



Integrated Regeneration Study for

# **Birkenhead and Wirral Waters**

STRATEGY REPORT JUNE 2010

# **Birkenhead Integrated Regeneration Study (Birkenhead IRS)**

Wirral Council

Final Report for Approval

**June 2010**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2009 GVA Grimley Ltd was commissioned by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council to prepare an Integrated Regeneration Study (IRS) for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters.
- 1.2 The IRS represents the “single, integrated comprehensive spatial regeneration plan for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters”. As such, it is accountable to a number of audiences and will help establish the policy context in support of a wide platform of investment activity going forward. It will inform the statutory Local Development Framework process and has taken account of work completed to date as part of this process.
- 1.3 The extent of the study area is highlighted in figure 1.1, and was agreed through discussion with Wirral Council to include the Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI) neighbourhoods adjacent to the Birkenhead dock system to fit with locally recognised boundaries of the township of Birkenhead.

## Strategic Context – “A Single Vision, Story and Programme”

- 1.4 The Brief notes the past recent history of planning, economic development and regeneration activity in the Birkenhead locality, which includes the area immediately to the north of the dock system, south of the Mersey Kingsway Tunnel. Quite rightly, the Brief also concludes that much of the previous analysis is becoming out-dated, having been prepared in a very different economic climate and within a different public policy context. Previous spatial masterplans for the area have, in general, proved difficult for the public sector and the market to deliver (being the case with the Birkenhead Town Centre or the previous Woodside Masterplan) or proved to be too ambitious in the face of available resources and commitments from stakeholders.
- 1.5 Since this time, the higher order strategic context has emerged. This relates to both the *regional* level of strategic planning (Regional Spatial Strategy now adopted) and the level of the *city-region* (Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy and City-Region Housing Strategy) and sets a very different strategic context to the way in which we can plan for the future of Birkenhead. The

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- new Housing Growth Point programme represents a further important iteration of the higher order strategic context.
- 1.6 Going forward, the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (2008) is in the early stages of being replaced by a new Regional Strategy, an over-arching policy document that draws together the regional, spatial, economic, social and environmental strategies to build a long term vision for the region to 2030. The draft Part 1, a high level strategic framework, was issued for consultation in January 2010 with the draft Part 2, which will contain more detailed policies, due to be issued in the summer. Final publication of the overall Strategy was anticipated by the end of 2011 following an Examination in Public into the comments made during the consultation stages.. However, recent announcements by Central Government cast doubt on the continuation of the regional planning tier, including abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy. This will place greater emphasis on the Local Development Framework and reinforces the importance of this document in helping to position the Birkenhead Study Area within the Liverpool City Region.
- 1.7 The research that underpins many of the previous regeneration strategies represents a valuable time-trend resource in which it is possible to track changing conditions in Birkenhead. The greatest value to be gleaned from previous regeneration proposals has been the depth and breadth of evidence used to support proposals at that particular time.
- 1.8 There is no greater illustration of this than when considering the detailed analysis that was undertaken as part of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Framework (the “Wirral Investment Strategy”). The conclusions drawn at this time (2005/6) underlined a number of key important factors that prevented the borough from competing with the likes of Liverpool, Chester and North East Wales. In particular, was the borough’s movement towards its subservient role in relation to these locations in terms of employment and retail opportunities as the area continues to slip towards an increasingly dormitory role within this part of the Northwest region; a wholly unsustainable position.
- 1.9 In the appraisal of the evidence base for the purposes of the IRS, it is clear that three years on, many of the conclusions drawn as part of the Investment Strategy remain extremely relevant. Wirral Council and partners are therefore looking for a new future that will reverse this trend and establish a role for Birkenhead and Wirral that will complement higher order centres and make an active contribution to the economic performance of the City Region.
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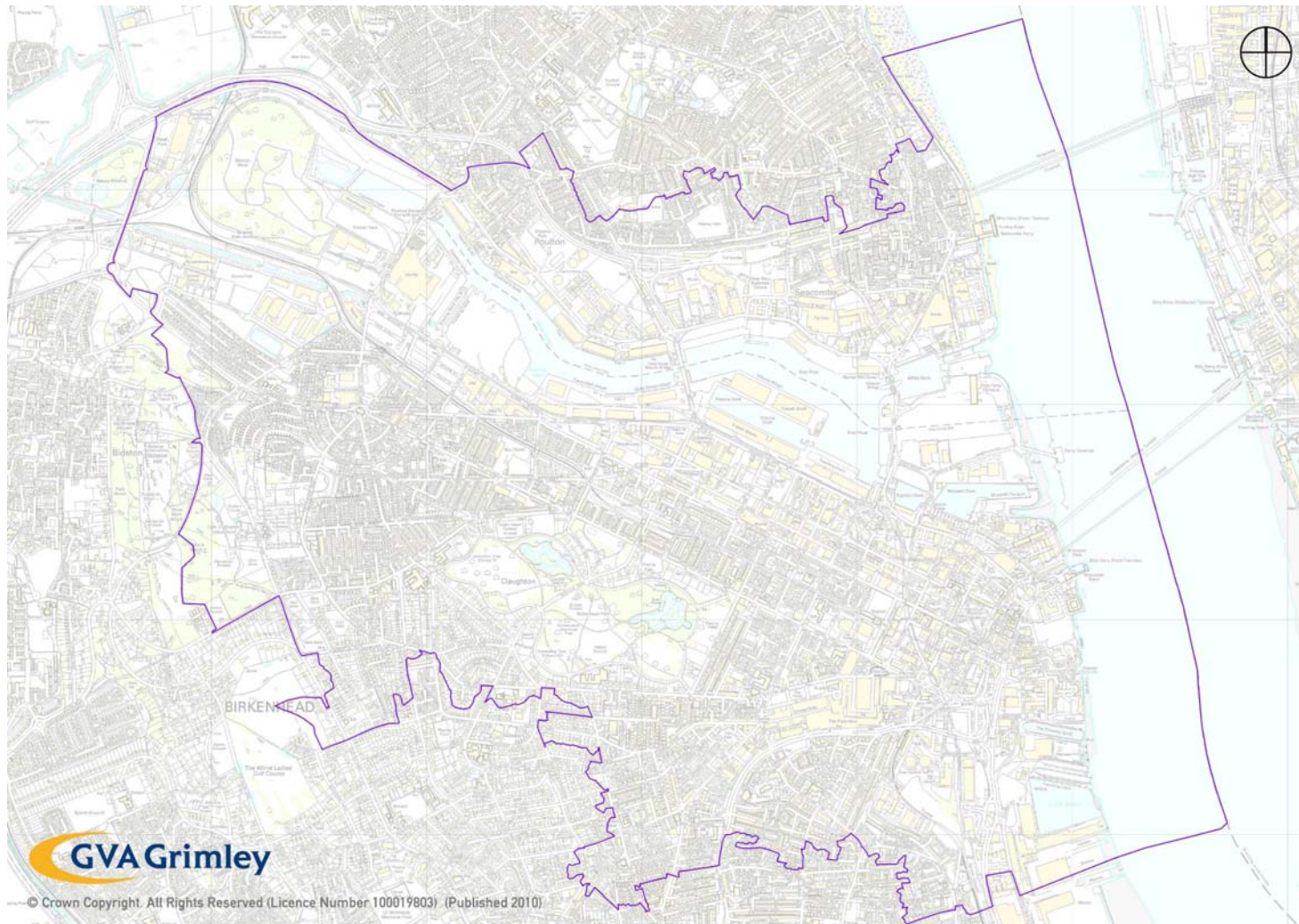
- 1.10 The emerging proposals for Wirral Waters present an exciting opportunity for Wirral, which could act as a major driver in attracting inward investment into Birkenhead, thereby potentially helping to accelerate the wider regeneration of the urban areas that compose Inner Wirral, if an appropriate policy and strategic context can be put in place.

### **Purpose of this Report**

- 1.11 This report presents an Integrated Regeneration Study (IRS) for Birkenhead and proposes a coordinated approach to regeneration in light of the proposals of Wirral Waters and other key projects. The recommendations draw upon the core issues identified in the baseline report, provided in Appendix 1, and through discussion with key council officers and stakeholders.
- 1.12 The purpose of this study as defined in the initial Brief is to:
- Produce a “single, integrated comprehensive spatial plan for Birkenhead
  - Provide a “clear vision for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters, which supports the core aims of strategic economic regeneration within both the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework.

- 1.13 This report presents a summary of the core findings from the evidence base and discusses stakeholder aspirations and concerns, before presenting a strategic framework and series of area-based principles for regeneration.
- 1.14 Finally, it considers various mechanisms for delivery, including alternative approaches to management, project coordination and raising finance.
- 1.15 This report is structured as followed:
- **Chapter 2 – Issues and Opportunities**
  - **Chapter 3 – Vision and Objectives**
  - **Chapter 4 – Strategic Framework**
  - **Chapter 5 – Delivery and Next Steps**

*Figure 1.1: Birkenhead Integrated Regeneration Study Area*





## 2. Issues and Opportunities

- 2.1 This report is supported by a thorough and robust analysis of the IRS study area, providing a baseline profile against which to set future proposals. The baseline forms an appendix to this document (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 This section draws together the conclusions reached from the baseline analysis and offers an interpretation of the key issues and 'drivers' that need to be addressed by a strategy for Birkenhead. Combined, understanding these drivers and addressing the identified issues will be critical to enabling the delivery of sustainable regeneration and growth across Birkenhead in years to come.
- 2.3 Whilst the Birkenhead study area exhibits certain opportunities there are a significant number of constraints that need to be addressed in order to transform the area physically, economically and socially, thereby enabling it to make a much more positive contribution to the sub-regional economy.
- 2.4 The baseline analysis in particular highlights a series of challenges presented by the borough's economic structure and

ability to support long term growth. All other issues relating to local skills and employment, housing, retail, and the built environment are all related to this central issue. Maximising both the physical and socio-economic potential of the area and the potential to attract inward investment and stimulate economic development through key projects including *inter alia* Wirral Waters, revitalising the town centre, continued HMRI activity and the redevelopment of Woodside, will therefore be critical to its future regeneration. However, this requires a co-ordinated strategy to address a series of core challenges, which are summarised below.

### Structural weaknesses in the economy

- 2.5 The restructuring of the traditional industrial base of the economy has had a major impact on the both the physical and social fabric of the whole area. The once thriving riverside is now characterised by lower value employment activity alongside large areas of semi-redundant and underutilised land. These structural changes have in turn resulted in high levels of unemployment, which is mirrored by comparatively low productivity in the



economy with GVA per head lagging significantly behind the national average, with the gap widening<sup>1</sup>.

2.6 Whilst the future sustainable economic growth of the area will largely be dependent on wider macro-economic forces, the analysis presented through the baseline has highlighted a number of obstacles and challenges to growth going forward. They include:

- **An inadequate business base** - Issues regarding the quality of the employment offer are underpinning the problems in this economy with the more 'mobile' residents travelling to work outside Birkenhead or actually leaving the peninsula altogether. This is also highlighted by low productivity levels, lower wages and low value volume production. Whilst the business set-up level across Wirral is creditable (one of just three local authorities in the North West to meet targets), this is not converting on the ground into sustained job creation and economic value creation. This raises questions in terms of the quality of businesses setting up in the area and is synonymous with a weakening capital base in the broadest sense.

- **Limited education and skills levels** – Although within the Wirral context skills levels are generally good, the education and skills deprivation in the Birkenhead study area is particularly acute (42% of residents have no recognised qualifications<sup>2</sup>), acting as a barrier to people's participation in the local labour market. However it can be argued that skill shortages are also a consequence of a more worrying deficiency in the business base highlighted above.
- **Lack of quality sites and premises** – The study area, as a result of its industrial legacy, has a large number of sites of different sizes and ownerships, with varying site conditions, which make the availability of quality sites a significant challenge for economic development. In addition, whilst there has been the provision of some modern units in various parts of the study area, the majority of the premises are dated and not fit for modern business uses due to their large size, inflexibility in terms of adaptation and sub-division and surrounding environments. These circumstances cannot therefore attract higher value businesses to the study area and a re-structure of the business environment is needed to realise the economic potential of the area.

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<sup>1</sup> GVA Performance: Past GVA Trends 1998-2008; Future GVA Trends 2008-2026; Forecast Productivity Growth (Source Experian) Baseline Report – Chapter 4.

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<sup>2</sup> Qualification Levels (Source: ONS 2001) Baseline Report Chapter 3.

- 2.7 The economic assessment portrays a challenging context for the borough-wide economy but in many respects, an even greater challenge for the Birkenhead economy, which raises the importance of the IRS for Birkenhead and the potential opportunity created by Wirral Waters within this context. Those economic sectors expected to post growth going forward to 2026 make up a 41% share of total employment in Wirral but only 30% in the study area<sup>3</sup>. The disaggregated sectoral analysis highlights that the only real 'growth' sector across the borough will be public health, a sector significantly under-represented in the Birkenhead area. Consequently, the study area has a higher share of employment in those sectors expected to contract.
- 2.8 Whilst this baseline has considered future economic trends and projections these can be no certain guide to what the future may hold. Ultimately there is a need for local partners to continue to take a long term view, whatever the economic conditions at the current time. The current economic climate therefore presents an opportunity to refocus key sectors to provide the context for growth in the future. This study provides a spatial and thematic structure from which to guide inward investment and streamline service delivery, both necessary to attract emerging sectors.

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<sup>3</sup> Employment Base and Forecast (Source: ONS 2009) Baseline Report Chapter 4.

- 2.9 Looking beyond the current market opinion, a key challenge will be diversifying the economic specialisms for which Birkenhead can become known<sup>4</sup>. Critical to this will involve enhancing the competitiveness of indigenous sectors, whilst diversifying the local business base and capitalising on growth sectors. A lack of employment in the public health and social work sector within this specific area would appear to provide an opportunity to nurture investment linked to the strength of the sector elsewhere in Wirral and indeed in Liverpool (e.g. the Bio-medical cluster). At the same time the concentration of public administration suggests that this is an area which lends itself well to Government de-centralising opportunities. Wirral has previously benefited from the relocation of the Land Registry and Wirral Council are currently progressing discussions with various Government departments concerning new opportunities.
- 2.10 Creating development of a high quality, both in which to work and live, will be critical in realising economic potential.

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<sup>4</sup> Refer to Wirral Economic Development and Investment Framework (2006) GVA Grimley/KPMG, and Birkenhead Integrated Regeneration Study (IRS) Baseline Report - Appendix 2 Employment Sub-Sector Forecasts (2010) GVA Grimley.

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## Socio-economic underachievement

- 2.11 In stark contrast to the recent economic performance of the wider sub-region, and barring the present recession, the economy of Birkenhead is suffering from long-term stagnation and structural weakness, with unemployment and benefit claiming levels substantially above the Wirral average<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.12 Given the continuation, and in some cases concentration, of socio-economic disparities and inequalities across Birkenhead, measures aimed at addressing these structural weaknesses have become increasingly important when the present recessionary climate is considered.
- 2.13 It is evident that major barriers (identified below) still exist which are disconnecting the labour force within the study area from the opportunities of the wider City and Regional economy which are both tangible and intangible. Accessibility to employment in one sense is arguably a major barrier due to the limited employment opportunities within the area. Poor health is another barrier, with a high proportion of the resident population of the study area

having a long-term limiting illness, which prevents them from working<sup>6</sup>.

- 2.14 However, in addition to these barriers there is also evidence of wider aspirational issues associated with people not wanting to engage in employment<sup>7</sup>, or lacking the confidence to do so. This is a major problem when considered alongside deficiencies in the skills and qualifications required to access higher value employment. Furthermore, those residents that are in employment are consequently predominantly restricted to lower value sectors and elementary occupation roles<sup>8</sup>. These issues have been recognised by Wirral Council and are being targeted through the Reach Out Initiative, which aims to engage with hard to reach groups and encourage people back into employment.
- 2.15 The issue of acute multiple deprivation remains across large parts of the study area, though there are concentrations in specific neighbourhoods, particularly within North Birkenhead. An assessment of the 2004 and 2007 IMD suggests that this deprivation is deeply entrenched with a vast proportion of the

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<sup>5</sup> Various (Source: DWP 2009; ONS 2001; IMD 2007) Baseline Report Chapter 3 and 4.

<sup>6</sup> Proportion of Population with a limiting long term illness (Source: ONS 2001) Baseline Report Chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> Economic Inactivity – Propensity to work in Wirral 06-08 (Source ONS). Baseline Report Chapter 4.

<sup>8</sup> Occupation Classification of the workforce (Source: ONS 2001) Baseline Report Chapter 4.

area continuing to be classed within the worst 10% nationally. Particularly alarming is that in certain areas this entrenched deprivation has intensified between 2004 and 2007.

2.16 Deprivation is most severe in the belt of neighbourhoods running to the north and south of the docks and to the east of Birkenhead Park. Here pockets of deprivation within the worst 1% nationally persist. Particular hotspots include:

- the western estates towards Bidston. This includes the areas surrounding the Bidston Rise Estate, Hoylake Road, Ilchester Road, Laird Street and Townsend Street.
- the neighbourhoods to the east of Birkenhead Park, stretching from Paterson Street towards the town centre between South Claughton Road and Conway Street.
- the neighbourhoods between East Float and Beckwith Street, including parts of Price Street, Corporation Road, Vittoria Street; and Duke Street;
- the neighbourhoods to the east and west of Birkenhead Road and Demesne Street to the north of the docks in Seacombe; and
- the areas to the north of Hamilton Square towards Morpeth and Egerton Docks.

2.17 These neighbourhoods, some of which were identified for intervention as part of the HMRI programme in 2005, remain some of the most deprived areas of Merseyside and indeed the North West.

2.18 Another important consequence of socio-economic underachievement is low income. This is manifest in the high proportion of low-income households within the area<sup>9</sup> and in particular the over-representation of single-parent households and households with dependent children and no source of employment. This situation is being driven in part by housing needs and a lack of financial capacity, both of which have served to direct those households with low incomes, and in a vulnerable position, into the Birkenhead study area where there is a substantial proportion of social and private rented accommodation. This is also a symptom of several other component factors mentioned above including; limited educational attainment, low skills and capacity building, physical barriers to accessing employment and low aspirations reinforced over several generations, which are evident across Inner Wirral and in particular within the Birkenhead study area.

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<sup>9</sup> Average Weekly Earnings (Source: ASHE 2009) Baseline Report Chapter 3.

2.19 Household income has important knock-on effects for the wider economy and quality of place within the Birkenhead study area. Moreover, the wider quality of place associated with many of the neighbourhoods within the area has clearly been highlighted as a major issue in market perception and attractiveness. This impacts on the ability of the area to attract new families and households with higher aspirations. Indeed often households that do achieve higher incomes often leave Birkenhead to live elsewhere, a factor which further compounds the concentration of deprivation within the area.

### Poor quality housing offer

2.20 The Birkenhead study area has a high social-rented bias to its housing tenure profile<sup>10</sup> (38.5% compared to Wirral 16.6%), with a relatively low proportion of private market (owner-occupied 44.8% compared to Wirral 72.9%) and intermediate affordable housing stock, including a high proportion of private rental (16.7% compared to Wirral 10.5%). The prominence of the social rented sector not only creates significant concentrations of certain types of properties, but also limits the opportunity and choice for existing and new residents to obtain equity in their property and to move tenure.

2.21 In contrast to the rest of Wirral, the area is characterised by a high proportion of single person households<sup>11</sup> and, in particular, above average levels of lone parent households who are unable to buy and/or rent in the market. Given this context, and the relative affordability of property in Birkenhead, it is likely to remain an attractive option for lower income households who are more reliant on affordable housing to meet their needs.

