

Lowton East Neighbourhood Development Forum (LENDF)

Contact Email Address: lendf99@gmail.com

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 9 June 2025 at Lowton Social Club

PRESENT:

Chair	Prof. Graham Wardle (GW)
Secretary	Liz Brown (LB)
Minutes Secretary	Minutes taken on this occasion by Liz Parsons (thank-you!)

Councillor	Garry Lloyd (GL)
Councillor	Jenny Gregory (JG)

Apologies:

Councillor Mike Smith
LENDF Treasurer Irene Thomson
LENDF Social Secretary Kath Houlton
LHSRG Secretary Gill Dickenson

No. of attendees = 20

1. Welcome and previous minutes

Minutes not read out at meeting, but copies have been sent out by email and posted on the Facebook page and will be put on the LENDF website in due course.

New visitors and guests were welcomed to the meeting.

2. Wigan Draft Local Plan (*Presentation by LB*)

a) What is it?

It is a 158 page document based on part of the 'Places for everyone' document and authored by Wigan Borough Council. It sums up planned changes to the Borough in next 15 years. *About 10-20 pages of it refers to our local area.* The council have asked for residents comments by midnight on the 24 June 2025. It is important that you comment on all the sections where you feel strongly positive or strongly negative. And there are some positives, for example their ambition to try to direct builders to build more starter homes and build downsize homes for empty nesters. Looking at the comments the council have had from builders at their last public consultation, the builders really, really want to build big 4/5 bedroomed houses on green field sites as it maximises builders profit margins. If you have some spare time on your hands then skimming through this document shows the pressure councils are under from the building lobby! This also proves lots of residents need to put in their two penneth worth into the current consultation to balance things up!
<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Council/Consultations/Future-plan/Consultation-Report.pdf>

The negative side of the local council plan lies in changing two substantial greenfield agricultural sites in/close to Lowton into industrial parks. **The council justify these decisions by saying Wigan Borough need more industrial units of a larger size** (2000-5000m2 floor space units) to attract larger manufacturing and logistical (haulage) businesses. This was one of the conclusions reached by *The Wigan Economic Market and Employment Land Assessment 2024* (EMELA) document. It stated 'Additional high quality accessible and readily available employment land is needed'. Please note the word **accessible**, as this is our key to comment why larger businesses, that require a jam free road infrastructure, should **not** be placed in/near Lowton!

Page 47 of the Wigan Local Plan gives all the land they have potentially ring fenced (safe guarded) for industrial use in the next 15 years in the Wigan borough. Poor little Lowton appears 3 times as Aspull Common is actually partly in Lowton !!

Areas mentioned in the Plan (P47)

The resulting amount of land identified for employment floorspace (almost 997,100sqm) is greater than the net requirement of 647,211sqm of employment floorspace.

This is in case the land is used for something else, not available at present or becomes not appropriate.

Eg Part of Pocket Nook is now allocated to houses but there might be more job floorspace there once safe guarded land becomes available.

Policy ref:	Site name	Floorspace (sqm)
Places for Everyone site allocations		
JPA31	M6 Junction 25, Wigan	140,000
JPA33	Pocket Nook, Lowton	15,000
JPA34	West of Gibfield, Atherton	45,500
Local Plan employment allocations		
J3	Land north of M6 Junction 26, Wigan	150,000
J4	Moss Industrial Estate Extension, Aspull Common	45,000
J5	Bridgewater West, Astley	50,000
J6	Land West of Winwick Lane, Lowton	300,000
Local Plan mixed use allocations		
H6	East of Atherton	25,500
H8	Westwood Park	16,800
Remaining employment land within Employment Areas in the Local Plan		
	South Lancashire Industrial Estate Extension	119,000
	Chaddock Lane	33,000
	Other	57,300
TOTAL		997,100

Figure 6.1: Breakdown of the employment land supply in Wigan Borough

Pocket Nook is still reeling from house building and the land they want to build on next isn't available as the farmer won't sell, so this is why it hasn't got a specific mention in this Local plan. However, in the next 15 years the council have their eye on extending Moss Industrial Estate and the Land West of Winwick Lane Lowton (AKA Parkside East) A council review of ring fenced land happens every 5 years.

