

◆ Transport and Highways

INTRODUCTION

1. Intermodal Logistics Park North Ltd. ('the Applicant') is promoting proposals for a new strategic rail freight interchange (SRFI) and associated development on land to the east of Newton-le-Willows, in the jurisdictions of St Helens, Wigan and Warrington Councils. An SRFI is a large multi-purpose freight interchange and distribution centre linked into both the rail and trunk road systems. SRFIs reduce the cost of moving freight by rail and encourage the transfer of freight from road to rail, thereby reducing carbon emissions and contributing to the UK's target to achieve net zero by 2050.
2. Under the Planning Act 2008, the proposals qualify as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). Accordingly, an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) is to be made to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS), which will examine the DCO application on behalf of the Secretary of State (SoS) for Transport.
3. Before making a DCO application, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Proposed Development will be undertaken in accordance with the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations'). EIA is a process that provides the decision maker with sufficient information about the likely environmental effects of a project and is used to improve the environmental design of a development proposal. The first stage of this process was the submission of a request for a formal scoping opinion under Regulation 10 of the EIA Regulations.
4. The Applicant submitted an EIA Scoping Report to the Planning Inspectorate in October 2024. This outlined the work undertaken to date and sought advice from the Inspectorate on the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development and the topics that needed to be assessed as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). A Scoping Opinion was received in December 2024 and this will be used to inform the EIA process for the Proposed Development. A summary of the main comments received and how the Applicant intends to address these are set out in the table below.

Table 1 Scoping Opinion comments and responses

Inspectorate's Comments	Applicant's Response
Construction traffic travelling to and from the DCO Site is proposed to be scoped out of further assessment, on the basis that past experience indicates this is not expected to	The Applicant notes this comment. An assessment of construction traffic to and from the DCO Site will be included in the

Inspectorate’s Comments	Applicant’s Response
<p>result in a significant increase in traffic. Given that there are no details yet available of the likely level of construction traffic, including whether this would include abnormal loads, and as there may be existing capacity issues on the surrounding road network, the Inspectorate does not agree that this matter can be scoped out of the assessment at this stage.</p>	<p>ES.</p>
<p>The ES should ensure any traffic models, including the Parkside Link Road Saturn Traffic Model, are up-to-date. Models should be re-calibrated and re-validated where necessary and accurately reflect the proposed scenarios and assessment years.</p>	<p>The Applicant can confirm that traffic models to be used in the assessment will be considered “up to date” and/or appropriate for assessment. The scope of the models to be used, their application, and approval of suitability will be discussed via the Transport Working Group with relevant members of the key consultees (St Helens Council, Warrington Council, Wigan Council, National Highways).</p>

5. This Topic Paper has been prepared by Hydrock Consultants Limited and describes the approach taken to assess the highway and transportation impacts of the development proposals.
6. In line with the EIA Regulations, this Topic Paper has been compiled by appropriately qualified, experienced, and competent experts. The author of this paper is Mark Loveridge BA MA, a Principal Transport Planner at Stantec. This paper has been reviewed by Ashley Russell BEng Technical Director at Hydrock and approved by Sam Denby BA MSc, CMILT a Director at Hydrock with over 20 years of relevant UK experience. Mark, Ashley and Sam have a wide-ranging experience in undertaking Transport Assessments of large scale Industrial & Logistics development proposals across the UK. Hydrock possesses extensive expertise in delivering comprehensive transport planning solutions for largescale logistics developments across the country and a proven track record dating back over 20 years in working with the local authorities of St Helens, Wigan, Warrington and National Highways.

RELEVANT LAW, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

7. This section sets out the national, regional and local policy as well as the technical guidance documents that will be used in relation to transport and highways.
8. The DCO application will be determined pursuant to the Planning Act 2008 and relevant regulations, the National Networks National Policy Statement (‘NPSNN’, adopted 2024) and

the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024). Relevant local planning policy and statutory development plans are material considerations which are considered further in this section. Further to the above, while the following sections considers current policy, as a matter of course the team will monitor for any relevant policy changes going forward.

