



Warrington Local Plan
Proposed Submission Version
Warrington Waterfront

Representations on behalf of Peel Land and
Property and the Peel Ports Group

June 2019



Turley

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Report is prepared by Turley on behalf of our clients Peel Land and Property and the Peel Ports Group (hereafter referred to as “Peel”). It provides representations to Warrington Borough Council (WBC) in respect of the Proposed Submission Version Local Plan 2017 – 2037 (March 2019) (hereafter referred to as “the draft Plan”), which is currently the subject of public consultation.
- 1.2 This Report has been prepared in **support** of Draft Policy MD1 Warrington Waterfront. This representation specifically relates to the proposed expansion of Port Warrington, the proposed Arpley Meadows Nature Reserve and Country Park, and the proposed business hub aspects of the Warrington Waterfront proposals in Draft Policy MD1.
- 1.3 It demonstrates that the removal of part of the land at Warrington Waterfront from the Green Belt and its allocation for expanded port infrastructure, along with a new employment business hub, in the draft Plan is exceptionally justified and ‘sound’. It also confirms that the Arpley Meadows former landfill site (c. 90ha) which is intended to be transformed into a new Nature Reserve and Country Park (c. 181ha) should be retained within the Green Belt.
- 1.4 Peel, working with WBC, have carried out detailed work to demonstrate the need for the allocation and development at Warrington Waterfront for the expanded port infrastructure, business hub, and nature reserve and country park, which are presented in a Draft Development Framework and Draft Justification Document (both of which form evidence documents which accompany the draft Plan). This representation should be read alongside those reports, to which it refers and draws from. Those reports are subject to further development following consideration of the feedback from the consultation process.
- 1.5 This representation provides further support for Draft Policy MD1 Warrington Waterfront, and provides suggested amendments to the wording of the draft policy to ensure it aligns with the ambitions and objectives for the delivery of the proposals within Warrington Waterfront.
- 1.6 Peel respectfully requests that WBC considers the detail in this Report and the suggested amendments to the wording of Draft Policy MD1.
- 1.7 The remainder of this representation is structured as follows:
 - Chapter 2: provides a summary of the proposed allocation of Warrington Waterfront for the expanded port infrastructure, business hub, and nature reserve and country park
 - Chapter 3: provides a description of the benefits of the expanded port infrastructure, business hub, and nature reserve and country park at Warrington Waterfront
 - Chapter 4: provides a description of the case for the release of land from Green Belt

- Chapter 5: provides suggested alterations to the wording of Draft Policy MD1 Warrington Waterfront

2. Warrington Waterfront

- 2.1 This section provides a summary of the opportunity provided by the Warrington Waterfront proposal, specifically in relation to the expanded port infrastructure, business hub, and nature reserve and country park. A detailed description of the proposal can be found in the Draft Development Framework and Draft Justification Document.

The Peel Group

- 2.2 The Peel Group is a major investment company and is one of the leading infrastructure, real estate, transport and investment enterprises in the UK. Peel is a major investor, infrastructure provider, landowner and developer with major interests and assets across the United Kingdom. Its diverse network of businesses ranges from ports to airports; land to leisure; media to hotels; wind farms to shopping centres, nature parks to canals, residential sites to agricultural uses.
- 2.3 Peel's track record is one of delivering transformation and creating vibrant places through regeneration and innovation. The company invests for the long term. For example, at MediaCityUK in Salford Peel delivered a £650 million investment in Europe's largest construction project during the recession. Its investment of £400 million into Liverpool2, a new deep-sea container terminal at the Port of Liverpool, will open up new import and export markets for the North.
- 2.4 Peel's vision is to create sustainable environments where people and businesses can flourish. This vision is realised through a constant cycle of reinvestment, regenerating places, innovating in new development sectors and creating positive legacies. This vision is a key driver of Peel's Ocean Gateway ambition. The Ocean Gateway will deliver an unprecedented scale of co-ordinated private sector investment across the North West of England along a strategic corridor encompassing the route from Liverpool, through Warrington and Cheshire to Greater Manchester, over 50 years with £50 billion of investment. Ocean Gateway projects embrace ports; logistics; retail and leisure; residential; commercial development; media infrastructure and renewable energy. Warrington Waterfront is one of over 50 Ocean Gateway Schemes across the strategic corridor. Since the launch in 2008 Ocean Gateway projects within Cheshire and Warrington have attracted over £500 million of capital investments.
- 2.5 Peel Ports (part of the Peel Group) is one of the largest port operators in the United Kingdom handling more than 70 million tonnes of cargo a year. Peel Ports includes the Port of Liverpool and The Manchester Ship Canal (MSC) (serving the largest cargo generating region outside of London), the Lancashire Port of Heysham, the Port of Great Yarmouth, and the Medway Ports of Sheerness and Chatham in the South East of England. In Scotland, Peel Ports Clydeport operates the key ports of Glasgow, Greenock, Ardrossan and Hunterston. Peel Ports also operates a container terminal in Dublin and a container shipping line BG Freight.
- 2.6 At its heart, the Peel Ports network comprises the Port of Liverpool and the MSC – an all water route which forms a comprehensive range of ports facilities over its 44 mile

length which handles more than 40 million tonnes of cargo and 16,000 shipping movements a year, making it Britain's third busiest estuary. Port Warrington is ideally located to connect to this network.

Warrington Waterfront

- 2.7 Warrington Waterfront utilises land which is formed by Port Warrington, Arpley Meadows, and Moore Nature Reserve. Warrington Waterfront is a strategic regeneration proposal to reinvigorate Warrington's central waterfront along the River Mersey.
- 2.8 Warrington Waterfront will be a new urban quarter of Warrington, taking advantage of its waterside setting and unlocked by a new strategic access arrangement (the Western Link Road). This will link the A56 Chester Road in Higher Walton with the A57 Sankey Way in Great Sankey, and will also provide a new access to the Port from the new link road.
- 2.9 The proposed allocation includes:
- The expansion of Port Warrington with key connections to Port Salford and Liverpool, including a container handling area with loading cranes, extended shipping berths, potential for rail freight connection, warehousing for manufacturing, distribution and storage purposes, potential turning basin to the south of the MSC and open storage and hardstanding areas.
 - The creation of an ecological nature reserve and country park.
 - A new business hub ('Warrington Commercial Park') contributing to meeting Warrington's employment and business needs.
 - New infrastructure works and road access to support the proposal and link to the wider Western Link Road scheme.
 - Approximately 2,000 new homes.
- 2.10 This policy allocation reflects the specific proposals which are supported and justified in this Report. This representation specifically relates to the areas Peel has an interest in, this includes the proposed expansion of Port Warrington, the proposed Arpley Meadows Nature Reserve and Country Park, and the proposed business hub aspects of the Warrington Waterfront proposals.

