



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Chris Argent
CBRE
10th Floor, One St Peters Square
Manchester
M2 3DE

Our ref: APP/V4250/V/20/3253242
Your ref: A/18/85947/MAJES

21 June 2021

Dear Sir,

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 77
APPLICATION MADE BY TRITAX SYMMETRY LTD.
LAND AT JUNCTION 25 OF THE M6 MOTORWAY, WIGAN, BOUNDED BY THE M6
SLIP ROAD AND A49 WARRINGTON ROAD JUNCTION TO THE EAST,
AGRICULTURAL LAND TO THE NORTH AND THE M6 MOTORWAY TO THE WEST,
WIGAN.
APPLICATION REF: A/18/85947/MAJES**

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State to say that consideration has been given to the report of D M Young JP BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI MIHE and B J Sims BSc (Hons) CEng MICE MRTPI, who held a public local inquiry between 1 December 2020 and 4 December 2020 into your client's application for planning permission, reference A/18/85947/MAJES dated 16 August 2018 for the demolition of existing buildings and re-profiling of the site for development comprising:
 - Full planning permission for the erection of 27,871 square metres of employment floor space (Use Class B8 with ancillary integral Use Class B1a floor space), comprising two units and the provision of associated infrastructure including sub-station, car parking, landscaping, access from the A49 roundabout and internal estate road; and
 - Outline planning permission for the erection of up to 106,095 square metres of employment floor space (Use Class B8 with ancillary integral Use Class B1a floor space), including car parking, internal estate road and landscaping. All matters except for access are reserved, with access proposed from the A49 roundabout.
2. On 21 May 2020, the Secretary of State directed, in pursuance of Section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, that your client's application be referred to him instead of being dealt with by the local planning authority.

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
Phil Barber, Decision Officer
Planning Casework Unit
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2 Marsham Street
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Inspector's recommendation and summary of the decision

3. The panel of Inspectors recommended that the application be approved and planning permission granted.
4. For the reasons given below, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors' conclusions and agrees with their recommendation. He has decided to approve the application and grant planning permission, subject to conditions and the planning obligations of the Section 106 agreement. A copy of the Inspectors' report (IR) is enclosed. All references to paragraph numbers, unless otherwise stated, are to that report.

Environmental Statement

5. In reaching this position, the Secretary of State has taken into account the Environmental Statement which was submitted under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 and the environmental information submitted before the inquiry. Having taken account of the Inspector's comments at IR1.11, the Secretary of State is satisfied that the Environmental Statement complies with the above Regulations and that sufficient information has been provided for him to assess the environmental impact of the proposal.

Matters arising since the close of the inquiry

6. Details of the representation received since the Inquiry is at Annex A. The representation is also referred to at paragraph 7 of this decision letter. Copies of this may be obtained on request to the email address at the foot of the first page of this letter.
7. The Secretary of State notes that on 17 February 2021 Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council ('the Council') provided the Planning Inspectorate with consultation versions of the Council's emerging Development and Air Quality Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and emerging Landscape Design SPD. The Secretary of State notes that the Council's stated position is that the emerging SPDs make no material difference to its assessment of either the landscape design or air quality impacts of the proposal.
8. The Secretary of State is satisfied that the emerging SPDs do not affect his conclusions on these matters. He is satisfied that no other new issues were raised in this correspondence to warrant further investigation or necessitate additional referrals back to parties.

Policy and statutory considerations

9. In reaching his decision, the Secretary of State has had regard to section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
10. In this case the development plan consists of the Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy 2013 (CS), the 'saved' Wigan Replacement Unitary Development Plan 2006 (UDP), the Greater Manchester Joint Minerals Plan 2013 and the Greater Manchester Joint Waste Development Plan Document 2012. The Secretary of State considers that relevant development plan policies include those set out at IR4.15-IR4.18.

11. Other material considerations which the Secretary of State has taken into account include the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') and associated planning guidance ('the Guidance'), as well as the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 ('the CIL regulations') and those policy documents set out at IR4.25-4.29.

