Port Warrington, Warrington Commercial Park and Moore Nature Reserve and Country Park

Paper 2: Case Making Document

Local Plan Representations

Warrington Updated Proposed Submission Version Local Plan 2021-2038

Peel Land & Property Holdings (UK) Ltd & Peel Ports Group Ltd

Turley

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 This Report has been prepared by Turley on behalf of Peel Land & Property Holdings (UK) Ltd ("Peel L&P") and Peel Ports Group Ltd ("Peel Ports") to support representations being made to the Warrington Local Plan 2021-2038 (Updated Proposed Submission Version) (September 2021) (hereafter referred to as "the draft Plan") which is currently the subject of public consultation. The representations being made by the Peel companies in relation to Port Warrington and Warrington Commercial Park (WCP) are made jointly on behalf of Peel L&P and Peel Ports, whilst representations in relation to housing matters (including the South West Urban Extension and Outlying Settlements) are made on behalf of Peel L&P. For simplicity, these representations largely hereafter refer to "Peel" as meaning either or both companies.

1.2 The report provides an overview of the key policy, economic, technical and environmental considerations associated with the proposed expansion of Port Warrington and new Warrington Commercial Park (WCP) and to explain why land immediately adjoining the Port is essential to facilitate that expansion. Given the nature of the site and surroundings, this report specifically presents the case in support of the proposed expansion, and addresses particular environmental and technical considerations that have been highlighted as being constraints to development and justify the absence of an allocation in the draft Plan.

1.3 It demonstrates that the removal of part of the land at Warrington Waterfront from the Green Belt and its allocation for expanded port infrastructure, along with a new employment business hub which will support the objective of realising the ambition of the Port, is exceptionally justified. It also confirms that the Arpley Meadows former landfill site (c. 176ha) which is proposed to be transformed into a new Nature Reserve and Country Park (c. 186ha) could be retained within the Green Belt and would convey significant benefits.

1.4 This report should be read alongside the Development Framework which sets out the overall vision and development opportunity and confirms its suitability, achievability and viability.

1.5 To summarise, the proposed expansion of Port Warrington and the new Warrington Commercial WCP could deliver around 288,350 sqm (3.1 million sqft) for employment development, split as follows:

- 205,850 sqm of development (c2.2 million sqft) immediately to the north of The Manchester Ship Canal (Port Warrington) for port centric employment uses (B2/B8) alongside the introduction of a second berth, interchange storage areas for loading/unloading, turning vessel basin and rail connection to the West Coast Mainline; and

- 82,500 sqm of employment development (c0.9million sqft) at WCP which could be developed for port centric employment uses (B2/B8) and other business uses (B1, B2 and B8 uses), plus complementary uses to support the business park environment and the wider Warrington Waterfront regeneration initiative.

1.6 The overall proposals also include:

- New access arrangements to the Port, WCP and the Moore Nature Reserve and Country Park, which will seek to divert traffic away from Moore village, with associated amenity benefits;

- The retention and enhancement of Nature Reserve and a new Country Park (c. 186ha), which would be retained within the Green Belt and reflective of the role it will play in the wider development, including woodland planting, open space, habitat creation, recreational/cultural provision and pedestrian/cycle routes; and

- Long term management of the retained Nature Reserve and Country Park.

The Peel Group companies

1.7 The Peel Group is a major, long term investor in the regeneration and growth of the North West. Working with partners in the public and private sector, it has delivered some of the region's largest and most transformational projects. Peel L&P is the wholly owned land and property company of Peel Group which has extensive landholdings in Warrington.

1.8 Peel Ports is owned by a number of shareholders including the Peel Group and is managed independently from Peel L&P. Peel Ports is one the largest private operators in the United Kingdom handling more than 66 million tonnes of cargo a year. Peel Port operates as the statutory harbour authority for the Port of Liverpool, Manchester Ship Canal (MSC) and the River Medway. Peel Ports is the owner and operator of the current Port Warrington site.

1.9 Peel's track record is one of delivering transformation and creating vibrant places through regeneration and innovation. The company invests for the long term. For example, at MediaCityUK in Salford Peel delivered a £650 million investment in Europe's largest construction project during the recession. Its investment of £400 million into Liverpool2 a new deep-sea container terminal at the Port of Liverpool will open up new import and export markets for the North.

1.10 Peel's vision is to create sustainable environments where people and businesses can flourish. This vision is realised through a constant cycle of reinvestment, regenerating places, innovating in new development sectors and creating positive legacies. This vision is a key driver of Peel's Ocean Gateway ambition. The Ocean Gateway will deliver an unprecedented scale of co-ordinated private sector investment across the North West of England along a strategic corridor encompassing the route from Liverpool, through Warrington and Cheshire to Greater Manchester, over 50 years with £50 billion of investment. Ocean Gateway projects embrace ports; logistics; retail and leisure; residential; commercial development; media infrastructure and renewable energy. Warrington Waterfront is one of over 50 Ocean Gateway Schemes across the strategic corridor. Since the launch in 2008 Ocean Gateway projects within Cheshire and Warrington have attracted over £500 million of capital investments.

1.11 Peel Ports is one of the largest port operators in the United Kingdom handling more than 66 million tonnes of cargo a year. Peel Ports is the statutory harbour authority for the the Port of Liverpool and The Manchester Ship Canal (serving the largest cargo generating region outside of London). It also owns and operates the Lancashire Port of Heysham, the Port of Great Yarmouth, and the Medway Ports of Sheerness and Chatham in the South East of England. In Scotland, Peel Ports Clydeport operates the key ports of Glasgow, Greenock, Ardrossan and Hunterston. Peel Ports also operates a container terminal in Dublin and a container shipping line BG Freight.

1.12 At its heart, the Peel Ports network comprises the Port of Liverpool and The Manchester Ship Canal – an all water route which forms a comprehensive range of ports facilities over its 44 mile length which handles more than 40 million tonnes of cargo and 16,000 shipping movements a year, making it Britain's third busiest estuary.

1.13 The report is set out in the following manner:

Section A – Context

- Chapter 2: Sets out the site and surroundings comprising the proposed development.
- Chapter 3: Provides an overview of the proposals, namely the expansion of Port Warrington, the creation of Warrington Commercial Park, and the creation of the Nature Reserve and Country Park.

Section B – The Case for the Proposals

- Provides the overall justification and case for the expansion of Port Warrington comprising:
  - Chapter 4: Provides an overview of the historical development of Port Warrington; its operational extent today; and prevailing constraints restricting its potential
  - Chapter 5: Sets out the strategic national, regional and local policy alignment supporting the expansion of Port Warrington
  - Chapter 6 and 7: Sets out the maritime justification for the expansion of Port Warrington
  - Chapter 8: Sets out the justification for Warrington Commercial Park (including a mix of B1, B2 and B8 and other complementary uses)

Section C - Impacts of the Proposals

- Chapter 9 summarises the economic benefits of the proposals;
- Chapter 10 considers the impact of the proposals on the Green Belt; and
- Chapter 11 considers other environmental impacts.

Section D – Exceptional Circumstances

- Chapter 12 presents the exceptional circumstances which justify the proposed amendment of the Green Belt boundary and the planning balance.

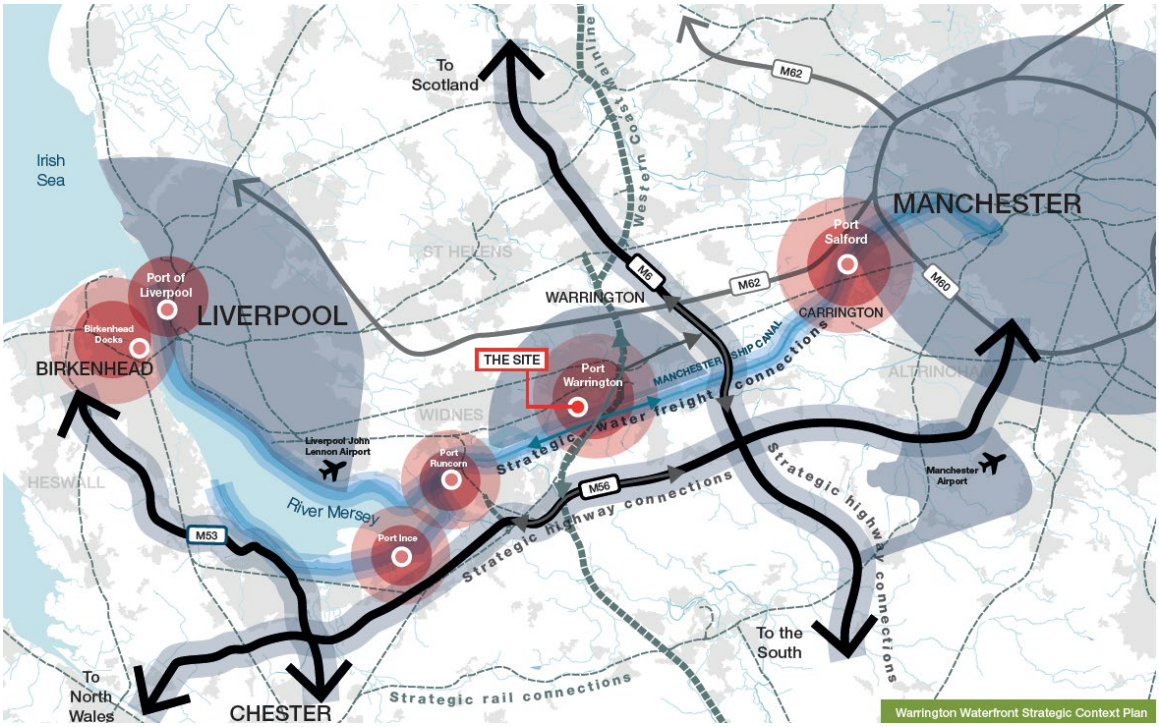
Section A – Strategic Context

2. Site Context

Strategic Context

2.1 Warrington lies at the heart of the North West region, Atlantic Gateway and Northern Powerhouse. The M6, M56 and M62 motorways intersect within the borough providing excellent access to all ports of the region and beyond. Warrington also lies on the regions main North-South (West Coast Main Line) and East-West (Trans-Pennine) rail routes and is traversed by The Manchester Ship Canal – an important commercial waterway linking the Port of Liverpool to the Manchester conurbation. Future infrastructure proposals such as HS2 have the opportunity to further reinforce the borough's connectivity in the future. In short, Warrington is one of the best connected places in the North West and also benefits from the proximity to Liverpool and Manchester conurbations and markets.

Figure 2.1: Warrington in its strategic context



2.2 Warrington's spatial position, infrastructure and inherent connectivity has enabled the borough to grow and develop a strong and resilient economy. Over the last 40 years, Warrington has grown from a town with a population of around 70,000 to one which is over 200,000. A working age population of around 2.5 million live within a 30 minute drive of Warrington. This is the largest workforce catchment in the UK outside London and its recent performance in economic growth is only bettered by Aberdeen and London. Warrington is now viewed and widely recognised as a key economic contributor to the North West economy and a major growth area.

Site Context

Port Warrington

2.3 Port Warrington is an existing warehousing and distribution facility located on the northern bank of The Manchester Ship Canal ("MSC"). It benefits from a direct frontage on to the canalside and benefits from an existing berth which is underutilised but operationally available.

2.4 The Port currently accommodates a range of road-based storage and distribution uses (c. 14 hectares), with the current vehicular access via Runcorn Road and Moore Lane.

2.5 The Port benefits from an extant planning permission for the extension of the existing operations onto adjoining land (c. 5.4 hectares) for open storage purposes together with the refurbishment and extension of the canalside berth and the reinstatement of a rail freight connection onto the West Coast Main Line.

2.6 The Port is adjacent to the Moore Nature Reserve, which consists of woodland areas, ponds and green space, and also to the Arpley Meadows landfill site.

Arpley Meadows

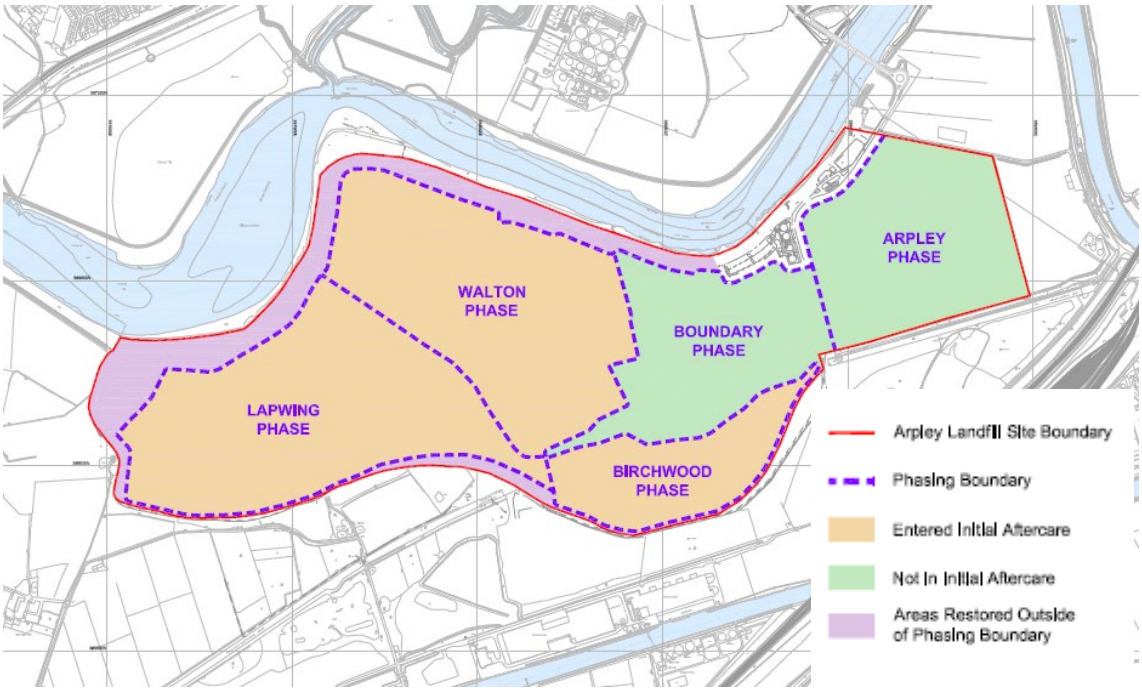
2.7 Arpley Meadows landfill site measures an area of approximately 176 ha and although it is within the designated Green Belt, it has been in operation for waste disposal operations since 1986.

2.8 An application to extend the operational life of the facility to October 2018 and enable its restoration by October 2019, with a revised sequence of landfill phasing and restoration works, was approved after appeal in May 2015. The Planning Inspector recognised that the benefits of the development outweighed the harm to the Green Belt and very special circumstances had been demonstrated. The majority of the site has now been filled and is in the process of being restored to grassland, with the final phases remaining in use.

2.9 The planning permission allowed for the restoration (and ongoing maintenance and funding via an s106 legal agreement) of those areas previously landfilled with a full landscaping restoration scheme of new topsoil, planting and seeding. New native woodland, scrubland and hedgerows are also proposed, alongside the creation of new usable greenspace. The approved Restoration Landscaping Scheme also incorporates a number of habitat creation measures to provide ecological enhancement measures, with the plantation of woodland habitats and new connections to the Moore Nature Reserve to the south. A network of recreational footpaths is also proposed to be dispersed throughout the site to encourage access by members of the public.

2.10 To date a number of phases of restoration have been completed and are in aftercare (see Figure 2.2). The aftercare period will be managed in accordance with the approved landscaping and aftercare plan until May 2025.

Figure 2.2: Arpley Meadows – Restoration Phases



2.11 The restoration habitats of Arpley Meadows are naturalistic in style and it is considered that more modern methods of habitat restoration could be applied, resulting in greater soil, botanical and structural diversity. This opportunity for betterment forms part of Peel's approach to biodiversity net gain.

Moore Nature Reserve

2.12 Moore Nature Reserve comprises of some 90ha of land comprising wet woodland, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, native hedgerows, reedbeds and open water and is designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). The reserve has been managed through funding secured through planning obligations as part of the Arpley Landfill development. The current funding stream for the Nature Reserve is coming to an end in 2021, and there is no known funding package for the ongoing maintenance of the existing reserve; this could result in the gradual decline in habitat quality and diversity. Peel's proposals would include a programme for the future management of the Arpley Meadows Country Park and the retained area of the Moore Nature Reserve.

Warrington Waterfront

2.13 Port Warrington and Arpley Meadows should form a key component of Warrington Waterfront – a strategic regeneration programme to reinvigorate Warrington's central waterfront along the River Mersey.

2.14 Warrington Waterfront is to be a new urban quarter of Warrington, taking advantage of its waterside setting and unlocked by a new strategic access arrangement (the Western Link Road). This will link the A56 Chester Road in Higher Walton with the A57 Sankey Way in Great Sankey, and will also provide a new access to the Port from the new link road.

2.15 The draft Plan, through policy MD1.1, promotes the Warrington Waterfront as a new urban quarter to deliver around 1,135 new homes of which 1,070 will be delivered in the plan period, alongside social infrastructure (including a new school) and a new local centre. A new country park through the consented restoration of the Arpley Meadows - alongside wider environmental works is also supported.

2.16 The policy justification confirms that the Waterfront is a key regeneration priority for the Council, the principle of which has been established in previous local plans1.

[1] Paragraphs 3.2.7 and 10.1.9 Updated Proposed Submission Version Local Plan

3. Overview of the Proposals

3.1 This proposed expansion of Port Warrington and the new Warrington Commercial Park (WCP) could deliver around 288,350 sqm (3.1 million sqft) for employment development, split as follows:

- 205,850 sqm of development (c2.2 million sqft) immediately to the north of The Manchester Ship Canal (Port Warrington) for port centric employment uses (B2/B8) alongside the introduction of a second berth, interchange storage areas for loading/unloading, turning vessel basin and rail connection to the West Coast Mainline; and

- 82,500 sqm of employment development (c0.9million sqft) at WCP which could be developed for port centric employment uses (B2/B8) and other business uses (B1, B2 and B8 uses), plus complementary uses to support the business park environment and the wider Warrington Waterfront initiative.

3.2 The overall proposals also include:

- New access arrangements to the Port, WCP and the Moore Nature Reserve and Country Park, which will seek to divert traffic away from Moore village, with associated amenity benefits;

- The retention and enhancement of the Nature Reserve and a new Country Park (c. 181ha), to reflect its retention within the Green Belt and reflective of the role it will play in the wider development, including woodland planting, open space, habitat creation, recreational/cultural provision and pedestrian/cycle routes; and

- Long term management of the Nature Reserve to be retained and Country Park.

Moore Nature Reserve and Country Park

3.3 Arpley landfill site measures an area of approximately 176ha and although it is within the designated Green Belt, it has been in operation for waste disposal operations since 1986. An application to extend the operational life of the facility to October 2018 and enable its restoration by October 2019, with a revised sequence of landfill phasing and restoration works, was approved after appeal in May 2015. The Inspector recognised that the benefits of the development outweighed the harm to the Green Belt and very special circumstances had been demonstrated.

3.4 The planning permission allowed for the restoration of those areas previously landfilled with a full landscaping restoration scheme of new topsoil, planting and seeding. The majority of the site has now been filled and is in the process of being restored to grassland, with the final phases remaining in use.

3.5 Moore Nature Reserve has been managed through funding secured through planning obligations as part of the Arpley Meadows Landfill development. The current funding stream for the Nature Reserve is coming to an end in 2021, and there is no known funding package for the ongoing maintenance of the existing reserve. The current proposals include a programme for

the long term future management of the new Nature Reserve and Country Park and the retained area of the Moore Nature Reserve.

3.6 The new proposals propose more extensive works (betterment) than previously permitted, to create new native woodland, scrubland and hedgerow areas, alongside the creation of new usable greenspace. A number of habitat creation measures to provide ecological enhancement measures also proposed, with a plantation of woodland habitats and new connections. The proposals also seek to respond to the deficiencies in the existing open space network. A Vision Document in respect of the proposals has been prepared by LUC and contained within the Development Framework.

Development Framework

3.7 To support the proposals, a Development Framework has been prepared which accompanies this Case Making Document. The Development Framework presents an urban design assessment of the Site, its context and arrives at a number of principles which as follows:

- To retain, protect and enhance as much existing ecological habitat in Moore Nature Reserve as possible;
- To significantly enhance Arpley Meadows into an ecological and recreational Country Park of significance;
- To create an expanded Port and Commercial Park which meets existing and future occupier demand; and
- To create a development which is connected.

3.8 The principles inform a Framework Plan which identifies the broad parameters of the proposals. It is supported by an illustrative masterplan and informed by a range of technical appraisals[2] to demonstrate the suitability and deliverability of the project, as follows:

- A Suite of Ecological Surveys and Assessments;
- Tree Survey and Preliminary Impact Assessment;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal;
- Noise Appraisal and Air Quality Appraisal;
- Heritage Appraisal;
- Sustainability Appraisal;
- Viability Appraisal; and
- Transport Appraisal.

[2] Some of these appraisals reference the fact that the proposals were originally allocated under policy MD1 in the previous version of the Local Plan.

Section B – The Case for the Proposals

4. Port Warrington

History

4.1 Port Warrington is an established distribution facility which has its origins following the opening of The Manchester Ship Canal in 1894, through the provision of a dedicated wharf at a strategic location adjoining the main railway line. At the time, the Port Warrington site presented a unique location enabling goods to be loaded and unloaded from the canal for onward distribution via the railway network.

4.2 The Haydock Colliery Company first recognised these unique characteristics when it developed a wharf and railhead at the site. This multi-modal infrastructure enabled them to import 'pit props' via the canal and distribute them by rail to its collieries across the North West. At its peak, the wider area was one of the UK's richest areas of coal mining activity with up to 13 collieries operating at any one time. The site, in terms of its strategic geographic advantages and multi-modal potential as well as its operation, has therefore been present for over a century which pre-dates both the planning system and the designation of the Green Belt.

4.3 Eventually coal mining declined in the area and the Port was adapted to facilitate the movement of goods and produce to support the chemical industry which was a burgeoning sector at the time and one which supported Warrington's economic growth and expansion as a New Town in 1968. Between the 1960s and 1980s, DuPont Chemicals owned the Port and utilised it to import chemicals from its plant in Northern Ireland and to facilitate distribution by road.

4.4 In 1979, the entire Port Warrington site was designated as Green Belt through the Cheshire Structure Plan despite it being operational and a fixed strategic infrastructure asset. As a result of more stringent planning policies this arguably contributed to the Port's unattractiveness and ultimate decline in later years.

4.5 From the mid-1980s, different operators maintained the Port's berth, operated warehouses, and distributed goods via the nearby motorway network but its successful operation declined during the economic recession of the 1990's. During this time the sites connectivity to the railway network was also lost and the berth became unused.

Port Warrington Today

4.6 Port Warrington comprises an existing warehouse complex of some 14 hectares and operates primarily as a road to road based distribution centre (comprising some 34,000 sqm of warehousing space across three units) with insufficient utilisation of the Ship Canal for the movement of goods.

4.7 Having acquired Port Warrington in 2007, Peel Ports Group has always held the long-term aspiration to reconfigure the existing site to become an inland multi-modal Port facility utilising the Ship Canal through the refurbishment of the existing berth and the re-integration of a rail freight connection onto the West Coast Main Line via the Arpley Sidings.

4.8 To kick-start the delivery of this, planning permission was granted by Warrington Borough Council (WBC) in March 2010 for the extension upon an adjoining 5.4 hectares immediately adjacent to the east of the existing Port, facilitated by the in-filling of the site, the refurbishment and extension

of the canalside berth and the reinstatement of a rail freight connection. In respect of the principle of development and in demonstrating very special circumstances to justify development in the Green Belt, Warrington Borough Council's Officer Committee Report notes the following:

(a) Principle:

"It is accepted – as part of the case for "very special circumstances" below – that there are no alternative sites which have the required infrastructure to deliver a multi-modal inland port to serve Warrington and its surrounding area. It should also be borne strongly in mind that no national, regional or local policy requires a need to be demonstrated for the type of facility proposed. It should also be noted that the proposal is not a strategic rail freight interchange – so would not operate with the same high volumes of rail freight. Instead, the proposed rail connection to the ship canal would mean the use of rail would be driven by users or operators of the site and also by the size and limited capacity of the site (i.e. a single berth). Provided the port operations are able to expand – and crucially to be well served by water barges – then it is considered that the principle of the proposed use in this location is acceptable, and is a principle well supported by national, regional and local planning policy and guidance."

(b) Green Belt and Very Special Circumstances:

"The application is considered to constitute inappropriate development in the green belt by definition. The proposal therefore needs to show that harm by way of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by very special circumstances. Harm to the openness of green belt and to the objectives of green belt policy is considered to be limited in this case. The site is sandwiched between existing warehouses at Acton Grange to the west, and the west coast mainline and the large Solvay Interox chemical plant complex to the east. Advice from WBC Planning Policy confirms that the combination of the following factors amount to very special circumstances in the case:

- *national, regional and local polices all encourage modal shift via provision inter-modal freight facilities. The area to the south west of Warrington with access to the Ship Canal and rail links is identified as a location for such a facility, particularly where use can be made of existing infrastructure;*

- *it is doubtful that there are any better connected sites in the Borough that benefit from both rail and canal access;*

- *there is genuine potential to achieve significant environmental benefits if the port fully utilises its assets and affects a modal shift to rail as well as to water barge;*

- *there are likely to be few financial implications for freight operators wishing to switch from road to barge, and this is likely to occur if the facilities are made available here."*

(WBC Officers Committee Report, Item 4.1, Application Ref: 2009/15222, 3rd March 2010)

4.9 The planning permission has been partially implemented by way of the infilling of the site to establish ground levels for the open storage area. However, to date, the rail freight connection has not been delivered and the canal berth has yet to be reinstated and extended.

4.10 There are a number of reasons for this:

- Notwithstanding the benefit of additional open storage land, the scale and extent of Port Warrington and its operational capacity ultimately remains relatively modest. The extent of space is insufficient to generate a critical mass of occupier presence to viably deliver a rail head connection. The existing scale of Port Warrington is not large enough to make best use of the multi-modal opportunity Port Warrington presents but its necessary expansion is constrained and prevented by Green Belt;

- The quality of existing warehousing space is poor and no longer fit for modern standards and is no longer befitting the needs and requirements of Mersey Port or potential occupiers/users who are requiring larger and more flexible floorspace; this further stymies their market attractiveness;

- The current vehicular access arrangement (via the village of Moore) is constraining, requiring HGV drivers to navigate narrow roads, tight corners and a swing bridge. This limits the market attractiveness of the site and it means alternative locations are likely to be more attractive to investors, despite the site's advantages in respect of potential water and rail connection.

4.11 Port Warrington is an existing facility which is uniquely placed to harness water and rail connectivity in a strategically important geographical location, placed within the heart of Warrington and the North West. However, Port Warrington's ability to viably deliver upon any growth to maximise its advantages and to maximise the economic potential of the Manchester Ship Canal, is currently constrained by its location within the Green Belt and a series of factors (see paragraph 4.10 above) that diminishes its attractiveness to the market.

4.12 In light of this, a series of positive interventions are needed to maximise the economic potential of Port Warrington and ability its to meet development needs, capitalise on its rail and water potential, and to enable the Port to meet freight demand needs arising from the Port of Liverpool.

5. Strategic Planning Policy Alignment

5.1 Despite the draft Plan removing the policy allocations which support the expansion of Port Warrington and WCP, there are a wide range of national, regional and local planning and economic which strongly support the provision of new port infrastructure to secure and sustain economic growth, meet freight needs and how multi-modal sites to can significantly contribute towards to decarbonisation of freight traffic through the UK. This policy narrative strongly aligns with the proposals.

National

Building Back Better: Our Plan for Growth (2021)

5.2 The Plan for Growth, released in 2021, outlines the Government's plan to 'build back better'. This means taking a transformational approach to tackle long-term problems, and delivering growth that creates high-quality jobs across the UK and builds on the nation's existing strengths. The plan is guided by three main themes: levelling up the whole of the UK, supporting the transition to net zero, and supporting the vision for 'Global Britain'.

5.3 The Plan sets out that greater economic prosperity is key for *all* regions of the UK, which must be supported by appropriate businesses, industry and a significant investment in infrastructure. This will drive the prosperity of the surrounding region and propel forward the national economy, seeking to ensure that every region in the UK can be 'levelled up', particularly the regions which in the last 50 years may have seen less economic growth than other areas.

5.4 Supporting this ambition of greater economic prosperity for all regions is the UK's new post-Brexit approach to trade, which will seek to be free and fair, working across internal borders to establish strong relationships to directly expand trading opportunities for UK businesses, the logistics of which will primarily be facilitated by worldwide freight transportation. The Government will also seek to develop a new 'Export Strategy' within the next 12 months which will seek to offer more support to key exporters, and presumably the logistics networks that underpin the growth of the exporters, alongside an 'Internationalism Fund' which seeks to support small and medium-sized businesses to significantly grow overseas trading and strengthen businesses.

5.5 Freeports are also key to the vision of 'Building Back Better', and are expected to enhance trade and investment across the UK, boost growth and high skilled jobs and increase innovation and productivity in port regions, particularly those situated in or near deprived areas. The Freeport initiative is discussed in more detail below.

5.6 There is a clear intention from the Government, therefore, to scale up the UK's global trade influence following Brexit, which will undoubtedly have significant implications on the physical infrastructure (such a port infrastructure) freight and trading networks underpinning this global network.

5.7 Alongside the objectives to level up the UK, and support the vision of a 'Global Britain' is the intention to drive the economy on in its transition to Net Zero. The UK is seeking to be a world leader in this regard, and therefore approaches and developments which seeks to help industries

transition towards Net Zero, such as the use of more sustainable methods of transport like rail freight, whilst still achieving economic growth, will be supported.

Transport Decarbonisation Plan

5.8 'Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge', published in March 2020, assessed the need to reduce emissions across all forms of transport, and laid out the scale of the additional reductions needed to deliver net zero by 2050. The 'Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Green Britain' sets out how the emissions reductions, and associated benefits, will be realised across the UK. The plan emphasises the importance of the use of more sustainable methods of transport to move freight, particularly rail infrastructure.

5.9 The Plan for Rail aims to encourage more freight onto rail from roads, noting that rail freight reduces road congestion, connects markets over longer distances and is much less carbon intensive than road freight.

5.10 As originally proposed within the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, the Government are committed to introducing a rail freight growth target for all areas of the network the Department for Transport oversees to encourage the continued growth of rail freight. Great British Railways will also have a statutory duty to promote rail freight. The intention of this is to help provide private operator investment confidence and galvanise action across local partners and industry, in acknowledgment of the important benefits that the shift to rail fright can bring.

5.11 The Plan also acknowledges the important role that ports play in the objective to decarbonise transport, acting as critical parts of the wider transport network and thus should seek to support the decarbonisation of their customers / operators in the rail freight sectors. The Plan also makes specific reference to the fact the maritime decarbonisation should act as an opportunity to revitalise ports and coastal communities across the UK.

National Policy Statement for Ports

5.12 The National Policy Statement for Ports ("NPSP") provides the direction on decisions on new port development and is a relevant consideration for local planning authorities[3].

5.13 The expansion of Port Warrington aligns closely with the NPSP policies and guidance. In summary:

5.14 The upward trajectory of the Peel Ports Group's growth forecasts align with the NPSP, which explains that UK Government's policies on sustainable economic growth and achieving rising prosperity will drive increased trade in goods and, to a lesser extent commodities.[4]

5.15 The NPSP confirms that there is a compelling need[5] for substantial additional port capacity over the next 20–30 years. In particular, to exclude the possibility of additional port capacity would accept limits on economic growth and on the price, choice, and availability of goods; as well as to

[3] National Policy Statement for Ports, paragraph 1.2.1
[4] National Policy Statement for Ports, paragraph 3.4.2
[5] National Policy Statement for Ports, paragraph 3.4.16

limit the local and regional economic benefits that new port developments might bring. Such an outcome would be strongly against the public interest.[6]

5.16 The NPSP encourages sustainable port development to cater for long-term forecast growth in volumes of imports and exports by sea[7], and recognises that developers will need to bring forward proposals (alongside committed developments) to meet anticipated long-term growth and introduce further competition, flexibility and resilience in the market.[8]

5.17 The NPSP is clear that capacity must be in the right places to serve the needs of import and export markets.[9] The NPSP states that port development must be responsive to changing commercial demands, and the Government considers that the market is the best mechanism for getting this right, with developers bringing forward applications for port developments where they consider them commercially viable.[10]

5.18 The NPSP recognises the direct and indirect economic benefits of port development. In particular, bringing together groups of related businesses within and around ports can create a cluster effect, which supports economic growth by encouraging innovation and the creation and development of new business opportunities.

