



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

ST HELENS BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2020-2035

PARKSIDE STRATEGIC RAIL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE BACKGROUND PAPER

October 2020

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Background Paper is one of several that have been prepared by the Council. It will provide evidence for the forthcoming Examination in Public of the St Helens Borough Local Plan 2020-2035 (the SHBLP).
- 1.2 This Paper briefly summarises:
- background information about the Parkside site (see section 2);
 - the policy context and evidence base relevant to the Parkside site (see section 3);
 - the proposed approach to the Parkside site in the SHBLP (see section 4);
 - the strategic need for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) at Parkside (see section 5);
 - the deliverability of Parkside East (see section 6 and Appendix 2);
 - the latest position in relation to planning applications on Parkside (see section 7); and
 - the exceptional circumstances justifying the proposed approach to the Parkside site in the SHBLP (see section 8).
- 1.3 This Paper should be read in conjunction with other documents prepared by the Council. These include:
- the Council's background papers covering developing the strategy¹; climate change² and employment land³; (documents ref SD026; SD028; and SD022);
 - the Duty to Cooperate statement⁴ (document ref SD009); and
 - other evidence base documents including the Parkside Logistics and Rail Freight Interchange Study⁵ (August 2016).

¹ Developing the Spatial Strategy Background Paper (SD026)

² Climate Change Background Paper (SD028)

³ Employment Land Need and Supply Background Paper (SD022)

⁴ St Helens Local Plan 2020-2035, Duty to Cooperate Statement (SD009)

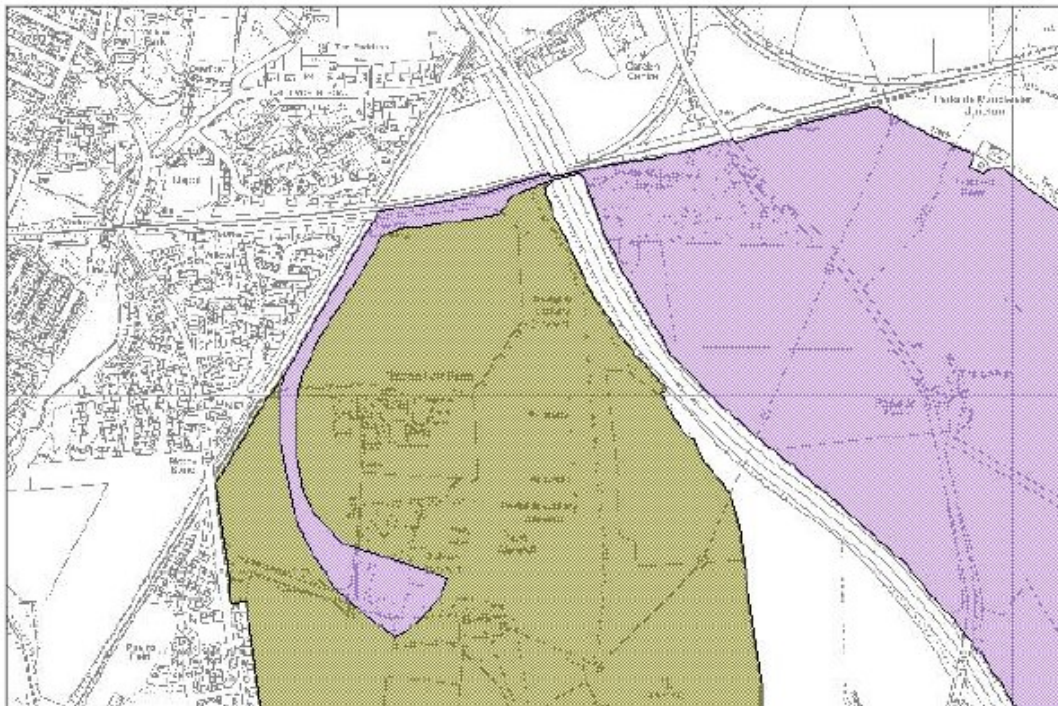
⁵ Parkside Logistics and Rail Freight Interchange Study (EMP005)

2. Background

- 2.1 The Parkside site is located midway between the cities of Manchester and Liverpool. The site is dissected by the M6 motorway, close to Junction 22 and the M6/M62 interchange at Junction 21a and is adjacent to the West Coast Mainline (WCML) and Liverpool to Manchester (Chat Moss) railway, both of which form core routes within the Government's Strategic (Rail) Freight Network (SFN).
- 2.2 The St Helens Core Strategy (2012) identified Parkside as a strategic location for a SRFI, and the SHBLP 2020-2035 proposes the allocation of land for a SRFI with an operational area of approximately 64.55ha (site 7EA) to the east of the M6, and 5.58ha to the west of the M6 (site 8EA). The site comprises two elements; Parkside East is the proposed location of the SRFI (together with other industrial and logistics uses), and Parkside West is a separate, though linked, proposed employment land allocation for logistics use, which will be served by road only, although it will likely accommodate a reception siding for incoming trains, which could in turn be linked to Parkside East. Both the West and East sites are located within the St Helens Green Belt, which links with the Green Belts of Warrington and Wigan.
- 2.3 Parkside West is 97.43ha in size and comprises:
 - the former Parkside Colliery, including existing areas of hard standing, the colliery spoil tips, associated settlement ponds and related former infrastructure; and
 - former agricultural land and Newton Park Farm in the west and north west of the site.
- 2.4 Parkside West is located on the south-eastern edge of Newton-le-Willows, approximately 1 km north of Winwick, which is in Warrington Council's administrative area, and 1.5 km south-west of Golborne, which is in Wigan Council's administrative area. The site ceased production in 1992 and all the pithead buildings and ancillary structures were subsequently demolished. The site has elements of both brownfield and greenfield land. There are two Grade II Listed Buildings and features of archaeological interest in the vicinity. The south western part of the site forms part of a Registered Battlefield – '*The Battle of Winwick*' which was designated in 2018.
- 2.5 Newton-le-Willows High Street and Willow Park Conservation Areas lie to the north of Parkside West on the A49. An Air Quality Management Area is in place along the M6 corridor and Newton-le-Willows High Street. The A49 Winwick Road is a busy road that runs between Junction 23 of the M6 to the north and Junction 9 of the M62 to the south. Residential development fronts the A49 and backs onto the site.
- 2.6 Parkside East is 124.55ha in size and comprises of predominately open farmland (mostly agricultural land of Grade 2 and 3a quality) and is on the opposite side of the M6 from the former colliery area at Parkside West and the built up area of Newton-le-Willows.

- 2.7 Following the decommissioning of Parkside colliery, there has been significant interest from both the private and public sector in bringing the Parkside site forward for logistics and distribution use including a SRFI.
- 2.8 In 2016 consultants AECOM were commissioned by St Helens Council to undertake the Parkside Logistics Rail Freight Interchange Study (2016). The Study concluded that there was sufficient demand from the industry to support a SRFI in the North West, with Parkside regarded as the best placed site to satisfy that need. It also concluded that eight trains per day could feasibly service by Parkside in the medium term and 12 trains in the longer term, with discussions with Network Rail and Transport for the North necessary in order to establish the viability of paths to forecast destinations, in a pre- and post-HS2 environment within the current and future passenger franchises.
- 2.9 The scheme concept set out in the AECOM Study (2016) is shown as Figure 1. The proposed approach to the Parkside site in the SHBLP is informed by the findings of the AECOM Study (2016). Parkside West is a proposed road based employment allocation (B8, B2 logistics) but could potentially be served from the SRFI by tractor units. Parkside East is a proposed allocation for a SRFI and / or for rail served employment development.

Figure 1: Parkside SRFI Site



- 2.10 Parkside West is owned and being promoted by Parkside Regeneration, a joint venture between commercial developers Langtree and St Helens Council (with the exception of Newton Park Farm which is not owned by Parkside Regeneration). Parkside East is under the control of developers iSec with the intention of developing a SRFI (incorporating a food manufacturing and distribution 'Super Hub') on the site. iSec are in advanced discussions with

one of the established rail freight operators in respect of the design of the rail freight interchange facilities on site (see Appendix 2 for further information).

- 2.11 There are currently two live planning applications on the Parkside site. Planning application P/2018/0048/OUP⁶ was submitted in January 2018 for a phase 1 logistics development on Parkside West (site 8EA). Planning application P/2018/0249/FUL was submitted in March 2018 for a single carriageway road referred to as the 'Parkside Link Road', which would link the A49 Winwick Road to the A579 Winwick Lane enabling access to Junction 22 of the M6. In May 2020, both planning applications were called-in for determination by the Secretary of State. A public inquiry in relation to the applications is likely to take place in early 2021. The site layouts for these schemes are shown in Appendix 1.

⁶ Section 7 of this Paper provides further information.

3. Policy Context and Evidence Base

- 3.1 The development of new rail-linked logistics development is strongly supported at a European, national, regional and local policy level. The following policy and evidence base documents have helped inform the proposed approach within the SHBLP with regards to the Parkside sites.

European Policy and Evidence Base

- 3.2 The White Paper 2011: Roadmap to a Single Transport Area – Towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system, European Commission, sets out the vision for transport in Europe over the next 40 years. The Commission sets out the following key goals to be achieved by 2050.
- Halve the use of ‘conventionally-fuelled’ vehicles in urban transport by 2030; phase them out in cities by 2050.
 - Achieve essentially CO2-free city logistics in major urban centres by 2030.
 - 30% of road freight over 300 km should shift to other modes such as rail or waterborne transport by 2030, increasing to more than 50% by 2050. This should be facilitated by efficient and green freight corridors and appropriate infrastructure developments.
 - Ensure that all core seaports are sufficiently connected to rail freight and, where possible, inland waterway systems.
 - Achieve a 60% overall reduction of transport emissions by the middle of the twenty first century.
- 3.3 The Combined Transport (CT) Directive (Council Directive 92/106/EEC) seeks to promote Combined Transport (i.e. intermodal) freight operations. As part of the process of updating the Directive, a 2014 study highlighted the need for better infrastructure, noting the problems of securing planning consent for new terminals.⁷
- 3.4 Whilst not all related directly to rail freight, there is a clear focus on rail freight as a key contributor to progress towards sustainable freight transport in Europe.
- 3.5 Although the UK is now in the process of leaving the EU, it is much too early to factor in any possible changes in policy. But it is likely that any UK Government will continue to work towards more sustainable transport, so the sentiment of this White Paper is still relevant.

⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/themes/strategies/studies/doc/2015-01-freight-logistics-lot2-combined-transport.pdf> (page 13)

National Planning Policy and Evidence Base

National Policy Statement for National Networks (2014)

- 3.6 The National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN) sets out Government policies for nationally significant rail and road infrastructure projects for England. It also forms the primary basis for making decisions on development consent applications for national networks Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).
- 3.7 NPSNN states that the Government believes that it is important to facilitate the development of the intermodal rail freight industry because the transfer of freight from road to rail has an important part to play in the low carbon economy and in helping to address climate change (Paragraph 2.53). For this reason, a network of SRFIs are needed across the regions, to serve regional, sub-regional and cross-regional markets. In all cases it is essential that these have good connectivity with the road and rail networks, in particular the strategic rail freight network (Paragraph 2.43).
- 3.8 Paragraph 2.56 of the NPSNN states that Government has concluded that there is “*a compelling need for an expanded network of SRFIs*” and notes that it is “*important that SRFIs are located near to the business markets they will serve - major urban centres or groups of centres - and are linked to key supply chain routes.*” Paragraph 2.56 of the NPSNN advises that, due to the locational and operational requirements of SRFIs, the number of locations suitable for this form of development will be limited.
- 3.9 Importantly, Paragraph 5.1.72 states that promoters of SRFIs “*may find that the only viable sites for meeting the need ... are on Green Belt land*”. This indicates the Government’s acknowledgement that, because SRFIs need to be located close to the markets that they are intended to serve and because major urban markets tend to be surrounded by Green Belt, such development may need to be accommodated on Green Belt sites.

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

- 3.10 An economic objective of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is to:
- “help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure”* (Paragraph 8).
- 3.11 Local Plans should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development (Paragraph 11), which means they should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area and provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses.
- 3.12 In plan making, the NPPF requires strategic policies in a Local Plan to make sufficient provision for employment and commercial development. Paragraph 23 states:

“Strategic policies should provide a clear strategy for bringing sufficient land forward, and at a sufficient rate, to address objectively assessed needs over the plan period, in line with the presumption of sustainable development.”

- 3.13 NPPF Paragraph 23 also confirms this should include planning for and allocating sufficient sites to deliver the strategic priorities of the area, except where needs can be met more appropriately through alternative mechanisms.

- 3.14 Paragraph 80 of the NPPF is clear that economic growth and productivity should be supported through Local Plan policies. Paragraph 80 states:

“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.”

- 3.15 Paragraph 81 specifically requires planning policies to:

“a) set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;

b) set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;

c) seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and

d) be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.”

- 3.16 The NPPF also requires planning policies to recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different employment sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.

- 3.17 Paragraph 104 states that planning policies should:

“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. In doing so they should take into account whether such development is likely to be a nationally significant infrastructure project and any relevant national policy statements.”

- 3.18 The NPPF promotes sustainable development and states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future, helping shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure (Paragraph 148).
- 3.19 Paragraph 5 states that the NPPF does not contain specific policies for nationally significant infrastructure projects. These are determined in accordance with the decision-making framework in the Planning Act 2008 (as amended) and relevant national policy statements for major infrastructure, as well as any other matters that are relevant (which may include the NPPF). The NPPF states that national policy statements form part of the overall framework of national planning policy and may be a material consideration in preparing plans and making decisions on planning applications.

Planning Practice Guidance, Employment Land Review Guidance – Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (July 2019)

- 3.20 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) gives specific recognition to the logistics sector, stating that:

“The logistics industry plays a critical role in enabling an efficient, sustainable and effective supply of goods for consumers and businesses, as well as contributing to local employment opportunities, and has distinct locational requirements that need to be considered in formulating planning policies (separately from those relating to general industrial land)” (031, Reference ID: 2a-031-20190722).

- 3.21 The PPG emphasises that:

“strategic facilities serving national or regional markets are likely to require significant amounts of land, good access to strategic transport networks, sufficient power capacity and access to appropriately skilled local labour” (031, Reference ID: 2a-031-20190722).

Future of Freight: Interim Report, National Infrastructure Commission (2018)

- 3.22 The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) in their published Future of Freight: Interim Report, looked closely at the role of local planning authorities in relation to freight and concluded that the current planning system

encourages local authorities to only plan for the parts of the freight system that they 'see' within their area. Current planning policy encourages neighbouring local planning authorities to agree and cooperate on 'strategic policies' and cross border issues, which can include housing, transport infrastructure and water supply, but there is limited precedent for freight.

- 3.23 The Report indicates that without better recognition of the value of freight in planning, the freight system will encounter more pinch points, restricting its capacity to operate efficiently and deliver goods in the most sustainable way possible. Therefore, the NIC are committed to explore in the next phase of their work how local planning authorities can develop and maintain a more robust evidence base on demand and supply for logistics land, and the steps that should be taken to maintain a suitable supply and correct an emerging undersupply issue.

Transport infrastructure for our global future: a study of England's port connectivity (2018)

- 3.24 The Department for Transport's Ports Connectivity Study examined port surface access and connectivity in England to identify improvements that support economic growth and help inform transport investment decisions. The Study makes the case for improved freight connectivity, including rail freight connections, to and from English ports. The Study concludes that improved rail and road links will provide more effective freight journeys between important economic areas and ports, which will increase productivity, lower costs and provide access to international markets.

Clean Growth Strategy (2017)

- 3.25 The Government's Clean Growth Strategy sets out how the Government is working to enable cost-effective options for shifting more freight from road to rail, including using low emission rail freight for deliveries into urban areas, with zero emission last mile deliveries.

Rail Freight Transport Strategy (2016)

- 3.26 In 2016 the Government published a dedicated Rail Freight Transport Strategy which was developed in collaboration with the rail freight industry and sets out a shared vision for the future of the sector. The Strategy outlines the Government's aim of promoting freight transport by rail in order to limit road congestion and reduce transport carbon emissions. The Strategy identifies four priority areas where further action by Government, industry and others could empower rail freight to achieve its potential: innovation and skills; network capacity; track access charging; and telling the story of rail freight. In assessing the key sectors in the rail freight market, the conclusion on intermodal freight (now the largest part of the rail freight market) is that the key constraint to unlocking potential in this sector is the availability / construction of suitable rail-connected terminal facilities including SRFI (page 21).

Regional Policy and Evidence Base

Transport for the North Strategic Transport Plan (2019)

- 3.27 The Transport for the North (TfN) Strategic Transport Plan seeks to overhaul northern transport infrastructure over the next 30 years, connecting the major cities and moving forward with its flagship project Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR). Alongside NPR another key project is the long term rail strategy which proposes investment in lines, stations, services and franchises to deliver greater connectivity, capacity and cost effectiveness.

Transport for the North Long Term Rail Strategy (2018)

- 3.28 The Transport for the North Long Term Rail Strategy sets out TfN's guiding principles for rail and is an integral part of the Strategic Transport Plan. It sets out why change is needed, what that change should be and how that change should be delivered, with an ambitious vision for the transformation of the North's rail network based on five themes. One of these themes is connectivity.
- 3.29 The connectivity theme seeks to see a step-change in connectivity including frequency and journey time improvements for both passenger services and freight, combined with better integration of services. The principal intervention within the next five year period for rail enhancements will be the Trans Pennine Route Upgrade, with improvements concentrated on the corridor between Manchester and Leeds. A relevant aim is W10/W12 gauge clearance and provision of one freight path per hour (in each direction) for freight services.
- 3.30 The Strategy indicates that HS2 will be transformational for the North of England and will free up much-needed capacity on the existing rail network for both passenger and freight services by allowing the existing West and East Coast Main Lines, and the Midland Main Line, to be used in different ways, growing the overall capability of the rail network to meet future need.
- 3.31 The Strategy indicates that where modal shift from road to rail may not currently be seen as economically viable, there is the opportunity to create the right conditions for a paradigm shift in the way that freight is viewed in the North. To achieve this, freight routes must be direct and not circuitous, which is a significant constraint at present. Freight routes and paths must be planned alongside passenger rail, rather than as an afterthought.
- 3.32 The Strategy also sets out the need for multimodal connectivity improvements and indicates there is a clear benefit in developing sites with multimodal access that can accommodate the efficient transfer of goods between modes for storage and onward distribution. Improving the strategic East-West, multimodal connectivity between the important economic centres, assets and ports within Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Sheffield City Region, East Riding and Hull and Humber, as well as cross-border

movements to the Midlands is a key aim for the Southern Pennines strategic development corridor.

