

Astmoor

Regeneration Masterplan

Final Report REV A
August 2020

This masterplan report has been prepared by a consultant team composed of BDP, JLL, Curtins and Ekosgen
on behalf of Halton Borough Council and Astmoor Business Improvement District (BID)

BDP.

 **JLL**

 **curtins**

 **ekosgen**

Contents

1. The Opportunity

1.1 Introducing Astmoor	6
1.2 Masterplan Purpose	7
1.3 Issues & Opportunities	8
1.4 Vision & Objectives	11

2. The Masterplan

2.1 Key Design Moves	14
2.2 Illustrative Masterplan	16
2.3 Development & Investment Opportunities	18
2.4 Placemaking, Connectivity & Movement	20
2.5 Inclusive Growth	26

3. Design Guidance

3.1 Design Principles	30
3.2 Concept Statements	32

4. Delivery

4.1 Summary	44
4.2 Delivery Options	45
4.3 Delivery Considerations	46

Welcome to
ASTMOOR

1. The Opportunity

1.1 Introducing Astmoor

Astmoor is a major dedicated employment area, one of the largest in the Liverpool City Region, located to the northeast of Runcorn. It caters primarily for manufacturing and distribution businesses and currently provides in excess of 2.3 million square feet of business accommodation.

Almost 11 hectares of development land is now available, in addition to opportunities to reconfigure and enhance existing accommodation on the estate. This has the underlying capacity to support the growth of existing businesses and attract new investment.

Astmoor can be a driver of local prosperity with the potential to support the creation of approximately 950 (full time equivalent) new jobs and safeguarding many more.

In October 2017 the Mersey Gateway Bridge opened to traffic. The Mersey Gateway project has created a new strategic transport route linking the Liverpool city-region and the northwest to the rest of the UK. It crosses Astmoor Industrial Estate on elevated piers and was made possible through the acquisition and clearance of a central area of Astmoor.

The Mersey Gateway has enhanced the prominence and connectivity of Astmoor and provides the catalyst for intervention. Astmoor is identified in the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy as one of eight regeneration 'Impact Areas' linked to the Mersey Gateway Project. These areas will be prioritised for investment and development in the Borough over the next ten to fifteen years.

Land that was assembled to allow for the construction of the bridge is soon to be handed back to the Council and this provides the opportunity to directly influence the delivery of new high quality employment space for existing and new employers. The ambition is for Astmoor to provide a modern and vibrant employment location that meets the needs of existing businesses and attracts new investment.

Key businesses in Astmoor

Business	Size (ft ²)	Sector
Howdens Joinery	452,185	UK's largest manufacturer and designer of fitted kitchens and joinery services.
Kawneer UK Ltd	168,000	One of the UK's leading manufacturers and suppliers of architectural aluminum services.
NHS Supplies (NW division)	131,960	National provider working to deliver procurement efficiencies.
Thompson & Capper	108,653	Manufacturer of pharmaceutical products.
Ventcroft Ltd	108,000	Independent UK manufacturer of fire cable and security alarm cables.
Kuehne & Nagel Drinkflow	107,112	Leading global provider of innovative and fully integrated supply chain solutions.
AB Storage	87,000	Commercial business storage
AAK Food Division	82,866	Development, production and application of edible oils and fats for the food manufacturing and baking industries.
Pharmaserve (North West)	68,700	Development and manufacture of respiratory medicines.
Kerry Ingredients	55,040	Manufacture of food flavourings.
Alma Products Ltd	51,477	Manufacturer and developer of packaging for the food industry.

1.2 Masterplan Purpose

Astmoor Industrial Estate was created over 50 years ago, planned and delivered as part of Runcorn New Town. It remains a significant employment area with a particular emphasis on manufacturing and is home to a number of important local employers. However Astmoor is not realising its full potential. Some of the building stock is dated and the overall appearance of the Estate impacts negatively on the perception of Astmoor as a successful business and investment location.

Halton Borough Council is committed to the regeneration of Astmoor and this masterplan is an integral part of the visioning and marketing of the Estate. The masterplan outlines the development opportunities that can be realised as well as a package of physical and non-physical interventions, aimed at enhancing business confidence and investment.

An accompanying delivery strategy has also been produced that will guide a programme of investment over the next five years. The delivery strategy defines a programme for implementation and governance, including prioritising masterplan projects and actions, and identifying roles and responsibilities for delivery.

Developed in collaboration with local stakeholders, the masterplan and delivery strategy provides a transformational shared vision to secure the long-term future and prosperity of Astmoor as a 'stand out' business location.

This document outlines:

- 1. The Opportunity** - the case for intervention.
- 2. The Masterplan** - the masterplan and its main thematic components: Development & Investment Opportunities, Placemaking, Connectivity & Movement, and Inclusive Growth.
- 3. Design Guidance** - how good design should be delivered through the masterplan, including general principles and specific guidance for sites.
- 4. Delivery** - an overview of how the masterplan will be delivered.



1.3 Issues & Opportunities

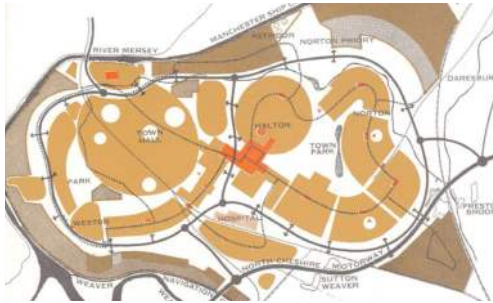
Astmoor is well located and prominently positioned on the approach to the Mersey Gateway Bridge. The new bridge has significantly repositioned the approach to the Liverpool City Region and Astmoor is well placed to benefit from the enhanced connectivity it brings. The Estate is easily accessible from the national road network via the Bridgewater, Daresbury and Central Expressways, which provide access to the M56 and M6, as well as northern links to the M62 and beyond via the Mersey Gateway itself.

Astmoor was planned as an industrial estate over 50 years ago. Today there are over 160 individual units ranging in scale from less than 1,000 ft² to over 450,000 ft². The estate is home to a range of businesses from manufacturers of curry sauces to fitted kitchens, wire mesh to curtain wall systems.

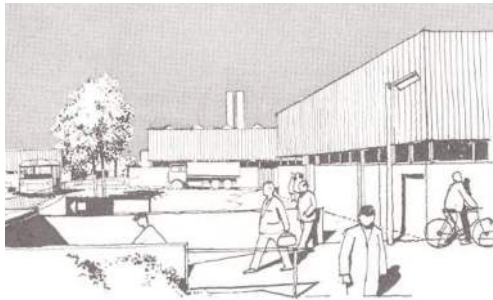
There has been a Business Improvement District (BID) active on the Estate since 2008 and the BID entered a third term in 2018. The BID provides a collective voice for the business community and has delivered a number of positive initiatives based around security, image enhancement and training and skills programmes.



The location and setting of Astmoor



Runcorn New Town Masterplan



Astmoor as intended



Parts of Astmoor today

Runcorn New Town was planned in the 1960s and Astmoor follows many of the principles of the 1968 New Town masterplan. This includes the integration of the Busway as a major structuring element of the Estate and the principle of pedestrian and vehicular segregation, which aimed to create safe walking routes away from heavy vehicles. Whilst well intentioned, there have been some issues related to this approach:

- Building plots are exposed to isolated areas of public realm, which has made them less easy to secure;
- Many businesses have boarded up windows and entrances where they back onto public footpaths, which has reduced natural surveillance;
- With reduced natural surveillance and no passing surveillance from vehicles, the pedestrian greenways feel deserted and foreboding;
- Because there is limited provision for pedestrians on the estate roads, highway safety is compromised; and
- The lack of visible free flowing pedestrian movement makes the Estate overall feel lifeless.

In addition to these layout issues, some of the older properties in the east of the Estate suffer from a number of common design issues:

- Segregation of pedestrian and vehicular access - gives units a 'back to front' appearance;
- Low eaves heights - limited eaves heights of approx. 3.8m make the units less attractive for rental purposes;
- Small forecourt areas – the proportion of outside hardstanding space relative to each unit is lower than modern day expectations, which results in occupiers colonising public space for private storage; and
- Car parking areas – surface car parks envisaged as part of the original New town masterplan have been reallocated for other uses, putting pressure on forecourt areas and public roads.

The dated design and degraded physical appearance of Astmoor, also evident in the poor first impressions created by the uninspiring Astmoor Road, has had a negative impact on private sector investment. Units have become less attractive for rental purposes and owners have consequently been reluctant to invest. Despite having development potential there has been little significant investment and development activity in Astmoor over the past two decades.

With the Mersey Gateway now complete and a large portfolio of new development land coming into Council ownership there is a

significant opportunity to transform Astmoor into a modern business park. By utilising vacant land and remodelling the Estate, Astmoor can make a significant contribution to the Borough's employment land supply, securing the beneficial use of brownfield land to create new job opportunities on the doorstep of some of Halton's most deprived communities.

In addition, building on the game changing opportunities brought about by the opening of the Mersey Gateway for strategic traffic the de-linking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge offers a unique and compelling opportunity to revitalise the Runcorn Station Quarter and Runcorn Old Town to the west of Astmoor.

An initial focus on public realm at the station will lay the ground work for a vibrant and functional gateway into Runcorn, which will reset perceptions of the area providing a memorable gateway for future visitors. The delivery of a new transport hub will enable greater ease of movement for local residents, commuters and visitors. The benefits of an improved station extend not only to Runcorn and Halton but to the wider Liverpool City Region. Runcorn Old Town has a unique character with a diverse and active community and a strong independent retail offer. The vision for the area acknowledges its future role as a high quality residential, commercial and visitor destination.



Artist's impression of Astmoor

1.4 Vision & Objectives

“To transform Astmoor Industrial Estate, to create a modern, business park environment to enable it to prosper to meet existing business needs and create new employment development opportunities.

Astmoor will provide an attractive and distinctive location within the Liverpool City Region where a strong business community will thrive.”

1. **A high profile, connected Estate.**
The prominence of the estate to the Mersey Gateway Bridge will be harnessed to improve perceptions of Astmoor as a well-connected modern business park and gateway location to the Liverpool City Region. Opportunities for remodelling and restructuring the layout will be used to improve local and internal connectivity.
2. **An Estate that meets the demands of modern business.**
The land due to be handed back to the council, vacant sites, and existing outdated buildings hold significant development potential. The masterplan will identify a range of appropriate development opportunities to expand and enhance Astmoor’s offer to existing and incoming businesses.
3. **A safe and attractive Estate.**
The regeneration programme presents a one-off opportunity to address the problems related to its outdated layout and tired appearance. New development and environmental works will redefine the look and feel of Astmoor and will project a positive and distinctive sense of place.
4. **Business led and inclusive growth.**
Investment in Astmoor should encourage and promote the benefits of an integrated and inclusive approach between business growth and local job creation. This will include local training, work experience, work placements, skills and apprenticeship opportunities, as well as initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of employees.
5. **An Estate with a strong business community.**
Capitalising on the success of the BID, the regeneration of Astmoor will be delivered in partnership with those who will benefit from a growing and successful estate; the existing businesses and landowners. The capacity of the local business community will be built up so it can contribute to the regeneration of the estate.



2. Masterplan Proposals

2.1 Key Design Moves



1. Enhance first impressions

The environmental upgrade of Astmoor Road to a 'boulevard' is a simple, bold move designed to create a clear and enhanced identity for Astmoor, and a safer, more walkable estate.

The concept relies on the potential to narrow the currently excessive carriageway and assign greater provision for pedestrians and high quality landscape. Given the recent installation of new cycleways and footpaths on the busway, however, careful consideration should be given to the long term functionality of the road and whether a demand for additional provision for cyclists and pedestrians exists.



2. Form a setting for investment

Astmoor Boulevard forms a structuring element of the masterplan, providing an improved setting in which to emphasise many of the available development investment opportunities on the estate.

The aim is to create certainty over the Council's commitment to quality and to positively influence the development of adjacent plots in addition to the handback land alongside the Mersey Gateway.

New roadside frontages will contribute to an enhanced image of Astmoor, providing overlooking, animation and design interest.



3. Create landmarks and hubs

In order to provide enhanced on site facilities and to positively contribute to the development of the Astmoor business and social community, two locations are identified as potential 'hubs' where ancillary and complementary uses will be encouraged subject to compatibility with the Development Plan.

The form of these hubs will be commercially driven, but there is scope to include retail, food and drink, a gym and / or a nursery. It may even extend to some form of business centre that includes meeting / conferencing space. The function and strategic location of these hubs on Astmoor Road also offers the opportunity to create distinctive landmark architecture.



4. Make Astmoor pedestrian friendly

The successful interaction between businesses and individuals can be amplified by a public realm that encourages people to walk, as well as inhabit the spaces between buildings.

In order to achieve these qualities, the existing network of estate roads and pedestrian greenways will be upgraded. This will include, in addition to improvements to Astmoor Road and the busway, new pedestrian routes on some estate roads and works to the greenways.

The network will be supplemented by new pedestrian crossing points on Astmoor Road.



5. Modernise the Busway

Runcorn's innovative Busway provides the infrastructure for good access by public transport, but in its original form it was not fully exploited as a resource.

A £1.5m remodelling of the busway has been completed which will provide enhanced connectivity to the pedestrian network and a new cycle route.



6. Regenerate Astmoor East

Some of the oldest building stock is now dated and desperately in need of a refresh or more radical action.

The proposed investment in Astmoor aims to create the conditions for local businesses to expand and relocate into modern accommodation, as well as give greater confidence to landowners to invest in their land holdings.

This will result in the refurbishment of a large part of East Astmoor, potentially including the redevelopment of some existing stock to create new better format buildings for today's industries.