9. The following national policy is applicable to the transport and highways elements:
 - National Networks National Policy Statement (March 2024)
 - National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)
 - National Highways DfT Circular 01/2022
 - Design Manual for Roads and Bridges
 - Manual for Streets
 - Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Guidelines - Environmental Assessment of Traffic and Movement
10. The following regional policy is applicable to the transport and highways elements:
 - Local Transport Plan 3 for Merseyside
 - Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2024
11. The following local policy is applicable to the transport and highways elements:
 - St Helens Borough Local Plan up to 2037
 - St Helens Transport and Travel Supplementary Planning Document
 - Wigan Local Plan
 - Warrington Local Plan 2022/23 to 2038/39
 - Warrington Local Transport Plan 4

SITE DESCRIPTION

Site location

12. The DCO Site is located on the eastern extent of Newton-le-Willows in a flat, agricultural landscape. The DCO Site is located within the local authority areas of St Helens Borough Council, within the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority; Wigan Council, within the Greater Manchester Combined Authority; and Warrington Borough Council.
13. The DCO Site is split broadly in two sections:
 - the Main Site – land to the east of the M6 motorway, to the south of the Chat Moss Line

and to the west of Winwick Lane incorporating the triangular parcel of land located to the west of Parkside Road and to the north of the Chat Moss Line;

- the Western Rail Chord – land to the west of the M6 motorway, which bisects the DCO Site in a northwest southeast orientation, and to the east of the West Coast Mainline.

14. The majority of the land contained within the Main Site is bound to the north by the Chat Moss Line (Liverpool-Manchester railway line), to the west by the M6 motorway and to the southeast by Winwick Lane (A579). The Main Site south of the Chat Moss Line is approximately 198 hectares in size. The Highfield Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is also adjacent to the north of the DCO Site, which is described in more detail below. A number of other uses exist at the Main Site currently, including:

- Kenyon Hall Airfield, which is a small airfield used by the Lancashire Aero Club for recreational flying of small propeller planes;
- Warrington Model Flying Club, which is a model club for radio-controlled model aircraft; and
- Highfield Farm, which is comprised of two agricultural/residential buildings set within a curtilage surrounded by agricultural fields.

15. The majority of the Main Site is comprised of agricultural fields used for arable crops, with some small patches of woodland in the east. There are also a number of residential properties, farmsteads and a commercial yard within the Main Site. Parkside Road (A573) runs through the DCO Site to the south before passing over the M6 where it provides access to Parkside Link Road West.

16. The triangular parcel of land located to the north of the Chat Moss Line and to the east of Parkside Road also forms part of the Main Site.

17. The Western Rail Chord of the DCO Site is approximately 12 hectares in size and is bordered to the west by the West Coast Mainline railway, to the north by the Chat Moss Line and to the east by the Parkside West Development. The Western Rail Chord is comprised of safeguarded land for the rail-turn head to enable trains to be serviced to and from the North and the East.

18. The Western Rail Chord is comprised of scrub land and areas of woodland which are set within the context of an area of redevelopment with commercial uses proposed, which is known as Parkside West, and is currently being promoted through the Town and Country Planning Act process.

Baseline environment

19. In order to consider the baseline conditions and the potential infrastructure improvements required to support the Proposed Development, a review of the planning history for the DCO Site has been conducted. This review has considered previous traffic impact assessments completed for the highway network surrounding the DCO Site and mitigation work that was proposed.

20. The planning history for the Parkside area, which includes the DCO Site and the Parkside West development, dates back to 2001 when the first application for an SRFI was submitted. Following the submission of this application there have been various applications submitted for development at Parkside, the most significant of these are summarised being;
- Parkside Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (previous application);
 - Parkside West (various applications for phase 1 and 2); and
 - Parkside Link Road.
21. Of these applications the Parkside Link Road (PLR) application is the most relevant to the DCO Site as it relates to the creation of a new link road between A49 Winwick Road and M6 Junction 22 and includes the re-alignment of Parkside Road and other associated work. This road would form one of the key access routes for the Proposed Development and serve as a link road through the DCO Site. The construction of the PLR is expected to be completed in Q1 of 2025 and will be operational prior to any development at either Parkside West or the Proposed Development.
22. A Transport Assessment (TA) was prepared to support the PLR planning submission. This assessment included for the area of Parkside Strategic Rail Freight Interchange within St Helens. The model will be updated to reflect the Proposed Development to consider the impact on the strategic and local highway network. The primary purpose of the model was to test the impact of the PLR on the highway network including the M6 and M62 motorways and all strategic roads within the area.
23. The PLR TA also detailed infrastructure improvements which would be required to support the development of the PLR. These improvements are summarised below:

Junction 6 - M6 Junction 22 / A579 Winwick Lane Roundabout

- All approaches at the roundabout would be signalised;
- The existing circulatory roundabout geometry would be retained however 3 lanes were proposed;
- Introduction of an additional lane on the approaches to Winwick Lane and Winwick Link Road;
- Pedestrian crossing facilities on the A49 Winwick Link Road and M6 southbound arms; and,
- The M6 southbound and northbound off-slips retained and not altered.
- The delivery of this scheme is on-going.