Transport for the North – Northern Freight and Logistics Strategy Report (2016)

- 3.33 The Transport for the North – Northern Freight and Logistics Strategy Report was published in September 2016 and was designed to carry out a number of purposes including:
- reduce the cost of freight transport to both users and non-users (for example, reducing the environmental impacts of freight and logistics movements);
 - expand market share in the logistics sector; and
 - attract inward private sector investment to the Northern Powerhouse.
- 3.34 The Strategy has a strong focus on the increased use of rail freight through improved availability of train paths and development of rail freight interchanges to help achieve the goals of the strategy. The core of the strategy is as follows:
- the development of 50 hectares of rail and/or water connected Multimodal Distribution Parks (MDPs) per year, to be located at the edge of urban centres;
 - rail network upgrades to allow 20% longer freight trains to operate on a six day week basis, which will reduce unit costs through improved asset productivity;
 - the promotion of short-sea shipping (particularly for unitised freight) to bring cargo directly to Northern ports;
 - complementary land-side access improvements to ports to reduce local road congestion, most importantly along the route of the M62/M60 north of Manchester and into Hull and Liverpool; and
 - raising the quality of the environment to further promote the Northern economy.
- 3.35 The Strategy recognises a lack of capacity on the existing rail network in the North and that additional capacity is required along both north-south and east-west routes to help achieve the rail/port centric distribution outlined in the Strategy. The Strategy specifically recognises Parkside as a potential rail freight interchange site.

Former North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (2008)

- 3.36 Prior to the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies in July 2010, the North West RSS (2008) Policy RT8 provided strong regional policy support for the development of a SRFI at Parkside. It stated that plans and strategies should facilitate the transfer of freight from road to rail and /or water by the identification of sites for inter-modal freight terminals, adding that

consideration should be given to the allocation of land for inter-modal freight terminals in broad locations including Parkside.

- 3.37 The RSS indicated that if attempts to increase the volume of freight moved by rail or water in the region were not undertaken, then this could lead to a shortage of inter-modal freight terminals close to the major origins and destinations of freight in the North West.

Sub-Regional Planning and Evidence Base

Building Back Better – the Liverpool City Region Economic Recovery Plan (July 2020)

- 3.38 The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority's Economy Recovery Plan shows how economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic could be delivered, across four strategic themes. The four themes: the business ecosystem, people-focused recovery, place, and a green recovery are all underpinned by a tangible commitment to build back better.
- 3.39 In relation to the Green Recovery theme, the Plan indicates that the City Region's target date for reaching net carbon neutrality is 2040 and this sits within the UK's legal commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The Plan emphasises the urgent need to transition to a zero-carbon economy and indicates that this remains unchanged by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Draft Liverpool City Region Local Industrial Strategy (March 2020)

- 3.40 NPPF Paragraph 81a and the PPG place specific emphasis on the need to take account of policy and evidence contained in Local Industrial Strategies when setting out a clear economic vision in Local Plans. The LCR Draft Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), building on the UK Industrial Strategy (2017) identifies five foundations of productivity that require strengthening to unlock the full potential of opportunities that exist in the City Region. The LIS indicates that the full potential of the opportunities that exist in the LCR can only be unlocked if the foundations of the LCR economy are sufficiently strengthened. Performance gaps must be addressed in order to level-up with the rest of the UK economy and maximise the potential for transformation. These foundations include:
- the opportunity to turn potential into prosperity (people);
 - a dynamic business base creating opportunity (business environment); and
 - connecting all communities to opportunity (infrastructure).
- 3.41 The LIS states that delivering the infrastructure foundation includes supporting the clean growth of freight and logistics. The LIS indicates that given the LCR'S identified assets including the port, inland ports, Liverpool John Lennon Airport, the Manchester Ship Canal, proximity to national arterial road

networks, and the potential for a major intermodal freight interchange at Parkside, the LCR will continue to be a hub for freight and logistics.

- 3.42 Securing HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail is also identified as integral to delivering the infrastructure foundation. The LIS suggests that a Northern Powerhouse Rail would form a 'belt' between Liverpool / Manchester / Sheffield / Leeds / Hull, enabling increased service patterns and frequency, providing a stronger link to Manchester's international airport, and helping to ensure that the LCR is central to, and fully contributing towards, the success of the wider northern economy. Importantly for the proposed SRFI site at Parkside, the LIS states that this could also free up capacity for freight and logistics, bringing national benefits economically and environmentally.

Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA) (March 2018)

- 3.43 The main objective of the SHELMA was to provide a consistent joint evidence base for housing and employment land needs over the period to 2037 for the LCR and West Lancashire. The scope of the Assessment was to review:

- future economic performance, and the scale of growth in jobs to 2037;
- the objectively assessed need (OAN) for housing; and
- the need for B-class employment land.

- 3.44 The SHELMA identified a large-scale B8 land requirement of 308-397ha to 2037 for the LCR, though this was not disaggregated to the local authority level.

Liverpool City Region Assessment of the Supply of Large-Scale B8 Sites (June 2018)

- 3.45 The LCR Assessment of the Supply of Large-Scale B8 Sites report was prepared by a consultant team led by GL Hearn on behalf of the LCR authorities to assess sites for large scale logistics premises (defined as being over 9,000 sqm or 100,000 sqft). The report looked at two scenarios – a do minimum approach (current economic growth and committed transport investments) and a do something approach (substantial transport infrastructure investment including a Transport for the North Strategy).
- 3.46 The report included assessments of current and potential sites within the LCR that could accommodate large-scale logistics and warehousing uses. The potential sites were those that were known across the City Region as they have been in the planning pipeline for a long time (such as Parkside) or they benefit from a Local Plan allocation or a planning permission. This included four sites within St Helens:

- Parkside SRFI, (Local Plan site 8EA);

- Parkside West (Local Plan site 7EA);
 - Land to the North of Penny Lane, Haydock (Local Plan site 3EA – the site is now fully complete and operational); and
 - Land at Florida Farm North, Haydock (Local Plan site 2EA - the site is now fully complete and operational).
- 3.47 For the Parkside East (site 7EA) the assessment found that the site was a prime site within the City Region to support development of a new SRFI. The site was considered an attractive location for regional and national distribution activities and for large scale B8 and B2 uses. For the Parkside West site (site 8EA) the assessment found the site to be a prime site within the City Region providing potential for 63.65 ha of strategic B2 and B8 development at a location which provides excellent access to strategic road and rail networks.
- 3.48 From this analysis of the St Helens and other local authority area sites, the report estimated a total available land area that would be appropriate for large-scale warehouse uses. The report found that St Helens has the highest amount of available land in the LCR for B8 uses, comprising 45% of the Region's supply of B8 land. However, this total includes a number of sites which are proposed in emerging Local Plans but are currently under Green Belt designation (such as the Parkside sites).
- 3.49 The report looked at the demand and supply balance for strategic B8 land. The demand requirement⁸ to 2037 was estimated to be between 339ha (do minimum scenario) and 437ha (do something scenario). When considering available supply, this results in a requirement of a further 43.4-141.4ha of strategic B8 land by 2037.

Liverpool City Region SHELMA Areas of Search Assessment (August 2019, and Addendum Sheet, November 2019)

- 3.50 The LCR Areas of Search Assessment (August 2019) built on the work previously undertaken in the LCR Assessment of the Supply of Large-Scale B8 Sites (June 2018), by assessing sites that were not part of the 'committed supply' (sites within the planning pipeline such as Parkside or with allocations and planning permissions) that could be considered to provide further development potential for strategic B8 warehousing and distribution requirements.
- 3.51 The Areas of Search Assessment updated the committed supply position in the Assessment of the Supply of Large-Scale B8 Sites (June 2018), and indicates that if the supply of land likely to support strategic B8 development is extended to include sites as set out in the Table 3 of the Assessment (as corrected by the Addendum Sheet 2019), then the total supply increases to

⁸ The demand requirement is slightly higher than the LCR SHELMA (2018) indicated as it includes a 10% buffer to account for churn, flexibility, normal market vacancy and choice.

342.68ha (previously 295.6ha in the Assessment of Supply of Large-Scale B8 Sites, June 2018).

- 3.52 The Areas of Search Assessment establishes a residual over-supply of 3.68ha for the 'Do Minimum' scenario and a residual requirement of 94.32ha for the 'Do Something' scenario.
- 3.53 The Areas of Search Assessment then goes on to review several potential sites that could meet the residual requirement of 94.32ha. Table 8 of the Areas of Search Assessment summarises the findings of the assessment of these sites, and proposed SHBLP employment allocation sites 1EA (Omega South Western Extension), 5EA (Land to the West of Haydock Industrial Estate) and 6EA (Land west of Millfield Lane, south of Liverpool Road and north of Clipsley Brook, Haydock) totalling 60.2ha in are identified as sites that could help meet the residual requirement in the short term.

Liverpool City Region Freight and Logistics Strategy (2017)

- 3.54 The Freight and Logistics Strategy was prepared by Mott MacDonald and MDS Transmodal on behalf of Merseytravel and its partners, including the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The Strategy aims to:
- ensure the freight and logistics sector maximises its contribution towards achieving the economic development aspirations for the LCR, including creating additional GVA and employment opportunities; and
 - minimise, as far as possible, the environmental and social impacts of freight and logistics activities on local communities and business in the LCR and enhance the quality of life for residents.
- 3.55 The Strategy states that:
- “as the LCR is relatively peripheral for national distribution activity, it is only through the greater use of lower cost forms of freight transport (rail and waterborne) that the city region can secure additional market share. Limited road capacity and pressing concerns over air quality mean that in the longer term, there is a clear need to secure modal shift from road distribution to rail and waterways.”*
- 3.56 The first key 'package' of interventions identified by the Strategy is for the development of more MDPs and supporting infrastructure which will improve efficiencies and capacities of distribution. Potential locations identified for MDPs in the LCR, include Parkside, Knowsley Business Park, 3MG in Halton, Port Wirral, along the Manchester Ship Canal, and/or along the Fiddlers Ferry Line between Widnes and Warrington. Interventions which could be delivered as part of this package include:
- public sector support for the development of MDPs through the planning system. This could include support for the acquisition

and assembling of land, and / or entering into active partnerships with private parties to develop plans for the site;

- provision of new or enhanced link roads to facilitate suitable HGV access to the MDP. This could include the construction of new link roads, combined with capacity upgrades in the local area to accommodate the effects of increased HGV traffic; and
- provision of new rail connections to the MDP. This could include connections to the national network, reception lines and an intermodal terminal within the MDP.

- 3.57 The Strategy identifies three rail access options for Parkside: access onto the Chat Moss Line eastbound, west of the M6; access onto the Chat Moss Line westbound, west of the M6 and access onto the Chat Moss Line westbound, east of the M6.
- 3.58 The Strategy indicates that another key package of interventions will be around freeing up rail capacity on the network (east-west and north-south). This package focuses on delivering greater capacity for freight traffic on the rail network to and from the LCR, which will accommodate the anticipated demand from the private sector and deliver economic, environmental and decongestion benefits for the region. It consists of a combination of 'hard' rail infrastructure investments, and 'softer' measures which do not have a direct capital cost. These investments include securing additional paths for freight trains on the WCML. The Strategy indicates that the development of HS2 may provide some additional capacity in the longer term on the WCML, if it leads to a net reduction of passenger services on the existing tracks.
- 3.59 The Strategy indicates that a further effective local measure may be provided by Northern Powerhouse Rail providing a new high speed passenger link between Liverpool and Leeds, linking to HS2, which could further contribute to relieving the WCML north of Weaver Junction. The Strategy also indicates a need for two paths in each direction along the Chat Moss route. Similar to the situation on the WCML, the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail may provide some additional freight capacity in the longer term on trans-Pennine routes, if it leads to a net reduction of passenger services on the existing tracks.
- 3.60 Capital investment in support of optimisation measures could include grade separation at Earlestown West Junction (in St Helens) to allow freight to move between the Chat Moss line and the WCML without needing to cross other tracks.

Liverpool City Region Strategic Investment Fund (SIF)

- 3.61 In November 2018, the LCR Combined authority announced that they had approved £24 million funding for the Parkside Link Road scheme. The LCR Combined Authority approved the application for SIF, subject to conditions.

When making the announcement Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, said:

“The Combined Authority’s key priority is to drive economic prosperity for the whole city region and ensuring that we have the right transport infrastructure in place is absolutely vital. This new link road is a key element of the future economic development of St Helens, and the rest of the city region, which is why the Combined Authority was so keen to support it.”

- 3.62 The LCR Combined Authority SIF Appraisal Report – Full Business Case⁹, published at the time of the funding approval announcement concludes that:

“the Parkside Link Road project represents a rare opportunity to enable development and open up a strategic development site in an attractive market location with the (indirect) potential to create significant new floorspace, jobs, economic growth, attract investment, generate value and enhance movement on a regeneration site that has long been recognised as a strategic priority at the regional level.”

- 3.63 This confirms the very high level of policy support for the Parkside site.

A Transport Plan for Growth, Liverpool City Region (2015)

- 3.64 One of the five strategic projects at the heart of the Transport Plan for Growth is to create a freight and logistics hub. This project aims to put the City Region in the best place to respond to changes in the UK and international logistics market.
- 3.65 Wider strategic priorities are outlined with Freight and Logistics considered the most important. The Plan recognises that improving connectivity and capacity for freight on our road and rail networks opens up access to the Port of Liverpool from across the whole of the UK and is therefore fundamental to supporting the economic prosperity of the Region. There is also a strong emphasis on logistics and freight as a means of supporting and enhancing the economic output of the region.
- 3.66 Delivering the SUPERPORT Freight and Logistics Hub (developments, sites and premises) is a key priority. The Parkside site along with Knowsley Industrial Park and 3MG in Halton are recognised as key to achieving the SUPERPORT Hub.

⁹ The report is available to view here:

<https://moderngov.merseytravel.gov.uk/documents/s30573/Item%2011%20-%20Parkside%20-%20Appendix%20Two.pdf>

Liverpool City Region Growth Deal (2014)

- 3.67 The LCR Growth Deal was announced in July 2014 and allocated over £232m of resources to the area - with £35m of new funding confirmed for 2015/16 and £153.2m from 2016/17 to 2021. The Growth Deal focusses on transport and skills projects which will support the City Region's ambitions to create a freight and logistics hub serving an expanded Port of Liverpool.
- 3.68 The Growth Deal focuses on four priority areas. These include creating a LCR freight and logistics hub, a low carbon LCR and skills and business support to enable growth. Other transformational projects include LCR2Energy which will facilitate the transition of the City Region's energy requirements to a lower carbon supply and access to the Port of Liverpool.
- 3.69 The programme of projects aimed at creating a LCR Freight and Logistics Hub builds on the investment in Liverpool2 and the £600m investment in the Mersey Gateway. Both these projects complement the Atlantic Gateway initiative and the aspirations of the Cheshire and Warrington, and Greater Manchester LEPs for job creation resulting from expanding freight capacity.

Liverpool SUPERPORT Market Analysis Land and Property Report (2014)

- 3.70 The market analysis for land and property in relation to the Liverpool SUPERPORT, is set out in the Liverpool SUPERPORT Market Analysis Land and Property Report (2014), which outlines a minimum land supply of 634ha over the next 20 years, split across logistics (418 ha) and manufacturing use (216 ha). Factoring in a 25% headroom in supply, to allow for client choice etc. to enable the market to function properly this would inflate the totals required to 793 ha for logistics (522 ha) and manufacturing use (271 ha) overall.
- 3.71 As part of the market analysis for land and property a number of current and potential sites were identified that are capable of addressing the specific need for logistics facilities in the LCR. A SRFI at the Parkside is identified as a key project if the SUPERPORT is to be successfully delivered.

Local Policy and Evidence Base

St Helens Local Plan Core Strategy (2012)

- 3.72 The St Helens Local Plan Core Strategy forms part of the existing development plan for St Helens. Policy CSS1: Overall Spatial Strategy, identifies an area of land principally based on the former Parkside Colliery as a strategic location for a SRFI subject to an appropriate scheme being delivered on the site.

3.73 Policy CAS 3.2: Development of a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) at the former Parkside Colliery, identifies the former Parkside colliery as a location for a SRFI and sets out how the Council will support development of the site as a SRFI, provided a number of criteria are met. The Policy seeks to facilitate the transfer of freight between road and rail by making best use of Parkside's unique locational advantages in terms of road and rail infrastructure. It identifies the appropriate scale of development, outlining an appropriate phased release of land and defines criteria which a SRFI proposal will need to satisfy to be considered suitable. The Policy recognises that for operational, viability and commercial reasons a larger area of land extending to the east of the M6 motorway may also be required to accommodate an enlarged SRFI.

3.74 Figure 2 shows a very basic indicative layout of the SRFI from the Core Strategy.

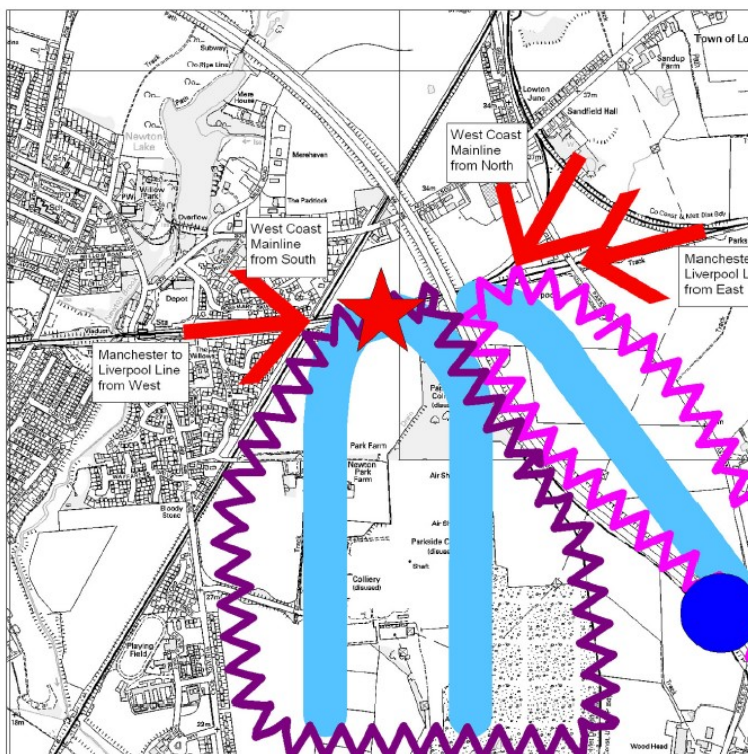


Figure 2: St Helens Core Strategy (2012) Indicative SRFI Layout

3.75 St Helens Council recognised that road access via the A49 would not be acceptable as the main access to the SRFI. The Policy indicated that the delivery of an acceptable SRFI at Parkside would be dependent on a suitable scheme being agreed by the Highways England and St Helens Council, that would provide appropriate infrastructure to mitigate local and wider off-site traffic impacts of the SRFI.

