provided by a named lead, on behalf of the 'Board' within the brief and limits specified for the role. The AIM Project Board will also engage closely with DLUC for M&E purposes.

The AIM Project board will benefit from dedicated Legal, Finance, Procurement, Communications and Planning support as and when needed.

Two working groups will progress the project on a day-to-day basis i.e., one focused on the multifunctional square in Ashton's historic market site and one focused on the streetscape, greening, and road safety interventions in and around Ashton's town centre. Each of the workstreams will have a core working group led by a dedicated Lead officer and supported by a programme manager. The other members of the working group will be drawn from specialist fields and procurement, PR and Communications, and legal advice will service the working groups as required. The working group will be supported by an appropriate professional services team required to undertake and complete the development.

Set out what governance procedures will be put in place to manage the grant and project

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

The governance, assurance and monitoring for #OurFutureAshton is based on PRINCE2 principles, which underpin Wigan Council's governance arrangements.

The governance model proposed aims to set in place two working groups i.e., one focused on the multifunctional square in Ashton's historic market site and one focused on the streetscape, greening, and road safety interventions in and around Ashton's town centre. The two LUF working groups will progress #OurFutureAshton on a day-to-day basis assuring delivery, hitting programme milestones, quality control, monitoring progress and reporting to the Aim Project Board and the Corporate Management Board.

The AIM Project Board will project manage #OurFutureAshton works on a day-to-day basis in line with the strategic guidance provided by the Corporate Management Board. The AIM Project Board will ensure that #OurFutureAshton activities are coordinated with the Council's ambitions and vision, aiming to liaise – when needed – with relevant Council offices e.g., legal, finance, procurement, comms, planning to ensure the project is aligning with other Wigan Council initiatives. Finally, informed by the Working Group Lead(s), the AIM Project Board will be responsible for engaging and reporting to Senior Council Officers, DLUHC and Council Members on a bi-annual basis.

The Corporate Management Board will have overall responsibility for the strategy and direction of the scheme with Wigan Council's Senior Management Team sitting above to provide strategic corporate management. The #OurFutureAshton governance structure will provide the Portfolio Holders, Places Scrutiny Committee, and the Council's Cabinet members with the ability to exercise overall strategic governance.

ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

Wigan Council has established an anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy approved by the Council's senior management team and the Audit, Governance and Standards Committee, which sets out to protect the public purse and is fully committed to the highest ethical standards, to ensure proper use and protection of public funds and assets.

Wigan Council's anti-fraud, bribery and corruption strategy adheres to the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption 2014 (the Code) and the key themes of the Local Government Fraud Strategy – Fighting Fraud & Corruption Locally 2020 to ensure that all projects where the Council is involved can adhere to the proper regulations.

DATA MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY

The Data Protection Officer within Wigan Council works firstly on protecting the privacy and security of personal information, while complying with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. All projects and information generated during the delivery of a project within the council will have to comply with these regulations ensuring - the regulation of the processing of information relating to individuals.

If applicable, explain how you will cover the operational costs for the day-to-day management of the new asset / facility once it is complete to ensure project benefits are realised

The operational cost associated with the multifunctional public square space on Garswood Street will be covered in full by the rent paid for the commercial/retail space on site.

Streetscape, greening and road safety works will sit within the public highway and the maintenance responsibility remains with the Highways Service. Proposals have been designed to ensure that the

impact on revenue budgets is minimised using standard details and a standard palette of materials. As such, the works are not expected to result in increases in the public realm maintenance costs currently covered by Wigan Council.

Set out proportionate plans for monitoring and evaluation

Wigan Council is committed to robust monitoring and evaluation across all its service areas, programmes, and projects. Monitoring the impact of #OurFutureAshton will be essential to Wigan Council to ensure intended outcomes have been realised; value for money has been achieved and lessons for future schemes have been learnt. As such, 0.75% of the total project budget (i.e., £54,635) has been allocated for M&E activities from the start to the end of the LUF period, beginning with establishing a baseline at month 0, carrying out interim evaluations at the end of Year 1 and Year 2 and a final evaluation at the end of Year 3.

