



**Wigan**♥  
**Council**

# **Wigan Authority Monitoring Report**

**2024/25**

**February 2026**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Wigan Council produces an Authority Monitoring Report to monitor the performance of policies within the borough's development plan, as well as progress with local plan preparation, in accordance with legislation.
- 1.2 The last Authority Monitoring Report was published in April 2024 covering the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2024. This report covers the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.
- 1.3 Our emerging Wigan Borough Local Plan aligns closely with Progress with Unity, the movement for change in the borough, and will help deliver on its two key missions:
1. Create fair opportunities for all children, families, residents & businesses
  2. Make all our towns and neighbourhoods flourish for those who live and work in them
- 1.4 In this context the Local Plan is ambitious for the future of the borough and, on adoption, will guide development within it to March 2039.
- 1.5 To reflect this, this Authority Monitoring Report is structured around the seven key themes which form the basis of our emerging Local Plan, ordered as follows to align with the two Progress with Unity Missions:
- Mission 1:
    - Homes
    - Jobs
    - Transport
    - People
  - Mission 2:
    - Places
    - Town and Local Centres
    - Environment
- 1.6 In accordance with the regulations, relevant indicators within these themes will be monitored and reported annually. Regular monitoring will enable the council to assess the effectiveness and continuing relevance of policies within the development plan, which will be used as evidence for the council's Local Plan review. A number of these indicators are measured against targets set out in a monitoring framework in Section 10 of the Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy (2013).
- 1.7 The Authority Monitoring Report for the Places for Everyone Plan is available as a separate accompanying document. This assesses the performance of the Places for Everyone Plan against the indicators and

policy outcomes in its monitoring framework, which are set out in Tables 12.1 to 12.7 of the Plan.

## 2. Local plan preparation

2.1 National planning practice guidance requires councils to publish information at least annually that shows progress with local plan preparation. The council's latest Local Development Scheme was prepared in February 2025. This provides a timetable for the preparation of a new Wigan Borough Local Plan, and a position statement on Neighbourhood Plans in the borough.

### Neighbourhood Plans

2.2 There are three adopted Neighbourhood Plan in the borough:

- Standish Neighbourhood Plan (July 2019)
- Golborne and Lowton West Neighbourhood Plan (July 2023)
- Abram Neighbourhood Plan (January 2025).

2.3 As at December 2025, there are four designated Neighbourhood Forums in the borough:

- Standish Voice
- Golborne and Lowton West Neighbourhood Forum
- Abram Communities Together
- Leigh Central Forum

2.4 Leigh Central Forum is designated until April 2027. Initial work on a Neighbourhood Plan for Leigh town centre and environs has stalled, and it is not anticipated that a Neighbourhood Plan will be produced.

2.5 Further details on Neighbourhood Planning in the borough can be viewed on the council's website.

### Wigan Borough Local Plan

2.6 As at December 2025, the council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan for the borough. Upon adoption, the new Wigan Borough Local Plan will supersede remaining policies in both the Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy (2013) and the Wigan Replacement Unitary Development Plan (2006). A revised Policies Map is also being prepared alongside the Local Plan.

2.7 As part of its preparation to date, the council has undertaken the following engagement on the Local Plan:

- **October – December 2022:** Specific and general consultation bodies were notified that the council is preparing a new Local Plan and were invited to make representations about what it ought to contain. Engagement with local residents and key stakeholders on key 'issues and opportunities' for the borough. This engagement

was widely publicised and comprised an online questionnaire on the 7 key themes covered in this report, attracting 1,413 responses.

- **October – December 2023:** Engagement with local residents, key stakeholders and specific and general consultation bodies on ‘Options and Preferences’. Informed by what people told us at the Issues and Opportunities consultation stage, this set out, and invited comments on, our preferred policy approach. This was widely publicised and attracted nearly 1,000 individual responses. There were a series of workshops across the borough for residents to discuss proposals with planning officers during the consultation period.
- **April – June 2025:** Consultation for eight weeks on the Initial Draft Local Plan with local residents, key stakeholders and specific and general consultation bodies. The Initial Draft Local Plan was informed by comments received at both the issues and opportunities and options and preferences stages, as well as a robust and up-to-date evidence base. The consultation was widely publicised and attracted over 5,800 individual responses, plus three separate petitions. There were a series of consultation drop-in events across the borough to enable residents to discuss proposals with planning officers during the consultation period.

2.8 Informed by the responses received on the Initial Draft Local Plan, the Council is currently preparing the Publication and Submission version of the plan, upon which consultation is anticipated in Spring/Summer 2026 ahead of submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination prior to December 2026.

2.9 The indicative timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan is set out in Figure 2.1 below:

**Figure 2.1: Indicative timetable for the preparation of the Wigan Borough Local Plan**

Stage	Date
Preparing the pre-submission version of the local plan	Oct 2022 – Feb 2026
Consultation on Publication Plan (Reg 19)	Spring / Summer 2026
Submission	By December 2026
Examination	Spring 2027
Adoption	Summer/Autumn 2027



## **Mission 1**

**Create fair opportunities for all children, families,  
residents and businesses**

*“Together, we will break down the barriers that  
create financial, health, education and environmental  
inequalities in our borough.”*

### 3 Homes

3.1 Fundamental to creating fair opportunities for everybody to realise their potential, as set out in the first Mission of Progress with Unity, is the ability to access a safe, secure and suitable home.

