

**Historic Environment Assessment**

**in connection with**

**the proposed Greater Manchester Spatial Framework allocation at**

**Pocket Nook, Lowton**

Prepared by

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose and Format**

- 1.1 This historic environment assessment has been prepared to assess proposals for residential and employment development on land at Pocket Nook, Lowton, which is proposed for allocation in the draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.
- 1.2 Initial screening work undertaken by the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service in 2019 identified one designated heritage asset within the proposed land allocation that required further assessment. The heritage asset is no longer included within the revised allocation boundary, but it is located on Pocket Nook Lane, within the vicinity of the site. The farmhouse at Fairhouse Farm is Grade II Listed and care is needed to avoid harming the significances of the setting of the listed building in line with the requirements of planning law and policy.
- 1.3 The statement has been prepared in accordance with the general guidelines set out in the Historic England publications 'Informed Conservation'<sup>i</sup> and 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance'<sup>ii</sup> and in particular responds to heritage policies outlined in Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (MHCLG, 2019). The legal context is set by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act of 1990.
- 1.4 In terms of local planning policy, Policy CP 11 of the Wigan Core Strategy Local Plan is of relevance and needs to be given the appropriate weighting.

### **1.5 The Author**

- 1.6 Ian Rowan, the author, is a qualified Planning & Conservation Officer. With a background of over 30 years in Planning, Regeneration & Conservation, Ian holds a Masters Degree in Environmental Planning and a Post Graduate Diploma in Conservation & Regeneration, and has specialised in Conservation Planning for the past 15 years.

### **1.7 Methods of Research and Investigation**

- 1.8 Inspections of the site were carried out in May 2020 to assess its physical nature. Background research has also been conducted to ascertain all relevant contextual matters appertaining to the proposals. In accordance with the NPPF, background research has been proportionate to the nature of the proposed works and their likely impact.

## **2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

### **Location**

- 2.1 The proposed site allocation occupies 44.78 hectares of open pastureland,

and a site location plan is provided in Figure 1. Fair House Farmhouse is located on Pocket Nook Lane, Lowton to the immediate north of the allocation.

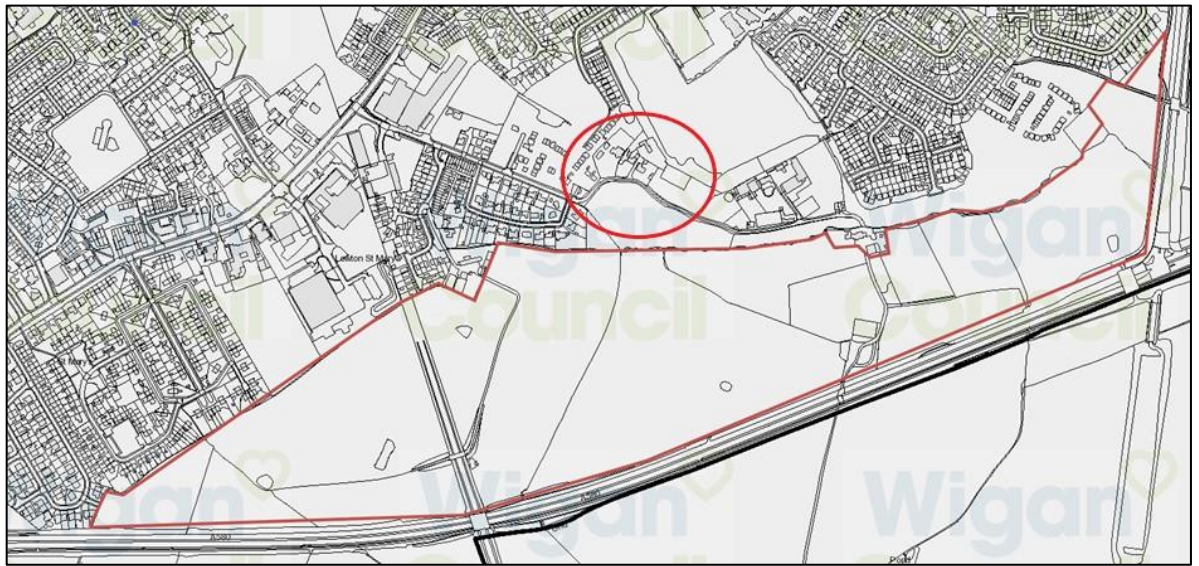


Figure 1 – Location plan.

## 2.2 Outline Description & Historical Background

- 2.3 The allocation site (“the site”), has been relatively undeveloped historically, whilst to the west of the site, incremental 20<sup>th</sup> Century residential development has occurred, to the east of Newton Road. To the north of the site, the area to the south of Newton Road has experienced similar development, with more recent 21<sup>st</sup> Century development immediately to the north of Pocket Nook Lane. To the south of the site, the East Lancashire Road has been constructed.
- 2.4 Fair House Farmhouse, built in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, first appears on the 1848 Ordnance Survey Map. The building has been extended to the rear in the later 20<sup>th</sup> Century.
- 2.5 Historic maps showing the development of the site (figures 2 –6) and the house (figures 7 – 10) follow. Views of the area are shown in the photographs given later in figures 11 - 51.



