## Wigan Borough Local Plan

# Duty to Cooperate: Draft Statement of Compliance

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Date: August 2026

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# 1. Introduction

1.1.1 Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as inserted by section 110 of the Localism Act 2011, places a duty to cooperate in relation to the planning of sustainable development.

1.1.2 The duty requires the council to cooperate with other local planning authorities and other public bodies in preparing and developing development plan documents so far as it relates to a strategic matter. The proposed Wigan Borough Local Plan falls under this duty.

1.1.3 This statement outlines the collaborative working that has taken place throughout the production of the Local Plan with the aim of producing a plan that effectively addresses the challenges that the borough faces and is likely to face over through to 2039. In doing so, this statement also demonstrates how the council has met its duty to cooperate.

1.1.4 A separate statement of common ground relating to the Duty to Cooperate has also been published in support of the Publication and Submission version of the Local Plan, demonstrating agreements around the specific strategic issues relevant to the Local Plan. A separate consultation statement, detailing all formal stages of consultation on the Local Plan, has also been published.

1.1.5 This Compliance Statement, and the Statement of Common Ground referred to above, will be updated following the end of the formal consultation period on the Wigan Borough Local Plan, and updated versions of these documents will be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination.

# 2. The Duty to Cooperate

2.1.1 Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as inserted by section 110 of the Localism Act 2011, introduced a duty to cooperate in relation to the planning of sustainable development.

2.1.2 The duty requires the council to cooperate with other local planning authorities and other public bodies in preparing and developing development plan documents and other local development documents so far as it relates to a strategic matter.

2.1.3 In this regard, the council and others are required to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis. The national planning policy framework (NPPF) states that "strategic policy-making authorities should collaborate to identify the relevant strategic matters which they need to address in their plans." (NPPF December 2023, paragraph 25).

2.1.4 A strategic matter is defined in the Act as "sustainable development or use of land that has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas, including (in particular) sustainable development or use of land for or in connection with infrastructure that is strategic and has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas."

2.1.5 The NPPF further states (paragraph 26) that "effective and on-going joint working between strategic policy-making authorities and relevant bodies is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy."

2.1.6 The public bodies prescribed in the Act for the purposes of the duty to cooperate, as applying to the scope and function of the proposed Wigan Borough Local Plan in 2025, are:

1) The Environment Agency
2) Historic England
3) Natural England
4) The Civil Aviation Authority
5) Homes England
6) NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board
7) NHS England
8) The Office of Rail and Road
9) National Highways
10) Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)

2.1.7 The act also prescribes the Mayor of London, Transport for London (TfL) and the Marine Management Organisation as public bodies for the duty to cooperate. We determined that there would be no strategic issues arising for the Mayor of London or TfL and the Marine Management Organisation has confirmed that Wigan Borough does not fall within their remit as we do not have tidal waters.

2.1.8 In addition, regard must be had under the provisions of the Act to the activities of the Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), although LEPs have been formally disestablished by Government, and the Greater Manchester Local Nature Partnership, so far as they are relevant to plan making. We have engaged with them through the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), and with the Mayor of Greater Manchester.

2.1.9 The Council has also engaged with infrastructure providers, namely United Utilities, Electricity North West and National Gas, in order to establish whether any additional cross-boundary strategic infrastructure is required.

2.1.10 Co-operation on cross-boundary strategic issues is also required with neighbouring authorities. We actively work with the other GM authorities on a wide range of matters through the GMCA and engage with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. Wigan's neighbouring authorities are:

- Bolton Council and Salford City Council within the Greater Manchester City Region
- Chorley Council and West Lancashire Borough Council within Lancashire
- Lancashire County Council, as highway and transport authority
- St Helen's Borough Council within the Liverpool City Region
- Warrington Borough Council.

2.1.11 We have also engaged with the Central Lancashire Planning Team who are working on their own joint Local Plan, involving South Ribble Borough Council and Preston City Council.

