

WARRINGTON MEANS BUSINESS

Warrington's Growth Ambition

ISSUED-03-05-24





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Warrington Means Business
Warrington Borough Council
Warrington & Co.

Foreword

I am very proud to introduce the fourth edition of Warrington Means Business, setting out Warrington Borough Council's growth ambitions and regeneration vision

This edition of Warrington Means Business captures the opportunities that we are afforded by both the recently adopted local plan and the potential impact that large infrastructure projects such as Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) will have on the town's future growth.

To achieve this ambition, we will work with our neighbours in the Liverpool City Region and Greater Manchester Combined Authorities, Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils, and the newly formed Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington, and work with those businesses and organisations in Warrington and in the wider North West to deliver a people focussed, inclusive, green and vibrant town.

We have had opportunities of a similar scale before, Warrington is a significant success story from the New Towns programme doubling the population and employment base of Warrington. We have a once in a generation opportunity in Northern Powerhouse Rail, to cooperate rather than compete, to create centres of excellence and specialism along the route to continue to ensure a strong and balanced economy, that is able to adapt to changing societal and environmental demands and technological advancements. Now is not the time to be timid in our ambitions. We need to be confident in our successes and collective ambition and not be concerned in telling others what we need and want, in order to see Warrington continue to flourish as a true economic centre in its own right and a place in which all its citizens have the opportunities for a good quality of life.



Councillor Hans Mundry
Leader
Warrington Borough Council



Professor Steven Broomhead MBE
Chief Executive
Warrington & Co

NPR is a huge opportunity to put the heart back into the centre of the town. The key themes of this report are therefore outlining how infrastructure enhances the town centre offer and provides the foundations for a central business district around Bank Quay, and the Town Centre, as well as some of the other major development areas and strategic employment land released in the recently adopted local plan.

It is clear that Warrington has worked, is working, and will continue to work in the future. Warrington Means Business, but don't take our word for it, read the independent Centre for Cities [here](#).



WM

WARRI

MARKET

Cookhouse

Cookhouse

OPENING HOURS
MARKET & MEZZANINE
MON - SAT 10 am - 5pm
SUN CLOSED
COOKHOUSE
MON - THURS 10 am - 7pm
FRI & SAT 10 am - 11pm
SUNDAY 10 am - 7pm

Cookhouse

LAST FOOD ORDERS 4
FRI-SAT 10pm

OPEN
SUNDAY

BEST LARGE
INDOOR
MARKET

OPEN
HOURS
WARRINGTON
& MEZZANINE
MON - SAT 10 am - 5pm
SUN CLOSED

OPEN

01

A History of Success



Warrington - A History of Success

RESTRUCTURED LOCAL ECONOMY

Warrington has been welcoming visitors for over 200 years. Its location is a big plus. It is close to Liverpool and Manchester and within easy reach of the Peak District, North Wales and the Lake District.

Today, you'll find a busy town centre with great shopping on offer including Golden Square, independent outlets, as well as festivals, music, museums and art galleries, but as we look to the future development it is important to understand that this is a product of relatively recent history, brought about principally by the success of the New Towns programme.

Over 15 years, 3,000 hectares of successful development was delivered, of which 375 hectares was a heavily contaminated munitions centre at Risley- one of the largest derelict sites within Europe.

Remarkably, this site later transformed into a UK centre of excellence in nuclear engineering, capitalising on its accessibility via the M6 since 1958. The evolution of Risley stands as a testament to the New Town's enduring impact and its ability to adapt to changing economic landscapes.

Amidst opinions and critiques, it becomes pertinent to appreciate the ambition and scale of what was accomplished. Examining the statistics of the New Town initiative provides a more nuanced and balanced view.

- » Warrington ranks eighth nationally for its employment rate – at 81%.
- » Warrington appears fifth in the national rankings for the highest number of new economy firms, businesses that are at the forefront of new technologies and innovations. This is particularly important for the UK's overall productivity, and shows that Warrington is one of the leading places for innovation in the country.
- » Warrington has a strong education legacy; over 95% of primary schools and 92% of secondary schools have been consistently rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by OFSTED. Warrington has also

set itself apart in careers education, with schools scoring above average on the Gatsby Benchmarks, making Warrington one of the leading local authorities in the region for education.

- » Warrington ranks fourth for the largest percentage increase in house price growth, reinforcing the view that Warrington is a great place to live as well as work and relax.

If one was to use House Price Inflation as a proxy measure of success, then Warrington is the second most successful New Town and has outperformed national and regional house price growth.

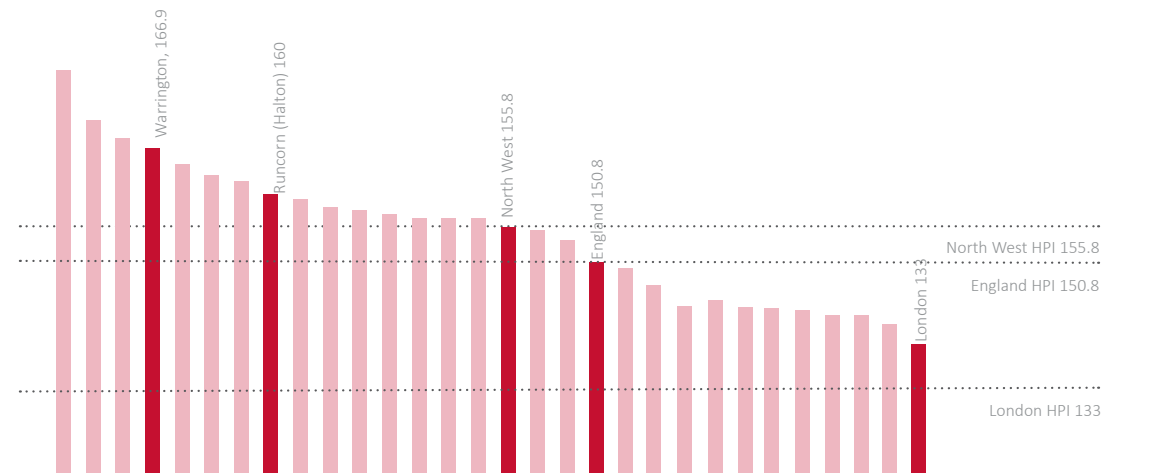


Figure 1. HPI Index value 1968, 2023, All property

Far from a sterile failure it is clear that the New Town has been an exemplar success in many ways, but particularly in economically restructuring the employment profile, away from declining heavy town centre industries, towards light industrial and office based uses adjacent to the established motorway network. It is this that has delivered lasting investment and lasting change.

Warrington is one of the leading places for innovation, research and development in the country



£250m

Business rates increase over the period and one of the best employment densities along the proposed Northern Powerhouse Rail route



81%

Employment rate ranking 8th nationally for employment rates



3,000 ha

of development was delivered in just 15 years



396

Business per 10,000 people, highest ranked



Top 10

UK's best rated schools, Ofsted 2023



5TH

Highest number of new economy firms



Top 10%

of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the UK



4TH

Largest percentage increase in house price growth

Warrington - A History Of Success

INFRASTRUCTURE, LAND RELEASE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Successful Delivery of Homes and Jobs

Long term investment in strategic enabling infrastructure has underpinned widespread and sustained physical, economic and social betterment in the town.

The overarching objectives of the New Town were to: double the population from 100,000 to 200,000, address industrial obsolescence and blight in the town centre, establish a self-sustaining local economy to alleviate pressure on the regional transport network and commuting flows, and provide 20,000 new homes as part of Manchester's post war urban clearance programme.

The town has met all of these objectives and undergone significant transformations, including the pedestrianisation of the centre. Golden Square, with over 800,000 sq ft of covered retail, continues to serve as the town's retailing centre.

National Nuclear Laboratory (NNL) has experienced a remarkable 50 per cent growth in jobs, currently employing over 6,500 individuals and a cluster of 165 companies. Birchwood Park continues to grow its nuclear cluster with some of the most prominent global nuclear companies, including Rolls-Royce, Nuvia, Cavendish Nuclear and Jacobs, now based at Birchwood Park.

Approximately 30% of the 40 million sq ft employment space on the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) rating list can be directly attributed to the New Town. In total, the town generates £250 million in business rates and boasts one



40,000
more jobs than regional and
national comparator locations

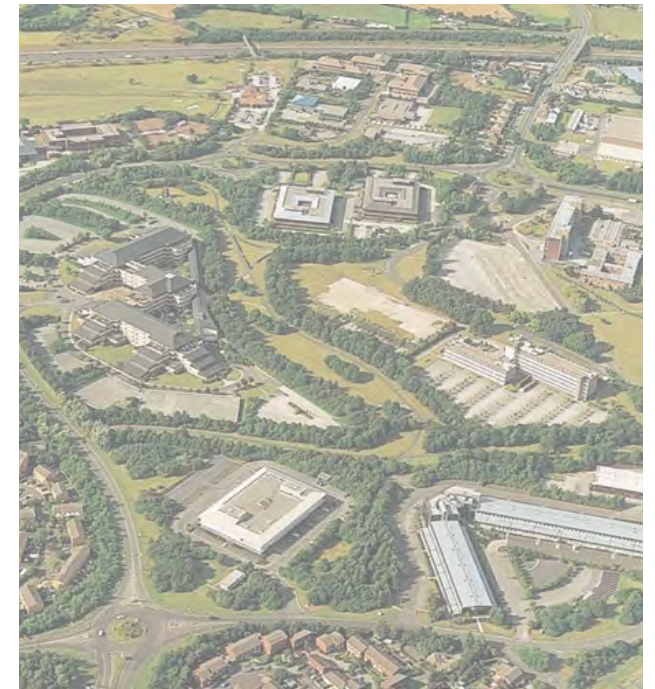


Figure 2. 375 Hectare Royal Ordnance Factory site in 1980 now known as Birchwood

Figure 3. Birchwood Science Park Aerial in 1984, Locking Stumps Arterial Route (M62 visible to North) as well as British Nuclear Fuels Tiered Roof



Figure 4. Culture event in a public space

of the best employment densities along the proposed Northern Powerhouse Rail route. This achievement is astonishing, considering the town has doubled in population over a 50-year period. Currently, Warrington has 40,000 more jobs than regional and national comparator locations.

But the Job is not done! We have delivered three of the five originally planned New Town districts, including: Padgate, Birchwood, Westbrook. Our aspiration is to complete the final two districts as part of the local plan to complete the town by delivering outstanding infrastructure, namely, a crossing of the Manchester Ship Canal to enable continued strategic land release. The lessons of the New Town project are simply that planned growth works, Warrington has worked, is working, and will work in the future. However, we now also face an additional challenge of achieving the objectives set out in the Warrington Climate Emergency Strategy.



Strategic location advantage

Catchment of 6 million people within one hour



Connectivity

Rail and Road connectivity acting as a growth driver



SMEs Centre

Recognised as a top 5 location for start-ups by the centre for cities



Specialisms in sciences

Specialisms in Sciences, Nuclear, Regional Administration (Fire, Utilities, housing)



Proven and sustained commercial market

Birchwood celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2023 and the 'nuclear cluster' is fast approaching its 70th year



70% Graduate Retention

Rate Ranked 40th out of 1,058

Warrington - A History Of Success

LOCATIONAL ADVANTAGE, CONNECTIVITY AND AFFORDABLE COMMERCIAL SPACE

Whilst many of these significant developments, which have shaped the Town, have taken a number of decades to come to fruition, they are as a result of Warrington working in partnership with government to achieve the desired outcomes.

Recent developments, point to a continuing theme of growth and development by working with others. In particular, a focus on the Town Centre and its immediate environment was needed following the decline in heavy manufacturing. Development of a significant scale has taken time. The town centre has evolved over the last 40 years with the development of Golden Square, to the development of Time Square. Proving to be a popular location for both leisure and education, with the addition of the University of Chester to the list of occupiers. Several new restaurant operators, in addition to well known operators, offer a vibrant modern restaurant in a modern development.

Time Square is now starting to attract interest from a new and changed office demand as its success as a destination continues.

The access to a more distributed, campus approach to providing accommodation for staff becomes more attractive for businesses

The Base, our office hub for small and medium enterprises (SME's) is now fully let and we are continuing to see demand for similar modern, flexible and well located offices.

The attractiveness of the Town Centre is not just about the space, but also about connectivity. The relocation of the Bus Depot was a very deliberate planned move, giving greater space for business to develop in close proximity to the Town Centre, whilst allowing the Bus Service to de-carbonise, as part of an overall carbon reduction strategy for the Town, improving air quality in the Town and making the bus service more reliable with the advent of an all electric bus fleet, all in line with our Net Zero Carbon pledge.

Omega Manufacturing and Logistics Park is almost full creating over 9,000 jobs over the last 4 years becoming one of the UK leading logistics hubs.

This history of achieving what we set out to do, of continuing to grow and taking advantage of our opportunities is in the Warrington DNA, at its core, at its heart

Whilst the achievements to date are notable, It is the forthcoming opportunities that will really prove to be most influential, delivering change on a scale of the New Town programme. The strategic highways 'box' around Warrington comprising the M6, M56, M62 and the Mersey Gateway is now complete and continues to drive the success of Omega and Birchwood. It is rail infrastructure that holds the key to drive future growth.




Figure 5. Outdoor seating at the Warrington Market

Sustainability - A 360 Degree Approach

In terms of sustainability, major investment is needed locally. Nearly all existing buildings will need to be upgraded to be more energy efficient and all new ones built so they are fit for the future. We will need major new energy infrastructure to accommodate the electrification of heat and travel, new low carbon energy generation, and new low carbon district heating rather than natural gas. Industry will need to transform to fossil fuel free operation, or capture and store emissions in perpetuity. We need to reconsider the importance of natural assets and the important services that they provide for food production, air quality, drainage, flood mitigation, shade and cooling, and enhance investment in them accordingly.

As we move forward, we are seeking to create a sustainable, inclusive, and diverse economy that brings benefits for local people and communities. Working with our existing business base and with training and education providers to ensure people have the right skills will be particularly important. We need to ensure businesses have support to grow and adapt to changing circumstances and that local people are equipped with the right skills to take advantage of local opportunities.



**Time Square continues
to be a popular location
for both leisure and
education, offering outdoor
space, encouraging social
connection**

