



# Site Location and Proposals

## Overview of Proposals

Table 1 highlights the proposed land uses on the Phase 1 Planning Application Site.

The scale of the Phase 1 development has been dictated in part by the highway capacity through the A49 corridor. The Phase 1 planning application development traffic can be accommodated by the existing highway infrastructure subject to improvements within the A49 corridor. Phase 1 is not therefore reliant on the implementation of the Parkside Link Road (PLR).

A full planning application has been submitted (Ref. P/2018/0249/FUL) for the Parkside Link Road which will link the A49 to Junction 22 of the M6.

This is also subject to a current 'Call-In'. The PLR will be open to all traffic and will pass through Parkside West (8EA).

Phase 2 of the development will follow Phase 1 once the delivery of the Parkside Link Road is confirmed. An indicative masterplan has been prepared to support the development of the wider Parkside West site and also support the delivery of the Strategic Rail Freight Interchange on allocation 7EA (Parkside East), through the safeguarding of land for a rail reversing leg.

Phase 2 has the potential to accommodate three development cells which could accommodate three further large floorplate buildings. The development will form part of the B8 logistics park, but could also include an element of use class B2 manufacturing use, amounting to circa 70% B8 use and 30% B2 use.

The comprehensive indicative masterplan is provided opposite. It shows the alignment of Parkside Link Road, the safeguarded land to support the delivery of the rail reversing leg supporting the delivery of the SRFI, alongside the comprehensive development of Parkside West for B8 and B2 uses.

| Land Use  | Total Floor Area Proposed | Site Area (ha) | Number of Units Proposed (indicative) | Total Developable Plot Areas (sqm) | Maximum Height of Units (m)                                      |
|---|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Employment Uses B8 (including Ancillary B1 Car Parking) | 92,900 sq.m               | 19.64 ha       | 3 to 4                                | 197,336.60                         | 23m to ridge (except Unit A/B which has a max 22m, 18m to eaves) |
| Road Infrastructure                                     | -                         | 2.29           | -                                     | -                                  | -  |
| Structural Landscape/ Buffers/ Bunds                    | -                         | 22.82          | -                                     | -                                  | -  |
| Attenuation Areas/ SUDS                                 | -                         | 1.65           | -                                     | -                                  | -  |
| Safeguarded Land for Rail                               | -                         | 1.02           | -                                     | -                                  | -  |
| Existing Substation                                     | -                         | 0.64           | -                                     | -                                  | -  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>92,900 sq.m</b>        | <b>47.90ha</b> | <b>3 to 4</b>                         | <b>197,336.60</b>                  | <b>23m to ridge (except Unit A/B)</b>                            |

Table 1

# Site Location and Proposals

## Overview of Proposals

There has been a long held ambition to redevelop the former Parkside Colliery and to address issues around deprivation and access to employment within St Helens and Newton-le-Willows/Earlestown. Whilst the Parkside West site is identified as being within the Green Belt (Policy S1) in the adopted Unitary Development Plan, the Core Strategy, adopted 2012, identifies Parkside West as one of only two 'Major Development Site' on the Key Diagram.

The principal tenet of the approach to the development plans within St Helens has been to facilitate economic growth to address the significant levels of deprivation and joblessness. This is clearly reflected through the approach to Parkside within the Core Strategy.

Policy CSS1 Overall Spatial Strategy identifies the former Parkside Colliery as a strategic location for an SRFI, acknowledging its location within the Green Belt. The policy confirms the intent to remove the site from the Green Belt as part of the subsequent Allocations Local Plan once planning permission had been granted for the development. This was consistent with a planning application for an SRFI on the site that was being considered at that time. It was also consistent with the relatively limited scale of the identified employment need at the time, which was 37 hectares. Notably the Core Strategy highlights the significant role Parkside had in supporting the strategy for economic development, accounting for 68% of Economic Development.

CAS 3.1 recognised that the Parkside SRFI would have the potential to provide economic benefits to the area, alongside the focus for industrial activity at Sankey Valley Industrial Estate. Part 6 ii of the policy also sought to develop initiatives

to improve access to employment opportunities, such as those at Parkside. The justifying text also recognised the ability of the development at Parkside to significantly increase the pool of local employment opportunities.