Emerging plan

12. Following the decision of 3 December 2020 by Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council to withdraw from the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) has decided not to progress the GMSF. The Secretary of State thus gives no weight to the provisions of the GMSF. However, noting that the AGMA intends to use the same evidence base to underpin its Development Plan Document 'Places for Everyone', the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors for the reasons given in IR4.24, that the evidence base underpinning it is a material consideration in this case.

Main issues

13. The Secretary of State agrees that the main issues are those set out by the Inspectors at IR10.2.

Green Belt

Inappropriate development in the Green Belt

14. The Secretary of State notes that the entire application site is located within the Merseyside and Greater Manchester Green Belt. As such, the Secretary of State has given careful consideration to the Inspectors' analysis at IR10.3-10.22.

15. For the reasons given at IR10.3-10.4 the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors that the proposal constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt. He further agrees that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the development, is clearly outweighed by other considerations (IR10.5).

Openness of the Green Belt

16. The Secretary of State concurs with the Inspectors' analysis of landscape evidence at IR10.6-10.11. He agrees with the Inspectors for the reasons given at IR10.6-10.11 that the scale of development would substantially erode the spatial openness of the Green Belt in this location (IR10.7), but that the harm to Green Belt openness would be localised and moderate upon completion and that structural landscaping would mitigate the impact on openness in the medium-long term (IR10.12).

Green Belt Purposes

17. For the reasons given at IR10.13-10.14, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors at IR10.15 that the combination of existing and proposed features would provide the Green Belt with coherent and defensible boundaries which would be sufficient to prevent the unrestricted sprawling of Wigan. For the reasons given at IR10.16-10.17 he further agrees that while the proposed development would undeniably erode elements of the open space between the two settlements, the separate identities of Wigan and Ashton would be safeguarded and they would remain distinguishable from one another.

18. However the Secretary of State also agrees, for the reasons given at IR10.18, that in terms of Green Belt purpose (c), the scheme would undeniably encroach into the countryside and that the level of harm would be 'moderate'.
19. For the reasons given at IR10.19 he agrees that there would be no conflict with Green Belt purpose (d). He similarly agrees, for the reasons given at IR10.20, that there would be no harm caused to Green Belt purpose (e).

Overall Impact on the Green Belt

20. For the reasons given at IR10.3-10.20 the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors at IR10.21 that there would be definitional harm to the Green Belt by virtue of the development being inappropriate. He further agrees that there would be limited and localised harm to openness and moderate harm to Green Belt purpose (c). He further agrees that collectively, these harms must carry substantial weight in the overall Green Belt balance in accordance with paragraph 144 of the Framework. He notes that it is not disputed that the proposed could not be accommodated on a preferable site in Wigan either within or outside the Green Belt (IR10.22), and that it is therefore material that a loss of spatial and visual openness and associated landscape harm would result in Green Belt and other harm as a consequence of any large B8/warehouse development in the Borough.
21. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors that the proposal if approved would not formally change the Green Belt boundary (IR10.123). He further agrees that it would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt requiring justification by very special circumstances and hence the development would not amend the general extent of Green Belt as defined on the Proposals Map. The Secretary of State notes that CS Policy SP1 states that the full extent of the Green Belt in Wigan will be maintained. For the reasons given above, he considers the proposal is not in conflict with CS Policy SP1.

Need and Economic Considerations

Need for Employment Land

22. For the reasons given at IR10.23-10.25, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors that there is an evident and compelling planning policy imperative for high-quality logistics floorspace regionally, sub-regionally and locally (IR10.26). The Secretary of State further agrees with the Inspectors' analysis of need for employment land at IR10.27-10.30.

Employment Land Supply

23. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors' finding that due to the attraction of the M6 corridor for logistics operators, employment land supply has been unable to keep pace with demand and is now critically low (IR10.31). He further agrees with the Inspectors' finding that the supply rate of employment land within Wigan Borough itself since 2011 is even lower (IR10.32) and that there is considerable uncertainty about the deliverability of around half of the supply due to factors including the need for significant transport infrastructure improvements and ground remediation (IR10.33). He agrees with the Inspectors that the evidence suggests that the low take-up levels of employment land in Wigan Borough are not symptomatic of an absence of demand (IR10.34-35). The Secretary of State agrees that CS Policy CP5 is now out of date in light of the latest evidence of employment land need contained in the GMSF evidence base (IR10.121).