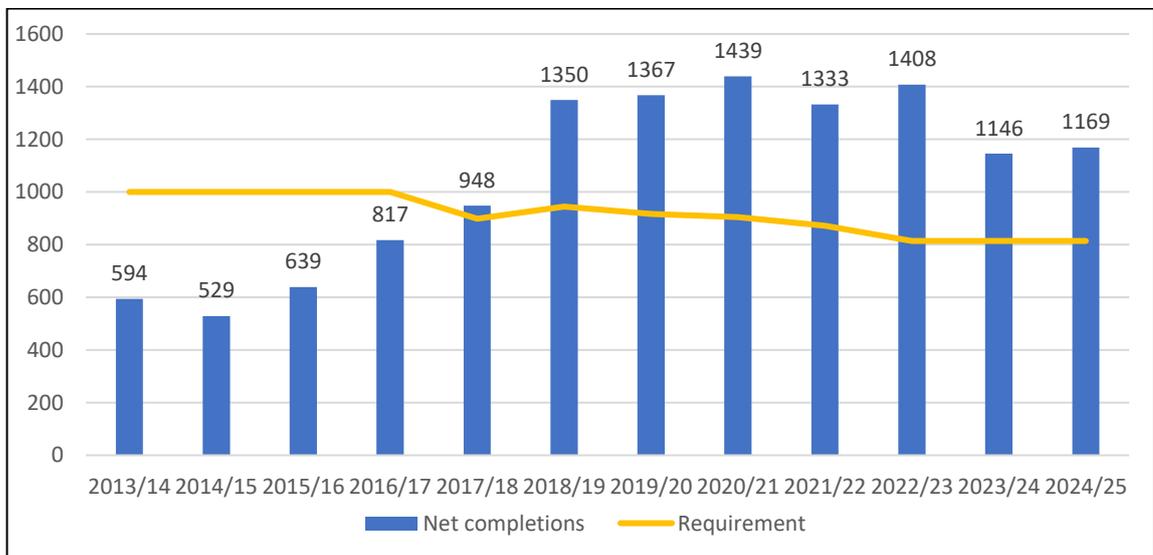
#### Housing completions

3.2 Housing completions aren't just about the numbers, they are about residents' access to safe, good quality housing that meets their needs.

3.3 Nevertheless, in order to achieve that, the borough's current housing requirement is set out in the Places for Everyone Plan. This requires an average of 972 homes per annum (net) to be delivered over the period 2022-39, which equates to 16,527 homes over the plan period. The requirement is phased with 814 homes per annum required from 2022-25, 972 homes per annum from 2025-30 and 1,025 homes per annum from 2030-39.

3.4 As shown in Figure 3.1, net annual completions in the borough have exceeded requirements since 2017/18 but were below them in previous years.

**Figure 3.1: Net housing completions (2013-25)**



Source: Wigan Council

#### Housing Delivery Test

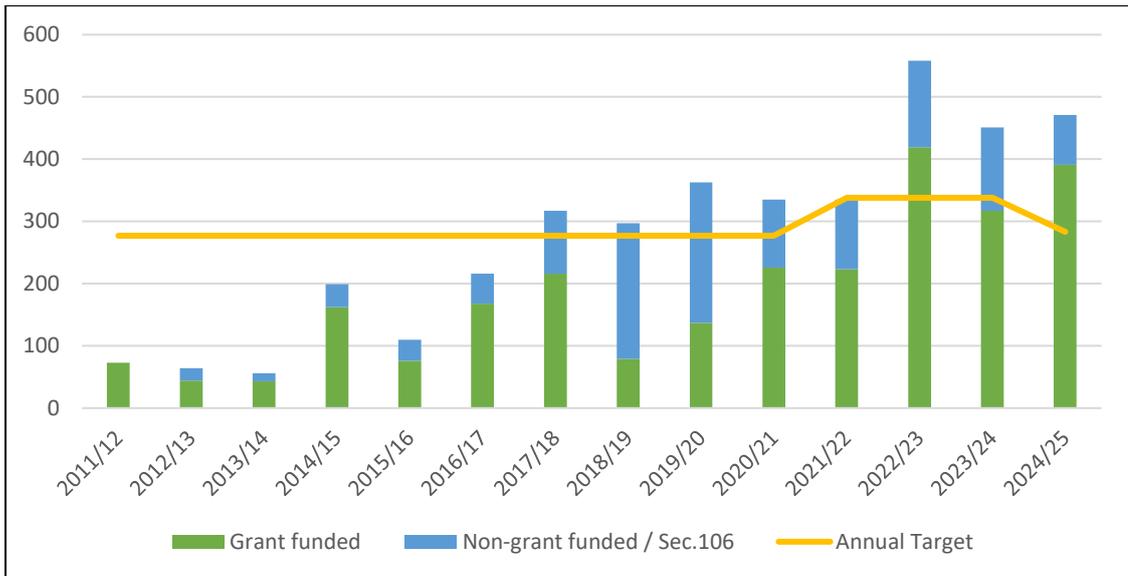
3.5 The Government introduced an annual Housing Delivery Test in 2018. This sets out a standard measure to compare the delivery of homes over the previous three financial years against the number of homes required during that period.

- 3.6 Wigan Borough scored 180% in the 2023 Housing Delivery Test, which looks back over the financial years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23. This means that the council is only required to apply a 5% buffer when calculating its five-year housing land supply. As at December 2025, the 2024 Housing Delivery Test measurements have not been published by Government.

### **Affordable housing completions**

- 3.7 Affordable housing is delivered either directly by the council or by registered providers. Registered providers receive grant funding to build new homes or receive new homes from housing developers as part of planning obligations (Section 106 agreements). Section 106 agreements are secured as part of planning permissions for new housing, in line with Policy CP6 of the Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy, which requires 25% of homes on private developments of ten or more units to be affordable, subject to viability. The preference is for these to be offered to registered providers for a mix of affordable rent and shared ownership.
- 3.8 The 2024 Wigan Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) identifies a need for 283 net additional affordable homes per annum in the borough, which is lower than the figure of 338 per annum in the 2020 LHNA.
- 3.9 In 2024/25, 471 affordable homes were delivered in the borough, which is higher than the identified annual need. 391 of these homes were grant funded, 71 were secured through Section 106 agreements and 9 were secured through other arrangements with the private sector.
- 3.10 As shown in Figure 3.2, affordable housing delivery in the borough fell short of annual targets from 2011-17. This was primarily a result of the national economic downturn with lower housing delivery rates resulting in low levels of affordable homes delivered through Section 106 agreements. Affordable housing delivery has, however, picked up in the borough from 2017, with the annual target being exceeded each year from 2017-2025, except for 2021/22 when it fell just short.
- 3.11 In total, 3,835 affordable homes have been delivered since April 2011, which equates to an average of 274 per year. Around 67% of these have been grant funded, including homes delivered directly by the council, with the remainder delivered largely through S106 agreements.

