

TRANSPORT FOR THE NORTH STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PLAN - DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION, MAY 2023

<https://transportforthenorth.com/reports/strategic-transport-plan-draft-for-consultation-transport-for-the-north/>

RESPONSE FROM THE NORTHERN BRANCHES OF RAILFUTURE (amended version submitted 17.8.23)

This response represents the views of the three Railfuture Yorkshire branches wholly in the north of England, Railfuture Yorkshire, Railfuture North East, and Railfuture North West. Railfuture Lincolnshire has also contributed to this submission.

Railfuture welcomes the opportunity to respond to this draft of the updated plan, and welcomes the fact that three core strategies underpin it. We are pleased with the recognition of the importance of the overwhelming importance of reducing carbon emissions to the liveable future of our planet, and by the fact that in an advanced economy within a democratic society, public transport exclusion is unacceptable. **Because of this, we are surprised and dismayed by the failure of the plan to advocate an urgent and ongoing rolling programme of railway electrification.** We endorse the briefing prepared by the environmental transport organisations grouping (ETOs – on which Railfuture has three members) about the STP as a whole

We are in broad agreement with your Executive Summary and with your general approach, but **in this submission we instance many areas where we feel improvement is necessary before the plan is finalised.**

There is a general concern that TfN's plans for rail are mainly concerned with longer-distance, new and high speed routes (e.g. section 5.1). Local buses and active travel are considered in 5.4. **But there is very little on the considerable network of existing rail routes on which many passengers depend every day, many others use but less frequently, and which are ripe for enhancement so as to become more attractive and useful to a wider group of the population.** A “yawning gap” which we shall attempt to address.

As Railfuture is concerned with a bigger and better railway, we comment chronologically in detail below on sections 5.1 (Rail), 5.3 (freight and international connectivity) and 5.4 (local connectivity). We also comment on your targets under 5.6 Conclusion. **Our comments will be about things where we feel amplification is needed, and where we seek expansion or changes to your proposals.**

Prior to those comments however, we would like you to revisit the map at Figure 4.2, as there does not seem to be an understandable logic as to what has been included and what has been omitted. We are surprised that the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, the East Lancashire Railway, and the Embsay Steam Railway have not been included, likewise Locomotion at Shildon. There are no RSPB or Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust reserves shown, few National Trust properties, no castles e.g Bamburgh, no attractions in Hull, nor Beverley Minster. We are sure there are other important attractions that should have been included, including Halifax for the Piece Hall. Redcar and Saltburn are not included as “Tourist Coastal Destinations”, nor are Tynemouth and Whitley Bay.

Our comments need to be read in conjunction with the sections and pages referred to.

5.1 “OUR STRATEGY FOR RAIL”

THE CURRENT SITUATION

P69. Para 1. Please add: An efficient and reliable rail network is also essential to achieving modal shift from road and air, and in doing so, reducing transport related carbon emissions, road congestion, and air pollution from road vehicles (Including the small particulates released from the brakes and tyres of electric vehicles)

P70. Top para. We are confused by these statistics. The largest increases in rail travel have mainly been at weekends, and there is evidence of considerable overcrowding on some routes on weekends, notably inter-city, and leisure destinations (including retail). Yet you state that weekend rail travel has risen “in relative importance from 16% at end 2019 to 21% in 2022. In other words, 79% Of journeys take place Monday to Friday (average 16% each day) and 21% at weekends (average 10.5% each day). We seek amplification of these figures.

P70 Para 2. The proposed closure of most ticket offices, and the related reduction of staff on stations, will act as a further barrier to train travel, and should be scrapped - and this should be included in this paragraph (which we realise was written before the closure proposals). Additionally, please add: The current complex ticketing system needs reform, and progress to tap-in/tap-out needs to be speeded up.

P70 para 3. Existing routes also create a constraint on the growth of East-West freight by rail. This will be partially ameliorated when TRU is complete, but capacity will still be far too low to achieve modal shift aspirations.