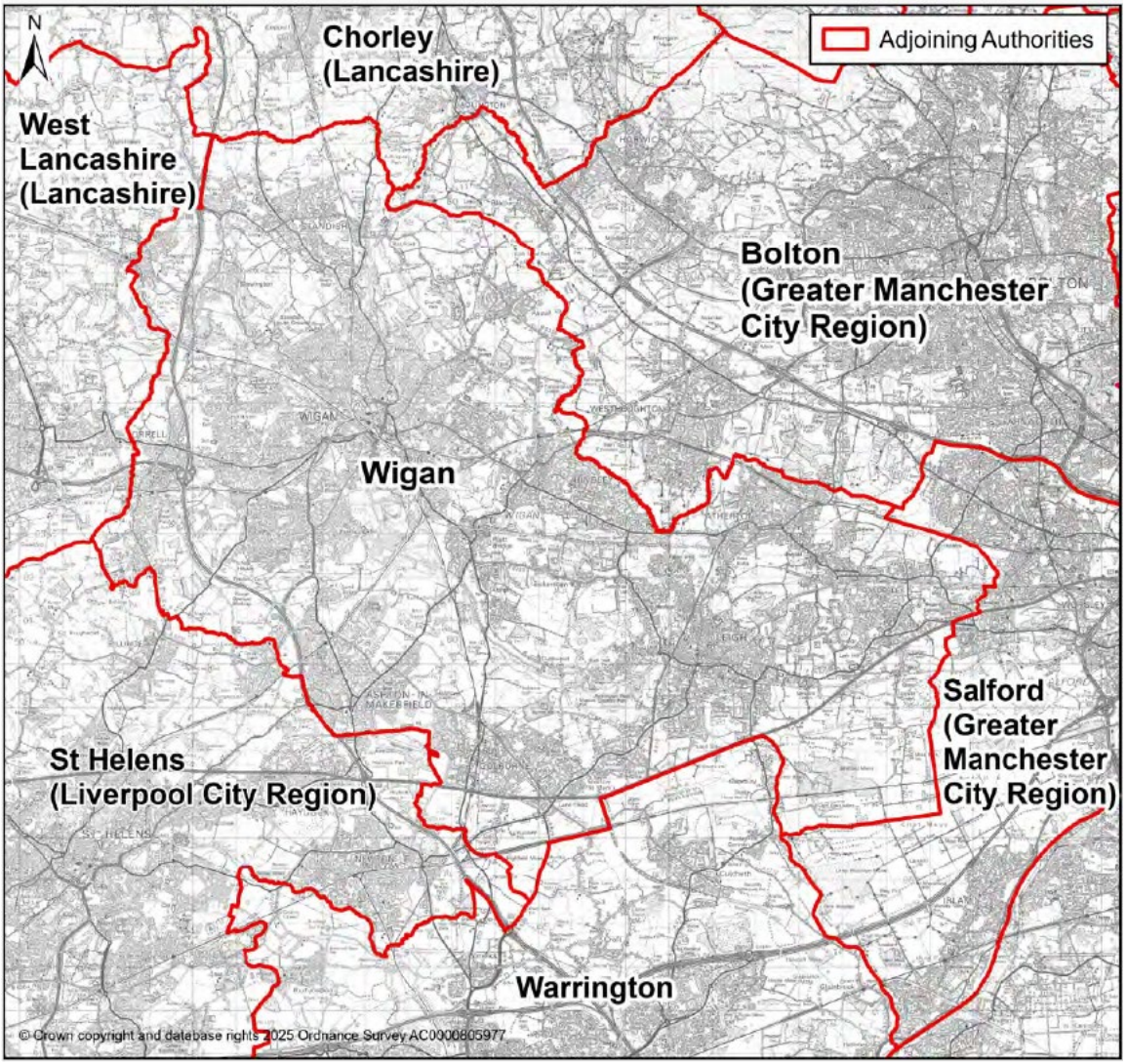
2.1.12 Combined Authorities have been brought into force for Lancashire County and Cheshire and Warrington, but it is early days for both organisations and they have not engaged with us to date.

2.1.13 National guidance describes that "all parties should approach the duty in a proportionate way, tailoring cooperation according to where they can maximise the effectiveness of plans". It is therefore appropriate to focus engagement where it will deliver most benefit.

2.1.14 Whether or not a local planning authority has brought forward a plan in line with the duty to cooperate is a key legal test which the plan will be assessed against when it is considered at public examination.

# 3. Wigan Borough Local Plan

3.1.1 This duty to cooperate compliance statement relates to the Wigan Borough Local Plan, which will provide a local planning framework for Wigan Borough. The cross-boundary issues relating to that plan involve neighbouring local authority areas as shown on the map below.




3.1.2 This compliance statement has been published alongside the Publication Wigan Borough Local Plan. Prior to this version of the Local Plan there have been six main stages of engagement with Duty to Cooperate (DtC) bodies:

- An Issues and Opportunities consultation between October and December 2022, which was more of a community orientated consultation, but DtC bodies were invited to comment.
- An invitation to DtC bodies in May 2023 to raise issues.

- An Options and Preferences consultation between October and December 2023, which DtC bodies were engaged on.
- An invitation to DtC bodies in March 2024 to comment on potential strategic issues.
- Consultation on the Initial Draft Local Plan between April and June 2025, alongside which a Draft Duty to Cooperate Statement of Common Ground was also published, which DtC bodies were to comment on.
- Informal engagement with all DtC bodies on strategic matters and potential for agreement in January / February 2026.

3.1.3 A record of which DtC bodies we consulted at each stage and where we received a response is set out in table 1 below.

