

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Acquisition of Land Act 1981

Inquiry into:

**THE ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL (ST HELENS TOWN CENTRE) COMPULSORY
PURCHASE ORDER 2022**

St Helens Bus Station

**Statement of Evidence
of**

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of Merseytravel

13 July 2023

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1. QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

- 1.1 My name is Andrew Cairns, I have a BA (Hons) in Business Administration, and I have been a Member of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport since 1998. I have been the Infrastructure Manager at Merseytravel since March 2020.
- 1.2 I have worked in the public transport and transport planning sectors for 28 years, holding a variety of positions and grades in both the public and private sector. I have been involved in a broad range of transport projects, most notably in the field of public transport. I was a Principal Officer at Merseytravel between 2001 and 2007 with responsibility for delivering a number of bus capital projects, and I was part of the core team that successfully developed and built the new bus station at Liverpool One in Liverpool city centre. Between 2008 and 2020 I worked for transport engineering consultants (Mouchel from 2008 to 2016, where I was team leader and operational lead, and WSP from 2017 to 2020 where, as Technical Director, I led the Transport team in the Northwest). During that period, I fronted a number of significant studies and pieces of work (including leading the Trans Pennine Tunnel Study for the Department for Transport, National Highways and Transport for the North between 2016 and 2020; A Streets for All programme for Transport for Greater Manchester; and, Stoke Councils Transforming Cities Bid).
- 1.3 My role in this Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) and the First Phase Development (which includes the redevelopment of the St Helens bus station) has been as part of the Merseytravel team in supporting St Helens Borough Council, since May 2020, in the redevelopment of the bus station as part of the wider regeneration of the town centre (“the Scheme”). My role has involved establishing Merseytravel’s requirements as end user of the redeveloped bus station and ensuring that all operational and safety requirements and specifications are clear and understood by all parties (St Helens Borough Council, WSP, and English Cities Fund (ECF)). I have also played a key role in the option selection and identification of the location and design of the redeveloped bus station. I have also been a key individual in the discussions with St Helens Borough Council regarding the scheme delivery models.
- 1.4 Having worked for Merseytravel for over ten years (2001 to 2007 and 2020 to date) I have a particularly good knowledge and understanding of our infrastructure and our assets, and the public transport network (buses) that serve those assets and the various local communities, including St Helens, and the towns bus station.

1.5 Merseytravel is the strategic transport advisor to the LCRCA (Liverpool City Region Combined Authority) and is also responsible, on its behalf, for transport delivery. Merseytravel’s focus is on supporting the economic growth of the Liverpool City Region by improving connectivity across the region and beyond, supporting and maintaining an integrated transport network and improving the customer experience. LCRCA is led by the Metro Mayor and brings together the Liverpool City Regions six local authorities – Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley, St Helens, Wirral and Halton. Through their devolved powers LCRCA works with all six local authorities to make decision, plan investments, and deliver initiatives in transport, employment, culture, digital and housing.

2. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

2.1 The structure of my evidence is set out in paragraph 2.2. In broad terms my statement of evidence will describe the Merseytravel input to the scheme to date. It will include detail on that input and the broader context around the Liverpool City Regions ambitions and plans, and Central Government’s position with regard to bus travel.

2.2 My statement of evidence is structured as follows:

- Section 3 provides the background, outlining the recent history of the bus station in St Helens town centre and its current operation.
- Section 4 provides the ‘case for change’ i.e., why a new, improved, and larger bus station is required to serve the town and residents of St Helens and the Liverpool City Region.
- Section 5 documents the extensive option identification process undertaken, together with the details of the option assessment and selection work that has been explored. This cross references strongly to the work and evidence of transport consultants WSP who led this piece of work on behalf of the ECF partners and St Helens Borough Council.
- Sections 6 and 7 summaries the evidence given in this proof and presents the case for, and the reasons why, the CPO is required.
- Section 8 is my statement of truth.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Current facility

3.2 The current bus station was built in the 1990s to provide significant enhancements to St Helens public transport provision. At that time, the initial plans for the bus station development included the land upon which the Swan public house and Town Fryer chip shop are presently located. However, the decision was taken to retain the two local food and drink retail premises, which created a significant development constraint, meaning the bus station was brought forward on a limited footprint creating a bus station with a major internal division, (i.e., split into two distinct halves) which has restricted the operation of the bus station since its inception and subsequent build.

3.3 The 1990's bus station design, without the land at the north-eastern section of the bus station area (where the Swan and the Town Fryer currently stand), dictated the station's vehicular access and egress routes, and resulted in a station of two distinct halves. Three bus stands could be used in an eastbound direction and six stands could be used in a westbound direction, with no internal vehicular link capable between the two halves. Nevertheless, buses can move between all of the current bus stands by use of Bickerstaffe Street and Corporation Street which abut the bus station, albeit outside its perimeter. This design is the current facility, which is now sought to be redeveloped, a plan of which is appended to this report (**Appendix 1**).

3.4 The existing bus concourse has nine internal stands with three and four external stops located on Bickerstaffe Street and Corporation Street respectively. The station has circa 160 services arriving / departing during the peak hours and has no practical additional capacity to cater for future growth in bus services in its current layout. The existing bus station therefore requires redevelopment and expansion. Photographs of the current bus station are included in **Appendix 2**.

3.5 Constraints of the current facility

3.6 In this context, the 1990's design has therefore resulted in a facility with several significant operational constraints and safety concerns:

- Any vehicles travelling between the two distinct sections of the bus station must circulate on the external highway. This is operationally less efficient, reducing the

bus station capacity and reducing the ability to group services by common destination which is an integral element to how Merseytravel manages its bus stations for ease of use by passengers, and, with services making additional turning movements in and out of the facility, this increases the risk of collisions with pedestrians and creates additional noise and vehicle emissions within the public realm. This also causes additional peak time congestion, slows down the efficiency of the operation and impinges on the management of the facility as Merseytravel has no control or jurisdiction over the public highway immediately outside the facility.