Parkside SRFI Evidence Base Background Paper (January 2010)

- 3.76 As part of the evidence base to inform the Core Strategy, St Helens Council appointed Scott Wilson (now AECOM) and Atkins to carry out a study into the development of a SRFI at the former Parkside colliery in order to inform and support the identification of the site as a strategic location for a SRFI in the St Helens Local Plan Core Strategy (2012).
- 3.77 The Study concluded that a SRFI at Parkside would be of significant importance not just for St Helens but also at a regional, sub-regional and national level and would help deliver an essential component of central Government's strategy for the transfer of freight from road to rail and was thus compliant with national policy. The Study identified likely significant beneficial impacts in respect of the transport network, with a reduction in CO2 emissions arising from the transfer of freight from road to rail and the significant, much needed, employment opportunities likely to be generated. The Study also indicated that a SRFI at Parkside is deliverable in operational and technical terms and measures up well against the criteria identified by the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) in its SRFI Policy.
- 3.78 The Study highlighted a number of economic viability issues and risks in delivering a SRFI at Parkside, including the cost of providing up-front infrastructure including a new motorway junction and M6 hard shoulder running, and that in the short term the Parkside site would be competing with interchange terminals at Port Salford and 3MG at Ditton.

St Helens Allocations Local Plan – Economic Evidence Base Paper (2015)

- 3.79 The Allocations Local Plan Economic Evidence Base Paper (2015) prepared by consultants AECOM and DTZ provides an expert view of market demand for employment land in St Helens. The Paper demonstrates strong recent demand for modern large scale logistics development in the North West, particularly over 100,000 square feet. SuperPort is identified as a project that will increase the demand for large logistics and manufacturing space in the Borough. The Paper concludes that large scale logistics is the most active market in the region and a particular opportunity for St Helens given its location straddling the M6.
- 3.80 The Paper identifies a number of key locational and site specific criteria for large scale distribution uses (300,000 square feet) including a minimum site size of 5ha and a drive time to motorway junctions of 10 minutes or less. The Paper concludes none of the sites identified in the evidence base that supported the St Helens Core Strategy (2012) as suitable for large scale distribution and manufacturing uses, satisfy the criteria now suggested as being preferred by the market for large scale uses. Consequently, there is currently zero provision of suitable land for large scale distribution uses within the Borough's identified employment land supply. This shortage of available land to build large distribution facilities has meant that in recent years, when

demand for such premises has been high, occupiers have had to locate elsewhere.

St Helens Employment Land Needs Study (2015)

- 3.81 The St Helens Employment Land Needs Study (ELNS) prepared by BE Group assessed the quantitative employment land need in St Helens between 2012 and 2037. The Study reviewed the local commercial property market and the socio-economic characteristics of St Helens and consulted directly with local businesses through one-on-one interviews and a telephone survey. The data gathering informed the forecasting of the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for employment land to 2037, which was assessed using three approaches – historic land take-up, jobs forecast and residential labour force projections. The historic land take-up was assessed to be the most appropriate approach for St Helens. Additional to a baseline general employment land needs forecast, an assessment of the additional demand due to major employment projects in the region, including the Parkside SRFI and SuperPort Liverpool, as well as the strong logistics market, was undertaken. The OAN, including the additional demand, was forecast to be 177-214 ha to 2037.
- 3.82 The ELNS was a demand side assessment and did not fully assess the supply of available employment land in St Helens. However, in the course of the Study it was identified that there was a lack of large scale, strategic sites in the LCR appropriate for logistics units. Furthermore, recent take-up of employment land in St Helens appeared to be constrained by lack of local supply, limiting take-up in the 2012-15 time period.
- 3.83 The ELNS notes that major employment facilities, including logistics, require large unconstrained sites which allow for 24-hour operational close to the strategic road network and preferably with strong links to major port facilities. The ELNS found that St Helens' location on the M6 and M62 motorways means that it is ideally positioned to provide a critical role in the North West large-scale logistics and distribution sector. The ELNS indicates whilst traditionally St Helens has been a manufacturing centre, with the largest consumers of land being B2 (general industrial) operations, it is likely that the mix of uses will change during the Plan period, with a strong shift to B8 (storage and distribution) uses. The Study indicated that Parkside would be an ideal location for a multi-modal freight interchange.
- 3.84 The key conclusions of that study can be summarised as follows:
- warehousing and the logistics market are performing strongly with further demand for growth in the regional market, focusing particularly on the motorway corridors. The logistics sector, particularly large-scale major projects, will be a key driver of growth but with some growth also expected in manufacturing;

- large-scale warehousing market has substantial land requirements across the Liverpool City Region, and St Helens could play a significant role in the provision of such land, especially given its proximity to the motorway network and the employment development around the former Parkside colliery (including a SRFI); and
- notwithstanding the high-level of demand, the development of large logistics space has been constrained over recent years by a shortage of supply in high quality, large sites with excellent access to the motorway network and with planning support. Removal of these land supply constraints has / will generate renewed interest from occupiers for strategic locations in St Helens.

St Helens Employment Land Needs Study Addendum Report (2019)

- 3.85 This Report was prepared by BE Group as an addendum to the main ELNS (2015) and should be read in conjunction with the earlier document. The Addendum Report was commissioned to assess whether the OAN was still valid in light of further information available since 2015. It also provided further information on the likely ultimate job levels on the proposed employment allocations and potential job growth trajectories and where the additional labour to fill these jobs might emerge from.
- 3.86 The OAN was revised upwards, recognising the continued strength of the logistics sector and interest in and around St Helens, particularly for regionally significant, strategic sites. The OAN range was identified as 190-239 ha (from 2012 to 2037).

Parkside Logistics and Rail Freight Interchange Study (2016)

- 3.87 The Parkside Logistics and Rail Freight Interchange Study prepared by AECOM and Cushman & Wakefield investigated delivery options for road and rail-linked logistics development on land at Parkside East and West. It confirmed, having regard to the results of consultation with relevant industry stakeholders, that there is a clear demand for a new SRFI in the North West. Due to its geographical location and specific characteristics the Study found that Parkside is uniquely placed to satisfy this demand. The opportunities for rail access from the site are considered to be second to none in the North West, with access being easily achievable to both the line the WCML and to the East-West ('Chat Moss') line between Liverpool and Manchester. This will allow train movements to / from the north, south, east and west to be catered for at the site.
- 3.88 The Study also identified that the development of a SRFI at Parkside would bring substantial benefits in terms of modal shift of freight movement (from road to rail) and therefore of reducing carbon emissions, when compared with the development of purely road based logistics uses of an equivalent scale.

- 3.89 In comparison to other current and potential SRFI sites, the Parkside site scores well on investment criteria metrics. Based on available evidence, the Study indicates that the Parkside site could viably deliver a medium (8 trains per day) to large (12 trains per day) facility. The Study recommends that consideration is given to the modification of Core Strategy Policy CAS3.2 to provide a more flexible policy position to support a deliverable and viable SRFI scheme. The Study concludes that to deliver a viable SRFI at Parkside, land on both the west and east side of the M6 must be allocated for the SRFI use and its associated rail infrastructure.

St Helens Council Plan 2018-2020 (2018)

- 3.90 St Helens Council Plan 2018/2020 is the Council's current corporate Plan. The Council Plan identifies high levels of worklessness in the Borough as a key challenge, with lower numbers of people in work, higher numbers of people on out of work benefits and less economic activity than the national average. A key challenge is low attainment and skill levels, as although having shown improvement, school attainment and adult skill levels lag behind the national averages, particularly higher level skills for specialist sectors.
- 3.91 The Council Plan is structured around three key ambitions, one of which is to create a '*Better Place*'. Growing the Economy is identified as one of four Borough level strategic objectives, which can help deliver this key ambition.
- 3.92 The Council Plan sets a number of ambitions relevant to employment land and the Local Plan. The Council's ambition is for a strong, well connected and sustainable St Helens to prosper at the centre of a northern economic powerhouse. The Plan seeks to implement an approach to promoting greater economic development activity and growth within the Borough. The adoption of a new Local Plan that establishes the Borough's future planning priorities for the next 15 years and allocates sites for housing, employment, retail and green space development is identified as being key to meeting the Borough's strategic objectives.
- 3.93 The Council Plan identifies ways it will deliver the strategic objectives. Those relevant to employment land and economic growth include:
- a growth focussed planning and development service with landowners and developers to increase economic development, growth and investment;
 - promote the Borough as a northern hub for logistics, maximising the potential of the M6 growth corridor, the immediate focus of which includes the development of Parkside strategic employment site;
 - successfully deliver the £4.9 million 'Ways to Work' programme to reduce worklessness, in particular youth unemployment,

engaging over 3,700 people and creating over 800 jobs through a series of apprenticeship and employment support schemes; and

- work collaboratively to maximise the Borough's transportation assets and further establish St Helens reputation as a well-connected location for national road and rail, whilst delivering a safe and sustainable transport offer. Key projects to be delivered include access to Parkside, national road network improvement to the M6 and A580, the redevelopment of Newton-le-Willows rail station and improved accessibility to the Town Centre.

4. St Helens Borough Local Plan Proposed Approach

- 4.1 SHBLP Policy LPA 04: A Strong and Sustainable Economy, allocates Parkside West (site 8EA) for 79.57ha of employment land for B8 and B2 uses. A further 5.58ha of land is included at Parkside West to facilitate the provision of rail access to Parkside East (site 7EA). 12.1ha of land occupied by a spoil heap is not considered developable and is excluded from the proposed employment site area at Parkside West.
- 4.2 Parkside East (site 7EA) is subject to its own policy: LPA10: Parkside East. Policy LPA10 establishes firstly that the Parkside East site is suitable for use as a SRFI or for other rail served employment uses. It also indicates that (to ensure a suitably flexible approach to the delivery of the site) part of the site (up to 64.55 ha as set out in Policy LPA04) could be developed for non-rail served employment uses, if they bring significant inward investment and / or local employment and training opportunities, and are of a layout and scale that would not prejudice the ability to develop an effectively laid out SRFI or other rail served employment development on at least 60 has of the site, at any time in the future. This approach is justified by the unique combination of locational advantages of this site, including its ready accessibility to both the west coast and east-west ('Chat Moss') rail lines and to the motorway network.
- 4.3 With a gross area of 124.55ha Parkside East is considered sufficiently large enough to accommodate other forms of B2 and B8 employment development on part of the site. However, as stated above, for such uses to be accepted LPA10 states that it must be demonstrated that the layout of the site as a whole would enable the effective development of a nationally significant SRFI or other form(s) of major rail-enabled employment use(s) on at least 60ha of the site. The figure of 60 hectares equates to the threshold above which a SRFI use is identified as being 'nationally significant' under the Planning Act 2008.
- 4.4 As set out in the reasoned justification to Policy LPA10, the strategic location of the Parkside East site next to major north-south and east-west rail routes also makes it attractive to a range of rail-enabled uses such as the manufacture and maintenance of rolling stock, and other industrial uses that require access to rail to serve their markets. Policy LPA10 indicates that the Parkside East site will be considered suitable in principle for these uses provided they bring significant inward investment and / or local employment and training opportunities, the benefits of which would have to outweigh any impact that the proposal would have on the scope to develop an SRFI.
- 4.5 Policy LPA10 sets out robust justification for removing the Parkside East site from the Green Belt. It makes clear that the site strongly supports the Government's aims of building a robust northern economy, promoting the use of the national rail infrastructure, and reducing carbon emissions and congestion by limiting freight movement by road. There are also specific locational requirements for an SRFI, particularly the need for rail and strategic

road connectivity, which prevents the identification of any reasonable alternative in the Borough outside of the Green Belt. In combination with the Parkside West site (8EA), the Parkside East site (7EA) is identified as providing the single largest economic development opportunity in the Borough.

- 4.6 The Parkside sites are the largest of the proposed site allocations for employment development in the SHBLP. The Council consider these sites to be capable of providing transformational employment opportunities that will make a major contribution to the economic development of St Helens, the LCR and beyond. Part 3 of Policy LPA10 sets out what proposals for development on Parkside East will be required to demonstrate, including specific masterplanning requirements, access requirements (mitigating any adverse impacts on the local road network), minimising impacts on close by residential development and provide training schemes to increase the opportunity for the local population to obtain access to and employment at the site.

St Helens Local Plan Green Belt Review (2018)¹⁰

- 4.7 As set out in the Green Belt Review 2018 and other background papers produced in support of the SHBLP¹¹, St Helens Borough has an identified shortfall of urban land supply to meet housing and economic development needs. For this reason, a review of the Borough's Green Belt has been undertaken as part of the plan-making process for the SHBLP.
- 4.8 The methodology utilised in the Green Belt Review includes a 'sieving' process in which those parcels of Green Belt which are assessed as making a 'high' or 'very high' contribution to selected Green Belt purposes (as set out in the NPPF) are discounted at an early stage (at stage 1B) from consideration at later stages (stages 2 and 3) for release from the Green Belt. There are however exceptions to this approach. Whilst the Green Belt Review acknowledged that if Parkside East parcel GBP_039 (land east of M6 and north of A579 Winwick Lane) was to be developed there would be a high impact on the Green Belt, taking into consideration the scope of the site to accommodate a SRFI and the benefits that could result from this, the Green Belt Review carried forward parcel GBP_039 to Stage 2 notwithstanding its 'high' score at Stage 1B.¹²

¹⁰ St. Helens Borough Local Plan 2020 - 2035 Green Belt Review 2018 (SD020).

¹¹ See Developing the Strategy Background Paper (SD026) and Employment Land Need and Supply Background Paper (SD022) for more information.

¹² Given the strong evidence of developer interest and the sub-regional demand for logistics development, Parcels GBP_033 (land to the east of the M6, Junction 23) and GBP_036 (Land south of A580 East Lancashire Road and south east of M6 Junction 23) located on the east side of the M6 were also carried forward to Stage 2 notwithstanding their 'high' score at Stage 1B.

- 4.9 As evidenced in the Green Belt Review, it is accepted that the development of Parkside East (site 7EA) for a SRFI (or indeed most other employment uses) would have a substantial impact in terms of the purposes of Green Belt land stated in paragraph 134 of the NPPF, particularly in respect of purpose a: *“to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas”* and purpose c: *“to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment”*. However, as set out in the reasoned justification to Policy LPA10 and in section 8 of this Paper, there are considered to be exceptional circumstances justifying the release of the Parkside East (and West) site from the Green Belt that clearly outweigh the likely harm to the Green Belt.

Cooperation with neighboring authorities and stakeholders

- 4.10 It is recognised that the development of both the Parkside West and Parkside East sites could impact on key infrastructure within Warrington and potentially in Wigan too, including the local and strategic highway network. Indeed, the application site for the current planning allocation for Parkside Link Road lies within the administrative areas of both St Helens and Warrington. As set out in the Warrington Borough Council Draft Statement of Common Ground, St Helens Council, Warrington Council and Wigan Council have all agreed to work together, in liaison with Highways England, to consider any cross boundary infrastructure or other issues related to the development of the Parkside sites.¹³

Differences between the Core Strategy and proposed SHBLP Policy Position for Parkside

- 4.11 The market for employment land has changed significantly since the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2012 and the current evidence base which supports the SHBLP, identifies a substantially greater need for employment development in the Borough than the evidence base informing the Core Strategy.
- 4.12 The proposed policy approach for Parkside in the SHBLP differs to the existing Core Strategy policies. Policy CAS 3.2 required Parkside West to be developed first before development on Parkside East would be supported. Policy CAS 3.2 also required it to be proven that a SRFI is not deliverable without land on Parkside East, for development on Parkside East to be supported.
- 4.13 The approach in the SHBLP builds on the findings of the AECOM Parkside and Logistics Study (2016) which found that the Parkside site could support a large scale development (12 trains a day) by utilisation of the eastern side of the site, and that the eastern side could be used for the core rail freight

¹³ Please see The Warrington Borough Council Draft Statement of Common Ground 2019 (SD012), (see agreement points 9, 10 and 11 on page 14 and 16) and the St Helens Local Plan 2020 – 2035 Duty to Cooperate Statement (SD009).

terminal or additional intermodal sidings. The Study envisaged a scenario, whereas a first phase, development would commence on the western side accessed by road, with subsequent phases having to have rail access. The Study recommended consideration should be given to the modification of Core Strategy Policy CAS 3.2 to provide a more flexible policy position to support a viable and deliverable SRFI scheme to come forward. The Study shows that a SRFI on the east of the M6 appears to be the most likely form of SRFI to come forward.

- 4.14 The approach in the SHBLP reflects the desire by the Council to provide sufficient flexibility to allow a rail served employment development to come forward on the site, such as a manufacturing scheme should it represent a transformational opportunity for the Borough.
- 4.15 In light of the above factors, unlike existing Core Strategy Policy CAS 3.2, the proposed approach in the SHBLP does not require a sequential approach to the development of the Parkside sites. The approach in the SHBLP is to allocate Parkside West for B2 and B8 employment uses and to allocate Parkside East for a SRFI, but also provide suitable flexibility to allow other rail served employment uses within the site and non-rail served employment uses subject to conformity with Policy LPA10. Non-rail served employment uses will only be permitted if they bring significant inward investment and / or local employment and training opportunities, and are of a layout and scale that would not prejudice the ability to develop an effectively laid out SRFI or other rail served employment development on at least 60 hectares of the site, at any time in the future.
- 4.16 The proposed site area of 124.55ha for Parkside East in the SHBLP is larger than the indicative 70ha outlined as potential additional operational land on Parkside East in the Core Strategy.

5. Strategic Need for a SRFI

- 5.1 As set out in section 3 of this Paper the policy support for a SRFI at Parkside is clear at the European, national, regional, sub-regional and local scale. The Government's NPSNN recognises that there is a 'compelling need' for an expanded network of SRFIs. According to the Government, this reflects several key drivers including the changing needs of the logistics sector, rail freight growth, the environmental advantages of rail freight and the economic and employment benefits that SRFIs can generate. Importantly, the Parkside East site meets the criteria for function, transport links, locational requirement, scale and design of an SRFI as set out in paragraphs 4.83 – 4.89 of the NPSNN.
- 5.2 As set out in this Paper and in the Market Demand and Supply Assessment in the AECOM Study (2016) which included a review of relevant freight demand forecasts, it is clear there is a long-established and unmet need for a SRFI that would serve the needs of the LCR and wider North West. The evidence on take-up of large warehousing in the Borough and the wider region, the findings of the ELNS (2016 and Addendum Report 2019) and the LCR SHELMA assessment of how much land is required to meet the LCR's strategic B8 needs, demonstrate a significant level of need for additional logistics floorspace in the City Region and for rail linked floorspace to meet the needs of the sector. Parkside is clearly a key strategic location for the LCR's freight and logistics sector and the wider North West, because of its unique location on the doorstep of the WCML, Chat Moss Line, M6 and M62 and its close proximity to the Port of Liverpool.
- 5.3 Originally identified in the 2014 Liverpool City Region Growth Plan as one of a select few multi-phase investment sites, the 2016 updated Growth Strategy continues to highlight Parkside as a key project in supporting the Liverpool City Region Freight and Logistics Hub as well as delivering SuperPort. The LCR Freight and Logistics Strategy (2017) is highly supportive of multi-modal distribution parks (MDPs) and Parkside is named as a potential location for such an MDP. Likewise, the Transport for the North Freight and Logistics Report (2016) specifically names Parkside as a suitable site for a SRFI.
- 5.4 It is clear from the strategic context of Northern Powerhouse, the LCR Growth Plan and Covid-19 recovery and the national and City Region Industrial Strategies, that Parkside has the potential to support inward investment and new growth sectors (such as low carbon and clean growth) while also supporting the Port of Liverpool (which serves a transatlantic market and acts as an Irish Sea hub). The Parkside site also presents a unique opportunity to provide a modern facility to serve the movement of freight from southern ports for certain deep sea markets not served by Liverpool.
- 5.5 The strategic case for a SRFI at Parkside remains strong, demonstrating excellent strategic fit with a number of local, sub-regional, regional and national strategies for both transport and economic growth.

