



Astley Warehouse Action
Group
Copy to
Michael Wheeler MP
Ward Councillors

Via secure email

Our reference: Astley BP response
Your reference:
Please ask for: Aidan Thatcher
Extension: 07917 642777
Direct line:
Date: 24th October 2025

Dear Astley Warehouse Action Group,

Thank you for taking the time to share your questions and concerns regarding the warehouse development. We deeply value the perspectives of our residents and are committed to listening carefully and responding with transparency and respect.

As you may be aware, planning permission for the development was granted by our committee during the summer of last year, following a comprehensive review process. In light of the issues raised, we have since carefully revisited the steps taken and remain confident that all actions were strictly aligned with the relevant planning legislation and regulations. Nevertheless, we remain committed to full accountability and transparency, and we are eager to work closely with you to provide assurance and address any ongoing concerns as the project progresses.

As part of this transparency, please find below the answers to all of the questions posed. We have addressed each of your questions in turn:

You told residents that you ‘followed the process’. Do you accept that following process is not the same as following good practice?

Our planning decisions are guided by a national framework of legislation, policy, and guidance, designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency. We recognise that good practice means not only following the rules but also acting with integrity and care to balance competing interests in our community.

What lessons have you taken from how this application has affected trust in Wigan Council?

We understand that our decisions may not always align with the wishes of every resident, and that this can impact trust. We are committed to being honest and open about our reasoning, and we will continue to engage with residents to explain how and why decisions are made. We see every interaction as an opportunity to build stronger relationships and to learn from your feedback.

Can you explain how you have come to the conclusion that you carried out an extensive local community consultation?

In accordance with statutory requirements and good practice, we directly notified all properties adjoining the site. We welcomed and received feedback from a significant number of these neighbours, as well as from many others in the wider community. We believe this level of engagement shows that residents both near and far had the chance to make their voices heard, and every comment was carefully considered as part of our assessment.

Can you give a concise overview of what has happened on this application, what's outstanding, and what the next 12 months look like, including enforcement and monitoring?

The planning application was submitted and validated in November 2023. After a thorough assessment, it went before the Planning Committee in June 2024, where an Officer recommendation for approval was presented. The Committee resolved to grant permission, which was formally issued in August 2024 following the completion of a legal agreement. Over the next 12 months, we will focus on closely monitoring compliance with the approved plans, all conditions and other requirements and will take enforcement action if necessary to uphold our standards and the interests of the community should any planning breaches be found.

Over the last number of months, Officers have determined various applications relating to conditions. All of these are available to view on the Council website.

The Council has determined one Non-Material Amendment application (ref: A/25/098865/NMA); the details of this are on the Council's website.

The Council currently have one pending Non-Material Amendment application (ref: A/25/099520/NMAS). We also have one pending condition discharge application (ref: A/25/099766/CON) and a pending application for the display of advertisement (ref: A/25/099628/ADV). The details of all these applications can be found on the Council's website.

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We will continue to monitor the site as and when necessary and will undertake enforcement action if necessary.

Who quality-assured and signed off the officer report before it went to committee? Who reviewed it and when. Please provide evidence of what was discussed during those reviews.

The Planning Committee report was reviewed by two managers within the Development Management service, who have access to the full case file. This process took place within 10-14 days before the publication of the Committee agenda.

Do you accept that the officer's report under-represented the scale and impact on homes and the school?

The officer's report and the presentation given to the committee, in addition to the online application case file, clearly set out the plans which included site maps and detailed, scaled drawings – and detailed the scale of the development and assessed the impact on neighbouring buildings sufficiently.

Councillors depend on the officer's report, but public objections made up just 3.5% of that report. The evidence and real-life impact (94 objections on average 500 words long) were sterilised into a few bullet points. Does Wigan Council accept that this distorted the balance of information before the vote or are councillors expected to read 55,000 words of objection on the portal before the hearing in addition to the officer's report?

Each objection is reviewed and set out in the report. It is also reflected in the analysis that led to the recommendation, and the matters were raised and discussed during the committee meeting.

Were the planning drawings submitted before or after the planning officer attended the site. If the drawings were submitted before the site visit did the planning officer not notice the drawings were incorrect as houses were missing? If the drawings were submitted after the site visit did the planning officer make reference to this with the applicant to rectify the issue?

The planning drawings were submitted prior to the initial planning officer site visit. The submitted drawings are not required to provide precise details on the land surrounding the planning unit (red edged site). The Officer's report details the surrounding area and assesses the impact of the development on

all surrounding land users, acknowledging the presence of residential properties close to the site boundaries.

