

Hillhouse

Masterplan Review.

2026



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Hillhouse Masterplan Review

1. Introduction

1.1 Hillhouse International on the Wyre Estuary became a Central Government agreed Enterprise Zone (EZ) in 2016.

1.2 The EZ is primarily owned and controlled by private entity NPL Group (UK) Ltd (NPL) with major occupiers Victrex PLC, AGC Chemicals, and Addison Project having substantial freehold interests. Wyre Council is the accountable body for the EZ.

1.3 A masterplan was developed in 2018 by Mott MacDonald in partnership with multi-disciplinary partners, covering the 25-year lifespan of the Enterprise Zone designation. Since then, various background changes at the site and in relation to the wider business environment have occurred. To ensure the masterplan remains current, this Masterplan Review was commissioned by Wyre Council, in conjunction with NPL in late 2024. This Masterplan Review is an addendum to the 2018 Masterplan.

1.4 The team that has undertaken the Masterplan Review has been led by WSP who also provided expertise in transport, access, planning and infrastructure. WSP were able to assign staff with knowledge from working on the Masterplan in 2018, which has brought continuity of knowledge and understanding of the EZ's history, constraints and initial strategy. The team has also included:

- **LDA Design – Landscape and Masterplanning.** Leading work on spatial considerations and potential layout/landscape considerations. This includes the previous IBI lead from the original masterplan.
- **BE Group – Property and Market.** An organisation who worked on the previous masterplan using the same staff, but who have also more recently

formed part of the team who have undertaken an Employment Land Review for Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre.

- **Walker Sime – Costing.** Providing a small high-level input on costing of the core off site infrastructure to allow initial understanding of the implications of road bridge or not scenarios.

1.6 Work has been undertaken on this Review using the following methods:

- Site visits with NPL and others (visiting both within and outside the site boundaries);
- Review of the Masterplan and documentation since 2018;
- Workshop sessions with key stakeholders, including representatives of key current businesses in occupation at the EZ;
- Technical reviews of information; and
- Discussion with key officers of the inward investment agency and senior officers and members at Wyre Council.

1.7 The numbers of jobs to be created within the masterplan area would vary in relation to the specific nature and mix of land uses, particularly in relation to the potential for a large footprint occupier. This would need more detailed work to understand, but the overall aim of development at the EZ is to significantly increase density of development, and therefore jobs.

1.8 The number of jobs generated by a potential large-footprint occupier could vary considerably depending on the end use. Uses such as defence may create a lower number of higher-skilled, higher-value jobs, while other uses, such as a prison, may deliver higher levels of employment overall. This Review is not intended to provide a detailed assessment of job numbers within the EZ.

2. The Site & 2018 Masterplan

2.1 The Site

2.1.1 Wyre is a district in Lancashire, located in the northern part of the Fylde Coast sub-region, which also includes Fylde and Blackpool. The EZ site is at Thornton, to the north of the settlement, and is separated from the town of

Fleetwood by existing green belt. To the east of the site is the River Wyre Estuary. Figure 2-1 shows the EZ's extent and location, looking northwards towards Fleetwood.



Figure 2-1 – Site Extent (Source: Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone Marketing Brochure, 2018)

2.1.2 Figure 2-2 overleaf shows the red line boundary of the masterplan or study area. Land around the Enterprise Way Industrial Estate which is in the northwestern part of the masterplan area could provide possible key accessible links between this

part of the masterplan area and relatively new housing to the South (dwellings off Hawthorn Drive).

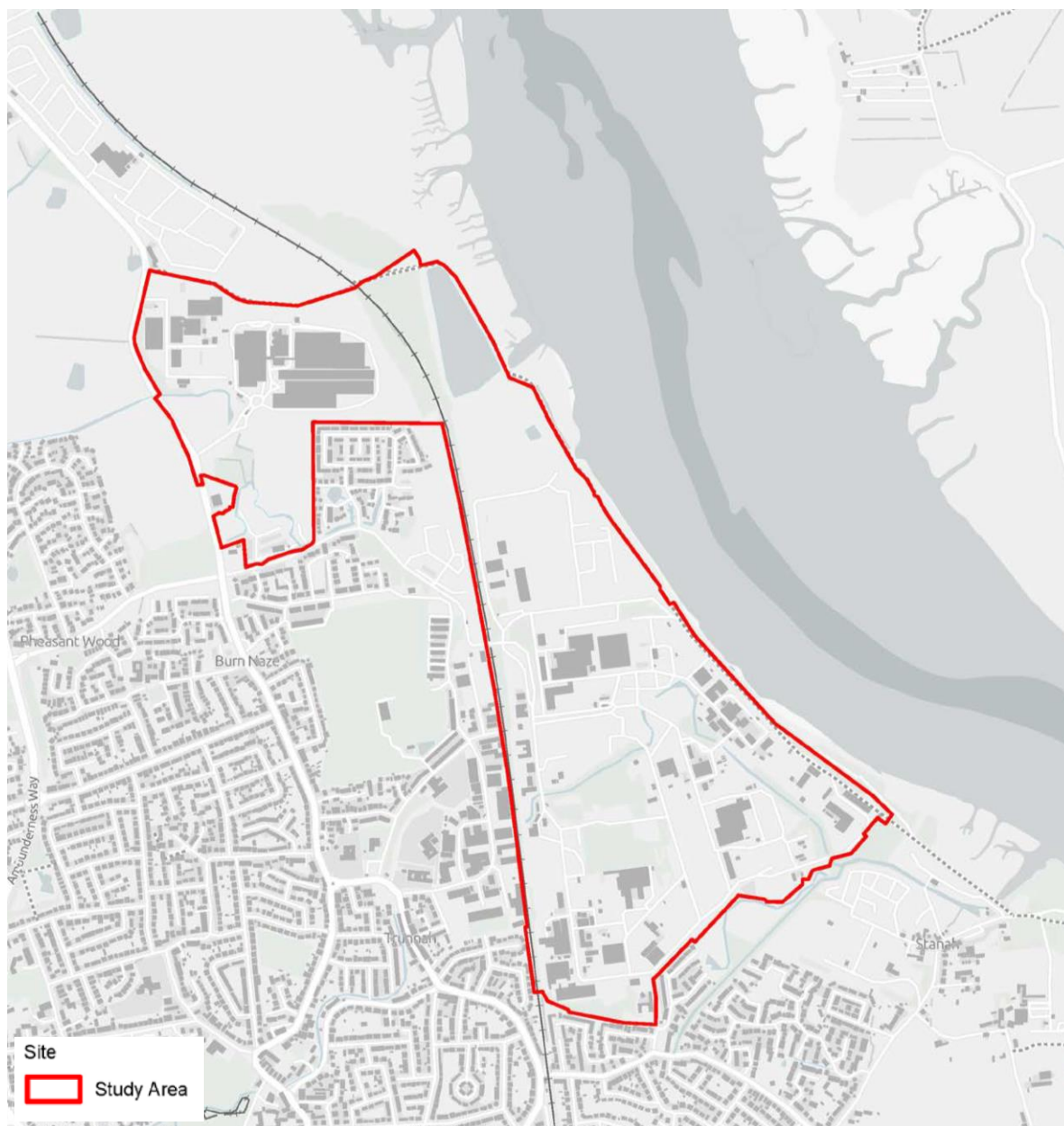


Figure 2-2 – Red Line Boundary

2.1.3 Along the western boundary of the EZ lies the formerly active Fleetwood to Poulton Railway line. The route has been disused for some time, with the last passenger train understood to have operated in 1970 and last freight train in 1999. The route is still currently safeguarded for rail use within the local plan.

2.1.4 Along the eastern boundary is the River Wyre Estuary, separated from the site by bunded land, with a public footpath running between the site secure boundary

and the river.

2.1.5 The EZ is mainly located in Flood Zone 2 and 3, with the source being sea flooding. A small extent of the site to the south of the lagoon, and on the northwestern periphery, is within Flood Zone 1. There may be opportunities to try to mitigate against flood risk. Many of the proposed uses for the EZ would be classed as less vulnerable development in terms of flood risk impact.

2.1.6 There are residential areas to the south of the site, interspersed with light industrial premises. In recent years there has been housing growth in the area, particularly in the northwestern part of the EZ. Some housing development within the EZ has been completed, a parcel of land in the EZ has received outline planning permission for housing, and a reserved matters application has been received for another.

2.1.7 This housing growth has been partly facilitated by the upgrading of the A585 Garstang New Road from Skippool to Windy Harbour, providing better road-based links from the area towards the M55 (and onwards to the M6 at Preston). These upgrades have also benefitted EZ-related

traffic.

2.1.7 Within this Review, the site has been divided into three distinct areas (as opposed to two areas in the 2018 Masterplan) to better reflect the development potential of land in the northern extent of the site. The areas are as follows, and shown in Figure 2-3:

- **Southern End** – same area as the 2018 Masterplan;
- **Middle** – area where large footprint occupiers would be attracted to;
- **Northern End** – lagoon area (which is a consideration for future development by NPL, but needs further assessment) and Enterprise Way.



Figure 2-3 – Site Areas

The Southern End

2.1.8 At the southern end of the EZ is the secure and developed boundary zone, with significant established businesses. This area has two access points. The southern access at the Hawthorns is pedestrian and emergency and local access only, and is close to long established residential communities. The main secure gated access point is accessed via Bourne Road South – a long-established route to the EZ, which housing has gradually encroached around.

The Middle

2.1.9 In the middle section of the EZ is a substantial vacant plot, north of the Victrex site and adjacent to Addisons. This land is undeveloped and available as multiple plots or one large plot.

The Northern End

2.1.10 At the northern end of the EZ is the lagoon area, and Enterprise Way Industrial Estate.

Summary

2.1.11 The EZ site is 2km in length from its most northern point to the southern end of the site, with the widest east-west length being around 1km. The site in effect forms an elongated triangular shape of land, with the tip at the northern end. While the larger area of the site at the south has substantial occupants, even that is relatively lightly developed and occupied.

2.2 Site Accesses

2.2.1 For the purposes of this Review, access to the EZ is considered in terms of two routes: Bourne Road South and Bourne Road North. Bourne Road South is the existing access road to the gatehouse on the western boundary of the EZ. It forms a strategic route, connecting to Fleetwood Road North via a signalised junction and then continuing along Bourne Way to the A585 Amounderness Way.

2.2.2 Bourne Road North is the proposed

Northern Access Road for the EZ, providing access to the northern part of the site. The route would be located approximately 650m north of Bourne Road South, extending from the EZ across the railway line and through the retained corridor between Enterprise Way Industrial Estate to the north and the residential properties on Hawthorn Drive to the south. The road would connect to Fleetwood Road North to the west and provide a strategic link to the wider highway network via Bourne Way and the A585 Amounderness Way.

2.2.3 The feasibility of the Northern Access Road (or proposed Bourne Road North) would need to consider land ownerships, the impact on residential amenity and the proposed uses in the north of the site.

