Wigan Council

Wigan Borough Local Plan

Site Allocation Assessment Report 3: Remaining land south of Atherton

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Note of changes made since the August 2026 version of this document:

Section	
1.5	Update to cover consultation on the Publication version

1. Background

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is one of 6 site allocation assessment reports, each one relating directly to one of 6 site allocations in the Publication and Submission version of the Wigan Borough Local Plan. This is Site Allocation Assessment Report 3 on Remaining land south of Atherton.

1.1.2 The site allocation assessment reports distil the evidence base that has been collated and, where applicable, commissioned to support the site allocation, and set out the key messages to help demonstrate that the site is justified, appropriate, deliverable and effective, against national planning policy and relevant strategic planning policies.

1.1.3 The 6 reports need to be read alongside the 7 Topic Papers and the self-assessment toolkit reports. For more detailed information reference should be made to the source reports and studies.

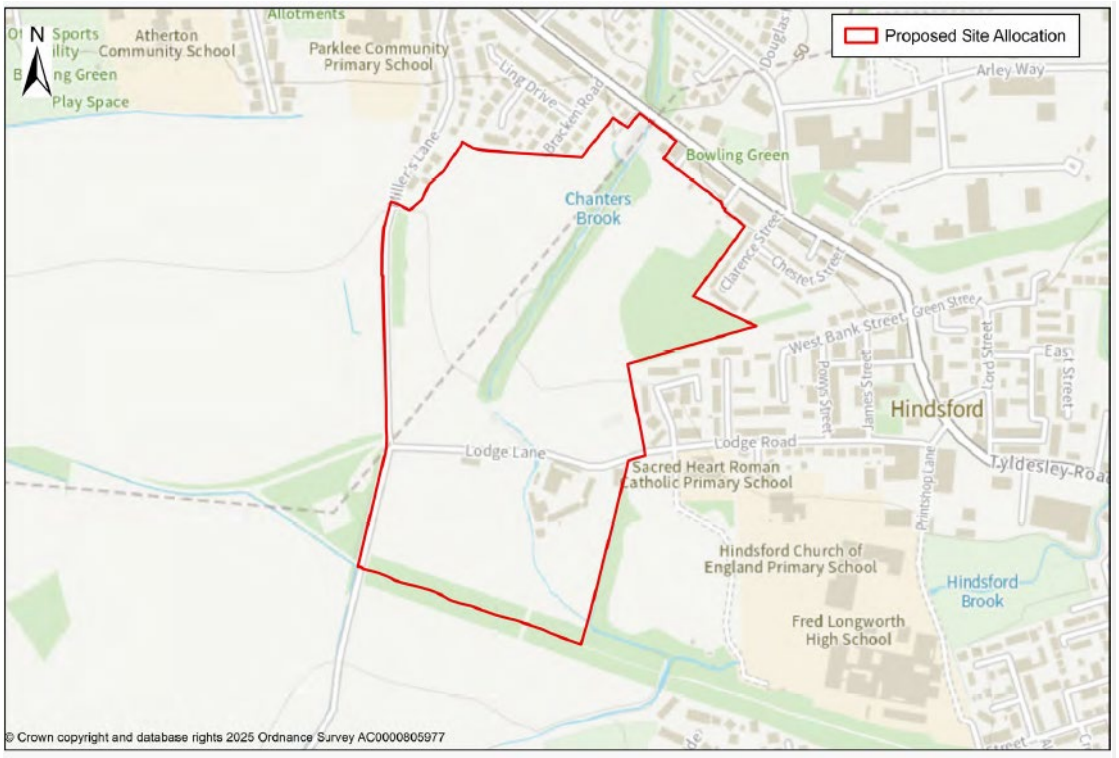
1.2 Site details

1.2.1 The site extends to around 20.3 hectares and is located to the east of Millers Lane, less than 1km southeast of Atherton Town Centre. The site is a mix of brownfield and greenfield land, with a historic mining legacy, with open grassland in grazing and agricultural use. Lodge Farm, a small farmstead, is located centrally within the site. Chanters Brook runs through the site, as does a public right of way (Lodge Lane) linking Lodge Road to Millers Lane. Overhead electricity lines also run across the site.

