

# Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park

## DSRFP

### Draft

# Masterplan

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# Contents

<i>Section</i>	<i>Page</i>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1-1</b>
Structure of the Masterplan	1-2
<b>2. Policy Context</b>	<b>2-1</b>
National Policy	2-1
Regional Policy	2-2
Local Policy	2-4
<b>3. Halton BC Regeneration Ambitions</b>	<b>3-1</b>
Background & Objectives for the DSRFP	3-1
Extent of DSRFP	3-1
Halebank Action Area	3-2
Planning/UDP	3-2
<b>4. DSRFP – The Current Position</b>	<b>4-1</b>
Land/Business Interests & Operations	4-1
Rail Operations	4-2
Existing Road Infrastructure	4-4
Environment	4-6
Existing Landscape Character	4-10
<b>5. Public Sector Funding Review</b>	<b>5-1</b>
NWDA/ERDF Funding	5-1
SRA & SRA Funding	5-2
<b>6. The Vision for DSRFP</b>	<b>6-1</b>
Introduction	6-1
Key Components of the Vision	6-2
<b>7. Projects and Tasks</b>	<b>7-1</b>
Project Management	7-1
Strategic Baseline Development	7-2
HBC Fields	7-3
Ditton Road (Landscape Improvements & Branding)	7-8

Rail Reception Sidings	7-9
Rail Corridor Extension	7-10
Green Wedge	7-13
Eddarbridge	7-14
Desoto Road Crossing	7-15
<b>8. Delivery, Implementation and Outputs</b>	<b>8-1</b>
Introduction	8-1
Phase 1 (2005/2006)	8-1
Phase 2 (2006/2007)	8-2
Phase 3 (2007/2008)	8-2
Phase 4 (2008/2009)	8-3
Phase 5 (2009/2010)	8-3
Outcomes	8-3
<b>9. Programme Management</b>	<b>9-1</b>
Introduction	9-1
Long Term Management – Property and Estate	9-2
Long Term Management – Railway Infrastructure	9-3
<b>APPENDIX 1</b>	<b>A1-1</b>
<b>Location Plans</b>	
<b>APPENDIX 2</b>	<b>A2-1</b>
<b>Masterplan Drawings</b>	

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park (DSRFP) is a project of great importance not just for the Borough of Halton but also at a regional, sub-regional and national level. Building upon the existing rail related commerce the DSRFP Masterplan puts in place the project architecture to develop a rail freight park for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, allowing the park to meet its full regenerative potential, creating jobs in the local community, transforming the built environment by bringing into productive use derelict and contaminated sites and creating a high quality facility which the borough and the local community can be proud of. The location of the site in the local and regional context is shown in Figures 1.1 and 1.2 respectively in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The strategic significance that this development has in local and regional policy cannot be over emphasised. DRSFP is a common thread that runs through a range of local and regional policies. Consequently the impact that this development can and will have on the local and regional economy is significant and the failure to realise the ambitions set out in the various policies will have a negative impact on the local and the wider regional economy.
- 1.3 Realising the economic and regenerative potential of rail related commerce, and the significance of the West Coast Main Line's route through the Borough, Halton BC established the principle of the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park (DSRFP) in 1999.
- 1.4 The potency of the Council's aspirations were endorsed by the Mersey Freight Study in 2000. The Study highlighted the strategic importance of the Ditton area, as part of a developing freight network for Merseyside and was identified as possessing a number of advantages:
- ◆ two existing inter-modal users
  - ◆ existing access onto the West Coast Main Line capable of accommodating long intermodal trains at a competitive loading gauge
  - ◆ opportunity of creating a new road link to the A5300 Knowsley Expressway
  - ◆ opportunity of reusing previously developed land (brownfield/blackfield land), and
  - ◆ opportunity to achieve critical mass by the incorporation of further Greenfield land adjacent to the existing rail linked developments.
- 1.3 Further support for the Council's position was provided by the Northwest Development Agency's (NWDA) designation of Ditton as a Strategic Regional Site. In the Strategic Regional Sites Formal Designation report the NWDA stated that *"Ditton is a potential major inter modal freight terminal serving Merseyside, North Cheshire, and the Port of Liverpool."*
- 1.4 The masterplan for the DSRFP has been developed collaboratively between public and private sector partners. Its delivery will also be dependent upon a collaborative approach that utilises the statutory powers and project management skills of the public sector and the commercial drive and insight of the private sector.

- 1.5 Significant elements of the DSRFP concept already exist. The private sector has already invested significant sums of finance to provide infrastructure and commercial premises in response to the opportunity provided by the site's strategic location and rail connections.
- 1.6 The Vision for DSRFP is to build upon the established credentials of the location and realise its full economic and regenerative potential. This will entail:
- ◆ enhancement of road and rail infrastructure
  - ◆ release of additional land and property development opportunities
  - ◆ enhancement of environmental quality
  - ◆ coordinated branding and promotion
  - ◆ further collaboration of public and private sector interests, and initiatives, and
  - ◆ coordinated management of infrastructure and landscaping.
- 1.7 For the masterplan to succeed it needs to be self-sustaining, and economically viable. While it is anticipated that pump-priming investment will be required to provide some of the road and rail infrastructure it must be the case that the commercial investment is viable. Investment in DSRFP will come from both the public sector and the private sector and the masterplan provides clear and unambiguous guidance as to which party is expected to deliver 'what and when'.
- 1.8 In addition to guidance on 'what and when', the masterplan also provides guidance on form and image. It is important that the establishment of DSRFP not only adds to the economic well-being of the area, but that it also adds to the environmental quality of the area. To achieve this the masterplan will be supplemented with a Landscape Strategy and Design Guide, which will be used to ensure that development is consistent with the overall image and brand of the park.

#### **STRUCTURE OF THE MASTERPLAN**

- 1.9 The following Masterplan is structured as follows:
- ◆ Section 2 – sets the Policy context to the DSRFP
  - ◆ Section 3 – establishes Halton BC's regeneration ambitions
  - ◆ Section 4 – outlines the current position of the DSRFP
  - ◆ Section 5 – establishes the public sector funding context for DSRFP
  - ◆ Section 6 – establishes the Vision for DSRFP
  - ◆ Section 7 – details the projects and tasks that make up the DSRFP Masterplan
  - ◆ Section 8 – summarises delivery programme, identifies funding needs and identifies outputs and benefits, and
  - ◆ Section 9 – provides a framework for the long-term management of the DSRFP.

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## 2. Policy Context

### NATIONAL POLICY

- 2.1 In July 1998 the Government published the Transport White Paper 'A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone' which set out the Government's policies to create a better, more integrated transport system to tackle the problems of congestion and pollution.
- 2.2 The White Paper detailed the Government's objectives for encouraging the use of the railway system for the transportation of freight and it is specifically stated that '*Local authorities in preparing development plans will be expected to consider, and where appropriate protect, opportunities for rail connections to existing manufacturing, distribution and warehousing sites adjacent or close to the rail network....*'.
- 2.3 This commitment to the use of the rail network for the transfer of freight was further reinforced with the publication, in 2000, of the Government's ten-year plan for transport in a document titled 'Transport 2010 – The Ten Year Plan'. Within the document the specific target of increasing rail freight by 80% was set.
- 2.4 The mechanisms for encouraging the use of rail are set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 13, Transport (PPG13) which has a specific objective to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional, strategic and local level. In paragraph 45 of PPG13 it is stated that '*local authorities should identify and, where appropriate, protect sites and routes, both existing and potential, which could be critical in developing infrastructure for the movement of freight (such as major freight interchanges including facilities allowing road to rail transfer or for water transport)...*'.
- 2.5 In March 2004 the Strategic Rail Authority published its Strategic Rail Freight Interchange Policy, which set out the SRA's policies with regard to the form, function, operating characteristics and role of Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges. This sits alongside Government policies for rail freight, transport, planning, sustainable development and economic growth and is directed at developing a national policy framework via the land use and transport planning systems.
- 2.6 The SRA sees Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges as key features of national rail infrastructure necessary to promote a shift from road to rail freight and to achieve the associated sustainability benefits.
- 2.7 For Greater Manchester, Liverpool and the North West, the SRA recognise there is a need for further Strategic Rail Freight Interchange capacity to support future growth. The SRA's West Coast Main Line (WCML) Strategy notes that a number of new interchanges are proposed to meet anticipated demand within the region, and that "*The SRA view is that the most efficient use of the WCML, and of the rest of the network in the area, would be made by those projects located within the Liverpool-Warrington-Manchester commercial belt*".

- 2.8 Key factors the SRA will use in considering site allocations are:
- ◆ suitable rail and road access – on rail freight routes with capacity and avoiding congestion, with good access to motorway junctions, primary and trunk roads
  - ◆ ability for 24/7 working
  - ◆ adequate level site area and potential for expansion
  - ◆ proximity to workforce
  - ◆ proximity to commercial customers, both existing and potential (Noting the potential to change to rail achieved by close proximity)
  - ◆ fit with primary freight flows in the area
  - ◆ ability to contribute to the national network by filling gaps in provision; and
  - ◆ fit with SRA strategies, including the Freight Strategy, Route Utilisation Strategies, and Regional Planning Assessments.
- 2.9 The SRA also recognise that sites might also present themselves as extensions to existing Strategic Rail Freight Interchange facilities where these are well located relative to the considerations and are operating successfully and efficiently. Ditton is already in operation as a rail freight terminal, and has many, if not all, of the key factors in place that the SRA will use to consider alternative sites.
- 2.10 It can be seen that the development of the DSRFP is fully compliant with national planning policies in that it seeks to build upon, and enhance, an existing rail connected distribution park with a view to encouraging the shift of freight from road to rail.

## REGIONAL POLICY

### Regional Planning Guidance

- 2.11 In March 2003 Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13) was published. The main purpose of RPG13 is to provide the regional planning framework within which local authority development plans and local transport plans can be prepared. Within RPG13 there are a number of policies that are of particular relevance to the proposed development of the DSRFP and they are discussed below.
- 2.12 Policy SD9 of RPG13 states that the Regional Transport Strategy should deliver '*effective multi-modal solutions to the conveyance of goods, people and services, especially at major hubs...*'. The proposals for the DSRFP are in line with this policy in that the development is seeking to encourage the use of rail for the movement and distribution of freight.
- 2.13 Within RPG13 there are a number of policies specifically relating to transport which aim to make the best use of the Region's key inter-regional and intra-regional rail and road links and gateways. The main policies which are of particular relevance to the DSRFP are as follows:
- ◆ Policy T1 – within this policy statement it is indicated that it is critical to the economic competitiveness of the Region that transport systems should be

modern, efficient and well integrated and that transport issues should be examined on a multi-modal basis

- ◆ Policy T2 – organisations which play an active role in rail service and infrastructure provision should work towards the delivery of a Regional Freight Strategy
- ◆ Policy T7 – the SRA and freight transport companies should assist the transfer of freight from road to rail through the provision of new, strategically located, inter-modal interchanges to serve the North West. Local authorities should satisfy themselves that the prime purpose of any proposed site is to facilitate rail freight when allocating land in development plans, and
- ◆ Policy T10 – this policy sets out a hierarchy for transport investment and management within the region that includes making the best use of the networks through measures to improve more sustainable movement of freight and investment in major transport infrastructure schemes of regional significance.

2.14 The development of the DSRFP is compatible with all of the above policies and will assist in the delivery of the key objectives for the region.

### **North West Regional Freight Strategy**

2.15 In November 2003 the North West Regional Freight Strategy was published which aims to create the following vision for the North West: *'To develop and maintain an integrated, efficient and sustainable freight transport system which facilitates and supports economic development in the North West, whilst also contributing to environmental objectives and improving quality of life in the region.'*

2.16 Within the Freight Strategy it is stated that to cater for the anticipated growth in rail freight a number of inter-modal terminals, rail linked warehouses and distribution centres need to be developed at key locations around the region. However, it recognised that there is a scarcity of suitable locations for such terminals with good road and rail links and sufficient land for rail-connected development.

2.17 It is indicated in the Freight Strategy that existing terminals and private sidings in the North West have an important role to play and that greater use should be made of these facilities to encourage modal shift.

2.18 The development of the DSRFP is entirely in accordance with the aims and objectives of the North West Regional Freight Strategy in that the development seeks to build upon and enhance the existing rail freight based facilities at the site.

### **Regional Economic Strategy (RES)**

2.19 The NWDA's initial strategy - 'England's North West: a strategy towards 2020' identified a focused shortlist of 11 large regional sites within the North West region. The list of sites was subsequently extended to twenty-five sites, including Ditton. These sites were identified with the intention of providing a balanced portfolio to encourage large and small-scale development and indigenous growth, as well as inward investment and strategic inter-modal freight facilities.