Figure 2 – 1840s Ordnance Survey

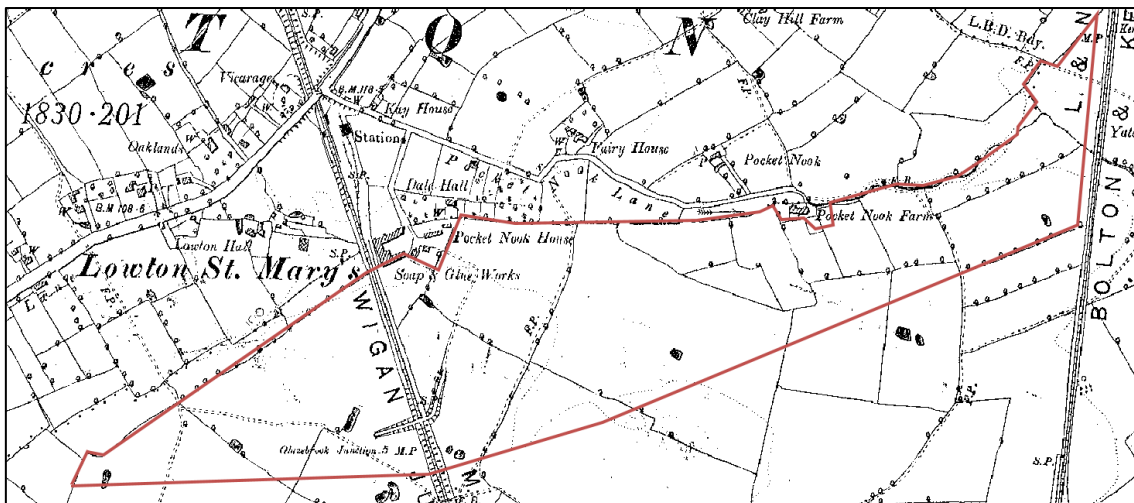


Figure 3 – 1890s Ordnance Survey

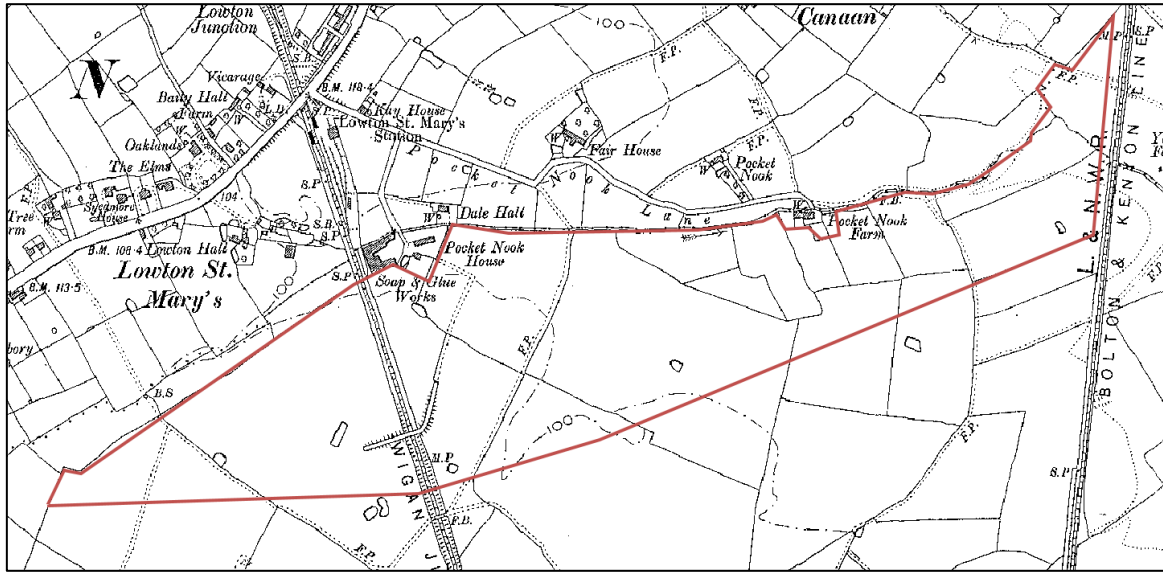


Figure 4 – 1900s Ordnance Survey

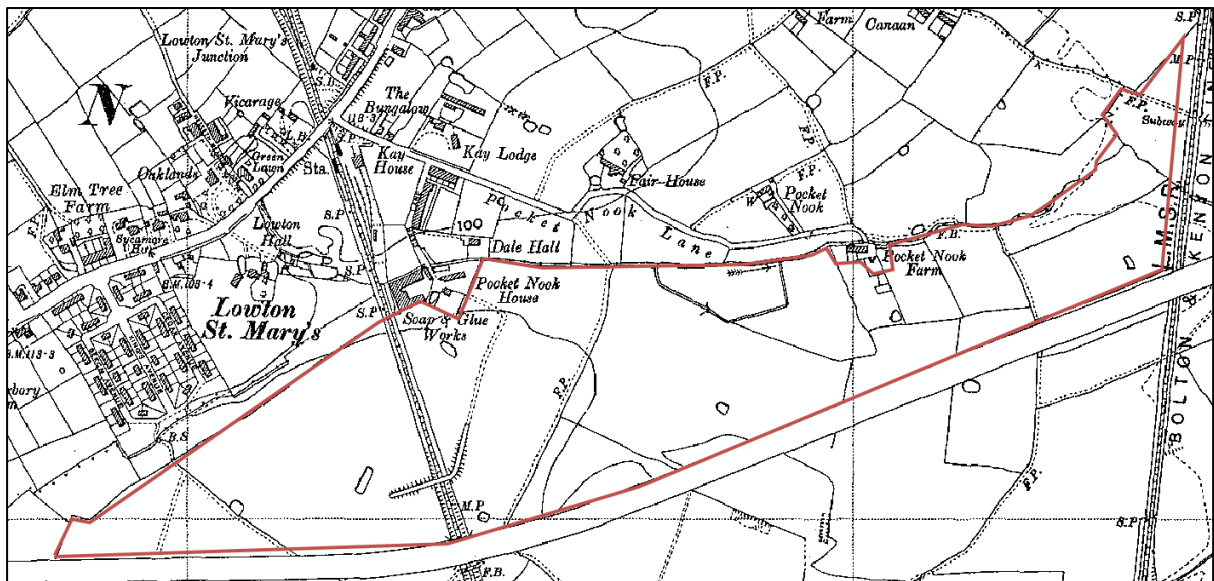


Figure 5 – 1930s Ordnance Survey



Figure 6 – 2020 Ordnance Survey



Figure 7 – Fairhouse Farm, 1840s Ordnance Survey (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)



