

# **Warrington Local Plan 2021-2038: Examination in Public**

Hearing Statement by Peel L&P (Holdings) UK  
Ltd and Peel Ports (representor no. UPSVLP  
0438)

Matter 6a: Main Development Area:  
Warrington Waterfront

July 2022

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**Client**

Peel L&P (Holdings) UK Ltd and Peel Ports

**Our reference**

PEEM3056

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement is prepared by Turley on behalf of Peel L&P (Holdings) UK Ltd and Peel Ports Group (hereafter called ‘Peel’ and ‘Peel Ports’ respectively) in respect of the examination of the Warrington Local Plan 2021-2038. It provides a joint response by Peel and Peel Ports to the Matters, Issues and Questions (‘MIQs’)<sup>1</sup> identified by the Inspectors in respect of Matter 6a: Main Development Area – Warrington Waterfront.
- 1.2 In overall terms, Peel and Peel Ports are fully supportive of the emerging Local Plan and consider it imperative that Warrington has an up-to-date Local Plan, and one which provides the policy tools for the planning system to support sustainable growth, in accordance with national planning policy. Notwithstanding such support, Peel/Peel Ports have identified a number of issues and concerns relating to the soundness of specific policies within the Updated Proposed Submission Version Local Plan (‘UPSVLP’). These concerns relate specifically to:
- The removal of strategic policy support and recognition – established through Policy CS11 of the adopted Warrington Core Strategy – that Port Warrington was a strategic opportunity of scale and had the potential to develop into a multi-modal facility; and
  - The removal of proposed land use allocations<sup>2</sup> supporting the expansion of Port Warrington and associated Warrington Commercial Park (WCP) from the UPSVLP.
- 1.3 Amendments to the relevant policies are suggested, without which those policies are not considered sound. The representations<sup>3</sup> and the comments set out in this Statement demonstrate how such concerns can be readily addressed through the suggested Modifications to the policies such that the UPSVLP can be found sound.

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<sup>1</sup> ID02

<sup>2</sup> The 2019 Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Version Local Plan (PSVLP) proposed to remove land around Port Warrington and the WCP from the Green Belt and, through draft Policy MD1, proposed an expansion of the Port for B2/B8 uses of some 185,000 sq m and a new business hub for B1, B2 and B8 of some 65,000 sq m

<sup>3</sup> Warrington Updated Proposed Submission Version Local Plan 2021-2038: Representations on behalf of Peel L&P (Holdings) UK Ltd and Peel Ports – Paper 1: Regulation 19 Representations

## 2. Matter 6a: Main Development Area

### Q1: What is the background to the Main Development Area and how was it determined?

- 2.1 The regeneration of Warrington Waterfront has its genesis within the existing Warrington Core Strategy<sup>4</sup> ('WCS'). The WCS contains overarching strategic policies<sup>5</sup> that recognise that there is a sizable strategic opportunity to regenerate land close to the town centre and inner Warrington, comprising the Warrington Waterfront and Arpley Meadows, to create a new quarter consisting of residential and employment development, transport infrastructure, green infrastructure and a country park. These policies include 'in-principle' support for an expanded Port Warrington which has the capability to become a multi modal port facility utilising the Manchester Ship Canal ('MSC') with an opportunity for rail freight.
- 2.2 These provisions were carried into the previous versions of the Local Plan. In particular, the previous plan (the 'Proposed Submission Version Local Plan') identified three broad employment locations, with one being Port Warrington. Port Warrington was described as a *"long standing strategic priority and the principle of Green Belt release to facilitate this development was established in the current Local Plan Core Strategy"*.
- 2.3 The omission of Port Warrington and associated WCP from the UPSVLP results in the Warrington Waterfront proposition being significantly watered down in terms of economic, recreational and social benefits compared to its original version. The UPSVLP no longer provides any recognition of the potential sustainable economic activity generated and sustained by the Manchester Ship Canal or the recognition (as in the WCS) of the development potential of Port Warrington, as a much needed and significant piece of intermodal infrastructure and its potential to deliver significant multi-modal sustainable transport benefits and wider economic growth for Warrington and the wider region.
- 2.4 Peel and Peel Ports considers that the case<sup>6</sup> for expanding Port Warrington and WCP are weighty and significant. However, rather than being a high priority in the UPSVLP, the plan does not take into account the specialist justification and need for an expanded Port Warrington to Peel Ports into consideration. This is not consistent with national planning policy<sup>7</sup> in plan-making terms and is also against the plethora of national and regional planning and economic policy<sup>8</sup> which seeks to support the delivery of port infrastructure to serve the UK economy.

