



HOYLAK RAILWAY CROSSING

DRAFT ONLY: FOR COMMENT



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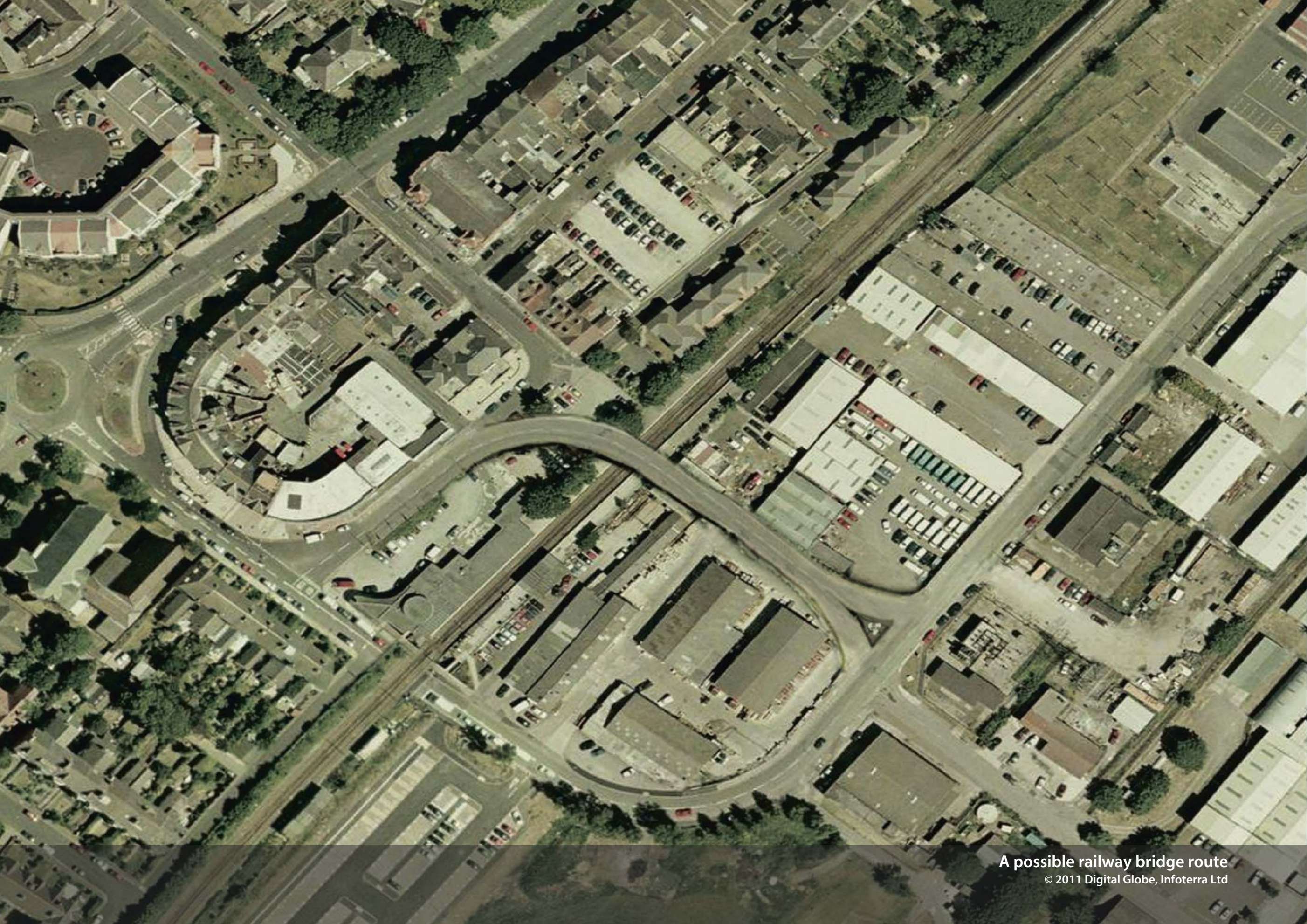
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NOTE: This paper has been prepared by members of Hoylake Village Life (HVL), to explore a potential solution to one of the key factors we believe is affecting the regeneration of Hoylake. The paper is not a comprehensive exploration of all the issues, but a preliminary summary which is intended to stimulate a debate, in the hope that a viable way forward can be found.