Warrington - A History of Success

FROM MERSEY FLATS TO NUCLEAR FUSION - 1,000 YEARS OF GROWTH

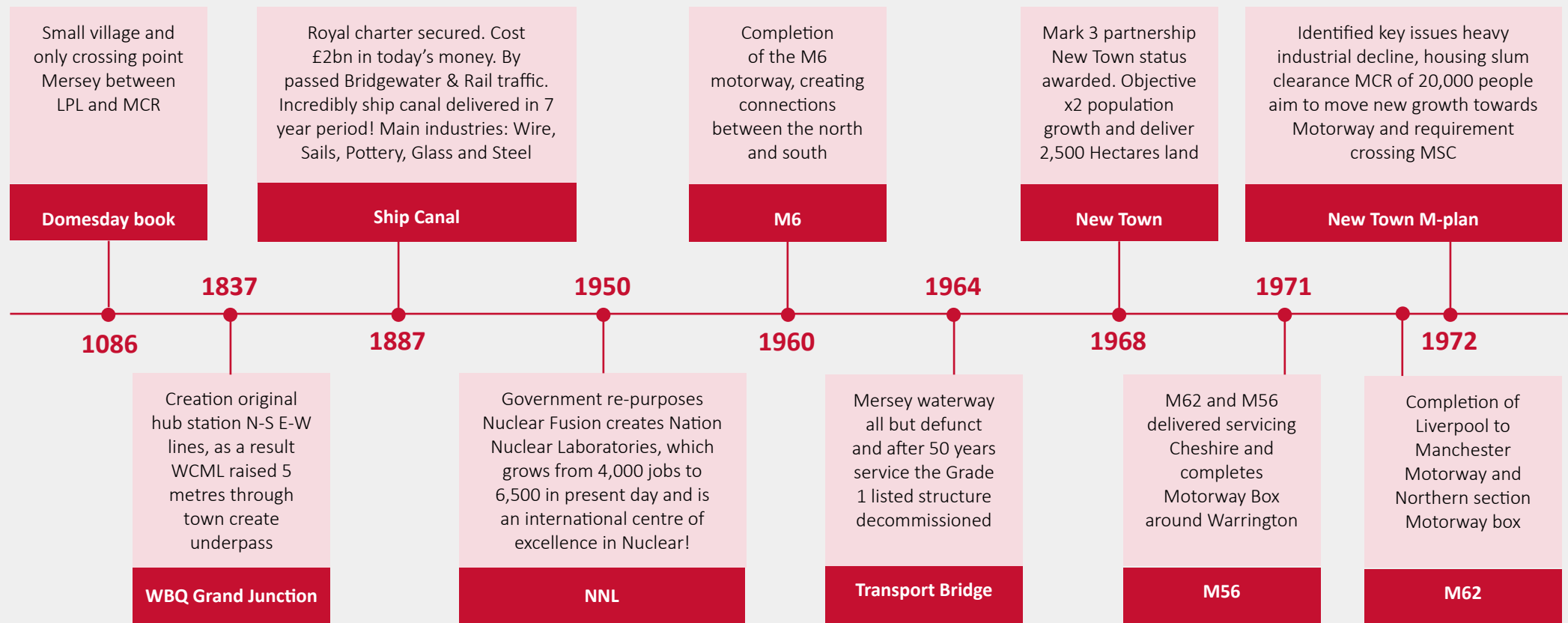
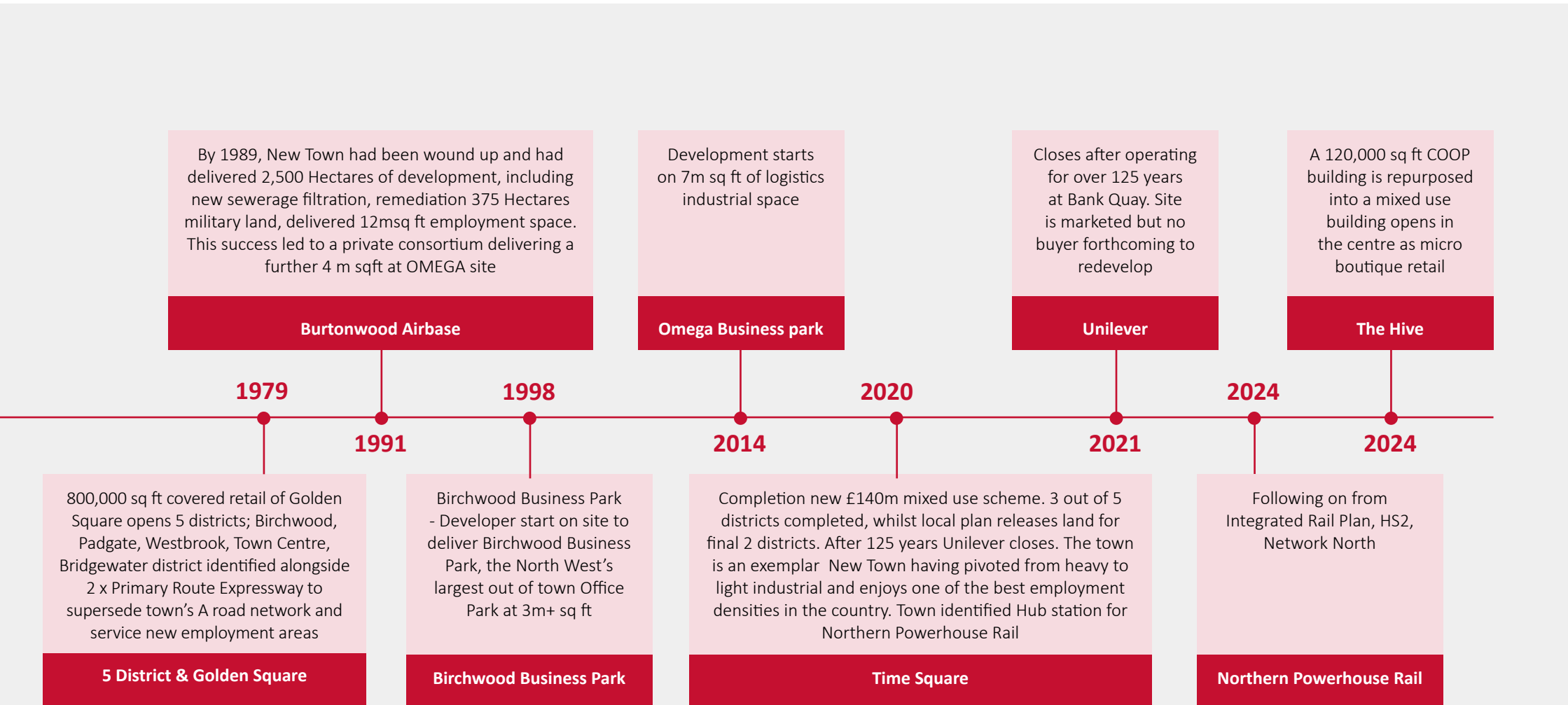


Figure 6. Timeline illustrating 1,000 years of Warrington's growth





02

Opportunities for Growth



Opportunities for Growth

WARRINGTON RAIL HUB - A DRIVER FOR GROWTH

Northern Powerhouse Rail will create a hub station at Warrington Bank Quay providing a junction between the West Coast Mainline and proposed Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) East-West route.

According to the ONS, Warrington has delivered the second largest GVA and productivity growth in the region between 1997-2015 but the disparity with London is stark as it still has four times the amount of commercial floorspace than the second largest region- the North West.

The twenty year average shows that growth in the capital is now plateauing. The North West's growth rate, albeit from a lower base, has been 115% in comparison to London's twenty year average of 101%. So it is right that infrastructure investment and growth is focussed elsewhere than London, to further stimulate this growth.

The North West's growth rate, albeit from a lower base, has been 115% in comparison to London's twenty year average of 101%

The strategic infrastructure diagram, figure 7, illustrates the integrated rail plan route, connecting Warrington to Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds.

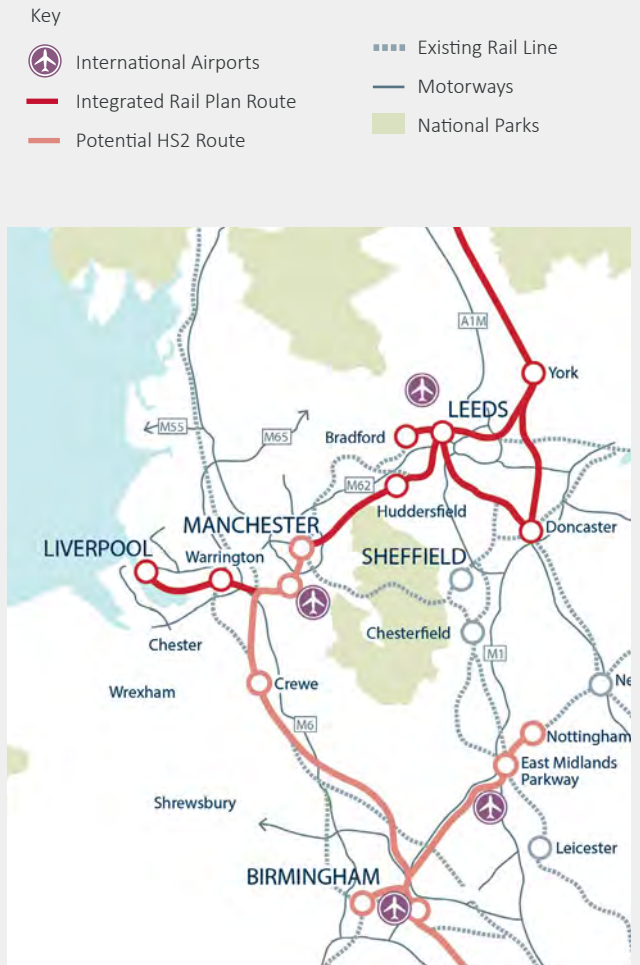


Figure 7. Strategic Infrastructure diagram illustrates Warrington's strategic position within the UK's rail network

Northern Powerhouse Rail gross development product comparison

Warrington is at the heart of a significant network, connecting main rail lines and airports

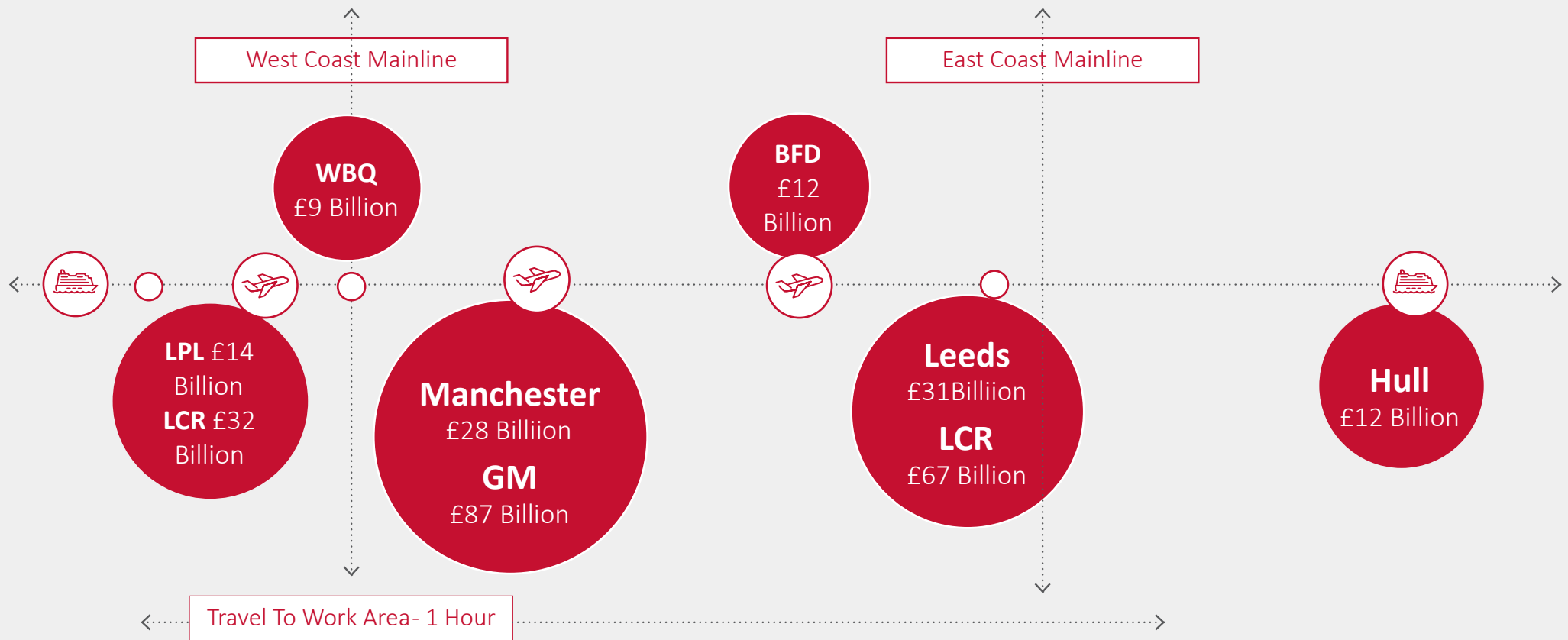


Figure 8. NPR gross development product comparison

Opportunities for Growth

WARRINGTON RAIL HUB - A DRIVER FOR GROWTH

Within the North West, Northern Powerhouse Rail has the potential to deliver 80% time savings and create express services to major cities as well as connect to the regions major airports. This will have a catalytic impact, drive sustained growth and land release for decades to come.

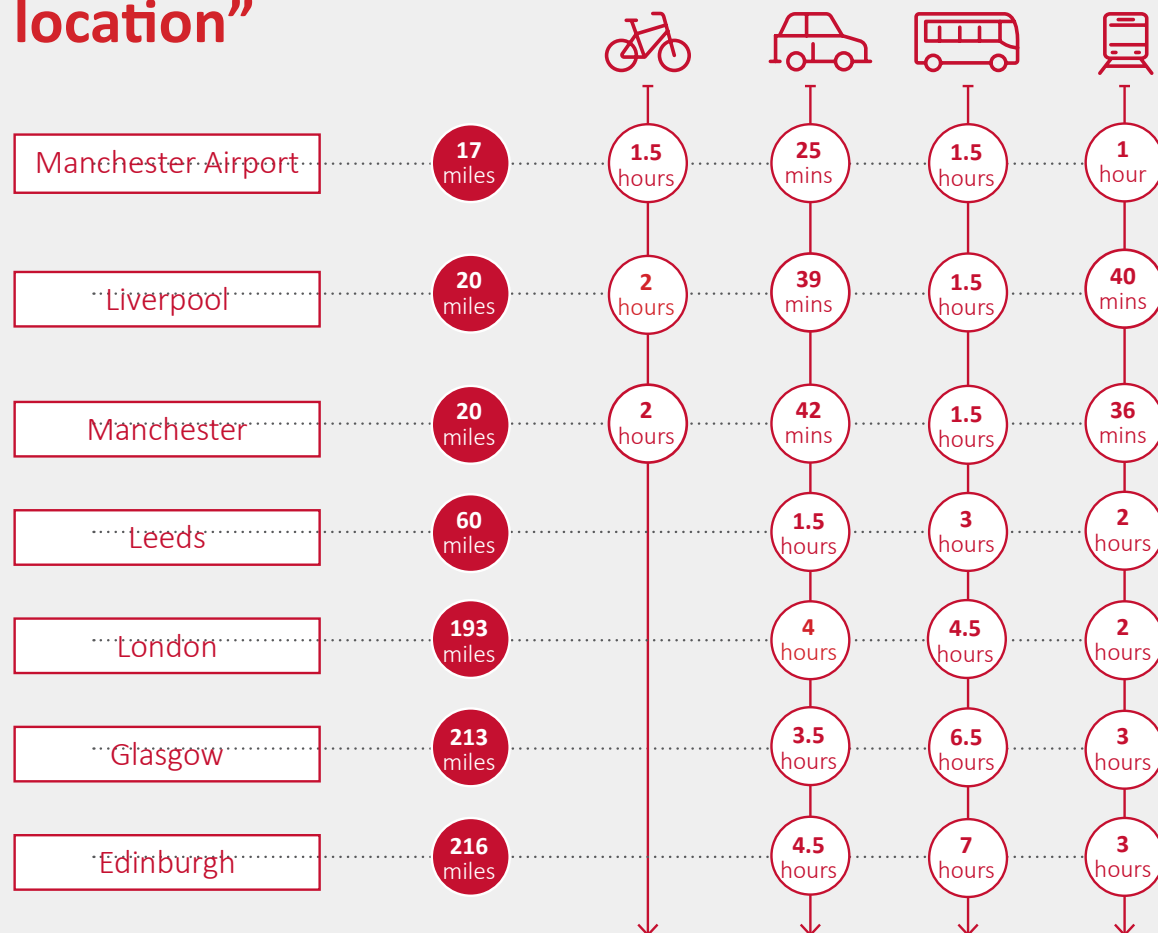
The marketing campaign for the New Town programme had the tag line of “The nation’s most central location”, this level of connectivity has proven key to the town’s enduring economic success, enhanced connectivity will drive continued future growth.

Enhanced connectivity will also contribute to reduced congestion as it will become quicker for business and leisure users to use the rail network rather than driving. The recent announcement of Northern Powerhouse Rail routed through Warrington Bank Quay will help boost productivity rates and close the productivity gap with London.

Northern Powerhouse Rail benefits and opportunities:



Warrington “the nation’s most central location”



1 hour

Rail connection to Manchester Airport



40 Minutes

Warrington Bank Quay to Liverpool and Manchester



2 Hours

Warrington Bank Quay to London

Figure 9. diagram illustrating journey times from existing Warrington Bank Quay

Opportunities for Growth

STRATEGIC LAND RELEASE AND MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Local Plan

Warrington's new Local Plan was adopted in December 2023. It seeks to meet Warrington's future development needs by planning for a minimum of 14,688 homes and 168 hectares of employment land in the Plan period up to 2038/39.

The Plan carries forward the Council's longstanding priority of promoting the ongoing regeneration of the Inner area of Warrington, ensuring productive development of brownfield land and securing significant investment in the Town Centre. The majority of new development will therefore be within the existing urban area and the Council has significant ambitions to intensify development in the Town Centre and surrounding inner urban area.

The existing urban area will deliver around 10,900 new homes in the Plan period. With regard to employment land, the Local Plan will protect and increase land supply within the existing employment areas at Omega, Birchwood and Woolston. Through its regeneration plans, the Council is seeking to significantly increase office supply in the Town Centre.

The prospect of a new Western Link will open up the Warrington Waterfront Main Development Area allocation, unlocking an additional 1,300 new homes. Over the longer term, the Council considers that Northern Powerhouse Rail (Northern Powerhouse Rail) provides the opportunity to broaden the Waterfront regeneration area, connecting it directly into the Town Centre and further increasing housing and employment land supply.

It is not possible however to meet all of Warrington's development needs within the existing urban area and there is the need for some land to be released from the Green Belt. The Local Plan will ensure that development on former Green Belt land complements rather than competes with development within the existing urban area and that new infrastructure investment will benefit Warrington as a whole.

The largest Main Development Area allocations which require release of land from the Green Belt are:

- » The South East Warrington Urban Extension, which will deliver around 2,400 homes, with the

potential for a further 1,800 homes beyond the Plan period, supported by a wide range of infrastructure and services; and

- » The development of 860 homes at the Fiddlers Ferry opportunity site, helping facilitate the redevelopment of the former power station itself for 101 hectares of brownfield employment land.

Further details on the Waterfront, including the longer term opportunity provided by Northern Powerhouse Rail, the South East Urban Extension and Fiddlers Ferry are provided in the following sections.



Figure 10. Warrington's major development areas

Warrington's Quarters

The local plan continues to reinforce the six development quarters in the Town Centre Masterplan and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD), these are:

1. Time Square & The Cultural Quarter
2. Stadium Quarter
3. Eastern Gateway
4. Southern Gateway Regeneration Quarter
5. Centre Park
6. Warrington Waterfront

The Quarters are split into distinctive character areas defined by place-making and architectural features. They are located within 1 mile of the Town Centre and provide the frame of analysis for both the Masterplan 2020 and the [First and Last Mile Transport Masterplan](#), the key objective of which the town is to create well connected and green streets.

The major development areas (figure 10) and the quarters (figure 11) are a key to deliver a step change on environmental sustainability, setting high standards and acting as exemplars for development elsewhere in the borough. It will be important that Development Frameworks for these major development areas deliver on this promise.

As important as the development frameworks will be the ability of these new sites to function as best practise exemplars setting the tone for the wider Warrington Climate Emergency Strategy.