Port Warrington

- 2.11 Port Warrington is an existing warehousing and distribution facility located on the northern bank of the MSC. It benefits from a direct frontage on to the MSC and benefits from an existing berth which is underutilised but operationally available.
- 2.12 The Port currently accommodates a range of road-based storage and distribution uses (c. 10 hectares), with the current vehicular access via Runcorn Road and Moore Lane.

- 2.13 The Port benefits from an extant planning permission for the extension of the existing operations onto adjoining land (c. 4 hectares) for open storage purposes together with the refurbishment and extension of the canalside berth and the reinstatement of a rail freight connection onto the West Coast Main Line.
- 2.14 There is clear evidence, as provided in the Draft Justification Document, to support the need for the growth and expansion of Port Warrington, but existing constraints (such as HGV access, poor quality buildings, and constrained designated land availability) restricts the ability of Peel to secure growth and capitalise upon the Port's unique advantages.
- 2.15 To address these constraints, positive policy interventions in the form of the proposed allocation will enable the Port to attract new occupiers, secure inward investment and maximise the economic potential of the Manchester Ship Canal and the existing rail links.

Moore Nature Reserve & Country Park

- 2.16 Arpley Meadows landfill site measures an area of approximately 176 ha and it has been in operation for waste disposal operations since 1986.
- 2.17 An application to extend the operational life of the facility to October 2018 and enable its restoration by October 2019, with a revised sequence of landfill phasing and restoration works, was approved after appeal in May 2015. The Inspector recognised that the benefits of the development outweighed the harm to the Green Belt and very special circumstances had been demonstrated. The majority of the site has now been filled and is in the process of being restored to grassland, with the final phases remaining in use.
- 2.18 The planning permission allowed for the restoration (and ongoing maintenance and funding via a s106 legal agreement) of those areas previously landfilled with a full landscaping restoration scheme of new topsoil, planting and seeding. New native woodland, scrubland and hedgerows are also proposed, alongside the creation of new usable greenspace. The approved Restoration Landscaping Scheme also incorporates a number of habitat creation measures to provide ecological enhancement measures, with the plantation of woodland habitats and new connections to the Moore Nature Reserve to the south. A network of recreational footpaths is also proposed.
- 2.19 Moore Nature Reserve is located to the south of Arpley Meadows just to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal and covers an area of c. 75 hectares. The nature reserve includes areas of woodland waterbodies and grassland. There are footpath links and bird hides through the nature reserve used by local residents and visitors to the nature reserve. The management of Nature Reserve is currently funded by FCC Environment as part of the Arpley landfill operations and associated obligations created by the planning consent for the landfill. The obligation to fund the management of the Nature Reserve is coming to an end in 2021 and it is understood that no future funding stream has been identified to date and secured for the Nature Park post 2021. FCC are under an obligation to assist in the identification of a successor body to manage of the nature reserve.

- 2.20 Port Warrington is a fixed locational asset to enable the expansion of Port Warrington and deliver the opportunities which are set out in chapter 3 of this document. This requires that an area of the existing Nature Reserve would be developed for these purposes.
- 2.21 To address this loss the Warrington Waterfront proposals will improve upon the restoration plan for Arpley Meadows and retain the remaining area of Moore Nature Reserve to create an enhanced Nature Reserve and Country Park at Arpley Meadows.
- 2.22 The proposal is to create a Country Park with an ecological focus for Warrington. The draft proposals are set out in the Moore Nature Reserve and Country Park Vision Document. In summary the enhancements could include additional footpath infrastructure, improved vehicular and pedestrian access connections, on site car parking, sculpture trails, family areas with picnic areas, children's play spaces, as well as the creation of new woodland and grassland areas. Peel will work with Warrington Council to refine these proposals further.
- 2.23 Importantly the proposal will commit to secure the funding of the Nature Reserve and Country Park in perpetuity through the proposed development at Warrington Waterfront.

Warrington Commercial Park

- 2.24 The new Warrington Commercial Park will enable the creation of a variety of new employment floorspace for a mix of potential businesses. The Warrington Commercial Park is a development proposition that can assist in meeting the quantitative and qualitative employment land requirements in the borough across the plan period. The site benefits from a unique local advantage, notably its location close to Warrington town centre and excellent transport links that sets it apart from any alternative non-Green Belt location elsewhere in the Borough. Its proximity to the Port is also a key advantage, given the opportunities for synergy with port related industries, whereby it can supplement and support the Port's activities, benefiting from it, offering greater opportunity.

The Opportunity

- 2.25 The presence of an expanded Port of Liverpool, with the MSC, creates the potential for a 21st century hub with very significant economic advantages having a major hinterland and population alongside access to an existing industrial and commercial base which, in terms of size and scale, is second only to the London conurbation.
- 2.26 The Mersey Ports (Port of Liverpool and the MSC) network is Britain's third busiest port estuary and traffic forecasts to 2030 indicate an anticipated 70% growth in port traffic tonnage when compared against a base date of 2008. Significant growth is envisaged in container traffic following the opening of Liverpool2 the new deep sea container terminal at the Port of Liverpool.
- 2.27 Growth forecasts to 2030 have been translated into an overall land requirement which has subsequently been disaggregated across the Peel Ports network.