1.2.2 The site is bounded to the west by Millers Lane; to the northeast and east by existing residential development; and to the south and southeast by agricultural land.

1.2.3 The site slopes down from north to south and is generally undulating with Chanters Brook crossing the site in a deep cut (5-9m) that becomes shallower (1.5m) towards the southern boundary. Another steep embankment is located towards Millers Lane at the northwestern part of the site.

1.2.4 The site allocation boundary is shown in the map on the following page:



1.3 Proposed development

1.3.1 The remaining land at South of Atherton is allocated for residential development comprising around 270 homes, with an appropriate mix of house types, sizes and tenures, including affordable housing to help address local needs.

1.3.2 An area will be retained free from any built development, which will incorporate measures to alleviate flood risk downstream of the site, including but not limited to tree planting and the provision of Biodiversity Net Gain. This retained area will be the land bounded by Millers Lane, Chanters Brook / the road connection to Tyldesley Road, and the disused rail line, unless it can be conclusively demonstrated that an equivalent level of alleviation can be achieved through the retention of an alternative area of the site.

1.3.3 The masterplan for the wider South of Atherton development makes provision for the creation of through road connecting Leigh Road in the west to Tyldesley Road in the east. With planning permission already granted for part of this from Leigh Road up to the site allocation boundary on Millers Lane, as part of existing planning permissions to the west, this development will be required to complete this road connection through to Tyldesley Road. This will help reduce pressure on the road network running through Atherton town centre to the north.

1.3.4 The development will be required to ensure good walking, wheeling and cycling provision within the site and to adjacent areas and protect and enhance the environs of Chanters Brook as a green infrastructure corridor for biodiversity, flood risk management and open space.

1.4 Planning history

1.4.1 Wigan Unitary Development Plan Policy GB2 identifies this land as Safeguarded Land. The allocation of this site in the Wigan Borough Local Plan will replace the safeguarded land status. Further information on the de-designation of all of the safeguarded land shown on the existing policies map can be found in the Safeguarded Land Report that accompanies the Local Plan.

1.4.2 The site allocation itself is subject to only one householder planning application and lawful development certificate for the extension of the existing farmhouse at Lodge Farm (ref. A/17/84112/HH and A/18/85424/LUCP).

1.4.3 As stated above, the land immediately to the west of the proposed site allocation on the opposite side of Millers Lane, forms the remainder of the safeguarded land designation to the south of Atherton, and is subject to recent planning permissions for residential development. The proposed site allocation will deliver the final phase of the South of Atherton development.

1.4.4 Outline planning consent (ref. A/17/84560/OUTMAJ) was granted in 2020 for the development of up to 830 dwellings with associated open space, road infrastructure and landscaping on land to the west of Millers Lane and east of Bee Fold Lane.

1.4.5 Phase 1 of the wider outline application received reserved matters approval (ref. A/21/92057/RMMAJ) in 2022 for 120 dwellings off Bee Fold Lane. The development follows the principles and parameters set out in the approved outline planning application. The Beefold Meadows development is being built out by Bloor Homes and is expected to be completed by the end of 2026.

1.4.6 A reserved matters planning application (ref. A/23/95089/RMMAJ) for Phase 2 of the wider outline application, providing for 170 dwellings accessed off Crab Tree Lane, was approved in August 2024. This scheme is presently being built by Bloor Homes and is expected to be completed before 2030.

1.4.7 The remaining development of up to 540 dwellings will be served via a new spine road which is accessed from the B5215 Leigh Road to the west.

1.4.8 Prior to the 2017 outline permission (A/17/84560), Bellway Homes delivered the very first part of the development of the South Atherton site via outline planning permission A/14/79203 and associated reserved matters permission A/16/82773/RMMAJ for 85 homes.

1.4.9 The wider site therefore represents an established sustainable extension to Atherton, which is now being delivered. The proposed site allocation represents the final phase of this extension and importantly can facilitate the delivery of the through road connection, helping to alleviate congestion in and around Atherton town centre.

