

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

Development Framework (Working Draft)

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Planning
Design
Economics
Heritage
Sustainability



Transport and
Highways



Flood risk /Geo-
environmental



Agricultural Land



Masterplanning



Freight
transport



Nature Reserve
and Country Park
Vision&Masterplan



Arboricultural
Landscape
appraisal
Ecology



Noise



View across Manchester Ship Canal

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01 Introduction

This Development Framework Document (“the Document”) has been prepared on behalf of Peel Land & Property and the Peel Ports Group in respect of the land which is owned by Peel at Port Warrington and Arpley Meadows, and the adjoining land which is owned by Warrington Council.

1.1 This document focuses on the following aspects of the Warrington Waterfront vision (together ‘the proposals’, and the land which they cover ‘the Site’):

- 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 a rail freight connection, warehousing for manufacturing, distribution and storage purposes, potential turning basin to the south of the Ship Canal and open storage and hardstanding areas.
- Enhanced Moore Nature Reserve and Country Park to provide additional recreational facilities for Warrington, alongside ecological enhancement and green infrastructure
- A new business hub (‘Warrington Commercial Park’) contribute 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.

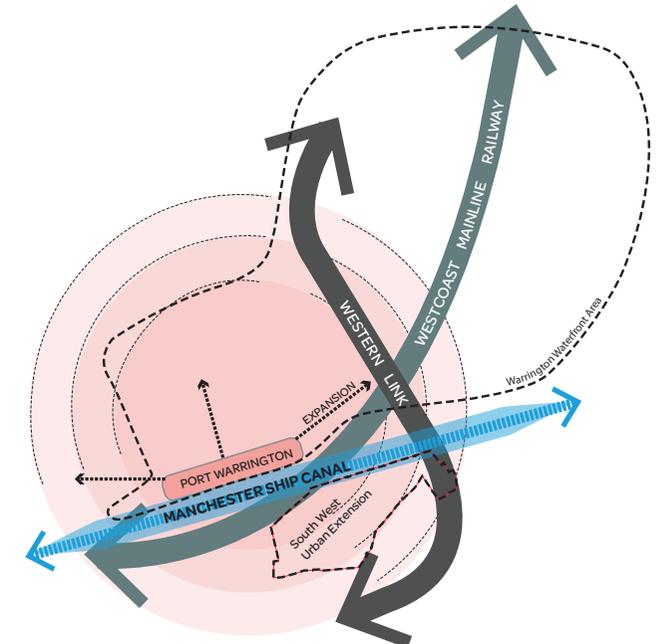
1.2 This document has been produced in consultation with the Council and seeks to help inform and support the wider Warrington Waterfront development.

1.3 It sets out an overall vision and development opportunity for the sustainable development of the Site and its proposed allocation within the emerging Warrington Local Plan for mixed-use (principally B2 and B8) development. It reflects the significant growth aspirations of the Council for this section of the Waterfront and outlines how the Site can help achieve these ambitions. It should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Justification Document which fully outlines the reasoning for the proposal. Both documents are provided to Warrington Borough Council in support of the emerging Local Plan and will be subject to further input as the proposal progresses.

1.4 The Document outlines the key baseline and survey work which has been assembled to identify the constraints and opportunities, and to inform the development potential of the Site. It also considers the overall strategic locational advantages of Port Warrington and its relationship to the West Coast Mainline Railway, the Manchester Ship Canal and the Western Link Road proposals. It presents an overall spatial response within a development framework masterplan. It has sought to respond to the various representations from local authorities and key stakeholders which were made in response to consultation on the draft Local Plan.

1.5 The remainder of this Document is structured as follows:

- Overview of the strategic context and development needs
- Planning policy position and Green Belt justification
- Existing site context, including a review of the planning history and environmental condition of the Site
- Site constraints and opportunities
- Details of proposal, including an overview of the suitability, sustainability and the impact of the proposal
- Benefits
- Summary and conclusions.



Multimodal Port Proposition



Liverpool Rd

Sankey Valley Park

A57

A6

Lingley Green

Great Sankey

Warrington Town Centre

Latchford

A562

Penketh

Sewage Works

River Mersey

West Coast Main line (Railway)

Waterfront Area

Stockton Heath

Walton

A56

South West Urban Extension

Appleton

Manchester Ship Canal

Moore Lane

Higher Walton

Runcorn

Moore

Aerial Location Plan

02 Strategic Context and Warrington Waterfront Vision

This Section outlines the strategic locational context, the growth ambitions for Warrington and the contribution the Warrington Waterfront proposals are expected to make.

2.1 As illustrated in the Warrington Waterfront Strategic Context Plan on the following page, the Site is located between Warrington town centre, the River Mersey to the north, Manchester Ship Canal to the south (between Runcorn Docks and Port Salford) and the West Coast mainline and Solvay Interox chemical works to the east, with farmland to the west. The settlement of Moore is located to the south, with access via Moore Lane Bridge. It has strong connections to the strategic transport network (the M56, for example, is approximately 2.5km from the Site) and it is well placed to capitalise on the North West growth aspirations.

2.2 The Site comprises the existing storage and distribution uses at Port Warrington, the Arpley landfill site and Moore Nature Reserve.

2.3 Peel, as the majority landowners of the Site, support its release from the Green Belt and its re-allocation for a new ports-led development ('Port Warrington'), a country park proposal ('Moore Nature Reserve and Country Park') and business park ('Warrington Commercial Park'), alongside wider environmental and infrastructure improvement works.

2.4 Peel support the Council's vision and ambition for Warrington Waterfront to become a key area of growth over the next Local Plan period. Peel has been working in partnership with Warrington Council over the past five years to develop the Warrington Waterfront proposals, on land Peel own, including the joint commissioning of a masterplan to create a comprehensive proposal for the Waterfront area. Peel will continue to support and to facilitate the delivery of the Waterfront ambition.

2.5 Full details of the overall delivery ambitions for the Site, including the drivers of demand for a new business park and employment space with multi-modal potential (namely it will be accessible by road, rail and ships) in this location and the specific strategy of Peel Ports to capture this opportunity, is outlined within the supporting Justification Document.