- A reduced capacity, meaning three bus stops had to be retained on the highway for intensive use along Bickerstaff Street. This is more difficult for Merseytravel’s bus station staff to monitor and manage these vehicles, whilst being unsightly and noisy for pedestrians. They have to spread their resources accordingly between the facility and these highway stops. It means they can miss key customer interventions or support when needed as they are effectively dealing with issues “off site.” The on-street nature of the Bickerstaffe Street stops additionally means that these facilities have to be managed under a completely different regime to the stops within the bus station itself.
- At the time of the 1990 design, some functional elements of the former St Helens Corporation Hall Street depot (now the Northwest Museum of Road Transport) were retained, allowing some bus layover to be taken on to the northern section of Hall Street. Such capacity has now gone, as the depot has been converted.
- The size of the 1990 design also meant that some bus layover (layover is a space where driver's park buses between services, which can vary in time, depending on the purpose of the layover) had to be retained on Corporation Street, a requirement that has subsequently increased following the loss of the layover facilities on Hall Street, adjacent to the former depot. This means that buses are parked on the highway and not within the formal bus station curtilage. This means that there are challenges for Merseytravel’s bus station staff to have oversight, and responsibility for the safe movement of vehicles between stands. This is set out in the Merseytravel Bus Station Agreement (**Appendix 3**).

- The number of stands, which limited the capacity of the station, and the resultant three-platform arrangement, has made overall operation cumbersome and has precluded the ability to grow and meet new demands. The three on Bickerstaff Street, that exist outside of the facility, were developed on the principal of demand, and need at the time. They couldn't be housed inside the footprint, so they were grouped together for easier management and use than separated out elsewhere. But as detailed elsewhere, this creates issues for staffing, management, and public use alike. This is particularly pertinent as the Liverpool City Region aims to increase the use of more sustainable forms of travel through its proposed radical reform of the bus network (Bus Reform – see section 4 for more detail) and the challenging targets for decarbonising and achieving agreed net zero targets (further detail on LCRC environmental targets and policies are presented in section 4). In respect of St Helens Bus Station, St Helens Borough Council and the ECF Development Partnership have indicated that Merseytravel should plan for patronage growth in the region of 11% during the life of the current Town Centre Plan.
- The requirement for continued dependence on lay-over and passenger stands outside the bus station itself has also hampered travel opportunities and caused some significant safety concerns. Hampered in the sense that people have to move out of the facility to make journeys. This can put people off from a TravelSafe perspective, particularly in the evening and weekends when the area is not as busy. By moving all of the passenger facilities, and most bus movements between lay-over spaces and bus stands, to within the Bus Station this will significantly reduce the potential for vehicle – vehicle, and vehicle -pedestrian conflicts. It will also allow a more rational and efficient distribution of services to bus stands within a more controlled environment enhancing coherence to passengers and the publicity / guidance that can be provided to passengers.
- The current bus station layout causes some pedestrian severance and pedestrian safety issues for those walking across the town centre, which would become a very much greater problem in the proposed new town layout if the current layout was retained. The chief safety concern is having to traverse between the bus station and the outside stops, and vice versa. These other stops are outside the footprint of the bus station and are not under staff monitoring or CCTV in the same way as the rest of the facility. For some people, particularly the old and more vulnerable, a safety

concern only has to be perceived for it to become a barrier to travel. This would only become a greater problem if the current facility were retained as there is an anticipation and aspiration to increase patronage and bus use generally.

- The current bus station was designed to 1990's standards and consequently has some significant concerns with regard to poor levels of accessibility for those with mobility limitations. For example, standards around level boarding and the creation of 'step free' routes, no longer allow any kind of upstand and need to be flush. BS8300 is a British Code of Practice that sets out the requirements of how buildings should be designed, constructed and maintained to meet the needs of disabled people as well as create an accessible and inclusive environment for them. This was updated in 2018 and included a broad range of recommendations on inclusive design and provision of fully accessible routes for buildings, which in this case impacts on the travel centre. Overarching this is the Equalities Act (2010), which puts a requirement on all providers / organisations to deliver services and facilities which do not discriminate against the nine characteristics defined in the Act.
- The current structures are now showing their age in some areas, and the very popularity of the bus station means that the constraints, which have been with the station since its reopening, now need to be addressed.

3.7 **Redeveloping the current bus station**

3.8 Given the very significant problems with the bus station, discussions between St Helens Borough Council and Merseytravel commenced in 2019 regarding the possible redevelopment of the existing bus station. These conversations were held following the publication of the St Helens Town Centre Strategy and the aim of the Council to explore a comprehensive redevelopment of the town centre. This was seen as an opportunity to rectify the design constraints introduced within the 1990's layout and bring forward a higher capacity and safe bus station, fit for the 21st Century, consistent with national, regional and local planning and transport policy imperatives to reduce reliance in the private car and maximise the opportunities for public transport in town centres.

3.9 The importance of the planned town centre redevelopment was heightened by the simultaneous development of proposals for St Helens to be adopted as the first corridor within the Liverpool City Region's Green Bus Routes Programme, with the relevant corridor (bus route 10A) terminating at St Helens Bus Station. The Green Bus Routes programme is a

cornerstone of both LCRCAs Bus Strategy published in 2016 (**Ref 1**) and the more recent LCRCAs BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan in 2022) (**Ref 2**). The Green Bus Routes programme aim is to make bus services more attractive through investment in the highway network to make bus journeys faster and more reliable, which will benefit local communities through improved connectivity, reducing congestion, boosting local economies, and improving air quality (through more people using buses and buses moving to alternative fuels technology, in this case hydrogen) for everyone. The programme began in 2020 and investment is due to continue throughout the current central government funding period (up to March 2027). Route 10A is the first of these corridors and it is anticipated that the scheme for this route will be delivered in 2024 and 2025. A new high quality bus station fit for the 21st century will complement this investment and ensure that the overall customer experience is enhanced.