- 2.20 In the strategic regional sites 'Formal Designation' report (December 2001) the NWDA stated "*Ditton is a potential major inter modal freight terminal serving Merseyside, North Cheshire, and the Port of Liverpool.*" It was one of three sites identified as potential sites for inter-modal freight transfer, along with Parkside in Newton-le-Willows and Carrington in Trafford. Proposals for a multi-modal freight interchange have subsequently been brought forward by a private developer for the Barton strategic regional site in Salford. However, it is understood that much of this proposal will involve relocation of existing inter-modal freight facilities rather than additional capacity.
- 2.21 The SRA supported the designation of Ditton, noting that the site would contribute to national freight objectives for modal transfer.
- 2.22 The designation was also supported in principle by the CPRE, Mersey Partnership and Merseytravel. The Highways Agency noted the potential of the site, subject to consideration of the capacity of the wider strategic road network.
- 2.23 The Revised RES for the North West was launched on 27 March 2003 to provide the economic development framework for the region. Within the RES it is stated that in order to support economic growth in the North West it is vital that the region has a strong offering of employment sites in terms of quality and sustainable development. The RES identifies 25 strategic regional sites, including Ditton as critical to the effective implementation of the Strategy.

## LOCAL POLICY

### Merseyside Freight Strategy

- 2.24 In line with the Government's White Paper on Transport 'A New Deal for Transport - Better for Everyone' the Five Merseyside Authorities, Halton BC and Merseytravel commissioned the Mersey Freight Study in July 1999.
- 2.25 The study was scoped to examine the existing and future freight transport demands of the sub-region; develop a long-term strategy that supported economic development in the sub-region ('Merseyside'); and, provide a basis for the promotion of the sustainable movement of goods and materials.
- 2.26 The need for a number of sub-regional freight facilities capable of serving Merseyside and the North West regional markets were amongst the recommendations that emerged from the Study.
- 2.27 The Study highlighted the strategic importance of the Ditton area, as part of a developing freight network for Merseyside. The Ditton area was identified as possessing a number of advantages:
- ◆ two existing inter-modal users
  - ◆ existing access onto the West Coast Main Line, capable of accommodating long intermodal trains at a competitive loading gauge (i.e. W10)
  - ◆ opportunity of reusing previously developed land (brownfield/blackfield land)
  - ◆ opportunity of creating a new road link to the A5300 Knowsley Expressway, and

- ◆ opportunity to achieve critical mass by the incorporation of further Greenfield land adjacent to the existing rail linked developments.

2.28 The commissioning authorities broadly accepted the recommendations of the Study, which became embodied within the objectives of the Merseyside and Halton LTP's.

#### **Halton LTP 2001-2006**

2.29 Building upon the results of the Merseyside Freight Study Halton included a freight strategy within their LTP which identified the following strategies, amongst others:

- ◆ freight distribution sites to be located next to rail linkages and docks, where possible, and in all cases to be accessed by suitable roads
- ◆ to upgrade existing railway lines and safeguarding disused lines for possible future use, and
- ◆ to promote freight quality partnerships between Local Authorities and the commercial sector.

2.30 It is also indicated within the LTP that Halton BC wish to encourage a shift in freight from road to rail and the development of the DSRFP is entirely compatible with these aspirations.

#### **Halton UDP**

2.31 Policy ENEW1 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> deposit draft of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) specifically deals with DSRFP and sets the framework within which the park can be developed. DSRFP is included in policy SNEW3 that relates to Regional Investments Sites. The following section relating to Halton's regeneration ambitions covers in more detail the role of DSRFP in local planning policy.

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### 3. Halton BC Regeneration Ambitions

- 3.1 The Halton UDP aims to support the Council's Corporate Priorities by transforming the quality of Halton's environment and improving economic prosperity and social progress through sustainable development.
- 3.2 Action Areas provide an important tool in support of the Council's promotion of their urban renewal priority and the encouragement of regeneration in a number of areas in the Borough.

#### BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES FOR THE DSRFP

- 3.3 Halton BC first established the principle of the DSRFP in 1999.
- 3.4 In response to the findings of the Merseyside Freight Study, and Regional Policy Guidance Policy AR7, the Halton Local Transport Plan (LTP) included a freight strategy for the Borough. The Council's freight strategy focused on three types of freight movement in Halton; shipping, road and rail. The LTP highlighted Halton Borough Council's support for freight as an economic regenerator with minimal environmental cost.
- 3.5 The LTP identified that freight distribution plays a major role in Halton's economy. At the time the LTP was prepared, freight represented eleven per cent of the Borough's GDP and sixteen per cent of employment. Ditton was therefore seen as a significant economic opportunity.
- 3.6 The potential for development of the DSRFP is specifically referred to in the LTP. The potential of both the freight only line running from Warrington (including coal freight trains serving Fiddlers Ferry Power Station through Ditton), and the various sidings connections at Ditton was clearly recognised in the LTP. The LTP describes how *"careful land assembly and a spine road between the A562/A5300 junction ..... would capitalise on existing rail and road infrastructure"*.
- 3.7 Informed by the Mersey Freight Study and Halton LTP, the DSRFP concept has been developed in partnership with existing owners/operators, tested and appraised (in terms of its strategic importance and viability), and translated into planning policy through the emergence of the Halton UDP.

#### EXTENT OF DSRFP

- 3.8 The physical extent of the DSRFP, as defined in the UDP 2nd Deposit version, identifies a core site comprising the following allocations:
- ◆ Site 253 – a Green Belt site to the south of the railway and west of Hale Road
  - ◆ Site 256 – which connects site 253 to Hale Road, and
  - ◆ Site 255 – which comprises the industrial land to the south of the railway and east of Ditton Brook, which contains the existing rail connected industries and intermodal depot.

- 3.9 The Inspector's Report, which addresses received objections to the Halton UDP, slightly alters the boundaries of the allocations, as shown on the 2nd Deposit version Proposals Map. The Inspector's Report recommends that the Proposal Map should show the potential extent of the DSRFP, which was illustrated on TP Map New 2 and submitted to the Public Inquiry. The three allocated sites are considered to form the core area of the DSRFP and the area of potential extent illustrates the additional land that could become part of the DSRFP in the future.
- 3.10 Within the UDP the DSRFP is defined by a drawn boundary line. However, it is important to recognise that the DSRFP is as much a concept as it is a physical location. Halton BC intends that DSRFP be associated with a particular Brand that will be promoted to attract investment and development to the areas associated with the Brand. The range and mix of investment and development which the DSRFP Brand will attract will be varied and will cover not only functions which will make direct use of the rail freight facilities available within the park, but will also include functions which have an indirect link with the rail freight facilities such as processing industry and support and service industries.

#### **HALEBANK ACTION AREA**

- 3.11 The Halebank Action Area (UDP Policy RG6 Halebank Action Area) recognises the isolation of the residential area, lack of community facilities, and the mixed quality of the adjacent employment area. The Policy recognises that numerous sites could become available during the Plan period, and that there are a number of contaminated sites in need of reclamation.
- 3.12 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is being prepared for the Halebank Action Area. The current draft version of the SPG has been produced for public consultation purposes. The SPG sets out the opportunities for regenerating Halebank and supporting the local community. It also looks to address the interface between the existing industrial area, the DSRFP and the residential community of Halebank. The Council has accepted, in part, the Inspector's recommendation to widen the 2<sup>nd</sup> deposit Action Area boundary to cover more of the industrial areas of Halebank. Although this will delay the formal consultation process regeneration work in Halebank is proceeding in parallel with masterplan work on the DSRFP.

#### **PLANNING/UDP**

- 3.13 The DSRFP was allocated in the Halton UDP Revised (2nd) Deposit Version (2001) to provide the opportunity to create a rail freight interchange of regional significance; to underpin the economy of the region; and, to contribute to the Government's objectives for the national growth in rail freight.
- 3.14 Directly the allocation will:
- ◆ bring into use extensive areas of derelict and contaminated land that currently act as a deterrent to most forms of new investment
  - ◆ create a significant number of jobs for local people, and
  - ◆ provide a real opportunity to make lasting improvements in the quality of the built environment.

- 3.15 The policy facilitates the kind of development envisaged in RPG, the Merseyside Freight Study and in the Regional Economic Strategy, and takes into account the technical, commercial and environmental considerations raised by existing and potential new inter-modal transport developers and operators.
- 3.16 Indirectly the proposals may also facilitate a number of the opportunities identified in the draft Halebank Action Area SPG (2004).
- 3.17 The UDP policy relating to DSRFP (Policy ENEW1) was subject to a number of refinements during the UDP Pre-Inquiry process. The amendments were made to provide further support for the proposal and improve the supporting policy framework.
- 3.18 In Spring 2003 the proposal was examined at the Halton UDP Public Inquiry.
- 3.19 The Planning Inspector's Report, received by the Council in January 2004, endorses the principles of the DSRFP.
- 3.20 The UDP Inspector, in agreeing with the Council's desire to see the DSRFP wrote:
- "...Through a rare combination of advantages the Rail Freight Park is accepted to be a project of exceptional potential worth. It has formidable potential to contribute to the economy of the borough and to regeneration of the critical South Widnes area, and at the same time to meet important regional transportation objectives seeking the transfer of freight to rail. The DSRFP scheme would build upon an established base within the already developed industrial zone of South Widnes. Availability in the short term of a particular scale of development opportunity critical to the success of the project can only be achieved by use of the Green Belt Site 253. This is seen as sufficient reason to justify recommending release of this land in advance of the sub-regional study on the basis of truly exceptional circumstances".*
- 3.21 The policy has now been slightly refined and reaffirmed in the light of the Inspector's report and, on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2004 Halton Council resolved to adopt the policy, reproduced below, for the purposes of a final round of statutory consultation before statutory adoption.

### **Policy ENEW1 – Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park**

1. A phased strategic inter-modal rail freight park will be developed on land at Ditton, Widnes in accordance with an overall masterplan to be approved as Supplementary Planning Guidance. Within the defined park Sites 253, 255 and 256 are allocated for development. Development will be permitted provided that it complies with all of the following (and in the case of 253 subject also to compliance with paragraph 2 below):
  - a) It is for use by businesses that would utilise the railway for the transportation of freight, and uses offering support services to them.
  - b) It would be of a quality suitable for occupation by companies of regional or national importance, which would give rise to additional new employment opportunities for residents of Halton and surrounding local authority areas.

- c) It would not have a significantly adverse impact on the environment and on the amenity of local residents, particularly in the Halebank area, and would contribute to urban regeneration.
  - d) It would not prejudice the improvement of the passenger rail network or improvements to it identified in the UDP.
  - e) It is demonstrated through a detailed Transport Assessment and Travel Plan that it would not have a significant adverse impact on the local transport networks and trunk road network.
2. Development will not be permitted on site referenced 253 on the proposals map and known as land north of Hale Bank Road, unless all of the following also apply:
- a) It is part of a comprehensive proposal for a strategic rail freight park at Ditton in accordance with an agreed phasing plan.
  - b) Development of the strategic inter-modal rail freight park on the previously developed sites 255 and 256 identified on the proposals map and policy SNEW3 has already commenced in accordance with an agreed phasing plan set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance.
  - c) Unless already implemented as advance structural landscaping, landscaped buffer zones are provided on the land shown as Proposed Greenspace on the Proposals Map to the south, east and west of site 253.
  - d) A warehouse development proposal comes forward of larger than 25,000 sq metres floorspace and of a sufficient size or character that would be incapable of being accommodated within the remaining areas in the defined Park.
  - e) It is designed to be rail-served, including the provision of dedicated rail sidings adjacent to it.
  - f) The layout of development incorporates measures actively to discourage the direct movement of goods vehicles from the site to the local road network in the Halebank area. In order to achieve this aim a road system shall be provided to connect Sites 253, 255 and 256 where they are divided by public highways or railway lines.

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## 4. DSRFP – The Current Position

### LAND/BUSINESS INTERESTS & OPERATIONS

- 4.1 Land within the DSRFP core site is in multiple ownerships. Principally they are:
- ◆ Halton Borough Council
  - ◆ The O'Connor Group (Widnes Intermodal Rail Depot), and
  - ◆ AHC Warehousing Ltd (Widnes International Freight Terminal).
- 4.2 Halton BC ownership (UDP allocation 253) comprises 26 Hectares of predominantly greenfield land partially occupied by a number of agricultural tenant businesses.
- 4.3 The southeastern side of the DSRFP site (allocation 255) contains two existing rail served logistics/distribution operations, namely:
- ◆ The O'Connor Group, and
  - ◆ AHC Warehousing Ltd.

### The O'Connor Group

- 4.4 Widnes Intermodal Rail Depot is owned and operated by The O'Connor Group of companies. The terminal specialises in the transfer of containers from intermodal container trains to commercial trucks/lorries for final delivery by road (or visa-versa). The terminal is approximately 15 Hectares. The terminal comprises:
- ◆ 2 x 300m rail sidings (plus a locomotive release loop of a similar length)
  - ◆ 2 Liebherr container gantry cranes, and
  - ◆ areas of hard standing adjacent to the rail sidings that are used to store both loaded and empty containers in stacks up to 8 high.
- 4.5 The loaded and empty container storage capacity of the Depot is approximately 2,000 twenty foot containers.
- 4.6 The transfer of containers between the storage stacks and road vehicles is undertaken by a combination of the gantry cranes and reach stackers.
- 4.7 The Depot operates its own fleet of goods vehicles providing final delivery of goods and initial collections of loaded containers from shippers in the Northwest.
- 4.8 The Widnes Intermodal Rail Depot business is predominantly a container handling and dispatch/collection operation. Property within the Depot is limited to an administrative office and ancillary workshops for the maintenance of machinery and vehicles. However, the site also provides the depot for a significant fleet of road haulage vehicles dedicated to the distribution of containers.

