



Council

Extraordinary Meeting

Town Hall
Wallasey

3 January, 2020

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend an extraordinary meeting of the Council to be held at **6.00 p.m. on Monday, 13 January 2020** in the Council Chamber, within the Town Hall, Wallasey, to take into consideration and determine upon the following subjects :

This meeting will be webcast at
<https://wirral.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

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AGENDA

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Council are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest, in connection with any matter to be debated or determined at this meeting and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

2. CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive the Civic Mayor's announcements and any apologies for absence.

3. MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL OR CONSIDERATION BY THE COUNCIL

To consider any recommendations which require the approval of the Council.

A. Wirral Local Plan - 2020-2035: Approval of Issues and Options Document for Public Consultation (Pages 1 - 532)

A copy of the report on the Wirral Local Plan 2020-2035 Issues and Options Document for Public Consultation, to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 13 January, 2020, is attached. The Council is invited to consider and approve the recommendations from Cabinet.

B. Membership of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Pages 533 - 536)

The Council is requested to appoint 6 persons to the Independent Remuneration Panel as recommended in the report of the Director of Governance and Assurance.



Director: Governance and Assurance

Audio/Visual Recording of Meetings

Everyone is welcome to record meetings of the Council and its Committees using non-disruptive methods. For particular meetings we may identify a 'designated area' for you to record from. If you have any questions about this please contact Committee and Civic Services (members of the press please contact the Press Office). Please note that the Chair of the meeting has the discretion to halt any recording for a number of reasons, including disruption caused by the filming or the nature of the business being conducted.

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COUNCIL

13 JANUARY 2020

WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN – 2020-2035: APPROVAL OF ISSUES AND OPTIONS DOCUMENT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Cabinet Member for the Local Plan, Cllr Anita Leech, said:

“The draft Local Plan consultation document we are putting forward outlines how we propose to meet the housing target of 12,000 new homes by 2035.

“We have made it clear that our preferred option is to do this through the use of urban sites but it will not be easy. Council officers have been working non-stop for many months to examine each and every site being put forward to show they are suitable for development and justify including them within a preferred regeneration approach that not only maximises the potential of these sites but will also support the regeneration of some of our most disadvantaged areas. Then it will be up to developers and our major partners in these areas to deliver the new homes they have told us they can provide.

“There is still a considerable way to go and it is crucial now that the public and all stakeholders in Wirral look at these proposals and options and tell us what they think, so we can use their views to draw up the final document later in 2020 which will be submitted to the Government for the next stage of inspection.”

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval of an Issues and Options document for public consultation as part of the preparation of the Council’s Local Plan for the Borough.

Producing a Local Plan is one of the most important obligations for a local authority. Local Plans set out a long-term vision for how an area will develop in the future, with policies that will shape future development. They address a wide range of issues, from strategic planning matters that affect the whole local authority area right through to finer details on the design of development on individual sites. The Government requires each local planning authority to produce a Local Plan and then review it at least once every five years to ensure that it is up to date.

The Wirral Local Plan will cover a period from 2020 through to 2035 and set out policies and proposals to guide the future development of the Borough over that time. It will set out where future development will take place, and allocate land for housing, employment, mixed-use and other development. It will also seek to protect the most important characteristics of the Borough, by preserving our unique natural and historical assets from development.

In preparing the new Local Plan the Council must consult with local residents to seek their views on the proposed contents of the Plan. We also need to engage with local and regional partners, such as neighbouring local authorities and government agencies.

The Local Plan Issues and Options document sets out the Council's proposals and must be published for consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, which requires that:

- (1) A local planning authority must—
 - (a) notify each of the bodies or persons specified in paragraph (2) of the subject of a local plan which the local planning authority propose to prepare, and
 - (b) invite each of them to make representations to the local planning authority about what a local plan with that subject ought to contain.
- (2) The bodies or persons referred to in paragraph (1) are—
 - (a) such of the specific consultation bodies as the local planning authority consider may have an interest in the subject of the proposed local plan;
 - (b) such of the general consultation bodies as the local planning authority consider appropriate; and
 - (c) such residents or other persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area from which the local planning authority consider it appropriate to invite representations.
- (3) In preparing the local plan, the local planning authority must take into account any representation made to them in response to invitations under paragraph (1).

The proposals are based upon evidence about the economic, social and environmental needs of the Borough and a number of evidence studies have been commissioned or updated to inform the production of the Issues and Options document. These evidence studies are listed in Appendix 1.1 of the Issues and Options document.

This Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document seeks views on the future direction for development in Wirral. One of the main issues is that the Council needs to deliver enough new homes to meet the nationally prescribed target of 12,000 net new dwellings over the 15-year Local Plan period – equivalent to 800 new homes every year; and 80 hectares of new employment land. These figures have been established through the evidence base.

The Issues and Options document sets out a series of Spatial Options as to how the housing and employment requirements could be met within the Borough. The Preferred Option is for Urban Intensification. However, to meet the evidential requirements for deliverability and developability of our development needs over the Plan period it is also necessary to consult on a range of other options should we not be able to meet all our requirements by Urban Intensification alone. These other options would involve release of land for development which is currently designated as Green Belt. Therefore, the consultation document sets out a total of four options, which are Urban Intensification (Option 1A); Urban Intensification with stepped delivery (Option 1B); Urban Intensification with Dispersed Green Belt Release (Option 2A); and Urban Intensification with a Single Urban Expansion into the Green Belt (Option 2B).

Details of the options can be found in Chapter 4 of the consultation document. The consultation document makes it clear that the preferred option is Urban Intensification without Green Belt release and clearly sets out what is required in order to achieve that option. It also clarifies that in the event that some Green Belt release is required, the solution could be a hybrid of the various options.

A draft policy on Housing in Multiple Occupation is detailed in Appendix 5.1 of the consultation document. Publication of this proposed policy at the Regulation 18 stage will enable the policy to be considered as an emerging planning policy when determining planning applications pending the adoption of the Local Plan. However, as an emerging policy it cannot carry full statutory weight before the Local Plan is adopted. The Council remains under threat of intervention by the Secretary of State should it not produce a Local Plan in accordance with the timetable set out in the Councils Action Plan, which was agreed with MHCLG in April 2019. That Action Plan stated that the Regulation 18 consultation would commence in January 2020. The consultation will be in accordance with the Statement of Community Involvement adopted by the Council in 2014, which sets out local standards for public involvement in the Council's preparation of policy documents and on planning applications.

The Statement of Community Involvement sets out the expected methods of community involvement for local plans at the Regulation 18 stage of the plan making process, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, which includes public meetings, focus groups and notification letters. For this Regulation 18 consultation there will also be a website consultation portal available at <https://wirral-consult.objective.co.uk> where anyone who wishes to can view and submit comments on the Local Plan Issues and Options document.

In approving the Issues and Options document, Members will not be approving the final draft Local Plan that will be submitted to the Secretary of State. Subject to Cabinet and Council approval of the Regulation 18 consultation document, attached to this report, the Council will consider all responses received as a result of the consultation process and take them into account in preparing the final draft Local Plan which will set out the details of how the Council proposes to meet the Borough's development needs and the long term vision for the development of the Borough. The final site allocations will also be included in the final draft Local Plan.

It is expected that, subject to the approval of the attached Issues and Options consultation document, the final draft Local Plan will be brought to Council for approval in July 2020 and further public representations will then be invited (the Regulation 19 stage). The final draft Local Plan and all representations received will then be submitted for Examination by an independent Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. This is currently expected to take place in November 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

- (1) Council approves the content of the Wirral Local Plan 2020-2035 Issues and Options Report attached to this report and its accompanying technical evidence for the purposes of public consultation under Regulation 18 of**

the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012; and

- (2) The Director of Regeneration and Place be given authority to make non-material amendments to the final text and presentation of the consultation documents before the consultation exercise begins.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To comply with the legal and procedural requirements necessary to complete the preparation and adoption of a Local Plan for Wirral, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Progress of the Local Plan continues to be monitored by the Secretary of State and the threat of intervention remains. Not preparing an up-to-date Local Plan may also incur financial penalties.

- 2.2 To comply with the NPPF, the Council must positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the Borough with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change. Strategic policies should, as a minimum, meet objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas unless:

- the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area or
- any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole (NPPF paragraph 11 refers).

- 2.3 The Government's standard method for calculating local housing needs reduces the scope for considering a wider variety of options. The number of dwellings may only need to be increased to support additional economic growth.

- 2.4 National policy requires the Council to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing. Where it cannot do so, planning applications for housing would need to be considered alongside the presumption in favour of sustainable development, when assessed against national policy as a whole (NPPF, paragraph 11 refers).

- 2.5 The Council is also required to identify a supply of specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 in its Local Plan. Where it cannot do so and particularly if it also cannot identify a suitable five-year supply, it risks having its Local Plan declared 'unsound' by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State and will not be allowed to adopt its Local Plan unless it is altered to do so.

- 2.6 Not preparing an up-to-date Local Plan would mean that the Council would have to continue to rely on the Unitary Development Plan adopted in February 2000.

- 2.7 The national presumption in favour of sustainable development will be held to apply where there are no relevant development plan policies or the policies which

are most important for determining the application are out of date (NPPF paragraph 11).

- 2.8 Relevant policies may not be considered up-to-date if the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites or where the delivery of housing was substantially below the housing requirement over the previous three years (NPPF, paragraph 11, footnote 7). In these circumstances, decisions on planning applications will have to be made in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, with policies in the Unitary Development Plan and Neighbourhood Development Plans prepared by the local community only carrying weight according to their consistency with the Framework.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Wirral Local Plan (previously the Core Strategy Local Plan) is a statutory Development Plan Document that is intended to set the long-term vision, objectives, strategic and non-strategic policies for the development and use of land in the Borough over the next 15 years and to provide the framework for future Development Plan Documents, neighbourhood planning documents, supplementary planning documents and development management decisions.
- 3.2 The Wirral Local Plan went through several stages of public consultation from 2006 onwards culminating in the publication of a Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy in December 2012. The revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy, in May 2013, required the Council to re-assess the Borough's housing needs, complicated by results for Wirral from the 2011 Census, which made previous population and household projections unreliable.
- 3.3 A revised Strategic Housing Market Assessment (May 2016) was published for public consultation in August 2016, alongside the latest update to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, for April 2016 (Cabinet, 18 July 2016, Minute 31 refers). The results of consultation were reported to Cabinet in February 2017 and a wider review of development options approved (Minute 96 refers).
- 3.4 The Council's Cabinet considered a further report on 23 July 2018 setting out the results of the Development Options review and approved public consultation on the findings (Minute 17 refers). Although comments were received and recorded as soon as the Cabinet Report was published in July 2018, formal consultation took place between 3 September and 26 October 2018.
- 3.5 The consultation drew 3,221 responses from 2,989 individual respondents and an update report was considered by Cabinet on 17 December 2018. Members resolved that a revised Local Development Scheme be submitted for approval by the Council once an amended future timetable had been determined (Minute 47 refers).
- 3.6 The key themes emerging from the consultation were:
- 1) no development should take place in the Green Belt

- 2) concern over the lack of progress by Peel in delivering residential development in Wirral Waters
 - 3) ability of infrastructure (roads, sewers, drains, etc) to support further development
 - 4) need to protect agricultural land which is used for food production
 - 5) need to protect sensitive environmental and ecological site from future development and/or the impact of development.
- 3.7 A report of the comments received can be viewed on the Council's website at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/core-strategy-local-plan-6>
- 3.8 The timetable for the preparation of the Wirral Local Plan is set out in a statutory Local Development Scheme. This was revised following a review of development options, legal advice and in response to the Secretary of State's letter to the Council in January 2019.
- 3.9 Specifically, the Council prepared and submitted a Local Plan Action Plan to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in response to his letter of 28 January 2019. The Action Plan commits the Council to submitting the Local Plan to the Secretary of State by November 2020. The Action Plan, covering letter and detailed delivery timetable can be viewed at: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/wirral-new-local-plan/local-plan>
- 3.10 The revised Local Development Scheme, approved by full Council on the 14 October 2019 (Minute 72 refers) sets out the amended timetable for the remaining stages of the production of the Wirral Local Plan working towards Submission to the Secretary of State, in November 2020.
- 3.11 The Council's original intention was to re-publish the Local Plan as a proposed submission draft under Regulation 19 of the Local Plan Regulations. Advice from the Council's legal advisors and from consultants undertaking the sustainability appraisal of the Local Plan was that an additional stage of public consultation under Regulation 18 was required to take account of changes in national planning policy and to ensure that all the revised spatial options and reasonable alternatives and the Council's revised preferred option are documented and made available for public comment before any final proposals are prepared.
- 3.12 It is the Wirral Local Plan 2020-2035 Issues and Options document attached to this report that forms the basis of this public consultation and for which approval for the purposes of public consultation is now sought.

4.0 THE NEED FOR HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

- 4.1 One of the main requirements of the Local Plan is to make provision for future development in accordance with objectively assessed needs.

- 4.2 The Local Plan Issues and Options document attached to this report sets out the assessed needs for new development for housing and employment, in line with national policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and its accompanying Planning Practice Guidance. Section 2 of the Issues and Options Report summarises these needs as:
- We have to plan for up to 12,000 net additional dwellings; and
 - We have to plan for up to 80ha of new employment land.
- 4.3 After setting out a vision for Wirral and series of objectives for the Local Plan in Section 3 of the Issues and Options document, Section 4 sets out the Options that are currently available to meet these needs during the next fifteen years.
- 4.4 A strategy of Urban Intensification (Option 1A) is identified as the Council's preferred option, to promote urban regeneration and prevent the need to identify land for development in the Green Belt. Urban Intensification will involve maximising the use of all available urban land, including suitable previously developed brownfield sites.
- 4.5 To be included in the Local Plan any site that is identified for new housing development must be 'deliverable' or 'developable' within the Plan period of 2020 to 2035, as defined in the Glossary of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.6 To be considered 'deliverable' a site should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within 5 years.
- 4.7 To be considered 'developable' a site should be in a suitable location for housing development with a reasonable prospect that they will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.
- 4.8 Section 4.2 of the Issues and Options document sets out the 'deliverable' and 'developable' land supply at April 2019, which shows a potential shortfall of 2,444 new dwellings over the Plan period, once demolitions and the contribution from conversions and changes of use, the re-use of empty homes and other new build windfalls had been taken into account (Table 4.1 of the Issues and Options document refers).
- 4.9 The list of proposed urban housing allocations, which includes sites where planning permission has already been granted, is set out in Appendix 4.1 and shown on Figure 4.1 of the Issues and Options document.
- 4.10 Section 4.2 of the Issues and Options document then looks at potential additional urban sites which might also be able to be brought forward, if they too can be shown to be 'deliverable' or 'developable' within the Plan period. This includes increasing the density and timetable for delivery on some sites and a review of sites that were previously designated for new employment development.
- 4.11 A list of potential additional urban housing allocations is set out in Appendix 4.2 and the impact of the potential additional supply, which could mean that no land

is needed to be released from the Green Belt, is set out in Table 4.2 of the Issues and Options document.

- 4.12 It is important to note that this higher land supply can only be achieved if these further changes can be shown to be 'deliverable' or 'developable' by the time the Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State and that this uncertainty over the future housing land supply means that the Council will be required to show other alternative options, which include the possible release of land from the Green Belt.
- 4.13 The Issues and Options document therefore also sets out two main Green Belt options, that would each be able to deliver the 2,500 homes that may be needed, if the potential additional urban housing allocations identified cannot be added to the existing urban land supply. These options have been included on the clear advice of Counsel.
- 4.14 Option 2A looks at the potential for a dispersed release of land from the Green Belt and Option 2B looks at the potential for a single urban extension to be identified. The potential sites included in Tables 4.5 and 4.7 and shown on Figures 4.6 and 4.7 have been identified following a more detailed review of the Green Belt undertaken by specialist consultants and the additional technical evidence that has been collected as part of the preparation of the Local Plan, which will also be made available for public consultation.
- 4.15 The Issues and Options document nevertheless makes it clear that the release of land from the Green Belt is not the Council's preferred option and has only been included as a contingency, in the event that insufficient 'deliverable' or 'developable' sites can be identified within the urban area.
- 4.16 The other option presented (Option 1B) is for a stepped approach to urban intensification, which could allow the Local Plan to reflect any proven delivery constraints with a lower annual requirement in the short term, provided that any shortfall in the early years is fully met within the remainder of the Plan period.
- 4.17 The Issues and Options document concludes that there is unlikely to be a shortfall of urban sites for new employment development and the list of proposed urban employment allocations is set out in Appendix 4.6 and shown on Figure 4.5 of the Issues and Options document.
- 4.18 The Issues and Options document also sets out the preferred approach to other matters including requirements for affordable housing, empty homes, town centres, infrastructure, and the protection of open space, biodiversity and heritage (Sections 5 to 8: Our Homes, Our Economy, Our Physical and Social Infrastructure, and Our Environment refer).
- 4.19 While the types of policies that are likely to be included in the final draft Local Plan are listed in Appendix 9.1, the Issues and Options document does not set out the text of any of these policies, with the exception of a draft policy for Houses in Multiple Occupation, which has been identified as particular priority by the Planning Committee, which will allow the draft policy to be to carry some weight in the determination of future planning applications. The detail of the

remaining strategic and non-strategic policies will be included in the final draft Local Plan and representations will be able to be made on these at Regulation 19 stage.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The Local Plan Issues and Options document attached to this report and its accompanying technical evidence will be published for public consultation for eight weeks, commencing in January 2020.
- 5.2 The comments received will be analysed and used alongside any further necessary technical evidence to inform the preparation of a final draft Local Plan, which will be reported to Cabinet in June 2020 for approval by Council in July 2020.
- 5.3 Following a statutory period of six weeks for final representations on the soundness and legal compliance of the proposals, the draft Local Plan and the representations received will be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by a Planning Inspector, who after a public hearing will recommend whether the Local Plan can be adopted.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The costs of the Local Plan have been met from the Council's Local Plan budget.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Local Plan for Wirral must be prepared in line with the process set out in national legislation and can only be adopted by the Council if it is found to be legally compliant and sound by a Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State after public examination.
- 7.2 To be sound, a local plan must be: positively prepared, to as a minimum, meet the area's objectively assessed needs; justified, in terms of being an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives; effective, in terms of being deliverable over the plan period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters; and consistent with national policy, enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, paragraph 35 refers).
- 7.3 The Council will not be able to successfully submit a Local Plan for public examination without basing its housing requirement figure on up-to-date evidence of objectively assessed need or without being able to demonstrate a credible five-year housing land supply and the broad locations for future housing land supply over the rest of a fifteen-year plan period to 2035, in line with the requirements of national policy.
- 7.4 Recent case law indicates that it is not sufficient to simply determine the maximum supply of land available for new housing and constrain the number of dwellings to what can be accommodated. A distinct assessment must be made of whether specific policies dictate or justify constraint.

- 7.5 Exceptional circumstances will need to be demonstrated if Green Belt boundaries are to be altered (NPPF, paragraph 83 refers).
- 7.6 To be legally compliant, the local plan must be prepared to fully comply with national legislation and regulations, including the Duty to Co-operate.
- 7.7 The Council has a legal Duty to Co-operate with named public bodies including adjoining local authorities and national agencies. A failure to comply with the Duty to Co-operate can be fatal to the legal compliance of the Local Plan and could require the Local Plan to be withdrawn. The Council has already consulted with relevant bodies as part of the preparation of the technical evidence base for the Local Plan and will be approaching neighbouring authorities more formally once the Issues and Options document has been approved. A full record of the actions taken to comply with the Duty and of any necessary agreements with relevant bodies will be published alongside the draft (Regulation 19) Local Plan.
- 7.8 The Council must also comply with its own statutory Statement of Community Involvement, last adopted in March 2014.
- 7.9 The approval of the final Draft Local Plan will require a resolution of Council before it can be published and submitted to the Secretary of State for public examination.
- 7.10 The Housing and Planning Act 2016 significantly increased the powers of the Secretary of State to intervene in plan-making at any stage in the plan making process. The Secretary of State can now intervene if he thinks that a local planning authority are failing or omitting to do anything it is necessary for them to do in connection with the preparation, revision or adoption of a local plan and may prepare or revise the document or give directions to the authority in relation to the preparation or revision of the document but must give reasons for any action that he takes (section 146 refers).
- 7.11 The Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017 also enables the Secretary of State to make regulations to require a local planning authority to review local development documents at prescribed times; and extended powers over their content, with which the Council must comply (sections 11 and 12 refer). Regulations under section 12 now require local planning authorities to review their local plans and statements of community involvement at least every five years, from April 2018.
- 7.12 The Secretary of State can also direct two or more local planning authorities to prepare a joint local plan, if this would facilitate the more effective planning of the development and use of land in one or more of their areas, including setting a timetable and specifying the areas and matters to be covered. The Secretary of State or combined authority will then be able to apportion liability for expenditure on joint plan preparation as the Secretary of State considers appropriate (section 9 refers).
- 7.13 Section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act requires the Council to revise their Local Development Scheme, to set out the documents that will

comprise their local plan and the timetable for their preparation and revision, when directed to do so by the Secretary of State. The Localism Act 2011 also requires the Council to publish up to date information on their compliance with the Scheme (section 111 refers).

- 7.14 Under the Housing and Planning Act 2016, the Secretary of State can prepare a Local Development Scheme for a local planning authority, if one has not been prepared and direct that the local planning authority bring it into effect and can direct a local planning authority to make such amendments as he thinks appropriate to ensure the full and effective coverage of the area, with regard to both geography and content (section 143 refers).
- 7.15 Following Counsel's advice, the timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme approved by Council in March 2018 (Minute 133), which is currently being monitored by the Secretary of State, was updated and approved by Council on 14 October 2019 (Minute 72).
- 7.16 Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the adopted Development Plan unless material considerations (which include national policy and guidance) indicate otherwise.
- 7.17 The statutory Development Plan for Wirral currently comprises the Council's Unitary Development Plan, adopted in February 2000; the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton, adopted in July 2013; the Neighbourhood Development Plan for Devonshire Park, made in December 2015; and the Neighbourhood Development Plan for Hoylake, made in December 2016.
- 7.18 Where policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed or any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole (NPPF, paragraph 11 refers).
- 7.19 The Local Plan must be accompanied by a statutory sustainability appraisal including an assessment under the Habitats Regulations, copies of which are also attached to this report.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 8.1 New housing development currently attracts New Homes Bonus at a rate linked to the Council Tax banding of each new dwelling constructed or empty property brought back into use once the number of new dwellings has exceeded a baseline target of 0.4% of dwelling stock in Band D equivalents. In Wirral, this is currently equivalent to 600 dwellings or above, with a £350 premium for every new affordable dwelling provided.
- 8.2 New housing and employment development will also have implications for other Council services, including transport, education, social services and the Wirral Growth Plan, which are still to be determined through further stakeholder consultation.

- 8.3 The preparation of the Local Plan will require additional technical assessments, including flood risk, transport, sustainability and habitats assessment, including visitor management and ongoing monitoring of development, funded through the budgets for Economic and Housing Growth, which will be reported at the appropriate time.
- 8.4 An independent external Programme Officer has been identified to advise on the preparations for the submission of the final Local Plan to the Secretary of State and to run and co-ordinate the future public examination on behalf of the Planning Inspector who will be appointed by the Secretary of State.
- 8.5 Securing the 'deliverable' and 'developable' land supply that is necessary to support the preferred option of Urban Intensification will require continued support through the Council's ongoing regeneration activities, Affordable Housing Programme and Wirral Plan commitments and from development and funding partners including Peel Holdings, Wirral Growth Company, Homes England and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

9.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 9.1 A failure to meet the Council's timetable for the preparation of the Local Plan could lead to intervention by the Secretary of State, including potential financial penalties; which could include the withdrawal of some or all, of the Council's annual award of New Homes Bonus, or work undertaken by consultants appointed by the Secretary of State in default.
- 9.2 Not modifying the Local Plan to address the issues identified in national policy or in the latest local research could lead to the Local Plan being withdrawn, with abortive costs and/or unnecessary time and expense being incurred at a future public examination.
- 9.3 There may be a need to revise the final number of new homes and supply of land to be provided, either before or during the public examination, to take account of any new or emerging evidence, including the implications of any more up-to-date population and household projections, the changing requirements of national policy or the emerging Liverpool City Region Spatial Development Framework.
- 9.4 The final decision on the sites that should be allocated for development, including the amount of development that Wirral Waters may be able to contribute to meeting the Borough's housing needs, will ultimately need to be considered by the Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the soundness of the submitted Local Plan, based on evidence related to planning history, the record of delivery and development viability.
- 9.5 Payments under the New Homes Bonus could be amended, in terms of the conditions, amount and duration of payments for each new home completed.
- 9.6 The national presumption in favour of sustainable development will be held to apply where there are no relevant development plan policies or the policies which

are most important for determining the application are out of date (NPPF paragraph 11).

- 9.7 Relevant policies may not be considered up-to-date if the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites or where the delivery of housing was substantially below the housing requirement over the previous three years (NPPF, paragraph 11, footnote 7). In these circumstances, decisions on planning applications will have to be made in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, with policies in the Unitary Development Plan and Neighbourhood Development Plans prepared by the local community carrying weight according to their consistency with the Framework.

10.0 ENGAGEMENT / CONSULTATION

- 10.1 Public involvement in the preparation of the Local Plan has been governed by the Council's statutory Statement of Community Involvement, adopted by Full Council in March 2014.
- 10.2 The Statement of Community Involvement requires a minimum six-week period of consultation, including the need to notify the neighbours of any site-specific proposals (SCI, Table 1, page 13; and paragraphs 3.52 and 3.56, page 16 refer). The Regulation 18 consultation will be for an 8-week period.
- 10.3 People and organisations may also register their contact details so that they are notified as each new document is made available and when each new stage is reached. Personal data is held and used in accordance with a Forward Planning Privacy Notice, for which a link is provided below.
- 10.4 Consultation will take the form of a series of documents - both on-line and in paper copies placed for inspection in public libraries - including maps of the sites involved; the methods of analysis used; and a summary of the Council's initial findings and conclusions, for public comment before any final decision is taken.
- 10.5 A series of public 'open days' are being held, which will be widely publicised, with the opportunity to speak to members of the Forward Planning Team.
- 10.6 All responses will need to be submitted in writing and the results of the consultation will be reported back to Cabinet before any findings are recommended to be included in the final draft Local Plan to be published and submitted to the Secretary of State. Respondents are encouraged to use the Council's online consultation portal.

11.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The Local Plan has been subject to ongoing Equality Impact Assessment.
- 11.2 The Issues and Options consultation document will be accompanied by a sustainability appraisal incorporating equality impact assessment. A headline findings report is attached at Appendix 3.

- 11.3 A revised equality impact assessment will be presented alongside the final proposals to be included in the draft Local Plan.
- 11.4 An additional Interim Health Impact Assessment has also been prepared, on behalf of the Director of Public Health, which will be published for public comment alongside the Issues and Options document.

12.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Proposals to address climate change are set out in Section 8: Our Environment of the Issues and Options consultation document.

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APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Issues and Options consultation document
- Appendix 2 – Issues and Options appendices
- Appendix 3 – Sustainability Appraisal headline findings report
- Appendix 4 – Habitats Regulations Assessment

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Local Development Scheme for Wirral (October 2019) can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/local-development-scheme>

Previous stages in the preparation of the Council's Core Strategy Local Plan can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/core-strategy-local-plan>

The Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (March 2014) can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/community-involvement-local-planning/statement>

Documents related to the Development Options Review, including a summary of the responses received, can be viewed at <http://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/core-strategy-local-plan-6>

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) can be viewed at <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/>

The accompanying evidence base, which will be published for public consultation alongside the Issues and Options document can be viewed at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-3>

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet – Wirral Local Plan Update Report (Minute 47)	17 December 2018
Cabinet – Core Strategy Local Plan Review of Development Options (Minute 16)	23 July 2018
Environment Overview and Scrutiny – Wirral Local Plan – Report of Progress Since 2004 (Minute 46)	31 January 2018
Environment Overview and Scrutiny - Wirral Local Plan – Letter from Secretary of State (Minute 40)	21 December 2017
Cabinet – Core Strategy Local Plan – Report of Further Consultation on Housing Needs and Land Supply (Minute 96)	27 February 2017

Wirral Local Plan 2020-2035

Issues and Options Consultation

Meeting our development requirements through sustainable regeneration

January 2020



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- 2.1 Strategic Sites
- 4.1 Proposed Urban Housing Allocation Sites
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- 5.1 Draft Housing in Multiple Occupation Policy
- 8.1 Open Space Sites to be Protected
- 9.1 List of Detailed Development Management Policies to be included in the Draft Final Local Plan

1 Introduction

1.1 Wirral: A Brief Introduction

- 1.1.1 Wirral is a diverse and exciting place – with an urban core and waterfront environment, whose history has helped to shape the modern world, and suburban towns and villages surrounded by stunning beaches, and open countryside with varied wildlife. With a population of just under 325,000¹ people, the borough of Wirral is a sizeable place – occupying around 60 square miles at the northern end of the wider Wirral Peninsula.
- 1.1.2 Wirral is bounded to the east by the River Mersey, to the west by the River Dee and to the north by the Irish Sea. Whilst it retains its own distinct ‘over the water’ character, Wirral is also an integral part of the wider Liverpool City Region (LCR). In addition to Wirral, the LCR comprises the City of Liverpool, the Merseyside Metropolitan Boroughs of Knowsley, Sefton and St Helens, and the borough of Halton in Cheshire. Wirral also has close linkages with Ellesmere Port and Chester, located within Cheshire West and Chester to the south.
- 1.1.3 Water has been key to Wirral’s development over the years, and the establishment of the first ferry links across the Mersey from the Priory in Birkenhead can be traced back as far as 1330. In the 1820s, steam powered boats were introduced into the ferry services, which led to the rapid industrialisation of the Mersey Coast². Wirral’s first railway was built in 1840, and in the 1840s and 1850s the Great Float (now part of the Wirral Waters regeneration project) of the Birkenhead Docks progressively opened. The first fixed link across the Mersey to Liverpool came with the opening of the Mersey Railway Tunnel in 1886, which led to rapid urbanisation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- 1.1.4 The eastern side of the Borough has remained the focus for industrial and residential development, and some of the former hamlets and villages of the western side of the Borough have grown into thriving commuter suburbs, following the further expansion of the railways. Green Belt areas of agricultural land, open countryside and land in leisure and recreational use are interspersed between the Borough’s settlements, including areas of special landscape value.
- 1.1.5 Today, Wirral is at a crossroads. In recent years, the Borough has not always been able to deliver the levels of development which were expected by national policy, to allow the sustainable growth of our communities and economy. To avoid the need for Green Belt release we need to unlock the significant brownfield land resources which exist within

1 <https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/2778/compendium-2019-final.pdf>

2 <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/unitary-development-plan/written>

our urban areas, particularly in Birkenhead. The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework will seek to demonstrate how the major opportunities presented by the future development of Wirral Waters, Woodside, Hamilton Park, Scott's Quay, Hind Street and parts of Birkenhead Town Centre, providing thousands of new homes and job opportunities in new mixed use communities, can be delivered.

1.1.6 At the same time, we need to try to protect the natural and historic assets which make Wirral unique, and ensure that we contribute to solving the climate emergency.

1.1.7 *Our Wirral Plan: 2025*³ sets out the Council's ambition for:

- A prosperous, inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations;
- A cleaner, greener Borough which celebrates, protects and improves our environment and urgently tackles the environmental emergency;
- Brighter futures for our young people and families – regardless of their background or where they live;
- Safe, vibrant communities where people want to live and raise their families; and
- Services which help people live happy, healthy, independent and active lives, with public services there to support them when they need it.

1.1.8 This Local Plan will seek to achieve this ambition by creating opportunities for the Borough to grow, and to achieve a higher quality of living for our residents. The Council will do this by achieving urban regeneration, delivering a sufficient amount of development to meet our needs for new homes and jobs based on brownfield land first, and supporting low carbon and sustainable lifestyles for everyone.

³ The Wirral 2025 Plan is a separate document which sets out corporate priorities for service delivery.

Figure 1.1: Wirral Context

Figure 1.1 Wirral Context

1.2 Purpose of this document

- 1.2.1 Producing a Local Plan is one of the most important obligations for a local authority. Local Plans set out a long-term vision for how an area will develop in the future, with policies that will shape future development. They address a wide range of issues, from strategic planning matters that affect the whole local authority area right through to finer details on the design of development on individual sites. The Government requires each local planning authority to produce a Local Plan and then review it at least once every five years to ensure that it is up to date.
- 1.2.2 The Wirral Local Plan will cover a period from 2020 through to 2035 and set out policies and proposals to guide the future development of the Borough over that time. It will set out where future development will take place, and allocate land for housing, employment, mixed-use and other development. It will also seek to protect the most important

characteristics of the Borough, by preserving our unique natural and historical assets from development.

- 1.2.3 In preparing the new Local Plan the Council must consult with local residents to seek their views on the proposed contents of the Plan. This Local Plan Issues and Options document sets out those proposals and is published for consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012⁴.
- 1.2.4 The details of how to comment are set out in Section 1.7 of this document. We will respond to all the comments submitted during this consultation process.
- 1.2.5 We also need to engage with local and regional partners, such as neighbouring local authorities and government agencies.
- 1.2.6 It is essential that our proposals are based upon evidence about what the economic, social and environmental needs of the Borough are and we have commissioned or updated a number of evidence studies as part of the production of this consultation document. These evidence studies are listed in Appendix 1.
- 1.2.7 This Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document seeks your views on the future direction for development in Wirral. One of the main issues is that we need to deliver enough new homes to meet the nationally prescribed target of 12,000 net new dwellings over the 15-year Local Plan period – equivalent to 800 new homes every year⁵, and 80 hectares of new employment land. These figures have been established through our evidence base.
- 1.2.8 This consultation particularly focuses on potential strategic spatial options that will allow us to deliver our requirements for housing and employment land. We are also seeking your views on a range of proposed and potential strategic housing and employment allocations across the Borough.
- 1.2.9 This consultation document therefore sets out a series of Spatial Options as to how the housing and employment requirements could be met within the Borough. The Council's Preferred Option is for Urban Intensification. Details of this option can be found at Chapter 4. However, due to having

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/767/contents/made>

⁵ This figure is arrived at through a calculation set out in national policy, which adjusts as new information is published while the plan is being prepared; but will be held constant for two years once the final draft Plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State. The current figure of 800 new dwellings per annum is based on data for 2019 and will be adjusted again for the 'Regulation 19' stage when the latest up-to-date information on affordability is published in March 2020. The draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019 anticipates that from 2020 this may be 783 new dwellings per annum.

to meet the evidential requirements for deliverability and developability of our development needs over the plan period it is also necessary for us to consult on a range of other options should we not be able meet all our requirements by Urban Intensification alone. These other options would involve release of land for development which is currently designated as Green Belt.

- 1.2.10 It is important therefore that you express any views you may have on all the potential options set out in this consultation document.

1.3 What Happens Next?

- 1.3.1 The Council will consider all responses received as a result of this consultation process and take them into account in preparing the final draft Local Plan as far as it is possible for us to do so within the confines of national policy and legislation.
- 1.3.2 The final sites that will be allocated for development will be included in the final draft Local Plan. It is expected that the final draft Local Plan will be published, and representations invited (the Regulation 19 stage) in summer 2020. The final draft Local Plan and all representations received will be submitted for Examination by an Independent Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. If the Council considers there is a need for significant changes to the final draft Local Plan as a result of representations made at the Regulation 19 stage it may be necessary to further revise the draft Plan. If this happens a further round of public consultation may be necessary.
- 1.3.3 It should be noted that this Local Plan Issues and Options document does not include the detailed planning policies which will be used to inform decisions on planning applications⁶. This approach is explained in Chapter 9. The detail of the policies will be included in the final draft Local Plan and representations will be able to be made on these at Regulation 19 stage.

1.4 The Examination in Public

- 1.4.1 An Inspector will be appointed by the Secretary of State to undertake an examination into the 'soundness' of the submitted Plan. You can ask to

⁶ With the exception of a draft policy setting out the Council's preferred policy approach for Homes in Multiple Occupation as set out in Chapter 5.

attend the Examination during the Regulation 19 Stage, but it will be up to the Inspector to agree.

- 1.4.2 The examination process will consider whether the document is ‘sound’, as set out in paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF), which requires the Plan to be;
- positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs; and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
 - justified – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
 - effective – deliverable over the plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
 - consistent with national policy – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.
- 1.4.3 The following options are available to an Inspector when submitting their Report to the Council:
- the Inspector can find that the plan is sound and legally compliant as submitted: in these circumstances the Inspector must recommend that the plan is adopted; or
 - the Inspector can find that the plan is unsound and/or legally non-compliant as submitted, but that it is possible to make it sound and legally compliant by making main modifications to it. In these circumstances the Inspector must recommend the necessary main modifications, if requested to do so by the Council. The main modifications must relate directly to the reasons why the Inspector has found the plan unsound or legally non-compliant. Any main modifications will be published for further representations to be made; or
 - the Inspector can find the plan unsound and / or legally non-compliant as submitted, and that it is not possible to make it sound and legally compliant by making main modifications to it. In these circumstances the Inspector must recommend non-adoption of the plan.
- 1.4.4 Once the Council receives the Inspector’s final Report recommending adoption the Council will then formally adopt the Plan.

1.5 The Existing Local Plan for Wirral

- 1.5.1 The statutory Development Plan for the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral currently comprises the 'saved' policies in the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral (UDP), adopted by the Council in February 2000 and the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton, adopted in July 2013; together with Neighbourhood Development Plans for Devonshire Park and Hoylake.
- 1.5.2 In replacing the UDP, the Council originally proposed a two-stage process of Local Plan preparation, initially focused on the preparation of a Core Strategy Local Plan (containing mainly strategic policies, which would only partially replace the Unitary Development Plan) followed by a second stage to produce a site-specific Land Allocations and a Heritage Local Plan. The Council consulted on a Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy Local Plan in December 2012.
- 1.5.3 However, the Council now intends to produce a single Wirral Local Plan, which will replace the Unitary Development Plan in its entirety. The Wirral Local Plan will include detailed policies including site allocations and development management policies, and a Policies Map to replace the Unitary Development Plan Proposals Map.
- 1.5.4 Public consultation previously took place on a Development Options Review between 3rd September and 26th October 2018. The consultation drew 3,221 responses from 2,989 individual respondents. A report setting out the background and results of the consultation along with three volumes of consultation responses was published on the Council's web site at the end of February 2019 (see section 2.2) The comments submitted to the Development Options Review have been taken into account in producing this Regulation 18 document.
- 1.5.5 The Development Plan for Wirral will comprise the following documents:
- The Wirral Local Plan and Policies Map;
 - The Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton, adopted in July 2013;
 - The Spatial Development Strategy for the Liverpool City Region (to be produced by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, for which initial consultation began in October 2019⁷); and
 - Neighbourhood Planning documents, including Neighbourhood Development Plans, prepared by the local community.

⁷ <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/metro-mayor-launches-consultation-to-shape-future-development-of-the-liverpool-city-region/>

1.6 Policy and Legal Requirements

- 1.6.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012⁸ sets out the requirements for local authorities for producing and consulting on their Local Plan. There are various stages in the production of a Local Plan and Wirral Council is now at the “Regulation 18” stage, which is the formal public consultation stage on the issues and options. This provides the community and other stakeholders with an opportunity to shape the final contents of the Local Plan based on the current evidence that has been gathered by the Council.
- 1.6.2 The following paragraphs provide a brief summary of the formal requirements associated with Local Plan making.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 1.6.3 The NPPF sets out the framework for the preparation of a Local Plan. It ensures that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and that plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area.
- 1.6.4 Paragraph 16 of the NPPF 2019 states that Plans should be prepared positively, with the objective of contributing to sustainable development in a deliverable manner. Plans need to be shaped by early and effective engagement between all stakeholders. Therefore, the Plan needs to be accessible to all, with a clear purpose and policies which are unambiguous to support decision making.
- 1.6.5 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF 2019 states that Plans must include strategic policies to address each local planning authority’s priorities for the development and use of land in the area.
- 1.6.6 Both strategic and non-strategic policies should be included in local plans. Strategic policies should set out the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development making provision for housing; infrastructure; community facilities; and conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment.
- 1.6.7 Each chapter in this document includes more detailed references to the NPPF in respect of their specific content.

⁸ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/767/contents/made>

Duty to Cooperate (DtC)

- 1.6.8 Section 33A of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004⁹ seeks to maximise effective working on strategic issues by requiring the Council *"...to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis..."* with certain prescribed bodies, including neighbouring councils and organisations such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and in the case of the Liverpool City Region, Merseytravel.
- 1.6.9 This "Duty to Cooperate" is a legal requirement which must be addressed in Local Plans, to demonstrate that the emerging plan has also taken account of needs which require a wider level of co-operation over a wider geographical area. For the Liverpool City Region these are currently set out in a Statement of Common Ground¹⁰. A similar Statement is to be agreed with Cheshire West and Chester Council. A separate initial summary of the Council's collaboration with other relevant bodies is published alongside this document.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

- 1.6.10 The preparation of this Local Plan is being informed by a Sustainability Appraisal process which ensures that all aspects of sustainability have been properly considered, in line with Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004¹¹ which requires a local planning authority to carry out a SA for each of the proposals in a plan during its preparation.
- 1.6.11 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) considers the economic, environmental, and social effects of a plan. The SA is undertaken from the start of the preparation of a plan to help ensure decisions lead to sustainable development. In March 2019 we published a draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report¹². This identifies baseline information regarding, economic, social and environmental issues within the Borough which will be used in the main SA process.
- 1.6.12 An Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report (SA)¹³ has been published alongside this Local Plan Issues and Options Document. The SA

⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/section/33A>

¹⁰ <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=4549>

¹¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/section/19>

¹²

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/planning%20and%20building/Local%20plans%20and%20planning%20policy/Local%20plans/Core%20strategy%20local%20plan/Sustainability%20Appraisal/Wirral%20Local%20Plan%20Sustainability%20Appraisal%20Scoping%20Report%20March%202019.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-3>

assesses the proposals of this document against the Sustainability Appraisal objectives set out in the Scoping Report.

Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)

- 1.6.13 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017¹⁴ (as amended) and the Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017¹⁵ (as amended) require local authorities to undertake assessment of the implications of their plans for internationally important wildlife sites. Internationally important wildlife sites are Special Areas of Conservation (sites designated for habitats and species other than birds), Special Protection Areas (sites designated for birds) and Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance). There are a number of these sites along the entirety of the Wirral coastline. This process is often called Habitats Regulations Assessment and consists of two key elements, an initial Assessment of Likely Significant Effects and an Appropriate Assessment, if there is a need to progress to an investigation of adverse effects on integrity.
- 1.6.14 An Interim Habitats Regulations Assessment¹⁶ for this Local Plan is published alongside this document. This involves a screening Assessment of Likely Significant Effects (ALSE) of the emerging Local Plan on internationally important wildlife sites and identifies the potential implications of the plan options and highlights potential solutions as a basis for discussion with stakeholders, including Natural England, in advance of preparation of the full draft Local Plan. A full Appropriate Assessment will be undertaken on the final Draft Local Plan.

1.7 How do we Consult?

- 1.7.1 A series of walk-in exhibitions have been arranged in different venues across the Borough which members of the community are encouraged to attend (Details are available through the Local Plan Consultation web page <https://wirral-consult.objective.co.uk>). A number of focus groups

¹⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made>

¹⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1013/contents/made>

¹⁶ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-3>

have also been arranged to discuss the various options for housing and employment land allocation set out in this document.

1.8 Making your Views Known

1.8.1 We want to know your views.

1.8.2 This Wirral Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document is available for comment between Monday 27th January 2020 and Monday 23rd March 2020 – a period of eight weeks.

1.8.3 We are particularly interested to hear views on the options for our future development strategy and would also welcome views on other parts of the document as we move towards the finalisation of our new Local Plan.

1.8.4 Copies of this consultation document are available for viewing and inspection using any of the following options:

- Through the Council's Local Plan web page¹⁷;
- Through the Council's Consultation Portal: <https://wirral-consult.objective.co.uk>;
- Wallasey Town Hall (Monday to Friday between 9:00 and 17:00): www.wirral.gov.uk/about-council/contact-us/council-offices; and
- Public Libraries across Wirral (during their normal opening hours): www.wirral.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/find-library.

Interim Sustainability Appraisal and Interim Habitat Regulations Assessment

1.8.5 Copies of the Interim Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Interim Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) can be viewed and downloaded through

¹⁷ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy>

the Council's Local Plan webpage: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy>

- 1.8.6 They will also be available for viewing and inspection at the locations specified in 1.8.4.
- 1.8.7 You can also comment on the SA and HRA through the Council's online consultation portal: <https://wirral-consult.objective.co.uk>

Evidence studies

- 1.8.8 Copies of the evidence studies can be viewed and downloaded using the Council's Local Plan webpage: <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy>
- 1.8.9 You can also comment on any of the evidence studies through the Council's online consultation portal: <https://wirral-consult.objective.co.uk>;

How to comment on the Local Plan Issues and Options Document

- 1.8.10 Throughout the document we have set out a series of specific questions which address key issues, options and site proposals. These questions are set out throughout the document in the coloured boxes. You can make your views known through responding to these questions or, if you do not think the questions allow you to give your views, you can use Chapter 10 to make your own additional comments.
- 1.8.11 To make comments on the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document you should use the Council's new online consultation portal: <https://wirral-consult.objective.co.uk>. A user guide is available on the webpage and you will need to register and provide your name and contact details if you want to make comments. Your comments will be published online but your name and details will not be shown.
- 1.8.12 If you are unable to use the Council's online portal you can request a separate questionnaire via email or telephone.
- 1.8.13 If you use the questionnaire to make comments please send to:
- Forward Planning Team, Wallasey Town Hall, Wirral, CH44 8ED; or
 - email: localplan@wirral.gov.uk,

Comments must be received by the Council, in writing, no later than 5pm on Monday 23rd March 2020.

1.9 Document Structure

- 1.9.1 This document is broadly split into three parts, set across a number of chapters. It aims to provide an overview of the challenges and requirements which the Council is faced with in preparing for the Local Plan. It then goes on to set out how we currently propose to respond to those challenges in preparing the Local Plan.

Part One – Introduction and Context

- This Chapter explains the background and purpose of the Local Plan and of this consultation.
- Chapter 2, Context and Evidence, sets out our understanding of the context with regards to the preparation of the Local Plan. It considers the responses we received to the 2018 Development Options Review consultation and our key challenges and opportunities, before setting out the evidence we have collected around a number of different topics and summarising the associated implications for the Local Plan.
- Chapter 3 sets out the challenges and opportunities within Wirral with our proposed vision and objectives for future development in Wirral

Part Two – Local Plan Strategic Issues and Options

- Chapter 4 sets out the Spatial Options for the delivery of our development needs.

Part Three – Local Plan Topic Based Issues and Options

- Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 set out our current issues, options and proposals across the key themes of Our Homes, Our Economy, Our Social and Physical Infrastructure and Our Environment respectively.
- Chapter 9 explains the proposed list of policies that are currently expected to be included in the Regulation 19 stage of the Local Plan
- Chapter 10 addresses any other comments and questions and
- Chapter 11 sets out the Next Steps in the Wirral Local Plan process.

- 1.9.2 Appendices at the end of the document (numbered with reference to the relevant chapter) set out the following information:

- 1.1 List of Evidence Base Studies
- 2.1 Strategic Sites
- 4.1 Proposed Urban Housing Allocation Sites
- 4.2 Potential Additional Urban Housing Allocation Sites
- 4.3 Other Suitable but Currently Uncertain Sites

- 4.4 Current and Future Housing Land Supply
- 4.5 Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)
- 4.6 Proposed Urban Employment Allocations
- 4.7 Interim Green Belt Site Assessment
- 5.1 Draft Housing in Multiple Occupation Policy
- 8.1 Open Space Sites to be Protected
- 9.1 List of Detailed Development Management Policies to be included in the Draft Final Local Plan

Preferred Approach Boxes

Throughout the document, there are orange coloured boxes like this, to indicate our proposed preferred, and /or alternative, approaches to a variety of topics within the Local Plan.

Questions Boxes

Throughout the document, there are green coloured boxes like this, to indicate numbered questions which we would like your views on. These questions will relate to the text directly above the box. In order to enable us to efficiently manage and review all the comments received we would be grateful if you could be as concise as possible.

There is a word limit of 500 words for each response, but you can upload other supporting information, if you need to.

Where you do upload supporting information please ensure that the comment you submit to each question summarises the main points made and references the questions number.

This is particularly important for agents and consultants to note, as your summary is likely to be used to represent yours or your client's position in future reports.

Key Aspect Boxes

Throughout the document, there are also blue boxes like this, to indicate a key aspect of a Chapter and the Local Plan.

2 Context and Evidence

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 In order to deliver the aspirations of the Local Plan, it is important to review the work undertaken to date, bring this up to date with new research where necessary, develop a robust understanding of the issues facing Wirral and consider more fully the potential options to address them through the Local Plan.
- 2.1.2 The most significant areas of research and evidence gathering that have been undertaken enable us to understand demands placed upon us, and how we can appropriately accommodate this demand are set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.1.3 The demand for land to build on in Wirral primarily relates to housing and employment. Retail demand can also place significant demands on land, but our research has shown that for the plan period, demand is relatively small scale and can be accommodated within existing and proposed centres and developments.
- 2.1.4 The demand for land needs to be balanced with other constraints, including Green Belt and wildlife, landscape, heritage and environmental designations. This balance is considered throughout the subsequent sections of this document, through seeking to maximise the potential of existing urban areas.
- 2.1.5 This section of the document explains this context and covers the following;
- public and stakeholder feedback from the Development Options Review in 2018;
 - our current understanding of our housing needs;
 - our current understanding of our economic development needs;
 - how we can ensure the most appropriate use of land through control of development density, while preserving local character;
 - issues relating to the viability of development in Wirral;
 - outcomes from a re-visiting of the review of the Green Belt; and
 - an overview of our overall development needs and pressures and key messages to be taken forward.

2.2 What you told us during the Development Options Review Consultation

2.2.1 Previous public consultation on a review of Development Options was undertaken between 3rd September and 26th October 2018. It was based upon a recognition that there may be an insufficient amount of land available within Wirral's existing urban areas to meet our identified needs for new homes and new jobs within the next fifteen years and beyond. Consultation took place on four categories of potential new development sites:

- proposed housing allocations: sites within the Borough's existing urban areas which had been assessed within the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and concluded to be potentially suitable for the delivery of new homes;
- proposed employment allocations: sites within the Borough's existing urban areas which had been assessed within the Council's Employment Land and Premises Studies and concluded to be suitable for the delivery of new employment floorspace and jobs;
- proposed mixed-use allocations: sites within the Borough's existing urban areas which had been assessed within either the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment or Employment Land Studies and concluded to be suitable for the delivery of a mix of new homes and commercial floorspace, for example, including sites in or around existing town centres where some new homes could be provided above or alongside new retail or employment floorspace; and
- Green Belt sites for further investigation: sites currently located within the Borough's Green Belt, which were identified for further investigation to help meet any shortfall in available land within existing urban areas.

2.2.2 A total of just over 3,200 responses to the previous Development Options Review Consultation were received. The majority of these were from Wirral residents and a number were also received from local interest groups, technical consultees, neighbouring local authorities and prospective developers. This resulted in a wide array of issues being raised by respondents – a number were supportive of the approach taken by the Council, but many others expressed serious concerns. Some of the key points raised were as follows:

- fundamental objections to the principle of removing land from the Green Belt for development (although a number of comments also supported the necessity of releasing land from the Green Belt to allow Wirral's development needs to be met);
- if new development in the Green Belt is required, the delivery of a single new settlement should be considered rather than a large number of smaller sites;

- the development of brownfield land should be the first priority, with greater emphasis placed on the delivery of major redevelopment at Wirral Waters in particular;
- large numbers of empty homes were not being utilised, which should be brought back into use rather than building new homes;
- the housing targets for Wirral are over-estimated and unnecessarily high – fewer new homes should be built;
- certain areas of Wirral should be protected from new development and should not be required to provide affordable housing (although a number of comments considered that an insufficient amount of new affordable housing was being proposed);
- concern that housing developers were motivated by profit, and not by putting the best interests of the Borough first;
- concern that the health and wellbeing of residents is not being adequately considered by the Council;
- concern that development being proposed would exacerbate the climate emergency and increase CO2 emissions; and
- fundamental constraints in Wirral's infrastructure networks, making it difficult or impossible to accommodate new development.

2.2.3 A wide range of comments were also raised about the merits of individual sites and the estimated development capacity of each. These included concerns around infrastructure capacity close to certain sites and impacts that development would have on issues such as character, wildlife, flood risk and noise in and around certain sites.

2.2.4 We have considered all the comments we received and have set out a summary of our responses to them in our Statement of Response to the Development Options Review¹⁸. Because of our need to balance competing interests and address the requirements set out in the National Planning Policy Framework we know that we will not have been able to satisfy every respondent. However, we have tried to reflect and respond to the comments received in this Regulation 18 document wherever possible.

¹⁸ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-3>

2.3 Housing Needs

What is required of us?

- 2.3.1 One of the most important tasks for the new Local Plan will be to provide for the appropriate number of homes to meet our needs. This is a key component of our vision to ensure that we will overcome any inequalities across the Borough and create sustainable communities and align with the Strategic Objectives set out in Section 3.4 of this document.
- 2.3.2 In order for our Local Plan to be found sound, when it is examined by the independent Inspector at the Examination in Public, it needs to comply with paragraph 35 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This requires the Council to *“provide a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet the area’s objectively assessed needs”*.
- 2.3.3 The importance of housing delivery has been underlined by the ‘Local Plan Intervention’ letter¹⁹ sent to Wirral Council by the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in 2019. This stated that *“Up-to-date plans are essential in providing clarity to communities and developers about where homes should be built and where not, so that development is planned rather than the result of speculative applications”*.
- 2.3.4 The need for all local authorities to have a Local Plan in place is supported by the Government’s 2017 Housing White Paper. This outlined the Government’s view that not enough homes are being built across the country, resulting in a ‘broken housing market’. Whilst the ‘affordability ratio’, the difference between local earnings and house prices is slightly better in Wirral than the national average²⁰, house prices have nevertheless been rising sharply and making local home ownership more and more challenging to achieve²¹.
- 2.3.5 As a result, in April 2019 the Council responded to MHCLG stating that sufficient land will be allocated in the Local Plan to meet the need for housing for the whole of Wirral for the Plan period 2020-2035²². The Local Plan Action Plan, prepared at that time, set out that the Council did not believe that there were any exceptional circumstances that would justify an alternative approach to using the standardised methodology to

¹⁹https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/660232/Letter_Local_Plan_intervention.pdf

²⁰ <https://www.wirralintelligenceservice.org/media/2625/local-insight-wirral-october-profile.pdf>

²¹ The latest analysis is included in the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Wirral 2019

²²<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/planning%20and%20building/Local%20plans%20and%20planning%20policy/Local%20plans/Core%20strategy%20local%20plan/Action%20Plan/Wirral%20Local%20Plan%20Action%20Plan%20-%20April%202019.pdf>

calculate the Borough's housing requirements. Further information is set out below.

What our evidence tells us

- 2.3.6 Paragraph 60 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires Local Plans to be “informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance – unless exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals”.
- 2.3.7 The standard method is a formula-based approach, with three components, set out in the Government's national Planning Practice Guidance²³ as:
- Step 1 – Setting the baseline, using the 2014-based housing projections for England. This should be used to establish the average annual household growth over a 10-year period (i.e. from 2019 through to 2029). In Wirral, in 2019, this equated to 700 households per year.
 - Step 2 – Adjust to take account of housing affordability, using median workplace-based affordability ratios. For Wirral, the current ratio is 6.28. For each 1% the ratio is above 4, the average household growth from Step 1 should be increased by 0.25%. The adjustment factor for Wirral is therefore 1.1425 (i.e. 14.25%) – which when added to average household growth increases the figure to 800 homes per annum.
 - Step 3 – Capping the level of increase. For authorities like Wirral where strategic policies for housing are more than five years old, the adjustment factor in Step 2 should be capped at 40%. However, because the adjustment factor in Wirral is already less than 40%, 800 homes per annum is the Council's established housing requirement.
- 2.3.8 Whilst it is for neighbouring authorities within the Liverpool City Region to justify their own Local Plans and housing targets based upon individual local circumstances, it is helpful to examine the extent to which our target of 800 homes per annum compares to others established through the standard methodology – which is set out in Table 2.1. The table identifies that as a proportion of overall households, growth of 8.2% sits just below the overall level for the city region at 8.7%.

23 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

Table 2.1 Liverpool City Region housing statistics

Local authority	Households (2019)	Notional Annual Household Growth	Notional Housing Target 2020-2035	Housing Target as % of 2019 Households
Halton	55,728	254	3,810	6.8%
Knowsley	63,820	251	3,765	5.9%
Liverpool	221,886	1,624	24,360	11.0%
Sefton	122,323	632	9,480	7.7%
St Helens	79,723	460	6,900	8.7%
Wirral	146,132	800	12,000	8.2%
City Region	689,612	4,021	60,315	8.7%

Implications for the Local Plan

- 2.3.9 On this basis, the Council needs to ensure that the new Local Plan provides for a minimum requirement of 800 net new homes per annum. This equates to a minimum requirement of 12,000 net new homes across the whole 15-year Plan period.
- 2.3.10 The Local Plan must also be able to identify a sufficient supply of housing land to meet local housing need which:
- is **'deliverable'** in the first five years following the adoption of the Local Plan; and
 - is **'developable'** within the subsequent years 6 to 15 following the adoption of the Local Plan
- 2.3.11 The Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework sets out what is meant by being 'deliverable' and 'developable'²⁴:
- **'Deliverable'** sites for housing should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within 5 years.
 - **'Developable'** sites should be in a suitable location for housing development with a reasonable prospect that they will be available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.

²⁴https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf

- 2.3.12 In order to comply with the national Planning Practice Guidance on the calculation of five-year housing land supply, an additional 20% buffer will also need to be applied for the first five years (brought forward from later in the plan period).
- 2.3.13 The 20% buffer is required because the results of the first Housing Delivery Test (HDT) in 2018 showed that the delivery of new homes in Wirral over the previous 3 years was 73%²⁵, below the 85% requirement set by Government (NPPF para 73c and footnote 39) and subsequently results in the need to apply a buffer to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply.
- 2.3.14 As a result, our housing land supply, including the 20% buffer for the first five years of the Plan period would, effectively, need to provide up to 960 homes per annum plus an allowance for demolitions.

Question 2.1

Do you agree with the Council's calculations using the standard method set out in national Guidance²⁶ ? If not, please explain why.

Question 2.2

Do you think there are exceptional local circumstances to deviate from the standard method for calculating local housing need? If you believe there are exceptional local circumstances, please let us know what they are.

Question 2.3

Can you suggest an alternative approach that would also comply with national policy?

25 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/housing-delivery-test-2018-measurement>

26 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

2.4 Settlement Hierarchy

Proposed Settlement Hierarchy

- 2.4.1 The overarching strategy for development in the Borough seeks to focus development within the existing urban area, as the Council believes that this will best support and provide for the most sustainable patterns of development.
- 2.4.2 This strategy in particular is focused on the two strategic development opportunities of Birkenhead, its immediate hinterland and Wirral Waters, a multi-billion pound private sector-led regeneration investment at the heart of the older urban area within the historic Birkenhead and Wallasey docklands. Both will be the prime focus for the majority of new development and public investment in the Borough across the whole of the Plan period and lie at the heart of the top tier of the Borough's settlement hierarchy, the Urban Conurbation²⁷.
- 2.4.3 The importance of this focus, which also mirrors the pattern of physical, social, economic and environmental disparity within the Borough, has been reinforced by a more recent review of facilities and services including infrastructure, post offices, supermarket and other retail provision, community facilities, places of worship, leisure facilities, schools, doctor's surgeries and bus and train accessibility.
- 2.4.4 The review underlines the importance of embedding the continued regeneration of the Urban Conurbation, in the area to the east of the M53 Motorway within the Local Plan. This should seek to focus development and public, voluntary and private sector investment towards the areas in greatest need of physical, social, economic and environmental renewal, which also function as the areas of greatest importance to future social and economic well-being, in terms of their position within the Borough's settlement hierarchy.
- 2.4.5 This pro-active, regeneration-focused, policy-led approach will also need to be strongly reflected within policies for increasing development densities to maximise viability, and to ensure the most appropriate patterns of sustainable development across the Borough. This will, in particular, make the most effective use of vacant and underused brownfield land in line with the priorities in national policy.

²⁷ This area has been the focus of long-term public and private sector investment over a number of years, including the former Inner Area Programme, the designation of the Merseyside Development Corporation, the City Challenge Initiative, Single Regeneration Budget, European Structural Funds, Housing Market Renewal and Growth Point funding and was the focus for regeneration and investment in the Secretary of State's former Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021

- 2.4.6 Although to some extent it is mirrored and reinforced by the settlement hierarchy, the approach to town centres and the retail hierarchy is considered separately in Section 6.3 of this document, which defines the Borough's retail centres in accordance with specific retail-based priorities set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2.4.7 In the Council's view the hierarchy set out below (Table 2.2) best reflects the existing role and function of each the Borough's main settlement areas, by identifying a single major urban area to the east of the M53 Motorway and by taking account of the difference between this area and the more commuter-based urban settlements to the west of the M53.
- 2.4.8 The Council believes that this approach will also allow the wider strategic importance of the larger urban area on the opposite bank of the river to Liverpool to be more fully recognised, alongside the more secondary role of the urban settlements to the west. This will allow the Borough to contribute positively to the wider vision to promote economic and social growth and revitalisation at the heart of the City Region.

Our Preferred Approach

Our preferred option is to use the settlement hierarchy set out in Table 2.2, to form the overarching basis of future planning policy. This will:

- **encourage increased development and public and private sector investment within the 'Urban Conurbation' as the first priority of the Local Plan before the provision of supporting development; and**
- **meet locally identified needs, within the remaining surrounding urban settlements, large and small villages and then the single hamlet.**

This focused priority will cover all development types including retailing and the provision of public services and will guide the Local Plan's approach to site selection and the prioritisation of investment.

- 2.4.9 For the avoidance of doubt, the 'Urban Conurbation' is equivalent to the Settlement Areas 1-4 identified in the Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy published for public consultation in December 2012 and the 'Urban Settlements' to Settlement Areas 5-7 in the Proposed Draft Submission Core Strategy, as many of the Council's monitoring and data collection and evidence base documents still refer to this previous geography.

Table 2.2 Settlement Hierarchy

Hierarchy	Township
Urban Conurbation (previously identified as Settlement Areas 1-4)	Bidston, Birkenhead, Bebington, Beechwood, Bromborough, Bromborough Pool, Claughton, Eastham, Egremont, Liscard, Mountwood, New Brighton, New Ferry, Noctorum, Oxton, Port Sunlight, Poulton, Prenton, Raby Mere, Rock Ferry, Rock Park, Seacombe, Spital, Tranmere, Wallasey Village
Urban Settlement (previously identified as Settlement Areas 5-7)	Urban Barnston, Caldy, Gayton, Greasby, Heswall, Hoylake, Irby, Leasowe, Meols, Moreton, Newton, Pensby, Thingwall, Upton West Kirby, Woodchurch
Large Village (previously identified as Settlement Area 8)	Thornton Hough
Small Village (previously identified as Settlement Area 8)	Barnston Village, Brimstage, Frankby, Raby, Saughall Massie, Storeton, Thurstaston
Hamlet (previously identified as Settlement Area 8)	Landican

Question 2.4

Do you agree with the proposed settlement hierarchy set out in Table 2.2 and an approach based towards focusing investment and regeneration toward the Urban Conurbation to the east of the M53 Motorway? If not, what alternative approach would you consider and why?

Question 2.5

Do you agree with the settlement definitions and groupings, and if not, what changes would you wish to see and why?

2.5 Economic Needs

What is required of us?

- 2.5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future (NPPF paragraph 80 refers). NPPF paragraph 81 states that “*planning policies should:*
- a) *set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;*
 - b) *set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;*
 - c) *seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and*
 - d) *be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.”*
- 2.5.2 To achieve this, plan-making bodies should take a proactive role in identifying and helping to bring forward land that may be suitable for meeting development needs, using the full range of powers available to them (NPPF paragraph 119 refers).
- 2.5.3 In Wirral’s context, the Borough’s unique geography and strategic connectivity should continue to be used to support port-related development and to create opportunities to strengthen the wider functional economic market area, particularly through its extensive passenger rail and cross-river road network and proximity to Chester and North Wales.
- 2.5.4 To support this, National Planning Practice Guidance for housing and economic needs assessments²⁸ states that a robust evidence base must

28 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments>

be prepared to understand business needs and analyse current market demand, to develop an idea of future employment needs.

What our evidence tells us

- 2.5.5 Like many older urban areas, over the last 30 years Wirral has seen a decline in traditional local industries. Targeted regeneration of key growth sectors and sites is therefore critical for the continued economic prosperity of the Borough over the coming plan period.
- 2.5.6 Evidence from the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA) for the City Region (2017) and from the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (WELPS) (2017) outlines the Borough's likely future requirements based on forecasts of future employment and growth and the past take-up of land and identifies the importance of being able to accommodate demand in a way that provides a flexible choice of appropriate opportunities for future development, to allow businesses to develop and create local employment.

Employment Land Need

- 2.5.7 The SHELMA has assessed and identified the quantity of new employment space that would be needed to be accommodated in Wirral, using two main scenarios consistent with forecasts prepared for the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership. The Baseline Scenario identified that up to 6,600 additional FTE jobs could be created in Wirral by 2037, with up to 11,500 FTE jobs created under a Growth Scenario, based on the improved performance of local growth sectors and identified development projects.
- 2.5.8 An additional margin was also added to the labour demand-derived figures to provide some flexibility to allow for existing vacant floorspace; allow for a margin of error in the forecasts; provide a choice of sites to facilitate competition; and to provide flexibility to allow for delays in sites coming forward. This margin was recommended to be based on 5 years completions trend data, which for Wirral was 23 hectares (Ha) (2012-37). The final total land requirements were derived by adding the margin to the outcomes of the baseline and growth scenario forecasts
- 2.5.9 An alternative approach was included, based on projecting forward past gross completions (based on local authority monitoring data) of employment floorspace development for B1, B2, and small scale B8 developments. since 2000. This period was bisected by the 'credit crunch' in 2008, and in their view was representative of a full market cycle. Large scale B8 developments were stripped out. Completions data was recorded in terms of floorspace (sq m) and converted to land area (ha) using consistent plot ratio assumptions from published guidance from the

Homes and Communities Agency. As gross completions data was used, it was not necessary to include provision for a 'margin' for this scenario.

- 2.5.10 Table 2.3 sets out the implications for the accommodation of projected employment growth over the period 2012-2037 based on the Baseline, Growth and Past Completions trend scenarios.

Table 2.3 LCR SHELMA employment land economic forecasts 2012-2037 (Wirral only)

SHELMA	Baseline (ha)		Growth (ha)		Past Completions (ha)		
	B1	B2	B1	B2	B1	B2	Small scale B8
	27.6	29.1	33.8	30.1	26.1	89.0	14.5
	= 56.7		= 63.9		= 129.6		

- 2.5.11 Small scale B8 requirements were not included under the Baseline or Growth scenarios, as the specific need for storage and distribution (B8) uses could not be easily isolated from sector-based employment forecasts and is assumed to be included under main type of business (B1) and general industrial (B2) uses identified²⁹. The potential additional need for sites for large scale B8 logistics use has also been assessed at City Region level but no additional land requirements have so far been identified for Wirral.

- 2.5.12 The WELPS pro-rated the SHELMA calculations for Wirral to a fifteen-year timeframe equivalent to the local plan period (2018-2033 at the time of the WELPS, but now 2020-2035) as shown in Table 2.4 below.

Table 2.4 WELPS SHELMA-derived fifteen year forecast net employment land requirement

Scenario	B1	B2	Small scale B8	Total	Margin	Total+ Margin
Baseline scenario (6,600 FTEs)	13.44	6.78	0	20.22	13.8	34.02
Growth scenario	17.1	7.44	0	24.6	13.8	38.4

²⁹ The classification of B1, B2 and B8 uses are based on the types of business and industrial uses identified in the national Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended)

Past completions	15.66	53.4	8.7	77.76	0	77.76
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2.5.13 The past completions scenario is believed to be the most appropriate scenario to follow, as it is based on past economic development performance within Wirral.

2.5.14 As a sense check the Council has updated the past completions figures to the most recent 5-year time frame to April 2019:

Table 2.5 Employment Completion Figures

Year	B1	B2	Small scale B8	Total Land
2014/15	3.53	3.96	0.36	7.85
2015/16	2.17	1.22	0.28	3.67
2016/17	3.14	2.53	0.02	5.69
2017/18	6.12	0.69	0	6.81
2018/19	0.07	2.28	0.43	2.78
Total	15.03	10.68	1.09	26.8
Annual average	3.006	2.14	0.22	5.36

2.5.15 This would result in revised employment land requirement as follows:

Table 2.6 Employment Land Requirements

Scenario	B1	B2	Small-scale B8	Total land
Past take up rate	45.09 Ha	32.1 Ha	3.3 Ha	80.4 Ha

Implications for the Local Plan

- 2.5.16 Based on the above evidence, there is a need to allocate a minimum of 80 Ha of employment land during the Local Plan period.
- 2.5.17 The Council is seeking to meet its employment needs in the urban area and on brownfield sites. Within the Local Plan, we need to be able to identify a sufficient supply of employment land across the Plan period with a clear economic vision based on a robustly prepared evidence base to be compliant with the NPPF and PPG. Employment land supply is discussed in Chapter 6.

Question 2.6

Do you agree that the Council should calculate the need for employment land based on the Past Completions approach? If not please provide your reasons.

Question 2.7

If the Council were to calculate the need for employment land based on the lower Baseline or Growth scenarios, do you believe that potentially surplus employment land should be re-designated for alternative uses, including, where suitable, new housing development?

2.6 Retail and Leisure Needs

What is required of us?

- 2.6.1 Paragraph 85 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies should allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least 10 years ahead. Meeting anticipated needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses over this period should not be compromised by limited site availability, so town centre boundaries should be kept under review where necessary.

What our evidence tells us

- 2.6.2 The Wirral Retail and Centres Study 2019 prepared by consultants WYG provides an up-to-date objective assessment of retail and leisure development needs in the Borough, together with a clear understanding of retail and leisure provision and potential strategic responses/recommendations. The study is underpinned by a new household survey of 1,100 Wirral households. For the purposes of the

survey the Borough was divided into 11 zones which are based on postcode areas grouped around one or more of the existing town centres.

Capacity for Additional Convenience Goods floorspace

- 2.6.3 Convenience shopping is on food and everyday items. The 2019 study concludes that, by 2029 (the minimum timeframe identified by the NPPF when allocating sites), after commitments, there will be no need/capacity for additional convenience floorspace in Birkenhead, primarily due to convenience goods stores in Birkenhead under- trading. The findings suggest that there is an over-provision of convenience goods facilities in the town.
- 2.6.4 In contrast to Birkenhead, existing convenience goods stores in West Kirby are assessed to be over- trading with floorspace capacity of some 1,300sq m net identified over the next 10 years.
- 2.6.5 There is also identified to be some capacity, albeit limited, for additional convenience goods floorspace in the other three towns of Liscard, Heswall and Moreton.
- 2.6.6 There is also assessed capacity for additional convenience floorspace in the three district centres in Wirral. For Woodchurch Road (Prenton), primarily due to both the Sainsbury's and Aldi stores overtrading, there is assessed to potential capacity for an additional convenience goods facility. Lower levels of floorspace capacity are identified for the other two district centres of Bromborough Village and Hoylake (less than 500sq m net).

Capacity for Additional Comparison Goods Floorspace

- 2.6.7 In relation to comparison (non-food) goods, the 2019 assessment identifies that as the main comparison goods retail destination in Wirral, Birkenhead, after commitments/planning permissions, is assessed to have the greatest level of floorspace requirements by 2029 (1,100sq m net). This requirement is assessed to increase to some 5,600sq m net by 2034.
- 2.6.8 In terms of the other town centres in Wirral, only limited comparison goods capacity is identified in each over the next 10 years (less than 300sq m net). In the longer term (end of plan period), Liscard is has been assessed to see the largest level of capacity (1,200sq m net) whilst the other towns were assessed to have capacity of less than 800sq m net.

- 2.6.9 Turning to the district centres, there is only very limited capacity identified in both the next 10 years and plan period. However, comparison goods capacity in Bromborough Village at the end of the plan period is anticipated to be circa 800sqm net.

Commercial Leisure and Cultural Activities

- 2.6.10 The Wirral Retail and Town Centre Study 2019 includes a detailed assessment of the commercial leisure needs undertaken for the centres across Wirral. The assessments use data gathered from the household survey to understand how leisure facilities in Wirral currently meet the needs of the population. The results from this, coupled with the use of national statistics in respect of the typical level of provision for specific types of leisure facilities, and reference to estimated increases in the Study Area population were used to inform judgements in respect of the likely future needs.
- 2.6.11 Whilst a low proportion of respondents to the household survey wanted to see a new gym facility in their local area, the forecast and outstanding operator requirements indicate that Wirral could potentially accommodate 1-2 additional indoor health & fitness facilities over the next 10 years. We assess that this need should be directed to Birkenhead.
- 2.6.12 When looking at cinema needs across Wirral, it is considered that the existing provision largely meets the needs of the current population. Large facilities already exist in Birkenhead Town Centre, at New Brighton and at the Croft Retail Park, and there is also an additional smaller bespoke drive-in facility in Birkenhead. Given that a new 2-screen cinema has recently been approved as part of the Beacon Arts Village development in Hoylake, the study concluded that there was not a requirement for any additional new cinema facilities in Wirral in the next 10 years.
- 2.6.13 For ten-pin bowling, the Study identifies that there are 2 facilities in Wirral that adequately meet the requirements of the population. Accordingly, the study concluded that it was not necessary to plan for a new facility in the Borough at this time but should proposals for such a development come forward it should be judged on its own merits in accordance with town centre policies at the time of submission.

- 2.6.14 In terms of arts and cultural facilities, the Study identifies that existing provision across Wirral is of a scale appropriate to the size of the Borough and its proximity to the major cultural centre of Liverpool. Consideration should be given to ways of further promoting and improving the marketing of existing facilities and any future proposals for arts and/or cultural development be assessed on its own merit.

Summary of needs for town centre uses

- 2.6.15 The overall quantitative needs to 2029 (the minimum timeframe identified by the National Planning Policy Framework when allocating sites) for retail and commercial leisure for the Borough's Town and District centres is summarised below in Table 2.7 below:

Table 2.7: Quantitative Capacity Summary (to 2029)

Centre	Convenience Goods (sq m net)	Comparison Goods (sq m net)	Health & Fitness (no.)	Cinema Screens (no.)	Bingo (no.)	Tenpin Bowling (no.)
Birkenhead	nil	1,100	1-2	Nil	Nil	Nil
Liscard	300	300	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Heswall	600	200	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Moreton	700	100	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
West Kirby	1,300	100	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Bromborough Village	300	200	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Hoylake	500	30	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Woodchurch Road	1,600	100	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

2.7 Increasing Residential Development Density

What is required of us?

- 2.7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places a strong emphasis on achieving appropriate densities and making efficient use of land (NPPF paragraphs 122 and 123 refer). Ensuring that optimal use is made of available land is particularly relevant when there is an existing or anticipated shortage of land for meeting identified housing needs. This should include the use of minimum density standards for city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport and the use of minimum density standards should also be considered for other parts of the plan area.
- 2.7.2 The NPPF also refers to achieving the efficient use of land and the importance of creating safe inclusive places which promote health and well-being whilst securing high standards of design and amenity for existing and future users. NPPF paragraphs 28 and 127 indicate that non-strategic policies should be used to set locally relevant design policies, which are sympathetic to local character and history, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change and establish or maintain a strong sense of place.
- 2.7.3 The National Design Guide³⁰ also provides guidance on how density should respond to its context, placing particular emphasis on accessibility, proposed building types and local character and walkability and access to services are encouraged through the design of compact forms of development citing an 800m radius (10 minute walk) as an appropriate walking distance to local facilities.

What our evidence tells us

- 2.7.4 In addition to re-considering our housing and employment land supply, to ensure that we are maximising the potential of our urban and brownfield land supply we have commissioned a new study of development density, to ensure that we can support the most sustainable patterns of development and maximise the potential of the most appropriate areas for development across Wirral. The study will identify the most appropriate broad locations for increasing density, by focusing higher density development around locations where sustainable travel, such as walking, cycling and public transport can most easily be supported.

³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide>

- 2.7.5 The outcome of the density study will be a recommendation on how and where higher urban densities will be allowed across the Borough and how policy should be formulated to ensure that an appropriate design-led approach is secured. This will be reflected in more detail as the Local Plan progresses towards Regulation 19.

Implications for the Local Plan

- 2.7.6 The Council's policies already allow higher density development to be permitted in areas within an easy walking distance of a high frequency public transport service, in and around existing centres and to support viability in areas of greatest need of physical, social, economic or environmental regeneration, subject to the impact on character and local amenity³¹. Proposals for lower densities have, however, not yet been actively discouraged or refused.
- 2.7.7 A new approach, based on the findings of the density study, could proactively require new development to be built at a higher density and the Council could, in line with national policy, begin to refuse planning applications which they consider fail to make efficient use of land.
- 2.7.8 This approach will ensure that development density is maximised in all settlements in Wirral through appropriately worded policy and that sites coming forward through the planning application process are therefore required to fully address its requirements to ensure the best and most effective use of suitable urban land.

Question 2.8

Do you agree that densities should be increased whilst maintaining good design to ensure the maximum use of suitable urban land?

Question 2.9

Are there any particular sites or areas where you believe that this would be most or least appropriate? Please give your reasons.

³¹ Relevant policies were included in the Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy, which was approved by the Council for the purposes of development management in October 2012 and published for public consultation in December 2012 (Policy CS2 and Policy CS43 refer).

2.8 Development Viability

What is required of us?

- 2.8.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that "... planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability." (NPPF paragraph 67 refers).
- 2.8.2 The viability of a site will depend on a range of factors including land remediation costs, building and infrastructure costs, and the costs of any additional local plan policy requirements. These could include affordable housing, education, open space etc, the costs being set against the market value of the development and developer profit expectations. The NPPF (Paragraph 34 refers) also makes it clear that Local Plan policy requirements should not undermine the deliverability of the plan.
- 2.8.3 Sites that are unlikely to be 'deliverable' or 'developable' cannot be included as land allocations in the Local Plan.
- 2.8.4 The NPPF defines a 'deliverable' site as being achievable with a realistic prospect that development will be delivered on the site within 5 years and a 'developable' site as a site which could be viably developed at the point envisaged. The NPPG guidance states that *"a site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that the particular type of development will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site, and the capacity of the developer to complete and let or sell the development over a certain period."*
- 2.8.5 National Planning Practice Guidance does not require every site to be assessed for viability in plan making, suggesting that site typologies can be used. However, it states that in some circumstances more detailed assessment may be necessary for particular areas or key sites critical to delivering the strategic priorities of the plan. This could include, for example, large sites; sites that provide a significant proportion of planned supply; sites that enable or unlock other development sites or sites within priority regeneration areas on which the Council will need to rely, to demonstrate that that the Plan strategy is deliverable.

What our evidence tells us

Residential Developments

- 2.8.6 The 'Wirral Local Plan Economic Viability Study 2018 Update' Report undertook a high-level assessment of development viability and identified that the viability of housing development based on a range of typologies varied geographically across the Borough in four broad Zones (Figure 2.1). Its key findings were that market housing development on brownfield land in the lowest value areas (Zone 1) around Birkenhead is generally not viable without adjustment to the level of developers profit or land price or both. Viability in Zone 2 improves (depending upon density and whether site was greenfield or brownfield) whilst in Zones 3 and 4 Market Housing is generally viable.

Figure 2.1: Viability Zones



Figure 2.1 Development Viability Zones

- Zone 1
- Zone 2
- Zone 3
- Zone 4

2.8.7 The study findings indicate that it may be appropriate to consider introducing differing levels of affordable housing requirements within each geographical zone, to reflect the range of development values and hence viability in each area of the Borough. The study also suggests a test of viability is introduced into the Local Plan’s policy to ensure that development on brownfield sites is not prejudiced due to potential contamination and other abnormal development costs.

Non-Residential Developments

- 2.8.8 The results for the viability testing for the office and industrial uses suggest that employment development is not currently viable on a speculative basis. The study found that existing planning policy obligations do not place such a burden on new employment development so as to prejudice its future delivery. Issues in relation to viability arise because rents and capital values for employment uses are still currently at a relatively low level and in comparison, there is a 'gap' with build costs. Traditionally in recent years this gap has been met by public sector funding support or in the case of mixed-use schemes cross-subsidised by other more viable forms of development.
- 2.8.9 Notwithstanding the above, the study advises that it is likely that office and industrial development will come forward in Wirral in the future motivated by specific circumstances such as an owner occupier wishing to expand or alternatively with the benefit of public sector funding support. The results of the viability testing for retail development show that development of both convenience and comparison retail is generally viable at present.

Implications for the Local Plan

- 2.8.10 The Council are undertaking detailed further work to understand viability issues and thresholds across the Borough on strategic sites and will be undertaking specific consultation with developers and stakeholders on this issue as part of the Regulation 18 consultation.
- 2.8.11 The Council is working with our partners Homes England and the Combined Authority to secure funding to address viability issues and help to accelerate housing delivery on major brownfield sites within the Birkenhead area, supported by an updated regeneration framework for the area.
- 2.8.12 Viability has been considered when assessing potential sites in line with paragraph 67 of the NPPF. It may therefore be unachievable to deliver some of the sites identified as part of the Council's housing land availability study (SHLAA) due to viability considerations, which may not be able to be included as proposed allocations unless viability can be overcome by other means.

- 2.8.13 The latest position, taking account of the findings of the Economic Viability Study, is set out in the proposed land allocations in Appendices 4.1 and 4.2.

Question 2.10

Do you agree with the findings of the Economic Viability Study Baseline Assessment? If not, please give your reasons.

Question 2.11

Are you aware of any other ways that potential gaps in viability could be addressed in the Local Plan, to bring more urban brownfield sites forward for development?

2.9 Delivering Growth Through Regeneration

- 2.9.1 At the heart of the Local Plan Vision and strategy and the key to delivering the Preferred Urban Option is the comprehensive regeneration of Birkenhead. Birkenhead is the largest urban conurbation in the Borough and its town centre forms the sub regional centre in the retail hierarchies, outlined in section 6.3. As is described below there is both a strategic requirement and a strategic opportunity of national significance to realise the regeneration of Birkenhead as an exemplar 'Urban Garden City'.
- 2.9.2 The National Planning Policy Framework supports the delivery of regeneration, stating that policies need to assist in town centre and estate regeneration in addition to recycling direct and urban land. Our Spatial Vision and Objectives focus our local development needs to urban and brownfield areas.

What our evidence tells us

- 2.9.3 There are a range of existing strategies and evidence base which provide the policy context and the supporting justification for the regeneration of Birkenhead.

Wirral Waters Vision Statement and Design & Access Statement (2010)

- 2.9.4 These documents were prepared in support of the outline planning application which was granted planning permission for the Wirral Waters strategic mixed-use development area. The documents set out the Vision for transforming current underused/ vacant dockland into an exemplar world-class mixed-use neighbourhood. Importantly the Vision Statement also emphasises the need to unlock the potential of Wirral waters by complimentary actions to “repopulate” and reconnect Birkenhead through regeneration of several adjoining Partnership neighbourhoods. Essential infrastructure improvements including a mass transit system to connect Wirral Waters and the Partnership Neighbourhoods to the Mersey Rail system each other and Birkenhead Town Centre.

The Integrated Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters (BIRS, 2010)

- 2.9.5 The BIRS provides a framework for the integration of the Wirral Waters proposals with the surrounding residential neighbourhoods and Birkenhead Town Centre. It sets out a vision for Birkenhead, informed by stakeholder engagement and baseline analysis, and provides a spatial framework to demonstrate how physical change and development could potentially help address key economic, social and environmental issues in the area. The BIRS sets out eight thematic principles, which are each supported by a set of objectives to guide future development, regeneration and investment in Birkenhead. The eight thematic principles are:
- Achieving Economic Prosperity;
 - Town Centre Restructuring;
 - Take Advantage of the Waterfront;
 - Enhanced Education and Learning Offer;
 - Health and Well Being;
 - A Sustainable Residential Offer;
 - Places, Spaces and Connections; and
 - Sustainable Future.
- 2.9.6 It provides a series of recommendations including advancing the concept of an education cluster/campus centred around a possible university precinct campus; preparing an integrated masterplan for Birkenhead Town Centre; and developing an East Wirral Transport Study.

A Transport Options and Feasibility Study for East Wirral (2017)

- 2.9.7 This exercise reviewed a range of transport studies completed across Wirral over the past decade in response to the BIRS recommendations and proposed the development of a 'Strategic Transport Framework for East Wirral' in order to identify a priority list of projects to support the regeneration ambitions for East Wirral.

Wirral Strategic Transport Framework (Final Draft July 2019)

- 2.9.8 The Council is in the process of finalising a Strategic Transport Framework, to underpin the Strategic Regeneration Framework and align the development of specific transport packages to the Council's regeneration aspirations. The draft Strategic Transport Framework has identified a number of potential schemes to enable growth in Birkenhead Town Centre, the A41 and Wirral Waters.

Wirral Retail and Centres Study 2019 (draft)

- 2.9.9 Birkenhead town centre is Wirral's sub-regional centre. The Wirral Retail and Town Centre Study 2019 Health Check for Birkenhead concludes that overall, Birkenhead has reasonable levels of viability and vitality, but consider there to be several issues which are of key concern, including poor environmental quality; diversity of uses below average; a lack of other non-retail main town centre uses; vacancy rate more than double the national average in terms of proportion and nearly double the amount of floorspace and proximity to larger centres with a wider national and regional draw.

A41 Feasibility Study (emerging)

- 2.9.10 This transport study seeks to provide an integrated transport plan to support the regeneration proposals across the northern end of the A41/East Wirral Corridor and help the Council to identify which schemes to prioritise for transport investment and business case development.

Wirral Waters Gateways Feasibility Study (emerging)

This transport study looks specifically at the Gateways to Wirral Waters, to identify existing opportunities/barriers at existing junctions and develop options to secure funding for improvements to the transport network.

The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework and Delivery Action Plan Study 2020 (ongoing)

- 2.9.11 Given the range of strategies, some of which are now increasingly dated, the Council commissioned the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework (BRF) and detailed Delivery Action Plans in November 2019 to guide the regeneration of the Central Birkenhead Area over the next 20 years. The BRF (see Figure 2.2) will provide evidence in support of the Local Plan Preferred Urban Option. Key outputs of the study will be:
- a spatial regeneration vision for Birkenhead;
 - Delivery Action Plans for Birkenhead Town Centre and other priority development sites/ areas;
 - transport and infrastructure requirements;
 - evidence for the Local Plan in terms of potential new broad areas for mixed-use regeneration neighbourhoods; and
 - a detailed delivery strategy.

The Future High Streets Fund

- 2.9.12 The Council has been awarded funding to prepare a business case for a bid of up to £25 million for Birkenhead Town Centre. The bid will be closely aligned with the BRF proposals and will be submitted in early 2020.

Birkenhead Town Deal

- 2.9.13 Birkenhead is one of 100 towns selected nationally to work towards a Town Deal as part of Government's £3.6bn Towns Fund to further improve the ability of towns to realise their growth ambitions.
- 2.9.14 The first stage is the development and convening of a Town Deal Board. The second stage is developing a Town Investment Plan for Birkenhead to enable a business case to apply for up to £25m. The Council will establish a Town Board in early 2020 to develop the bid which will be for the wider Birkenhead area.

Strategic Sites

- 2.9.15 Appendix 2.1 sets out details of strategic sites / areas which the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2019 explains could deliver approximately 5,500 new homes over the Local Plan period based on current evidence as set out in Chapter 4 (see Appendix 2.1 for full details).

Table 2.8 Strategic Sites Maximum Dwelling Capacity

Site	Maximum number of dwellings currently identified in SHLAA (2019) to be delivered within plan period 2020 to 2035
Wirral Waters	4,650
Hind Street	580*
Woodside	250*
*Potential significant increase in dwelling capacity to be confirmed through the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework	

- 2.9.16 The Council considers that there is potential for significant increases in dwelling capacity at Hind Street and Woodside, which will be confirmed by the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework.
- 2.9.17 In addition, as described in Chapter 4, the Council have identified a number of Broad Locations for Regeneration Growth which could as part of a comprehensive regeneration programme, deliver significant numbers of new homes during the latter part of the Plan period.

Implications for the Local Plan

- 2.9.18 A significant proportion of the Local Plan housing requirement is expected to be delivered on three currently identified strategic sites as set out above. Appendix 2.1 sets out the current and potential housing delivery trajectories for these sites and the further potential for increased capacity which will be confirmed through ongoing studies.
- 2.9.19 The Council recognises the significant challenges to delivering the scale of regeneration required to meet our housing and employment needs within the existing urban area and is therefore also taking steps to make this ambition a reality by:
- engaging proactively with the Government, Homes England and the Combined Authority to provide additional resources to accelerate brownfield land development and tackle what is a regeneration opportunity of a nationally significant scale;
 - commissioning the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework Study (BRF) in November 2019. The Regeneration of Birkenhead is a key component of the Preferred Urban Intensification Option (as set out in Chapter 4). The BRF is intended to consolidate and update previous studies to set out a new comprehensive spatial, infrastructure and investment framework for Birkenhead which will stimulate demand in the area and improve the confidence and performance of the development market. The BRF will provide essential evidence for the next stage of the Local Plan in terms of the quantum of housing that may be delivered on strategic brownfield sites already identified. It will also provide further detail on the potential capacity of other 'broad Growth Locations' which could be realised during the Local Plan (as set out in Chapter 4);
 - the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework will also take account of the potentially significant funding for project delivery which may become available through successful bids for Future High Streets Fund and the Town Deal, and other sources of funding which may become available from the Combined Authority and Homes England;
 - the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework will explore the concepts of a 'Left Bank- Regeneration Zone' and a 'Birkenhead Urban Garden City' and set out the Council's overall Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead;
 - undertaking organisational change. To enable the Council to play a vital future part in delivering regeneration and creating high quality new places and ensuring housing delivery a new Place Directorate is being created. As part of this reorganisation a new multidisciplinary project delivery team is being established;

- establishing a new Housing Delivery Team to work proactively to identify new housing opportunities and to work with developers to understand and overcome obstacles and accelerate suitable development opportunities; and
- in November 2019 we submitted a bid to the Government to seek funding to undertake works which could lead to the designation of Birkenhead and parts of Seacombe as an Urban Development Corporation (see 2.10 below)

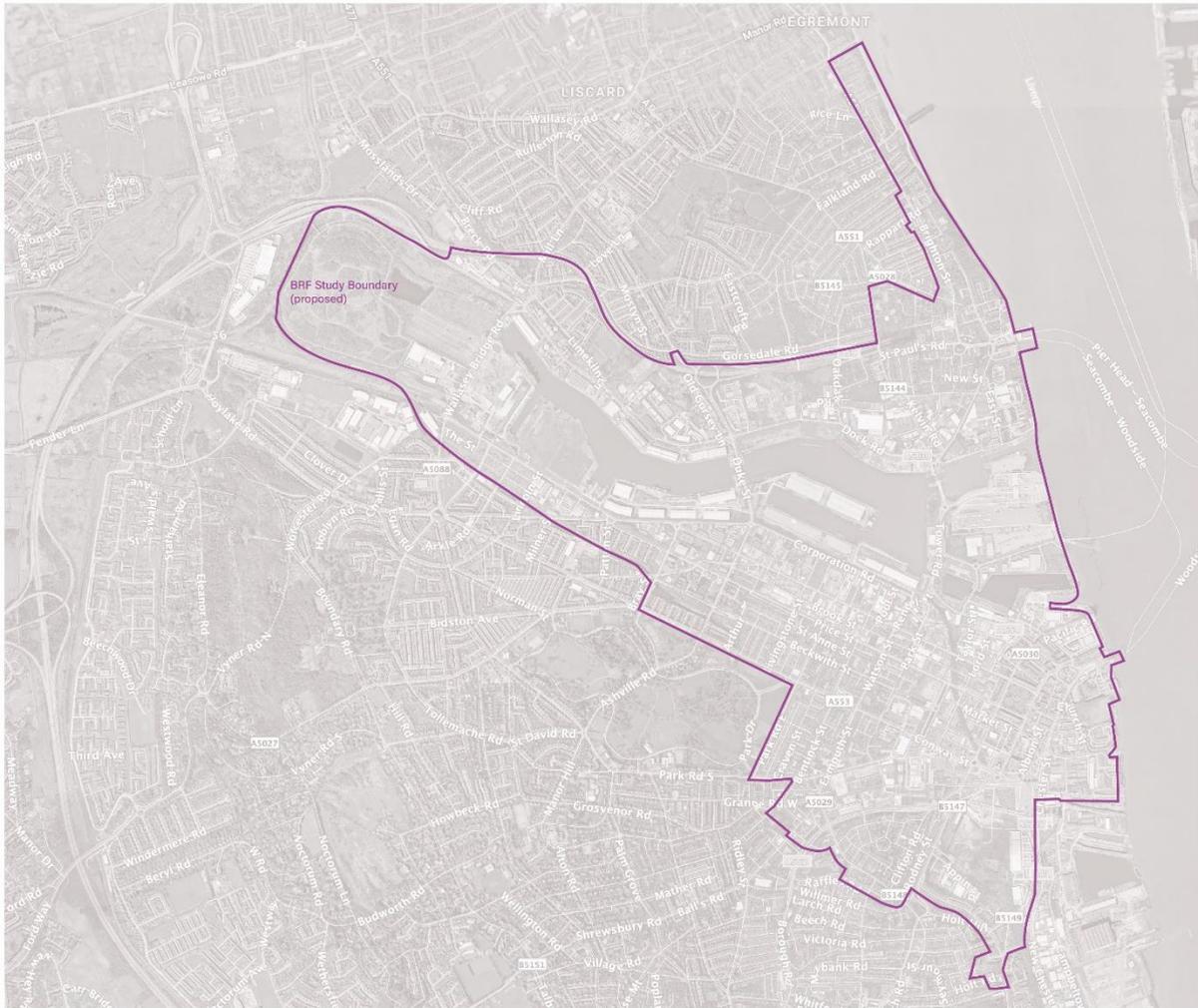
2.9.20 If all these actions come together, then the Council is hoping to be able to adopt the preferred Urban Intensification Option (Option 1A), as set out in Chapter 4 as its spatial strategy in the final draft Local Plan and to deliver all our development needs within urban areas and without Green Belt release.

2.10 Expression of interest for potential Urban Development Corporation Status

- 2.10.1 The growth of Liverpool, our close neighbour across the Mersey, in the past decade has shown what can be achieved by a successful comprehensive programme of regeneration. An ambitious vision and a commitment to deliver has harnessed a range of public sector initiatives to provide the catalyst for private sector investment leading to the transformation of Liverpool City Centre.
- 2.10.2 Faced with the challenges of Climate Change and a need to accommodate growth preferably without impacting on our valuable Green Belt the Council wishes to emulate Liverpool's achievement. Based on our work in preparing the draft Local Plan we recognise that the regeneration opportunities in the eastern part of the Borough are of a national scale and significance. Focussed on Birkenhead, Wirral Waters and the River Corridor between Seacombe and New Brighton the availability of large areas of brownfield land and neighbourhood areas in need of investment and regeneration, together with our rich heritage assets and the attractiveness of waterside development, provide us with an opportunity to deliver our development requirements in a uniquely sustainable way.
- 2.10.3 Our ambition is to develop a regeneration strategy for Birkenhead which will deliver a unique place, perhaps as an 'Urban Garden City'.
- 2.10.4 We appreciate this is a bold ambition but unless we are bold our achievements will be insufficient to meet the challenges that we face with Climate Change and delivering new homes for our current and future population in a sustainable way.

- 2.10.5 The Council will need the support of key partners such as the Government, Combined Authority, Homes England, our development partners Muse, and the private sector including Peel Holdings, to address implementation barriers and accelerate delivery.
- 2.10.6 We will explore this ambition with our partners over the next six months and develop a regeneration strategy which is realistic and achievable to embed into the draft final Local Plan.
- 2.10.7 As part of this exploration the Council submitted an expression of interest to Government for funding in November 2019 to generate proposals for a new business-backed innovative delivery vehicle including a possible Urban Development Corporation model for Birkenhead which recognises the scale of our opportunities and the challenges we face (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 Birkenhead Regeneration Framework Boundary



Our Preferred Approach

The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework (BRF) will provide the overall strategy for the regeneration of the Birkenhead Area and set the spatial and infrastructure context for the delivery of strategic development and investment at:

- **Wirral Waters;**
- **Hind Street;**
- **Birkenhead Town Centre, including the Central Business District; and**
- **Woodside**

Through the BRF and other detailed work relating to strategic sites the Council will seek to maximise the development capacity, and where feasible the accelerated delivery, of strategic sites to be set out in the draft final Local Plan as explained in Appendix 2.1.

The BRF will explore the concepts of a 'Left Bank- Regeneration Zone' and a 'Birkenhead Urban Garden City' and set out the Council's overall Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead.

Masterplans will be prepared for New Brighton and Liscard which will inform the Council's wider Regeneration Strategy for the Borough to be included in the draft final Local Plan.

The Council will work with our strategic partners: the Government, Homes England and the Combined Authority to make available sufficient resources to deliver a comprehensive regeneration strategy for Birkenhead to facilitate the delivery of strategic sites and realise the potential of Broad Locations for Growth.

The Council will work with our strategic partners to establish an appropriate Regeneration delivery model for the scale of regeneration required.

Question 2.12

Do you agree with our proposed approach to enable the positive regeneration and development of Birkenhead to maximise its potential to accommodate a significant proportion of the borough's development needs?

Question 2.13

Do you agree with the preferred approach for delivering the strategic sites/ development areas through the Local Plan as set out in Appendix 2.1?

Question 2.14

Do you support the establishment of a dedicated delivery model for the Regeneration of Birkenhead?

Question 2.15

Do you have any alternative ideas for the regeneration of Birkenhead?

2.11 Green Belt Assessment

What is required of us?

- 2.11.1 The Green Belt boundary is a policy choice that the Council must make, in line with national policy, in its Local Plan. If we cannot clearly demonstrate that we can accommodate all of the Borough's development needs within the urban area, we may need to consider Green Belt land as an option for accommodating some of our development needs.
- 2.11.2 Paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that "Green Belt serves five purposes:
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land."*
- 2.11.3 Paragraph 136 of the NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries "...should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans."
- 2.11.4 Paragraph 137 of the NPPF sets the tests required in order to demonstrate that exceptional circumstances exist – essentially, to fully examine all other reasonable options for meeting identified development needs:
- to make as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
 - to optimise the density of development, including setting out policies which promote an uplift in density in town centres and locations well served by public transport; and
 - to undertake discussions with neighbouring authorities around whether they are able to accommodate any of the identified needs for development.

- 2.11.5 NPPF paragraph 138 states ‘When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account. Strategic policymaking authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. Where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well-served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.’

What our evidence tells us

- 2.11.6 The existing Green Belt boundary in Wirral has been in place since it was formally established in 1983 through the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan. It was last amended in February 2000, to include additional land within the M53 Corridor³².
- 2.11.7 The Council’s Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2019 (SHLAA) sets out the current position, at April 2019, on the potential delivery of suitable urban sites. Appendix 4.1 in this document shows the sites that could currently be allocated for residential development, in line with the Government’s definition of ‘deliverable’ or ‘developable’ land. Further work is ongoing, to see if further urban sites can also be brought to delivery within the Plan period and to optimise the density of development on suitable sites (see Appendix 4.1). Whilst previous consultation has identified that Neighbouring Authorities are not able to accommodate any of Wirral’s needs, under the Duty to Cooperate, these discussions are ongoing to establish whether this is still the case. If all these solutions cannot be shown to be sufficient, land within the Green Belt will need to be released and allocated for development.
- 2.11.8 In September 2018, the Council consulted on a number of sites for further investigation in the Green Belt, as part of a wider Development Options Review. The consultation responses received were many and critical. The Council’s work has now therefore been reviewed and replaced by a new independent study undertaken by specialist consultants during 2019³³.
- 2.11.9 The 2019 Green Belt Review provides an updated methodology and a finer-grained assessment of the existing Green Belt in Wirral. Parcels of land in the Green Belt have been categorised into different groups

³² Unitary Development Plan for Wirral Section 7: Green Belt refers

³³ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-3>

according to their contribution to the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. The findings show that:

- No Green Belt parcels make 'no' overall contribution to the Green Belt and
- 47 Green Belt parcels make a weak overall contribution to the Green Belt; and
- 41 Green Belt parcels make a moderate overall contribution.

2.11.10 The Green Belt Review addresses paragraph 136 of the NPPF, in that if the Council needs to identify any Green Belt sites for release, the Council will need to show there are 'exceptional circumstances' that would justify altering Green Belt boundaries.

Implications for the Local Plan

2.11.11 The Council's preferred option is to identify sufficient 'deliverable' and 'developable' land to meet the Borough's development needs within the existing urban area. If this is not possible, an exceptional circumstances case will need to be set out for development in the Green Belt.

2.11.12 In developing the 'exceptional circumstances' case it will be necessary to look at the need for development and consider whether these needs can be accommodated without incursions into the Green Belt, and should Green Belt development be necessary, to ensure that any impact is minimised.

2.11.13 Lower performing parcels, which currently make a weak overall contribution to the Green Belt, will have the greatest potential (in purely Green Belt terms) to form part of the supply of 'deliverable' or 'developable' sites where exceptional circumstances exist.

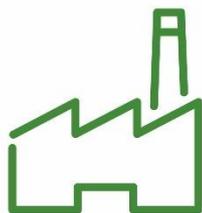
2.11.14 The potential options, taking account of the findings of other relevant studies, are set out in Chapter 4.

Question 2.16

Do you agree with the classification of sites set out within the 2019 Green Belt Review? If not, please state your reasons

2.12 Evidence Base Conclusions

- 2.12.1 This chapter has established the following strategic conclusions and key messages to be taken forward:
- We have to plan for up to 12,000 net new dwellings.
 - We have to plan for up to 80ha of new employment land;
 - We will seek to maximise development densities on sites within the urban area to make the most efficient use of urban land balanced with high standards of development.
 - There are issues with the viability of development in parts of Wirral which will impact on our ability to identify some sites as 'deliverable' or 'developable' within the Plan period.
 - We are continuing to work with neighbouring authorities to establish whether they can accommodate any of Wirral's development needs.
 - The majority of the existing Green Belt makes a moderate or strong contribution to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt but there are areas that currently only make a weak contribution.
 - We will continue to undertake work to ensure that our supply of 'deliverable' and 'developable' urban land has been thoroughly examined before making any decisions regarding the need to take land out of the existing Green Belt. The future of sites that cannot currently be classified as 'deliverable' or 'developable', and the implications for local communities and urban regeneration will also need to be taken into account.



80ha Employment Land



12,000 homes



**Maximise
Development
Densities**



**Working with
Neighbouring
Authorities**



**Viability Concerns
around Deliverability
and Developability**

Question 2.17

Do you agree with our analysis of the key messages from the evidence we have collected so far? If not, please state what you disagree with and why.

3 Our Vision and Objectives for Wirral

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This chapter sets out our ambitions for the way in which Wirral will develop in the future. Its three sections set out in turn:
- Wirral's future challenges and opportunities;
 - Our vision for the future development of the Wirral over the life of the new Local Plan from 2020 to 2035; and
 - The objectives for the Local Plan, which will help us to achieve our vision.

3.2 Future Challenges and Opportunities

- 3.2.1 While growth and change will present some challenges for our area, it also allows us to respond appropriately to the needs of our economy and our residents. A positive plan for development will allow us to harness opportunities to support the development of Wirral as a more sustainable low carbon borough, which looks to the future whilst still protecting the things which make it a great place today.
- 3.2.2 The challenges for Wirral are underpinned by the evidence base work which has been carried out to support this Issues and Options consultation document. These challenges range from housing growth and the availability of suitable land for housing, to the availability of funding to address infrastructure pressures or mixed-use regeneration schemes such as Wirral Waters.
- 3.2.3 Regeneration schemes and development proposals coming forward over the lifetime of the Local Plan can address some of the challenges faced by the Borough through the securing of, for example, developer contributions. These could include improvements to the transport network, public transport, school facilities, open spaces and recreation, health and social care, digital connectivity and the availability of affordable housing.
- 3.2.4 The following opportunities and challenges are examples of some of the issues affecting Wirral that can be addressed through the delivery of the Local Plan.