- 3.10 Merseytravel have responsibility for managing the operations of all bus stations across the Liverpool City Region, including the current bus station in St Helens town centre. Merseytravel has guidelines outlining the minimum requirements for these types of facilities including standards around layouts, accessibility and back office /support functions. These requirements are explained in more detail within section 5 and ensure that for any redeveloped and/or new facility the standards match, or where possible, exceed those standards so that Merseytravel can continue to efficiently manage such a facility, and provide a high-quality customer experience for bus passengers, which is future-proofed such that there is the opportunity for further capacity.
- 3.11 A chronology of the meetings and discussions in developing a potential new bus station in St Helens town centre, from the Merseytravel perspective, is included as **Appendix 4**.

4. THE WIDER CASE FOR CHANGE

4.1 St Helens Town Centre Strategy (2017-2027)

- 4.1.1 The St Helens Town Centre Strategy (2017-2027) (**CD G5, page 5**) was published and adopted by St Helens Borough Council in 2017, which sets out the direction and vision for the town centre over the next ten years and identified the need to redevelop the bus station as a priority due to its capacity issues, dated format and infrastructure, together with its potential to inhibit town centre growth being

delivered via sustainable travel modes and the opportunities for new services in the future.

4.1.2 Merseytravel and the LCRC were supportive of this rationale to redevelop the bus station as part of the wider town centre redevelopment particularly as St Helens has a high level of deprivation, with 33.4% of households facing deprivation in one form or another (**Ref 3**). A large number of localities as defined by LSOA's (Lower Super Output Area) close to the town centre have deprivation indicators closer to 40% and are therefore classified as being within the 10% most deprived areas with the UK. This, coupled with a high number of areas which have limited access to a private car, means that access to good, reliable public transport services is essential for many residents to access key employment and educational destinations and to facilitate future economic growth within the town centre. The importance of a good and reliable public transport offer within St Helens is also demonstrated in the 'Mode Choice Surveys' which are undertaken in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) on a periodic basis to identify the proportion of people entering St Helens centre by each travel mode. The most relevant survey, in light of the proposal to redevelop the bus station, was carried out in 2016/17 and an extract of some key figures from these survey reports are shown in **Appendix 5**.

4.1.3 The results of the mode choice survey indicate that although private vehicle trips make up the majority of trips into the town centre, bus trips make up the second largest share of overall trips into St Helens Town Centre with 26.2% and 31.2% of people arriving by bus in the AM and inter-peak periods respectively. This shows that there is a high reliance on bus travel into the town centre with relatively small numbers of trips made by other sustainable modes (rail, on foot and by bike). The proposal to redevelop the bus station provides an ideal opportunity to increase bus usage and to build on the existing high numbers of bus trips. A good and modern bus interchange facility will enhance the existing bus provision on offer and facilitate increased usage which will also contribute towards sustainable transport.

4.1.4 The Data Shine website (**Ref 4**) provides information on the origins of people travelling towards the town centre by bus. The data has been taken from the 2011 census and is for the location 'St Helens 014 MSA', within which the bus station is located. A screenshot taken from the website is shown in **Appendix 6** and

demonstrates that the majority of people travelling into St Helens by bus originate from areas within the borough rather than regional trips, showing more localised trip patterns rather than regional ones. The planned growth within the St Helens Local Plan (**CD B2, page 2**) for the wider borough, where sustainable transport will be key in developing sustainable places to live, is likely to increase bus patronage into the town, should travel patterns remain broadly similar. Therefore, increasing the capacity at the bus station should be considered essential for the development of the wider region, delivery of the Local Plan as well as the regeneration of the town centre (consistent with national and regional policy and the climate agenda).

4.2 **Liverpool (CRSTS) City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement**

- 4.2.1 The Liverpool (CRSTS) City Region Sustainable Transport Strategy (**CD G7**) was submitted to Central Government (Department for Transport) in November 2021. This outlined the Liverpool City Regions' investment prospectus to support its plans to reshape and rebuild the region's economy and society through the aim of creating a 'London style' transport network, which will provide a positive step change to local residents' lives. It highlighted the potential for delivering significant economic growth in a sustainable manner, by supporting the ambitions for achieving enhanced town centre retail, leisure, employment and residential opportunities within a net carbon zero context by 2040.
- 4.2.2 The investment plan within the prospectus cross references the LCR's BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) submitted to the DfT in 2022. The LCR BSIP sets out ambitious plans for the city region's largest ever investment in bus, aligned to Central Governments 'Bus Back Better' strategy published in 2021 (**Ref 5**). Bus Back Better is a national strategy which sets out the vision and opportunity to deliver better bus services for passengers across England, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered.
- 4.2.3 The CRSTS Investment Plan included five strategic corridors (**Appendix 7 shows the geographical coverage**), one of which was the Eastern Corridor. Included within the prospectus for the Eastern corridor was £10m for a package of multimodal interchange improvements and public realm enhancements to support the regeneration of St Helens town centre that is being delivered by St

Helens Borough Council in partnership with the English Cities Fund (ECF). The aim of this investment was, and is, that by improving public transport infrastructure, primarily the form of the bus station, in combination with improvements to active travel links across the town centre, will assist in reducing car dependency in support of the ambitious ECF partnership activity and deliver transformative growth in a more sustainable manner. It will also contribute significantly to relieving congestion, improving travel times for bus services and reducing CO2 with the knock-on improvement to air quality and reduction in harmful CO2 emissions.