2.3 Review of 2018 Masterplan

2.3.1 As part of this Masterplan Review, a review of the 2018 Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone Masterplan has been undertaken. A summary of key points from the 2018 masterplan, with their corresponding status in this Masterplan Review are contained in the Tables 2-1, 2-2, 2-3 and 2-4 overleaf.

Table 2-1 – Review of 2018 Masterplan

2018 Masterplan	Status in Masterplan Review 2026
1.2 Planning Policy Context	Included as Section 4.2 Planning Policy Context
The current Development Plan for the Hillhouse International Enterprise Zone comprises: • Saved policies of the Wyre Borough Local Plan (1999); • Fleetwood - Thornton Area Action Plan (AAP) (2009); • Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Core Strategy DPD (2009); and • Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Site Allocation and Development Management Policies (2013)	Has been updated to reflect inclusion of Wyre Local Plan (2011-2031)
2.2 Summaries of Baseline Topics	Included as Section 4. Key Issues, Constraints and Parameters
Access and Movement	Included as Section 4.1 Access and Movement The movement of the Bourne Road gatehouse is reflected in Section 3. Changes Since Previous Masterplan
Property Market	Included as Section 5 Property Market
Environment and Ecology	Included in Section 4.2 Planning Policy Context and Section 4.3 Planning Constraints
The 6 main constraints for the EZ are: • The safeguarded rail line route • River Wyre Estuary and surrounding land Flood risk • Possible ground and water contamination • Land ownership • Utilities, including the gas line on the eastern side of Enterprise Zone.	The 6 main constraints remain relevant to this Masterplan Review as they have not been addressed or mitigated in the interim
3.2 Key Considerations	Included as Section 4. Key Issues, Constraints and Parameters
Key characteristics of the EZ which have influenced the masterplan are: • Its location within one of Europe's leading regions and within the Lancashire Advanced Manufacturing and Energy Cluster – a key part of the Northern Powerhouse; • The region's expertise of advanced manufacturing, engineering, aerospace, automotive and energy related industries; • Its legacy, as a chemical and energy production facility; • Its proximity to an internationally significant energy and chemical industries cluster (the Energy Coast); • Its proximity to Blackpool and links to skills, knowledge and services; • Its accessibility from the Amounderness Way (A585) and improving public transport connectivity; and • Its riverside setting and links to the surrounding areas of Cleveleys, Blackpool and Fleetwood.	The key characteristics remain relevant to this Masterplan Review and have been reflected throughout

Table 2-2 – Review of 2018 Masterplan

2018 Masterplan	Status in Masterplan Review 2026
3.3 Vision Our masterplan has been formed with the aim of realising the following vision: <i>“A high quality riverside residential and employment site, offering well connected premises for world leading chemical and energy production, logistics and manufacturing.”</i>	This vision remains relevant to this Masterplan Review, and a series of recommended next steps has been identified to support its delivery Section 5. Market View has been updated to reflect a move away from demand in chemical production, towards energy, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and defence
3.4 Objectives The following objectives have been set out to help deliver the Vision. These are: • Objective 1: Meet the Demand from a Diverse Range of Sectors • Objective 2: Provide Improving Accessibility • Objective 3: Deliver Critical Infrastructure • Objective 4: Marketing and Promotion • Objective 5: Support Competitive Business, Knowledge and Innovation • Objective 6: Deliver Efficient and Functional Employment Plots • Objective 7: Create an Active, Productive and Liveable Environment	These objectives remain relevant to this Masterplan Review, and a series of recommended next steps has been identified to support its delivery
4. Masterplan Principles A summary of key overall principles of the masterplan are: • Prioritise the creation of the Northern Access Road; • Deliver a new clearly defined gateway entrance off Fleetwood Way North; • Develop a green grid landscape approach; • Define a clear north-south primary access route though the site; • Create secure edges to the EZ as required for controlled pedestrian and vehicular access; • Deliver a secure and non-secure site within the masterplan; • Deliver active movement through the site via connected pedestrian and cycle networks; • Explore ways of strengthening relationships with local leisure providers; • Deliver improvements to the frontages, highways and street infrastructure; • Enhance connections to the wider transport network; • Deliver a common theme of quality in buildings, landscape, public realm and highway design; • Achieve high levels of sustainability through increased active travel, sustainable energy production and active uses; and • Deliver a mix of land uses.	These principles remain relevant to this Masterplan Review, and a series of recommended next steps has been identified to support its delivery Principle 6 (Deliver a secure and non-secure site within the masterplan) will depend on occupier demand, but remains relevant

Table 2-3 – Review of 2018 Masterplan

2018 Masterplan	Status in Masterplan Review 2026
5.2 Land Use Characteristics	The land use characteristics table remains relevant to this Masterplan Review, with the exception of office use. BE Group's Employment Land Study (2024) has suggested that demand for office use in this location is low Section 5. Market View has been updated to reflect a move away from demand in chemical production, towards energy and AI
5.4.1 Secure Area South	Loss of proposed power station in Secure Area (South) is reflected in Section 3. Changes Since Previous Masterplan
5.4.2 Open Access Area (North)	Exploration of training academy within Open Access Area (North) is reflected in Section 3. Changes Since Previous Masterplan
5.5 Indicative Floorspace Yield	Floorspace yields remain relevant (including uses, potential storeys, potential floorspace, potential unit ranges and comments) We have not updated the plots or phasing for this 2026 Masterplan Review
5.5.1 Residential Development	Housing targets within the EZ will be delivered during the current plan period, therefore the EZ Masterplan Review does not need to include Use Class C3 This is reflected in Section 3. Changes Since Previous Masterplan
6. Access and Movement Four key access and movement interventions were proposed as part of the masterplan as follows: 1. New primary access road from roundabout on B5268 into the northern part of site; 2. Reconfiguration of Bourne Road access gatehouse: in short term, additional lane for HGVs, in medium term staff only entrance; 3. Relocation of the manned gatehouse in line with repositioning of secure fence line; 4. North-south spine corridor through entire site.	These four key interventions remain relevant and are considered in Section 4. Key Issues, Constraints and Parameters Intervention 1, 3 and 4 have not yet happened. Intervention 2 has happened in the short-term but not in the medium-term (and is dependent on the implementation of Intervention 1)

Table 2-4 – Review of 2018 Masterplan

2018 Masterplan	Status in Masterplan Review 2026																						
7. Form, Space and Massing Principles	The form, space and massing principles remain relevant to this Masterplan Review																						
8. Masterplan Character Areas	The character areas remain relevant to this Masterplan Review																						
9. Utilities	Availability of power is a significant issue at the EZ, due to loss of potential power station and potential new land uses being more energy-intensive (i.e. AI data centre) This is considered throughout this Masterplan Review and a recommendation within Section 8. Summary is to undertake a further study into the energy capacity and infrastructure of the site																						
10. Phasing	The Phasing Plan has not been updated as part of this Masterplan Review A review of progress against the phasing plan is contained within Section 3.3 Progress Against 2018 Phasing Plan																						
11. Further Work and Next Steps Further work and outstanding queries to be addressed: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Issue</th><th>What to be done</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Development demand</td><td>Assessment of demand for proposed land use</td></tr> <tr> <td>Utilities infrastructure condition</td><td>Intrusive site investigation</td></tr> <tr> <td>Utility demand</td><td>Utility demand assessment</td></tr> <tr> <td>Utility capacity</td><td>Discussions with providers</td></tr> <tr> <td>Infrastructure demand and capacity</td><td>Discussion with infrastructure providers</td></tr> <tr> <td>Pipelines</td><td>Establish width of easement/ wayleave for High-Pressure Gas main</td></tr> <tr> <td>Ecological constraints</td><td>Phase 1 Ecology assessment Project Level Habitat Regulation Assessment Review of ecological mitigation and compensation land</td></tr> <tr> <td>Landscape and green infrastructure</td><td>Landscape and green infrastructure framework Funding mechanism for provision and long term maintenance of green infrastructure</td></tr> <tr> <td>Contaminated land and water</td><td>Intrusive site investigation</td></tr> <tr> <td>Flood risk and drainage</td><td>Flood risk assessment</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Issue	What to be done	Development demand	Assessment of demand for proposed land use	Utilities infrastructure condition	Intrusive site investigation	Utility demand	Utility demand assessment	Utility capacity	Discussions with providers	Infrastructure demand and capacity	Discussion with infrastructure providers	Pipelines	Establish width of easement/ wayleave for High-Pressure Gas main	Ecological constraints	Phase 1 Ecology assessment Project Level Habitat Regulation Assessment Review of ecological mitigation and compensation land	Landscape and green infrastructure	Landscape and green infrastructure framework Funding mechanism for provision and long term maintenance of green infrastructure	Contaminated land and water	Intrusive site investigation	Flood risk and drainage	Flood risk assessment	Majority of further work and outstanding queries within the 2018 Masterplan have not been addressed or undertaken These are reflected in Section 8. Summary, alongside additional next steps identified as part of this Masterplan Review
Issue	What to be done																						
Development demand	Assessment of demand for proposed land use																						
Utilities infrastructure condition	Intrusive site investigation																						
Utility demand	Utility demand assessment																						
Utility capacity	Discussions with providers																						
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3. Changes Since Previous Masterplan



Figure 3-1 – 2018 Masterplan

3.1 Changes to the Site

3.1.1 Since the 2018 Masterplan, there have been a number of key changes at the Hillhouse Technology EZ Masterplan site. These include:

- The loss of Vinnolit as a business on the Southern End and the proposed power station investment into the site.
- Extension of the Local Full Fibre Network on the 'doorstep' of the EZ.
- Construction of a new Bourne Road gatehouse, which encompassed improved road access, improved water supply and distribution, improved electrical supply and distribution.
- A585 Skippool to Windy Harbour link road has opened, which has allowed lorry access to improve and likely reduced journey times to the EZ.
- The establishment of a Hydrogen Steering Group by NPL and concept development of hydrogen production at the EZ, which would utilise the potential attribute of abundant power and the proximity of the site to water.
- A Growth Energy Innovation Regulatory Sandbox (GEIRS) developed by Lorraine Beavers MP, in partnership with parties including NPL in April 2025. The GEIRS for Blackpool North and Fleetwood would involve the role of Fleetwood & Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone as a potential industrial base, and would propose to introduce:

“An innovative regulatory framework which allows new technologies, business models or policies to be tested within a controlled environment” (GEIRS Brochure April 2025, Lorraine Beavers MP)

- Approval of grant funding for the development of proposals for a Training Centre which could improve shared facilities within the EZ. This Training Centre could support apprenticeship schemes and talent in the local area.
- Based on figures provided by Wyre Council, job numbers provided across

the site in December 2025 were approximately 1,726 across the site and 14 new businesses have come to the EZ since 2018. In 2018 there were 3 large occupiers, 35 SMEs and 1,650 jobs in 2018. The site has had some marginal growth in job figures due to Addisons expansion.

