



Wigan Borough Local Plan

The case for an

Economic Development

Fund

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The case for an Economic Development Fund

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper sets out the case and evidence to support and justify the approach set out in proposed policy J2 of the Publication version of the Wigan Borough Local Plan where development that results in the loss of employment land or floorspace within an Employment Area will be expected to contribute to improving economic development and/or regeneration elsewhere in that Employment Area. This contribution or the resulting section 106 funding will be known as the 'Economic Development Fund' or 'the Fund' in short
- 1.2 This paper is intended to support and explain how Policy J2 will be established and applied, including through the Local Plan examination process, if required. Details of the approach and how the Fund will be used are set out below.

2. Policy requirement

- 2.1 Part of the proposed policy J2 relates to improving the economic development opportunity of the remaining employment area when development would result in the loss of employment land or floorspace within an Employment Area to a higher value use. The relevant part of proposed policy J2 states:

When development will result in the loss of employment land or floorspace within an Employment Area to residential, retail or leisure development under criteria b. and c. of this policy, a contribution will be sought to facilitate economic development and/or regeneration elsewhere in that Employment Area, in ways that will help secure its future for employment purposes or, where that is not practicable, in an alternative employment area nearby, unless it would not be viable to do so.

The contribution sought will be £5 per sqm of employment land or floorspace, including external space, that will be lost.

The fee in the paragraph above is set at 1 April 2026 and will be reviewed and amended annually on 1 April in each subsequent year according to the rate of inflation applying at that time provided by the Office for National Statistics. This will apply to the date that the development commences.

- 2.2 The supporting text states:

"Where a development proposal will result in a loss of employment land or premises the developer will be expected to provide compensation for the economic harm arising from the loss of the site to residential or retail development (or any other higher value use).

This contribution will be used to facilitate economic development and/or regeneration elsewhere within that Employment Area, in the first instance, and where that is not practicable, in an alternative employment area within the same ward and then in an adjacent ward of the borough.

Economic development across Wigan Borough is often vulnerable to small changes in economic fortunes due often to marginal levels of viability and high levels of risks associated. Therefore, these contributions will be used to establish an economic development fund to help de-risk and unblock sites, whether this is due to ground conditions, structural or access issues, or for building costs to help raise standards and meet higher sustainability and environmental efficiency standards.

Payment into the 'facilitating economic development fund' will be subject to the viability of the proposed development, which will be impacted in part by the costs of demolishing and cleaning up the site for redevelopment. However, in the circumstances where this policy applies, this payment will be the priority for section 106 funding unless there is a fundamental reason why it should be prioritised for other section 106 matters."

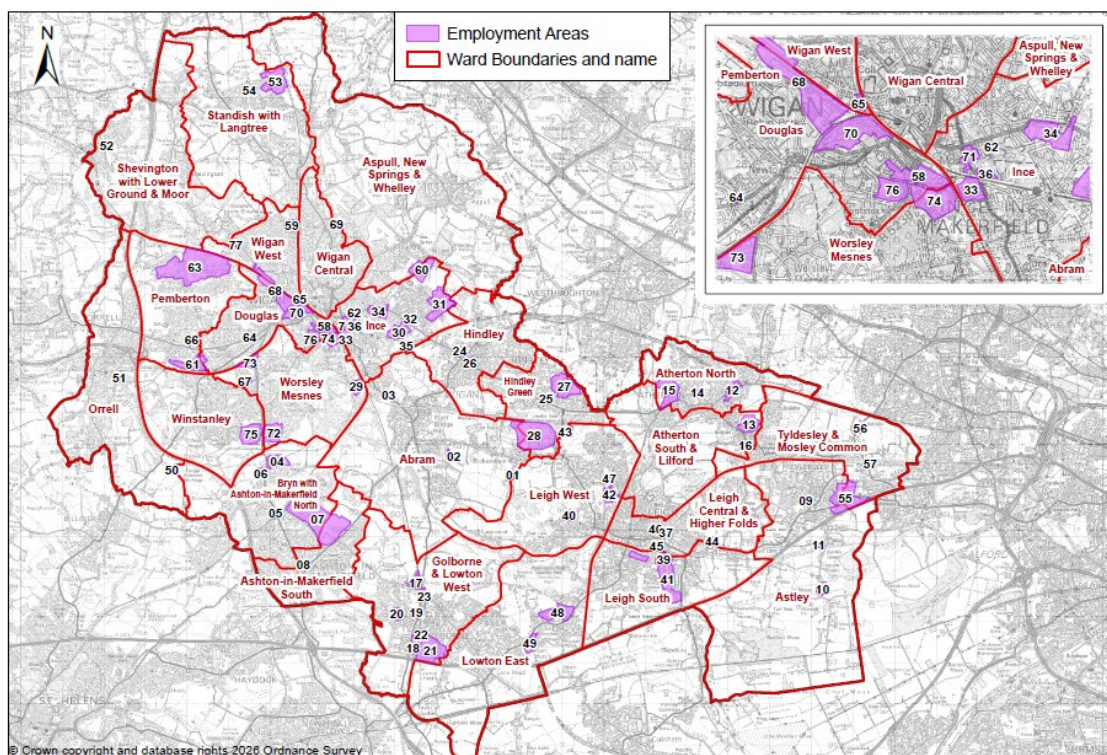
3. What the potential Economic Development Fund could achieve

