

Existing Evidence

A review was carried out of the available strategies and plans for the UK as well as for the North specifically. This includes documents from Network Rail, National Highways, Department for Transport and other partners including Local Authorities. The benefit of closely analysing the available documents are that they show a consulted view of the freight and transport world that TfN can review progress against as well as providing with an initial list of interventions and programmes that either have been delivered or require delivering.

Warehousing and Highway terminal issues

One issue that has become an issue of greater importance is the requirement for warehousing. There is a shortage of freight warehousing caused by changes to the type of goods being carried and logistics operations more generally. This means that there is less demand for bulk industrial goods to be moved by road and more demand for more local distribution centres. These will house things like food shopping and items people order more frequently to reduce the journey times between the warehouse and the person who has bought the item. This is causing increasing levels of warehouses being rented. Without increasing the availability of this warehousing economic activity risks moving to locations where the rental price and locations are right but the journeys the delivery vans make will be longer.

When we consider the proliferation of Amazon warehouses over the last 10 years, the company has invested over £23 billion¹ in UK markets in warehouse and fulfilment centres. This has caused significant changes to the road use around those areas, something that Amazon has noticed. As future plans are developed, we are aware of initial testing of rail connections to some Amazon sites and also the growth in the electrification of their fleet of delivery vehicles. Amazon procure sites with utmost care and attention. We will continue to watch and learn about the impact such large companies have on areas within the North and use this knowledge to recommend the shape of future growth to the best of our ability.

However, if TfN were to support investment in new warehousing through policy and other interventions as a stand-alone initiative this would risk only entrenching existing highway freight modal dominance.

¹ [About our Fulfilment Centres \(aboutamazon.co.uk\)](https://aboutamazon.co.uk) Accessed June 2021

Therefore, we will work with local authorities in support of greater logistics warehousing but also seek that such warehousing should (by default) be also rail connected where possible and appropriate for the nature of the business. This will be a challenge for the market but, as has been seen in recent developments at iPort Doncaster and with Kraft-Heinz there is a market led appetite for modal shift to and from warehousing locations. This policy recommendation will be reviewed once the future of the Planning regime is published by Government.

Highway and rail connected terminals

The North has few rail fed connected terminals – particularly west of the Pennines. The dominant position of Trafford Park is both evidence of the desire for rail terminals in the North-West and the lack of alternatives. This makes capacity issues all the greater as Trafford Park sits close to Manchester city centre on some of the busiest rail lines in the North.

Alternative terminals on different lines may reduce the network capacity impact of intermodal freight through Manchester.

This concern about the lack of terminals is not a new issue as there is a policy position within the STP for TfN to work with Partners and the private sector to explore the benefits of regional freight consolidation and distribution networks, and network of construction consolidation centres.

TfN recommends that we could play a role in determining the best locations to develop warehousing – particularly where the opportunity for rail connection exists. If agreed by partners this could form evidence for the generation of new Local Plans once the planning policy arrangements are released by Government.



UK Intermodal Terminals