- Some elements of Phase 1 from the 2018 Masterplan have been delivered, particularly on the western side of the railway. Access issues have not been addressed, and associated infrastructure has not been delivered from Phase 1.
- Some housing has been delivered in the northern end of the site. Outline consent has been received for a further 130 dwellings, and a reserved matters application is currently being considered. It is expected that housing within the EZ will be delivered within the current plan period.
- There have been multiple planning applications submitted within the EZ (see Table-4-1), but an absence of significant development proposals (such as new industrial units) have been submitted.
- Strategic Outline Business Case work was undertaken in 2021 (led by the Department for Transport) as part of the national Restoring Your Railways programme.
- The Employment Land Review (2024) identified there was 10.96ha employment land for B use classes (including E(g) that replace use class B1).
- The EZ has been marketed for sale by NPL since August 2025.

3.2 Changes in the Wider Context

3.2.1 At a local and regional level, the key changes have been:

- Assessment of the feasibility of the EZ has presented a strategically compelling alternative termination point for the Morgan and Morecambe Wind Farm's onshore connection route. Work has identified the potential for Lancashire to capture greater economic, social and environmental value from the project by landing and distributing power through the EZ.
- Declaration of a Climate Emergency by Wyre Council in July 2019.
- The 2021 Environment Act introduced mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for almost all developments, with updated exemptions announced in August 2026.
- Lancashire Combined County Authority (LCCA), officially launched February 2025. The Lancashire Growth Plan was adopted October 2025 and the currently on-going development of the Joint Lancashire Transport Plan.
- A substantial change in interests following the global pandemic and Ukraine War. This means that greater emphasis has been placed on resilience, security and power by companies and governments.
- The Government announced a Modern Industrial Strategy in June 2025, which is a 10-year plan to increase business investment and grow the industries of the future in the UK. The Strategy will:

“Make it quicker and easier for business to invest and will provide the certainty and stability needed for long-term investment decisions” (The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy, Department for Business and Trade)

- It is considered that the EZ will need to align in policy terms to the Industrial Strategy and needs the certainty and

stability referred to in the Strategy to enable the best possible long-term investment. Sites of this scale with the attributes it has (security and ability to provide for chemical and power industries) are rare and represent something that any government should be looking to help inward investment into.

- In July 2025, the Office of Rail and Road produced a report which highlighted that the nature of freight moved on railways is moving towards maritime intermodal (shipping containers) and construction materials (i.e. aggregates from quarries). Neither of these are likely to happen on the Fleetwood line since it is not a container port, nor servicing construction type traffic.

3.3 Progress Against 2018 Phasing Plan

3.3.1 The 2018 Masterplan set out a phased delivery programme across the 25-year Enterprise Zone designation, with timescales against the phases as follows:

- Phase 1: 2019 – 2023
- Phase 2: 2023 – 2030
- Phase 3: 2031 onwards

3.3.2 The Phasing Plan included consideration of development plots, highways and utilities. The Phasing Plan has not been updated as part of this 2026 Masterplan Review, and the plot layout and indicative floorspace yield phasing have also not been revisited.

3.3.3 The 2018 Phasing Plan has not been delivered in line with the original programme for a variety of reasons. Whilst some Phase 1 development has taken place on the western side of the railway, the access improvements and enabling infrastructure required to support development at scale in subsequent phases (Northern Access Road, flooding and power) have yet to be implemented. As set out in the 2018 Phasing Plan, the delivery of Phases 2 and 3, particularly at significant scale or where they include land uses generating substantial trip activity, is likely to require the infrastructure interventions identified for Phase 1.

3.3.4 The phasing sequence set out in the 2018 Masterplan should therefore be read as indicative only, and a refreshed phasing plan is recommended as part of the further work identified in Section 8 of this Review. This would require a detailed assessment of works completed across the site, a refreshed plot layout and indicative floorspace yield to be calculated.

4. Key Issues, Constraints & Parameters

4.1 Access and Movement

4.1.1 Access and movement considerations remain a significant issue to unlocking the potential of the EZ.

4.1.2 The 2018 masterplan noted 4 key interventions for access and movement as part of the masterplan. These included:

1. New primary access road from roundabout on B5268 into the northern part of site;
2. Reconfiguration of Bourne Road access gatehouse: in short term, additional lane for HGVs, in medium term staff only entrance;
3. Relocation of the manned gatehouse in line with repositioning of secure fence line;
4. North-south spine corridor through entire site.

4.1.3 Interventions 1, 3 and 4 have not been progressed as per the 2018 masterplan. Intervention 2 has been delivered in the short-term through the reconfiguration of the gatehouse at Bourne Road. It has not been delivered in the medium-term, as this requires Intervention 1 (the Northern Access Road) to be delivered. Similarly, whilst the gatehouse in Intervention 3 has been repositioned, our understanding is that this has not happened in line with the secure fence line.

4.1.4 Without a new primary access road (Northern Access Road), the EZ's growth potential will in WSP's opinion be constrained, with development largely limited to small-scale schemes around the existing gatehouse.

Northern Access Road

4.1.5 Prior to this Review, WSP undertook an assessment of the potential access route alignments for a Northern Access Road utilising Bourne Road North. This work considered a 'without bridge' (at-grade) option and a 'with bridge' option.

4.1.6 In our view, an at-grade crossing option would require robust justification, as Network Rail is unlikely to support the creation of a new level crossing in this location. This aligns with the Office of Rail and Road's Strategic Risk Chapter, which states that *"ORR does not support the creation of new level crossings where there is a reasonably practicable alternative"* (Office of Rail and Road, June 2026). As such, an at-grade crossing is only likely to be feasible if the railway line is closed in this location, or if a demonstrably safer alternative can be identified and agreed with the relevant stakeholders.

4.1.7 The 'with bridge' option is shown on the plan below (Figure 4-1) and in the Appendix, and would allow just under 6m clearance over the railway line. It should be noted that this plan may need more detailed topographical analysis to be relied upon for construction going forward.

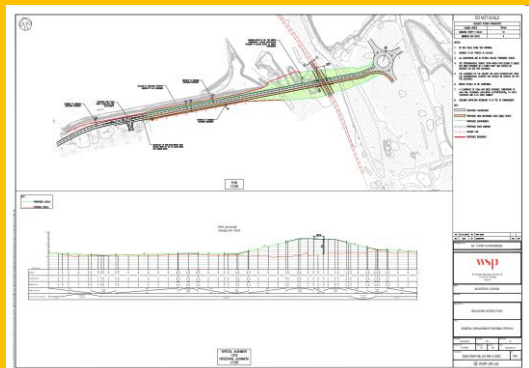


Figure 4-1 – Bridge Option (Bourne Road North Access to Site, South of Lagoon)

4.1.8 The drawings have been prepared to support the masterplan and illustrate a potential roundabout arrangement within the site. The final junction form may vary depending on the timing, extent and location of future land release, and could comprise an alternative layout such as a priority junction or three-arm roundabout. Greater certainty regarding future land use would enable the junction to be designed and delivered as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

Railway Crossing

4.1.9 Key points that need to be noted when considering options for Bourne Road North crossing the railway are:

- The 'with bridge' railway option needs to be built to a gradient suitable for large HGV's, whilst accommodating noise and visual mitigation measures.
- At a gradient of 1:20, a road would require approximately 120m to tie into the surrounding land levels, equating to around half the site width at this location. Consequently, the resulting level difference could create physical severance between the lagoon area and the central part of the site, potentially constraining large-footprint occupiers seeking to utilise both areas.
- The location of any future gatehouse at the northern end of the site, whether serving the entire EZ or providing a dedicated secure access point for a specific occupier, would require careful consideration. Such a facility would be more readily accommodated as part of an at-grade access solution than a bridge-based arrangement.
- The bridge option would necessitate significant embankments and associated infrastructure to carry the road over the railway line. In addition to creating severance within the site, this approach could introduce challenges associated with nearby residential properties and third-party land ownerships to the south of the alignment. It would also constrain future access to land to the north-west

of the site (east of Bourne Road/Lancashire Renewables and west of the railway), as a compliant level-gradient connection could not readily be achieved.

- An at-grade option potentially reduces visual and noise impact on the dwellings to the south and could allow the potential for noise and mitigation measures to be provided if required.

4.1.10 As part of the previous assessment in 2023 (referred to in 4.1.5), a preliminary cost estimate of the 'without bridge' and 'with bridge' scenarios was undertaken. This concluded headline costs of:

- **£3.480m ex VAT** without bridge; and
- **£8.022m ex VAT** with bridge.

4.1.11 A more detailed and up-to-date cost estimate would be beneficial should the schemes be progressed further.

4.1.11 This suggests a cost differential of approximately £4.8 million. However, these are early-stage estimates and should be used for order-of-magnitude comparison only. They exclude potentially significant costs, including works over a live railway (for the bridge option), development contingencies, land acquisition and site remediation.

Jameson Road Option

4.1.12 An alternative alignment for the Northern Access Road would be via Jameson Road. This route would utilise an existing railway bridge, although the structure would likely require replacement to accommodate the traffic associated with EZ access.

4.1.13 The option would require a new link road of over 1km across land with uncertain ownership and deliverability, including areas outside the control of NPL and Wyre Council. Given these constraints and the route's proximity to potentially incompatible neighbouring uses, WSP has discounted the Jameson Road access option as a means of accessing the EZ.

The Future Role of Rail

4.1.14 The Lancashire Combined County Authority (LCCA) is responsible for preparing a Transport Plan for Lancashire (expected to be adopted in Spring 2027), supported by an Implementation Plan and Rail Strategy, which are currently in the scoping stage. Together, these documents will help to inform the future and outline ambitions for the 5-mile stretch of disused railway line on the Fleetwood to Poulton railway corridor which runs along the western boundary of the EZ.

4.1.15 In 2020, as part of the Restoring Your Railways Fund, funding was received to progress the scheme to Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) stage. A Fleetwood Railway Line Reopening Feasibility Study was undertaken by Atkins on behalf of Lancashire County Council in 2021. The Restoring Your Railways Fund was cancelled by Central Government in 2024, with some more advanced schemes given funding to continue development.

4.1.16 The Railway Line Study undertaken by Atkins considered three options for the reinstatement of the railway line:

- A heavy rail route between Preston and Fleetwood;
- A light rail route operating between Poulton-le-Fylde and Fleetwood Ferry on the existing Blackpool Tram route; or
- A hybrid tram-train route operating across the national rail and Blackpool Tram routes from Preston to Fleetwood Ferry.

4.1.17 The heavy rail option represents the lowest-cost option for reinstatement, but carries risks associated with reopening and operating level crossings, particularly at Station Road, as well as potential network impacts at Preston. The light rail option avoids many of the level crossing risks but requires new on-street infrastructure, introducing challenges related to land acquisition, utilities diversions and traffic impacts. A tram-train

provides greater network integration but combines the costs and risks of light rail with additional requirements to modify existing rail infrastructure and systems to accommodate tram operations.