Strategic Growth of Warrington

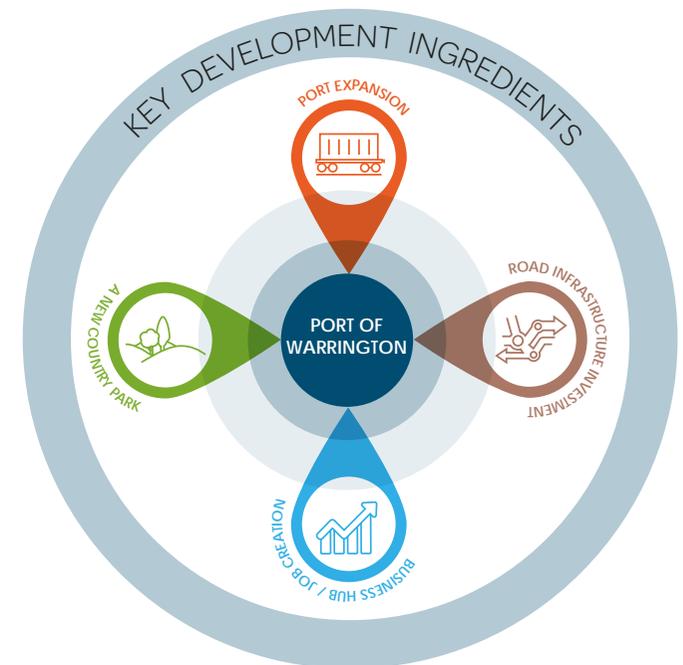
2.6 Warrington lies at the heart of the North-West region, Atlantic Gateway and Northern Powerhouse. The M6, M56 and M62 motorways intersect within the borough, providing excellent access to all parts of the region and beyond. Warrington also lies on the region's main North-South (West Coast Mainline)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

2.7 Its spatial position, infrastructure and inherent connectivity have resulted in Warrington becoming one of the most successful towns in the UK. Over the last 40 years, Warrington has grown from a town with a population of around 70,000 to one which is now over 200,000. A working age population of around 2.5 million live within a 30 minute drive of Warrington; this is the largest working catchment in the UK outside London and its recent performance is bettered only by Aberdeen and London. Warrington is now viewed and widely recognised as a key economic contributor to the North West economy and a major growth area. This economic strength is only expected to continue and this will result in ongoing opportunity but also development pressure.

2.8 Warrington wishes to further capitalise on its position and assets and to accelerate economic growth in order to consolidate its position as one of the most important economic hubs in the UK. However, despite its economic strength, its potential is at threat of being limited through the availability of land, lack of infrastructure and congestion. The need to unlock these constraints and capitalise upon Warrington's economic potential is a key focus of the Council's Industrial Strategy and expressed spatially through its emerging Local Plan, which includes the release of Green Belt to meet increasing development needs for the next 20 years, during the Plan period. The ambition is to deliver 18,900 new homes and 31,000 jobs through regeneration and expansion across key areas of the borough. One of these key areas is Warrington Waterfront, as illustrated within the Preferred Development Option Plan on the following page, which is expected to create a new part of Warrington town centre. This will be facilitated by the construction of a new link road to open up swathes of under-utilised and inaccessible land and to deliver 2,500 homes, community facilities, a major expansion of Port Warrington and a new business hub.

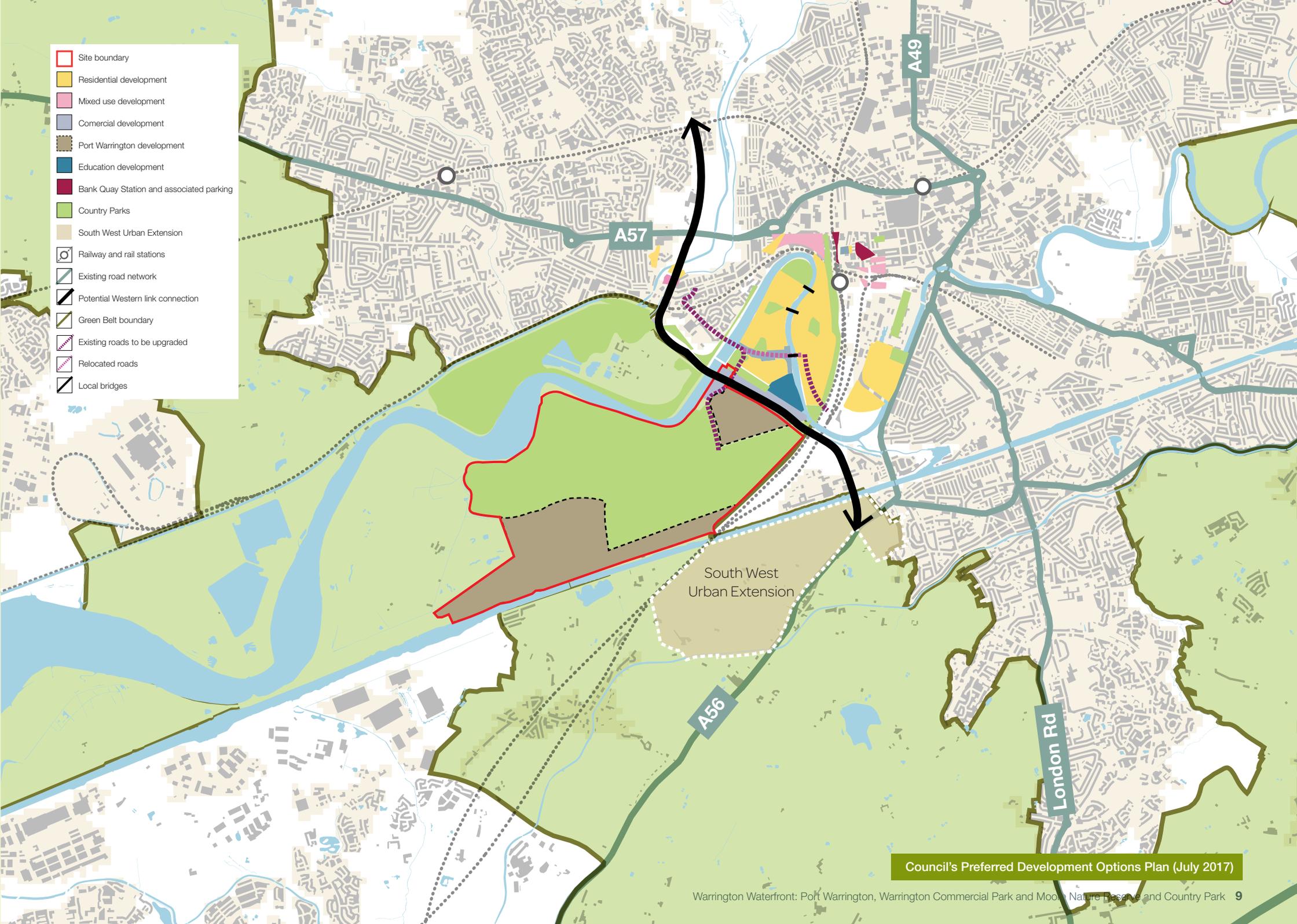
2.9 The expanded Port would take advantage of the increased use of the Manchester Ship Canal for freight activity linked to investments at the Port of Liverpool and opportunities for port related manufacturing and port-centric logistics and distribution. It will attract businesses that wish to benefit from a port-side location. In the longer term, there is opportunity to connect the Ship Canal to the rail network, as well as the strategic road network providing a truly multi-modal facility (water, rail and road) which distinguishes it as an unrivalled development opportunity in the borough and the wider region. It also offers a more sustainable long term solution to freight distribution, as reflected in national policy which seeks to harness port-centric distribution to deliver greater environmental benefits and economic growth. The principle of expanding Port Warrington has been established in the adopted Local Plan Core Strategy and the emerging Local Plan seeks to provide a clearer more positive framework for this expansion.