- 2.28 There is an unmet land requirement to deliver port related facilities to meet forecast demand as originally identified by the Mersey Ports Masterplan (MMP). An expanded Port Warrington (in addition to that which was originally envisaged in the MMP) will assist in addressing the shortfall and accommodate a large proportion of this growth to continue to drive economic growth in Warrington and across the sub-region.
- 2.29 Since the publication of the Mersey Ports Masterplan, a number of third party research and evidence documents have been published to inform economic strategies and/or the preparation of development plans across the sub-region. This evidence validates the port forecasts set out in the Mersey Ports Masterplan. The conclusion that can be drawn from this evidence is that port growth is having, and will continue to have, a large impact on the demand for employment land throughout the sub-region (including Warrington).
- 2.30 Port Warrington is one of the very few places in the region that has significant potential to be a multi-modal logistics site providing access to the River Mersey (via the Manchester Ship Canal) to the Port of Liverpool and the Irish Sea and to the West Coast Main Line which is the most important route for intermodal rail freight in Great Britain (this evidence is presented in the Draft Justification Document). It is the type of development proposition which national and local Government policy seeks to encourage ensuring the greatest potential for transfer of freight from road to rail and harnessing port-centric distribution to deliver greater environmental benefits and economic growth¹. There are very few sites within the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester corridor which share the same locational characteristics and advantages of Port Warrington; reference should be made to the Draft Justification Report.
- 2.31 Port Warrington can act as an inland extension of the Port of Liverpool for port-centric distribution, handling container traffic, dry bulk, and construction materials and other general cargo (such as steel products) that would be transhipped at the Port of Liverpool and then transported along the MSC on barges or small coastal and feeder container ships.
- 2.32 A direct connection can be achieved to the West Coast Main Line, part of Network Rail's Strategic Freight Network, which can handle the most efficient combination of containers and wagons that can be accommodated on the British rail network. Assessment has concluded that there is capacity on the network sufficient for Port Warrington to be served by one freight path per hour per direction which would be commercially attractive to the rail freight industry. Future network interventions by the public sector will only increase rail capacity in the future. Reference should be made to the evidence prepared by MDS Transmodal, supporting the Draft Justification Report.
- 2.33 The wider Warrington Waterfront initiative and the delivery of the Western Link Road infrastructure will provide a unique opportunity to unlock an unrivalled growth opportunity at Port Warrington and the Commercial Park.
- 2.34 Port Warrington presents a unique opportunity to deliver significant port expansion and a critical mass of development land and floorspace to harness the full potential of

¹ National Policy Statements for Ports and National Networks

its multi-modal connectivity while being positioned at the heart of a major consumer market. Port Warrington has a clear and competitive advantage over other sites within Warrington or indeed the wider sub-region which cannot offer the same characteristics or benefits that Port Warrington can provide, as the Draft Justification Report addresses

- 2.35 A Draft Development Framework has been prepared to illustrate how Port Warrington may be delivered during the emerging Warrington Local Plan period to meet anticipated growth in port related traffic and active markets. The Development Framework also sets out a vision for the Warrington Commercial Park and Arpley Meadows Nature Reserve and Country Park.

3. Benefits of Warrington Waterfront

- 3.1 The development of Warrington Waterfront will deliver considerable and tangible social, economic and environmental benefits to the region, borough and the nearby local community.
- 3.2 Warrington Waterfront will generate significant economic, social and environmental benefits which strongly support the allocation of the site. Peel is committed to delivering a lasting social and economic legacy and implementing a Local Employment Strategy to optimise the benefits of the scheme for the residents and businesses of Warrington. Peel is also committed to mitigating the impacts of the development on the local area, including in relation to transport and traffic, ecology, landscape and other potential impacts. This will be achieved in partnership with WBC and other key stakeholders.

Economic Benefits

- 3.3 The development of Port Warrington and Warrington Commercial Park will attract investment which is not otherwise catered for by port and port-proximate facilities within Warrington and in doing so would contribute directly to the Government's objectives of rebalancing the UK economy. This also reflects the wider emphasis on economic growth, as reflected in the Northern Powerhouse initiatives and reflects Warrington's overall growth and importance as one of the fastest growing centres in the country. Given these strategic advantages, multi-modal operations are becoming more important to occupiers who see rail operations and port-centric operations increasing in significance. The significant opportunities which Port Warrington offers, including both rail and port centric operations within a large urban catchment area at the heart of an urbanised region, needs to be fully exploited.
- 3.4 The development will also stimulate further business linkages and provide a significant opportunity to create a significant number of new jobs and training for local people. The development represents a significant financial investment in the Borough. It will deliver a wide range of jobs during the construction and operational phases and make a significant contribution to the local economy.
- 3.5 The substantial economic benefits that arise from the delivery of an inland port is supported by national planning policy as expressed in National Planning Policy Statement for Ports and National Networks respectively. This is in terms of supporting further through-put capacity and multi-modal provision at Ports (which are the main conduit for the country's imports and exports), and through provision of hubs with access to the strategic road network and rail (which would offer choice to customers and facilitate the prompt movement of goods for manufacturers, retailers and end consumers).
- 3.6 The proposals will offer potential occupiers with maximum choice and flexibility to utilise the most sustainable and competitive forms of transport in a location close to markets. This combination would make it a sustainable and logical location for logistics businesses serving the central and northern parts of the UK and offer an attractive

location from which to base a UK wide logistics operation and the increased generation of business rates. These benefits will provide a significant boost to the region's economy and will include direct and indirect opportunities for local suppliers and workers.

Sustainability and Environmental Benefits

- 3.7 The proposals will generate other significant sustainability and environmental benefits for the local area and wider region. The transfer of freight from road haulage to more sustainable rail and water freight networks is a key objective of the Government's vision for a low carbon/sustainable transport system.
- 3.8 By encouraging a shift from road to water and rail based transport, Port Warrington has the potential to significantly reduce the amount of road haulage across the region, including amending the existing route via country roads and Moore Village. This could deliver reductions in carbon emissions and could ease congestion. The benefits of this would be felt across the highway network. Particular benefits would occur in areas of high HGV concentrations and areas of congestion. This would include the urban area around the port, the motorway links to Port Warrington and outlying areas.
- 3.9 The proposals strongly support the Government's vision for a low carbon, sustainable transport system through the transfer of road haulage and its associated emissions to sustainable rail and water based transportation. The movement of freight and goods to and from the regional economy will continue to rise significantly in line with economic growth and therefore there is a need to ensure the presence of the necessary infrastructure to allow a growing percentage of these goods to be transported via sustainable modes of transportation. This modal shift will also have benefits in terms of reduced vehicle emissions and improved local air quality by transporting goods closer to their origins and destination through lower emission modes, such as waterborne and rail transport.
- 3.10 The emerging scheme proposals will provide access opportunities for members of the public to areas that are of improved visual context and biodiversity to the current use of the site, thereby providing some accordance with this objective of Green Belt policy. The development will also incorporate ecological mitigation measures and pursue opportunities where possible to secure a net gain in biodiversity.
- 3.11 The scheme will be designed in accordance with high standards of sustainable design and construction which is fully supportive of draft vision and objectives of the Local Plan and the Framework (Paragraph 7). The buildings and infrastructure will be designed to minimise resource consumption (such as water), waste generation and carbon emissions through the use of sustainable design and construction best practice. The use of renewable and / or low carbon sources will be investigated, with a focus on solutions that are future proofed in response to a changing climate and smart grid energy supply. An assessment will also be undertaken at the detailed design stage to identify the need for suitable resilience measures to be included within the proposals in response to future climate change.
- 3.12 As part of Warrington Waterfront, Port Warrington will fully support the Western Link Road infrastructure by ensuring that it is integrated with the existing road network.

