Wigan Council

Wigan Borough Local Plan

Site Allocation Assessment Report 6: Remaining land at Westwood Park

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

Section	
1.2, 2.3, 5.1	Factual updates
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 Draft Wigan Borough Local Plan. This is Site Allocation Assessment Report 6 on Remaining land at Westwood Park, Wigan.

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 site allocation assessment 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 remaining land at Westwood Park covers an area of 29.03 hectares and is one of the largest development sites within the borough. The site is previously developed as it was home to the Westwood Power Station, which closed in 1986.

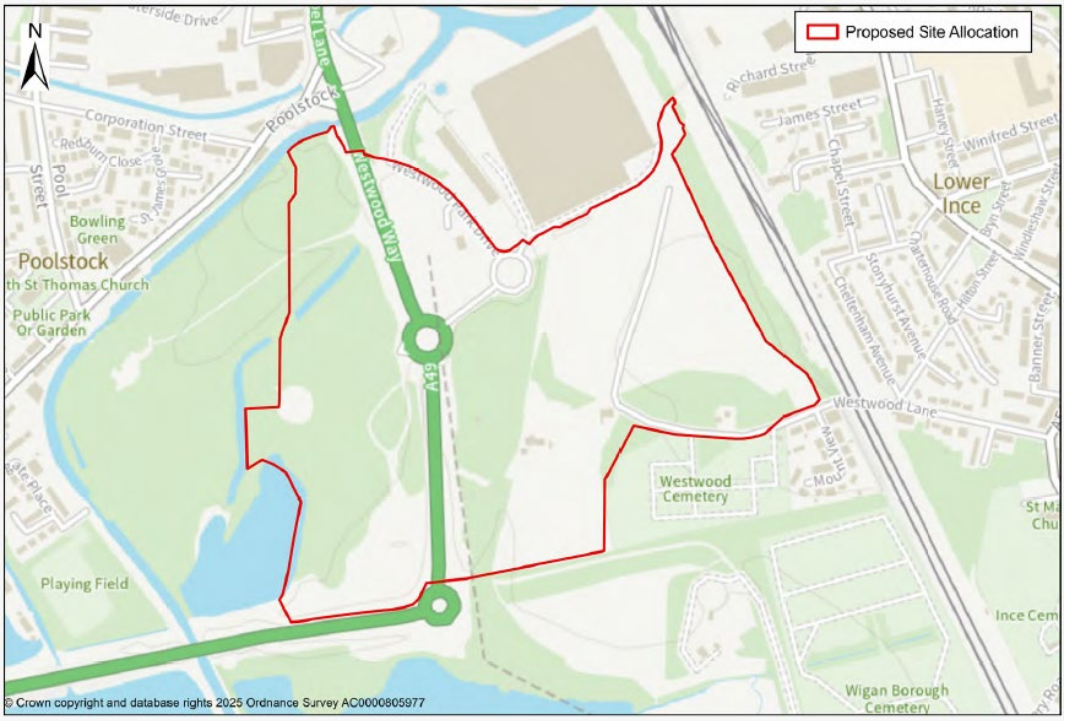
1.2.2 The site is bounded by the West Coast Mainline to the east; the A49 Westwood Way, the alignment of the proposed Wigan-Hindley Link Road and Westwood Lane to the south, Westwood Flash to the west; and the canal and existing employment uses to the north. The site allocation boundary is shown on the map on the following page.

1.2.3 The majority of the site is cleared, with the exception of three dwellings (of which one is Grade II Listed), a substation and surface car parking adjacent to the office buildings. A further Grade II Listed building (Westwood Hall) was destroyed by fire in 2022, with what remained being subsequently demolished.

1.2.4 There are some existing public rights of way within the site boundary, of which the aim is to upgrade and improve these in line with the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

1.2.5 The council has proactively invested in new road infrastructure through the site with the A49 Westwood Way, which opened to the public in June 2020, providing direct access to the M6 Motorway via

Junction 25 to the south. This gives it both excellent strategic route access and a position as a new gateway to Wigan town centre.