2.22 However, an analysis of affordable housing provision<sup>12</sup> highlights clearly that the supply of new affordable housing has failed to keep pace with demand. This demand is driven by the low income of residents in the study area which restricts their ability to afford even the low cost accommodation available in the area. This situation clearly justifies the case for the focus of the HMRI and other economic initiatives to tackle worklessness and create employment in the area. What is more the financial capacity of many households continues to be eroded due to the tightening of lending criteria and rising unemployment. This places additional pressure on the need to provide a broader spectrum of housing to meet the varying needs of new and existing residents.

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<sup>10</sup> Housing Tenure (Source: ONS 2001) Baseline Report Chapter 7.

<sup>11</sup> Housing Composition (Source: ONS 2001) Baseline Report Chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> Affordable Housing Provision (Source: Wirral MBC 2009) Baseline Report Chapter 7 – See wider assessment detailed – various data sources.

- 2.23 These issues, coupled with a lack of planned new-build schemes coming to the market, is likely to result in heightened levels of demand and further unmet housing need across Birkenhead. Whilst some unmet need is being met through the private rented sector, further new development is clearly needed to improve the quality and choice of affordable housing and address the current shortfall.
- 2.24 Given this context, there is a strong rationale for tenure diversification and a re-focus on stock types suitable to modern aspirations and living standards. This will not only provide greater housing choice for both new and existing residents, but will also help to break down perceptual barriers which continue to constrain market demand.
- 2.25 Given the fragility of the housing market a strategy that seeks to provide largely for the social rented sector is likely to exacerbate, and indeed reinforce, the deep-rooted and long-term socio-economic problems that have become entrenched within Birkenhead. Furthermore, additional social-rented housing will continue to skew the tenure imbalance and further increase the proportion of vulnerable households residing within Birkenhead. Redressing the tenure balance and improving housing choices is

the focus of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative for Inner Wirral.

- 2.26 The development of high quality affordable housing across a range of sizes and a range of tenures would be an appropriate measure to provide affordable housing choices in the current market and encourage an increasingly stable and sustainable community across Birkenhead. Continued HMRI investment in restructuring Birkenhead's housing market is also vital to stimulating the wider and longer term regeneration of the area, which will include concerted action to reduce the number of pre1919 housing stock in private rental activity,

## Fragmented urban form and function

- 2.27 Despite a history of development that was based upon the 'Laird grid', developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and which created strong, distinctive patterns of urban form, the urban structure of the study area has been eroded over time with a large part of the central area characterised by irregular forms (large footprint industrial and retail/service buildings), which are fragmented by extensive areas of vacant, underused land.

- 2.28 The gradual erosion of the urban form and changes to movement around the grid pattern has resulted in a loss of coherency. This has affected the relationship between key locations such as the town centre, the dock system and Birkenhead Park. The poor quality of the townscape makes the public realm in these areas feel hostile, exacerbating the sense of separation and lack of cohesiveness.
- 2.29 The analysis has also revealed how physical fragmentation affects the *function* of the place, as much as it does its *form*.
- 2.30 The study area reveals in overall terms a rigid land use structure, which is a legacy of its historic development patterns and especially dock activity. It is possible to identify a number of 'hubs' - or key nodes – within the study area that are characterised by clusters of activity. These hubs are an important part of the structure and the 'mental map' of the place. However, rather than feeling like component parts of an overall whole, there is a sense that these are detached. Adding to this effect is the dominance of the employment corridor extending through the Birkenhead dock system and along the Mersey edge. The poor pedestrian environment in these areas results in an isolated and unpleasant atmosphere. Furthermore it severely affects the sense of north-south connectivity.

## Opportunity Areas

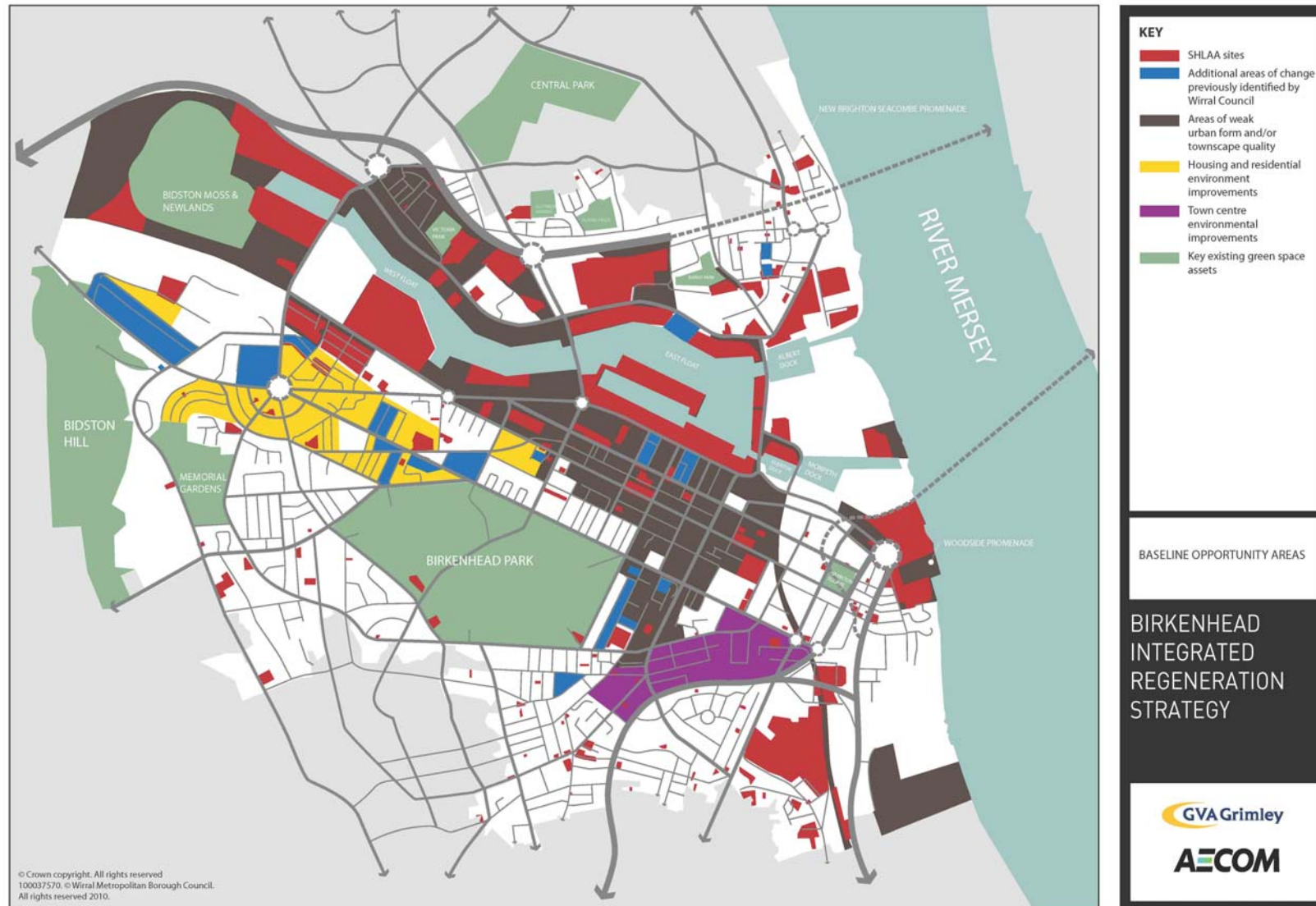
- 2.31 There is a clear opportunity for Birkenhead's ongoing regeneration to include interventions that will help to connect key hubs, create a less divisive pattern of land use and enhance the public realm experience. These should come together as part of an integrated approach to creating a better connected and united place: a better sense of a coherent whole.
- 2.32 An early step in taking this approach is to identify 'opportunity areas'. These include areas where evident weaknesses in form and function are presenting opportunities for change and improvement: In particular, these include redevelopment/refurbishment of land and property, and enhancement of key public realm/movement corridors. Aiding this process is information held by Wirral Council on development opportunities, including through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), and housing quality.
- 2.33 Opportunity areas are defined on the plan overleaf, which highlights a series of opportunities particularly throughout the Birkenhead dock system, extending through to Woodside and the



residential corridor that bounds Conway Street and Cleveland Street.

- 2.34 It is this combination of opportunities that lays the foundation to recreating a formed, connected series of neighbourhoods that can enhance the quality of place.

Figure 2.1: Areas of Opportunity



### 3. Vision and Objectives

- 3.1 To inform the visioning process and the development of regeneration objectives for Birkenhead, a comprehensive series of meetings with individual stakeholders and discussion groups were held during the study process. This was complemented by a series of Steering Group meetings which guided the vision and content of the IRS.
- 3.2 A list of those consulted during this process is included in the baseline study.
- 3.3 The following section presents a summary of the key messages emerging through these discussions, before presenting the proposed vision and the integrated regeneration themes and objectives.

#### Stakeholder Engagement

- 3.4 The messages which emerged through discussion with Stakeholders about the future of Birkenhead have informed the development of a vision. These are presented here in summary form and in some cases include direct quotes, where these

explain an aspiration. These perspectives have been collectively discussed in the Steering Group meetings, enabling refinement and consensus and allowing us to utilise them in arriving on an agreed Vision.

#### Sub Regional Perspectives

- Birkenhead has “dropped in the void” between Liverpool and Wirral/North Cheshire/North East Wales
- Wirral, and by implication, Birkenhead needs to find its own solution to **stimulating local wealth generation**
- Birkenhead needs to find a “new reason to exist”
- Birkenhead should actively be the “other side” of a **‘Regional Central Business District’**
- Birkenhead needs a “big vision” and needs to become an “I’d like to go there” **destination**.

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## Birkenhead Town Centre

- Birkenhead town centre is in significant decline and needs to find a **new purpose** and direction
- The configuration of the retail centre does not meet the accommodation requirements of present day high street multiples.
- The town centre needs a more **sustainable mix** of uses to attract and retain users
- The owners of the Shopping Centre are unable/unwilling to invest in the current market and in the meantime occupiers are leaving as demand drops
- The centre lacks a **quality hotel** or leisure-based offer to attract and retain overnight visitors
- The town centre should become more multi-functional for example a focal place for **business and multi-service delivery, which could** act as a catalyst for investment, helping to create confidence in the private sector to invest.
- Birkenhead Market is poorly configured and has lost its once strong **focus** on fresh produce. It is an important feature of the town centre and needs to be a priority for revitalisation.

- There is a need to improve the physical relationship with Conway Park station
- Need to establish **better connections** between the central town centre area and Woodside.

## Wirral Waters

- Birkenhead needs a strong and **ambitious Vision** that provides a context for Wirral Waters
- Wirral Waters and the rest of Birkenhead need to **complement** each other, rather than compete.
- Delivery of Wirral Waters over 30-40 years has the potential to become part of the “**community’s** ”life-work” – something to be proud of and in so doing, **raise aspiration** and **confidence**
- Wirral Waters would deliver 18,000 **new residents** to the population, therefore requiring **supporting infrastructure** (i.e. schools, green space, transport etc)
- Need to ensure that Wirral Waters is **socially integrated** – build on initiatives such as the ‘Construction Employment Integrator’.

- Wirral Waters offers the opportunity to make more efficient use of the dock land with increased public accessibility to the waters edge.

### Economic Development

- Building up the **local economy** from within is essential – make people ready for work and encourage local entrepreneurship.
- Ensuring local employment opportunities **address Wirral's long term worklessness**.
- Ensure full advantage is taken of national and local **public sector occupation** requirements
- Birkenhead's industrial past provides a positive (as well as negative) legacy and should not be ignored. Need to build upon the **potential for investment in key sectors** – maritime, food, environmental, digital, health and pharmaceuticals
- A distinction needs to be made between Bromborough (industrial-led) and Birkenhead (**office-led**) to ensure complementary activity.

- Small, **start-ups/incubators** are in relatively high demand in Birkenhead ('Micro-Business Accelerator') - 3,000 sqft and should be nurtured and accommodated.
- Investigate the potential to create a zone of **enterprise** within Birkenhead, with appropriate fiscal incentives.
- Promote the Birkenhead study area for significant inward investment.
- A focus on **renewable technologies** and eco-buildings should be actively pursued as an opportunity.

### Residential

- Introducing new **higher density town-living** into the wider town centre area and expand mixed-use approach around **Hamilton Square**
- Introduce high quality, **mixed tenure residential** development which is socially sustainable - It is necessary to increase the level of owner occupation in the area to increase the population level and subsequently support local and economic infrastructure.

- Ensure access to a range of **community services** including health and education for existing and potential neighbourhoods.
- The recent **HMRI investment** in existing housing stock has lead to resurgence in interest in the housing in some areas. Opportunity for further investment of this nature into residential areas
- Important to **invest into the existing stock**, in addition to redeveloping certain **areas for new housing**
- The quality of the **historic stock** is high in certain places and despite a lack of recent investment could become popular again in the future if the Wirral Waters scheme goes ahead – however there is a need to consider the future of poorer quality older stock in low demand in certain locations and reconfigure land uses to assemble sites for new housing.
- Need for **neighbourhood management** approach to be continued in HMRI neighbourhoods and expanded across the study area as appropriate.

## Education and skills

- **Improvement in educational attainment** outcomes and raise skills levels should be given the highest priority.
- Educational “drive” to reinstate “the value of education” locally from early-learners to adults; reinforcing the contribution of education to family life and **economic well-being**
- Encourage the **retention of Higher Education (HE)/Further Education (FE) students** in Birkenhead from study through to employment
- Explore opportunities for public sector multi-agency approach to provide and boost **local apprenticeships, training and employment**
- Use policy as a lever to formally **tie local education, apprenticeship, up-skilling and employment opportunities to new development** through Development Agreements
- Introduce a marketing strategy to encourage local engagement with education, employment and skills services and events

## Health and Well Being

- A focus is required to improve physical health outcomes and mental **well-being**
- Raise the quality of, and accessibility to, **public recreational** facilities
- Encourage **healthy lifestyles** and raise local and regional awareness of green assets
- Develop a **multi-agency approach** to improving health outcomes linked to improving economic activity, skills, attainment and community support
- Improve mental well-being to raise confidence and aspirations, foster personal development and encourage a **sense of pride** in the community

## Places, Spaces and Connections

- Reinststate a **legible and coherent** city structure, including a network of safe and accessible neighbourhood streets
- A **pedestrian focused** public realm connecting key locations

- A more integrated and connected **sustainable public transport system**
- Utilise existing investment programmes, including HMRI, to transform the place and feel of Birkenhead with the local authority taking a lead role.

3.5 Drawing upon these key messages and the baseline analysis the vision for the Birkenhead (IRS) study area is proposed:

## Proposed Vision for Birkenhead

*By 2030, Birkenhead will be a lively and popular place, which attracts a wide variety of visitors, residents and investors, who are attracted by the exciting urban waterside environment and popular residential neighbourhoods with excellent links to a bustling town centre, world famous green spaces and Liverpool City Centre.*

*Firmly established on the tourist trail, visitors will be attracted by a diverse range of cultural and heritage assets, which included the world's first public park, Hamilton Square and the best views of the Liverpool World Heritage Site waterfront and skyline.*

*The daily bustle of Birkenhead town centre and waterfront as a modern shopping, business and service destination offering a*



*sustainable mix of uses, will extend into the evening and visitors and residents will enjoy a range of quality hotel accommodation and a diverse evening economy, including gourmet restaurants and lively waterfront cafes and bars in Woodside. The town centre will offer a variety of new and refurbished residential and business accommodation, including the introduction of new uses in to Hamilton Square, with safe and attractive connections to the surrounding neighbourhoods. The transport infrastructure will support the priorities for Birkenhead and the surrounding area, providing effective access to services and opportunities, helping to reduce carbon emissions and contributing towards a healthier community.*

*East Float will complement the regeneration of the town centre and will raise aspirations and confidence in the future ambition of Birkenhead, providing a sustainable mix of exciting new residential, office and ancillary retail, leisure and commercial uses. The vibrant East Float will be physically and socially integrated with surrounding neighbourhoods providing new opportunities for the local community and attracting new residents to the Birkenhead study area.*

*The Birkenhead study area will offer a strong economic platform, which responds to emerging key sectors and will complement*

*and draw upon its links with Liverpool City Centre, actively contributing towards the strength of the City Region. Businesses will be attracted by a variety of high quality accommodation incorporating sustainable technologies, which will include new waterfront floorplates catering for national private and public office-led sectors and smaller start-up and incubation spaces to support indigenous enterprise. Local businesses will have established links with adjacent education and training amenities.*

*The variety and quality of housing choices in Birkenhead will attract new residents into the area, who are drawn by attractive, modern new build and high quality historic properties adjacent to Hamilton Square and Birkenhead Park. The HMRI programme will deliver new and improved properties throughout the wider study area, which will include investment into sustainable stock and the redevelopment of less popular housing types. New higher density development in the town centre and within East Float will diversify the housing choices further, to ensure that the full range of housing choices are offered across Birkenhead, for sale and rent.*

*Birkenhead will be a successful place to live – where residents are happy, healthy and have access to the amenities and services they need. Birkenhead will offer a high quality of life,*

*which combines the facilities of a town centre at the heart of the Liverpool City Region, the green spaces and quality waterfront of a top destination, with a choice of unique, popular and liveable urban neighbourhoods.*

- 3.6 The next section sets out the key elements of the approach and guiding principles that will be necessary to achieve such an ambitious vision.

## Guiding Principles

### Bold, but practical

- 3.7 Key to developing the Strategic Framework is an approach that aims to be bold, but practical, exploiting with the economic potential of Birkenhead, the wider Borough and the City Region. The framework seeks to set out a new future for Birkenhead and its role within the City Region, raise aspirations, tap into emerging economic prospects and to attract inward investment thereby changing the economic profile of the Borough.

### Emphasises Delivery

- 3.8 An emphasis needs to be placed upon delivery at all stages, setting out how change can be delivered, who should manage

the process and where funding opportunities may lie in the short and long term. Wirral Waters brings with it an unprecedented level of investment over the long term. The key to success is to capture the benefits of that investment for the areas beyond the site boundaries. A 'planning gain' approach alone will not achieve this, but a comprehensive approach that delivers integrated development and economic growth across the wider area is required.

## Exploit the Assets

- 3.9 The aspiration is to capture and deliver the potential of the local assets in Birkenhead and the wider Inner Wirral area. The waterfront offers tremendous potential for the long-term regeneration of Birkenhead, and provides a starting point for capturing value. However, other key green, cultural and heritage assets in the wider area include *inter alia* Birkenhead Park, Hamilton Square, Bidston Hill, Bidston Moss, Birkenhead Priory and the sustainable neighbourhoods that surround the inner core. Improving the connections between these assets, creating areas of opportunity and facilitating integration between neighbourhoods forms the basis of an agreed regeneration strategy that draws upon the strengths of the local area.

## Local Benefit

- 3.10 The strategy seeks to direct investment to the benefit of the local community thereby improving prosperity and quality of life. The challenge is to position Birkenhead economically within the city region and wider North West region in order to drive growth and renewal and deliver a step change in social mobility for the people that reside there.

## Commitment

- 3.11 The framework has sought to achieve the required focus and agreement of the Stakeholders and core service providers who will be tasked with making things happen and delivering change. This has sought to include the commitment of parties beyond the Council, including all service providers. The next step will be to ensure it is embraced by leading businesses and land owners in Birkenhead and the wider Inner Wirral area.

## Defining roles and relationships

- 3.12 The future role of Birkenhead and its regeneration strategy must be defined by its relationship with the wider Wirral Peninsula and the Liverpool City Region. The consequence of these

relationships defines the potential of this place, and shapes the ongoing development and change.