Both planned industrial sites below rely on greenbelt being turned into grey belt by the council – they need to follow the '**Green Belt Golden Rules**' ensuring it is approached in a thoughtful and sustainable manner. More information <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/green-belt> can be found here. The traffic generated by both sites is not sustainable !!

b) Moss industrial Estate Extension (Page 55 – 57 of Local Plan)

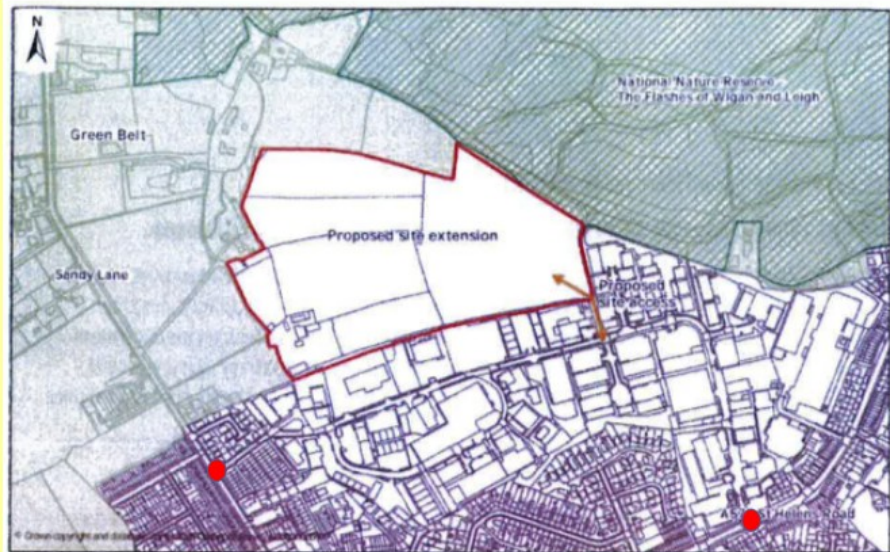
See next page →

Moss Industrial Estate Extension

Access is via Walter Leigh Way as shown by the 2 red dots into St Helens Rd and Sandy Lane

Increasing in size by 50% as indicated by the red outline

There are currently no weight restrictions on Sandy Lane



Proposed business uses are Manufacturing, distribution, construction and health and social care sectors on larger units. Most of these businesses require lots of HGVs access to the A580 East Lancashire Road. The extension area is 10.8 ha = 108000 m² at the back of the current Industrial Estate built on Greenbelt

Issues:

- *Access points* - narrow Sandy Lane with tight corners, busy Newton Rd/St Helens Rd passes 4 busy schools. This does not fulfil the brief of easy access to the A580. Please comment that Sandy Lane must not be used by large vehicles. Comment on safety issues at the start and end of the school day too.
- Poorly serviced by public transport (610 the only regular bus), no cycle path. This means it's unlikely that active travel will make any difference to increased traffic volumes and of course have no impact on HGV numbers.
- The land is currently greenbelt – in the plan the council say they will scrape off the soil so it must be good quality arable land!
- Who owns the land, they may not want to sell? Selling good quality farm land for industrial use is depleting locally grown food sources and destroying Lowton's heritage as a farming community.
- There are already 4 vacant units on the website for smaller businesses (largest max 480 m²) – smaller businesses are more suited to this residential location
<https://mossindustrialestate.co.uk/>
- The extended Industrial Estate will continue to box in the National Nature Reserve at Pennington Flash – leaving water run off problems, light pollution and less green corridor for wildlife movement between pockets of their habitat. We have already seen larger mammals such as deer on our roads, and we won't even notice as many smaller animals and insects will be squashed by our cars. The council have already allowed new housing on the other side of the canal (West Leigh waterfront) so this green corridor to the Flash has already been closed off.
- Gill Turner (thank-you) has posted a large number of A4 posters to residents about these plans in the local area as the council have done close to the minimum required to advertise

these proposed changes. Unfortunately as the council have fulfilled their advertising brief it is pointless to comment on this.

- This is one of the councils objectives for this extension, please comment on how the health of residents will **not** improve!

10. Clearly demonstrate how it will deliver social responsibility benefits in the locality that is hosting the development within Wigan Borough, in support of the borough's community health and wealth building ambitions.