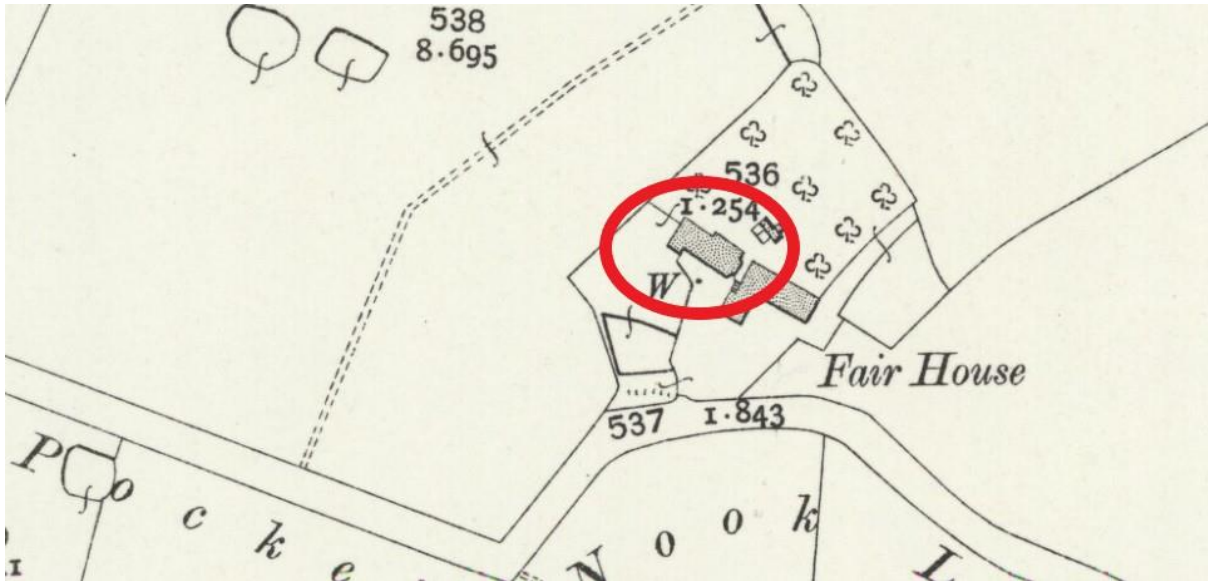


Figure 8 – Fairhouse Farm, 1900s Ordnance Survey (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)

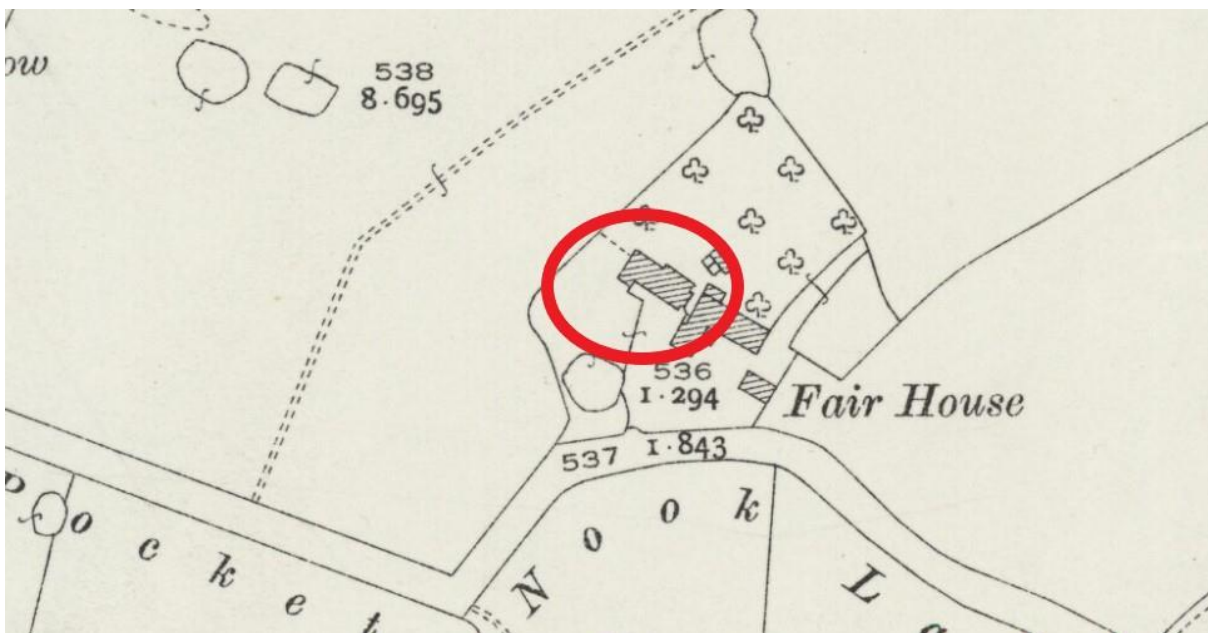


Figure 9 – Fairhouse Farm, 1920s Ordnance Survey (Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland)