- 4.2.4 In January 2022, the Department for Transport awarded the LCR (Liverpool City Region) £710m to invest in a range of transport projects across the region. This included the full £10m ‘ask’ for St Helens multi-modal interchange. The LCRCA settlement letter is included as **Appendix 8**
- 4.2.5 Investment aimed at improving the bus station in St Helens and key bus corridors such as the 10A bus route are part of a broader mix of improvements in public transport in this area. The wider package of measures planned for implementation include improvements to the link between the bus station and the town’s rail station (St Helens Central) with the aim of creating an enhanced multi modal interchange. Significant recent investment in the Chat Moss Line and Newton Le Willows station have been delivered successfully and are part of the broader aim to ensure that public investment is maximised with the aim of reducing private car use.
- 4.2.6 The broader case, outlining the need to redevelop St Helens town centre, including specifics on the Towns Deal Fund which is part of the funding mix for the proposed new bus station, is detailed further in the proofs of Iain Jenkinson (CBRE) and Sean Traynor (St Helens Borough Council).

4.3 **Bus Reform**

- 4.3.1 In March 2021, the DfT (Department for Transport) launched the National Bus Strategy Bus Back Better (“Back Better”) (**Ref 5**), setting out its long-term vision for bus provision in England. The strategy details what future bus services should look like to passengers, and the role LTAs (Local Transport Authorities) and bus operators have to improve those services. Bus Back Better sets a new direction

for how bus services should be delivered, making it clear that the design of bus systems must consider more than just the commercial returns they may generate i.e., improved customer experience, improved level of service, better network coverage, environmental benefits. In the LCR, a decision to pursue bus franchising as the preferred option for reform was taken by the Metro Mayor and city region leaders in March 2022, triggering the finalisation of the assessment and an independent audit.

- 4.3.2 The business cases undertaken in support of the Bus Reform work is documented in 'Bus Franchising in The Liverpool City Region: Assessment', (**Ref 6**) published on the 25 April 2023 as part of LCRCAs launch of its consultation on bus franchising (the same day). This outlines a strong strategic case for changing the way bus services are provided across the Liverpool City Region, and how this will contribute to a strong growth in patronage. The Bus Back Better strategy and BSIP highlights that improved bus networks should be a key priority for supporting bus recovery.
- 4.3.3 The LCR has bold and ambitious plans for economic growth, including the delivery of 100,000 new jobs and for the LCR to be a £50 billion economy (a near doubling from today's level) by 2040. This growth must be clean and inclusive, achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040. Targeted action on the main social and economic issues where the LCR underperforms relative to other city regions – namely gaps in wealth, business activity, jobs, productivity and skills, persistent worklessness and spatially concentrated deprivation – will be required to achieve those ambitious targets. The LCR's Vision for Growth sets out the plan for tackling these issues around the three 'growth pillars' of productivity, people and place. Transport, and particularly bus, has a significant role to play and in delivering clean growth and in tackling these issues, which is recognised in LCRCAs Transport Plan and LCRCAs Bus Strategy. The importance of Local Transport Plans in reducing carbon in transport at a local level is referenced in the DfT's Transport Decarbonisation Plan. Bus journeys represent almost eight out of every ten public transport journeys in the LCR, which means that bus must be at the forefront of the transport response.

4.4 The Liverpool City Regions move to Net Zero

- 4.4.1 The Combined Authority declared a Climate Emergency in June 2019 and set an ambitious goal to become carbon neutral ten years ahead of the UK target (2050) i.e., by 2040.
- 4.4.2 In 2020 a LCR Climate Partnership was established to catalyse rapid actions to make significant progress against the 2040 target. One of its first actions included the publication of the Year One Climate Action Plan (**Ref 7**) which established the framework and guiding principles under which the targets will be met.
- 4.4.3 The Climate Action Plan has nine themes of which one is Air Quality and Transport – (Achieve zero carbon mobility with an emphasis on active travel and low polluting modes). One of those key actions, purchase 20 hydrogen fuelled double decker buses, to be used initially on the 10/10A corridor between Liverpool, Knowsley and St Helens (targeting air quality action areas), is on track to come into service from late 2023.
- 4.4.4 In 2021, the Department for Transport published its Transport Decarbonisation Plan (**Ref 8**) which built on the evidence established in Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge 2020 (**Ref 9**). This strategy advocated strongly for planning movement and travel in a different way, noting that one bus can take the place of several dozen on the roads.
- 4.4.5 In 2022 Liverpool City Region Combined Authority ('LCRCA') published its 'Pathway to net zero' report (**Ref 10**). At the heart of this plan is the Metro Mayor's plans and ambitions to deliver a London Style Transport Network with active travel and public transport key to giving local people a genuine alternative to the car to tackle the climate emergency.
- 4.4.6 To reach the LCR net zero carbon 2040 goal there needs to be a 50% reduction in the amount of energy that is used. This will mean the region can generate the remaining energy needed from clean, renewable energy sources that don't produce any carbon emissions at all.

- 4.4.7 In November 2022 a report was submitted to LCRCAs Transport Committee (**Ref 11**) about the work going on to develop the LCRs new Local Transport Plan. Within that report a number of scenarios, which have been modelled, were presented all of which presented a challenging picture in terms of the scale of the challenge in getting to net zero by 2040.
- 4.4.8 A follow up report to the same Committee in January 2023 (**Ref 12**) concluded that a very significant modal shift and a big reduction in vehicle trips must a big part of this preferred strategy.
- 4.4.9 Increased use of bus is at the forefront of LCRCAs plans to achieve its net zero targets, and the creation of bigger and better facilities such as new and improved bus stations are central to those ambitions, as the successful funding awards demonstrates.