2.2 Illustrative Masterplan

The illustrative masterplan shown opposite is a spatial representation of how the vision for Astmoor can be delivered. It forms the framework for the physical and economic regeneration of Astmoor through the identification of Development and Investment Opportunities and Place-making, Connectivity and Movement improvements to the Estate.

A third theme of Inclusive Growth acknowledges that the masterplan can also deliver other socio-economic benefits for local businesses and the wider residential community.

Development & Investment Opportunities

A portfolio of sites that will be attractive to the market and will meet the needs of modern business have been identified across Astmoor. Together these sites have the ability to deliver close to 360,000 ft² of additional employment space that will be primarily aimed at manufacturing and distribution businesses (use classes B2 and B8).

Halton Borough Council Investment Sites

The Council will actively promote through its own land ownership the development of five (currently vacant) sites to deliver high impact physical regeneration and enhanced business accommodation for existing and new businesses.

Private Sector Investment Sites

Four sites in private ownership are acknowledged to have development potential and will be supported in line with the aspirations of the masterplan and other material considerations.

East Astmoor Regeneration

The refurbishment and remodelling of existing built stock in this location will be encouraged to bring under performing accommodation up to today's standards, thereby improving the overall offer of Astmoor as a quality business location.

Placemaking, Connectivity & Movement

A series of projects to enhance Astmoor's appearance and the performance of the highway network for all transport modes will complement the identified Development & Investment Opportunities, as well as deliver improvements for existing businesses and employees.

Astmoor Boulevard

First impressions count and will be improved by enhancing the visual appearance and pedestrian environment of Astmoor Road.

Highway and Public Realm upgrades

The network of estate roads and pedestrian greenways routes will be improved in East Astmoor to create a better walking environment and enhanced public realm.

Busway works

The Busway has received significant investment and will be maintained through Astmoor as a strategic public transport route, but elements of this existing infrastructure are being remodelled to improve the overall accessibility of Astmoor by a range of transport modes.

Branding and Signage

A consistent brand will be reinforced across the Estate and at key gateways to enhance perceptions of Astmoor as a high quality business park and investment opportunity.

Inclusive Growth

In addition to bringing forward physical regeneration, the Council is committed to driving Halton's economic growth and prosperity for the benefit of local businesses and residents.

Current initiatives

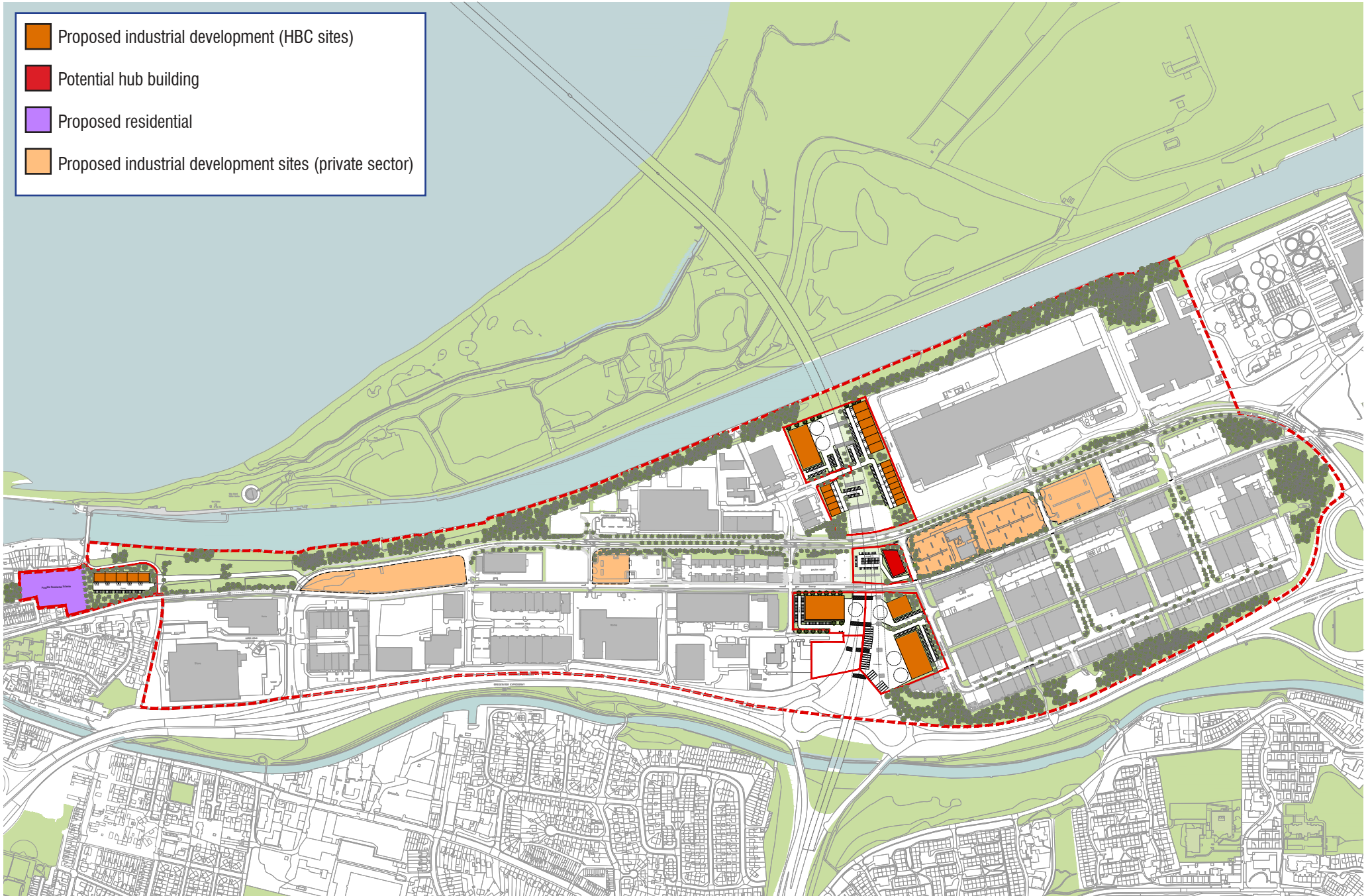
Through the Halton Employment Partnership, Astmoor Apprenticeships and Astmoor Vacancies, an integrated and inclusive approach to job creation, work experience, skills and apprenticeship opportunities in Astmoor will be promoted.

Maximising public sector investment

The procurement for physical works arising from the masterplan can play a role in supporting inclusive growth ambitions.

Healthy Astmoor

Under the Healthy Astmoor initiative a positive, safe and healthy environment for employees will be promoted to enhance staff morale and work-life balance.



The Masterplan, highlighting available development opportunities

2.3 Development & Investment Opportunities

Halton Borough Council Investment Sites

The Council has a land interest in five sites with a combined area of 7.28 hectares. Concept Statements to guide the development of these sites are provided in section 3.

A1 Goddard Road - 1.92 ha cleared site, part of the Handback land portfolio with an estimated capacity of circa 105,000 ft² for B2 / B8 development.

A2 Chadwick Road West – 0.59 ha cleared site, part of the Handback land portfolio with an estimated capacity of circa 11,000 ft² for B1 / B2 / B8 development and potentially other complementary uses.

A3 Davy Road - 1.38 ha cleared site . with an estimated capacity of circa 28,000 ft² for B2 / B8 development.

A4 Chadwick Road South - 1.92 ha cleared site, part of the Handback land portfolio with an estimated capacity of circa 50,000 ft² for B2 / B8 development.

A5 Old Quay Street - 1.47 ha brownfield site that could provide an alternative location for the Bridge School or circa 15,000 ft² of B2 / B8 development in addition to residential (the site is partly allocated for residential in the Local Plan).

Private Sector Investment Sites

There are other sites that are either vacant or occupied by non-intensive uses that have development potential. Some of these sites are already allocated within the Local Plan. Proposals to develop these sites for B2 / B8 development in line with the aspirations of the masterplan, Local Plan policy and other material considerations will be supported. Bearing in mind that all of these sites front on to Astmoor Road, particular emphasis should be given to achieving a high quality frontage that enhances the image of Astmoor.

A6 Hardwick Road West - 1.20 ha vacant site allocated in the Local Plan with a capacity of circa 32,000 ft² for B2 / B8 development.

A7 Edison Road East – 0.37 ha site, currently used as car parking and allocated in the Local Plan with a capacity of circa 26,000 ft² for B2 / B8 development, subject to the relocation of car parking.

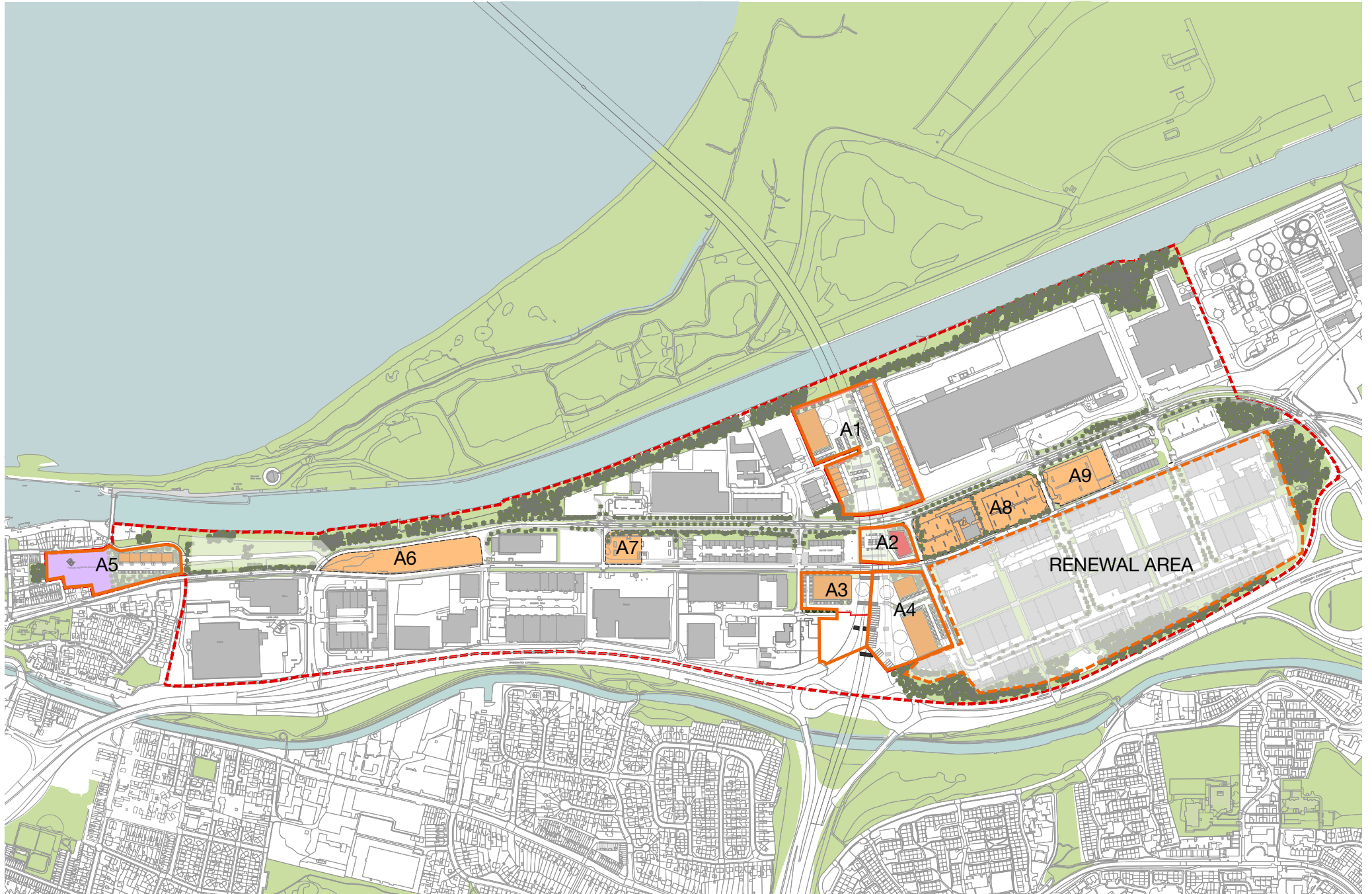
A8 Chadwick Road East - 1.88 ha site, currently occupied by the Bridge School and commercial vehicle storage with an estimated capacity of circa 65,000 ft² for B2 / B8 development, following the relocation of existing uses.

A9 Brindley Road East – 0.66 ha site, currently used for open storage with a capacity of circa 34,000 ft² for B2 / B8 development.

East Astmoor

Proposals to refurbish and remodel the building stock within this area will be supported, provided schemes accord with the aspirations of this masterplan, Local Plan policy and other material considerations. It is acknowledged that the restrictions imposed by the current built fabric may require a more radical approach, including some phased remodelling or even redevelopment of units.

As part of the regeneration of East Astmoor the Council will also support the relocation of incompatible uses that would be better located in other parts of the Borough, particularly the Bridge School and the traveller site on Marsh Lane. The Council will work with stakeholders to bring forward the relocation of existing uses and the redevelopment of these sites to better support the growth of Astmoor as a dedicated employment area.



2.4 Placemaking, Connectivity & Movement

The Movement Strategy illustrated opposite provides the basis for a series of highway and public realm improvements across the estate. It is based on the following movement principles:

Coherent – any changes to routes should ensure that the all potential origins and destinations remained linked with continuous and recognisable routes that offer a consistent standard of access throughout.

Convenient – pedestrians and cycle routes should be based on desire lines with a positive advantage (in terms of directness and priority) over motor traffic.

Conspicuous – routes should be safe and perceived as safe by maximising natural and passing surveillance, whilst limiting conflict between cyclists, pedestrians and motor vehicles.