1.2.6 The site is within a short walk of the amenities and public transport connections in Wigan town centre, including a new bus station and local, regional and national rail services provided at Wigan North Western and Wigan Wallgate Stations.

1.2.7 On completion of the M58 Link Road, which is a future transport priority safeguarded in proposed policy T1, Westwood Park will have direct access to the M58 and M6 Motorways at Junction 26, via Westwood Way. Other future transport priorities identified in proposed policy T1 include the development of the road eastwards from Westwood Way to the M61 Motorway at Junction 5 and Bolton, via Hindley and Atherton. This route would connect directly into the site from the recently implemented roundabout to the south.

1.2.8 In March 2026, the Wigan–Hindley Link Road, connecting the A49 in Wigan with the A58 Liverpool Road in Hindley, was officially accepted into the Government's Major Road Network / Large Local Majors (MRN/LLM) programme. Subject to approval, construction is expected to commence in March 2029, with completion targeted for April 2031.

1.2.9 The majority of the site is owned by the council, with a small part owned by Greenbank Properties. The site was marketed in 2025 as a strategic development opportunity in accordance with proposed policy H8, and a preferred bidder is in final negotiations with the

council and Greenbank Properties to purchase the site, with a resolution expected before the end of 2026 in terms of Heads of Terms, exclusivity and contract.

1.3 Proposed development

1.3.1 The site allocation is for a housing-led mixed-use development comprising around 420 homes together with new employment space on around 3.5 hectares of land to the east.

1.3.2 There is a requirement for the development to deliver high-quality green infrastructure and to take advantage of its proximity to Westwood Flash. Development will be required to integrate well with its setting and enhance accessibility and awareness of this key local asset.

1.4 Planning history

1.4.1 The most recent planning application for Westwood Park was a hybrid application (A/12/77633), which granted outline planning permission (with all matters reserved apart from access) for a mixed-use development scheme comprising residential uses (up to 430 units), employment (B1, B2, B8), a neighbourhood centre (A1-A5) and a visitor centre (D1), and full permission for new road infrastructure. Whilst the full permission for the road has been implemented, the outline planning permission lapsed in September 2018.

1.5 Summary of consultation responses

1.5.1 Only 11 comments were received in response to the proposed allocation in the Initial Draft Local Plan, including from National Highways, Historic England, NHS Property Services, Sport England, United Utilities and the Canal & River Trust.

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 a number of statutory bodies, with some amendments suggested to strengthen the policy in terms of managing its impact on the historic and natural environment and on existing sport provision.

1.5.3 31 comments were received in response to the proposed allocation in the Publication and Submission version of the plan in Autumn 2026, including from Historic England, NHS Property Services, Sport England, United Utilities, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Persimmon Homes, and 24 residents. The

comments from Persimmon Homes confirms them as the preferred bidder for the site's development.

1.5.4 Residents have raised objections across various themes, including:

- Ecological harm, wildlife habitat loss and SBI protection
- Loss of green space
- Impact on the historic environment
- Traffic and air quality
- Social infrastructure capacity
- Flood risk

1.6 Integrated assessment

1.6.1 The broad implications of policy H8 Remaining Land at Westwood Park 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, environment quality, historic environment, landscape / townscape, biodiversity / geodiversity, transport, economy and town centres. The implications in terms of climate change, water, landscape / townscape, resource efficiency and land and soil 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 H8. The integrated assessment has been 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 2012 planning application was accompanied by a Transport Assessment to fully understand the transport implications of the proposal together with a detailed application for the A49 Link Road (Westwood Way), which opened in 2020.

2.1.2 Vehicular access to the site was proposed to be provided from the A49 Westwood Way via the existing roundabout junction that provides access to Westwood Park.

