

## Appendix J

# Wigan

## PfE 2021 SITE REFERENCES INSERT

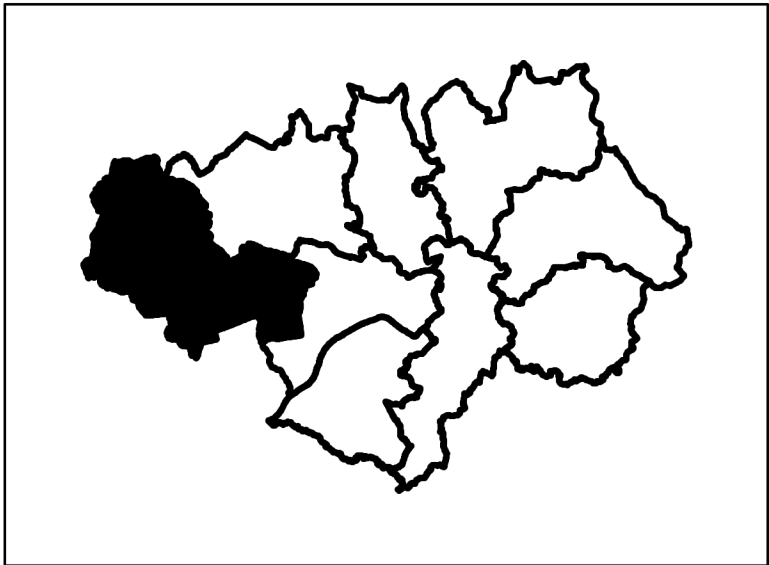
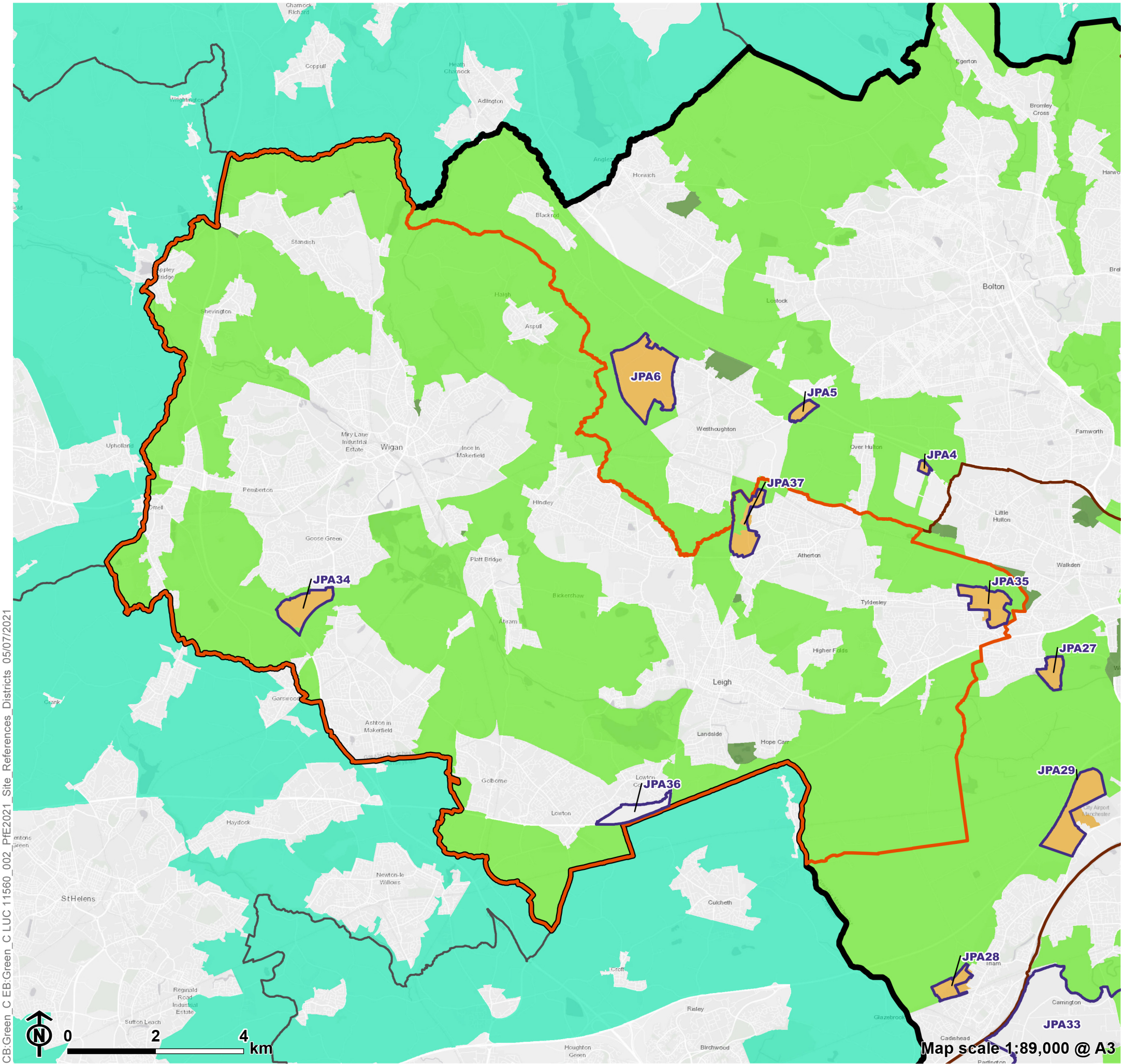
The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) was replaced by the Places for Everyone (PfE) Plan in 2021. This report still forms part of the PfE Plan evidence base, but the allocation policy numbers used in it have subsequently changed. The 2020 GMSF policy numbers (and in some instances the allocation names) were also different to the allocation references used by LUC in their original assessments. The table below sets out a comparison between the LUC Allocation references and names, the 2020 GMSF policy numbers and names, and the 2021 PfE policy numbers. The following map shows the allocation locations with their PfE Plan policy numbers.

District	LUC Allocation Ref	LUC Allocation Name	GMSF 2020 policy number	2020 GMSF / 2021 PfE Allocation Name	2021 PfE policy number
Wigan	GM47	Land South of Pennington	Deleted	N/A	N/A
Wigan	GM48	M6, Junction 25	GMA42	M6 Junction 25	JPA34
Wigan	GM49	North of Mosley Common	GMA43	North of Mosley Common	JPA35
Wigan	GM50	Pocket Nook	GMA44	Pocket Nook	JPA36
Wigan	GM51	West of Gibfield	GMA45	West of Gibfield	JPA37



**PfE 2021 Site References:  
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council**

- Places for Everyone Plan boundary
- Wigan Borough boundary
- Greater Manchester Local Authority boundary
- Other Local Authority boundary
- Site allocation
- PfE 2021 Green Belt proposed for release
- PfE 2021 Green Belt land to be retained
- PfE 2021 Proposed additional Green Belt
- Green Belt outside PfE boundary

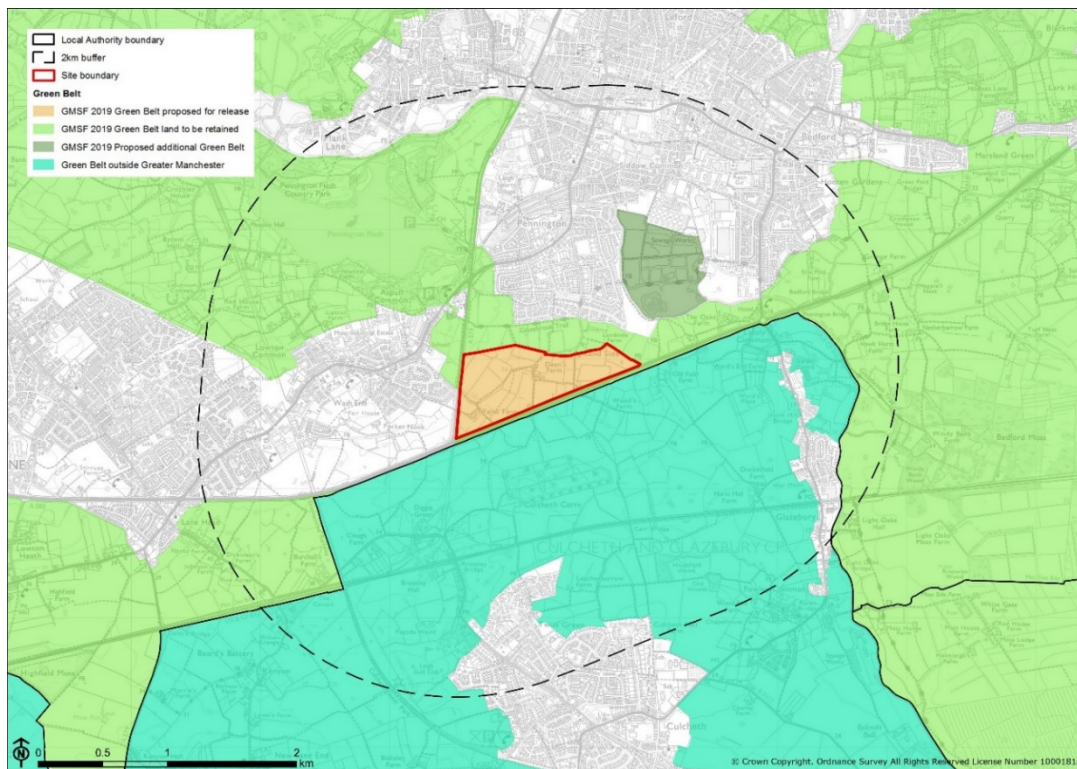


CB:Green\_CEB:Green\_C LUC 11560\_002\_PfE2021 Site References Districts 05/07/2021

# GM Allocation 47, Land South of Pennington



Above: View from the A580 East Lancashire Road looking north west across GM Allocation 47 towards A579



GM Allocation Area: 53.14 ha

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

## Study area definition

GM Allocation 47, Land South of Pennington is a linear site located adjacent the A580 approximately 2km south of Leigh town centre. The GM Allocation site is located within the Wigan Borough, bordering the Borough of Warrington, and is entirely proposed for release from the Green Belt. According to the Draft GMSF, a 21 ha (600 homes) site (Ref SHLAA0449) has been identified for future housing developments in land bordering GM Allocation 47, at Pocket Nook.

GM Allocation 47 is a flat landscape dominated by small to medium, mixed arable and pastoral fields with neat hedgerow boundaries and an abundance of hedgerow trees. Scattered farmsteads, small ponds and tributary drainage ditches add to key landscape features within the locality. Carr Brook runs through the south western corner of the GM Allocation site. Two of Leigh RUFC pitches are located on a split site within GM Allocation 47, south of Carr Lane.

GM Allocation 47 is bound to the south and west by the A580 East Lancashire Road and the A579 Atherleigh Road respectively. The northern and eastern boundaries are less robust, formed by field boundaries and a section of Carr Lane.

Land lying within 2km of GM Allocation 47 (identified as retained Green Belt) will form the focus of GI recommendations / mitigation to enhance the 'beneficial use' of the Green Belt. Retained Green Belt lies immediately north of GM allocation 47 plays a role as buffer, separating the site from residential properties within Pennington. A section of Green Belt also lies immediately west of the A579 Atherleigh Road. There is one proposed addition to the Green Belt within 2km of the GM Allocation site located at Hope Carr Nature Reserve to the north east.

# Summary of evidence and policy influencing 'beneficial use' proposals

## Published landscape character assessments – Greater Manchester Combined Authority

In reference to the Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment, 2018<sup>1</sup>, GM Allocation 47 is located within the Mosslands and Lowland Farmland LCT. This LCT is further refined into LCA 1: South Wigan and Salford Mosslands. The most notable landscape characteristics of this LCT include a generally flat landform, floodplain landscape of mainly arable farmland with some pasture, interspersed with distinctive areas of remnant mossland. Guidance and opportunities to consider within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Ensure that the sense of separation the landscape provides between distinct settlements is retained.
- Utilise areas of existing woodland (e.g. moss woodlands, valley woodlands, woodland along settlement edges) to integrate new development into the landscape, avoiding sites designated for their nature conservation importance.
- Protect areas of semi-natural habitat, including mosses and moss woodlands, which are locally designated as SBIs or nationally protected as SSSIs. Seek to enhance these where possible and provide linkages to form robust habitat networks.
- Conserve and manage the mosslands, including those areas which form part of SBIs and LNRs, to avoid drying and erosion. Consider the potential to restore less productive areas of farmland to lowland raised bog habitat where possible.
- Restore and enhance areas of deteriorating farmland including additional, species-rich, hedgerow planting to fill gaps and replace post and wire fencing. Reintroduce hedgerow trees where appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2018) Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment

- Protect areas of moss woodland, which provide important semi-natural habitat and contribute to the distinctive geometric character of the mosslands.
- Conserve and manage existing woodlands to encourage habitat diversity, using locally appropriate species and protecting from grazing during establishment.
- Improve the condition of the mossland 'rides' and restore ditches and field boundaries in the mosslands to improve grassland biodiversity.
- Consider additional woodland planting to enhance landscape structure, soften the urban fringe, screen industrial areas and reduce the noise and visual impacts of motorway corridors, where appropriate.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology and subsequent knock-on effects, such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off.
- Enhance existing public access and provide new informal recreational provision e.g. by creating circular routes with connections to canal tow paths, using derelict railways lines where possible. Tie in with proposals for a "Carbon Trail"<sup>2</sup> under the Carbon Landscape project.
- Improve signage, interpretation and waymarking at areas used for informal recreation, with parking provision where appropriate.

## **Published landscape character assessments – Local level**

Wigan Council Landscape Character Assessment, 2009<sup>2</sup> defines GM Allocation 47 within the Undulating Enclosed Farmland LCT within sub area 1A East Lancashire Road Corridor Lowton Heath to Lately Common. Key characteristics of this part of the LCT include medium to large scale arable fields with gappy hedgerows in a flat landscape with a deciduous wooded backdrop to the south and west. The A580 and the residential urban edge influence limited views in and out from the LCA. Recommended management and landscape objectives include the restoration and enhancement of remaining field patterns through additional hedgerow planting and the management of existing woodland and addition of woodland at settlement edge to encourage habitat diversity. Other landscape considerations include the monitoring of public

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<sup>2</sup> Wigan Council, 2009, Wigan: A Landscape Character Assessment

access routes through the area, encouraging routes along field boundaries rather than across open fields and creating circular routes where possible reinforced by appropriate waymarking.

## **Flood Risk<sup>3</sup>**

The Environment Agency has identified Green Belt to the west of the A579 Atherleigh Way as lying within Flood Zone 3. Land at Lately Common, centred on the A574 Warrington Road, is also included within Flood Zone 3. This presents an opportunity to combine Nature Based Solutions for Flood Risk reduction with green infrastructure enhancements.

## **Wildlife Corridor EV2C<sup>4</sup>**

Wildlife Corridors are located on the urban fringe of Pennington.

Development which would adversely affect, directly or indirectly key landscape features (which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora) will not be permitted unless the permission can be subject to conditions that will prevent damaging impacts on wildlife habitats or important physical features or if other material considerations are sufficient to override these. Appropriate management of these features will be sought through the imposition of conditions on planning permissions, the use of planning obligations and by entering into management agreements with landowners and developers where appropriate. Developers will also be expected to protect and enhance habitats and species listed in the UK and Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plans.

## **Open Space Study**

Wigan Council has provided qualitative and quantitative open space data through their 2017, Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision and Needs Assessment<sup>5</sup>.

GM Allocation 47 and Green Belt to the east are located within the Leigh settlement area, whilst nearby Green Belt to the west is located within Golborne and Lowton. The study seeks to

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<sup>3</sup> The Environment Agency (2018) Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea)

<sup>4</sup> Wigan Council (2006) Replacement Unitary Development Plan

<sup>5</sup> Wigan Council (2017) Wigan Borough Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision and Needs Assessment

identify surplus open space, sport and recreation provision and highlight deficits and catchment gaps.

Specific findings include investing in existing amenity green spaces to improve quality and value. Pennington Flash and Hope Carr Nature Reserve were also identified as high quality and high value natural and semi-natural green spaces. Allotment provision was also identified as a deficit, with waiting lists of up to five years.

## Existing baseline

### Access

Within GM Allocation 47 and the adjacent Green Belt there is a relatively concentrated network of PRoWs which follow lanes and field boundaries. This pattern is repeated on the opposite side of the A580, where the Green Belt to the south is outwith the Greater Manchester boundary.

Hope Carr Nature Reserve in a proposed addition to the Green Belt, 0.3km north east of GM Allocation 47 is readily accessible by a number of PRoWs.

Pennington Flash Country Park located in Green Belt to the north of GM Allocation 47 contains a number of PRoWs and trails traversing the wetlands and woodlands and encircling the large water body.

The Glazebrook Trail long distance footpath originates at Pennington Flash, and follows the Glaze Brook south to Cadishead where it flows into the Manchester Ship Canal. The path crosses just 0.2km north of the proposed release site and connects the existing Green Belt with the new addition to the north east.

The Leeds and Liverpool Canal is located 1.7km north of GM Allocation 47 and connects into the Bridgewater Canal to the east. The Leeds and Liverpool stretch of the canal towpath does not currently offer extensive provisions for cyclists.

Running along the western and southern edges of GM Allocation 47 are TfGM traffic-free routes for cyclists on the A579 and A580. These routes allow connectivity through Pennington and Pennington Flash to join with the Leeds and Liverpool Canal to the north.