However, apart from that, he agree with the Inspectors that the development plan relevant to this application remains up to date.

24. The Secretary of State notes that there is a broad consensus that there are no suitable alternative sites in the Borough that could accommodate the proposed development, for the reasons set out at IR10.36. He agrees that the other sites under consideration by the Inspectors would not address the shortage of employment land that exists in Wigan (IR10.36)
25. For the reasons set out at IR10.37-10.38, and given his conclusions on the GMSF at paragraph 12 above, the Secretary of State agrees the existing policy vacuum on employment land supply runs counter to the approach advocated in paragraphs 33, 81 and 120 of the Framework and is likely to result in valuable investment flowing into adjacent authorities of Bolton, Warrington and St Helens, to the detriment of Wigan's residents (IR10.38). He also agrees that another potential consequence is that existing businesses in the Borough who wish to expand will continue to leave, in order to find more suitable premises in neighbouring authority areas (IR10.38). For the reasons given at IR10.39-10.40, he agrees that it is material that the site is available now and that the detailed element of the scheme can be delivered relatively quickly to address known commercial and policy needs (IR10.40).

Economic benefits

26. The Secretary of State agrees that the development would deliver a range of other socio-economic benefits as set out at IR10.41. He agrees, for the reasons given at IR10.42, that these benefits carry significant weight in a Borough where, according to the CS, a 'high concentration of jobs are low skilled and within declining sectors of the economy'.

Economic Considerations Overall

27. For the reasons given at IR10.23-10.43 the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors that there is a demonstrable policy and market need for logistics floorspace on a regional, subregional and local level, and that with regards to Wigan, that need is particularly stark and cannot be met through existing or other non-Green Belt sites (IR10.44). He also agrees that the policy would accord with CS Policy CP5, by delivering much needed employment floorspace in a Borough that has consistently been unable to provide suitable and sufficient employment land (IR10.45). For the reasons given, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors' conclusions at IR10.126-127 that Wigan has, and continues to, suffer from poor take up rates due to constraints on its supply of employment land. He agrees that in light of the current policy vacuum there is no imminent prospect of the supply issue being addressed. He further agrees that consequently, very substantial weight has to be accorded to the delivery of up to 133,966sqm of high-quality logistics floorspace.
28. The Secretary of State agrees the development would accord with the objectives of paragraphs 80 and 82 of the Framework by both creating the conditions in which business can invest and satisfying the need to support economic growth. He further agrees that the proposal would also address the specific locational requirement of the logistics sector and make provision for storage and distribution operations at an appropriate scale (IR10.45) For the reasons given, he agrees with the Inspectors'

conclusion at IR10.128 that these locational benefits carry further significant weight in favour of the application.

29. He further agrees for the reasons given that the proposal would deliver a substantial range of tangible economic benefits including well paid jobs for local people (IR10.44). He agrees with the Inspectors at IR10.129 that these socio-economic benefits would boost the local economy and would help to address economic inequalities in nearby communities. He agrees that these benefits carry substantial weight.

Highways – Impact of Development on the Road Network

30. The Secretary of State notes that neither the Council's Highway Department, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), St Helens Council nor Highways England (HE) object, and all statutory consultees judge the development would be acceptable in terms of its impact on the strategic and local road network, subject to appropriate mitigation (IR10.46).
31. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors' analysis of transport evidence at IR10.46-10.65. He agrees that the proposed improvement schemes at J24 and the Bryn Interchange would mitigate the impact of development and, in the latter case, would provide some incidental betterment to highway users (IR10.65). He further agrees that the site boasts excellent sustainability credentials with walking, cycling and the use of public transport all viable and realistic alternatives to the private motor car (IR10.65). Overall he agrees that the proposed development would comply with paragraphs 108 and 109 of the Framework.

