

Greater Manchester's Plan for Homes, Jobs, and the Environment: The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework

Key questions and answers

Below are answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF), our joint plan for homes, jobs and the environment up to the year 2037. There will be number of drop-in sessions during the consultation period attended by council officers providing the opportunity for residents to raise any further questions or comments.

Questions and answers are themed around seven topics:

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About the GMSF

1. What is the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework?

Greater Manchester's Plan for Homes, Jobs, and the Environment (the GMSF) has been put together by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, which comprises the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the leaders of Greater Manchester's ten local councils.

This plan is about providing the right homes, in the right places, for people across our city-region, including Wigan. It's also about creating jobs and improving infrastructure to ensure the future prosperity of Greater Manchester and Wigan.¹

The GMSF is part of a wider suite of documents sitting below the Greater Manchester Strategy (including transport and housing strategies). Together, these will help to reduce inequalities, improve the lives of our residents and transform Greater Manchester into the world-leading city-region we know it can be. It is crucial that the borough of Wigan is part of these ambitions and benefits from what we are collectively trying to achieve.

2. Why are we involved with a Greater Manchester plan?

Whilst Wigan is home to over 300,000 people most of us don't spend our time solely in the borough. A family might live in Wigan but work in Manchester, go to

¹ These are Wigan, Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Tameside, Trafford, Rochdale, Salford and Stockport

school in Bolton and shop in Trafford. A Greater Manchester wide plan allows us to plan at a level that better reflects people's everyday lives to ensure that new homes and transport are in the best locations.

This means that we can make sure that residents can access the best job, education and leisure opportunities from across the city-region in places such as Manchester city centre, Salford Quays and Trafford Park. It also means that we can best plan for issues that cut across local authority boundaries and affect us all, such as transport and protecting the environment.

3. There is already a strategic planning document for Wigan Borough called the Core Strategy. Why do we need another one?

The current plan for Wigan, officially called the *Core Strategy*, was published more than five years ago in 2013. We can only plan ahead for the future with a reasonable amount of certainty and we need to update our plan regularly to reflect changes in where people want to live, what sort of homes they want and where they work, informed by the latest evidence. The Core Strategy only plans for up to the year 2026, whereas the GMSF plans ahead to 2037.

4. Does this mean we don't need a Local Plan?

No. The GMSF will only cover policies and proposals of a strategic nature that are relevant to Greater Manchester as a whole. It will not cover all of the locally-specific policies and proposals to deal with local matters. These will be set out within individual Local Plans produced by each district. However some policies in the Core Strategy will be superseded by policies in the GMSF. A timeframe for the production of a new local plan for Wigan is to be determined.

5. Wasn't the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework consulted on a few years ago?

The first draft of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework was published in October 2016. During the consultation for this the public raised several concerns, notably about the amount of Green Belt land being released for development. In May 2016 Andy Burnham was elected Mayor by the people of Greater Manchester with a promise to have the plan rewritten to include a reduction in the amount of land released from the Green Belt, as well focus more on regenerating our town centres and strengthening protections for the environment. This new draft is what we are consulting on now.

6. What's different about the new draft?

Taking on-board feedback from our last consultation the new draft plan has an increased emphasis on maximising the amount of new homes being built on previously-developed sites and the region's town centres. The new draft plan also proposes less land for employment bringing it in line with identified employment need, whilst retaining a focus on the region's economic assets. A number of sites or parts of sites that were proposed in the previous draft of the

GMSF are no longer proposed to be released from the Green Belt for development. These are:

- Land at M6 Junction 26, Wigan, known locally as 'The Bell'
- Land at Castlemere Close, Winstanley (formerly part of Land at M6 Junction 25, Wigan)
- Land South of M6 Junction 25, Bryn (formerly part of Land at M6 Junction 25, Wigan)
- Land North of New Springs, Wigan
- Land at Liverpool Road, Hindley
- Land at Cleworth Hall, Tyldesley
- Land at Astley and Boothstown

However, the plan is about much more than allocating land for housing and employment. The new plan also includes policies which will support the delivery of key infrastructure, such as transport, schools, health centres and utilities and protects important environmental assets across Greater Manchester.