5.19 In assessing the need for additional capacity, the NPSP invites the decision maker to accept the need for more port capacity is demonstrated by the Government's demand forecasts. The Government expects that ultimately all of the demand forecast in the 2006 ports policy review is likely to arise, though, in the light of the recession that began in 2008, not necessarily by 2030. It also expects the decision maker to accept that additional port capacity is required to offer a sufficiently wide range of facilities at a variety of locations to meet existing and future demand; to introduce further resilience and competitiveness to our national infrastructure and; to take into account both the potential contribution port developments might make to regional and local economies.

5.20 Given the level and urgency of need of infrastructure, the decision maker should start with the presumption in favour of granting consent to applications for ports development.

5.21 The NPSP confirms that, from a policy perspective, it does not contain any general requirement to consider alternatives or whether the proposed project represents the best option[11].

5.22 As a general principle, port development should aim to avoid significant harm to biodiversity through mitigation; where significant harm cannot be avoided, then appropriate compensation should be sought. In respect of regional and local sites of biodiversity interest, the NPSP indicates that the decision-maker should give due consideration to such designations. However, given the need for new infrastructure, these designations should not be used in themselves to refuse development consent.

[6] National Policy Statement for Ports, paragraph 3.4.16
[7] National Policy Statement for Ports, paragraph 3.3.1
[8] National Policy Statement for Ports, paragraph 3.4.9
[9] National Policy Statement for Ports, paragraph 3.4.11
[10] National Policy Statement for Ports, paragraph 3.4.12
[11] National Policy Statement for Ports, paragraph 4.9.1

National Policy Statement for National Networks

5.23 The National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN) was published in December 2014 and sets out the need for, and Government's policies to deliver, development of nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIPs) on the national road and rail networks in England. This includes developments consisting of new rail terminal facilities and rail-served warehousing, which are referred to as Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFIs) in the NPSNN.

5.24 While Port Warrington is not seeking to deliver an SRFI, the NPSNN is relevant in that it is clear Government policy which seeks to deliver more rail-connected warehousing. The NPSNN identifies that transferring more freight from road to rail will have clear environmental benefits, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and deliver upon economic benefits[12].

5.25 The NPSNN reminds us that logistics is predominately a road-based industry and the continuation of a predominately road-to-road logistics sector is neither viable nor desirable (paragraph 2.55). However it states that the users and buyers of warehousing and distribution services are increasingly looking to develop new facilities that need to be located alongside major rail routes, close to major trunk roads, as well as near the conurbations that consume the goods[13]. The NPSNN therefore confirms that there is a 'compelling need' to deliver a network of SRFIs across the regions while accepting that the need for effective connections for both road and rail will restrict the scope for developers to identify viable alternative sites[14].

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

5.26 The Framework confirms that the overall purpose of planning is to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development[15] and so that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development[16].

5.27 One of the overriding objectives of the Framework is to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, which is to be achieved by ensuring that sufficient land is available in the appropriate places and at the appropriate time. This, alongside the identification and coordination of the provision of infrastructure, should help to support economic growth, innovation and improved productivity[17].

5.28 It also instructs that planning policies should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, and significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account business needs and wider opportunities for development. Planning Practice Guidance states that an understanding of (often changing) business needs, particularly where specialist requirements apply, should be achieved through engagement with the business community, whilst also identifying and addressing any barriers to investment such as a lack of appropriate infrastructure[18]. The informed approach should allow

[12] National Policy for National Networks, paragraph 2.40
[13] National Policy for National Networks, paragraph 2.45
[14] National Policy for National Networks, paragraph 2.56
[15] National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 7, February 2019
[16] National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 10, February 2019
[17] National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 8, February 2019
[18] Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 61-040-20190315

each area to build upon its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future[19].

5.29 Planning policies should set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth[20], and should also recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors – this includes storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations, ensuring that the delivery of infrastructure is consistent local / national growth ambitions[21].

5.30 The Framework also specifies that transport issues and opportunities should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making, with a focus on the promotion of sustainable means of transport whilst also actively managing opportunities to facilitate and promote economic growth. Particular support is offered for significant developments which can or are able to be made sustainable[22]. The Framework further states that planning policies should provide for large-scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area (with specific reference made to ports and interchanges for rail freight), as well as the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy23. Planning policies in these circumstances should also take into account whether such development is likely to be a nationally significant infrastructure project and the relevance of national policy statements.

Freeports Initiative

5.31 The Government has identified that ports are a critical piece of infrastructure to support and sustain our national economy. To support and enhance their role the Government wish to create a series of Freeports across England. Freeports are seen as one of the cornerstones of the Government's plan to level up opportunity across the country. They are expected to enhance trade and investment across the UK, boost growth and high skilled jobs and increase innovation and productivity in port regions, particularly those situated in or near deprived areas. The Government has set out the following objectives for Freeports:

- Establish Freeport as national hubs for global trade and investment across the UK: intensify the economic impact of our ports by enhancing trade and investment and generating increased economic activity across the UK

- Promote regeneration and job creation: create high skilled jobs in ports and the areas around them, prioritising some of our most deprived communities to level up the UK economy

- Create hotbeds of innovation: create dynamic environments, capitalising on new ideas and fostering the conditions that will attract new businesses, investors and innovations.

5.32 Freeport status has been awarded the Port of Liverpool and the Liverpool City Region (LCR). It will be a low carbon, multi-modal, multi-gateway trade platform with a network of sites attracting high value investment, supporting growth and employment to regenerate communities through industry, innovation, and collaboration. Centred on a mix of multi-modal infrastructure

[19] National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 81, July 2021
[20] National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 82, July 2021
[21] National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 11, July 2021
[22] National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 105, July 2021
[23] National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 106, July 2021

including the deep-water container terminal at the Port of Liverpool – the UK's biggest western facing port, handling 45% of trade from the US – multiple rail heads, other water-based access, and the airport, it's the key coastal access point to the UK's largest concentration of manufacturing. Targeting key sectors including automotive, bio-manufacturing/pharmaceuticals and maritime, Liverpool City Region Freeport will also support advanced manufacturing, logistics and energy.

Pan-Regional

5.33 The **Northern Powerhouse**[24] initiative seeks to boost economic growth across the North of England to rebalance the economy.

5.34 The Northern Powerhouse Independent Review[25] (NPIER) was launched at the end of June 2016. It was commissioned by the Transport for the North (TfN) on behalf of northern partners and sets out the important of an ambitious approach showing how high quality transport infrastructure is vital for boosting exports and unlocking investment across the north.

5.35 The NPIER demonstrated how transformational economic growth by 2050 could generate:

- 15% increased gross value added (GVA) - £100bn compared with business as usual, and
- 850,000 additional jobs, based around four prime and three enabling capabilities for the North's economy, all underpinning the North's quality of life.

5.36 One of the three enabling capabilities to deliver transformational growth is the logistics and freight sector. More specifically, the Northern Powerhouse supports increasing capacity in transport and port-centric and multi-modal warehousing needs arising from the Liverpool2 and SuperPort projects.

5.37 The Northern Transport Strategy[26] confirms that regional ports have potential to support economic activity and provide additional capacity, reducing pressure elsewhere. This will result in greater market share of the freight logistics industry. In particular, Transport for the North (TfN), through its Strategic Transport Plan for the North[27] sets out the case for strategic transport infrastructure investment through to 2050 and the expansion of Port Warrington has the potential to contribute positively to this Plan. The plan recognises that the connectivity of goods moved in the North can be improved, particularly with the interchange between road and rail. It sees the benefit of developing sites with multimodal access (such as Port Warrington) which can accommodate the efficient transfer of goods between modes for storage and onward distribution.[28]

5.38 It also recognises that the North West experiences significant congestion, efficiency, capacity, and reliability impacts on the road and rail networks (such as on parts of the West Coast Main Line and M6 Motorway) which is constraining economic growth. The freight and logistics industry

[24] Northern Powerhouse Strategy, November 2016
[25] NPIER Reference
[26] The Northern Transport Strategy: Spring 2015 Report, TfN
[27] Strategic Transport Plan, February 2019, TfN
[28] Draft Strategic Transport Plan for the North, 2017, page 35; Transport for the North

require enhanced connectivity on both the road and rail networks, as well as exploring opportunities for greater use of waterborne and intermodal freight.[29]

5.39 More specifically the plan's associated evidence[30] base recommends the proposed development of 50 hectares per year of rail and/or water connected chain of Multimodal Distribution Parks (MDPs) to create a rail and water-connected distribution network at existing ports and across the north. Indeed, the evidence suggests that there is scope to build an additional two million square metres of rail/water connected distribution space by 2033. However, it also notes the challenges noting:

> *"…there is currently a lack of sufficiently large sites with the ability to provide the required rail and water connections being brought forward, due to difficulties in bringing suitable sites forward through the planning system and achieving the uplift in land value needed to install the required connections……However without a sufficient number of site that are rail/water connected, the North cannot secure a greater market share of logistics activity as it is often more expensive to transport goods over longer distances by road. Larger sites are needed to generate sufficient revenue to justify the investment needed to build a rail terminal and a connection to the network; and the planning system must be more favourable and better inform developers of where suitable land parcels exist in order to enable these sites to be brought forward[31]."*

Regional

5.40 The Atlantic Gateway initiative is a partnership between the Liverpool, Manchester and Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The initiative seeks to prioritise high growth opportunities, which have the greatest ability to transform in the corridor between the regions. It is recognised that the Atlantic Gateway area is in a strong position to capitalise on this shift in global markets to expand its port operations and develop a more integrated transport network with the Port of Liverpool, Port of Salford, Port Warrington and Port Wirral at its core.[32]

5.41 The Cheshire & Warrington Strategic Economic Plan[33] outlines the growth ambitions across the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region and the aim to grow its economy's GVA to £50 billion per annum by 2040. To achieve this, the Plan recognises that the area's strategic location between Liverpool and Manchester, and that its reputation as a centre for logistics and development should be exploited further. It specifically notes that the development of large-scale port facilities, including at Port Warrington, will be ideally placed to capitalise on the new, post-Brexit trading relationship with the world. It also recognises that the enlargement of the Port would help remove heavy goods vehicles from the local road and motorway networks and also provide direct employment in the form of greater logistics and distribution capacity.

5.42 The SuperPort concept is an initiative being led by the Liverpool City Region LEP supported by local authorities (including the immediate hinterland authorities of West Lancashire, Warrington and Cheshire), Peel Ports, Liverpool John Lennon Airport, Stobart Group, Unipart Logistics, Mersey Maritime, Merseytravel and a wealth of retail, manufacturing, maritime, logistics and

[29] Draft Strategic Transport Plan for the North; 2017, page 65; Transport for the North
[30] For example, see Northern Freight and Logistics Report, TfN, 2018
[31] Northern Freight and Logistics Report, TfN, 2018, Section 6.3.1, Page 52
[32] Atlantic Gateway Business Plan, July 2012; page 17; Atlantic Gateway
[33] Cheshire and Warrington Strategic Economic Plan, Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership, July 2017

professional services operations. SuperPort is an integrated cluster of logistics assets and expertise that will deliver faster, greener global market access for business to and from the northern UK and Ireland via the deep water container terminal at the Port of Liverpool. Amongst the key assets are the Port of Liverpool and The Manchester Ship Canal as a means of linking Liverpool and freight traffic with major distribution hubs around the North West. Evidence[34] prepared on behalf of the Liverpool LEP demonstrates that the SuperPort will create additional employment need and sub-regional demand for 634 ha of B2 and B8 uses with the majority of demand being for large scale sites in locations with good access to the strategic road network and rail hubs. This evidence is informing the preparation of development plans across the sub-region.

Local

Warrington Means Business: Warrington's Economic Growth and Regeneration Programme

5.43 In 2017 and more latterly in 2021, Warrington & Co published an Economic Growth and Regeneration Programme[35] (EGRP) for the next ten years. In essence, it is Warrington's Industrial Strategy, which is to sit along its emerging Local Plan to facilitate further economic growth and development. It identifies the characteristics that have made Warrington successful in becoming one of the best economically performing areas in the UK and that investment and market interest in Warrington is strong and is getting stronger. However, the availability of land, lack of infrastructure and congestion are now starting to limit Warrington's growth potential and this is a key focus of the EGRP and the emerging Local Plan.

5.44 The EGRP sets out the case for Warrington's growth with an ambition to deliver 26,000 new homes and 31,000 jobs through regeneration and expansion across key areas of the borough. One of these identified key areas is Warrington Waterfront which is expected to be a new part of Warrington which still includes the major expansion of Port Warrington for large scale port logistics and manufacturing tri-modal facility.

Cheshire and Warrington Local Industrial Strategy (2019)

5.45 In 2019 the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership released the Local Industrial Strategy for the area, which seeks to analyse evidence to establish the key strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities for the Cheshire and Warrington Economy.

5.46 The Local Industrial Strategy recognises the that the central UK location, with easy access to Manchester and Liverpool, two airports within 30 minutes, the Manchester Ship Canal and North Wales, is one of the key characteristics and strengths of the region, with specific reference made to the importance of the international shipping links in the region – this is a key strength which should be further built upon to fully utilise the unique strategic location. Despite the strong links, the Strategy notes that 23% of businesses stated that they view transport infrastructure as a barrier to business turnover growth in the next three years, meaning there is still significant room for improvement.

5.47 This document represents the Local Enterprise Partnership's initial thinking, with further documents to be released regarding the practical steps that the Local Enterprise Partnership and its partners can take to respond to identified issues and opportunities.

[34] SuperPort – Market Analysis, Land and Property, NAI Global, March 2014
[35] Warrington Means Business, Warrington's Economic Growth & Regeneration Programme, 2017 and 2021

Cheshire and Warrington Recovery Plan (2021 / 2022)

5.48 Since the publication of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Industrial Strategy in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a changed economic context, the Recovery Plan sets out how the Local Enterprise Partnership aims to recover the economy post-COVID.

5.49 The Recovery Plan once again makes reference to the key strategic location that the area benefits from, noting the importance of Warrington's role as a significant logistics hub courtesy of the excellent transport links across the country. In recent years logistics and distribution has experienced high employment and business growth, but despite this the Local Enterprise Partnership still identify that there are significant opportunities to innovate, and thus grow, in the future.

5.50 The Recovery Plan places significant emphasis on the need to support business to grow and successfully adapt to change. As well as recovering from the impact of COVID-19, this means adapting to new trading arrangements with the world, and ensuring that the region's economy remains outward-facing and an exporting powerhouse.

Warrington Core Strategy (2014)

5.51 The principle of expanding Port Warrington also has broad support in Warrington Borough Council's adopted development plan. In summary:

5.52 The adopted Warrington Core Strategy recognises, through strategic objectives and formal policy[36] that there is a sizable strategic opportunity to regenerate land close to the town centre and inner Warrington comprising the Warrington Waterfront and Arpley Meadows to create a new quarter consisting of residential and employment development, transport infrastructure, green infrastructure and a country park.

5.53 Core Strategy policy CS11[37] recognises that Port Warrington has the capability to become a multi modal port facility utilising the ship canal with an opportunity for rail freight recognising the extant planning permission in place to extend the existing operation and reinstate that rail freight connection and the Mersey Ports Masterplan proposing a further expansion to meet anticipated forecast demand arising from the growth of the Port of Liverpool and The Manchester Ship Canal. The policy confirms the Council will support sustainable economic activity generated and sustained by the Manchester Ship Canal taking into account a range of factors including impacts upon the openness of the Green Belt and nature conservation.

5.54 While the Core Strategy was not informed by a detailed Green Belt review to justify any significant de-allocations and the Port therefore remained within the Green Belt boundary, policy CS10 expressly states that the expansion of Port Warrington may be capable of demonstrating the '*very special circumstances'* by virtue of; (a) the fixed location of the infrastructure within the Green Belt; and (b) the potential for multi-modal sustainable transport benefits and contributing to promoting wider sustainable growth.

[36] Adopted Local Plan, 2014; Policy CS10, Page 38; Warrington Borough Council
[37] Adopted Local Plan, 2014; Warrington Borough Council

5.55 The Core Strategy[38] also notes that major warehousing and distribution developments should ideally be located away from areas sensitive to heavy vehicle movement and have direct access to the Primary Road Network, rail or the Ship Canal where possible.

5.56 It is also highly pertinent to note that previous iterations of the Local Plan removed land from the Green Belt and identified specific land use allocations to expand Port Warrington and a new Business Hub. The previous version of the Plan also confirmed that:

- Port Warrington offers the unique locational advantage of being able to link the Manchester Ship Canal to the rail network as well as the strategic road network. This would enable a more sustainable long term solution to freight distribution[39];
- It is a national policy objective to increase the provision of port and multi-modal freight facilities and there is a particular need in the North West arising from Liverpool Super Port and the enhanced use of the Ship Canal[40];
- The WCP will provide employment space for activities related to Port Warrington buts its location in proximity to Warrington Town Centre and the Western Link will mean that it is also able to fulfil a broader role in meeting wider range of Warrington's business needs[41]; and
- Confirmed that the combination of need and location which provide the exceptional circumstances which justify removal of this part of the allocation site from the Green Belt[42].

5.57 Despite this categorical confirmation of justification and need, the proposed allocations for Port Warrington and WCP have been removed from the draft Plan without any proper justification for this radically altered approach.

[38] Adopted Local Plan, 2014; Policy CS2, Page 28; Warrington Borough Council
[39] Paragraph 10.1.16 Proposed Submission Version Local Plan 2019
[40] Paragraph 10.1.17 ibid
[41] Paragraph 10.1.18 ibid
[42] Paragraph 10.1.19 ibid

6. Meeting Port Demand & Development Needs

Peel Ports

6.1 The Port of Liverpool and The Manchester Ship Canal form an international gateway which is recognised by Government as a key component of the UK's global trading links and is therefore fundamental to the UK's economic prosperity.

6.2 The River Mersey is the third busiest estuary in the UK with some 16,000 commercial shipping movements per annum. In 2017, the Port of Liverpool handled 32.5milion tonnes of cargo with the Manchester Ship Canal handling 6.8 million tonnes of cargo.

6.3 Taken together, the Port of Liverpool, at the mouth of the Mersey, and the Ship Canal which begins eight miles upriver and continues for a further 36 miles to the centre of Manchester, is Britain's richest cargo-generating region outside London.

6.4 The Port of Liverpool extends from Royal Seaforth for four miles of docks up river with another three miles of berths across the Mersey at Birkenhead. All 1,500 acres accommodate a rich diversity of cargo handling and processing operations. The Port has over 300 lessees and operators ranging from blue chip companies such as Essar, Cargill, Eon and EMR to smaller port businesses – all of which are reliant upon water freight solutions and port infrastructure as part of their supply chains.

6.5 The Ship Canal has a number of docks, wharves, terminals and dredging grounds supporting over 70 lessees and operators. Until recently, the particular specialism of the Ship Canal was the handling of chemicals and bulk liquids and this is still reflected in the continued presence of companies including Shell, Nu Star, INEOS and Solvay Interox. However, diversification in new cargo sectors has begun to be achieved including the delivery of port-side warehousing which benefit from water, rail and road accessibility (multi-modality) and offer cost and environmental advantages in terms of removing unnecessary HGV journeys which would otherwise occur through normal 'road to road' distribution.

6.6 These opportunities have also been founded upon the recent opening of the deep water container terminal (Liverpool2) enabling the largest vessels to call directly in the heart of the UK and significant increases in freight movements into and through the region including along the Manchester Ship Canal. Container volumes on the Manchester Ship Canal have grown from 3,000 TEU per annum in 2009 to 36,600 TEU per annum in 2016 – a twelve fold increase in seven years. The opening of Liverpool2 has the potential to significantly increase these throughputs further.

Mersey Ports Master Plan

6.7 Under a Department of Transport publication in 2008 "Guidance on the Preparation of Port Master Plans," the Government recommends that all major ports produce Port Masterplans and to consult upon them with stakeholders – including local planning authorities in order to clarify the port's own strategic planning and development needs but also to assist local planning bodies in preparing and revising their own development strategies.

6.8 Peel Ports Group published its draft Mersey Ports Master Plan[43] (MPMP) in 2011. This Plan sets a strategy to harness the economic potential of Port of Liverpool and the development of a network of inland ports, including Port Warrington. The Masterplan outlines that the integration of the Port of Liverpool and The Manchester Ship Canal offers the unique opportunity to drive transformational shift in the behaviour of supply chains beyond the UK, by developing a key logistics platform allied to the development of water freight solutions. This will provide the added value beyond the ports being simply a transit point and is to be achieved through the wider diversification of port operations including:

- Development of single and multi-user port-centric warehousing.
- Development of new processing facilities for imported commodities.
- Development of more customer-focussed operating practices.
- Entry into new sectors – including biomass, energy, offshore wind, waste to energy and recycling.
- Development of a new number of multi-modal inland ports upon The Manchester Ship Canal including Port Warrington.

6.9 The MPMP advances the national need case for ports as advocated in the NPSP by clarifying its own strategic planning needs over the medium and long term. It sets out how the Mersey Ports network is expected to grow and develop its business over time and identifies a land strategy response for its respective ports to meet the anticipated forecast in demand to 2030.

6.10 In this context, it is important to note that the MPMP seeks to identify land requirements for port-related activity. It does not seek to identify and address wider B8 distribution needs which might be most sustainably located near a port or rail connection. These are additional needs and requirements and identified within respective local authority employment land studies.

Forecast Growth

6.11 The Masterplan identifies that for Mersey Ports[44], there is an anticipated growth in tonnage traffic in excess of 70% from 39.64 million tonnes (2008 base year) to 68.58 million tonnes by 2030. This is predicated on a number of factors, including the following:

(a) Containers (lo-lo[45])

The anticipated increase in container traffic arising from general growth but also from the delivery of the deep sea container port will enable the opportunity for the Port of Liverpool to double annual capacity to 1.5 million TEU. The expanded container operations at the Port of Liverpool will stimulate growth in port-centric logistics across its hinterland, serving the largest export cargo market outside London (the North West). The Manchester Ship Canal has a great advantage of 'running through' the most densely populated area of the North West enabling distribution centres to be located along this route and thereby accessing freight by water. The economic cost savings

[43] Mersey Port Master Plan (Consultation Draft), 2011

[44] Including Port Warrington

[45] Containerised cargo – which is loaded and offloaded by a port's cranes and derricks.

are supplemented with carbon and congestion benefits when compared to long distance freight movements made across the UK's strategic road network emanating from existing ports in the South East of England.

The anticipated rise in port-centric demand would be serviced through the delivery of multi-modal ports along the Manchester Ship Canal at Port Cheshire, Port Warrington and Port Salford.

(b) Trailer Freight (ro-ro[46])

Liverpool is a national hub for the provision of roll-on and roll-off freight and passenger services owing to its proximity to the gateways of Belfast and Dublin. Trade is anticipated to expand based upon the further integration and reliance of the British and Irish economies. The Masterplan also identifies that it would be logical for the future development of ro-ro facilities to be closely related to distribution centre development at the inland ports so that the North West and Ireland can be served from one site.

(c) Steel, Metals and General Cargo

As a result of anticipated rising forecasts for steel, metals and general cargo throughput, the Masterplan anticipates the need for additional storage capacity along the Ship Canal to increase.

(d) Port Centric Logistics

Portside logistics warehousing and distribution facilities benefit from water, rail, and road accessibility. The demand emanating from the growth in lo-lo container traffic is predicated on the supply chain savings generated through using a port closest to the population centres of the UK and the ship to door logistics cost is optimised when the distribution centre is next to water.

The Masterplan identifies that the competitive advantage of the Mersey Ports is enforced through their advantageous position relative to centres of population and consumer demand. It cites that the North West represents the largest container-generating region outside of London and within a 125 mile radius has the largest concentration of distribution and manufacturing activity and the largest concentration of population. In light of this, the Master Plan envisages that over the 20 year strategy period, there is likely to be an increase in the amount of port-related warehousing by a further 4 million sqft; this would necessitate the identification and delivery of a further 113 hectares of development land within the geographical remit of Mersey Ports.

(e) Other Dry Bulks

The Port Masterplan envisages a likely demand for more space for tank storage associated with new businesses and further demand for material imports (such as aggregates, cement and timber) to support the construction sector all coming through the increase in the size of container vessels and enhanced ro-ro activity.

Land Strategy Response

6.12 To meet this growth forecast, the Master Plan sets a requirement for 851 acres (344 hectares) of port-related development land. This land requirement is based upon forecasting the growth in

[46] Non containerised cargo which is transported via roll-on, roll-off vessels designed to carry wheeled cargo that are driven on and off the ship on their own wheels

various traffics handled at the ports. Three aspects to future land requirements have been considered:

- Amount of land needed to serve the Port's traffic growth;
- Amount of land required to serve the needs of port-centric distribution; and
- Amount of land required to serve complementary sectors (energy, waste, off-shore wind sector, processing activities).

6.13 The Master Plan identifies the overall land requirement to support the 20 year growth strategy as illustrated in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: Summary Land Requirements (acres)

Port Traffic	2020	2030	Total
Containers	40	90	130
Ro-Ro	40	45	85
Trade Cars	30	0	30
Grain	3	3	6
AFS & Biomass	8	0	8
Coal	0	0	0
Other Dry Bulks	5	5	10
Steel, Metals & General Cargo	5	5	10
Forest Products	10	10	20
Petrochemicals	0	0	0
Other Bulk Liquids	6	6	12
Port Centric Warehousing	140	140	280
Complementary Sectors:			
Off-shore Wind Farms	75	0	74
Biomass Energy	45	0	45
Processing & Value Added	70	70	140
Total	**477**	**374**	**851**

Draft Mersey Ports Master Plan 2011

6.14 To deliver this requirement, the Master Plan (MPMP) has disaggregated it amongst the Mersey Ports, accompanied by land use plan for each of the proposed development interventions.

6.15 Port Warrington was apportioned with a 35 acres (14 hectares) requirement (see Table 6.2 below) split into two phases which was the known opportunity at each location at the time:

- Phase 1 which incorporates land to the east of the existing Port complex which benefits from planning permission received in March 2010

- Phase 2 which extends the Port complex westwards in a linear fashion beyond Moore Lane Swing Bridge.

6.16 The scale of development expansion sought at that time was the full land extent that was under the control of Peel Ports Group.

6.17 The MPMP notes (at paragraph 6.40) that Port Warrington offers an ideal strategic mid-point upon the Manchester Ship Canal to develop port centric warehousing which could benefit from the operation of a regular barge shuttle between the Container Terminal at the Port of Liverpool and Irlam Container Terminal. It also acknowledges that the delivery of sustainable transport solutions will be a key determinant in respect of the further expansion of operational activities upon adjoining landholdings and upon the community.

6.18 Overall, Table 6.2 refers to 105 acres (c.42 hectares) of land requirement which is unidentified – this equates to a 12% gap in overall land requirement. The MPMP also notes that while 746 acres (302 hectares) has been identified, not all of this is readily available and/or deliverable without further activity – in respect of securing consenting options and ultimately through site acquisition, indicating that the shortfall in land provision could be even larger.

Table 6.2: Land Disaggregation (to 2030)

	Site Description	Area (acres)
L1	Seaforth river Terminal	42
L2	Seaforth Area B	78
L3	Hornby/Alexandra Dock	24
L4	LIFT Zone Phase 2	19
L5	Regent Road/Derby Road	92
L6	N3 Canada	10
L7	Huskisson Dock Complex	20
B1	Twelve Quays	4
B2	Beaufort Road	27
B3	Former Mobil Site	23
B4	Cammell Laird	34
M1	Land at QEII Dock	17
M2	Port Wirral	146
M3	Former Bridgewater Paper Mill	46
M4	Port Ince	10
M5	Wigg Wharf	2

M6	Port Warrington Phase 1	11
M7	Port Warrington Phase 2	24
M8	Irlam Container Terminal	6
M9	Port Salford	111
	Total Land Identified	**746**
	Unidentified Land	**105**
	Overall Land Requirement	**851**

The Land Position Today

6.19 Ten years have elapsed since the draft MPMP was published and while it was never formally adopted, its vision and implementation has been progressed with some £750 million invested in new facilities at the Port of Liverpool and The Manchester Ship Canal. This is best reflected through the construction and operation of Liverpool2 - the new deep sea container terminal at the Port of Liverpool which opened in 2017. Further developments have included a £100m biomass import terminal, steel and animal feed terminals and port-centric logistics development notably at Port Salford.

6.20 During this time, it has also become evident that the availability of development land at a number of the Mersey Ports required to meet its strategy is much lower than originally anticipated. This has occurred because previously identified expansion land remains unavailable. For example, in some circumstances, Peel Ports Group has not managed to secure the identified landholdings that were previously identified by the MPMP or land has been subsequently lost to alternative uses. Moreover, there has been further contraction of available land through the closure and the disposal of assets at Port Wirral and the Irlam Container Terminal.

6.21 In light of this, there is now an evidenced shortfall of available development land against the 2030 growth forecast (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3: Revised Port Land Availability (acres)

Port	Land Identified for Port-Related Uses (2011)	Land Available for Port-Related Uses (2021)	Change (+/-)	Comments
Seaforth River Terminal	42	42	-	Delivered
Seaforth Area B	78	-	-78	SSSI/SPA/Ramsar designation – IROPI case significant planning delivery issues
Hornby Alexandra Dock	24	24	-	Available

LIFT Zone Phase 2	19	19	-	Planning permission secured and partially implemented
Regent Road / Derby Road	92	-	-92	Land assembly issues multiplicity of land ownerships public sector CPO required not been progressed
N3 Canada	10	10	-	New steel terminal implemented
Huskisson Dock Complex	20	20	-	Available
Twelve Quays	4	4	-	Available
Beaufort Road	27	-	-27	Required for decant of port customers from East Float
Former Mobil Site	23	-	-23	Alternative permission secured
Cammell Laird	34	34	-	Available specific for off-shore wind
Land at QEII Dock	17	17	-	Available
Port Wirral	146	-	-146	Land has been/is to be disposed
Former Bridgewater Paper Mill	46	46	-	Consented and available
Port Ince	10	10	-	Consented and available
Wigg Wharf	2	2	-	Available
Port Warrington Phase 1	11	11	-	Planning permission secured and partly implemented
Port Warrington Phase 2	24	24	-	Forms part of the land assembly strategy and promotion

Irlam Container Terminal	6	-	-6	Closed
Port Salford[47]	111	111	-	Planning permission secured and partially implemented
Total land available for port-related development	**746**	**374**	**-372**	
Unidentified land	**105**	**479**		
Overall land supply	**851**	**851**		

6.22 Peel Ports Group calculate that the overall land supply shortfall is now circa. 479 acres (193 Ha), including the original shortfall of 105 acres (42.5ha).

6.23 Along with capacity issues at the Port of Liverpool and Port Runcorn, it is clear that there remains a significant shortage of available development land to meet identified port related growth. This will hamper the ability for operators within the region to be responsive to the opportunities flowing from the growth in freight tonnage; and as consequence, growth opportunities are now being lost to other ports around the UK. This is of crucial importance as the Ports NPS seeks to actively encourage competition and resilience to ultimately ensure national port provision which exceeds overall demand in order to secure efficiencies and overall competiveness advantages of the UK economy. The configuration, availability and cost of land is important in this context. It also means the regional economy is missing out on this investment.

6.24 The market forces that apply to ports are variable and fast-paced. Hence, port operators must have access to a supply of available land that will enable them to be responsive to new enquiries and accommodate changing requirements. It will also ensure competition in the marketplace. This situation has only become more important in a post-Brexit economy when there is a growing reliance on imports (by sea) as the UK Government secure new global trade deals.

6.25 In order to meet identified needs, Peel Ports are now principally concentrating on three key strategic port sites – Port of Liverpool, Port Warrington and Port Salford. As is confirmed in the next section, Port Warrington offers the opportunity to provide sustainable port and logistics facility that would distribute deep sea and short sea containers inland from the Port of Liverpool directly to the inland origins and destinations of cargo in North West England and to transport a range of bulk and semi-bulk cargoes inland for local industry. Port Warrington would also be able to act as an inland extension to the Port of Liverpool, with container storage for subsequent

[47] A further expansion of Port Salford is currently being promoted through the draft Greater Manchester Places for Everyone. The proposed expansion relates to an additional 120 ha of land to the north and west of Phase 1 for expansion to deliver a 320,000 sqm (3.4m sqft) of logistics and manufacturing space. Port Salford is now being marketed as a nationally significant sustainable logistics hub and is seeking to meet a specific B8 logistic need as identified in the Greater Manchester Freight and Logistics Strategy rather than any port requirement envisaged in the MPMP.

destination by road or rail to local shippers and receivers and, with its on-site distributions centres, become on origin and destination of cargo in its own right. Port Warrington goes some way to addressing the shortfall in port land requirement identified above.