### 1. *The Wirral Peninsula*

Development and change in the Birkenhead study area should be driven by its role as “Inner Wirral”; an energetic urban centre with a quality retail and leisure offer. A vibrant, mixed-use, multi-functional location which integrates a unique residential offer within the peninsula: an urban, compact housing environment with convenient access to quality walking, cycling and public transport links and offering a high degree of liveability built around strong quality of life factors – especially open space and leisure (both local and peninsula-wide) and access to a strong educational offer.



### 2. *Liverpool City region*

Central Birkenhead should be distinct but complementary to Liverpool city centre - a historic, liveable, intimate, human scale and tranquil location which is different to and balanced against Liverpool's clear role as economic driver. This is not to say that Birkenhead cannot and should not offer a diverse and varied

range of uses, services and facilities that supports a strong local economy in its own right, and accommodates industry, business, education and training.

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### *3. A unique and self sustaining “city quarter”*

Bringing these two concepts together, we can see central Birkenhead as an individual quarter of the wider Liverpool City Region. Central Birkenhead has all the essential ingredients of a liveable neighbourhood but with a walkable scale and a density and intensity that gives it life and animation – potentially very good services, facilities, shops and restaurants, superb links to Liverpool city centre, quality open space assets and waterfront access. The following diagrams illustrate this concept.

Figure 3.1 A Complementary Role for Birkenhead

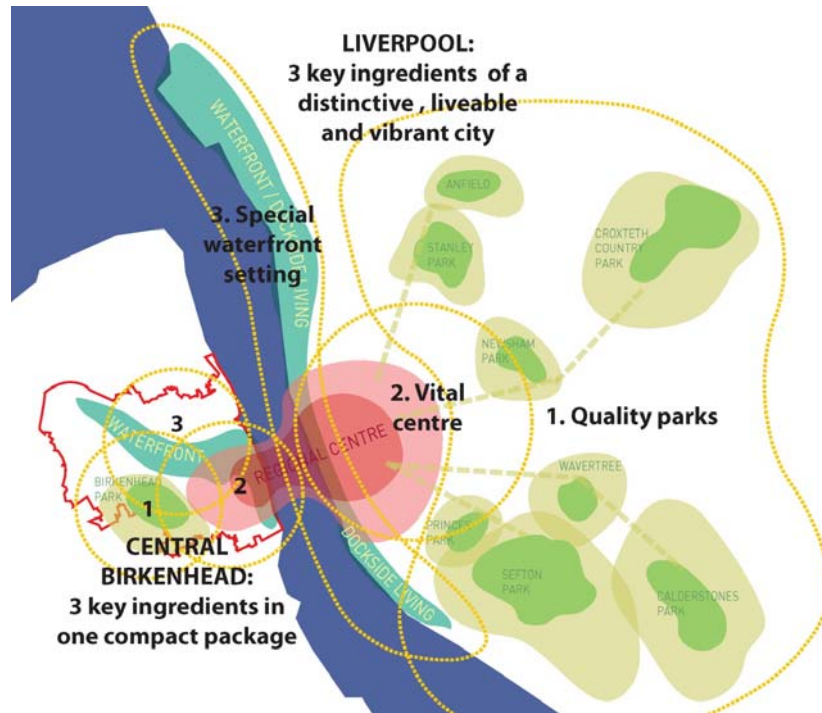
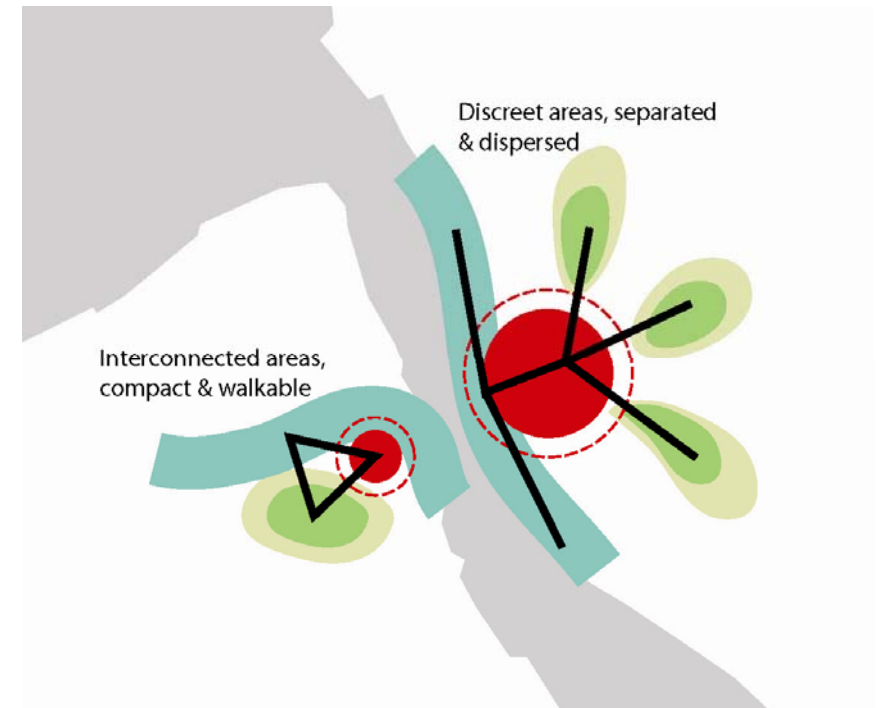


Figure 3.2A Compact and Walkable Neighbourhood



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## Enhancing and re-establishing the key components of Birkenhead

### Foundations for change

3.13 Our approach to shaping the future of Birkenhead focuses on rediscovering what made it vibrant and vital in the past. Key objectives embedded within an integrated regeneration study for Birkenhead are:

- Rediscovering people-friendly routes into and out of the central core and waterfront
- Rediscovering human scale, welcoming streets and spaces
- Rethinking the Birkenhead dock system— from isolated former dock system (and barrier) in to an attractive waterside hub – vibrant, active and integrated.
- Rediscovering a logical, responsive scale of built form scale, enhancing the role and structure of the place by building up density in the central area.
- Rediscovering the ‘Laird grid’, and maximising this as a highly distinctive asset and foundation for a clear and legible urban structure.

- Rediscovering natural landscape features and the ‘man made’ open space network

3.14 To deliver these objectives the spatial strategy should be founded upon improving;

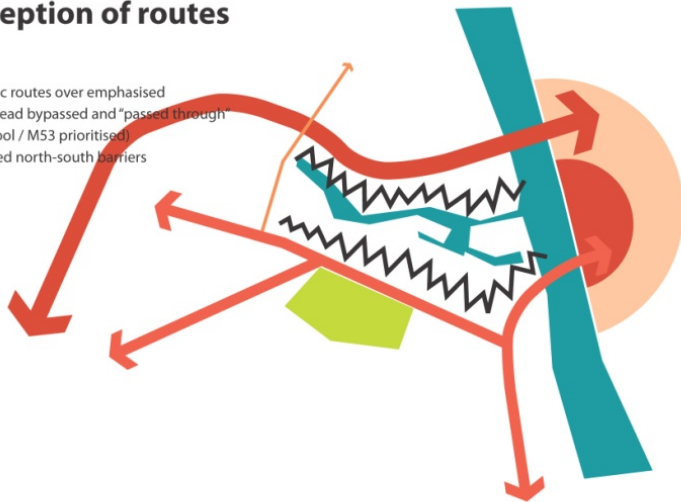
## a) Perceptions of routes and connectivity

From...

*Figure 3.3 Perception of routes: Now*

### Perception of routes

- Strategic routes over emphasised
- Birkenhead bypassed and "passed through" (Liverpool / M53 prioritised)
- Ingrained north-south barriers

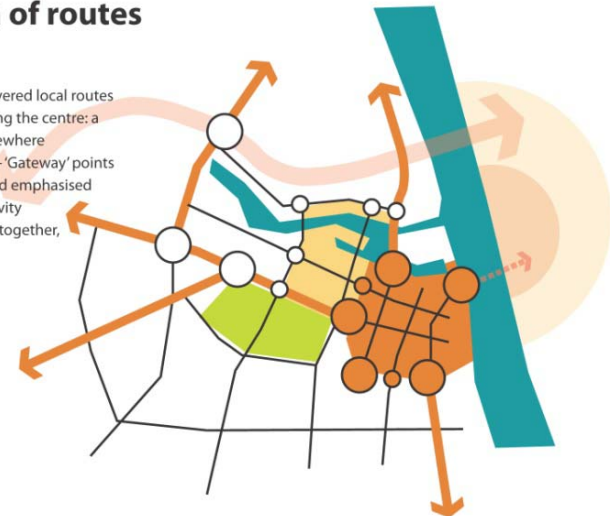


To...

*Figure 3.4 Perception of routes: Improved*

### Perception of routes

- A better balance of layered local routes
- Strategic routes feeding the centre: a sense of arriving somewhere
- Easy to find your way - 'Gateway' points and nodes defined and emphasised
- North-south connectivity
- Routes 'bind' the area together, not divide it





## b) Perceptions of public realm assets and open spaces

From...

*Figure 3.5 Perception of public realm assets: Now*

### Perception of public realm assets

- 'Stranded islands' of green space
- Birkenhead Park has limited placemaking value - a wasted asset
- A privatised, inaccessible and/or very low quality waterfront
- High quality assets are 'outside' not 'inside' Birkenhead
- An intense, unrelieved town centre environment

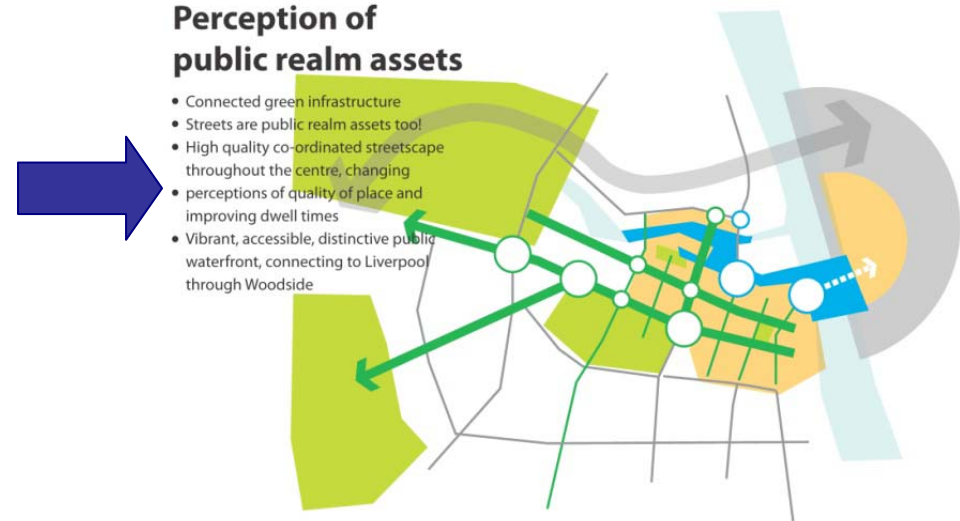


To...

*Figure 3.6 Perception of public realm assets: Improved*

### Perception of public realm assets

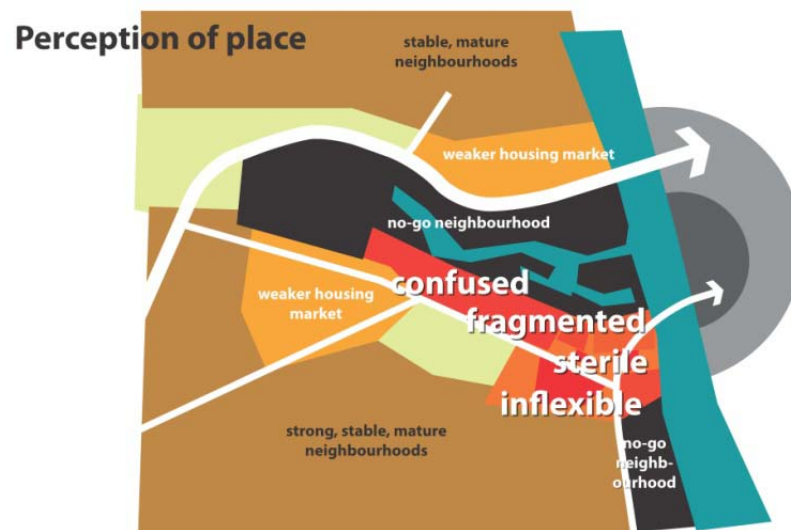
- Connected green infrastructure
- Streets are public realm assets too!
- High quality co-ordinated streetscape throughout the centre, changing perceptions of quality of place and improving dwell times
- Vibrant, accessible, distinctive public waterfront, connecting to Liverpool through Woodside



### c) Perceptions of intactness and integrity

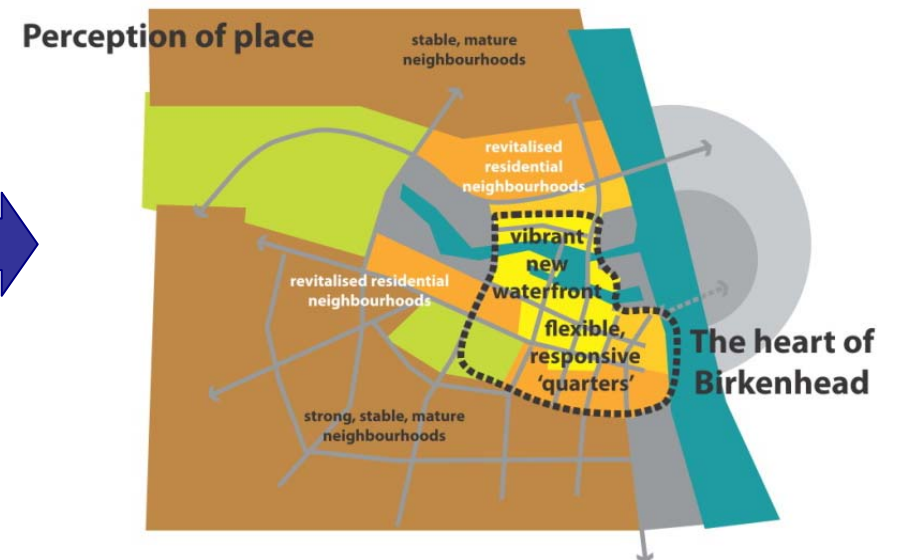
From...

Figure 3.7 Perception of place: Now



To...

Figure 3.8 Perception of place: Improved



## Reasserting the town centre as the nucleus

- 3.15 The town centre is key to realising the potential to create a self-sustaining “city quarter”. Without a strong, vibrant centre activity will continue to leak out and there will be no ‘life and intensity’ to balance the more serene open space and passive leisure assets. A strong town centre is also key to unlocking the potential of the waterfront, both in terms of the River Mersey and the dock system.
- 3.16 The objective should be to rediscover the original “central hub” of the borough – the heart of inner Wirral and a key to historic partnerships with Liverpool.
- 3.17 By taking this ‘start with the heart’ approach the central core of Birkenhead can become the focus of and driver for change, based on strengthening key attributes to;
- build on the existing sense that this is somewhere distinct – a clear sense of place;
  - build on the significant heritage assets;
  - build on the foundations of an organic, logical and legible movement network;

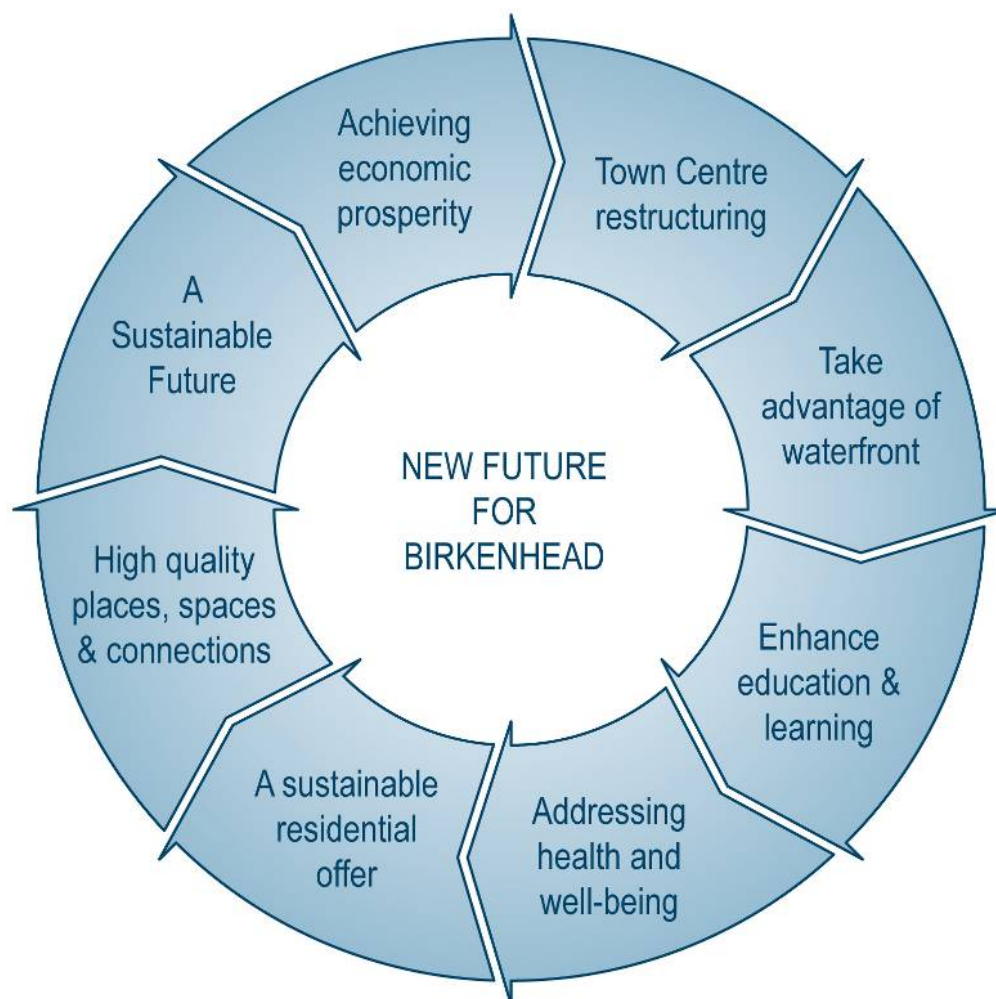
- build on the unique juxtaposition between planned/formal (Laird grid, Hamilton Square) and organic/informal (Bridge Street, Grange Road) built form origins;
- build on the key views and a perceived connectivity to Liverpool (River Mersey and the Birkenhead dock system);
- build on the great public transport assets, especially Merseyrail; and
- build on the walkable scale and intimate street spaces.

## Spatial Framework

### Thematic Principles

- 3.18 These elements have been incorporated into the spatial framework for the regeneration of Birkenhead, which is based upon a series of thematic principles to guide future development and investment in Birkenhead.
- 3.19 The thematic principles have evolved through discussion with Stakeholders and Council officers in a series of discussions and are represented and discussed overleaf.

Figure 3.9: Thematic Principles



## Theme 1 – Achieving Economic Prosperity

- 3.20 The baseline analysis outlines the structural weaknesses of the economy and the socio-economic factors that in particular are holding back economic growth. Much work has been done in the past to put in place an integrated economic strategy for Wirral<sup>13</sup> and efforts continue with the recent Investment Strategy.
- 3.21 Within the context of existing and ongoing work, this study aims to provide a focus for Birkenhead in the light of the Wirral Waters proposals and the wider City Region economic strategy. The key is to establish a role and function for the Birkenhead study area and to nurture businesses in target economic sectors, matched with up-skilling and enhanced educational attainment. Economic prosperity goes hand in hand with a successful town centre, exploiting the full potential of the waterfront and, a sustainable housing offer and improved educational attainment.