IMPORTANT: At the time of writing, the 'strategic justification' notes at the back of this book were drawn from the North West Development Agency's (NWDA) Regional Economic Strategy, whose implementation was overseen by The Mersey Partnership (TMP). With the closure of NWDA, current structures, policies and strategies are being reconsidered. In the meantime, the justification notes drawn from the existing RES will necessarily form the basis of current justification for this project within this document.

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A possible railway bridge route
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INTRODUCTION

The development of the railway line has been integral historically to the development of Hoylake. Prior to the construction of the line, Hoylake was a small fishing village with a population of just 924 in 1861. The extension of the Wirral Line and creation of Hoylake Station in 1866 (and West Kirby station in 1876), transformed the fortunes of West Wirral and created a population boom. Since then, Hoylake has developed into an attractive residential town, with a population of almost 6000, reliant on the railway line to transport passengers to Liverpool and beyond.

The Wirral Line from West Kirby through Hoylake is now a vital artery into the economic heart of the Liverpool City Region. The line transports passengers between West Wirral and Liverpool, and to connecting railway lines across the region and across the country. In particular the rail network transports residents in Hoylake and West Kirby to work in the offices, hospitals, shops and universities of Liverpool, and for residents of surrounding areas to work in Hoylake.

The railway line is also integral to the future regeneration of Hoylake. In recent years, West Wirral has been promoted by the key regeneration agencies, including the Northwest Development Agency, The Mersey Partnership and Wirral Council, as a major tourism destination. Hoylake is considered a major asset to the promotion of 'England's Golf Coast' and the Mersey Waterfront.

The Edwardian charm of this coastal resort, together with the long beach and stunning coastal views and the attraction of major international sporting events, particularly The Open golf championships, are essential to the appeal of Wirral as a visitor destination. The railway line is vital to this appeal, transporting visitors from around the City Region to Hoylake.

There are many benefits that a bridge over the railway line could bring to Hoylake. This paper sets out further issues which, if addressed, could ensure the long-term sustainability of Hoylake as an outstanding place to visit, live and work for many more generations to come.

HOYLAKE GOLF HOTEL



In 2011 Hoylake Village Life prepared a separate document 'An eco Golf Resort for Hoylake'; an alternative to the proposed '5 star International Golf Resort'.

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ISSUES

The urban form of Hoylake is restricted by two key features, one natural, the other man-made. The coastline forms the north-western boundary of Hoylake, with the railway line to the south-east. The built development of Hoylake is mostly restricted between these two boundaries. The town boundary of Hoylake does cross the railway to the south-east, with a small area around Carr Lane of predominantly employment land, with some residential, but the restricted vehicular and pedestrian access across the railway line, together with the Green Belt designation, means that this area is very limited in size.

The economic and social benefits of the railway line are clearly considerable and fundamental to the future of Hoylake, as set out earlier in this paper. HVL recognises these benefits, but considers that in its present form, the railway line also represents a physical and social barrier that:

- Limits the potential opportunities to develop Hoylake;
- Restricts access from the town centre and most of the residential areas to the rural hinterland around Hoylake;
- Prevents the integration of Hoylake town centre with its employment centre off Carr Lane and the adjoining residential properties

In addition to this, HVL are concerned that the railway line would limit pedestrian and vehicular access between the proposed Golf Resort and the town centre, such that this major development project would not provide the necessary catalyst for Hoylake's regeneration. The proposed Golf Resort would have a far more beneficial impact on Hoylake town centre if the Golf Resort was well integrated with the town, and delivered as part of a transformational and holistic regeneration project.

