



Policy JPA36

Pocket Nook, Lowton

Topic Paper

PfE 2021

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Section A – Background

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2014, the AGMA Executive Board recommended to the 10 Greater Manchester local authorities that they agree to prepare a joint Development Plan Document (“Joint DPD”), called the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (“GMSF”) and that AGMA be appointed by the 10 authorities to prepare the GMSF on their behalf.
- 1.2 The first draft of the GMSF DPD was published for consultation on 31 October 2016, ending on 16 January 2017. Following substantial re-drafting, a further consultation on the Revised Draft GMSF took place between January and March 2019.
- 1.3 On 30 October 2020, the AGMA Executive Board unanimously agreed to recommend GMSF 2020 to the 10 Greater Manchester Councils for approval for consultation at their Executives/Cabinets, and approval for submission to the Secretary of State following the period for representations at their Council meetings.
- 1.4 At its Council meeting on 3 December Stockport Council resolved not to submit the GMSF 2020 following the consultation period and at its Cabinet meeting on 4 December, it resolved not to publish the GMSF 2020 for consultation.
- 1.5 As a joint DPD of the 10 Greater Manchester authorities, the GMSF 2020 required the approval of all 10 local authorities to proceed. The decisions of Stockport Council/Cabinet therefore signalled the end of the GMSF as a joint plan of the 10.
- 1.6 Notwithstanding the decision of Stockport Council, the nine remaining districts considered that the rationale for the preparation of a Joint DPD remained. Consequently, at its meeting on 11 December 2020, Members of the AGMA Executive Committee agreed in principle to producing a joint DPD of the nine remaining Greater Manchester (GM) districts. Subsequent to this meeting, each district formally approved the establishment of a Joint Committee for the preparation of a joint Development Plan Document of the nine districts.
- 1.7 Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Regulation 32 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 enable a joint plan to continue to progress in the event of one of the local authorities withdrawing, provided that the plan has ‘substantially the same effect’ on the remaining authorities as the original joint plan. The joint plan of the nine GM districts has been prepared on this basis.
- 1.8 In view of this, it follows that PfE should be considered as, in effect, the same Plan as the GMSF, albeit without one of the districts (Stockport). Therefore “the plan” and its proposals are in effect one and the same. Its content has

changed over time through the iterative process of plan making, but its purpose has not. Consequently, the Plan is proceeding directly to Publication stage under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.

- 1.9 Four consultations took place in relation to the GMSF. The first, in November 2014 was on the scope of the plan and the initial evidence base, the second in November 2015, was on the vision, strategy and strategic growth options, and the third, on a Draft Plan in October 2016.
- 1.10 The fourth and most recent consultation on The Greater Manchester Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment: the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework Revised Draft 2019 (GMSF 2019) took place in 2019. It received over 17,000 responses. The responses received informed the production of GMSF 2020. The withdrawal of Stockport Council in December 2020 prevented GMSF 2020 proceeding to Regulation 19 Publication stage and instead work was undertaken to prepare PfE 2021.
- 1.11 Where a local planning authority withdraws from a joint plan and that plan continues to have substantially the same effect as the original joint plan on the remaining authorities, s28(7) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that any step taken in relation to the plan must be treated as a step taken by the remaining authorities for the purposes of the joint plan. On this basis, it is proposed to proceed directly to Publication stage under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) England Regulations 2012.
- 1.12 A comprehensive evidence base was assembled to support the policies and proposals in the GMSF 2020. Given the basis on which the Plan has been prepared, this evidence base remains the fundamental basis for the PfE 2021 and has remained available on the GMCA's website since October 2020. That said, this evidence base has been reviewed and updated in the light of the change from GMSF 2020 to the PfE 2021 and, where appropriate, addendum reports have been produced and should be read in conjunction with evidence base made available in October 2020. The evidence documents which have informed the plan are available via the GMCA's website.

2. Pocket Nook Overview

- 2.1 Located within the A580 corridor, the Pocket Nook site provides an opportunity for a substantial housing-led development. The principle of development on this site is established in the adopted Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy (2013), which identifies the site within a broad location for new development. The site is not within the Green Belt.
- 2.2 The site is situated in Lowton which is a popular residential area with excellent road connections into both the Manchester and Liverpool City Regions via the A580 and also has good accessibility to the M6 at Junction 23.

- 2.3 There is potential to enhance sustainable travel opportunities by foot, cycle and public transport in the Lowton and Golborne area for employment and other services in Leigh and the Regional Centre, consequently reducing car dependency in this area; and, with possible connections to Leigh Guided Busway services.
- 2.4 The proposed alignment of the HS2 link to Wigan runs parallel to the route of a dismantled railway which runs north-south through the western part of the site. A buffer zone of 60 metres either side of the route needs to be kept free from development to enable access and for servicing. HS2 will result in the demolition of existing business units to the north of the site on Enterprise Way which will need to be relocated. Their relocation within the site allocation is however unlikely to be feasible given that the land proposed for employment uses will only be deliverable later in the plan period as it is earmarked as a HS2 construction compound until at least 2028.
- 2.5 The site will be principally served from a new junction on the A579 Atherleigh Way. The development will deliver a new road from Atherleigh Way in the east through the site to Newton Road in the west and will need to bridge the proposed HS2 route. It will connect into Newton Road on land close to its existing junction with Enterprise Way. The road will serve both new housing and employment development and will be able to accommodate bus services.
- 2.6 A small parcel of residential development on the western edge of the site is accessible from Rowan Avenue and is likely to have no vehicular connections with the remainder of the site.

3. Site Details

- 3.1 The site allocation boundary is set out in Appendix 1. The allocation has a site area of 44.78ha. It is a greenfield site in an urban fringe location and predominantly consists of farmland, farmsteads and ponds.
- 3.2 Located outside of the Green Belt, the site was designated as Protected Open Land in the 1996 Wigan Unitary Development Plan and subsequently as land safeguarded for future development in the Wigan Replacement Unitary Development Plan in April 2006. In September 2013, the site was designated as part of a broad location for new development in Golborne and Lowton for approximately 1,000 new homes in Policy SP4 of the Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy. As at July 2021, around 1,300 homes have been approved elsewhere within this broad location, outside of the proposed site allocation.

4. Proposed Development

- 4.1 The proposed development at Pocket Nook in PfE 2021 remains the same as that proposed in GMSF 2020. Served by the new through road from Atherleigh Way to Newton Road, the site is proposed for around 600 homes and 15,000 sq. m of employment floorspace in PfE 2021. This assumes a residential density of around 35 dwellings per hectare, consisting of a mix of house types and tenures to meet local needs. Light industrial employment

uses are envisaged, which will need to be carefully planned and designed so that they do not have an unacceptable adverse impact on residential amenity. Assuming an employment density of 47 employees per sqm, which is consistent with national guidance, it is envisaged that this level of employment could generate in the region of 320 new jobs on the site.