Figure 10 – 2020 Fairhouse Farm, 2020 Ordnance Survey

## 2.6 Heritage Asset Designations

2.7 Fair House Farmhouse is Grade II Listed and the Listing description is provided below:

2.8 **GOLBORNE POCKET NOOK LANE SJ 69 NW (north side) 5/16 Fair House Farmhouse II House. C17. Timber-framed structure which is concealed by render. Repairs and additions in brick. Slate roof. 3-unit, lobby-entrance plan with total of 5 bays and 2 storeys. Original door to right of bay 3. Later door to bay 4. Bay 1 projects as a gabled crosswing with a door in the angle. All the windows are replacement casements many having been altered. Continuous outshut added to rear. Chimney stack on rear slope. The inside contains a remarkably complete pair of back-to-back inglenook fireplaces including smoke hoods. The bressumer beams and other ceiling beams are ovolo-moulded with stepped stops. Various timber-framed components are clearly visible including some principal posts, king-post roof trusses and crosswalls one of which has curved diagonal braces at tie beam level. The building is an important survival in many respects, not least as an example of timber-framing in an area where little remains.**

## 2.9 Photographic Survey

2.10 There follows a selection of photographs showing the relevant features of the site, views and its wider context, see Appendix 1 for photograph positions.



*Figure 11*



*Figure 12*



*Figure 13*



*Figure 14*



Figure 15



Figure 16



*Figure 17*



*Figure 18*



Figure 19



Figure 20



*Figure 21*



*Figure 22*





*Figure 23*



*Figure 24*



*Figure 25*



*Figure 26*



Figure 27



Figure 28



Figure 29



Figure 30



*Figure 31*



*Figure 32*



*Figure 33*



*Figure 34*



*Figure 35*



*Figure 36*



*Figure 37*



*Figure 38*





*Figure 39*



*Figure 40*



*Figure 41*



*Figure 42*



*Figure 43*



*Figure 44*



Figure 45



Figure 46



*Figure 47*



*Figure 48*



Figure 49



Figure 50



*Figure 51*

### 3 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT APPRAISAL

#### Introduction

- 3.1 The following appraisal adheres to guidance published by Historic England (2008)<sup>2</sup> and relates specifically to the requirement contained in paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), given in extract below:
- 3.2 *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.”*
- 3.3 The appraisal begins by identifying and assessing any heritage values which might be affected by the proposals, before evaluating these values and expressing them concisely within a ‘Statement of Significance’. The essential purpose of this Statement is to set priorities for conservation of significance and enable an objective assessment on the likely impact of the proposals.

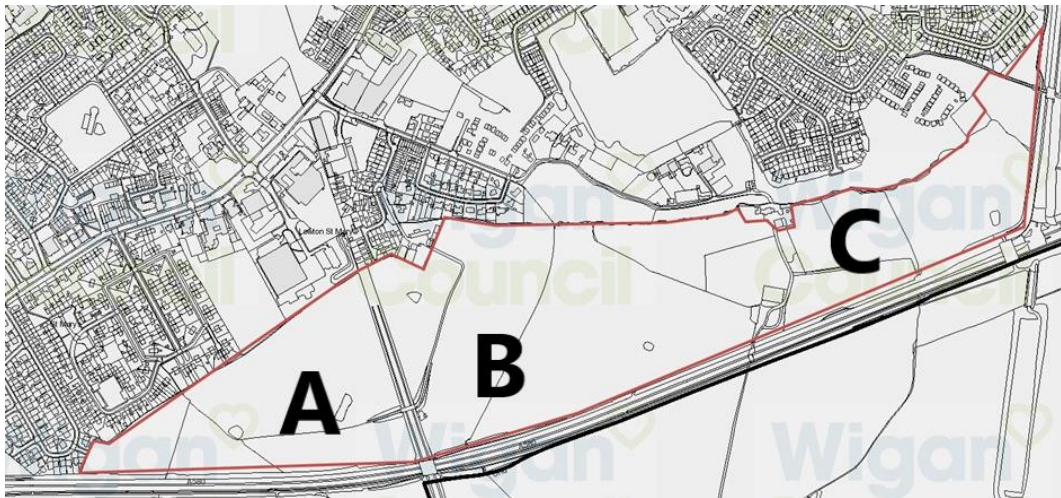


Figure 52

#### Heritage Values

- 3.4 The heritage values explored below are distilled under the following headings: *evidential value; historic value; communal value; aesthetic value*. The exploration focusses specifically on those values deemed of relevance to the proposals and is therefore not an exhaustive assessment of the relevant heritage assets.