P70 para 4. Is it true to say “services in the North are typically hourly”? We think not. Yes, there are inadequate hourly services on some routes (e.g Leeds-Glasshoughton-Pontefract, Manchester-Bolton-Blackburn-Clitheroe, Wigan-Rochdale-Brighouse-Leeds, Preston-Blackpool South, and Hull-York), and worse than that on some rural routes (e.g

Middlesbrough-Whitby, Carlisle-Barrow, Leeds- Settle- Carlise, Ellesmere Port - Helsby),and these need improving, but services on most routes out of Leeds and Manchester are higher frequency services e.g Aire Valley, Calder Valley via Bradford, Hallam, Leeds-York, York-Huddersfield-Manchester, Crewe-Manchester, and in the North East on the Tyne Valley and Darlington to Saltburn routes.

Sunday services should start earlier and be similar to weekday services now we have a 7 day a week economy, although with fewer early trains on commuter routes, and with an enhanced weekend service on key leisure routes. It is certainly unacceptable that on Sundays, Brighouse, for example, does not have direct trains Northern Trains to Hebden Bridge and Manchester, and that the Leeds-Glasshoughton- Pontefract service is two-hourly.

Effect of boundaries. We are concerned about the way local government boundaries affect services. In Greater Manchester, stations with over half a million trips per annum warrant a minimum four trains an hour service, but towns outside GM that relate to Manchester and are not on a main line get an inferior service. A prime example is Knutsford, a wealthy commuter town 19 miles South West of Manchester, which only has an hourly service to Altrincham and Manchester (and to Chester) because it is in Cheshire! The Greater Manchester Rail Policy also recommends two trains an hour for stations currently generating between 50k and 500k trips per annum. If this were to be adopted then towns like Northwich, Greenbank, Mossley, Greenfield, Marsden and Slaithwaite, and many others, would see much needed improved services. We would also like to see a consistent approach to the level of service corresponding with passenger footfall, and also to estimates of how an optimal service would increase the station's footfall – this could be considerable.

P71 Railway station accessibility. Good data here, but **we query “225 (38%) have adequate physically accessible waiting shelters”.** How is adequate defined? We consider as inadequate the very basic shelters, part exposed to rain and wind, such as the newer ones installed at many Northern stations. This is amplified when a station has a large footfall and even more so when their number does not reflect the footfall of the station (e.g. Brighouse, footfall c400K, despite an inadequate train service). Indoor waiting rooms are the ideal, although these warm, dry waiting rooms on stations in that the rooms are locked after station staff have gone home, and we fear this will be exacerbated if planned ticket office closures are allowed to proceed.

LOOKING FORWARD

“OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES”. Pp72-73

This section is split into two parts – “Requiring a fit-for-purpose rail network” and the “three major programmes (that) need to be achieved”

Regarding the fit-for-purpose rail network, we agree with your narrative, but would add under either “Supportive of Communities” or “Integrated”: “ Station ticket offices need to

be retained, with their role expanded to sell multi modal tickets and passes, and provide information on local bus and tram services, and possibly other services.

Integration needs to be seamless at major stations too. We highlight that at the stations in Manchester where there is interchange with Metrolink services (Manchester Piccadilly, Manchester Victoria, Deansgate-Castlefield, and Rochdale) there is no on-platform information about next departures on the “other” system, i.e. arriving by rail, you don’t see any Metrolink departure or route information until you are on the Metrolink platforms, and *vice versa*. The same applies to bus services at large, medium and small size railway stations.

Under “Integrated”, we would add “Stations should either have a taxi rank or freephone telephones to local private hire companies”

Under “Sustainable”, we think the 28% figure requires more explanation and origin. **If a train, bus or tram is running anyway, someone choosing to use it instead of their car will at a personal level be making a zero emission journey**, and this needs highlighting to the general public.

Under “accessible”, a link to the “Northern England Stations Enhancements Programme” needs to be added.