LEVEL CROSSING

The present level crossing operates throughout the daytime, effectively cutting off Carr Lane businesses and residents three times per hour for approximately five minutes each time.

A BRIDGE SOLUTION

A bridge would:

- Completely remove the 15 minute per hour waiting time for traffic in and out of Carr Lane
- Ensure that emergency services have unhindered access to the Carr Lane area
- Provide a future-proof, simple and sustainable method of utility provision to developing businesses and residences in Carr Lane; as well as the proposed Golf Resort, including water, gas, electricity and telecommunications
- Reduce pollution from queuing vehicles in Grosvenor Road
- Reduce traffic congestion at Kings Gap roundabout, improving traffic flow through Market Street
- Enhance the visual amenity of the Station Gateway
- Offer an opportunity for high quality small business units to be located beneath the bridge.
- Offer improved opportunities for the Station Gateway approach, including green space and semi pedestrianisation of the area currently in front of cottages along Station Road
- Reduce pollution and noise caused by stationery 'waiting' traffic in the area
- Increase pedestrian safety by removing the level crossing
- Improve disabled access across the line by providing disabled access over the adapted existing pedestrian bridge.



Artists impression of the view from the Station gateway approach
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THE PROPOSAL

HVL proposes that a solution to these issues be explored further. The cost of the research will need to be met by a mix of public and private funding, and the efforts of Hoylake Village Life and other volunteers. This will include:

- public consultation to assess whether the idea has support
- monitoring traffic to build a picture of traffic flow and peaks around the area, in particular during daytime hours.
- adjusting level crossing timings to try to improve on the current waiting time for vehicles accessing Carr Lane
- costing of a bridge building project
- assessing the financial benefits of such a project to Carr Lane businesses
- assessing social and environmental impact on affected residents and businesses

OBJECTIVES

HVL sees this proposal as an upgrade of existing infrastructure necessary to support six key objectives:

- Development of an international-standard eco-golf championship complex, fully integrated with the facilities and services on offer in the town centre;
- Regeneration of the town centre through enhanced vehicular and pedestrian linkages to new development opportunities and the attractions of the Golf Resort;
- The creation of opportunities to significantly increase and enhance the provision of employment land, vital for the regeneration of Hoylake and its surrounding areas;
- The provision of more high quality homes and facilities in Hoylake, including the creation of new development opportunities for high value family housing on the periphery

of Hoylake, to complement concentrated economic activity in Wirral Waters and Liverpool;

- Upgrading of the environmental quality of the urban-rural interface to re-connect the town to its rural hinterland and provide new and enhanced recreational amenities; and
- Create new opportunities for co-ordinated Green Infrastructure, linking the existing rural and coastal landscape, and providing opportunities for landscape adaptation.