Junction 7 - Existing A49 Mill Lane / A572 Southworth Road Signalised Junction

- Introduction of enhanced pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities by creating a dedicated

left-turn from Southworth Road to Mill Lane and introducing a dedicated right-turn lane from Mill Lane to Southworth Road. This scheme has now been delivered.

Junction 8 - Existing A572 Southworth Road / A572 Newton Road / A573 Parkside Road / A573 Golborne Dale Road Staggered Priority Junction

- Convert the junction from a priority junction to a signal-controlled junction. This scheme has been delivered.
24. It is understood the construction of the PLR will be completed Q1 of 2025 and open in spring 2025 after the M6 Junction 22 widening of the circulatory carriageway and white lining works are complete.

DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

25. The Proposed Development is an SRFI and associated development comprising:
- provision of a rail terminal serving up to 16 trains per day, including ancillary development such as container storage, cranes for the loading and unloading of shipping containers, Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) parking, rail control building and staff facilities;
 - a rail turn-back facility within the Western Rail Chord;
 - up to c.767,000 square metres (m²) (gross internal area) of warehousing and ancillary buildings with a total footprint of c.590,000m² and up to c.177,050m² of mezzanine floorspace, subject to ongoing design and market assessment, comprising a mixture of units with the potential to be rail-connected, rail served and additional units;
 - new road infrastructure and works to existing road infrastructure;
 - provision of overnight lorry parking for users of the SRFI;
 - new energy centre and electricity substations, including central battery storage and potential provision of central Combined Heat and Power (CHP) units to augment the grid supply in the case of demand exceeding instantaneous firm and variable supplies;
 - provision of photovoltaics and battery storage on site;
 - strategic landscaping and open space, including alterations to public rights of way and the creation of new ecological enhancement areas;
 - demolition of existing on-site structures (including existing residential dwellings / farmsteads and commercial premises);
 - potential relocation of the Huskisson Memorial; and
 - earthworks to regrade the DCO Site to provide appropriate access, connections to the railway, development plots and landscape zones.

OUR APPROACH TO THE ASSESSMENT

26. At this stage the full approach and methodology of assessment is still to be developed and agreed with the respective Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) / Highway Authorities (including National Highways) (HAs) (and associated advisors) plus National Highways (NH).
27. The consultations undertaken to date with the highway authorities have focussed on general approach, specifically relating to modelling and it has been agreed by all authorities that an update of the Parkside Link Road Highway Model (PLRHM) is the most appropriate modelling approach due to the network coverage being the most suitable to consider the impact of the Proposed Development. Operational modelling of individual junctions (to be identified) will also be required to support detailed discussions with the respective LPAs / HAs, this will take the form of bespoke microsimulation modelling and / or industry standard junction modelling software.
28. In transport planning terms, a vision and validate approach to the transport strategy, as required by national planning policy (considered further below) is to be taken. This approach contrasts with traditional predict and provide methods, offering a more sustainable and proactive strategy for shaping transportation systems. A breakdown of what this approach entails and how it is validated is set out below:

Vision:

- **Goal-Oriented:** It starts with a clear, aspirational vision of the desired future state of the transportation system. This vision often aligns with long-term goals such as reducing carbon emissions, increasing public transport usage, enhancing walkability, and promoting equitable access.
- **Sustainability and Liveability:** The vision prioritises outcomes like environmental sustainability, public health, and quality of life. It seeks to create systems that serve people, reduce congestion, minimise environmental impacts, and foster vibrant, inclusive communities.
- **Multi-Modal Focus:** A key element of the vision is a shift away from car-centric infrastructure to a more balanced multi-modal approach that includes, rail, walking, cycling, public transport, and new mobility solutions like car-sharing or micro-mobility (e.g., e-scooters, bike-sharing).
- **Policy Frameworks:** The vision is often embedded within broader urban development or climate change goals, such as achieving net-zero emissions by a specific year, or improving air quality in cities.

Validate:

- **Scenario-Based Planning:** Rather than simply reacting to forecasts of future demand, the validate phase involves testing different scenarios that align with the vision. Transport Planners assess what policies, technologies, and infrastructure are required to realise the vision.