6. Deliverability of Parkside East

- 6.1 The deliverability of both Parkside West (site 8EA) and Parkside East (site 7EA) was assessed in the St Helens Green Belt Review 2018. This deliverability assessment indicated that there are no fundamental constraints to delivery of the sites in terms of land availability, environmental capacity or infrastructure capacity constraints. The Council consider that the allocation of Parkside East for an SRFI is deliverable and sound in policy terms. However, given the unique infrastructure requirements of a SRFI it is necessary to consider the deliverability of the site in more detail, particularly in relation to rail capacity, rail connection and viability.

Planning History

- 6.2 The following planning history is relevant to the Parkside sites:
- A hybrid planning application was submitted by Railtrack in August 2001 for a rail freight distribution facility comprising the: construction of the M6 link road; infrastructure and service works; earthworks; flood attenuation; connecting track work into rail terminal; rail terminal; warehousing; office space and car parking. The application was withdrawn due to Railtrack going into railway administration.
 - An application was made in 2005 to facilitate the redevelopment of the site, by carrying out remediation works, undertake site clearance works, excavate, segregate and engineer the soils on the site to form a development platform. This would then facilitate the future construction of a link road. This application included works to generate electricity from mine gas and was approved.
 - In 2006 Astral Developments submitted an application for a SRFI to provide rail served warehouse and distribution building; assembly areas and depots; waste recycling centre, power generating facilities; relocation of substation and rerouting of underground cables. The proposals for Parkside SRFI were for a total of 715,000m² of warehouse and distribution buildings on a 272ha site. Parkside west comprised a 136ha site with 403,000m² warehouse space and Parkside east comprised a 115.5ha with 251,000m² of warehouse floor space. The application was subsequently withdrawn by ProLogis in August 2010. In a statement released on behalf of the developer at the time, the developer indicated that although the withdrawal of the application reflected the viability issues related to developing the site in the economic downturn, the developer did not wish to permanently abandon plans for an SRFI at Parkside.

Site Promotion

- 6.3 As evidenced in the AECOM Study¹⁴ (2016), there continues to be strong developer and operator interest in the site. Parkside East is currently being promoted by iSec for a SRFI and Food Super Hub. Appendix 2 contains a delivery statement for the Parkside East site produced by consultants CBRE on behalf of iSec.
- 6.4 In representations made by CBRE to the Local Plan Submission Draft (2019) on behalf of iSec, strong support was expressed for the proposed allocation of Parkside East. The ability for Parkside to deliver a rail freight interchange, alongside major manufacturing and logistics development, was identified as a 'game changer' and being highly important part to the delivery of the overall growth strategy for St Helens and the LCR.
- 6.5 On behalf of iSec, CBRE has produced a Delivery Statement in relation to Parkside East, and this is included at Appendix 2. This identifies that:
- iSec control land at Parkside East;
 - In accordance with the proposed Local Plan policy, iSec is developing a masterplan for Parkside East focussed on the provision a major SRFI incorporating a new food manufacturing and distribution 'Super Hub' for the North West of England;
 - The model of development proposed for Parkside East is similar to a scheme being progressed by iSec at Thames Enterprise Park, serving the London conurbation;
 - iSec is in advanced discussions with a Freight Operating Company (FOC) for the SRFI at Parkside East and is working with specialist SRFI advisors to inform design;
 - The intention of iSec is to progress the proposals at Parkside East through a Development Consent Order, with the expectation that this process will conclude at the end of 2023; and
 - Development of Parkside East could start in 2024 and would likely take up to 10 years to be fully developed.

Capacity of the Rail Network

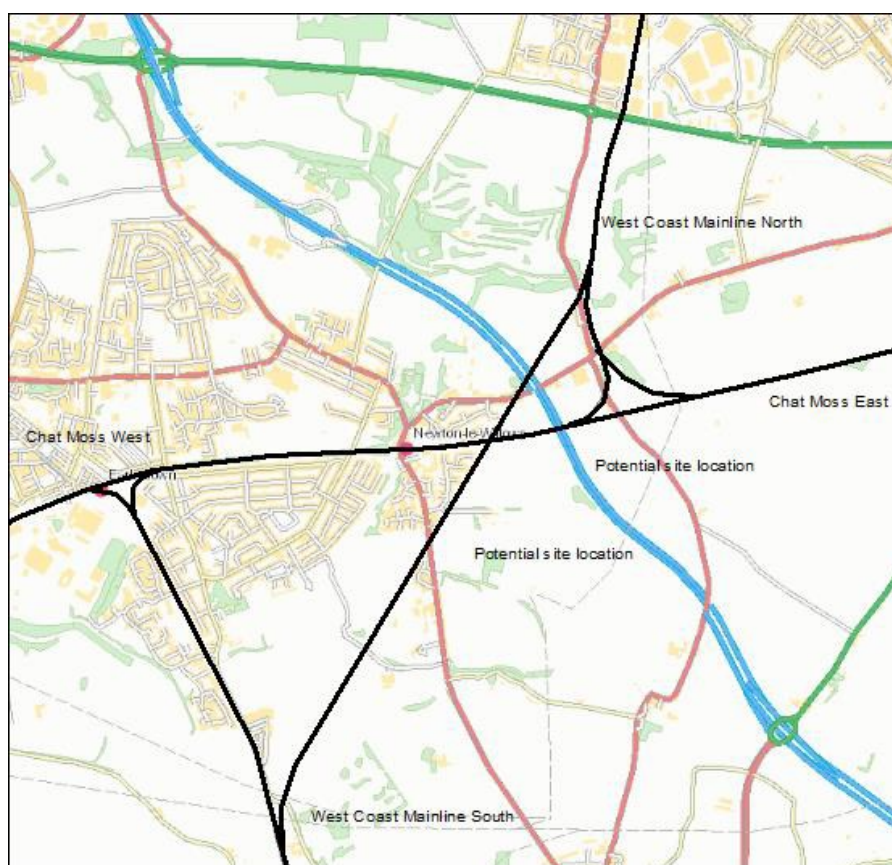
- 6.6 As set out in the AECOM Study (2016), Parkside is well situated for potential rail access. To the north and south of the site, the WCML is a mostly four track, fully electrified railway running between Scotland and London via the North West and West Midlands. It is a key freight and passenger artery. The

¹⁴ Parkside Logistics and Rail Freight Interchange Study (August 2016) (EMP005)

Chat Moss line runs east to west linking Liverpool to Manchester, Yorkshire and east coast ports, and is a two track partly electrified route. A series of junctions and chords connect both routes, allowing trains to arrive and leave the area in all four directions.

- 6.7 There are remnants of both the rail connection to the former Parkside Colliery (accessed via a loop on the Liverpool bound Chat Moss line) and the ex-Motorail Terminal (on the northern side of the Chat Moss line by Newton-le-Willows station) close to the site.
- 6.8 As part of the AECOM Study (2016) the broad operational requirements for varying sizes of rail freight interchanges were set out with demand (number of trains per day) used to match what the specification and functionality of the site would be. The Study concluded that the site could deliver a large facility (12 trains per day).
- 6.9 Network Rail submitted representations to Local Plan Submission Draft (2019) and in relation to Parkside East, noted that feasibility work would be required to understand the availability of space on the rail network to accommodate a SRFI.

Figure 3: Local Area Rail Network



(Source, Parkside Logistics and Rail Freight Interchange Study 2016)

- 6.10 Analysis was undertaken by Network Rail in July 2018 in the *Parkside Strategic Rail Freight Interchange Report Capability & Capacity Analysis*¹⁵, as to whether 12 paths into and 12 paths out of Parkside per day could be accommodated to service the proposed Parkside SRFI site. This was based initially on the quantum of services in the December 2018 timetable and then with the inclusion of HS2 Phase 2a services.
- 6.11 The analysis found that there is enough capacity on the existing network to allow for 12 paths a day arriving and 12 paths a day departing Parkside SRFI. However, whilst these paths are available in the geographic scope of the analysis, the report indicated that paths may not be compliant outside of the area considered for in the analysis. In addition, when taking into account HS2 (Phase 2a) the analysis identified there would be 8 paths departing from Parkside SRFI and 4 paths arriving to Parkside SRFI, which does not meet the requirements of 12 paths per day in each direction.
- 6.12 The analysis indicated that the Indicative Train Service Specification (ITSS) for HS2 is still be developed into a concept train plan, so it should be investigated further at a later date to understand if any more paths could be identified. As highlighted in the AECOM Study (2016), the experience of existing SRFIs indicates that it can take several years for a site to achieve a mature level of rail freight traffic. Therefore, there might not be a need for capacity on the rail network of 12 trains per day from the onset at Parkside. It is important to note that the AECOM Study concluded that a terminal that is at least medium size (8 trains a day) would be operationally and financially viable. It should be noted that the established SRFI operate commercially with between 2 and 11 trains per day, the NPSNN referencing the Planning Act 2008 that SRFI sites qualifying as NSIPs must be capable of handling 4 goods trains per day as a minimum (paragraph 4.89).
- 6.13 The Network Rail capacity analysis is considered very high level and very broad and does not provide the level of detail required to be able to fully determine the likely capacity on the rail network to accommodate a SRFI at Parkside. For example, it did not consider a 24-hour operation and the geographical scope was limited. It is considered the 24-hour ability of Parkside to accept or receive trains would provide flexibility in the pathing of train movements to and from the site and would also allow train movements to take place at times when the network is less busy.
- 6.14 The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority working alongside St Helens Council are in the process of commissioning a more detailed capacity study. Initial findings from the study are due to be reported late November 2020 with a final report expected in late December 2020.
- 6.15 Network Rail have been involved in devising the scope of the study and will be consulted on what data is to be used in the study. In summary, the study requirements are:

¹⁵ Parkside Strategic Rail Freight Interchange Report Capability & Capacity Analysis, July 2018 (EMP010)

- Identification of train paths per hour in both directions that could be used to serve Parkside;
- Identification of opportunities and/or interventions on the rail network that could release additional freight paths to serve Parkside, including:
 - Minor retiming of existing services;
 - Consolidation of some off-peak passenger services to improve loadings and set utilization;
 - Rerouting of existing intermodal services from other RFI in the surrounding area to Parkside (within the provisions of the NPSNN paragraph 2.58) where this would yield material benefits to train operators (e.g. use of longer / fewer trains or faster transits) and the wider region (e.g. relieving the Castlefield Corridor through Manchester); and
- Alterations to Network Rail's Engineering Access Strategy.

- 6.16 The study will involve liaison with the rail industry and other key stakeholders to ensure assumptions, dependencies and scenarios are robust and accurate.

Design of the rail connection

- 6.17 Alongside the need to establish capacity on the network to accommodate rail freight services to and from Parkside through the engineering and timetable assessment work, the next stage in taking forward the site is to work with Network Rail to establish a design for the rail infrastructure that will deliver main line connections to the site. This will involve progressing through the relevant stages of Network Rail's Governance for Railway Investment Projects (GRIP) process.

- 6.18 The AECOM Study (2016) considered at the headline level the different options for rail connection to the site. Network Rail have been engaged with St Helens Council and the LCR Combined Authority over taking forward the GRIP process over the past few years. Parkside East site promoters iSec have more recently engaged Network Rail to provide advice regarding the GRIP process, timetabling / rail capacity studies and establishing proposals for the siting and design of the main line connections.

Viability

- 6.19 Paragraph 2.4 of the NPSNN tasks the logistics industry with the development and location of new rail freight facilities, noting that the nature of that commercial development is such that some degree of flexibility is needed when schemes are being developed, in order to allow the development to respond to market requirements as they arise.
- 6.20 Paragraph 4.8 of the NSPNN states that for a SRFI, a judgement of viability will be made within the market framework, and taking account of Government

interventions such as, for instance, investment in the strategic rail freight network.

- 6.21 The economic viability of a SRFI is determined by a number of key measures. The site must be commercially attractive to developers and investors and economically sustainable in terms of growing earnings and acceptable rates on return to satisfy funders. The site must be strong commercially in relation to competitive sites, not only in the immediate vicinity and the region, but also in relation to other potentially competitive SRFIs, over a wider area.
- 6.22 All SRFIs have high initial investment costs to provide rail and road connections and infrastructure provision and internal site facilities along with the warehouses themselves. This high initial cost must be weighed against the potential for earnings from site operations, and especially the scope to expand the potential and activity of the site according to the expansion and development of the local freight market. The ability to respond and react to the competition from other comparable sites in the region is also an important factor. As identified in the AECOM Study (2016), lack of scope for expansion to the east of the M6 motorway would reduce the competitive position and raise questions about the business strength of Parkside.
- 6.23 The AECOM Study (2016) indicates that in comparison to other current and potential SRFI sites, the Parkside site scores well on investment criteria metrics. No other sites in the catchment area have the potential to receive trains from all directions, with some only able to receive trains from one direction. For example, Garston can only receive trains from the South. Additionally the Parkside site's access to both the M6 and M62 is highly advantageous meaning that Parkside has the potential to be an 'all points' operation, offering as much in terms of intermodal activities as it might in terms of being a destination and general logistical base in its own right.
- 6.24 However, previous proposals at Parkside have been constrained by the up-front capital costs of new infrastructure (both rail and road). The headline economic viability assessment and cash flow forecasting in the AECOM Study (2016) showed that a break-even point would only be reached by 2044 or even later, depending on different development options; this is clearly not a timescale that will encourage the private sector to invest without public sector support. This contrasts with the recent experience of one of the latest SRFI to be developed, on the iPort Doncaster site, where traffic levels have reached over 6 trains a day within 2 years of opening, and without an anchor customer or train operator in place beforehand.
- 6.25 The proposed Parkside Link Road would provide a direct route from the Parkside site to the M6 at Junction 22. The link road has been allocated approximately £24 million from the LCR Strategic Investment Fund (SIF). Furthermore, a St Helens Council Cabinet Report of 23rd October 2019 identifies that the Council will provide £6.17 million to be funded from capital receipts, and that the private sector would provide the balance.

- 6.26 Coupled with the Council's ownership of the majority of the Parkside West site through the Parkside Joint Venture and iSec's land interest in Parkside East, this now provides the private sector with market confidence in the Parkside sites, as there is now less risk in terms of multiple land ownerships.
- 6.27 The juxtaposition of the public sector link road funding, the strong land ownership position and the significant developer and operator interest in the site mean that viability, market attractiveness and investor confidence in the Parkside site has never been stronger.

7. Parkside Planning Applications Latest Position

- 7.1 There are currently two live planning applications at Parkside. Planning application **P/2018/0048/OUP** was submitted on the Parkside West site (8EA) in January 2018 for:
- “Outline application (all matters reserved except for access) for the construction of up to 92,900 m2 of employment floorspace (Use Class B8 with ancillary B1(a)) and associated servicing and infrastructure including car parking; vehicle and pedestrian circulation space; alteration of existing access road including works to existing A49 junction; noise mitigation; earthworks to create development platforms and bunds; landscaping including buffers; works to existing spoil heap; creation of drainage features; substations and ecological works.”*
- 7.2 The application proposes that the buildings would have a minimum unit size of 13,935m2 and a parameters plan identifies that the buildings would be constructed on three development cells within the site. Access would be taken from the A49. A safeguarded rail parameters plan was also submitted with the application which identifies an area of the site identified for future rail connections associated with a potential future SRFI on Parkside East.
- 7.3 The applicant identifies that the proposed development is the first phase of a comprehensive development of the site to help meet current employment need land needs within the Borough and wider City Region. The application is for Parkside Phase 1 which is the southern area of the former colliery. The applicant states that the application will be followed by an application for B8 and B2 development on the northern part of the former colliery – Phase 2.
- 7.4 Council officers presented a report to the Planning Committee meeting held on the 17th December 2019 recommending that planning permission be granted subject to conditions, a planning obligation and the Secretary of State not wishing to intervene. Members agreed the officer recommendation. The Council received notification that the Secretary of State had decided that the application be referred to him for a decision in a letter dated 21st May 2020. A public inquiry in relation to the application is likely to take place in early 2021.
- 7.5 Planning application **P/2018/0249/FUL** was submitted in March 2018 for:
- “the formation of a new link road between A49 (Winwick Road) and M6 Junction 22 including the re-alignment of Parkside Road and other associated works.”*
- 7.6 The application proposes a single carriageway road referred to as the ‘Parkside Link Road’, which would link the A49 Winwick Road to the A579 Winwick Lane enabling access to Junction 22 of the M6. The application site lies within the administrative areas of St Helens and Warrington.
- 7.7 The applicant identifies that the Parkside Link Road is proposed in order to facilitate both Parkside West and Parkside East sites. It will provide a comprehensive highways solution for both sites and remove a large

infrastructure cost. The applicant states that although the proposed development would facilitate the development of the former Parkside Colliery site, the current application for a first phase (P/2018/0048/OUP) is not dependant on the proposed link road.

- 7.8 Council officers presented a report to the Planning Committee meeting held on the 17th December 2019 recommending that planning permission be granted subject conditions and the Secretary of State not wishing to intervene. Members agreed the officer recommendation. The Council received notification that the Secretary of State had decided that the application be referred to him for a decision in a letter dated 21st May 2020. A public inquiry in relation to the application is likely to take place in early 2021.

8. Green Belt Exceptional Circumstances

- 8.1 The approach in the plan-making process for the SHBLP in relation to Parkside has been to assess the level of need for a SRFI at Parkside, the suitability and deliverability of the Parkside East site to meet any identified need, the potential benefits of a SRFI and any harm that might be caused to the Green Belt, before concluding whether exceptional circumstances exist to justify release of Green Belt land.
- 8.2 As part of the preparatory work for the Local Plan, it has been important to acknowledge St Helens' role within the wider LCR by understanding its key strengths and how these can help support the aspirations of the LCR Combined Authority and the LCR Local Economic Partnership (LEP) (as set out in the Local Investment Strategy), particularly in driving forward the logistics sector. Both the LCR Combined Authority and the LEP are seeking to strengthen the LCR economy with the overall aim of 'levelling up' with the rest of the UK economy and maximising the potential for transformation.
- 8.3 It has also been important to take account of the Council's own economic objectives as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan (see section 3 of this Paper), which places further emphasis on the importance of a growth focused Local Plan in order to increase economic development, growth and investment. The Local Plan is seen as key to maximising the potential of the Borough as a northern hub for logistics, the potential of the M6 growth corridor as well as helping to deliver the 'Ways to Work' programme to reduce worklessness.
- 8.4 At both the local and sub-regional scale, relevant economic and corporate strategies are clear that the Local Plan is integral in helping meet wider economic objectives as part of a sustainable approach that combines job creation and reduced inequalities. The Council therefore recognises that it is vital that the Local Plan identifies a future supply of land which is suitable, available and deliverable for economic development uses over the Plan period. Ensuring there is a sufficient supply of employment land - of the right type and in the right locations for new and existing businesses, and especially for the employment growth sectors, has been a key consideration in the plan-making process. Getting it right clearly matters, for local and inward investment and for business growth.
- 8.5 Of the 11 sites allocated for employment use in the SHBLP including Parkside East and West sites all, but 3 would be released from current designation as Green Belt¹⁶. This is justified because of the limited land supply (particularly for large employment sites with good access to transport routes) which exists in urban areas in St Helens and in nearby districts, and the opportunity provided at Parkside. The exceptional circumstances justifying release of Green Belt for employment land are set out in the Green Belt Review (2018),

¹⁶ See Developing the Strategy Background Paper (SD026) and Employment Land Need and Supply Background Paper (SD022) for more information.

the Developing the Strategy Background Paper (SD026) and the Employment Land and Needs Supply Background Paper (SD022).