The monitoring and evaluation of the outputs created through #OurFutureAshton will be captured through the contractor reporting process, including contractor drawings, monthly reporting against programme and cost and site visits and photographs of the final implemented scheme.

Through the implementation of the whole project and beyond, performance monitoring and reporting will take place on a regular basis:

- a. Baseline (Month 0) – Data collection on outcomes prior to project commencement for reference purposes shared with DLUHC
- b. Programme monitoring (Progress) – Quarterly review of project expenditure, project progress, project changes, and stakeholder engagement disseminated to AIM LUF Project Board and LUF Programme Board
- c. Programme monitoring (Outputs and Outcomes) – Biannual review of outputs and outcomes disseminated to Senior Council Officers, DLUHC and Council Members. Most of the project outcomes will be realised upon completion of the capital investment works. However, during the development phase, the imperative will be on measuring project progress against key milestones to track progress against the programme and budget of each of the initiatives. Upon completion of the capital investment, full outcomes of the program should begin to be realised, as set out in the Theory of Change. To this end, measurement of the movement against the established baseline will be undertaken on a regular basis through a range of tools as set out in the Costing & Planning Workbook.
- d. Final Evaluation Report (by March 2025) – Final review of outputs, outcomes and impacts compared to the baseline disseminated to Senior Council Officers, DLUHC and Council Members. A summary of key points will also be made available via the local press and on social media.
- e. Ongoing monitoring of outputs, outcomes, and impacts post project completion (post-April 2025) - Beyond submission to the Project Board of the final evaluation report, the Council will also feed into wider evaluations undertaken by partners such as Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)

Note: To ensure project-wide commitment to the monitoring and evaluation framework and a committed long-term contribution to measuring impact, we will put in place outcome-based delivery agreements with contractors

At a programme level, the LUF Programme Board will establish an M&E approach in line with the national evaluation and appraisal guidance as set out within the Magenta and Green Books and aligned with the Levelling Up Fund monitoring guidance as published by the Government.

At a strategic level, the evaluation will need to address the following questions:

- Delivery: Was the programme delivered on time, to budget and within acceptable risk parameters?
- i. Value for Money: Was the Benefit-Cost Ratio achieved; what other added value/benefit was realised? What additional match funding (capital or revenue) was leveraged into the programme?
 - ii. Impact: Did the programme achieve the outputs intended? What outcomes have been derived? Can the programme be attributed to achieving against the impact intended?
 - iii. Governance: How strong was governance & decision-making? What additional partnerships have been created as a result of the project?

iv. Lessons Learned: What went wrong? What went well? What can Wigan Council and partners learn from the experience of delivering the programme?

At the intervention level, a robust monitoring and evaluation plan has been developed based on the established Theory of Change, that will utilise a combination of quantitative and qualitative research tools to capture the direct and indirect outputs and outcomes of each of the individual interventions in contributing to the overall objectives of the project. See Costing and Planning Workbook for details on the proposed quantitative and qualitative research tools designed to capture the direct and indirect #OurFutureAshton outputs and outcomes.

Summary of outputs

- a. 7000 sqm public realm created or improved
- b. 50 new trees planted
- c. 5200 sqm public amenities/facilities created, improved, or relocated
- d. 25 sqm community centre space created or improved
- e. 1000 sqm retail space created or improved
- f. 200 sqm of other commercial space (not captured elsewhere) created or improved

Summary of outcomes/expected impact

- i. Change in footfall
- ii. Change in productivity and pay
- iii. Change in perceptions of place (business, residents and visitors)
- iv. Change in business investment
- v. Change in business sentiment
- vi. Change in consumer spending
- vii. Change in the health of residents (physical and/or mental)