- 3.1 The policy suggests the contribution or the Fund could be used to facilitate economic development and/or regeneration within employment areas. While this is reasonably broad and flexible in terms of what can be delivered to meet the needs within individual employment areas, further detail is needed to clarify what the Fund or contribution will be used for and the specific outcomes or benefits that it is intended to deliver. Examples of the types of works that could be undertaken are identified later in this paper.

4. Where this funding could be used

- 4.1 Policy J2 suggests that any contribution raised from the proposed higher value development should be used elsewhere within that same Employment Area, in the first instance, or where that is not practicable, in an alternative employment area within the borough.
- 4.2 The Publication version of the Local Plan proposes 77 Employment Areas as shown in Map 1 below along with Ward boundaries. Further details of the Employment Areas are set out in Appendix A.

Map 1: 77 Employment Areas by Ward in Wigan Borough



5. Employment Areas in need of economic development funding

- 5.1 The 2024 Wigan Economic Market and Employment Land Assessment (EMELA) assessed 57 of the borough's Employment Areas (those identified at that time) in terms of how they aligned with current and future market demand. This was based on criteria including building condition, quality of the environment, access for commercial traffic to the primary road network / motorway, access by public transport, compatibility of surrounding land uses and market attractiveness.
- 5.2 This assessment concluded that the 9 employment areas identified in Table 1 below were the poorest performing and were more likely to be suitable as low amenity areas rather than having potential to attract and support the borough's core and cross cutting sectors.

Table 1: Poorly performing Employment Areas, EMELA 2024

Draft LP ref:	Site Name	Site area (ha)
J2.01	Bolton House Road	2.05
J2.02	Junction Works/ Bickershaw Lane	2.36
J2.30	Cemetery Road	6.73
J2.33	Moat House Street	1.48
J2.40	English Street	1.71
J2.41	Firsdale Industrial Estate	2.99
J2.56	Mort Lane	1.77
J2.65	Prescott Street	1.11
J2.69	Valley Gate/ Leyland Mill Lane	0.49

5.3 The Employment Areas listed in Table 1 is not intended to be a priority list for attention or as suitable beneficiaries of the funding that could be generated through policy J2. It merely serves to highlight that there are issues with some employment areas across the borough which would benefit from investment and improvement if they were to be made more attractive as potential locations for existing and new businesses to invest in.

5.4 The Fund is not intended to target Council-owned assets, but be available to all employment areas or sites or properties within them that are impacted by loss of employment land or floorspace and are considered to require improvement. Engagement with local site owners would be needed to help to provide a better understanding of the existing challenges and whether the Fund could effectively address their needs.

6. The potential level of funding generated by section 106

6.1 It is not known which, if any, of the employment area estate will be subject to redevelopment proposals for alternative higher value uses in the future or how much section 106 funding that Policy J2 could generate over the local plan period, up to 2039. However, a total of 76.53 hectares of employment land and premises on land designated for employment purposes was lost to other higher value land uses in the period 2012-2024, primarily for housing. This is detailed in Appendix B.

- 6.2 This equates to 267,855 sqm of lost employment floorspace. If the proposed policy requirement set out in proposed Policy J2 had been applied it could have generated up to £1,339,275, equivalent to around £111,000 per year.
- 6.3 It is not expected that any future contribution would be at the same level given that Policy J2 is subject to viability and its robust application should result in a reduced level of existing employment uses / areas being lost to non-employment higher value uses. Notwithstanding this, the Fund should be able to generate a reasonable pot of funding that could facilitate economic development and regeneration improvements within employment areas across the borough.

7. The management and monitoring of funding generated by this policy requirement

- 7.1 A clear and transparent process for the use and distribution of this funding will be required. The basis for this monitoring will be through the local plan annual monitoring and for Section 106 Board to monitor the process, with sign-off of section 106 spending required by the relevant Assistant Director.
- 7.2 Consideration of any existing or planned works, particularly where sites may already have funding in place, will also be required to avoid duplication.