Do you accept that housing being missing on planning maps within metres of the warehouse is a critical error?

It is understood that this is a reference to the maps submitted by the applicant, the developer. It is acknowledged that the base map used by the applicant in a number of drawings forming the planning application did not show some of the houses to the east of the site. The Council believes that this was because the base map used by the applicant pre-dated construction of these houses. There is no evidence that this was a deliberate attempt to conceal the relationship between the proposed buildings and these houses, and there is a large amount of other material, both within the application pack and the officer's report to Committee, that does clearly show these houses. This includes other plans, aerial photos, and (importantly) the cross-sections used to help appraise the relationship between the buildings and the houses and the effectiveness of the proposed landscaping.

Was a video of the site shown to the committee. Did this indicate the height of the structures?

No video was shown to Planning Committee

What timeframe did the committee receive to review the application? How many other applications had to be reviewed in that time?

In line with the statutory requirements, agendas and reports for Planning Committee are published no later than five clear days before the meeting. The agenda for the June 2024 meeting comprised three applications including this one.

You appear to have the view that the development is 'on-balance acceptable'. Why was the clear harm to the community not given enough consideration and what threshold would not have been acceptable?

The assessment of the application related to the facts of the case which is fully detailed within the committee report. It is not possible to speculate on other scenarios, and the statutory requirements are to make an assessment on the basis of the submitted development.

Research shows that warehouses of the scale you have approved create far fewer jobs per square metre (often one job per 130–150 m²), compared

with smaller industrial units that generate up to five times more employment density. Was this considered when approving the 18 metre structure?

The officer's report makes reference to estimated levels of employment within the development and arising in the wider economy as a result of it. The Council is obliged to determine the application before it, and cannot consider other hypothetical forms of development or recommend alternative designs.

What volume are the warehouses compared to the volume of those proposed in 2017.

The 2017 planning permission was in outline only and did not fix any building positions, uses or volumes, therefore it is not possible to undertake a comparison. The 2017 permission allowed for any or all of office (Use Class B1), general industry (Use Class B2) and warehousing / distribution (Use Class B8). The 2017 outline permission would have allowed scope for a development very similar if not identical to the one now approved to be proposed through a Reserved Matters application.

What negotiations took place between the planning officer and PLP to reduce the height, footprint or orientation of buildings prior to submitting plans to the public to ease the impact on the community? If none, why not?

The Council can only negotiate changes to a proposed development where those changes are needed to make the development comply with local or national planning policy. In this instance the proposal as submitted complied with policy in respect of building positions, scale and massing, and so no changes to the development were sought in these regards.

You stated there were 'iterations of plans' between public planning submission and the council decision meeting. What changes have improved the outcome for residents?

The initially submitted and amended plans are available to view on the Council's website.

Why was the industrial element of the 2017 outline plan allowed to lapse?

The Council has no control over this – the question of whether to bring forward reserved matters applications was a commercial matter for the private landowner.

Once the 2017 residential element was dispatched, why was the new full planning application of 2023 so unsympathetic and incongruous to the houses? What changed?

See earlier response – the 2017 outline did not fix building positions, scales or massing (or uses).

Is Wigan Council aware of any motivation to let the industrial unit plans lapse to ensure the new surrounding houses were purchased at a high market value?

No.

Why was no Environmental Impact Assessment or LVIA required on a development within a few metres of so many homes and a school? Who made that decision, and how did you come to that decision?

The Council did not require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or a formal Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for this development, as it was determined that the potential impacts could be appropriately assessed through the standard planning application process and the supporting documentation submitted.

While the development exceeds the threshold set out under Schedule 2, Category 10(a) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, this does not in itself trigger the requirement for an EIA. For Schedule 2 developments, the need for an Environmental Statement is subject to a judgement as to whether the proposal is likely to result in significant environmental effects that require separate assessment. In this case, it was considered at that stage that the proposal did not constitute EIA development, and the Council was content to validate the planning application without an Environmental Statement.

Visual impact was dealt with through information in a suite of documents, including the Planning Statement, Design and Access Statement, Landscape Statement, Landscape Plans, Site Sections, and other drawings, that collectively addressed visual and landscape impacts. There is not a requirement for a standalone document to be submitted if the Council is satisfied that the relevant information is contained elsewhere. In this instance the Council is satisfied that the information provided within the suite of documents was sufficient to assess the proposal's effects.

Why were drawings accepted that omitted existing homes? Was that error disclosed to the committee before the vote given it impacted on the reality of the plans? (Many public objections raised this issue and even those comments were misrepresented in the officer's report).