### **AHC Warehousing Ltd**

- 4.9 Widnes International Freight Terminal is owned and operated by AHC Warehousing Ltd. The facility handles a wide range of goods for the food retail sector, including canned goods and bottled water, as well as tank container traffic for the local chemical industry.
- 4.10 The AHC site covers approximately 40 hectares. The site is contiguous, however the principal developments/land are to the east and west of the site joined by a narrow land corridor that also accommodates road and rail connections. The western site is known as the Foundry Lane site. The eastern site is known as the Mathieson Road site. In total the site comprises around 60,000m<sup>2</sup> of covered warehousing (divided into a number of units ranging between 500m<sup>2</sup> and 15,000m<sup>2</sup>).
- 4.11 The site is rail served by 2 x 450m and 2 x 350m rail sidings.
- 4.12 The 450m sidings directly serve an element of the warehouse accommodation on the Foundry Lane site and provides for the direct transfer of pallets from 'box wagon' rail traffics to warehouse using forklift trucks.
- 4.13 The 350m length rail sidings can be used by both intermodal trains and traditional 'box wagon' rail traffics, utilising adjacent hard standing areas for handling and/or temporary storage.
- 4.14 The Mathieson Road site (comprising approximately 50% of current warehouse accommodation) does not benefit from direct rail access. Intermodal units and pallets have to be hauled from the Foundry Lane site using commercial lorries.
- 4.15 The AHC site does not have overhead gantry cranes. All handling of containers and pallets is undertaken with reach stackers or forklift trucks.
- 4.16 Total loaded and empty container storage capacity of the site is approximately 750 containers.
- 4.17 AHC Warehousing Ltd business is primarily a property/warehousing operation benefiting from direct rail connections and supporting road infrastructure. AHC Warehousing Ltd operates a fleet of goods vehicles.

### **RAIL OPERATIONS**

- 4.18 DSRFP has existing direct access to both the West Coast Main Line (WCML) and the Ditton/Warrington line, via the Ditton Junction reception siding.
- 4.19 The existing main line connections provide DSRFP with direct connections at W9/W10 standard to the south-east deep-sea container ports of Felixstowe, Thamesport and Tilbury, to the Channel Tunnel, and the Midlands and Scotland. DSRFP also has direct access to the northeast, Humberside and to Southampton at W8 standard loading gauge.
- 4.20 The SRA's freight strategy includes plans to upgrade these routes to W10 loading gauge.

- 4.21 The O'Connor Group currently handles 4 intermodal train services each day (i.e. 2 inward and 2 outward) to and from Felixstowe. The train service is operated by Freightliner principally on behalf of Maersk.
- 4.22 AHC Warehousing Ltd currently handles six intermodal train services per day (i.e. 3 inward and 3 outward) to and from Felixstowe, Southampton and Thamesport. The services are operated by EWS carrying containers for a number of shipping lines. AHC Warehousing Ltd also handles a number of other intermodal and box wagon traffics, delivered by feeder trips from the EWS Enterprise hub at Warrington. These traffics include tank-containers serving the local chemical industry.
- 4.23 All trains arriving or departing from The O'Connor Group or AHC Warehousing Ltd do so via Ditton Junction reception sidings. The sidings comprise three tracks of approximately 350m – 450m in length. They are located to the south of the WCML and to the west of Hale Road bridge, and are connected to the terminal and warehouse site by a single-track line. Both the connection from the WCML to Ditton Junction reception sidings and the single-track line to the rail terminals occupy the southern arch of Hale Road bridge (2 tracks wide).
- 4.24 Both the Ditton Junction sidings and the single-track line are owned and operated by Network Rail (NR).
- 4.25 Neither of the existing operations (The O'Connor Group/AHC Warehousing Ltd) utilise reception sidings that are independent of NR.
- 4.26 The current track layouts and operating arrangements limit both existing and future train operations as indicated below:
- ◆ the reception sidings are of inadequate length to accommodate the emerging standard 30-wagon length train
  - ◆ the longest reception siding at Ditton can handle a maximum train length of 22 wagons – 450m
  - ◆ neither AHC Warehousing Ltd nor The O'Connor Group operate their own shunting traction, or contract with independent third party shunting traction operators
  - ◆ each terminal is reliant on different train operators (EWS and Freightliner) to undertake the shunting of trains from Ditton Junction sidings into the AHC Warehousing Ltd and O'Connor Group sites, and
  - ◆ the sidings do not have capacity to accommodate any significant future growth in rail freight traffics to/from DSRFP.
- 4.27 These issues together with the layout and sitting of the Ditton Junction sidings results in a number of operational inefficiencies:
- ◆ all trains currently arrive from, or depart to, the east (i.e. Runcorn direction). As Ditton Junction sidings are located to the west of both AHC Warehousing Ltd and The O'Connor Group this means that when a train arrives at the sidings the locomotive is at the 'wrong end' of the train i.e. facing towards Liverpool. Normal practice in such situations would be for the locomotive to 'run around' the train using a parallel siding and re-position at the other end of the train and haul the

wagons into the appropriate terminal/depot. However, handling 22 wagons in Ditton Junction sidings results in the wagons blocking the crossover to a parallel 'run around' siding, meaning such a re-positioning cannot be undertaken. Currently Freightliner (serving The O'Connor Group) solve this issue by despatching a second 'light' locomotive from Crewe to Ditton, which then connects to the rear of the train (now the front) to haul the wagons into the Intermodal Terminal. This is obviously an inefficient use of resources. It is understood that EWS (serving AHC Warehousing Ltd) push their trains, with the locomotive at the rear, into the AHC site. This requires an EWS employee to walk with the now front of the train to check the line is clear

- ◆ as there is no one organisation in overall control of the sidings this effectively means that the first traction supplier into the sidings is in control until they depart, and
- ◆ the absence of a single controlling organisation for the sidings also means that trains cannot be 'parked' outside the AHC Warehousing Ltd or O'Connor Group sites after delivery by the traction supplier, or prior to despatch. This greatly reduces the efficiency of both AHC Warehousing Ltd and The O'Connor Group. Both are reliant on their mainline locomotive (EWS or Freightliner) to return and collect their trains to free up further operational/site capacity. At other rail served sites, the mainline locomotive and shunting operations are separated for efficiency. The mainline locomotive drops a train in the reception sidings and then departs. When ready for handling a shunting locomotive would then haul the wagons into the depot/terminal for unloading. Once the train has been 'turned around', the shunter would haul the train back to the reception sidings to await collection by a mainline locomotive.

## EXISTING ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

### Existing Network

- 4.28 The principal current strategic highway connection for site 255 (the AHC Warehousing Ltd and O'Connor Group sites) is provided by the Desoto Road junction onto the A533 Queensway. The A533 Queensway provides access to the M56 motorway to the south (via the Runcorn Expressway), and to the M62 motorway to the north (Junction 6 via A562 Speke Road and the A5300, and Junction 7 via the Widnes Eastern Bypass). A second access to the site also exists via Foundry Lane to the west. Access from the site to the adopted highway network makes use of a single-track private bridge that is part of the AHC Warehousing Ltd land holdings. The bridge is currently gated and is at times closed and therefore cannot be deemed a right of way. As the bridge is a private road the Council has no powers to control its use, or to seek any improvements in its capacity or structural integrity. Such powers would be available if the bridge were to be the subject of a planning application, either in its own right, or as part of any wider development proposal. Certainly if the bridge were to become part of an internal road network linking the various components of DSRFP the ambition would be that a bridge constructed to adoptable standards should be provided.
- 4.29 There is no current road access into site 253, however Hale Road runs along its eastern side and Halebank Road abuts its southern boundary.

- 4.30 The A533 Queensway carries significant volumes of traffic, particularly during peak periods, and is frequently subjected to delays and congestion. Congestion is particularly acute where the link crosses the River Mersey via the Silver Jubilee Bridge. The bridge is the most westerly free crossing of the Mersey and is currently single carriageway providing two narrow lanes in each direction that carry in the region of 80,000 vehicles per day. This is in excess of its theoretical capacity and consequently, queues of up to 1.5 km are regularly experienced on the Expressway approaches to the bridge during peak hours.
- 4.31 The A562 Speke Road forms part of the strategic road network linking Widnes to south Liverpool and Liverpool John Lennon Airport, and the rest of Merseyside via the A5300. Consequently it also carries large volumes of traffic, particularly during peak periods.
- 4.32 Traffic signals have recently been installed at the A562/A5300 junction to reduce delays and congestion at this location. At its northern end the A5300 connects with the M62 at Junction 6. M62 Junction 6 performs an important role in the regional highway network. As a consequence of the delays and congestion experienced at this location the junction was added to the Highways Agency's Targeted Programme of Improvements (TPI) in March 2001. Consultants were appointed by the Highways Agency in December 2001 to look at the options for improving the junction including the provision of direct links from M62 westbound to M57 northbound and direct links from M57 southbound to M62 eastbound. The need for additional links to improve movements from the M62 Westbound to A5300 Knowsley Expressway and from the A5300 to M62 eastbound are also being investigated.

### **Second Mersey Crossing**

- 4.33 In 1995, the Mersey Crossing Group (MCG) was established to examine the need for an additional crossing of the River Mersey in Halton. The group is chaired by Halton and comprises of the five Merseyside Authorities, Warrington, Merseytravel, Cheshire County Council, English Partnerships and Peel Holdings.
- 4.34 Since 1995 the MCG has financed a number of studies that were reported in Halton's LTP submission in July 2000. In July 2001 a further study was commissioned with the following objectives for a new crossing:
- ◆ to relieve the Silver Jubilee Bridge
  - ◆ to maximise development opportunities
  - ◆ to improve public transport links across the river, and
  - ◆ to encourage the increased use of cycling and walking.
- 4.35 This study identified a preferred route for a new crossing which will stretch from the Central Expressway in Runcorn to Ditton roundabout, approximately a quarter of a mile to the east of the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge. An assessment of the new crossing indicates that it would attract up to 90% of the traffic currently using the existing crossing which would leave the latter to become primarily a sustainable local crossing with improved provision for pedestrians, cyclists and buses.

- 4.36 The proposed new crossing would connect into the existing strategic road network at Ditton roundabout, adjacent to the DSRFP, and will, in all probability, result in major changes to the geometry and traffic flows at this location.
- 4.37 The traffic forecasts for the new crossing are currently being updated and a number of alternative options are being investigated, including the possibility of tolling the new crossing. It is anticipated that a new crossing could be open to traffic by the end of the decade.

### **Existing road capacity**

- 4.38 Access to the site is currently predominantly achieved at the eastern end of the site at the MacDermott Road/Desoto Road junction and from there onto the A533 Queensway and the remainder of the strategic road network. At present all junctions in the immediate area operate satisfactorily and appear to have spare capacity to accommodate some growth. However, the limit of the available spare capacity in the area, and the need for any highway improvements, will need to be investigated as part of a detailed Transport Assessment of any development proposals in the area.
- 4.39 The main constraint to the free movement of vehicles into and out of the site are the queues which often develop on the approaches to the existing Silver Jubilee Bridge. Clearly the proposed second Mersey crossing will alleviate this problem and it is understood that some of the scheme options, for the new crossing, involve revisions to the eastern access to the DSRFP. These proposals will need to be taken into consideration in the development of a Transport Assessment for the site.

### **Ditton Railway Bridge**

- 4.40 The existing road bridge across the railway line adjacent to the closed Ditton Railway station has failed a structural assessment and as a result measures have been introduced to keep road traffic away from the edges of the bridge. The structure is the responsibility of NR whilst the road surface is the responsibility of the local highway authority, i.e. Halton Borough Council.
- 4.41 Correspondence received from NR indicates that due to the existing condition of the bridge complete reconstruction will be required and that the majority of this cost (up to ninety five per cent) will be met by NR with the remainder being via a contribution from Halton Borough Council. They also state that NR's responsibility is to provide a replacement structure capable of withstanding its original design load, which in this case would be the full Highway Authority loading of 40-44T.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Introduction**

- 4.42 The majority of the area covered by the DSRFP is brownfield land. It has been subject to a number of current and past industrial land-uses that may result in ground conditions that may constrain future development. These constraints could relate to both the presence of contamination and to ground engineering.