8. Implementation of the Economic Development Fund process

- 8.1 A process for implementing the Fund could be developed in two phases:

Phase 1 – Grant of planning permission and agreement of the section 106 contribution

- Confirm likely extent of issue at pre-application stage, as applicable.
- Receive planning application.
- Identify / agree amount to be paid (based on policy J2).
- Prepare section 106 agreement content (with standard content as far as applicable – as suggested in Appendix C).

- Identify / agree what the standard practice will be in terms of the contribution to be paid - when planning permission is granted, or upon commencement of development, or within 1 year, 2 years or 3 years, with Development Management colleagues.

Phase 2 - Identification of an appropriate use / project for the contribution and its implementation in line with the content in the section 106 agreement

- Identify / agree amount to be spent within the same Employment Area as the planning application site, or if this is not achievable, identify another suitable Employment Area (in line with the standard wording in the section 106 agreement, and the policy).
- Identify nature of project works required, possibly by liaising with owners and/or remaining businesses within the Employment Area to identify opportunities for spend, such as to:
 - Improve the fabric of properties - doors, windows, roofs;
 - Make the Employment Area or site or property more useable or attractive to new businesses – site ready, improved access, decontamination;
 - Improve the marketing of the Employment Area / sites / plots / property; or
 - Upgrade to meet modern standards, including addressing energy efficiency / sustainability issues.
- Identify scope of any third party or match funding contributions.
- Manage the project and ensure delivery within 5 years of the final section 106 payment.

Other works improvements

- 8.2 Other works improvements could include fencing; roofing; cladding; painting; lighting; security measures such as CCTV, entrance barriers, security cabin; landscaping; resurfacing works; electrical works; power and lighting to new yard, and/or new doors or windows.
- 8.3 Other items to be considered might include demolition and removal costs (including dealing with asbestos and disconnections for water, electricity and gas). Contingency fees should also be considered.

9. An illustration of what can be achieved

- 9.1 Appendix D provides an example at Bradley Hall Trading Estate of how, through the planning permission (and section 106), improvements to the remaining Employment Area at Bradley Hall have been addressed.

10. Learning from a grant scheme that could be applied for the Economic Development Fund

- 10.1 Appendix E sets out how an approach to developing and delivering a grant scheme could be applied to implement similar for the proposed Fund.

11. An example of site related constraints on business expansion and retention

- 11.1 Appendix F illustrates the experience of a former business seeking to expand and grow in situ or in an alternative location within the borough. Site-related constraints, including access and traffic management concerns, limited the attractiveness of further expansion on the current site, while the limited availability of suitable sites elsewhere within the borough proved unsatisfactory for the business to remain in the borough.

Appendix A: 77 Employment Areas proposed in the Wigan Borough Local Plan

Policy ref:	Name	Site area (Ha)	Land available (Ha)	
			With PP	Without PP
Abram				
J2.01	Bolton House Road	2.05	-	-
J2.02	Junction Works, Bickershaw Lane	2.36	-	-
J2.03	Moss Street, Warrington Road	0.66	-	-
Ashton-in-Makerfield				
J2.04	Haslemere Land Gate, Park Lane	10.63	-	-
J2.05	Oak Street / Wigan Rd, Bryn	0.80	-	-
J2.06	Park Brook, Wigan Road	3.11	-	-
J2.07	South Lancashire Industrial Estate	90.62	23.83	11.77
J2.08	Armoury Bank	0.48	-	-
Astley				
J2.09	Chaddock Lane	36.36	13.87	-
J2.10	Dam House, Astley Hall Drive	0.46	-	-
J2.11	Lower Green Lane	5.47	-	-
J2.12	Peel Lane, Higher Green	0.85	-	-
Atherton				
J2.13	Bolton Road	5.86	-	-
J2.14	Chanters Industrial Estate	14.62	-	-
J2.15	Collier Brook and Ena Mill	1.95	-	-
J2.16	Gibfield	24.80	-	0.81
J2.17	Mill Street	0.74	-	-
Golborne				
J2.18	Ashton Road	6.52	-	-
J2.19	Bridge Street	7.26	-	-
J2.20	Golborne Enterprise Park	3.23	-	-
J2.21	Harvey Court and Bank Street	4.67	-	-
J2.22	Stone Cross Park	30.88	-	-
J2.23	Tanner's Lane	0.64	-	-
J2.24	Wigan Road	1.12	-	-