## **Evidential Value**

- 3.5 Historic England (2008) suggests that “Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.”
- 3.6 Fair House Farm retains physical evidence of a farmstead which originated in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The evidence of highest significance is presented by the altered and extended farmhouse, which is listed at Grade II.
- 3.7 The design and architectural details provide evidential value of the buildings origins and development. The slate roof and later crosswing provide evidence of the historical development of the vernacular nature of the building. The original building retains elements of timber frame which has been hidden by render, thus diminishing evidential value. The building is an example of a 3 unit farm building with attached crosswing, with this latter addition adding to significance. Much evidential significance has been diminished through loss of features such as removal of windows
- 3.8 There may be particular items of interest internally which may yield evidential value and provide some evidence of the original plan form of the building, however, these will not be of any importance within the scope of this assessment.
- 3.9 The land around the farmhouse provide a degree of contributory evidential value through the manner in which it provides some understanding of the farm’s historic use. The parallel layout of the farm and barn suggests a small farmstead. Historic field patterns may yield evidential value in terms of former farming practices and provide evidence of links to other estate buildings across the area. Through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century this value has been eroded by incremental development to the north of the farm, and immediately west and south.
- 3.10 This land to the immediate north of the farmhouse is more closely aligned with Fair House Farmhouse.
- 3.11 Area 1 located to the south west of Fair House Farmhouse, (see Figure 52), contributes very little in the way of evidential value to the setting of the house. It is unlikely from the location, that there is any clear connection to the farmhouse, and the land may have more connection to Lowton Hall and Dale Hall. Any potential evidence around this has been further eroded through the arrival of the railway line in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, segregating this segment from the remainder of the site.
- 3.12 Area 2 located to the south of Fair House Farmhouse, (see Figure 52), may yield evidential value in terms of potential links to the farmhouse, however, this area is also more likely to be associated with Lowton Hall and Dale Hall as with Area 1.
- 3.13 Area 3, (see Figure 52), located to the east of Fair House Farm is more

closely associated with Pocket Nook Farm, and as such will yield little in the way of evidential value in terms of its relationship with Fair House Farmhouse.

- 3.14 The wider setting of the farm has retained this rural setting to the south, however, given the above commentary, it is arguable as to whether there is any historic connection with the farm, and as such, evidential value of the contribution to the setting of the farmhouse will be quite low. The area of most importance, the area to the north and west holding most likely associations having lost evidential value through 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century development.

### **Historical Value**

- 3.15 Historic England (2008) suggests that - "Historical value derives from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present. It tends to be illustrative or associative".
- 3.16 Fair House Farmhouse offers an insight into the historic lifestyle and farming traditions of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century. The farmhouse holds illustrative value in terms of its authenticity, particularly the original parts of the front elevation and crosswing. The extension to the north elevation in more recent years impact upon this historic value to some extent. The adjacent barn provides some illustrative value in terms of how it evokes a sense of the site's farming past, although the conversion to residential has eroded this value to some extent. There is no evidence to suggest any notable associative value.
- 3.17 The setting of the farm contributes to its historic value. This rural setting of the farm bears a close relationship to the buildings, and vice versa, as expected of most farm developments. The historic setting of the farm does contain some illustrative value through the manner in which it helps portray rural life from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. This setting has changed particularly to the north and west of the farmhouse through development, whilst the close knit relationship of the buildings within the farmstead are integral to their setting in terms of how they sit as a small collective group.
- 3.18 The setting of Areas 1 and 2 changed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century with the arrival of the railway, running north / south cutting between the land and later bringing industrial uses outside of the site. This character changed again with the closing of the railway in the later 20<sup>th</sup> Century, whilst retaining an element of commercial and residential use outside of the site. Area 3 retains much of its historic rural setting, whilst development to the north has not diminished this historic setting. As stated in 3.13, there is little evidence of historic association between this land and the farmhouse, therefore the contribution made to the historic setting of the land is quite low, with the land to the west and north of the farmhouse making a larger, albeit negative contribution to historic setting.

### **Communal Value**

- 3.19 Historic England (2008) suggests that: “Communal value derives from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory”.
- 3.20 The farm will contain some communal value in terms of its past associations with agriculture and farming. However, as a private farm set back from Pocket Nook Lane, and with limited visibility, it is unlikely to possess any real notable communal heritage value. Land to the north and west of the farmhouse which forms the immediate setting to the farmhouse has been incrementally developed with no public access and as such any communal value has long since diminished.
- 3.21 Open land immediately to the south of the site will provide some communal value due to the presence of public right of way, although not clearly associated with the farm house, it gives limited views so again, communal value will be lower.

### **Aesthetic Value**

- 3.22 Historic England (2008) suggests that: “Aesthetic value derives from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place”.
- 3.23 The farmhouse is a good example of vernacular architecture, and whilst rendered, has a particularly attractive south elevation. The use of natural vernacular materials in terms of slate roof adds to aesthetic value, whilst the render hides the vernacular nature of the building including the timber frame, thus detracting from its aesthetic value. There is little in the way of architectural detailing save for the above.
- 3.24 The farmstead retains some of its original setting with adjacent parallel barn, however the immediate rural setting has significantly changed by residential development through the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries, particularly to the north and west. The barn has been converted but retains its original footprint and contributes to the sense of enclosure of the farmstead by providing a backdrop to the listed building. The enclosure of the site within the grounds immediately surrounding it makes a positive contribution to the setting of the asset, and the view from Pocket Nook Lane is of importance as the asset is approached from the south.
- 3.25 Areas 1 and 3 contribute nothing to the aesthetic value of the setting of the building, being so far divorced from the site, and whilst the open space is aesthetically pleasing in its own right, this does not readily translate in heritage terms. Similarly, the larger part of Area 2 does not contribute, however the northern portion of the site may have some impact upon setting of the farm. There is little in the way of views of the farmhouse from this part of the site due to natural landscape and screening. However, the presence of a public right of way running north – south across this informal, open pasture land can add to the sense of expectation and anticipation as the farmhouse is approached, so therefore there is an indirect contribution made to the

farmhouse's aesthetic setting, and this should be considered.