Comfortable – pedestrian routes should be of sufficient width and gradient with a smooth, non-slip, well maintained and drained surface.

Convivial – any enhancements to the movement structure of Astmoor should contribute to the attractiveness and interest of the Estate through the use of a high quality palette of materials, planting and street furniture.

The main aspects of the Movement Strategy are:

Astmoor Road – A detailed assessment of projected traffic flows and capacity has been undertaken in order to confirm the scope to remodel Astmoor Road and create a much enhanced pedestrian environment. The aspiration is to narrow the carriageway to a single lane in each direction, which will create space for pedestrian pathways along the length of the road. The current speed limit will be reduced from 40mph to 30mph and crossing points will be created at strategic locations to provide better access to public transport stops and walking / cycle routes.

Estate Roads to upgrade – both Chadwick Road and the east - west Estate Road to the south of Astmoor East will be remodelled to incorporate pedestrian pathways either side of the carriageway.

Estate Roads – no proposed changes.

Segregated pedestrian routes - these green routes will be retained and enhanced through improvements to the public realm and adjacent properties to create a more attractive and safer pedestrian environment. As part of the development of site A8 and due to the proposed removal of the footbridge small sections of walkway will be decommissioned.

Busway (buses, cycles, pedestrians) – the busway has been upgraded to include a new parallel cycle route and improved pedestrian routes.

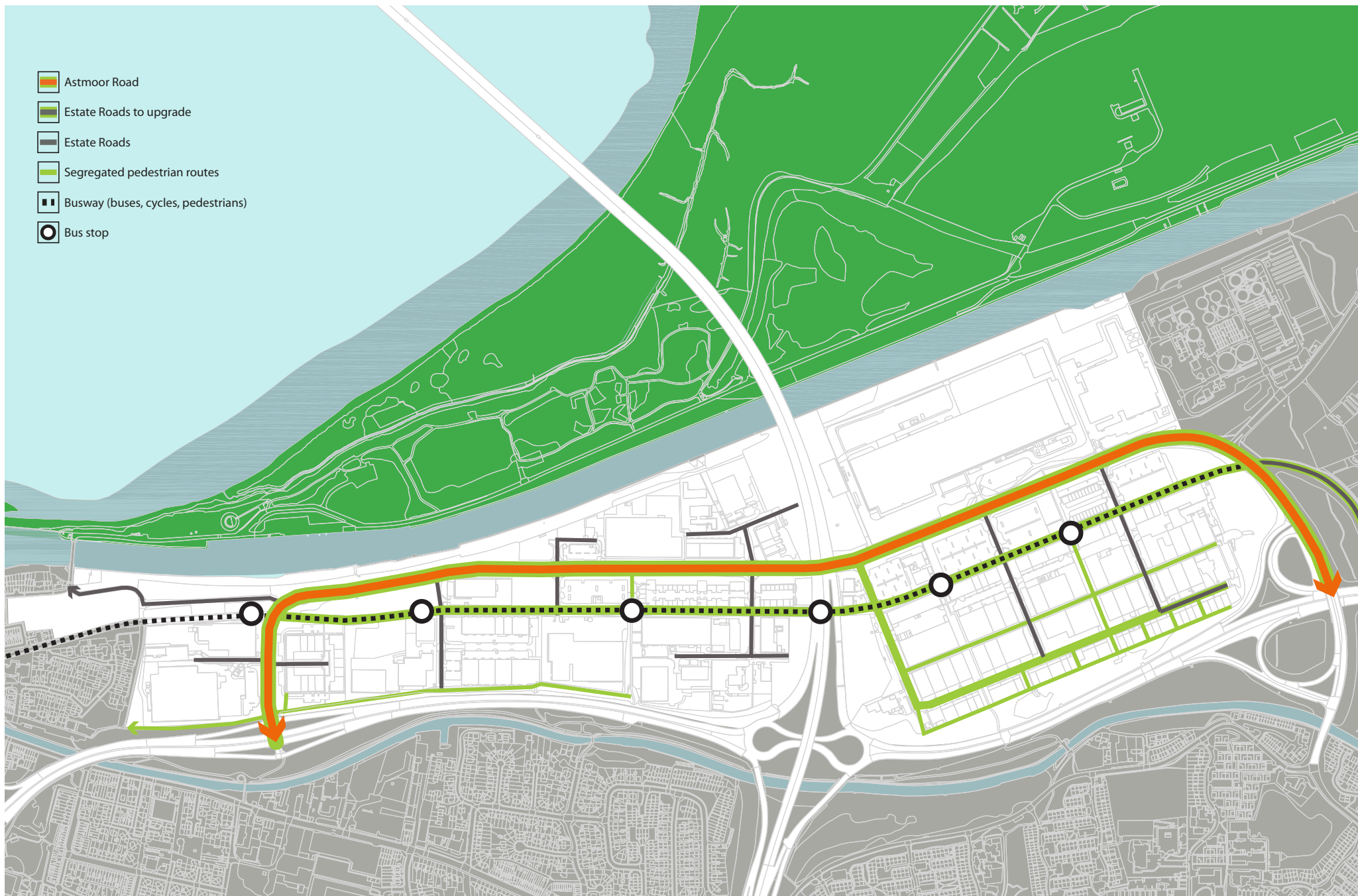
Bus stop – as part of improvements to the Busway, all bus stops have been upgraded.

The movement strategy aims to make it more attractive to access Astmoor on foot, by bicycle or the bus, but there are limitations related to car parking and yard space that also need addressing. A more detailed car parking and servicing study will establish how the demands for parking and servicing can be met, however, the masterplan has been developed on the following assumptions:

New development – maximum car parking provision should be provided in line with Council car parking standards.

Handback land – there may be scope to incorporate an element of public car parking under the bridge subject to certain safety restrictions.

Loading / unloading – the proposed remodelling of carriageways assumes that additional carriageway space will be maintained to facilitate on street loading / unloading and parallel parking bays as appropriate.



Astmoor Road (Boulevard)

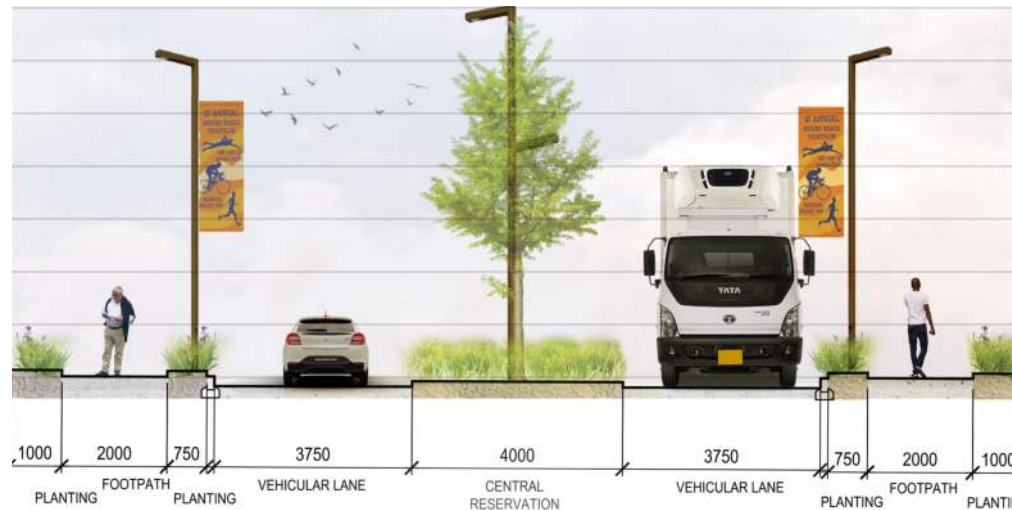
Astmoor Road in its current form does not create the right first impression for the Estate. The road is inadequately lit, lacks pedestrian-appropriate infrastructure and the original rigid concrete construction looks dated. The overall width of the carriageway with two lanes partly in each direction is also considered as excessive given the volume of traffic that is currently observed along the route.

To create the right 'front door' to Astmoor and set the scene for a quality business location it is proposed to significantly change the character of Astmoor Road through a 'boulevard' design treatment (see proposed road section). This will include enhanced surface materials, street tree planting and contemporary lighting columns, but also works to narrow the carriageway to create the space for pedestrian walking paths, which are currently lacking along much of the length of Astmoor Road.

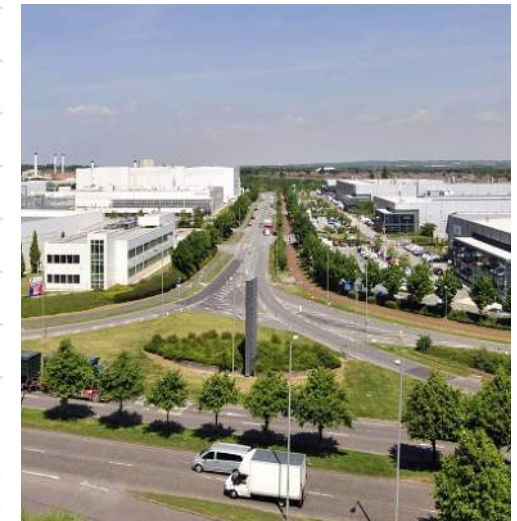
Pedestrian access will be further enhanced through the provision of formal crossing points along Astmoor Road, which will replace the existing footbridge that is proposed for removal. There will also be a reduction in the speed limit from 40mph to 30mph, which would be more commensurate to the proposed highway arrangement.



Astmoor Road existing



Sample section of Astmoor Road



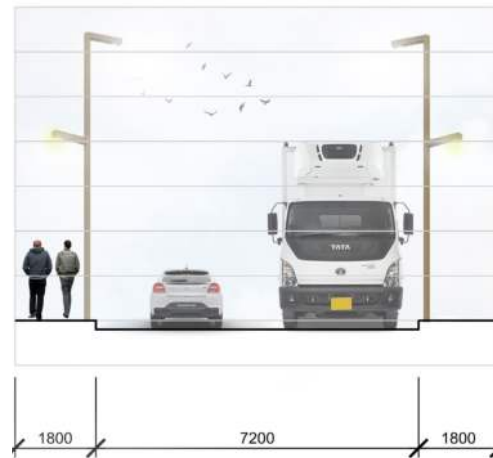
Design precedent - Boulevard Industrial Park, Speke

Chadwick Road

Chadwick Road has pedestrian paths along part of the route, but not on both sides. It is proposed to widen the road, using public owned land on the western side of the route, so that consistent pathways can be formed on both sides of the highway, whilst retaining the highway to its current specifications.



Chadwick Road existing



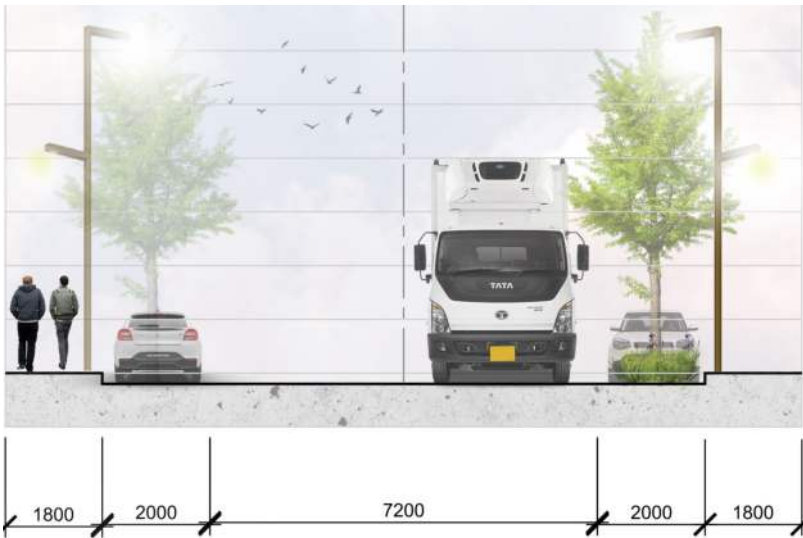
Sample section of Chadwick Road



Design precedent

East - West Road

The Estate Road that runs to the south of Astmoor East will be upgraded to create safe pedestrian routes along either side of the road. The works will involve redesigning the existing carriageway to incorporate paths, whilst retaining sufficient carriageway width and parking / layover space. Surfaces will be upgraded and street trees planted to improve the appearance of the estate.



Chadwick Road existing



Design precedent - Light Box, Wirral

Greenways

Astmoor's greenways will be retained and enhanced as a convenient off-road movement network for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as a natural resource that contributes to the health and wellbeing of employees on the estate. The overall maintenance of this resource will be complemented by improvements to lighting, signage and landscaping. Property owners and occupiers will also be encouraged to enhance their interface to the greenways as part of any improvement works.

The Busway

The Council has secured funding through the Liverpool City Region STEP programme and is delivering a package of improvements along the Busway, which have been incorporated into the masterplan. This includes:

- Replacement of grass verge areas with a shared footway / cycleway along the full extent of the Busway through the Estate;
- New road lighting / signage;
- Installation of toucan crossing points and signal upgrades at each junction;
- Improvement of the greenway that links the Busway to Castlefields;
- A new link path to Wigg Island;
- Bus stop upgrades at each stop; and
- Vegetation removal for visibility / safety and footpath installation.

Branding & Signage

There are a multitude of signs across the Estate, including Halton Borough Council and BID signage and bespoke landlord signage boards. Combined this makes for a confused message and cluttered public realm. There is a need for a more consistent and high quality approach to signage across the Estate.

