



Wigan Borough Employment Land Position Statement

October 2020

Update

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1. Introduction

1.1. The October 2020 update of the Wigan Employment Land Position Statement has been published to reflect the most recent employment land monitoring period 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020. It replaces the previous version published in May 2019.

1.2. An Employment Land Position Statement has been prepared because the council's most recent Employment Land Review was not finalised. It reached an advanced draft stage in December 2015 in association with the initial work on the Draft Wigan Allocations and Development Management Local Plan (Allocations Plan). It was not completed in part because work on the Allocations Plan was stopped and focus transferred to the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, with an extended end-date of 2037.

1.3. In the absence of an up-to-date Employment Land Review, the position statement sets out the employment land context in Wigan and also informs the wider work on the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. The Position Statement therefore:

- Sets out the findings of the Draft 2015 Employment Land Review.
- Reports on the recent take-up and losses of available employment land and employment development, as at April 2020.
- Reports on the long term trend of loss of employment land to competing land uses, including housing development.
- Reports on the quality and quantity of available employment land in Wigan Borough, as at April 2020.
- Summarises the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF), its current position as at October 2020, and its implications for the supply of employment land.
- Provides an update on regional scale employment development opportunities in neighbouring districts.
- Summarises the reasons why there is a need to widen the portfolio of employment sites in the borough to attract and help generate significant investment in businesses and jobs within the borough.

1.4. It is increasingly evident that most of the borough's employment land supply is either too small, too long term or in the wrong location to compete for major investment opportunities for business and jobs. The borough needs to take advantage of its strategic assets, including the M6 and M61 Motorways and the A580 East Lancashire Road, to secure a greater share of the modern employment market. It is the only borough in Greater Manchester that has direct access to the M6 and M58, which the GMSF recognises as a significant opportunity for manufacturing and logistics development (Use Classes B2 & B8).

2. Draft Wigan Borough Employment Land Review, December 2015

2.1 The Draft Employment Land Review involved a quantitative and qualitative assessment of the borough's employment land and buildings. It was an important part of the evidence base for the Initial Draft Allocations and Development Management Local Plan, published for consultation in October 2015. The Draft Employment Land Review:

- Identified the challenges and opportunities to increase the borough's business base, in order to provide a range of employment sites in the right locations.
- Reported on the quality of the designated employment areas and non-designated employment clusters, as at mid-2014 when the assessments were carried out, by scoring them against a series of criteria including: market attractiveness; commercial viability; quality of the site and wider area; environmental sustainability; strategic access and catchment; and other policy considerations.
- Recommended how the designated employment areas and non-designated clusters should be updated by, as relevant: retaining areas; making boundary amendments to take account of expansions or losses of employment land; proposing that successful non-designated clusters should become designated employment areas; and by modernising the accommodation.
- Recommended that 'saved' Policies EM1A and EM1B of the adopted Wigan Replacement Unitary Development Plan (UDP) be combined into one policy in a subsequent local plan. The subsequent draft policy in the Initial Draft Allocations and Development Management Local Plan was a more pragmatic approach to considering proposals the loss of employment land and buildings, given ten years of experience of using the two UDP policies.
- Identified a quantitative shortfall of around 35 hectares in the supply of available employment land against the Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy requirement of 200 hectares from 2011 to 2026.
- Assessed six sites that could potentially meet the shortfall without affecting the Green Belt boundary, which were: Land South of Leopold Street, Pemberton; East of Stone Cross Lane, Lowton; Land at Pocket Nook Lane, Lowton; Land at Almond Brook Road, Standish; Land at Rectory Lane, Standish; and Land at Smith's Lane, Bickershaw.
- From the options, recommended that the site at Pocket Nook, Lowton would be the best to meet the shortfall to attract growing logistics and advanced manufacturing industries and that Land South of Leopold Street, Pemberton would make a logical small extension to Lamberhead Industrial Estate.

2.2 The recommendations were included in the Initial Draft Allocations and Development Management Local Plan. However further work on that plan was put on hold to focus on the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.

3. Need for an updated Employment Land Position Statement

3.1 The Employment Land Position Statement was last reviewed in May 2019, covering the period up to 31 March 2019. An updated Statement is required to take into account:

- The take up of employment sites and premises that has taken place since 1 April 2019.
- Further losses of employment land to other uses that has occurred in the borough, predominantly for housing.
- The announcement from Government in February 2020 that the Council’s joint Housing Infrastructure Fund bid (with Bolton Council) to enable the delivery of significant east-west road infrastructure across the borough was unsuccessful. This has increased the level of uncertainty over the delivery timeframes of a number of employment sites in the borough including South of Hindley and West of Leigh Road, Hindley Green.
- The removal of the proposed employment allocation at South of Pennington from the Publication Version of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. This was proposed for around 160,000 sq. metres of employment floorspace in the 2019 GMSF but has been removed because land ownership constraints have raised doubts about its deliverability within the plan period.