6.26 As identified in the Development Framework document, an expansion of Port Warrington has been identified as having the potential of delivering up to 195 acres (79 hectares) of port-related development (inclusive of the 35 acres (14 hectares) previously identified in the Peel Ports Masterplan). This will enable Peel Ports Group to grow the port, address some of the land requirement deficiency and develop a multi-modal facility (with rail freight) to complement its network of existing ports along the MSC and integrate with the Port of Liverpool.

7. An Updated Need Case for Port Warrington

7.1 The previous chapter of the report provided an overview of the anticipated demand arising from port freight traffic as set out in the MPMP and identified the shortfall of land provision to meet such demand.

7.2 To supplement this context and to further support the allocation of Port Warrington, Peel Ports has commissioned MDS Transmodal to consider the market demand opportunity presented by Port Warrington in serving shipping, barge, rail and road freight.

7.3 The report can be viewed at **Appendix 1**. The key conclusions of the report are as follows:

(1) The MDST report confirms that it is Government policy (principally enshrined through the NPS for Ports and for SRFIs in the NPS for National Networks) to support the delivery of the required level of Port infrastructure to support the UK economy and that employment distribution facilities which are connected to both the rail and ports network. The development of rail and/or water connected multi-modal distribution parks are also supported through the Transport for the North's Freight and Logistics Report.

(2) There is a shortfall in land requirement to meet Port needs. The shortfall in port land, when compared with future forecast port traffic, is likely to limit the Port's ability to handle and store cargoes in the future. Given the importance of port infrastructure and indeed the Peel Ports network is to the economic growth of the North West, this could limit the regional economy's capacity for future growth and employment. Port Warrington is now central meet this need and is the best alternative to expand port infrastructure in the North West. The expanded Port of Warrington would facilitate a sustainable multi-modal port-logistics facility between the port of Liverpool, Port Warrington and Port Salford along the Manchester Ship Canal. Port Warrington provides the means to distribute deep sea and short sea containers inland from Irish Sea markets directly to the inland origins and destinations across North West England. In effect, Port Warrington can act as:

– an inland port for the North West of England, providing the opportunity for short-sea and coastal shipping to distribute cargoes (bulk and general cargo traffics) directly into the heart of logistics activity in the North West using cost effective and environmentally sustainable waterborne freight transport; and

– an inland extension of the Port of Liverpool for high value containerised cargoes, linked by a cost effective and sustainable container barge service between Gladstone Dock (within the Liverpool Docks System) and Port Warrington.

(4) The ability to connect to the rail network is a strategic advantage that needs to be capitalised upon. Port Warrington can provide much need rail served logistics facilities to meet rail freight demand as set out in the National Rail Freight Forecasts.

(5) A review of alternative sites to Port Warrington was undertaken to ascertain whether the quantum of land that will potentially be brought forward at other rail and water connected

sites in the North West of England is able to meet anticipated demand to 2037. Taking an optimistic view with regards to deliverability, it is estimated that around 435ha of land at rail served and/or water connected sites (including Port Warrington) could be developed up to 2037 in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor. This would leave a significant shortfall (of around 375ha) that cannot be found from all of the appropriate rail and water connected sites even when Port Warrington is included within the assessment.

(5) The report confirms that Port Warrington would be able to enjoy a direct connection to the West Coast Main Line and would not encounter any constraints to the operation of the site from a rail connectivity point of view. Port Warrington would be able to handle the most efficient combination of containers and wagons and accommodate the longest intermodal trains that operate on the British rail network. Initial capacity assessments and timetabling indicate that Port Warrington could be served by six daily paths which would make it a commercially attractive proposition for occupiers who are looking to adopt and/or expand rail freight connectivity into their supply chain distribution network.

(6) The estimated environmental benefits from the proposals through providing a tri-modal capability and removing approximately HGVs from the national highways network are significant, with an estimated 34.2 million HGV-km which would equate to a reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions from these HGVs of about 30,345 tonnes per annum.

Conclusion

7.4 As outlined above and in the supporting evidence, there is clear local, regional and national market demand for the type of facilities which are proposed at the expanded Port Warrington and WCP. There is a pressing land requirement through the Peel Port network and the Port of Warrington is best placed and the best alternative to expand port infrastructure in the North West. The draft Plan does not seek to meet this specific need and its proposed allocations do not provide reasonable alternatives to meet this need. The lack of sufficient alternative sites and the significant locational advantages which Port Warrington offers, notably its potential to take advantage of its multi-modal transport options, significantly contribute towards the 'exceptional circumstances' to supports its removal from the Green Belt. This need in question is not met by any of the proposed allocations in the draft Plan

8. Warrington Commercial Park

The Opportunity

8.1 The proposed Warrington Commercial Park (WCP) would lie to the south-west of Warrington Town Centre and adjacent to Port Warrington. Access to the WCP would need to be taken via a new link route (to Port Warrington) from the new Western Link to the east of the site.

8.2 The WCP could provide employment space for ancillary activities related to Port Warrington (see previous section) but its location and proximity to Warrington town centre means that it will also be able to fulfil a broader role in meeting a wider range of Warrington's business needs. A range of small to medium sized units could be built to complement the Port and to take advantage of the site's location close to the Western Link, the proposed new dwellings to the north and the town centre.

8.3 This section considers the justification for the release of Green Belt for WCP in this context.

(A) Objectively Assessed Employment Need

8.4 Warrington lies in a key strategic position on the M62 and is equidistant between Manchester and Liverpool. Over the last 20 years, it has taken advantage of this location to generate significant employment development, which has outstripped growth in the wider sub-region and the national average. The borough's employment land take-up during this period was approximately 300 ha (22.8ha per annum) and the Council's evidence[48] confirms that a similar level of growth is likely to continue.

8.5 The Green Belt tightly surrounds Warrington. Consequently, the borough cannot accommodate its objectively assessed employment requirement without incursion into the Green Belt. The Council has also explored the possibility for neighbouring authorities accommodating a proportion of its identified employment requirement to reduce the need for Green Belt release. However, whilst a proportion of the borough employment land requirement could be met via an extension to the Omega employment site in St Helens' emerging Local Plan, this proposal would also necessitate Green Belt release.

8.6 In light of the above, the Council evidence clearly demonstrate that the borough cannot reasonably meet its objectively assessed employment needs without the release of Green Belt land. This confirms that exceptional circumstances exist to justify a review of the Borough's Green Belt boundary.

(B) Distribution of Employment Land

8.7 Over the past 20 years, the north of the borough has been the focus for new employment land due to the good access to the M62; in particular, the success of Birchwood Park and the Omega site has been a key feature of the local economy. However, these sites are now approaching their capacity and there is limited opportunity for further growth.

[48] Warrington Employment Development Needs Assessment (2016), paragraph 8.76

8.8 The Council's employment evidence prepared in 2016 highlights[49] that there is consensus amongst the property market that there is very little employment land supply in South Warrington and close to the town centre, but a great deal of demand. More recent evidence[50] also points to expected loss of approximately 18 ha of Warrington's Class B land supply in and around Warrington Town Centre through the loss of land to residential uses. This represents an additional need to be met.

8.9 To address this, the evidence highlights[51] the requirement for further employment allocations around Port Warrington on the Manchester Ship Canal and land in South Warrington along the M56 Corridor. This would take advantage of the key M56/M6 links, reflect current market demand and the lack of remaining supply along the M62 in North Warrington (particularly at Omega).

8.10 The Council's evidence highlights a patent disparity in South Warrington between the supply and availability of employment land, versus a high level of occupier demand. In light of this, the proposed WCP can accommodate a substantial employment development in South Warrington and can make a positive contribution toward these identified needs.

(C) Qualitative Need

8.11 Alongside the objectively assessed employment need, a qualitative assessment is also crucial in establishing future employment locations. The Council's evidence[52] looks specifically at qualitative needs for future employment development and confirms that consultation with national, regional and local property stakeholders has identified that:

- There is a shortage of land for all types of B-Class use in the Borough, including offices and smaller industrial options, alongside the larger B2/B8 premises currently being provided at Omega.
- There is a lack of industrial and warehouse units of 2,000-5,000 sqm. Hence, Warrington may be losing out on some requirements to neighbouring authorities.
- Local office demand is primarily for suites of 0-500 sqm, in Birchwood and Warrington Town Centre. Larger requirements can extend to 2,000 sqm and tend to be focused at Birchwood only. However, there is a shortage of 1,000-2,000 sqm properties at Birchwood and across the Borough generally.
- Based on historic take-up, the evidence confirms that the strongest demand is likely to be for B8 Warehousing and B1(a) Offices.

8.12 The evidence concludes that there is a strategic requirement for large regional and national production/distribution facilities (B2/B8) requiring site of 5-10 ha (or larger); a local warehousing demand for properties of up to 5,000 sqm on sites of up to or over 1.3 ha; and a general demand for smaller office units serving the micro business market.

8.13 In light of this, the scheme aligns with the qualitative requirements set out in the evidence and can deliver a high-quality business hub, which can accommodate a range of employment uses, such as

[49] Economic Development Need Assessment, 2016, paragraph 10.19
[50] Economic Development Needs Assessment 2021
[51] Economic Development Need Assessment, 2016, paragraph 5.55
[52] Economic Development Need Assessment, 2016, table 60

production/distribution facilities (B2/B8) alongside smaller offices use (B1a). A range of other complementary uses, supportive of the proposed business function would be appropriate.

8.14 Importantly, the site's proximity to the town centre, the Manchester Ship Canal and the expanded Port Warrington, and the strategic road network, gives it unique locational advantage (see below) that make it a location of choice for employment development in both the borough and sub-region.

(D) Locational Advantages

8.15 The WCP is a unique site in the Borough and sub-region that benefits from: multi-modal connectivity (road, rail and water); adjacency to the expanded Port Warrington; and proximity to the town centre. These attributes act to differentiate the site from other potential employment sites in the local area and enable the site to attract inward investment opportunities that may not otherwise be accommodated in the borough and / or sub-region.

8.16 The site offers multiple locational advantages, not least:

- The site is strategically located in a gateway position on the Western Link road, which will provide convenient access to the strategic motorway and trunk road network;
- The proximity to Port Warrington provides the opportunity for synergies and clustering opportunities between port-related businesses while also being proximate to Warrington town centre; and
- Local accessibility to both high value residential areas and deprived communities that can benefit from the wide range of job opportunities created.

8.17 These multiple locational advantages, particularly the fixed multi-modal infrastructure relating to the Port, will help the WCP become a location of choice for inward investment in the Borough and / or sub-region. These advantages will create a competitive business location which appeals to a breadth of occupiers (B1, B2 and B8 uses) who require proximity to the town centre, the strategic road and canal network, a skilled workforce, and flexibility in terms of size and format of accommodation.

8.18 The land has also been in use for a number of years and subject to previous industrial uses, including accommodating ancillary development associated with the infrastructure of the landfill and as a dredging deposit ground.

Summary

8.19 The WCP is a unique development proposition that can support the needed activities at the Port while also assisting in meeting the quantitative and qualitative employment land requirements in the borough across the plan period. Notably, this site benefits from a unique local advantage that set it apart from any alternative non-Green Belt location and current Green Belt allocations elsewhere in the Borough.

Section C: Impacts of Expansion

9. The Positive Benefits of Expansion

Economic Benefits

9.1 The scheme will attract investment which would not otherwise come to Warrington and in doing so would contribute directly to the Government's objectives of rebalancing the UK economy. This also reflects the wider emphasis on economic growth, as reflected in the Northern Powerhouse initiatives and reflects Warrington's overall growth and importance as one of the fastest growing centres in the country. Given these strategic advantages, multi-modal operations are becoming more important to occupiers who see rail operations and port-centric operations increasing in significance. The significant opportunities which Port Warrington offers, including both rail and port centric operations within a large urban catchment area at the heart of an urbanised region, needs to be fully exploited.

9.2 The development will also stimulate further business linkages and provide a significant opportunity to create a significant number of new jobs and training for local people. The development represents a significant financial investment in the Borough. It will deliver a wide range of jobs during the construction and operational phases and make a significant contribution to local GVA.

9.3 The substantial economic benefits that arise from the delivery of an inland tri-modal port and an expansion to the Port of Liverpool is supported by national planning policy as expressed in National Planning Policy Statement for Ports and National Networks respectively. This is in terms of supporting further through-put capacity and multi-modal provision at Ports (which are the main conduit for the country's imports and exports) and through provision of hubs with access to the strategic road network and rail (which would offer choice to customers and facilitate the prompt movement of goods for manufacturers, retailers and end consumers). It also dovetails with the Freeports initiative the identified of the Port of Liverpool as a Freeport. A fundamental narrative of this Freeport is to connect intermodal infrastructure together and to integrate the Port of Liverpool with the Manchester Ship Canal to deliver upon its economic potential.

9.4 The proposals will offer potential occupiers with maximum choice and flexibility to utilise the most sustainable and competitive forms of transport in a location close to markets. This combination would make it a sustainable and logical location for logistics businesses serving the central and northern parts of the UK and offer an attractive location from which to base a UK wide logistics operation and the increased generation of business rates. These benefits will provide a significant boost to the region's economy and will include direct and indirect opportunities for local suppliers and workers.

9.5 A bespoke economic impact model has been created in order to assess the potential effects of the scheme. This initial assessment uses scheme-specific data and assumptions in order to consider the quantifiable impacts of the proposed development, both during its construction and operational (or 'lifetime') phases.

9.6 The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Additionally Guide, published in January 2014, provides guidance to practitioners on the standard methodology associated with assessing the additional effects of an intervention or development. The HCA guidance has informed this

assessment in order to ensure conformity to nationally accepted standards for assessing potential socio-economic effects.

9.7 Given the early stage of the project, all effects are presented as gross impacts.

Construction Phase

9.8 It is estimated that investment will total £317 million over the construction period.

9.9 Investment of this scale could be expected to support around 2,600 person-years of direct employment over the construction period, based on the average turnover per employee in the construction industry in the North West. This indicates that the proposed development will directly support an annual average of 515 temporary full-time equivalent (FTE) gross jobs over the construction period. Approximately 260 further jobs could also be induced or indirectly supported across the North West as a result of the proposed investment.

9.10 Construction of the proposed development will contribute significantly to economic output, measured in gross value added (GVA). GVA measures the value output created (i.e. turnover) net of inputs purchased, and is used to produce a good or service (i.e. production of the output). GVA therefore provides a measure of economic productivity – put simply the GVA is the total of all revenue into businesses, which is used to fund wages, profits and taxes.

9.11 The construction phase of the proposed development is expected to generate to a total of between £252 million over the construction period.

Operational Phase

9.12 Upon completion, the proposed development will generate a range of economic impacts through its operation. Unlike the temporary construction impacts presented above, these economic impacts will continue over the long-term, supporting local, regional and national economic growth objectives.

9.13 The operational phase of the development could be expected to directly support c. 5,300 gross jobs on site. In addition, the operation of the proposed development could support additional indirect and induced employment, equating to a further 2,650 jobs across the North West. Total additional employment supported by the operation of the proposed development is therefore calculated as 7,950 FTE jobs.

9.14 The proposed development is expected to generate £418 million gross GVA per annum over its operational lifetime. This comprises direct impacts of £270 million, and indirect and induced impacts (those accruing in the wider supply chain) of £148 million per annum.

9.15 Given the large floorspaces that could be delivered, it can be assumed that the operational phase of the proposed development will generate significant business rate revenue for Warrington Borough Council. Initial analysis of the floorspaces and intended uses indicate that business rate revenue in the region of £6.3 million per annum could be generated.

Other Economic Led Benefits

9.16 There is a proven link between economic growth and an improvement in health and wellbeing of workers and local communities. Port Warrington and the WCP will provide significant economic benefits which, through an active local benefits and Social Value programme that will seek to maximise health and wellbeing benefits. New buildings will be designed with measures to promote health and wellbeing of occupants and workers such as maximising the use of natural ventilation and light.

9.17 Port Warrington and the WCP will provide additional revenues for the Council to spend on necessary social infrastructure such as health care, education and community facilities. The creation of thousands of new employment opportunities will provide significant financial support for local shops and facilities in nearby.

9.18 A viability appraisal has been prepared and is included within the evidence base. The appraisal makes significant allowances and along with cost efficiencies, it confirms that the proposals would be deliverable and would be able to withstand a proportionate contribution to the WWL should it be required.

Sustainability and Environmental Benefits

9.19 The proposals will generate other significant sustainability and environmental benefits for the local area and wider region. The transfer of freight from road haulage to more sustainable rail and water freight networks is a key objective of the Government's vision for a low carbon/sustainable transport system. MDST estimate that that the proposals would remove HGVs from the national highways network In total the estimated annual environmental benefits from the Port Warrington site being a water- and rail-connected distribution park and removing HGVs from the national highways network would be an estimated 34.2 million HGV-km, which would equate to a reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions from these HGVs of about 30,345 tonnes per annum[53].

9.20 By encouraging a shift from road to water and rail based transport, an expanded Port Warrington has the potential to significantly reduce the amount of road haulage across the region, including amending the existing route via country roads and Moore Village. This would deliver significant reductions in carbon emissions and could ease congestion. The benefits of this would be felt across the highway network. Particular benefits would occur in areas of high HGV concentrations and areas of congestion. This would include the urban area around the port, the motorway links to Port Warrington and outlying areas.

9.21 The proposals therefore strongly support the Government's vision and policy for a low carbon, sustainable transport system through the transfer of road haulage and its associated emissions to sustainable rail and water based transportation. The movement of freight and goods to and from the regional economy will continue to rise significantly in line with economic growth and therefore there is a need to ensure the presence of the necessary infrastructure to allow a growing percentage of these goods to be transported via sustainable modes of transportation. This modal shift will also have benefits in terms of reduced vehicle emissions and improved local

[53] Based on 2.511 kg of CO2e per litre of diesel and fuel consumption for an articulated HGV of 2.83 km/litre.

air quality by transporting goods closer to their origins and destination through lower emission modes, such as waterborne and rail transport.

Recreational and Ecological Benefits

9.22 The scheme proposals include the retention and enhancement of Moore Nature Reserve (46ha) and the enhancement of Arpley Landfill site into a Country Park (136ha).

9.23 In terms of Arpley Meadows, the new proposals propose more habitat creation than previously permitted, to create new native woodland, scrubland and hedgerow areas, alongside the creation of new usable greenspace. A Vision Document in respect of the proposals has been prepared by LUC and are at Appendix 1 to the Development Framework. It sets out the proposals for developing a new Nature Reserve and Country Park in more detail and confirms that a range of zones that can be achieved within the environment including:

- A Nature Conservation Zone for ecologically sensitive areas. Access would be restricted within these areas with a primary purpose for education;
- A Passive Zone which would feature quieter recreational activities such as bike riding and guided walks;
- A Family Zone within a central hub area, with picnic table amenities and children's play facilities and outdoor performance areas;
- An Active Activity Zone in carefully sited areas of the park, suited to high energy sports such as bouldering/rock climbing; and
- A network of new recreational footpaths proposed to be dispersed throughout the site to encourage access by members of the public.

9.24 These provisions will ensure that the land is significantly enhanced, particularly from an ecological and recreational perspective, when compared to the baseline position[54] and the existing Moore Nature Reserve. The proposals will be of a scale, quality and range of activity which will result in the delivery of one of the largest country recreational and ecological parks in the North West and of sub-regional importance. The enhancement will deliver significant ecological, recreational and health benefits which weigh in favour of the overall proposals.

9.25 Finally, these benefits would be secured for the long term. As explained above, the existing Moore Nature Reserve has been managed through funding secured through planning obligations as part of the Arpley Landfill development. The current funding stream for the Nature Reserve is coming to an end in 2021, and there is no known funding package for the ongoing maintenance of the existing reserve. As part of the proposals, the Peel Group are committed to manage the Country Park and the retained area of the Moore Nature Reserve in perpetuity.

[54] As established through the base-line survey work undertaken and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

10. Impact on Green Belt

Introduction

10.1 National planning policy is clear[55] that once established, local authorities should only alter Green Belt boundaries where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should also establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period.

10.2 The Council has confirmed in its emerging Local Plan that there are exceptional circumstances to justify the release of Green Belt to meet Warrington's development needs. Whilst the Borough's existing Green Belt fulfils at least some aspects of Green Belt purposes, the Council acknowledges that it simply will not be possible to meet the identified employment needs of Warrington without some impact on the Green Belt.

10.3 This section assesses the proposed amendment to the Green Belt boundary that would be necessary at Port Warrington and WCP. It reviews the Council's evidence base to highlight the contribution that the land currently makes to the Green Belt (as measured by the five purposes in the Framework).

10.4 It then assesses the extent that the remaining Green Belt will continue to fulfil these purposes following the allocation and subsequent development of the site. The subsequent chapters include an appraisal of the exceptional circumstances.

The Proposed Revised Green Belt Boundary

10.5 The Cheshire Structure Plan 1977 (adopted 1979) established the Green Belt boundary that wraps around Warrington. The current Green Belt boundary is still largely identical to the original designation set in 1979. The first borough wide development plan to formally define the Green Belt was the saved Unitary Development Plan 2006 (UDP).

10.6 The area of current Green Belt subject to the proposed MD1 allocation lies between the River Mersey to the north and the Manchester Ship Canal to the south. It comprises an expanse of Green Belt contained broadly by Warrington's existing urban area to the north and west, existing waterways to the north and south, and a major railway line (West Coast Main Line) to the south.

10.7 The administrative area of the borough of Halton lies to the south-west of the proposed allocation (on the southern side of the Manchester Ship Canal) and its adopted Core Strategy currently designates this land as Green Belt. Notwithstanding this, Halton's Submission Delivery and Allocation Development Plan (DADP) proposes to amend this Green Belt boundary through the removal the village of Moore from its Green Belt designation and the allocation of land for employment development.

[55] MHCLG (2019) National Planning Policy Framework, para. 140

The Council's Evidence Base

10.8 As part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan, the Council commissioned an independent Green Belt Assessment[56] to provide them with an "…*objective, evidence-based and independent assessment of how Warrington's Green Belt contributes to the five purpose of Green Belt set out in national policy*"[57].

10.9 This Assessment divides Warrington's Green Belt into large parcels called 'General Areas'. These were defined by their 'recognisable and permanent boundaries' and then assessed against the five purposes of Green Belt.

10.10 The Assessment identifies[58] that the proposals lie entirely within General Area No. 15 and concludes[59] this broad area makes a '*moderate contribution'* to the purposes of Green Belt. The Assessment indicates that this is a balanced judgement[60] made on the basis that the area only contributes to some purposes of Green Belt and does not fulfil all purposes.

10.11 In summary, the Assessment shows that the parcel makes:

- a '*strong contribution'* when assessed against the purpose of preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- a '*moderate contribution'* to assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and assisting in urban regeneration;
- a '*weak contribution'* in relation to preventing sprawl; and
- '*no contribution'* in respect to protecting historic towns.

10.12 The Council recognises that Halton's emerging DADP proposes an amendment to Green Belt boundary near to the proposed Warrington Waterfront development area and the Council commissioned a further technical note[61] to consider whether it was necessary to reassess the contribution that this part of the Green Belt makes to the purposes.

10.13 The technical note highlights that the original Assessment recognised the role that this part of the Green Belt currently makes in respect to preventing the merging of the Warrington urban area and Runcorn. It states[62] "…the site forms a largely essential gap between the Warrington urban area and Runcorn with the Manchester Ship Canal retaining an element of separation. This remains unchanged by Halton's draft proposals". The technical note, therefore, concludes[63] that reassessment is not necessary as the original assessment sufficiently recognises the role the Green Belt plays in relation to this purpose.

[56] Ove Arup and Partners (2016) Green Belt Assessment – Final Report
[57] ibid, para. 6
[58] ibid, Appendix D
[59] ibid, Appendix E, pg. F7-F8
[60] ibid, Table 4
[61] Ove Arup and Partners (2019) Warrington Green Belt – Review of Port Warrington Sites
[62] ibid. pg. 2
[63] ibid, pg. 5

10.14 The Council's evidence base therefore identifies that the Green Belt parcel within which Port Warrington and the WCP lies makes overall a moderate contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt; albeit a strong contribution to the separation of settlements.

The Proposed Removal of the Land from the Green Belt

10.15 This section assesses the extent that the remaining Green Belt will continue to fulfil its contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt (as set out in the evidence base) following the allocation and subsequent development of the site. The findings are set out below under each of the purposes:

A) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

10.16 While the proposed development will expand built development into open countryside to the west of Warrington's urban area, in the form of the WCP, and will lead to expansion of the port facilities into adjoining open countryside, this will not constitute or lead to unrestricted sprawl in Green Belt terms.

10.17 The proposed Nature Reserve and Country Park would remain designated as Green Belt. These proposed protective policy designations, as well as its durable boundaries, will prevent further expansion of the urban areas in this location and provide definitive and defensible boundaries. The substantial size of Nature Reserve and Park coupled with the proposed protective designations (Green Belt, nature conservation and open space) and its durable boundary, will act as a permanent and durable buffer to ensure openness and to check any future unrestricted sprawl from the Warrington urban area.

10.18 The expanded Port Warrington will remain physically separate from the urban area and therefore does not in itself cause any impact to this purpose. Its boundaries will also be strengthened and made more durable through the creation and protection of the Nature Reserve and Country Park to the north, and maintained as permanent and defensible boundary to the south given the relationship with the Manchester Ship Canal.

10.19 The proposals would have a limited impact on this Green Belt purpose and cause no risk to further impact beyond allocation.

B) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

10.20 The Council's evidence base highlights that the broader parcel within which the proposals lie forms part of an essential gap between the towns of Warrington and Runcorn (in the adjacent neighbouring authority of Halton) and as a result, it makes a '*strong contribution'* to this purpose.

10.21 In terms of the WCP, the development would expand the urban area of Warrington southwards towards and Runcorn, and coupled with the proposed changes to the Green Belt boundary at Moore in Runcorn borough, there will be a reduction in the separation distance between the two; the Green Belt will be narrower in this location. However, there will remain a distance of between 900m and 1.2km between the two, a significant degree of openness and limited inter-visibility, particularly given that the Manchester Ship Canal provides permanent and definitive separation. The Nature Reserve and Country Park will also strengthen the contribution the intervening land

makes to Green Belt purposes and with additional policy protection will ensure there is no further risk to merging.

10.22 The proposed expansion of Port Warrington will bring urban form closer to the existing urban area of Runcorn / Moore village and effectively reduce the gap between the two, at the eastern-most edge of Port Warrington, to the breadth of the Manchester Ship Canal. However, Port Warrington already exists in this location albeit to smaller extent, and the expanded Port Warrington will be an island allocation, bounded by retained Green Belt and the Nature Reserve and Country Park to the north, which in itself will maintain separation from the Warrington urban area. In physical and perceptual terms, Port Warrington will still be seen separate from the Warrington urban area and despite its closer proximity to the Runcorn urban area/ Moore village will not bridge the gap and lead to merging of the two settlements. There will undoubtedly be some harm caused to this purpose given the reduction in the present degree of physical separation but the settlements will remain physically separate (because of the Canal) and the degree of separation is sufficient for Moore Village to retain its individual character and sense of place. This Green Belt purpose will be maintained. The proposed revisions to the Green Belt boundary will not fundamentally undermine this strategic purpose of the Green Belt (i.e. preventing towns from merging) but it is necessary to consider the identified limited harm to this purpose in considering whether exceptional circumstances exist to justify the harm. We turn to this in Chapter 12 below.

C) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

10.23 The proposed development seeks to regenerate an existing portside facility through the redevelopment of existing brownfield land. They also, however, seek to expand into largely undeveloped areas of countryside and therefore will cause some harm to this purpose. However, through the creation of the Nature Reserve and Country Park and the presence of the Manchester Ship Canal, the revised boundaries will be durable and defensible, limiting the risk of any further encroachment. The enhancement associated with the Nature Reserve and Country Park will also help to off-set this level of harm as it will deliver a valuable and permanent countryside resource that will offer managed public access and enhanced biodiversity. This will ensure compensatory improvements in environmental quality and will enable significantly greater numbers of people to enjoy the intrinsic value of the countryside (in accordance with Paragraph 138 of the Framework).

10.24 Given the robustness of the revised boundaries and the enhancements proposed, overall the proposals are only considered to have a limited impact on this Green Belt purpose.

D) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

10.25 While the Council's evidence base identifies Warrington as a historic town, it explains that Green Belt release will only affect the historic setting and special character of Warrington in two circumstances:

(a) if the parcel is within 250m of one of the Conservations Areas in the Warrington Town Centre; and / or

(b) if the parcel crosses an important view of the spire of the Parish Church of St Elphins.

10.26 The Council's evidence base demonstrates the proposed release of Green Belt for an allocation at Port Warrington will not conflict with either of these circumstances. It also considered that the proposals would not affect the character of Moore Village. Therefore the proposals would have no impact on this Green Belt purpose.

E) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

10.27 The purpose of assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land is applicable but it has to be balanced against the need for the development proposed and the availability of alternative urban land to meet that need. As set out elsewhere in this report, and drawn together in Section D on exceptional circumstances, the need is significant and alternatives would not satisfy the need nor convey the same benefits. Therefore, no harm is caused to this purpose. Indeed, the proposals – which seek to revitalise an existing Port, partly through the regeneration of its existing built extent and expansion into Green Belt land cannot sensibly be considered to offend this Green Belt purpose.

A revised Green Belt boundary

10.28 A revised Green Belt boundary would establish a strong, permanent and defensible boundary along its edges. This will safeguard the surrounding countryside from encroachment over the long-term. The Nature Reserve and Country Park will also remain within the Green Belt and this will act as a permanent buffer that will maintain openness in this location.

10.29 Alongside this, the proposals will unlock significant improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land. The works to enhance the Nature Reserve and Country Park will deliver significant net environmental and recreational improvements. This will bring wider benefits and offer opportunities to provide access and for outdoor sport and recreation, and to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity (as supported within Paragraph 142 and 145 of the Framework).

Summary

10.30 The removal of the land from the Green Belt to facilitate an expanded Port Warrington and WCP would inevitably have some limited impact on the purposes of the present extent of Green Belt. The affected land makes no contribution toward the setting and special character of historic town (purpose D) and will have no adverse impact on the objective of assisting urban regeneration (purpose E). The proposed removal of land from the Green Belt and its development will have a limited impact on checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (purpose A) and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (purpose C).

10.31 The change to the Green Belt boundary would create a logical and defensible boundary and the delivery of the enhanced Nature Reserve and Country Park will deliver significant net environmental and recreational improvements in line with national Green Belt planning policy.

10.32 Notwithstanding this, the only Green Belt purpose arising from development will relate to the purpose of preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another, but this is limited in nature; settlements will remain separate and boundaries will be defensible due to existing permanent features to protect against future merging but there will be a reduction in the physical distance between Port Warrington and existing settlements. However there will be no actual or perceived merger and each settlement will retain its own character/identity.

10.33 Therefore, it is necessary to consider this identified degree of harm against other considerations to establish whether exceptional circumstances exist to justify the proposed amendments to the Green Belt boundary. This is considered further in Chapters 11 and 12 that follow.

11. Environmental and Other Impacts

11.1 This section of the report addresses relevant technical and environmental considerations. It draws upon available evidence to assess the likely impacts of the proposals.

Biodiversity

11.2 It is acknowledged that there would be biodiversity loss associated with the development proposals, due to its fixed position, and that it is essential that a comprehensive package of mitigation and net gain is agreed with the council before to any application for the development of Port Warrington is permitted. It also goes on to state that new and improved habitat should be created in the first instance within the Waterfront allocation site, with part of Moore Nature Reserve and new areas of wildlife friendly habitat to be incorporated into the new Country Park. If additional mitigation is required, then this should preferably be provided as close as possible to the Warrington Waterfront allocation site.

11.3 This section of the report presents uses available evidence to consider potential effects of the development on biodiversity. It is accepted that, once mitigation is taken into account, some impacts will need to be compensated for and that further work will be required in support of any planning application and Peel will work with relevant parties to agree the scope of additional work. However, considerable work has already been undertaken to understand the proposals impact on biodiversity and develop a robust strategy in respect of mitigation and biodiversity net gain (BNG). The body of work comprises:

- Ecological Assessment including:
  - Desk study;
  - Extended phase 1 habitat survey;
  - Natural Vegetation Classification (NVC) surveys of semi-natural broadleaved woodland and grassland scrub;
  - Detailed arboricultural survey;
  - Preliminary bat roost assessment and desktop study;
  - Water vole and otter survey;
  - Incidental evidence of badger activity;
  - Breeding and wintering bird survey; and
  - Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessments for great crested newt breeding.

- Biodiversity Mitigation Strategy detailing the provision of mitigation and enhancement with respect to designated sites, protected species, priority habitats and future management.

- Landscape and Habitat Management Plan which provides a framework for long term landscape and habitat management and maintenance of the open spaces associated with the proposals;

- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment which considers the biodiversity impact for the proposals; and

- Habitats Regulation Assessment which sets out measures to ensure the construction and operation of the development will not adversely affect the birds and habitats associated with nearby European Nature conservation sites.