Challenges

- The shortage of deliverable and developable urban and brownfield sites on which to bring forward new homes.
- The challenging viability environment which may restrict our ability to deliver the redevelopment of key brownfield sites in east Wirral at the pace we would wish, without significant additional financial assistance for site remediation and infrastructure.
- The ongoing Climate Emergency, which necessitates new ways of working and new ways of delivering development.
- High-level infrastructure capacity constraints, such as the M53, particularly at junctions 4 and 5, the A41 and the Mersey crossings to Liverpool, which may make it more challenging to deliver the Borough's growth requirements.
- More localised infrastructure constraints such as local highway and school capacity, which may make the delivery of growth more challenging in certain locations.
- The availability of government funding to assist in overcoming constraints to development.

Opportunities

- The regeneration of the east of the Borough, with a particular emphasis on Birkenhead, Liscard, New Ferry and New Brighton.
- The ability to return a sizeable number of empty homes around Wirral to a productive residential use.
- Securing the delivery of Wirral Waters, with flagship new educational, retail, leisure and commercial opportunities alongside the delivery of significant new residential communities at the East Float.
- The availability of significant sites and broad areas of urban brownfield land with the potential for major mixed-use development.
- The ability to take positive climate action, including implementing an ambitious tree planting strategy; the delivery of new electric vehicle charging points; energy efficient lighting; combined heat and power in new development and support for a low carbon economy.
- Growth in Wirral's tourism industry, particularly around our outstanding historical and natural assets, with a focus on sustainable tourism approaches and harnessing our proximity to Liverpool.

3.3 Wirral Local Plan Spatial Vision

- 3.3.1 The Local Plan will seek to address these challenges and to build upon the opportunities, by addressing the issues related to housing and economic growth; working to alleviate social, economic and environmental disparities; ensuring the protection of environmental assets and securing urban regeneration as part of the wider vision for Wirral and the Liverpool City Region. Underlining all this is our commitment to create a more sustainable and resilient future for local communities, in response to the Climate Emergency.
- 3.3.2 To support the strategic direction of growth for Wirral, and to address the challenges set out above, we have set out a Spatial Vision which looks beyond the short and medium-term and considers the full 15-year life of the Local Plan.

The Spatial Vision for Wirral: A Healthy, Sustainable and Prosperous Borough.

By 2035, Wirral will continue to offer a high quality of life, as an attractive place to live an active, sustainable, productive, safe and healthy lifestyle, to complement the attractiveness of and make a significant contribution to the economic competitiveness of the Liverpool City Region.

In 2035 Wirral will be a sustainable and prosperous Borough with a strong sense of place and identity. It will be a place that people are proud to call home and want to invest in.

Significant progress will be made in the regeneration of Birkenhead, which is the key development focus of the Plan, providing thousands of new homes to meet our housing needs. The skyline of the river frontage will be changing as the “left bank” of the Mersey becomes a focus for private and public sector investment of regional and national importance to transform brownfield sites and create new green urban mixed-use neighbourhoods and visitor attractions at Wirral Waters and Woodside.

Birkenhead Town Centre will be a vibrant mixed-use area, with a new Central Business District Quarter, perhaps fewer shops to reflect changes in retail opportunities, but with a mix of new homes and businesses and leisure uses. The potential of Wirral Waters and Woodside will be unlocked and maximised by further investment in the Town Centre and adjoining neighbourhoods including Hamilton Park, Scott’s Quay and Hind Street.

Beyond Birkenhead, the regeneration of New Ferry and Liscard, as mixed-use centres, will be completed. The river corridor from Seacombe through to New Brighton will become a focus for renewal and environmental enhancement taking advantage of its waterside setting and dramatic river views, whilst New Brighton will have reinvented itself as a mixed-use river gateway.

New employment opportunities will be provided at Wirral Waters and through mixed-use redevelopment in Birkenhead and along the A41 corridor.

An integrated transport network will reduce reliance on private car travel, giving Wirral residents a variety of sustainable travel choices to meet their travel needs. Active travel will be the mode of choice for short journeys.

Our peninsula, towns, homes, and workplaces will be greener and more sustainable. We will have made major progress towards a Carbon Neutral Peninsula Wirral by implementing spatial elements of the Council’s Climate Change Emergency Plan, including promoting appropriate green energy technologies.

3.4 Wirral Local Plan Strategic Objectives

3.4.1 The Council proposes 12 strategic objectives to guide the delivery of the Spatial Vision through the Local Plan. The strategic objectives have been categorised under three themed headings which seek to capture the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development, in accordance with the NPPF.

A sustainable peninsula

Strategic Objective 1:	<p>To support sustainable approaches to the location, design, construction, operation and impact of new development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To position Wirral to face the future changes and challenges of Climate Change via strategic development location choices and design standards. To reduce carbon emissions in line with national and local targets.
Strategic Objective 2:	<p>Realise the potential of our industrial legacy, and our waterside and heritage assets to deliver comprehensive urban regeneration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a vibrant new mixed-use community at Wirral Waters, providing the catalyst for the wider regeneration of Birkenhead and support the regeneration of surrounding partnership neighbourhoods. Create at Woodside a vibrant mixed use and cultural riverside quarter. Revitalise Birkenhead Town Centre as a mixed use focal point for our community, including a new gateway mixed community at Hind Street. Realise the potential of the river corridor and promenade between Seacombe and New Brighton as a focus for recreation and mixed use riverside living. Complete the regeneration of New Brighton town centre as a high quality mixed use tourist destination.
Strategic Objective 3:	<p>Promote sustainable travel, improve accessibility, connectivity, and ease of movement and direct new development to locations which will provide easiest access to existing centres, high-frequency public transport corridors, pedestrian and cycle routes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enable sustainable travel solutions to improve air quality, support behaviour change and reduce congestion Seek to improve and encourage improvements to public transport, walking and cycling, including access for all sections of the community to work, shopping, health, education, leisure, valued environments and other facilities. Seek to encourage the implementation of a sustainable and integrated transport strategy making active travel the mode of choice for short journeys.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To reduce reliance on private cars for local journeys where possible, through spatial development choices and well-designed layout of communities. • To support the construction of new road infrastructure only where this is related to achieving sustainable development, environmental enhancement, public transport or road safety benefits. • To support sustainable freight distribution by road, rail and water. • To safeguard land required for new sustainable transport proposals, including active travel, public transport, road and water facilities, from prejudicial development.
Strategic Objective 4:	<p>Ensure the responsible use of land and natural resources to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change and promote the transition to a low carbon Borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure sustainable resource use by reducing waste, increasing recycling and safeguarding potential minerals reserves. • To promote appropriate renewable energy and green technologies. • To ensure the resilience of infrastructure and vulnerable development to Climate Change.
Strategic Objective 5	<p>Protect and improve the quality and accessibility of green space, green infrastructure and nature, whilst protecting and enhancing biodiversity and ensuring that development delivers net environmental gains where possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To protect, conserve and enhance the Borough's natural and historic environment assets, particularly the coast, country parks and heritage assets, through the appropriate management of development pressures and opportunities for access and enjoyment. • To conserve, expand and link natural habitats through habitat creation and improvement to ensure a robust, coherent network of sites that provides wildlife with the opportunity to prosper. • To provide green corridors suitable for active travel/sustainable travel use and improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.
Strategic Objective 6:	<p>Manage flood risk through a risk-based approach which directs inappropriate development away from high risk coastal, river or surface flooding areas, makes space for water and uses sustainable urban drainage systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying the Sequential Test and if the Sequential Test is passed, applying and passing the Exception Test, if required. • Surface water flood risk treated with equal importance to fluvial and tidal flood risk. • Safeguarding land required for current and future flood management. • To require use of sustainable drainage systems and natural flood risk management methods.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use opportunities offered by new development to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding. • To phase development between and within sites to avoid cumulative flood risk impacts. • To identify where flood risk is expected to increase with Climate Change to ensure that existing and proposed development is sustainable in the long term.
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A special and healthy place to live

Strategic Objective 7:	<p>Provide sufficient housing to meet identified local housing needs and provide a choice of housing for people at all stages of life and incomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To facilitate sustainable housing provision. • To manage the release of sufficient land for housing to meet the Borough's locally assessed housing needs. • To help meet local need for both affordable and aspirational housing. • To provide housing choices for an ageing population. • To cater for the needs of different communities.
Strategic Objective 8:	<p>Ensure that high quality new development integrates with and respects our peninsula's distinctive character, natural environment and built heritage, to create vibrant, healthy places and local communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conserve and enhance the most significant elements of our cultural heritage including designated sites and important elements of historic landscape character. • To achieve new development designed to provide a high quality of built form and public realm which enhances the Borough's distinct natural and historic environmental assets. • To support proposals that cater for longer, healthier, more active and more independent living. • To facilitate provision of accessible, good quality, sustainably managed open space, sport, physical activity, leisure and entertainment and community facilities. • To encourage the use of watercourses and green corridors in providing sport and leisure opportunities, including the support of active travel (walking and cycling). • To help support measures which address issues of obesity. • To help support measures which contribute to good mental health.

Strategic Objective 9:	<p>Provide and promote essential local infrastructure including emergency services, community, cultural, education, transport, health and leisure facilities, shops, and services all within easy reach of local communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that essential local services are provided within or on the edge of existing centres as a first preference or locations accessible by a choice of transport. To ensure that new housing and other development is supported by the necessary physical, social and community infrastructure and facilities.
Strategic Objective 10:	<p>Tackle social, economic and environmental deprivation, especially in the eastern part of the peninsula, through housing renewal, reducing unemployment, improving skills, education, community and environmental conditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To focus jobs, housing and population growth to areas of greatest need of physical, social economic and environmental regeneration. To support the re-use and redevelopment of brownfield land

A thriving peninsula

Strategic Objective 11:	<p>Provide a range of employment and mixed-use sites to meet assessed needs, provide work opportunities for our residents and foster an environment where our existing businesses and new, innovative start-ups can prosper. To support a competitive and diverse rural and visitor economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a continuous supply of good quality accessible employment land to attract more new businesses. To help support improvements in workforce skills, a broader economic base and training opportunities to enhance local recruitment. To provide for the growth and expansion of existing local businesses. To facilitate a range of sizes and types of employment sites to meet modern business needs. To provide employment opportunities in locations which best respond to market demands and which will attract inward investment while being consistent with other sustainable development principles of the Local Plan. To ensure that business locations and centres are accessible by public transport from all areas of the Borough, reducing travel needs where possible. To ensure the rural economy, including agriculture, can continue to operate, diversify and prosper. To enable the growth of sustainable tourism balanced with the protection of the Borough's coast and countryside.
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Strategic Objective 12:	Ensure that Birkenhead and the Borough's other town, district and local centres adapt to changing shopping patterns to become a vibrant mixed-use focus for each of our peninsula's communities. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure the Borough's town, district and local centres maintain their positions within the retail hierarchy.• To support growth of shops, offices, business, leisure, arts, cultural, tourism and residential and employment opportunities to secure an accessible network of vital and viable town centres.
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Question 3.1

Do you agree with our proposed Vision?

Question 3.2

Do you agree with our proposed objectives?

Are there any objectives you would want to change or remove?

Question 3.2

**Are there any additional objectives you would want to include?
Please state your reasons.**

4 Strategic Spatial Options

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The Local Plan is required to allocate sufficient land to meet the housing and employment requirements outlined in Sections 2.3 and 2.5. This chapter sets out the strategic options that the Council consider appropriate to meet these requirements.
- 4.1.2 In developing spatial options for the Local Plan the Council is mindful that they must:
- be realistic. This means they must all deliver the quantity of homes and land for employment that has been identified as required for Wirral; and
 - consider all reasonable alternatives to ensure this Local Plan can be considered 'sound' (as outlined in section 1.4.2) and summarised below on the flowchart.

How many homes do we need to deliver and when?

- 4.1.3 As explained in Section 2.12 we need to allocate sufficient housing sites to deliver:
- At least 4,800 homes during the first 5 years of the Local Plan period plus replace any future losses from demolitions estimated at 50 dwellings each year = **5,050 new dwellings**³⁴; and
 - At least 7,200 homes for the subsequent 6 to 15 year period plus replace any future losses from demolitions = **7,700 new dwellings**³⁵.
 - The total Plan requirement is therefore currently to provide for a minimum of **12,000 new dwellings with an allowance for demolitions**.
- 4.1.4 As explained in Section 2.12 we also need to allocate at least 80 hectares of land for new employment development.
- 4.1.5 The Council has identified the following reasonable spatial options for meeting our local housing and employment requirements, and they are explained in more detail in the following sections.

³⁴ Allowance also needs to be made for the 20% buffer, brought forward from later in the Plan period, required under the Government's Housing Delivery Test in line with National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 73.

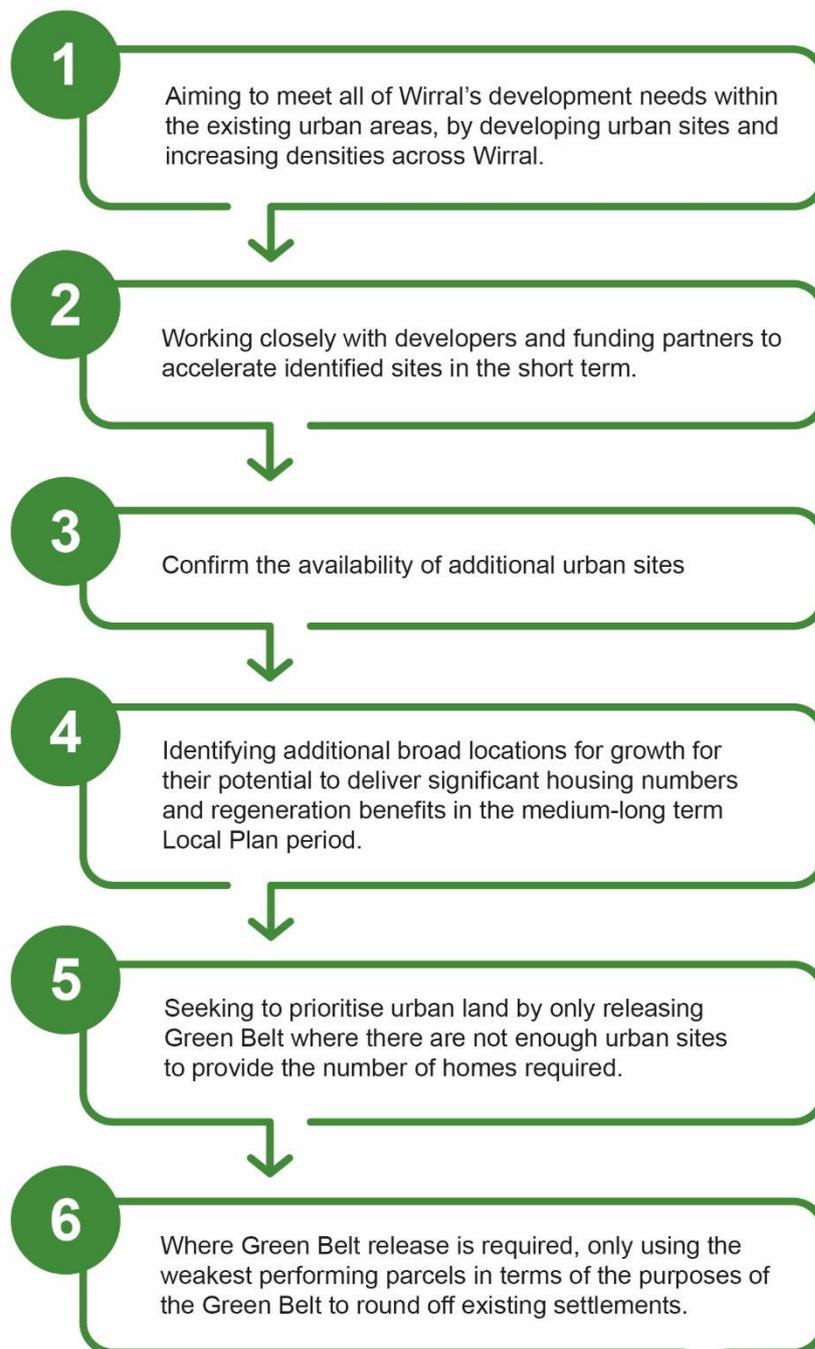
³⁵ Broad locations for growth may also be identified for later years, if specific sites cannot be identified at this stage, in line with National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 67.

Urban only options

- Option 1A: Urban Intensification (our Preferred Approach); and
- Option 1B: Urban Intensification with stepped delivery;

Options for meeting any residual development requirements through Green Belt release

- Option 2A: Dispersed Green Belt Release; and
- Option 2B: Urban Expansion.



4.2 Option 1A: Urban Intensification

- 4.2.1 The option for Urban Intensification plans for all the Borough's development needs to be met within the existing urban areas, by developing urban sites and by increasing densities across all the settlements in Wirral in accordance with our approach to density set out in Section 0. It also seeks to accelerate delivery, as far as the Council is able, through joint working arrangements with our investment and funding partners.
- 4.2.2 This is the Council's preferred approach, seeking to prioritise developing brownfield land ahead of any Green Belt release, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 137.

What are we doing to try to maximise the urban housing supply and to adopt our preferred Urban Intensification option?

- 4.2.3 The Council will first of all seek to meet its housing needs within the existing urban area, where possible on brownfield sites. The results of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2019 (SHLAA) show however, that currently there may not be enough specific, 'deliverable' or 'developable' sites (see para 2.3.11) within the urban area and on existing brownfield sites that will be able to provide for the number of new homes required to be delivered within the Plan period³⁶.
- 4.2.4 The Council is currently undertaking further intensive work to seek to increase the supply of deliverable and developable land in the urban areas including:
- undertaking a further comprehensive 'call for housing and employment sites', as part of this Regulation 18 consultation;
 - a review of all lapsed and soon to lapse planning permissions;
 - proactively contacting landowners who have not recently contacted the Council to confirm that they are still willing to bring their sites forward for development;
 - undertaking further, more detailed, research on the viability of housing development and how this may best be tackled and addressed;
 - examining whether some employment sites would be better used for housing purposes³⁷;

³⁶ Further information on the existing supply of sites is set out in the sections immediately below

³⁷ The draft findings of the Employment Land Options Study produced by Avison Young in 2019 have been published for public comment alongside this Regulation 18 document and the sites involved have been included in our analysis below.

- commissioning specialist evidence studies to seek additional housing supply through increasing urban density and bringing empty homes back in to use³⁸;
- working proactively with developers and funding partners to accelerate the development of sites;
- undertaking a comprehensive review of all Council owned land to identify new opportunities for housing;
- working with our Joint Venture Partner MUSE to deliver an accelerated housing programme through the Wirral Growth Company;
- seeking to further accelerate housing delivery on large strategic sites, by working with Peel Developments at Wirral Waters and the owners of sites at Hind Street and Woodside;
- working with Registered Social Landlords to utilise their expertise and resources to bring forward new social rented housing across the Borough, particularly on sites that may not currently be viable for market development;
- commissioning the preparation of a Regeneration Framework and Delivery Action Plan to identify any further areas of opportunity for housing-led regeneration within and around the central areas of Birkenhead and create a series of high quality 'green mixed-use urban villages'; and
- identifying other medium to longer term broad locations for regeneration growth, including the river corridor between Seacombe and New Brighton, and within New Brighton itself (see paragraph 4.2.25).

4.2.5 If all these actions come together, then the Council is likely to seek adoption of the preferred Urban Intensification Option (Option 1A) as its spatial strategy for the Local Plan and to deliver all our development needs within urban areas without Green Belt release in the final draft Local Plan (in the next Regulation 19 stage of preparing the Local Plan).

³⁸ The interim findings of the Density Study produced by Urban Imprint and the draft Empty Homes Report produced by ARUP in 2019 have been published for public comment alongside this Local Plan Issues and Options document and the conclusions on empty homes have been included in our analysis below.

Question 4.1

Is there anything else that you think the Council could do to ensure that a sufficient urban land supply capable of meeting the Borough's development needs is identified?

What urban housing sites are we proposing to allocate to deliver this Option?

Proposed Urban Housing Allocations

- 4.2.6 The Council are currently proposing to allocate the sites listed in Appendix 4.1 for new housing development within the urban area. They are also summarised in Figure 4.1 below.
- 4.2.7 The sites have been identified through the preparation of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2019 (SHLAA).
- 4.2.8 They also include sites where planning permission has already been granted but on which development had not yet begun as at April 2019³⁹.
- 4.2.9 They are predominantly previously developed brownfield sites but also include some urban greenfield sites, where they have also been considered to be suitable, available and achievable and have been found to meet the definition of 'deliverable' and 'developable' set out in the Glossary to the National Planning Policy Framework⁴⁰. Three quarters of the sites are below one hectare in size⁴¹.
- 4.2.10 They include sites at Wirral Waters and Hind Street; sites identified for development through the Wirral Growth Company, the Council's Affordable Housing Programme, and some longer-term redevelopment sites at Woodside, which are currently not expected to be able to deliver new homes until later in the Plan period.

³⁹ Sites with planning permission proposed for allocation excludes sites where the landowner or developer has subsequently indicated that they no longer intend to implement the permission in response to consultation undertaken during 2019 as part of the preparation of the SHLAA and where no landowner or developer response was obtained excludes sites where the Baseline Viability Study 2018 indicated that the development proposed would be unviable in the current market

⁴⁰https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_2019_.pdf

⁴¹ NPPF paragraph 68 requires that at least 10% of the housing requirement should be met on sites no larger than one hectare. This will be confirmed at Regulation 19 stage.

- 4.2.11 Together with relevant allowances for net gains from conversions and changes of use, windfalls and empty homes⁴², these sites would currently provide for up to 10,300 new dwellings between 2020 and 2035, as shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1 Proposed Urban Housing Allocations⁴³

Requirement (Dwellings)	2020-2025	2026-2030	2031-2035	Totals
Local Housing Need	4,000	4,000	4,000	12,000
Demolitions	250	250	250	750
Total Requirement	4,250	4,250	4,250	12,750
Housing Delivery Test Buffer at 20%	800	-	-	-
Phased Trajectory	5,050	3,850	3,850	12,750
Proposed Supply				
Existing New-Build Permissions (April 2019)	1,218	178	0	1,396
Deliverable and Developable Sites (April 2019)⁴⁴	1,310	2,490	1,510	5,310
New-Build Windfalls⁴⁵	350	350	350	1,050
Net Conversions and Changes of Use	400	400	400	1,200
Empty Homes	500	450	400	1,350
Total Supply	3,778	3,868	2,660	10,306
Balance⁴⁶	-1,272	18	-1,190	-2,444

⁴² Assumptions about allowances for demolitions, net conversions and changes of use and new build windfalls are set out in the SHLAA 2019 based on information collected as part of the Council's annual monitoring. The allowances for empty homes are taken from the recommendation of the draft Empty Homes Report produced by ARUP in 2019 (see also section 5.5).

⁴³ Based on the 'deliverable' and 'developable' sites identified in the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) for April 2019, which has been published for public consultation alongside this Issues and Options Report.

⁴⁴ Further details on each of these sites and on their contribution to the housing trajectory in April 2019 is set out in Appendix 4.3 and Appendix 4.4.

⁴⁵ Sites not specifically identified in the Local Plan.

⁴⁶ Phased trajectory against total supply.

Figure 4.1 Proposed Urban Housing Allocations



Figure 4.1 Proposed Urban Housing Allocations

- Proposed Urban Housing Allocations
 - Urban Permissions Not Started in April 2019
- Please see Appendix 4.1 for further details.

Question 4.2**Do you have any comments on the proposed urban housing allocations set out in Appendix 4.1?****Are they deliverable or developable?**

- 4.2.12 When viewing this document on the consultation portal you can view and make comments on any of these proposed urban housing allocations by clicking on the weblinks in Appendix 4.1, which will take you to a larger scale map and to the information that is currently included in the SHLAA 2019. Where the site has planning permission, the link will take you to further details about that planning permission.

Potential intensification and additional urban housing allocations

- 4.2.13 Further work since April 2019 has identified scope to increase the capacity, and re-schedule the delivery, of some of the sites identified in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2019 (SHLAA)⁴⁷.
- 4.2.14 The Council has also identified a number of potential additional urban housing allocations, which the Council expect will be able to meet the tests of being 'deliverable' and 'developable' within the Plan period, by the time the draft Plan is prepared to be submitted to the Secretary of State.
- 4.2.15 They include sites where a planning application has already been submitted but not determined, or where the landowner or developer has indicated that they intend to develop their site at a faster rate. They also include sites which have been identified as suitable for re-designation as part of the latest review of employment land⁴⁸.
- 4.2.16 The potential additional urban housing allocations that are expected to be brought forward within the Plan period are listed in Appendix 4.2 and shown on Figure 4.2 below.
- 4.2.17 Together with relevant allowances for net gains from conversions and changes of use, windfalls and empty homes, the intensification and re-scheduling of 'deliverable' and 'developable' sites and these potential additional urban housing allocations could provide for up to 14,800 new dwellings between 2020 and 2035, as shown in Table 4.2 below. This would more than meet the housing requirement for the plan period.
- 4.2.18 The potential additional urban housing allocations would on their own contribute an additional 2,174 dwellings between 2020 and 2035.

⁴⁷ The differences in the figures included for each site in the housing trajectory at April 2019 and in the potential future position are set out in Appendix 4.3 and Appendix 4.4

⁴⁸ The draft findings of the Employment Land Options Study produced by Avison Young in 2019 have been published for public comment alongside this Issues and Options report (see also section 4.2.25). The sites involved (SHLAA 0756, 0769, 1715, 2072, 4012 and 4021) are included in Appendix 4.2A and their contribution to the potential future position is set out in Appendix 4.3 and Appendix 4.4.

Table 4.2: Potential intensification and additional urban housing allocations

Requirement (Dwellings)	2020-2025	2026-2030	2031-2035	Totals
Local Housing Need	4,000	4,000	4,000	12,000
Demolitions	250	250	250	750
Total Requirement	4,250	4,250	4,250	12,750
Housing Delivery Test Buffer at 20%	800	-	-	-
Phased Trajectory	5,050	3,850	3,850	12,750
Proposed Supply				
Existing New-Build Permissions (April 2019)	1,218	178	0	1,396
Intensification and Re-scheduling of Deliverable and Developable Sites⁴⁹	2,345	3,966	1,360	7,671
Potential Additional Urban Housing Allocations⁵⁰	458	846	870	2,174
New-Build Windfalls⁵¹	350	350	350	1,050
Net Conversions and Changes of Use	400	400	400	1,200
Empty Homes	500	450	400	1,350
Total Supply	5,271	6,190	3,380	14,841
Balance⁵²	221	2,340	-470	2,091

⁴⁹ Further details on each of these sites and on their contribution to the housing trajectory in April 2019 and to the potential future position is set out in Appendix 4.3 and Appendix 4.4.

⁵⁰ The potential additional urban housing allocations expected to be brought forward within the Plan period and their contribution to the potential future position is set out in Appendix 4.4 and Appendix 4.5.

⁵¹ Sites not specifically identified in the Local Plan.

⁵² Phased trajectory against total supply.

Figure 4.2 Potential intensification and additional urban housing allocations



Figure 4.2 Potential Urban Intensification and Additional Urban Housing Allocations

- Proposed Urban Housing Allocations
- Urban Permissions Not Started in April 2019
- Potential Additional Urban Housing Allocations

Please see Appendix 4.2 for further details.

Question 4.3

Do you have any comments on the potential additional urban housing allocations set out in Appendix 4.2? Will they also be deliverable or developable?

- 4.2.19 If viewing this document on the consultation portal you can view and make comments on any of these potential additional housing allocations by clicking on the weblinks in Appendix 4.2 which will take you to a larger scale map and to the information that is currently included in the SHLAA 2019.

Other Suitable but Currently Uncertain Sites

- 4.2.20 Other sites identified in the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2019 (SHLAA) are still subject to ongoing assessment to determine whether they can be included in the urban land supply⁵³.
- 4.2.21 These sites appear to be suitable for new housing development but would not currently be able to meet the tests of being 'deliverable' and 'developable' within the Plan period unless further information can be provided by the time the draft Plan is prepared to be submitted to the Secretary of State.
- 4.2.22 These suitable but currently uncertain sites include sites where planning permission has previously been granted but has now lapsed; where the landowner has not recently indicated that they are still willing to take the site forward for development; and sites which have been identified as unviable in the current market.
- 4.2.23 These suitable but currently uncertain sites are listed in Appendix 4.3 and shown on Figure 4.3 below but have not yet been included in the calculations of the future land supply. If they can be shown to be 'deliverable' or 'developable' within the Plan period, they could contribute an additional 720 new dwellings between 2020 and 2035.

⁵³ This work will be ongoing, until we publish and submit the final draft Plan to the Secretary of State for examination in November 2020

Question 4.4

Do you have any comments on the other suitable but currently uncertain sites set out in Appendix 4.3? Are they also deliverable or developable within the Plan period?

- 4.2.24 If viewing this document on the consultation portal you can view and make comments on any of these potential additional housing allocations by clicking on the weblinks in Appendix 4.3 which will take you to a larger scale map and to the information that is currently included in the SHLAA 2019.

Figure 4.3 Other Suitable but Currently Uncertain Sites



Figure 4.3 Other Suitable but Currently Uncertain Sites

- Other Suitable but Currently Uncertain Sites
- Please see Appendix 4.3 for further details.

Broad Locations for Growth

- 4.2.25 Paragraph 67 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) allows the Council to identify broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the Plan and Paragraph 23 states that broad locations for development should be indicated on a key diagram.
- 4.2.26 National Planning Guidance (Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 3-018-20190722) gives further guidance on the factors that can be considered when assessing the suitability of sites or broad locations for development and states:
- “A site or broad location can be considered suitable if it would provide an appropriate location for development when considered against relevant constraints and their potential to be mitigated.*
- When considering constraints, plan-makers may wish to consider the information collected as part of the initial site survey, as well as other relevant information, such as:*
- *national policy;*
 - *appropriateness and likely market attractiveness for the type of development proposed;*
 - *contribution to regeneration priority areas;*
 - *potential impacts including the effect upon landscapes including landscape features, nature and heritage conservation.*
- When using the emerging plan to assess suitability, plan-makers will need to account for potential policy changes or other factors which could impact the suitability of the site / broad location. For example, an emerging site allocation may enable development to come forward. This will have to be reflected in the assessment of achievability”.*
- 4.2.27 Based on evidence set out in Appendix 2.1 and on pre-application discussions, the Council considers that there is significant potential for housing growth within specific Broad Locations which could be promoted through specific policies of the emerging Local Plan and which would form key parts of the Council’s future regeneration strategy. Whilst the majority of housing delivery in these Broad Locations is likely to be in the latter part of the Plan period some delivery may be within years 6 to 10.
- 4.2.28 The potential for future housing delivery within these broad location areas is not yet included in the calculations of the future land supply above as further work will be required through the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework and masterplans for Woodside and New Brighton.
- 4.2.29 The Broad Location areas currently envisaged to be included in the Local Plan are summarised in Table 4.3 and shown at Figure 4.4, which could deliver up to 6,000 dwellings during the Plan period.

Table 4.3 Proposed Broad Locations for Growth

	Broad location	Description	High level housing capacity estimate	Estimated Local Plan delivery Timescale	Comments
1	Hind Street (additional capacity at higher density)	Strategic development Site	Approximately 1000 min dwellings capacity mix of apartments, houses. Represents an additional min 450 dwellings on current SHLAA estimates	Majority of housing delivery to be in years 6 to 10 of Local. Part of phase 1 on southern site could deliver by 2025.	Detailed capacity to be confirmed by Masterplan in early 2020
2	Woodside (additional capacity at higher capacity)	Strategic Development Site	Approximately 1000 dwellings. Represents an additional min 650 dwellings on current SHLAA estimates	Years 11 to 15. Possible delivery from years 7 onwards	Detailed capacity to be confirmed by Woodside Masterplan
3	Central Birkenhead (including Town Centre)		500 to 1000 dwellings through new build and conversions	500 dwellings to be delivered years 0 to 5, balance years 6 to 10.	Detailed opportunities to be identified through Birkenhead Regeneration Framework.
4	Wirral Waters	Strategic Development Site	1800 additional dwellings on current SHLAA figures based on high level trajectory submitted by Peel	Years 11 to 15	Subject to successful delivery of years 0 to 7 housing and market conditions.
5	Partnership Neighbourhoods				
The Wirral Waters Vision Statement identified ten Partnership Neighbourhoods which should be developed to unlock the potential of Wirral Waters and to help repopulate Birkenhead. The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework will review these Partnership Areas but is likely to prioritise Hamilton Park and Scotts Quay for intervention regeneration as mixed use garden city neighbourhoods. (NB Conway Park Neighbourhood included within Central Birkenhead)					
5a	Hamilton Park	Partnership Neighbourhood	500 to 750 dwellings	Years 11 to 15. Possible delivery from years 8 onwards	Detailed opportunities to be

5b	Scotts Quay	Partnership Neighbourhood	500 to 750 dwellings	Years 11 to 15. Possible delivery from years 8 onwards	identified through Birkenhead Regeneration Framework.
6	Seacombe- New Brighton Riverside Corridor	Regeneration Corridor	Approximately 500 to 750 dwellings	Years 11 to 15. Possible delivery from years 8-9 onwards	Subject to detailed Regeneration Framework
7	New Brighton	Masterplan area	Approximately 500 dwellings	Possible delivery from Year 8 onwards	Detailed Opportunities to be identified through a detailed masterplan to be prepared in early 2020.

- 4.2.30 Appropriate housing number estimates (as informed by further evidence including the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework and detailed masterplanning work for Woodside and New Brighton) for these areas will be included in the draft final Local Plan supply for the appropriate Local Plan period.

Question 4.5

Do you agree with the Preferred Approach to identify Broad Locations for growth based on regeneration opportunities and priorities in the Local Plan?

Question 4.6

Are there any other areas which should be identified as Broad Locations for Growth?

Figure 4.4 Proposed Broad Locations for Growth



- 1 ▲ Hind Street (Additional capacity)
- 2 ▲ Woodside (Additional capacity)
- 3 ▲ Central Birkenhead inc. Town Centre
- 4 ▲ Wirral Waters
- 5a/b ▲ Partnership Neighbourhoods
- 6 ▲ Seacombe Riverside Corridor
- 7 ▲ New Brighton

- 4.2.31 The final list of urban sites to be allocated for new housing development will be updated, subject to the results of public consultation and to reflect any further progress, before they are included in the final draft Local Plan to be submitted to the Secretary of State.
- 4.2.32 In many cases, the number of homes that sites can deliver within the Plan period will depend on a range of factors, some of which are beyond the control or influence of the Council.
- 4.2.33 All sites require a lead-in period, to work up proposals and identify a developer before a planning application can be submitted and time to bring forward the proposals once a planning application has been approved and some proposals will be further amended before work begins on-site. Once construction has begun, most sites will also take some time to compete, which for larger sites could extend over a couple of years, depending on the number of homes that can be built and sold in the market.
- 4.2.34 While further work is still ongoing, Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 demonstrate that an urban-only option will be only be realistic if a significant acceleration and intensification of urban housing development can be achieved and if all the sites listed can be brought to development within the specified time periods. If this cannot be achieved, any shortfall within the Plan period could only currently be made up by releasing land for development from the Green Belt.

Question 4.7

Are there any other sites within the urban area that you think should be considered for future housing development? Please identify each site and say why you think they would be suitable.

Please also submit these sites through the separate 'Call for Sites' Consultation event and tell us how many homes these sites will deliver and when.

How much employment land do we need to allocate?

- 4.2.35 As is explained in section 2.5 there is a need to find at least 80 hectares of employment land, to provide for the likely growth in the local economy⁵⁴.

What urban employment sites are we proposing to allocate in this Option?

Proposed Urban Employment Allocations

- 4.2.36 The Council is proposing to allocate the sites listed in Appendix 4.6 for new business, general industrial and storage and warehouse uses. They are also shown on

⁵⁴ The levels of growth expected to take place in the Wirral economy based on the latest economic forecasts undertaken on behalf of the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership, under the Baseline, Growth and Past Trends scenarios are set out in the Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA)

-
- 4.2.37 Figure 4.5. These will provide up to 105 hectares of employment land and would therefore meet the required amount of employment land.
- 4.2.38 The sites are all within the existing urban area and are based on the sites recommended to be protected for new employment development in the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2017 (WELPS).
- 4.2.39 They also take account of the recommendations of the draft Employment Land Options Study (ELOS) 2019, which has been published for consultation alongside this Issues and Options report⁵⁵.
- 4.2.40 The proposed urban employment allocations are predominantly previously developed brownfield sites but also include some urban greenfield sites, where they have also been considered suitable to accommodate new employment development.

⁵⁵ See section 6.1.16]

Figure 4.5 Proposed Urban Employment Allocations

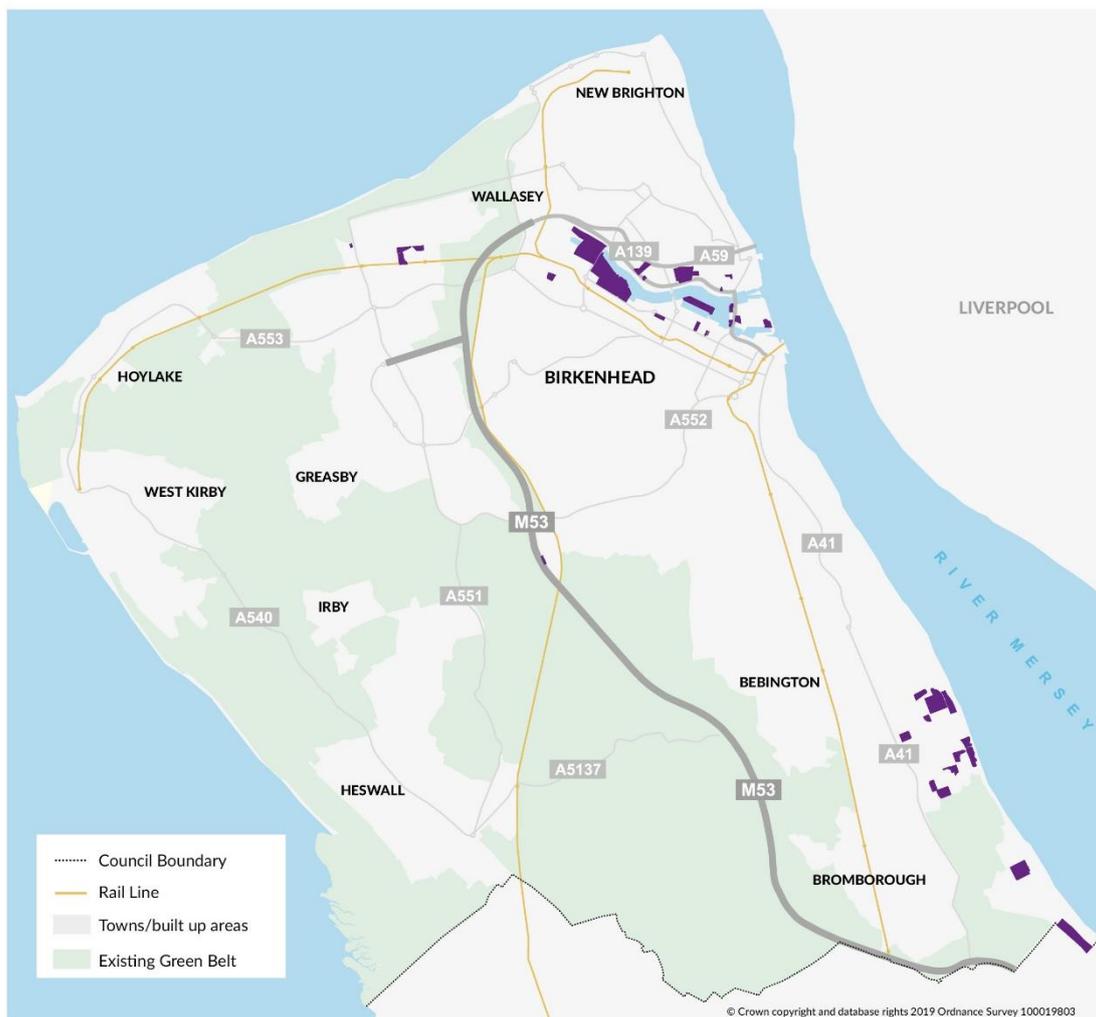


Figure 4.5 Proposed Urban Employment Allocations

 Proposed Urban Employment Allocations

Please see Appendix 4.6 for further details.

4.2.41 The proposed urban employment allocations include sites within the Borough’s flagship Wirral International Business Park at Bromborough; the large cleared urban sites at Bidston Dock and Beaufort Road; the ‘Sky City’ site at East Float, which may also include a mixed-use component; the remaining sites within the Dock Estate at Eastham; and some smaller

sites within the existing employment areas at Moreton and in and around the Birkenhead and Wallasey docklands.

Question 4.8

Do you have any comments on the proposed urban employment allocations set out in Appendix 4.6.?

Are they deliverable and developable?

- 4.2.42 If viewing this document on the consultation portal you can view and make comments on any of these proposed urban employment allocations by clicking on the weblinks in Appendix 4.6, which will take you to a larger scale map and to the information that is currently included in the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (WELPS) 2017.

How much employment land will these sites deliver?

- 4.2.43 The list of proposed urban employment allocations in Appendix 4.6 identifies approximately 105 hectares of land.
- 4.2.44 While some elements of local need may also be able to be accommodated on small re-development sites within existing employment areas, were they to become available or as part of mixed-use developments, for example, in and around town centres, it is often not suitable to place some types of general industrial uses within a mixed-use or residential setting and separate specific sites need to be set aside for this type of development.

Question 4.9

Are there any other urban sites which you think should be allocated for future employment development? Please identify each site and say why you think they would be suitable.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Option 1A: Urban Intensification

4.2.45 The advantages and disadvantages of the approach set out in Option 1A: Urban Intensification are set out in Table 4.4:

Table 4.4 Option 1A: Summary of advantages and disadvantages

Urban Intensification Advantages	Urban Intensification Disadvantages
It meets all of our development needs within the urban area, predominantly using brownfield land.	Risk of the plan being found unsound if it relies on an over-optimistic and potentially undeliverable set of circumstances
An urban focus for new development supports the prioritisation of previously developed land, directing new development to areas of regeneration need and opportunity and need, enabling the creation of attractive new mixed-use communities.	<p>Challenges with meeting the housing target, due to the dependence on a high proportion of brownfield sites with potentially uncertain viability or land contamination issues.</p> <p>Could lead to some delay in providing new homes whilst more complicated brownfield sites are remediated.</p> <p>Reliance on less viable sites could reduce 'planning gains', such as the future provision of affordable housing in market housing development</p>
Social, convenience, economic, and environmental benefits of living in places of higher density, supporting high quality urban living	<p>Over-concentration on one type of site in similar types of location</p> <p>Potential for over development and social stress if not controlled through good design, with impacts on local character and environment</p>
More homes would be built close to employment opportunities and existing transport infrastructure.	Over concentration of cars and traffic in intensified areas, with impacts on noise and air pollution
Reduces the potential need for vehicle dependency, supporting active travel with benefits to the environment and climate. Supports investment in existing infrastructure	

Will safeguard Green Belt land with benefits for agricultural production, Climate Change, biodiversity, landscape and amenity.

- 4.2.46 An interim Transport Assessment Report which considers the transport impacts of this option is available alongside this Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document.

Question 4.10

Do you agree with our assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the Urban Intensification Option?

Are there any other advantages or disadvantages that you believe we should take into account?

Option 1B: Urban Intensification with stepped approach

- 4.2.47 If it can be established that there is enough suitable, available and achievable capacity to meet all of the Borough's future development needs within the existing urban area but that it would not be possible to deliver sufficient homes for the first five years, the Local Plan may be allowed to follow a 'stepped approach'. This would mean the same amount of housing and employment would be delivered in the plan period, but with a lower proportion in the first five years.
- 4.2.48 National guidance currently states that a stepped approach may be appropriate where there is to be a significant change in the level of housing requirement between emerging and previous policies and / or where strategic sites will have a phased delivery or are likely to be delivered later in the plan period but will need to ensure that identified development needs will still be fully met within the plan period⁵⁶. In Wirral, a large number of homes will be delivered on major sites, including Wirral Waters, which will need to be phased delivery due to the works required to be able to develop the sites, resulting in long lead in times, as well as ensuring the market is not 'swamped' with new homes in a small area. This may provide a sufficient basis for a case for a stepped approach, particularly where the alternative requires development in the Green Belt.
- 4.2.49 Option 1B would therefore represent a variation on the approach to the delivery of Option 1A.
- 4.2.50 Option 1B would still provide for all the Borough's new development to be accommodated within the urban area, in line with Option 1A, but could allow the development required to be provided at a lower rate through the early years of the plan period, followed by a higher rate during the later years. The total housing requirement for the plan period would still be delivered.

Question 4.11

Do you believe that a 'stepped approach' would be appropriate to apply, to reflect the complicated nature of many of the proposed sites for development and their longer lead in times, provided that this is made up in the later years of the plan period to take account of the need to bring forward brownfield sites?

⁵⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-supply-and-delivery> (paragraph 021, 22 July 2019 refers)

4.3 Options requiring Green Belt release

- 4.3.1 The Council has set out above its preferred option to deliver sufficient land for our development needs with the Borough's existing urban areas. However, if the land identified to meet the total requirement cannot be shown to be 'deliverable' or 'developable' in line with the definitions set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (explained below and at 2.3.11) then some development may be required in the Green Belt.
- 4.3.2 These options would still include bringing forward as many urban housing and employment sites as possible, and increasing residential densities, as outlined in Option 1A but would require the Council to decide which sites in the Green Belt should be brought forward to meet any shortfalls.

Potential residual Green Belt development requirements

- 4.3.3 Table 4.1 above, shows the sites that are currently considered to be 'deliverable' or 'developable' and that if additional urban sites cannot be demonstrated to be 'deliverable' or 'developable' by the time the draft Plan is submitted to the Secretary of State, there could be a shortfall of up to around 2,500 dwellings within the Plan period⁵⁷.
- 4.3.4 As already noted, work is ongoing to develop the evidence needed to support the delivery of the Urban Intensification option, so it is currently envisaged that this amount of development in the Green Belt is the worst-case scenario. However, it is necessary for the Council to take this contingency into account at the earliest possible stage, so that all the possible alternatives can be properly assessed and consulted on.
- 4.3.5 The National Planning Policy Framework also requires that we must examine fully all other reasonable options before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries in line with paragraphs 136 and 137 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This will be thoroughly scrutinised by the Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the Plan before it can be adopted.

⁵⁷Subject to the response to consultation Question 4.11 above on proposed urban employment allocations, the Council does not currently believe that it will be necessary to take land out of the Green Belt to accommodate new employment development during the Plan period

How have we identified potential Green Belt options and sites?

- 4.3.6 As set out in Section 2.11 of this document, a revised detailed assessment of land within the existing Green Belt has identified areas that perform strongly, moderately and weakly against the five purposes of the Green Belt set out in national policy⁵⁸.
- 4.3.7 The approach to identifying potential land for release from the Green Belt for development has utilised the following steps and assumptions:
- excluded land in flood zone 3;
 - excluded land with statutory environmental designations;
 - identified parcels as performing 'weakly' against Green Belt purposes; and
 - prioritised weakly performing parcels with a known developer or landowner interest (to ensure evidence of developability).
- 4.3.8 Only where the above steps do not provide sufficient land to meet the identified requirement, would consideration be given to other potential sites. Further engagement with landowners and developers would also need to be undertaken to ensure that only sites that can be shown to be 'deliverable' or 'developable' within the Plan period are included.
- 4.3.9 More detailed assessments of the suitability, availability and achievability of the proposed areas of land would also be required before the draft Local Plan was finalised. This would include further, more detailed assessments of transport, environmental, sustainability, heritage and other site constraints, which would also be used to inform the amount of development that would be appropriate within each area.
- 4.3.10 Further work will be required to determine the boundaries of any parts of the Green Belt to be released. Where there is a significant difference between the areas of a site proposed by a developer or landowner and the parcel identified in the Green Belt Assessment, further considerations will be required. This will consider whether the full parcel is needed and developable or whether a suitable new boundary could be created to protect the retained Green Belt. New boundaries may seek to strengthen existing weak boundaries and / or look for opportunities for suitable 'rounding off' of existing urban areas.

⁵⁸ The methodology and findings of the new revised detailed assessment are set out in full in the Green Belt Review Study Arup 2019

- 4.3.11 It is important to note that under this option not all parts of a weakly performing parcel would be developed for housing, as significant areas of each parcel would also need to be set aside for green infrastructure, landscaping and appropriate social infrastructure. The indicative dwelling capacities of each weakly performing parcel identified below has therefore been estimated using the approach to calculating net developable areas set out in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2019 (SHLAA).
- 4.3.12 The eventual number of sites (if any) required under this option will depend on the scale of residual need which has not been able to be met within the urban area, subject to the outcome of this consultation and any future further investigations.

What are the Options for Green Belt release?

- 4.3.13 The pattern of weakly performing parcels offers two main options for delivering the necessary amount of development that may be required. These are:
- using a larger number of smaller-medium sized Green Belt areas of land that are well-connected to existing urban areas, spread widely around the Borough, which we have termed 'Option 2A: Dispersed Green Belt Release'; and /or
 - A more concentrated approach in which any new development required would be focused on a single larger area, which we have termed 'Option 2B: Single Urban Extension'.
- 4.3.14 Both options 2A and 2B would allow for the 2,500 additional homes to be provided, to meet the likely requirements over the Plan period.
- 4.3.15 A hybrid option in which one or more parts of each option could be selected may also be appropriate depending on the final amount of new development that needs to be accommodated.
- 4.3.16 The option of a single new large settlement has been discounted because of the existing geography of Wirral, the configuration of the existing urban area, the pattern of strongly, moderately and weakly performing parcels, the scale of the development likely to be required and the absence of an obviously sustainable location, with access by a wide choice of sustainable transport.
- 4.3.17 Alternative locations for a single urban extension have been considered. Land at Eastham has been considered but not taken further as an option. This is because the constraints on this land means that significant parts would not be suitable for development and therefore releasing this land from the Green Belt would not be the most appropriate.

4.4 Option 2A Dispersed Green Belt Release

4.4.1 This option proposes the release of a series of small to medium sized areas of land, which when added together would allow sufficient land to be allocated to meet any residual housing needs within the Plan period.

4.4.2 This option spreads development across the Borough, thereby spreading the impacts of new development on existing infrastructure and ensuring that single settlements are not impacted disproportionately. The final number of sites required will depend on the scale of the residual need which has not been able to be met within the urban area.

Which areas of land are currently suggested for potential release under Option 2A

4.4.3 The areas of land that could potentially be released from the Green Belt under Option 2A are listed in Table 4.5 and shown on Figure 4.6.

Table 4.5 Green Belt Option 2A: Dispersed Green Belt Release

Site ref (Figure 4.6)	Green Belt Parcel Reference ⁵⁹	Net Developable Area (hectares) ⁶⁰	Estimated Capacity (Dwellings)
Bromborough and Eastham			
1	Parcel 4.13 (SP049) South of Mill Park Eastham	20.45	368
Saughall Massie			
2	Parcel 5.8 (SP0005, SHLAA 0740) East of Garden Hey Road, Saughall Massie	1.74	47
3	Parcel 5.9 (SP004, SHLAA 0925) North of Saughall Massie Conservation Area	8.56	193

⁵⁹ References are those used by Arup in their Green Belt Review (Parcel References). SP references are Wirral Development Options Review work, and the SHLAA references cross reference to the SHLAA itself.

⁶⁰ The area of the parcel identified less any features to be retained such as woodlands, ponds, river corridors and designated sites and other land that would or could not be developed

	West Kirby		
4	Parcel 6.15 (SP013, SHLAA 4056) West of Column Road, West Kirby	17.38	261
	Heswall		
5	Parcel 7.11 (SP071) Land at Chester Road, Gayton	18.71	337
	Thingwall		
6	Parcel 7.18 (SP061) North of Gill's Lane, Pensby	18.09	326
7	Parcel 7.19 (SP065) West of Lower Thingwall Lane, Thingwall	6.90	155
	Irby		
8	Parcel 7.25 (SP009, SHLAA 1778) West of Sandy Lane, Irby	4.09	92
9	Parcel 7.26 (SP059C, SHLAA 1764) 59 Thurstaston Road, Irby	0.58	16
10	Parcel 7.26 (SP059B, SHLAA 1765) 41 Thurstaston Road, Irby	0.67	18
11	Parcel 7.26 (SP059D, SHLAA 1766) 61 Thurstaston Road, Irby	0.51	14
12	Parcel 7.27 (SP060) South of Thingwall Road, Irby	56.42	1,106

Figure 4.6: Option 2A-Dispersed Green Belt Release



Figure 4.6 Option 2A: Dispersed Green Belt Release

 Potential Dispersed Green Belt Release

See Table 4.5 for details.

4.4.4 The areas of land listed in Table 4.5 and shown on Figure 4.6 have been identified by analysing the weakly performing parcels identified in the Green Belt Review 2019 and by screening them against the existing evidence that has already been collected, which is currently summarised in Appendix 4.7⁶¹ This currently includes information from:

⁶¹ Full copies of the studies referred to Appendix 4.6 can be viewed on the consultation portal or on the Council's website

- environmental screening undertaken by the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service
- Wirral Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019
- Wirral Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019
- Wirral Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019
- Transport Accessibility Study 2019; and
- any further information on constraints from the SHLAA 2019.

4.4.5 Further site-specific work would still need to be undertaken, as indicated in Appendix 4.6, before any sites can be confirmed for final inclusion in the Local Plan, if enough 'deliverable' or 'developable' urban sites cannot be identified.

Question 4.12

Do you have any views on the sites that have been currently identified under the Dispersed Green Belt Release option, shown in Table 4.5 and on Figure 4.6?

Question 4.13

Do you think that any of the other weakly performing land identified in the Green Belt Review should be considered for release to meet any residual housing or employment requirements?

4.4.6 If you are viewing this document on the consultation portal you can view and make comments on any of the areas of land identified under Option 2A by clicking on the weblinks in Table 4.5, which will also take you to a larger scale map.

How many new homes could these parcels accommodate?

- 4.4.7 Table 4.5 demonstrates that, if taken together, the areas of land identified under the Dispersed Green Belt Release option could accommodate up to 2,900 new dwellings, with a range of site size of between 14 and 1,100 dwellings.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Option 2A: Dispersed Green Belt Release

- 4.4.8 The advantages and disadvantages of approach set out for Option 2A: Dispersed Green Belt release are set out in Table 4.6:

Table 4.6 Option 2A: Summary of advantages and disadvantages

Dispersed Release Advantages	Dispersed Release Disadvantages
Only land with weaker Green Belt contribution and value would be used.	Smaller sites may not be able to support significant improvements to local infrastructure.
Development could strengthen the vitality of a number of existing settlements, help to meet localised housing needs, make use of existing local infrastructure and may support other local improvements	Green Belt lost across a number of locations in the Borough, albeit smaller sites.
Development would only be used to 'round-off' the existing settlement patterns.	
The impact of development would be spread across the Borough, rather than being concentrated in one single location.	

- 4.4.9 An interim Transport Assessment Report which considers the transport impacts of this option is available alongside this Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document.

Question 4.14

Do you agree with our assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of a dispersed approach to releasing sites from the Green Belt under Option 2A?

Are there any other advantages or disadvantages that you believe we should take into account?

4.5 Option 2B Single Urban Extension

4.5.1 The alternative option to dispersed release is to focus development more strategically into a single larger area around an existing settlement. This option still relies on the weakly performing Green Belt areas but groups these together to identify a larger area for urban expansion. The most suitable location would be on land west of Barnston Road, Heswall.

4.5.2 The Green Belt Review Study 2019 identifies that the only areas where these groupings of weakly performing areas could occur at sufficient scale are around Heswall and Eastham. A single urban extension at Eastham has however been discounted because the constraints on this land means that significant parts would not be suitable for development. The number of sites that would potentially be suitable for development would be too small and too sparsely distributed to form a logical single urban extension of sufficient size⁶².

4.5.3 As under Option 2A, the final size of the area to be released will depend on the scale of the residual need which has not been able to be met within the urban area.

Which areas of land are currently suggested for potential release under Option 2B

4.5.4 The parcels of land that could potentially be released under Option 2B are listed in Table 4.7 and shown on Figure 4.7.

Table 4.7 Green Belt Option 2B: Single Urban Extension

Green Belt Parcel Reference	Net Developable Area (hectares) ⁶³	Estimated Capacity (Dwellings)
West of Barnston Road, Heswall		
Parcels 7.15 and 7.16 (SP062)	107.71	1,938
Parcel 7.17 (SP062A, SHLAA 0884)	17.76	320
Parcel 7.18 (SP061)	18.09	326

⁶² The reasons for this conclusion are also based on information included in Appendix 4.7

⁶³ The area of the parcel identified less any features to be retained such as woodlands, ponds, river corridors and designated sites and other land that would or could not be developed

⁶³

4.5.5 This larger area has also been identified by analysing the largest groupings of weakly performing parcels identified in the Green Belt Review 2019 and by screening them against the existing evidence that has already been collected, which is currently summarised in Appendix 4.6.

4.5.6 Further site-specific work would, again, still need to be undertaken, as indicated in Appendix 4.6, before any of this larger area could be confirmed for final inclusion in the Local Plan, if enough 'deliverable' or 'developable' urban sites cannot be identified.

Figure 4.7: Option 2B-Single Urban Extension



Figure 4.7 Option 2B: Single Urban Extension

 Potential Single Urban Extension Sites

Please see Table 4.7 for further details.

How many new homes could this single larger area accommodate?

- 4.5.7 Table 4.7 demonstrates that the larger area identified under the Single Urban Extension option could also accommodate up to 2,500 new dwellings.

Question 4.15

Do you have any views on the areas that have been currently identified for the single large scale urban extension, shown in Table 4.7 and on Figure 4.7?

Question 4.16

Are there any other areas that you think should be considered for a single large scale urban extension to meet any residual housing or employment requirements?

- 4.5.8 If you are viewing this document on the consultation portal you can view and make comments on the areas of land identified under Option 2B by clicking on the weblinks in Table 4.7, which will also take you to a larger scale map.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Option 2B: Single Urban Extension

- 4.5.9 The advantages and disadvantages of approach set out for Option 2B: Single Urban Extension are set out in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8 Option 2B: Summary of advantages and disadvantages

Single Urban Extension Advantages	Single Urban Extension Disadvantages
Any impacts would be concentrated within only one area of the Borough	It will take longer to develop homes on a larger site.
A larger site would be better able to plan for and support any necessary improvements to local infrastructure and secure a sustainable pattern of development	The impact of construction would be prolonged
Provision would make a major contribution to the overall housing need and supply of housing, including affordable housing.	Comprehensive land assembly may be more difficult to achieve

	Significant investment is likely to be required in supporting necessary infrastructure.
The allocation of a single strategic parcel of land would allow the integrity of the remainder of the Green Belt protected.	

- 4.5.10 An interim Transport Assessment Report which considers the transport impacts of this option is available alongside this Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document.

Question 4.17

Do you agree with our assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of a more concentrated approach to releasing a single urban extension from the Green Belt under Option 2B? Are there any other advantages or disadvantages that you believe we should take into account?

Question 4.18

Do you agree with our preferred approach to meeting demands in Wirral through Urban Intensification?

Question 4.19

If it was necessary to supplement urban intensification by releasing land from the Green Belt, would you prefer to see a dispersed release of land, a single larger urban extension, or a hybrid of the two options, and why?

Question 4.20

Do you have an alternative option you would like to propose that would also meet the housing and employment land requirements for Wirral over the Plan period?

4.5.11 A summary of the Spatial Options is shown below.



Option 1A: Urban Intensification
Between 10,300 and 14,800 homes
within the plan period



Increasing Densities
Potential for increased
urban area dwellings
within the plan period



Birkenhead
Potential for 26,000sqm of
office space with a new civic
hub, public realm and housing

Wirral Waters



Up to **4,500** homes
within the plan period



Potential for a further
9,000 homes beyond

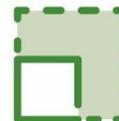


Over **620,000sqm** office, retail,
hotel, leisure and community space

Only if urban housing supply falls below 12,750



Option 2A: Green Belt Dispersed
Potential for up to 2,900
dwellings within the plan period



Option 2B: Green Belt Urban Extension
Potential for 2,500 dwellings
within the plan period

5 Our Homes

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Section 2.3 of this Local Plan Issues and Options document has set out the local housing need for the plan period and how this has been calculated. This concludes that we have to plan for 12,000 net additional homes over the Plan period to 2035.
- 5.1.2 This chapter therefore considers how the Local Plan will seek to provide for the size, type, and tenure of different housing that has been identified as needed for different groups in the Borough and where it should be located based on the strategic context that has already been set out in the earlier Chapters of this document.
- 5.1.3 The Council's principal source of evidence for the policies that will be proposed to be included in the Local Plan under this Chapter, is the draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) undertaken by specialist consultancy Arc4 in 2019, which has been published for public consultation alongside this Local Plan Issues and Options document.

5.2 Overall Mix of Housing

- 5.2.1 The overall mix of housing likely to be needed by existing and future households in the Borough is summarised by dwelling type, size and tenure (by percentage of dwellings required) in Table 5.1 below.
- 5.2.2 The figures are based on a detailed assessment of the relationship between households and dwellings and how this is expected to change over the Plan period to 2035, assuming that 70% of new homes would be for sale in the market and that 30% would be affordable. The overall percentage of the different size and type of properties that will be needed across the Borough as a whole, is set out in the final column.

Table 5.1 Overall Annual Dwelling Mix Based on Standard Method Outputs From 2020 to 2035 (percentage of properties required)⁶⁴

Dwelling type/size	Tenure Market (70%)	Affordable (30%)	Overall
1 and 2-bedroom house	0.7	20.8	6.7
3-bedroom house	39.4	21.8	34.1
4 or more-bedroom house	24.4	7.3	19.3
1-bedroom flat	1.6	13.6	5.2
2 and 3-bedroom flat	17.3	14.2	16.3
1-bedroom bungalow	3.0	2.7	3.0
2-bedroom bungalow	7.6	13.9	9.5

⁶⁴ Draft Wirral Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019

3 or more-bedroom bungalow	6.2	3.7	5.5
Other	-0.3	2.1	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Dwelling type	Market (70%)	Affordable (30%)	Overall
House	64.5	49.8	60.1
Flat	18.9	27.7	21.5
Bungalow⁶⁵	16.9	20.3	17.9
Other	-0.3	2.1	0.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of bedrooms	Market (70%)	Affordable (30%)	Overall
1	4.4	16.5	8.1
2	24.4	48.7	31.7
3	46.7	27.5	40.9
4	24.4	7.3	19.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Base	548	235	783

⁶⁵ Or level access accommodation

Our Preferred Approach

Our preferred approach will be to seek to deliver an appropriate mix of dwelling size and type across the Borough through a Local Plan policy and/or specific site allocations for new housing based on the following dwelling mix:

**1-bedroom (8%)
2-bedroom (32%)
3-bedroom (41%)
four or more-bedroom 19%**

**60% houses
22% flats
18% bungalows (or level-access accommodation)**

The implementation of any policy for dwelling type and mix will need to be assessed and agreed on a case by case basis, based on the location and site characteristics. Applicants, particularly on larger more viable sites, will need to show why they cannot meet these proportions, if they propose to vary from them. The Council may also consider if internal layouts should meet the Nationally Prescribed Technical Space Standards.

The policy will be subject to high-level viability appraisal before being included in the final draft Local Plan and will be implemented through site allocations and through conditions and obligations attached to planning permissions.

Question 5.1

Do you agree with our preferred approach to seeking to ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling type and size by requiring developers to take account of the proportions set out, while taking account of any site-specific opportunities or constraints, which could also include the need for a higher density of development on appropriate sites? If not, what alternative approach would you suggest and why?

5.3 Affordable Housing Need

- 5.3.1 The scale of the need for affordable housing has been assessed based on housing register data and a household survey undertaken in late 2019. The assessment takes account of the requirements of The National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance, balances the current supply of affordable housing with future need and the cost of buying and renting on the open market.
- 5.3.2 The assessment concludes that for the Plan period, 17.2% of new affordable dwellings should have one-bedroom, 46.8% two-bedrooms, 29.7% three-bedrooms and 6.3% four or more-bedrooms. The SHMA 2019 also recommends an overall split of 60% rented and 40% intermediate tenure. The delivery of these types and sizes of homes would have to be secured through site allocations and through conditions and obligations attached to planning permissions for market housing.
- 5.3.3 Paragraph 34 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that any contributions expected from development should not undermine the deliverability of the plan.
- 5.3.4 The Council's latest Economic Viability Study Update 2018 tested the viability of providing affordable housing on a range brownfield and greenfield sites in different locations in the Borough at 10%, 20%, 30% and 40%. The findings indicate that it may be necessary to require different levels of affordable housing to be provided on different types of site, in different areas of the Borough, to reflect the range of values and viability in each area of the Borough (see also Section 0).
- 5.3.5 A final judgement on what will be viable to require and where can only be made once the full range of likely Local Plan requirements have been agreed and assessed and will be included in the draft Local Plan, taking account of any comments submitted, based on the viability assessment to be prepared alongside the draft Local Plan.

Our Preferred Approach

Our preferred approach will be to seek to achieve up to 30% affordable housing⁶⁶ on all schemes of 10 or more dwellings⁶⁷, with the following dwelling mix, on a 60% rented and 40% intermediate basis, unless a high-level viability assessment shows that this would not be viable within a certain type of location or development⁶⁸:

- **17% of new affordable dwellings should have one-bedroom;**
- **47% of new affordable dwellings should have two-bedrooms;**
- **30% of new affordable dwellings should have three-bedrooms; and**
- **6% of new affordable dwellings should have four or more-bedrooms.**

Our preferred approach will be to accommodate this requirement as part of the scheme to be developed on each site but in some cases a commuted sum, equivalent to the cost of providing the same affordable requirement off-site, may be appropriate, secured through a legal agreement attached to the planning permission for the development proposed.

The policy will be subject to high-level viability appraisal before being included in the draft final Local Plan and will be secured through site allocations and through conditions and obligations attached to planning permissions.

⁶⁶ NPPF paragraph 64 states that where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect at least 10% of the homes to be available for affordable home ownership as part of the overall affordable housing contribution from the site unless this would significantly prejudice the ability to meet the identified affordable housing needs of specific groups.

⁶⁷ NPPF paragraph 63 states that provision of affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments, other than in designated rural areas and that to support the re-use of brownfield land, where vacant buildings are being reused or redeveloped, any affordable housing contribution should be reduced by a proportionate amount equivalent to the existing gross floorspace of the existing buildings.

⁶⁸ NPPF paragraph 57 states that it will be up to the applicant to demonstrate whether particular circumstances justify the need for a viability assessment at the application stage

Question 5.2

Do you agree with our preferred approach of seeking to achieve up to 30% affordable housing from all new developments of 10 dwellings or over, subject to viability, based on the mix of size and tenure recommended in the SHMA 2019? If not, what alternative approach would you suggest and why?

5.4 The Needs of Other Groups

- 5.4.1 The Draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019 (SHMA) also considers the future need for specialist accommodation, the need for residential care institutions and the role of general housing in meeting needs, in particular bungalows and homes that can be adapted to meet a future change in needs.
- 5.4.2 The number of households in the Borough headed by someone aged 65 or over is expected to increase by 13,579 (+22.4%) by 2035. According to the household survey, the majority of older people (79.1%), 65 and over want to continue to live in their current home with support when needed, with help with repair/maintenance, gardening, cleaning and other practical tasks, which would help people remain in their own home. However, the household survey also points to a need to deliver a range of smaller dwellings (particularly bungalows/level access accommodation) for older people in the general market and for specialist housing provision.
- 5.4.3 Across the Borough, there are currently around 8,238 units of specialist older persons accommodation. This includes 2,719 units of residential care (C2) dwellings and 5,519 specialist older persons dwellings (C3). It is estimated that an additional 2,799 units of specialist older person (C3) and 1,330 units of residential care (C2) will be required by 2035. The SHMA does not specify the precise nature of specialist older person dwellings to be built. This is to allow flexibility in delivery and because national guidance currently states that *'any single development may contain a range of different types of specialist housing'*⁶⁹
- 5.4.4 The key conclusion is that there needs to be a broader housing offer for older people across the Borough and the SHMA has provided evidence of scale and range of dwellings needed.
- 5.4.5 In addition, the Draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019 (SHMA) indicates that 22.7% of residents in households are estimated to have a disability and 21.8% of residents in households have their activities limited in some way but only around 9.1% of households live in properties which

⁶⁹ PPG June 2019 Paragraph: 010 Reference ID: 63-010-20190626

have either been purpose-built or adapted for someone with an illness or disability. There is also a need for 1,252 wheelchair accessible dwellings.

- 5.4.6 While some adaptations will continue outside the planning system, with changes only being controlled through Building Regulations, there is an opportunity for the Local Plan to 'opt in' to requiring new properties to be provided at a higher standard under the Building Regulations, where there is clear evidence of local need and where it can be shown to be viable to do so.

Our Preferred Approach

Based on the evidence of need set out in the Draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019, our Preferred Approach is:

- **To continue to encourage the provision of specialist housing for older people on appropriate sites with easy access to local services; and**
- **To include a policy in the Local Plan to require that all schemes of 10 or more dwellings make suitable provision for M4(3) wheelchair user at 6% and for M4(2) accessible and adaptable dwellings at 20%.**

The policy will be subject to high-level viability appraisal before being included in the draft Final Local Plan and will be secured through site allocations and through conditions and obligations attached to planning permissions.

Question 5.3

Do you agree with our approach to the provision of specialist housing for older people and for ensuring that a proportion of all new homes meet optional accessibility standards? If not, what alternative approach would you suggest could be adopted?

5.5 Empty Properties

Policy Review

- 5.5.1 In response to the position outlined in Section 2.3, the Council is proposing to include an allowance for the re-use of empty homes as part of the Local Plan's future housing supply over the Plan period.
- 5.5.2 This is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). For example, NPPF paragraph 117 states that "planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses" and that "strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land."
- 5.5.3 Similarly, NPPF paragraph 118 (d) states that policies should "promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively" and footnote 45 states that "As part of this approach, plans and decisions should support efforts to identify and bring back into residential use empty homes and other buildings, supported by the use of compulsory purchase powers where appropriate."

Proposed Future Policy Options

- 5.5.4 A recent study has confirmed that empty homes can and have formed part of the housing supply elsewhere in the country and that this has been supported by Planning Inspectors at examination in plans that have already been found sound⁷⁰. The study recommends that empty homes in Wirral could in future contribute between 1,125 and 1,425 homes over the Plan period 2020-2035, depending on the option chosen. Three options are being considered, which are summarised below.
- 5.5.5 Homes that have been vacant for up to 6 months will continue to be considered as normal part of market turnover. Long term empty properties, which have been vacant for over 6 months, will however be considered as having left the market and their return to active use will be counted as additional housing supply.

⁷⁰ ARUP Empty Homes Report 2019 refers

5.5.6 The Council already has a successful Empty Homes Programme, which includes a range of support to property owners, including grant, which has enabled an average of 197 long term empty dwellings brought back into use annually over the past eight years (see Table 5.2). It is estimated that there is still an estimated stock of 2,097 long term empty homes in Wirral in 2018 (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.2 Number of Long Term Empty Properties Brought Back into Use in Wirral

2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
141	165	150	215	207	238	238	226

Table 5.3 Total All Long Term Vacant Dwellings in Wirral

2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
2,941	2,982	2,609	2,495	2,219	2,047	2,208	2,014	1,936	2,097

5.5.7 The Wirral Local Plan Empty Homes Study, which has been published for consultation alongside this Local Plan Issues and Options document, sets out a number of potential options for including long term empty homes brought back into use as part of the Local Plan housing supply as follows:

- Option 1: Assume a static figure of 75 dwellings each year for long term empty homes brought back into use within each year of the Local Plan. This option has the potential to add 1,125 dwellings over the Plan period.
- Option 2: Assume a higher static figure of 95 empty homes brought back into use within each year of the Plan period. This option has the potential to add 1,425 dwellings over the Plan period.
- Option 3: Assume a tapered delivery of long term empty homes being brought back in to use, starting with 100 empty homes in the first five years, reducing to 90 empty homes in years 6 to 10 and to 80 empty homes in years 11 to 15. This option has the potential to add 1,350 dwellings over the Plan period.

5.5.8 Option 3 is the option that is recommended to be adopted in the Wirral Local Plan, taking local circumstances and best practice into account.

Implications for the Local Plan

5.5.9 Bringing empty homes back and maximising the efficient use of the existing dwelling stock into use is a key priority for the Council and the Council will continue to work to bring empty homes back into use throughout the Plan period.

- 5.5.10 Option 3 is recommended, because the assumed target levels are likely to be realistic and achievable, reflect existing national policy and best practice and the likely availability of financial support and reflect the hope that the number of long term empty homes will reduce over time.
- 5.5.11 The number of long term empty homes returning to use will continue to be subject to annual monitoring and will be reflected in future housing assessments, with any fluctuations in delivery reflected in the allowance for windfalls prior to a Local Plan review.

Our Preferred Approach

Our preferred approach is to include an allowance for the return of long term empty homes as part of the future housing land supply, which will allow for the tapered delivery set out under Option 3 above, equivalent to 1,350 additional homes over the Plan period.

Our preferred approach will also include a positive policy framework by including a Local Plan policy which will say:

“The Council will support proposals for bringing suitable empty homes and buildings back into residential use. Where changes require planning permission, the Council will work proactively with applicants to progress applications, to ensure that any changes proposed meet the requirements of any other relevant Local Plan policies.”

Question 5.4

Do you have any views on our preferred approach for promoting the re-use of empty homes and buildings to provide for additional housing within the Plan period?

Question 5.5

Do you think there is anything else that the Council could do to promote the reuse of empty homes within the Local Plan?

5.6 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People

What is required of us

- 5.6.1 National policy requires a local plan to consider and address the housing needs of different groups in the community, including the needs of gypsies and travellers and of travelling showpeople.
- 5.6.2 The Planning Policy for Travellers (PPTS, 2015), cross referenced from the National Planning Policy Framework, now defines a gypsy or traveller as *“Persons of nomadic habit of life whatever their race or origin, including such persons who on grounds only of their own or their family’s or dependants’ educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excluding members of an organised group of travelling show people or circus people travelling together as such”*.
- 5.6.3 The PPTS now also defines travelling show people as “Members of a group organised for the purposes of holding fairs, circuses or shows (whether or not travelling together as such). This includes such persons who on the grounds of their own or their family’s or dependants’ more localised pattern of trading, educational or health needs or old age have ceased to travel temporarily, but excludes Gypsies and Travellers as defined above”.

What does the evidence tell us?

- 5.6.4 The Wirral Local Plan Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2019 (GTAA), which replaces the previous 2014 Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment for Merseyside and West Lancashire, has sought to understand these needs through engagement with members of the Travelling Community.
- 5.6.5 The Wirral Local Plan Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2019 found that the main need identified in Wirral was from a single extended family group, some of which have joined Wirral’s housing register for affordable housing in Wirral and therefore recommended that the needs identified should be able to be met through the Council’s general housing policies.
- 5.6.6 No Travelling Showpeople were identified in Wirral, so there is no current or future need for additional plots.
- 5.6.7 The GTAA also did not identify a need for the Council to consider any transit provision at this time due to the number and nature of recorded encampments.

- 5.6.8 The study nevertheless recommended that the situation relating to levels of unauthorised encampments by households that meet the new definition of a Traveller should be continually monitored and that, in line with national policy, a criteria-based policy should be put in place for any Gypsy or travelling households that might seek to develop a site in Wirral during the Plan period.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

Based on the findings of the Wirral Local Plan Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2019, our preferred approach is to include a criteria-based policy in the Local Plan similar to the policy already consulted upon as part of the preparation of the previous Core Strategy Local Plan, which was published in December 2012 and modified in December 2014⁷¹.

The needs of households who no longer meet the planning definition will be addressed as part of general housing need and through separate Local Plan Policies for housing.

Question 5.6

Do you agree with our preferred approach to meeting any future housing needs for Gypsies and Travellers, if they arise during the Plan period? If not, what alternative approach do you think we should follow?

5.7 Primarily Residential Areas

- 5.7.1 The Council has also reviewed the boundaries to the Primarily Residential Areas designated in the previous Unitary Development Plan Proposals Maps, which show the areas where development that would be appropriate within a residential area should be permitted.
- 5.7.2 The revised boundaries would be shown on the Policies Map prepared to accompany the Local Plan and can be viewed on the Council's website at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy>.

⁷¹ Policy CS24 – Gypsies and Travellers, which can be viewed at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/core-strategy-local-plan/further> refers

- 5.7.3 The boundaries will be accompanied by a policy setting out the types of development that will normally be permitted within the Primarily Residential Areas and set criteria for the control of non-residential uses that may come forward within the Area, similar to Policy HS15 in the existing Unitary Development Plan⁷². It may also be supported by policies to implement the findings of the Density Study mentioned in Section 0.

Question 5.7

Do you agree with the boundaries to the Primarily Residential Areas that the Council proposes to include on the new Local Plan Policy Map? If not, please say where they should be revised and why?

5.8 Houses in Multiple Occupation

What is required of us

- 5.8.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 28 indicates that non-strategic policies should be used by local planning authorities and communities to set out more detailed policies for specific areas, neighbourhoods or types of development.
- 5.8.2 NPPF paragraph 127 also indicates that policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area over its lifetime;
 - are sympathetic to local character and history;
 - optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate and mix of development; and
 - should create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

⁷² Policy HS15 can be viewed at <https://ww3.wirral.gov.uk/udp/oneudp1.asp?id=HS15>

What our evidence tells us

- 5.8.3 Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) can provide cheaper accommodation for people whose housing options are limited. HMOs can also be occupied by the most vulnerable people in society.
- 5.8.4 Most planning applications are for the conversion of premises that were not built for multiple occupation, and the risk of overcrowding in unsuitable accommodation can be greater than with other types of housing.
- 5.8.5 HMOs can provide an affordable type of accommodation and contribute to the overall mix of housing types and tenures. However, it is also recognised that high concentrations of HMOs can have adverse impacts on the character and amenity of the area from noise, nuisance and achieving or maintaining a balanced sustainable community.

Our Preferred Approach

The Council wants to support the provision of housing in multiple occupation in well-designed premises that can achieve safe and healthy living conditions with a high standard of amenity for future occupiers where unacceptable impacts on the neighbour's amenity and the character of the area would be avoided.

Our approach is to include a criteria-based policy in the Local Plan as set out in Appendix 5.1. The policy sets out minimum room sizes and the basic amenities that should be provided.

It also includes similar criteria to Policy HS14 in the current Unitary Development Plan, to protect the character and amenity of the area.

Question 5.8

Do you agree with the Draft Policy for Houses in Multiple Occupation, which the Council proposes to use in the determination of planning applications as set out in Appendix 5.1? If not, please say how it should be revised and why?

6 Our Economy

6.1 Employment

What is required of us?

6.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future (paragraph 80 refers). Paragraph 81 states that *“planning policies should:*

- a) set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;
- b) set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;
- c) seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and
- d) be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.”

6.1.2 To achieve this, plan-making bodies should take a proactive role in identifying and helping to bring forward land that may be suitable for meeting development needs, using the full range of powers available to them. (The National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 119 refers).

What our evidence tells us

6.1.3 Section 2.5 identifies the need to find at least 80 hectares of employment land to provide for the likely growth in the Wirral economy based on the latest economic forecasts undertaken on behalf of the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership, as set out in the Liverpool City

Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA)

- 6.1.4 The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (WELPS) (2017) considered the Borough's existing portfolio of available sites, to recommend which sites should be retained and allocated for future employment use in the Local Plan. The Strategic approach to determining Wirral's employment land demand and supply balance was framed by three key objectives including:
- protect and provide good quality sites suitable for employment uses with the greatest prospect of delivery over the Local Plan period and to respond to areas of strong market demand, principally Bromborough;
 - remove policy protection for employment designations and de-allocate poorer quality sites that don't meet business needs, and those which have significant deliverability and viability issues; and
 - distinguish between meeting Wirral's Local Business needs and those strategic requirements generated by the wider Liverpool City Region and Inward Investment.
- 6.1.5 In total, 93 sites were assessed, covering 237 ha (gross) of land. The recommended employment land supply comprises 41 sites with a combined net developable area of 59.5 ha, as set out in Section 6.2 and summarised in Table 6.1 below. The majority of the recommended supply relates to 8 retained Employment Development Sites and 26 retained Primarily Industrial Area designations. A further four potential sites were considered suitable employment sites and are recommended to be allocated for industrial B-Class use. The Borough's employment land supply also consists of three extant planning permissions with a total of 0.2 ha net developable area for B- Class employment use.
- 6.1.6 Discounted from this recommended employment land supply (but retained in the overall portfolio) were 13 Wirral Waters sites of strategic importance to the wider Liverpool City Region, 12 sites appropriate for mixed use development, and 17 sites safeguarded for long term employment use. The mixed-use sites may contribute additional B-Class employment space within the plan period, but by their very nature the quantum of this cannot be accurately predicted in advance of planning applications being submitted, however they are likely to predominantly provide for B1a/b/c and related uses.

**Table 6.1 Summary of Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (WELPS) (2017)
Employment Land Supply Recommendations**

Employment land portfolio recommendations	No of sites	Gross ha	Net ha
Recommended retained and allocated sites and new	38	85.3	59.4
Employment Development Site – retain designation	8	26.1	23.2
Primarily Industrial Area – retain designation	26	38.7	23.3
Potential site – allocate for B-Class employment	4	20.3	12.9
Extant planning permissions	3	-	0.2
Recommended employment land supply (excluding Green Belt, mixed use, safeguarded and Wirral Waters)	41	85.3	59.5
Mixed use sites	12	17.1	16.3
Employment Development Site – release for mixed use	5	10.0	9.8
Primarily Industrial Area – release for mixed use development	5	4.9	4.3
Potential site – allocate for mixed use development	2	2.2	2.1
Safeguarded expansion land	17	52.9	38.
Wirral Waters sites	13	53.2	29.
Of which B-Class employment	5	26.5	22.
Of which safeguarded for long term employment use	1	2.0	0.0
Of which mixed use development	7	24.7	7.1
	83		

6.1.7 The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (WELPS, December 2017) assessed the extent to which the recommended supply would meet the needs arising from the Baseline, Growth and Past Completions scenarios (discussed in Chapter 2 of this document). The results are shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 WELPS Demand and supply balance

Scenario	B1	B2	Small scale B8	Total	Margin	Total + Margin	Surplus (Total + Margin - Overall portfolio, at 143.6 ha net)	Total + Margin - Recommended supply at 59.5 ha net
Baseline scenario (6,600 FTEs)	13.44	6.78	0	20.22	13.8	34.02	+109.6	+25.5
Growth scenario (11,500 FTEs)	17.1	7.44	0	24.6	13.8	38.4	+105.2	+21.1
Past completions	15.66	53.4	8.7	77.76	0	77.76	+65.8	-18.26

6.1.8 The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (2017) recommended employment land supply of 59.5 hectares would still be able to accommodate the needs arising from the Baseline and Growth scenarios, with a slight surplus of employment land which could be re-allocated to alternative uses within the Plan period.

6.1.9 Under the Past Completions scenario there would, however, continue to be a shortfall of approximately 20 hectares within the Plan period, against a total potential need of 80 hectares, which would have to be found from sites elsewhere within the urban area, subject to suitability, viability and infrastructure considerations. However, the Council has commissioned a further assessment of the employment land supply (including the role of Wirral Waters sites, which were excluded from the WELPS recommended employment land supply). The outcome of this review is discussed below.

Accommodating Growth

6.1.10 The Council is seeking to meet its employment needs in the following areas: Birkenhead & Wallasey and Bromborough & Eastham market areas, as highlighted within the evidence base as these areas have the strongest market demand. There is also a role for existing employment sites and centres such as Moreton and Upton to provide for future employment needs, as well as rural areas in West Wirral to support their ongoing economic sustainability. The National Planning Policy Framework places significant importance on making efficient use of land to support economic growth and productivity. Further to this, the framework promotes development of under-utilised land and buildings to meet need.

- 6.1.11 There is a focus on delivering Use Class B1 and B2 employment developments to meet the current demand within the Borough. There is a significant proportion of small poor-quality sites within Birkenhead and Wallasey, where there is demand from Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs) for smaller sites. The future employment space should focus on accommodating SMEs wanting modern small Use Class B1 and B2 employment space within Birkenhead.
- 6.1.12 It is important that future employment growth is directed towards key transport corridors such as the A41 and rail corridor to take advantage of accessibility, connectivity and to provide flexible space for SMEs. Wirral has a significant net out-flow of commuters and therefore there is a challenge to consider the workforce location compared to employment locations within the Wirral⁷³.
- 6.1.13 Furthermore, the Liverpool City Region Large Scale Employment Site Assessment Study found that the Wirral is not optimally located for distribution uses due to its relatively poor connectivity to the rest of the City Region or to the M6⁷⁴. It is considered that land with good road network access is the most desirable across the existing industrial stock.
- 6.1.14 The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (December 2017) identified that Wirral currently has approximately 1.45 million sqm of employment floorspace, as of 2017, of which 85% is industrial. In the first five years of the plan period the employment land supply is expected to be predominantly provided by smaller infill sites in the Birkenhead & Wallasey and Bromborough & Eastham market areas. In the medium and longer term most of the employment land supply is expected to be provided in the Bromborough and Eastham market area.
- 6.1.15 For key market areas the net developable area within Bromborough & Eastham is 39.9 ha over 17 sites, and 16.6ha over 15 sites for Birkenhead & Wallasey during from 2018 to 2033, as stated in the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (2017). However, this does not take into account any viability concerns. In addition, Wirral has the second largest amount of available office space within Liverpool City Region, as identified in the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment. However, the majority of current supply is second hand and poor-quality stock highlighting a clear regeneration challenge for Birkenhead and Wallasey where most of this stock is situated.

⁷³ Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (2017)

⁷⁴ Avison Young (2019) Employment Land Options Study DRAFT

Employment Land Options Study 2019

- 6.1.16 Wirral Council commissioned the Employment Land Options Study (ELOS) in 2019 to:
- a) review the existing local and sub-regional economic evidence base;
 - b) assess key employment sites to determine whether they continue to be suitable and deliverable employment sites having regard to specific site characteristics, constraints, market demand, local economic requirements and trends;
 - c) review the thirteen strategic sites at Wirral Waters assessed as part of the WELPS to consider which sites, if any, could be reclassified as part of the deliverable employment land supply.
 - d) assess the cumulative impact of any sites recommended for release for alternative use on the quantitative and qualitative supply of employment land required to meet the emerging Local Plan requirements; and
 - e) subject to (c), provide an assessment of the most suitable location for meeting any shortfall in quantitative and / or qualitative supply including Green Belt locations.
- 6.1.17 The Employment Land Options Study 2019 (ELOS) assessed several sites within the Wirral International Business Park (WIBP) previously assessed in the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (December 2017) (WELPS). The ELOS acknowledged that the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment identifies strategic potential for employment development within this area for Use Class B8 uses in the future – including potential waterfront access. It also acknowledged that the WELPS identifies the WIBP as being a flagship business location, and that large industrial development is likely to be viable within the Bromborough and Eastham market area.
- 6.1.18 The Employment Land Options Study 2019 identified a number of constraints which limit the potential for non-employment uses including contamination, adjoining heavy industrial activities (including chemicals and waste activities), and concerns regarding potential viability, sustainability, social infrastructure and amenity provision considered necessary to create sustainable communities. These issues could only be addressed through a future comprehensive masterplan approach. The only exceptions were three sites (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2019) sites 1713, 1713 and 1730), the former D1 Oils site, and adjacent expansion land to the east which are being promoted for residential development. None of these sites were recommended in the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (2017) for inclusion in the declared employment land supply for allocation in the Local Plan.

- 6.1.19 While mixed use development would not be envisaged within the Plan period, these three sites are being promoted for a residential-only scheme (c.1250 dwellings) which if progressed would lead to the sites being removed from the employment land portfolio. The Employment Land Options Study 2019 (2019) (ELOS) is supportive of the release of these sites in principle for residential development. In addition, in relation to the former Croda site at the far north of the Wirral International Business Park, the ELOS is supportive of the balance of this site being developed for residential use. The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (2017) had already concluded that as the site is under construction and considered to be fully developed, it does not form part of the Borough's future employment land supply.
- 6.1.20 At the southern end of the Wirral International Business Park, the Employment Land Options Study 2019 (ELOS) considered three sites, north and south of Old Hall Road (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) references 1719 (Riverside Park), 1715 (former MoD tank farm), and 2061(former Epichem)). The ELOS noted that these sites are known to have been subject of residential interest in recent years – in particular site 1719 upon which there is notable planning history relating to historic promotion of the site for residential development. The ELOS recognised that if released collectively these sites are likely to have significant residential market appeal. The ELOS site assessment further noted that such release would likely impact upon the employment appeal of adjacent sites – including the business area located immediately between 1715 and 1719. The assessment considered it likely that this additional land would be lost to employment use if sites 1719, and 1715 and/or 2061 were released for residential development.
- 6.1.21 The Employment Land Options Study 2019 ELOS was cognisant of the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA) and Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (2017) (WELPS) analysis, which clearly identifies the Wirral International Business Park (WIBP) as an important established employment location for Wirral. The ELOS recognised that viability for employment development at the southern end of the WIBP is heavily influenced by a requirement to repay monies paid by the public sector to enable historic remediation (to support employment development). The ELOS also noted that work has been undertaken separately in relation to SHLAA site 1715 (former MoD tank farm) to test viability for employment development - which identifies a gap funding requirement for delivery. This has been further tested in terms of its deliverability through the Wirral Growth Company, which has drawn the same conclusion.

- 6.1.22 Given the noted wider employment supply conclusions resulting from the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (2017) (WELPS) process, the Employment Land Options Study 2019 (ELOS) concluded, however, that the Council could consider release of the sites 1715 and 1719 for residential development – subject to addressing constraints relating to Health and Safety Executive restrictions on development in the area. Part of SHLAA site 1715 is required for adjacent business expansion and access (subject to current negotiations), which should be removed from any release, and protected as safeguarded expansion land in the Local Plan.
- 6.1.23 The Employment Land Options Study 2019 (ELOS) also re-assessed the approach adopted in the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (2017) (WELPS) to sites within Wirral Waters, which the WELPS identified as a 'strategic' employment land supply for the wider Liverpool City Region, rather than forming part of the declared employment land supply for allocation in the Local Plan (although retained in the overall portfolio of employment land). The ELOS concluded that given the evolution of the Wirral Waters proposals since the WELPS was commissioned, it is no longer necessary to distinguish between strategic requirements and general employment land supply and recommended that sites within Wirral Waters either be reclassified as forming part of the declared employment land supply for allocation in the Local Plan or allocated for mixed use development.
- 6.1.24 The cumulative impact of the recommendations of the Employment Land Options Study 2019 (ELOS) in relation to the sites in the Wirral International Business Park would be a reduction in the overall portfolio of employment land of 31.9HA, of which 9.88 HA formed part of the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study (2017) (WELPS) recommended employment supply for allocation in the Local Plan. However, the loss of 9.88HA could be offset by the ELOS recommendation that sites in Wirral Waters, totalling 26.37 HA, could now be treated as part of the recommended employment land supply for allocation in the Local Plan.

6.2 Provisions for Future Employment Growth

- 6.2.1 This document contains an interim list of 36 urban sites for proposed allocation for employment B-class uses (listed in section 4 as part of the Council's preferred option). Collectively these sites will exceed the required 80 ha Local Plan requirement.
- 6.2.2 These sites are drawn from the Wirral Employment Land Study (WELPS) and the more recent Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and take account of the recent ELOS recommendations as set out above.

- 6.2.3 A revised employment land supply and set of proposed allocations will be brought forward in the proposed draft Final Local Plan (Regulation 19) later in 2020 taking account of any comments received through this consultation.

Our Preferred Approach

The council will seek to allocate a minimum of 80ha of employment land with employment growth and economic revitalisation focusing on the key employment areas at Birkenhead, Bromborough and Eastham. Development will be supported in these locations whereby:

- **The employment space caters for small and medium sized enterprises for B1 and B2 uses; or**
- **Significant B1 office development is directed towards existing centres and then to existing employment areas and other locations with easy access to high-frequency public transport corridors.**

The proposed release of some employment sites in the Bromborough area for residential development will be balanced out by the inclusion of sites in Wirral Waters as part of the employment land supply for allocation in the Local Plan.

Alternative Approach

The council will allocate 80ha of employment land within defined employment zones in urban locations across the borough, with a focus on locations around transport hubs and primary road networks to maximise accessibility, to support local economic need and expansion of existing businesses.

Question 6.1

Do you agree with our preferred or the alternative approach to meet current and future employment demands in Wirral for everyone in our community?

Question 6.2

Do you agree with the proposed release of some employment land in Bromborough for housing (as set out in paragraphs 6.1.19 and 6.1.22)?

Question 6.3

Do you agree that strategic employment land at Wirral Waters should be made available for general employment use?

Protection of Existing Employment Areas

- 6.2.4 The Council has also reviewed the boundaries to the Primarily Industrial Areas designated on the previous Unitary Development Plan Proposals Maps, which show the areas where development that would be appropriate within an industrial or commercial area should be permitted.
- 6.2.5 The revised boundaries would be shown on the Policy Map prepared to accompany the Local Plan and can be viewed on the Council's website.
- 6.2.6 The boundaries will be accompanied by a policy setting out the types of development that will normally be permitted within the Primarily Industrial Areas, similar to Policy EM8 in the existing Unitary Development Plan⁷⁵. The new policy could also be designed to accommodate a wider range of uses within Primarily Industrial Areas, while safeguarding the needs of existing businesses who, for example, wish to vacate older stock and move into more modern premises, such that the efficient use of the Boroughs employment land portfolio is maximised.

⁷⁵ Policy EM8 can be viewed at <https://ww3.wirral.gov.uk/udp/oneudp1.asp?id=EM8>

Our Preferred Approach

The council will seek to protect all sites currently in use, or allocated, for employment and resist development change of use to ensure continuation of employment uses for those sites. The council will specifically seek to protect employment land on:

- **land used, or allocated, in strategic employment areas;**
- **land where there is market demand for employment uses; and**
- **land allocated for employment in rural areas which meets local needs.**

The council will only consider re-allocating employment sites for other uses where it is demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of the site being utilised for employment uses, and it is demonstrated that demand for employment land can be met in a more sustainable location.

Alternative Approach

The council will not take forward a policy to protect existing employment land and will let the market determine future use, taking account of tests for sustainable development.

Question 6.4

Do you agree with the boundaries to the Primarily Industrial Areas that the Council proposes to include on the new Local Plan Policy Map? If not, please say where they should be revised and why?

Question 6.5

What is your view of providing for a wider range of uses within these Areas and which uses do you think should be included?

Question 6.6

Do you agree with the Council's preferred approach to protect all sites currently in use, or allocated, for employment and resist development change of use to ensure continuation of employment uses for those sites? Or

Do you think that the alternative approach whereby the Council will not take forward a policy to protect existing employment land and will let the market determine future use, taking account of tests for sustainable development should be adopted?

6.3 Town Centres and Retail

What is required of us?

- 6.3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation, stating that (Paragraph 85 refers): "*Planning policies should:*
- a) *define a network and hierarchy of centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters;*
 - b) *define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre;*
 - c) *retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones;*
 - d) *allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead;*

- e) *where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for town centre uses, allocated appropriate edge of centre sites that are well connected to the town centre. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, policies should explain how identified needs can be met in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre; and*
- f) *recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites*

Local Planning Authorities should apply the sequential test to support the viability and vitality of town centres by placing existing town centres foremost in both plan making and decision taking...”

What our evidence tells us

Retail and Centres Study 2019

- 6.3.2 The Wirral Retail and Centres Study 2019 provides an objective assessment of retail and commercial leisure development needs, together with a clear understanding of existing provision and potential strategic responses/recommendations. The Study is underpinned by a shopping survey of 1,100 households in the Borough and ‘health checks’ of the Borough’s town, district and local centres. The Study is also informed by published data sources including demand/requirements from retail/leisure operators in the defined town centres. The Study supersedes the previous Retail and leisure Study update completed in March 2016 and assesses changes in trends over that period.

Shopping Patterns

- 6.3.3 The findings of the household survey form the basis of an analysis of shopping patterns in the Borough for convenience goods (day to day items such as food) and comparison goods (non-food items such as clothing, furniture and electrical goods).

Convenience goods

- 6.3.4 The survey results indicated that less than 6% of all food shopping trips (both main & top-up) are made to stores outside of Wirral. This strong retention rate reflects the good convenience goods provision distributed throughout Wirral and the geography of Wirral as a relatively self-contained peninsula.

- 6.3.5 The proportion of expenditure in Liscard and Heswell Town Centres, and Bromborough Village and Hoylake District Centres have broadly remained at the same or similar levels. However, the survey results indicate a declining trend in expenditure at Birkenhead Town Centre reducing from 8% in 2016 to 5% in 2019 which may reflect the closure of foodstores including Marks and Spencer and the growth of stores in out of centre locations. This is supported by the indicated increase in market share captured by each of the out-of-centre stores aside from Aldi on Hoylake Road, Moreton.

Comparison goods

- 6.3.6 Overall, facilities in Wirral retain 60% of comparison shopping trips, with 19% of trips made to locations outside of the district, and 21% of comparison shopping 'trips' made online.
- 6.3.7 As with convenience goods, the comparison goods expenditure patterns remain comparable with figures from 2016. Although the retention of spending within Wirral has increased from 68% to 72% this has mainly benefitted out of centre destinations. For example, Croft Retail Park at Bromborough has increased its market share to 18%, 1% higher than Birkenhead. Market shares of the main town and district centres outside Birkenhead are largely unchanged ranging from 1-3%.
- 6.3.8 Outside of Wirral, the survey results suggest that Liverpool and Chester both now have less of an influence on shopping patterns than 2016 whilst Cheshire Oaks' influence has increased. Liverpool's market share has fallen from 18 to 15 per cent, Chester's from 5-2% and Cheshire Oaks increasing from 4-6%.

Internet

- 6.3.9 The household survey results identify that books, CDs and DVDs are the most commonly bought items online, alongside small and large electrical goods and toys, games, bicycles and other sporting or recreational goods. Chemist goods and DIY items are the least common comparison goods to be purchased online. For convenience food shopping, between 1% and 8% of respondents from each survey zone did their shopping online. In terms of how items purchased online are received, results show that all convenience goods were received by home delivery, over 89% of comparison goods were home delivered, while purchases of chemist goods were most commonly collected from stores.

Retail Hierarchy

6.3.10 In drawing up local plans, Paragraph 85 of the NPPF requires that planning policies should define a network and hierarchy of centres. The previous emerging Core Strategy policy (Policy CS25) identifies a hierarchy of retail centres within Wirral. It identifies Birkenhead as a 'Sub-Regional Town Centre and Liscard, Moreton, Heswall and West Kirby as 'Town Centres'. Underneath this, 3 district centres (Bromborough Village, Hoylake and Woodchurch Road) are identified alongside 16 local centres. The Wirral Retail and Centres Study 2019 Study undertook a review of the retail network and hierarchy, taking into account the evidence gathered through the health checks and household survey. The key conclusions are summarised in the Study sets out a retail hierarchy for Wirral is set out in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Retail Hierarchy

Hierarchy	Retail Centres	2019 Retail Study conclusions
Sub-regional Centre	Birkenhead Town Centre (including Grange Road West, Oxton Road, Europa Boulevard, Argyle Street, Market Street and Hamilton Street)	Birkenhead Town Centre continues to perform as an important town centre. The town centre provides a sub-regional role serving the borough and despite the on-going difficult economic retail climate for town centre comparison goods retailers, has not seen a weakening in its comparison goods market share. It is important for Birkenhead Town Centre to remain a strong sub-regional town centre and for policy to continue to ensure that further potential out-of-centre retail and/or commercial leisure development does not undermine its role in the hierarchy.
Town Centres	Heswall Liscard Moreton West Kirby	The Study finds that all the town centres in the Borough continue to provide town centre retail and service uses and function as town centres.
District Centres	Bromborough Village Hoylake Woodchurch Road / Prenton	The detailed examination of both Bromborough and Woodchurch Road (Prenton) district centres finds that each provide retail and services akin to a district centre. In terms of Hoylake District Centre, whilst the centre does not provide any banks/building societies it provides all the attributes of a district centre and the Study recommends should be retained as a district centre.
Local Centres	Borough Road (Prenton Park) Claughton Village Dacre Hill Eastham Greasby Irby Village	The Study found that whilst in varying health, all continue to meet the day to day needs of their local catchment. Accordingly, the Study recommends that the centres are retained as 'Local Centres'.

	Laird Street Lower Bebington New Ferry Oxton Road Seacombe (Poulton Road) New Brighton (Seabank Road) Tranmere Urban Village Upton Village New Brighton (Victoria Road) Wallasey Village	
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- 6.3.11 It should be noted that potential development at Wirral Waters may require the definition of a centre at East Float as part of this hierarchy which will be addressed in the future. The Wirral Retail and Centres Study also includes policy recommendations for each centre, which have informed the policy objectives for the categories of centre outlined below:

Proposed planning policy objectives for the Borough's Town, District and Local Centres

Birkenhead

- 6.3.12 The Borough's main comparison shopping destination and the primary focus for retail, office, leisure, service, arts, culture and tourist development, community facilities and other main town centre uses of Borough wide significance.
- 6.3.13 The Local Plan will have a strong focus on the transformation of Birkenhead Town Centre, supported through the Wirral Growth Company. Birkenhead will be a modern thriving centre with a reconfigured commercial business district, a new and vibrant market and an enhanced public realm, leisure and commercial retail offer.

Town Centres

- 6.3.14 The main objective is to provide for ongoing improvement to the environment and support investment to achieve a mix of uses, with retail as the principal use, to ensure the centres continue to meet the needs of the communities within the catchments that they serve.
- 6.3.15 There will be an emphasis on safeguarding and enhancing the vitality and viability of towns centres and to capture the unique and distinctive qualities of each of the towns.

District Centres

- 6.3.16 The main objective is to provide for ongoing improvement to the environment and support investment to achieve a mix of uses, with retail as the principal use, to ensure the centres will continue to meet the needs of the local communities within the catchments that they serve and to support diversification and specialisation where this can be shown to contribute to the overall vitality of the centre.
- 6.3.17 Development proposals should respond to the needs of the catchment and recognise the need to support the vitality and viability of the district centres.

Local Centres

- 6.3.18 The main objective is to provide for ongoing improvement to the environment, maintain and improve the range of local shopping and service provision where it remains viable and an important service to the local community.
- 6.3.19 To safeguard and enhance the vitality and viability of the local centres as the focus for neighbourhood level shops, services and community facilities to serve everyday needs.
- 6.3.20 New small-scale retail facilities will be encouraged where they would provide for local everyday needs and promote vitality during the daytime and would not be harmful to the vitality and viability of nearby centres.

Retail Capacity Study

Local Impact Thresholds

- 6.3.21 In accordance with national planning policy, it is appropriate to identify locally set retail thresholds for the scale of edge-of-centre and out-of-centre development which should be subject to the assessment of the impact criteria set out by paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets a default impact threshold of 2,500sq m gross.

6.3.22 The Wirral Retail and Centres Study 2019 recommends that policy should advocate a tiered approach whereby the threshold applied to planning applications at edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations varies in relation to the size, role and function of a particular centre. The thresholds should not only apply to new floorspace, but also to changes of use and variations of conditions to remove or amend restrictions on how units operate in practice. In relation to the proposals to amend restrictions to existing retail units, the floorspace threshold should apply to the relevant planning/retail unit as a whole. Table 6.4 presents the recommended thresholds for Birkenhead and the Town and District Centres.