2.1.3 The previous assessment concluded that the proposed development would comply with national planning policy on promoting sustainable transport, which requires that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all road users and that any significant impacts from the development on the transport network in terms of capacity and congestion, or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

2.1.4 As the previous planning permission has lapsed a revised Transport Assessment will be required as part of any future planning application for the site.

2.1.5 As part of the evidence base for PfE Plan a strategic model was developed for all of the Greater Manchester. This modelling assessment considered existing land supply to determine how much of Greater Manchester's future housing and employment needs could be met from land that was already identified within the urban area before considering additional allocations or Green Belt release.

2.1.6 SYSTRA led the assessment and mitigation of transport impacts arising from development proposals within the GMSF and later PfE. The model was used to identify the potential impact of development and how these impacts could be mitigated where they were deemed to adversely impact on the operation of the highway network.

2.1.7 As the proposals for Westwood Park formed part of the existing land supply within Wigan this development quantum was included within this assessment. As permission had also been granted for the A49 Link Road (Westwood Way), this link road was included within the previous modelling assessment.

2.1.8 As part of the evidence review for the Local Plan, Systra was commissioned by Wigan Council to undertake a review of its Local Plan and compliance with PfE through the preparation of a Strategic Technical Note.

2.1.9 This review concluded that the emerging Wigan Local Plan strategy and proposed site allocations are broadly consistent with the assumptions and outcomes of the Places for Everyone Strategic Transport Model. The assessment confirmed that the scale and distribution of development proposed within the borough had been appropriately represented within the PfE Plan evidence base, and that the identified strategic transport interventions provide an appropriate framework for accommodating forecast growth.

2.1.10 As the remaining land at Westwood Park was included within the transport modelling and review process, it is considered that the transport impacts of this allocation have been appropriately assessed and that a suitable package of mitigation measures has been identified to support development proposals at this location.

2.1.11 The 2026 Transport Evidence Review Note has been published online alongside this SAAR.

2.2 Flood risk and drainage

2.2.1 A full flood risk assessment (FRA) was conducted for the site in 2012 in support of a hybrid application for outline consent for this proposed allocation, and full consent for the construction of the A49 link road (Westwood Way), which has subsequently been implemented.

2.2.2 The FRA states that the majority of the site lies within Flood Zone 1 (low risk), with a small portion in Flood Zone 2 near Smithy Brook. However, this is now out of date with further areas of Flood Zone 2 identified around the adjacent Westwood Flash, and an associated ditch that connects to the flash through the site showing as a potential flood route from the River Douglas to the northwest of the proposed allocation.

2.2.3 The site was considered suitable for the proposed development at the time of the application with no historical flooding recorded on-site, and fluvial, surface water, and groundwater flood risks were assessed as negligible.

2.2.4 An up-to-date FRA would be required in support of any subsequent planning applications for the site allocation which will need to consider the presence of Flood Zone 2 as confirmed by the latest EA Flood Map for Planning (August 2025). It is considered that this area which is relatively small in relation to the wider allocation can be adequately dealt with through retention of existing waterbodies as part of the wider green infrastructure/habitat proposals for the site.

2.3 Ground conditions

2.3.1 The site is subject to potential constraints in terms of land contamination and landfill / ground gas, associated with its previous land uses. The site is partially associated with Nominated Landfill Site A003 – Westwood Power Station.

2.3.2 The site was subject to ground investigation as part of the previous planning application, which identified potential constraints in terms of land contamination and possible ground instability. The assessment set out that that these issues could be resolved through further site investigations, appropriate design and mitigation measures. In 2023 a further site investigation was undertaken by the council, and a report published providing further information on ground conditions. These findings were included in the 'data room' for when the site was marketed in 2025.

2.3.3 Ground conditions will need to be addressed as part of the planning application process for the site through updated assessments in accordance with current standards and guidance.

2.3.4 To support this, Westwood Park is due to be accepted as a pilot pathfinder scheme between DEFRA and the GMCA to undertake a coordinated pre-application service to address matters relating to flooding, ground conditions and landfill matters.