The regeneration programme creates the opportunity to relaunch Astmoor and stamp a new identity on the estate. The Mersey Gateway Bridge is a strong and obvious design cue and could be reflected in a new logo and 'family' of replacement signage including gateway / welcoming signage, road signage and wayfinding. A new corporate identity could even embrace a name change for Astmoor, shrugging off the old fashioned and potentially negative connotation of the 'Industrial Estate' to something more aspirational and positive e.g. Business Park or Enterprise Park.

The BID will play a key part in seeking any new corporate identity and the co-ordination of signage to create a more cohesive approach and will represent the choice of businesses throughout the process.

Finally there is scope to bring more attention on Astmoor as an investment proposition, utilising its frontage to major highway infrastructure. This could include signage in particularly conspicuous locations adjacent to the A558 and A533 or even a major art piece that is more subtle but more ambitious in its redefinition of Astmoor's image.



Signage precedent - Winnersh Triangle, Berkshire



Gateway public art at Birchwood Park

2.5 Inclusive Growth

The masterplan is not only concerned with physical change. Inclusive growth aims to ensure better connectivity between opportunities and all people, seeking in particular to ensure that those at risk of poverty and exclusion are able to access new opportunities. Employment and skills policies play a fundamental role in supporting business growth and better outcomes, helping to support those out of work to access opportunities and those in work into better jobs and higher wages.

On the demand side, investment is needed to create environments which support businesses to thrive, while on the supply side there is a need for greater investment in skills and training provision as well as transport and housing to ensure that residents are better able to access opportunities. The purpose of the Inclusive Growth Strategy is to build on existing initiatives and consider potential new ways to engage local people in the delivery of actions arising from the Astmoor masterplan and the ongoing operation of the Estate.

Current Initiatives

Halton Employment Partnership - Halton Employment Partnership (HEP) is a strategic level Partnership which brings together expertise from various employment, learning and skills agencies in Halton and can support inward investors and local businesses with a complete employment offer. The complete 'offer' includes regular email promotion of Halton Employment Partnership services and activities to Astmoor employers, including flexible recruitment support; bespoke or generic pre-employment training courses for local businesses; job opportunities; identifying and matching candidates to vacancies; and arranging interviews and providing employer feedback to candidates on the employers behalf.

Pre-Recruitment training and skills development - HEP can design and deliver bespoke pre-employment programmes to support businesses in recruiting suitably trained workforce. In addition, HEP can deliver generic employability skills training to local residents to equip them with the skills needed to compete in the job market. The BID will also continue to offer subsidised business led training courses for employees

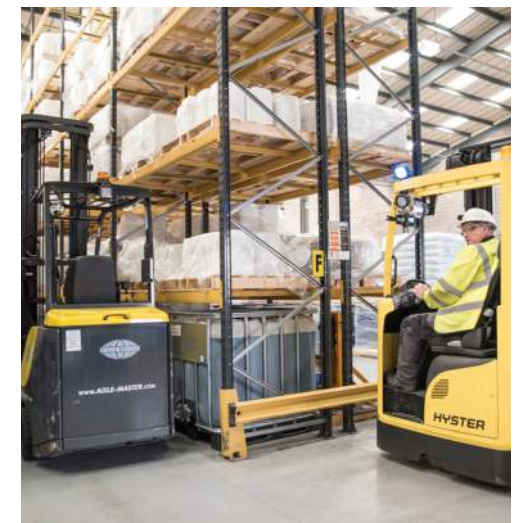
Workforce development and training - HEP can support businesses to source training and skills development packages for their employees.

Astmoor Apprenticeships - Hold an apprenticeship week each year on the estate to promote apprenticeship places for local employers with support from Riverside College

Astmoor Vacancies - Businesses are invited to market their vacancies through the Halton BID website and social media

Maximising public sector investment

Environmental improvements - procurement for physical works arising from the masterplan can play a role in supporting inclusive growth ambitions.



Healthy Astmoor

Being in work is good for people's health and wellbeing, but it's increasingly recognised that a healthy workforce benefits employers too. Creating a positive, safe and healthy environment for employees, can result in improvements in staff morale and work-life balance. The obvious benefit of a healthy workforce is that healthier employees are absent less often, are more motivated to stay in work, recover from sickness quicker and are at less risk of long term illness.

The Council's Health Improvement Team (HIT) working in partnership with the BID recently delivered the Workspace Health Champions training. The BID, working with a number of different of partners, will continue to take the lead in any further health initiatives, working in partnership with HIT.

Through the Healthy Astmoor initiative the BID will promote and offer:

- Estate wide NHS health checks for over 40s (annually);
- A health and wellbeing event or health fair as part of the BID annual review;
- Promotion of Mental Health Awareness as part of the BID training package;
- Establishing Mental Health First Aiders;
- Encouraging estate wide Health Champions; and
- Stop Smoking sessions.

Halton Borough Council will expand and support this provision by sharing the delivery of the following initiatives:

- Estate wide health checks for under 40s;
- Musculoskeletal masterclass;
- Guided walks for employees during lunch hours; and
- Provision of outside seating areas.





3. Design Guidance

3.1 Design Principles

The masterplan retains the flexibility for detailed proposals to come forward, but good design should be at the heart of all decision making.

Good design makes sound financial sense over the long term. Well-designed buildings and places can help to raise the profile of a business as well as provide a more pleasant place of work that increases staff morale and satisfaction and in turn productivity, recruitment and retention. Good design also creates places that local people are proud to have within their neighbourhood.

The following design and development principles apply to all future development proposals. It should also be noted that any use of land under the bridge approach structure will require agreement with the Project Company and Mersey Gateway Crossings Board. As a general rule of thumb, this area can be utilised for parking and yard space, but this will depend on the nature of the proposed activity. No built structures can be developed under the viaduct or within a 3 metre offset of the viaduct edge.

More detailed concept statements for the Halton Borough Council Investment sites are also provided.



Layout and frontage

Buildings should define the public facing edges of a site, rather than yard space and parking. Consider what are the desirable views to and from the site and plan accordingly. Building frontages should enclose private yard space away from public view and present a 'public face' to adjacent roads with active rooms (e.g. offices, canteens) positioned to provide animation and overlooking of the public realm.

Where the full road frontage cannot be effectively screened by buildings, a high quality boundary treatment should provide effective screening. Facilities for the storage of waste should not be visible from the public realm.



Movement and servicing

All users should be able to easily access a site and find their way about safely. Sites should be designed to be accessible by a range of transport modes, bearing in mind vehicle servicing requirements, but carefully laid out to integrate people movement, vehicle movement and parking to create people-friendly places. Safe and convenient access by foot and cycle should be provided from adjacent public routes to building entrances.

Parking should be provided in line with Council parking standards. Currently 1 space per 45 sqm (B2 use class) and 1 space per 100 sqm (B8 use class) with 10% (rounded up) to be disabled parking. Cycle / motorcycle parking should be provided at a standard of 1 space per 100 sqm.



Architectural design and materials

The architectural design of buildings should contribute to making Astmoor as attractive and welcoming as possible. Functional requirements and corporate identities should not predetermine design decisions and new buildings should be visually pleasing and sit comfortably within their surroundings through the thoughtful use of materials and colour.

Industrial buildings and their associated plant and infrastructure need not necessarily be concealed as they might offer scope to create visual interest, especially if attention is paid to their appearance.



Landscape setting

All developments should sit within a landscape setting that forms part of the overall boundary treatment and frontage of the site, so budget accordingly for soft and hard landscaping as well as ongoing maintenance. Retain any significant existing trees or vegetation, plant native species and avoid amenity planting of low wildlife value.

Consider how landscaping can provide for a more comfortable place of work and an amenity for employees and customers. The location of any social space should consider site micro-climate, including aspect (sun and shade areas) and the direction of prevailing winds and breezes.



Boundary treatments

In most cases some form of boundary treatment will be required to secure the site. The design approach should not, however, look overtly defensive, as this can often create the perception that crime and security is a bigger issue than it is.

Where needed, security fencing should be sensitively designed. Avoid using galvanised steel palisade or chain link fencing with concrete posts and barbed wire, and painted fencing in non-natural corporate colours.

Consider the impact of boundary treatments from key views and street frontages. A landscape buffer alongside street frontages can provide a level of security, but also help to conceal any security fencing (e.g. paladin fencing) if it is absolutely required.



Legibility and signage

For most industrial activities signage is only required to identify the presence of a business, so in general there should only be a need for one sign per building plot. In new buildings, a location for signage should be identified and 'designed in' from the outset. This avoids the need for free standing signs, flags and banners, which can result in excessive and distracting clutter, and should be avoided.

Signs should be framed within the elevation and should not protrude beyond walls, eaves, roof verges, and other structural elements.



Roofscape and views

The prominence of Astmoor from the Mersey Gateway and adjacent expressways means that the roofscape can be particularly prominent from a number of view points. In this regard the treatment of the roofscape in terms of form, materials and colour, but also the impact of layout and scale on the roofscape, is a particular design opportunity to promote Astmoor as an interesting and distinct business location.

The positioning and design of rooftop plant and infrastructure relative to key view points also needs to be considered. Screening is an option but there may also be scope to 'celebrate' the industrial aesthetic and create some visual rooftop interest.

3.2 Concept Statements

Concept Statement

Overview

Part of the handback land that was acquired to enable construction of the Mersey Gateway. The site has since been cleared and is now ready for redevelopment. The aspiration is for B2 / B8 development.

Site area

1.92 ha (4.75 acres).

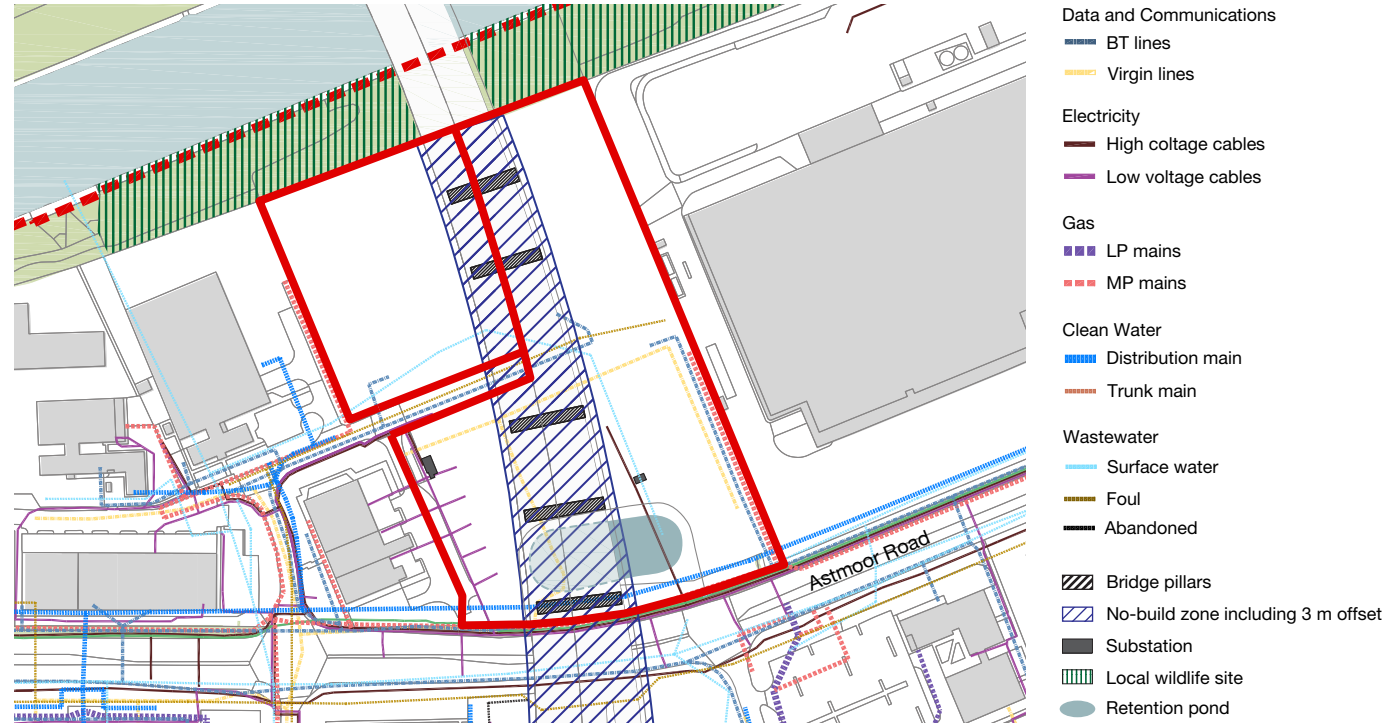
Ownership details

Halton Borough Council.

Site constraints

As identified on constraints plan:

- Underground utilities.
- Electricity sub-station.
- Balancing pond.
- No build zone and development restrictions imposed by proximity to bridge.