STRATEGIC JUSTIFICATION

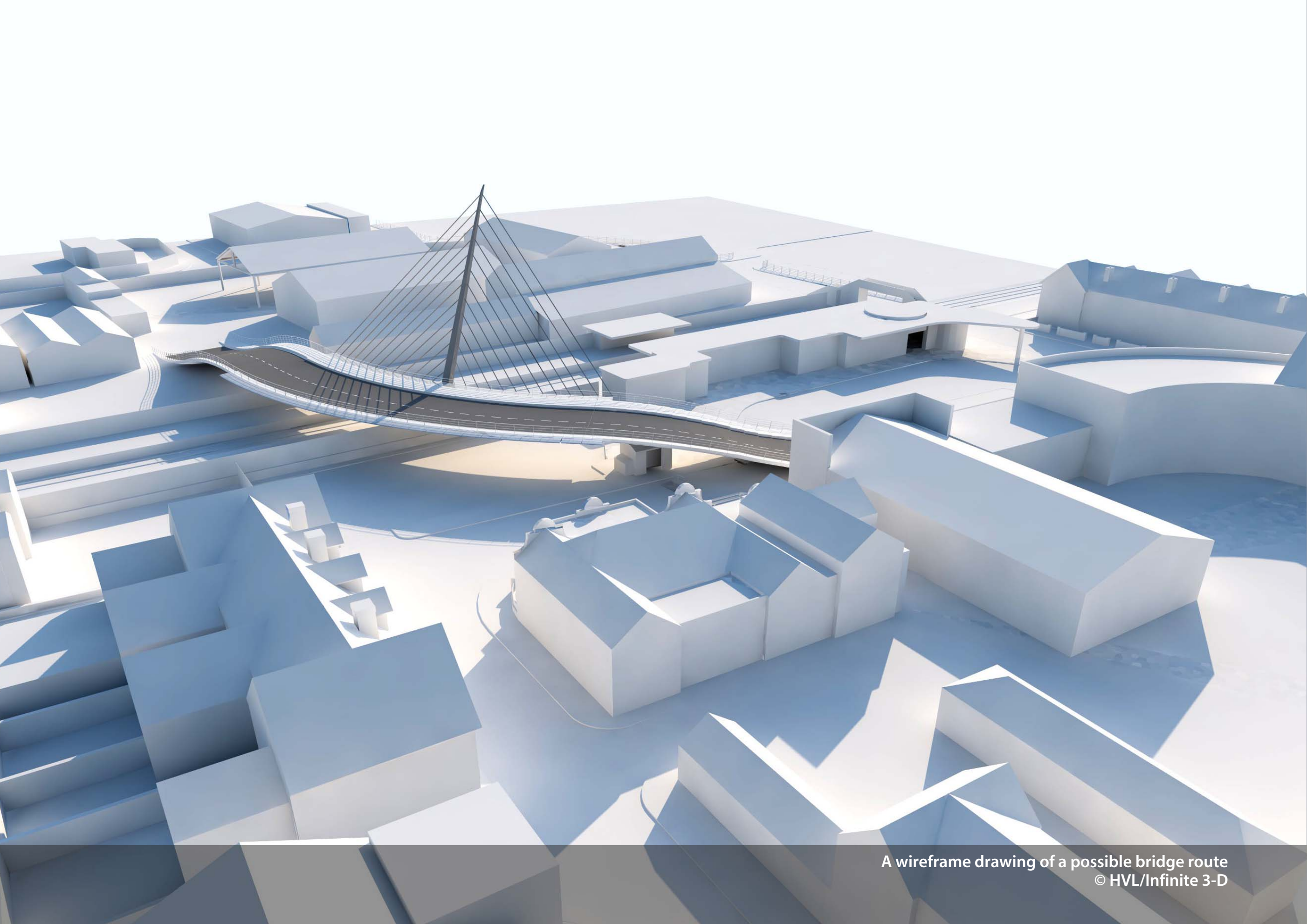
Regional Economic Strategy

The proposal would support the following Actions of the Regional Economic Strategy:

RES 119: Improve the physical environment

A high quality of environment is essential to attract private sector investment. The proposed railway works would improve the image and perception of West Wirral to businesses and potential investors by creating an enhanced town centre environment, with enhanced employment land, and easier access to the rural environment. Additionally the existing businesses would benefit from a step change in the quality of environment, and a more open accessible Hoylake.

Furthermore, an enhanced physical environment and regenerated town centre, would provide a more attractive environment for investment by developers of the proposed Golf Resort.