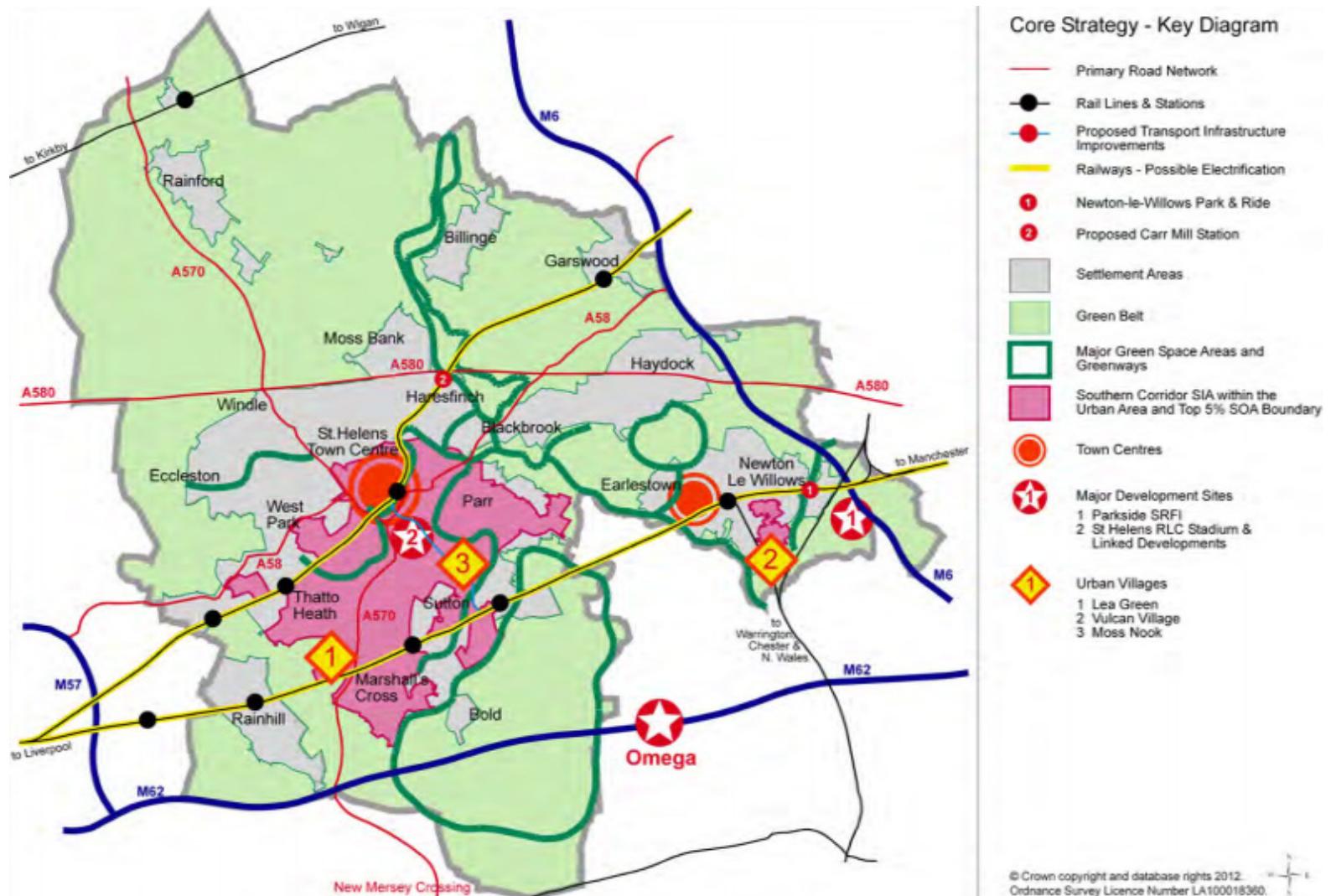
Policy CAS 3.2 Development of a SRFI at the Former Parkside Colliery, provides policy support for a SRFI at Parkside Colliery and immediately adjacent land through establishing a criteria based policy relating to the land on and around the former Parkside Colliery for provision of a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange. The policy is clear that the criteria were established at a time when there was the belief that a deliverable and viable SRFI could be developed on the western side of the M6.

The policy is however clear that there may be operational, viability and commercial reasons for the use of a larger area of land to the east of the M6 for the SRFI, and the policy establishes a sequential approach to support the land to the east of the M6 coming forward. Further, it considered that planning permission will not be granted for land at the former colliery and land to the east of the M6 if it would prejudice its use as a rail freight interchange.

There have been some significant changes since the adoption of the Core Strategy. The employment land requirement for St Helens is exponentially more than it was previously calculated within the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy identified a need of 37 hectares, now there is a need of some 239 ha of employment land, of which a substantial proportion is to meet the needs of strategic warehousing and distribution.