- 4.43 Historically, most of the industrial land-uses in the Ditton and West Bank areas of Widnes have been connected with the development of the chemical industry. This has resulted not only in contamination as result of losses during the operation of the various industrial processes, but also the disposal of wastes generated by the processes. The latter is a significant concern particularly with regard to the presence of LeBlanc wastes, which were deposited across large areas of south Widnes.
- 4.44 The LeBlanc process was developed to produce sodium carbonate ('alkali') for use in the manufacture of soap. The process generated large volumes of LeBlanc waste (known locally as *galligu*). During the nineteenth century, these wastes were deposited on low-lying marshy areas close to the Mersey Estuary, including the former Ditton Marshes. As a result of these historical disposal practices, LeBlanc waste is present beneath large areas of Widnes, including the West Bank Dock Estate, Ditton Marsh and to the north of the West Coast Main Line railway (Liverpool-Crewe branch) and Ditton to Warrington freight line, i.e. large parts of the area covered by DSRFP. In addition to the potential for impact due to chemical contamination, LeBlanc waste also presents potential engineering constraints due to its instability.
- 4.45 In addition to LeBlanc Wastes, other wastes from other process were also deposited. These other wastes could have contained contaminants such as metals, chlorine compounds and corrosive substances. For example, the production of bleaching agents using barytes (barium sulphate) resulted in the generation of barium containing wastes.
- 4.46 Several sites within the DSRFP area are candidates for 'inspection' as 'contaminated land' under the provisions of Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (and associated regulations). Within the meaning of the Act, there are statutory requirements for persons responsible for identified sites to implement an appropriate remedial strategy. 'Contaminated land' is enshrined as a material planning consideration within planning policy guidance. As such Local Planning Authorities are required to consider the effects of proposed developments on contamination of soils and controlled waters. The development of DSRFP provides an opportunity for voluntary remediation of these sites as a part of the planning process.
- 4.47 Set out below is a brief discussion of the main environmental issues that are likely to be associated with sites within the area covered by the DSRFP core area. This discussion is not exhaustive, but does give a good indication of the main types of environmental issues that will require consideration during the implementation of the Masterplan.
- 4.48 As part of the implementation procedure, and the subsequent longer-term development of the DSRFP, it will be necessary to undertake site specific risk assessments. The output of these assessments will inform the necessity for remedial works and allow the development of pragmatic, sustainable and cost-effective remedial strategies. In order to obtain sufficient and appropriate data for the risk assessments, it will be necessary to undertake intrusive ground investigation. The scope of these investigations will need to take into account both specific development proposals and the historical potential for contamination. It is usually preferable to adopt a phased approach to the investigation and assessment process.

**Site 253**

- 4.49 Site 253 is effectively a ‘greenfield’ site which has not been subject to any ‘built development uses’, with the exception of the north west corner, which was formerly occupied by a sewage works and sludge beds. Although local “hot spots” may exist as a consequence of agricultural tipping and filling of ponds, it is not considered necessary to include site 253 in the discussions below.

**Site 255 – AHC Warehousing Ltd and The O’Connor Group**

- 4.50 Within the core masterplan area are the two sites operated by AHC Warehousing Ltd and The O’Connor Group. Previously part of the West Bank Dock Estate, both these sites lie within an area of reclaimed marshland, which was subsequently occupied by a variety of industrial premises associated with the chemical industry.
- 4.51 Previous ground investigations have encountered LeBlanc waste beneath both sites, to depths in excess of 10m in places. The presence of this material presents potential constraints that will have to be taken into account in the future continued development of these sites.
- 4.52 In addition to considering the potential impacts on the development fabric itself, the risks posed to both human health and the wider environment will need to be considered. This will be required as part of the planning process and should be carried out in general accordance with the guidance available to support the regulatory regime implemented by Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act.
- 4.53 With regard to the wider environment, the main potential impacts requiring consideration are those on controlled waters (i.e. surface waters and groundwater) and the SSSI/Ramsar site in the Mersey Estuary. The potential for these impacts to be significant depends on the ability of water to infiltrate into (and through) the LeBlanc wastes and the solubility (mobility) of the significant contaminants present.
- 4.54 Notwithstanding the findings of any intrusive investigation/risk assessment, an appropriate remedial strategy could involve the use of a cement stabilisation technique, which has proven successful elsewhere with Widnes. This technique, which mixes the LeBlanc waste with cement and other ingredients, produces a relatively low permeability layer that significantly reduces infiltration and significantly improves the engineering properties of the ground. This technique also minimises the necessity for off-site waste disposal. The use of cement stabilisation and solidification techniques has been successfully used to economically treat galligu contamination elsewhere in the borough.
- 4.55 The AHC site extends to the west, beyond Steward’s Brook, to include an area adjacent to Ditton Brook. Historically, this western area does not appear to have been used for the deposition of LeBlanc wastes. However, it was formerly a timber yard, and previous investigations have proved the localised presence of timber treatment chemicals in the underlying made ground and soils.

### **The Mound**

- 4.56 Lying between the two areas of the AHC site, and to the north of the confluence of Steward's and Ditton Brooks is 'the Mound'. At present, this area is occupied by a large landscaped mound, with narrow plateau areas adjacent to the watercourses. This area was subject to a remediation scheme carried out by Cheshire County Council/Halton Borough Council between 1995 and 1998.
- 4.57 The Mound area, which was formerly part of Ditton Marsh, was historically used for the deposition of LeBlanc and other wastes. During the 1960s or 1970s, this area was covered with concrete and used for timber storage. Subsequently, further LeBlanc wastes were deposited on top of the slab.
- 4.58 The remediation scheme included the regrading and landscaping of waste materials; the provision of a clay cap (1m in thickness) and subsoil (max 1.5m thick); and the construction of a sheet-piled cut-off wall along parts of Ditton Brook and Steward's Brook.
- 4.59 Any proposals for redevelopment of this area would be likely to involve the removal of some or all of the LeBlanc wastes imported to the area as part of the reclamation scheme.

### **Steward's Brook**

- 4.60 Steward's Brook flows in a north to south direction across the area of the DSRFP, before discharging into the Mersey Estuary. Although water quality in the brook is poor, it will be necessary to ensure that development of DSRFP does not further impact on water quality in the brook and, indeed, in the Mersey Estuary. In particular, it will be important to consider this issue for developments on any sites that are adjacent to the brook, or any developments that propose to span the brook.
- 4.61 The main issues to be addressed will be the potential for contaminated surface water run-off or contaminated shallow groundwater to enter the brook. It will also be necessary to consider the potential impact on any sensitive ecology associated with the brook, and the impact on downstream receptors.
- 4.62 The necessity, and form, of any remedial measures will depend on the outputs from appropriate risk assessments. Although providing low permeable surface cover over adjacent sites should significantly reduce the risk, it might also be necessary to consider the use of sheet piled walls, as were used during the remediation scheme on the mound.
- 4.63 A possible remedial option would be to place the brook in culvert. However, the Environment Agency has indicated that this would not be acceptable.

### **Hutchinson Hill (Hedco Landfill Site)**

- 4.64 Lying adjacent to the north bank of the Mersey Estuary is an area identified as Hutchinson Hill. This raised landscaped area is the former Hedco landfill site. This landfill site, which accepted a wide variety of chemical wastes, including liquids is

known to be producing landfill gas and leachate, and to be impacting on water quality in Steward's Brook, Ditton Brook and the Mersey Estuary.

- 4.65 There are significant environmental liabilities associated with the Hedco site. These liabilities, together with the raised topography, present significant constraints to development that cannot be readily, or economically, addressed.

### **Eddarbridge**

- 4.66 The DSRFP proposals include an area of dilapidated and derelict premises in the eastern part of the West Bank Dock Estate known as the Eddarbridge site. Similar to the AHC and O'Connor sites, the site lies above reclaimed marshland that was subsequently occupied by industrial premises including a phosphate works, and an alkali works. The eyesore appearance has a long history, for Michael Heseltine was quoted as saying in 1980/81 while travelling on the West Coast Main Line that "the environment and decay as you cross the River Mersey at Widnes on the train makes you wonder how we get investment for jobs in the area".
- 4.67 Currently, the site contains a number of buildings of various construction, the majority of which are in poor, or very poor condition. The buildings and exterior areas are, or have been, used recently by numerous persons and companies for a variety of purposes including a waste transfer station, car dismantlers, bio-diesel production and vegetable oil re-processing. As a result of this recent use, there are significant quantities of waste or abandoned materials present on site including, scrap metal, gas cylinders, tyres, rubble and wood. Additionally, there are numerous drums, intermediate bulk containers (IBCs) and a road tanker. These are generally associated with the area of the former waste transfer station and could contain unidentified liquid wastes. There is evidence of spillage/leakage from several of these containers.
- 4.68 Based on recent and past history, it is highly probable that the ground beneath the Eddarbridge site is contaminated. This includes the possible presence of LeBlanc waste that was probably used in the initial land reclamation of the marsh area.
- 4.69 In addition to the potential constraints posed by below ground conditions, there are constraints present by the presence of above ground waste materials. These will need to be considered and addressed in such a way that there will be no further contamination of the underlying ground.

### **EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

- 4.70 The DSRFP site is characterised strongly by its current and past industrial use. In some parts of the site areas have been reclaimed though the form and height of the grassed mounds make them visually prominent and not in character with the overall landscape form. Wide open views across the Mersey Estuary are also key to the character and the flat, open salt marsh. The Estuary itself defines the character of the natural landscape of this area that contrasts sharply with the mainly industrial areas to the north.

- 4.71 The proposed landscape areas and types, in accordance with the current Planning Guidance, need to reflect and enhance the character areas in order to strengthen biodiversity and 'sense of place'.
- 4.72 Topographically, the site is generally fairly flat particularly in the vicinity of the rail line. The higher areas are the result of previous reclamation of The Mound and Hutchinson Hill located towards the centre of the site. These areas lie adjacent to the Steward's and Ditton Brooks and whilst not being visually prominent, do link the site with the Estuary. The wide open views out to the Estuary, enjoyed by the users of the site and those using the Trans-Pennine Trail are also important and are a major influence to the character of the southern part of the site.
- 4.73 The most visually attractive part of the site lies to the west, adjacent to the greenbelt land and to the south adjacent to the Estuary. The western area abuts the residential area of Hale Bank and the Local Nature Reserve of Pickering Pasture. Whilst the southern area (which includes the Trans Pennine Trail) is also attractive the existing mounds screen this from the majority of the site to the north. This area, particularly to the east gives good views of the Silver Jubilee Bridge, a major feature which sites a sense of place to the area as a whole.

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## 5. Public Sector Funding Review

### NWDA/ERDF FUNDING

#### ERDF

- 5.1 Within the current Northwest ERDF Programme 2000 -2006, Halton Borough Council manages an ERDF Priority 1 Action Plan. Priority 1 aims to contribute to the transformation of the North West economy through the development of new and high growth sectors at the same time as supporting the competitiveness of existing businesses.
- 5.2 The principals of the DSRFP Masterplan/delivery strategy accord with the principles of Priority 1 measure 5, that aims to provide investment in premises for new and expanding SME's, ensuring that specialist business accommodation can be made available in the Northwest region.
- 5.3 The 2000-2006 ERDF programme requires expenditure on projects to have been defrayed by 31st December 2008 and projects would need to be in receipt of an offer or contract by 31st December 2006.
- 5.4 The western access to the DSRFP, i.e. the connection from the A5300 into the site, lies within the borough of Knowsley, which is an Objective 1 area. It is therefore possible that there may be an opportunity to receive some Objective 1 funding towards the proposals.

#### NWDA

- 5.5 The NWDA confirmed in the Strategic Regional Sites Formal Designation Report that delivery of the strategic regional sites is critical to the effective implementation of the Regional Economic Strategy and, where necessary, strategic regional sites will have priority for implementation in the NWDA's Corporate Plan in terms of Agency resources and in Agency bids for support for other resources.
- 5.6 The extent to which NWDA may provide funding for the delivery of DSRFP will be subject to a full and detailed appraisal, set in the context of the Agency's strategic investment plan. At this stage, the Agency has not given a formal commitment to provide funding for the delivery of DSRFP and the assumptions made in the Delivery Strategy are purely indicative.

#### NWDA/ERDF 'Matching'

- 5.7 The North West of England Objective 2 SPD emphasises the importance of the SME sector in any regional economy. The SPD states that the Business and Ideas Priority (Priority 1) "will harness the latent creativity and innovation in the Objective 2 region to build a modern and dynamic digital economy for the 21st century, not only to create sustainable competitive advantage, but also to provide sustainable employment opportunities for socially excluded people".