Development of the Link Road will also reduce traffic volumes travelling between Port Warrington and the outlying area, thereby reducing HGV movements through Moore Village.

Social Benefits

- 3.13 There is a proven link between economic growth and an improvement in health and wellbeing of workers and local communities. Port Warrington will provide significant economic benefits which, through an active local benefits and Social Value programme that will seek to maximise health and wellbeing benefits. New buildings will be designed with measures to promote health and wellbeing of occupants and workers such as maximising the use of natural ventilation and light.
- 3.14 As part of Warrington Waterfront, the expansion of Port Warrington and the proposed Warrington Commercial Park will provide additional revenues (through business rates for instance) for the Council to spend on necessary social infrastructure such as health care, education and community facilities. The creation of thousands of new employment opportunities will provide significant financial support for local shops and facilities nearby.
- 3.15 The inclusion of the new Nature Reserve and Country Park will provide opportunities for recreational activities. This development will also alleviate HGV traffic from passing through Moore Village, thereby providing wider environmental and social benefits.

4. Green Belt Release

- 4.1 Warrington Waterfront is presently located within the Green Belt. It is proposed to remove the majority of the land from the Green Belt (including the land associated with Port Warrington and its expansion, and the Warrington Commercial Park) and deallocate it for employment purposes. The remaining land at Arpley Meadows will be retained within the Green Belt and turned into a Nature Reserve and Country Park.

Exceptional Circumstances

- 4.2 It is considered that exceptional circumstances exist to support the release of the land proposed for the expansion of Port Warrington and the Warrington Commercial Park from the existing Green Belt. The exceptional circumstances are to be viewed cumulatively and include:
- Port Warrington has specific and fixed locational attributes and characteristics which are unique and cannot be replicated elsewhere. These include direct access onto the MSC (which links to the Port of Liverpool), direct access to the West Coast Mainline, and to the Western Link. The Warrington Commercial Park will also take advantage of these features, notably the Western Link Road and proximity to the multi-modal transport facilities, to enable stronger connections to the wider region. The Warrington Commercial Park relates to and would benefit from its proximity to the expanded port, offering opportunity for supply chain and other related business. It is also well related to the town centre and its close proximity will also help encourage sustainable modes of transport to / from the Site.
 - Port Warrington is an appropriate sustainable and spatial response to meet employment demand needs arising from port freight growth. There is a shortage of land to deliver much needed added capacity in port-related facilities arising from the need to serve the Port of Liverpool, as originally identified in the Mersey Ports Masterplan (MPM)².
 - The Warrington Commercial Park will help to meet the need for the significant new employment land. WBC's Economic Needs Assessment confirms that there is insufficient urban capacity to meet the borough's total employment land requirement and there is a residual requirement to accommodate 215 hectares of employment land in the Green Belt.
- 4.3 Further information on the exceptional circumstances is set out in the Draft Development Framework and Draft Justification Report.

² <https://www.peelports.com/about/master-plan>

Release of the Land from the Green Belt

- 4.4 It is considered that the release of this land from the Green Belt and the alternative boundary which is proposed in this location is, in the context of the exceptional circumstances that exist, an appropriate response on the following grounds:
- the separation between settlements will be maintained and no merging of settlements will occur;
 - a revised permanent Green Belt boundary can be established by using existing and reinforced features to enhance definition, and longevity; and
 - existing major urban features reduce the openness of the Green Belt in this area such that its contribution to this purpose of Green Belt is already weakened, as recognised by the Council’s Green Belt Assessment.
- 4.5 It is considered that the proposed release of Green Belt and its allocation for development will not cause significant harm to warrant its retention and it will not affect the long term permanence and endurance of the remaining Green Belt.
- 4.6 The realignment of the Green Belt would still retain substantial settlement separation and the proposals for Arpley Meadows would also provide enhancement of the Green Belt purposes. The new Nature Reserve and Country Park will remain within the Green Belt, with the strong, permanent and defensible boundaries along the edge ensuring that the surrounding countryside is safeguarded from encroachment over the long term. The proposals will also enable significant improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land at the Nature Reserve and Country Park. The works to Arpley Meadows and the significant wider environmental and social improvements it will generate, notably the addition of new structural landscaping zones along the perimeter, will sustain the Green Belt’s permanence in the long term³. It will also bring wider benefits and offer opportunities to provide access and provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation, and to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity (as supported within Paragraph 141 of the Framework).

Table 4.1: Assessment against national Green Belt purposes if the site is removed from the Green Belt

Green Belt Purpose	Assessment Against Green Belt Purpose
Preventing Sprawl	The boundaries of the site would be reinforced from the extensive soft landscaping works which are proposed at the Nature Reserve and Country Park, to reduce any further development and unrestricted sprawl over the long term.
Merging of Settlements	A physical and visual separation (through soft landscaping works) would still be maintained in all directions and form a large green gap between the existing settlements to ensure that these remain separate townships.

³ In accordance with Paragraph 136 of the Framework

Encroachment	Whilst the proposed development will itself represent a form of encroachment into the countryside, the proposed dense tree belts between the Nature Reserve and Country Park and the employment development will prevent any physical or visual encroachment into the wider Green Belt. The existing development on part of the land already provides a level of encroachment into the Green Belt area.
Overall Evaluation	The revised Green Belt boundary will be defensible over the long term and the end value of it will not be compromised, rather the proposals will provide the enhancement of the retained Green Belt.

