

Drivers Jonas Deloitte.

Volume 2 - Site Assessments

Contents

- 1 Cluster One – Ditton Marsh, Widnes**
 - Ditton Junction Station, Widnes (65000211)
 - Land Adjacent to Speke Road, Widnes (65000242)
 - Ditton Junction, Ex Sleeper Depot, Widnes (65000279)

- 2 Cluster Two – Bowers Business Park Phase 2, Widnes**
 - Bowers Business Park Phase 2, Widnes (65000001)
 - Bowers Business Park Phase 2, Widnes (65000002 & 65000003)

- 3 Cluster Three – ICI Zeneca, Widnes**
 - Former ICI, Widnes (65000064)
 - Croda Tip, Widnes (65000136)
 - Croda Tip, Widnes (65000136)
 - Land South of Johnson’s Lane, Widnes (65000243)

- 4 Ditton Road, Widnes (65000054)**

- 5 Ex Breakers Yard, Croft Street, Widnes (6500076)**

- 6 Mill Lane, Widnes (65000092)**

- 7 Side of Fairfield School, Widnes (65000349)**

- 8 Nyborgs Plastics, Widnes (65000137)**

- 9 Hough Green Railway Station, Widnes (65000109)**

- 10 51 - 57 Tynwald Crescent, Widnes (65000176)**

- 11 Hutchinson’s Tip, Widnes (65000244)**

- 12 Percival Lane, Runcorn (65000066)**

- 13 Land Off Runcorn Dock Road, Runcorn (6500043)**

- 14 Stonehills, Runcorn (65000116)**
- 15 Pool Lane, Runcorn (65000119)**
- 16 Halton Road, Runcorn (65000125)**
- 17 A E Evans Storage, Sandy Lane, Runcorn (65000148)**
- 18 Hallwood Link Road, Runcorn (65000145)**
- 19 Former Crossville Bus Depot, Runcorn (65000305)**
- 20 Okell Street Day Nursery, Runcorn (65000248)**

1 Cluster One – Ditton Marsh, Widnes

Cluster Summary

- 1.1 This cluster contains three sites, which all sit within the potential extent of the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park in Widnes. The sites include:
 - 6500211 - Ditton Junction Station, Widnes, NLUD Category C - derelict land and buildings;
 - 65000242 – Land adjacent to Speke Road, Widnes, NLUD Category A – previously developed land now vacant;
 - 65000279 - Ditton Junction, Ex Sleeper Depot, Widnes, NLUD Category A – previously developed land now vacant
- 1.2 These three sites have been identified for rail-based freight development and are highlighted in the following reports:
 - The Merseyside Freight Study, prepared for the joint Merseyside authorities and Halton Borough Council by MDS Transmodal and WS Atkins Consultants Ltd, June 2000; and
 - The report identifying the Strategic Regional Sites, published by the NWDA in December 2001.
- 1.3 The Merseyside Freight Study was commissioned to provide the basis for a strategy and action plan for freight distribution within, to and from Merseyside that would:
 - Promote future economic growth;
 - Reduce accidents, health risks, disturbance and environmental damage; and
 - Be affordable, practical and capable of implementation.
- 1.4 The Study drew on relevant policy guidance at EU, national and regional level. It pointed to the common theme that non-road modes (rail and waterborne transport) should be promoted through land use policies that locate industrial and distribution development at rail or water connected sites to support sustainable transport objectives. Attention was drawn to the EU's strategy for revitalising railways, including advice on the encouragement of "freight villages" at which heavy transport users and supporting activities would be clustered in order to make best use of extensive inter-modal facilities.
- 1.5 The Study noted the potential for the *"extension and restructuring of the Ditton area, exploiting the two new inter-modal terminals, bringing into play redundant land and creating a new road link to the A5300"*.

- 1.6 The NWDA published its Regional Economic Strategy (RES) in March 2003 and in its Summary Action Plan 2003-2006 it identifies this site in Key Activity 9.1.
- 1.7 The Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park proposal supports Regional Spatial Strategy Policy T7 this intention as it will assist the transfer and handling of freight on a key rail corridor of international standards, through the provision of an inter-modal interchange in a regionally strategic location.
- 1.8 The UDP Proposals Map shows all land considered to have potential for development as part of the scheme within the UDP period, and specifically allocates site 65000211 (amongst others) for development as Core Areas of the development.
- 1.9 The UDP identifies this area under policy E7 which sets out the strategic policy for delivering a phased strategic inter-modal rail freight to be delivered in accordance with an overall masterplan to be approved as a Supplementary Planning Document. Within the defined park Site 65000211 is allocated for development.
- 1.10 The recently adopted 3MG (Mersey Multimodal Gateway) is based upon the contents of the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park Masterplan and Landscape Strategy and Design guide that were adopted by the HBC in 2004.
- 1.11 Within the emerging Core Strategy, the preferred options report allocates this area within the 3MG area as a Preferred Area of Change. Development within the Regionally Significant Economic Development site at 3MG should meet the broad criteria set out within policy RT8 of the RSS: Inter Modal Freight Terminals. The policy notes that development in the surrounding employment area should seek to complement the operation of 3MG.

Ditton Junction Station, Widnes (65000211)

Site Description

- 1.12 NLUD Category C – Derelict land and buildings.
- 1.13 The site extends to approximately 0.26 ha (0.65 acres) and was previously occupied by Ditton Junction Railway Station. The site fronts Hale Road on the border between Ditton and Halebank. The station, on the London-Liverpool line, was closed to passengers on 27 May 1994.

Planning Policy and Planning History

- 1.14 The site is allocated under the following UDP policies:
- **Environmental Priority Area (BE3):** This policy focuses on raising environmental standards within the policy area. The main objective of this policy is to enhance the character and appearance of the area.
 - **Proposed Employment Development Site (E1):** The Ditton Intermodal Freight Exchange Site 2 (site 256) is allocated as 2.96 hectares of employment use under use class B1, B2 and B8).
 - **Disused Stations (TP3):** The policy is explicit in its protection of the former Ditton Railway Station from development that may prejudice the use of the station as part of the transport network in the future. The policy notes that ‘the re-opening of the Shell Green Route (Ditton - Widnes South - Warrington) would allow improved opportunities for travel between Widnes and Warrington and could form part of the Trans-Pennine linkage’.
 - **Potential Extent of Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park (E7):** The site forms part of the wider area that has been included within land illustrating the potential extent of the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park. The former Ditton Railway station is referenced as site 256 in the adopted UDP.

Constraints

- 1.15 The key constraint to re-opening this railway station will be funding. There was evidence that the former platforms are still in situ (albeit requiring restoration). The former footbridge has also been retained. The station is heavily protected both within the adopted UDP and within the RSS. Development, over than that of re-instating this station will be refused.

Recommended Final Use: Railway Station

- To allocate this land for alternative uses would be contrary to the strategic policies set out with the UDP and Core Strategy.
- The 3MG multimodal Gateway SPD identifies the importance of this site and precludes development that would prejudice the use of Ditton Railway Station.

Site Delivery¹: *This is very much dependant on Network Rail and Government Priorities which are more likely going to be focused on the north west high speed trains. The re-opening of this station will not be a priority of Network Rail or Central Government in the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review.*

¹ Assuming more ‘normal’ (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

- We have suggested that this is a medium-term deliverable given that the re-opening of the station is seen as an important element of the 3MG multimodel Gateway.
- There are no current proposals for re-opening the railway station which would be predicated on a viable business case for Network Rail to justify the costs of making an additional stop.
- The Council would initially be required to establish a need for this station which they are unlikely to be able to justify given the lack of critical mass in the immediate vicinity to warrant public sector investment in re-opening the station.
- Given the lack of critical mass and therefore footfall the case for re-opening is flooded. The Council should simply retain the current protection afforded to the site via planning policy and monitor growth within the Ditton Marsh area over the next 10 – 15 years.
- This site, for the purposes of this study, should be treated in a similar way to protected greenspace. The site is protected against all forms of redevelopment that would prevent the railway station re-opening.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **This should not be a priority of the Council in the context of brownfield land redevelopment. The land is heavily protected from alternative forms of development and Network Rail is unlikely to invest money in a railway station which is not in an area of current high employment and/or residential development.**
- **The Council should engage with Network Rail over the likely future potential to re-open the railway station to confirm its priorities over the next 10 years and basis for assessing the re-opening of closed stations.**

Land Adjacent to Speke Road, Widnes (65000242)

Site Description

- 1.16 NLUD category A – Previously developed land now vacant.
- 1.17 This site extends to approximately 13.62 ha (33.66 acres) in size and was previously used as a landfill site for household refuse disposal. The site is now vacant.
- 1.18 The site is long and narrow in nature with undulating topography (raising to approximately 5m AOD) mainly focussed around a ridge which is likely to be the result of the tipping of waste material.
- 1.19 We understand that the landfill operations ceased in the late 1980's which was followed by a programme of remediation works undertaken by HBC. This included the instillation of a substantial clay cap, overlain with top-soil, with a tree planting scheme. An innovative approach to tackling leachate discharging from several points around the site and prevent contamination of Ditton Brook were employed. These methods included, limestone treatment beds and reeds being used to neutralise and clean leachate before entering Ditton Marsh.
- 1.20 We understand from anecdotal evidence, that reed beds provide a reliable and low maintenance form of non-biological treatment of waterborne pollutants. Assuming the established reed beds are not damaged by unreasonable activity on the site, the system will continue to neutralise leachate discharge for the foreseeable future. The nature reserve status will provide protection from disturbance of the reedbeds by earth works or other procedures which may damage the clay cap and reed bed ecosystem.
- 1.21 Drivers Jonas Deloitte is a firm of chartered surveyors and not specialists in reed bed systems. The Council should take specialist advice on the longevity of the reed beds in protecting against contamination of the surrounding watercourses.
- 1.22 The site forms part of the Hale Road Woodlands Local Nature Reserve which is part of the Mersey Forest. Accordingly, the site is protected from development in both local and regional planning policy. The site is managed by Halton Borough Council.

Planning policy and planning history

- 1.23 The site is allocated in the UDP as a Greenspace System under policy GE10 which seeks to protect the linkages in the greenspace systems. The site falls under policy GE6 for the Protection of Designated Greenspace and also under the Proposed Greenway policy TP9 which aims to provide green off-road route connections. These policies safeguard this greenspace from development.
- 1.24 The site does fall under the UDP policy allocation for the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park (E7). This is a strategic policy justification for a phased strategic inter-modal rail freight park.

- 1.25 There is no evidence of any planning applications having been submitted for the site.

Key constraints

- 1.26 It is understood that the site is in two separate ownerships. We understand the north east corner of the site is owned by Halton Borough Council and the remainder of the site is in private ownership. The entire site is managed by Halton Borough Council who are responsible for the Nature Reserve.
- 1.27 The site was operated as a landfill site until the 1980's and subsequently has little attraction for redevelopment for either employment or residential use due to significant costs required, and also the stigma of its previous use. Any form of development on this site would require significant engineering works (not least piling to the bedrock) to provide stable foundations, a significant cost to any development. The site is, however, protected from development in the adopted UDP.
- 1.28 It is understood that the conditions of the landfill use were not strictly adhered to and the capping of the landfill was not implemented using the most appropriate techniques. Information has been provided that shows that the landfill is still producing low levels of methane, although the peak gas production has passed and this does not pose a threat to its current use as a nature reserve.
- 1.29 In addition, the site is further constrained by the presence of 5 electricity pylons and a high pressure Transco gas pipeline running along the northern boundary of the site.
- 1.30 Notwithstanding this, the site is designated as public open space. The Forestry Commission has undertaken planting on the land. **It is understood that the ecological value of the site is high, including the presence of several reed beds which are developing over time and are now established ecosystem (see introduction). Further, there is evidence that this site is widely used and enjoyed as open space by dog walkers and runners.**
- 1.31 The south/south east boundary of the site is bordered by Ditton Brook. The site is identified by the Environment Agency as being in Flood Zone 3, which is a high flood risk and therefore presents a significant constraint. Planning Policy 25 advises that in determining the location of development, that the risk-based Sequential Test should be applied to all stages of planning. The aim of the sequential approach is to steer new development to areas at the lowest probability of flooding (Zone 1), the sequential approach discourages development within flood zone 3 unless alternative sites can be identified.

Recommendations for final use: Continued use as public open space, nature reserve, due to:

- o The site is likely to be subject to a wayleave in respect of the electricity pylons and an easement in respect of the gas pipe. Similar statutory easements within the borough extend to 7 meters along the length of the pipeline which precludes development along its route. This effectively sterilises much of the land from development.

- The remediation costs to allow development on this land outweigh commercial viability. In any event, redevelopment would be contrary to adopted planning policy and result in the loss of an established green corridor.
- The high flood risk to the site would mean that development would be inappropriate. In theory development could be appropriately mitigated against flood risk, however this would not be viable option to consider due to further costs and the various other constraints.
- Vegetation has become established on the site, the site has a degree of local ecological value and provides a reasonably attractive setting for the public, in the surrounding urban and industrial environment.
- The site is now used by the public as open space, walkers and dog walkers frequent the site and use the footpaths which have become established on the land.

Site delivery²: < 1 year

- The site should continue to be operated as it currently is, as such there is no specific delivery methodology.
- The site is part of the Hale Road Woodlands Local Nature Reserve and Mersey Forrest which is managed and funded by Halton Borough Council. The site has no development potential given the extent of enabling works required to provide suitable foundations for works. In any event, the site is protected from development in the Local Plan and is protected by its designation as a nature reserve.
- Having met with the Council's contamination team we are advised that there are no health and safety issues related to the previous use of this site. Whilst the landfill is still producing methane, this is at very low levels which do not present a threat or danger.
- The reed beds continue to provide filtration of leachates from the former landfill preventing contamination of the watercourses. Halton Borough Council is responsible for the continued monitoring of these water courses.
- The site is an established wildlife corridor. This site should not be regarded as a brownfield site for the above reasons.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **This is a protected nature reserve. The site is heavily protected against development and should be removed from the brownfield register.**

² Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

Ditton Junction, Ex Sleeper Depot, Widnes (65000279)

Site Description

- 1.32 NLUD category A – Previously developed land now vacant.
- 1.33 The site forms part of the former Ditton Timber Treatment works extending to approximately 9.25 hectares. Part of the former works has been developed into a successful industrial estate, having benefited from European Regional Development Agency funding grant in 2002 which funded the infrastructure required to open the site up for development. The site is referred to in the adopted UDP as Proposed Employment Site 242.
- 1.34 The site has independent access from the roundabout at the junction of the Knowsley Expressway (A5300) and Speke Road (A562). This provides direct access to the M62 (junction 6) the M56 (junction 11 and 12) and the M6 at Junctions 20 and 22.
- 1.35 The extent of the development to date has provided 19 detached units of various sizes within Use Classes B1, B2 and B8 with ancillary offices and parking.
- 1.36 The remainder of the site is undeveloped and is overgrown with low level shrubs and ground covers. There is evidence of former hard standing beneath the undergrowth. There are no obvious physical constraints to development and the existing estate road could easily be extended as required.