According to TfGM's Bee Network, major Severance Lines are identified along the A580, isolating GM Allocation 47 from Green Belt to the south within the neighbouring Borough of

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

Warrington. Many of the PRowS within the GM Allocation site continue south, although pedestrian crossings on the A580 are limited.

## **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

### **Access**

There is opportunity for small scale green infrastructure interventions to enhance usability and legibility of routes, including vegetation clearance and potential resurfacing at cross-country, circular and long-distance routes with improved access at overgrown entrance points.

Public Rights of Way within GM Allocation 47 should be retained in-situ wherever possible to maintain continuity and historical identity of routes. Where retention is not possible, diversions should be put in place to enable onward connections, particularly with retained Green Belt to the east.

A disused stretch of railway line in Green Belt to the west, north of Lowton could be transformed into a local-level footpath network linking Edge Green and Golborne with Pennington Flash via a new cycle-way link north-south along a second disused railway line (discussed below).

There is potential to link Hope Carr Nature Reserve with the Green Belt to the south and east along the northern side of Pennington Brook with the creation of a new Public Right of Way. This would enable a new recreational corridor with links to PRow 010/227/10 (the Glazebrook Trail Long Distance Footpath) along the urban fringe of Hooten Gardens.

Key improvements to the accessibility of Pennington Flash Country Park could focus on a hierarchical approach to routes and usability. A circular route around the main lake could be made available for multi-user access creating an off-shoot / extension to the Glazebrook Trail which currently terminates at the visitor car park.

Improvements to the visitor car park, including the use of SuDS would enable increased visitor numbers to this regional destination.

There is opportunity to upgrade the surfacing of the Glazebrook Trail to provide all-weather access. Such proposals would need to be aligned with access improvements at key residential

locations at Pennington and Hooten Gardens to enable better connectivity with the suburban population and promote walking as a recreational pursuit.

The towpath to the south of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in Green Belt to the north west of GM Allocation 47 could be improved through widening, resurfacing and vegetation management to provide clear maintenance strips and good sightlines.

These improvements would be most beneficial in links from the disused railway line to the west and the A579 to the east.

There is further opportunity in Green Belt to the north west to convert a disused railway line into a cycle route connecting Pennington Flash Country Park with Green Belt to the south and east.

A new crossing point across the A580 could be considered between the junction of the A579 and the A574. This may be most appropriate at the junction of PROW 010/252/10 and the A580, which would link Hope Carr Nature Reserve with the Green Belt in the neighbouring borough of Warrington. A small section of new PROW east of Old Field Farm would enable full connectivity of north-south pedestrian movement.

## Existing baseline

### Sport and recreation

Pennington Flash Country Park, which is classified as a public park, offers a major opportunity for recreation within the study area. Located 0.5km north west of the release site, the 200ha park provides an information centre, play area, bird hides, golf course, fishing and water sports, as well as multi-user routes suitable for walkers, cyclists, horse riders, joggers and wheelchair users.

Pennington Flash Country Park currently serves as a gateway to Wigan's Greenheart, an area of multi-functional greenspace which help to deliver many of the borough's health and wellbeing programmes. The site scored highly for both quality and value within the Open Space Assessment.

Other recreational facilities outside the Greater Manchester boundary include Lately Common park, Leigh End allotments, and Glazebury Cricket Ground, all of which are located to the south east of the GM Allocation 47.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

# **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

## **Sport and recreation**

Suggestions include working with the active Friends of Pennington Flash group to increase accessibility to and within the Country Park. Pedestrian links to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal have been identified as priorities within the Borough’s Open Space Assessment.

Other improvements would be aligned with enhanced visitor experience and increasing the duration and frequency of visits. Suggestions would include upgrades to the existing play area, the improvement and creation of woodland trails, refurbishment/addition of bird hides and a strategic approach to interpretation and signage to increase usability across the park.

The 9-hole golf course could be improved through enhanced community access packages to enable wider usability.

Improvements should be read in conjunction with options discussed in both the ‘Access’ and “Biodiversity and Wildlife Corridor’ themes to create a holistic management plan.

Opportunities exist to improve the functionality and aesthetic of each recreational facility, and it is recommended that interventions are discussed with Warrington Borough Council to maximise benefits to the wider Green Belt and the local communities.

## **Existing baseline**

### **Biodiversity and wildlife corridors**

The GMEU has defined a large proportion of the study area within the Greater Manchester boundary as corridors of Green Infrastructure (2018).

The surrounding Green Belts hold important ecological value, as identified by the number of SBIs and LNRs. This is due to its variety of rich habitats including open water, fen, reed bed, scrub and woodland.

SBIs are located at Hope Carr Nature Reserve (north east) and Pennington Flash (north west).

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

The entire Green Belt within the study area surrounding GM Allocation 47 is classified within the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area.

This area covers 48,000 hectares of wetlands across Wigan, Manchester, Salford and Warrington. Mosslands are a UK Priority Habitat.

There are several waterbodies associated with the lowland landscape to the north and north east.

The Leeds and Liverpool Canal is also located within Green Belt to the north of Pennington Flash forming a key green corridor linking the wetland habitats within Wigan.

## **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

### **Biodiversity and wildlife corridors**

Pennington Flash with its connections to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal offers strategic green infrastructure corridors. They represent opportunities for enhancement of existing habitats and increasing biodiversity, particularly through targeted species additions. They also present key opportunities to create linkages to other habitats, namely SBIs, hedgerows and areas of semi-natural green space. As discussed in the Access theme, proposals should be in conjunction with increased community accessibility.

Green infrastructure enhancements should be in keeping with local ecological requirements, including invasive species and woodland management to improve key aspects for designation.

There may be opportunities to connect the SBIs using existing Green Corridors such as Hey Brook / Pennington Brook, although these entities are outwith the Green Belt boundary.

The area of existing Green Belt, running along the northern boundary of GM Allocation 47 could benefit from the creation and/or restoration of species rich hedgerows and tree lines bordering fields. This would improve and maintain habitat connectivity between Pennington Flash and Green Belt areas to the south of the A580.

Ecological enhancements within the Green Belt area should look at the restoration of wetland habitats. This will include the re-wetting of the landscape to create the appropriate conditions for these valuable ecosystems.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

Such habitats will have the opportunity to support endangered and rare plant and animal species as well as providing natural flood defences and actively storing carbon dioxide.

Particular focus should be placed on wetland restoration in Green Belt to the north west around Pennington Flash LNR. Waterbodies were created from subsidence resulting from the extraction of coal. Potential enhancements should include improvements to the various habitat types including open water, reedbed, mossland, willow carr and fenland. These ecosystems support a number of important species including willow tit, bittern, gadwell and kingfisher. The reedbed areas at Pennington Flash and Wigan Flash LNRs are the only two areas of important reedbed identified in Greater Manchester in the GM Biodiversity Action Plan therefore maintaining and improving these areas should be a priority.

The corridors of Hey Brook and Pennington Brook provide important wildlife corridors connecting the flashes and lowland areas, in particular the SBIs.

The naturalistic bankside habitat adjacent to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal should be conserved and enhanced to maintain BAP priority habitat status.

There is also opportunity for green infrastructure enhancements to improve the WFD 'Moderate' status associated with the Leeds to Liverpool Canal, Hey Brook and Pennington Brook to 'Good' through interventions such as the removal of historic modifications which prevent natural flow, and the introduction of appropriate native planting to enhance water health.

## Existing baseline

### Landscape and visual

Land immediately north of GM Allocation 47 forms a buffer which separates the site from residential properties within Pennington. The land south of GM Allocation 47 does not play a critical role in halting the amalgamation of settlement. However, it does provide the rural setting for Pennington and help absorb visual disruptions on the landscape, including the A580 and the railway.

The GMLCA defines GM Allocation 47, as well as the adjacent land to the south, east and west, to be part of the Mosslands and Lowland Farmland character type. This landscape is typified by a fine network of brooks and drainage ditches crossing farmland. The simple, open and ordered

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

nature of the landscape creates a contrasting backdrop to the surrounding urban and industrial settlement. The conservation of semi-natural habitats is important in these areas, as shown by the frequency of designations, alongside the retention and promotion of open and long-distance views.

Land to the north west of GM Allocation 47 forms part of the Reclaimed Land / Wetlands character type. This landscape is again recognised for its rich ecological value, with a variety of habitats including rivers open water bodies, carr woodland and wetlands. The protection of these semi-natural habitats is important within the area, as well as the maintenance and enhancement of the landscape structure.

The UHLC characterises the majority of the study area as Enclosed Land. The proposed release site and adjacent farmland is considered to be a mixture of Piecemeal Enclosure and Drained Wetland. The Enclosed Land is not directly adjacent to GM Allocation 47 and is further defined as Agglomerated Fields common to the area, and generally denoting formation between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Typically, they consist of larger fields with regular or semi-regular boundaries, which are created from the removal of boundaries from Piecemeal Enclosure.

The wetland environment associated with the Green Belt to the north west of GM Allocation 47 gives rise to a typical flood risk pattern, with EA Flood Zone 2 breaching the south west corner of the GM Allocation site.

A large portion of EA Flood Zone 3 can also be found to the east adjacent Pennington Brook.

## **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

### **Landscape and visual**

The potential exists to enhance the landscape quality of the land immediately north of GM Allocation 47, including the integration of access improvements associated with the Glazebrook Trail. There is also opportunity to expand and enhance existing native planting belts along the A580, in Green Belt south of the GM Allocation site and along the A579 within GM Allocation 47 to increase mitigation and promote the separation functionality of these transport corridors.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

Existing semi-natural habitats at Hope Carr Nature Reserve in the proposed addition to the Green Belt north east of GM Allocation 47 could be enhanced and extended. In particular green links to the Pennington Brook corridor encompassing settlement edge planting east of Thames Avenue would create a more robust and contiguous habitat network whilst reinforcing landscape integration.

Expansion of Hope Carr Nature reserve in Green Belt located on open land to the north would also strengthen visual mitigation for the adjacent treatment works.

Pennington Flash Country Park offers significant potential for woodland management and extension where appropriate, and in line with the Greenheart Action Plans and Local Nature Reserve Management Plans applicable at this location. Particular focus should be placed on managing woodlands where they encroach upon wetland habitats.

Further semi-natural habitat enhancements can be achieved through the planting of native woodland species to soften urban edges, particularly north of Moss Industrial Estate in Aspull Common.

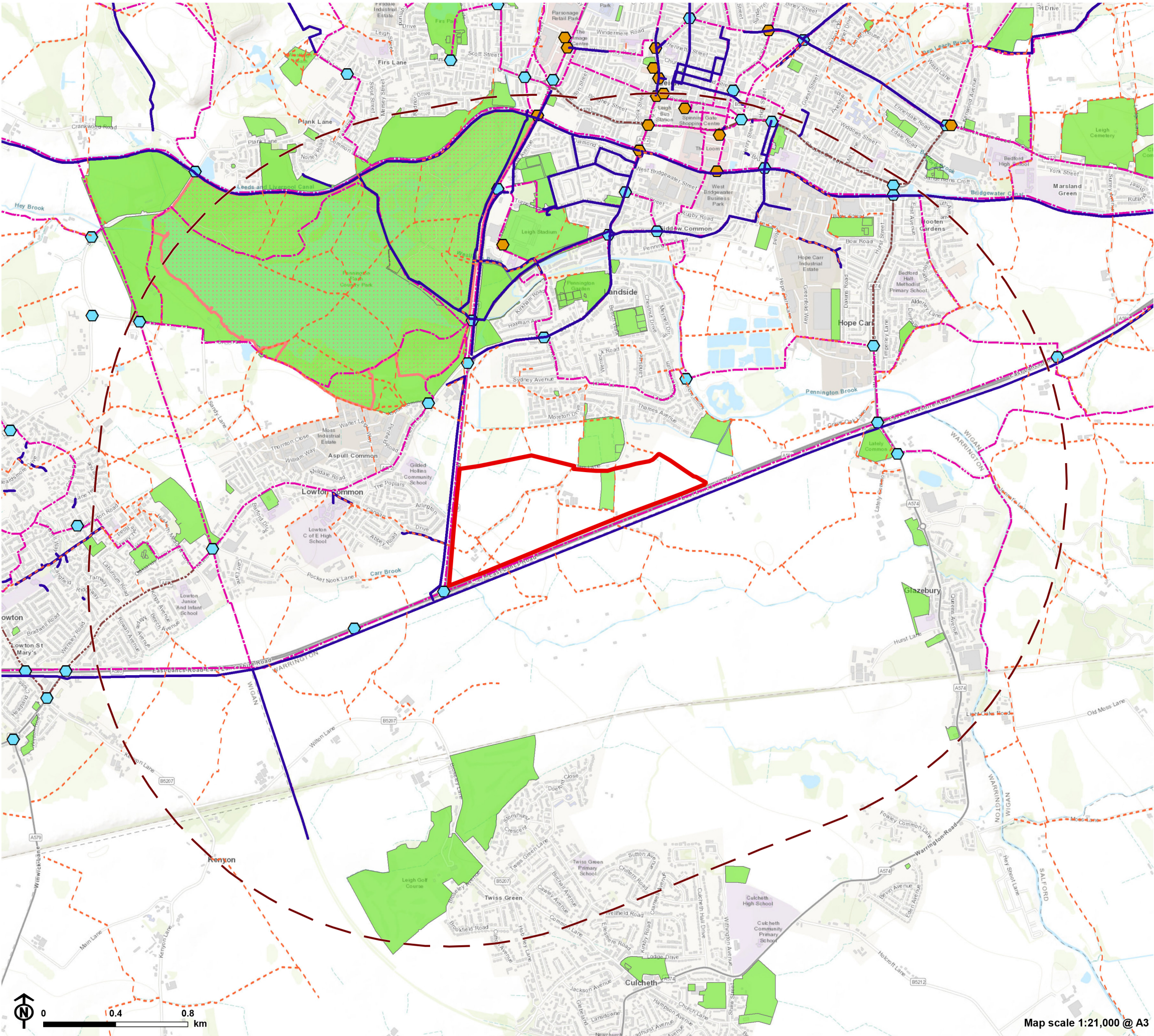
There is opportunity to reinforce hedgerows and woodland structure planting in the Green Belt to the east of GM Allocation 47 where hedgerows are more gappy and there are fewer hedgerow trees. Structure planting could be introduced adjacent the A580 and Pennington Brook to strengthen landscape character.

There is opportunity to enhance the existing environmental functionality inherent within the Pennington Flash habitat to address issues associated with flooding. This may involve increases in size of wetlands or additional planting to improve flooding alleviation.

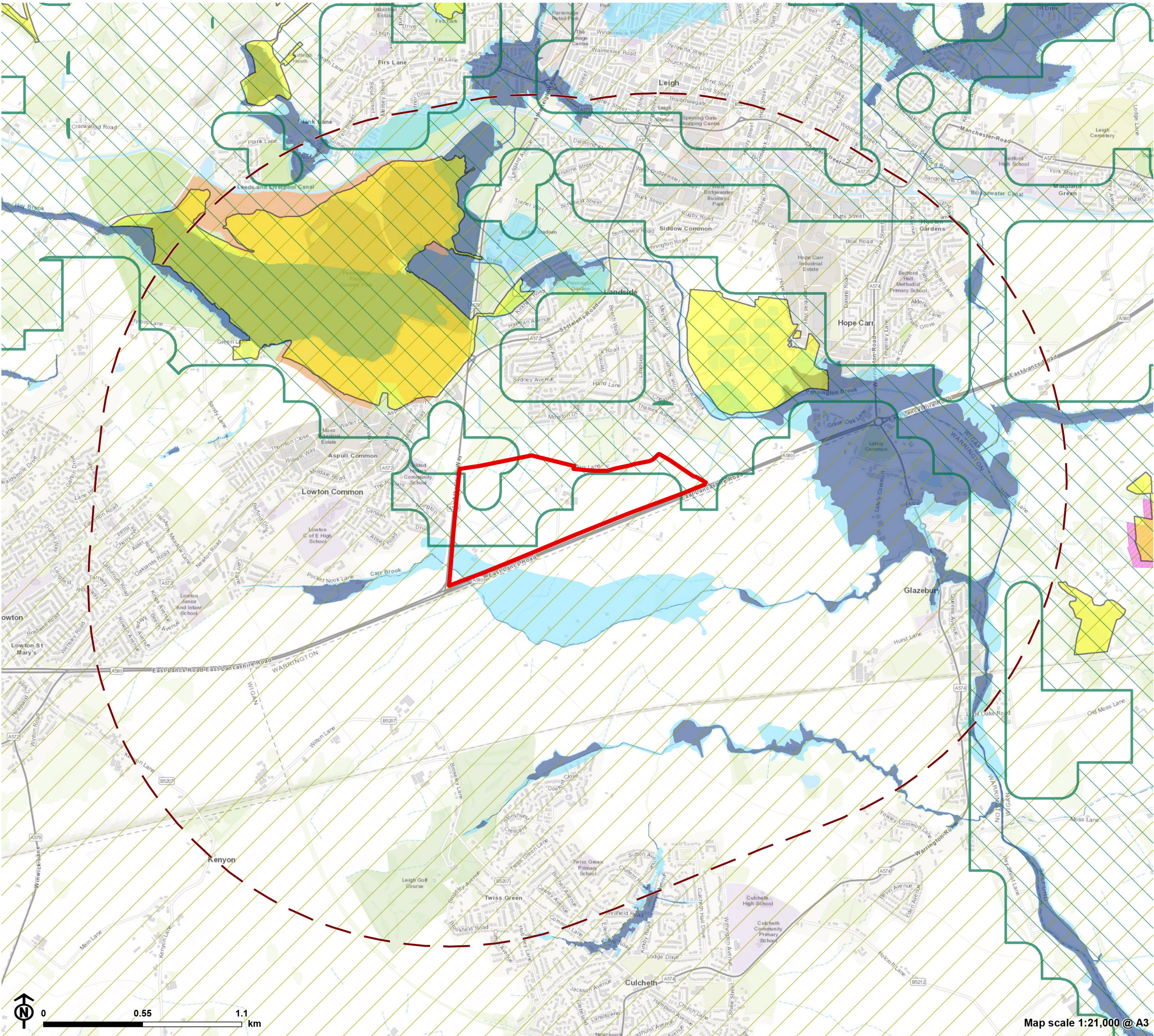
The farmland surrounding Pennington Brook should be protected from development to retain natural flood defences.