- 8.6 The Council see the proposed employment allocations for logistics development in the Local Plan as being vital to assisting the delivery of the sub-regional economic development objectives of the Government's Northern Powerhouse agenda and also reflecting the LCR LEP's support for logistics in association with Liverpool SuperPort. There is an evidenced need (as set out in the ELNS 2015 and ELNS Addendum Report 2019) to identify and allocate new land for logistics at commercially attractive strategic sites, enabling the sector to growth in a sustainable manner.
- 8.7 The proposed approach to employment land in the SHBLP will also help meet employment land needs across the City Region and West Lancashire as a whole, as identified in the LCR Strategic Housing and Employment Land Assessment (SHELMA) 2017. The Plan will address an identified shortage of large sites, suitable for the needs of the growing logistics sector and the clear evidence of market demand in the Borough. It also takes into account the need for flexibility and choice in site supply and the strategic location of St Helens in relation to the motorway and rail networks.
- 8.8 As set out in section 3 of this Paper, the policy support for a SRFI at Parkside is clear at the European, national, regional, sub-regional and local scale. The Government's NPSNN recognises that there is a 'compelling need' for an expanded network of SRFIs. The development of a SRFI at Parkside would help to meet the national need for a network of SRFIs to support the Government's rail freight and sustainable transport objectives. A SRFI at Parkside would help reduce the number of HGVs on the national road network and would therefore make a direct contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport.
- 8.9 Local Plan evidence suggests that the Parkside site would be attractive to the market for major logistics (and manufacturing) development in the absence of a rail freight interchange but that its connectivity to the motorway and rail network make the Parkside site ideal as a multimodal freight interchange. Along with the SuperPort, a SRFI at Parkside is recognised as being a driver for growth, providing significant economic benefits in itself, while also acting as a catalyst for wider growth having the potential to increase demand for employment land in the City Region, particularly for B8 and B2 uses.
- 8.10 The development of a SRFI at Parkside would contribute to economic growth at the regional, sub-regional and local scales. It would help create a significant number of new jobs across a range of skilled, semi-skilled and entry level positions during the construction and operational phases of development and would serve to reduce unemployment in some of the Borough's and wider City Region's most deprived areas.

- 8.11 As set out in the Green Belt Review 2018 and other supporting background papers¹⁷ to the SHBLP, it is accepted that the development of Parkside East (site 7EA) for a SRFI (or indeed most other employment uses) would have a substantial impact in terms of the purposes of Green Belt land stated in paragraph 134 of the NPPF, particularly in respect of purpose a: “*to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas*” and purpose c: “*to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.*” However, it is considered that the harm to the Green Belt would clearly be outweighed by the national and regional need for the proposed SRFI and the significant economic and social benefits of a SRFI and other strategic employment at the local and sub-regional level. Therefore, it is considered that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of Parkside East from the Green Belt in the SHBLP.

¹⁷ See Developing the Strategy Background Paper (SD026) and Employment Land Need and Supply Background Paper (SD022) for more information.

9 Conclusions

- 9.1 As highlighted in this Paper, there is robust evidence for the allocation of Parkside East for a SRFI. The allocation of Parkside East for a SRFI and for rail served employment land will address an identified shortage of large sites, suitable for the needs of the growing logistics sector and the clear evidence of market demand locally and across the wider City Region.
- 9.2 There is clear demand for a new modern SRFI in the North West and due to its geographical location and specific characteristics, Parkside is uniquely placed to satisfy that demand.
- 9.3 The market for employment land has changed significantly since the adoption of the St Helens Local Plan Core Strategy and the current evidence base which supports the SHBLP identifies a substantially greater need for employment development in the Borough (specifically for the logistics sector) than the evidence base informing the Core Strategy.
- 9.4 The strategic case for a SRFI at Parkside remains strong, demonstrating excellent strategic fit with a number of local, sub-regional, regional and national strategies for both transport and economic growth. Indeed, major policy developments since the adoption of the Core Strategy, such as the publication of the NPSNN, various transport and economic strategies at the regional and City Region level have strengthened the case for a SRFI at Parkside. It is clear from the strategic context of Northern Powerhouse, Covid-19 recovery, LCR Growth Plan and the national and City Region Industrial Strategies, that Parkside has the potential to support significant inward investment and new growth sectors such as low carbon and clean growth.
- 9.5 The evidence base informing the SHBLP indicates that the Parkside East site is suitable and deliverable for a SRFI. The viability case, market attractiveness and investor confidence in Parkside East (and West) has never been stronger.
- 9.6 The employment opportunities likely to be created by a SRFI at Parkside would contribute significantly to the regeneration of the Borough and would strengthen the local and wider sub-regional and regional economy. The significant social and economic impact of a SRFI at Parkside, coupled with the strategic fit of a SRFI with national transport objectives means that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release of Parkside East from the Green Belt in the SHBLP.
- 9.7 The policy approach in the SHBLP reflects the desire by the Council to provide sufficient flexibility to allow a viable and deliverable SRFI to be developed at Parkside, or for a rail served employment development to come forward on the site, such as a manufacturing scheme should it represent a transformational opportunity for the Borough.

- 9.8 The delivery of new employment development in the Borough through the SHBLP at sites such as Parkside, will be vital in kick-starting the local economy and supporting businesses and organisations in the economic recovery and renewal from the COVID-19 pandemic.

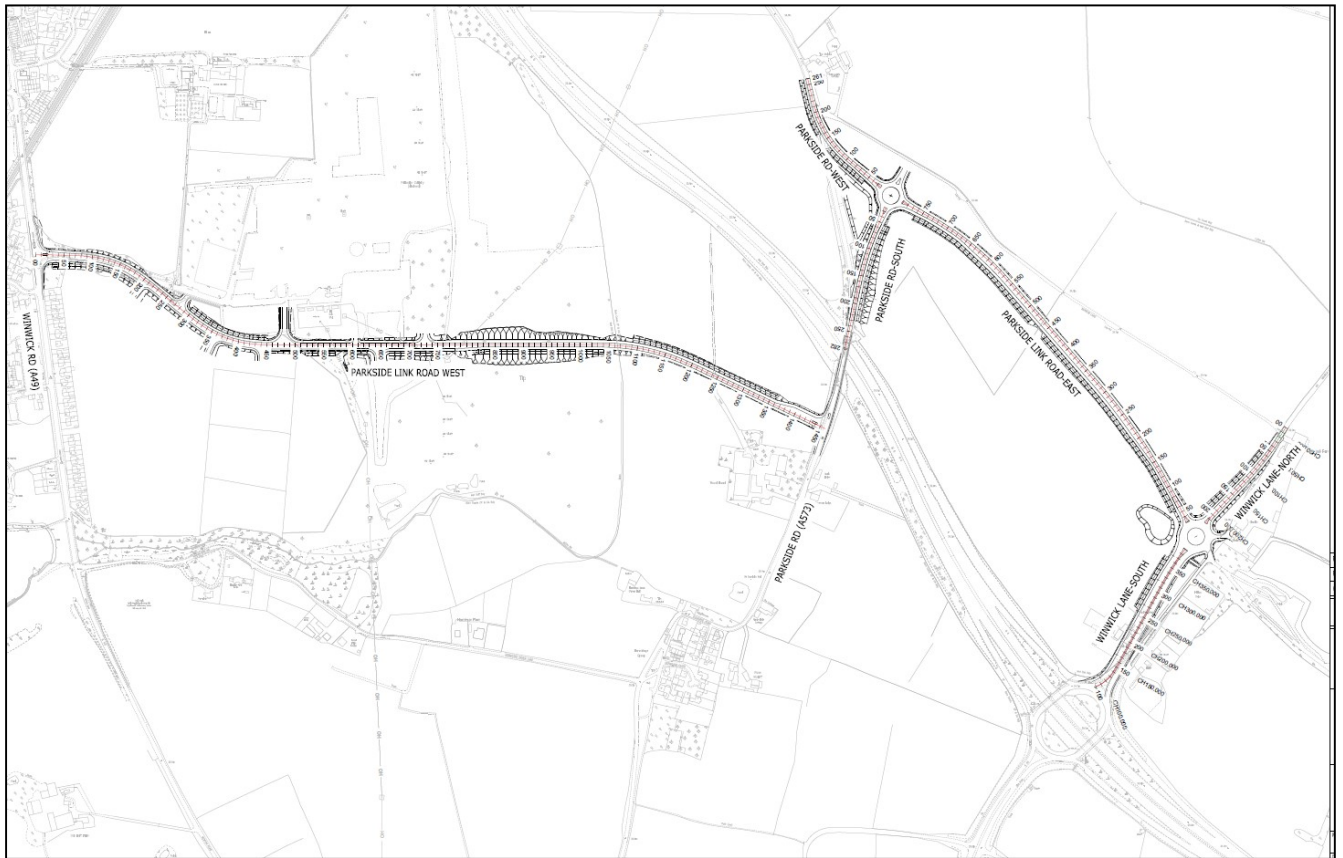
Appendix 1: Site Layout for Live Planning Applications at Parkside West and for Parkside Link Road



Illustrative Masterplan for Parkside Phases 1 and 2 at Parkside West submitted as part of P/2018/0048/OUP

The red line highlights the site area for the Phase 1 development which is the area currently subject to a live planning application (P/2018/0048/OUP).

**Proposed Parkside Link Road Alignment as proposed in planning application
P/2018/0249/FUL**





**Proposed Parkside Link Road Location Plan as proposed in planning application
P/2018/0249/FUL**

Appendix 2: Delivery Statement for Parkside East

PARKSIDE EAST

Land East of Junction 22 of the M6 Motorway, St Helens

Delivery Statement

October 2020

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Part One: Introduction

- 1.1 This document has been prepared on behalf of our client, iSec, which is part of the Marcol Group with a 25 year track record and reputation for delivering major strategic logistics based developments.
- 1.2 Our client has an interest in land known as Parkside East, a strategic development site located adjacent to Junction 22 of the M6 motorway (a site plan, also indicating areas of ownership and the St Helens administrative boundary, is included at **Appendix 1**). The land is allocated in the draft St Helens Local Plan for a Strategic Employment Site (Site 7EA in Policy LPA04) suitable for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange ("SRFI") and industrial / warehousing and distribution.
- 1.3 Given the scale and nature of the SRFI proposals for Parkside East, the development will be subject to an application for a Development Consent Order ("DCO") under the Planning Act 2008. The proposed programme for the DCO for Parkside East is identified in Part Six of this Statement.
- 1.4 In the evolution of the proposals, iSec and their advisors will continue to work closely with the Council and other stakeholders including the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Network Rail.
- 1.5 The purpose of this document is to demonstrate that the proposed Local Plan site allocation at Parkside East, and the associated proposal by iSec for the site, is deliverable, and that it will provide significant benefits, furthering national and other aims and objectives.
- 1.6 In line with the draft Local Plan, iSec's vision for Parkside East can be described as:

To create a Strategic Rail Freight interchange and unique food-focussed 'SuperHub' employment development of in excess of 3 million square feet.

- 1.7 The subsequent parts of this document are structured as follows:

- Part Two: The Site and its Context;
- Part Three: The Development;
- Part Four: The Policy Context;
- Part Five: The Benefits;
- Part Six: The Delivery Plan;
- Part Seven: Summary and Conclusions;
- Appendix 1: Site Plan;
- Appendix 2: Parkside Link Road Plan;
- Appendix 3: Parkside East Masterplan; and
- Appendix 4: Intermodality SRFI Note.

Part Two: The Site and its Context

THE SITE

- 2.1 Parkside East is a strategically positioned development site located between Liverpool, Manchester, Wigan and Warrington. It is located on the eastern side of the M6 motorway close to Junction 22. It is circa 1.5 miles to the east of Newton-le-Willows and circa 5.5 miles to the north of Warrington.
- 2.2 Access to the Site is currently from Parkside Road and Winwick Lane / Barrow Lane which provides connections to the M6 Junction 22. The Site is large, regular in shape and generally flat in topography, thereby able to accommodate a wide range of development plots and requirements. There is a Grade II listed building, Huskisson Memorial¹, on the Chat Moss Line to the north of the Site.
- 2.3 The Site comprises mainly of agricultural land and, at present, is wholly located within the Green Belt (until the land's removal from it through the adoption of the draft Local Plan). The northern part of the draft local plan allocation includes an area of woodland (this however lies outside of iSec's current masterplan development area). The Site also includes a small number of farm buildings and other properties. The land is dissected by the A573 (Parkside Road) and a smaller rural lane (Barrow Lane). Initial ecology surveys have been undertaken across the Site which has identified that there may be presence of reptiles, breeding birds and bats. Further species surveys will be undertaken.

THE SURROUNDING CONTEXT

- 2.4 The Site, near Newton-le-Willows, is ideally located being well positioned close to the M6 and M62 motorways as well as the main A49 road. In addition to its access to the strategic road network, the Chat Moss Line runs along the northern boundary of the Site, providing a linkage to the West Coast Main Line (WCML) and the Liverpool to Manchester railway. These railway lines are core routes on the Strategic Freight Network,² electrified and cleared to W10 and W12 loading gauge respectively, enabling movement of high-cube containers on standard wagons. Its rail connectivity makes it a unique development opportunity to create a new rail freight interchange and logistics / manufacturing 'SuperhHub'. It will provide multi-modal connectivity to the Port of Liverpool, elsewhere in the Liverpool City Region, and far beyond to other national and global locations.
- 2.5 There are a number of major employment schemes involving the release of Green Belt land that are being promoted elsewhere along the motorway corridor, including in St Helens and in neighbouring local authority areas. A number of these schemes have been called-in by the Secretary of State for his determination, along with an application for the Parkside Link Road. It is likely that the majority of these employment schemes, if allowed, will come forward in advance of land at Parkside East.
- 2.6 The Parkside Link Road application (P/2018/0249/OUP) proposes a road of 3.3 kilometres, connecting the A49 Winwick Road and A579 Winwick Lane, bridging over the M6 motorway. Part of this link road runs through the Parkside East site. The link road lies mainly within the administrative area of St Helens although part of it is also located within Warrington. A plan showing the proposed Parkside Link Road is included at **Appendix 2**.

¹ The Huskisson Memorial was erected in 1831. It was listed in 1966 as a memorial to William Huskisson, MP for Liverpool. Huskisson is reputed to have been the world's first fatality of the Railway Age, being knocked down and fatally injured by the Rocket during the opening celebrations of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830.

² National Policy Statement on National Networks 2014, Annex C

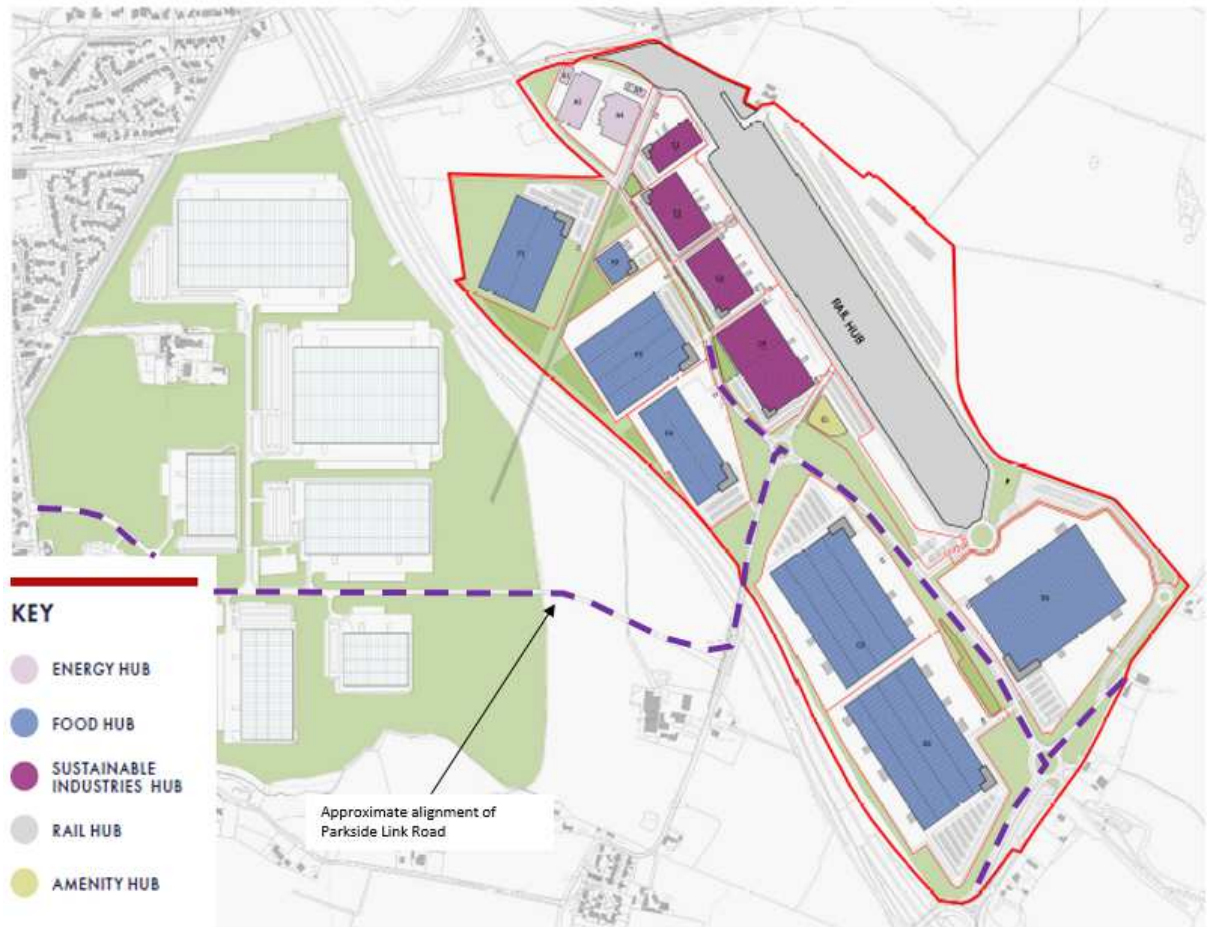
-
- 2.7 Of the major employment schemes being determined by the Secretary of State, the closest one to Parkside East is Phase 1 of Parkside West (planning ref: P/2018/0048/OUP), which is located on the opposite side of the motorway and adjacent to the settlement of Newton-le-Willows. The application for Parkside West (Phase 1) was submitted by Parkside Regeneration LLP (a JV between Langtree Property Partners Limited and St Helens Council). It comprises 48ha of previously developed land for the proposed development of 92,900sqm of B8 floorspace with ancillary B1(a) office space, and is made in outline with all matters reserved except for access. The parameter plans provided with the application show an area of safeguarded land to the north of the site for a possible future rail connection with the Parkside East SRFI.