- 4.2 Whilst the site allocation boundary has been amended from that proposed in the 2019 GMSF, the 2021 PfE proposes the same level of development within the site allocation.
- 4.3 The proposed site allocation policy is included at Appendix 2.

5. Site Selection

- 5.1 As Pocket Nook is not within the Green Belt and is designated as safeguarded land for future development within an existing development plan, the site selection assessment deemed it sequentially preferable to Green Belt sites in principle. It is a sustainable site in a strategic location adjoining the A580 which can make a significant contribution to meeting future development needs. Not delivering the site for housing, would result in the need to remove additional Green Belt to meet identified housing needs, either within the borough or elsewhere in Greater Manchester.

6. Planning History

- 6.1 Planning permission has not been granted for any major or significant uses within the site. However residential schemes have been approved recently on two sites to the north of the allocation, which are both currently under construction:
- Bellway Homes, 119 homes (A/16/82102/MAJOR)
 - Persimmon Homes, 150 homes (A/16/82258/RMMAJ)
- 6.2 The eastern edge of the site was subjected to two current applications for a new junction, spur road and associated engineering works. The junction would provide vehicular access into the site from Atherleigh Way. A/20/88953/MAJOR was submitted by Milnes Gaskell Estate, who are the landowners of a small part of the site allocation. This application was withdrawn, and a resubmission A/20/88953/MAJOR was submitted and subsequently approved with conditions on 1 December 2020. A/20/89132/MAJOR had been submitted by Morris Homes, proposing the new junction to be located closer to the A580, but this was withdrawn on 13 April 2021.
- 6.3 Historically, the western side of the site has been subjected to applications for layout roads and sewers for light industry and warehousing in 1975 and an outline application for B1/B2 employment uses in 1990, however neither application was approved.

7. GMSF 2019 Consultation Responses

- 7.1 The site allocation is supported by Milnes Gaskell Estate who own a small part of the site including the potential access point fronting onto A579 Atherleigh Way. It is also supported by Morris Homes, who have an option on land owned by Rock House Investments, which together with the land owned by Milnes Gaskell Estate forms the eastern half of the allocation. The other landowner, Mr W Adamson, who has a significant landholding in the west of the allocation, is opposed to its allocation and development. Whilst a notable proportion of Adamson's land is anticipated to be compulsory purchased by HS2 Ltd to enable the delivery of HS2 which crosses the site, the availability of the remainder of his land will need to be resolved prior to the site's strategic development.
- 7.2 352 representations were received as part of the 2019 consultation, primarily from local residents opposing the site allocation. These covered a range of planning themes, most notably regarding the impact on traffic impact and associated noise and air pollution, the unwillingness of a key landowner, the loss of open land, and the level of development that has already been recently built or approved in the area. Other issues raised included the lack of capacity in local schools, GP surgeries and dentists; the impact on wildlife habitats and species; and flood risk.
- 7.3 A more detailed summary of the issues raised, together with the Council's response, is set out in the GMSF Statement of Consultation (October 2020).

8. GMSF 2019 Integrated Assessment

- 8.1 The Integrated Assessment (IA) of GMSF 2019 identified a very positive effect in relation to this policy in terms of meeting current and future demand for employment land across Greater Manchester. It also identified a number of positive effects.
- 8.2 The 2019 IA made some recommendations in terms of enhancement and mitigation measures. Some minor changes to the site boundary and revisions to the allocation policy have been made in response to the IA and to the consultation exercise. Those changes are reflected in amendments to the northern boundary of the site which reflect heritage, flood risk, drainage and ground water protection zones and by changes to the policy to:
- Refer to the need for a masterplan to be agreed with the Council (clause 1)
 - Promote safe and sustainable access for pedestrians and cyclists to local amenities (clause 6)
 - Protect and enhance the environs of Carr Brook through the creation of a green infrastructure corridor (clause 7)
 - Ensure that the heritage setting of Grade II Listed Fair House Farmhouse is retained or enhanced (clause 9)

8.3 Other recommendations are addressed when the allocation policy is read in conjunction with plan thematic policies.

8.4 In addition, in response to the 2019 IA, a change has been made to the thematic policy on supporting long term economic growth (JP-J 1) which now requires local labour and training agreements to be secured through planning obligations or other mechanisms, in line with the IA objective to help ensure sustainable economic growth and job creation.

9. **GMSF 2020 Integrated Assessment**

9.1 The 2020 IA assessed the GMSF 2020. It provided a narrative detailing how the recommendations from the 2019 IA were considered in the development of the 2020 draft. The 2020 IA identified many positive impacts in relation to this allocation policy, with very positive effects identified in relation to:

- Ensuring housing land is well-connected with employment land, centres and green space
- Meeting current and future demand for employment land across Greater Manchester
- Providing sufficient employment land in locations that are well connected and well served by infrastructure
- Ensuring the transport network can support and enable the anticipated scale and spatial distribution of development
- Improving transport connectivity
- Supporting healthier lifestyles and supporting improvements in determinants of health
- Reducing the need to travel and promoting efficient patterns of movement
- Promoting sustainable modes of transport

9.2 It concluded that when the plan was read as a whole, no further changes were necessary to the allocation policy.

9.3 The 2020 IA addendum report provided a broad consideration of the impacts of final changes to policies. It concluded that, as recommended mitigation measures were addressed by changes to thematic policies and no changes made to this allocation policy, it would not score differently in relation to the IA Framework.

9.4 A 2021 PfE IA Addendum has been produced which reviews the changes made between GMSF 2020 and PfE 2021. There have been no substantial changes to this specific allocation between GMSF 2020 and PfE 2021, but the policy has been amended in response to comments from Historic England in relation to the Grade II Listed Fair House farmhouse and this change results in a positive effect against the IA Framework, specifically against Objective 16.

Section B – Physical

10. Transport

- 10.1 A Locality Assessment for Pocket Nook, prepared by SYSTRA, concludes that the transport impacts of the site allocation can be accommodated on the surrounding highway network without severe impacts.
- 10.2 Transport modelling work has been undertaken using the Greater Manchester Variable Demand Model (GMVDM), a multi-modal transport model, to understand the transport implications and requirements of Pocket Nook and all other PfE allocations.
- 10.3 The GMVDM provides estimates of future transport demand, including projected travel behaviour changes and new patterns that the PfE is likely to produce. These include changes in choices of routes, mode and time of travel and changes in journey destinations for some activities such as work and shopping.
- 10.4 The transport modelling work includes:
- A 'Reference Case' scenario, in which the transport model accounts for background growth in addition to baseline housing and employment sites provided by the districts.
 - A 'with PfE' scenario, in which the 'Reference Case' scenario is supplemented by Pocket Nook and all other PfE allocations.
- 10.5 For Pocket Nook, the transport assessment examined the capacity of ten junctions within proximity to the allocation and demonstrates that the majority of these are operating at or exceeding operational capacity in both the 'Reference Case' and 'with PfE' scenarios during network peak periods.
- 10.6 At this stage, the modelling and analysis work is considered to be a 'worst case' scenario as it does not take full account of the extensive opportunities for active travel and public transport improvements in the wider GM area.
- 10.7 The assessment concludes that the following junctions may require mitigation to lessen the impact of Pocket Nook and all other PfE allocations. It should be noted that the schemes are not designed to solve pre-existing congestion on the local network:
- A580 East Lancashire Road / A579 Atherleigh Way
 - A580 East Lancashire Road/ A572 Newton Road
 - A580 East Lancashire Road/ B5207 Church Lane
 - A572 Newton Road/ A579 Winwick Lane
 - A580 East Lancashire Road/ A574 Warrington Road.