Access, Sport and Recreation  
GM Allocation 47

- Site boundary
- Site boundary - 2km buffer
- Access**
- Public right of way
- TfGM cycle route
- Bee network - confirmed infrastructure
- Bee network - crossing point
- Bee network - beeway
- Bee network - busy beeway
- Sport and Recreation**
- Open green space
- Country park



Map scale 1:21,000 @ A3



**Biodiversity, Landscape and Visual  
GM Allocation 47**

- Site boundary
- Biodiversity**
  - Site of biological importance
  - Local nature reserve
  - National nature reserve
  - SSSI
  - Special Area of Conservation
  - Ancient woodland
  - Flood zone 2
  - Flood zone 3
- Landscape and Visual**
  - Priority green infrastructure
  - Green infrastructure opportunity area



Map scale 1:21,000 @ A3

# Potential enhancement projects

## Access

1. Access improvements to Glazebrook Trail including signage and interpretation at urban fringe of Pennington and Hooten Gardens.
2. Disused railway line west of Aspull Common converted into cycleway.
3. Disused railway line north of Lowton converted into local level footpath.
4. Crossing point on A580 and creation of new section of PRow linking Hope Carr Nature Reserve and Green Belt to the south, including the settlement of Glazebury within Warrington Borough.
5. Upgrade of routes around Pennington Flash to create additional loop to the Glazebrook Trail long distance footpath.

## Sport and recreation

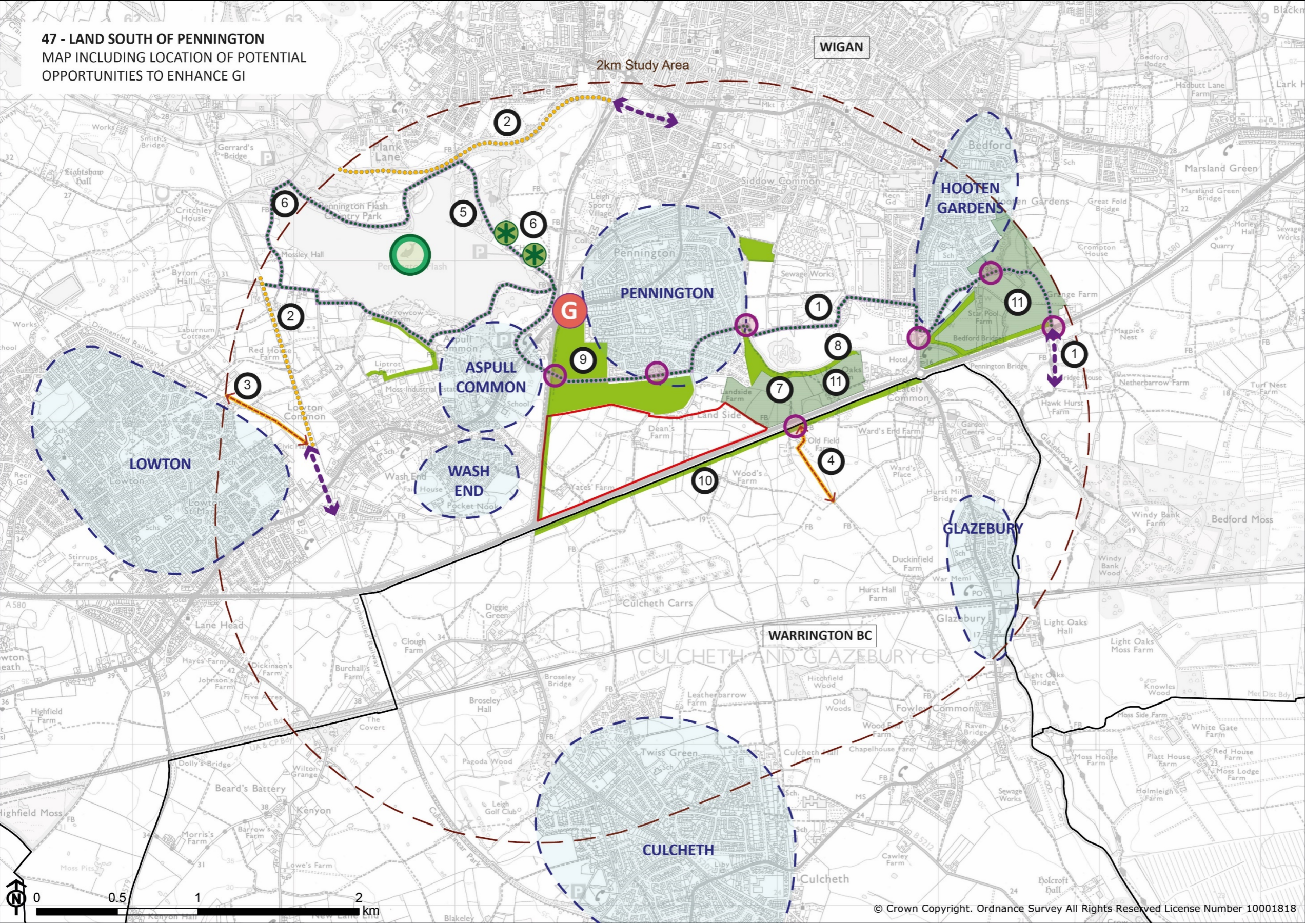
6. Upgrading of play area and car parking at Pennington Flash Country Park.

## Biodiversity and wildlife corridors

7. Northern woodland extension to Hope Carr Nature Reserve.

## Landscape and visual

8. Native planting along Pennington Brook.
9. Enhance the landscape quality of the land immediately north of GM Allocation 47, offering local links to residential properties within Pennington.
10. Structure planting adjacent A580.
11. Hedgerow reinforcement north of the A580.



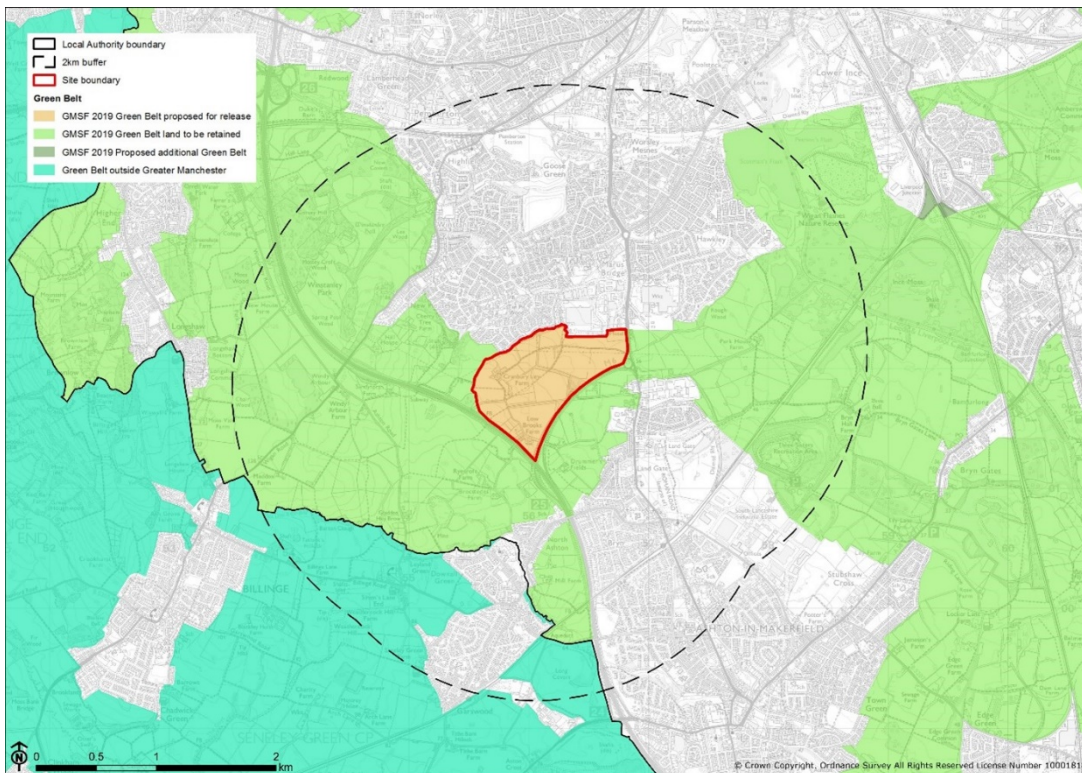
- LOCAL SETTLEMENT
- LOCAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARY
- REVISED GMSF ALLOCATIONS (2019)
- POTENTIAL CONTIGUOUS HABITAT NETWORK
- POTENTIAL AREA FOR EXTRA HEDGEROW RESTORATION
- POTENTIAL FOOTPATH UPGRADE / ADDITION
- POTENTIAL CYCLEWAY UPGRADE / ADDITION
- ACCESS / CROSSING POINT IMPROVEMENTS
- EXISTING RECREATIONAL ASSET ENHANCEMENT
- PROMOTION OF STRATEGIC LINK
- POTENTIAL LONG DISTANCE FOOTPATH UPGRADE / ADDITION
- IMPROVEMENT OF REGIONAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES
- POTENTIAL GATEWAY ENHANCEMENT
- REFER TO POTENTIAL ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

# GM Allocation 48, M6 Junction 25



Above: View from Drummer's Lane looking east towards the urban fringe of Bryn in Green Belt to the east of GM Allocation 48



GM Allocation Area 73.67 ha

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

## Study area definition

GM Allocation 48 is located within the Green Belt to the north east of Junction 25 on the M6. The GM Allocation site is within the local authority borough of Wigan on the southern fringe of suburban Winstanley and approximately 3.75km south west of Wigan town centre.

The M6 motorway exerts an audible influence on what is otherwise a relatively rural and tranquil landscape. Land use is a mix of pastoral and arable fields, bordered by mature woodland belts and robust settlement edge planting. A series of small man-made ponds are located adjacent the Junction 25 M6 spur and are utilised for recreational fishing.

The M6, Junction 25 site is bound to the south and east by the M6 and M6 spur roads. The northern boundary is defined by the southern limit of the settlement of Winstanley and the GM Allocation site is bounded to the west by softer field boundaries which are less well defined.

Land lying within 2km of GM Allocation 48 (identified as retained Green Belt) will form the focus of GI recommendations / mitigation to enhance the 'beneficial use' of the Green Belt. There are no proposed additions to the Green Belt within 2km of the GM Allocation site.

## Summary of evidence and policy influencing 'beneficial use' proposals

### Published landscape character assessments - Greater Manchester Combined Authority

GM Allocation 48 is located within the Urban Fringe Farmland LCT, as identified within the Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment, 2018<sup>1</sup>. It is further defined within LCA 4: Bispham, Winstanley and Land Gate. The predominant landscape characteristics of GM Allocation 48 include a rolling, elevated farmland landscape with small to medium irregular shaped fields, remnant of parliamentary enclosure. Recreational pursuits including golf courses are evident, as are pockets of woodland associated with settlement edges, road and stream corridors. Parts of the landscape are influenced by large scale

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<sup>1</sup> Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2018) Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment

industrial and commercial developments. Guidance and opportunities to consider within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Avoid siting development on highly visible skylines e.g. elevates areas on the urban fringe opposite Unsworth.
- Ensure that the sense of separation the landscape provides between distinct settlements is retained.
- Utilise areas of existing woodland to integrate new development into the landscape. Avoid sites designated for their nature conservation importance.
- Consider the potential to restore less productive areas of farmland to lowland raised bog habitat.
- Restore and enhance areas of deteriorating farmland including additional, species-rich hedgerow planting to fill gaps and replace post and wire fencing. Reintroduce hedgerow trees where appropriate.
- Encourage woodland creation schemes on areas of low grade agricultural land, including through the Northern Forest Initiative. Woodland planting along motorways and staggered blocks of planting should be used to help screen views of traffic and reduce noise.
- Enhance public access and provide new informal recreational provision.
- Protect the pockets of tranquillity and relative remoteness associated with the landscape and the role the LCT plays as a rural backdrop and buffer between discrete urban areas.
- Improve signage, interpretation and waymarking at areas used for informal recreation.
- Ensure any development is in keeping with the mainly rural character of the landscape in terms of form, density and vernacular.

## **Published landscape character assessments – Local Level**

Wigan Council Landscape Character Assessment, 2009<sup>2</sup> defines GM Allocation 48 within the Elevated Enclosed Farmland LCT within sub area 2A Billinge and Orrell Ridge. Key characteristics of this part of the LCT include an elevated area of large arable fields with expansive views, particularly to the east. The presence of the M6 and communication masts

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<sup>2</sup> Wigan Council, 2009, Wigan: A Landscape Character Assessment

and pylons exert a human influence on the landscape. Key management recommendations include the restoration and enhancement of remaining field patterns with additional hedgerow planting and the reintroduction of hedgerow trees. Further consideration should be given to mitigation planting in association with the M6 motorway, and the prevention of skyline developments.

## **Greenway Network Policy C1E<sup>3</sup>**

The Greenway Network refers to a linked route of public rights of way which follow Green Belt in the west, through GM Allocation 48 towards the urban fringe of Bryn.

The Greenway Network includes public rights of way, canal towpaths and disused railways and is one of the Borough's key recreational assets for residents and visitors alike. Much of it involves the reclamation of derelict land.

The aim is to develop a network of attractive, safe, off-road routes linking the countryside and recreational facilities with urban areas across the Borough. Greenways will link into proposals of neighbouring authorities including long distance footpath and cycle routes such as the National Cycle Network and compliment the Council's Walking and Cycling Strategies and initiatives to improve the bridleway network.

Agreements will be sought to secure advantageous links across private land or other improvements, including as part of new development through negotiation, planning conditions and / or legal agreement.

## **Open Space Study**

Wigan Council has provided qualitative and quantitative open space data through their 2017, Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision and Needs Assessment<sup>4</sup>.

GM Allocation 48 is located within the Winstanley and Highfield settlement area, whilst Green Belt to the east is located within Wigan South and Green Belt to the south and west is within the Ashton settlement. The study seeks to identify surplus open space, sport and recreation provision and highlight deficits and catchment gaps.

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<sup>3</sup> Wigan Council (2006) Replacement Unitary Development Plan

<sup>4</sup> Wigan Council (2017), Wigan Borough Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision and Needs Assessment

Specific findings indicate a shortage of Amenity Green Space in the Winstanley area from consultation which identified a general frustration that Green Belt is required for development. Natural and semi-natural Green Space was discovered as a highly valued asset within this part of the Borough. Allotments were also identified as a valued green space resource which is currently under-provided. Whilst there was sufficient provision for a range of play activities within the area, there is a need to improve the quality of sites that scored poorly or averagely. There is also an opportunity to address specific deficiencies within local sports facilities.

## Existing baseline

### Access

The Green Belt within the 2km study area has limited PRowS to the east in the land surrounding Park House Farm, and to the north west of GM Allocation 48 on the urban fringe of Winstanley.

PRowS are more prevalent to the south west of GM Allocation 48 in Green Belt on the western side of the M6 motorway. Existing PRowS predominantly follow field boundaries and there are no long-distance footpaths within the study area.

There is a short stretch of traffic-free cycle route suitable for mountain biking, stretching from Brocstedes Road where it joins a track and PRow via a tunnel through the M6.

The Leigh Branch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal is located to the north east of the proposed release site. This area is also associated with wetlands and a variety of large water bodies (Wigan Flashes Nature Reserve and Ince Moss). Both pedestrian and cycle access is granted along the tow path of the canal, enabling traffic-free movement connecting east – west.

The M6 and its adjoining filter road, which run along the southern extent of the release site, act as major severance lines to both people and wildlife. Furthermore, the A49 to the east and the A571 to the west both further enclose GM Allocation 48.

Confirmed infrastructure on TfGM's Bee Network will see the creation of a new route between Ashton-in-Makerfield and Ince Moss / Wigan Flashes. This route passes through sections of Green Belt to the east of GM Allocation 48 and will also connect nearby neighbourhood.

# **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

## **Access**

Improvements to the PRoW network within the study area should concentrate on reinforcing and creating countryside links at urban fringes, including the promotion of east-west links.