- 5.8 There is recognition in the region that employment zones such as the DSRFP can provide the appropriate business environment for attracting entrepreneurial activity and investment from the region's growth sectors. The region's economy is disadvantaged by its weak industrial structure where declining sectors are over-represented and new and rapid-growing industries are not provided with the appropriate business support services. The rates of business formation and survival are low in the borough and clearly the initiatives and actions identified in this Masterplan will address the significant enterprise deficit both locally and regionally.
- 5.9 Consequently, Priority 1 aims to contribute to the transformation of the North West economy through the development of new and high growth sectors whilst supporting the competitiveness of existing businesses.
- 5.10 Specific support from the European Programme is available in the following areas:
- ◆ providing capital support for, inter alia, starter units and managed workspaces, business incubator units, science parks, technology parks, centres of manufacturing excellence, refurbishment of derelict buildings, and
  - ◆ the development of intelligent buildings and links to advanced ICT networks, new/improved facilities for SME training and development.
- 5.11 Associated revenue activities for SMEs can also be supported, for example, business plan appraisal; help in building management teams; signposting to sources of finance and help in securing finance; help with securing interim premises; technology and knowledge-based services; hands-on help with management, tactical and strategic business planning; assistance in negotiations with commercial business partners; Technology Transfer facilities; advice on specialist regulatory, support for appropriate e-commerce and e-business applications, intellectual property and legal issues.
- 5.12 In the current ERDF Programme 2000 -2006, Halton Borough Council manages an ERDF priority 1 action plan.
- 5.13 As stated above, the proposals set out in the DSRFP Masterplan/delivery strategy accord with the principles of priority 1 measure 5, which aims to provide investment in premises for new and expanding SMEs, ensuring that specialist business accommodation can be made available in the region. Provision has, therefore, been made in the ERDF action plan to accommodate the £1.3 million identified in the DSRFP Masterplan. It is important to note that expenditure on projects would need to have been defrayed by 31st December 2008 and projects/activities included in the Master plan would need to be in receipt of an offer or contract by 31st December 2006.

#### **SRA & SRA FUNDING**

- 5.14 The SRA currently operates three main grant-funding schemes at a UK national level to assist rail freight terminals and services. These are:
- ◆ Freight Facilities Grants
  - ◆ Track Access Grants, and
  - ◆ Company Neutral Revenue Support.

### Freight Facilities Grants

- 5.15 Freight Facilities Grants (FFGs) are grants made as a contribution towards the capital costs of constructing new rail freight terminal infrastructure, handling equipment and related facilities which will enable the rail mode to handle traffic which would otherwise go by road. In England, the scheme is administered and funded by the SRA to whom applications are made.
- 5.16 The principal criteria for qualifying for a grant are:
- ◆ environmental benefits will arise through removing HGVs journeys from the road network, and
  - ◆ without the grant funding, the rail based supply chain will be more expensive than undertaking the operation purely by road i.e. there is a 'cost gap'.
- 5.17 The scheme is based on the principle that rail freight is more environmentally friendly than road transport, and thus by removing HGV journeys from the road and switching traffic to rail there will be environmental benefits. The environmental benefits are expressed in monetary terms by applying certain monetary values to each HGV mile removed from the roads.
- 5.18 Schemes that are eligible for grant must also demonstrate that there is a 'cost gap' between the rail and road solutions. FFG will therefore 'fill the gap' between the rail and road costs typically up to 50% of eligible scheme costs, however this may be increased to 75%, the maximum level allowed under EU state aid rules.
- 5.19 The potential beneficiary of a FFG is the site infrastructure owner; in this case either the DSRFP or its constituent members
- 5.20 The SRA has indicated that an FFG application can be lodged with its grants department pending the reopening of the scheme (believed to be Spring 2005), at which point it would be assessed against other projects 'in the queue' on a value for money basis (capital sought versus the 'sensitive lorry miles' value of goods expected to switch from road to rail). FFG has traditionally been focussed on freight flows that can be readily identified and can be assured by the cargo owners rather than on 'freight parks.

### Track Access Grants

- 5.21 Track Access Grants (TAGs) are payable to traction suppliers as contribution towards track access charges for non-intermodal rail freight flows. Consequently they are not directly relevant to the physical/property development of the DSRFP.

### Company Neutral Revenue Support (CNRS)

- 5.22 The Company Neutral Revenue Support grant scheme was introduced in April 2004. It will replace TAG for intermodal railfreight, but it will be similar in that it will provide an operational subsidy as a contribution towards rail freight running costs. However it will differ from TAG in that it will be paid to the organisation taking the commercial risk in committing traffics to rail, not necessarily the traction supplier, and be paid on the basis of containers actually moved not those projected to be carried. These will

include container shipping lines contracting their own dedicated trains between deep sea port and inland terminals, or logistics providers offering their customers rail based solutions. In the case of common user intermodal services, where the traction supplier sells slots on a scheduled train service, they will receive the CNRS grant as they are the organisation taking the commercial risk.

- 5.23 The scheme will not be affected by the suspension of the FFG/TAG schemes as the money to fund it is currently allocated to the TAG scheme for intermodal traffics, which the CNRS is replacing for intermodal traffics. Consequently the grant scheme will not be available to DSRFP as a contribution towards its capital costs.
- 5.24 The implications of the new scheme for DSRFP are twofold:
- ◆ prospective train operator revenue from the CNRS scheme will be deducted before FFG funding is assessed; the grant benefit of relieving the road network cannot be 'scored' twice, and
  - ◆ if the scheme is successful in aiding the transfer of goods from road to rail freight, it will assist the overall viability of DSRFP

#### **Disolution of the SRA**

- 5.25 The dissolution of the SRA following the Government's rail white paper of July 2004 will lead to the DfT, the Office of the Rail Regulator (ORR) and NR taking more powers or responsibilities.
- 5.26 NR will take over direct responsibility for managing the timetable and being the arbiters of capacity.
- 5.27 The ORR will take over more responsibility for safety and are likely to be more active in terms of economic regulation.
- 5.28 The DfT will take over responsibility for passenger train franchising. Given the DfT continues to administer waterbourne freight grants, it is likely to also take over rail freight grants and deal with matters together. Indications are that the total amount available may be reduced.
- 5.29 There is no clarity as to whether any 'official' body will take over the SRA's 'statutory consultee' role with respect to new schemes and the planning system. There would be an obvious conflict of interest if either the DfT, or NR were to take that role. The ORR is unlikely to be given responsibility for developing a rail freight policy.
- 5.30 For the Ditton project, the most obvious approach and one that should be given a high priority, is to develop a closer relationship with NR.

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## 6. The Vision for DSRFP

### INTRODUCTION

- 6.1 The Vision for DSRFP is the creation of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century rail freight facility which capitalises on the existing assets, to unlock the full economic potential of the area, bringing into use derelict and contaminated sites and at the same time improving the built environment and to create a facility which is a good neighbour to the local community and an asset to the Borough.
- 6.2 The Vision for DSRFP is the creation of a regional, sub-regional and national rail freight facility for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, that capitalises on the existing assets to unlock the full economic potential of the area thereby allowing the park to meet its full regenerative potential, creating jobs in the local community, transforming the built environment by bringing into productive use derelict and contaminated sites and creating a high quality facility which the borough and the local community can be proud of.
- 6.3 Significant elements of the DSRFP concept already exist. The private sector has already invested significant sums of finance to provide infrastructure and accommodation in response to the opportunity provided by the site's strategic location and rail connections.
- 6.4 The Vision for DSRFP is to build upon the established credentials of the location and realise its full economic and regenerative potential through the:
- ◆ enhancement of road and rail infrastructure
  - ◆ release of additional land and property development opportunities
  - ◆ enhancement of environmental quality
  - ◆ coordinated branding and promotion
  - ◆ coordinated management of infrastructure and landscaping, and
  - ◆ collaboration of public and private sector interests, and initiatives.
- 6.5 The challenges facing the public and private sector partners are considerable. Individual commercial interests and preferences will require to be considered and accommodated if the Vision for DSRFP is not to be compromised.
- 6.6 The existing private sector interest and investment in DSRFP is a significant indication of commitment, and provides the project with a very strong nucleus around which the scheme can be further developed. It is recognised that long-term public sector ambitions and private sector commercial considerations have to be reviewed and balanced.
- 6.7 The fundamental challenges facing the public sector partners are to:
- ◆ broker agreements between individual private interests, and between public and private interests, for the long-term benefit of the DSRFP and its commercial interests

- ◆ manage private sector perceptions of risk
- ◆ secure the necessary sums of public sector funding, and political commitment, to sustain private sector confidence and lever in investment, and
- ◆ realise the maximum job generation potential of the DSRFP for the benefit of the Halton community.

#### **KEY COMPONENTS OF THE VISION**

6.8 The masterplan for DSRFP has been developed around a number of key components that have been identified to ensure the proper planning of the scheme (in the context of RPG, RES, and Halton UDP), and its commercial success.

6.9 These components are:

- ◆ the realisation of the economic and employment potential of commercial freight businesses for the benefit of the Halton community
- ◆ the development of the railway infrastructure both serving the DSRFP (Ditton sidings), and within the site, to provide the necessary capacity and operational efficiency to support the full potential of the scheme
- ◆ the development of the road infrastructure within the DSRFP, and connecting it to the strategic road network, to provide efficient and effective connections between the commercial and operational interests within the site, and mitigate any impacts of the scheme on local communities
- ◆ the provision of complementary facilities and land uses to support the maximum usage of the DSRFP
- ◆ the addition of further land and development opportunities to provide critical mass respond to the market opportunity and maximise employment generation potential, and
- ◆ the improvement of environmental quality through quality landscape treatments and removal of bad neighbour activities.

6.10 A fundamental component in the delivery of the Vision are the improvements which need to be created both in the built environment and in the hard and soft landscaping. It is essential that DSRFP is a good neighbour to the local community and is an asset that the entire borough can be proud of. To ensure that there is a consistent high standard of both the design and the quality of materials used a Landscape Strategy and Design Guide will be produced. The design guide will lay down standards and principles which will ensure high quality/low maintenance finishes and a consistency in design which will reinforce the identity of DSRFP and will also reflect the expectations of the NWDA for all its Regional Investment Sites.

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## 7. Projects and Tasks

- 7.1 The DSRFP Masterplan comprises a number of discrete, but complementary, projects and tasks.
- 7.2 The following section references and outlines each project (and associated tasks) and should be read in conjunction with the masterplan drawings provided in Appendix 2.

### PROJECT MANAGEMENT

#### Introduction

- 7.3 The DSRFP is to be established in a location comprising a mix of public and private sector land and property ownerships.
- 7.4 The initiative enjoys a significant level of support and commitment from all public and private sector parties that are both affected by the proposals and/or required to make significant financial investments to ensure its delivery.
- 7.5 The Public Sector Partners that are promoting the DSRFP initiative will, however, be required to manage the implementation of the scheme if it is to be delivered in accordance with the masterplan and within the parameters of the accompanying financial model.
- 7.6 The Public Sector Partners will be required to:
- ◆ pro-actively broker relationships and commercial agreements between public and private sector interests, and private and private sector interests
  - ◆ secure the delivery of required public and private sector investment
  - ◆ deliver necessary political and community support and endorsement for the initiative and its individual project components, and
  - ◆ ensure that the full economic and employment benefit of the scheme is realised by the Halton business and resident communities.
- 7.7 All individual aspects of these requirements will be required to be delivered to both programme and financial budget to ensure the realisation of the DSRFP initiative in a manner that delivers value for money and maximum certainty.

#### Project Management Structure and Composition

- 7.8 The project management resource will blend the following skills:
- ◆ commercial property development brokerage and appraisal
  - ◆ planning negotiation
  - ◆ financial and programme management
  - ◆ community and political liaison and lobbying, and

- ◆ economic development and employment brokerage.
- 7.9 The permanent core project management resource will comprise:
- ◆ Project Director
  - ◆ Project Manager
  - ◆ Financial and Programme Manager, and
  - ◆ Administrative support.
- 7.10 The Project Director and Project Manager resource will be deployed full time for the duration of the initiative. The Financial and Programme Manager and administrative support will be a part time deployment.
- 7.11 The permanent core project management team will be supported by outsourced consultancy resources as required and identified within each of the projects and tasks.

## **STRATEGIC BASELINE DEVELOPMENT**

### **Introduction**

- 7.12 To enable the partners to continue the development of the DSRFP Masterplan and delivery strategy a number of strategic studies and assessments are required to provide the context and basis for individual project development.
- 7.13 The strategic studies and assessments will provide a refined framework of technical data to inform the necessary scope of subsequent individual project design and development.

### **Strategic Objectives**

- 7.14 The studies and assessments will seek to address the following Strategic Objectives:
- ◆ identify the rail infrastructure requirements within the DSRFP to facilitate forecast volume of train movements
  - ◆ identify the requirements for detailed Environmental Impact Assessments
  - ◆ identify the ecology, nature and habitat implications of the proposals
  - ◆ determine the transport impacts of the proposals, and
  - ◆ prepare a design guide for the scheme.

### **Projects**

- 7.15 The strategic baseline development projects will be both undertaken and funded by the public sector partners, utilising wherever possible, existing public and private baseline information.

#### *SBD1 – Environmental Impact Assessment – Scoping Report*

- 7.16 A preliminary overall scoping study will be undertaken to consider the requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the individual Key Projects. The

objective of the scoping study will be to confirm which of the Key Projects require a more detailed EIA (screening opinion) and the main issues that would require addressing for each project.