Hindley				
J2.25	Darby Lane	1.28	-	-
J2.26	Greenbank Industrial Estate, Atherton Road	1.68	-	-
J2.27	Hindley Business Centre, Platt Lane	2.02	-	-
J2.28	Swan Lane	26.71	-	0.83
J2.29	West of Leigh Road	56.36	4.98	-
Ince				
J2.30	Cemetery Road	6.73	-	-
J2.31	Dobson Park Industrial Estate	13.75	-	-
J2.32	Makerfield Way	27.84	-	1.69
J2.33	Moat House Street	1.48	0.1	-
J2.34	Richard Street	4.47	-	-
J2.35	Rose Bridge	8.78	-	-
J2.36	Seaman Way	1.68	-	-
J2.37	Warrington Road	1.10	-	-
Leigh				
J2.38	Brewery Lane	0.76	-	-
J2.39	Bridgewater Business Park	5.52	-	-
J2.40	English Street	1.71	-	-
J2.41	Firsdale Industrial Estate	2.99	-	-
J2.42	Hope Carr Leigh Commerce Park	36.45	-	-
J2.43	Kiribati Way and Kirkhall Lane	7.06	-	-
J2.44	Leigh Road	2.07	-	-
J2.45	Manchester Road, Bedford	1.19	-	-
J2.46	Mather Lane	0.72	-	-
J2.47	Platt Fold Street	3.11	-	-
J2.48	Westleigh Lane	0.80	-	-
Lowton				
J2.49	Moss Industrial Estate	19.46	0.36	-
J2.50	Newton Road	7.10	-	-

Orrell				
J2.51	Crows Nest Business Park, Windy Arbour	0.78	-	-
J2.52	Hewitt Business Park, Winstanley Road	1.18	-	-
Shevington				
J2.53	Finch Mill Farm, Miles Lane	0.43	-	-
Standish				
J2.54	Bradley Lane	23.32	-	-
J2.55	Mayflower Industrial Estate	0.90	-	-
Tyldesley				
J2.56	Mort Lane	1.77	-	-
J2.57	Parr Brow	1.79	-	-
Wigan				
J2.58	Chapel Lane	7.50	-	-
J2.59	Gidlow Lane (North)	6.70	-	-
J2.60	Kirkless Industrial Estate, New Springs	18.01	-	-
J2.61	Lamberhead Industrial Estate	16.71	1.92	-
J2.62	Leigh Street, Scholes	0.43	-	-
J2.63	Martland Park and Heinz	92.92	-	3.73
J2.64	Pioneer Industrial Estate, Pemberton	0.43	-	-
J2.65	Prescott Street	1.11	-	-
J2.66	Richmond Hill Industrial Estate	2.54	-	-
J2.67	Smithy Court and Beecham Court	2.39	-	-
J2.68	Springfield and Miry Lane	25.29	-	-
J2.69	Valley Gate, Leyland Mill Lane	0.49	-	-
J2.70	Wallgate	12.56	-	-
J2.71	Warrington Lane	2.56	0.29	-
J2.72	Warrington Road, Hawkley	13.55	3.90	0.59
J2.73	Warrington Road Industrial Estate	8.34	-	-
J2.74	Westwood Park Drive	10.04	-	-

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J2.75	Wheatlea Industrial Estate	20.46	-	-
J2.76	Wigan Pier Business Park	5.52	-	-
J2.77	Woodhouse Drive	1.21	-	-

Appendix B: Breakdown of Employment Land lost to higher value uses across Wigan Borough since 2012/13

Year implemented	Site ref:	Planning ref:	Site Name	New use	Previous use	Emp. land lost (ha)	Assumed Plot Ratio 1Ha : 3,500sq.m	Contribution of £5/ sqm (£)	VOA Land values report 2019 - £500,000/ha in Wigan
Loss of employment units/ premises									
2014/15	EM1A 04	A/14/79259	Site of former AG Barr Factory, Atherton	Residential	Employment (AG Barr)	6.54	22,890	£114,450	£3,270,000
2016/17	EM1A 24	A/15/80803	Former Household Waste Recycling Centre, Frog Lane, Wigan	Residential	Employment - Former HWRC	1.35	4,725	£23,625	£675,000
2017/18	EM1A 25	A/14/78966	Wigan Newspapers PLC Martland Mill, Wigan	Hotel	Employment	2.54	8,890	£44,450	£1,270,000
2018/19	EM1A 24	A/18/85329	Canal Street, Wigan	Residential	Employment - Betafence	3.36	11,760	£58,800	£1,680,000
2019/20	EM1A 17	A/19/87324	Land At Wigan Enterprise Park, Ince	Residential	Employment - Joy Mining	8.9	31,150	£155,750	£4,450,000
2020/21	EM1A 7	A/09/72812, A/15/80681	Bridgewater Business Park, Leigh	Major redevelopment (Housing led)	Employment	6.78	23,730	£118,650	£3,390,000
2020/21	EM1A 10	A/17/83702	Maxilead Metals, Parr Bridge Works, Mosley Common	Local centre / retail	Employment	2	7,000	£35,000	£1,000,000
2021/22	EM1A 10	A/17/83702	Parr Bridge Works, Mosley Common Road, Tyldesley	Housing	Employment - Worsley Business Park	1.6	5,600	£28,000	£800,000
2021/22	EM1A 24	A/11/75748	Land at Frog Lane / Field Street, Wigan	Housing	Employment	1.73	6,055	£30,275	£865,000
2022/23	EM1A 27	A/21/90730	Bradley Hall Industrial Estate. Standish	Housing	Employment	5.61	19,635	£98,175	£2,805,000
2022/23	EM1A.8	A/21/92089/ LUCP	Unit 4 Green Fold Court Green Fold Way Leigh	Class E(g) gymnasium	Employment	0.1	350	£1,750	£50,000
						40.51	141,785	£708,925	

