

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

ENVIRON UK Limited (ENVIRON) was commissioned by Westlink Group Limited (WGL) to compile an Environmental Statement (ES) as defined by the *Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999*. This is required in association with the planned re-development of a mixed use freight handling and logistics facility (AHC Warehousing) with a high bay regional distribution centre, separate warehouse unit and associated support buildings and infrastructure. The subject site centre is located at NGR: SJ 503 844 on the north bank of the River Mersey, west of Widnes (see *Figure 1.1* opposite).

This Environmental Statement (ES) comprises the collective input of a number of key specialists employed by WGL to undertake the necessary technical studies. These specialists and the aspects of the proposed development they assessed are identified overleaf.

The approximate outline of the site which is the subject of this Environmental Statement is depicted by the red line on *Figure 1.1* but for a definitive depiction of the application boundary the drawings encompassed in the Planning Application package should be consulted.

It should be noted that there has been a previous planning application on this site for a similar development comprising 7 rail fed freight warehouses and this was granted consent on 24/03/2006 (planning reference 05/00212/FULEIA). The developer who was granted that consent (INNOVIS) planned to secure a range of tenants for each of the buildings but subsequently decided to divest the site to Westlink Group Limited, prior to any development taking place. Westlink have taken an alternative approach to the development of the site and are seeking to place one primary occupier on the majority of the site in an integrated high bay and low bay distribution centre that will act as a central hub for a wider network of distribution centres, which in turn feed a national network of stores. In addition they are seeking to relocate an existing long-term tenant (logistics warehouse) to a new warehouse building as the one they occupy currently will be demolished as part of the proposals. Although the new proposals conceptually do not represent a different use of the site from those previously approved for INNOVIS, therefore, they do involve a slightly larger land area and different scale of built development. Furthermore proposed finished site levels are higher than previously proposed and there is a need to divert a

water course (Steward's Brook) which currently bisects the site (not necessary previously). Consequently it is necessary to submit a new planning application which necessitates a new EIA and associated ES. Given, however, that the site conditions and surrounding areas have changed very little since the INNOVIS EIA and that the proposals are effectively for the same type of development, Halton Borough Council (the Planning Authority) has agreed that most of the data used for the INNOVIS EIA is still valid and relevant and the technical assessments associated with this are still appropriate. As such, it was agreed with HBC that the design team could re-visit the INNOVIS EIA and associated ES and re-assess and edit them respectively in the light of the new proposals, taking due cognisance of changes in policy, practice and environmental conditions since the original assessments were undertaken (2004/2005). This document represents the output of that process.



Figure 1.1 – Site Location

At the outset of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which this ES summarises, an Environmental Scoping Study was carried out to identify the key environmental issues associated with the proposed development and to prepare and agree an assessment methodology. The Scoping Report, which was submitted formally to Halton Borough Council, involved consultation with the following statutory bodies and information sources:

- Environment Agency information on water quality and abstractions, groundwater source

protection zone, flood risk, land contamination and waste management/remediation;

- English Nature information on sites designated for their nature conservation value;
- English Heritage information on scheduled and un-scheduled monuments;
- Landmark Report/Historical Maps (<http://www.landmark.co.uk>);
- Adopted Unitary Development Plan for Halton Borough;
- the UK National Air Quality Information Archive (<http://www.airquality.co.uk>);
- MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) website for land designations;
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) for land designations;
- Sites and Monuments office for information of un-scheduled archaeology;
- Previous reports available for the site; and
- Information provided by members of the development design team (which includes the AHC businesses that has occupied and operated the site for many decades).

A summary of the Scoping Study is provided in Section 4 and is referenced, where appropriate, within the technical sections of this Environmental Statement (ES). The Scoping Report itself is presented in *Appendix 1*.

This ES has been prepared by ENVIRON (UK) Limited, with assistance and input from other members of the Project Design Team, as follows:

- **Westlink Group Limited (incorporating Stobart Group, Port of Weston and AHC Warehousing)** – the Client, site owner & developer;
- **Ashton Smith Architects (ASA)** – principal design of the scheme and visualisations for visual impact assessment; building design and layout;

- **W A Fairhurst & Partners (Fairhurst)** – Civil, Structural and Geotechnical Engineering Consultants;
- **GVA Grimley (GVA)** – Planning Consultants, Planning Application Co-ordination, Project Management and Socio-economic impact assessment ;
- **Bell Fischer Landscape Architects (BFLA), with Ecology Consultancy Limited** – Ecological and Landscape Consultants;
- **ADL** – Traffic and Transport Consultants;
- **WA Developments** – Galigu remediation design and earthworks strategy;
- **Liverpool Museum Field Archaeological Unit** – Archaeology and Cultural Heritage; and

In addition to overseeing the collation of the ES, ENVIRON was responsible for undertaking technical studies in the following disciplines:

- Air Quality & Climate
- Noise and Vibration
- Soils, Geology and Land Contamination;
- Waste Management
- Sustainability
- COMAH Risk Assessment; and
- Water Quality, Hydrology and Flood Risk Assessment.

The various technical studies are presented in separate chapters in this ES as described below.

## 1.2 STRUCTURE OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

This ES is volume two of a three volume set of documents that comprise the following:

Volume 1 – Non Technical Summary

Volume 2 – Environmental Statement

Volume 3 – Supporting Technical Appendices

The following sections of the ES provide a full description of the scheme and the impact assessment as follows:

*Section 2* - Existing Site Description

*Section 3* – The Development Proposals

*Section 4* - Details of the Assessment Methodology

*Section 5* - Planning Policy Context for the Development Proposals

*Section 6* – Archaeology & Cultural Heritage

*Section 7* - Air Quality

*Section 8* - COMAH Risk Assessment

*Section 9* - Ecology & Nature Conservation

*Section 10* - Landscape and Visual Character

*Section 11* – Night Light

*Section 12* - Noise and Vibration

*Section 13* - Socio-economic Issues

*Section 14* - Soils, Geology & Land Contamination

*Section 15* - Sustainability

*Section 16* - Traffic and Transport

*Section 17* - Water Quality and Hydrology

*Section 18* – Waste Management

An overall summary and conclusion is provided in *Section 19*.

All three volumes should be consulted for a full account of the EIA. It should also be noted that Figures are presented in A3 format in this suite of documents, but full size drawings (where relevant) are presented in the main planning submission.