P73. “Three major programmes need to be delivered”.

We agree about the importance of these programmes, but they will not be enough by themselves to achieve the changes required. They need to be supplemented by (a) improvements to, and expansion of, the conventional rail network for passengers and freight; and (b) by disincentivising more polluting forms of transport through selective road pricing, selective workplace parking charges, and the removal of subsidies from GB inland air travel (except for socially necessary flights such as to islands).

P74 “PREFERRED NPR NETWORK”

Bullets 1 or 2 (or separate bullet). Add “with a new through underground section of Manchester Piccadilly station”

Bullet 2. To clarify, we trust that this will be a wholly new line, and not the unacceptable compromise that appears in the IRP?

(Bullet 3 addition at the end). See bullet 7 regarding south Manchester capacity

Bullet 4. Add “including electrification” after “significant upgrades”

Bullet 6. Add after “restoration”, “including electrification”

Add a new Bullet 7. The South Manchester network will remain constrained for growth unless its capacity issue is resolved – as an example, additional services from the Hope Valley line cannot presently be accommodated into or beyond Piccadilly. Options to be progressed should include;

- 1) grade separation at Slade Lane Junction which is a significant bottleneck;
- 2) re-introducing regular services on the line from Heaton Norris Junction via Reddish South and Denton to Manchester Victoria; this would enable some south Manchester local services to be diverted to terminate at Manchester Victoria instead. Some signalling additions and an extra set of points would enable Buxton – Manchester services to divert to Victoria without conflicting other lines though Stockport (using Platforms 0 and 1 bi-directionally for which they are already part signalled).
- 3) Double the Hazel Grove chord from the present single track; this would increase the capacity, which is currently constrained by the limited number of services that can cross (Buxton – Manchester and Sheffield – Manchester trains share the track north from here)

Page 75. **Figure 5.1 (map)**. The map is not easily readable and needs to be made clearer. The Leeds - Settle and Carlisle, and Leeds- Morecambe (“the Little North Western”) routes should be shown as grey lines on this map, instead of being omitted, as these are through inter-regional routes.

P76-77. THE NORTH’S STRATEGIC RAIL PRIORITIES.

Page 76

1st Paragraph. Add at end “This enhancement will also be needed to enable the proposed timetable uplift.”

“Manchester Piccadilly area”. Add to the white box. “including the new freight route around south and west Greater Manchester as proposed by Railfuture” <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1855-Relieving-Castlefield> and “the development of a new underground cross city link which can help alleviate the traffic through the Castlefield Corridor and would then allow more extensive use of the Castlefield curve to allow better connectivity from North East Manchester to the South”

We would like to see additions to the North’s Strategic Rail Priorities, stating that TFN will work with other Strategic Transport Bodies to **promote infrastructure developments outside the North which, if completed, will have great benefits to the North**. These include:

- the **Ely Area Capacity Enhancement Project**, which will facilitate greater rail freight traffic between Felixstowe Port and the North of England (and Scotland)
- **Enhancement to the rail routes from Immingham**, to enable more railfreight between Immingham port and the North of England (and Scotland)
- **Construction of a major interchange station for both long distance and local services, together with four way junctions, at the point where the new East West Railway crosses the East Coast Main Line** – this is at Tempsford on the latest route

proposals. This will greatly improve connectivity between Scotland, the North of England, Oxford and Cambridge.

- **There needs to be better direct rail connectivity between the East Midlands and the North West; between the NE and Yorkshire with Nottingham and Leicester; and between the NE and Yorkshire with South Wales.**

“Leeds area” There is an immediate need for capacity improvements to Leeds station to provide for the current service levels – especially in relation to platform 17.

“East Coast Mainline North” There is an urgent need to improve capacity at the north end of York station to avoid conflict with the improved Harrogate line service.