Conclusion

- 4.7 As outlined above, it is considered that the extent to which the site proposed for development continues to meet the purposes of the Green Belt is limited and the effect of its release from the Green Belt would not be significantly harmful, nor compromising of the retained Green Belt in this area. The wider economic, social and environmental benefits which the different aspects of the development will generate, plus its location in close proximity to the strategic road, water and rail network, is also a key factor to promote its allocation for employment uses and the following sections of this report sets out the exceptional circumstances that justify the release from the Green Belt.

5. Suggested Alterations to the Wording of Draft Policy MD1 Warrington Waterfront

- 5.1 Peel strongly supports the allocation of land at Warrington Waterfront for the development of a new urban quarter which includes the expansion of Port Warrington, new homes, a business hub, and the proposed Nature Reserve and Country Park, and infrastructure works.
- 5.2 Notwithstanding this support, Peel proposes alterations to the wording of the policy to ensure it aligns with the ambitions and objectives of the delivery of the Warrington Waterfront proposal and ensure it meets the tests of soundness in accordance with the Framework.
- 5.3 The proposed alterations are shown in track changes below. Where necessary, justification for the proposed alterations is provided, as follows:
- The terminology applied to parts of the development is inconsistent with that used in the Draft Development Framework; changes are proposed to provide consistency;
 - Certain area / floorspace measurements are incorrect and inconsistent with the Draft Development Framework;
 - Further clarity is proposed to identify the policy expectations for different parts of the development (i.e. those that apply only to the residential);
 - The policy should recognise that there may be an alternative to the Warrington Link Road as a means of achieving appropriate access to the development (or parts thereof);
 - There is insufficient clarity on what level of contribution will be sought towards the Warrington Link Road, and how this relates to funding available from other sources (including public funding and other developer contributions). Also, there should be recognition of viability considerations in determining appropriate contributions;
 - Ensuring consistency with the Framework with regard to net gains in biodiversity.

DRAFT POLICY WITH PROPOSED ALTERATIONS

10 Main Development Areas and Site Allocations

10.1 Warrington Waterfront

10.1.1 Warrington Waterfront, extending from the south west of the Town Centre to the Manchester Ship Canal, will be developed as a new urban quarter of Warrington, taking advantage of its waterside setting. It will provide around 2,000 new homes and a major employment area, incorporating a multi-modal port facility at Port Warrington and a new [bBusiness hHub, Warrington Commercial Park](#). The urban quarter will provide an extension of Warrington Town Centre and its proximity to Bank Quay station will support high density residential development.

10.1.2 The new residential and working community will be supported by:

- A new primary school
- A local centre comprising local shops, a new health facility and other community facilities.
- A major new country park at Arpley Meadows and significant enhancements to Gatewarth country park [with nature conservation at its focus](#).

10.1.3 Homes in the Waterfront will be built at a relatively high density reflecting the proximity of the Town Centre and easy access to public transport services. This will make the area attractive to young people and young families who are looking for their first home. The provision of local services and the new local centre will also make it suitable for supported housing for older people.

10.1.4 Port Warrington will provide an opportunity for [an extended expansion to create a](#) state of the art Port Facility, enabling Warrington to take advantage of the increased use of the Manchester Ship Canal for freight linked to investments at the Port of Liverpool and opportunities for port related manufacturing and port centric logistics and distribution. It will attract businesses to Warrington who will benefit from a port-side location and create a large number of jobs for Warrington residents. Its location provides a unique opportunity in the longer term to connect the [Manchester](#) Ship Canal to the rail network as well as the strategic road network, providing a more sustainable transport solution than traditional road to road freight distribution.

10.1.5 Located between the Port and new residential community, [the a New new Business business Hub-hub, Warrington Commercial Park,](#) will provide a range of flexible employment space suitable for, [but not limited to,](#) businesses with connection to the Port. It will also provide space for small and medium sized enterprises looking to establish and grow their business in Warrington.

10.1.6 The Waterfront will be designed to support walking and cycling for local trips. It will benefit from the new Western Link and improved public transport to enable access between the Waterfront and the Town Centre, Bank Quay Railway station and onwards to

the wider Warrington area via the existing wider strategic highway and public transport network.

10.1.7 The Waterfront will link into Warrington's wider Green Infrastructure Network. Waterfront residents, Waterfront employees and residents from the wider area will have easy access to Arpley [Meadows Nature Reserve and](#) Country Park (comprising the former tips at Arpley and Gatewarth and adjoining areas), a major recreational and ecological resource.

10.1.8 The overall Waterfront area will be designed to ensure Port Warrington and the [Business Hub Warrington Commercial Park](#) ~~do not reduce impact as far as possible upon the~~ [protect the](#) amenity of the new residential community and existing communities, including those on the southern side of the Manchester Ship Canal in Halton.

10.1.9 Development will preserve and enhance the setting of nearby heritage assets, in particular it will contribute to the enhancement of the Bank Quay Transporter Bridge.

10.1.10 Development [at the Waterfront](#) cannot ~~come forward~~ [commence](#) until the funding ~~and the programme~~ for the delivery of the Western Link [\(or a suitable alternative\)](#) ~~have has~~ been confirmed. ~~This~~ [The delivery of the Western Link \(or suitable alternative\) should be delivered simultaneously with the development of the Waterfront in an appropriately phased manner to mitigate impacts in the existing highway from increases in traffic.](#) means the first homes are anticipated to be completed in 2023/24 with the first phases of Port Warrington and the Business Park following shortly afterwards. The Waterfront will be completed in full by the end of the Plan period in 2037.

10.1.11 Agreement of mitigation for the loss of part of Moore Nature Reserve will be required before any development at Port Warrington is permitted. The mitigation package will ~~ensure~~ [pursue opportunities for securing](#) a net gain in biodiversity with new and improved habitat for local wildlife to be created within and in close proximity to the Waterfront area, including at the new [Nature Reserve and](#) Country Park [at Arpley Meadows](#).

10.1.12 Community infrastructure will be required in the early phases of development to ensure new residents and workers have access to essential local services.

10.1.13 The development concept diagram provides a definitive boundary of the site allocation and illustrates some of the key development principles set out in the allocation Policy. The final form of development will be determined through the preparation of a comprehensive masterplan incorporating a green infrastructure strategy.