- 10.8 Mitigation schemes were developed and tested to address the network congestion impacts on the local road network. The schemes have been shown to mitigate the impact of the allocation trips and to restore the network to a similar state as that found in the Reference scenario, however, at a cumulative level with other PfE allocations, it has not been possible to mitigate the entire PfE impact due to land constraints or costs associated with major infrastructure works. Further detailed work will be necessary to identify the specific interventions required to ensure the network works effectively based on transport network conditions at the time of the planning application.
- 10.9 The A580 East Lancashire Road carries a significant volume of traffic towards and from the Regional Centre. The junction modelling work undertaken indicates that each of the junctions along the corridor will be operating under considerable stress by 2040 and it is anticipated that a strategic corridor-based approach to improving the operation of the junctions will be required. Based on current traffic flow projections, considerable engineering interventions are likely to be required should forecast traffic flows become a reality.
- 10.10 A new signalised 3 arm junction is required to provide access to the allocation from the A579 Atherleigh Way. A through road will be provided extending from the A579 Atherleigh Way to the A572 Newton Road which would require a bridge over the safeguarded HS2 line.
- 10.11 The through road will enable the allocation to be served by public transport and potentially provide connecting services to the Leigh Guided Busway, via Atherleigh Way, enabling local residents with a convenient and sustainable means of travel into the regional centre.
- 10.12 The allocation will need to create safe and convenient walking and cycling links to key local destinations and public transport facilities including local schools and public transport opportunities along the A572 Newton Road.
- 10.13 There is an initial indication that the allocation is deliverable in transport terms, however, further work will be needed to substantiate these findings as the allocation moves through the planning process. The allocation would need to be supported by continuing wider transport investment across GM.
- 10.14 Following a further round of modelling work undertaken as part of the transition from the GMSF to the PfE Plan, a number of junctions were re-assessed to check the validity of conclusions reached in the initial Locality Assessment. The updated assessment has not identified any significant changes and on this basis, the conclusions arrived at in the Locality Assessment is still considered to be valid.

11. Flood Risk and Drainage

- 11.1 The Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Greater Manchester - Update (March 2019) highlights strategic flood risks and recommends key priorities for intervention.

11.2 At Pocket Nook, it recommends careful consideration of site design and layout to help avoid or accommodate the flood risk. It concludes that this should take place as part of a detailed site-specific Flood Risk Assessment and drainage strategy used to inform the design and layout of the proposed site. This will be appropriately addressed at the masterplanning stage, as set out in clause 1 of the site allocation policy.

12. Ground Conditions

12.1 There are no known ground constraints on this site. Future planning applications will need to be supported by a comprehensive and robust land contamination assessment. This will need to clearly set out ground contamination and ground gas issues in relation to the proposed development and site layout.

13. Utilities

13.1 The site is immediately adjacent to an established urban area where a range of services are available. This includes water, gas and electricity mains, alongside telecommunications infrastructure. The development can therefore be connected to key utilities. Any upgrades required to accommodate new homes can be made alongside the delivery of the development. National Grid have confirmed that this site is not crossed by or in proximity to their assets.

13.2 Regarding water, United Utilities recognise that they have a duty to connect all new homes to the network. However, they would urge early engagement with prospective developers requiring the need for masterplanning, including a holistic drainage strategy for the entire site.

13.3 A cleanwater network runs close to the northern boundary of the site and a main trunk runs north-south within the HS2 easement area. Sewers of various sizes pass through the site, with the largest passing west to east. There are also 2 pumping stations located outside the allocation close to its northern boundary.

13.4 Regarding electricity, National Grid state that specific development proposals within Wigan are unlikely to have a significant direct effect upon their electricity transmission system; and that generally, improvements to the system to provide supplies to the local distribution network are generally as a result of overall regional demand growth, rather than site specific developments.

13.5 Regarding gas, National Grid owns and operates the high-power gas transmission system in England. Gas leaves this system and enters the distribution networks and is delivered to sites and networks. Cadent are the gas network operator and they indicate that the nearest gas main is 247 metres from the site boundary and it is a Medium Pressure main. This main will require reinforcement as part of the site works to increase its capacity.

14. Notifiable Installations

- 14.1 The eastern end of the site falls within the Class E zone of the Glazebury Notifiable Installation. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has reported that it has no problem with housing in this area providing that the construction meets the definition of protected place and does not include 'vulnerable buildings' ([Explosive Regs. 2014](#)). These include buildings of more than three storeys, 12 metres in height, and/or a plan area of 400 sqm with a high proportion of glazed panels. This will need to be addressed at the masterplanning stage in accordance with clause 1 of the site allocation policy.

Section C – Environmental

15. Green Belt Assessment

15.1 This site is not in the Green Belt.

16. Green Infrastructure

- 16.1 Carr Brook, which is classed as a main river, crosses the site. The Environment Agency has advised that this is a river valley which should be regarded as a priority green infrastructure asset and, as such, the habitat corridor should be protected and enhanced to improve the existing water quality. This is reflected in clause 7 of the site allocation policy which requires development to protect and enhance the environs of Carr Brook through the creation of a green infrastructure corridor.
- 16.2 Trees and hedges are predominantly field boundary features offering a backdrop to nearby properties and a screen from the A580.
- 16.3 The existing hedges are in the main remnant, predominantly Hawthorn, and will require a full assessment to determine if they meet the criteria of 'important' hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. Many of the existing hedgerows are important amenity features and provide interlinking corridors between surrounding landscape features and therefore should be assessed as part of a pre-development plan.
- 16.4 The site is bordered by mature native trees (ash, oak, willow and sycamore) growing along historical field boundaries and ditches. Mature oak stand in remnant hedges alongside public rights of way and are within green corridors. The oaks appear in good condition and are visual components of the landscape setting and should be retained and protected as part of any future development. However, the mature ash are showing early symptoms of Chalara Ash dieback.
- 16.5 In accordance with PfE 2021 Policy JP-G9, the development of the site will be required to secure a 10% biodiversity net gain. The creation, protection and enhancement of green infrastructure within the site, including the environs of Carr Brook, will contribute towards this.
- 16.6 Land has been removed from the allocation to the north of the site to reflect two recent developments together with identified water courses, drainage and flood zones. This has reduced the site area from 51.94 hectares to 44.78 hectares. Additionally, existing public footpaths will be retained or rerouted across the site to ensure safe and convenient access for pedestrians and cyclists to services in Lowton, as set out in clause 6 of the site allocation policy.