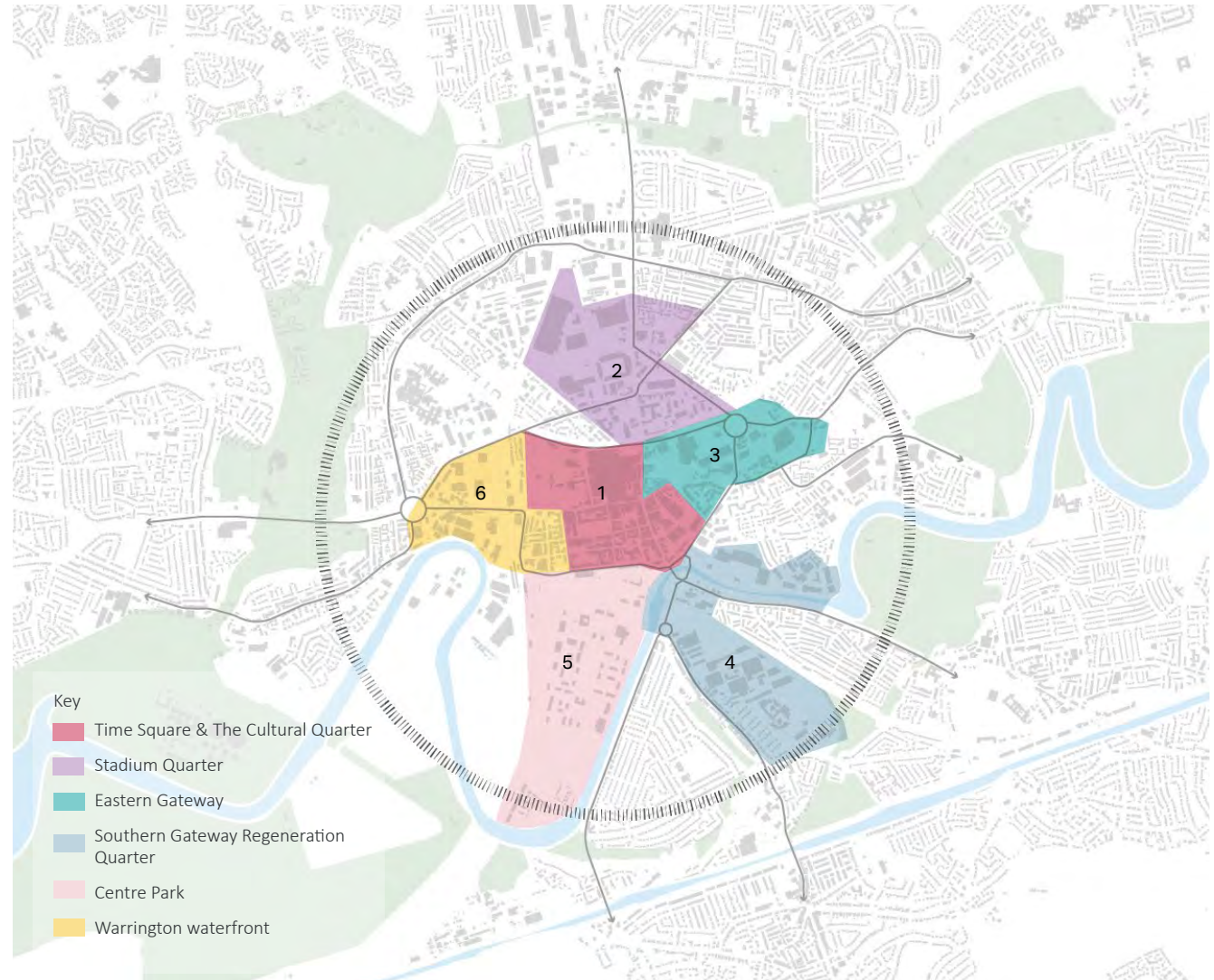


Figure 11. Warrington's quarters, described in the Town Centre masterplan 2020

Opportunities for Growth

DESIGN VISION AND AMBITION

The Warrington Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

The SPD seeks to facilitate ambitious, forward-thinking development in the borough, with a focus on high-quality design and placemaking. Through analysing the existing constraints and opportunities that Warrington faces, the SPD outlines a coherent vision for the borough moving forward. The Warrington Design Guide SPD includes the following 7 vision principles:

- » Design quality + innovation
- » Leading with landscape
- » Healthy, happy places
- » Climate resilience
- » Leading with identity
- » Inclusive, community led development
- » Connecting Warrington

Following this, the document outlines design guidance for how different types of spaces can contribute towards the vision, including our streets, green space, homes and workplaces. The aim is for developments of all scales and typologies to work towards a well-designed, distinct, green, accessible and net zero Warrington.



Figure 12. Ambition diagram, Warrington Design Guide

Warrington Bank Quay

The Waterfront is a key regeneration priority for the Council, the principle of which has been established in previous Local Plans. The Council's Town Centre masterplan envisages the Waterfront as an extension to Warrington Town Centre, providing a 1,500 to 3,800 new homes located within a high quality riverside environment and taking advantage of the proximity of Bank Quay Station.

The Western Link is the council's flagship transport infrastructure scheme and will provide a new road connection between the A56 Chester Road and the A57 Sankey Way, crossing the Manchester Ship Canal, the West Coast Mainline and the River Mersey. It will directly enable the development of the Waterfront area and through reducing traffic levels on the existing road network, it will facilitate a greater level of development within the Town Centre and across Inner Warrington. The impact of Northern Powerhouse Rail is also anticipated to be a driver of employment floorspace and housing density and the combined effect of Northern Powerhouse Rail and the Western Link will be truly transformative. Estimates suggest the site could deliver 25% of all homes required and up to 2m sq ft of primarily B1 Grade A office space. This also provides the opportunity to create a new place, connected to the river and adjacent green space, designed for the people of Warrington and able to reduce carbon emissions.



Figure 13. Warrington Bank Quay development area



Warrington Waterfront

The river is one of the Town Centre's underutilised natural assets. The vision for Warrington's Waterfront aims to capitalise on its multiple benefits, enhancing the relationship with the river and establishing a new destination for residents and visitors alike.

The Western Link transport project, brings an opportunity to facilitate the development of the Waterfront area by alleviating traffic congestion on the existing road network. The potential impact of Northern Powerhouse Rail on Warrington is substantial, reinvigorating the heart of the town centre. The proposals present an exciting prospect for opening up the town centre to the River Mersey, integrating pedestrian footpaths connecting the station to the river's edge and a bridge connection to Atherton Quay. Further details regarding the bridge are described in the [First and Last Mile Transport Masterplan](#).

Activation of the waterfront will create a multifunctional corridor, promoting health and well-being, introducing water-based leisure facilities and activities. Rewilding the river's edge will foster biodiversity and wildlife. Dedicated cycling and paths will encourage active modes of transport, with careful management to coexist harmoniously with nature. Jetties will provide access to the river's edge while safeguarding wildlife habitats.

The piazza will become a vibrant focal point in the town centre, bustling with activity from pop-up events and a diverse mix of establishments including restaurants, cafes, retail outlets, and leisure amenities.



Warrington Quayside



Opportunities for Growth

6,000 B8 LOGISTICS JOBS

Major Development Areas

While many areas for development are concentrated in the main town centre, there is still demand beyond the core for residential and employment developments. Warrington has consistently achieved great success with its district centres, and the major development areas of Fiddlers Ferry and the South East Warrington Urban Extension (SEWUE) will complement these and balance the development of Warrington Town Centre at Bank Quay Gateway.

Fiddler's Ferry (Westerly Site)

This significant site measures 101 hectares and will deliver 300,00 Square Metres of employment land, enabling over 6,000 jobs within the plan period. The site is being delivered by Peel Holdings and the demolition of 4 of the cooling towers has already taken place.

Following demolition, a residential neighbourhood comprising of a minimum of 860 new dwellings and supporting community facilities will be delivered. It is anticipated that this phase will be delivered in the period 2025- 2039. The employment land review has assessed the site as having the potential to become one of the town's largest formal employment centres. It is a sign of the confidence that the private sector has in the town that this site has been taken forward without government intervention. The windfall brownfield site has also resulted in a significant easing on pressure to release greenfield sites. The developer will also deliver a range of amenities to support the housing development.



Figure 14. Fiddlers Ferry development area

The South East Warrington Urban Extension (SEWUE)

South East Warrington Urban Extension will deliver a minimum of 4,200 homes of which a minimum of 2,400 homes will be delivered in the period covered by the Local Plan to 2038. As such it has the potential to deliver 15% of the housing supply over the plan period and is therefore the largest residential allocation.

South East Warrington Urban Extension (SEWUE) will be developed as a sustainable urban extension to the south east of the main urban area of Warrington. It will create an attractive, well-designed and distinctive place set within a strong landscape framework of open spaces. The Urban Extension will be well served by new community infrastructure and a network of sustainable transport links maximising travel by walking, cycling and public transport.



Figure 15. SEWUE Extension area



03

A Focus on Business



Economic Profile

PRODUCTIVITY & GDP GROWTH

There are over 8,000 businesses operational in Warrington employing over 138,000 people.

Historically, Warrington's key attraction has been its connectivity, a function of this advantage is an excellent employment base and significant job opportunities. There are more jobs in Warrington than can be filled by its working age population. The ONS Gross Domestic Product heat map, demonstrates that the North West has the second largest GDP outside London and the South East and Warrington is one of a few examples UK Wide that produces high levels of GDP.

GDP output per head of population is £44,000 and second only to Manchester in the wider region at £51,000 (which is itself top 10 location within UK) and compares favourably to the UK average of £34,000. Local output that contributes the greatest proportion of Warrington's GDP figures are administrative and support services and wholesale and retail trade. So Warrington is a significant example of growth both regionally and nationally.



Figure 16. GDP Per Head for UK Local Authorities 1998-21, UK. Ranked 17 out of 229 Nationally

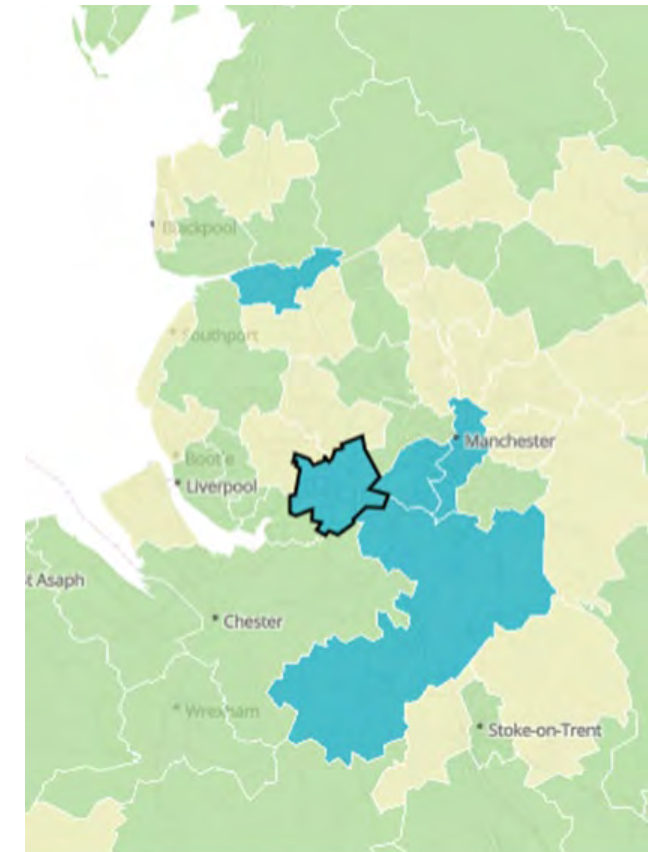


Figure 17. GDP Per Head for UK Local Authorities 1998-21, North West. Ranked 2 out of 20 Regionally

Unemployment levels in Warrington remain fairly stable. The key statistics that illustrate the Economic Profile are below.

The largest sectors for employment in Warrington are professional, scientific and technical services (16.5%), as well as wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles services (15.8%).

Warrington (at 41.8%) has a higher rate of the population with a NVQ level 4 qualification than the North West (38.7%) and Great Britain (43.1%).

41.8%
Population
qualified to NVQ
Level 4

39%
of occupations include
professional and
technical occupations

16.5%
Professional,
scientific and
technical

15.8%
Wholesale, retail
and motor
services



Figure 18. Omega Industrial Park, Warrington

Economic Profile

FORECAST GROWTH - FINANCE, IT AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Employment Change

Over the period 1996-2021 an additional 42,000 jobs were created, the largest increases being in financial services, government and transport. Warrington's heavy manufacturing base is now comparatively small at just 6,000 jobs and has experienced a period of contractions over the last two decades. Where appropriate, we will intervene, to tackle industrial obsolescence and work with Central Government to bring this back into beneficial use.

The Local Plan has completed an Economic Development Needs Assessment 2021 which summarises historic market trends as well as drawing on data from Cambridge Economics and Oxford Economics to forecast future land requirements. Overall, the two forecasts consistently show that Warrington saw strong growth in certain office sectors plus transport and storage. This is consistent with the patterns of employment and data for employment between 1995-2021. The review highlights that most development in the Borough was, pre-2010 for office uses and, post 2010, for logistics. A slight decline in manufacturing is forecast to 2038.

The forecasting anticipate that the highest average jobs growth will be in financial and business services of circa 8,000 new jobs and a further 3,500 new jobs in government services.

**Employment change
1996-2021 has seen
net increase of 40,000
jobs. Growth has been
Financial Services and
Government Jobs**

40,000

Financial services and
government jobs

Change in employment by broad sector 1996 - 2021

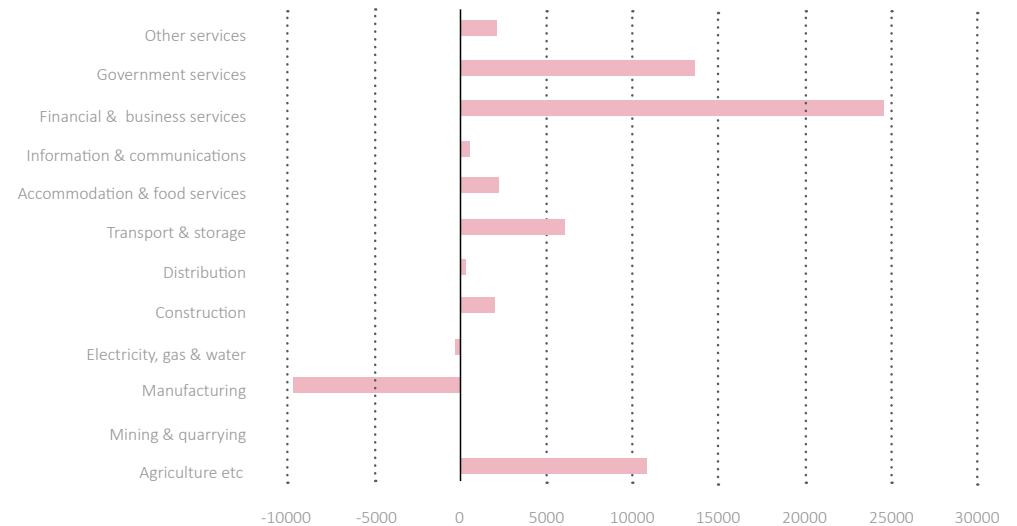


Figure 19. Change in employment by broad sector 1996- 2021- Cambridge Econometrics Data, Source Cambridge Econometric, 2021

Opportunities for Employment Growth

A sectoral employment analysis by the ONS reveals that Warrington has specialisms in utilities, logistics, science and construction. In terms of opportunities for future growth, the Council is looking to deepen its existing educational partnerships such as Chester University to grow jobs in this area and provide a bridge between regional education institutions and the town's significant employers such as Rolls Royce, National Nuclear Laboratories and United Utilities. Despite a large growth in financial services jobs (25,000), on a per head of population basis, the town has a comparatively low proportion of jobs in financial services when compared to neighbouring conurbations. Cambridge Economics has forecast a further 6,000 jobs in financial services in the next two decades so there is an opportunity to match this forecast demand with a new Grade A office pipeline in the centre.

There is a potential regional dynamic between the cities of Manchester and Liverpool for redeveloping older, poorly located, obsolete industrial sites for commercial property and residential uses and the strategic land release of additional well located logistics land next to the strategic road network in Warrington. A more cohesive approach and synergy between regional rather than local planning targets, the town's housing growth ambitions, and protection of green belt sites in major cities as well as redevelopment of obsolete industrial sites for more productive uses – could be beneficial for all parties. This

would also strengthen the public investment case for investing in the town centre to deliver greater densities and optimal economic land release across the region as the cities continue to regenerate and repopulate by redeveloping their obsolete industrial sites.

There is also an opportunity to ensure that these regenerated sites are ready for business to deliver against and take advantage of our net zero ambitions – ensuring that businesses can adapt as necessary to stay in business and thrive.