<sup>13</sup> Wirral Economic Regeneration Strategy 2001 – 2010, and the Economic Regeneration and Investment Framework 2005.

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*Proposed Objectives*

- Wirral will play an increasingly **active role in the City Region**, with the wider Birkenhead study area increasingly seen as the western edge of Liverpool city centre.
  - Optimise the full potential of the waterfront for economic activity – the Wirral Waters proposals in particular have the potential to deliver a transformational level of new accommodation.
  - Nurture investment in identified economic sectors, including public health and social work, including spin-off activity from bio–medical clusters in Liverpool; Communications, retail and hotels and catering, etc.
  - Address supply side issues by providing accommodation to meet business needs, including quality large-footplate office space, and smaller accommodation to support and foster start-up and enterprise activity.
  - Seek to attract additional relocations as a consequence of Government relocations through preparation and presentation of a credible offer.
- Birkenhead Town Centre will become a **key ‘centre’ for Wirral** – a primary service centre to serve the borough catchment, **offering a variety of uses**:
    - a. Reinvigorated retail environment
    - b. Cultural/leisure amenities
    - c. Higher quality office space
    - d. Quality business accommodation and the potential for multi-agency service delivery
    - e. Educational linkages
    - f. Quality civic environment
    - g. Pedestrian and cycle friendly public realm
    - h. Improved connections to the waterfront and neighbourhoods
  - Birkenhead will become a **destination** for cultural, leisure, economic and residential opportunities.

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## Theme 2 – Town Centre Restructuring

- 3.22 The central area of Birkenhead is composed of a number of distinct zones, including *inter alia* Hamilton Square, Woodside, Europa Boulevard and the core retail area among others, which together create the wider town centre environment.
- 3.23 The revitalisation of this wider central area is an essential component in the regeneration of Birkenhead and the Inner Wirral catchment. Once the driving force behind the borough's development, Birkenhead has declined in recent years, which is reflected in the lower status of the town centre shopping precinct in the retail hierarchy. However, due to its proximity to Liverpool City Centre, Birkenhead retains the opportunity to once again become a central service centre for the borough, with the potential to establish a quality mixed-use complementary offer that contributes to the extended city centre region.
- 3.24 The latent potential that exists within Birkenhead and the wider study area due to its connectivity to Liverpool; the size of its urban catchment; the extent of under-utilised dockland; and recent developer ambition, which is best illustrated through the ambitious plans of Wirral Water, places Birkenhead in an opportune position that distinguishes it from other town centres in the borough.
- 3.25 It is therefore within this context that the future of Birkenhead town centre becomes a key priority, not just for the immediate Birkenhead area, but also for the Borough as a whole. This is considered in the recent [Wirral] Strategy for Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure report<sup>14</sup>, which considers the future viability of the town centre.
- 3.26 The essence of the IRS approach is it to take a fresh look at the potential of the wider town centre to grow and develop in line with emerging markets. In order to do this, the town centre needs to offer the appropriate quality of floor space, activity and service support required to retain and attract new businesses. The Focus Area Objectives (Appendix 2) discuss the potential of the wider town centre in more detail and also draw upon best practice, considering the essential ingredients required to support a successful town centre.
- 3.27 Retailing is increasingly recognised as being only one component of a successful town centre: leisure, residential,

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<sup>14</sup> Wirral Council Strategy for Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure – Volume 1: Main Report (Dec 2009) Roger Tym and Partners

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- office/service and a diverse evening economy all have a role in contributing to future vitality and viability.
- 3.28 The wider town centre needs to be reconsidered as an appropriate location for key services that could otherwise be brought forward elsewhere in Birkenhead (and the borough). A commitment is needed to ensure that the town centre remains as the primary service centre in Inner Wirral and that service providers, where appropriate, are setting an example to the wider business market that central Birkenhead is a viable business location.
- 3.29 As such, the role and function of the wider town centre and how this is considered in policy terms needs to change from one primarily focused on the retail precinct, to a wider central urban area that offers a range of high quality uses including *inter alia* retail, business, cultural, transport, service, recreation and residential. The latter of which would play an important role in ensuring that the town centre is lively and active throughout the day and has the critical mass of activity in the evening to create a safe, interesting and diverse night-time economy to attract new users back into the centre for leisure and recreational purposes.
- 3.30 As discussed previously, the central area is made up of a number of distinct zones, which need better definition and connection. In addition, the redundant rail line runs through the centre of this area and acts as a physical scar and barrier to efficient movement and integration. Each of these areas has its own (existing and potential) character and should be knitted together, to create a mixed-use town centre which has a variety of high quality character zones.
- 3.31 The use and function of the wider Birkenhead (IRS) area needs to support and complement the role of the town centre as the primary service centre and ensure that new development does not undermine this role, but contributes towards a more sustainable Birkenhead.
- 3.32 The ability to deliver positive change in the town centre is constrained by the lack of available sites within or close to the retail/transport core, with those that do exist, fragmented. Utilising existing vacant land and surface car parking is a start to creating new opportunities, subject to development of a Parking Strategy for the town centre. However, in the longer term a more intensive approach will be needed to enable development to come forward. This will include taking a long term view on the mix of occupiers in the town centre and identifying areas of overprovision of retail and other floorspace, with the overall aim of raising the quality of use and appearance of the town centre.
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In light of this, a level of commitment to the IRS is needed that goes beyond the public sector and service providers and includes key business stakeholders, which recognises that change is needed in the wider town centre area if it is to become a viable and competitive business location that plays a recognisable role in the City Region context.

*Proposed Objectives – for the wider town centre area*

1. To **revitalise and diversify the retail provision** through the provision of modern retail floor plates and enhance connections towards the waterfront.
2. To **improve pedestrian and cycle connections** to surrounding neighbourhoods and create a quality environment that is attractive and vibrant.
3. For **Europa Boulevard** to become the primary street for new and improved leisure and business activity and to consider the potential to extend to the north, to link to East Float.
4. To create a high quality **public realm** along Europa Boulevard, which connects to key destinations e.g. Hamilton Square; Woodside; the retail precinct; Docks and Waterfront; residential communities.
5. To attract new leisure and business activity along Europa Boulevard, including active uses at ground floor, to strengthen activity between the waterfront and the retail centre.
6. To introduce **new residential development** into the wider town centre area to stimulate activity and create a vibrant urban environment.
7. To increase the **scale and mass of development** within the town centre to clearly define the 'central zone' and stimulate greater activity.
8. To maximise the potential of the town centre and the study area as a focus for multi-agency service delivery.
9. To **reduce the impact of highways** infrastructure on pedestrian and cycle movement within and around the town centre – review the priority of through traffic and consider how the tunnel toll plaza area might be more effectively utilised.
10. To create a more **user-friendly street hierarchy** that sensitively guides through traffic around the town centre, using better signage and legible public realm, whilst enables convenient access for town centre users.

11. To **re-establish routes** and connections across the town centre and 'knit' together different parts of the town centre, including sites segregated by the redundant rail line.
12. To bring forward **higher-value development on vacant and under-utilised sites** and relocate industrial activity to more appropriate locations.
13. To introduce **new educational, business and enterprise activity**, to integrate with established and emerging uses on the docks and along Canning Street and Cleveland Street.
14. To open up **connections to the Merseyrail stations and bus facilities** and cluster activity around these locations.
15. To provide a **new hotel and leisure offer** that capitalises on the historic and cultural assets of the town centre, including Hamilton Square and the waterfront.

### Theme 3 – Take Advantage of the Waterfront

- 3.33 The waterfront is one of Birkenhead's untapped 'Unique Selling Points'. It offers the potential for a step change in perception. The proposal by Peel for Wirral Waters captures that potential and presents a new long term aspiration for Birkenhead. There

is no doubt though that the proposals seek to fully exploit that potential. A long term perspective may mean that recent investments, for example at 12 Quays are revisited, particularly if investment at the East Float is successful.

#### *Proposed Objectives*

1. To introduce appropriate **higher value development** on the waterfront to capitalise on setting and outlook.
2. To draw upon **Northern European exemplars** of best practice to guide development activity – Malmö, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Amsterdam, Hamburg
3. To open-up **pedestrian and cycle access along the waterfront** and encourage public access in new dock front developments including the creation of new linkages and connections.
4. To create **new physical and visual connections** from the town centre to the waterfront through an integrated urban design.
5. To secure **design principles** for the waterfront which will ensure the quality and future maintenance of the new development and public realm in waterfront locations.

6. To ensure all new **developments are founded on masterplanning principles**, which consider scale and massing, and ensures that new developments are integrated with the town centre, minimise overshadowing and respond appropriately to the open waterfront location.
7. To create opportunities for **ground floor activities** in key locations to stimulate footfall and animate public routes – to avoid blank frontage at ground floor.
8. To ensure that new development is physically and visually integrated into the surrounding context and that pedestrian and cycle **connectivity and movement is maximised** within a defined route network.
9. To **consolidate industrial activity** into appropriate locations, which are accessible to the motorway network and limit impact on residential neighbourhoods.
10. To ensure that development activity is set within a wider masterplan that establishes a framework for places, spaces and connections.
11. To ensure that the integration of **new uses complements the role and function of the town centre**.

12. To ensure that the masterplan for the waterfront is deliverable and provides a **viable framework for regeneration activity**.

## Theme 4 – Enhanced Education and Learning Offer

- 3.34 Linked to economic development a core element of creating a sustainable recovery is addressing educational attainment and skill levels across the community. This requires a joined up approach and concentrated effort by all public sector institutions to tackle worklessness and low esteem within the community. This is a long, slow and intensive process.

### *Proposed Objectives*

1. Improve educational attainment outcomes and raise skills levels
2. Educational ‘drive’ to reinstate “the value of education” locally from early-learners to adults; reinforcing the contribution of education to family life and economic well-being
3. Encourage retention of HE/FE students in Birkenhead from study through to employment

4. Explore opportunities for public sector multi-agency approach to provide and boost local apprenticeships, training and employment
5. Use policy as a lever to formally tie local education, apprenticeship, upskilling and employment opportunities to new development through Development Agreements and S106
6. Introduce a marketing strategy to encourage local engagement with education, employment and skills services and events

## Theme 5 – Health and Well Being

- 3.35 A similar approach is required in relation to addressing healthcare inequalities in Birkenhead – a multi-agency collaborative approach that learns from best practice.

### *Proposed Objectives*

1. Improve physical health outcomes and mental well-being
2. Raise the quality of, and accessibility to, public recreational facilities

3. Encourage healthy lifestyles and raise local and regional awareness of green assets
4. Develop a multi-agency approach to improving health outcomes linked to improving economic activity, skills, attainment and community support
5. Improve mental well-being to raise confidence and aspirations, foster personal development and encourage a sense of pride in the community

## Theme 6 – A Sustainable Residential Offer

- 3.36 Birkenhead has an imbalanced housing offer, which no longer provides the quality, choice and range of property types and values to create a sustainable housing market. Successful regeneration will require the provision of a full range of housing opportunities offering choice for local residents and in-migrants alike. The HMRI and Wirral Waters programmes offer an opportunity to restructure Birkenhead's housing market which can be phased to create incremental change.

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*Proposed Objectives*

1. To create choice and diversity in the Birkenhead housing offer – providing new, high quality housing products that offer aspirational choices for rent and for sale.
2. To offer a balanced housing market that provides a full range of products and a sustainable mix in type and tenure, and to raise the owner occupation rates closer to the borough average.
3. To introduce good quality higher density residential uses into the town centre and surrounding area to stimulate activity and vibrancy.
4. To identify declining stock of architectural and historic value for targeted improvement activity, including stock within or adjacent to conservation areas – Birkenhead Park, Hamilton Square, Clifton Park.
5. To continue to remove poor quality, low demand and obsolete housing supply and consider derelict and industrial land for housing, where it can create a new residential market.
6. To provide higher quality housing for rent, shared ownership and affordable sale including specialist housing for elderly residents, families and single persons.
7. To introduce high quality residential development in waterfront locations, which capitalise on the views and create a new housing offer in Birkenhead.
8. To extend the HMRI stock improvement activity, including face-lifting and refurbishment, to bring declining stock back into viable and popular uses.
9. To continue neighbourhood management approach in HMRI neighbourhoods (Seacombe, Birkenhead, Bidston)

## **Theme 7 – Places, Spaces and Connections**

- 3.37 Quality of Place is a key determinant of economic investment and success. As has been identified Birkenhead has a series of fundamental weaknesses. This means not only creating high quality, attractive and safe neighbourhoods, but a town centre that is attractive to users. It also means making it easy for people to move through the area, accessing services, the town centre, the parks, waterfront etc.

*Proposed Objectives*

1. To re-empower the pedestrian in Birkenhead creating safe and attractive connections, downgrading the emphasis on through traffic and re-establishing use and activity along key routes to improve natural surveillance and animation.
2. To refine the use and activity of places and spaces by introducing ground floor activity in key locations, encouraging an appropriate scale and mass of development in the town centre, and integrating a mixed-use approach to promote day time and evening activity.
3. To connect key assets with opportunity areas by creating new green linkages and pedestrian/cycle links; emphasising north-south connections and improving access to public transport.
4. To establish connections between the town centre, existing and potential key locations through an integrated public realm strategy.
5. To create connected communities, which are safe, well designed and usable to all.

6. To build upon the Live Wirral branding and communication projects as a successful method to promoting HMRI in Wirral.

**Theme 8 – Sustainable Future**

- 3.38 New investment in Birkenhead should push the boundaries of sustainable development. It should be ‘future-proof’. We should seek to make Birkenhead and its renaissance an exemplar in sustainable development

*Proposed Objectives*

1. To encourage the use of Modern Methods of Construction and sustainable technologies in design, development and use.
2. To minimise waste creation during construction and promote recycling and sustainable lifestyles.
3. To adopt sustainable approaches to power generation and distribution in large redevelopment schemes.
4. To promote healthy lifestyles and encourage greater pedestrian, cycle and public transport use.

5. To support exemplar schemes for sustainable design and development to promote sustainable lifestyles and housing choices.
6. To incorporate sustainable technologies into the refurbishment and improvement of popular historic stock in sustainable locations.

## 4. Spatial Framework

4.1 The proposed spatial framework is a central element of the Birkenhead IRS and is intended to be developed further to inform the LDF process. It demonstrates how physical change and development could potentially help to address key issues and opportunities – not just from an environmental perspective (i.e. addressing weaknesses in urban form) but also encompassing social and economic dimensions to. For example;

- Helping to address **structural weaknesses in the economy** by identifying opportunities for complementary employment and education development, and enhancing the attractiveness of Birkenhead as a place to invest.
- Helping to address **socio-economic inequality and instability** by easing tangible barriers – e.g. opening up access to and connections between places of work and education, enhancing the quality and legibility of the environment (to appeal to and inspire people), promoting walking, cycling and public transport as genuine alternatives as modes of travel to work (and, in the case of walking and cycling, as appealing leisure pursuits).

- Helping to address the **quality of the housing offer** by promoting key residential development and redevelopment opportunities and using urban design principles to establish the foundation for more appealing living environments that **feel welcoming and safe**.

4.2 In creating a spatial framework the consultant team has integrated a number of influences including careful analysis of stakeholder viewpoints and information. The aim has been to generate a framework that assimilates a wide range of factors in a way that presents a **single, integrated comprehensive spatial plan for Birkenhead**. This comprehensive plan;

1. *Is founded on a defined context and understanding of place assets*. This has been achieved through comprehensive baseline analysis and stakeholder consultation.
2. *Defines a clear vision and overall concept for change*. This has been driven by a need to both (a) *complement* and reinforce existing assets and (b) coordinate and prioritise responses to weaknesses and features which currently 'divide' the place (be this a physical or a socio-economic divide).
3. *Can be used as a foundation for co-ordinated delivery*. This has been achieved by thinking about how opportunities for



change can both (a) maximise and synchronise existing strategies / development proposals, and (b) stimulate new partnerships and complementary approaches to development.

## Approach

- 4.3 The spatial framework sets out ideas and proposals for change that have a 'bottom up' as much as a 'top down' approach. This means that the framework is based both on wider concepts that react to large scale, strategic issues and opportunities, and also on localised, site specific issues and opportunities ('getting under the skin' of Birkenhead to reveal the detail of the challenge - the potential to implement change - at the local level).

### Bigger Picture Concepts

- 4.4 The vision and objectives for the IRS define the overall approach to change across Birkenhead, not only driven by need but also by opportunity. This has in turn defined the thrust and content of the physical framework.
- 4.5 In spatial terms, the big picture concepts - the overall approach to change - are defined by three central ideas that look to enhance and re-establish key components of Birkenhead (as

described at Section 3.0 Vision and Objectives). These form the foundation to the three plans (presented later) which together form the physical framework.

- i. Improving the attractiveness and legibility of key routes and enhancing the overall sense of connectivity through Birkenhead
- ii. Improving the quality of key areas of public realm, and the connectivity between important public open spaces
- iii. Developing a land use structure that can guide development decision in a way that helps to improve the 'intactness' and coherence of Birkenhead's urban structure

### Locally Relevant and Manageable

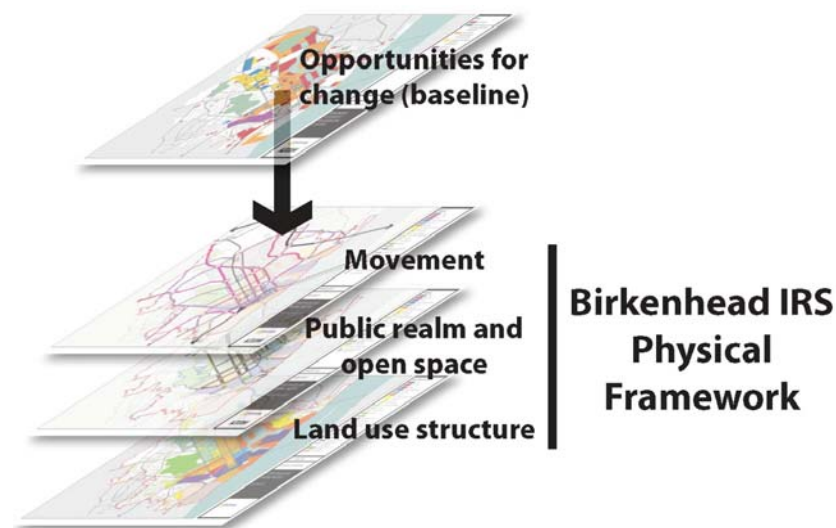
- 4.6 The study area for the IRS is of a significant scale, and the physical framework covers an extensive spatial area. In creating the plan it is has been advantageous to break the wider down into a number of smaller elements, to help make it more manageable to assemble. The physical framework is based on a number of constituent Focus Areas which have been defined by (a) similarities in spatial characteristics (i.e. the Character Areas identified in the baseline study) and (b) common objectives and themes for development and change.

- 4.7 Putting together proposals for individual Focus Areas has allowed the capacity for change to be understood and calculated at site specific level. This ensures that the overall framework is based on a firm understanding of more localised issues and opportunities. It also makes the framework easier to interpret (and more useful) at a local level as much as an overall, wider concept. Hence it becomes a 'composite' framework – a big picture shaped by local opportunities and strategies.

### Layering the Plan

- 4.8 In order to manage the myriad issues and objectives underpinning the IRS, the physical framework has been generated as a layered spatial plan. This has involved generating proposals under the three key themes set out above in a way that comes together to create a combined physical framework strategy – in effect creating three plans in one. Layering the plan in line with these themes allows the spatial strategy to be understood as an overall plan for change, whilst also allowing an appreciation of component strategies, tailored to specific objectives.