## Table 1: Record of consultation with duty to cooperate bodies and similar organisations

| | Issues and Opportunities for the Local Plan<br>October 2022 | | Invitation to raise issues<br>May 2023 | | Options and Preferences for the Local Plan<br>October 2023 | | Invitation to comment on potential strategic issues<br>March 2024 | | Pre-Initial Draft Local Plan policies<br>November 2024 | | Initial Draft Local Plan and draft Statement of Common Ground<br>April 2025 | | Informal engagement on strategic matters and potential for agreement<br>January 2026 | | Proposed Local Plan for Publication and Submission<br>December 2026 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Environment Agency** | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| **Historic England** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| **Natural England** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| **Civil Aviation Authority** | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| **Homes England** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| **GM Integrated Health Board** | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| **NHS England** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| **Office of Rail and Road** | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| **National Highways** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| **TfGM** | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |

| | **Issues and Opportunities for the Local Plan**<br>**October 2022** | | **Invitation to raise issues**<br>**May 2023** | | **Options and Preferences for the Local Plan**<br>**October 2023** | | **Invitation to comment on potential strategic issues**<br>**March 2024** | | **Pre-Initial Draft Local Plan policies**<br>**November 2024** | | **Initial Draft Local Plan and draft Statement of Common Ground**<br>**April 2025** | | **Informal engagement on strategic matters and potential for agreement**<br>**January 2026** | | **Proposed Local Plan for Publication and Submission**<br>**December 2026** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Marine Management Organisation** | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| **Mayor of GM / GMCA** | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| **Electricity North West** | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | | |
| **National Gas** | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| **United Utilities** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| **Bolton Council** | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| **Salford City Council** | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| **Chorley Council** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| **West Lancs Borough Council** | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| **Lancashire County Council** | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |

| | **Issues and Opportunities for the Local Plan**<br>**October 2022** | | **Invitation to raise issues**<br>**May 2023** | | **Options and Preferences for the Local Plan**<br>**October 2023** | | **Invitation to comment on potential strategic issues**<br>**March 2024** | | **Pre-Initial Draft Local Plan policies**<br>**November 2024** | | **Initial Draft Local Plan and draft Statement of Common Ground**<br>**April 2025** | | **Informal engagement on strategic matters and potential for agreement**<br>**January 2026** | | **Proposed Local Plan for Publication and Submission**<br>**December 2026** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Central Lancs Joint Planning** | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| **St Helens Council** | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| **Liverpool City Regional CA** | | | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |
| **Warrington Borough Council** | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | | |

# 4. Collaboration across Greater Manchester

## 4.1 The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and Places for Everyone Plan

4.1.1 The foundation for the duty to cooperate on our Local Plan was the Joint Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) and Places for Everyone (PfE) Plan prepared between 2015 and 2024.

4.1.2 From 2015 to 2020 this was the GMSF, being prepared by all ten councils in Greater Manchester with the GMCA. However, Stockport Council rejected the proposed submission version of the GMSF in December 2020 and the GMSF fell at that point.

4.1.3 It was resurrected, however, as a joint plan of the other nine councils, now known as the PFE Plan, and went through the proposed submission (Publication) stage in August-October 2021, was submitted for public examination in February 2022, and was adopted in March 2024.

4.1.4 As a joint plan it was based on cross boundary collaboration within Greater Manchester and, subsequently, the PfE districts, and was subject to the duty to cooperate with neighbouring councils and other DtC bodies. A Statement of Common Ground was signed, including with Stockport Council, regarding the content of the PfE Plan.

4.1.5 The outcome is that the Local Plan is premised on the housing figures from the PfE Plan.

4.1.6 The nine districts continue to collaborate on annual monitoring report content related to the PfE Plan.

## 4.2 Greater Manchester Minerals and Waste Plan

4.2.1 The ten councils and GMCA have now formally agreed to prepare a joint Greater Manchester Minerals and Waste Local Plan. The schedule for the preparation of this plan will be formalised once the final regulations and guidance are published for the new plan making system.

## 4.3 Spatial Development Strategy

4.3.1 The Government is making provisions for all strategic authorities, such as the GMCA, to be required to produce a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS).

4.3.2 Despite having the recently adopted PfE Plan, the Government's new housing need figures are a lot higher for Greater Manchester as

a whole. Districts are protected from those figures for 5 years from adoption of the PfE plan, i.e. to March 2029. In line with that timeframe, or as soon thereafter as is reasonably practicable, an SDS is needed to determine how housing need will be distributed across Greater Manchester. While this will be a Mayoral and Combined Authority strategy, ongoing collaboration between the ten councils and the GMCA will be a necessity.

# 5. Cooperation on the Local Plan

## 5.1 Issues and opportunities for the Local Plan

5.1.1 Work on the Wigan Borough Local Plan commenced informally in mid-2022 in preparing for a consultation on what became the Issues and Opportunities for the Local Plan. This consultation took place from 17 October – 11 December 2022.

