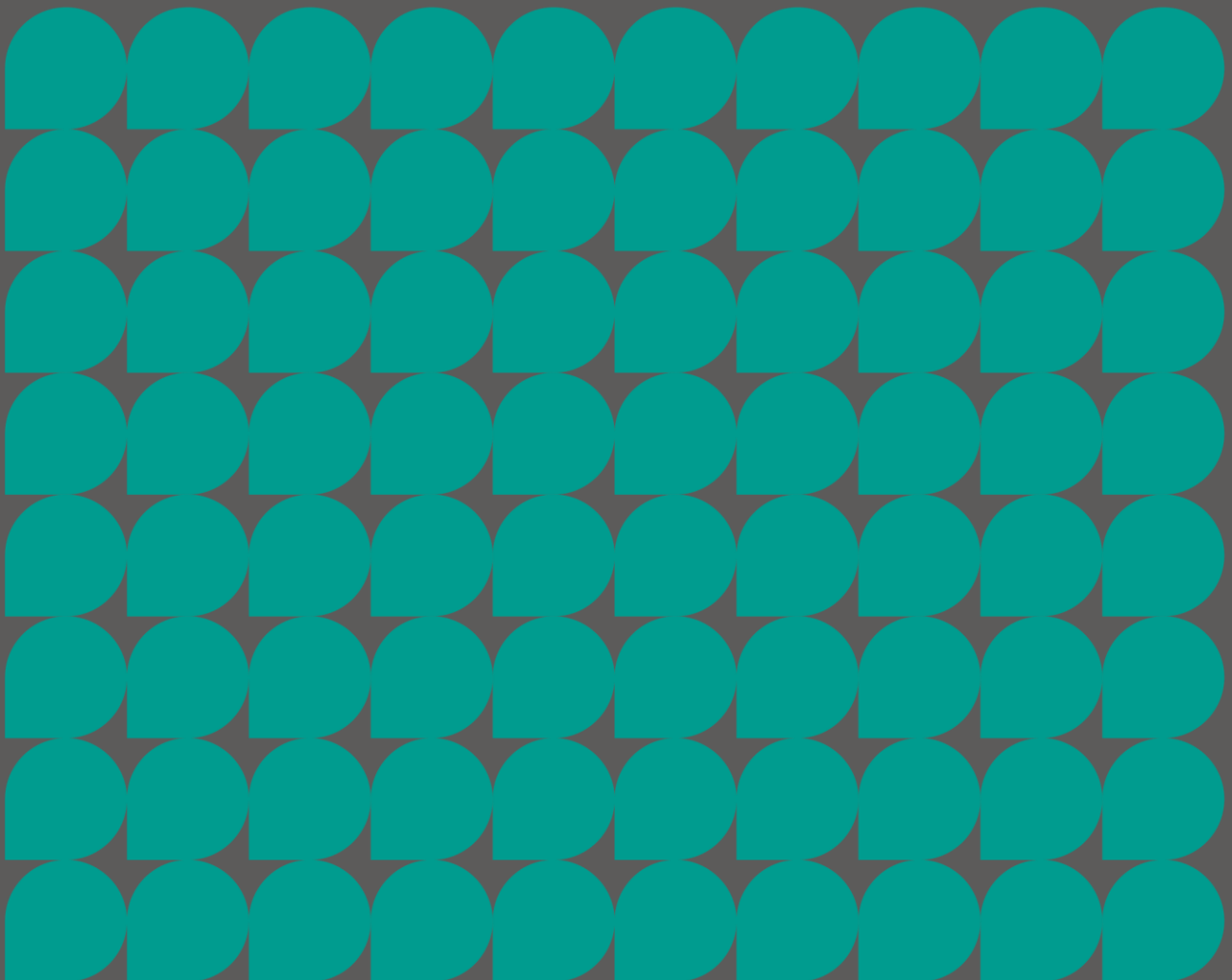


Places for Everyone

JPA34 M6 Junction 25 Allocation Topic Paper

July 2021



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Section A – Background

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2014, the AGMA Executive Board recommended to the 10 Greater Manchester local authorities that they agree to prepare a joint Development Plan Document (“Joint DPD”), called the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (“GMSF”) and that AGMA be appointed by the 10 authorities to prepare the GMSF on their behalf.
- 1.2 The first draft of the GMSF DPD was published for consultation on 31 October 2016, ending on 16 January 2017. Following substantial re-drafting, a further consultation on the Revised Draft GMSF took place between January and March 2019.
- 1.3 On 30 October 2020, the AGMA Executive Board unanimously agreed to recommend GMSF 2020 to the 10 Greater Manchester Councils for approval for consultation at their Executives/Cabinets, and approval for submission to the Secretary of State following the period for representations at their Council meetings.
- 1.4 At its Council meeting on 3 December, Stockport Council resolved not to submit the GMSF 2020 following the consultation period and at its Cabinet meeting on 4 December, it resolved not to publish the GMSF 2020 for consultation.
- 1.5 As a joint DPD of the 10 Greater Manchester authorities, the GMSF 2020 required the approval of all 10 local authorities to proceed. The decisions of Stockport Council/Cabinet therefore signalled the end of the GMSF as a joint plan of the 10.
- 1.6 Notwithstanding the decision of Stockport Council, the nine remaining districts considered that the rationale for the preparation of a Joint DPD remained. Consequently, at its meeting on 11 December 2020, Members of the AGMA Executive Committee agreed in principle to producing a joint DPD of the nine remaining Greater Manchester (GM) districts. Subsequent to this meeting, each district formally approved the establishment of a Joint Committee for the preparation of a joint Development Plan Document of the nine districts.
- 1.7 Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Regulation 32 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 enable a joint plan to continue to progress in the event of one of the local authorities withdrawing, provided that the plan has ‘substantially the same effect’ on the remaining authorities as the original joint plan. The joint plan of the nine GM districts has been prepared on this basis.
- 1.8 In view of this, it follows that PfE should be considered as, in effect, the same Plan as the GMSF, albeit without one of the districts (Stockport). Therefore “the plan” and its proposals are in effect one and the same. Its content has

changed over time through the iterative process of plan making, but its purpose has not. Consequently, the Plan is proceeding directly to Publication stage under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

- 1.9 Four consultations took place in relation to the GMSF. The first, in November 2014 was on the scope of the plan and the initial evidence base, the second in November 2015, was on the vision, strategy and strategic growth options, and the third, on a Draft Plan in October 2016.
- 1.10 The fourth and most recent consultation on The Greater Manchester Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment: the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework Revised Draft 2019 (GMSF 2019) took place in 2019. It received over 17,000 responses. The responses received informed the production of GMSF 2020. The withdrawal of Stockport Council in December 2020 prevented GMSF 2020 proceeding to Regulation 19 Publication stage and instead work was undertaken to prepare PfE 2021.
- 1.11 Where a local planning authority withdraws from a joint plan and that plan continues to have substantially the same effect as the original joint plan on the remaining authorities, s28(7) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that any step taken in relation to the plan must be treated as a step taken by the remaining authorities for the purposes of the joint plan. On this basis, it is proposed to proceed directly to Publication stage under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.
- 1.12 A comprehensive evidence base was assembled to support the policies and proposals in the GMSF 2020. Given the basis on which the Plan has been prepared, this evidence base remains the fundamental basis for the PfE 2021 and has remained available on the GMCA's website since October 2020. That said, this evidence base has been reviewed and updated in the light of the change from GMSF 2020 to the PfE 2021 and, where appropriate, addendum reports have been produced and should be read in conjunction with evidence base made available in October 2020. The evidence documents which have informed the plan are available via the GMCA's website.

2. M6 Junction 25 Overview

- 2.1 This site was granted planning permission in June 2021 for substantial employment development, following call-in by the Secretary of State and a subsequent Public Inquiry. The approved development comprises 133,966 sqm of B8 storage and distribution floorspace across eight units with ancillary integral office space on a 54 hectare site. Two of the eight units have full planning permission with the remaining six units having outline permission. The applicant Tritax Symmetry intends to deliver the first two units in the short term to address market demand.
- 2.2 The Inspector's Report, which informed the Secretary of State's decision to approve the development, recognised the site's major opportunity to provide a

high quality location for substantial employment development in the M6 corridor. The M6 is a significant business asset and the UK's most important strategic route for freight movement between the north and south of the country, and Wigan is the only district in Greater Manchester which has direct access to it. The site is large, relatively unconstrained, directly accessible to the motorway and has a long visible frontage along it. These attributes make the site highly attractive to the market, including key growth sectors such as logistics and advanced manufacturing which are growing rapidly in the North West, primarily due to its strong global connections including Manchester Airport and the new deep water port at Liverpool 2.