Proposed use

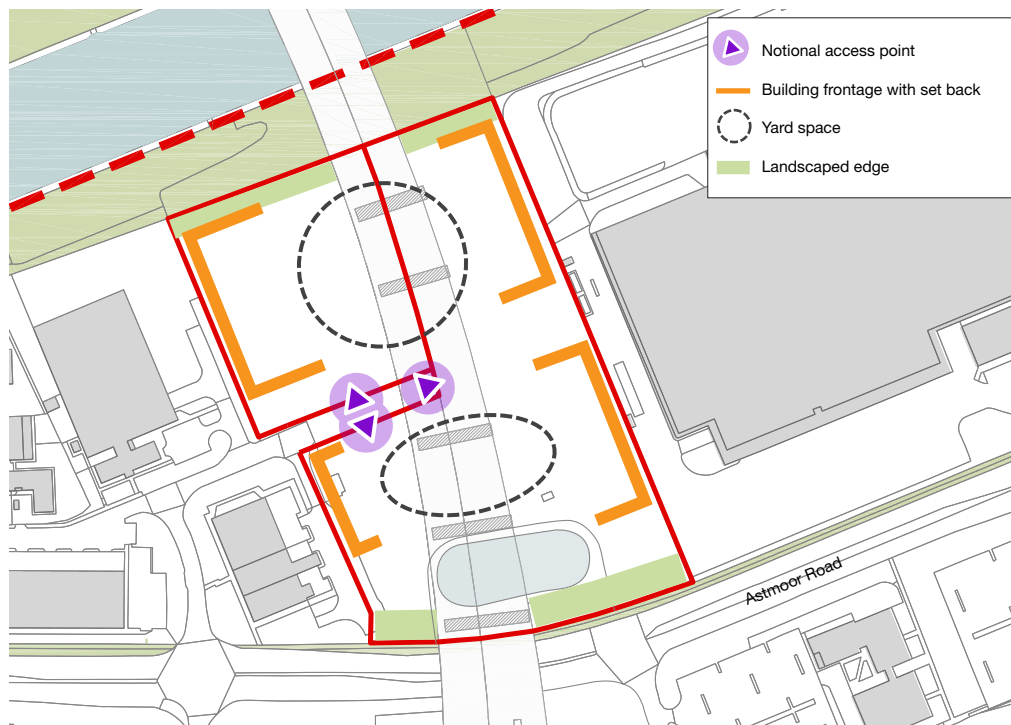
The site should be developed for B2 (General Industrial) and / or B8 (Storage or distribution). Due to the position of the Mersey Gateway which crosses the site overhead it is likely that the site will be divided into a series of plots.

Scale

There is scope to deliver around 105,000 ft² of accommodation with the flexibility to provide a range of unit sizes including terraced accommodation capable of amalgamation / sub-division.



Simple use of materials: The Foundry, Salford



Specific design considerations

Due to site constraints, buildings may need to be set back some distance from Astmoor Road, but there may be scope to create some visual interest through added height, architectural detailing and / or signage.

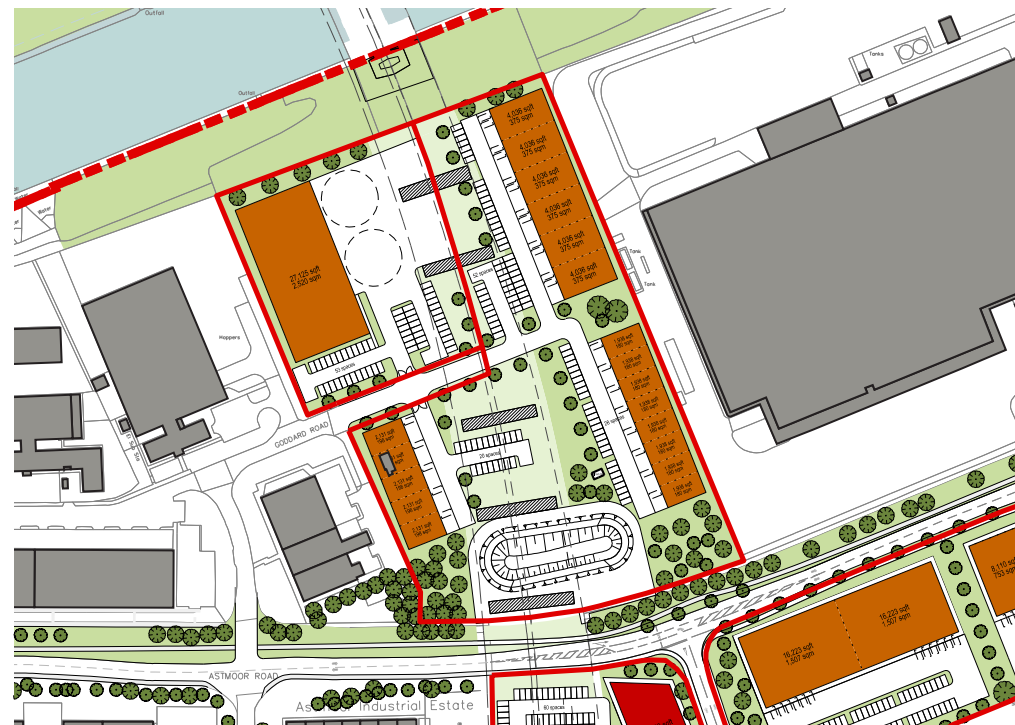
A high quality landscape edge should be provided along Astmoor Road, but some visual permeability to the development should be retained.

Views and the impact of the roofscape from the Mersey Gateway should be considered.

Yards and parking should be orientated away from Astmoor Road.

Vehicular access cannot be taken directly from Astmoor Road and should be taken from Goddard Road.

No building should be located either underneath or within a 3 metre offset from the Mersey Gateway viaduct, but land can be maximised for car parking and hardstanding areas, subject to agreement.



Using colour to add interest to otherwise blank facades: Knorr-Bremse factory, São Paulo

Chadwick Road West Concept Statement

Overview

Part of the handback land that was acquired to enable construction of the Mersey Gateway. The site has since been cleared and is now ready for redevelopment.

The aspiration is for B1 / B2 / B8 development, although this site also offers scope for other community / social uses that maximise the site's central location and roadside frontage, including the potential for a shared service / business hub for the Estate.

Site area

0.59 ha (1.5 acres).

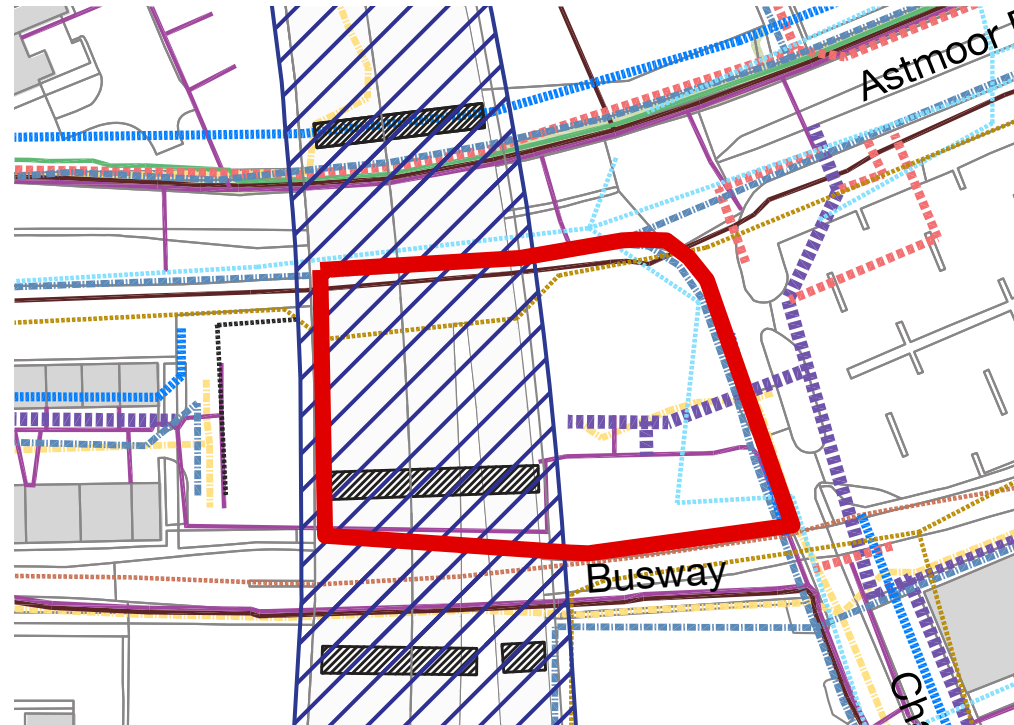
Ownership details

Halton Borough Council.

Site constraints

As identified on constraints plan:

- Underground utilities.
- No build zone and development restrictions imposed by proximity to bridge.



Data and Communications

- BT lines
- Virgin lines

Electricity

- High voltage cables
- Low voltage cables

Gas

- LP mains
- MP mains

Clean Water

- Distribution main
- Trunk main

Wastewater

- Surface water
- Foul
- Abandoned

- Bridge pillars
- No-build zone including 3 m offset

Proposed use

The site could be developed for B1 (offices), B2 (General Industrial) and / or B8 (Storage or distribution), which could include a proportion of showroom space. There is also the scope to accommodate commercial uses or a service hub, which could comprise a single use or mix of uses including small scale retail (A1), food and drink (A3), a conferencing / meeting space or day nursery (D1) or a gym (D2).

Scale

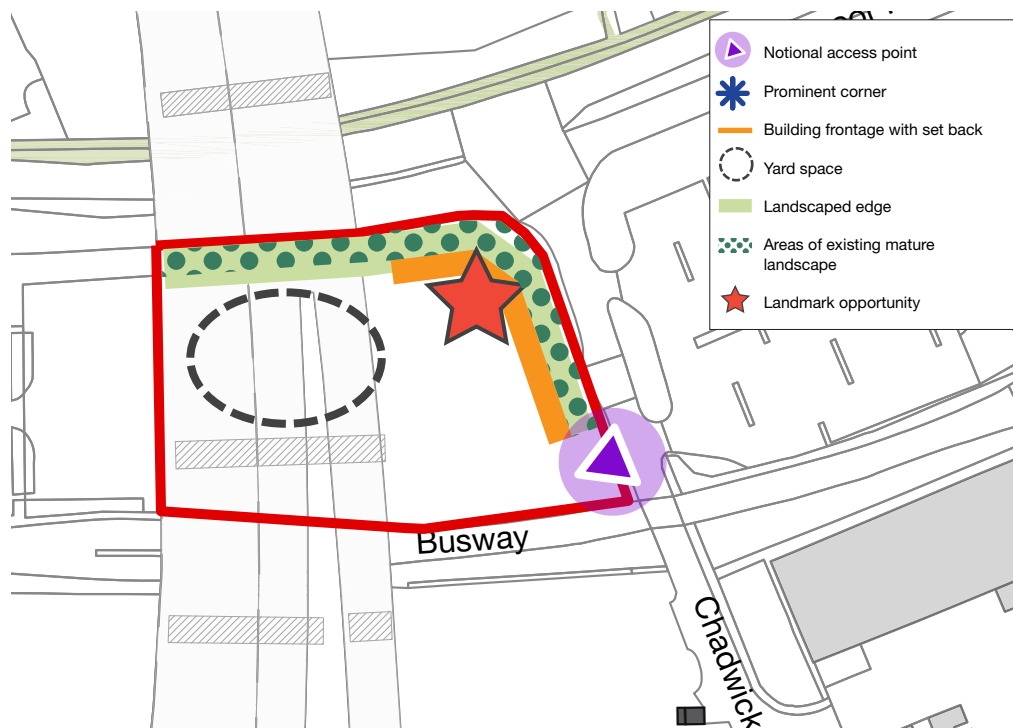
There is scope to deliver around 11,000 ft² of accommodation and the added flexibility for multi-storey development given the site's prominent location.

Specific design considerations

There is a particular opportunity to emphasise this prominent site with a landmark building. This could manifest itself in the type of uses as well as the overall form and façade of the building in terms of the relationship / set back of development to the corner, articulation of facades and / or additional height at the corner.



Articulation of roof to create a landmark: City College, Norwich



This is a particularly prominent site so equal design quality should be applied to all frontages.

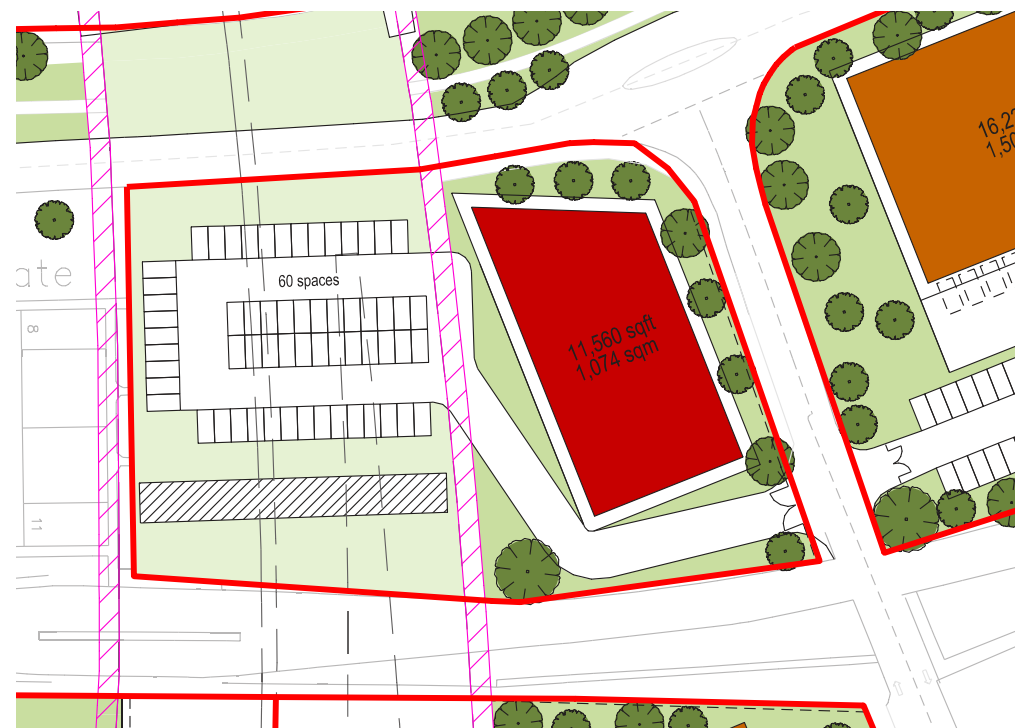
Consider the location of active rooms and the position of windows and building entrances to provide enclosure, overlooking and animation in relation to key routes and views.