PP 76-77. **“THE NORTH’S STRATEGIC RAIL PRIORITIES”.**

We note that all the priorities mentioned are ones that one of Network Rail, the Manchester Task Force or the ECML Blueprint are involved with, and whilst we are supportive of these, we want the STP to also look beyond them to other rail priorities for the North of England. **We would like to see a separate sub section of the Strategy for Rail which looks at other enhancements to the north’s railway network,** in line with your priority (p9) that *“Our rail network and wider connections must transform the access to opportunities for millions of people ...”*

As well as the detailed enhancements set out below, **there must be an overriding ambition nationally, and by definition across the TfN area, for a massive rolling programme of railway electrification** as advocated in a number of reports, and especially in the **RIA report *Rail Electrification: The Facts*** and **Network Rail’s *Transport Decarbonisation Network Strategy (TDNS)***. An electrified railway is necessary not only for decarbonisation, but also because electric trains cause less track damage, are quieter and smoother, are more reliable and cost less to operate.

The required enhancements fall into seven sections:

- 1 Full services on lines that currently have “Parliamentary services” e.g Sheffield-Pontefract-York; Sheffield to Gainsborough Central and Grimsby via Brigg; Leeds to Goole via Knottingley; Stockport to Stalybridge; Ellesmere Port to Helsby; Darlington to Hartlepool (the only direct connection between Eaglescliffe and Stockton).
- 2 Additional station stops on some routes e.g Eaglescliffe for TPE trains to/from Teesside; Stockton for Grand Central Trains to/from Sunderland; Sowerby Bridge for York-Blackpool services
- 3 New stations on existing routes such as Elland, Haxby, Milnsbridge/Golcar, Horbury/Ossett, Garstang; together with significant improvements to Morecambe station to cater for substantial extra traffic that the Eden Centre Morecambe is expected to generate.
- 4 New or additional services on existing lines. Examples include:

- a) (Leeds)-Pontefract-Askern (new station)-Doncaster;
 - b) Manchester-Huddersfield-Wakefield-Castleford-York;
 - c) East/Central Lancashire* via upper Calder Valley and Brighouse to eastern destinations including Huddersfield , possibly extended to Wakefield and beyond (dovetailing with (b)), or to Manchester Piccadilly (dovetailing with (e)); (* there are a number of possible starting points including Preston, Clitheroe or Hellifield).
 - d) Extend Clitheroe – Manchester services to Hellifield, with connections to trains to Skipton, Carlisle and Morecambe.
 - e) Extend Bradford-Huddersfield services to Manchester Piccadilly;
 - f) Sheffield-Deepcar-Stocksbridge (which could later combine with 7(a) below to give faster Sheffield-Huddersfield service);
 - g) Barrow Hill Line;
 - h) Middlesbrough-Stockton-Ferryhill (new station)-Durham-Newcastle;
- 5 New services made possible by the re-opening of closed chords or small sections of line e.g
- a) Burscough south Curve, to enable extension of Merseyrail services (battery hybrid) to Southport, bringing more stations onto the Merseyrail network.
 - b) A short spur from the Wigan-Liverpool Line near Rainford to connect Skelmersdale to the railway network.
 - c) Burscough North Chord to enable a direct service between Preston and Southport.
 - d) Crigglestone Curve (Horbury) to enable fast Sheffield-Barnsley-Halifax-Bradford, as proposed by Greengauge 21) as part of a 10-year strategy to improve services over the wider Leeds-Sheffield corridor. This is a good example of a regional strategic proposal, and it is one of a several possible new routes mentioned in the draft WYCA rail strategy (summer 2023), the full list is:
 - i. Crigglestone (as above)
 - ii. Menston-Otley,
 - iii. Spen Valley (more direct route Bradford-Crigglestone-Sheffield)
 - iv. Penistone-Deepcar (linking with Stocksbridge route above to provide a fast direct route Huddersfield-Sheffield),
 - v. Keighley-Oxenhope (using Worth Valley infrastructure).
 - e) Crewe-Stockport via Middlewich, re-opening Middlewich station and a new station at Gadbrook Park
- 6 Through services and increased connectivity made possible by the construction of tunnels e.g.
- a) Cross Manchester City Centre
 - b) Cross Bradford (Aire Valley and Calder Valley Lines)
- 7 New services made possible by the construction of new routes, including the re-opening of closed lines e.g:
- a) Deepcar-Penistone (to enable faster through Huddersfield-Sheffield service along with 4(e) above);
 - b) Beverley-York (as well as connecting these two Minster cities, and the towns in-between, this would provide a faster Hull-York direct route which would also be