Planning Policy and Planning History

The site is allocated under the following UDP policies:

- Environmental Priority Area (BE3): This policy focuses on raising environmental standards within the policy area. The main objective of this policy is to enhance the character and appearance on the area.
- Proposed Employment Development Site (E1): The ex sleeper depot (site 242) allocates 17.52 hectares of employment use under use class B1, B2 and B8.
- Potential Extent of Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park (E7): The site forms part of the wider area that has been included within land illustrating the potential extent of the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park. The ex sleeper depot, referenced as site 242 in the adopted UDP has been partly developed since the UDP was adopted leaving the remaining land which is the subject of this study.
- Within the emerging Core Strategy, the preferred options report allocates this area within the 3MG area 'Preferred Area of Change CS7: 3MG'. Policy CS7 notes that "*Development within the Regionally Significant Economic Development site at 3MG should meet the broad criteria set out within policy RT8 of the RSS: Inter-Modal Freight Terminals and should contribute to the prime purpose of facilitating the movement of freight by rail. The policy notes that development in the surrounding employment area should seek to complement the operation of 3MG*".

Planning Policy and Planning History

- 1.37 The subject site has no planning history.

Key Constraints

- 1.38 Having discussed this site with the Council's contaminated land team, we understand that there are contamination issues associated with the site's previous use within the eastern area of the site (which consists entirely of the undeveloped portion of the former works). We are advised that the site suffers from drainage issues and contamination associated with the former timber treatment process.
- 1.39 Current values within Speke Approach are not achieving the capital values that would be required to underpin the significant site remediation works required to deliver further development and extension of Speke Approach Industrial Park. We understand, having spoken to local agents currently marketing vacant units that whilst interest in the vacant properties is high, rental values are low at circa £2 - £2.50 per sq ft. With yields at around 8%, the capital value of a third phase of Speke Approach Industrial Estate is therefore unlikely to be sufficient to make development on the current vacant land a viable opportunity.
- 1.40 As we set out above, capital values in this location are unlikely to be viable. In addition, banks will not lend on commercial developments without pre-lets secured. As a result, it is unlikely that the remediation of this site will be facilitated by the private sector and public sector money will be required to bring the site forward.
- 1.41 The Council, in partnership with other public sector bodies should look at options for funding remediation work to facilitate/encourage private sector investors to develop the final stages of Speke Approach Industrial Estate. Early engagement with the appropriate Government Agencies should be encouraged in order to set out and agree the priority of this site amongst other strategic employment sites.
- 1.42 Given that the current Speke Approach Industrial Park has a number of vacancies, allied with low rents and capital values, it is unlikely that any private sector developer will be able to secure pre-lets to obtain bank funding. The public sector is unlikely to have the level of funding required to deliver a redevelopment of this site without the private sector and therefore, in the short to medium term this site is unlikely to be a priority for the public sector.

Recommendations for Final Use: Employment

- A continuation of the existing light industrial estate is the most appropriate use for this site, subject to market demand and owner agreement.

Site Delivery³: 6-10 Years

- For the reasons set out above, the short to medium term opportunity for redevelopment of this site is limited by the low capital values and weak market. Rental values and yields will need to increase significantly to generate capital values sufficient to drive viability and allow the private sector to remediate and develop the site.

³ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

- Given that the original Approach Industrial Park was brought forward with ERDA funding it is unlikely the remaining site will be brought forward by the private sector alone.
- It is likely that a public/private sector approach to redevelopment will be needed, with the public sector funding remediation and infrastructure with the private sector building out the commercial units to meet market demand.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **As the private sector is unlikely to take on this site with the inherent contamination liabilities and financial risks, public sector partners should look to remediate the site and create a development platform to encourage the private sector to invest. Without public sector investment, this site will not be viable for the private sector to bring forward independently due to the amount of contamination and low capital values/lack of demand.**
- **The Council should continue to promote the site for employment and business use within the emerging LDF.**
- **Development would be dependent on demand for space from occupiers similar to the established business within Speke Approach Industrial Park. The Council must be realistic about the current demand for space of this nature and the current vacancy rates within the Speke Approach Industrial Park coupled with very low capital values.**
- **If the funding required to remediate the site cannot be provided by the public sector, the site should remain fenced to prevent public access.**
- **An alternative solution would be to phase remediation and development. This would enable smaller amounts of public sector funding to be provided over time. However, there may be economies of scale achieved by remediation of the whole site.**

Cluster Conclusions & Recommendations

- 1.43 This cluster of sites, made up of three individual sites around Ditton Marsh provide limited opportunity for short to medium term development.
- 1.44 The cluster sits within the Ditton Marsh Strategic Rail Freight Park boundary, however, sites 65000211 and 65000242 are protected against redevelopment in both local and regional planning policy. Site 65000211 is the site of the old Ditton Railway station which is protected against any form of development that may jeopardise the re-opening of this facility. Site 65000242 forms part of a wider nature reserve and should be removed from the list of brownfield sites. Accordingly, there is no opportunity for a comprehensive redevelopment of the three sites.
- 1.45 Site 65000279 is the only site of the three with development potential. The market for industrial/employment land remains very depressed. The credit crunch which began in 2007 and which has abated to the extent that the market no longer appears to be falling, has still resulted in a significant depreciation of capital values over the last 3 years. Whilst the market has stabilised, there remains no indication that prices are rising. Development activity remains extremely muted, particularly in the industrial sector which is evidenced by the low quoting rents on vacant units within the current estate. The ability for an extended estate to take up yet further industrial/employment land within the short-medium term has to be questioned.
- 1.46 For the reasons set out above, redevelopment of this site is unlikely to take place in the short to medium term but is likely to come forward as a phased extension of the current estate in the long-term as values and demand recover sufficiently.
- 1.47 Halton Borough Council should discuss the long-term approach to delivering regeneration on this site with the NWDA to establish the NWDA's ambition to bring this site forward and wider priorities for grant funding.

2 Cluster Two – Bowers Business Park Phase 2, Widnes

Cluster Summary

- 2.1 This cluster contains three sites, which are collectively known as Bowers Business Park Phase Two and form part of the Widnes Waterfront masterplan area. The sites are:
- 65000001 - Bowers Business Park Phase 2, NLUD Category A – previously developed land now vacant;
 - 65000002 - Bowers Business Park Phase 2, NLUD Category A – previously developed land now vacant;
 - 65000003 - Bowers Business Park Phase 2, NLUD Category A – previously developed land now vacant;
- 2.2 The Widnes Waterfront, formally an Economic Development Zone, is a multi-million pound regeneration programme facilitating the transformation of over 81 ha (200 acres) of former industrial land on the northern banks of the River Mersey. It aims to transform low quality industrial land into a new, regionally significant development site consisting of commercial office and light industrial developments.
- 2.3 The programme began when it was awarded European Objective 2 funding in 2002. The programme continues to be implemented using NWDA funding and other public funds secured until March 2010.
- 2.4 The delivery of this vision is set out in four key documents:
- Halton Unitary Development Plan;
 - Widnes Waterfront SPD;
 - Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Framework Phase 2; and
 - Emerging core strategy.
- 2.5 The UDP identifies the Widnes Waterfront as one of six Action Areas in Halton that require comprehensive development or redevelopment in order to achieve their regeneration. The Action Area policies list the appropriate land uses for them and principles of development that should apply.
- 2.6 Policy RG3 states that within the Waterfront Action Area the following uses will be acceptable:
- Employment uses (B1, B2 and B8);
 - Residential uses (C2 & C3);
 - Leisure uses (D2) where they comply with policy TC01(2);
 - Open Space;

- Food and Drink (A3); and
 - Bulky goods retail warehousing within Class A1, where it complies with Policy TC01(2).
- 2.7 In April 2005, HBC adopted the Widnes Waterfront SPD to supplement the UDP policies and give greater detail and certainty to guide new development in the area. The SPD identifies individual sites for a particular use and sets out the principles of development that proposals for each site must follow.
- 2.8 The Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Framework Phase 2 was prepared by Taylor Young, BE Group and Faber Maunsell on behalf of HBC and was formally adopted by HBC in July 2009. It updated the New Widnes Waterfront and Masterplan Delivery Strategy that was approved by HBC in May 2003 and updated in July 2004.
- 2.9 The vision, as set out in the masterplan is:

“An exciting waterfront destination and gateway to Widnes offering a range of employment, leisure and residential opportunities. Widnes Waterfront displays notable sustainable design, making the most of this unique and well-connected waterside setting.”

- 2.10 The masterplan divides the 64 identified sites in to two phases. Phase one being sites that are currently viable or deliverable; can be funded from existing funding streams and which do not face major constraints; and projects which cannot be funded at present, but where funding streams can be identified.
- 2.11 The Hive (sites 65000002 and 65000003) is identified as a Phase One site deliverable between 2009 and 2013.
- 2.12 Phase two are sites that are either highly constrained or highly speculative and in the current economic climate are unlikely to see any activity in the period 2009 – 2013. Site 65000001 is identified as a phase two site.
- 2.13 Widnes Waterfront (as part of South Widnes) is identified in the emerging Core Strategy as a Key Area of Change (Policy CS8). The policy seeks to:

“improve the performance of Widnes Town Centre, continue the economic development of Widnes Waterfront through the rejuvenation of brownfield and redundant sites, and support regeneration in West Bank, including connectivity”.

Bowers Business Park Phase 2, Widnes (65000001)

Site Description

- 2.14 NLUD Category A – previously developed land now vacant.
- 2.15 This site, which extends to approximately 2.83 ha (6.99 acres), lies within a cluster of three sites to the south of Widnes town centre, separated by Ashley Way (A557).
- 2.16 Earle Road runs along the western end of the site, linking the thermPhos works to the south west with Ashley Road. Recent infrastructure improvements included the construction of a new roundabout with spurs in to the three sites, anticipating future development.
- 2.17 Land immediately to the north is vacant and in the ownership of Priority Sites and Langtree.
- 2.18 Priority Sites were the developer of the new office development, Turnstone Business Park, slightly further north. This development comprised 1 detached and 12 semi-detached two storey high quality offices and 6 high specification two storey business units. It has always been the intention that the remainder of the land in their ownership will form a second phase of Turnstone Business Park.
- 2.19 Langtree obtained a planning permission for a 30,860 sq ft, 3 storey office development, which expired in December 2009. The land, formerly in HBC ownership will revert back in April 2010 as the consent has not been implemented.
- 2.20 Uses to the north of Cornubia Road, at the eastern end of the site, include a car dismantlers and waste recycling plant.
- 2.21 A disused railway line runs along part of the southern boundary of the site.
- 2.22 The site is predominantly in the ownership of HBC.

Planning Policy & Planning History

- 2.23 Site 65000001 isn't specifically identified in the SPD as a key development opportunity. It is identified in the masterplan as being suitable for green space, mixed use and high quality offices.
- 2.24 Land immediately to the south of the site is the subject of an outline planning application submitted in January 2005 (05/00057/OUTEIA) by J Routledge & Sons. The application is for the creation of a new mixed use development including 595 residential units (2, 3, 6 and 8 storey) and commercial uses including A1 (retail), A2 (financial & professional services), A3 (food & drink), B1 (business). A decision on the application is still pending.

Constraints

- 2.25 The site's elongated shape restricts its developability. Any development is likely to require further onsite infrastructure such as highways, reducing the developable area of the site.
- 2.26 It is understood that a number of services run through the site from east to west including sludge and filtrate mains which have 8m easements.
- 2.27 There is also a public footpath which runs through the middle of the site. HBC are in the process of trying to relocate the footpath along the new linear park to the north.
- 2.28 The site lies within Flood Zone 3 although HBC dispute this and are currently in discussions with the Environment Agency as to whether this allocation is correct. PPS 25 seeks to limit development in Flood Zone 3. Where development is proposed, there is a need to undertake a sequential test to demonstrate that no alternative sites are available.
- 2.29 The above constraints have prevented the site coming forward independently and has more recently been used to open up sites to the north (namely the ones developed by Langtree and Priority Site's) as well as land to the south.
- 2.30 We believe that HBC are in advanced discussions to acquire further interests in the area which could allow access to the site from Denis Road.
- 2.31 The site's location in the former industrial heartlands of Widnes indicate that there may be some issues with ground conditions, although it is not known if these are likely to be geotechnical, contamination or a combination of the two. HBC have undertaken significant remediation works over the last 20 – 30 years, however there may be some residual issues that would impact on the development of the site. These would need to be investigated further especially as environmental standards have changed so much and further work may now be required.

Recommended Final Use: *Green space, mixed use, offices (in accordance with the adopted masterplan)*

- As stated above, the site is unlikely to be brought forward independently and therefore will need to be brought forward in conjunction with neighbouring sites, complimenting those uses. A mixed use allocation would allow sufficient flexibility to respond to market demand.

Estimate of Site Delivery⁴: 6 – 10 years

- There are no current proposals for the site. HBC will need to identify a strategy for delivery i.e. partnership with other landowners and work up proposals for the site. Demand for the proposed uses is unlikely to exist at present given prevailing market conditions and is therefore unlikely to be able to secure funding in the short term.