Site Designations

11.4 The proposed development site is subject to no European or national ecological designations. Moore Nature Reserve is identified as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS).

Land Ecology

11.5 The Ecological Assessment confirms the presence of important habitat within Moore Nature Reserve comprising wet woodland, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, native hedgerows, reedbeds and open water. Other habitats include scrub, marshy grassland, modified neutral grassland, tall herb and bare ground/short emphemeral vegetation. The former Arpley Landfill site has been capped and is in the process of being remediated with new areas of woodland and grassland creation. Parts of the currently unrestored areas of Arpley landfill consist of bare ground, ephemeral habitats and some areas of open water, tall herbs, scrub and grassland.

11.6 Reedbeds are the only priority habitat which has been recorded on Arpley Meadows. Other habitats include plantation broad-leaved woodland, modified neutral grassland, bracken, tall herb and bare ground.

11.7 No ancient woodland has been identified across the development site but the tree survey and impact assessment indicates eight veteran trees within Moore Nature Reserve. There is potential for one or two of these trees being lost to the development.

11.8 Moore Nature Reserve is well used by local naturalists and species recorders and is used for the recording and re-introduction of locally rare native species. The nature reserve has been managed through funding secured through planning obligations as part of the Arpley Landfill development. The current funding stream for the Nature Reserve is coming to an end in 2021, and there is no known funding package for the ongoing maintenance of the existing reserve.

Protected and Notable Species

11.9 Seven species bat have been recorded within the study area and the range of habitats provide foraging, roosting and commuting opportunities for bats. Great crested newt (GCN) and common toad have been recorded within the study area as recently as 2013. Other species recorded across the development site include badgers, woodland birds, wetland birds, birds of prey and bluebell. Other protected and

Impacts

11.10 The Ecological Appraisal provides a précis of the ecological impacts that arise from the proposals. In summary, the expansion of Port Warrington will result in the loss of approximately 44ha of habitats and the proposed commercial park will result in the loss of approximately 31ha of habitats.

11.11 The habitat lost include:

- Lapwing lake which measures approximately 2ha in size
- Woodland and reedbed
- Hedgerows (although none qualify under the regulations)

11.12 The habitats lost through the proposed development are considered to be of significant ecological value. The proposed development site has the potential to support a number of protected species including great crested newts, badger, otter, roosting bats, reptile species and a diverse range of nesting and feeding birds.

Mitigation

11.13 In accordance with national planning policy, compensation for the habitats lost at Moore Nature Reserve LWS will be required and result in achieving net gain in biodiversity.

11.14 As set out the Biodiversity Mitigation Strategy, compensation measures include the following:

- Extensive woodland creation within the newly created Arpley Country Park which will mitigate for the majority of woodland loss expected from the proposals;
- New areas of native scrub planting and creation of new wildflower meadows;
- Enhancement of retained hedgerows and creation of new hedgerows within the green infrastructure element of the proposed development;
- Areas of acid grassland in the retained element of the Moore Nature Reserve will be enhanced and management in the long term to improve its quality and condition;

- The retained reedbeds within Moore Nature Reserve and the extensive reedbeds within Arpley Country Park will be enhanced through long term management to improve their viability and suitability for the species that use this habitat;

- The loss of priority open water habitats will be partially mitigated by the rewetting of the former and currently dry and overgrown 1,450m Runcorn to Latchford Canal to form a series of waterbodies designed to provide suitable habitat for waterbirds;

- In between respective development parcels, landscape and ecological buffer zones are embedded into the development framework along with retained habitats and further habitat creation wherever possible;

- Every effort will be made to avoid the loss of veteran trees through detailed design of the Port Warrington development area. On present evidence, there are eight veteran trees identified within the study area. Two would be unaffected; one would definitely be lost from development with the remainder having the potential to be retained through further detailed design. If loss is unavoidable, a compensation strategy would be developed and would include consideration of the potential for translocation, replacement planting, whole tree carcass retention, destructive pruning or veteranisation, artificial ecological enhancement or woodland planting; and

- Long term management in-perpetuity will be implemented at both the retained Moore Nature Reserve and Arpley Country Park to ensure good condition in all retained, enhanced and created habitats.

11.15 In addition, the following measures will be implemented to ensure no harm to retained habitats and protected species within the retained Moore Nature Reserve:

- Construction-stage controls on encroachment into, and pollution of, retained habitats (CEMP);

- Seasonal restrictions on vegetation clearance; and

- Conservation method statements for protected and notable species, under Natural England licence as appropriate.

11.16 Whilst the habitats within the already restored areas of Arpley Landfill are naturalistic in style, it is considered that more modern methods of habitat restoration can be applied, resulting in greater and enhanced soil, botanical and structural diversity than that which is to be delivered under the current restoration scheme. This opportunity for betterment forms part of The Peel Group's overall approach to ecological mitigation, enhancement and biodiversity net gain.

11.17 Access to the retained areas of Moore Nature Research will be maintained throughout construction activities ensuring visitors and naturalists can still enjoy the variety of wildlife present in the reserve. New footpaths will be created within Arpley Country Park which link with those in Moore Nature Research enabling access to the whole area for enjoyment and wildlife watching. A new feeding station will be

installed within the retained area of Moore Nature Reserve and retained hides will be upgraded and include opportunities for recording wildlife. A scheme of information boards will be installed recording the history of the lost areas of the Moore Nature Reserve and detailed enhancements made, alongside species likely to be found.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

11.18 A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (BNGA)[64] has been prepared and is included within the submitted evidence base for the proposals. It explains the methodology and approach undertaken to BNG, including how enhancements in biodiversity have been calculated on both the Moore Nature Reserve and Arpley Meadows.

11.19 The BNGA seeks to ascertain the biodiversity impact for the proposals through the use of the Environment Bank Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculator (May 2019). The matrix assigns a biodiversity value on the baseline condition of existing habitats to be lost and retained, along with new habitats to be created.

11.20 The BNGA confirms that the net biodiversity balance of the proposals is -13.32 and in order to achieve a 10% net gain, an additional 76 biodiversity units are required through further off-site habitat creation. Five potential site have been identified as having potential for habitat creation. All five potential are located within 8km of the development proposals, are along the Mersey Estuary. Three sites are owned by the Peel Group of companies, and the remaining two are owned by Warrington Borough Council who have expressed support for the potential to utilise and enhance these sites for biodiversity:

Gatewarth Landfill

Gatewarth, a large former landfill site located immediately north of site on the north side of the River Mersey is currently managed by Warrington Borough Council and supports rough grassland and scrub over former landfill. There are opportunities to enhance the biodiversity of the site, in areas of existing rough grassland, by creating additional areas of broad-leaved woodland in the east of the site.

This habitat creation would result in up to 80 biodiversity units being achieved at this site, providing ample scope to achieve net gain.

Wigg Island

Wigg Island, a reclaimed industrial site, is a community park and Local Nature Reserve. Wigg Island is located approximately 3.5km west of the Port Warrington site and is managed by Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust. The entire northern boundary is dominated by coastal saltmarsh while the rest of the Island comprises a mosaic of mixed plantation woodland, scrub and rough grassland. The condition of the areas of

[64] The BNG assessment was undertaken using the Defra metric 2.0. Biodiversity Metric 3.0 has been recently released. An assessment against this metric has not been undertaken but Peel's consultants have indicated that an assessment of the proposals against this metric is unlikely to alter the overall conclusions set out in the original assessment. See Biodiversity Net Gain Review, TEP, November 2021

rough and amenity grasslands could be enhanced to create a more diverse species-assemblage.

Should enhancement be undertaken at Wigg Island within the areas of rough and amenity grassland, we believe that up to 13.5 biodiversity units can be achieved at this site.

Paddington Meadows

Paddington Meadows is a Local Nature Reserve owned by Warrington Borough Council located approximately 3.5km north east of the Port Warrington site. The site is a riverside 'meadow' dominated by semi-improved grassland, crossed by a network of hedgerows and bounded by scrub which borders the River Mersey. Opportunities for enhancement include improving the condition of the grassland to increase species-richness and the creation of new wetland habitat of approximately 1ha. The site is immediately adjacent the Woolston Deposit Ground SSSI and any proposed enhancement here would seek to compliment the SSSI and also retain amenity features for those that currently use the site,

Should the enhancement and creation measures suggested be undertaken at Paddington Meadows, we believe that up to 80 biodiversity units can be achieved at this site, providing ample scope to achieve net gain.

New Cut Woolston

New Cut Woolston is a linear site adjacent to Paddington Meadows Local Nature Reserve at its western end and opposite Woolston Eyes Site of Special Scientific Importance (SSSI) at its eastern end. The site is owned by Manchester Ship Canal Company (MSCC) and is approximately 3.6km north east of the Port Warrington Site. A former canal runs the length of the site and its banks are heavily dominated by scrub. The east of the site comprises a mosaic of rough grassland and scrub and provides the greatest opportunities for enhancement at this site. Creation of new wetland and improving the condition of the grassland in this area will provide biodiversity benefits at this site. There may also be an opportunity to restore the overgrown and filled in canal but this has not been considered within the biodiversity metric calculations.

Should the proposed habitat enhancement and creation be undertaken at New Cut Woolston, we believe that up to 20 biodiversity units can be achieved at this site, resulting in net gain for the development proposals.

Rixton

Rixton, a former landfill, owned by Peel, Biffa and MSCC is located approximately 7.8km east of the Port Warrington site. Rixton comprises a mosaic of broadleaved woodland, scrub and rough grassland and in the east of the site, an area of arable land. New habitat creation within the area of arable, including new woodland planting, creation of wetland habitat and wildflower meadow is thought to be the greatest opportunities for enhancement of this site. There is also an opportunity for new woodland planting in the north-east of the site within the rough grassland on part of the former landfill.

Should the proposed habitat enhancement and creation be undertaken at Rixton, we believe that up to 89 biodiversity units can be achieved at this site, resulting in ample scope to achieve biodiversity net gain for the development proposals.

Summary

11.21 The high level assessment of potential off-site opportunities demonstrates that there are a range of opportunities available where wetland, woodland and grassland creation and grassland enhancement can be undertaken on land either within The Peel Group's control or Warrington Borough Council's and which would enable 10% net gain to achieved, with Rixton former landfill site, Paddington Meadows and Gatewarth providing the greatest potential.

Habitat Regulations Assessment

11.22 A shadow HRA has been prepared which identifies potential impacts on a conservative basis, taking into account 'in-combination' plan and projects. The report considers the proposals against a range of European sites (Natura 2000 sites) and identifies likely significant effects on certain birds and habitats associated with the Mersey Estuary SPA/Ramsar. On a highly conservation basis, further effects on this and other Natura 2000 sites are identified "in-combination" with other plans and projects.

11.23 Mitigation measures are identified in the form of:

- CEMP (as described in the BMS)
- New wetland along for the former Runcorn-Latchford Canal
- Boundary treatments and exclusion zones
- Cold-weather restrictions on potentially disturbing activities near wetlands used by SPA birds

11.24 The appropriate assessment identifies that, taking account of the mitigation measures identified above, there would be no adverse effect on integrity of Natura 2000 sites. The HRA can be revisited at later stages in the planning process, but it contains sufficient detail at the allocation stage for the Council to satisfy itself that it can discharge its obligations under the Habitats Regulations.

Conclusion on Biodiversity

11.25 The proposed development and the impact upon biodiversity has been assessed. The unique and fixed location of Port Warrington and its necessary expansion means that ecological impacts cannot be avoided by locating the development elsewhere. The development proposals will result in habitat loss, including part of Moore Nature Reserve which is an existing Local Wildlife Site. The loss of existing habitat is to be adequately mitigated through the delivery of green infrastructure on site, the creation and long term management of a new country park and through

enhancement of retained section of the existing Moore Nature Reserve. A range of site opportunities have been identified, close to Port Warrington and along the Mersey Estuary where wetland, woodland and grassland creation and grassland enhancement can be undertaken which would enable at least a 10% net gain to achieved.

Noise

11.26 The Site is located in proximity to a number of existing sources of background noise including noise from the West Coast Main Line, activity noise from the existing operations of Port Warrington and road traffic noise from the existing road network, including the A56. There are a number of noise sensitive receptors surrounding the Site, including existing residents to the south in Moore Village, and the future residents of the proposed South West Urban Extension.

11.27 A desk-based noise screening assessment has been completed for the proposal which establishes a series of mitigation measures which could be incorporated into the detailed design of the scheme to control noise emissions to an acceptable level. Such measures could include: detailed consideration of the location of specific noisy activities, the use of natural and formed bunds and barriers, and the implementation of a Noise Management Plan to control noise levels.

11.28 Detailed mitigation will be specified through further assessments and will be incorporated to control noise levels to an acceptable level, however no significant constraints are anticipated as a result of noise impacts.

Heritage

11.29 A heritage appraisal is included within the overall evidence base. The Site does not contain any designated or non-designated heritage assets, though there are a number of listed and locally listed buildings and Conservation Areas nearby. The Bank Quay Transporter Bridge, to the east of the Site, is a scheduled monument and grade II* listed. It was constructed in 1913 – 1914 and is deemed to be one of only three major transporter bridges in Britain. Other heritage features within the immediate vicinity of the Site include Moore Lane Bridge to the south (grade II listed) and Monks Siding Signal Box (grade II listed).

11.30 The Heritage Appraisal confirms there are no significant heritage constraints to the development of the Site and development is unlikely to lead to any harm of any heritage assets in the vicinity of the Site.

Transportation and Access

11.31 In order to inform the proposals, Peel commissioned i-Transport to consider transport and highways related aspects. The key conclusions of the transport appraisal are as follows:

- The Warrington Waterfront area as a whole can include a mix of uses enabling travel to be made locally between homes and workplaces and to a range of local

facilities and services by active travel modes. The site will therefore support and promote sustainable travel patterns and development.

- The Waterfront and Peel's land interests within it will meet the transport related objectives of the Council's draft Plan. The development of the site will therefore fully accord with the NPPF objective related to sustainable travel, with many opportunities for such modes to be taken up.

- A new strategic high quality and high capacity highway access to the Waterfront sites can be provided by the provision of the Warrington Western Link. The rationale for this scheme is partly to open-up development areas at the Waterfront including PW and the scheme is capable of accommodating the traffic movements generated by Port Warrington and WCP.

- Satisfactory access can be provided to Port Warrington and WCP in accordance with the NPPF.

- The Warrington Western Link will also provide significant additional capacity in the central Warrington road network and its objectives provided to DfT to secure conditional funding noted that it would provide access to Port Warrington. WBC undertook traffic modelling as part of the 2019 Regulation 18 Plan to demonstrate that the traffic flows generated by PW and the Waterfront, as well as the remainder of the Reg 18 development, could be accommodated on the surrounding highway network.

- The Council's concerns related to the impacts of Port Warrington and WCP on the WWL are unfounded. The proposals will not have severe impacts on the WWL within the meaning of the NPPF.

- Traffic assessments of the initial development of Port Warrington and the Warrington Commercial Park demonstrate that there is some potential to serve initial phases of the development (estimated as being up to 50%) from the existing road network without resulting in severe traffic impacts. This could allow development at the Waterfront to progress before the WWL is opened to traffic.

- Satisfactory access can be provided to the development proposals, either ahead of the construction of the WLL (via Forest Way bridge) or alongside it. Peel have suggested an alternative roundabout access arrangement to serve Port Warrington to that which is currently proposed on the WLR. Both arrangements are achievable.

- The proposed access arrangements to Port Warrington would ensure that the existing access arrangements via Moore Lane would no longer be utilised. This would bring highway and environmental benefits to the village of Moore through the removal of HGV traffic.

- The appraisal includes a number of outline strategies to ensure the encouragement of walking, cycling and patronage of public transport.

Air Quality

11.32 An air quality appraisal has been completed and in included within the overall evidence base. The Site is located approximately 760 metres west of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The appraisal confirms that whilst further detailed assessments will be required, the air quality objectives are not expected to be exceeded at the Site and it is considered suitable for its proposed allocated use. The impact of air quality on the Site and the surrounding area is not a constraint to the delivery of the proposals.

Flood Risk

11.33 A preliminary flood risk appraisal has been completed for the Site. It confirms that the existing Port Warrington and the majority of its proposed expansion is located within flood zone 1 with small elements being located within flood zone 2 and 3. The type of development uses at the expanded Port are consistent with national policy and guidance with regards to compatibility and vulnerability. The proposed WCP is identified within flood zone 1.

Landscape and Views

11.34 A landscape and visual appraisal is included within the overall evidence base and considers the anticipated effects on landscape character and on views.

11.35 The landscape of the Site comprises a varied mix of land uses. The topography of the southern part of the Site is predominantly flat whilst the north of the Site has introduced slopes and elevation which contrast with the natural topography. To the south there are two large existing units associated to the existing Port Warrington. To the south east of the Site, the boundary is formed and contained by the West Coast Main Line railway. The Site is fairly contained, with Arpley Meadows Landfill helping to effectively screen the majority of views from the north and north east. The woodland along the western side of the landfill also helps to screen views, though there are several viewpoints into the Site from nearby elevated positions.

11.36 The proposed development would fit the prevailing pattern of development that has utilised previously developed land while using other land for recreation and nature conservation. Part of the development comprises large built form in areas which presently are undeveloped, although affected to some extent by existing or previous development. The proposed development would affect a small proportion of existing green infrastructure that provides the setting to existing development at the Site and in the surrounding area. The proposed development would also significantly add to existing green infrastructure through the creation of a new Country Park at Arpley Meadows and considerable amounts of new shrub and woodland planting.

11.37 Effects of major adverse significance are anticipated owing to the loss of a portion of Moore Nature Reserve. There would be adverse effects of moderate adverse significance on other areas of the Site and effects of low beneficial significance on the largest part of the Site comprising the proposed Country Park.

11.38 While the proposed development would add new built form into the landscape and would redevelop some land on the Site that is already developed, it would not

substantially change the wider pattern of land use or alter landscape character to a degree that is considered to change the key characteristics and qualities of national, regional and local landscape character types and areas.

11.39 In terms of effects on views and visual amenity, the proposed development would likely introduce large buildings and gantry cranes into existing views across the landscape. It would also introduce shipping movement into views. The effects of greatest adverse significance on views would occur to receptors on parts of the Site and very close to its south western and north eastern boundaries where large new built form would be constructed. Buildings would occupy a large proportion of the field of view resulting in substantial change to the composition of existing baseline views. No potential effects have been identified on views from residential properties that would give rise to unacceptable residential amenity.

11.40 In medium and longer distance views the proposed development would be noticeable in combination with large scale built form, transport infrastructure, energy development and transmission lines on lattice pylons. All of these are part of the baseline environment and influence the composition and quality of views. Existing green infrastructure plays an important part in breaking up or fragmenting views of development in this largely level or undulating landscape. This characteristic mosaic of built form interspersed with vegetation gives the fringes of Warrington a well-wooded appearance that would not change as a result of the proposed development. The proposed development would not result in the physical or perception of settlements merging either in short range or long distance elevated views due to the predominantly level well wooded landscape which fragments areas of built form. The proposed Country Park, the River Mersey and the Manchester Ship Canal would separate the proposed development from existing and proposed development with trees, woodland and intervening layers of vegetation fragmenting and filtering views.

11.41 The majority of receptors in the wider landscape would experience effects on views of minor or negligible significance and it is likely that other proposed developments would have a greater, although limited, influence on views and visual amenity in the wider area.

Conclusion

11.42 The potential natural and built environment impacts associated with the proposals has been assessed based upon an extensive range of evidence. This includes a suite of ecological studies, including an assessment of impact on the Mersey Estuary SPA and an assessment in biodiversity net gain.

11.43 The suite of evidence indicates that there is unlikely to be significant environmental impacts that are not capable of mitigation or compensation as part of the development. This includes specific requirements for ecological and habitat mitigation with which the proposals must comply if they are to achieve planning permission.

11.44 Further detailed assessments would be undertaken as part of further design development and future planning applications. Where necessary, further baseline survey work will be undertaken to inform such assessments. Where applicable, applications would be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment and Appropriate

Assessment in accordance with the relevant Regulations. Such assessments would identify precise impacts and inform the mitigation strategy for the proposals in consultation with relevant consultees and stakeholders.

Section D: Exceptional Circumstances

12. Exceptional Circumstances to justify Green Belt boundary change

12.1 Previous iterations of the draft Plan have stated that Warrington Waterfront is a key regeneration priority for the Council, the principle of which has been established in previous local plans, including the principle of expanding Port Warrington. The previous Regulation 18 version of the draft Plan also confirmed that:

- Port Warrington offers the unique locational advantage of being able to link the Manchester Ship Canal to the rail network as well as the strategic road network. This would enable a more sustainable long term solution to freight distribution[65];
- It is a national policy objective to increase the provision of port and multi-modal freight facilities and there is a particular need in the North West arising from Liverpool Super Port and the enhanced use of the Ship Canal[66];
- The WCP will provide employment space for activities related to Port Warrington buts its location in proximity to Warrington Town Centre will mean that it is also able to fulfil a broader role in meeting wider range of Warrington's business needs[67]; and
- It is this combination of need and location which provide the exceptional circumstances which justify removal of this part of the allocation site from the Green Belt[68].

12.2 In doing so, the policy aim was to maximise the unique economic opportunity which the expansion of Port Warrington will bring to Warrington and the wider sub-region.

12.3 In accordance with national planning policy the alteration of Green Belt boundaries is only justified in exceptional circumstances. In order to consider whether exceptional circumstances exist in this case, it is necessary to weigh the impacts of the Green Belt and other material considerations against the need and benefits of the expansion. In this case, the other material considerations include the potential impacts of the natural environment; the historic environment; the amenity and of local residents; local transport considerations; and the climate change/net zero carbon agenda.

Impacts on Green Belt

12.4 The proposed removal of the land from the Green Belt to facilitate the WWA would inevitably have some impact on the purposes of the present extent of Green Belt. The affected land makes no contribution toward the setting and special character of historic town (purpose D) and will have no adverse impact on the objective of assisting urban regeneration (purpose E). The proposed removal of land from the Green Belt and its development will have a limited impact on checking the

[65] Paragraph 10.1.16, Proposed Submission Version Warrington Local Plan, 2019
[66] Paragraph 10.1.17, Proposed Submission Version of the Warrington Local Plan, 2019
[67] Paragraph 10.1.18, Proposed Submission Version of the Warrington Local Plan, 2019
[68] Paragraph 10.1.19, Proposed Submission Version of the Warrington Local Plan, 2019

unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (purpose A) and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (purpose C).

12.5 The proposed change to the Green Belt boundary would create a logical and defensible boundary and the delivery of the retained and enhanced Nature Reserve and new Country Park which will deliver significant net environmental and recreational improvements in line with national Green Belt planning policy.

12.6 Notwithstanding this, the main Green Belt impact arising from development will relate to the purpose of preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another. Settlements will remain separate and boundaries will be defensible to protect against future merging but there will be a reduction in physical distance between PW and existing settlements. They will however remain separate, and there will be no material adverse effect on the perception of settlements merging; each will retain its individual character and identity.

Other Impacts

12.7 As set out in Chapter 11 above, the potential impacts of the planned expansion of the Port and a new WCP has been assessed. Peel has commissioned a wide range of surveys and studies to inform both the Development Framework and this Paper. It is acknowledged that it will be necessary to consider and agree the need for further studies to inform project specific assessment of likely effects at the planning application stage. The work undertaken to date, however, is helpful in confirming the suitability, deliverability and achievability of the proposals.

12.8 The assessments indicate that, subject to any necessary further additional detailed survey work, detailed design, assessment of specific development proposals, and the incorporation and refinement of appropriate mitigation measures, the development proposals are unlikely to have significant adverse environmental impacts. Significant adverse impact is identified in respect of the anticipated loss of significant and notable habitat and is impact which is unavoidable. However, loss of existing habitat (of ecological and landscape value) is to be more than adequately mitigated through the delivery of green infrastructure on site, the creation and long term management of a new country park and through enhancement of retained section of the existing Moore Nature Reserve. A range of site opportunities have also been identified, close to Port Warrington and along the Mersey Estuary where additional offsite wetland, woodland and grassland creation and grassland enhancement can be undertaken which would enable at least a 10% biodiversity net gain to achieved.

12.9 In terms of views, the effects of greatest adverse significance will be on views arising from a small number of receptors on parts of the Site and very close to its south-eastern and north eastern boundaries, owing to the substantial change to the composition of existing baseline views. These effects however, are not anticipated to give rise to unacceptable residential amenity impacts.

12.10 In considering the soundness of the development proposals, the likely impacts must be weighed against the need for and benefits of the proposals.

Need and Benefits

12.11 Port Warrington is a unique opportunity to deliver port expansion and a critical mass of development land and floorspace to harness the full potential of its multi-modal connectivity at the heart of the North West. Port Warrington is a sustainable, spatial and necessary response to meet land needs arising from existing and future port freight growth traffic across the Peel Port network. It is the only alternative to deliver new port infrastructure in the North West. It has the potential to create a unique development opportunity in Warrington which can create jobs, support the supply chain, unlock inward investment opportunities, and increase growth and local/regional competitiveness consistent with Warrington's LEP and Industrial Strategy. Once operational, it is estimated that the proposals can be expected to support c.5,300 jobs and support a further 2,650 jobs through indirect and induced employment across the region. GVA generation is estimated to be £418m per annum over its operational lifetime. These benefits are very significant.

12.12 The expansion of Port Warrington and the delivery of the WCP will derive additional benefits. These includes the enhancement of a 146ha Nature Reserve and Country Park with enhanced habitat creation and recreational provision and need community facilities. Arpley Country Park will be of a scale, quality and range of activity which will result in the delivery of one of the largest country recreational and ecological parks in the North West and of sub-regional importance. The enhancement will deliver significant ecological, recreational and health benefits which weigh in favour of the overall proposals.

12.13 The proposals will facilitate modal shift in goods, products and produce. The decarbonisation of freight – the transfer of freight from road haulage to more sustainable rail and water freight networks - is a key objective of the Government's vision for a low carbon/sustainable transport system. It is estimated that that the proposals would remove HGVs from the national highways network equivalent to 34.2 million HGV km per annum; this equates to a reduction in carbon emissions from these HGVs of about 30,345 tonnes per annum. By encouraging a shift from road to water and rail based transport, Port Warrington has the potential to significantly reduce the amount of road haulage across the region, including amending the existing route via country roads and Moore Village. This would deliver significant reductions in carbon emissions and could ease congestion. The benefits of this would be felt across the national, regional and local highway network.

12.14 The Port is a fixed asset. There is no other port in Warrington and the anticipated economic, social and environmental benefits cannot be delivered and accrued elsewhere through alternative means. The only land that is suitable around the existing Port to accommodate this growth is that which is originally proposed to be removed from the Green Belt by former Policy MD1.

12.15 The WCP forms part of the wider Warrington Waterfront regeneration initiative in that can provide employment space for activities related to Port Warrington but its location and proximity to Warrington town centre means that it will also be able to fulfil a broader role in meeting a wider range of Warrington's business needs. The Council's previous evidence highlights a significant disparity in South Warrington between the

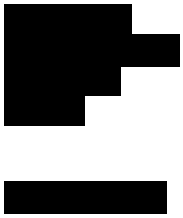
supply and availability of employment land, versus a high level of occupier demand. In light of this, the proposed WCP can accommodate a substantial employment development in South Warrington and can make a positive contribution toward these identified needs.

Planning Balance

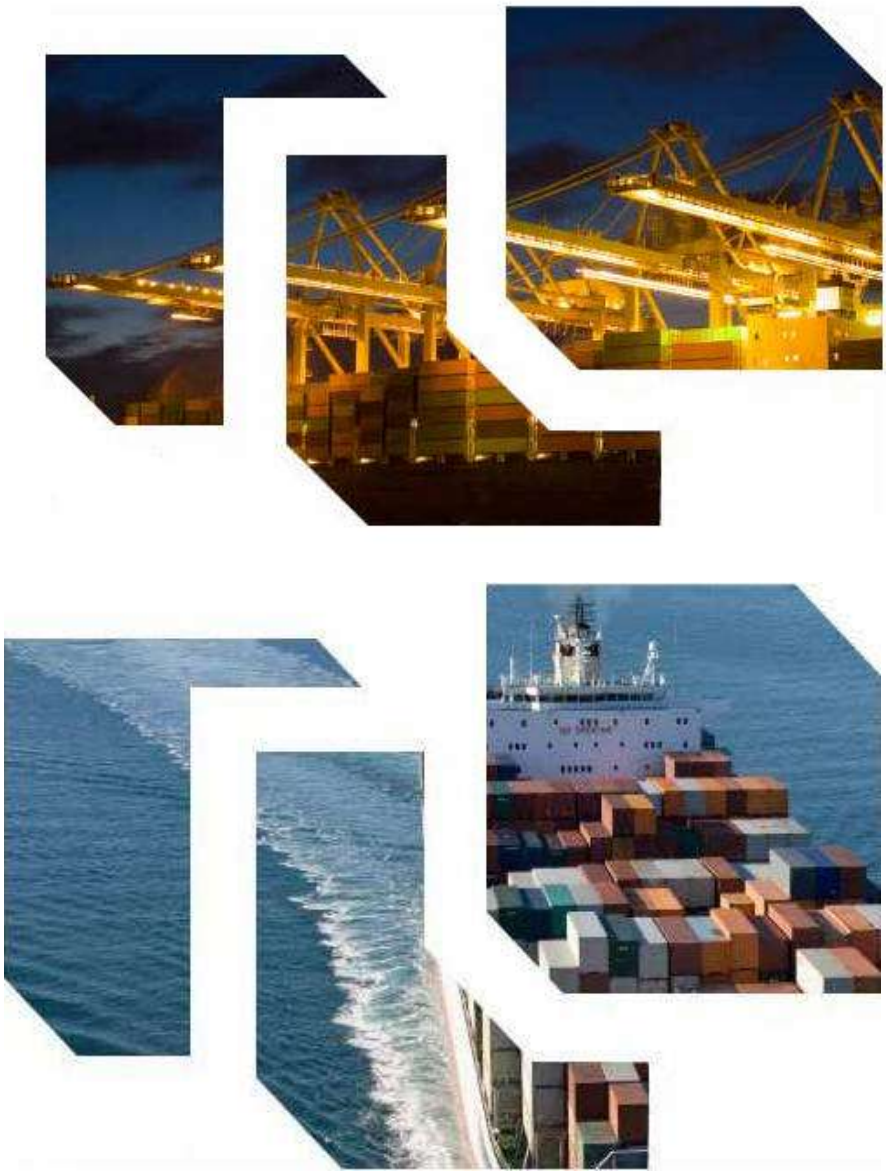
12.16 In conclusion it is considered that, taken together and in combination, the following comprise compelling exceptional circumstances:

- The unique and strategic economic opportunity presented at Port Warrington to the growth and regeneration of Warrington and the wider region;
- The drivers of growth derived from increased port activity, including that arising from Liverpool2 and the resultant demand in further port traffic and employment land to serve this demand;
- The significant economic benefits that the expansion of Port Warrington and the WCP would deliver over the Plan Period including job creation;
- The acute absence of sites capable of meeting port growth and meeting this need sustainably through multi-modal means;
- New employment space (WCP) uniquely positioned close to an expanded Port Warrington but also in close proximity to Warrington Town Centre offering a unique development proposition that can assist in meeting the quantitative and qualitative employment land requirements in the borough across the plan period; and
- The enhancement of a new Country Park which is to be of a scale, quality and range of activity which will result in the delivery of one of the largest country recreational and ecological parks in the North West and of sub-regional importance.

12.17 These are very weighty considerations which in combination, outweigh and justify the identified impact on the purposes of Green Belt and other identified harm arising from the proposed release of land for development necessary to achieve the optimal expansion of Port Warrington along with the WCP. The amendment of Green Belt boundary is therefore considered to be justified and able to ensure that an appropriate balance is struck between meeting port needs (that are regionally significant) and the growth and regeneration of Warrington Waterfront whilst safeguarding its natural and built environment. Exceptional circumstances are proven.



Appendix 1: Port Need Case by MDST



Freight Transport Case for the Expansion of Port Warrington – November 2021 Update

November 2021

MDS Transmodal

Ref: 218024r_Nov 2021 refresh Final

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Section 1: Introduction

MDS Transmodal was commissioned by Peel Investments (North) Ltd and Peel Ports to examine the freight transport case for the expansion of Port Warrington, taking into account maritime traffic, road and rail freight traffic and associated storage requirements. The report also considers rail network capacity and rail and marine operational issues related to the overall feasibility of the Port Warrington site for freight-related activity.