17. Recreation

- 17.1 Recreation opportunities will be provided by ensuring safe and convenient access for pedestrians and cyclists into green spaces both within and adjacent to the site, including the open countryside to the south of the A580, as well as to local services within Lowton to the north. This will include the retention and/or rerouting of existing public rights of way and the creation of new footpaths where appropriate.
- 17.2 The provision of new on-site open space and play facilities will also be required within the scheme in line with local planning policy.

18. Landscape

- 18.1 The 2009 Landscape Character Assessment describes the site to be in an area which is typically 'Undulating Enclosed Farmland'. Key characteristics of such areas include medium to often large-scale fields, mainly cereal crops; lack of hedgerow trees; hedgerows between fields often gapped; deciduous wooded backdrops to the south and west; limited internal views. Specific characteristics of the site's landscape also include the A580 and its embankments to the south; views of residential urban edge to the north; and mainly flat land particularly to the east associated with Carr Brook and Pennington Brook.
- 18.2 The 2018 Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment (LUC) identifies the allocation within the Mossland and Lowland Farmland landscape character type and within the South Wigan and Salford Mosslands landscape character area. The overall sensitivity assessment concludes that residential, commercial or industrial development within this character area would have moderate harm on the landscape.

19. Ecological/Biodiversity Assessment

- 19.1 There are no nationally or internationally designated wildlife sites within 1km of the site, and the proposed development would not pose a risk to any Natural England Impact Risk Zones for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
- 19.2 Three Groundwater Source Protection Zones have been identified either within or immediately adjacent to the northern boundary of the site. The design of new development should ensure that there are no adverse impacts to groundwater resources or groundwater quality and ensure compliance with the Environment Agency approach to groundwater protection. Consistent with this, the concept plan shown in Appendix 3, incorporates the Groundwater Source Protection Zone 1 areas within the green infrastructure areas.

20. Habitat Regulation Assessment

- 20.1 The Habitats Regulations Assessment of the GMSF –Thematic Policies and Strategic Sites (December 2018) forms stage 1 and part of stage 2 of the HRA

process – screening and Stage 2 - Appropriate Assessment. Pocket Nook was 'screened in' given it is within 4km of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) at Manchester Mosses.

- 20.2 The assessment confirmed that although there is no direct pathway to the SAC, potential effects could occur through increased recreational pressure and through diffuse air pollution. However, it is noted that the part of the Mosses closest to the site is not developed for recreational use and is separated from the site by a busy major trunk road. Increased recreational use arising as a result of the development is therefore considered unlikely.
- 20.3 The assessment concluded that sufficient safeguards exist such that there is no justification for removing the site from consideration as a potential development site. However, a more detailed assessment may be required if detailed development plans come forward.
- 20.4 The GMCA and TfGM are responding to Natural England's comments on the draft HRA (2020) by commissioning additional air quality modelling to more accurately assess the implications of changes in air quality on European sites that could potentially be affected by changes to nitrogen levels arising from changes in vehicle movements in Greater Manchester or within close proximity of the Greater Manchester boundary.
- 20.5 A Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) has been undertaken and supported by an assessment of air quality impacts on designated sites. The following sites have been screened out at Stage 1 HRA:
- Rixton Clay Pits (SAC)
 - Midland Meres & Mosses – Phase 1 Ramsar
 - Rostherne Mere (Ramsar)
- 20.6 The following sites require Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment:
- Manchester Mosses (SAC)
 - Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) (SPA)
 - Rochdale Canal (SAC)
 - South Pennine Moors (SAC)
 - South Pennine Moors Phase 2 (SPA)

21. Historic Environment Assessment

- 21.1 A screening assessment undertaken by the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS) initially graded the site a red rating, largely as a result of its proximity to the Grade II Listed Fair House Farmhouse on Pocket Nook Lane to the north of the allocation. This was subsequently downgraded to an amber rating following a boundary amendment which increased the distance from the heritage asset. The screening assessment concluded that a more detailed archaeological assessment of the site was

necessary to get a better understanding of the relative significance of heritage assets with an archaeological interest across the site.

- 21.2 Further to this, a Historic Environment Assessment (2020) has been prepared to assess proposals for residential and employment development on the site. This reviews the likely impact of proposed development within the site allocation upon the Grade II Listed farmhouse and its setting. It concludes that the development could have some impact on the setting of the Listed farmhouse, but this would be limited to development within the northern part of the allocation. As such, consideration needs to be given at a detailed stage to the treatment of the northern portion of the site to ensure that any development harmonises with the wider setting of the Listed Building to ensure it does not harm the heritage values and significances of it or its wider setting. This is reflected in clause 9 of the revised site allocation policy.

22. Air Quality

- 22.1 The site is adjacent to an Air Quality Management Area (along the A580). A full air quality assessment will need to be submitted as part of the planning application process.

23. Noise

- 23.1 A noise assessment will be required to be submitted as part of the planning application process. The assessment should consider the nature and extent of noise (and vibration if applicable) generated by the proposed development and the existing noise climate of the site. The assessment shall identify proposed noise limits and any mitigation measures to control noise and vibration if applicable to agreed limits.

Section D – Social

24. Education

- 24.1 There is no site-specific education provision / mitigation required as a result of the proposed development. Developments on the site will be required to make financial contributions towards off-site education provision, through a planning obligation or planning condition, at the planning application stage.

25. Health

- 25.1 There is no site-specific health provision / mitigation required as a result of the proposed development. Developments on the site will be required to make financial contributions towards health needs, through a planning obligation or planning condition, at the planning application stage.

Section E – Deliverability

26. Viability

- 26.1 The GMCA Viability Assessment of Spatial Framework- Allocated Sites, September 2020 sets out the impact on development viability of the strategic policies of the PfE.
- 26.2 For Pocket Nook, a sensitivity test has been assumed based on the values in the adjacent Ward, Golborne and Lowton West, as this is considered more representative of the type of development proposed. The assumed values reflect the vast majority of the recent developments that have been built or are under construction in both Lowton East and Golborne and Lowton West Wards, including schemes at Rothwell's Farm, Stone Cross, and Heath Lane.
- 26.3 The sensitivity test produces a viable scheme, with a residual value of £3.8m. When strategic transport costs are included (£4.37m), the scheme is shown to be marginal. However, the calculations are based on the development funding a road bridge over the proposed HS2 rail line, but it is anticipated that this will be funded by the Government rather than being a cost to the development, which would increase its viability.
- 26.4 Land ownership constraints could potentially impact on deliverability as a notable proportion of the site is owned by a landowner who is unwilling to bring his land forward for development. All other landowners are supportive, with one landowner actively promoting the site through the PfE process.