The wooded Green Belt to the north west of GM Allocation 48 has the potential for increased public accessibility. In particular, Winstanley Park could provide varied circular recreational walking routes taking in the wetlands, woodlands and scheduled monuments from Blundell’s Wood and Smith Brook on the outskirts of Winstanley. This would create formal onward links for PRoW 005/64/10, 005/64/10 and connections with the A571 Pemberton Road to create a local level walking route.

The existing cycle infrastructure should be retained within development proposals where possible. Where retention cannot be combined with designs, a diversion should be provided to maintain existing linkages. In principle, this diversion can follow the line of the M6 motorway corridor along the southern boundary of the GM Allocation site, with the upgrading of existing PRoW 002/06/10 to cycleway standard.

There is opportunity to widen and upgrade the surfacing of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal towpath to provide all-weather off-road cycle access. Such proposals would need to be aligned with access improvements at key points along the canal to improve east – west connectivity and provide opportunities for onward travel.

There is opportunity to create parallel pedestrian / cycle routes to connect existing crossing points and provide more permeability at severance lines, for example connecting the A571 Pemberton Road, parallel to the M6, with Brocstedes Road.

There is also opportunity to connect existing routes via improved infrastructure, for example enhanced pedestrian / cycle segregation at the crossing points located at Low Brooks Farm to enable connections across the M6 and link the settlements of Garswood and Bryn.

As mentioned above, enhancements should focus in improved local level access, with feeder-routes from the surrounding urban areas onto the TfGM confirmed infrastructure.

In particular, improved and new access at the southern edge of Hawkley with links onto the confirmed TfGM infrastructure at Park House Farm would enable enhanced connectivity with Wigan Flashes Nature Reserve to the north east.

The creation of a new section of PRow south of Hawkley along the line of the brook would enable links with PRow 002/02/40 to the south of Windstanley, fostering onwards connections to the west.

## Existing baseline

### Sport and recreation

The Green Belt surrounding the proposed release site is generally quite poorly services by formal sport and recreation provision.

0.1km south of GM Allocation 48, on the west side of the M6, there is a cluster of recreational spaces on the outskirts of North Ashton. These include the playing fields of Ashton Athletic Football Club, a bowling green, and Brocstedes Park, which is defined as a public park.

The pitches at Ashton Athletic Football Club have been assessed as mainly standard quality with one mini pitch rated as poor quality.

1.9km north west of the GM Allocation site on the periphery of the study area is Winstanley Park, a hall and parkland accessed off Hall Lane.

To the north east of GM Allocation 48 there are no formal designations for play and recreation, however Wigan Flashes Nature Reserve falls within the outer limits of the study area.

Wigan Flashes Nature Reserve provides a much-valued community resource within close proximity of Wigan Town Centre. It offers 10km of footpaths, bird hides and sailing supported by a 30 space car park and small picnic area.

# **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

## **Sport and recreation**

In reference to Wigan Council’s Open Space Assessment, there is potential to provide additional amenity green space and allotment facilities within proximity to GM Allocation 48.

Amenity green space could form an important part of any masterplan proposals for developments within this area.

New allotment space could also be incorporated into development proposals, and there is further potential to provide new sites within retained Green Belt on the urban fringes of Bryn and Hawkley.

Brocstedes Park is a large informal amenity open space. There is potential to increase usability through informal play provision and enhanced landscape setting for residents in adjoining North Ashton.

The bowling club located to the east of Brocstedes Park would benefit from access and car parking improvements to enable multi-user access.

As discussed within the ‘Access’ theme, there is potential to increase recreational access to Winstanley Park. Access should be planned so as to respect the heritage and setting of the hall, parkland and scheduled ancient monuments.

There is opportunity to create a regional recreational visitor attraction at Winstanley Park with accessible walks and visitor facilities similar to those available at nearby Haigh Woodland Park.

Green infrastructure investments at Wigan Flashes Nature Reserve should look at improving visitor experience and creating a wider user base with a view to creating a country park.

Access and car parking would be key areas for investment, alongside signage and interpretation. There is an opportunity for improved entrance and highway signage from Poolstock Lane to enhance visitor access. Natural play facilities could also be included south of the car park within an area of amenity grass to encourage families to further use the site and promote healthy lifestyles.

## Existing baseline

### Biodiversity and wildlife corridors

Flood risk is not a major issue within the study area, although there are some areas of EA Flood Zone 2 and 3 located in the wetlands to the north west of GM Allocation 48.

There are a number of SBIs located within the adjacent Green Belt, most of which are associated with the wetland landscape to the north east of GM Allocation 48 and the formal parkland to the north west. The designations themselves form prominent features within the landscape, including Ochre Flash, Bryn Marsh, Scotsman's Flash (north east), Three Sisters (south east), Glead Wood & Tan Pit Slip (north west), Winstanley Hall Woods (north east).

Bryn Marsh and Ince Moss SSSI is located within Green Belt to the north east of GM Allocation 48, forming part of the wider Wigan Flashes ecosystem.

There are a number of waterbodies associated with the wetland landscape to the north east and east.

The Leeds and Liverpool Canal is also located within Green Belt to the south of Wigan Flashes forming a key green corridor linking the wetland habitats within Wigan.

The Green Belt surrounding GM Allocation 48 is entirely within the Wetlands Nature Improvement Area which marks the extent of the study area for potential improvements to the quality of the ecological network for the benefit of local communities.

## 'Beneficial use' proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work

### Biodiversity and wildlife corridors

The Scotsman's Flash SBI is located north east of GM Allocation 48 within Flood Zones 2 and 3. There is opportunity to enhance the existing environmental functionality inherent within the reedbeds to address issues associated with flooding. This may involve increases in size of wetlands or additional planting to improve flooding alleviation.

Green infrastructure enhancements should be in keeping with local ecological requirements, including invasive species and woodland management to improve key aspects for designation.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

There may be opportunities to connect the SBIs using existing Green Corridors such as the M6 to the south east whilst reinforcing the landscape characteristics of this area. This would prevent the disconnection of SBIs to the north west and those in the north east.

This initiative would also complement recreational access proposals to enable wider usability of the Green Belt surrounding the M6, Junction 25 GM Allocation site.

Key habitats include open water, fen and swamp, mire, woodland, acidic and neutral grassland and ruderal communities.

Recommendations for conservation and enhancement would include vegetation management on adjacent open spaces to maintain open nesting and feeding criteria. Fen habitats may benefit from rotational cutting or grazing to maintain species diversity and prevent the encroachment of scrub.

The corridors of Smithy Brook, Reed Brook and Park Brook provide important wildlife corridors connecting the flashes and wetlands, in particular the SBIs.

The naturalistic bankside habitat adjacent the Leeds and Liverpool Canal should be conserved and enhanced to maintain BAP priority habitat status.

There is also opportunity for green infrastructure enhancements to improve the WFD 'Moderate' status associated with the Leeds to Liverpool Canal to 'Good' through interventions such as the removal of historic modifications which prevent natural flow, and the introduction of appropriate native planting to enhance water health.

Ecological enhancements within the Green Belt area should look at the restoration of wetland habitats. This will include the re-wetting of the landscape to create the appropriate conditions for these valuable ecosystems.

Such habitats will have the opportunity to support endangered and rare plant and animal species as well as providing natural flood defences and actively storing carbon dioxide.

Particular focus should be placed on wetland restoration in Green Belt to the north east within and around Wigan Flashes and Ince Moss focusing on the Local Nature Reserve and Sites of Biological Importance located here. Waterbodies were created from subsidence resulting from the extraction of coal. Potential enhancements should include improvements to the various habitat types including open water, reedbed, mossland, willow carr and fenland. These ecosystems support a number of important species including willow tit, bittern, gadwall and kingfisher.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

## Existing baseline

### Landscape and visual

The GMEU defines large proportions of the Green Belt to the north east of the GM Allocation 48 as an important section of the Green Infrastructure network, this relates to the canal corridor and its surrounding wetlands.

Furthermore, the land to the north west, particularly within Winstanley Park and its associated woodland, is also recognised for its role as a Green Infrastructure corridor. This is reflected in the scattering of Sites of Biological Importance designations within these areas, as well as portions of SSSI within the wetland and marsh habitats.

The Green Belt within the study area plays an important role in reducing the amalgamation of surrounding settlement. This release site in particular creates a countryside barrier between Winstanley and Bryn.

Furthermore, the Green Belt acts as a natural buffer between the M6 motorway corridor and surrounding residential development.

On the north west periphery of the study area, two Scheduled Monuments are located within Winstanley Park - the Winstanley Moated Site and Five Fishponds, providing a good surviving example of this type of medieval monument.

As defined by the GM LCA1, the proposed release site itself and the Green Belt directly surrounding it to the south, east and west, falls into the character type of Urban Fringe Farmland. This would denote an undulating landscape with a scattering of locally important semi-natural habitats, including riparian woodland, dry heath, acid grassland and flashes.

This landscape is particularly important in forming a rural backdrop to the surrounding urban areas.

The vast majority of the surrounding Green Belt is classified as Grade 3 in the Agricultural Land Classification. 1.5km east of GM Allocation 48 there is a portion of Grade 4 classified land, and 1.8km west, on the opposite side of the M6 to Winstanley Woods, there is a narrow strip of Grade 2 land.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

# **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

## **Landscape and visual**

The Green Belt provides an opportunity for creating significant green corridor linkages across the landscape, reinforcing landscape character within these LCTs.

In particular, a green corridor could be reinforced from Wigan Flashes LNR along the brook on the periphery of southern Hawksley / Marus Bridge, through the proposed GM Allocation 48 to the north and connecting with the Winstanley Woods and Winstanley Parkland area.

This proposal would also strengthen the functionality of Glead Wood & Tan Pit Slip SBI and Winstanley Hall Woods SBIs and enable a landscape buffer on the southern fringe of Winstanley assisting in the physical separation of this settlement with any development proposals within the GM Allocation site.

The motorway corridors themselves present an opportunity for enhanced green infrastructure in the form of native woodland and shrub planting to strengthen the role these transport routes play in reducing settlement coalescence. This would be particularly important at the Junction 25 slip road interface to separate North Ashton from GM Allocation 48, and to improve the landscape setting of Brocstedes Park.

At both locations, the surrounding Green Belt plays a significant role in the setting of such structures. A review of the quality and appropriateness of the immediate setting and resulting improvements to help retain and maintain the character associated is a key recommendation.

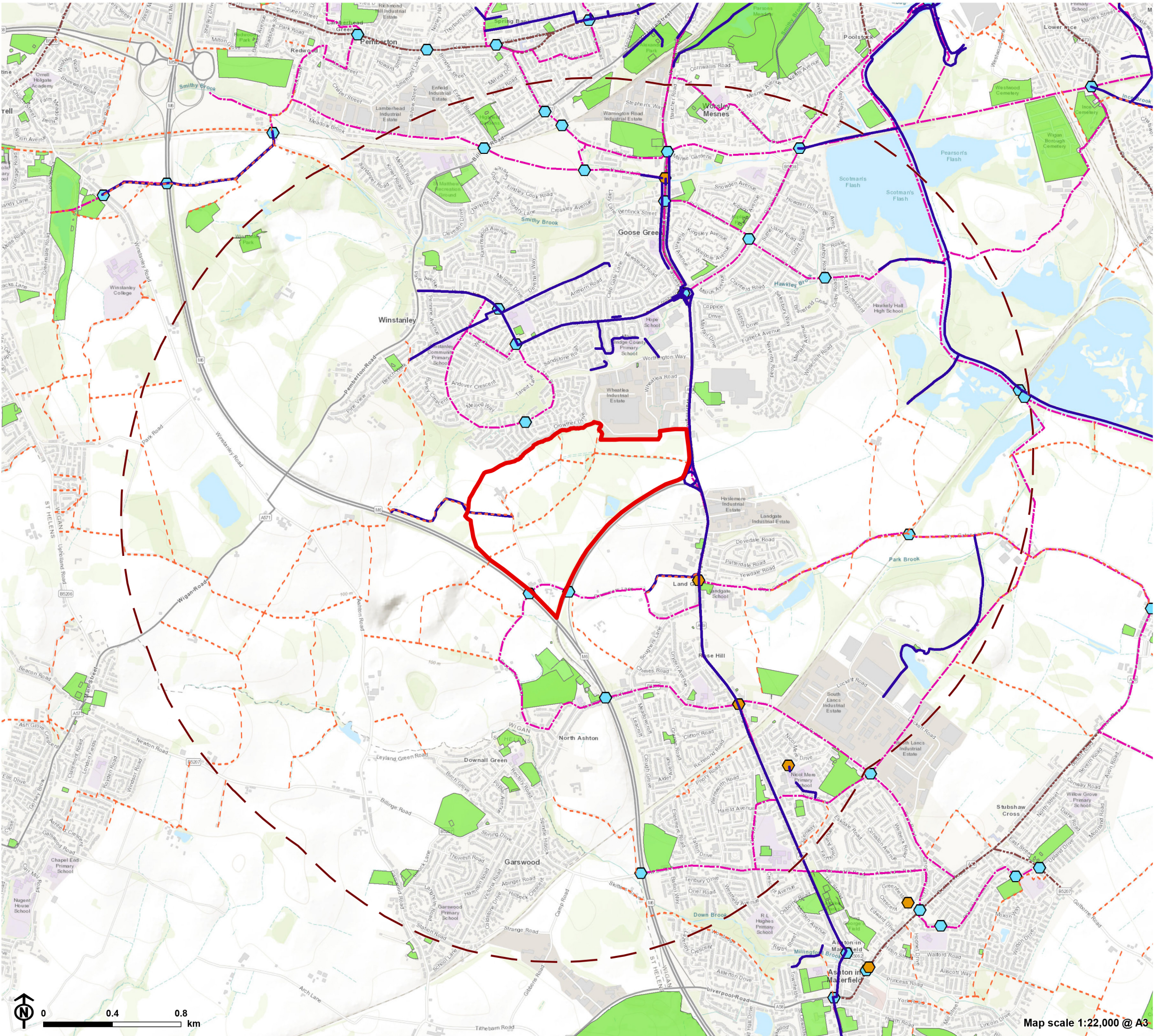
Existing woodland blocks within the surrounding Green Belt could be enhanced through woodland management practices including tree works and replanting to maintain longevity of tree stock.

Woodland extensions should be considered where this provides multi-functionality. For example, east of Winstanley Woods where additional planting would provide habitat contiguity alongside enhanced settlement setting, or north of the Three Sisters Recreation Area where this could provide additional recreational opportunities and improvements to the Three Sisters SBI.

Land to the west of Ashton Road on higher ground should be retained as open countryside to maintain landscape character in this area.

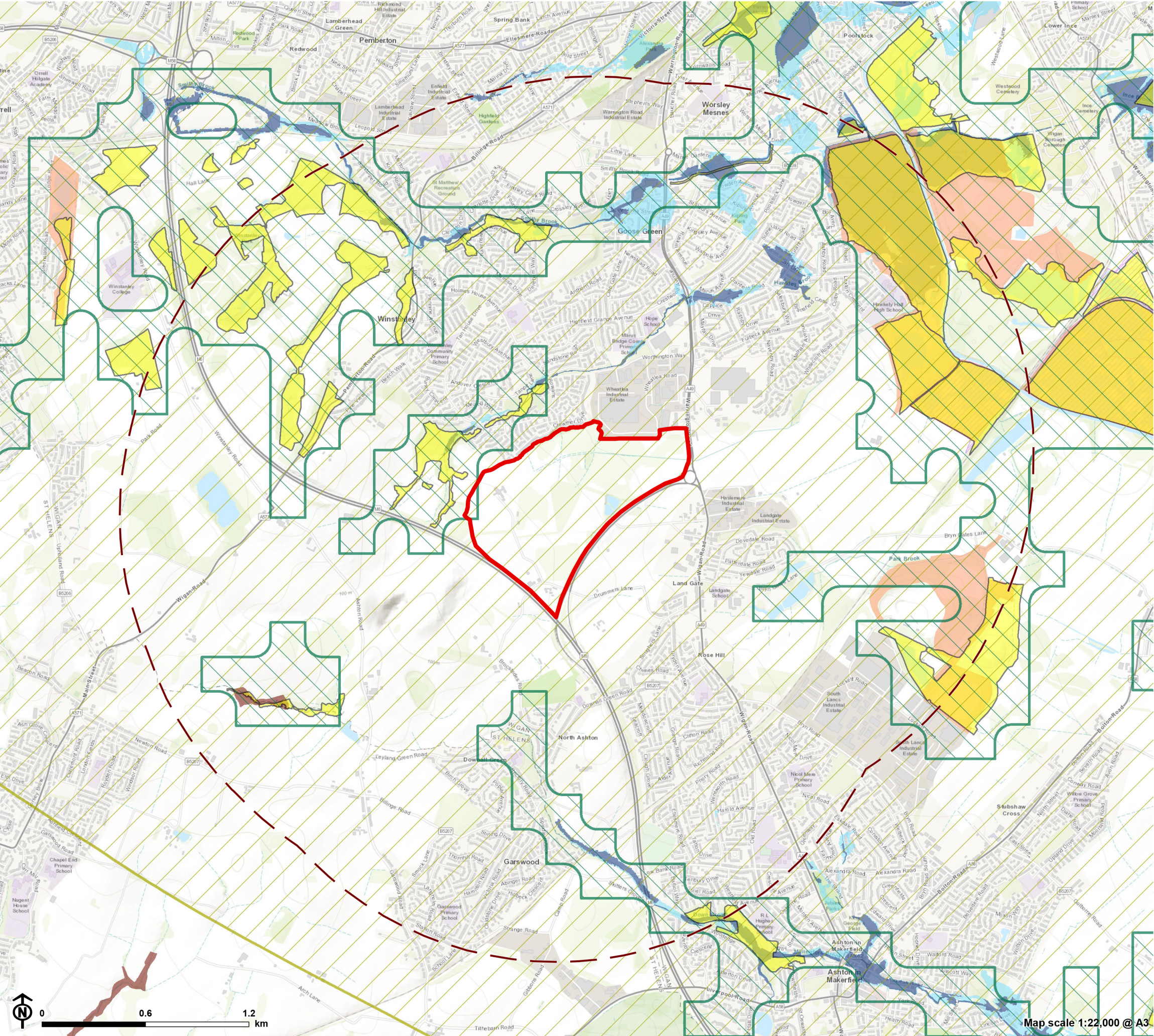
Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

There is opportunity to reinforce hedgerows and woodland structure planting in the more fragmented Green Belt to the south west GM Allocation 48 where hedgerows are more gappy and have often been replaced with post and wire fences, particularly adjacent public roads. Structure planting could be introduced adjacent the M6 in this location to further mitigate the impact of the motorway.