1.5 Summary of consultation responses

1.5.1 Comments were received in response to the proposed allocation in the Initial Draft Local Plan from 48 respondents, including National Highways, Sport England, United Utilities, NHS Property Services, Transport for Greater Manchester, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Jo Platt MP, the majority landowner Tarleton Estates, and 30 residents.

1.5.2 A summary of the comments received, and the council's response, can be viewed in the Consultation Report. In summary, there is broad support for the site from bodies / organisations, with some amendments suggested to strengthen the policy in terms of managing its impact on the natural environment, on existing sport provision, and in relation to infrastructure delivery.

1.5.3 Comments were received from 20 respondents in response to the proposed allocation in the Publication and Submission version of the plan in Autumn 2026, including from Historic England, United Utilities, NHS Property Services, the majority landowner Tarleton Estates, and 14 residents. Tarleton Estates are not supportive of the reduced housing figure and the requirement for natural flood management which was introduced following consultation on the initial draft Local Plan.

1.5.4 Residents have raised objections across various themes, including:

- Flood risk
- Traffic
- The proposed through road
- Impact on amenity, including air quality and noise

- The lack of need for more homes
- Overdevelopment in the Atherton area
- Impact on wildlife and ecology
- Loss of recreational land
- Impact on health and wellbeing
- Loss of farmland
- Infrastructure capacity, including schools, health care and utilities.

1.6 Integrated assessment

1.6.1 The broad implications of policy H5 South of Atherton were assessed as part of the Integrated Assessment (IA) process. The policy was considered to have broadly positive implications in relation to housing, health and community, equality and diversity, historic environment and biodiversity / geodiversity. The implications in terms of climate change, water, environment quality, landscape / townscape, resource efficiency, land and soil, transport, economy and town centres were considered to be broadly neutral. No broadly negative implications were identified.

1.6.2 Following consultation on the Initial Draft Plan, changes were made to policies, including policy H5. The integrated assessment was updated to take account of the changes made to all policies (including further consideration of mitigation and enhancement measures), but no further mitigation and enhancement measures were identified as the changes made do not lead to significant negative effects.

2. Physical assessment

2.1 Transport

2.1.1 The A577 corridor is part of the key road network that currently serves the wider built-up area surrounding the site. This area includes Atherton town centre. Data published by INRIX in 2023 scored Wigan as the fifth most congested urban area in the UK and the A577 is Wigan's most congested road. Therefore, the approach to development in this location needed to consider how access to the site could be achieved and what infrastructure is required to mitigate some of these existing constraints. These proposals include the development of a new through road as outlined below.

2.1.2 The western parcel of land benefits from outline planning permission for the development of up to 830 homes. The primary access point is a signalised junction from Leigh Road that terminates at Millers Lane. The development provides the opportunity to extend this through road to Tyldesley Road, allowing traffic to bypass the congested A577 corridor and Atherton town centre to the north of the development.

2.1.3 The consented section of the through road from Leigh Road to Millers Lane is 6.5m wide with 2m footways located on the southern side of the road and a 3.5m shared facility for pedestrians and cyclists on the northern side of the road. This design standard can accommodate the traffic generated by the consented scheme, this development and any wider reassignment that would occur if the through road was completed.

2.1.4 Failure to complete the through road is likely to exacerbate congestion along the A577 corridor and Atherton town centre. By providing the through road it will be possible to improve public transport access to the consented scheme and this development. This would be challenging if the link was not progressed due to the various cul-de-sac arrangements which will be in place.

2.1.5 Furthermore, completion of the through road to the same design standard through the development would also provide a strategic cycling connection from Howe Bridge to Hindsford. This is likely to be an attractive route for cyclists due to the dedicated provision and the small number of junctions to cross.

The traffic generated by the development is likely to travel through Atherton town centre without the through road in place. This will undermine the council's aspirations for the town centre (policy TC5), which is to create a safer and more people-friendly environment alongside improved walking, wheeling and cycling provision.

2.1.6 The completion of the development and, by association the through road, will make it possible to improve public transport within the local area, as the through road will be designed to be capable of accommodating buses. This will allow buses to travel through the site connecting the B5215 Leigh Road at Howe Bridge to the A577 Tyldesley Road at Hindsford.