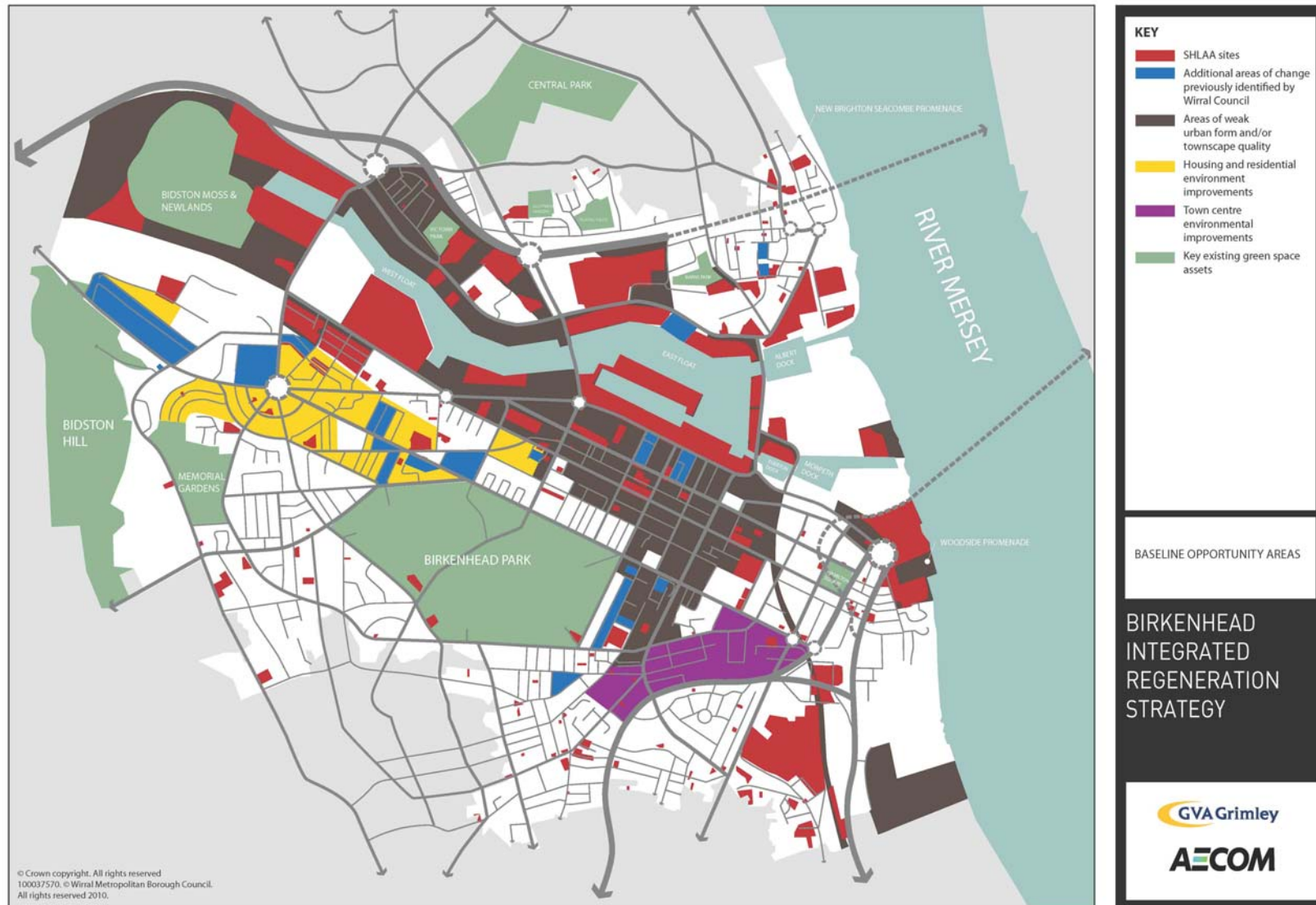
*Figure 4.1: Approach to creating a Physical Framework*



### The Physical Framework Strategy

- 4.9 By addressing both the bigger picture concepts and understanding localised challenges and capacity, the physical framework represents a single, integrated comprehensive spatial plan for Birkenhead. The 'opportunities for change' plan generated through baseline analysis provides the foundation to the strategy – revealing locations where physical change has the greatest potential.

Figure 4.2 Opportunity Areas Plan



## 1. Improving the attractiveness and legibility of key routes and enhancing the overall sense of connectivity through Birkenhead

- 4.10 Birkenhead has become a place where highways infrastructure dominates its environment. Highways infrastructure has evolved in a way that has impacted negatively on quality of place, as the focus and nature of movement has shifted fundamentally: Original, 'organic' pathways to the town centre and waterfront have been engulfed by strategic highways that prioritise fast, efficient vehicular links to/from the M53, the Mersey tunnels and Twelve Quays ferry terminal.
- 4.11 This engineering-led approach has given rise to strategic highways that dominate the environment, cutting through the urban fabric, often severing areas from one another and creating environments that are often very hostile to pedestrians and cyclists. This effect is felt most in and around the town centre, where the strategic highways both "drive through" and "pass around" what should be a key focal point for the community.
- 4.12 The strategy expressed by the spatial framework aims to rebalance the movement network in a way that helps to ensure

that the character of key routes is more responsive to their context (e.g. heavily engineered, fast moving traffic routes should not be appropriate within the town centre) and play a greater role in providing attractive, welcoming public realm that should be attractive and welcoming for all. There are some particular street environments highlighted in the framework that need to be improved to enhance the experience of being in and moving through Birkenhead, helping to reinstate a network of streets and spaces that make it easier for people, and in particular pedestrians and cyclists, to find their way around the town (logical and clear) and that integrate areas across the Birkenhead study area and beyond rather than divide them (well connected and permeable).

- 4.13 Some key ideas promoted within the strategy are to;
- a) Acknowledge that Birkenhead town centre is somewhere that should be "arrived at and enjoyed" rather than "passed through and ignored", and make sure that the design of roads and the character of street spaces change in proximity to the centre, favouring a more pedestrian friendly environment.
  - b) Create attractive, pedestrian and cycle friendly spaces along key radial routes. Higher volume, higher capacity roads

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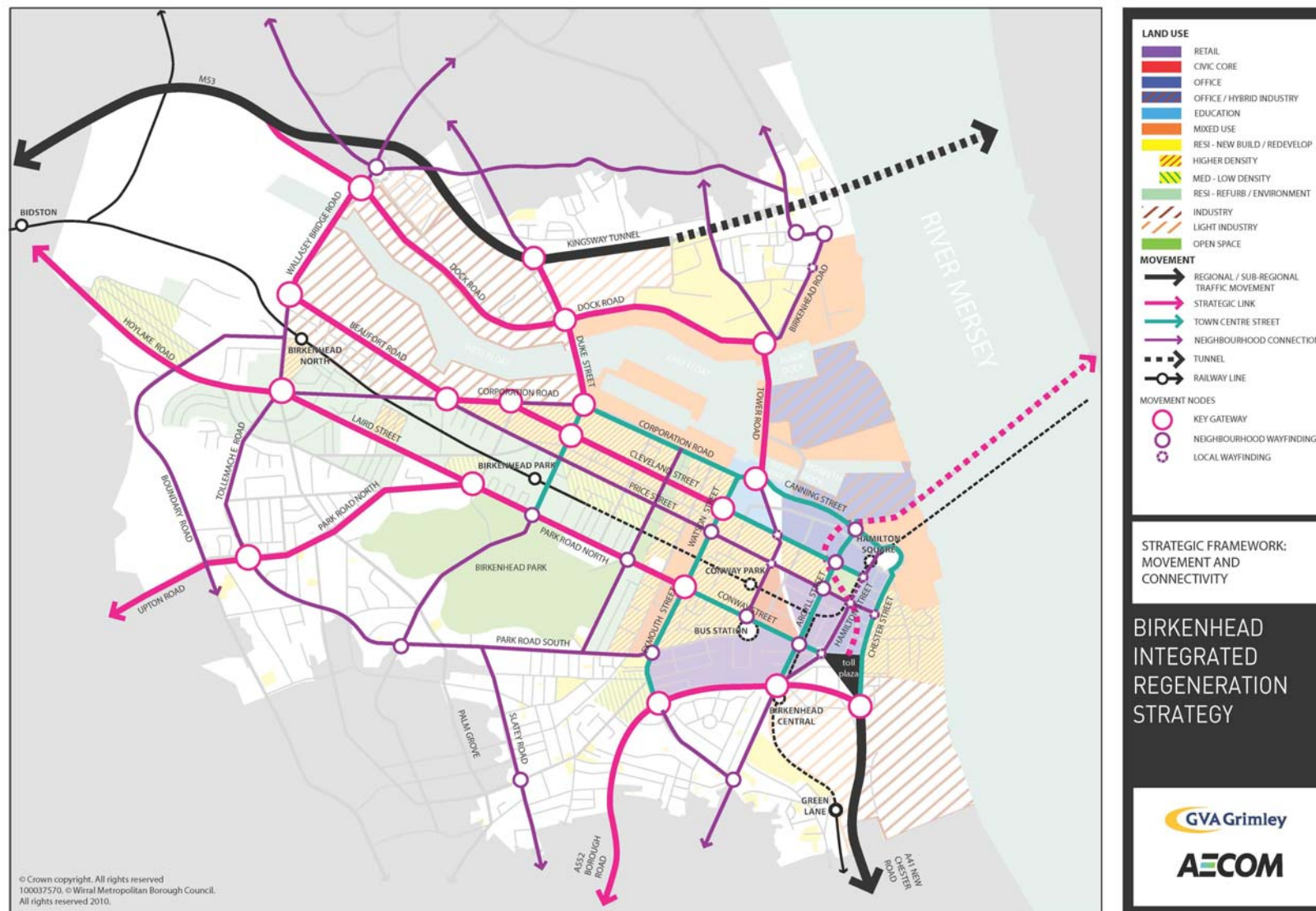
such as the A553 (Conway Street / Park Road North / Laird Street) should not allow vehicles to dominate the pedestrian and cyclist experience, and in fact they should be attractive, multi-functional 'corridors' that provide a welcoming experience for those travelling into and out of the centre.

- c) Where appropriate, physically downgrade certain highways – for example changing from dual carriageways and/or urban motorways to standard carriageways with integrated footpaths and cycle paths.
- d) Improve perceptions of north-south connectivity across the Birkenhead dock system, rebalancing the dominant east-west flow of routes through the Laird grid. There are particular opportunities to improve the sense of connectivity through the A554 Tower Road corridor, extending through Kelvin Road / Wheatland Lane (B5144).
- e) Improve the quality of the environment / pedestrian experience around the tunnel toll plazas and their approaches. This is particularly important at the Queensway Tunnel plaza which is currently surrounded by an extensive zone of land that is very hostile to pedestrians and has limited development value - it needs to provide a much more positive front door to the town centre for arrivals from the

south. Kingsway Tunnel, being in a cutting, is less of a priority in this regard.



Figure 4.3: Movement Framework Plan



- 4.14 The movement framework plan above demonstrates potential to implement these strategic objectives. Some key aspects of the framework plan are discussed below.

*a) Regional / Sub-Regional Movement*

- 4.15 Although there is a desire to emphasise Birkenhead as an attractor in its own right - an 'arrival' point - the framework also recognises the strategically important function of the M53, A5139 in the regional and sub-regional road network. Its location in a cutting and its strategic importance limits the opportunity for significant environmental enhancements. None the less measures which will lessen this severance effect without reducing the strategic importance of the route should be promoted.

*b) Strategic Links*

- 4.16 The physical framework looks to promote a more logical and better balanced arrangement of strategic links in a way which (a) promotes a sense of "arrival" at the town centre, and (b) ensures that north-south connections, across the dock system, are an integral part of the movement network.

- 4.17 The changes promoted here are not dramatically different to the existing "A" road structure. The framework does not necessarily recommend the downgrading of existing "A" roads in terms of highway / traffic function, but promotes a step change in the environmental quality and character of the routes. The framework advocates that strategic links should not be designed purely to maximise the flow of vehicular traffic, but should be key links which can accommodate both vehicular and non-vehicular traffic, and which have an attractive and welcoming character.
- 4.18 This is something that can be achieved in particular at Queensway tunnel plaza and the A41 / A5227 junction, which has the potential to perform a role as a key entry point into Birkenhead town centre, rather than just a means of getting to Liverpool. Highway remodelling schemes in this location that seek to improve the directness of connections with the town and rationalise highways infrastructure should be promoted. In this way the Queensway tunnel takes on less of a regional / sub regional movement corridor but becomes more of a strategic link between the Liverpool City Region and Birkenhead. The need to accommodate pedestrian and cycle movements as well as vehicles should be considered on key north – south routes such as A5027 and A554.

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### *c) Town Centre Links*

- 4.19 A key weakness of the current movement network is the sense that vehicle-dominated main routes pass through rather than arrive at the Town Centre. As part of a more coherent and logical route hierarchy, a key move should be to identify certain routes into, through and around the town centre which should be targeted for environmental and public realm improvements that highlight their significance as town centre environments, yet maintain their role as movers of significant volumes of vehicular traffic.
- 4.20 The A41 New Chester Road (around and to the north of Toll Plaza), eastern Corporation Road, A554 Canning Street, A5029 Watson Street and A553 Conway Street are key links on which such improvements should be considered.
- 4.21 The idea would be not to restrict their strategic purpose, but to find a better balance in the way highway space is designed, to promote a sense of being more friendly to pedestrian and cyclist use.
- 4.22 This approach would see these routes become a 'hybrid' between the Strategic Links and Neighbourhood Connections (see below).
- 4.23 Every effort should be made through development decisions to promote building forms that provide maximum active frontage along these routes and a high quality public realm / landscape finish involving generous footways, street planting and excellent lighting that forms part of a coordinated scheme across the centre. There is particular potential to implement a complementary approach to public realm design along these routes and certain 'key gateways' (see Movement Nodes below) which mark threshold locations into the core of the town centre. These relationships are illustrated on the strategy plan.
- 4.24 The emphasis on establishing 'Town Centre Streets' is about delivering vibrant and active street spaces which help to unify areas. As such Corporation Road has been identified as a route which should take on the above characteristics, with the aim of ensuring that future development at East Float is integrated as much as possible with neighbourhoods immediately to the south.



#### *d) Neighbourhood Connections*

4.25 Development and investment in public realm along these routes will see a greater focus / emphasis on the pedestrian and cyclist experience – with an improved balance in design approach between pedestrians and cars (i.e. moving cars must not be allowed to dominate these environments). This should not only involve intelligent and sensitive design of highway space itself (where there is opportunity to invest in and redesign existing routes) but thinking carefully about how adjacent built form affects the character and feel of that highways space, for example;

- wherever possible highway space along these routes should be defined as a 2-sided street (consistent building frontage on both sides of the street)
- reducing the set back of buildings from the street so that buildings align or come close to back-of-pavement, encouraging a more interactive and intimate relationship between buildings and space
- ensuring that new buildings alongside these routes are of a height that creates a well proportioned street section – reducing this down to around 1:2.5 or less can be a very

effective way of creating human scale space which feels welcoming and comfortable

#### **Movement Nodes**

4.26 To help create a movement network that is easier to navigate and that invites a sense of progression towards the centre, it is important to identify junctions that can play a role as nodal points - distinctive and notable landmarks in the network. These can be marked by specialised design features, in terms of public realm and landscape and also the quality and scale of buildings that front onto them. The approach should be consistent and complementary along routes to promote the navigational qualities.

4.27 These nodal points should be evident at three scales;

- **Key gateways** - These are junction points that are designed to signal a sense of arrival at somewhere important – essentially effective at two levels; (a) marking 'arrival' into the centre of Birkenhead itself (e.g. markers along Laird Street and Dock Road) and (b) arrival into the 'core' of the town – marking the threshold into a pedestrian friendly town centre environment (e.g. the Conway Street / Exmouth Street junction). These key gateways should be marked by

clear and consistent signage, attractive public realm / landscape, key landmark buildings and an urban form that creates a distinct urban character.

- **Neighbourhood wayfinding** - These are nodal points which acknowledge the point at which key routes cross and there is a choice to divert to significant neighbourhoods and key locations within Birkenhead. For example marking the point at which key routes divert off Park Road North down to the West Float (these will be highly significant junction points as the Wirral Waters development concept is realised). There is good opportunity to create an urban form at these locations which 'clusters' around nodal points, creating an enclosed urban character.
- **Local wayfinding** - The intent here is to promote some smaller scale / pedestrian scale junction points which could enhance the experience of being in and moving around a particular locality. This is particularly important with the town centre, where currently 'separated' areas could feel more coherent and joined up if the junction points between them benefited from investment into consistent public realm and landscape treatments (e.g. the junction points between the Hamilton Square area and the Laird Grid).

## 2. Improving the quality of key areas of public realm and the connectivity between important public open spaces

- 4.28 The public realm experience in Birkenhead is on the one hand marked by a number of highly distinctive elements – key set piece open spaces such as Hamilton Square - but on the other characterised by low quality, poorly maintained streets and spaces. The latter is generally exacerbated by a tendency for the main strategic / radial routes to and from the town centre to be dominated by vehicular traffic. It is evident that Birkenhead has seen physical change and interventions that generally focus on making traffic movements more efficient (e.g. widening carriageways, creating 'heavily engineered' junctions) at the expense of comfortable pedestrian and cyclist environments.
- 4.29 The approach to addressing these issues is built on two foundations; (a) to uplift the quality of public realm, in terms of the pedestrian experience, along key movement corridors, and (b) to improve the sense that key public open spaces form part of a connected and coherent network. This is about making Birkenhead feel a more integrated place – an environment which is less fragmented, that helps to bind the town and its

communities, and that creates a satisfying series of quality spaces that enhance quality of life and sense of place.

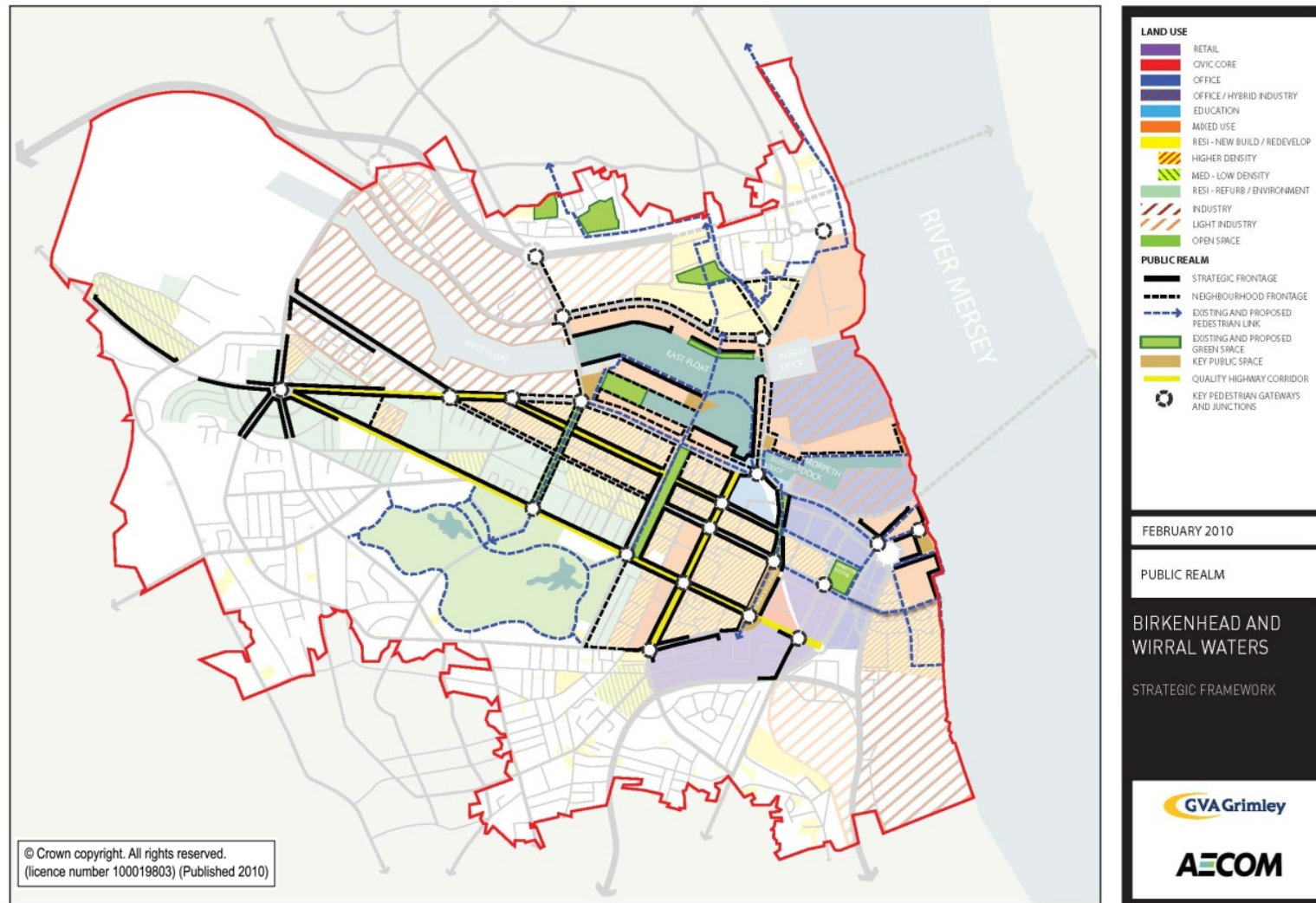
4.30 Some key ideas promoted within the strategy are;

- Realising the potential for the Birkenhead dock system to incorporate attractive and highly distinctive open space assets offering informal/passive and formal/active leisure as part of redevelopment of East Float. This is key to helping address its current barrier effect and providing an open space resource that connects Birkenhead and Wallasey.
- To 'rediscover' and reemphasise the qualities of the Laird town plan, by strengthening the quality of key routes, particularly those that will promote a sense of connection between Hamilton Square, Birkenhead Park and the dock system.
- Strengthening the role of the town centre as a key hub at the centre of an open space network, especially by strengthening links between it and the River Mersey (especially Woodside) and the dock system.
- Generally promoting links to and the quality of the environment around the River Mersey. This will target both

opportunities for high quality, highly distinctive passive leisure (taking advantage of the remarkable views and opportunities for river side walks) and enhancing its social and economic role (improving the prominence and quality of the ferry services being a key priority).

- Promote the diversity of the natural environment, habitats and ecology as a key feature of Birkenhead, particularly by opening up access to the River Mersey and also to Bidston Moss. These are both potentially high value environments that are currently being compromised by poor accessibility.

Figure 4.4: Public Realm Framework Plan



- 4.31 The framework plan above demonstrates potential to implement these strategic objectives. Some key aspects of the framework plan are discussed below.

### Existing and Proposed Green Space

- 4.32 The framework identifies where there is opportunity to enhance existing and create new green spaces – public spaces that incorporate soft landscape features. The key aspects of this are;
- i. To recognise the importance of Birkenhead Park as a feature which drives change in the surrounding urban structure. The framework plan promotes the creation of a new linear green space aligned along Vittoria Street that makes a literal, highly distinctive north-south connection between Birkenhead Park and the dock system.
  - ii. To create a quality destination green space at the East Float– adopting the proposal set out within the Wirral Waters scheme to partly fill Vittoria Dock and create a new focal space. Linkages to/from this space need to be enhanced by proposals to create new bridging points across water bodies at East Float, aligned with Vittoria Street.
  - iii. To define a new link extending north from Europa Boulevard to Tower Road and the south eastern edge of the East Float.

This could be a quality green space incorporating the disused rail link in this location.

### *Other Key Public Space*

- 4.33 In addition to enhancing and creating green space, the framework identifies the opportunity for additional key public spaces that might not necessary have a soft landscape character, but that need to be invested in and promoted as quality public space assets. There are particular opportunities at;
- i. Woodside – creating a waterfront square in tandem with new development and a revitalised ferry terminal
  - ii. Europa Boulevard – continuing to invest in creating and maintaining high quality public realm, in order to strengthen the proposed north south link between East Float and the town centre retail core (this potentially including revitalised Market Place / Market Hall to create a southern ‘anchor point’ for the link)
  - iii. East Float – Wirral Waters scheme envisages a number of key public spaces, including at the eastern tip of Vittoria Wharf (the Point), potentially in tandem with a new iconic building. Again this aligns and complements with proposals to create new

linear green space along Vittoria Street. There is also additional opportunity to create good quality public space at Egerton Dock to complement proposed development here, allied with the proposed Europa Boulevard link.

#### *Quality Highway Corridors*

- 4.34 The intent is to identify particular opportunities to create high quality public space within key highway corridors in a way that aligns with the movement network proposals. The framework identifies the A553 Conway Street / Park Road North / Laird Street and the A5053 Cleveland Street as being key opportunities, especially as a means through which to redefine and strengthen the environmental quality of the Laird grid. The framework also identifies the A5029 Watson Street / Rendell Street as a potential quality corridor – this route providing a key north-south connection and also marking the threshold point into the core of central Birkenhead.

#### *Frontage*

- 4.35 It is essential that proposals to create quality public spaces, highways corridors and an interweaving pedestrian movement network (see framework diagram) is complemented by consistent, quality building frontages. The framework identifies

locations where as development and investment opportunities arise, there is a need to strengthen existing building frontages. This operates at two levels;

- i. Strategic frontages are those where a higher volume of traffic movements imply a need to present a consistent visual experience which promotes Birkenhead as a quality environment. Building frontages should be as uninterrupted as possible, distinctive and harmonious, helping to build a common sense of place throughout Birkenhead.
- ii. Neighbourhood frontages are those where links pass through areas where there is opportunity to create a more individual character for individual neighbourhoods, albeit in a complementary way in terms of built form scale and massing. These frontages could be looser and a little more eccentric than the strategic frontage elements, with more interruptions and therefore greater permeability and through-movement.



### 3. Developing a land use structure that can guide development in a way that helps improve the ‘intactness’ and coherence of Birkenhead’s urban structure

- 4.36 Birkenhead has emerged from ordered and logical development origins, but has developed to become somewhere that feels divided, with a sense of a place in decline. Whilst urban form characteristics closely follow historic growth patterns, these have been eroded over time and there are locations where this characterises the central part of Birkenhead as a fading, disintegrating environment.
- 4.37 Furthermore, baseline analysis has shown that, by identifying a series of Character Areas, we reveal on the one hand that there is a varied built environment, but on the other this is often composed of weak urban form and accommodates patterns of land use that give rise to rigid zones, with boundaries that are rigid and exacerbate the sense of segregation and division.
- 4.38 Future development and investment needs to help break down these perceived barriers and generate a more integrated place with a physical environment and land use structure that has a

more seamless ‘flow’. A key early step in this approach has been the identification of opportunity areas (see 4.17), which reveal locations where the opportunities for change – improvement, refurbishment and development - are most evident.

Opportunities need to be taken here to improve the intactness and integrity of the built form and land use structure.

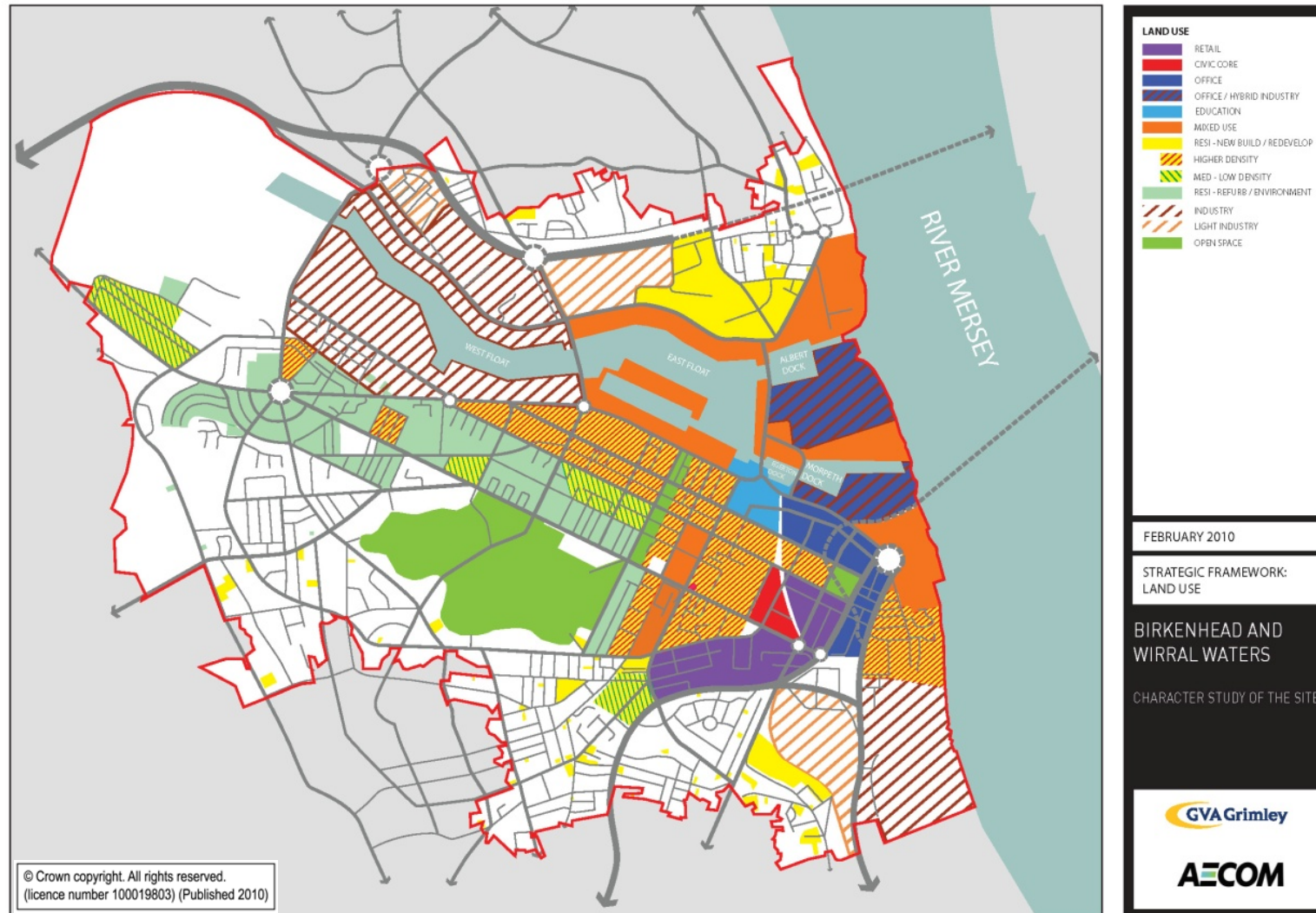
Fragmentation affects the *function* of Birkenhead as much as it does its *form* and this relationship is interlinked; weaknesses in one will detrimentally impact the other.

- 4.39 The preceding framework diagrams – movement and public realm – implicitly identify priority locations for development and change, including the need for better quality, more continuous built form. To complement this there needs to be a wider concept of development form and function – thinking in particular about wider patterns of land use and how a looser, more informal land use arrangement can help Birkenhead become a more integrated place.
- 4.40 Some key ideas promoted as part of this strategy are;
- a. **Maximise locations identified within the opportunity areas plan to redevelop, refurbish and generally improve the quality of the built environment and land use structure.**

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- b. Look to strengthen key clusters and hubs in land use terms, with particular opportunities for employment and education clusters, and shopping and leisure clusters in and around the town centre.
  - c. Look to strengthen heritage assets that can become the focal points for specialised and highly distinctive land use clusters, especially Hamilton Square and Woodside, with their inherently strong public transport connections
  - d. Similarly look to maximise the mutually beneficial value of key open space / public realm assets and development opportunity. This is particularly important around East Float, Egerton Dock and Europa Boulevard for example.
  - e. Encourage town centre diversification and integration.



Figure 4.6: Strategic Framework: Land Use



- 4.41 The framework plan above demonstrates potential to implement these strategic objectives. Some key aspects of the framework plan are discussed below:

### Mixed Use Waterfront

- 4.42 There are specific and substantial opportunities for change throughout the Birkenhead dock system that need to be maximised. The legacy of historic development patterns dominated by privatised dock activity has sterilised and isolated land and created a considerable physical and psychological divide between Birkenhead and Wallasey. It is clear that, through concepts advanced through Wirral Waters, there is considerable potential to overcome these issues.
- 4.43 The scale of the opportunity here lends itself to a truly mixed use neighbourhood (or neighbourhoods) where new homes, a range of employment, education, leisure, community and cultural uses can enliven the public realm and create a defined series of links, movement corridors and quality spaces. This will be crucial to improving connectivity and cohesion between Birkenhead and Wallasey.
- 4.44 There is particular opportunity to strengthen this by extending the mixed use redevelopment concept north through to the

Birkenhead Road area (A554) and the Alfred Pier Head. Over time this could release considerable value by opening up access to the banks of the Mersey and Alfred Dock. Similarly, to the south, the area around Woodside should be seen as part of this mixed use waterfront opportunity.

- 4.45 Woodside is a key development location in any event – where there is a clear need to rediscover connections between Birkenhead town centre and the River Mersey, and, of course, promote ferry links with Liverpool.
- 4.46 Over time the waterfront mixed use concept could be extended to include Morpeth Dock, although it is acknowledged that existing uses and property here (Twelve Quays business units and – more significantly – the Water Treatment works operated by United Utilities) are likely to limit potential in the short – medium term.

### A Stronger Residential Offer

- 4.47 Housing is currently a feature of the central areas of Birkenhead, which is key to maintaining a vibrant and vital local economy and injecting life into streets and spaces. However, the area of housing to the north of Birkenhead Park – lying between the town centre / Conway Street and the East Float currently suffers

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- socio-economic deprivation, a weak housing market and - in physical terms - a confused and unsettling built form (which gradually deteriorates travelling north, towards the edge of the dock system).
- 4.48 The framework, builds upon the HMRI strategy and updates this in response to the Wirral Waters proposal, and envisages two approaches to improvement and development to strengthen the housing offer at this particular location;
- i. In the areas around Birkenhead Park (where the stock is the most robust but where environmental quality could be improved): refurbishment of building exterior and street spaces.
  - ii. In the areas further north, adjacent to East Float: New build development, and redevelopment, to provide mostly higher density family housing areas (circa 50 dwellings per hectare or above), feeding from and linking to the opportunities arising through East Float/Wirral Waters. There is significant opportunity as part of this concept to rationalise land use here – gradually relocating existing heavy industrial premises to more appropriate locations to create a more comfortable and attractive residential, mixed-use environment.
- 4.49 By rationalising the land use structure in this location it will be possible to realise a more stable and appealing housing offer, with a complementary opportunity to revitalise built form quality and in particular redefine the Laird grid (and reduce the severance effect of roads such as Price Street and Cleveland Street). The Laird grid can become a quality, highly liveable location.
- 4.50 Flexibility is needed across the wider area in the use of HMR funds to ensure investment is directed towards the neighbourhoods where it will have the greatest impact. This is especially important against a backdrop of limited public finance for housing investment. For instance, areas around Oxton Road and Balls Road are currently showing some of the worst housing market decline in Birkenhead, but fall just outside the HMR area set in 2003 on previous ward boundaries.
- 4.51 The HMR programme has had a demonstrable impact in Birkenhead through the removal of over 400 properties since 2003, but there is still unfinished business in respect of the obvious need for further clearance and the emergence of a large scale new build programme, led by the Council, Keepmoat Homes and local RSL's, which aims to provide upwards of 500 new homes in the next ten years.
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- 4.52 The land use structure in the primary residential areas of Birkenhead needs simplifying to create a scale of development opportunity to attract a new housing market. The location of existing lower value commercial and industrial uses should be reconsidered in light of the need to create suitable locations for housing development to optimise the impact of existing HMR clearance schemes.

### Town Centre: 'Flexible Quarters'

- 4.53 The area around the town centre has become disjointed as a result of contraction in population and activity. From its origins as a bustling – and substantially sized – centre extending from Exmouth Street to Woodside, activity has tightened around three key areas: (i) the main shopping area defined by Grange Road, St Werburgh's Square and the Pyramids, (ii) a cluster of business and tourism activity around Hamilton Square, and (iii) secondary shopping areas on Market Street and Grange Road West/Oxton Road. Areas in between these locations have a peripheral feel, with a lack of a defined character, role or function.
- 4.54 The approach advocated through the framework is to support the development of a series of quarters across the town centre,

where mutually supportive clusters of activity can begin to take root and 'fill out' the currently underutilised and underperforming parts of the central area. Particular elements that could form part of this include;

### *Diversification of Town Centre Uses*

- 4.55 References have already been made to the fact that retailing is increasingly recognised as being only one component of a successful town centre: leisure, residential, office/service and a diverse evening economy all have a role in contributing to future vitality and viability. Particular emphasis should be placed on activities which inject significant levels of activity throughout the centre, supporting local business and in particular shops and services.
- 4.56 Europa Boulevard/Conway Park rail station area, potentially extending through to Argyle Street, is a key location for new development and investment to enable town centre diversification. This area benefits from its location close to key public transport nodes and proximity to the existing retail core.
- 4.57 Bringing forward development along Europa Boulevard could also potentially stimulate greater ground floor activity and animation, which would help to strengthen the role and function

of the retail precinct. This should be influenced in a way that extends out along Argyle Street, to meet Hamilton Square (with the objective of enhancing connections between Hamilton Square and the current retail hub).

#### *Commercial office*

- 4.58 There is no doubt that Birkenhead's public transport connections are not currently being maximised, and there is considerable potential on the back of this to promote the town centre as a great business location. This location is not only highly accessible by public transport (with particularly strong and rapid connections into Liverpool city centre) but, by promoting the area around Hamilton Square as the main 'office quarter', can clearly become very attractive and distinctive environment - offering occupiers the opportunity to become part of a unique, exceptional place. Hamilton Square also offers attractive glimpsed views out across the Mersey, and of course ready access to Woodside which in its redeveloped state could provide a very appealing complementary business and leisure location in an exceptional setting.

#### *Town Centre Residential*

- 4.59 Housing should continue to form part of a vibrant, mixed use centre and the framework advocates intensification of the current offer, but with an improved form and quality. This should include maximising development and redevelopment opportunities to provide higher density urban living options, with particular opportunities within the areas to the west of Europa Boulevard and extending through to Hamilton Square. Additionally, the area to the east of Church Street, on the banks of the River Mersey has housing potential, strengthening existing housing in this location as a complementary element of the Woodside development concept.

#### *Education Hub*

- 4.60 With the potential to rationalise existing and attractive additional higher and further education establishments in Birkenhead, there could be significant benefits in promoting this as a function of the town centre, and in particular clustering new and improved accommodation. The framework proposes that the area around Egerton Dock/Tower Road/Canning Street could be promoted as a location suitable for such a cluster, stimulated by the recent 12 Quay Campus development for Wirral Metropolitan College and providing a vibrant anchor at the northern end of the proposed

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extension of Europa Boulevard. These proposals could also complement the promotion of town centre residential, with student housing potentially providing a significant economic boost to the town centre.

### Focus Areas

- 4.61 Appendix 2 provides a synopsis of potential for individual 'neighbourhood focus areas' across the Birkenhead area. It builds upon the principles set out in this section. It is, however important to remember that the proposals for these areas need considerable new detailed assessment and consultation. The proposals have been formulated at this stage for the purposes of conducting a high level environmental assessment and will need further development in line with the LDF process.

## 5. Delivery and Next Steps

- 5.1 This Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead does not constitute a Masterplan or Blueprint dictating the way forward. Rather it points the direction of travel to address the major physical and socio-economic issues faced in Birkenhead and detailed in the Baseline report. It also recognises fully the potential afforded by Wirral Waters and points to how wider benefit from this investment can, and should be captured to help deliver regeneration across Birkenhead.
- 5.2 What is clear from this work is the sheer scale of the challenge posed across Birkenhead. The reversal of the decline that has befallen the community will take at least a generation of effort. There are no quick fixes and leadership is required from the Council and partners if success is to be achieved.
- 5.3 Wirral faces a challenging agenda and the IRS and Wirral Waters proposals will demand additional skill and capacity to deliver. In particular, delivery will need to involve people and agencies with:

- Clear vision and leadership skills;
- Commercial and urban regeneration skills in developing a robust new framework;
- Commercial skills in dealing with private sector partners and entering into complex negotiations;
- The ability to establish and broker new partnerships with multi-sectoral leadership and representation;
- Project and Programme management skills – including the ability to co-ordinate area-based multi-agency teams dealing with physical and people based actions in an integrated way;
- Effective marketing and promotional skill, including the ability to draw upon the private sector expertise.

5.4 A key attribute of delivery arrangements where regeneration has been achieved is a clear and pragmatic demarcation of delivery responsibilities based on agencies and the individuals that possess the right skills and experience to deliver effectively.

5.5 Wirral Waters in isolation will not address these wider problems. Rather it creates a window of opportunity that needs to be grasped by the public sector. An integrated approach is called for and a set of priorities needs to be established to commence,



and give momentum to the regeneration process – beyond the delivery of Wirral Waters.

- 5.6 This report does not comment specifically on the delivery of the Wirral Waters scheme – that is in the hands of Peel. However, it focuses on parallel action in a co-ordinated and focused manner to ensure that wider benefits accrue.

## Delivery Considerations

- 5.7 The IRS sets a long-term vision for change and agreement needs to be reached on what the priorities should be. We consider that the following should be a focus for activity at the next stage:
- **Housing Market Renewal.** As outlined in the baseline and in the 'Focus Area' assessments there is potential to build upon the success of the HMR programme elsewhere in Wirral and bring a focus to those areas of Birkenhead showing 'Housing Market Stress'. The Wirral HMR programme has now made an important transition into Birkenhead as its priority neighbourhood. This can allow an acceleration of momentum building on the investment made in Birkenhead since 2003. To achieve value for money for

the investment to date, the area requires continued attention to complete a programme which has made inroads but is some way from completion. An integrated approach is required that identifies bespoke solutions in particular neighbourhoods addressing local problems, but also expanding housing choice for existing and new residents.

- Advance the concept of an 'education cluster/campus' around a new University precinct and relocated Further Education College. This can be a key linkage (functionally and physical) between Wirral Waters and the Town Centre.
- Prepare an integrated masterplan for the whole town centre along the lines set out in this report. This must not just focus on the shopping aspects but address all aspects of a centre that truly functions as the 'heart' of the wider community. The 'direction of travel' for this masterplan has been set out in this report.
- Put in place an integrated strategy to tackle the endemic socio-economic condition – low education attainment, poor health, worklessness and high unemployment. Again this report points the way and there are lessons to be learned from local initiatives, but equally an alignment of approach is required to ensure comprehensive and joined-up action.



- Develop the East Wirral Traffic Model and Transport Strategy for the Town Centre. The model will provide a valuable tool to help determine the cumulative traffic impacts of the proposed and any future developments in and around the Town Centre, and help inform decisions in regards to changes to the existing highway infrastructure, including re-prioritisation of the various road-users. The model will be essential to inform the development of a transport strategy for the town centre, which should be an integral part of the overall masterplan for Birkenhead. The East Wirral Traffic Model will also be invaluable in assisting future development Transport Assessments.

## Policy and Engagement

- 5.8 Work is advancing on the LDF for Wirral and the content of this document, and in particular the baseline study will be invaluable in helping formulate the component parts of the LDF. An outline Strategic Environmental Assessment has been completed and is provided separately. This can be refined and updated as more information becomes available as the elements referred to are advanced. Moreover detailed community engagement will be required as part of the LDF process.

## Delivery Vehicle/Process

- 5.9 During the course of the study there has been considerable discussion around how change in Birkenhead can be delivered and a series of options have been debated with the Steering Group. These are outlined below with a synopsis of issues arising:

- **“Routine” local authority** – This would represent a huge challenge for the Council, especially in the face of public sector spending cuts. Although there are clearly delivery skills within the Council – most notably in the HMRI team, does the level of resource and expertise exist to deliver a programme of this scale?
- **Special ‘Executive’ Arms Length Public Agency (e.g. New Town Development Corporation, UDC)** - an Urban Development Corporation has specific powers and a dedicated resource. This was a concept that was well known in the 1980/90s, and indeed had a short revival more recently. However, it is not a favoured delivery model in the current political and funding climate.
- **Special ‘Facilitating’ Arms Length Public Agency (e.g. URC, CDC)** – This is a more recent delivery model, which is

more of a public partnership approach than a UDC – e.g. Liverpool Vision, directing established funding streams. However, this is not favoured approach in the current political and funding climate.

- **Managing Development Agent** - This would involve the involvement of a third party, probably a private organisation, to manage the delivery process. Again, this is unlikely to be a favoured model in the current funding and policy climate and would also be difficult to ensure longstanding public support.
- **Single Private Developer (i.e. empowerment of a single developer through transfer of consolidated land)** - In our view, this places too much power with one private organisation and there is no evidence of this approach being successful elsewhere. This approach is also not likely to be acceptable in the current policy and financial climate.
- **Enlightened “Private Developer(s)/Town Founder(s)”** – This approach raises issues similar to those discussed above and would not be a favoured approach in the current political and funding climate.
- **Joint Private-Public (e.g. Local Asset Backed Vehicle; pooling of assets)** - This is the current forward model being

adopted elsewhere – note the Croyden example, etc. It appeals in the current restricted public spending environment and seeks to fully utilise existing public sector assets. It will require the identification of assets and matching these with private investment in a special purpose delivery vehicle.

- 5.10 Current arrangements have not been successful in reversing decline. A new way is required. However with declining political and fiscal support for traditional regeneration delivery models – Urban Development Companies (UDCs), Urban Regeneration Companies (URCs), Economic Development Companies (EDCs) etc then we need to become more creative.
- 5.11 A joined up and focussed public sector is essential. Whatever form this takes it needs to be supported by the private sector if it is to be successful.

### We advocate an ‘Asset Based Approach’

- 5.12 We see scope to utilise land, and other assets controlled by the public sector to entice private investment. This points to a ‘new wave’ Asset Backed Vehicle (ABV), utilising land and other income generating assets, complemented by any public funding

that can be attracted to entice matching private investment to deliver change.

5.13 A further dimension is provided by the Jessica programme. A Merseyside Urban Development Fund (UDF) has been identified with an initial fund size of £60m, for which private sector interest has been sought. Aside from identifying projects in Birkenhead that could possibly benefit from this fund, thought should be given to a parallel 'Place Fund' for Birkenhead with a core portfolio of projects and initiatives. This is new ground, but the ingredients in Birkenhead are potentially enticing given the low values currently and the potential emanating from a major investment by Peel at Wirral Waters, plus the new Education Campus Concept.

5.14 This initial concept idea should be the subject of much greater testing, and to an extent the experience of the Jessica UDF will assist with this, by illustrating the private sector appetite for such a Fund and also the issues that would be faced in formulating such a fund.

5.15 Regardless we would suggest that an initial step would be to set up a vehicle in the mould of a URC – Liverpool Vision, Creative Sheffield – but not a URC. Chester Renaissance would be a useful comparison. This should be Council led, but slightly

removed, with private involvement and a small core team to stand to move matters forward in a co-ordinated manner.

5.16 The aim here is to draw upon established delivery expertise, existing public funding streams and the start of a process of 'joining up' different programmes. It also brings a clear focus, and intent to the programme. There may be a requirement for a number of Special Purpose Vehicles/ Asset Backed Vehicles dependent upon the specific nature of land ownerships and desired objectives. Further work will be required on the detail of the implementation stage of the project.

## Next Steps

5.17 There are a number of key steps to moving the Birkenhead Regeneration Study forward. This is to enable progress to be made as rapidly as possible once the study's findings have been ratified. A number of these steps have been articulated in outline at the steering and member groups. These steps are not necessarily sequential and indeed in certain instances should be implemented in parallel.

5.18 The findings of the study need to be fed into the LDF process in a manner to be determined by the Local Planning Authority. We

have completed a high level Strategic Environmental Assessment of the proposal to facilitate this process. A key component of the next stage will be to engage with the wider community in a manner that satisfies the requirements of the LDF process.

5.19 The HMRI programme needs to be updated and carried forward as an essential tool to improve the existing housing market in the urban areas that compose Inner Wirral. The plan provides a framework for that, but there is a need to establish the detail of the appropriate interventions in each neighbourhood. A key starting point will be engagement with the community using the plan as the vehicle to initiate that process. This will utilise effectively update the HMRI area development frameworks in reference to the emerging Wirral Waters proposals and the wider regeneration context provided in this study.

5.20 We include initial thoughts on the format of a delivery vehicle to take the initiative forward. There is a considerable amount of work involved in formulating and agreeing the detail of this vehicle. An initial step is to hold discussions with NWDA on the subject. A detailed feasibility study is required to advance thinking, which needs to fully consider the assets and income streams that could provide a basis for a vehicle and the market

appetite for the fund. Legal advice will be required as part of this exercise.

5.21 The study advances radical thinking around the regeneration of the Town Centre. The key next steps will be the completion of a masterplan for the centre as defined to clearly define a strategy for the centre as outlined in this report instruction, and the appropriate means of delivery in the context of the wider strategy.

## Appendices

## Appendix 1: Baseline Report – (provided separately)

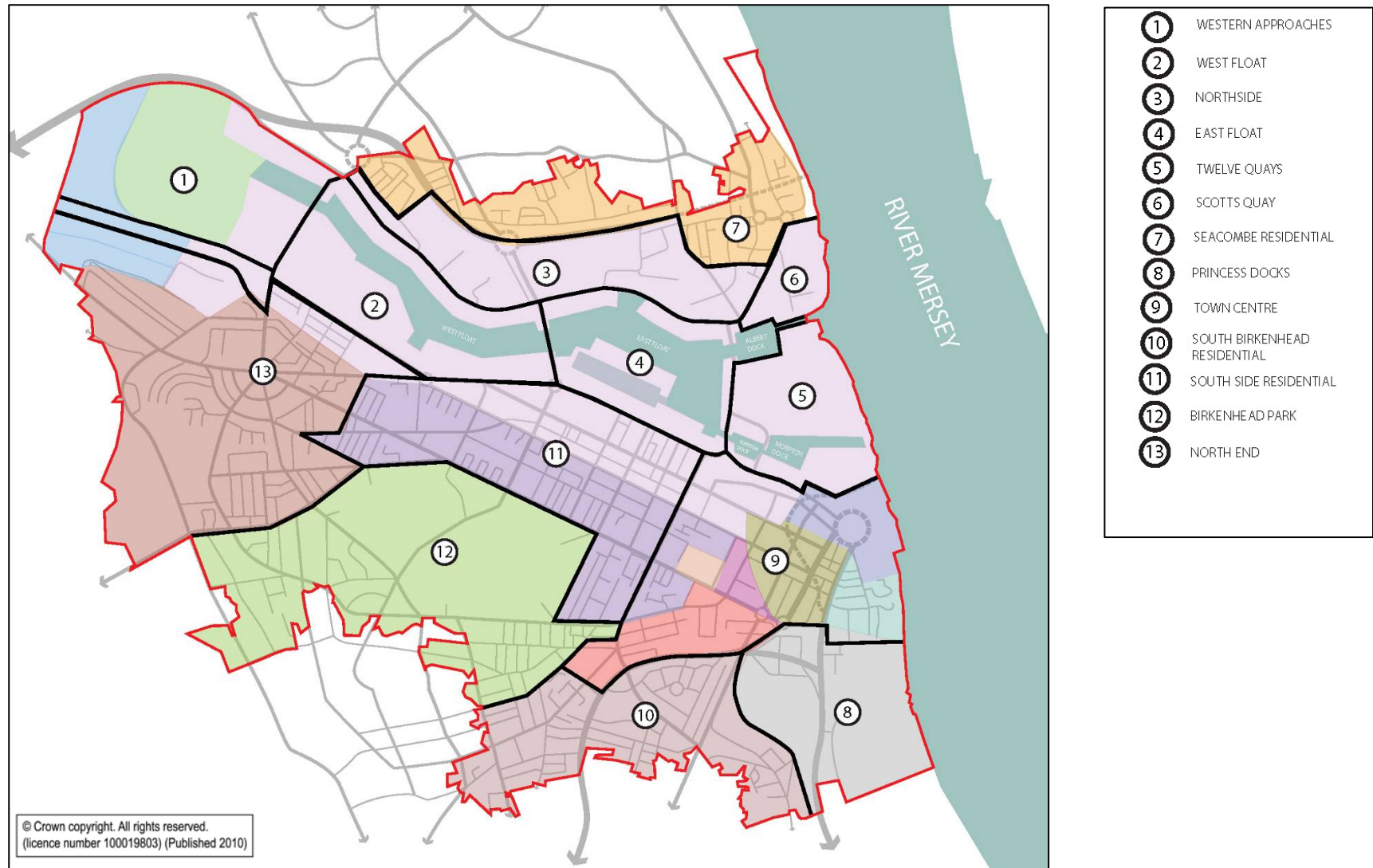
## Appendix 2: Focus Area Profiles

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## Focus Area Profiles and Objectives

1. To disseminate the strategic framework at a local level, a series of focus areas have been defined within Birkenhead, identifying neighbourhood character areas with a similar role and function. Proposed regeneration objectives have been proposed for each area to provide a structure for regeneration activity and a guide for coordinating multi-service delivery and investment moving forward.
2. This chapter therefore presents each focus area and discusses the approach to regeneration envisaged, together with a series of proposed regeneration objectives.



*Figure A: Focus Area Plan*

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## Focus Area: Western Approaches/Bidston Moss

3. The prime asset of this area is the Bidston Moss Open Space and Nature Reserve, established on the site of a former municipal waste landfill. However, this facility is largely obscured from view in all directions, by a variety of commercial and retail uses and heavy road infrastructure, which sever visual and physical linkages from the surrounding area. The regeneration of this focus area should therefore aim to open-up and exploit this resource as a key green space in the heart of Birkenhead. This will involve improvements into the provision, condition and signage of pedestrian and cycle linkages, in addition to expanding the range of facilities that this area offers, including parking, visitor information centre and complementary leisure and recreational activities.
4. The open space and nature reserve is surrounded by a variety of commercial activity, of which a proportion is underutilised or poorly designed. Therefore, regeneration activity should aim to consolidate active uses and develop under-used sites to attract new commercial and leisure opportunities. A careful balance is required in design and planning to respond to the unique setting and fully exploit the visual and physical connectivity to the open

space and nature reserve, whilst enabling development to come forward in a sustainable manner.

5. It is essential that new uses introduced as part of this activity complement the role and function of the town centre as the primary service centre within Inner Wirral. The introduction of new and expanded uses in this location will benefit from access to the wider Wirral and Liverpool catchment, through the M53/Wallsey Tunnel connection and access to the rail network at Birkenhead North station, but need also to be considered in light of the local context and impact.

### Regeneration Objectives

- Consolidate retail and commercial activity and introduce new commercial and leisure uses
- Ensure that uses complement the town centre.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle linkages to Bidston Moss from surrounding locations
- Upgrade the appearance of the streetscape along Wallasey Bridge Road and Poulton Bridge Road

## Focus Area: Northside



6. Regeneration activity in the Northside provides an opportunity to consolidate commercial and industrial activity and intensify use through the development of under-utilised and semi-vacant sites. Developing a more focused and supported business environment here will create greater employment opportunities and support the redevelopment of the wider dock area. The Northside has the potential to capture displaced business and commercial activity from the wider area, including elsewhere on the dock estate.
7. The tunnel approach cutting forms a physical barrier to the residential area to the North (Seacombe Residential) and

therefore, this should be used as a positive barrier to separate conflicting uses. Under-utilised sites within this area can accommodate commercial and industrial activity including B1, B2 and B8 and other complementary uses, in a sensitive manner. The point at which the tunnel approach descends, marks the point at which uses should become more conducive to integration with the adjacent residential neighbourhoods. With this in mind, higher value mixed-use would be appropriate on the eastern fringe of this area, which would complement the regeneration of Scott's Quay.

8. To support this role and function the Northside requires improvement to the wider environmental and streetscape appearance, including investment into Dock Road, to improve signage, access and create a safer pedestrian environment. The Northside needs to become a more attractive business location with the necessary characteristics and services to support sustainable business activity.

## Regeneration Objectives

- Focus industrial use on the south side of the Tunnel approach, to facilitate relocation from elsewhere on the docks

- Utilise the Tunnel Approach as a positive barrier between residential and industrial/commercial activity
- Encourage higher-value business uses along Dock Road, with B1 offices to front and servicing/industry to the rear
- Create an attractive business environment along Dock Road, including environmental and streetscape improvements

### Focus Area: West Float

9. The West Float includes a number of active industrial and port-based operations and therefore the regeneration of this area should support these businesses. However, despite existing employment-related uses there are a number of large under-utilised and vacant sites, where development activity should be focused to intensify the use of this area. Regeneration activity should aim to consolidate port-related activity and make better use of the land that exists in this location, creating the opportunity to attract new commercial and high-tech industries on available sites, which do not hinder the operation of the port.
10. To support the role and function of the West Float investment is required to improve the overall quality of the wider environment and public realm, including investment into Beaufort Road and Wallasey Bridge Road, to improve signage, access and create a

safer pedestrian environment. Establishing better pedestrian linkages to the stations, which will improve the safety and convenience for potential employees, is an important aspect in raising the profile of this location for employment purposes. The West Float needs to become a more attractive business location with the necessary characteristics and services to support sustainable business activity. However, a sensitive approach is needed in urban planning and design to integrate these uses with the adjacent residential communities.

11. An emphasis should be placed on locating higher value business operations along Beaufort Road, including ancillary office buildings, to create an active frontage and improved natural surveillance along its length.