Access, Sport and Recreation  
GM Allocation 48

- Site boundary
- Site boundary - 2km buffer
- Access**
  - Public right of way
  - TfGM cycle route
  - Bee network - confirmed infrastructure
  - Bee network - crossing point
  - Bee network - beeway
  - Bee network - busy beeway
- Sport and Recreation**
  - Open green space



**Biodiversity, Landscape and Visual  
GM Allocation 48**

- Site boundary**
- Biodiversity**
  - Site of biological importance
  - Local nature reserve
  - National nature reserve
  - SSSI
  - Special Area of Conservation
  - Ancient woodland
  - Flood zone 2
  - Flood zone 3
- Landscape and Visual**
  - Priority green infrastructure
  - Green infrastructure opportunity area

# Potential enhancement projects

## Access

1. Improvement of the Leeds Liverpool Canal towpath.
2. Development of new cycle route parallel to M6 and linking North Ashton with Bryn.

## Sport and recreation

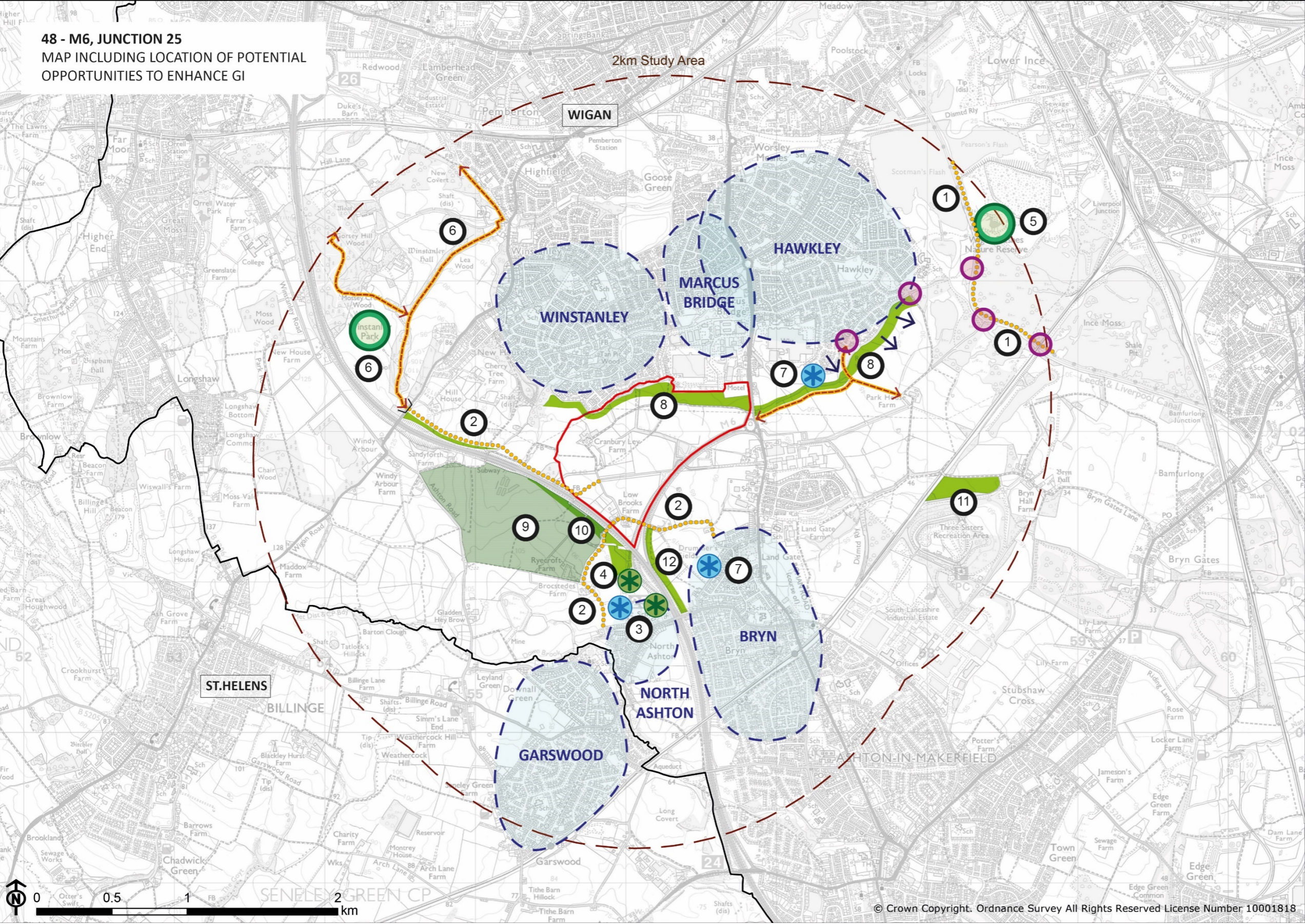
3. Spectator and small scale ancillary facility improvement at North Ashton Bowling Club.
4. Natural play provision at Brocstedes Park.
5. Creation of country park attraction at Wigan Flashes Local Nature Reserve.
6. Investment at Winstanley Park to increase access and create multiple local-level pedestrian routes.
7. New allotment facility on the urban fringe of Hawkley or Bryn.

## Biodiversity and wildlife corridors

8. Creation of contiguous habitat linking Wigan Flashes Nature Reserve and Winstanley Woods.
9. Hedgerow reinstatement south of the M6.

## Landscape and visual

10. Buffer planting along the M6 motorway.
11. Extension of the woodland at the Three Sisters Recreation Area.
12. Creation of significant green corridor linkages.



- LOCAL SETTLEMENT
- LOCAL AUTHORITY BOUNDARY
- REVISED GMSF ALLOCATIONS (2019)
- POTENTIAL CONTIGUOUS HABITAT NETWORK
- POTENTIAL AREA FOR EXTRA HEDGEROW RESTORATION
- POTENTIAL FOOTPATH UPGRADE / ADDITION
- POTENTIAL CYCLEWAY UPGRADE / ADDITION
- ACCESS / CROSSING POINT IMPROVEMENTS
- EXISTING RECREATIONAL ASSET ENHANCEMENT
- POTENTIAL RECREATIONAL ASSET
- IMPROVEMENT OF REGIONAL RECREATIONAL FACILITIES
- ENHANCEMENT OF SETTLEMENT LINKAGES
- REFER TO POTENTIAL ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

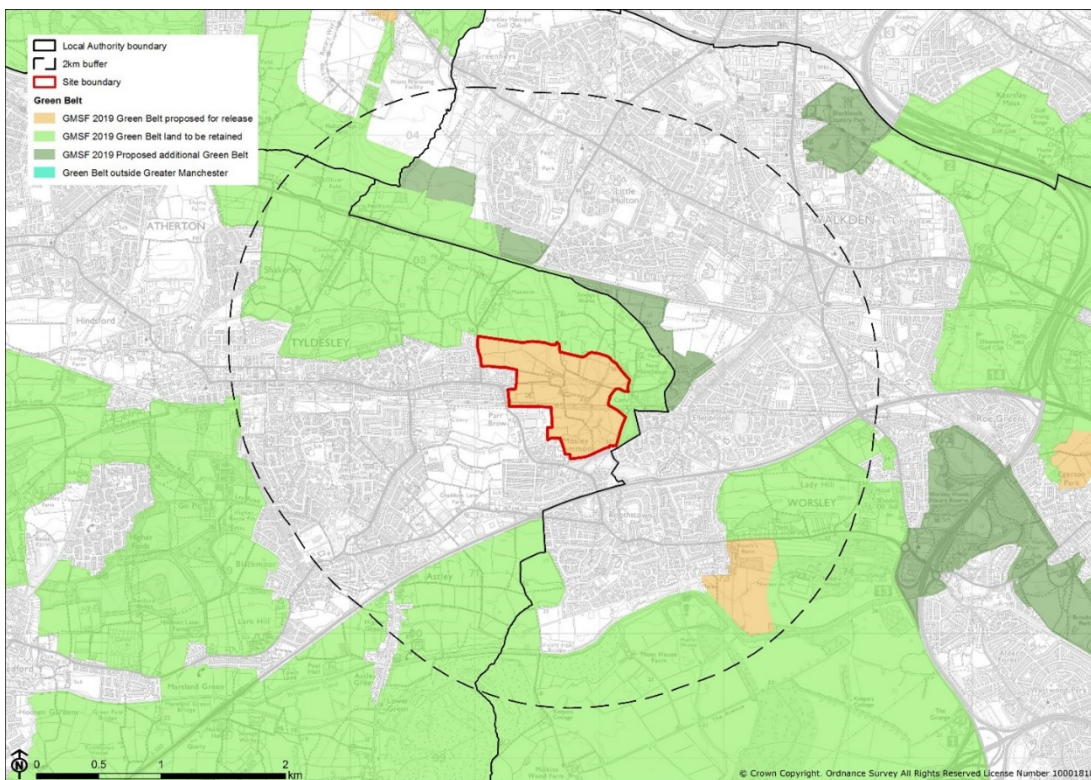
Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt



# GM Allocation 49, North of Mosley Common



Above: View from Lower New Row looking south west across GM Allocation 49 towards Wigan MBC Bridleway 014



Allocation Site Area 64.64 ha

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

## Study area definition

GM Allocation 49, North of Mosley Common is located with the municipality of Wigan Council, approximately 2km east of Tyldesley. The GM Allocation site as a whole is located within the Green Belt and is entirely proposed for release. According to the Draft GMSF, a small parcel of land in the south western quadrant of the GM Allocation site, east of Worsley Business Park has been identified for housing allocation, Ref SHLAA0431.

The existing land use is predominantly rolling pastoral farmland bounded by mature hedgerows and woodland blocks. The Honksford Brook traverses through GM Allocation 49 from the north western corner through the centre of the site. The Leigh Guided Busway dissects GM Allocation 49 in an east-west direction and the Wigan to Manchester railway line is located approximately 0.5km to the north.

GM Allocation 49 is bound to the west and south by the urban fringe of Mosley Common, to the east by Mosley Common Playing Fields, The Woodland Cemetery and sections of Lower New Row road. The northern boundary is less well defined, following vegetated field edges.

Land lying within 2km of GM Allocation 49 (identified as retained Green Belt) will form the focus of GI recommendations / mitigation to enhance the 'beneficial use' of the Green Belt. There are three proposed additions to the Green Belt within 2km of the GM Allocation site located at Land west of Burgess Farm to the north east, Wharton Playing Fields to the north and Cutacre Country Park to the north west.

## Summary of evidence and policy influencing 'beneficial use' proposals

### Published landscape character assessments - Greater Manchester Combined Authority

GM Allocation 49 is located within the Reclaimed Land / Wetlands LCT as identified within the Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment<sup>1</sup>. It is further defined

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<sup>1</sup> Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2018) Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment

within LCA 10: Lever Edge and Tyldesley. This is a landscape strongly influenced by its industrial past, with a generally flat to gently undulating landform interspersed with distinctive artificial landforms remnant of past mineral extraction and landfill. Land use is predominantly medium-sized, regular shaped pastoral and arable fields often defined by a network of drainage ditches and species poor hedgerows. Reclaimed industrial landscapes now form important areas for recreation and wildlife e.g. Pennington Flash Country Park. Areas are often overlooked by surrounding urban and industrial areas, particularly from higher ground resulting in reduced perceptions of tranquillity, although a sense of remoteness can be experienced in the Wigan Flashes. Guidance and opportunities to consider within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Avoid siting development on highly visible areas which form the skyline in views e.g. elevated areas on the urban fringe including Edge Fold / Lever Edge.
- Ensure that the sense of separation the landscape provides between distinct settlements is retained.
- Ensure that any development is in keeping with the mainly rural character of the landscape in terms of form, density and vernacular.
- Utilise areas of existing woodland to integrate new development into the landscape.
- Conserve and manage existing woodlands to encourage habitat diversity, using locally appropriate species and protecting from grazing during establishment.
- Consider additional woodland planting to enhance landscape structure, soften the urban fringe, screen industrial areas and reduce the noise and visual impacts of motorway corridors, where appropriate.
- Restore and enhance areas of deteriorating farmland including additional, species-rich hedgerow planting to fill gaps and replace post and wire fencing. Reintroduce hedgerow trees where appropriate.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development.
- Enhance existing public access and provide new informal recreational provision e.g. by creating circular routes.
- Improve signage, interpretation and waymarking at areas used for informal recreation.

- Maintain open and long ranging views across the Greater Manchester conurbation from elevated parts of the urban fringe e.g. Lever Edge.

## **Published landscape character assessments – Local Level**

Wigan Council Landscape Character Assessment, 2009<sup>2</sup> defines GM Allocation 49 within the Undulating Enclosed Farmland LCT within sub area 1E Fragmented Areas. Key characteristics of this part of the LCT include low grade mainly pastoral farmland which is often poorly drained with evidence of flashes, ponds and ditches. The open areas of landscape are surrounded or fringed by residential and / or industrial land with evidence of urban and suburban edge of settlement pressures including fly-tipping and horse grazing. Hedgerows are in poor condition with few hedgerow trees and a general lack of mature woodland planting. Key management recommendations include the consideration for alternatives to agricultural land use, including public open space, woodland and limited development appropriate to the LCT.

## **Flood Risk**

The Environment Agency has identified Green Belt to the north west, adjacent Old Mill Brook and north of Tyldesley and an area of Green Belt to the north east adjacent Ellen Brook and north of New Manchester within Flood Zone 2 and 3. This presents an opportunity to combine Nature Based Solutions for Flood Risk reduction with green infrastructure enhancements.

## **Greenway Network Policy C1E<sup>3</sup>**

The Greenway Network refers to the Leigh Guided Busway which passes through the centre of GM Allocation 49 and into Green Belt to the east.

The Greenway Network includes public rights of way, canal towpaths and disused railways and is one of the Borough's key recreational assets for residents and visitors alike. Much of it involves the reclamation of derelict land.

The aim is to develop a network of attractive, safe, off-road routes linking the countryside and recreational facilities with urban areas across the Borough. Greenways will link into proposals of neighbouring authorities including long distance footpath and cycle routes such as the National

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<sup>2</sup> Wigan Council, 2009, Wigan: A Landscape Character Assessment

<sup>3</sup> Wigan Council (2006) Replacement Unitary Development Plan

Cycle Network and compliment the Council's Walking and Cycling Strategies and initiatives to improve the bridleway network.

Agreements will be sought to secure advantageous links across private land or other improvements, including as part of new development through negotiation, planning conditions and / or legal agreement.

## **Open Space Study**

Wigan Council has provided qualitative and quantitative open space data through their 2017, Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision and Needs Assessment<sup>4</sup>.

GM Allocation 49 and neighbouring Green Belt are located within the Tyldesley and Astley settlement area. The study seeks to identify surplus open space, sport and recreation provision and highlight deficits and catchment gaps.

Specific findings include a deficit in allotment provision particularly around Tyldesley, and contributions should be sought to improve existing sites throughout the borough and identify new locations for additional allotments where demand exists. There is a gap in equipped play provision in the west of the borough. This deficit could be addressed by requesting on site provision for any new developments in this area. In Astley there are only locally equipped play areas and this shortfall should be addressed through new development. There is also an opportunity to address specific deficiencies within local sports facilities.

## **Existing baseline**

### **Access**

A network of PRow traverse the Green Belt directly adjacent to, and within GM Allocation 49, connecting surrounding residential areas, including New Manchester, Tyldesley and Greenheys with the open space. Further afield, the Green Belt land to the south has a distinct lack of PRow, something to consider when planning for the release of the GM Allocation site.

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<sup>4</sup> Wigan Council (2017), Wigan Borough Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision and Needs Assessment

The Salford Trail Long Distance Footpath is a 50 mile circular walk which is entirely within the boundaries of the City of Salford. The Worsley stretch of The Salford Trail meets the eastern edge of the adjoining Green Belt, before travelling south to join the Bridgewater Canal.

Although outwith the 2km study area, the Rotary Way long distance footpath meets The Salford Trail west of the M60/M61 interchange and forms a strategic recreational route for the wider area.

A number of NCN routes and TfGM traffic-free routes traverse the wider area, however the nearby Green Belt is relatively lacking in cycle infrastructure.