⁴ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **in the short term, maintain the site's existing use as greenspace;**
- **retain the site's existing mixed-use allocation to allow for future development;**
- **relocate the footpath along the new linear park to the north;**
- **further engage with Environment Agency over the site designation as Flood Zone 3. ;**
- **ensure dialogue between HBC departments, particularly planning, highways and Economic Development;**
- **continue discussions with adjoining land owners over the acquisition of interests in order to create access from Denis Road;**
- **In the long term, HBC may wish to consider utilising their compulsory purchase powers to acquire this land if it cannot be acquired by private treaty. However this not a priority until sites 65000002 and 65000003 have been delivered;**
- **engage with Priority Sites to understand their appetite and timescales for delivery of phase 2 of the Turnstone Business Park development;**
- **HBC should consider how the site to the north subject to an agreement with Langtree could be combined to make best use of both sites;**
- **further ground investigations and remediation works are not an immediate priority and will only need to be addressed when the site is brought forward for redevelopment;**
- **determine the application by J Routledge & Sons on land to the south of the site. The longer the decision is delayed, the greater the risk of the applicant lodging an appeal on the grounds of non-determination;**
- **HBC should engage with J Routledge & Sons to discuss their appetite for the delivery of the site and if appropriate, assist the applicant in scoping a revised layout which is likely to be more deliverable.**

Bowers Business Park Phase 2, Widnes (65000002 & 65000003)

Site Description

- 2.32 NLUD Category A – previously developed land now vacant.
- 2.33 Site 65000002 extends to approximately 2.27 ha (5.6 acres) and lies within a cluster of three sites (65000001, 65000002 and 65000003). It lies to the west of Earle Road with a prominent frontage on to Ashley Way (A557).
- 2.34 Foundry Industrial Estate and Ashley Retail Park lie immediately opposite on the northern side of Ashley Way.
- 2.35 Developer Morbaine have submitted an outline planning application (09/000101/OUT) for the comprehensive redevelopment of Ashley Retail to develop a single foodstore comprising 100,000 sq ft. (gross) of retail floorspace. A decision on the application is still pending.
- 2.36 Site 65000003 extends to approximately 1.3 ha (3.21 acres) and lies immediately to the north of site 65000002 and has similar attributes and constraints.
- 2.37 An operational warehouse and associated car parking is situated along the eastern boundary.
- 2.38 The site is accessed via a new spur road off Earle Road.

Planning Policy & Planning History

- 2.39 Sites 65000002 and 65000003 are coupled together in the SPD and are identified as a key development opportunity. Most appropriate uses are recommended as being business (use Class B1), assembly and leisure (use Class D2) and bulky goods retail warehousing (use Class A1) that is compliant with policy TC01 (see note below), food and drink (use Class A3) and hotels (Use Class C1).
- 2.40 In the masterplan, part of the site is identified as being suitable for leisure uses (use class D2) with the northern part of site 65000003 being identified as suitable for a mixed use development comprising hotel (C1), leisure (D2) and retail (A1).
- 2.41 Reserved matters planning permission was granted on 30th October 2007 (07/00611/REM) for a proposed leisure facility consisting of a cinema, bowling alley, ice rink, laser zone and ancillary A1/A3 uses.
- 2.42 The development, to be known as The Hive, is to be anchored by Reel Cinemas. Phase 1 of the development will also include a 36,000 sq ft ice rink operated by Planet Ice, a Frankie and Benny's bar and restaurant together with 600 car parking spaces. In addition, Phase 1 will provide up to 10,000 sq ft of retail space and a 6,000 sq ft restaurant unit, together with a further 26,500 sq ft leisure unit. There will also be a second stand alone restaurant.
- 2.43 There is an agreement in place for HBC to acquire the investment from St Modwen upon completion.

2.44 Phase 2 of the development, to the most southerly end of the site, is likely to comprise a budget hotel, however an operator has yet to be identified.

Constraints

2.45 The site, along with much of the immediate area, has seen significant land remediation over the past two to three decades, although it is understood that further ground work will be required as the historic remediation works do not comply with current standards, the extent of which is not known at this stage.

2.46 The dominance of Ashley Road acts as a natural barrier, severing the site (and the rest of the waterfront Area) from Widnes town centre. Connectivity to the centre will be essential to the success of a development on this site, particularly ones centred on leisure uses. Recent improvements to Ashley Road have sought to address this and a new pedestrian access in to the site from Ashley Road is proposed as part of the development. It remains to be seen whether these improvements will have the desired impact on the movement of pedestrians across Ashley Road.

2.47 The site is currently identified as lying within Flood Zone 3 and therefore the restrictions of Flood Zone 3 will apply.

Recommended Final Use: Mixed Use

- Proposals for The Hive are well progressed, bringing a new offer to Widnes. The prominence of this site is the key to unlocking other sites within the masterplan area and therefore a vibrant, well connected development which brings people in to the area is needed.
- It is understood that funding arrangements are in place and that construction is to commence later this year.

Estimate of Site Delivery⁵: <1 year (phase 1)

- Proposals for the proposed scheme are well advanced and indications are that the extant permission will be implemented and the development executed.
- As stated above, this will be a phased scheme and therefore works will continue in to the medium term.

The following actions can be taken to assist with the site's delivery:

- **continue to support and facilitate the site's development enabling St Modwen to commence works as soon as possible;**
- **further engage with Environment Agency over the site designation as Flood Zone 3.**

⁵ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

Cluster Conclusions & Recommendations

- 2.48 This cluster has been the subject of a masterplanning process for a number of years as part of the wider Widnes Waterfront area. Two of the three sites (65000002 and 65000003) are to be brought forward for development shortly, with proposals for a commercial-led mixed use scheme, The Hive, due to start on site later this year.
- 2.49 The Hive will be delivered in two phases which will straddle both sites delivering a cinema, ice rink, hotel, restaurants and retail.
- 2.50 Site 65000001 is disconnected from the other sites in the cluster by Earle Road. Should the Hive proposals, as well as land to the north owned by Langtree, be brought forward for development, this will improve the desirability of the area and therefore site 65000001, however the size and shape of the site significantly affects its developability.
- 2.51 Some public realm improvements have been made near to the site. Given the length of time that is anticipated that this site could remain vacant, the public realm could be extended.
- 2.52 The proposals for sites 65000002 and 65000003 are well advanced and therefore HBC need to continue to support and facilitate the development wherever possible to ensure its delivery.
- 2.53 The future of site 65000001 remains uncertain and relies on a number of constraints being resolved before it can be delivered. Redevelopment of sites 65000002 and 65000003 will assist with this.

3 Cluster Three – ICI Zeneca, Widnes

Cluster Summary

- 3.1 The cluster comprises three sites which are as follows:
 - 65000064 – Former ICI, NLUD Category C – Derelict Land and Buildings
 - 65000243 - Croda Tip, NLUD Category C – Derelict Land and Buildings;
 - 65000136 - Land South of Johnson's Lane, NLUD Category C – Derelict Land and Buildings
- 3.2 Along with the sites comprising Cluster Two, sites 65000064 and 65000136 fall within the Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Area, whilst site 65000243 lies on the eastern boundary of the masterplan area.
- 3.3 The Widnes Waterfront, formally an Economic Development Zone, is a multi-million pound regeneration programme facilitating the transformation of over 81 ha (200 acres) of former industrial land on the northern banks of the River Mersey. It aims to transform low quality industrial land into a new, regionally significant development site consisting of commercial office and light industrial developments.
- 3.4 The programme began when it was awarded European Objective 2 funding in 2002. The programme continues to be implemented using NWDA funding and other public funds secured until March 2010.
- 3.5 The delivery of this vision is set out in four key documents:
 - Halton Unitary Development Plan;
 - Widnes Waterfront SPD;
 - Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Framework Phase 2; and
 - Emerging core strategy.
- 3.6 The UDP identifies the Widnes Waterfront as one of six Action Areas in Halton that require comprehensive development or redevelopment in order to achieve their regeneration. The Action Area policies list the appropriate land uses for them and principles of development that should apply.
- 3.7 Policy RG3 states that within the Waterfront Action Area the following uses will be acceptable:
 - Employment uses (B1, B2 and B8);
 - Residential uses (C2 & C3);
 - Leisure uses (D2) where they comply with policy TC01(2);
 - Open Space;

- Food and Drink (A3); and
 - Bulky goods retail warehousing within Class A1, where it complies with Policy TC01(2).
- 3.8 In April 2005, HBC adopted the Widnes Waterfront SPD to supplement the UDP policies and give greater detail and certainty to guide new development in the area. The SPD identifies individual sites for a particular use and sets out the principles of development that proposals for each site must follow.
- 3.9 The Widnes Waterfront Masterplan Framework Phase 2 was prepared by Taylor Young, BE Group and Faber Maunsell on behalf of HBC and was formally adopted by HBC in July 2009. It updated the New Widnes Waterfront and Masterplan Delivery Strategy that was approved by HBC in May 2003 and updated in July 2004.
- 3.10 The vision, as set out in the masterplan is:

“An exciting waterfront destination and gateway to Widnes offering a range of employment, leisure and residential opportunities. Widnes Waterfront displays notable sustainable design, making the most of this unique and well-connected waterside setting.”

- 3.11 The masterplan divides the 64 identified sites in to two phases. Phase one being sites that are currently viable or deliverable; can be funded from existing funding streams and which do not face major constraints; and projects which cannot be funded at present, but where funding streams can be identified.

Former ICI, Widnes (65000064)

Site Description

- 3.12 NLUD Category C – Derelict Land and Buildings.
- 3.13 The site extends to approximately 16.09 ha (39.76 acres) and comprises the former ICI works which was decommissioned in the late 1990's.
- 3.14 The site is bounded to the west by Tan House Lane and to the east by a former landfill site. The southern boundary is bordered by a dismantled railway and beyond, the St Helens Canal.
- 3.15 Despite the site being cleared of buildings, a considerable amount of residual infrastructure remains, including wells and railway tracks. Part of the adjoining landfill fall within the redline boundary of this site.
- 3.16 The site borders three sides of the existing, operational Saffil works which fronts Moss Bank Road.
- 3.17 When operational, the ICI works manufactured organic materials such as herbicides and pesticides. HBC have advised that as a consequence there are a number of hazardous contaminants. In addition, the geotechnical properties of the site makes the site difficult to develop.
- 3.18 It is recognised by HBC and the Environment Agency that the site is grossly contaminated and that the problems are not easily resolvable. Any remedial works will focus on near surface contaminants but it is unlikely that a full clean up will ever be achieved.
- 3.19 Since decommissioning of the plant the site has been in private ownership and has lain vacant for a number of years.
- 3.20 Over the years there have been a number of plans for a range of uses by third parties including a business and technology centre (application 06/00694/OUT – decision pending) and more recently a waste resource park (see below), however the owner has not been inclined to dispose of the site for redevelopment. HBC have sought to acquire the site, however the terms of a sale could not be agreed.
- 3.21 HBC have advised that the applicant of the waste resource park has entered in to agreement with the owner to acquire this site, however this has not been confirmed.

Planning Policy & Planning History

- 3.22 The Widnes Waterfront SPD identifies the site as being suitable for offices and light industrial use (Use Class B1), general industrial (Use Class B2) and storage and Distribution (Use Class B8).
- 3.23 The Widnes Water Waterfront masterplan suggests a range of appropriate uses including:
- Public open space / soft leisure (sui generis / D2);

- Mixed use – soft leisure (D2), visitor attraction (sui generis), retail (A1) , food and drink (A3); and
 - Small industry (B2 / B8).
- 3.24 In addition, the site is subject to a planning application (09/00358/EIA) which was submitted in August 2009 for “the development and operation of a waste resource park to enable the recycling and sorting of waste materials, the production of compost and the production of refuse derived fuel”. A decision on the application is still pending.
- 3.25 The site lies immediately to the east of a site which is the subject of an outline planning application submitted in January 2005 (05/00057/OUTEIA) by J Routledge & Sons. The application is for the creation of a new mixed use development including 595 residential units (2, 3, 6 and 8 storey) and commercial uses including A1 (retail), A2 (financial & professional services), A3 (food & drink), B1 (business). A decision on the application is still pending.
- 3.26 Immediately to the north lies an area allocated as a Primarily Employment Area (Policy E3) and a proposed employment development site (Policy E1) known as Tanhouse Lane / Moss Bank Road which extends to 0.96 ha (2.37 acres). Permitted uses include industrial uses (use Classes B1, B2 and B8).

Constraints

- 3.27 We are advised that the site is grossly contaminated as a result of its industrial heritage which severely limits the development potential of the site. In addition, we believe that the site’s geotechnical properties make it difficult to develop.
- 3.28 The site is heavily constrained from an access perspective. HBC have suggested that significant highway improvements, particularly to Gorsey Lane, would be required to facilitate development of this site however this would require the acquisition of some third party land and overcoming a ransom situation.
- 3.29 Given the contaminated nature of the site, it is only ever likely to be suitable for an industrial (or similar) use however the costs associated with remediation, infrastructure and construction solutions are likely to significantly outweigh the value that these uses could generate and therefore is not a viable proposition for a private sector developer.

Recommended Final Use: *Industrial, sui generis, open space (in accordance with the adopted masterplan)*

- The degree to which the site can be remediated will heavily influence the end use and it is likely that it will only ever be remediated to a level that would allow some form of industrial (or similar) use.
- Uses would have to be compatible with the proposed residential development to the west. There is the opportunity to create a buffer separating the two sites by creating open space to the western end of the site.
- Given the extensive problems with the site, the site’s allocation will need to be flexible in the event that a viable proposal can be brought forward.

Estimate of Site Delivery⁶: 3 – 5 years

- This is based on the assumption that the agreement for sale is realised and that the current planning application is approved and implemented enabling inward investment in to the borough, creation of jobs and development of a heavily contaminated site.
- The agreement for sale is only likely to be completed once a planning consent has been granted. Should HBC refuse consent, it is likely that the sale will fall through, leaving the site to remain in it's current state. Were HBC to grant consent for the site, and the developer still had an appetite for the site, this development could be brought forward in a relatively short timescale.
- It is understandable that local residents and Councillors are opposed to waste uses, given the area's history, however the waste and recycling sector is emerging as an increasingly valuable and much-needed source of new occupiers for the industrial property sector particularly as greater restrictions on landfill sites (a ban, in affect, on domestic landfill by 2020). Waste and recycling already make a an important sub-sector of the property market and will claim increasing prominence over the medium to long term. HBC need to be convinced about the sustainability of the proposed use and use it as an opportunity to educate local residents. This cold be done via some form of public consultation event.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **establish a relationship with the landowner to understand their aspirations and intentions for the site as these are currently unknown;**
- **HBC should alert the landowner about the sites poor security;**
- **determine application 06/00694/OUT for the development of a waste resource park. The longer the decision is delayed, the greater the risk of the applicant lodging an appeal on the grounds of non-determination;**
- **The acquisition of the site is not a priority as it will be a liability rather than an asset;**
- **further ground investigations and remediation works are not an immediate priority and will only need to be addressed if and when the site is brought forward for redevelopment;**
- **investigate a highways solutions to improve the access to the site.**

⁶ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

Croda Tip, Widnes (65000136)

Site Description

- 3.30 NLUD Category C – Derelict land and buildings.
- 3.31 The site extends to approximately 3.88 ha (9.59 acres) and comprises land that previously formed the Croder Colloides works including a landfill to the eastern end of the site.
- 3.32 The site is of an irregular shape with its principle access and frontage on to Gorsey Lane.
- 3.33 Neighbouring uses include light industrial and manufacturing. It is bounded on the eastern boundary by a proposed employment development site.