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Year implemented	Site ref:	Planning ref:	Site Name	New use	Previous use	Emp. land lost (ha)	Assumed Plot Ratio 1Ha : 3,500sq.m	Contribution of £5/ sqm (£)	VOA Land values report 2019 - £500,000/ha in Wigan
Loss of designated employment land									
2012/13	EM1A 30	A/11/76138	Pemberton Colliery	Residential	Vacant land	6.96	24,360	£121,800	£3,480,000
2012/13	EM1A 06		Parsonage, Leigh	Residential	Vacant land	1.07	3,745	£18,725	£535,000
2016/17	EM1A 06	A/16/82975	Parsonage, Leigh	Residential	Vacant land	5.29	18,515	£92,575	£2,645,000
2016/17	EM1A 09	A/17/83910	Land at Garrett Lane, Astley	Residential	Vacant land	2.58	9,030	£45,150	£1,290,000
2018/19	EM1A 15	A/14/79838	Vacant Land South Of 147 Alder Lane, Hindley Green	Residential	Vacant land	2.98	10,430	£52,150	£1,490,000
2020/21	EM1A 9	A/19/87155/RM	Land off Garrett Lane (Chaddock Lane East)	Housing	Vacant land	2.95	10,325	£51,625	£1,475,000
2021/22	EM1A 24	A/20/89753	Land at Whitworth Way, Woodhouse Lane, Wigan	Retail (Lidl)	Vacant land	0.58	2,030	£10,150	£290,000
2021/22	EM1A 30	A/21/91969	Former Pemberton Colliery (North)	Housing	Vacant land	10.05	35,175	£175,875	£5,025,000
2023/24	EM1A.17	A/23/95287/MAJOR	Land At Wigan Enterprise Park	Housing (106 houses)	Cleared and vacant land	3.56	12,460	£62,300	£1,780,000
						36.02	126,070	£630,350	
					Total	76.53	267,855	£1,339,275	£38,265,000

Appendix C: Model section 106 wording

An example of section 106 wording for an education contribution, based on May 2026, that could be adapted to support the Economic Development Fund approach.

‘Education contribution’ – the sum of £510,660 (five hundred and ten thousand six hundred and sixty pounds) of which £xx shall be committed to improving XX facilities at X primary school and £YY shall be committed to improving YY facilities in Y secondary in school place planning area A and/or planning area B to accommodate pupils resident at the development.

Appendix D: Case Study - Land adjacent to Bradley Hall Trading Estate, Bradley Lane, Standish

This is an example of the loss of employment land within an existing employment area to a higher value use – housing, where a contribution was made to the improvement of the remaining land and premises in the area. This was agreed through a works improvement plan set out in a section 106 agreement.

A/17/85026/OUTMAJ: Outline planning application for up to 163 dwellings, seeking approval of access (All other matters reserved). The application was approved with conditions on 28 March 2019.

This application established the principle of development for a higher value use, in this case housing, on designated employment land contributing to compensatory improvement to the remaining employment area. This was secured through a works improvement plan that was attached as an annex to the section 106 agreement, dated 27 March 2019.

The works improvement plan included fencing, roofing, cladding, painting, lighting, security measures, entrance barrier, security cabin, landscaping, resurfacing works, electrical works, power and lighting to new yard, new doors and a 5% contingency. The total cost agreed was £511,582.17.

Other items excluded from the funding included demolition and removal costs (including dealing with asbestos and disconnections for water, electricity and gas).

A/21/90730/MAJOR: To construct 155 dwellings, comprising of flats and houses, together with associated access, car parking, drainage and landscaping, Applicant: Homes England & Torus Developments. The application was approved with conditions on 05 Nov 2021.

The planning report on this application recognised that a key issue for the principle of development was the loss of employment land and its replacement by housing. This was acknowledged as having been addressed previously when granted outline planning consent as set out above.

It was reported that approximately £450,000 had been spent by the time this more recent application was determined, on modernising other units within the employment area to bring them up to modern standards and improve the ability for them to be let. No further works were considered necessary.