NCN Route 55, which connects Ironbridge and Preston, currently runs directly through the proposed area of released Green Belt adjacent the Leigh Guided Busway, linking with retained and additional Green Belt to the east.

A TfGM traffic-free cycling route also dissects the site of released Green Belt, running from City Road to Wellington Drive, which has a rough unpaved surface suitable only for mountain biking.

In the area of retained and additional Green Belt to the east of the release site, a further traffic-free route with an all-weather surface connects the two branches of NCN Route 55, following the eastern edge of the retained Green Belt along a disused railway line.

Additionally, a towpath (where cycling is permitted) runs along the Bridgewater Canal through part of the Green Belt to the south east.

Confirmed infrastructure within TfGM's Bee Network proposals is currently limited within the wider study area. There is a proposed off-road branch running along Cumbermere Lane north of Tyldesley and confirmed links in Green Belt to the south will connect Worsley with the Bridgewater Canal around the perimeter of the new RHS Bridgewater Gardens.

Severance Lines are identified as part of the Bee Network, with the railway line forming a key barrier. There are no TfGM plans to create additional crossing points on the railway line for access from outlying settlements of Walkden and Greenheys. Further Severance Lines can be found at Mort Lane in the north west, and the A580 to the south.

# **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

## **Access**

Existing PRoW should be retained in-situ within development proposals wherever possible. Where retention is not possible, footpaths should be diverted around the Northern boundary of GM Allocation 49, conforming to boundaries rather than across open fields. These local level routes should then link to Moat Lane to the west and Lower New Road to the east.

A new PRoW could be added within Green Belt to the north with strategic links along the disused railway line (largely outwith the Green Belt) into the urban fringe of Little Hulton. This new route would connect PRoW W148 along Ashawe Terrace and westwards to the disused railway line.

There is opportunity to enhance the Salford Trail Long Distance Footpath within the adjacent Green Belt. Interventions including resurfacing, particularly at key access points onto the route from the surrounding urban area, and tributary footpaths such as the junctions of PRoW E28 and E31 with the A57 Liverpool Road. Signage, and markers, similar to those utilised on other Long Distance Trails (e.g. The iconic Trans Pennine Trail marker post) could increase route legibility and identity.

There is also potential to create gateway feature at the junction of the Rotary Way and Salford Way Long Distance footpaths, with improved landscape interventions such as seating and interpretation.

There is potential to create an additional cycle route in Green Belt to the north of GM Allocation 49, linking the A5082 in the west with Hilton Lane in the east parallel to the railway line.

National Cycle Route 55 should be retained within GM Allocation 49. The route forms a key strategic recreational corridor through the Greater Manchester area and has been improved through recent infrastructure investment by TfGM as part of the Leigh Guided Busway scheme.

The TfGM traffic-free route running through GM Allocation 49 should be utilised within existing development proposals wherever possible.

The TfGM traffic-free route is in relatively good condition. There would be some benefit from vegetation clearance along the section within the proposed Green Belt addition at Land West of Burgess Farm.

The towpath to the south of the Bridgewater Canal has been discussed above relating to potential improvements as part of the Salford Trail long distance footpath. Such improvements could be enhanced further to enable multi-user benefits.

There is opportunity to extend the confirmed cycle infrastructure at Cumbermere lane, across the railway line with northern links to the A6 Manchester Road West. This addition would effectively link the urban areas of Tyldesley and Little Hulton.

Further potential exists within the Green Belt to the south east of GM Allocation 49 around Worsley Old Hall to improve local access and links onto the wider cycle network.

Due consideration will be required to connect the Green Belt to the north and south of the Wigan to Manchester railway line. This may be achieved through enhanced signage and the development of a route parallel to the railway line to the south (this additional cycle link has previously been discussed).

## Existing baseline

### Sport and recreation

New Manchester Woodland Cemetery is located to the east of GM Allocation 49.

Adjoining GM Allocation 49 to the east is the Council owned City Road Playing Fields. The Wigan Borough Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Report, 2017, identified that this site had spare capacity.

Wharton Playing Fields are located in Green Belt to the north of GM Allocation 49 within Salford Council administrative boundary. According to the Salford Community Leisure Playing Pitch Strategy, 2018, facilities at this location received a poor rating.

1.7km to the south west there is a pocket of recreational spaces including Astley Street Park play area, Ellesmere Street Playing Fields and allotments, which are all accessed via Ellesmere Street. The playing fields are have previously been disused for periods of time but have become operational again (2016) due to demand.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

# **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

## **Sport and recreation**

Green infrastructure opportunities would focus on improved community access to the cemetery rather than physical interventions.

The opportunities for green infrastructure enhancements at City Road Playing fields would relate to perimeter improvements with the removal of existing boulder deterrents with a more aesthetically pleasing and appropriate fencing.

Enhancement options at Wharton Playing Fields would relate to the improvement of ancillary facilities, in particular changing rooms, alongside pitch quality investment to increase usability.

Consideration should be given to transforming this site into a multi-functional community use facility or mini-park, incorporating multiple recreational benefits.

Enhancements to the play area should focus around accessibility and potential expansion to meet the deficit in provision for young people in the area.

The allotments are well maintained and managed by Tyldesley Allotment Association. Despite this neighbourhood having the largest provision in Wigan, there are still waiting times, and there is opportunity to expand the existing facility to meet demand.

## **Existing baseline**

### **Biodiversity and wildlife corridors**

The GMEU defines large proportions of the surrounding Green Belt, both existing and proposed, as corridors of Green Infrastructure. These have been identified due to their importance for species and habitats diversity and their linear linkages.

As defined by the Greater Manchester Landscape Character Assessment (GMLCA), the area of proposed and existing Green Belt which is directly adjacent to the release site falls into the character type of Reclaimed Land / Wetlands. This would denote a landform of generally flat or

gently undulating topography with a network of wetland habitats. Agriculture dominates the land use, with regular, medium-scale field patterns being present.

EA flood zone 2 and 3 are located within the Green Belt to the west of GM Allocation 49 associated with Old Mill Brook and Shakerley Brook.

The entire Green Belt within the study area surrounding GM Allocation 49 is classified within the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area.

This area covers 48,000 hectares of wetlands across Wigan, Manchester, Salford and Warrington. Mosslands are a UK Priority Habitat.

There are large tracts of SBIs located within the adjacent Green Belt, most of which are associated with the wet woodland landscape to the north of GM Allocation 49. The designations themselves form prominent features within the landscape, including Ponds near New Manchester (north east), Ponds North of Cleworth Hall (north west).

## **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

### **Biodiversity and wildlife corridors**

The Wigan – Manchester railway line and the Leigh Guided Busway are both strategic green infrastructure corridors. They represent opportunities for enhancement of existing habitats and increasing biodiversity, particularly through targeted species additions. They also present key linkages to other habitats, namely SBIs, hedgerows and areas of semi-natural green space. As discussed in the Access theme, proposals should be in conjunction with increased community accessibility.

Opportunities for wetland conservation and regeneration will mainly focus on vegetation management and the creation of new ponds where practicable. Typical emergent vegetation should be established where this is not prolific. Species should include water plantain, nodding bur-marigold, marsh marigold, lady’s smock, common spike rush, flote grass, gipsyworth, purple loosestrife, watermint, branched bur-reed and bog stitchwort.

The surrounding scrub and hedgerows often associated with these smaller waterbodies provide cover and foraging for amphibians, birds and mammals and should be retained and enhanced alongside wetland specific interventions.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

There is opportunity to increase the size and capacity of the existing habitats located adjacent to these watercourses to enforce nature-based solutions to flood risk, prevent storm water infiltrating lower catchments and create new accessible habitats.

Ecological enhancements within the Green Belt area should look at the restoration of wetland habitats. This will include the re-wetting of the landscape to create the appropriate conditions for these valuable ecosystems.

Such habitats will have the opportunity to support endangered and rare plant and animal species as well as providing natural flood defences and actively storing carbon dioxide.

Particular focus should be placed on wetland restoration in Green Belt to the north around the Cleworth Hall SBI. Waterbodies include typical marl ponds and seasonal pools which support breeding amphibians including great crested newt and good assemblages of aquatic invertebrates.

Green infrastructure enhancements should be in keeping with local ecological requirements, including management of invasive species and structure planting to improve the key aspects for designation.

There may be opportunities to connect some of the SBIs through the creation of wetland habitats to create a contiguous network whilst reinforcing the landscape characteristics of this area. This potentially could be achieved through the utilisation of the railway line as a green infrastructure link corridor.

## Existing baseline

### Landscape and visual

The retained and proposed Green Belt found directly adjacent to the proposed release site creates separation between Walkden and Tyldesley, reducing the potential for settlement coalescence.

Additionally, the railway line running between Walkden and Atherton acts as a physical barrier to the merging of urban form.

The existing Green Belt to the south plays an essential role in the isolation of Little Hulton from surrounding settlements, including Worsley.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

There is a conservation area located at Worsley Old hall in Green Belt to the south east of GM Allocation 49. This area has been designated for the significant contribution it makes to the quality of the townscape and the local distinctiveness. Improvements to the public realm of conservation areas will be sought through planning obligations with developers.

The majority of the surrounding farmland is Grade 3 Agricultural Land Classification, with an area of Grade 1 land 1.7km south of GM Allocation 49.

The UHLC defines the vast majority of the existing Green Belt within the study area as Enclosed Land, and more specifically Agglomerated Fields, highlighted previously by the dominant agricultural use and regular field pattern. The importance of the relict field boundaries and farm buildings should be considered, and their characters retained.

Encroaching on the existing Green Belt to the north of GM Allocation 49 is an area of Extractive land. There is a significant scar on the landscape resulting from the Logistics North permissioned industry / warehousing development which is under construction Ref. 5P1.1 (Bolton MBC local authority).

## **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

### **Landscape and visual**

In order to prevent settlement coalescence, it is recommended that significant belts and wedges of the surrounding Green Belt are safeguarded from future development. The opportunity exists to create a country park on land to the north of GM Allocation 49, on land separating Little Hulton and Tyldesley.

Physical interventions could be introduced in the form of a western extension to the structural planting within the SBI to the east to reinforce this existing green wedge.

Stopping up gaps in the existing buffer planting along the Wigan to Manchester Railway line particularly adjacent the treatment works and opposite Wharton Playing Fields on the southern side of the embankment will help retain separation between settlements.

Edge of settlement planting at Boothstown, particularly in Green Belt to the west will soften the existing urban fringe and provide a greater degree of landscape integration.

There is opportunity to improve the landscape setting of the conservation area at Worsley Old Hall with landscape treatments which respect and compliment the history of this area.

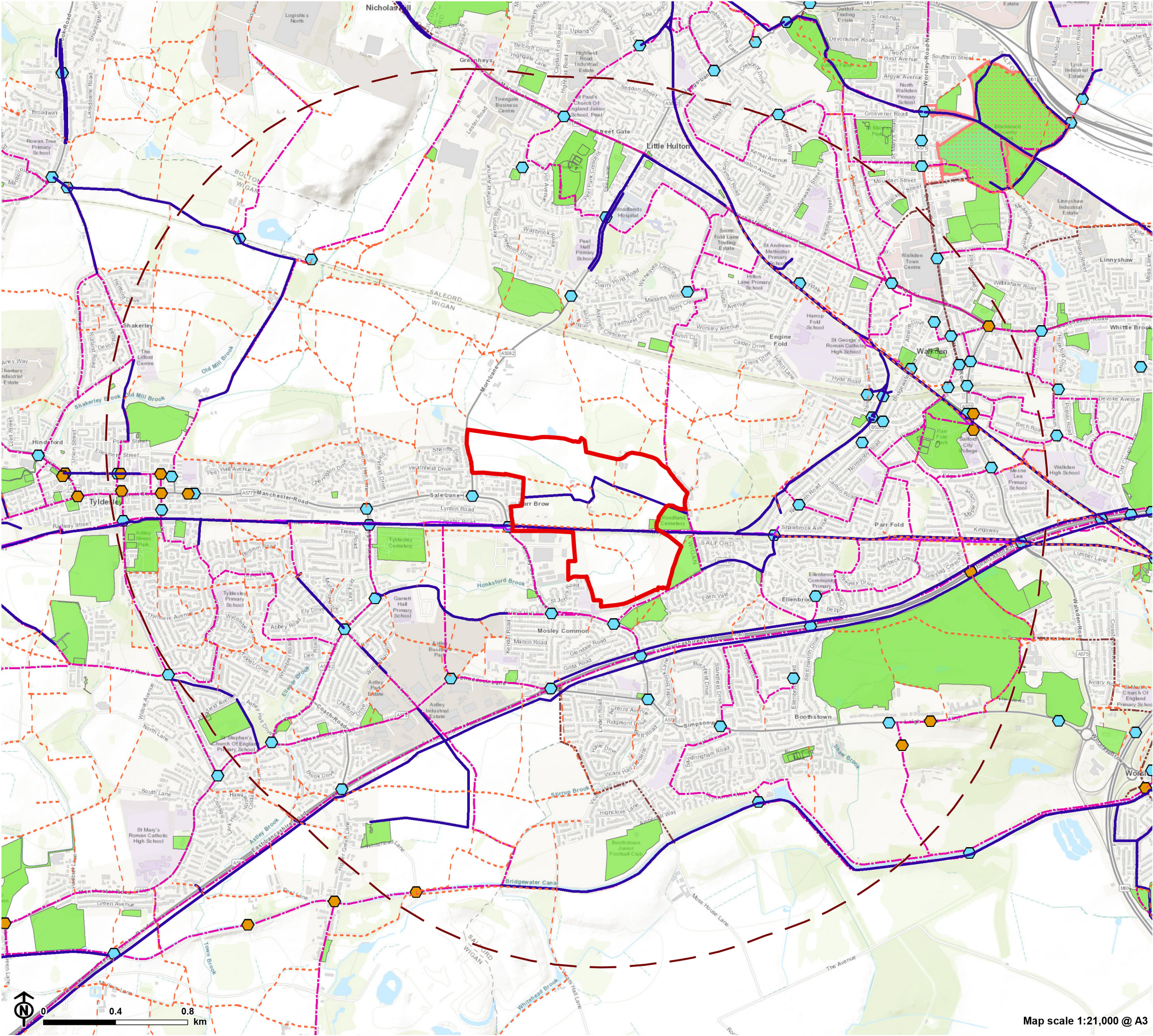
As per the GMCLA, there is opportunity within this LCT to create additional woodland blocks to enhance landscape structure, particularly where agricultural classification is low. Field, road and footpath boundary planting within the Green Belt to the north and south could be improved to enable this enhancement measure.

This landscape character investment will also bolster wildlife corridors along Stirrup Brook and Whitehead Brook west of Boothstown.

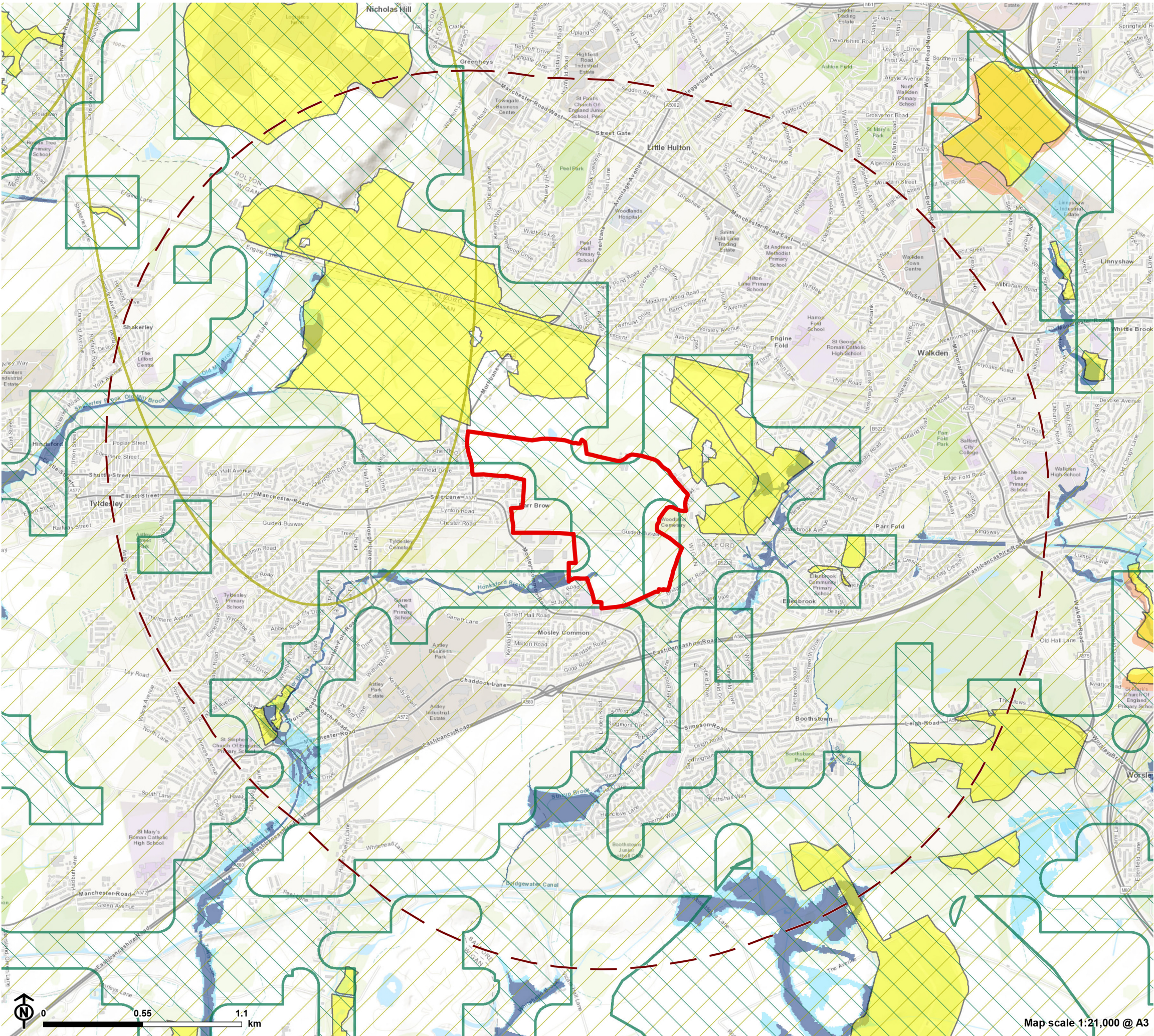
The agricultural land to the east of Mort Lane in Green Belt to the North, and east of Higher Green in Green Belt to the south east of GM Allocation 49 would benefit from replanting of gappy field boundary hedgerows to reassert the historic landscape character.