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<sup>4</sup> Warrington Core Strategy, adopted 21<sup>st</sup> July 2014

<sup>5</sup> Policies CS10 and CS11, Warrington Core Strategy, adopted 21<sup>st</sup> July 2014

<sup>6</sup> See Representations on behalf of Peel L&P (Holdings) UK Ltd and Peel Ports – Paper 2: Case Making Document

<sup>7</sup> See sections 6.18 – 6.20 of Representations on behalf of Peel L&P (Holdings) UK Ltd and Peel Ports – Paper 1: Regulation 19 Representations

<sup>8</sup> See chapter 4 of Representations on behalf of Peel L&P (Holdings) UK Ltd and Peel Ports Group – Paper 1 and chapter 5 of Case Making Document – Paper 2

- 2.5 In revising the plan, the Council has therefore given insufficient weight to (a) Peel and Peel Ports' own evidence base for Port Warrington and WCP not only in terms of specialist need and benefits but also in respect of constraints and proposed mitigation and (b) its own conclusions on the suitability, viability and deliverability of Port Warrington and WCP stated within the previous iteration of the plan and its associated evidence base.

**Q6: Have the funding and programme for the Warrington Western Link Road (WLLR) been confirmed?**

- 2.6 No. The Council has submitted a planning application but this awaits validation. Department for Transport ('DfT') conditional funding for the WWLR was confirmed in April 2019, providing around two-thirds of the scheme's cost, and this offer was accepted by the Council's Cabinet in July 2019. The funding shortfall at the time was estimated at around £70m and to meet this, the Council settled on a strategy of developer contributions as part of its plan to deliver the WLLR.
- 2.7 The Council has now removed a critical funding stream in no longer proposing the allocation of Port Warrington/WCP and South West Urban Extension (SWUE). As a result, there remains a clear deficiency in the evidence base in respect of financial funding which casts doubt upon the certainty of delivery of the WLLR, particularly as it is understood that potential costs have risen to £286 million<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> See minutes of 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021 of Supporting the Local Economy Policy Committee, Warrington Borough Council - [Meetings and Events \(warrington.gov.uk\)](https://www.warrington.gov.uk/Meetings-and-Events)

### 3. Modifications Requested

3.1 To rectify soundness, Peel and Peel Ports propose the following modifications:

- (1) In order to provide more flexibility and choice in supply and to meet the specific need for growth at the Port, relevant policies<sup>10</sup> of the UPSVLP should be amended and the land-use allocations for Port Warrington and WCP be reinstated.

A proposed redrafting of Policy MD1 is provided in Appendix 2 of our representations<sup>11</sup>. Minor consequential amendments should be made to Policy MD4 and GB1.

Whilst the approach set out in (1) is strongly Peel's preference, an alternative policy approach would be to safeguard Port Warrington and WCP to meet future development needs beyond the Plan period but also support their development during this Plan period through a criteria-based policy which would determine the need for the proposals.

A proposed modification to Policy MD4 is provided below:

#### ***Port Warrington and WCP***

*Port Warrington will meet an identified need for an extended 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 support the ability of Peel Ports to handle, transact and process cargo against growing freight demand and 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 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.*

*Located between the Port and new residential community, the Warrington Commercial Park (WCP), functionally connected and an integral part to meet Port growth, will provide a range of flexible employment space. It will also provide space for small and medium sized enterprises looking to establish and grow their business close to Warrington Town Centre.*

*Land to facilitate the expansion of Port Warrington and the WCP defined on the Policies Map will be safeguarded for development and protected from development. However, in order to ensure this infrastructure is provided at the right time and to ensure there is sufficient flexibility to respond to changing*

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<sup>10</sup> Policies MD4 (Economic Growth and Development), MD1 (Warrington Waterfront) and GB 1 (Green Belt)

<sup>11</sup> See Representations on behalf of Peel L&P (Holdings) UK Ltd and Peel Ports – Paper 1: Regulation 19 Representations – Appendix 2

*circumstances, the delivery of an expanded Port Warrington and WCP would be supported to come forward during this plan period should it be satisfactorily demonstrated that:*

- *There is a proven need for the development to come forward during this plan period*
- *There is an agreed mitigation strategy for the loss of part of Moore Nature Reserve in accordance with national policy*
- *There is no significant adverse effects on any European site of International Importance for nature conservation including the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area/Ramsar site*
- *Suitable access to both the expanded Port and the WCP can be achieved and that the proposals would not have an severe impact on traffic movements in the area; and*
- *A programme is agreed for the implementation of on-site infrastructure including the potential additional berth or rail infrastructure.*

- (2) Upon adoption, the draft plan should undertake an objective assessment of the need for safeguarded land having regard to potential on-going wider development needs. It should identify and allocate suitable safeguarded sites subject to policy protection that makes clear the circumstances in which it could be brought forward for development. In making provision for safeguarded land to meet employment needs, it should be for a minimum of five years beyond the plan period.

Turley Office



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