2.10 The Warrington Waterfront proposals also include the delivery of a new Commercial Park, which would offer flexible employment space suitable for businesses wishing to be close to the town centre or proximate to the Port, and the restoration of the former Arpley landfill site to create a new major country park of sub-regional importance.



Port of Warrington Key Ingredients

-  Site boundary
-  Residential development
-  Mixed use development
-  Commercial development
-  Port Warrington development
-  Education development
-  Bank Quay Station and associated parking
-  Country Parks
-  South West Urban Extension
-  Railway and rail stations
-  Existing road network
-  Potential Western link connection
-  Green Belt boundary
-  Existing roads to be upgraded
-  Relocated roads
-  Local bridges



Wider Warrington Waterfront Ambition

2.11 As outlined within the Council's Preferred Development Options Plan (July 2017), and illustrated on the previous page, and the AECOM masterplan shown on the following page, the wider Warrington Waterfront area ambitions are for a major development opportunity site which offers the potential to become one of the most important employment areas around the North West region and deliver around 2,500 new homes. Warrington Waterfront will be a new urban quarter of Warrington, taking advantage of its waterside setting which would be 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 Link Road.

2.12 Peel's proposals will form a key component of the Council's wider growth aspirations for this area of Warrington, encouraging further growth. The delivery of the Western Link Road infrastructure will also provide a unique opportunity to unlock an unrivalled growth opportunity at Port Warrington and Warrington Commercial Park.

2.13 Peel has worked in partnership with Warrington Borough Council to progress the comprehensive development vision for the Site and ensure that it relates well and it forms an integral part of the wider Waterfront proposals.

2.14 Considered around the themes of People, Place and Movement, the Site has the potential to create the following in the context of the wider Warrington Waterfront vision:



Employment

An employment land offer taking advantage of the multimodal potential accessible by road, rail and ship.

Economic growth

A new range of business units will take advantage of the Site's location increasing the number of jobs and investment in the local area.

Social infrastructure

A number of new services and facilities will be available for the local community created by the delivery of new homes.

Health and well-being

A new country park will include a strong green infrastructure, pedestrian walking paths and attractive leisure and recreational areas accessible to members of the public.



An aspirational place

An expansion of Warrington town centre, creating a great place to live, work and enjoy.

Biodiversity value

Additional green features including tree planting and hedgerows alongside well-established trees.

Habitat creation and protection

A strong green infrastructure network will protect and enhance wildlife habitats.

Sustainable drainage

A number of ponds and basins will be part of a sustainable drainage system network (SUDs) in order to prevent and manage flooding.

Sustainable energy

Encouraging the use of renewable energy, energy saving measures and a sustainable construction will minimise the carbon impact.



Sustainable travel choices

Reducing the use of the private car and promoting the public transport, walking, cycling or car sharing.

Public transport

Additional bus stops within walkable distances alongside the existing bus and train routes.

Footpaths and cycleways

Pedestrian and cycling links through the country park will connect the waterfront development with residential areas and community facilities.

Connections

The delivery of a new link road will reduce the traffic congestion and provide the infrastructure required for the expansion of Warrington town centre.



Warrington
Commercial Park

Moore Nature Reserve
and Country Park

Port Warrington

03 Planning Policy

This Section includes an assessment of the key national and local planning policies. It also summarises the exceptional circumstances case which justifies the release of land from the Green Belt.

Planning Policy Position

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (the “Framework”) identifies that sustainable development should be at the heart of the planning system and that local authorities should secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of their local area. It notes that planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable (notably economic) growth and that Councils should plan proactively to meet development needs over their Plan period (Paragraph 23). In addition, developments should be located and designed to exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes (Paragraph 103), and the movement of goods / people and development, which facilitates large scale rail freight interchanges and ports should be supported.

3.2 The National Policy Statement for Ports also highlights the important role of ports for economic growth (Paragraph 3.17) and confirms that there is a national need to upgrade and extend the port capacity of the UK and provide supporting infrastructure to optimise supply chains (Paragraph 3.3.3) and to provide further choice and competition.