5.1.2 This was primarily a public facing consultation with an online questionnaire and engagement sessions directly with the public in 16 town centres and local centres across the borough.

5.1.3 We did, however, email a wider range of stakeholders at the outset, including Duty to Cooperate bodies on 24 October, on the "subject and scope of a new Wigan Local Plan". The email stated:

"Wigan Council is preparing a new Wigan Local Plan to replace the existing Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy (2013) and saved policies in the Wigan Replacement Unitary Development Plan (2006). The Local Plan will be consistent with, and sit alongside, the emerging Places for Everyone Plan and the existing joint Greater Manchester Waste and Minerals Plans to form the development plan for Wigan Borough. The proposed timetable for its preparation is set out in our new Wigan Local Development Scheme.

Consistent with the strategic policies in the emerging Places for Everyone Plan, it is proposed that the Local Plan will include planning policies for Homes, Jobs, Centres, Transport, Places, Environment and People. We are consulting widely on a very initial basis with residents and other members of the public with a strong interest in the borough at present and, for information, details can be found at www.wigan.gov.uk/futurewigan2040.

It is envisaged that the Local Plan will allocate specific sites for development to facilitate sustainable development, deliver associated infrastructure and address development needs over the next 15 years. We intend to focus particularly on ensuring that the Plan will support future bids for regeneration, transport and other funding opportunities.

To inform the preparation of the Wigan Local Plan, we are inviting your comments on what you think the plan should contain. Please do so by email to planningpolicy@wigan.gov.uk by 23:45 on Sunday 11 December 2022.

We want to work closely with key stakeholders on the preparation of this Plan and we intend to embrace a continuous engagement

approach, so if you would like to meet we would be happy to do so, and that does not need to be before 11 December.

We look forward to hearing from you."

5.1.4 We received responses from 8 DtC bodies as noted in Table 1 above including from Historic England, Natural England and NHS Property Services who all sought that the Local Plan should support their interests and responsibilities. Chorley Council raised the issues of cross boundary school places, public transport and air quality considerations and confirmed that they were unable to meet any of Wigan Borough's housing need. West Lancashire Borough Council raised various cross boundary strategic issues including housing and employment land provision, the strategic road network, public transport, town centres and town centre uses, water management including flooding, and green infrastructure.

## 5.2 Invitation to raise issues for the Local Plan

5.2.1 As a belt and braces approach, and to ensure we had met the legal duty, we followed up the Issues and Opportunities consultation with an invitation to raise issues for the Local Plan in May 2023.

5.2.2 We emailed a wide range of stakeholders, including Duty to Cooperate bodies on 10 May, on the "Wigan Local Plan Review". The email stated:

"As you may already be aware, we have embarked on preparing a new Local Plan for Wigan, to sit under the Places for Everyone Plan that is currently at public examination. It will replace remaining policies in our Unitary Development Plan (2006) and in our Core Strategy (2013).

We held an extensive public focused consultation on Issues and Opportunities in October-December last year, and we will be consulting on Options and Preferences in October-December this year, with consultation on an Initial Draft Local Plan following in the summer of 2024.

As such, if you haven't already, we are inviting you to raise any issues with us that you think we need to know in preparing the Local Plan, in the context of the existing duty to cooperate and any successor to that duty and, regardless, in the interest of successful strategic and local planning.

We are also preparing a Transport Strategy and an Infrastructure Needs Assessment and Delivery Plan (not transport), and we will be in touch with you on those separately, as applicable.

If you would like to meet, please also get in touch.

We look forward to hearing from you."

5.2.3 We again received written responses from 8 DtC bodies, although the majority were different from the 8 bodies that we had heard back from at the previous stage, as noted in Table 1 above. The Environment Agency said they will provide comments on the Integrated Assessment scoping report. National Highways raised their primary interest of consideration of cross boundary impacts on the strategic road network of any development proposals in Wigan Borough. Salford City Council referred to the legacy of joint working on the PfE Plan providing a strong framework for our own Local Plans.

5.2.4 We met with Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust in July 2023 and their response referred to opportunities arising with

the joint education and skills partnerships with them, ourselves and the education sector.

## 5.3 Options and Preferences for the Local Plan

5.3.1 Our second full consultation on the Local Plan was on the Options and Preferences for the plan. This consultation took place from 24 October – 18 December 2023.

5.3.2 As a full consultation there was a strong emphasis on engaging the public and this was done primarily through publicised workshops at 10 locations across the borough as well as having a strong online presence.