4.1.18 In 2020, the estimated capital costs of construction for the options were in the region of £121m for a 1 train per hour, heavy rail service (the option with the lowest capital cost). These costs are likely to have increased further since 2021, particularly if electrification were required.

4.1.19 While these costs were not assessed in detail by Atkins, WSP considers that a viable Business Case for reopening the line in this location would be challenging, particularly in the absence of a viable freight component.

4.1.20 The railway line adjacent to the EZ originally operated during a period when rail freight volumes were higher and private car ownership was lower. While reducing reliance on private vehicles remains a national policy objective, and rail can play an important role in achieving this, it is considered unlikely that industrial development within the EZ alone would generate sufficient demand to justify the reinstatement of rail freight services.

4.1.21 Despite local aspirations to reinstate the railway and its inclusion within the forthcoming LCCA Rail Strategy, WSP considers the likelihood of the corridor being reinstated for rail services to be low, given the substantial capital investment required and the uncertainty over securing the funding necessary to deliver the scheme.

4.2 Planning Policy Context

4.2.1 This section of the Review outlines the planning context that all future proposals need to be considered against. It is not meant to be a full interpretation of implications but a 'listing' against which forward considerations need to be compared.

4.2.2 The current Development Plan for the EZ comprises the following:

- Wyre Local Plan (2011-2031) (incorporating partial update of 2022) adopted 2023
- Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Core Strategy DPD (2009); and
- Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan Site Allocation and Development Management Policies (2013).

4.2.3 Policy SA4 of the Wyre Local Plan guides development at the EZ. The local Plan allocates the site as a significant mixed-use area for the region which aims to provide significant employment needs for the local area. The Local Plan has a requirement for Hillhouse Enterprise Zone to deliver:

- 250 dwellings;
- and at least 13 hectares of employment development within use classes B1 (now part of class E(g)), B2 and B8

4.2.4 Other complementary commercial uses, including an element of small convenience (A1 retail store) of no more than 400 square metres to support any residential and employment development would be considered acceptable by the Council.

4.2.5 Policy SA4 of the Local Plan requires proposals to comply with several key development considerations for development within the EZ.

4.2.6 The key development considerations are as follows:

- Development proposals should be supported by a landscape and green infrastructure framework incorporating structure tree planting, and pedestrian and cycle connectivity within and where possible outside the site. (Note this places importance on internal environment suggestions made in the property analysis).
- Proposals should account for the site's location adjacent to the Wyre Estuary/Morecambe Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) which is also a designated Ramsar Site and Site of Special Interest (SSSI). Development proposals should be accompanied by a project level Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) and have regard to the mitigation measures in the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Local Plan. Further information on the ecological constraints of the EZ is provided in the planning constraints section of this chapter.
- The EZ's location in Flood Zone 2 and 3 means that development proposals at the EZ must provide mitigation measures to ensure that the site remains safe throughout the lifetime of the development. Development proposals must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment, the results of which must take a sequential approach to site layout.
- Residual surface water run-off should drain direct to the River Wyre via Springfield in the north and Royles Brook in the south. Both are designated main Rivers. Prior written consent from the Environment Agency is required for any proposed works or structures in, under, over or within 8 metres of the top of the bank of the watercourse and 16 metres of the estuary flood defences. An open space buffer should be provided to protect the watercourse from detrimental impacts. (Note this demonstrates importance of continual dialogue with the Environment Agency).

- The site is a former chemical works and there is a high potential for ground and water contamination. Any future development proposals will be required to comply with the relevant planning and regulatory processes and be informed by the necessary technical studies, assessments and site investigations. (Note this work is considered to apply to both applications in the currently gated area and future land to the north and could be a substantial area of consideration, particularly related to the northern lagoon).
- There is a public right of way along the eastern boundary of the EZ. Planning

applications would need to take this into account.

Site Designation

4.2.7 The Wyre Local Plan identifies the EZ as a strategic site on the Fylde Coast, allocating it primarily for employment development, alongside a limited amount of residential development. Proposals within the area shown in red will be considered part of the EZ allocation and are therefore expected to comprise residential development or uses falling within Use Class E(g) (formerly B1), B2, B8, F1(a), or Sui Generis.

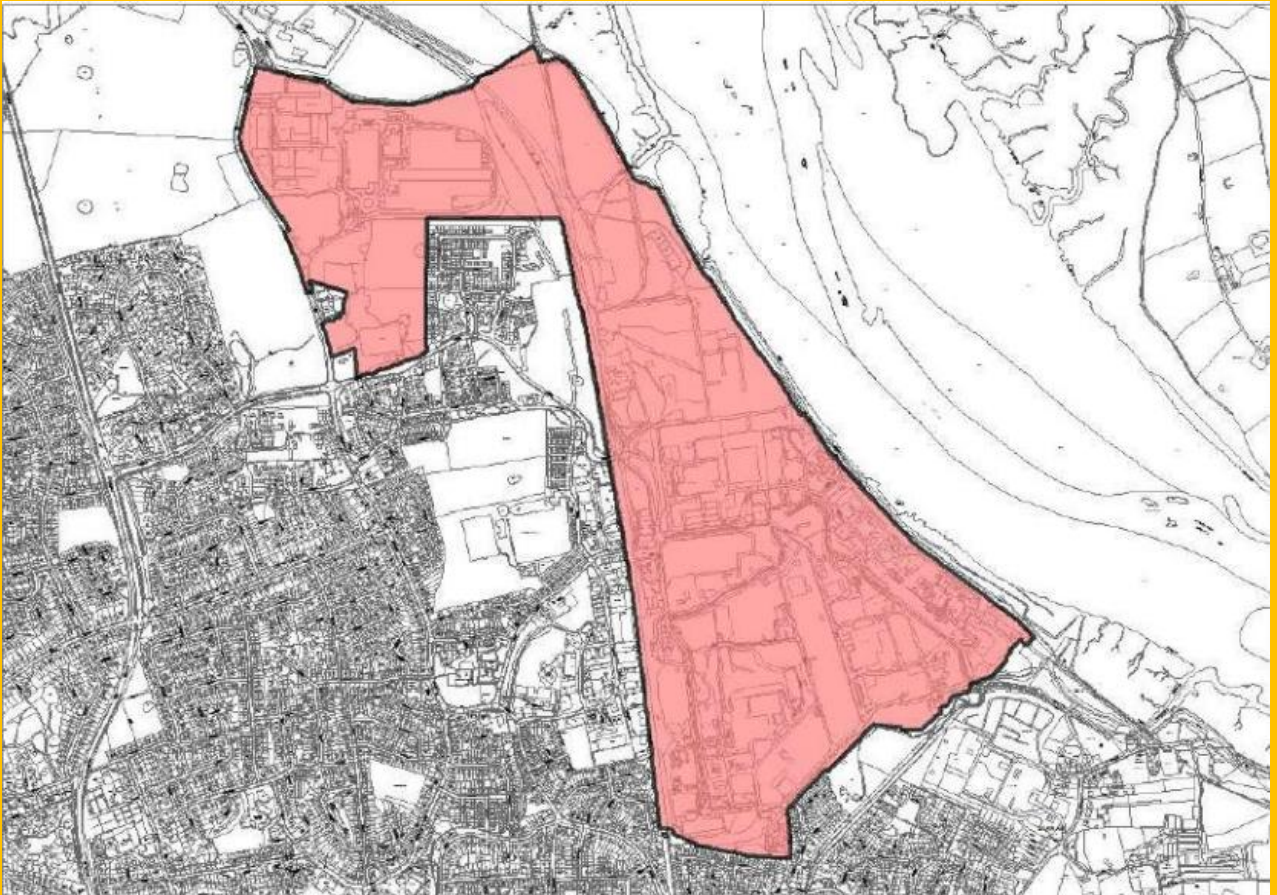


Figure 4-2 – Site Designation (Source: Wyre Local Plan)

4.3 Planning Constraints

Environmental Constraints

4.3.1 The site falls within Flood Zone 2 and 3, there is a high probability of flooding from land and the sea due to the site's location adjacent to the Wyre Estuary. Consideration of the more detailed effects of this due to bunding and other measures needs to be made going forward. It is recommended that a strategic site flood risk assessment covering the whole site is undertaken.

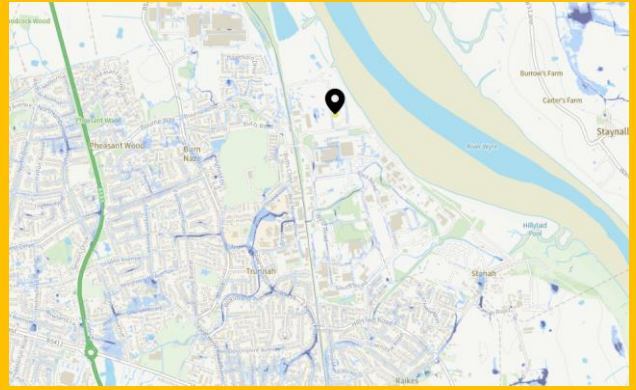


Figure 4-4 – Surface Water Flood Risk Map
(Source: DEFRA)

4.3.4 The benefits of a proposed development can be shown in the context of mitigation methods which reflect that the habitats of protected species have been considered and any harm to habitats has been compensated and offset. The benefits of a proposed development must clearly outweigh any harm, and any harm must be mitigated and compensated. The EZ's location in the context of the River Wyre SSSI is shown in the following (MagicMap) designation SSSI map.



Figure 4-5 – Site Context in River Wyre SSSI
(Source: Magic Map)

4.3.2 Similarly, the site is also technically at risk of flooding from surface water. While the majority of the site is not susceptible to flooding from surface water, proposals will have to consider drainage through their design, choice of materials, scale and massing so not to increase the risk of surface water runoff and an elevated flood risk. Proposals should consider flood risk mitigation and management strategies. All development proposals need to be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment due to the site's position in Flood Zones 2 and 3.

River Wyre and Estuary SSSI

4.3.3 Any development deemed likely to adversely affect an SSSI will need to demonstrate that the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh these impacts. There are protected species within the SSI.

4.3.5 The 2021 Environment Act makes 10% BNG mandatory for almost all developments. This is a substantial change since the last masterplan.

4.3.6 Major development = 10 homes or more; a site of 0.5 hectares or more, non-residential development and changes of use with a floorspace of 1000 sqm or more, development on sites of 1 hectare or more; and waste and mineral development. Proposals for major development must use the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.

4.3.7 Minor development = Development that does not fall under major development. Many minor development proposals can use the Small Sites Metric. Restrictions on use apply where protected species or priority habitat and designated sites are present; applicants should ensure it is appropriate to use the Small Sites Metric.