3.3 The Local Plan Preferred Development Options acknowledges that Warrington is a Key Area of Growth and it needs to identify a variety of suitable, available and deliverable sustainable sites, including within the Green Belt, to meet its overall growth ambitions and development needs to 2037. It supports the expansion of Port Warrington and recognises that the wider Warrington Waterfront area is a “long standing strategic priority” which offers the ability to connect the City Centre to the Mersey and the Ship Canal. It notes that there is already suppressed demand for employment land and that, in the medium and longer term, Warrington’s status as a key driver of the North West economy will be threatened as development land is used up, with potential employers and investment lost to other regions of the UK and overseas.

3.4 To address this, the Council has identified that it will open up Port Warrington to “become one of the most important employment areas in the North West region.”

Green Belt Justification

3.5 The whole Site is presently located within the designated Green Belt. The current uses of the Site reflect its industrial heritage and comprise a mix of warehouse buildings, a landfill site, and associated infrastructure / buildings and a nature reserve. The existing footprint of Port Warrington and the adjoining land associated with the consented extension, which was approved in 2010, as outlined in Section 4, are within the existing Port Warrington Strategic Opportunity allocation (Policy CS11).

3.6 The Core Strategy has previously accepted that a justification for the expansion of Port Warrington development within the Green Belt could be demonstrated 'by virtue of the fixed location of the infrastructure within the Green Belt and the potential for multi-modal sustainable transport benefits and contributing to promoting wider sustainable growth' (Policy CS11).

3.7 As outlined further in the Justification Document, the inherent case for the allocation of the expanded Port Warrington site and its release from the Green Belt is the Site's fixed location (namely that it is bordered and has direct access to the Manchester Ship Canal, the West Coast Mainline and the proposed Western Link at the heart of the North West which means that the proposed port-related facilities will be able to take full advantage of these locational circumstances) and the significant strategic opportunity it brings to harness the more efficient port-centric and multi-modal connections. In its allocation of Port Warrington as a Strategic Opportunity Site, the Core Strategy fully recognises its importance in terms of the regeneration and economic development benefits that it could bring to the borough.



View showing the extent of the existing Port Warrington Site, illustrating the industrial character.

3.8 The Warrington Local Plan acknowledges that the prosperity and success of Warrington, will not be realised without a significant release of land currently within the Green Belt over and above 'brownfield' sites that exist. The existing Green Belt was established in 1979 and has not been comprehensively reviewed since that date – it is seriously out of date.

3.9 It is important to note at the outset that the Council has accepted in their emerging Plan that there are exceptional circumstances which justify the release of significant amounts of Green Belt to meet Warrington's needs. Whilst it is recognised that all land within the current Green Belt fulfils at least some aspects of Green Belt purposes, the Council acknowledges that it simply will not be possible to meet the identified employment and housing needs of Warrington without revising Green Belt boundaries.

3.10 The Council's Assessment identifies that the whole Warrington Waterfront site, including Arpley Meadows, Port Warrington and the proposed Commercial Park location (General Area no. 15), makes a 'moderate' overall contribution to the Green Belt. It acknowledges that although it makes a 'strong' contribution when assessed against the preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another criteria, it only makes a 'moderate' contribution to assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and assisting in urban regeneration; and a 'weak' contribution in preventing sprawl and protecting historic towns.

3.11 The Assessment concludes that the land contributes strongly to preventing towns from merging and the wholesale development of this parcel of land would 'result in the merging of the Warrington urban area and Runcorn'. However, as outlined further within this document, the scale and type of development which is proposed will not result in any merging of these settlements, primarily as Arpley Meadows will be retained within the Green Belt and turned into a Country Park. It is considered that the majority of the land fails to contribute towards the purposes of the Green Belt, is not deemed to make a 'significant' contribution to warrant its retention within the Green Belt and is currently largely underutilised as parts of it are not publicly accessible. As a result of the limited contribution which the majority of the Site makes to the Green Belt, it is considered that its amended status in the Local Plan to employment purposes will not cause significant harm and it will not affect the long term permanence and endurance of the wider Green Belt.

3.12 Further explanation regarding the exceptional circumstances can be found in the Justification Document which accompanies this Development Framework, but can be summarised as follows:

- Need for significant new employment land: To provide more employment land to meet development needs through to 2037 (the Plan period). The Council's own 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, which accounts for two thirds of the overall requirement.

- Need for an expanded Port Warrington: 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). An updated freight assessment has been prepared by MDST (included as an appendix to the Justification Document) which confirms that traffic growth remains healthy and in line with expectations as envisaged within the MPM. Port Warrington would effectively act as an inland extension to the Port of Liverpool with container storage for subsequent distribution by road to local shippers and receivers and, with its on-site distribution centres, become an origin and destination of cargo in its own right.
- Port Warrington has specific and fixed locational attributes and characteristics which are unique and cannot be replicated elsewhere. The Commercial Park will also take advantage of these features, notably the Western Link Road, to enable stronger connections to the wider region. 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.