See earlier response. It is acknowledged that the base map used by the applicant in a number of drawings forming the planning application did not show some of the houses to the east of the site. The Council believes that this was because the base map used by the applicant pre-dated construction of these houses. This issue was referenced in the officer's report to Committee (pages 132 and 133), and plans which showed these houses in situ were used in the officer presentation to the planning committee.

Do you feel enough was done to educate the committee on the impact of the warehouses prior to their vote?

Members of the planning committee receive training to ensure they are able to interpret and make decisions on planning applications. Committee received a detailed presentation from the planning officer that included numerous photographs of the site and surrounding area, plans depicting various aspects of the development, and cross-sections showing the relationship between the development, the proposed landscaping and residential properties adjacent. The Committee also had the full officer's report, and the ability to view any part of the full planning file.

Please provide the notification list, addresses, distances, and dates sent of the planning notifications. Was the school formally consulted?

Yes the school was formally notified by letter on 7/11/2023.

A list of all addresses notified of the planning application when it was first received is appended.

You said you followed legislation, do you agree that good practice required in-person engagement with affected residents?

Like the majority of Councils, the Council does not as a matter of practice arrange direct in person consultation with residents regarding planning applications. The number of objections made on a particular issue is not of itself a material planning consideration. The Council is satisfied that the officers and Planning Committee were aware of the comments that had been made regarding the scale of the buildings and their relationship to nearby houses, and took these factors into account in their decision.

What provisions were made to ensure that blind, disabled, and elderly residents were properly informed about the development. Given the limited public notifications, it's important to know whether the council made any effort to make the consultation accessible to everyone in our community.

Consultations were conducted via letters, site notices, and (where applicable) press advertisements. We strive to ensure accessibility for all residents and offer alternative communication methods where needed.

If you say 99 letters were sent, and 94 objections submitted (a 95% rate of letters v objections), many citing clear errors in plans and seek further information - why did the planning officer who collated them not pick up on the errors / key issues / impact?

The officer's report, committee presentation, and online case files included comprehensive plans, site maps, and detailed scaled drawings. All objections were considered and summarised in the report, with full representations taken into account in the assessment and recommendation.

Why were 70 objections reported when there were 94 objections + 2 neutral.

The Council reports objections on a per-address basis. As noted above, the number of objections or comments on a particular issue is not of itself a material planning consideration.

Has Wigan Council communicated with or offered guidance to Garrett Hall School's employees in any way, relating to the Warehouse's development plans or external communications.

The Council consulted Garrett Hall School about the application in November 2023. The Council has not received any requests from the school for guidance, but we have provided communications and media advice to the school to ensure they are supported.

Please provide details and dates of visits made to the site by the planning officer, any other council officials, prior to the planning permission being proposed.

The case officer visited the site on three separate occasions during consideration of the application: on receipt of the application in November 2023, in January 2024 and in May 2024.

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What criteria were used for the councillors to not hold a site visit? Did any member propose one? Given the knowledge and potential impact in the area, why did the planning officer or those signing it off not advise the Chair of the committee to recommend a site visit?

It is not common practice to arrange site visits prior to planning decisions. When they are it tends to be when i) a member of Committee proposes a valid motion during the meeting requesting one, ii) that motion is seconded so as to go to a vote; and iii) a majority of Committee vote that a visit should take place.

Given councillors could not rely on first-hand context, is it possible they lacked a full understanding of scale and proximity?

The Council believes that members of the Committee had an accurate understanding of the site and its context; if they had felt that they did not then it would have been expected that a motion would be proposed for a site visit or to defer the application. All information was available for Councillors to view on the Council's website including plans, sections, neighbouring representations.

Two Independent councillors objected, the remaining Labour councillors approved it. Were the Labour Councillors on the committee advised or whipped in any way to approve this development?

The voting pattern described above does not reflect officers' notes of the meeting, or other information that they have seen regarding the outcome of the vote. These show that 12 members voted to approve, one member voted against and one abstained. There is no evidence to substantiate an allegation of whipping of Committee members.

Approved planning documents show 3-4m bunds, but residents report large gaps in bunds and a significant height difference in many places. Please provide details of the current plan with bunds. When will you complete an as-built survey and certify compliance?

The construction phase has not yet been completed and there is no requirement on the developer to complete the bunds at this stage. Construction is due to be completed by February 2026 and if any concerns remain regarding compliance with approved plans, Officers will continue to attend the site to investigate this matter further as the development progresses. It should be noted that the height of the bunds (as well as the

height of the buildings) is to be measured relative to the level of the ground within the development site, which may differ from that of the surrounding area.