4. Take-up and loss of employment land

Employment Land take-up, 1 April 2004 – 31 March 2020

4.1 Table 1 shows that, with the exception of 2016/17, employment land take-up in Wigan has been negligible over the last ten years. Low take-up was initially strongly influenced by the recession which had a major impact on investment in new employment opportunities in towns in the north of England, including Wigan. However, the constrained supply of good quality, deliverable employment land options has also been a contributing factor. This is evidenced by the significant fall in delivery rates after 2006, two years before the recession began.

Table 1: Take-up of available employment land (hectares)

Year	Take up (ha)	Year	Take up (ha)
2004/05	16.38	2012/13	0
2005/06	19.76	2013/14	0.11
2006/07	4.7	2014/15	0
2007/08	4.68	2015/16	0.48
2008/09	0	2016/17	15.33
2009/10	0	2017/18	0.58
2010/11	1.54	2018/19	0
2011/12	0	2019/20	3.65

- 4.2 The high take-up rate in 2016/17 comprised 1.98 hectares at Westwood Park, developed as part of the relocation of Nice Pak's manufacturing plant from Hindley Green; and 13.35 hectares spread across three plots at South Lancashire Industrial Estate. These were developed for three Class B8/B2 warehouses occupied by Bunzl plc (3.87 ha), Poundland regional distribution centre (8.04 ha) and a Compagne Fruitiere banana ripening facility (1.44 ha). These predominantly occupied land previously occupied by Georgia Pacific which was destroyed by fire in 2011. Within 5 years of the fire, the site was cleared, sold, planning permission applied for and granted, and development completed. This clearly illustrates that, in reasonable market conditions, if good sites are made available in the borough, they are developed for large units and occupied quickly for the logistics and manufacturing sectors.
- 4.3 On completion of these sites in 2016/17, employment land take up returned to low levels with only 0.58 hectares delivered in 2017/18, comprising of small-scale industrial units at Lamberhead Industrial Estate, Pemberton, and no take-up in 2018/19. 2019/20 has seen a slight uplift in take up of 3.65 hectares, albeit still significantly below policy requirements. This includes 1.53 hectares at Leigh Commerce Park for Aerial Platforms (0.9ha) and CPH (0.63ha), 1.21 hectares at South Lancashire Industrial Estate for 3PL, 0.25 hectares for open air storage at Swan Lane (Plot 1) Hindley Green, and a variety of small scale developments totalling around 0.6ha.
- 4.4 The employment take up figures for at least the past five years, when the employment market has picked up both nationally and at the sub-regional level (as set out in Section 10), indicate that the supply of available, well located and suitably large employment sites in the borough is limited.

Employment land losses

- 4.5 Since April 2016, 21.63 hectares of available employment land has been lost in the borough, comprising:
- 4.05 hectares at Wigan Enterprise Park (A/ - approved on appeal for housing in January 2020, leaving 1.07 hectares of available employment land on the site.
 - 1.82 hectares at Parsonage, Leigh - approved for housing in February 2017.
 - 2.85 hectares at Swan Lane, Hindley Green – approved for housing in April 2018.
 - 12.91 hectares at the site of the former Pemberton Colliery, Smithy Brook Road, Wigan - approved for housing in September 2020.

5. Employment land completions and losses

- 5.1 It is also important to report on completions and losses of employment land and buildings which are not part of the identified available employment land supply. These are shown in Table 2 for the period 1 April 2016 - 31 March 2020.

Table 2: Employment completions and losses, 2016-2020

	Offices	Industrial and warehousing	Total
2016/17			
Completions	1,271	84,908	86,179
Losses	-11,523	-11,235	-22,758
Net	-10,252	73,673	63,421
2017/18			
Completions	1,289	3,796	5,085
Losses	0	0	0
Net	1,289	3,796	5,085
2018/19			
Completions	817	5,211	6,028
Losses	-332	-585	-917
Net	485	4,626	5,111
2019/20			
Completions	1,184	20,599	21,783
Losses	-1,830	-1,069	-2,899
Net	-647	19,530	18,883
2016-2020			
Completions	4,561	114,514	119,075
Losses	-13,685	-12,889	-26,574
Net	-9,125	101,625	92,500

Note: Monitoring period is 1 April to 31 March each year.

Offices

- 5.2 Since April 2016, very little office floorspace has been developed indicating a weak office market in the borough. The net loss of 7,010 sq. m in 2017/18 was largely due to a retrospective planning application for the continued use of a former office building for Class B8 uses in Stone Cross Business Park and the change of use of offices at Martland Mill, Wigan into a hotel. The loss of 332 sq. m in 2018/19 was due to a retrospective planning application for the change of use offices to five apartments at Dicconson Street, Wigan.
- 5.3 Whilst Wigan has a weak office market, neighbouring districts such as St. Helens and Chorley have developed successful office schemes close to the M6 Motorway. Immediately prior to the recession, an office development was

commenced at Glasshouse Business Park on land close to the M6 Motorway in Wigan, but office units have remained empty and the remaining land left undeveloped.