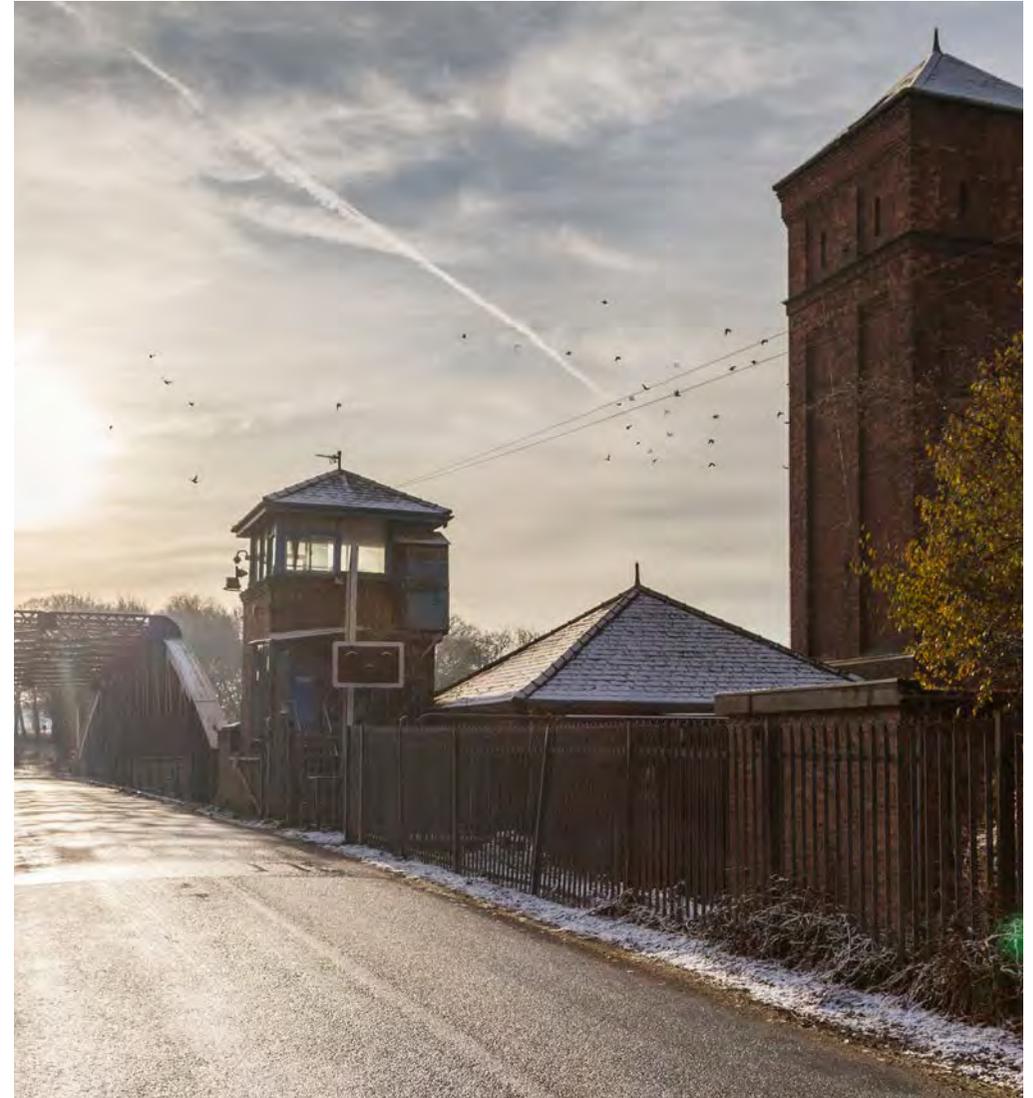
- Complementary Employment Uses: The Port Warrington and Commercial Park developments will provide complementary new uses to the area – although both aspects of the proposal will be distinct and will offer a different employment environment, these have the potential to attract a variety of businesses and employers which will benefit from locating next to each other.
- Existing Local Policy: There is clear local policy support in respect of the growth and expansion of Port Warrington, new employment development and the regeneration of the wider Warrington Waterfront as evidenced through the existing Development Plan, pan-northern, regional and local regeneration and economic strategies.
- National Policy Support: Government policy support for new employment development and multi-modal port facilities and rail connected warehousing is explicit in National Policy Statements in respect of Ports and National Networks. These seek to deliver more port capacity and to encourage modal shift via the provision of intermodal freight facilities here. The weight to be afforded is substantial. Only Port Warrington and Port Salford can be developed as both water and rail connected facilities through the Liverpool-Manchester corridor.
- Previous use of land: Much of the land has been consented for development previously (as canal deposit ground and then as landfill) and its openness has been impacted upon by that development.
- Port Warrington and the Commercial Park are both key pieces of strategic infrastructure which, along with infrastructure proposals such as the Western Link Road, will support Warrington's growth as a whole.
- The economic benefits that would flow from a new, modern Port and commercial hub would be substantial.
- It will generate a range of community benefits including the delivery of a major new Country Park offering a range of community enhancements to Warrington and new ecological enhancements across the wider area.
- The proposal would also result in the removal of existing HGV traffic from local roads passing through Moore village.
- The proposal would lead to significant environmental benefits; in freight transportation for example, Port Warrington will result in a 34.8 million reduction in annual HGV kilometres which would equate to a reduction in carbon emissions from these HGVs of about 30,900 tonnes per annum.

04 Existing Site Context

This Section summarises the current local context, highlighting the Site's position within Warrington, key transport links and main features. This has been informed by a range of technical assessments which Peel commissioned to demonstrate the suitability of the Site for development.