Policy MD1 - Warrington Waterfront

MD1.1 Key Land Use and Infrastructure Requirements

1. Warrington Waterfront will be allocated as a new urban quarter to deliver around 2,000 new homes and a major employment area, incorporating an enlarged multi-modal port facility and a business hub.

2. In order to facilitate development, the southern section of the allocation site, comprising the ~~2 employment sites~~ expanded multi-modal port facility and Warrington Commercial Park, will be removed from the Green Belt.

3. The new residential and employment development will be supported by the following range of infrastructure:

- a. A range of housing tenures, types and sizes, including affordable homes and a residential care home (Use Class C2) providing a minimum of 80 bedrooms.
- b. A two form entry primary school
- c. A mixed use local centre providing a health facility and a range of units within Use Classes A1, A2, A5 and D1 up to 500 sq.m.
- d. A new Country Park of a minimum of c.160ha
- e. Provision of a minimum of ~~19.41ha~~ c.19ha of public open space, including a range of smaller areas of open space within the residential development to serve the new community in accordance with the Council's open space standards.
- f. Provision of playing pitches (either on-site or a contribution towards off-site provision).
- g. A comprehensive package of transport improvements.
- h. A contribution towards additional secondary school places
- i. A contribution towards built leisure facilities
- j. A contribution towards strategic transport infrastructure (The Western Link), or a suitable alternative
- k. Landscape buffers and ecological mitigation and enhancement
- l. Flood mitigation and drainage including exemplary sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) with only foul flows connecting to the existing public sewer.

The type and scale of infrastructure to be provided for each element of the development is set out below.

MD1.2 Delivery and Phasing

4. The Council will require the preparation of a masterplan for the entire site allocation together with a delivery strategy and phasing plan in order to ensure comprehensive and coordinated development.

5. The masterplan must conform to the requirements of this policy and be subject to consultation with statutory consultees and the local community.

6. The masterplan must be informed by a Green Infrastructure Strategy, a site wide Foul and Surface Water Strategy, a site wide Clean Water Strategy and a Transport Assessment.

7. The masterplan will provide the basis for subsequent planning applications for individual phases of development.

8. ~~— No development will be permitted~~

Development at the Waterfront cannot commence until the funding has been secured and a programme of for the delivery of the Western Link (or a suitable alternative) has been confirmed for the Western Link. The delivery of the Western Link (or suitable alternative) should be delivered in an appropriately phased manner to mitigate impacts on the existing highway from increases in traffic.

9. The first operation/use of the expanded Port Warrington will be not be permitted until the expansion or improvement of either the berth or the rail freight connection has been completed and a programme for the implementation of the subsequent berth extension or railway infrastructure has been confirmed.

10. Approval of a plan of mitigation for the loss of part of Moore Nature Reserve will be required before any application for the development of Port Warrington is permitted.

11. Full details of the programme and funding for delivery of the primary school, health centre, public open space and other necessary infrastructure will need to be agreed by the Council before the first phase of the residential development is permitted to come forward.

MD1.3 Detailed Site-specific Requirements

New Homes

12. A range of housing tenures, types and sizes, as identified in Policy DEV2, should be provided in order to ensure the residential development contributes to meeting the Borough's general and specialist housing needs.

13. In accordance with Policy DEV2 a minimum of 30% of homes should be affordable.

14. The new ~~urban quarter~~ residential development should provide a range of homes to meet different needs. Higher density and larger scale residential development should create an attractive waterside frontage. New homes may be particularly suitable for younger people and young families, whilst a proportion of homes should be provided as supported housing suitable for older people.

15. ~~— Specific~~ The residential development should have a specific provision ~~should be made~~ for a residential care facility providing a minimum of 80 bed spaces. This should be located within or in proximity to the local centre.

16. To reflect the site's urban location and proximity to the Town Centre, the residential development should be constructed to an average minimum density of 50dph, with opportunities for higher densities throughout the site.

Employment

17. 78ha of land, including the existing established Port Warrington site which equates to 15ha, will be removed from the Green Belt immediately to the north of the Manchester Ship Canal at Port Warrington for port expansion and related uses (primarily B8 but also potential for B2). The Port will provide around 185,000 sq.m. of employment floorspace.

18. 32ha of land will be removed from the Green Belt to provide a new [Business Hub](#) [business hub, Warrington Commercial Park](#), comprising a range of B1, B2 and B8 uses, alongside ancillary uses of an appropriate scale and nature to service the employment area as a whole. The [business hub](#) [Warrington Commercial Park](#) will provide around ~~6584~~ 6584,000 sq .m. ~~(amend)~~ of employment floorspace.

Community Facilities

19. The residential development will be required to provide land (1.6ha minimum) and financial contributions for the delivery of a new two form entry primary school to meet the need for school places that will be generated from the development.

20. Residential development will be expected to make a contribution towards the provision of additional secondary school places through expansion of existing or planned new secondary schools.

21. A new local centre [relating to the residential development](#) will provide a focal point for the new community and should be located in an accessible position within the site in order to serve both the residential and employment areas.

22. The specification and delivery of the health facility within the local centre will need to be agreed with the NHS as part of the delivery strategy.

23. Other small scale units up to 500 sq.m in total within Use Class A1, A2, A5 and D1 will be supported in the Local Centre in order to provide for day to day needs. Any proposal for additional retail floorspace will require a retail needs assessment and be subject to the sequential assessment set out in Policy DEV5.

Open Space and Recreation

24. A Green Infrastructure Strategy will be required to be prepared for the Waterfront in order to ensure the provision of an accessible, comprehensive and high quality network of multi-functional green spaces.

25. Arpley Meadows and Gatewarth Country Parks should be focal points within the green space network, together with connections to the river frontage. The design of the Waterfront should ensure that the [Nature Reserve and](#) Country Parks are accessible for new residents within the allocation site and existing residents across wider central and southern Warrington and for residents south of the ship canal in Halton.

26. The Business Hub must be designed to ensure accessible green connections through the site. This will also provide the opportunity for the [hub](#) [Warrington Commercial Park](#) to be situated within a high quality green space environment.