- Data-Driven: Transport Planners use a variety of data sources, including traffic models, public transport usage patterns, environmental impact assessments, and social surveys, to evaluate the feasibility and impact of the proposed vision.
 - Performance Metrics: Key performance indicators (KPIs) are defined and tracked over time. These might include reductions in vehicle miles travelled (VMT), greenhouse gas emissions, improvements in travel time for public transport users, or increased modal share for cycling and walking.
 - Feedback Loops: Regular validation is necessary to ensure that the vision remains realistic and adaptive. Adjustments are made based on observed outcomes, emerging technologies (e.g., autonomous vehicles, electric vehicles), and evolving societal needs (e.g., changing demographics, remote work patterns).
 - Community Engagement: Validation also comes from extensive stakeholder and community engagement. Public consultations, workshops, and feedback mechanisms help ensure that the vision reflects the needs and values of local populations.
29. A comprehensive assessment will be undertaken in order to understand and mitigate the impacts of the Proposed Development on the strategic and local highway network.
30. This assessment follows the current EIA Regulations and other pertinent national, regional and local policy documents as set out above. A fully compliant Transport and Access Chapter will be prepared for inclusion as part of the Environmental Statement (ES) with the submission consisting of:
- ES Transport Chapter
 - Transport Assessment
 - Sustainable Access and Movement Strategy
 - Framework Travel Plan
 - Construction Traffic Management Plan
31. Draft versions of the above documents will be provided to support the Preliminary Environmental Information Report [PEIR] which will be published as part of the statutory consultation materials. These will set out our understanding and modelling outcomes at the point of statutory consultation. The outcomes of the consultation will then feed into updated documents. The final documents will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) as part of the DCO application.
32. To agree the assessment methodologies, thorough consultation is being undertaken, including organising and hosting regular Transport Working Groups between all relevant highway authorities (HAs) (St Helen's Borough Council, Wigan Council, Warrington Borough Council and National Highways). Further meetings with the LPAs and HAs and stakeholders will be held on an ongoing basis to inform this process.

33. The detailed scope of the ES Transport Chapter is yet to be confirmed but the following will be included:
- Introduction
 - Scope and Methodology
 - Consultation
 - Statutory and Planning Context
 - Baseline Conditions
 - Predicted Impacts (Construction and Operational phases)
 - Mitigation
 - Residual Effects and Mitigation
 - Summary of Effects
34. The scope of the Transport Assessment is still to be agreed, however it is envisaged that the following will be included:
- Introduction
 - National, Regional and Local Policy
 - Existing Highway Conditions
 - Assessment of Accessibility by Sustainable Travel Modes
 - Development Proposals
 - Trip Generation and Distribution
 - HGV Routing Plan
 - Strategic Modelling Assessment
 - Local Junction Modelling Assessment
 - Mitigation
 - Summary and Conclusions
35. The Sustainable Access and Movement Strategy will present the vision for how the Proposed Development will function from a mobility perspective. It serves to demonstrate that the site is accessible, that it has the potential to deliver significant local and strategic benefits, and that its movement strategy is connected, innovative, forward thinking and future-proofed,

adding value to the community and maximizing social welfare.

36. The strategy presented will build on wider input to the application, with a view to integrate sustainable transport improvements in any emerging layout proposals, where access, movement and connectivity serve as a guiding principle and a vision for how staff and visitors will travel to/from/within the Proposed Development site.
37. The strategy will contain a series of proposed off-site interventions to connect the development with the nearby towns and facilitate longer distance sustainable trip chains.
38. A HGV Routing Strategy will be prepared for the Proposed Development which will set out how HGVs will route to and from the site. The strategy will provide a HGV routing plan that will direct HGV on appropriate and efficient roads, avoiding any unsuitable local highway network.
39. The Framework Travel Plan will be prepared for the Proposed Development which will set out the initiatives and measures to be brought forward to promote and enhance the sustainable accessibility of the DCO Site for staff and visitors. This will be prepared in conjunction with the Sustainable Access and Movement Strategy which will also include these details. The Framework Travel Plan is intended to cover the whole DCO Site including for all land uses. It is proposed that as operators move into the units, they would prepare an individual Travel Plan that would be required to comply with the Framework Travel Plan. This is considered to be the most suitable approach given that the end users of the Proposed Development are not yet known.
40. The Framework Travel Plan will include the following:
 - Introduction
 - Accessibility/baseline review
 - Aims/objectives
 - Mode shift target setting
 - Measures and initiatives
 - Programme of monitoring and review
41. The Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) will be produced as part of the submission; and a Full Construction Traffic Management Plan will be produced by the lead contractor once appointed. This will be required to follow the principles established in the CTMP, which will include the following:
 - Introduction
 - Existing Situation
 - Construction Programme and Vehicle Movements