Industry and warehousing

- 5.4 As set out in paragraph 4.2, there was a significant net growth in industrial and warehousing floorspace in 2016/17, due to the completion of the Nice Pak manufacturing factory at Westwood Park and the Poundland regional distribution centre, Bunzl Plc warehouse and Compagne Fruitere banana ripening facility at South Lancashire Industrial Estate. These four developments account for 95% of the industrial and warehousing floorspace completions shown for 2016/17 in Table 2.
- 5.5 With the exception of 2016/17 and a very slight uplift in 2019/20, there has been negligible net growth in industrial and warehousing floorspace in recent years which indicates that there is a limited supply of employment land in the borough that is available, well located and of a suitable scale to attract investment.
- 5.6 The majority of employment floorspace losses have been small units to gyms, children's play centres, fitness studios, martial art studios and trampoline parks, which indicates a growing trend in the leisure industry and the attractiveness of industrial and warehousing buildings for these uses.

Pipeline completions

- 5.7 Despite low levels in net employment completions and take up in recent years, several planning applications for employment development were granted permission over the last years. If and when built out, these developments will increase net completions and will take-up a small proportion of the available employment land supply in the borough and will be recorded as such in the next update to the Employment Land Position Statement. These permissions are summarised below:
- Stone Cross Business Park, Golborne – permission was granted in April 2019 to OXW Catalina (Logistics) Ltd to erect a storage and distribution warehouse, for 6,735 sq. m of B8 floorspace (A/18/86456) within the curtilage of the former Carlsberg Tetley warehouse.
 - Moss Industrial Estate, Lowton – permission was granted in July 2008 for the erection of 25 industrial units for B1, B2 and B8 uses (A/08/71092). This was partly implemented ahead of an approved working amendment in 2016 which proposed an additional six units (A/16/82673). At October 2020, four units have been completed.

- Hope Carr / Leigh Commerce Park, Leigh – Permission was granted in September 2018 for 24 small-scale industrial units, comprising 2,088 sq. m of B2 floorspace. Part of this scheme was implemented in 2019/20 and is recorded in Table 1 and 2. The remainder of the scheme (Plot 4), was implemented in Summer 2020 and will be reported in a subsequent 2020/21 update of this Position Statement.

5.8 Stone Cross Business Park is a successful employment area with excellent access to the A580. Like the Poundland example at South Lancashire Industrial Estate, the approval of the storage and distribution unit within the curtilage of the former Carlsberg Tetley site is illustrative of the fact that if good sites become available there is interest to develop them,. Similarly, the recent permissions at Hope Carr/ Leigh Commerce Park and on last available vacant plot at South Lancashire Industrial Estate illustrate the attractiveness of employment sites with good access to the A580 and M6.

6. Loss of employment land to competing land uses

- 6.1 Loss of available employment land and floorspace has been discussed in the previous two sections. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to review the long term trends in loss of employment land to competing land uses particularly housing, as it is a significant source of loss.
- 6.2 As set out in Table 3, 118.52 hectares of employment land has been lost to competing land uses, primarily housing, in the period 1 April 2011 - 31 March 2020. Just under half of this land has been implemented with the remainder having an extant planning permission(s). The majority of this loss is within designated Primary Employment Areas.

Table 3: Summary of employment land lost 2011-2020

Employment land lost	Implemented (Ha)	Unimplemented (Ha)	Total	Loss to housing
Within Primary Employment Areas	50.81	51.44	102.25	90%
Outside Primary Employment Areas	6.61	9.66	16.27	100%
Total	57.42	61.10	118.52	92%

- 6.3 This equates to an average annual loss of around 13.2 hectares of employment land. Losses since April 2017 equate to 49.8 hectares demonstrating that this is a recent trend and there is no reason to believe that this trend will not continue.
- 6.4 Table 3 presents a summary of all employment land losses since 2011. For clarity Table A1 in Appendix 1 contains a full list of developments that informs these figures.

6.5 In order to help attract, maintain and grow businesses within the borough, Wigan Council has attempted to safeguard employment land through the designation of Primary Employment Area (PEA) within its Local Plan. However, landowners and developers have continually been able to demonstrate that the re-use of or redevelopment of many of these sites for full employment use is not viable, which highlights the issues with the attractiveness of much of the employment land and premises in the borough for modern business needs. This is discussed in more detail in Section 8.

7. Available employment land supply, October 2020

7.1 Taking account of the recent take-up and losses of available employment land together with pipeline completions, Table 4 overleaf indicates an available employment land supply of 131.44 hectares as of October 2020, across 32 sites. This equates to 26,730 sq. m of office floorspace and 420,248 sq. m of industrial and warehousing floorspace (B1c/B2/B8) based upon standard site area to floorspace ratios.