27. Phasing

- 27.1 It is envisaged that the development is completed in full during the PfE plan period. The site is not within the Green Belt and there is active developer interest to deliver the eastern part of the site following recent access applications, one of which has been granted.
- 27.2 The HS2 proposals will inevitably influence the delivery of the western part of the site. The proposed construction compound for HS2 is scheduled to be operational until 2028, which will restrict the delivery of the employment development and limited number of houses close to the HS2 line, until the late phases of the plan period.

28. Indicative Masterplanning

- 28.1 A concept plan prepared by the Council is included at Appendix 3. This provides an indicative layout of the development, including the location of the housing and employment parcels, the alignment of the through road, the safeguarded operational land for HS2, green infrastructure and sustainable connectivity with the existing surrounding areas.

Section F – Conclusion

29. The Sustainability Appraisal

29.1 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been incorporated into the IA of the GMSF / PfE. The IA identified many positive impacts in terms of this allocation policy, but also made some recommendations in terms of enhancement and mitigation measures. These recommendations have been addressed through revisions to the policy, as set out in section 8 and 9 of this Topic Paper or are addressed when the policy is read in conjunction with the PfE thematic policies, because the PfE Plan should be read as a whole. Taking account of the IA findings, this allocation is considered to accord with relevant economic, social and environmental objectives.

30. The main changes to the Proposed Allocation

30.1 The site allocation policy proposed in GMSF 2019 is set out in Appendix 5. The northern boundary of the site was amended in GMSF 2020 to exclude all land to the north of Carr Brook, including Pocket Nook Lane, Pocket Nook Farm, and other properties including the Grade II Listed Fair House Farmhouse. This reduced the overall site area from 51.94ha to 44.78ha. This amended boundary has been carried forward into PfE 2021.

30.2 The amended allocation boundary reflects:

- The presence of significant water infrastructure under the land between Carr Brook and Pocket Nook Lane;
- Identified flood risk areas;
- Recognised drainage and groundwater protection zones; and
- The findings of the Historic Environment Assessment, which identified that the larger allocation could result in harm to the Grade II Listed farmhouse and its setting.

30.3 The policy wording in GMSF 2020 was updated to reflect these points and key mitigation outcomes from the 2019 Integrated Assessment, including the need to promote access for pedestrians and cyclists to areas within and adjacent to the site and to the wider area.

30.4 The GMSF 2020 policy has been carried through to PfE 2021 but has been subject to a minor amendment to provide further clarification in relation to the Historic Environment Assessment. The PfE 2021 policy is set out in Appendix 2.

31. Conclusion

31.1 The site allocation proposed in PfE 2021 remains for 600 houses and 15,000 sq. metres of employment land. The site allocation is not in the Green Belt and was identified as a broad location for new development in the 2013 Wigan

Local Plan Core Strategy. The suitability of the site for development has therefore already been established, with the site therefore sequentially preferable in principle to the release of Green Belt land.

- 31.2 Whilst the delivery of HS2 means that parts of the site, notably that proposed for employment, will only be deliverable in the later stages of the plan period, the bulk of the housing across the site is deliverable in the short to medium term, subject to resolving land ownership issues.
- 31.3 Reflecting both the outcomes of the 2019 Integrated Assessment and consultation responses to GMSF 2019, the revised policy wording is set out in Appendix 2.

Section G – Appendices

Appendix 1: Site allocation boundary

Appendix 2: Proposed policy, PfE 2021

Appendix 3: Indicative concept plan

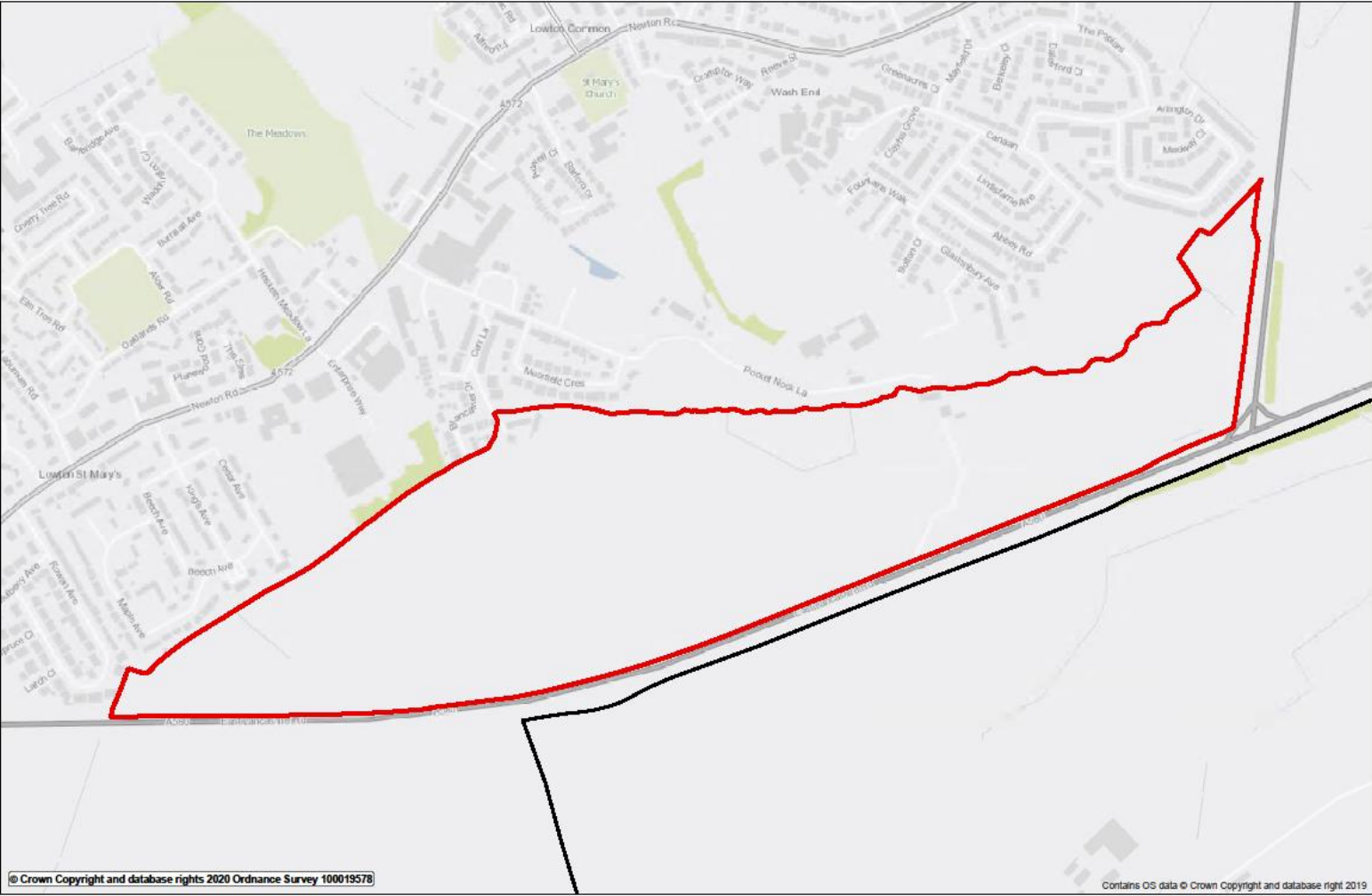
Appendix 4: Previous draft policy, as proposed in GMSF 2020