Planning Policy and Planning History

- 3.34 The site is allocated in the UDP as a Primarily Employment Area (policy E3) which permits “development falling within use classes B1 (Business), B2 (general industry) and B8 (storage and distribution) and industrial uses not falling within these uses classes”. Appendix 6 lists a series of industrial processes that will also be permitted on the proviso that “the process and operation is compatible with neighbouring industrial uses and the use already exists on the site”.
- 3.35 Immediately to the east of the site lies a proposed employment development site (policy E1) known as Johnson’s Lane. The policy permits development falling within use classes B1, B2 and B8.

Constraints

- 3.36 There are significant highways problems associated with the corner of Gorsey Lane which restricts intensification of traffic in the area.
- 3.37 It is understood that there are proposals to link Johnson’s Lane and Gorsey Lane in an attempt to overcome this issues and open up land in the area for development.
- 3.38 Similar to site 65000243, the site has been used for the tipping of chemical waste. However, HBC have advised that the ground conditions are not as severe.

Recommended Final Use: Employment

- The site lies in a predominantly employment area and therefore development within use classes B1, B2 and B8 would be appropriate. However, HBC would be advised to ensure that a suitably flexible policy be adopted to allow any viable scheme to be brought forward.

Estimate of Site Delivery⁷: 6 – 10 years

⁷ Assuming more ‘normal’ (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

- A significant number of constraints need to be overcome in order to bring this site forward for development. The key to opening up the site will undoubtedly be extensive improvements to the surrounding infrastructure. This is likely to take time as proposals and funding will need to be developed, identified and implemented.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **maintain the existing planning allocation;**
- **establish a relationship with the landowner to understand their aspirations and intentions for the site;**
- **further ground investigations and remediation works are not an immediate priority and will only need to be addressed if and when the site is brought forward for redevelopment;**
- **investigate a highways solutions to improve the access to the site.**

Land South of Johnson's Lane, Widnes (65000243)

Site Description

- 3.39 NLUD Category C – Derelict Land and Buildings.
- 3.40 The site extends to approximately 15.08 ha (37.26 acres) and has historically been used as a landfill. HBC have advised that waste includes both toxic and non-toxic materials including radioactive materials from Thorium Ltd.
- 3.41 URS, on behalf of the Environment Agency are currently undertaking a Part 2A⁸ risk assessment to ascertain the nature and degree of contaminants.
- 3.42 HBC have a considerable amount of historic information about the site although further assessment work is required.
- 3.43 There is no vehicular or pedestrian access to this site. Historically, it would appear that waste was brought in to the by rail.
- 3.44 There are a number of steep slopes across the site which could be hazardous to any visitors.

Planning Policy & Planning History

- 3.45 The UDP allocates the site (along with the rest of the Widnes Waterfront area) as an Action Area (see above).
- 3.46 It also identifies the site as a proposed green space under Policy GE5.

Constraints

- 3.47 The site is heavily constrained with severe contamination, limited access and hazardous slopes.

Recommended Final Use: Green space (restricted access)

- The site is highly constrained and contaminated and consequentially there are very few alternative uses that are suitable.
- The site, over time, has established itself as a green space resulting in its allocation in the UDP. Given the above, this would appear to be the most appropriate use for the site.

Estimate of Site Delivery⁹: < 1 year

- Our recommendation is that the existing use be continued.

⁸ Part 2A Environmental Protection Act 1990 inserted by s.57 of the Environment Act 1995

⁹ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

HBC should undertake the following:

- **complete Part 2A investigations;**
 - **contaminated land team to identify gaps in knowledge and undertake further assessments where necessary;**
 - **ensure that the site is properly secured;**
 - **encourage the site to develop as a natural habitat;**
 - **policy GE5 should be maintained;**
 - **remove from the NLUD database**
-

Cluster Conclusions & Recommendations

- 3.48 This cluster is severely constrained due to the historic use of the three sites for refuse disposal and chemical manufacturing with significant remediation costs required to bring forward development on these sites.
- 3.49 We believe that the degrees of contamination differ across the three sites, with site 65000064 (former ICI site) being the worst affected. The sites are also heavily constrained by lack of infrastructure.
- 3.50 Even considering these sites as a cluster rather than on an individual basis it is hard to envisage development on the majority. There is potential for some commercial use on 65000136 given its principle access lies within an established industrial area, however there are significant highways obstacles to overcome to allow this to come forward.
- 3.51 Allocating these sites, particularly 65000064 and 65000243 as brownfield employment sites is inappropriate as it is highly unlikely that any scheme will be commercially viable. The sites cannot remain in their current state in perpetuity and therefore it may be appropriate in this instance to secure the sites and encourage them to develop as a natural habitat.
- 3.52 That said, it is understood that a waste disposal operator has expressed a desire to develop a facility on 65000064 and submitted a planning application, however this has not been determined. Were this to be a viable proposal acceptable to HBC, the reuse of this site should be strongly encouraged. Should this application be unacceptable a greening of this site should be encouraged.

4 Ditton Road, Widnes (65000054)

Site Description

- 4.1 NLUD Category A – Previously developed land now vacant
- 4.2 This site is very prominent lying adjacent to the main approach to Runcorn Bridge (to the north and east), a golf course (to the north and west) and industrial processing units (to the south and west).
- 4.3 The golf course is currently closed and currently under going remediation works to address contamination issues.
- 4.4 The nearby Ditton Road Corridor comprising a number of waste transfer facilities.
- 4.5 The site itself is currently being remediated and basic infrastructure implemented to enable development.
- 4.6 The site benefits from excellent transport links as it lies adjacent to the A533 and Ditton Road, which leads to Widnes. The site is also in relatively close proximity to Liverpool Airport.
- 4.7 The site extends to approximately 2.12ha (5.24 acres) and is irregular in shape but this represents no major constraint to development.

Planning Policy & Planning History

- 4.8 The UDP allocation is for 'Provision for New Employment Development'. Policy E1 details that development falling into the following use classes are deemed to be acceptable:
 - o Business (B1);
 - o General Industry (B2);and
 - o Storage and Distribution (B8);
- 4.9 Within the emerging Core Strategy, the preferred options report allocates this area within the Mersey Multimodal Gateway 'Key Area of Change'. Policy CS7: 3MG states that development should meet the broad criteria set out within the policy RT8 of the RSS: Inter-Modal Freight Terminals and should contribute to the prime purpose of facilitating the movement of freight by rail.

- 4.10 The proposals for the Mersey Bridge cut across this site. The Bridge is currently awaiting approval from the Secretary of State.
- 4.11 The site currently has permission for a 149 bed hotel, a conference centre, a health & fitness facility and 450 car parking spaces. The proposals for a hotel on this site, go back to 2001 where there was an application for proposed three storey 120 bed Travelodge, restaurant, conference centre and associated parking (01/00712/OUT). This was approved in February 2002.
- 4.12 There was subsequently an application to extend the life time of the consent (04/00828/S73), which was approved in October 2004.
- 4.13 A reserved matters application was approved under delegated powers in January 2007, for a 3.5 storey hotel with conference centre, ancillary restaurant & health/fitness facility with 425 no. ancillary car parking spaces (06/00720/REM).

Constraints

- 4.14 The site is currently undergoing extensive remediation having previously formed part of the Ditton Road Corridor, which was primarily occupied by industrial uses. During the 1980s, Cheshire County Council used the site for tipping and as such, HBC have advised that in order for development to be brought forward for development, a piling construction solution will be required.
- 4.15 HBC have advised that whilst there is a valid planning permission for a hotel development, the developer is yet to secure an operator. Without an operator, it is unlikely that the developer will be able to secure private funding.

Recommended Final Use: Mixed Use

- The security of a hotel operator will be key to the delivery of this site, principally because the developer is highly unlikely, in the current market, to secure development finance without one.
- The eventual mix of uses will be market led and therefore any allocation should have sufficient flexibility to respond to this.
- Should the Secretary of State approve the proposals for the Mersey Bridge, this will have a significant impact on the future delivery of this site.

Estimate of Site Delivery¹⁰: 3 – 5 years

- This assumes that a hotel operator can be secured in the near term and the extant planning consent implemented. Should the owner fail to secure an operator, the delivery of this site will be uncertain and is likely to fall in to the 6 – 10 year bracket.

¹⁰ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **maintain the existing planning allocation;**
 - **establish a relationship with the landowner to understand their aspirations and intentions for the site.**
-

5 Ex Breakers Yard, Croft Street, Widnes (6500076)

Site Description

- 5.1 NLUD Category A – Previously developed land now vacant.
- 5.2 The site extends to approximately 0.52 hectares and sits behind a railway viaduct with access off Cross Street. There are a number of small enterprises running along Croft Street, some of which are based in converted archways. Adjacent businesses include a car garage and workshop. The site does not benefit from frontage to the A557 and is screened by a line of mature roadside planting.
- 5.3 Access into the site is through a single railway arch from Croft Street. A comprehensive redevelopment of this area to include gentrification of the railway arches and hinter land would not be commercially viable in this location given the low rental levels and soft investment yields.

Planning Policy and Planning History

- 5.4 Policy RG1 – Southern Widnes: sets out the key policies for ensuring investment in social and physical environments.
- Business (B1)
 - General Industry (B2)
 - Residential Institution (C2)
 - Residential (C3)
 - Community Facilities (D1)
 - Recreation and Leisure (D2)
- 5.5 The policy notes that a variety of employment uses should be provided for including provision for small businesses.
- 5.6 Environmental Policy Areas (BE3): sets the policy framework for ensuring environmental conditions are significantly improved as a result of development. It also sets out policies for ensuring schemes of an appropriate quality are delivered.
- 5.7 There is no planning history on this site.

Key Constraints

- 5.8 This site is hidden behind a railway viaduct and accessed through a single railway arch from Croft Street. The site was originally linked to the railway. There are a number of small enterprises running along Croft Street, some of which are based in converted archways. Adjacent businesses include a car garage and workshop. The site does not benefit from frontage to the A557 and is screened by a line of mature roadside screening.
- 5.9 A comprehensive redevelopment of this area to include gentrification of the railway arches and hinter land would not be commercially viable in this location.
- 5.10 Having discussed the site with the Council's Contaminated Land Team we are not aware of any specific contamination issues effecting this site.
- 5.11 There is no planning history on this site.

Recommendations for Final Use: Employment

- This site would be suitable for a small size business. The site is secure and could accommodate a small workshop and service yard. The confined boundaries and access make redevelopment for an alternative use difficult, particularly given that values in this area are too low to underpin any form of regeneration of the railway arches themselves.
- To ensure that a viable use comes forward, the site should continue to be allocated within the Regeneration Action Area. This provides a flexible planning policy background to support alternative uses.

Site Delivery¹¹: 6 – 10 years

- In order to facilitate delivery of the site the owners of this land will need to agree to dispose of this land.
- The site is likely to be of interest to a local business which may include (but not limited to) a car workshop or storage.
- Whilst market for industrial land remains very depressed, this site is likely to appeal to a small business recently established or an existing business requiring new/additional space. We have therefore placed this within a 6 to 10 year timetable to reflect the difficult economy small businesses are operating in, particularly in securing debt from banks.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **This site has limited appeal to the market and will be of interest to a local business.**
- **This site should not be a priority of the Council.**

¹¹ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

6 Mill Lane, Widnes (65000092)

Site Description

- 6.1 NLUD Category A– Previously developed land now vacant.
- 6.2 This site is surrounded by a road network on all four sides. Open countryside lies to the east and a new residential development, which is currently under construction, lies to the north. Light industrial units are situated to the west and south of the site however, these are buffered by the road network.
- 6.3 The site is approximately 0.97ha (2.40 acres) in size and is regular in shape.

Planning Policy & Planning History

- 6.4 The UDP identifies the site as lying within a 'Primary Employment Area'. Policy E3 details that development falling into the following use classes are deemed to be acceptable:
 - Business (B1);
 - General Industry (B2);
 - Storage and Distribution (B8); and
 - Industrial uses not falling within those categories named above.
- 6.5 Notwithstanding, the policy also stipulates that industries that have the potential to cause noise, smell, dust and noxious omissions, leading to unacceptable loss of amenity, will not be acceptable. This is particularly relevant for this site as it is located adjacent to a residential area.
- 6.6 The site also borders an Environmental Priority Area (Policy BE3). Within such areas, the council pay particular regard to significantly raising environmental standards and as such:
 - Proposals for development will be expected to be of a quality of design that enhances the character and appearance of that area.
 - Development adjacent to or visible from the main road and rail transport routes should be of a high quality of design in terms of landscaping, boundary treatments, and facing materials.
- 6.7 Within the emerging Core Strategy, the preferred options report does not place this site within one of the 'Key Areas of Change', key to the delivery of forecasted growth, as identified by policy CS1.

- 6.8 The site itself has not been subject to any planning applications however, the area to the south of the site has planning permission for 34 residential dwellings which are currently under construction.(Application Ref. 06/00946/REM).

Constraints

- 6.9 The site is boarded on all four sides by a road network, one of which carries a significant amount of traffic (A557) which may conflict with future uses for the site.
- 6.10 There is a historic access on the eastern boundary of the site, however recent highway improvements in the immediate vicinity mean that this now lies in between two roundabouts.
- 6.11 It is highly unlikely that the existing access could be reinstated as part of any development without significant amendments to surrounding infrastructure, which is costly. Alternative access solutions should be considered by HBC as a priority. Being proactive and establishing a position on access arrangements at this stage has the potential to expedite delivery. This would enable any developer considering the potential of the site to establish at an early stage what an acceptable solution may look like and assess the likely cost of those works.

Recommended Final Use: Residential

- The existing employment allocation is inappropriate given neighbouring residential uses.
- Office and light industrial development would be better suited to developments elsewhere within the borough where occupiers can benefit from being part of a cluster, for example within 'Key Areas of Change'.
- Residential development which would complement the surrounding uses, in particular the new housing development to the north of the site. Any planning application for this site should be able to demonstrate effective screening from the nearby road network and should also be accompanied by a Transport Statement which addresses any potential issues regarding road access.

Estimate of Site Delivery¹²: 3-5 years

- The site is not thought to be heavily contaminated like many of the sites in this study and therefore the two principal constraints appear to be an inappropriate allocation in the UDP and access.
- Assuming a transport solution can be identified, this is an attractive site. The timescales for delivery will be heavily dependant on market conditions, however house builders and once again seeking to acquire viable residential sites. The developers of the surrounding schemes may want to capitalise on their success and consider this site. Dialogue with these developers would be recommended.