- 3.26 There are no wider views of the farmstead from anywhere else across the site.

### **Statement of Significance**

- 3.27 Having assessed the heritage values associated with the site, it is possible to take a more informed approach to the assessment of site significance, giving specific consideration to conservation priorities in light of the potential for large scale development. In this context a statement of significance is given below.
- 3.28 Fair House Farm is an altered historic farmstead originating from the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. At the heart of the farmstead is the Grade II Listed Farmhouse, which is also the product of later phases of development. To the north and west of the house is modern residential development in the form of typical 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century housing estates. The farm is accessed from Pocket Nook lane to the south.
- 3.29 An appraisal of heritage values has revealed that the farmhouse possesses high levels of evidential and historic value, of particular significance the style and design of the building, offering evidence of the buildings historic evolution, and this is best enjoyed up close where this evidential value can be enjoyed and interpreted. These close up views of the building also help establish the primary values of the setting of the asset, and contribute to the significance of the setting.
- 3.30 Aesthetic value is lower as the building, whilst retaining some elements of its vernacular design, has been altered by rendering. Nonetheless, this provides a pleasing aesthetic environment within which to enjoy the heritage asset. In terms of longer views of the property, the view along the access road from Pocket Nook Lane is of primary importance, and the visual interest of the building and sense of anticipation is experienced as the building is approached from the south. There are no long - range views of the building.
- 3.31 Communal value is somewhat lower given the private ownership of the farm, however some value is yielded through its listed status as being a source of shared pride for the local community.
- 3.32 The wider setting of the farmhouse in terms of Areas 1, 2 and 3 provide less in the way of heritage significance. A lack of historic connection to the farmhouse demonstrates that there is little in the way of evidential and historic value to "the site", in terms of its contribution to setting. There is some contribution from the northern part of Area 2 as the farmhouse is approached. There are no views of the building across any parts of the site however, there is a contribution to aesthetic setting from this northern part of Area 2.



## 4 ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSALS

### General Principles

- 4.1 General guidance on assessing proposed changes to heritage assets is given in Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019). The policy establishes the premise that conserving significance should be a guiding principle when developing proposals for any new scheme. In order to do this it is first necessary to conduct an appraisal of heritage values and identify the significance(s) of heritage assets before commencing with design. Part 3 of this appraisal fulfils this need, and the findings of part 3 have informed the development of the proposals. There follows, here in section 4, an objective review of the proposed allocation to verify to what extent conservation of significance is likely to be secured or compromised.

### Summary of the Proposals

- 4.2 This proposed GMSF allocation is for around 600 homes and 15,000 sq. m of employment floorspace. This assumes a residential density of around 35 dwellings per hectare and a mix of house types. Light industrial employment uses are envisaged. At this stage there are no indicative plans or building elevations.

### Analysis of the Proposals: National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.3 As discussed earlier, Section 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the NPPF (2019) considers heritage planning and in essence unifies the overall approach to planning in a way that previous guidance, such as PPS's and PPG's, did not. This ensures that deliberations over decisions relating to heritage assets are made in the full planning context, where factors other than heritage conservation play a crucial role. It identifies the following key drivers in the decision making process:-
- *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
  - *the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
  - *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*
- 4.4 In order to establish a clearer, objective assessment of the proposals in the context of the NPPF, the following commentary considers how the proposed scheme aligns itself to the NPPF heritage policy drivers listed above.
- 4.5 ***The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation*** – the significance of the heritage assets and their setting has been assessed within this statement which has established that Fair House Farmhouse has high evidential and historic value, with lesser aesthetic value,

and lower communal value. The key drivers of the setting of the building will be sustained – the immediate setting and the sense of arrival from the Pocket Nook Lane will not be unduly affected by future development. There may be impact upon the wider setting in the north of Area 2 and consideration should be given to mitigation in this area through carefully designed landscape, and / or sensitively designed development.

- 4.6 ***The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality*** – the heritage asset i.e. the farmhouse and its immediate setting will be preserved and will not be physically altered. Provision of residential and employment uses across the site will contribute to the Council's requirement for provision of new housing and employment in order for the Council to meet its targets and to stimulate growth.
- 4.7 ***The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*** – an opportunity exists to ensure high quality, inclusive design, with specific reference to the northern part of Area 2 ensure that development does not affect the setting of the farmhouse.
- 4.8 Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states: ***“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”*** – the proposal under scrutiny is whether the development causes harm to the setting of the listed building. In this case, as demonstrated through this report, the proposal will not impart harm upon the significance of the building's setting. The primary setting of the building is the immediate surroundings, and Pocket Nook Lane to the south. The proposal will not impact upon this immediate setting. Provision of development in this location will not impact on long range views, however the wider setting could have some slight impact which needs to be considered and if appropriate mitigated against. In summary, the impact of change will be minimal, and the setting of the farmhouse will be unharmed, particularly the primary areas of significance.

### **Analysis of the Proposals: Local Planning Policy**

- 4.9 Current Planning Policy is provided through Policy CP 11 of the Wigan Council Local Plan Core Strategy which states:

#### **Historic environment**

*We will conserve and enhance our historic environment, thereby helping to make the borough a better place to live, visit and work in, by:*

- 1. Conserving and enhancing where appropriate our heritage assets and their settings, including scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, locally listed buildings and structures, key historic landscape characteristics and other*

*important features, in accordance with legislation and national planning policy as appropriate*

*2. Encouraging the sympathetic and appropriate re-use of existing buildings and structures, especially those which make a positive contribution to the special character of their locality and are identified as 'at risk'.*

*3. Promoting the value of our historic environment through signing, interpretation, public art and other measures as appropriate.*

- 4.10 The key significance of the heritage asset, i.e. its setting will not be adversely affected as demonstrated through this report. Historic and evidential significance is high, along with a contribution from aesthetic value, and this has been identified as being the immediate setting of the building. As such this will not be impacted upon, and the wider setting has the opportunity to be preserved by the contribution of new landscaping and buildings.
- 4.11 It has been demonstrated that the proposal conforms to NPPF. The report has demonstrated that the proposal will preserve the key drivers of the setting of the heritage asset.