Environmental Considerations

Landscape and visual impact

32. For the reasons given at IR10.66-10.73 the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors that while there would be some visual and landscape harm arising from the loss of the site's open character, the visual and landscape effects of the proposal could be satisfactorily mitigated within a reasonable period of time such that the overall level of harm due to the development would be moderate rather than significant (IR10.73). The Secretary of State considers that this visual and landscape harm carries moderate weight.

Ecology, Biodiversity and Arboriculture

33. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors that, for the reasons given at IR10.74 to 10.81, overall, and notwithstanding the genuine concerns raised by local residents in respect of ecology matters, the impact of the development has been adequately assessed (IR10.81). He further agrees that the proposal would not result in harm to any designated nature conservation sites or loss of any irreplaceable habitats. The Secretary of State agrees that, subject to mitigation measures, the development would secure a 10% biodiversity net gain, consistent with the Framework and CS Policies CP9 and CP12 (IR10.81). The Secretary of State agrees, for the reasons given, with the Inspectors' analysis of biodiversity net gain at IR10.98-10.104. He further agrees that the biodiversity net gain obligation meets the statutory tests (IR10.104). He agrees

(IR10.130) that the biodiversity net gain and the highway benefits collectively attract moderate weight.

Air quality

34. The Secretary of State notes that part of the site is within a designated Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). For the reasons given at IR10.83-10.87 the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors at IR10.87 that air quality matters have been satisfactorily assessed and addressed in the evidence and that there would be no conflict with CS Policy CP17, UDP Policy EV1B, the Air Quality Supplementary Planning Document or paragraph 181 of the Framework.

Public rights of way

35. The Secretary of State notes the applicant's PRow Strategy Plan is considered acceptable to the Council (IR10.88). He agrees with the Inspectors that the PRow Strategy Plan removes the opportunity for local residents to undertake a circular walk. He agrees, however, that the finer details for the treatment of those public footpaths through the outline element of the development are not fixed and it might be possible to incorporate such a route at a later date (IR10.88).

Other matters

2013 Core Strategy Inspector's Report

36. The Secretary of State notes the Inspectors' observation that their overall conclusion is at odds with the examining Inspector at the 2013 Core Strategy examination (IR10.108). He agrees with the Inspectors at IR10.108 that based on the evidence the 2013 decision should not command any significant weight in this case.

Cross-boundary Matters

37. For the reasons given at IR10.109-IR10.110, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors that cross-boundary issues do not arise and that the present application may appropriately be determined independently on the basis of this Inspectors Report alone (IR10.111).

Mineral safeguarding, living conditions, odours, hazardous chemicals, emergency vehicle access, publicity, flood risk, property values, localism

38. For the reasons given at IR10.112-10.120 the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspectors' analysis of impacts on minerals safeguarding, living conditions, odours, hazardous chemicals, emergency vehicle access, publicity, flood risk, property values or localism.

Planning conditions

39. The Secretary of State has given consideration to the Inspector's analysis at IR10.89-10.95, the recommended conditions set out at the end of the IR and the reasons for them, and to national policy in paragraph 55 of the Framework and the relevant Guidance. He is satisfied that the conditions recommended by the Inspector comply with

the policy test set out at paragraph 55 of the Framework and that the conditions set out at Annex B of this letter should form part of his decision.

Planning obligations

40. Having had regard to the Inspector's analysis at IR10.96-10.107, the planning obligation dated 08 February 2021, paragraph 56 of the Framework, the Guidance and the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, as amended, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's conclusion for the reasons given in IR10.107 that the obligation complies with Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations and the tests at paragraph 56 of the Framework.

Planning balance and overall conclusion

41. For the reasons given above, and in the light of his conclusion in paragraph 43 of this letter, the Secretary of State finds no conflict with development plan policies, and thus concludes that the application is in line with the development plan overall. He has gone on to consider whether there are material considerations which indicate that the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan.