2.1.7 Should this allocation be delivered in advance of the approved development to the west of Millers Lane, the new road will need to be delivered up to the allocation boundary to enable its connection westwards.

2.2 Flood risk and drainage

2.2.1 The Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Greater Manchester Update (March 2019) highlights strategic flood risks and recommends key priorities for intervention. At remaining land South of Atherton, a fluvial water source (Chanters Brook) flows through the centre of the site. A license is required for any construction within 8 metres of fluvial water sources.

2.2.2 The site forms part of the existing identified development land supply in Wigan (SHLAA Ref: SHLAA0022A). It has been identified and assessed in the Level 1 SFRA with a recommendation to consider site layout and design around the identified flood risk. The SHLAA and previous allocations of the land at South of Atherton take account of flood risk zones and the potential capacity has been set accordingly.

2.2.3 A flood risk assessment has been undertaken on behalf of the site promoter in support of the allocation. The assessment states that fluvial flooding is associated with Chanters Brook and areas south of Lodge Lane fall within Flood Zone 2 and 3. The report also states that the proposed development only intersects Flood Zones 2/3a at two locations: the proposed Tyldesley Road connection and the bridge crossing over Chanters Brook. Residential development will be steered away from the areas of flood risk within the site.

2.2.4 The site is also assessed as having medium risk to surface water flooding, as such the site promoter has also produced a drainage strategy in support of the proposed allocation. The strategy proposes a broad drainage for the allocation but is not at this stage based on a fully fixed detailed design.

2.2.5 Should any form of development be required within Flood Zone 2 or 3, a flood risk sequential test would be required to support an application to develop the site. Additionally, an exception test would

also be warranted if 'more vulnerable' uses, including residential, are to be sited within Flood Zone 3a.

2.2.6 There would be no requirement for a sequential test based on fluvial flood risk if no form of development is to be included within Flood Zones 2 or 3.

2.2.7 Flood defence measures will be required around Chanters Brook; it is advised that levels are to be amended to avoid surface water flooding around the site.

2.2.8 Should works be required to the existing culvert north of the site adjacent to A577 Tyldesley Road, any such works will require prior consent from the relevant local authorities. However, in summary, flood risk is not considered to present an insurmountable constraint to the development of the site for around 270 units.

2.3 Ground conditions

2.3.1 The site is primarily in agricultural use comprising grassland. It is bisected by Chanters Brook and has an undulating topography, falling from around 49 metres above sea level in the north to around 34 metres above sea level in the south.

2.3.2 Historical mapping indicates a railway passing through the centre of the site, north east to south west from pre-1849 until 1973. From 1894 the railway was marked as Chanters Siding and from 1951 marked as a mineral railway. From 1973, the railway was marked as dismantled and no longer recorded. The majority of the rest of the site was/is utilised as agricultural land, with Green Bank Farm and Lodge Farm in the centre and Chanters Brook passing through the site north to south.

Geology

2.3.3 The British Geological Survey (BGS) map (Sheets 84 and 85) for the site (1:50,000, Solid editions) and online records indicate the area is underlain by Glacial Till, in turn underlain by Pennine Middle Coal Measures of mudstone, sandstone and siltstone.

2.3.4 An onsite BGS borehole (SD 60SE24) indicates that the bedrock geology is relatively shallow in the south of the site, with coal seams being identified between 33.68m BGL (Borehole Geology Log) and 106.96m BGL. Four coal seams have been identified and named as Binn Seam, Crumbouke Seam (Worked), Brassey Seam and Rams seam respectively.

2.3.5 There are two geological faults noted to be present within the site boundary, and therefore geological sequences may be logically displaced by possible fault sub-inclusions of rock, which may result in some seams being incorrectly named.

Coal mining works

2.3.6 The Mining Remediation Authority Online Viewer shows that there are four recorded outcrops on-site, with Development High-Risk Areas extending south from them, indicating the strata dips southwards. Development High Risk Areas are present across most of the north and centre of the site. Furthermore, there are two mine shafts recorded within the respective north and east of the site. A band of past shallow workings is also recorded in the north.