Table 4: Available employment land supply, October 2020

Within Primary Employment Areas

Site Ref.	Location	Available	Office % Split	Ind/Wh % Split	Office Sqm	Ind/Wh Sqm
EM1A 5	Moss Industrial Estate, Lowton – Plot 1	0.37	0%	100%	0	1,278
EM1A 8.1	Hope Carr/Leigh Commerce Park – Plot 1	3.38	25%	75%	4,259	11,178
EM1A 8.2	Hope Carr/Leigh Commerce Park – Plot 3	1.79	25%	75%	1,785	4,686
EM1A 9	Land at Chaddock Lane, Astley	13.37	20%	80%	5,600	22,400
EM1A 12.1	Gibfield, Atherton – Plot 1	3.15	0%	100%	0	11,015
EM1A 12.2	Gibfield, Atherton – Plot 2	0.59	0%	100%	0	2,055
EM1A 12.3	Gibfield, Atherton – Plot 3	0.71	0%	100%	0	2,478
EM1A 14	West of Leigh Road, Hindley Green	6.98	0%	100%	0	24,413
EM1A 15.1	Swan Lane, Hindley Green – Plot 2	0.32	0%	100%	0	1,131
EM1A 15.2	Swan Lane, Hindley Green – Plot 3	3.24	0%	100%	0	11,340
EM1A 16.1	Makerfield Way, Ince – Plot 1	1.45	0%	100%	0	5,061
EM1A 16.2	Makerfield Way, Ince – Plot 2	0.78	0%	100%	0	2,727
EM1A 16.3	Makerfield Way, Ince – Plot 3	2.18	0%	100%	0	7,623
EM1A 17	Wigan Enterprise Park, Ince	1.08	0%	100%	0	3,745
EM1A 20	Westwood Park, Wigan	4.8	0%	100%	0	16,800
EM1A 24	Springfield and Miry Lane, Wigan	2.05	0%	100%	0	7,175
EM1A 25.1	Martland Park and Heinz – Plot 1	2.13	0%	100%	0	7,438
EM1A 25.2	Martland Park and Heinz – Plot 2	3.33	0%	100%	0	11,648
EM1A 25.3	Martland Park and Heinz – Plot 3	1.59	0%	100%	0	5,576
EM1A 32.1	Warrington Road, Hawkley – Plot 1	0.58	0%	100%	0	2,034
EM1A 32.2	Warrington Road, Hawkley – Plot 2	0.98	100%	0%	3,936	0
EM1A 32.3	Warrington Road, Hawkley – Plot 3	2.08	0%	100%	0	7,294
EM1A 36	South Lancashire Industrial Estate Extension	34.01	0%	100%	0	119,042

Employment Land within Core Strategy Allocation or Designation

Site Ref.	Location	Available	Office % Split	Ind/Wh % Split	Office Sqm	Ind/Wh Sqm
SP3	North Leigh Park, Leigh	8	0%	100%	0	28,000
SP4.1	South of Hindley	12	0%	100%	0	42,000
SP4.2	East of Atherton	9	0%	100%	0	31,500
SP4.4	Landgate	2	20%	80%	1,600	5,600

Other Employment Sites Outside Primary Employment Areas

Site Ref.	Location	Available	Office % Split	Ind/Wh % Split	Office Sqm	Ind/Wh Sqm
EM1.1	Land at Leopold Street, Pemberton	2.04	20%	80%	1,632	5,712
EM1.2	Land at Smithy Brook	1.51	100%	0%	6,150	0
EM1.3	Land at Landgate, Bryn	5.51	0%	100%	0	19,299
EM1H	Wigan Pier Quarter – Plot 1	0.32	100%	0%	1,276	0
EM1H	Wigan Pier Quarter – Plot 2	0.12	100%	0%	492	0
GRAND TOTAL		131.44			26,730	420,248

Notes:

- Site references are from the Wigan Replacement Unitary Development Plan, the Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy or the Initial Draft of the Wigan Allocations and development Management Local Plan.
- Plot ratio of 4,000 sq. m / hectare has been applied to office development and 3,500 sq. m / hectare for industrial and warehousing based on the recommendations in 'Setting Employment Land Targets for the North West of England' 2010, by Roger Tym & Partners for 4NW.
- Base date of land supply is 1 April 2020, taking account of completed sites since.

7.2 Table 5 below breaks the land supply up by size thresholds. This shows that 25 of the 33 employment sites (78%) are small sites below 5 hectares, of which 9 are very small sites below one hectare. These small sites represent one third of the borough's employment land supply (33%). Their size generally limits their attractiveness to low cost and low amenity businesses that serve the local area, as set out in more detail in Section 8.

Table 5: Employment land supply by site size

Site size	No. of sites	Total (Ha)	%
Less than 1 hectare	9	4.77	4%
1-2 hectares	5	7.42	6%
2-5 hectares	11	30.38	23%
5-10 hectares	4	29.49	22%
10+ hectares	3	59.38	45%
Total	32	131.44	100%

7.3 Site plans of the available plots of employment land are available on the [Wigan Council website](#).

8. Quality, deliverability and availability of employment land supply

Uncertain elements in the supply

- 8.1 As set out in Table 4, the borough has an employment land supply of 131.44 hectares. However, there is considerable uncertainty about the availability of around 69.33 hectares (235,967 sq. m of floorspace) within the Core Strategy plan period to 2026, and beyond, which is over half of the total supply. This is set out in Table 6.