important for resilience in the event of flooding or other disruption on the Hull-Selby route. It could also be an important freight route from Hull port)

- c) Penrith-Keswick (-Cockermouth- Whitehaven);
- d) Skipton-Colne (+ doubling of the route between Colne and Gannow Junction);
- e) A new western link line connecting the Manchester- Chester via Altrincham line (Mid-Cheshire) to Manchester Airport. Provision has been made for this in the current MIA station layout but **further development at the airport risks using up possible track routes if not set in plans now.**
- f) Leamside Line (with new station for Washington New Town). The northern part of this line would be shared with an expanded Tyne Wear Metro
- g) Harrogate –Ripon -ECML (as well as connecting the city of Ripon to the rail network, this gives an alternative route for freight trains, and for diversions from the ECML)

Furthermore, prior to re-openings occurring, or if re-openings are impossible, we want to see the **train operating companies running, as part of the railway timetable, limited stop bus/coach services to connect key towns to the railway network.** (GWR are currently doing this.) Examples in the north include Penrith- Keswick-Cockermouth, and Malton-Pickering-Whitby (although Whitby is on the national rail network and has services to Middlesbrough, it needs better connectivity with York and stations in West and South Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and further south. Pickering is poorly served by public transport.)

Train frequency. As well as the above enhancements, Railfuture considers that **the minimum number of trains per hour** on routes within the metropolitan counties and other heavily populated areas should be two, and the minimum on rural routes should be one train per hour. These services should start in the early morning, run through the evening, and be 7 day a week services. As one example:

- the Brighouse line serves two intersecting routes, each only hourly at present; services need to be at least half hourly on all arms N, S, E and W, including full Sunday services, and with a timetable that facilitates connections.

5.2 ROADS

We will not comment in detail on the roads section, as this is beyond our remit. But in the context of **the importance of modal shift** from cars to public and active transport, necessary to facilitate carbon reduction and achieve Net Zero targets, we consider that TfN's STP should advocate selective* workplace parking levies, and selective* road pricing. These are the sticks which need to go alongside the carrot of a much more efficient, comprehensive and affordable fare public transport system, and safe walking and cycling routes. (**By selective, we only advocate workplace parking levies where there are good public transport alternatives, and road pricing where roads are currently running at high capacity and there are good public transport alternatives*).

5.3. FREIGHT AND INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY.

You have identified issues which are restricting the growth of rail freight in the North of England (and nationwide). Further down in this section, we put forward positive proposals to enable rail's share of the freight market to grow to meet your **target of growing rail's share of freight** tonne kms to 17% by 2050. Furthermore, we would like you to re-examine this target as we do not feel it is ambitious enough, given the low base it is starting from. We would also like differential targets – see section 5.6 at end.

The key to increasing rail's share of the freight haulage market is investment in infrastructure. You have cited some of the key bottlenecks.

We advocate that you adopt as a priority **Railfuture's plan for a South Manchester freight line** that obviates the need for freight to pass through Manchester Piccadilly and the Castlefield route, and also enables a major new intermodal depot in Carrington . See the Appendix, and: <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1855-Relieving-Castlefield>

As mentioned earlier, we see infrastructure developments outside the North that enhance important connectivity to and from the North as of vital importance, and these should be part of the STP. Examples are the Ely Area Capacity Enhancements which will allow increased freight traffic to and from the port of Felixstowe; London Gateway developments; and East West Rail to improve connectivity with Southampton. Immingham lies just outside the TfN area, but is a very important port for the North of England, and infrastructure improvements are needed both to increase the rail freight volumes that can access the port, but also to enable the port to grow, especially for intermodal.