42. The material considerations weighing against the proposal are the definitional harm to the Green Belt by virtue of inappropriate development, the limited and localised harm to Green Belt openness and the moderate harm from encroachment into the countryside. The Green Belt harm carries substantial weight. Also weighing against the proposal is the moderate visual and landscape harm, which carries moderate weight.

43. Weighing in favour of the proposal are the delivery of logistics floorspace which he accords very substantial weight. The locational benefits carry further significant weight. The socio-economic benefits also carry substantial weight. The biodiversity net gain and highway benefits collectively attract moderate weight.

44. The Secretary of State has considered whether the harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and the other harms he has identified, are clearly outweighed by other considerations. Overall, the Secretary of State considers that the economic and other benefits of the proposal are collectively sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and to the landscape such that very special circumstances exist to justify permitting the development. As such he finds no conflict with CS Policy CP8 or Green Belt policy in Section 13 of the Framework.

45. Overall the Secretary of State considers that the material considerations in this case indicate a decision which is in line with the development plan – i.e. a grant of permission.

46. The Secretary of State therefore concludes that planning permission should be granted.

Formal decision

47. Accordingly, for the reasons given above, the Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's recommendation. He hereby grants planning permission subject to the conditions set out in Annex B of this decision letter for:

- Full planning permission for the erection of 27,871 square metres of employment floor space (Use Class B8 with ancillary integral Use Class B1a floor space), comprising two units and the provision of associated infrastructure

including sub-station, car parking, landscaping, access from the A49 roundabout and internal estate road; and

- Outline planning permission for the erection of up to 106,095 square metres of employment floor space (Use Class B8 with ancillary integral Use Class B1a floor space), including car parking, internal estate road and landscaping. All matters except for access are reserved, with access proposed from the A49 roundabout.

in accordance with reference A/18/85947/MAJES date 16 August 2018.

48. This letter does not convey any approval or consent which may be required under any enactment, bye-law, order or regulation other than section 57 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Right to challenge the decision

49. A separate note is attached setting out the circumstances in which the validity of the Secretary of State's decision may be challenged. This must be done by making an application to the High Court within 6 weeks from the day after the date of this letter for leave to bring a statutory review under section 288 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

50. An applicant for any consent, agreement or approval required by a condition of this permission for agreement of reserved matters has a statutory right of appeal to the Secretary of State if consent, agreement or approval is refused or granted conditionally or if the Local Planning Authority fail to give notice of their decision within the prescribed period.

51. A copy of this letter has been sent to Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council and notification has been sent to others who asked to be informed of the decision.

Yours faithfully

Phil Barber

This decision was made by the Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government on behalf of the Secretary of State, and signed on his behalf

Annex A Schedule of representations

Annex B List of conditions



Report to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government

by D M Young JP BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI MIHE

and

B J Sims BSc (Hons) CEng MICE MRTPI

Inspectors appointed by the Secretary of State

Date 2 March 2021

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

APPLICATION BY

TRITAX SYMMETRY LTD

MADE TO

WIGAN METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Inquiry Held on 1-4 December 2020

Symmetry Park, Junction 25 of the M6, Wigan

File Ref: APP/V4250/V/20/3253242

- 10.19 It has not been suggested that the proposal would affect the setting and special character of historic towns. Accordingly, there would be no conflict with Green Belt purpose d). [6.8, 7.9]
- 10.20 In terms of Green Belt purpose e), the Council's evidence is unchallenged that there are no alternative sites in the Borough that could accommodate the proposed development. None of those opposing the development were able to point to any derelict or urban sites whose regeneration would be frustrated by the proposed development. On that basis, there would be no harm caused to this purpose. [6.28, 6.31, 6.42, 7.16]

Overall Impact on the Green Belt

- 10.21 There would be definitional harm to the Green Belt by virtue of the development being inappropriate. Added to that, there would be limited and localised harm to openness and moderate harm to the Green Belt purpose (c). Collectively, these harms must carry substantial weight in the overall Green Belt balance in accordance with NPPF paragraph 144.
- 10.22 However, it is not disputed that the proposed could not be accommodated on a preferable site in Wigan either within or outside the Green Belt. It is therefore material that a loss of spatial and visual openness and associated landscape harm would result in Green Belt and other harm as consequence of any large B8/warehouse development in the Borough.