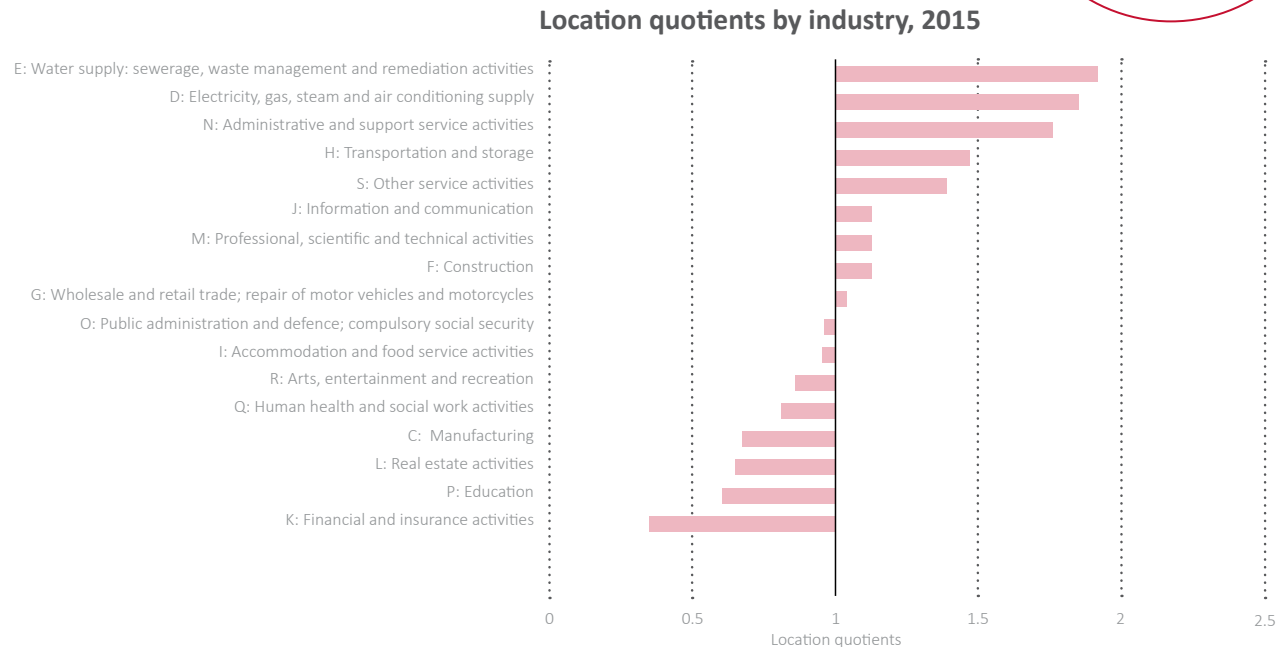
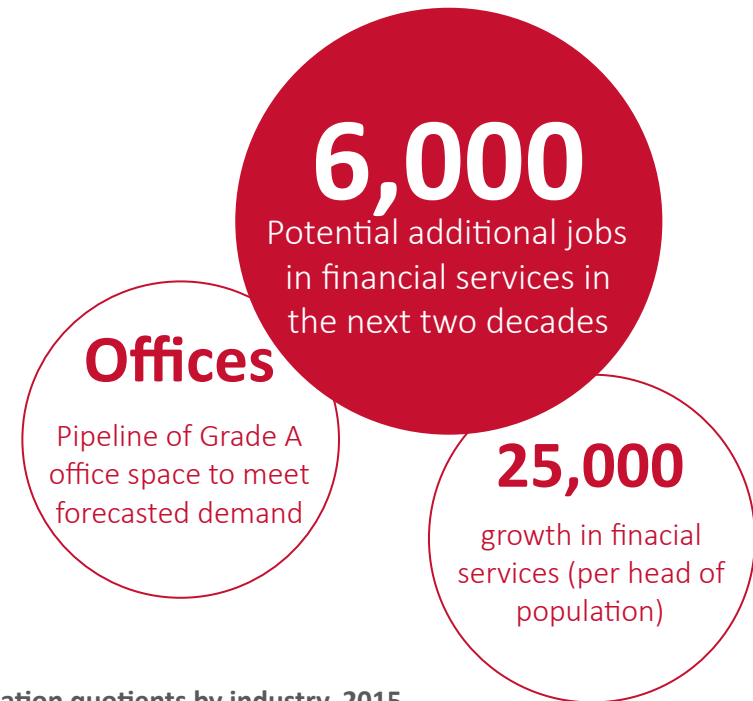


Figure 20. Location quotients by industry, 2015 - Cambridge Econometrics Data, Source Cambridge Econometric, 2021

Property Profile

BEST IN CLASS ASSETS

Market Overview: Local, Regional and National

The recent business rates revaluation identifies changes in asset classes between 2017 and 2023 and also provides a local, regional and national comparison.

Key Headlines

- » Warrington's growth has outperformed the North West and National average over 6 year period
- » Nationally retail is down and industrial is up
- » Peripheral city regions seen highest growth e.g. Knowsley, South Ribble and Rossendale
- » "The North" is a misnomer as the North West's growth is higher than North East
- » London's property growth is slowing
- » Film and TV, Brickworks and Minor Airports have seen a 70% percentage increase change
- » Hotels and retail malls have seen a 30% decrease change in value

Post Covid Trends

Post covid, the emerging market trends we expect to see continue are as follows:

- » A need to diversify town centre retail offer towards an experience-based leisure offering,
- » Continued flexible working
- » Potentially further growth in flexible office space
- » A continued demand and growth in logistics space near strategic road network

Looking to the future, the employment land review identified 80 hectares of B1 office space take up over last 20 years (equates to circa 4m+ sq ft of office space). Given changing market trends it is very difficult to forecast B1 Office requirements. That said, the town centre should benefit from being the only hub station on the Northern Powerhouse Rail line. The enhanced connectivity will underpin localised demand to deliver 2m sq ft in the sequentially preferable town centre. Manchester has ten times the population, a similar employment density, and is

forecasting ten times the amount of office space, 70% of which is within the town centre. In light of these changing times and complexities around forecasting a minimum target of 2m sq ft of space is the Council's aspiration and is consistent with other Local Authority approaches in terms of scale. In the event that demand is greater, more sites will be released in the town centre, in addition to existing centres of Lingley Mere and Birchwood.

| Area | All sectors (%) | Retail (%) | Industry (%) | Office | Other |
|----------------|-----------------|------------|--------------|--------|-------|
| Warrington U A | 8.2 % | -14.1 % | 25.2 % | 8.4 % | 6.8 % |
| North West | 7.4 % | -9.9 % | 23.2 % | 17.2 % | 5.4 % |
| England | 7.3 % | -10.0 % | 27.8 % | 10.3 % | 4.4 % |

Figure 21. VOA change in business rates valuation 2017-2023



Post covid, the market trends demonstrate the need to diversify the town centre offer towards experience-based leisure, culture, flexible working and office space

Annual Property Review

INVESTOR APPETITE AND CONFIDENCE

Property Footprint

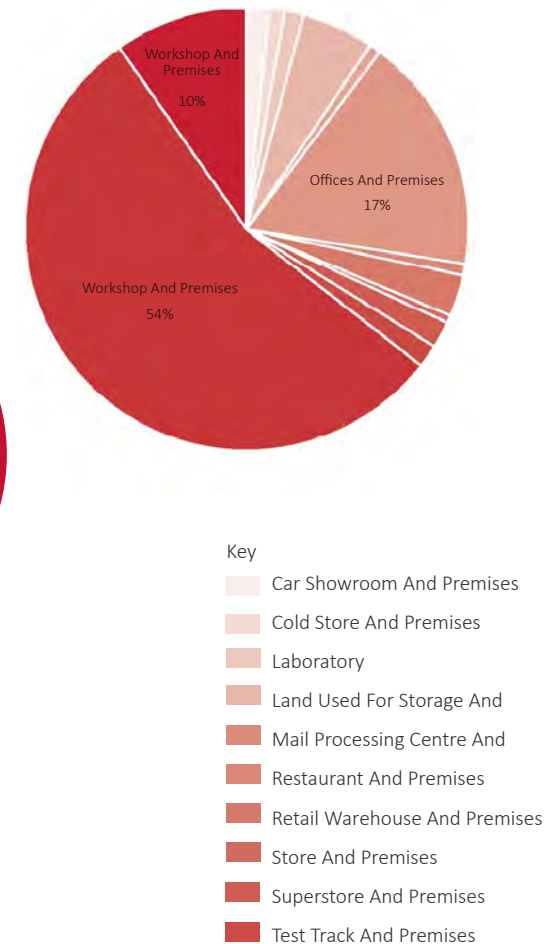
Warrington has the same volume of industrial space as Manchester and Liverpool respectively despite being 1/10th of the population size and represents 54% of total commercial floorspace. The town now serves as a regionally significant logistics hub with best in class fully let logistics and distribution assets.

Offices make up 17% of floorspace but over 60% of jobs. It is therefore vitally important that there is reinvestment in the existing 5.75 sqm of office stock, and that the Council looks to actively promote a proportion of the suggested 4m sq ft of demand in the Employment Land Review and establish a new build pipeline of Grade A office space, ideally within the town centre to exploit enhanced connectivity Northern Powerhouse Rail will deliver.

The ONS's analysis of census data shows a functional travel to work area and commuter market area that services Frodsham in the South and Wigan to the North. The data captures that more people commute into Warrington than commute out – 13,000+ each day – that also serves residents from Halton and Wigan. Overall Business Rates re-valuation exercise shows that the property market has grown by 8.2% since 2017 across all sectors and compares to regional growth of 7.2% over the same period. Broad market trends show that Warehousing and Logistics space is outperforming all other asset classes at a local level as demand is strong as evidenced by recent transactions with B & M Bargains and Amazon at OMEGA.

Matching the changes in employment markets with future demand is a key focus within the town centre

VOA Total Floor Space WBC 2023



8 million sqft
Logistics space at
Omega

3 million sqft
Office space at
Birchwood

700,000 sqft
Laboratory space
at Daresbury

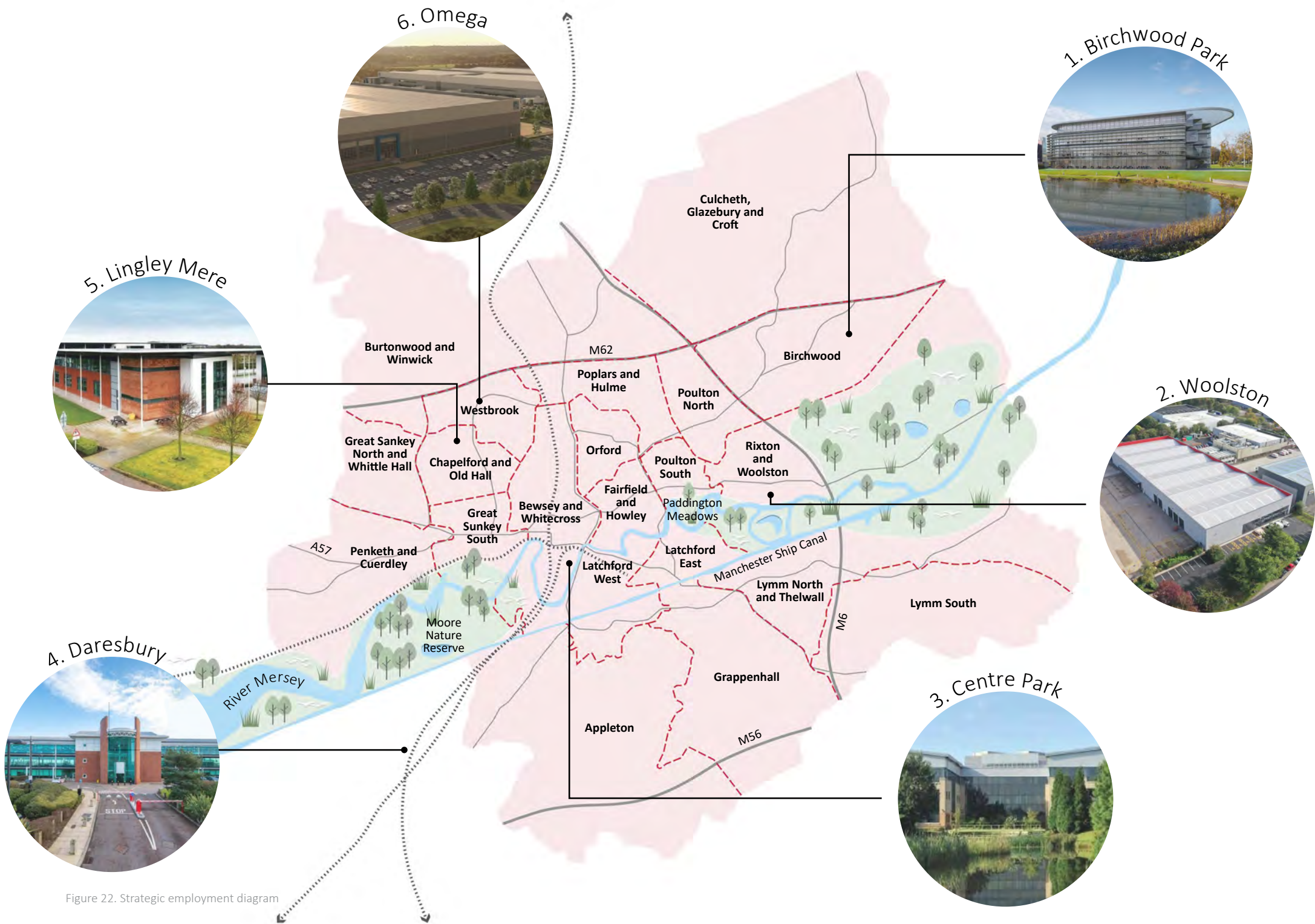


Figure 22. Strategic employment diagram

Annual Property Review

INVESTOR APPETITE AND CONFIDENCE


Residential

Sales volumes and values have bounced back since covid and are consistent with the last iteration of Warrington Means Business, however, activity and confidence from Housebuilders in the town has arguably increased.

Riverside Reach, a Countryside scheme on edge of town, has proved to be its most popular scheme nationally.

Other notable developments:

- » Phase Seven of Omega South, with Bellway Homes being granted permission to build 195 homes on land formerly occupied by RAF Burtonwood airbase
- » Former Beers Timber Yard- brownfield edge of centre development for 189 apartment
- » John Street- 8 storey complex containing 362 apartments for private rent
- » Appleton Cross- 370 home scheme for family housing brought forward by David Wilson
- » Grappenhall Heys (Phase 1 and 2)- 228 homes for families on edge of town
- » Peel Hall is a significant residential scheme and the highest value residential land deal ever in the North of England, a £100m land transaction.



“Rivers Edge, which is located along the Mersey next to Centre Park, has generated more interest than any of Countryside’s 95 nationwide developments since the start of the year. Homebuyers are increasingly seeking greener living.”

Jo Jamieson, chief executive of Partnerships North at Countryside

Figure 23. Rivers Edge Warrington

Industrial

E-commerce is the single most important issue driving activity in the industrial and logistics sector. The UK is Europe's most mature e-commerce market with over a third of UK retail sales being undertaken online during the height of the pandemic although this has now dropped back to a still substantial 28 %. This has driven take up rates and demand for large warehouses at OMEGA and the Council has now released the majority of employment land at this location to meet market demand.

The property review identifies 41 deals and a total of 860,000 sq ft of space, with the average size of deals at 21,000 sq ft. The largest transaction deal of 257,319 sq ft was by European Tyre Enterprises. There has been reasonable activity in the investment market with two transactions of over £30m at primary yields within the wider market, which indicates continued success of the employment areas associated with the motorway box.

The strength of market demand for Industrial logistics space in Warrington is demonstrable with the recent Mountpark development. The project sits within the wider Omega scheme and totals 740,000 sq ft and was fully let before practical completion, and then immediately sold at practical completion to real estate investment company.

“This asset adds to the impressive portfolio of best-in-class assets acquired to date. The North West market has been one of the best performers in the UK over the past few years and we believe it will continue to do so for best-in-class logistics and distribution assets.”

Ekaterina Avdonina, chief executive and co-founder at Mirasta

Figure 24. Mountpark, Warrington

Annual Property Review

INVESTOR APPETITE AND CONFIDENCE

Office

The Warrington office market consists of approximately 5.5m sq ft of office accommodation. 2.7m sq ft of that total floor space exists in Birchwood with the remainder located across Warrington predominantly on established motorway corridor business parks as well as Warrington town centre. Prime office rents have grown steadily over the last two decades from £15 psf to £22 psf. A Warrington Annual Property Review 2023 identifies 37 deals for 230,000 sq ft total (21800sqm), with average size of deal 6,400sqft (589sqm). The largest transaction deal recorded was 35,793sq ft at Birchwood Park by the Arne Clo – on-line shopping company.

The service sector remains a dominant proportion of the economy in terms of jobs generated but less so in terms of its land and property requirements. Technical advantages and the changing expectations and working practices of businesses, have polarised the office market in the North West and elsewhere. Large businesses are seeking high grade offices in well located positions such as Manchester City Centre at the expense of out of centre schemes. Micro businesses and start-ups are seeking flexible space in serviced schemes or small offices let on flexible terms more generally. This allows them to change the amount of space they occupy rapidly in response to changing trends in factors such as homeworking and technological change. Recent ONS data shows that 30% of the workforce are now working flexibly post covid and ultimately this is dampening demand and absorption rates in the short term.