Part Three: The Development

OVERVIEW

- 3.1 iSec's current masterplan for Parkside East has been informed through engagement with various stakeholders as well as technical and environmental studies and assessments. An overview of masterplan is included at **Figure 3.1**, with further details also set out below and at **Appendix 3**.
- 3.2 The proposals at Parkside East will create significant and far-reaching benefits, delivering on the Northern Powerhouse's sustainable growth agenda. It will positively respond to need and demand, provide substantial economic and job creation opportunities and contribute to the low carbon agenda, including through the movement of freight from road to rail. These themes are discussed further in Part Five of this Statement.

Figure 3.1: The Parkside East Illustrative Masterplan



- 3.3 Parkside East will accommodate a strategic rail freight interchange with a major manufacturing and logistics 'SuperHub', and this vision reflects the draft Local Plan allocation and policy for the site. It will meet the Government's strategic objectives for national networks as set out in Chapter 2 of the National Policy Statement for National Networks ("NPSNN").
- 3.4 The proposals are based on a thorough understanding of commercial and deliverability considerations, and are following a similar approach to the development being promoted by iSec at the Thames Enterprise Park ("TEP") next to London Gateway Port, serving the conurbation of London.
- 3.5 Working with their JV partner Greenergy, the TEP scheme will provide for the redevelopment of 167ha of brownfield land in the Thames Estuary to create 480,000sqm of B2/B8 employment comprised of a Food Hub, Amenities Hub, Energy Park and Sustainable Industries Park. The intention is to reproduce the TEP model at Parkside East to serve the North West of England.

The 'SuperHub'

- 3.6 The 'SuperHub' at Parkside East is proposed to focus on the following elements, supported by a major new rail freight interchange.

SuperHub	Overview
Food	Temperature-controlled food storage, processing and distribution. The food Superhub will allow operators to greatly enhance their efficiencies including through creating complementary food clusters and enabling the shared use of multi-use facilities and supply chains. iSec has considerable ownership and interest in the cold store sector in the UK.
Amenity	A focal point for shared, state-of-the-art services and facilities, providing a skills academy, R&D, training, educational, amenity and conference space, with the potential to link to various higher education institutions in the area.
Energy	Supporting the area's existing energy sector, together with furthering the 'Green Energy agenda' through providing the opportunity for on-site energy generation and the recycling of food wastes.
Sustainable Industries	Designed to attract smaller industries to support the Food hub, with a particular focus on incubation and highly skilled sustainable industries.

Strategic Rail Freight Interchange

- 3.7 The designs of the SRFI are being developed and refined with a proposed operator, providing a large inter-modal terminal area which could have capacity for up to 20 trains per day. At this scale, this will be one of the largest facilities of its type in the Country. The current plans include 16 rail sidings, direct road access to the terminal, and associated buildings, lorry park and container storage areas.
- 3.8 iSec has appointed Intermodality³ as its specialist consultant advisors on the SRFI. Intermodality has advised on several recent SRFIs and specialise in their design and planning, finance and procurement, development, marketing and operations. Intermodality has also worked closely with the proposed operator on the design and technical requirements for the SRFI proposed for Parkside East.
- 3.9 The proposals shown for Parkside East on the current masterplan have been developed to meet the criteria for function, transport links, locational requirements, scale and design of an SRFI, as set out in the National Policy Statement for National Networks ("NPSNN").

³ Please see www.intermodality.com for further information on the practice and their track record of other recent SRFI schemes they have worked on and helped to successfully deliver.

Part Four: The Policy Context

LOCAL POLICY

The Adopted St Helen's Core Strategy (2012)

- 4.1 In the Core Strategy, land at Parkside West (circa 85 hectares) is identified as a location for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (Policy CAS 3.2). This policy also identifies a further circa 70 hectares at Parkside East (a smaller area than that now identified in the draft Local Plan) as part of the SRFI but notes that land at Parkside East land can only come forward if:
- Parkside West is developed first; and
 - If Parkside West is insufficient to fully accommodate the SRFI.
- 4.2 Land at Parkside West and East is shown as being within the Green Belt in the Core Strategy; one of the requirements of Policy CAS 3.2 is for the development of Parkside to satisfy the "Very Special Circumstances" Green Belt Policy test.

The St Helen's Local Plan (Submission Draft, January 2019)

- 4.3 The draft Local Plan is advocating a different approach to Parkside East. Draft Policy LPA10 now proposes the removal of land at Parkside East from the Green Belt and allocates it as a Strategic Employment Site (Site 7EA in Policy LPA04) suitable for:
- The development of a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange ("SRFI"), with the primary purpose of facilitating the movement of freight by rail and its on-site storage and transfer between rail and other transport modes; and
 - Other forms of B2 and B8 employment use, subject to certain criteria, such as ensuring that such employment uses complement / allow for an SRFI at the site.
- 4.4 Paragraphs 4.36.14 and 4.36.15 of the draft Local Plan summarises the justification for removing Parkside East from the Green Belt (and its allocation under draft Policy LPA10 outlined above). These paragraphs state:

"Site 7EA was (until adoption of this Plan) located in the Green Belt. However, its development in accordance with Policy LPA10 (linked to the unique locational benefits set out above) would strongly support the Government's aims of building a robust northern economy, promoting the use of the national rail infrastructure and reducing carbon emissions and congestion by limiting freight movement by road. The potential to develop an SRFI at this site is reflected in the TfN Northern Freight and Logistics Report Technical Appendices (2016) and would play a key role in delivering the objectives of the Liverpool City Region Growth Plan and Strategic Economic Plan (2016)."

"In combination with Parkside West (Site 8EA), the Parkside East site provides the single largest economic development opportunity in the Borough. The parts of the site that are not directly required to provide rail or road infrastructure or landscaping will also make an important contribution to meeting needs for employment development."

NATIONAL POLICY

National Policy Statement for National Networks (December 2014)

- 4.5 The National Policy Statement for National Networks (NPSNN) 2014 recognises that the railway network forms a vital part of the UK's transport infrastructure that must: *"...provide for the transport of freight across the country, and to and from ports, in order to help meet environmental goals and improve quality of life"*.
- 4.6 The NPSNN identifies that there is a compelling need for an expanded network of SRFIs. This is to: support sustainable distribution (by reducing long-haul road transport of goods on national and local road networks); meet the changing needs of the logistics industry (and addressing growth in movement of freight by rail); and help promote economic development (by responding to the changing needs of the logistics sector).
- 4.7 The NPSNN also stresses that SRFIs should be located near to business markets such as major urban centres or groups of centres, be linked to key supply chain routes, and have good connectivity with both the road and rail networks. It highlights that SRFI capacity needs to be provided at a wide range of locations to provide the flexibility needed to match the changing demands of the market.
- 4.8 In its interpretation of the NPSNN, the Government has noted that multiple SRFIs have been developed in close proximity to each other, creating clusters of activity⁴ and acknowledging an existing cluster between the SRFI at Widnes to the west and at Port Salford to the east.⁵

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

- 4.9 This confirms that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of certain industries; and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.
- 4.10 In relation to transport, it states that planning policies should provide for any large scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area (specifically referencing interchanges for rail freight), and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy.
- 4.11 The NPPF promotes sustainable development and states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future, helping shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

THE EVIDENCE BASE

- 4.12 There is a wide body of existing evidence prepared to underpin and inform various local and sub-national plans, policies and strategies. These provide strong evidential and related support for the proposals for the development of land at Parkside East.

⁴ West Midlands Interchange SRFI Development Consent Order, Secretary of State decision letter 4th May 2020, para 20.

⁵ West Midlands Interchange SRFI Development Consent Order, Inspectors Report 27th November 2019, para 5.3.64

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Draft Local Industrial Strategy (March 2020)

- 4.13 A modern, low carbon infrastructure system is noted as being necessary to deliver the draft Local Industrial Strategy ("LIS"). The LIS specifically emphasises the importance of Parkside to the delivery of one of its key themes, which is to support the clean growth of freight and logistics. In particular, it states that:
- LCR's assets, including the port, inland ports, Liverpool John Lennon Airport, the Manchester Ship Canal, proximity to national arterial road networks, and the potential for a major intermodal freight interchange at Parkside in St Helens, mean it will continue to be a hub for freight and logistics.
- 4.14 The LIS highlights the importance of infrastructure to the future success of the economy. The aim for the LCR is to transform its energy, transport, and digital infrastructure to protect the environment, improve public health, and link people to opportunities across the City Region and beyond. To deliver this, a number of priorities are identified, and several of these are of direct and significant relevance to supporting the vision for the development of Parkside East, including:
- Future readying and integrating LCR's infrastructure;
 - Improving connectivity to the rest of the UK and to international markets;
 - Managing the impact of the growth of freight and logistics; and
 - Powering the City Region effectively and sustainably.
- 4.15 The importance of ensuring that HS2 and Northern Powerhouse Rail links the Liverpool City Region more effectively with other major UK cities is also noted, as is the associated benefits of freeing up rail capacity for freight and logistics, which brings national benefits economically and environmentally.
- 4.16 The logistics (and manufacturing) sectors are also highlighted as being important to the area's future economic growth. Such sectors are acknowledged as having a high incidence of scale-ups and that they can form clusters that are ripe for innovation, supported by dynamic supply chains.

"Building Back Better" – The Liverpool City Region Economic Recovery Plan (2020)

- 4.17 *Building Back Better* is the LCR's (post-Covid) economic recovery plan, aimed at delivering a competitive, clean and inclusive City Region. This is underpinned by four themes: Business Ecosystem; People Focused Recovery; Place; and Green Recovery.
- 4.18 The themes of Business Ecosystems and Green Recovery are particularly relevant to Parkside East. For example, the Green recovery programme recognises the significant changes required to achieve carbon-neutrality and the objectives of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) which sets out the LCR's local *Grand Challenge* of becoming pioneers of the zero-carbon economy.

The Northern Powerhouse

- 4.19 The Northern Powerhouse is a vision for joining up regions of the North, pooling strengths, and tackling major barriers to productivity to 'unleash' the economic potential. The primary objective of the Northern Powerhouse is to achieve an increase in productivity across the North. The need to improve connections within and between regions of the north is at the heart of the Northern Powerhouse vision.
- 4.20 Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) is a major rail programme designed to unlock the economic potential of the North. It aims to transform rail services making it easier to move between the region's towns and cities. It will be the region's single biggest transport investment since the Industrial Revolution and include upgraded railway lines, increased capacity, speed, and resilience of the North's rail network. The Government is also committed to Northern Powerhouse Rail with £60m having been provided to

develop options for the initiative. It is the centrepiece of Transport for the North's Strategic Transport Plan and Investment Programme.

- 4.21 NPR is likely to release rail capacity that can be used to transport freight, enabling increased volumes of freight to be transported in a more efficient way. It is also noted that this will lead to environmental benefits; increased inward investment; new housing growth and land release resulting in an overall positive impact on the economy; and reduced congestion on the existing road and rail infrastructure, especially the East-West routes.

TfN Strategic Transport Plan (2019)

- 4.22 Key conclusions of relevance to Parkside East can be summarised as:

- Growth of the freight and logistics sector will be crucial to support the transformational economic growth ambitions of the North. Understanding and supporting the needs of the North's freight and logistics sector and our international gateways will be vital, and supporting businesses to move freight and goods efficiently and across modes is one of the three ways included in the Plan to support the North's economic assets and clusters.
- There is a need for improvements in the arrangements for interchanging goods movements between road and rail and the development of sites with multi-modal access should be supported. Actively supporting modal shift to rail will reduce road congestion, free up capacity, enable businesses to make sustainable choices and reduce emissions, although more needs to be done to make this modal shift an attractive option; and
- The needs of the North's logistics sector will continue to be dynamic, with changing demand for freight flows. A rail network able to respond quickly to such dynamics is key to ensuring the continuation and growth of freight on rail, including capturing commodities currently carried by less sustainable modes such as road or air freight.

St Helens Employment Land Needs Study (October 2017, and Addendum January 2019)

- 4.23 The 2019 Addendum to the Employment Land Needs Study was commissioned to update evidence of employment land requirements and market conditions, and to assess the jobs growth potential of the St Helens Local Plan Preferred Options proposed employment allocations. Key conclusions can be summarised as including that:

- The warehousing and logistics market is performing strongly with further demand for growth in the regional market, including within St Helens, focussed particularly on the motorway corridors. The logistics sector, particularly large-scale major projects, will be a key driver of growth but with some growth also expected in manufacturing.
- The large-scale warehousing market has substantial land requirements across the Liverpool City Region, and St Helens could play a significant role in the provision of such land, especially given its proximity to the motorway network and the employment development around the former Parkside colliery [including a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI)].
- Notwithstanding the high-level of demand, the development of large logistics space has been constrained over recent years by a shortage of supply in high quality, large, flat sites with excellent access to the motorway network and with planning support. Removal of these land supply constraints has / will generate renewed interest from occupiers for strategic locations in St Helens.

The Parkside Logistics and Rail Freight Interchange Study (August 2016)

- 4.24 This study was produced to underpin the allocation of land at Parkside in the draft Local Plan. It includes a number of key conclusions to support the development of a rail freight interchange and Parkside more generally. These can be summarised as:
- There is an improving narrative behind the North West and its regional economy, which has served to enhance wider market perceptions of the region. One of the key advantages to Parkside is that it will help to improve the supply of unconstrained available strategic site supply with strategic transport accessibility.
 - The use of rail freight nationally has grown significantly and the ability to deliver a rail freight interchange at Parkside could be a real 'game changer'.
 - In addition to the benefits of the rail freight interchange, the Parkside site's access to both the M6 and M62 is highly advantageous, meaning that Parkside has the potential to be an 'all points' operation to serve this part of the UK.
 - The co-location of employment development on the site and in the immediate area of Parkside will enable the scale of supply and demand to help to support the development of intermodal train services to be offered from the site to a range of different markets and locations.

Building Our Future - Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy (2016)

- 4.25 This strategy aims to make the Liverpool City Region the Global Port and Logistics Hub for the Northern UK and Ireland through developing an integrated multi-modal transport system for the City Region which will deliver economic growth whilst reducing carbon.
- 4.26 Logistics is identified as one of the region's key growth sectors, with the Growth Strategy promoting the development of a large portfolio of long-term logistics sites and multi-modal facilities to fulfil demand. In order to enable growth, a need for improved road and rail infrastructure, connectivity and capacity to key assets including port, airport and multi-modal sites is identified.
- 4.27 Also, due to the high costs and carbon footprint of road based freight transport compared to sea/rail creates, the opportunity for carbon rebalancing through greater use of port/multimodal sites is emphasised.

TfN Northern Freight and Logistics Report (2016)

- 4.28 This concludes that 850ha of land should be developed for rail and / or water connected Multi-modal Distribution Parks (MDPs) between 2016 and 2033 to reduce the cost of freight transport, expand market share in the logistics sector and attract private inward investment to the North.

Part Five: The Benefits

OVERVIEW

- 5.1 The evidence base prepared by the local planning authority to inform the draft Local Plan outlines major economic benefits from the development of Parkside East. This is further supported by a number of studies and other evidence base documents prepared for the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, which recognise Parkside East as an inter-modal infrastructure project of key importance.
- 5.2 Parkside East is necessary to realising a number of the strategic priorities of the City Region's Local Industrial Strategy and Recovery Plan, such as in relation to the sustained growth of logistics and manufacturing. It will also address recognised issues for the Region, including contributing to addressing regional inequalities further to the the Government's 'levelling up' agenda and moving towards the more efficient movement of freight in a way that minimises environmental impacts and supports low carbon economic growth.
- 5.3 In simple terms, the key benefits of Parkside East can be grouped under the following three headings:
- Economy and Economic Growth;
 - Addressing Need and Demand; and
 - Contribution to the Low Carbon Agenda.

Economy and Economic Growth

- 5.4 The intended employment focus of Parkside East will be meeting the demands of the rapidly evolving food manufacturing and distribution industry. It will be the first dedicated food hub of its type in the North West of England, and will be supported by on-site waste to energy provision; incubator industries; communal and educational facilities. These sectors are recognised as being particularly important to the growth and success of the City Region's economy.
- 5.5 Parkside East is one of the most significant employment opportunities in the Northern Powerhouse, at the heart of Liverpool City and Manchester City Regions. It is an opportunity for enhanced trade well beyond the Region. It has the potential to support the delivery of new employment development elsewhere in the area beyond Parkside East itself, and for this to operate in a more sustainable way.
- 5.6 There is potential to link Parkside East to iSec's sister facility at Thames Enterprise Park by rail as well as connectivity with many other parts of the UK, together with more local destinations such as the Port of Liverpool. The latter will help to further build trading links to the Americas, which could become more important to the UK economy post Brexit.
- 5.7 An Economic Impact Assessment is being prepared by iSec to outline the scale and type of employment and other economic benefits to be delivered through the development of Parkside East.
- 5.8 In summary, the delivery of Parkside East will contribute to economic recovery and job creation, help to build export potential, utilise and improve the local skills base, and bolster the area's logistics, manufacturing and other key growth sectors.

Addressing Need and Demand

- 5.9 The opportunity presented by Parkside East is unique and is of importance to ensuring the sustainable and continued economic growth of the Borough and the City Region more widely. The ability to provide a SRFI at Parkside East will be a 'game-changer' in addressing the imperative of moving freight from road to rail and in attracting new investment.
- 5.10 The vision for Parkside East is focussed on the creation of a 'SuperHub', with a specific sector focus on manufacturing, energy industry and R&D at its heart. Parkside East will respond to the need to create

higher value employment opportunities; it will not simply be another logistics park aimed at meeting traditional large-scale B8 requirements.

Strategic Rail Freight Interchange

- 5.11 There is a consistent evidence base that strongly supports the delivery of a Rail Freight Interchange at Parkside East. The importance of such facilities is recognised at the national policy level through the NPSNN and the NPPF, which supports the expansion of the existing networks of SRFI's to deal with new freight growth and also freight migrating from other locations.
- 5.12 Additionally, within the North West context a number of existing rail freight interchanges are legacy facilities constrained by surrounding development. This lends further support to Parkside East and enhancing generally the SRFI network within this part of the country.
- 5.13 The NPSNN does not set out any policy restrictions or geographical restraints on the number of SRFIs across locations to meet demand. The Secretary of State has confirmed that there are limited suitable locations for SRFIs and that it is for the market to determine the feasibility of particular proposals. As noted, the SRFI at Parkside East meets the locational, functional and other criteria and objectives set out in the NPSNN.
- 5.14 The policy support at national level is translated down to the regional and local level through a variety of strategies and evidential documents, which recognise the value and importance of Parkside East to addressing the need for a rail freight facility in this location. In addition, there is a body of evidence prepared by Network Rail, including various Freight Studies, which support the growth of SRFI's in the area.
- 5.15 Further justification and evidence on the case for the SRFI at Parkside East is included in the note prepared by Intermodality, included at **Appendix 4** of this Delivery Statement.