Appendix E: Model approach - Applying arrangements for shop front grant schemes to the proposed Economic Development Fund

Background and context

Wigan Council has operated shop front grant schemes under various regeneration initiatives including, recently, in Leigh and Ashton-in-Makefield town centres. There are some elements of these processes that could be used for the proposed Economic Development Fund (the Fund).

Both schemes provide some basic information, a checklist and guidance notes (appended below).

In these cases, up to 90% grant funding has been applied, so the applicant whether site owner or business operator has had to contribute the remainder, together with other upfront costs and time as set out below.

In these cases, the opportunity was promoted within area and expressions of interest invited, as the scheme was only available during a limited window as part of a wider regeneration initiative. In our Employment Areas it would be more ad hoc and short notice, although there would be a significant delay between the planning application being received and the section 106 funding becoming available, either on commencement of development or at stage thereafter.

A scoring matrix was used to narrow down potential projects. This would be an appropriate approach where there is more than one project seeking funding.

Candidates were shortlisted and advised of the need to appoint architects and get planning permission (as appropriate). A similar approach would be appropriate at a suitable time, perhaps on receipt of section 106 funding.

There would be certain standards to apply to the funded work, such as qualifications and membership of relevant professional or occupational bodies.

Tenders would need to be obtained from suitable contractors to ensure suitable value.

A full grant application form needed to be submitted together with supporting documents, including a copy of the specification / schedule of works, drawings of the proposed work and the preferred contractor's tender price. Something similar and proportionate would be needed to support the Fund.

A grant agreement and offer must be signed and returned.

The grant holder is then expected to appoint and manage their own contractors but must adhere to the terms and conditions of the grant. Terms and conditions will be needed for the Fund.

Issues identified

Time taken to work through process and working with property owners / businesses who are not used to working within the formal constraints applied by the council's procedures and expectations.

Ashton in Makerfield Town Centre Building Grant Scheme Application Advice Notes

The Ashton-in-Makerfield Town Centre Building Grant Scheme is part of the wider Government Funded Capital Regeneration Programme 'Our Future Ashton'.

The aim of the Grant Scheme is to improve and regenerate Ashton by bringing out the best in the historic environment, to increase the attractiveness and vitality of the town centre. A total fund of up to £500,000 will provide grant to deliver a range of repair and conservation work to retail and other business premises within the Conservation Area, particularly on Gerard Street.

The project was completed in March 2026 with all grant funding expected to have been spent by then.

This guidance has been developed to support property owners and commercial tenants in Ashton, to explain the grant process and how to apply successfully for funding to make improvements to buildings on the high street.

1. Eligible Works for grant funding

Funding is available for conservation-led repairs and improvements to commercial properties located within the priority area. These could include:

- Repairs to existing historic architectural features and decorative details (or reinstatement of details that have been lost where clear evidence exists to inform the historic appearance and details), such as traditional shop fronts, upper floor joinery (including windows, especially sliding sashes, leaded windows, bays, oriels, doors, mock Tudor applied timber details and ornamental barge boards), and terracotta and masonry detailing.

- Removal of overlarge plastic fascias, projecting box signs and external roller-shutters and replacement with sympathetic alternatives, including traditional hand painted signs, hanging signs and traditional fabric awnings. Where appropriate, and with convincing justification, internal security measures may be eligible for grant.
- Other external building repairs which add to the historic character of the area, such as repairs to/reinstatement of lost chimneys, reinstatement of cast iron or timber rainwater goods, leadwork repairs/reinstatement and pointing of masonry.

Works which cannot be funded:

- Complete re-roofing will not normally be eligible for grant. However, minor roof repairs will be considered where there is economic benefit whilst other high-level work is being undertaken at the same time.
- Internal refurbishment and repairs (except where such works are necessary as a consequence of shopfront repair or reinstatement works, to make good the internal fabric, or are necessary for structural stability).
- Work that has already been started.
- Work that does not have the necessary planning consents and other approvals.

2. Who can apply?

You can apply for funding if you are the owner of a property in Ashton Town Centre which is in commercial use, as long as the building / project meets the selection criteria set out below. If you are the tenant of commercial property, you can also apply, as long as you have a repairing lease which is not due to expire before the end of March 2026.

There is no limit to the number of applications that an owner or tenant can make, subject to available funding. Eligibility for grant under this scheme is also conditional upon the grant being designated as Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) under Section 36 of the Subsidy Control Act 2022. In exceptional circumstances, this condition may be removed at the sole discretion of the Council, on a case by case where in the sole opinion of the Council the removal of the condition is in compliance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022.