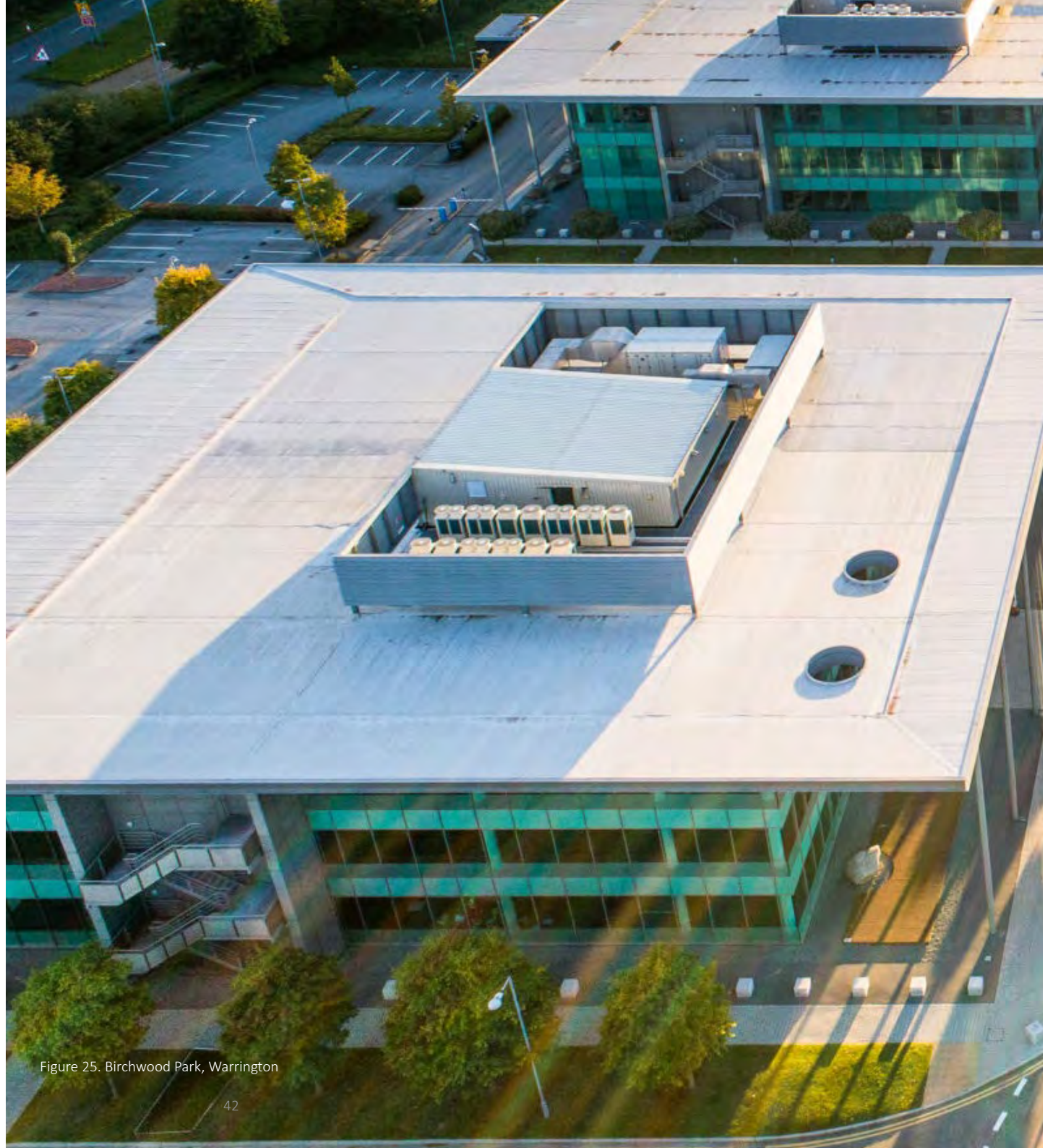


Figure 25. Birchwood Park, Warrington

An aerial photograph of a modern office park. The main building is a large, multi-story structure with a flat, light-colored roof and extensive glass facades. To the left of the building is a landscaped area with several rectangular green lawns, each bordered by a low concrete wall and lined with small, rounded trees. A curved road or driveway is visible in the bottom left corner. In the background, other buildings and a parking lot with several cars are visible under a clear sky.

“At 3 million sq ft Birchwood Office Park is the largest Out of Town Office Park in the North West. Its enduring appeal with tenants has been due to its affordable and well connected office space”

A Focus on Business

Small and Medium Enterprises

In terms of flexible office space for start ups, the town has a number of organised centres at St James Business Park, The Base and Pure Offices all based in the town centre.

The centre for cities research has highlighted Warrington as one of its key economic successes, with high levels of growth in “New Economy” firms such as computer games development and business services, Cambridge Economics has forecast 10,000 more jobs over the plan period in Finance, IT and Business Support.

Throughout its history Warrington has been good for business, large and small alike. Birchwood and Omega now host some of the most significant employers in the Borough. However, Warrington now ranks highly amongst the 10 best cities and towns for SME jobs and this will be a significant focus for Warrington going forward.

Warrington has been named the 5th best town or city to work for a small business in Britain, – one of Europe’s largest small business lenders

Iwoca’s (online business finance specialist) annual ‘Top 25 Towns & Cities for SME Jobs’ list, which ranks areas using ONS data on average wage, commute, job density, house price and growth of the number of small businesses, found that in 2023, Glasgow, Salford and Liverpool are the top three areas to consider if you want to work for a small business.

Warrington came in fifth place, up from 9th last year, ranking highly for its short average commuting time and job density. Warrington residents typically spend 25 minutes travelling between work and home, compared to 40 minutes for those living in Greater London. The North West centre also boasts the highest ratio of jobs to workers out of the top 10, with 1.17 jobs available for every individual of working age. As a growing regional hotspot for technology – and home to enterprise hubs such as The Base – Warrington continues to be an attractive place to work and put down roots.

The table below, shows that in Warrington 88% of all companies are micro sized businesses employing under 10 people, and our position as the 5th best city in the UK as a location for SMEs means that this is an incredibly important part of our economy.

The Council’s aspiration is to grow the size of flexible office space within the town centre from 150,000 to 500,000 sq ft and actively promote diversifying the retail offer towards employment uses.

Future business growth could simply be about growing this base into small and medium sized businesses. The Council’s role in this is to foster strong working relationships with the business community through Warrington Chamber of Commerce and the Business Exchange.

Although there are several moving parts to growing our SME base: the right property, the right infrastructure and the right help with development is key. Warrington has a good combination of these, however, in order to fulfil our growth ambitions and fulfil our potential as an SME hub we need to focus on quality of place.

Of particular importance within the provision of SME space will be upgrading existing office stock to meet with our climate emergency strategy and our climate and sustainability policy. We know that if we make Warrington a great place for people, businesses will follow. We will only get one chance to take full advantage of our opportunities – our focus is a town for people to enjoy, a town with a beating heart.

| Business Counts (2023) | Warrington (Numbers) | Warrington (%) | North West (Numbers) | North West (%) |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Enterprises | | | | |
| Micro (0 to 9) | 7,390 | 88.1 | 235,640 | 88.3 |
| Small (10 to 49) | 785 | 9.4 | 25,715 | 9.6 |
| Medium (50 to 249) | 160 | 1.9 | 4,490 | 1.7 |
| Large (250+) | 50 | 0.6 | 1,110 | 0.4 |

Figure 26. Warrington Means Business Population Estimates, Source ONS



The aspiration is to grow flexible office space from 150,000 to 500,000 sqft

Figure 27. The base, Warrington, bottom left
 Figure 28. St. James Business centre, top right
 Figure 29. Pure office, top left
 Figure 30. Internal of St. James Business Centre, Warrington, bottom right





An aerial photograph of a city grid, overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The image shows a dense urban layout with streets, buildings, and green spaces. The text '04' is positioned in the top left corner.

04

A Reinvigorated Heart

A Reinvigorated Heart

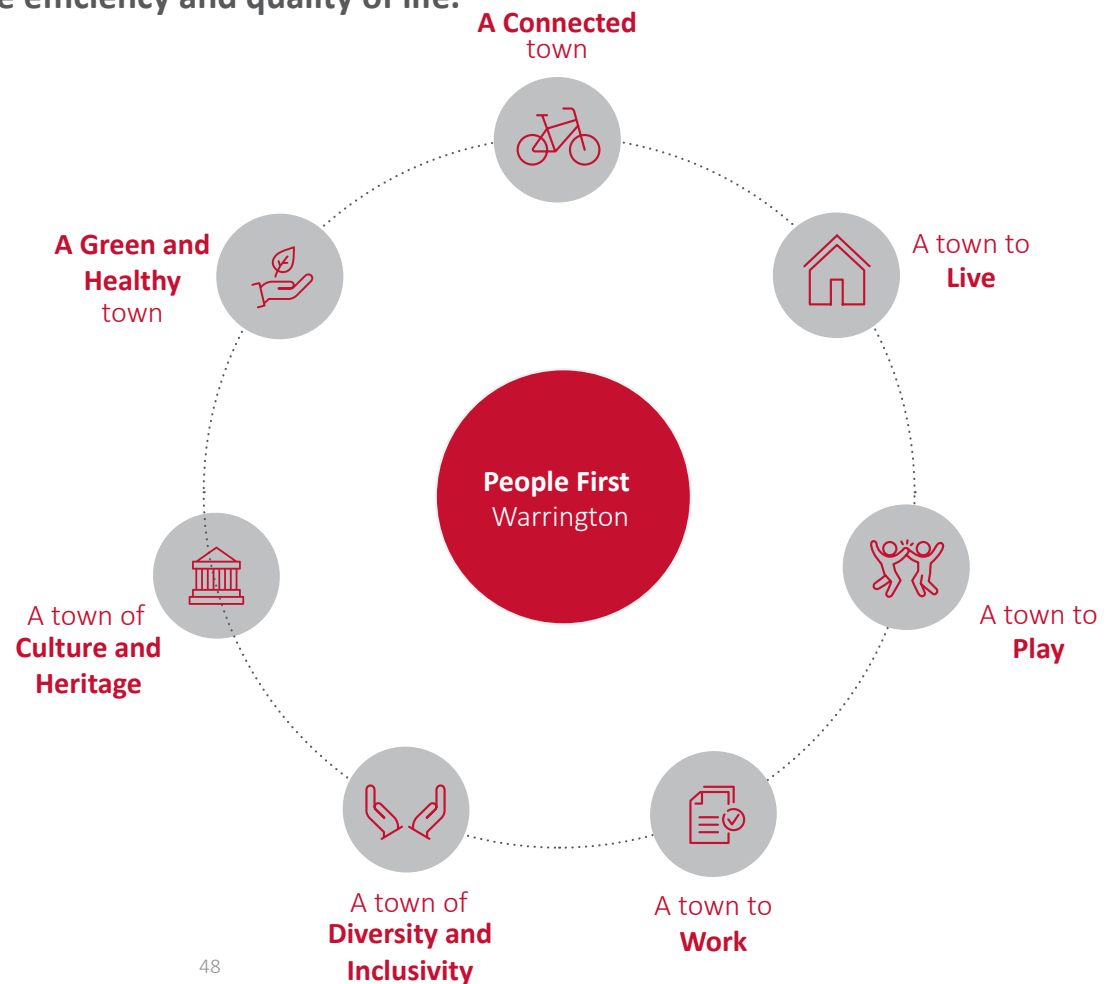
REBALANCING THE CENTRE

Warrington aims to become a globally recognised destination. We celebrate our heritage and waterfront, envisioning a bustling town centre as the heart of our community. With a focus on sustainability, we attract talent and investments, striving to set the standard for future cities. Through Circular Parklands and active travel initiatives, we prioritise people, green spaces, mobility to promote health and well-being. Investing in transportation infrastructure, we enhance connectivity and economic growth. We integrate technology and smart solutions to improve efficiency and quality of life.

Creating the optimal environment for business and growth is undoubtedly crucial, however, it's equally vital to create places for people, catering for the community. At the start of the New Town project, 70% of employment opportunities were in the centre of town. Whilst the town still has a manufacturing base, it has reduced and over time, new growth and job opportunities have migrated towards the motorways to create a decentralised employment base.

However, we are now beginning to see a shift back towards town centre growth opportunities. The well-connected pedestrianised centre of Warrington is now home to just 20% of the town's employment opportunities. The Council is therefore seeking to capitalise on rail enhancements in the centre to diversify and supplement the town's retail centre to increase population and increase the employment base. The creation of a mixed-use centre is part of the Heart of Warrington programme to REPOPULATE and RENEW.

A people first approach is essential. A place that resonates with people is inherently attractive to businesses. This approach is at the centre of our efforts to further enhance the positive steps taken in the regeneration of the town centre. To fully capitalise on our strategic opportunities, several elements must align to ensure they meet the needs of the community and our net zero ambitions.



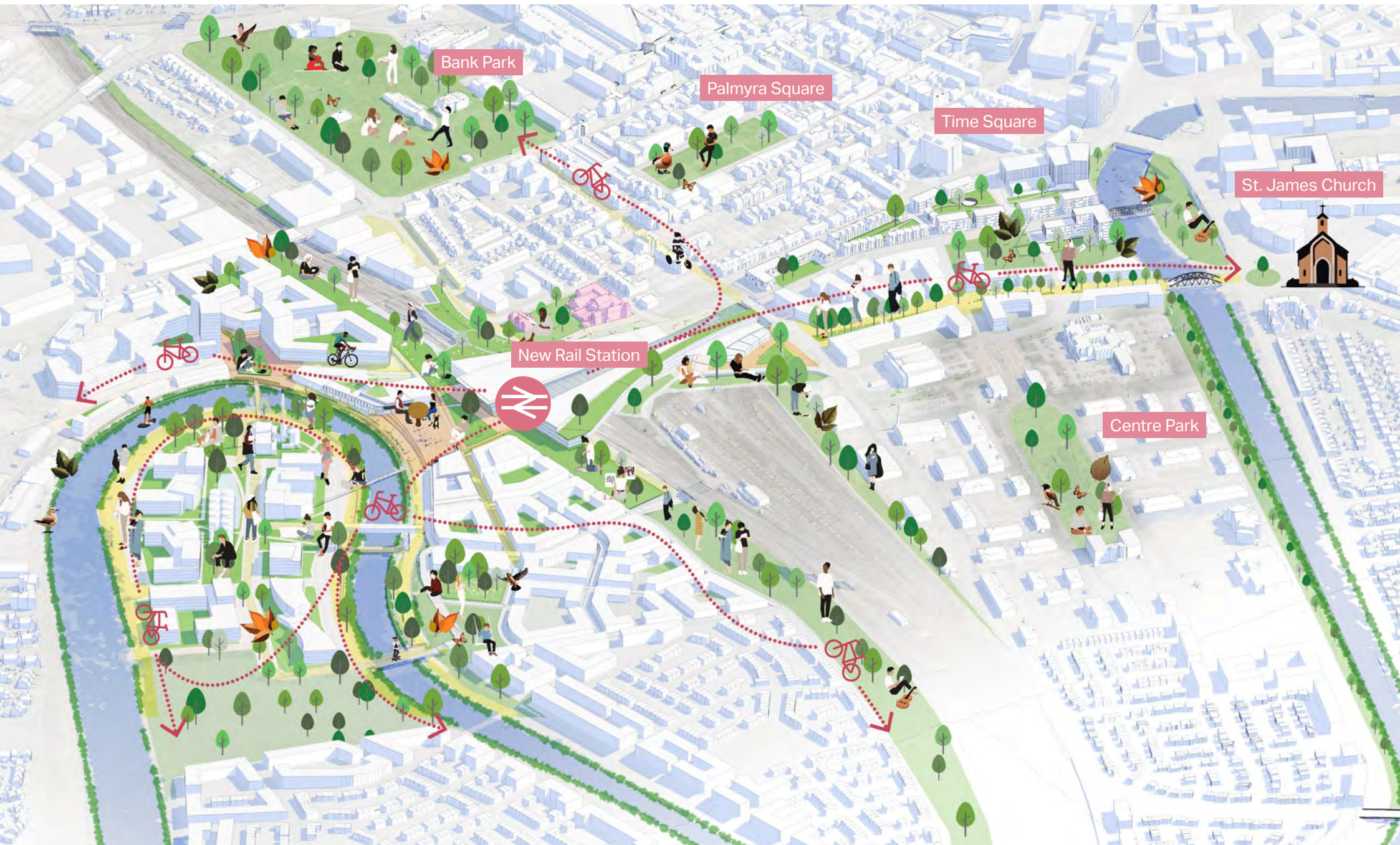


Figure 31. Concept diagram illustrating the town centre vision

A Reinvigorated Heart

REBALANCING THE CENTRE



A Connected Town

Creating a connected, people focussed town will require a coordinated partnership approach to road, rail and regeneration activity to deliver distinctive places to live and work.

The centre of Warrington is car dominated and difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to use. The reliability of bus services is often severely disrupted by busy traffic conditions close to the Town Centre. The [First and Last Mile Transport Masterplan](#) sets out priority improvements of journeys to and from the Town Centre for pedestrians, cyclists and buses. The [Local Transport Plan \(LTP4\)](#) has developed a package of measures to improve the [First and Last Mile Transport Masterplan](#) programme;

- » Transport for the North Smart Ticketing
- » Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles
- » Autonomous and Connected Vehicles

Key infrastructure to underpin sustained growth and development is clearly identified as;

1. Delivery of an Northern Powerhouse Rail ready network & Western Link- Unlock up to 3,800 homes
2. Hub Rail Station at Warrington Bank Quay as a destination
3. Primary Route cycle network and traffic free orbital routes

The Western Link will unlock the delivery of over 3,800 homes. The benefits of the Western Link are set out below and will result in the rationalisation of the town centre road network in order to prioritise cyclist and pedestrians over the motorcar. Key benefits;

- » Improved north – south connection
- » Traffic relief for the town centre – improving air quality and reducing congestion
- » High level Manchester Ship Canal crossing
- » Opening up 112 hectare major development area
- » Making accessible 300 hectares of greenspace
- » Critical enabling scheme for Warrington Bank Quay Northern Powerhouse Rail station to ensure this station is fully accessible by all types of transport

The Western Link will enable the First and Last Mile Primary Route Cycling network upgrades and creation of planned direct radial routes integrate with 35km of car free, cycle superhighways and greenways that surround the town.