**Figure 3.2: Affordable homes delivered in the borough**

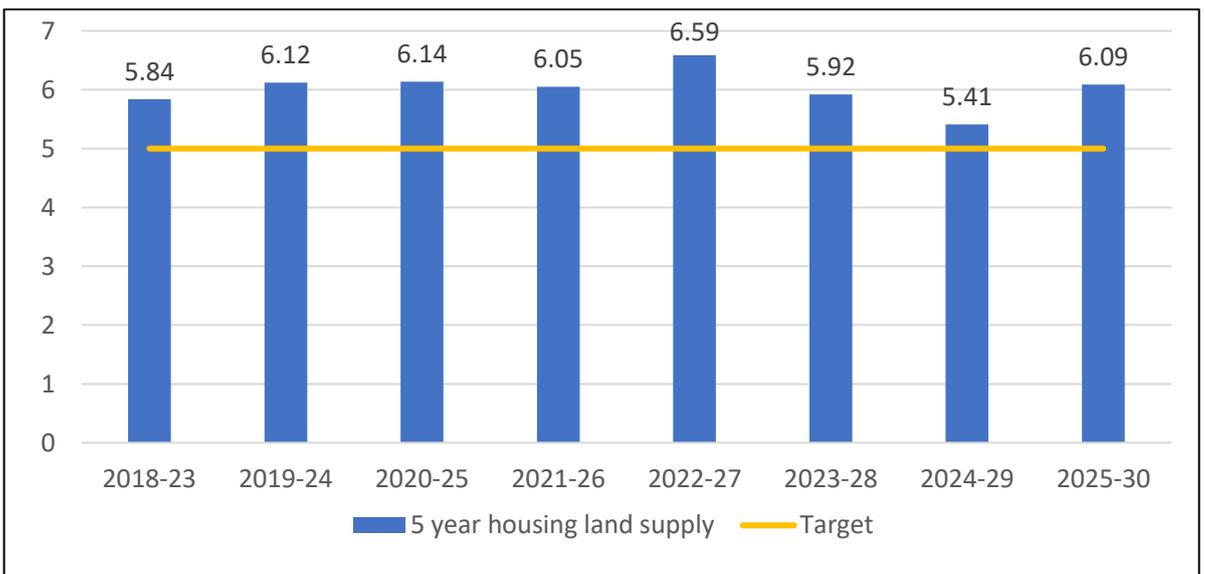


Source: Wigan Council

**Five-year housing land supply position**

3.12 Figure 3.3 shows that the Council can demonstrate a 6.09-year deliverable housing land supply for the period 2025-30 in relation to phased housing requirements set by the Places for Everyone Plan and has been able to demonstrate a five-year supply consistently since 2018. Details of the sites which make up the borough’s 5-year housing supply can be found in the Wigan Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

**Figure 3.3: Five-year housing land supply position in Wigan Borough**



Source: Wigan Council

### Proportion of new housing development on brownfield sites

- 3.13 As shown in Figure 3.4, just over half of the homes built annually in the borough over the period 2018-25 have been on brownfield sites, with the highest proportion achieved in 2024/25.

**Figure 3.4: Percentage of new homes on brownfield sites**

Year	Net completions	Greenfield	Brownfield	%
2018/19	1,350	689	662	49%
2019/20	1,367	860	507	37%
2020/21	1,439	739	700	49%
2021/22	1,333	677	656	49%
2022/23	1,408	631	777	55%
2023/24	1,146	493	653	57%
2024/25	1,169	417	752	64%
2018-25	9,212	4,506	4,707	51%

Source: Wigan Council

### Provision for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

- 3.14 The Greater Manchester Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (2024) identifies a need for an additional 6 pitches to meet the needs of gypsies and travellers in the borough for the period 2023-28, and an additional 12 pitches for the period 2028-41. The Council intends to address this need through the emerging Wigan Borough Local Plan.
- 3.15 The Wigan Local Housing Needs Assessment identifies sufficient capacity on existing yards in the borough to meet the needs of travelling showpeople over the period of the new Local Plan.

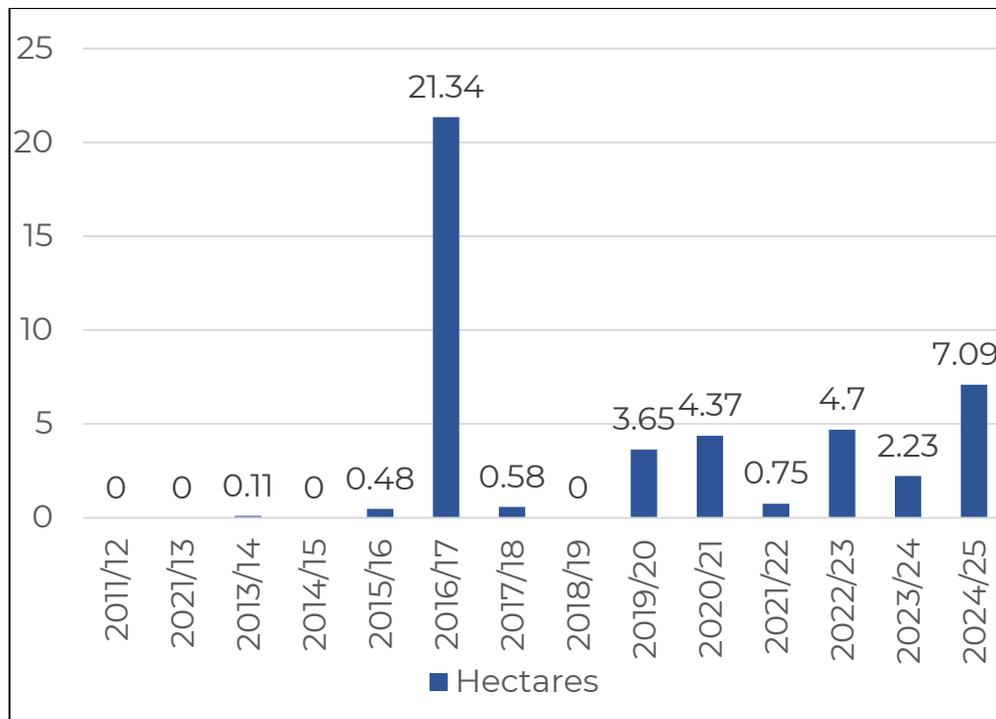
## 4 Jobs

4.1 The ability to access work is fundamental to creating fair opportunities for everybody to realise their potential, as set out in the first Mission of Progress with Unity. Planning has a key contribution to make to this in helping to ensure that the conditions are right for businesses to invest in the borough, whether they be local start-ups and social enterprises, or big international companies, and this includes ensuring that the right land and buildings are available in the right locations. Wigan Borough is a significant exporter of workers to jobs elsewhere at present, in part to secure better jobs with higher pay, but also because of a shortage of job and business opportunities in the borough.

### Employment land take-up

4.2 The Local Plan Core Strategy identified a need for new employment sites of the right quality in the borough to attract, maintain and grow businesses. Policy CP5 identified a need for the provision for around 200 hectares of new employment land to meet needs from to 2026, equating to around 13.33 hectares per annum. However, as shown in Figure 4.1, take up has been significantly below this with only 45.3 hectares taken up during the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2025, equating to just 3.24 hectares per year.

**Figure 4.1: Employment land take-up (hectares) (2011-2025)**



Source: Wigan Council

4.3 Whilst the low take-up rate from 2009 to 2015 was primarily dictated by the international recession, which had a major impact on investment

nationally and particularly across towns in the north of England, the limited supply of good quality, larger, deliverable sites in the borough has also been a significant factor.