- Construction Traffic Routes (including HGV routing plan)
- Construction Traffic Management
- Construction Workforce
- Noise, Environment Conditions and Waste Management
- Monitoring and Mitigation

LIKELY MAIN EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSALS

42. The EIA will assess the following topics as identified in the IEMA Guidelines for assessment:
- Severance
 - Driver Delay
 - Pedestrian Delay
 - Non-motorised user amenity
 - Fear and Intimidation
 - Road Safety
 - Hazardous Loads/Large Loads
43. The extent/scope of assessment will be informed by the PLRHM, which will inform where and at what level changes in traffic levels are expected to occur.

Trip Generation

44. The Proposed Development would generate the following trip types:

Construction Phase:

- Light Goods Vehicle (LGV) trips internal
- LGV trips external
- HGV trips internal
- HGV trips external
- Construction staff trips internal
- Construction staff trips external

Rail freight terminal:

- HGV trips internal
- HGV trips external
- Employee/visitor trips

Warehousing (Use Class B8) with rail freight terminal operational:

- LGV trips internal
- LGV trips external
- HGV trips internal
- HGV trips external
- Employee/visitor trips

Warehousing (Use Class B8) with rail freight terminal not operational (early phase development):

- LGV trips external
- HGV trips external
- Employee/visitor trips

PROPOSED APPROACH TO MITIGATION

45. Our approach to mitigation is informed by over-arching planning policy tests, as set out in the NPSNN, which states:

“5.281 Mitigation measures for schemes should be proportionate and reasonable, focussed on facilitating journeys by active travel, public transport, shared transport and cleaner fuels.

5.282 Where development would worsen accessibility, there is a strong expectation that such impacts should be mitigated. Where impacts cannot be mitigated, the applicant is required to provide reasoning as to why impacts cannot be mitigated.

5.283 The applicant should provide evidence that the development improves the operation of the network and assists with capacity issues.”

46. In addition, in relation to the rail freight interchange development paragraph 5.285 states:

“For Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges, travel planning should be undertaken for all major developments which generate significant amounts of transport movement. There may be circumstances where the implementation of travel plan measures alone would not be sufficient to reduce the traffic demand of a project to acceptable levels. In such instances, the applicant should align with the agreements made with relevant highway authority, local

planning authority, and Great British Railways Transition Team, as appropriate.”

47. In terms of mitigation there will be imposed operational and management measures which will comprise the following:
- Construction Traffic Management Plan
 - Operational HGV Routing Strategy
 - The Sustainable Access and Movement Strategy
 - Framework Travel Plan
48. In addition, the modelling and impact analysis may demonstrate the requirement for off-site highway improvements which could include the following:
- Pedestrian/cycle infrastructure upgrades
 - Public transport provision/upgrades
 - Junction capacity improvements
 - Traffic calming/safety measures
 - Traffic management measures

NEXT STEPS

49. As part of the consultation process the Transport Working Group (TWG) which includes St. Helens, Wigan and Warrington HA's, as well as National Highways, has had three working group meetings and will be meeting monthly going forward.
50. The TWG for a DCO application is a collaborative forum established to address transport-related issues associated with a proposed project. Its primary purpose is to ensure that transport and traffic impacts are properly assessed, managed, and mitigated in line with statutory and policy requirements.
51. We have established the TWG with the following aims:
- Robust Transport Assessment: Ensure the TA is comprehensive and meets the standards expected by decision-makers.
 - Agreed Mitigation Measures: Provide clarity and certainty on the measures to be implemented to address transport impacts.
 - Efficient Examination: Minimise contentious issues related to transport during the examination phase by resolving as many as possible during pre-application.
 - Build trust and cooperation among stakeholders.

- Ensures that transport impacts are considered holistically and align with local and national planning objectives.
52. As part of the process, consultation with a number of additional stakeholders, including the public, will be undertaken.
53. This topic paper forms part of the material available for the informal consultation that is taking place between 27 January 2025 and 21 March 2025. Should you wish to comment on this paper or any other matters related to the Proposed Development you can respond to the informal consultation via:
- ILP North website – www.tritaxbigbox.co.uk/our-spaces/intermodal-logistics-park-north
 - Email ilpnorth@consultationonline.co.uk
 - Freepost ILP North
 - 01744 802043