A high quality landscape edge should be provided along Astmoor Road and Chadwick Road.

Consider the scope to provide some outdoor social space to form additional animation to the corner, particularly if commercial / social uses form part of the mix.

Vehicular access cannot be taken from the Busway or Astmoor Road and should be taken from Chadwick Road.

No building should be located either underneath or within a 3 metre offset from the Mersey Gateway viaduct, but land can be maximised for car parking and hardstanding areas, subject to agreement.



Creating a public realm focal point: National Blood Service



Creating a vibrant social place: Instagram offices

Davy Road Concept Statement

Overview

A mix of handback land that was acquired and cleared to enable construction of the Mersey Gateway and other land and buildings acquired by HBC. The aspiration is for B2 / B8 development.

Site area

1.38 ha (3.4 acres).

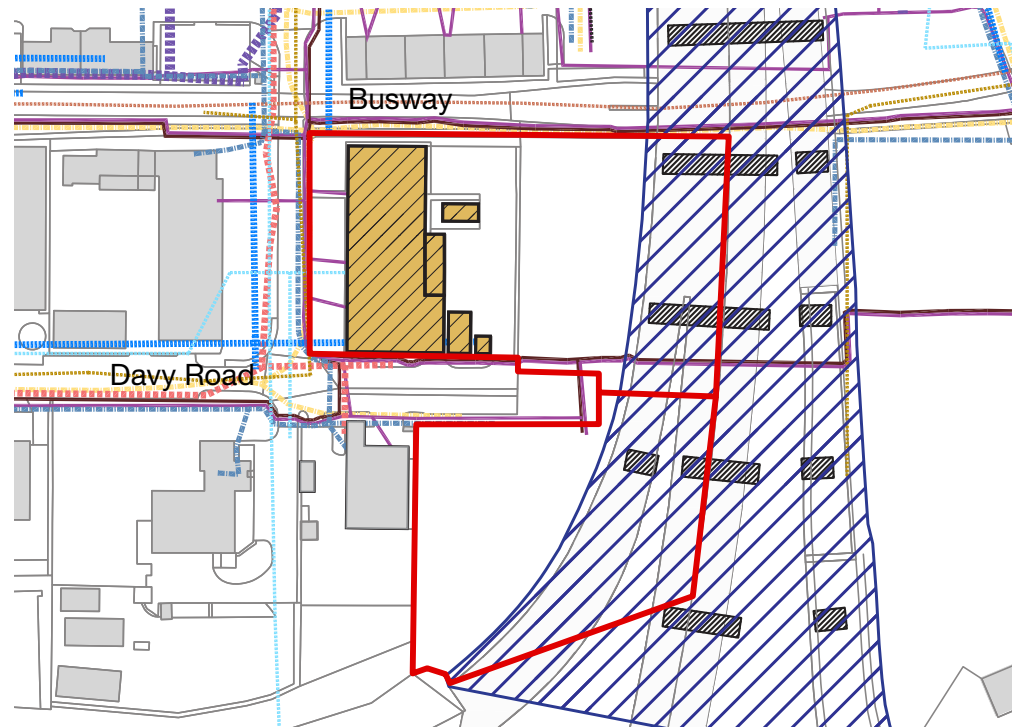
Ownership details

Halton Borough Council.

Site constraints

As identified on constraints plan:

- Underground utilities.
- Buildings to be demolished.
- No build zone and development restrictions imposed by proximity to bridge.



Data and Communications

- BT lines
- Virgin lines

Electricity

- High Voltage cables
- Low Voltage cables
- 33 kV cables

Gas

- LP mains
- MP mains

Clean Water

- Distribution main
- Trunk main

Wastewater

- Surface water
- Foul

- Building to demolish

- Bridge pillars

- No-build zone including 3 m offset

Proposed use

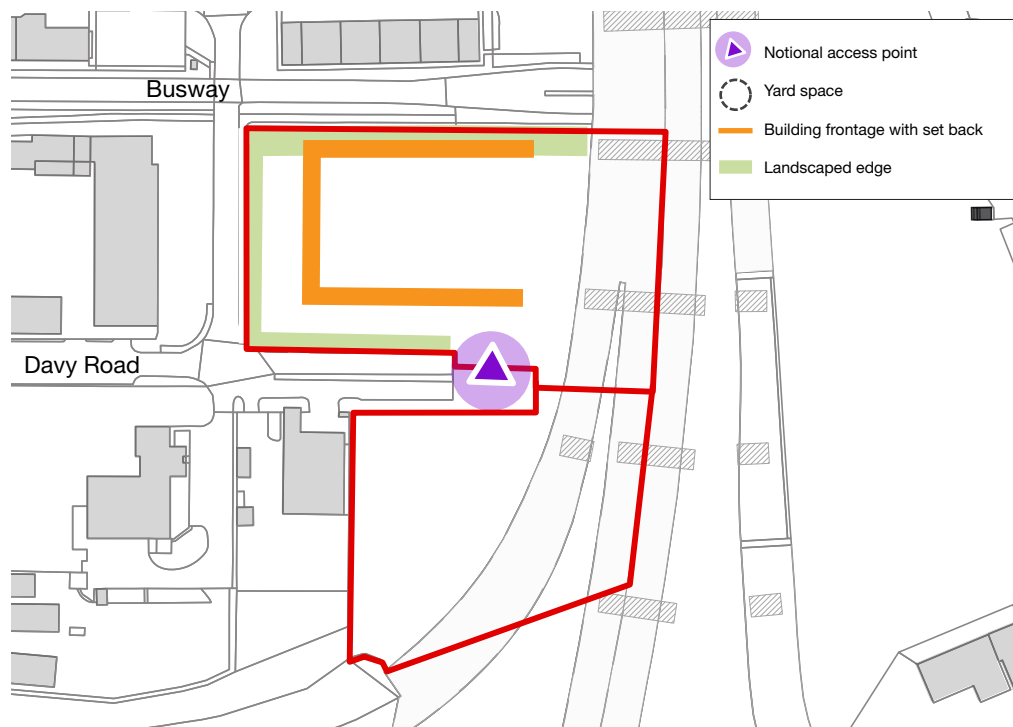
The site should be developed for B2 (General Industrial) and / or B8 (Storage or distribution) development.

Scale

To the north of Davy Road there is scope to deliver around 28,000 ft² of accommodation with the flexibility for larger footplate buildings or terraced units capable of amalgamation / sub-division. South of Davy Road this relatively smaller site could be developed or used to service either the northern land parcel or the Chadwick South site.



Creating visual interest from the highway: Lifescan, Inverness



Specific design considerations

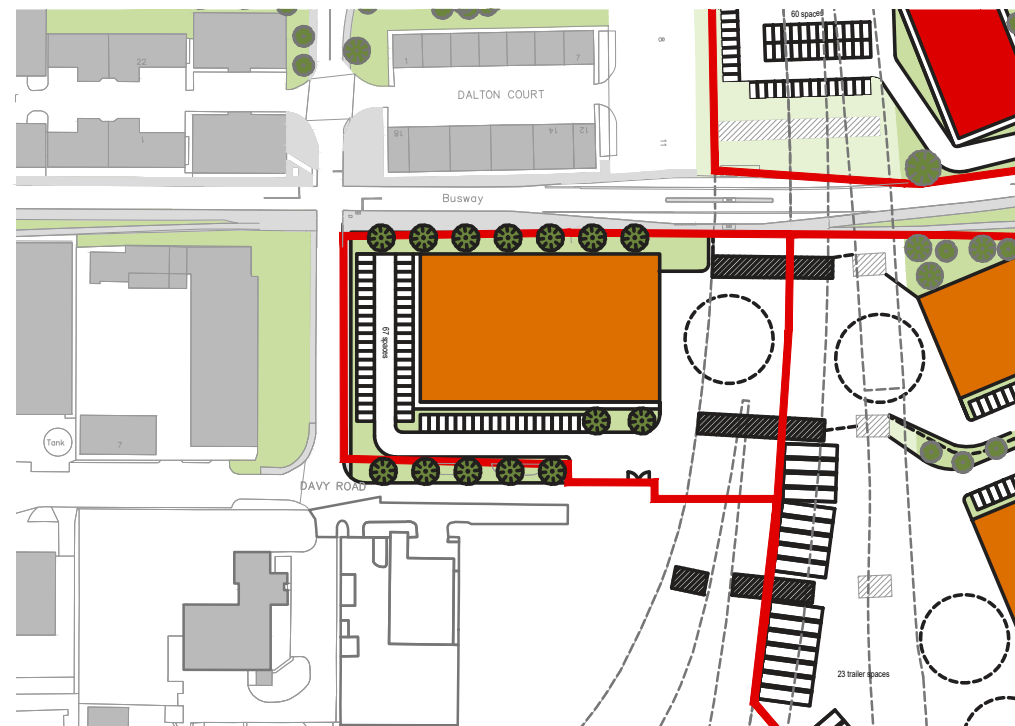
Building(s) should enclose, overlook and animate the public facing edges of Davy Road and the Busway.

A high quality landscape edge should be provided along the Busway and Davy Road.

Vehicular access cannot be taken from the Busway and should be taken from Davy Road.

Consideration should be given to the potential to maximise the site's visibility from the Mersey Gateway and Bridgewater Expressway.

No building should be located either underneath or within a 3 metre offset from the Mersey Gateway viaduct, but land can be maximised for car parking and hardstanding areas, subject to agreement.



Industrial buildings don't have to look boxy: Truganina, Melbourne and HAWE factory Bavaria

Chadwick Road South Concept Statement

Overview

Part of the handback land that was acquired to enable construction of the Mersey Gateway. The site has since been cleared and is now ready for redevelopment.

The aspiration is for B2 / B8 development. Being one of the largest development sites, this site offers the most scope to develop a larger footplate building (circa 50,000 ft²).

Site area

1.92 ha (4.75 acres).

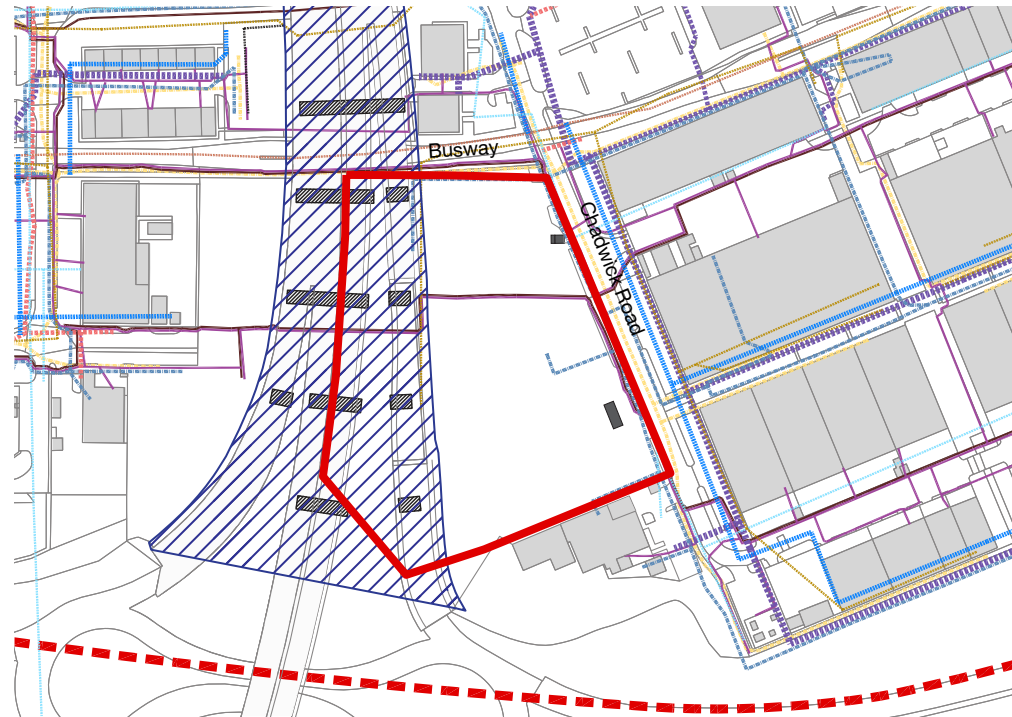
Ownership details

Halton Borough Council.

Site constraints

As identified on constraints plan:

- Electricity sub-stations.
- Underground utilities.
- No build zone and development restrictions imposed by proximity to bridge.



Data and Communications

- BT lines
- Virgin lines

Electricity

- High voltage cables
- Low voltage cables

Gas

- LP mains
- MP mains

Clean Water

- Distribution main
- Trunk main

Wastewater

- Surface water
- Foul

- Bridge pillars
- No-build zone including 3 m offset
- Substation

Proposed use

B2 (General Industrial) and / or B8 (Storage or distribution).