- 2.3 There is a significant demand and requirement for large scale logistics development within the M6 Corridor. Yet, despite its strategic location, Wigan has not had the right sites to attract this demand. This site has the scale, prominence, and motorway connectivity to satisfy this demand and deliver new jobs and investment for the local economy. M6 Junction 25 is the main gateway into Wigan from the south, and the delivery of a high quality employment development on this site will enhance the economic profile of the borough whilst taking full advantage of its strategic location.
- 2.4 Land between the allocation and the Winstanley residential area to the north will be retained within the Green Belt and will provide a robust green infrastructure corridor. In addition to safeguarding residential amenity, this green corridor will open up the site for wider public access, including suitable diversions to public rights of way as necessary, with good links to the footbridge over the M6 motorway. It will also provide enhanced walking and cycling opportunities for local residents to the Wigan Flashes to the east, which are a major environmental and recreation resource in the borough. To enable this, a safe crossing of the A49 Warrington Road will need to be provided.
- 2.5 It is important that provision is made for this employment site to be safely and conveniently accessed from nearby residential areas by walking, cycling and bus services, to enable local people to take advantage of the job opportunities that it will provide and to reduce car dependency in the area.
- 2.6 To make the site attractive to potential occupiers and to minimise any adverse visual impacts, high quality landscaping is required within the site and along sensitive site boundaries, including the A49 road frontage and the remaining Green Belt to the north. The development must also provide easements for the significant utilities infrastructure that runs through the site.

3. Site details

- 3.1 As shown in Appendix 1, the site allocation is located within the Green Belt to the north of the M6 spur road at Junction 25 and west of A49 Warrington Road. The main access into the site will be from an additional arm on the existing A49/M6 roundabout (Bryn interchange). The site allocation is 64.51 hectares in size, including 1.97 hectares that are proposed to be retained

within the Green Belt. Consequently, the allocation will result in the loss of 62.54 hectares of Green Belt.

- 3.2 The site was previously mined with subsequent re-working of the land. It has now been reclaimed and is predominantly undulating arable farmland used for the production of silage. The majority of the site is partitioned into fields that are primarily enclosed by hedgerows and/or wire fences with a number of copses throughout, mostly along the field boundaries and peripheral areas.
- 3.3 There are a variety of existing buildings and structures within the allocation which are predominantly located into three groupings - Highbrook Stables to the south west, Highbrooks centrally and Cranberry Lea Farm (Cranberry Ley Farm) to the north. In terms of topography, the site and surrounding area are generally gently sloping upwards towards the south and south west.
- 3.4 There are two existing vehicular accesses to the site - Brocstedes Road to the south, which extends northwards into the site; and a private agricultural road (High Brooks) located to the north of the A49 Warrington Road roundabout (Bryn Interchange) to the east of the site. This road extends to the west across the northern boundary of the site towards the Cranberry Lea Farm complex and includes Public Rights of Way (path references 002/02/40 and 002/02/20). A number of Public Rights of Way are located on the site, mostly within the northern and western areas, and there are fishing ponds to the south adjoining the M6 spur road.

4. Proposed Development

- 4.1 The proposed development at M6, Junction 25 in PfE 2021 remains the same as that proposed in GMSF 2020. PfE 2021 proposes a substantial high-quality employment development on this site, comprising around 140,000 square metres of logistics (B8) and/or manufacturing (B2) floorspace. This will meet an identified market need for new B2 and B8 floorspace whilst generating new investment and employment in the local economy. It is anticipated to generate in the region of 1,600 new full time equivalent jobs.
- 4.2 As set out in Section 2, since its proposed allocation in the GMSF (2016), a planning application for substantial economic development on the site, comprising 133,966 sqm of employment floorspace, has been received and approved by the council (planning ref: A/18/85947). The application, submitted by employment developer Tritax Symmetry, was called in by the Secretary of State, but has subsequently been approved in June 2021 following a public inquiry.
- 4.3 The site allocation boundary has been amended from that proposed in the 2019 GMSF to exclude land to the north between the proposed development and the residential area of Winstanley. This green corridor is now proposed to be retained in the Green Belt and will act as a green buffer safeguarding residential amenity of local residents. Retention of this area also means that a significant swathe of Green Belt can be retained for public benefit.

- 4.4 The site allocation also includes a small area of land (1.97ha) at its southern tip, south of Brocstedes Road, that is proposed to be retained within the Green Belt. This small parcel has strategic importance to facilitate an upgrade of the motorway junction to allow for a northbound connection. In addition to its Green Belt status, inclusion within the allocation provides an additional safeguard for the potential future provision of an all-ways junction, as set out in clause 7 of the policy.
- 4.5 The proposed site allocation policy is included at Appendix 2.

5. Site Selection

- 5.1 This allocation (JPA34) was submitted to the GMCA as part of the call for sites exercise. It is located within an Area of Search (WI-AS-2) where development will make a positive contribution to delivering the PfE Spatial Strategy. The site constraints have been assessed and the site is considered to be free of significant constraint.
- 5.2 As a site within the Green Belt, exceptional circumstances need to be demonstrated for it to be brought forward as an allocation in the PfE Plan. These exceptional circumstances are considered to outweigh any harm to the Green Belt identified from the site's release. Section 14 of this Topic Paper provides a summary of the Green Belt harm assessment for this site. The exceptional circumstances case takes the form of:
- A strategic level case: high level factors that have influenced and framed the decision to alter boundaries; and
 - A local level case: specific factors relevant to the proposed release that complement the strategic case.
- 5.3 The October 2020 paper on the case for exceptional circumstances to amend the Green Belt boundary sets out the strategic level case for Green Belt release. It also sets out the headline issues that make up the local level case for each allocation. The local level case for the M6 Junction 25 allocation is summarised below.
- 5.4 This allocation is considered to satisfy one of the seven site selection criteria for justifying release from the Green Belt, as follows:
- 5.5 **Criterion 3 – Land that can maximise existing economic opportunities which have significant capacity to deliver transformational change and / or boost the competitiveness and connectivity of Greater Manchester and genuinely deliver inclusive growth.**
- 5.6 As stated previously, the M6 is a major business asset with a high demand for logistics and manufacturing activity. Wigan is the only district in Greater Manchester which has direct access to it and this allocation offers a large,

relatively unconstrained and directly accessible site to the motorway making the site highly attractive to the market.

5.7 Release of this site from the Green Belt will also provide the following benefits:

- Provision of around 140,000 square metres of B8/B2 floorspace, which will make a large contribution to employment supply and meet business needs for new modern industrial floorspace in the borough.
- Delivery of land to provide the scale and type of floorspace generally not found in Wigan to meet an identified market need for new B2 and B8 floorspace for sectors including logistics. Despite a high level of enquiries from potential investors over recent years, a lack of suitably attractive employment sites for modern business operators has resulted in investment going elsewhere and businesses moving out of Wigan to fulfil their growth aspirations. An assessment of alternative sites outside of the Green Belt has confirmed that there are no available non-Green Belt sites in the borough with the attributes to meet the identified market demand.
- Generation of new investment and employment in the local economy which is anticipated to generate in the region of 1,600 new full-time equivalent jobs. In addition to jobs created on-site, logistics operations generate jobs indirectly through supply chains. It would also deliver apprenticeship opportunities, an increase in economic output (Gross Value Added) and business rates.
- A location alongside the M6 with excellent access to the motorway facilitated from an additional arm on the existing A49/M6 roundabout (Bryn interchange). As Wigan is the only district in Greater Manchester with direct access to the M6, this site provides a unique opportunity for Wigan and Greater Manchester to capture and meet the commercial demand within this key growth corridor.

5.8 The proposed allocation aligns with a number of economic strategies, including the National Industrial Strategy and the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy, as well as the Greater Manchester Strategy and the NPPF.

5.9 This together with the statement above represent exceptional circumstances in support of the site's release from the Green Belt for employment development in the PfE (2021).