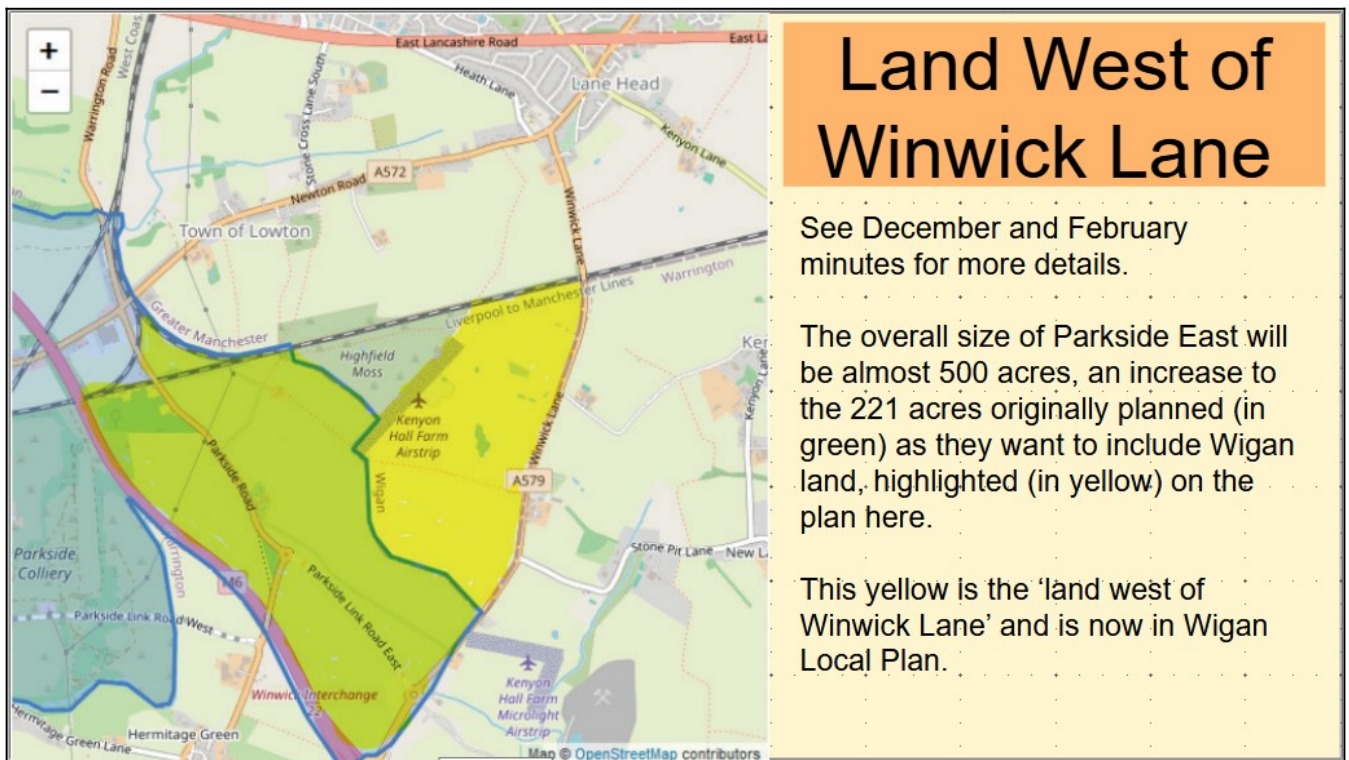
- Please see later in the minutes for ways to comment to the Council by 24th June

c) Land West of Winwick Lane, Lowton (Page 60 – 63 of Local Plan)

Proposed business uses (AKA Parkside East, Tritax Bigbox) Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI), distribution sectors. The very large site links into the A580 East Lancashire Road potentially via Winwick Lane or Newton Rd, the M6 J22 and the link road to the A49 that St Helens might weight limit! Extension Area: Wigan area is 300,000 m2 of floor space. See map on next page and previous LENDF minutes for a full sorry back story!

Issues:

- **Access points** – Winwick Lane goes to J22 on the M6 or to the A580 via Lane Head.
History: there is already existing long term illegal air pollution at Lane Head. *Warrington is blocking* putting a weight limit on the Lane heading towards Lane Head, but have weight limited all their roads. Wigan are refusing to weight limit Newton Road. Comments please about the 3 councils working poorly together, they are not spreading the very large volume of new traffic fairly between their roads, this must be addresses or the project needs to be cancelled. Also J22 on the M6 will become very congested especially going north bound, as it is very close to the previous junction. Warrington council are also thinking of putting a large biomass plant just off J22 requiring more HGV access. Please comment that traffic access to the A580 is currently stationary at peak times and this large site will make it far worse. A bypass is the only solution – see next point.
- **Please, please comment on Point 6.93 – Bypass for Lane Head** – from A580 to Winwick Lane. *Warrington council are actively preventing* the extension of Atherleigh Way so Wigan have stated the bypass will be on Wigan land. This means creating an extra junction on the A580 between the end of the Atherleigh Way and Lane Head. Please comment that the bypass **MUST** be completed **first** before SRFI goes ahead, this is the **ONLY** way to prevent gridlock for HGV traffic (and the many other cars *passing through* the heart of old Lowton) It was noted that no plan or costings have yet been done :(
- No public transport, no cycle path, no footpath at present down Winwick Lane. Comment that we need a footbridge with bike ramp at the side of Dolly's Bridge and foot/cycle access to the A580 cycle path. Agree that we need frequent public transport from Lowton to Warrington along Winwick Lane and to Newton via the link road, perhaps tying in with the train stations.
- The land is currently greenbelt and is good arable land – owned by the farming community. Comment that selling good quality farm land for industrial use is depleting locally grown food sources and destroying Lowton's heritage as a farming community.
- The Highfield Moss SSSI will be completely boxed in. This plan is signing the site's death warrant. No more green corridor, the water table for the moss wont cope, excess light pollution.
- Many jobs will be relocated from FreightLiner in Manchester – staff commuting down the A580! So there will be far fewer local new jobs than are promised on the plan.
- The first two phases of Parkside were on the brown field site of the old colliery. This third phase, on good arable green belt land, is a very different issue.