Given the clear impact that now exists within the community, what will Wigan Council do to compromise and find a solution to win back the trust of the community they represent?

The Council has confirmed that planning permission was properly granted. This was not challenged through judicial review within the available window. Wigan Council is keen to work with residents, to listen deeply and do what we can to alleviate concerns.

Current landscaping plans show that many of the trees planted will be much smaller when planted. What will be in place to ensure the community is protected from the visual, light, sound and pollutants in the 20-50 years it takes for those trees to grow?

The landscaping to be planted includes trees of a mixture of sizes, including semi-mature specimens approximately 4.5 metres in height. This will provide some immediate softening of the development, but it is accepted that it is not feasible to provide complete screening of the development from the outset. The trees do not form any part of the technical mitigation for the development in relation to noise or light spillage.

Many of the trees detailed are deciduous species, meaning they will have no leaves for 6 months of the year. Has the impact of this been considered?

The trees are a mix of species including those native to Britain. Even when no foliage is present the trees will perform a function in breaking up the appearance of the buildings.

Does the proposed planting plan show rates of growth as trees planted on bunds take longer to get established because of water running off making growing conditions drier and therefore slowing growth? How long would it take for the trees to reach say ten metres in height?

The trees will be planted in appropriately specified pits, and we would not expect their growth to be impacted by their position on sloping bunds. Trees commonly grow on sloping ground in natural settings.

Does the landscaping plan require replanting of any failed trees and at what height?

Yes, like for like replacements are required for a period of 30 years.

What enforcement has taken place by Wigan Council since building has commenced and when?

The planning enforcement visits have not identified any breaches of planning control, and therefore no formal enforcement action has been taken.

What action has been / continues to be taken on dust control and water supply? Who is monitoring and how often?

Regular site visits have been conducted, with no breaches of planning control identified. Officers remain vigilant and will respond to any concerns regarding compliance or environmental impacts such as dust control.

Water supply / pressure is a matter for United Utilities and any concerns would need to be raised directly with them.

You said officers visited 'multiple times'. Please provide that site-visit log with dates and findings.

15/05/2025 – No breach of CEMP

29/05/2025 – No breach of CEMP

25/07/2025 – Frame heights and location of Units 1 and 2 correct.

11/09/2025 – No breaches identified

30/09/2025 - No breaches identified

What is the status of fire strategy and hydrant provision? Will occupation be prevented until GMFRS confirm compliance?

The detail of firefighting arrangements, hydrant positions and so on is dealt with through the Building Control regime rather than Planning. Developers have the option to use private Approved Inspectors to undertake Building Control assessment and inspections, and in this case the Approved Inspector dealing with this development is:

SOCOTEC Building Control
SOCOTEC House
Bretby Business Park
Ashby Road
Burton Upon Trent
DE15 0YZ

In terms of fire regulations, Building Control ensures that the fire safety design complies with the relevant requirements of the Building Regulations, particularly Approved Document B. This includes assessment of means of escape, fire compartmentation, boundary conditions in relation to fire spread, fire detection and alarm systems, and access for firefighting. For this development, the Approved Inspector will be responsible for reviewing and approving the fire strategy and as part of that process, including undertaking consultation with Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service to ensure that operational requirements are met.

The Fire Site Boundary Plans was drawn in 2021, but consultation with the Fire Service didn't start until 8th September 2025. Nearly four years later, by which time the warehouse structures were already built. GMFRS only have 15 working days to respond. These warehouses are dangerously close to our homes and the junior school, if a fire like the Cannock warehouse fire in May 2024 happened here, the consequences could be catastrophic. Can you explain this late consultation, do you accept responsibility for this late consultation, and do you recognise the danger it poses if a fire was to break out?

See above in relation to Building Control.

Has United Utilities confirmed firefighting flows won't affect residential supply? Please publish the correspondence.

Water supply / pressure is a matter for United Utilities.

You have permitted 24/7 operations and lighting. What reassurances will you give to the community that this will not impact their quality of life given the details provided about bunding and landscaping above?

The application was assessed on the basis of 24/7 operations and was considered acceptable with the proposed mitigations and management measures in place. These include consideration of the location of the site and site access on the fringes of an existing and established industrial area, the internal site arrangements whereby each of the proposed units faces inwards and so all associated activity would be focussed within the site as opposed to those areas closest to local residents, and the bund which extends along all sensitive boundaries of the site.

Will you require PLP to route HGVs via the A580 only and publish a routing plan?

No, it was not found during the Council's assessment of the application that such a restriction was necessary. Use of the A580 is the most likely/logical route for HGV traffic, given the location of the site.