¹² Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **establish a relationship with the landowner to understand their aspirations and intentions for the site;**
- **revisit the site's allocation to allow the site to be brought forward for residential development;**
- **prepare a highways strategy that would compliment the improved highways network;**
- **enter in to dialogue with developers of the neighbouring residential schemes to understand their appetite for the site.**

7 Side of Fairfield School, Widnes (65000349)

Site Description

- 7.1 NLUD Category A – Previously developed land now vacant.
- 7.2 The site extends to approximately 0.38 hectares and is an elongated L shape. The site is cleared and vacant, it is level with no man-made or natural features and has rudimentary grass cover.
- 7.3 The site is bounded by a low wooden beam fence. The site sits between a recent (c.2006) medical centre development with pharmacy and Fairfield High School. The surrounding area is a large post war residential suburb.
- 7.4 To the north of the site there is a railway line, with the high school and playing fields to the east and south.
- 7.5 During the construction of the medical centre a short access road spur has been constructed that leads up to the boundary of the site.

Planning policy and planning history

- 7.6 The site is identified on the 2005 UDP proposals map as part of a housing allocation in phase 1. It is classified as an infill/redevelopment site, the specific site reference is 921. This was an allocated site with capacity for 30 dwellings. The site as identified on the UDP proposals has since been split with the medical centre and pharmacy now occupying approximately half of the UDP allocation. The UDP allows for certain non-residential uses to come forward in housing areas especially where they would provide important facilities.
- 7.7 The neighbouring land allocations are residential use for the housing areas and as greenspace for the school and playing fields.
- 7.8 Site 65000349 and the site of the medical centre was the subject of planning application 04/00285/FUL. This was submitted in March 2004 and was granted in June 2004. The application was for the development of a health centre on the west part of the (combined) site, and the east part (of the combined site), which is now site 65000349, was proposed to be a housing site for potential future disposal.

7.9 Planning application 04/00285/FUL was superseded by application 06/00874/FUL which only included for development on the current medical centre site, it did not contain reference or proposals for the land which is now site 6500349. It is apparent that in revising the planning applications site 6500349 was deemed surplus to requirements and excluded.

Key constraints

7.10 It is understood that the Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) own the freehold to the site. The site was developed for Halton & St Helens Primary Care Trust. The LIFT partnership developed the medical centre but not the remaining land.

7.11 At the time of the medical centre development this site should have been included in the scheme. As such the recent development of the centre and associated car parking has resulted in a irregular shaped site remaining with a long, thin strip of land leading to a more consolidated area to the east.

7.12 The resultant left-over site is sandwiched between a medical centre and a school. This severely impinges on the attraction of the site for any purchaser, developer or future occupier and also restricts the uses that would be permissible on the site.

7.13 There was evidence of congestion issues on the local highway network associated with the School, Medical Centre and residential area.

7.14 As the site has be provided with an access road up to its boundary it is assumed that there exists a right of way to the site from the local road, Pellhouse Lane.

7.15 Ground conditions and contamination levels at the site are unknown. The presence of the school and playing fields on one side of the site and the recent development of the medical centre on the other would indicate that there are no significant geo-environmental issues. A geo-environmental report would need to be commissioned prior to any development proposals.

- Recommended Final Use: Various
- It is not straightforward to propose a single recommended use for the site as a result of the configuration of the site. Prior to the medical centre development the site would have been perfectly suitable for a the provision of circa 30 dwellings. However the development of part of the site for the medical facility has effectively blighted development on the remainder.
- As a result of the above three recommendations have been put forward for the site:
 - (i) develop for additional car parking for the medical centre;
 - (ii) transfer to Education Authority which is Halton Borough Council; or
 - (iii) advertise on the open market
- The site is allocated for residential development, however the recent LIFT development effectively has created an island site with the strip of land only sufficient width for an access road. Residential development could be inappropriate on the remainder of the site as depending on the size only

c.6 houses could be delivered, these would be noticeably divorced from the surrounding residential area.

- o There are three options for the site:
 - (i) The LIFT partnership could apply to use the site as a car park to provide additional space for its patients. In time the facility may need to expand to meet additional patient/population requirements, development would be then required on the current car park area. This site would then provide the additional capacity for patients' vehicles.
 - (ii) The site could be advertised for development on the market. Due to the constraints on the site combined with the relatively low property values in the area, the site may not attract any bids.
 - (iii) Thirdly the PCT partnership could transfer the site to Halton Borough Council, they, as the Education Authority could use the site to provide additional land for Fairfield High School. The site could be used for additional sports fields, greenspace, car parking or to provide additional land to enable estate development or the construction of new facilities.

Estimate of Site Delivery¹³: 3 – 5 years

- o In the first instance, assuming that the LIFT own the freehold to the site, the Council should approach the LIFT to understand what their future plans and ambitions are for the site – if any. The Council need to work in conjunction with the LIFT partnership to ascertain if they would consider transferring the land to another public service (i.e. the education authority), or if they would want to sell the site.
- o If the LIFT no longer have a requirement for the site, the Education Authority should be approached to determine whether there would be a future need and demand for local secondary education provision. This would inform the preferred strategy as to the future allocation and use of the site. If the Education Authority deemed there to be a requirement for future land, the site could be transferred to them for future development.
- o Assuming that either the PCT use the land to provide additional car parking or agree to transfer the land to Halton Borough Council as Education Authority the site could be utilised within the next 0 – 5 years.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- o **The Council should contact the LIFT partnership to determine what their future ambition for the site is.**
- o **The Council can assist in dialogue between the L**

¹³ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

8 Nyborgs Plastics, Widnes (65000137)

Site Description

- 8.1 NLUD Category C – Derelict land and buildings.
- 8.2 The site lies on the corner of Warrington Road and Page Lane.
- 8.3 The BPI Stretchfilm works lies immediately to the east of the site and would appear to share access with this site. There are a number of other employment uses surrounding the site.
- 8.4 Going north along Warrington Road, the area becomes predominantly residential.
- 8.5 The site is predominately vacant, however there is some open storage and temporary car parking uses on site.

Planning Policy and Planning History

- 8.6 The site is allocated within the UDP as a primarily employment area (policy E3) which permits development falling within use classes B1, B2 and B8.

Constraints

- 8.7 The site's principle access appears to be shared with the adjacent works which will restrict developability.

Recommended Final Use: Employment

- With the issue of shared access, the site would most suitably be used for the expansion of the adjacent works.
- Given the surrounding uses, if an independent access solution could be identified, the most appropriate use would remain employment.

Estimate of Site Delivery¹⁴: 6-10 years

- There aren't any current proposals for the development of this site and until the access issue can be resolved / addressed, proposals are unlikely to be forthcoming.
- Should the adjacent works look to expand it's operation on to this site, this could presumably take place in a relatively short time frame and therefore delivery may fall in to the 3 – 5 year bracket.

¹⁴ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

- The site is in private ownerships and therefore HBC are reliant on the aspirations of the owner as to when the site comes forward.
- In the context of all the sites considered in this report, this site should not be a strategic priority for HBC.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **identify and establish a relationship with the landowner to understand their aspirations and intentions for the site;**
- **develop a highways strategy for the site;**
- **maintain the site's existing employment allocation;**
- **investigate whether or not permission has been granted for open storage and car parking.**

9 Hough Green Railway Station, Widnes (65000109)

Site Description

- 9.1 NLUD Category A – previously developed land now vacant.
- 9.2 The site extends to approximately 0.15 hectares and sits within an established 1980's residential housing estate. The site is bordered by Hough Green railway station along the western and northern boundaries and private housing along the southern and eastern boundaries. The site can be accessed directly from the main estate road (Wilsden Road) via a spur road. The site is currently overgrown and inaccessible on foot given the extent of brambles and vegetation ground cover.

Planning Policy and Planning History

- 9.3 Policy H8 – Primarily Residential Area: sets out the key policies for protecting the amenity and public safety of existing residents and conserving the character and environmental quality of these primary residential areas.
- 9.4 The policy recognises that housing will be the predominant land use in Primary Residential Areas but provides flexibility to allow for local facilities such as schools, local shops, doctors surgery etc assuming they are subservient to residential uses. In addition, the policy allows for other land uses which do not directly meet local needs including C1 (hotels) and C2 (residential institutions) which includes residential homes.

Key Constraints

- 9.5 There are no obvious constraints to delivering development on this site. There are no access issues, access being taken from the existing estate road. We have undertaken a Land Registry search to confirm ownership. According to the official copy of the register of title the land was transferred to Cheshire County Council on 12 July 1988. We understand, having discussed the site with Officers at Halton Borough Council's Estate team that this site was transferred to Halton Borough Council in 1998 when the Council became a Unitary Authority.

Recommended Final Use: Residential

- Residential development is the most appropriate use for this site. Based on PPS3 and the size of the actual site, the development could deliver 5 houses. Subject to comment from the Council's Highways Department, the existing road network could support an additional 5 houses. Our investigation into house prices suggests that modern, three bedroom houses are current being marketed at £160,000. Subject to ground

investigation works, this presents a viable development opportunity to a local development company.

Estimate of Site Delivery¹⁵: 3 – 5 years

- This site should be considered as part of the Council's capital receipt programme and offered on the open market for sale. This would relieve the Council of its liability and realise a capital receipt for the Council. It is recommended that the site is sold with the benefit of an outline planning permission. It is our experience in the current market that banks are reluctant to lend money to developers to purchase sites which do not benefit from a planning consent in the current market.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **Halton Borough Council should declare this site surplus.**
- **To meet the requirements of s123 Local Government Act 1972 the Council is required to demonstrate it has achieved best consideration for the site.**
- **The Council (as land owner) should apply for an outline planning permission for 9 residential units to provide certainty to the market, and importantly to banks that there is limited risk in respect of planning.**
- **The Council should formulate a sales pack with any information they may hold on the property, including legal title, surveys, site plan, planning statement. This will provide the market with as much information as possible to allow interested parties to formulate robust offers.**
- **The Council should continue to monitor the residential market and offer the site to the market in 2012/13 (assuming an improvement in the residential market).**

¹⁵ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

10 51 - 57 Tynwald Crescent, Widnes (65000176)

Site Description

- 10.1 NLUD category A - previously developed land now vacant.
- 10.2 The site extends to approximately 0.07 hectares and is currently a cleared (vacant) plot which sits within a 1960-70s residential estate, primarily consisting of semi-detached houses and bungalows. The surrounding residential area is of a reasonable standard. A pavement runs along the front of the site, which is bounded on its other three sides by residential properties.
- 10.3 The site is secure but heavily overgrown with a combination of scrub, brambles, saplings and some established trees.

Planning policy and planning history

- 10.4 The site is allocated in the April 2005 UDP proposals map as housing land for primarily residential uses. Non-residential proposals would be considered by the LPA under policy H8 (non dwelling house uses), however a key consideration would be with regard to their impact on the neighbouring residential uses.
- 10.5 The site itself was identified by HBC in the 2005 UDP under policy H1 provision for new housing as a phase 1 committed site, site reference 3004. Phase 1 was for the period May 2002-April 2007. This site was included in the committed sites due to an extant planning consent for full planning permission. It is apparent that this consent was never implemented and has since expired.
- 10.6 In researching the planning history in more detail, no records could be found either on the Halton Borough Council planning application database, which dates back to 2000, neither were there any details contained in the NLUD database.

Key constraints

- 10.7 There are no physical constraints to the site. The planning policy background is supportive of appropriate residential development in this area. The most likely constraint to development is ownership complications.

- 10.8 Official copies of the Land registry title and register (CH134278) have been obtained for the site to ascertain if there are any issues with regard to the land title which may have prevented the site coming forward in the past. The title register suggests a disjointed ownership with four persons listed as proprietors. The multiple ownership of this small parcel of land is a significant constraint for development as each proprietor will have to agree to the disposal of the land for development.

Recommended Final Use: Residential

- The site could accommodate two semi detached houses.
- Based on the surrounding residential estate, residential use is the most appropriate use for development. The site is secure and is not used as open space by surrounding residents and therefore village green status could not be claimed to prevent development.
- Alternative uses are unlikely to receive support from local residents and would conflict with the quiet residential street.

Estimate of Site Delivery¹⁶: 3 - 5 years.

- In order to facilitate delivery of the site the owners of this land would need to agree to dispose of the property.
- The site is likely to be of interest to a local developer/builder.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **The Council should write to the owners of this land to establish their intentions over this piece of land.**
- **It is unlikely the owners will wish to sell their interest in the land in the current market, however, the Council can provide advice on the planning process and encourage the owners to consider disposal of the land.**
- **There are few additional actions that the local authority can take.**

¹⁶ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

11 Hutchinson's Tip, Widnes (65000244)

Site Description

- 11.1 NLUD Category C- Derelict Land and Buildings.
- 11.2 The site is located south west of Widnes Town Centre and located on the north bank of the river Mersey, downstream from the Widnes-Runcorn road bridge. The site sits within a predominantly light industrial area and bounded by Ronan Road (bordering the West Bank Dock Estate) to the east, Desotto Road to the south and Stewards Brook to the north and western elevations.
- 11.3 The site was previously used as a tip and is entirely man made. We understand that deposits include galigu covered by a substantial landscaped capping layer. Galigu is an historic by-product of the local chemical industry, primarily associated with the Le Blanc Process. It is principally made up from calcium sulphate, but contains numerous contaminants which can include arsenic, mercury and other heavy metals. In the final years of the tips use the site was used for the disposal of liquid waste.
- 11.4 We understand that the area was subject to a remediation scheme carried out by Cheshire County Council and Halton Borough Council between 1995 and 1998. The remediation scheme included the regrading and landscaping of waste materials, the instillation of a clay cap (c1m thick) and subsoil, together with the construction of a sheet-piled cut-off wall along parts of Ditton Brook and Steward's Brook.
- 11.5 The current land form rises above the surrounding land to approximately 30m AOD. The steep sided mound has an extensive plateau at the summit which has views out over the Mersey estuary to the southwest and Widnes to the north east.
- 11.6 The mound is now referred to as Hutchinson's Hill.