3. Selection Criteria

The following selection criteria will be used in the assessment of applications, and may be subject to change in exceptional circumstances:

- Location: the property must be in Ashton Town Centre, within the boundary shown on the attached map. Priority will be given to properties within the Ashton-in-Makerfield Conservation Area, particularly those located on the main high street (Gerard Street).
- Conservation quality of the proposals: Will the proposals protect and enhance the character of the Conservation Area to a sufficient degree to warrant funding?
- Environmental sustainability: Does the application involve use of appropriate materials and techniques, in line with national conservation standards and with reference to addressing concerns around climate change and environmental sustainability?
- Modest projects and 'quick wins' where small packages of work can have considerable impact.
- Group impact: Taking into consideration properties in proximity to other grant-funded buildings, which can create a higher impact by adding critical mass.
- Viability: The future use and sustainability of the building if work is carried out; potential to bring vacant space back into use; supporting an existing business that may be struggling (or supporting a new independent business whose enterprise will add to the vitality and new offer of the town).
- Potential to be a catalyst for change and an exemplar for other buildings / owners.
- Condition of the property, with those buildings in the worst state of repair being given priority.
- Quality of the host building, with those of greater architectural merit being prioritised.
- Social Value: Does the project involve consultants and / or contractors who are located within the Borough? Is there a commitment to use local suppliers on the project?
- Value for money – size of grant request – owners' contribution.

4. How much grant could you receive?

- Grant applicants applying in the first round could receive up to 90% funding towards their project.
- Grants over £100,000 would only be awarded in exceptional circumstances.

Note: Grant percentage rates could be subject to change subject to available budget.

5. Application process

The work required before you can submit an application may take several months. It will involve appointing an architect / appropriate lead consultant, preparing drawings/work specification, obtaining priced tenders from building contractors and applying for statutory permissions. Your application will then have to be assessed and approved by the Project Board. You therefore need to allow plenty of time before work starts on site.

Stage 1: Submit an Expression of Interest Form

Following initial discussion with the Consultant Project Manager to explain all aspects of the scheme, including what is eligible for a grant, how the scheme works and its timescales. If appropriate, you will be invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) form. Your proposals will then be reviewed by the Project Manager, who will formally confirm whether your project meets the selection criteria and is eligible for grant funding, enabling you to progress to the next stage.

Stage 2: Appoint a qualified consultant to develop proposals

When you have had formal confirmation that your project can progress to the next stage, you will need to appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced architect or building surveyor to prepare a specification and drawings for the work, obtain statutory consents and manage the tendering process to select an appropriate contractor. Consents include planning permission, listed building consent, advertising consent and building regulations (as applicable).

The consultant must be registered with an appropriate professional body (ARB/RICS) and have relevant previous experience. For work involving historic buildings, conservation expertise is desirable and a conservation accredited architect (either AABC Registered or an RIBA Conservation Architect) or an RICS conservation-accredited surveyor is preferred. Please contact the Consultant Project Manager for a list of consultants who have provided appropriate services in the borough previously.

Professional fees incurred from the date of submission of your Expression of Interest (including the cost of essential survey work and obtaining statutory consents) will be eligible for funding as part of the grant scheme, provided there is compliance with subsidy control. Unfortunately, until you make your full grant application, payment of any fees and associated costs to this stage will be at your own risk - see Section 7.

It is therefore essential that your appointed consultant liaises with the Consultant Project Manager at the earliest opportunity and throughout the design development phase, so that she can help you to develop a successful application and avoid abortive work.

Stage 3: Obtain tenders from suitable contractors

We encourage the use of local contractors and sub-contractors provided they have proven skills in working with historic buildings. We may require evidence to be supplied to confirm these skills. The Consultant Project Manager is able to provide a list of companies who have performed well on similar projects previously. You must seek three written quotations, based on clear written specifications, covering all grant eligible works.

Stage 4: Submit a full grant application form

The completed application form should be submitted with supporting documents, including a copy of the specification/schedule of works, drawings of the proposed works and the preferred contractor's tender price – see checklist. Your grant will be based on your contractor's price for the works that are eligible for grant. (The project may also include works that are not eligible for grant.) The Consultant Project Manager can help with completing the application form and advise on the accompanying documentation.

Stage 5: Decision making

Grant decisions will normally be made within four weeks of the round deadline. Once the application is received, it will be assessed against the criteria, appraised by the Consultant Project Manager and colleagues from Creative Heritage Consultants Ltd and Wigan Council Officers, and presented to the Project Board with recommendations for consideration. (The Project Board will consist of senior officers from the Wigan Council Regeneration team.) Short listed projects will then be presented to the Ashton Innovation Board for discussion prior to the Project Board making final grant decisions. No work may be started until written approval is given, or you will not be eligible for grant.

Stage 6: Grant Award and Offer

Following approval from the Project Board you will receive a Grant Offer letter and Agreement, which must be signed and returned to the Consultant Project Manager. The offer of grant must be accepted in writing within one month of issue and the grant spent by 31 March 2026, unless otherwise agreed in writing. Other clauses will include a commitment to an ongoing Maintenance Plan, to protect the investment that is being made in the property. Request a copy of the full grant application form and standard Grant Offer Conditions for more

information. Note however that the Council reserves the right to amend these conditions in exceptional circumstances.