The application for an SRFI at Parkside at the time of the Core Strategy was withdrawn and since then significant work has been undertaken by both Parkside Regeneration and St Helens Council (with expert advice from specialist consultants) to assess the feasibility of delivering the SRFI at Parkside Colliery. This new evidence has confirmed that the Parkside West site cannot feasibly accommodate the required rail lengths in order to support the delivery of a viable SRFI.

It is clear from the Core Strategy policy and its associated justification that the locational advantages of Parkside Colliery are acknowledged, along with the need to tackle worklessness and strengthen the local and wider sub-regional economy to provide significant employment opportunities at this location. The policy also establishes the principal of



large scale development at this location both within the Green Belt and through subsequent Green Belt release. Both the policy and justifying text recognise that there may be a need to utilise land to the east of the M6 in order to deliver a viable SRFI.

St Helens in their approach to the submission Local Plan have recognised the need to plan positively for economic growth for the benefit of the Borough. The submission Plan through its allocations for 8EA and 7EA responds to the area's identification as a 'strategic location'; the

established employment requirement, which has grown significantly since the adoption of the Local Plan; and technical evidence relating to the requirements of an SRFI. The allocation of site 8EA Parkside West, is consistent with the overarching principles of the adopted Core Strategy, in that:-

- it will secure employment opportunities for the Borough;
- take advantage of the site's locational advantages;
- make efficient use of the former colliery; and
- ensure that its development for B8 and B2 uses will not prejudice the delivery of a viable SRFI, which is now to be accommodated on land to the east of the M6, with a rail reversing leg on Parkside West.

# Deliverability

## Land Ownership and Availability

Parkside Regeneration LLP was formed in 2013, and is a joint venture between Langtree Property Partners (Langtree PP) and St Helens Council. Parkside Regeneration LLP was formed with the sole purpose of regeneration and delivery of the former colliery as a strategic employment site for the economic, social and environmental benefit of Newton-le Willows, St Helens, and the wider Liverpool City Region.

The site is available, suitable and achievable and is deliverable in accordance with national guidance and represents a sustainable employment development opportunity.

The public-private joint venture Parkside Regeneration LLP is the landowner for of Parkside West (8EA). The ownership is freehold. The former colliery shafts remain within the ownership of the Coal Authority, and there is an electricity sub-station on site, leased to Electricity North West. Both the Coal Authority and Electricity North West have rights of way access to their assets. Parkside Regeneration LLP can confirm that there are no covenants or easements that would preclude development coming forward as anticipated.

The objective of Parkside Regeneration LLP is to design a commercially viable employment scheme for the site, delivering serviced employment land to attract commercial operations to locate on the site. Funding arrangements are in place to facilitate the delivery of Phase 1 of the site subject to planning permission being granted. The site should be considered available for employment development.

# Deliverability

## Site Suitability

The development at the former Parkside Colliery will make a major contribution to the economic development of St Helens Borough. It will benefit Newton-le-Willows, St Helens and Liverpool City Region with economic, environmental and social benefits. The Parkside West site is uniquely well located to Newton-le-Willows train station; areas of socio-economic deprivation; and the motorway network which means that it meets the requirements of both the employment market and planning policy in a highly sustainable way.

It is therefore considered that the development is suitable. The key focus is to create the conditions for sustainable economic growth. The core objectives of The Framework are sustainable development and growth. The Framework states that planning should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. The Framework also seeks to ensure that both policies and decisions address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitable accessible locations.

The allocation of the site for B8 and B2 employment uses in this location is appropriate. The submitted technical evidence in support of the Phase 1 planning application also confirms there are no environmental or technical constraints that would preclude the development of the site. The following sections of this Delivery Report consider the suitability further in the context of the need for employment land, the regeneration imperative, the exceptional circumstances for Green Belt release, and the performance of the site against the Green Belt purposes.

It is considered that the development of the site clearly accords with the emphasis set out in The Framework. The site provides a vitally important opportunity to meet the employment needs of the District. The site is therefore eminently suitable for employment uses.

# Deliverability

## Market/Need for Employment Land

There is a national imperative to facilitate and deliver economic growth in the United Kingdom. This economic imperative is embedded within national planning policy through The Framework. Paragraph 8 of The Framework establishes the three overarching objectives of the Planning system, economic, social and environmental.