Planning Policy and Planning History

- 11.7 The site is allocated under the following UDP policies:
- 11.8 Coastal Zone Developed (Policy GE30): This policy is divided between the developed and undeveloped coast and for the most part is determined by:
- Areas of tidal flood risk and coastal erosion;
 - Biological influences relating to maritime conditions;
 - The extent of visibility between land and sea;
 - Patterns of economic activity;

- The extent of maritime influence on the built environment; and
 - Distinctive boundaries such as coastal roads, railways and field boundaries.
- 11.9 The Council are partners in the Mersey Strategy, a partnership between organisations and individuals. Key players include the Environment Agency and United Utilities. The work undertaken as part of the Mersey Strategy has transformed the image of the Mersey Estuary and developed its position as one of the regions most valued environmental assets.
- 11.10 As an area of international wildlife value, the Mersey Estuary incorporates sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area and Ramsar site designations due to its importance for passage and wintering wildfowl and waders. The undeveloped coast is an essential part of the eco systems within these designated areas and as such should be afforded protection from inappropriate development.
- 11.11 Coastal Zone Undeveloped (Policy GE30) recognises that opportunities exist within Halton's developed coastal zone to encourage environmental improvement along coastlines damaged by urban development and the legacy of the chemical industry, such as port facilities, derelict and contaminated land. In line with Planning Policy Guidance "Coastal Policy" 1992 (PPG20), it is envisaged that such improvements could be implemented through imaginative reuse of land and buildings, tourism and recreational use and the enhancement and restoration of the estuaries nature conservation value.
- 11.12 Environmental Priority Area (BE3): This policy focuses on raising environmental standards within the policy area. The main objective of this policy is to enhance the character and appearance on the area.
- 11.13 Greenspace (GE7): Hutchinson's Hill is designated as a proposed greenspace in the UDP. This policy fits with the Council's vision of creating further open space and upgrading existing areas of land for its recreation or wider amenity value.
- 11.14 Protection of Important Landscape Features (GE24): The policy recognises that Halton has a number of important landscape features in addition to those contained within Areas of Special Landscape Value. Important Landscape Features include copses and woodlands, topographical features, watercourses, man-made features, parks, etc.
- 11.15 Hutchinson's Hill sits within the Trans-Pennine Trail (West Bank Dock section), Widnes.
- 11.16 Within the emerging Core Strategy, the preferred options report allocates this area within 'Preferred Option CS26: Green Infrastructure. The policy recognises the importance of Halton's Green Infrastructure in providing, amongst other things, important open space for recreation.
- 11.17 Preferred Option CS27: Contaminated Land supports a range of actions to address the problems associated with contaminated land, including the re-use of Halton's derelict contaminated land for beneficial after use, including both hard-end and soft-end uses as appropriate.

Key Constraints

11.18 Hutchinson's Hill is a man-made mound rising to circa 30m containing significant landfill materials which would make development on this land commercially unviable and impractical.

11.19 Development on landfill sites, sees buildings normally erected on base slabs which are themselves supported on piles driven into firm ground below the base of the landfill. The use of this construction technique will overcome subsidence problems but would not be practical in this location given the gradient of the hill and depth of landfill.

11.20 Leachates may be an issue in this area, particularly in respect of contamination of groundwater in the permeable strata below the landfill and in surrounding watercourses, particularly Steward's Brook which drains directly into the Mersey.

11.21 A management plan for this open space is required.

Recommended Final Use: Greenspace

- Development on Hutchinson's Hill is both economically unviable and contrary to adopted planning policy. This hill has now become an established area of greenspace and provides an important buffer in the Ditton Marsh area and should be maintained as such.
- For this reason, the site should be removed from the brownfield register and treated as protected greenspace.

Estimate of Site Delivery¹⁷: <1 year

- The site currently provides greenspace but in private ownership with public access prohibited. Subject to the adoption of an appropriate management plan and necessary remediation to prevent leachates entering the surrounding watercourse, the site could become a destination along the Trans Pennine Trail given the commanding views from the summit.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **For the reasons set out in this study, this site should be removed from the brownfield register and treated as protected greenspace.**

¹⁷ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

12 Percival Lane, Runcorn (65000066)

Site Description

- 12.1 Classification C – Derelict land and buildings.
- 12.2 This site lies in an industrial area, adjacent to the Manchester Ship Canal (to the west) and the Western Point Light Railway (to the East).
- 12.3 The western section of the site is currently occupied by a car dismantling company and the centre of the site contains a large electricity sub-station and pylon.
- 12.4 Access to the site is down a private track, owned by the landowner.
- 12.5 The leasehold interest in the northern section of the site (1.94ha / 4.79 acres) is currently being marketed by GVA Grimley. It is being marketed with the benefit of planning permission and environmental permit for the treatment of liquid waste.
- 12.6 The site is approximately 3.79 ha (9.36 acres) in its entirety and is irregular in shape.

Planning Policy & Planning History

- 12.7 The UDP allocates this site within a 'Regeneration Action Area' and as such, policies S1 and RG5 apply. Development within these areas is expected to:
- Create jobs and stimulate economic development;
 - provide housing to meet local needs;
 - provide local facilities for the community;
 - reclaim derelict and contaminated land back into beneficial use; and
 - protect and enhance the local environment.
- 12.8 The Runcorn and Western Docks Action Area is proposed as an area primarily for the development of freight handling and storage and distribution activities. The following uses are deemed acceptable:
- Business (B1);
 - General Industrial (B2);
 - Storage and Distribution (B8);
 - Open Space;
 - Uses ancillary to an employment area; and

- o Education and Housing.

12.9 Within the emerging Core Strategy, the preferred options report allocates this area within the West Runcorn 'Key Area of Change'. Policy CS10: West Runcorn, specifically identifies the Runcorn Docks area, stating that comprehensive redevelopment for a residential led, mixed-use development would be appropriate.

12.10 The site is also located within the Mid-Mersey Growth Point Area. The development of the Runcorn Docks, within which this site sits, is seen as a major residential opportunity that the Growth Point Initiative seeks to facilitate.

12.11 Peel Holdings, the site owners, have approached HBC in 2007 regarding proposals for the comprehensive redevelopment for 4,000 dwellings. Since that time, Peel Holdings and HBC have been working together to produce a Masterplan. The site is estimated to generate 100 units per annum from 2011.

12.12 A historic planning permission for this site relates to a change of use application to a car dismantlers in 2001 (Application no. 01/00093/WST).

Constraints

12.13 The site currently contains a large sub-station and electricity pylon.

12.14 The current use of car dismantling, is likely to leave significant contamination on the site. In addition previous land uses associated with the railways and the docks are also likely to have resulted in significant contamination across the site.

12.15 Redevelopment of the site for residential uses will need to provide a buffer zone for the railway which runs along the eastern section of the site.

12.16 The site is extremely large and will have to be delivered in phases.

Recommended Final Use: Residential-led mixed use development

- o This site is suitable for residential development in the long term, with appropriate complementary uses.
- o As advised by HBC, Peel Holdings, the landowner, appear committed to redevelopment of this site for residential development.
- o This is a long term regeneration site which will only come forward when existing uses are extinguished. This will require a long term commitment to the strategy involving a comprehensive masterplan for whole area (Runcorn Docks).
- o A development brief is required to ensure delivery of growth point numbers are achieved.

Estimate of Site Delivery¹⁸: 6 - 10 years (phase 1)

- o This is a long term regeneration site which will only come forward when existing uses are extinguished. This will require a long term commitment to the strategy delivered through a comprehensive masterplan for the whole area.

¹⁸ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **contact GVA Grimley to obtain details of the interest currently on the market;**
- **engage with Peel Holdings to understand timescales and aspirations for delivery;**
- **consider utilising compulsory purchase powers to acquire/extinguish existing occupiers;**
- **preparation of a development brief/masterplan for the Runcorn Docks area.**

13 Land Off Runcorn Dock Road, Runcorn (6500043)

Site Description

- 13.1 NLUD Category A – Previously developed land now vacant.
- 13.2 The site is located off Runcorn Dock Road and between the Western Point Expressway and a dismantled railway line. The site sits within a valley created by the embankments supporting both the railway line and expressway.
- 13.3 Whilst the site extends to approximately 0.96 hectares, the elongated shape of the site limits the amount of land available for development. Assuming that an access road would be required to open the site, the remaining land for development may be inadequate to deliver an optimum quantum of floorspace.
- 13.4 The surrounding area has benefitted from recent development including improvements to Runcorn Docks. The docks are owned and operated by the Manchester Ship Canal Company and equipped to handle a variety of bulk and semi-bulk cargoes, palletised etc. On the opposite side of the railway line, a recent scheme by McInerney Homes has delivered a successful residential development, delivering a range of unit types/tenures.

Planning Policy and Planning History

- 13.5 The UDP allocates this site within Policy RG5 – Runcorn and Weston Docklands which sets out the key policies for delivering regeneration in and around Runcorn Docks. The policy notes that the following uses could be appropriate:
- Business (B1)
 - General Industry (B2)
 - Storage and Distribution (B8)
 - Open Space
 - Uses ancillary to an employment area
 - Education and housing
- 13.6 Environmental Policy Areas (BE3): sets the policy framework for ensuring environmental conditions are significantly improved as a result of development. It also sets out policies for ensuring schemes of an appropriate quality are delivered.

- 13.7 Within the emerging Core Strategy, the preferred options report allocates this area within the West Runcorn 'Key Area of Change'. Policy CS10: West Runcorn, specifically identifies the Runcorn Docks area, stating that comprehensive redevelopment for a residential led, mixed-use development would be appropriate. The Core Strategy notes that the Council intend to work with site owners in the area to develop a masterplan to guide the development of the area which may form the basis of a Runcorn Docks SPD within which site 65000043 could usefully be included.
- 13.8 The site has no planning history, its last registered use being a builders merchants in 1983.

Key Constraints

- 13.9 Whilst the site benefits from excellent access onto Runcorn Dock Road, the site has limited road frontage which may restrict redevelopment capacity on the site. Any application for redevelopment would need to be accompanied by a detailed TA and Design and Access Statement. Halton Borough Council's Highways Department will need to comment on the ability to deliver appropriate viability splays onto Dock Road which are limited owing to the mini roundabout and railway/expressway bridges.
- 13.10 Having discussed the site with the Council's Contaminated Land Team we are not aware of any contamination issues effecting this site.

Recommended Final Use: Employment

- The location of the site, sandwiched between a disused railway line and a busy road, does not make this an attractive residential site. It is unlikely that a suitable vehicular and pedestrian access road could be delivered whilst releasing sufficient land to allow development of residential units and associated circulation/open space.
- Ensuring an appropriate access solution to this site will be key in unlocking its potential and thus attractiveness to the market. The site could usefully benefit from its proximity to Runcorn Docks, however the elongated nature of the site and possible access constraints may limit its attractiveness to the market.
- To ensure that a viable use comes forward, the site should continue to be allocated within the Regeneration Action Area. This provides a flexible planning policy background to support a range of alternative uses as they come forward.

Estimate of Site Delivery¹⁹: 6 – 10 years

- In order to facilitate delivery of the site the owners of this land will need to agree to dispose of this land.
- The site is likely to be of interest to a local developer/builder.
- The market for industrial (and residential) land remains very depressed. Whilst the market has stabilised, there remains no indication that prices are rising. Development activity remains extremely muted, particularly in the industrial and residential sectors. When market conditions improve, the site should be placed on the open market to test market appetite. This is likely to be no earlier than 2012.

¹⁹ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **The Council should write to the owners of this land to establish their intentions over this piece of land.**
- **Delivery of the site will be driven by demand for employment land and/or premises. The Council should continue to support key economic drivers such as Runcorn Docks which will encourage economic development and demand for employment land in this area. The product delivered must satisfy the demand with occupiers most likely be linked to ancillary port operations, storage and/or emerging business sectors.**

14 Stonehills, Runcorn (65000116)

Site Description

- 14.1 Classification C – Derelict Land and Buildings.
- 14.2 This site lies adjacent to a fuel depot and warehouse to the east with access onto Stonehills Lane which is used mainly to access the residential properties and primary school, which lie to the west and south. The site is also situated immediately north of Spenhills landfill and adjacent to an area of attractive open space.
- 14.3 The site itself is overgrown and uneven, with little sign of previous development.
- 14.4 It is recognised by HBC and the Environment Agency that the site could face the risk of contamination due to its proximity to the fuel depot with the potential of historic spills or leaks.
- 14.5 There have been a number of plans for the wider area in recent years, non of which have come to fruition. These plans have previously focused on residential development.
- 14.6 Whilst the site only extends to approximately 0.44ha (1.07 acres) in size, it is square in shape, making it easier to develop.

Planning Policy & Planning History

- 14.7 The UDP allocation is for 'Primary Employment Area'. Policy E3 details that development falling into the following use classes are deemed to be acceptable:
- Business (B1);
 - General Industry (B2);
 - Storage and Distribution (B8); and
 - Industrial uses not falling within those categories named above.
- 14.8 Notwithstanding, the policy also stipulates that industries that have the potential to cause noise, smell, dust and noxious omissions, leading to unacceptable loss of amenity, will not be acceptable. This is particularly relevant for this site as it is located adjacent to a residential area.

- 14.9 Within the emerging Core Strategy, the preferred options report does not place this site within one of the 'Key Areas of Change', key to the delivery of forecasted growth, as identified by policy CS1. However, policy CS15 does identify this site as the existing 'Halton Road' employment area, stating that 'proposals for uses within the B use classes and sui generis employment uses will be directed towards the identified employment areas'.
- 14.10 In 2003, there was a planning application for 'residential development on Land Off Stonehills Lane, (Application no. 03/00189/OUT), however this application was subsequently withdrawn. Also in 2003, an application for residential and office development was submitted for the area to the north of this site and was subsequently refused. This was due to the residential aspect of the proposal conflicting with the existing UDP employment allocation.
- 14.11 In 2005, permission was given for a two storey office building and single storey warehouse for the land immediately to the north of this site. The permission has subsequently expired.

Constraints

- 14.12 The site, when viewed in isolation from the surrounding land, suffers from poor access for industrial use due to conflicting adjoining uses i.e. residential and school.
- 14.13 HBC have advised that the site could possibly suffer from contamination. A more detailed assessment is needed to understand the extent of the necessary remediation.
- 14.14 This site needs to be viewed in the context of the neighbouring depot and warehouse which surrounds the site to the north and east. Should this wider area be assembled and the uses extinguished, then this site would be appropriate for residential development. The site, when viewed in isolation, suffers from poor access and is unlikely to be viable for development due to its size.

Recommended Final Use: Residential Development

- With neighbouring residential dwellings to the west and east and open space to the south, this site, when assembled as a larger site, is suitable for residential development.
- The existing employment allocation is inappropriate in this area, in particular heavy industry due to neighbouring uses, and explains why this site has not been brought forward earlier for development.
- Office and light industrial development would be better suited to developments elsewhere within the borough, where occupiers can benefit from being part of a cluster.
- This site, when viewed in isolation, is small with poor access making development unviable. This site needs to be assembled as part of a wider development.