Table 6.4: Recommended thresholds for retail assessments Birkenhead and the Town and District Centres

Centre	Total No. of Retail Units	Total Floorspace (sq m gross)	Anchor Stores and sizes (sq m gross)	Recommended Threshold (sq m gross)
Town Centres				
Birkenhead	480	91,334	House of Fraser (6,684sq m) Asda (7,187sq m) TK Maxx (3,317sq m) Wilko (3,809sq m) TJ Hughes (3,409sq m) Next (2,406sq m)	1,500sq m
Liscard	296	32,602	B&M (3,150sq m) Wilko (2,849sq m) Primark (2,492sq m) Tesco Express (209sq m) Iceland (349sq m)	1,250sq m
Moreton	144	9,615	Home Bargains (1,159sq m) Iceland (862sq m) Tesco Express (364sq m)	1,000sq m
Heswell	194	19,590	Tesco (5,621sq m) M&Co (1,776sq m) Aldi (1,624sq m) M&S (1,545sq m)	1,000sq m
West Kirby	171	13,674	Morrisons (4,194sq m) Aldi (1,377sq m) M&Co (687sq m)	1,000sq m
District Centres				
Woodchurch Road (Prenton)	64	8,348	Sainsbury's (3,685sq m) Aldi (1,589sq m) Home Bargains (907sq m)	750sq m
Bromborough	92	9,644	Matalan (2,727sq m) Co-op (469sq m)	750sq m
Hoylake	169	6,301	Sainsbury's Local (412sq m)	400sq m

Notes: Retail Floorspace/Units = convenience and comparison goods only

- 6.3.23 In relation to local centres the Wirral Retail and Centres Study 2019 recommends that a threshold of 350sq m gross is required taking account of the trading format of smaller convenience goods store format operated by the likes of Co-op, Sainsbury's and Tesco. Such stores generally have a net sales area slightly below the 280sq m net sales area limit for extended Sunday trading and generally have a gross floorspace approaching 400sq m. Whilst of a relatively moderate size, these convenience stores often have a relatively substantial turnover and it is considered necessary for the local planning authority to retain control in respect of the considerations of impacts arising from the implementation of such proposals

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

Our preferred approach is to focus on promoting the vitality and viability of the hierarchy of centres within newly defined town centre boundaries that will best meet the limited need for retail development, and to carefully consider the potential role of East Float in the future. Primary shopping areas will be defined in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirements. We will identify local thresholds for impact assessment where necessary.

We propose developing policy to best accommodate and encourage flexible uses in addition to retail that will complement their roles as town centres to maximise their vitality and viability. This will include residential development as well as the NPPF defined town centre uses.

Allocate a suitable range of sites within the defined town centre boundaries to meet defined need over the first ten years of the plan.

Question 6.7

Do you agree with our Preferred Approach to meet retail demands in Wirral for everyone in our community? Would you suggest an alternative approach?

Question 6.8

Do you agree with our preferred approach to seek to maximise the potential of town centres' vitality and viability including residential development? Would you suggest an alternative approach?

Question 6.9

Do you agree with our preferred approach to defining a locally set threshold for retail impact assessments? Would you suggest an alternative approach?

- 6.3.24 The Council has also re-considered the boundaries to each of the Borough's town and district centres, to take account of changes that have occurred since the Unitary Development Plan was adopted.
- 6.3.25 The proposed boundaries for each of the centres, which show the areas where development that would be appropriate within a town centre should be permitted, can be viewed on the Council's website⁷⁶.

Question 6.10

Do you agree with the boundaries to the town centres shown on the Council's website? If not, please say how they should be amended and why.

⁷⁶ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-3>

6.4 Tourism

What is required of us

- 6.4.1 Direct references to tourism/visitor economy in national planning policy are limited to paragraph 83 of the NPPF 'Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy' which states that planning policies and decisions should enable sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside. The NPPF glossary indicates that culture and tourism development (including theatres museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities) fall within the definition of main town centre uses. As such, these uses should be located in town centres as a first preference.

What our evidence tells us

- 6.4.2 Wirral has made significant progress in developing its visitor offer over the last 10 years. Wirral has built its reputation on quality and distinctiveness, receiving a wide range of awards for its beaches and green flag parks and its heritage and attractions. Wirral is part of England's Golf Coast, home to 14 golf courses including Royal Liverpool, the host of The Open in 2006 and 2014. The renaissance of New Brighton has seen huge increases in day visitors, while Port Sunlight Village and Birkenhead Park continue to demonstrate the depth of international heritage the Wirral has to offer.
- 6.4.3 The Wirral Visitor Economy Strategy 2017-2020 identifies a number of key priorities:
- Developing Wirral's tourism marketing strategy and positioning the peninsula as an outstanding destination.
 - Generating greater benefit from conferences, business meetings and events.
 - Developing Wirral's tourism assets and experiences to increase competitiveness and attract new visitor markets.
 - Encouraging sustainable and accessible tourism in Wirral.
- 6.4.4 The Wirral Accommodation Development Strategy 2018 found immediate potential for budget hotel development in Birkenhead, and longer-term potential for additional hotels as the Birkenhead and Wirral Waters regeneration plans are progressed. It also found potential for the upgrading and development of existing hotels and guest houses; new pub accommodation; holiday cottages and lodges; touring caravan and camping sites; motorhome stopovers; camping pods and glamping, while recognising that the scope to introduce many of these uses in the rural areas of the Borough is significantly limited by current Green Belt planning policy.

Overall Local Plan objectives for tourism and visitor economy

- 6.4.5 The planning system has an important role in facilitating and promoting the implementation of good quality development, ensuring that the tourism industry can develop and thrive, thereby maximising the economic, social and environmental benefits while at the same time ensuring that these benefits are achieved in the most sustainable manner possible. In Wirral, a growth in sustainable tourism will be focused on the quality of the Borough's natural environment; built heritage; country parks; and coastline, with appropriate visitor facilities at Birkenhead, New Brighton, Leasowe, Hoylake, West Kirby, Thurstaston and along the Mersey coast, managed to avoid harm to European Sites and their supporting habitat.
- 6.4.6 Tourism investment will be targeted to support regeneration in Birkenhead; provide improvements within the coastal resorts of New Brighton, Hoylake and West Kirby and along the Mersey coastline; and to improve public access to the coast and countryside subject to the protection of European Sites and their supporting habitats.

Proposed objectives for New Brighton and Wallasey

- 6.4.7 To promote the wider regeneration of New Brighton as a mixed use 'River Gateway' and tourist destination with appropriate high density residential development and additional hotel accommodation, subject to the preparation of a comprehensive masterplan/planning framework, including building heights.
- 6.4.8 Preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas at Magazines and Wellington Road and the setting of other designated and un-designated heritage assets, including the listed buildings at Fort Perch Rock and Lighthouse.
- 6.4.9 Maintain and enhance the open aspect of the coastline; the national and international importance of the inter-tidal foreshores; and the facilities and open spaces associated with the coastal promenades between Seacombe Ferry and North Wirral Coastal Park.

Birkenhead

- 6.4.10 Focus regeneration to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area at Hamilton Square, to secure a long-term mixed-use commercial future for the designated Area; and the setting of other designated and un-designated heritage assets, including the listed buildings and ancient monument at Birkenhead Priory.
- 6.4.11 Support the regeneration of Birkenhead Town Centre through the Wirral Growth Company, and waterfront regeneration at Woodside.
- 6.4.12 Preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas and Historic Parks and Gardens at Bidston Village; Birkenhead Park; Flaybrick Cemetery; Oxton Village; Clifton Park; Rock Park and Mountwood and the setting of other designated and un-designated heritage assets.

Bromborough and Eastham

- 6.4.13 Preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas at Port Sunlight, Bromborough Pool, Bromborough Village and Eastham Village and the setting of other designated and un-designated heritage assets.
- 6.4.14 Maintain and enhance the national and international importance of the intertidal foreshores and the wooded, natural and semi-natural character and biodiversity value of the western and southern fringes of the area.
- 6.4.15 Secure improved pedestrian and cycle access from the residential and industrial areas, to the north and to and along the Mersey coastline, subject to the impact on coastal nature conservation.

Hoylake and West Kirby

- 6.4.16 Hoylake and West Kirby function as coastal resorts of regional significance, with provision for formal and informal recreation including golf, watersports and sand yachting. The Neighbourhood Plan for Hoylake (2016) promotes enhancements to the town centre where a new arts centre has recently been approved, while looking to safeguard its distinctive character and sustainable enhancements to the promenade. In West Kirby consideration is being given to the future development and improvement of the concourse, including the fire station, railway station, existing public buildings, car park and bus terminus in a comprehensive manner through the preparation of a masterplan/ planning framework.

- 6.4.17 Maintain and enhance facilities for visitors, including provision for leisure, tourism, golf, coastal recreation and water sports and the open spaces associated with the coastal promenades and North Wirral Coastal Park, while maintaining and enhancing the national and international nature conservation value of the intertidal foreshores and their supporting habitats, the Hilbre Islands and the Victorian and Edwardian heritage of the coastal resorts.

West Wirral

- 6.4.18 Maintain and enhance access to the coast and to the major natural and semi-natural open spaces at Heswall Dales, Thurstaston Common, Arrowe Country Park and Wirral Way, while maintaining and enhancing the national and international importance of the foreshore and their value for landscape, biodiversity and earth science.

Rural Area

- 6.4.19 Preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Areas at Barnston, Eastham Village, Frankby, Gayton, Saughall Massie, Thornton Hough and Thurstaston; the setting of other designated and un-designated heritage assets; and the rural character of the smaller settlements at Brimstage, Raby and Storeton.
- 6.4.20 Conserve, enhance and restore the natural beauty, visual amenity and landscape character of the Area in line with the findings of the Wirral Landscape Character Assessment.
- 6.4.21 Maintain and enhance the natural and semi-natural character of the undeveloped coastline; the national and international importance of the inter-tidal foreshores and their supporting habitats; and the biodiversity value of local nature reserves, dune systems, lowland heath, woodlands, hedgerows, river corridors, ponds, wetland and farmland habitats, including any linkages with the surrounding urban areas.

Our Preferred Approach

A growth in sustainable tourism will be focused on the quality of the Borough's natural environment; built heritage; country parks; and coastline, with appropriate visitor facilities at Birkenhead, New Brighton, Leasowe, Hoylake, West Kirby, Thurstaston and along the Mersey coast, managed to avoid harm to European Sites and their supporting habitat.

Tourism investment will be targeted to support regeneration in Birkenhead; provide improvements within the coastal resorts of New Brighton, Hoylake and West Kirby and along the Mersey coastline (supported by the preparation of masterplans where appropriate); and to improve public access to the coast and countryside subject to the protection of European Sites and their supporting habitats.

Question 6.11

Do you agree with our preferred approach for planning for tourism within Wirral?

7 Our Physical and Social Infrastructure

7.1 Our Approach to Infrastructure Planning

What is required of us?

- 7.1.1 Infrastructure is an important thread throughout the National Planning Policy Framework to deliver the three objectives for sustainable development and help combat Climate Change. Whilst infrastructure can often only be thought of as including physical systems such as highways and utilities, it is also important for us to ensure proper provision of social infrastructure such as schools and healthcare provision. Green and Blue Infrastructure is included within the Environment section.
- 7.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework identifies the need for early engagement with infrastructure and service providers stating that “*plans should: c) be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between plan makers and ... infrastructure providers and operators ...*”. In addition, Paragraphs 25 and 26 refer to engagement with infrastructure providers and joint working to help determine where additional infrastructure is necessary.
- 7.1.3 Paragraph 34 of the National Planning Policy Framework covers contributions expected from development stating that “plans should set out the contributions expected from development. This should include, along with other infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, green and digital infrastructure). Such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan”.
- 7.1.4 The Council has undertaken a series of stakeholder engagement meetings with internal and external infrastructure and service providers to understand existing deficits and planned works and to help consider the implications for the Strategic Spatial Options (presented in Chapter 4). This work will be used in the preparation of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)
- 7.1.5 **Stage 1 of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan** is published alongside this Local Plan Issues and Options document. This sets out the baseline evidence including an overview of the quality and capacity of the existing infrastructure and consideration of what may be required to support the spatial options set out in Chapter 4.

- 7.1.6 **Stage 2 of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan** will be published to support the final draft Local plan (Regulation 19 stage) and will set out detailed infrastructure requirements to support the future timely delivery of the final housing and employment site allocations. It will set out responsibilities for providing infrastructure, costs, timing and who will pay, for example through planning obligations or a Community Infrastructure Levy.

What our evidence tells us

- 7.1.7 We have commissioned a number of infrastructure studies, or are working on them with our partners, in order to ensure that we understand what our approach to infrastructure planning needs to be. These studies set out the current levels of infrastructure provision across the Wirral and planned infrastructure improvements across the Borough which are already coming forward, in order to inform us about what levels of infrastructure are likely to be needed to support future growth. These studies include:
- Baseline Transport Modelling Report;
 - Wirral Strategic Transport Framework;
 - Wirral Waters and A41 Transport Studies;
 - Strategic Water Supply Study;
 - Sustainable Energy Generation Study; and
 - Indoor Sports Facilities Needs Assessment.
- 7.1.8 Further detail about each of these studies is set out in the consideration of different infrastructure categories below. It is clear that the growth we need to provide within the Wirral will need to be supported by new or improved infrastructure.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

The Council will produce an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to provide the evidence that the Local Plan is deliverable in infrastructure terms. It will identify the costs of necessary infrastructure to support development and how these costs can be met including recommendations on the contribution through planning obligations or a Community Infrastructure Levy towards critical, essential or desirable infrastructure that can be borne by developers through viability assessment.

The Council proposes to develop the Infrastructure Delivery Plan in two stages:

Stage 1: The production of an IDP Evidence Base Report for the Borough documenting the physical, social and environmental infrastructure and a schedule of planned infrastructure that may be needed for the proposed options over the next Local Plan period; and

Stage 2: Identification of the infrastructure requirements, costs and funding opportunities for Local Plan site allocations and planned development (once known).

Further stakeholder engagement including liaison with site promoters will be undertaken to assess potential site allocation infrastructure requirement, and studies to assess cumulative impact will be undertaken to produce the final IDP and IDP Schedule.

The IDP Schedule will include the type and location of new infrastructure needed, provider, phasing, cost, funding source any funding gap. The final IDP will provide evidence to enable the Council to identify priority areas for infrastructure provision and protect sites which could be critical in developing infrastructure within the Local Plan.

The Council will need to decide on whether funding will need to be secured through a fixed charge by way of a Community Infrastructure Levy and/or through planning obligations via individual planning applications.

Question 7.1

Do you agree with our preferred approach for planning for infrastructure within Wirral?

Do you have a suggested alternative approach?

7.2 Transport

7.2.1 The provision of high-quality transport networks is an essential part of the efficient day-to-day functioning of the Wirral – they allow our residents to get where they need to be and ensure that our businesses can bring in the people and goods they need to succeed.

What is required of us?

7.2.2 There are three broad types of transport infrastructure within Wirral – highways, public transport, and active transport (such as walking and cycling). Wirral Council has a role in the provision of these various transport infrastructure types (particularly local road networks and active transport routes such as footpaths), but we are also reliant on a number of other organisations to ensure provision of others. Highways England has responsibility for the operation and management of the M53 motorway through Wirral, and Merseytravel is responsible for the promotion of public transport services and operation of the Queensway and Kingsway road tunnels linking Wirral to Liverpool and the Mersey Ferries service. We also need to work with public transport operators; such as Stagecoach, Arriva and Merseyrail.

7.2.3 Throughout this plan, we recognise the role that the planning system has in addressing the critical challenge of Climate Change. Whilst we recognise the need for good quality highway provision both to existing areas of the Wirral and to new developments, we know that we need to do a lot more to ensure that public transport and active transport linkages are able to provide genuine alternatives for travel in Wirral.

7.2.4 Paragraph 102 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making, to ensure that potential impacts on transport networks can be addressed and that opportunities to promote public transport and active transport are pursued. Paragraph 103 of the NPPF further requires our Local Plan to actively manage patterns of growth to reflect our existing transport infrastructure – with significant new developments being focussed around locations which are (or can) be made sustainable, limiting the need to travel in the first place whilst also ensuring public and active transport provision to provide modal choice. This can help to

reduce congestion and emissions and improve air quality and public health.

What our evidence tells us

- 7.2.5 A Baseline Transport Modelling Report has been produced as part of the evidence for considering the need for infrastructure in each of options in the proposed Local Plan. Areas likely to experience exacerbated congestion at junctions in the future include those in the vicinity of Wirral Waters, along the A41 south near to Wirral International Business Park, junctions 4 and 5 of the M53 and existing congestion hotspots on key routes to the M53 including the A552.
- 7.2.6 The development of a Wirral Strategic Transport Framework and transport studies at Wirral Waters, and A41 North have been undertaken, with a further A41 south study planned to identify transport improvement schemes to support sustainable development within and beyond the Local Plan period. Planned improvements to the Merseyrail network and Bidston to Wrexham Line and cycling and walking investment will increase the attractiveness of travel by sustainable modes and electric vehicle charging infrastructure will encourage the use of greener vehicles.
- 7.2.7 Further transport modelling, air quality assessment and work with stakeholders including Highways England, Merseytravel, public transport operators and Council transport teams will be undertaken to identify any mitigation required. This will include infrastructure to support travel by sustainable modes, and technological advances to reduce the need to

travel will also be undertaken to support the development of the final Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

The Council is committed to using the Local Plan to support our transition to a lower carbon economy, and to supporting the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

As a result, our preferred approach will be to propose new development in locations which are well supported by existing public transport provision, or where new public and active travel links can be provided to ensure that those developments can be provided with genuine modal choice which reduces reliance on the car.

We will support and where appropriate ensure that existing public transport networks within Wirral are improved. This will ensure that existing urban areas around Wirral are provided with the most attractive possible non-car transport options. We will also support and plan for improvements to the Borough's highway networks, both to alleviate existing congestion challenges, improve road safety and support new growth. These will particularly be prioritised where evidence shows that these schemes will reduce pollution and/or improve air quality in the vicinity of those locations. Electric vehicle charging infrastructure will also be expected to be provided as part of new development.

Question 7.2

Do you agree with our approach to prioritise public and active transport improvements and electric vehicle charging infrastructure provision in new development, and to support the construction of major new roads only where they are related to achieving sustainable development, environmental enhancement, public transport or road safety benefits?

7.3 Utilities

- 7.3.1 Utilities infrastructure is generally unseen and unnoticed by the general public but is essential to the effective and efficient day-to-day functioning of the Borough.

What is required of us?

- 7.3.2 The Council recognises the requirement to balance the need for an assessment anticipated utility needs based on current usage, with developing a local plan that is fit for the future by reducing energy and water consumption and promoting sustainable alternatives.
- 7.3.3 The majority of the Borough's electricity is provided via National Grid's high voltage electricity overhead transmission 275kV line from Capenhurst and underground cables from Liverpool to Prenton. Energy generated by the wind farms in Liverpool Bay also connects to the grid at Birkenhead. Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN) operate the 132kV (major), 33kV (primary) and 11 kV (secondary) substations and power lines within Wirral on an interconnected system.
- 7.3.4 The high-pressure gas main for the Borough runs along the M53 Motorway. Cadent are the local distribution network operator, providing gas to existing and new homes and businesses in Wirral.
- 7.3.5 The majority of Wirral's water supply (supplied by United Utilities) is extracted from the River Dee and transferred to Sutton Hall Water Treatment Works, which supplies over 90 per cent of Wirral's water. There are some additional boreholes at Prenton, Grange and Newton to meet localised needs, with reservoirs at Crosshill (Barnston), Gorsehill, Flaybrick, Grange and Prenton.
- 7.3.6 United Utilities (UU) and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) are the water companies responsible for the management of the majority of the drainage networks within the borough. Waste water Treatment Works are located at Birkenhead, Bromborough, Heswall and Meols.
- 7.3.7 Paragraph 16, of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies the need for early engagement with infrastructure and service providers. Paragraph 20 states that strategic policy should make sufficient provision for energy infrastructure.

What our evidence tells us

- 7.3.8 High level engagement with utility providers has indicated that there would be sufficient capacity within the electricity, gas, and wastewater networks to accommodate the level of growth identified for the Local Plan period without large scale reinforcement being required. There are challenges in providing additional water supply to northern parts of the Wirral as the public water supply to the peninsula only comes from the south. A strategic water supply study for the Wirral is currently being undertaken by United Utilities. Allocated sites as part of the Urban Intensification option e.g. at Wirral Waters, will be carefully planned with United Utilities and lead in times for studies and infrastructure provision considered.
- 7.3.9 The Council is to commission a Renewable Energy Study to inform the Local Plan in early 2020.
- 7.3.10 Opportunities for sustainable energy generation in Wirral Waters and Birkenhead are currently being investigated through a Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy funded study.
- 7.3.11 Infrastructure providers operate a first come, first served basis. This means that, in areas with limited capacity, a development site may absorb the existing capacity in a substation, the network requiring the next development to contribute towards an upgrade.
- 7.3.12 Assessment of site allocations and cumulative impact will be undertaken, with costs and lead in times for any reinforcement requirements included within the IDP schedule. Further site studies and increased lead in times could be required if Green Belt options were to be progressed where connections will need to be made to utilities at the extremities of the existing networks. Government policy and regulation changes impacting the level of electricity/ gas use and advanced in technology including hydrogen energy will be closely monitored and impacts reassessed as appropriate.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

Through the Local Plan the Council will promote opportunities for reduced reliance on fossil fuels, improved water efficiency and sustainable drainage within new development to support the Council's Climate Change Action Plan. The Council will work with partners to implement the recommendations of borough wide and Wirral Waters and Birkenhead Sustainable Energy Studies.

Early and continued detailed discussions with utility service providers will be undertaken to identify improvements to utilities infrastructure to support sustainable growth and ensure network resilience on a site by site and cumulative basis.

We will monitor changes to government policy and regulation changes impacting the level of energy use and advancements in technology.

Question 7.3

Do you agree with our approach to consider the cumulative impact of development on the utilities networks to ensure resilience, where possible reduce reliance on fossil fuels, improve water efficiency and sustainable drainage and to monitor and respond to future technological advances?

7.4 Communications Infrastructure

- 7.4.1 Supporting high quality digital infrastructure is a critical part of future proofing our Borough, for its businesses and residents. The provision of full fibre connections and next generation mobile technology has a significant economic and social impact upon local areas and local economies.

What is required of us?

- 7.4.2 98.8% of Wirral can access Superfast Broadband with connectivity speeds of up to 100 mb. Openreach has embarked on a Fibre First programme to deliver ultrafast broadband (speeds of up to 1000 mb direct to premises) across the Borough.

- 7.4.3 Virgin Media is a private closed network while the network installed by Openreach is an open network which can be used by other providers. As part of Virgin Media's 'Project Lightning' the Wallasey and Leasowe areas are benefitting from installations. There is currently no coverage by Virgin Media in the west of the Borough.
- 7.4.4 The Council is a strategic partner in a Liverpool City Region initiative to develop a 250km high speed Local Full Fibre Network across the region by 2021.
- 7.4.5 Ofcom's Infrastructure Report 2018 states that mobile coverage is very good in Wirral, with more than 99% of premises and roads having 2G (voice and low speed data rate), and 3G and 4G (high speed data) mobile network coverage. A 5G service has already been launched in the UK, parts of Birkenhead are currently covered by the Vodafone 5G service.
- 7.4.6 Paragraph 112 of the National Planning Policy Framework recognises that advanced, high quality and reliable communications infrastructure is essential for economic growth and social well-being. It states that planning policies should: *"support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections. Policies should set out how high quality digital infrastructure, providing access to services from a range of providers, is expected to be delivered and upgraded over time; and should prioritise full fibre connections to existing and new developments (as these connections will, in almost all cases, provide the optimum solution)."*

What our evidence tells us

- 7.4.7 Broadband providers aim to work with developers to provide Fibre to the premises (FTTP) infrastructure to avoid the need for future retrofit. Approximately 9 months' notice is needed from developers (before commencement) to put plans in place for delivering FTTP to new buildings. The Council will continue to liaise with Openreach and Virgin Media as the Local Plan evolves.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

The Council considers that high quality digital infrastructure is essential infrastructure vital to the delivery of sustainable development.

The Local Plan will seek to support the provision of high-quality digital infrastructure from a range of providers as part of new development and support the expansion of electronic communications networks.

Question 7.4

Do you agree with our approach to support a choice of digital infrastructure providers for new developments and to support the expansion of electronic communications networks?

7.5 Social Infrastructure

7.5.1 Social infrastructure covers a range of services and facilities that meet local and strategic needs and contribute towards a good quality of life including education, health, leisure and cultural and emergency services and facilities. Social infrastructure is a component part of all three of the dimensions (economic, social and environmental) of sustainable development.

What is required of us?

7.5.2 In Wirral Local Education Authority Area there are 3 Early Years Centres; 46 nursery classes attached to primary schools; 90 mainstream primary schools; 21 secondary schools and 12 special schools. In addition to schools Wirral Council runs and maintains 24 libraries, 8 leisure centres and 4 municipal golf courses. The majority of Community Centres previously in Wirral Council ownership have been transferred to community groups. There is also an extensive network of community groups, activities and services operating from shared spaces and places of worship across the Borough.

- 7.5.3 Wirral Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) commissions services from the following providers:
- Primary Care: 58 GP practices grouped into 5 Primary Care Networks;
 - Secondary Care: Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust;
 - Mental Health: Cheshire and Wirral Partnership NHS Foundation Trust;
 - Community: Wirral Community Trust;
 - Social Care: Wirral Borough Council; and
 - Other providers: pharmacies, dentists and opticians.
- 7.5.4 Paragraph 20 of the National Planning Policy Framework identifies that strategic policies should make sufficient provision for community facilities such as health, education and cultural infrastructure;
- 7.5.5 Paragraph 34 of the National Planning Policy Framework discusses developer contributions stating that “Plans should set out the contributions expected from development. This should include setting out infrastructure (such as that needed for education, health, transport, flood and water management, green and digital infrastructure). Such policies should not undermine the deliverability of the plan”.
- 7.5.6 Paragraph 94 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires that Local Planning Authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans.

What our evidence tells us

- 7.5.7 Consultation has been undertaken with education, leisure, libraries, youth and adult care and emergency services to assess the ability of existing social and community infrastructure to accommodate growth and to understand plans for future service changes.
- 7.5.8 School place planning and implications for NHS services are a particularly important part of Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) development. It is considered that there is capacity within existing schools and GP practices to accommodate the overall level of growth planned. Sites will however be considered on an individual and cumulative basis within the final IDP to identify any gaps, areas where there would be increased pressure on existing services, and if additional capacity is required.
- 7.5.9 An Indoor Sports Facilities Needs Assessment was carried out in 2019 summarising the provision and future requirements to accommodate growth. Recommendations included the need for an additional sports hall

and pool facility and investment in existing running track and tennis facilities to maintain quality. There are several leisure centre sites located within areas identified for consideration for redevelopment as part of Wirral Growth Company (WGC) e.g. Central Birkenhead Masterplan area. If affected by development proposals the Council would seek to provide alternative new leisure facilities. Section 0 refers to open space, sport and recreation and also forms an important aspect of social infrastructure and should be considered accordingly.

- 7.5.10 In terms of catering for demand as arising from growth for library and community centre provision there are opportunities to introduce library/ community services into new development through outreach opportunities rather than there be a need for new physical capacity.
- 7.5.11 Initial findings of consultation with the emergency services has suggested, further need for infrastructure as a result of the Local Plan is not necessary but the council will continue to engage with emergency services on site allocation and master planning.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

Social infrastructure planning will be embedded into the Local Plan site selection and master planning process through early and continued engagement across council departments and service providers. New and / or improved social infrastructure will be required to support new housing development which will be addressed through detail Development Management policies (Appendix 9.1).

The Council will identify the likely school yield for all education phases (0-19) and Special Educational Needs from development based on past trends. An assessment of the capacity within school planning area catchments to accommodate likely pupil requirement will be undertaken and the opportunity for potential school expansion or new school provision reviewed as required. Following DfE Guidance on securing contributions for education. Our approach to developer contributions will be set out within the Local Plan and requirements per site allocation will be identified within the final IDP.

The Council will continue to work with NHS Wirral and engage Primary Care Networks to identify any increased pressure on existing services and the opportunity for potential expansion or new provision as appropriate.

The Council will implement the recommendations of the Indoor Sports Facilities Needs Assessment and work with Wirral Growth Company to identify opportunities for new leisure centre facilities if existing sites are affected by proposals.

Question 7.5

Do you agree with our approach to work with our partners to undertake capacity assessments of existing social infrastructure, identify needs arising from growth and the opportunity for potential expansion or new provision as appropriate?

8 Our Environment

8.1 Climate Change

What is required of us?

- 8.1.1 Addressing Climate Change is recognised as a critical challenge facing the world, our nation and our local community and it is one of the core land use planning principles of the National Planning Policy Framework which underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. To be found sound, our Local Plan will need to reflect this principle.
- 8.1.2 There is a statutory duty on local planning authorities through Section 19(1A) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which requires local planning authorities to include in their Local Plans "*policies designed to secure that the development and use of land in the local planning authority's area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, Climate Change*".
- 8.1.3 National policy and guidance also require the Council to adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change in line with the provisions and objectives of the Climate Change Act 2008.
- 8.1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework also states that Local Plans should consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy development. Local planning authorities should also support community-led initiatives for renewable and low carbon energy taken forward through Neighbourhood Planning. The Government has stated that wind farm developments should only be granted planning permission if the site is identified as a "*suitable area*" and the proposal has the backing of the local community.
- 8.1.5 The Council is developing a Climate Emergency Action Plan to address the commitments and requirements of the resolution passed in July 2019. The Action Plan will set out the long-term direction for the Council and provide a route map for the changes required to address climate pollution to enable Wirral to become carbon neutral and resilient to unavoidable changes to the climate.

What our evidence tells us

- 8.1.6 The UN's Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which came into force in 2016, sets a target to limit the unnatural rise in global average temperatures to well below 2°C (above the pre-industrial period). The Paris Agreement, and the latest special report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that stems from it, demands more stringent targets requiring more urgent action. We now need to limit

warming to 1.5°C. The evidence indicates we have already seen 1°C of unnatural warming and could pass the 1.5°C threshold within the life of the new Local Plan. Urgent action is required to address this challenge.

8.1.7 In the UK, the Climate Change Act 2008 sets the legal framework for the UK's response to Climate Change. It established the independent Climate Change Committee to advise Government on reducing emissions and adapting to Climate Change. In the light of the Paris Agreement and special IPCC report, advice and targets have changed. The UK legal target is now net zero emissions by 2050. Achieving this is technically feasible but will demand far reaching change in energy, transport, the built and natural environment.

8.1.8 In the light of the changing picture Wirral Council declared a Climate Emergency in July 2019. In doing so it recognised that there is a need to do more in the face of latest evidence about climate and ecological disruption. The Council already maintains an active climate programme. It supports partnership work through the multi-sector Cool Wirral Partnership. This partnership developed and championed the Wirral Climate Change strategy – 'Cool 2014-19', endorsed by Wirral Council Wirral Climate Change Strategy 2014-2019. At the council's request the partnership has developed a new strategy, 'Cool 2' to take on board the implications of the Paris Agreement and recent IPCC evidence. A working draft of the new strategy was agreed by the partnership at the end of July 2019⁷⁷. The draft includes two main goals:

- net zero climate damaging pollution from Wirral, to be achieved as early as we practically can and no later than 2041 so that we stay within a local 'budget' of 7.7 million tonnes (Mt CO₂) during the period 2020-2100; and
- a climate resilient Wirral adapted to cope with existing change and unavoidable change that will be experienced during this century.

8.1.9 The draft strategy has 11 objectives in support:

- Lean energy: To reduce the overall demand for energy in Wirral and make sure as many homes as possible are improved to at least EPC Band C by around 2030.
- Clean energy: To generate and/or source all our local energy needs from zero carbon and renewable sources by around 2041.
- Clean Travel: A complete transition to fossil fuel free local travel by around 2030.
- Wiser decisions: To use resources – materials, land and food - in a sustainable way so that our collective decisions do not add indirectly to the burden of climate damaging pollution in Wirral or elsewhere;

⁷⁷ Cool 2 A strategy for Wirral in the face of the global climate emergency – working draft for consultation 2019

- Storing more carbon: To capture more carbon naturally by both increasing tree cover and protecting soils and natural habitats.
- A clear view of climate risk: To identify vulnerabilities in the face of present extreme weather and further, already unavoidable changes in the climate this century.
- Adaptation: To put in place infrastructure, policies and practices that help limit negative impacts from existing and future changes.
- Wider climate understanding: To educate and raise awareness about the climate emergency and about the opportunities and benefits of taking climate action and the risks and threats of inaction across Wirral and make sure we have the right skills in place to do what needs to be done.
- Adequate resourcing: To secure increased investment to match the scale of the challenge.
- Stronger partnerships and networks: To ensure climate action is given the priority it needs and is developed in a co-ordinated way with key organisations, interests and networks involved to provide mutual support.
- Evidence informed action: To build a better picture of where we are at, what needs to be done and the impact of our actions through the collation and examination of the evidence and data available.
- Engagement work to develop the new Cool 2 strategy highlighted the importance of the new local plan in responding to Climate Change.

8.1.10 The Council recognise that the Local Plan is a key opportunity to influence and implement key elements of the emerging climate strategy through its policies for the development and use of land.

8.1.11 The new Local Plan will cover a period over which we must see significant reduction in greenhouse gas pollution. This will necessitate substantial changes in land uses, buildings and energy and transport infrastructure. It covers a period over which we will experience further impacts from unavoidable changes in the climate necessitating steps to adapt to mitigate these impacts.

8.1.12 To stay within the local carbon budgets that are compatible with the Paris Agreement requires significant reductions in emissions sooner rather than later. The local carbon budget reporting tool used to develop the Cool 2 strategy, based on work by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change, indicates that if we continue polluting at 2017 levels from 2020 then we would use up the entire Paris compatible local carbon budget in seven years.

8.1.13 Since the Liverpool City Region Renewable Energy Capacity Study (RES) was undertaken in 2011, the policy framework within which renewable energy is operating, has changed substantially as have the falling costs

and economics of generation. Some of the policy changes have created uncertainty in the renewable energy sector and has fundamentally altered the risk profile and financial case for investment in some technologies.

- 8.1.14 Power generation has seen rapid decarbonisation with the rise in renewable generation displacing coal. Decarbonising heat however remains a challenge. Heat networks present one opportunity make progress. Another possibility is substituting natural gas for biogas and hydrogen. A Wirral Heat Mapping and Masterplanning study was conducted in 2019, funded and supported by the Heat Network Delivery Unit (HNDU) of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The purpose of this project was to identify and evaluate opportunities to develop district heat networks in Wirral. Opportunity mapping pointed to the Birkenhead area as having most potential. BEIS has now commissioned a feasibility study to look in more detail at the opportunity in the Birkenhead area including the Wirral Waters area which will inform the next stage of the Local Plan.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

The Council is committed to using the Local Plan to meet local climate goals and objectives where this is appropriate and, feasible.

To inform the Local Plan the Council will complete a Climate Change and Renewable energy study in 2020. This is to advise how the Local Plan should best meet its statutory requirements and to provide guidance on how to implement appropriate elements of the Borough's Climate strategy through the Local Plan. This will include the development of a positive strategy to promote the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and which would incorporate requirements on housing, employment, retail, leisure and tourism development to meet higher standards of energy efficiency.

Question 8.1

Do you have any views on our preferred approach to plan for Climate Change in Wirral?

Question 8.2

Would you support including additional measures within the Local Plan to plan for Climate Change, including allocating sites for renewable energy or including additional requirements on housing, employment, retail, leisure and tourism developments to meet higher standards of energy efficiency?

Question 8.3

Do you think there is anything else that the Council could do to address or plan for Climate Change within the Local Plan?

8.2 Green and Blue Infrastructure

What is required of us?

- 8.2.1 In order to meet Government Policy objectives, the Council must have a strategic overview of green assets including public open space for recreation as well as green and blue infrastructure across the Borough. This will determine how appropriately planned development can ensure this critical resource is suitably protected and enhanced.
- 8.2.2 Paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that “planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places...through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.” Paragraph 96 of the NPPF continues that “planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision”.
- 8.2.3 Paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that “Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to Climate Change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes...” and managing the implications of Climate Change including ensuring the future resilience of communities and infrastructure. Likewise, paragraph 150 of the NPPF states that “new development should be planned in ways that avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from Climate Change” and that Local Authorities should ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures and appropriate planning of green infrastructure.
- 8.2.4 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out that authorities, when determining planning applications, should expect new development to “*take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption*” (Paragraph 153). In addition, paragraphs 163 and 165 state that “*When determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere.*” Guidance sets out that sustainable drainage systems should be incorporated in development unless evidence suggests this would be inappropriate.
- 8.2.5 Paragraph 171 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that Local Plans need to distinguish between international, national and local designations of sites, taking a strategic approach to maintain and enhance these networks of green infrastructure. Paragraph 174 continues that to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity plans need to map ecological networks “*and pursue opportunities for securing measurable*

net gains for biodiversity.” Similarly, Local Plans also need to protect and enhance landscape character, recognise the benefits from natural and ecosystem services and prevent new and existing development from contributing to soil, air, water and noise pollution or land instability (paragraph 170).

What Our Evidence Tells Us

- 8.2.6 The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy will be underpinned by robust, up-to-date evidence both at local and City Region level. The Council has recently updated its evidence base with the Wirral Landscape Character Assessment 2019, Wirral Open Space Assessment 2019 and the Wirral Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2018, which have been published for public consultation alongside this Local Plan Issues and Options document.
- 8.2.7 The Liverpool City Region Ecological Network⁷⁸, prepared by the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS), comprises ecological and biodiversity information on the City Region’s ecological network, identifying opportunities to enable better protection and management of those natural assets and describing opportunities to create new natural assets. This includes defining the City Region’s core biodiversity assets and identifying a series of Nature Improvement Areas, which will be taken into account in the preparation of the Wirral Local Plan. The Council has, in addition, determined to undertake an updated Phase One Habitat Survey, to provide a comprehensive picture of habitats, their location and distribution across the Borough as a baseline to further survey work.
- 8.2.8 The Council will prepare a comprehensive Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy in 2020 which will inform the future approach to maintaining and enhancing the strategic network of green and blue infrastructure across the Borough through the Local Plan. Emphasis will be placed on securing a resilient, coherent network of interconnected landscape, wildlife or ecosystem services. This will include the protection and enhancement of existing environmental assets and the creation of corridors and stepping stones to assist species movement and enable colonisation and adaptation to Climate Change.
- 8.2.9 The Green Infrastructure Strategy will set out the multiple roles and functions of the Borough’s existing green assets but also set out additional infrastructure requirements which will need to be considered when determining what use a particular site can be allocated for. The Green Infrastructure Strategy will identify existing networks of green infrastructure (GI) and help to plan positively for their protection, for the

⁷⁸ <http://www.lcreconet.uk/>

creation of new assets where appropriate or necessary and for the enhancement and management of existing provision.

- 8.2.10 In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, the Council has also undertaken a robust assessment of need for open space, sport and recreation facilities. The Council will also seek to ensure that future development proposals contribute to maintaining and enhancing strategic priorities for green and blue infrastructure as informed by the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2020 and Open Space Study 2019.
- 8.2.11 The implications for local areas will be determined by the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and included in policies for land allocations and development management. The policies will set out local priorities and characteristics including issues related natural features; trees and woodland; soils and geology; coastal character and influences; landscape and heritage; habitats and species; corridors and linkages; public rights of way; formal and informal recreation; water courses and drainage.
- 8.2.12 The revised Landscape Character Assessment 2019 will be used to guide development and land management that is sympathetic to the local character and special qualities of the Borough, including encouraging the protection and enhancement of valued landscapes in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. It is also intended to promote an understanding of how the landscapes of the Borough are changing as a result of a combination of natural, economic and human factors, and how they can be strengthened in response. Appropriate policies will be included, to ensure that its findings are taken into account in land allocations and development management decisions.
- 8.2.13 A Visitor Management Strategy is currently being prepared to ensure that the local authorities in the Liverpool City Region are able to meet their legal requirements to protect internationally important wildlife sites from the implications of growth. The Strategy will seek to support sustainable housing and tourism development, whilst securing sustainable, long term protection of the internationally important wildlife from recreation impacts through a comprehensive mitigation strategy funded through developer contributions. It will also identify where cross-authority mitigation measures can help to address any identified impacts from recreation arising from additional housing and other types of development.
- 8.2.14 The Cool Wirral Partnership has developed a new Climate Change strategy, Cool 2, for Wirral. The strategy considers:
- recent changes in global and national frameworks informed by the latest scientific evidence;
 - the original Cool 2014-19 strategy and the lessons learnt from efforts to implement it;
 - local CO2 emissions data;

- new tools to help plan emissions reductions in line with the latest scientific evidence; and
 - contributions gathered through several workshops involving partner organisations, schools and members of the public.
- 8.2.15 The emerging Wirral Tree Strategy sets out the ambitions and overarching strategic guidance of how to manage trees in Borough up to 2030 in accordance with the Government's long-term ambition for achieving an average of 12% tree cover across England by 2060 and the 25 year Environmental Plan (December 2018).
- 8.2.16 Wirral envisages 'an aspirational and bright future for trees in Wirral, in the lifetime of this strategy we will work towards a greater provision of trees, whether on our highways or in the parks and countryside which we manage. We will seek to share the benefit of trees across Wirral. We want to ensure that we create a positive future legacy for trees in Wirral whilst also effectively and safely managing trees in the present. We will work constructively with individuals and groups to deliver this vision on an understanding of shared responsibility'
- 8.2.17 The emerging tree strategy will also increase Natural Flood Management solutions for flood mitigation in the borough, including Working with Natural Processes (WwNP) and opportunities for SuDS.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

Green and Blue Infrastructure Standards

The Local Plan will set Borough-wide standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of parks and gardens; natural and semi-natural greenspace; outdoor sports provision; amenity greenspace; provision for children and young people; and allotments.

The Borough-wide standards will be used to protect and enhance existing provision and facilities and will identify priorities for new provision and improvements. Contributions for new or improved provision resulting from the demands of new development will be sought through developer contributions or through a Community Infrastructure Levy.

New Development

Where appropriate, new development will be required to contribute towards the provision, protection and enhancement of green and blue infrastructure, whether on site or through developer contributions. Developers should secure multi-functional benefits to the Borough's identified green and blue network including:

- **providing enough good quality, accessible public open space;**
- **mitigating and adapting to the impacts of Climate Change;**
- **maintaining and enhancing landscape features;**
- **sustainable management of surface water and drainage issues**
- **enhancing ecological networks;**
- **preserving and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity assets;**
- **protecting and enhancing identified green and blue networks; and**
- **supporting health and wellbeing and enable sustainable patterns of development.**

All development proposals and land allocations will be assessed against their contribution to:

- **the standards to be set out in the Green and Blue Infrastructure Study 2020;**
- **the priorities for the particular settlement(s) concerned;**
- **the delivery of the Council's overall Strategy for Green Infrastructure;**

- the delivery of any other related initiatives and strategies; and
- the avoidance and mitigation of an adverse impact on internationally important wildlife.

Tree Planting Strategy

In support of the emerging climate strategy the Council is also developing a Tree Strategy as a natural way to store carbon.

The vision for the Tree Strategy is *'In the ten-year span of this strategy we will raise woodland cover in the Borough to at least 10% to boost the benefits of trees and woodlands. We will seek to share these benefits across Wirral. Our planting will be based on "the right tree for the right place" building a strong legacy for our tree stock. For every tree Wirral Council are forced to fell we will net plant at least two more. We will work constructively with individuals and groups to deliver this vision'*.

The Local Plan is seen as a key mechanism to implement this Strategy.

Question 8.4

Do you have any views on our preferred approach for planning for Green and Blue Infrastructure within Wirral?

Question 8.5

Do you have any views as to how the Local Plan should promote tree planting?

Question 8.6

Do you have any ideas as to where the Council should promote new tree planting as part of its Tree Planting strategy?

8.3 Open Space, Sport and Recreation

What is required of us?

- 8.3.1 Chapter 8 of the National Planning Policy Framework deals with promoting healthy and safe communities and states (paragraph 92 refers) that *“To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should: a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments....”*
- 8.3.2 Paragraph 96 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that *“Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate”*.
- 8.3.3 Paragraph 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that *“Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless: a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use”*.
- 8.3.4 The Council currently protects open spaces within the urban area either as Urban Greenspace under Policy GR1 – The Protection of Urban Greenspace⁷⁹ and Proposal GR2 – Land Designated as Urban Greenspace⁸⁰ or as sports facilities under Proposal RE6 – Sports Grounds for Protection from Development⁸¹, in line with national policy for open space and recreation. Allotments are protected under Policy GR3 –

⁷⁹ Which can be viewed at <https://ww3.wirral.gov.uk/udp/oneudp1.asp?id=GR1>

⁸⁰ Which can be viewed at <https://ww3.wirral.gov.uk/udp/oneudp1.asp?id=GR2>

⁸¹ Which can be viewed at <https://ww3.wirral.gov.uk/udp/oneudp1.asp?id=RE6>

The Protection of Allotments⁸² and Proposal GR4 - Allotments to be Protected from Development⁸³.

- 8.3.5 Greenspace can include parks, play areas, playing fields, woodlands, as well as individual trees, hedges, private gardens and other features such as river corridors, road verges, and other smaller amenity areas. Such areas can be of great significance to the character and environment of a neighbourhood, irrespective of their ownership or formal designation as public open space. This significance increases not only in terms of visual amenity but also in terms of the recreational opportunities they may provide.
- 8.3.6 The Council currently uses two quantifiable measures to assess the local provision of accessible public open space - a minimum standard for overall supply in order to relate the total amount of land available to the number of people resident within an area, and a network analysis in order to relate the location of available land with its accessibility to local people.
- 8.3.7 The minimum standard for the supply of accessible public open space is currently 2.4 hectares for every thousand people and is normally applied to local areas with a distinct and separate community identity. A local deficiency is indicated where the total area of accessible public open space available to that community, when compared with the total resident population, falls below this standard.
- 8.3.8 The network analysis is based upon the principle that no part of the Primarily Residential Area should be further than a comfortable walking distance away from a local park or similar space available for public use. The basic network is, therefore, currently defined by drawing 400 metre catchment areas around all accessible public spaces of 1.5 hectares and above, which includes sites within the Green Belt as well as sites within the urban area.
- 8.3.9 The implications of both these quantifiable measures are taken together in assessing overall deficiencies within an area, priority has always been given to maintaining the basic network of accessible public open space.

⁸² Which can be viewed at <https://ww3.wirral.gov.uk/udp/oneudp1.asp?id=GR3>

⁸³ Which can be viewed at <https://ww3.wirral.gov.uk/udp/oneudp1.asp?id=GR4>

- 8.3.10 In support of this approach, the Council's existing policies currently require new housing developments of more than 35 dwellings, that would be further away than a 400 metres walking distance from an existing larger open space, to provide additional useable publicly accessible open space at a rate of 60 square metres for every family dwelling and to make specific provision for safe children's play (Policy GR6 – Greenspace Within New Family Housing Development refers⁸⁴).
- 8.3.11 There is also an additional requirement to provide for the protection of sports pitches.
- 8.3.12 While it is proposed that a similar approach will be followed in the Wirral Local Plan, the Council has sought to update its evidence by completing an up-to-date Playing Pitch Assessment, Strategy and Action Plan and by commissioning wider reviews of open space and indoor sports provision.

⁸⁴ <https://ww3.wirral.gov.uk/udp/oneudp1.asp?id=GR6>

Figure 8.1 Open Space, Sports and Recreation



Figure 8.1 Existing Open Space in Wirral

Existing Open Space

What Our Evidence Tells Us

- 8.3.13 The Council approved a revised Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy in November 2017. The accompanying assessment, which was published for public comment during 2018, indicated that:
- there was a particular shortage of football pitches across the Borough, as well as more localised shortfalls for cricket and rugby union and growing demand for hockey; and that
 - demand for bowls and tennis is currently being met, although qualitative improvements for tennis will be required in the future.
- 8.3.14 The Strategy goes on to conclude that there is a need to protect levels of provision improve quality, where possible, to create additional capacity and, if viable, to create access to school sites or bring some disused sites back into use, if the needs identified were to be fully met⁸⁵.
- 8.3.15 The Wirral Open Space Assessment 2019 shows that the Borough is generally well-provided with open space against the normal national benchmarks, but that there are local deficiencies in certain types of open space within some locations, particularly within the older urban areas. The initial findings of the Assessment and a draft Local Standards Paper have been published for public comment alongside this Regulation 18 document. The existing distribution of open space is shown on Figure 8.1.
- 8.3.16 The draft Indoor and Built Facilities Assessment and Strategy, which has also been published for public comment alongside this Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document, concludes that Wirral is, generally currently well provided with indoor sports facilities but that there is likely to be a need to renew or replace ageing facilities, particularly for swimming, within the Plan period.

⁸⁵ The full reports can be viewed on the Council's website at <https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=4329>

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

The Council has reviewed the open spaces to be protected from development in line with national policy in paragraphs 96 and 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed boundaries to each of these sites, which are also listed in Appendix 8.1, can be viewed on the Council's website⁸⁶. The sites are based on the existing designations in the previous Unitary Development Plan and on the findings of the most recent Open Space Assessment and Playing Pitch Strategy.

The Wirral Local Plan will include revised standards for the provision of open space in line with the recommendations to be contained within the Wirral Open Space Assessment 2019, which new development will also be required to comply with.

Policies to support the continued provision of other sports facilities will also be included in the Local Plan, in line with the findings of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy 2016 and the Indoor and Built Facilities Assessment and Strategy 2019.

The Wirral Local Plan will include revised standards for the provision of open space in line with the recommendations to be contained within the Wirral Open Space Assessment 2019, which new development will also be required to comply with.

Policies to support the continued provision of other sports facilities will also be included in the Local Plan, in line with the findings of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy 2016 and the Indoor and Built Facilities Assessment and Strategy 2019.

⁸⁶ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-3>

Question 8.7

Do you have any views on the Council's proposed approach to the provision of open space and sport and recreation facilities?

Question 8.8

Do you agree with the list of open spaces identified for protection from development set out in Appendix 8.1 and the boundaries shown on the Council's website? If not, please state how they should be revised and why.

8.4 Local Green Space

What is required of us?

- 8.4.1 Paragraph 99 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that the designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.
- 8.4.2 Paragraph 100 states that Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is: a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
- 8.4.3 Paragraph 101 states that policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts.
- 8.4.4 The National Planning Practice Guidance provides further detailed guidance on the designation of Local Green Spaces and states that:
- Local Green Spaces may be designated where those spaces are demonstrably special to the local community, whether in a village or in a neighbourhood in a town or city
 - Local Green Space can only be designated through Local Plans or Neighbourhood Development Plans;

-
- Designating Local Green Spaces must be consistent with planning for sustainable development in the area and should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making;
 - Local Green Space designation will rarely be appropriate where the land has planning permission for development; and
 - Local Green Space need not be publicly owned or publicly accessible.

What Our Evidence Tells Us

- 8.4.5 The Council has already received an application to designate a site to the north of Rectory Road, within West Kirby Old Village Conservation Area, as a Local Green Space (See Figure 8.2). The guidelines for designating a site as Local Green Space are set out in national policy, in paragraphs 99 to 101 of the National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)⁸⁷.

⁸⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

Figure 8.2 Application boundary for Local Green Space Designation in West Kirby



Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

The Council will consider designating sites nominated by local communities which meet the requirements for designation as set out in national policy and guidance

Question 8.9

Do you support the designation of ‘the Glebe land’ at West Kirby as a Local Green Space?

Question 8.10

Are there any other sites which you think should be considered for designation as a Local Green Space?

Please provide a map with a proposed boundary marked on it or provide a clear description of the location of the site so that we can identify it and tell us how you think it meets the criteria set out in paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

8.5 Landscape

What is required of us?

8.5.1 Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 170 states that *“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland...”

8.5.2 Paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that, *“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments: c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)”*.

8.5.3 Paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework contains a reference to sensitivity as follows:

‘Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development...’

8.5.4 The National Planning Practice Guidance recognises the role that Landscape Character Assessments play in helping to understand the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape it states that, *‘Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.’*

What Our Evidence Tells Us

- 8.5.5 A Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and a Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) were completed in November 2019. The LCA updates the previous LCA undertaken in 2009 and provides detailed descriptions of the Landscape Character Areas within Wirral, highlights key characteristics (both positive and negative) and valued attributes that are of most significance to the particular landscape concerned. It also describes the main physical and cultural influences which have shaped the landscape of Wirral. It is intended to promote an understanding of how the landscapes of the Borough are changing as a result of a combination of natural, economic and human factors and how they can be strengthened in response.
- 8.5.6 The landscape of Wirral is a mixture of lowland farmland, rocky outcrops covered by heathland and establishing woodland, coastal farmland and recreational areas with extensive views. The landscape classification within the Landscape Character Assessment identified six landscape / seascape character types, each representing a distinct identity and reflecting the range of contrasting landscapes across the borough. These landscape character types have then been sub divided into 13 landscape character areas which are discrete geographic areas that possess the characteristics described for the landscape type but also have a recognisable local identity.
- 8.5.7 Key landscape issues were highlighted in the Landscape Character Assessment, including Climate Change, which is a major pressure on rural landscapes and is likely to result in increasingly unpredictable weather which could have an impact on the species composition of woodland and hedgerows and other important semi-natural habitats. Agriculture is of considerable significance in terms of its effect on the local landscape in Wirral. However, agricultural changes, particularly related to the viability of traditional small-scale farming, are leading to the diversification of farm-based activities which in turn could lead to a change in traditional field patterns and farming methods.
- 8.5.8 The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment considers the landscape sensitivity of 53 specific areas of land in the Green Belt that were identified for further investigation in the 2018 Development Options Review. It provides an assessment of the extent to which the character and quality of the landscape of these areas would, in principle, be susceptible to change as a result of the introduction of built development. To assess landscape sensitivity some of the smaller areas were amalgamated. The amalgamations were undertaken within the spatial framework of the Landscape Character Assessment to ensure that only areas of consistent landscape character were amalgamated. Each area was then assessed against landscape sensitivity criteria to provide an indication of the relative sensitivity of the landscape to new development. The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment will need to be extended to

include any additional areas identified through public consultation or in the Wirral Green Belt Review 2019 before the final draft Local Plan is prepared.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

Landscape is a fundamental part of the visual and cultural character of Wirral and its biodiversity. It is important that the Local Plan contains policies which protect and enhance Wirral's most valuable landscapes.

Additional Landscape Assessments

To inform the Local Plan and complete the site selection process, additional landscape sensitivity assessments will be required for any additional areas identified through public consultation or in the Wirral Green Belt Review 2019 before the final draft Local Plan is prepared.

A review of the Areas of Special Landscape Value (ASLV) within Wirral is also required following the introduction of the phrase 'valued landscapes' in paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This review will set out the justification for any continued or revised ASLV designations in terms of special character and qualities and where necessary, provide amendments to boundaries and / or allocate new areas, in order to provide evidence to underpin a robust set of up-to-date ASLVs.

New Development

The LSA provides general guidance for any potential development within each of the landscape areas assessed.

Any new development would therefore need to take this guidance into consideration. Examples of this guidance include:

- conserving and managing hedgerows as important wildlife habitats and landscape features;**
- conserving, enhancing and managing any other valued habitats that have formed within the area;**
- conserving and reinforcing the network of native hedgerows and seeking to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting;**
- avoiding visually intrusive development on more elevated areas; and**
- protecting and enhancing public rights of way and promoting further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development.**

It is intended that appropriate policies will be included in the Local Plan, to ensure that the findings of the Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment are taken into account in land allocations and development management decisions.

Question 8.11

Do you have any views on our preferred approach for protecting and conserving landscapes within Wirral through the Local Plan?

8.6 Flood Risk and Coastal Change

What is required of us?

- 8.6.1 Flood risk is a combination of the likelihood of flooding and the potential consequences arising. It is a critical consideration when assessing suitable locations for future development and should be considered at all stages of the planning process. The National Planning Policy Framework requires strategic policies to make provision for flood risk and coastal change management as part of the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development (Paragraph 20).
- 8.6.2 Strategic policies should be informed by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), should manage flood risk from all sources and consider cumulative impacts in, or affecting, local areas susceptible to flooding, taking into account the advice from the EA and other relevant flood Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) such as Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) and Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) (National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 156). According to the Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA, 2010), RMAs, including LPAs should work together to carry out their flood and coastal erosion risk management functions effectively, efficiently and in collaboration with communities, businesses and infrastructure operators to deliver more effective flood risk management.
- 8.6.3 Chapter 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework 'Meeting the challenge of Climate Change, flooding and coastal change' focuses on planning principles in relation to flood risk and coastal change.

- 8.6.4 Paragraph 149 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that “Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to Climate Change, taking into account the long term implications for flood risk, coastal change... Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to Climate Change impacts, such as... making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure”.
- 8.6.5 Paragraph 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework recognises that “inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future).” This is supported by Paragraph 157, whereby the NPPF identifies that “all plans should apply a sequential risk-based approach to the location of development – taking into account the current and future impacts of Climate Change – so as to avoid, where possible, flood risk to people and property.” Where development is necessary in areas at higher risk of flooding, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere (Exception Test).
- 8.6.6 Paragraph 158 of the National Planning Policy Framework goes further and states that “development should not be allocated or permitted if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding.”
- 8.6.7 Paragraph 160 of the National Planning Policy Framework details “the application of the exception test should be informed by a strategic or site specific flood risk assessment, depending on whether it is being applied during plan production or at the application stage. For the exception test to be passed it should be demonstrated that;
- a) *the development would provide wider sustainability benefits to the community that outweigh flood risk and;*
 - b) *the development will be safe for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere and where possible, reducing flood risk overall.”*
- 8.6.8 Paragraph 163 of the National Planning Policy Framework states “when determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere... development should only be allowed in areas at risk of flooding where... it can be demonstrated that:... the development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient; it incorporates sustainable drainage systems, unless there is clear evidence that it would be inappropriate.”

Coastal Change

- 8.6.9 In relation to coastal change, national policy states that “plans should reduce risk from coastal change by avoiding inappropriate development in vulnerable areas and not exacerbating the impacts of physical changes to the coast” (Paragraph 167 of the National Planning Policy Framework)
- 8.6.10 Paragraph 168 of the National Planning Policy Framework advises that “development in a coastal change management area will be appropriate only where it is demonstrated that:
- a) *it will be safe over its planned lifetime and not have an unacceptable impact on coastal change;*
 - b) *the character of the coast including designations is not compromised;*
 - c) *the development provides wider sustainability benefits; and*
 - d) *the development does not hinder the creation and maintenance of a continuous signed and managed route around the coast”*

Legislation

- 8.6.11 The Local Planning Authority and the Lead Local Flood Authority have a responsibility in respect to managing flood risk and in the delivery of the requirements of the Flood Risk Regulations (2009) and the Flood and Water Management Act, 2010. There are clear links between legislation, national policy, statutory documents and assessment of flood risk. The implementation of legislation and policy should aim to provide a comprehensive and planned approach to improving flood risk management within communities.
- 8.6.12 The Flood and Water Management Act requires the Environment Agency to “develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England”. The National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy (2011), is currently being revised and is anticipated to be published in Spring 2020.

What Our Evidence Tells Us

- 8.6.13 The updated Level 1 Wirral Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (2019) and the Environment Agency’s Flood Map for Planning and the Risk of Flooding from Surface Water (RoFSW) third edition dataset, provides a more detailed picture of areas susceptible to flood risk across the Borough. The main sources of flood risk within Wirral are from rivers and watercourses (fluvial), the sea (tidal) and surface water runoff, and

- can be viewed in more detail on the Interactive Maps in Appendix A of the SFRA.
- 8.6.14 The Wirral Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (2019) assesses surface water flooding with equal importance as fluvial and tidal, including possible withdrawal (to sites where high-risk areas cannot be avoided), redesign or relation for sites at significant surface water risk.
- 8.6.15 Wirral Council is the designated Lead Local Flood Authority and under the Flood and Water Management Act, 2010, and must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development when carrying out flood risk management functions, in accordance with the Wirral Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) which was published in 2016.
- 8.6.16 The Council should use the assessment not only to determine the variations of risk from all sources of flooding across Wirral but also, to help inform the Sustainability Appraisal, consider opportunities to reduce flood risk to existing communities and developments through better management of surface water, provision for conveyance and storage for flood water.
- 8.6.17 As a result of Climate Change, (as discussed in Section 8.), the risk of flooding to local communities as a result of Climate Change is expected to rise according the Met Office's UK Climate Projections 2018 (UCKP18). Therefore, the importance of steering more vulnerable development to areas at low risk of flooding, as stated in the NPPF and the SFRA, is paramount on the peninsula.
- 8.6.18 The Wirral Water Cycle Study (WCS, 2013) identifies any constraints on housing and employment growth planned for the borough up to the year 2027, that may be imposed upon by the water cycle and details how these can be resolved.
- 8.6.19 The Wirral Water Cycle Study and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) highlight that surface water and sewer flooding is an existing concern in several areas and with Climate Change, the capacity of the foul sewer system to accept additional surface water may be limited. New development should therefore manage surface water at source in a sustainable, effective and appropriate way. The SFRA further explains this.
- 8.6.20 Wirral Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Report (2011) provides an assessment of local flood risk across the Borough, including information on past floods and the potential consequences of future flood events. The study was updated via Addendum in 2017.

- 8.6.21 The coastline of Wirral is covered by the North West and North Wales Shoreline Management Plan 2 (SMP2) which provides a large scale assessment of the risks associated with coastal processes and a policy framework to reduce these risks, both to people and the environment, in a sustainable way over the following 100 years. The Wirral Coastal Strategy supplements the SMP by identifying how the strategic SMP policies might be best implemented locally. The Strategy covers the entire Wirral coastline, which is split into three primary frontages, consistent with natural process behaviour and environmental interests:
- Strategy Frontage West – the River Dee shoreline, from the Borough boundary at Gayton to Red Rocks at Hoylake;
 - Strategy Frontage North – the North Wirral shoreline, from the Red Rocks at Hoylake to Fort Perch Rock at New Brighton; and
 - Strategy Frontage East – the River Mersey shoreline, from Fort Perch Rock at New Brighton to the Borough boundary at Eastham.
- 8.6.22 The Strategy splits the frontage into 14 'strategy units' for the purposes of policy implementation, which will need to be reflected in policies within the Local Plan, where relevant.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

The Local Plan will support Climate Change adaptation through the management of residual risk by guiding the appropriate location, layout and design of development to take account of flood risk and coastal change and by requiring the use of effective Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other flood risk management practices to reduce the impacts of flooding, such as safeguarding land and Natural Flood Management (NFM), as outlined in the Level1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019, without having an adverse impact on water quality.

The Local Plan will also provide policies to support the sustainable management of surface water and the maintenance of effective flood defences, land drainage infrastructure and river corridors, and to support improvements to water quality.

Question 8.12

What are your views on the Council using a sequential risk-based approach to direct development to areas at lowest risk of flooding?

Question 8.13

Do you think there is anything else that the Council could do to address or plan for flood risk and coastal change within the Local Plan?

8.7 Habitats and Biodiversity

What is required of us?

- 8.7.1 The Council has a statutory duty to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity and to encourage the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna.
- 8.7.2 Paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework in Chapter 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- *“protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
 - *recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; and*
 - *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures”.*
- 8.7.3 Paragraph 171 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that plans should, “distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.”

- 8.7.4 Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that in order to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
- a) *“Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and*
 - b) *promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.”*
- 8.7.5 Paragraph 175 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
- a) *“if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
 - b) *development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*
 - c) *development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons⁵⁸ and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*
 - d) *development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.”*
- 8.7.6 Paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that the following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:
- a) *“potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;*
 - b) *listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and*
 - c) *sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites”.*

- 8.7.7 Paragraph 177 of the National Planning Policy Framework also states that, “the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.”
- 8.7.8 The National Planning Practice Guidance outlines that section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on all public authorities in England and Wales to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. A key purpose of this duty is to embed consideration of biodiversity as an integral part of policy and decision making throughout the public sector, which should be seeking to make a significant contribution to the achievement of the commitments made by government in its 25 Year Environment Plan.

What Our Evidence Tells Us

Wirral’s Wildlife

- 8.7.9 Biodiversity is one of Wirral’s greatest assets. A comprehensive biodiversity audit of the Borough was undertaken in 2009 and more recently the Liverpool City Region Ecological Network was published in 2015. The main features of note within the Borough include:
- *The Mersey and Dee Estuaries and North Wirral Foreshore*, where tens of thousands of waders and wildfowl spend the winter, including redshank, dunlin, knot, turnstone, curlew teal and pintail;
 - *Clay cliffs* at Thurstaston, which are of considerable geological as well as biological importance;
 - *Sand dunes* at Leasowe and West Kirby, where natterjack toads breed, and which are the home of rare plants such as Mackay’s Horsetail;
 - *Ancient woods* still line the River Dibbin, much of them open to the public, which are home to plants such as wood anemones, bluebells and other flowers. These woods are also important for invertebrates, bats and birds;
 - *Ponds* are a Wirral speciality. They support a wide variety of water plants; and frogs, toads and newts, including the legally protected Great Crested Newt, a species which is declining across Europe; and
 - *Lowland heathland*, especially at Thurstaston Common and Heswall Dales, particularly as at least 80% of the Borough’s lowland heathland was destroyed in the last century.

- 8.7.10 Small pockets of other wildlife can be found elsewhere. A *remnant marsh* at Bidston, and new habitats on the former tip; some remaining small traditional *hay meadows* at Meols and Frankby; butterflies on the goods yard to Bebington railway station (New Ferry Butterfly Park); and special *maritime wildlife* on the Hilbre Islands.

Wildlife Designations

- 8.7.11 Wirral has twelve Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) three of which – the Dee and Mersey Estuaries and the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore– are also listed as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention and as Special Protection Areas (SPA), under European Habitat Regulations for their bird interest. The Liverpool Bay Special Protection Area was also recently extended to include the Mersey Estuary.
- 8.7.12 In addition to these, the Dee Estuary and North Wirral Foreshore are designated as a Sensitive Marine Area. The Dee Estuary is also Special Area for Conservation (SAC) under European Habitats Regulations. Significant inland areas of the Borough are functionally-linked to these sites as inland roosting sites for bird species for which the sites are classified and are therefore protected by the Habitats Regulations. The Core count areas used for the Wetland Bird Survey undertaken by the British Trust for Ornithology have been adopted as an indicator of where this functionally-linked land lies in the Borough, but further work is needed to understand the importance and location of these sites in the Borough.
- 8.7.13 Wirral has five Local Nature Reserves (LNR's) and there are 69 Sites of Biological Importance and 15 Local Geological Sites.
- 8.7.14 There are ten areas of designated Ancient Woodland within the Borough. All are clustered towards the south-east of the Plan area, at Eastham Woods, Plymyard Dale, Stream Wood, Thornton Wood, Intake Wood, Foxes Wood, Footpath Wood, Marfords Wood, Railway Wood and Patricks Wood.
- 8.7.15 There are also a broad range and distribution of Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats within the Borough, including:
- large areas of coastal saltmarsh in the Dee Estuary to the south-west and Mersey Estuary to the south-east of the Plan area;
 - two notable sites of coastal sand dunes along the northern coast of the Borough;
 - a large mudflat area in the Mersey Estuary, with a smaller mudflat area in the Dee Estuary;
 - significant clusters of coastal and floodplain grazing marsh in the north of the Borough;

- a scattering of lowland heathland, mostly towards the western border of the Plan area;
- a scattering of deciduous woodland throughout the Borough; and
- small, isolated pockets of wood pasture and parkland throughout the area.

8.7.16 These designations can be viewed on Figure 8.3.

Figure 8.3 Environmental Designations and Priority Habitats



Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 8.7.17 Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, competent authorities have a legal obligation to consider the impacts of any plan or project that has the potential to have an adverse effect on a European designated site, including the granting of consents or permissions of any such plan or project. This process is assessed under a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).
- 8.7.18 A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) was undertaken in 2012 as part of the Wirral Core Strategy Local Plan, concluding that, following amendments that were made in the Submission Draft Core Strategy in

response to the 2010 Preferred Options HRA Report, a sufficient policy framework existed to enable the avoidance or mitigation of adverse effects on the European designated sites within Wirral. It was however recommended that, with regard to the issue of loss of off-site supporting habitat, a residual recommendation from the 2010 Preferred Options HRA be considered for action at a strategic district-wide (or Merseyside-wide) scale. The recommendation was to identify all important areas of supporting habitat and to assess any impacts on these areas, and thereby potential impacts on qualifying species, prior to permitting any future development. It was recognised that a commitment to undertake such an exercise at a district-wide scale prior to permitting future development may not be realistic, and that such matters could be deferred to individual planning applications and their associated environmental investigations.

- 8.7.19 An interim Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). report has also been prepared for public consultation alongside the proposals contained within this Local Plan Issues and Options document.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach: Wirral's Biodiversity:

The Council will seek to protect and enhance the natural environmental assets of the Borough, including the designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites; priority habitats and species; ancient woodland; and ancient and veteran trees found outside ancient woodland; and wherever possible provide net gains in biodiversity and establish coherent ecological networks.

Our Preferred Approach: Internationally Important sites:

The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority is proposing to prepare a sub-regional Recreation Mitigation Strategy (RMS) which will seek to address the implications of growth across the Liverpool City Region for the City Region's wildlife sites of international importance. It will enable sustainable housing and tourism development within the City Region, whilst securing sustainable, long term protection of the internationally important wildlife sites.

A policy setting out the Council's approach to recreation mitigation will be included in the Local Plan. The policy will need to include a recreation mitigation and avoidance mechanism for Wirral in advance of the LCR-wide study being completed, approved and implemented. The policy is likely to require that mitigation will be required for recreational disturbance from new residential development within 5km of the coast, through the funding of a strategy which will involve a mix of access management, habitat management and provision of alternative recreational space, to be secured through a legal agreement before planning permission is granted.

In the meantime, Wirral Council will continue to work in collaboration with the LCR Combined Authority to contribute to the delivery of a RMS to address potential damage from increased recreation and visitor pressure on the species and habitats of the designated sites within the Borough on a City Region wide basis.

An updated Habitat Regulations Assessment for the Local Plan is currently being undertaken which will examine whether the forthcoming policy framework will be sufficient to enable the avoidance or mitigation of adverse effects on European designated sites.

Question 8.14

Do you have any views on the Council's approach to ensuring biodiversity is properly addressed within the Local Plan and that important species and habitats are protected?

8.8 Healthy Communities

What is required of us?

- 8.8.1 Creating healthy places for our communities is a key element of the Local Plan Spatial Vision for Wirral – “A Healthy, Sustainable and Prosperous Borough” Health is an issue across a number of the strategic objectives but is dealt with specifically in Strategic Objective 7.
- 8.8.2 Health is also a key theme throughout the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 8.8.3 Paragraph 91 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires that Planning policies and decisions should “*aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:*
- a) *promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;*
 - b) *are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and*
 - c) *enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.”*

What Our Evidence Tells Us

- 8.8.4 An Interim Health Impact Assessment for the Local Plan was completed in October 2019 which is intended to inform at an early stage how the Local Plan Policies can best deliver healthy outcomes. The Assessment set out a number of recommendations on how the Local Plan can contribute to health and wellbeing including:
- neighbourhood design;
 - housing;
 - food environment;
 - natural and sustainable environments/ environmental hazards/ air quality/ noise;
 - access to and engagement with the natural environment;

- adaptation to Climate Change;
- provision of active travel walking and cycling infrastructure/ mobility for all ages;
- provision of public transport;
- limiting fast food outlets;
- arts and culture;
- reducing alcohol-related harm; and
- effective engagement of communities in overall plan and future.

Implications for the Local Plan

- 8.8.5 The health of our communities can be fundamentally affected by their living environment which the planning system has a key role in creating and controlling. The planning system also has a key role in promoting health and reducing health inequalities, for instance in promoting regeneration and requiring appropriate health and wellbeing infrastructure to be provided to support new development.
- 8.8.6 The Council's corporate plans place great emphasis on the importance of improving health and wellbeing of our community. This will need to be carried through into the Local Plan with all policies which can influence health and wellbeing being developed having regard to the recommendations of the Interim Health Impact Assessment.

Our Preferred Approach

Improving health will be a cross cutting theme in the final draft local plan and will be addressed in environment, design and infrastructure policies. In addition, a specific policy "Improving Health and addressing health inequalities" will be included in the Plan. This would provide details of when a Health Impact Assessment may be required to be submitted in support of certain types of development.

Question 8.15

Do you have any views on the Council's approach to ensuring that new development will take account of health and wellbeing through the Local Plan?

Question 8.16

Do you think there is anything else that the Council could do to address health and wellbeing within the Local Plan?

Heritage: What is required of us?

- 8.8.7 The Local Planning Authority is required to identify and address strategic priorities for development and use of land through policies in the development plan under Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. There is also a general duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings and the desirability preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Protection is provided for scheduled monuments under the Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Historic Buildings & Ancient Monuments Act 1953.
- 8.8.8 Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for Conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 185 states *"Plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats. This strategy should take into account:*
- a) *the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
 - b) *the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;*
 - c) *the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and*
 - d) *opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place."*

What Our Evidence Tells Us

- 8.8.9 The Merseyside Historic Environment Record (HER) records details on local archaeological sites and finds, historic buildings and historic landscapes.
- 8.8.10 The Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project – Wirral Report (2011) contains spatial data in relation to historic landscape character of Wirral.
- 8.8.11 The Draft Wirral Heritage Strategy 2011-2016 sets out priorities for capital investment in heritage and heritage assets, to maximise educational, recreational, tourism and regeneration opportunities.
- 8.8.12 Wirral currently has a large number of historic assets including: 726 entries for groups of listed building, 8 scheduled monuments and 4 registered parks and gardens identified on the National Heritage List for England and 26 Conservation Areas designated at local level. The Heritage at Risk Register records 13 features considered to be at risk within the Borough. Two features are recorded as being at immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric.
- 8.8.13 Flaybrick Cemetery and Port Sunlight have conservation area management plans dated 2018. Other conservation area appraisals and management plans date from 2007 and will need to be updated. New management plans will also need to be prepared for: Clifton Park, Hamilton Square, Lower Bebington, Meols Drive, Mountwood, the Kings Gap and the Magazines.
- 8.8.14 A wide variety of historic assets are undesignated can make an important contribution to Wirral’s broader historic character. These features range widely in scope and in scale. Liverpool Museum considers undesignated historic assets to include “*the vast majority of non-Scheduled archaeological remains, historic landscapes, buildings of local interest, artwork.*”
- 8.8.15 The Battle of Brunanburh was a key event in the formation of Britain. The Wirral Archaeological Society Evidence have recently presented evidence which suggests that the battle took place at Bromborough, though the location is not known with confidence. The Council are supporting the work of the Wirral Archaeological Society to appoint an independent professional archaeologist to assess recent archaeological finds, advise on how they have been recorded and how these finds may impact on the

historical landscape of central Wirral. This work is expected to be undertaken in early 2020.

Our Preferred Approach

The Local Plan will set a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the Borough's heritage assets through the vision, objectives, broad spatial strategy, strategic priorities for settlement areas and policies for:

- **achieving Sustainable Places;**
- **protection of Heritage Assets; and**
- **each designated Conservation Area**

Question 8.17

Do you agree with the Council's approach to how Heritage is dealt with in the Local Plan?

Question 8.18

Do you agree with the Council's approach to ensuring heritage assets are preserved or enhanced?

8.9 Minerals

What is Required of us

- 8.9.1 Chapter 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework deals specifically with minerals and sets out what planning authorities should do when considering proposals for mineral extraction. Paragraph 203 within the chapter states that *“it is essential that there is a sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs. Since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, best use needs to be made of them to secure their long-term conservation”*.
- 8.9.2 National Guidance advises that mineral planning authorities should adopt a systematic approach for safeguarding mineral resources; and plan for the steady and adequate supply of minerals in one or more of the following ways:
- designating Specific Sites – where viable resources are known to exist, landowners are supportive of minerals development and the proposal is likely to be acceptable in planning terms. Such sites may also include essential operations associated with mineral extraction;
 - designating Preferred Areas, which are areas of known resources where planning permission might reasonably be anticipated. Such areas may also include essential operations associated with mineral extraction; and/or
 - designating Areas of Search – areas where knowledge of mineral resources may be less certain but within which planning permission may be granted, particularly if there is a potential shortfall in supply.
- 8.9.3 Other chapters from the National Planning Policy Framework that are of particular relevance to minerals waste include Chapter 13 ‘Protecting Green Belt Land’, Chapter 16 ‘Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment’ and Chapter 16 ‘Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment’. Planning policies and decisions being undertaken for minerals would need to pay due regard to the advice outlined within these chapters.

What our evidence tells us

- 8.9.4 The Council have commissioned a new study to undertake a complete review of mineral resources and mineral-related facilities in Wirral with a view to providing advice on future minerals planning policy; and how best to deal with any proposals that may come forward for minerals related development within the Wirral⁸⁸.
- 8.9.5 The Wirral land area extends to 60 square miles, with just under half being open countryside. Approximately 58 percent of this area is used for farming, over half of which is high quality agricultural land. Most of the remaining open land is designated as Green Belt (45%) with a boundary tightly defined by the surrounding urban area.
- 8.9.6 The Merseyside Mineral Resource Study⁸⁹ (MMRS) confirmed, following consultation with the mineral industry, that Wirral has no workable resources for land-won crushed rock, sand and gravel or industrial minerals. Much of the background information contained within the MMRS was taken from the British Geological Survey⁹⁰ report 2006, which set out the background to mineral resources on Merseyside. It states that there is very limited current extraction of sand and gravel in Merseyside; most of which is marine dredged and is landed at coastal ports such as the Port of Liverpool.
- 8.9.7 Much of Wirral is founded on sandstone, which is major aquifer. Wirral does not however have any significant mineral reserves, apart from small amounts of winnable brick clay. The MMRS recommended that only the Carr Lane Brickworks at Moreton should be safeguarded for future mineral extraction.
- 8.9.8 From 2007 to 2015, marine-won sand and gravel from Liverpool bay was landed at a purpose-built facility at Bromborough Coast. The 2016 North West Regional Aggregate Working Party (NWRAP) Annual Monitoring Report stated that annual landings had been as high as 124,000 tonnes, but also advised that “the facility has now closed”.

⁸⁸ The Wirral Local Plan Minerals Report 2019, prepared by RPS, has been published for public consultation alongside this Regulation 18 document

⁸⁹ The Evidence Base for Minerals Planning in Merseyside Final Report August 2008 (Urban Vison)

⁹⁰ BGS: Mineral Resource Information in support of National, Regional and Local Planning: Merseyside (2006)

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

It is recommended that the following topics be covered by individual policies in the emerging Local Plan:

- General criteria for minerals development;
- Maintaining the supply of aggregates;
- Safeguarding Mineral Reserves & Infrastructure;
- Use of Secondary and Recycled Aggregates;
- Oil and Gas Exploration; and
- Site restoration.

Proposed draft policies are set out within the Wirral Local Plan Minerals Report 2019, for public consultation.

Question 8.19

Do you have any views on our preferred approach for planning for minerals within Wirral?

8.10 Waste Management

What is required of us

- 8.10.1 Wirral Council is the waste planning authority for the Borough. “National Planning Policy for Waste” (October 2014) requires that planned provision should be based on a robust evidence base, joint working and considered alongside other spatial planning concerns recognising the positive contribution that waste management can bring to the development of sustainable communities. Waste planning authorities should prepare Local Plans which identify sufficient opportunities to meet the identified needs of their area for the management of waste streams including driving waste management up the hierarchy, which encourages waste prevention and minimisation, re-use and recycling before treatment and disposal and to minimise landfill to meet European commitments.

Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton

- 8.10.2 The spatial strategy, criteria for development management and site allocations for new waste management development in Wirral, based on a resource recovery-led strategy and a sub-regional site approach, is set out in a separate, jointly prepared sub-regional Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton, which was adopted in July 2013. The Plan period runs to 2027.
- 8.10.3 The Joint Waste Local Plan identifies three additional sites for new waste management facilities; at Cammell Lairds in Tranmere and at Bidston adjacent to the existing recycling facilities at Wallasey Bridge Road; and areas of search for smaller scale facilities at Poulton and Tranmere, which reflect the scale and pattern of development anticipated in the Local Plan.
- 8.10.4 The delivery of the Joint Waste Local Plan strategy relies upon improved facilities for the minimisation, collection, re-use and recycling of waste on the site where the waste is generated, as an integral part of new development or through improvements to the facilities available at existing sites. Other off-site facilities for new waste management development will normally be expected to be provided in industrial locations away from residential property and other environmentally sensitive land uses, with good access to the Strategic Route Network or water access (wharfage) to encourage transport by water.
- 8.10.5 The Joint Waste Local Plan is also subject to separate annual monitoring⁹¹.

What our evidence tells us

- 8.10.6 Five Waste Local Plan Implementation and Monitoring Reports have been produced, the latest covering the period from 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018 issued in April 2019. The reports are prepared by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service on behalf of the six Liverpool City Region councils. The Monitoring Report also provides more recent contextual information especially where this relates to cross-boundary matters or progress with implementation of planning consents. During the fifth monitoring period, in Merseyside and Halton:
- four waste management facilities were consented yielding 80,000tpa capacity;
 - this comprised mainly of new capacity at existing sites for composting and small-scale biomass facilities; and

⁹¹ Previous annual monitoring reports can be viewed on the Council's website at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/joint-waste-local-plan-merseyside>

- the 4 consented waste management facilities have the potential to create up to 19 new jobs.

8.10.7 In terms of the Waste Hierarchy – 3 recycling facilities were consented and 1 was for ‘other recovery’ (i.e. biomass CHP);

- 75% of waste applications received were on existing waste management sites;
- the recycling rate for the Plan Area has dropped again slightly from 41.1% to 38.9% in 2017-18; and
- all waste applications received propose to use road transportation.

Implications for the Local Plan

Our Preferred Approach

Waste policy objectives for Wirral will mainly be delivered through the policies in the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton, which will continue to remain in force and will not be superseded by the policies in the Wirral Local Plan and through any associated supporting policies for development management set out in the Wirral Local Plan.

Additional guidance on the space that will be necessary to allow safe access for the on-site storage, collection and emptying of containers and on the control of litter will be included in relevant Supplementary Planning Documents.

The Joint Waste Local Plan expires in 2027, mid-way through the Wirral Local Plan period. It is proposed that following completion of the 5th AMR 2018/19, a high-level 5-year review of the Waste Local Plan is undertaken. The review should identify areas which are sufficiently ineffective or out of date to trigger full review.

Question 8.20

Do you have any views on our preferred approach for planning for waste within Wirral as part of a wider City Region partnership?

9 Detailed Local Plan Policies

- 9.1.1 When we publish the final Draft Local Plan later in 2020 it will include a comprehensive set of 'strategic' and 'local' policies. We have provided the policy direction for strategic policies in this document. Appendix 9.1 provides the proposed list of detailed development management policies or 'local' policies that we propose to include in the draft Final Local Plan when it is published in Summer 2020.
- 9.1.2 This consultation document does however contain a draft policy on Housing in Multiple Occupation (see Appendix 5.1) which is referred to further in section 5.8 above and upon which comments are requested as part of this consultation process (see Question 5.8)

Question 9.1

Do you have any comments on any of the detailed policy subjects?

Question 9.2

Are there any additional detailed development management policies you suggest are included?

Question 9.3

Are there any of the detailed development management Local Plan policies you do not think are needed in the Wirral Local Plan

10 Other Comments or Questions

- 10.1.1 If you have any comments on any aspect of this Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document or the new Local Plan generally that you feel are not covered by the questions set out elsewhere, please provide your comments here:

Question 10.1

What section or subject would you like to make a comment on?

What is your comment?

11 Next Steps

- 11.1.1 This Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document is the start of the formal engagement stage for the new Wirral Local Plan, which will cover the period from 2020 to 2035. The representations received in response to this consultation will be used to help to finalise our plan.
- 11.1.2 We invite you to submit any comments you may have on this Wirral Local Plan Issues and Options consultation by 5pm, 23rd March 2020. Please see Section 1.8 on how to submit your comments or visit the Local Plan Consultation Page.
- 11.1.3 We will publish all comments received on the online consultation portal (names and contact details will not be shown). We will also in due course publish our response to relevant comments made.
- 11.1.4 We currently anticipate presenting the draft final Local Plan to be considered by the Council's Cabinet and Council in July 2020. The draft final Local Plan will then be published under Regulation 19 to enable formal representations to be made. At the same time the Council will also publish the final Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment together with any further evidence documents which have been used to help inform the preparation of the Local Plan. All representations received will be passed to the independent Inspector appointed to undertake the 'Examination in Public'.
- 11.1.5 We anticipate submitting the Local Plan to the Secretary of State (Regulation 22) for examination in November 2020, with the examination likely to take place from Spring 2021.
- 11.1.6 Subject to the Inspector finding that the final Wirral Local Plan is "sound" and allowing for a period of modification to the submitted plan, we anticipate that the Wirral Local Plan 2020-2035 will be formally adopted by Spring 2022.

Wirral Council,
Wallasey Town Hall,
Brighton Street,
Wallasey,
Wirral.
CH44 8ED



Wirral Local Plan 2020-2035

Issues and Options Consultation

Appendices

January 2020



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APPENDIX 1.1

List of evidence studies

Economy and Employment	
Draft Employment Land Options Study 2019	Stage 1 Urban Brownfield Site Assessment Study. Considers potential to release key employment sites for alternative uses and assesses the implications for employment land supply.
Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2017	This report assesses the future supply of employment land and identifies an appropriate land portfolio to meet the needs of local businesses and attract inward investment. Emphasis is placed on the suitability, deliverability and viability of land and premises for employment use.
Liverpool City Region Ecological Network 2015	Evidence base which comprises ecological and biodiversity information on the City Region natural assets. Identifies opportunities to enable better protection and management of those natural assets and describes opportunities to create new natural assets.
Wirral Retail and Centres Study 2019	This study provides an up-to-date assessment of retail and leisure needs over a fifteen-year period to 2034, together with a review of the health of the Borough's town, district and local centres. It identifies the future retail and leisure capacity of each centre, assesses the appropriateness of the centre hierarchy and reviews the boundaries to the town centres and defined retail frontages to be shown on the Local Plan policies map.
Wirral Minerals Report 2019	This report provides an up-to-date review of mineral resources and mineral-related facilities in Wirral. It provides advice and guidance on future minerals planning policy and how best to deal with any proposals that may come forward for minerals related development within Wirral.
Environment and Climate Change	
Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019	This study provides an up-to-date assessment of agriculture in Wirral including underlying soil and geology and climate limitations. The study also captures the views of agricultural stakeholders including farmers, agricultural landlords and statutory consultees and identifies areas where best and most versatile agricultural land is likely to be present including the Green Belt parcels that were identified

	for further investigation in the 2018 Development Options Review.
Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service RAG Screening 2019	This provides a red, amber and green risk-based screening assessment of potential urban site allocations and Green Belt parcels that were identified for further investigation in the 2018 Development Options Review against information held on MEAS environmental databases including the Historic Environment Record. The screening includes archaeology, ecology, contaminated land, waste and minerals.
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019	This Level 1 assessment considers the number and distribution of flood risk sources present in Wirral. It draws together the most up-to-date flood risk information and provides an assessment of flood risk for potential site allocations and sites for further investigation to assist with the decision-making process for sites to take forward as part of the Local Plan and the contribution of individual planning applications.
Wirral Landscape Character Assessment 2019	<p>This study is intended to update the previous Landscape Assessment Study 2009 and will inform the Local Plan in terms of landscape protection.</p> <p>This study provides an outline of the landscape character of the Borough and classifies the landscape and character of Wirral through a series of area profiles. These will guide development and land management that is sympathetic to local character and the special qualities of the Borough and encourage the protection and enhancement of valued landscapes.</p>
Wirral Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019	This study provides an assessment of the character and quality of the landscape of the Green Belt parcels that were identified for further investigation in the 2018 Development Options Review and their susceptibility to change as a result of the introduction of new built development.
Sites of Biological Importance	This webpage provides the latest information on the designated Sites of Biological Importance in Wirral.

Conservation Areas	This webpage provides the latest information on the designated Conservation Areas in Wirral.
Local Geological Sites	This webpage provides the latest information on the designated Local Geological Sites in Wirral.
Green Infrastructure	
Wirral Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy 2016	This report sets out a strategy for the provision of sports pitches, tennis courts and bowling greens. It includes an action plan to provide a strategic framework for the maintenance and improvement of outdoor sports facilities.
Wirral Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Assessment 2016	This report provides a quantitative and qualitative assessment of provision and demand in the Borough for sports pitches, tennis and bowling.
Draft Indoor and Built Facilities Strategy 2019	This report sets out a strategy for providing a modern, efficient and sustainable range of community-based leisure, physical activity and sport facilities.
Draft Indoor Sports Facilities Needs Assessment 2019	This report provides an up-to-date assessment of need for indoor sports halls, health and fitness and specialist facilities in the Borough. Deficiencies and surpluses are identified to inform the provision required.
Draft Open Space Assessment Report 2019	This report provides an up-to-date assessment of the condition, distribution and overall quality of existing open space in Wirral. It also considers the future need for new open space based upon population distribution, planned growth and public consultation.
Draft Open Space Standards Paper 2019	This document sets out proposed revised standards for open space provision by identifying deficiencies and surpluses in existing and future provision. The revised standards will inform the policies to be contained within the Council's Local Plan and help to set the approach to securing open space facilities through new housing development and developer contributions towards the provision of appropriate open space facilities and their long-term maintenance.

Health and Social	
Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is a web-based systematic review of the health and wellbeing needs of the local population, informing local priorities, policies and strategies that in turn informs local commissioning priorities that will improve health and wellbeing outcomes and reduce inequalities throughout the Borough. It is an interactive and continuous process of reviewing current content and developing information for inclusion.
Hot Food Takeaway Evidence Base 2019	This document provides evidence to support proposed controls on Hot Food Takeaways (Use Class A5) to assist in reducing local obesity levels.
Interim Health Impact Assessment 2019	This document presents the findings of an interim Health Impact Assessment on the strategic objectives of the emerging Local Plan and sets out recommendations for embedding health and well-being considerations in the Plan preparation process.
Housing	
Draft Wirral Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019	This study provides an assessment of the local housing market and of local housing needs. It includes up-to-date analysis of the social, economic, housing and demographic characteristics of the area and establishes the need for different types of housing for different groups in the Wirral population including the mix of housing and requirement for specialist and affordable housing.
Wirral Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2019	This study assesses the potential future supply of land for new housing in Wirral and identifies the supply of 'deliverable' and 'developable' housing sites.
Wirral Empty Homes Study 2019	This report analyses Wirral's current position in terms of empty homes, windfall and overall housing delivery. It outlines the justification and methodology of including empty homes within Wirral's housing supply within the Local Plan.
Wirral Gypsy and Traveller	This report provides an assessment of current and future need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling

Accommodation Assessment 2019	Showpeople accommodation within the Borough for the period 2019-34.
Wirral Housing Density Study Interim Report 2019	This study will identify the most appropriate broad locations for increasing urban density, by focusing higher density development around locations where sustainable travel, such as walking, cycling and public transport can most easily be supported.
Green Belt	
Wirral Green Belt Review 2019	<p>A comprehensive review of the Green Belt against the purposes of including land in the Green Belt which replaces the Interim Green Belt Review published in September 2018</p> <p>This study provides a detailed specialist assessment against the five purposes of the Green Belt set out in national policy. It considers the consultation responses received during the Development Options Review 2018 and replaces the Council's previous Initial Green Belt Review 2018.</p>
Transport	
Wirral Local Plan Baseline Modelling Report 2019	This study updates Wirral's Transport Model 2015 to provide a baseline scenario for the Local Plan period 2020-2035 to support further assessment of the proposed sites included in Wirral's Local Plan.
Wirral Local Plan Spatial Options Modelling Report 2019	This study provides key evidence in relation to the potential impact on Wirral's highway network of each of the Strategic Spatial Options set out within the Local Plan Issues and Options document 2020.
East Wirral Transport Scoping Report 2016	This report set out the need to prepare a Strategic Transport Framework for East Wirral and to review the current list of projects, pin-pointing and prioritise gaps to identify and direct further work.
Draft Wirral Strategic Transport Framework 2019	This framework provides the principles for the development of potential transport schemes to enable growth and underpin the Council's Strategic Regeneration Framework. It aligns the development of specific transport packages to the Council's regeneration aspirations.

<p>Draft Wirral Strategic Transport Framework Action Plan 2019</p>	<p>This Action Plan forms Stage 2 of the Strategic Transport Framework and provides a series of preferred options for each of the five spatial priority areas identified in the Council's Strategic Regeneration Framework, to enable the desired growth to be achieved and to ensure that the transport network is fully aligned with Wirral's regenerations plans.</p>
<p>Draft A41 Corridor Study 2018</p>	<p>This study investigates ways to remove transport barriers and connect spatial priority areas along the northern section of the A41 East Wirral corridor with the aim of improving investment, creating jobs and developing skills in the area.</p>
<p>Draft Wirral Waters and Supporting Road Infrastructure Feasibility Study Baseline Report 2018</p>	<p>This study identifies detailed highway improvements that are necessary to serve and bring forward the Wirral Waters regeneration project. It includes an options appraisal and feasibility work to develop the highway infrastructure and sustainable transport options needed to support investment and growth and Wirral Waters.</p>
<p>Transport & Accessibility Review for Sites for Further Investigation 2019</p>	<p>This document reviews the Green Belt parcels that were identified for further investigation in the 2018 Development Options Review. It assesses the potential of these parcels to support future development considering include key information such as indicative dwelling capacity, potential trip generations, high level site considerations and general accessibility to the site. This study has been updated to include weak performing parcels as identified in Arup's Green Belt Review.</p>
<p>Wirral Transport Background Paper 2019</p>	<p>This report sets the transport context and summarises the transport evidence base available to date. It includes commentary on transport characteristics, key issues and next steps for transport assessment of the Local Plan.</p>
<p>People and Places</p>	
<p>Borough Spatial Portrait 2019</p>	<p>This document presents a summary of various demographic and background information for the Borough and its individual settlements.</p>

<p>Wirral Infrastructure Delivery Plan Baseline 2019</p>	<p>The Infrastructure Delivery Plan seeks to identify the essential infrastructure that will be needed to achieve growth aspirations to be set out in the Wirral Local Plan. It will identify the costs of necessary infrastructure for development and how these costs can be met.</p> <p>This Report (Part 1) provides information on the baseline provision of infrastructure in the Borough together with an assessment of known constraints or pinch points or shortfalls in provision. This will inform Part 2 of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, to be published in support of the final draft Local Plan, which will address the infrastructure needed to deliver key housing and employment sites.</p>
<p>The Integrated Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters 2010</p>	<p>This study provides a framework for the integration of the Wirral Waters proposals with the surrounding residential neighbourhoods and Birkenhead Town Centre. It sets out a vision for Birkenhead, informed by stakeholder engagement and baseline analysis, and provides a spatial framework to demonstrate how physical change and development could potentially help address key economic, social and environmental issues in the area.</p>
<p>Wirral Waters Vision Statement 2010</p>	<p>This document was prepared in support of the Outline Planning Application for the proposed strategic mixed-use development at Wirral Waters. The documents set out the Vision for transforming current underused/ vacant dockland into an exemplar world-class mixed-use neighbourhood.</p>
<p>Wirral Strategic Regeneration Framework 2017</p>	<p>This document sets out the priorities and challenges for economic growth in the Borough, to help guide and proactively drive investment and activity across Wirral to deliver our ambitions for the local economy.</p>
<p>Wirral Growth Plan 2015</p>	<p>This sets out key ambitions for the Borough and goals shared by partners from across all sectors to attract and guide investment into Wirral, to benefit Wirral's communities, businesses and residents.</p>
<p>Development Viability</p>	
	<p>The 2018 Update considers the economic viability of different types of new development in the Borough.</p>

<p>Local Plan Economic Viability Baseline Update 2018</p>	<p>The report considers the cumulative impact of the policies and proposals contained within the emerging Local Plan on viability and deliverability. The study identifies the key policies that could have implications for financial viability and assesses the likely cost to development of these policies.</p>
<p>Liverpool City Region</p>	
<p>Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing & Employment Land Market Assessment 2018</p>	<p>This provides a joint evidence base for housing and employment land needs within the Liverpool City Region for the period 2012 to 2037 and support the preparation of local plans by individual authorities within the City Region and to inform the preparation of a statutory City Region Spatial Framework.</p>
<p>Liverpool City Region Assessment of the Supply of Large Scale B8 Sites 2018</p>	<p>This provides a joint evidence base for employment land needs for Large-scale (B8) warehousing and logistics uses within the Liverpool City Region.</p>
<p>Liverpool City Region Large Scale B8 Areas of Search Assessment 2019</p>	<p>This study provides a further assessment of areas which are considered to have potential to meet large scale B8 warehousing and distribution requirements within the City Region.</p>

APPENDIX 2.1

Strategic sites

Strategic Regeneration Sites

1- Wirral Waters

A2.1 Wirral Waters, located in the heart of Birkenhead (see Figure A2.1), is one of the largest regeneration projects in the UK (500 acres) and will transform the derelict docks in Birkenhead through a scheme of high density, mixed use, sustainable regeneration development. Its unique physical assets, connectivity and the size, scale and diversity of development opportunity are unprecedented in the north of England. The 40 year project is a key part of the Council's regeneration strategy for Birkenhead and the emerging Local Plan housing and employment supply.

A2.2 The project is led by Peel Holdings as the land owner and developer who have a proven track record of delivery across the North West and comprises of two key elements:

- The East Float which will be transformed into a high density mixed use regeneration scheme; and
- West Float which will be focussed on industrial and port related uses.



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Figure A2.1 Wirral Waters strategic mixed use

 Wirral Waters strategic mixed use

What our evidence tells us:

- A2.3 Outline planning permission was granted in May 2012, subject to a Section 106 agreement, for the demolition of existing buildings and the creation of a new city neighbourhood at East Float, including a series of new urban quarters comprising the following:
- Up to 13,520 new homes;
 - Up to 422,757sqm office and research and development floorspace;
 - Up to 60,000sqm retail uses;
 - Up to 38,000sqm hotel and conference facilities; and
 - Up to 100,000 sqm of culture, education, leisure, community and amenity floorspace.
- A2.4 The heart of the project is focused on the delivery of a large-scale, mixed-use new neighbourhood at East Float. The scheme could ultimately lead to the delivery of up to £4.5 billion of private sector investment over the next 40 years including up to 21,000 jobs.
- A2.5 The development of Wirral Waters is guided by the Wirral Waters Vision Statement and Design & Access Statement.

Proposed Housing Development within the Local Plan period

- A2.6 Peel Land and Development as landowner have indicated that they will deliver a minimum of 4,650 homes during the Plan period.

Delivery

- A2.7 Until recently there have been significant barriers to delivering the ambitious plans put forward by the landowner and captured within the Outline Planning Permission. These include notably weak housing market conditions across much of Wirral, poor environmental conditions, and inadequate infrastructure. However, the Council has worked closely with the landowner and other partners to overcome these barriers to project and infrastructure delivery in the area through a package of initiatives, public sector assistance programmes, and direct financial support from the Council, intended to put in place a “place making” environment capable of bringing forward residential development in the area and to raise land values and investment confidence as summarised below:

Wirral Waters granted Enterprise Zone status up to 2037

In March 2011 the UK Government announced the establishment of Enterprise Zones with the aim of encouraging new businesses and jobs in areas with significant growth potential. Wirral Waters was one of the first of four Enterprise Zones to be announced in the UK. Liverpool Waters, on the

opposite banks of the River Mersey, is also included within the Mersey Waters Enterprise Zone.

Enterprise Zone status enables the area to benefit from a range of incentives including Enhanced Capital Allowances at West Float – one of very few areas within the North West of England to have this. ECA designation supports areas to attract investment into manufacturing and the EZ strategy is to support strategic supply development for several sectors including marine, energy and automotive, and to act as a catalyst for accelerated growth.

Housing Zone

The Council secured Housing Zone status in November 2016 at Wirral Waters and three other areas across the Borough. Housing Zones support the acceleration of pace at which brownfield land in both public and private ownerships is brought forward for new housing, for developments where construction can start in the next 12 – 18 months. Strengthened by its Housing Zone designation, the Council has since secured over £6 million of Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) funding, to support site preparation at Northbank East and Northbank West within Wirral Waters. A grant funding agreement with the Council and Homes England and with Peel is now being finalised.

Wirral Waters Investment Fund (WWIF):

Under this initiative (agreed in 2015) the Council retains and reinvests Business Rates received within Wirral Waters EZ to form a Wirral Waters Enterprise Zone investment fund. This could invest a total of £47 million by 2037, funded through Council borrowing which would be repaid over the life of the EZ from increased business rates income.

Housing Infrastructure Fund

The designation of Wirral Waters as a Housing Zone designation in 2017, has enabled the Council to secure over £6 million of Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) funding, to support site preparation at Northbank East and Northbank West within Wirral Waters. A grant funding agreement with the Council and Homes England and with Peel is close to agreement.

The following place making projects have been recently completed or committed (see Figure A2.2):

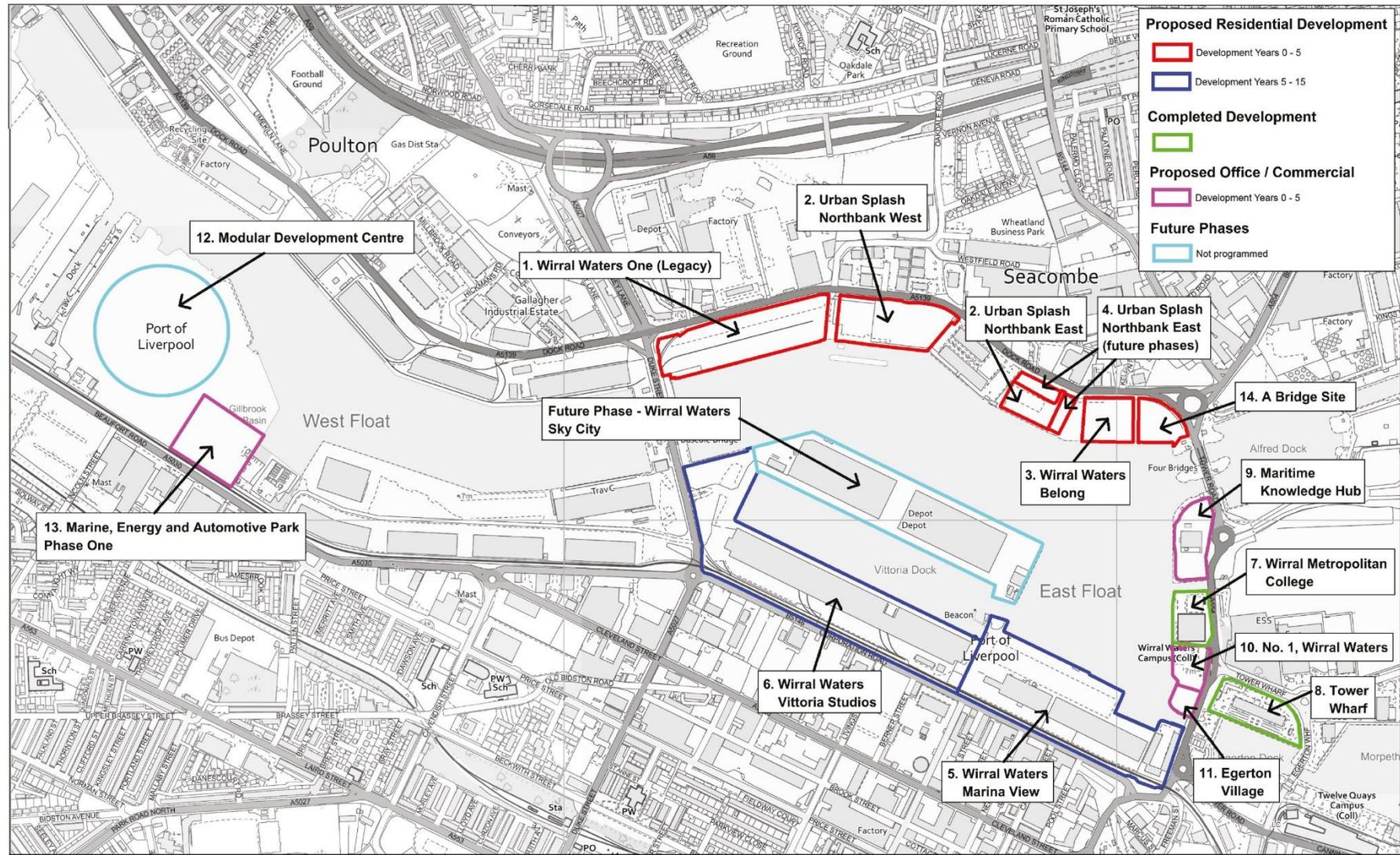


Figure A2.2 Wirral Waters development sites

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Wirral Metropolitan College – Wirral Waters Campus

A £10m 38,000sq ft Further Education College specialising in the Built Environment enabling young people to gain the range of skills needed to take advantage of the opportunities for construction within the Zone. (Completed: September 2015)

Tower Wharf

A £9m 48,000sq ft Grade A office for the Contact Company. (Completed: December 2015)

Maritime Knowledge Hub

Wirral Council is working with Liverpool John Moores University, Mersey Maritime and the Peel Group in order to develop a Maritime Knowledge Hub at the Hydraulic Tower at Wirral Waters. The hub will provide up to 60,000 sq. ft of business growth space for innovation and knowledge transfer, specialist teaching and training facilities for degree apprenticeships, innovation, and space for schools outreach and cultural activities. It will also provide the home for an offshore survival training centre. This linking of academic excellence, skills and industry is seen as crucial to driving the growth of this sector and reflects the Government's Industrial strategy aims of aligning innovation, research and commercialisation of concepts. (Estimated completion: March 2022)

No 1 Tower Road

No 1 Tower Road is a £8m Grade A office development feeding latent demand for office accommodation and providing much needed growth on space. SIF funding has been secured for the development, planning has been approved and the project has secured Cabinet approval. (Estimated completion: 2021)

Together with related completed and planned infrastructure improvements these projects are key elements of the place making approach being adopted across Wirral Waters which is beginning to accelerate the delivery of the Wirral Waters vision.