- 4.4 The higher take-up rate in 2016/17 comprised 7.99 hectares (previously recorded as 1.98ha) at Westwood Park, developed as part of the relocation of Nice Pak's manufacturing plant from Hindley Green, and 13.35 hectares spread across three plots at South Lancashire Industrial Estate, developed for three warehouses occupied by Bunzl plc, Poundland and Compagne Fruitiere. These warehouses predominantly occupy land that was used previously by Georgia Pacific, whose warehouse was destroyed by a fire in 2011. Within 5 years of the fire, the site was cleared, sold and redeveloped, demonstrating that good quality sites are taken quickly when they become available.
- 4.5 The employment take-up in 2024/25 comprised of:
- 3 units for B1(a), B1(c) and B8 flexible uses at Linstock Way, Atherton.
  - A Class B8 warehouse (storage & distribution) with ancillary offices at Bridge Street, Golborne.
  - A new warehouse (B8) with ancillary office accommodation, light manufacturing (E(g)iii) at Plot 3 Makerfield Way, Ince.
  - B2, B8 open storage and distribution and Class E (g)(i) administrative function at Millingford Industrial Estate Bridge Street Golborne.
  - The change of use to Class B2/B8/E with sub-division of a building into 12 units at Queen Street, Golborne.
- 4.6 Employment take-up in the borough is anticipated to improve in the short-medium term following the approval of 133,966 sqm of high-quality employment floorspace on land at M6 Junction 25 in July 2021 (planning reference 18/85947). This will comprise eight B8 units, of which two have full planning permission (27,871 sqm) and the remaining 6 have outline planning permission (106,095 sqm). A recently issued certificate of lawful development (24/97738/LUCP) confirms that development has commenced on site.
- 4.7 In addition, a further 6 employment developments, totalling 124,838 sqm, are currently under construction at:
- Chaddock Lane, Astley (23/96226/MAJOR)
  - Plot 2 Martland Park and Heinz, Wigan (24/97573/RMMAJ)
  - Plots 2 and 3 Warrington Road, Hawkley (21/90935/MAJOR)
  - Part of South Lancashire Industrial Estate extension, Ashton-in-Makerfield (21/92036/OUTMAJ)
  - South Of Wigan Road Farm, Wigan Road, Golborne (22/94882/MAJOR)
  - Offices as part of the regeneration of Eckersley Mills (23/95983).

4.8 Policy CP5 in the Local Plan Core strategy was replaced by policies JP-J1 and JP-J2 in the Places for Everyone Plan when it was adopted in March 2024. However, the PfE Plan does not set specific land requirements for Wigan Borough. This is being addressed through the Wigan Borough Local Plan but, meanwhile, the land requirements set out in policy CP5 remain relevant for monitoring purposes.

**Loss of employment land to non-employment uses**

4.9 As shown in Figure 4.2, 1.78 hectares of employment land within the borough’s 35 designated Primary Employment Areas (as designated in Policy EM1A of the 2006 Wigan Unitary Development Plan) were lost to non-employment uses between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. This contributes to an overall loss of 87.56 hectares of employment land within Primary Employment Areas since 2011, with the vast majority being for housing.

**Figure 4.2: Employment land within Primary Employment Areas lost to non-employment uses, 2024-2025**

Site ref:	Planning ref:	Site Name	Emp. land lost (ha)	New use
EM1A.30	23/96416/MAJ	Former Pemberton Colliery, Queen Pit Road, Wigan	1.78	Housing
<b>Total</b>			<b>1.78</b>	

Source: Wigan Council

4.10 Figure 4.2 only includes sites with full permission or with reserved matters approval which are built or where development has started. There are only two sites (totalling 0.45 hectares) with permission for non-employment uses within Primary Employment Areas where development had not yet started as at April 2025.

4.11 Outside of designated Primary Employment Areas, an additional site of 0.8 hectares of former employment uses have been lost between April 2024 and March 2025, making a total of 7.82 hectares of employment land has been lost to non-employment uses since 2011. This included land at the former Bispham Hall Brick and Terracotta Works in Orrell; Howe Bridge Mill in Atherton; land to the rear of Moss Industrial Estate in Lowton; and at Bradley Lane, Standish - all of these schemes were for housing. There are also three sites (totalling 0.35 hectares) with permission for non-employment uses where development had not yet started as at April 2025.

4.12 Figure 4.3 presents a summary of employment land losses since 2011, with the majority lost for housing. Proposals for housing or other uses are often supported by compelling evidence that sites are either unviable for the continued employment use, or that there is a proven

lack of demand. Poor accessibility to the motorway network and/or the outdated condition of existing sites or accommodation often contribute to this. The emerging Wigan Borough Local Plan will address the need to identify a suitable suite of employment sites that meet occupiers' needs going forward.

**Figure 4.3: Summary of employment land lost in the period April 2011 - April 2025 (hectares)**

Employment land lost	Implemented	Unimplemented permissions	Total
Within Primary Employment Areas	87.56	0.45	88.01
Outside Primary Employment Areas	7.82	0.35	8.17
<b>Total</b>	<b>95.38</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>96.18</b>

Source: Wigan Council

## 5 Transport

- 5.1 Investing in our transport system is vital for our future and for delivering on our Progress with Unity missions. We aim to make transport opportunities more equitable, so that there are fair opportunities for all children, families, residents and businesses, and tackle air quality, reduce carbon emissions and environmental impacts and make places more liveable.

### Bus and rail services

- 5.2 Figure 5.1 shows the proportion of trips by different modes into Wigan town centre during the AM peak (07:30-09:30) in 2011, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. TfGM last updated this data in 2022, therefore this data is unchanged from the previous report.