5.3.3 We emailed everyone on our consultation database at the outset to publicise this, including Duty to Cooperate bodies on 24 October. The email was headed "Planning for the Future of Wigan Borough to 2040 – the Wigan Borough Local Plan", and stated:

"We are now consulting on the Options and Preferences for our Local Plan, which went live earlier today and closes at 23:59 on Monday 18th December 2023.

The Options and Preferences is an early-stage consultation and very much written to generate discussion. You can access the consultation here. It includes a main consultation document and an accompanying map book. On each you will be able to click on 'bubbles' in the page to both view comments that others have made and leave your own comments. It will be anonymous on the webpage.

This email is going out to neighbouring councils, strategic bodies and other specific and key consultees, amongst which many of you will have an interest as a Duty to Cooperate body and/or from an infrastructure perspective relevant to our infrastructure delivery plan.

We have met with some of you already but either way, we will be seeking meetings with many if not all of you during these 8 weeks, if possible, or otherwise early in the new year, but if you particularly want to meet with us, please don't hesitate to get in touch yourself and we will prioritise."

5.3.4 We received written responses from 11 DtC bodies, as noted in Table 1 above. Historic England provided a range of advice but didn't identify specific issues relating to strategic-cross boundary matters. NHS Property Services provided advice on the health infrastructure needed to support housing growth. Chorley Council was pleased that cross-boundary bus services were referred to.

5.3.5 We met with Electricity North West (ENW) on 26 October where they shared details of their strategic network and where different parts of the borough are served from, as well as plans for strengthening the network through to 2040.

## 5.4 Potential strategic matters for the Local Plan

5.4.1 Conscious that we hadn't until this point pinned down what the strategic matters were for the Local Plan, we emailed all of the DtC bodies on 26 March 2024. The email was headed 'Wigan Local Plan Review: Duty to Cooperate' and stated:

"As you will be aware, we are producing a new Local Plan for Wigan Borough and we have a duty as part of that to cooperate with each other, and with other prescribed bodies, to identify relevant strategic matters that cross our administrative boundaries, which we need to address in our plans.

At the present time we are seeking to agree with you the relevant strategic matters which we need to address. Taking account of responses received during earlier consultation stages we have identified potential strategic issues in the table attached, together with suggested bodies for cooperation.

Could you please confirm by 23 April whether you agree or disagree with the strategic issues identified for you, and whether there are any additional strategic cross-boundary issues that we have not identified that should be included.

Following the receipt of your comments, where issues have been identified, we would like to invite you to meet to discuss them further and to answer any questions you may have on the emerging Wigan Local Plan. Please could you let us know whether you have any availability during the mornings on the following dates?

Wednesday 24/04/24
Tuesday 30/04/24
Wednesday 01/05/24
Friday 03/05/24
Wednesday 08/05/24

If none of these dates suit, or if you would like an earlier or later meeting, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate you.

We look forward to hearing from you."

5.4.2 The table that was attached to this email is reproduced on the following two pages.

## Table 2: Potential strategic issues for the Local Plan, March 2024

| Potential strategic Issue | Suggested bodies for cooperation | Please make any comments here |
|---|---|---|
| **Homes** | | |
| Identifying sufficient land to meet Wigan's housing needs as set out in Places for Everyone | All neighbouring districts, GMCA, Homes England | |
| Meeting the need for gypsy and traveller accommodation in Wigan as set out in the emerging 2024 GM Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment | All neighbouring districts, GMCA | |
| Meeting the need for travelling showpeople accommodation in Wigan as set out in the emerging 2024 Wigan Housing Needs Assessment | All neighbouring districts, GMCA | |
| **Community Infrastructure in neighbouring districts** | | |
| Impact of any allocations / growth on school capacity in neighbouring districts and capacity in Wigan for neighbouring districts | All neighbouring districts, Lancashire County Council | |
| Impact of allocations / growth on healthcare capacity in neighbouring districts and capacity in Wigan for neighbouring districts | All neighbouring districts, GM Integrated Care Partnership, NHS England | |
| **Transport** | | |
| Impact of allocations / growth on the strategic road network | All neighbouring districts, Lancashire County Council, National Highways, TFGM, GMCA, Office of Rail and Road | |
| Impact of allocations / growth on commuting patterns | All neighbouring districts, Lancashire County Council, TFGM, GMCA, Office of Rail and Road | |
| Impact of allocations / growth on rail and bus provision | All neighbouring districts, Lancashire County Council, TFGM, GMCA, Office of Rail and Road | |
| Securing improvements to M6 motorway junctions 23, 24, 25 & 26 | Warrington Borough Council, St Helens Borough Council, West Lancashire Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, TFGM, | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | National Highways, GMCA, Office of Rail and Road | |
| Securing Metrolink to Leigh | Salford City Council, TFGM, GMCA, Office of Rail and Road | |
| Improving rail services on the Atherton line | Bolton Council, Salford City Council, TFGM, National Rail, GMCA, Office of Rail and Road | |
| Securing improved services on the Kirkby rail line | Lancashire County Council, West Lancashire Borough Council, Merseytravel, Liverpool City Region, GMCA, Office of Rail and Road | |
| Improved cross boundary bus services | All neighbouring districts, Lancashire, TFGM, GMCA, Office of Rail and Road | |
| **Environment** | | |
| The provision of flood mitigation measures on Borsdane Brook | Bolton Council, GM Natural Capital Group, Environment Agency, Natural England | |
| Impacts on GM Nature Improvement Area | Salford City Council, Warrington Borough Council, GM Natural Capital Group, Natural England, GMCA | |
| Impacts on wildlife corridors | All neighbouring districts, GM Natural Capital Group, Natural England, GMCA | |
| **Places** | | |
| Impacts on canals | Chorley Council, West Lancashire Borough Council, Salford City Council, Historic England | |
| Inclusion of existing community at Bolton Road, Aspull as a new Green Belt settlement | Bolton Council | |
| **Other** | | |
| Wigan – Bolton Growth Corridor | Bolton Council | |