In addition, site remediation and infrastructure investment work has taken place to drive demand and create a market for the wider development of Wirral Waters

Egerton Village:

In addition to the amenities that will come forward as part of the residential developments the proposed £2m Egerton Village at the gateway to Wirral Waters will provide a waterside amenity and arts hub to support the residents, workers and visitors within the existing and planned developments. Comprising restaurants, a high quality food and drink offer, niche retail elements and a new public square for events, the scheme will also provide managed workspace for the service, knowledge intensive and creative sectors. Planning permission was granted in August 2019

Infrastructure

The Council, working with Peel and other partners, have developed a comprehensive infrastructure programme involving a range of transport initiatives, remediation projects and public realm improvements contributing to sustainable placemaking through a high quality and accessible environment which will support the delivery of residential and commercial developments within Wirral Waters.

A Transport Options and Feasibility Study for East Wirral (April 2017) reviewed a range of transport studies completed across Wirral over the past decade and recommended the development of a 'Strategic Transport Framework for East Wirral' in order to identify a priority list of projects to support the regeneration ambitions for East Wirral, including Wirral Waters.

The Council appointed Mott MacDonald to develop a Strategic Transport Framework (STF), to underpin the Strategic Regeneration Framework and align the development of specific transport packages to the Council's regeneration aspirations. This STF work, which has recently been completed, is supported by a Transport Feasibility Study which looks specifically at the Gateways to Wirral Waters, to identify existing opportunities/barriers at existing junctions and links within Wirral Waters and develop prioritised packages of work.

In July 2019 the Combined Authority approved further funding to take the Wirral Waters Feasibility Study to Outline Business Case. The brief for this work is currently being developed and it is likely that the development of this OBC will take 9-12 months. The OBC will support a package of transport infrastructure focussed on mass transit provision, improvements to key junctions and corridors around the site, including junction improvements, enhanced provision for pedestrians and cyclists and public realm improvements.

The scale of the development proposed at East Float and within the surrounding area also presents a significant opportunity to make a strategic contribution to the transition to a low carbon economy, through the provision of sustainable energy infrastructure which could include district heating.

The proposals form part of a wider vision for future growth at the core of the City Region, linked to the approval of similar proposals in north Liverpool, to help transform the heart of the conurbation and make a major contribution to re-balancing the UK economy in line with Government priorities.

- A2.8 The above place making projects, and enabling infrastructure works already completed and planned, has created the environment for the delivery of housing and the comprehensive build out of Wirral Waters to commence during the early Plan period through a series of exciting projects on the Northbank.
- A2.9 With assistance of the above financial programmes and with direct support from the Council there are now firm proposals in place to deliver a range of high quality housing schemes across the North Bank which could deliver up to

1,200 new homes over the first five years of the Local Plan period on the following schemes (See Figure A2.2):

Housing Delivery

A2.10 Peel have proposed to deliver a minimum figure of 4,650 dwellings during the plan period. Table A2.1 below summarises the current and potential housing delivery trajectory for the site.

Table A2.1: Wirral Waters Current and Potential Housing Delivery Trajectory

Site	Years 0 to 5		Years 6 to 10		Years 11 to 15		Current Delivery Status
	current	potential	current	Potential	Current	Potential	
Wirral Waters 1(Legacy) (SHLAA 2081)	240	500	260	0	0	0	Vacant cleared dockland site. Detailed Planning Permission recommended for approval subject to s106.
<p>This is a £90m scheme to deliver, including 20% affordable housing and local community amenities and is being taken forward by Peel in partnership with the local authority. Wirral Waters One is seen as a catalyst project, bringing new residential developments and kick starting further residential and mixed use investments at East Float, including Belong, Urban Splash and Egerton Village.</p> <p>The scheme will be a mix of 1 and 2 bedroom apartments meeting demand for smaller units which will complement the education / business innovation projects being progressed at East Float.</p>							
Tower Road Roundabout (SHLAA 2080)	0	150	150	0	0	0	Vacant, cleared dockland site. Planning Application to be submitted in 2020
Belong (SHLAA 2079)	34	34	0	0	0	0	Vacant, cleared dockland site with permission for Belong Care Village and 34 independent living apartments. Detailed Planning Permission granted. Awaiting development programme from developer

Site	Years 0 to 5		Years 6 to 10		Years 11 to 15		Current Delivery Status
	current	potential	current	Potential	Current	Potential	
Urban Splash Phase 1 (SHLAA 2078)	30	30	0	0	0	0	Vacant, cleared dockland site with application for Phase 1 (of 4) 30 town houses. Planning Permission submitted awaiting decision, with grant awarded to secure development. Peel has entered into a Joint Venture with Urban Splash who specialise in urban regeneration projects on brownfield and derelict land. A detailed planning application has been submitted for the first phase 30 dwellings.
Urban Splash Phases 2 to 4 (SHLAA 2078)	0	90	90	0	0	0	No planning permission has been submitted
Urban Splash (SHLAA 2082)	0	230	230	0			No planning permission has been submitted
This will be a mixed product development including some 3 storey town houses at the water's edge and the Mansion House development overlooking Dock Road. The units will employ innovative modular building techniques to deliver desirable one to three storey houses and apartments. The two schemes will deliver up to 347 dwellings, with current designs incorporating 173							
Marina View (SHLAA 0753)	0	0	200	1325	500	530	Occupied dockside site with no development scheme yet available. Ongoing work between peel and the Council to understand

Site	Years 0 to 5		Years 6 to 10		Years 11 to 15		Current Delivery Status
	current	potential	current	Potential	Current	Potential	
							market and infrastructure constraints. Delivery also influenced by availability of transit system and intervention in poor quality Hamilton Park Industrial Area to South.
Vittoria Studios (SHLAA 0755)	0	0	200	1175	500	470	Occupied dockside site with no development scheme yet available. Ongoing work between peel and the Council to understand market and infrastructure constraints. Delivery also influenced by availability of transit system and intervention in poor quality Hamilton Park Industrial Area to South.
Total	304	1034	1130	2500	1,000	1,000	

Source: 2019 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

A2.11 Table A2.1 above shows the current housing delivery figures set out in the Strategic Housing Availability Assessment 2019 (SHLAA) and the potential delivery figures submitted by Peel. The current figures are those which, at the time of completing the SHLAA in October 2019, the Council considered meet the evidence criteria set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance.

A2.12 Whilst the current figures are much lower than those proposed by Peel for the delivery periods 0 to 5 years and 6 to 10 years, the Council are working in partnership with Peel and are confident that outstanding delivery issues can be resolved by early 2020. This will allow delivery scheduled for years 0 to 5 of the Plan period to be brought forward in line with Peel's intentions in time for inclusion in the final Draft Local Plan housing delivery trajectory.

A2.13 Development of Sites in later years of the Plan at Vittoria Studios and Marina View will depend on a further shift of market sentiment, but the Council and Peel believe that, together with the significant progress made to date and the committed housing delivery on North Bank in the first five years of the Local Plan period, these initiatives will achieve a "critical mass" of development and provide confidence sufficient to shift market and public perception of the area, drive demand and create a market for development for the 6 to 10 year period and beyond.

A2.14 The Council recognise that this market shift will also depend on:

- The availability of, or firm progress towards, delivering a transit system linking Wirral waters to the Mersey rail station towards the end of year 5 of the Local Plan;

In July 2019 the Combined Authority (CA) approved funding to progress the Council's existing Wirral Waters Transport Feasibility Study to Outline Business Case (OBC). The OBC, if taken forward to implementation will support a package of transport infrastructure improvements focussed on appropriate options for mass transit links to existing Mersey Rail stations, enhanced provision for pedestrians and cyclists, public realm improvements and junction improvements. The OBC feasibility work is anticipated to be completed by late 2020 and will inform ongoing discussions between the Council and the CA on future funding commitments. The Council will be working with the CA to ensure that priority is given to this essential scheme. A decision can be expected in late 2020 early 2021;

The Council is to commission a Mass Transit Delivery Strategy in late 2019. This will review the potential regeneration benefits of a mass transit system for Birkenhead and provide advice on a strategy to expeditiously deliver an appropriate system to enable Wirral Waters, and other priority areas identified through the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework, to come forward;

- Intervention to restructure and regenerate the poor quality mainly industrial area (known as Hamilton Park) which lies to the immediate

south of Vittoria studios as a mixed use Urban Garden Neighbourhood and to open up green links to the Town Centre and Birkenhead park;

As part of the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework a Delivery Action Plan (DAP) is to be prepared for the Hamilton Park area building on the proposals set out in the Wirral Waters Vision Statement. The DAP will set out a delivery strategy and timescale for the transformation of this area. We will need to work with our partners Homes England and the Combined Authority to help deliver this important project.

Implications for the Local Plan

A2.15 The Council is committed to enabling the regeneration of Wirral Waters and the significant contribution that it can make to the development needs of the Borough for this plan period and beyond. Brownfield, urban and regenerative development also sits at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework and therefore we will set out a positive policy framework to enable the appropriate implementation of development at Wirral Waters. The Council are engaged in discussions with Peel, the Combined Authority and Homes England to help maximise the delivery of housing within Wirral Waters.

A2.16 It is considered that early progress over the initial period of the Plan, ie years 1 to 5 on residential development on Northbank, will result in a shift in market sentiment and confidence in the area, which together with ongoing support from key partners, will enable the Vittoria Studio and Marina View housing proposals set out by Peel for years 6 to 10 to be delivered as a minimum.

A2.17 The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework will, by summer 2020, set out detailed proposals for intervention in the Hamilton Park area as a priority Delivery Action Plan. Work on transport feasibility work including the provision of a mass transit system to serve Wirral Waters will also have progressed.

Our Preferred Approach

Recently completed place making projects and infrastructure, planned and potential future infrastructure will enable the development of strategic brownfield sites at Wirral Waters which will provide up to 1,200 sustainable new homes in the first five years of the Plan period and a minimum of 3,300 homes during the subsequent 6 to 15 year period;

The plan will set out policies to facilitate the delivery of the approved outline planning application for Wirral Waters and will include policies which:

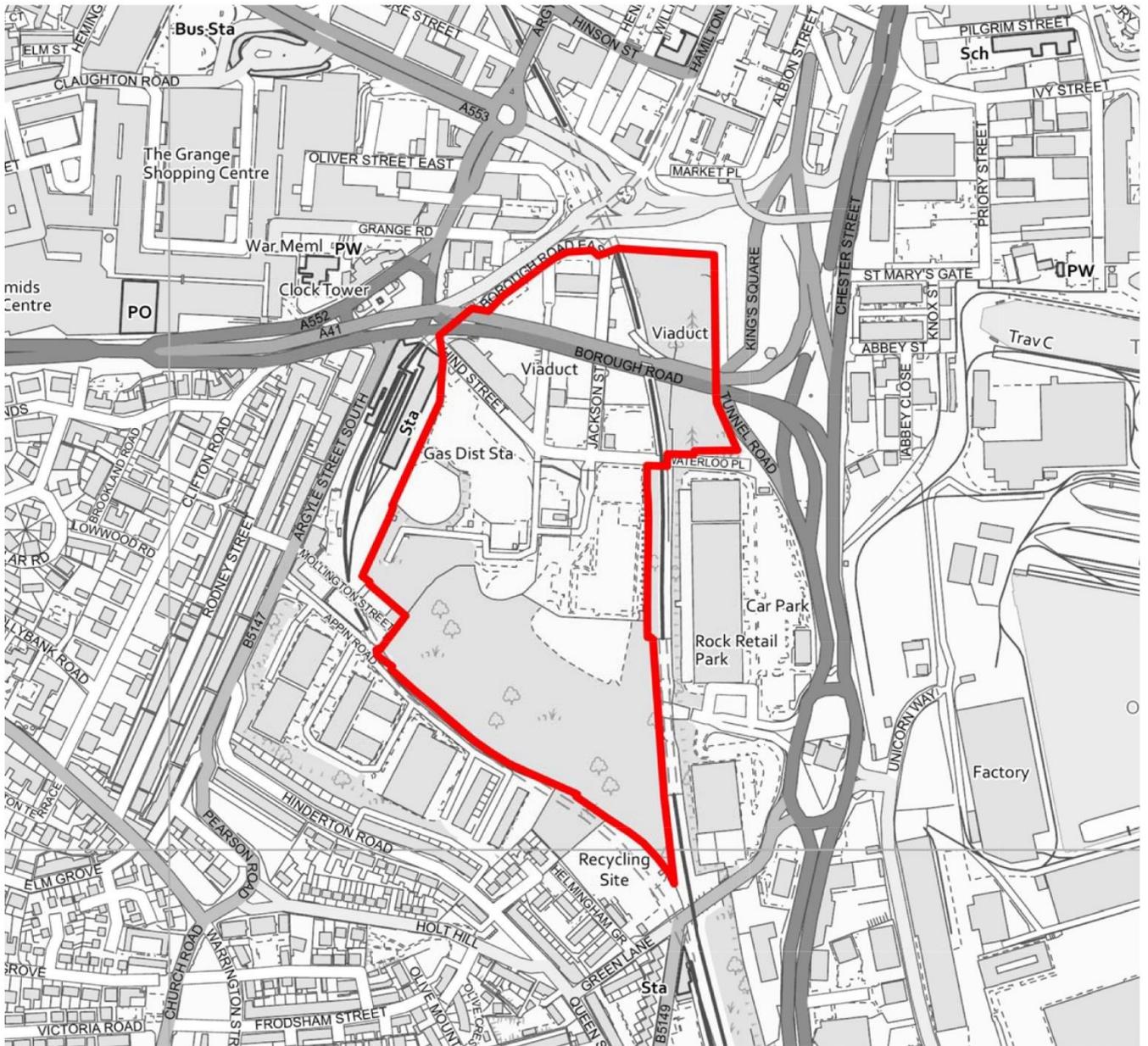
- allocate specific housing and employment sites;
- optimise the densities that these developments will achieve to make the most of the opportunities that exist;
- ensure high quality design of buildings and public realm;
- ensure the adoption of climate change mitigation and adaptation including clean energy/ district heating, urban greening;

- ensure that appropriate enabling and community infrastructure is provided;
- ensure that appropriate pedestrian and cyclist links are provided to adjoining neighbourhoods, transport nodes, green infrastructure as well as within the development area.

Based on the outcomes from the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework the Plan will seek to address how the further potential of Wirral Waters can be unlocked by addressing current inadequate infrastructure, and the poor environmental conditions of adjoining neighbourhoods, to identify opportunities for restructuring these areas as new mixed green urban villages or neighbourhoods, providing a range of new family homes in a highly sustainable urban environment.

2- Hind Street

- A2.18 Hind Street is a strategically important regeneration area located on the south-eastern edge of Birkenhead town centre with immediate connectivity to Birkenhead Central station (see Figure A2.3).
- A2.19 The Hind Street area of Birkenhead, bounded by Hind Street in the north, Appin Road and Green Lane in the south, the Rock Retail Park to the east and Birkenhead Central Station in the west is, by its very location at the edge of Birkenhead Town Centre, a key economic growth opportunity for the Council.
- A2.20 The area is currently characterised by derelict, vacant and underused land and buildings, and a mix of low value commercial uses. The environment is also materially impacted by the dominant highway fly overs which cross the northern part of the site. It consequently represents an underutilised asset and clear opportunity for delivery of in terms of the regenerative change. Land assembly activity has already commenced and, working with key stakeholders, a new vision and delivery strategy will be established to enable the full potential of this brownfield site to be realised.
- A2.21 The project also provides a unique opportunity to remodel the southern strategic highway network, to remove the fly overs and to re-align the approaches to Birkenhead Town Centre as part of wider strategic intervention in the A41 corridor



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Figure A2.3 Hind Street strategic mixed site

 Hind Street strategic mixed site

What our evidence tells us:

A2.22 Situated largely on land to the west of the A41 road corridor, and east of the main Merseyrail line to Central Station and beyond, the Hind Street area is strategically situated to the southeast of Birkenhead town centre. The boundaries of the land are defined, geographically, largely by road and rail transport infrastructure and these have historically isolated this area from the rest of Birkenhead. It is however not only immediately adjacent to Birkenhead but a short distance from the waterfront area and key regeneration projects at Woodside and Wirral Waters.

A2.23 The ambition of the Council is to seek to achieve the comprehensive development of the whole site as an iconic gateway quarter, integrating new development in this location into the urban fabric of Birkenhead, making it functionally and economically part of the town centre. The primary interface boundaries require significant investment in public realm works to counteract the impact of previous road construction, and particularly the negative impact of the road flyovers in terms of visual impact and the creation of physical barriers. The Council recognises and supports the need to consider change in this area comprehensively as a result of these challenges, and to contribute fully to the wider regeneration of Birkenhead, including:

- Birkenhead Town Centre. The Wirral Growth Company plans for a major mixed-use development centred on Europa Boulevard and Conway Park rail station. This will bring forward a new commercial district, introduction of urban living opportunities, and reconfiguration and improvement of the retail and leisure offer on the north side of the town centre including Birkenhead Market; and
- The Woodside area, which has considerable potential for a waterfront mixed-use development with quality links back to Hamilton Square and the town centre.

A2.24 The site is in a number of ownerships including National Grid and Wirral Borough Council. Ownership to the north, across which the existing highway fly overs cross, is in more fragmented ownership but with Ion Development owning or having options on a significant portion of land.

A2.25 The Council are engaged with the Combined Authority to support the comprehensive regeneration of the site.

Potential Housing Delivery

A2.26 The Preferred Urban Option 1A currently assumes a more modest capacity of approximately 580 units which could be delivered in the years 6 to 10 of the Local Plan as set out in Table A2.2 below.

Table A2.2: Hind Street Current and Potential Housing Delivery Trajectory

Site	Years 0 to 5		Years 6 to 10		Years 11 to 15		Current Delivery Status
	current	potential	current	Potential	Current	Potential	
Hind Street			200	580	250	0	Requires new distributor road from A41 to Argyll Street roundabout plus potential site remediation works. No masterplan. No Planning permission submitted.

Source: 2019 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

A2.27 From Table 7.2 above it can be seen that, currently, it is anticipated that some 200 dwellings out of a total estimated (lower density) will be delivered between years 6 to 10 of the Local Plan as compared to a Potential Figure of 580. This is based on current evidence available to the SHLAA 2019.

A2.28 From early design work undertaken at time of writing it is understood that, at higher densities, the site has a potential housing capacity of over 1000 dwellings comprising taller apartments and lower rise family homes. It is envisaged that the southern part of the area would be developed as phase 1 with potential delivery commencing by the end of 2025. This needs further testing and is being progressed as part of the Local Plan process.

A2.29 The Council consider that there is potential to increase the current figure significantly by the time the Regulation 19 Draft Final Plan is published in summer 2020. The comprehensive regeneration of Hind Street is a high priority of the Council has embarked on a fast track Development Strategy in partnership with the CA to identify the most appropriate development vehicle/ vehicles to accelerate mixed use development on the site:

- Work commenced in November 2019 to taking the A41 Transport Feasibility Study to Outline Business Case (OBC). This is addressing realignment of the A41 to provide access to all parts of the area; feasibility works for removing fly overs; enhancement to the railway station; a new green/ transit corridor linking the area to Wirral waters and public realm improvements and connections to the site and the town centre. The Council are also considering undertaking detailed design work to accelerate delivery of the infrastructure works;
- The regeneration of the site is a delivery priority for the CA which could make funds available for essential infrastructure works;
- Based on more recent initial site assessment based on higher densities it is now considered that the site capacity is in excess of 1,000 dwellings.

Implications for the Local plan

- A2.30 The Hind Street area is currently expected to deliver up to 580 dwellings within the period 2026 to 2030. However, the Council believes that the site has the potential to deliver in excess of 1,000 homes at a higher density subject to further master planning and appropriate development and delivery agreements.
- A2.31 The comprehensive regeneration of the area is a priority for the Council. The Council is working with key landowners and funding partners to establish an agreed approach to achieving comprehensive accelerated delivery of the site and are intending to progress detailed master planning works in January 2020. The Council intends to have a development strategy in place by April/May 2020 which would enable firm figures to be included in the draft Final Local Plan for higher levels of housing to be delivered in years 6 to 10 of the Local Plan, with a possibility of some delivery at the end of years 0 to 5 period.
- A2.32 The final Local Plan will need to include policies which will ensure that an appropriate planning framework for the area is in place to ensure the comprehensive regeneration of the area.

Our Preferred Approach

The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework will provide guidance on the policy approach to be taken in the Local Plan on strategic sites.

Recognising the strategic importance of this site to the wider regeneration of Birkenhead and the Town centre the Local Plan could include policies which will:

- ensure the comprehensive regeneration of the whole area as a strategic gateway mixed use neighbourhood by requiring an outline application for the whole site to be informed by a comprehensive masterplan;
- consider the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document/s to provide additional guidance on design matters and support any potential need for land assembly;
- allocate the site for mixed use, but identify specific housing and employment output requirements and other supporting uses to ensure a sustainable neighbourhood is created;
- optimise the densities that these developments will achieve to make the most of the opportunities that exist;
- ensure high quality design of buildings and public realm on this key gateway site;
- ensure the adoption of climate change mitigation and adaption including clean energy/ district heating, urban greening;
- ensure that appropriate enabling and community infrastructure is provided; and
- ensure that appropriate pedestrian and cyclist links are provided to adjoining neighbourhoods, the Town Centre and Birkenhead Central Railway Station as well as within the development area.

Subject to the outcome of detailed delivery strategy work in early 2020 it may be possible to include an updated trajectory for Hind Street in the draft Final Local Plan. Otherwise it will be included as a broad location as allowed for in the National Planning Framework.

3- Woodside Development Area

A2.33 The Woodside Development Area is located on the Birkenhead riverfront (see Figure A2.4) and has one of the world's most recognisable and spectacular views – that of the Liverpool Waterfront. The area is recognised to have exceptional re-development potential.

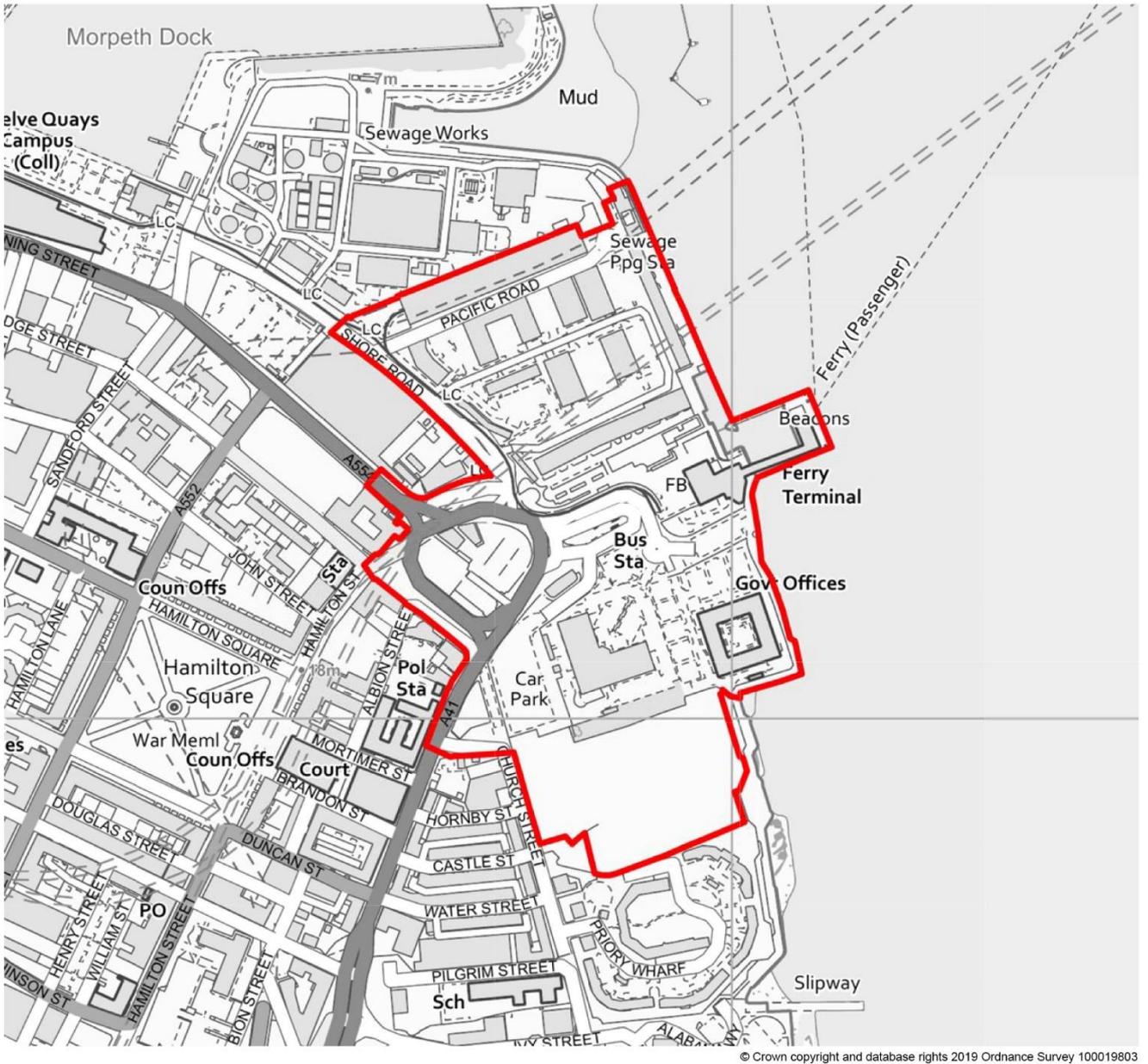


Figure A2.4 Woodside development area

 Woodside development area

What our evidence tells us

A2.34 The redevelopment of the Woodside area presents many challenges and opportunities. Apart from the range of landownerships (both public and private) there are significant infrastructure challenges to be overcome if development potential is to be maximised. This includes the potential realignment of the A41 at Chester Street and Bridge Street (a crucial element of the Birkenhead road network) and the possible re-positioning of the bus interchange close to the Woodside Ferry Terminal.

A2.35 The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework, which is due for completion in Summer 2020, will identify and address strategic infrastructure issues, connections and linkages and investment requirements to enable the regeneration of Woodside Riverside Quarter to be delivered from the mid to late 2020's.

A2.36 Building on this strategic framework the Council is to commission a detailed masterplan for the area in early 2020 in partnership with Peel, the major landowner.

A2.37 The masterplan will provide the vision and detailed proposals for regeneration of the Woodside river frontage as a mixed use cultural quarter, a once-only opportunity to achieve a landmark private-sector led development, which would drive the regeneration of this important part of Birkenhead as an exemplar of quality of design and visual impact worthy of its location opposite the Three Graces on the Liverpool Waterfront. Subject to detailed master planning Woodside could comprise series of iconic buildings and public spaces which:

- provide a range of business, residential, leisure, cultural and tourism uses operating on a commercial basis;
- complement the regeneration and conservation of the adjoining historic areas of Birkenhead and the world-famous Liverpool Waterfront;
- re-connects the waterfront with the centre of Birkenhead including Hamilton Square (which has the largest concentration of Grade One listed buildings outside London); and
- represents an attraction in its own right and creates a high quality and accessible environment for visitors, day and night throughout the year.

Housing Delivery

Table 7.3: Woodside Development Area Current and Potential Housing Delivery Trajectory

Site	Years 0 to 5		Years 6 to 10		Years 11 to 15		Current Delivery Status
	current	potential	current	Potential	Current	Potential	
Woodside (SHLAA 0752)			120	120	150	250	Operational business park, ferry, bus terminus. Masterplan/ Site assembly required.
Former Rose Brae, Church Street (SHLAA 0478)			119	119			Vacant cleared site of former graving docks. Not currently viable due to poor ground conditions.

A2.38 From Table A2.3 above it can be seen that, currently, it is anticipated that some 120 dwellings out of a total estimated 370 dwellings will be delivered between years 6 to 10 of the Local Plan at Woodside. This is based on current evidence available to the SHLAA 2019.

A2.39 The Former Rose Brae site adjoins the Woodside area and should be considered comprehensively as part of the Woodside Masterplan. Table A2.3 shows that 119 dwellings are expected to be delivered on the site between years 6 to 10 of the Local Plan under both the current and potential scenarios. Based on the recent Draft Wirral Urban Brownfield Study this site could accommodate approximately 340 dwellings at a density of approximately 100 dwellings per hectare.

A2.40 The Woodside masterplan will set out the eventual mix and delivery of housing within the Woodside area and the majority of the area should be treated as a 'Broad Location for growth' for potential housing (see Chapter 4). Given that the location lends itself to higher density apartments a reasonable minimum figure of 1,000 dwellings which could be delivered during the 11 to 15 year Plan period.

Implications for the Local Plan

- A2.40 The Woodside Development Area has the potential to be world class as a mixed-use cultural quarter. The proposed Woodside Masterplan ,which is due to commence in early 2020, will not be completed in time to inform the final Draft Local Plan.
- A2.41 The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework will provide guidance on the policy approach to be taken in the Local Plan on strategic sites.
- A2.42 However, the area has potential to provide a significant number of new homes in the latter part of the Local plan period (years 10 to 15) and will be considered as a broad location for growth as allowed for in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Our Preferred Approach

The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework will provide guidance on the policy approach to be taken in the Local Plan on strategic sites.

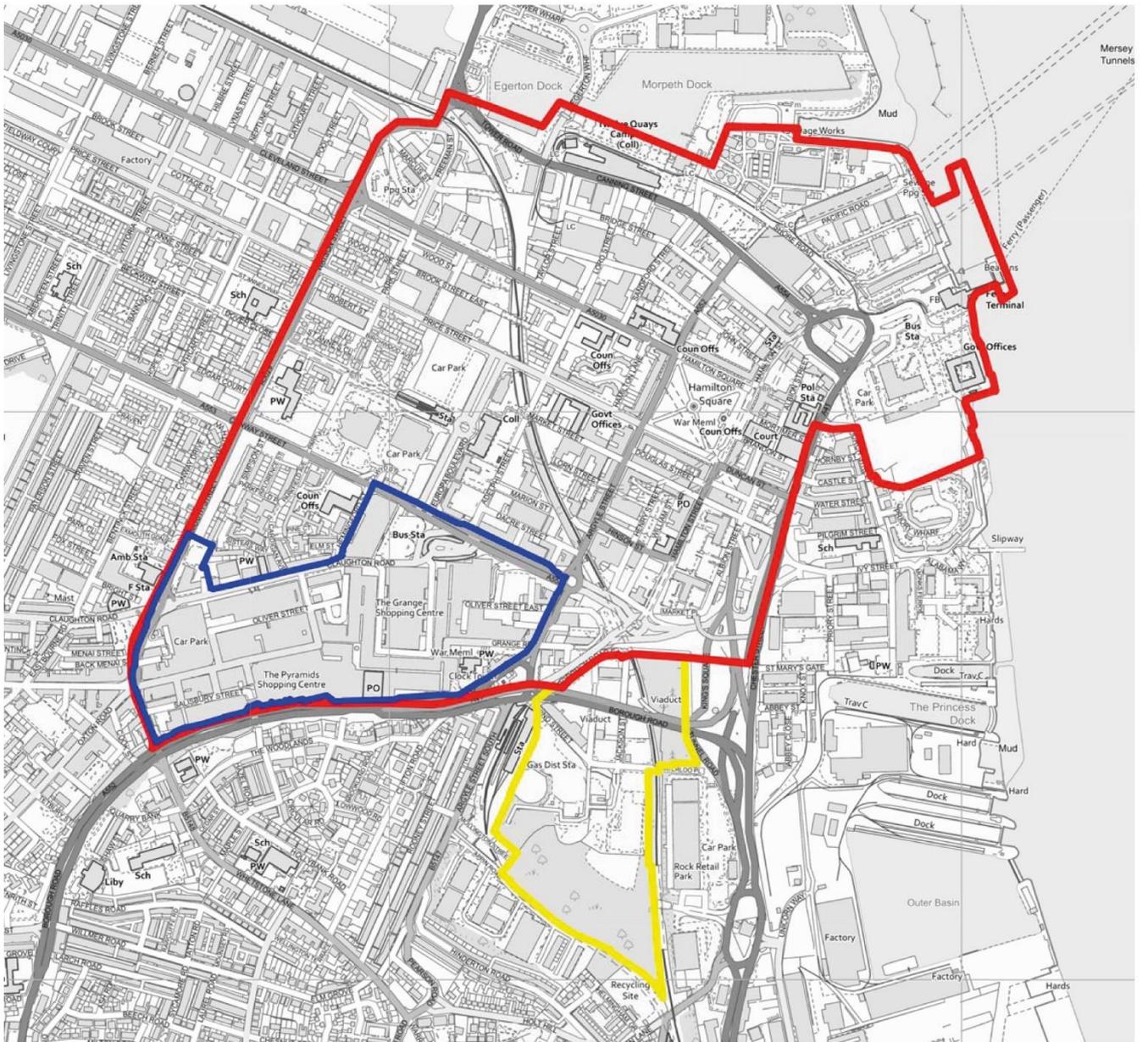
Recognising the strategic importance and potential of the Woodside Development to the wider regeneration of Birkenhead, the Local Plan could include policies which will:

- seek to ensure the comprehensive regeneration of the whole area by requiring an outline application for the whole site informed by a comprehensive masterplan and / or the preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document;
- allocate the site for mixed use but identify specific housing and employment and other uses;
- optimise the densities that these developments will achieve to make the most of the opportunities that exist;
- ensure high quality design of buildings and public realm reflecting its strategic riverside location;
- ensure the adoption of climate change mitigation and adaptation including clean energy/ district heating, urban greening;
- ensure that appropriate enabling and community infrastructure is provided; and
- ensure appropriate ferry, pedestrian and cyclist links are provided to adjoining neighbourhoods, the Town centre and other transport nodes.

The area will be included as a broad location in the draft final Local Plan as allowed for in the National Planning Framework pending the completion of the Woodside Masterplan.

4- Birkenhead Centre

A2.43 The regeneration of Central Birkenhead area as a mixed-use focus for the Borough is a key element of the Local Plan Vision and Objectives. The Central area comprises a much broader area than the retail focussed Town Centre, and includes a range of office, employment, leisure and residential uses, car parks and vacant/ underused land and properties. (See Figure A2.5). The area includes Hamilton Square, a world class heritage asset, and river frontage at Woodside (see above) with views across the Mersey to the Liverpool World Heritage area.



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Figure A2.5 Birkenhead central area

- Birkenhead central area
- Hind Street strategic mixed site
- Birkenhead key town centre

A2.44 The area has been in general economic and environmental decline for over a decade. The town centre itself is facing significant issues in common with other retail centres in the UK due to changing consumer shopping habits, the challenge from online shopping and the impacts of economic austerity.

A2.45 There is now however a significant momentum for change and investment in the Central Birkenhead area fed by the Wirral Growth Company's masterplan proposals; the Council's success in reaching the second stage of the Future High Streets Fund Competition; the Invitation by the Government to bid for funding through the Town Fund and through the commencement of the Birkenhead Regeneration Study.

A2.46 The area has the potential to become a sustainable, vibrant mixed-use area, a focus for cultural, retail, economic and leisure activity, as well as being a great place to live comprising different neighbourhoods and quarters

What our evidence tells us

A2.47 Birkenhead Town Centre is a sub-regional shopping centre providing a range of facilities to meet the needs of Wirral residents. The core retail area is centred on the Pyramids Shopping Centre and pedestrianised Grange Road. The opening of the Pyramids Shopping Centre in 1991 represented a significant expansion of retail floorspace and helped to secure Birkenhead's status as a retail destination of choice.

A2.48 Birkenhead Town Centre has since, however, experienced decline as consumers have been drawn to out-of-town centres and online shopping for goods and have sought a stronger evening economy offer as part of their shopping experience. Despite this decline, it remains the most significant shopping centre in the Borough and is comparable with sub-regional centres across the Liverpool City Region.

A2.49 The Wirral Retail & Centres Study, 2019 (Birkenhead Town Centre Health Check) found that there are currently 116 units vacant in the town centre, which equates to 25% of the total number of units. The proportion of units vacant in the town centre is more than double the national average (12%). The proportion of floorspace currently vacant in the town centre is also high (18%) which is 8% above the national average of 10%.

A2.50 Despite occupying the majority of national multiples in the town centre, and the focus for pedestrian activity, notable concentrations of vacant units were observed in the Pyramid Shopping Centre with other concentrations noted along Oxtan Road and Grange Road West. Some 38 vacant units measure less than 100sq m in size and 46 units between 100-200sq m in size which suggests that there is an overprovision of smaller units in the town centre.

A2.51 As noted earlier, there is also a significant number of units/floorspace in the Indoor Market that are currently unoccupied.

A2.52 The Council has recognised the challenges facing the Central Birkenhead and the Town Centre area, but also its significant potential, and has previously prepared the Birkenhead Urban Blue Print [2019] which sets out an ambitious vision for the area. This document is to be updated by the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework (BRF) which will set out a comprehensive vision for the wider Birkenhead Area including the Town Centre, Wirral Waters, and Hind Street. It will identify priorities for investment in sites, infrastructure and public realm. A key requirement of the BRF is to identify new opportunities for urban living within Birkenhead.

A2.53 As part of the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework (BRF) a detailed Delivery Action Plan will be prepared for the Town Centre which will set out how the centre can address the future appropriate scale of retail requirements and reinvent itself as a vibrant mix of uses including as a place to visit, shop and to live. The BRF is due to be completed by Summer 2020 to inform the draft Final Local Plan.

A2.54 The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework will also provide the wider context for work of the Wirral Growth Company (a joint venture partnership with Muse Developments) which has embarked on a series of exciting projects :to redesign and develop a number of Council owned assets within Birkenhead Town Centre.

A2.55 The WGC Birkenhead masterplan (overview below) includes a range of projects which will transform the centre of Birkenhead. For further details of each phase see <https://wirralgrowthcompany.co.uk/have-your-say/birkenhead/masterplans/>



- **New public space**

The removal of the current market hall allows for the creation of new public realm within the town centre to act as a connecting space between the retail, commercial and leisure elements of the proposed masterplan. Such integration will improve pedestrian and cycle links. It will also create an attractive environment, encouraging opportunities for events and participation in town centre-based activities.

- **New commercial office development**

Up to 280,000 sqft of Grade A office floorspace to meet the growing demand for high-quality commercial floorspace in the town centre.

- **A new leisure centre**

A modern and more energy-efficient leisure centre is proposed close to Conway Park Station and existing homes to make sure that it is sustainable. This would be delivered before any work takes place on the existing leisure centre.

- **Civic Hub**

Delivery of flexible and sustainable office floorspace for occupation by Wirral Council and wider public sector partners.

- **Improved highway and transport infrastructure**

An investment in the local road network will improve the circulation of traffic and allow for improved connectivity for both pedestrians and cyclists. This includes works to further improve Birkenhead Bus Station.

To make sure the full potential of Birkenhead can be realised, it is proposed that the masterplan will be brought forward in phases.

- **A new home for Birkenhead Market**

Options for the new market are being considered through public consultation and, whichever option is chosen, will re-vitalise the market and bring it back to being a place that the Wirral community can be proud of and want to visit.

These proposals are due to be presented as part of the Wirral Growth Company First Phase Business case to the Council's Cabinet for approval early 2020. The Council has already commenced necessary site assembly work to facilitate an early start on the Central Business District.

New Housing Opportunities in Central Birkenhead

A2.56 As part of the Council's work towards being able to adopt the Preferred Urban Intensification Option 1A the Council are working with the Wirral Growth Company (WGC) to develop an accelerated programme of housing delivery. Key elements of the WGC Masterplan proposals is to deliver new homes on sites at Conway Park North and South. The draft WGC programme currently comprises 13 sites within Central Birkenhead with a total capacity of 1138 dwellings including 5 sites with a capacity of 50 or more (see Table A2.4 below).

Table A2.4: Proposed Wirral Growth Company Housing Sites: Central Birkenhead Current and Potential Housing Delivery Trajectory (sites over 50 dwellings)

Site	Years 0 to 5		Years 6 to 10		Years 11 to 15		Current Delivery Status
	current	potential	current	Potential	Current	Potential	
Conway Park North (SHLAA Ref 0424)	100	100	70	70			Vacant cleared Site
Conway Park South (SHLAA 0956/0957)			105	105			Vacant cleared Site
Birkenhead Leisure Centre (SHLAA 4081)			130	130			Operational leisure centre to be re-provided as part of wider town centre regeneration proposals by Wirral growth Company
Lorne Street Car park (SHLAA 1620)					50	50	Cleared site currently used as temporary Council
Treasury Building, Cleveland Street			65	65			Occupied Council offices requiring staff relocation.

Birkenhead Future High Streets Fund Bid

A2.57 The Council has been successful in reaching the second stage of the Future High Street Fund competition. The Council has been awarded £150,000 to fund the preparation of a business case to accompany a second stage application for up to £25 million funding for projects to help transform Birkenhead. The bid will closely align with the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework and the WGC masterplan and will seek to secure funding to implement major regeneration projects in association with the private sector partners. A draft Bid is due to be submitted in January 2020 with the final bid due for submission in April 2020.

New Town Fund

A2.58 Birkenhead is one of 100 towns in England which has been invited to submit bid for funding from the £3.6 billion Towns Fund which has been established by the Government. The Council will be required to establish a Town Board with representations from a range of private, public and community bodies to oversee the bid for funding. The Town Board bid is expected to reflect the emerging proposals of the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework in consultation with the Town Deal Board

A2.59 Together the Future High Streets Fund and the new Town Fund could provide significant new resources to pump prime and deliver existing projects and others identified through the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework.

Implications for the Local Plan

A2.60 The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework and the Birkenhead Town Centre Delivery Action plan will inform the Local Plan on the future boundary of the Town Centre and broader regeneration strategy for Central Birkenhead as whole, providing the context for and promoting the emerging proposals by the Wirral Growth Company Masterplan, the Future High Streets Bid, and the Town Fund Bid.

A2.61 In addition to Wirral Growth Company sites there is increasing demand for new homes within the Central Birkenhead Area as evidenced by recent planning approvals for 200 student apartments at Lord Street/ Cleveland Street, and 132 apartments at Grange Road.

A2.62 A key output from the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework will be the identification of further residential opportunities and guidance on policies which will promote the conversion of existing buildings for residential use and new residential development (including within the current Town Centre retail area).

A2.63 Because of the scale of potential opportunities for further significant net residential development within the Central Birkenhead Area the Council considers that it should be identified as a Broad Location for growth in the draft Final Local Plan as allowed for in the National planning Policy Framework (see Chapter 4: Broad Locations).

Our Preferred Approach

The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework will inform the regeneration strategy and Local Plan policy approach to be taken in respect to Central Birkenhead and the Town Centre whilst the Birkenhead Delivery Action Plan and the Wirral Growth Company will set out detailed proposals.

The Local Plan could include policies which will:

- redefine the boundary of the Town Centre;
- identify areas for comprehensive redevelopment to be informed by detailed masterplans (including the area covered by the Wirral Growth Company Masterplan);
- potential preparation of a Supplementary Planning Document/s to provide additional guidance on design matters;
- allocate sites for residential mixed use and other uses;
- optimise the densities that these developments will achieve to make the most of the opportunities that exist;
- ensure high quality design of buildings and public realm appropriate for this key location;
- ensure the adoption of climate change mitigation and adaption including clean energy/ district heating, urban greening;
- ensure that appropriate enabling and community infrastructure is provided
- ensure that appropriate pedestrian and cyclist links are provided to other parts of the Town Centre, railway stations, bus station, community facilities and green infrastructure.

The area will be included as a broad location in the draft final Local Plan as allowed for in the National Planning Framework pending the completion of the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework

APPENDIX 4.1

Proposed urban housing allocation sites

Site Ref	Proposed Designation	Site Name	Indicative Dwelling Capacity
Wallasey			
SHLAA 2006	Proposed Housing Allocation	Rear of Gibson House	87
SHLAA 2023	Proposed Housing Allocation	Wallasey Town Hall South Annexe	45
SHLAA 0475	Proposed Housing Allocation	New Street	32
HLA 103100	Proposed Housing Allocation	Former La Banque PH	28
HLA 612000	Proposed Housing Allocation	Former Seacombe Ferry Hotel	28
HLA 661200	Proposed Housing Allocation	Love Lane	23
SHLAA 2022	Proposed Housing Allocation	Wallasey Town Hall North Annexe	19
SHLAA 2005	Proposed Housing Allocation	Gibson House	15
HLA 690300	Proposed Housing Allocation	Old Tavern Club	14
SHLAA 1171	Proposed Housing Allocation	Egerton Street Play Area	12
HLA 610600	Proposed Housing Allocation	Darlington Street	10
HLA 671800	Proposed Housing Allocation	Leasowe Road	10
HLA 698300	Proposed Housing Allocation	Church Street/Liscard Road	10
SHLAA 2047	Proposed Mixed Use Allocation	Wallasey Village	10
HLA 686700	Proposed Housing Allocation	The Ship Inn	9
HLA 698900	Proposed Housing Allocation	1-7 Leasowe Road	9
HLA 699600	Proposed Housing Allocation	Embees	9
SHLAA 0651	Proposed Housing Allocation	Lighthouse PH	9
HLA 698000	Proposed Housing Allocation	Oakdale Road	8
HLA 638600	Proposed Housing Allocation	Stringhey Road	4
HLA 529900	Proposed Housing Allocation	38 Mount Pleasant Road	3
HLA 672800	Proposed Housing Allocation	Redcliffe	2
HLA 680100	Proposed Housing Allocation	7 Leasowe Road	2
HLA 697500	Proposed Housing Allocation	St Nicholas Vicarage	2
HLA 686100	Proposed Housing Allocation	50 Wellington Road	1
HLA 697300	Proposed Housing Allocation	Stonehill	1
			402
Birkenhead Commercial			
SHLAA 0753	Proposed Mixed Use Allocation	Wirral Waters - Marina View	1,795
SHLAA 0755	Proposed Mixed Use Allocation	Wirral Waters - Vittoria Studios	1,705
SHLAA 4078	Proposed Housing Allocation	Hind Street	580
SHLAA 0752	Proposed Housing Allocation	Woodside	507
SHLAA 2081	Proposed Housing Allocation	Wirral Waters - Legacy	500
SHLAA 2082	Proposed Housing Allocation	Wirral Waters - Urban Splash 2	230
SHLAA 0557	Proposed Housing Allocation	Beaufort Road	178
SHLAA 0424	Proposed Housing Allocation	Europa Car Park	170
SHLAA 2080	Proposed Housing Allocation	Wirral Waters - Tower Road	150
SHLAA 4081	Proposed Housing Allocation	Europa Pools	130
SHLAA 2078	Proposed Housing Allocation	Wirral Waters - Urban Splash 1	120
SHLAA 0478	Proposed Housing Allocation	Rose Brae	119
SHLAA 4082	Proposed Housing Allocation	Vue Cinema	110
SHLAA 2026	Proposed Housing Allocation	Treasury Building	65
SHLAA 0956	Proposed Housing Allocation	Europa North	55
SHLAA 0957	Proposed Housing Allocation	Europa South	50
SHLAA 1620	Proposed Housing Allocation	Lorn Street	50

Site Ref	Proposed Designation	Site Name	Indicative Dwelling Capacity
SHLAA 2014	Proposed Housing Allocation	Conway Building	40
SHLAA 2079	Proposed Housing Allocation	Wirral Waters - Belong	34
SHLAA 2036	Proposed Housing Allocation	Elgin Way CP	25
SHLAA 2069	Proposed Housing Allocation	Hinson Street CP	20
SHLAA 2002	Proposed Housing Allocation	Duncan St CP	20
			6,653
Suburban Birkenhead			
SHLAA 1665	Proposed Housing Allocation	Rock Ferry High	178
SHLAA 1832	Proposed Housing Allocation	Rock Station PH	25
HLA 693000	Proposed Housing Allocation	165 Bedford Road	14
HLA 701500	Proposed Housing Allocation	Former Riverside Day Centre	13
SHLAA 0689	Proposed Housing Allocation	Gladstone Liberals	12
HLA 665400	Proposed Housing Allocation	31 - 33 Palm Grove	10
SHLAA 0766	Proposed Housing Allocation	Greenacres	10
HLA 545600	Proposed Housing Allocation	Copper Beech	8
HLA 679000	Proposed Housing Allocation	Former Dave Pluck	6
HLA 691100	Proposed Housing Allocation	St Peters Mews	5
SHLAA 0218	Proposed Housing Allocation	Woodchurch Road (65 to 67)	5
HLA 684300	Proposed Housing Allocation	2 Beryl Road	4
HLA 679500	Proposed Housing Allocation	7 & 9 West Road	3
HLA 683400	Proposed Housing Allocation	Pipistrelle Rise	3
HLA 241500	Proposed Housing Allocation	48 Beryl Road	1
HLA 114800	Proposed Housing Allocation	Oak Cottage	1
HLA 636500	Proposed Housing Allocation	71 Bebington Road	1
HLA 646800	Proposed Housing Allocation	65 Bidston Road	1
HLA 664100	Proposed Housing Allocation	23 Nursery Close	1
HLA 664900	Proposed Housing Allocation	1 The Ridings	1
HLA 665200	Proposed Housing Allocation	Priory Cottage	1
HLA 669000	Proposed Housing Allocation	2 Bryanston Road	1
HLA 695000	Proposed Housing Allocation	The Paddock	1
HLA 700700	Proposed Housing Allocation	Intabene Manor	1
HLA 701400	Proposed Housing Allocation	Westgate	1
HLA 701600	Proposed Housing Allocation	Ha Pennyfield	1
HLA 703200	Proposed Housing Allocation	2 Edinburgh Drive	1
HLA 660000	Proposed Housing Allocation	Foxearth	1
			310
Bromborough and Eastham			
HLA 699300	Proposed Housing Allocation	Acre Lane	217
SHLAA 1610	Proposed Housing Allocation	Civic Way	60
SHLAA 4079	Proposed Housing Allocation	Woodhead Street CP	45
SHLAA 1850	Proposed Housing Allocation	Lyndale	28
SHLAA 4072	Proposed Housing Allocation	Trafalgar Garage	26
SHLAA 4080	Proposed Housing Allocation	Olinda Street	23
SHLAA 1974	Proposed Housing Allocation	Eastham Youth Centre	20
HLA 674900	Proposed Housing Allocation	Rosebrae Nursing Home	12
SHLAA 2034	Proposed Housing Allocation	Delamere Ave	12

Site Ref	Proposed Designation	Site Name	Indicative Dwelling Capacity
SHLAA 1833	Proposed Housing Allocation	Bebington Road	11
HLA 691600	Proposed Housing Allocation	168 Bolton Road East	9
HLA 645500	Proposed Housing Allocation	15 New Chester Road	8
HLA 691500	Proposed Housing Allocation	Mallowdale Close	7
HLA 090200	Proposed Housing Allocation	Mill Road/Spital Road	5
HLA 683800	Proposed Housing Allocation	Spital Railway Station	4
HLA 663000	Proposed Housing Allocation	106 Allport Road	3
HLA 671000	Proposed Housing Allocation	Abbey Grange	3
HLA 618600	Proposed Housing Allocation	Winkie Wood	1
HLA 667500	Proposed Housing Allocation	20 Village Road	1
HLA 670900	Proposed Housing Allocation	5 Uplands Road	1
HLA 677800	Proposed Housing Allocation	30 Shore Drive	1
HLA 677900	Proposed Housing Allocation	The George	1
HLA 679100	Proposed Housing Allocation	24 Acres Road	1
HLA 695200	Proposed Housing Allocation	2 Donne Avenue	1
HLA 697200	Proposed Housing Allocation	11 Heygarth Road	1
			501
Mid Wirral			
HLA 685200	Proposed Housing Allocation	Former Burtons Foods	299
SHLAA 2068	Proposed Housing Allocation	Typhoo	100
SHLAA 1827	Proposed Housing Allocation	Foxfield	69
SHLAA 2008	Proposed Housing Allocation	Moreton Family Centre	60
SHLAA 2007	Proposed Housing Allocation	Pasture Road	38
SHLAA 1472	Proposed Housing Allocation	Fernleigh	30
HLA 702000	Proposed Housing Allocation	Ferny Brow Road	18
SHLAA 4014	Proposed Housing Allocation	The Stirrup PH	15
SHLAA 2010	Proposed Housing Allocation	Knutsford Road	8
HLA 642100	Proposed Housing Allocation	8 Rone Close	6
HLA 678700	Proposed Housing Allocation	The Overchurch	6
HLA 686400	Proposed Housing Allocation	216 Greasby Road	3
HLA 697600	Proposed Housing Allocation	29 & 31 Norwich Drive	2
HLA 642300	Proposed Housing Allocation	53 Birch Avenue	1
HLA 655300	Proposed Housing Allocation	83 Saughall Massie Lane	1
HLA 669400	Proposed Housing Allocation	230 Greasby Road	1
HLA 674400	Proposed Housing Allocation	2 Girtrell Road	1
HLA 697900	Proposed Housing Allocation	8 Netherton Road	1
HLA 703500	Proposed Housing Allocation	4 Hopfield Road	1
			660
West Kirby and Hoylake			
SHLAA 3095	Proposed Housing Allocation	Greenfield Estate	50
SHLAA 0916	Proposed Housing Allocation	Grange Hill Farm	17
SHLAA 2042	Proposed Housing Allocation	Ashton Court	14
SHLAA 2035	Proposed Housing Allocation	Paton Close	11
HLA 680600	Proposed Housing Allocation	Blue Anchor	8
HLA 695300	Proposed Housing Allocation	45 Grange Cross Lane	4
SHLAA 3042	Proposed Housing Allocation	Majestic Wine	3

Site Ref	Proposed Designation	Site Name	Indicative Dwelling Capacity
HLA 680400	Proposed Housing Allocation	The Forge	2
HLA 683200	Proposed Housing Allocation	Braeside	2
HLA 691900	Proposed Housing Allocation	12 Grammar School Lane	2
HLA 692700	Proposed Housing Allocation	Drayton	2
HLA 699000	Proposed Housing Allocation	Elrig	2
HLA 703600	Proposed Housing Allocation	Sandhey Road	2
HLA 647800	Proposed Housing Allocation	Grange Old Road	1
HLA 654100	Proposed Housing Allocation	Springfield	1
HLA 672400	Proposed Housing Allocation	White Gables	1
HLA 676700	Proposed Housing Allocation	Long Hay	1
HLA 679200	Proposed Housing Allocation	Whytethorne	1
HLA 681900	Proposed Housing Allocation	Bright Smiles	1
HLA 682900	Proposed Housing Allocation	43 Walker Street	1
HLA 695800	Proposed Housing Allocation	3 Hillside Road	1
HLA 696900	Proposed Housing Allocation	Heath Grange	1
HLA 700400	Proposed Housing Allocation	13 Elm Terrace	1
HLA 703300	Proposed Housing Allocation	Wreckers Cottage	1
SHLAA 1301	Proposed Housing Allocation	1 Cholmondeley Road	1
SHLAA 1409	Proposed Housing Allocation	22A Shaw Street	1
			132
Heswall			
HLA 703800	Proposed Housing Allocation	Fishers Lane	35
SHLAA 4074	Proposed Housing Allocation	Pensby Hall Residential Home	15
HLA 702900	Proposed Housing Allocation	26 Cornelius Drive	10
SHLAA 3029	Proposed Mixed Use Allocation	Silverdale Medical	7
HLA 632800	Proposed Housing Allocation	Grange Villa	6
HLA 403000	Proposed Housing Allocation	Seven Acres Lane	4
HLA 678100	Proposed Housing Allocation	Co Operative Pharmacy	2
HLA 681300	Proposed Housing Allocation	Rosemary Cottage	2
HLA 123200	Proposed Housing Allocation	The Old Forge	1
HLA 635700	Proposed Housing Allocation	42 Sparks Lane	1
HLA 652000	Proposed Housing Allocation	133 Kings Drive,	1
HLA 656700	Proposed Housing Allocation	Little Orchard	1
HLA 663400	Proposed Housing Allocation	440 Pensby Road	1
HLA 664300	Proposed Housing Allocation	Ashbourne House	1
HLA 666300	Proposed Housing Allocation	Heath Top	1
HLA 667900	Proposed Housing Allocation	Moonshine	1
HLA 671500	Proposed Housing Allocation	5 Birchmere	1
HLA 673700	Proposed Housing Allocation	346 Telegraph Road	1
HLA 678400	Proposed Housing Allocation	62 Whitfield Lane	1
HLA 679400	Proposed Housing Allocation	3 Dale Gardens	1
HLA 682100	Proposed Housing Allocation	Beechfield Close	1
HLA 688300	Proposed Housing Allocation	Conifers	1
HLA 689300	Proposed Housing Allocation	Parklands Drive	1
HLA 693100	Proposed Housing Allocation	Conifers	1
HLA 693500	Proposed Housing Allocation	Woodcote	1

Site Ref	Proposed Designation	Site Name	Indicative Dwelling Capacity
HLA 694700	Proposed Housing Allocation	Grangewood	1
HLA 695900	Proposed Housing Allocation	71 Dawstone Road	1
HLA 696400	Proposed Housing Allocation	Arrowcroft	1
HLA 701700	Proposed Housing Allocation	Glenbank	1
HLA 703000	Proposed Housing Allocation	89 Ridgemere Road	1
HLA 703100	Proposed Housing Allocation	Adj St Peters Primary School	1
SHLAA 1109	Proposed Housing Allocation	274 Irby Road	1
			105
			8,763

APPENDIX 4.2

Potential additional urban housing allocation sites

Site Ref	Proposed Designation	Site Name	Indicative Dwelling Capacity
Wallasey			
SHLAA 4086	Potential Mixed Use Allocation	New Palace Amusements	120
SHLAA 1864	Potential Housing Allocation	Liscard Municipal	20
SHLAA 4089	Potential Housing Allocation	Wallasey RBL	14
SHLAA 0468	Potential Housing Allocation	Borough Road (22 to 40)	10
SHLAA 1503	Potential Housing Allocation	Trafalgar Road	8
			172
Birkenhead Commercial			
SHLAA 0756	Potential Housing Allocation	Northern Case	172
SHLAA 0769	Potential Housing Allocation	Kelvin Road	156
SHLAA 4083	Potential Housing Allocation	Pilgrim Street Arts	15
SHLAA 2016	Potential Housing Allocation	Wilbraham Street CP	15
SHLAA 1691	Potential Housing Allocation	Brooklands	12
SHLAA 0754	Potential Mixed Use Allocation	Wirral Waters - Sky City	0
			370
Suburban Birkenhead			
SHLAA 4085	Potential Housing Allocation	Sevenoaks Extra Care	83
SHLAA 3039	Potential Housing Allocation	Crossways	50
SHLAA 2013	Potential Housing Allocation	Hamilton Building	30
SHLAA 0763	Potential Housing Allocation	Nelson House	12
			175
Bromborough and Eastham			
SHLAA 4021	Potential Housing Allocation	Dock Road South	950
SHLAA 2072	Potential Housing Allocation	Prices Way	108
SHLAA 4012	Potential Housing Allocation	Southwood Road	85
SHLAA 1715	Potential Housing Allocation	Old Hall Road	76
SHLAA 4088	Potential Housing Allocation	Maple Grove	6
			1,225
Mid Wirral			
SHLAA 4084	Potential Housing Allocation	Wirral Business Park	127
SHLAA 4087	Potential Housing Allocation	Dodds Builders Merchants	15
SHLAA 3000	Potential Housing Allocation	Church Lane	10
SHLAA 1908	Potential Housing Allocation	Arrowe Hill Primary	5
			157
West Kirby and Hoylake			
SHLAA 4071	Potential Housing Allocation	Kingsmead School	25
			25
			2,124

APPENDIX 4.3

Other Suitable but Currently Uncertain Sites

Site Ref	Proposed Designation	Site Name	Indicative Dwelling Capacity
Wallasey			
SHLAA 0449	Potential Housing Allocation	North of Black Horse PH	34
SHLAA 2051	Potential Housing Allocation	Sycamore Lodge	24
SHLAA 0463	Potential Housing Allocation	Former Seacombe House	21
SHLAA 0020	Potential Mixed Use Allocation	Former Grand Hotel	16
SHLAA 1127	Potential Housing Allocation	Rear of St Johns	12
SHLAA 1129	Potential Housing Allocation	Mill Lane	8
SHLAA 0047	Potential Housing Allocation	Hartismere Road	7
SHLAA 1070	Potential Housing Allocation	Littledale Road	3
			125
Birkenhead Commercial			
HLA 691300	Potential Mixed Use Allocation	Former Rank Bingo	132
HLA 549700	Potential Mixed Use Allocation	Former Rocky's Gym	38
SHLAA 0758	Potential Housing Allocation	Chester Street	28
SHLAA 1571	Potential Housing Allocation	Duncan Street	9
HLA 540500	Potential Mixed Use Allocation	Atlantic House	3
			210
Suburban Birkenhead			
HLA 671300	Potential Housing Allocation	Former Open Arms PH	42
HLA 685500	Potential Housing Allocation	Former ESWA	39
SHLAA 1621	Potential Housing Allocation	Howson Street	23
HLA 682500	Potential Housing Allocation	Land at Old Chester Road	20
SHLAA 0974	Potential Housing Allocation	Oxton Road	20
HLA 667700	Potential Housing Allocation	Holt Road, Tranmere	18
SHLAA 3001	Potential Housing Allocation	Birch Tree PH	18
HLA 586000	Potential Housing Allocation	Former Livingstone PH	16
SHLAA 1358	Potential Housing Allocation	Pearson Road	11
SHLAA 0255	Potential Housing Allocation	Hassal Road	10
SHLAA 1030	Potential Housing Allocation	Grosvenor Buildings	9
SHLAA 1671	Potential Housing Allocation	156 Bedford Road	9
SHLAA 1686	Potential Housing Allocation	Derby Road	9
HLA 680800	Potential Housing Allocation	Westbourne Road	9
SHLAA 0111	Potential Housing Allocation	Devonshire Road	8
SHLAA 1280	Potential Housing Allocation	Dial Road	8
SHLAA 1232	Potential Housing Allocation	46 Egerton Park	7
SHLAA 1558	Potential Housing Allocation	Rock Lane West	7
SHLAA 1561	Potential Housing Allocation	Rodney Street	6
HLA 673400	Potential Housing Allocation	Singelton Avenue	6
SHLAA 0776	Potential Housing Allocation	Former Crooked Billet PH	5
SHLAA 3035	Potential Housing Allocation	Thorsway	5
SHLAA 0134	Potential Housing Allocation	Brassey Street	2
HLA 687500	Potential Housing Allocation	Hampden Grove	2
HLA 691200	Potential Housing Allocation	37 Clifton Road	2
HLA 700000	Potential Housing Allocation	98 Upton Road	2
HLA 702700	Potential Housing Allocation	25 Slatey Road	2
HLA 602700	Potential Housing Allocation	32 Harland Road	1

Site Ref	Proposed Designation	Site Name	Indicative Dwelling Capacity
HLA 677200	Potential Housing Allocation	Livingston Street	1
HLA 683500	Potential Housing Allocation	107 Church Road	1
HLA 699700	Potential Housing Allocation	7-9, Marquis Street	1
			319
Bromborough and Eastham			
SHLAA 1362	Potential Housing Allocation	Beaconsfield Road	10
SHLAA 0806	Potential Housing Allocation	99 New Chester Road	9
SHLAA 0785	Potential Housing Allocation	101 New Chester Road	8
			27
Mid Wirral			
SHLAA 0517	Potential Housing Allocation	Ferny Brow Road	16
HLA 703900	Potential Housing Allocation	Grasswood Road	14
SHLAA 1513	Potential Housing Allocation	Bermuda Road	4
SHLAA 1295	Potential Housing Allocation	Elm Avenue	3
			37
Heswall			
SHLAA 1267	Potential Housing Allocation	Mill Road	3
			3
			721

APPENDIX 4.4

Current and future housing land supply

Wirral Local Plan 2020 - 2025 Draft Housing Trajectory (Part 1: Years 0 to 5)

Table 1: Summary Housing Need

Local Housing Need	Dwellings	Dwellings	
Standard Method Calculation for 2019	4,000	4,000	800 pa based on ten year average household growth (700) and latest published median affordability ratio of 6.28 (2018)
20% buffer from Housing Delivery Test	800	800	Based on Housing Delivery Test result (October 2018), rolled forward from future years. Remains until existing development exceeds 85% of standard method over previous 3-years
Forecast Demolitions	250	250	50 pa based on average of previous recorded demolitions over last five years subject to annually reported monitoring results from 2014/15 to 2018/19
Total Required	5,050	5,050	

Table 2: Summary of Potential 5 Year Supply (April 2020 onwards)

	Current 2020 to 2025	Potential 2020 to 2025	
A-Land with Planning Permission (see Table 3)	1,218	1,218	Sites with planning permission which will deliver completions during years 0 to 5. Excludes sites where developer has indicated they will not deliver within 5 years; where the Council's Viability Baseline Report 2018 indicates the development proposed would not be viable; and where delivery would occur in year 6 onwards.
B-Other Committed Sites (awaiting pp/ programme):			
Wirral Waters (see Table 4.1)	304	1,034	Includes sites, with, awaiting and without detailed planning permission where a detailed programme with underwriting or grant support has been identified
Wirral Growth Company (see Table 4.2)	356	489	Subject to formal confirmation of initial programme in January 2020
Affordable housing programme(See Table 4.3)	173	476	Sites with or expected to obtain Homes England Funding Support
C-Other potentially deliverable sites (years 0 to 5)			
Other SHLAA 2019 (see Table 5)	477	626	Other sites without existing planning permission expected to deliver new-build dwellings within the next five years
D-Other Potential Sites			
Other Pipeline Sites (see Table 6)	0	66	Other sites which may be expected to obtain permission and deliver new-build dwellings within the next five years
ELOS Avison Young Sites (see Table 7)	0	112	Sites identified for potential re-designation for housing development subject to further confirmation
Sub-Total	2,528	4,021	
E-Allowances			Data subject to annually reported monitoring results
Conversion and change of use	400	400	NPPF paragraph 70 - must be realistic and subject to compelling evidence of reliable source of supply - 80 pa based on average of recorded delivery over last 10 years 2009/10 to 2018/19
New Build windfalls	350	350	NPPF paragraph 70 - must be realistic and subject to compelling evidence of reliable source of supply - 70 pa based on average recorded delivery since first SHLAA in April 2008 up to end of 2018/19
Empty Homes	500	500	NPPG - to be included must not already be counted as part of the existing stock to avoid double counting - assumed future annual delivery of 100 pa subject to ongoing interventions and support programme, recommended by ARUP for years 0 to 5.
Sub Total for Allowances	1,250	1,250	

Total Potential Supply (0- 5 years)	3,778	5,271	
Balance	-1,272	221	Total Potential Supply less Total Required (subject to assumptions set out in tables)

Table 3: Land with Planning Permission for New Build Dwellings at April 2019 with completions from 2020 to 2025	Current 2020 to 2025	Potential 2020 to 2025	All sites subject to annually reported monitoring results. Data amended for SHLAA questionnaire returns and viability in Baseline Viability Report 2018.
Full permission (Small Sites<10)	242	242	NPPF Glossary - not major development and have planning permission.
Full permission (Majors<50)	283	283	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within 5-years only.
Full Permission (Large Sites>50)	572	572	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within 5-years only.
Full permission (Strategic Sites>500)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within 5-years only.
Outline permission (Small Sites<10)	69	69	NPPF Glossary - not major development and have planning permission.
Outline permission (Majors<50)	42	42	NPPF Glossary - only where clear evidence of completions within 5-years.
Outline permission (Large Sites>50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - only where clear evidence of completions within 5-years.
Outline permission (Strategic Sites>500)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - only where clear evidence of completions within 5-years.
Reserved matters (Small Sites<10)	10	10	NPPF Glossary - not major development and have planning permission
Reserved matters (Majors<50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within 5-years only.
Reserved matters (Large Sites>50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within 5-years only.
Reserved matters (Strategic Sites>500)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within 5-years only.
Total With New Build Permission	1,218	1,218	

Table 4: Other Committed Sites (awaiting pp/ programme):			
Table 4.1	Current	Potential	
Wirral Waters (Strategic Site)	2020 to 2025	2020 to 2025	NPPF Glossary - Must be available now, in a suitable location now and delivered within 5 years
SHLAA 2081 Wirral Waters - Legacy	240	500	Written agreement being sought with developer over future delivery
SHLAA 2080 Wirral Waters - Tower Road Roundabout	0	150	Vacant, cleared dockland site. DLS/18/00715 for 500 flats in six blocks recommended for approval subject to section 106. Lower trajectory based on permission being granted during 2019/20 with residual delivery in years 6 to 10. Higher trajectory based on landowners submitted estimates.
SHLAA 2079 Wirral Waters - Belong	34	34	Vacant, cleared dockland site. Residual of Northbank East after Legacy, Belong and Urban Splash. Higher trajectory based on landowners submitted estimates but no developer or scheme yet available. Also expected to include hotel but no operator yet identified.
			Vacant, cleared dockland site with permission for Belong care village and 34 independent living apartments APP/18/00470 (A19/04/19). No development programme yet available. Trajectory based on landowners submitted estimate.

SHLAA 2078 Wirral Waters - Urban Splash (Phase 1)	30	30	Vacant, cleared dockland site with application for Phase 1 (of 4) 30 town houses and row houses awaiting decision APP/19/01061, with grant awarded to secure development.
SHLAA 2078 Wirral Waters - Urban Splash (Phases 2 to 4)	0	90	Remainder of vacant, cleared dockland site, with detailed planning application still awaited, with grant awarded to secure development of a further 90 dwellings in three phases. No development programme yet available. Higher trajectory based on landowners submitted estimates.
SHLAA 2082 Wirral Waters - Urban Splash	0	230	Vacant, cleared dockland site, with grant awarded to secure development of a further 230 dwellings but detailed planning application still awaited. No development programme yet available. Higher trajectory based on landowners submitted estimates. Residual delivery expected in years 6 to 10.
Total	304	1,034	

Table 4.2	Current 2020 to 2025	Potential 2020 to 2025	NPPF Glossary - Must be available now, in a suitable location now and delivered within 5 years
Wirral Growth Company			Option and Partnership Agreements signed by both parties in March 2019. Business Plan to be submitted for formal Council, JV Board and MUSE Board approval in January 2020 followed by individual draw down of sites with detailed proposals.
SHLAA 0424 Europa Boulevard Car Park, Birkenhead	100	100	Vacant cleared site to north of Conway Park Station in use as temporary car park. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory for 170 flats based on Muse submission reviewed by Barton Willmore with residual delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 1827 Foxfield School, Moreton	69	69	Vacant cleared former school site. School already relocated to alternative site. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 69 family houses reviewed by Barton Willmore.
SHLAA 1610 Land at Civic Way, Bebington	60	60	Vacant cleared site of former Council offices adjacent to Bebington Suburban Centre. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for mix of 60 flats and houses reviewed by Barton Willmore.
SHLAA 2008 Moreton Family Centre, Pasture Road	40	40	Vacant social services building currently in interim temporary use. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 60-bed extra care village reviewed by Barton Willmore with residual delivery in years 6 to 10 years.
SHLAA 2007 Pasture Road, Moreton	20	38	Vacant grassed site adjacent to Moreton Key Town Centre. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 38 family houses reviewed by Barton Willmore. Currently designated as Urban Greenspace, which could delay delivery.
SHLAA 1715 Land at Old Hall Road, Bromborough	0	70	Vacant reclaimed land identified for re-designation for residential development by Avison Young. No planning application yet submitted. Capacity of 76 dwellings based on 30dph, with residual delivery assumed in years 6 to 10.

SHLAA 1974 Eastham Youth Centre, Lyndale Avenue	20	20	No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Development to accommodate relocated youth centre underway. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 20 family houses reviewed by Barton Willmore.
SHLAA 2023 Wallasey Town Hall South Annexe, Egremont	20	45	Occupied Council offices, with staff requiring relocation. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity based on Muse submission for 45 flats reviewed by Barton Willmore with residual delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 2022 Wallasey Town Hall North Annexe, Egremont	19	19	Vacant Council building. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 19 family houses reviewed by Barton Willmore.
SHLAA 1864 Municipal Offices, Liscard	0	20	Council buildings now in minimal use, adjacent to Liscard Key Town Centre. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 20 terraced houses reviewed by Barton Willmore with residual delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 2010 Knutsford Road, Moreton	8	8	Vacant cleared site of former Council offices adjacent to Moreton Key Town Centre. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 8 family houses reviewed by Barton Willmore.
Total	356	489	

Table 4.3	Current 2020 to 2025	Potential 2020 to 2025	NPPF Glossary - Must be available now, in a suitable location now and delivered within 5 years
Affordable Housing Programme			
SHLAA 1665 Former Rock Ferry High School, Ravenswood Avenue	50	178	Cleared, Council-owned site under offer to RSL with playing fields being retained on separate southern site. Application for 102 extra care flats, 76 family dwellings and conversion of Ravenswood to 8 flats submitted September 2019 (APP/19/01459). Trajectory assumes grant of permission during 2019/20 with residual delivery in years 6 to 10 but completion could be by March 2022.
SHLAA 4085 Sevenoaks Extra Care, Rock Ferry	0	83	Part of cleared, former housing site currently undergoing redevelopment. Subject to positive pre-application discussion for 83 unit extra care housing scheme with Homes England funding secured for completion by late 2021. No planning application yet submitted.
SHLAA 3039 Crossways, Naylor Road, Bidston	0	50	Currently undergoing clearance, with RP considering future options, including housing types and tenure. No pre-application discussion or planning application yet submitted.
SHLAA 0763 Former Nelson House, Rock Ferry	0	12	Cleared, former housing site owned by RP with potential to provide 12 family houses. No pre-application discussion or planning application yet submitted.
SHLAA 0475 South of 6 to 36 New Street, Seacombe	32	32	Cleared vacant former housing site with application for 32 dwellings awaiting determination (APP/19/00373).
SHLAA 1472 Former Fernleigh Care Home, Leasowe	30	30	Council owned, cleared former elderly persons home. Under offer to RSL for 30 dwellings but no planning application yet submitted, subject to final price being agreed by Asset Management. Flood risk will require resolution before permission can be granted.

SHLAA 1850 Former Lyndale School, Eastham	28	28	Council owned, under offer to RSL with APP/18/01632 for 28 family houses approved 19/06/19.
SHLAA 2034 Land at Delamere Avenue, Eastham	12	12	Council owned grassed amenity space under offer to RSL with planning permission granted for six houses and six flats (APP/19/00132 A18/04/19)
SHLAA 2035 Rear of Paton Close, West Kirby	11	11	Backland garage court and open space proposed for development by RSL, with permission for 11 dwellings approved 07/06/19 (APP/18/00841). Already on site.
SHLAA 0766 Former Greenacres Court, Beechwood	10	10	Council owned, cleared former elderly persons home with application for 10 houses awaiting decision (APP/19/01047)
SHLAA 4089 Wallasey Royal British Legion, Withens Lane, Liscard	0	14	Application for 8 terraced family houses and 6 flats awaiting decision (APP/19/00888). Homes England funding secured, with completion by late 2020.
SHLAA 3000 Church Lane, Woodchurch	0	10	RP owned backland site subject to positive pre-application discussion with potential for completion by late 2020. No planning application yet submitted.
SHLAA 4088 Maple Grove, Bromborough	0	6	RP owned site subject to positive pre-application discussion in early 2019, with completion anticipated by March 2020. No planning application yet submitted.
Total	173	476	

Table 5: Other SHLAA April 2019	Current 2020 to 2025	Potential 2020 to 2025	NPPF Glossary - Must be available now, in a suitable location now and delivered within 5 years
SHLAA 0557 Land at Beaufort Road, Birkenhead	150	178	Vacant Council owned site under offer to developer partner with permission for 178 family homes approved 20/08/19 (APP/19/00564), supported by Homes England grant award. Conditions already being discharged. Lower trajectory assumes residual delivery in years 6 to 10 but latest programme now expects all units will be completed by March 2025.
SHLAA 2068 East of Typhoo, Moreton	50	100	Disused former company playing fields with willing landowner. Currently allocated as an Employment Development Site. Capacity based on DOR response by landowner for mixed residential and employment. Lower trajectory assumes residual delivery in years 6 to 10. Flood risk may need to be resolved before development can be permitted, which could delay delivery.
SHLAA 2006 Rear of Gibson House, Maddock Road, Egremont	87	87	Vacant grassed riverfront site with permission for enabling development to retain and convert Gibson House recommended for approval subject to section 106 (APP/18/00786). Only new-build elements retained in trajectory.
SHLAA 3095 Greenfield Estate, Grange Road, West Kirby	25	50	Prominent green field site with woodland setting on main entrance to West Kirby previously thought to be subject to restrictive covenants but now in single ownership with existing tenanted residential properties, with residual delivery assumed in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 2005 Gibson House, Seabank Road, Egremont	15	15	Permission now granted with enabling development to retain and convert Gibson House recommended for approval subject to section 106 (APP/18/00786). Only new-build elements retained in trajectory.
SHLAA 4072 Trafalgar Garage Service Station, Gardens Road, Bebington	26	26	Operational petrol station with application for 26 dwellings awaiting determination (OUT/18/01329).
SHLAA 1832 Rock Station PH, 9-11 Highfield Road, Rock Ferry	25	25	Extended scheme to replace public house with 25 flats approved 13/09/19 (APP/17/01606).
SHLAA 0916 Land at Grange Hill Farm, West Kirby (combined with SHLAA 3009)	17	17	Ownership within one family looking to sell for housing development. Removal of Council restrictive covenant approved in 2017.

SHLAA 4074 Pensby Hall Residential Home, Pensby Road, Pensby	15	15	Cleared site with application for 15 flats approved 17/06/19 (APP/19/00096)
SHLAA 4014 Stirrup PH, Upton	15	46	Vacant public house with application for 15 dwellings awaiting determination (APP/19/00063). Now with potential interest for 46 older people's apartments.
SHLAA 4087 William Dodds Builders Merchants, Bermuda Road, Moreton	0	15	Application for redevelopment with 15 family houses awaiting determination (APP/18/01284)
SHLAA 0689 Gladstone Liberals, Dial Road, Tranmere	12	12	Vacant social club and bowling green. No application yet submitted but landowner expects site to be sold and development to be complete by 2022
SHLAA 1171 Egerton Street Playground, New Brighton	12	12	Cleared vacant site with application for 7 houses and 5 flats awaiting determination (APP/18/00889)
SHLAA 2042 Ashton Court, West Kirby (combined with SHLAA 2042)	14	14	Vacant buildings awaiting redevelopment subject to resolution of acceptable provision of affordable housing. Principle and design of proposed development for 7 town houses approved at previous appeal.
SHLAA 3029 Silverdale Medical Centre, Heswall	7	7	Application for town centre redevelopment for mixed uses including 7 flats approved 30/08/19 after withdrawal of previous application for 9 flats (APP/19/00802).
SHLAA 0218 Former 65 to 67, Woodchurch Road, Prenton	5	5	Cleared vacant site with previous lapsed consent for four flats now with application for 5 flats awaiting determination (APP/18/01499)
SHLAA 1301 Adjacent 1 Cholmondeley Road, West Kirby	1	1	Garden site with previous lapsed consent for one dwelling now to be resubmitted by landowner during 2020
SHLAA 1409 22A Shaw Street, Hoylake	1	1	Application for replacement of workshop with single bungalow approved 02/05/19 (APP/19/00173)
Total	477	626	

Table 6: Other potentially deliverable pipeline sites	Current 2020 to 2025	Potential 2020 to 2025	Not in SHLAA 2019. NPPF Glossary - Must be available now, in a suitable location now and delivered within 5 years
SHLAA 4084 Wirral Business Park, Arrows Brook Road, Upton	0	16	Post-war advance factory subject to planning application awaiting determination for 127 dwellings (APP/19/00315). Trajectory assumes potential for permission to be granted in December 2019 with residual delivery in years 6 to 10. Relocation of employment uses may also be required.
SHLAA 2050 Clatterbridge Hospital	0	50	Cleared vacant land in the Green Belt under offer to Homes England. No developer or scheme yet available but delivery contract could potentially support earlier inclusion subject to planning permission. Suitability and capacity can only be confirmed following NPPF paragraph 145(g) Green Belt assessment.
Total	0	66	

Table 7: Other potentially deliverable sites	Current 2020 to 2025	Potential 2020 to 2025	Not in SHLAA 2019. NPPF Glossary - Must be available now, in a suitable location now and delivered within 5 years
SHLAA 2072 Vacant Land at Prices Way, Bromborough	0	50	Remaining part of employment area agreed as part of previous mixed used permission on land adjacent to the River Dibbin, with developer interest for further housing. Draft development scheme and trajectory provided by Avison Young. No planning application yet submitted. Flood risk would need resolving before permission could be granted.

SHLAA 4012 Land at Southwood Road, Bromborough	0	62	Vacant land adjacent to Riverside Office Park with willing landowner, identified for re-designation for residential development by Avison Young. No planning application yet submitted. Capacity of 85 dwellings based on 30dph, with residual delivery assumed in years 6 to 10.
Total	0	112	

Wirral Local Plan 2026 - 2030 Draft Housing Trajectory (Part 2: Years 6 to 10)

Table 1: Summary Housing Need

Local Housing Need	Dwellings	Dwellings	
Standard Method Calculation for 2019	4,000	4,000	800 pa based on ten year average household growth (700) and latest published median affordability ratio of 6.28 (2018)
20% buffer from Housing Delivery Test	-400	-400	Based on Housing Delivery Test result (October 2018), with half of 20% rolled forward to first five years from years 6 to 10.
Forecast Demolitions	250	250	50 pa based on average of previous recorded demolitions over last five years subject to annually reported monitoring results from 2014/15 to 2018/19
Total Required	3,850	3,850	

Table 2: Summary of Potential Year 6 to 10 Supply (April 2025 onwards)

	Current 2026 to 2030	Potential 2026 to 2030	
A-Land with Planning Permission (see Table 3)	178	178	Sites with planning permission which are expected to deliver completions during years 6 to 10.
B-Other Committed Sites (awaiting pp/ programme):			
Wirral Waters (see Table 4)	1,130	2,500	Includes sites without detailed planning permission where a detailed programme with underwriting or grant support has not yet been identified
Wirral Growth Company (see Table 5)	588	586	Subject to formal confirmation of initial programme in January 2020
Affordable homes programme(See Table 6)	128	18	Sites with or expected to obtain Homes England Funding Support
New Ferry Regeneration (see Table 7)	79	79	Sites with or expected to obtain Homes England Funding Support
C-Other potentially deliverable sites (Years 6 to 10)			
Other SHLAA 2019 Sites (see Table 8)	565	867	Other sites currently in SHLAA 2019, expected to obtain permission and deliver new-build dwellings in years 6 to 10
D-Other potential sites			
Other pipeline sites (see Table 9)	0	111	Other sites which may be expected to obtain permission and deliver new-build dwellings in years 6 to 10
ELOS Avison Young Sites (see Table 10)	0	651	Sites identified for potential re-designation for housing development subject to further confirmation. Additional sites are expected to be identified subject to final reporting
Sub Total	2,668	4,990	
E-Allowances			Data subject to annually reported monitoring results
Conversion and change of use	400	400	NPPF paragraph 70 - must be realistic and subject to compelling evidence of reliable source of supply - 80 pa based on average of recorded delivery over last 10 years 2009/10 to 2018/19
New Build windfalls	350	350	NPPF paragraph 70 - must be realistic and subject to compelling evidence of reliable source of supply - 70 pa based on average recorded delivery since first SHLAA in April 2008 up to end of 2018/19
Empty Homes	450	450	NPPG - to be included must not already be counted as part of the existing stock to avoid double counting - assumed future annual delivery of 90 pa subject to ongoing interventions and support programme, recommended by ARUP for years 6 to 10.
Sub Total for Allowances	1,200	1,200	
Total Potential Supply (Years 6 to 10)	3,868	6,190	

Balance	18	2,340	Total Potential Supply less Total Required (subject to assumptions set out in tables)
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Table 3: Land with Planning Permission for New Build Dwellings at April 2019 with completions from 2026 to 2030	Current 2026 to 2030	Potential 2026 to 2030	All sites subject to annually reported monitoring results. Data amended for SHLAA questionnaire returns and viability in Baseline Viability Report 2018.
Full permission (Small Sites<10)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - not major development and have planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Full permission (Majors<50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Full Permission (Large Sites>50)	178	178	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only (Burtons and Acre Lane).
Full permission (Strategic Sites>500)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Outline permission (Small Sites<10)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - not major development and have planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Outline permission (Majors<50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - only where clear evidence of completions, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Outline permission (Large Sites>50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - only where clear evidence of completions, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Outline permission (Strategic Sites>500)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - only where clear evidence of completions, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Reserved matters (Small Sites<10)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - not major development and have planning permission, , completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Reserved matters (Majors<50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Reserved matters (Large Sites>50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Reserved matters (Strategic Sites>500)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Total With New Build Permission	178	178	

Table 4: Wirral Waters (Strategic Site)	Current 2026 to 2030	Potential 2026 to 2030	NPPF Glossary - must be suitable with reasonable prospect will be available and viable at point envisaged
SHLAA 0753 Wirral Waters - Marina View	200	1,325	Occupied dockside site with no developer or scheme yet available. Further information required on future development programme. Lower trajectory based on the assumed completion of 50 dwellings per year from 2026, with residual delivery in years 11 to 15. Higher trajectory based on landowners submitted estimates, subject to market demand. Relocation of employment uses may also be required.
SHLAA 0755 Wirral Waters - Vittoria Studios	200	1,175	Occupied dockside site with no developer or scheme yet available. Further information required on future development programme. Lower trajectory based on the assumed completion of 50 dwellings per year from 2026, with residual delivery in years 11 to 15. Higher trajectory based on landowners submitted estimates, subject to market demand. Relocation of employment uses may also be required.

SHLAA 2081 Wirral Waters - Legacy	260	0	Vacant, cleared dockland site. DLS/18/00715 for 500 flats in six blocks recommended for approval subject to section 106. Trajectory based on permission being granted during 2019/20 with residual delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 2080 Wirral Waters - Tower Road Roundabout	150	0	Vacant, cleared dockland site. Residual of Northbank East after Legacy, Belong and Urban Splash. Higher trajectory based on landowners submitted estimates but no developer or scheme yet available. Also expected to include hotel but no operator yet identified.
SHLAA 2078 Wirral Waters - Urban Splash (Phases 2 to 4)	90	0	Remainder of vacant, cleared dockland site, with detailed planning application still awaited, with grant awarded to secure development of a further 90 dwellings in three phases. No development programme yet available.
SHLAA 2082 Wirral Waters - Urban Splash	230	0	Vacant, cleared dockland site, with grant awarded to secure development of a further 230 dwellings but detailed planning application still awaited. No development programme yet available.
SHLAA 0754 Wirral Waters - Sky City	0	0	Occupied dockland site with no developer or scheme yet available. No information yet provided by landowner. Relocation of employment uses may also be required.
Total	1,130	2,500	

			NPPF Glossary - must be suitable with reasonable prospect will be available and viable at point envisaged
Table 5: Wirral Growth Company	Current 2026 to 2030	Potential 2026 to 2030	Option and Partnership Agreements signed by both parties in March 2019. Business Plan to be submitted for formal Council, JV Board and MUSE Board approval in January 2020 followed by individual draw down of sites with detailed proposals.
SHLAA 4081 Europa Pools	130	130	Operational Council leisure centre to be re-provided as part of wider town centre regeneration proposals to be included in initial development. Capacity and trajectory for 130 flats based on Muse submission reviewed by Barton Willmore with delivery in years 6 to 10 following relocation of leisure centre.
SHLAA 4082 Vue Cinema	110	110	Operational private commercial cinema to be re-provided as part of wider town centre regeneration proposals to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory for 110 flats based on Muse submission reviewed by Barton Willmore with delivery in years 6 to 10 following expiry of cinema lease.
SHLAA 0424 Europa Boulevard Car Park	70	70	Vacant cleared site to north of Conway Park Station in use as temporary car park. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory for 170 flats based on Muse submission reviewed by Barton Willmore with residual delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 2026 Treasury Building, Cleveland Street, Birkenhead	65	65	Occupied Council offices requiring staff relocation. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 60 flats and 5 houses reviewed by Barton Willmore with delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 0956 West of The Crown PH, Europa Boulevard	55	55	Vacant cleared site. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory for 55 flats based on Muse submission reviewed by Barton Willmore with delivery in years 6 to 10.

SHLAA 0957 South of Conway Park, Europa Boulevard	50	50	Vacant cleared site. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory for 50 flats based on Muse submission reviewed by Barton Willmore with delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 2023 Wallasey Town Hall South Annexe, Egremont	25	0	Occupied Council offices, with staff requiring relocation. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity based on Muse submission for 45 flats reviewed by Barton Willmore with residual delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 2036 Elgin Way Car Park, Birkenhead	25	25	Operational car park for Council offices (SHLAA 2026). No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 25 houses reviewed by Barton Willmore with delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 2008 Moreton Family Centre, Pasture Road	20	20	Vacant social services building currently in interim temporary use. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 60-bed extra care village reviewed by Barton Willmore with residual delivery in years 6 to 10 years.
SHLAA 1715 Land at Old Hall Road, Bromborough	0	6	Vacant reclaimed land identified for re-designation for residential development by Avison Young. No planning application yet submitted. Capacity of 76 dwellings based on 30dph, with residual delivery assumed in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 2007 Pasture Road, Moreton	18	0	Vacant grassed site adjacent to Moreton Key Town Centre. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 38 family houses reviewed by Barton Willmore. Currently designated as Urban Greenspace, which could delay delivery.
SHLAA 2069 Hinson Street Car Park	20	20	Operational public car park. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 20 town houses reviewed by Barton Willmore with delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 4083 Pilgrim Street Arts and Drama Centre, Birkenhead	0	15	No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Trajectory with delivery in years 6 to 10 based on Muse submission reviewed by Barton Willmore.
SHLAA 2016 Wilbraham Street Public Car Park, Birkenhead	0	15	No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Trajectory with delivery in years 6 to 10 based on Muse submission reviewed by Barton Willmore.
SHLAA 1908 Arrowe Hill Primary School, Woodchurch	0	5	Small redundant school buildings on backland site with limited access and capacity. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 5 family dwellings reviewed by Barton Willmore with delivery in years 11 to 15.
Total	588	586	

Table 6: Affordable Housing Programme	Current 2026 to 2030	Potential 2026 to 2030	NPPF Glossary - must be suitable with reasonable prospect will be available and viable at point envisaged
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SHLAA 1665 Former Rock Ferry High School, Ravenswood Avenue	128	0	Cleared, Council-owned site under offer to RSL with playing fields being retained on separate southern site. Application for 102 extra care flats, 76 family dwellings and conversion of Ravenswood to 8 flats submitted September 2019 (APP/19/01459) for completion by March 2022. Trajectory assumes grant of permission during 2019/20 with residual delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 1503 Former 23 to 37 Trafalgar Road, Egremont (combined with SHLAA 0457)	0	8	Council owned, cleared site, under offer to RP with vacant building to be demolished and potential CPO of adjacent site (SHLAA 0457, capacity=2) with unregistered ownership (8 to 12 months to complete), which could be accommodated as part of phased redevelopment programme. No planning application yet submitted or funding secured.
SHLAA 0648 Former 20 to 40 Borough Road, Seacombe	0	10	RSL owned, cleared former housing site with re-development programme currently constrained by late-opening public house. No current plans to bring forward. No planning application yet submitted or funding secured.
Total	128	18	Further sites will be expected to come forward but have not yet been identified

Table 7: New Ferry Regeneration	Current 2026 to 2030	Potential 2026 to 2030	NPPF Glossary - must be suitable with reasonable prospect will be available and viable at point envisaged
SHLAA 4079 Woodhead Street Public Car Park, New Ferry	45	45	Operational shopping centre car park. New Ferry Master Plan shows proposals for up to 26, 2-bed; 7, 3-bed; and 12, 1-bed mixed tenure housing units with a third of the site retained for car parking. Trajectory based on latest project information, which is still subject to public consultation.
SHLAA 4080 Former 56 to 66 Bebington Road and Olinda Street Public Car Park, New Ferry	23	23	Partially cleared site with some remaining vacant properties currently in private ownership. New Ferry Master Plan shows 16, 1-bed and 7, 2-bed mixed tenure housing units and 535sqm of new retail floorspace subject to final land assembly. Trajectory based on latest project information, which is still subject to public consultation.
SHLAA 1833 43 Bebington Road, New Ferry	11	11	Cleared site currently in private ownership. New Ferry Master Plan shows proposals for mixed uses including 9, 1-bed flats, 2, 2-bed flats and 473sqm of new retail floorspace. Trajectory based on latest project information, which is still subject to public consultation.
Total	79	79	Council has set aside £1.3 million to support acquisition of selected derelict and dilapidated properties in New Ferry.

Table 8: Other SHLAA 2019	Current 2026 to 2030	Potential 2026 to 2030	NPPF Glossary - must be suitable with reasonable prospect will be available and viable at point envisaged

SHLAA 4078 Hind Street Regeneration Area, Tranmere	200	580	Vacant reclaimed Council owned railway sidings and vacant cleared gas depot and former gas holders with some associated plant remaining, subject to emerging development agreement for large scale mixed-use development to south of Birkenhead Town Centre, which is unlikely to come forward until funding is secured. Requires new distributor road from A41 to Argyle Street roundabout using existing railway underpass, removal of Birkenhead Tunnel flyovers and remodelling of Birkenhead Tunnel approach roads plus potential treatment for ground conditions. Capacity and trajectory are currently tentative at 50 dwellings each year from 2026/27 with residual delivery in years 11 to 15. Scheme to include 580 dwellings is currently being worked up by Newbridge on behalf of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for grant bid and approval purposes.
SHLAA 0752 Woodside Regeneration Area, Chester Street, Birkenhead	120	120	Operational multi-unit business park, Ferry Terminal, public car park, bus station and bus layover, private car park and other land subject to initial development agreement with relevant landowners to assemble large waterfront regeneration site. May require relocation of the A41 and include adjacent Government office complex. Capacity and trajectory currently based on Growth Company estimate for potential mixed-use flatted development on Council owned sites. Capacity and trajectory are currently tentative with residual delivery in years 11 to 15. Final proposed capacity will be determined through updated Woodside Master Plan. Relocation of employment uses may also be required.
SHLAA 0478 Former Rose Brae, Church Street, Birkenhead	119	119	Vacant cleared waterfront site of former graving docks. Owned by RSL but not currently viable because of poor ground conditions. Capacity and trajectory currently based on Growth Company estimate for waterfront flatted development but site has now been deleted from Growth Company trajectory. Final proposed capacity will be determined through updated Woodside Master Plan which is ongoing.
SHLAA 2068 East of Typhoo, Moreton	50	0	Disused former company playing fields with willing landowner. Currently allocated as an Employment Development Site. Capacity based on DOR response by landowner for mixed residential and employment. Flood risk may need to be resolved before development can be permitted, which could delay delivery. Residual delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 0557 Land at Beaufort Road, Birkenhead	28	0	Vacant Council owned site under offer to developer partner with permission for 178 family homes approved 20/08/19 (APP/19/00564), supported by Homes England grant award. Conditions already being discharged. Residual delivery in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 4071 Kingsmead School, Meols	0	25	Subject to hybrid planning application for outline planning permission for sixth form block and full planning permission for new housing on school playing fields, awaiting decision (APP/19/00014).
SHLAA 3095 Greenfield Estate, Grange Road, West Kirby	25	0	Prominent green field site with woodland setting on main entrance to West Kirby previously thought to be subject to restrictive covenants but now in single ownership with existing tenanted residential properties, with residual delivery assumed in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 2047 215 to 223 Wallasey Village	10	10	Cleared site with outline application for 3 retail units and 10 flats approved 19/09/19 (OUT/18/01374).
SHLAA 0651 Rear of The Lighthouse PH, Wallasey Village	9	9	Site with old permission for 9 dwellings owned by pub chain now looking to dispose but towards the end of the first five years (24913 approved 1979).

SHLAA 3042 Rear of Majestic Wine, Column Road, West Kirby	3	3	Submitted to previous call for sites but no developer response this time round. Assumed to still be available, with possible completion in year 6 onwards
SHLAA 1109 276 Irby Road, Irby	1	1	Outline application for one dwelling approved 01/05/19 (OUT/19/00177)
Total	565	867	

Table 9: Other potentially deliverable pipeline sites	Current 2026 to 2030	Potential 2026 to 2030	Not in SHLAA 2019. NPPF Glossary - must be suitable with reasonable prospect will be available and viable at point envisaged
SHLAA 4084 Wirral Business Park, Arrowe Brook Road, Upton	0	111	Post-war advance factory subject to planning application awaiting determination for 127 dwellings (APP/19/00315). Trajectory assumes potential for permission to be granted in December 2019 with residual delivery in years 6 to 10. Relocation of employment uses may also be required.
Total	0	111	

Table 10: Other potentially deliverable sites	Current 2026 to 2030	Potential 2026 to 2030	Not in SHLAA 2019. NPPF Glossary - Must be available now, in a suitable location now and delivered within 5 years
Wilkie's Lesiure, Marine Promenade, New Brighton	0	120	Amusement arcade proposed to be replaced with 100-bed hotel and 120 flats. Planning application expected in May 2020 (Viking), with delivery assumed in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 2072 Vacant Land at Prices Way, Bromborough	0	58	Remaining part of employment area agreed as part of previous mixed used permission on land adjacent to the River Dibbin, with developer interest for further housing. Draft development scheme and trajectory provided by Avison Young. No planning application yet submitted. Flood risk would need resolving before permission could be granted.
SHLAA 4012 Land at Southwood Road, Bromborough	0	23	Vacant land adjacent to Riverside Office Park with willing landowner, identified for re-designation for residential development by Avison Young. No planning application yet submitted. Capacity of 85 dwellings based on 30dph, with residual delivery assumed in years 6 to 10.
SHLAA 4021/4023 Former D1 Oils, Dock Road South, Bromborough	0	450	Former chemical factory and expansion land undergoing clearance, with planning application for up to 1,350 dwellings in preparation with possible completions in year 6 onwards and residual delivery in years 11 to 15, with two developers assumed.
Total	0	651	Further sites are expected to be added within this period subject to final reporting

Wirral Local Plan 2030 - 2035 Draft Housing Trajectory (Part 3: Years 11 to 15)

Table 1: Summary Housing Need

Local Housing Need	Dwellings	Dwellings	
Standard Method Calculation for 2019	4,000	4,000	800 pa based on ten year average household growth (700) and latest published median affordability ratio of 6.28 (2018)
20% buffer from Housing Delivery Test	-400	-400	Based on Housing Delivery Test result (October 2018), with half of 20% rolled forward to first five years from years 11 to 15.
Forecast Demolitions	250	250	50 pa based on average of previous recorded demolitions over last five years subject to annually reported monitoring results from 2014/15 to 2018/19
Total Required	3,850	3,850	

Table 2: Summary of Potential Year 11 to 15 Supply (April 2030 onwards)

	Current 2031 to 2035	Potential 2031 to 2035	
A-Land with Planning Permission (see Table 3)	0	0	Sites with planning permission which are expected to deliver completions during years 11 to 15.
B-Other Committed Sites (awaiting pp/ programme):			
Wirral Waters (see Table 4)	1,000	1,000	Includes sites without detailed planning permission where no detailed programme is yet available
Wirral Growth Company (see Table 5)	110	140	Subject to formal confirmation of initial programme in January 2020. Additional sites are expected to be added in further rounds of land release.
Affordable homes programme (See Table 6)	0	12	Sites with or expected to obtain Homes England Funding Support
New Ferry Regeneration (see Table 7)	0	0	Sites with or expected to obtain Homes England Funding Support
C-Other potentially deliverable sites (Years 11 to 15)			
Other SHLAA 2019 Sites (see Table 8)	400	250	Other sites currently in SHLAA 2019, expected to obtain permission and deliver new-build dwellings in years 11 to 15
ELOS Avison Young Sites (see Table 9)	0	828	Sites identified for potential re-designation for housing development subject to further confirmation. Additional sites are expected to be identified subject to final reporting
Sub Total	1,510	2,230	
D-Allowances			Data subject to annually reported monitoring results
Conversion and change of use	400	400	NPPF paragraph 70 - must be realistic and subject to compelling evidence of reliable source of supply - 80 pa based on average of recorded delivery over last 10 years 2009/10 to 2018/19
New Build windfalls	350	350	NPPF paragraph 70 - must be realistic and subject to compelling evidence of reliable source of supply - 70 pa based on average recorded delivery since first SHLAA in April 2008 up to end of 2018/19
Empty Homes	400	400	NPPG - to be included must not already be counted as part of the existing stock to avoid double counting - assumed future annual delivery of 80 pa subject to ongoing interventions and support programme, recommended by ARUP for years 11 to 15.
Sub Total for Allowances	1,150	1,150	
Total Potential Supply (Years 11 to 15)	2,660	3,380	
Balance	-1,190	-470	Total Potential Supply less Total Required (subject to assumptions set out in tables)

Table 3: Land with Planning Permission for New Build Dwellings at April 2019 with completions from 2031 to 2035	Current 2031 to 2035	Potential 2031 to 2035	All sites subject to annually reported monitoring results. Data amended for SHLAA questionnaire returns and viability in Baseline Viability Report 2018.
Full permission (Small Sites<10)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - not major development and have planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Full permission (Majors<50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Full Permission (Large Sites>50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Full permission (Strategic Sites>500)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Outline permission (Small Sites<10)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - not major development and have planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Outline permission (Majors<50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - only where clear evidence of completions, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Outline permission (Large Sites>50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - only where clear evidence of completions, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Outline permission (Strategic Sites>500)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - only where clear evidence of completions, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Reserved matters (Small Sites<10)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - not major development and have planning permission, , completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Reserved matters (Majors<50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Reserved matters (Large Sites>50)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Reserved matters (Strategic Sites>500)	0	0	NPPF Glossary - all sites with detailed planning permission, completions within years 6 to 10 only.
Total With New Build Permission	0	0	

Table 4: Wirral Waters (Strategic Site)	Current 2031 to 2035	Potential 2031 to 2035	NPPF Glossary - must be suitable with reasonable prospect will be available and viable at point envisaged
SHLAA 0755 Wirral Waters - Vittoria Studios	500	470	Occupied dockside site with no developer or scheme yet available. Further information required on future development programme. Lower trajectory is based on landowners submitted estimates with residual delivery in years 11 to 15, subject to market demand. Relocation of employment uses may also be required.
SHLAA 0753 Wirral Waters - Marina View	500	530	Occupied dockside site with no developer or scheme yet available. Further information required on future development programme. Higher trajectory is based on landowners submitted estimates with residual delivery in years 11 to 15, subject to market demand. Relocation of employment uses may also be required.
SHLAA 0754 Wirral Waters - Sky City	0	0	Occupied dockland site with no developer or scheme yet available. No information yet provided by landowner. Relocation of employment uses may also be required.
Total	1,000	1,000	Further capacity may be able to come forward subject to market demand and progress of earlier schemes

Table 5: Wirral Growth Company	Current 2031 to 2035	Potential 2031 to 2035	NPPF Glossary - must be suitable with reasonable prospect will be available and viable at point envisaged
SHLAA 1620 Car Park, West of 22 Lorn Street, Birkenhead	50	50	Cleared site currently used as Council employees car park. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 50 flats reviewed by Barton Willmore with delivery in years 11 to 15.
SHLAA 2002 Duncan Street Car Park, Hamilton Square, Birkenhead	20	20	Public Car Park in Hamilton Square Conservation Area. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 20 flats reviewed by Barton Willmore with delivery in years 11 to 15.
SHLAA 2014 Conway Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead	40	40	Operational Council Office and One Stop Shop. Grade II Listed Building. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Capacity and trajectory based on Muse submission for 40 flats reviewed by Barton Willmore with delivery in years 11 to 15.
SHLAA 2013 Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead	0	30	Operational Council Office. No application yet submitted but to be included in initial development programme. Trajectory with delivery in years 11 to 15 based on Muse submission with capacity still to be reviewed by Barton Willmore.
Total	110	140	Further sites will be expected to come forward but have not yet been identified

Table 6: Affordable Housing Programme	Current 2031 to 2035	Potential 2031 to 2035	NPPF Glossary - must be suitable with reasonable prospect will be available and viable at point envisaged
SHLAA 1691 Former Brooklands, Birkenhead	0	12	Cleared, former housing site owned by RP will intention to redevelop in longer term.
Total	0	12	Further sites will be expected to come forward but have not yet been identified

Table 7: New Ferry Regeneration	Current 2031 to 2035	Potential 2031 to 2035	NPPF Glossary - must be suitable with reasonable prospect will be available and viable at point envisaged
Total	0	0	No schemes are currently expected to come forward within years 11 to 15

Table 8: Other SHLAA 2019	Current 2031 to 2035	Potential 2031 to 2035	NPPF Glossary - must be suitable with reasonable prospect will be available and viable at point envisaged
SHLAA 4078 Hind Street, Tranmere	250	0	Vacant reclaimed Council owned railway sidings and vacant cleared gas depot and former gas holders with some associated plant remaining, subject to emerging development agreement for large scale mixed-use development to south of Birkenhead Town Centre, which is unlikely to come forward until funding is secured. Requires new distributor road from A41 to Argyle Street roundabout using existing railway underpass, removal of Birkenhead Tunnel flyovers and remodelling of Birkenhead Tunnel approach roads plus potential treatment for ground conditions. Capacity and trajectory are currently tentative at 50 dwellings each year from 2026/27 with residual delivery in years 11 to 15. Scheme to include 580 dwellings is currently being worked up by Newbridge on behalf of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for grant bid and approval purposes.