5. OPTION IDENTIFICATION AND SELECTION

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 Preliminary collaborative discussions between St Helens Borough Council, St Helens Borough Council’s development partner (ECF) and Merseytravel / the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in late 2019 and early 2020, concluded that the first steps in looking for a bus station design, which could address the deficiencies of the 1990 layout, would be two-fold.
- 5.1.2 Firstly, to examine all possible, alternative locations, for a town centre bus station, that could afford suitable space for an enhanced design, at a site that would be suitable in terms of the connectivity requirements of current town centre demands, mapped against the demands likely to be generated by the regeneration being brought forward by the Town Centre Strategy 2017 – 2027 (**CD G5**). In no sense was the location and/or final form of the bus station pre-judged. It was led by the evidence and the analysis, which informed the iterative bus station design.
- 5.1.3 Secondly, to examine the possible options for utilising the footprint of the current bus station (1990 design) in a revised and enhanced layout to address the

identified restrictions and deficiencies of the present arrangements, particularly in the light of the proposed growth that the Town Centre Strategy 2017 – 2027 was seeking to create.

5.1.4 Further detail on the St Helens Town Centre Strategy is outlined in the evidence from Sean Traynor, St Helens Borough Council.

5.1.5 The basic parameters for the proposed new bus station were originally based upon current operational demands, as specified by but with a view to providing for these demands in a safer and more efficient manner. The parameters were set out in discussions and correspondence between the design partners (see 5.2 and appropriate appendices referenced in subsequent sections).

5.2 Merseytravel essential requirements

5.2.1 The Merseytravel specification for the WSP design work included the following key elements as part of a wider specification.

- A minimum number of 9 operational bus stands, for passenger boarding and alighting.
- A minimum number of 8 bus layover stands, to be located within the bus station.
- A minimum of 2 vehicular entrance and exit points for buses, with one to be provided at each end of the facility to ensure access / egress can be maintained in the event of a road closure on the highway network, and to ensure that the points made in bullet points 4 and 5 below, can be satisfied.
- Layout to be as all other large managed bus stations in the Liverpool City Region i.e., linear or ‘saw tooth’ in nature and no Drive In Reverse Out (DIRO) for safety reasons.
- Facilitation of the bus manoeuvres, required to use each bus stand in the facility.

- A Travel Centre with a defined minimum floor area (To match that of existing facility at St Helens).
- Accommodation for bus driver facilities – (Based on the requirements in comparable Bus Stations, such as Bootle or Liverpool One Bus Stations).

5.2.2 The full specification is set out in **Appendix 9**. Alongside this full specification Merseytravel also undertook a review of the pattern of bus service operation through St Helens Town Centre and the bus station. This examined the viability and requirements for all current services, together with the mix of services that terminate within the town centre and those that operate across the central area, to and from suburban destinations.

5.2.3 The conclusions of this further review were that the current pattern and mix of terminating and ‘through’ services was broadly appropriate and was likely to remain so for the foreseeable future, given the location of key employment, commercial, residential, and retail uses on suburban sites in addition to the central retail, public administration and leisure facilities in the town centre.

5.3 **St Helens Bus Station Review (part of Green Bus Routes commission)**

5.3.1 St Helens Bus Station Review (**CD F2**) study was commissioned by Merseytravel in 2019 as part of a wider commission aimed at reviewing and identifying options for its Green Bus Routes programme. This specific piece of work (undertaken by transport engineering consultants Watermans) identified and appraised a range of options for improving bus capacity and passenger facilities in St Helens town centre. The aim being to support the development of the 10A bus route, the first corridor to be enhanced under the Green Bus Routes programme, where St Helens bus station forms one end of the corridor.

5.3.2 Although primarily driven by the needs of the Green Bus Routes programme and the aims of improving the ‘bus offer’ in the LCR, this study was rooted in (and aligned with) the broader discussions and wider considerations for developing the town centre as rooted in the St Helens Town Centre Strategy (2017-2027) (**CD G5**).

5.3.3 The report identified six sites (locations), and (overall) twenty options were identified. **(CD F3)** is a map showing those six locations. Plans for all of the twenty options are included in the Watermans report **(CD F2)**.

5.3.4 The six locations were as follows:

0. Current Bus Station (options 1, 2 and 3) - This is the existing location of St Helens Bus Station and would include investigating the re-arrangement of the existing layout to make it more efficient. Improvements could be made to the cycle and pedestrian infrastructure and improve permeability through the site.

1. Enlarged current location (options 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) – Increase the size of the current location. This would include demolishing the existing retail units to the west.

2. Current location and new Hall Street site (options 1, 2 and 3) – Use the current location plus a new site created on Hall Street

3. New site St Mary's (options 1, 2, 3 and 4) – new site for the bus station where St Mary's shopping centre is located

4. Current bus station with stands / layover facilities at St Helens Central Station (1 option) – use the current location plus a new site created at St Helens Central Station

5. Current bus station with stands / layover facilities at land off Parr Street (options 1, 2 and 3) – use the current location plus a new site created on derelict land off Parr Street

5.3.5 Locations 0, 2, 3, 4 and 5 were rejected for the following reasons:

- Location 0 – Considers options for retaining The Swan and Town Fryer. However, these options don't allow any adequate scope to design out and/or overcome the constraints outlined in section 3.5 and 3.6 of this evidence and therefore do not meet Merseytravel's requirements and are not acceptable for operational and/or safety reasons.
- Location 2 – Is a very linear space and therefore will not meet a number of requirements for any new bus station. In particular, the land available

will not provide sufficient space to accommodate appropriate passenger facilities and support buildings (travel centre, plus back office and driver facilities). Furthermore, it won't be able to accommodate the required operational flexibility and necessary turning movement, along with a lack of usable layover space for bus services. This option also splits services over two sites, which is a significant constraint of the current facility.