4.3.8 Exemptions to BNG from the 2021 Environment Act are as follows:

- Development granted permission by a development order (including PD);
- Development subject to the 'de minimis' exemption: Development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 sqm of onsite habitat or 5 metres of linear habitats such as hedgerows; and
- Development of BNG sites.
- Specific requirements for 10% BNG, for each of:
 - Habitats on the site (area habitat units);
 - Hedgerows if there are already hedges on the site (hedgerow units); and
 - Watercourses if the site contains or is next to a watercourse.

4.3.9 In August 2026, further BNG exemptions were introduced, as follows:

- Sites with a red line area of 0.2 ha or less will be completely exempt from mandatory BNG requirements, provided no priority habitats are present on site.
- The existing exemption for small-scale

self-build and custom-build developments will be eliminated. Many of these individual projects will naturally fall under the new 0.2 ha threshold.

- Temporary Permissions: Developments with temporary planning permissions granted for a maximum of five years will receive a targeted BNG exemption.
- Hierarchy Shift for Minor Developments: For minor developments still subject to BNG, the biodiversity gain hierarchy will be amended so that off-site biodiversity gains are given the same preference as on-site habitat creation or enhancement.

4.3.10 This will have substantial impacts upon potential layouts and use within the site.

4.4 Planning History

4.4.1 A Planning History Search has been conducted and informs this chapter of the report. The table overleaf outlines some of the recent planning applications since the masterplan was adopted in 2018. It is understood that there have been hundreds of applications in and around the EZ over the longer-term, reflecting continual activity in the area. However, some of the most recent permissions relate to the ongoing activities of businesses on the site (expansion of existing units and activities). Applications for brand new development such as office or industrial units have been limited.

4.4.2 Within recent years, several large-scale residential developments have begun to place community pressure on the western boundary of the site since they have, in effect, enclosed the route to and from the current Gatehouse with a land use that is sensitive to industrial and employment-led traffic. While residents may have bought these new properties in full knowledge of activity at the EZ, they are unlikely to be supportive of its further expansion and indeed may be against such.

4.4.3 Any development proposals will need to account of new residential

properties which have been granted planning permission in the northwestern part of Hillhouse. The site itself has a diverse and varied Planning History which highlights its mixed-use nature and importance and potential as an economic engine for the Local Area. Key planning applications and decisions over recent years are listed in the table overleaf (Table 4-1), although this is not exhaustive as there have been a range of smaller applications too within the site boundaries by various applicants including Hillhouse International and occupiers such as Victrex.

Table 4-1 – Recent EZ Planning History

LPA Reference	Proposal	Decision and date
24/00699/LC C	Construction and operation of an Incinerator Bottom Ash Processing Facility	Pending Consideration
24/00676/FUL	Proposed commercial storage building for B8 and E use	Permitted
24/00637/PA OA	Prior approval for proposed installation of 393kWp solar canopy under schedule 2, Part 14, Class OA of the GPDO	Prior Approval not required - 2024
23/01099/FUL	Erection of a building for vehicle repairs and servicing, with ancillary offices, following demolition of existing building, and change of use of land for vehicle parking (sui generis)	Approved – June 2024
23/00288/FUL	Erection of office building to replace portacabin	Application withdrawn – August 2023
22/00372/DE M	Demolition of three unused buildings (Standards North, Standards South and Building No 46)	Prior Approval not required - 2021
22/01085/LC C	Erection of portal building for storage of hazardous waste materials	Approved - 2023
20/00945/DE M	Prior notification for the demolition of the manufacturing plant	Prior Approval approved – March 2021
21/00705/FUL	Demolition of existing gatehouse offices, and erection of new gatehouse office building	Approved – October 2021

4.5 Utilities

4.5.1 Power and energy have been considered at very high level but it is clear that while the site has the potential to include uses that could generate power there is understood to be a shortage for substantial demands created in the EZ, with significant development particularly in relation to some types of more consuming land uses.

4.5.2 It is understood that Wyre Council have had meetings with National Grid related to capacity at Stanah who have suggested *“there is current capacity to meet typical demand in the wider locality. ENW is not looking to upgrade this facility until 2035+. However, Hillhouse uses are typically more energy intensive and their bespoke energy demands may be above National Grid. A bespoke assessment may be needed for specific developments coming forward that may be energy intensive”*.

4.5.3 On 14th September, the Secretary of State confirmed that the Morgan and Morecambe Offshore Wind Farm would not use the EZ and Stanah as an alternative connection point. However it is understood that a decision is still pending on whether the Morven Wind Farm could be taken through the EZ and via the Stanah substation.

4.5.4 Work is seeking to determine the potential for Lancashire to capture greater economic, social and environmental value from the project by landing and distributing power through the EZ. If substantial industrial development parcels within the Enterprise Zone could access renewable energy, they may benefit from overnight price reductions and improved grid capacity. If feasible this could create opportunities for significant land value uplift, job creation and GVA growth.

4.5.5 As we understand it, the views on water and gas have not significantly changed since the 2018 masterplan, although we highlight a general move away from the use of gas in the UK.

5. Property Market

5.1 Property Market Context

5.1.1 As was outlined in the previous masterplan, the EZ has the potential to become a more strategically important employment site, serving the Wyre area and beyond. Across the Fylde coast area there are few locations that can deliver such a site.

5.1.2 The 2024 Employment Land Review for Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre undertaken by Capita and BE Group identified around 95ha of land, but these are spread across around 27 different locations with the vast majority 'infill' or legacy sites. For Wyre, the EZ accounts for a large portion of the supply, whereas in Blackpool, over 80 percent of the 13ha available is around the airport. Fylde has the largest overall supply, but with much of Whitehills now developed out, the supply is spread across the Borough in 11 different locations.

5.1.3 The EZ has the scale and land availability to provide a strategic employment site that can cater for a range of industrial and logistics uses. But this is likely to continue to be piecemeal and through extension to the existing uses and occupiers without substantial investment and remodelling.

5.1.4 For new visitors, the site currently presents a fragmented and uncoordinated appearance, comprising a mix of active occupiers, open storage, underutilised land and derelict sites. Navigation is hindered by the absence of a site-wide plan and limited wayfinding signage, making it difficult for visitors to orient themselves and locate occupiers.

5.1.5 The current arrangement could continue providing land as and when expansion or similar uses come along. However, this will not serve the wider regional and national market and the

potential demand for employment land and premises that are more high-profile by nature.

5.2 Industrial Market Demand

5.2.1 Wyre has few modern or higher-grade premises which could be marketed to the sub-regional and regional economy. This point can also be extended to the EZ, as higher graded premises could attract investors and operators in specialist uses.

5.2.2 Various studies into have been carried out over a number of years, these include:

- Wyre Employment Land and Commercial Leisure Study 2012 (undertaken by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners).
- Commercial Market Review 2015 (undertaken by Keppie Massie).
- Update addendum of 2015 and Employment Land Study update of 2015 (undertaken by Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners).
- Fylde Coast Economic Needs Update and Employment Land Review (ELR) 2024 (undertaken by Capita and BE Group).

5.2.3 The Industrial Market Demand undertaken for this study summarises BE Group's comprehensive market review in their 2024 Employment Land Review.

5.2.4 The latest 2024 evidence reports that over the last ten years 176 industrial deals were recorded within Wyre, of which a total of 61,580 sqm of floorspace has been transacted. A breakdown by size band can be seen in the chart overleaf (Figure 5-1). On average over the last ten years, 18 deals and around 6,200 sqm of floorspace have been transacted annually.

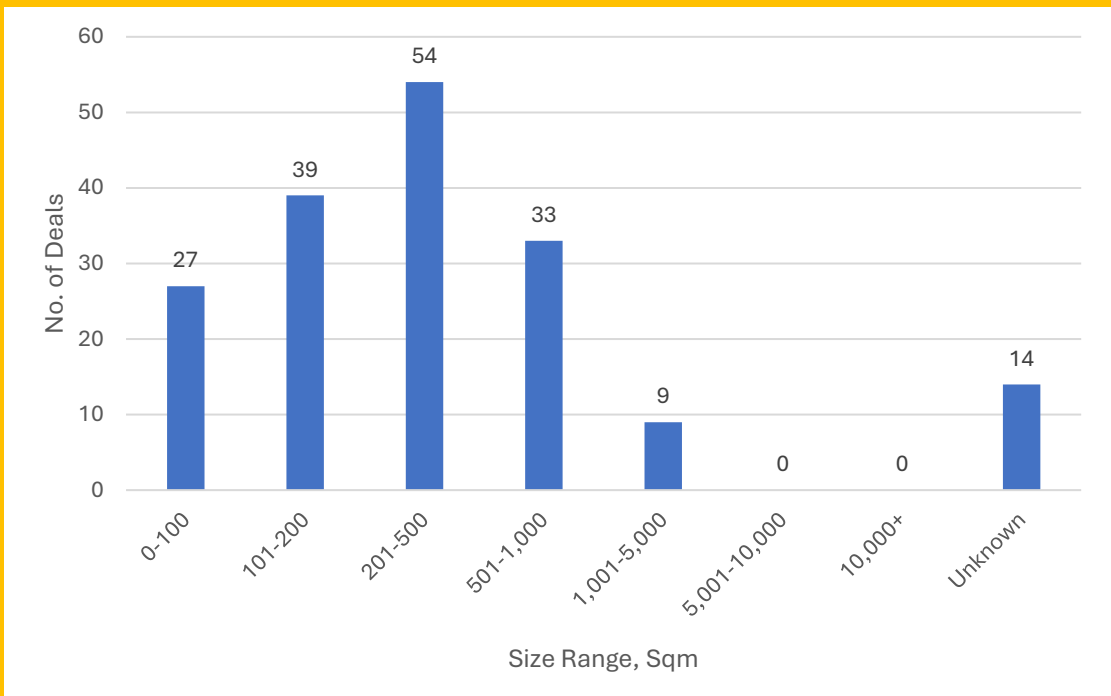


Figure 5-1 – Industrial Transactions by Size, 2013-2023 – Wyre (Source: Radius Data Exchange)

5.2.5 The key trends from the studies undertaken on the EZ are:

- “Units of under 500 sqm accounted for 68.2 percent of all transactions, with properties of 201-500 sqm dominating again showing a market focused on small to mid-sized premises.
- There were no deals for units over 5,000 sqm.
- Since January 2020 there has been just 10 transactions completed accounting for 5,420 sqm of floorspace. This may reflect weakening market demand but could also reflect a more limited local supply for businesses to take up.
- Wyre has few modern or higher-grade premises which could be marketed to the sub-regional and regional economy. This point can also be extended to the EZ as higher-grade premises could attract investors with specialist uses.
- Two third of the deals were leasehold, with an average achieved rent of £4.46/sqft (£48/sqm). Much of the take-up was average quality space and this is reflected in the rental levels. Elsewhere in the north west rents

achieved are reaching twice this level.”