SHLAA 0752 Land at Woodside, Chester Street, Birkenhead	150	250	Operational multi-unit business park, Ferry Terminal, public car park, bus station and bus layover, private car park and other land subject to initial development agreement with relevant landowners to assemble large waterfront regeneration site. May require relocation of the A41 and include adjacent Government office complex. Capacity and trajectory currently based on Growth Company estimate for potential mixed-use flatted development on Council owned sites. Capacity and trajectory are currently tentative with residual delivery in years 11 to 15. Final proposed capacity will be determined through updated Woodside Master Plan. Relocation of employment uses may also be required.
Total	400	250	

Table 9: Other potentially deliverable sites	Current 2031 to 2035	Potential 2031 to 2035	Not in SHLAA 2019. NPPF Glossary - Must be available now, in a suitable location now and delivered within 5 years
SHLAA 4021/4023 Former D1 Oils, Dock Road South, Bromborough	0	500	Former chemical factory and expansion land undergoing clearance, with planning application for up to 1,350 dwellings in preparation with residual delivery in years 11 to 15 and following, with two developers assumed.
SHLAA 0756 Former Northern Case Supplies, Birkenhead Road, Seacombe	0	172	Cleared former pallet depot, now relocated. Part of Birkenhead Dock Estate adjacent and overlooking Wirral Waters at Tower Road roundabout. Draft development scheme and trajectory provided by Avison Young but not yet confirmed with landowner. No planning application yet submitted
SHLAA 0769 Land at Kelvin Road, Seacombe	0	156	Cleared former car sales area for sale or let with operational hand car wash. Adjacent and overlooking Wirral Waters at Tower Road roundabout. Draft development scheme and trajectory provided by Avison Young but not yet confirmed with landowner. No planning application yet submitted
Total	0	828	Further sites are expected to be added within this period subject to final reporting

APPENDIX 4.5

Wirral Local Plan housing trajectory

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

								Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			
Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/ Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	NOTES
Urban SHLAA Sites In April 2019 Housing Trajectory														
								Data included in Table 4.1			Data included in Table 4.2			
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2081	500	PDL	Major - Wirral Waters	Legacy	Peel	Yes	240	260	0	500	0	0	DLS/18/00 715
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2080	150	PDL	Major - Wirral Waters	Tower Road	Peel	Yes	0	150	0	150	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2079	34	PDL	Major - Wirral Waters	Belong	Peel	Yes	34	0	0	34	0	0	APP/18/0 0470
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2078	120	PDL	Major - Wirral Waters	Urban Splash 1	Peel	Yes	30	90	0	120	0	0	APP/19/0 1061
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2082	230	PDL	Major - Wirral Waters	Urban Splash 2	Peel	Yes	0	230	0	230	0	0	
Proposed Mixed Use Allocation	SHLAA 0753	1795	PDL	Major - Wirral Waters	Marina View	Peel	Yes	0	200	500	0	1325	470	
Proposed Mixed Use Allocation	SHLAA 0755	1705	PDL	Major - Wirral Waters	Vittoria Studios	Peel	Yes	0	200	500	0	1175	530	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0424	170	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Europa Car Park	Muse	Yes	100	70	0	100	70	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0957	50	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Europa South	Muse	Yes	0	50	0	0	50	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0956	55	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Europa North	Muse	Yes	0	55	0	0	55	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1827	69	PDL/GF	Major - Growth Company	Foxfield	Muse	Yes	69	0	0	69	0	0	

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/ Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			NOTES
								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1610	60	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Civic Way	Muse	Yes	60	0	0	60	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2008	60	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Moreton Family Centre	Muse	Yes	40	20	0	40	20	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2007	38	GF	Major - Growth Company	Pasture Road	Muse	Yes	20	18	0	38	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1974	20	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Eastham Youth Centre	Muse	Yes	20	0	0	20	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2010	8	PDL	Minor - Growth Company	Knutsford Road	Muse	Yes	8	0	0	8	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2022	19	PDL	Major - Growth Company	North Annexe	Muse	Yes	19	0	0	19	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2023	45	PDL	Major - Growth Company	South Annexe	Muse	Yes	20	25	0	45	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1665	178	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Rock Ferry High	Torus	Yes	50	128	0	178	0	0	APP/19/0 1459
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0475	32	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	New Street	RSL	Yes	32	0	0	32	0	0	APP/19/0 0373
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1472	30	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Fernleigh	Prima	Yes	30	0	0	30	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1850	28	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Lyndale	RSL	Yes	28	0	0	28	0	0	APP/18/0 1632
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2034	12	GF	Major - Affordable	Delamere Ave	RSL	Yes	12	0	0	12	0	0	APP/18/0 0132

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/ Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			NOTES
								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
				Housing Programme										
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2035	11	GF	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Paton Close	RSL	Yes	11	0	0	11	0	0	APP/18/0 0841
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0766	10	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Greenacres	RSL	Yes	10	0	0	10	0	0	APP/19/0 1047
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0557	178	PDL	Major	Beaufort Road	Keepmoat	Yes	150	28	0	178	0	0	APP/19/0 0564
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2068	100	GF	Major	Typhoo	Private	Yes	50	50	0	100	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2006	87	GF	Major	Rear of Gibson House	Numast	Yes	87	0	0	87	0	0	APP/18/0 0786
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2005	15	PDL	Major	Gibson House	Numast	Yes	15	0	0	15	0	0	APP/18/0 0786
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 3095	50	GF	Major	Greenfield Estate	Private	Yes	25	25	0	50	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4072	26	PDL	Major	Trafalgar Garage	Private	Yes	26	0	0	26	0	0	OUT/18/0 1329
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1832	25	PDL	Major	Rock Station PH	Private	Yes	25	0	0	25	0	0	APP/17/0 1606
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0916	17	GF	Major	Grange Hill Farm	Private	Yes	17	0	0	17	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4074	15	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Pensby Hall Residential Home	Torus	Yes	15	0	0	15	0	0	APP/19/0 0096

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

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								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4014	15	PDL	Major	The Stirrup PH	Private/RS L	Yes	15	0	0	46	0	0	APP/19/0 0063
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0689	12	PDL	Major	Gladstone Liberals	Private	Yes	12	0	0	12	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1171	12	PDL	Major	Egerton Street Play Area	Private	Yes	12	0	0	12	0	0	APP/18/0 0889
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2042	14	PDL	Small	Ashton Court	Private	Yes	14	0	0	14	0	0	
Proposed Mixed Use Allocation	SHLAA 3029	7	PDL	Small	Silverdale Medical	Private	Yes	7	0	0	7	0	0	APP/19/0 0802
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0218	5	PDL	Small	Woodchurch Road (65 to 67)	Private	Yes	5	0	0	5	0	0	APP/18/0 1499
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1301	1	PDL	Small	1 Cholmondeley Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1409	1	PDL	Small	22A Shaw Street	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/19/0 0173
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4081	130	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Europa Pools	Muse	Yes	0	130	0	0	130	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4082	110	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Vue Cinema	Muse	Yes	0	110	0	0	110	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2069	20	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Hinson Street CP	Muse	Yes	0	20	0	0	20	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2026	65	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Treasury Building	Muse	Yes	0	65	0	0	65	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2036	25	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Elgin Way CP	Muse	Yes	0	25	0	0	25	0	

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/ Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			NOTES
								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4080	23	PDL	Major - New Ferry	Olinda Street	Homes England	Yes	0	23	0	0	23	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1833	11	PDL	Major - New Ferry	Bebington Road	Homes England	Yes	0	11	0	0	11	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4079	45	PDL	Major - New Ferry	Woodhead Street CP	Homes England	Yes	0	45	0	0	45	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0752	507	PDL	Major - Woodside	Woodside	Private	Yes	0	120	150	0	120	250	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0478	119	PDL	Major - Rose Brae	Rose Brae	RSL	Yes	0	119	0	0	119	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4078	580	PDL	Major - Hind Street	Hind Street	WBC/Nat Grid	Yes	0	200	250	0	580	0	
Proposed Mixed Use Allocation	SHLAA 2047	10	PDL	Major	Wallasey Village	Private	Yes	0	10	0	0	10	0	OUT/18/0 1374
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0651	9	PDL	Small	Lighthouse PH	Private	Yes	0	9	0	0	9	0	24913 (1979)
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1109	1	GF	Small	276 Irby Road	Private	Yes	0	1	0	0	1	0	OUT/10/0 0177
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 3042	3	PDL	Small	Majestic Wine	Private	Yes	0	3	0	0	3	0	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1620	50	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Lorn Street	Muse	Yes	0	0	50	0	0	50	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2014	40	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Conway Building	Muse	Yes	0	0	40	0	0	40	
Proposed Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2002	20	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Duncan St CP	Muse	Yes	0	0	20	0	0	20	

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

								Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			
Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	NOTES
								1310	2490	1510	2345	3966	1360	
Urban Sites With Planning Permission Not Yet Started at April 2019														
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 699300	217	PDL/GF	Major - Planning Permission	Acre Lane	Morris Homes	Yes	146	71	0	146	71	0	APP/17/0 1295
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 702900	10	PDL/GF	Major - Planning Permission	26 Cornelius Drive	Private	Yes	10	0	0	10	0	0	OUT/15/0 0249
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 685200	299	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Former Burtons Foods	Bellway	Yes	192	107	0	192	107	0	APP/16/0 0108
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 103100	28	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Former La Banque PH	Private	Yes	28	0	0	28	0	0	OUT/17/0 1035
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 612000	28	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Former Seacombe Ferry Hotel	Private	Yes	28	0	0	28	0	0	APP/18/0 0819
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 661200	23	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Love Lane	Private	Yes	23	0	0	23	0	0	APP/17/0 1567
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 702000	18	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Ferny Brow Road	Private	Yes	18	0	0	18	0	0	APP/18/0 1508
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 690300	14	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Old Tavern Club	Private	Yes	14	0	0	14	0	0	OUT/18/0 0047
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 693000	14	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	165 Bedford Road	Private	Yes	14	0	0	14	0	0	APP/17/0 0823
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 701500	13	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Former Riverside Day Centre	RSL	Yes	13	0	0	13	0	0	APP/18/0 1423
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 674900	12	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Rosebrae Nursing Home	Private	Yes	12	0	0	12	0	0	APP/18/0 0519
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 610600	10	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Darlington Street	RSL	Yes	10	0	0	10	0	0	APP/17/0 1330

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Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			NOTES
								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 665400	10	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	31 - 33 Palm Grove	Private	Yes	10	0	0	10	0	0	OUT/15/0 1491
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 698300	10	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Church Street/Liscard Road	RSL	Yes	10	0	0	10	0	0	APP/18/0 1077
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 703800	35	GF	Major - Planning Permission	Fishers Lane	RSL	Yes	35	0	0	35	0	0	APP/18/0 1266
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 671800	10	GF	Major - Planning Permission	Leasowe Road	Private	Yes	10	0	0	10	0	0	OUT/15/0 0977
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 695300	4	PDL/GF	Small - Planning Permission	45 Grange Cross Lane	Private	Yes	4	0	0	4	0	0	APP/18/0 1564
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 681300	2	PDL/GF	Small - Planning Permission	Rosemary Cottage	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/18/0 0474
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 698900	9	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	1-7 Leasowe Road	Private	Yes	9	0	0	9	0	0	APP/18/0 0550
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 699600	9	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Embees	Private	Yes	9	0	0	9	0	0	APP/18/0 0982
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 645500	8	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	15 New Chester Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 1089
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 680600	8	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Blue Anchor	Private	Yes	8	0	0	8	0	0	APP/17/0 0744
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 698000	8	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Oakdale Road	Private	Yes	8	0	0	8	0	0	OUT/18/0 0650
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 691500	7	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Mallowdale Close	RSL	Yes	7	0	0	7	0	0	APP/18/0 0445
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 632800	6	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Grange Villa	Private	Yes	6	0	0	6	0	0	APP/18/0 1016

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			NOTES
								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 678700	6	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	The Overchurch	Private	Yes	6	0	0	6	0	0	APP/17/0 0592
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 679000	6	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Former Dave Pluck	Private	Yes	6	0	0	6	0	0	APP/17/0 0479
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 638600	4	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Stringhey Road	RSL	Yes	6	0	0	6	0	0	APP/17/0 1062
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 684300	4	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	2 Beryl Road	Private	Yes	4	0	0	4	0	0	APP/17/0 1394
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 529900	3	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	38 Mount Pleasant Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	OUT/16/0 0562
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 686400	3	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	216 Greasby Road	Private	Yes	4	0	0	4	0	0	OUT/17/0 1419
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 678100	2	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Co Operative Pharmacy	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/17/0 0218
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 680100	2	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	7 Leasowe Road	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/17/0 0757
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 680400	2	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	The Forge	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/17/0 0028
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 683200	2	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Braeside	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/17/0 1146
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 699000	2	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Elrig	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/18/0 1415
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 667500	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	20 Village Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 0873
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 677900	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	The George	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 0546

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								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 679100	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	24 Acres Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 0280
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 679200	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Whytethorne	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 1500
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 681900	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Bright Smiles	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 0353
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 682900	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	43 Walker Street	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 1232
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 693500	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Woodcote	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 0737
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 701700	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Glenbank	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 0859
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 686700	9	GF	Small - Planning Permission	The Ship Inn	Private	Yes	9	0	0	9	0	0	APP/17/0 1009
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 691600	9	GF	Small - Planning Permission	168 Bolton Road East	Private	Yes	9	0	0	9	0	0	APP/18/0 0431
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 545600	8	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Copper Beech	Private	Yes	4	0	0	4	0	0	APP/17/0 1006
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 642100	6	GF	Small - Planning Permission	8 Rone Close	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 0579
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 090200	5	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Mill Road/Spital Road	Private	Yes	5	0	0	5	0	0	APP/18/0 0177
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 691100	5	GF	Small - Planning Permission	St Peters Mews	Private	Yes	5	0	0	5	0	0	APP/18/0 0379
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 403000	4	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Seven Acres Lane	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	DLS/16/01 342

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								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 683800	4	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Spital Railway Station	Private	Yes	4	0	0	4	0	0	OUT/16/0 0816
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 663000	3	GF	Small - Planning Permission	106 Allport Road	Private	Yes	3	0	0	3	0	0	OUT/16/0 0173
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 671000	3	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Abbey Grange	Private	Yes	3	0	0	3	0	0	OUT/16/0 1421
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 679500	3	GF	Small - Planning Permission	7 & 9 West Road	Private	Yes	3	0	0	3	0	0	OUT/16/0 1466
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 683400	3	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Pipistrelle Rise	Private	Yes	4	0	0	4	0	0	APP/16/0 0663
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 672800	2	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Redcliffe	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/16/0 1051
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 691900	2	GF	Small - Planning Permission	12 Grammar School Lane	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/18/0 0380
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 692700	2	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Drayton	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/18/0 0638
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 697500	2	GF	Small - Planning Permission	St Nicholas Vicarage	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/18/0 0286
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 697600	2	GF	Small - Planning Permission	29 & 31 Norwich Drive	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/18/0 1246
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 703600	2	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Sandhey Road	Private	Yes	2	0	0	2	0	0	APP/18/0 1422
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 123200	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	The Old Forge	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	OUT/17/0 1572
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 241500	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	48 Beryl Road	Private	Yes	3	0	0	3	0	0	APP/16/0 1271

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								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 114800	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Oak Cottage	Private	Yes	8	0	0	8	0	0	OUT/17/0 1551
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 618600	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Winkie Wood	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 0537
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 635700	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	42 Sparks Lane	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	DLS/17/00 232
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 636500	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	71 Bebington Road	Private	Yes	4	0	0	4	0	0	APP/17/0 0333
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 642300	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	53 Birch Avenue	Private	Yes	8	0	0	8	0	0	APP/18/0 1285
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 646800	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	65 Bidston Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	DLS/18/00 078
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 647800	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Grange Old Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 1546
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 652000	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	133 Kings Drive,	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 1417
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 654100	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Springfield	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 1044
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 655300	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	83 Saughall Massie Lane	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 1581
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 656700	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Little Orchard	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 1033
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 663400	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	440 Pensby Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 1119
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 664100	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	23 Nursery Close	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 0479

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								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 664300	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Ashbourne House	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 0301
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 664900	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	1 The Ridings	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 0740
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 665200	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Priory Cottage	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 0322
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 666300	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Heath Top	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	OUT/16/0 0881
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 667900	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Moonshine	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	OUT/16/0 1146
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 669000	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	2 Bryanston Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 1240
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 669400	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	230 Greasby Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 1365
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 670900	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	5 Uplands Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 0099
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 671500	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	5 Birchmere	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 1020
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 672400	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	White Gables	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 0667
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 673700	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	346 Telegraph Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 1578
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 674400	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	2 Girtrell Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 0693
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 676700	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Long Hay	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	OUT/17/0 0036

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/ Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			NOTES
								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 677800	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	30 Shore Drive	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 0304
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 678400	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	62 Whitfield Lane	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 0522
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 679400	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	3 Dale Gardens	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/16/0 1089
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 682100	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Beechfield Close	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	OUT/17/0 0927
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 686100	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	50 Wellington Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 1516
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 688300	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Conifers	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	DLS/18/01 335
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 689300	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Parklands Drive	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 1511
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 693100	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Conifers	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 0753
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 694700	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Grangewood	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	OUT/17/0 0999
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 695000	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	The Paddock	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 0866
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 695200	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	2 Donne Avenue	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 0669
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 695800	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	3 Hillside Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 1026
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 695900	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	71 Dawstone Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	OUT/17/0 1474

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

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								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 696400	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Arrowcroft	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	OUT/18/0 1049
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 696900	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Heath Grange	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 0698
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 697200	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	11 Heygarth Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 1255
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 697300	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Stonehill	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 1078
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 697900	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	8 Netherton Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	OUT/18/0 1093
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 700400	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	13 Elm Terrace	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 1592
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 700700	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Intabene Manor	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 1297
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 701400	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Westgate	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/19/0 0004
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 701600	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Ha Pennyfield	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/18/0 1046
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 703000	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	89 Ridgemere Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 1145
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 703100	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Adj St Peters Primary School	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 0790
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 703200	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	2 Edinburgh Drive	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/17/0 0560
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 703300	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Wreckers Cottage	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/19/0 0071

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/ Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			NOTES
								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 703500	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	4 Hopfield Road	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	APP/19/0 0028
Proposed Housing Allocation	HLA 660000	1	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Foxearth	Private	Yes	1	0	0	1	0	0	OUT/15/0 0279
Excludes sites with permission in the Green Belt and sites where construction had already begun at April 2019								810	178	0	810	178	0	

Potential Additional Urban Housing Allocations Expected to Be Brought Forward

								Data included in Table 4.1			Data included in Table 4.2			
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1715	76	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Old Hall Road	Muse	No	0	0	0	70	6	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2013	30	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Hamilton Building	Muse	No	0	0	0	0	0	30	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1864	20	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Liscard Municipal	Muse	No	0	0	0	20	0	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4083	15	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Pilgrim Street Arts	Muse	No	0	0	0	0	15	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2016	15	PDL	Major - Growth Company	Wilbraham Street CP	Muse	No	0	0	0	0	15	0	n/a
Potential Mixed Use Allocation	SHLAA 0754	0	PDL	Major - Wirral Waters	Sky City	Peel	No	0	0	0	0	0	0	OUT/09/0 6509
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4085	83	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Sevenoaks Extra Care	Lovells	No	0	0	0	83	0	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 3039	50	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Crossways	RSL	No	0	0	0	50	0	0	n/a

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			NOTES
								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4089	14	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Wallasey RBL	RSL	No	0	0	0	14	0	0	APP/19/0 0888
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0763	12	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Nelson House	RSL	No	0	0	0	12	0	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1691	12	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Brooklands	RSL	No	0	0	0	0	0	12	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 3000	10	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Church Lane	RSL	No	0	0	0	10	0	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0468	10	PDL	Major - Affordable Housing Programme	Borough Road (22 to 40)	RSL	No	0	0	0	0	10	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4021	1,350	PDL	Major	Dock Road South	Private	No	0	0	0	0	450	500	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0756	172	PDL	Major	Northern Case	Peel	No	0	0	0	0	0	172	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0769	156	PDL	Major	Kelvin Road	Private	No	0	0	0	0	0	156	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4084	127	PDL	Major	Wirral Business Park	Bellway	No	0	0	0	16	111	0	APP/19/0 0315
Potential Mixed Use Allocation	SHLAA 4086	120	PDL	Major	New Palace Amusements	Viking	No	0	0	0	0	120	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2072	108	PDL	Major	Prices Way	Persimmon	No	0	0	0	50	58	0	n/a

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/ Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			NOTES
								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4012	85	GF	Major	Southwood Road	Private	No	0	0	0	62	23	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2050	50	PDL	Major	Clatterbridge Hospital (GB)	Homes England	No	0	0	0	50	0	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4087	15	PDL	Major	Dodds Builders Merchants Kingsmead	Private	No	0	0	0	15	0	0	APP/18/0 1284
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4071	25	GF	Major	Kingsmead	Forth Homes	No	0	0	0	0	25	0	APP/19/0 0014
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1503	8	PDL	Small - Affordable Housing Programme	Trafalgar Road	RSL	No	0	0	0	0	8	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 4088	6	PDL	Small - Affordable Housing Programme	Maple Grove	RSL	No	0	0	0	6	0	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1908	5	PDL	Small - Growth Company	Arrowe Hill Primary	Muse	No	0	0	0	0	5	0	n/a
								0	0	0	458	846	870	
Other Sites Suitable But Currently Uncertain														
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 2051	24	PDL	Major	Sycamore Lodge	Private	No	0	0	0	0	24	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0974	20	PDL	Major	Oxton Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	20	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 3001	18	PDL	Major	Birch Tree PH	Private	No	0	0	0	0	18	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0463	21	PDL	Major - Affordable	Former Seacombe House	RSL	No	0	0	0	0	21	0	n/a

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

Status	Site Ref	Indicative Dwelling Capacity	Previously Developed/Greenfield	Category	Scheme Name	Developer (if known)	Within April 2019 Trajectory	Housing Trajectory at April 2019			Potential Future Position			NOTES
								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
				Housing Programme										
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0517	16	PDL/GF	Major - Lapsed Permission	Ferny Brow Road	RSL	No	0	0	0	0	16	0	APP/11/0 1514
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0449	34	PDL	Major - Lapsed Permission	North of Black Horse PH	Private	No	0	0	0	0	34	0	OUT/06/0 6563
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0758	28	PDL	Major - Lapsed Permission	Chester Street	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	28	APP/11/0 0964
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1621	23	PDL	Major - Lapsed Permission	Howson Street	Private	No	0	0	0	0	23	0	DLS/08/06 932
Potential Mixed Use Allocation	SHLAA 0020	16	PDL	Major - Lapsed Permission	Former Grand Hotel	Private	No	0	0	0	0	16	0	OUT/06/0 6897
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1127	12	PDL	Major - Lapsed Permission	Rear of St Johns	Private	No	0	0	0	0	12	0	APP/06/0 6002
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1358	11	PDL	Major - Lapsed Permission	Pearson Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	11	OUT/07/0 6068
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0255	10	PDL	Major - Lapsed Permission	Hassal Road	Private	No	0	0	0	0	10	0	OUT/06/0 7461
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1362	10	PDL	Major - Lapsed Permission	Beaconsfield Road	Private	No	0	0	0	0	10	0	APP/08/0 5006
Potential Mixed Use Allocation	HLA 691300	132	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Former Rank Bingo	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	132	APP/16/0 1088
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 671300	42	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Former Open Arms PH	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	42	APP/16/0 1248
Potential Mixed	HLA 549700	38	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Former Rocky's Gym	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	38	OUT/13/0 1426

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								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Use Allocation														
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 682500	20	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Land at Old Chester Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	20	APP/17/0 0946
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 667700	18	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Holt Road, Tranmere	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	18	APP/16/0 0685
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 586000	16	PDL	Major - Planning Permission	Former Livingstone PH	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	16	APP/15/0 1520
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 685500	39	GF	Major - Planning Permission	Former ESWA	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	39	APP/16/0 0732
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 703900	14	GF	Major - Planning Permission	Grasswood Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	14	APP/18/0 0884
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1280	8	PDL	Small	Dial Road	Private	No	0	0	0	8	0	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1513	4	PDL	Small	Bermuda Road	Private	No	0	0	0	0	4	0	OUT/11/0 0397
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 3035	5	PDL	Small - Affordable Housing Programme	Thorsway	RSL	No	0	0	0	0	5	0	n/a
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1030	9	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Grosvenor Buildings	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	9	OUT/98/0 6416
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0806	9	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	99 New Chester Road	Private	No	0	0	0	0	9	0	APP/11/0 0218
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1571	9	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Duncan Street	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	9	APP/08/0 5872
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1671	9	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	156 Bedford Road	Private	No	0	0	0	0	9	0	DLS/08/06 932

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								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1686	9	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Derby Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	9	APP/09/0 6551
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0111	8	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Devonshire Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	8	OUT/05/0 7336
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0785	8	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	101 New Chester Road	Private	No	0	0	0	0	8	0	APP/11/0 0591
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1129	8	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Mill Lane	Private	No	0	0	0	0	8	0	OUT/06/0 6564
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0047	7	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Hartismere Road	Private	No	0	0	0	0	7	0	OUT/06/0 6940
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1232	7	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	46 Egerton Park	Private	No	0	0	0	0	7	0	APP/01/0 6871
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1558	7	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Rock Lane West	Private	No	0	0	0	0	7	0	APP/12/0 1334
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1561	6	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Rodney Street	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	6	APP/08/0 5122
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0776	5	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Former Crooked Billet PH	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	5	APP/12/0 0117
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1070	3	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Littledale Road	Private	No	0	0	0	0	3	0	OUT/86/0 6318
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1267	3	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Mill Road	Private	No	0	0	0	0	3	0	APP/13/0 1375
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 0134	2	PDL	Small - Lapsed Permission	Brassey Street	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	2	OUT/05/0 7352
Potential Housing Allocation	SHLAA 1295	3	GF	Small - Lapsed Permission	Elm Avenue	Private	No	0	0	0	0	3	0	APP/96/0 6360

Summary of Wirral Local Plan Housing Trajectory (Regulation 18)

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								Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	Years 0 to 5	Years 6 to 10	Years 11 to 15	
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 680800	9	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Westbourne Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	9	APP/17/0 0926
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 673400	6	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Singelton Avenue	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	6	APP/16/0 1406
Potential Mixed Use Allocation	HLA 540500	3	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Atlantic House	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	3	APP/17/0 0343
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 602700	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	32 Harland Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	1	APP/17/0 0835
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 677200	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	Livingston Street	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	1	APP/17/0 0381
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 683500	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	107 Church Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	1	APP/17/0 0720
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 699700	1	PDL	Small - Planning Permission	7-9, Marquis Street	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	1	APP/18/0 0882
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 687500	2	GF	Small - Planning Permission	Hampden Grove	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	2	APP/17/0 1579
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 691200	2	GF	Small - Planning Permission	37 Clifton Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	2	APP/18/0 0041
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 700000	2	GF	Small - Planning Permission	98 Upton Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	2	APP/18/0 1320
Potential Housing Allocation	HLA 702700	2	GF	Small - Planning Permission	25 Slaty Road	Private	Currently Unviable	0	0	0	0	0	2	APP/17/0 1358
								0	0	0	8	257	456	

APPENDIX 4.6

Proposed urban employment allocations

Employment Land Study Reference	Housing Land Availability Assessment Reference	Proposed Designation	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
Birkenhead Commercial				
ELPS 030	SHLAA 0421	Proposed Employment Allocation	Twelve Quays - Tower Wharf	1.01
ELPS 031	SHLAA 0428	Proposed Employment Allocation	Twelve Quays - Morpeth Waterfront	1.36
ELPS 035	SHLAA 0420	Proposed Employment Allocation	Oakdale Road, Seacombe	0.78
ELPS 060	SHLAA 0425	Proposed Employment Allocation	Cleveland Street Warehouse, Birkenhead	0.98
ELPS 064	SHLAA 0549	Proposed Employment Allocation	Valley Road, Bidston	1.15
ELPS 079	SHLAA 0953	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral Waters - Bidston Dock	10.40
ELPS 081	SHLAA 2066	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral Waters - North of Beaufort Road	14.17
ELPS 087	SHLAA 2067	Proposed Mixed Use Employment Allocation	Wirral Waters - Tower Quay	0.40
ELPS 097	SHLAA 0429	Proposed Employment Allocation	Former Royal Swan PH, Seacombe	0.38
ELPS 110	SHLAA 0417	Proposed Employment Allocation	West Float IE, Seacombe	0.34
ELPS 123	SHLAA 0432	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wheatland Lane, Seacombe	0.50
ELPS 129	SHLAA 0434	Proposed Mixed Use Employment Allocation	Wirral Waters - Hydraulic Tower	0.83
ELPS 217	SHLAA 0587	Proposed Employment Allocation	Berner Street, Birkenhead	0.98
ELPS 229	SHLAA 0564	Proposed Employment Allocation	SMM Business Park, Seacombe	6.86
ELPS 232	SHLAA 0595	Proposed Employment Allocation	Lynas Street, Birkenhead	0.33
ELPS 265	SHLAA 0754	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral Waters - Sky City	5.39
ELPS 357	SHLAA 2058	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral Waters -Wallasey Bridge Road	9.33
ELPS 417	SHLAA 2064	Proposed Employment Allocation	Former Gas Holders, Wallasey	2.32
				57.51
Suburban Birkenhead				
ELPS 072	SHLAA 0401	Proposed Employment Allocation	Prenton Way, North Cheshire Trading Estate	0.57
				0.57
Bromborough and Eastham				
ELPS 006	SHLAA 0398	Proposed Employment Allocation	QE2 Dock, Eastham	6.57
ELPS 013	SHLAA 0400	Proposed Employment Allocation	North Road, Eastham	8.38
ELPS 017	SHLAA 1716	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral International - East of Tulip	1.91
ELPS 043	SHLAA 1717	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral International - East of Georgia Avenue	8.05
ELPS 050	SHLAA 1714	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral International - Commercial Road	0.97
ELPS 074	SHLAA 1715	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral International - Old Hall Road	4.62
ELPS 116	SHLAA 1718	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral International - Riverbank Road	1.01

ELPS 234	SHLAA 1724	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral International - Caldbeck Road	2.36
ELPS 242	SHLAA 1725	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral International - Slack Wood	1.35
ELPS 263	SHLAA 1727	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral International - Thermal Road	1.60
ELPS 330	SHLAA 1861	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral International - Plantation Road	2.18
ELPS 364	SHLAA 2061	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral International - Power Road	1.83
ELPS 415	SHLAA 2063	Proposed Employment Allocation	Wirral International - East of Riverbank Road	1.94
				42.77
Mid Wirral				
ELPS 008	SHLAA 2068	Proposed Employment Allocation	East of Typhoo, Moreton	1.93
ELPS 024	SHLAA 1978	Proposed Employment Allocation	West of Reeds Lane, Moreton	1.46
ELPS 070	SHLAA 0407	Proposed Employment Allocation	Peninsula Business Park, Moreton	1.13
ELPS 125	SHLAA 0411	Proposed Employment Allocation	Tarran Way North, Moreton	0.24
				4.76
				105.61

APPENDIX 4.7

Interim Green Belt Site Assessment

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A1.1 Identification of weakly performing parcels	1
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Draft

Interim Green Belt Site Assessment 2019

- 1.1. This Appendix sets out the background to the land areas identified under Green Belt Option 2A – Dispersed Green Belt Release (Table 4.5) and Green Belt Option 2B – Single Urban Extension (Table 4.6), included in section 4.4 and 4.5 of the Local Plan Issues and Options Report.
- 1.2. It comprises:
 - A short introductory commentary
 - A map of weakly performing parcels from the Green Belt Review 2019 (Map A)
 - A map of the weakly performing parcels with development potential for consideration for inclusion in the Local Plan (Map B)
 - A map of the initial urban extension options put forward for consideration for inclusion in the Local Plan (Map C)
 - A table showing the overall capacity of each site to accommodate new development (Table A)
 - A table showing the conclusions of the Council's Current Assessment (Table B)

Identification of weakly performing parcels

- 1.3. The Green Belt Review 2019 sets out the detailed methodology for identifying and assessing parcels of land in the Green Belt. It accords with national policy and guidance as well as good practice from elsewhere. The whole of the Wirral Green Belt was assessed at a strategic level using 'general areas'.
- 1.4. Smaller areas of land, termed 'parcels' were then identified adjoining the urban areas. Parcels were identified using durable boundaries, where possible, with less durable boundaries where necessary. The parcels were then assessed against each of the five purposes of Green Belt set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The methodology for this assessment and how the conclusions were derived in a transparent and consistent way is provided in the Green Belt Review 2019. This process identified weak parcels with potential for development (Map A).

How weakly performing parcel were selected for the Green Belt Options

- 1.5. The approach to identifying potential land for release from the Green Belt for development has used the following steps and assumptions:
 - Excluded land in flood zone 3
 - Excluded land with statutory environmental designations
 - Identified parcels as performing 'weakly' against Green Belt purposes
 - Prioritised weakly performing parcels with a known developer or landowner interest (to ensure evidence of developability)
- 1.6. More detailed assessments of the suitability, availability and achievability of the proposed areas of land will be undertaken at the next stage. This will

include further, more detailed assessments of transport, environmental, sustainability, heritage and other site constraints, which would also be used to inform the amount of development that would be appropriate within each area.

- 1.7. Further work will be required to determine the boundaries of any parts of the Green Belt to be released. Where there is a significant difference between the area of a site proposed by a developer or landowner and the parcel identified in the Green Belt Review 2019, further consideration will be required. This will include whether the full parcel is needed and developable or whether a suitable new boundary could be created to protect the retained Green Belt. New boundaries may seek to strengthen existing weak boundaries and/or look for opportunities for suitable 'rounding off' of existing urban areas.

How the Green Belt Options were refined

- 1.8. The Green Belt options have been refined by considering the likely development potential within each of the weakly performing parcels identified (Map B).
- 1.9. Two areas were initially identified for potential larger urban extensions - to the west of Barnston Road at Heswall; and to the east of the M53 motorway at Eastham (Map C refers).
- 1.10. The land at Eastham has been discounted because existing evidence suggests that significant parts of this area would not be suitable for development and that the remaining sites would be too small and too sparsely distributed to form a logical single urban extension of sufficient size. The basis for this conclusion is set out in Table A and Table B.

How the land areas identified in Table 4.5 and Table 4.6 have been selected

- 1.11. The Council has reviewed the weakly performing parcels containing submitted sites identified by Arup against the evidence that has so far been collected on each site as part of the preparation of the Local Plan. The interim conclusions and the information on which they have been based are set out in Table B attached, for further public comment.
- 1.12. Table B also illustrates the types of issues that will need to be addressed and the types of judgement that will have to be made, if not enough urban sites can be identified as 'deliverable' or 'developable' within the Plan period.
- 1.13. Further information is still being gathered. In some cases, this is because the Green Belt Review 2019 has identified a number of weakly performing parcels that are different to the areas previously identified by the Council for further investigation¹, which means that further information is still

¹ The previous findings of the Interim Green Belt Review 2018 can be viewed at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/core-strategy-local-plan-7>

required to be gathered on some of these sites.

- 1.14. This evidence will be completed early in 2020, as a series Addendums to previous existing studies, so that the same level of information is available for each of the weakly performing parcels before any final decisions are taken.
- 1.15. Table B also indicates where further, more detailed, site-specific studies will also be required before any of these sites could be confirmed for future allocation in the Local Plan. In most cases this involves a more detailed assessment of the likely impact on biodiversity; heritage assets, such as conservation areas, listed buildings and archaeology; and agricultural impacts and soil quality, to satisfy the requirements of national policy. The final list of sites and their capacity for future development, if they are needed, will therefore depend on the outcome of these further studies.

Next steps

- 1.16. Subject to further consideration of the urban land supply, the final site selection process, if needed, will be undertaken by specialist consultants for inclusion in the final draft Plan in June 2020.
 - 1.17. The final draft Plan and the evidence supporting it will be published for final public comment in July 2020 before being submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in November 2020.
-

Map A - Weakly Performing Parcels from The Green Belt Review

**Map B - Weakly performing parcels with
development potential for consideration for
inclusion in the Local Plan**



Notes

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- Key**
-  Council Boundary
 -  Weak Parcels with Submitted Sites
 -  Remaining Weak Parcels with no Submitted Sites
 -  Green Belt not in parcels



Drawing Title
Dispersed Release - Weak Parcels

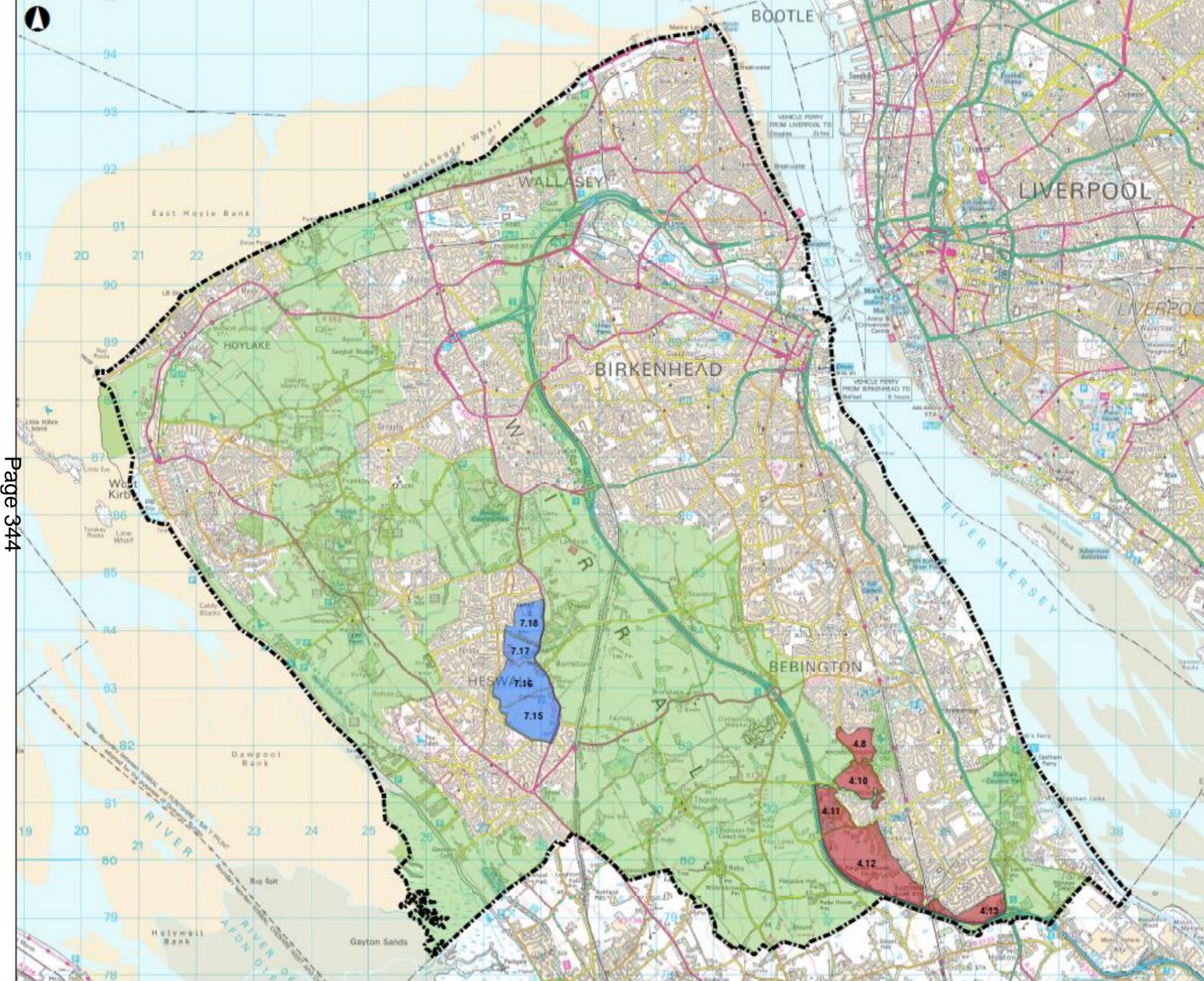
Scale at A3
1:60,000

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Name
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Rev
01

Map C - Initial Urban Extension Options Put Forward for Consideration for Inclusion in the Local Plan



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Key

- Council Boundary
- Eastern Urban Extension
- Western Urban Extension
- Green Belt not in parcels

Drawing Title
Green Belt Release Options
- Urban Extensions

Scale at A3
1:50,000

Suitability
Confidential

Name
DR-PL-0003

Rev
01

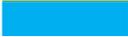
Table A - The Overall Capacity of Each Site to Accommodate New Development

Parcel Ref	Strategic Parcel Ref	Option	Parcel Area (ha)	Number of Dwellings (Based on 30dph)	Potential Developable Area (ha)	Gross to Net Ratio	Notes - Explanation of F, G and H
4.11	SP045	Eastern Urban Extension	35.30	141	4.71	75%	Environmental Constraints including ancient woodland, SSSI and WeBS Count, removed from potential developable area. SHLAA sites 0648 and 0649
4.12	SP046	Eastern Urban Extension	133.1	89	3.97	75%	Parcel includes locally designated nature reserves and priority habitats with an area of ancient woodland, removed from potential developable area. SHLAA site 4013
4.13	SP047, SP048, SP049	Eastern Urban Extension	34.3	368	20.45	60%	Woodland, open space with a public footpath and river, removed from potential developable area.
4.8	part of SP048	Eastern Urban Extension	26.4	387	21.51	60%	Environmental and Infrastructure constraints including woodland and listed buildings, removed from potential developable area. SHLAA site 1930
4.10	SP044	Eastern Urban Extension	37.5	409	22.72	60%	Environmental constraints within parcel, removed from potential developable area.
7.15	part of SP062	Western Urban Extension	66.1	2258	136.06	60%	Ribbon development and woodland, removed from potential developable area.
7.16	part of SP062	Western Urban Extension	52.0				
7.17	part of SP062	Western Urban Extension	22.0				

7.18	SP061	Western Urban Extension	35.5	326	10.85	60%	Ribbon development and a reservoir, removed from potential developable area.
4.6	SP040	Dispersed	14.1	195	12.66	60%	SHLAA site 1942
4.8	part of SP048	Dispersed	21.5	387	21.51	60%	Environmental and Infrastructure constraints including woodland and listed buildings, removed from potential developable area. SHLAA site 1930
4.11	SP045	Dispersed	34.5	141	4.71	75%	Environmental Constraints including ancient woodland, SSSI and WeBS Count, removed from potential developable area. SHLAA sites 0648 and 0649
4.13	SP047, SP048, SP049	Dispersed	34.3	368	12.27	60%	Woodland, open space with a public footpath and river, removed from potential developable area.
5.8	SP005A	Dispersed	1.83	47	1.74	90%	SHLAA site 0740
5.9	SP004A, part of SP003	Dispersed	12.4	193	8.56	75%	SHLAA site 0925
6.15	SP013	Dispersed	37.0	261	17.38	60%	Parcel includes a protected woodland. SHLAA site 4056. Dwelling number may be reduced to 261 due to potential landscape constraints as the parcel is on a slope.
7.11	SP071	Dispersed	28.4	337	18.71	60%	Parcel includes a public park and football grounds, removed from potential developable area.
7.18	SP061	Dispersed	36.2	326	18.09	60%	Ribbon development and a reservoir, removed from potential developable area.

7.26	SP059, SP059B, SP059C, SP059D, SP059E	Dispersed	96.6	1390	77.21	60%	Part of site is within the WeBS Count. SHLAA site 1775 (SP059E). Parcel is on a rising slope and therefore may have landscape implications. Potential rounding off of parcel is SHLAA sites 1775, 1764, 1765 and 1766 which totals 133.
7.27	SP060	Dispersed	62.8	1016	56.42	60%	Potential landscape impact. Parcel includes woodland and fields, removed from potential developable area.
4.18	part of SP052, SP053, SP054	Dispersed	41.8	278	16.47	60%	Parcel includes golf course, partially (9 holes) removed from potential developable area and within COMAH zone. SHLAA site 4051.
5.13	SP007	Dispersed	44.8	697	38.4	60%	Existing development within parcel.
7.5	SP104	Dispersed	23.4	221	12.26	60%	Potential impact from close to WeBS Count. Woodland within parcel.
7.19	part of SP065	Dispersed	6.9	155	5.18	75%	Woodland within parcel.
7.25	part of SP009	Dispersed	11.8	92	4.89	75%	Woodland, school and nature reserve within the parcel, removed from potential developable area.
3.4	SP026	Dispersed	40.6	0	0.00	0%	Schools, a care home, leisure centre, playing fields, community park and woodland within the parcel, removed from potential developable area.
4.4	SP038	Dispersed	27.9	0	0.00	0%	Golf course and recreation ground within the parcel, removed from potential developable area. Council owned land.
4.5	SP039	Dispersed	26.1	0	0.00	0%	Golf course and recreation ground within the parcel, removed from potential developable area. Council owned land.

4.9	part of SP043	Dispersed	6.2	0	0.00	0%	Nature reserve, woodland and park within the parcel, removed from potential developable area. Close to SSSI. Council owned land.
4.10	SP044	Dispersed	37.5	409	22.72	60%	Environmental constraints within parcel, removed from potential developable area.
4.15	part of SP052	Dispersed	13.7	0	0.00	0%	No developable area
6.20	SP092	Dispersed	8.4	0	0.00	0.00%	No developable area

 Part of a site
 Site not mentioned in Potential Capacity Calculations Sheet

Totals	
	Dispersed
Urban Extension - East	1394
Urban Extension - West	2584
Urban Extension Totals	3182

Table B - The Conclusions of the Council's Current Assessment

ARUP 2019 Parcel Ref	Initial Green Belt Assessment 2018 Ref	SHLAA Sites	MEAS Screening - Overall Summary	MEAS Screening Ecology	MEAS Screening - Archaeology	MEAS Screening - Contamination	MEAS Screening Waste	MEAS Screening Minerals	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019	Transport and Accessibility Review 2018	Merseytravel RAG	SP Energy Networks	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019	Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019	Other Known Constraints	Other Comments	Interim Conclusion
4.6	SP040 (North of Claremont Farm)	942	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • Approx 13% surface water, majority in low 1 in 1000 AEP event • 100% FZ1	Green. £1M to £3M two accesses and realignment required	Amber/Red. Would need new highway to facilitate bus access and new service	£89k new substation and cable diversion	Low to Moderate	3a, 3b (91% MAFF 1986)	• Tree Preservation Order • LCR Nature Improvement Area		Do not take forward due to isolated configuration of developable area
4.8	SP043 (Vineyard Farm)	930	Red - do not progress	Red - significant constraints	Red - evaluation required prior to allocation	Amber (localised)	Green	Green	SP043 - <i>Recommendation A - Development may be potentially unsuitable based on fluvial and surface water flood risk (if development cannot be directed away from risk areas, the site will be unsuitable for development)</i> • 13.36% in FZ3b & 11.8% in high and 13.56% in medium SW risk outlines SHLAA 1930 - <i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • 100% in FZ1 • Small amount surface water (0.61% high risk, 0.77% medium risk)	Red. Undeliverable without significant improvements - not costed	Red. Remote from transport network, would need new highway layout and bus service	£162K two substations	Eastern section - Moderate to High. North-western section - Moderate. Significant designations, localised natural habitats, sense of remoteness and tranquillity provided by woodland	3a, 3b (36% MAFF 1986, SHLAA 1930 - 92%)	• Local Nature Reserve • Site of Special Scientific Interest • Site of Biological Interest • Ancient woodland • Biodiversity Action Plan habitat • Tree Preservation Order • Listed building • Archaeological Site • Public right of way		Do not take forward due to multiple constraints.

ARUP 2019 Parcel Ref	Initial Green Belt Assessment 2018 Ref	SHLAA Sites	MEAS Screening - Overall Summary	MEAS Screening Ecology	MEAS Screening - Archaeology	MEAS Screening - Contamination	MEAS Screening Waste	MEAS Screening Minerals	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019	Transport and Accessibility Review 2018	Merseytravel RAG	SP Energy Networks	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019	Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019	Other Known Constraints	Other Comments	Interim Conclusion
4.10	SP044 (West of Dibbinsdale Road)		Red - do not progress	Red - significant constraints	Red - evaluation required prior to allocation	Green	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation A - Development potentially unsuitable based on surface water flood risk</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11.47% in medium surface water risk outline (& 9.69% high risk) • 9.47% in FZ3b Significant surface water risk associated with Dibbinsdale Brook - watercourse will need a green corridor free of development 	Red. Undeliverable without significant improvements - not costed	Red. Remote from transport network, would need new highway layout and bus service and widening of Dibbinsdale Road.		Moderate to High. Strong natural and rural qualities, valued natural features, perceived gap between settlements	3a, 3b (49% MAFF 1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCR Core Biodiversity Area (41%) • Site of Special Scientific Interest • Site of Biological Importance and Priority Habitat • LCR Nature Improvement Area, Ancient woodland 		Do not take forward due to multiple constraints
4.11	SP045 (North of Raby Hall Road)	947, 649, 648, 511, 094	Red - do not progress	Red - significant constraints	Amber	Amber (localised)	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium (8.05%) to high risk (6.67%) of surface water 	45A - (SHLAA 0648) Amber £1M to £3M cost 45B - (SHLAA 0649) Green £500k to £1M cost	45A - Red. Would require upgrade of Raby Hall Road and internal road layout for buses. 45B - Amber. Access routes to Blakeley Road bus services and support for enhanced bus service	SP045 and SP046 = £2.5M New primary substation and six secondary substations	Moderate. Wooded watercourses and rural wooded setting	2, 3a, 3b (54% MAFF 1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site of Special Scientific Interest, Ancient woodland, Site of Biological Importance, WeBS Core Count Area, Priority Habitat, Protected Species, Tree Preservation Order, LCR Nature Improvement Area 	Only potentially small sites along Raby Hall Road (SHLAA 0648 and 0649)	Do not take forward due to isolated configuration of developable sites

ARUP 2019 Parcel Ref	Initial Green Belt Assessment 2018 Ref	SHLAA Sites	MEAS Screening - Overall Summary	MEAS Screening Ecology	MEAS Screening - Archaeology	MEAS Screening - Contamination	MEAS Screening Waste	MEAS Screening Minerals	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019	Transport and Accessibility Review 2018	Merseytravel RAG	SP Energy Networks	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019	Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019	Other Known Constraints	Other Comments	Interim Conclusion
4.12	SP046 (South of Raby Hall Road)	948, 058, 013	Red - do not progress	Red - significant constraints	Amber	Amber - golf course filling materials	Amber - closed landfill	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • Medium (4.68%) to high risk (2.66%) of surface water Dibbinsdale Brook forms east of boundary	Blue. Undeliverable. No realistic access point to majority of the area	Red. Would need new access route, new internal highway layout and new bus services	SP045 and SP046 = £2.5M primary substation and six secondary substations	Low to Moderate	2, 3a, 3b (19% MAFF 1986) Rest is golf course or woodland	•LCR Nature Improvement Area •Ancient woodland •Sites of Biological Importance and Priority Habitats along Plymyard Dale and across golf course, Protected Species	Only potentially SHLAA 4013	Do not take forward due to isolated configuration of developable sites
4.13	SP049 (South of Mill Park)	930, 891, 769, 002	Amber - capable of being addressed	Green	Amber (localised)	Amber (localised)	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • 100% in FZ1 • Small amount of surface water risk (1.64% medium, 0.95% high)	Amber - New signal junction on A41, north of M53. Cost £3M-£5M	Amber/Green. New internal highway layout. Extend bus services and support for extended service pattern.	£171K two new substations and cable diversion	Low to Moderate. Woodland and ponds and semi-natural habitat within site.	2, 3a, 3b (91% MAFF 1986)	• Tree Preservation Order • Biodiversity Action Plan habitat	Need to coordinate several land owners	Identify as potential site subject to agricultural impact and soil survey
4.18	SP054 (part) - Eastham Golf Course (part)	608	Amber - capable of being addressed	Amber	Amber	Amber (localised)	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • Recommended for re-assessment for residential use suitability (water compatible site assessment was assessed as Recommendation D, but for residential	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Southern and north-western areas of SP054 - Moderate Remainder of SP054 - High. Designated sites and tranquil wooded character	Not agricultural	• Biodiversity Action Plan habitat • Tree Preservation Order • LCR Nature Improvement Area • COMAH/HS E Zones, oil pipelines		Do not take forward until further screening completed including Health and Safety Zones

ARUP 2019 Parcel Ref	Initial Green Belt Assessment 2018 Ref	SHLAA Sites	MEAS Screening - Overall Summary	MEAS Screening Ecology	MEAS Screening - Archaeology	MEAS Screening - Contamination	MEAS Screening Waste	MEAS Screening Minerals	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019	Transport and Accessibility Review 2018	Merseytravel RAG	SP Energy Networks	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019	Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019	Other Known Constraints	Other Comments	Interim Conclusion
									would be Recommendation C) • Minimal surface water risk								
Page 354	SP005 (West of Diamond Farm)	740	Amber - capable of being addressed	Amber	Green	Green	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation D - Development could be allocated on flood risk grounds subject to consultation with LPA / LLFA</i> • Minimal surface water risk	Green. £100k.	Green. Needs new bus stops		Moderate to High Elevated ground, historic field patterns, contribution to perceived gap between settlements and setting of Conservation Area	3a, 3b			Suitable, subject to heritage impact assessment and agricultural impact and soil survey

ARUP 2019 Parcel Ref	Initial Green Belt Assessment 2018 Ref	SHLAA Sites	MEAS Screening - Overall Summary	MEAS Screening Ecology	MEAS Screening - Archaeology	MEAS Screening - Contamination	MEAS Screening Waste	MEAS Screening Minerals	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019	Transport and Accessibility Review 2018	Merseytravel RAG	SP Energy Networks	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019	Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019	Other Known Constraints	Other Comments	Interim Conclusion
5.9	SP004 (North of Diamond Farm)	925	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation A - Development may be potentially unsuitable based on surface water flood risk.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18.66% medium and 6.19% high risk of surface water. • 8.61% FZ3b SHLAA 925 - Recommendation A (surface water)	Green. £100k-£500k	Green. Needs new bus stops	£89K and cable diversion	Moderate to High. Elevated ground, historic field patterns, contribution to perceived gap between settlements and setting of Conservation Area	3a, 3b (89% MAFF 1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Area • Listed building • Protection of hedgerows • LCR Nature Improvement Area • Tree Preservation Order 	Additional public open space to be provided	Identify as potential site subject to flood risk assessment, heritage impact assessment and agricultural impact and soil survey
5.13	SP007 (West of Greasby)	781	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	<i>Recommendation A - Development may be potentially unsuitable based on fluvial / tidal flood risk</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39.23% FZ3b • FZ3b at west half of site associated with Greasby Brook (SHLAA 1781 Recommendation A 50.98% in FZ3b) 	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	£162K two substations (SHLAA 1718 only)	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed (23% MAFF 1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCR Core Biodiversity Area (7%) • Priority Habitat • Conservation Area, LCR Nature Improvement Area (part) 		Do not take forward until further screening completed

ARUP 2019 Parcel Ref	Initial Green Belt Assessment 2018 Ref	SHLAA Sites	MEAS Screening - Overall Summary	MEAS Screening Ecology	MEAS Screening - Archaeology	MEAS Screening - Contamination	MEAS Screening Waste	MEAS Screening Minerals	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019	Transport and Accessibility Review 2018	Merseytravel RAG	SP Energy Networks	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019	Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019	Other Known Constraints	Other Comments	Interim Conclusion
6.15	SP013 (West of Column Road)	944, 076 now 065 (excluding Stapledon Wood)	Red - Stapledon Wood	Red - Stapledon Wood	Amber - capable of being addressed	Green	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium (4.71%) and high (0.97%) SW risk • Multiple ordinary watercourses. SW risk towards east of site 	Green. £1M-£3M; two priority junctions, footways and bus stop upgrades and extend 30mph speed limit	Red/Amber. New bus and highway links to Column Road and enhancement of bus service	£82K new sub-station	Moderate to High (eastern) High (western) Elevated nature of woodland, which contributes to biodiversity; recreational value and tranquillity. Area of Special Landscape Value	2, 3a, 3b (27% MAFF 1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCR Core Biodiversity Area (49%) • Tree Preservation Order, Site of Biological Importance, Biodiversity Action Plan habitat • Public right of way • LCR Nature Improvement Area • Conservation Area 	Need to coordinate several land owners	Identify as potential site subject to design and mitigation for landscape impact. Exclude Stapledon Wood
6.5	SP104 (Cottage Road West)	968	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal fluvial / tidal flood risk in FZ2 (0.05%), FZ3a (0.9%) • Minimal surface water flood risk 	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed (29% MAFF 1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site of Special Scientific Interest (along coastline) • Site of Biological Importance • LCR Core Biodiversity Area (13%) • Priority Habitat 		Do not take forward until further screening completed	
7.11	SP071 (Chester High Road)	767, 817 549 main), 878	Amber - capable of being addressed	Green	Amber	Amber (localised)	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface water approx 20%, majority in low risk 1 in 1000 year AEP - ordinary watercourses 	Green. Needs two accesses cost. £1M to £3M	Amber/Red. Internal highway layout and enhancement to services required.	£164K two new substations and cable diversion	Low to Moderate	3a, 3b (29% MAFF 1986)	Some Priority Habitat (ponds and woodland)	At edge of UU (for water supply) and Welsh Water (for waste water) catchments. Need to coordinate several	Identify as potential site, subject to archaeological assessment and agricultural impact and soil survey. Exclude Gayton Park

ARUP 2019 Parcel Ref	Initial Green Belt Assessment 2018 Ref	SHLAA Sites	MEAS Screening - Overall Summary	MEAS Screening Ecology	MEAS Screening - Archaeology	MEAS Screening - Contamination	MEAS Screening Waste	MEAS Screening Minerals	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019	Transport and Accessibility Review 2018	Merseytravel RAG	SP Energy Networks	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019	Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019	Other Known Constraints	Other Comments	Interim Conclusion
									on site • 100% in FZ1							land owners	
7.15 7.16 7.17	SP062 (South of Gills Lane)	981, 982, 934, 956, 955, 946, 093, 884, 932, 831, 882, 883	Red - significant constraint	Green	Red - evaluation required prior to allocation	Green	Green	Amber	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • Less than 10% in FZ3b (0.27%) • Less than 10% in medium (2.89%) and high (1.65%) surface water risk outlines • Flood risk associated with Prenton Brook (north of site); ponds and sinks shown on site • Avoid FZ3b. Incorporate green corridor free of development	Red. Improvement to Gills Lane (7.17 and 7.18). £1M to 3M cost. Southern area also needs new east-west link - not costed and could delay delivery	Amber/Red. Improvement to Gills Lane. Extensive internal highway layout required. Enhancement to bus service and access to new bus infrastructure required on Barnston Road and Whitfield Lane.	£2.8M for SP061 and SP062. New primary and ten secondary substations.	Moderate to High Elevated nature of landscape, historic fields, habitats and features	3a, 3b (51% MAFF 1986)	• Site of Biological Importance • Conservation Area • Primary school capacity, wooded river valley	Numerous accidents on Gills Lane. SP062Aa to immediate south of Gill's Lane could be brought forward alongside SP061 subject to road realignment. Additional public open space required. Need to coordinate several land owners	Identify as potential site subject to heritage impact assessment, biodiversity assessment and agricultural impact soil survey
7.18	SP061 (North of Gill's Lane)	069	Amber - capable of being addressed	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • 100% in FZ1; • Less than 10% in medium (3.56%) and high (2.41%)	Red. Improvement to Gills Lane (7.18 and 7.17). £1M to 3M cost	Amber/Red. Improvement to Gills Lane. Enhancement to bus service and access to new bus infrastructure required	£2.8M for SP061 and SP062. New primary and ten secondary substations	Low to Moderate	3a, 3b (60% MAFF 1986)	• Tree Preservation Order • Biodiversity Action Plan habitat • High pressure pipeline. • Retention		Identify as potential site subject to agricultural impact and soil survey. Exclude water reservoir

ARUP 2019 Parcel Ref	Initial Green Belt Assessment 2018 Ref	SHLAA Sites	MEAS Screening - Overall Summary	MEAS Screening Ecology	MEAS Screening - Archaeology	MEAS Screening - Contamination	MEAS Screening Waste	MEAS Screening Minerals	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019	Transport and Accessibility Review 2018	Merseytravel RAG	SP Energy Networks	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019	Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019	Other Known Constraints	Other Comments	Interim Conclusion
									surface water risk outlines		on Barnston Road				of water reservoir		
7.19	SP065 (opposite Crosshill Reservoir)	931 (Part only)	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low surface water risk (3.99% medium, 2.42% low) • Minimal flood risk (0.69% FZ3b) 	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed (23% MAFF 1986)	• Archaeological Site		Identify as potential site subject to completion of further screening
7.25	SP009 (part)	778 (West of Sandy Lane)	Amber - capable of being addressed	Amber	Green	Green	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very little surface water risk • 100% FZ1 	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	£82K substation for 1764, 1765, 1766 and 1778	Not yet assessed. Area of Special Landscape Value	(21% MAFF 1986)	• Biodiversity Action Plan habitat (traditional orchard) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree Preservation Order • LCR Core Biodiversity Area (5%) 		Identify as potential site subject to completion of further screening (west of Sandy Lane only)
7.26	SP059 (West of Irby Road)	764, 765, 766, 775, 783, 784, 980, 031	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very little surface water risk • 100% FZ1 	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed	Not yet assessed. Visually prominent. Partly within Area of Special Landscape Value	Not yet assessed (57% - MAFF 1986)	• LCR Core Biodiversity Area (6%) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pond and Priority Habitat • Woodland • WeBS Core Count Area (59%) • Site of Biological Importance • LCR 	May have some potential for rounding off but mainly isolated configuration of available sites	Do not take forward until further screening completed

ARUP 2019 Parcel Ref	Initial Green Belt Assessment 2018 Ref	SHLAA Sites	MEAS Screening - Overall Summary	MEAS Screening Ecology	MEAS Screening - Archaeology	MEAS Screening - Contamination	MEAS Screening Waste	MEAS Screening Minerals	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019	Transport and Accessibility Review 2018	Merseytravel RAG	SP Energy Networks	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019	Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019	Other Known Constraints	Other Comments	Interim Conclusion
															Nature Improvement Area • Public right of way		
	SP059b (Thurstaston Road)	765	Amber - capable of being addressed	Green	Green	Amber (localised)	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • Minimal surface water risk	Amber. £100K	Amber. Limited 2-hourly service only	£82K substation for 1764, 1765, 1766 and 1778	Low	Not agricultural. Adjacent to ASLV	LCR Nature Improvement Area (part)		Identify as potential site
	SP059c (Thurstaston Road)	764	Amber - capable of being addressed	Green	Green	Amber (localised)	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • Minimal surface water risk	Amber. £100K	Amber. Limited 2-hourly service only	£82K substation for 1764, 1765, 1766 and 1778	Low	Not agricultural. Adjacent to ASLV	LCR Nature Improvement Area (part)		Identify as potential site
	SP059d (Thurstaston Road)	766	Amber - capable of being addressed	Green	Green	Amber (localised)	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • Minimal surface water risk	Amber. £100K-£500K realigned site access required	Amber. Limited 2-hourly service only	£82K substation for 1764, 1765, 1766 and 1778	Low	Not agricultural. Adjacent to ASLV	LCR Nature Improvement Area (part)		Identify as potential site

ARUP 2019 Parcel Ref	Initial Green Belt Assessment 2018 Ref	SHLAA Sites	MEAS Screening - Overall Summary	MEAS Screening Ecology	MEAS Screening - Archaeology	MEAS Screening - Contamination	MEAS Screening Waste	MEAS Screening Minerals	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019	Transport and Accessibility Review 2018	Merseytravel RAG	SP Energy Networks	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment 2019	Agricultural Economy and Land Study 2019	Other Known Constraints	Other Comments	Interim Conclusion
	SP059e (rear of Irby Hall)	775	Red - significant constraints	Red - species surveys required prior to allocation and WeBS Core Count Area	Red - evaluation required prior to allocation	Green	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • Minimal surface water flood risk <10% in all events	Red. Problematic junction with Irby Road and Thingwall Road £1M to £3M; level differences and gas utility relocation. Limited secondary access points	Amber/Green. Need pedestrian links to Irby Road	£82K substation	Moderate. Historic fields and rural setting to Irby Hall	2, 3a, 3b (100% MAFF 1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public right of way • Tree Preservation Order • Scheduled Ancient Monument • LCR Nature Improvement Area • WeBS Core Count Area (99%) 		Do not take forward until further investigations completed
7.27	SP060 (Land between Irby and Pensby)	932, 892, 895, 197, 1546, 052	Red - significant constraint	Green	Red - evaluation required prior to allocation	Amber (localised)	Green	Green	<i>Recommendation C - Consider site layout and design around flood risk</i> • Minimal surface water flood risk. Medium (3.19%) and high (1.68%)	Amber. Multiple accesses needed £3M-£5M. Opportunity for new link road across site.	Red. Internal bus layout and enhanced service pattern needed.	£242K three new substations	Moderate. Historic field patterns, wetland habitats and contribution towards perceived gap	3a, 3b (96% MAFF 1986)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public rights of way • Site of Biological Importance • Tree Preservation Order • LCR Core Biodiversity Area (5%) • LCR Nature Improvement Area • Harrock Wood (National Trust) 	Additional public open space to be provided. Need to coordinate several land owners	Identify as potential site, subject to heritage impact assessment and agricultural impact and soil survey. Exclude Harrock Wood

APPENDIX 5.1

Draft Housing in Multiple Occupation Policy

Houses in Multiple Occupation

Proposals for houses in multiple occupation (HMO's) will not be permitted unless the proposal fulfils the following criteria:

- (i) the property is of sufficient size to provide safe and healthy living conditions with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users in accordance with the following:

Bedrooms Sizes		
No. Occupiers	1- 6	7 and above
Single bedrooms (1 person) (sq. metres)	10.21*	10.21
or	6.51**	
Main bedrooms (2-person household) (sq. metres)	14*	14
or	10.21**	
<p>*Where there is no separate communal living room each room providing sleeping accommodation for 1 person must be a minimum of 10.21sqm or a minimum of 14m² for 2 related persons and must provide kitchen facilities as per the table below.</p> <p>**Where rooms used for sleeping accommodation are between 6.51m² and below 10.21m² (1 person) and 10.21 m² and below 14m² (2 person rooms), the provision of a kitchen as per table below is required. Additional communal living/dining, or separate lounge plus additional dining room or alternatively a separate lounge and combined kitchen/dining space must meet the recommended room sizes below.</p>		

Communal Facilities								
No. Occupiers	2	3	4	5	6	7-8	9-10	11-12*
Living room in a dwelling with a separate kitchen and diner								
internal floorspace	12m ²	13m ²	14m ²	15m ²	16m ²	18.5m ²	21m ²	24m ²
Living room/diner in a dwelling with a separate kitchen								
internal floorspace	14m ²	15m ²	16m ²	17.5m ²	18.5m ²	24m ²	26.5m ²	29m ²
Kitchen/diner								
internal floorspace	9m ²	10m ²	11m ²	12m ²	13m ²	18m ²	19m ²	21.5m ²
Kitchen								
internal floorspace	6.5m ²	6.5m ²	7m ²	8m ²	8m ²	13m ²	14m ²	16m ²
* A proportionate increase will be required for every additional resident.								
Washing & Toilets								

A reasonable standard of personal washing and toilet amenities for existing and future users is required at a ratio of:	
1-5 persons	At least 1 bath or shower cubicle, WC and Wash Hand Basin (WHB) (the bath, WHB and WC may be combined in one room. For 5 people the WC and WHB must be separate
6 - 10 persons	2 baths or 2 shower cubicles AND 2 separate WCs with WHBs (but one of the WCs can be contained within one of the bathrooms)
11-12 persons*	3 baths or 3 shower cubicles AND 3 separate WCs with WHBs (but two of the WCs can be contained within one of the bathrooms)
* A proportionate increase will be required for every additional 3 residents.	
A wash hand basin in each sleeping accommodation room where reasonably practicable, having regard to the age and character of the property.	

- (ii) if the property is not detached then adjoining properties are not in single family occupation;
- (iii) the proposal not resulting in a private dwelling having an HMO on both sides;
- (iv) the proposal not resulting in a change in the character of the surrounding area which would be detrimental;
- (v) the proposal not resulting in a concentration of HMO's in an area such that the character of the area is adversely affected;
- (vi) the proposal ensuring the privacy of neighbours and occupants, including the layout of car parking areas, to prevent overlooking of habitable room windows;
- (vii) safe and convenient access is available for all units with staircases being provided within the main structure of the building and rear yards/gardens can be entered from the accommodation by each occupier;
- (viii) any extensions complying with Policy CS22C;
- (ix) any interior vertical partitions not cutting across windows and ceiling height reductions not being visible externally
- (x) adequate sound proofing being provided;
- (xi) any basement accommodation having windows with two-thirds of their height above the existing outside ground level giving sufficient daylight penetration, a reasonable outlook and not immediately adjacent to parking bays and vehicle access-ways;
- (xii) habitable rooms, including living rooms, kitchens and bedrooms would not be lit solely by roof lights; and windows will give sufficient daylight with adequate separation

distances between adjacent properties and structures to safeguard residential amenity;

- (xiii) safe unobtrusive parking arrangements, secure on-site bicycle storage and waste refuse and recycling containers being provided;
- (xiv) the premises will be adequately managed, including external maintenance for the upkeep of the building and its curtilage; and
- (xv) the proposal otherwise complying with Policy CS1A and Policy CS40.

Existing HMO's and valid planning permissions must not comprise more than 10% or more of the properties forming the street frontage within a street block.

Justification

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are houses which are not occupied by a single family but by a number of unrelated people and small groups in varying combinations.

HMOs can provide cheaper accommodation for people whose housing options are limited. HMOs can also be occupied by the most vulnerable people in society.

The Council is concerned that the risk of overcrowding in unsuitable accommodation can be greater than with other types of housing. It is also recognised that high concentrations of HMOs can have adverse impacts on the character and amenity of the area from noise, nuisance and achieving or maintaining a balanced sustainable community.

The National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that good design is a key aspect of achieving sustainable development and expects planning policies to promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

The Council's policy contributes to the objective of promoting mixed and balanced communities and sets out how a high standard of amenity of should be achieved through the development of HMO's. Planning applications for new HMO's will need to demonstrate how the Council's policy and supplementary guidance has been taken into account in the evolution of their proposals.

APPENDIX 8.1

Open Space Sites to be Protected

Site Ref	KKP Study Ref	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
Wallasey			
Open Space			
OS1	7000	North Wirral Coastal Park - Derby Pool	4.26
OS2	461	Kings Parade (Red and Yellow Noses)	5.70
	250	Kings Parade	5.31
	333	Kings Parade	4.36
	583	Kings Parade	3.65
	416	Kings Parade	3.51
	685	Kings Parade	2.30
	249	Atherton Street / Portland Street Greenspace	1.10
OS3	223	Bayswater Gardens	0.39
OS4	582	Harrison Park	9.46
OS5	6000	Wallasey Grange	0.51
OS6	595	Flynns Piece	0.64
OS7	888	Gorse Hill Park	0.49
OS8	462	Quarry Recreation Ground	0.76
OS9	579	Elleray Park	1.74
OS10	220	Captains Pit	0.35
OS11	457	Earlston Gardens	1.62
	768	Earlston Allotments	0.21
OS12	457	Rake Lane Cemetery	10.27
OS13	597	Belvidere Recreation Ground	3.50
OS14	797	Belvidere Allotments	0.44
OS15	835	Brookthorpe Close Play Area	0.36
OS16	429	Urmson Road Play Area	0.17
OS17	8942	Central Park	24.07
OS18	988	Cross Lane Community Woodland	17.82
	766	Cross Lane Allotments	0.82
	581	School Lane Playing Fields	3.69
OS19	868	Breck Recreation Ground	1.92
OS20	596	St Hilarys Gardens	0.27
OS21	431	Wallacre Playing Fields	5.26
	782	Mosslands Drive Allotments	1.42
OS22	430	Wallacre Play Area	0.44
OS23	761	Buckingham Avenue Allotments	0.88
OS24	459	Tower Grounds	5.07
OS25	451	Vale Park	4.00
OS26	175	Magazine Promenade Plantations	0.34
OS27	864	Egremont Promenade Plantations	0.62
OS28	173	Sandon Road Recreation Ground	0.21
OS29	174	Wallasey Town Hall Gardens	0.22
	513	Demense Street Recreation Ground	2.03
OS30	774	Ilford Avenue Allotments	1.50

Site Ref	KKP Study Ref	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
OS31	522	Rycroft Road Playing Fields	2.42
OS32	518	Oakdale Recreation Ground	1.20
OS33	516	Citrine Park	1.22
OS34	512	Limekiln Lane Community Park	0.97
OS35	515	Bridle Road Play Area	0.27
OS36	519	Luke Street Play Area	0.36
OS37	211	Wheatland Lane Play Area	0.13
Sport and Recreation			
OS38	PPS44	Marine Park	1.31
OS39	453	Kings Parade Recreation Ground	3.91
OS40	585	Kings Parade Miniature Golf Course	3.71
OS41	810	The Warren Golf Course East	13.06
	981	The Warren Golf Course West	4.15
OS42	PPS85	Wallasey Cricket Club	1.38
OS43	PPS46	New Brighton Cricket Club	1.92
OS44	PPS97	Delph Recreation Ground	1.86
OS43	PPS86	Wallasey Rugby Club	2.63
	PPS6	Villa Park (Ashville)	1.32
OS44	PPS83	Victoria Park (Poulton)	1.38
School Playing Fields			
OS45		St Georges Primary	0.81
OS46		Oldershaw School	1.56
OS47		Liscard Primary	0.60
OS48		St Josephs Primary (Seacombe)	0.70
Commercial Birkenhead			
Open Space			
OS49	895	Bidston Moss Community Woodland	36.26
OS50	1198	Bidston Moss Linear Nature Reserve	4.67
OS51	27	Hamilton Square Gardens	1.40
OS52	1231	Scott's Field Linear	0.75
Sport and Recreation			
OS53	PPS96	Wirral Sports Centre, Bidston	5.08
Suburban Birkenhead			
Open Space			
OS54	1	Birkenhead Park	57.23
	1233	Edward Kemp Community Garden	0.57
OS55	19	Bidston Hill (North)	27.56
OS56	65	Bidston Hill (South)	23.11
	1183	Tam O Shanter Urban Farm	1.54
	775	King Georges Way Allotments	0.55

Site Ref	KKP Study Ref	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
	760	Boundary Road Allotments	1.13
	794	Thornton Allotments	0.84
OS57		Wirral Golf Course	24.13
OS58	1261	Holm Lane Recreation Ground	13.66
	8943	The Arno, Prenton	2.78
	785	Ormonde Allotments	1.38
OS59	356	Victoria Park	11.35
OS60	813	Flaybrick Memorial Gardens	10.64
	791	Shakeshaft Allotments	0.32
OS61	551	Mersey Park	8.32
OS62	757	Bebington Road Allotments	7.44
OS63	772	Harris Allotments	5.94
OS64	488	Walker Park	5.41
OS65	15	Boundary Road Open Space	5.39
OS66	330	Bidston Court Gardens	2.85
	64	Vyner Road South Open Space	0.98
	1075	Vyner Road South Walkway	0.74
OS67	1237	Manor Way Linear	2.07
OS68	21	Fender Way Linear	4.51
OS69	262	Lennox Lane Open Space	3.98
	119	School Lane Open Space	0.11
OS70	18	Compton Road Open Space	3.91
	18	Bidston Approach Open Space	0.43
	1058	Valley Road Open Space	0.31
OS71	1011	Gautby Road Play Area	0.37
OS72	20	Gautby Road Recreation Ground	3.87
OS73	117	Bluewood Drive	1.17
OS74	1022	Highfield South Playing Fields	3.65
OS75	547	Conway Playing Field	2.17
OS76	135	Townfield Close Open Space	1.81
OS77	1124	Noctorum Way Play Area	1.49
OS78	1061	Noctorum Way Woodland	1.25
OS79	334	Bentham Close Open Space	0.81
OS80	478	Shavington Avenue Play Area	1.35
OS81	477	Davenham Avenue Play Area	0.50
OS82	137	Farndon Way Open Space	0.32
OS83	257	Ilchester Square Play Aea	1.33
OS84	796	Upton Road Allotments	0.58
OS85	773	Hill Road Allotments	1.20
OS86	795	Tollemache Road Allotments	0.85
OS87	196	Howson Street Play Area	1.14
OS88	764	Carrodus Allotments	1.03
OS89	1087	Tollemache Road Play Area	0.99

Site Ref	KKP Study Ref	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
OS90	80	Cheviot Road Wood	0.86
OS91	769	Fairview Allotments	0.68
OS92	327	Sorrell Close Open Space	0.61
OS93	329	Olivia Close Open Space	0.43
OS94	197	Rock Park Esplanade	0.61
OS95	194	Former Royal Rock Hotel, Rock Park	0.74
OS96	200	Rock Park Linear Woodland	0.71
OS97	553	Delta Road Open Space	1.13
OS98	783	Mountwood Allotments	0.59
OS99	267	Woodlands Play Area	0.56
OS100	198	Bedford Road Play Area	0.55
OS101	781	Molyneux Allotments	0.53
OS102	1189	Hanover Close Open Space	0.49
OS103	272	Bentinck Street Open Space	0.42
OS104	765	Church Road Allotments	0.37
OS105	1126	Lincoln Gardens Play Area	0.37
OS106	758	Bedford Avenue Allotments	0.34
OS107	1168	Eaton Place Play Area	0.32
OS108	792	Sumner Road Allotments	0.31
OS109	469	Grove Open Space, Oxton	0.25
OS110	271	Connaught Way Play Area	0.23
OS111	487	Prenton Hall Road Play Area	0.22
OS112	778	Manor Lane Allotments	0.22
OS113	144	Osmaston Road War Memorial	0.20
OS114	752	Wilfred Owen Drive Open Space	0.20
OS115	759	Bedford Avenue Open Space	0.19
OS116	555	Thorsway Play Area	0.18
OS117	554	Pembroke Court Play Area	0.15
OS118	777	Landsdown Place Allotments	0.15
OS119	788	St James Allotments	0.09
OS120	1139	Union Street Play Area	0.07
Sport and Recreation			
OS121	PPS12	Birkenhead Park Rugby Club	2.77
OS122	PPS132	Wayfarers Cricket Ground	1.03
OS123	PPS66	Solly Recreation Ground	4.80
OS124	PPS52	Oxton Sports Ground	3.99
OS125	PPS34	Parkonians Sports Ground	3.62
OS126	PPS179	Prenton Park	3.67
OS127	PPS64	Shaftesbury Youth Club	2.05
OS128	PPS15	Brorough Road Playing Fields	3.98
OS129	PPS142	St Peters Sports Ground	1.17
School Playing Fields			
OS130	PPS176	St Werburghs Primary	0.37

Site Ref	KKP Study Ref	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
OS131	PPS172	Manor Primary	1.86
OS132		Hillside Primary	1.03
OS133	PPS161	St Peters Primary, Noctorum	0.73
OS134		Townfield Primary	3.23
OS135		St Saviours Primary	0.61
OS136		Prenton Primary	1.45
OS137		Bedford Drive Primary	0.51
OS138	PPS9	Sandy Way Sports Ground	1.03
OS139	PPS146	Beresford Road Playing Field	1.37
OS140	PPS148	Noctorum Lane Sports Ground	2.24
OS141	PPS147	Mcallister Memorial Playing Fields	5.71
OS142	PPS68	St Anselms Playing Field	3.33
OS143	PPS59	Ridgeway High School	6.82
Bebington Bromborough and Eastham			
Open Space			
OS144	920	Kings Close Open Space	0.27
OS145	244	Kings Lane Playing Fields	6.56
	767	Dawson Allotments	2.87
OS146	874	Cressida Avenue Play Area (Juliet Avenue)	0.27
OS147	11	Bebington Cemetery	8.88
	875	Bebington Oval Playing Fields	16.78
	243	Higher Bebington Recreation Ground	6.83
OS148	793	Teehey Road Allotments	2.08
OS149	305	Mayer Park	7.47
OS150	52	Civic Way Open Space	0.80
OS151	1244	Abbot's Drive Open Space	0.19
OS152	940	The Crescent Plantations	0.24
OS153	6008	Benty Hey Woodland	1.42
OS154	308	Stanton Road Open Space	0.47
OS155	51	Wirral Gardens	0.63
OS156	50	Brimstage Road Woodland	0.64
OS157	311	Radford Avenue Linear	0.38
OS158	48	Dibbinsview Grove Woodland	0.37
OS159	53	Paradise Wood	1.49
OS160	312	Colmore Avenue Woodland	0.32
OS161	310	Poulton Road Open Space	0.24
OS162	320	Brome Green Play Area	0.24
OS163	113	Inley Close Open Space	0.19
OS164	282	New Ferry Park	4.64
OS165	908	Stanley Park	1.00
OS166	8949	New Ferry Butterfly Park	1.97
OS167	287	Mayfields Playing Field	4.68

Site Ref	KKP Study Ref	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
	300	Shorefields Open Space	4.31
	37	Samaria Avenue Woodland	0.52
OS168	9	Port Sunlight River Park	26.86
OS169	756	Beaconsfield Allotments	0.57
OS170	296	Boundary Road Open Space	0.40
OS171	917	Pool Bank Backland	0.26
OS172	914	Lower Road Backland	0.33
OS173	1221	Osbourne Court Open Space	0.34
OS174	873	Knox Close Backland	0.39
OS175	41	Lodge Lane Open Space	0.33
OS176	281	Windy Bank Open Space	0.69
OS177	40	The Diamond (N)	0.83
	8949	The Causeway War Memorial	0.05
	35	The Diamond (S)	0.30
	42	The Diamond (W)	0.26
	33	The Diamond (E)	0.24
OS178	291	Church Drive Open Space	0.43
OS179	286	Walker Street Open Space	1.10
OS180	283	Owen Street Open Space	0.85
OS181	915	Corniche Road Open Space	0.31
OS182	289	The Ginnel	0.83
OS183	0	Bolton Road Open Space	0.30
OS184	38	The Dell	1.16
OS185	111	Poets Corner	0.28
OS186	1134	Wharf Street Linear	0.18
OS187	902	Shore Drive Allotments	0.19
OS188	903	Woodhead Road Allotments	0.19
OS189	824	Kings Hill Play Area (Proposed)	0.09
OS190		Bromborough Court House	4.04
OS191	1246	Ashton Way Open Space	0.42
OS192	1252	Bromborough Pool Open Space	0.91
OS193	118	South View Playing Fields	4.04
OS194	284	Port Causeway Play Area	0.56
OS195	1250	Hesketh Road Woodland.	2.34
	34	Bromborough Road Woodland North	6.91
OS196	31	Bromborough Road Woodland South	2.08
OS197	1122	Brotherton Park and Dibbinsdale LNR East	21.65
OS198	285	Bromborough Recreation Ground	2.39
OS199	290	Bradmoor Recreation Ground	0.87
	770	Forwood Road Allotments	0.71
OS200	319	Marfords Park	1.75
OS201	76	Allport Common	1.77
OS202	342	Plymyard Playing Fields West	7.42

Site Ref	KKP Study Ref	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
OS203	1205	Plymyard Playing Fields East	9.39
	786	Plymyard Allotments	3.83
	72	Plymyard Cemetery	5.10
OS204	1254	Acre Lane (Proposed)	0.64
OS205	315	Brookhurst Park	2.07
OS206	787	Wingate Road Allotments	0.38
OS207	343	Heygarth Road Open Space	1.16
OS208	121	Lyndale Avenue Open Space	0.24
OS209	350	Eastham Rake Play Area	0.87
OS210	73	Eastham Rake Woods	0.87
OS211	1229	Mill Park Drive Open Space	0.32
OS212	346	Kelsall Avenue Play Area	0.35
OS213	1108	Eastham Country Park Riverwood Road	7.45
OS214	247	Storeton Quarry	1.50
	247	Prospect Hill Open Space	0.48
Sport and Recreation			
OS215	PPS73	Bebington Oval Sports Centre	8.60
OS216	PPS51	Octel Sports Club	3.82
School Playing Fields			
OS217		Higher Bebington Junior	1.15
OS218		Stanton Road Primary	0.47
OS219	PPS174	Poulton Lancelyn Primary	1.12
OS220	PPS169	Woodslee Primary	0.99
OS221	PPS163	Mendell Primary	1.66
OS222		Christ the King Primary	0.68
OS223		Raeburn Primary	0.90
OS224		Brookhurst Primary	0.56
OS225	PPS156	Heygarth Primary	1.14
OS226		Millfields Primary	0.62
OS227	PPS69	St John Plessington High School	1.16
OS228	PPS93	Wirral Grammar Schools	10.45
OS229		Bromborough Pool Cricket Ground	2.58
OS230	PPS67	South Wirral High	2.80
Mid Wirral			
Open Space			
OS231	1255	Leasowe Allotments	0.66
OS232	408	Cameron Road Play Area	0.11
OS233	409	Twickenham Drive Play Area	0.43
OS234	414	Whiteheath Play Area	1.06
OS235	422	Mereheath Wood	0.29
OS236	419	Farnworth Avenue Play Area	0.08

Site Ref	KKP Study Ref	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
OS237	1056	Epsom Road Play Area	0.85
OS238	124	Ditton Lane Nature Area	9.28
OS239	0	Birket Walkway Leasowe	0.99
OS240	1281	Bullrush Drive Open Space	0.26
OS241	834	Cornflower Way Open Space	0.27
OS242	1129	Fendale Avenue Open Space	0.39
OS243	1128	Grovedale Drive Play Area	0.25
OS244	411	Yew Tree Green Play Area	1.46
OS245	424	Knutsford Green Play Area	0.38
OS246	447	Lingham Park	9.14
OS247	860	Curlew Way Open Space	0.38
OS248	1042	Mallard Way Open Space	0.26
OS249	2	Arrowe Brook Linear Park (Moreton)	6.14
OS250	444	Berwick Close Open Space	0.69
OS251	446	Saughall Grange Recreation Ground	0.56
OS252	1261	Oak Close Open Space	0.16
OS253	1088	Fulford Park Play Area	0.23
OS254	120	Paulsfield Drive Woodland	2.64
OS255	569	Overchurch Park	6.41
OS256	1282	Arrowe Brook Linear Saughall Massie	0.87
OS257	568	Woodpecker Close Ponds	0.70
OS258	212	Saughall Massie Road Woodland	0.86
OS259	565	Warwick Hey Park	1.94
OS260	426	Weybourne Close Woodland	1.32
OS261	204	Norwich Drive Woodland	0.69
OS262	779	Manor Drive Allotments	0.51
OS263	205	Salacre Crescent Woodland	0.53
OS264	789	Salacre Allotments	0.93
OS265	208	Nuffield Close Woodland	0.29
OS266	209	Upton Meadow	16.27
OS267	1266	Upton Pines Play Area	0.20
OS268	1146	Arrowe Brook Road Woodland	1.67
OS269	1262	Hazelwood, Greasby	0.18
OS270	1691	Coronation Park	8.85
OS271	504	Bromsgrove Road Open Space	0.46
OS272	506	Mere Park Road Open Space	0.28
OS273	152	Greasby Road Open Space	0.45
OS274	155	Thorns Drive Woodland	0.62
OS275	945	Common Field Road Linear	1.36
OS276	943	Carr Bridge Road Backland	0.35
OS277	935	Greenwood Road Backland	0.33
OS278	854	New Hey Road Play Area	0.26
OS279	8940	Home Farm Close Open Space	0.20

Site Ref	KKP Study Ref	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
Sport and Recreation			
OS280	PPS47	New Brighton Rugby Club	3.93
OS281	PPS40	Leasowe Recreation Centre	7.44
OS282	PPS152	Millcroft Sports Ground	1.36
OS283	PPS78	Upton Cricket Club	3.22
OS284		Fender Farm Riding School	1.86
School Playing Fields			
OS285	PPS162	Castleway Primary	3.15
OS286		Leasowe Primary	0.25
OS287		Sacred Heart Primary	0.76
OS288		Eastway Primary	0.82
OS289		Lingham Primary	0.73
OS290	PPS173	Overchurch Schools	1.13
OS291		Hayfield School	1.12
OS292		Rear of Hayfield School	1.30
OS293	PPS171	Brookdale Primary	0.65
OS294	PPS164	Greasby Infants	0.63
OS295		Greasby Junior	0.90
OS296		Our Lady of Pity Primary	1.23
OS297	PPS175	Fender Primary	1.68
OS298	PPS131	Kingsway Academy	0.41
OS299		Claremount School	2.37
OS300	PPS79	Upton Hall	0.65
Hoylake and West Kirby			
Open Space			
OS301	7000	North Wirral Coastal Park Bennets Lane	0.19
	7000	North Wirral Coastal Park Forest Road	0.25
	7000	North Wirral Coastal Park Dovepoint Common	1.89
OS302	103	Barn Hey Crescent	0.20
OS303	392	Meols Lower Green North	0.67
	1038	Meols Lower Green South	0.88
OS304	102	Roman Road Open Space West	1.47
	879	Roman Road Open Space East	1.30
OS305	99	Meols Parade Open Space	0.82
OS306	394	Meols Parade Gardens	1.39
OS307	491	Queens Park	3.27
	96	Monkey Wood	0.26
OS308	104	Goose Green	0.27
OS309	381	Hoylake Promenade Open Space	0.74
OS310	4	Hoylake Graveyard, Trinity Road	0.79
OS311	382	Grove Play Area, Hoylake	0.38

Site Ref	KKP Study Ref	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
OS312	393	Carr Lane Play Area	0.97
OS313	1145	Hilbre Islands LNR	10.00
OS314	384	Sandlea Park	0.52
OS315	535	Coronation Gardens	0.93
OS316	397	Victoria Gardens	0.34
OS317	539	Devonshire Road Playing Field	0.76
OS318	391	Ashton Park	4.66
	7003	Ashton Park Allotments	0.16
	5002	Wirral Country Park (Urban)	2.80
OS319	1297	Caldy Hill	26.94
OS320	149	Newton Common	5.04
OS321	1270	Mereworth Open Space	0.19
OS322	105	Grange Hill	9.20
	1193	Grange Hill Allotments	0.55
	1961	Greenbank Community Park	2.38
	161	Grange Cemetery	3.03
OS323	1272	Newbold Crescent Open Space	0.17
OS324	501	Grange Farm Crescent Play Area	0.21
OS325	1271	Lartonwood Amenity Space	0.22
School Playing Fields			
OS326	PPS39	Kingsmead School	2.63
OS327		West Kirby Grammar	0.63
OS328	PPS33	Hilbre High	3.08
OS329	PPS18	Caldy Grammar (Grammar School Lane)	1.69
OS330	PPS18	Caldy Grammar (Column Road)	0.85
Heswall			
Open Space			
OS331	537	Irby Recreation Ground	3.94
OS332	1273	Denning Drive Open Space	0.15
OS333	536	Oaklea Road Play Area	0.25
OS334	531	Ridgewood Park Pensby	6.63
OS335	176	Telegraph Road Open Space	0.50
OS336	1239	Heswall Dales	27.46
	1148	Cleaver Heath (Wirral Wildlife)	4.51
OS337	89	Poll Hill	2.53
OS338	369	Puddy Dale	1.64
OS339	86	Feather Lane Woodland	1.31
OS340	370	Hill House Grounds	1.09
OS341	87	Heswall Beacons	4.46
OS342	371	Dawstone Park	0.70
OS343	4	Heswall Pinewoods North	0.55
	4	Heswall Pinewoods South	0.88

Site Ref	KKP Study Ref	Site Name	Site Area (hectares)
OS344	368	Whitfield Common	7.06
School Playing Fields			
OS345		Irby Primary	1.20
OS346	PPS157	Thingwall Primary	0.48
OS347	PPS165	Ladymount Primary	0.65
OS348	PPS160	Pensby Primary	0.84
OS349	PPS166	St Peters Primary, Heswall	0.51
OS350	PPS158	Gayton Primary	0.72
OS351	PPS159	Barnston Primary	0.71

APPENDIX 9.1

List of Detail Development Management Policies

Broad Spatial Strategy

- Policy LP2 - Broad Spatial Strategy
- Policy LP3 - Green Belt
- Policy LP3A – Land to Meet Objectively Assessed Needs
- Policy LP4 - Priorities for Wallasey
- Policy LP5 - Priorities for the Commercial Core of Birkenhead
- Policy LP6 - Priorities for Suburban Birkenhead
- Policy LP7 - Priorities for Bebington, Bromborough and Eastham
- Policy LP8 - Priorities for Leasowe, Moreton, Upton, Greasby and Woodchurch
- Policy LP9 - Priorities for Hoylake and West Kirby
- Policy LP10 - Priorities for Irby, Thingwall, Pensby, Heswall and Gayton
- Policy LP11 - Priorities for the Rural Areas
- Policy LP12 - Wirral Waters

Sustainable Development By Design

- Policy LP1 – Promoting Sustainable Development
- Policy LP1A – Achieving Sustainable Places by Design
- Policy LP1B – Achieving Sustainable Places by Design - Landscaping, Trees & Hedgerows

Business and Industry

- Policy LP13 - Employment Land Requirement
- Policy LP14 - Priority Sectors
- Policy LP15 - Criteria for Employment Development
- Policy LP16 - Criteria for Port-Related Development
- Policy LP17 - Protection of Employment Land
- Policy LP17A – Land Allocated for New Strategic Employment Development

Housing Development

- Policy LP18 - Housing Requirement
- Policy LP19 - Housing Implementation Strategy
- Policy LP19A – Housing Density
- Policy LP20 – Land Allocated for New Strategic Housing Development

- Policy LP21 - Criteria for Residential Development
- Policy LP22 - Affordable Housing Requirements
- Policy LP22A – Accessible Housing Requirements
- Policy LP22B - Backland Development
- Policy LP22C - House Extensions
- Policy LP22D - Self-Contained Flats
- Policy LP22E - Houses in Multiple Occupation
- Policy LP22F - Non-Residential Uses in Primarily Residential Areas
- Policy LP22G – Child Minders Working From Home
- Policy LP23 - Criteria for Specialist Housing
- Policy LP24 - Gypsies and Travellers
- Policy LP24A – Requirements for Gypsies and Travellers

Retailing and Town Centres

- Policy LP25 - Hierarchy of Retail Centres
- Policy LP26 - Criteria for Development within Existing Centres & Parades
- Policy LP27 - Food and Drink and Night Time Uses in Existing Centres
- Policy LP28 - Town and Local Centre Impact Assessments
- Policy LP29 - Criteria for Edge-of-Centre and Out-of-Centre Facilities

Green Infrastructure

- Policy LP30 - Requirements for Green Infrastructure
- Policy LP31 - Recreational Land and Buildings
- Policy LP32 - Recreational Open Space in New Residential Developments
- Policy LP33 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Environmental Protection

- Policy LP34A Coastal Defence and Erosion
- Policy LP34B Flood Risk
- Policy LP34C Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Natural Flood Management
- Policy LP36 - Pollution and Risk
- Policy LP37 - Contamination and Instability

Minerals & Waste

- Policy LP38 – Minerals
- Policy LP39 - Waste Management

Transport

- Policy LP40 - Transport Requirements
- Policy LP41 - Transport Schemes

Heritage Assets

- Policy LP42 - Protection of Heritage Assets
- Policy LP42A - Demolition Control within Conservation Areas
- Policy LP42B - Bidston Village Conservation Area
- Policy LP42C - Hamilton Square Conservation Area
- Policy LP42D - Birkenhead Park Conservation Area
- Policy LP42E - Oxton Village Conservation Area
- Policy LP42F - Rock Park Conservation Area
- Policy LP42G - Port Sunlight Conservation Area
- Policy LP42H - Eastham Village Conservation Area
- Policy LP42I - Caldy Conservation Area
- Policy LP42J - Frankby Village Conservation Area
- Policy LP42K - Gayton Conservation Area
- Policy LP42L - Heswall Lower Village Conservation Area
- Policy LP42M - Thornton Hough Conservation Area
- Policy LP46N - West Kirby Old Village Conservation Area
- Policy LP42O - Saughall Massie Conservation Area
- Policy LP42P - Wellington Road (New Brighton) Conservation Area
- Policy LP42Q - Thurstaston Conservation Area
- Policy LP42R - Bromborough Village Conservation Area
- Policy LP42S - Barnston Village Conservation Area
- Policy LP42T - Bromborough Pool Conservation Area
- Policy LP42U - Flaybrick Cemetery Conservation Area

- Policy LP42V – Kings Gap Hoylake Conservation Area
- Policy LP42W – Meols Drive Conservation Area
- Policy LP42X – Clifton Park Conservation Area
- Policy LP42Y – Lower Bebington Conservation Area
- Policy LP42Z – The Magazines Conservation Area
- Policy LP42ZA – Mountwood Conservation Area
- Policy LP42ZB - Development Affecting Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Policy LP42ZC Development Affecting Non-Scheduled Archaeological Remains
- Policy LP42ZD - The Preservation of Historic Parks and Gardens
- Policy LP42ZE – Historic Parks and Gardens

Phasing and Infrastructure

- Policy LP43 - Phasing and Infrastructure
- Policy LP44 – Developer Contributions

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Wirral Local Plan: Issues and Options Consultation

Sustainability Appraisal: Interim Note Appraisal of spatial options

December 2019

DRAFT

1. Introduction

This document sets out interim findings in relation to the Sustainability Appraisal of the Wirral Local Plan. The findings are focused upon an appraisal of the options for the spatial strategy as set out in the issues and options consultation document.

These are high level findings, based upon a more detailed assessment of each option that is ongoing. Given that SA is an iterative process, the findings are subject to change in light of updated evidence, consultation findings and other new information. The purpose at this stage is to help inform the decision making process in relation to the spatial strategy.

The assessments have been undertaken primarily using professional opinion informed by quantitative information, site visits, and technical studies. A summary is provided for each of the 13 SA Objectives that were established during the Scoping Stage of SA.

2. Headline findings / summary

2.1 Air Quality

There are no AQMAs in the Borough, but annual monitoring reveals several locations where air quality has exceeded targets for maximum nitrogen dioxide emissions. Development that could worsen emissions in these areas or expose people to poor air quality should therefore be avoided if possible. Conversely, strategies that promote sustainable modes of travel ought to be supported.

All three options involve employment growth in broadly the same locations, with substantial development land identified near Port Sunlight / Bromborough and also in locations complementing Wirral Waters. These will therefore be likely to act as major attractors of car trips (with potential negative effects in terms of air quality). The extent to which trips are likely to take place along routes which already suffer from poor air quality, and the number of trips being made by car rather than sustainable modes will determine the effects for each option.

Option 1 involves growth in the urban areas within the Borough, with most new residential development identified in the Commercial Core. Development in this location will have very good access to employment land, which would reduce the need to travel to access such opportunities. There are also good public transport links which could mean that additional growth is able to access employment opportunities and other services further afield such as in Liverpool and at Port Sunlight / Bromborough. It is still likely that car trips will be generated though, and this could involve traffic along routes that have been highlighted as being of concern in terms of nitrogen dioxide emissions (for example along the New Ferry Bypass), and the A552. However, the length and number of trips that would need to be made under this option ought to be reduced by virtue of the good connections to services that are available in proposed development locations.

Additional residential sites are located in Mid-Wirral and at West Kirby in particular. These areas are less well-located and may lead to an increase in car trips. However, there are local services and some local job opportunities that could help to limit car travel.

Overall, option 1 involves a strategy that should ensure that growth does not lead to notable increases in emissions from traffic. Though there is substantial growth in areas that experience poorer levels of air quality, there is a good connection between employment and housing opportunities and this should help to promote sustainable modes of travel. Overall, **minor positive effects** are predicted.

Option 2a involves dispersed growth at urban fringe sites across the Borough. This would involve locations that are less well related to employment opportunities, and are likely to be reliant on car trips. Though this could increase emissions along routes toward key employment and retail areas, the implications are unlikely to be significant given the dispersed nature of growth. As such, **minor negative effects** are predicted.

Option 2b involves focused growth in one of two locations. An extension at Heswall would likely involve substantial car trips toward employment opportunities at Port Sunlight and Wirral Waters, which could cause a worsening of air quality along key routes (For example the A552). With this approach though, the majority of new development would be located in an area with low levels of ambient air pollution (which is beneficial in this respect). There is also a train station which could potentially help to offset trips. Overall, **minor negative effects** are predicted.

An extension at Bromborough / Eastham would also be likely to generate substantial car trips, but is well located in regard to employment opportunities. This means that trips would be shorter for some residents, and potentially offers greater ability to use non-car modes of travel. There is also a train station nearby to access locations further afield. Nevertheless, **minor negative effects** are predicted, as car trips are likely to be generated along routes where air quality is being monitored and has been close to exceedance targets.

2.2 Biodiversity

Wirral is unique in comparison to other localities as it has significant biodiversity designations in both coastal and non – coastal environments. It is important to ensure development which happens on the land, does not adversely affect the surrounding coastal environments.

In saying this there are currently no Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ) or National Nature Reserves (NNRs) within the locality. The SSSI's on the land are found within Settlement Areas 4, 7 and 8. The other settlement areas have significant biodiversity designations surrounding the coastline.

There are common elements to each of the spatial options that are likely to generate negative effects with regards to the biodiversity.

Of particular note is that the majority of the employment sites are located in waterside locations, along the River Mersey and Liverpool Bay. The majority of these sites are close to a number of biodiversity assets and are at risk of having negative effects upon these assets

along with species natural habitats. Though development will be required to avoid and mitigate effects and ultimately achieve net gain, the potential for negative effects does exist.

Each option performs differently in relation to impacts upon local settlement areas across the borough, how new development can bring forward local benefits to the green infrastructure and local species

Options 1A promotes urban intensification, by developing urban sites and by increasing densities across all the settlements in Wirral. The locations that option 1A focuses on are mostly waterside locations that fall within the impacts zones for the River Mersey SSSI, and SPA and Ramsar, along with sites in the Liverpool Bay impact zones. The majority of sites are brownfield sites, most of which have limited value, but others that may be rich in species and natural habitats where natural regeneration has occurred. It is anticipated that permanent effects should be avoidable, but it will be important to manage disturbance and pollution that could affect waterside environments. This leaves a question mark over the potential for negative effects.

In terms of functionally-linked land, the HRA concludes that the opportunity sites are likely to offer limited value, and so **neutral effects** in this respect are predicted.

The majority of the remaining housing sites are small – medium in scale and dispersed throughout the borough, which is likely to minimise the opportunities to enhance and connect the green infrastructure network through onsite improvements alone. In this respect, only **minor positive effects** are predicted.

Larger site options may be able to deliver some strategic green infrastructure improvements, which can help with wildlife and biodiversity enhancement. This could be particularly beneficial for more built up areas such as Birkenhead and Wirral Waters.

Options 2a and 2b are less negative with regards to growth impacting on biodiversity in waterside locations. However, there are other locally important habitats present across the Borough that overlap with development opportunity areas. For some locations, a loss of greenfield land could also have potentially significant negative effects in terms of being functionally linked to the European Sites. Both options contain land that could provide this function, and so **significant negative effects** are recorded at this stage in this respect.

For Option 2a additional effects on local wildlife would depend upon the exact sites involved in a dispersed approach. However, the majority of identified parcels that could be involved do not overlap significantly with designated or biodiversity action plan habitats. The most likely issues with this option will relate to disturbance to adjacent habitats, and ensuring that net gain is achieved. Given that the developments are strategic in nature, this ought to be possible. However, a loss of potential functionally linked land will mean that offsite compensation may also need to be secured.

Taking the above factors into account, **minor to significant positive effects** are predicted to reflect the potential to improve ecological value on green belt sites across a number of locations across the borough (not just one such as the urban extensions). However, their use to support Ramsar / SPA / SAC species constitutes potentially significant negative effects. The choice of sites ought to provide some flexibility in avoiding the most sensitive locations and making the best out of opportunities for enhancement.