**Figure 5.1: Trips into Wigan town centre, AM peak, 2011-22**

Mode	Proportion of trips					% change				
	2011	2019	2020	2021	2022	2011-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2011-22
<b>Bus</b>	25%	23%	17%	24%	23%	-2%	-6%	7%	-1%	-2%
<b>Rail</b>	11%	8%	10%	6%	9%	-3%	2%	-4%	3%	-2%
<b>Walk</b>	26%	31%	32%	30%	30%	5%	1%	-2%	0%	4%
<b>Cycle</b>	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
<b>Car</b>	37%	38%	40%	39%	37%	1%	2%	-1%	-2%	0%
<b>Total</b>	9,481	9,155	8,377	6,104	6,778	-326	-778	-	674	-
						-3%	-8%	-27%	11%	-29%

Source: TfGM Highways Forecasting and Analytical Service

- 5.3 These timeframes allow an assessment of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on travel patterns and behaviours during 2020 and 2021. The 2020 surveys were undertaken during the Covid-19 outbreak. The 2021 surveys were undertaken when there was no lockdown in place and educational establishments had reopened, however, higher education had partially moved online, and homeworking was advised where possible. The data for 2022 allows an initial insight into how travel behaviours have changed post-pandemic.
- 5.4 Unsurprisingly, Figure 5.1 shows a notable reduction in the number of trips into Wigan town centre during 2019/20 (-8%) and 2020/21 (-27%). As a proportion, it shows a 6% reduction in bus use in 2019/20 and a 4% reduction in rail use in 2020/21. It also shows that between 2021 to 2022, there has been a decrease in both bus and rail travel, with both modes showing a 2% decrease. It must be noted that walking has increased by 4%, which could show people were opting to walk into the centre as opposed to using public transport. 2021 – 2022 is also the first year since

2019 where we see a slight uplift in total trips into the town centre by 11% compared to 2021.

- 5.5 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on bus and rail service use into Wigan town centre is better shown in Figure 5.2 which shows the percentage change by mode rather than proportional change.

**Figure 5.2: Percentage change by mode of trip into Wigan town centre**

Mode	2019-20	2020-21	2021-2022
Bus	-32%	3%	17%
Rail	14%	-56%	58%
Walk	-6%	-32%	11%
Car	-4%	-29%	4%
Total trips	-778	-2,273	674
	-8%	-27%	11%

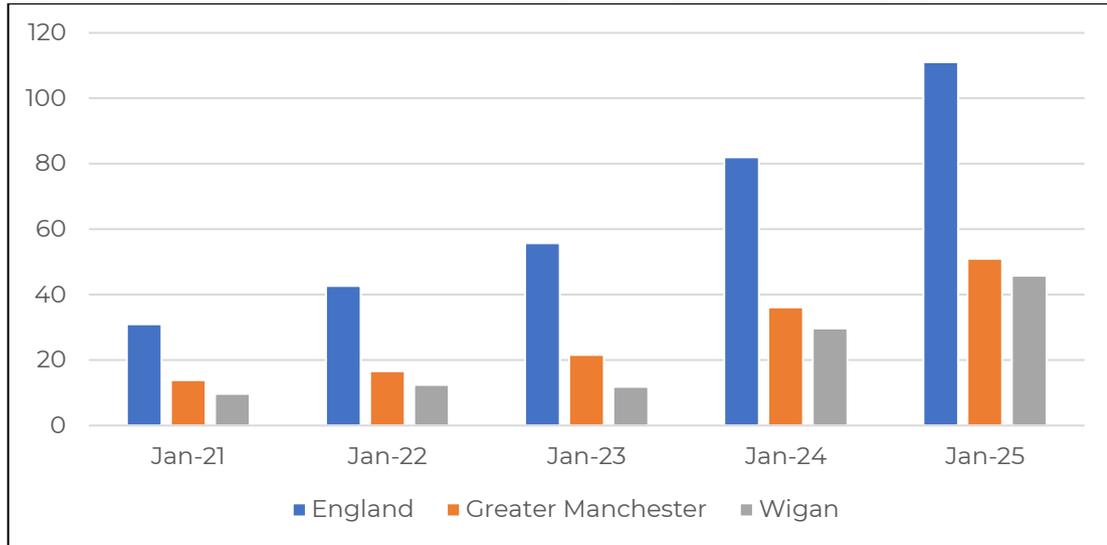
Source: Wigan Council calculations based on data from TfGM Highways Forecasting and Analytical Service (shown in Figure 6.1). Please note numbers are subject to rounding error.

- 5.6 Figure 5.2 shows that trips into Wigan town centre by bus and rail reduced significantly in the period 2019-21, by 30% and 50% respectively. However, this changes between 2021-22, with rail rebounding by 58%, bus by 17%, and walking by 11%. This equates to 220 more rail passengers and 227 more bus passengers.
- 5.7 The number of trips on foot and by car also increased by around 11% and 4% between 2021 and 2022, equating to an increase of 203 and 101 trips respectively.

### **Number of publicly accessible electric vehicle charging points**

- 5.8 Data from the Department for Transport shows that the number of electric vehicle (EV) charge points per 100,000 population is growing nationally, as set out in Figure 5.3. In Wigan Borough, provision has increased significantly from 9.7 charge points per 100,000 in 2021 to 45.8 in 2025. However, availability in the borough and Greater Manchester continues to lag the national average.
- 5.9 The Council adopted a [Development and Air Quality Supplementary Planning Document](#) in April 2021 which requires the provision of EV charge points (with smart charging functionality) on all new residential developments and on a range of other land uses including employment, retail, community, leisure, medical or health facilities, and on commercial car parks, unless it is not practicable, in line with set minimum requirements. As such, the number of EV charge points per 100,000 population is anticipated to rise in the short to medium term and become more in line with national averages going forward.

**Figure 5.3: Number of EV charge points per 100,000 population**



Source: Department for Transport

- 5.10 As shown in Figure 5.4, the number of EV charge points that are rapid chargers or above gradually increased in the borough between January 2021 to January 2024, increasing from 2.7 to 7.9 per 100,000 population. Between January 2024 and January 2025, a more significant increase was seen from 7.9 to 15 per 100,000 population.
- 5.11 In January 2023, Wigan Borough fell behind the GM average of rapid charge points. By January 2025, the Greater Manchester average reached 20.5 per 100,000 population compared to 15.0 in the borough.
- 5.12 Note that from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023, the speed category of rapid charge points changed from 25kW or above to 50kW or above to be in line with the industry.

**Figure 5.4: Number of EV charge points that are rapid chargers or above per 100,000 population**



Source: Department for Transport

## 6 People

- 6.1 The health and wellbeing of our communities, both physically and mentally, is integral to ensuring there are fair opportunities for all children, families, residents and businesses, as set out in Mission 1 of Progress with Unity.

### **Percentage of applicable schemes supported by a Health Impact Assessment**

- 6.2 Policy JP-P6 of the Places for Everyone Plan requires a Health Impact Assessment to be submitted in support of all development proposals for which an Environmental Impact Assessment is required, or other proposals where the council considers that a Health Impact Assessment is needed, showing, as far as is reasonable, how the proposals will impact positively on health and wellbeing. The Planning for Health Supplementary Planning Document, adopted in April 2022, provides clear and consistent guidance on how Health Impact Assessments should be undertaken in support of development proposal in Wigan Borough.
- 6.3 This indicator will be monitored from April 2026 and will be reported on in subsequent Authority Monitoring Reports.