Estimate of Site Delivery²⁰: 6-10 years

- There aren't any current proposals for the development of this site and as stated above are inevitably reliant on the assembly of a wider site. There is unlikely to be any appetite from the private sector to undertake such an exercise. Market conditions have resulted in developers and in particular house builders progressing more straight forward, lower risk projects.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **identify and establish a relationship with the landowner to understand their aspirations and intentions for the site;**
- **prepare a strategy for the development of the wider area;**
- **reconsider the site's allocation which is in conflict to adjoining uses.**

²⁰ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

15 Pool Lane, Runcorn (65000119)

Site Description

- 15.1 NLUD Category C – Derelict land and buildings.
- 15.2 The site is surrounded by a new housing development (to the north), a disused Scout Hut (to the east) and residential dwellings (to the south). There is a public footpath which defines the eastern boundary of the site.
- 15.3 The site extends to approximately 0.0024ha (0.59 acres) and appears to currently be used as public open space.
- 15.4 It is situated at the end of Pool Lane which provides a turning circle for vehicles.

Planning Policy & Planning History

- 15.5 The UDP allocates this site within a 'Primarily Residential Area'. Policy H10 states that proposals for development other than C3 (dwelling houses) will be considered with regard to their effect on residential amenity.
- 15.6 This site is located within the area defined by the Runcorn Old Town, Town Centre Strategy (Draft Supplementary Planning Document) and sits within the Bridge Street sub-area. Whilst the site is not mentioned specifically, the Bridge Street policies relate to providing improvements in the physical environment and enhancing connectivity between the older estate housing to the south of this site, and the newer apartments to the north.
- 15.7 There are no planning applications relating specifically to this site.

Constraints

- 15.8 The site is very small making it difficult to develop.
- 15.9 In addition, the site lies at the end of Pool Lane, a narrow road congested by residents' on street parking.

Recommended Final Use: Public Open Space

- The site could only accommodate 1 or 2 houses and therefore viability is questionable. Whilst it is unlikely that there will be any significant abnormals, it is difficult to see where demand would come from. A site of this size would normally be delivered for owner occupation.

- Infrastructure improvements required to facilitate development of this site would undoubtedly mean the loss of the turning circle for what is already a congested road.
- An allocation for anything other than open space would be inappropriate.

Estimate of Site Delivery²¹: < 1 year

- It is proposed that this site continue in its existing use and consequently should be removed from the brownfield register.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **the site's allocation should be removed;**
- **the site should be removed from the NLUD database;**
- **allow existing use to be maintained.**

²¹ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

16 Halton Road, Runcorn (65000125)

Site Description

- 16.1 Classification C – Derelict Land and Buildings.
- 16.2 This site lies adjacent to a club house (to the west) and trade counter retail units and boat repair workshop (to the east) which currently provide a buffer for the nearby residential dwellings, which dominate the area.
- 16.3 Halton Road runs along the southern boundary of the site, with an industrial operation and residential dwellings on the south side of the road. The Bridgewater Canal runs along the northern boundary.
- 16.4 The site was previously a gasworks, owned and operated by National Grid. Major gas infrastructure still remains on site. We understand that there are some remediation works planned for the near future, the extent to which is unknown. There is currently an RPG plant in the centre of the site (which we understand is still operational).
- 16.5 The site itself is unoccupied, with the southern section of the site covered in hard standing and the northern section overgrown.
- 16.6 Whilst the site only extends to approximately 0.69ha (1.70 acres) in size, it is regular in shape, making it easier to develop.

Planning Policy & Planning History

- 16.7 In the UDP the site lies in a 'Primary Employment Area'. Policy E3 sets out that development falling into the following use classes would be acceptable:
- Business (B1);
 - General Industry (B2);
 - Storage and Distribution (B8); and
 - Industrial uses not falling within those categories named above.
- 16.8 Notwithstanding, the policy also stipulates that industries that have the potential to cause noise, smell, dust and noxious omissions, leading to unacceptable loss of amenity, will not be acceptable. This is particularly relevant for this site as it is located in close proximity to a residential area.

16.9 Within the emerging Core Strategy, the preferred options report does not place this site within one of the 'Key Areas of Change', key to the delivery of forecasted growth, as identified by policy CS1. However, policy CS15 does identify this site as the existing 'Halton Road' employment area, stating that 'proposals for uses within the B use classes and sui generis employment uses will be directed towards the identified employment areas'.

16.10 There have been no planning applications submitted for redevelopment of the site.

Constraints

16.11 The site still has significant operational infrastructure in place, including an existing RPG Plant. The site may also have been contaminated. Costs associated with remediation and removal / relocation of infrastructure will have a significant impact on the viability of an proposals.

Recommended Final Use: Residential

- With neighbouring residential dwellings to the east and a canal running along the northern boundary, the site is ideally situated for residential development.
- This recommendation for residential dwellings should also be viewed in the context of the recommendations give for site 65000116.
- The existing employment allocation is inappropriate in this area, in particular heavy industry is inappropriate due to neighbouring uses.
- Office and light industrial development would be better suited to developments elsewhere within the borough, where tenants can benefit from the being part of a cluster.
- The site will need extensive remediation to bring it forward to the market, for which there is currently limited market appetite.

Estimate of Site Delivery²²: 6-10 years

- It would appear that there is significant on site infrastructure, albeit no longer operational. We are aware that the freeholders, National Grid, have a national disposal programme for non-operational assets and no doubt this site will (if it isn't already) become part of this process.
- It is likely that the programme will see National Grid remove the infrastructure and add value to the site by secure an appropriate planning consent before bringing it to market. They will bring it to the market when they believe that the property market has returned sufficiently for them to obtain an acceptable return for the property.

²² Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **contact national grid to establish if the site remains operational and their aspirations for the site in the future;**
 - **reconsider the site's allocation in the context of site 65000116**
-

17 A E Evans Storage, Sandy Lane, Runcorn (65000148)

Site Description

- 17.1 NLUD category C – derelict land and buildings.
- 17.2 The site extends to approximately 0.53 hectares and is located in the Weston Point area of Runcorn. The site is currently derelict and we understand that previously the site was used as storage space for industry and business purposes. The majority of the site is cleared, although there is a large shed to the west of the site that was used for the storage and repair of vehicles.
- 17.3 The site is dissected by an access road to the Ineos Chlor warehouse to the rear. A high volume of vehicular movement was observed during the inspection. The site is subdivided by a series of wire fences creating a number of enclosed parcels of land, several of which are becoming overgrown with grasses and scrub vegetation.
- 17.4 There are residential properties to the south of the site and to the east and west. The Ineos Chlor warehouse facility, is to the north of the site.

Planning policy and planning history

- 17.5 Halton Borough Council has a strategic regeneration policy (S1) in part 1 of the 2005 UDP. This policy is expanded on in part 2 of the UDP where six action areas are defined. This site is just within the southern policy boundary for Action Area 4 Runcorn and West Docklands (RG4). This policy identifies the area as primarily for employment, general industry and storage and distribution as associated with the nearby dock area. Acceptable uses within this land allocation are business, general industry, storage and distribution, along with open space, uses ancillary to an employment area, education and housing.
- 17.6 The site lies within the Environmental Protection Area (BE3) in which the council would seek that any future development has regard to raising environmental standards.
- 17.7 Adjacent to the site, on the southern site of policy allocation RG4, on Sandy Lane there is an allocation for residential uses under UDP policy that supports primarily residential use.
- 17.8 There are no records of previously submitted planning applications for the site.

Key constraints

- 17.9 There is good access to the site for vehicular traffic off Sandy Lane, the access is currently used by lorries which serve the Ineos Chlor facility behind the site.
- 17.10 We understand from official copies of the Land Registry Title that the majority of this site is owned by Ineos Chlor. Ineos Chlor own and operate the warehouse to the rear of the property which is accessed through the subject site. During our site inspection we noted a high volume of vehicular movement through the site via the access road.
- 17.11 The access road affectively dissects the site into two parts which may constrain future development of this derelict site, by limiting development to parcels of land either side of the road this significantly reduces the amount of developable land.
- 17.12 Alternative access to the warehouses owned by Ineos Chlor could be taken from the access road to Weston Point Studies (off Mersey View South Point). Unless alternative access is found, it is extremely unlikely that Ineos Chlor will dispose of this site and would only do so if they maintained a right of way across the existing road.
- 17.13 Discussions with the contamination land team at Halton Borough Council would suggest that, although there were no specific details on ground conditions, it was not envisaged that there would be any significant issues or major concerns with respect to potential contamination.

Recommended Final Use: Residential

- The recommendation assumes that site ownership can be consolidated and the right of way to the warehouse facility relinquished, or diverted, thus improving the immediate environment.
- The site sits within an established residential area and falls within a regeneration action area. Although the site does fall within UDP policy allocation RG4 for primarily employment uses, alternative uses for employment, such as B1, B2, B8 would conflict with the residential units adjacent to the site.

Estimate of Site delivery: 6-10 Years

- In order to facilitate delivery of the site the land ownership issues would need to be resolved. Whilst Ineos Chlor remain in operation the likelihood of bringing the site forward is limited. The Council should engage in discussions with Ineos Chlor to ascertain their long term plans for their operation in the borough and for their land holdings at this site.
- If, in time, Ineos Chlor's operations are relocated elsewhere there exists the opportunity to deliver a comprehensive redevelopment of this site and surrounding property/land.
- Due to the complications inherent in this site it should be viewed as presenting a long-term redevelopment opportunity subject to the future operations of Ineos Chlor.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **The Council should consult with site owners that make up the Ineos Chlor site and surrounding parcels of land to discuss their future aspirations and intentions for their respective parcels of land.**
- **Key to realising a comprehensive development of this site is the removal or diversion of the right of way crossing the site. The Council should engage with Ineos Chlor to discuss this option.**
- **There may be other land owners that wish to enter into development agreements for their parcel but this will be dependent on the attitude of individual owners towards redevelopment of this site.**
- **Piecemeal development of this site should be avoided and the Council's role in bringing landowners together is key in delivering a comprehensive development of this site.**
- **The Council's Planning Policy Team should carry the current regeneration action area allocation forward into the emerging LDF. This policy gives sufficient flexibility to allow a range of uses, including residential to come forward. The Council's SHLAA via it's Annual Monitoring Review should be updated accordingly.**

18 Hallwood Link Road, Runcorn (65000145)

Site Description

- 18.1 NLUD Classification A – previously developed land now vacant.
- 18.2 The site extends to approximately 0.29 hectares and sits adjacent to the Hallwood Park housing estate.
- 18.3 The site is bounded by the Hallwood Park Avenue to the west, the main Hallwood Link Road to the north east, and a small portion of wooded green space to the south east. The Halton Lea shopping centre is to the north of the site. Further to east of the site, across the Halton Link Road is the Halton General Hospital.
- 18.4 The site is irregular in shape, with a narrowing to the south west. The topography is predominately flat, though there is evidence of raised embankments along the edge of the site, the originals of which are unknown.
- 18.5 The site benefits from frontage onto Hallwood Park Avenue, one of the main arterial routes into the Hallwood Park estate. The site is currently vacant and un kept with a number of sampling trees and scrub covering. The site was previously occupied by the former Southgate power generation unit which supplied power and heating to Hallwood Park.
- 18.6 The NLUD records identify the site as in public sector ownership. The 2007 draft Halton Lea SPD identified that the Council owned the site, this may have since been transferred to the HCA.

Planning policy and planning history

- 18.7 The site is allocated in the Halton UDP for residential development under housing policy H8 - primarily residential area, where housing is, and will continue to be, the predominant land use in such areas.
- 18.8 Residential Development would be the most appropriate use on the site and deliver infill development complementing the existing Hallwood Park estate.
- 18.9 While housing is the predominant land use in the area, policy H8 makes provision for a range of uses ancillary to residential including, local community facilities, care homes and local shops.
- 18.10 The land to the east and south east of the site is allocated as greenspace in the local plan. This land forms a buffer between the main Hallwood Link Road and the housing estate.

18.11 A draft Supplementary Planning Document for Halton Lea Town Centre Strategy was produced in February 2007. Although this document has not been adopted, having been through a period of public consultation it does carry some weight and would form a material consideration in determining a planning application. There is a specific allocation in the Strategy for the site - Hallwood Park Policy 1 - states that the site should be redeveloped for uses that would complement the Hallwood Park residential estate and not compete with uses in the Halton Lea shopping centre.

18.12 There are no records of any planning applications for the site.

Key constraints

18.13 Vehicular access to the site is a potential constraint given the close proximity to the Hallwood Park Link Road roundabout. Consultation with the Highways Authority would be necessary. Any planning application for redevelopment should be accompanied by a Transport Assessment and a Design and Access Statement to support development on the site.

18.14 Due to the proximity to the Hallwood Link Road, traffic noise could be an issue for residential development. A landscaping strategy may be required to provide appropriate screening and soundproofing.

18.15 Financial viability of development may be a constraint. Initial assessment of house prices in the neighbouring estate suggest that three bedroom semi-detached houses are currently achieving values of c. £80,000. Given the low sales values developer's profit may be too low to make this an attractive development opportunity.

18.16 Discussions with the contaminated land team at the Council revealed that the site was previously the site of a combined heat and power plant for the Hallwood Park estate, this former use is unlikely to have created any significant geo-environmental problems, a geo-environmental assessment should be undertaken to confirm that there are no environmental or geotechnical issues.

Recommended Final Use: Residential

- It has been estimated that 9 dwellings could be provided on the site based on national planning guidance set out in Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) Housing of 30 Dwellings per hectare. This would depend on the design and layout of the site, the somewhat irregular site shape may reduce the potential number of dwellings.
- Based on the planning policy allocation and the surrounding land use, residential use would be the most appropriate. Should later financial feasibility models advise that development is not viable then the site should be maintained in its current condition, which provides an area of open space close to a residential area until market conditions improve. This use complies with planning policy.

Estimate of Site delivery²³: 6-10 years

- Current residential values in the area are too low to make this an attractive opportunity for developers.

