

SEFTON COUNCIL

Sefton Council (Maritime Corridor)

Compulsory Purchase Order 2025

Summary Proof of Evidence of:

Peter Eustance

20 January 2026

Summary

1. Personal Details

1.1 My name is Peter Eustance, and I am employed by SLC Property (SLCP) as Associate Director, Acquisition & Development, working from my home in Liverpool. SLCP is a specialist infrastructure property consultancy with offices in Birmingham and Newcastle.

1.2 I am a Chartered Surveyor (MRICS), having qualified in 1990 after completing a BSc in Land Management at Reading University. Before joining SLCP, I held senior roles including Associate Director in the Claimant and Compensation team at Ardent, and Director of the North West Valuation Team at CBRE.

1.3 Since 2018, I have undertaken significant land acquisition work for Sefton Council, Wirral Council, Kirklees Council, and Northumberland County Council, including involvement in major infrastructure projects such as the Northumberland Line reopening.

1.4 I have been instructed on the Maritime Corridor Scheme for Sefton Council (SC) since spring 2023, leading the land and property workstreams from an early stage. Where I have not engaged personally with landowners, I have remained fully informed through colleagues at SLCP, WSP, Brabners LLP, and DAC Beachcroft LLP via meeting notes and correspondence.

1.5 The evidence in this Proof has been prepared in accordance with RICS guidance, and the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

Structure of Evidence

1.6 This Proof summarises the objections to the Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (Maritime Corridor) Compulsory Purchase Order 2025, together with the status of each objection and the Council's responses.

1.7 Section 2 outlines the objectors, the grounds of objection, the level of engagement, and progress toward resolution.

1.8 Section 3 provides my conclusions.

1.9 Other witnesses provide supporting evidence:

- Andrew Dunsmore (SC) – Scheme need and justification for the CPO
- Andrew Ivey (WSP) – Scheme design and land requirements

2. Statutory Objections

2.1 The CPO and associated documents were published on 12 July 2025, with the objection period concluding on 8 August 2025. Six statutory objections were received, one of which has since been withdrawn. At the time of writing, five remain, although three of which are close to being withdrawn with underlying agreement:

OBJ1 – Network Rail

OBJ2 – Aubrey & Rachel Weis

OBJ3 – Your Housing

OBJ4 – Portfield Investments Ltd

OBJ5 – Vesty Business Park Tenants

OBJ6 – SP Energy Networks – withdrawn

SC contacted each objector promptly and held several meetings aimed at addressing concerns.

Objections and Responses

- OBJ1 – Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd (NRIL)

2.2 NRIL has interests in several plots (1,2,4,8–14). They objected seeking clarity on which interests were being acquired or extinguished and how this may affect their retained land.

Response:

2.3 A meeting was held shortly after the objection (14 July 2025), followed by further engagement. A Basic Asset Protection Agreement (BAPA) has since been signed. NRIL confirmed no direct impact on operational rail lines. Withdrawal of the objection now depends on completion of a Deed of Undertaking and NRIL's internal LC17 approval. Both are underway, and withdrawal is expected before the Inquiry.

- OBJ2 – Aubrey and Rachel Weis (represented by Axis Property Consultancy LLP)

2.4 The owners of Plot 20, the Weis's raised objections concerning:

1. Potential adverse impact on their retained development land
2. Possible disruption to access for their industrial estate and tenants
3. Insufficient justification for the acquisition
4. Insufficient engagement from SC
5. The principle that CPO should be used only as a last resort

Response:

2.5 Extensive attempts were made to contact the owners from October 2023 onwards. Engagement only began when their agents responded in April 2025. SLCP met Axis in May 2025 and issued Heads of Terms in July 2025. Progress since then has been limited due to slow engagement from the owners.

2.6 Their claims regarding alternative access or design approaches have not been substantiated with evidence despite repeated requests. Any alleged injurious affection relates to compensation and is not a ground to refuse confirmation of the CPO. The land is required to meet national active travel standards, and disruption during construction is manageable.

2.7 A technical report provided by the Weis's consultant in late December 2025 was issued three months after it was prepared and long after information could have been requested. A full response has now been provided, and design alternatives are addressed separately in Mr Ivey's evidence.

- OBJ3 – Your Housing Group (YHG)

2.8 YHG owns plots 1,2,4,8–11 and raised objections via Deloitte Legal, stating the Scheme takes “unnecessary land”, and citing insufficient engagement and failure to consider alternatives. YHG also owns plots 12 and 13 and is willing in principle to sell these.

Response:

2.9 While I have been involved primarily regarding plots 12 and 13, SC has led negotiations on the remainder. A draft settlement agreement is being finalised which will facilitate withdrawal of the objection.

- OBJ4 – Portfield Investments Ltd (PIL)

2.10 PIL objects to acquisition of Plot 16 and raised concerns on behalf of Vesty Business Park.

Response:

2.11 SLCP have been able to negotiate with PIL and have agreed to purchase the land required. At the date of this summary, we await the withdrawal of the objection

- OBJ5 – Vesty Business Park Tenants (represented initially by County Planners)

2.12 Objections relate to fear that the Scheme could increase crime or create unsafe areas. However, the specific tenants objecting have not been identified. Their stated concerns mirror those of PIL.

Response:

2.13 SLCP have been able to negotiate with PIL and have agreed to purchase the land required. At the date of this summary, we await the withdrawal of the objection

- OBJ6 – SP Energy Networks (SPEN) – Withdrawn

2.14 SPEN objected to protect their apparatus but have since withdrawn their objection following agreement of Protective Provisions.

3. Conclusion

3.1 The evidence demonstrates:

- Comprehensive engagement with all affected landowners
- Multiple settlements already reached, with others progressing
- Use of CPO powers only as a last resort, where negotiation has failed or landowners have declined to meaningfully engage
- A clear and compelling public interest case, supported by SC and WSP

- Objections raised do not undermine justification for the Order, and many relate instead to compensation or scheme design matters

3.2 I confirm that all information in the Proof is accurate to the best of my knowledge, and the opinions expressed represent my true professional judgement.