A wireframe drawing of a possible bridge route
© HVL/Infinite 3-D

RES 95: Promote the image of the region

Hoylelake could be a key tourist destination for the north west, as a charming Edwardian seaside resort with stunning coastal views, and host venue for The Open Golf championships. In addition, the West Wirral coastline attracts many visitors from its other sporting activities, including sailing, sand yachting and parakarting, and recreational activities including birdwatching, walking, riding and cycling. With greater promotion of Hoylelake's key assets, and the forthcoming European Sand yacht Championships in 2011 and major international golf tournaments in 2012, 2013 and 2014, Hoylelake will attract considerable interest from tourists and visitors to the region. A regenerated town centre, with a more open accessible rural environment, and stronger links to the proposed Golf Resort will make a major contribution towards the attraction of new businesses, investment, and continued economic growth of Wirral.

RES 101: Develop the quality of the visitor experience

Hoylelake is identified as part of the Mersey Waterfront, a Signature Project identified by NWDA, as one of the region's key projects to transform the region to attract visitors. This project will greatly enhance the Mersey Waterfront visitor experience by helping to regenerate Hoylelake, and making West Wirral more attractive to tourists, which in turn will help grow the overall visitor economy.

RES 82: Develop a portfolio of sub-regionally important employment sites.

Hoylelake includes a key employment site for Wirral, located along Carr Lane. This proposal would improve access to this employment site by removing the constraint of the railway line, and by creating a more attractive environment, integrated with the town centre, this employment site will considerably enhance the sub-regional portfolio.

ERDF Action Areas

By regenerating Hoylelake and creating greater accessibility to the employment site, the proposal would make a significant contribution to ERDF Action Area (AA4.2) Supporting linkages to key employment areas, and 4.3 Supporting employment creation for areas of regeneration need. In addition the proposal would help to enhance Hoylelake as a key regional visitor attraction, therefore contributing towards Action Area 3.3, Supporting the improvement of the region's visitor offer and image.

Tourism Strategies

The **Regional Tourism Strategy** identifies Mersey Waterfront as a 'Signature Project', along with the Lake District, Chester Super Zoo, Blackpool and Hadrian's Wall. In addition the strategy identifies 'England's Golf Coast' as a key marketing theme, recognising the importance of the Royal Liverpool Golf Club.

The **Wirral Tourism Strategy** identifies the revitalisation of Hoylelake as a key project of the Mersey Waterfront Signature Project.

In addition, the Department of Communities and Local Government's '**Strategy for Seaside Success: Securing the future of seaside economies**' highlights the importance of regenerating the seaside towns of Great Britain. The Strategy states that poor transport links are often cited as a reason for economic decline in some seaside towns, and supports proposals that enable residents to connect with employment opportunities, key local services, social networks and goods. Hoylelake is specifically referred to in the Strategy as a seaside resort in need of support.

The **Multi Area Agreement** identifies an issue of worklessness around Hoylelake, and its correlation with transport deprivation (maps 4.1, 4.2)



World class educational facilities could be offered by a wildfowl and wetland centre

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The promotion and regeneration of the Mersey Waterfront is a key part of the **Action Plan for the Liverpool City Region**.

The Scott Wilson **Open Space Audit** commissioned by Wirral MBC shows that the Hoylake & Meols Ward is poorly provided for in terms of public open space and very poorly compared to the neighbouring West Kirby & Thurstaston Ward. The development of new parkland behind Hoylake as part of HVL's transformation strategy would address this weakness and provide a major visitor attraction and enhanced connectivity between the existing Wirral Country Park and North Wirral Coastal Park with public footpaths linking inland to Royden Park and Thurstaston Common.

The improvement of accessibility to the key assets of the region are essential parts of the **Merseyside Local Transport Plan**.

RESOURCES

In addition, the costs of the work must be considered in relation to the costs of providing new road infrastructure leading from Saughall Massie Road to the proposed Golf Resort which would also intrude into the Greenbelt and disturb its tranquility. The proposal to improve vehicular access across the railway line would mean that direct vehicular access to the Golf Resort could be achieved via the existing road infrastructure, i.e. from Market Street, which would again help to integrate the Golf Resort to Hoylake town centre, rather than directing traffic away from Hoylake. Upgrading Heron Road to provide an attractive rural gateway route to Hoylake from the M53 via the A5027/ B5192 would further enhance the visitor experience and reduce journey times whilst also greatly improving Hoylake's connectivity to local inland settlements.