Scale

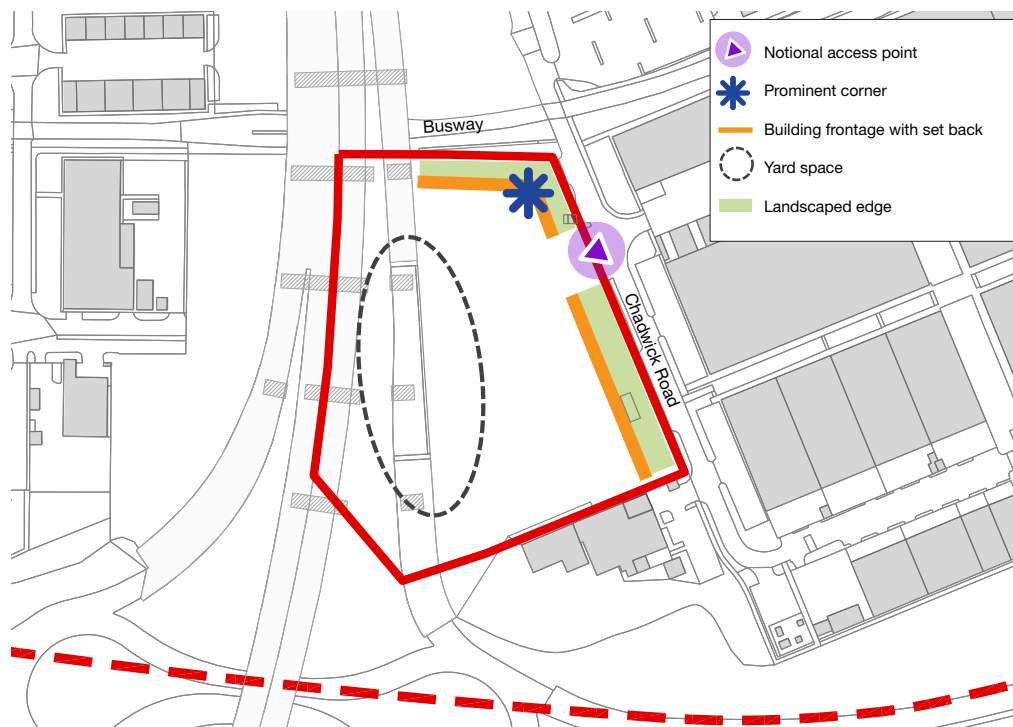
Suitable for one large footplate occupier (up to 50,000 ft²) or capable of sub-division into two sub-plots, with the largest providing capacity for up to 30,000 ft².



A dramatic use of glass: Optimal Media Logistics Centre



A bold entrance: Outerspace, Manchester



Specific design considerations

Building(s) should enclose, overlook and animate the public facing edges of Chadwick Road and the Busway.

The corner of Chadwick Road and Busway should be articulated with a design feature.

No building should be located either underneath or within a 3 metre offset from the Mersey Gateway viaduct, but land can be maximised for car parking and hardstanding areas, subject to agreement.

Consideration should be given to the potential to maximise the site's visibility from the Mersey Gateway in terms of scale, massing and roofscape design.

Vehicular access cannot be taken from the Busway and should be taken from Chadwick Road.



Creating visual interest: Carcemal headquarters, Portugal

Old Quay Street Concept Statement

Overview

The site is currently vacant land and allocated for residential development in the Local Plan. There is potential to accommodate a proportion of B2 / B8 development on the site as part of a mixed use scheme. There is also scope to provide the site as an alternative location for the Bridge School in order to free up land within the heart of the Estate for employment uses.

Site area

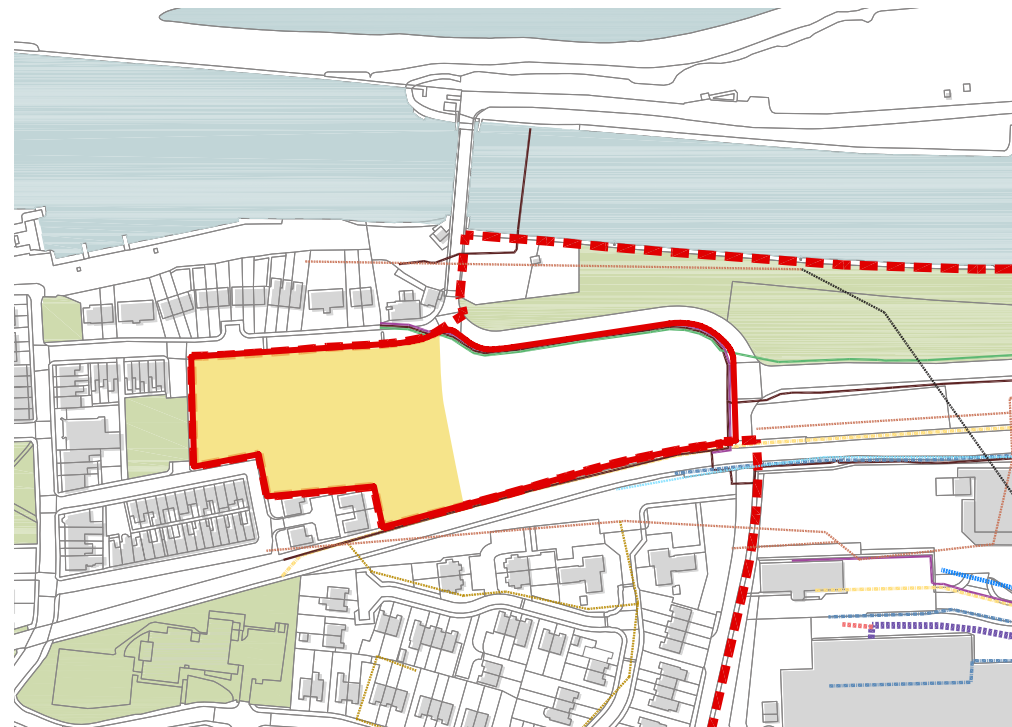
1.47 ha (3.6 acres).

Ownership details

Halton Borough Council.

Site constraints

- The western part of the site is to be retained for residential development, so care should be taken to form a development that does not undermine the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- It is understood that there is some land contamination.



Proposed use

The site should be developed for B2 (General Industrial) and / or B8 (Storage or distribution) aimed at small scale enterprises and start-ups. There is also the scope to accommodate commercial uses or a service hub, which could comprise a single use or mix of uses including small scale retail (A1), food and drink (A3), a conferencing / meeting space or day nursery (D1) or a gym (D2).

Scale

There is scope to deliver around 28,000 ft² of accommodation with the flexibility to provide a range of unit sizes within terraced accommodation capable of amalgamation / sub-division.

Specific design considerations

There is a particular opportunity to emphasise the corner of Astmoor Road with a landmark. This could manifest itself in the type of uses proposed as well as the overall form and façade of the building in terms of the relationship / set

Data and Communications

- BT lines
- Virgin lines

Electricity

- High voltage cables
- Low voltage cables

Gas

- LP mains
- MP mains

Clean Water

- Distribution main
- Trunk main

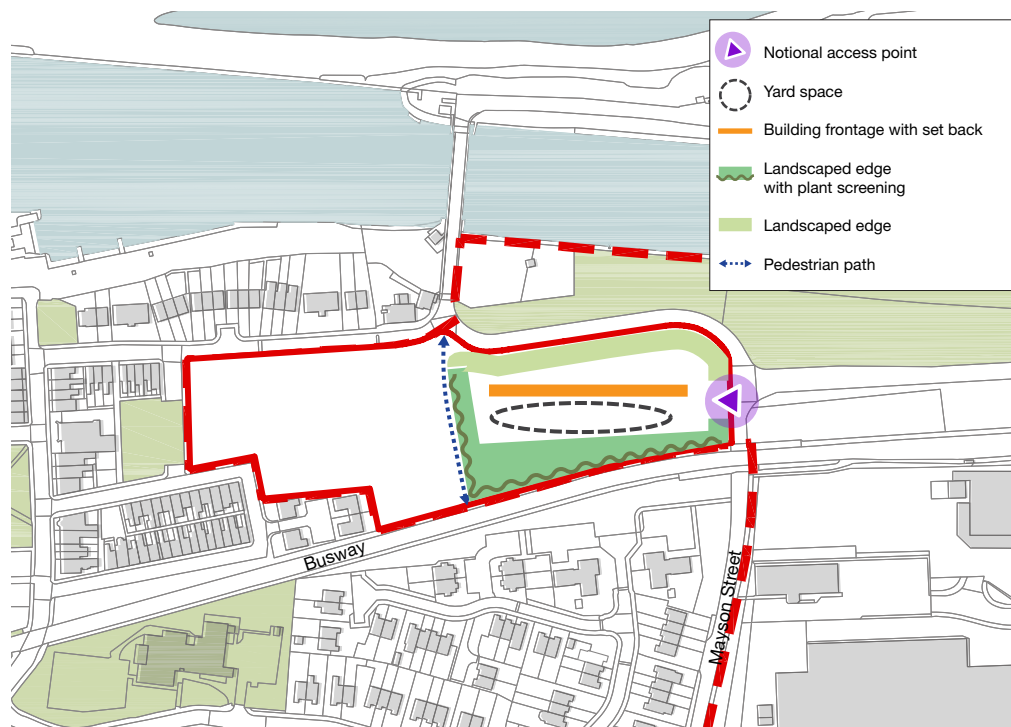
Wastewater

- Surface water
- Foul
- Abandoned

- Area for housing development



Simple form and materials: IPMB headquarters, Konárovice



back of development to the corner, articulation of facades and / or additional height at the corner.

Attention should be focused on providing enclosure, overlooking and animation to the corner of Astmoor Road through the location of active rooms and the position of windows and building entrances.

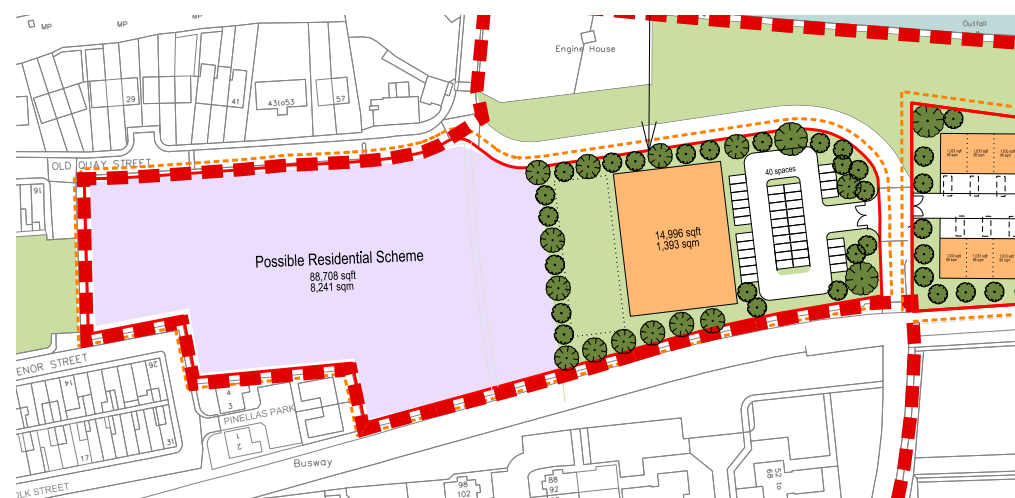
The prominent roadside frontage to the busway will require consideration in terms of the design of frontages, boundary treatments and landscape setting.

Given the site's position, there is scope to maximise the outlook over the Mersey Estuary through the location of active rooms / uses (especially above first floor level), consider also the scope to provide some outdoor social space that maximises this setting.

Vehicular access should be taken from Astmoor Road. Additional access can also be provided from Mason Street.



Employment use option



School option



4. Delivery Strategy

4.1 Summary

A detailed delivery strategy has been prepared to guide a programme of activity and investment over a 5 year period, commencing in April 2021. The delivery strategy defines a programme for implementation and governance, including the prioritisation of masterplan projects and actions, and identifies roles and responsibilities for delivery.

As highlighted earlier in this masterplan, five key objectives have been set that underpin the vision to secure the regeneration of Astrmoor Industrial Estate. To support the delivery of these objectives, the regeneration masterplan incorporates guidance in the form of design and development principles that will apply to the delivery of all future development proposals within the estate. Subject to Council endorsement, the key design principles set out in the masterplan should become a material consideration in determining future planning applications in relation to future developments within the estate.

The Council owned investment sites offer development opportunities that will be of interest to both indigenous businesses seeking to expand and to developers, investors and occupiers. In addition to the design principles, detailed Concept Statements prepared for each site confirm site capacity, future uses, site constraints and site specific design guidance.

The consultation process undertaken in the preparation of the masterplan established that there was good interest from existing Astmoor businesses and existing property owners in the Council owned investment sites. This is positive, but the Council need to be able to capitalise on this interest in a transparent and compliant way that satisfies the needs of local stakeholders, whilst meeting its statutory obligations of achieving best consideration in its disposal of land.

It will be necessary for the Council to take the initial lead in order to drive this regeneration project forward. The first activity to be undertaken by the Council will be to establish an officer's working group that should meet regularly (as a minimum on a quarterly basis); establish governance and reporting protocols; confirm use of statutory powers where needed; and draw upon the project management and departmental skills of the Council to deliver estate wide regeneration. It is critical that the masterplan has ownership and direction in order to influence decision making and facilitate change.

Moving forward it will be important to ensure key partners are included to oversee the delivery of the masterplan. To bring these partners on board and to secure their endorsement, an early action will be to prepare a detailed programme

setting out key objectives and milestones to maintain momentum and manage delivery. The identification of a Project Champion who will drive forward this initiative and champion its cause at the highest level is also extremely important. Consideration should be given to setting up a Project Board similar to that which was set up in Cheshire West & Chester to drive forward the regeneration of Ellesmere Port. This is largely made up of private sector stakeholders supported by the public sector.

With sites due to be handed back to the Council by the Mersey Crossings Board in the coming months, confirmation on the timing of these being handed back and their condition on hand back will be fundamental to the preparation of a detailed delivery plan. Prior to taking forward proposals to bring the hand back sites back into beneficial economic use, early consideration and legal input is required in respect of the obligation placed upon the Council under the Crichel Downs rules, to offer back to the former owners (usually the Freeholder or long leaseholder owner including successors), land that was acquired by compulsory purchase or under the threat of compulsory purchase to develop the Mersey Gateway Crossing.

The availability of the hand back sites provides an opportunity for new employment developments to be brought forward (subject

to restrictions on uses due to safety and operational requirements pertaining to the Mersey Gateway) that could enable existing business expansion / relocation that may then release other parts of the Estate in private ownership for redevelopment. However, the more development / user restrictions that apply to the handback sites, the more likely that this will constrain their market attractiveness.