For Option 2b, development at an extension to Bebington would overlap substantially with some of the boroughs BAPs and ancient woodland. This presents the potential for negative effects upon these biodiversity assets, but given the large scale strategic nature of the site, it is possible that mitigation and enhancement could be secured. There is a question mark relating to this though. The potential for the land to be useful as functionally linked habitat is less likely in this location though, and so the overall effects are predicted to be **neutral effects**.

A development east of Heswall overlaps less dramatically with BAP habitat, and therefore, enhancement is more likely to be achieved. For example, by reducing the developable land on the site and including green spaces and woodland retention on the sites, which could bring forward benefits for local habitats and species. However, a loss of potential functionally linked land will mean that avoidance, mitigation and offsite compensation may also need to be secured.

Taking the above factors into account, **minor positive effects** are predicted to reflect the potential to improve ecological value on green belt sites in this part of the borough. However, the use of such land to support Ramsar / SPA / SAC species constitutes potentially significant negative effects in this location.

2.3 Climate Change Adaptation

Option 1 involves dispersed growth in the urban areas on mostly brownfield land. In this respect, new development is unlikely to substantially alter drainage patterns, as it will not result in wholesale changes in the amount of hardstanding. The majority of sites identified for residential development are within flood zone 1, and so neutral effects are predicted in the main. However, some important sites fall within flood zones 2 and 3 and/or are affected by surface water flooding:

- SHLAA 2068 in Moreton is proposed for housing, and is entirely within flood zone 2 and 3. There is also associated employment uses in this location, but this may be an appropriate use.
- SHLAA 0752 overlaps with significant areas of flood zone 2 and 3.
- Site 4078 is heavily affected by surface water flooding.

These sites will place residents at risk of flooding, and therefore significant negative effects are possible in these locations. Mitigation measures would clearly need to be secured to ensure that development is appropriate.

Overall, **minor negative effects** are predicted with regards to flooding. The majority of new development would be in areas that are not at risk of flooding and would not increase flood risk elsewhere. However, there are some important exceptions where significant flood risk exists.

Development throughout the urban areas should present an opportunity to introduce urban greening measures, which can help with climate change resilience for wildlife and human health. This could be particularly beneficial for more built up areas such as Birkenhead and Wirral Waters, in terms of helping to reduce a potential heat island effect. However, these benefits would be reliant upon such measures being incorporated into new development. Given the lack of space and the intensification involved in the urban areas, it is unclear the

extent to which urban greening will be achieved. Therefore, **uncertain minor positive effects** are predicted.

Option 2a involves dispersed growth on greenfield land. A range of potential sites are identified, with some exhibiting limited risk of flooding, whilst others are intersected by watercourses and therefore parts of the sites fall within flood zone 2 and 3. There are areas of surface water flooding concern on each of the sites also to differing extents. The scale of the sites should mean that where flooding is an issue, it is possible to avoid such areas. There should also be good opportunities to design developments that mimic natural drainage patterns and ensure no net increase in run-off. Consequently, a **neutral effect** is predicted overall for this option.

Option 2b will have similar effects to Option 2b. The potential urban extension to Heswall is at risk of flooding from Prenton Brook, as well as there being pockets of surface water flood risk throughout the site. The strategic nature of development should allow for these areas to be avoided though and for SUDs to be incorporated that ensure no net increase in surface water run-off or flooding. Consequently, a **neutral effect** is predicted overall for this option.

An extension at Bebington exhibits similar characteristics, and therefore the effects would be the same.

For both Green Belt options, a loss of greenfield land could reduce the ecosystem services associated with natural and semi natural land (such as food management, reduction in urban heating, ecological corridors. Therefore, in terms of wider resilience to climate change, the effects are possibly negative. However, this depends upon the extent of enhancement measures that are secured though and whether net gain is actually achieved. Neutral effects are predicted at this stage.

2.4 Climate Change mitigation

The ability to deliver resource efficient and resilient developments ought not to be dependent upon location to a great extent. Therefore, the distribution of homes should have the same effects on emissions from the built environment regardless of location. Development in any location should also provide opportunities to introduce resilience measures such as green infrastructure, green roofs and SUDs. An important factor in achieving sustainable design is the viability of development, as this could make reductions in emissions harder to achieve. Therefore, site options with some constraints could be less likely to lead to lower carbon development. In this respect, Option 1, which involves a lot of brownfield sites (with possible viability issues) could be less likely to achieve higher emissions reductions. Likewise, options that rely upon substantial infrastructure upgrades to be funded through development (such as Option 2b) may also be constrained in this respect.

Location can however, lead to differences in the amount of emissions from transport, and certain locations or types of sites (larger mixed-use with demands for heat) may also be more likely to support decentralised energy schemes. These factors are discussed below with regards to each option. The effects have not been broken down in terms of the settlement areas, as impacts in one area could offset those in another. Therefore, it is more appropriate to discuss the overall implications at a borough level for each option with regards to emissions and resilience. It should also be acknowledged though that the impacts within

the Borough are interlinked with those in surrounding areas, as climate change is a cross boundary issue.

Option 1A promotes urban intensification, by developing urban sites and by increasing densities across all the settlements in Wirral. The locations that option 1A focuses on have good access to jobs, services and public transport. Therefore, new development should be less likely to generate long car trips (and associated emissions). This option would also limit further growth in less accessible locations. Whilst there is no solid evidence to support decentralised energy schemes, the scale of some site options in the commercial Core and Birkenhead, and the higher heat demand in the urban area could make these locations more suitable for such schemes.

Larger site options may also be more appropriate for delivering strategic green infrastructure improvements, which can help with climate change resilience for wildlife and human health. This could be particularly beneficial for more built up areas such as Birkenhead and Wirral Waters, in terms of helping to reduce a potential heat island effect. Consequently, a **minor positive effect** is predicted overall for Option 1a in terms of carbon emissions and adaptation.

Option 1B would still provide for all the Borough's new development to be accommodated within the urban area, in line with Option 1A but could allow the development required to be provided at a lower rate through the early years of the plan period, followed by a higher rate during the later years. Given that the efficiency requirements for new development will increase in the longer term, this ought to mean that the carbon emissions for this approach would be lower over the plan period compared to option 1a.

Option 2A proposes the release of a series of medium to large sized areas of land, which when added together would allow sufficient land to be allocated to meet any residual housing needs within the Plan period.

Depending upon the viability of individual sites, their greenfield nature could possibly present good opportunities to achieve higher standards of efficiency (through higher land values). However, this is an uncertainty. The peripheral nature of the site options is more likely to encourage car trips though, which would lead to a continuation or worsening of current trends with relation to emissions from transport.

The overall picture in terms of emissions is therefore likely to be **neutral** or **minor negative effects**.

A loss of greenfield land will also reduce the ecosystem services associated with natural and semi natural land (such as food management, reduction in urban heating, ecological corridors). Therefore, in terms of resilience, the effects are possibly negative. This depends upon the extent of enhancement measures that are secured though and whether net gain is actually achieved.

The alternative option to dispersed release (**Option 2b**) is to focus development more strategically into a single larger area around an existing settlement. This option still relies on the weakly performing Green Belt areas but groups these together to identify a larger area for urban expansion. An extension at Heswall is thought to be more feasible than one at Bromborough / Eastham.

A large development at Heswall would be at the urban fringe. It is therefore likely to generate car trips, as it would allow relatively good access to the strategic road network. The majority of jobs growth is to the east of the Borough, and so in this respect, the length of trips (and associated emissions) would be expected to increase. The presence of a train station nearby would help to offset this somewhat, but the services are not particularly regular or quick. In terms of local services and facilities, a new well-planned extension should help to provide local access, which can encourage walking and cycling. This too ought to offset an increase in emissions from car based travel. There are no identified options with regards to district heating, though in theory a large scale mixed use development ought to provide better opportunities for such schemes. Overall, a **neutral effect** is predicted. Whilst there may be some reductions in travel due to the provision of local facilities and the presence of a train station nearby, it is also likely that car emissions will continue to be important. It is uncertain whether higher standards of resource efficiency would be achieved, but the requirement for new roads and other social infrastructure to support a comprehensive development would make this less likely. Therefore, at this stage, uncertain effects are predicted.

2.5 Economy and Employment

There are common elements to each of the spatial options that are likely to generate positive effects with regards to the economy and employment.

Of particular note is that the majority of employment land is proposed along Wirral Waters and surrounding areas and along the River Mersey at Port Sunlight / Bromborough and Eastham. These are high quality employment opportunities that are accessible to the most deprived parts of the Borough and tie-in with the wider regeneration ambitions for the Borough and the wider Liverpool sub-region. In this respect, **significant positive effects** are likely to be generated for each option with regards to economic growth, investment and employment.

However, each option performs differently in relation to impacts upon local centres across the borough, how housing is related to new and existing jobs, and how the options could help to address deprivation.

Option 1 promotes a lot of housing growth in urban areas that are in need of regeneration and are suffering from high levels of deprivation. In this respect, the benefits of new affordable homes and associated infrastructure improvements would be most likely to help address inequalities. Option 1 promotes most housing growth the east of the borough and it is therefore accessible to job opportunities and public transport. Growth is managed in the more affluent areas to the west, which helps to support this regeneration-led approach. In this respect, Option 1 is predicted to have **significant positive effects**.

One area where Option 1 could generate negative effects though is a reliance on employment land to deliver housing growth on some sites. If suitable replacements are not provided, this could lead to **minor negative effects** in terms of employment land availability in certain areas. This is unlikely to be a major stumbling block though, especially if a hybrid option was established involving limited greenbelt release should a need arise.

Options 2a and 2b are less positive with regards to tackling regeneration. Firstly, growth is at the periphery of settlement areas, which is less accessible to jobs generally

speaking. Furthermore, growth would be drawn away from the east of the borough in the urban areas and would be placed in more affluent locations such as Heswall, and West Kirby. Whilst this has some benefit in terms of local job provision and local spending it is much less likely to address inequalities. Therefore, only **neutral** or **minor positive effects** would be generated in this respect.

These two options would also be more likely to lead to increased commuting, which is considered a **minor negative effect** in terms of creating an efficient modern economy.

2.6 Health

TO BE COMPLETED

2.7 Heritage

Option 1 involves a range of housing sites in the urban areas of the main settlements across the borough. In some locations, there are limited sensitivities and the sites involved are poor quality. Therefore **neutral effects** are predicted. This applies to most of the development proposed in Heswall (Settlement Area 7), the rural areas (Settlement Area 8), mid Wirral (Settlement Area 6) and Sub-Urban Birkenhead (Settlement Area 5). At West Kirby and Bromborough, there are some local features that could be affected by development, but mitigation ought to ensure that the residual effects are **neutral** too.

In other locations, development is proposed that is close to conservation areas and / or listed buildings. For example, In Wallasey (Settlement Area 1) several sites are identified for intensification which are adjacent to listed buildings (i.e. Wallasey Town Hall). However, the existing site conditions / character of the existing buildings is poor and development is most likely to lead to improvements rather than negative effects. This is also the case in Bebington at the edge of Port Sunlight Conservation Area, where improvements measures ought to help enhance the setting of listed buildings. **Minor to significant positive effects** are predicted to reflect these factors.

The key area where effects are likely is the Commercial Core (Settlement Area 2). There are several large sites proposed in areas that contain multiple listed buildings and overlap with Conservation Areas. Of particular importance are the sites along the River Mersey which form a backdrop to Liverpool and contain listed assets. In this wider area there are also a number of listed buildings. Effects are potentially negative or positive but this is dependent upon design and layout. If buildings are lost or damaged by development, these could be **significant negative effects**. Likewise, development along the River Mersey could negatively affect the character of a prominent listed asset. However, sensitive development could help to better preserve listed buildings and enhance the setting and character of the area should development be sensitively designed. This would be a **significant positive effect**. Given the regeneration-focused approach being promoted by the Plan, it is considered more likely that positive rather than negative effects will be generated, but there is uncertainty at this stage.

Option 2a is more likely to have effects on heritage features that rely upon open countryside. This is because dispersed growth in the Green Belt would involve a loss of open space, which in some locations would be likely to erode the character of small villages and affect the setting of heritage assets. However, there ought to be sufficient flexibility in the choice of sites to ensure that the most sensitive areas can be avoided. The more sensitive locations under this option involve parcels of land at Bromborough and Eastham Settlement Area. Development of some of these could lead to significant negative effects. However, at the lower levels of growth involved, there remains flexibility to ensure that such effects are avoided. Therefore, only **minor negative effects** are predicted for option 2a overall.

Option 2b would have different effects depending upon which urban extension is involved. Common to both approaches though, there would be limited growth in other parts of the borough, and so the effects would be very localised.

A western extension to the east of Heswall is predicted to have minor negative effects. The scale of the site would substantially alter the rural settling of the countryside between the existing urban area of Heswall and the small village of Barnston (which is designated as a Conservation Area). There is a Grade II listed Christ Church at the edge of the settlement and stone boundary walls along the edge of the proposed urban extension site. Development has the potential to alter the setting of both the church, and the edge of the Conservation Area. Retention of important features and landscaping could help to mitigate effects and avoid significant impacts. However, a **minor negative effect** could remain.

An eastern urban extension to the south / south-west of Bebington and Eastham could lead to **significant negative effects** in this location. Several of the parcels of land involved in an urban extension would involve changes to the setting of heritage assets. In combination with one another, and the fact that all of the sites would come forward, the effects would be difficult to mitigate.

For all of the Green Belt options, if development is at the expense of urban regeneration, there are implications for heritage and built environment in those areas. On one hand, it could protect the character of urban areas, but most likely, it would mean that areas stay in a poor condition, and opportunities to enhance the setting of built environments would be fewer.

2.8 Housing

Option 1 proposes enough additional housing sites to meet the locally assessed housing need (using the standard method) of a minimum of 12,000 dwellings net over the plan period (i.e. 800 homes per year). There are additional sites identified also, which is a theoretical supply of approximately 14,800 dwellings (though these potentially have deliverability issues). In the event that all these sites come forward, a **significant positive effect** is likely to occur. This amount of development should however provide sufficient choice and flexibility. The distribution of development is also well correlated in terms of employment opportunities and supporting communities of need in a number of locations.

Option 2a is predicted to have **significant positive effects** in terms of housing delivery as it would also meet objectively assessed needs. However, if this was at the expense of growth

in the urban areas, then the benefits of development for those in greatest need would be reduced.

The issues would be more pronounced for **Option 2b**, as development would be concentrated more into singular locations (and thus the benefits of development would not be felt by a variety of communities). Therefore, only **minor positive effects** are predicted for option 2b.

All three options provide sufficient land to meet objectively assessed housing needs. There is also a degree of flexibility built into each option.

Should the locally assessed housing need be achieved (for the Borough), this would lead to positive effects on housing. However, setting a target in line with the locally assessed housing need figure does not necessarily mean it will be achieved if there are issues of deliverability and phasing. Therefore, at this scale of growth, the potential for significant positive effects could be reduced somewhat unless additional land is released to allow for flexibility.

The distribution of housing is also important to ensure that a wide range of communities benefit from growth, and that development occurs in appropriate, attractive locations. In this respect, option 2b performs less well compared to options 1 and 2a.

2.9 Land and Soil

Option 1 is predicted to have **significant positive effects** as it will lead to the regeneration and use of brownfield land in the urban areas of the Borough. Overlap with agricultural land would be very limited. At a higher scale of growth, the intensification option would need to be supplemented by greenbelt release, but this would not necessarily need to be on best and most agricultural land unless very high levels of growth were pursued (which could then result in minor negative effects).

The Green Belt options assume that there would be much more growth in the countryside and therefore, negative effects are inevitable. The precise nature of effects would depend upon the location of development. However, high level effects can be determined as follows.

Option 2a offers some flexibility in the choice of sites, and therefore a loss of best and most versatile land is possible. However, the weak parcels of land that have been identified as potential sites mostly consist of best and most versatile land, so a degree of negative effects are likely. At the level of growth involved, it is likely that at least 120ha of BAMV land would be affected, with a large amount potentially being Grade 3a (subject to detailed survey to confirm). There would probably be some Grade 2 land involved though. Therefore, a **significant negative effect** is predicted.

The effects for **Option 2b** depend upon the urban extension involved. As the most deliverable option, it is assumed that the western extension would be most likely. This approach would lead to an overlap with approximately 70ha of grade 3 land, which is a **significant negative effect**. The eastern extension would be even more negative, with potentially up to 100ha of Grade 2 land (to be confirmed) affected.

At a higher scale of growth, both greenbelt options would generate further negative effects with regards to agricultural land and offer limited opportunities for the reuse of land in urban

areas (in fact it could discourage investment in such areas). Therefore, the negative effects could be severe for land and soils at very high levels of growth.

2.10 Landscape

Option 1 promotes urban intensification, with the majority of growth focused to the east of the Borough and within the urban areas. A large number of the sites that would be involved for development are previously developed, and a notable proportion of these are also derelict / vacant and/or low quality in terms of the contribution they make to townscape. Redevelopment of these sites is likely to have positive effects on townscape. There would be limited changes to the character of the open countryside, but this a positive effect of the strategy which would reduce pressure for Green Belt land release.

There are a handful of sites on 'green' space in the urban settlements (for example in West Kirby), but development would not be on important recreational land or lead to coalescence between settlements.

Overall, **significant positive effects** are predicted, reflecting these factors.

It will be important to ensure that the character of the River Mersey front is enhanced for any development that occurs along its banks. This will be visible from long distances in Liverpool. Provided that appropriate heights, scale and density are used, then positive rather than negative effects ought to be most likely.

The effects of **Option 2a** will depend upon the exact sites involved. However, there are likely effects of a dispersed approach regardless of which locations are involved. Though the sites that would be involved have all been identified as weak performing in terms of overall green belt contribution, they are all in the countryside outside of the urban area. It is therefore likely that the character of landscapes will be affected negatively. Development is most likely to affect local amenity rather than lead to significant effects in terms of coalescence and the loss of sensitive land. It is also likely that strategic green infrastructure would be involved given the large scale nature of the sites. However, it is considered that a **minor negative effect** would remain. The choice of sites and dispersed nature of development should mean that no significant effects in any one location are likely.

Option 2b focuses growth into one large urban extension, with two possible locations identified. Whilst both consist of land that is considered 'weak' in terms of its contribution to green belt function, the combined effects of releasing all these parcels of land would most likely lead to **significant negative effects** in these two locations. To the west of Heswall, a large scheme could lead to coalescence with Barnston, whilst an extension at Bromborough / Bebington could lead to locally important open space being 'closed off' between Poulton and Brookhurst. For both urban extensions, the strategic nature of development would likely involve substantial roles for green infrastructure and landscaping schemes. Therefore, the potential for mitigation and enhancement of the quality of land is possible. The residual effects may therefore be minor rather than significant. However, at this stage, a precautionary approach is taken, and significant effects are recorded.

Should Green Belt development draw investment away from the urban areas to the east of the borough in particular, then the opportunities to achieve positive effects in these locations

would be diminished also. This is the case for both options 2a and 2b and is a particular weakness of focusing solely or heavily on Green Belt release.

2.11 Population and Communities

Of particular note is that the majority of employment land is proposed along Wirral Waters and surrounding areas and along the River Mersey at Port Sunlight / Bromborough and Eastham. These are high quality employment opportunities that are accessible to the most deprived parts of the Borough and tie-in with the wider regeneration ambitions for the Borough and the wider Liverpool sub-region. In this respect, **significant positive effects** are likely to be generated for each option with regards to population and the community.

However, each option performs differently in relation to impacts upon local centres/settlement areas across the borough, how the growth areas are related to new and existing jobs, health and leisure facilities, green infrastructure links and how the options could help to address overall deprivation.

Option 1 promotes a lot of housing growth in urban areas that are in need of regeneration and are suffering from high levels of deprivation. In this respect, the benefits of associated infrastructure improvements would be most likely to help address inequalities, improving access to new / improved health and leisure opportunities and increasing the housing options for a greater proportion of the population. Option 1 promotes most housing growth the east of the borough and it is therefore accessible to job opportunities and public transport. Growth is managed in the more affluent areas to the west, which helps to support this regeneration-led approach.

There are a number of vacant and poor quality sites involved for option 1. Redevelopment ought to help improve the public realm and could help to improve perceptions of community safety.

Most of the proposed sites are brownfield in nature, and the surrounding areas are urbanised. It will be important to ensure that access to open space and green infrastructure is considered for Option 1 given that there are no immediate links to green infrastructure networks in the countryside.

Taking the above factors into account, option 1 is predicted to have **significant positive effects**.

Options 2a and 2b are less positive with regards to tackling regeneration across the whole borough, as growth mainly focuses on the more affluent areas in the borough. Development would be at the periphery of settlement areas, which is less favourable for the population as this is less accessible to jobs, leisure and health facilities generally speaking. Therefore, **neutral effects** are predicted in terms of addressing inequalities.

However, the strategic nature of developments ought to allow for improvements to be made with regards to social infrastructure. For Option 2a, **minor positive effects** would be generated at several locations across the borough.

For Option 2b, the scale of growth associated with an urban extension would likely support new open space, education and health facilities, which would be beneficial for new communities. The location of the new settlements would also be likely to support good access to green infrastructure and open space. These are **significant positive effects** for new communities, but the benefits in other parts of the borough would be limited.

These two options would also be more likely to lead to increased commuting for work and distance travelled for local services, which is considered a **minor negative effect** in terms of creating rounded communities/services centres which provide the right offering to improve people's quality of life.

2.12 Transport

In general, most of the urban areas in Wirral are covered by some form of transport linkage whether it be cycle routes, roads or rail. The Merseyrail line between Birkenhead and Chester runs along the eastern side of the Wirral, and is close to where more developments are being proposed in these existing urban areas. More development will harness the need for better transport linkages. It is best to place development in areas already serviced by transport infrastructure, to avoid transport upgrade costs in areas where they currently don't exist.

Option 1 proposes higher density development in existing urban areas, mainly focusing on Wirral Waters, Commercial Core and other locations to the east of the Borough. Wirral Waters is planned to include a wide range of local facilities and services, including further enhancements to the already good public transport links. Access to jobs would also be good given the future opportunities in Wirral Waters itself and links to Birkenhead and Liverpool, via public transport and road. Development in the urban area would therefore have excellent accessibility. The scale of some sites at Wirral Waters could also be more likely to support on-site facilities that could benefit new and existing communities.

In the absence of strategic infrastructure improvements this could lead to negative effects with regards to congestion in areas that already suffer. However, the factors discussed above will help to mitigate such effects.

More limited growth is proposed in settlement areas to the middle and west of the borough. These settlement areas exhibit poorer accessibility in terms of access to services and jobs (especially by rail), and in turn increase travel trips by car for a large proportion of the population. Given that growth is limited in these areas, congestion problems are unlikely to be worsened notably here. There are public transport links and local services that will help to promote sustainable travel, but it is likely that a reliance on car travel will remain, which are **neutral effects**.

On balance, **significant positive effects** could be generated as the majority of new development will have excellent accessibility and is well linked to existing and planned employment growth and existing infrastructure. This ought to promote sustainable travel and ensure that growth can be supported.

However, it will be important to ensure that intensified growth in the urban areas to the east of the Borough does not lead to congestion problems. A **minor negative effect** is predicted to reflect the potential for increased traffic on local roads (though this is also

uncertain / dependent upon whether road and bus networks can be enhanced in advance of any development in this area).

Both **Option 2A and 2B** are proposing substantial focused development at the periphery of urban areas. This could have a negative effect on transport as existing transport linkage infrastructure may reach capacity and there could be requirements for infrastructure upgrades in locations that are not currently well connected to the transport network. Furthermore, these locations are generally less well related to public transport and services, and more likely to encourage car use. Consequently, these approaches are less likely to support a shift from car dominance.

Option 2A may have a negative effect on existing transport infrastructure at a number of the Settlement Areas as they will be affected by increases in development, but not necessarily at a high enough scale to fund strategic transport infrastructure or on site improvements to social infrastructure provision such as new schools and health facilities. However, the effects in terms of congestion are less likely to be significant, as development (and thus car trips) would be dispersed. However, the overall picture in terms of car usage would likely be the worst of all three options. The good access afforded by Option 1 would be absent, whilst the strategic opportunities for enhancement associated with large urban extensions would also be less likely. Overall, **minor negative effects** are predicted.

Option 2b will involve the largest focus of growth into new urban extensions. This could create localised pressures on the road network, but the scale of growth ought to allow for improvements to be secured. There should also be associated services supporting such extensions and so it should be possible to achieve walkable developments. With regards to employment opportunities though, the links are less positive. For example, an extension to the east of Heswall would likely result in car dominated commuting patterns, putting pressure on local road networks. If development in this location draws development away from the urban areas near to the Commercial Core, it may also mean that investment in transport improvements measures in those areas is diminished. With this in mind, **minor negative effects** are predicted overall. Whilst this approach could lead to notable effects in certain locations in terms of traffic, the potential for strategic enhancements offset this to an extent.

An extension at Bebington would have similar effects, but this has better connections to new employment opportunities (resulting in shorter and potentially fewer car trips). This location is also likely to generate car trips though, particularly given its good access to A41. A significant increase in traffic in this location could therefore contribute to negative effects on congestion.

2.13 Water resources

The impacts upon water resources will be dependent upon the ability to manage waste water and drainage requirements resulting from new developments. There is an assumption that development can be supported, but this will need to be confirmed with utilities providers regardless of the spatial approach that is taken. At this stage, uncertain effects are predicted for each option in this respect.

With regards to longer term water quality, it is possible that a change in land use from agricultural to residential can reduce the levels of nitrate pollution. In this respect the Green Belt options could have **minor positive effects**, but this carries a degree of uncertainty.

DRAFT

Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Wirral Local Plan 2020-2035: Issues and Options Consultation Document

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

Project number: 60610735

December 2019

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1. Background

Introduction

- 1.1 AECOM has been appointed by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (WBC) to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of its new Local Plan. This report is an assessment of the Wirral Local Plan 2020-2035: Issues and Options Consultation Document (referred to hereafter as the 'Issues and Options Document') which is to be published for consultation in early 2020 under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The objective of this assessment is to identify any aspects of the emerging Local Plan that would cause an adverse effect on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites, otherwise known as European sites (Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and, as a matter of Government policy, Ramsar sites), either in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects, and to advise on appropriate policy mechanisms for delivering mitigation where such effects are identified. The UK is bound by the terms of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). Under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, an Appropriate Assessment of impact pathways is required, where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect upon a European Site, either individually or 'in combination' with other projects.
- 1.2 The new Local Plan will cover the years 2020 to 2035, which on adoption will replace the previous Unitary Development Plan for Wirral, adopted in February 2000. It will set out the policies and proposals to guide the future development of the Borough during this period. Particularly the Local Plan will allocate land for housing, employment, mixed-use and other purposes, specifying both the quantum and spatial distribution of development. However, the Plan will also seek to protect important characteristics of Wirral, including the unique natural and historical assets, as well as preserving the highly-performing parcels of Green Belt land. The current Reg 18 Issues and Options document sets out the housing and employment needs (and other strategic objectives) for Wirral. It is projected within the Local Plan that a minimum of 12,000 net new residential dwellings and 80ha of employment land will be delivered across the Borough within the Plan period. The Issues and Options Document is the first of several stages of plan consultation and development, each of which will be subject to HRA.
- 1.3 The Issues and Options Document considers several strategic options to deliver the required growth within Wirral. WBC's preferred approach is Option 1A (Urban Intensification), which would deliver all the required development in urban areas without Green Belt release. This option would involve the delivery of higher density development and converting some of the existing employment land to housing. However, if some the land proposed to be allocated under Option 1A does not meet the test for developability and deliverability, some development will be provided in the Green Belt. According to the Issues and Options document, up to 2,500 homes and 20ha of employment land could be delivered in the Green Belt. WBC considers two different options of Green Belt development:
 - Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Release): Under this option, several small-medium size areas would be included throughout Wirral, mainly to the north-west of Heswall and south of Bebington which when added together, would allow sufficient land to be allocated to meet any residual housing needs within the Plan Period; and
 - Option 2B proposes an alternative option to focus development more strategically into a single larger area around an existing settlement. This option still relies on the weakly performing Green Belt parcels but groups these together to identify a larger contiguous area for urban expansion. The most suitable location would be on land west of Barnston Road, Heswall.
- 1.4 It is possible that, if a green belt release option is progressed for the Reg. 19 Local Plan a mixture of Options 2A and 2B would be needed. Despite its relatively early stage, the Issues and Options Document already proposes several different spatial options with specific sites included within the potential strategic options. Therefore, in addition to the quantum of development, the HRA for the Issues and Options Document assesses the different strategic growth options (1A, 2A and

2B) to evaluate whether any option, or site within those options, might be of particular concern to the integrity of Wirral's European sites based on the evidence currently available.

- 1.5 However, given that actual policy wording is not yet available and that some key evidence is still missing (e.g. air quality modelling data), some of the Appropriate Assessment (the second stage of the HRA process) and definitive recommendations for some impact pathways are deferred to the Regulation 19 stage of the Local Plan. Furthermore, some of the evidence base needed to make an informed judgment is not yet available (see later discussion), meaning that this HRA also identifies some areas for further work.
- 1.6 An initial assessment of the designated sites within and surrounding Wirral, and the associated impact pathways linking them to the spatial options and proposed allocations in the Issues and Options Document was undertaken. This indicated that several European sites required consideration, most notably the nearby estuarine and coastal sites, including the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar site, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar site, the Dee Estuary SAC and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar site. Given that these sites enclose the Borough of Wirral (i.e. virtually all of Wirral's coast is designated as European sites), they provide a unique geographic context that requires detailed consideration.

Legislative Context

- 1.7 The need for an assessment of impacts on European sites is set out within Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and transposed into English and Welsh law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The ultimate aim of the Habitats Directive is to "*maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and species of wild fauna and flora of Community interest*" (Article 2(2)). This aim relates to habitats and species, not the European Sites themselves, although the European Sites have a significant role in delivering favourable conservation status.
- 1.8 The Habitats Directive applies the precautionary principle¹ to European Sites. Consent should only be granted for plans and projects once the relevant competent authority has ascertained that there will either be no likelihood of significant effects, or no adverse effect on the integrity of the European Site(s) in question. Where an Appropriate Assessment has been carried out and results in a negative impact, or if uncertainty remains over the significant effect, consent will only be granted if there are no alternative solutions and there are Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest (IROPI) for the development and compensatory measures have been secured.
- 1.9 To ascertain whether site integrity will be affected, an Appropriate Assessment should be undertaken of the plan or project in question. Figure 1 provides the legislative basis for an Appropriate Assessment.

¹ The Precautionary Principle, which is referenced in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, has been defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2005) as: "*When human activities may lead to morally unacceptable harm [to the environment] that is scientifically plausible but uncertain, actions shall be taken to avoid or diminish that harm. The judgement of plausibility should be grounded in scientific analysis*".

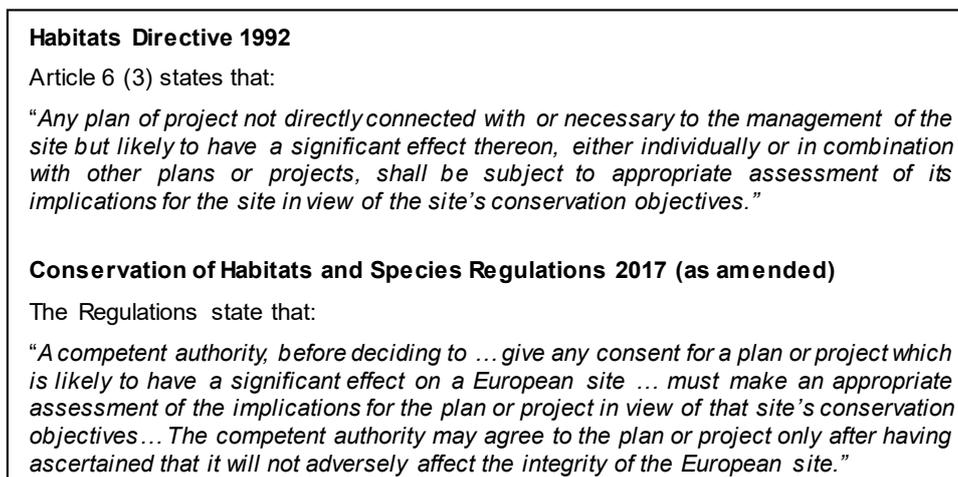


Figure 1. The legislative basis for Appropriate Assessment

- 1.10 Over the years, the phrase ‘Habitats Regulations Assessment’ (HRA) has come into wide currency to describe the overall process set out in the Habitats Regulations, from the Test of Likely Significant Effects (ToLSE) through to identification of IROPI. This has arisen in order to distinguish the overall process from the individual stage of “Appropriate Assessment”. Throughout this Report the term HRA is used for the overall process and restricts the use of Appropriate Assessment to the specific stage of that name.

Scope of the Project

- 1.11 There is no pre-defined guidance that dictates the physical scope of an HRA of a Plan document. Therefore, in considering the physical scope of the assessment, we were guided primarily by the identified impact pathways (called the source-pathway-receptor model) rather than by arbitrary ‘zones’. Current guidance suggests that the following European sites be included in the scope of assessment:
- All European sites within the boundary of the Borough of Wirral; and,
 - Other European sites within 10km shown to be linked to development in Wirral through a known ‘pathway’ (discussed below).
- 1.12 Briefly defined, impact pathways are routes by which the implementation of a policy within a Local Plan document can lead to an effect upon a European designated site. An example of this would be new residential development resulting in an increased population and thus increased recreational pressure, which could then affect European sites by, for example, disturbance of non-breeding or breeding birds. Guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) states that the HRA should be ‘*proportionate to the geographical scope of the [plan policy]*’ and that ‘*an AA need not be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is useful for its purpose*’ (MHCLG, 2006, p.6).
- 1.13 This basic principle has also been reflected in court rulings. The Court of Appeal² has ruled that providing the Council (competent authority) was duly satisfied that proposed mitigation could be ‘achieved in practice’ to satisfy that the proposed development would have no adverse effect, then this would suffice. This ruling has since been applied to a planning permission (rather than a Core Strategy document)³. In this case the High Court ruled that for ‘*a multistage process, so long as there is sufficient information at any particular stage to enable the authority to be satisfied that the proposed mitigation can be achieved in practice it is not necessary for all matters concerning mitigation to be fully resolved before a decision maker is able to conclude that a development will satisfy the requirements of Reg 61 of the Habitats Regulations*’.

²No Adastral New Town Ltd (NANT) v Suffolk Coastal District Council Court of Appeal, 17th February 2015

³High Court case of R (Devon Wildlife Trust) v Teignbridge District Council, 28 July 2015

1.14 Given an initial assessment of the relevant European sites and the impact pathways present, and referring to the HRA work that was undertaken for the adopted Local Plan, this HRA will discuss (at least as far as the ToLSE) the following European sites:

- Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar (partly within Wirral, along its northern and eastern shoreline);
- Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar (partly within Wirral, along its western shoreline);
- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar (partly within Wirral, along its eastern shoreline);
- Dee Estuary SAC (partly within Wirral, along its western and northern shoreline);
- Liverpool Bay SPA (partly within Wirral, along its northern coastline);
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar (approx. 1.6km to the north-east of Wirral);
- Sefton Coast SAC (approx. 1.6km to the north-east of Wirral);
- Halkyn Mountain SAC (approx. 5.7km to the south-west of Wirral);
- River Dee and Bala Lake SAC (approx. 7.3km to the south of Wirral);
- Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC (approx. 9.1km to the south of Wirral); and
- River Eden SAC (beyond 10km of Wirral, but identified as a key source of potable water for the Liverpool City Region)

1.15 As part of the HRA process, the views of the statutory nature conservation advisors, namely Natural England and Natural Resources Wales, will be sought as part of the consultation process on the scope of the European sites assessed.

1.16 The distribution of these sites in relation to the Borough of Wirral is shown in Appendix A. An introduction to these sites, their qualifying features (species and habitats), conservation objectives, and threats and pressures to site integrity are set out in the Appendix B of this report. Given that the Borough is enclosed by European sites, a significant proportion of the sites proposed in the Issues and Options Document are in close proximity to these sites or functionally linked habitat.

1.17 In order to fully inform the ToLSE process, several studies and information databases have been consulted to determine Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) that could arise from the Issues and Options Document. These include:

- Future development proposed (and, where available, HRAs) for the adjoining authorities of Flintshire, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton, Liverpool and Chester;
- Road traffic statistics from the Department for Transport (<https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk>);
- Journey-to-work data from the Population Census 2011 (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/WU03UK>);
- Visitor surveys and bird disturbance fieldwork carried out by Thomson Ecology⁴ and Footprint Ecology⁵, covering the North Wirral and Mersey Narrows Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar;
- Bird surveys assessing supporting habitats in the Liverpool City Region commissioned by the Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service⁶

⁴ Thomson Ecology. (2015). Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Sites of Special Scientific Interest – Investigation into the Impacts of Recreational Disturbance on Bird Declines. 107pp.

⁵ Liley D., Panter C., Marsh P. & Roberts J. (2017). Recreational activity and interactions with birds within the SSSIs on the North-West coast of England. Unpublished report by Footprint Ecology for Natural England.

⁶ TEP. (2015). Assessment of Supporting Habitat (Docks) for Use by Qualifying Features of Natura 2000 Sites in the Liverpool City Region. Ornithology Report. 330pp. and available at: <http://www.meas.org.uk/1088> [Accessed on the 28/11/2019]

- The HRA produced for the proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy Local Plan;
- Core Management Plans (for Welsh sites), Site Improvement Plans and Supplementary Conservation Advice Notes (for English sites) for relevant European sites;
- The UK Air Pollution Information System (www.apis.ac.uk); and
- Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) and its links to SSSI citations and the JNCC website (www.magic.gov.uk).

1.18 The emerging Spatial Development Strategy of the Metro Mayor Liverpool City Region Combined Authority is not assessed at this time because it is not sufficiently advanced with no strategic policies available.

Quality Assurance

- 1.19 This report was undertaken in line with AECOM's Integrated Management System (IMS). Our IMS places great emphasis on professionalism, technical excellence, quality, environmental and Health and Safety management. All staff members are committed to establishing and maintaining our certification to the international standards BS EN ISO 9001:2008 and 14001:2004 and BS OHSAS 18001:2007. In addition, our IMS requires careful selection and monitoring of the performance of all sub-consultants and contractors.
- 1.20 All AECOM Ecologists working on this project are members (at the appropriate level) of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and follow their code of professional conduct (CIEEM, 2017).
- 1.21 This report has also been reviewed by Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) staff who are technical advisors to Wirral on environmental planning officers. The MEAS staff undertaking the review are all full Members of CIEEM.

2. Methodology

Introduction

- 2.1 The HRA has been carried out with reference to the general EC guidance on HRA⁷, general guidance on HRA published by government in July 2019⁸ and the Welsh Government's guidance on HRA: Technical Advice Note 5 (Nature Conservation and Planning) 2009 and The Planning Series: 16 – Habitats Regulations Assessment (since some Welsh European sites are involved). AECOM has also been mindful of the implications of European case law in 2018, notably the Holohan ruling and the People over Wind ruling, both discussed below.
- 2.2 Figure 2 below outlines the stages of HRA according to current EC guidance. The stages are essentially iterative, being revisited as necessary in response to more detailed information, recommendations and any relevant changes to the plan until no significant adverse effects remain.

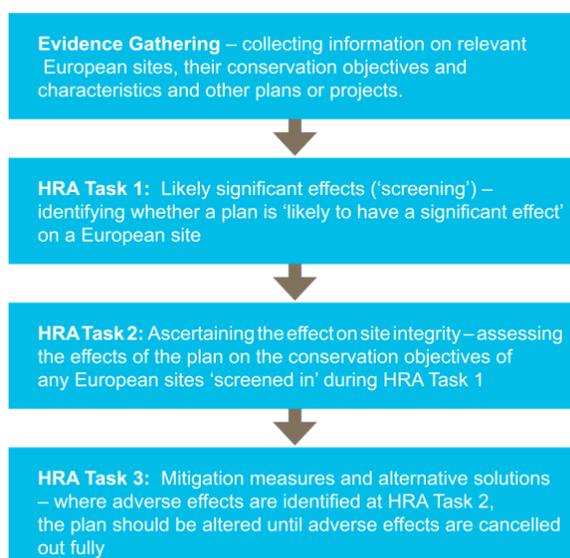


Figure 2: Four Stage Approach to Habitats Regulations Assessment. Source EC, 2001¹.

Description of HRA Tasks

HRA Task 1 – Likely Significant Effects (LSE)

- 2.3 Following evidence gathering, the first stage of any Habitats Regulations Assessment is a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) test - essentially a high-level assessment to decide whether the full subsequent stage known as Appropriate Assessment is required. The essential question is:

"Is the project, either alone or in combination with other relevant projects and plans, likely to result in a significant effect upon European sites?"

- 2.4 The objective is to 'screen out' those plans and projects that can, without any detailed appraisal, be said to be unlikely to result in significant adverse effects upon European sites, usually because there is no mechanism for an adverse interaction with European sites. This stage is undertaken in Chapter 4 of this report and in Appendix A.

⁷ European Commission (2001): Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/appropriate-assessment>

HRA Task 2 – Appropriate Assessment (AA)

- 2.5 Where it is determined that a conclusion of ‘no likely significant effect’ cannot be drawn, the analysis has proceeded to the next stage of HRA known as Appropriate Assessment. Case law has clarified that ‘appropriate assessment’ is not a technical term. In other words, there are no particular technical analyses, or level of technical analysis, that are classified by law as belonging to appropriate assessment rather than determination of likely significant effects.
- 2.6 By virtue of the fact that it follows ToLSE, there is a clear implication that the analysis will be more detailed and one of the key considerations during Appropriate Assessment is whether there is available mitigation that would entirely address the potential effect. In practice, the appropriate assessment would take any policies or allocations that could not be dismissed following the high-level ToLSE analysis and analyse the potential for an effect in more detail, with a view to concluding whether there would actually be an adverse effect on integrity (in other words, disruption of the coherent structure and function of the European site(s)).
- 2.7 A decision by the European Court of Justice⁹ concluded that measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of a proposed project on a European site may no longer be taken into account by competent authorities at the ToLSE stage of HRA. That ruling has been taken into account in producing this HRA.
- 2.8 Also, in 2018 the Holohan ruling¹⁰ was handed down by the European Court of Justice. Among other provisions paragraph 39 of the ruling states that ‘*As regards other habitat types or species, which are present on the site, but for which that site has not been listed, and with respect to habitat types and species located outside that site, ... typical habitats or species must be included in the appropriate assessment, if they are necessary to the conservation of the habitat types and species listed for the protected area*’ [emphasis added]. Due account of this decision has been taken in this HRA, particularly regarding potential functionally linked habitat parcels of agricultural land and the dock systems, which are used by qualifying birds of the surrounding SPA and Ramsar sites, and also form part of the Wetland Bird Surveys (WeBS) core count areas.

HRA Task 3 – Avoidance and Mitigation

- 2.9 Where necessary, measures are recommended for incorporation into the Plan in order to avoid or mitigate adverse effects on European sites. There is considerable precedent concerning the level of detail that a Local Plan document needs to contain regarding mitigation for impact pathways on European sites (e.g. regarding recreational pressure). The implication of this precedent is that it is not necessary for all measures that will be deployed to be fully developed prior to adoption of the Plan, but the Plan must provide an adequate policy framework within which these measures can be delivered.
- 2.10 In evaluating significance, AECOM has relied on professional judgement as well as the results of previous stakeholder consultation regarding development impacts on the European sites considered within this assessment.
- 2.11 When discussing ‘mitigation’ for a Local Plan, one is concerned primarily with the policy framework to enable the delivery of such mitigation rather than the details of the mitigation measures themselves since a Local Plan document is a high-level policy document.
- 2.12 In any Local Plan, there are numerous policies for which there is a limit to the degree of assessment that is possible at this plan level. This is because either:
- The policy in question does not contain any specifics as to what will be delivered or where so literally cannot be assessed in detail at the plan level. In these cases, the appropriate assessment focusses on precautionary mitigation that can be included in the plan to ensure that whatever proposals come forward will not result in adverse effects on integrity; or
 - The nature of the potential impacts (notably lighting, noise and visual disturbance during construction, or loss of functionally-linked habitat) are very closely related to exactly how

⁹ People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17)

¹⁰ Case C-461/17

the development will be designed and constructed, or detailed development site-specific bird survey data, and therefore cannot be assessed in detail at the plan level. In these instances, the appropriate assessment focusses on the available mitigation measures, the extent to which such measures would be achievable and effective and whether an adequate protective framework exists to ensure that the policy would not lead to an adverse effect on the integrity of any internationally designated sites.

- 2.13 On these occasions the advice of Advocate-General Kokott¹¹ is worth considering. She commented that: *'It would ...hardly be proper to require a greater level of detail in preceding plans [rather than planning applications] or the abolition of multi-stage planning and approval procedures so that the assessment of implications can be concentrated on one point in the procedure. Rather, adverse effects on areas of conservation must be assessed at every relevant stage of the procedure to the extent possible on the basis of the precision of the plan. This assessment is to be updated with increasing specificity in subsequent stages of the procedure'* [emphasis added]. This is particularly relevant for the Issues and Options Document due to some evidence limitations at the current time.

¹¹ Opinion of Advocate General Kokott, 9th June 2005, Case C-6/04. Commission of the European Communities v United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, paragraph 49 <http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=58359&doclang=EN>

3. Background to Impact Pathways

3.1 The following impact pathways are considered relevant to Wirral's Issues and Options Document:

- Recreational pressure (due to the local population growth);
- Loss of functionally linked habitat (habitat loss due to the potential allocation of greenfield sites for development);
- Water quality (due to increases in sewage effluent and industrial pollutant input);
- Visual and noise disturbance (due to construction activities, artificial lighting, other urban development); and
- Atmospheric pollution (due to an increase in the number of commuter journeys).

Recreational Pressure

3.2 There is growing concern about the cumulative impacts of recreation on key nature conservation sites in the UK, as most sites must fulfill conservation objectives while also providing recreational opportunity. HRAs of Local Plans tend to focus on recreational pressure arising from a net increase in residents¹². Generally, recreational use of a European site has the potential to:

- Cause disturbance to wildlife species, particularly non-breeding waterfowl and wader species
- Cause damage through direct trampling damage, erosion and habitat fragmentation;
- Cause eutrophication through recreation, such as through dog fouling; and
- Prevent appropriate management or exacerbate existing management difficulties;

3.3 The sensitivity of European sites to different types of recreational pressure varies. Studies across a range of species have shown that the effects from recreation can be complex. It also should be emphasised that recreational use is not necessarily damaging. For example, in heathlands a certain level of physical disturbance (that is not continuous in nature) is considered beneficial, as this contributes to the maintenance of the overall habitat diversity and the maintenance of bare ground, the habitat feature that may harbour some of the rarest heathland species¹³. However, in practice, a benign level of disturbance is not quantifiable and is likely to be confined to within narrow limits. Once the optimum recreational pressure is exceeded, negative impacts of recreation are to be expected.

3.4 Some of the most prominent examples of recreational pressure relevant to the European sites within or close to Wirral, namely disturbance to sensitive species of non-breeding birds, trampling damage, and erosion and nutrient enrichment, are discussed below.

Disturbance of non-breeding waterfowl and waders (September – March)

3.5 Human activity can affect birds either directly (e.g. by causing them to flee) or indirectly (e.g. by damaging their habitat or reducing their fitness in less obvious ways e.g. stress). The most obvious direct effect is that of immediate mortality such as death by shooting, but human activity can also lead to much more subtle behavioural (e.g. alterations in feeding behaviour, avoidance of certain areas and use of sub optimal areas etc.) and physiological changes (e.g. an increase

¹² The RTPPI report 'Planning for an Ageing Population' (2004) which states that 'From being a marginalised group in society, the elderly are now a force to be reckoned with and increasingly seen as a market to be wooed by the leisure and tourist industries. There are more of them and generally they have more time and more money.' It also states that 'Participation in most physical activities shows a significant decline after the age of 50. The exceptions to this are walking, golf, bowls and sailing, where participation rates hold up well into the 70s'.

¹³ Key R. 2000. Bare ground and the conservation of invertebrates. *British Wildlife* 11: 183-192.

- in heart rate). While these are less noticeable, they might result in major population-level changes by altering the balance between immigration/birth and emigration/death¹⁴.
- 3.6 Concern regarding the effects of disturbance on birds stems from the fact that they are expending energy unnecessarily and the time they spend responding to disturbance is time that is not spent feeding¹⁵. Disturbance therefore risks increasing energetic expenditure of birds while reducing their energetic intake, which can adversely affect the 'condition' and ultimately survival of the birds. Additionally, displacement of birds from one feeding site to others can increase the pressure on the resources available within the remaining sites, as they then must sustain a greater number of birds¹⁶. Moreover, the more time a breeding bird spends disturbed from its nest, the more its eggs are likely to cool and the more vulnerable they, or any nestlings, are to predators. Multiple research reports have provided compelling links between changes in housing and access levels and impacts on different bird species in European protected sites^{17 18}.
- 3.7 Evidence in the literature suggests that the magnitude of disturbance clearly differs between different types of recreational activities. For example, dog walking leads to a significantly higher reduction in bird diversity and abundance than hiking¹⁹. Scientific evidence also suggests that key disturbance parameters, such as areas of influence and flush distance, are significantly greater for dog walkers than hikers²⁰. A UK meta-analysis suggests that important spatial (e.g. the area of a site potentially influenced) and temporal (e.g. how often or long an activity is carried out) parameters differ between recreational activities, suggesting that activity type is a factor that should be taken into account by HRAs²¹.
- 3.8 There is also likely to be a temporal element to disturbance, creating different disturbance patterns in summer and winter. It can be generally assumed that there are fewer recreational users in winter and that disturbance at a population level may be reduced, because birds are not breeding. However, recreational disturbance in winter may still have negative impacts, because birds face seasonal food shortages and are likely to be susceptible to any nutritional loss. Therefore, the abandonment of suitable feeding areas due to disturbance can have serious consequences for their ability to find suitable alternative feeding sites.
- 3.9 Scientific evidence of disturbance to waterfowl and waders is now widely available. For example, Tuite et al²² used a large (379 sites), long-term (10-year) dataset (September – March species counts) to correlate seasonal changes in wildfowl abundance with the presence of various recreational activities. They determined that the shoveler was one of the most sensitive species to recreational activities, such as sailing/windsurfing and rowing. Studies on recreation in the Solent have established that human leisure activities cause direct disturbance to non-breeding waterfowl populations^{23 24}.
- 3.10 A recent study on recreational disturbance on the Humber²⁵ assesses different types of noise disturbance on waterfowl referring to studies relating to aircraft (see Drewitt 1999²⁶), traffic

¹⁴ Riley, J. 2003. Review of Recreational Disturbance Research on Selected Wildlife in Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage.

¹⁵ Riddington, R. *et al.* 1996. The impact of disturbance on the behaviour and energy budgets of Brent geese. *Bird Study* 43:269-279

¹⁶ Gill, J.A., Sutherland, W.J. & Norris, K. 1998. The consequences of human disturbance for estuarine birds. *RSPB Conservation Review* 12: 67-72

¹⁷ Liley D, Clarke R.T., Mallord J.W., Bullock J.M. 2006a. The effect of urban development and human disturbance on the distribution and abundance of nightjars on the Thames Basin and Dorset Heaths. Natural England / Footprint Ecology.

¹⁸ Liley D., Clarke R.T., Underhill-Day J., Tyldesley D.T. 2006b. Evidence to support the appropriate Assessment of development plans and projects in south-east Dorset. Footprint Ecology / Dorset County Council.

¹⁹ Banks P.B., Bryant J.Y. 2007. Four-legged friend or foe? Dog walking displaces native birds from natural areas. *Biology Letters* 3: 14pp.

²⁰ Miller S.G., Knight R.L., Miller C.K. 2001. Wildlife responses to pedestrians and dogs. 29: 124-132.

²¹ Weitowitz D., Panter C., Hoskin R., Liley D. The spatio-temporal footprint of key recreation activities in European protected sites. Manuscript in preparation.

²² Tuite, C.H., Hanson, P.R. & Owen, M. 1984. Some ecological factors affecting winter wildfowl distribution on inland waters in England and Wales and the influence of water-based recreation. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 21: 41-62

²³ Footprint Ecology. 2010. Recreational Disturbance to Birds on the Humber Estuary

²⁴ Footprint Ecology, Jonathan Cox Associates & Boumemouth University. 2010. Solent disturbance and mitigation project – various reports.

²⁵ Helen Feamley Durwyn Liley and Katie Cruickshanks (2012) Results of Recreational Visitor Survey across the Humber Estuary produced by Footprint Ecology

²⁶ Drewitt, A. (1999) Disturbance effects of aircraft on birds. English Nature, Peterborough.

(Reijnen, Foppen, & Veenbaas 1997)²⁷, dogs (Lord, Waas, & Innes 1997²⁸; Banks & Bryant 2007²⁹) and machinery (Delaney et al. 1999; Tempel & Gutierrez 2003). These studies identified that there is still relatively little work on the effects of different types of water-based craft and the impacts from jet skis, kite surfers, windsurfers etc. (see Kirby et al. 2004³⁰ for a review). Some types of disturbance are clearly likely to invoke different responses. In very general terms, both distance from the source of disturbance and the scale of the disturbance (noise level, group size) will both influence the response (Delaney et al. 1999³¹; Beale & Monaghan 2005³²). On UK estuaries and coastal sites, a review of WeBS data showed that, among the volunteer WeBS surveyors, driving of motor vehicles and shooting were the two activities most perceived to cause disturbance (Robinson & Pollitt 2002)³³.

- 3.11 A study in the Solent monitored bird disturbance across 20 different locations between December 2009 and February 2010³⁴. This involved recording all recreational activities and relating these to behavioural responses of birds in pre-defined focal areas of intertidal habitat. The study recorded a total of 2,507 potential disturbance events, generating 4,064 species-specific behaviours. Roughly 20% of recorded events resulted in disturbance of waterfowl, including behaviours such as becoming alert, walking / swimming away, short flights (< 50m) or major flights. Generally, the likelihood of disturbance decreased with increasing distance to the disturbance stimulus (i.e. the recreational activity being undertaken). Importantly, the study also illustrated that recreational activities in the intertidal zone have the highest disturbance potential (41% of recorded events resulted in disturbance), followed by water-based activities (25%) and shore-based activities (12%).
- 3.12 The specific distance at which a species takes flight when disturbed is known as the 'tolerance distance' (also called the 'escape distance') and greatly differs between species. The tolerance distances of the study carried out for the Bird Aware project are summarised in Table 1. It is reasonable to assume from this evidence that disturbance is unlikely to be relevant at distances of beyond 200m. The data show that the sensitivity to disturbance differs between species, but that the intra-specific variation in response to disturbance is equally important. It was also examined how disturbance to different recreational activities varies between species, but for most species the number of recorded events was not enough for comparison (except for brent goose, oystercatcher and redshank). The results suggest that species might respond to recreational activities differently. For example, brent geese responded to dog walkers much further away than oystercatcher and redshank. It is noted that while these data have been collected in relation to the Solent, similar tolerance distances might apply to species in the Severn Estuary SPA and Ramsar.

Table 1: Tolerance distances in metres of 16 species of waterfowl to various forms of recreational disturbance, as found in recent disturbance fieldwork³⁵. The distances are provided both as a median and a range.

Species	Disturbance Distance (metres from stimulus)		Activity			
	Median	Range	Cycling	Dog walking	Jogging	Walking
Brent goose	51.5	5 - 178	100	95	30	50

²⁷ Reijnen, R., Foppen, R. & Veenbaas, G. (1997) Disturbance by traffic of breeding birds: evaluation of the effect and considerations in planning and managing road corridors. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 6, 567-581.

²⁸ Lord, A., Waas, J.R. & Innes, J. (1997) Effects of human activity on the behaviour of northern New Zealand dotterel *Charadrius obscurus aquilonius* chicks. *Biological Conservation*, 82, 15-20.

²⁹ Banks, P.B. & Bryant, J.V. (2007) Four-legged friend of foe? Dog-walking displaces native birds from natural areas. *Biology Letters*, 3, 611-613.

³⁰ Kirby, J.S., Clee, C. & Seager, V. (1993) Impact and extent of recreational disturbance to wader roosts on the Dee estuary: some preliminary results. *Wader Study Group Bulletin*, 68, 53-58.

³¹ Delaney, D.K., Grubb, T.G., Beier, P., Pater, L.L.M. & Reiser, H. (1999) Effects of Helicopter Noise on Mexican Spotted Owls. *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, 63, 60-76.

³² Beale, C.M. & Monaghan, P. (2005) Modeling the Effects of Limiting the Number of Visitors on Failure Rates of Seabird Nests. *Conservation Biology*, 19, 2015-2019.

³³ Robinson, J.A. & Pollitt, M.S. (2002) Sources and extent of human disturbance to waterbirds in the UK: an analysis of Wetland Bird Survey data, 1995/96 to 1998/99: Less than 32% of counters record disturbance at their site, with differences in causes between coastal and inland sites. *Bird Study*, 49, 205.

³⁴ Liley D., Stillman R. & Fearnley H. 2011. The Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project Phase 2: Results of Bird Disturbance Fieldwork 2009/10. Report by Footprint Ecology for the Solent Forum.

³⁵ Ibid.

Oystercatcher	46	10 - 200	150	45	50
Redshank	44.5	75 - 150	125	50	40
Curllew	75	25 - 200			
Turnstone	50	5 - 100			
Coot	12	10 - 20			
Mute swan	12	8 - 50			
Grey plover	75	30 - 125			
Little egret	75	30 - 200			
Wigeon	75.5	20 - 125			
Dunlin	75	25 - 300			
Shelduck	77.5	50 - 140			
Great-crested grebe	100	50 - 100			
Lapwing	75	18 - 125			
Teal	60	35 - 200			
Mallard	25	10 - 50			

Trampling damage, erosion and nutrient enrichment

3.13 Most terrestrial habitats, especially grassland, heathland and woodland, can be affected by trampling and other mechanical damage, which in turn causes soil compaction and erosion. Some of the following studies have investigated the negative impacts of trampling, associated with different recreational activities:

- Wilson & Seney³⁶ examined the degree of track erosion caused by hikers, motorcycles, horses and cyclists from 108 plots along tracks in the Gallatin National Forest, Montana. Although the results proved difficult to interpret, it was concluded that horses and hikers disturbed more sediment on wet tracks, and therefore caused more erosion, than motorcycles and bicycles.
- Cole et al³⁷ conducted experimental off-track trampling in 18 closed forest, dwarf scrub and meadow & grassland communities (each trampled between 0 – 500 times) over five mountain regions in the US. Vegetation cover was assessed two weeks and one year after trampling, and an inverse relationship with trampling intensity was discovered, although this relationship was weaker after one year than two weeks indicating some recovery of the vegetation. Differences in plant morphological characteristics were found to explain more variation in response between different vegetation types than soil and topographic factors. Low-growing, mat-forming grasses regained their cover best after two weeks and were considered most resistant to trampling, while tall forbs (non-woody vascular plants other than grasses, sedges, rushes and ferns) were considered least resistant. The cover of hemicryptophytes and geophytes (plants with buds below the soil surface) was heavily reduced after two weeks, but had recovered well after one year and as such these were considered most resilient to trampling. Chamaephytes (plants with buds above the soil surface) were least resilient to trampling. It was concluded that these would be the least tolerant of a regular cycle of disturbance.
- Cole³⁸ conducted a follow-up study (in 4 vegetation types) in which shoe type (trainers or walking boots) and trampler weight were varied. Although immediate damage was greater with walking boots, there was no significant difference after one year. Heavier trampers caused a greater reduction in vegetation height than lighter trampers, but there was no difference in the effect on cover.

³⁶ Wilson, J.P. & J.P. Seney. 1994. Erosional impact of hikers, horses, motorcycles and off road bicycles on mountain trails in Montana. *Mountain Research and Development* 14:77-88

³⁷ Cole, D.N. 1995a. Experimental trampling of vegetation. I. Relationship between trampling intensity and vegetation response. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 32: 203-214

Cole, D.N. 1995b. Experimental trampling of vegetation. II. Predictors of resistance and resilience. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 32: 215-224

³⁸ Cole, D.N. 1995c. Recreational trampling experiments: effects of trampler weight and shoe type. Research Note INT-RN-425. U.S. Forest Service, Intermountain Research Station, Utah.

- Cole & Spildie³⁹ experimentally compared the effects of off-track trampling by hiker and horse (at two intensities – 25 and 150 passes) in two woodland vegetation types (one with an erect forb understorey and one with a low shrub understorey). Horse trampling was found to cause the largest reduction in vegetation cover. The forb-dominated vegetation suffered greatest disturbance but recovered rapidly. Generally, it was shown that higher trampling intensities caused more disturbance.
- In heathland sites, trampling damage can also affect the value of a site to wildlife. For example, heavy use of sandy tracks loosens and continuously disturbs sand particles, reducing the habitat's suitability for invertebrates⁴⁰. Species that burrow into flat surfaces such as the centres of paths, are likely to be particularly vulnerable, as the loose sediment can no longer maintain their burrow. In some instances, nature conservation bodies and local authorities resort to hardening paths to prevent further erosion. However, this is concomitant with the loss of habitat used by wildlife, such as sand lizards and burrowing invertebrates.

3.14 A major concern for nutrient-poor terrestrial habitats (e.g. heathlands, bogs and fens) is nutrient enrichment associated through dog fouling, which has been addressed in various reviews (e.g.⁴¹). It is estimated that dogs will defecate within 10 minutes of starting a walk and therefore most nutrient enrichment arising from dog faeces will occur within 400m of a site entrance. In contrast, dogs will urinate at frequent intervals during a walk, resulting in a more spread out distribution of urine. For example, in Burnham Beeches National Nature Reserve it is estimated that 30,000 litres of urine and 60 tonnes of dog faeces are deposited annually⁴². While there is little information on the chemical constituents of dog faeces, nitrogen is one of the main components⁴³. Nutrient levels are the major determinant of plant community composition and the effect of dog defecation in sensitive habitats (e.g. heathland) is comparable to a high-level application of fertiliser, potentially resulting in the shift to plant communities that are more typical for improved grasslands.

3.15 Given its proximity to the Liverpool City Region, the European sites around Wirral, especially the coastal sites that are designated for their non-breeding birds, are likely to be subject to significant recreational pressure including as a consequence of the Issues and Options Document policies, housing targets and associated allocations for housing land. To estimate the current baseline of recreational disturbance and to assess the likely impact of future population growth, two visitor surveys were carried out at various access points to the coastlines and estuaries in north-west England. Thomson Ecology undertook a visitor survey at the main car parks providing access onto the Mersey Narrows and the North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar⁴⁴. Footprint Ecology carried out visitor surveys in various SSSIs, including component parts of the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, and the Sefton Coast SAC⁴⁵. Importantly, both surveys also related the recreation patterns to bird disturbance events, showing that birds in the European sites around Wirral are already changing their normal foraging / roosting behaviour in response to the existing recreation patterns. The relevant results from the visitor surveys will be used as supporting evidence in sections of this HRA that discuss the respective European sites.

3.16 Recreational pressure in Wirral might also affect functionally linked habitat, particularly where large residential sites (e.g. Wirral Waters in Birkenhead) are proposed. Wirral Waters would be directly adjacent to the Birkenhead Docks, for which TEP has undertaken a bird survey⁴⁶ under

³⁹ Cole, D.N., Spildie, D.R. 1998. Hiker, horse and llama trampling effects on native vegetation in Montana, USA. *Journal of Environmental Management* 53: 61-71

⁴⁰ Taylor K., Anderson P., Liley D. & Underhill-Day J.C. 2006. Promoting positive access management to sites of nature conservation value: A guide to good practice. English Nature / Countryside Agency, Peterborough and Cheltenham.

⁴¹ Taylor K., Anderson P., Taylor R.P., Longden K. & Fisher P. 2005. Dogs, access and nature conservation. English Nature Research Report, Peterborough.

⁴² Barnard A. 2003. Getting the facts – Dog walking and visitor number surveys at Burnham Beeches and their implications for the management process. *Countryside Recreation* 11:16-19.

⁴³ Taylor K., Anderson P., Liley D. & Underhill-Day J.C. 2006. Promoting positive access management to sites of nature conservation value: A guide to good practice. English Nature / Countryside Agency, Peterborough and Cheltenham.

⁴⁴ Thomson Ecology. (2015). Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Sites of Special Scientific Interest – Investigation into the Impacts of Recreational Disturbance on Bird Declines. 107pp.

⁴⁵ Liley D., Panter C., Marsh P. & Roberts J. (2017). Recreational activity and interactions with birds within the SSSIs on the North-West coast of England. Unpublished report by Footprint Ecology for Natural England.

⁴⁶ <http://www.meas.org.uk/media/5279/4157005-assessment-of-supporting-habitat-liverpool-docks-excl-drawings-aug-2015.pdf>

the guidance of MEAS. Results from this survey will be used to assess whether an increase in recreational pressure might disturb species in this functionally linked habitat.

3.17 The following European Sites within 10km of Wirral are sensitive to recreational pressure:

- Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar
- Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar
- Dee Estuary SAC
- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar
- Sefton Coast SAC
- River Dee and Bala Lake SAC
- Halkyn Mountain SAC
- Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC

Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat

3.18 While most European sites have been geographically defined to encompass the key features that are necessary for coherence of their structure and function, and the support of their qualifying features, this is not always the case. A diverse array of qualifying species including birds, bats and amphibians are not confined to the boundary of designated sites.

3.19 For example, the highly mobile nature of both wildfowl and heathland birds implies that areas of habitat of crucial importance to the maintenance of their populations are outside the physical limits of European sites. Despite not being designated, this area is still integral to the maintenance of the structure and function of the interest feature on the designated site and, therefore, land use plans that may affect such areas should be subject to further assessment. Examples of other mobile qualifying species are great-crested newts and bats. The latter animal group is known to travel considerable distances from their roots to feeding sites. For example, in a 2001 study, female adult Bechstein's bats regularly undertook commuting distances of up to 1km⁴⁷. However, it is known that bat home ranges can be between 1-1.5km, with some individuals ranging up to 2.5km distance. Both spring migrations or regular foraging trips might take these species beyond the designated site boundary.

3.20 There is now an abundance of authoritative examples of HRA cases on plans affecting bird populations, where the potential importance of functionally linked habitat is recognised⁴⁸. For example, bird surveys in relation to a previous HRA established that approximately 25% of the golden plover population in the Somerset Levels and Moors SPA were affected while on functionally linked habitat, and this required the inclusion of mitigation measures in the relevant plan policy wording. Another important case study originates from the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, where adjacently located functionally linked habitat had a peak survey count of 108% of the 5 year mean peak population of golden plover. Similar to the above example, this led to considerable amendments in the planning proposal to ensure that the site integrity was not adversely affected.

3.21 Generally, the identification of an area as functionally linked habitat is now a relatively straightforward process. However, the importance of non-designated land parcels may not be apparent and require the analysis of existing data sources to be firmly established. In some instances, data may not be available at all, requiring further survey work.

⁴⁷ Kerth G., Wagner M. & Koenig B. 2001. Roosting together, foraging apart: Information transfer about food is unlikely to explain sociality in female Bechstein's bats (*Myotis bechsteinii*). *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology* 50: 283-291.

⁴⁸ Chapman C & Tyldesley D. 2016. Functional linkage: How areas that are functionally linked to European sites have been considered when they may be affected by plans and projects – A review of authoritative decisions. Natural England Commissioned Reports 207: 73pp.

3.22 Given that Wirral is surrounded by European sites designated for mobile waterfowl, it is possible that the allocation of greenfield sites (i.e. parcels of land without any existing development) would result in the loss of functionally linked habitat. The main concern would be about the loss of greenfield sites in the western part of Wirral, which mostly constitute agricultural land. Many SPA and Ramsar birds, such as golden plover and particularly geese and swans, forage in agricultural stubble in winter. Most notably, the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, along the coast of Sefton is designated for species like pink-footed goose. These species are dependent on agricultural land and are known to travel long distances to their foraging sites. The Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas provides winter distribution maps for bird species within the wider area⁴⁹ and the atlas will be consulted as supporting evidence in assessing the impact pathway loss of functionally linked habitat. In addition, the dock system in eastern Wirral which forms much of the Wirral Waters development area, is also functionally linked habitat for a range of qualifying features, including breeding common tern (Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar) and; cormorant and great crested grebe (part of the waterbird assemblage of several European sites).

3.23 The following European Sites within 10km of Wirral are sensitive to the loss of functionally linked habitat:

- Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar
- Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar
- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar
- Liverpool Bay SPA
- Sefton Coast SAC
- Halkyn Mountain SAC
- Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC

Water Quality

3.24 The quality of the water that feeds European sites is an important determinant of the nature of their habitats and the species they support. Poor water quality can have a range of environmental impacts:

- At high levels, toxic chemicals and metals can result in immediate death of aquatic life, and can have detrimental effects even at lower levels, including increased vulnerability to disease and changes in wildlife behaviour.
- Eutrophication, the enrichment of plant nutrients in water, increases plant growth and consequently results in oxygen depletion. Algal blooms, which commonly result from eutrophication, increase turbidity and decrease light penetration. The decomposition of organic wastes that often accompanies eutrophication deoxygenates water further, augmenting the oxygen depleting effects of eutrophication. In the marine environment, nitrogen is the limiting plant nutrient and so eutrophication is associated with discharges containing available nitrogen.
- Some pesticides, industrial chemicals, and components of sewage effluent are suspected to interfere with the functioning of the endocrine system, possibly having negative effects on the reproduction and development of aquatic life.

3.25 The most significant water quality issue in relation to the Issues and Options Document is the discharge of treated sewage effluent into coastal and estuarine European sites, which is likely to increase the nutrient concentrations, most importantly nitrogen levels. The Issues and Options

⁴⁹ The Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas is available online as a free resource. Available at: <http://www.cheshireandwirralbirdatlas.org/species/> [Accessed on the 29/11/2019]

Document assessed in this HRA proposes development in the United Utilities water catchment, responsible for the public water supply and waste water treatment in this part of England, with the exception of an area around Heswall, where waste water treatment is the responsibility of Dyr Cymru (Welsh Water) who operate the Waste Water Treatment Works at Target Road.

3.26 The following European Sites within 10km of Wirral are sensitive to changes in water quality:

- Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar
- Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar
- Dee Estuary SAC
- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar
- Liverpool Bay SPA
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar
- Sefton Coast SAC
- River Dee and Bala Lake SAC
- Halkyn Mountain SAC
- Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC

Water Resources

3.27 Regarding the availability of water resources, Figure 3 shows that Wirral is in an area that is classified as having low water stress (coded green). The wider North West (including the wider geographic area surrounding Wirral⁵⁰) is also an area of low stress (coded green), as is North Wales, which is a major source of potable water for north-west England.

3.28 Initial investigation indicates that Wirral lies within United Utilities' Strategic Resource Zone which currently serves approximately 7 million people in south Cumbria, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, most of Cheshire and a small part of Derbyshire. This zone supplies around 1,706 MI/d of potable water, which includes water imports from Wales, Cumbria, and other parts of North West England. It constitutes a large integrated supply network that enables substantial flexibility in distributing supplies within the zone with the 'west to east link' further aiding this flexibility and thus breaking the traditional division in which Greater Manchester received water from Cumbria and Merseyside received water from the River Dee (which lies partly in England and partly in Wales) and from purely Welsh sources (e.g. Lake Vyrnwy).

3.29 The most recent United Utilities Water Resource Management Plan (WRMP)⁵¹ indicates that there is currently no supply deficit forecast in the WRMP period, with supply reducing from 38 MI/d in 2025/26 to 20MI/d by 2044/45. However, given the recent demand increases and the integration of the West Cumbria Resource Zone into the Strategic Resource Zone, a small baseline deficit is forecast towards the end of the WRMP (ca. 3 MI/d). From reading the WRMP it appears that increased abstraction from the River Dee or any other European sites beyond the current licensed volumes is not part of United Utilities' intended future supply strategy. Furthermore, the HRA of United Utilities' earlier WRMP: Assessment of Feasibility and Preferred Options (2013)⁵² identified that no likely significant effect would result from the WRMP.

3.30 This impact pathway is therefore not discussed further.

⁵⁰ Figure adapted from Environment Agency. 2007. Identifying Areas of Water Stress. <http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO0107BLUT-e-e.pdf>

⁵¹ United Utilities (2019) Final Water Resource Management Plan 2019 – 2045. Available at: https://www.unitedutilities.com/globalassets/z_corporate-site/about-us-pdfs/wrmp-2019---2045/final-water-resources-management-plan-2019.pdf [Accessed on the 28/11/2019]

⁵² AMEC (2019). United Utilities Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Water Resource Management Plan.

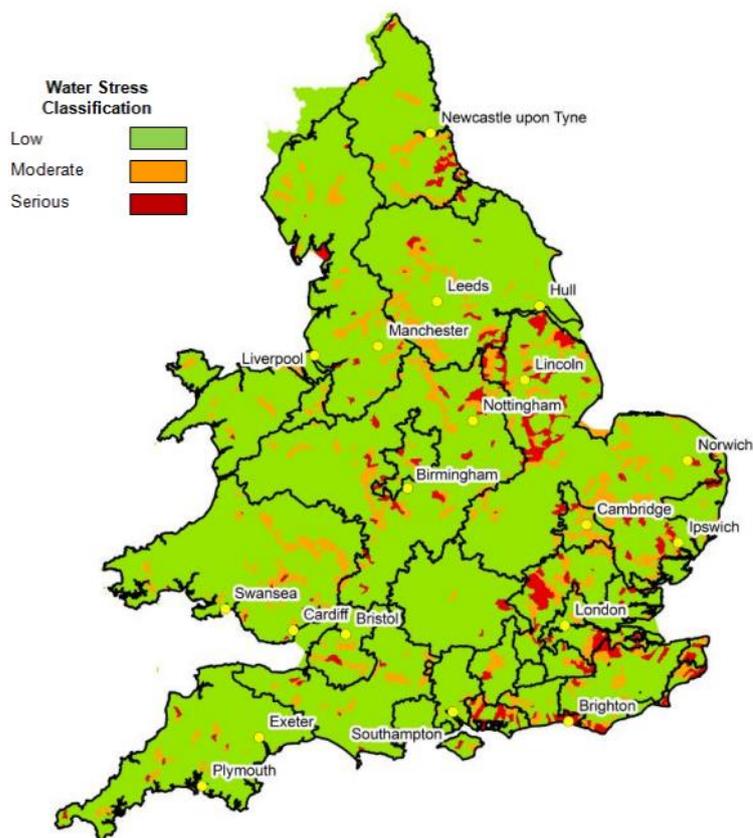


Figure 3: Areas of water stress in England and Wales⁵³.

Visual and Noise Disturbance (both in European sites and functionally linked habitat)

- 3.31 Human activity can affect birds either directly (e.g. through causing them to flee) or indirectly (e.g. through damaging their habitat). The most obvious direct effect is that of immediate mortality such as death by shooting, but human activity can also lead to behavioural changes (e.g. alterations in feeding behaviour, avoidance of certain areas *etc.*) and physiological changes (e.g. an increase in heart rate) that, although less noticeable, may ultimately result in major population-level effects by altering the balance between immigration/birth and emigration/death⁵⁴.
- 3.32 The degree of impact that varying levels of noise will have on different species of bird is poorly understood except that a number of studies have found that an increase in traffic levels on roads does lead to a reduction in the bird abundance within adjacent hedgerows - Reijnen et al (1995) examined the distribution of 43 passerine species (i.e. 'songbirds'), of which 60% had a lower density closer to the roadside than further away. By controlling vehicle usage they also found that the density generally was lower along busier roads than quieter roads⁵⁵.
- 3.33 A recent study on recreational disturbance on the Humber⁵⁶ assesses different types of noise disturbance on waterfowl referring to studies relating to aircraft (see Drewitt 1999⁵⁷), traffic

⁵³ Figure adapted from Environment Agency. 2013. Water stressed areas – final classification

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/244333/water-stressed-classification-2013.pdf

⁵⁴ Riley, J. 2003. Review of Recreational Disturbance Research on Selected Wildlife in Scotland. Scottish Natural Heritage.

⁵⁵ Reijnen, R. et al. 1995. The effects of car traffic on breeding bird populations in woodland. III. Reduction of density in relation to the proximity of main roads. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 32: 187-202

⁵⁶ Helen Fearnley Durwyn Liley and Katie Cruickshanks (2012) Results of Recreational Visitor Survey across the Humber Estuary produced by Footprint Ecology

⁵⁷ Drewitt, A. (1999) Disturbance effects of aircraft on birds. English Nature, Peterborough.

(Reijnen, Foppen, & Veenbaas 1997)⁵⁸, dogs (Lord, Waas, & Innes 1997⁵⁹; Banks & Bryant 2007⁶⁰) and machinery (Delaney et al. 1999; Tempel & Gutierrez 2003). These studies identified that there is still relatively little work on the effects of different types of water-based craft and the impacts from jet skis, kite surfers, windsurfers etc. (see Kirby et al. 2004⁶¹ for a review). Some types of disturbance are clearly likely to invoke different responses. In very general terms, both distance from the source of disturbance and the scale of the disturbance (noise level, group size) will both influence the response (Delaney et al. 1999⁶²; Beale & Monaghan 2005⁶³). On UK estuaries and coastal sites, a review of WeBS data showed that, among the volunteer WeBS surveyors, driving of motor vehicles and shooting were the two activities most perceived to cause disturbance (Robinson & Pollitt 2002)⁶⁴.

- 3.34 Large structures (e.g. new bridges, offshore and onshore wind turbines), have the potential to alter bird flight paths (e.g. hunting flight paths for raptors, bird migratory paths, regular flight paths between roosting and feeding sites, and foraging routes for bats etc.) This may result in a collision risk barrier effect or displacement which could make birds either vulnerable to predation or loss of vital energy stores.
- 3.35 Animals can also be disturbed by the movement of ships. For instance, a DTI study of birds of the North West coast noted that: "*Divers and scoters were absent from the mouths of some busier estuaries, notably the Mersey... Both species are known to be susceptible to disturbance from boats, and their relative scarcity in these areas... may in part reflect the volume of boat traffic in these areas*"⁶⁵.
- 3.36 Disturbing activities are on a continuum. The most disturbing activities are likely to be those that involve irregular, infrequent, unpredictable loud noise events, movement or vibration of long duration. Birds are least likely to be disturbed by activities that involve regular, frequent, predictable, quiet patterns of sound or movement or minimal vibration. The further any activity is from the birds, the less likely it is to result in disturbance. Overall, the factors that influence a species response to a disturbance are numerous, but the three key factors are species sensitivity, proximity of disturbance sources and timing/duration of the potentially disturbing activity.
- 3.37 It is important to note that visual and noise disturbance is relevant not only to designated sites themselves, but also to habitat that is functionally linked to these sites. Because qualifying species depend on linked habitats for foraging and roosting (see earlier impact pathway), any visual and noise disturbance might impair the species' ability to use such land appropriately. For Wirral, visual and noise disturbance is most likely to be relevant in agricultural land and the Birkenhead docks, the latter having been identified as supporting >1% of some SPA/ Ramsar waterbird species.
- 3.38 The following European Sites within 10km of Wirral are sensitive to visual and noise disturbance resulting from construction work, artificial lighting and other urban processes:
- Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar
 - Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar
 - Dee Estuary SAC

⁵⁸ Reijnen, R., Foppen, R. & Veenbaas, G. (1997) Disturbance by traffic of breeding birds: evaluation of the effect and considerations in planning and managing road corridors. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 6, 567-581.

⁵⁹ Lord, A., Waas, J.R. & Innes, J. (1997) Effects of human activity on the behaviour of northern New Zealand dotterel *Charadrius obscurus aquilonius* chicks. *Biological Conservation*, 82, 15-20.

⁶⁰ Banks, P.B. & Bryant, J.V. (2007) Four-legged friend of foe? Dog-walking displaces native birds from natural areas. *Biology Letters*, 3, 611-613.

⁶¹ Kirby, J.S., Clee, C. & Seager, V. (1993) Impact and extent of recreational disturbance to wader roosts on the Dee estuary: some preliminary results. *Wader Study Group Bulletin*, 68, 53-58.

⁶² Delaney, D.K., Grubb, T.G., Beier, P., Pater, L.L.M. & Reiser, H. (1999) Effects of Helicopter Noise on Mexican Spotted Owls. *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, 63, 60-76.

⁶³ Beale, C.M. & Monaghan, P. (2005) Modeling the Effects of Limiting the Number of Visitors on Failure Rates of Seabird Nests. *Conservation Biology*, 19, 2015-2019.

⁶⁴ Robinson, J.A. & Pollitt, M.S. (2002) Sources and extent of human disturbance to waterbirds in the UK: an analysis of Wetland Bird Survey data, 1995/96 to 1998/99: Less than 32% of counters record disturbance at their site, with differences in causes between coastal and inland sites. *Bird Study*, 49, 205.

⁶⁵ DTI (2006). Aerial Surveys of Waterbirds in Strategic Wind Farm Areas: 2004/05 Final Report

- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar
- Liverpool Bay SPA
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar
- River Dee and Bala Lake SAC

Atmospheric Pollution

Table 2: Main sources and effects of air pollutants on habitats and species⁶⁶.

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
3.39 Sulphur Dioxide (SO ₂)	<p>The main sources of SO₂ are electricity generation, and industrial and domestic fuel combustion. However, total SO₂ emissions in the UK have decreased substantially since the 1980's.</p> <p>Another origin of sulphur dioxide is the shipping industry and high atmospheric concentrations of SO₂ have been documented in busy ports. In future years shipping is likely to become one of the most important contributors to SO₂ emissions in the UK.</p>	<p>Wet and dry deposition of SO₂ acidifies soils and freshwater, and may alter the composition of plant and animal communities.</p> <p>The magnitude of effects depends on levels of deposition, the buffering capacity of soils and the sensitivity of impacted species.</p> <p>However, SO₂ background levels have fallen considerably since the 1970's and are now not regarded a threat to plant communities. For example, decreases in Sulphur dioxide concentrations have been linked to returning lichen species and improved tree health in London.</p>
Acid deposition	<p>Leads to acidification of soils and freshwater via atmospheric deposition of SO₂, NO_x, ammonia and hydrochloric acid. Acid deposition from rain has declined by 85% in the last 20 years, which most of this contributed by lower sulphate levels.</p> <p>Although future trends in S emissions and subsequent deposition to terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems will continue to decline, increased N emissions may cancel out any gains produced by reduced S levels.</p>	<p>Gaseous precursors (e.g. SO₂) can cause direct damage to sensitive vegetation, such as lichen, upon deposition.</p> <p>Can affect habitats and species through both wet (acid rain) and dry deposition. The effects of acidification include lowering of soil pH, leaf chlorosis, reduced decomposition rates, and compromised reproduction in birds/plants.</p> <p>Not all sites are equally susceptible to acidification. This varies depending on soil type, bed rock geology, weathering rate and buffering capacity. For example, sites with an underlying geology of granite, gneiss and quartz rich rocks tend to be more susceptible.</p>
Ammonia (NH ₃)	<p>Ammonia is a reactive, soluble alkaline gas that is released following decomposition and volatilisation of animal wastes. It is a naturally occurring trace gas, but ammonia concentrations are directly related to the distribution of livestock.</p> <p>Ammonia reacts with acid pollutants such as the products of SO₂ and NO_x emissions to produce fine ammonium (NH₄⁺) - containing aerosol. Due to its significantly longer lifetime, NH₄⁺ may be transferred much longer distances (and can therefore be a significant trans-boundary issue).</p> <p>While ammonia deposition may be estimated from its atmospheric concentration, the deposition rates are strongly influenced by meteorology and ecosystem type.</p>	<p>The negative effect of NH₄⁺ may occur via direct toxicity, when uptake exceeds detoxification capacity and via N accumulation.</p> <p>Its main adverse effect is eutrophication, leading to species assemblages that are dominated by fast-growing and tall species. For example, a shift in dominance from heath species (lichens, mosses) to grasses is often seen.</p> <p>As emissions mostly occur at ground level in the rural environment and NH₃ is rapidly deposited, some of the most acute problems of NH₃ deposition are for small relict nature reserves located in intensive agricultural landscapes.</p>

⁶⁶ Information summarised from the Air Pollution Information System (<http://www.apis.ac.uk>)

Pollutant	Source	Effects on habitats and species
Nitrogen oxides (NO _x)	<p>Nitrogen oxides are mostly produced in combustion processes. Half of NO_x emissions in the UK derive from motor vehicles, one quarter from power stations and the rest from other industrial and domestic combustion processes.</p> <p>In contrast to the steep decline in Sulphur dioxide emissions, nitrogen oxides are falling slowly due to control strategies being offset by increasing numbers of vehicles.</p>	<p>Direct toxicity effects of gaseous nitrates are likely to be important in areas close to the source (e.g. roadside verges). A critical level of NO_x for all vegetation types has been set to 30 ug/m³.</p> <p>Deposition of nitrogen compounds (nitrates (NO₃), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and nitric acid (HNO₃)) contributes to the total nitrogen deposition and may lead to both soil and freshwater acidification.</p> <p>In addition, NO_x contributes to the eutrophication of soils and water, altering the species composition of plant communities at the expense of sensitive species.</p>
Nitrogen deposition	<p>The pollutants that contribute to the total nitrogen deposition derive mainly from oxidized (e.g. NO_x) or reduced (e.g. NH₃) nitrogen emissions (described separately above). While oxidized nitrogen mainly originates from major conurbations or highways, reduced nitrogen mostly derives from farming practices.</p> <p>The N pollutants together are a large contributor to acidification (see above).</p>	<p>All plants require nitrogen compounds to grow, but too much overall N is regarded as the major driver of biodiversity change globally.</p> <p>Species-rich plant communities with high proportions of slow-growing perennial species and bryophytes are most at risk from N eutrophication. This is because many semi-natural plants cannot assimilate the surplus N as well as many graminoid (grass) species.</p> <p>N deposition can also increase the risk of damage from abiotic factors, e.g. drought and frost.</p>
Ozone (O ₃)	<p>A secondary pollutant generated by photochemical reactions involving NO_x, volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and sunlight. These precursors are mainly released by the combustion of fossil fuels (as discussed above).</p> <p>Increasing anthropogenic emissions of ozone precursors in the UK have led to an increased number of days when ozone levels rise above 40ppb ('episodes' or 'smog'). Reducing ozone pollution is believed to require action at international level to reduce levels of the precursors that form ozone.</p>	<p>Concentrations of O₃ above 40 ppb can be toxic to both humans and wildlife, and can affect buildings.</p> <p>High O₃ concentrations are widely documented to cause damage to vegetation, including visible leaf damage, reduction in floral biomass, reduction in crop yield (e.g. cereal grains, tomato, potato), reduction in the number of flowers, decrease in forest production and altered species composition in semi-natural plant communities.</p>

3.40 The main pollutants of concern for European sites are oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), ammonia (NH₃) and sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and are summarised in Table 2. Ammonia can have a directly toxic effect upon vegetation, particularly at close distances to the source such as near road verges⁶⁷. NO_x can also be toxic at very high concentrations (far above the annual average critical level). However, in particular, high levels of NO_x and NH₃ are likely to increase the total N deposition to soils, potentially leading to deleterious knock-on effects in resident ecosystems. Increases in nitrogen deposition from the atmosphere is widely known to enhance soil fertility and to lead to eutrophication. This often has adverse effects on the community composition and quality of semi-natural, nitrogen-limited terrestrial and aquatic habitats^{68 69}.

3.41 Sulphur dioxide emissions overwhelmingly derive from power stations and industrial processes that require the combustion of coal and oil, as well as (particularly on a local scale) shipping⁷⁰.

⁶⁷ http://www.apis.ac.uk/overview/pollutants/overview_NOx.htm.

⁶⁸ Wolseley, P. A.; James, P. W.; Theobald, M. R.; Sutton, M. A. **2006**. Detecting changes in epiphytic lichen communities at sites affected by atmospheric ammonia from agricultural sources. *Lichenologist* 38: 161-176

⁶⁹ Dijk, N. **2011**. Dry deposition of ammonia gas drives species change faster than wet deposition of ammonium ions: evidence from a long-term field manipulation *Global Change Biology* 17: 3589-3607

⁷⁰ http://www.apis.ac.uk/overview/pollutants/overview_SO2.htm.

Ammonia emissions originate from agricultural practices⁷¹, with some chemical processes also making notable contributions. As such, it is unlikely that material increases in SO₂ or NH₃ emissions will be associated with the Issues and Options Document. NOx emissions, however, are dominated by the output of vehicle exhausts (more than half of all emissions). A 'typical' housing development will contribute by far the largest portion to its overall NOx footprint (92%) through the associated road traffic. Other sources, although relevant, are of minor importance (8%) in comparison⁷². Emissions of NOx could therefore be reasonably expected to increase because of a higher number of vehicles due to implementation of any growth options outlined in the Issues and Options Document.

- 3.42 According to the World Health Organisation, the critical NOx concentration (critical threshold) for the protection of vegetation is 30 µgm⁻³; the threshold for sulphur dioxide is 20 µgm⁻³. In addition, ecological studies have determined 'critical loads'⁷³ of atmospheric nitrogen deposition (that is, NOx combined with ammonia NH₃).
- 3.43 The Department of Transport's Transport Analysis Guidance outlines that, beyond 200m, the contribution of vehicle emissions from the roadside to local pollution levels is not significant (Figure 4 and ⁷⁴). This is therefore the distance that has been used throughout this HRA in order to determine whether European sites are likely to be significantly affected by development outlined in the Issues and Options Document. Exhaust emissions from vehicles are capable of adversely affecting heathland habitats.

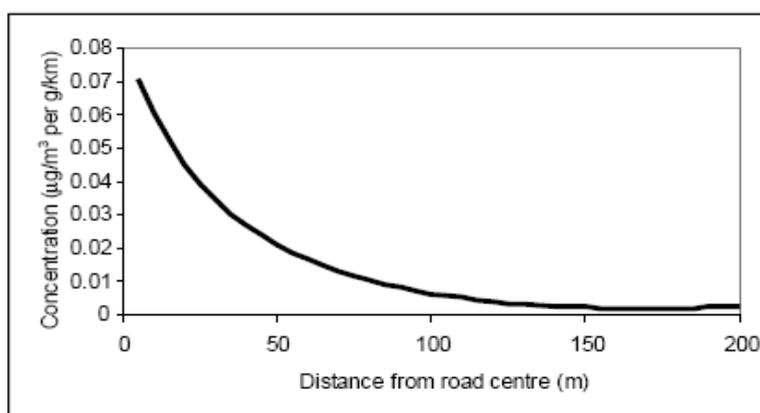


Figure 4: Traffic contribution to concentrations of pollutants at different distances from a road (Source: DfT75).

⁷¹ Pain, B.F.; Weerden, T.J.; Chambers, B.J.; Phillips, V.R.; Jarvis, S.C. 1998. A new inventory for ammonia emissions from U.K. agriculture. Atmospheric Environment 32: 309-313

⁷² Proportions calculated based upon data presented in Dore CJ et al. 2005. UK Emissions of Air Pollutants 1970 – 2003. UK National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory. <http://www.airquality.co.uk/archive/index.php>

⁷³ The critical load is the rate of deposition beyond which research indicates that adverse effects can reasonably be expected to occur

⁷⁴ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/webtag/documents/expert/unit3.3.3.php#013> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

⁷⁵ <http://www.dft.gov.uk/ha/standards/dmr/vol11/section3/ha20707.pdf>; accessed 13/07/2018

4. Test of Likely Significant Effects (ToLSE)

Recreational Pressure

4.1 The following European sites within 10km of Wirral are sensitive to recreational pressure arising from the 12,000 net new residential dwellings being proposed in the Issues and Options Document (the sites in bold are taken forward to Appropriate Assessment):

- **Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar**
- **Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar**
- **Dee Estuary SAC**
- **Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar**
- **Liverpool Bay SPA**
- **Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar**
- **Sefton Coast SAC**
- **Halkyn Mountain SAC**
- River Dee and Bala Lake SAC
- Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC

4.2 The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar borders the Wirral Peninsula to the north, extending towards The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar in the west and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar in the south-east. The SPA and Ramsar is designated for several non-breeding waterfowl species, including bar-tailed godwit, knot, little gull and common tern, and its overall waterbird assemblage. All qualifying features are sensitive to recreational disturbance, because this may change the local distribution and abundance of these birds, ultimately affecting the viability of the birds by altering their feeding and breeding behaviour. Natural England's Site Improvement Plan highlights that recreational disturbance is one of the major pressures acting on the birds. For example, on the North Wirral Foreshore, a range of regulated, consented and unregulated activities are carried out, the impacts of which are currently difficult to manage. The Wirral Issues and Options Document includes proposed residential allocations in close proximity to the SPA and Ramsar and is therefore likely to increase recreational pressure within the SPA and Ramsar. Likely Significant Effects therefore cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

4.3 The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar borders the Wirral peninsula on its western side, extending on a north-south axis to the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. The site is also designated for its sensitive non-breeding waterfowl species (e.g. black-tailed godwit, dunlin, knot, redshank), its overall waterbird assemblage and several breeding species (e.g. common tern, little tern). Natural England's Site Improvement Plan for the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar also covers this European site, identifying recreational pressure as a threat to the site's integrity. The 12,000 residential dwellings to be delivered in Wirral over the Plan period of 2020 and 2035, will increase the recreational demand in the authority and are therefore likely to increase recreational pressure in the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Likely Significant Effects therefore cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

4.4 The Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar is the third coastal site that borders Wirral, extending along its south-eastern side. It is designated for several migratory species, including non-breeding dunlin, redshank, teal and shelduck, and its overall waterbird assemblage. Natural England's Site

- Improvement Plan identifies recreational pressure as one of the three main threats for the site. As for the other estuarine and coastal sites bordering Wirral, the provision of additional residential dwellings is likely to increase the visitation level in the Mersey Estuary. Likely Significant Effects therefore cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.5 The Dee Estuary SAC partly overlaps with the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar but extends to the northern side of Wirral into the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. Several habitats and species in the Dee Estuary SAC, notably the areas of saltmarsh (*Salicornia* spp. and the Atlantic salt meadows) concentrated on the foreshore in the Heswall Beach area, are sensitive to abrasion arising from recreational activities. This is in accordance with Natural England's Site Improvement Plan, which highlights recreational pressure as a pressure for the site. The net additional residential dwellings proposed in Wirral's Issues and Options Document, are likely to increase the number of recreational visits into the upper foreshore saltmarsh habitats of the SAC. Likely Significant Effects therefore cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.6 The Liverpool Bay SPA stretches along the east of the Irish Sea, bordering both northern England and northern Wales. Most importantly for this HRA, it stretches along the northern coastline of Wirral and up the River Mersey to Bebington, thereby being directly accessible to residents from this authority. Both the red-throated diver and common scoter are highly sensitive to visual and noise disturbance stemming from activities in the open water. This includes disturbance from wind turbines and helicopters. Importantly in relation to the Issues and Options Document, boating can also result in disturbance to these species⁷⁶. Given the proximity of the SPA to Wirral, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.7 The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is designated for various non-breeding waterfowl and wader species (e.g. Bewick's swan, whooper swan, pink-footed goose, redshank), which are all sensitive to recreational disturbance. Natural England's Site Improvement Plan mentions public access and disturbance as a key pressure in the SPA and Ramsar, particularly arising from recreational activities on the foreshore⁷⁷. The net increase in residential dwellings within Wirral has the potential to increase the number of recreational visits in the SPA and Ramsar. It is noted that Wirral's boundary is only 1.5km in straight-line distance from the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar. However, the actual by-road distance for Wirral residents will amount to over 9km and crossing of the Mersey Narrows via the Kingsway or Queensway Tunnels. As such it is considered that recreational disturbance will primarily arise in-combination with growth in the authorities of Liverpool and Sefton. Likely Significant Effects therefore cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.8 The Sefton Coast SAC is designated for several dune habitats (e.g. shifting dunes, fixed vegetated coastal dunes), which are all highly sensitive to recreational trampling and nutrient enrichment from dog fouling. Natural England's Site Improvement Plan mentions public access and disturbance as a key pressure in the SAC, particularly arising from recreational impacts in the dune systems⁷⁸. The net increase in residential dwellings within Wirral has the potential to increase the number of recreational visits in the Sefton Coast SAC. Given the SAC largely overlaps with the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, it lies approx. 1.5km in straight-line distance from Wirral. However, as for the SPA and Ramsar, the actual by-road distance for Wirral residents will amount to over 9km and a crossing of the Mersey Narrows via the Kingsway or Queensway Tunnels. As such it is considered that recreational disturbance will primarily arise in-combination with growth in the authorities of Liverpool and Sefton. Likely Significant Effects therefore cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.9 The Halkyn Mountain SAC is designated for its population of great-crested newts and several habitats, including Calaminarian grasslands (vegetation associated with old mines), European dry heaths and semi-natural dry grassland. The SAC comprises a large common with a right of public access, which is frequently used for dog walking and horse riding. The heathland habitats within the common are particularly sensitive to recreational pressure as a result of trampling damage and nutrient enrichment. The closest component site of the Halkyn Mountain SAC lies

⁷⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5733149452009472> [Accessed on the 20/11/2019]

⁷⁷ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6274126599684096> [Accessed on the 19/11/2019]

⁷⁸ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6274126599684096> [Accessed on the 19/11/2019]

approx. 5.5km to the south-west of Wirral, with the common being even further away. The driving distance from the closest major population centre (Heswall) is 30km due to the intervening presence of the Dee Estuary. It is not considered that the SAC is a major destination for residents from Wirral; therefore, a conclusion of no likely significant effect is reached.

- 4.10 The Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC is designated for its population of great-crested newts and its old sessile oak woods. Natural Resources Wales' Site Conservation Advice highlights that the site is heavily used for recreational purposes, particularly by residents from Deeside and Buckley. However, the site is 9.1km to the south of Wirral and therefore lies beyond a typical visitor catchment for a non-coastal site. Furthermore, it is not considered that the qualifying features of the site are particularly sensitive to the impact of recreational pressure. As such, LSEs of the Issues and Options Document can be excluded and the site is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.11 Given that the Issues and Options Document does not yet contain strategic policies or policy text, this HRA considers the Preferred Option text that the Issues and Options Document does provide. The following growth options and Preferred Approaches have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment because they might result in increased recreational pressure in European sites, particularly the coastal and estuarine SPAs / Ramsars:
- Strategic Growth Options **1A (Urban Intensification)**, Option **2A (Dispersed Green Belt Release)** and Option **2B (Urban Extension)**
 - Chapter 2.9 **Delivering Growth Through Regeneration** (provides for the overall strategic development in Wirral Waters and Birkenhead)
 - Chapter 5.5 **Empty Properties** (returning long-term empty properties to the housing market by providing 1,275 additional homes)
 - Chapter 5.6 **Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People** (considers the need of providing plots for gypsies and travellers)
 - Chapter 6.4 **Tourism** (promotes tourism opportunities in the Borough of Wirral)

Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat

- 4.12 The following European sites within 10km of Wirral⁷⁹ are sensitive to the loss of functionally linked land due to additional development being proposed in the Issues and Options Document (the sites in bold are taken forward to Appropriate Assessment):
- **Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar**
 - **Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar**
 - **Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar**
 - **Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar**
 - Sefton Coast SAC
 - Halkyn Mountain SAC
 - Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC
- 4.13 The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar is designated for several waterfowl and wader species, and its overall waterbird assemblage. As such, the site harbours a variety of mobile bird species, which might use functionally linked habitat beyond the European site boundary. The SPA and Ramsar stretches along the northern coastline and the eastern shoreline of the Wirral peninsula and various land parcels potentially included in the Issues and Options Document. Natural England's Site Conservation Supplementary Advice note highlights that the bird features use habitats outside the site boundary, indicating that the integrity of the

⁷⁹ It is possible that species using functionally linked land in Wirral are associated with SPAs further afield, but it is considered probable that the functionally-linked land in Wirral is most significant for the SPAs and Ramsars that border the Wirral peninsula.

- SPA and Ramsar will partly depend on functionally linked habitat⁸⁰. As such, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.14 The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar is designated for several waterfowl and wader species, and its overall waterbird assemblage. Notably, the qualifying species assemblage includes some mobile species that are often recorded on functionally linked habitat, including curlew, lapwing and wigeon. The SPA and Ramsar stretches along the western shoreline of the Wirral peninsula. This is the section of Wirral that is less urbanised and where various greenfield sites are allocated under Options 2a and 2b, which could act as functionally linked habitat. As such, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.15 The Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar is designated for several waterfowl and wader species, and its overall waterbird assemblage. Notably, the qualifying species assemblage includes some mobile species that are often recorded on functionally linked habitat, including curlew, lapwing and wigeon. The SPA and Ramsar stretches along the eastern shoreline of the Wirral peninsula. This is the section of Wirral that is already highly urbanised. However, several greenfield sites are included under Options 2a and 2b (particularly to the south of Bebington), which could act as functionally linked habitat. As such, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.16 The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is designated for several waterfowl and wader species, most importantly whooper swan, Bewick's swan and pink-footed goose. Both geese and swans are particularly mobile and might use foraging or roosting sites tens of kilometres from the SPA and Ramsar. Natural England's Supplementary Advice Note highlights that Bewick's swans feed on arable land outside the SPA boundary, whereas pink-footed geese show complex flyways and use agricultural land in the wider region⁸¹. The SPA and Ramsar is only approx. 1.5km to the north-east of Wirral and well within the distance that the geese and swans would be expected to travel to functionally linked habitat parcels. As such, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.17 The Sefton Coast SAC is partly designated for its Annex II species great-crested newt. This species is known to migrate from its summer breeding ponds to non-breeding terrestrial habitats, which is integral to the viability of the species. However, great-crested newts have limited mobility and most adults will remain within approx. 250m from their breeding ponds. The SAC is approx. 1.5km to the north-east of Wirral, and separated from the Borough by the Mersey Narrows. This is beyond 250m and Likely Significant Effects can thus be excluded. The site is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.18 The Halkyn Mountain SAC is also partly designated for its Annex II species great-crested newt. This species is known to migrate from its summer breeding ponds to non-breeding terrestrial habitats, which provides essential functionally linked habitat for this species. However, most adult great-crested newts will remain within approx. 250m from their breeding ponds. The SAC is approx. 5.7km to the south-west of Wirral, which is beyond the 250m distance used for great-crested newts. Therefore, Likely Significant Effects can thus be excluded. The site is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.19 The Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC is designated for one of Great Britain's largest great-crested newt populations. Given that the species moves up to 250m beyond the designated site boundary to seek out non-breeding habitats, there is the potential for the loss of functionally linked habitat associated with the Issues and Options Document. The SAC is approx. 9.1km to the south of Wirral, which is far beyond the 250m distance used for great-crested newts. Likely Significant Effects can thus be excluded. The site is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.20 Given that the Issues and Options Document does not yet contain strategic policies or policy text, this HRA considers the Preferred Option text that the Issues and Options Document does provide.