Need and Economic Considerations

Need for Employment Land

- 10.23 A key objective of the NPPF is to build a strong and competitive economy. Part of that objective involves delivering logistic developments in the right locations. [1.4, 4.6, 4.7, 7.5]
- 10.24 Although the policies in the GMSF carry limited weight at this time, significant weight is to be given to its up-to-date evidence base, particularly the Employment Topic Paper⁸⁴. [4.22, 6.38-6.40, 7.13, 7.19]
- 10.25 The GMLIS⁸⁵ identifies the Wigan-Bolton Growth Corridor as important in supporting long-term economic prosperity, and as an important cluster location for the logistics and manufacturing sectors. It states that the M6 logistics hub in Wigan (extending into Warrington, St Helens and West Lancashire) provides a major cluster of warehousing and distribution activity with good accessibility to the motorway network.
- 10.26 Based on the foregoing, there is an evident and compelling planning policy imperative for high-quality logistics floorspace regionally, sub-regionally⁸⁶ and locally.

⁸⁴ CD: GM_Ot_6_GMSF Topic Paper

⁸⁵ CD: GM_Ot_7_GMLIS

⁸⁶ The M6 sub-market area is defined as the area between Junctions 20 and 26 and includes the local authority areas of Wigan, St Helens and Warrington

- 10.27 This need is a result of a highly active logistics sector, fuelled primarily⁸⁷ by the rise of e-commerce, which has expanded substantially in recent years and is likely to account for over 35% of the market by the end of 2020. [4.20, 4.22, 5.3, 6.19-6.23, 6.35-6.43, 7.4, 7.13-7.22]
- 10.28 The demand for logistics floorspace is focused on the motorway corridors, as operators demand better access to their markets for 'just-in-time' delivery. Moreover, operators require good access to multi-modal supply chain facilities, such as depots, ports and airports. The M6 corridor is centrally located to supply chains and markets and has seen unprecedented levels of inward investment in the logistics sector over the last decade. [7.3]
- 10.29 With respect to the impact which Brexit might have on the need for logistics floorspace, the evidence before the Inquiry suggest a potential uplift in demand, given the severance of warehousing and distribution facilities, which previously served all of Europe⁸⁸.
- 10.30 At the local level, evidence⁸⁹ shows that the Council is receiving a significant number of investment enquiries for large Class B8 units of 40,000 to above 100,000ft².

Employment Land Supply

- 10.31 Due to the attraction of the M6 corridor for logistics operators, employment land supply has been unable to keep pace with demand and is now critically low, amounting to only around six months of supply based on annual average take-up rates⁹⁰. There is a similar situation within the wider North West region, with approximately nine months of supply. [6.36, 6.39, 7.3, 7.16, 7.18, 7.24]
- 10.32 The supply rate of employment land within Wigan Borough itself since 2011 is even lower. CS Policy CP5 sought to provide 200ha of employment land in Wigan between 2011 and 2026 (approximately 13.3ha per annum). However, as set out in the latest ELPS⁹¹, the Borough only has 131.44ha of available employment land at October 2020. The Council's supply has been considerably weakened by a significant loss of employment land to other uses, predominantly residential⁹².
- 10.33 These figures mask the full reality of the situation as there is considerable uncertainty about the deliverability of around half of the supply due to factors including the need for significant transport infrastructure improvements and ground remediation. Of those sites that are earmarked as 'available', a significant proportion are small plots (under 5ha) and unattractive to the market for a variety of reasons including size, location, poor access to the motorway network and the existence of constraints such as nearby housing⁹³. These constraints are reflective of Wigan's industrial legacy and its failure to allocate any new sites since the UDP was adopted. [6.31, 7.14]