Table 6: Uncertain sites in the employment land supply

Site Ref:	Location	Gross site area (ha)	Office SQM	Ind/Wh SQM	Comments
EM1.2	Land at Smithy Brook Pemberton	1.51	6,191	0	This land has been left over following granting of permission for housing and a Farmhouse Inn family pub. The land is surrounded on three sides by residential uses and its potential for employment development has been reduced to B1 uses.
SP4.1	South of Hindley	12	0	42,000	The employment land element at South of Hindley is part of a large strategic site and is dependent on it coming forward as a whole including ground remediation and major highway connections. There is, therefore, no certainty about the extent of provision or the timing. Improved highway connections will increase the site's market attractiveness but it will likely serve sub-regional or local occupiers that are not dependent on direct motorway access.
SP4.4	East of Atherton	9	0	31,500	This is a low amenity employment site for which there is a current proposal on part that could be implemented soon. However, it is for only 3 ha of the available 9 ha and if it doesn't happen there will remain considerable uncertainty on deliverability and timing.
EM1A 20	Westwood Park, Wigan	4.8	0	16,800	The employment element on this large mixed use strategic site is likely to be the last parcel to be developed and is dependent on the funding and provision of highway connections, agreement of a third party landowner and ground remediation.
SP3	North Leigh Park	8	0	28,000	This site is currently the subject of a planning application for housing which will be reported to planning committee for determination in late 2020
EM1.3	Land at Landgate, Bryn	5.51	0	19,299	Market interest is unproven, potential onsite viability issues, problems with timing of development given need for new access road through Landgate scheme.
SP4.4	Landgate	2	1,600	5,600	Market interest is unproven, potential onsite viability issues, problems with timing of development given need for new access road through Landgate scheme.
EM1A 36 (part)	South Lancashire Industrial Estate Extension - Plot 1	19.53	0	68,355	The western part of the extension land has land ownership constraints, including the connection onto the existing industrial estate at Lockett Road.
EM1A 14	West of Leigh Road, Hindley Green	6.98	0	24,413	The site has poor access to the strategic road network and is distant from the M61, M6 and A580. It also has challenging ecological constraints including a designated Site of Biological Importance. There is no certainty about the timing of site delivery. Improved highway connections will increase the site's market attractiveness but it will likely serve sub-regional or local occupiers that are not dependent on direct motorway access.
Total		69.33	7,791	235,967	

Vacant plots in designated employment areas

- 8.2 As set out in Section 7, around one third (42.82 hectares) of the available land supply (less than 5ha in size) is comprised of small vacant plots, many below 2 hectares, within the borough's designated Primary Employment Areas. These vacant plots are likely to be attractive to low cost and low amenity businesses that serve the local area, but not to large scale logistics and advanced manufacturing development, because they are:
- Poorly located to access the motorway network
 - Not of a sufficient scale or quality, and/or
 - Constrained by nearby housing or other uses.
- 8.3 The issues with the employment land supply means that it is also difficult to retain businesses in the borough that require better specifications and/or more space to expand, particularly if there are better opportunities in neighbouring boroughs. Joy Global (part of the Komatsu Group), who supply mining technology and equipment, recently moved from their long standing premises in Ince to a new purpose built 7,600 sq. m facility at Logistics North in Bolton. Such a move may be necessary for the very survival of a business in a global marketplace, where unsuitable premises cause additional costs and impact on their ability to compete.
- 8.4 The low take-up of available employment land over the past few years is indicative of its problems. The trend appeared to be reversing in 2016/17 when 15.33 hectares was taken up, but, as previously noted, this was an anomaly and related to the delivery of a former employment site on South Lancashire Industrial Estate which became available following a fire in 2011. Since then take up rates have been significantly lower, rising in the last year to just 3.4 hectares.
- 8.5 Westwood Park employment area and South Lancashire Industrial Estate are good sites. Westwood Park is close to Wigan Town Centre and will have improved access to the motorway network via the A49 diversion scheme; and South Lancashire Industrial Estate has a modern layout and is accessible from the M6 motorway. The sites are not representative of the majority of vacant employment plots and buildings in the borough that have remained undeveloped or lost to other uses.

Quality sites in the supply

- 8.6 South Lancashire Industrial Estate Extension is arguably the best potential employment site that the borough has outside of the Green Belt. The site is accessible from Junction 25 of the M6 and the estate has proved popular with local businesses looking to modernise and expand in recent years. Such

businesses are expected to be the main driver of demand for the extension land. There is sufficient space to create landscape buffers between employment development and housing and initial phases of development could get underway with relatively little new road infrastructure or ground remediation that would impact on its deliverability. Access from South Lancashire Industrial Estate to Junction 25 of the M6 will be improved by new road infrastructure proposed at the Landgate site. A road scheme has been approved in outline which will bypass the busy road junction at Bryn Cross; however, this is currently being reviewed in light of alternative proposals as part of the mixed use development scheme at Landgate.