### **Loss of sport, recreation and informal open space to other uses**

- 6.4 The Local Plan Core Strategy sets a target of no net loss of sport, recreation and informal open space to other uses, except where compliant with policy details.
- 6.5 The council's Open Space Report (2025) assesses the quantity, quality and value of open space within the borough for the following typologies: parks and gardens, natural / semi-natural greenspace, amenity greenspace, provision for children and young people, allotments, cemeteries and churchyards, civic spaces, green corridors, and outdoor sports. The report identifies shortfalls and surpluses across the borough which is used in decision making for development on or within open spaces. Pitch sports facilities are addressed separately in the council's Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy (2025).
- 6.6 A total of 36.6 hectares of open space has been approved for other land uses throughout the borough since April 2013 across a total of 43 sites. This does not include open spaces that will be replaced with equal or better provision elsewhere in the borough in accordance with Policy CP2.
- 6.7 Around half of the open space lost to, or committed for, development since 2013 are natural / semi natural greenspace or amenity greenspace. These losses are generally small and on the edge of much

larger areas. The borough has an abundance of natural / semi-natural greenspace largely as a legacy of the borough's mining and industrial past, and pockets of amenity greenspace. Consequently, this is of varying quality and value, with the loss of some low value areas to other uses deemed appropriate, as set out in Policy CP2, where there is comparable or better quality open space provision in the vicinity.

- 6.8 There were no schemes with full planning permission or reserved matters approved during this monitoring year.



## **Mission 2**

**Make all our towns and  
neighbourhoods flourish for those  
who live and work in them.**

“Together, in genuine partnership with our residents and businesses, who know our communities best, we will help each town and neighbourhood in the borough to celebrate and maintain their identity whilst understanding and helping to achieve what is needed to thrive.”

## 7 Places

7.1 Ensuring new developments secure high quality and inclusive design and conserving and enhancing the borough’s rich historic environment are both fundamental to making our towns and neighbourhoods flourish for those who live, work and visit them, as set out in the second mission of Progress with Unity.

### Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas on Heritage at Risk Register

7.2 Historic England, the Government’s statutory advisor for heritage, publishes its Heritage at Risk Register on an annual basis. This covers Grade I and II\* listed buildings and Grade II listed places of worship, as well as Conservation Areas across the country. The register identifies heritage assets that are at risk of losing their significance due to their deterioration and/or neglect.

7.3 Figure 7.2 identifies the number of entries on the Register in Wigan Borough annually since 2013, and shows 6 buildings, 3 places of worship and 2 conservation areas at risk (as at December 2025). These include the same 6 buildings and the 2 conservation areas that were at risk in 2013.

7.4 The Grade I listed Church of St Wilfrid in Standish was added to the Register in November 2025 due to a wood-boring beetle infestation affecting its decorative timber ceilings. As such, the number of assets on the Register remained at 10 at the end of the monitoring period in March 2025.

**Figure 7.1: Heritage at Risk Register, Wigan Borough**

Year	Type of entry			Total
	Building or Structure	Place of Worship	Conservation Area	
2013	6	0	2	8
2014	6	1	2	9
2015	6	3	2	11
2016-17	6	2	2	10
2018-22	6	1	2	9
2023-24	6	2	2	10
2025	6	3	2	11

Source: Wigan Council

7.5 The 11 heritage assets considered to be at risk in the borough at December 2025 are:

- Leigh Spinners Mill (Grade II\*)
- Haigh Hall Park Gateway and Lodges, Wigan Lane (Grade II\*)
- Barn and stable to east of Winstanley Hall and two attached gateways (Grade II\*)
- Winstanley Hall (Grade II\*)
- Haigh Hall (Grade II\*)
- Headgear at Astley Green Colliery (Grade II and Scheduled Ancient Monument)
- Queen's Hall Methodist Mission, Market Street, Wigan (Grade II)
- Church of St. Catherine, Scholes (Grade II)
- Church of St. Wilfrid, Standish (Grade I)
- Leigh Bridge Conservation Area
- Tyldesley Town Centre Conservation Area

- 7.6 Leigh Spinners Mill is in a process of reassessment and realignment after a few years of disruption. A bid for funding is being prepared and commercial opportunities for the upper floors of the second mill are being explored to complement the community, independent and startup uses that Mill 1 is geared towards.
- 7.7 Conversion works are underway to the lodges at Haigh Hall Park Gateway and Lodges and Phase 1 works to Haigh Hall to make the site weatherproof are almost complete with completion anticipated in early 2026.
- 7.8 A full planning application, and associated application for Listed Building consent were submitted in September 2025 for the conversion of Winstanley Hall as part of a wider residential development proposal. The proposal is for 432 new homes, including the conversion of the Winstanley Hall complex of buildings into 36 homes. As at December 2025, the planning application is awaiting determination.
- 7.9 The Mining Museum at Astley Green Colliery are preparing a Heritage Lottery Fund bid for some enabling works and repair to the engine house in preparation for a capital bid for the headgear in 2028-29.
- 7.10 Queen's Hall Methodist Mission have submitted their bid for capital works programme that if successful will run from 2025-2030.
- 7.11 Tyldesley Town Centre Conservation Area has improved, there has been concentrated funding from Historic England through Heritage Action Zones and supported by UKSPF.

### **Green Belt land lost to development**

- 7.12 As set out in the previous Authority Monitoring Report for the period 2022-24, the Green Belt boundary in the borough was redrawn for the first time since its introduction in the early 1980s upon the adoption of

the Places for Everyone Plan in March 2024. This resulted in a loss of 175 hectares of Green Belt land in the borough (equating to a 1.6% reduction), through the allocation of three sites for housing and/or employment development to meet identified development needs.

- 7.13 Since 2013, the vast majority of development within the Green Belt has been limited infilling, agricultural buildings or the redevelopment of brownfield sites, in accordance with national planning policy and the adopted development plan.
- 7.14 As shown in Figure 7.1, three major development proposals have been approved in the Green Belt since 2018 as it was considered, following detailed assessment, that the level of benefits that they would bring constituted ‘very special circumstances’, which significantly outweighed Green Belt harm and any other harm, in line with national planning policy.