### Policy Context

The economic objective is concerned with ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity. Paragraph 80 seeks to ensure that policies and decisions create the right conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. The Framework considers that an area should build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. Furthermore, The Framework confirms that the specific locational requirements of different sectors should be recognised and addressed by policies and decisions, this includes making provision for "storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations".

The Government is also committed to a rebalancing agenda whereby it is seeking to "level up" economic growth and overcome regional disparities in order to allow the North of England to realise its potential. The Industrial Strategy – Building a Britain Fit for the Future, November 2021, aims to create an economy that boosts productivity and earning power throughout the UK.

The Northern Powerhouse forms part of the Government's Industrial Strategy and has an objective to achieve a sustained increase in productivity across the whole of the North of England. The Northern Powerhouse Strategy seeks to achieve this aim through improvements in connectivity; addressing the disparity in skills; ensuring that the north is an excellent place to start and grow a business; and promoting trade and investment across the north.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's Economic Recovery Plan – Building Back Better, takes account of the Covid-19 pandemic and is the City Region's approach to address the issues highlighted by the pandemic. It recognises that the pandemic hit the City Region hard, but that it represents the opportunity to be ambitious about the Growth of the City Region to deliver opportunity and transformation. It indicates that an investment of £1.4 bn will unlock £8.3 bn worth of projects which will create 94,000 jobs and secure employment for 26,000 people who are not in work. This document makes specific reference to the importance of the Parkside Strategic Rail Freight Interchange to come forward in the medium term.

Liverpool City Region is a key component of the Northern Powerhouse approach and it is critical to the success of the Country that the Liverpool City Region is empowered to "build back better". The role and importance of the B8 warehouse and distribution sector is key in this regard for the Liverpool City Region and the Parkside site has been identified as a key component of delivering that potential.

## The Need

The need for employment land in LCR and St Helens is established within the SHELMA, and St Helens Employment Land Reviews in 2015, 2017 and 2019 Addendum. The SHELMA recognised and analysed the scale of employment growth within Liverpool City Region. It concluded that there was a high demand for warehousing and storage, that there was a shortage of available land to accommodate larger warehouses, and that the opening of Liverpool2 and other developments related to the Super Port concept will drive increased demand for warehouse and distribution space across the City Region.

Furthermore the SHELMA singled out St Helens authority as having the largest quantum of potentially suitable land for B8 development, factoring in the draft allocations in St Helens, within its growth scenario. No other authority is described or explicitly referred to as having such suitability of land to meet the City Region's identified needs. The SHELMA concluded that for the period to 2037 there is a need for 308 ha of land for strategic B8 development in the baseline scenario, and a need of 397 ha in the do something scenario/TfN Strategy scenario. The latter scenarios reflects the Freight and Logistics Study for the North of England, with the North of England gaining warehouse market share due to it becoming a more competitive location to locate.

The LCR Spatial Planning Statement of Common Ground (October 2019) confirms that the City Region authorities need to identify "sites with a combined capacity of at least 397 hectares to be developed for large scale B8 (storage and distribution) before 2037".

St Helens Employment Land Need Study, 2015 (ELNS), and the update in 2017, as amended in 2019, and Employment Background Paper, serve to demonstrate the significant need for employment land within St Helens. The ELNS identified an objectively assessed employment land need for B8 Storage and Distribution. The ELNS update reiterates that the most active market for employment premises surrounding St Helens was for logistics and warehousing space "driven by the growth in the online retail market with operators seeking large facilities, very close to the motorway network and key Markets".

The ELNS acknowledges that the SuperPort will increase demand for large logistics and manufacturing space in St Helens, however at the time of the study there was no provision of suitable land for large scale distribution uses within the Borough's identified employment supply. Thus, there is a significant imbalance between demand and supply of sites within St Helens, and there is a need to identify new employment sites to meet the projected demand for large sites for distribution and manufacturing to address the regional shortfall of large scale sites.

The ELNS identified an objectively assessed employment land need for St Helens of 177 to 214 hectares between 2012 and 2037, of which 100 to 130 hectares would be for B8 Storage and Distribution. The 2015 ELNS Report was updated in October 2017 and in January 2019. The updated ELNS reiterated that the most active market for employment in and around St Helens was for logistics and warehousing space "driven by the growth in the online retail market with operators seeking large facilities, very close to the motorway network and key Markets".

The ELNS update reviewed the appropriateness of the original assessments in 2015 and concluded that the logistics market continues to be the most in-demand commercial market in the broader region, focused on the motorway corridors. Furthermore it considered that the market is showing signs of being constrained by a lack of space, with high quality large flat sites with excellent access to the motorway network being in very short supply.