2.4 Utilities

2.4.1 The following details how utilities infrastructure will be dealt with and provided for on site.

Electricity

2.4.2 Overhead power lines originate in the north of the site and go south via two pylons within the site on a route immediately adjacent and the east of Westwood Way. An appropriate easement will be required beneath these lines to ensure safe development and continued access for maintenance.

2.4.3 Wigan is served from two Bulk Supply Points (BSP) and has 5 primary substations. This electrical infrastructure has available capacity to accommodate existing demand. Interventions were identified by SP Electricity North West (SP-ENW), and are set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, to release additional capacity to cover future demand for one BSP and two primary substations to meet demand from the development. All connections to the network will be co-ordinated with SP-ENW, together with any diversions of existing infrastructure on and adjacent to the site.

Gas

2.4.4 The developer of the site will need to liaise with National Grid regarding any major gas assets that cross, or are adjacent to, the site, and take reference of any easements associated with these assets. If connections to the mains gas network are required, Cadent should be consulted with regard to capacity and location of suitable connections and associated land requirements for access to, and servicing of, new gas supplies.

Clean Water

2.4.5 The delivery of clean water to the site will need to be agreed with United Utilities. This will include identification and supply from mains, and an assessment of any re-enforcement works to ensure that supply is maintained in the locality. All works will be co-ordinated with United Utilities.

Sewers

2.4.6 As the proposed development will deliver new housing, a comprehensive drainage strategy will be required and agreed with United Utilities and will be implemented in phases as the site is developed. If there is insufficient capacity in the main sewer network, strategic reinforcement works by United Utilities will ensure that sufficient capacity is provided. United Utilities also have an obligation under Section 94 of the Water Industry Act 1991 to provide a connection to, and capacity for, the sewer network.

Telecommunications and digital infrastructure

2.4.7 Provision of telecommunications and digital infrastructure will be co-ordinated with Open Reach and other suppliers. Where there is existing infrastructure such as overhead and underground cables any disconnections and diversions will be agreed with the service provider to minimise disruption.

3. Environmental assessment

3.1 Recreation

3.1.1 The Wigan Borough Open Space Report (2025) identifies two areas of natural / semi-natural greenspace within the site allocation boundary, at Westwood Flash, Westward Park Drive and land around Pearsons Flash adjacent canal / railway, rated as average and good quality respectively.

3.1.2 The Open Space Report observes that Worsley Mesnes Ward has a shortfall of parks and gardens (-0.67 hectares per 1,000 population) and a surplus of natural / semi-natural greenspace and amenity greenspace.

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 rate of 2.44 people per household (based on a national average), the PPOSS Strategy and Action Plan estimates that a development of 420 homes at Westwood Park would generate an additional 1,025 people, which would equate to an additional demand for 1.73 pitches.

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 Despite the site being adjacent to the Wigan Flashes landscape character area (part of the Reclaimed Land / Wetlands landscape typology) which is assessed as having a moderate sensitivity to housing development, the site was not considered in the Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment because it had planning permission at the time, which has subsequently lapsed.

3.2.2 The proposed allocation includes the site of a former coal fuelled power station and is considered brownfield land. Westwood Way severs the site in landscape terms from the wider Wigan Flashes area.

3.3 Ecology and biodiversity

3.3.1 The environmental statement submitted in support of the previously approved hybrid planning application in 2012 contains detailed information on ecological impacts from the proposal at the time. The proposed allocation is not within an Impact Risk Zone for Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

3.3.2 The ecological baseline for the Westwood Park area comprises a mosaic of habitats including semi-natural woodland, scrub, semi-improved grassland, swamp, standing water, and tall ruderal vegetation. It includes part of the designated Westwood Flash Site of Biological Importance (SBI), known for its unique vegetation developed on Pulverised Fuel Ash (PFA), supporting notable plant species such as Marsh Helleborine, Common Spotted Orchid, and Marsh Orchid.