There is a capacity problem on the East Coast Main Line north of Northallerton. To address this, the route via Eaglescliffe and Stockton to Ferryhill should be electrified and made accessible to gauge W12. Together with the Leamside line (see above). this will provide a 4 track route all the way from York to Tyneside – and also give easier access to Teesport.

There is a clear need for more cross-Pennine freight capacity. The Trans Pennine Route Upgrade (TRU), vital as it is, will not have sufficient capacity to meet modal shift targets. We need additional capacity. The Skipton to Heysham route (“the Little North Western”) is underused, but needs investment at the Lancashire end. Re-opening Skipton to Colne will provide a necessary extra route, The Settle and Carlisle line is underused. Consideration must be given to a new route suitable to W12 containers in the south of the region – either a re-opened Woodhead, a re-opened Matlock – Buxton, or a new route.

Much more use needs to be made of the railway in taking goods to and from all our Northern Ports, and infrastructure upgrades will be needed. As well as the major ports, there is a need to look at rail freight connectivity at Heysham.

Freight routes must be electrified, and government needs to ensure that FOCs can purchase electricity at prices lower than diesel cost. Infill to enable long distance electric haulage is essential and urgent. In the North West, electrifying the Bootle branch in Liverpool would provide great potential for more freight to run with electric locomotives.

Parcels and mail have not been mentioned in this section. There is great potential for growth in the bulk carriage of parcels by rail. The recently inaugurated services into capital city stations at night need extending, and needs to include other cities and large towns in the North and elsewhere. We need a full return of Royal Mail trunking to rail, and for parcels companies to transfer trunking to rail (DHL have just announced that rail is the future for long haul)

Freight strategy must include planning reform. TFN needs to advocate for planning law changes that necessitate new mail, parcels and logistics warehouses being rail connected, and incentives need to be offered to connect to the rail network existing warehouses that are adjacent or close to railway lines. Additionally, we need to ensure that every conurbation has a well located trans-shipment facility for intermodal traffic. At present there is a glaring lack of such a facility in the Tyne & Wear area. A facility on the site of the former freightliner depot at Follingsby would enable containers to be delivered by battery powered road transport to most of the surrounding area.

5.4 LOCAL CONNECTIVITY

Although we are railway focussed organisation, we are very keen that public transport should be integrated, with **railway stations being transport hubs** wherever possible. Assuming land is available, railway stations need adequate storage for bicycles and parking for cars and motor bikes. Charging points are important. It is important there there are connecting bus services at railway stations, and currently bus services are being badly hit by cuts. **We want TFN to advocate sustainable funding models for bus services.**

Trams and light rail fall within our specific remit. The UK lags behind continental Europe and other “advanced” nations in our tram/light rail provision. This has to change. Our top priorities are:

- Delivery of the West Yorkshire mass transit system, which we consider should be tram-focussed.
- Expansion of the South Yorkshire Supertram and tram-train network.
- Development of a tram system for Merseyside.
- Expansion of the Tyne Wear Metro.
- Expansion of the Manchester Metrolink
- Full investigation into the possibility of tram services (possibly Very light Rail, as in Coventry) for Hull and Holderness; York; Greater Preston; and Teesside.

5.6 CONCLUSION

TARGETS

We consider TfN needs to do much more work on targets, and to make these more sophisticated. The targets should be for 2050 (or 2045, as that is when your decarbonisation targets is for), but with stage targets at 5 year intervals.

P117. We assume the target for the share of trips by public transport is based on the number of trips. Should there not also be a target for the share of trips by mileage, specifically for trips of over one mile?

We would like to see targets for the share by mode of specific types of trips. E.g. commuting to city and town centres: commuting to out-of-town sites; leisure trips to towns and cities; leisure trips to coastal locations; leisure trips to rural locations; business trips by distance. In all of these we would look for increased public transport share, and reductions in car and aircraft use. The scale of these increases and reductions should vary by type of trip/location, with the most significant changes being in trips to towns and cities, and in business travel.