⁸⁷ Aherne PoE paragraph 12

⁸⁸ Aherne PoE, paragraphs 10, 12, 14 and 74

⁸⁹ Mulligan PoE, Section 5

⁹⁰ Aherne PoE, paragraphs 59-63

⁹¹ CD: Wi_Ot_14

⁹² See Kearsley PoE paragraph 3.8

⁹³ See Kearsley PoE Table 5

- 10.34 Take-up rates within Wigan since 2011 have been similarly poor, with only 20.15ha taken up, 13.35 ha of which was accounted for by redevelopment at the South Lancashire Industrial Estate in 2016-17. [4.16, 6.26-6.30, 6.37, 7.13-7.15]
- 10.35 However, the evidence suggests that the low take-up levels in Wigan are not symptomatic of an absence of demand. On the contrary, on those rare occasions when good quality sites have come forward, such as the South Lancashire Industrial Estate, they have been taken up quickly. [6.9, 6.14, 6.29, 6.45, 7.15]
- 10.36 There is a broad consensus that there are no suitable alternative sites in the Borough that could accommodate the proposed development. Some written representations have suggested that the development could be accommodated on the South Lancashire Industrial Estate Extension. However, for the reasons set out in the ELPS including land ownership and site access constraints, there are clearly significant impediments to the delivery of that site. Some objectors have also pointed to the other sites under consideration by the Panel. However, these sites would not address the shortage of employment land that exists in Wigan. [6.9, 6.42, 6.43, 7.9, 7.14, 7.16, 12.20]
- 10.37 Despite the fact that the Council is failing to provide the levels of employment land stipulated in Policy CP5, the CS monitoring mechanism provides no means of addressing the shortfall. The CS including Policy CP5 was predicated on the Council bringing forward an allocations document by 2016. This would have potentially remedied the shortfall by allocating new sites. However, that document was abandoned or paused by the Council in 2016, in favour of the GMSF. [4.19-4.24, 6.27, 7.13]
- 10.38 Given the significant uncertainty which now surrounds the GMSF, there is no imminent prospect of its adoption. Even if the GMSF is taken forward in amended form, its adoption is still some way into the future, resulting in a prolonged period since the Council last allocated any employment sites. The existing policy vacuum clearly runs counter to the approach advocated in NPPF paragraphs 33, 81 and 120 and is likely to result in valuable investment flowing into the adjacent authorities of Bolton, Warrington and St Helens, to the detriment of Wigan's residents. Another potential consequence is that existing businesses in the Borough who wish to expand will continue to leave, in order to find more suitable premises in neighbouring authority areas⁹⁴. [4.19-4.24, 6.22, 6.28, 6.32, 6.39, 7.3, 7.16, 6.28]
- 10.39 It is common ground between the Applicant and Council that the current situation cannot be allowed to continue, and the lack of supply must be addressed now if Wigan is to compete for inward large logistics investment and reap the rewards that come from it. The Panel concurs with that assessment.
- 10.40 It is material that the site is available now and the detailed element of the scheme can be delivered relatively quickly to address known commercial and policy needs.

⁹⁴ Asda to Warrington and Joy Mining to Bolton

Economic Benefits

10.41 The development would deliver a range of other socio-economic objectives consistent with the NPPF including:

- A construction expenditure of £72.7m, creating over a thousand construction jobs;
- The creation of 1,200-1,410 operational jobs with mechanisms in place to ensure these are available to local people.
- Business rates of circa £3m per annum;
- £50-60m GVA, and
- Support for local businesses. [6.9, 6.14 6.44, 7.19, 7.20]

10.42 These benefits carry significant weight in a Borough where, according to the CS, a “*high concentration of jobs are low skilled and within declining sectors of the economy*”. The CS also refers to the Borough’s “*low wage economy*”⁹⁵ with wages on average 8% below sub-regional and regional averages and 17% below the national average. More up-to-date evidence presented to the Inquiry confirmed that whilst unemployment in the Borough is relatively low, there is a preponderance of low-value and low-paid employment⁹⁶. In terms of wages, figures derived from the Office of National Statistics indicate that salaries in the logistics sector are above average⁹⁷. [6.36, 6.45, 7.2 8.19]

10.43 Concern over the employment projections is noted. However, whilst jobs figures from the Florida Farm development have been cited, no source for this information has been provided. It is also noted that the employment projections on the South Lancashire Industrial Estate in 2016/17 proved to be a significant underestimate. Given the wide variation in B8 job densities, the NPPF prefers to focus on the amount of employment land rather than the numbers of jobs.