3.3.3 The proposed development would result in some loss of habitat within the Westwood Flash SBI, notably woodland/scrub and semi-improved grassland. The environmental statement concludes that despite mitigation, there would be a significant adverse residual impact at County level due to habitat loss within Westwood Flash SBI.

3.3.4 Given the presence of the Westwood Flash SBI and habitats within the site, it is identified within the Nature Network in the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy, with actions for lowland, grassland, rivers and woodland. These will need to be considered during the detailed design process.

3.3.5 Up to date ecological surveys and studies will be required in support of any subsequent planning applications for the site, however, the baseline from 2012 will still give a good view as to the habitats within the site allocation that are not likely to have substantially changed and the ecological impacts that would need to be considered alongside new statutory requirements for biodiversity net gain and the proposed policies in the Local Plan.

3.4 Habitats Regulation Assessment

3.4.1 The proposed site allocation has been considered in the Habitats Regulation Assessment 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 to mitigate traffic-related nitrogen oxide pollution and ensure that collaboration takes place with United Utilities to ensure 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 A Historic Environment Assessment of the site was undertaken by Wigan Council in 2025. This reviews the likely impact of the proposed development on heritage assets and their settings. Screening work identified the presence of two designated heritage assets within the proposed allocation, namely the Grade II Listed Westwood Hall and attached Westwood Hall Cottage, and the Grade II Listed Westwood Gardens. However, while it is still recorded on the National Heritage List, Westwood Hall and the attached Westwood Hall Cottage have been demolished following a fire, and there are no standing remains of the building. As a result, the assessment finds that proposed development will have no impact on Westwood Hall or the attached Westwood Hall Cottage.

3.5.2 The assessment also finds that proposed development may have some impact on the setting of the area immediately around Westwood Gardens. Consideration will need to be given at a detailed stage to the treatment of the southern portion of the site to ensure that any development harmonises with the wider setting of Westwood Gardens so that it does not harm the heritage values and significances there. This requirement is reflected in criterion 8 of proposed policy H8. Overall, the assessment finds that the proposed allocation satisfies national and local heritage planning policy.

3.6 Air quality

3.6.1 Air quality issues were considered in the environmental assessment that was submitted as part of the previously approved planning application for the site, and the impacts considered acceptable at the time. A full air quality assessment will be required in support of any forthcoming planning application for the development of the site.

3.7 Noise

3.7.1 The environmental statement for the previously approved application addressed noise issues for the proposed new residential dwellings, which were predicted to be within acceptable levels with the mitigation proposed.

3.7.2 A noise assessment will need to be submitted with any forthcoming planning application. It should cover all noise sources that may impact the development site, including industrial, commercial and transport related noise sources. It should also cover all noise sensitive receptors that may be impacted by the development and be prepared by a professional noise consultant in line with all relevant standards and guidance.

4. Social assessment

4.1 Access to local shops and services

4.1.1 The residential elements of the proposed allocation are within reasonable walking distance of both the Poolstock Local Centre and the Lower Ince Local Centre, and also within the 800-metres catchment of Wigan town centre. There is not considered to be a gap in provision of a local centre in this location.

4.2 Education and skills

4.2.1 Criterion 10 of the proposed site allocation policy requires the development to provide, or contribute towards the provision of, the infrastructure needed to support it including for education, in accordance with proposed 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 10 also requires the development to provide, or contribute towards the provision of health and care, as appropriate in accordance with proposed 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 Policy JP-P6 and proposed 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 borough-wide high-level viability assessment using broad, non-site-specific assumptions. The assessment identifies value zones, based on ward boundaries and uses specific site (e.g. greenfield / brownfield / Green Belt) and scheme typologies (e.g. number of units, flats etc.) to appraise sites.

5.1.2 The remaining land at Westwood Park is a large brownfield allocation in Worsley Mesnes Ward, which the viability assessment identifies as a lower value zone. In this zone, the assessment indicates that brownfield housing schemes may be unviable. However, the housing market changes and proactive interventions can be taken to support the delivery of affordable and other housing.