²³ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

- The Council should consider erecting fencing around this site and ensure appropriate signage is visible to advise that the site is in private ownership to mitigate against objections against the loss of amenity land coming forward when any application is submitted in the future.
- The HCA, as owners of the site, would need to market the opportunity for residential development to a private developer. In order to attract a developer, the HCA should provide a degree of certainty as to the potential uses that could be brought forward. The HCA would be advised to confirm the principle of development through discussions with the local planning authority, this should be further strengthened by way of an outline planning consent prior to marketing. The HCA should review market conditions in 2012.
- The Council should consider preparing a brief for the site which includes all the information the Council hold on the site as well as a statement from Highways on site access. This can be used during the marketing of the site to assist developers in formulating their bid/scheme for the development opportunity.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **The HCA as freehold owner should declare this site surplus or otherwise.**
- **If the site is declared surplus, the HCA should engage with Halton Borough Council Planning Department to establish that the principal of a 9 unit residential scheme is acceptable.**
- **The HCA could consider transferring the land to an RSL or the Council to construct public housing.**
- **If the HCS wish to realise a receipt for this land the market should be tested by placing the site on the market. However, the HCA would be advised to continue to monitor the residential housing market before disposal. The HCA should review market conditions in 2012.**

19 Former Crossville Bus Depot, Runcorn (65000305)

Site Description

- 19.1 NLUD Category A – Previously developed land now vacant.
- 19.2 The site is located in a prominent position with direct access off the Daresbury Expressway (A533) and backing onto the Bridgewater Canal. The topography of the site is flat and there are a limited number of immature trees along the edge of the site. Much of the site is laid to hard standing and extends to approximately 2.13 hectares.
- 19.3 The Bridgewater Canal is owned and operated by the Manchester Ship Canal Company in conjunction with the Bridgewater Canal Trust. The Canal forms an integral part of the Bridgewater Way, a regeneration project which will create a 65km/39 mile leisure route for walkers and cyclists along the historic Bridgewater Canal. The project is seen as a fresh approach to the use of the towpath as a connection between communities around the Mersey Basin and the North West. Proposals include a programme of regeneration and renewal introducing:
 - 19.4 New access points and a wide surface for new uses including cycling
 - 19.5 Focal points, public arts and heritage interpretation and programmes
 - 19.6 A safer and more appealing route
- 19.7 The Bridgewater Way is being promoted by the Bridgewater Canal Trust , a partnership which comprises 8 local authorities (including Runcorn) and The Manchester Ship Canal Company.

Planning Policy and Planning History

- 19.8 **Policy TC1 Retail and Leisure Allocations:** The Ex. Crossville Bus Depot Site is identified in the Runcorn Old Town Centre Strategy 1997 and the Halton Development Partnership's Four Sites Initiative and appraised in the Retail Issues Study's (1999) sequential approach to identifying suitable development sites. The policy notes that the site has development potential for leisure and entertainment uses, restaurant/ pubs and roadside uses. All highway access improvement off the Expressway are in place. Any development must make maximum advantage of its canal side location. The site is approximately 300m from the Primary Shopping Area and considered edge of centre but it is important however that new pedestrian links to the town centre across the canal are established and improvements to existing routes are also incorporated.

- 19.9 **Policy GE24 Important Landscape Features: Development** will not be permitted if it would have an unacceptable effect on the visual or physical characteristics for which a site was designated as having Important Landscape Features. The Bridgewater Canal is designated as an Important Landscape Feature.
- 19.10 **Policy TP9 and GE6 Proposed Greenways:** The "Greenway Network", as identified on the Proposals Map, is made up of proposed and potential off-road routes for walking, cycling and, where appropriate, horse riding, connecting people to facilities and greenspaces in and around the urban area and to the countryside. This allocation complements the vision for the Bridgewater Way.
- 19.11 **Waterside Development Strategy for Halton:** The Council published a Masterplan/Development Brief in 2005 titled The Runcorn Historic Canal Town (RHTC) Masterplan/Development Brief. The purpose of the brief is to set out the design principles to inform regeneration of two parts of the Runcorn Town Centre a) the Bridgewater Canal waterfront and b) the Manchester Ship Canal Waterfront. The 2005 masterplan proposes leisure, retail and commercial focus with secondary residential.
- 19.12 Within the emerging Core Strategy, the preferred options report allocates this area within the West Runcorn 'Key Area of Change'. Policy CS10: West Runcorn, specifically identifies Runcorn Old Town Centre which captures site 650000305 noting that additional provision in keeping with the scale and role of the centre should be provided prioritising redevelopment of vacant and underused sites, particularly around High Street, including the Canal Quarter opportunity, securing further environmental improvements.
- 19.13 Redevelopment of the site has been considered via two planning applications, both now expired.
- 19.14 Application 04/00529/Ful was approved in August 2004. The proposal included the erection of a public house with attached play barn, extended play area, patio and associated car parking and landscaping to the west of the site. Full planning permission was granted.
- 19.15 Application 04/0053/OUT was approved in September 2004. The proposal included the erection of 26 500 sq ft Class D2 (Assembly & Leisure) unit on east of the site, therefore complementing the above application and completing the redevelopment proposal for the site. Outline permission was granted.

Key Constraints

- 19.16 We understand the site was formally occupied by a chemical works which manufactured soap. The site is therefore heavily contaminated with Galigu and other heavy metals. This poses significant geotechnical issues in respect of the load bearing capacity of the ground and costs associated with soil stabilisation and foundations.
- 19.17 One option for addressing this issue is to use a cement stabilisation process. This process holds the galigu in situ within the cement complex, thus providing ground stability to support the foundations of the proposed development.

19.18 Further, detailed geotechnical surveys are required to determine the extent of works required before marketing the site.

Recommended Final Use: *Employment-led mixed use (including B1 office, C3 residential, A1 retail, A3 cafes/restaurants and A4 pub/bars.*

- This site presents an opportunity to regenerate a canal side brownfield site. The location should also take advantage of the Brindley Art Centre and the pedestrian link crossing the Bridgewater Canal as well as embracing the Bridgewater Way initiative and the leisure opportunities this presents through increased footfall and spin-off marketing.
- In order to maximise developer interest, a mixed-use policy should be introduced to take advantage of the sites features. The canal side location presents an opportunity for uses which could benefit from a waterside frontage, such as apartments, cafes/restaurants and offices. The cafes and restaurants would complement the Brindley Centre and cement this area as a destination to visit as well as a starting/end point of the Bridgewater Way. The site also incorporates the canal dock which could deliver an area of important public realm. Retail could form an appropriate part of an active ground floor element, contributing to the overall mix, whilst providing active frontage onto the A533. Design should be an important part of this scheme.
- Delivering a scheme which incorporates a variety of uses will ensure a vibrant development which complements both Runcorn Town Centre and the Brindley Art Centre. Pedestrian links and cycle paths to both Runcorn Town Centre, the Brindley Art Centre and Runcorn Railway Station make this a sustainable location.
- It appears from our site visit that the Expressway benefits from recent highway improvements required to deliver the St Modwen retail scheme opposite. There is a large recessed entrance to the site from the A533. Works to widen the entrance and increase the slip way may be required. Any application for development should be accompanied by a detailed Transport Assessment.

Estimated time of Site Delivery²⁴: *6 to 10 years.*

- The Council, as land owner may need to investigate options to deliver development on this site. Viability will be a key constraint in bringing this site forward, particularly in respect of remediation cost verses gross development value.
- At an early stage, the Council should position itself with the appropriate Government Agencies to ensure that this important regeneration opportunity fits with the overall strategic aims for regeneration in this priority area.
- Assuming appropriate level of public support and a revised allocation in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document, this site could be brought forward within the next 6 to 10 years.
- The Council may wish to consider putting this land into a Local Asset Backed Vehicle (LABV). This would allow the Council to use its asset (in this case land) to lever long term investment from the private sector for regeneration projects. They are designed to bring together a range of public and private sector partners in order to:
 - § Pool finance, planning powers, land and expertise;
 - § Ensure an acceptable balance of risk and return for all partners;

²⁴ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

- § Plan and deliver projects more strategically;
 - § Enable the public sector to retain a long-term stake in development; and a share of the returns from any uplift in land values.
- By way of background, LABVs have the potential to:
 - Unlock significant additional investment for urban regeneration projects, by encouraging local authorities to make best use of their assets, without necessarily giving them up, increased investment from the private sector for urban developments can be secured;
 - Create a 'self sustaining cycle' of regeneration funding. Packaging assets and developing them sequentially allows for the establishment of revenue streams that support development;
 - LABVs provide returns to both the private and public sector partners, with a share of profits being reinvested in future urban regeneration programmes;
 - Help raise the standard of management for regeneration projects by ensuring the public and private sector are firmly engaged with one another, LABVs offer the potential for local authorities to draw on the skills of the private sector, improving efficiency in asset management, and enhancing leadership, creativity and delivery for projects at a local level.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **The Council's Major Developments Project Team, with appropriate support from other public sector partners, should continue to prioritise this as an important regeneration opportunity.**
- **An assessment of options for the site including the mix of uses and viability should be considered with minimum requirements for the site in terms of public realm and connectivity to Runcorn Town Centre. Input from the Council's Highways Department will be important to identify access and egress issues from the A533. Any commercial opportunities that would generate receipts from development and attract developer interest should be identified.**
- **A development brief for the site should be prepared by the Council to provide the market with as much detail as possible. The document would also include a statement from Highways setting out the key considerations concerning site access and mitigation measures required.**
- **Any appeal to the private sector will depend on the business aspects of the scheme and the amount of funding available to aid delivery of public realm and any necessary infrastructure improvements. Assessment of private sector appetite through soft market testing would be recommended. The aim of this would be to help the council judge market interest in the site and see how realistic and affordable particular plans or aspirations are.**

20 Okell Street Day Nursery, Runcorn (65000248)

Site Description

- 20.1 NLUD Category C – Derelict land and buildings.
- 20.2 The site extends to approximately 0.15 hectares and is currently derelict and cleared. Formerly the site was used for a day Nursery, this has since been demolished and cleared. Vegetation has become established on the site, which is grassed over and there are some mature trees to the edge of the site. The site is securely fenced with locked gated access.
- 20.3 The site is regular in formation as it is broadly square shaped. There is good frontage on Okell Street, and it is situated close to, and visible from the A533 Daresbury Express Way, however it does not benefit from direct access off it.
- 20.4 Adjacent to the site is a former BT Telephone Exchange building, this appears to be vacant.
- 20.5 To the west and south of the site there is established residential streets, to north there is the A533, and to the east the Bridge Retail Park.

Planning policy and planning history

- 20.6 The site is allocated as part of a wider area under shopping policy allocation TC1 for retail and leisure attractions. The recent Bridge Retail Park has been developed by St Modwen in line with the policy allocation. This site was not included in the original retail development.
- 20.7 The site is allocated within the Environmental Priority Area BE3 in the Halton UDP, any development proposals in this area will have to pay regard to raising environmental standards.
- 20.8 There was a proposed road scheme detailed under policy TP11 the route of which goes through the area in the vicinity of the site. This scheme is the Runcorn Station Access road and has been built out.
- 20.9 There was a planning application submitted for site 65000248 on the 19 January 2009 for an outline application with all matters reserved for a proposed light industrial warehouse/office (up to 4840 sq ft gross floorspace). This application was withdrawn on the 19 March 2009 as the proposals were not suitable for the site. It is understood that the applicant was to resubmit alternative proposals for the site, however this has not happened to date.

20.10 An application was permitted in November 1992 on the site for a certificate of lawfulness for a proposed use falling within Class D1 (Non Residential Institutions). No further details have been found on this application. This application would have been linked to the later use for a day nursery.

Key constraints

20.11 There may be geotechnical and contamination issues as a consequence of the use of a nearby site as a former chemical/soap works, potential contamination would need to be assessed by a geo-environmental assessment. Considering the neighbouring site has been developed for the Bridge Retail Park, any potential ground issues could be overcome with appropriate remediation.

20.12 There is an electricity sub station on the site in the southeast corner of the site, close to Okell Street. The substation does not occupy a considerable area but nonetheless would need to be incorporated into any future design layout for development.

20.13 As the site fronts directly onto Okell Street any development would need to provide off-road parking on site, this would limit the developable area.

20.14 Under the current UPD 'saved' policies, development other than that associated with leisure and retail would be contrary to adopted policy. The site should be reallocated for residential use in the emerging Site Allocations Development Plan Document. Development for a non retail/leisure use could be justified through a planning statement allied with the validation that the Bridge Retail Park has satisfied the retail/leisure need in the area.

20.15 Low property values in the area could be a constraint to development, a financial appraisal of the site would be required in order to assess the viability of any proposed scheme.

20.16 To separate the site from the Retail Park and to provide screening from the A533 Expressway suitable buffers would need to be created, this could be achieved through a mixture of planting (taking advantage of the existing trees) and subtle fencing.

Recommended Final Use: Residential

- up to 30 dwellings could be accommodated on the site.
- The surrounding area is an established residential area. The UDP retail and leisure allocation was part of a wider site, the majority of which has been developed out by St Modwen for the Bridge Retail Park. This remaining site is somewhat divorced from the developed retail allocation, and would be more appropriately developed out for residential use to complement the housing adjacent and opposite the site.
- A well designed residential development would provide additional housing units for the Borough, including a small proportion of affordable units. The site would also create an appropriate infill development at this derelict site.

Estimate of Site delivery²⁵: 6 – 10 years

- Ownership of the site needs to be determined. Once ownership has been established the Council should write to and contact the owner to ascertain their plans for the site and to establish if the development of the site for residential use has been considered.
- A more attractive development opportunity could be created through the consolidation of the site with the adjacent former telephone exchange building and site. The owners of site 65000248 should approach the owners of the telephone exchange site to assess the possibilities of acquiring the site, or alternatively with a joint venture development.
- In order to facilitate appropriate development on the site the Council should produce a concise information pack, or committee report, which clarifies the planning position on the site, detailing acceptable uses and densities. This reference document should also contain the Council's assessment of the highway network in the vicinity and a statement from Transport officers which would set the parameters against which a scheme could be produced.
- A combined site would increase the number of residential units that could be developed, and would subsequently increase any provision of affordable units on the site and should be considered by the Council in its preparation its the Site Allocations DPD.

The following actions can be taken to maintain current use but progress future delivery:

- **At an early stage the Council should identify ownership. This can be determined by checking the Council's land terrier or HM Land Registry.**
- **In parallel, the Council should approach the Asset Management Department of British Telecom (BT) to determine BT's long-term plan for the former telephone exchange.**
- **The Council's Planning Policy Team should consider this site and the telephone exchange as a residential redevelopment opportunity in the emerging LDF. The Council's SHLAA via it's Annual Monitoring Review should be updated accordingly.**
- **With more appropriate planning allocation, and having established ownership, the site(s) is more likely to attract interest if advertised for sale as a residential redevelopment opportunity.**

²⁵ Assuming more 'normal' (i.e. not boom or bust) market conditions, anticipated timescale before commercial developer might start on site.

Important notice

This document is confidential and prepared solely for your information. Therefore you should not, without our prior written consent, refer to or use our name or this document for any other purpose, disclose them or refer to them in any prospectus or other document, or make them available or communicate them to any other party. No other party is entitled to rely on our document for any purpose whatsoever and thus we accept no liability to any other party who is shown or gains access to this document.

Deloitte LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales with registered number OC303675 and its registered office at 2 New Street Square, London EC4A 3BZ, United Kingdom.

Drivers Jonas Deloitte is a trading name of Deloitte LLP, which is the United Kingdom member firm of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu ('DTT'), a Swiss Verein, whose member firms are legally separate and independent entities. Please see www.deloitte.co.uk/about for a detailed description of the legal structure of DTT and its member firms.

Member of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu