

## 6-56 Proposal - Conflict With National Transport Policies

1. It is important to set the SEWEA proposal, in terms of freight movement - which it clearly is closely-related to - in the context of the national transport policy framework.
2. In the National Policy Statement for National Networks, Department for Transport, December 2014, under “Importance of strategic rail freight interchanges”, p20, it states:

\* (para 2.45) “The users and buyers of warehousing and distribution services are increasingly looking to integrate rail freight.....This requires the logistics industry to develop new facilities that need to be located alongside the major rail routes.....” (my underlining).

\* (para 2.47) A network of SRFIs (Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges) is a key element in aiding the transfer of freight from road to rail, supporting sustainable distribution and rail freight growth (my underlining) and meeting the changing needs of the logistics industry.....SRFIs also play an important role in reducing trip mileage of freight movements on the national and local road networks.”

3. In terms of freight distributional activities, allowing the South East Warrington Employment Area proposal to proceed completely contradicts the above philosophy, which has not been reversed since it was formulated.
4. It is also relevant to examine current Government policy for freight in relation to rail, under Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFIs). Under “Government’s policy for addressing need for SRFIs”, p22:

\* (para 2.53) “The Government’s vision for transport is for a low carbon sustainable transport system that is an engine for economic growth.....The transfer of freight from road to rail has

an important part to play in a low carbon economy, and in helping to address climate change.” (again, my underlining).

\* (para 2.55) “Even with significant future improvements and enhancements to the Strategic Road Network, the forecast growth in freight demand would lead to increased congestion, both on the road network and at our ports, together with a continued increase in transport carbon emissions.”

5. In “The Logistics Growth Review - Connecting People With Goods”, Department for Transport”, November 2011, it is stated that:

\* (para 6) It is extremely important that more modern, high specification logistics buildings and intermodal terminals in the form of Rail Freight Interchanges are now approved and built in order to give occupiers the opportunity to actively move more goods by rail.” (again, my underlining).

6. In the “Rail Freight Strategy - Moving Britain Ahead”, Department for Transport, September 2016, Executive Summary:

\* para 1) “Each tonne of freight transported by rail reduces.....UK emissions as well as building a stronger economy and improving safety by reducing lorry miles.”

\* (para 2) “Government is committed to ensuring that transport plays a full part in delivering the economy-wide emissions reductions needed to meet this target”.

\* (para 3): “In 2014, HGVs were responsible for 17% of total UK transport emissions. Shifting more freight from road to rail therefore has the potential to make a real contribution to meeting the UK’s emission reduction targets”.

\* “The key constraint to unlocking potential in this sector (is the) availability/construction of suitable rail-connected terminal

facilities, including SRFIs (strategic rail freight interchanges).”  
(my underlining).

7. In the Transport for the North “Enhanced Freight and Logistics Analysis Report”, 2018, under Section 4, “Freight and Logistics in the North of England”, it states:

\* (para 4.1): “There are a) wealth of freight assets located in the North, which underpin a strong multimodal freight capability. These include three Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (intermodal terminals) at Ditton, Wakefield and Selby (and) five further intermodal terminals at Trafford Park, Leeds, Garston, Doncaster and Wilton.

8. It is very notable that this list does not include any reference to Warrington. This is all the more extraordinary given Warrington’s major role as a logistics base. It suggests a sustained inaction on Warrington Borough Council’s’ part to embrace the potential of rail freight, in the face of Government policy.

9. In the Transport for the North “Strategic Transport Plan Evidence Base”, January 2018, under the heading “Inland Freight Terminals Scenario” (p155), it states:

\* (para 5.5.3.1) “.....there is strong encouragement towards the decarbonisation of freight transport and a move towards low/zero emissions This will open up many opportunities around modal shift and how it can be achieved.”

\* (Then, under “Intermodal connectivity”) the report points to: “.....improving the establishment of increased intermodal terminals across the North, and their connection to the rail network. This may be through working in partnership with local authorities.”

10. The 2021 Department for Transport policy paper “Decarbonising Transport - A Better, Greener Britain, states:

\* “We (the Government) will support and encourage modal shift of freight from road to more sustainable alternatives, such as rail, cargo-bike and inland waterways.....HS2 will release a significant amount of spare capacity on the.....West Coast Main Line, some of which could create opportunities for freight operators to grow and develop.”

\* “The modal shift of freight from road to rail would not only lead to a reduction in GHG levels, but also reduce congestion and noise pollution.”

11. Previously, the designation in January 2015 of the National Networks National Policy Statement “provided the Planning Inspectorate with a clear statement of Government Policy on the development of Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges (SRFIs).” The same paper stated: “Each tonne of freight transported by rail reduces carbon emissions by 76% compared to road, and each freight train removes 43 to 76 lorries from the road - meaning rail freight has real potential to contribute to reducing UK emissions as well as building a stronger economy and improving safety by reducing lorry miles.”
12. The Transport for the North Freight and Logistics Strategy, November 2022, includes a stated objective to promote and support the built and natural environment. It states that TfN “will work with Local Authorities in support of greater logistics warehousing but also seek that such warehousing should by default be also rail connected where possible..... This will be a challenge for the market but as has been seen in recent developments at Port Doncaster and with Kraft-Heinz, there is a market-led appetite for modal shift.....(In the Wigan/Warrington area) Parkside will provide part of the answer if Phase 2 goes ahead, but at least one more Strategic Freight Interchange will be needed, ideally in the Warrington area.”

13. Under “Recommendations”, TfN state (p97) that key actions are to “Encourage modal shift from road to rail and inland waterway through.....supporting the creation of new intermodal terminals at strategic locations, connected to road, rail and waterway networks.....and to encourage mode shift.”
14. The Transport for Greater Manchester/Greater Manchester Combined Authority GM Freight and Logistics Transport Strategy (2016?) included the following key objectives: (a) to increase network integration (rail/road/maritime/distribution-centres (b) to actively reduce carbon levels generated by road freight transport.
15. The UK Department for Transport Future of Freight Plan (June 2022) states the following goals: (a) maximising opportunities for modal shift to make use of capacity (b) harnessing cross-modal efficiencies and synergies as the whole (logistics) sector transitions to Net Zero.
16. The Future of Freight also clearly states: “At the heart of the Government’s ambitions for an improved planning system is more use of environmentally sustainable transport modes and a decarbonised transport network. The Transport Decarbonisation Plan was clear in its ambitions for a zero-carbon freight sector.....It is important that the planning system recognises this.” ((p74)
17. All of the above relevant policies, which as far as can be ascertained are still valid under the present Government and under Transport for the North, suggest that the purely road-served South East Warrington Employment Area represents a development that is diametrically opposed not only to the Council’s own policies but also to Government and Transport for the North’s policy framework.