27. In accordance with the Council's open space standards the overall provision of open space for the new residential development should include as a minimum:

- a. Public open space – Delivery of a minimum of 19.41ha of open space, comprising 2.53ha of informal play space; 7.36ha of formal space (parks & gardens); 9.2ha of natural/semi-natural green space and 0.32ha of allotments (comprising 13 plots).
- b. Equipped play – Delivery of provision equating to 1.15ha (aligned to LEAP and NEAP's) on the application site together with details of the management and maintenance arrangements.
- d. Provision of playing pitches (either on-site or a contribution towards off-site provision).

28. It may be appropriate for some of this provision to be accommodated within Arpley Meadows [Nature Reserve and Country Park](#).

29. The development should ensure the long term management arrangements for the [Nature Reserve and Country Park](#) and wider green space network within the Waterfront.

30. Residential development will be required to make a contribution to expanding and enhancing existing or planned built leisure facilities that will serve residents of the urban extension.

Natural Environment

31. The Green Infrastructure Strategy will need to demonstrate how development within the urban quarter will protect and enhance existing wildlife corridors and provide new corridors to link the site into Warrington's wider ecological network and ensure the site contributes to the wider objectives of the Northern Forest.

32. Approval of a plan of mitigation for the loss of part of Moore Nature Reserve will be required before any application for the development of Port Warrington is permitted.

33. The mitigation package must ~~ensure~~[pursue opportunities for securing](#) a net gain [net gain](#) in biodiversity.

34. New and improved habitat should be created in the first instance within the Waterfront allocation site, with part of Moore Nature Reserve and new areas of wildlife friendly habitat to be incorporated into the new [Nature Reserve and Country Park](#). If additional mitigation is required then this ~~must~~[should](#) be provided as close as possible to the Waterfront allocation site-, [and within the borough](#).

35. Particular consideration should be given to protecting and enhancing habitat for migrating birds, given the site's proximity to the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area.

36. The developer must consult the Council, the Local Nature Partnership and the local community in the preparing the plan of mitigation.

37. The layout of the urban extension should take account of existing landscape features, including watercourses, woodlands and significant hedgerows.

Green Belt

38. The western and southern boundaries of the site define the Green Belt boundary. Development at the western and southern extent of the site will be required to respect the Green Belt boundary and contribute to maintaining the separation between Warrington and Widnes and Warrington and Runcorn.

39. Arpley Meadows [Nature Reserve and](#) Country Park will remain within the Green Belt.

Transport and accessibility

40. A comprehensive package of transport improvements will be required to support the Waterfront allocation.

41. Required improvements to support the new residential development will include:

a. Ensuring appropriate access arrangements for the site as a whole and for individual phases of development.

b. Improved cycling and walking routes well related to the green infrastructure and waterside network; connecting to the new employment areas, Arpley Meadows [Nature Reserve and](#) Country Park, Bank Quay Station and Warrington Town Centre.

c. Provision of waterside walkways and cycleways.

d. Providing public transport improvements to connect the new community with Warrington Town Centre; and other major employment areas in Warrington and Daresbury.

e. Other necessary network improvements as identified by an appropriate Transport Assessment.

42. ~~Required improvements~~ [Improvements](#) to support the further port expansion and related employment development ~~will~~ [\(Warrington Commercial Park\) will, where required,](#) include:

a. Ensuring appropriate access arrangements for the site as a whole and for individual phases of development.

b. New road connections from the employment area to the Western Link.

c. Improved cycling and walking routes well related to the green infrastructure network; connecting the new employment area to the residential development on the Waterfront, Arpley Meadows Country Park, Bank Quay Station, Warrington Town Centre and south of the Ship Canal to the South West extension and Halton.

d. Maintaining a direct pedestrian access between Moore Lane and the proposed Country Park to enable residents from Moore to access the Country Park.

e. Providing public transport improvements to connect the new employment site to Warrington Town Centre; Bank Quay Station and the residential areas across the wider Warrington area.

f. ~~Expansion~~ [Improvement](#) of the quay at Port Warrington and connection to the strategic rail network.

g. Other necessary network improvements as identified by an appropriate Transport Assessment.

43. The employment and residential elements of the development will be ~~required~~expected to make a ~~proportionate~~ contribution towards the delivery of the Western Link-, commensurate with the traffic demands of the respective developments, reflective of viability considerations, and in view of other funding sources, including other developments.

44. The layout of the Waterfront should maximise the potential for walkable neighbourhoods, with a legible hierarchy of routes, providing new footpaths and cycleways that link to existing networks beyond the site. In particular, connections should be made to the Trans Pennine Trail (national cycle route) to provide links to adjoining Boroughs to support cross boundary commuting by bike.

45. The Western Link will act as a natural divide to the Waterfront with residential properties to the north and employment to the south.

46. The residential development should take advantage of its river frontage location and provide riverside walkways to connect into the existing pedestrian and cycle network.

47. The access road serving the employment area from the Western Link will be required to be designed to enable safe and convenient cycle and pedestrian access to Arpley Meadows Country Park.

48. Good accessibility to public transport services should be provided by ensuring that the bus routes and bus stops within the site are accessible by pedestrians and cyclists via effective footpaths and cycle routes.

Utilities and Environmental Protection

49. A site-wide foul and surface water strategy is required across the Waterfront as a whole, incorporating appropriate Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and flood alleviation measures. It will be important for this to be integrated with site's Green Infrastructure Strategy in order to maximise ecological and potentially recreational benefits. Development proposals will be expected to incorporate infiltration SuDS and SuDS with multi-functional benefits in preference to traditional underground storage systems.

50. Improvements to the water supply and sewerage network will be required, ensuring that surface water drainage is not combined with foul discharge. A site wide clean water strategy will also be required.

51. Development within the Waterfront must not inhibit the operation of the existing gas pipeline, power line and sewage works that are on or adjacent to the site.

52. The Waterfront should be designed to mitigate the impacts of climate change; be as energy efficient and water efficient as possible and seek to meet a proportion of its energy needs from renewable or low carbon sources in accordance with Policy ENV7.

53. The design of residential development within the Waterfront must incorporate appropriate measures to ~~mitigate any~~ protect residents from prospective noise and air quality impacts from the future Western Link and the railway line.

54. Development proposals may be required to assess the impact on the groundwater environment and incorporate appropriate mitigating measures.

55. The design of the employment area must protect the amenity of the residential area within the Waterfront and protect the amenity of existing residents to the south of the Manchester Ship Canal in Halton.