Strategic Logistics and Manufacturing

- 5.16 The evidence supports the delivery of a significant employment opportunity in this location, with an ability for it to help address the continuing demand for large-scale and strategically located unconstrained development opportunities that are well served by rail and the strategic road network. The M6 motorway corridor is acknowledged as a commercially attractive location for meeting necessary strategic employment growth.
- 5.17 The ability to provide a SRFI as part of the development of Parkside East makes this a unique strategic employment opportunity for St Helens and the wider area. This is a different 'offering' to other large-scale employment allocations within the City Region and the traditional predominantly road-based logistics operations that they tend to attract. iSec intends to prepare further analysis on need and demand to support the already substantial evidence base underpinning the proposed strategic employment allocation at Parkside East.
- 5.18 Due to its location, with good access to the motorway network and two major railway lines, Parkside East will to help deliver new economic growth in a way that also meets the drive towards reducing carbon footprints. It will make a major contribution to the ambition for a global freight, logistics and manufacturing hub serving the north of the UK, well aligned to the Northern Powerhouse transport and growth agenda.

Contribution to the Low Carbon Agenda

- 5.19 The SRFI to be provided at Parkside East will likely be one of the largest such facilities in the UK, with the potential benefit of relieving rail congestion at key points on the local network, as well as vital removal of significant volumes of freight off road. Sustainable connectivity and the decarbonisation agenda are important drivers and benefits of Parkside East and the City Region more widely, helping to deliver the

low carbon aspirations and relieving congestion on the road network. Other aspects of the proposed development at Parkside East, such as the proposed Energy and Sustainable Industries SuperHubs, will also contribute towards the objective of creating a low carbon economy.

- 5.20 The development of a SRFI at Parkside will bring substantial benefits in terms of modal shift of freight movement from road to rail, thereby greatly reducing carbon emissions and levels of potential congestion when compared with the development of purely road based logistics uses of an equivalent scale. This would not only be a benefit attributable to the employment uses accommodated at Parkside East itself, but also in supporting a reduction in the long-haul road freight associated with other employment operations in the local and wider area.
- 5.21 In addition to the SRFI, the scale and nature of the SuperHub model proposed for Parkside East will enable the clustering of complimentary activities. This will, in itself, create transport efficiencies, as illustrated in Figure 5.1 below, allowing a move from a traditional less efficient transportation model to one that better meets the needs of a modern sustainable economy.

Figure 5.1: The SuperHub Model



Part Six: The Delivery Plan

OWNERSHIP, OPERATOR AND MODEL

- 6.1 iSec are in control of land at Parkside East. Additionally, iSec are in advanced discussions with a major rail freight business to operate the proposed rail facility. As noted, the design and technical specification of the proposed SRFI has been developed in consultation with the proposed operator and Intermodality, iSec's specialist SRFI consultant advisors.
- 6.2 iSec, which is part of Marcol Group, has a 25 year track record and reputation for delivering major strategic logistics based developments. The proposals for Parkside East are based on a similar model to that being adopted for sister proposals at Thames Enterprise Park ("TEP"). These proposals are advancing through the planning process, with an outline planning application for the development submitted. Additionally, iSec has undertaken the remediation of land at TEP and there is potential for iSec to also act in a similar proactive capacity at Parkside East through, for example, the provision of certain infrastructure and enabling works.
- 6.3 It is envisaged that there will also be synergies between Parkside East and TEP, including the potential to run freight trains between the two facilities. Given the distance between them, this would allow rail freight movements to function at scale.

TRANSPORT

Rail Capacity

- 6.4 Network Rail submitted comments to the Council in early 2019 in response to consultation on the submission draft version of the Local Plan. In relation to Parkside East, Network Rail identified that feasibility work should be undertaken to understand the availability of space on the rail network to accommodate the SRFI.
- 6.5 To identify how many train paths are potentially available to serve the Parkside East site, a capacity and timetabling study has been commissioned through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The study is focussing on the following three locations for which capacity needs to be determined:
- Winsford South Junction (for Crewe and southern destinations);
 - Ribble Junction (for Preston and northern destinations); and
 - Ordsall Lane Junction (for Manchester and eastern destinations).
- 6.6 The expectation is that there will be minimal or no traffic needing to operate westwards towards Liverpool and hence, this does not need to be assessed. A number of scenarios and different assumptions are being considered as part of the study to ensure a robust and long-term assessment.
- 6.7 The study is being completed in consultation with a range of stakeholders including the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, iSec, St Helens Council, Network Rail, Transport for the North (TfN), Department of Transport, Langtree (who are promoting Parkside West), and train and freight operating companies.
- 6.8 In advance of this work, iSec, through specialist advisor's Intermodality, are already engaging with Network Rail to implement connection to the Liverpool to Manchester line which forms part of the national Strategic Freight Network. Network Rail has assigned an internal project sponsor to support the onward development of the proposals and main line freight access strategy.

Highways

- 6.9 The Parkside Link Road ("PLR") is being proposed by the Council as a means of promoting the comprehensive development of Parkside West (Phase 2) and Parkside East. Grant funding of circa

£24m has been secured from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR) to contribute to the delivery of the PLR. Funding is also being provided by the Council towards its delivery.

- 6.10 The planning application for the PLR was considered by St Helens Planning Committee on 17th December 2019 (application ref: P/2018/0249/FUL) where it was resolved to approve the scheme subject to conditions and referral to the Secretary of State. The application has been called in for determination by the Secretary of State, together with the application for Parkside West (Phase 1) and certain other applications for large strategic employment schemes involving the release of Green Belt land along the motorway corridor. iSec has issued a statement of support in relation to the call-in Inquiry for the PLR scheme, which is due to be heard early 2021.
- 6.11 The PLR provides a comprehensive highways solution for the delivery of land at both Parkside West and East. If the currently proposed PLR scheme did not take place, suitable alternative access options would need to be considered for the delivery of Parkside East, and this would be done working in collaboration with the Council, the LEP and others including Highways England. As a 'fallback position' iSec is to commission its own independent highways work to define and assess alternative highways options to deliver Parkside East in the unlikely event that the PLR scheme is not forthcoming.

DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER

- 6.12 Given the scale and nature of the development proposed for Parkside East, which includes a SRFI, iSec intend to progress the proposals under the Development Consent Order ("DCO") planning regime.
- 6.13 It is anticipated that time period from issuing information as part of the pre-application process through to issuing of DCO consent will be circa 3 years, with around 18 months at the pre-application stage, and a further 18 months from formal submission of the DCO application through the DCO coming into force. This assumed timeline is similar to a number of recent DCO examples including:
- Northampton Gateway Rail Freight Interchange (application reference number is TR050006);
 - East Midlands Gateway Rail Freight Interchange (application reference number is TR050002); and
 - Daventry International Rail Freight Interchange (application reference number is TR050001).
- 6.14 The intention is to commence this process at the end of 2020, starting with initial engagement with the Planning Inspectorate to agree matters such as consultation arrangements, timetable programming, main policy and other evidence documents, and the likely main matters for consideration through the DCO process.
- 6.15 An overview of the currently anticipated DCO programme is summarised in the Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1: Anticipated DCO Programme

Activity (Date)	Main Tasks
Pre-Application (Late 2020 – mid 2022)	Consultation; ES Scoping; Design development; technical assessments; application; EIA and draft Order preparation.
Acceptance (mid 2022)	DCO application validation.
Pre-Examination Activities (Autumn 2022)	Provision of additional information; pre-examination meetings; agreement of main matters for examination.
DCO Examination (Autumn 2022 – Mid 2023)	Hearing sessions; provision of additional information; pre-examination meetings; agreement of main matters for examination.

Activity (Date)	Main Tasks
DCO Recommendations and Decision (by end 2023)	DCO Examiner report drafting; provision of any additional information; issue of Examiner report to Secretary of State; SoS decision and Order confirmed.
Start of Site (Early 2024)	Commencement of on-site delivery of Parkside East.

PHASING AND PROGRAMME

- 6.16 The broad anticipated timeline and sequencing for the delivery of Parkside East is as follows:
- DCO process commences (2020/21);
 - Grant of DCO (end of 2023);
 - Delivery of SRFI (2024 to 2026); and
 - Delivery of the 'Superhub' (2024 to 2029-2034) – an estimated 5 to 10 year timeframe from the end of 2023 is identified for the development of the Superhub, within the emerging plan period, with the precise timing of development influenced by prevailing market demand.
- 6.17 The SRFI railway infrastructure is a key component to the proposals and this is currently identified as being one of the earlier phases of the overall development (and as noted, iSec is in advanced discussions with an operator for the SRFI). Phasing and overall programme will continue to be kept under review and refined although it is probable that elements of the 'Superhub' will be in place before the SRFI rail infrastructure.
- 6.18 In this regard, the Secretary of State recognises that the construction of commercial buildings and the construction of a new railway involve different timescales and that it is entirely reasonable that a commercial undertaking should seek to generate income from the warehousing (or manufacturing) facilities before the railway becomes operational.

FREEPORT OPPORTUNITY

- 6.19 iSec is seeking to promote the opportunity for a Freeport at Parkside East, (potentially as an inland port as part of a future wider multi-port Freeport for the Liverpool City Region) and is in discussion with the Combined Authority. A response was made earlier this year to the Government's consultation on Freeports and the intention is to engage further in this process, including through the 'Call for Freeport Sites' which will likely take place at the end of 2020.
- 6.20 Whilst the success of Parkside East is not dependent on its designation as a Freeport, given the locational, transportation and connectivity advantages of the proposals, it does represent a significant opportunity as a future Freeport, including as part of a wider potential Freeport for the Liverpool City Region.

Part Seven: Summary and Conclusions

- 7.1 This Delivery Statement has been prepared on behalf of our client, iSec, which is part of the Marcol Group with a 25 year track record and reputation for delivering major strategic logistics based developments.
- 7.2 iSec are in control of land at Parkside East, which is a strategic development site located adjacent to Junction 22 of the M6 motorway and the Chat Moss railway line. The land is allocated in the draft St Helens Local Plan for a Strategic Employment Site (Site 7EA in Policy LPA04) suitable for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange ("SRFI") and industrial / warehousing and distribution.
- 7.3 iSec's masterplan for Parkside East delivers the draft local plan policy, with the provision a major SRFI and a new employment 'SuperHub' for the North West of England. The designs of the SRFI are being developed and refined with a proposed operator. The proposals for the SuperHub element of the development mirror those being advanced by iSec at Thames Enterprise Park next to London Gateway Port, which serves the conurbation of London.
- 7.4 The masterplan has been informed by technical and environmental studies and assessments and further work is being progressed, including in relation to railway pathway capacity and economic impact. In developing the proposals, iSec has worked closely with St Helens Council and others such as the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and Network Rail.
- 7.5 In summary, work has been taking place over a number of years to evolve the proposals for Parkside East and the location is a well-established opportunity as a location for a SRFI and major employment development. iSec has a strong track record in the delivery of complex major developments such as this and they are in advanced discussions with a well-known rail freight business to operate the proposed rail facilities.
- 7.6 The evidence base prepared to inform the draft Local Plan confirms major economic benefits of Parkside East. This is also reflected in studies and strategies prepared for the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority which recognise Parkside East as an inter-modal infrastructure project of key importance.
- 7.7 Parkside East is important to realising a number of the strategic growth priorities of the City Region's Local Industrial Strategy and Recovery Plan, and the Government's 'levelling up' agenda aimed at addressing regional disparities. Parkside East will deliver the sustained growth of important employment sectors and respond to the need to create higher value employment opportunities. It is not intended to simply be another warehouse park aimed at meeting traditional large-scale B8 requirements; rather the vision is to create a development that will contribute more to economic recovery and job creation, help to build export potential, utilise and improve the local skills base, and bolster the area's manufacturing, low-carbon and other key growth sectors.
- 7.8 Parkside East aligns to the economic and transport objectives for the Northern Powerhouse, and it will address recognised issues for the Region such as moving towards the efficient movement of freight in a way that minimises environmental impacts and supports a shift towards a low carbon economy.
- 7.9 Given the scale and nature of the SRFI development proposed for Parkside East, proposals will be taken forward under the Development Consent Order ("DCO") planning regime. It is anticipated that a DCO could be granted in early 2024, which will then be followed by the phased delivery of the development over a 5-10 year period up to 2034.

Appendix 1: Site Plan

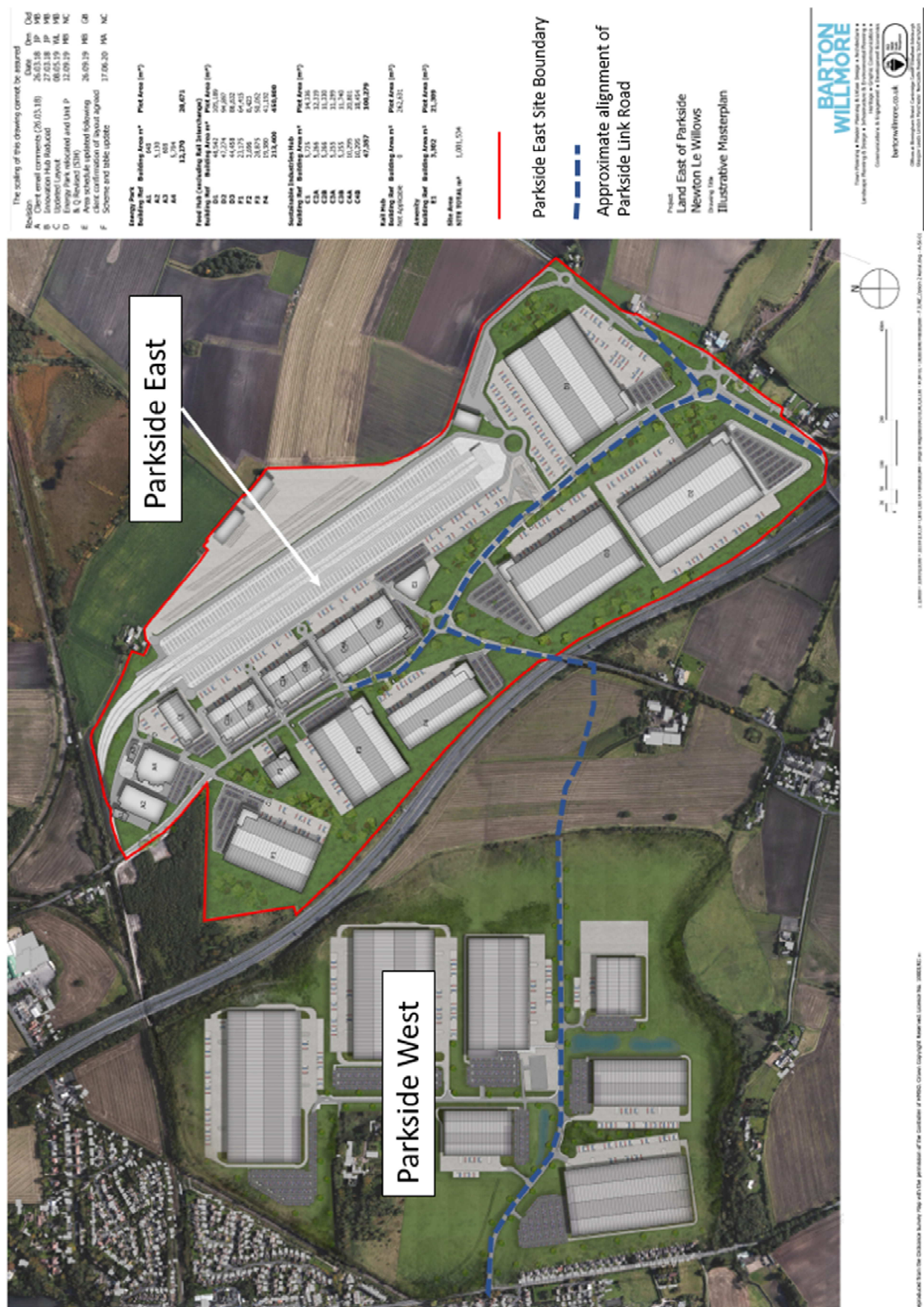


Note: whilst iSec also control land outside of the proposed Local Plan allocation boundary for Parkside East, the masterplan being developed by iSec is contained within the proposed allocation boundary.

Appendix 2: Parkside Link Road Plan



Appendix 3: Parkside East Masterplan



Appendix 4: Intermodality SRFI Technical Note

1 The role and importance of Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges

1.1 The development of rail freight interchanges, 1955 - 2000

- 1.1.1 Rail freight interchanges (RFI) typically provide facilities for the storage and/or handling of goods between trains and other modes of transport, principally road and sea. Given that the vast majority of movements of goods by rail will involve road haulage at one of both ends of the rail transit, RFI are therefore integral to achieving mode shift of goods to rail for part of the journey, by providing the necessary interfaces with road haulage. RFI will either provide a straight transfer of goods between rail and road (eg lifting of containers between trains and trucks), or will enable goods to be moved by rail to adjacent storage and processing facilities, from where the goods will then be held prior to onward sortation and delivery by road.
- 1.1.2 Between the 1950's and 1990's, the number of RFI declined dramatically, reflecting the downward trend in traffic volumes and the changing pattern of rail-based logistics. Previously, a multitude of RFI of various sizes existed to serve industry and wider general merchandise traffic, with most passenger stations having some form of goods facilities, together generating a profusion of individual wagon loads of freight. As British Rail moved away from this inefficient and unprofitable wagon-load business and focussed instead on train-load business, most of the smaller RFI were closed. The redundant RFI sites were gradually sold off for alternative uses, or became increasingly surrounded by other development which then constrained the scale, nature and working hours of such sites.
- 1.1.3 In recent years, the unprecedented growth in containerised (intermodal) traffic moved by rail has been facilitated by expansion of interchange facilities. Around the coast, the major ports of Felixstowe, Southampton and London Gateway have invested in new quayside RFI facilities. In 2017, Felixstowe moved a record-breaking 1 million TEU¹ by rail, and is now working with Network Rail to expand rail traffic throughput further, from 33 trains per day at present to 47 trains per day in and out of the port. In parallel, investment has also been made in a network of existing inland RFI (mainly BR-era inner-city rail terminals), as well as a small number of new, larger facilities (Strategic RFI or SRFI).
- 1.1.4 The National Policy Statement on National Networks (NPSNN) states that there is a compelling need to expand the SRFI network, but rationalisation of RFI during the last 50 years has meant that many areas either no longer have any interchange facilities, or have "legacy" sites which often suffer from poor location, accessibility, capacity or facilities. Independent research by Sheffield Hallam University in 1999 (Rail Freight Growth and the Land Use Planning System) noted the absence of sites (our highlighting):

Finding sites for the larger terminals and freight villages within existing urban areas is very difficult. Where there are existing rail freight facilities, as at Willesden in north London, there is usually insufficient space, and disused facilities will probably have been sold on and developed.