Will you implement parking permits on the residential streets surrounding the Business Park to prevent parking issues?

The Council did not identify any parking issues during our assessment of the development given that level of on-site parking is being provided. However, if residents wish for parking permit holders only to be implemented they can apply via the Council's website.

How much weight did officers give to land-value or 'council revenue' versus community impact?

The land is privately owned and so there is no land value receipt for the Council as a result of the development. The Committee report outlines a number of financial considerations pertaining to the development, including the potential benefit to the local economy. The way that various factors were balanced is set out in the committee report.

Why was biodiversity offset money spent away from Astley? Will you review that allocation?

The national legislation relating to biodiversity net gain is very prescriptive as to the type of works required to improve habitats, and following discussions with the Council's Greenheart team no suitable site in Astley was identified.

How Bedford Colliery was chosen as the recipient?

This followed lengthy discussions with the Council's Greenheart team who identified this area as a suitable location.

Given Bedford Colliery closed in the 1960's and the residents near to Green Lane couldn't tell us where Bedford Colliery was, please detail the specific area that will benefit of this biodiversity funding.

Bedford Colliery Reclamation Land Holding (known more commonly as Bedford Colliery) is located between Green Lane and Clough House Drive. The site was reclaimed and landscaped following the closure of the surrounding coal mines. Today, the site is managed for its biodiversity value and as accessible quality greenspace for the local community. The Council is aware

of a video circulated online, which shows a different area. The plan below shows the correct area.



Will you commission an independent review of this application's handling and publish it?

It is our view that the decision was made in accordance with the processes outlined in planning legislation. In addition, no legal challenge was made within the statutory period. However, we will be undertaking an independent audit of the application's handling and are committed to publishing the outcomes.

If material errors are found, will you add conditions or pursue revocation if necessary?

Planning permission was granted and not subject to any legal challenge within the required window, therefore the Council does not intend to seek to vary or revoke the permission.

Will you co-operate fully with the Ombudsman and pause sign-offs pending outcome?

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If a formal complaint is investigated by the Ombudsman (having first been considered by the Council at Stage 1 and Stage 2 in line with its published policy) then the Council will cooperate fully with the Ombudsman.

Will you commit that no unit can be occupied until an independent 'as-built' compliance pack is verified?

The development is subject to various sign-offs in relation to both planning and other regimes, including Building Control. As noted above the Council is proactively monitoring the development and is satisfied that at this stage it is being constructed in line with the planning permission.

Will you fund independent air and noise monitoring at the nearest homes and school for 12 months and publish the results?

The council does not plan to do this as it is not part of the planning requirements.

Will you attend an on-site walkabout on Wednesday 15th October with residents and agencies to agree mitigations?

As you know, we have met with the Resident's Association and local politicians on 2 October 2025, and continue to engage with and listen to residents and agencies to understand concerns and ensure these are raised with the developer.

Given the distress and evident harm caused to the community, will you issue a public apology and commit to training for officers, supervisors and committee members?

The Council fully recognises that some residents disagree with the decision. Planning Committee members already receive mandatory training before being able to sit on Committee, as well as refreshers or updates on key topics. Officers hold relevant planning qualifications and are members of relevant professional bodies, ensuring they are able to operate to the highest level.

Will you provide compensation to the residents affected by this development which has been built as a direct result of Wigan Council's approval.

The Council will not offer compensation.

You said this decision ‘followed the process’. But residents live in shadow with no empathy or support from Wigan Council. Do you still stand by your belief that this decision was the correct one?

The Council does acknowledge the concerns expressed by residents and understands that planning decisions can be contentious. Planning is a policy-driven process with parameters set by national legislation, as well as national and local planning policy. The weight to be given to different factors within the planning balance is one for the decision-maker, and the Council believes that the decision was properly taken within this framework. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does require local planning authorities to approve policy complaint developments without delay.

We recognise the strength of feeling within the community and remain dedicated to supporting residents in achieving the best possible outcomes as we move forward, within the context that the application has been approved and is outside of any legal challenge period. We hope the information provided here is helpful and reassuring. Please rest assured that your feedback continues to inform our approach, and we value your ongoing engagement.

Kind regards,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature on the left is 'Aidan Thatcher' and the second signature on the right is 'David Proctor'.

Aidan Thatcher and David Proctor

Copy to:

Michael Wheeler MP
Cllr Jess Eastoe
Cllr James Fish
Cllr Joanne Marshall
Cllr Christine Roberts
Cllr Barry Taylor
Cllr Paula Wakefield