The proposal would help to increase land values in the area considerably, including:

- the land for development of the Golf Resort complex;
- Retail/ commercial redevelopment of central Hoylake (Melrose Ave-The Row area and its hinterland);
- The potential upgrading/extension of the industrial estate off Carr Lane to a new Business Park, with a mix of workshop style accommodation, services, light manufacturing/ fabrication as existing, together with scope for some upmarket office developments with open views, and creative industries

For such significant economic benefits, HVL considers potential funding sources to be from NWDA, ERDF and the Local Transport Plan, Network Rail, as well as through a contribution from the developer of the Golf Resort, through the Development Agreement, or s.106 contribution.

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

To justify such a radical proposal and considerable cost of delivering such a project, it is clearly essential that significant outputs and outcomes are achieved. HVL consider that the outputs would be wide-ranging and the outcomes far-reaching.

In terms of outputs, the proposal would create a significant amount of jobs through the development and enhancement of the employment land around Carr Lane. The enhanced accessibility would raise the profile of the employment land, raising values and encouraging greater investment in industrial land. This would increase employment opportunities and help to reduce worklessness in West Wirral.



The proposed railway bridge route

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In addition, the proposal would increase house values and create new opportunities for high value family housing. This would be of direct benefit to commercial centres such as Liverpool, Birkenhead and the emerging Wirral Waters development, by creating a more diverse offer of accommodation, more suited to the high value professional jobs being created in those locations.

Other outputs include the development of poor quality Green Belt land, and the facilitation of improved, more accessible Green Belt; increased job opportunities through the creation of new retail and leisure development; and increased spend through the development of the visitor economy.

In terms of outcomes, the proposal would create a stronger and more diverse local economy by creating greater accessibility to more employment opportunities and creating new development opportunities. The proposal would also create a more accessible, and therefore more sustainable, rural environment; and help to raise the profile of Wirral as an outstanding place to live, work and visit.