The current Port Warrington site has long operated as a road-based distribution facility. However, an expanded Port Warrington site is very well-placed to be a modern piece of tri-modal port and logistics infrastructure given that it offers:

- An existing berth on the Manchester Ship Canal, with passive provision for a second berth;
- A location in close proximity to the West Coast Main Line (WCML) with the potential to develop a direct rail connection and;
- Existing road access which would be enhanced by the planned development of the Warrington Western Link to provide a new link road between the A56 Chester Road in Higher Walton and the A57 Sankey Way in Great Sankey;
- A site with almost 60 hectares of space, which could accommodate 205,850 sqm of new modern high-bay warehousing.

The Port Warrington site is unique in that it is the only location close to Warrington that can provide a tri-modal port and logistics facility. It will offer the ability to land cargo in the centre of the North West region by net-zero or low-carbon emission transport (rail and shipping). The on-site warehousing will offer opportunities to undertake cargo storage and other added value activities (potentially within the Liverpool freeport). Its close proximity to the main North West conurbations will also potentially permit the onward distribution of that cargo to end-users using battery-electric vans or HGVs. National distribution will be possible using rail freight. In that respect it strongly conforms with the Government's net-zero carbon pathway. The only other locations in the North West which offers this ability are at the Port of Liverpool (Seaforth, where land is currently limited) or Port Salford (at the eastern end of the Liverpool-Manchester corridor).

Section 2: Policy Context

Government policy as set out in the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Ports, the NPS for National Networks and the National Planning Policy Framework provides strong policy support for the development of strategic logistics facilities which are located on sites connected to the railway network, within ports or both. On a similar basis, Transport for the North's Freight and Logistics Report recommended the development of rail and/or water connected 'Multimodal Distribution Parks'

(MDPs). Policy at a national level and work carried out a pan-northern level for Transport for the North is therefore highly supportive of the development of a water- and rail-connected distribution park at Port Warrington.

Section 3: Review of Waterborne Freight Markets

Port Warrington, as a tri-modal port and logistics facility, has the opportunity to perform two key roles in the waterborne freight transport network in the North West as:

- An inland port for the North West of England, providing new port infrastructure to create the opportunity for short sea and coastal shipping to distribute cargoes (bulk and general cargo traffics) directly into the heart of logistics activity in the North West using cost effective and environmentally sustainable waterborne freight transport; and
- An inland extension of the Port of Liverpool for high value containerised cargoes, linked by a cost effective and sustainable container barge service between Gladstone Dock (within the Liverpool Docks system) and Port Warrington.

The key to both concepts would be the availability of a combination of port infrastructure (berths and handling equipment) and distribution centres on the Port Warrington site, so that the inland origins and destinations of the cargo would be within the estate and would therefore remove the need for the fixed cost of road haulage for a shunt from the quay to an off-site warehouse; this reduces the door-to-door cost of transport for the logistics providers and their customers and so helps to gradually attract waterborne freight traffic to the port facility at Port Warrington through the operation of market forces.

Port Warrington offers the opportunity to provide a cost-effective and environmentally sustainable means to distribute deep sea and short-sea containers inland from the Port of Liverpool directly to the inland origins and destinations of cargo in North West England and to transport a range of bulk and semi-bulk cargoes inland for local industry. Port Warrington would be able to act as an inland extension to the Port of Liverpool, with container storage for subsequent distribution by road to local shippers and receivers and, with its on-site distribution centres, become an origin and destination of cargo in its own right. The Port Warrington site adds to the overall capacity of port land for the North West of England for buffer cargo and takes the cargo closer to its inland origins and destinations using cost-effective and sustainable transport by shipping or barge.

Section 4: Review of Existing Supply and Forecast Demand for Large-scale Warehousing

The table below summarises the forecast demand for new-build large scale warehousing to 2037 along the Mersey corridor between the Liverpool City Region, Warrington and Greater Manchester

	New-build Demand to 2037 (000s sqm)	Land Required (ha)**
Liverpool City Region*	1,234	309
Greater Manchester	2,200	550
Warrington	389	97
Total	**3,823**	**956**

In total, some 3.8 million square metres of new large scale floor space can be expected to be built in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor up to 2037. If all of this demand were to be located at new sites, this would imply a need to bring forward 956ha of land in Local Plans. Around 0.8 million square metres of the total expected demand of 3.8 million square metres to 2037 is to cater for traffic growth.

There is significant demand overall for new land for replacement build in addition to this as demand cannot be met by existing vacant plots or by recycling existing plots alone. Furthermore, Government policy promotes increasing the proportion of logistics activity which takes place at rail and/or water connected sites, both to increase the cost competitiveness of supply chains and for sustainability reasons. Given that, as demonstrated above, most existing sites are not rail or water-served and some existing employment sites may be recycled for housing, there is a need to bring forward new land for distribution parks that are located alongside railway lines, within ports and adjacent to berths on waterways.

Section 5: Review of Alternative Sites

Following a review of potential 'alternative sites', the only site identified along the Mersey corridor that could provide additional (new) port capacity and is likely to be available over the medium term is Port Salford. The opportunity at the Port of Liverpool is a long-term ambition, it would be dependent on Peel Ports assembling the required quantum of land from non-port ownership and is dependent on highway capacity improvements that have yet to be formally authorised. Parkside East and Fiddlers Ferry, while potentially well located in rail terms, do not offer any new port capacity for the region.

Sites at Port Wirral, Port Cheshire and Ince Marshes, which were previously being promoted as port-centric logistics developments, are no longer available to meet future demand. Developments planned at Port Runcorn are effectively refurbishments of existing (now obsolete) facilities which will not provide any new port or rail-served capacity into the North West region.

Overall, the potential pipeline of new port and rail-connected sites is likely to provide around 435ha of land (including Port Warrington) for development up to 2037 in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor. However, this takes an optimistic view with regards to each of the schemes

being able to overcome any deliverability limitations and, for those requiring it, gaining planning consent.

Even if all the alternative sites identified were built out to their full extent, there would still be a shortfall of around 521ha of land in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor up to 2037 for large-scale warehouse new-builds. Some of this future need could be developed by recycling existing or developing new road-only sites, however that would not meet the policy and sustainability objectives as set out in Section 2.

Section 6: Traffic Forecasts for Port Warrington

We have prepared traffic forecasts for the Port Warrington scheme, on the basis that 205,850 sqm of modern high-bay warehouse floor space is developed alongside a quay on the Manchester Ship Canal and an intermodal terminal capable of handling 750m trailing-length trains. The table below summarises, on a conservative basis, the potential Ship Canal and rail traffic that could be attracted to the site.

HGV Equivalent Units			
Ship Canal or Rail to/from Warehousing			
Loaded inbound	105	Empty Outbound	105
Empty inbound	105	Loaded outbound	105
Total inbound	210	Total outbound	210
Rail to/from off-site (by HGV)			
Loaded inbound	105	Loaded outbound	105
Empty inbound	105	Empty Outbound	105
Total inbound	210	Total outbound	210
TOTAL Inbound	**420**	**TOTAL Outbound**	**420**

Taking into account both loaded arrivals/departures and empty re-positioning movements, overall forecast for daily HGV movements is for 761 inbound HGVs and 761 outbound movements.

Section 7: Rail Network Capability, Capacity & Operations

The restoration of the short rail link from the Manchester Ship Canal Exchange Sidings that lie south of Arpley Yard would allow Port Warrington to enjoy a direct connection to the West Coast Main Line, capitalising on those Exchange Sidings and the existing Arpley Yard further north to hold trains before and after loading. The intermodal terminal would be able to accommodate two sidings for 750m long intermodal trains. There are therefore no current constraints to the operation of the site.

The WCML is a W10 gauge cleared route (allowing the operation of economic intermodal rail freight services using standard wagons and carrying the largest deep sea containers), with the capability to accommodate 750m trailing length intermodal rail freight services (the European standard for intermodal rail freight services and the longest trains that can be operated on the GB network). Port Warrington will therefore be able to handle the largest container units on standard platform wagons and at the most competitive length available on the GB network.

While a detailed pathing analysis would need to be undertaken to fully ascertain the availability of freight paths on the WCML, an initial high level assessment indicates that a need for 6 daily paths could be accommodated within the current Working Timetable. In contrast, the main route serving Trafford Park (from Crewe via Styal and Piccadilly) appears to be operating at capacity during daytime hours. Our analysis also shows that plans by the public sector for HS2 and NPR will reinforce this position north of Crewe.

Section 8: Environmental Benefits

Port Warrington would provide economic benefits due to its capability to receive and despatch unitised freight by rail and waterborne transport, rather than being a road-only facility.

Taking into account intermodal rail services that could be expected to handle 20% of cargo bound for on-site distribution centres, traffic transported on a waterborne freight service along the Manchester Ship Canal and three daily intermodal rail freight services serving off-site distribution activity, Port Warrington would be able to lead to a 34.8 million reduction in annual HGV kilometres which would equate to reduction in carbon emissions from these HGVs of about 30,900 tonnes per annum.

Section 9: Conclusion

The extension of the Port Warrington site offers the opportunity to develop a new inland port and rail-served distribution park that is well-located to serve the whole of the North West England market and which is fully in line with Government and pan-Northern policy.

There is a forecast need in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor for an estimated 956ha of land to cater for 3.8 million sqm of new build warehouses up to 2037.

Overall, the potential pipeline of new port and rail-connected sites is likely to provide around 435ha of land (including Port Warrington) for development up to 2037 in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor. However, this takes an optimistic view with regards to each of the schemes being able to overcome any deliverability limitations and, for those requiring it, gaining planning consent.

Even if all the alternative sites identified were built out to their full extent, there would still be a shortfall of around 521ha of land in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor up to 2037 for large-scale warehouse new-builds. Some of this future need could be developed by recycling existing or developing new road-only sites, however that would not meet the policy and sustainability objectives as set out in Section 2.

The Port Warrington site is unique in that it is the only location close to Warrington that can provide a tri-modal logistics facility. It will offer the ability to land cargo in the centre of the North West region by net-zero or low-carbon emission transport (rail and shipping). Only Port Warrington and Port Salford can be developed as both inland port and rail-connected distribution parks in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor in the short to medium term, which means that Port Warrington should be regarded as being a high priority for Warrington in its Local Plan.

The restoration of the short rail link from the Manchester Ship Canal Exchange Sidings that lie south of Arpley Yard allows Port Warrington to enjoy a direct connection to the West Coast Main Line and there are no current operational constraints associated with the site. The Port Warrington site could be served by one freight path per hour per direction, which means it is a commercially attractive proposition for the rail freight industry.

1 INTRODUCTION

MDS Transmodal were commissioned by Peel Investments (North) Ltd and Peel Ports in 2018 to examine the freight transport case for the expansion of Port Warrington, taking into account the likely future demand for new port facilities in the North West of England, the requirement for new-build logistics warehousing in the region and the extent to which other sites could realistically deliver those new facilities. The report also considered rail network and marine operational issues related to the overall feasibility of the Port Warrington site for freight-related activity.

Following a review of the freight transport case, this document provides a re-fresh and update of the final report supplied in 2018. Following broadly the same format and structure of the 2018 study, it contains more up-to-date data where this has become available, alongside changes and additions to public policy and developments with respect to sites which were considered 'alternatives' to Port Warrington. Our overall conclusion remains the same; there is a need for the inland port facilities proposed by Peel Ports for Port Warrington that cannot be delivered at another location. It will facilitate and support the further development of sustainable freight transport in the region, and it has strong policy support at a national and regional level. This means that Port Warrington should be regarded as being a high priority for Warrington in its Local Plan

Port Warrington – the Proposals

The current Port Warrington site has long operated as a road-based distribution facility. There are currently two old warehouse units, nearing the end of their economic life, occupying the site that currently provide around 30,000 square metres of floor space.

The proposed Port Warrington development will provide a new inland port and tri-modal logistics facility, served from the Manchester Ship Canal, at the heart of the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester 'Mersey' corridor. It will be designed to handle lift-off lift-on maritime containers from short-sea vessels or barges, alongside semi-bulk cargoes such as steel, timber or paper products. The marine infrastructure currently includes the existing Acton Grange berth, while passive provision will be made for the development of a second berth to the west of the existing berth. A turning basin is proposed on the southern side of the canal so that vessels can turn and berth at Port Warrington ready to return towards Ellesmere Port and the River Mersey; this will avoid disruption to road traffic in Warrington as vessels would otherwise have to pass under the A5056 swing bridge to turn upstream before passing back through to berth at Port Warrington. It is anticipated that containers will be delivered to the port either on short-sea feeder vessels (linking with the main European deep-sea ports) or barges served from the deep-sea L2 Terminal at the Port of Liverpool.

In addition to the ship canal berth(s), a new intermodal rail freight terminal will be developed within the port. This will be connected to the nearby West Coast Main Line (WCML) via a new chord passing over the vacant track-bed of the former Ship Canal railway. The WCML is electrified, allowing the use

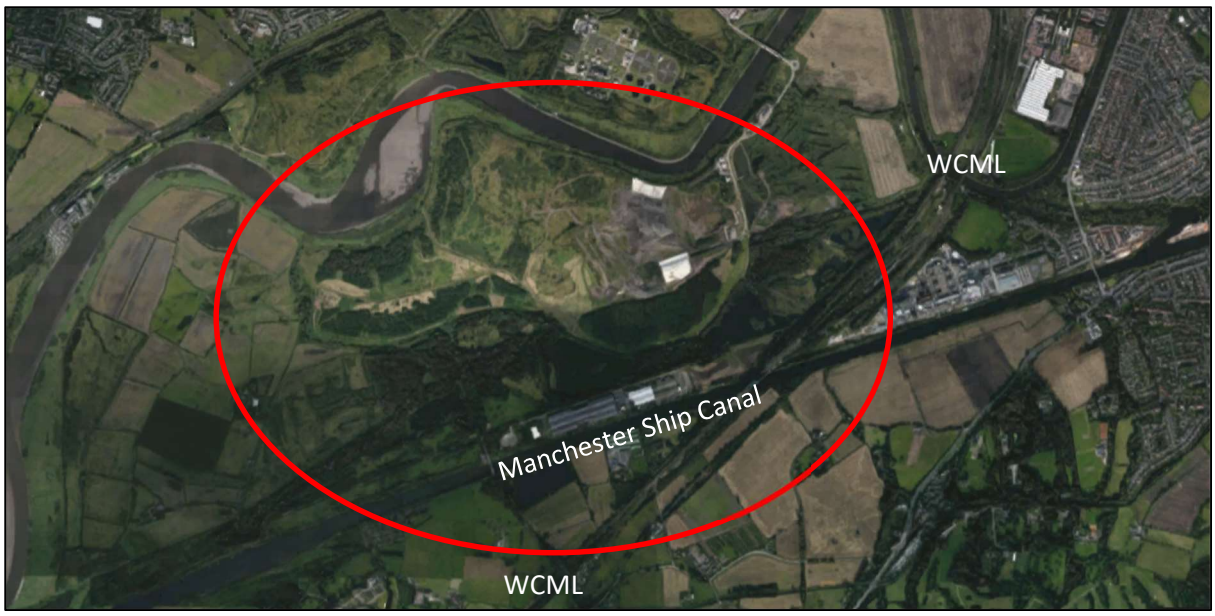
of net-zero emission electric traction, and is cleared to the most generous loading gauge profile on Network Rail's infrastructure. The new terminal will therefore allow containerised goods to be brought into the region by rail, either for storage within Port Warrington itself or for onward re-distribution to off-site distributors on the wider Warrington hinterland. Given the short distance involved, it will also be possible to transfer containers to the nearby Warrington Commercial Park using the same yard tractor/trailer equipment (works trucks) that will be utilised within the Port Warrington estate (these have lower operating costs and can be operated by drivers without a formal HGV driving licence).

To support this port operation, 205,850 square metres of new modern high-bay logistics warehousing will be developed behind the quay. This will enable goods, either landed from shipping vessels or brought to the site by rail, to be stored before subsequently being re-distributed to the next stage of the supply chain. Added value or light-manufacturing activities could also be undertaken on-site (which, potentially, could in future form part of the Liverpool City Region freeport). In addition to the on-site warehousing serving the regional North West market, it is envisaged that part of the floor space will also have a national hinterland (potentially acting as e-commerce customer fulfilment centres). Its close proximity to the main North West conurbations will also potentially permit the onward distribution of that cargo to end-users using battery-electric vans or HGVs. Longer-distance re-distribution to national markets would most likely be undertaken by electrically hauled rail freight services.

The site is also in close proximity to the planned development of the Warrington Western Link, which is a local authority-led scheme to provide a new link road between the A56 Chester Road in Higher Walton and the A57 Sankey Way in Great Sankey. While there is already road access to the Port Warrington site from the south, the planned Warrington Western Link would provide a higher quality and more appropriate future link for HGVs from the Port Warrington site to the A56/M56 to the south and the A57/M62 to the North West, as well as provide access for residential and employment land close to the centre of Warrington.

The aerial photograph below shows the location of the existing site at Port Warrington.

Port Warrington Site



The Port Warrington site is unique in that it is the only location close to Warrington that will be able to provide modern tri-modal port and logistics infrastructure. It will offer the ability to land cargo in the centre of the North West region by net-zero or low-carbon emission transport (rail and shipping). The planned warehousing will allow cargo to be stored, and added value or light-manufacturing activities could also be undertaken on-site (potentially within the Liverpool freeport zone). Its close proximity to the main North West conurbations will also potentially permit the onward distribution of that cargo to end-users using battery-electric vans or HGVs. National distribution will be possible using rail freight hauled by electric traction. In that respect it strongly conforms with the Government's net-zero carbon pathway.

The only other locations in the North West which offers this ability are at the Port of Liverpool (where land is currently limited) or Port Salford (at the eastern end of the Liverpool-Manchester corridor). Peel Ports have previously identified other sites along the Mersey corridor, as outlined in the Mersey Ports Master Plan, however these have now been discounted for a number of reasons. In particular, the quantum of warehousing that could have been developed at some of those sites and the subsequent traffic generation were not of the scale required to justify a new port development. Some of the land previously identified is also no longer available.

With its 205,850 sqm of distribution centre floor space, its location adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal and its potential connectivity to the West Coast Main Line, an expanded Port Warrington would provide a site of sufficient size to offer the economies of scale required for both a water and rail-connectable distribution park. This is because the site would be large enough to provide the critical mass of traffic required to justify waterborne freight and intermodal rail freight services and therefore

support the development of sustainable distribution which has strong policy support at a national and regional level. Without the development of water and rail-connectable sites such as Port Warrington there is a risk that developers will bring forward road-only sites on smaller plots of land which will not lead to the sustainability benefits sought by policy makers.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This section of the report describes the current strategic policy context with respect to the development of water- and rail-connected distribution parks and shows how policy at a national level and work carried out at a pan-Northern level provides strong support for the development of sites such as an expanded Port Warrington. Five key documents are relevant to the Port Warrington scheme, namely:

- National Policy Statement (NPS) for Ports;
- NPS for National Networks;
- National Planning Policy Framework;
- Transport for the North Freight and Logistics Report; and
- Transport Decarbonisation Plan

The overarching case for port and rail-connected sites, as outlined in each document, are that they promote economic growth and generate more cost competitive supply chains through the use of modes of transport that are more cost-effective over longer distances, whilst at the same time allowing goods to be handled and moved in a more sustainable manner when compared with road-only sites. The relevant parts of each document are summarised below. A number of other issues are also important, including the development of *Freeports* and HGV driver shortages.

2.2 National Policy Statement (NPS) for Ports

The *NPS for National Networks* was published by the Department for Transport (DfT) in January 2012. It sets out the Government's current policies concerning the development of new nationally significant port schemes, alongside providing a framework that will guide decisions on proposals for such schemes. The NPS details the Government's conclusions on the need for new port infrastructure such as an expanded facility at Port Warrington, considering the current place of ports in the national economy, the available evidence on future demand and the options for meeting future needs.

The NPS begins by setting out the importance of the ports sector to the UK economy. It notes that around 95% of international trade (by volume) passes through ports. It highlights the pivotal role played by the ports sector in handling energy supplies, alongside wider economic benefits generated.

In terms of Government policy for the ports sector, the NPS states that the Government encourages sustainable port development to cater for long-term forecast growth in volumes of imports and exports by sea with a competitive and efficient port industry capable of meeting the needs of importers and exporters cost effectively and in a timely manner. Judgments about when and where

new developments might be located should be made on the basis of commercial factors by the port industry or port developers operating within a free market environment (Para 3.3.1).

The NPS states that the Government wishes to see port development wherever possible:

- Being an engine for economic growth;
- Supporting sustainable transport by offering more efficient transport links with lower external costs; and
- Supporting sustainable development by providing additional capacity for the development of renewable energy (Para 3.3.5).

In terms of the Government's assessment of the need for new port infrastructure, the NPS states that total need for port infrastructure depends not only on overall demand for port capacity but also on the need to retain the flexibility that ensures that port capacity is located where it is required, including in response to any changes in inland distribution networks and ship call patterns that may occur, and on the need to ensure effective competition and resilience in port operations (Para 3.4.1).National port demand forecasts to 2030 are set out in the NPS and are discussed in more detail below in section 5. The purpose of the national forecasts is to help set the context of overall national capacity need, alongside competition and resilience considerations.

The NPS clearly states that capacity must be in the right place if it is to effectively and efficiently serve the needs of import and export markets. It notes that capacity needs to be provided at a wide range of facilities and locations, to provide the flexibility to match the changing demands of the market (para 3.4.11).

The NPS states that UK ports compete with each other. The Government welcomes and encourages such competition, as it drives efficiency and lowers costs for industry and consumers, so contributing to the competitiveness of the UK economy. Effective competition requires sufficient spare capacity to ensure real choices for port users. It also requires ports to operate at efficient levels, which is not the same as operating at full physical capacity. Noting that demand fluctuates seasonally and weekly, some latitude in physical capacity is needed to accommodate such fluctuations. Total port capacity in any sector will therefore need to exceed forecast overall demand if the ports sector is to remain competitive. The Government believes the port industry and port developers are best placed to assess their ability to obtain new business and the level of any new capacity that will be commercially viable, subject to developers satisfying decision-makers that the likely impacts of any proposed development have been assessed and addressed (Para 3.4.13).

The NPS states that spare capacity also helps to assure the resilience of the national infrastructure. Port capacity is needed at a variety of locations and covering a range of cargo and handling facilities, to enable the sector to meet short-term peaks in demand, the impact of adverse weather conditions, accidents, deliberate disruptive acts and other operational difficulties, without causing economic

disruption through impediments to the flow of imports and exports. Given the large number of factors involved, the Government believes that resilience is provided most effectively as a by-product of a competitive ports sector (Para 3.4.15).

In conclusion, Paragraph 3.4.16 of the NPS states that the Government believes there is a compelling need for substantial additional port capacity over the next 20–30 years, to be met by a combination of development already consented and development for which applications have yet to be received. Excluding the possibility of providing additional capacity for the movement of goods and commodities through new port development would be to accept limits on economic growth and on the price, choice and availability of goods imported into the UK and available to consumers. It would also limit the local and regional economic benefits that new developments might bring. Such an outcome would be strongly against the public interest.

In that respect, the NPS recognises that developers will need to bring forward proposals (alongside committed developments) to meet anticipated long-term growth and introduce further competition, flexibility and resilience in the market.

The NPS recognises the direct and indirect economic benefits of port development. In particular, bringing together groups of related businesses within and around ports can create a cluster effect, which supports economic growth by encouraging innovation and the creation and development of new business opportunities.

Given the level and urgency of need of infrastructure, the decision maker should start with the presumption in favour of granting consent to applications for ports development. The NPS can be a material consideration in non-NSIP port development.

There is therefore strong policy support at a national level for the further development of Port Warrington as an inland extension of the Port of Liverpool, providing a port-centric/water-connected distribution park and facilities for the handling and storage of bulk and semi-bulk cargoes for local industry. It will therefore provide the opportunity for importers and exporters to bring their cargoes further inland using sustainable waterborne freight transport, while at the same time delivering the market need for additional port capacity as identified in the NPS. This is explained in more detail in section 5 of this report. It also provides further market choice for port users and additional resilience in the ports sector.

2.3 NPS for National Networks

The *NPS for National Networks* was published by the Department for Transport (DfT) in December 2014. It includes the Government's current policies concerning the development of Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFIs) and it also provides planning guidance for the promoters of such projects. While Port Warrington does not meet the definition of a SRFI (it is less than 60ha) and is being

promoted as multi-modal inland port and logistics facility with the ability to be rail connected (as described), the NPS is considered to be the principal policy document concerning the development of rail-served warehousing and logistics facilities; Paragraph 1.4 states that the NPS is also material for schemes considered under the Town and Country Planning Act.

Paragraph 2.40 states that modal shift from road to rail can help reduce transport's emissions of greenhouse gases as well as providing wider transport and economic benefits. For these reasons, the Government seeks to accommodate an increase in rail freight where practical and affordable by providing extra capacity. Port Warrington would be able to contribute to this reduction in transport emissions of greenhouse gases by facilitating a shift of traffic from road to rail for long trunk-hauls.

The document notes that for many freight movements, rail is unable to offer a full end-to-end journey. SRFIs – and, more generally, rail-connected logistics facilities such as Port Warrington - therefore enable goods to be transferred between modes, allowing rail to be used to best effect to undertake the long trunk-haul, with road haulage subsequently undertaking the final delivery (Paragraph 2.43). The NPS states that the aim of SRFIs is to optimise the use of rail in the freight journey by maximising rail trunk haul and minimising some elements of the secondary distribution leg by road through co-location of freight and distribution activities. Port Warrington would therefore be a key element in reducing the cost of moving freight by rail to and from the North West of England and so would be important in facilitating modal shift (Paragraph 2.44).

Logistics is currently a predominantly road based industry. However, the NPS states that the users and buyers of warehousing and distribution services are increasingly looking to integrate rail into their transport operations. This will require the logistics industry to develop new facilities that need to be located alongside the major rail routes, close to major trunk roads as well as near the conurbations that consume the goods (Paragraph 2.45). Port Warrington would meet this commercial need in the North West of England.

There are four drivers of need for SRFIs and other rail-connected distribution parks such as Port Warrington that are identified in the NPS (Paragraphs 2.46 to 2.52).

1. Changing needs of the logistics sector. The document states that a network of SRFIs is a key element in aiding the transfer of freight from road to rail and supporting sustainable distribution. It notes that existing rail facilities offer no opportunity to expand, they lack modern warehousing facilities and they are not conveniently located for the modern logistics and supply chain industry. Port Warrington would be able to offer modern rail freight terminal facilities and on-site warehouses for the storage of goods that arrive and depart by both sea and rail.

2. Rail Freight Growth. The NPS notes that the industry, working with Network Rail, has produced rail freight demand forecasts. The document states that the forecasts confirm the need for an expanded network of rail freight interchanges across the regions to accommodate the long-term growth in rail

freight (Paragraph 2.50). Port Warrington would be able to meet this commercial new for intermodal rail freight services in the North West – serving both the Greater Manchester and Liverpool areas from a single site. Note that these forecasts have since been updated (see below), albeit they continue to project future growth in this sector.

3. Environmental. The document notes that rail transport has a less negative impact on society than road transport and so has a crucial role to play in delivering reductions in pollution and congestion. Port Warrington would be able to accommodate at least six trains a day (see Section 6), thereby removing HGVs from the road network for long hauls and providing environmental benefits.

4. Jobs and Growth. The NPS states that rail-connected distribution parks such as Port Warrington can provide considerable benefits for the local economy. This is because many of the on-site functions of major distribution operations are relatively labour-intensive and this can create many new job opportunities and contribute to the enhancement of people's skills and use of technology, with wider longer term benefits to the economy.

The Government's vision is for a sustainable transport system that is an engine for economic growth. The NPS consequently states that the Government believes it is important to facilitate the development of the intermodal rail freight industry. The transfer of freight from road to rail has an important part to play in play in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and addressing climate change (Paragraph 2.53). As a rail-connected distribution park Port Warrington would be able to contribute to the growth of the intermodal rail freight industry and promote a shift from road to rail by providing origins and destinations for freight movements that are rail-connected. To facilitate this modal transfer, the NPS concludes that a network of rail freight interchanges is needed across the regions, to serve regional, sub-regional and cross-regional markets and this network of SRFIs should in turn provide improved trading links with our European partners and improved international connectivity and enhanced port growth (Paragraph 2.54).

The NPS concludes that a reliance on existing rail freight interchanges and on road-only based logistics is neither viable nor desirable (Paragraph 2.55 and Table 4). The Government concluded that there is a compelling need for an expanded network of interchanges. It is important that interchanges are located near the business markets they will serve – major urban centres, or groups of centres – and are linked to key supply chain routes. Given the locational requirements and the need for effective connections for both rail and road, the number of locations suitable as SRFIs will be limited, which will restrict the scope for developers to identify viable alternative sites (Paragraph 2.56).

While Port Warrington is being planned as an inland port and logistics facility (in any case it would not be classed as a SRFI because of its scale), it would more than meet all the other criteria set out in the NPS with respect to its key characteristics. It would, in particular, be able to accommodate at least six trains a day (compared to a minimum of four trains) and so would more than meet the requirement

to be able to generate the critical mass of traffic required to secure a switch of traffic from long distance road haulage to rail.

Given the above and apart from its size, in all other respects the expanded Port Warrington facility would meet the key requirements of a SRFI as set out in the NPS (para. 4.84-4.88) as it would:

- Be well-located to serve both the major urban centres in the North West (Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region) and is also close to the major regional supply chain routes of the M6 and the M62 for road and the West Coast Main Line for rail.
- Have good road access via the planned Warrington Western Link to the A56/M56 to the south and the A57/M62 to the North West. This would allow the site to facilitate the use of rail to compete effectively with, and work alongside, road freight to achieve a modal shift to rail.
- Have a connection to a rail route with a W10 loading gauge, which is more generous than the W8 minimum gauge that is included in the NPS.
- Be a large-scale commercial operation and so is planned to operate 24/7.
- Be able to have an operational connection to the West Coast Main Line and an intermodal rail freight terminal to allow the handling of traffic between rail and road and for storage in on-site warehouses.
- Be able to handle at least six trains a day, higher than the minimum number of four included in the NPS.
- Be able to handle 775m trains both in the reception sidings at the entrance to the site and within the intermodal.

2.4 National Planning Policy Framework

National planning policy for England is currently set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This was originally published by the *Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG)* in March 2012, and then subsequently revised and reissued in February 2019 and *July 2021* by the re-titled *Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).* The NPPF provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for development can be produced (Para 1). The NPPF must be taken into account when preparing the development plan and is also a material consideration in planning decisions (Para 2). A number of key sections of the reissued NPPF are relevant schemes to port and rail-connected distribution parks such as Port Warrington, and these are summarised below.

In general, the NPPF states that plans and decision should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development, meet the development needs of their area and align growth and infrastructure. Policies should also provide for objectively assessed needs (Para 11).

Sustainable transport is addressed in Section 9 of the NPPF. It states that significant development should be focused at locations which are or can be made sustainable, though limiting the need for travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes, thereby reducing congestion and emissions, and improving air quality (Para 105). In summary the NPPF requires that planning policies should:

- Identify and protect, where there is robust evidence, sites and routes which could be critical in developing infrastructure to widen transport choice and realise opportunities for large scale development (Para 106c);
- Provide for any large scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area, and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy. Relevant national policy statements should also be taken into account (Para 106e).

The development of an expanded Port Warrington would be a modern tri-modal port and logistics facility that would widen transport choice for freight through its connections to the waterborne and rail networks, and therefore planning policies in Warrington should make provision for its development and allow it make a contribution to the wider economy of the area.

The NPPF states that in assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been - taken up, given the type of development and its location (Para 110a). The Port Warrington site could provide rail and waterborne freight connectivity access and would therefore be able to promote sustainable transport modes for freight use.

2.5 Transport for the North Freight and Logistics Report

Transport for the North (TfN) published *its Freight and Logistics Report* in autumn of 2016. The report considered opportunities to reduce the cost of freight transport for users (through lower freight transport costs) and non-users (for example, by reducing the environmental impacts of freight and logistics movements), create new facilities, expand market share in the logistics sector and attract inward private sector investment to the Northern Powerhouse. The report made a series of recommendations for public sector interventions that would encourage the private sector to invest in and operate a thriving freight and logistics industry in the North that will, in turn, support a vibrant and well-connected Northern economy.

The recommendations included:

- The development of rail and/or water connected Multimodal Distribution Parks (MDPs) at an average rate of 50ha per year, to be located at the edge of urban centres, thus minimising the cost of onward distribution by road, as well as offering sustainability enhancements. ; and
- Ensuring that MDPs can be brought forward in suitable locations through the planning system, with the relevant funding required to achieve rail and water connections.

MDPs are essentially logistics sites that are connected to the rail and/or waterborne freight network (either at a port or on an inland waterway) and therefore allow on-site warehouses to be used for the storage of goods that are distributed to and from the sites by rail and/or waterborne transport.