5.4.3 We met with National Highways on 7 May, the Greater Manchester NHS Integrated Care Board on 8 May, Lancashire County Council on 8 May, West Lancashire Borough Council on 8 May, Bolton Council on 24 May, Natural England on 4 June, and the Environment Agency on 11 July.

5.4.4 We received written responses from 12 DtC bodies, as noted in Table 1 above.

5.4.5 This engagement enabled us to refine the key cross-boundary strategic issues that should be considered as part of the Local Plan process.

## 5.5 Pre-Initial Draft Local Plan

5.5.1 Prior to finalising the Initial Draft Local Plan, we sent draft policies out to key stakeholders including duty to cooperate bodies to see if we could address issues prior to the formal consultation.

5.5.2 The emails were sent around 7 -15 November 2024, and stated:

"We are intending to produce an Initial Draft of our Wigan Borough Local Plan early in the new year, but before we do, we would welcome your feedback on policies that we intend to include.

Attached to this email are policy templates on [policy details varied].

The template includes the proposed policy in bold text. For the most part the policies are in a form that we would be content to include in our Initial Draft Local Plan, so we would like to know if we have missed anything or errored in some way.

The Reasoning and Explanation (R&E) that follows the policy is far less worked up. We will be working this up through to the end of the year so please let us know if you think something should be included.

The remaining part of the template is about the building blocks for the policy, including what we are preparing the Local Plan under – national policy and the Places for Everyone Plan - and what policy we are replacing in our existing development plan, and then what the implications of the proposed policy are, such as for the Policies Map and the infrastructure Delivery Plan. Comments are welcome on this too.

In respect of the Duty to Cooperate, we would appreciate any further confirmation of strategic cross boundary issues and any outstanding issues.

Please return all comments as soon as possible, and by Friday 6 December at the latest."

5.5.3 We met with Central Lancashire Joint Planning on 26 November, Salford City Council on 2 December, the Canal and River Trust on 3 December, St Helens Council on 4 December, United Utilities on 11 December and the Environment Agency on 7 February.

5.5.4 We received written responses from 12 DtC bodies, as noted in Table 1 above, and fed back to many on proposed changes to policies arising from their response and those of others, as applicable.

5.5.5 External stakeholders welcomed the opportunity to comment on the draft policies and useful comments were received from bodies including Natural England, Historic England, National Highways,

Salford City Council and West Lancashire Borough Council. The responses received allowed us to further refine policies before they went out for full public consultation.

## 5.6 Initial Draft Local Plan and draft Statement of Common Ground

5.6.1 Our third full consultation on the Local Plan was on a full initial draft of the plan. This consultation took place from 30 April – 24 June 2025.

5.6.2 As a full consultation there was again a strong emphasis on engaging the public and this was done primarily through publicised drop-in sessions at 7 locations across the borough, notably related to the proposed site allocations. There was a strong online presence.

5.6.3 We emailed everyone on our consultation database, including Duty to Cooperate bodies, at the outset to publicise this, and followed up in the two days thereafter with specific emails to Duty to Cooperate bodies on the draft Statement of Common Ground. The emails were headed "Wigan Borough Local Plan - Draft Duty to Cooperate Statement of Common Ground", and stated:

"Further to our email on 30th April notifying you of our consultation on our Initial Draft Wigan Borough Local Plan, we would like to use this consultation to make progress on the Duty to Cooperate as far as we are able, and I am contacting you now in that regard.

We have prepared a Draft Wigan Borough Duty to Cooperate Statement of Common Ground, which has been published alongside the Initial Draft Local Plan. It provides our summary of the position with regards to the Duty to Cooperate as at April 2025, as we understand it.