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<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/SupAdvice.aspx?SiteCode=JK9020287&SiteName=mersey+narrows&SiteNameDisplay=Mersey+Narrows+and+North+Wirral+Foreshore+SPA&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=IFCAAraea=&NumMarineSeasonality=5> [Accessed on the 20/11/2019]

⁸¹
<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/SupAdvice.aspx?SiteCode=JK9005103&SiteName=ribble&SiteNameDisplay=Ribble+and+Alt+Estuaries+SPA&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=IFCAAraea=&NumMarineSeasonality=20> [Accessed on the 20/11/2019]

The following growth options and Preferred Approaches have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment because they allocate for sites that might result in the loss of functionally linked habitat:

- Strategic Growth Options **1A (Urban Intensification)**, Option **2A (Dispersed Green Belt Release)** and Option **2B (Urban Extension)**
- Chapter 2.9 **Delivering Growth Through Regeneration** (provides for the overall strategic development in Wirral Waters and Birkenhead)
- Chapter 5.5 **Empty Properties** (returning long-term empty properties to the housing market by providing 1,275 additional homes)
- Chapter 5.6 **Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People** (considers the need of providing plots for gypsies and travellers)
- Chapter 6.2 **Provisions for Future Employment Growth** (allocates a minimum of 80ha of employment land)
- Chapter 6.4 **Tourism** (promotes tourism opportunities in the Borough of Wirral)

Water Quality

4.21 The following European sites within 10km of Wirral are sensitive to changes in water quality arising from wastewater effluent associated with development proposed in the Issues and Options Document (the sites in bold are taken forward to Appropriate Assessment):

- **Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar**
- **Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar**
- **Dee Estuary SAC**
- **Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar**
- **Liverpool Bay SPA**
- **Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar**
- Sefton Coast SAC
- River Dee and Bala Lake SAC
- Halkyn Mountain SAC
- Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC

4.22 The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar might be affected by development proposed in the Issues and Options Document, particularly through an increase in the discharge of treated sewage effluent. This is primarily because an increase in nitrogen might lead to phytoplankton and macroalgae blooms, which in turn might affect the invertebrate communities that the SPA and Ramsar birds rely on. The site extends along the northern and eastern shorelines of Wirral and could be affected by local wastewater discharge from Wastewater Treatment Works (WwTWs). Given the sensitivity of the SPA and Ramsar to water quality issues, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

4.23 The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar might also be affected by development proposed in the Issues and Options Document, particularly through an increase in the discharge of treated sewage effluent. The increase in nutrient levels (especially nitrogen) might lead to phytoplankton and macroalgae blooms, which in turn might affect the invertebrate communities that the SPA and Ramsar birds rely on. The site extends along the northern and eastern shorelines of Wirral and could be affected by local wastewater discharge from WwTWs. Given the sensitivity of the SPA

and Ramsar to water quality issues, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

- 4.24 The Dee Estuary SAC is designated for several habitats (e.g. sand- and mudflats, estuaries) and plant assemblages (e.g. Atlantic salt meadows, *Salicornia* colonising mud / sand). The SAC comprises some of the habitats underpinning the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and parts of the North Wirral Foreshore. Natural England's and Natural Resources Wales' joint Conservation Advice highlights that the SAC is highly sensitive to non-toxic contamination by inorganic nutrient loading⁸². This is because the additional nutrients are likely to imbalance the local plant communities and alter the invertebrate populations in the SAC. The site extends along the northern and western shorelines of Wirral and could be affected by local wastewater discharge from WwTWs. Given the sensitivity of the SAC to water quality issues, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.25 In line with the previous estuarine sites, the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar is likely to be affected by development proposed in the Issues and Options Document, particularly through an increase in the discharge of treated sewage effluent. The site is designated for several waterfowl species that are depending on food resources in the intertidal sand- and mudflats. A net increase in nitrate loading associated with development in Wirral might lead to changes in invertebrate and plant communities within the SPA and Ramsar. Natural England's Supplementary Advice highlights that the SPA and Ramsar depends both on good water quality and sufficiently high dissolved oxygen concentrations⁸³. Overall, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.26 The Liverpool Bay SPA is designated for its non-breeding populations of red-throated diver and common scoter. Both of these waterfowl species depend on a sufficient number of fish available to prey upon. An increase in the nutrient loading in the SPA might lead to changes in the food supply of the fish. Furthermore, dissolved oxygen depletion might also have direct negative impacts on fish populations. The SPA borders the northern shoreline of Wirral and might therefore be affected by WwTWs effluent discharging directly into the bay or into sites that are hydrologically connected to the SPA. Therefore, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.27 The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is sensitive to changes in water quality through the impact of nitrogen deposition on the prey communities of the qualifying waterfowl. The site is also in hydrological continuity with the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, the Liverpool Bay SPA, and the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. As such, while being approx. 1.5km to the north-east of Wirral, additional nutrients might be reaching the SPA and Ramsar via these connecting waterbodies. Given the sensitivity of the SPA and Ramsar and its hydrological linkage with other European sites in the area, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.28 The Sefton Coast SAC's qualifying dune habitats and great-crested newts are all potentially sensitive to changes in water quality resulting from the Issues and Options Document. The site largely overlaps with the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, which was screened in above. However, in contrast to that SPA and Ramsar, which will receive hydrological input from other coastal sites, the hydrology and water quality is primarily determined from inland water sources in Sefton. Also, Natural England's Conservation Objectives Supplementary Advice Note highlights that the hydrology of the SAC is not well understood and requires further study⁸⁴. Given the above, it is concluded that there is no hydrological connectivity between the SAC and Wirral. Therefore, Likely Significant Effects can be excluded. The site is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.29 The River Dee and Bala Lake SAC is designated for several habitats (e.g. water course from plain to montane levels) and species (e.g. Atlantic salmon, species of lamprey), all of which are

⁸² https://naturalresources.wales/media/673576/Dee%20Estuary-Req33-Volume%201-English-091209_1.pdf [Accessed on the 20/11/2019]

⁸³

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/SupAdvice.aspx?SiteCode=JK9005131&SiteName=mersey+estuary&SiteNameDisplay=Mersey+Estuary+SPA&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=&NumMarineSeasonality=7> [Accessed on the 20/11/2019]

⁸⁴ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6588974160150528> [Accessed on the 20/11/2019]

highly sensitive to changes in water quality. In contrast to the marine sites, the main impact would be through increases in phosphorus concentrations linked to wastewater from Wirral. Natural Resources Wales has published a Core Management Plan for the site, highlighting that water quality is an important threat to site integrity⁸⁵. However, the site lies 7.3km south of Wirral and therefore upstream of any watercourses that local WwTWs are likely to discharge into. Therefore, given that there is no linking impact pathway between the SAC and WwTWs in Wirral, Likely Significant Effects can be excluded. The site is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

- 4.30 The Halkyn Mountain SAC is partly designated for its great-crested newt population, which requires sufficiently good water quality such that there are no surface sheens or algal blooms in the breeding ponds⁸⁶. However, the SAC lies 5.7km to the south-west of Wirral and upstream of any of Wirral's WwTWs that are likely to be discharging treated sewage effluent. Given that the sites lie on an elevated plateau, they are also much more likely to be receiving water from higher terrain. As such it is considered that there is no hydrological connectivity with development in Wirral. Therefore, Likely Significant Effects can be excluded and the site is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.31 While the qualifying great-crested newts in the Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC are generally sensitive to negative water quality impacts, such issues also need to be considered on a site-by-site basis. The Core Management Plan published by Natural Resources Wales states that '*water pollution is not considered to be a significant factor affecting the presence of great-crested newts on this site*'⁸⁷. Furthermore, the site lies 9.1km to the south of Wirral, upstream of any waterbodies that might receive treated sewage effluent from Wirral. As such it is considered that there is no hydrological connectivity with development in Wirral. Therefore, Likely Significant Effects can be excluded and the site is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.32 Given that the Issues and Options Document does not yet contain strategic policies or policy text, this HRA considers the Preferred Option text that the document does provide. The following growth options and Preferred Approaches have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment because they provide for development that will contribute sewage effluent and surface run-off, potentially changing the water quality in European sites:
- Strategic Growth Options **1A (Urban Intensification)**, Option **2A (Dispersed Green Belt Release)** and Option **2B (Urban Extension)**
 - Chapter 2.9 **Delivering Growth Through Regeneration** (provides for the overall strategic development in Wirral Waters and Birkenhead)
 - Chapter 5.5 **Empty Properties** (returning long-term empty properties to the housing market by providing 1,275 additional homes)
 - Chapter 5.6 **Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People** (considers the need of providing plots for gypsies and travellers)
 - Chapter 6.2 **Provisions for Future Employment Growth** (allocates a minimum of 80ha of employment land)
 - Chapter 6.4 **Tourism** (promotes tourism opportunities in the Borough of Wirral)

Visual and Noise Disturbance

- 4.33 The following European sites (and habitat that is functionally linked to these sites) within 10km of Wirral are sensitive to visual and noise disturbance from construction work and other activities associated with Wirral's Issues and Options Document (the sites in bold are taken forward to Appropriate Assessment):

- **Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar**

⁸⁵ https://naturalresources.wales/media/673374/River_Dee_Bala_Lake_32_Plan.pdf [Accessed on the 20/11/2019]

⁸⁶ https://naturalresources.wales/media/672548/Halkyn%20SAC%20Plan%20_Eng_.pdf [Accessed on the 20/11/2019]

⁸⁷ https://naturalresources.wales/media/671740/Deeside_and_Buckley_WES32_Plan_English.pdf [Accessed on the 20/11/2019]

- **Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar**
 - **Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar**
 - **Liverpool Bay SPA (primarily due to visual and noise disturbance issues in habitat that is functionally linked to the SPA)**
 - Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar
- 4.34 This section considers disturbance effects on qualifying bird species through pathways other than recreational pressure, such as construction and vehicular noise, construction lighting, operational lighting and other visual disturbance. Professional experience suggests that these impacts are unlikely to arise on sites located more than 200m from the qualifying bird species. For example, the noisiest construction activity is generally impact piling, where a hammer is dropped on the pile. This has a typical maximum noise level of 100-110dB at 1m from source; however, it typically results in noise levels below the typical waterfowl disturbance threshold (70 dB) at distances of more than 100m from source because atmospheric noise attenuates by 6dB for every doubling of distance. Therefore, this precautionary 200m distance was used to assess the options, specifically to flag allocations of particular concern. It is to be noted that the impact pathway visual and noise disturbance is not only relevant to European sites, but also to functionally linked habitat beyond the site boundary.
- 4.35 The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar is designated for waterfowl and wader species that are all sensitive to visual and noise disturbance, which might arise from the Issues and Options Document. The precautionary distance for non-recreational disturbance is 200m, meaning that potential development sites within this buffer are likely to result in LSEs. There are several potential development sites within Option 1 that lie within 200m of the Mersey Narrows and the North Wirral Foreshore. Therefore, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.36 The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, also designated for various waterfowl and wader species, lies adjacent to the western shoreline of the Wirral Peninsula. Using a 200m precautionary distance, Option 1 only allocates one site within 200m of the SPA and Ramsar. However, there are several greenfield sites allocated under Options 2a and 2b (the Green Belt release options) in which development might cause visual and noise disturbance on SPA and Ramsar birds (if present). Therefore, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.37 The Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, designated for disturbance-sensitive waterfowl and waders, lies adjacent to the eastern shoreline of the Wirral Peninsula. Using a 200m precautionary distance, Option 1 allocates several sites within 200m of the SPA and Ramsar. Furthermore, Options 2a and 2b (the Green Belt release options) allocate multiple greenfield sites in which development might cause visual and noise disturbance on SPA and Ramsar birds (if present). Therefore, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.38 The Liverpool Bay SPA lies over 200m to the north of Wirral's development, such that visual and noise disturbance arising from construction works related to Wirral's LP is not considered to be an issue for the European site itself. However, as highlighted earlier, a significant number of some of the qualifying species of the SPA use the Birkenhead Docks as functionally linked habitat. This lies directly adjacent to some of the sites proposed for development, most notably Wirral Waters, and might be affected by visual and noise disturbance arising during the construction period, as well as from recreational use post-construction. Therefore, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded, and the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.39 The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, designated for disturbance-sensitive bird species, lies approx. 1.5km to the north-east of Wirral's boundary. Therefore, the entire site extent lies beyond the precautionary 200m distance applied for waterbirds. As such, it is concluded that development in Wirral will not result in visual and noise disturbance of the SPA's and Ramsar's qualifying birds. Therefore, there is no potential for Likely Significant Effects and the site is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

4.40 Given that the Issues and Options Document does not yet contain strategic policies or policy text, this HRA considers the Preferred Option text that the document does provide. The following growth options and Preferred Approaches have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment because construction activities, artificial lighting or other processes might cause visual and noise disturbance to SPA and Ramsar birds:

- Strategic Growth Options **1A (Urban Intensification)**, Option **2A (Dispersed Green Belt Release)** and Option **2B (Urban Extension)**
- Chapter 2.9 **Delivering Growth Through Regeneration** (provides for the overall strategic development in Wirral Waters and Birkenhead)
- Chapter 5.5 **Empty Properties** (returning long-term empty properties to the housing market by providing 1,275 additional homes)
- Chapter 5.6 **Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People** (considers the need of providing plots for gypsies and travellers)
- Chapter 6.2 **Provisions for Future Employment Growth** (allocates a minimum of 80ha of employment land)
- Chapter 6.4 **Tourism** (promotes tourism opportunities in the Borough of Wirral)

Atmospheric Pollution

4.41 The following European sites within 10km of Wirral are sensitive to atmospheric pollution due to an increase in the number of car-based commuter journeys resulting from Wirral's Issues and Options Document (the sites in bold are taken forward to Appropriate Assessment), taking into account key journey to work routes of Wirral residents:

- **Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar**
- **Dee Estuary SAC**
- Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar
- Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar
- Liverpool Bay SPA
- Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar
- Sefton Coast SAC
- Halkyn Mountain SAC
- Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC

4.42 The Dee Estuary SAC comprises several habitats with a varying degree of sensitivity to atmospheric pollution, and especially nitrogen deposition. APIS shows that the most sensitive features in the SAC are the fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (critical nitrogen load of 8-15 kg N/ha/yr), the humid dune slacks (10-20 kg N/ha/yr), the embryonic shifting dunes (10-20 kg N/ha/yr) and the shifting dunes with *Ammophila arenaria* (10-20 kg N/ha/yr) and these are also the habitats where the SAC species petalwort is found. This is mainly because high nitrogen deposition will result in a biomass increase of tall graminoids, soil acidification and a loss of lichens species. However, these habitats occupy a relatively small proportion of the SAC (considerably less than 1% according to the JNCC website) and are not found within the parts of the SAC around the Wirral peninsula that lie within 200m of roads. The other main habitats sensitive to nitrogen deposition are the Atlantic salt meadows and *Salicornia* vegetation, which both have a critical load of 20-30 kg N/ha/yr; the lowest part of the critical load range is currently exceeded in places. These habitats have a relatively low sensitivity to nitrogen deposition (hence the high critical load) because they are naturally relatively high nitrogen habitats, but they are found in the Heswall Beach area. However, there are no significant through roads within 200m

of this part of the SAC. Moreover, it is important to note that the experimental studies which underlie conclusions regarding the sensitivity of saltmarsh (the habitat representative of littoral sediment on which most studies have occurred) to nitrogen deposition have '*... neither used very realistic N doses nor input methods i.e. they have relied on a single large application more representative of agricultural discharge*⁸⁸, which is far in excess of anything that would be deposited from atmosphere. There is good reason to believe the upper part of the critical load range (30 kgN/ha/yr) may be more appropriate than the lower part (20 kgN/ha/yr). The Dee Estuary SAC lies within 200m of the A548 in Flintshire (Wales), on the opposite side of the estuary. Commuters originating from Wirral might use the A548 to reach work locations in Flintshire, including at Flint and Holywell and saltmarsh is a specific qualifying feature of the SAC. Therefore, the Welsh part of the site is screened in for Appropriate Assessment in relation to the impact pathway atmospheric pollution.

- 4.43 The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar is designated for its non-breeding waterfowl and breeding tern species, some of which are indirectly sensitive to atmospheric pollution. This is because excess nitrogen deposition might lead to changes to the food resources and habitats of these species. APIS states that supralittoral sediment, immediately inland from the high-water mark and the main habitat of all three tern species, is highly sensitive to nitrogen deposition. For example, coastal acid and calcareous dune grasslands have critical nitrogen loads of 8-10 kg N/ha/yr and 10-15 kg N/ha/yr. Exceedance of these critical loads might lead to increases in tall grasses and N leaching, while decreasing prostrate plants and typical lichen species. However, there are no tern nest sites located within 200m of the A548. Waterfowl and waders primarily depend on the littoral zone of the SPA and Ramsar, particularly the saltmarsh habitats, which have a critical nitrogen load of 20-30 kg N/ha/yr. According to APIS only one wader species (curlew) for which the SPA is designated is potentially sensitive to nitrogen deposition to saltmarsh, due to potential habitat structure effects. Given that the southern part of the SPA and Ramsar overlaps with the boundary of the Dee Estuary SAC, it also lies within 200m of the A548 in Wales (see previous paragraph). Therefore, for completeness, this site is also screened in for Appropriate Assessment in relation to the impact pathway atmospheric pollution.
- 4.44 The Site Relevant Critical Load on APIS⁸⁹ for nitrogen deposition to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, as it relates to each bird for which the site was designated, indicates that maximum baseline nitrogen deposition to littoral sediment for the grid squares within which the site is situated is 19 kg N/ha/yr (last checked 19/09/19), with an average deposition rate of 14 kg N/ha/yr. This compares to a critical load for littoral sediment of 20-30 kg N/ha/yr. Therefore, nitrogen deposition is well-below the critical load for the relevant habitat. Moreover, it is important to note that the experimental studies which underlie conclusions regarding the sensitivity of saltmarsh (the habitat representative of littoral sediment on which most studies have occurred) to nitrogen deposition have '*... neither used very realistic N doses nor input methods i.e. they have relied on a single large application more representative of agricultural discharge*⁹⁰, which is far in excess of anything that would be deposited from atmosphere. There is good reason to believe the upper part of the critical load range (30 kgN/ha/yr) may be more appropriate than the lower part (20 kgN/ha/yr).
- 4.45 Moreover, APIS concludes the effects of nitrogen deposition may be positive for most birds for which the SPA is designated because nitrogen enrichment potentially means more prey species. The only SPA species for which nitrogen deposition to littoral sediment is identified on APIS as being potentially negative are great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus* (if algal blooms were to occur, which is very unlikely due to inherent turbidity and low water temperatures in the Mersey Estuary, or if saltmarsh experienced a change in grass cover, which is not expected to occur since the nitrogen deposition rate is well below the critical load) and wigeon *Anas penelope*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa* and curlew *Numenius arquata* (if nitrogen deposition increases the sward height of their grassland foraging grounds; however, sward height is much more strongly influenced by other factors than atmospheric nitrogen deposition such as cut height & frequency and conventional fertilisation).

⁸⁸ UK Air Pollution Information System website [accessed 21/04/15]: <http://www.apis.ac.uk/node/968>

⁸⁹ <http://www.apis.ac.uk/>

⁹⁰ UK Air Pollution Information System website [accessed 21/04/15]: <http://www.apis.ac.uk/node/968>

- 4.46 Finally, the relevant habitats of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar are subject to regular tidal flushing. This both deposits far more nitrogen in a single tidal cycle than would come from local roads (reflected on APIS itself, which states regarding saltmarsh that '*Overall, N deposition [from atmosphere] is likely to be of low importance for these systems as the inputs are probably significantly below the large nutrient loadings from river and tidal inputs*'⁹¹) and controls the growth of otherwise competitive plant species.
- 4.47 With regard to Liverpool Bay SPA, while terns are vulnerable to nitrogen deposition on their nesting sites, the SPA is not designated for nesting terns but for foraging birds which are plunge-diving fishers - as are cormorant and red-throated diver, other key interest features of the SPA - and their use of the SPA is thus unaffected by atmospheric nitrogen deposition. Similarly, common scoter (another SPA interest feature) is a sea-duck that does not rely on vegetation or intertidal foreshore for its food resource and would therefore be unaffected. The analysis regarding the waterbirds of the Mersey Estuary SPA would also apply to the waterbird assemblage feature of Liverpool Bay.
- 4.48 Similarly, scrutiny of APIS indicates that the only species for which Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore is designated that is potentially sensitive to nitrogen deposition is nesting terns; however, it has been established that there is no semi-natural vegetated nesting tern habitat within the SPA within 200m of roads on the Wirral peninsula (the terns in the SPA nest primarily on Seaforth Nature Reserve in Sefton; they have also been known to nest at Birkenhead Docks but there is no semi-natural habitat here that would be affected by atmospheric nitrogen deposition). It is therefore concluded that LSEs will not arise on these SPAs/Ramsar sites due to air quality.
- 4.49 The qualifying features of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar include a range of waterfowl and wader species, some of which are indirectly sensitive to atmospheric pollution. For example, APIS highlights that most of the littoral zone that the waders depend on has a critical nitrogen load of 20-30 kg N/ha/yr. Natural England's Supplementary Advice on Site Conservation Objectives also states that air quality is an important feature determining the quality of the species' supporting habitat⁹². However, the Advice Note also states that '*there is a lack of evidence that the feature [the qualifying bird species] is being impacted by any anthropogenic activities*'. Furthermore, while Sefton is in the top five list of origins and destinations of commuter traffic relating to Wirral, the SPA and Ramsar is beyond 200m of any major road likely to form a journey to work route. It is therefore concluded that Wirral's Issues and Options Document will not result in LSEs on the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar regarding atmospheric pollution. No air quality modelling will be required for the HRA of the Reg. 19 Local Plan.
- 4.50 The Sefton Coast SAC's qualifying dune systems and associated plant species are highly sensitive to atmospheric pollution. This includes the fixed acidic coastal dunes with vegetation (critical nitrogen load: 8-10 kg N/ha/yr) and the humid dune slacks (critical nitrogen load: 10-15 kg N/ha/yr). An exceedance of this nutrient load will change the community composition of the dunes towards an increased biomass of tall graminoids. This is also reflected in Natural England's Conservation Objectives Supplementary Advice Note, which confirms that the current nitrogen deposition already exceeds the critical loads within the shifting dunes⁹³. However, a review of the existing roads along the SAC highlights that the dune systems are within approx. 150m of the A565 (Liverpool Road) near Southport, relatively far north in Sefton and only a very short c. 200m section of road lies this close (i.e. considerably less than 0.01% of the SAC lies within 200m). While review of the 2011 Census shows that there is a relatively high number of commutes between Wirral and Sefton, most of these journeys are likely to be to / from the settlements of Bootle, Litherland and Maghull, and therefore will not affect the Sefton Coast SAC further north. It is therefore concluded that Wirral's Issues and Options Document will not result in LSEs on the Sefton Coast SAC regarding atmospheric pollution. No air quality modelling will be required for the HRA of the Reg. 19 Local Plan.

⁹¹ APIS website [accessed 21/04/15]: <http://www.apis.ac.uk/node/968>

⁹² <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/SupAdvice.aspx?SiteCode=JK9005103&SiteName=ribble&SiteNameDisplay=Ribble+and+Alt+Estuaries+SPA&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=&NumMarineSeasonality=20> [Accessed on the 20/11/2019]

⁹³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6588974160150528> [Accessed on the 20/11/2019]

- 4.51 The Halkyn Mountain SAC is designated for several habitats that are sensitive to atmospheric nitrogen deposition, including European dry heaths and Calaminarian grasslands. APIS identifies a critical nitrogen load for Calaminarian grasslands of 10-15 kg N/ha/yr and for European dry heaths of 10-20 kg N/ha/yr, which are the two most sensitive features within the SAC. Component parts of the SAC, notably Halkyn Common, lie directly adjacent to the A55 south of Holywell. However, while Flintshire is clearly a major workplace destination for Wirral residents, it is most likely that commuters from Wirral will work in settlements in the south-east of the district on the English border, including Connah's Quay, Buckley, Flint and Mold, since these are the focal areas for employment. These journeys would not involve driving within 200m of Halkyn Common. Therefore, Likely Significant Effects can be excluded and the site is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.52 The Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC is partly designated for compartments of sessile oak woods containing *Ilex* and *Blechnum*. On APIS a critical nitrogen load of 10-15 kg N/ha/yr is identified for this habitat feature that, if exceeded, would result in the decrease of mycorrhiza, epiphytic lichens and bryophytes. The only location in which the SAC is within 200m of a major road is south-west of Ewloe adjacent to the A55. However, a review of Natural Resources Wales' Core Management Plan shows that none of the management units within the Buckley Claypits and Commons SSSI (which covers this part of the SPA and Ramsar), contains this habitat feature. As such, there is no impact pathway linking the SAC to increased traffic arising from the Issues and Options Document. Therefore, Likely Significant Effects can be excluded and the site is screened out from Appropriate Assessment.
- 4.53 Given that the Issues and Options Document does not yet contain strategic policies or policy text, this HRA considers the Preferred Option text that the document does provide. The following growth options and Preferred Approaches have been screened in for Appropriate Assessment because they are likely to increase the number of commuter journeys within and beyond the Borough of Wirral, potentially resulting in atmospheric pollution:
- Strategic Growth Options **1A (Urban Intensification)**, Option **2A (Dispersed Green Belt Release)** and Option **2B (Urban Extension)**
 - Chapter 2.9 **Delivering Growth Through Regeneration** (provides for the overall strategic development in Wirral Waters and Birkenhead)
 - Chapter 5.5 **Empty Properties** (returning long-term empty properties to the housing market by providing 1,275 additional homes)
 - Chapter 5.6 **Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People** (considers the need of providing plots for gypsies and travellers)
 - Chapter 6.2 **Provisions for Future Employment Growth** (allocates a minimum of 80ha of employment land)
 - Chapter 6.4 **Tourism** (promotes tourism opportunities in the Borough of Wirral)

Plans / projects to be Considered In-Combination

- 4.54 It is obligatory to not only assess the impacts of a proposed plan alone, but also to investigate whether there might be 'in-combination' effects with plans proposing development in other authorities surrounding a European protected site. In practice, such an 'in-combination' assessment is of greatest relevance when the plan would otherwise be screened out because its individual contribution is inconsequential. For the purposes of this HRA, we have identified several other authorities that have developed their own Local Plans or Local Development Plans (applicable to Welsh authorities), outlining residential and / or employment growth within their own boundary. These include the English authorities of Sefton, Liverpool, Cheshire West and Chester, Halton and the Welsh authority of Flintshire. Table 3 summarises the residential and / or employment growth allocated within the respective Plans for these authorities. It is to be noted that several authorities are nearing the end of their plan period and are currently working on updated Plans. However, Table 3 summarises the currently adopted, and therefore legally effective, Plans.

Table 3: Number of residential dwellings and employment space that are to be delivered in authorities adjacent to Wirral, according to their adopted Local Plans or Local Development Plans.

Local Authority	Total housing provided	Total employment space provided
Sefton (Adopted April 2017) ⁹⁴	11,520 (2012-2030)	81.6ha
Liverpool (Pre-submission draft, January 2018) ⁹⁵	34,780 (2013-2033)	149.5ha
Cheshire West and Chester (Adopted January 2015) ⁹⁶	22,000 (2010-2030)	365ha
Flintshire (Local Development Plan – Preferred Strategy) ⁹⁷	7,645 (2015-2030)	223ha
Halton (Pre-submission draft, July 2019) ⁹⁸	8,050 (2014-2037)	NA
Wirral (Issues and Options Document, November 2019)	12,000	80ha
Total In-Combination Growth	95,995	Min. 899.1ha

4.55 Other ongoing projects in the Borough of Wirral and its surrounding authorities must also be considered, as these might have in-combination effects with the emerging Issues and Options Document. For example, a project to enhance the scope for tourism in the Liverpool City Region might lead to higher recreational pressure in the coastal and estuarine European sites in Merseyside, thereby acting in-combination. The following further projects (in addition to the Plans of adjoining authorities outlined in the previous section) are considered in this HRA:

- **Keuper Gas Storage Project** - underground Gas Storage Facility - up to 19 underground caverns, gas processing plant and associated development with capacity to store up to 500 standard million cubic meters (mcm) of natural gas, having an import and export capability of up to 34 mcm per day. It was granted development consent in 2017;
- **Hydrodec Oil Re-Refinery Eastham** - The construction of a new hazardous waste recovery facility at Power House Road, Eastham, Port Wirral, Merseyside comprising the construction and operation of a waste oil re-refining plant together with associated and ancillary development;
- **Alexandra Dock Biomass Project** - New Biomass energy project (output of between 100 and 150MW);
- **Liverpool John Lennon Airport Masterplan to 2050** (March 2018). This project constitutes part of the Halton Local Plan and Liverpool Local Plan, but the Masterplan provides considerably more detail on some issues than the Local Plan policy and it is therefore discussed in detail in the later chapters of this document;
- **Mersey Ports Masterplan** (Consultation draft; June 2011), including the Port expansion into Seaforth Nature Reserve and the Seaforth River Terminal (a deepwater container port expansion in Sefton is currently under construction and due for completion imminently), new opportunities for renewable energy, development of single and multi-user port centric warehousing and of new processing facilities for imported commodities, potentially leading to the Liverpool SuperPort – An integrated port, airport, intermodal terminal, freight and commercial network based upon the Port of Liverpool, the Manchester Ship Canal, Liverpool John Lennon Airport and the Mersey Multimodal Gateway (Liverpool City Region); and

⁹⁴ <https://www.sefton.gov.uk/media/1270013/A-Local-Plan-for-Sefton-for-ADOPTION-FINAL.pdf> [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

⁹⁵ <https://liverpool.gov.uk/media/1356834/01-local-plan-january-2018-final.pdf> [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

⁹⁶ http://consult.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/portal/cwc_ldf/adopted_cwac_lp/ [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

⁹⁷ Pre-Deposit Consultation version of the Plan. Available at: <https://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Planning/Home.aspx> [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

⁹⁸ Revised Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. Available at: <https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/policyguidance/planningplans.aspx> [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

- **Marine Spatial Plan**, the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) is responsible for preparing marine plans for the English inshore and offshore regions according to the policies and objectives set out in the Marine Policy Statement (MPS). The plan will guide the sustainable development of marine industries, such as wind farms, shipping and marine aggregates.

4.56 The following projects are noted, but are not formally taken into account in the assessment because they are at a very early stage of implementation:

- **Mersey Tidal Power** - Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) approved £650,000 of funding to complete work on a business case for the proposed Mersey tidal energy project at a meeting held on July 27 2018.
- **Mersey Approach Channel Dredging Project**, a £300 million-pound project to dredge the Mersey Approach has now begun to allow larger ships to dock on Merseyside.

4.57 The Liverpool City Region now has a combined authority and that authority has published several plans of its own. These include a Construction Action Plan (2018-2020), a Skills & Investment Statement (2018/19), a Skills Strategy (2018-2030), an Apprenticeship Growth Plan (2018-20), an Employability Action Plan, a Low Carbon Action Plan, an Advanced Manufacturing Action Plan, a Visitor Economy Action Plan, a Visitor Economy Strategy and Destination Management Plan, a Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2018-2028), a Long-Term Rail Strategy, a Local Journeys Strategy, a Transport Plan for Growth, a Road Safety Strategy and a Single Growth Strategy. It must also be noted that the various Liverpool City Region Local Plans are part of the mechanism by which the Mayor's strategic objectives will be delivered and therefore it is important not to double-count impacts.

5. Appropriate Assessment

Summary of the Growth Options

- 5.1 Over the Plan period of 2020 to 2035, the total housing requirement to be delivered in Wirral is a minimum of 12,000 new dwellings. The Wirral Local Plan Issues and Options document details that the Preferred Option for strategic growth is Option 1A (Urban Intensification). This plans for all the Borough's development needs to be met within the existing urban areas, by developing urban sites and by increasing densities across all the settlements in Wirral in accordance with the Council's approach to density, as set out in the plan. It also seeks to accelerate delivery, through joint working arrangements with the Council's investment and funding partners. This is the Council's preferred approach, seeking to prioritise developing brownfield land ahead of any Green Belt release, in line with paragraph 137 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Option 1A comprises proposed urban housing allocations comprising 8,763 dwellings (including sites with planning permission, and 4,534 dwellings at Wirral Waters) together with relevant allowances for net gains from conversions, changes of use, windfalls and empty homes. Several broad locations for growth are proposed in and around Birkenhead and New Brighton, covering years 6-10 and 11-15 of the plan period where additional acceleration and intensification could deliver additional housing supply in the plan period. The option also includes proposed urban employment allocations totalling 105 hectares.
- 5.2 Option 1B is the same as 1A in that it considers that there is enough suitable, available and achievable capacity to meet all the Borough's future development needs within the existing urban area. However, it assumes that it would not be possible to deliver sufficient homes for the first five years and as such the emerging Local Plan may be allowed to follow a 'stepped approach'. This would mean the same amount of housing and employment would be delivered in the plan period, but with a lower proportion in the first five years.

Options Requiring Green Belt Release

- 5.3 If the land identified in the urban area under Options 1A or 1B to meet the total requirement cannot be shown to be 'deliverable' or 'developable' in line with the definitions set out in the NPPF, then some development may be required in the Green Belt. The following options would still include bringing forward as many urban housing and employment sites as possible, and increasing residential densities, as outlined in Option 1A, but would require the Council to decide which sites in the Green Belt should be brought forward to meet any shortfalls.
- 5.4 Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt release) proposes the release of a series of small to medium sized areas of land, which when added together, would allow sufficient land to be allocated to meet any residual housing needs within the Plan period.
- 5.5 Option 2B proposes an alternative option to focus development more strategically into a single larger area around an existing settlement. This option still relies on the weakly performing Green Belt parcels but groups these together to identify a larger contiguous area for urban expansion. The most suitable location would be on land west of Barnston Road, Heswall.

Recreational pressure

- 5.6 It is noted that recreational pressure is an impact pathway that is relevant to European sites directly, as well as to functionally linked habitat outside the European site boundaries. This is because recreation might affect the extent to which qualifying species (e.g. common tern, cormorant and great-crested grebe) are able to use supporting habitats, such as the Birkenhead Docks. This section will first investigate each of the designated sites in turn, before investigating recreational pressure in habitats that are functionally linked to these European sites.

Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar

- 5.7 Given its extent, distribution and proximity to urban development, particularly its eastern section near Wallasey, the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar is unsurprisingly a primary destination for residents of Wirral. At the same time, the SPA and Ramsar supports internationally important waterfowl species as well as a significant overall waterbird assemblage. Furthermore, it is particularly important to note that the site supports qualifying features throughout the year (e.g. non-breeding bar-tailed godwit and knot, as well as breeding common tern and little gull on passage), and the issue of recreational pressure is therefore not seasonal (as it is in many other estuarine sites). Notwithstanding this, it is to be acknowledged that visitor numbers in summer are likely to be significantly higher than in winter and this might influence the magnitude of impact on the qualifying bird species.
- 5.8 Not all qualifying features of the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar are considered to be equally sensitive to recreational disturbance. The most sensitive species of the SPA and Ramsar are bar-tailed godwit, knot and the overall waterbird assemblages. This is because these features heavily rely on roost sites and foraging habitat within the intertidal mudflats of the SPA and Ramsar, which are frequently subjected to human activity. In contrast, while little gull and common tern are sensitive to disturbance in principle, Natural England considers that in the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar there is limited recreational disturbance of these species. This is partly because parts of the populations of these species roost or nest within the confines of the Seaforth Nature Reserve, which has limited access to the public. Visitors need to be members of the Lancashire Wildlife Trust and require a visitor's and vehicle pass from the port police. As such, disturbance of these species is limited to a minimum.
- 5.9 Local residents tend to visit natural spaces around them to gain the well-being benefits of being in the outdoors, as well as engaging in recreational activities. Wirral has a high-quality and beautiful coastline that is well-provisioned for a wide range of formal and informal recreation. Wirral's coast is therefore very attractive for recreation and tourism purposes for residents and visitors. A recent study has demonstrated a direct link between the number of residential dwellings and the number of visitors to nearby European protected sites, both at foot access and car park access locations⁹⁹. Another study investigated the link between the number of visitors to the coastline and the resulting disturbance on bird populations¹⁰⁰, highlighting that there is a relationship between visitor numbers and the magnitude of bird disturbance. In order to assess the impact of recreation on birds, it is therefore of fundamental importance to understand how the local housing density affects access patterns and the activities undertaken in estuarine sites¹⁰¹.
- 5.10 There are high levels of housing in the proximity of the SPA and Ramsar, particularly around the eastern section of the site near the Mersey Narrows. However, site accessibility plays a major role in modulating the recreational pressure effect, as this determines which part of a foreshore people can access. A review of the main access points to the SPA and Ramsar highlights that there are several car park facilities, especially along the North Wirral Foreshore, that are likely to facilitate recreational access to the site. Furthermore, visitor counts along the shore indicate that some of these access points are recreational hotspots, where recreational pressure concentrates. A 2014 study ranked all English SPAs based on their vulnerability to recreational pressure, incorporating factors such as weighted housing, number of car parks per kilometre of shorelines, proportion of shoreline with access and total mudflat area¹⁰². The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar ranked within the top five most vulnerable sites to recreational pressure. Wirral's parks, beaches and countryside are visited by six million visitors annually, indicating a very high baseline of recreational pressure. A review of satellite imagery

⁹⁹ Weitowitz, D.C., Panter C., Hoskin R. & Liley D. (2019). The effect of urban development on visitor numbers to nearby protected nature conservation sites. doi: [10.1093/ijue/juz019](https://doi.org/10.1093/ijue/juz019): 1-12.

¹⁰⁰ Clarke R., Feamley H. & Liley D. (2012). Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project. Available at: http://www.solentforum.org/forum/sub_groups/Natural_Environment_Group/Disturbance_and_Mitigation_Project/Solent%20Mitigation%20and%20Disturbance%20Project%20Non%20Technical%20Summary%20February%202012.pdf

¹⁰¹ Stillman R.A., Cox J., Liley D., Ravenscroft N., Sharp J. & Wells M. (2009). Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project: Phase 1 report. Solent Forum.

¹⁰² Ross K., Liley D., Austin G., Clarke R.T., Burton N.H., Stillman R.A., Cruickshanks K. & Underhill-Day, J. (2014). Housing development and estuaries in England: Developing methodologies for assessing the impacts of disturbance to non-breeding waterfowl. Unpublished report by Footprint Ecology for Natural England.

shows a minimum of eight formal car parks directly adjacent to the North Wirral Foreshore, amidst a network of footpaths and public bridleways. There is also a large quantity of informal car parking and unrestricted or time-limited roadside parking along much of the linear frontage of Wirral's coast. Furthermore, three toilet blocks, refreshment infrastructure and several bathing beaches are also present.

- 5.11 On UK coastlines various recreational activities are undertaken, which differ in their likely level of bird disturbance. The increasing human footprint in coastal sites in the UK means that such activities should be better monitored and disturbance quantified, to manage disturbance in better ways. Across six sites in Teesmouth and the Cleveland Coast, 28% of all recreational activities resulted in significant disturbance, with bait digging, fishing, dog walking and kite surfing causing the greatest disturbance responses. The North Wirral Foreshore accommodates various recreational activities, including walking, dog walking, exercising, cycling, bird watching, fishing, canoeing and swimming.
- 5.12 In December 2014, Thomson Ecology was commissioned by Natural England to investigate the impacts of recreational disturbance on bird declines in the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. While these exercises were not carried out specifically in relation to growth in Wirral, they establish the evidence base regarding the impacts of housing growth on both visitor numbers and bird disturbance within the European site. The report by Thomson Ecology had the following main elements, which are discussed further in the following sections:
- A desk-based review that puts the bird population declines in the SPA and Ramsar into the context of recreational use;
 - A visitor questionnaire of people visiting the SPA and Ramsar; and
 - Data on bird disturbance collected in the field

Visitor Survey

- 5.13 In their assessment of recreational pressure within the SPA and Ramsar, Thomson Ecology consulted Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) experts, local birders and site managers to identify the main public access points and the activities that caused disturbance most frequently. Survey participants were asked to consider the magnitude of impact and frequency of shore-based, water-based and air-borne activities on a seven-point scale. The survey also asked basic questions regarding bird behaviour and relevant mitigation measures that are in place. At Hoylake, an access point near an important high-tide roost, dog walking was perceived to be the most significant disturbance issue, while aircraft were also being mentioned. This access point is being patrolled by voluntary dog wardens at high tide and notices addressing bird disturbance are displayed to protect roosting birds. The main suggested improvements to the provision of mitigation were a more official wardening role along with the provision of additional funding.
- 5.14 A visitor survey was carried out at the seven access points of the SPA and Ramsar, including King's Gap Road / North Parade, Bennets Lane / Meols Parade, Pasture Road Car Park, Seafront Car Park, Green Lane, Wallasey Beach (all access points to the North Wirral Foreshore), Victoria Road Slipway (New Brighton) and Vale Park (both access points to the Mersey Narrows). It is to be noted that all of these locations are tarmacked and well-maintained car parks, that are likely to be operating at capacity all the time. The busiest survey points in terms of the number of interviewees were Bennets Lane (78 interviews), Pasture Road (87 interviews), Wallasey Beach (91 interviews), Victoria Road Slipway (83 interviews) and Vale Park (84 interviews). Notably, at all survey locations except for Victoria Road Slipway, dog walking was by far the most frequently undertaken activity. Importantly, there was a high proportion of dog walkers that exercise their dogs off-lead (44% of all interviewees). At Bennets Lane almost three quarters of interviewees were off-lead dog walkers. Dog walkers are frequently considered to be the user group with the highest adverse impact on waterfowl in estuarine sites, especially if dogs freely roam the intertidal zone. Most visitors travelled less than 5 miles from home, either visiting by car (64%) or on foot (33%). The temporal parameters of recreational activities were also investigated. A typical activity lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and as such was relatively short. Interviewees also stated that they mostly visit daily or more than twice a week. Interestingly, while most visitors are aware of the site's conservation designation and vulnerable species, few of them regard bird disturbance as a significant issue.

Relating Visitor Data to Bird Responses

- 5.15 To assess whether there is a link between recreation and bird disturbance in the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, bird surveys were also carried out in December 2014 and in January and February 2015. Several roost sites close to access points were surveyed, including Hoylake (near Bennets Lane Car Park), Leasowe (near Pasture Road and Seafrost Car Parks), North Mersey and South Mersey (both near Victoria Road Slipway and Vale Park Car Parks), allowing for a direct link between visitor numbers and disturbance events to be made. All of the bird survey locations are important high-tide roosts for knot, dunlin, bar-tailed godwit, redshank and oystercatchers.
- 5.16 The visitor spot counts from vantage points indicated the number of people actually accessing the respective locations. North Mersey was the busiest of the locations with a mean number of 103 visitors per hour. In contrast, Hoylake was the least busy survey location in Wirral with a mean number of 18 visitors per hour. Leasowe, a short distance to the east of Hoylake, had the highest dog count (189 dogs) and the highest ratio of dogs per person (0.40). The most frequent activity of visitors was walking (71%), followed by off-lead dog walking (16%). Roughly a third of visitors (27%) used the intertidal zone compared to 73% of visitors that remained on the shore or the promenade. At Hoylake, one of the roost sites for birds, the proportion of intertidal zone users was the highest (55%). Off-lead dog walking was also considerably more popular in the intertidal zone compared to on-lead dog walking. These data are significant in that recreational activities in the intertidal zone, in particular off-lead dog walking, are likely to have the greatest disturbance effect on SPA and Ramsar bird species. Relating the visitor spot counts to bird abundances, indicated that there is a significant negative correlation between the two. In other words, the total number of birds was lower when the number of visitors increased. The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar is highly popular for recreation with higher visitor rates than at Teesmouth, the Solent and the North Kent Marshes, with walking (with and without dogs) being the single most dominant activity. Furthermore, the intertidal zone is more popular than in other marine sites (e.g. Solent, North Kent Marshes), especially for off-lead dog walking (81% of all dogs).
- 5.17 An investigation of Potential Disturbance Events (PDEs) highlighted that of the 223 PDEs that were recorded, 73 (33%) evoked a response by the birds. Some of these involved a long flight or leaving the area, which are the responses that are most likely to be associated with the highest impacts on fitness. Off-lead dog walking was the activity that triggered the highest percentage of active responses, including long flights and leaving the area. Some of the important roost sites (e.g. Leasowe) had a very high number of PDEs and disturbance responses, generally due to the fact that there were more birds within 200m of recreational activities. With regard to Wirral's Issues and Options Document HRA, it is to be noted that behavioural responses to disturbance (33%) were higher in this SPA and Ramsar than in other studies (ranging from 7% to 28%). It is also noted that this is only a third of the events that could potentially result in disturbance and therefore habituation might naturally mitigate the effects of recreational pressure to some extent. As in other studies¹⁰³¹⁰⁴, some activities in the intertidal zone resulted in the highest proportion of disturbance. Location, the type of activity and the species affected are all important determinants of the magnitude of recreational pressure, and more important than the total visitor number per se.
- 5.18 However, the report also clarifies that the issue of bird declines cannot solely attributed to disturbance. While bar-tailed godwit and turnstone have declined considerably in recent years at Hoylake and Leasowe respectively, other species have increased in numbers. In order to evaluate the role of disturbance in this, it might be advisable to zone sections of the intertidal zone, to see whether this results in an increase in bird numbers. Furthermore, some wader species (e.g. knots, bar-tailed godwits, dunlin) have a relatively low roost fidelity¹⁰⁵. As such, a decline in bird numbers at some survey points might merely represent a redistribution of these birds within the wider area.

¹⁰³ Liley D., Cruickshanks K. Waldon J. & Fearnley H. (2011). Exe Disturbance Study. Report by Footprint Ecology for the Exe Estuary Management Partnership.

¹⁰⁴ Liley D. & Fearnley H. (2011). Bird Disturbance Study, North Kent 2010-2011. Report by Footprint Ecology for Greening the Gateway.

¹⁰⁵ Rehfisch M.M., Inley H.U.G.H. & Swann B. (2003). Fidelity of overwintering shorebirds to roosts on the Moray Basin, Scotland: Implications for predicting impacts of habitat loss. *Ardea* 91: 53-70.

Review of current management practices

- 5.19 Thomson Ecology also undertook a review of the management measures currently in place to address recreational pressure in the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. Currently, there are measures in place to manage vehicle and boat access / movement, sporting activities and public safety. However, none of these specifically address bird disturbance. Information boards and disturbance warnings are located at several access points where there are strong recreational interactions with birds, including three access locations at the Hoylake frontage. Despite this, there is a notable disconnect between the importance that relevant authorities (in this case WeBS monitoring experts) assign to recreational disturbance and the lack of awareness of disturbance issues among members of the public. This is a clear indication that the current notice boards that are in place are insufficient for educational purposes. Overall, the paper concluded that there are few formal mitigation measures in place that specifically target bird disturbance.
- 5.20 Ideally, a need for mitigation measures is demonstrated prior to their enactment. However, as discussed for the case of bird disturbance, a cause-and-effect is not always easy to demonstrate, because of the numerous confounding factors and the difficulty of surveying birds. One potential measure would be to manage human access through the incorporation of buffer zones, providing screens, dog control orders and path management. Furthermore, a simple and cost-effective technique would be to place further information boards and signs for keeping dogs on lead at key strategic locations, where bird disturbance is an issue. This would augment the signage that is already present on site. Furthermore, zonation measures might include an approach similar to that in the Dee Estuary, where high tide lines between October and March are closed off by a warden. Finally, the report advised that the relevant authority (in this case Wirral Borough Council), should cooperate with site owners and local interest groups to devise a management scheme for the SPA and Ramsar that takes due account of the site's qualifying features and conservation objectives¹⁰⁶.

Wirral's Spatial Development Options

Over the Plan period of 2020 to 2035, the total housing requirement to be delivered in Wirral is a minimum of 12,000 new dwellings. The Issues and Options Document details that the Preferred Option for strategic growth is option 1A (Urban Intensification). This plans for all the Borough's development needs to be met within existing urban areas, without the need for releasing Green Belt land for development. This option primarily utilises 2019 SHLAA sites and allocates 4,534 dwellings and 5250 jobs at Wirral Waters, the main development within the authority.

- 5.21 Generally, it is to be noted that the currently preferred option proposes to allocate relatively little new residential development in the northern and eastern section of Wirral, while concentrating much of the provision of residential dwellings in Birkenhead, which is already highly urbanised. This is potentially positive for the North Wirral Foreshore, which is considered to be more susceptible to recreational pressure than the Mersey Narrows, because most of the potential larger housing sites lie further than 4km from the North Wirral Foreshore (NWF). Given that distance is one of the most important predictors of recreational visits, new Birkenhead residents are more likely to visit parts of the Mersey Narrows Foreshore than the North Wirral Foreshore. However, given that Birkenhead is still well within a typical recreational catchment of a coastal site and that the Mersey Narrows are also sensitive with regards to bird disturbance, the likely recreational impact of Wirral's Preferred Option must still be adequately addressed.
- 5.22 The unique setting of Wirral on a peninsula that is enveloped by three coastal sites (Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar) means that local residents have the choice between three sites with similar characteristics (although not necessarily similar accessibility; the Mersey Estuary SPA is much less accessible from Wirral than the other sites). It is therefore considered that distance from home is likely to be the key factor driving site choice. As such, the potential larger housing sites close to the Mersey Narrows are likely to drive a potential increase in its

¹⁰⁶ Page 60 of the following report: Thomson Ecology. (2015). Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Sites of Special Scientific Interest – Investigation into the Impacts of Recreational Disturbance on Bird Declines. Natural England Commissioned Report NECR201. 107pp. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5547581758242816> [Accessed on the 12/11/2019].

visitor pressure, while allocations close to the North Wirral Foreshore are likely to contribute to recreational pressure in that component site.

- 5.23 Option 1A proposed allocations of approx. 334 residential dwellings to be delivered west of the M53 within the vicinity of the North Wirral Foreshore (NWF), with the furthest of these proposed allocations being approx. 1.7km distant from the NWF. This is considered to be well within the distance that residents would walk from home. Given the existing evidence for high numbers of off-lead dog walkers at Hoylake and Leasowe, it is expected that Wirral's Issues and Options Document would lead to an increase of dog walkers near these bird roost sites. For example, from the furthest of these allocations it is only a short walk along Pasture Road to reach the NWF, from where there is direct access on to the intertidal mudflats of the SPA and Ramsar.
- 5.24 In contrast, approx. 7,218 dwellings are proposed for allocation in the eastern part of Wirral, mainly in highly urbanised areas of Birkenhead. These residential sites are further away from the NWF (e.g. approx. 4.8km for the major development in Wirral Waters) and much closer to the Mersey Narrows component part of the SPA and Ramsar. It is therefore considered that residential development in the eastern section of Wirral is more likely to affect the Mersey Narrows.
- 5.25 Aside from Option 1A, Options 2A and 2B propose the release of Green Belt land for residential development to accommodate any shortfall unable to be met in the urban area. Options 2A and 2B would need to deliver up to 2,500 homes in the Green Belt during the Plan period. While these options would not affect the net total residential pressure in the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, they would likely alter the spatial dimension of recreational pressure. For example, Option 2A could deliver a considerable number of residential dwellings in the relatively sparsely populated north-west of Wirral. This could increase recreational pressure along the NWF (particularly the Hoylake roost), rather than constraining the recreational pressure hotspots around the Mersey Narrows. Overall, this could help spread the adverse impacts of recreation to other parts of the site. Option 2B would concentrate Green Belt release in the form of Urban Extension sites around Heswall and Bebington. Regarding recreational pressure impacts on the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, Option 2B would be preferable over Option 2A due to the longer distances between potential housing sites and the SPA and Ramsar.

Mitigation

- 5.26 The existing evidence indicates that the Issues and Options Document has the potential to lead to adverse effects on the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar as a result of increased recreational pressure. At this point it is noted that a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy (RMAS) is jointly being developed by Merseyside authorities in collaboration with Natural England and the National Trust. This strategy is designed to mitigate the recreational pressure arising from the in-combination growth in the wider Liverpool City Region. Being a mitigation solution for all European sites that are relevant to Wirral and the cumulative growth in the area, the RMAS will also address the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. However, its role will be discussed in the in-combination section at the end of the Appropriate Assessment on recreational pressure.

Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar

- 5.27 The Test of Likely Significant Effects (ToLSE) identified that the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar is vulnerable to recreational disturbance, both due to its sensitive waterfowl species and its proximity to new residential development to be delivered in Wirral. Like the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar harbours qualifying species throughout the entire year and this impact pathway therefore requires consideration across all seasons. Natural England's and Natural Resources Wales' joint Conservation Advice Note¹⁰⁷, stipulates that there is to be no significant reduction in numbers of birds attributable to disturbance, as this is likely to result in reduced food intake and increased energy expenditure.

¹⁰⁷ As this is a trans-border European site, the Conservation Advice is jointly published by Natural England and Natural Resources Wales. It is available at: https://naturalresources.wales/media/673576/Dee%20Estuary-Reg33-Volume%201-English-091209_1.pdf [Accessed on the 13/11/2019]

This might the reproductive success and viability of individuals, ultimately leading to population-level effects.

- 5.28 While the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar is clearly a very attractive natural space, the likelihood of recreational disturbance arising from a Local Plan will partly depend on how accessible a destination is. Regarding estuarine and coastal sites, suitable parameters to determine accessibility include car parks, the extent of the path network, opportunities for direct access to intertidal mudflats and other local attractions (e.g. nature reserves, marine pools, beaches, sporting clubs, etc.). In the first instance, this HRA therefore establishes public access to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. A review of the Ordnance Survey Map on ViewRanger indicates that public access to the SPA and Ramsar north of West Kirby is likely to be limited, because the Royal Liverpool Golf Course is a barrier to direct access on to the mudflats. However, to the south at West Kirby Beach, residents of Grange Hill and Newton have direct foot access on to the SPA's and Ramsar's mudflats. The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar is easily accessible all the way south to Neston with numerous beaches marked on google maps, including beaches at Caldy, Thurston and Heswall. The Wirral Way is a long-distance path that runs parallel to the SPA and Ramsar all the way from West Corby past Neston, providing hikers with ample opportunity to access the mudflats along the way. Finally, there are two main car parks along this stretch of the coast with one being located at West Kirby Beach (50+ capacity) and one further south at Heswall Beach (30-40 capacity). This is important as this means that the SPA and Ramsar is likely to be attractive for visitors from further afield as well as local residents travelling on foot.
- 5.29 Next, it is important to consider the current baseline of disturbance that is documented within the SPA and Ramsar. It is well known that SPA species are highly sensitive to visual and noise disturbance arising from recreation. According to Natural England and Natural Resources Wales, the current noise levels along the intertidal mud- and sandflats are relatively low. However, on parts of the shore that are popular for beach recreation (e.g. Gronant, Talacre, West Kirby, Thurston), noise disturbance is high, which might be particularly impactful at high tides, when birds are pushed closer to the coastline. The Conservation Advice Note identifies water sports at West Kirby as a particular disturbance concern for redshank roosting on the upper shore¹⁰⁸. Furthermore, both kite surfing and windsurfing is considered to cause significant disturbance on oystercatchers (and other species) roosting on Little Eye, Hilbre Islands. Birds using the saltmarsh further south in the SPA and Ramsar, experience exposure to frequent disturbance from dog walking, fishing, motorcycle scrambling and the flying of model aircraft and drones. This is of particular concern because if carried out on the upper marsh, these activities are carried out in close proximity to high tide roosts. Birds roosting on the Hilbre Islands experience relatively low disturbance, primarily from visitors that walk over from Wirral at low tide. Disturbance of the breeding tern colonies in the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar is primarily an issue on the Welsh side of the European site (Gronant, Point of Ayr) and is therefore not considered to be linked to Wirral's Issues and Options Document.
- 5.30 Footprint Ecology undertook a visitor survey in SSSIs on the north-west coast of England in, which covered two locations in the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, namely West Kirby and Thurston Car Park¹⁰⁹. Both survey locations were popular in general (368 and 408 people passing over 16 hours respectively), and especially so among dog walkers (119 and 100 dogs entering over 16 hours respectively). Compared to the other SSSI sites surveyed, the SSSIs forming part of the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, were among the busiest stretches of coast in the north-west of England. Notably, the proportion of dog walkers (> 75%) was also higher in the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar than in any of the other estuaries that were surveyed. At both survey locations, the bird disturbance fieldwork showed that over 90% of visitors exercise their dogs off-lead. Furthermore, one of the two survey locations (West Kirby) had the highest proportion of over 50% of daily visitors. In contrast, only about 30% of visitors at Thurston Car Park visited daily or on most days. The core visitor catchment for the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar was relatively typical for an estuarine site, and therefore larger than for inland sites. For West Kirby the core visitor catchment (i.e. the distance that 75% of visitors travelled from home) was 5.3km, compared to 8.8km for Thurston Car Park. Given the relatively small size of Wirral, this puts much of the authority, including the outskirts of Birkenhead and therefore the more

¹⁰⁸ Smith R. (2003). The effect of kite surfing on wader roosts at West Kirby, Dee Estuary. Unpublished Report on behalf of the West Kirby Voluntary Wardens.

¹⁰⁹ Liley D., Panter C., Marsh P. & Roberts J. (2017). Recreational activity and interactions with birds within the SSSIs on the North-West coast of England. Unpublished report by Footprint Ecology for Natural England.

populated urban centres of Wirral, within the catchment of the SPA and Ramsar (and SAC). Importantly, visitors also undertook longer routes (a median route of 3.4km) in the Dee Estuary than in other estuaries, indicating that the average visitor has the potential for affecting several roosting or feeding sites along the SPA and Ramsar.

Wirral's Spatial Development Options

- 5.31 Under Option 1A (Urban Intensification), relatively little residential growth is proposed in the western part of Wirral, the geographic area that is most relevant to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Given the limited residential growth in this area, it is considered that the Issues and Options Document would not substantially increase recreational pressure in this SPA and Ramsar. However, approx. 134 dwellings are to be allocated here, mainly in West Kirby. Given that the intertidal sand- and mudflats are particularly popular for recreational activities and that important high-tide roosts of sensitive SPA and Ramsar birds (e.g. redshank, oystercatcher) are close to West Kirby Beach, even a relatively small amount of residential growth could have an adverse effect on these waders.
- 5.32 As discussed in the previous section, Options 2A and 2B would deliver up to 2,500 homes in Wirral's Green Belt to accommodate any shortfall unable to be met in the urban area. While these options would not affect the net total recreational demand in Wirral, they would likely alter the spatial dimension of recreational pressure. For example, Option 2A could deliver a considerable number of residential dwellings in the west of Wirral, much closer to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Given that the likelihood of visit increases as distance decreases, a link that was established in the previous section on the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, it is likely that this option would considerably increase pressure near some of the identified high-tide roost sites. Option 2B would concentrate Green Belt release in the form of Urban Extension sites around Heswall and Bebington. As for the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, Option 2B would be preferable over Option 2A due to the longer distances between the proposed Green Belt potential housing sites and the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Overall, regarding recreational pressure in the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, Option 1A (Urban Intensification: as currently proposed) is expected to have the lowest potential for adverse effects on the estuarine site.

Mitigation

- 5.33 The existing evidence indicates that the Issues and Options Document has the potential to lead to adverse effects on the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar as a result of increased recreational pressure. At this point it is noted that a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy (RMAS) is jointly being developed by Merseyside authorities in collaboration with Natural England and the National Trust. This strategy is designed to mitigate the recreational pressure arising from the in-combination growth in the wider Liverpool City Region. Being a mitigation solution for all European sites that are relevant to Wirral and the cumulative growth in the area, the RMAS will also address the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. However, its role will be discussed in the in-combination section at the end of the Appropriate Assessment on recreational pressure.

Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar

- 5.34 The Test of Likely Significant Effects (ToLSE) identified that the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar is vulnerable to recreational disturbance, both due to its sensitive qualifying species and its proximity to Wirral, where significant residential growth will be delivered over the Plan period 2020-2035. In contrast to the coastal sites discussed in the previous sections, the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar only harbours sensitive species that are non-breeding or on passage. As such, recreational disturbance in this SPA and Ramsar has a more seasonal dimension, with recreation being of main concern between the months of October and March, when the waterfowl will be utilising the site.
- 5.35 As for the European sites that were previously discussed, the main disturbance effects will be delivered by recreational activities that are carried out on the intertidal sand- and mudflats, and on the water. Therefore, accessibility will be one of the key factors determining the magnitude of recreational effects. The SPA and Ramsar starts below the oil terminal in southern Birkenhead and then extends southwards to the mouth of the River Mersey. The shoreline of the estuary in Wirral is highly urbanised. Review of Ordnance Survey Mapping on ViewRanger shows that there are few public rights of way adjacent to the estuary and there are limited opportunities for direct

access onto the intertidal sand- and mudflats. Furthermore, to the south of Eastham Country Park, the estuary is separated from residential development by the Manchester Ship Canal, which runs all the way to Runcorn.

- 5.36 Accessibility to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar is considerably higher on its northern side in the authorities of Liverpool and Halton. While the shoreline in Liverpool is also very industrial in character (there are several docks, industrial estates and Liverpool John Lennon Airport), there are several footpaths that facilitate recreational access. Between Garston and Hale the Mersey Way leads directly along the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. From there the Trans-Pennine Trail follows the SPA and Ramsar in a north-easterly direction. Notably, these paths lead directly past several important feeding and roosting sites, such as The Oglet to the south of Liverpool Airport. Due to this difference in access between the northern and southern shore of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, it is considered that the main source of recreational pressure in the SPA and Ramsar will be the authorities of Liverpool and Halton. This assessment is supported by Natural England's Site Improvement Plan, which states that 'users of public footpaths immediately adjacent to the north shore of the site can cause disturbance to birds roosting and feeding' here¹¹⁰. It is considered relatively unlikely that residents of Wirral will be frequently visiting the northern side of the Mersey Estuary, which would involve use of the Runcorn-Widnes Bridge and an additional by-road distance of over 30km just to reach the bridge. Additionally, there are accessible destinations of similar appeal (e.g. Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar) much closer.
- 5.37 Footprint Ecology's visitor survey of estuarine sites in the north-west of England also covered one survey point in the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, namely Hale Head on the more accessible northern site of the estuary (opposite of Wirral). However, these results are summarised here as it is possible that some residents of Wirral will visit the northern the northern side of the SPA and Ramsar. The bird disturbance work found that bird flight responses in this part of the estuary were the lowest of any of the estuaries surveyed (0.3 bird flights per hour). In contrast to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, Hale Head was much less busy (under 4.4 people per hour, 122 people passing in 16 hours). It was the only estuary where dog walkers constituted less than 50% of all recorded activities and the proportion of people that visited often (i.e. daily or on most days) was less than 40%. Overall, this indicates that the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, even on its more accessible northern shore, is not a primary destination for recreation. Notwithstanding; the core visitor catchment of Hale Head was 8.3km, which means that residents from Wirral could be expected to use the SPA and Ramsar.
- 5.38 However, due to the relatively long distance that Wirral residents would have to travel to the northern shore of the site, it is concluded that Wirral's Issues and Options Document will not result in adverse effects on site integrity when considered alone. However, given that Wirral is a significant component part of the highly urbanised wider Liverpool City region and that some Wirral residents may visit the northern site of the SPA and Ramsar, the Mersey Estuary is nevertheless included in the following in-combination section on visitor pressure and mitigation.

Mitigation

- 5.39 The existing evidence indicates that the Issues and Options Document has the potential to lead to adverse effects on the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar as a result of increased recreational pressure. At this point it is noted that a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy (RMAS) is jointly being developed by Merseyside authorities in collaboration with Natural England and the National Trust. This strategy is designed to mitigate the recreational pressure arising from the in-combination growth in the wider Liverpool City Region. Being a mitigation solution for all European sites that are relevant to Wirral and the cumulative growth in the area, the RMAS will also address the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. However, its role will be discussed in the in-combination section at the end of the Appropriate Assessment on recreational pressure.

Dee Estuary SAC

- 5.40 The Test of Likely Significant Effects (ToLSE) identified that the Dee Estuary SAC is vulnerable to recreational pressure, primarily as a result of abrasion of its qualifying habitats and aquatic

¹¹⁰ Page 4 of the Site Improvement Plan. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6273450410770432>
[Accessed on the 13/11/2019]

- plant species. Furthermore, negative impacts on SAC habitats are also likely to affect the waterfowl species of overlapping SPAs / Ramsars, because these birds forage in SAC habitats.
- 5.41 Natural England's and Natural Resources Wales' joint Conservation Advice Note highlights the potential effect of physical damage through abrasion. Importantly, abrasion can damage plants at the individual level as well as leading to changes in the overall saltmarsh and sediment communities. Sensitivity varies across the Dee Estuary SAC depending on the habitats and species present. Abrasion damage can be attributed to three main sources, including dredging, commercial fisheries and recreational activities. The intertidal sand- and mudflats are sensitive to sediment compaction, alteration of micro-habitats and the potential loss of invertebrate species. Bait digging (raised particularly for the North Wirral Foreshore part of the SAC) is a particular concern because it results in the reworking of sediment, mudflat compaction and lowers the abundance of lugworms and rag worms. Finally, the *Salicornia* and the Atlantic salt meadows, both sensitive to abrasion, experience considerable abrasion from recreational activities near the shoreline, most notably from motorcycling.
- 5.42 The Dee Estuary SAC covers large areas of the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. As such, public access to the site will follow the same pattern as in these SPAs / Ramsars. For details relating to the accessibility of these sites, please refer to the respective sections above. In summary, these established that both these European sites are highly accessible because they have nearby car parks (making them appealing to visitors from further away), comprise an extensive network of public rights of way along the shoreline (making them accessible for local residents), offer direct access onto the intertidal zone and have numerous local watersports clubs. Review of detailed priority habitat mapping on MAGIC shows that coastal saltmarsh habitat in the SAC occurs in the south-western tip of Wirral, towards the mouth of the River Dee. The HRA therefore next addresses accessibility of the SAC between Heswall and Neston, which is where the saltmarsh occurs. Between Heswall and Neston there are public rights of way directly along the shoreline. Furthermore, there are two notable car parks in this area; one at Heswall Beach (30-40 capacity) and one at the Old Baths Picnic Area near Neston (30-40 capacity). Therefore, it is in theory possible for visitors to directly access the saltmarsh habitats. It is to be noted that access is made difficult due to a water channel that runs along the Mean High Water Line. However, given the fact that Natural England and Natural Resources Wales highlight recreational pressure, particularly motorcycling, as a threat in the upper saltmarsh indicates that people are accessing this part of the SAC.

Wirral's Spatial Development Option

- 5.43 Under Option 1A (Urban Intensification), relatively little residential growth is proposed in the western part of Wirral, the geographic area that is most relevant to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Given the limited residential growth in this area, it is considered that Wirral's Issues and Options Document would not substantially increase recreational pressure in this SPA and Ramsar. However, approx. 134 dwellings are to be proposed to be allocated here, mainly in West Kirby. Given that the intertidal sand- and mudflats are particularly popular for recreational activities and that important high-tide roosts of sensitive SPA and Ramsar birds (e.g. redshank, oystercatcher) are close to West Kirby Beach, even a relatively small amount of residential growth could have an adverse effect on these waders.
- 5.44 As discussed in the previous section, Options 2A and 2B could deliver up to 2,500 homes in Wirral's Green Belt to accommodate any shortfall unable to be met in the urban area. While these options would not affect the net total recreational demand in Wirral, they would likely alter the spatial dimension of recreational pressure. For example, Option 2A could deliver a considerable number of residential dwellings in the west of Wirral, much closer to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Given that the likelihood of visit increases as distance decreases, a link that was established in the previous section on the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, it is likely that this option would considerably increase pressure near some of the identified high-tide roost sites. Option 2B would concentrate Green Belt release in the form of Urban Extension sites around Heswall and Bebington. As for the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, Option 2B would be preferable over Option 2A due to the longer distances between the proposed Green Belt potential housing sites and the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Overall, regarding recreational pressure in the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, Option 1A (Urban Intensification; as currently proposed) is expected to have the lowest potential for adverse effects on the estuarine site.

Mitigation

5.45 The existing evidence indicates that the Issues and Options Document has the potential to lead to adverse effects on the Dee Estuary SAC as a result of increased recreational pressure. At this point it is noted that a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy (RMAS) is jointly being developed by Merseyside authorities in collaboration with Natural England and the National Trust. This strategy is designed to mitigate the recreational pressure arising from the in-combination growth in the wider Liverpool City Region. Being a mitigation solution for all European sites that are relevant to Wirral and the cumulative growth in the area, the RMAS will also address the Dee Estuary SAC. However, its role will be discussed in the in-combination section at the end of the Appropriate Assessment on recreational pressure.

Liverpool Bay SPA

5.46 The Liverpool Bay SPA is designated for its sensitive non-breeding bird species red-throated diver and common scoter. Natural England's Site Conservation Advice states that red-throated divers are highly sensitive to non-physical disturbance by noise and visual stimuli¹¹¹, which may result in the cessation of foraging or displacement from a given area. While the main impact on this species stems from the construction and operation of wind turbines, recreational boating might also affect this species' behaviour. Very similar recreational disturbance pressures are noted for the common scoter.

5.47 The Liverpool Bay SPA runs alongside Wirral's northern coastline, extending relatively far out into the sea. Given this, and the fact that most of the qualifying species of the site are primarily linked with open water, recreational activities on the shoreline are unlikely to have any potential for adverse effects on the site's qualifying features. However, as stated above, there is the potential for boating to result in disturbance of the birds. A review of online information shows that there are multiple boating clubs along northern Wirral's coastline, including the Hoylake Sailing Club, the Wirral Sailing Centre, the West Cheshire Sailing Club and the Wirral Sand Yacht Club. From all of these (and other) locations, boats can be launched into the Liverpool Bay SPA, potentially contributing to long-term effects on the SPA's red-throated diver and common scoter populations.

5.48 Generally, both an activity's potential impact and its popularity (i.e. how many people engage in it) should be considered in Appropriate Assessment. Due to the large potential area affected and high noise emission, boating is considered a high-impact activity. However, boating is also a niche activity that is undertaken by relatively few people. The number of new residents carrying out this activity will therefore be correspondingly small. As such, it is not possible to relate a Local Plan document to an increase in boating in the same way that it is related to an increase in dog walking, which is an activity that is carried out by a much larger proportion of the population. Therefore, it is considered that Wirral's Issues and Options Document will not result in adverse effects on the Liverpool Bay SPA alone. However, as a precautionary measure, in-combination adverse effects with the wider growth in the Merseyside region cannot be excluded.

Sefton Coast SAC

5.49 Sand dune systems, some of the qualifying features of the Sefton Coast SAC, are vulnerable to several aspects of recreation. Firstly, trampling can result in excessive physical disturbance, ultimately retarding or reversing the dune development process. However, it is also to be noted that a limited amount of recreational trampling is beneficial for community diversity as this ensures that the dune vegetation does not all succeed to late stages of development. Furthermore, Natural England's Site Improvement Plan also states that dog walking in the vulnerable dune systems can also result in nutrient enrichment through dog fouling, which potentially affects the community structure in dune communities¹¹².

5.50 The previous section on Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar established the site's access infrastructure and geographic location in relation to the Borough of Wirral. Given that the Sefton Coast SAC is largely contiguous with that SPA and Ramsar, this will not be re-assessed here. However, as for the SPA and Ramsar, it is considered that residents from Wirral are unlikely to account for a large proportion of the recreational footprint within the SAC, especially because

¹¹¹ <http://archive.jncc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=7507> [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

¹¹² <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6274126599684096> [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

there are similar coastal destinations much closer to the proposed development in Wirral. Regardless, the habitat features of the Sefton Coast SAC, particularly the dunes, are likely to exert a strong recreational draw on people, meaning that residents may choose to visit the SAC, even though there are closer coastlines to home.

- 5.51 A study on recreation use of Sefton's Natural Coast¹¹³ estimated that half of the recreational users were locals (i.e. residents within the Borough of Sefton). Interviewees were also asked about their main reason for visiting the coast. Over 50% of respondents answered that dog walking, walking, fresh air and visiting the coast were primary motivations. Surprisingly, nature-related reasons such as seeing the squirrels, bird-watching and fishing were given by only 20% of interviewees. The recreational hotspots occurred around Formby and Crosby. However, the study did not explore where the remaining 50% of visitors (i.e. visitors coming from beyond Sefton) came from. Visitor surveys in coastal and estuarine sites often observe core catchments up to 10km, and sometimes greater. The by-road distance for visitors from Wirral would be approx. 9km, which therefore places Wirral just within a potential core catchment. This indicates that some Wirral residents will definitely visit the Sefton Coast SAC, but most likely fewer than from Sefton, Liverpool or Lancashire.
- 5.52 Footprint Ecology's visitor survey in the north-west coast of England also covered two survey locations in the Sefton Coast SAC, namely Ainsdale-on-sea and Formby. Results for the later survey point are more relevant to Wirral, because this is located significantly further south in the SAC and therefore closer to Wirral. Formby in the Sefton Coast SAC was by far the busiest destination of any of the survey locations with 771 people passing and 364 people entering over 16 hours, the latter equating to 22.8 people entering per hour. For comparison, the next busiest survey locations had 13.8 people entering per hour (10 less than at Formby), illustrating how popular the Sefton Coast SAC is. The overall proportion of dog walkers at the two locations was approx. 60%, considerably higher than in the Mersey Estuary but much lower than in the Dee Estuary. This is mainly because Formby is particularly popular for family outings, which accounts for a much larger proportion of activities than in other survey locations (approx. 15%). Notably, at Formby over 70% of visitors stay for relatively long periods (1 hour and above) but visit relatively infrequently (only 20% of interviewees visit daily or on most days). This is supported by Formby's large core visitor catchment of 15.3km. While Wirral is within a 15km straight-line distance of Formby, the actual by-road travel distance for residents from Birkenhead would be approx. 20km, putting it just beyond the core visitor catchment. However, other destinations within the SAC (e.g. Crosby) lie much closer and are potentially more realistic destinations for Wirral residents within the Sefton Coast SAC.
- 5.53 Given the easy access to the SAC and the site's appeal, it is concluded that (while Wirral's Issues and Options Document is unlikely to result in adverse effects alone, due to the long by-road distance to Wirral), adverse effects in-combination with growth in other authorities, cannot be excluded (also see the in-combination section on recreational pressure below).

Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar

- 5.54 The Test of Likely Significant Effects (ToLSE) identified that the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is vulnerable to recreational pressure, primarily due to disturbance of the qualifying bird species. Natural England's Site Improvement Plan highlights that both on-shore (e.g. dog walking, jogging, walking) and off-shore (e.g. kite surfing, boating, sand yachting, jet-skiing) are significant concerns for the site¹¹⁴.
- 5.55 The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar lies over 9km in road distance from the Borough of Wirral, and would involve a partial crossing of Liverpool. Therefore, it is considered that residents from Wirral are not a primary contributor to recreational pressure in the SPA and Ramsar. Furthermore, there are several coastal and estuarine European sites with similar characteristics that lie much closer to Wirral (e.g. the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar). Notwithstanding, it cannot be excluded that some of the new Wirral residents will visit the Ribble and Alt Estuaries and thus contribute to negative impacts on the bird features.

¹¹³ England's North West Research Service for Economic Development and Tourism (May 2009) Sefton's Natural Coast Local Users of the Coast (Version 2)

¹¹⁴ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6274126599684096> [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

- 5.56 The shoreline of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar attracts tourists from across the county, especially the Ribble Estuary (the furthest part of the SPA and Ramsar from Wirral) due to its proximity to Blackpool. For visitors from Wirral, the southern part of the SPA and Ramsar around Seaforth, Crosby and Formby is likely to be of greatest relevance, due to the shorter travel times to that part of the SPA and Ramsar. It is noted that this part of the SPA and Ramsar is largely contiguous with the Sefton Coast SAC and therefore similar recreational pressures are likely to apply to these two sites (see the following Appropriate Assessment on the Sefton Coast SAC). A key difference is that recreational pressure in the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar relates to the qualifying bird species (e.g. nesting terns), which depend on different habitat features (i.e. intertidal sand- and mudflats) than those in the Sefton Coast SAC (e.g. the dune systems). Another difference is that the SPA's and Ramsar's sensitivity is seasonal, whereas the Sefton Coast SAC is vulnerable throughout the entire year. The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is most vulnerable in winter, when the non-breeding waterfowl uses the site. Overall, recreational disturbance is likely to be lower in winter, because people are less likely to engage in outdoor activities. Notwithstanding, some activities are carried out in all seasons (most notably dog walking) and recreational pressure thus requires appropriate consideration.
- 5.57 A review of Ordnance Survey Mapping on ViewRanger¹¹⁵ shows that this part of the coastline between Seaforth and Formby has easy access (except for a small section that forms part of a rifle range). The Sefton Coastal Path leads directly past the intertidal sandbanks of the SPA and Ramsar and there is direct easy access onto these habitats from the path. The existing path network and the general infrastructure of the area (i.e. no buildings or fencelines blocking access of the beach) provide an explanation for why the Sefton Coast is so popular for recreation. It is also to be noted that at the section of the SPA and Ramsar in Crosby alone there are four public car parks (two at the marine lake and two north of Brighton le Sands). The availability of public parking is a prerequisite for attracting visitors from further afield that would travel to the site by car, such as residents from Wirral.
- 5.58 Footprint Ecology surveyed three locations in the Ribble Estuary, but due to the long by-road distance to Wirral, these results are not considered to be particularly relevant for residents in Wirral. Indeed, these survey locations only had core visitor catchments between 1.9 and 4.4km, which would put Wirral well beyond the travel distance of most visitors. However, given that the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar site overlaps with the Sefton Coast SAC, notably also in the area around Formby, it is considered that a similar core visitor catchment (i.e. 15.3km) applies to the SPA and Ramsar (see previous section on the Sefton Coast SAC).
- 5.59 Given the easy access to the SPA and Ramsar and the site's appeal, it is concluded that (while Wirral's Issues and Options Document is unlikely to result in adverse effects alone, due to the long by-road distance to Wirral), adverse effects in-combination with growth in other authorities, cannot be excluded (also see the in-combination section on recreational pressure below).

In-combination Assessment

- 5.60 It is evident that Wirral is not the only source for recreational pressure, particularly given the fact that there are numerous other densely populated authorities within a relatively short distance. Visitor surveys in several other coastal European sites in England have been undertaken, which may serve as a broad indicator for the sites assessed in this HRA, provided they are used with care:
- In the Exe Estuary SPA and Ramsar, a visitor survey undertaken by Footprint Ecology¹¹⁶, established that 60% of visitors had travelled by car compared to 29% that had travelled on foot. Foot visitors tended to be very local, whereas car-borne visitors were travelling considerable distances: 51% of interviewees (taking only those visiting from home on a short visit/day trip rather than holidaymakers) lived within a 10km radius and 75% within 20km.

¹¹⁵ <https://my.viewranger.com/user/routes/add> [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

¹¹⁶ Liley, D. & Cruickshanks, K. (2010). Exe Visitor Survey, 2010. Teignbridge District Council / Footprint Ecology.

- A visitor survey in the Humber Estuary SAC / SPA and Ramsar¹¹⁷ showed that 88% of interviewees were local residents on a short trip from home. 70% of interviewees arrived by car. Home postcodes indicated people travelled a median distance of 4.4km from home. 50% of interviewees arriving on foot lived within 0.95km and 50% of interviewees arriving by car lived within 8.4km.
 - A visitor survey in the North Kent Estuaries undertaken by Footprint Ecology¹¹⁸ identified that most regular visitors lived within 6km, after which points of origin became more dispersed.
 - Data for the Solent Maritime SAC and overlapping SPAs obtained from the Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project¹¹⁹ showed that visitors undertook a wide range of activities, with walking and dog walking being the most popular activities. In these sites, half of visitors arrived on foot and the other half by car. 90% of the interviewees arriving on foot lived within 2km, whereas 80% of interviewees arriving by car lived within 10km.
- 5.61 These case studies illustrate that, while there is between-site variability, estuarine and coastal European sites have fairly large core recreational catchments of up to 10km and potentially beyond. This is in agreement with a recent meta-analysis relating visitor numbers to the number of residential dwellings surrounding protected sites across the UK. This study showed that the number of visitors correlated most strongly with housing numbers over 15km in estuaries than in any of the other habitats that were investigated, thereby confirming the large recreational catchments¹²⁰. Given the size of the recreational catchments, it is likely that people will be travelling from adjacent authorities to visit these sites. Therefore, the recreational pressure arising from Wirral needs to be set into the context of urban growth across the other Liverpool City Region Boroughs. The same conclusion was reached in the HRAs of other Local Plans, such as the Plans for Liverpool and Halton. Both HRAs determined that there was a potential for adverse effects from recreational pressure, especially when considered in-combination.
- 5.62 Avoiding recreational impacts on European sites usually involves locating new residential development beyond the core catchment zones of European Sites. In the case of Wirral this is not possible, as it is a relatively small authority and bordered by sensitive European sites on all sides. Thus, alternative measures are needed to avoid adverse recreational effects on the Mersey Narrows and Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, the Dee Estuary SAC and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. One promising approach is to manage recreation in collaboration with the neighbouring authorities, thereby providing a framework for sustainable recreation. To achieve this, Wirral Borough Council needs to work with the other Merseyside Authorities (such as Liverpool, St. Helens, Wirral), MEAS, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales and other partners to devise a framework for the delivery of enhanced access management of these European sites. This recommendation was also made in the HRAs of the Liverpool and Halton Local Plans, highlighting that recreational pressure arising from the cumulative growth in the Liverpool City Region requires a unified mitigation approach.
- 5.63 The Merseyside authorities have commissioned a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy (RMAS) for all European sites in the City Region in partnership with Natural England and the National Trust. The Strategy is currently being developed by a team that has expertise in mitigation design and delivery. One of the main aims is to provide a better evidence base for recreational pressure, particularly regarding the spatial and seasonal dimensions of recreation. The evidence base for the RMAS will be available before the end of March, while the strategy is currently intended to be completed by the end of 2020 or early 2021. It is to act as a joint and strategic response to the on-going issue of recreation pressure. The draft Strategy will require consultation and approval prior to being implemented.
- 5.64 In other areas a recreation mitigation strategy typically involves individual residential allocations seeking to reduce recreational pressure within the nearby European sites by providing bespoke

¹¹⁷ Feamley, H., Liley, D. & Cruickshanks, K. (2012). Humber Management Scheme Visitor Survey. Footprint Ecology, unpublished report for Humber Management Scheme.

¹¹⁸ Feamley, H. & Liley, D. (2011). North Kent Visitor Survey Results. Footprint Ecology.

¹¹⁹ Stillman, R. A., West, A. D., Clarke, R. T. & Liley, D. (2012) Solent Disturbance and Mitigation Project Phase II: Predicting the impact of human disturbance on overwintering birds in the Solent. Report to the Solent Forum.

¹²⁰ Weitowitz D.C., Panter C., Hoskin R. & Liley D. The effect of urban development on visitor numbers to nearby protected nature conservation sites. Manuscript in review with the Journal of Urban Ecology.

Suitable Alternative Greenspace (SANG; a term originating from the Dorset Heaths) on the allocation itself, or enhancing existing nearby natural greenspace to deliver improved capacity and functionality. However, this is considered difficult in Wirral for several reasons. Firstly, the largest potential housing sites with capacities of 1,795 and 1,705 residential dwellings respectively, lie in Birkenhead (SHLAA 0753 and 0755), not far from the Mersey Narrows component of the SPA and Ramsar. Given the highly urbanised nature of this area, space for a sufficient SANG capacity is scarce. Furthermore, as for most areas of Wirral, appealing estuarine sites lie close to residents' homes. It is therefore concluded that SANGs will have a more limited effectiveness in Wirral (as opposed to other authorities that are in a different geographic setting). Therefore, it seems most likely that on-site Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) mitigation will be the more important (and effective) element in the case of Wirral. Despite this, provision of on-site avoidance measures embedded into developments, improvements to existing greenspaces and exploration of SANG provision must continue to be considered positive, as it is likely to attract at least some of the new residents in Wirral. This would divert them from the use of coastal resources and reduce recreational pressure on these European sites.

5.65 Given that SANG provisioning in Wirral is likely to have limited effectiveness, SAMM initiatives within relevant European sites are the most promising approach. These would be informed by a visitor survey and then tailored to the specific circumstances of the respective site. Any package of measures in the emerging Strategy will include site-specific considerations, such as the qualifying features, accessibility to the site and the recreation activities undertaken. For example, for the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, it is important to take into consideration the accessibility of the designation features because large areas are inaccessible due to commercial and land-ownership considerations (e.g. no public access) or inaccessible due to physical barriers and health and safety considerations (e.g. high dock walls and unsafe mud and saltmarsh). Examples of deployable measures might be:

- Formalising the currently voluntary wardening that is in place at the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, and extending it to other relevant European sites on the Wirral peninsula
- Providing additional professional wardening posts, or increasing wardening hours, covering recreation hotspots; giving wardens a specific public liaison role to increase public awareness of the sensitivities of the sites and specifically address problematic activity
- Improving and unifying signage across the European sites, including information boards, waymarkers and dog-on-lead notices; a particular focus should be on communicating why measures are put into place, as this is known to increase compliance
- Develop a partnership for the most prevalent user groups, establishing Codes of Conduct and a coordinating employment post
- Undertaking standardised visitor surveys at all European sites sensitive to recreational pressure in the LCR region to establish an improved evidence base
- Funding of academic research studies as identified useful / necessary by Natural England / Natural Resources Wales, for example an investigation into the impact of recreational fishing on feeding wader birds¹²¹
- Exploring regulatory measures to reduce the impact of recreation on waders, such as temporary footpath or access closures during sensitive periods, rerouting of footpaths and dog exclusion zones, as well as potentially tighter management of areas currently zoned for activities such as kite-surfing, if necessary.

5.66 Some large developments (notably Wirral Waters) will also need to devise their own recreation management measures which would address not only nearby European sites but also recreational pressure on significant areas of functionally-linked habitat adjacent to the development, notably Birkenhead Docks which is known to be used extensively by birds

¹²¹ This is identified as important research in Natural England's Site Improvement Plan with an estimated cost of £15,000. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6579320399069184> [Accessed on the 14/11/2019]

associated with the Wirral European sites, notably Liverpool Bay SPA and the Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore.

- 5.67 It is noted that Wirral's Issues and Options Document already recognises the emerging Liverpool Recreation and Avoidance Mitigation Strategy (referred to as the Liverpool City Region Recreation Mitigation Strategy in the Issues and Options Document; RMS). Wirral's Preferred Approach to internationally important sites indicates that such a strategy will enable sustainable housing and tourism development, while ensuring the long-term protection of Wirral's European sites. In particular, the Plan's text states that *'A policy setting out the Council's approach to recreation mitigation will be included in the Local Plan. The policy will need to include a recreation mitigation and avoidance mechanism for Wirral in advance of the LCR-wide study being completed, approved and implemented'*. The Issues and Options Document goes on to identify that *'Wirral Council will continue to work in collaboration with the LCR Combined Authority to contribute to the delivery of a RMS to address potential damage from increased recreation and visitor pressure on the species and habitats of the designated sites within the Borough on a City Region wide basis'*. The Preferred Approach notes that the RMS is likely to require mitigation for residential developments within 5km of European sites through a mixture of access management, habitat management and provision of Suitable Alternative Greenspace (SANG). Current evidence from visitor surveys in the European sites surrounding Wirral indicates that the core visitor catchment of most sites (e.g. the Sefton Coast SAC) is considerably larger than 5km. Therefore, it is recommended that the mitigation zone is identified in consultation with Natural England. Overall, it is considered that the Issues and Options Document contains sufficient text (and is in line with the current developments on recreation mitigation) to provide adequate protection to Wirral's estuarine and coastal European sites. It is recommended that the emerging Local Plan is continually updated to reflect any upcoming changes or evidence in relation to the RMS.
- 5.68 In the intervening period, and until such time as the Strategy has been adopted by Wirral and is in the process of implementation, recreational pressure from development (housing, employment and tourism) will need to be considered on a case by case basis as part of the planning and development management process. The emerging Strategy evidence base can be drawn upon to inform project-specific assessments. In undertaking these project-specific assessments, care will need to be taken to ensure that the approach complies with the "People Over Wind" ECJ ruling¹²² with regard to avoiding reliance on mitigation measures at the Test of Likely Significant Effects stage.
- 5.69 In summary, it is recommended that the following key steps are undertaken by Wirral Council and incorporated into the next iteration of the Local Plan, prior to the formal adoption of the RMAS in 2021:
- Publish the evidence report underpinning the future RMAS as an interim position;
 - Introduce an explicit statement of intent into the Plan to collaborate with other authorities in the Liverpool City Region, Natural England and the National Trust to complete and implement the RMAS; and
 - Prepare an Interim Guidance Note that sets out the Council's interim position on housing development and the mitigation of recreational pressure.

Recreational Pressure in Functionally Linked Habitat to the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, and Liverpool Bay SPA

- 5.70 Recreational pressure is an impact pathway that is also relevant for functionally linked habitat, as recreation might affect the ability of qualifying species to use such supporting land. In fact, because it is likely to be closer to urban development, functionally linked habitat might be much more easily accessible than European sites, resulting in a high disturbance potential of qualifying bird species. One such area in Wirral are the Birkenhead Docks, which are particularly noteworthy, because it supports qualifying birds from nearby European sites.

¹²² People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17)

- 5.71 A bird survey commissioned in 2013 and undertaken by TEP¹²³, showed that the Birkenhead Docks are regularly used by birds from the surrounding estuarine and coastal European sites. For example, qualifying shelduck, redshank, black-tailed godwit and little gull all use the docks in winter. However, only relatively low numbers (< 1%) and occasional usage by these birds were observed. Towards spring, the usage of the docks by shelduck increased to 41%, which was just under 1% of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar population.
- 5.72 Most notably, cormorant (a qualifying species of the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar) was regularly observed fishing on the West Float and East Float in Birkenhead, reaching a peak count of 35 individuals. This is equivalent to 4.7% of the population in the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. The bird survey report therefore concluded that the Birkenhead Docks are likely to form functionally linked habitat for cormorants stemming from the SPA and Ramsar.
- 5.73 Wirral Waters is a large residential site with existing outline consent, is located directly adjacent to the docks. The largest component sites (Marina View and Vittoria Studios) have anticipated capacities of 1,795 and 1,705 residential dwellings respectively. It is unlikely that residents from these dwellings will have recreational access to the water in the docks, but these schemes will result in greater activity levels on paths / future greenspaces in immediate proximity of both the West and East Float.
- 5.74 Therefore, it is advised that this development scheme will require further detailed consents. Furthermore, a bespoke mitigation scheme for the development will need to be produced by the developer to minimise any disturbance arising from the net local population growth. This mitigation strategy could involve some of the measures already recommended in relation to the RMAS, adapted to the specific circumstances for Wirral Waters:
- Providing for a part-time wardening post that covers the parts of the docks that are most vulnerable to recreational disturbance (e.g. the West and East Float)
 - Installing information boards and / or dog-on-lead notices to increase public awareness of the sensitivity of qualifying bird species using the docks
 - Circulating flyers to residents of Wirral Waters that inform them about the ecological importance of the docks for the integrity of nearby European sites
 - Restricting access directly onto the docks by planning the path network accordingly (i.e. use of a precautionary distance); potential path closure during sensitive periods

Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat

- 5.75 Wirral is surrounded by three European sites, all of which are designated for their waterfowl species and overall waterbird assemblages. All these species are mobile and few solely depend on tidal habitats in estuarine and marine sites. Depending on prey availability and season, many of these species frequently move beyond the boundary of European sites, foraging and roosting in freshwater habitats, grassland and farmland. Many parcels of such functionally linked habitat can be located many kilometres inland, where greenfield sites might be used by significant flocks of these qualifying species. Because Wirral is adjacent to several European sites with similar qualifying species that might all use greenfield sites allocated in the emerging Reg. 19 Local Plan, the following Appropriate Assessment combines the discussion of the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar. Combining these sections also avoids unnecessary replication of analysis.

¹²³ Available at: <http://www.meas.org.uk/media/5279/4157005-assessment-of-supporting-habitat-liverpool-docks-excl-drawings-aug-2015.pdf> [Accessed on the 28/11/2019]

Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar and Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar

Qualifying species that depend on functionally linked land

- 5.76 Table 5 summarises the qualifying waterfowl species in the three European sites and their likelihood of using functionally linked habitat in Wirral. This information was collated using several information sources, including the Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas, and information from the RSPB and BTO websites. The data indicate that 14 of the 23 qualifying species are known to regularly forage, roost or rest in land towards the centre of Wirral in winter, including freshwater, grassland and farmland habitat. The following paragraphs discuss some of these mobile species. It is to be noted that the largest flocks of these species are likely to be associated with intertidal habitats on the coasts of Wirral, but significant assemblages have been documented in other habitat tetrads, as highlighted in the Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas.
- 5.77 For example, **golden plover**, a qualifying species of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, breed in upland areas of Britain, but are found on lowland coastal marshes, estuaries, wetland and farmland during winter, where they eat worms, beetles and insects. Golden plovers also often form large flocks with lapwing, a qualifying feature of the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar; in the breeding season they generally remain within 3km of their nesting sites¹²⁴. There is no specific information regarding the distance inland that they may forage or roost during the winter, but anecdotal evidence suggests that significant congregations can be found 5km away. **Curlew**, a qualifying species of the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, move to estuaries and adjacent areas in winter, feeding on a variety of worms, crabs and molluscs. The Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas highlights that most of the tetrads in which curlew were found were farmland (56%), although the largest flocks occurred in tidal areas. Evidence evaluated by Scottish Natural Heritage¹²⁵ suggests that this species generally remains within 2-3km of its associated SPAs in winter. RSPB's land Management for Wildlife Advice suggests that farmland is important as curlew feeding habitat¹²⁶, particularly regarding earthworms and other soil invertebrates. **Wigeon** are grazers, more like geese than other duck species, that predominantly feed on estuarine saltmarsh, particularly the grass *Puccinellia maritima*. However, there have also been found in at least 14 agricultural improved grassland habitats. Most inland records are from freshwater bodies, but according to the authors of the Bird Atlas this is most likely due to the ducks resting on water during the day and feeding in grassland at night (when counters are not present).
- 5.78 The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is designated for several goose / swan species, notably Bewick's swan, whooper swan and pink-footed goose. In contrast to some of the other waterfowl, these species are much more regularly seen foraging on winter stubble and are therefore considered to be much more closely linked with dry, off-site habitats than the likes of wigeon. Natural England's Supplementary Advice Note¹²⁷ states that Bewick's swans '*feed in the inner estuary and on arable land outside of the SPA boundary*'. For the pink-footed goose the Advice note state that '*this species has complex flyways and movements between roosting and feeding areas within the SPA and outwith - particularly agricultural land in the wider region*'. Pink-footed goose can travel up to 15-20km from its roosting sites to forage inland (in contrast to Bewick and whooper swan that will usually remain within 5km)¹²⁸. However, the Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas documents few, if any, records of these species in inland tetrads in Wirral. One explanation for this is that the birds are likely to undertake the shortest possible trips to reach suitable roosting or foraging ground. The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is on the Sefton coast and therefore much closer to arable land in Sefton and West Lancashire. To reach

¹²⁴ <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2018-08/Assessing%20connectivity%20with%20special%20protection%20areas.pdf> [Accessed on the 28/11/2019]

¹²⁵ <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2018-08/Assessing%20connectivity%20with%20special%20protection%20areas.pdf> [Accessed on the 28/11/2019]

¹²⁶ <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-sustainability/land-management-for-wildlife/land-management-for-wildlife---curlew.pdf> [Accessed on the 14/11/2019]

¹²⁷ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/SupAdvice.aspx?SiteCode=UK9005103&SiteName=ribble&SiteNameDisplay=Ribble+and+Alt+Estuaries+SPA&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAAraa=&NumMarineSeasonality=20> [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

¹²⁸ <https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2018-08/Assessing%20connectivity%20with%20special%20protection%20areas.pdf> [Accessed on the 28/11/2019]

greenfield sites in Wirral the geese and swans would have to cross the Mersey Narrows and to navigate over the highly urbanised north-eastern part of Wirral. However, given that these species are known to travel several up to 15km to foraging grounds, they have been marked as a potential concern in Table 5.

- 5.79 Other species that are marked as potentially using habitats inland in Table 5, are less likely to be affected by Wirral's Issues and Options Document. Species like cormorant, pintail, teal, mallard and great-crested grebe are likely to be associated with freshwater bodies, such as ponds, lakes and reservoirs. It is unlikely that the Plan would allocate Green Belt sites with significant freshwater habitat features, but any emerging Green Belt allocations would have to be screened for such habitats prior to development. However, as already discussed, recreational impacts on SPA species using the Birkenhead Docks would need to be addressed for the adjacent Wirral Waters development.
- 5.80 Having established that some of the qualifying bird species in SPAs / Ramsars adjacent to Wirral use functionally land outside the respective European site boundaries, the HRA next investigates whether the currently proposed development options have the potential to affect any such functionally linked habitat parcels.

Option 1A: Urban Intensification

- 5.81 Wirral Borough Council currently identifies Option 1A (Urban Intensification) as its preferred development option. Regarding functionally linked habitat this would be preferable, because this would limit development to existing highly developed area. With the exception of land at the Birkenhead Docks (which comprise off-site habitat for some SPA and Ramsar species), Wirral's brownfield sites are generally considered to be unsuitable as functionally linked habitat because these lack feeding opportunities or the habitats required for roosting and resting. Furthermore, most sites allocations (both residential and employment) allocated under Option 1A are too small (many are under 2ha) to realistically function as important roosting or feeding locations. Option 1A does allocate some sites over 2ha in size, some of which comprise grassland elements. However, a review of satellite imagery for these sites indicates that these are generally in very industrialised parts of Birkenhead and Bebington. Sites allocated under Option 1A, with the exception of those which form part of the Wirral Waters development, are therefore unlikely to be used as functionally linked habitat (please see Table 4 for general comments on the habitats and locations of the allocations).

Table 4: Summary of the potential development sites over 2ha in size and a general comment regarding their habitats and locations.

Site Code	Site Name	Site Area (ha)	General Comments
ELPS 330	Plantation Road	2	Grassland and scattered trees, but industrial centre
ELPS 234	Caldbeck Road	2.24	Grassland, but too disturbed
ELPS 417	Former Gas Holders	2.31	Brownfield site
ELPS 017	East of Tulip	3.12	Mainly trees and scrubland, not suitable habitat
ELPS 324	Prices Way	3.45	Brownfield site
ELPS 415	East of Riverbank Road	3.61	Brownfield site
ELPS 049	Southwood Road	3.81	Mainly trees and scrub in industrial area, not suitable habitat
ELPS 265	Wirral Waters - Sky City	5.5	Brownfield site
ELPS 006	QE2 Dock	6.54	Grassland (may need further consideration)
ELPS 229	SMM Business Park	6.86	Brownfield site
ELPS 074	Old Hall Road	8.04	Disturbed greenfield site (motorcycling)

ELPS 043	East of Georgia Avenue	8.07	Mainly trees with sandy areas, heavily industrialised area
ELPS 357	Wallasey Bridge Road	9.22	Brownfield site
ELPS 100	Southern Reclamation Area	9.25	Mainly trees and scrub in industrial area, not suitable habitat
ELPS 013	North Road	9.32	Mainly trees and scrub in industrial area, not suitable habitat
ELPS 3043	Dock Road South	10.48	Brownfield site
ELPS 081	North of Beaufort Road	14.22	Brownfield site
ELPS 079	Bidston Dock	16.64	Brownfield site
SHLAA 2081	Legacy	2.49	Heavily built-up area, Wallasey
SHLAA 3095	Greenfield Estate	2.75	Small grassland but surrounded by housing
SHLAA 2068	Typhoo	3.08	Small grassland but surrounded by industrial estate
SHLAA 0557	Beaufort Road	3.57	Grassland with scattered trees, but heavily industrialised area
SHLAA 1665	Rock Ferry High	4.56	Located in highly urbanised area of Birkenhead and Bebington
SHLAA 0753	Marina View	5.16	Brownfield site
SHLAA 0755	Vittoria Studios	6.76	Brownfield site
SHLAA 4078	Hind Street	7.87	Brownfield site
SHLAA 0752	Woodside	9.33	Brownfield site
SHLAA 2072	Prices Way	3.45	Brownfield site
SHLAA 2050	Clatterbridge Hospital (GBelt)	4.75	Mixed grassland and scrub, but in a developed area
SHLAA 0754	Sky City	5.5	Brownfield site
SHLAA 4084	Wirral Business Park	5.8	Brownfield site

5.82 Considering the relatively small size of most proposed allocations, the fact that most are brownfield sites and that they are generally located in built up areas, it is considered that Option 1A would have little potential for the loss of functionally linked habitat (see ToLSE decisions in Table 5) and would be far less likely to pose conflict with functionally linked habitat than either Options 2A and 2B (discussed in the following sections), both of which would involve the release of Green Belt land for development.

Option 2A: Release of Green Belt (Dispersed Development)

5.83 At the time of writing, no bespoke bird surveys have been undertaken of the sites proposed for development. The Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas¹²⁹ was therefore consulted to determine whether any of the qualifying species identified in Table 5, use the wider area around the proposed greenfield sites. Note that the Bird Atlas identifies presence / absence and abundance

¹²⁹ <http://www.cheshireandwirralbirdatlas.org/species/> [Accessed on the 14/11/2019]

in 4km² tetrads and is therefore much coarser in scale than needed for a definitive assessment of the greenfield sites. Therefore, the data is no evidence for the birds being present within the included greenfield sites. However, the atlas provides the best available, relevant evidence for bird records throughout Wirral.

- 5.84 Option 2A includes the possible release from the Green Belt of three greenfield sites (**parcels 7.25, 7.26 and 7.27**) in the north-western part of Heswall and one greenfield site (**parcel 5.13**) for residential development. These sites are all much larger than 2ha and primarily comprise arable land, improved grassland and smaller compartments of grazing land. As such, these proposals are large enough and provide suitable habitats to potentially support SPA and Ramsar birds, such as golden plover. It is noted that all allocations lie close to existing residential development. However, this does not preclude the suitability of these sites as functionally linked habitat. Qualifying birds are known to utilise sites in close proximity to urban development in other areas, such as the Solent. It is also noted that some of these sites, particularly parcels 7.26, 7.27, are large (96.6ha and 62.8ha respectively) and have uninterrupted flightlines to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. It is therefore highly likely that birds from the SPA and Ramsar, which have been recorded in this tetrad, such as curlew and lapwing, will be using these land parcels in winter. Of further note is parcel 7.5 (23.4ha in size), which comprises arable and grazing land. As this parcel is directly adjacent to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, therefore offering a short uninterrupted flightline, there is a high potential that this parcel is functionally linked habitat. SPA and Ramsar birds are expected to fly the shortest possible distance to suitable feeding or resting areas to conserve energy. Indeed, several species including redshank, curlew, oystercatcher and lapwing. Further greenfield sites (e.g. parcels 4.8, 4.10, 4.11) would be proposed for release from the Green belt to the south of Bebington, all of which are considered to be sufficiently large and comprise suitable habitats.
- 5.85 Option 2A also includes ten greenfield sites to the south of Bebington, which are all relatively close to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. However, it is also noted that the atlas shows very few birds records in tetrads approx. covering these potential development sites. Furthermore, many of these parcels (e.g. parcels 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11 and 4.13) are separated from the SPA and Ramsar by substantial areas of existing development and in relatively close proximity to the M53, potentially impeding sight- and flightlines for qualifying birds and involving high baseline disturbance levels. Therefore, it is considered that the suitability of these parcels as functionally linked habitat is likely to be generally lower than for greenfield sites in western Wirral. However, due to their proximity and their clear sight- and flightlines to the SPA and Ramsar, two of the sites (parcels 4.15 - 13.7ha and 4.18 - 41.8ha) might have a higher potential to be used by SPA and Ramsar birds. However, a review of satellite imagery shows that these parcels comprise an existing golf course and several sports pitches, which are not considered to be highly suitable for SPA and Ramsar birds.
- 5.86 As identified above, the most significant Green Belt releases would be north-west and south of Heswall. Overall, records of the following SPA and Ramsar bird species occur in tetrads that approximately overlap with these Green Belt sites: redshank, dunlin, oystercatcher, cormorant, curlew, pintail, shelduck, teal, black-tailed godwit, mallard, lapwing, golden plover, wigeon and great-crested grebe. While not all these species will be using the respective greenfield sites or will reach numbers that amount to 1% of the SPA and Ramsar population, this indicates the potential for these sites to be functionally linked habitat.
- 5.87 Overall, the closest Green Belt Release site that isn't urban infill (parcel 5.13) to the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, lies over 4km from these European sites. However, there are numerous large Green Belt release sites between 0 and 4km from the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Regarding the potential loss of functionally linked habitat, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar is therefore of greater concern than the other SPAs and Ramsars.
- 5.88 It is noted that since the writing of this HRA, Wirral Council has further narrowed down the sites that could potentially be included under Option 2A. Most notably, the parcels 7.5, 7.26 and 5.13 (some of the sites that are flagged above, particularly with regard to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar) are now unlikely to be taken forward. While this removes some of the sites with the highest potential risk for the loss of functionally linked habitat, the risk for this impact pathway in relation to the remaining Green Belt sites remains (particularly due to limitations associated with

the coarse-scale data available). As such, the screening decisions in Table 5 and the recommendations for the next iteration of the Local Plan are upheld.