What will be vital is that the benefits that the Western Link will bring to town centre traffic are maximised. Considerable progress has already been made in removing much of the through traffic in the town centre in the last few years to support its further regeneration. The First and Last Mile improvements need to build on this by improving access for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users of the town centre, whilst ensuring cars can still access the town centre and that this complimentary with additional car parking located on the

periphery of the town centre to intercept cars and avoid unnecessary cross-town movements.

This will all help to deliver the changes set out in the Local Transport Plan to shift journeys from car to more sustainable modes of transport and the Western Link highway scheme will better route traffic across Warrington, creating opportunities to rethink and improve how people travel within the town centre and around its edges. This will build on the success of the Centre Park Link scheme.

The fundamental aspiration for the Masterplan therefore seeks to better balance the movement of people on streets, whilst creating environments that are more attractive.

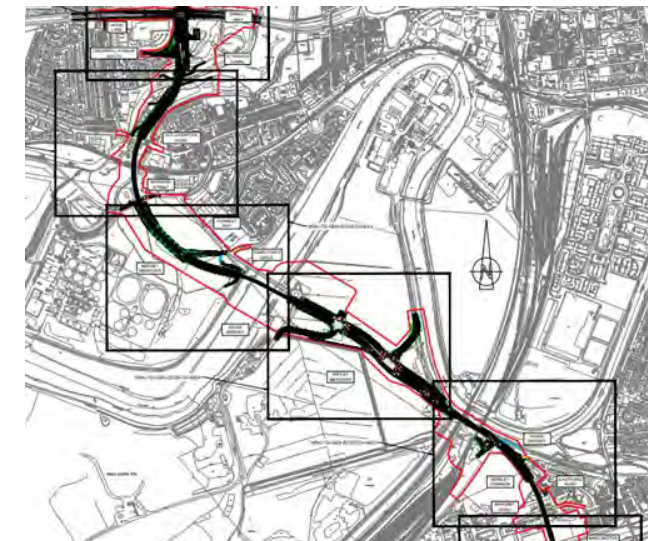


Figure 32. Western Link Plan, Source Image: Balford Beatty

The evidence base developed during the Outline Business Case (OBC) work for Western Link highlights a forecast reduction in 2-way traffic flows of over 15% to 2036.

All conventional work on traffic flow growth suggests that the delivery of new capacity results in the release of suppressed demand onto the highway network. Therefore, in line with the vision for Local Transport Plan 4 (LP4) and the forecasts that the Western Link will reduce traffic travelling through the Town Centre cordons, an opportunity exists to create higher quality connections to and through the Town Centre with a focus on people, place and sustainable movement, rather than allowing the capacity to be used up by further growth in vehicle traffic. Analysis on the forecast percentage changes in traffic flows in the AM Peak on selected roads, as a result of building Western Link, suggests the largest changes in

Figure 33. Electric bus



flows are decreases along the western section of the ring road, such as on Parker St at Bank Quay Station (-51%) and on the new Centre Park Link (-73%).

This is because Western Link will divert more east-west than north-south movements. It is also worth noting though that there are reductions in flows all around the ring road (ranging from -6% to -51% at different sections). This demonstrates the opportunity for the First and Last Mile Transport Masterplan (FLMTM) to take advantage of the reduced traffic flows and reallocate road space away from private vehicles.



Figure 35. TransPennine Upgrade

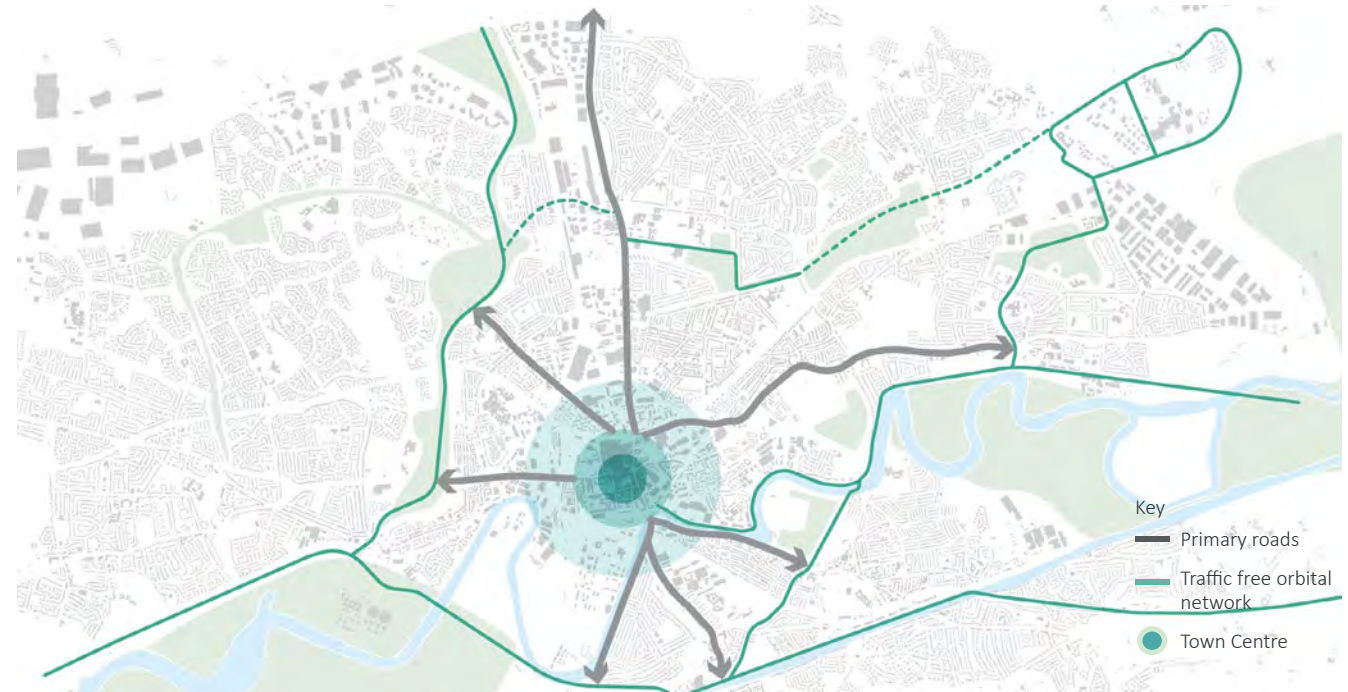


Figure 34. Integrated cycle network. Primary route on road and traffic free orbital

A Reinvigorated Heart

REBALANCING THE CENTRE



A Town to Live

Warrington has one of the lowest housing densities along the Northern Powerhouse Rail line. The Council's 2020 Masterplan sets out the ambition for 6,000 homes within inner Warrington over the plan period and use Northern Powerhouse Rail as a step change to drive density.

The Local Housing Company, Incrementum has in turn played its part in making the Town more attractive to people and contributed to the total of 1,400 new homes in the Town last year with new homes being built on Omega South, at various Gemini sites, in South Warrington and in the Town Centre.

The Supplementary Planning Document built on this and set out aspiration for mid rise housing of 130 dwellings per hectare. The market has responded with proposals for number of projects at scale.



Figure 36. Cockhedge

We have started to deliver against this target in partnership with developers and registered providers in the town.

Academy Street

Owned by Torus this scheme has started the move within the Town Centre to greater height and density but still enabling good quality accommodation, with good access to amenities and public transport. A rent to buy scheme has targeted First Time Buyers seeking to get first foot on Housing Market. The site was fully let in a period of 12 months.

Cockhedge

A live major planning application to deliver 3 x 12 storey apartment blocks to deliver 900 apartments on the former retail site currently being promoted by a private developer and the council jointly.

John Street

Part of the Stadium Quarter masterplan, is currently on site with over 350 apartments due to complete this year for rent.

Sigma Capital Riverside

The riverside scheme has delivered over 500 homes with a variety of tenures and types. The scheme has attracted significant investment with 200 apartments at over 3 storeys on the urban fringe at Countryside's rivers edge scheme and the reported demand is strong.





A Town to Play

Our ambition is to animate the town centre with events, activities, arts and culture, ensuring opportunities for our communities to come together for fun, celebration, culture and new experiences.

We want to create a captive audience for businesses to thrive and our evolving year-round programme of events and family-friendly activities is one of the key strategies for animating our town centre with light, sound, colour and play.



A renewed focus on 'scaling up' our ambition and impact has been enabled by funding from the Warrington Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID), UK Shared Prosperity Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England. We have recognised that engaging our communities is key in developing a sense of identity, pride and ownership across the whole borough, and our mission has been to develop a town centre programme which attracts more diverse audiences and develops an understanding of shared history and emerging cultures across the town.

In recent years, visitors to the town centre have been able to gaze at Luke Jerram's floating three-dimensional artwork, Gaia, learn about climate emergency and the biodiversity crisis when EKO, the 13-foot-tall Sea Giant visited the town centre with a team of dancers, follow the story of sea creatures and their battle to survive in an ocean full of rubbish alongside a true-to-life 50ft inflatable sperm whale and take part in a lantern parade led by a team of drummers and ending at a spectacular light projection onto the historic façade of the Town Hall.

Our growing calendar of town centre events, which includes Lunar New Year, Proms in the Square, Warrington Arts Festival, Warrington Pride, Warrington Mela and Warrington's Weekend Wonderland, to name just a few, reflects the increasing diversity in our local communities, providing something for everyone.

Figure 37. Interactive event for children

Figure 38. Parade

Figure 39. Alice in Wonderland in Warrington



A Reinvigorated Heart

REBALANCING THE CENTRE



A Town To Work

If you live in Warrington, statistically speaking you are more likely to be: in full time employment, earn more per month, be highly educated and have experienced higher house price growth than the regional or national average.

The likelihood is that you will work in a professional, scientific, or technical industry and benefit from a localised commute of under 30 minutes. If you have children, then it is more likely that they will be obtaining above average educational outcomes at one of the top 10 best rated schools in the country as assessed by OFSTED.

The last thirty years has seen profound growth in the service-based economy and more recently “New Economy” firms in Warrington. New investment and forecast growth is likely to come from universities, finance and IT facing business support services.

Our focus will therefore be on enabling SMEs, predominantly within the centre of town based around rail hubs to set up and grow. The strategy is to de-risk entrepreneurship for start-ups and encourage the co-location of tech start-ups in the same physical space (100,000 sq ft managed business centres) to grow existing IT clusters within the town as has happened at the fully let Base development.

A greater concentration of employment opportunities, with a greater mix of employment types located within our town centre and close to public transport hubs and connections, will provide a boost to our efforts towards supporting local people into employment. Physical proximity, accessibility, a local supply chain providing a mix of entry level and mixed skill based jobs, are all critical to enabling people into the workplace. We already work with employers, partners and colleagues to deliver targeted employment support programmes. Further focus will be put on working with employers to support inclusive employment.



Figure 40. Birchwood Office Park



Figure 41. Birchwood Office Park (above)

Figure 42. Chadwick House (below)



A Town of Inclusion and Diversity

What started as a humble, determined industrial town famed for our wire manufacturing is now a celebrated economic powerhouse of mixed industries and sectors, with a wealth of global, European and UK headquartered companies and a more diverse resident population than ever before.

An inclusive economy is an economic system that is equitable, participatory, that grows in a way that promotes wellbeing and opportunity, that is stable, and is sustainable. It recognises the valuable contribution that our voluntary and community, and public sectors makes towards a more holistic and varied economy.

The influences on Warrington's economy are far reaching, and often uncontrollable, which makes the ambition of achieving a fully inclusive economy an extremely challenging one. Nevertheless, there are actions we should and are making to support a town of inclusion and diversity.

Our focus on the town centre is central to this, providing both jobs and homes in a location which is accessible, affordable and offering a range of opportunities at different skill levels.

We want to create a refreshed town centre community, a place in which people can participate in the economic offers on their doorstep, or within easy public transport reach.

Our town centre cultural offer showcases Warrington's cultural diversity and is accessible to everyone, fostering a sense of pride in place. We know that arts and culture can make a huge difference to people's health and wellbeing, and we have a strong track record of using culture as a positive intervention to address some of the issues we face.

Partnership working has long been one of Warrington's strengths and we work across all sectors of the community and economy to address barriers to participation, realising the potential of local people and increasing engagement across the borough that will be valued at all levels.

We will maintain our collective focus on supporting those people within our communities who struggle to realise the opportunities our strong economy offers, both with employment support programmes which directly support individuals seeking work, but also providing a growing support offer to employers who recognise the value of a more diverse workforce and who want to support the values of fair employment.



Figure 43. Warrington Music Festival



Figure 44. Mela Festival



Figure 45. Warrington Pride 2023

A Reinvigorated Heart

REBALANCING THE CENTRE



A Town Of Culture And Heritage

In 2020, Warrington's Cultural Framework, A Great and Curious Future and setting out Warrington's vision for Cultural Growth was published, recognising the importance of Arts and Culture in economic growth and the place-making agenda.

'We want to reflect the stories of our people in such a way that not only illuminates Warrington's culturally significant past, but lights the road to a creative and successful future.' (A Great and Curious Future: Warrington's vision for Cultural Growth, 2020)

Figure 47. The Old Treasury Building



The cultural sector plays a key part in supporting our visitor economy and arts, culture and heritage is firmly embedding within Warrington's place-making and tourism strategies. The heart of our cultural offer sits within the magnificent Cultural Quarter which is centred on the Palmyra Square Conservation Area, incorporating 3 iconic cultural venues:

Warrington Museum And Art Gallery

Warrington Museum and Art Gallery has the distinction of being one of the oldest municipal museums in the UK and much of the quintessential character of the Grade II Listed building has been preserved. The museum houses an eclectic collection and around 1,000 paintings, (oils, watercolours and prints) from the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Art Galleries showcase a vibrant and varied programme of exhibitions, including the work of local artists and events relating to the community. Exhibitions such as 'Eric Tucker: The Unseen Artist' have attracted visitors from around the northwest.



Figure 46. Warrington Museum and Art Gallery



Parr Hall

Parr Hall, a historic concert hall and listed building, is a long-standing feature of Warrington's cultural scene since it opened in 1895 and it still plays host to some of the country's biggest shows. The venue plays host to big names in theatre, music and comedy. Acts in recent years have included Arctic Monkeys, Michael McIntyre, the Editors, the Charletons and John Bishop.

Pyramid Arts Centre

Welcoming visitors throughout the day and evening, Pyramid Arts Centre is a bustling creative hub, the centre of Warrington's cultural life and home to Warrington's creative community, where talent is nurtured and every generation is inspired.

Funding from the Town Deal award will enable a newly remastered Pyramid to provide a vibrant environment where our communities can experience excellence in the arts and a dynamic space for creatives to create new work across all art forms.



Figure 48. The Hive, Warrington Town Centre

A Reinvigorated Heart

REBALANCING THE CENTRE



A Green and Healthy Town

Energy infrastructure fit for the future. The net zero transition will see the need for major investment in power infrastructure, the smarter use of energy systems and more decentralised renewable energy generation, as well as new utilities to develop and operate low carbon district heating and to capture, transport and store carbon emissions.

The changing climate will also require further investment in existing utilities so that they are resilient and remain fit for purpose. There will be a need to utilise water more efficiently as the climate changes.

To secure this investment, and the economic activity this will support, requires engagement with utility companies, and other stakeholders and the exploration of local opportunities for new low carbon energy infrastructure.

Work has already been progressed to map heat demands and explore opportunities for new low carbon heat networks, with the potential to develop a town centre heat network under detailed investigation.

More work is needed make progress on local area energy planning to progress the most cost-effective transformation the local energy “system”. If we don’t get it right it will present a barrier to future development and the competitiveness of Warrington as a place to do business

Retrofitting buildings for the new energy system

The upgrade of existing homes and buildings so that they are fit for the future –more energy efficient and adapted for clean energy power and heating and resilient to the future climatic condition is a significant challenge and huge economic opportunity. Sub-regional work has begun to quantify the scale and nature of this opportunity with a view to accelerating activity.

Natural infrastructure supporting a thriving and sustainable economy

The value of natural capital is now more widely recognised as being fundamental to our economic success. The need for natural recovery is also recognised with a nature recovery strategy for Cheshire & Warrington is under development. All new development must now demonstrate biodiversity net gain presenting an opportunity to secure investment in local nature recovery.

Warrington is surrounded by a network of green spaces that are within easy reach of the town centre and over 900 hectares of waterside nature reserves.

Creating a network of footpath and cycle connections will enhance connectivity from the town centre to the surrounding green spaces, improving health and well-being for residents, visitors and people working in the town centre.

Warrington’s compact size and fairly flat terrain provides an excellent opportunity for more local journeys to be made by walking and cycling. Currently, there are over 70 miles of surfaced segregated cycle paths, shared use paths alongside roads and greenway routes across the borough. Within Warrington Town Centre there are over 400 publicly available cycle parking stands. There are over 136 miles of public rights of way in Warrington, 128 miles



Figure 49. Lavender Gardens, Warrington Town Centre

of footpath and seven miles of bridleways and restricted byways. There are routes in the town, villages and the countryside.