With regards to **freight**, we would like clarification as to whether mail and parcels are included in the freight target.

We also seek clarification as to whether the rail freight share target is just for freight originating or terminating in the TfN region, or whether it includes freight in transit. We would like separate targets for both and, further, we would like to see the targets split into several freight categories including international intermodal, internal intermodal, bulk freight (minerals etc), parcels and mail.

RAILFUTURE NORTHERN BRANCHES 16.8.23

We will be happy to discuss our views with you.

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APPENDIX

Castlefield – a great opportunity for freight?

<https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1855-Relieving-Castlefield>

Since the opening of the Ordsall Chord, too many passenger services have been scheduled via the Castlefield corridor through Manchester's Oxford Road and Piccadilly stations. The result has been the overcrowded services and delays in both morning and evening peaks described in [Railwatch 163](#) "Pinchpoint in Manchester".

Railfuture, through its Freight Group and Infrastructure and Networks Group, have come up with a response to the challenge of the Castlefield Corridor with a particular focus on freight movements.

Due to their length, freight trains take up twice the line capacity of passenger trains. For reliable operation, a line should only operate at 85% capacity. At Castlefield it is pressed to 93% with delays and cancellations a regular occurrence.

Freight currently has no choice but to use this route every hour and cannot deploy some of the tricks passenger services use to recover from late running. It cannot turn back short of its final destination and ask its cargo to catch the next train or leave out stops to recover time if it's journey is delayed. But, as freight doesn't complain on social media when it is late or cancelled, it is a popular target for politicians looking for a solution.

Before advancing a potential solution, we had to consider how we want freight to develop in future. As batteries can never match the *energy density* of road fuel and therefore not suitable for long distance road haulage and demand for freight movement by rail will far exceed that of today, almost certainly outgrowing capacity at Trafford Park.

Is it now time to look for another site? If so, where?

In drawing up a possible solution we have been guided by the following assumptions:

1. that Trafford Park will continue to operate as part of that freight offering and will need to be accessed other than via Castlefield
2. that if possible, freight terminals will need to attach to the network where there is sufficient capacity to avoid impacting on the ever increasing number of passenger services
3. that infrastructure enhancements should if possible, avoid demolition of residential property

Carrington Business Park lies to the south west of Manchester and although mostly vacant, has good access to the local road network and plenty of room to accommodate 775m freight trains. It was once the Shell chemical works which enjoyed rail access via the former line between Stockport and the Warrington Central (CLC) line at Glazebrook.

Reinstatement of the line to Skelton Junction is straightforward with no blocking development. Although this line has no west-to-south connection with the West Coast main line we demonstrate how this can be created by a new Adswold curve over a former landfill site at Cheadle Hulme. The junction here can be formed such that the majority of trains are fed onto the Stoke line. With no more than five passenger trains per hour on this section it is far cry from the situation at Castlefield. From there, trains can access any of the main lines towards the southern ports at Felixstowe, Southampton and London Gateway.

At Carrington we propose the freight terminal follows the north/south alignment of the former works siding to Carrington Power station. By extending this line for less than a mile northwards to form a south-to-east junction with the CLC line to the west of Flixton, we provide the western access to Trafford Park terminal.

The benefits of this package of interventions are:

- A new and more efficient freight terminal for Manchester with capacity for longer trains offering regeneration potential on a brownfield site conveniently located for rail access from many parts of the UK rail network
- A new strategic freight route serving up to five key sites, including Trafford Park, Garston and Ditton freight terminals and the great rock quarries while avoiding busy junctions at both Crewe and Dore.
- Releases capacity for passenger services on the Castlefield Corridor as well as on the lines south of Piccadilly.

Castlefield – a great opportunity for freight? – [view](#) or [download](#) the full report.