5.2.6 In addition to the key trends, , NPL have advised that there were five sales since the last issue of the masterplan, namely Victrex, LWM, Xetrov, Sesona and the Events Company.

5.2.7 In addition, approaches from major organisations through inward investment agencies and NPL provide both anecdotal and demonstrable evidence of demand from large single-footprint occupiers. These enquiries recognise Hillhouse's unique offering for large-scale, secure chemical, energy and defence-related industries. At present, however, there is no readily developable location within the site capable of accommodating such requirements.

5.2.8 Hydrogen-related industries are a key aspiration for NPL and the Enterprise Zone (EZ). However, the potential benefits of attracting such uses will need to be carefully assessed against other opportunities, including data centres and alternative employment-generating sectors. While hydrogen-related development could support the site's strategic positioning within the energy and chemicals sector, this should not preclude the accommodation of smaller businesses that can also contribute to the EZ's growth.

5.2.9 A balance will therefore be required between land-intensive uses and those that generate higher levels of employment, particularly where they offer stronger salary and skills opportunities. The ability to accommodate large-scale occupiers represents a key unique selling point for the EZ and could attract significant inward investment from the energy, chemical and defence industries. In addition, recent investment in digital connectivity infrastructure in the surrounding area will create opportunities to enhance broadband provision within the EZ itself, potentially increasing its attractiveness to digital and technology-focused businesses, including data centre operators such as the proposed Blackpool AI Data Centre.

5.2.10 When the take-up is looked at by settlement, the review showed that the majority of deals, 119 or two thirds of the total, occurred in Poulton-le-Fylde or Thornton Cleveleys. This is unsurprising as most of the largest industrial estates fall into these settlements. It also points to the areas of demand going forward.

5.2.11 In conclusion, there is a reasonable level of demand at the smaller end of the market that will underpin the potential for the EZ, although at the same time the unique potential of the site to accommodate certain types of large footprint users needs to be preserved in

any detailed masterplanning or site consideration, since even with demand for small units filling such a large space with the right potential users (particularly those that could not be accommodated elsewhere) would take time.

5.3 Market Requirements

5.3.1 At present, the development and occupier market will not be attracted to the EZ. Potential could be realised through investment, re-structuring of sites, the internal road infrastructure and management.

Approach and Entrance

5.3.2 The approach to the site at present is not clear and unattractive. Any employment site needs a sense of arrival, with clear signage, branding and landscaping/street furniture. There are plenty examples of employment that have evolved from former large industrial complexes (such as Birchwood Park in Warrington and Deeside in North Wales), and where the legacy industry remains but where investment around the entrance brings potential occupiers in.

Internal Road Layout

5.3.3 Whilst remodelling may be cost prohibitive, investment in creating clear routes with landscaping, footways and street furniture is important. This initially may be a primary route that will open up or lead to development sites from the entrance. The Masterplan Review recommendations reflect this.

Site Assembly and Remodelling

5.3.4 The site ownership and site development has evolved over a long period there are a mix of sites which are currently do not read cohesively. There are areas available for larger development which can serve large scale development and potential large occupiers. Retaining these is important for the market attraction going forward, but creation of sites for smaller scale development to serve the immediate identified demand is also important if the site is to evolve as a wider mixed use employment site.

5.3.5 The key to meeting the mix of uses going forward is to assemble sites where possible, service sites and have a flexible approach. The smaller scale development should not be lost in the larger site, but

equally does not have to take up the most prominent locations. A flexible approach in the early stages will see sites emerge that can provide a mix of uses, and importantly that will start to create market interest.

Premises Provision

5.3.6 Whilst the short-term recommendation is to maintain flexibility by keeping potential for larger footprints, if businesses are to be attracted consideration should be given to some level of smaller plot development. The findings of the BE Group Employment Land Review (2024) points to the strongest demand being units of up to 1,000sqm. Businesses looking for this type of space do not want undeveloped land, but buildings readily available for occupation. Consideration should be given to where and how these can be provided as part of the early planning stage.

Management

5.3.7 Early stakeholder discussions and site observations suggest that plot management arrangements at the EZ lack clarity and are perceived as inconsistent. While certain site-wide services are provided and recovered through service charges, the basis on which these costs are allocated does not appear to be transparent across the site.

5.3.8 Although addressing these issues will be challenging, a clear governance and management framework will be essential to attract new occupiers and investment, and to support the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the EZ. While a single ownership model may not be achievable, alternatives such as a management company representing existing and future occupiers could be explored. Regardless of the approach adopted, a business location of this scale would benefit from a coordinated management structure and clear, consistent communication on matters such as service charges, utilities and site services.

5.3.9 Several businesses highlighted the requirement for individual employee identity or security passes to access the EZ, which is perceived as an additional cost and administrative burden, particularly for part-time, temporary and short-term staff. It is understood that only some occupiers currently contribute to security costs, which total approximately £1 million/annum. While these costs must be recovered, a more coordinated management structure could provide a transparent and consistent approach to cost allocation, while also considering how arrangements can be made more proportionate for occupiers with flexible or short-term workforces.

5.3.10 A particular issue is that for R&D related activities, or to attract study related to facilities like Blackpool and Fylde College, barriers need to be navigated to access premises. Such barrier issues present challenges – particularly for young people who may not have access to a car and rely on being dropped off and picked up, or access on by foot or bicycle. Creating both educational/learning and supporting amenities (such as canteens or resource hubs) that could relate to both internal and external boundaries would appear beneficial, although we recognise that this

has layout challenges as they would need to take into account secure and public areas, and the interfaces between them. It could help create ease of access to employees for businesses on site and make the site more attractive to them.

Investment Feedback

5.3.11 There needs to be clear agreement, or an agreed mechanism between Wyre Council, NPL and existing occupiers on the potential for investment spend linked to land use change being linked to return. As a public body, Wyre Council would need to demonstrate that their investment can give benefit in terms of jobs, revenue and investment from any upfront spend. With NPL it would need to ensure any other public investment might be attracted.

5.3.12 However, by example, the cost to provide the northern access road would be substantial, yet land ownership means there would be no direct return to Wyre Council for any investment and spending. Development of a return on investment mechanism could create the conditions for substantial investment which would alter the fortunes of the EZ going forward.



6. Masterplan Scenarios

6.1 Taking into account this Review's considerations and findings, WSP have worked closely with LDA and the project team to consider the views of stakeholders, and review the masterplan principles to develop the following scenarios.

6.2 Of the masterplan principles, the key consideration impacting upon internal layouts is road access. The following three scenarios were considered:

Access Option A: Bourne Road South (Existing Access Road)

6.3 Access Option A (shown on Figure 6-1) is constrained as it runs through a residential area off Bourne Road, which will limit the usability of this route throughout the day. The route enters the site halfway up the western boundary, and leads directly to the secure gatehouse.

6.4 Unless the gatehouse is relocated to allow access via a new Northern Access Road, its ability to support significant additional development is likely to be constrained. Even where additional development may be acceptable in planning terms, reliance on the existing gatehouse to serve substantial volumes of activity could be operationally challenging and may attract significant local opposition.

6.5 Whilst there may be scope for modest extensions to the central masterplan area adjacent to Addisons, it is unlikely that large-scale development of this area, or the land to the north, by a major occupier would be acceptable in addition to the uses currently allocated. The gatehouse should therefore be retained to provide operational resilience and as a potential alternative security access point should a new northern entrance be delivered.



Figure 6-1 – Access Option A





Figure 6-2 – Access Option B



Access Option B: Bourne Road North (Potential Access Road)

6.6 Access Option B (see Figure 6-2) is a proposed route which would follow the east-west alignment from the Fleetwood Road roundabout, and route between the Enterprise Way Industrial Estate to the north and residential dwellings on Hawthorn Drive to the south. The alignment would then cross the railway and enter the EZ between the northern end (lagoon area) and the middle area of the masterplan.

6.7 As identified in Section 4 of this Masterplan Review, crossing the railway line ('with bridge' or 'without bridge') has implications to be considered in further design stages, including the proximity to the residential dwellings on Hawthorn Drive.

6.8 This access option would provide significant resilience by potentially allowing for the extension of the hours of operation, particularly if a 'without bridge' (at-grade) solution could be found. This would be particularly beneficial if an unrestrained access area or separate gated area be required in the northern end of the EZ. It would have further benefit if the lagoon were found to be developable.

Access Option C: Jameson Road from North

6.9 Access Option C (see Figure-6-3) considers using Jameson Road to access the EZ from the north. This option would still require a crossing of the railway, either via a new railway bridge, or closure of the rail line. This option would require control of third-party land which is likely to be undevelopable (due to its environmental designations and poor ground conditions from being a former landfill site). It would also require the construction of over 1km of new road to access the EZ.

6.10 It is therefore considered that Access Option C is not viable, and is therefore discounted from further optioneering.

Summary

6.11 Access Option B is the preferred option for improving road access to the EZ and unlocking development potential across the site. While Option A may facilitate release a small amount of additional land within the northern extent of the EZ, it is unlikely to be able to fulfil the requirements of a major occupier in the middle of the site, due to physical constraints and impact on nearby residential amenity.

6.12 Progressing Option B would, however, require a crossing of the railway line, the feasibility and form of which would need to be considered in the context of the railway's future role and any requirement for its continued operation as an active rail corridor.



Figure 6-3 – Access Option C



Scenario Development

6.13 Following development of the above parameters for access, a series of actions were considered:

1. Firstly, land use areas were identified and considered;
2. Secondly consideration of secure line options was made; and
3. Thirdly this was linked to access considerations.

6.14 The following diagram (Figure 6-9) summarises this.

Land Use

6.15 When considering land use in the above process and Figure 6-9, the availability for infill is considered to be limited in scale without intruding on the potential for larger plots to be created. Two land use options were developed which explored options for the middle area and the eastern side of the northern area (i.e. the lagoon east of the railway line).

6.16 Discussion with stakeholders in both Wyre and NPL highlighted that neither

were particularly popular since;

- They do not open up largescale plots that have emerged as the potential of the EZ through enquiries made by major potential businesses and landowners;
- From an NPL perspective they did not consider the potential of removing the lagoon and creating alternative areas for BNG investment.
- They both included land to the west of the railway (east of Lancashire Renewables) as development land, however this was considered as challenging and more likely to become an area of potential BNG or environmental designation.

6.17 The preferred option was therefore developed with these considerations in mind.

6.18 With these land use scenarios there was considerable consideration of the potential for where secure lines could be created. These are summarised in Figure 6-10 overleaf.