# Deliverability

## Market/Need for Employment Land

The update ELNS revised the additional land requirement of 30-40 hectares to 55-65 hectares; the need for B8 Storage and Distribution to a minimum 110 hectares to 155 hectares; and the total employment land needs to 190-239 ha.

The above provides a clear indication of the need for B8 warehouses and distribution land within St Helens. Correspondingly the Submission Draft Local Plan identified that the Plan will seek to deliver a minimum of 215.4 ha of land for employment development between 1st April 2018 and 31st March 2035. The development at Parkside West (8EA) will make a substantial contribution towards meeting the significant identified employment land needs, within St Helens and the City Region.

Since the preparation of the ELNS there have been some significant changes to the economic landscape. Evidence that supported the Phase 1 Call-In inquiry in January 2021 demonstrated the continuing need for employment land within the City Region and in St Helens. The response to Covid-19 and Brexit have resulted in an acceleration in the growth of e-commerce, the increased need for resilience in the supply chain for all sectors and growth in on-shoring/re-shoring. This has led to an upward pressure for employment land that was not envisaged by the ELNS.

Furthermore, in March 2021 the Government announced the location of the 8 Freeports in England which included Liverpool City Region, in which Parkside is identified as a tax and customs site. The Freeport is anticipated to provide further support for economic growth across the City Region. Evidence to support the Call-In inquiry confirmed that there remained an extremely limited development pipeline of units and suitable development sites; that there is a large imbalance between building supply and demand where current supply cannot satisfy the demand to the detriment of the economy; quantitatively and qualitatively there is a shortage of suitable development sites capable of accommodating the regions requirements; and there are no sites in St Helens with consent capable of satisfying the requirements of the strategic warehousing and distribution sector.

In addition to the above there is also a significant need for employment land within the adjacent areas of Greater Manchester and Warrington. The draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) (October 2020) identified a need for 4,100,000 sq m of new industrial and warehousing floorspace, resulting in the need for Green Belt release to meet the scale of employment need, demonstrating that there are insufficient non-Green Belt alternatives to meet this need.

In Warrington the evidence base and (draft) Local Plan demonstrates an employment land need of a minimum of 363 ha of employment land for B1, B2 and B8 uses (2017-2037) and demonstrates the need for Green Belt release.

There is a significant scale of employment need, particularly B8 warehousing, within St Helens, Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester and Warrington MBC that must be met to drive national, regional and local economic growth and to deliver the levelling up and regeneration agenda.

## **Site characteristics and locational requirements and alternative sites.**

As highlighted above there is a significant need for employment land, in particular for strategic warehousing and distribution. The Framework recognises certain sectors have specific locational requirements, including storage and distribution uses. The Local Plan evidence base acknowledges that many businesses are seeking large modern units of at least 100,000 sq ft (9,000 sq m). Specific site and locational requirements to support strategic warehousing and distribution in line with the need include: Large footprint; regular shaped and flat sites; motorway access; landownership; deliverability; utilities; adequate labour supply, customer base and supply chain; access to ports and rail. In terms of St Helens, sites need to be close to the A570/A580/M6/ M62 via 'A' roads; have a minimum area of 5 hectares to accommodate large footprint buildings; have good access to labour supply preferably via public transport; and be deliverable.

The 2015 ELNS confirmed that there was no provision of suitable land for large scale distribution uses within the Borough's identified employment land supply. Model Logic confirmed that Parkside West is located near the centre of the North West motorway network enabling a large geographic area to be covered within appropriate drive times; is near the centre of the high population belt of Liverpool, Warrington and Manchester, providing a large customer base; is a prime site for an Import Centre linked to Liverpool2 docks; has excellent labour supply catchment; and is an excellent location for local or "last mile" distribution using sustainable electric vehicles.

An Alternative Sites Assessment was undertaken by Spawforths to support the Phase 1 application, and subsequently reviewed by the Council. This concluded that there are no suitable alternative sites within the urban area or with planning permission available to meet the identified need. The Alternative Site Assessment was updated in September 2020 (ASA Update).

The ASA Update concluded, in the context of the Phase 1 application, that there are no sites that were suitable for the proposed use of the site in part or in whole, that were not within the Green Belt.

Furthermore the ASA update and Council's committee report (December 2019) for the phase 1 application confirmed that no other Green Belt sites within St Helens were better suited to meet the identified needs than Parkside West. Parkside West is one of the best performing Green Belt sites to meet the need.