2.3.7 One of the two mine shafts in the east of the site (ref: 368402-005) was located and found to be filled with colliery shale and capped at rockhead with a reinforced concrete cap, in February 1980. There are legacy coal mining features located on-site including both recorded and potential unrecorded shallow workings and mineshafts.

2.3.8 An intrusive investigation will be necessary at application stage to identify potential void spaces and determine the need for drill and grout, alongside an assessment for the potential for vertical migration of mine gas below the site. The Development Framework prepared for the site does, however, seek to avoid these mine shaft locations.

Geotechnical matters

2.3.9 The site is recorded as being underlain by primarily cohesive superficial glacial till deposits, and there may be significant areas of tree influence towards the boundaries of the site and along the banks of Chanters Brook. Heave/desiccation precautions may be necessary for plots within these areas.

2.3.10 There is a reservoir located in the centre of the site between the pre-1949 to pre-1892 historical OS mapping, which has since been infilled. There may be potential deep made ground and an increased risk of alluvial/organic deposits here, which pose a risk of differential settlement. An intrusive investigation will be required at application stage to determine foundation solutions dependent upon the needs of the proposed development.

2.3.11 Future planning applications will need to be supported by a comprehensive and robust land contamination assessment. This will need to clearly set out ground contamination, geotechnical

constraints and ground gas issues in relation to the proposed development and site layout.

Radon

2.3.12 The northwestern part of the site is within a Radon Class 3 Affected Area. New properties within this area will require basic radon protection measures.

2.4 Utilities

2.4.1 The site is immediately adjacent to established urban areas to the north and east, where a full range of services are already available. This includes mains water, gas, electricity, and telecommunications infrastructure. The remaining land South of Atherton can therefore be readily connected to these key utilities, with any upgrades required to accommodate growth capable of being delivered alongside the development.

2.4.2 Overhead high voltage electricity lines run across the site, with a pylon located towards the centre of the site. A 40-50m wide easement will be required between these lines to ensure safe development and continued access for maintenance. This could be used as s green infrastructure corridor.

2.4.3 A medium pressure gas main runs along the length of Miller's Lane, adjacent to the site, which will require a maintenance easement.

2.4.4 A public sewer runs across the eastern part of the site. An easement will be required to safeguard this infrastructure, with unrestricted access maintained at all times for maintenance and replacement. Development proposals must ensure this access is not compromised.

2.4.5 United Utilities has a statutory duty to connect all new homes to the water network. They strongly encourage early engagement with developers to ensure masterplanning of the allocation addresses water supply and wastewater capacity requirements. It will be important to prepare a detailed drainage strategy to accompany proposals.

3. Environmental assessment

3.1 Recreation

3.1.1 The Wigan Borough Open Space Report (2025) identifies one amenity greenspace within the site allocation boundary on land adjacent to 327 Tyldesley Road, rated as average quality.

3.1.2 The Open Space Report observes that Atherton South and Lilford Ward has a small shortfall in both natural / semi-natural green space (-1.14 hectares per 1,000 population), and amenity greenspace (-0.09 hectares per 1,000 population).

3.1.3 The Wigan Borough Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (PPOSS) – Strategy and Action Plan Report (September 2025) provides a number of scenarios as a guide to show the potential additional demand for pitch sports that could be generated from housing growth in Wigan, including for each of the proposed site allocations.

3.1.4 Assuming an occupancy rating of 2.44 people per household (based on a national average), the PPOSS Strategy and Action Plan estimates that a development of 270 homes at South of Atherton would generate an additional 659 people, which would equate to an additional demand for pitch provision.

3.1.5 Informed by this, the development will need to contribute accordingly to meeting the needs of open space, sport and recreation provision in the locality in accordance with proposed policy PE5.

3.2 Landscape

3.2.1 The remaining land South of Atherton is covered by the Historic Parks and Wooded Estate Farmland Landscape Character Type (within the Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment), in a landscape character area assessed as having moderate-high sensitivity to housing development.

3.2.2 The development parcels will need to be defined carefully to help mitigate impact whilst preserving a buffer along Chanters Brook and to the countryside to the south.

3.2.3 A detailed Landscape Visual Impact Assessment will need to be provided at application stage in order to advise specific mitigation such as additional landscaping to screen the development.

3.3 Ecology and biodiversity

3.3.1 The remaining land South of Atherton does not contain any statutory or local ecological designations. The site is located almost 5km from the nearest Special Area of Conservation (Manchester Mosses) and Site of Special Scientific Interest designation (Astley and Bedford Mosses). The development of the site is not anticipated to result in a significant impact on either of these designated sites and the proposed allocation is not within an Impact Risk Zone for Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

3.3.2 In terms of the site's general ecological interest and present habitat, it is principally made up of grassland, both 'other neutral grassland' and 'modified grassland'. There is a limited extent of cropland – cereal crops, at the centre of the site.

3.3.3 The site is bisected by Chanters Brook which is lined by established woodland. Appropriate development buffers will need to be incorporated to these areas in order to protect any species that may be present, and 'protect and enhance the environs of Chanters Brook', as required by policy H5.

3.3.4 The proposed site is within the Nature Network as identified in the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy, with priority actions for rivers and grassland. These will need to be considered alongside biodiversity net gain for future detailed design.

3.3.5 In terms of protected species, there are records of curlew and lapwing within the locality, whilst the areas centred on Chanters Brook are identified as a Great Crested Newt Opportunity Area. Similar habitat and ecological conditions are evident on land to the west, and which have ultimately not precluded development of the site. All necessary ecological surveys and recommended protection and mitigation measures can be addressed through the development management process.

3.3.6 With regard to biodiversity net gain, the Development Framework prepared for the site anticipates that 10% requirements can be achieved on site. However, if this ultimately proves unfeasible, off-site enhancements will be required in order to comply with statutory requirements.

3.4 Habitats Regulation Assessment

3.4.1 The proposed site allocation has been considered in the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) carried out by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. The key recommendations and mitigations suggested

in the HRA are to apply the Holcroft Moss Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document (2025) to all relevant allocations. This requires mitigation of traffic-related nitrogen oxide pollution and ensuring that collaboration takes place with United Utilities so that wastewater treatment capacity keeps pace with development. The HRA also concludes that the Local Plan contains many policies which are designed to reduce or eliminate risks to European sites by embedding environmental safeguards, in particular policies EN1-3, EN5-7 and EN10-13.

3.5 Historic Environment Assessment

3.5.1 The site does not contain any designated heritage assets. The Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS) has previously advised on the wider South of Atherton site indicating that an assessment would be required at the planning application stage. GMAAS also drew attention to the possibility that pre-determination archaeological evaluation may be required to properly define the significance of below-ground remains relating to identified archaeological sites.

Built heritage

3.5.2 There are eleven Listed Buildings within a 1km radius of the centre of the site. A heritage impact assessment will be required in order to understand the likely impact of the proposed development on the setting and significance of these Listed Buildings.

3.5.3 By means of separation distances and the characteristics of the intervening landscape and built environment, the proposed development would not impact on the setting or significance of the majority of these Listed Buildings. However, due to the proximity of the Church of St Anne (Grade II, c. 20m from the site boundary at its nearest point) and the Sacred Heart Catholic Church (Grade II, c. 105m from the site boundary at its nearest point) a detailed setting assessment will be required in relation to these two assets.

3.5.4 Atherton Market Place Conservation Area lies c. 425m to the north of the site, Tyldesley Town Centre Conservation Area lies c. 735m to the south-east of the site, and Howe Bridge Conservation Area lies c. 1km to the west of the site. Separation distances will ameliorate any perceived effect on the settings of these areas but the impact of the proposed development on any 'Key Views' identified in the Conservation Areas towards the site should be assessed at the planning application stage.

Archaeology

3.5.5 The site extends over multiple Historic Landscape Character (HLC) parcels identified by the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record (GMHER). The HLC for the majority of the site is Enclosed Land, with pockets of Horticulture, Woodland, Residential and Transport.

3.5.6 The GMHER records the following five archaeological assets within the site, with further details below:

- The potential route of a Roman road
- Lodge Farm
- Atherton Lodge
- Reservoirs near Lodge Farm and Atherton Lodge
- Colliery railway line

3.5.7 The route of the Roman road between Manchester and Wigan is conjectural and there is, as yet, no firm evidence that remains of the road would be present.

3.5.8 Lodge Farm is identified on 19th-century mapping as 'Green Bank' and is of sufficient historic interest to be considered a 'non-designated heritage asset'. The site is also thought to have incorporated a workshop for carding cotton, with the motive power provided by a waterwheel on the Hindsford Brook/Chanters Brook. Historic maps show a reservoir to the north of Greenbank and east of Atherton Lodge (also known as Lodge Hall). This was possibly a mill pond.

3.5.9 Atherton Lodge (also known as Lodge Hall) is thought to be the site of a moated manor house, remains of which may include the moat, the platform and structures, including the house.

3.5.10 The two reservoirs, close to Lodge Farm and Atherton Lodge, are both sites of potential archaeological interest, primarily to establish their relationship with the putative waterwheel.

3.5.11 The site is traversed by an early railway line that served a colliery to the north-east. The line is shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 6:1 mile map of 1848. Its course is clearly visible in the modern landscape.

3.5.12 The archaeological potential at the site would need to be worked through comprehensively in a desk-based assessment and any implications for the proposed development arising from this potential would need to be detailed. On the basis of current

understanding there is no reason to suppose that the Historic Landscape Character or archaeology would constitute an insurmountable constraint to development, though intrusive archaeological investigation of the part of the site around Lodge Farm and Atherton Lodge will be required ahead of its development.

3.5.13 Commensurate investigation to confirm the presence or absence of archaeological remains and their character (if present) can be undertaken at the planning application stage in order to determine the desirability for and scope of any mitigation responses to cater for archaeological interest.

3.6 Air quality

Local Air Quality Management

3.6.1 Wigan Council presently has a single Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) within its administrative area, declared due to exceedances of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide (NO2) Air Quality Assessment Level (AQAL) (i.e. 40µg/m3) at locations of relevant exposure. Road traffic emissions have been identified as the dominant emission contribution to monitored NO2 concentrations resulting in the declaration of the AQMA.

Local Baseline Air Quality Monitoring and Background Concentrations

3.6.2 Existing baseline air quality data is available from the GMCA 2024 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR), which presents NO2 and particulate matter (as PM10 / PM2.5) monitoring data.

3.6.3 The closest NO2 monitoring locations to the site, WI237NO & WI238NO, are located approximately 710m to the north-west and 750m to the east, respectively. These monitoring locations recorded 2024 annual mean NO2 concentrations of 19.1µg/m3 and 18.6µg/m3, representing 47.8% and 46.5% of the air quality assessment level (AQAL) of 40 µg/m3, respectively. The monitored annual mean NO2 concentrations at these locations demonstrate a downward trend in the 2021 – 2024 period where they have been sited.

3.6.4 There are no relevant PM10 / PM2.5 monitoring locations in proximity to the site. Notwithstanding, across the wider monitoring network within Wigan Borough, there have been no monitored exceedances of the annual mean or 24-hour mean PM10 AQAL, or annual mean PM2.5 AQAL over the 2020 - 2024 period.

3.6.5 Based upon Defra's nationwide model of background air quality concentrations, the maximum predicted 2024 background annual

mean concentrations for the grid squares which cover the site are 10.8µg/m3, 11.6µg/m3 and 6.9µg/m3 for NO2, PM10 and PM2.5, respectively. In the earliest predicted opening year of the proposed development (2031), these annual mean background concentrations are predicted to be 8.2µg/m3, 11.3µg/m3 and 6.5µg/m3 respectively, demonstrating the predicted downward trend in background pollutant concentrations.

Greater Manchester Clean Air Plan

3.6.6 In July 2017, the Government published its plan for tackling roadside NO2 concentrations, to achieve compliance with the EU Ambient Air Quality Directive (2008/50/EC). The Pollution Climate Mapping (PCM) model identified Greater Manchester as having persistent exceedances beyond 2021, leading to a ministerial direction under the Environment Act 1995 and requiring compliance by 2026 at the latest.

In December 2023, the GMCA submitted evidence for its preferred investment-led, non-charging Clean Air Plan, centred on zero-emission buses, taxi upgrades and traffic-flow measures. Current GMCA modelling predict no long-term exceedances under the Plan including in the site's setting.

Construction Phase Dust

3.6.7 Existing receptors surrounding the site are potentially sensitive to dust / PM10 generated during construction. Any future assessment will need to follow Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) guidance, with identified mitigation measures proportionate to dust risk and receptor sensitivity. Mitigation measures, to include a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will need to be secured by planning condition.

Operational Phase Road Traffic Emissions

3.6.8 Road traffic emissions arising from additional development trips will require assessment to determine the potential impact and effect on air quality at existing receptors.

3.6.9 The scope of the operational phase road traffic emissions assessment would need to follow the requirements of the Council's Development and Air Quality Supplementary Planning Document.

3.6.10 A full air quality assessment will be required in support of a forthcoming planning application for this site.

3.7 Noise

3.7.1 The remaining land South of Atherton allocation is adjoined by residential properties to the north and east, ongoing residential development to the west and open countryside to the south. In this respect it is not particularly sensitive to noise generating sources such as highly frequented roads or industrial uses. The only noise-related issue raised during the consideration of the planning applications on the western half of the South Atherton safeguarded land allocation, relate to the presence of sports pitches which are separated a good distance away from the remaining land South of Atherton at the eastern end of the area of safeguarded land.

3.7.2 A noise assessment will need to be submitted with any forthcoming planning application covering all noise sources that may impact the development site. It should cover all noise sensitive receptors that may be impacted by the development.

4. Social assessment

4.1 Access to local shops and services

4.1.1 Atherton Town Centre is located around 700 metres from the site and provides a wide range of shops and services, including a large supermarket. However, in terms of local centres, the site lies within a gap area identified for south-east Atherton.

4.2 Education and skills

4.2.1 Criterion 8 of the site allocation policy requires the development to provide, or contribute towards the provision of, the infrastructure needed to mitigate its adverse impact including for education, in accordance with proposed Local Plan policy PE6. The level of contribution required, and whether it is for on-site or off-site provision, will be determined at the planning application stage based on evidence of need at that time.

4.2.2 In line with Places for Everyone (PfE) Plan policy JP-J1(F), the development will also need to address the requirements for local training and employment as part of the construction phase.

4.3 Health

4.3.1 As with education, criterion 9 also requires the development to provide, or contribute towards the provision of, the infrastructure needed to mitigate its adverse impact on health and care, in accordance with proposed Local Plan policy PE6. The level of contribution required, and whether it is for on-site or off-site provision, will be determined at the planning application stage based on evidence of need at that time.

4.3.2 Future planning applications on the site will also need to be supported, where appropriate, by a Health Impact Assessment in accordance with PfE Plan policy JP-P6 and proposed Local Plan policy PE1.

4.3.3 A Health Impact Assessment will help ensure that the effects of development on both health and wellbeing are considered and responded to during the planning process. They should aim to enhance the potential positive aspects of a proposal while avoiding or minimising any negative impacts, with particular emphasis on disadvantaged sections of communities that may be affected. This is detailed in the Council's Planning for Health Supplementary Planning Document.

5. Deliverability

5.1 Viability

5.1.1 AspinallVerdi have undertaken a high-level viability assessment using broad, non-site-specific assumptions. This site is a mix of brownfield and greenfield land in Atherton South and Lilford Ward, which the viability assessment identifies as a low – medium value zone. In this zone, the assessment indicates that both brownfield and greenfield schemes face significant viability challenges.

5.1.2 However, there are also variations in value within individual wards and site-specific factors and costs vary. Therefore, significant variation from this high-level work should be expected. The site promoter has identified that there is active developer interest in the site, with ongoing development on adjacent sites to the west demonstrating strong market conditions in this locality.

5.2 Phasing

5.2.1 It is anticipated that allocation will be fully delivered within the plan period. The site is not located within the Green Belt and is currently safeguarded for housing development in the Development Plan.

5.3 Indicative concept plan

5.3.1 A concept plan prepared by the council is included below. This provides a spatial representation of the allocation policy and shows an indicative layout of the potential development of the site.