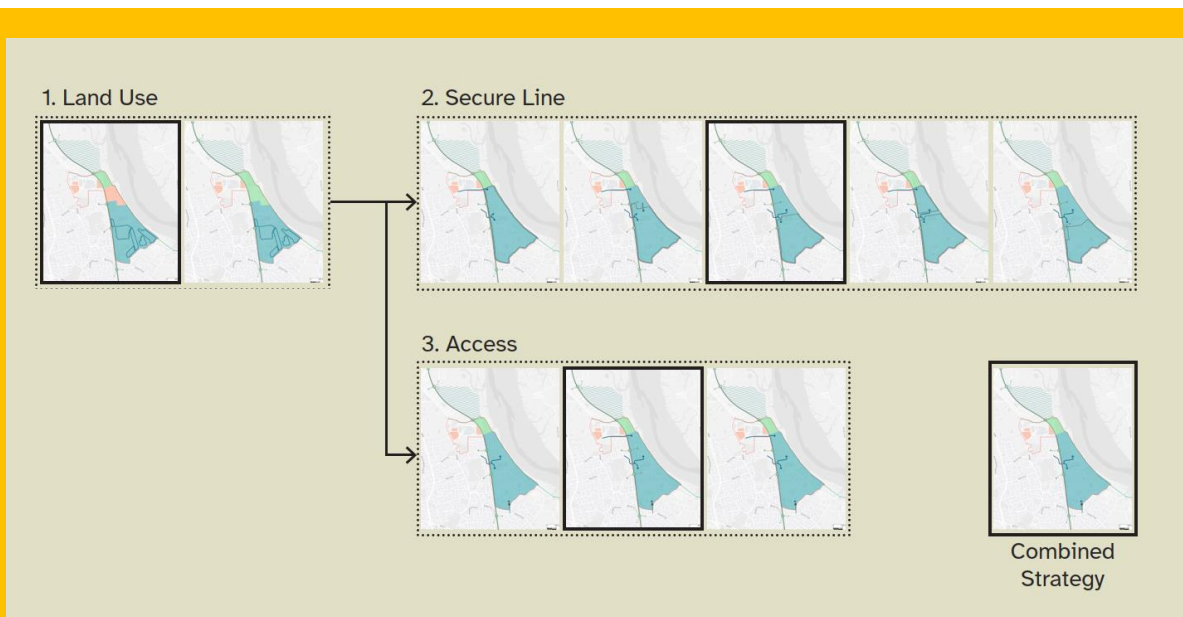


Figure 6-9 – Scenario Development

2. Secure Line

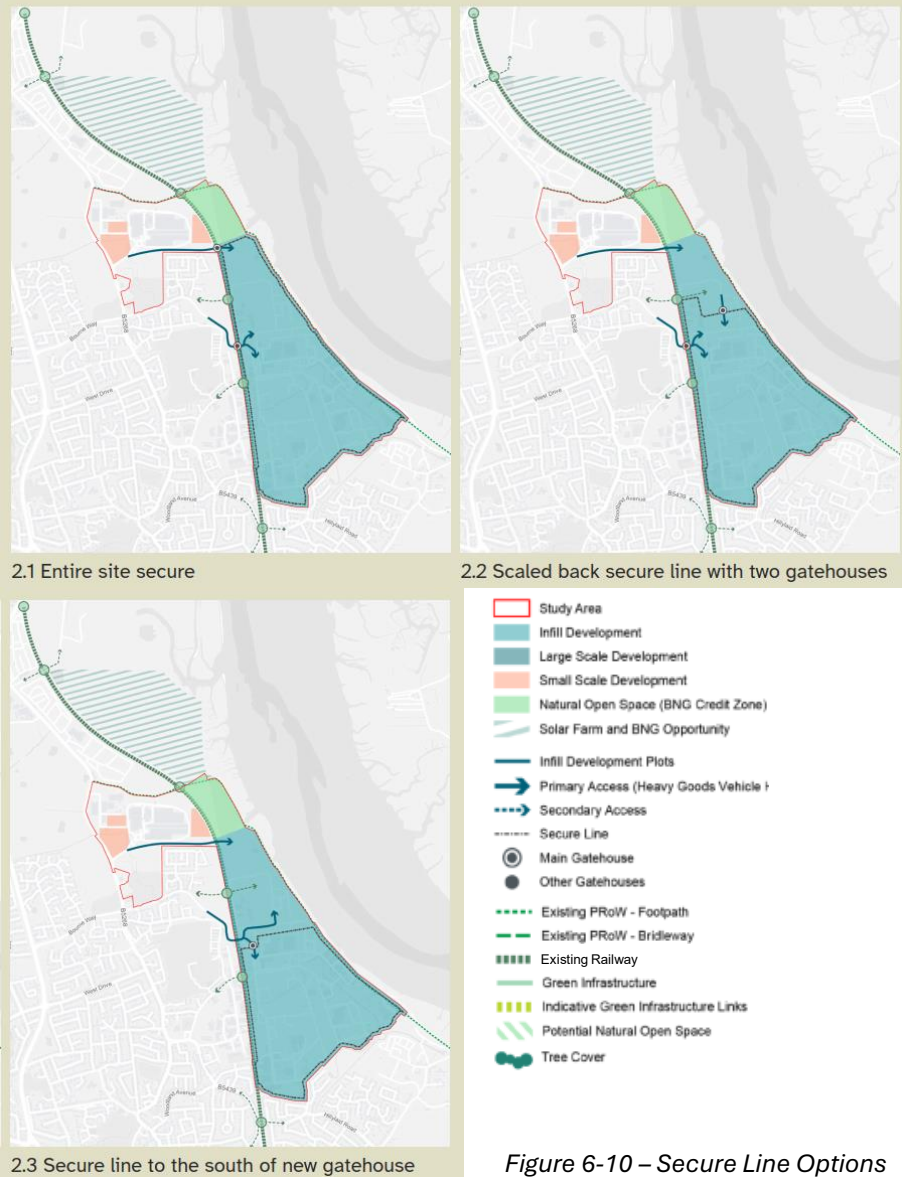


Figure 6-10 – Secure Line Options

6.19 The options in Figure 6-10 above highlight that there is some flexibility in relation to the potential location of secure lines. Keeping a more flexible land area to the north could facilitate movement of that line or offer the potential (as per plan 2.1 in Figure 6-10) to include the whole site as secure.

6.20 During the assessment process, NPL reiterated its preference for the lagoon area to remain under consideration for future development. Any progression of this option would require further assessment to establish its feasibility and suitability.

6.21 Whilst access is considered elsewhere in this document the addition of green space was not considered to be just about Biodiversity Net Gain, but also about the potential to create an environment that became more legible and attractive to inward investment.

6.22 Regarding the inclusion of a solar farm, it is understood that there is a local plan policy restriction on this land and Wyre Council are not necessarily supportive of this proposal. No examples outside of the masterplan are necessarily indicative of support from Wyre Council.

6.23 The overall strategy developed is shown in Figure 6-11 below (and in the Appendix), and the requirement for larger flexibility in land at the north to accommodate larger footprint is clear from stakeholders. In the case of NPL, this could include the lagoon. In the case of Wyre Council and inward investment needs, this includes the middle area, which was initially suggested as smaller areas but is felt to require the flexibility to offer a large footprint user, potentially combined with the lagoon area or land

around it. A critical point is that this does not hinder key infrastructure being promoted or stop the current site being infilled further, with some ‘creep’ northwards of the existing access point being carefully considered.

Summary

6.24 This strategy aligns with the key principles outlined in the previous masterplan for Hillhouse, whilst updating to reflect the flexibility needed to attract a large footprint occupier.

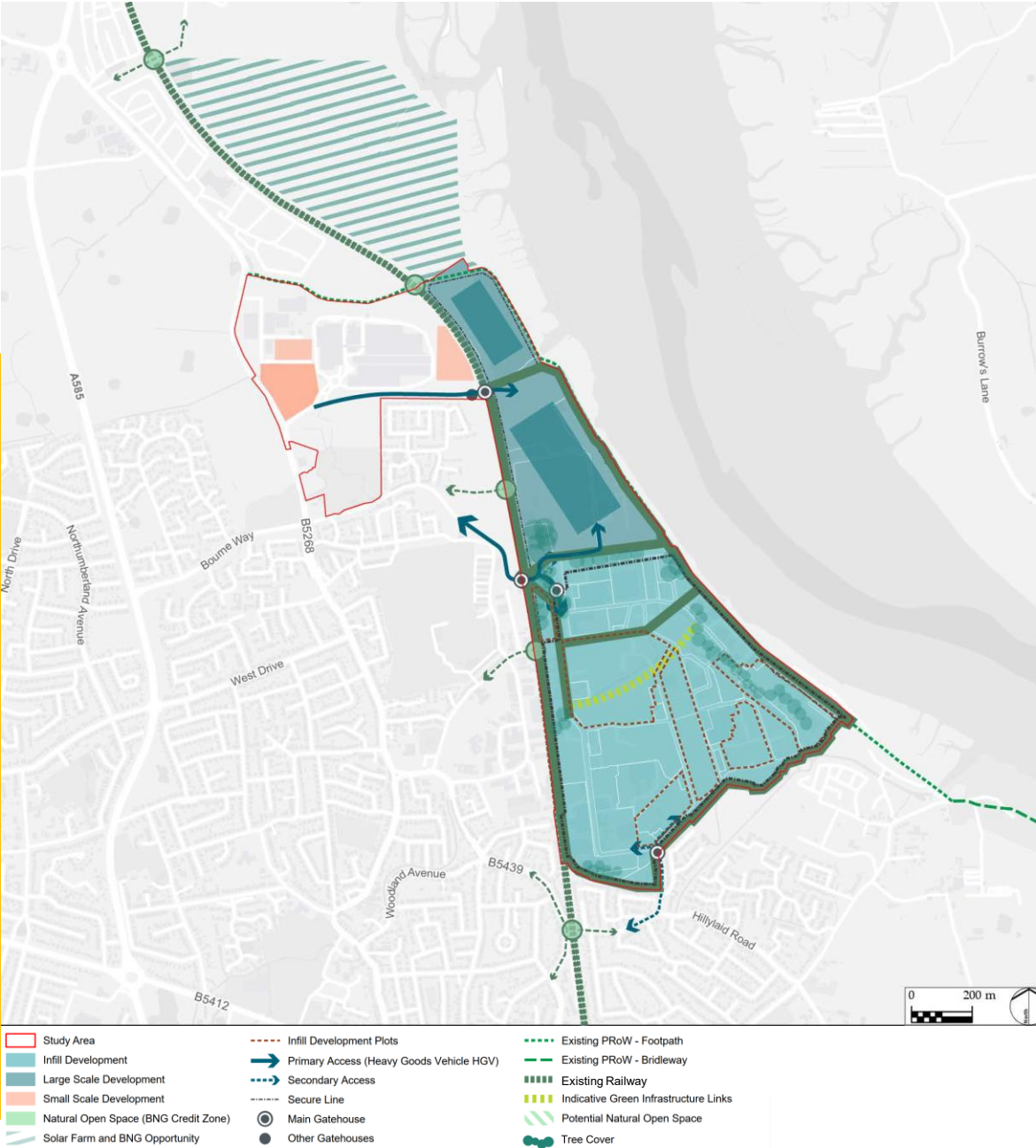


Figure 6-11 – Overall Strategy

7. Masterplan Principles

7.1 The following section sets out the masterplan principles at very high-level, taking account of comments and considerations received on the masterplan scenarios.