- Location 3 – In terms of size could provide sufficient operational capacity (now and in the future). However, the site is remote from key destinations in the town centre and moving the bus station to a less attractive location, at a time when there is a broad remit (both regionally and nationally) to promote bus more strongly, would not attract more people to travel sustainably to/from the town.
- Location 4 – Aside from the bus /rail integration opportunities, this site is far too small to accommodate the necessary operational requirements of Merseytravel and / or any aspirations for growth.
- Location 5 – As with location 3, this location is seen as too far away from the heart of the (redeveloped) town centre and therefore not as close to the key facilities and services in the town centre to make it an attractive location for bus services and passengers alike, reducing patronage.

5.3.6 A detailed Merseytravel commentary on each of the twenty options is included within **Appendix 10**.

5.3.7 The conclusions of this work resulted in Merseytravel expressing preference for the Enlarged current location and specifically the further exploration of options 2 and 5 produced by the study, as possible designs to stimulate progress towards a suitable layout. Both of these options required an enlarged footprint on the current location, and Corporation Street and Bickerstaffe Street being retained as vehicular highways.

5.3.8 The conclusions of this extensive piece of work were produced in the Waterman's report of August 2020 (**CD F3**). This report then stimulated further discussion and study work by the town centre design partners, with the conclusion that the

current bus station site was the only suitable/viable option and offered considerably greater benefits of connectivity than any of the alternative locations.

5.4 **St Helens Borough Council / WSP: Optioneering and selection**

- 5.4.1 Following the above work, in January 2021 Merseytravel was approached by transport engineering consultancy WSP who had been appointed by ECF, as part of wider team, bringing forward a masterplan for St Helens town centre. High quality transport and access were identified as key to the masterplan and concentrated on an upgrade of the existing town centre transport facilities, including St Helens Central Station and, most importantly, a new bus station for the town centre.
- 5.4.2 This study team’s initial work revisited the Watermans work of 2020 and conducted a further investigation of possible alternative locations for the bus station. This revealed that there were limited suitable options around the town centre that were large enough to cater for the current and future bus service provision, located in the heart of the town centre and close to St Helens Central Station, and which did not require extensive acquisition of land owned by third parties. It concluded that the site of the existing bus station is long established and familiar to bus passengers and operators, and that relocating the bus station elsewhere could require extensive re-routing of services, would make the bus station far less attractive as a travel option for the town centre, and would bring with it attendant disruption and risk. This analysis was included in the WSP RIBA Stage 3 report. **(CD F1, page 20)**
- 5.4.3 As part of their work, WSP presented an initial six options (1, 1A, 2, 3, 4, 5) to Merseytravel in Jan 2021. A further six options (6, 7, 8, 9, 9A, 10) were shared in February 2021 and were developed/discussed in the period up to June 2021. Drawings of all of these options and a full commentary of how each option was considered, are contained within WSPs Statement and Technical Report, ‘St Helens Town Centre Multi-Modal Interchange – Options Technical Report’, **(and the WSP RIBA Stage 3 Report Appendix, CD F1, pages 21 to 32)** which is annexed to the evidence supplied in this evidence and the evidence of St Helens Borough Council.

- 5.4.4 A number of these options (options 1, 1A, 2, 10) included a Drive in Reverse Out (DIRO) layout which was not acceptable to Merseytravel (see below), and it was agreed that these would not be progressed.
- 5.4.5 For over forty years Merseytravel has not designed or constructed any bus facilities on the basis of DIRO layouts or stand arrangements. This follows a fatal incident which occurred back in the 1980s when a passenger was killed in the Pier Head Bus Station, despite the facility being under marshal control. Following this fatality, Merseytravel moved away from designing all of its facilities with any element of drive-in reverse out manoeuvres. **Appendix 11** shows the layout and bus stand arrangement of all major bus stations across the Merseytravel area, which are all linear (with 'saw tooth' bays) in nature with no reversing. Health and Safety records kept by the Merseytravel Health and Safety Team (**Appendix 12**), indicate that for the last twelve years, only four collisions have occurred involving a bus and a pedestrian, within extremely busy facilities which is testimony to the safe design and operation of these facilities, where the top objective is always the safety of pedestrians and all bus station users.
- 5.4.6 Merseytravel's views on the remaining options (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9) are outlined in **Appendix 13**. From these views it will be noted that a key function of any new design is that it should fulfil two principal criteria which are as follows.
- That the new station should seek to bring all passenger and bus movements safely into the confines of the station; and
 - That the new station should create ease of safe bus movement between all parts of the station, including all of its layover spaces and bus passenger stands.
- 5.4.7 The outcome of this first stage of work, undertaken by WSP was the presentation of the consultant's preferred bus station design of a new St Helens Bus Station which was option 7 (CD F1, page 25). This was then considered further by St Helens Borough Council in consultation with its ECF partner and Merseytravel, with the technical work continuing to be led by WSP. It has always been accepted that, whilst Merseytravel's concerns have centred on operations and safety, there is also a significant master planning/design issue for the bus station to address.