The opportunity to create an integrated primary route on road network with a traffic free 20km orbital network is clear. 90% of the orbital network is in situ with only the sections in green dash requiring completion (some of which is on Council owned land). The network requires fresh investment to improve signage and renew surfaces. It is an obvious asset to improve given the compact nature of the town and its relative affordability in comparison to highway works.

There is insufficient land available to make the entire network traffic free, the routes highlighted in red are roads identified as part of the cycling primary route network and will be prioritised as part of the first and last miles suggested recommendations for further cycling enhancements such as segregated cycle lanes.

A recent cycling survey captured over 5,000 movements, in comparison to the 100,000 vehicular journeys per day. The key to a greater participation is investing in the network and prioritising cyclists and pedestrians over cars in the town centre. This will create safer more appealing options to the car and also enhance the sense of arrival at the two railway stations. See figure 34 on page 49.

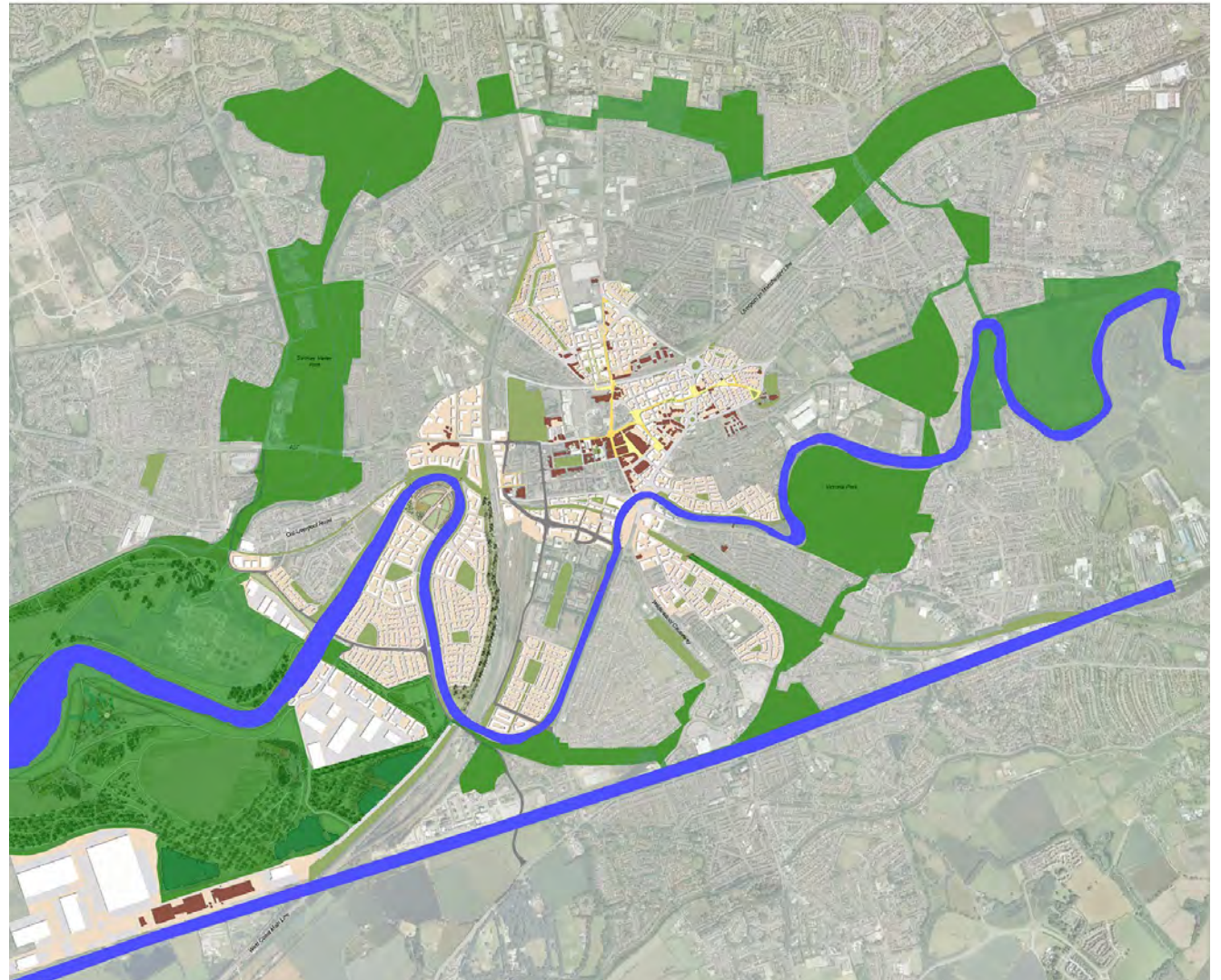


Figure 50. Warrington's green network surrounding the Town Centre

A scenic view of a river flowing through a park. The river is calm, reflecting the surrounding trees and sky. The trees on the left bank are dense and have vibrant green and yellow foliage, suggesting autumn. The right bank is a grassy path with some fallen leaves. The sky is clear and blue.

Warrington's compact size and fairly flat terrain provides an excellent opportunity for more local journeys to be made by walking and cycling



70 miles

surfaced segregated cycle
paths and shared use paths
across the borough



136 miles

Public rights of way



**20km Orbital
network**

90% of network in situ

A Reinvigorated Heart

REBALANCING THE CENTRE

A Central Business District

The development of the 120 hectare Warrington Bank Quay project will transform the Town Centre and create the opportunity for a central business district.

Warrington Bank Quay will effectively become the only hub station on the Northern Powerhouse Rail line with a direct mainline route running north-south as well as east-west. It is this connectivity that will underpin higher density land release in the urban core.

The local plan prioritises reinvestment in the town centre, so that we can capitalise not just on the strategic locational advantage Warrington has always enjoyed as one of the best-connected locations in the country, but also the catalytic impact of Northern Powerhouse Rail.

The reinstated rail link has the potential to place Bank Quay within a 15 minute Journey of 35 million square foot of office space and 6 million people, making it the best connected stop on the Northern Powerhouse Rail line in terms of commuting and connectivity.

At a regional level, the airport links will be used by both domestic and business travellers alike. Direct rail connections to the airports will drive growth and land release of over 500 hectares of exceptionally well connected land within close proximity to the airports. We will be at the heart of this future growth.

Town Centre Connectivity and Impact Northern Power House Rail

Post Northern Powerhouse Rail Warrington Bank Quay will be within 20 minutes of Liverpool Lime Street, Liverpool Airport, Birchwood, Manchester Airport and Manchester City Centre. Realisable time savings of 80% will effectively create an express line within the hour from Liverpool to Leeds taking in 3 of the top 6 major population centres in the country and connect commuters to 35m sq ft of employment space or circa 250,000 jobs. This will have a major impact on appetite for mid rise residential within the town centre and to be 30% cheaper than buying or renting in neighbouring conurbations.

We consider there to be a growth scenario that flows from rail infrastructure to drive the delivery of mid-rise residential apartment market and over the medium term consider it to be a prospect for Institutional investment in built to rent, student housing and retirement housing as well as more conventional first time buyer market.

Northern Powerhouse Rail will create opportunities within the immediate vicinity of Warrington Bank Quay. We anticipate increased connectivity, inward investment in commercial property seeking to exploit connectivity gains associated with hub station for office, hotel and regional conferencing uses

Repurposing Town Centre Assets

Post Covid the famous Unilever plant closed after 125 years, the site blights other uses coming forward but also the sense of arrival. No purchaser was found following a marketing exercise and it is likely that the site will be brought forward in partnership between the public and private sector. The site is symbolic of a shrinking manufacturing base and a site that will require active intervention with central government and the council.

There is currently an opportunity to repurpose the former large retail units previously occupied by Marks & Spencer and Debenhams. The Council is keen to work with the new owners to actively manage and repurpose these assets, ideally into employment uses and utilise the existing 1,700 car park already attached to Golden Square.

The Hive development is a private investment in the town's historic former CO-OP department store that totals 120,000 sq ft. The development has launched as a set of boutique retail arcades, co working space and hotel and is an example of a focus on boutique retailing and mixed uses that is repurposing large deep plan functionally obsolete retail units into smaller high end retail.

Employment Forecast and Growth

Dedicated B1 office space uptake over the past 20 years, has totalled over 4 million square feet, evidence that significant commercial development has occurred. The town centre's unique position as the sole hub station on the Northern Powerhouse Rail line promises enhanced connectivity, a factor known to bolster local demand. Leveraging this advantage, it's projected that the town centre will see an additional 2 million square feet of office space development. This anticipated growth highlights the pivotal role of improved transportation infrastructure in stimulating economic activity.

Manchester has ten times the population, a similar employment density, and is forecasting ten times the amount of office space, 70% of which is within the town centre. In light of these changing times and complexities around forecasting a minimum target of 2m sq ft of space is the Council's aspiration and consistent with other Local Authority approaches in terms of scale. In the event that demand is greater then more site will be released at the town centre and existing centres of Lingley Mere and Birchwood.

The charts opposite, illustrate the land use percentages in Warrington in comparison to England and Wales averages, retail is proportionally higher than the national average and office space is lower than the national average. There is an opportunity for a combination of growing office and diversifying retail to develop towards 2 million sq ft requirement. This would create a balance of mixed uses within the Town Centre that has parity in terms of employment with Birchwood.

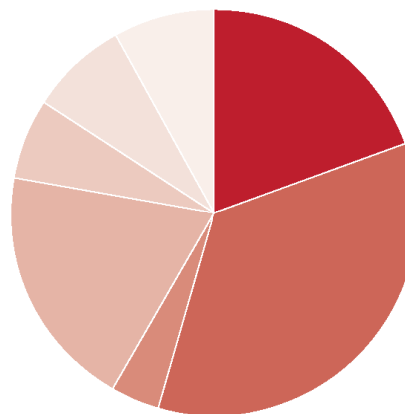
Strategy

Key points for Warrington Council will be active management of Town Centre industrial & retail space to alternative uses to sustain investment in the centre. There is 85 hectares of land in use as either heavy industrial or out of town style retail parks (located in the centre), of which 21 Hectares is in institutional ownership and 64 hectares in heavy industries. Working in partnership with institutional owners, it should be possible to repurpose existing assets into alternative uses, whilst the heavy industrial sites are likely to require an element of grant funding to remediate to bring back into use. The strategy is to focus on cleared sites and surface level car parks first and managed interventions if manufacturing assets reach economic, physical or functional obsolescence.

Warrington has a comparatively small town centre office footprint and oversized retail. The strategy is therefore to release vacant land next to major transport nodes for B1 office space to meet identified need and repurpose retail assets where required.

Targeted growth in Office and Residential is planned to complement existing assets and connectivity within the centre.

Warrington Town Centre



England and Wales Town/City average

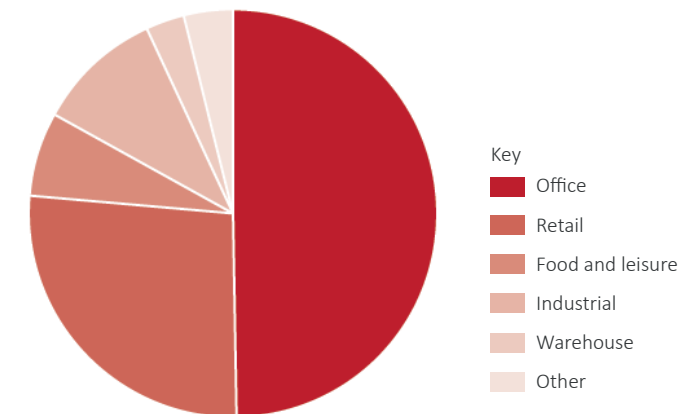


Figure 52. Town Centre composition compared to England and Wales average, Source Centre for Cities

A Reinvigorated Heart

REBALANCING THE CENTRE

Central Business District - Concept Design Principles

The concept diagram illustrate the following design principles:

- » Station complex connect and west sides of West Coast Mainline rail.
- » Movement corridor connecting St. James Church and station.
- » Pedestrian paths connect station to the river front.
- » Pedestrian bridges across River Mersey.
- » Pedestrianised route through old town to Town Hall and Time Square.

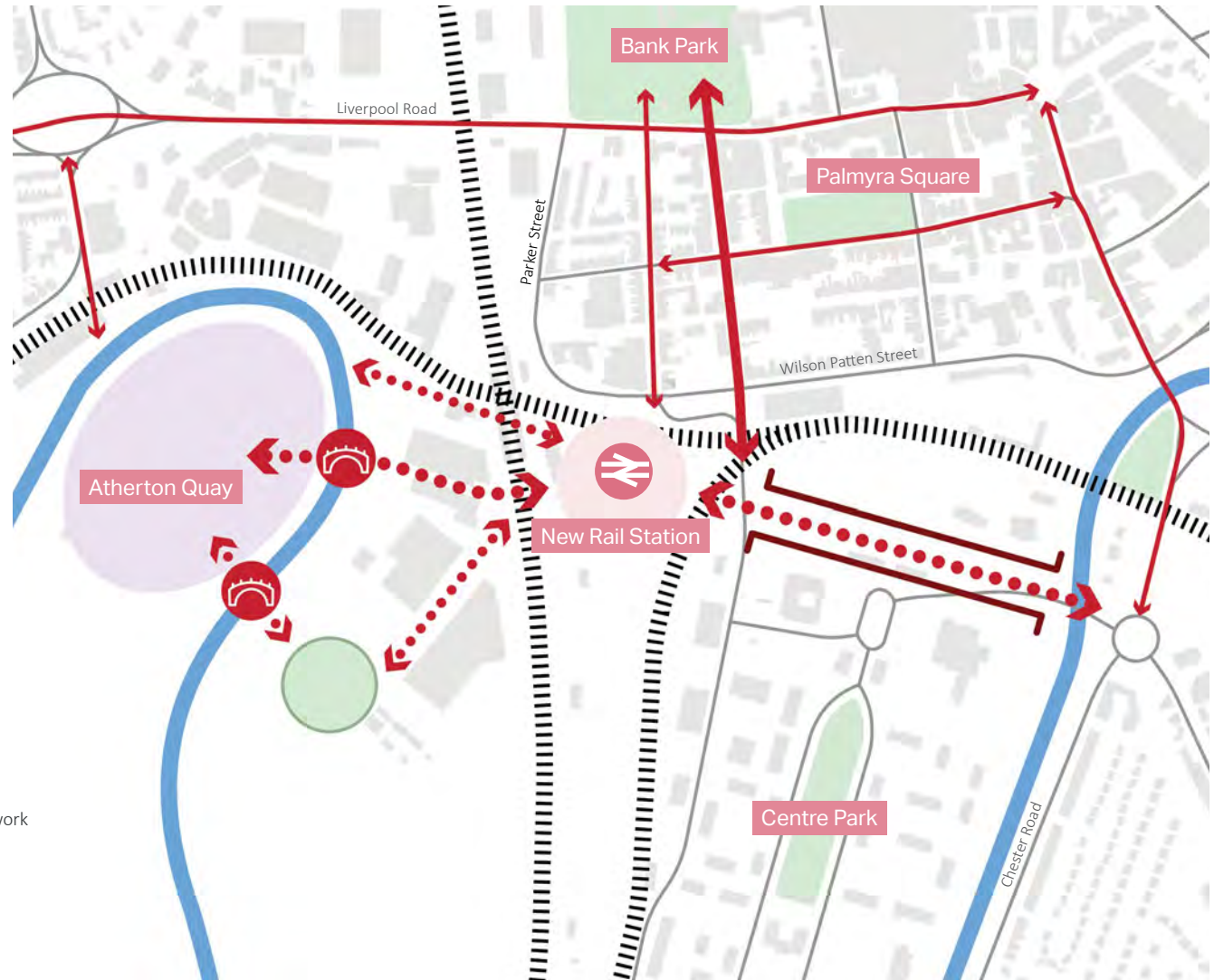
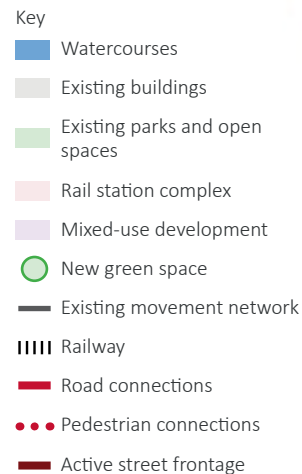


Figure 53. Conceptual diagram illustrating the station complex and connectivity to the surrounding area

Station Concourse

The design of a new Northern Power House Rail Station at Warrington Bank Quay has the potential to create a concourse and thoroughfare through the centre of the station to bridge the West Coast Mainline and open up the river. The station will create 2 new entrances than have a significant sense of arrival to the town as well as three public piazzas (one of which overlook the water). Bridging the West Coast Mainline will enable the release of 75 HA of brownfield land and is a key objective for the town centre masterplan.



Figure 54. Illustrative concept of the new Warrington Bank Quay Station, subject to detailed design



People First Streets

Embracing the essence of Warrington's people-first approach, our vision introduces a new pedestrian-friendly street leading from St. James Church to the new Warrington Bank Quay station.

At ground level, vibrant shop fronts and cafés will spill out onto the street, infusing the area with vitality. The integration of urban greenery, including rain gardens and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), will not only enhance the aesthetics but also promote a healthier environment, attracting wildlife and nature. This approach fosters social cohesion and invites people to dwell, thereby increasing footfall.

By prioritising pedestrians over cars, our streets will become hubs of activity, encouraging modes of transport such as walking and cycling. Street trees and greenery will further enrich the landscape, providing a serene setting for relaxation amidst nature.