## **5 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION**

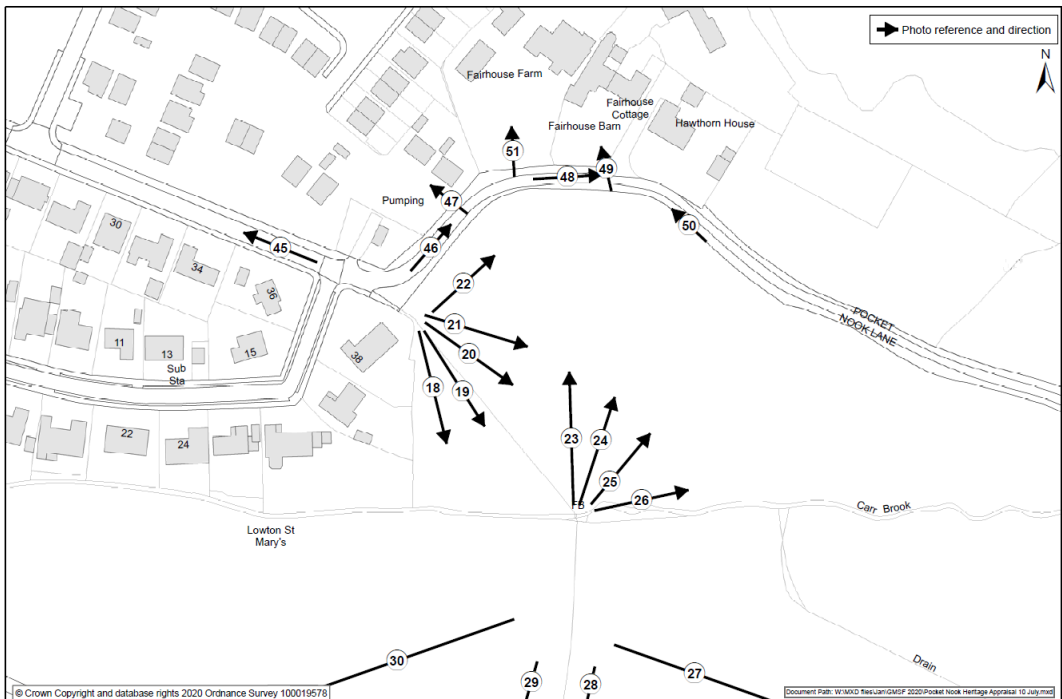
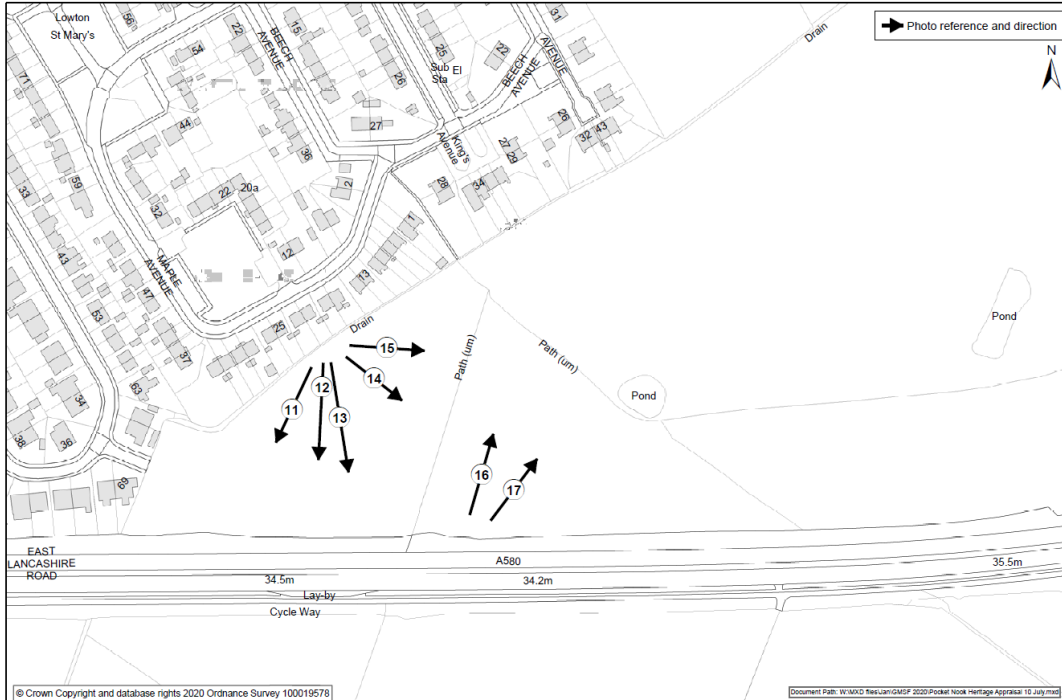
- 5.1 This heritage statement has reviewed the likely impact of proposed development to the south of Fair House Farmhouse, Pocket Nook Lane, upon the significances of the setting of this Grade II Listed Building. The findings of the statement are that the proposed development may have some impact in the northern part of the development site, however, the remaining site will have no impact upon the setting. Consideration needs to be given at a detailed stage to the treatment of the northern portion of the site to ensure that any development harmonises with the wider setting of the listed building to ensure it does not harm the heritage values and significances of the Listed Building or its wider setting.
- 5.2 The proposed allocation satisfies national and local heritage planning policy and represents what in the context of the NPPF is described as sustainable development, and as such the proposal is wholly supportable.