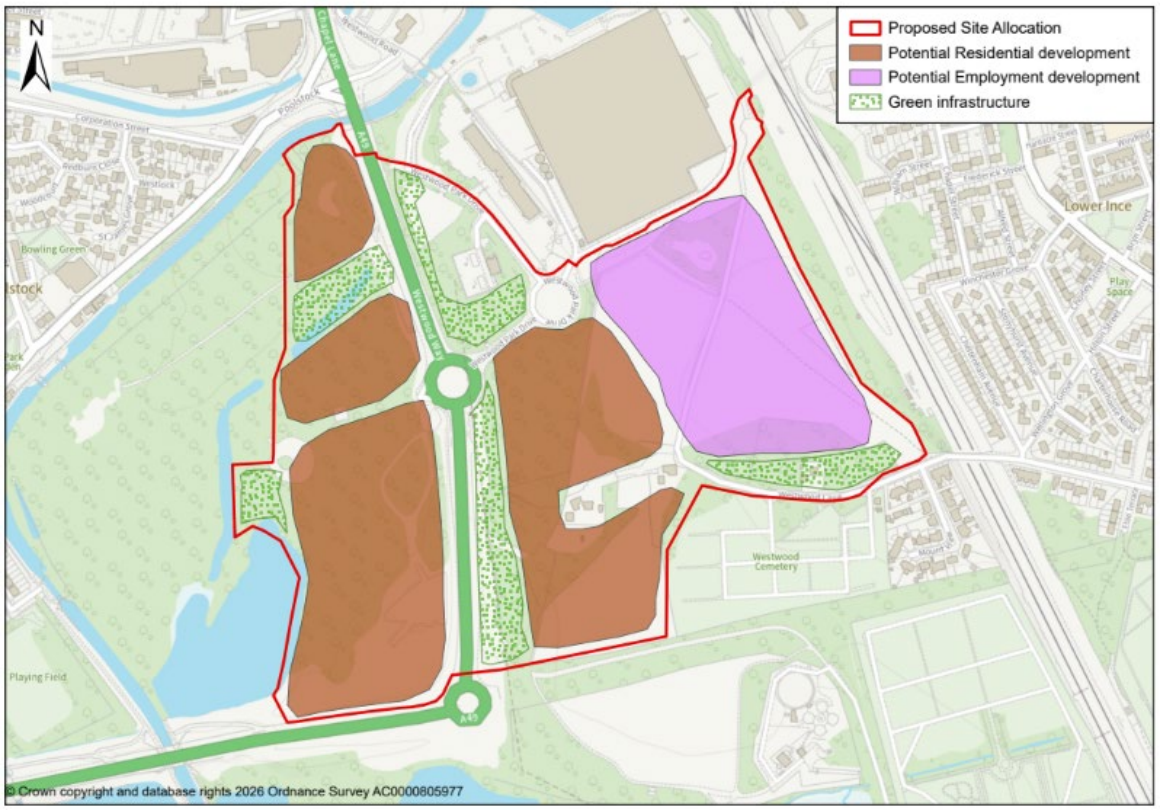
5.1.3 There are also variations in value within individual wards and site-specific factors and costs vary. Therefore, significant variation from this high-level work should be expected. The majority of the site is in council ownership and is currently subject to disposal to a preferred bidder for development, with a high level of developer interest noted from the sales process, indicating that a scheme in this location is viable to developers.

5.2 Phasing

5.2.1 An application for the development of this site is anticipated in late 2026 / early 2027. Site delivery is anticipated to take place over the short to medium term at a rate of 50 dwellings per year, with all units anticipated to be completed within the plan period.

5.3 Indicative Concept Plan

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


N
Proposed Site Allocation
Potential Residential development
Potential Employment development
Green infrastructure
Lower Ince
Westwood Cemetery
Playing Field
A49
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