5.5 REFINING OPTION 7

- 5.5.1 Furnished with the conclusions of the Merseytravel Waterman’s study with its two preferred options, and the ECF WSP study with its preferred option 7, the design work was then progressed with the addition of greater technical detail. At this stage the greater involvement of the local bus and train operators was also enlisted.
- 5.5.2 It is worth noting that up to this point, the primary focus was on exploring layouts in terms of bus movements (in/out and to/from layover) and capacity (number of operational stands and layover). Layouts had considered the requirements from Merseytravel for the various support buildings required to support the operation of the facility (travel centre, back-office facilities, welfare facilities and driver facilities) but only at a high level to this point.
- 5.5.3 As this stage Merseytravel reaffirmed and updated its initial defined list of essential requirements, that any bus station design would need to incorporate, in order to be an appropriate facility for St Helens town centre and for Merseytravel as end operator, based on existing demands and those likely to be generated by the St Helens Town Centre Strategy aspirations. This detail was sent to WSP on 8th March 2021 (**outlined in Appendix 9**). At this time Merseytravel included an anticipated growth in demand for the Bus Station of 11% over the 10-year period of the Town Centre Strategy, on the guidance of St Helens Borough Council and the ECF Development Partnership. The bus station is, of course, intended to operate over a longer timescale than 10 years.
- 5.5.4 These discussions sought to balance the identified safety and operational requirements for the proposed new bus station designs against wider considerations relating to the overall Town Centre regeneration project including:
- aspirations for public realm enhancement within the new town centre proposals, particularly the desire for the creation of a new public space in the vicinity of the Gamble Building and the Theatre Royal
 - enhancements to the pedestrian routes across the proposed new town centre designs

- the visual and environmental aspirations contained within the Town Centre Strategy and the planning proposals being brought forward as part of the strategy.
- The revised highway layouts contained within and arising from the Town Centre Strategy proposals.
- Proposals relating to the likely economic uses for sites within the Town Centre Strategy in the proximity of the Bus Station.

5.5.5 From May 2021 to July 2021 variants of option 7 were designed by WSP and reviewed by St Helens Borough Council and Merseytravel. The WSP’s Statement, Technical Report and Stage 3 report records the design iterations from options 7A to 7O (**CD F1, pages 27 to 31**). For each option a drawing has been included, with an accompanying commentary on the merits of each option (**CD F1 Appendix, pages 33 to 47**).

5.5.6 Merseytravel’s views on the options between 7A and 7O are outlined in **Appendix 14**. It should be noted that these views only relate to options presented to Merseytravel in workshops and does not consider other options that might have been discounted earlier in the design process (and not presented to Merseytravel).

5.5.7 It is worth noting that up to this point, the primary focus was on exploring layouts in terms of bus movements (in/out and to/from layover) and capacity (number of operational stands and layover). Layouts had considered the requirements from Merseytravel for the various support buildings required to support the operation of the facility (travel centre, back-office facilities, welfare facilities and driver facilities) but only at a high level to this point.

5.5.8 In November 2021, WSP (in partnership with architects Austin Smith Lord) were appointed by St Helens Borough Council to undertake further development of the emerging preferred design. Through the experience of Austin Smith Lord, the work started to look in a lot more detail and granularity, at the required support buildings (structures, dimensions, and locations). This provided further clarity on the land take required for the new bus station.

- 5.5.9 From a major design workshop, held on the 21st of January 2022 and which encompassed all of the design partners (Merseytravel, St Helens Borough Council, ECF and WSP) until the autumn of 2022, discussions, meetings, and correspondence flowed between the partners with a view to refining potential design options for the current bus station site.
- 5.5.10 As part of those discussions Merseytravel, in January 2022, once again reaffirmed the essential requirements listed previously, and, shared further detail on detailed technical specifications including IT, electrical, access control etc. **(see Appendix 15).**
- 5.5.11 Based on this further review Design 7O was updated, for consideration by all the design partners. It was option/design 7O that formed the basis of the master plan that St Helens Borough Council used to progress the Compulsory Purchase Order. **Option 7O shows that there is an absolute requirement for the land currently occupied by The Swan public house and the Town Fryer chip shop, to widen Hall Street and create enhanced functionality into the facility as a controlled environment for bus use. Merseytravel considers there is certainly a compelling case in the public interest for the use of the Swan Public House land.**

5.6 LATEST POSITION

- 5.6.1 Discussions and work have (naturally) continued between Merseytravel, St Helens Borough Council, ECF and technical partners to further consider the design which resulted in the RIBA layout which was presented in March 2023 **(CD F1, page 48)**. The latest position is that the design has now evolved to an option 7P (see plan of this design/option in the WSP Statement and Technical Report) **(CD F1, Appendix page 49)**.
- 5.6.2 Design Option 7P does not change the conclusion on the amount of land which is necessary to deliver the bus station.
- 5.6.3 Design option 7P is different from option 7O in that it now provides an entrance and exit at the eastern end of the bus station resulting in an 'in/out' at both ends of the facility. This change is fundamental to Merseytravel's requirements as outlined in **Appendix 9 and Appendix 15**.

- 5.6.4 The consequences of this design evolution (which is a refinement of option/design 7O rather than being a redesign) to both the CPO and the development/delivery of the scheme and programme, are minimal:
- It reinforces the essential requirements;
 - it's within the scope of the outline;
 - there are some changes to the public realm areas, but these are minimal;
 - It is not anticipated that this will impact on cost or delivery/programme; and
 - If anything, it strengthens the need to take the land occupied by The Swan public house and the Town Fryer chip shop, again allowing further access improvements from Hall Street (although it was not conceived with this in mind).
- 5.6.5 For Merseytravel and the local bus operators, option 7P offers the optimum deliverable design, providing a significantly enhanced transport facility that can be safely and effectively operated, within a bus network that would be capable of supporting the town centre's economic, public realm and development aspirations, as set out in the Town Centre Strategy.
- 5.6.6 In doing so, the preferred design would allow the busiest town centre bus and passenger movements to be concentrated under a safe and controlled environment within the new bus station. It will also remove the significant bus layover that takes place on Corporation Street, and the major bus passenger boarding and alighting movements on Bickerstaffe Street, from their current and inherently less safe, on highway locations, in addition to creating space for new town centre uses.
- 5.6.7 I understand this option can be delivered within the approved outline planning permission (a matter addressed by Iain Jenkinson of CBRE in his evidence).

6. OBJECTIONS TO THE ORDER

6.1 A total of ten objections were made to the Compulsory Purchase Order. Merseytravel was one of the ten but his has since been withdrawn and the organisation now strongly supports the confirmation of the CPO and continues to strongly support the plans to regenerate St Helens town centre.