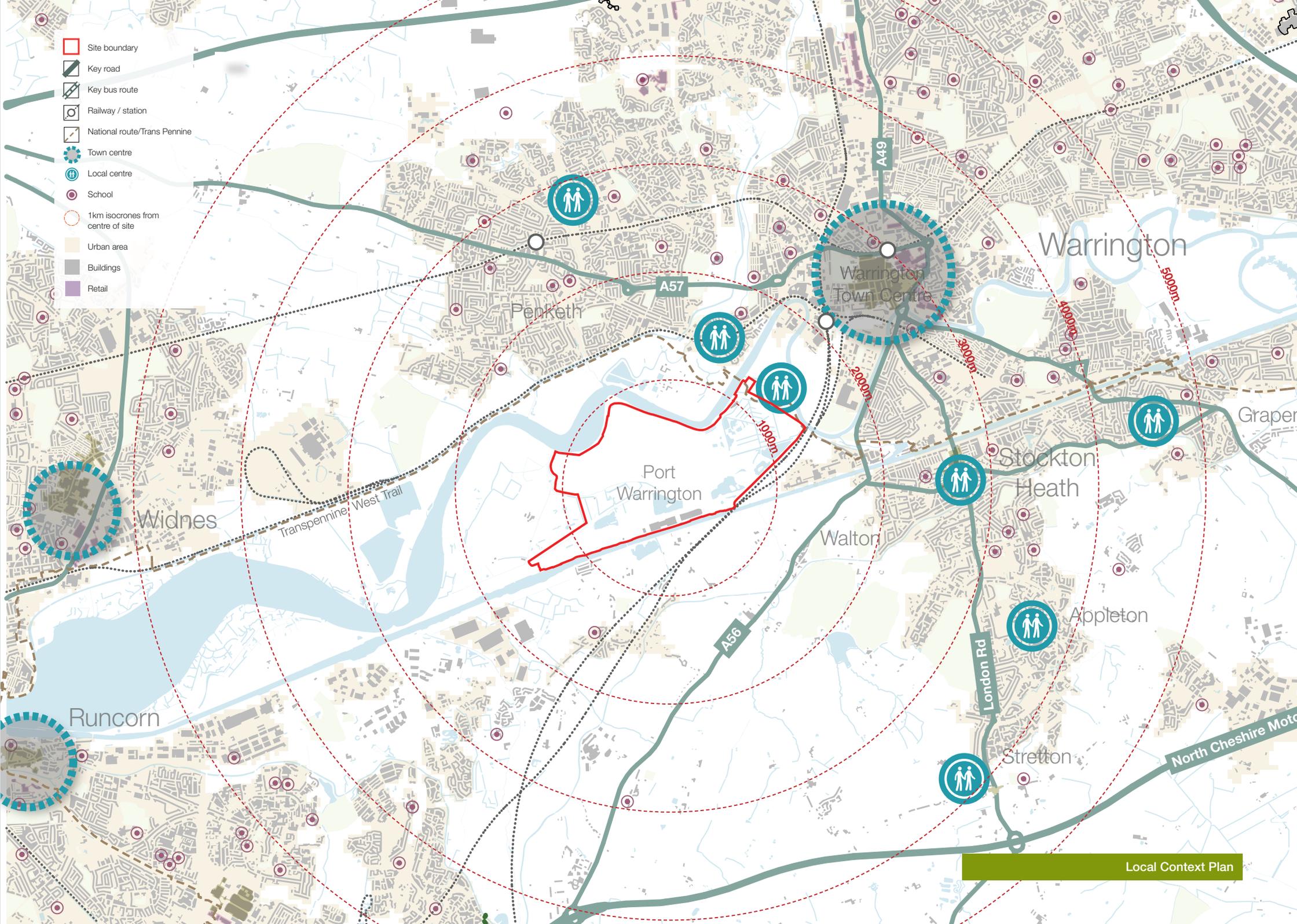
4.1 These assessments have identified that:

- There are no significant constraints to development at the Site which cannot be addressed through careful masterplanning and typical mitigation measures.
- The Site provides significant opportunities to create a high quality residential community, whilst protecting valued environmental and recreational assets.



View showing the immediate local context, adjacent to Moore Lane bridge

-  Site boundary
-  Key road
-  Key bus route
-  Railway / station
-  National route/Trans Pennine
-  Town centre
-  Local centre
-  School
-  1km isocrones from centre of site
-  Urban area
-  Buildings
-  Retail



The Site and its Surroundings

4.2 The Site measures an area of approximately 296ha and it currently accommodates existing storage and distribution warehousing at Port Warrington (14ha), Arpley landfill site which is partly restored (176ha), the Moore Nature Reserve (90ha) and outlying woodland areas and several lakes which are fully accessible to members of the public (16ha).

4.3 The Site is in a highly sustainable location, with potential for multimodal connectivity and access to local services and amenities. The proposals will take advantage of the Site's multimodal access (by road, rail and ship) and will bring further investment from businesses looking for a strategic location.

4.4 It is located within the Warrington borough, 3km to the west of the Warrington town centre and 5 and 6km from Widnes and Runcorn, respectively.

4.5 As illustrated in the Neighbourhood Connectivity and Movement Plan on the following page, the Site is bounded by the River Mersey to the north, the Canal to the south and the Westcoast mainline railway to the southeast. It is accessed by

the A56 and A49 from the south and the A57 and A49 from the north. Port Warrington has direct frontage to the northern bank of the Manchester Ship Canal, with the current vehicular access via Moore Lane and Birchwood Lane. The Western Link is a proposed major highways improvement, connecting the A56 and A57 to the west of the town centre, reducing levels of traffic through the town and also providing access to development sites. The Link has broad governmental support and an Outline Business Case has been submitted recently for funding.

4.6 The levels on the Site range between 10 – 20m AOD. The topography generally falls towards the onsite waterbodies and the Manchester Ship Canal.