Please can you review this draft statement as far as it relates to your interests, and provide us with your position on it and the accompanying plan? We would specifically like to know whether you are in agreement or, if not, what needs to be done to secure your agreement. We would be very happy to meet if there is anything you wish to discuss.

As you are aware, the Duty to Cooperate process is ongoing, but we hope to have an agreed Statement of Common Ground by the time we publish the formal version of the Local Plan for final consultation prior to public examination, if possible.

Thank you for engaging with us on the preparation of the Wigan Borough Local Plan and I look forward to hearing from you."

5.6.4 The table of draft strategic cross boundary matters that was included in the draft SoCG is reproduced below.

### Table 3: Identified strategic cross boundary matters / issues, April 2025

| Matter / issue | Local Plan theme |
|---|---|
| Identifying sufficient land to meet Wigan Borough's housing needs as set out in the PFE Plan | Homes |
| Meeting the need for gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople accommodation | Homes |
| Impacts of the housing allocation at East of Atherton | Homes |
| Identifying sufficient land to meet the need for employment sites / premises | Jobs |
| Impacts of the employment allocation at Land north of M6 Junction 26, Wigan | Jobs |
| Impacts of the employment allocation at Moss Industrial Estate Extension, Aspull Common, Leigh | Jobs |
| Impacts of the employment-led allocation at Bridgewater West, Astley | Jobs |
| Impacts of the employment allocation at Land west of Winwick Lane, Lowton | Jobs |
| Impact of Local Plan Town Centre policies on neighbouring town centres | Town Centres |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on the strategic road network | Transport |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on the Key Route Network | Transport |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport | Transport |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on water courses flowing into the borough and from the borough | Environment |
| Impacts of Local Plan policies on the GM Wetlands Nature Improvement Area | Environment |
| Impacts of Local Plan policies on Chat Moss | Environment |
| Impacts of Local Plan policies on strategic Green Infrastructure | Environment |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on school places | People |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on healthcare facilities | People |
| Impacts of Local plan policies on the Wigan–Bolton Growth Corridor (NorthFold) | Various |

5.6.5 We received written responses from 14 DtC bodies, as noted in Table 1 above, including from St Helens Council on the implications of our site at West of Winwick Lane, the proposed Lane Head South Bypass and the strategic road network, as well as cross boundary bus and rail services, and town centre policies. Salford City Council raised comments on some of our policies including Bridgewater West (J6) and Chat Moss (EN4).

## 5.7 Leading up to the Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan

5.7.1 Following the consultation on the Initial Draft Local Plan there were some issues that needed further work prior to confirming the content of the Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan.

5.7.2 The matter of the plan period for the Local Plan not complying with the need for a full 15 years on adoption of the plan, as set out in the NPPF paragraph 22, was raised by a number of bodies, notably housebuilders. 15 years on adoption would be 2042 instead of 2039 in line with the Places for Everyone. In response we needed to engage our Places for Everyone Plan partner councils to make sure they were okay with our position. We emailed them on 22 August 2025 with a reminder going out on 15 September and all of the councils were either in agreement or had no objection with all responses received by 29 September 2025.

5.7.3 We met with the Environment Agency on 17 September to make sure they were okay with the plan. They committed to review previous comments and review our revised policies and the draft Statement of Common Ground.

5.7.4 We also emailed out in early January 2026 (one in late mid-December) to all DtC bodies including the utilities companies with an extract of our proposed Initial Draft Local Plan consultation report showing a summary of their reps, as applicable, and our proposed responses, the strategic matters that we thought are relevant to them with initial commentary, and those that we think aren't, with a request for comment, and proposed revised policies of particular relevance to their representations and/or strategic matters, as they stood at that time, all in confidence.

5.7.5 We had amended the strategic matters further by then, with further amendments as the DtC bodies concerned being made as the informal engagement progressed, as set out in Table 4 below:

## Table 4: Identified strategic cross boundary matters / issues, January 2026

| Strategic matter | The DtC bodies concerned |
|---|---|
| Identifying sufficient land to meet Wigan Borough's housing needs as set out in the PFE Plan | Homes England, National Highways, Office of Rail and Road, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, United Utilities, Electricity North West, National Gas, Bolton Council, Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Warrington Council |
| Meeting the need for gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople accommodation | Homes England, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, United Utilities, Bolton Council, Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Warrington Council |
| Impacts of the housing allocation at East of Atherton | Office of Rail and Road, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, Bolton Council |
| Identifying sufficient land to meet the need for employment sites / premises, including Green Belt land if the need cannot be met without it, either within the borough or within neighbouring districts | National Highways, Office of Rail and Road, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, United Utilities, Electricity North West, National Gas, Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Warrington Council |
| Impacts of the employment allocation at Land north of M6 Junction 26, Wigan | Environment Agency, National Highways, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, United Utilities, Electricity North West, National Gas, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, |
| Impacts of the employment allocation at Moss Industrial Estate | Natural England, National Highways, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP |

| Strategic matter | The DtC bodies concerned |
|---|---|
| Extension, Aspull Common, Leigh | and LNP, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority |
| Impacts of the employment-led allocation at Bridgewater West, Astley | Environment Agency, Natural England, National Highways, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, United Utilities, Electricity North West, National Gas, Salford City Council, Warrington Council |
| Impacts of the employment allocation at Land west of Winwick Lane, Lowton | Environment Agency, Natural England, Office of Rail and Road, National Highways, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, United Utilities, Electricity North West, National Gas, Lancashire County Council, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Warrington Council |
| Impact of the Local Plan end date of 31 March 2039 on cross boundary land supplies for new homes and jobs | TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, Bolton Council, Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Warrington Council |
| Impact of Local Plan Town Centre policies on neighbouring town centres | TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, Bolton Council, Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Warrington Council |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on the strategic road network | Natural England, National Highways, Office for Road and Rail, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, Bolton Council, Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Warrington Council |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on the Key Route Network | National Highways, Office for Road and Rail, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, Bolton Council, Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central |

| Strategic matter | The DtC bodies concerned |
|---|---|
| | Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Warrington Council |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport | Office of Rail and Road, National Highways, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, Bolton Council, Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Warrington Council |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on the operational integrity or safety of aerodromes | Civil Aviation Authority, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP |
| Impacts of Local Plan policies on the Wigan–Bolton Growth Corridor (NorthFold) | Natural England, Office of Rail and Road, National Highways, TfGM, GMCA, Electricity North West, National Gas, Bolton Council |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on water courses flowing into the borough and from the borough | Environment Agency, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, United Utilities, Bolton Council, Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Warrington Council |
| Impacts of Local Plan policies on the GM Wetlands Nature Improvement Area | Environment Agency, Natural England, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, United Utilities, Bolton Council, Salford City Council, Warrington Council, Trafford Council |
| Impacts of Local Plan policies on Chat Moss | Environment Agency, Natural England, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, Salford City Council, Warrington Council |
| Impacts of Local Plan policies on strategic | Environment Agency, Natural England, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, United Utilities, Bolton Council, |

| Strategic matter | The DtC bodies concerned |
|---|---|
| green infrastructure and nature recovery | Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, Lancashire County Council, St Helens Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Warrington Council |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on school places | TfGM, Bolton Council, Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, St Helens Council, Warrington Council |
| Impact of Local Plan policies on healthcare facilities | Homes England, NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board and NHS England, TfGM, GMCA on behalf of the Mayor, LEP and LNP, Bolton Council, Salford City Council, Chorley Council and the Central Lancashire Local Plan, West Lancashire Borough Council, Lancashire County Council, Warrington Council |

5.7.6 As part of this engagement we met with St Helens, Bolton and Salford City Councils, GMCA, Natural England and Electricity North West.

5.7.7 Historic England confirmed in an email to the council on 26 January 2026 that they agree that the historic environment is not a strategic cross boundary issue for the emerging local plan.

5.7.8 National Gas confirmed in an email on 14 January 2026 that they do not have any comments to provide on the strategic cross boundary matters.

5.7.9 Natural England responded with an email on 28 January 2026 with further comments.

5.7.10 We met with the Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group on 22nd April 2026. This group includes representatives of the GMCA, Natural England and the Environment Agency as duty to cooperate bodies, United Utilities and sub-regional nature conservation organisations and businesses. It is Greater Manchester's Local Nature Partnership and as such is responsible for driving positive change to the local natural environment in Greater Manchester.

5.7.11 At the meeting we presented our proposed environment policies and explained how these relate to, and will help deliver, the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This was positively received and we have

taken on feedback concerning to trees in changes to our 'Development and Green Infrastructure' policy presented in the Publication version of the plan.

5.7.12 In finalising the Publication version of the Local Plan for approval at Cabinet, it was determined that the jobs sites in the Green Belt would not be taken forward in the Publication version. Therefore, the four strategic matters relating to those sites no longer apply.

5.7.13 In response the strategic matter on 'Identifying sufficient land to meet the need for employment sites / premises' has been amended to read:

"Identifying sufficient land to meet the Borough's need for employment sites / premises, as set out in the Places for Everyone Plan."

## 5.8 Publication of the Proposed Submission version of the Local Plan

5.8.1 To be completed after the 8 weeks publication period.

# 6. Our conclusion

6.1 All of our strategic matters are known to the bodies that need to know about them. Further work is needed to resolve the detail of many but there are no suggestions that those details cannot be resolved. Therefore, there is nothing that has been raised through the duty to cooperate and, indeed, the wider process of plan preparation, that suggests that there is any doubt that the Local Plan cannot be implemented in full.