Site selection

7. What criteria were used to select the proposed GMSF sites across Greater Manchester?

Feedback from the initial GMSF consultation raised concerns regarding the approach to selecting sites.

The revised GMSF is supported by a number of topic papers. One of these topic papers sets out more detail in relation to the site selection criteria that have been used to determine the sites that have been selected.

More detail is included within the topic paper which will be available at [Greater Manchester Combined Authority - Greater Manchester Spatial Framework](#). The paper sets out the seven criteria that were used to help select the sites proposed in the revised draft GMSF. These are briefly outlined below:

- Land which has been previously developed and/or land which is well served by public transport.
- Land that is able to take advantage of the key assets and opportunities that genuinely distinguish Greater Manchester from its competitors.
- Land that can maximize the advantage of existing economic opportunities which have significant capacity to deliver transformational change and/or boost the competitiveness and connectivity of Greater Manchester and genuinely deliver inclusive growth.
- Land within 800 metres of a main town centre boundary or 800 metres from the other town centres' centroids.

- Land which would have a direct significant impact on delivering urban regeneration.
- Land where transport investment (by the developer) and the creation of significant new demand (through appropriate development densities), would support the delivery of long-term viable sustainable travel options and deliver significant wider community benefits.
- Land that would deliver significant local benefits by addressing a major local problem or issue.

The criteria used reflects national planning policy principles and the wider strategic context of wider Greater Manchester ambitions to boost the competitiveness of Greater Manchester's northern districts, creating more opportunities for employment and improving the housing offer and market.

8. Which sites are being put forward for development?

A call for sites exercise was held allowing local residents, businesses, land owners and developers to suggest sites that they think could be suitable for housing or employment development. 119 sites were put forward in Wigan. Using the site selection criteria outlined above, and considering the need for new housing and employment space in the borough, we are proposing the following sites for development in the GMSF:

- Land North of M6 Junction 25, Wigan for around 140,000 sqm of employment floorspace.
- Land at Pocket Nook, Lowton for around 600 homes and 15,000 sqm of employment floorspace.
- Land South of Pennington, Leigh, for around 160,000 sqm of employment floorspace with a Green Belt gap to be retained between the site and Pennington to the north and opportunities sought for the site to link in to guided busway services.
- Land West of Gibfield, Atherton for 700 homes and around 45,500 sqm of employment floorspace, with a new road link to Junction 5 of the M61, substantial green infrastructure and improved service provision at, and access to, Daisy Hill station.
- Land North of Mosley Common, Tyldesley for 1,200 homes, taking advantage of the guided busway and requiring provision for new education and health facilities.

Housing

9. Why do we need more homes?

The starting point for determining if we need more homes and how many we need to build is population growth. In Wigan people are living longer and so as the population of Wigan increases more homes are needed.

Whilst population growth is an important part of deciding how many homes we need to build they are not the only consideration. Wigan Council and the rest of Greater Manchester have ambitious plans for economic growth, to improve people's skills, create new jobs and boost people's pay packets. As the economy grows and wages rise, so too does demand for housing as people move up the property ladder.

Changing social preferences are also important. It is becoming increasingly common for people to choose to live alone. By 2037 the population of Wigan will have increased, but the average household size will be smaller, which increases the demand for new homes.

If we fail to build enough homes to meet demand, homes will simply become more expensive. The plan will help make sure that housing in Wigan stays affordable and that as many people as possible can afford a home.

Most of the new homes built in Wigan are likely to be bought by people who already live in Wigan. This will include young people moving out of the parental home, couples looking to buy their first home together and growing families who need more space.

10. How many homes will be built in Wigan?

Using a standard government methodology, Greater Manchester has set itself a target for 200,980 net additional homes. The plan sets a requirement for 21,400 of these to be built in Wigan by 2037. This is equivalent to 1,126 a year and is almost identical to the target set in the last draft of the GMSF published in 2016. The government has identified a need for 944 net additional homes in Wigan a year, nearly 20% below the plan requirement. We have partly chosen a higher requirement to reflect the Council's ambitions for growth. Furthermore, a key strategy of the GMSF is to regenerate the north of Greater Manchester, including Wigan. We anticipate that more people will want to live in Wigan in the future than is currently forecast as the borough becomes a more attractive place to live

11. Can't all these homes be built on brownfield land?

The council has a policy of ensuring that all suitable vacant and previously developed land, known as brownfield land, is redeveloped. All brownfield sites considered suitable for housing with a realistic chance of being developed are included in our land supply. Such sites include the Orica site in Shevington, the former AG Barr factory in Atherton and the former Hovis factory in New Springs.