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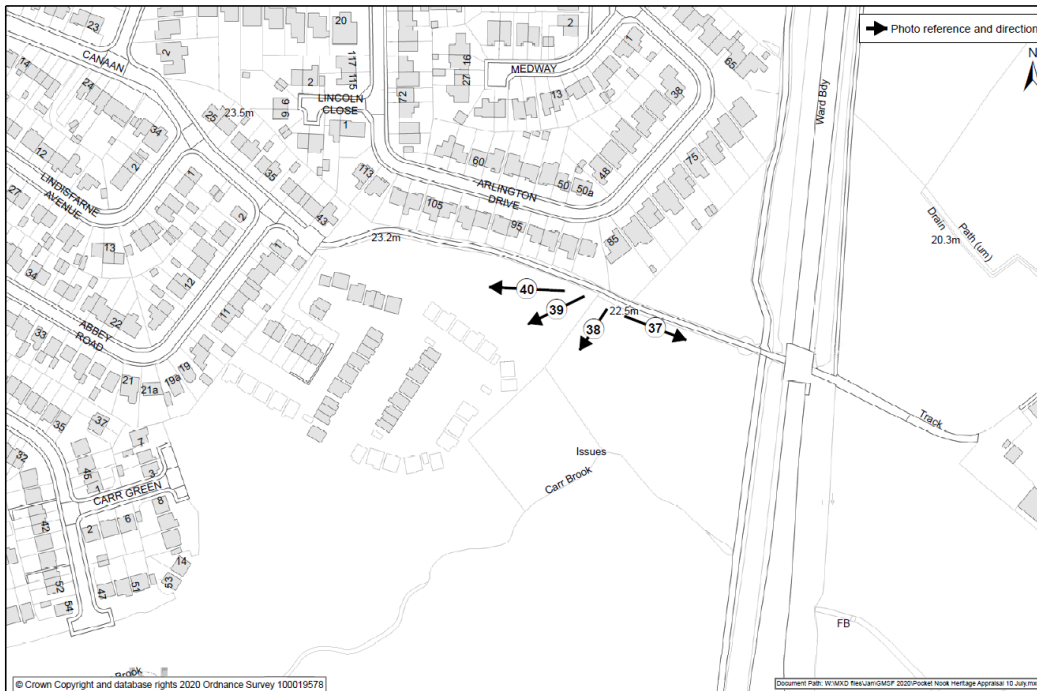
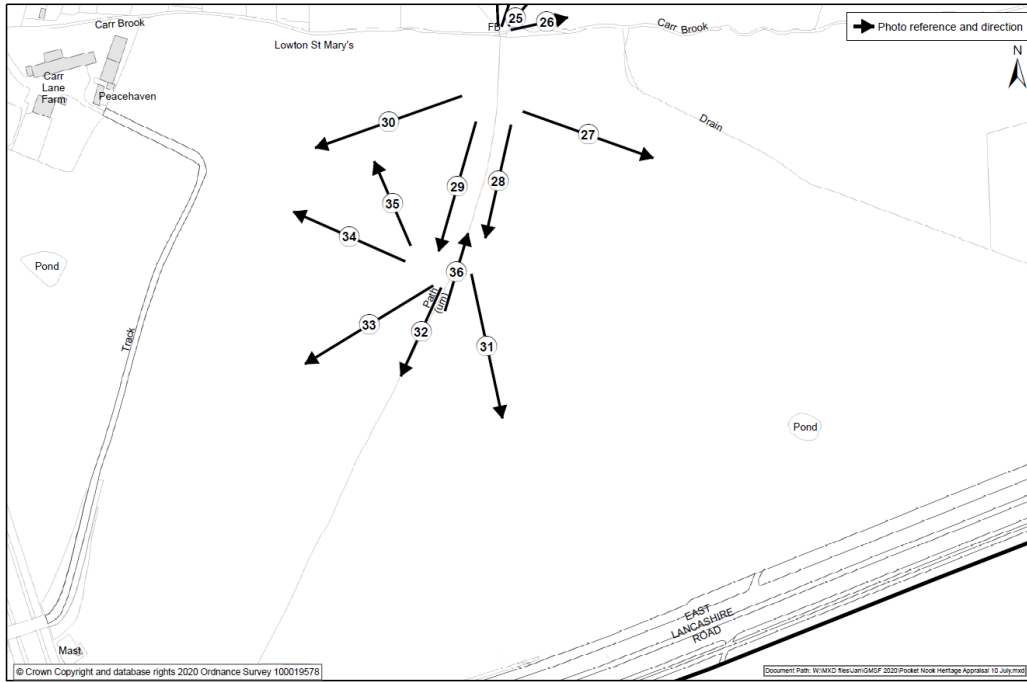
i – Clarke K, Informed Conservation, Historic England, 2003

ii – Historic England, Conservation, Principles, Policies and Guidance: Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment 2008

### APPENDIX 1 – Photograph Locations



# GMSF Allocation at Pocket Nook, Lowton



GMSF Allocation at Pocket Nook, Lowton