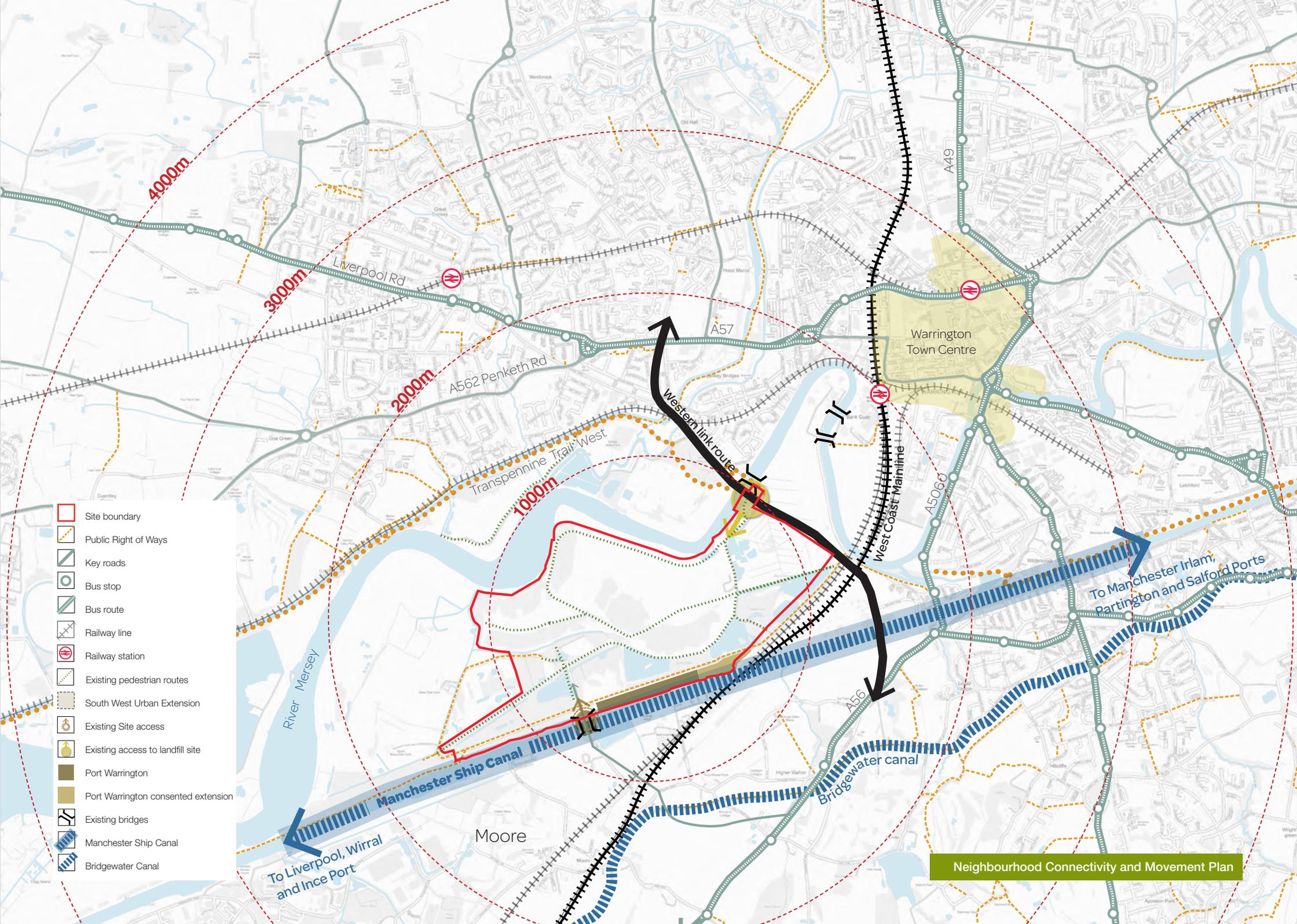
4.7 Key parts of the Site such as Port Warrington and Arpley landfill are industrial in nature, comprising a mix of previously developed land, historic large scale warehouse units, access roads and leachate treatment facilities.

Planning History

4.8 The Port Warrington site has been in operational use for over a century, which pre-dates both the planning system and the designation of the Green Belt. Several parts of site were once used as canal deposit grounds for the disposal of dredgings, with the western area of the landfill operations site also previously consented for waste disposal.

4.9 There have been a number of major applications on the land, including for the development of the existing warehousing, storage and distribution buildings which was approved in 1994. Planning permission was then obtained in March 2010 for a £20m development and engineering operations and to create a multi-modal (water, rail and road) port facility, including the infilling of the Site to the previous levels, the re-instatement of the rail freight line and an extension to the existing canalside berth, on a 5.4ha site immediately to the east of the existing warehouse distribution centre. The planning permission has been partially implemented by way of the infilling of the Site to establish ground levels for the open storage area. However, to date, the rail freight connection has not been delivered and the canal berth has yet to be extended, although the existing berth is available for use.

4.10 The Arpley landfill has been in operation since 1986. An application to extend the operational life of the facility to October 2018 and enable its restoration by October 2019, with a revised sequence of landfill phasing and restoration works, approved in May 2015. The permission allows for the restoration of those areas previously landfilled with a full landscaping proposal to transform it into an area of usable greenspace, with connections to the Moore Nature Reserve to the south.



- Site boundary
- Public Right of Ways
- Key roads
- Bus stop
- Bus route
- Railway line
- Railway station
- Existing pedestrian routes
- South West Urban Extension
- Existing Site access
- Existing access to landfill site
- Port Warrington
- Port Warrington consented extension
- Existing bridges
- Manchester Ship Canal
- Bridgewater Canal