However there isn't enough brownfield land in Wigan to accommodate all the homes Wigan needs. We estimate that around 60% of new housing needed in the borough up to 2037 could be built on brownfield land. Around 40% of our potential housing supply is on land that previously hasn't been developed, known as greenfield land. Much of this land is agricultural.

12. Will land be released from the Green Belt as well to accommodate housing?

Accounting for all sites deemed suitable for housing and considered deliverable outside the Green Belt there is capacity for an estimated 21,192 homes up to 2037. This is enough to meet our requirement of 21,400 – but only just. It is always prudent to include additional sites as a buffer as some sites identified for housing may not come forward. This could be for a variety of reasons such as the necessary infrastructure not coming forward, a developer changing their plans or the site delivering fewer homes than anticipated. A buffer also creates choice and competition in the market for land, allowing for a wider range of house types to be provided in a variety of locations.

Two extra housing sites will be from land released from the Green Belt. These are 1,200 homes North of Mosley Common and 700 homes at West of Gibfield. This is the first substantive alteration to the boundaries of the Green Belt in Wigan since they were drawn up in the early 1980s.

13. There are lots of empty homes across the borough. Why can these not be occupied instead of building new homes?

The council has had a long standing priority of bringing long term empty properties back into use. This has resulted in a reduction of long term empty homes in the borough from 2,537 in 2009 to 1,359 in 2017. This represents less than 1% of the borough's total housing stock and is below national and regional averages.

14. How many of the new homes will be affordable?

The Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy requires for 25% of homes on sites of more than ten homes to be affordable, where viable. This requirement will however be reviewed when the Council prepares a new Local Plan, based on up-to-date evidence. Affordable homes are usually transferred to a registered provider of social housing such as Great Places or Adactus Housing. Further details can be found in the Council's [Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document](#). The GMSF targets 50,000 new affordable homes across Greater Manchester by 2037, with at least 30,000 of these being for social or affordable rent.

15. What about school places, and access to health and leisure facilities?

Wigan Council continually monitors school places provision, the demand for places, population age profiles, birth rates in the borough and housing developments, to ensure that we are planning effectively for new schools places when needed. We know there is some capacity in our schools to develop more places by remodelling provision or expansion on school sites. However, where

demand exceeds capacity, it will be necessary to provide new school provision. This will generally be funded by the development industry through legal agreements associated with planning permissions in the area.

Employment

16. How much land is being designated for employment?

The draft plan is proposing to allocate the following sites in the borough for employment development:

- 140,000 square metres at Junction 25 of the M6.
- 15,000 square metres at Pocket Nook, alongside proposed housing.
- 160,000 square metres at Land South of Pennington.
- 45,500 square metres at West of Gibfield, alongside proposed housing.

With the exception of Pocket Nook all of these are currently in the Green Belt.

Given their location, accessibility and prominence, these sites are likely to attract investment from logistics and manufacturing businesses which are key growth sectors in the North West.

17. Why are we releasing Green Belt for employment when there is a lot of vacant employment land in the borough which should be occupied instead?

New sites for high quality employment development are needed to attract new investment into Wigan Borough and to enable existing businesses to expand and modernise to enable the borough to compete for jobs at both the regional and national level. These will offer high quality accommodation and take advantage of the borough's strategic location and transport connections. While some of the borough's existing employment sites are successful and attractive to the market, many other sites are not for various reasons, including poor accessibility, low amenity and old accommodation that does not meet modern business needs. The Council's case for releasing land from the Green Belt for employment development can be read [here](#).

18. Why aren't we building offices?

Offices are best suited to town centre locations which are not in the Green Belt, so it isn't necessary to allocate them through the GMSF.