Port Warrington, with its location adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal and with the potential for a high quality rail connection to the West Coast Main Line, is therefore a prime example of an MDP. The report was therefore recommending that sites such as Port Warrington should be brought forward through the planning system in the North West and that the connection to the rail network could be subject to public sector funding.

2.5 Decarbonising Transport: A Better Greener Britain

This document, published by the *Department for Transport* in July 2021, considers greenhouse gas emissions (GHG emissions) produced by the UK's transport system. It presents the Government's path to net-zero GHG emissions from transport, and sets out the principles that underpin the approach to delivering it. It notes that GHG emissions from transport amounted to 122.15 million tonnes of CO_2e in 2019, of which 16% were generated by road freight transport and 5% from domestic shipping.

The document principally sets out the likely technological solutions that will enable each transport mode to achieve net zero, meaning that much of the document is not directly related to the planning aspects of the Port Warrington development. For example, for the rail freight sector this is likely to involve extensive electrification of those railway lines that currently rely on diesel powered traction. It notes that further work and research is required in other 'more difficult' sectors such as HGVs and maritime transport.

However, there are a number of key policy initiatives in the document that are directly relevant to Port Warrington. Firstly, it re-commits the Government to delivering a net-zero transport system by 2050. This will not be an 'over-night' process, meaning that there will be a key role for less carbon-intensive modes in order to lower GHG emissions in the early years as technology is then developed in the more challenging sectors. This should see more goods move by shipping and rail freight ahead of road transport.

It states that the planning system will have an important role to play in decarbonising transport (decarbonising through places). Local Transport Plans (LTPs) will need to set out how local areas will deliver ambitious quantifiable carbon reductions in transport, taking into account the differing

transport requirements of different areas. Quantifiable carbon reductions will become a fundamental part of local transport planning and funding. There is also a commitment to 'embed' transport decarbonisation principles in spatial planning and across transport policymaking (it references the NPPF and its sustainable transport contents – see above).

Finally, within the freight and logistics section there is a commitment to "support and encourage modal shift of freight from road to more sustainable alternatives, such as rail, cargo bike and inland waterways". A rail freight growth target will be introduced to encourage the continued growth of this sector. It also notes that the modal shift of freight from road to rail would not only lead to a reduction in GHG levels, but also reduce congestion and noise pollution.

The development of new inland port and rail-served facilities such as Port Warrington will therefore have a key role to play in delivering the transport net-zero target. They will allow 'quick wins' by transferring goods to non-road modes in the early years while decarbonisation solutions for HGVs can be developed. It should also be noted that the railway line serving Port Warrington (West Coast Main Line) is already electrified, meaning that goods could be collected and delivered at Port Warrington in a net-zero manner from the outset.

2.6 Other Key Issues

Freeports

In February 2020, the Government launched a consultation on the re-introduction of freeports to the UK. Freeports are viewed by Government as a flagship policy that are intended to bring re-generation, economic development and inward private sector investment to deprived areas of the country. Freeports are to be established in the three nations of Great Britain plus Northern Ireland, albeit those located outside England are subject to agreement with the respective devolved administrations. The three key objectives stated for freeport development are:

- National hubs for global trade and investment across the UK;
- Regeneration and 'levelling up' (the lead policy objective); and
- To create 'hotbeds of innovation'.

The model that has been adopted allows for the development of multiple sites within the overall freeport zone, as follows:

- Customs sites – where payment of import duties and tariffs are suspended while goods remain within the Customs site. These are only paid once the goods leave the site for domestic consumption. Duty inversion will also be available i.e. lower tariffs apply if the finished goods exiting the Freeport attract a lower tariff than their component parts; and

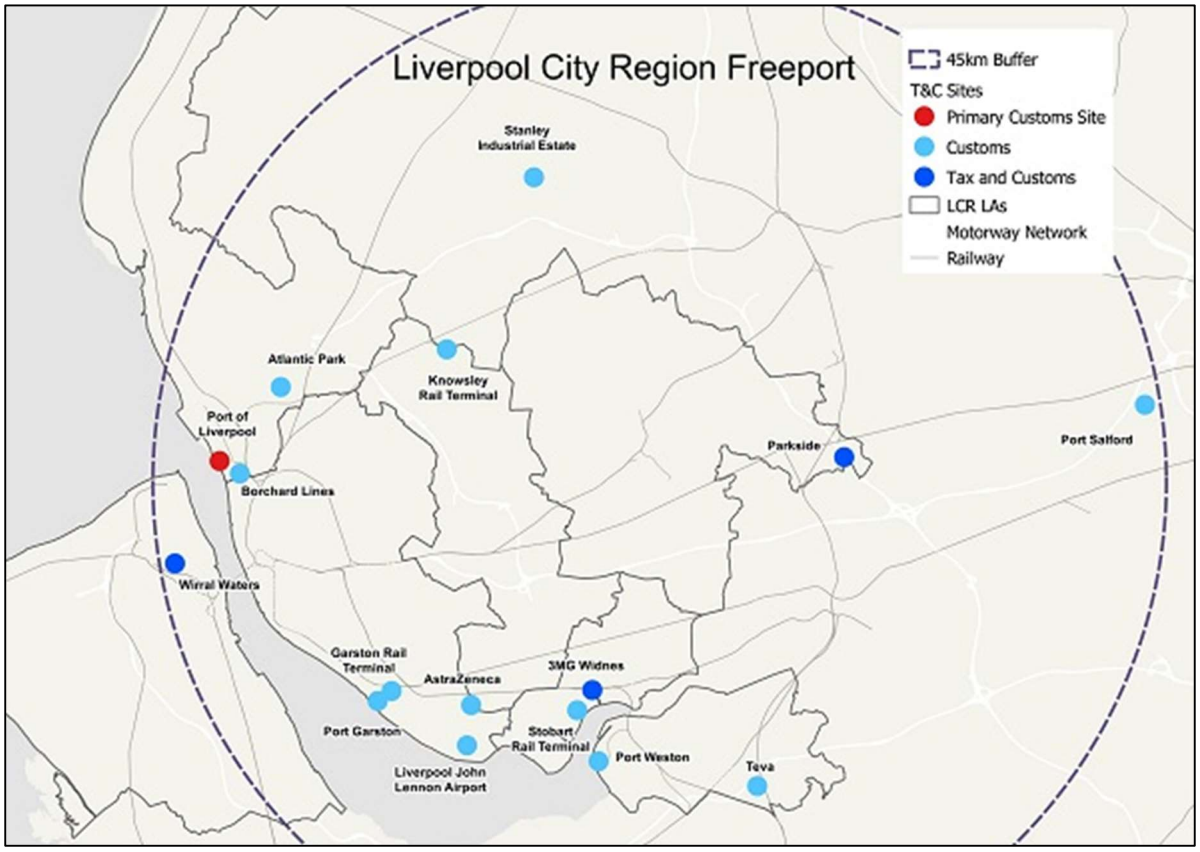
- Tax sites - where new and existing businesses locating will benefit from certain tax reliefs for a limited period of time (in most cases up to five years). These include temporary exceptions from stamp duty land tax and employer National Insurance contributions alongside enhanced capital allowances.

One existing facility within the Freeport must be designated as the 'primary customs site'; this cannot simultaneously be a tax site too. Further existing facilities can become Customs subzones within the overall Freeport. Undeveloped sites can be classified as Customs sites, Tax Sites or both simultaneously. All sites within the overall Freeport zone, both existing and undeveloped sites, must be located with 45km of the 'primary customs site'. The primary customs site can be a traditional maritime port, but also an airport or rail freight terminal. Other existing sites can also fall into these categories but they can also include manufacturing facilities. Undeveloped sites can be developed for both manufacturing and logistics uses. Designated sites within the Freeport area will also benefit from relaxed planning requirements.

Bids for Freeports were invited by the Government in November 2020, with a deadline for bid submission at the start of February 2021. The winning bids in England were announced in March 2021 (eight in total), and they included the Liverpool City Region Freeport. It is the only freeport on the west coast. Two more are planned in due course, one in each of Scotland and Wales, although these need to be agreed by the devolved administrations.

The geographic scope of the Liverpool City Region Freeport extends from the Port of Liverpool along the Mersey corridor and the Manchester Ship Canal as far as Port Salford in Greater Manchester. The map below shows sites currently designated within the freeport.

Map 2.1: Liverpool City Region Freeport



The Liverpool City Region freeport is focused primarily on regeneration, although some additional traffic could also be generated. The Port Warrington site also lies within the overall 45km freeport buffer (from the Primary Customs site at the Port of Liverpool). Potentially, it could be added into the freeport zone in future, as either a Customs and/or Tax site.

National Rail Freight Forecasts

During Summer 2018, MDS Transmodal were commissioned by Network Rail to produce a set of rail freight demand forecasts for the 2023/4; they were intended to inform their inputs into the Control Period 6 determination process. Subsequently, during late 2018, MDST were further commissioned by Network Rail to produce demand forecasts for 2033/4 and 2043/4. The forecasts for the three years concerned were to represent an update on similar forecasts produced in 2013 (those referenced in the NPS for National Networks – see above) and would inform Network Rail's long-term planning. Six main scenarios were forecast, reflecting a range of economic factors and overall market growth:

- Scenario A: factors favouring rail (relative to road) and low market growth;
- Scenario B: factors favouring rail and high market growth;
- Scenario C: factors less favourable to rail and low market growth;
- Scenario D: factors less favourable to rail and high market growth;

- Scenario E: central scenario (factors and market growth central to Scenarios A-D);
- Scenario F: as scenario E, but with internalisation of external costs.

The principal forecasting tool was the latest version of MDST's GB Freight Model. The forecasts covered 15 main commodity groupings, including intermodal (ports, domestic and Channel Tunnel), construction, steel, biomass and automotive. As per the earlier forecast iterations, the outputs are projections of future demand unconstrained by capacity, either on the national railway network or at terminals. Consultation was undertaken with the main rail freight traction operators, the Department for Transport (DfT) and Network Rail during the process.

In each scenario, various assumptions were made regarding changes to HGV and train crew wages and fuel costs which were consistent with the DfT's WebTag appraisal guidance. Scenarios A and B also included some moderate improvements in train productivity (train length). Maritime container growth was derived from MDST's World Cargo Database trade forecasting tool, with domestic non-bulk traffic growth related to population change. For the intermodal sector, Scenarios A and B assumed that in future 26% of warehouse new-build would be located at a rail served site (around 260,000 square metres per annum). Scenarios C and D assumed half this rate, with Scenario E adopting the midpoint between the two. This new rail-served warehousing was located at known or expected SRFI (or similar) type developments that were at various stages of the planning process or being actively promoted by developers. It is important to note that for the North West region, new rail-served warehousing at *Port Warrington* and *Port Salford* (amongst other sites) was assumed.

The results of the forecasting exercise were published alongside an associated routing study in August 2020[1]. Overall, the forecasts indicate continued growing demand for rail freight services, particularly in the intermodal and construction sectors. The table below presents a summary of the forecasts to 2033/4 and 2043/4 in terms of tonnes-lifted. Scenario E, the central forecast, is highlighted.

[1] The forecasting report (with detailed methodology) and the associated routing study can be downloaded from Network Rail's website:
https://www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/long-term-planning/

Table 2.1: Summary of Rail Freight Demand Forecasts to FY2033/4 and FY2043/4

	000s tonnes lifted						
	Actual 2016/7	A	B	C	D	E	F
2033/4 TOTAL	**85,786**	**121,248**	**147,013**	**86,333**	**106,258**	**113,145**	**159,122**
of which:							
Ports Intermodal	16,213	38,505	42,549	25,920	28,759	31,756	47,832
Domestic Intermodal	2,481	10,096	12,440	3,311	4,576	6,046	18,465
Construction	24,286	36,348	45,410	23,028	28,769	35,869	51,277
2043/4 TOTAL	**85,786**	**153,617**	**200,212**	**113,518**	**151,132**	**147,696**	**194,307**
of which:							
Ports Intermodal	16,213	51,844	56,596	35,099	39,321	42,879	61,493
Domestic Intermodal	2,481	16,724	23,633	5,203	9,026	10,933	27,613
Construction	24,286	47,903	72,412	37,782	57,113	53,338	63,182

Source: MDST GB Freight Model for Network Rail

Taking the central scenario (E), total rail freight demand is forecast to grow from 85.8 million tonnes in 2016/7 to 113.1 million tonnes by 2033/4 (+32%) and 147.7 million tonnes by 2043/4 (+72%). Significant growth in demand is forecast for the ports intermodal, domestic intermodal and construction sectors. Ports intermodal, for example, is forecast to grow from 16.2 million tonnes in 2016/7 to 31.8 million tonnes by 2033/4 (+96%) and 42.9 million tonnes by 2043/4 (+165%). Increasing rail freight competitiveness is the key driver of growth in the intermodal sector, with the expansion in the quantum of rail-served floor space a key contributory factor. The forecasts therefore demonstrate a need to develop new modern rail-served logistics facilities such as those proposed for Port Warrington.

HGV Driver Recruitment Issues

Since Summer 2021, supply chain reliability issues have affected a number of industry sectors. This has particularly manifested itself (certainly in the eyes of the general public and mainstream media) at the end of the supply chain in the retail sector, where a variety of product lines have experienced (and continue to experience) periods of temporary unavailability. The grocery sector has possibly borne the brunt (in terms of product outages) as it relies on just-in-time deliveries due to the short product shelf-life of many fresh foods. In late September 2021, a shortage of diesel/petrol at a small number of filling stations resulted in a round of panic-buying of fuel, which subsequently generated a much wider shortage of fuel nationally. Armed Forces personnel were subsequently drafted in to assist making deliveries to forecourts. By mid-October 2021, the Port of Felixstowe conceded that they were experiencing difficulties in moving containers out of the port (they subsequently stopped receiving in-bound empty containers due to a lack of space). While there are a number of factors at-

play, including global 're-stocking' post Covid-19, a major contributory issue is the now widely recognised significant shortage of qualified HGV drivers (both Class C and Class C+E).

The road haulage sector has for a number of years struggled to recruit, train and retain sufficient numbers of qualified HGV drivers. According to Logistics UK's most recent labour market survey (published in October 2020), the logistics industry currently has around 76,000 vacancies for HGV drivers, and there were 25,000 fewer drivers employed in Q2 2020 compared with the same period in 2019 (decline of 6.7%). The average age of a HGV driver is now 49.6 years (up from 47.9 years in 2019) and 52.4% of drivers are in the 45-59 years age range. Only 18% of HGV drivers are under 35 years old. The previous labour market survey from October 2019 estimated that there were 59,000 vacancies, and by August 2021 Logistics UK were subsequently estimating that the driver shortage had reached 90,000 vacancies i.e. a worsening position.

A number of factors have contributed to this shortage. Historically, road haulage operators had no requirement to provide their own in-house driver training as they could rely on a steady supply of ready qualified drivers. However, over the past 15 years this inward supply of qualified drivers from domestic sources has reduced significantly, coupled with a reluctance by hauliers to fund driver training themselves fearing that drivers will subsequently leave for other operators once fully qualified.

In particular, the Armed Forces were traditionally a significant source of drivers (retiring personnel with HGV driving qualifications would find new employment in the logistics sector). However cuts to numbers serving in the Forces has led to a reduction in those leaving with the appropriate skills and qualifications. Also, many would-be drivers would traditionally self-fund their training. However the increasing length of training courses and the need to complete the Driver CPC has pushed the cost of training courses out of financial reach of many potential drivers.

The ability to recruit drivers from other EU countries, particularly from central and eastern Europe, had mitigated the declining inward supply of drivers from domestic sources. However, since the Brexit referendum in 2016, there has been a steady decline in the number of EU drivers employed in the UK logistics sector. This has been caused by many EU drivers already employed in the UK returning to their home country or another EU country, coupled with significantly less new inward migration. This process was subsequently accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the afore-mentioned Logistics UK labour market survey, between Q2 2019 and Q2 2020, the numbers of EU drivers fell from 39,000 to 25,000 (decline of 36%). Allied to this, since 1 January 2021 the new post-Brexit work-visa system now effectively bars operators from recruiting new drivers from the EU. Under the new 'skilled workers' immigration work-visa system, HGV drivers are not be classified as 'skilled workers'.

Undoubtably, road haulage operators will have to expand their in-house training offer, and a number of leading hauliers are now introducing schemes to train existing employees as HGV drivers (after an appropriate qualifying time in other roles). However, a number of logistics operators and shippers are

also now looking to utilise non-road modes for a greater part of their transport requirements, the ability to overcome the shortage of skilled qualified HGV drivers being one of the reasons. This is particularly the case on long-distance trunk haul flows, thereby allowing remaining HGV drivers to be mainly rostered on shorter local deliveries where non-road modes are not a realistic option. In economic terms, this is also a much more efficient deployment of skilled labour, as one driver could potentially undertake 3-4 delivery operations on a shift compared to one delivery on long-distance trunking.

Maritime Transport, the inland container clearance specialist, now seeks to move most containers by rail freight in the first instance to a series of inland terminals it leases (including Trafford Park in the North West). One such service now operates from the Port of Liverpool to the East Midlands Gateway SRFI. Scottish hauliers Russell Logistics and WH Malcolm both have long-standing arrangements to use rail freight on their flows between DIRFT and Scotland. Interestingly, a number of recent new rail freight services have been developed over relatively short distances (compared with what was hitherto regarded as economic or practical). This includes a twice daily service between Teesport and Doncaster iPort (around 150km) and between Immingham and iPort (less than 100km). The development of new facilities such as Port Warrington will therefore allow the greater use of non-road modes when delivering cargo into the North West region, thereby overcoming the shortages of qualified HGV drivers. It will facilitate the greater use of short-sea shipping or rail freight to 'land' containers in the North West, with road haulage (the requirement for HGV drivers) only being used for shorter-distance local final delivery trips.

3. NEED FOR WATERBORNE FREIGHT

3.1 Introduction

This section of the report sets out how Port Warrington can meet a need for waterborne freight facilities and provide an inland port facility that would allow cargo to be distributed by waterborne transport directly to Warrington, which is one of the most important logistics location in the North West with its central location between the two main regional conurbations. It also demonstrates how the waterborne freight services can operate efficiently at Port Warrington.

Port Warrington, as a trimodal port and logistics facility, has the opportunity to perform two key roles in the waterborne freight transport network in the North West as:

- An inland port for the North West of England, providing port infrastructure to create the opportunity for short-sea and coastal shipping to distribute cargoes (bulk and general cargo traffics2) directly into the heart of logistics activity in the North West using cost effective and environmentally sustainable waterborne freight transport;
- An inland extension of the Port of Liverpool for high value containerised cargoes, linked by a cost effective and sustainable container barge service between Gladstone Dock (in the Liverpool Docks system) and Port Warrington.

The key to both concepts would be the availability of a combination of port infrastructure (berths, land adjacent to the berths for quayside storage and cranes for the loading and unloading of cargo) along with large-scale modern high-bay warehousing that would be available on the Port Warrington site, so that the inland origins and destinations of the cargo would be within the estate and would therefore remove the need for the fixed cost of road haulage for a shunt from the quay to an off-site warehouse. This reduces the door-to-door cost of transport for the logistics providers and their customers and so helps to gradually attract waterborne freight traffic to the facility through the operation of market forces.

3.2 National Port Traffic Forecasts

The most recent national port traffic forecasts relevant to the above traffics were published by the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2019, with a base year of 2016 and a forecast time horizon of 2050.

Table 3.1 shows actual traffic between 2010 and 2020 and the national port traffic forecasts for unitised traffic in terms of TEU (for load on load off, LOLO traffic) between 2020 and 2050 (with a 2016 base year).

[2] Cargoes which are transported in large homogenous consignments rather than in 'boxes' such as a containers or trailers

Table 5.1: Unitised Traffic via UK ports 2010-2020 and Forecasts to 2050

Million TEU							
Traffic type	2010 (A)	2015 (A)	2020 (A)	2030 (F)	2050 (F)	% CAGR 2010-2020	% CAGR 2020-2050
LOLO	8.22	9.11	9.73	13.42	21.89	+1.7%	+2.7%

Source: Department for Transport Port Traffic Forecasts 2019, Central Scenario
A: Actual, F: Forecast

Between 2010 and 2020 container traffic grew at a compound average growth rate of 1.7% and between 2020 and 2030 container traffic is forecast to grow at a compound average rate of 2.7%.

Table 3.2 shows actual traffic between 2010 and 2020 and the national port traffic forecasts for selected non-unitised traffic in terms of million tonnes between 2020 and 2050 (with a 2016 base year).

Table 3.2: Selected Non-unitised Traffics via UK Ports 2010-20 and Forecasts to 2050

Millions Tonnes							
Traffic type	2010 (A)	2015 (A)	2020 (A)	2030 (F)	2050 (F)	% CAGR 2010-2020	% CAGR 2020-2050
Agricultural products	15.0	13.2	10.2	14.6	15.0	-3.8%	+1.3%
Other dry bulk	34.3	47.8	52.5	48.8	58.8	+4.3%	+0.4%
Iron & steel products	6.1	8.8	5.6	8.9	9.6	-0.9%	+1.8%
Other general cargo	5.1	5.6	5.9	4.1	2.8	+1.5%	-2.5%
Forestry products	5.6	5.9	4.9	4.3	4.5	-1.3%	-0.3%
Other liquid bulks	12.8	10.5	9.7	8.6	5.9	-2.7%	-1.6%

Source: Department for Transport Port Traffic Forecasts 2019, Central Scenario
A: Actual, F: Forecast

Between 2010 and 2020 some traffics, such as other dry bulks and other general cargo generally grew, driven by increases in traffics such as biomass and construction materials and increased volumes of traffic related to offshore installations. However, growth in some other traffics such as forestry products and steel may have been more affected by slowdowns in production and demand in 2020 caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Between 2020 and 2030 agricultural products, other dry bulk and steel products traffic are expected to grow by between 0.4% and 1.8% per annum on average.

3.2 Mersey Ports Traffic 2010-2020

As well as container traffic, the waterborne freight facility at Port Warrington could also handle a variety of bulk and semi-bulk traffics that would mainly be related to local industry or specific occupiers, such as:

- Grain (included in 'agricultural products' within the data in Table 5.3 below);
- Dry bulk traffics;
- Steel, metals and general cargo;
- Forestry products;
- Edible oils (included in 'other liquid bulks' in Table 5.3 below).

Table 3.3 shows actual traffic between 2010 and 2020 for the Mersey Ports (i.e. the Port of Liverpool and the port/wharf facilities along the Manchester Ship Canal) for containerised traffic in TEU and for the above selected non-unitised traffic in tonnes.

Table 3.3: Selected Mersey Ports Traffics 2010-2020

Traffic type	Units	2010	2015	2020	% CAGR 2010-20	Market share 2010	Market share 2020
LOLO containers	000s TEU	662	680	843	+2.4%	8%	9%
Agricultural products	000s Tonnes	2,290	1,926	1,292	-5.6%	15%	13%
Other dry bulk	000s Tonnes	1,802	3,545	5,160	+11.1%	5%	10%
Iron & steel products	000s Tonnes	413	633	541	+2.7%	7%	10%
Other general cargo	000s Tonnes	70	142	183	+10.1%	1%	3%
Forestry products	000s Tonnes	151	237	37	-13.1%	3%	1%
Other liquid bulks	000s Tonnes	2,065	1,829	1,793	-1.4%	16%	18%

Source: Department for Transport Port Traffic Forecasts 2019, Central Scenario

Compared to total UK port traffic in 2010, the Mersey Ports lost some market share at 7.5% in 2015 compared to 8.1% in 2010; however, following the opening of the *Liverpool2* container terminal that can accommodate very large container ships (around 98% of the world's container shipping fleet) and the joint venture with Terminal Investments Limited[3] to operate the terminal, they have increased their share to 8.7% in 2020. Of the non-unitised traffics, the Mersey Ports have increased their market share over the last 10 years with the exception of forestry products and a small reduction in their share of agricultural products.

[3] TIL is mainly owned by Mediterranean Shipping Company, which is the second largest container shipping line in the world

The handling of the above traffics would allow Port Warrington to act as an inland extension of the Port of Liverpool via the Manchester Ship Canal to a key centre of logistics and industry in North West England. Each of these traffic types is discussed in more detail below.

3.3 Review of Traffic Types for Port Warrington

Containers

The opening of the Liverpool 2 deep sea container terminal in 2016 allowed the port to receive calls by some of the largest container ships in the world. The joint venture to operate the terminal between Terminal Investments Limited (TIL) and Peel Ports in 2019 provided a direct incentive for a major deep sea shipping line to call at the port as TIL is owned by Mediterranean Shipping Company, the second largest deep sea container shipping line in the world. As a result, rapid growth in container traffic and market share is expected through the Port of Liverpool over the next few years.

The increasing size of vessels and increasing volumes of containers that is likely to be unloaded and loaded per call at the Port of Liverpool will place additional pressure on portside land required for the handling and storage of containers. Part of the forecast growth in container traffic at the Port of Liverpool will be catered for by the in-dock Seaforth Container Terminal and part will be handled at the *Liverpool2* riverside terminal, but the pressure for portside land at the Port of Liverpool and the availability of a trimodal port and logistics facility at Port Warrington would allow shippers and shipping lines to transport goods by means of cost-effective and environmentally sustainable waterborne freight services along the Manchester Ship Canal for storage at on-site distribution centres.

A short sea container shipping service used to operate between Liverpool (and other Irish Sea ports) and Irlam in Greater Manchester. This weekly service was operated by two vessels with a length of 99 metres and capacity of 340 TEU; the service was operated by BG Freight Line, which is owned by Peel Ports, and was able to provide a vertically integrated service on a quay-to-quay or door-to-door basis between Irish Sea markets and Greater Manchester.

While the service operated for over a decade, with a baseload traffic of containerised wine between Liverpool and Irlam for an importer based in Irlam, it incurred operational losses and the service struggled to compete in terms of reliability and price with road-based transport. This is likely to have been due to the need for the ships to transit two locks to access the terminal at Irlam (at Eastham and Warrington) and, in particular, the need for a road shunt on public roads to the customer's premises because there was no space for warehousing.

In addition, the vessels that could operate on the Ship Canal were only 340 TEU, which was likely to be sub-optimal for the wider Irish Sea market. The current BG Freight Line fleet of 10 vessels that operates within or to and from the Irish sea are currently (November 2021) between 803 TEU and

1,036 TEU, with a length of between 141m and 152m. While these vessels are likely to be competitive in the Irish Sea container market, they are too large to access container terminals on the Ship Canal.

Finally, the Irlam Container Terminal was a relatively small scale terminal (around 2.5ha) which was mid-way between the logistics clusters of Warrington and Trafford Park in Greater Manchester where most distribution centres are located. Due to its sub-optimal characteristics Peel Ports has sold its freehold interest in the Irlam Container Terminal; Port Warrington, by contrast, offers the opportunity to provide the market with a larger port and logistics facility site with on-site warehousing in one of the best logistics locations in the North West and with cost effective access to deep sea container services via the Port of Liverpool.

While the Liverpool2 container terminal at the Port of Liverpool can accommodate many of the largest container ships in the world, the facility at Port Warrington would be able to cater for barges of up to 300 TEU capacity operating a shuttle service between the Port of Liverpool and Port Warrington. This service would enjoy a lock-free transit to Port Warrington once the barge had accessed the Ship Canal via Eastham Lock and would allow shippers and shipping lines to transport containers inland from Liverpool to the trimodal port and logistics facility at Port Warrington.

Port Warrington offers the opportunity therefore to provide a low cost and environmentally sustainable means to distribute deep sea and short sea containers inland from the Port of Liverpool directly to the inland origins and destinations of containerised cargo in North West England. In this way, Port Warrington would be able to act as an inland extension to the Port of Liverpool, with its on-site distribution centres providing an origin and destination of cargo in its own right and, where necessary, container storage and subsequent distribution by road to local shippers and receivers in the wider Warrington area. The Port Warrington site provides additional port infrastructure that adds to the overall capacity of port land for containerised cargoes in the North West of England and would take the cargo closer to its inland origins and destinations using cost-effective and sustainable waterborne transport.

Grain

Most of the grain traffic through the Port of Liverpool relates to inbound movements in deep sea vessels for processing within the region's food processing and manufacturing sector. The handling of grain at Port Warrington would therefore require the transhipment of the grain at the Port of Liverpool into barges and the development of specialist handling and storage in siloes. While this is potential cargo for Port Warrington, it would be based on a bespoke agreement with a shipper.

Other Dry Bulks

Other dry bulk cargoes associated with local industry that are clean and therefore offer no risk of contamination of general distribution cargo, such as dry bulk chemicals and some construction

materials, could be handled by the port infrastructure at Port Warrington. Again, this is likely to be based on bespoke agreements with shippers.

Steel and Other Metals

Given that Brexit and the decline of the UK steel industry might lead to higher volumes of deep sea imports of steel and other metals via the Port of Liverpool, these traffics could be a source of traffic for Port Warrington because the consignment sizes are suitable for short sea/coastal vessels or barges that can be handled by the port infrastructure; they can be handled using a mobile harbour crane and then transferred into a warehouse located close to the quay. As the cargoes are relatively high value they would be able to bear the cost of additional handling at the Port Liverpool if transhipped from a deep sea vessel. Port Warrington would effectively provide an inland extension to the port of Liverpool by means of low cost waterborne freight transport for these traffics. The cargoes are relatively clean and there would be no risk of contamination and the traffic would therefore be compatible with other general logistics traffic that would be handled in the rest of the Port Warrington site.

Forest Products

The Port of Liverpool has little land currently available for portside handling of forest products because packaged timber, for example, requires significant amounts of open or covered storage land. Given that Brexit might lead to greater imports of North American forest products, the Mersey would be well-located for these traffics. Similarly to metal traffics, these cargoes are relatively high value and are more likely to bear the cost of additional handling at Liverpool if transhipped from a deep sea vessel. Port Warrington would effectively provide an inland extension to the Port of Liverpool by providing port infrastructure to facilitate the handling of forest products such as packaged timber transported on cost effective waterborne freight transport services.. The cargoes are relatively clean and so would be compatible with other general logistics traffic that would be handled in the rest of the Port Warrington site. This traffic type could use open as well covered storage and so offers some flexibility over where it is stored on the Port Warrington site.

Edible Oils

Edible oils, used in the food processing industry, can be transported in relatively small shipments, but would require the development of specialist handling and tank storage. This is a possible cargo for Port Warrington given the nature of the manufacturing industry in the local area.

3.4 Port land availability

Land with direct access to port infrastructure is restricted along the Mersey Ports corridor, given the forecasts for future growth set out in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. While the Port of Liverpool has developed

its £750 million *Liverpool2* container terminal along with other major investments and Port Salford in Greater Manchester has partially been developed, it has not been possible to bring forward significant other additional port land in the last few years between the Port of Liverpool and Port Salford.

At the Port of Liverpool, some 32ha (c.78 acres) of potential port land at Seaforth could, in theory, be developed but there are significant environmental restrictions because of its designation as a nature reserve; land assembly outside the existing port estate in the Regent Road/Derby Road area (38ha, 92 acres) has also been difficult due to the number of different ownerships and the need for compulsory purchase orders.

The other major opportunity in terms of additional land provision at Port Wirral (60ha, 146 acres) has been removed due to the developer focusing on non-port opportunities. Port Runcorn lacks land for development and the former Port Cheshire site has been sold by the owner for development as a road-only distribution site.

Port Warrington, on the other hand, has been identified as having the potential of delivering up to 79ha (195 acres) of port-related land on the Manchester Ship Canal between the Port of Liverpool and Port Salford. Its development as a trimodal port and logistics facility would allow Peel Ports Group to grow the port and address some of the land requirement deficiency with a facility that offer its occupiers access to cost effective and environmentally sustainable transport options.

3.5 Marine Operations

The existing berth at Port Warrington, which is 28km inland from the sea-lock at Eastham at the entrance to the Manchester Ship Canal, is approximately 100m long and is sufficient to cater for the maximum size of vessels that would operate to and from Port Warrington of around 5,000 cargo tonnes or 300 TEU capacity. The passage along the Ship Canal to Port Warrington is lock-free apart from the sea-lock to obtain access to the River Mersey at Eastham.

An turning basin is on the southern boundary in the immediate vicinity of Port Warrington is proposed and will allow vessels of about 100m in length to turn and come alongside to unload and then re-load cargo before returning along the Manchester Ship Canal towards the Mersey estuary.

The small powered container barges that could be deployed on the service between Liverpool and Port Warrington could be served by a single crane capable of averaging about 20 lifts per hour (around 35 TEU) so that a barge of 300 TEU would take some 18 hours to discharge and reload. Given that ships enter and leave the Ship Canal at high tide and there are no locks for the 28km between Port Warrington and the Canal entrance lock at Eastham there would be sufficient time for a ship to round trip efficiently between Liverpool and Warrington in 48 hours. A single berth could therefore cater for three visits per week, meaning that at an 80% mean load factor one berth could handle around 75,000 TEU p.a. or 750,000 tonnes of semi bulk and bulk cargo.