5.10 The Council's Planning Committee report (January 2020) for the Tritax Symmetry planning application, and the subsequent Inspector's Report (June 2021) clearly sets out the very special circumstances case in support of the approved development. The Inspector concluded that the benefits of the proposal, primarily in terms of how it would support economic growth, are of such magnitude that they clearly outweigh the Green Belt and non-Green Belt harms identified. He recognised that there is a pressing need in Wigan, the M6 sub-region and the wider North West for warehousing and distribution

development, and that Wigan has and continues to suffer from poor take up rates due to qualitative and quantitative constraints on its employment land supply. The delivery of 133,966 sqm of high quality logistics floorspace was therefore accorded very substantial weight. In addition, the socio-economic benefits of the scheme were afforded substantial weight, and the highways and biodiversity net gain benefits moderate weight.

- 5.11 In summary, this allocation accords with the spatial strategy set in the PfE Plan; it provides a wide range of benefits, and it is being actively promoted and has planning permission for employment development.

6. Planning History

- 6.1 The site has limited relevant planning history pre-2011, restricted to small scale proposals related to agriculture, horsiculture and farmhouses.
- 6.2 Of most relevance and significance are the proposed allocation of the site for employment development in the Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy in 2011 and the 2018 planning application (A/18/85947) from Tritax Symmetry for large scale employment development, approved in June 2021.
- 6.3 In 2011, 34 hectares of land at M6 Junction 25 were proposed for allocation in the draft Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy for employment development. However, this was rejected at examination in 2012 as the independent planning inspector concluded that there was insufficient evidence to justify its release from the Green Belt. However, since 2012, there have been several material changes in circumstances since this decision, as set out in this Topic Paper, including a strengthened employment market, a depleted employment land supply in the borough, much increased economic demand for sites of this scale that are directly accessible to the motorway, and firm interest from an employment developer, Tritax Symmetry, with a strong track record of delivery in the borough.
- 6.4 In 2018, the aforementioned planning application (A/18/85947) was received from Tritax Symmetry for the development of 133,966 square metres of B8 storage and distribution floorspace with ancillary integral B1(a) office space on a 54 hectare site. This was considered at planning committee in January 2020 where the committee resolved to grant permission. The application was called-in by the Secretary of State, but was approved in June 2021 following a public inquiry.

7. GMSF 2019 Consultation Responses

- 7.1 A total of 609 representations were received in relation to the site allocation, primarily from local residents.
- 7.2 These covered a range of planning themes most notably regarding its impact on traffic and the principle of development, particularly given its release from the Green Belt for employment uses was dismissed by an independent

planning inspector in 2013 as part of the examination of the Local Plan Core Strategy.

- 7.3 In terms of highways, many respondents believe the development will make congestion on the M6 and the local road network worse, exacerbated by other employment developments proposed elsewhere along the M6 in St Helens. Many also stated that the site should not be developed without a two-way junction at M6 Junction 25.
- 7.4 In terms of the Green Belt, concerns were raised about the potential merger of Wigan and Ashton, and that exceptional circumstances could not be demonstrated.
- 7.5 In terms of employment, comments raised included that logistics developments only create low numbers of jobs which will be low paid and low skilled, and that previously developed employment sites and buildings and town centre locations should be developed before greenfield and Green Belt sites. Some claimed that land at M6 Junction 26 in Orrell is a better location and has been removed from the GMSF.
- 7.6 Other issues raised included the environmental impact, in terms of wildlife habitats and species, fishing ponds and nearby Sites of Biological Importance; the loss of public rights of way and green space used for recreation; flood risk; and its impact on air quality.
- 7.7 A more detailed summary of the issues raised, together with the Council's response, is set out in the GMSF Statement of Consultation (October 2020).

8. GMSF 2019 Integrated Assessment

- 8.1 The Integrated Assessment (IA) of the 2019 GMSF identified many positive impacts in relation to this allocation policy, with very positive effects identified in relation to:
- Meeting current and future demand for employment across Greater Manchester
 - Providing sufficient employment land in locations that are well connected and well served by infrastructure
 - Ensuring the transport network can support and enable the anticipated scale and spatial distribution of development
 - Improving transport connectivity
 - Supporting healthier lifestyles and supporting improvements in determinants of health

- 8.2 The 2019 IA also made some recommendations in terms of enhancement and mitigation measures. In response to the 2019 IA recommendations the policy was amended to:
- Refer to the need for a masterplan to be agreed with the Council (clause 1)
 - Require the incorporation of high quality landscaping to minimise its visual impact (clause 5)
- 8.3 Other recommendations are addressed when the allocation policy is read in conjunction with plan thematic policies.
- 8.4 In addition, in response to the 2019 IA, a change has been made to the thematic policy on supporting long term economic growth (JP-J1) which now requires local labour and training agreements to be secured through planning obligations or other mechanisms, in line with the IA objective to help ensure sustainable economic growth and job creation.

9. GMSF 2020 Integrated Assessment

- 9.1 The 2020 IA assessed the GMSF 2020. It provided a narrative detailing how the recommendations from the 2019 IA were considered in the development of the 2020 draft. It concluded that when the plan was read as a whole, no further changes were necessary to the allocation policy.
- 9.2 The 2020 IA addendum report provided a broad consideration of the impacts of final changes to policies. It concluded that, as recommended mitigation measures were addressed by changes to thematic policies and no changes made to this allocation policy, it would not score differently in relation to the IA Framework.
- 9.3 A 2021 PfE IA Addendum has been produced which reviews the changes made between GMSF 2020 and PfE 2021. As there have been no substantial changes to this specific allocation between GMSF 2020 and PfE 2021 there has been no change to the assessment of this policy in relation to the IA Framework since 2020.

Section B – Physical

10. Transport

- 10.1 The planning application from Tritax Symmetry was accompanied by a Transport Assessment and a Transport Assessment Addendum to fully understand the transport implications of the proposal.
- 10.2 These examined the capacity of five junctions in the vicinity of the site likely to be impacted by development traffic. Of particular concern was the A49/M6 slip road roundabout junction, known locally as the Bryn Interchange. At the time of the 2017 traffic surveys the southbound arm of the Bryn Interchange was observed to be generally free flowing, though occasional long queues developed which dispersed quickly. On the northbound arm, consistent but small queues developed during the AM peak, which were slightly longer queues in the PM peak. On the eastbound arm, queues built up but dispersed quickly, though queues developed during 0845-0900 due to queues backing up from A49/Worthington Way junction.
- 10.3 The allocation is forecast to increase traffic flow by approximately 7% in both the AM and PM weekday peaks at the Bryn Interchange. In real terms this will see traffic rise by around 250 vehicles in the AM peak and around 280 vehicles in the PM peak.
- 10.4 With regard to the Bryn Interchange, a scheme has been agreed with the council to signalise both the proposed site access arm and the M6 Link Road. The scheme would also provide widening of the A49 southbound approach to provide a third lane flare and associated widening of the circulatory carriageway. Signalised pedestrian crossing facilities are also proposed on the site access arm and the A49, in the vicinity of the existing bus stops. The improvement scheme is shown to mitigate the impact of development traffic at the junction. The Transport Assessment confirms that the proposed improvement will result in the junction operating substantially better, even with the addition of proposed development traffic.
- 10.5 The Transport Assessment confirms that there will be minimal impact on the on and off slips at Junction 26 of the M6, but larger impacts on the on and off slips at Junction 24 (between 3% and 4%), with in excess of 60 additional vehicles in both the AM and PM peak.
- 10.6 At M6 Junction 24, the on-slip carriageway benefits from two lanes, with left turning traffic from the A58 onto the slip road generally using the nearside lane and right turning traffic from the A58 generally using the offside lane. As such, these turning manoeuvres generally happen simultaneously and on-site observations confirms this is the case. The proposed development will add traffic to the right turn movement; therefore, consideration has been given to formalising the existing arrangement, which will assist in limiting queuing on the A58 and the Junction 24 off-slip.

- 10.7 As traffic disperses on the wider network, development trips at junctions become increasingly diluted, with increases being 4% or lower. The wider junctions considered as part of the assessment will not therefore experience a significant impact as a result of the proposals and any increase in queuing/delay are not considered to be severe.
- 10.8 The site is accessible by cycle, with an on-road cycle route adjacent to the site along the A49 and National Cycle Routes 562 and 55 being located within a relatively short cycle ride. The proposed improvement to the existing public right of way to bridleway standard will also strengthen cycle linkages to the residential areas to the north. The provision of walking and cycling links between the site and the surrounding residential areas and bus services is also a requirement of the allocation policy.
- 10.9 Bus services available in the vicinity of the site operate at times that provide the opportunity for staff and visitors of the proposed development to travel by public transport.
- 10.10 A sensitivity assessment has also been undertaken that accounts for the recently constructed A49 link road and the future provision of the committed M58 link road. This shows that, whilst these highway schemes will impact on traffic flow on the network, development at M6 Junction 25 would not have a material impact.
- 10.11 Strategic modelling outputs were not utilised for the allocation as it was further along in the planning process than the other allocations across Greater Manchester. As a result, no further assessment has been undertaken in the 5th round of modelling for the allocation. However, with no changes to the quantum of development and with the allocation on the periphery of the modelling network, it is anticipated that the conclusions reached in the Locality Assessment remain valid.
- 10.12 The Inspector's Report concluded that the improvement schemes at M6 Junction 24 and the Bryn Interchange proposed by Tritax Symmetry would mitigate the impact of the development and, in the latter case, would provide some incidental betterment to highway users. He stated that the site boasts excellent sustainability credentials with walking, cycling and the use of public transport all viable and realistic alternatives to the private motor car.
- 10.13 On this basis, it was concluded that the proposed development would comply with paragraphs 108 and 109 of the NPPF, which requires appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes to be taken up, safe and suitable access to be achieved, and any significant impacts on the transport network to be effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

11. Flood Risk and Drainage

- 11.1 There are two watercourses running through the site and one culverted.

- 11.2 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 1 undertaken in March 2019 confirms the site is within Flood Zone 1 with a low probability of fluvial/tidal flooding with a risk of less than 1 in 1,000 per year.
- 11.3 A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), undertaken in support of the Tritax Symmetry planning application, concludes that the proposed development is acceptable in flooding and drainage terms subject to the provision of drainage mitigation works, including a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS). SuDS are a requirement of thematic policy GM-S5. An important aspect of the FRA has been to ensure development of the site does not increase the rate of surface water run-off from current levels or to significantly increase the risk of flooding elsewhere to unacceptable levels.
- 11.4 The Inspector's Report to the approved planning application concluded that there is a low probability of flooding and that subject to the imposition of drainage conditions that there was no objection from the Environment Agency, United Utilities or the Council's Drainage Engineers and Lead Local Flood Authority.

12. Ground Conditions

- 12.1 The site has a historical legacy of coal mining having been the site of a colliery and having been worked as an open cast mine in the 1940s. In association with the planning application by Tritax Symmetry, a Coal Mining Risk Assessment has been undertaken. The Coal Authority concur with the findings of the risk assessment that past coal workings pose a risk to the proposed development of the site and that mitigation measures are required through the implementation of a series of intrusive site investigation works and remedial works as appropriate. Any future development of this site would therefore require a planning condition to ensure that the development is implemented safely and that public health is safeguarded.

13. Utilities

- 13.1 The site is immediately adjacent to an established urban area to the north and east where a range of services are available. This includes water, gas and electricity mains, alongside telecommunications infrastructure. The development can therefore be easily connected to key utilities. Any upgrades required to accommodate the development can be made alongside its delivery.
- 13.2 There are three pylons with high voltage overhead power lines (Wigan-Skelmersdale Line) running east-west across the northern part of the site. A high pressure gas pipeline also crosses the site in a broadly east-west alignment. Appropriate easements for these significant utilities infrastructure will therefore be required as set out in clause 8 of the site allocation policy.
- 13.3 With regard to electricity, National Grid has confirmed that specific development proposals within Wigan are unlikely to have a significant direct effect upon their electricity transmission system, and that improvements to the

system to provide supplies to the local distribution network are generally as a result of overall regional demand growth, rather than site specific developments.

- 13.4 With regard to gas, the high pressure pipeline forms part of the Crank to Warrington feeder, which is defined as a major accident hazard pipeline by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Cadent Gas, on behalf of the HSE and National Grid, have however raised no objections to the development of the site subject to safety procedures and measures being applied. On this basis the presence of the pipeline and apparatus on the site is not considered to be a constraint which precludes its development.
- 13.5 United Utilities are responsible for a variety of infrastructure across the site and have raised no objection to the development of the site but urge early engagement with prospective developers requiring the need for masterplanning, including a holistic drainage strategy for the site as set by condition in the recent planning application.

Section C – Environmental

14. Green Belt Assessment

- 14.1 The proposed allocation would result in the loss of 62.54 hectares of Green Belt, as whilst it is 64.51 hectares in size, 1.97 hectares of the allocation is proposed to be retained in the Green Belt.
- 14.2 The Stage 1 Green Belt Study, undertaken by LUC in 2016, assessed the whole of the Green Belt in Greater Manchester in terms of its contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The M6 J25 allocation forms part of Green Belt parcel WGBA05 and the LUC assessment concludes that this:
- Performs a role in preventing the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas of Wigan and Ashton in Makerfield.
 - Plays a strong role in preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another i.e. Wigan and Ashton in Makerfield, and the further merging of Wigan and Billinge.
 - Plays a moderate role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment given the fragmentation of the countryside by the M6 transport corridor.
 - Plays a weak role in preserving the setting and character of historic towns.
- 14.3 The Stage 2 Green Belt Study, undertaken by LUC in 2019, assesses each of the proposed site allocations in terms of their impact on the five Green Belt purposes and their impact on the adjacent Green Belt.
- 14.4 Its assessment of M6 Junction 25 is based on the site allocation boundary proposed in the 2019 GMSF, with a reassessment included in an addendum to reflect the amended boundary. It concludes that the release of this land will have very high harm on the purposes of the Green Belt and a moderate impact on the adjacent Green Belt.
- 14.5 In 2021 a further review of the overall harm to Green Belts was undertaken in an addendum report showing changes to allocation boundaries proposed in PfE 2021. In the case of the M6 Junction 25 site, no boundary changes were made, and the allocation proposed within PfE 2021 remains the same as in GMSF 2020, as presented in Appendix 4.
- 14.6 National policy states that plans should set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land. The 2020 Stage 2 Green Belt Study – Identification of

Opportunities to Enhance the Beneficial Use of the Green Belt identifies opportunities to enhance green infrastructure on remaining Green Belt within 2km of the allocation sites.

- 14.7 At M6 Junction 25 the assessment identifies opportunities and projects in relation to:
- Improvements to public rights of way and cycle routes
 - The provision of additional amenity green space and allotments
 - Improved community access to existing green spaces, such as Winstanley Park.
 - Enhancements to existing wildlife habitats and linkages through to others
 - The creation of green corridor linkages and improvements to planting and hedgerows.
- 14.8 The proposed site allocation boundary was amended in GMSF 2020 (and taken forward in PfE 2021) from that proposed in GMSF 2019. It excludes land to the north between the proposed development and the residential area of Winstanley, which is now retained as a green corridor in the Green Belt. This is also reflected in the planning application for employment development on the site. This ensures that an area of Green Belt land is retained for public benefit. The proposed allocation policy also requires high quality landscaping along site boundaries and the incorporation of a landscaped green infrastructure corridor with walking and cycling links to remaining areas of Green Belt.
- 14.9 Some of the opportunities identified are reflected in the proposed Tritax Symmetry development of the site, which will generate environmental benefit to local biodiversity value including generating funds for projects at local sites, such as Wigan Flashes. The proposed scheme also retains public rights of way and proposes improvements to paths that will improve opportunities for walking and cycling into the adjoining open countryside.
- 14.10 Further information in relation to green infrastructure, recreation, landscape and biodiversity is found in the relevant sections of this Topic Paper.
- 14.11 Based on the conclusions of the LUC assessment, it is acknowledged that the proposed allocation would have a detrimental impact on the functioning of the Green Belt in this location. However, as set out in Section 5 above and elsewhere in this Topic Paper, it is the council's view that the development will bring significant benefits including the delivery of economic growth, inward investment, jobs and training opportunities in Wigan, as well as addressing economic need and demand, that significantly outweigh its harm and represent exceptional circumstances in accordance with national planning policy.

- 14.12 This site's location at Junction 25 of the M6 is a unique strategic opportunity which cannot be met elsewhere in the borough. These benefits, and the overall planning balance, are set out elsewhere in this Topic Paper, together with the Planning Committee Report (January 2020) and the public inquiry documents for the Tritax Symmetry planning application.
- 14.13 In making his decision, the Inspector determining the Tritax Symmetry planning application concluded that very special circumstances exist as the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 14.14 In summary, he concluded that the material considerations weighing against the proposal were the definitional harm to the Green Belt by virtue of inappropriate development, the limited and localised harm to Green Belt openness and the moderate harm from encroachment into the countryside. The Green Belt harm carries substantial weight. Also weighing against the proposal was the moderate visual and landscape harm, which carried moderate weight.
- 14.15 Weighing in favour of the proposal, the Inspector afforded very substantial weight to the delivery of logistics floorspace, further significant weight to the locational benefits and socio-economic benefits of the scheme, and moderate weight to both the biodiversity net gain and highway benefits, concluding that these collectively sufficiently outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and to the landscape.

15. Green Infrastructure

- 15.1 The boundary of the M6 Junction 25 allocation has been amended since the 2019 Draft GMSF. This broadly reflects the boundary of the Tritax Symmetry planning application (A/18/85947) and retains land within the Green Belt to the south of the Winstanley residential area that was previously proposed to be removed from the Green Belt. This area of open fields will form a green buffer between the development and existing residential properties protecting residential amenity. The buffer will also introduce opportunities to strengthen the green infrastructure network with enhanced footpaths which will provide links to the new employment park and into the surrounding countryside. The policy requires the development of the site to incorporate a landscaped green infrastructure corridor within the allocation, with walking and cycling links, connecting the A49 to the remaining area of Green Belt to the north, and ensure suitable diversions to public rights of way as necessary, with good links to the footbridge over the M6 motorway.

16. Recreation

- 16.1 As the site is proposed for employment uses, the site allocation policy does not require the development to deliver formal play or sport and recreation facilities as part of the scheme. However, the retention of associated public rights of way and improvement of these paths in association with measures

designed to improve accessibility to the business park for pedestrians and cyclists will improve opportunities for walking and cycling, including into the adjoining open countryside.

17. Landscape

- 17.1 The 2009 Landscape Character Assessment of Wigan identifies this site as being within the Billinge and Orrell Ridge landscape area which is typically characterised as an area of elevated enclosed farmland. The M6 motorway has had a major influence upon this landscape, traversing north-south and utilising the Billinge and Up Holland Ridge. There are several extensive woodland areas (plantation and semi-natural), farms, some historical designed parkland landscapes, together with historical relics of mineral extraction now disused and in some cases restored and filled in.
- 17.2 The 2018 Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment (LUC) identifies the allocation within the Lancashire Coal Measure landscape character area. The allocation is identified as within an area of urban fringe farmland in Bispham, Winstanley and Land Gate where commercial / industrial development has the potential to have a moderate – high impact upon the landscape.
- 17.3 To minimise the visual impact of the development on the wider area, the amended allocation policy (clause 5) requires high quality landscaping to be incorporated both within the site and along sensitive site boundaries, including the A49 road frontage, the remaining Green Belt to the north, and around each building within the site.
- 17.4 The Inspector's Report to the planning application concluded that while there would be some visual and landscape harm arising from the loss of the site's open character, the visual and landscape effects of the proposal could be satisfactorily mitigated within a reasonable period of time.

18. Ecological/Biodiversity Assessment

- 18.1 Development of the site will not impact any statutorily designated sites. There are locally designated sites next to the development, including the Sites of Biological Importance at Glead Wood, however these spaces can best be protected through incorporation within a sensitive landscaping scheme around the site to protect the integrity of these locally important sites.
- 18.2 As part of the planning application, it has been demonstrated that the site does have some local value for its onsite woodland (plantation and semi natural); hedgerows, ponds, semi—improved neutral grassland, marshy grassland and marsh.
- 18.3 The development of the site will result in the loss of many onsite natural habitats, however this loss in the overall habitat area can be compensated for by significantly enhancing the remaining areas of greenspace and creating

new greenspace as well as through new tree, hedgerow and woodland planting. This has been demonstrated through the planning application (A/18/85947) which would be expected (by condition) to provide a detailed landscape and habitat creation and management plan as part of future development of the site.

- 18.4 Policy JP-G9 of the PfE Plan requires developments to achieve at least a 10% biodiversity net gain. The Tritax Symmetry development of the site will generate environmental benefit to local biodiversity value including generating funds for the Wigan Wetlands Project at Wigan Flashes and Three Sisters Local Nature Reserve (A/18/85947). The Inspector's Report concluded that, subject to proposed mitigation measures, the development would secure a 10% biodiversity net gain.

19. Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 19.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the GMSF Thematic Policies and Strategic Sites (December 2018) forms stage 1 and part of stage 2 of the HRA process – screening and Appropriate Assessment. However, the M6 Junction 25 allocation was 'screened out' and not subject to further assessment as it was considered too distant from European sites for any discernible effects to occur.
- 19.2 The GMCA and TfGM are responding to Natural England's comments on the draft HRA (2020) by commissioning additional air quality modelling to more accurately assess the implications of changes in air quality on European sites that could potentially be affected by changes to nitrogen levels arising from changes in vehicle movements in Greater Manchester or within close proximity of the Greater Manchester boundary.
- 19.3 A Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) has been undertaken and supported by an assessment of air quality impacts on designated sites. The following sites have been screened out at Stage 1 HRA:
- Rixton Clay Pits (SAC)
 - Midland Meres & Mosses – Phase 1 Ramsar
 - Rostherne Mere (Ramsar)
- 19.4 The following sites requires Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment:
- Manchester Mosses (SAC)
 - Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) (SPA)
 - Rochdale Canal (SAC)
 - South Pennine Moors (SAC)
 - South Pennine Moors Phase 2 (SPA)

20. Historic Environment Assessment

- 20.1 The Tritax Symmetry planning application was supported by a Heritage Assessment, which formed part of an Environmental Statement undertaken by CBRE. No designated heritage assets are located within or immediately adjacent to the site, though there are six non-designated heritage assets recorded within the site that have uncertain to low historic importance. However, the assessment identified one Grade II Listed building, the Park Lane Unitarian and Free Christian Chapel, within 400 metres of the site boundary. The assessment concluded that the proposed development would have no impact on the significance of the Listed Building and the key aspects of the chapel's significance and setting would remain unaffected.
- 20.2 As previously stated, the site has been the subject of opencast mining (most recently in the 1980s) which has left an industrial legacy across the site including the remains of a former colliery works. Consultation with Greater Manchester's Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS) has identified that owing to the extensive industrial use of the site there may only be a small number with low potential for archaeological remains that predate the post-medieval areas. It is likely that prior to the development, a Heritage Assessment would be used to identify specific areas to be targeted for intrusive archaeological evaluation (e.g. trenching following demolition of structures footprints) with the potential for watching briefs over the course of the development's construction phases.

21. Air Quality

- 21.1 Part of the site is within a designated Air Quality Management Area, which follows the M6 motorway, the Junction 25 spur road, the A49 Warrington Road frontage and the majority of the Bryn Interchange roundabout. The proposed development has the potential to adversely impact air quality during construction and road traffic exhaust emissions associated with vehicles travelling to and from the application site during operation.
- 21.2 As part of the planning application, a supporting Air Quality Assessment (AQA) was submitted to determine baseline conditions and, having regard to air quality, assesses the effects of the demolition and construction phase and the operational phase upon the environment. The study demonstrated that any adverse impacts of the development both during construction and its future operation can be mitigated to acceptable levels through the use of good practice control measures. The Inspector concluded that air quality matters were satisfactorily assessed and addressed and that there is no conflict with national or local planning policy.

22. Noise

- 22.1 Noise sensitive receptors in proximity to the site allocation include residential development, predominantly to the north in Winstanley. However, the retention of a Green Belt corridor to the south of Winstanley provides a green buffer and will assist in protecting residential amenity of existing residents.

Regardless, any adverse impacts associated with the use of the site for logistics and distribution will need to be adequately controlled and mitigated through planning condition, as demonstrated by the current planning application.

- 22.2 A noise assessment undertaken by Resource Environment Consultancy (REC), submitted as part of the Tritax Symmetry planning application, has identified that the key noise sources associated with the site's development relate to HGV movements, unloading and loading operations within the service bays of the units and fixed plant equipment. A Noise Management Plan in respect of the development demonstrates that a range of acoustic mitigation measures can be employed which would reduce the impacts of noise and vibration to acceptable levels.
- 22.3 The Inspector concluded that the proposed development does not give rise to concern in relation to noise and vibration and would not cause any adverse impact on neighbouring amenity.

Section D – Social

23. Education

- 23.1 As the site is proposed for employment uses, the site allocation policy does not require the development to contribute towards or deliver new or improved education facilities for the community.
- 23.2 However, Policy JP-J1 of the PfE Plan seeks to support local job growth, by seeking agreement with employers and developers, including housebuilders, to enter into local labour and training agreements through planning obligations and other mechanisms where appropriate.
- 23.3 If approved at public inquiry, the Tritax Symmetry proposal is conditioned to enter into a local labour and training agreement with subsequent onsite operators to ensure a proportion of newly generated jobs would go to local people and that training would be available.

24. Health

- 24.1 The site allocation policy also does not require the development to contribute towards or deliver new or improved health facilities due to the proposal being for employment uses.
- 24.2 However, the development should contribute positively towards the health and wellbeing of local residents through the creation of local job and training opportunities, and improvements to the green infrastructure network. Enhancements to public rights of way which connect the site to neighbouring residential areas and the wider countryside will encourage active travel such as walking and cycling, for both recreation and commuting to work.

Section E – Deliverability

25. Viability

- 25.1 The Viability Assessment of the Spatial Framework, undertaken by Three Dragons, sets out the impact on development viability of the strategic policies of the GMSF. It concludes that the proposed development at M6 Junction 25, including all necessary mitigation, has a residual value of £8.16 million. Taking account of strategic transport costs associated with development the remaining scheme value equates to £2.8m which is equivalent to more than 10% above the benchmark land value with a 'headroom' of 16%. Headroom is what is left after all the known costs have been taken away from the total value of the scheme.
- 25.2 The Viability Assessment concludes that this large scale employment development is well located on the M6 motorway corridor and should be able to attract good values for services land parcels. The study concludes that the scheme will be able to support the associated transport costs identified as part of the scheme. On this basis, the assessment deems the scheme viable and able to proceed in viability terms.

26. Phasing

- 26.1 Tritax Symmetry have full planning permission for 2 units (Units DBS1 and DBS2) with the remaining 6 units having outline permission. They are keen to begin development on this site in the short term, indicating that there are end users with firm interest in the initial two units. Given its market attractiveness, the remainder of the site is envisaged to be progressed and developed soon after with completion of the full development anticipated in the first half of the GMSF plan period. This is supported by a substantial amount of enquiries in the borough over recent years from potential investors within the logistics and manufacturing sectors, which have not been adequately met within the borough due to a lack of suitably attractive sites with sufficient scale and vehicular access to the motorway network.

27. Indicative Masterplanning

- 27.1 An indicative masterplan prepared by Tritax Symmetry as submitted as part of their planning application is set out in Appendix 3. This provides an illustration of the form, scale, highway access and layout of a future potential scheme within the allocation. It also shows how the development could sit apart from neighbouring residential properties and how the Green Belt will perform the function of a green buffer to protect the amenity of nearby land uses.

Section F – Conclusion

28. The Sustainability Appraisal

- 28.1 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been incorporated into the IA of the GMSF/PfE and has informed plan preparation. The IA identified many positive impacts in terms of this allocation policy, but also made some recommendations in terms of enhancement and mitigation measures. These recommendations have been addressed through revisions to the policy, as set out in section 8 of this Topic Paper, or are addressed when the policy is read in conjunction with the PfE thematic policies, because the PfE should be read as whole. Taking account of the IA findings, this allocation is considered to accord with relevant economic, social and environmental objectives.
- 28.2 The appraisal was clear that to accord with objectives to tackle social deprivation it would be necessary to give greater consideration to the methods for delivering positive change in the implementation of this policy. A training and skills strategy would be required in association with any future development at M6 Junction 25 to secure new employment and training for local people. The current planning application proposes a local employment training and skills strategy which satisfies these concerns.

29. The main changes to the Proposed Allocation

- 29.1 The allocation policy proposed in GMSF 2019 is set out in Appendix 5. The employment allocation in GMSF 2020 was reduced in size by around one fifth (from 78.53 hectares to 64.51 hectares) by removing the green corridor to the south of Winstanley from the allocation and retaining it within the Green Belt.
- 29.2 Another change since GMSF 2019 is the retention of a small parcel of land (1.97 hectares) to the south of Brocstedes Road within the Green Belt, albeit within the allocation. As stated in Section 4, this has strategic importance to facilitate an upgrade of the motorway junction to allow for a northbound connection. Retaining this within the Green Belt as well as being within the allocation boundary provides an additional safeguard for the potential future provision of an all-ways junction, as set out in clause 7 of the policy. These changes have reduced the proposed Green Belt loss to 62.54 hectares.
- 29.3 The wording of the GMSF 2019 allocation policy was updated in GMSF 2020 and no further changes have been made to the allocation in PfE 2021 (see Appendices 1 and 2). The allocation takes account of key mitigation outcomes from the 2019 Integrated Assessment, as set out in Section 8.

30. Conclusion

- 30.1 The allocation of this land for employment development will attract much needed new investment and employment opportunities to the local economy. Wigan has very few sites of sufficient size and quality in the right locations to accommodate large industrial / storage and distribution developments. This

has meant that Wigan has struggled to compete in the sub-region, and some expanding Wigan businesses have been forced to find new premises outside of the borough. This site will satisfy demonstrated market demand and will assist in retaining existing employment in the borough whilst generating new onsite and offsite employment opportunities.

- 30.2 As a site within the Green Belt, exceptional circumstances need to be demonstrated for it to be brought forward as an allocation. The exceptional circumstances case takes the form of a strategic high level case and a local level case and is detailed in the October 2020 paper on the case for exceptional circumstances to amend the Green Belt boundary and section 14 of this Topic Paper. This allocation is considered to satisfy one of the seven site selection criteria for justifying release from the Green Belt and it provides a range of additional benefits. These exceptional circumstances are considered to significantly outweigh any harm to the Green Belt identified from the site's release.
- 30.3 Furthermore, in granting planning permission to Tritax Symmetry for the development of the site, the Inspector's Report concluded that very special circumstances exist. This was primarily due to the significant benefits that the scheme would have on supporting local economic growth in an area which continues to suffer from poor take up rates due to qualitative and quantitative constraints on its employment land supply.
- 30.4 In summary, this allocation accords with the PfE spatial strategy, exceptional circumstances exist to outweigh any harm to the Green Belt from its release, it is being actively promoted and has planning permission for commercial development, and it provides a wide range of benefits. The site is considered to be free of significant constraints and its allocation is considered to accord with relevant economic, social and environmental objectives.

Section G – Appendices

Appendix 1: Site allocation boundary

Appendix 2: Proposed policy, PfE 2021

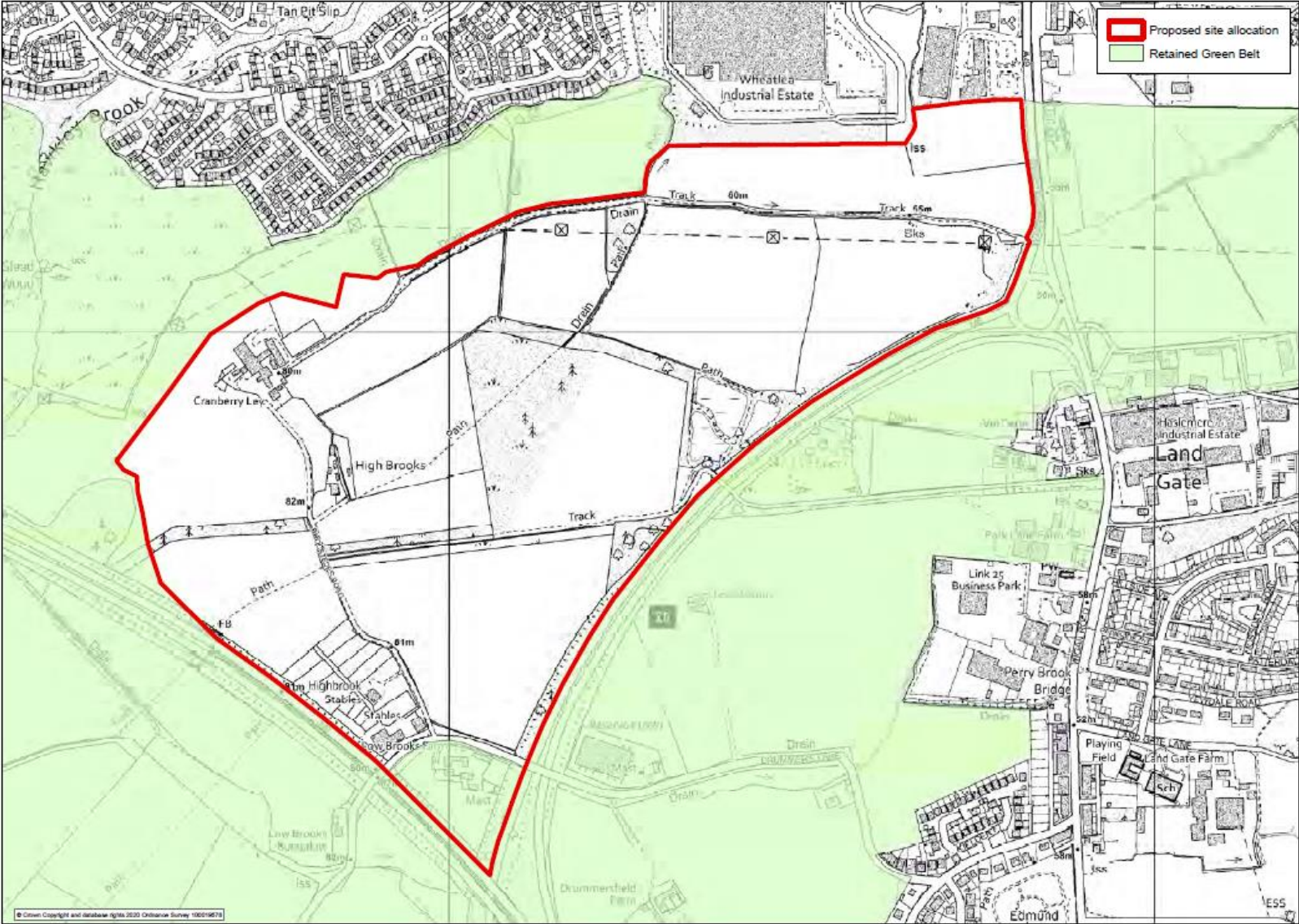
Appendix 3: Indicative concept plan

Appendix 4: Previous draft policy, as proposed in GMSF 2020

Appendix 5: Previous draft policy, as proposed in GMSF 2019

Appendix 6: Bibliography

Appendix 1: Site allocation boundary



Appendix 2: Proposed policy, Places For Everyone (2021)

Policy JPA34 - M6 Junction 25, Wigan

Development of this site will be required to:

- 1. Be in accordance with a masterplan that is agreed with the Council and is effectively informed by detailed site investigations and other constraints;**
- 2. Deliver around 140,000 sqm of high quality B2 and B8 employment floorspace;**
- 3. Provide good quality road access from the M6 motorway and the A49, whilst making sure that it has no significantly adverse effect on the motorway or other surrounding roads;**
- 4. Ensure that the employment development is accessible by walking and cycling from Winstanley, Hawkley and Bryn, and from bus services in those areas, including on the A49 through the provision of a safe pedestrian crossing;**
- 5. Incorporate high quality landscaping within the site and along sensitive site boundaries to minimise its visual impact on the wider area, including the A49 road frontage, the remaining Green Belt to the north, and around each building within the site;**
- 6. Incorporate a landscaped green infrastructure corridor, with walking and cycling links, connecting the A49 to the remaining area of Green Belt to the north, and ensure suitable diversions to public rights of way as necessary, with good links to the footbridge over the M6 motorway;**
- 7. Provide an internal road connection with Wheatlea Industrial Estate;**
- 8. Provide easements for the significant utilities infrastructure running through the site; and**
- 9. Allow for the provision of an all-ways junction at Junction 25 and the ability for more direct access from the motorway once provided, subject to agreement by Highways England.**

Supporting text:

The M6 Junction 25 site presents a major opportunity to provide a high quality location for substantial employment development in the M6 corridor. A masterplanning process will guide the future delivery of this major development scheme.

The M6 is a major business asset. It is the UK's most important strategic route for freight movement between the north and south of the country, and Wigan is the only district in Greater Manchester which has direct access to it. The site is large,

relatively unconstrained, directly accessible to the motorway and has a long visible frontage along it. These attributes make the site highly attractive to the market, including key growth sectors such as logistics and advanced manufacturing which are growing rapidly in the North West, primarily due to its strong global connections including Manchester Airport and the new deep water port at Liverpool 2.

There is a significant demand and requirement for large scale logistics development within the M6 Corridor. Yet, despite its strategic location, Wigan currently does not have the sites to attract this demand. This site has the scale, prominence and motorway connectivity to satisfy this demand and deliver new jobs and investment for the local economy.

Junction 25 is the main gateway into Wigan from the south and an all-ways junction would enhance the economic profile of the borough whilst taking full advantage of its strategic location, which will have sub-regional benefits. The site also has the potential to provide a connection to the adjacent established Wheatlea Industrial Estate, so that it also has improved access to the M6.

Land to the south of the Winstanley residential area has been retained within the Green Belt and will provide a robust green infrastructure corridor. In addition to safeguarding residential amenity, this green corridor will open up the site for wider public access, including suitable diversions to public rights of way as necessary, with good links to the footbridge over the M6 motorway. It will also provide enhanced walking and cycling opportunities for local residents to the Wigan Flashes to the east, which are a major environmental and recreation resource in the borough. A safe crossing of the A49 Warrington road will need to be provided.

It is important that provision is made for this employment site to be safely and conveniently accessed from nearby residential areas by walking, cycling and bus services, to enable local people to take advantage of the job opportunities that it will provide and to reduce car dependency in the area.

In order to make the site attractive to potential occupiers and to minimise any adverse visual impacts, high quality landscaping is required within the site and along sensitive site boundaries, including the A49 road frontage and the remaining Green Belt to the north. The development must also provide easements for the significant utilities infrastructure that runs through the site.

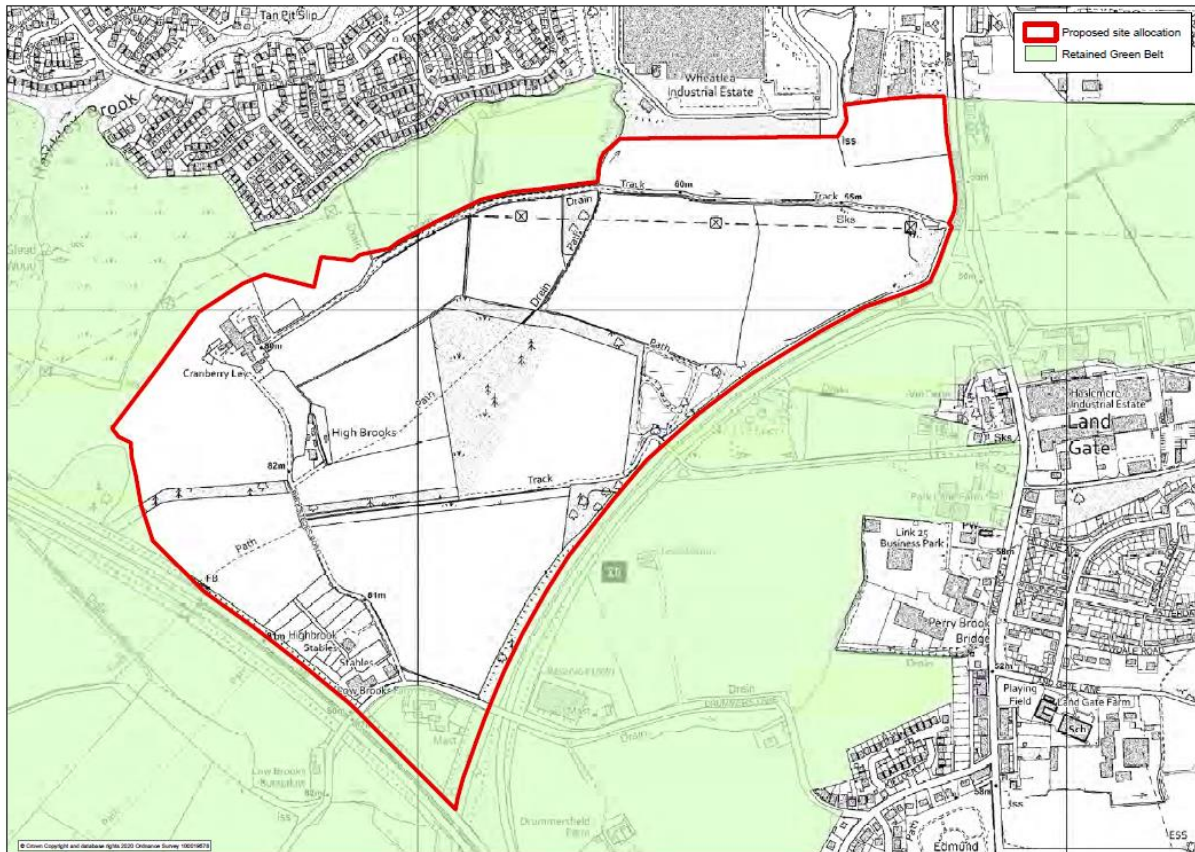
Appendix 3: Indicative concept plan



Source: Planning application: A/18/85947

Appendix 4: Previous draft policy, as proposed in 2020 GMSF

Policy GMA42: M6 Junction 25



Development of this site will be required to:

1. Be in accordance with a masterplan that is agreed with the Council and is effectively informed by detailed site investigations and other constraints;
2. Deliver around 140,000 sqm of high quality B2 and B8 employment floorspace;
3. Provide good quality road access from the M6 motorway and the A49, whilst making sure that it has no significantly adverse effect on the motorway or other surrounding roads;
4. Ensure that the employment development is accessible by walking and cycling from Winstanley, Hawkley and Bryn, and from bus services in those areas, including on the A49 through the provision of a safe pedestrian crossing;
5. Incorporate high quality landscaping within the site and along sensitive site boundaries to minimise its visual impact on the wider area, including the A49 road frontage, the remaining Green Belt to the north, and around each building within the site;

- 6. Incorporate a landscaped green infrastructure corridor, with walking and cycling links, connecting the A49 to the remaining area of Green Belt to the north, and ensure suitable diversions to public rights of way as necessary, with good links to the footbridge over the M6 motorway;**
- 7. Provide an internal road connection with Wheatlea Industrial Estate;**
- 8. Provide easements for the significant utilities infrastructure running through the site; and**
- 9. Allow for the provision of an all-ways junction at Junction 25 and the ability for more direct access from the motorway once provided, subject to agreement by Highways England.**

Supporting text:

The M6 Junction 25 site presents a major opportunity to provide a high quality location for substantial employment development in the M6 corridor. A masterplanning process will guide the future delivery of this major development scheme.

The M6 is a major business asset. It is the UK's most important strategic route for freight movement between the north and south of the country, and Wigan is the only district in Greater Manchester which has direct access to it. The site is large, relatively unconstrained, directly accessible to the motorway and has a long visible frontage along it. These attributes make the site highly attractive to the market, including key growth sectors such as logistics and advanced manufacturing which are growing rapidly in the North West, primarily due to its strong global connections including Manchester Airport and the new deep water port at Liverpool 2.

There is a significant demand and requirement for large scale logistics development within the M6 Corridor. Yet, despite its strategic location, Wigan currently does not have the sites to attract this demand. This site has the scale, prominence and motorway connectivity to satisfy this demand and deliver new jobs and investment for the local economy.

Junction 25 is the main gateway into Wigan from the south and an all-ways junction would enhance the economic profile of the borough whilst taking full advantage of its strategic location, which will have sub-regional benefits. The site also has the potential to provide a connection to the adjacent established Wheatlea Industrial Estate, so that it also has improved access to the M6.

Land to the south of the Winstanley residential area has been retained within the Green Belt and will provide a robust green infrastructure corridor. In addition to safeguarding residential amenity, this green corridor will open up the site for wider public access, including suitable diversions to public rights of way as necessary, with good links to the footbridge over the M6 motorway. It will also provide enhanced walking and cycling opportunities for local residents to the Wigan Flashes to the east, which are a major environmental and recreation resource in the borough. A safe crossing of the A49 Warrington Road will need to be provided.

It is important that provision is made for this employment site to be safely and conveniently accessed from nearby residential areas by walking, cycling and bus services, to enable local people to take advantage of the job opportunities that it will provide and to reduce car dependency in the area.

In order to make the site attractive to potential occupiers and to minimise any adverse visual impacts, high quality landscaping is required within the site and along sensitive site boundaries, including the A49 road frontage and the remaining Green Belt to the north. The development must also provide easements for the significant utilities infrastructure that runs through the site.

Appendix 5: Previous draft policy, as proposed in 2019 GMSF

Policy GM Allocation 48: M6 Junction 25



Development of this site will be required to:

1. Provide a high quality location for around 140,000 sqm of B2 and B8 employment floorspace, with integrated landscape design and planting;
2. Incorporate a robust green infrastructure corridor between the proposed employment development and residential development at Winstanley;
3. Provide good quality road access from the M6 motorway and the A49, whilst making sure that it has no significantly adverse effect on the motorway or other surrounding roads;
4. Enable the provision of an internal road connection with Wheatlea Industrial Estate;
5. Ensure that the employment development is accessible by walking and cycling from Winstanley, Hawkley and Bryn, including the provision of a safe pedestrian crossing of the A49;
6. Provide easements for the significant utilities infrastructure running through the site; and

7. Allow for the provision of an all-ways junction at Junction 25 and the ability for more direct access from the motorway once provided, subject to agreement by Highways England.

The M6 Junction 25 site presents a major opportunity to provide a high quality location for substantial employment development in the M6 corridor.

The M6 is a major business asset. It is the UK's most important strategic route for freight movement between the north and south of the country, and Wigan is the only district in Greater Manchester which has direct access to it. The site is large, relatively unconstrained, directly accessible to the motorway and has a long visible frontage along it. These attributes make the site highly attractive to the market, including key growth sectors such as logistics and advanced manufacturing which are growing rapidly in the North West, primarily due to its strong global connections including Manchester Airport and the new deep water port at Liverpool 2.

There is a significant demand and requirement for large scale logistics development within the M6 Corridor. Yet, despite its strategic location, Wigan currently does not have the sites to attract this demand. This site has the scale, prominence and motorway connectivity to satisfy this demand.

Junction 25 is the main gateway into Wigan from the south and an all-ways junction would enhance the economic profile of the borough whilst taking full advantage of its strategic location, which will have sub-regional benefits. The site also has the potential to provide a connection to the adjacent established Wheatlea Industrial Estate, so that it also has improved access to the M6.

The site will provide a robust green infrastructure corridor between the employment uses and residential development to the north at Winstanley. In addition to safeguarding residential amenity, this will open up the site for wider public access, and provide enhanced walking and cycling opportunities for local residents to the Wigan Flashes to the east, which are a major environmental and recreation resource in the borough. A safe crossing of the A49 Warrington road will need to be provided.

Appendix 6: Bibliography

- [2016 GMSF](#)
- [2019 GMSF](#)
- [National Planning Policy Framework](#)
- [Wigan Landscape Character Assessment 2009](#)
- [M6 Junction 25 Tritax Development - planning application](#)
- [National Industrial Strategy](#)
- [Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy](#)
- [Greater Manchester Strategy](#)

The following documents are found at:

[Supporting documents - Greater Manchester Combined Authority
\(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#)

- GMSF Integrated Assessment Report
- GMSF Integrated Assessment Addendum Report
- GMSF Integrated Assessment Report (2021)
- GMSF Landscape Character Assessment (2018)
- GMSF Statement of Consultation (October 2020)
- GMSF Strategic Viability Assessment Stage 1
- GMSF Strategic Viability Assessment Stage 2 Allocated Sites
- GM Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 Report
- GM Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 Report & Appendices
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- M6 Junction 25 – Inspector’s Report and Secretary of State’s Decision
- Site Selection GMSF 2020
- Stage 1 Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment (2016)
- Stage 1 Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment Appendices (2016)
- Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study – Cumulative Assessment of Proposed 2020 GMSF Allocations and Additions (2020)
- Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study – Assessment of Proposed 2019 Allocations (2020)
- Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study – Addendum: Assessment of Proposed GMSF Allocations (2020)
- Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study – Contribution Assessment of Proposed 2020 GMSF Green Belt Additions (2020)
- Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study – Identification of Opportunities to Enhance the Beneficial Use of the Green Belt (2020)