- 8.7 However, the site only contributes 34 hectares, just over 25% of the overall supply and although the site is large, it does not have direct access to the motorway network, which is a key attribute that many large scale occupiers seek. The site is also not immediately available in its entirety, with land ownership issues on a significant part of the site and site access constraints needing to be resolved.
- 8.8 The eastern half of the site has attracted recent interest for employment uses, and a screening opinion has been submitted to the Council by a developer. Land ownership constraints however prevent this part of the site connecting into Lockett Road to the north which would enable access to the M6 at Junction 25. Without this connection, its development would likely be served solely from a new access off A58 Bolton Road to the south, which does not provide easy access to the M6, via Ashton-in-Makerfield town centre.
- 8.9 Furthermore, whilst the site is of a sufficient size to incorporate adequate landscape buffers, residential development along its southern and eastern boundaries will limit the scale of employment uses that can be accommodated on parts of the site. The potential for Plot 2 of the site to come forward (14.587ha) alone pose further practical problems of site layout given the more challenging proportions of Plot 2 as opposed to the entire site (34ha) coming forward.

9. Greater Manchester Spatial Framework

- 9.1 The Publication version of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) is scheduled for consultation in late 2020 ahead of submission to the Secretary of State in Summer 2021 for independent examination. This is the third and final scheduled round of consultation on the GMSF, with previous consultations taking place between October 2016 and January 2017 and January-March 2019.
- 9.2 The Publication Version of the GMSF has been informed by the representations submitted during previous consultation periods and also the updated evidence base. Following its independent examination, the GMSF could be ready for adoption by 2022.
- 9.3 Due to the uncertainty and unsuitability of the available supply of employment land in the borough to meet the demand for large scale Class B2 and B8 uses in Greater Manchester, the GMSF proposes to remove land from the Green Belt and allocate it for employment development on land at M6 Junction 25 and at West of Gibfield, the latter as part of a mixed use scheme.
- 9.4 The Green Belt in and around the M6 provides the most attractive market opportunities to deliver large scale logistics and advanced manufacturing developments. These employment sectors would enable the borough to compete with the large scale employment developments being progressed in neighbouring districts (summarised in the next chapter) whilst meeting local expansion needs and generating much needed employment and investment for the local economy. As previously noted in Section 3, the GMSF recognises the significance of the borough's strategic location on the M6 Motorway to increase economic activity in Greater Manchester, with Wigan being the only district with direct access to this national economic asset.
- 9.5 The GMSF site allocation at M6 Junction 25 proposes a substantial high quality employment development of the site comprising around 140,000 square metres of B2 and/or B8 employment floorspace. At over 50 hectares in size, and located adjacent to, and with direct access to the M6 motorway, which is the most important route for road freight in the UK, the site enjoys the scale, locational and access benefits which are highly attractive for a Class B8 logistics scheme.
- 9.6 The GMSF site allocation at West of Gibfield proposes a substantial mixed use development of the site, comprising around 500 homes and 45,500 sqm of employment floorspace (Class B uses). The development will be required to make highway improvement measures at the junction of the A577 and Gibfield Park Way, extend Gibfield Park Way northwards and contribute effectively

towards the provision of appropriate highway mitigation measures to provide enhanced access to/from the A6 and Junction 5 of the M61. Improved access to the A6 and the M61 will make this site attractive to a range of businesses and will increase the market attractiveness of the adjacent Gibfield Park Industrial Area to investors.

- 9.7 Previous drafts of the GMSF also proposed to release land from the Green Belt at both M6 Junction 26 (2016 GMSF) and South of Pennington in Leigh (both the 2016 and 2019 GMSF) for large scale employment development. However, they are now not considered to be needed quantitatively to address identified employment needs across Greater Manchester to 2037 and have been removed from the GMSF. Both sites also have land ownership constraints which cast some doubts about their deliverability within the GMSF plan period.
- 9.8 There are no known alternative sites in the borough that are outside of the Green Belt that would be suitable to meet employment needs for large scale Class B2 and B8 uses. Through the Draft Employment Land Review, the suitability of the remaining safeguarded land in the borough to meet employment needs was assessed and considered unsuitable, with the exception of land at Pocket Nook, Lowton. However, issues have emerged in bringing that land forward for employment development as the site is quite narrow in places, particularly close to where it would be accessed, is intersected by the proposed route of HS2 and is in close proximity to housing. Consequently, the site is now proposed predominantly for housing in the GMSF. Any other remaining safeguarded land in the borough has either been granted planning permission for non-employment uses or is constrained by nearby housing, such that it is unsuitable for large scale Class B2 and B8 development.

10. Update on regional employment developments

10.1 Whilst there are issues with the availability, deliverability and quality of employment land in Wigan Borough, neighbouring local authorities are delivering major, regionally significant economic developments that take advantage of their accessible locations with good access to the motorway network, which is key to their success. These include:

- Omega, Warrington - a 233 hectare site adjacent to Junction 8 of the M62 motorway. The development includes a number of large scale logistics operators including Brakes, Hermes, Travis Perkins, ASDA, Hut Group and Plastic Omnium. Over 316,000 sq. m of logistics floorspace have been constructed with 56,658 sq. m remaining available.
- Matrix, Buckshaw Village, Chorley - a 32 hectare mixed use development, including a business park providing over 93,000 sq. m of warehousing and office accommodation. The site is built out and occupiers include a major distribution depot for Waitrose.
- Logistics North - a 100 hectare development site on a former colliery adjacent to Junction 4 of the M61 motorway in Bolton. Around 336,000 sq. m of employment floorspace has been built with only 34,962 sq. m remaining available. Occupiers include Aldi, Joy Global and MBDA. Lidl have outline permission for a logistics distribution centre on part of the remainder and a Reserved Matters application has been submitted.
- Parkside, Newton-le-Willows - a 144 hectare, former colliery site straddling the M6 Motorway in St. Helens that is proposed for logistics development and a strategic rail and freight interchange. An outline planning application has been submitted for the first phase of development, west of the M6, for 92,900 sq. m of Class B8 floorspace.
- Florida Farm, St. Helens – a 37 hectare Green Belt site on the west side of Haydock Industrial Estate that was granted planning permission in April 2017 for 135,000 sq. m of logistics floorspace. Planning permission was granted ahead of the site being allocated and released from Green Belt in the forthcoming St. Helens Local Plan.
- Penny Lane, St. Helens – a 11 hectare site on the west side of the M6 and north of Junction 23 currently under construction for a 34,653 sq. m unit for Movianto. A small 2.9 ha vacant plot remains to be taken up.
- Haydock Point, St. Helens – a planning application has been submitted for a 42.3 hectare Green Belt site located south of Haydock Racecourse for 167,000 sq. m of logistics floorspace. The site is also proposed to be allocated and released from Green Belt in the forthcoming St. Helens Local Plan. The planning application is pending a decision at the time of publishing this Statement.

- Liverpool 2 - a new deep water port is open in Liverpool which is capable of accommodating the world's largest shipping vessels. The new port is likely to significantly increase the demand for logistics development land and other trade opportunities in Wigan Borough via the M58 and the proposed M58 Link Road into Wigan.
- Port Salford - a proposed new inland port facility served by road, rail and short sea shipping with a distribution park at Barton, close to the M60 and M62 motorways. Proposals include up to 153,000 sq. m of new warehousing facilities providing up to 4,000 jobs.
- Heywood Distribution Park, near Rochdale, close to the M66 and M62, home to Argos, Footasylum, Next, DFS and Moran Logistics with 27,271 sq. m of employment floorspace available. An extension of the distribution park is proposed through the Northern Gateway proposal in the GMSF.
- Kingsway, Rochdale – a 170 hectare office, manufacturing and logistics site, home to a new Asda, Wincanton, JD Sports, CR Laurence, E.ON and Takeuchie MFG, with 35,434 sq. m of employment floorspace remaining available.

10.2 Further to these employment commitments, West Lancashire Borough Council is currently proposing 190 hectares of new employment land by 2050 in its Local Plan Review, including around 170 hectares within the M58 Corridor. The majority of this land is proposed for logistics development to take advantage of its strategic location and connections to the Liverpool 2 Superport.

10.3 There are currently no available sites in Wigan Borough that can match the large scale employment sites that are being offered in neighbouring authorities. However, sites at Junction 25 of the M6 Motorway and West of Gibfield close to the M61 Motorway are the borough's best opportunities to compete and offer good new local job opportunities in the borough.

11. Conclusion

- 11.1 Wigan Borough has 131.44 hectares of available employment land at October 2020. However, there is currently considerable uncertainty about the deliverability of around half (52%) of this supply due to factors including the need for significant transport infrastructure improvements and ground remediation, which could take many years. As set out in Section 7, around two-fifths of the employment land supply consists of small vacant plots below 5 hectares within designated employment areas, with one third on very small sites of less than one hectare. These small sites are suitable for small, locally based and low cost or low amenity businesses, and are therefore unattractive to, and unsuitable for, larger Class B2 and B8 uses due to their size, access and location. Many of these small sites have been left vacant or have been lost to housing or other uses.
- 11.2 The highest quality site within the borough's employment land supply that is not overly constrained by housing or reliant on significant transport infrastructure or ground remediation is South Lancashire Industrial Estate Extension in Ashton. However, this does not have the attributes necessary to compete with the top tier employment sites elsewhere in the region and only accounts for around one-quarter of the overall available supply. The site is also not immediately available with land ownership and site access constraints needing to be resolved before its comprehensive development.
- 11.3 Confidence has returned to the market following the recession and the demand for high quality employment sites with good access to the strategic route network, and the motorway network for logistics development in particular, has increased substantially. The Poundland regional distribution centre, Compagne Fruitere banana ripening facility and Bunzl Plc warehouse at South Lancashire Industrial Estate built in 2017 are a testimony to this and demonstrate that if good sites become available in the borough, they are quickly developed. Recent employment proposals at Stone Cross Park, Golborne (OXW Catalina Logistics Ltd), South Lancashire Industrial Estate, Bryn (3PL) and Leigh Commerce Park, Leigh (Aerial Platforms and CPH) further demonstrate this.
- 11.4 Neighbouring local authorities have also taken advantage of their accessible locations to the motorway network to meet the demand for large scale logistics and advanced manufacturing sites or have released land from Green Belt for these uses ahead of their Local Plans, such as at Florida Farm in St. Helens.
- 11.5 Given the issues with the current employment land supply; that demand for large scale employment opportunities is high; and that the borough has land that would meet that demand; sites at Junction 25 of the M6 Motorway and at West of Gibfield, Atherton are proposed to be removed from the Green Belt and

allocated for employment development in the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. These sites present the borough's best opportunities to deliver the type of sites that large scale Class B2 and B8 businesses would be attracted to, enabling the borough to take advantage of its strategic assets and compete economically at the sub-regional level.