In respect of the hand back sites, the Council needs to consider the risks and implications that development of these sites places upon the Council, taking account of the terms of the overarching agreement with the Mersey Crossing Board related to the safe and continued operation of the toll bridge. The following matters will require further detailed consideration by the Council:

- Agreeing requirements for future controls over the sites;
- Agreement of a disposal strategy and structure;
- Risk assessment
- Options for revenue stream or capital receipt;
- Minimise resources required; and
- Maximising job opportunities for local people.
- Funding Options

4.2 Delivery Options

The ability to attract funds to facilitate delivery of projects within Astmoor Industrial Estate will be pivotal to its success. It will be important for partners to work together with established and new innovative funding mechanisms to secure delivery.

The preparation of detailed feasibility studies on each of the Council owned investment sites will need to be undertaken to confirm the need for public sector intervention / subsidy to assist their delivery. The actual requirements for funding are unknown at this stage, however it is important to consider relevant potential sources of funding available to support implementation and delivery of the projects.

Current funding options available to the Council to support the regeneration of Astmoor Industrial Estate include (but is not limited to):

1. Borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)
2. Funds from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
 - Strategic Investment Fund
 - Chrysalis Fund
 - Liverpool Combined Authority Urban Development Fund
 - Post BREXIT Funding
3. Private Sector Investment.

Direct Delivery

There are two options for the Council to consider:

- Directly delivering the developments as developer; and
- Delivering the remediation of the sites and providing the services infrastructure to create 'oven ready' development plots.

Through direct development the Council retains control of the site and captures 100% of the development profit as well as the potential for future revenue generation initiatives. However, the risk also solely lies with the council, and there would be a substantial call on resources to deliver the development (both capital and human). Serviced sites could be disposed of on either a freehold or a leasehold basis. Disposal by way of a development agreement is recommended so that the buyer is obliged to develop the site within an agreed time-frame.

There are a number of obligations placed upon the Council in regard to the hand back sites and the Mersey Gateway bridge. These obligations will need to be passed on to any developer of these sites, and as such a leasehold disposal would be appropriate as the Council would retain an interest in the site through the lease structure and controls through specific lease covenants.

Land Sales

Leasehold Disposal

Under a leasehold disposal, the Council would grant a lease of the site to a developer or occupier under which they would develop the land. This could be for a serviced or un-serviced site. Typically, the lease term would be either a 125 year or 250 year ground lease. The Council would either receive a capital receipt (premium) for the site, or a ground rental income depending upon the strategy that is adopted by the Council. By retaining the freehold interest in the site the Council will retain control of the use of the land and future development through the terms of the lease.

Freehold Disposal

In general terms the Council could dispose of the freehold interest in a site on a serviced or un-serviced basis. The Council would sell the freehold interest in a site to a developer or end user who would finance and build a scheme to their requirements. This option reflects a minimal financial risk to the Council who would receive a capital receipt.

In either scenario the Council could impose restrictions upon the proposed use of the site e.g. restrict the uses to B2 / B8 employment uses. Overage provisions could be included in the disposal terms to capture a proportion of any

enhanced value that might be created through the developer / owner securing an alternative planning permission for a higher value use.

Joint Venture

A joint venture is a commercial arrangement between two or more participants who agree to co-operate to achieve an objective. Joint ventures may be set up for projects for a fixed period or an indefinite period and are a way of sharing costs, expertise and risks associated with a development project.

In the context of the Council owned sites, the Council would align itself with a partner(s) who would bring added value through the imposition of complementary skills and / or additional resource (human and capital).

The most commonly used joint venture structures are as follows:

- Contractual Development Agreement
- Joint Venture Company
- Joint Venture Development Agreement

Each of the above structures have their advantages and disadvantages. The most typical structure adopted by landowners and developers to bring forward development of a site(s) such as at Astmoor is that of a Joint Venture Development Agreement.

Development partnerships can also be used for the delivery of large complex sites. There are several different Development Partnership structures including Limited Liability Partnerships and General or Limited Partnerships each containing advantages and disadvantages depending upon the purpose of the partnership structure.

Development Manager

If the Council were able to directly develop the Council owned investment sites under their control themselves, an alternative to directly managing this process would be to appoint an external Development Manager to manage delivery of the project(s) on behalf of the Council. The Development Manager would run the entire project from early political engagement to planning and design, finance, construction procurement, management and delivery. In this structure, the Council would be the Client responsible for all post PC management, FM and administration.

In summary, there are various delivery options and structures open to the Council to consider in relation to the development of the Council owned investment sites and to secure the wider regeneration of the Astmoor Industrial Estate. In relation to the hand back sites, the level of control that the Council will require over their development and future use is important to

ensure that it safeguards as far as is possible any potential breach of the Council's contractual obligations relating to the operation and maintenance of the Mersey Gateway Bridge.

The Council should consider in more detail the following delivery / disposal options:

- Joint venture with existing land owners / investors, where release of private land may optimise broader regeneration benefits and satisfy the objectives with minimum risk.
- Direct development being undertaken by the Council with procurement of a Development Manager.
- Disposal of sites on a leasehold basis by way of a development agreement – which are prepared and serviced.

There are several aspects to be considered before a final delivery option can be agreed. Further analysis and refinement of these options will be required.

4.3 Delivery Considerations

Procurement

Whichever delivery option the Council consider is appropriate to bring forward the development of the Council owned investment sites, one of the key considerations will be how the Council procures the disposal of its land holdings, and through what process. The Council has an obligation to achieve best consideration when disposing of land to satisfy the requirements of S123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Where it is intended to dispose of development land opportunities, there are two broad methods that can be utilised:

- Competitive – openly promoted through use of on-site marketing boards, advertising in national property publications such as Estates Gazette / Property Week, trade press, web site etc.
- Non –competitively – negotiated disposals.

The competitive route to market is the most effective way of ensuring that market value is achieved and is open and transparent with less risk of corruption. Issues such as State Aid and other procurement issues can be managed with more certainty.

Negotiated disposals should only be considered where there is a clear case that this will result in a better outcome for the Council, for example, where the disposal is to a special purchaser.

A negotiated disposal should only normally be considered when there is a clear justification that this will result in a better outcome for the Council. This could include practical reasons relating to the nature of the site or to an identified parties' status as a special purchaser capable of securing the full development potential from the site.

Whilst disposing of land is a relatively straight forward process the procuring of a development partner to deliver the regeneration of the Council's investment sites would require more detailed consideration. Subject to the advice of the Council's procurement team, the use of an OJEU procurement process under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 to select a development partner would be recommended in this respect.

There are a number of procurement procedures under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 that can be considered which include a restrictive procedure, a competitive dialogue procedure and a competitive procedure with negotiation. Deciding upon which procedure to use will depend on what specific requirements

the Council has in relation to project delivery, and whether any 'public works' form part of the Council's requirements.

One way to establish early interest in the Astmoor Regeneration project would be for the Council to issue a Prior Information Notice (PIN) through an appropriate route such as the European Journal and through advertising this opportunity in the Property / Construction press whereby the Council would invite Expressions of Interest from potential private sector partners, to offer a flexible approach to support delivery of development on the Council investment sites and in the wider regeneration of the estate.

Due Diligence

Given the nature of the sites, prospective developers will require access to due diligence reports and information relating to the sites. Prior to the Council owned investment sites being marketed, steps to de-risk the disposal process should be put in place to create delivery certainty.

This due diligence should include agreeing the approach to satisfying the requirements of the Crichel Downs rules; undertaking technical studies to identify any site constraints; identifying any legal issues that might affect the future development of the sites; provide more

planning certainty through the preparation of development brief(s) for the sites; preparation of a costed remediation strategy including termination or diversion of any utilities / services affecting the future development of the sites; and identifying potential sources and availability of public funding to fund site remediation / preparation. Site specific action plans have been prepared in respect of each of the five Council owned investment sites (Sites A1 – A5).

Potential Risks

The four Council owned hand back sites (A1 -A4) are unique in that they are predominantly located beneath the Mersey Gateway structure and as a result of this are constrained both physically by the actual bridge structure and legally by constraints contained within the agreement between the Mersey Crossings Board and Halton Borough Council relating to their future development, and access and maintenance to the Mersey Gateway bridge structure.

As a result of these constraints the development of each site is restricted when compared to similar sized sites that do not have the burden of these restrictions. The amount of potential development that can be delivered on each site is limited by the fact that no built development can be undertaken within a 3 metre offset of the Mersey Gateway viaduct. Land below the

crossing can be used for car parking and for hardstanding subject to agreement.

The legal restrictions on future use and access / maintenance requirements on the hand back sites have the potential to have an impact upon their market attractiveness, however taking account of the limited development opportunities that are available within the Astmoor Estate, it is considered that with careful structuring of the legal agreements that these will not be a material barrier to their development.

Disposal

Whilst a number of the sites may lend themselves to be lotted together, for example Site A2, A3 and A4, by seeking to dispose of these to a single buyer / developer, this may then preclude a party e.g. owner occupier who is interested in developing a single site forming part of a lot. As such, if the Council were to embark upon the procurement of a development partner to deliver the development of lotted sites, enough flexibility should be built into the legal agreement with the developer in order that a direct approach from an occupier wishing to develop its own project can be accommodated.

Due to the contractual obligations placed on the Council through the agreement with the Mersey Crossings Board, the Council should only consider a disposal of the hand back site(s)

by way of a long leasehold interest. In terms of preference, 250 years is favoured by developers and investors.

Considering the unique circumstances of developing sites below the Mersey Gateway bridge, and the likely restrictions that the Council will look to impose within the lease of these sites (to mirror the legal obligations placed upon the Council under its agreement with the Mersey Crossings Board) in relation to the operation of the bridge crossing, it may be more appropriate to offer a 125 year lease in this regard.

Guidance upon the contractual restrictions imposed upon the Council should be sought from the Council's legal advisers. These restrictions can then be incorporated in the structure of the lease documentation that will be prepared to support the disposal of the hand back sites.

Notwithstanding the contractual obligations that the Council may be bound by under the agreement with the Mersey Crossings Board there are certain restrictions and obligations that the Council should impose upon a long leasehold buyer of the hand back sites which would generally apply to any site disposal. The Council's legal advisers should lead upon the preparation of appropriate terms to be included within the lease for the hand back sites.

Working with existing landowners / investors

During the preparation of the masterplan several consultation events were undertaken with stakeholders including existing landowners / developers / investors. This included several 'one to one' discussions with developers and site owners to establish individual parties' opinions on Astmoor Industrial Estate and to establish their interest in the future development opportunities that the Council will bring forward including the hand back sites, and the wider regeneration / redevelopment of the estate.

Several property owners and investors that have holdings within the Astmoor estate have expressed interest in the hand back development opportunities that the Council will be bringing forward and have also confirmed that they would be interested in working with the Council in the wider regeneration of the estate.

One way to establish early interest in the Astmoor Regeneration project would be for the Council to issue a Prior Information Notice (PIN) through an appropriate route such as the European Journal and through advertising this opportunity in the Property / Construction press requesting expressions of interest from interested parties to offer a flexible approach to support delivery of development on the Council investment sites and in the wider regeneration of the estate.

Developers, Investors, Design and Build contractors and Development Managers, who may be interested in the opportunity could engage in dialogue with the Council to explore how they might work with the Council to deliver the Council's ambitions. An initial written expression of interest should be sought from interested parties to establish the nature of their interest, their track record, financial standing, their approach to risk, their ability to introduce funding, comments on the regeneration masterplan and how to take forward development, their thoughts on the role they expect the Council to play, and confirmation of what the interested party can offer and any unique qualities that they can bring to make this a successful project.

An alternative approach to consider would be for the Council to enter into individual Memorandum of Understanding with the major existing property owners to work together to secure the regeneration of those parts of the estate within the control of the existing owners; each party utilising their expertise, management, and funding and in the case of the Council its statutory powers to deliver the required regeneration. This may be particularly relevant in respect of the Eastern Renewal Area where there is fragmented ownership and inappropriate uses that would be better relocated to alternative relocation sites.

The regeneration of the Eastern Renewal Area is a project in its own right. This area contains some of the oldest building stock within the estate and is desperately in need of a refresh or more radical action. The built fabric of this part of Astmoor does not meet modern business needs and a more radical approach may be needed including phased remodelling or even redevelopment.

In order to deliver the regeneration of this part of the estate, this will require the Council and the major landowning parties to work together to develop a mini masterplan and delivery strategy for this part of the estate. This will need the key stakeholders (property owners / major occupiers / the Council / BID) buy in to work together and potentially fund the necessary cost of taking this forward.

The terms of reference of such memorandum would need to be agreed between the parties. Whether this would translate into a formal joint venture or a more traditional development partnership i.e. development agreement will require further consideration by the Council.

Delivery Programme

The masterplan has been developed collaboratively between public and private sector partners. Its delivery is predicated upon a co-operative approach that uses the statutory powers and project management skills of the public sector, and the commercial expertise and drive of the private sector.

Delivering the masterplan will require significant financial investment from both sectors. The delivery strategy is presented by reference to Phases / Years. An outline programme is set out below. A programme of activities for each of the five year programme has been prepared and is included within the detailed Delivery Strategy.

	Phases / Years				
	1	2	3	4	5
Project Management					
A1 Goddard Road					
A2 Chadwick Road West					
A3 Davy Road					
A4 Chadwick Road South					
A5 Old Quay Street					
Private Sector Investment Sites					
East Astmoor					
Astmoor Boulevard					
Chadwick Road					
East – West Road					
Arkwright Road					
Brindley Road					
Greenways					
Branding / Signage					