(There has been a success story in Hinckley, Leicestershire – an SRFI was actually refused planning permission by the Government. However their Council were also against it.)

d) New Housing in Lowton (Lowton isn't mentioned in the Local Plan)

There are not any significant plans to put more houses in Lowton in the next 15 years as we are still reeling from all the new houses put up in the last 5/10 years. It has been extremely sad to see our tenant farmers forced out of their homes and historical houses torn down. In this section of the plan we can comment in a positive way about starter homes and homes where we can downsize.

e) Where to comment on the Local Plan by Tuesday 24th June before midnight

You can comment in one of three ways:

You can comment **on-line** and click the consultation portal link, read the instructions before clicking the blue 'Submit comments here' button

<https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Consultations/Future-plan/Planning-for-the-Future-to-2040.aspx>

You will have to fill in your details when submitting your first comment. Write each comment on the appropriate section. The information about the two industrial sites are under **Jobs** section 6. Scroll down until you see the relevant heading and enter your comment.

Comments are also welcome by e-mail or in writing, people must include their name and email address, and ideally their home address (including postcode). Please also specify clearly the policy or site that comments relate to, in each case if there is more than one.

- **Email:** planningpolicy@wigan.gov.uk
- **Post:** FAO Strategic Planning, Wigan Council, Wigan Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1YN.

3. Councillors Business

Our local councillors are strongly in favour of the Lowton Bypass and would prefer the better one that is the extension of Atherleigh Way through Warrington land. This extension of

Atherleigh Way was supposed to happen when Atherleigh Way was originally built. They also don't want the two industrial sites built.

The councillors have written to Andy Burham about extending the hours of the 34 bus route beyond 6:15 pm. Currently you are left stranded at Newton Station beyond this time. They have also asked him about a direct bus route to Warrington.

Garry has said that a land owner in Lowton has been approached about building a prison on his land although the land owner is not willing to sell. Garry has asked Jo Platt to find out more details from the Secretary of State.

4. **Oaklands Park Official Opening Event – Sunday 31st August 1pm – 5pm**

Please put this date in your diary.

An opening event was part of Kompan's bid to the Council when the park was refurbished and LENDF were given the responsibility to organise it! We decided the Oaklands park event should be more than a red ribbon cutting exercise and target children and adolescents, showcasing what is available for them in the local area. We hope it will bring the local community closer together

Main partners: Lowton Social Club, Lowton Community Hub, Leigh East Junior Football club as all are within walking distance of the park, Lowton High School

Other possible clubs/youth organisations to contact : Leigh Leopards, Leigh Youth Hub, Gemstone Dance, Golborne Morris Dance, Fire Brigade, Scouts/Guides, Leigh Sports Centre, other local sports/youth organisations, Junior Schools, Pennington Park – bowling and tennis, LOADS (Lowton Operatic And Dramatic Society), local radio station.

We can't do this without LOTS of volunteers! Help needed for:

- Organisation before hand
- People to help on the day
- Donations for the tombola
- And for other things we haven't even thought of yet!!

Please contact us if you can help.

5. **AOB**

- a) **Braithwaite noticeboard** – the lock will have to be changed – you couldn't make this up!
- b) **Left hand turn off the A580** at Lane Head – been told work will be in the summer holidays but no word from the Council so far
- c) No time for traffic issues
- d) We were invited to go upstairs after the meeting and look at **the new darts room**. It is very nice with all the most modern equipment! The Social Club are working with an experienced darts club in St Helens to make sure equipment and the club structure is effective. There has been a lot of interest in the club already and it is open to all age groups..
- e) **Community Day**: Broadmead Day Centre, Golborne Road Sunday 28th June 10am-2pm. See attached poster.

**Next meeting, please come and join us:
Monday 11 August 2025 at 7:30pm at Lowton Social Club**