Appendix 5: Previous draft policy, as proposed in GMSF 2019

Appendix 6: Bibliography

Appendix 1: Site allocation boundary

1:5,000 N



Appendix 2: Proposed Policy – Places for Everyone (2021)

Policy JPA 36: Pocket Nook

Development of this site will be required to:

- 1. Be in accordance with a masterplan that is agreed with the Council and is effectively informed by an archaeological assessment and other constraints;**
- 2. Safeguard a north-south corridor towards the west of the site allocation for the construction of High Speed 2 Rail;**
- 3. Deliver around 600 homes; including around 75 homes to the west of the proposed HS2 route on land accessed from Rowan Avenue;**
- 4. Deliver around 15,000 sq. m of employment floorspace on land to the west of the proposed HS2 route accessed from Newton Road;**
- 5. Deliver or contribute effectively to the delivery of, a new road through the site from A579 Atherleigh Way to A572 Newton Road (via Enterprise Way), including a new bridge over the HS2 rail line as necessary, that is of a design quality to accommodate bus services, safeguarding the route for future construction where applicable;**
- 6. Ensure safe and convenient access for pedestrians and cyclists within the site and to services in Lowton, including Lowton High School, employment sites, neighbouring housing areas and green spaces within and adjacent to the site;**
- 7. Protect and enhance the environs of Carr Brook through the creation of a green infrastructure corridor;**
- 8. Ensure that groundwater resources are not jeopardised through the construction process or uses thereafter; and,**
- 9. Ensure that the heritage setting of the Grade II Listed Fair House Farmhouse on Pocket Nook Lane is retained or enhanced. Proposals should be informed by the findings and recommendations of the Historic Environment Assessment (2020) in the Plan's evidence base and any updated assessment(s) submitted as part of the planning application process.**

Supporting text:

Within the East Lancashire Road Corridor, the Pocket Nook strategic area provides an opportunity for a substantial housing and employment development. The principle of development on this site is established in the adopted Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy, which identifies the site within a broad location for new development.

Lowton is a popular residential area with excellent road connections into both the Manchester and Liverpool City Regions via the A580 and is also in close proximity to the M6.

There is potential to enhance sustainable travel opportunities by foot, cycle and public transport in the Lowton and Golborne area for employment and other services in Leigh and the Regional Centre, consequently reducing car dependency in this area; and, with possible connections to Leigh Guided Busway services. It is also important that safe and convenient pedestrian access is provided to green spaces within and adjacent to the site.

The proposed alignment of HS2 runs parallel to the route of a dismantled railway which runs north-south through the west of the site. HS2 will result in the demolition of existing business units to the north of the site on Enterprise Way which will need to be relocated. A buffer zone of 60 metres either side of the route needs to be kept free from development to enable access and for servicing.

The site will be principally served from a new junction on the A579 Atherleigh Way, close to its junction with the A580. The development will deliver a new road from Atherleigh Way to the east through the site to Newton Road in the west and will need to bridge the proposed HS2 route. The new road will connect into Newton Road on land close to its existing junction with Enterprise Way. The road will serve both new housing and employment development and will be able to accommodate bus services.

A small parcel of residential development on the western edge of the site is accessible from Rowan Avenue.

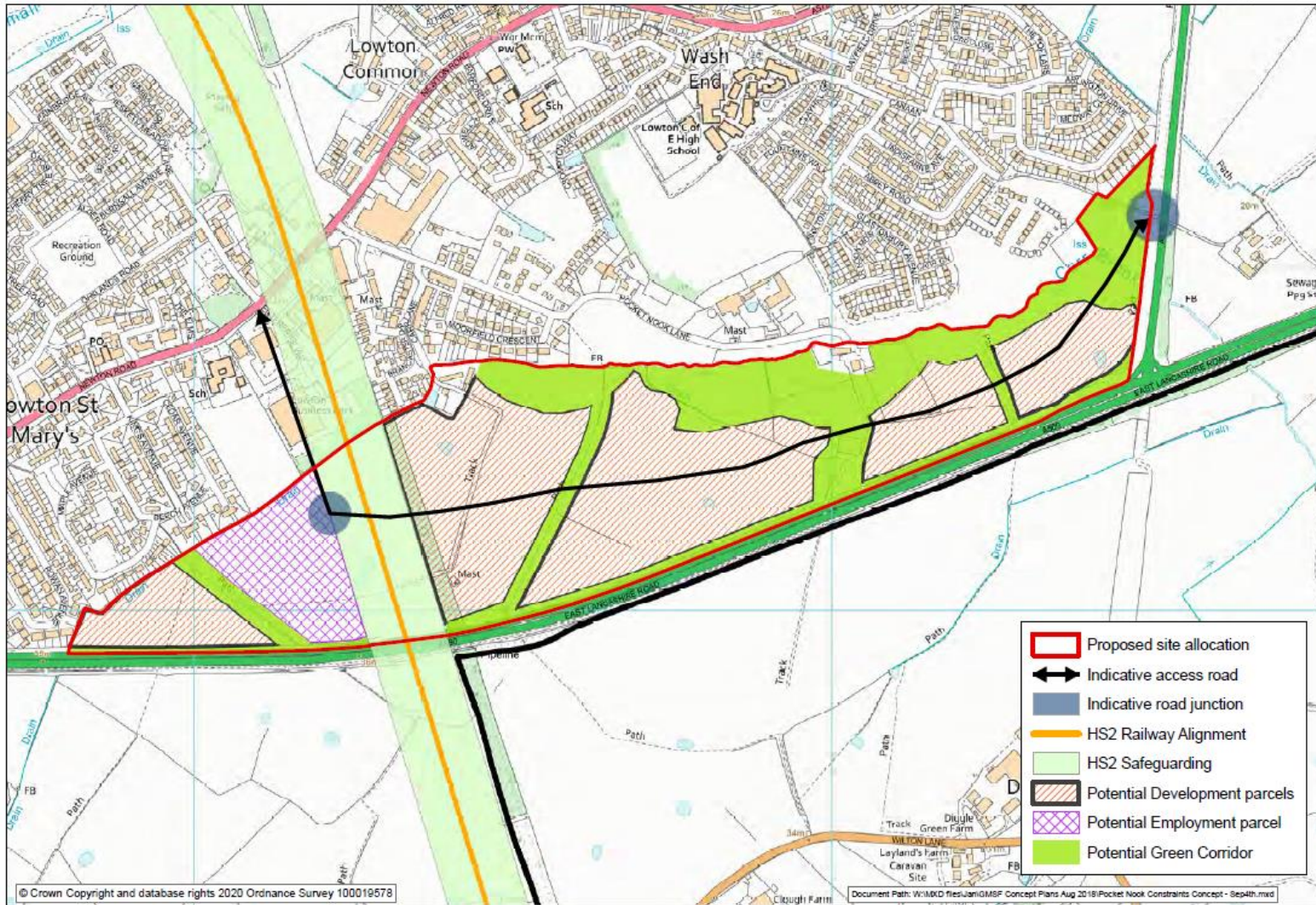
Carr Brook, which is classed as a main river, crosses the site and should be regarded as a priority green infrastructure asset. As such the habitat corridor should be protected and enhanced.