This does not mean that we are not planning for them though. The Council has commissioned Deloitte to develop a Strategic Regeneration Framework for Wigan town centre which identifies a need for more office development. In addition, the Council is also developing a growth strategy to ensure the borough fully capitalises on the arrival of High Speed 2 Rail from 2026. This also includes plans for office development in the town centre.

Many modern businesses prefer the large workforces, infrastructure and opportunity to be near other firms that large cities can provide. So whilst our town centres can accommodate more office development, the majority of the growth in offices in the city-region will be in Manchester city centre and at Salford Quays. However working with our partners through the GMSF allows us to make sure that people in the borough can access these employment opportunities.

19. Why is the Council promoting new sites for logistics when this sector generates relatively low levels of jobs that are low skilled and poorly paid?

The council wants to promote and grow jobs in a range of sectors including digital, creative and professional services, as well as logistics. Logistics offers a range of jobs and career opportunities including higher skilled and salaried positions. [It is forecast](#) that by 2036 up to 11,600 new jobs will be created in the logistics sector in Greater Manchester. Our location on the M6 and East Lancashire Road mean we have an opportunity to take advantage of this and make our borough a key centre for these sectors set apart from our peers. The allocations at M6 Junction 25 and South of Pennington offer key attributes – namely scale, prominence and connectivity – to attract inward investment and boost the economic profile of the borough.

Infrastructure

20. How is the provision of infrastructure being considered?

The GMSF has not been produced in isolation and is one of a suite of complementary documents designed to support the long-term aspirations for Greater Manchester.

This includes the Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework which is a precursor to the development of a Greater Manchester Infrastructure Strategy. The Infrastructure Framework reflects the remit of the National Infrastructure Commission in dealing with the following types of physical infrastructure:

- Transport
- Energy
- Water and waste water
- Flood risk management
- Digital communications
- Green and blue

Transport is at the heart of the city-region's ongoing success. The Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 sets out a future vision for 'world class connections that support long-term sustainable economic growth and access to opportunities for all'. This is supported by the new Transport Strategy Delivery Plan 2020-2025 which sets out the plan for the next five years to make rapid

progress on delivering this vision as well as longer-term plans that will in part ensure the success of the GMSF.

21. What are the key proposals for transport?

The [Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040](#) and the Transport Strategy [Draft Delivery Plan 2020-2025](#) set out the required transport interventions required to ensure that proposed developments are supported by the necessary transport infrastructure.

In the next five years, the following projects are expected to be well under way or completed:

- M58 Link Road
- A49 Link Road
- Junction improvements at Victoria Street/Warrington Road
- M58/M6 interchange upgrade
- Standish mineral line enhancement, including two new routes and a connection to Junction 27 of the M6.

Business cases will be developed for:

- Quality Bus Transit between Wigan and Bolton
- A new stop on the Leigh Guided Busway as part of the North of Mosley Common development
- A new east-west road network connecting Junction 26 of the M6 at Wigan to Junction 5 of the M61 at Bolton (including the already committed M58 Link Road and A49 Link Road)
- And these potential schemes will be investigated further:
- Extending the Vantage rapid transit bus service to Lowton and Golborne
- Upgrades to Ashton-in-Makerfield Interchange
- Introducing Metrolink tram-train services on the Atherton line, which includes Hindley, Hag Fold and Atherton
- Electrification of the rail line to Wigan via Westhoughton

The Environment

22. What are the key objectives for Greater Manchester's natural environment?

The GMSF supports the important role of Greater Manchester's natural assets by:

- Valuing the special qualities and key sensitivities of Greater Manchester's landscapes - recognising the importance of an area's appearance to the sense of place held by those who live in or visit it;
- Seeking to protect and enhance green infrastructure - the wider network of green (and blue) features which make a huge contribution to quality of life,

promote good mental and physical health, create liveable places and support economic growth;

- Seeking an overall enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity - the living organisms and ground beneath our feet which underpin the value of the natural environment and its ability to provide a wide range of important benefits, including supporting human health and quality of life;
- Seeking to maintain a Green Belt - which plays an important role in restricting unplanned development in a conurbation with a complex urban form, ensuring that its cities, towns and smaller settlements retain their identity.