CONCLUSION

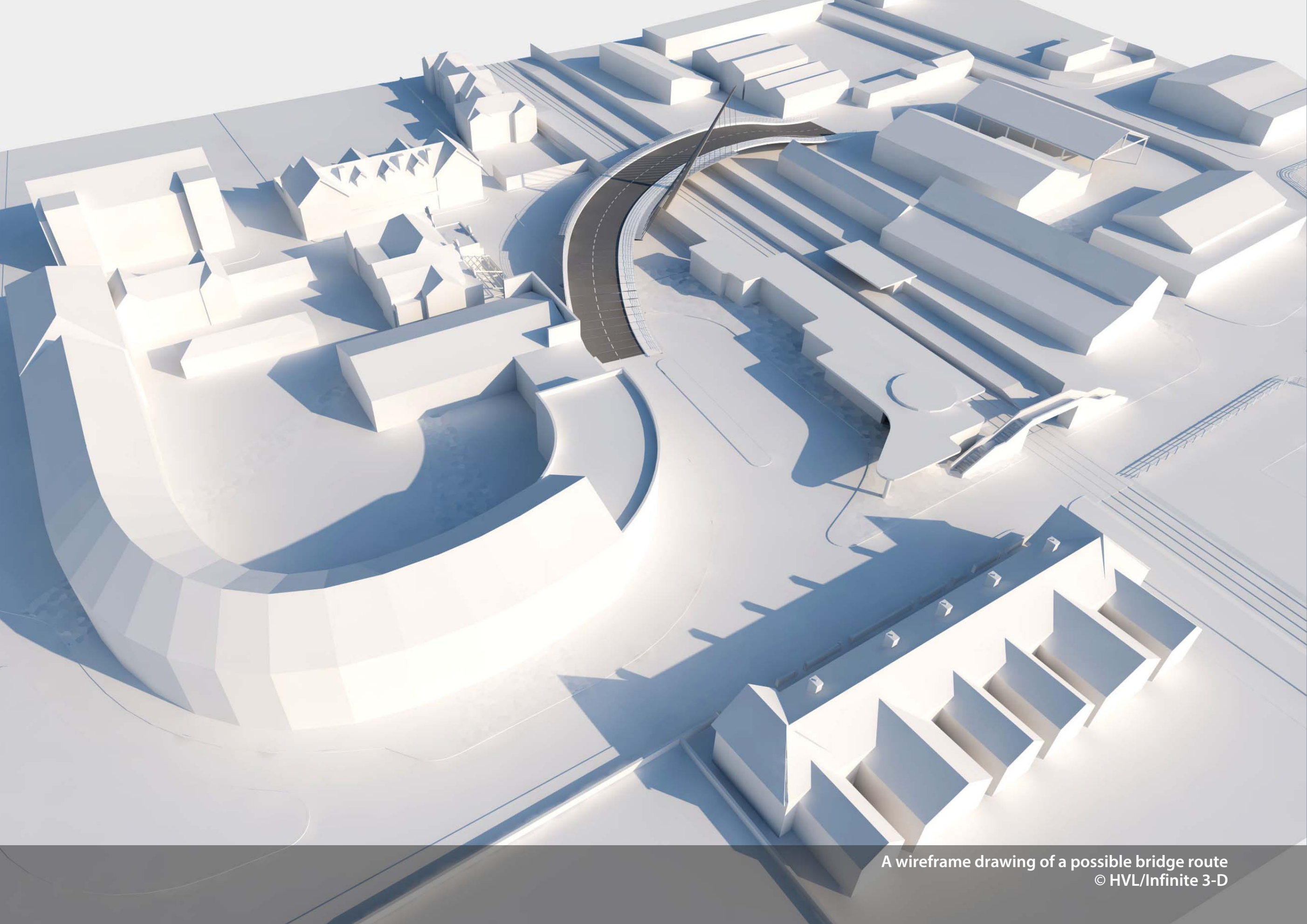
This paper sets out HVL's early thoughts about the potential issues around the constraints that the railway line creates for Hoylake, and suggests a potential solution. There may be other potential solutions to consider. The suggestions made in this paper are made without expert advice on the practical issues around delivery of a project of this nature, and HVL are aware that this proposal is undoubtedly highly ambitious and expensive. The paper is intended only to stimulate a debate in the hope that it could be given further consideration in the first instance by Wirral

MBC, Network Rail and then potentially Merseytravel and funders. However HVL consider that the proposal could tackle Hoylake's primary structural weakness and the benefits could be huge. It could address concerns of HVL that the Golf Resort may not provide the catalyst for Hoylake's regeneration unless it is fully integrated with the town centre.

The proposal for a bridge over the railway line would open up Hoylake to the adjacent countryside, addressing the constraints associated with the restrictive ribbon development; open up new development opportunities behind a new slightly extended but high quality town boundary; and create new opportunities for associated Green Infrastructure.

The proposal would integrate the Golf Resort, the Hoylake Village ('Heart of Hoose') retail & rail station development, the rest of Market Street, and coastal paths. The proposal would also facilitate an upgrade of the Carr Lane Industrial Estate, thereby transforming the attractiveness of Hoylake's most disadvantaged residential and business areas. It would also provide easily accessible high quality countryside and a tranquil parkland environment for residents and visitors alike.

The major benefit though would be through the creation of employment opportunities in the town centre, on the industrial estate and in tourist related businesses throughout the town. The Carr Lane industrial area is clearly disadvantaged by the location of the railway line, and increased accessibility and upgrading of the estate would make a huge impact on improving accessibility to employment, and increasing employment opportunities.



A wireframe drawing of a possible bridge route
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