

Warrington Local Plan 2021-2038: Examination in Public

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

Additional Hearing – Matter 5:
Economic Growth and
Development

June 2023

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Client

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

Our reference

PEEM3056

19 Jun 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement is prepared by Turley on behalf of Peel L&P (Holdings) UK Ltd and Peel Ports (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 ahead of the additional hearing session scheduled on Thursday 13th July 2023 to discuss the Borough's overall employment land requirement (Matter 5).
- 1.2 Peel and Peel Ports continue to fully support the progression of the Warrington Local Plan. It is 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.
- 1.3 Notwithstanding this support, Peel / Peel Ports remain concerned that the emerging Local Plan fails to make provision for port-specific employment needs at Port Warrington.

2. Matter 5: Economic Growth and Development

Port-specific employment needs

- 2.1 Peel’s representations to the UPSVLP¹, and Matter 5 statement² in July 2022, highlighted significant concerns that the UPSVLP fails to reflect the port-specific employment needs associated with the ongoing operation and potential expansion of Port Warrington.
- 2.2 Whilst a series of main modifications to Policy DEV4 (Economic Growth and Development) are proposed by WBC, these do not address the failing identified by Peel, meaning that the emerging Local Plan continues to fail to provide for all types of employment land required in the Borough.
- 2.3 As set out within Peel’s representations on the proposed main modifications³, the case behind expanding Port Warrington and providing new employment space at a new Warrington Commercial Park (WCP) are weighty and significant. There are clearly no alternatives in meeting the identified need for port-specific uses, either regionally or locally.
- 2.4 The emerging Local Plan therefore fails to take advantage of existing fixed port infrastructure in the borough and is absent in respect of meeting a clear identified need for the port network to expand to accommodate identified growth in port freight demand. This is clearly inconsistent with national planning policy and is unsound. It is also against the plethora of national and regional planning and economic policy⁴ which seeks to support the delivery of port infrastructure to serve the UK economy.
- 2.5 In modifying the UPSVLP, the Council has continued to give insufficient weight to:
- (a) Peel’s 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.

Local plan review

- 2.6 The supporting text to Policy DEV4 (paragraph 4.2.22) of the UPSVLP expresses a commitment to undertaking a review into Warrington’s employment land needs before the end of the plan period to ensure the long-term supply of employment land.

¹ UPSVLP 0438

² M5.07

³ MMC 074

⁴ See chapter 4 of Representations on behalf of Peel L&P (Holdings) and Peel Ports Group – Paper 1 and chapter 5 of Case Making Document – Paper 2

- 2.7 Whilst modifications to paragraph 4.2.22 have been proposed by WBC [MM 005], the proposed modifications are insufficient to overcome Peel's concerns about the level of commitment. The commitment to review employment land provision is still not referenced in any formal policy (either a separate policy or within existing Policies DEV4 or M1) and the plan, therefore, lacks a clear policy-led commitment to implementation. In addition, the mechanism for review is insufficiently clear to ensure that it will be enacted.
- 2.8 Importantly, Policy M1 (Monitoring Framework) remains silent on the commitment, precise timing and any mechanism to trigger / facilitate the review. As a result, the 'commitment' is weak and insufficiently responsive. Alongside the introduction of a specific policy, it must also be accompanied by a clear monitoring framework with evidenced trigger points.
- 2.9 In its current form, the commitment is ineffective and therefore unsound and needs to be rectified.

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