- 7.17 Throughout the preparation of the masterplan, it has been assumed that all key projects will require an individual EIA, but that there is likely to be some variation in the main potential impacts to be considered for the individual Key Projects. Ultimately, it might be concluded that a larger detailed EIA is required for the Ditton DSRFP project as a whole.
- 7.18 The proposed DSRFP lies in close proximity to the Mersey Estuary Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site. As such, an Appropriate Assessment may be required in accordance with the Conservation (Natural Habitat) Regulations 1994. This would also be addressed at this stage.

#### *SBD2 – Transport Assessment*

- 7.19 At the UDP Public Inquiry evidence was presented which demonstrated that the likely impact of the masterplan could be mitigated by the introduction of new highway links to the A5300 and the provision of links connecting all elements of the site. Based on this work a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan will need to be developed which looks at the current detail of the masterplan and which assess issues such as phasing and identifying the triggers when highway improvements will be required and/ or managed. The Transport Assessment should also include the latest forecasts for the Second Mersey Crossing that are currently emerging. Where necessary measures will be identified to mitigate the impact of the development on the surrounding network.

#### *SBD3 – Ecological Assessment*

- 7.20 Following from the recommendations of the EIA Scoping Report an assessment will be produced to further develop the ecological requirements of the site including the protection of important vulnerable habitats and the strategy for habitat enhancement.

#### *SBD4 – Refinement of Masterplan*

- 7.21 A site wide landscape framework will be developed of areas as appropriate to their scale and character that will include the use of 'gateways' to create a sense of place and establish an image for the site. The production of a design guide/palette will enable the establishment of basic principles so that each development will be cohesive and adopt the same overall concepts leading to greater cohesion for the site as a whole.

### **HBC FIELDS**

#### **Introduction**

- 7.22 The land North of Hale Bank Road, which for convenience we currently refer to as HBC Fields is crucial to the realisation of the full regenerative and economic development potential of DSRFP. The site provides DSRFP with the necessary

critical mass of development (scale) to ensure sustainability and economic/commercial success.

- 7.23 The majority of HBC Fields (site 253) is owned by Halton BC. However, there are a number of third party property interests that will be affected by the proposals.
- 7.24 The required new road link and bridge to the A5300/A562 crosses third party owned/occupied land and is in an adjoining Local Planning Authority area. The comprehensive landscape strategy to be implemented may affect third party owned/occupied land and property.
- 7.25 The public sector partners will secure the necessary agreements with affected third party landowners, and co-ordinate the detailed design of the requisite rail infrastructure to serve the overall site, prior to securing development agreements with private sector partners for the delivery of the physical development and the creation of employment opportunities (jobs).

### **Strategic Objectives**

- 7.26 The strategic objectives which need to be addressed are:
- ◆ securing agreements with affected third party land and property interests
  - ◆ completion of detailed EIA (as required)
  - ◆ detailed design of Landscape strategy (in consultation with community)
  - ◆ detailed design of road and bridge link
  - ◆ relocation of Sludge Line
  - ◆ detailed design of rail infrastructure to serve site
  - ◆ engagement of Private sector development partner(s)
  - ◆ procurement of road and bridge link
  - ◆ procurement of new commercial accommodation, and
  - ◆ creation of employment opportunities.

### **Projects**

- 7.27 Initial surveys and investigations will be funded jointly between the public sector partners and private sector.
- 7.28 The private sector development partners will undertake the detailed design of infrastructure and landscape/environmental mitigation works, and secure the requisite planning permissions, prior to implementation.

### **Land Acquisitions**

#### *HBCF1 – Bridge*

- 7.29 Negotiations with third party owners (Cheshire County Council, Knowsley MBC, and other third party property interests as determined) will be initiated in order to secure

the land necessary for the construction of a new bridge crossing and link road to the A5300/A562.

#### *HBCF2 – Hale Bank Road*

- 7.30 The necessity to acquire/extinguish third party property interests affected by the structural landscaping is to be determined. Should further third party land interests be required (in addition to project HBCF1) to implement the landscaping strategy, the public sector partners will secure the necessary agreements.

#### *HBCF3 – CPO*

- 7.31 CPO proceedings will be initiated to provide definitive time line/programme for acquisition negotiations, and to provide a backstop position in the event of a breakdown in negotiations and/or title clarification.

#### *HBCF4 – Acquisition Fees*

- 7.32 Provision for professional fees related to projects HBCF1, HBCF2 and HBCF3.

### **Surveys/Investigations**

#### *HBCF5 - Environmental Impact Assessment*

- 7.33 As determined by the Preliminary Scoping Study, a more detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be undertaken for the project. This will involve undertaking all necessary survey work (e.g. ecology, noise etc), and result in the preparation of an Environmental Statement to support planning applications. As part of the process, it will be necessary to take into account the findings of the intrusive ground investigation.

#### *HBCF6 - Topographical Survey*

- 7.34 A topographical survey will be undertaken of the site for use in the design process.

#### *HBCF7 - Ground Investigation – Infrastructure*

- 7.35 An intrusive ground investigation will be designed and undertaken on the HBC Fields development site and along the line of the proposed road and bridge linking the site to the A5300/A 562 roundabout.

- 7.36 A desk study review of available existing information will be undertaken.

- 7.37 The main objective of the investigation will be to provide ground engineering data for use in infrastructure design; it is also necessary to confirm that there are no significant ground contamination issues associated with the infrastructure route.

#### *HBCF8 - Services/Utilities*

- 7.38 In consultation with statutory undertakers the capacity of the existing service infrastructure will be determined.

## **Sludge Line Feasibility/Relocation**

### *HBCF9 - Surveys/Investigations*

- 7.39 The Mersey Valley High Pressure Sludge Main currently crosses the development site. Consultations with United Utilities will be conducted in order to determine the precise location and specification of the pipeline.

### *HBCF10 – Feasibility Assessment*

- 7.40 Following the consultations (project HBCF9) a design for the diversion of the pipeline, should it prove to be necessary, will be prepared for approval by United Utilities.

## **Design Works**

### *HBCF11 – Structural Landscaping and Gateway*

- 7.41 Structural planting to assist the integration of the development within the overall site will be designed. The scheme design will ensure that the character of the area will be similar to a ‘country park’ for access by, and to the benefit of, the residents of Hale Bank. There will be a high degree of community involvement in the design process.

### *HBCF12 – Bridge*

- 7.42 The link road from the site to the A5300, crossing the existing railway lines via a new bridge, will be designed. It is envisaged that the structure will be designed as a single span reinforced concrete bridge, built to adaptable standards.

### *HBCF13 – Ditton Reception Sidings*

- 7.43 Designs for the re-modelling or a replacement for the existing Ditton reception sidings will be prepared in order to provide for the more efficient and effective use of the rail network serving DSRFP.

### *HBCF14 – Private Open Space*

- 7.44 The design of the private open space will ensure that it will also form a visual and integrated link with the structural planting to the south, ensuring that the framework planting forms a cohesive whole.

### *HBCF15 – Temporary Public Open Space*

- 7.45 The area to the north of Lovel Terrace is classed as residential within the Halebank Action Area Plan. Pending the regeneration of Hale Bank, this area will be used as temporary Open Space.

### *HBCF16 – Lovel's Hall*

- 7.46 Improvement of and access to the site of Lovel's Hall will be undertaken in a manner that will not have a deleterious impact on the archaeology. The design of the appropriate solutions will be undertaken in collaboration with projects HBCF11 and HBCF12.

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## Authorities and Permissions

### *HBCF17 – Planning*

- 7.47 The necessary liaison with planning authority and submission of planning applications for the development will be undertaken.

### *HBCF18 – Highways*

- 7.48 The necessary approvals from the Halton and Knowsley Borough Councils for new highway construction will be secured.

### *HBCF19 – Rail (Bridge & Sidings)*

- 7.49 The necessary Network Rail permissions to connect new rail sidings to the main railway network and to provide a new bridge across the existing rail tracks, to allow a connection into the A5300, will be secured.

## Procurement

### *HBCF20 and HBCF21 – Road and Bridge*

- 7.50 The new road link and bridge from the site to the A5300 roundabout, including a new junction with Hale Bank Road will be procured.

### *HBCF22 – Structural Landscaping and Gateway*

- 7.51 A gateway feature will be installed at the commencement of the works to maximise awareness of the redevelopment and improvement of the site. The planting will follow the principles established earlier in the design guide/palette.

### *HBCF23 – Sludge Line Relocation*

- 7.52 The high pressure sludge pipeline crossing the site will be diverted to a suitable alternative location, if required.

### *HBCF24 – Rail Stub End*

- 7.53 New rail sidings/stub end will be procured to provide direct rail access to the site for the benefit of occupiers.

### *HBCF25 – Private Open Space*

- 7.54 Planting will be undertaken as early as possible for the benefit of residents of Hale Bank, whilst ensuring flexibility to construct the access road to the site. Where possible material from site strip for road will be used for earth mounding to give screening benefits

### *HBCF26 – Temporary Public Open Space*

- 7.55 Undertake liaison with the residents of Hale Bank early in the programme so that their suggestions can be considered as part of the development of draft proposals.

Provide the structural framework planting early to ensure maximum benefit for the residents.

#### *HBCF27 – Lovel's Hall*

- 7.56 The works to Lovel's Hall access will be integrated into the access road/bridge works to the site.

#### *HBCF28 – Private Sector Development (26HA)*

- 7.57 Engagement of private sector developer/occupier interests by development agreement and procurement of industrial/warehousing accommodation.

#### *Ditton Railway Bridge*

- 7.58 Although not identified as a project the Inspector at the UDP Inquiry recognised the benefit of connecting sites 253 and 256 (HBC Fields ) to site 255 the existing intermodal and freight depots to the east of Hale Road. The masterplan indicates the possibility of providing a link if commercially or operationally desirable. The existing Ditton Road railway bridge has failed its structural assessment and recent discussions with NR have revealed that they are minded to replace the bridge rather than repair it. The replacement of the structure will provide the opportunity to extend the structure to allow a link to be provided between the sites which is separate from the existing highway network, thereby removing freight park traffic from the local network and providing environmental improvements to the local community.

### **DITTON ROAD (LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS & BRANDING)**

#### **Introduction**

- 7.59 Comprehensive redevelopment of the land adjacent to Ditton Road is not proposed as part of the DSRFP Masterplan. However incremental redevelopment of land and property on Ditton Road for uses benefiting from the adjacent rail infrastructure are likely to be brought forward by the private sector as a result of the overall DSRFP initiative.
- 7.60 To encourage private sector investment, and to 'brand' the location as part of the DSRFP initiative, the public realm environmental quality of Ditton Road will need to be enhanced.

#### **Strategic Objectives**

- 7.61 The Strategic Objectives to be addressed are:
- ◆ baseline surveys, utilities, topographical and ground surveys
  - ◆ the production of an EIA (as required)
  - ◆ detailed scheme design, and
  - ◆ scheme implementation.

## Projects

- 7.62 The Ditton Road project is to be implemented by the public sector partners.

## Surveys/Investigations

### *DR1 - Environmental Impact Assessment*

- 7.63 As required by the Preliminary Scoping Study, a more detailed EIA would be undertaken for this part of the project. This would involve undertaking all necessary survey work (e.g. ecology, noise etc), and result in the preparation of an Environmental Statement to support the planning application.

### *DR2 - Topographical Survey*

- 7.64 A topographical survey will be undertaken of the area for use in the design process.

### *DR3 – Utilities*

- 7.65 The location of all utilities across the site, and in the immediate vicinity, will be identified to assist in the design process.

### *DR4 - Ground Investigation*

- 7.66 As necessary, limited ground investigations will be undertaken to aid landscape and branding works.

### *DR5 – Design Works*

- 7.67 The appearance of Ditton Road will be improved in accordance with its importance as a key route, which will initially also be used by the general public. A 'boulevard' character will be created initially at its eastern edge though it is proposed to extend this treatment along its full length if agreement is reached with adjacent landowners.

### *DR6 – Authorities and Permissions*

- 7.68 Liaison will take place with the relevant authorities in order to ensure compliance with the guidance already in the public domain and from previous studies.

### *DR7 – Scheme Procurement*

- 7.69 The landscape improvement works will be constructed in accordance with the identified programme and agreed guidance.

## RAIL RECEPTION SIDINGS

### Introduction

- 7.70 The technical specification, layout and capacity of the existing Ditton Sidings are inadequate to accommodate the full potential of the DSRFP.

- 7.71 The existing sidings will be developed to provide rail infrastructure suitable for the needs and requirements of the fully developed DSRFP.

### **Strategic Objectives**

- 7.72 The Strategic Objectives to be addressed are:
- ◆ the design of appropriate developments to existing Ditton Sidings
  - ◆ to secure necessary authorities and permissions from railway authorities, and
  - ◆ to procure developments to existing Ditton Sidings.

### **Projects**

- 7.73 The design of the necessary sidings will be undertaken by the public sector partners.
- 7.74 The implementation will be undertaken by the private sector.