23. What about our green spaces – will they be protected?

Our green space jewels will be protected and enhanced as part of the plan. The Lowland Wetlands covering the Mosslands in the south-east of the borough into Salford, and the Flashes from Leigh through to Wigan, the River Valleys including the valley of the River Douglas, and the canals – essentially our Greenheart – take centre stage in the Spatial Framework alongside the development.

24. What is the GMSF's approach towards fracking?

Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking as it is commonly known, is a term used to describe the process of extracting oil and natural gas by the fracturing of underground shale deposits.

The Government believes that shale gas has the potential to provide the UK with greater energy security, growth and jobs and encourage safe and environmentally sound exploration to determine this potential.

However, public concern over the potential impacts arising from fracking means that it has become a highly controversial and divisive issue particularly in terms of the potential environmental impacts and the principle of investing in fossil fuels rather than renewal sources of energy.

In addition, the extraction of fossil fuels would work directly against Greater Manchester's zero carbon targets, offsetting the benefits of the various measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The GMSF therefore specifies that Greater Manchester authorities, including Wigan, will not support fracking.

25. How will the GMSF contribute towards tackling air quality issues in Greater Manchester?

Air pollution has been identified as the top environmental risk to human health in the UK, and the fourth greatest threat to public health after cancer, heart disease and obesity. It is one of the biggest public health challenges, shortening

lifespans and damaging quality of life for many people. Within Greater Manchester, transport is the major source of air pollution.

It is clear that a wide range of actions will be required to improve air quality to appropriate levels, and support objectives relating to health and quality places. Many of these actions are beyond the scope of the GMSF, but the primary focus will need to be on transport given its primary contribution to air pollution.

The most significant role which the GMSF will play in this respect is to locate development in the most sustainable locations which reduce the need for car travel, for example by maximising residential densities around transport hubs.

Ideally, a higher proportion of general employment sites would be capable of being served by rail and/or water, but only a few such sites are available and hence within Greater Manchester there will need to be a stronger emphasis on the use of low-emission goods vehicles.

Government has directed Greater Manchester authorities to produce a Clean Air Plan to tackle Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) concentrations and bring them within Limit Values in the shortest possible time. The ten districts have chosen to do this collectively and an Outline Business Case will be presented to GMCA and submitted to Greater Manchester authorities for approval in 2019.

Wigan Council is currently reviewing its Supplementary Planning Document on Development and Air Quality, which sets out how planning applications in the borough will be considered against air quality considerations. The review will bring it fully up-to-date.

The Consultation

26. How can I have my say?

Residents will be able to give their views via the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework consultation portal which is hosted online at: www.gmconsult.org. This is the easiest and quickest way to respond. You can answer as many or as few of the consultation questions as you like and it counts just as much as a postal submission.

A paper copy of the draft plan is available in all public libraries in the borough.

The consultation commenced formally on Monday 21 January. All comments must be received by 23:59 on Monday 18 March 2019.

27. Is there somebody I can speak to?

Officers from Wigan Council are hosting drop-in sessions across the borough throughout February. This will be a chance to ask any questions and raise any concerns about the plan. These are detailed below.

Area	Date	Time	Venue
Mosley Common	Tuesday 5 February	4pm - 7.30pm	St John's Church Lounge, Mosley Common Road, M28 1AN
Winstanley / Hawkley	Friday 8 February	4pm – 7.30pm	Highfield Community Centre, Highfield Grange Avenue, Marus Bridge, WN3 6GH
Atherton	Monday 11 February	5pm – 8pm	Atherton Community School, Hamilton Street, Atherton, M46 0AY
Lowton / Pennington	Thursday 14 February	4pm – 7.30pm	Lowton High School, Newton Road, Lowton, WA3 1DU
Wigan	Tuesday 26 February	4pm – 7pm	Wigan Town Hall, Hewlett Street, Wigan, WN1 1YN

28. What will happen after the consultation closes?

Every comment received will be considered and will inform a new draft plan. This will be the Submission Draft which will be consulted on in summer 2019.

Following consultation, the Plan and all comments received, will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate who will independently assess how feasible the plan is and if it is in accordance with national planning policy. Depending on the conclusions of the Planning Inspector, the plan will come into force in 2020. All these dates are subject to change.