Three Groundwater Source Protection Zones have been identified either within or immediately adjacent to the northern boundary of the site. The design of new development should ensure that there are no adverse impacts to groundwater resources or groundwater quality and ensure compliance with the Environment Agency approach to groundwater protection.

Fair House Farmhouse on Pocket Nook Lane is a Grade II Listed Building. The building is important in many respects, not least as an example of timber-framing in an area where little remains. In order that its heritage setting is retained or enhanced consideration needs to be given at a detailed stage to the treatment of the northern portion of the site to ensure that any development harmonises with the wider setting of the Listed Building and it does not harm its heritage values and significance.

To ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to the delivery of this site, a masterplan will need to be prepared and agreed by the Council. The design and layout, including infrastructure provision, will need to be informed by an archaeological assessment and other constraints and opportunities provided by the site.

Appendix 3: Indicative concept plan



Appendix 4: Previous draft policy, as proposed in GMSF 2020

Policy GM Allocation 44: Pocket Nook

Development of this site will be required to:

- 1. Be in accordance with a masterplan that is agreed with the Council and is effectively informed by an archaeological assessment and other constraints;**
- 2. Safeguard a north-south corridor towards the west of the site allocation for the construction of High Speed 2 Rail;**
- 3. Deliver around 600 homes; including around 75 homes to the west of the proposed HS2 route on land accessed from Rowan Avenue;**
- 4. Deliver around 15,000 sq. m of employment floorspace on land to the west of the proposed HS2 route accessed from Newton Road;**
- 5. Deliver or contribute effectively to the delivery of, a new road through the site from A579 Atherleigh Way to A572 Newton Road (via Enterprise Way), including a new bridge over the HS2 rail line as necessary, that is of a design quality to accommodate bus services, safeguarding the route for future construction where applicable;**
- 6. Ensure safe and convenient access for pedestrians and cyclists within the site and to services in Lowton, including Lowton High School, employment sites, neighbouring housing areas and green spaces within and adjacent to the site;**
- 7. Protect and enhance the environs of Carr Brook through the creation of a green infrastructure corridor;**
- 8. Ensure that groundwater resources are not jeopardised through the construction process or uses thereafter; and,**
- 9. Ensure that the heritage setting of the Grade II Listed Fair House Farmhouse on Pocket Nook Lane is retained or enhanced.**

Supporting text:

Within the East Lancashire Road Corridor, the Pocket Nook strategic area provides an opportunity for a substantial housing and employment development. The principle of development on this site is established in the adopted Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy, which identifies the site within a broad location for new development.

Lowton is a popular residential area with excellent road connections into both the Manchester and Liverpool City Regions via the A580 and is also in close proximity to the M6.

There is potential to enhance sustainable travel opportunities by foot, cycle and public transport in the Lowton and Golborne area for employment and other services in Leigh and the Regional Centre, consequently reducing car dependency in this area; and, with possible connections to Leigh Guided Busway services. It is also important that safe and convenient pedestrian access is provided to green spaces within and adjacent to the site.

The proposed alignment of HS2 runs parallel to the route of a dismantled railway which runs north-south through the west of the site. HS2 will result in the demolition of existing business units to the north of the site on Enterprise Way which will need to be relocated. A buffer zone of 60 metres either side of the route needs to be kept free from development to enable access and for servicing.

The site will be principally served from a new junction on the A579 Atherleigh Way, close to its junction with the A580. The development will deliver a new road from Atherleigh Way to the east through the site to Newton Road in the west and will need to bridge the proposed HS2 route. The new road will connect into Newton Road on land close to its existing junction with Enterprise Way. The road will serve both new housing and employment development and will be able to accommodate bus services.

A small parcel of residential development on the western edge of the site is accessible from Rowan Avenue.

Carr Brook, which is classed as a main river, crosses the site and should be regarded as a priority green infrastructure asset. As such the habitat corridor should be protected and enhanced.

Three Groundwater Source Protection Zones have been identified either within or immediately adjacent to the northern boundary of the site. The design of new development should ensure that there are no adverse impacts to groundwater resources or groundwater quality and ensure compliance with the Environment Agency approach to groundwater protection.