### Regeneration Objectives

- Consolidate existing port uses within West Float to maintain viability of port operations
- Introduce new high-tech industrial opportunities beyond those areas required for port operations
- Create safe and accessible pedestrian and cycle linkages to adjacent rail stations and the proposed park and ride facilities

- Locate higher value/quality business use (providing frontage) to Beaufort Road

## Focus Area: East Float



12. The regeneration of East Float offers a tremendous opportunity to stimulate investment in the wider Birkenhead area and change the role and perception of the Wirral dockland environment. Emerging proposals for the site envisage the creation of a new waterside community, which will involve a mixed-use development, with significant amounts of residential development, office employment and complementary commercial and ground floor retail activity in key locations.
13. Through the relocation of existing industrial and port-related activity from this area to the West Float, there exists an opportunity to introduce new uses onto the dock and transform the area from a previous industrial location, to a publicly accessible new waterfront neighbourhood.
14. In light of this, it is important that development here is set within an agreed masterplan framework, which establishes how the development will be integrated with the wider area and, in particular, the town centre and adjacent residential communities to the south.
15. Given the strategic location of the site and the significant waterfront opportunity, it is essential that high quality design and materials are used to raise the profile of the area and create a precedent for new development elsewhere on the docks. The design and form of development should draw upon exemplar projects from across Northern Europe and ensure that public and private environments are designed and delivered to the highest possible standard. This is particularly important in considering public accessibility, pedestrian and cyclist activity and animation and activity in core locations. As such the new environment needs to create a safe and attractive waterfront amenity, which has a direct benefit to those living in the wider Inner Wirral area.
16. Whilst the emerging development is likely to contain a mix of residential, office and commercial uses, the proximity of this site to the town centre means that all new uses in this location should be complementary to the role and function of the town centre as the main service centre in Inner Wirral. The development should draw upon the services provided in the town centre, rather than becoming self-sufficient, to help stimulate the use of town centre

(including the wider Conway/Europa Boulevard and Hamilton Square central area) and encourage integration with adjacent neighbourhoods.

17. The regeneration of the East Float will create an opportunity to open-up access to the dock front to the public for the first time and create a new and extended public realm with impressive views across the dock.
18. The physical integration of the East Float with the wider area is important, particularly the visual and physical connections to the town centre and adjacent residential communities and therefore must be set within a wider public realm framework. As a new 'public' realm connectivity with existing and proposed green and open spaces across Birkenhead should also be considered with the aim of establishing green connections to *inter alia* Birkenhead Park, Hamilton Square, Central Park Liscard, Bidston Hill and Bidston Moss.
19. The regeneration of East Float should act as a catalyst for wider investment, which should put in place the basic urban and public realm infrastructure in the wider central Birkenhead area to attract additional inward investment.

## Regeneration Objectives

- New waterside community – mixed-use development – residential and offices, with ground floor activity in key locations
- Development to be founded on masterplanning principles
- High quality design and materials to raise the profile of the area and create a precedent for new development
- Introduce new pedestrian and cycle linkages and permeability between the waterfront, town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods



## Focus Area: Twelve Quays



20. Twelve Quays currently provides an interesting mix of employment uses, which include the Twelve Quays ferry and freight terminals, and therefore plays an important role in the local economy of Birkenhead and Wirral as a borough. However, this site sits directly opposite central Liverpool and is arguably Wirral's 'prime regeneration' site, offering the greatest views across the River Mersey to the Liverpool World Heritage Site. However, the current uses are likely to remain *in situ* for the foreseeable future and therefore this area will continue to have a predominantly employment-related function.

21. On the western fringe, the Twelve Quays area borders the East Float and with significant activity envisaged across the road, plans are also emerging for the Tower Wharf/Egerton Dock with aspirations for a new educational campus that brings together Higher Education and Further Education amenities.



22. Physical and visual connectivity with the town centre and East Float will be vital in creating a wider redevelopment that hangs together as a complete place. Within this, public realm connections and pedestrian safety will play a pivotal role in establishing linkages to public transport connections and supporting uses in the town centre.
23. In the longer term, the future for Twelve Quays should consider the introduction of higher value uses onto this 'prime' site, to fully capitalise on its river front location, drawing upon exemplars from waterfront regeneration in Northern Europe.

### Regeneration Objectives

- Create a new educational cluster, with linkages to the town centre and the revitalised East Float



- Pedestrian and cycle movement framework to connect key waterfront sites – Woodside, East Float, Scott's Quay
- Consider the long-term potential of introducing higher value uses along Mersey waterfront, through the relocation of industrial activity
- Monitor air quality issues and mitigate if necessary

### Focus Area: Scott's Quay

24. The regeneration of Scott's Quay provides a fantastic opportunity to take advantage of the river front location, with views across the River Mersey to Liverpool World Heritage Site, and the connectivity to the City Centre by the Seacombe Ferry Terminal.
25. Intervention here should involve the relocation of industrial and commercial activity to more appropriate locations and the redevelopment of under-utilised sites to create a higher value mixed-use neighbourhood. This would include the introduction of residential, leisure, cultural and business opportunities, with greater physical connections created to the ferry terminal and adjacent communities in Seacombe.
26. Development in this location should adopt excellence in design and materials and should draw upon exemplars from Northern European waterfront development. Creating an attractive and

visually interesting skyline - this will be highly visible from Liverpool City Centre. The corner site, along Kings Wharf, offers the potential for an 'iconic' building, through international architectural competition, which will contribute to the visual interest of the River Mersey frontage and will create a destination to draw people along the new stretch of promenade - attracting visitors from Liverpool, via the Seacombe Ferry connection.

27. Creating new public realm linkages by extending the promenade through to Alfred Dock, will also help to establish greater connections with the emerging developments on the East Float and Twelve Quays, and will forge greater integration across the dock estate.
28. Scott's Quay is almost a forgotten corner of the dock estate and has the potential to become a destination in its own right, with panoramic views of the Liverpool World Heritage site.

### Regeneration Objectives

- Introduce mixed-use development on the waterfront, which includes residential, leisure and business opportunities and opens up access to the waterfront for the general public
- Promote high quality design and materials as an exemplar waterfront scheme

- Improve pedestrian and cycle linkages with the Seacombe Ferry Terminal
- Monitor air quality issues and mitigate if necessary

### Focus Area: Seacombe Residential



29. South Seacombe is a largely sustainable neighbourhood, which has pockets of low demand and areas which are blighted by their adjacency to lower value uses, included industrial activity, both within the community and on adjacent dockland sites.
30. Regeneration activity will build upon the HMRI with the aim of creating a more balanced and sustainable housing market. Intervention will involve small-scale housing infill, development and refurbishment activity. This will be focused initially on

SHLAA sites identified on Gorsey Lane (Neighbourhood Resource Centre site); various sites along Brighton Street/Borough Road; and key waterfront sites. Environmental and public realm investment is also needed to raise the overall quality of the urban area in key locations.

31. An emphasis should be placed upon relocating industrial activity away from residential neighbourhoods and improving the choice and quality of local services. Renewed interest in the area following potential activity in Scott's Quay will also help to support local businesses along the A554 and A551.
32. South Seacombe will benefit from the more intensive redevelopment activity in Scott's Quay and public realm investment in both areas should improve linkages between the adjacent neighbourhoods. Key to this will be consideration of the A554 and the potential realignment of Birkenhead Road to create a more amenable pedestrian and cycle environment and higher value frontages.

### Regeneration Objectives

- Continued delivery of planned HMRI-led housing intervention, including small-scale residential-led infill, development and refurbishment activity

- Targeted environmental and public improvements along the A554 to improve north/south linkages, with the possible realignment of Birkenhead Road

### Focus Area: Princess Dock



33. Princess Dock, including the site of the former Cammell Laird ship yard, which has an important role within the history of Birkenhead and in the hearts of local residents. However, in response to the rise and fall of ship building activity in the area, the Princess Dock focus area has become a fragmented area of industrial mixed-use, which is cut off from the town centre by heavy road infrastructure.
34. Whilst the ship building works remains active (January 2010 announcement that the works received an order for the flight decks of the Royal Navy's new aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth ), decline is evident in some of the ancillary industries in the surrounding area and therefore regeneration activity should seek to consolidate business activity to reflect emerging markets and enable Wirral to remain at the forefront of shipbuilding activity.
35. Intervention here is therefore more related to movement, access and infrastructure, than significant land use changes, with the aim of creating a mixed-use area which is more conducive to attracting inward investment. Improving the physical appearance, structure and connectivity of this area will play an important role in attracting new business investment and visitor interest, and therefore intervention should focus on improving physical and visual connections with the town centre and adjacent neighbourhoods, together with appropriate signage and branding.
36. The area also includes the Hind Street Regeneration Area, which offers potential to improve links with the town centre, as part of a wider mixed-use proposal (this has outline planning permission), which would connect the Rock retail park and the roundabout by Birkenhead Central Station.

37. On the softer side, greater connectivity is required to improve linkages to Birkenhead Priory as a visitor destination. This local attraction is currently hidden amongst commercial and industrial activity and needs to become a more accessible location, including the potential to open up access to the waterside where feasible.

#### *Birkenhead Priory*



#### Regeneration Objectives

- Improve physical and visual connections with the town centre
- Consolidate business activity to reflect emerging markets

- Improve signage and access to Birkenhead Priority as a key visitor destination
- Establish pedestrian and cycle linkages with the Woodside Masterplan area, including access to the waterfront where possible

#### Focus Area: Town Centre

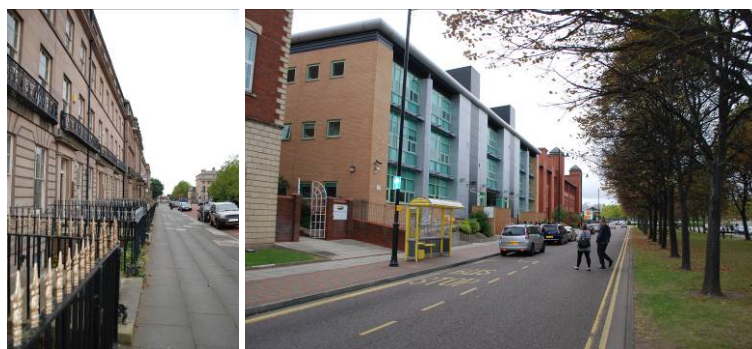
##### *Town Centre – Retail Precinct*



38. The IRS considers the town centre 'hub' to be a much wider area than the retail precinct alone. Instead the IRS draws a new boundary for the wider urban town centre area, which also includes Europa Boulevard and Conway Park, Hamilton Square and the civic uses located on Hamilton Street, and the Woodside

masterplan area. Thus including all of the uses that are generally associated with a town centre, beyond the primary retail function. Grange Road West/Oxton Road would fall outside of this area as a secondary retail location.

### *Town Centre – Hamilton Square and Europa Blvd*



39. This is broadly defined as the central area bounded by Canning Street; Exmouth/Watson Street; Chester Street and Borough Road.

### *Town centre 'hub'*

40. The creation of a vibrant central hub in Birkenhead will be a key element in unlocking the regeneration of the surrounding area and therefore ensuring that the town centre retains core activities which sit alongside and complement the proposals for Liverpool City Centre in particular Wirral Waters, and will ensure the

successful regeneration of the town centre and therefore the wider Birkenhead area.

41. The retail centre in Birkenhead will always be influenced by the proximity of Liverpool One scheme, but it could viably offer a more localised and unique offer, which if planned in an appropriate manner and linked to complementary activity in the wider central 'hub' could help sustain its future use.
42. The retail offer of Birkenhead town centre needs to be strengthened to provide a sustainable blend of multiplies and independent retailing, including an improved market and retail anchor, either through improving the existing floorspace or through redevelopment activity. The Strategy for Town Centres. Retail and Commercial Leisure in Wirral (2009 Roger Tym and Partners), which identifies the difficulties of redevelopment within the town centre, outlines some of the key elements needed to stimulate activity in the core area:

- *Attract a greater diversity of retailers*
- *Physical upgrading and maintenance of the public realm/streetscape*
- *Address vacancy, particularly at the Grange Centre*
- *Enhanced service sector and night time economy*



43. The approach to the regeneration of the town centre is therefore based on the strengthening of a number of core elements, which are widely recognised in best practice as key ingredients in a successful town centre:

### What makes a successful town centre?

#### *A vibrant mix of uses*

- Complementary activity and overlapping retail, business, cultural, leisure, recreation and residential
- Active Streets – ground floor activity, vertical mixes
- Themed clusters and character areas/quarters

#### *A safe and attractive environment*

- Heritage – focus on assets
- Pedestrian and cycle friendly, accessible and legible environment
- Human scale, welcoming and comfortable spaces
- Well maintained, quality materials

#### *A day time/night time economy*

- Quality evening economy
- Residential life
- ‘open’ and visible street spaces, open to vehicles and pedestrians

#### *A competitive business environment*

- Modern floor space, which responds to market standards
- If heritage – high quality and well maintained units, cluster of activity
- Access to key public transport nodes, communications and Liverpool City Centre

#### *A place that is easy to navigate and understand*

- A legible and secure pattern of “arrival” circulation and “departure” (e.g. defined threshold points/gateways)
- Public Transport
- Parking
- Signage

### *An appropriate scale and mass*

- Cluster of activity to create higher density development
- Clear and obvious gateways to mark central area
- Maximising densities and build form scale at key nodal points: both in practical terms e.g. public transport nodes, and in 'psychological' terms to mark important areas and encourage high numbers of people on the street.

### *A place that is connected to its hinterland*

- A town centre should be easy to find – an obvious destination
- Well connected to surrounding neighbourhoods by pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists

44. With these overall aims in mind, the IRS proposes the following approach for the regeneration of the town centre hub.

### Regeneration Objectives

- Establish a new north-south boulevard, linking to the docks, by utilising the redundant rail line
- Maximising the use of under-utilised sites adjacent to Conway Park train station and along Europa Boulevard as a focus for town centre diversification.

- Bring forward the regeneration of the Woodside masterplanning area – through the creation of a mixed-use leisure quarter linking the waterfront to Hamilton Square and East Float.
- Support the retail function of the town centre by creating new modern floor plates in a central position.
- Introduce modern residential choices into the town centre to stimulate activity
- Support the creation of an education cluster at Egerton Dock, including the potential to introduce new education, enterprise and supporting uses into the town centre
- Establish clear gateways to define the wider town centre environment, introducing higher density development in to core locations
- Maximise the potential of Hamilton Square to become a destination of residential, business, cultural and visitor activity
- Create a pedestrian and cycle friendly town centre environment, with clear signage, appropriate traffic calming, quality public realm and clear movement structure

45. The number of existing vacant and under-utilised sites in the town centre is limited and therefore the ability to bring forward



positive change in the town centre will involve a need for site assembly and taking a long term view on the mix of occupiers in the town centre.

### Focus Area: South Birkenhead Residential



46. South Birkenhead is a largely sustainable neighbourhood, which borders the popular Birkenhead Park area in the west and the Tranmere area to the south/east.
47. Regeneration activity will build upon the HMRI with the aim of creating a more balanced and sustainable housing market. Intervention will involve small-scale housing infill, development and refurbishment activity. This will be focused around a number of SHLAA sites, including those located at the Balls Road

East/Borough Road junction. This site offers the potential for a new mixed-use development, creating new frontage onto Borough Road and Ball's Road at a key junction within the neighbourhood.

48. The continued approach to environmental and neighbourhood management will also ensure that services are coordinated in an appropriate manner.

### Regeneration Objectives

- Deliver HMRI housing intervention to improve housing choices, including small-scale residential-led infill, refurbishment and improvement activity
- Environmental/neighbourhood management approach

## Focus Area: Southside Residential (Birkenhead Central)

*Livingstone Street*



49. The approach to regeneration in Southside is likely to involve significant intervention in the longer-term, which will see a step change in the quality and type of land use, particularly to the north of Price Street. Whilst the wider area will remain as a predominantly residential area, the lower value mixed-use neighbourhood to the north of Price Street will require a more intensive approach to create a higher-value mixed use neighbourhood that will complement the regeneration activity of the East Float. New higher density family and professional housing and apartments will be delivered along-side new start-up business space and sustainable B1 businesses, localised retail and supporting services.

50. In order for this to be realised a relocation strategy will be required to move the heavier industrial and commercial activity to appropriate locations, supporting and retaining business operations that are more conducive to a higher-quality mixed-use neighbourhood. This will need to be prepared following a more detailed analysis of occupier requirements and demand and consultation with key businesses. However, the improvement of the Northside focus area to create a more attractive commercial business environment could offer some opportunity for relocation.
51. Intervention to the south of Price Street will work with the existing stock, including a number of substantial period terraced streets, and will involve HMRI investment activity to improve housing stock through refurbishment and create some targeted development opportunities for new build. This approach will also require partnership working with social housing providers to upgrade or replace less popular stock.
52. The regeneration of this area will play a critical role in integrating the neighbouring communities, with key north-south routes (Duke Street, Vittoria Street, Cavendish Street, Livingstone Street and Watson Street) providing attractive connections between Birkenhead Park and the East Float.

53. A neighbourhood management initiative is also required to support the physical intervention envisaged in this area.
54. Given the extent of physical change envisaged in this area, it is recommended that a neighbourhood masterplan is prepared to guide development activity.

### Regeneration Objectives

- Targeted mixed-use redevelopment north of Price Street, including residential (medium density)
- Residential improvement and targeted redevelopment south of Price Street
- Improved pedestrian and green linkages linking Birkenhead park to the docks
- New frontage development and improvement along key north-south routes
- Environmental/neighbourhood management approach

### Focus Area: Birkenhead Park



55. Birkenhead Park is a largely sustainable residential area, which includes a wide range of housing choices and popular places to live. Regeneration activity in this area would therefore focus on small-scale residential-led infill developments on vacant and under-utilised sites as and when they become available.
56. This area continues to offer aspirational housing products and the provision of affordable family and LCHO products should be delivered as part of a sustainable mix of new housing products.

## Regeneration Objectives

- Small-scale residential-led infill on vacant/underutilised sites.
- Encourage the development of aspirational, family housing products, including affordable and LCHO.

## Focus Areas: North End



57. The Bidston/North End remains at the forefront of regeneration need within Birkenhead and continues to suffer from issues of deprivation, low demand and decline. Recent investment activity into local services and NRA activity is starting to create opportunities for housing-led development, and refurbishment

and improvement works undertaken through the HMRI have also been largely successful and welcomed by the local community.

58. Despite this ongoing investment, the area continues to need targeted investment into the physical and social infrastructure to combat the growing polarisation evident within the community.
59. Regeneration activity will bring forward HMRI/NRA investment into existing stock and deliver improvement in housing choice and new development will be delivered in the Milner Street area, creating new frontage along Laird Street, and on cleared sites in the vicinity of Ilchester Road. However, HMRI-led intervention in this area is at risk of being constrained by non-residential land uses along the Laird Street corridor where unless certain commercial interests are relocated, the integration of new housing with existing buildings and functions will be difficult. Further a field, it will be important to take a longer term view on the future of the large social housing estates in the areas where decline is evident despite some previous intervention.
60. To support intervention into the physical stock, a more extensive approach to environmental and neighbourhood management will be required, together with the coordinated delivery of services to ensure that the local community has access to emerging opportunities and support services.

61. A key aim of the regeneration of this area will be to forge greater integration with more sustainable neighbourhoods to the south and planned new development activity in Central Birkenhead and East Float. With this in mind, upgrading the quality of the public realm along key routes will be important in creating safe and accessible linkages for pedestrians and cyclists to key destinations, including Bidston Moss, East Float, Birkenhead Park and Bidston Hill together with the employment opportunities in the East and West Float and in the town centre.

62. The proposed Park and Ride schemes at Bidston and Birkenhead North Stations bring a meaningful land use to long standing vacant land and can be developed as part of an integrated approach to housing and transport provision, which will have the added value of creating an improved physical environment. The delivery of Park and Ride facilities will bring more people into the neighbourhood from further a field and it will be important to reduce the impact of additional traffic on existing residential areas and create better quality stations for all users.

- Create new residential frontage along Laird Street
- Consolidate the local centre to create a smaller, but more active service provision
- Improve accessibility to local stations including the creation of park and ride facilities at Birkenhead North Station and Bidston station
- Environmental/neighbourhood management approach

### Regeneration Objectives

- Deliver HMRI housing intervention to improve housing choices, including targeted improvement/refurbishment and redevelopment activity