What is required is large sites on the edge of metropolitan areas at points where the rail network intersects with the trunk road network: these factors combine to mean that suitable sites can often only be found outside existing urban areas, and such locations may well be subject to green belt policies and/or other restrictive planning policies.

¹ Twenty-Foot Equivalent Unit, a measure of container traffic throughput

There will only be a limited number of rail accessible sites in a local authority area that have potential for rail freight. The priority for such sites must be to retain/secure rail freight development on them, and this should override other demands such as the need to develop housing on brownfield sites, or to retain low grade farmland for agriculture as part of an urban containment strategy.

1.1.5 Almost 20 years later, the NPSNN shares this view:

Given the locational requirements and the need for effective connections for both rail and road, the number of locations suitable for SRFIs will be limited, which will restrict the scope for developers to identify viable alternative sites.²

1.2 Growth of Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges

- 1.2.1 During the 1990's, the prospect of the Channel Tunnel fixed rail link, combined with renewed interest in rail through the break-up of the former British Rail freight business, saw the emergence of a new generation of interchanges. Sites such as DIRFT (Rugby) and Hams Hall (Coleshill) in the Midlands spearheaded a small number of private-sector and public/private developments, primarily intended to create better access to and from mainland Europe via the Channel Tunnel.
- 1.2.2 Whilst the evolution of rail freight traffic through these sites has tended more towards deepsea and domestic intermodal traffic (notably, over much shorter distances than Channel Tunnel services), the success in securing occupiers, employment and rail freight traffic led Government to enhance planning policy in subsequent years to encourage expansion of the network.
- 1.2.3 "Strategic" RFI are distinguished from other RFI by virtue of:
- The of scale freight activity on site, compared to standalone RFI without associated warehouses;
 - Location, typically at the intersection of major railway and highway networks on the edges or between main population centres, as opposed to inner-city RFI sites; and
 - Number – 8 SRFI are operational, with at least 8 further sites currently being commissioned, under construction or proposed, contrasting with several hundred individual RFI sites.
- 1.2.4 For over twenty years from Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 in 1992 to the NPSNN in 2014, the Government has consistently sought to encourage the greater use of rail for freight transport, in part through the private-sector provision of RFI facilities. Policy notes the need for a relatively small number (compared to road-served distribution parks) of larger "Strategic" RFI, to create a significant amount of distribution floorspace and goods traffic around the associated interchange facilities.
- 1.2.5 Such developments increase the level of rail-served floorspace available to companies wishing to occupy such facilities in the local area. They also help consolidate local freight traffic activity into that needed to make trainload rail freight services, bringing together traffic from on-site occupiers as well as from other local companies in the hinterland, who may not wish to (re)locate to site, but who would still wish to have access to the rail network.

² Para 2.56

- 1.2.6 SRFI provide the critical opportunity for occupiers and other end users to have access to a choice of rail and road transport on a day-to-day basis, which would not be possible at exclusively road-served distribution parks. SRFI provide “incubators” for the development of new rail freight services, attracting occupiers to site who may not initially make use of rail, but who over time would become familiar with the adjacent rail freight facilities and services and in time make their own conversion of some traffic to rail.
- 1.2.7 This point was foreseen in the early evolution of Government policy on SRFI development, and latterly confirmed by the experience of occupiers at SRFI. In the case of Tesco and Eddie Stobart, each having taken a significant level of floorspace at DIRFT in the mid-1990's, the companies gradually developed their respective use of rail from individual containers moved by rail from the ports, through to operating multiple trainloads per day from 2006 onwards (up to 7 per day at present).
- 1.2.8 The Freight Transport Association (FTA, now Logistics UK) has highlighted the work of retailers in achieving mode shift to rail, with the majority of this involving use of SRFI at one or both ends of the rail transits. The Table below summarises mode shift by retailer. Research by the Campaign for Better Transport indicates that use of rail via DIRFT alone has led to 64 million lorry miles saved per annum.³

Table 1 Mode shift to rail by retailers (source FTA 2012)

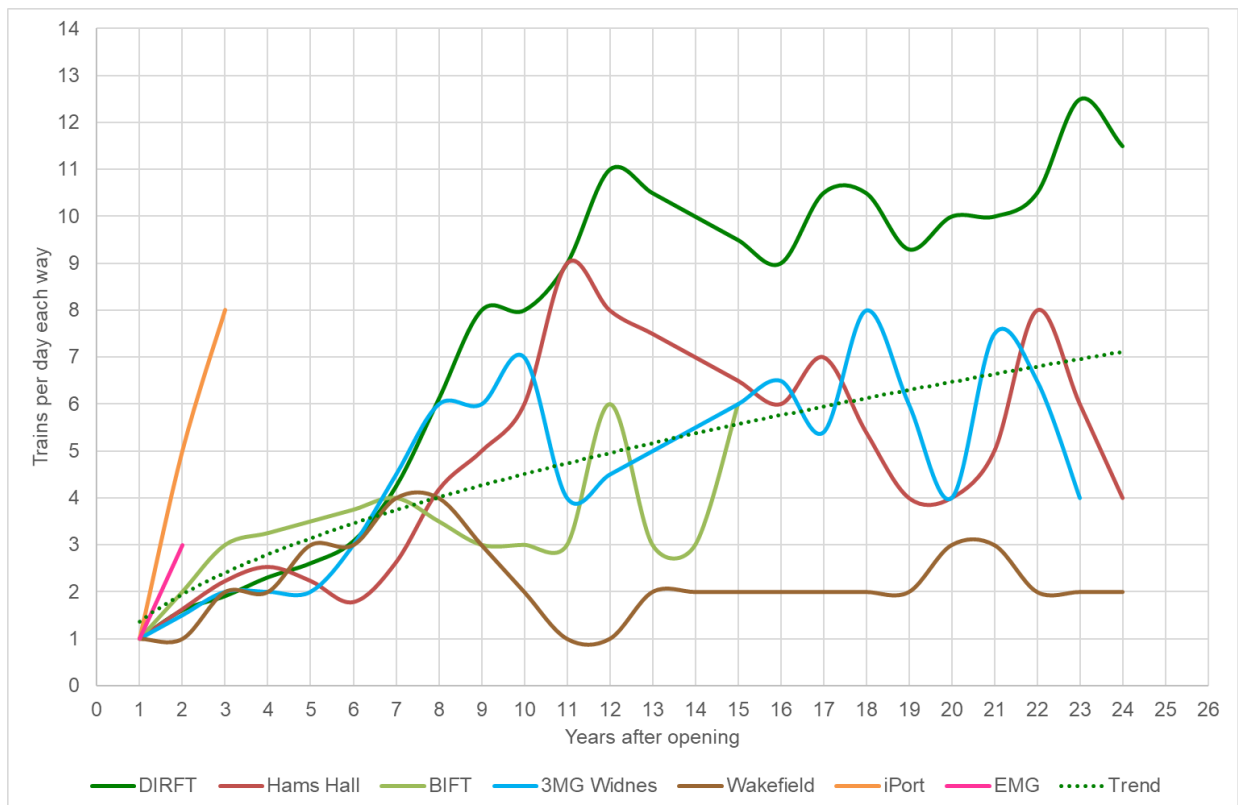
Retailer	HGV journeys saved per year	Road miles saved	CO ₂ saved	Comment
Tesco	110,000	41 million	39,000 tonnes	Rail freight is part of our ongoing commitment to be a zero carbon business by 2050. It is the most sustainable way of transporting goods across the country
Asda	10,300	5.54 million	5,300 tonnes	Any journey over 350 miles, if you have depots close to the railhead at either end, can stack up financially for rail
B&Q	10,000	3 million	4,237	So far the service levels on rail are good. We haven't been let down yet
Sainsbury's	4,200	1.6 million	1,500 tonnes	Rail clearly delivers significant environmental benefits and it has the potential to offer cost savings. We aim to exploit it as much as possible
Marks & Spencer	1,200	655,000	800 tonnes	Rail distribution saves time, costs less and, crucially, as we move towards our ambitious Plan A commitments, cuts carbon emissions from our transport operations
Morrisons	1,560	72,000	58 tonnes	Environmental benefits and cost savings go hand in hand. If we had the right opportunity, we would move more product off road and onto rail without hesitation
Co-operative	520	335,000	318 tonnes	The reliability of service has been excellent
Waitrose	260	156,000	0.15% of total transport CO ₂	I can see the environmental benefits of rail and intuitively I want to do more. But what's offered by the rail freight industry needs to fit our requirements better

³ <https://bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/integrated-transport-a-new-generation.pdf>

1.3 Growth in traffic from recent SRFI developments

- 1.3.1 The Figure below shows the evolution of rail freight traffic from the existing operational SRFI, noting the speed with which one of the latest generation of SRFI (iPort Doncaster) has achieved 4 trains per day each way (the target for SRFI as defined in the Planning Act 2008), compared to first-generation SRFI.
- 1.3.2 In addition, consents have been granted for two more SRFI in and around the Midlands, at Northampton Gateway (6 million sq ft) and at West Midlands Interchange (Cannock, 8 million sq ft). Unlike the Midlands which now has 6 sites in operation or with consent, and at least 2 further sites in planning, no further SRFI proposals have come forward in the North West region beyond the existing sites at 3MG and Port Salford.

Figure 1 Evolution of rail freight traffic through operational SRFI in England

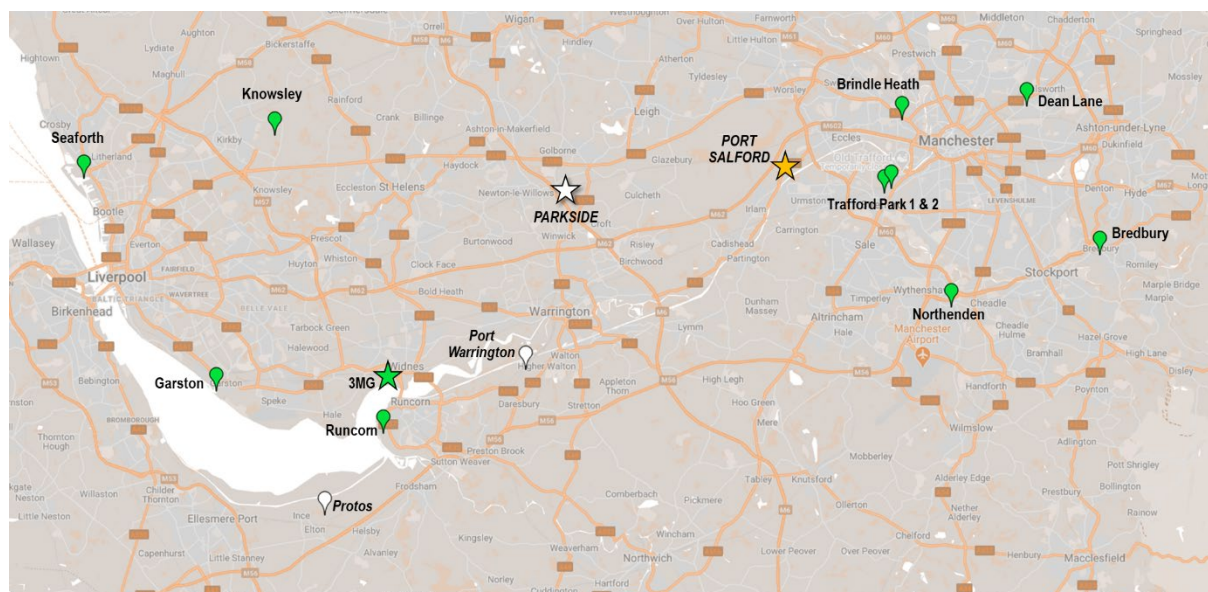


2 SRFI provision in the North West

2.1 Overview

- 2.1.1 The North West region is home to 7.3 million people, some 11% of the population of the UK,⁴ but generates 228 million tonnes of freight on road haulage, around 16% of the UK total,⁵ the difference in national shares in part explained by the presence of Liverpool Superport and associated traffic.
- 2.1.2 As with all other regions of the UK, the majority of road freight tonnage starts and finishes within the region itself (114 million tonnes), but otherwise traffic is concentrated on the nearest adjoining regions in the Midlands and Yorkshire & Humberside.
- 2.1.3 For warehousing floorspace, the region accounts for 70 million sq ft or 16% of total floorspace in England.⁶ In terms of SRFI capacity, it is worth noting that the East and West Midlands regions each generate similar levels of road haulage tonnage to the North West, and account for 21% and 16% of warehousing floorspace respectively, but each have at least 4 SRFI either operational, consented or proposed, compared to the 1 SRFI (and 1 under construction) in the North West at present.
- 2.1.4 The Figure below shows the availability of intermodal RFI and SRFI (★) in terms of sites already in operation (green), under construction (orange) or proposed (white). Most of the operational RFI handle refuse-derived fuel at Runcorn, Knowsley, Brindle Heath, Dean Lane, Bredbury and Northenden (and proposed at Protos). Those inland RFI handling general merchandise traffic (Garston and Trafford Park) are now surrounded by other development uses with little or no room to expand.

Figure 2 SRFI & RFI in the North West (colour indicates operational status)



⁴ ONS mid-year estimate 2019

⁵ DfT Road Freight Statistics 2018 – figure shown for GB-registered vehicles only

⁶ Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Distribution Study 2014

- 2.1.5 In the medium to long term (beyond 5-10 years), existing inner-urban sites may come under increasing pressure from network capacity constraints (the Castlefield rail corridor through Manchester being the subject of considerable scrutiny at present) or redevelopment for higher-value uses such as residential. The risk is that the investment, employment and rail modal shift opportunities associated with SRFI then gravitate to surrounding areas with greater levels of rail-served floorspace and interchange facilities.

2.2 The role of Parkside

- 2.2.1 The Parkside area has been under consideration for SRFI facilities since first being identified by the national rail network infrastructure manager (Railtrack at the time) in the mid-1990's. The failure of the subsequent Parkside and Trafford Interchange SRFI schemes to make progress has reduced the North West region to having only 2 SRFI sites available at present. Parkside is equidistant from Liverpool and Manchester, at the intersection of east-west and north-south strategic transport corridors. The site therefore offers an unique opportunity to enhance existing SRFI provision and associated rail-served floorspace, complementing their respective city-centric catchment areas with a central location and additional floorspace at the heart of the region.
- 2.2.2 To help determine an appropriate scale of rail freight interchange facilities on site, iSec has secured the support of an anchor rail freight operating company (FOC) which already moves containers by rail to and from the region. Based on the FOC's requirements to create an open-access interchange around which to consolidate operations in the region, the masterplan envisages an interchange covering over 20 hectares, with two main phases each having 8 x 800m sidings configured for gantry crane operation. This provides for container storage capacity of nearly 9,000 TEU, the equivalent of 100 trainloads. Access will be provided for electric and diesel-powered trains up to the rail freight interchange, from where on-site pilot locomotives would move trains to and from the handling area. Traversers at the southern end of the rail freight interchange (as used at Felixstowe) enable locomotives to switch between sidings as required.
- 2.2.3 The interchange would be linked to 800m length reception sidings constructed parallel with the Liverpool – Manchester main line. These reception sidings, like on the on-site rail freight facilities, have been designed for open-access operation, offering scope for other rail freight services to use these for recessing, allowing other trains to pass if required, creating wider network benefits for rail services and users. The rail access arrangements are also designed to interface with the separate proposals for the former Parkside Colliery site, allowing maximum rail accessibility into both sites.
- 2.2.4 In this way, the proposals provide for long-term expansion potential in line with the NPSNN,⁷ starting with the existing available network capacity to provide for the immediate requirements of the site as a SRFI (ie at least 4 trains per day through the site). From here, the site can then expand in line with the wider capabilities of the SFN, to cater for additional demand for rail freight services. This may include consolidation of traffic displaced from other legacy RFI by capacity constraints or development pressures, again in line with the NPSNN.⁸

⁷ Paragraph 4.88

⁸ Paragraph 2.58

3 Conclusions

- 3.1.1 The Government wishes to increase the level of freight traffic shifted from road to rail in support of wider economic and environmental policy objectives, rail having the ability to reduce emissions by over three-quarters relative to road transport.⁹ To achieve this, the Government has stated in the NPSNN that there is a compelling need to expand the network of larger Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges, which are intended to accommodate various combinations of rail-served warehousing, container handling facilities, manufacturing and processing activities. The Government has concluded that the alternative options, including reliance on road haulage or the existing network of Rail Freight Interchanges (Strategic or otherwise) cannot address this need.
- 3.1.2 The Government considers that SRFI capacity needs to be provided at a wide range of locations, to provide the flexibility needed to match the changing demands of the market, possibly with traffic moving from existing RFI to new larger facilities and/or through development of co-located “clusters” of SRFI. This policy has been borne out by the experience of the 8 operational SRFI in the UK, each of which has generated new rail freight services carrying traffic for users on site and in the immediate catchment area.
- 3.1.3 The Government has stated in the NPSNN that the logistics industry should determine where SRFI should be developed, with any judgement of viability then being made within the market framework, and taking account of Government interventions such as, for instance, investment in the Strategic Rail Freight Network. Due to the locational requirements and the need for effective connections for both rail and road, the Government has acknowledged that the number of locations suitable for SRFIs will be limited, restricting the scope for developers to identify viable alternative sites. The re-use of previously developed land may not be possible, the Government noting that brownfield land alone may not be economically or commercially feasible. Due to these requirements, it may be that countryside and/or Green Belt locations are required for SRFIs.
- 3.1.4 The nationally-significant nature of SRFI projects qualifying under the NPSNN and Planning Act 2008 is reflected in consent being granted for all four SRFI projects progressed through the Development Consent Orders (DCO) route, namely DIRFT phase 3, East Midlands Gateway, Northampton Gateway and West Midlands Interchange. All these sites have been developed on greenfield sites, the last on a Green Belt site, in each case being approved by the Secretary of State in response to the provisions of the NPS.
- 3.1.5 The North West currently only has access to a single SRFI at 3MG with a second under construction at Port Salford, the two sites providing a relatively small level of rail-served floorspace relative to that available in neighbouring regions. Without additional SRFI provision in the region, there is a risk of the rail-related investment and employment opportunities being lost to other parts of the UK where more sites are available.
- 3.1.6 The Parkside East site can make a significant contribution to local and national strategic priorities, providing a site at the centre of the North West region alongside the motorway and Strategic Freight Network at W10/W12 gauge, with a track layout on site capable of handling trains up to 775m. The site can therefore offer the same opportunities to generate new rail freight traffic as demonstrated by all the other operational SRFI.

⁹ https://www.raildeliverygroup.com/files/Publications/2018-06_rail_freight_working_for_britain.pdf (page 12)