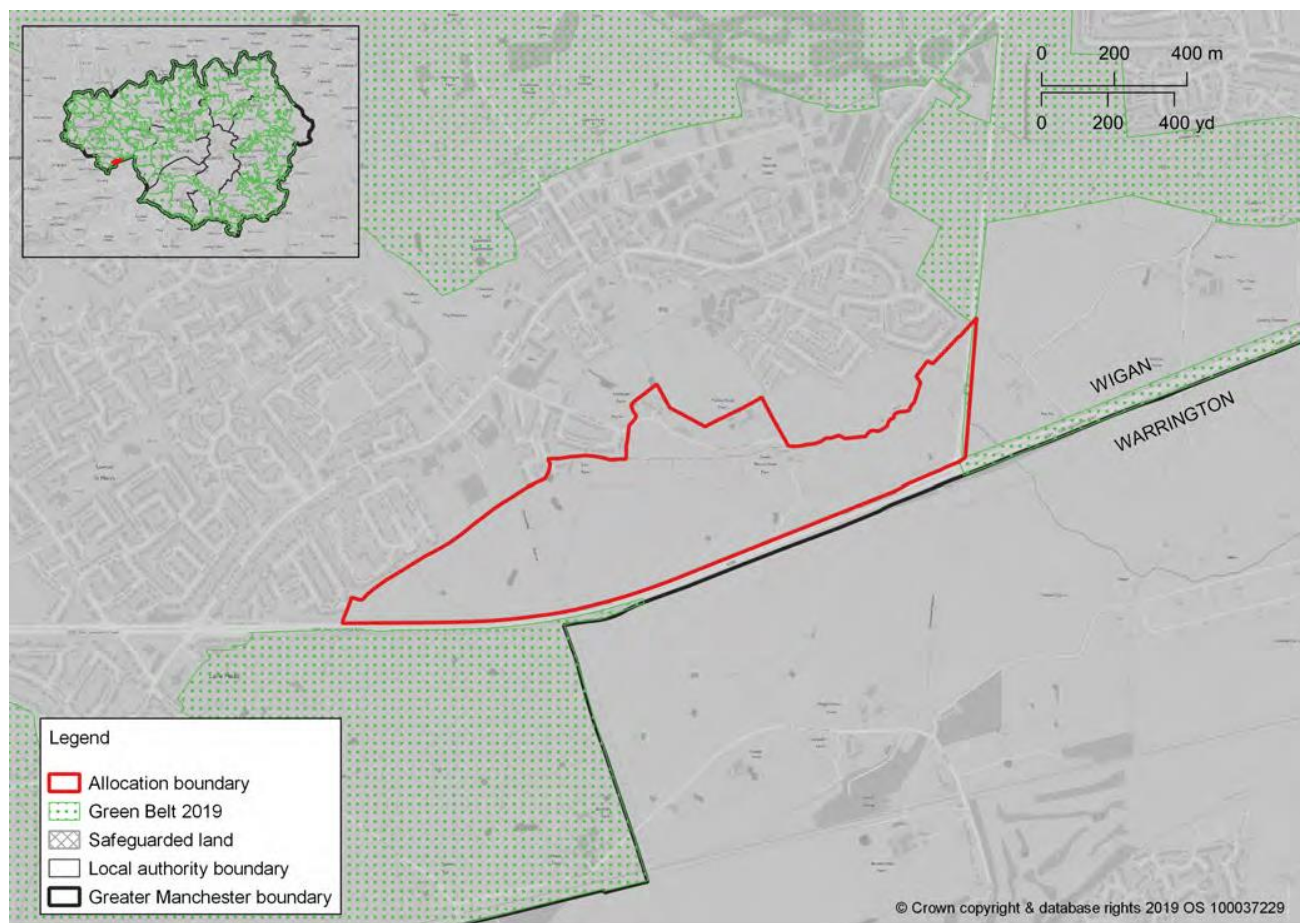
Fair House Farmhouse on Pocket Nook Lane is a Grade II Listed Building. The building is important in many respects, not least as an example of timber-framing in an area where little remains. In order that its heritage setting is retained or enhanced consideration needs to be given at a detailed stage to the treatment of the northern portion of the site to ensure that any development harmonises with the wider setting of the Listed Building and it does not harm its heritage values and significance.

To ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to the delivery of this site, a masterplan will need to be prepared and agreed by the Council. The design and layout, including infrastructure provision, will need to be informed by an archaeological assessment and other constraints and opportunities provided by the site.

Appendix 5: Previous draft policy, as proposed in GMSF 2019

Policy GM Allocation 50

Pocket Nook



Development of this site will be required to:

1. Provide for around 600 homes; including around 75 homes to the west of the proposed HS2 route on land accessed from Rowan Avenue;
2. Provide for around 15,000 sq. m of employment floorspace on land to the west of the proposed HS2 route accessed from Newton Road;
3. Deliver a new road through the site from Atherleigh Way to Newton Road, including a new bridge over the HS2 rail line, which can accommodate buses;
4. Be principally served from a new junction on the A579 Atherleigh Way, at a location which will also serve the adjacent site at South of Pennington on the opposite side of the A579;
5. Safeguard a north-south corridor towards the west of the site allocation for the construction of High Speed 2 Rail; and

6. Ensure that groundwater resources are not jeopardised through the construction process or uses thereafter.

Supporting text

Within the East Lancashire Road Corridor, the Pocket Nook strategic area provides an opportunity for a substantial housing and employment development. The principle of development on this site is established in the adopted Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy, which identifies the site within a broad location for new development.

Lowton is a popular residential area with excellent road connections into both the Manchester and Liverpool City Regions via the A580 and also close proximity to the M6.

The site is remote from rail stations and the Leigh Guided Busway. However, there is an opportunity to extend busway services to this site via the adjacent South of Pennington site allocation. This would significantly enhance sustainable travel opportunities in the Lowton and Golborne area for employment and other services in Leigh and the Regional Centre, consequently reducing car dependency in this area.

The proposed alignment of HS2 runs parallel to the route of a dismantled railway which runs north-south through the west of the site. HS2 will result in the demolition of existing business units to the north of the site on Enterprise Way which will need to be relocated. A buffer zone of 60 metres either side of the route needs to be kept free from development to enable access and for servicing.

The site will be principally served from a new junction on the A579 Atherleigh Way, close to its junction with the A580. This new junction will also serve the adjacent employment site at South of Pennington so it must be located in an appropriate location to serve both sites. The new junction will therefore be delivered in phases as part of the development of these two strategic sites.

The development will deliver a new road from Atherleigh Way to the east through the site to Newton Road in the west and will need to bridge the proposed HS2 route. The new road will connect into Newton Road on land close to its existing junction with Enterprise Way. The road will serve both new housing and employment development and will be able to accommodate bus services.

Proposed employment development to the west of the proposed HS2 route will effectively replace the employment floorspace lost following the demolition of businesses at Enterprise Way and provides an opportunity for their relocation.

A small parcel of residential development on the western edge of the site is accessible from Rowan Avenue.

Appendix 6: Bibliography

- [2016 GMSF](#)
- [2019 GMSF](#)
- [2020 GMSF](#)
- [National Planning Policy Framework](#)
- [Wigan Landscape Character Assessment 2009](#)

The following documents are found at:

[Supporting documents - Greater Manchester Combined Authority
\(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](#)

- GMSF Integrated Assessment Report
- GMSF Integrated Assessment Addendum Report
- GMSF Integrated Assessment Report (2021)
- GMSF Landscape Character Assessment (2018)
- GMSF Statement of Consultation (October 2020)
- GMSF Strategic Viability Assessment Stage 1
- GMSF Strategic Viability Assessment Stage 1
- GMSF Strategic Viability Assessment Stage 2 Allocated Sites
- GM Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1 Report
- GM Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 Report & Appendices
- Habitats Regulations Assessment of the GMSF
- Pocket Nook Historic Environment Assessment (2020)
- Pocket Nook Locality Assessment
- Site Selection GMSF 2020