6.2 Proposed demolition of The Swan

6.3 Objections to the St Helens Town Centre CPO have referenced the need for the proposed demolition of the Swan public house. This has specifically been raised by the following objectors:

- Angela Hindley (withdrawn)
- Punch Partnerships (PML Limited)
- Michelle Thomas
- Guy Newton
- Stefan Kwasek
- Scott Hindley (withdrawn)

6.4 Objections relating to the proposed demolition refer to:

- Issue with onward use of site of The Swan as a landscaped area / public realm at the end of the bus station;
- Insufficient information or explanation provided to understand why The Swan is required for the CPO; and
- No supporting information of the benefits of including The Swan as opposed to alternative sites and whether alternative methods could be used to enable the business to continue to operate.

6.5 The paragraphs below summarise the need for the demolition of The Swan.

6.6 The current bus station was last developed in the 1990's and has a number of constraints which limits its operation and ability to grown and meet demand. A split layout with some

services parked outside the facility results in a poor and unsafe environment for buses, bus users and pedestrians.

- 6.7 Merseytravel have worked extensively with St Helens Borough Council and their partners, on outlining and agreeing the essential requirements needed to ensure there is a functional bus station fit for the 21st century and into the future. These are based on safe and well-established practices at other similar bus stations across the Liverpool City Region.
- 6.8 The extensive optioneering and selection process that has taken place over three years has explored a broad range of locations, layouts, and sizes of bus station to serve St Helens town centre. Using the combined expertise and knowledge of St Helens Borough Council (and its partners ECF), Merseytravel, and both ably supported by WSP and Austin Smith Lord (with some earlier work from Watermans), detailed consideration has been given to how best to support the town of St Helens by more sustainable modes of travel at a time when climate emergencies have been declared and there is an onus on all responsible organisations to move towards net zero.
- 6.9 The extensive detail provided not just in this Merseytravel evidence, but also the evidence from St Helens Borough Council and the Statement and Technical Report from WSP annexed to this evidence, plus the evidence of others, demonstrates why the new bus station in St Helens town centre needs to be in the location proposed, and at the size and configuration as shown on the design.
- 6.10 In addition to responding to the need for more trips by bus to contribute to cleaner air, safety, is another critical factor driving the reasons for the bus station being the layout and size that it needs to be. The design moves the operations into a single location which reduces many of the current conflicting movements and allows the space to be better managed by Merseytravel's bus station staff, thus ensuring both safe and efficient operation.
- 6.11 Another factor driving the specific location proposed for the new bus station, is the need in the masterplan for high quality public realm to ensure that the redeveloped town centre is attractive to investors and visitors and ensuring that everyone can walk around the town in a safe and attractive environment with clear desire lines to major town centre destinations, with improved links to from the both the bus and rail stations.
- 6.12 Based on Merseytravel's operational requirement for such a facility, and at a time when there is significant emphasis on the need to grow bus and sustainable travel (nationally regionally

and locally) to tackle broad ranging challenges including the need for clean air and investing in local communities, then it's clear the optimum location requires the land currently occupied by The Swan public house and the Town Fryer chip shop. The reasons for this are (in summary):

- The bus station needs to be as close to the rail station as possible to provide the town with an effective multi-modal interchange facility. If the Swan pub site is excluded from the scheme, then this removes some of the enhanced efficiencies of the newly proposed facility as the Hall Street entrance will be designed in a way that allows for a smooth efficient flow of buses and a safe, clear and legible link from the bus station, down to the railway station.
- The layout needs to meet all of Merseytravel's operational and safety requirements, which include the need for full operational flexibility between the operational and layover stands, and a design which 'houses' all operations within its boundary to ensure all operations can be managed safely and efficiently. If the Swan is excluded from the scheme, then it will be possible to create an entrance/exit at both ends of the facility.
- The layout needs to meet the shared aspirations of Merseytravel, LCRCA and St Helens Borough Council to increase travel by sustainable travel (and bus in particular) to meet the plans envisaged through Bus Reform, the targets for achieving net zero and the anticipated growth resulting from the town centre redevelopment. If the Swan is excluded, then this provides the opportunity for an enhanced facility which addresses the constraints and issues with the current facility (and layout) and significantly increase opportunities to grow travel by bus.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

7.1 As St Helens looks towards a once in a lifetime opportunity to invest and grow its new town centre (as outlined in the evidence provided by Iain Jenkinson, CBRE and Sean Traynor, St Helens Borough Council, both of which present the strategic and economic drivers) uses and patterns of behaviour, the bus station now needs to keep pace with the town centre, to maintain good, sustainable access for central St Helens, and to maintain the excellent interchange capacity with the rail network.

- 7.2 Whilst the bus station remains perfectly placed to fulfil its role in assisting with the next round of regeneration for the town centre, to make the bus station fit for purpose for the next two decades, it needs upgrading and expanding in its current location.
- 7.3 Driven largely by the decarbonisation agenda and needing to get to net zero by 2040 (for the LCR), there is as real need for significant modal shift to help achieve those aims. With 80% of the current public transport use and the momentum behind Bus Reform then there is a very strong need to expand operations for bus services across the Liverpool City Region.
- 7.4 This robust optioneering exercise has demonstrated that all possible locations and orientations have been explored, and balanced economic need, with safety and operational flexibility and practicalities the preferred design is viewed by all parties involved as the optimum design and location to achieve the aims of the town centre masterplan and the broader aims around an even greater move towards sustainable travel for the Liverpool City Region.

8. STATEMENT OF TRUTH

- 8.1 I confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this report are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those that are within my own knowledge I confirm to be true. The opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions on the matters to which they refer.



ANDREW CAIRNS
Infrastructure Manager
Merseytravel
13th July 2023