The Green Belt to the south of the Logistics North industrial development site would benefit from large scale additional woodland planting to act as both visual screening for receptors in Little Hulton and those using the Wigan to Manchester railway line and to provide an element of separation between the industrial and the residential settlement edge.

Access, Sport and Recreation  
GM Allocation 49



- Site boundary
- Site boundary - 2km buffer
- Access**
- Public right of way
- Sustrans route
- TfGM cycle route
- Bee network - confirmed infrastructure
- Bee network - crossing point
- Bee network - beeway
- Bee network - busy beeway
- Sport and Recreation**
- Open green space
- Country park



Biodiversity, Landscape and Visual  
GM Allocation 49

- Site boundary
- Biodiversity**
  - Site of biological importance
  - Local nature reserve
  - National nature reserve
  - SSSI
  - Special Area of Conservation
  - Ancient woodland
  - Flood zone 2
  - Flood zone 3
- Landscape and Visual**
  - Priority green infrastructure
  - Green infrastructure opportunity area

# Potential enhancement projects

## Access

1. Development of new cycle facilities parallel to the railway line to improve suburban recreational and commuter off-road links.
2. Improvements to the existing route of Salford Trail long distance footpath including increased legibility and access.

## Sport and recreation

3. Small scale interventions to improve local sports facilities at City Road Playing Fields.
4. Ancillary facility improvements at Wharton Playing Fields.

## Biodiversity and wildlife corridors

5. Extension of woodland planting at the 'Ponds Near New Manchester' SBI.

## Landscape and visual

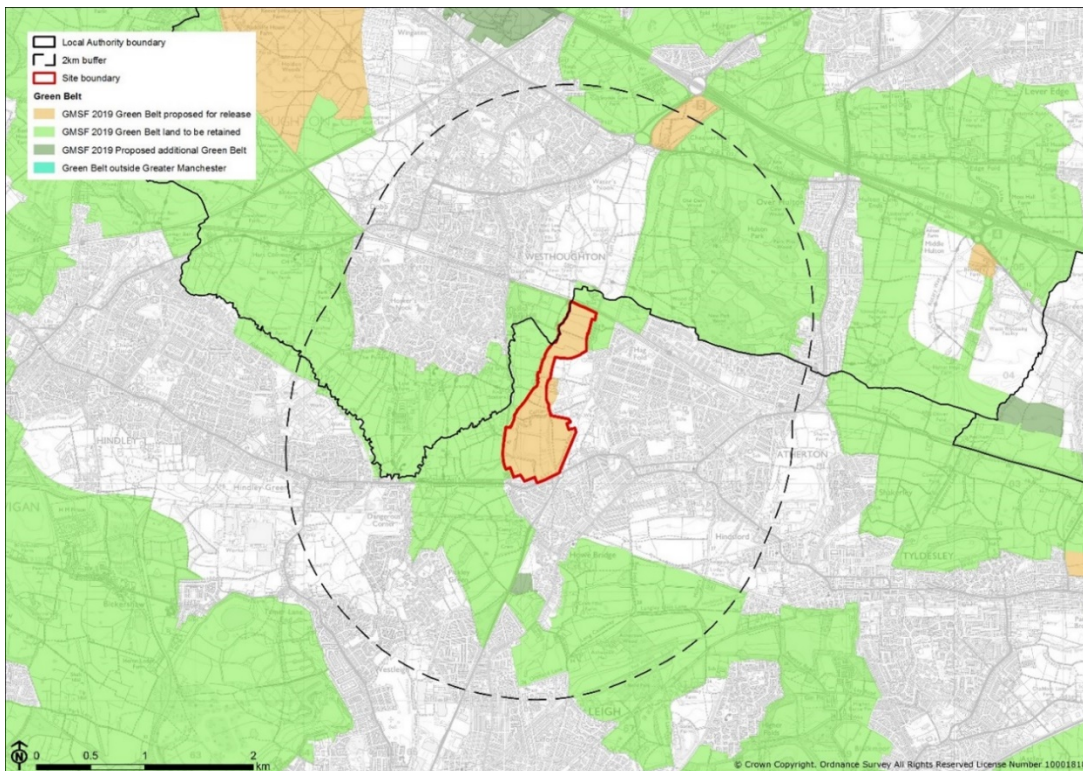
6. Creation of a country park on land to the north of GM Allocation 49, on land separating Little Hulton and Tyldesley.
7. Stopping up of gappy hedgerows within poor quality agricultural land east of Mort Lane and east of Higher Green.
8. Creation of woodland blocks to enhance landscape character and connectivity west of Boothstown.
9. Bolster existing planting adjacent Wigan-Manchester railway line.
10. Creation of accessible woodland buffer south west of Little Hulton.



# GM Allocation 51, West of Gibfield



Above: View from B5235 Schofield Lane looking east across retained Green Belt at Colliery Lane West towards proposed Green Belt release



GM Allocation Area 53.92 ha

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

## Study area definition

GM Allocation 51 is an elongated site located within the local authority of Wigan, bordering the Borough of Bolton, is entirely due for release from the Green Belt. It is located approximately 1km west of Atherton centre on the urban fringe of Hag Fold where substantial edge of settlement development has occurred within the last 10 years. Residential developments are currently under construction in land to the immediate east of the GM Allocation site.

This is a predominantly flat landscape, dominated by pastoral fields in the south of the GM Allocation site and regenerated scrub, woodland and species rich grass to the north. There are a series of small ponds connected by field drains in the northern part of GM Allocation 51.

GM Allocation 51 is bound to the north by the Wigan to Manchester railway line, to the west partially by the B5235 Lower Leigh Road and scrubby field boundaries. To the east and south, boundaries are more fragmented and less identifiable, partially utilising roads such as Gibfield Park Way and the A577 Wigan Road together with field boundaries.

Land lying within 2km of GM Allocation 51, West of Gibfield (identified as retained green belt) will form the focus of GI recommendations / mitigation to enhance the 'beneficial use' of the Green Belt. There is one proposed addition to the Green Belt within 2km of the GM Allocation site at Pennington FC Playing Pitches, Howe Bridge approximately 800m south of GM Allocation 51.

## Summary of evidence and policy influencing 'beneficial use' proposals

### Published landscape character assessments - Greater Manchester Combined Authority

GM Allocation 51 is located within the Reclaimed Land / Wetlands LCT as identified within the Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment, 2018<sup>1</sup>. It is further defined within LCA 2: Westhoughton to Marsland Green. This is a landscape strongly influenced

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<sup>1</sup> Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2018) Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment

by its industrial past, with a generally flat to gently undulating landform interspersed with distinctive artificial landforms remnant of past mineral extraction and landfill. Land use is predominantly medium-sized, regular shaped pastoral and arable fields often defined by a network of drainage ditches and species poor hedgerows. Reclaimed industrial landscapes now form important areas for recreation and wildlife e.g. Pennington Flash Country Park. Areas are often overlooked by surrounding urban and industrial areas, particularly from higher ground resulting in reduced perceptions of tranquillity, although a sense of remoteness can be experienced in the Wigan Flashes. Guidance and opportunities to consider within this Landscape Character Area include:

- Avoid siting development on highly visible areas which form the skyline in views e.g. elevated areas on the urban fringe including Edge Fold / Lever Edge.
- Ensure that the sense of separation the landscape provides between distinct settlements is retained.
- Ensure that any development is in keeping with the mainly rural character of the landscape in terms of form, density and vernacular.
- Utilise areas of existing woodland to integrate new development into the landscape.
- Conserve and manage existing woodlands to encourage habitat diversity, using locally appropriate species and protecting from grazing during establishment.
- Consider additional woodland planting to enhance landscape structure, soften the urban fringe, screen industrial areas and reduce the noise and visual impacts of motorway corridors, where appropriate.
- Restore and enhance areas of deteriorating farmland including additional, species-rich hedgerow planting to fill gaps and replace post and wire fencing. Reintroduce hedgerow trees where appropriate.
- Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development.
- Enhance existing public access and provide new informal recreational provision e.g. by creating circular routes.
- Improve signage, interpretation and waymarking at areas used for informal recreation.
- Maintain open and long ranging views across the Greater Manchester conurbation from elevated parts of the urban fringe e.g. Lever Edge.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

## **Published landscape character assessments – Local Level**

Wigan Council Landscape Character Assessment, 2009<sup>2</sup> defines GM Allocation 51 within the Undulating Enclosed Farmland LCT within sub area 1E Fragmented Areas. Key characteristics of this part of the LCT include low grade mainly pastoral farmland which is often poorly drained with evidence of flashes, ponds and ditches. The open areas of landscape are surrounded or fringed by residential and / or industrial land with evidence of urban and suburban edge of settlement pressures including fly-tipping and horse grazing. Hedgerows are in poor condition with few hedgerow trees and a general lack of mature woodland planting. Key management recommendations include the consideration for alternatives to agricultural land use, including public open space, woodland and limited development appropriate to the LCT.

### **Flood Risk<sup>3</sup>**

The Environment Agency has identified Green Belt to the east, adjacent Pennington Brook and north of Lately Common within Flood Zone 2 and 3. This presents an opportunity to combine Nature Based Solutions for Flood Risk reduction with green infrastructure enhancements.

### **Greenway Network Policy C1E<sup>4</sup>**

The Greenway Network refers to the Leigh Guided Busway which passes through the centre of GM Allocation 51 and into Green Belt to the east.

The Greenway Network includes public rights of way, canal towpaths and disused railways and is one of the Borough's key recreational assets for residents and visitors alike. Much of it involves the reclamation of derelict land.

The aim is to develop a network of attractive, safe, off-road routes linking the countryside and recreational facilities with urban areas across the Borough. Greenways will link into proposals of neighbouring authorities including long distance footpath and cycle routes such as the National Cycle Network and compliment the Council's Walking and Cycling Strategies and initiatives to improve the bridleway network.

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<sup>2</sup> Wigan Council, 2009, Wigan: A Landscape Character Assessment

<sup>3</sup> The Environment Agency (2018) Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea)

<sup>4</sup> Wigan Council (2006) Replacement Unitary Development Plan

Agreements will be sought to secure advantageous links across private land or other improvements, including as part of new development through negotiation, planning conditions and / or legal agreement.

## **Open Space Study**

Wigan Council has provided qualitative and quantitative open space data through their 2017, Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision and Needs Assessment<sup>5</sup>.

GM Allocation 51 and neighbouring Green Belt are located within the Atherton settlement area. The study seeks to identify surplus open space, sport and recreation provision and highlight deficits and catchment gaps.

Specific findings include a requirement to improve lower scoring amenity green space sites to enhance visual appearance of the Borough as well as accessibility of informal sports and play areas. There is also a need to improve the quality of some natural and semi-natural green spaces within the area. There is also an opportunity to address specific deficiencies within local sports facilities.

## **Existing baseline**

### **Access**

A broad network of PRowS crosses the study area, mainly acting as a connection between smaller settlements and the larger urban areas of Westhoughton, Atherton and Hindley.

GM Allocation 51 itself, and the areas adjacent to it, surrounding Daisy Hill and Pickley Green, have relatively high densities of PRowS. On the other hand, land surrounding Atherton Woods, Marshes Farm, and within Hulton Park, all have reduced connectivity through PRowS.

The Rotary Way, a long distance footpath which circles Bolton, follows the western edge of the GM Allocation site. More locally, it runs from the western edge of Westhoughton to the southern end of Hulton Park and follows settlement boundaries as well as field patterns. A small section is located adjacent the western boundary of GM Allocation 51.

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<sup>5</sup> Wigan Council (2017), Wigan Borough Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision and Needs Assessment

There is a distinct lack of designated cycle routes within GM Allocation 51 and the wider study area. The NCN Route 55 passes from east to west 0.3km south of the release site and offers an entirely traffic-free route within the local area.

Within GM Allocation 51, there is a segregated cycle lane adjacent to the carriageway running between the A577 and Atherleigh Business Park. 1.4km south east of the GM Allocation site, a traffic-free route with a rough unpaved surface runs alongside Hindsford Brook and Atherton Woods, a classified area of ancient woodland.

Beeways have been identified running north to south through GM Allocation 51 and within the adjacent Green Belt. In particular these look to connect the major settlements of Leigh, Atherton and Westhoughton. However, they also provide connectivity with the Registered Park and Garden of Hulton Park.

Severance Lines have been identified in the railway, which borders the northern edge of GM Allocation 51, and road corridors to the east. Additionally, the Severance Line created by Hall Lee Brook along the western edge of the GM Allocation site, creates a pocket of Green Belt which is limited in terms of its permeability to pedestrians and cyclists.

## **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

### **Access**

Existing PRoW within GM Allocation 51 should be retained in-situ within development proposals wherever possible. Where retention is not possible, footpaths should be diverted along the northern boundary adjacent the rail line and linking the B5235 Leigh Road with PRoW WES161 (The Rotary Way) and eastwards to North Road to allow for retained east-west connectivity, with strategic links across the rail line to the Green Belt to the north.

Access to the Grade II Listed Hulton Park site in adjacent Green Belt to the north east through the formalisation of a number of Public Rights of Way would enhance local level recreational access.

Further links to and from the Rotary Way long distance footpath should be considered with particular focus on the Hulton Park area and the suburbs of Daisy Hill.

Opportunities to upgrade surfacing treatments and access points along the Rotary Way Long Distance Footpath, particularly for local settlement fringes will ensure increased usability.

There is also potential to divert part of the Rotary Way along a disused railway line south of Daisy Hill to avoid the section along the A577 Smallbrook Lane, east of Dangerous Corner.

National Cycle Route 55 has been the subject of significant funding in recent years and does not require targeted improvement. Cycle enhancements in this location should focus on the upgrading / creation of local level link routes to enable wider access and create circular routes.

In particular, the B5235 Schofield Lane to the west of GM Allocation 51 could be upgraded to accommodate priority cycle infrastructure with links to PRoW 004/16/10 and onto NCN 55. This route would link Westhoughton to the north with the National Cycle Route.

The existing TfGM cycle infrastructure should be retained within GM Allocation 51 with links from any proposed development.

There is opportunity to create a new cycleway to the west of Hulton Park along a disused railway line with strategic links to existing TfGM infrastructure east of GM Allocation 51 (outwith the Green Belt).

Due consideration will be required to connect the Green Belt to the north and south of the Wigan to Manchester railway line. This may be achieved through enhanced signage and the development of a pedestrian route parallel to the railway line to the south (this additional cycle link has previously been discussed).

Improved pedestrian and cycle permeability could be created through the enhancement of existing north – south movement routes adjacent severance lines, for example the upgrading of Lower Leigh Road to Beeway standard.

## Existing baseline

### Sport and recreation

Jubilee Park in Howe Bridge, is located 0.5km south of the proposed release site, and occupies both existing and proposed Green Belt. The park provides playing fields which are home to Pennington Football Club and large areas of semi-natural open space. The pitches were rated

as standard quality within the Wigan Borough Playing Pitch Strategy 2017, although security was identified as a problem.

Playing fields are located within Bolton municipality 0.3km west of GM Allocation 51 off St. James Street adjacent a locally equipped play area.

Another playing field is located 0.7km south west of the release site at Pickley Green which is an extension facility for Westleigh High School. Pitch quality has been rated as poor.

Regional Facilities at Howe Bridge Leisure Centre, encompassing Butler Park and Atherton Cricket Club are located in Green Belt to the south east of GM Allocation 51, adjacent to Atherton Wood. Facilities at the leisure centre have been rated 'Good' as part of Playing Pitch Assessments (2017) with floodlighting and 3G pitch availability.

## **'Beneficial use' proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

### **Sport and recreation**

There is opportunity to work with the football club to increase security measures through both natural surveillance, including vegetation management and physical improvements, for example fencing and lighting.

There is potential to improve pitch quality through drainage and improved maintenance regime at Westleigh High Playing Fields extension. This may assist in providing community use opportunities to reduce local shortfalls.

There is opportunity to increase the recreational provision, targeting older children through the development of new facilities such as a skate park or BMX track within proximity to the existing play area to cater for a wider audience.