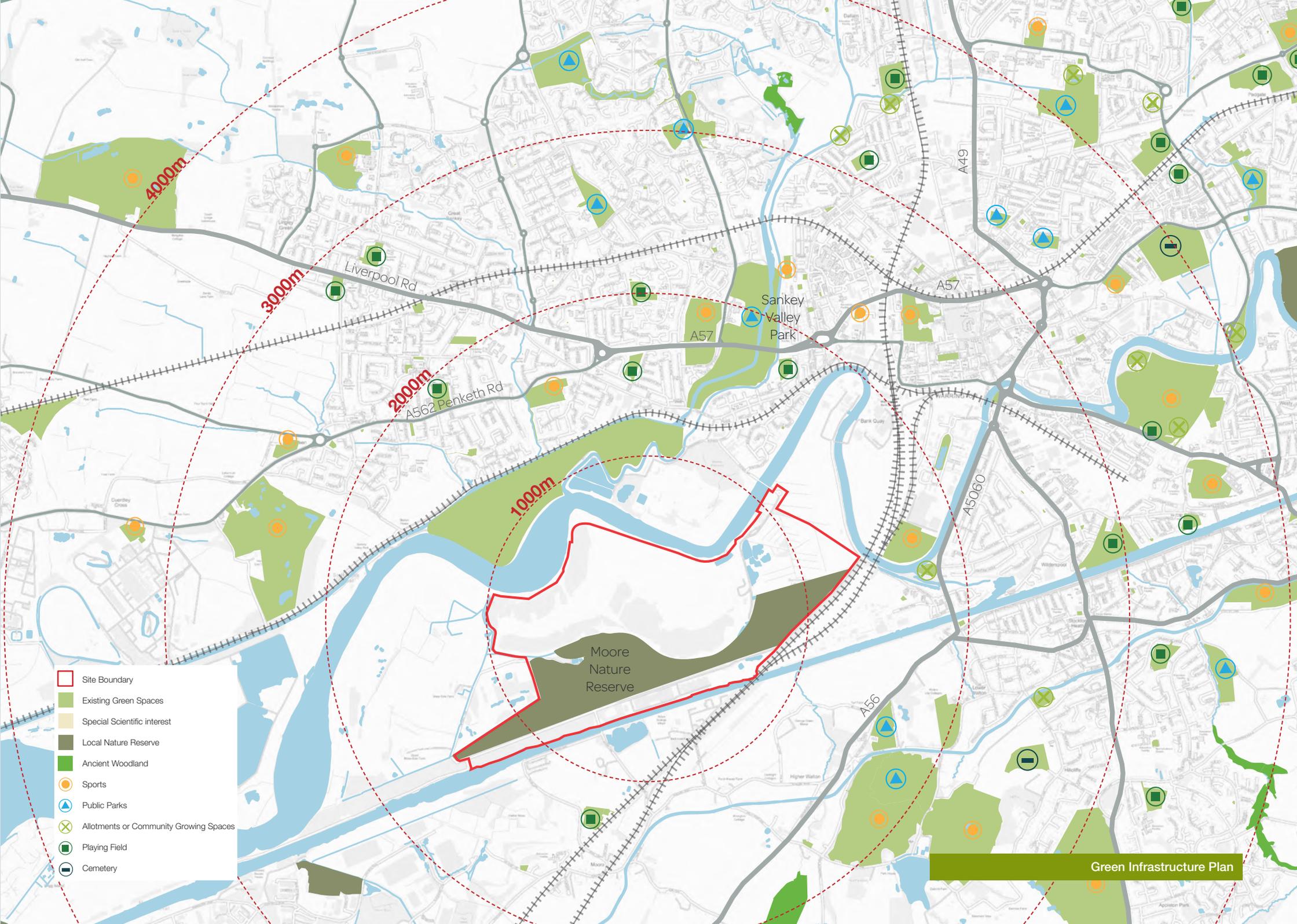
Green Infrastructure

4.11 A range of public parks, playing fields, and sports facilities are located within a 2km radius of the Site, meeting the immediate local needs.

4.12 As illustrated in the plan on the following page, beyond the 2km radius, local natural reserves and woodlands form part of the established green network.

4.13 As shown in the illustrated plan on the following page, there is a lack of accessible green space to the southwest of the town centre. This creates an opportunity to improve the existing landscape context, enhance the green infrastructure network and deliver a significant parkland destination.





- Site Boundary
- Existing Green Spaces
- Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserve
- Ancient Woodland
- Sports
- ▲ Public Parks
- ⊗ Allotments or Community Growing Spaces
- Playing Field
- ⊖ Cemetery

Understanding the Site

4.14 The following images of the Site will help to understand the character and nature of the Site within its wider and local context.

4.15 A detailed technical assessment of the Site itself has been undertaken to determine key constraints and opportunities which require consideration in the design of the proposal.

4.16 The key technical characteristics of the Site which are deemed to be most relevant to the proposal are summarised in the next pages.



Top right: View from landfill site

Bottom right: View along footpath in Moore Nature Reserve showing mix of woodland and grassland between two of the lakes



Top: Port Warrington signage



Top left: View along the tree lined Lapwing Lane in Moore Nature Reserve looking toward the north of the Site.
Top middle: View along the access road to the Port Warrington buildings
Top right: Existing buildings at Port Warrington

Bottom left: View of Arpley landfill site
Bottom right: View of Fiddler's Ferry Power Station

Environmental Condition of the Site

4.17 The following summary explains the findings from the technical reports.

Agricultural Land

4.18 The eastern section of the Site and the proposed location for the Warrington Commercial Park comprises Grade 3b agricultural land which is deemed to be of moderate quality. The wider site is unfavourable for agricultural purposes due to its topography and soil type.

Biodiversity and Ecology

4.19 There are no internationally / nationally designated or non-statutory sites on the Site, though the Moore Local Nature Reserve, which was established in 1991, is a Local Wildlife Site for its woodland, grassland and reedbed habitats and for the bird species it contains.

4.20 The Moss Side Farm Local Nature Reserve and Upper Mersey Estuary Local Wildlife Site are also located immediately adjacent to the west and northwest of the Site. There are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2km though it is within the Impact Risk Zone of three SSSIs. The Site contains a number of notable features including a variety of flora species, non-native invasive species and there have been records of several bat species, invertebrates, badgers, water vole, designated birds and noted amphibians and mammals.

Landscape and Views

4.21 The Site is within a largely working industrial landscape, with views to and from the proposed Western Link road. The Site falls within the River Flood Plain Character Area (Type 5A - River Mersey / Bollin), within which there is the mounded landfill site, existing bridge crossings and the Manchester Ship Canal; these features exhibit varying levels of sensitivity.

4.22 The Site is fairly contained, with the landfill site helping to effectively screen the majority of views from the north and north east. The woodland along the western side of the landfill also helps to screen views, though there are several viewpoints into the Site from nearby elevated positions.

Trees

4.23 The Site comprises a diverse range and quality of trees (including 55 ha of large broadleaved specimens and some woodland of exceptional quality and veteran trees, notably within the Nature Reserve), species poor hedgerows, scrubland and plantations, including on the landfill site. There are no ancient moorland or Tree Preservation Orders within or adjacent to the Site.

Flood Risk

4.24 The majority of the Site is within Flood Zone 1 (and is therefore deemed to be at low risk of flooding, according to the Environment Agency), there are also several areas which are within Flood Zones 2 and 3.

Heritage

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

Noise

4.26 There are several existing sources of background noise to the Site, including noise from the West Coast Main Line, activity noise from the existing Port Warrington site and road traffic noise from the existing road network, including the A56.

Hazards

4.27 There is a high pressure ethylene gas pipeline which runs through the eastern section of the Site and the Solvay Interlox Chemical Works are located outside of the Site boundary.