56. Within the COMAH Zones of the existing industrial uses in proximity to the allocation site, development will be restricted in accordance with the Health & Safety Executive's requirements.

Historic Environment

57. Development will be required to preserve and enhance the setting of heritage assets within the proximity of the site.

58. In accordance with the Waterfront Heritage Impact Assessment, specific mitigation is required for the following designated heritage assets in proximity to the site: where the development has the potential to cause harm:

- a. Bank Quay Transporter Bridge – requirement for screening buffer and potential restriction on heights of development within setting.
- b. ~~Moore~~ Moore Lane Bridge – requirement for screening buffer and potential restriction on heights of development within setting.
- c. Monks Siding Signal Bridge – requirement for screening buffer and potential restriction on heights of development within setting.

59. Where viable, and found to be consistent with the CIL Regulations, a contribution will be sought from both the residential and employment development towards the restoration of the Bank Quay Transporter Bridge.

Why we have taken this approach

10.1.14 The Waterfront is a key regeneration priority for the Council, the principle of which has been established in previous Local Plans. The Council's Town Centre masterplan envisages the Waterfront as an extension to Warrington Town Centre, providing a high quality riverside environment and taking advantage of the proximity of Bank Quay station.

10.1.15 The Western Link provides the opportunity to open up the Waterfront area that is otherwise not accessible. It will enable higher density residential development within the existing urban area, thereby reducing the level of Green Belt land required to meeting Warrington's housing need. It will also provide the required access to enable the expansion of Port Warrington and support the new business hub.

- 10.1.16 The principle of the expansion of Port Warrington has also been established in previous Local Plans. Port Warrington offers the unique locational advantage of being able to link the Manchester Ship Canal to the rail network as well as the strategic road network. This will enable a more sustainable long term solution to freight distribution [and create a multi-modal port](#).
- 10.1.17 It is a national policy objective to increase the provision of port and multi-modal freight facilities and there is a particular need in the North West arising from [Port of Liverpool and Liverpool2 \(deep-sea container terminal\) Liverpool Super Port](#) and the enhanced use of the [Manchester Ship Canal](#). This need has been confirmed in the work underpinning the [Super Port Mersey Ports Masterplan](#) and the Council's own Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA).
- 10.1.18 The Business Hub will provide employment space for activities related to Port Warrington but its location in proximity to Warrington Town Centre will mean that it is also able to fulfil a broader role in meeting a wider range of Warrington's business needs. Whilst, the primary focus of the Business Hub will be for employment related development, ancillary uses, such as a crèche, gym, [and conference, and other](#) facilities, which support the primary function of the location as a key employment area will be supported.
- 10.1.19 It is this combination of need and location which provide the exceptional circumstances which justify removal of this part of the allocation site from the Green Belt.
- 10.1.20 The Waterfront is of a sufficient scale to provide a range of services to support a new residential and working community in this part of Warrington, including a local centre, primary school, health facility and a network of open spaces. Its location will also ensure residents will have good access to Warrington Town Centre, the major employment development within the Waterfront and other major existing and proposed employment areas in the wider Warrington area.
- 10.1.21 The Allocation Policy will ensure that development comes forward in a comprehensive manner with phasing of development linked to the provision of infrastructure.
- 10.1.22 The expansion of Port Warrington will result in the loss of part of Moore Nature reserve and a number of important ecological assets. It is therefore an essential that a comprehensive mitigation package is in place before development is approved.
- 10.1.23 In preparing the mitigation strategy, the developer will be required to work closely with the Council, Local Nature Partnership and the local community to ensure that the mitigation ~~provides a~~ [pursues opportunities for securing a](#) net ecological gain and that as much of the enhancements are provided within and as close to the site as possible. This will include enhancements to Arpley Meadows [Nature Reserve](#) [and](#) Country Park [and retained areas of Moore Nature Reserve](#), and new areas of wildlife friendly habitat which are over and above those which are already required

to be provided as part of the remediation strategy for the land fill facility. There is also the opportunity to provide enhancements to the already reclaimed Gatewarth Country Park and to strengthen the green network to connect these major ecological and recreational assets.

10.1.24 Vehicular access to the established Port Warrington operational area is regarded as substandard particularly for HGV Movements. Port Warrington is currently accessed by local roads through Moore Village which are unsuitable to support any significant expansion of the existing operation. In addition, many of the proposed residential areas within the allocation site are cut off by the river and railway. This means it is essential that development is coordinated with the delivery of the Western Link [\(or a suitable alternative\)](#).

10.1.25 Given the case for Port Warrington is based on its unique location offering the potential to link the Ship Canal to the strategic road and rail network, the extended/ [improved](#) berth or rail freight connection must be completed as part of the first phase of the Port Warrington development. Agreement will also be required for the programme of the subsequent berth or rail connection implementation timetable before consent is given to the expansion of the Port.

10.1.26 Although Port Warrington has been in existence as an operational area for decades, it is located in a sensitive location with regard to the Green Belt that separates Warrington from Runcorn and Warrington from Widnes. There is also an existing residential community directly opposite the Port in Halton. The allocation policy therefore will ensure a strong Green Belt boundary and that measures are put in place to protect the amenity of existing residents.

10.1.27 Developers and the Council who are promoting the allocation have confirmed their commitment to ensuring a comprehensive form of development and are supportive of the preparation of a masterplan for the Waterfront.

10.1.28 The Council is confident that the programme for the Western Link will enable the first homes in the urban extension to be completed in 2023/24 with the first phases of employment development following shortly after. The new urban quarter will be completed in full by the end of the Plan period in 2037.

Key Evidence

- National Planning Policy Framework (2019)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Economic Development Need Assessment (2019)
- WBC Green Belt Assessment (2016)
- Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2019)
- WBC Multimodal Transport Model
- Waterfront Heritage Impact Assessment (2019)
- Information submitted in support of 'Call for Sites' by developers promoting land within the urban extension
- Habitat Regulation Assessment: Proposed Submission Version Local Plan (2019)
- SA Report: Proposed Submission Version Local Plan (2019)

Other Planning Documents

- Requirement for future Masterplan for Warrington Waterfront

Council Wide Strategies

- Warrington Means Business
- Draft Local Transport Plan (LTP4)

Delivery Partners

- Developers promoting land within the urban extension

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