## **Existing baseline**

### **Biodiversity and wildlife corridors**

Hall Lee Bank Park LNR and SBI are located in Green Belt north west of GM Allocation 51. The SBI is designated for its woodland features.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

Gibfield Park (South) SBI covers a large portion of GM Allocation 51 and is designated for ponds and amphibians.

As defined by the GMEU, major proportions of the existing Green Belt to the north east and south east of GM Allocation 51, as well as the GM Allocation site itself, have been identified as corridors of Green Infrastructure, including the Registered Park and Garden of Hulton Park. On the other hand, the tract of Green Belt sitting directly west of the release site has a very small proportion of its land designated corridors of Green Infrastructure.

Additionally, a significant proportion of GM Allocation 51, Hulton Park and Atherton Woods (ancient woodland), are designated Sites of Biological Importance.

The Green Belt to the south and west of GM Allocation 51 is interspersed with a number of streams and brooks including Hall Lee Brook, Westleigh Brook, Atherton Brook and Atherton Lake Brook. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) classifies the majority of these watercourses as 'Moderate'.

The network of brooks and streams throughout the study area gives rise to an expected risk of flooding. EA flood zone 2 and 3 designations run along the Cunningham Brook and more significantly along the Atherton Brook, and into the adjacent Howe Bridge Leisure Centre.

The Green Belt surrounding GM Allocation 51 is entirely within the Wetlands Nature Improvement Area which marks the extent of the study area for potential improvements to the quality of the ecological network for the benefit of local communities.

## **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

### **Biodiversity and wildlife corridors**

Green infrastructure enhancements should be in keeping with local ecological requirements, including management of invasive species and structure planting to improve the key aspects for designation.

There may be opportunities to connect some of the SBIs in the buffer and wider area through the creation of new wetland habitats to create a contiguous network whilst reinforcing the landscape characteristics of this area. This potentially could be achieved through the utilisation of the railway line as a green infrastructure link corridor to the north.

Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

The Wigan – Manchester railway line and Hulton Park represent opportunities for enhancement of existing habitats and increasing biodiversity, particularly through targeted species additions. They also present key linkages to other habitats, namely SBIs, hedgerows and areas of semi-natural green space.

There is further opportunity to create green corridors in the Green Belt to the west of GM Allocation 51. Such interventions could focus on the enhancement of habitats along the watercourses (Hall Lee Brook) or road corridors (B5235).

As discussed in the Access theme, proposals should be in conjunction with increased community accessibility, for example improvements to Public Rights of Way and cycleways with strategic links to the neighbouring urban populations of Daisy Hill and Atherton.

There is opportunity for green infrastructure enhancements to improve watercourse status to 'Good' through interventions such as the removal of historic modifications which prevent natural flow, and the introduction of appropriate native planting to enhance water health.

Further interventions to increase the size and capacity of the existing wetland habitats located adjacent to these watercourses to enforce nature-based solutions to flood risk, prevent storm water infiltrating lower catchments and create new accessible habitats would be recommended.

Ecological enhancements within the Green Belt area should look at the restoration of wetland habitats. This will include the re-wetting of the landscape to create the appropriate conditions for these valuable ecosystems.

Such habitats will have the opportunity to support endangered and rare plant and animal species as well as providing natural flood defences and actively storing carbon dioxide.

Particular focus should be placed on wetland restoration in Green Belt to the north within and around Hulton Park, and Green Belt to the south focusing on the Sites of Biological Importance located here. Waterbodies include typical marl ponds and seasonal pools which support breeding amphibians including great crested newt and good assemblages of aquatic invertebrates.

## Existing baseline

### Landscape and visual

The Registered Park and Garden of Hulton Park sits 0.9km north east of GM Allocation 51. The park is currently in poor condition, due to a long-term pattern of neglect, particularly after the demolition of Hulton Hall in the late 1950s. Blocks of ancient woodland and multiple heritage features add value to the land. However, scars have been left on the landscape through mining activities, as well as over-grazed farmland and poor woodland management. Therefore, the park and this area of Green Belt hold the potential for significant improvement.

GM Allocation 51 and its surrounding Green Belt plays an important role in the reduction of urban coalescence of surrounding settlements, particularly Atherton to the south east and Westhoughton to the north west.

The railway line, which runs directly north of the release site connecting the two stations of Hag Fold and Daisy Hill, also acts as a physical barrier to urban sprawl.

According to the GMLCA, GM Allocation 51 falls within the character type of Reclaimed Land / Wetlands. This denotes topography of gently undulating landforms with patches of wetland habitats. Within this area the conservation and enhancement of woodland and semi-natural habitats, including open water bodies, is of great importance. To the west, the character type Urban Fringe Farmland dominates, where an open and elevated character is present.

The UKLC defines a significant proportion of the surrounding existing Green Belt as Enclosed Land, however, with a wide variety of enclosure patterns. Within the southern end of GM Allocation 51, Agglomerated Fields are found. Within the northern end of GM Allocation 51 and towards Hulton Park, Piecemeal Enclosure is present, displaying more Medieval field patterns. Furthermore, Surveyed Enclosure (Parliamentary patterns) were found in the south east of the study area surrounding Atherton Woods, and Strip Fields are the dominant enclosure pattern on the western fringe of Daisy Hill.

# **‘Beneficial use’ proposals and potential GI enhancements subject to further work**

## **Landscape and visual**

Interventions at Hulton Park could range from small scale woodland and habitat management projects (as noted above) to maintain the historic fabric of the parkland landscape, to boundary replacement and access improvements.

The existing boundaries, particularly on main roads such as the A6 are modern interventions, and there is opportunity to create new wall or hedge boundaries that would respect the character and heritage of this site.

Public rights of way could further be developed to encourage wider access of the park landscape, particularly along Carr Brook linking with PROW WES134 and WES126.

In order to prevent settlement coalescence, it is recommended that significant belts and wedges of the surrounding Green Belt are safeguarded from future development. The opportunity exists to create a country park on land to the west of GM Allocation 51, on land separating Westhoughton and Atherton.

Stopping up gaps in the existing buffer planting along the Wigan to Manchester Railway line particularly on the northern embankment north of GM Allocation 51 will help retain separation between settlements. Additional planting and reinforcement of the woodland area at New Wood south of Everest Road will further connect this buffer planting and create edge of settlement accessible semi-natural greenspace.

An additional green wedge should be considered adjacent the reservoir on Leigh Road to create a contiguous habitat with the railway line green corridor and help prevent the merging of Daisy Hill with Atherton. This intervention would also provide setting for proposed access improvements.

There is opportunity for existing woodland and semi-natural habitats, including wetlands and ponds to be managed with potential extensions to increase connectivity.

Particular focus could be placed on the Green Belt to the south of GM Allocation 51 around Atherton Woods and the various streams that traverse east-west and north south. Extensions to Atherton Woods ancient woodland and SBI, with green corridor linkages along river corridors to

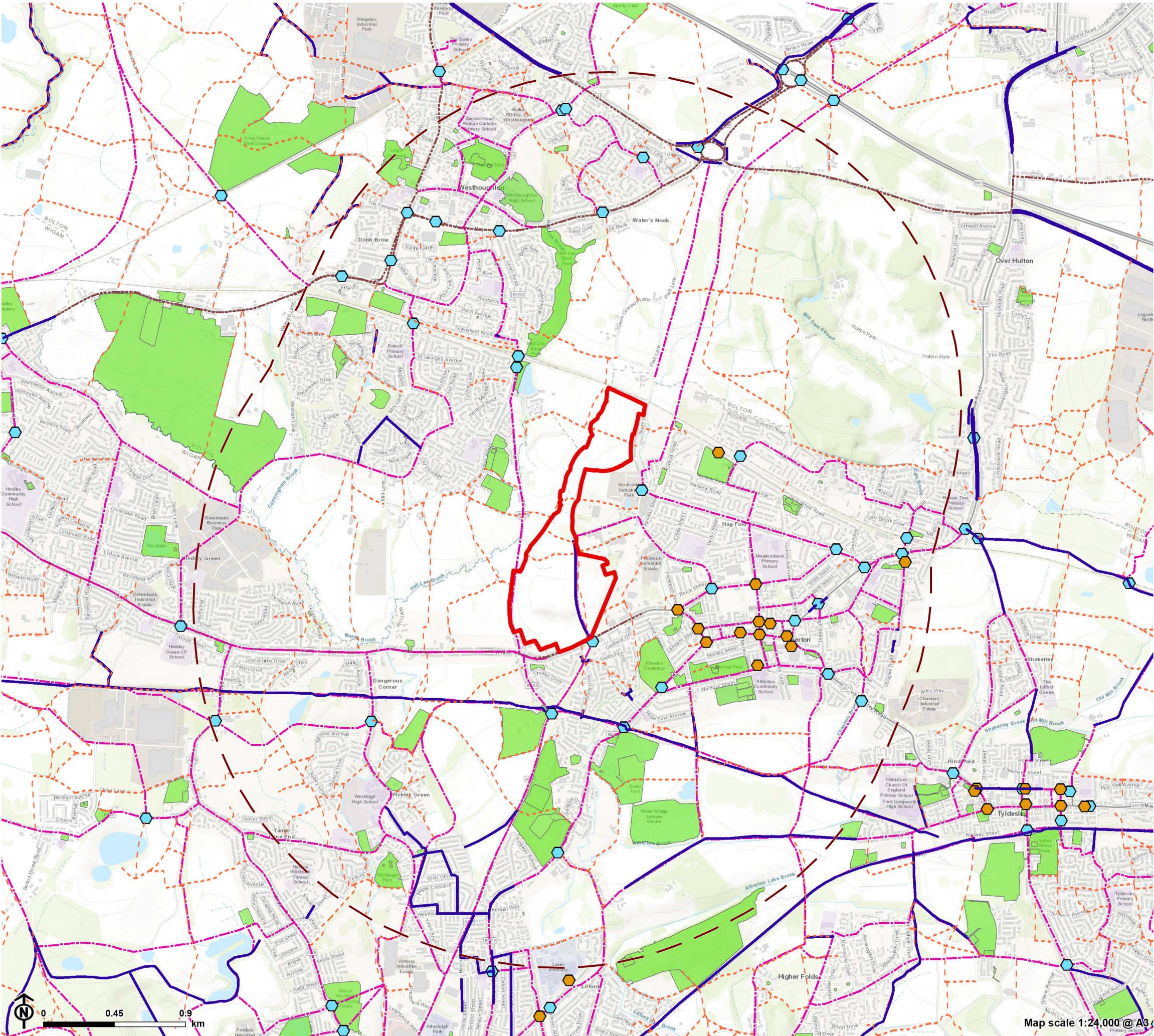
Potential Enhancement Opportunities  
for the Green Belt

reinforce existing habitats and create an enhanced biodiversity mosaic. These connections would also encompass the large pond east of Atherton Cricket club.

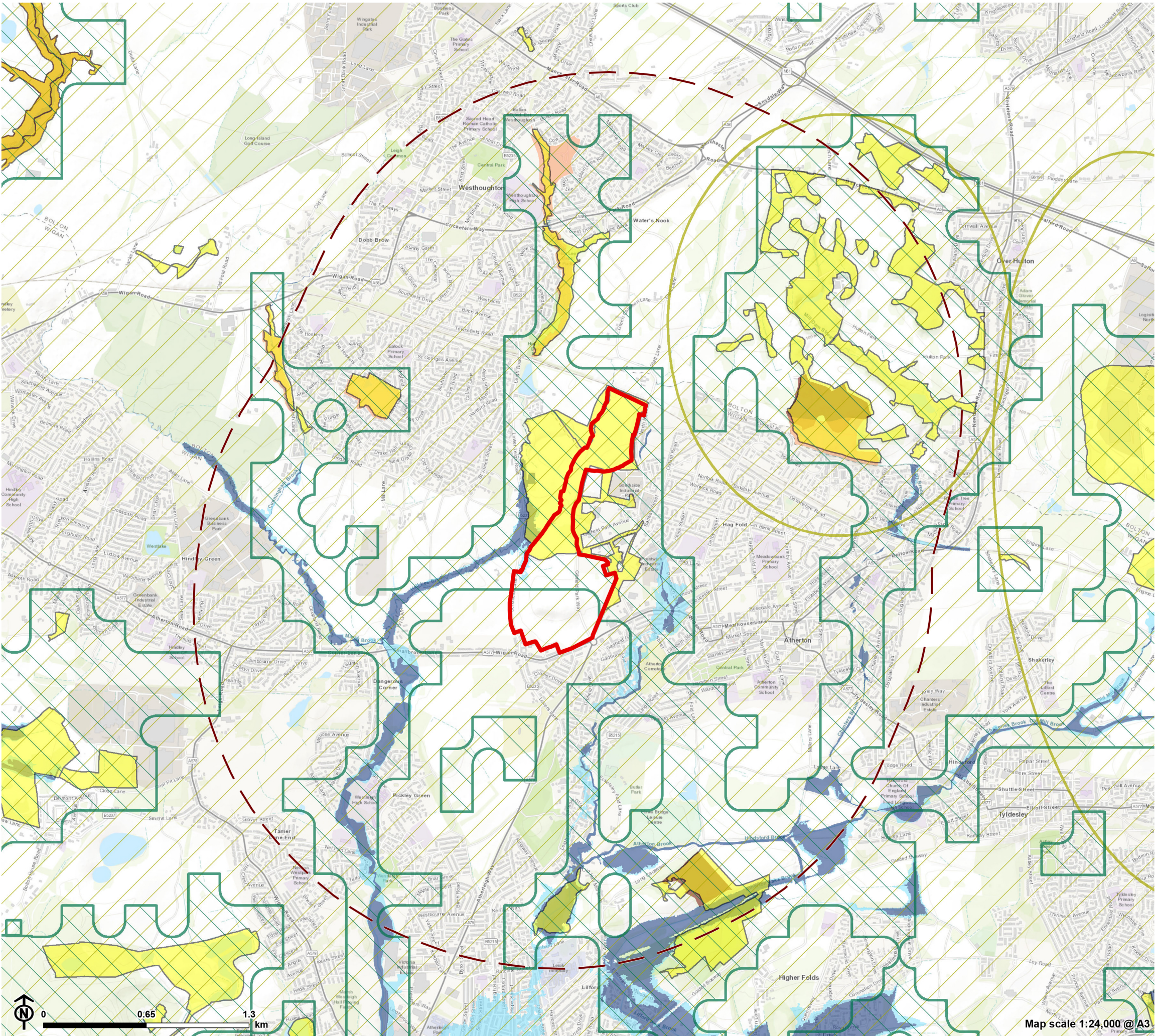
There are also a number of ponds and associated wetlands within Green Belt to the north of GM Allocation 51 in and around the Registered Hulton Park site. Similar linkages and management interventions could be progressed with a particular emphasis on the use of the railway line as a strategic green link.

Relict field boundaries, particularly in the adjacent Green Belt to the west of GM Allocation 51, south of Hall Lee Brook and in Green Belt to the east of Howe Bridge could be restored or reinstated to enhance the legibility of historic landscapes.

Access, Sport and Recreation  
GM Allocation 51



- Site boundary
- Site boundary - 2km buffer
- Access**
- Public right of way
- Sustrans route
- TfGM cycle route
- Bee network - confirmed infrastructure
- Bee network - crossing point
- Bee network - beeway
- Bee network - busy beeway
- Sport and Recreation**
- Open green space



**Biodiversity, Landscape and Visual  
GM Allocation 51**

- Site boundary**
- Biodiversity**
  - Site of biological importance
  - Local nature reserve
  - National nature reserve
  - SSSI
  - Special Area of Conservation
  - Ancient woodland
  - Flood zone 2
  - Flood zone 3
- Landscape and Visual**
  - Priority green infrastructure
  - Green infrastructure opportunity area

# Potential enhancement projects

## Access

1. Access improvements to Salford Trail in suburban Daisy Hill.
2. Footpath creation to enhance north-south connectivity.
3. Diversion of Salford Trail long distance footpath.
4. Development of cycleway along disused railway line north of Gibfield site and wider cycle network.

## Sport and recreation

5. Youth play provision (skate park, BMX facility).

## Biodiversity and wildlife corridors

6. Enhanced habitat connectivity around Atherton Wood and neighbouring watercourses.

## Landscape and visual

7. Creation of a country park on land to the west of GM Allocation 51, on land separating Westhoughton and Atherton.
8. Woodland block planting within Hulton Park.
9. Buffer planting along Wigan – Manchester railway line.
10. Reinforcement of fragmented hedgerows in agricultural Green Belt west and south of GM Allocation 51.
11. Boundary improvements at Hulton Park.

**51 - WEST OF GIFFORD**  
 MAP INCLUDING LOCATION OF POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE GI

The map displays a 2km study area around Gifford, with a dashed red line indicating the boundary. Numbered locations (1-11) are marked with circles, and green spaces are highlighted in green. The map includes surrounding towns like Bolton, Westhoughton, Wigan, and Leigh. A scale bar at the bottom left shows distances up to 2 km.

- 
- 51 - WEST OF GIFFORD**  
 MAP INCLUDING LOCATION OF POTENTIAL OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE GI
- The map displays a 2km study area around Gifford, with a dashed red line indicating the boundary. Numbered locations (1-11) are marked with circles, and green spaces are highlighted in green. The map includes surrounding towns like Bolton, Westhoughton, Wigan, and Leigh. A scale bar at the bottom left shows distances up to 2 km.