**Figure 7.2: Major development approved in the Green Belt**

Ref	Site address	Proposed development	Site area (hectares)	Approved
A/17/83702	Former site of Maxilead Metals, Mosley Common	Residential-led mixed use development	3.19	May 2018
A/18/85947	Land at M6 Junction 25, Wigan	High quality employment development comprising 133,966 sqm of employment floorspace	54.41	June 2021
A/22/94882	Agricultural Land South of Wigan Road Farm, Golborne	Mixed use development for employment, residential and open space	10.9	December 2023

Source: Wigan Council

- 7.15 The former site of Maxilead Metals and the land at M6 Junction 25 are both no longer in the Green Belt following the adoption of the Places for Everyone Plan in March 2024 but were in the Green Belt on approval.
- 7.16 The residential-led development on the former Maxilead Metals site is now complete. The proposed employment development on land at M6 Junction 25 in Wigan was approved following call-in by the Secretary of State and a subsequent Public Inquiry. The development, which will comprise 8 units, will help to address a pressing need in the borough

and the wider North-West for high quality warehousing and distribution development, in a location that optimises access to the M6 and the wider strategic road network.

The mixed use development approved on land south of Wigan Road, Golborne is under construction and will comprise a large redevelopment and expansion of the existing employment use operated by Murphy Group, a multi-disciplinary engineering and construction company, which will facilitate their retention in the borough. It also comprises the development of 26 new homes and the creation of public open space including new footpaths.

## **8 Town and local centres**

- 8.1 We are very ambitious for our town centres and local centres because it is the right thing to do for our communities, helping the borough to deliver on Mission 2 of Progress with Unity, making all our towns and neighbourhoods flourish for those who live and work in them.

### **The national position**

- 8.2 The retail sector in 2025 has continued to see turmoil with 17 major UK retailers going out of business or significantly downsizing and around 850 chain stores closing including Poundland, Claire's Accessories, Dobbies, and Homebase. Recovery post-Covid for retailing has been significantly hampered by cost of living rises with food and energy prices forcing households to economise and thus curtailing consumer spend. Internet shopping had fallen from 30.7% of consumer spend in 2021 to 26.7% in 2024 as people returned to high street shopping, however this figure has risen again in 2025 to 28.1%, likely due to the high number of store closures and further cost of living increases.
- 8.3 Town centres are increasingly looking to evolve with a focus on leisure activities including food and drink outlets, gyms, children's soft play, events, and opportunities for tourism where possible. To support these activities, investment in the buildings and surrounding infrastructure is needed, including improved access by walking, wheeling and cycling, and better public transport. National and local funding has been increasingly targeted at town centres for these types of improvements, including in Wigan, Leigh and Ashton town centres.

### **Vacancies in town centres**

- 8.4 Up to 2023, the Council monitored vacancy rates for units and floor space in town centres through an annual on-foot survey that considered only ground floor uses. In 2024, the Council used business data from its Destin system to identify the number of retail and commercial properties, floorspace, and vacancies. As part of this approach, the indoor markets for Wigan and Leigh town centres were separated out. As a result, the previous AMR provided data for vacancy rates in Wigan and Leigh town centres with separate figures for the market halls. In 2025, Nexus Planning were commissioned by the Council to produce a Retail Impact Threshold Report which has been used for this AMR and does not separate out the markets from the town centres.
- 8.5 Figure 8.1 shows that Wigan town centre still has the highest vacancy rates in the borough at 32.3% for units and 30.8% for floorspace. This figure is significantly higher than the national average of 14.1% and 14.4% respectively. However, data from 2024 showed Wigan Market Hall

had vacancy rates of over 50% due to the ongoing redevelopment of the former Galleries and Marketgate shopping centre area, which will include a new market hall, which is a main attribute for the high vacancy rate percentages this year also.

8.6 Leigh town centre is showing vacancy rates at 19.7% for units and 12.5% for floorspace for the town centre.

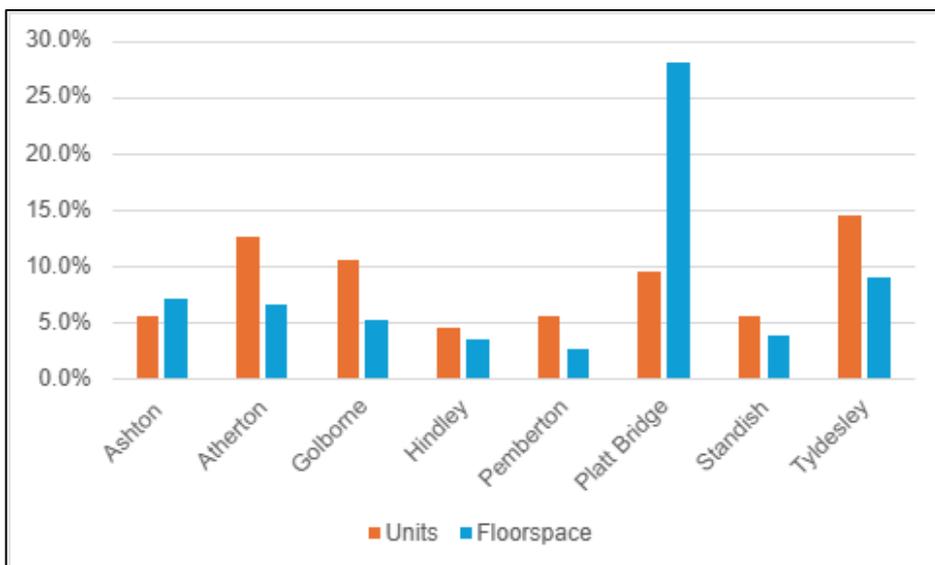
**Figure 8.1: Percentage of vacant units and vacant floorspace in Wigan and Leigh town centres (2025)**



Source: Wigan Council

8.7 Figure 8.2 shows the vacancy rates for units and floorspace in the borough’s other town centres in 2024.

**Figure 8.2: Percentage of vacant units and vacant floorspace in other town centres**



Source: Wigan Council

- 8.8 The town centres showing the highest vacancy rates are Tyldesley with units at 14.5% and floorspace 9%, and Platt Bridge at 9.6% for units and 28% for floorspace. The difference in the rates of unit and floorspace vacancy as seen with Platt Bridge is often down to a number of larger units being vacant.
- 8.9 Atherton and Golborne are also showing a higher number of vacant units with rates at 12.6% and 10.5% respectively, while their floorspace vacancy rates are 6.6% and 5.2%. This indicates that it is smaller units that are vacant, which are a feature of these two town centres.
- 8.10 Ashton shows vacancy rates for units at 5.6% and 7.1% for floorspace, while Hindley shows vacancy rates for units at 4.5% and 3.6% for floorspace, Pemberton shows a vacancy rate for units of 5.6% and 2.6% for floorspace, and Standish shows a vacancy rate for units of 5.5% and 3.8% for floorspace.