7.2 The development of the northern end and ‘middle section’ of the EZ area should be kept flexible for large occupant attraction, but with potential to accommodate smaller infill developments:

- A new (ideally at-grade) road crossing into the site along the corridor we term Bourne Road North.
- Retention of the current Bourne Road South overbridge into the site while structurally sound.
- Ability to retain future options for location of additional secure gate lines.
- Ability to consider future infilling of and development upon the lagoon area.

7.3 Details of the preferred option for the EZ, shown in Figure 7-1:

- The dark blue represents what we term the ‘expansion’ area. This includes the ‘middle area’ of the EZ and the lagoon area to the north of it.
- The lighter blue includes more ‘business as usual’ infill of plots.
- The green is a potentially important BNG and community asset as part of a wider BNG strategy that would be needed for a site of this scale (which could include some on-site land being used as buffer or landscape features).
- The area to the north is marked in hashed lines as an area that would remain separate from this opportunity. This could, with agreement, include some BNG opportunity.

7.4 There is potential for a shared facility within the preferred option, such as a training centre. This could be located at

the interface of the secure and open access zones, in the vicinity of the current gatehouse area. This would need to be carefully designed to ensure that matters such as fly tipping, vandalism and arson do not become unintended consequences of the open access zone.

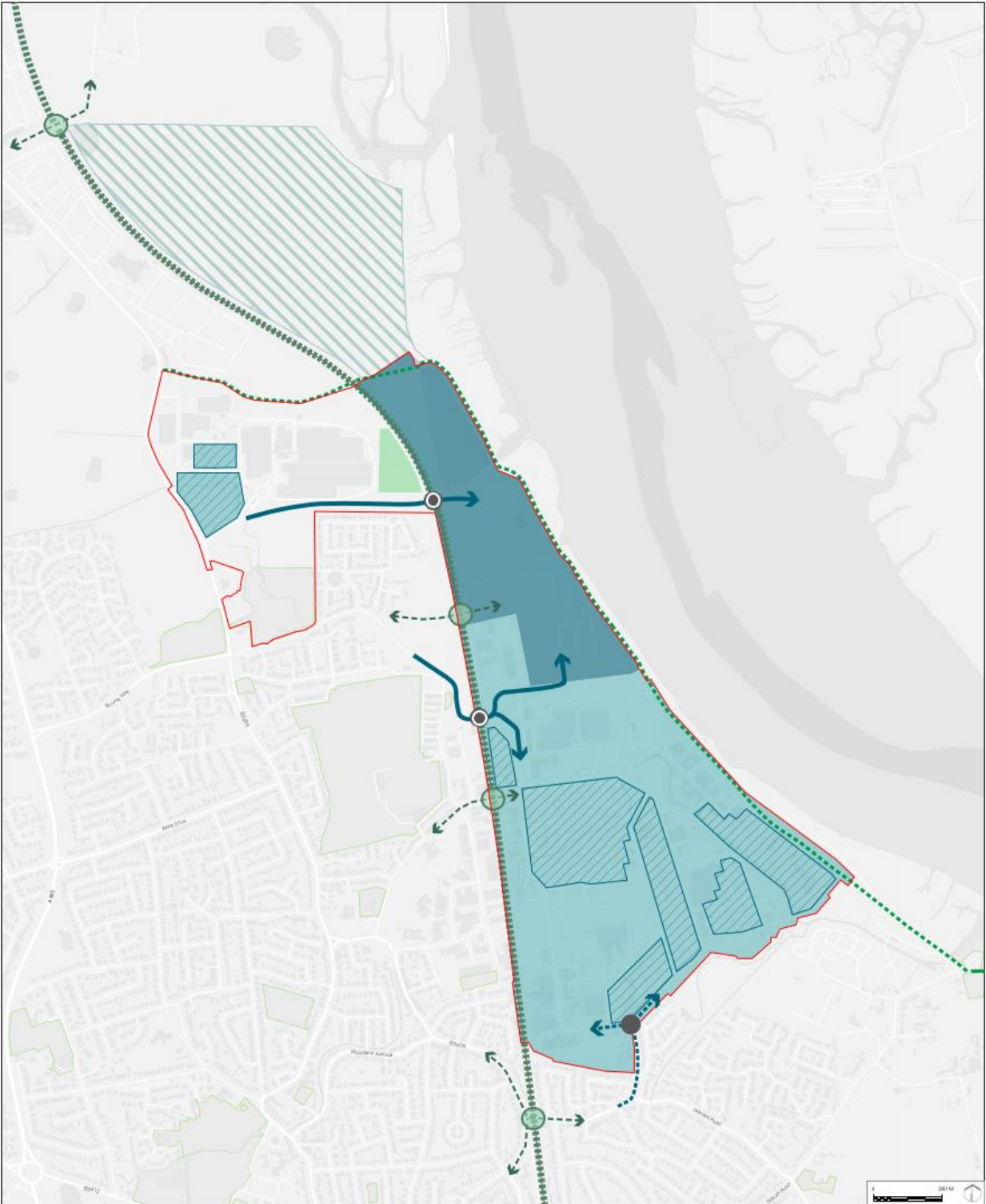
Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Measures

7.5 This Review identifies a range of measures which could make a positive contribution to sustainability, carbon reduction and climate resilience at the EZ. The most significant opportunities relate to low-carbon energy and infrastructure, including the concept development of hydrogen production at the EZ, the potential for the site to play a role as the Morven Wind Farm onshore connection point, and the recent solar canopy proposal.

7.6 In environmental terms, the masterplan and policy context also point to the importance of green infrastructure, structure planting, biodiversity net gain, drainage, flood risk mitigation and wider landscape improvements, all of which are relevant to climate adaptation as well as the overall quality and resilience of the place.

7.7 At the same time, it would not be realistic for this study to set a formal ‘net zero’ target for the EZ as a whole. The site is a large, complex and predominantly privately-owned industrial location with multiple occupiers, varied land interests, evolving infrastructure requirements and a market-facing role that may include energy-intensive uses. In that context, a blanket net zero commitment for the entire EZ would extend beyond the level of control available to the Council and beyond what can reasonably be evidenced through this Masterplan Review.

7.8 A more credible approach is to prioritise practical and progressive measures that reduce carbon emissions and improve resilience over time. These include enabling access to renewable energy, supporting lower-carbon industrial opportunities such as hydrogen, and biodiversity enhancements, and ensuring that flood risk, drainage and environmental constraints are addressed in a way that supports long-term adaptation to climate change.



LEGEND

Site

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| Study Area | Primary Access (Heavy Goods Vehicle HGV) | Existing PRoW - Footpath |
| Infill Development | Secondary Access | Existing PRoW - Bridleway |
| Infill Development Plots | Gatehouse | Existing Railway |
| Enterprise Zone Expansion Area | Staff Entry | |
| Natural Open Space (BNG Credit Zone) | | |
| Solar Farm and BNG Opportunity | | |

Figure 7-1 – Hillhouse EZ Preferred Option

8. Summary

8.1 The Hillhouse Enterprise Zone is a strategically important asset for NPL, Wyre and Lancashire. However, a combination of technical, infrastructure and organisational constraints currently limits its ability to compete as a clear and compelling investment proposition. Realising the EZ's full potential will require a more co-ordinated, market-facing approach, underpinned by targeted investment, joint working and a clear programme of further work and delivery actions.

8.2 Based on this review of the Masterplan and an assessment of progress made against the actions identified in the 2018 Masterplan, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. A dedicated Hillhouse Enterprise Zone steering group should be established as a priority outcome of this review. This should bring together NPL, Wyre Council, Lancashire County Council, the future Combined Authority, or other relevant stakeholders to provide strategic oversight, align objectives, address constraints and agree a co-ordinated approach to investment, delivery and site promotion.
2. To accelerate delivery, partners should explore an investment framework that enables early site-enabling works to proceed with appropriate mechanisms for public sector return. This could include repayment arrangements, shared value capture or other structures that provide confidence to public sector partners while helping to unlock development at pace.
3. The identified expansion area (middle area) should now be considered in full, with priority given to establishing an alternative access strategy. An at-grade access solution would be preferable – however, if unachievable, a bridged solution will need to be developed and assessed.
4. Northern road access options should be developed beyond the current concept stage, with 'with bridge' and 'without bridge' scenarios being progressed in parallel. This will provide greater certainty on feasibility, cost, impacts and plot configuration while decisions on the future of the railway corridor remain unresolved.
5. Commission a study to bring to a head the future of the railway line.
6. The EZ masterplan and this Masterplan Review should guide planning decisions; however, sufficient flexibility should be retained to respond to evolving market requirements and delivery considerations. Future proposals should therefore be tested against the masterplan's core development principles while allowing refinement of specific uses and layouts as the site is brought forward.
7. Further technical and regulatory feasibility work should be undertaken on the potential removal of the lagoon at the northern end of the site, working collaboratively with the Environment Agency and other relevant stakeholders to establish confidence in deliverability, impacts and mitigation requirements.

8. A site-specific drainage and flood risk assessment should be commissioned to define the extent of flood constraints, understand the interaction with development proposals and lagoon-related options, and identify opportunities to support wider environmental objectives, including Biodiversity Net Gain where appropriate.
9. Seek to undertake a more definitive assessment on demand for power, beyond recent work undertaken by Genecon, including both inward and outward capabilities and capacities against potential demand and resilience requirements.
10. In conjunction with, or as part of the above, undertake a further study into energy capacity and infrastructure of the site.
11. A comprehensive place and investment proposition should be developed for Hillhouse, bringing together site appearance, legibility, digital connectivity, amenity provision and design quality. This should include a design code and supporting interventions that help position the site as a coherent, modern and investable employment location.
12. Work to create collateral and information to place Hillhouse EZ in a better place to maximise its potential from both national and future Industrial Strategies.
13. Continue feasibility work including conversations with core business and local colleges to ensure that on-site training centre capabilities are created as part of an expansion of the offering to businesses, both current and future. This could include and combine with an investor welcoming suite and would support knowledge and innovation.
14. To sit alongside improvements in the infrastructure at, and approaching, the site, the actions from the EZ Marketing Plan 2026 should be considered to attract best-in-class investors that are relevant to Hillhouse
15. A contamination study should be undertaken to assess the ground conditions and development potential across the site, including the lagoon area.
16. Undertake a refreshed phasing plan and development plots plan. A refreshed plan should be informed by a detailed assessment of works completed across the site and realistic timescales aligned to the access strategy.



Appendices