#### *RRS1 – Design*

- 7.75 Design of additions to, or lengthening of, the existing reception sidings in order to facilitate longer container trains and optimise network capacity.

#### *RRS2 – Authorities and Permissions*

- 7.76 Negotiations with Network Rail will be conducted to secure permissions to connect new rail sidings to the main railway network.

#### *RRS3 - Land Acquisitions (Rail Possessions)*

- 7.77 Any land necessary for the construction of the new rail sidings will be acquired through negotiation with third party owners.

#### *RRS4 – Procurement*

- 7.78 To be undertaken by the private sector.

## **RAIL CORRIDOR EXTENSION**

### **Introduction**

- 7.79 Currently large areas of the DSRFP do not benefit from direct rail access (excepting access is available to the rail infrastructure via the Widnes Intermodal Rail Depot and AHC's Foundry Lane site). This is most evident within the former West Bank Dock Estate (to the South and East of the Widnes Intermodal Rail Depot ).
- 7.80 An additional rail corridor is proposed to provide future opportunity for direct rail connection for sites such as:
- ◆ Eddarbridge
  - ◆ AHC Warehousing Ltd's Mathieson Road site

- ◆ Tessengerlo, and
- ◆ Granox.

7.81 The corridor will be established over land currently owned by the O'Connor Group of Companies.

### **Strategic Objectives**

7.82 The Strategic Objectives to be addressed are:

- ◆ baseline surveys, ground, utility and topographical
- ◆ preparation of detailed design solution (to include necessary remediation strategy)
- ◆ securing of necessary agreements for the benefit of existing and future land owners/property occupiers
- ◆ securing any necessary authorities from the railway authorities, and
- ◆ procurement of new railway infrastructure.

### **Projects**

7.83 The corridor will provide significant benefit for the existing and future private sector operators and developers. It will, therefore, be designed and implemented by the private sector.

### **Surveys/Investigations**

#### *RCE1 - Environmental Impact Assessment*

7.84 As determined by the Preliminary Scoping Study, a more detailed EIA will be undertaken for the project. This will involve undertaking all necessary survey work (e.g. ecology, noise etc), and result in the preparation of an Environmental Statement to support the planning application. As part of the process, it will be necessary to take into account the findings of the intrusive ground investigation.

#### *RCE2 – Topographical Surveys*

7.85 A topographical survey will be undertaken of the area for use in the design process.

#### *RCE3 – Ground Investigation*

7.86 An intrusive ground investigation will be designed and undertaken for the rail corridor extension. The design stage will incorporate a desk study review of available existing information. The investigation will not be limited to the line of the infrastructure. The main objectives of the investigation will be to identify the ground contamination risk and ground engineering issues that will require addressing during the development of the new infrastructure. This should include the potential risks to Steward's Brook.

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#### *RCE4 – Utilities*

- 7.87 Utility information across the site, and in the immediate vicinity, will be obtained to assist in the design process.

#### *RCE5 - Landowner Agreements/Acquisitions*

- 7.88 Improvements to the rail infrastructure will be undertaken on land/property currently owned by the O'Connor Group of Companies. Implementation of the improvements will, therefore, require agreement between the existing parties (O'Connor and AHC), and provide for future private party interests as might become involved in the DSRFP.

### **Design Works**

#### *RCE7 – Rail Sidings*

- 7.89 Design of rail corridor along the southern edge of O'Connor's site to facilitate the connection of the Eddarbridge site to the rail network and the potential expansion of the Widnes Intermodal Rail Depot and AHC's operations.

#### *RCE8 – Steward's Brook Bridge*

- 7.90 Design of a new bridge across Steward's Brook to enable a new rail connection into the Widnes Intermodal Rail Depot area.

#### *RCE9 – Remediation Strategy*

- 7.91 Following completion of the intrusive ground investigation a remedial scheme will be designed to allow successful development of the area. The design process will include all necessary risk assessments and consultations with regulatory authorities. The remediation design will seek to mitigate the significant environmental risks associated with ground contamination and provide a suitable platform to support development loads.

#### *RCE10 – Gateway Feature*

- 7.92 The eastern entrance to the site will be upgraded to ensure that it is visually attractive and achieves a high quality. In keeping with the proposals for the western gateway the objective will be to reinforce a better image for the site and achieve a 'sense of arrival'.

### **Authorities and Permissions**

#### *RCE11 – Rail Sidings*

- 7.93 The necessary HMRI 'sign off' of the rail sidings works will be secured.

#### *RCE12 – Other (Environment Agency/Bridge)*

- 7.94 Approvals from the Environment Agency for proposed remediation measures and the crossing of Steward's Brook will be secured.

## Land Remediation

### *RCE13 and RCE14 – ‘Triangle’/Area of Le Blanc Waste*

- 7.95 The extent and type of remediation cannot be determined in advance of the ground investigation. However, at this stage, it is envisaged that the bulk of the remedial works would involve (cement) stabilisation of LeBlanc waste (galligu) together with measures to minimise run-off into Steward’s Brook. The need for excavation and off-site disposal to landfill would be minimised.

## Procurement

### *RCE15 – Rail*

- 7.96 Installation of a second rail access into the Widnes Intermodal Rail Depot, and four tracks beneath the cranes.

### *RCE16 – Bridge*

- 7.97 Construction of new rail bridge crossing over Steward’s Brook.

### *RCE17 – Gateway Feature*

- 7.98 As for the proposed western gateway the provision of a gateway feature will be included as far as possible at the commencement of the works to maximise awareness of the improvement of the site and its new image as a Rail Freight Park.

## GREEN WEDGE

### Introduction

- 7.99 The ‘Green Wedge’ is identified as an opportunity for the development of commercial facilities to support the DSRFP, for example commercial vehicle parking, ‘truck-stop’ and/or drivers rest facilities.

### Strategic Objectives

- 7.100 The Strategic Objectives to be addressed are:
- ◆ acquisition of the site by the public sector partners, and
  - ◆ the engagement of private sector development partners

### Projects

- 7.101 The site will be acquired by the public sector partners and prepared for such development by the private sector.

### *GW1 – Surveys*

- 7.102 A topographical survey will be undertaken of the area for use in the design process.

### *GW2 – Acquisitions*

7.103 Negotiations for acquisition with third party owners will be undertaken.

### *GW3 – Acquisition Fees*

7.104 Professional fees associated with the surveys and acquisitions.

### *GW4 – Private Sector Development*

7.105 The private sector will be engaged to develop and operate 'truck stop' facilities.

## **EDDARBRIDGE**

### **Introduction**

7.106 Eddarbridge is currently in private sector ownership. The site represents a significant visual 'blight' which could hinder further private investment in the area. The site has a long history of industrial use and is considered highly likely to be underlain by contaminated soils; there is also a significant presence of above ground wastes. However, it represents an opportunity for further development of direct rail connected commercial accommodation to complement the DSRFP. Development of this site represents a means of addressing the environmental risks associated with ground contamination and improving the overall visual environment.

### **Strategic Objectives**

7.107 The Strategic Objectives to be addressed are:

- ◆ secure agreement with existing or third party developer interests (potentially to include acquisition of site by the public sector partners)
- ◆ initiate CPO proceedings (as required)
- ◆ EIA (as required)
- ◆ utility, topographical and contamination surveys
- ◆ preparation of waste management strategy
- ◆ design of rail and road infrastructure
- ◆ secure necessary access agreements with adjacent land owners, and
- ◆ private sector development and creation of job opportunities.

### **Projects**

7.108 To facilitate the redevelopment of the site to complement the DSRFP, the public sector partners will initially secure control of the site through development agreements (or acquire it as necessary) and subsequently enter into appropriate development agreements with third party private sector developers/investors as required.

7.109 The costs of necessary surveys, remediation and waste management will be born by the private sector.

## Land Acquisitions

### *E1 – Acquisitions*

- 7.110 Budget line for acquisitions/extinguishments of existing land/property interests within the Eddarbridge site.

### *E2 – Acquisition Fees*

- 7.111 Professional fees associated with the acquisition/extinguishment of existing land/property interests within the Eddarbridge site.

### *E3 – CPO*

- 7.112 CPO proceedings will be initiated to provide definitive time line/programme for acquisition negotiations, and to provide a backstop position in the event of a breakdown in negotiations and/or title clarification.

### *EH4 - Land Owner Agreements*

## DESOTO ROAD CROSSING

- 7.113 In order to connect the Eddarbridge site to the rail infrastructure it will be necessary to cross Desoto Road. Desoto Road is owned by AHC. Commercial agreements for the crossing of Desoto Road will therefore be required with AHC. Moreover, AHC's agreement to the removal of the reception sidings from NR will be required.

## Surveys/Investigations

### *E5 - Environmental Impact Assessment*

- 7.114 As determined by the Preliminary Scoping Study, a more detailed EIA will be undertaken for the project. This would involve undertaking all necessary survey work (e.g. ecology, noise etc), and result in the preparation of an Environmental Statement to support the planning application. As part of the process, it will be necessary to take into account the findings of the intrusive ground investigation.

### *E6 – Topographical Survey*

- 7.115 A topographical survey will be undertaken of the area for use in the design process.

### *E7 – Ground Investigation*

- 7.116 An intrusive ground investigation is required in the area of the potential Eddarbridge development site. This investigation would be undertaken in two phases. An initial preliminary scoping investigation will be designed and undertaken in conjunction with the acquisition process. The initial investigation will incorporate a desk study review of available existing information. The main objective of this preliminary phase will be to identify the environmental liabilities associated with the development sites.

- 7.117 Subsequent to acquisition a more detailed investigation will be undertaken to identify the ground contamination risks and ground engineering issues that will require addressing as part of the redevelopment process. Ideally, the detailed investigation should not be undertaken until waste clearance has been completed and, ideally, following demolition of the on-site buildings. To undertake the investigation prior to these works could constrain its scope.

#### *E8 – Structures*

- 7.118 A full structural survey will be undertaken in order to develop a suitable demolition strategy.

#### *E9 – Utilities*

- 7.119 The location of all utilities across the site, and in the immediate vicinity, will be obtained to assist in the design of the services required for the proposed development.

#### *E10 - Waste Management Survey*

- 7.120 Currently areas of the Eddarbridge site are occupied by waste materials left by former occupiers. It will be necessary to undertake a waste survey to assess disposal routes and costs; as necessary, this would involve sampling and chemical analysis. This survey can best be achieved by appointing an experienced waste management contractor to undertake the work.

### **Design Works**

#### *E11 – Rail Extensions*

- 7.121 The design of necessary extensions to terminal sidings (to connect the Eddarbridge site) to the rail network will be undertaken.

#### *E12 – Landscape Integration*

- 7.122 The design of a landscape strategy to integrate the site into the wider DSRFP will be undertaken. The proposed landscape character will merge with that proposed for Ditton Road by adopting some of the design elements as well as those established for other roads around the perimeter of the DSRFP.

#### *E13 – Road*

- 7.123 Designs to upgrade the internal site road serving the Eddarbridge site will be prepared.

#### *E14 - Remediation Strategy*

- 7.124 Following completion of the intrusive ground investigation a remedial scheme will be designed to allow successful development of the area. The design process will include all necessary risk assessments and consultations with regulatory authorities.

The remediation design will seek to mitigate the significant environmental risks associated with ground contamination.

### **Authorities and Permissions**

#### *E15 – Planning*

7.125 The required liaison with the planning authority and submission of planning applications for the proposed development will be undertaken.

#### *E16 – Highways*

7.126 Necessary approvals from local highway authority for proposed new highway construction will be obtained.

#### *E17 – Rail (Sidings)*

7.127 Any necessary consents to connect the additional extended rail sidings to the network will be secured.

#### *E18 – Other (Utilities)*

7.128 Approvals from statutory undertakers for connecting the site to services will be obtained.

#### *E19 – Waste Management*

7.129 On completion of the waste survey, a contractor will be appointed to remove all the identified waste materials to off-site waste management facilities. Although wastes will be recycled if possible, landfill or incineration is likely to be the major disposal route. It will be necessary to complete the waste clearance in advance of demolition and preferably before ground investigation works.

#### *E20 – Demolitions*

7.130 Existing buildings that are inappropriate to the future redevelopment will be demolished.

#### *E21 – Land Remediation*

7.131 The extent and type of remediation cannot be determined in advance of the ground investigation. However, at this stage, it is envisaged that the bulk of the remedial works would involve (cement) stabilisation of LeBlanc waste (galligu). Although the need for excavation and off-site disposal to landfill would be minimised, it is anticipated that some removal of contamination ‘hot-spots’ will be required.

### **Procurement**

#### *E23 – Landscape Integration*

7.132 The landscape works will be integrated as part of the overall development and in accordance with seasonal constraints.

*E24 – Road*

7.133 The internal road network serving the site will be upgraded as required.

*E25 - Private Sector Development*

7.134 Engagement of private sector developer/occupier interests by development agreement and procurement of industrial/warehousing accommodation.