There is also provision for a second berth at Port Warrington and this, along with a second crane, would more than double this throughput figure as higher berth utilization could be achieved as there would be less chance of no berth being available when a ship arrived. We estimate therefore that Port Warrington, with two berths, could achieve an annual throughput of up to 200,000 TEU of container traffic or 2 million tonnes of bulk and semi-bulk traffic per annum. Given that the Port of Liverpool handled some 843,000 TEU and 31 million tonnes of traffic (including containerised traffic) in 2020, Port Warrington would provide significant additional port infrastructure capacity for the Mersey Ports as a whole while also providing the opportunity for shippers and shipping lines to distribute cargo inland using cost-effective and environmentally sustainable transport.

Finally, in the event that one berth is required for non-unitised traffic but there is demand for a more than a thrice weekly container service at the second berth it should be possible (subject to sufficient land being made available for container storage) to increase the frequency of service to six times a week on a single berth by using a tug barge and a fleet of three dumb barges. This would allow the tug to arrive at Port Warrington from Liverpool and 'drop off' a dumb barge to be unloaded and reloaded 'at the leisure' of the terminal operator; the tug would then immediately 'pick up' an already re-loaded barge and return to Liverpool without having to wait for the terminal discharge and loading operations at Port Warrington. In this way one dumb barge would be being discharged and re-loaded at each of the two ports while a third dumb barge was always in transit with the tug.

3.6 Conclusion on Maritime Traffic

In conclusion Port Warrington offers the opportunity to provide a cost-effective and environmentally sustainable port and logistics facility that would create the opportunity to distribute deep sea and short sea containers inland from the Port of Liverpool directly to the inland origins and destinations of cargo in North West England and to transport a range of bulk and semi-bulk cargoes inland for local industry. Port Warrington would be able to act as an inland extension to the Port of Liverpool, with container storage for subsequent distribution by road to local shippers and receivers and, with its on-site distribution centres, become an origin and destination of cargo in its own right. The Port Warrington site adds to the overall capacity of port land for the North West of England for buffer cargo and takes the cargo closer to its inland origins and destinations using cost-effective and sustainable transport by shipping or barge.

There is a shortfall in port land available at both the Port of Liverpool and along the Manchester Ship Canal as compared with future forecast port traffic, which is likely to limit the ports' ability to handle and store cargoes in the future. Given the importance of the port infrastructure to support the handling and storage of intermediate goods and raw materials required for manufacturing processes for industry in the North West, as well as the storage and distribution of finished goods for shippers via the region, this could limit the regional economy's capacity for future growth and employment.

Given that access by waterborne transport to the existing Port Salford site in Greater Manchester requires additional transit time and would have greater vessel size restrictions, Port Warrington remains the best alternative to expand port infrastructure capacity in the North West.

4. REVIEW OF EXISTING SUPPLY & FORECAST DEMAND FOR LARGE-SCALE WAREHOUSING IN NORTH WEST ENGLAND

This Section describes the existing supply of large-scale warehousing in the North West and the extent to which this capacity is located within a port or is rail-served (or both). In this context, existing supply refers to fully built-out warehouse units which physically exist 'on the ground', and will either be occupied by a shipper/distributor or standing empty but available for immediate occupation. It then summarises forecasts of need for new floor space capacity along the Mersey corridor between the Liverpool City Region, Warrington and Greater Manchester, and considers the extent to which this demand can be met by existing port locations or rail-served sites.

4.1 Introduction

As described in the introductory section, an expanded Port Warrington would provide modern high-bay logistics warehousing to support the inland port operation. This will enable relatively high value cargoes, such as consumer goods, to be sorted and stored directly after landing from sea-borne vessels within the port before re-distribution into the domestic market. Other added value activities may also take place (such as the processing and packaging of individual e-commerce consignments), while the planned rail connection will allow goods to be despatched or delivered to site by rail freight. Around half of all freight moving in Great Britain passes through these large-scale warehouses (over 9,000 square metres (sqm) in size). This planned warehousing will be an important component of the overall scheme, as it will generate a substantial part of the containerised traffic that will ultimately pass over the quay or through the rail freight terminal.

Further, national policy as set out in the National Networks NPS and the NPPF (as described in Section 2) highlights that the higher the proportion of warehousing that is located within ports or rail-connected sites, the lower will be the proportion of goods moved on long distance trunk legs by road. The need to move goods from a port to an inland warehouse is consequently avoided. This subsequently generates cost savings for shippers and receivers (so called user benefits) alongside with wider societal and environmental benefits (so called non-user benefits). However, such rail or water-connected logistics sites such as Port Warrington need to be sufficiently large to capture the available economies of scale to support rail and waterborne freight services and therefore present greater challenges in terms of land assembly and planning than smaller-scale road-only schemes.

The large-scale warehouses (over 9,000sqm) that planned for Port Warrington would be a mixture of National Distribution Centres (NDCs) and Regional Distribution Centres (RDCs). The precise mix would be determined by the requirements of specific occupiers.

National Distribution Centres (NDCs) act as inventory holding points for goods before re-distribution to subsequent stages in the supply chain. Average dwell time varies considerably but may average 4–6 weeks. They are termed 'national' because they serve the whole of Great Britain (and sometimes

Ireland) from the one site and are normally associated with manufacturers/suppliers to retailers and the major retailers themselves. Goods held at a NDC are often imported, and in particular using maritime containers from both deep-sea and short-sea origins. NDCs have traditionally been located in the Midlands, though many are also to be found in the North West and the Yorkshire/Humber regions. A more recent variant is the *Customer Fulfilment Centre* or *CFC*, which store, process and then despatch retail goods ordered via e-commerce platforms.

Port Warrington is particularly well located to accommodate both NDCs and CFCs serving the whole of Great Britain and also Ireland. It will enable goods to be landed directly to NDCs/CFCs from sea-going vessels at a central location within the British Isles, with onward distribution using a combination of waterborne, rail and road freight services.

Regional Distribution Centres (RDCs) receive goods from NDCs or direct from suppliers, before re-distributing the goods to retail outlets. They have a regional hinterland and are normally associated with retailers which receive inbound goods from suppliers and their own NDCs before consolidation into loads for individual retail outlets throughout the region. Dwell times are much shorter than for NDCs; perishable and time sensitive goods will generally be redistributed within 24 hours. RDCs located at Port Warrington would be well-located to serve the whole of North West of England from a single location, given that the site is located between both the Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region and would have good strategic road access on the north-south axis via the M6 and on the east-west axis via the M56 and the M62.

4.2 Existing Warehouse Capacity North West Region

This sub-section quantifies the existing supply of large-scale logistics and distribution floor space capacity within the North West region. The data has been derived from MDST's warehouse database, which has been compiled from the *Valuation Office Agency (VOA)* non-domestic Rating List records (a record of all commercial property in England and Wales by floor space function and location, collated for Business Rates purposes). We have interrogated the raw database and extracted floor space data within commercial buildings with a designation 'warehouse' or a similar classification. For clarification, this includes:

- Floor space designated as 'warehouse' or similar within a building whose primary classification is 'Warehouse and Premises' i.e. a building purposely built to receive, store and distribute cargo (the classic distribution centre); and
- Floor space designated as 'warehouse' or similar within a building that has some other primary classification e.g. a 'Factory and Premises' which contains floor space used to store and distribute goods manufactured at that site.

Property where the warehouse floor space (as defined) is greater than 9,000sqm in total has been included, this broadly equating to buildings around 100,000 square foot or larger, the logistics

industry's recognised definition of a large-scale distribution centre. Other ancillary floor space functions (e.g. offices) have been excluded i.e. the total 'headline' size of a commercial property will be greater once these other floor space functions are included. Further, while the total quantum of 'warehouse' or similar floor space within an individual property is greater than 9,000sqm, the actual floor space may be distributed over two or more different areas (zones) e.g. two separate buildings of 5,000sqm each within a much larger individual property (with other floor space functions) is therefore recorded as 10,000sqm and one unit.

Table 4.1 below provides a summary of the current (2021) total quantum of warehouse floor space in units greater than 9,000sqm by English region and Wales.

Table 4.1: Large Scale Warehouse Capacity by Region in 2021 (units >9,000sqm)

Region	Floor Space (000s sqm)	Market Share	Number Units	Market Share	Mean size per unit (sqm)
East Midlands	10,142	20%	402	16%	25,228
North West	***8,328***	***16%***	***419***	***17%***	***19,876***
West Midlands	7,559	15%	385	16%	19,634
Yorkshire/Humber	7,064	14%	336	14%	21,023
East	5,576	11%	270	11%	20,651
South East	4,021	8%	204	8%	19,710
South West	2,903	6%	132	5%	21,994
North East	1,947	4%	90	4%	21,637
London	1,870	4%	121	5%	15,454
Wales	1,588	3%	79	3%	20,102
Total	**50,998**		**2,438**		**20,918**

Source: MDST Warehouse Database (derived from VOA Rating List, correct at July 2021)

The North West region currently accommodates around 8.3 million square metres of large-scale warehouse floor space in 419 individual units. Nationally, there are some 51 million square metres of warehouse floor space across 2,438 buildings; mean unit size is therefore around 21,000sqm. In terms of market share, the North West is the second largest region when measured by floor space capacity, and the largest in terms of the number of individual properties.

The East Midlands has the largest concentration of logistics activity when measured by floor space capacity (10.1 million square metres). As well as the East Midlands, the North West, Yorkshire/Humber and the West Midlands also have large concentrations of warehouse centre floor space (each having over 7 million square metres) reflecting these regions role in national as well as regional distribution.

The East Midlands region has attracted a quantum of warehouse floor space which is significantly more than is required to handle the volume of cargo distributed into that region's economy. The region accounts for 9% of the population of England and Wales, though it accommodates 20% of the warehouse capacity by area. Much of the East Midland's warehouse capacity is therefore serving the national market in addition to regional consumers.

The same conclusion can be drawn for the North West, which has 13% of the population of England and Wales but 16% of the large-scale warehousing capacity, suggesting that there is some national distribution activity in addition to capacity serving the end-user market in the North West. For example, Matalan operates an NDC in Knowsley, and Adidas and Kellogg's operate NDCs in Trafford Park to serve northern and national markets. Port Warrington would therefore be serving an established market for logistics sites in the North West and would be able to accommodate both RDCs serving the large regional population centres in Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region and NDCs/CFCs serving the whole of Great Britain and even Ireland.

Table 4.2 below provides a breakdown of the North West region's capacity by local authority area.

Table 4.2: North West England Large Scale Warehouse Capacity 2021 (units >9,000sqm)

	Floor Space (000s sqm)	Number Units
Greater Manchester, of which	*3,187*	*162*
Bolton	405	19
Bury	117	7
Rochdale	650	31
Oldham	665	32
Manchester	159	8
Tameside	88	5
Stockport	100	8
Trafford	452	24
Salford	183	12
Wigan	367	16
Liverpool City Region, of which	*1,707*	*82*
Sefton	103	7
Knowsley	388	17
St Helens	401	16
Liverpool	387	18
Wirral	111	9
Halton	317	15
Cheshire, of which	*1,521*	*67*
Cheshire West & Chester	423	16
Cheshire East	525	26
Warrington	572	25
Lancashire	1,517	86
Cumbria	396	22

Source: MDST Warehouse Database (derived from VOA Rating List, correct at July 2021)

The two key points to note from the above data are:

- Large-scale warehousing in the North West is very much concentrated in the corridor passing between Manchester, Warrington and Liverpool. Two-thirds of the regions floor space capacity (5.5 million square metres) is located along this corridor;
- Just under 0.6 million square metres or 7% of the region's capacity is located in Warrington, albeit that Warrington only accommodates around 3% of the region's population. This suggests that the market regards Warrington as a competitive location for distribution activity, given its position between the region's two major population centres.

Further, a substantial proportion of the warehousing described above will already be receiving containerised goods from the Port of Liverpool (much of it is therefore 'related' to the Mersey Ports), and also from other ports such as Felixstowe and London Gateway. Port Warrington will therefore allow the development of modern warehousing where future containerised cargo flows from the Port of Liverpool can be landed 'directly' into warehousing, without the need for road transport and by-passing the congested South East ports. Those flows which do arrive via the South East can be delivered by rail freight directly.

Rail and Water-connected Distribution Space in the North West

Table 4.3 below summarises the position with respect to rail-served large-scale warehousing in the North West region. In this case, rail-served warehousing is defined as either being directly rail-connected (by means of a rail siding alongside) or being located in close proximity to an intermodal terminal.

Table 4.3: Large Warehousing in North West England on Rail-served Sites (units >9,000sqm)

	Floor Space (000s sqm)
Trafford Park	432
3MG	77
Knowsley	8
Port of Liverpool (Seaforth)	83
Sub-total	***600***
North West Total	8,328
% Rail-served	7%

Source: MDST Warehouse Database (derived from VOA Rating List, correct at July 2021)

Around 7% of the North West region's large-scale warehouse capacity is located on a rail-served site. Across England and Wales around 11% of capacity is now rail-served, recent consents at West Midlands Interchange and Northampton Gateway will push this figure higher, and the national rail freight forecasts (Section 2) were undertaken on the basis that just under one-third of future new-build would be rail-served. The North West region therefore lags behind the national picture.

Trafford Park was developed from the early 20th Century onwards as a planned industrial estate, served by rail and the Manchester Ship Canal. The Freightliner intermodal terminal was built in the 1960s, while more recently the Channel Tunnel Euroterminal opened in 1993 (now operated by Maritime Transport). Around 432,000sqm of large scale floor space is now located on the Trafford Park estate (in close proximity to both terminals). The 3MG site at Widnes has been developed over the past 15 years as a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) and currently 77,000sqm of floor space has been built around the Stobart operated intermodal terminal. A further 83,000sqm of large scale

floor space is located within the Port of Liverpool port estate. A small rail-served warehouse (dedicated to the handling municipal waste) is located on the Knowsley Industrial Estate.

In a similar manner, Table 4.4 below summarises the position with respect to water-connected large scale warehousing in the North West of England. In this case, water-connected is defined as either being directly served from a quay or being located within a port estate. Some 145,000sqm of water-served floor space is identified, mostly within the Port of Liverpool but also at the existing Port Warrington site. In total water-connected capacity accounts for around 2% of the regional floor space.

Table 4.4: Water-Connected Large Scale Warehousing North West England (units >9,000sqm)

	Floor Space (000s sqm)
Port of Liverpool, of which	
Seaforth	83
Birkenhead	29
Port Warrington	30
Sub-total	***142***
North West Total	8,328
% water connected	2%

Source: MDST Warehouse Database (derived from VOA Rating List, correct at July 2021)
NB: Seaforth water connected warehousing also rail-served (see Table 3.3 above)

The location of large scale floor space within the North West of England partly reflects where local planning authorities have in the past released land for B8 developments. With only 7% rail-served and 2% water-connected (and allowing for the Seaforth warehousing within the Port of Liverpool being both rail and water-connected), some 92% of the region's existing warehouse capacity has been developed on road-only connected B8 sites.

There is strong policy support for the development of sustainable distribution sites set out in Section 2 above, albeit that the proportion of large-scale warehousing that is located within a port or rail-linked in the North West region is low (and materially lower than the national average). A significant expansion in the quantum of large-scale warehousing that is rail or water-connected is therefore required to improve the modal share for both waterborne and rail freight. This clearly implies a need to bring forward schemes such as the expansion of Port Warrington.

4.3 Future Demand for Warehousing

Having considered existing capacity, an assessment of the future need for new-build large scale warehousing in the Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester and Warrington has been undertaken. As described in the policy section, an increasing proportion of any new-build warehousing should be

located within ports, rail-served or both. The assessment has initially been derived from future B8 land requirements that have been cited in recent evidence base documents, alongside a specific forecast undertaken for this report using MDST's established replacement and traffic growth methodology.

New-build warehouses undertake two principal functions, namely:

- To replace existing capacity which has become either physically or functionally obsolete; and
- To provide additional floor space to accommodate long-term growth in traffic.

Most newly built floor space is a replacement for existing warehouse stock which is 'life expired'. While this may not be related to physical obsolescence (i.e. many older buildings will be structurally sound), they can become functionally obsolete. This is particularly the case concerning the growth of e-commerce, where many older buildings cannot accommodate the automated picking/packaging equipment required for on-line sales, or the ability to handle distribution to retail outlets alongside direct to home e-commerce deliveries under the same roof. Many existing retailers have therefore commissioned more modern facilities (to service their e-commerce platforms) which have directly replaced older distribution buildings. Also, new floor space has been built for emerging e-commerce only retailers, such as Amazon or ASOS, much of which has effectively replaced floor space previously operated by 'bricks and mortar' retailers which have either ceased trading or have radically downsized to address the fall in 'high street' sales.

A second factor is the ability, when compared with 20-30 years ago, to operate much larger distribution buildings. This has been facilitated by advances in modern ICT inventory management systems which have permitted much larger warehouses to be operated more efficiently than was previously the case. As a result, many operators have sought economies of scale can through merging operations based at multiple sites to one new location. Finally, changing market conditions, both within specific companies/sectors and in the wider economy, means that warehouse operations might need to relocate in order to remain competitive. Occupiers who previously sourced goods from domestic suppliers but now predominantly import from deep-sea markets may seek a new location within a port or at a rail-linked site in order to remain competitive.

Overtime, traffic volumes passing through a warehouse can increase to the point where the facility reaches its operational capacity. This is accounted for by population growth over time, general economic growth in the wider economy, supply chain reorganisations following mergers/acquisitions and changes in tastes and fashions. Additional floor space is therefore required to handle growing traffic volumes.

Liverpool City Region and West Lancashire

The *Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA)* was published in 2018. As the name suggests, it covered future requirements for housing and employment land in the Liverpool City Region and West Lancashire district. It was produced by *GL Hearn*, with *MDS Transmodal* providing specialist inputs covering B8 land requirements going forward. The forecasts of new-build demand and the consequent land requirements up to 2033 and 2043 were produced using MDST's established replacement and traffic growth methodology (takes account of the need to replace a proportion of existing capacity due to physical or functional obsolescence plus an allowance for traffic growth due to wider economic and demographic factors).

The outputs from this process, which were subsequently included in the SHELMA report, are outlined in Table 4.6 below. The growth element includes two scenarios - a 'do-minimum' approach and a second scenario which reflected the recommended strategy contained in TfN's *Freight and Logistics Report* (published in September 2016) for the north of England

Table 4.6: SHELMA Large Scale New-build Forecasts and Associated Land Requirements

Scenario		2014	2033	2043
Do Minimum	Existing floor space	1,537		
	Replacement build		768	1,229
	Growth Build		232	354
	Total		**1,000**	**1,584**
	Land Required (ha)		250	396
TfN Strategy	Existing floor space	1,537		
	Replacement build		768	1,229
	Growth Build		517	820
	Total		**1,285**	**2,049**
	Land Required (ha)		321	512

Source: SHELMA 2018, derived from MDS Transmodal modelling

It should be noted that LCR have recently commenced the process of updating the SHELMA forecasts, albeit outputs from the assessment have yet to be formally agreed and published.

Places for Everyone – Joint Development Plan

Places for Everyone is the Joint Development Plan covering nine out of the ten Greater Manchester districts. It covers the period 2021 to 2037. The document does not cover the Stockport council area, who decided to withdraw from the joint plan covering the entire Greater Manchester Combined Authority. The Plan was subsequently taken forward covering the remaining nine districts, as permitted under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2008.

Policy JS – J4 covers warehousing and industry development. It states that:

"At least 3,330,000 square metres of new, accessible, industrial and warehousing floorspace will be provided in the Plan area over the period 2021-2037."

The Plan also commits to significantly increasing the supply of high quality sites across the northern parts of Greater Manchester to help increase the competitiveness of that area, including a major strategic opportunity at Northern Gateway. It also states that individual sites providing more than 100,000 square metres of warehousing floorspace should, where there is likely to be demand and it is appropriate to the location, *"promote and support access by sustainable modes of transport"*.

The figure quoted represents 'take-up' or total build (rather than net growth), meaning it represents both replacement and growth combined. Around 1 million square metres is allocated to Salford and Trafford districts, implying opportunities to provide new capacity served from the Manchester Ship Canal e.g. Port Salford.

The figures cover the full range of industrial and warehouse floor space i.e. from small units through to major distribution centres. However, if we assume that around 53%[4] of the existing large scale capacity in Greater Manchester will require replacement over the 16 year period 2021-2037 (53% x 3.187 million sqm = 1.689 million sqm) and that (in-line with the SHELMA do-minimum forecasts) the growth build element equates to around 15% of existing capacity (15% x 3.187 million sqm = 0.478 million sqm), then new-build demand for large scale units during the period 2021-2037 can be expected to account for 2.2 million square metres of the 3.3 million square metres stated in the Plan.

Warrington Employment Development Needs Study

The Warrington Employment Development Needs Study was published in October 2016 to inform the development of the emerging Local Plan. The document states that 200ha of B8 development can be expected in Warrington between 2016 and 2037, equating to around 800,000 square metres of logistics space on the basis that warehouse floor space occupies around 40% of a plot footprint.

[4] On the basis that the useful economic life of a warehouse building is around 30 years, implying that over a 16 year timescale we would expect around 53% (i.e. 16/30) of the existing capacity to require replacement.

As per the Greater Manchester figure, this is a gross 'take-up' figure based on past trends, meaning it represents both demand for replacement and growth build combined. The study also states that it represents 'Strategic and Local' take-up i.e. the full range of units across the spectrum of distribution facilities. However, on a similar basis to Greater Manchester, if we assume that around 60% of the existing large scale capacity will require replacement over the period 2021-2037 (53% x 572,000 sqm = 303,160 sqm) and that the growth build element equates to around 15% of existing capacity (15% x 572,000 sqm = 85,800 sqm), then new-build demand for large scale units during the period 2021-2037 can be expected to account for just over 388,900 sqm of the 800,000sqm (200ha) forecast in the Warrington study.

Summary

Table 4.7 summarises the forecast demand for new-build large scale warehousing to 2037 along the Mersey corridor between the Liverpool City Region, Warrington and Greater Manchester, as derived from the three planning documents described. The forecasts for the Liverpool City Region (to 2033 and 2043 in SHELMA) have been interpolated to 2037 so as to align with the Greater Manchester and Warrington figures.

Table 4.7: Forecast Demand for New-build Large Scale Warehousing to 2037 in Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester and Warrington

	New-build Demand to 2037 (000s sqm)	Land Required (ha)**
Liverpool City Region*	1,234	309
Greater Manchester	2,200	550
Warrington	389	97
Total	**3,823**	**956**

* Do-minimum scenario

** Floor space occupies 40% of plot footprint. Represents total land take required and not the quantum of 'new' land that needs to be brought forward in Local Plans and so does not account for existing vacant plots/sites with B8 consents and other sites in the planning pipeline.

In total, some 3.8 million square metres of new large scale floor space can be expected to be built in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor up to 2037. If all of this demand were to be located at new sites, this would imply a need to bring forward 956ha of land in Local Plans. Around 0.8 million square metres of the total expected demand of 3.8 million square metres to 2037 is to cater for traffic growth.

As a sense check on these figures, a specific land use forecast for the North West region has also been undertaken for this report using MDST's established replacement and traffic growth methodology. As

noted above, this methodology takes account of the need to replace a proportion of existing capacity due to physical or functional obsolescence plus an allowance for traffic growth due to wider economic and demographic factors. Existing warehouse capacity has been quantified from the MDST warehouse database (as described above), with a view then reached as to the likely replacement rate based on experience of the logistics sector. Freight traffic growth (a proxy for growth in the demand for goods) can be forecast using economic or traffic models. In this case the *MDST GB Freight Model* has been used, with traffic forecasts to 2033 and 2043 (to be consistent with the national rail freight demand forecasts). The growth is then related to floor space using cargo storage density and throughput rates expected at a modern distribution centre. Table 4.8 below shows the outputs from this exercise, with 2037 outputs being interpolated from 2033 and 2043.

Table 4.8: Forecast Demand for New-build Large Scale Warehousing to

	000s sqm		
	2033	2037	2043
Replacement build*	3,331	4,442	6,107
Growth Build	732	1,086	1,616
Total New-build	**4,063**	**5,527**	**7,723**
*Land required (ha)***	*1,016*	*1,382*	*1,931*

** % replacement assuming 40% to 2033*
30 years economic life 73% to 2043
*** floor space being 40% of plot footprint*

In total, some 5.5 million square metres of new large scale floor space can be expected to be built in the North West region up to 2037. If all of this demand were to be located at new sites, this would imply a need to bring forward 1,382ha of land in Local Plans. These figures for the region as a whole broadly align with those for the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor presented above in Table 3.7 (on the basis that the corridor currently accommodates around two-thirds of regional capacity).

In practice, a significant quantum of 'new' land will need to be brought forward to meet the expected total demand. This is because many existing sites are no longer commercially attractive to the logistics market, either due to the size and configuration of the plots available or their location. In many cases the size and configuration of plots potentially available for recycling are unable to accommodate the very large-scale buildings now required by the market. A recent trend has seen the merging of operations previously based at multiple sites to one new-build warehouse. The ability to operate fewer but larger distribution centres to provide economies of scale has been facilitated by advances in modern ICT inventory management systems which have permitted much larger warehouses to be operated more efficiently than was previously the case. Some of the existing sites, which are not well-suited to a strategic distribution role, could be released for other employment activities, or even non-

employment use, including playing a role in meeting local authority targets for new residential developments.

In addition, there is a policy objective of substantially increasing the quantum of floor space which is both water and rail-served. As described in Section 2, current Government policy supports the development of strategic logistics facilities which are located on sites within ports, connected to the railway network, or both. Work has been completed for *Transport for the North* that recommends the development of rail and/or water connected Multimodal Distribution Parks (MDPs). Such sites promote economic growth and generate more cost competitive supply chains, whilst at the same time allowing goods to be handled and moved in a more sustainable manner when compared with road-only connected sites.

The data above shows that only 7% of existing floor space capacity in the North West region is located on a rail-served site, while only 2% is located within a port. It is therefore clear that the national and sub-national policy objective of increasing the quantum of floor space which is both water and rail-served cannot be achieved through the 'recycling' of plots located at existing sites alone.

The implication of the above is that some new large sites will need to be brought forward over the long term to accommodate a significant proportion of the forecast new-build, given that such sites will be capable of being rail-served/water-served and will have the large plots required for modern distribution buildings.

This all suggests that additional land is required to be brought forward through Local Plans to meet the need for both growth and replacement newbuild. Further, as noted in Section 2 Government policy promotes increasing the proportion of logistics activity which takes place at rail and/or water connected sites, both to increase the cost competitiveness of supply chains and for sustainability reasons. Given that 92% of logistics space for large-scale warehousing is on sites that are not rail or water-served, there is a clear need for new sites in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor that are connected to the rail and/or waterborne freight networks.

As it would be able to offer 205,850 square metres of logistics floor space, Port Warrington would accommodate around 25% of the 0.8 million square metres of logistics space that is needed along the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor to accommodate forecast traffic growth, let alone replacement build up to 2037. Furthermore, the expansion of Port Warrington provides an opportunity in the North West to develop a new logistics facility that is both within a port and rail-served, thereby meeting the policy need to increase the proportion of logistics space that can facilitate modal switch to more sustainable modes.

5. REVIEW OF ALTERNATIVE SITES

5.1 Review of Rail and Water-connected Sites in the North West

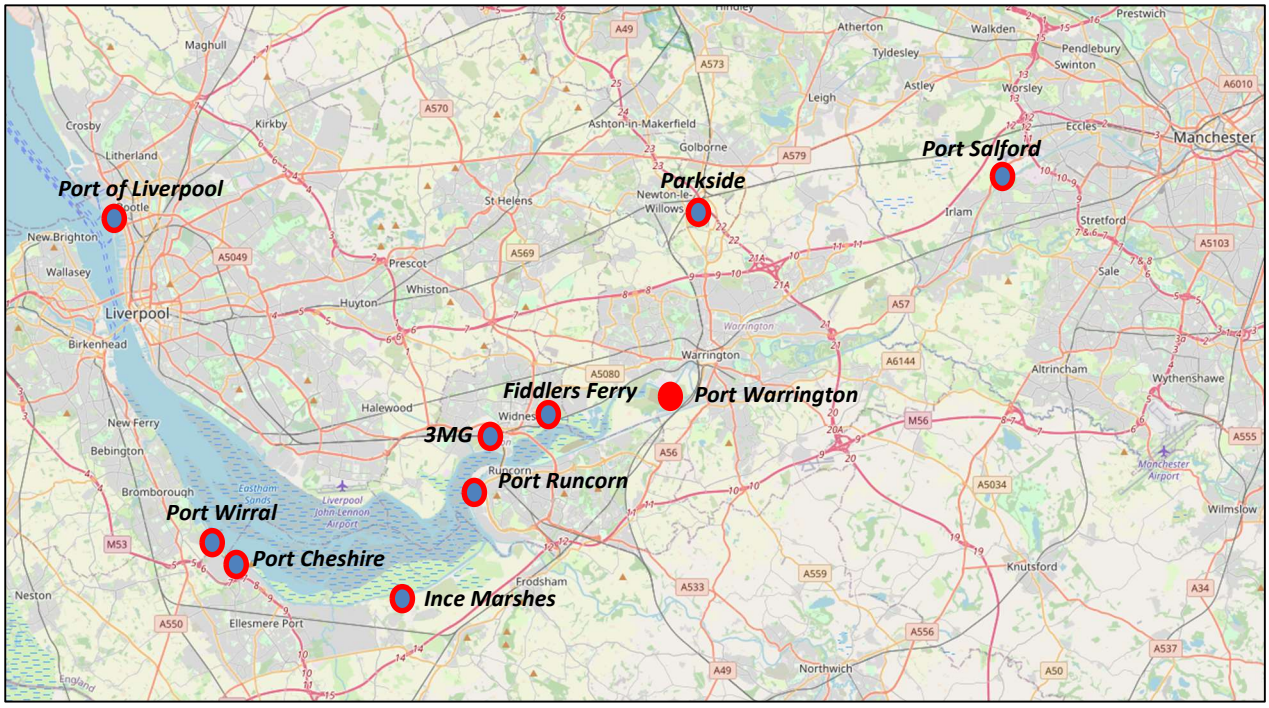
A review of 'alternative sites' has been undertaken to ascertain whether there are any other port or rail-connected sites in the North West region that could offer a comparable or superior location for the facilities proposed for Port Warrington. In particular, the extent to which these sites are able to meet the forecast demand for new-build large scale warehousing to 2037 along the Mersey corridor between the Liverpool City Region, Warrington and Greater Manchester has been assessed, as described in Section 3 (956ha by 2037).

In this context, potential 'alternative sites' are is considered to be:

- Existing ports or rail-served sites that currently have vacant land or with expansion potential. This included plots and sites that already have B8 consents or have been allocated for such uses in Local Plans; and
- Potential port locations or rail-served sites that may to come forward for consideration by the planning system over the medium term. This includes sites currently being promoted by port operators and developers, albeit they have yet to be formally considered by the planning system, or which have previously been identified as potential sites in studies and local plans.

In this case, an existing port is defined as current operational port that is navigable and handling cargo, including the various wharves and facilities along the Manchester Ship Canal. A potential port is considered to be an area of water-connected vacant land which could potentially be developed into an operational port and subsequently receive sea-going vessels. For rail-served sites, only those with a loading gauge of W8 or greater have been considered for inclusion.

Map 5.1: Potential Alternative Sites



The map above shows the location of nine potential alternative sites. The aerial pictures[5] and tables below provide a high level overview of these potential 'alternative sites'.

[5] Source: Google Earth

Port Salford

Description	A new **Strategic Rail Freight Interchange** being promoted by *Peel Land and Property*.
Rail and/or water connected	Planning consent granted for a new spur connection to the Manchester-Liverpool Chat Moss railway line with a W9 loading gauge, although it has not yet been built. Passive provision for a new container quay on the Manchester Ship Canal.
Highway connections	1km to M60 Jct11 and access to the Salford Western Gateway link road.
Floor space current	25,000 sqm currently occupied in one unit.
Development Potential	Planning consent for c150,000 sqm of floor space, though with adjacent expansion land (not yet consented but allocated in GM's *Places for Everyone*) the site could potentially expand to around 470,000 sqm once fully developed.
Comments and Deliverability Potential	Expansion potential identified and allocated in the *Places for Everyone* Joint Development Plan (Allocation 29) for new-build logistics development, on condition that rail connection and canal berths are operational. Potentially a tri-modal distribution park given the development of a new container quay – with potential to be served by container services passing along the Manchester Ship Canal from the Port of Liverpool. Scheme focused (and ideally located) to provide very large plots for water and rail-served distribution centres serving the north west conurbations. Discussion currently ongoing with Network Rail concerning rail spur. Freight capacity on the Chat Moss Line may be limited in the short-term, and long-term could be influenced by Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR).

