



## Request

Below are key points from the National Planning Policy Framework that appear to be inconsistent with the plans Wigan Council has proposed for this site. *Residents have requested clarification on these points and a clear demonstration of the Council Planning Team's compliance with these policies.*

1. The NPPF states that policies should set out an overall strategy and make sufficient provision for conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure. (Paragraph 20). **Please advise on how you are complying with this policy specifically in relation to the proposals for the site "Bridgewater West".**
2. The NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should enable and support healthy lives through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure (Paragraph 96) and offer access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for physical activity important for the health and well-being of communities and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities. (Paragraph 103). Existing open space, sports and recreational land, including playing fields and formal play spaces, should not be built on unless: a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space or land to be surplus to requirements; or b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use. (Paragraph 104). **Please advise on how you are complying with this policy specifically in relation to the proposals for the site "Bridgewater West".**
3. The NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails. (Paragraph 105). Additionally, Local Green Space designation should be considered if the site is: a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty or recreational value, tranquillity or richness of its wildlife and local in character. (Paragraph 107). Please advise on how you are complying with this policy specifically in relation to the proposals for the site "Bridgewater West".
4. The NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation and flood risk mitigation. They should also give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land for homes and other identified needs. (Paragraph 125). **Please advise on how you are complying with this policy specifically in relation to the proposals for the site "Bridgewater West".**
5. The NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. (Paragraph 142). Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans. (Paragraph 145). **Please advise on how you are complying with this policy specifically in relation to the proposals for the site "Bridgewater West".**

6. As the land is currently still Green Belt land, it is appropriate to mention that the NPPF states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. (Paragraph 153). Before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. (Paragraph 147). Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review, or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application, the following contributions should be made: a. affordable housing; b. necessary improvements to infrastructure; and c. the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home. (Paragraph 156). **Please advise on how you are complying with this policy specifically in relation to the proposals for the site "Bridgewater West".**

## Response

We appreciate that you are concerned about the potential development at the 'Bridgewater West' site, which was included in a consultation on a draft of Wigan's new Local Plan earlier in the year.

At this point, the Council is still considering the representations that were made, and in due course there will be a full report to our Cabinet on the outcome of the consultation and the next steps. In view of this, we hope you will appreciate that the council cannot pre-empt that process by opening up a detailed discussion about what the next iteration of the plan may or may not say. All submitted comments received on the initial draft of the Local Plan while the formal consultation was under way are being taken fully into account.

The exception being applied is Regulation 12(4)(d) where a public authority may refuse to disclose information to the extent that "the request relates to material which is still in the course of completion, to unfinished documents or to incomplete data."

We are sorry we can't give you more specific answers on the points raised at this stage.