6. Timescales for applications

Grants will not be offered for work that has already begun and cannot be awarded for works that do not have the relevant approvals such as planning permission, advertising consent or listed building. It is vital that applicants plan ahead when preparing applications and allow enough time for submitting supporting documents and obtaining any necessary consents. Expressions of Interest can be submitted at any time. Full applications must be submitted by the following dates:

- Round 1 deadline: 30 June 2024
- Round 2 deadline: Spring 2025 (date to be confirmed; a second round will only take place if there are sufficient grant funds remaining)

All projects must be completed and all grant funding claimed by end March 2026.

7. Grant Payments

Pre-contract costs - Before the grant is approved and the Grant Agreement is signed, all initial project costs are at the grant applicant's risk. These pre-contract costs, such as architect's fees, survey costs and planning application fees, must initially be paid by the applicant. If these project costs are deemed eligible for grant funding and the project proceeds, a grant towards these fees will be paid after the Offer Letter and Grant Agreement has been accepted and signed. If the project does not proceed, a grant will not be given for any of these costs.

Costs of eligible works - The grant is claimed against invoices, in arrears. (See separate Checklist of documentation to be provided at each stage of your project.) You or your consultant will need to provide the Consultant Project Manager with relevant invoices for professional fees, surveys and building work, supported by architect's certificates to confirm that work has been undertaken in accordance with the specification and to an appropriate standard. Grant will not be paid for work that does not meet generally accepted standards of quality and accuracy in materials and/or workmanship. Work should be completed by the approved contractor and sub-contractors as per the agreed schedule of works, plans and drawings. Interim claims can be made as the work progresses on site, with second and subsequent claims being supported by evidence that payments of prior claim invoices have been made to the contractors etc.

Where interim claims are made, each will be paid in full (subject to the provision of the supporting documentation required), until 90% of the

grant has been reached. Where claims for the full amount of the grant or interim claims are submitted, payment of the final 10% of the grant will be withheld until the Consultant Project Manager is satisfied that all works have been completed to the required standard. A completion report from the applicant's lead consultant and a maintenance plan will be required for projects where the grant exceeds £10,000, before the final grant payment will be made.

Appendix F: Case Study (Anonymised) of Business Relocation out of Wigan Borough

Business Overview

The business is a long-established, high-growth manufacturing company that was based in Leigh, in Wigan Borough, operating within the construction sector. The company manufactures specialist products for commercial and residential markets and has experienced significant growth over a number of years, investing heavily in new technology, production facilities and employment. At the time of expansion planning, the business employed around 90 staff and had ambitions for substantial growth, including the development of new product lines and a large-scale manufacturing capacity.

Main challenges in identifying suitable manufacturing premises

The business faced a number of significant challenges in securing manufacturing premises capable of supporting its long-term growth ambitions within Wigan Borough:

- Requirement for a very large manufacturing facility: As the company expanded, it required substantially larger premises to accommodate new production lines, additional storage, logistical operations and future growth plans. By 2024/25, the requirement had increased to approximately 300,000–420,000 sq. ft of industrial space.
- Limited availability of suitable sites within Wigan Borough: Despite engagement with Wigan Council, MIDAS (now Invest Manchester) and other partners, there were very few immediately available sites capable of accommodating the scale of the company's expansion requirements. A number of options were explored, including existing employment sites and potential future development opportunities, but no suitable short-term solution was identified.
- Timescale pressures: The business needed additional capacity within a relatively short timeframe to support continued growth and investment plans. Although some potential employment sites were identified through emerging local plan opportunities, these were not available quickly enough to meet operational requirements.
- Operational constraints at the existing site: The preferred option of the business was initially to remain and expand at, or around, its existing location. However, site-related constraints, including access and traffic management concerns, limited the attractiveness of further expansion on the current site.

- Competition from alternative locations: The business indicated that neighbouring authorities were actively promoting available industrial sites and discussing potential support packages, including financial assistance and business rates incentives, making alternative locations increasingly attractive.

Impact on location decision

The lack of immediately available, appropriately sized industrial premises within Wigan Borough was a key factor in the company's decision to relocate. While the business explored several options and expressed a preference to remain within the borough, a suitable site of the required scale was ultimately unavailable.

A major industrial opportunity outside the borough offered the business the ability to secure approximately 420,000 sq. ft of manufacturing space on a single site, supporting its planned expansion, future product development and long-term operational requirements. The availability of this facility, combined with the ability to accommodate significant future growth, resulted in the company proceeding with relocation outside Wigan Borough. The business has been able to retain its workforce (which was a key consideration).