Parkside (Parkside East)

Description	Site has previously been proposed as a **Strategic Rail Freight Interchange**, most recently by *ProLogis*.
Rail and/or water connected	Site is located to the east of the M6 and south of the Chat Moss Railway Line. Site would be served from the adjacent Manchester-Liverpool Chat Moss railway line – W9 loading gauge. St Helens Local Plan (see below) also requires direct access to the WCML. Not water-connected.
Highway connections	Adjacent to M6 Jct 22.
Floor space current	Zero
Development Potential	124ha potentially available, providing c496,000 sqm
Comments and Deliverability Potential	Site is located in the Greenbelt, albeit the St Helens Local Plan 2020-2035 (submission draft, currently in examination) permits the development of a SRFI on the site with strict conditions (Parkside East, Policy LPA10). Note part of the Parkside East Local Plan site allocation is to the west of the M6 – intended for supporting railway infrastructure e.g. reception sidings *Parkside West* (former Parkside colliery site to the west of the M6) is allocated in St Helens Local Plan for non rail-served employment land (Policy LPA04). Given its size, any development would be classed as a NSIP under the Planning Act 2008, meaning it would require a Development Consent Order (DCO). A developer is understood to be currently examining options for the site. Freight capacity on the Chat Moss Line may be limited in the short-term, and long-term could be influenced by NPR. New or significantly upgraded motorway junction likely to be required for full scheme to provide sufficient capacity.

Mersey Multi-Modal Gateway

Description	An existing **Strategic Rail Freight Interchange**. Site owned by a collection of owners/developers, with strategic co-ordination and branding from Halton BC.
Rail and/or water connected	Intermodal rail terminal operated by Stobart Ports. Served from the WCML Liverpool branch – W12 loading gauge. Not water-connected (River Mersey adjacent but not navigable)
Highway connections	Adjacent to new Mersey Gateway bridge (short connections to the M56), and via A557 to M62
Floor space current	c74,000 sqm, including Tesco temperature controlled DC.
Development Potential	A further 45,000sqm (12ha) potentially available for development. Once developed, the site will have reached a 'fully built out' position with no further room for expansion (due to neighbouring land uses, bordering infrastructure and the River Mersey).
Comments and Deliverability Potential	An established SRFI development with excellent road and rail links, alongside an established intermodal terminal with a variety of daily services to/from container ports. Western part of the site, originally earmarked for warehousing, now occupied by the Alstom train refurbishment plant (and possible assembly of new trains).

Port of Liverpool

Description	A planned port-centric warehousing development by Peel Ports (Port of Liverpool) alongside Regent Road/Derby Road, Bootle.
Rail and/or water connected	Planned development would have direct access via private haul roads to the Port of Liverpool's RoRo and LoLo quays and intermodal rail terminal. W12 cleared rail access to national network.
Highway connections	Via A5036 to M57/M58 Switch Island junction.
Floor space current	Zero - currently a mixture of low-grade light industrial units, open storage and other property
Development Potential	Potential for 37ha (c180,000 sqm) of large scale warehouse floor space.
Comments and Deliverability Potential	Identified in the Peel Ports Master Plan for port-centric warehousing. Land is currently under different ownership (c50% under Peel Ports control), meaning it would potentially require some compulsory purchase to assemble a sufficient quantum of land under the port's control to deliver a scheme. Development would probably be dependent on additional highway capacity from M57/M58 interchange (either upgraded existing road or proposed new route via Rimrose Valley). Longer term opportunity, but otherwise a competitive location for national distribution focused on the receipt, storage and re-distribution of imported cargo.

Former Port Wirral Site

Description	Land adjacent to the Vauxhall/Opel car factory near Ellesmere Port.
Rail and/or water connected	Rail-served by means of an extension of the existing branch line serving Manisty Wharf to the south. Potential for new quays on the Manchester Ship Canal.
Highway connections	Adjacent to the M53 Jct 6
Floor space current	Zero
Development Potential	Potential for 60ha (c150,000sqm) of port-centric warehouse floor space
Comments and Deliverability Potential	Previously identified in the Peel Ports Master Plan for port-centric warehousing, in part to replace outdated facilities at Runcorn Docks (see below). However, Peel Land and Property are no longer promoting the site as a port development (Port Wirral). The quantum of warehousing that could have been developed and the subsequent traffic generation were not of the scale required to justify a new port development. The aspiration now is for freestanding B1, B2 and B8 employment uses with no port/Ship Canal interface. The site is therefore currently not available as an alternative to Port Warrington. Further, since the publication of the Master Plan, there is now on-going investment planned at Port Runcorn, meaning there is no longer a requirement to relocate activities from Runcorn (see below)

Former Port Cheshire Site

Description	Former Bridgewater papermill site adjacent to Manisty Wharf
Rail and/or water connected	Rail-served by means of the existing branch line serving Manisty Wharf Water-connected by means of an existing quay on the Manchester Ship Canal.
Highway connections	Adjacent to the M53 Jct 6
Floor space current	Zero
Development Potential	Potential for 19ha (c76,000sqm) of port-centric warehouse floor space.
Comments and Deliverability Potential	Identified in the Peel Ports Master Plan for port-centric warehousing. However, Peel Land and Property sold the freehold interest in the site to Firethorn Trust in November 2020. They are progressing a scheme for a road in/road out B8 logistics development. The quantum of warehousing that could have been developed and the subsequent traffic generation were not of the scale required to justify a new port development. The site is therefore currently not available as an alternative to Port Warrington..

Protos (Ince Marshes)

Description	A commercial development by Peel Environmental based around resource recovery/recycling and environmental technologies.
Rail and/or water connected	Planned berth on the Manchester Ship Canal which forms the northern boundary of the site. Planned rail-terminal from the Helsby-Ellesmere Port line, which passes to the south of the site (existing connection serving the adjacent fertiliser factory)
Highway connections	2km to M56 J14
Floor space current	Zero
Development Potential	54ha – mainly devoted to resource recovery/recycling and environmental technologies. Some limited B8 available.
Comments and Deliverability Potential	Identified in the Peel Ports Master Plan for resource recovery/recycling and environmental technologies. The site is therefore currently not available as an alternative to Port Warrington.

Port Runcorn

Description	Two small port and port-centric distribution facilities located on the Manchester Ship Canal at Runcorn.
Rail and/or water connected	Berths on the Manchester Ship Canal. Not rail-served.
Highway connections	Adjacent to and direct access to the Weston Point Expressway.
Floor space current	c10,000sqm across 16 small scale units
Development Potential	No further development potential at both sites. Both sites are bounded on one side by the Manchester Ship Canal, and by the INEOS Chemicals and Waste-Energy plant on the other.
Comments and Deliverability Potential	The facilities on this site are outdated and were due to be replaced in the long term by Port Wirral (see above). On-going investment is now planned at the site which will update and replace the existing facilities, thereby securing continued port use over the long term. However, there is no expansion land available and the planned investment will effectively be a like-for-like replacement (meaning it will not generate any additional or new port land/capacity) and it will continue to focus on specialist bulk commodities related to nearby manufacturing. The site is therefore currently not available as an alternative to Port Warrington.

Fiddlers Ferry

Description	Former Fiddlers Ferry Power Station.
Rail and/or water connected	Rail-served from the freight-only Warrington-Widnes line (connects to the WCML at Warrington Arpley and Ditton). Not water-connected (River Mersey adjacent but not navigable)
Highway connections	Adjacent to and direct access the new Mersey Gateway crossing, with access to the M56. Also access to the A557/M62 and A562
Floor space current	Zero
Development Potential	Potentially around 100ha available for development – c400,000sqm of B8 floor space
Comments and Deliverability Potential	Former coal-fired power station that has recently closed. Existing live rail connection form the adjacent Warrington-Widnes freight only. Site owned by SSE – potentially seeking development partners for re-development. Overall, a reasonably well located brownfield site with an existing live railway connection. One of the potential alignments being examined for NPR is along the current Warrington-Widnes freight only line, which if taken forward would most likely remove the opportunity for this site to be rail-served.

5.2 Conclusion and Land Use Implications

The Port Warrington site is unique in that it is the only location close to Warrington that can provide a tri-modal port and logistics facility. It will offer the ability to land cargo in the centre of the North West region by net-zero or low-carbon emission transport (rail and shipping).

From the review above and taking an optimistic view with regards to each schemes' deliverability in planning and practical terms (as described), the following sites appear to be 'available' as potential alternatives to Port Warrington:

- Port Salford (port and rail-served);
- Parkside East (rail-served only);
- 3MG (rail-served only);
- Port of Liverpool (port and rail-served); and
- Fiddlers Ferry (rail-served only).

The only site along the Mersey corridor, other than Port Warrington, that could provide additional (new) port capacity and is likely to be available over the medium term is *Port Salford*. The *Port of Liverpool* opportunity is a long-term ambition, it would be dependent on Peel Ports assembling the required quantum of land from non-port ownership and is dependent on highway capacity improvements that have yet to be formally authorised. *Parkside East* and *Fiddlers Ferry*, while potentially well located in rail terms, do not offer any new port capacity for the region. The 3MG development only has a small quantum of land available for warehouse development (after which the site will be fully built out) and is also not water-connected.

Sites at *Port Wirral*, *Port Cheshire* and *Ince Marshes*, which were previously being promoted as port-centric logistics developments, are no longer available to meet future demand. Developments planned at *Port Runcorn* are effectively refurbishments of existing (now obsolete) facilities which will not provide any new port or rail-served capacity into the North West region.

The table below subsequently compares the quantum of land likely to be available for port located or rail-served logistics developments (Port Warrington and the 'alternative sites' from the review above) with the forecast demand for new-build large-scale warehousing to 2037 along the Mersey corridor between the Liverpool City Region, Warrington and Greater Manchester (as described in Section 4). Overall, the potential pipeline of new port and rail-connected sites is likely to provide around 435ha of land (including Port Warrington) for development up to 2037 in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor. However, this takes an optimistic view with regards to each of the schemes being able to overcome any deliverability limitations and, for those requiring it, gaining planning consent.

Table 5.1: Potential Port and Water-Served Land in Pipeline and Forecast Demand to 2037

Site	Potential Floor Space Remaining or Available (000s sqm)	Land Remaining or Available (ha)
Port Salford	445	111
Parkside East	496	124
3MG	45	12
Port of Liverpool (Seaforth)	180	37
Fiddlers Ferry	400	100
Port Warrington	205	51
Total	***1,771***	***435***
Expected New-Build to 2037	**3,823**	**956**
Shortfall	**2,052**	**521**

It is clear that, even when the Port Warrington site is included alongside the potential 'alternative sites', there is still a shortfall of suitable land for sustainably located logistics development. Effectively, the only sites that can provide any new/additional port-centric logistics capacity (for tri-modal distribution) in the short to medium-term are at *Port Salford* and *Port Warrington*, with a total of land area of 162ha. The Port of Liverpool (Seaforth) is a long-term opportunity subject to the deliverability limitations outlined above.

Even if all the sites in Table 5.1 were built out to their full extent, there would still be a shortfall of around 521ha of land in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor up to 2037 for large-scale warehouse new-builds. Some of this future need could be developed by recycling existing or developing new road-only sites, however that would not meet the policy objectives as set out in Section 2. Only *Port Warrington* and *Port Salford* can be developed as both port located and rail-served logistics/distribution parks in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor in the short to medium term. This means that Port Warrington should be regarded as being a high priority for Warrington in its Local Plan.

6. TRAFFIC FORECASTS FOR PORT WARRINGTON

We have prepared traffic forecasts for the Port Warrington scheme for the 205,850sqm of modern warehouse floor space that is planned to be developed alongside the berths on the Manchester Ship Canal and the integral intermodal rail freight terminal capable of handling 750m long trains. As a tri-modal logistics facility, the on-site large-scale warehousing can be expected to both receive and re-distribute cargo using sea-going vessels, rail freight and road haulage. In addition, the on-site intermodal terminal would handle traffic for off-site distributors and shippers in the wider area and therefore allow these operators to use water or rail rather than road for longer distance hauls.

Table 6.1 below provides an estimate of the likely cargo throughput for the large-scale warehouses planned for the Port Warrington development.

Table 6.1: Port Warrington – Warehouse Throughput Assumptions and Traffic Forecasts

Floor space - ground level warehouse	205,850 sqm
85% - mean floor space utilisation at anyone time	174,973 sqm
Pallet density (pallets/sqm)	1.50
Pallets in stock at anyone time	262,459
Stock turns per annum	12.0
Pallets handled per annum	3,149,505
Pallets per HGV-equivalent unit inbound	25
Days per annum	300
HGV-equivalent units per annum inbound	125,980
HGV-equivalent units per day inbound	***420***

A road-only distribution site of the scale of Port Warrington, in the absence of sustainable distribution services, would therefore generate *420 loaded inbound HGV-equivalent units* and *420 loaded outbound HGV-equivalent units* per day. However, these figures do not account for the following:

- The use of the Manchester Ship Canal or rail freight to distribute cargo to and from Port Warrington;
- Off-site distributors and shippers transporting cargo via Port Warrington's intermodal terminal; and

- For cargo that does moves by road, a proportion of the HGVs arriving at the site with goods will leave empty (without a backload), and likewise some outbound flows by road transport will be undertaken by HGVs which arrived inbound to the site empty.

The total number of HGV trips on a daily basis will therefore be different to the figures quoted above. These three factors and their impact on daily HGV trip generation are addressed below.

On a conservative estimate, around 25% of the warehouse traffic can be expected to arrive or depart via the Manchester Ship Canal or an intermodal rail freight service (i.e. 105 HGV- equivalent units) rather than by road. This would consequently reduce loaded road freight movements into and out of the warehousing to 315 HGV-equivalent units per day (i.e. both directions).

This volume of rail freight traffic would amount to three daily trains arriving into the site, supplemented by container units delivered by barge/ship along the Manchester Ship Canal. In addition, further train movements could be handled to serve off-site distributors and shippers in the wider Warrington hinterland. We estimate that the equivalent of three trains per day associated with off-site shippers and distributors would be attracted to Port Warrington's intermodal terminal. Given an average of 35 containers per train, these three trains would lead to an additional 105 inbound HGV-equivalent units and 105 outbound HGV-equivalent units per day. The table below summarises non-HGV traffic movements that can be expected at Port Warrington.

Table 6.2: Manchester Ship Canal and Intermodal Rail Traffic

HGV Equivalent Units			
Ship Canal or Rail to/from Warehousing			
Loaded inbound	105	Empty Outbound	105
Empty inbound	105	Loaded outbound	105
Total inbound	210	Total outbound	210
Rail to/from off-site (by HGV)			
Loaded inbound	105	Loaded outbound	105
Empty inbound	105	Empty Outbound	105
Total inbound	210	Total outbound	210
TOTAL Inbound	**420**	**TOTAL Outbound**	**420**

Note that the Ship Canal and rail traffic to and from the warehousing will not touch the public road network. The off-site intermodal traffic is expected to arrive or depart by road. In terms of HGV trip

generation, it is assumed that loaded units arriving by rail will subsequently re-position back to the site empty (i.e. loaded out by HGV, empty return by HGV). Likewise, export traffic from the wider Warrington area will be served initially by an empty container departing the site and then returning loaded for departure by rail (i.e. empty out by HGV, loaded return by HGV).

For the remaining warehouse traffic that arrives or depart by road, we have assumed that:

- 25% of inbound loaded HGVs will collect a backload from the site before departing back to the national road network. 75% of inbound loaded HGVs will therefore depart empty back to the national road network; and
- The remaining requirement for loaded outbound HGV traffic is met from HGVs based at the site that will subsequently return empty (e.g. HGV delivering to another distribution centre or retail outlet then returning to site empty).

On that basis, the table below estimates daily HGV trips rates once backloads, empty re-position movements and off-site intermodal traffic is accounted for.

Table 6.3: Estimated Daily HGV Trip Generation at Port Warrington

HGV-Equivalent Units			
To/from Warehousing			
Loaded inbound	315	Empty Outbound	236
Empty inbound	236	Loaded outbound - backload	79
		Loaded outbound - empty in	236
Total inbound	*551*	*Total outbound*	*551*
Intermodal to/from off-site			
Loaded inbound	105	Loaded outbound	105
Empty inbound	105	Empty Outbound	105
Total inbound	*210*	*Total outbound*	*210*
TOTAL Inbound	**761**	**TOTAL Outbound**	**761**
Total two-way	**1,522**		

7. RAIL NETWORK CAPABILITY AND OPERATIONS

7.1 Introduction

Sites considered appropriate locations for being served by intermodal rail freight services are expected to meet the following three requirements, namely:

- Operationally flexible, including the ability to handle full length trains to and from multiple destinations. The NPS National Networks states that suitable sites are those which can handle at least 4 trains per day;
- A generous loading gauge. The NPS National Networks states that as a minimum connecting main lines should be cleared to the W8 loading gauge clearance; and
- Available freight capacity.

Each of these is considered in turn below. Overall, this high level assessment shows that the Port Warrington site can be connected to the national network relatively easily, and that the main line serving the site has excellent capability to handle intermodal rail freight. This section will also show how rail operations at Port Warrington can be carried out efficiently.

7.2 Railway Operations

The Port Warrington site would be served via a chord from the existing Manchester Ship Canal (MSC) exchange sidings. These are a set of 4 x 400m sidings located to the east of the West Coast Main Line (WCML) slow lines and immediately to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal. They are still 'live' i.e. connected to the national railway network, and have recently been used to store new passenger rolling stock for *Merseyrail* and *Trans-Pennine Express*. From the southern end of the MSC sidings, a vacant former track alignment (track bed minus railway lines, albeit currently partly overgrown with vegetation) passes under the WCML and into the Port Warrington site. A single-track chord from the southern end of the MSC sidings could therefore be constructed over the vacant alignment into the Port Warrington site to connect with the planned intermodal rail terminal. The site of the four MSC sidings could be used to create two 775m long reception sidings for trains prior to arrival from or departure onto the WCML via Arpley freight yard.

The MSC sidings themselves connect with the WCML slow lines to the south of Arpley freight yard. Trains arriving from the WCML south (i.e. from Crewe) cannot enter the MSC sidings directly as the turnout onto the main line faces northwards towards Arpley freight yard only. Consequently, trains arriving from the WCML south (probably the majority of trains) would initially need to depart the WCML and pass into Arpley freight yard, and then reverse in order to enter the MSC sidings prior to proceeding into the Port Warrington site. This could be done by the main line traction (running round on a parallel siding) or more likely using a terminal shunter locomotive, which would attach to the rear

of the train once stationary and subsequently haul it into the MSC sidings. This shunter would also be employed to move wagons between the MSC sidings and the Port Warrington site terminal. The restoration of the short rail link from the MSC sidings along with the construction of the two reception sidings (as described) would therefore allow Port Warrington to enjoy a direct connection to the WCML.

It follows that a relatively simple 750m long two track loading area could be used intensively as the intermodal terminal within the Port Warrington site. A fleet of four reach stackers or a pair of overhead cranes would be able to turn around a train carrying an average of 35 containers in 3 hours, allowing up to 6 trains per day to be handled.

7.3 Rail Network Capability

The physical definition of the maximum height and width in cross section of a railway line is called its *loading gauge*. The size of the loading gauge is determined by lineside features such as overbridges, tunnels, overhead power lines, signal gantries and platform edges. The physical dimensions of a rail freight wagon or intermodal wagon/intermodal unit combination must be within the loading gauge profile to ensure that it will not collide with any of these lineside features. The higher the bridges and tunnels, the larger the freight wagon that can be conveyed.

There are seven different loading gauge profiles on the British railway network. The least generous is the *W6a* profile, which can only accommodate so called conventional freight wagons (most bulk type wagons used to convey coal, minerals etc). The minimum requirement for intermodal traffic is the *W8* loading gauge profile. However, this profile can only accommodate standard height maritime containers (2.59m/8'6") on 1.0m deck-height platform wagons (the most common type used by most of the major traction operators) and not the high-cube units now used on most deep-sea and intra-European shipping routes (2.9m/9'6" tall).

The *W9* loading gauge is the minimum gauge which can accommodate these intermodal units, albeit only on certain types of platform wagon. The *W10/W12* loading gauges can accommodate the full range of units on 1.0m deck-height platform wagons. An appropriate site is therefore one where the adjoining railway lines and the approach routes are gauge cleared to at least W9, and preferably to W10 or W12. The WCML is currently cleared to the W10 loading gauge profile (a generous profile), meaning that Port Warrington will be able to handle the largest container units on standard platform wagons.

It is also worth noting that the WCML is already electrified. This would therefore allow the use of net-zero emission electric traction on Port Warrington intermodal services from day one.

7.4 Rail Network Capacity

Network capacity is a key issue; clearly there has to be sufficient train path capacity available so that freight train service providers can operate trains to serve rail-freight distribution parks. This includes key strategic trunk routes and final approach routes into a site. Commercially attractive sites are generally recognised to be those where the adjoining railway lines are able to provide at least one freight path per hour per direction during the daytime period; while freight paths are more easily available overnight, rail freight rolling stock needs to be utilised 24 hours per day in order for rail freight to be economic.

The traffic forecasts and site throughput described above implies a need for six paths per day per direction along the WCML. The great majority of arriving and departing trains will be to and from the south (i.e. Crewe), with perhaps one daily train serving Scotland. While a detailed pathing analysis would need to be undertaken to fully ascertain the availability of freight paths on the WCML, an initial high level assessment indicates that a need for 6 daily paths could be accommodated within the current Working Timetable. This is largely because trains have only to pass along a relatively short length of route (24km) between Acton Grange and Winsford before reaching the continuous four track section towards Crewe. For the first 10km south of Warrington there are currently only two passenger trains per hour per direction on the route; a similar position exists between Warrington and Wigan.

In contrast, the main route serving Trafford Park (from Crewe via Styal and Piccadilly) appears to be operating at capacity during daytime hours. The Manchester Recovery Task Force[6] has recently published its conclusions (during September 2021) with respect to train service patterns from December 2022 onwards along the Castlefield corridor. It provides for one daytime freight path per direction via Piccadilly/Oxford Road into Trafford Park. As these are already occupied in most hours, this implies no further growth opportunities into the Trafford Park terminals during daytime hours.

7.5 Potential Impact of HS2 and NPR

By means of Acts of Parliament, HS2 currently has planning powers to build the new high speed railway line to a point just south of the current Crewe station. Phase 1 from London Euston to Lichfield was authorised in 2017 (High Speed Rail London – West Midlands Act 2017), while more recently Phase 2a from Lichfield to Crewe gained consent in 2021 (HS2 Phase 2a West Midlands – Crewe Act 2021). Construction of Phase 1 has commenced, including preparatory works in London and tunnelling under the Chiltern hills. Both Phases are due to open sometime between 2029 and 2033.

[6] A cross industry study that has examined timetable and performance issues along the Castlefield corridor in central Manchester

It is also current Government policy for HS2 to be completed as far north as Manchester (from Crewe) and Leeds via the East Midlands (Phase 2b), albeit planning powers have yet to be sought or granted. The planned route alignment for Phase 2b is documented; it includes a new line from Crewe to Manchester via a new station close to Manchester Airport, with a branch leaving the line at Mere and crossing the Ship Canal before re-joining the WCML at Golborne, south of Wigan.

Train service specifications (those tested for the HS2 business case) currently suggest that, for Phase 1 and 2a, the Weaver Junction-Warrington section of the WCML would accommodate three trains per hour per direction (one more than at present). Following the completion of Phase 2b, this would reduce to one train per hour per direction (an hourly Warrington Bank Quay stopping service), with the remaining trains by-passing Warrington on the planned HS2 branch line to Golborne.

It is the current policy of *Transport for the North* and Government to complement HS2 by developing *'Northern Powerhouse Rail' (NPR)*. NPR is currently planned to combine new high speed railway lines and upgrades to existing routes in order to deliver faster train services connecting the main northern conurbations. Key conditional outputs include 4 trains per hour between Manchester and Liverpool with a transit time of 20 minutes.

NPR infrastructure options and planned route alignments are less developed than HS2. They were due to have been published by now as part of the DfT's Integrated Rail Plan (IRP), although this has been delayed with no confirmed date for publication. However, it is understood that one option under serious consideration is for a new high speed branch line leaving HS2 Phase 2b near High Legh (Cheshire) and then following an alignment along the former Lymm – Warrington railway line (which passes underneath Warrington Bank Quay station). West of Warrington, the NPR route to Liverpool would either follow a new alignment (across current open countryside) or by upgrading the existing line to Liverpool via Ditton and Allerton, including the current freight only line from Warrington to Widnes which serves Fiddlers Ferry. Fast Liverpool to Manchester trains would use this route, sharing HS2 infrastructure east of High Legh towards Manchester. Liverpool to London HS2 trains would also use this new NPR route to High Legh before joining HS2 southbound. Another option may be an upgraded Chat Moss main line, with four tracking and grade separation at key pinch points

Planning powers for NPR will be required but are currently some-way off. However, it is clear that if the option of upgrading the existing line to Liverpool via Ditton (and the Warrington to Widnes freight only line) is taken forward, it would most likely remove the opportunity for Fiddlers Ferry to be rail-served. Likewise an upgraded Chat Mos route would have an impact on both Port Salford and Parkside rail access. However, it is also clear that whichever NPR option is developed, they will not have an impact on Port Warrington's rail access, which will continue to be from the WCML as described (which will be relieved by HS2).

7.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, therefore, our initial view is that there is likely to be sufficient network capacity on the WCML to handle the forecast level of traffic (subject to more detailed pathing exercise). In the longer-term, the combined effect of HS2 Phase 2b and NPR, as described, will be to relieve the WCML north of Crewe of the fastest passenger train services between London and North West England (Liverpool, Wigan and Preston), and also to Scotland, as these are diverted on to HS2/NPR. This will have the consequence of generating additional capacity on the WCML north of Crewe, some of which could be utilised by additional freight services to the Warrington area and further north. Further, it can also been seen that Port Warrington will not impact on TfN's long-term NPR aspirations for faster east-west passenger services.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

We have completed a calculation of the potential environmental impact of Port Warrington due to its capability to receive and despatch unitised freight by rail and waterborne transport, rather than being a road-only facility.

This is based on the following assumptions:

- 105 units per day by rail in each direction rather than by road (see section 5 above);
- 300km of road haulage saved in each direction[7];

The calculation of the annual benefits for traffic that would be received and despatched by rail and which would be transferred directly to and from on-site distribution centres is as follows:

- HGV movements saved per annum = 105 HGVs x 2 directions x 300 days = 63,000 HGV movements
- HGV-km saved per annum = 63,000 HGV movements x 300km = 18,390,000 HGV-km

In addition, a weekly container shipping service between Liverpool and Port Warrington would provide the following savings in HGV-km compared to distribution via the Port of Liverpool (40km from Warrington):

- 300 TEU ship = 200 container capacity (1.5 TEU/container)
- Assuming 90% capacity = 180 containers x 2 = 360 containers loaded and unloaded
- Annual containers handled = 360 x 50 weeks = 18,000 containers per annum
- Annual HGV-km saved = 18,000 containers x 40km = 720,000 HGV-km per annum

As it is likely that there will be insufficient intermodal terminal capacity in the rest of the North West to accommodate additional intermodal trains for traffic with origins and destinations off-site, this would allow further HGV traffic to be accommodated on rail rather than by road and would therefore lead to further environmental benefits. These potential environmental benefits have been calculated below, based on the following assumptions:

- 105 units per day by rail in each direction rather than by road (see section 5 above);
- 300km of road haulage saved on the trunk haul in each direction;
- 50km of local haulage required between the Port Warrington site and off-site origin or destination.

[7] The Network Rail Freight Market Study (October 2013) stated that the average length of haul for intermodal rail freight was 'over 300km'.

The calculation of the annual benefits for traffic that would be received and despatched by rail and which would then be distributed to and from off-site origins and destinations is as follows:

- HGV movements saved per annum = 105 HGVs x 2 directions x 300 days = 63,000 HGV movements
- HGV-km saved per annum = 63,000 HGV movements x (300 - 50)km = 15,750,000 HGV km

In total the estimated annual environmental benefits from the Port Warrington site being a water- and rail-connected distribution park and removing HGVs from the national highways network would be an estimated 34.2 million HGV-km, which would equate to a reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions from these HGVs of about 30,345 tonnes per annum[8].

[8] Based on 2.511 kg of CO2e per litre of diesel and fuel consumption for an articulated HGV of 2.83 km/litre.

9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Port Warrington site has the potential to be modern inland port and logistics facility providing up to 205,850 sqm of distribution centre floor space. With its location on the northern side of the Manchester Ship Canal providing access via the River Mersey to the Port of Liverpool and the Irish Sea and its close proximity to the West Coast Main Line (WCML), which is the most important route for intermodal rail freight in Great Britain, Port Warrington offers the opportunity for the development of a tri-modal facility to serve the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor.

The planned Warrington Western Link will provide enhanced road access to the site both to the south towards the M56 and to the north towards the M62. In the event that the local authority-led scheme does not go ahead, there is existing road access to the south via Moore Lane and, with improvements, to the north via Forrest Way.

The existing marine infrastructure includes the Acton Grange berth that would be available for use by berth for coasters, barges and small container feeder ships, plus the potential for the development of a second berth to the west of the existing berth. A turning basin is proposed on the southern side of the canal so that vessels can turn and berth at Port Warrington ready to return towards Ellesmere Port and the River Mersey. Alternatively, ships could make a way-call at Port Warrington before proceeding on to facilities in Greater Manchester. The facilities would require a harbour crane to provide the flexibility to be able to load and discharge both containers and a variety of general cargo.

The rail freight infrastructure would consist of a connection on an existing alignment to the Manchester Ship Canal Exchange Sidings, with an on-site intermodal terminal consisting of two sidings and four reach stackers or two rail-mounted cranes for the loading and unloading of trains.

A review of potential port traffics shows that Port Warrington can act as an extension of the Port of Liverpool for port-centric logistics in the Warrington area, handling container traffic, dry bulk and construction materials and other general cargo (such as steel products and forest products) that would be transhipped at the Port of Liverpool and then transported along the Manchester Ship Canal on barges or small coastal and feeder container ships. The container services could be either to and from Port Warrington itself or a way-call en-route to other berths along the Ship Canal in Greater Manchester

The North West of England has 8.3 million square metres of large-scale warehousing, representing 16% of the total warehouse floor space in England and Wales, while the regional population is only 13% of the total. This indicates that the North West has both a national and a regional distribution role.

However, despite the region having a deep sea container port at the Port of Liverpool and the Manchester Ship Canal and the main British rail freight route (the WCML) is running through it, only 7% of the large scale warehousing is on a rail-connected site and only 2% is on a water-connected site. Government policy as set out in the National Policy Statement (NPS) for National Networks, the National Planning Policy Framework and the Logistics Growth Review and its 2014 Update and the work completed on the Transport for the North Freight and Logistics Report supports the development of strategic logistics facilities which are located on sites connected to the railway network, within ports or both.

There is a forecast need in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor for an estimated 956ha of land to cater for 3.8 million sqm of new build warehouses up to 2037. Overall, the potential pipeline of new port and rail-connected sites is likely to provide around 435ha of land (including Port Warrington) for development up to 2037 in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor. However, this takes an optimistic view with regards to each of the schemes being able to overcome any deliverability limitations and, for those requiring it, gaining planning consent.

Even if all the alternative sites identified were built out to their full extent, there would still be a shortfall of around 521ha of land in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor up to 2037 for large-scale warehouse new-builds. Some of this future need could be developed by recycling existing or developing new road-only sites, however that would not meet the policy and sustainability objectives as set out in Section 2.

The Port Warrington site is unique in that it is the only location close to Warrington that can provide a tri-modal port and logistics facility. It will offer the ability to land cargo in the centre of the North West region by net-zero or low-carbon emission transport (rail and shipping). Only Port Warrington and Port Salford can be developed as both inland port and rail-connected distribution parks in the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor in the short to medium term, which means that Port Warrington should be regarded as being a high priority for Warrington in its Local Plan.

The restoration of the short rail link from the Manchester Ship Canal Exchange Sidings that lie south of Arpley Yard allows Port Warrington to enjoy a direct connection to the West Coast Main Line and the use of those Exchange Sidings and the existing Arpley Yard further north to hold trains before and after loading. The intermodal terminal would be able to accommodate two sidings for 750 metre long intermodal trains.

The WCML is a W10 gauge cleared route, with the capability to accommodate 750 metre long intermodal rail freight services. Port Warrington will be able to handle the largest container units on standard platform wagons and at the most competitive length available on Network Rail's network.