Appendix 1: Implemented Schemes (employment land losses) 1st April 2011- 31st March 2020 (related to Table 3)

PEA ref:	Site Name	Nearby Postcode	Date implemented	Employment Land Lost (ha)	Planning App Refs:	Decision date:	New use
Outside PEA	Rear of Moss Industrial Estate, Lowton	WA3 1DS	2011/12	0.53	A/11/75231	26/04/2011	Housing
EM1A 06	Parsonage, Leigh	WN7 5SJ	2012/13	1.07	A/11/76044	16/11/2011	Housing
EM1A 07	Bridgewater Business Park, Leigh	WN7 4HB	2012/13	6.48	73403	09/07/2010	Retail
EM1A 30	Former Pemberton Colliery (South), Wigan	WN3 6BZ	2012/13	6.96	A/11/76138	24/07/2012	Housing
EM1A 04	Former AG Barr Factory, North Road. Atherton	M46 0SW	2014/15	6.54	A/14/79259	27/10/2014	Housing
EM1A 33	BHW, Components Ltd, Caxton Close, Wheatlea Industrial Estate	WN3 6XU	2015/16	0.87	A/15/81710/CU	12/02/2016	Class D2 - Trampoline Centre
Outside PEA	Former Bispham Hall Brick Works, Orrell	WN5 7FQ	2015/16	2.70	A/10/74595	12/03/2013	Housing
EM1A 06	Parsonage, Leigh	WN7 5SJ	2016/17	5.29	A/16/82975/RMMAJ	06/02/2017	Housing
EM1A 09	Land Off Chaddock Lane, Tyldesley (north)	M29 7NW	2016/17	2.58	A/17/83910/RMMAJ	15/09/2017	Housing
EM1A 24	Former Household Waste Recycling Centre, Frog Lane, Wigan	WN6 7LB	2016/17	1.35	A/15/80803/MAJOR	19/08/2016	Housing
EM1A 25	Wigan Newspapers PLC, Martland Mill, Martland Park	WN5 0LX	2017/18	2.54	A/14/78966	09.04.2014	Hotel
Outside PEA	Howe Bridge Mill, Atherton	M46 0JT	2017/18	3.38	A/16/83468	13/04/2017	Housing
EM1A 15	Vacant land south of 147 Alder Lane, Hindley Green	WN2 4HY	2018/19	2.95	A/14/79838/MAJOR	05/04/2018	Housing
EM1A 24	Canal Street / Frog Lane	WN6 7NS	2018/19	3.36	A/18/85329/MAJOR	24/08/2018	Housing
EM1A 10	Parr Bridge Works, Tyldesley	M29 8PR	2019/20	1.93	A/18/86280/RMMAJ	08/03/2019	Housing
EM1A 17	Wigan Enterprise Centre, Wigan Enterprise Park, Ince	WN2 2LE	2019/20	8.90	A/13/78163	06/04/2016	Housing
Total				57.43			

Unimplemented Schemes (employment land losses) 1st April 2011- 31st March 2020 (related to Table 3)

PEA ref:	Site Name	Nearby Postcode	Date implemented	Employment Land Lost (ha)	Planning App Refs:	Decision date:	New use
EM1A 24	Land At Frog Lane/Field Street/Hey Street, Wigan	WN6 7LB	NA	1.73	A/11/75748	11/11/2013	Housing
EM1A 07	Bridgewater Business Park, Leigh	WN7 4HB	NA	6.78	A/09/72812; A/15/80681	28/10/2011	Major redevelopment (Housing led)
EM1A 09	Land off Garrett Lane (Chaddock Lane East)	M28 1AG	NA	2.95	A/19/87155/RMMAJ	20/09/2019	Loss to Housing
EM1A 10	Maxilead Metals, Parr Bridge Works, Mosley Common	M29 8PR	NA	2.00	86236	01/04/2019	Major redevelopment (Housing led)
EM1A 16	Site of Hemfield House, Hemfield Road, Ince	WN2 2EZ	NA	0.01	A/15/81539/MAJOR	24/04/2018	Housing
EM1A 20	Westwood, Wigan	WN3 5BY	NA	22.30	A/12/77633	24/09/2015	Major redevelopment (Housing led)
EM1A 27	Bradley Hall Industrial Estate, Standish	WN6 0XF	NA	5.61	A/17/85026/OUT	28/03/2019	Housing
EM1A 30	Former Pemberton Colliery (North), Wigan	WN3 6BZ	NA	10.05	A/19/87673/OUTMAJ	14/07/2020	Housing
Outside PEA	Kirkless Industrial Estate, New Springs, Wigan	WN2 1HF	NA	9.66	A/15/81125	20/10/2017	Housing
Total				61.09			