Economic Considerations Overall

10.44 The Panel’s conclusions on employment land supply matters are that there is a demonstrable policy and market need for logistics floorspace on a regional, sub-regional and local level, including within Wigan. In terms of the latter, that need is particularly stark and cannot be met through existing or other non-Green Belt sites. The delivery of the proposed development would contribute to meeting that need and secure valuable inward investment in the Borough which hitherto has been lost to neighbouring areas. The proposal would deliver a substantial range of tangible economic benefits including well paid jobs for local people.

10.45 Overall, the development would accord with the objectives of paragraphs 80 and 82 of the NPPF by both creating the conditions in which business can invest and satisfying the need to support economic growth. It would also address the specific locational requirements of the logistics sector and make provision for

⁹⁵ Paragraph 9.26 CD: Wi_DP_1_Core Strategy

⁹⁶ Mulligan Oral Evidence

⁹⁷ See Aherne PoE, paragraphs 25-27

storage and distribution operations at an appropriate scale. Furthermore, it would accord with CS Policy CP5, by delivering much-needed employment floorspace in a Borough that has consistently been unable to provide suitable and sufficient employment land.

Highways - Impact of the Development on the Road Network

- 10.46 Despite the number of highway objections to the scheme from the local population neither the Council's Highway Department, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), St Helens Council nor Highways England (HE) object. All statutory consultees judge that the development would be acceptable in terms of its impact on the strategic and local road network (SRN & LRN), subject to appropriate mitigation. [3.9, 5.5, 6.13]
- 10.47 In the main, those concerns raised by local people relate to existing issues on the LRN, such as high levels of congestion along the A49 between the Poolstock Lane junction and the Bryn Interchange. Whilst these concerns are genuine, it is not the Applicant's responsibility to resolve existing traffic issues in the locality. Rather the Applicant is expected to mitigate any unacceptable impacts arising from the development itself. [8.10, 9.1]
- 10.48 The Applicant's assessment of the transport effects of the development are contained in the Transport Assessment⁹⁸(TA) which forms part of the ES. This considers the broad nature of the road network in the vicinity of the site, including its accessibility by non-car modes of transport. The specific impact of the development is forecast from a number of future-year scenarios with and without the development. From this information, it is possible to ascertain where mitigation would be required. [5.5, 7.11]
- 10.49 In common with the other developments under consideration by the Panel, the trip rates and distribution⁹⁹ are taken from the Florida Farm, St Helens TA. Insofar as trip rates are concerned, these were originally calculated by interrogating the national Trip Rate Information Computer System to obtain trip rates from a number of similar developments. These trip rates were then supplemented by a survey of the Omega North, Warrington site. The trip rates that resulted from this exercise were then subject to further checking against surveys from the logistics developments at Hall Wood Avenue, Haydock, and Axis Business Park, Knowsley. Based on all of the above, the Panel considers that the Florida Farm trip rates are appropriate and provide a robust basis on which to assess the impact of the development. [5.5, 7.11]
- 10.50 The 33%-67% north/south split onto the M6 was calculated on consideration of: 1) the distribution of goods in the North West which tends to be focused on the two main conurbations of Liverpool and Manchester, accessed via the M62, and 2) Longer-distance HGV trips to and from the development would primarily be from the Golden Triangle¹⁰⁰ of the Midlands motorway network, southern ports and the Port of Liverpool. [5.5, 7.11]

⁹⁸ CD: SWi_Ei_40, SWi_Ei_62 & SWi_Ei_71

⁹⁹ The Florida Farm TA assumed a motorway split of 67% south and 33% north.

¹⁰⁰ The Golden Triangle refers to the Midlands and is defined by the location/interaction of the M42, M6 and M1 motorways