Figure 55. Street-level view showing how pedestrian movement will be prioritised and shops will animate the street





05

Delivering in Partnership



Partnerships

MAKING PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS WORK

Looking forward as we consider the major opportunities we have; we view through the same lens which is that we only ever achieve our goals by working with likeminded organisations who wish to see and share in the future prosperity of Warrington.

Local Economic Partnerships

Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington is the name of the newly formed organisation picking up the mantle of the former Cheshire and Warrington Local Economic Partnerships (LEP). In 2010 Local Business Economic Partnership were formed as a successor to the former regional development agencies.

Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington I the name of the newly formed organisation picking up the mantle of the former Cheshire and Warrington LEP. In 2010 Local Economic Partnerships were formed as a successor to the former Regional Development Agencies.

The aim of the partnerships was to form a sub-regional structure reflecting functional economic areas rather than Local Authority boundaries and provide a strong

voice for businesses in enabling strategic growth through targeted investment. Warrington is part of Cheshire and Warrington LEP. The LEP has been effective in;

- » Functional Economic Market Area: LEP identified and created functional economic areas that operate outside of local authority boundaries
- » Data: Provide a single credible source of data and research to understand employment base
- » Enterprise Zone: Tax incentives targeted industries and life sciences science corridor
- » Creation Evergreen Fund: Administered ERDF funds to support green growth
- » Skills and Education: The purpose of the “Pledge Programme” is to facilitate relationships between education and business, to put employers at the heart of inspiring plans with specific focus on STEM-related and digital skills to drive productivity and tailors how the existing apprenticeship levy and graduate pathways can work with existing major employers in the town to provide stepping stone into skilled roles

- » Clean Energy: Creation of Net Zero and De-carbonisation plan for businesses in region
- » Regional Tourism Plan: Creation of regional awards ceremony to celebrate excellence
- » Promotion: The LEP team provides professional promotion of strategic growth opportunities

In 2019 the Government announced its plan to integrate the functions of the LEP into local democratic institutions in line with wider devolution plans. The LEP will now be known as Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) and will be overseen by the three local authorities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington Borough Councils via a Joint Committee to give direction to the Board of ECW. There will also be a Business Advisory Board (BAB) to be established to work alongside the Local Authorities. The vision for Enterprise Cheshire Warrington;

- » Create a data driven strategy for growth in the LEP area
- » Link and enhance the voice of business in direction of strategy and growth
- » Lobby for future investment zones status

- » Lobby for Strategic Transport Enabling Infrastructure
- » Continue promote decarbonisation and green economy
- » Continue and enhance the Pledge employment programme on STEM and Digital Skills
- » Provide a board structure that incorporate business leaders
- » Support expansion of Evergreen Fund where possible

To deliver sustained investment, it is critical that ECW structure delivers a clear vision and investible platform of how our sub regional economy can continue to grow- we need to work with businesses to achieve this. Central to the successful integration and evolution of the LEP is to understand changes in local labour market, employer capital investment requirements, future skills, and training requirements to satisfy business needs. This partnership will act as a platform for putting forward regional investment cases to central government.



Partnerships

MAKING PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS WORK

Town Deal

The Town Deal programme is currently delivering a number of projects across a number of different areas within the Town Centre, from the new Bus Depot and new Electric Buses, through to the completion of the Living Well Hub, contributing to community health and wellbeing, officially launched on 1st March in conjunction with Warrington and Halton NHS Trust. Positive training outcomes at the Health and Social Care Academy through continuous engagement with schools and businesses. Work progresses via **Warrington & Royal Vale College** for the Construction & Civil Engineering Academy and engagement activities have seen increased enrolment for start in the new academic year. The Digital Enterprise Hub continues to move forward and is home to the Hydra training facility is being utilised within St James Business Centre, operated by **Wire Regeneration** and used by the **University of Chester**.

Town Deal funding has enabled Warrington & Vale Royal College to launch 2 specialist training academies at the colleges Warrington Campus in several key priority sectors for the town: Health & Social Care and Construction & Civil Engineering, **Priestley College** continuing to deliver 'Good' vocational and technical education, including T Levels in a number of areas.

Whilst the Town Deal programme is undertaken by a number of different public sector organisations, they are undertaken in partnership and co-ordinated to maximise the impact for all. Where we have government intervention and funding, it is welcomed and embraced rather. Our approach to delivering the Town Deal and Skills Commission programmes have been held up as exemplars of how to go about delivering 'Levelling Up' funding. We take our opportunities and deliver.

Warrington & Co and The Business Exchange

Warrington & Co and **The Business Exchange** has always been a joint effort between public and private organisations, although led by the Council it is very much about responding to the wider needs of business and in particular new and emerging businesses. Sometimes this takes the form of larger events such as the Annual Property Review but more often is about supporting business networking opportunities, shared learning and facilitating connections. More latterly Warrington & Co and the Business Exchange have been working hand in hand with **Warrington Chamber of Commerce** as we take a partnership approach to promoting and supporting the wider opportunities for business growth and inward investment into Warrington. This provides a consistent

'front door' to business and this consistency and co-ordination will be enhanced over the next Warrington Means Business period as we look to engage more businesses to help us deliver the ambition of a central business district.

Truly, the test of this is still to come, as we start to work out with our neighbours in Liverpool and Manchester, to understand how as a North West region we accelerate the benefits that we can extract from regional infrastructure

The major milestones for this large scale development of Warrington is at the moment unclear, we have a lot of work to do to make this happen and the timescales are significant. But progress on this to date is good, with Warrington being endorsed by both Regional Mayors and our own political leadership as part of the growth corridor that will come from Northern Powerhouse Rail.

Looking forward as we consider the major opportunities we have, we view through the same lens which is that we only ever achieve our goals by working with like minded organisations who wish to see and share in the future prosperity of Warrington

Importance of partnerships

In short, it is not possible for the Council to complete the vision of the New Town, or its more recent aspirations for the Heart of Warrington programme, alone. We simply do not have sufficient land or funds to affect the scale of change required to maximise the transformation possible from Northern Powerhouse Rail.

The Council is committed to working within the current landscape to achieve short term goals but the focus is to create a governance vehicle with sufficient support and buy in from public partners to instigate investment and change over a 15 year period. The vehicle will need sufficient legal, planning, funding support and democratic mandate to succeed.

Our suggestion is that this should be an Urban Regeneration Company which will have the benefit of clear objectives and longevity beyond government election cycles



£142 million
DfT Award



£22 million
Warrington
Town Deal



£24 million
UKSPF



**£150
million**
Western Link



**£150
million**
Revised Station



£12 billion
NPR Link

Partnerships

MAKING PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS WORK

A pre-cursor to establishing a fixed term vehicle is: a rationale for investment, clear case for change as well as a clear and agreed vision and set of objectives.

Rationale for investment is the demonstrable success of the new town and the public investment that has enabled the town's sustained growth. Case for change is twofold, firstly change in heavy manufacturing base, secondly positive impact and opportunity Northern Powerhouse Rail will bring.

Finally, vision and objectives for the town is to build on our strengths as a logistics hub, reinvest in our existing office, establish investment zones for existing and target "New Economy" industries, and intervene where required to deliver masterplan within the town centre. The evidence base has been set out and approved by the planning inspectorate in successive documents such as Masterplan, Employment Land Review, Transport Masterplan and Local Plan. So we have an established and up to date evidence base to ensure that we release the right land for future homes and jobs, at the right time, in the right place.

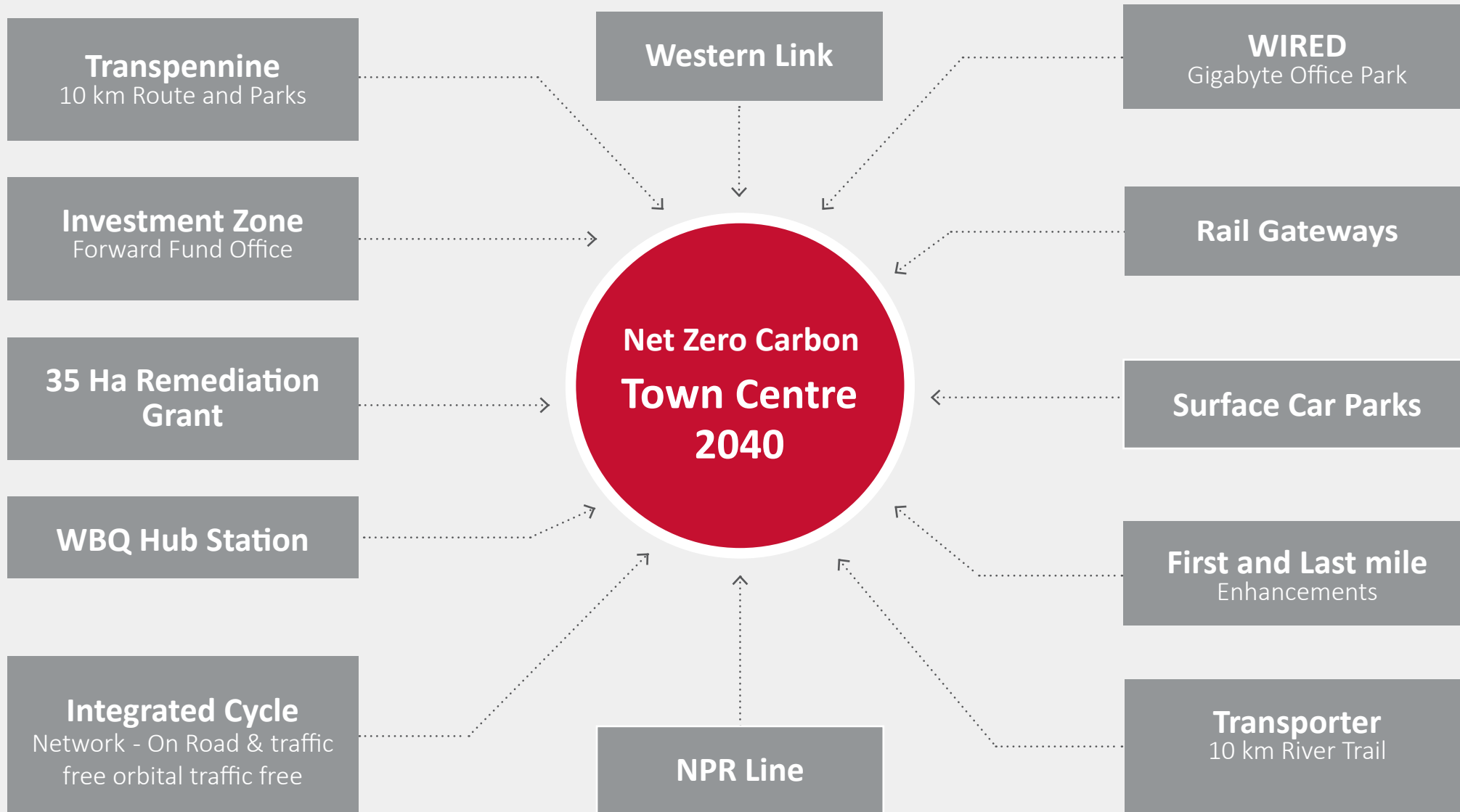
The "Heart of Warrington" programme is therefore a continuation and completion of the original New Town objectives, to rebalance and transform the centre and a response to physically regenerate the town's gateways ahead of Northern Powerhouse Rail.

This sits alongside wider skills and employment and training programme administered by ECW and Chamber of Commerce as an interface, incubator and accelerator of new business growth. ECW will also assist with reinvestment, apprenticeship programmes, university placements as well as continuing with localised employment programmes to further social mobility.

In order to create an Urban Regeneration Company as a vehicle to deliver the Heart of Warrington Programme, it will be imperative to work across government to create a partnership of funding to deliver place-based renewal as well as wider network improvements to reinvigorate the heart of the town in a net zero carbon framework.

The aim of which is to create an appealing offer in which residents choose to live and work. Delivering 6,000 homes will likely increase the resident town centre population by 10,000 people. There is proven demand for residential uses and an opportunity to improve amenity space within the centre. Increased footfall will therefore sustain the existing retail and leisure offer, whilst driving demand for up to 2m sq ft of new office space.

Conceptually, reinvesting in the centre is the right thing to do to diversify the mix of uses and increase mix of uses and footfall to make the centre more interesting and resilient to future changes in consumer habits. The transport connections are excellent and the idea is to capitalise on Northern Powerhouse Rail to deliver a step change in densities to create transit led communities based on rail travel. Placing new office development in the centre will leverage the connectivity benefits and create parity with Birchwood, and given the modest amount of space forecast compared to historic take up rates, is considered a reasonable plan to monitor and manage over time that will ultimately put the heart, and employment, back into the town centre.



Priorities

SHORT, MEDIUM AND LONG TERM

A series of projects and interventions have been identified and divided into short, medium and long term goals.

Short term priorities (0-5 years)

- » Creation of a regional forum including elected Mayors to accelerate delivery of NPR West
- » His Majesty's Treasury/Treasury) investment case- Heart of Warrington Programme.
- » Create public backed place-based vehicle – Phase 1 Station Quarter and deliver new pedestrian highway and dedicated link to the station.
- » Deliver coordinated road, rail and cycling transport programme for Town Centre as part of the First and Last mile improvements programme.
- » Investment zone status support delivery
- » Commercial Floorspace in Town Centre up to 1m sq ft.
- » Creation of “Wired” high speed gigabyte office campus on Wilson Patten Street.

Medium Term Priorities (6-10 years)

- » Station cycle hubs
- » Private provider electric cycle hire network integrated with rail and existing network
- » Mersey Way “Transporter Trail” – 10km footpath open up river for walking and cycling.
- » TransPennine link- 10km Manchester Ship Canal waterside route linking town centre, Moore nature reserve and Woolston Nature Reserve.

Long Term Priorities (10+ years)

- » Delivery of all major development areas.
- » Greater integration of electrical car and bike Leasing for residents.
- » Density step change in Town Centre of up to a minimum of 130 dwellings per hectare within 10 minutes of major stations.
- » Provide serviced land for up to 2m sq ft of b1 office space and underwrite delivery of 1m sq ft on a rolling basis.
- » Delivery of through school on Arpley Meadows.

Heart of Warrington Programme

The programme illustrates the councils priorities and delivery, breaking down the required actions and projects, identifying the quick short term wins and long term ambitions. The actions and delivery timescales are subject to funding and investment.

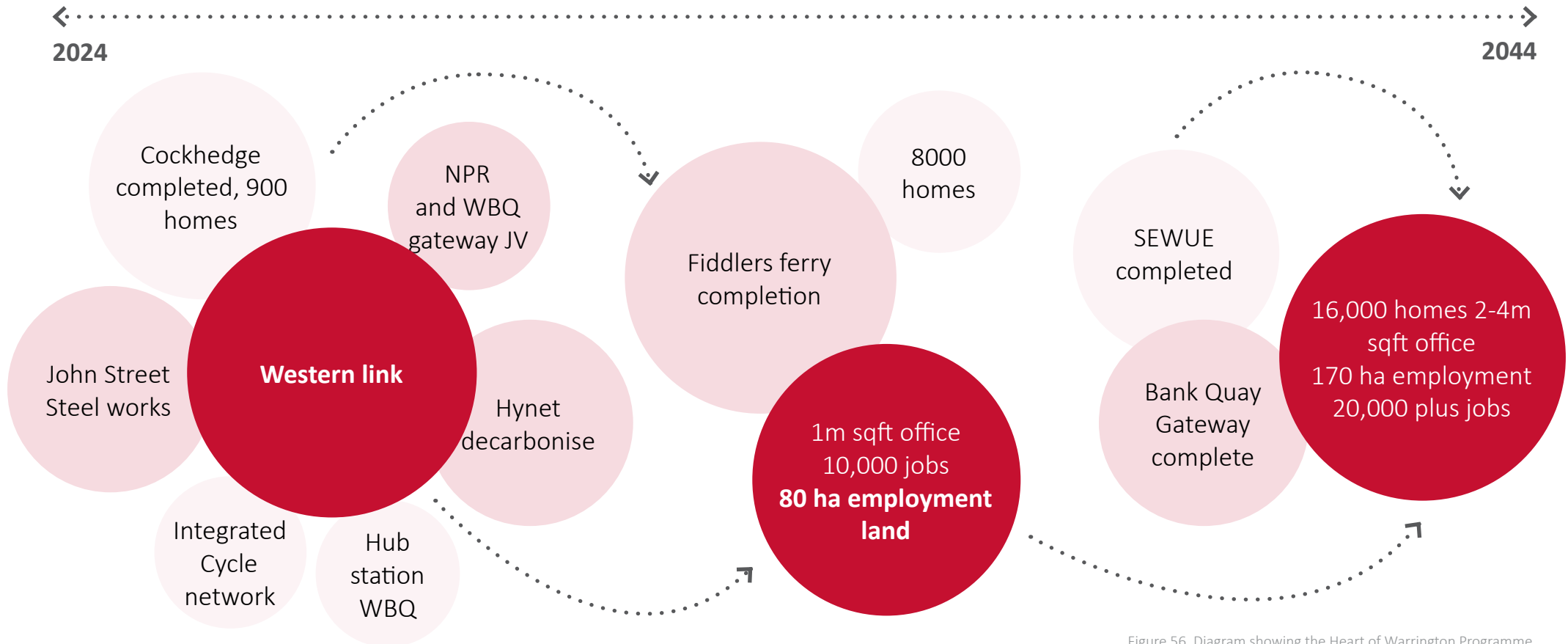


Figure 56. Diagram showing the Heart of Warrington Programme