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## 8. Delivery, Implementation and Outputs

### INTRODUCTION

- 8.1 The masterplan for the DSRFP has been developed collaboratively between public and private sector partners. Its delivery is also predicated upon a collaborative approach that utilises the statutory powers and project management skills of the public sector and the drive and insight of the private sector.
- 8.2 The delivery strategy is presented by reference to 5 Phases/Years.
- 8.3 The strategy assumes each phase of activity (completion of tasks/projects) is completed with a 12 month/1 year period and that these periods are concurrent with the annual funding periods relevant to ERDF and the NWDA.
- 8.4 On the basis that the partners can commit to the necessary funding being in place in the early years the following sequences represents a realistic programme to deliver the DSRFP.

### PHASE 1 (2005/2006)

- 8.5 Phase 1 of the project delivery (to be undertaken in 2005/6) principally comprises the establishment of the project management team and the completion of a number of Strategic Baseline technical assessments and surveys to inform the development of the masterplan and delivery strategy. Negotiations for the acquisition of third party land and property interests required for the DSRFP project will also commence during Phase 1.
- 8.6 The public sector partners will undertake these tasks. Although the private sector will continue to be consulted in their capacity as partners. The Phase 1 tasks will be driven forward and funded by the public sector partners.
- 8.7 Key tasks for Phase 1 include:
- ◆ establishment of dedicated project management team
  - ◆ completion of EIA scoping report
  - ◆ completion of Transport Assessments
  - ◆ completion of Ecology Assessment
  - ◆ refinement of masterplan/delivery strategy
  - ◆ commencement of negotiations for land acquisitions (or agreements) as required to deliver the HBC Fields road/bridge link and environmental strategy (to include the commencement of CPO proceedings)
  - ◆ completion of sludge line relocation strategy
  - ◆ commencement of survey works for Ditton Road environmental improvements
  - ◆ acquisition of Green Wedge; and

- ◆ commencement of the acquisition and design process for the new rail reception sidings.

### **PHASE 2 (2006/2007)**

- 8.8 Detailed survey and design works for a number of key individual projects commence during Phase 2.
- 8.9 A number of initial land acquisitions for HBC Fields road/bridge link are completed.
- 8.10 The environmental improvement scheme for Ditton Road commences.
- 8.11 Although the project management drive behind these projects will remain primarily with the public sector partners, initial private sector investment will be secured (for the design of railway infrastructure development), to complement that of the public sector.
- 8.12 Key tasks for Phase 2 include:
- ◆ completion of land acquisitions/agreements for HBC Fields
  - ◆ completion of detailed surveys for HBC Fields road/bridge infrastructure and landscape strategy, and commencement of detailed design works for same
  - ◆ design and implementation of Ditton Road environmental improvement strategy
  - ◆ commencement of design works for improved reception sidings, and securing of necessary authorities for same
  - ◆ commencement of survey works for rail corridor extension, and
  - ◆ engagement of private sector developer partner for 'truck stop' (Green Wedge).

### **PHASE 3 (2007/2008)**

- 8.13 Phase 3 of implementation triggers further investments by the private sector as a number of infrastructure projects commence on site, and further detailed design works are completed.
- 8.14 The public sector partners continue to drive the project forward, however the role of the private sector is no longer subservient.
- 8.15 Key tasks for Phase 3 include:
- ◆ completion of detailed design works for HBC Fields road/bridge infrastructure and landscaping strategy.
  - ◆ commencement of landscape schemes for HBC Fields
  - ◆ completion of rail corridor design works; and
  - ◆ completion of design works for improved reception sidings, and securing of necessary authorities for same.

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#### **PHASE 4 (2008/2009)**

- 8.16 Major physical infrastructure works commence during Phase 4 (funded by the private sector). Construction of the new road/bridge link to HBC Fields commences; the new rail reception sidings commences; the sludge line is relocated. These major projects are funded by the private sector. Eddarbridge is acquired by Halton and is sold to the private sector who carry out the necessary surveys and design, prior to remediation.
- 8.17 The public sector partners continue to manage the projects and continue the programme of environmental improvements to Ditton Road.
- 8.18 Key tasks for phase 4 include:
- ◆ construction of the new road/bridge link to HBC Fields
  - ◆ construction of the of the rail reception sidings commences
  - ◆ commencement of acquisition negotiations for Eddarbridge (to include commencement of CPO proceedings);
  - ◆ Eddarbridge is acquired
  - ◆ Eddarbridge is sold to the private sector who undertake the necessary surveys and investigations prior to remediation and development, and
  - ◆ land required for the rail corridor extension commences remediation.

#### **PHASE 5 (2009/2010)**

- 8.19 Phase 5 of implementation realises the development potential of the HBC Fields and Eddarbridge sites. The servicing and remediation of both sites is complete. Both sites are capable of development/redevelopment by the private sector.
- 8.20 Key tasks for phase 5 include:
- ◆ completion of the HBC Fields Landscape strategy
  - ◆ completion of the rail corridor extension to serve Eddarbridge and the West Bank Dock Estate
  - ◆ completion of the rail reception sidings
  - ◆ Eddarbridge site is cleared and remediation works undertaken, and
  - ◆ commencement of development of commercial accommodation at HBC Fields.

#### **OUTCOMES**

- 8.21 The outcome of implementing the masterplan will be the achievement of a number of key local, regional and national strategic objectives, namely:
- ◆ promoting and supporting the sustainable movement of goods and materials as outlined in the Government's Transport White Paper – "A New Deal for Transport – Better for Everyone", in the Northwest Regional Freight Strategy and in Halton's LTP

- ◆ strengthening the local and wider Merseyside sub regional economy as outlined in Regional Planning Guidance (RPG13), in the NWDA's Regional Economic Strategy and in Halton's UDP, and
- ◆ securing environmental improvements together with the development of derelict and contaminated brownfield sites, as outlined in Government Planning Policy Guidance, Regional Planning Guidance (RPG13) and in Halton's UDP.

8.22 In order to measure progress and monitor how effectively objectives are being met a series of measurable outputs can be identified. These are listed below together with the current projections for the outputs:

- ◆ 26 hectares of additional land serviced for development
- ◆ 5,000 jobs created
- ◆ 8,500 metres of new and improved rail infrastructure
- ◆ 1,200 metres of new and improved road infrastructure
- ◆ 11 hectares of derelict land which is brought into productive use
- ◆ 50 hectares of contaminated land which is cleaned and remediated, and
- ◆ 18 hectares of land that receives landscape improvements.

8.23 In addition to measurable Outputs the DSRFP project will also deliver a number of significant and positive Outcomes that cannot be easily measured. These include:

- ◆ creation of significant indirect jobs at a local and sub-regional level
- ◆ significant improvements to the road and public transport routes for the benefit of residential and business communities – in particular the residents of Halebank
- ◆ significant environmental improvements - creation of additional formal and informal environments for the benefit and use by the public, and
- ◆ stimulation of further property and business investment throughout Ditton and Widnes.

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## 9. Programme Management

### INTRODUCTION

- 9.1 Presently the DSRFP Masterplan embraces a number of private land/property and commercial interests (some of which have a shared interest in the railway infrastructure that is integral to the project), and publicly owned lands.
- 9.2 The premise behind the project has been that the combination of these interests will create a critical mass of complementary commercial activity that will both release the maximum potential of the railway infrastructure, and act as a nucleus that will drive further physical and economic development on surrounding land.
- 9.3 Releasing the maximum potential of the railway infrastructure and creation of the 'nucleus' requires further investment in sidings and cargo handling facilities, and additional provision of land for development and property with direct access to the infrastructure. However, the majority of surrounding land is owned by private interests, not all of which have immediately apparent commercial synergy with the project (numerous bad neighbour development/commercial activities on Ditton Road, for example). Moreover, those commercial interests that may be regarded as consistent with the objectives of the DSRFP may harbour different views as to the detail of the delivery of the project.
- 9.4 Delivery of the masterplan comprises six principle projects:
- ◆ improvement of the reception sidings for the common good of all partners through an agreed structure
  - ◆ linking, servicing and preparing of HBC Fields for disposal to the private sector for subsequent development and occupation by industrial/logistics businesses to which the adjacent railway infrastructure is of relevance
  - ◆ branding and linking of Ditton Road as an integral part of the DSRFP to provide for the redevelopment of adjacent properties/land for businesses to which the adjacent railway infrastructure is of relevance, when commercially viable
  - ◆ extension of the existing rail corridor to directly serve additional land considered to be suitable for future redevelopment for businesses to which the adjacent railway infrastructure is of relevance
  - ◆ provision of high quality service facilities for commercial drivers using the inter-modal handling facilities within the DSRFP, and
  - ◆ remediation of the Eddarbridge site by the public sector for disposal to the private sector for subsequent development and occupation by industrial/logistics businesses to which the adjacent railway infrastructure is of relevance.
- 9.5 And one over-arching theme:
- ◆ significant enhancement in environmental and design quality, with more greenery and enhanced biodiversity, and a consistent image and branding.

- 9.6 As an integral part of the above projects it will be vital to ensure that agreements are entered into in order to secure the on-going management and maintenance of all aspects of the DSRFP.
- 9.7 With the exception of the Ditton Road project (to be undertaken within the extent of the publicly adopted highway), all projects will require either the co-operation of existing property interests, and/or acquisition of third party property interests.
- 9.8 Moreover, the financial analysis for these projects indicates that when taken on a combined basis there is a significant funding deficit (associated costs exceed capital return generated by land disposals), which will require to be bridged by public sector grant monies.
- 9.9 A key consideration for the implementation of the DSRFP will, therefore, be the efficient and effective investment of public financial resources if value for money/best value is to be demonstrated. There are significant benefits to be realised from a single operator for the railway infrastructure within the DSRFP (out with the main through lines). If this benefit is of a sufficient commercial nature, it may provide the stimulus to secure collaboration between occupiers/commercial interests that may be extended beyond the operation of the railway infrastructure.
- 9.10 Such collaboration may take many forms from informal business association, to formal management company with responsibilities for out sourcing and procurement of services required for the operation of the DSRFP. A hybrid of the BID concept (Business Improvement District) currently being tested in numerous English cities may be appropriate to the DSRFP in the long-term. This matter is given further consideration in the Delivery Plan.
- 9.11 It is clear that the responsibility for driving the project forward in its initial stages rests with the public sector. It will, therefore, be for the public sector to resource the project management team.
- 9.12 There are clear potential, practical and financial benefits in the public sector driving the project during its initial first stages. Only the public sector is in a position to determine the most appropriate 'masterplan' from the combined perspective of economic and community benefits; environmental impact; commercial viability; and value for money. The public sector possesses powers of compulsory acquisition, and statutory planning control. Moreover, the opportunity exists to lever greater levels of public investment (grant) into projects that are in public ownership.

#### **LONG TERM MANAGEMENT – PROPERTY AND ESTATE**

- 9.13 In the long-term two options present themselves for the 'management' of the DSRFP:
- (i) No effective overall management. The established park becomes much like any other established industrial/commercial location, a collection of independent property and commercial interests sharing the publicly owned infrastructure (road and rail). A quality infrastructure framework and branding can be achieved by appropriate delineation between public and private land, but the cost of maintenance will in all probability fall primarily to the public sector.

- (ii) A collaborative approach by commercial/property concerns with a shared interest in the DSRFP concept, its operation and brand.

The later of these options is preferred for DSRFP as it will provide the consistently high level of quality and design, necessary for the branding and image of the park.

- 9.14 There are significant benefits to be realised from a single operator for the railway infrastructure within the DSRFP (out-with the main through lines). This issue is discussed below. If this benefit is of a sufficient commercial nature, it may provide the stimulus to secure collaboration between occupiers/commercial interests that may be extended beyond the operation of the railway infrastructure.

#### **LONG TERM MANAGEMENT – RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURE**

- 9.15 As identified in section 4 of this document, the current operation of the railway infrastructure is inefficient and would be wholly inappropriate to the management of railway operations within the DSRFP as advocated by the masterplan and delivery strategy.

- 9.16 It is clear that that the creation of an internal DSRFP railway network will necessitate the appointment of a DSRFP terminal operator, as licensed by the ORR. This operator would be responsible for:

- ◆ the day to day operation of the internal railway network, including the shunting of all trains between the new reception sidings and O'Connor's and AHC's rail terminal facilities, and
- ◆ the maintenance of the internal railway network.

- 9.17 A number of potential options present themselves that will necessitate further discussion and consultation with the existing operators. However, the preferred structure and operation of the railway within DSRFP would be:

- ◆ new reception/exchange sidings independent of NR
- ◆ the single railway track linking into the rail terminal facilities should be combined with the reception/exchange sidings to form an internal DSRFP railway network independent of NR, and
- ◆ the appointment of an independent terminal operating company potentially involving AHC Warehousing Ltd, The O'Connor Group and other third parties (including the Council).

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Location Plans**

# **APPENDIX 2**

## **Masterplan Drawings**