## 9 Environment

9.1 Wigan Borough has a unique natural environment that provides multiple benefits for our communities and is a key source of local pride for residents. Protecting and strengthening our environment helps us deliver on our Progress with Unity mission by reducing environmental inequalities and making our towns and neighbourhoods flourish for those who live in them.

### Changes in area of designated ecological sites

9.2 As at 2022, there were 93 Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) covering a combined area of 1,606 hectares in the borough. A sample of Wigan's SBIs is reviewed annually by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) in line with their Service Level Agreement, which requires each SBI to be resurveyed at least once every 10 years. The review of SBIs is reported in the year following the survey season, however the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on surveying and led to a delay in the publication of the 2019, 2020 and 2021 data which is now available. Figure 9.1 summarises the quality and quantity of SBIs in the borough, and how this has changed since 2011. The grading of sites is defined as follows:

- Grade A - of Regional or County Importance
- Grade B - of District Importance
- Grade C - of importance within the locality at a sub-district level.

**Figure 9.1: Quality and quantity of SBIs in the borough**

	2011	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Number of SBIs</b>								
Grade A	36	36	36	36	36	36	37	37
Grade B	29	31	31	31	32	32	32	31
Grade C	27	24	26	26	25	25	25	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Area of SBIs (ha)</b>								
Grade A	1,115	1,096	1,094	1,091	1,089	1,091	1,094	1,092
Grade B	348	359	359	359	362	362	386	385
Grade C	139	126	139	139	128	128	129	129
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,602</b>	<b>1,581</b>	<b>1,593</b>	<b>1,589</b>	<b>1,580</b>	<b>1,581</b>	<b>1,609</b>	<b>1,606</b>

Source: Wigan Council

9.3 This shows that the overall number of SBIs in the borough increased by one during the period 2011-2022, with an increase of two of district importance and one of regional or county importance. Despite this, there has been an increase of 4 hectares within this timeframe.

- 9.4 Since 31 March 2022, The Flashes of Wigan and Leigh was formally designated as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) in October 2022, in recognition of the area's natural beauty and significant ecological importance. The NNR comprises a number of precious wetland habitats across a number of sites with a total land area of 738.21 hectares. It is managed by Forestry England, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, and Wigan Council.
- 9.5 Prior to the designation of the NNR, there were 9 Local Nature Reserves in the borough totalling 379.08 hectares. The NNR replaces 6 of these, resulting in 3 remaining Local Nature Reserves at Kirkless (28.1 hectares), Borsdane Wood (24.5 hectares) and Greenslate Meadows (9.65 hectares).
- 9.6 There has been no change to Special Areas of Conservation or SSSIs within this monitoring period.

**Number of tonnes of greenhouse gases emitted annually from traffic**

- 9.7 Figure 9.2 sets out estimated annual levels of greenhouse gases emitted from traffic and railways in the borough in the period 2011-2023. The Local Plan Core Strategy sets a target for a reduction over time.
- 9.8 The data shows that emissions from transport reduced by 83.5 kilo tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (kt CO<sub>2</sub>e) (-17%) over the period 2011-23 with reductions particularly on A Roads (22%). Emissions on minor roads were down by 16% in the same period, while motorways decreased by 14%.

**Figure 9.2: Greenhouse gas emission estimates (2011-23) – kt CO<sub>2</sub>e<sup>1</sup>**

Year	Road transport				Diesel Railways	Transport Other	Transport Total
	A Roads	Motor- ways	Minor roads	Roads total			
2011	170.7	131.7	184.9	486.7	6.9	8.2	502.3
2012	164.1	132.2	187.0	483.3	7.0	8.1	498.4
2013	158.8	130.7	185.7	475.3	7.1	8.4	490.7
2014	160.7	132.3	188.5	481.5	7.3	8.6	497.4
2015	159.2	134.2	189.5	482.9	7.0	8.8	498.7
2016	159.5	139.2	194.5	493.1	6.9	8.8	508.8
2017	154.4	139.8	195.7	489.9	6.8	9.2	505.9
2018	148.3	136.6	199.2	484.1	6.4	9.4	499.9
2019	143.2	131.8	201.9	476.9	6.7	10.1	493.7
2020	121.0	116.4	174.9	412.4	5.3	8.9	426.5
2021	136.3	123.8	159.5	419.6	5.6	9.6	434.9
2022	136.2	119.9	155.8	411.9	5.4	10.0	427.4
2023	134.5	113.1	154.9	402.5	5.7	10.7	418.8

Source: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

### Annual greenhouse gas emissions in the borough by sector

- 9.9 The strategic objective set for energy in the Local Plan Core Strategy is to strengthen our energy infrastructure and minimise emissions of greenhouse gases.
- 9.10 In 2019, Wigan Council declared a climate emergency and a target to reach net zero by 2038. The council adopted its Outline Climate Change Strategy in 2020 which sets out how the 2038 net zero target will be reached and how progress will be monitored. These developments supersede the initial aims of the Core Strategy and the monitoring indicators set in the new Climate Change Strategy will be a more important monitor of progress on low carbon development going forward.
- 9.11 Figure 9.3 shows annual greenhouse gas emission estimates (kt CO<sub>2</sub>e) in the borough from 2011, when the Core Strategy was adopted, to 2022 across the industrial, commercial, public and domestic sectors. It demonstrates that despite ongoing development and an increasing population in the borough, greenhouse gas emissions continue to decrease in every sector.

<sup>1</sup> Figures for 2013-22 have been updated from the previous AMR to reflect current published estimates.

**Figure 9.3: Annual greenhouse gas emissions in the borough by sector<sup>2</sup>**

Calendar Year	Greenhouse gas emissions by sector				
	Industry	Commercial	Public Sector	Domestic	Transport
2011	295.0	205.8	68.1	622.4	502.3
2012	315.1	227.2	75.3	663.6	498.4
2013	305.4	208.0	69.6	641.1	490.7
2014	272.0	184.1	61.9	539.0	497.4
2015	257.1	159.5	55.0	532.0	498.7
2016	233.3	131.6	47.4	490.5	508.8
2017	233.2	117.0	45.4	472.8	505.9
2018	220.4	128.6	44.5	470.7	499.9
2019	202.5	118.2	38.3	454.6	493.7
2020	204.6	109.0	37.2	441.7	426.5
2021	221.0	116.6	41.3	451.8	434.9
2022	198.1	112.8	36.3	381.1	427.4
2023	169.7	98.4	33.7	362.3	418.8

Source: Department for Energy Security and Net Zero

<sup>2</sup> Figures for 2011-22 have been updated from the previous AMR to reflect current published estimates.