Option 2B: Release of Green Belt (Urban Extension)

- 5.89 An alternative to the dispersed development scenario is Option 2B, the release of Green Belt in the form of outward urban expansion. This option concentrates Green Belt release in the form of one large site between Heswall and the A551 (parcels 7.15 – 7.18), comprising mainly arable land and improved agricultural grassland. An alternative second large site was originally identified to the south of Bebington and Bromborough (parcels 4.8 – 4.13), comprising arable land, grassland, a golf course and small parcels of woodland. The total area of the urban extensions around Heswall and Bebington amount to 176.3ha and 265.8ha respectively.
- 5.90 A review of the Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas shows that the following SPA and Ramsar birds have been documented in a 4km² tetrad encompassing or adjacent to the proposed urban expansion sites: redshank, oystercatcher, cormorant, curlew, pintail, shelduck, teal, black-tailed godwit, mallard, lapwing, golden plover and great-crested grebe. As highlighted earlier, some of these species (e.g. mallard, shelduck, pintail, oystercatcher and great-crested grebe) are mainly linked to inland freshwater habitat, which is unlikely to be present in the proposed development sites. No information on relative abundance or frequency of occurrence is recorded and therefore it is impossible to determine whether they are present in significant numbers (i.e. regularly used by more than 1% of the SPA population). Dunlin and wigeon were not present in any nearby tetrads. Interestingly, few of the above listed qualifying species were recorded around Bebington and Bromborough, but all of them were present to the south-east of Heswall. This is potentially due to the slightly more rural character of Heswall, compared to the more populated area around Bebington and the nearby M53. It is therefore considered that development of the urban extension site in Bebington represents a slightly lower risk regarding the loss of functionally linked habitat compared to Heswall.
- 5.91 The urban extension sites are both much larger than the greenfield sites included under Option 2a. Therefore, there might be the potential for bringing forward residential development while also preserving on-site foraging habitat for the birds. The feasibility (and necessity) of this requires further information, including:
- Non-breeding bird surveys to establish whether the Urban Expansion sites are used by 1% of the population of any SPA and Ramsar bird species;
 - Masterplans for the two urban expansion sites to identify potential bird habitat for retention;
 - Number of dwellings to be delivered (assuming a typical density of 30 dwellings per ha, this can be used to work out the amount of space that might be available); and
 - Parkland or greenspace to be delivered (this would remove land available for bird habitat retention).
- 5.92 Wirral Council has since undertaken another evaluation of the Urban Expansion sites potentially allocated in the emerging Reg.19 Local Plan. AECOM has been advised that the Urban Expansion site in the eastern part of Wirral (south of Bebington) is now unlikely to be taken forward, which means that the potential for loss of functionally linked habitat to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar is reduced. However, the Urban Expansion site east of Heswall, which has a higher likelihood of being functionally linked habitat, is still being considered. Therefore, it is considered that the screening decisions in Table 5 and the recommendations provided remain applicable.
- 5.93
- 5.94 Table 5 below identifies the potential of Options 2A and 2B to result in the loss of functionally linked habitat to relevant qualifying bird species.

Table 5: Summary of qualifying waterfowl species of the coastal and estuarine sites surrounding Wirral, their likelihood of using functionally linked habitat within Wirral and how the different Options in Wirral's Issues and Options Document might affect such land. Note that species marked with * are components of

the overall qualifying waterbird assemblage for the respective European site. Furthermore, some species are qualifying features of multiple European sites, but they are only listed for the site in relation to which they first appear (e.g. redshank is a qualifying species of all three sites, but is only listed for the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar).

European site **Species** **Present Winter** **Inland** **in Allocation Potential for Functionally Linked Habitat**

Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar	Bar-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>)	No (This species is rarely found away from tidal areas in winter, with the last such record dating back to 1996)		NA
	Little gull (<i>Hydrocoloeus minutus</i>)	No (This species is only rarely found inland and usually in small numbers)		NA
	Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)	No (The Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas notes that knot is a rare species inland, with only one record of one bird from 2004)		NA
	Common tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)	No		NA
	Redshank* (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)	Yes		Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
	Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>)	No (Turnstone stick to rocky shores and roost sites on man-made structures along the coast)		NA
	Grey plover* (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)	No (Grey plover is a habitat specialist that is very rarely found away from tidal areas. Its main habitat is estuaries, open shores and saltmarsh)		NA
	Oystercatcher* (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)	Yes		Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
	Cormorant* (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)	Yes		Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None

			Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes
			Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
	Sanderling* (<i>Calidris alba</i>)	No (This species is very loyal to feeding grounds and roost sites which are generally near the tidal areas)	NA
Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar	Little tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>)	No	NA
	Sandwich tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>)	No	NA
	Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina alpina</i>)	Yes	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – None
	Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>)	Yes	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
	Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)	Yes	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
	Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)	Yes	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
	Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)	Yes	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
	Black-tailed godwit (<i>Limosa islandica</i>)	Yes	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes

			Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
	Mallard* <i>platyrhynchos</i>	(<i>Anas</i> Yes)	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
	Lapwing* <i>vanellus</i>	(<i>Vanellus</i> Yes)	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – None
	Wigeon* <i>penelope</i>	(<i>Anas</i> Yes)	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – None
Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar	Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Yes	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
	Ringed plover* <i>(Charadrius hiaticula)</i>	No (This species forages primarily at the tidal edge, foraging for marine worms, crustaceans and molluscs. It is rarely found inland)	NA
	Great-crested grebe* <i>(Podiceps cristatus)</i>	Yes	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar	Ruff <i>(Philomachus pugnax)</i>	No (No records in inland areas of Wirral)	NA
	Bewick's swan <i>(Cygnus columbianus bewickii)</i>	Yes (As a precautionary measure. The Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas shows no records in Wirral, but Bewick's swans are known to forage in agricultural land)	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes

Whooper swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>)	Yes (As a precautionary measure. The Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas shows few records inland in Wirral, but whooper swans are known to forage on winter cereals and grass)	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
Lesser black-backed gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>)	Yes	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
Pink-footed goose (<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>)	Yes (As a precautionary measure. The Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas shows only one record inland in Wirral, but pink-footed geese are well known to forage on winter cereals and grass)	Option 1A (Urban Intensification) – None Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Development) – Yes Option 2B (Urban Extension Green Belt Development) – Yes
Common scoter* (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>)	No (This is a species of the shallow open water, there are no inland records for Wirral)	NA

5.95 Options 2A and 2B both involve the strategic release of Green Belt land, which is sufficiently large (over 2ha) and comprises suitable habitats for SPA and Ramsar birds. If any of the Green Belt release options (or parts thereof) would come forward, these could involve the loss of functionally linked habitat. This would also require habitat suitability and bird surveys to be undertaken prior to granting planning permission.

5.96 If either of these options (or variations thereof) are included in the Reg.19 Local Plan, the following text (or similar) should be inserted into an appropriate policy of the Plan: ***'To meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive, the applicant should be required to provide evidence that the development will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of nearby European sites (namely the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar) regarding their qualifying bird species. To demonstrate this, a survey will be required to determine the habitats and current site use to verify if the land parcel is indeed suitable for supporting a significant population¹³⁰ of designated bird species. Where habitats are suitable, non-breeding bird surveys will be required to determine if the site and neighbouring land constitute a significant area of supporting habitat. Bird surveys will need to be undertaken during autumn, winter and spring. If habitat within the site or adjacent land are identified to support significant populations of designated bird species, avoidance measures and mitigation will be required, and the planning application will likely need to be assessed through a project specific Habitats Regulations Assessment to ensure that the development does not result in adverse effects on integrity.'***

¹³⁰ A significant population is classified as a site that regularly used by 1% or more of the population of qualifying bird species

Water Quality

Dee Estuary SAC & Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar

- 5.97 Large portions of the Dee Estuary SAC and the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar overlap to the west of Wirral, with the Dee Estuary SAC extending further north and also running along the northern shore of Wirral. Furthermore, the two sites are also ecologically linked in that the SAC provides the supporting habitats for the SPA and Ramsar birds. Given this geographic and ecological linkage, this section combines the Appropriate Assessment for the impact pathway water quality regarding both the Dee Estuary SAC and the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar.
- 5.98 TOLSE of the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar indicated that the site is highly sensitive to changes in water quality, such as its organic and inorganic nutrient loading. Nutrient enrichment is most likely to affect the SPA and Ramsar birds indirectly by altering food availability. A higher concentration of nutrients can lead to an increase in benthic populations of opportunistic marine worms, from which some birds might benefit. However, enrichment also tends to be associated with reduced species diversity, which might negatively affect the more specialised birds.
- 5.99 Very high nutrient loadings can have a profound effect upon the estuary, and sand- and mudflats of the Dee Estuary SAC, primarily by leading to eutrophication, which is associated with excessive algal blooms of opportunist algae, such as gutweed *Enteromorpha* species and sea lettuce *Ulva lactuca*. Algal growth is often associated with deoxygenation of water and sediments, leading to the death of invertebrate species. Aerobic bacteria that break down organic matter are more active under high nutrient regimes, thereby contributing to oxygen depletion. Oxygen depletion also increases the biological oxygen demand of aquatic species, which fuels both ammonia and hydrogen sulphide release that is toxic for aquatic life.
- 5.100 Natural England's and Natural Resources Wales' Conservation Advice for the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Dee Estuary SAC highlights that the nutrient enrichment is caused by various factors, including river input and direct discharge. Discharge from Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTWs) is particularly mentioned regarding the Chester and Queensferry works, both of which lie near the mouth of the River Dee and contribute the highest nutrient loadings to the estuary. The high nutrient loadings in the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar led to the site being designated as a Sensitive Area to Eutrophication under the Waste Water Treatment Directive, based on biological and chemical water quality parameters. This has led to WWTWs being 'secondary treated' to remove some of the organic matter that is being discharged into the estuary. However, recent analyses have determined that the faunal communities near WWTWs are still unbalanced and considered as polluted. Nutrient loading is a particular issue in the lower canalised section of the River Dee (where it enters the estuary), due to limited freshwater input and a relatively low dilution factor.
- 5.101 It is noted that in contrast to the estuarine sites in the Solent (where warmer water, low suspended sediment loading and low wave action all promote the formation of macroalgal mats), the waters around Wirral are colder, have a much higher suspended sediment loading and stronger wave action. This generally slows down macroalgal growth and breaks up any large mats that do occur. Notwithstanding this, attention needs to be given to appropriate wastewater treatment infrastructure because nutrient enrichment from treated sewage effluent is still a potential issue, especially for the saltmarshes of the Dee Estuary SAC (in the Heswall Beach area) because this could stimulate growth of more competitive species.
- 5.102 A review of the WWTW infrastructure serving the western part of Wirral shows that there are WWTWs near Neston (in the adjacent authority of Cheshire West and Chester) and Heswall (operated by Dwr Cymru Welsh Water), which are likely to be serving the new development allocations around West Kirby and Heswall. These WWTWs will be discharging into the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and have the potential to affect the invertebrate communities in the intertidal sand- and mudflats. However, Wirral's Issues and Options Document allocates relatively few new dwellings in this part of Wirral and it is considered unlikely that the Plan will result in adverse effects on the water quality in the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar alone.

In-Combination Assessment

- 5.103 Nevertheless, the development allocated in the western part of Wirral needs to be set into the context of growth in adjacent authorities, particularly Flintshire, and Cheshire West and Chester. These authorities are developing their own Local Plans or Development Plans with allocated growth. Given that WwTWs within these authorities will discharge into the hydrological catchment of the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Dee Estuary SAC, their wastewater will contribute to the nutrient loading in these European sites, potentially resulting in a cumulative water quality impact.
- 5.104 Avoiding adverse effects regarding water quality is largely the responsibility of water companies (by investing in future sewage treatment infrastructure) and the Environment Agency (by consenting effluent discharges that take consideration of qualifying features of European sites). Local authorities need to contribute to this process by ensuring that there is enough headroom in the existing wastewater treatment infrastructure to accommodate new development, prior to this being consented.
- 5.105 Therefore, to ensure that there is no potential for an in-combination effect, it is advised that the following text (or similar) is inserted into a relevant policy of the Reg. 19 version of the Local Plan: ***'The Council will liaise with United Utilities and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water to confirm there is sufficient headroom in the existing discharge consent to accommodate the growth planned for Wirral over the entire Plan period. If constraints are identified, housing delivery will need to be phased to keep in line with the available wastewater treatment infrastructure.'*** Given that the permitted headroom considers the qualifying features of European sites, and that the Plans of adjoining authorities would have to ensure this compliance as well, it would be concluded that there is no adverse in-combination effect of the Reg. 19 Wirral Local Plan on the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and SAC regarding water quality.

Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar

- 5.106 The Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar extends from the mouth of the River Mersey northward, alongside the eastern part of Wirral. It should be noted that this part of the Peninsula is heavily urbanised (both residential and industrial development) and is likely to contribute a relatively high nutrient load to the SPA and Ramsar already. TOLSE of Wirral's Issues and Options Document indicated that the site comprises several species of waterfowl that are sensitive to changes in nutrient loading, primarily indirectly via changes to their food resources.
- 5.107 Review of online information indicates that there are several sewage discharge points in Birkenhead and Bebington (e.g. Birkenhead WwTW, Bromborough WwTW), which directly discharge into the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Wirral's Preferred Option allocates a large portion of residential and employment in this section of Wirral, which would therefore contribute to the existing nutrient load generated in this part of the authority. In principle, this could deteriorate the water quality in the European site and lead to cascading effects on its qualifying waterfowl species.
- 5.108 Natural England's Supplementary Advice Note acknowledges a potential impact of eutrophication. However, it also clearly states that the risk of eutrophication across the site has been assessed as low using the Environment Agency's Weight of Evidence approach, which accounts for Water Framework Directive targets for opportunistic macroalgae and phytoplankton quality elements. The regulations stipulate that algae should be limited to under 15% in cover and low biomass (<500 g/m²) in the intertidal habitat and the area affected by opportunistic macroalgae should also be limited to under 15%.
- 5.109 However, the Issues and Options Document makes reference to wastewater treatment infrastructure. On page 62 the Plan document states that *'high level engagement with utility providers has identified that there is sufficient spare capacity within the current electricity, gas, wastewater and telecommunications networks to accommodate the level of growth identified for the Local Plan period without large scale reinforcement being required.'* It remains unclear what the term 'large scale reinforcements' means exactly, but the statement indicates that the proposed growth is unlikely to require major improvements in WwTW infrastructure.

5.110 Research studies¹³¹ have confirmed that combined pollution pressure from run-off and waste water discharge around the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar has been a significant historic pressure. However, a study of the water quality in the Mersey showed that due to a clean-up scheme in the 1970's, significant improvements in water quality have been achieved (e.g. in biological oxygen demand and total nutrient loads). These have been most important in the reaches above the tidal limit, where the dilution factor is much lower. In 2011 a Water Cycle Study (WCS) for the mid-Mersey identified that tidal influences within the lower reaches of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar help reduce potential impacts from WwTWs discharge by enhancing the estuary's dilution factor. Due to the low sensitivity of the SPA and Ramsar to eutrophication and significant improvements in the water quality of the Mersey, it is considered that Wirral's Issues and Options Document will not result in adverse effects on site integrity alone. Notwithstanding, a residual risk for eutrophication of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar remains, particularly when considering Wirral's growth in-combination with that of adjacent authorities.

In-Combination Assessment

5.111 The growth allocated in the eastern part of Wirral needs assessing in the context of growth in the adjacent authorities of Liverpool, Halton, and Cheshire West and Chester. Significant growth is allocated in these authorities over the period covered by Wirral's Issues and Options Document. Given that WwTWs within these authorities will discharge directly into the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar (or into watercourses feeding into the SPA and Ramsar), their wastewater will contribute to the existing high nutrient input into the site, potentially resulting in a cumulative water quality impact. To ensure that there is no potential for an in-combination effect, the text recommended in relation to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Dee Estuary SAC would also address any water quality risks in relation to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. This text is recommended for insertion into the Reg. 19 version of the Local Plan: ***'The Council will liaise with United Utilities to confirm there is sufficient headroom in the existing discharge consent to accommodate the growth planned for Wirral over the entire Plan period. If constraints are identified, housing delivery will need to be phased to keep in line with the available wastewater treatment infrastructure.'*** Given that the permitted headroom considers the qualifying features of European sites, and that the Plans of adjoining authorities would have to ensure this compliance as well, it would be concluded that there is no adverse in-combination effect of the Reg. 19 Wirral Local Plan on the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar regarding water quality.

Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar

5.112 As established for the previous European sites, the TOLSE identified that the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar is sensitive to changes in water quality. This is mainly because high nutrient concentrations can cause phytoplankton and macroalgal blooms, reduce dissolved oxygen concentrations and have a negative impact on the food resources of SPA and Ramsar birds. Natural England's Supplementary Advice Note highlights that any further deterioration in water quality should be avoided. In order to achieve this, algal cover should be limited to below 15% and a low biomass (< 500 g/m²)¹³². Furthermore, the Advice Note highlights dissolved oxygen as one of the most important water quality components, which is directly linked to nutrient loading. Low dissolved oxygen levels can result in lethal or sublethal effects on fish, infauna and epifauna communities of marine sites.

5.113 In terms of the site's ecological interest, the most important wader feeding grounds and roost sites are along the North Wirral Foreshore, particularly to the north of Hoylake and Moreton. It is noted that this is a relatively rural area and that Wirral's Issues and Options Document allocates relatively little net additional development here. As such, the additional wastewater discharge into the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar as a result of the plan will be

¹³¹ Langston, W.J., Chesman, B.S. and Burt, G.R. (2006). *Characterisation of European Marine Site: the Mersey Estuary Special Protection Area*, Marine Biological Association Occasional Publication No18.

¹³²

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/SupAdvice.aspx?SiteCode=UK9020287&SiteName=mersey+narrows&SiteNameDisplay=Mersey+Narrows+and+North+Wirral+Foreshore+SPA&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAAra=&NumMarineSeasonality=5> [Accessed on the 15/11/2019]

relatively small. A review of online information shows that there is a WwTW at Carr Lane near Meols, which discharges off the North Wirral coast via a long sea outfall. While the North Wirral Foreshore is the component of the SPA and Ramsar that is most sensitive to eutrophication, it is noted that the additional amount of growth proposed for this part of Wirral is relatively small.

- 5.114 It is noted that in contrast to the estuarine sites in the Solent (where warmer water, low suspended sediment loading and low wave action all promote the formation of macroalgal mats), the waters around Wirral are colder, have a much higher suspended sediment loading and stronger wave action. This generally slows down macroalgal growth and breaks up any large mats that do occur. Supporting this, Natural England's Supplementary Site Conservation Advice Note highlights the site's risk of eutrophication to be low. Furthermore, evidence from surveys and / or monitoring shows the bird qualifying features to be in good condition (relating to both nutrient and dissolved oxygen levels) and currently un-impacted by anthropogenic activities.

In-Combination Assessment

- 5.115 The potential water quality impacts of the growth in Wirral, particularly in its northern part that lies closest to the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, needs assessing in the context of growth in the surrounding authorities such as Liverpool, Halton and Flintshire. Given that WwTWs within these authorities will discharge into coastal waters that might be hydrologically connected to the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, their wastewater could contribute to the nutrient input load in the site, potentially resulting in a cumulative water quality impact. However, the site's geographic location also requires consideration. The SPA and Ramsar lies several kilometres from coastal wastewater discharge points and over 20km from where the respective rivers (Dee, Mersey) feed into other nearby European sites. Therefore, it is considered that attenuation processes would remove a significant portion of nutrients, before these can reach the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. Regardless, a residual risk of eutrophication remains, and plans need to ensure that any risks of adverse effects on water quality in European sites are minimised.
- 5.116 The text that was recommended in relation to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, would also ensure that there are no adverse effects on the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar in-combination with other plans (please see previous sections for details on policy wording).

Liverpool Bay SPA

- 5.117 The ToLSE identified that the Liverpool Bay SPA is likely to be sensitive to changes in water quality, primarily due to an increased nutrient loading and reduced dissolved oxygen concentrations associated with treated sewage effluent. Changes in water quality might affect the basal elements of the marine food chain, ultimately changing the composition of the fish community. Furthermore, low dissolved oxygen concentrations might also have direct lethal or sub-lethal effects on the fish. Red-throated diver and common scoter both rely on the sufficient supply of suitable fish species for survival.
- 5.118 The Liverpool Bay SPA is a marine site that commences beyond the North Wirral Foreshore and extends both westward past the coast of Flintshire and eastward part the Sefton coast. Therefore, any WwTWs within Wirral that discharge into the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, will also contribute to the nutrient load in the Liverpool Bay SPA. Furthermore, to its unique geographic setting, the Liverpool Bay SPA is also likely to be subject to water quality pressures from development in other authorities (e.g. Flintshire and Sefton) and hydrologically connected waterbodies (e.g. the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar). As such, there might be a potential for adverse water quality effects in-combination with those arising from other authorities.
- 5.119 Natural England's Supplementary Advice was also consulted. Notably, the Site Improvement Plan for the SPA and Ramsar mentions water quality only in relation to oil spills arising from marine traffic¹³³. One of the reasons why water quality is not considered to be a major threat to

¹³³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/52965265866806272> [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

the SPA is likely the dilution effect. Firstly, any non-toxic contaminant nutrients (such as nitrogen) enter a large body of water, meaning that they will be instantly diluted. Furthermore, a large proportion of the site (and its qualifying waterbirds) is relatively far off-shore and any nutrient contaminants will also be greatly diluted with distance from the coastline (see also ¹³⁴. Given that water quality is not highlighted as a pressure on the SPA by Natural England and the dilution factor discussed above, it is concluded that Wirral's Issues and Options Document will not result in adverse effects on site integrity, both alone and in-combination with other plans.

Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar

- 5.120 The ToLSE indicated that the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is sensitive to changes in water quality, primarily due to an increased nutrient loading and reduced dissolved oxygen concentrations associated with treated sewage effluent. Changes in water quality might alter the plant and invertebrate communities of the sand- and mudflats, ultimately limiting the type of prey that is available for the waterbirds and waders. Natural England's Supplementary Conservation Advice highlights that nutrient loading should be limited (to avoid algal blooms) and dissolved oxygen concentrations should be maintained at 5.7 mg/l¹³⁵.
- 5.121 The Issues and Options Document, through the provision of housing and employment has the potential to result in a deterioration of water quality through the process of wastewater discharge. While the Borough of Wirral is approx. 1.5km to the south-west of the SPA and Ramsar, there is hydrological connectivity with estuarine sites closer to Wirral, most importantly the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. As such, a deterioration in water quality is likely to arise as an in-combination effect with water quality conditions in the River Mersey. The Appropriate Assessment of the impact pathway water quality in relation to the estuarine sites closer to Wirral was undertaken in previous sections. Importantly, these indicated that the qualifying species of these site are currently unaffected by water quality impacts from anthropogenic sources.
- 5.122 Furthermore, it is worth considering that any sewage effluent discharged by WWTWs in Wirral is most likely to enter the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar or the Mersey Narrows further north. The points of discharge might therefore be many kilometres from the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar. Water pollutants are attenuated with increasing distance from the source of pollution, meaning that they will be converted into other products. There will also be a dilution effect of pollutants, especially as they enter more open water beyond the Mersey Narrows. It is therefore concluded that there will be no in-combination effect of the Issues and Options Document on the site integrity of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar regarding water quality.
- 5.123 In addition, the text that was recommended in relation to the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, would also ensure that there are no adverse effects on the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar in-combination with other plans (please see previous sections for details on policy wording).

Visual and Noise Disturbance

- 5.124 ToLSE identified that the three European sites that are sensitive to visual and noise disturbance arising from the Issues and Options Document are the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar. All these sites are designated for their non-breeding waterfowl and waders, which are potentially sensitive to noise and visual disturbance deriving from construction work or other urban processes. Additionally, the sites also provide shelter for breeding terns in the summer. This impact pathway is therefore relevant throughout all the year. The HRA will discuss the implications of the different strategic growth options, focussing particularly on Options 2A and 2B (which involve the loss of significant

¹³⁴ Natural England Conservation Advice for the Liverpool Bay SPA mentions nutrient dilution as a major mitigating factor for the site. <http://archive.incc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=7507> [Accessed on the 21/11/2019]

¹³⁵ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/SupAdvice.aspx?SiteCode=JK9005103&SiteName=ribble&SiteNameDisplay=Ribble+and+Alt+Estuaries+SPA&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=&NumMarineSeasonality=20> [Accessed on the 22/11/2019]

greenfield sites) for all European sites together. This is because due to the relatively small size of the Borough and it being surrounded by European sites on all sides, it is conceivable that birds from any of the SPAs / Ramsars could use functionally linked habitat anywhere in Wirral. This section will then conclude with overarching mitigation recommendation that is applicable to all sites.

Direct disturbance on SPAs / Ramsars

- 5.125 Option 1A proposed the allocation of numerous sites that lie within 200m of estuarine or coastal sites, all of which have the potential for visual and noise disturbance on non-breeding SPA and Ramsar bird species. This applies especially to the area around Bebington, where multiple potential employment sites (e.g. ELPS 050, ELPS 043, ELPS 100, ELPS 116, ELPS 263, ELPS 415, ELPS 3043, ELPS 017, ELPS 242, ELPS 330 and ELPS 013) lie within 200m of a thin strip of the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar.
- 5.126 North of the Kingsway Road Tunnel, Option 1A proposed to allocate several sites within 200m of the Egremont Foreshore, which forms part of the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar. This includes the Potential Extra Sites SHLAA 0468, SHLAA 04643, the Proposed Housing Sites SHLAA 2022, SHLAA 2023 and SHLAA 2005, and Potential Mixed-use Allocations SHLAA XXXX (not yet included in the Issues and Options Document) and SHLAA 0020.
- 5.127 There are few greenfield sites included under Options 2A and 2B that have a direct disturbance potential for the SPAs / Ramsars. Regarding the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, there are two potential sites (parcels 6.20 and 7.5) in which construction or artificial lighting could have a direct disturbance potential for SPA and Ramsar birds, as these are both directly adjacent to the intertidal sand- and mudflats of the Dee Estuary. None of the other greenfield sites are within the 200m precautionary distance that applies to this impact pathway.
- 5.128 All potential development sites listed above would have the potential for direct visual and noise disturbance on the SPAs / Ramsars, potentially resulting in birds ceasing their normal foraging and / or roosting routes. In extreme cases (i.e. if disturbance stimuli are particularly strong or close to the birds), this might result in birds taking flight and leaving their normal habitats. As such, activity in these allocations could affect the long-term viability of the SPA and Ramsar birds, thus requiring mitigation.

Disturbance of functionally linked habitat

- 5.129 Because the integrity of European sites depends on land parcels beyond the site boundary (see concept of functionally linked habitat), this also extends to any disturbance that may limit the birds' use of such land. In other words, visual and noise disturbance within 200m of known functionally linked habitat parcels should be avoided. Consultation of Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas highlighted that many of the bird species from nearby SPAs / Ramsars use functionally linked habitat in the non-breeding period and development near such parcels could affect the birds' pattern of use of this land. It is noted that visual and noise disturbance of functionally linked habitat is primarily an impact pathway that would be associated with Options 2A and 2B, which allocate sites in the much more rural western section of Wirral. Many of the main settlements (e.g. West Kirby and Heswall) are surrounded by agricultural land, which has a high likelihood of being used by SPA and Ramsar birds. Greenfield sites included around Heswall (under Options 2A and 2B) are a particularly high risk, given the many parcels of agricultural land that are nearby and the numerous existing winter records of SPA and Ramsar birds in this location.
- 5.130 A definitive Appropriate Assessment of this impact pathway would require more detailed bird survey data, particularly from the western part of Wirral. The Cheshire and Wirral Bird Atlas only provides records for 4km² tetrads, while a much higher level of detail is required for this analysis. It is therefore recommended to establish a more detailed ornithological evidence base for Wirral by undertaking bespoke bird surveys (which will be a requirement if any of the Green Belt release options come forward to establish whether parcels are functionally linked to the SPAs / Ramsars). To assess any potential for visual and noise disturbance of functionally linked habitat, such surveys should also cover adjacent land that could be used by SPA and Ramsar birds. The bird surveys should be carried out in the autumn, winter and early spring to cover the period in which

SPA and Ramsar birds are most likely to use inland habitat. Other authorities (e.g. Halton Borough Council) have also commissioned bird surveys to inform their Local Plan HRAs, by assessing the potential for visual and noise disturbance.

- 5.131 In devising appropriate mitigation measures, species-specific responses to noise disturbance need to be considered. For example, redshank are highly sensitive to noise and might be flushed at noise levels of 72dB¹³⁶. For other species (e.g. dunlin and golden plover), while likely to be disturbed by excessive levels of noise, a noise level of 72 dB measured at the birds is likely to be acceptable, as birds will habituate to such noise levels¹³⁷. Given the proximity of suitable habitats to the proposed development sites (especially those under Options 2A and 2B), mitigation measures would have to be incorporated into relevant policies in the Reg.19 Local Plan to avoid adverse effects on the coastal and estuarine SPAs / Ramsars regarding the impact pathway visual and noise disturbance.
- 5.132 Previous research on noise disturbance provides some guidance on whether development sites might require mitigation measures. Studies indicate that noise levels in excess of 84 dB(A) typically elicit a flight response in birds¹³⁸ and it is recommended that construction noise levels are kept below 70 dB to avoid excessive disturbance of birds¹³⁹. Impact piling is known to be one of the noisiest forms of construction, emitting atmospheric noise of 100-110 dB at 1m from source. Since noise attenuates at a rate of 6 dB with every doubling distance, it follows that noise pollution from impact piling will have dropped to under 70 dB at 100m from the source.
- 5.133 Moreover, specific regard should also be given to visual disturbance, as visual stimuli in most instances create a disturbance effect before any associated noise becomes influential. Similar to noise disturbance, high level visual disturbance might result in birds responding by major flight or, if they remain in the area, in the temporary cessation of foraging. Either of these responses might negatively affect the survival rates or breeding success of individual birds. Visual disturbance can be exacerbated by workers operating outside of equipment, moving fast, using large machinery and encroaching on mudflats. Curlew (taking flight at 275m distance to a stimulus) and redshank (taking flight at a distance of 250m) are the wildfowl that are most sensitive to visual stimuli¹⁴⁰. Generally, little effect of visual disturbance on birds has been demonstrated at distances of 300m and above¹⁴¹.
- 5.134 Overall, several recommendations are made to guide development proposed in the Issues and Options Document. Given Wirral's unique situation amidst several European sites designated for their bird interest, it is also recommended that this is included in the supporting text of, or, in condensed form, within an appropriate policy of the Reg.19 Local Plan. The advice regarding visual and noise disturbance is the following:
- **To minimise the effect of visual and noise disturbance, it is recommended that any construction work (and associated road infrastructure) is located more than 200m away from the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, or is undertaken during periods when bird populations of the sites are low (i.e. summer).**
 - **Furthermore, given the presence of highly sensitive bird species on functionally linked habitat near development allocations, it is advisable that such a distance is also maintained regarding functionally linked habitat. Construction within 100-200m of the SPAs / Ramsars, or functionally linked habitat parcels, should be carried out between April and August, when most qualifying species will not be**

¹³⁶ Waterbird Disturbance Mitigation Toolkit Informing Estuarine Planning & Construction Projects. Institute of Estuarine Coastal Studies, University of Hull. 2013. Available at: <http://bailey.persona-pi.com/Public-Inquiries/M4%20-%20Revised/11.3.67.pdf> [Accessed on 18/07/2019]

¹³⁷ Cutts, N., Phelps, A. and Burdon, D. (2009) Construction and waterfowl: Defining Sensitivity, Response, Impacts and Guidance. Report to Humber INCA, Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies, University of Hull.

¹³⁸ Cutts N & Allan J. 1999. Avifaunal Disturbance Assessment. Flood Defence Works: Saltend. Report to Environment Agency).

¹³⁹ Cutts, N., Phelps, A. and Burdon, D. (2009) Construction and waterfowl: Defining Sensitivity, Response, Impacts and Guidance. Report to Humber INCA, Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies, University of Hull

¹⁴⁰ Waterbird Disturbance Mitigation Toolkit. Available at: <http://bailey.persona-pi.com/Public-Inquiries/M4%20-%20Revised/11.3.67.pdf> [Accessed 18/07/2019]

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

present. This particularly applies to construction processes associated with high noise levels (e.g. impact piling).

- **If construction cannot be timed to avoid the winter and passage periods then an impact assessment will need to be undertaken to confirm that noise levels will remain below 70 dB at the bird, and that there will be no visual disturbance. Mitigation may be required in order to achieve this, including the provision of screens, selection of less noisy equipment or techniques, damping and noise shielding of equipment or avoidance of lighting in sensitive locations.**
- **Finally, it is advised that construction sites within 300m of known bird roosts in the SPA or on functionally linked habitat, have appropriate screening in place to minimise visual disturbance.**

Atmospheric Pollution

Dee Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar

5.135 The TOLSE section identified that LSEs of Wirral's Issues and Options Document on the Dee Estuary SAC regarding atmospheric pollution cannot be excluded. As highlighted earlier, the dune systems are the qualifying habitats most sensitive to atmospheric pollution. However, these habitat components are situated near the outer edge of the SAC, on the sea-ward coastlines of Wirral and Flintshire. Importantly, the dune segments in Wirral that form part of the SAC are beyond 200m of the A540, the closest major road, and therefore beyond the threshold distance set for atmospheric pollution impacts. However, there are sensitive SAC habitat elements (e.g. saltmarsh, intertidal sand- and mudflats) within 200m of the A548 in Flintshire, which may experience an increase in commuter journeys as a result of Wirral's Issues and Options Document.

Geographic Setting and Commuter Traffic

5.136 The Dee Estuary SAC is sandwiched between the authorities of Wirral (England) and Flintshire (Wales) and thus is likely to be affected by commuter traffic between these authorities. This might be especially the case for car-based journeys along the A548 involving potential commuters between the settlements of Connah's Quay, Flint and Holywell (all in Flintshire) and Wirral. According to road traffic statistics by the Department for Transport, the A548 is also a relatively busy A road. A traffic count point 99645¹⁴², an Annual Average Daily Traffic flow of 10,249 cars, 2,211 light goods vehicles and 1,308 heavy goods vehicles was observed.

5.137 Data from the 2011 Census shows that Flintshire is the third most popular destination for Wirral residents, with 2,828 (6.3% of the 45,025 total outward trips¹⁴³) daily outward journeys. However, it is to be noted that both Liverpool (18,094 journeys; 40.2%), and Cheshire West and Chester (10,189 journeys; 22.6%) are significantly more popular destinations, accounting for the largest proportion of commuter traffic. Therefore, Flintshire contributes relatively little to Wirral's overall traffic footprint. There is slightly less inward movement on this trajectory with only 991 journeys (5.7% of the 17,291 inward trips) into Wirral from Flintshire.

5.138 Furthermore, it is to be noted that a large proportion of out-commuters from Wirral are likely to work in the Deeside Business Park, which lies in the eastern part of Flintshire close to the boundary of Wirral. Therefore, many commuters accessing employment in the business park are likely to have turned off the A548 before reaching the Flintshire Bridge, and the sensitive area of saltmarsh identified above. Overall, due to the relatively small number of commuter journeys into Flintshire and the low likelihood that commuters will actually traverse the Flintshire Bridge, it is concluded that Wirral's Issues and Options Document will not result in adverse effects on the Dee Estuary SAC regarding the impact pathway atmospheric pollution.

¹⁴² <https://roadtraffic.dft.gov.uk/manualcountpoints/99645> [Accessed on the 18/11/2019]

¹⁴³ Wirral Employment land and Premises Study – Final Report.

6. Summary of Conclusions & Recommendations

6.1 Wirral's Issues and Options Document covers the years between 2020 and 2035 and will plan for a minimum of 12,000 net new residential dwellings and 80ha of employment land, while seeking to protect Wirral's natural assets. Three strategic growth options (urban intensification, urban expansion and dispersed Green Belt development) are currently proposed. This HRA assessed the potential impact pathways of the Issues and Options Document on European sites, particularly focussing on the two Green Belt release options. The following impact pathways of Wirral's Issues and Options Document were identified:

- Recreational pressure (both in European sites and in functionally linked habitat)
- Loss of functionally linked habitat
- Water quality
- Water resources
- Visual and noise disturbance (both in European sites and in functionally linked habitat)
- Atmospheric pollution

Recreational Pressure

6.2 Regarding recreational pressure, the HRA determined that the Issues and Options Document might result in adverse effects on the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, both alone and in-combination with Plans of other authorities. Furthermore, the Issues and Options Document might result in in-combination effects on the Sefton Coast SAC and the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar. In contrast, because the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar is not accessible on its southern shoreline in Wirral, it was determined that there would be no adverse effects on that European site.

6.3 The Merseyside authorities have commissioned a Recreation Mitigation and Avoidance Strategy (RMAS) for all European sites in the City Region in partnership with Natural England and the National Trust, which is intended to be completed by the end of 2020. This strategy was initiated to avoid adverse effects from recreational pressure on the aforementioned European sites. The core visitor catchment requiring mitigation should be identified in agreement with Natural England. Overall, it is considered that the Issues and Options Document contains sufficient text (and is in line with the current developments on recreation mitigation) to provide adequate protection to Wirral's estuarine and coastal European sites. It is recommended that the emerging Local Plan is continually updated to reflect any upcoming changes or evidence in relation to the RMAS.

6.4 It is recommended that the main focus of the mitigation strategy is on measures relating to Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM), including for example:

- Formalising the currently voluntary wardening that is in place at the SPA and Ramsar, and extending it to other relevant European sites on the Wirral peninsula
- Providing additional professional wardening posts, or increasing wardening hours, covering recreation hotspots; giving wardens a specific public liaison role to increase public awareness of the sensitivities of the sites and specifically address problematic activity
- Improving and unifying signage across the European sites, including information boards, waymarkers and dog-on-lead notices; a particular focus should be on communicating why measures are put into place, as this is known to increase compliance

- Develop a partnership for the most prevalent user groups, establishing Codes of Conduct and a coordinating employment post
 - Undertaking standardised visitor surveys at all European sites sensitive to recreational pressure in the LCR region to establish an improved evidence base
 - Funding of academic research studies as identified useful / necessary by Natural England / Natural Resources Wales, for example an investigation into the impact of recreational fishing on feeding wader birds¹⁴⁴
 - Exploring regulatory measures to reduce the impact of recreation on waders, such as temporary footpath or access closures during sensitive periods, rerouting of footpaths and dog exclusion zones, as well as potentially tighter management of areas currently zoned for activities such as kite-surfing, if necessary.
- 6.5 In the intervening period, and until such time as the Strategy has been adopted by Wirral and is in the process of implementation, recreational pressure from development (housing, employment and tourism) will need to be considered on a case by case basis as part of the planning and development management process. The emerging Strategy evidence base can be drawn upon to inform project-specific assessments. In undertaking these project-specific assessments, care will need to be taken to ensure that the approach complies with the “People Over Wind” ECJ ruling¹⁴⁵ with regard to avoiding reliance on mitigation measures at the Test of Likely Significant Effects stage.
- 6.6 It is recommended that the following key steps are undertaken by Wirral Council and incorporated into the next iteration of the Local Plan, prior to the formal adoption of the RMAS in 2021:**
- **Publish the evidence report underpinning the future RMAS as an interim position;**
 - **Introduce an explicit statement of intent into the Plan to collaborate with other authorities in the Liverpool City Region, Natural England and the National Trust to complete and implement the RMAS; and**
 - **Prepare an Interim Guidance Note that sets out the Council’s interim position on housing development and the mitigation of recreational pressure.**

Recreational Pressure in Functionally Linked Habitat

- 6.7 Some large developments (notably Wirral Waters) will also need to devise their own recreation management measures which would address not only nearby European sites but also recreational pressure on significant areas of functionally-linked habitat adjacent to the development, notably Birkenhead Docks which is known to be used extensively by birds associated with the Wirral European sites, notably Liverpool Bay SPA and the Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore.
- 6.8 The HRA further identified that there is a potential for adverse effects resulting from the development Wirral Waters, the largest residential site that is located directly adjacent to the Birkenhead docks that are known to be functionally linked to the nearby SPAs and Ramsars. While it is unlikely that residents from Wirral Waters will have direct access to the water in the docks, the scheme will result in greater activity levels on paths / future greenspaces in immediate proximity of the West and East Float in the docks.
- 6.9 Therefore, it is advised that a bespoke mitigation scheme for the development will need to be produced by the developer to minimise any disturbance arising from the net local population growth. This mitigation strategy could involve some of the measures already recommended in relation to the RMAS, adapted to the specific circumstances for Wirral Waters and adjusted to take account of measures already agreed and committed for that development, such as:

¹⁴⁴ This is identified as important research in Natural England’s Site Improvement Plan with an estimated cost of £15,000. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6579320399069184> [Accessed on the 14/11/2019]

¹⁴⁵ People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17)

- Providing for a part-time wardening post that covers the parts of the docks that are most vulnerable to recreational disturbance (e.g. the West and East Float)
- Installing information boards and / or dog-on-lead notices to increase public awareness of the sensitivity of qualifying bird species using the docks
- Circulating flyers to residents of Wirral Waters that inform them about the ecological importance of the docks for the integrity of nearby European sites
- Restricting access directly onto the docks by planning the path network accordingly (i.e. use of a precautionary distance); potential path closure during sensitive periods

Loss of Functionally Linked Habitat

- 6.10 Regarding the loss of functionally linked habitat the HRA determined that the Issues and Options Document might result in adverse effects on several European sites designated for mobile qualifying waterfowl, particularly if Options 2A and 2B were taken forward. Both of these options would allocate large greenfield sites (over 2ha) with potentially suitable habitat (e.g. agricultural stubble) in close proximity to SPAs and Ramsars. Specific land parcels contained in Option 2a that have a high potential to be functionally linked habitat are parcel 7.5 (directly adjacent to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar) and parcels 7.25, 7.26 and 7.27 (agricultural land with uninterrupted flightlines to the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar. Further greenfield sites (e.g. parcels 4.8, 4.10, 4.11) would be allocated to the south of Bebington, all of which are sufficiently large and comprise potential foraging habitat for SPA and Ramsar birds. However, the potential for the loss of functionally linked habitat here is considered to be lower than around Heswall, due to the more built-up nature of Bebington (i.e. existing industrial development and the M53).
- 6.11 It is advised that if either of the options 2A and 2B (or variations thereof) are included in the Reg.19 Local Plan, the following text (or similar) should be inserted into an appropriate policy of the Plan to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of European sites designated for their non-breeding waterfowl: ***'To meet the requirements of the Habitats Directive, the applicant should be required to provide evidence that the development will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of nearby European sites (namely the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar) regarding their qualifying bird species. To demonstrate this, a survey will be required to determine the habitats and current site use to verify if the land parcel is indeed suitable for supporting a significant population¹⁴⁶ of designated bird species. Where habitats are suitable, non-breeding bird surveys will be required to determine if the site and neighbouring land constitute a significant area of supporting habitat. Bird surveys will need to be undertaken during autumn, winter and spring. If habitat within the site or adjacent land are identified to support significant populations of designated bird species, avoidance measures and mitigation will be required, and the planning application will likely need to be assessed through a project specific Habitats Regulations Assessment to ensure that the development does not result in adverse effects on integrity.'***
- 6.12 Allocating sites for development prior to full wintering bird surveys being undertaken is legally compliant provided there is an adequate protective policy framework in the plan to ensure that no adverse effects could be permitted to arise in practice. The law accepts that ecological investigation to support plan development must be tiered, with more detailed investigation undertaken at each subsequent stage:
- The Court of Appeal¹⁴⁷ has ruled that provided the competent authority is duly satisfied that mitigation can be achieved in practice (in other words that solutions exist that are likely to be effective) this will suffice to enable a conclusion that the proposed development would have no adverse effect. In this case, other than Birkenhead Docks, the inland habitats in question are common, widespread and easily recreated (or managed in a more favourable manner) and the species in question (particularly pink-footed geese) do not have highly specific habitat requirements. Moreover, larger

¹⁴⁶ A significant population is classified as a site that regularly used by 1% or more of the population of qualifying bird species

¹⁴⁷ No Adastral New Town Ltd (NANT) v Suffolk Coastal District Council, Court of Appeal, 17th February 2015

developments have a higher risk of affecting significant areas of functionally-linked land but also have greater potential for delivering growth in parts of the site while leaving other parts of the site to continue to function as supporting habitat if significant populations are found;

- The High Court¹⁴⁸ has ruled that for ‘a multistage process, so long as there is sufficient information at any particular stage to enable the authority to be satisfied that the proposed mitigation can be achieved in practice it is not necessary for all matters concerning mitigation to be fully resolved before a decision maker is able to conclude that a development will satisfy the requirements of the Habitats Regulations’.
- Advocate-General Kokott¹⁴⁹ has commented that ‘It would also hardly be proper to require a greater level of detail in preceding plans or the abolition of multi-stage planning and approval procedures so that the assessment of implications can be concentrated on one point in the procedure. Rather, adverse effects on areas of conservation must be assessed at every relevant stage of the procedure to the extent possible on the basis of the precision of the plan. This assessment is to be updated with increasing specificity in subsequent stages of the procedure’.

6.13 That said, the ideal situation would be for some surveys would be undertaken before the plan is adopted in order to ensure that key developments are deliverable at the requisite scale, particularly for large sites.

Water Quality

6.14 Regarding water quality in the estuarine and coastal European sites immediately surrounding Wirral, it was determined that the Issues and Options Document might result in adverse effects on site integrity, unless appropriate policy wording is inserted into the next iteration of the Local Plan. Water quality is an issue for the Mersey Narrows and the North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar, and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, particularly in-combination with development in the wider Merseyside region.

6.15 Therefore, it is recommended that the following text (or similar) is inserted into an appropriate policy of the Reg.19 version of the Local Plan: ***‘The Council will liaise with United Utilities and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water to confirm there is sufficient headroom in the existing discharge consent to accommodate the growth planned for Wirral over the entire Plan period. If constraints are identified, housing delivery will need to be phased to keep in line with the available wastewater treatment infrastructure.’*** Given that the permitted headroom considers the qualifying features of European sites, and that the Plans of adjoining authorities would have had to ensure this compliance as well, it would be concluded that there are no adverse in-combination effects of the Reg.19 Local Plan on European sites sensitive to changes in water quality.

Visual and Noise Disturbance (both in European sites and in functionally linked habitat)

6.16 Wirral’s Issues and Options Document includes several potential development sites that would result in visual or noise disturbance of qualifying SPA and Ramsar bird species, due to the sites being within the precautionary screening distances for these impact pathways. Visual and noise disturbance is an impact pathway that is relevant to development sites adjacent to the European sites as well as land parcels identified as functionally linked habitat.

6.17 To avoid adverse effects on the populations of qualifying birds both within European sites and in functionally linked habitat, detailed recommendations are made to guide development proposed in the Issues and Options Document. Given Wirral’s unique situation amidst several European sites designated for their bird interest, it is also recommended that this text is included in the

¹⁴⁸ High Court case of R (Devon Wildlife Trust) v Teignbridge District Council, 28 July 2015

¹⁴⁹ Opinion of Advocate General Kokott, 9th June 2005, Case C-6/04. Commission of the European Communities v United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, paragraph 49.
<http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?docid=58359&dclang=EN>

supporting text of, or, in condensed form, within an appropriate policy of the Reg. 19 Local Plan. The following advice regarding visual and noise disturbance should be inserted:

- ***“To minimise the effect of visual and noise disturbance, it is recommended that any construction work (and associated road infrastructure) is located more than 200m away from the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar, or is undertaken during periods when bird populations of the sites are low (i.e. summer).***
- ***Furthermore, given the presence of highly sensitive bird species on functionally linked habitat near development allocations, it is advisable that such a distance is also maintained regarding functionally linked habitat. Construction within 100-200m of the SPAs / Ramsars, or functionally linked habitat parcels, should be carried out between April and September, when most qualifying species will not be present. This particularly applies to construction processes associated with high noise levels (e.g. impact piling).***
- ***If construction cannot be timed to avoid the winter and passage periods then an impact assessment will need to be undertaken to confirm that noise levels will remain below 70 dB at the bird, and that there will be no visual disturbance. Mitigation may be required in order to achieve this, including the provision of screens, selection of less noisy equipment or techniques, damping and noise shielding of equipment or avoidance of lighting in sensitive locations.***
- ***Finally, it is advised that construction sites within 300m of known bird roosts in the SPA or on functionally linked habitat, have appropriate screening in place to minimise visual disturbance.”***

Atmospheric Pollution

6.18 Regarding atmospheric pollution it was determined that the only European site requiring further consideration is the Dee Estuary SAC (and the overlapping Dee Estuary SP and Ramsar). Atlantic saltmarsh, a qualifying habitat of the SAC that is also used by bird species in the SPA and Ramsar, is located within 200m (approx. 50m) of the A548 to the east of the Flintshire Bridge. While the HRA established that Flintshire is a destination and source of commuters to / from Flintshire, it was also shown that the number of car-based journeys to this authority is relatively small and that a large proportion of commuters is unlikely to cross the Flintshire Bridge (which would bring them within 200m of sensitive habitats). Therefore, it is concluded that Wirral's Issues and Options Document will not result in adverse effects on the Dee Estuary SAC.

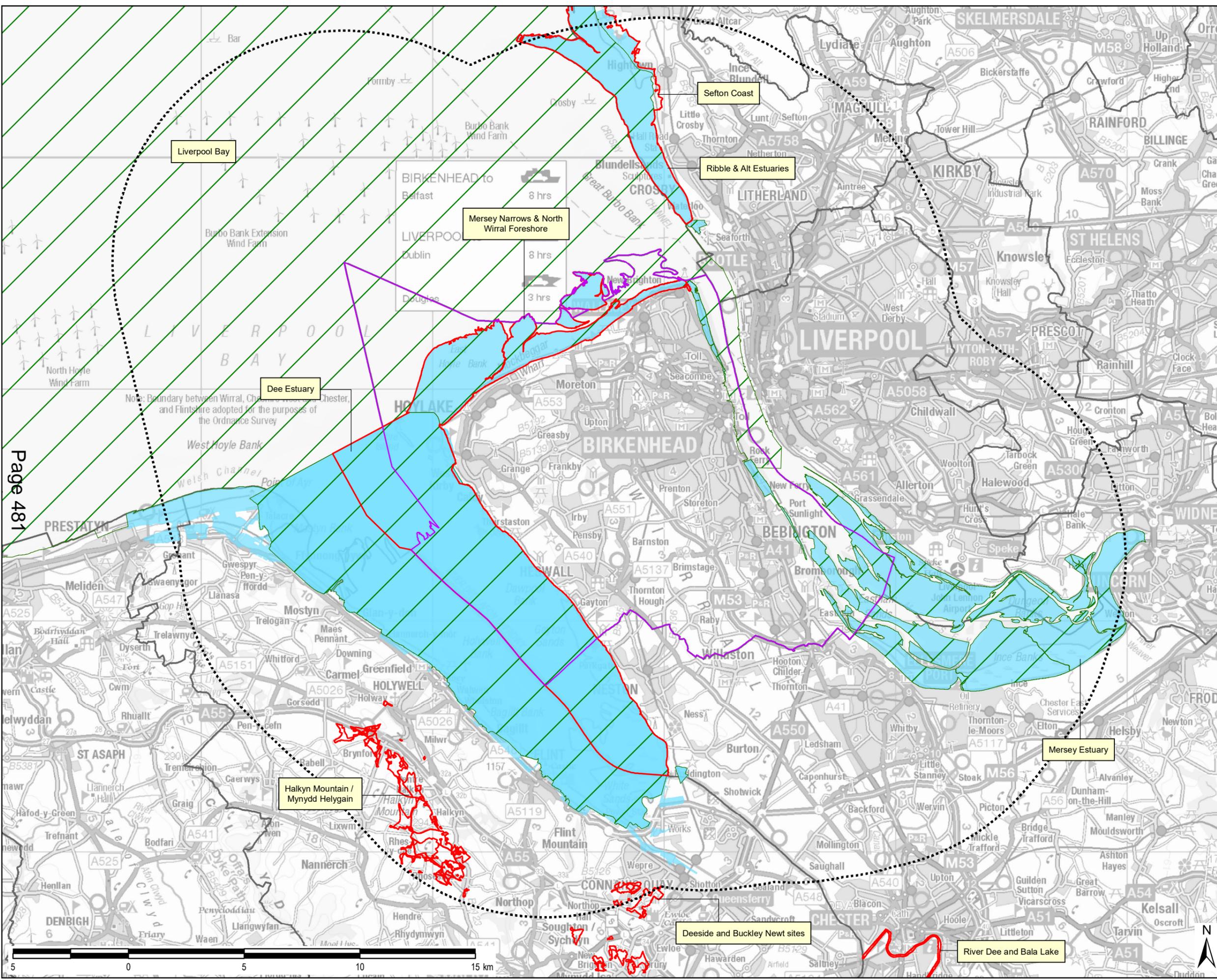
Appendix A Maps of Strategic Growth Options and European Sites

Appendix 1: Map of European sites within 10km of the Borough of Wirral, which could be affected by impact pathways linking to Wirral's Issues and Options Document.

THIS DRAWING IS TO BE USED ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ISSUE THAT IT WAS ISSUED FOR AND IS SUBJECT TO AMENDMENT

Legend

-  Wirral District Boundary
-  Study Area Buffer -10km
-  Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
-  Special Protection Area (SPA)
-  Ramsar



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Purpose of Issue **DRAFT**

Client **WIRRAL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Project Title **HRA OF THE REG.18 WIRRAL LOCAL PLAN**

Drawing Title **EUROPEAN SITES WITHIN 10KM OF THE BOROUGH OF WIRRAL**

Drawn AM	Checked NS	Approved DW	Date 10/12/2019
AECOM Internal Project No. 60470919		Scale @ A3 1:150,000	

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Drawing Number **FIGURE 1** Rev **01**



Appendix 2: Map of strategic growth Option 1A (Urban Intensification) in relation to European sites within 10km of the Borough of Wirral. Shown are SHLAA Housing Sites, Potential Extra Housing Sites and Employment Sites.

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Legend

-  Wirral District Boundary
-  Study Area Buffer - 10km
-  Employment Sites
-  Housing Allocations - SHLAA Sites
-  HSG Not Started
-  HSG PPU Under Construction
-  Potential Extra Housing
-  Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
-  Special Protection Area (SPA)
-  Ramsar

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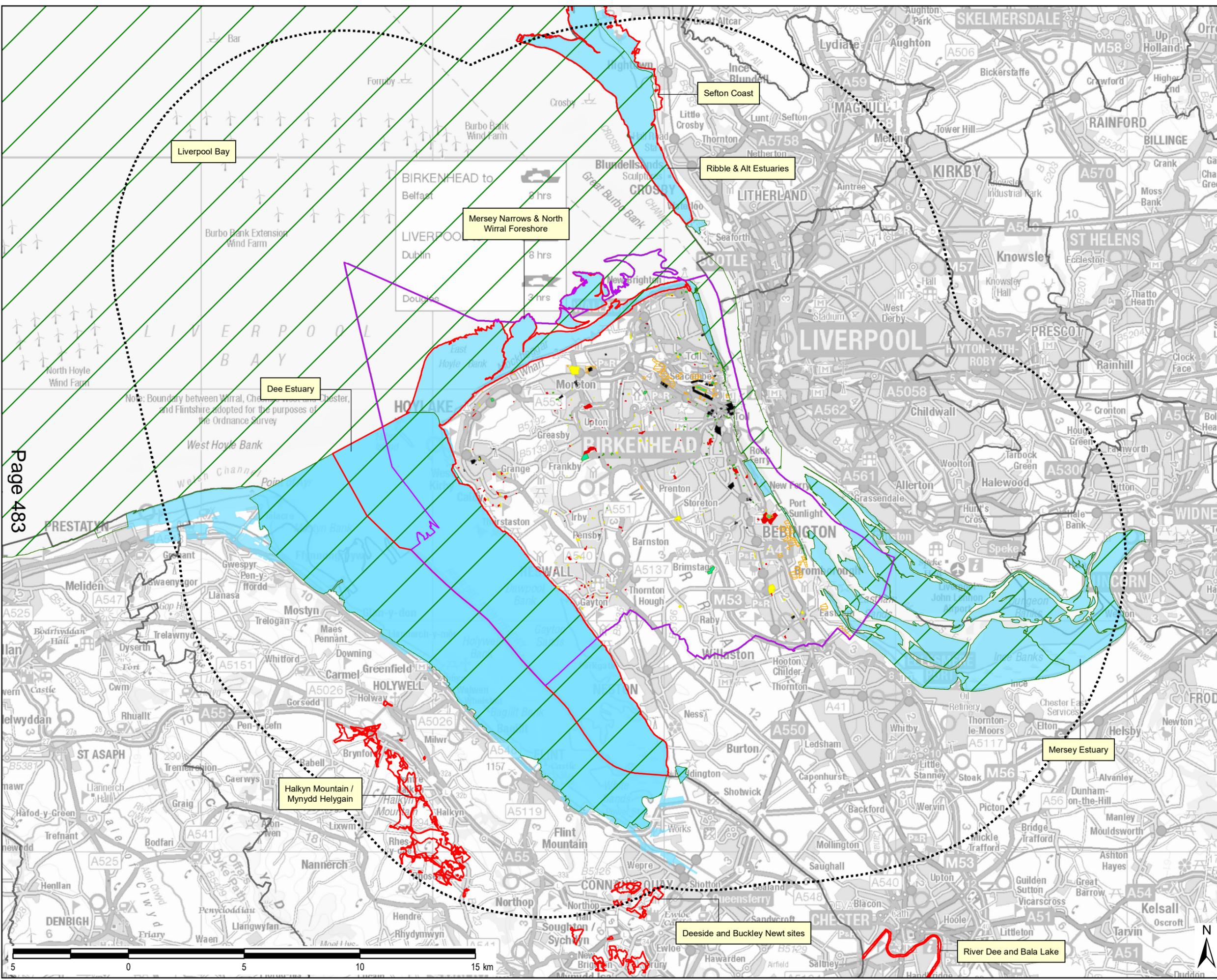
Drawing Title **URBAN INTENSIFICATION**

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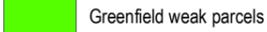
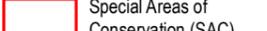
Page 483

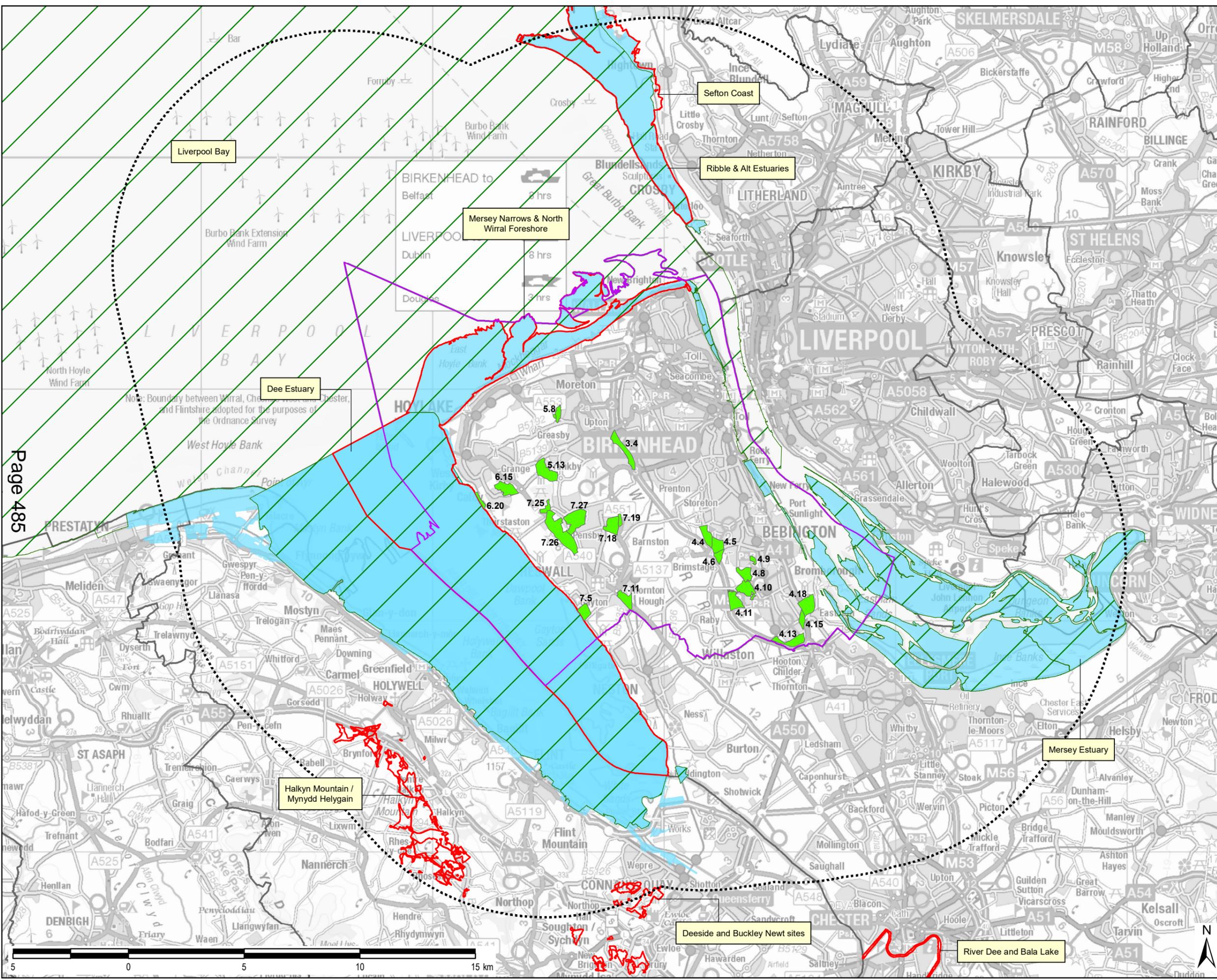
File Name: F:\General\GIS\01 - Jobs\2019\191128_Wirral_HRA_map02_Maps\Templates\Fig2C_Option3.mxd

Appendix 3: Map of strategic growth Option 2A (Dispersed Green Belt Release) in relation to European sites within 10km of the Borough of Wirral.

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Legend

-  Wirral District Boundary
-  Study Area Buffer - 10km
-  Greenfield weak parcels
-  Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
-  Special Protection Area (SPA)
-  Ramsar



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Drawing Title **DISPERSED GREEN BELT RELEASE**

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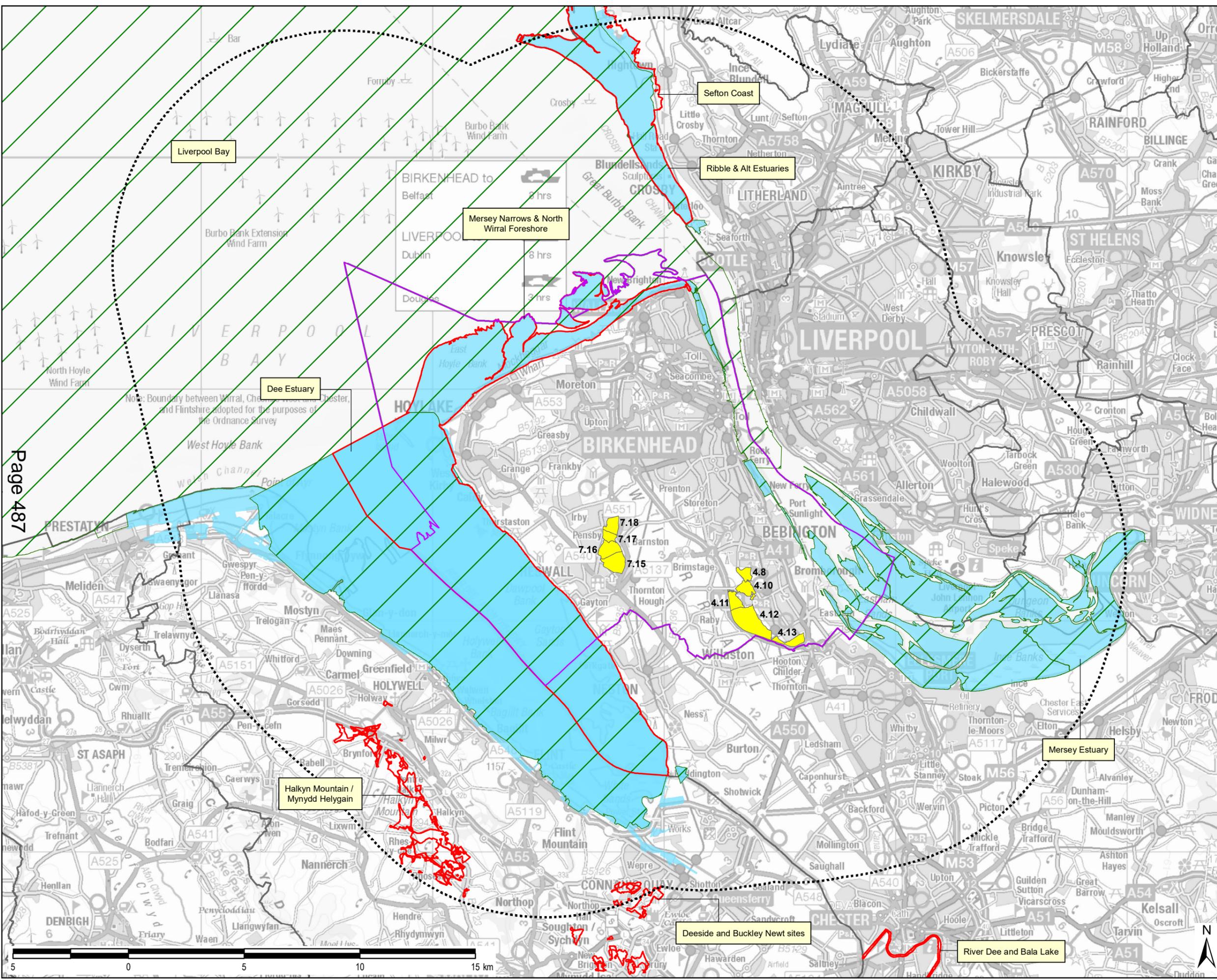
Drawing Number **FIGURE 2A** Rev **01**

Appendix 4: Map of strategic growth Option 2B (Urban Expansion) in relation to European sites within 10km of the Borough of Wirral.

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Legend

- Wirral District Boundary
- Study Area Buffer - 10km
- Urban Extensions
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Ramsar



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File Name: F:\General\GIS\01 - Jobs\2019\191128_Wirral HRA map02_Maps\Templates\Fig2B_Location of European Designated Sites_Urban Extensions.mxd

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Drawing Number **FIGURE 2B** Rev **01**



Appendix B Relevant European sites

Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar

Introduction

The SPA sits on the north-west coast of England and is fed by the Mersey and Dee estuaries. The site mainly comprises intertidal habitat at the Egremont foreshore, man-made lagoons at the Seaforth Nature Reserve and extensive intertidal flats at the North Wirral Foreshore. Both Egremont Foreshore and the North Wirral Foreshore are important as feeding habitat for waders at low tide and the latter additionally includes important high-tide roost sites. Seaforth Nature Reserve is primarily important as a high-tide roost site. Perhaps the most notable feature of the SPA is the high density of non-breeding turnstone *Arenaria interpres*. Birds from the Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar also regularly move to the Dee Estuary SPA, the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and, to a lesser extent, the Mersey Estuary SPA.

SPA Qualifying Features¹⁵⁰

The site qualifies under Article 4.2 of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica* (non-breeding)
- Common tern *Sterna hirundo* (breeding / non-breeding)
- Knot *Calidris canutus* (non-breeding)
- Little gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus* (non-breeding)

In the non-breeding season, the area regularly supports 32,366 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 2004/05 - 2008/09), comprised of 2,414 wildfowl and 29,952 waders including: cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, sanderling *Calidris alba*, knot *Calidris canutus*, dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica* and redshank *Tringa totanus*.

Ramsar Qualifying Features¹⁵¹

The Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore is designated a **Ramsar** site under the following criteria:

Criterion 4:

- Regularly supports plant and/or animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles, or provides refuge during adverse conditions. During 2004/05 - 2008/09 the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar site supported important numbers of non-breeding little gulls and common terns.

Criterion 5:

- Regularly supports 20,000 or more waterbirds: During the winters 2004/05 - 2008/09, the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore Ramsar site supported an average peak of 32,402 individual waterbirds.

¹⁵⁰

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/Marine/MarineSiteDetail.aspx?SiteCode=UK9020287&SiteName=mersey%20narrows&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&SeaArea=&IFCAAarea=&HasCA=1&NumMarineSeasonality=5&SiteNameDisplay=Mersey%20Narrows%20and%20North%20Wirral%20Foreshore%20SPA> [Accessed 22/10/2019]

¹⁵¹ <https://incc.gov.uk/incc-assets/RIS/UK11042.pdf> [Accessed 22/10/2019]

Criterion 6:

- During winter the site regularly supports at least 1% of the individuals in the populations of the following species or subspecies of waterbird:

Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*;

Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*;

Knot *Calidris canutus*;

Conservation Objectives¹⁵²

With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹⁵³

The following threats and pressures to the site integrity of the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral SPA have been identified in Natural England's Site Improvement Plan:

- Public access / disturbance
- Changes in species distributions
- Invasive species
- Climate change
- Coastal squeeze
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Water pollution
- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Overgrazing
- Direct impact from third party
- Marine litter
- Predation
- Planning permission: General
- Marine consents and permits
- Wildfire / arson

¹⁵² <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6521906232557568> [Accessed 22/10/2019]

¹⁵³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6579320399069184> [Accessed 22/10/2019]

- Air pollution: Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Transportation and service corridors
- Physical modification

Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar

Introduction

The Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar lies on the north-west coast of Britain between England and Wales. It is the sixth largest estuary in the UK, which is shaped like a funnel and is sheltered. It comprises extensive areas of intertidal sandflats, mudflats and saltmarsh. Where little land has been converted for agricultural use, there is gradation of saltmarsh into transitional brackish and swamp vegetation inland. Furthermore, the SPA and Ramsar also includes three sandstone islands of Hilbre with important cliff vegetation and maritime heathland. The two shorelines of the estuary illustrate a significant difference in usage from the industrial nature in coastal Wales to the recreational and residential usage in western England.

Most notably, the Dee Estuary SPA and Ramsar is of major importance for waterbirds. In winter, the intertidal sand- and mudflats, and the saltmarshes provide both feeding and roosting sites for significant populations of ducks and wading birds. Additionally, in summer the SPA and Ramsar acts as the breeding ground for two tern species, occurring at levels of European importance. The site also provides a crucial stopover point for numerous migratory birds, which resupply energy reserves on their long journeys from non-breeding to breeding grounds.

SPA Qualifying Features¹⁵⁴

The site qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

During the breeding season

- Common tern *Sterna hirundo*; 277 pairs representing at least 2.3% of the breeding population in Great Britain (5 year mean 1991-95)
- Little tern *Sterna albifrons*, 56 pairs representing at least 2.3% of the breeding population in Great Britain (RSPB, 5 year mean 1991-95)

On passage

- Sandwich tern *Sterna sandvicensis*, 818 individuals representing at least 5.8% of the population in Great Britain (5 year mean 1991-95)
- Knot *Calidris canutus* (non-breeding)
- Little gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus* (non-breeding)

Over winter

- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*, 1,013 individuals representing at least 1.9% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)

The site qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

On passage

- Redshank *Tringa tetanus*, 8,451 individuals representing at least 4.8% of the Eastern Atlantic wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)

Over winter

¹⁵⁴ <http://archive.incc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=2053> [Accessed 22/10/2019]

- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, 1,739 individuals representing at least 2.5% of the wintering Iceland breeding population (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)
- Curlew *Numerius arquata*, 4,028 individuals representing at least 1.2% of the wintering Europe breeding population (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, 22,479 individuals representing at least 1.6% of the wintering Northern Siberia / Europe / Western Africa population (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)
- Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, 2,193 individuals representing at least 1.5% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic population (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)
- Knot *Calidris canutus*, 21,553 individuals representing at least 6.2% of the wintering Northeastern Canada / Greenland / Iceland / Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)
- Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, 28,434 individuals representing at least 3.2% of the wintering Europe & Northern / Western Africa population (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)
- Pintail *Anas acuta*, 6,498 individuals representing at least 10.8% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)
- Redshank *Tringa totanus*, 6,382 individuals representing at least 4.3% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic population (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)
- Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, 6,827 individuals representing at least 2.3% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)
- Teal *Anas crecca*, 5,918 individuals representing at least 1.5% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)

Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance

The area qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl.

Over winter, the area regularly supports 130,408 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, teal *Anas crecca*, pintail *Anas acuta*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*, dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, sanderling *Calidris alba*, curlew *Numerius arquata*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, knot *Calidris canutus*.

Ramsar Qualifying Features¹⁵⁵

The Dee Estuary is designated a **Ramsar** site under the following criteria:

Criterion 1:

- Contains extensive intertidal mud and sand flats (20km by 9km) with large expanses of saltmarsh towards the head of the estuary. Habitats Directive I features present on the pSAC include estuaries, mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, annual vegetation of drift lines, vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts, *Salicornia* and other annual colonising mud and sand, Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima*), embryonic shifting dunes, shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes), fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) and humid dune slacks

Criterion 2:

- Supports breeding colonies of the vulnerable Natterjack Toad, *Epidalea calamita*.

¹⁵⁵ <https://incc.gov.uk/incc-assets/RIS/UK11082.pdf> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

Criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance of species with peak counts in winter

- 120,726 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 1994/5 – 1998/9).

Criterion 6: Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Species with peak counts in spring / autumn:

- Redshank *Tringa tetanus*; 8,795 individuals representing an average of 5.9% of the Eastern Atlantic population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)

Species with peak counts in winter:

- Redshank *Tringa totanus*; 5,293 individuals representing an average of 3.5% of the Eastern Atlantic population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)
- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*; 1,150 individuals representing an average of 1.2% of the Europe population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)
- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*; 1,747 individuals representing an average of 2.5% of the Icelandic population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)
- Curlew *Numenius arquata*; 3,899 individuals representing an average of 1.1% of the Europe and NW Africa population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*; 27,769 individuals representing an average of 2% of the Europe population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)
- Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*; 1,643 individuals representing an average of 1.1% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)
- Knot *Calidris canutus*; 12,394 individuals representing an average of 3.5% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)
- Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*; 22,677 individuals representing an average of 2.5% of the Europe and W Africa population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)
- Pintail *Anas acuta*; 5,407 individuals representing an average of 9% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)
- Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*; 7,725 individuals representing an average of 2.6% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)
- Teal *Anas crecca*; 5,251 individuals representing an average of 1.3% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1994/95-1998/99)

SPA Conservation Objectives¹⁵⁶

With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

¹⁵⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6557770283220992> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹⁵⁷

The following threats and pressures to the site integrity of the Dee Estuary SPA have been identified in Natural England's Site Improvement Plan:

- Public access / disturbance
- Changes in species distributions
- Invasive species
- Climate change
- Coastal squeeze
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Water pollution
- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Overgrazing
- Direct impact from 3rd party
- Marine litter
- Predation
- Planning permission: General
- Marine consents and permits
- Wildfire / arson
- Air pollution: Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Transportation and service corridors
- Physical modification

Dee Estuary SAC

Introduction

The Dee Estuary SAC is a 15,805.27ha maritime site comprising a wide variety of habitats, including tidal rivers, estuaries, mudflats and sandflats (81.8%), salt marshes and steppes (16.1%), coastal sand dunes (0.5%), shingle and sea cliffs (0.5%), and bogs and marshes (0.4%). While the SAC covers a similar area to the SPA and Ramsar, and is therefore also important for waterbirds, its main features are the habitats and their associated plant species. For example, the Dee Estuary is designated for its pioneer glasswort *Salicornia* spp. saltmarsh. The *Salicornia* saltmarsh forms extensive stands in the Dee, particularly on the sandy muds with reduced tidal surges. It occurs primarily on the seaward fringes as a pioneer and forms landward transitions to common saltmarsh-grass *Puccinellia maritima* saltmarsh.

Furthermore, the SAC represents Atlantic salt meadows in the north-west of the UK. It forms the most extensive saltmarsh in the Dee and has displaced large tracts of non-native common cord-grass *Spartina anglica* since the 1980s. The current high abundance of saltmarsh in turn favours further development of this type of vegetation. The Atlantic salt meadows are regularly covered by the sea and harbour salt-tolerant species, such as saltmarsh-grass *Puccinellia maritima*, sea aster *Aster tripolium* and sea arrowgrass *Triglochin maritima*.

¹⁵⁷ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6579320399069184> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

Qualifying Features¹⁵⁸

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
- *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand
- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Estuaries
- Annual vegetation of drift lines
- Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts
- Embryonic shifting dunes
- Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ('white dunes')
- Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ('grey dunes')
- Humid dune slacks

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

- Petalwort *Petalophyllum ralfsii*;
- River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*;
- Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*

Conservation Objectives¹⁵⁹

With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹⁶⁰

The following threats and pressures to the site integrity of the Dee Estuary SAC have been identified in Natural England's Site Improvement Plan:

- Public access / disturbance
- Changes in species distributions
- Invasive species
- Climate change

¹⁵⁸ <https://sac.incc.gov.uk/site/UK0030131> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

¹⁵⁹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6124489284780032> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

¹⁶⁰ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6579320399069184> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

- Coastal squeeze
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Water pollution
- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Overgrazing
- Direct impact from 3rd party
- Marine litter
- Predation
- Planning permission: General
- Marine consents and permits
- Wildfire / arson
- Air pollution: Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Transportation and service corridors
- Physical modification

Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar

Introduction

The Mersey Estuary is a 5,033.14ha maritime site that is located on the Irish Sea coast in north-west England. It is a large sheltered estuary that comprises areas of saltmarsh and extensive intertidal sandflats and mudflats. There is also some limited brackish marsh, rocky shoreline and boulder cliffs. The SPA and Ramsar is set within a largely rural and industrial environment. The site receives drainage from a catchment area of approx. 5,000km² encompassing the conurbations of Liverpool and Manchester, and including the River Mersey, the River Bollin and their tributaries in Cheshire and Merseyside.

The intertidal sand- and mudflats within the site provide feeding and roosting ground for a large assemblage of waterbirds. Especially in winter, the site is of major importance for ducks and waders. However, it is also of importance as a stopover point in the spring and autumn migration periods, particularly for wader populations that move along the western coast of Britain.

SPA Qualifying Features¹⁶¹

The site qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

Over winter

- Golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, 3,070 individuals representing at least 1.2% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2-1995/6)

The site qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

On passage

- Redshank *Tringa tetanus*; 3,516 individuals representing at least 2% of the Eastern Atlantic wintering population (5 year peak mean, 1987-1991)

¹⁶¹ <http://archive.incc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1986> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

- Ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*; 1,453 individuals representing at least 2.9% of the Europe / Northern Africa wintering population (Count as at 1989)

Over winter

- Dunlin *Calidris alpina*; 44,300 individuals representing at least 3.2% of the wintering Northern Siberia / Europe / Western Africa population
- Pintail *Anas acuta*; 2,744 individuals representing at least 4.6% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population
- Redshank *Tringa totanus*; 4,689 individuals representing at least 3.1% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic population
- Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*; 5,039 individuals representing at least 1.7% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population
- Teal *Anas crecca*; 11,667 individuals representing at least 2.9% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population

Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance

The area qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl

The area regularly supports 99,467 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: curlew *Numenius arquata*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, great-crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, pintail *Anas acuta*, teal *Anas crecca*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*.

Ramsar Qualifying Features¹⁶²

The Mersey Estuary is designated a **Ramsar** site under the following criteria:

Criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance of species with peak counts in winter

- 89,576 individual waterbirds (5 year peak mean 1998/99 – 2002/2003).

Criterion 6: Species/populations occurring at levels of international importance.

Species with peak counts in spring / autumn

- Common shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*; 12,676 individuals representing an average of 4.2% of the Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/03)
- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*; 2,011 individuals representing an average of 5.7% of the Iceland and Western Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/03)
- Redshank *Tringa totanus*; 6,651 individuals representing an average of 2.6% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/03)

Species with peak counts in winter

- Eurasian teal *Anas crecca*; 10,613 individuals representing an average of 2.6% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/03)
- Northern pintail *Anas acuta*; 565 individuals representing an average of 2% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/03)

¹⁶² <http://archive.incc.gov.uk/pdf/RIS/UK11041.pdf> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*; 48,364 individuals representing an average of 3.6% of the W Siberia and W Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/03)

SPA Conservation Objectives¹⁶³

With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹⁶⁴

The following threats and pressures to the site integrity of the Mersey Estuary SPA have been identified in Natural England's Site Improvement Plan:

- Changes in species distributions
- Invasive species
- Public access / disturbance

Liverpool Bay SPA

Introduction

The Liverpool Bay SPA is a maritime site that is approx. 252,800ha in size and lies in the east of the Irish Sea, bordering northern England and north Wales. The site comprises exposed mudflats and sandbanks in places, but extends up to 20km from the shoreline. Most of this distant area from the coast is relatively shallow water up to 20m deep. The SPA and Ramsar is contiguous with several other European sites, including the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar, the Mersey Narrows and North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar, and the Mersey Estuary SPA and Ramsar. It is primarily classified for the protection of red-throated diver, common scoter and little gull outside the breeding season and for breeding common tern and little tern. Furthermore, the SPA and Ramsar harbours a waterbird assemblage of European importance.

The proposal for the Liverpool Bay SPA Extension is to extend the SPA to support internationally important populations of common tern, little tern and little gull. The area proposed for extension is particularly important for the terns as much of the sea around their breeding colonies is the ideal habitat for plunge diving for food. The proposal is also to add cormorant and red-breasted merganser to the waterbird assemblage as named species.

Qualifying Features¹⁶⁵

The site qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

During the breeding season

- Little tern *Sterna albifrons*, at least 6.8% of the GB population

¹⁶³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5790848037945344> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

¹⁶⁴ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6273450410770432> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

¹⁶⁵ <http://archive.incc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=7507> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

- Common tern *Sterna hirundo*, at least 1.8% of the GB population

The site qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

Over winter

- Red-throated diver *Gavia stellata*, at least 6.9% of the GB population
- Little gull *Hydrocoloeus minutus*, count not available
- Common scoter *Melanitta nigra*, at least 10.3% of the NW Europe population

The site qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

On passage

- Redshank *Tringa tetanus*; 3,516 individuals representing at least 2% of the Eastern Atlantic wintering population (5 year peak mean, 1987-1991)

Designated as a **SPA** for its:

Non-breeding:

- Red-throated diver *Gavia stellata*
- Little gull *Larus minutus*
- Common scoter *Melanitta nigra*

Foraging areas for breeding colonies:

- Common tern *Sterna hirundo*
- Little tern *Sterna albifrons*

Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance

In the non-breeding season, the site regularly supports at least 555,597 individual waterbirds (2001/02–2002/03), including red-throated diver and common scoter.

Conservation Objectives¹⁶⁶

With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Threats / Pressure to Site Integrity¹⁶⁷

- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Transportation and service corridors

¹⁶⁶ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5089733892898816?cache=1571828814.29> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

¹⁶⁷ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5296526586806272> [Accessed on 23/10/2019]

- Fisheries: Recreational marine and estuarine
- Extraction: Non-living resources
- Siltation
- Water pollution

Ribble & Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar

Introduction

The Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar is approximately 12,361ha in size, and is located in north-west England. It comprises two estuaries with the Ribble Estuary being the much larger one of the two. It forms part of a system of marine European sites along the western coastline of the UK, which provides a migratory route for non-breeding birds. There is significant movement of birds between these sites and it is therefore important to maintain this functional network of sites.

The site comprises extensive sand- and mudflats and, particularly in the Ribble Estuary, large areas of saltmarsh. There are also areas of coastal grazing marsh located behind the sea embankments. The saltmarshes, coastal grazing marshes, and intertidal sand- and mudflats all support high densities of grazing wildfowl and are used as high-tide roosts. Important populations of waterbirds occur in winter, including swans, geese, ducks and waders. The highest densities of feeding birds are on the muddier substrates of the Ribble.

The SPA is also of major importance during the spring and autumn migration periods, especially for wader populations moving along the west coast of Britain. The saltmarsh and areas of coastal grazing marsh support breeding birds during the summer, including large numbers of gulls and terns. These seabirds feed both offshore and inland, outside of the SPA site boundary. Several species, most notably pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, utilise feeding areas on functionally linked land.

SPA Qualifying Features¹⁶⁸

The site qualifies under **Article 4.1** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following species listed on Annex I of the Directive:

During the breeding season

- Common tern *Sterna hirundo*, 182 pairs representing at least 1.5% of the breeding population in Great Britain (Count as at 1996)
- Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, 1 pair representing at least 9.1% of the breeding population in Great Britain (Count as at late 1980's)

Over winter

- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*, 18,958 individuals representing at least 35.8% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, 229 individuals representing at least 3.3% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, 4,277 individuals representing at least 1.7% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*, 159 individuals representing at least 2.9% of the wintering population in Great Britain (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

The site qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by supporting populations of European importance of the following migratory species:

¹⁶⁸ <http://archive.incc.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=1984> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

During the breeding season

- Lesser black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, 1,800 pairs representing at least 1.5% of the breeding Western Europe/Mediterranean/Western Africa population (Count, as at 1993)

On passage

- Ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, 995 individuals representing at least 2.0% of the Europe/Northern Africa - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Sanderling *Calidris alba*, 6,172 individuals representing at least 6.2% of the Eastern Atlantic/Western & Southern Africa - wintering population (3 year mean May 1993 - 1995)

Over winter

- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, 819 individuals representing at least 1.2% of the wintering Iceland - breeding population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, 39,952 individuals representing at least 2.9% of the wintering Northern Siberia/Europe/Western Africa population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, 6,073 individuals representing at least 4.0% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Knot *Calidris canutus*, 57,865 individuals representing at least 16.5% of the wintering Northeastern Canada/Greenland/Iceland/Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, 16,159 individuals representing at least 1.8% of the wintering Europe & Northern/Western Africa population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, 23,860 individuals representing at least 10.6% of the wintering Eastern Greenland/Iceland/UK population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Pintail *Anas acuta*, 3,333 individuals representing at least 5.6% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Redshank *Tringa totanus*, 2,708 individuals representing at least 1.8% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Sanderling *Calidris alba*, 2,859 individuals representing at least 2.9% of the wintering Eastern Atlantic/Western & Southern Africa - wintering population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, 4,103 individuals representing at least 1.4% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Teal *Anas crecca*, 7,641 individuals representing at least 1.9% of the wintering Northwestern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)
- Wigeon *Anas penelope*, 84,699 individuals representing at least 6.8% of the wintering Western Siberia/Northwestern/Northeastern Europe population (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6)

Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance

The area qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 seabirds.

During the breeding season, the area regularly supports 29,236 individual seabirds including: Black-headed gull *Larus ridibundus*, lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus*, common tern *Sterna hirundo*.

Assemblage qualification: A wetland of international importance

The area qualifies under **Article 4.2** of the Directive (79/409/EEC) by regularly supporting at least 20,000 waterfowl.

Over winter, the area regularly supports 301,449 individual waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1991/2 - 1995/6) including: Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*, golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica*, pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, wigeon *Anas penelope*, teal *Anas crecca*, Bewick's swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, curlew *Numenius arquata*, knot *Calidris canutus*, sanderling *Calidris alba*, dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, redshank *Tringa totanus*, cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, common scoter *Melanitta nigra*, lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, pintail *Anas acuta*.

Ramsar Qualifying Features¹⁶⁹

The Ribble & Alt Estuaries is designated as a **Ramsar** site under the following criteria:

Criterion 2:

- The site supports up to 40% of the Great Britain population of natterjack toads *Bufo calamita*

Criterion 5: Assemblages of international importance

- Species with peak counts in winter: 222,038 waterfowl (5 year peak mean 1998/99-2002/03)

Criterion 6: Species / populations occurring at levels of international importance

Species regularly supported during the breeding season

- Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus graellsii*, 4,108 apparently occupied nests, representing an average of 2.7% of the breeding W Europe / Mediterranean / W Africa population (Seabird 2000 Census)

Species with peak counts in spring / autumn

- Ringed plover *Charadrius hiaticula*, 3,761 individuals, representing an average of 5.1% of the Europe / Northwest Africa population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3 - spring peak)
- Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, 11,021 individuals, representing an average of 4.4% of the E Atlantic / W Africa wintering population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3 - spring peak)
- Red knot *Calidris canutus islandica*, 42,692 individuals, representing an average of 9.4% of the W & Southern Africa population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Sanderling *Calidris alba*, 7,401 individuals, representing an average of 6% of the Eastern Atlantic population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3 - spring peak)
- Dunlin *Calidris alpina alpina*, 38,196 individuals, representing an average of 2.8% of the W Siberia / W Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3 - spring peak)
- Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa islandica*, 3,323 individuals, representing an average of 9.4% of the Iceland / W Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Common redshank *Tringa totanus totanus*, 4,465 individuals, representing an average of 1.7% of the population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus graellsii*, 1,747 individuals, representing an average of 2.8% of the GB population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

Species with peak counts in winter

- Tundra swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, 230 individuals, representing an average of 2.8% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)
- Whooper swan *Cygnus cygnus*, Iceland/UK/Ireland 211 individuals, representing an average of 1% of the Iceland / UK / Ireland population (5 year peak mean 1998/9- 2002/3)

¹⁶⁹ <https://incc.gov.uk/incc-assets/RIS/UK11057.pdf> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

- Pink-footed goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*, 6,552 individuals, representing an average of 2.7% of the Greenland / Iceland / UK population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Common shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, 2,944 individuals, representing an average of 3.7% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Eurasian wigeon *Anas penelope*, 69,841 individuals, representing an average of 4.6% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Eurasian teal *Anas crecca*, 5,107 individuals, representing an average of 1.2% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Northern pintail *Anas acuta*, 1,497 individuals, representing an average of 2.4% of the NW Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Eurasian oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus ostralegus*, 18,926 individuals, representing an average of 1.8% of the Europe & NW wintering Europe population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)
- Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica lapponica*, 13,935 individuals, representing an average of 11.6% of the W Palearctic population (5 year peak mean 1998/9-2002/3)

SPA Conservation Objectives¹⁷⁰

With regard to the SPA and the individual species and/or assemblage of species for which the site has been classified (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features
- The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely
- The population of each of the qualifying features, and,
- The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.

Threats / Pressure to Site Integrity¹⁷¹

The following threats and pressures to the site integrity of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA and Ramsar have been identified in Natural England's Site Improvement Plan:

- Coastal squeeze
- Air pollution: Risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Invasive species
- Hydrological changes
- Public access / disturbance
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Change to site conditions
- Inappropriate coastal management

¹⁷⁰ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4868920422957056> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

¹⁷¹ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6274126599684096> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

- Shooting / scaring
- Invasive species

Sefton Coast SAC

Introduction

The Sefton Coast SAC is approx. 4,592ha in size and comprises tidal rivers and estuaries (50%), coastal sand dunes and beaches (30%), heath and scrub (10%) and coniferous woodland (10%). The SAC is a large sand dune system, stretching from Southport in the north to Crosby in the south. Both rapid erosion and active shifting dunes are present within the site. In the mobile dunes, marram *Ammophila arenaria* is dominant. Where rates of sand deposition are lower, lyme grass *Leymus arenarius*, sea-holly *Eryngium maritimum* and cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata* occur. The dunes around Formby Point have been eroding since 1906, which has significantly reduced shifting dunes in this area.

There are also extensive dune slacks, where creeping willow *Salix repens* is dominant. 99ha (43%) of the total English dune slack resource dominated by creeping willow is found here. Creeping willow is also prominent in free-draining grassland. Despite nearby urban and recreational development, these successional processes are active and well conserved. A large population of great-crested newts *Triturus cristatus* lives in pools among the fixed dunes. Furthermore, petalwort *Petalophyllum ralfsii* is abundant, especially on footpaths with a light trampling damage.

Much of the SAC has public access, including to the Ainsdale Sand Dunes and Cabin Hill National Nature Reserves, and the Ainsdale and Birkdale Sandhills Local Nature Reserves. Furthermore, there are five golf courses and a military camp within the SAC. This accessibility and the proximity to the Merseyside conurbation means that there is significant recreational usage and a risk of recreational disturbance. Disturbance of wildlife and habitats by dog walkers is a particularly significant issue for the site.

Qualifying Features¹⁷²

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Embryonic shifting dunes
- Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* ("white dunes")
- Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes")
- Dunes with *Salix repens* spp. *argentea* (*Salicion arenariae*)
- Humid dunes slacks

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (*Calluno-Ulicetea*)

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site

- Petalwort *Petalophyllum ralfsii*

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

- Great-crested newt *Triturus cristatus*

Conservation Objectives¹⁷³

With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

¹⁷² <https://sac.incc.gov.uk/site/UK0013076> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

¹⁷³ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6588974160150528> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity

The following threats and pressures to the site integrity of the Sefton Coast SAC have been identified in Natural England's Site Improvement Plan:

- Coastal squeeze
- Air pollution: Risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition
- Inappropriate scrub control
- Invasive species
- Hydrological changes
- Public access / disturbance
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Fisheries: Commercial marine and estuarine
- Change to site conditions
- Inappropriate coastal management
- Shooting / scaring
- Invasive species

River Dee & Bala Lake SAC

Introduction

The source of the River Dee lies in upland Wales (Snowdonia) and includes the tributaries of Ceiriog, Meloch, Tryweryn and Mynach. The SAC's catchment is very broad, including high mountains around Bala, steep woodland valleys and countryside plains. The tidal influence extends up to Farndon with high tides regularly exceeding the Chester weir crest level.

Its aquatic plant community includes Wirtgen's water-crowfoot *Ranunculus x bacchii* and pond water-crowfoot *R. peltatus*. The water crowfoot forms extensive beds along the entire length of the River, where flow conditions are suitable.

The Dee is one of the most important waterbodies in northern Wales for Atlantic salmon, with the Mynach, Meloch and Ceiriog tributaries being the most significant spawning grounds. Other anadromous fish using the River Dee include river lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis* and sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*. Non-migratory fish include bullhead *Cottus gobio* and brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*.

Two SSSIs underpin the SAC divided by national boundaries, which are the Afon Dyfrdwy (River Dee) SSSI and the River Dee SSSI.

Qualifying Features¹⁷⁴

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site

- Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*
- Floating water-plantain *Luronium natans*

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

- Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*
- Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*
- River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*
- Bullhead *Cottus gobio*
- Otter *Lutra lutra*

Conservation Objectives¹⁷⁵

With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹⁷⁶

There is no Site Improvement Plan for the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC. The following issues have been derived from Natural Resources Wales' Core Management Plan:

- Sedimentation
- Water quality
- Fishing: Recreational
- Public access / disturbance
- Bankside habitat management
- Dredging

¹⁷⁴ <https://sac.incc.gov.uk/site/UK0030252> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

¹⁷⁵ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4660149109129216> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

¹⁷⁶ https://naturalresources.wales/media/673374/River_De_Bala_Lake_32_Plan.pdf [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

- Invasive species
- Habitat connectivity

Halkyn Mountain SAC

Introduction

The Halkyn Mountain SAC is approx. 604ha in size and comprises a variety of habitats, such as heath and scrub (42%), dry grassland and steppes (28.1%), improved grassland (21.7%), and mines and industrial sites (2.6%).

Most of the site is located in north-eastern Wales, 4km north-west of Mold in Flintshire. It mostly comprises common land that is situated on an elongated plateau of Lower Carboniferous Limestone. The SAC contains many former mineral workings, such as metalliferous mine spoil tips and limestone quarries. Two small outlying component sites near the town of Holywell support calaminarian grassland over old lead workings.

The Halkyn Mountain SAC supports a mosaic of calcareous grassland, bracken and dry heath with heavy metal tolerant vegetation, which occurs locally. Areas with impede drainage comprise rush pasture, wet heath, marshy grassland and fen communities. The various pools and pits in disused quarries support one of the largest known great-crested newt populations in Wales.

Qualifying Features¹⁷⁷

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Calaminarian grasslands of the *Violetalia calaminariae*

Annex II species present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for site selection:

- European dry heaths
- Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*; important orchid sites)
- *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site

- Great-crested newt *Triturus cristatus*

Conservation Objectives¹⁷⁸

The conservation status of a natural habitat is the sum of the influences acting on it and its typical species that may affect its long-term natural distribution, structure and functions as well as the long term survival of its typical species. The conservation status of a natural habitat will be taken as favourable when:

- Its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing, and
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The conservation status of a species is the sum of the influences acting on the species that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations. The conservation status will be taken as 'favourable' when:

- population dynamics data on the species indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and

¹⁷⁷ <https://sac.incc.gov.uk/site/UK0030163> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

¹⁷⁸ https://naturalresources.wales/media/672548/Halkyn%20SAC%20Plan%20Eng_.pdf [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Threats / Pressure to Site Integrity¹⁷⁹

There is no Site Improvement Plan for the Halkyn Mountain SAC. The following issues have been derived from Natural Resources Wales' Core Management Plan:

- Appropriate grazing management
- Public access / disturbance
- Nutrient enrichment
- Hydrology
- Water quality

Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC

Introduction

The Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC is a composite site on the coastal slopes of Flintshire, overlooking the Dee Estuary. Waterbodies traversing the site support one of the largest breeding populations of great-crested newts in Great Britain, one of the strongholds of this species in Western Europe.

However, newt habitat is under continuing threat due to agricultural intensification, pond senescence and urban expansion. Other amphibian species that are supported within the site are smooth newt *Triturus vulgaris*, palmate newt *T. helveticus*, common frog *Rana temporaria* and common toad *Bufo bufo*.

Qualifying Features¹⁸⁰

Annex I habitats present as a qualifying feature, but not a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*

Conservation Objectives¹⁸¹

The conservation status of a natural habitat is the sum of the influences acting on it and its typical species that may affect its long-term natural distribution, structure and functions as well as the long term survival of its typical species. The conservation status of a natural habitat will be taken as favourable when:

- Its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing, and
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and

¹⁷⁹ https://naturalresources.wales/media/672548/Halkyn%20SAC%20Plan%20Eng_.pdf [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

¹⁸⁰ <https://sac.incc.gov.uk/site/UK0030132> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

¹⁸¹ https://naturalresources.wales/media/671740/Deeside_and_Buckley_WES32_Plan_English.pdf [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable. The conservation status of a species is the sum of the influences acting on the species that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations.

The conservation status will be taken as 'favourable' when:

- population dynamics data on the species indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Threats / Pressures to Site Integrity¹⁸²

There is no Site Improvement Plan for the Deeside and Buckley Newt Sites SAC. The following issues have been derived from Natural Resources Wales' Core Management Plan:

- Water quality
- Woodland and scrub management
- Grassland management
- Invasive species
- Recreational pressure

River Eden SAC

Introduction

The River Eden SAC is a floristically rich river flowing over sandstone and hard limestone. The SAC has a large hydrological catchment, which include headwaters from the Yorkshire Dales, the North Pennines, the eastern fells of the Lake District and Ullswater Lake. The streams contributing to the SAC that derive from limestone are calcareous, while others are more acidic. Overall, the nutrient loading increases towards the mouth of the river.

Owing to its variations in geology and flow, the SAC has a high number of aquatic plant species with over 180 recorded species. The site supports natural riparian habitats of wet woodland and swamp. Regarding animal species, the River Eden is one of the most important locations for Atlantic salmon, bullhead and lamprey in the UK. It also supports an significant population of white-clawed crayfish.

Qualifying Features¹⁸³

Annex I habitats that are a primary reason for selection of this site:

- Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the *Littorelletea uniflorae* and / or the *Isoeto-Nanojuncetea*
- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*)

Annex II species that are a primary reason for selection of this site

- White-clawed (or Atlantic stream) crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*

¹⁸² https://naturalresources.wales/media/671740/Deeside_and_Buckley_WES32_Plan_English.pdf [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

¹⁸³ <https://sac.incc.gov.uk/site/UK0012643> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

- Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*
- Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri*
- River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*
- Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*
- Bullhead *Cottus gobio*
- Otter *Lutra lutra*

Conservation Objectives¹⁸⁴

With regard to the SAC and the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated (the 'Qualifying Features' listed below), and subject to natural change;

Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring;

- The extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying species
- The structure and function (including typical species) of qualifying natural habitats
- The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species
- The supporting processes on which qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species rely
- The populations of qualifying species, and,
- The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Threats / Pressure to Site Integrity¹⁸⁵

The following threats and pressures to the site integrity of the River Eden SAC have been identified in Natural England's Site Improvement Plan:

- Water pollution
- Agricultural management practices
- Physical modification
- Invasive species
- Changes in species distributions
- Forestry and woodland management
- Hydrological changes
- Disease
- Air pollution: Risk of atmospheric nitrogen deposition

¹⁸⁴ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5935614042046464> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

¹⁸⁵ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5920746052255744> [Accessed on the 06/11/2019]

Appendix C ToLSE of Wirral's Preferred Approaches

Appendix 5: This table presents a ToLSE of the Strategic Growth Options and Preferred Approaches underpinning Wirral's Issues and Options Document. Where text has been coloured green in the 'Test of Likely Significant Effect' column, this indicates that the plan's wording does not contain potential impact pathways linking to European sites and therefore has been screened out from further consideration. Where text has been coloured orange in the 'Test of Likely Significant Effect' column, this indicates that the plan's text provides for potential impact pathways linking to European designated sites and has been screened in for Appropriate Assessment.

Chapter / Name	Text	Test of Likely Significant Effect
4.2 Option 1A: Urban Intensification	<p>The option for Urban Intensification plans for all the Borough's development needs to be met within the existing urban areas, by developing urban sites and by increasing densities across all the settlements in Wirral in accordance with our approach to density set out in Section Error! Reference source not found. It also seeks to accelerate delivery, as far as the Council is able, through joint working arrangements with our investment and funding partners.</p> <p>This is the Council's preferred approach, seeking to prioritise developing brownfield land ahead of any Green Belt release, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 137.</p>	<p>Likely Significant Effects on European sites cannot be excluded.</p> <p>This text identifies that Wirral Council primarily intends to deliver growth in the 2020-2035 Plan period within existing urban areas. This would mean that development would be restricted to brownfield sites, while protecting Green Belt land. While this is preferable to the other strategic growth options, Likely Significant Effects cannot be excluded, because this option still provides for development within Wirral.</p>
Option 1B Urban Intensification with Stepped approach	<p>If it can be established that there is enough suitable, available and achievable capacity to meet all of the Borough's future development needs within the existing urban area but that it would not be possible to deliver sufficient homes for the first five years, the Local Plan may be allowed to follow a 'stepped approach'. This would mean the same amount of housing and employment would be delivered in the plan period, but with a lower proportion in the first five years.</p>	<p>Potential impact pathways are present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational pressure (both in SPAs and Ramsars, and functionally linked habitat) • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water resources • Atmospheric pollution

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise and visual disturbance from urbanization (e.g. construction, light pollution) <p>Due to these potential linking impact pathways, the option is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>4.4 Option 2A: Dispersed Green Belt Release</p>	<p>This option proposes the release of a series of small to medium sized areas of land, which when added together would allow sufficient land to be allocated to meet any residual housing needs within the Plan period.</p> <p>This option spreads development across the Borough, thereby spreading the impacts of new development on existing infrastructure and ensuring that single settlements are not impacted disproportionately. The final number of sites required will depend on the scale of the residual need which has not been able to be met within the urban area.</p>	<p>Likely Significant Effects on European sites cannot be excluded.</p> <p>This text identifies that Wirral Council considers the delivery of growth in the form of dispersed Green Belt release. This growth option would release several small- to medium-sized Green Belt parcels to meet any residual housing need in Wirral. As identified in the main body of text, Option 2A is likely to be the growth option with the highest potential for the loss of functionally linked land. In addition, further impact pathways also need to be considered.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways are present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreational pressure (both in SPAs and Ramsars, and functionally linked habitat) Loss of functionally linked habitat Water quality Water resources Atmospheric pollution Noise and visual disturbance from urbanization (e.g. construction, light pollution)

		<p>Due to these potential linking impact pathways, the option is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>4.5 Option 2B: Single Urban Extension</p>	<p>The alternative option to dispersed release is to focus development more strategically into a single larger area around an existing settlement. This option still relies on the weakly performing Green Belt areas but groups these together to identify a larger area for urban expansion. The most suitable location would be on land west of Barnston Road, Heswall.</p>	<p>Likely Significant Effects on European sites cannot be excluded.</p> <p>This option identifies that the Council could focus development strategically into a large area of Green Belt land surrounding an existing settlement. While this could still result in the loss of functionally linked land, the main body of text identifies that a single urban extension site would potentially facilitate the provision of on-site mitigation measures (compared to the release of a network of smaller Green Belt sites under Option 2A). Similar to the other strategic growth options there is a potential for LSEs from other impact pathways.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways are present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational pressure (both in SPAs and Ramsars, and functionally linked habitat) • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Water resources • Atmospheric pollution • Noise and visual disturbance from urbanization (e.g. construction, light pollution) <p>Due to these potential linking impact pathways, the option is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.</p>

<p>2.4 Settlement Hierarchy – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Our preferred option is to use the settlement hierarchy set out in Error! Reference source not found., to form the overarching basis of future planning policy. This will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage increased development and public and private sector investment within the ‘Urban Conurbation’ as the first priority of the Local Plan before the provision of supporting development; and, meet locally identified needs, within the remaining surrounding urban settlements, large and small villages and then the single hamlet. <p>This focused priority will cover all development types including retailing and the provision of public services and will guide the Local Plan’s approach to site selection and the prioritisation of investment.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text identifies the settlement hierarchy within Wirral, including urban conurbations (e.g. Birkenhead, Bebington), urban settlements, large villages, small villages and hamlets. Importantly, this approach identifies urban conurbations as the main focus of further development, which reduces the potential for loss of functionally linked habitat (see Appropriate Assessment section).</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>2.9 Delivering Growth Through Regeneration – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework (BRF) will provide the overall strategy for the regeneration of the Birkenhead Area and set the spatial and infrastructure context for the delivery of strategic development and investment at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wirral Waters; Hind Street; and Birkenhead Town Centre, including the Central Business District; and Woodside <p>Through the BRF and other detailed work relating to strategic sites the Council will seek to maximise the development capacity and where feasible the accelerated delivery of strategic sites to be set out in the draft final Local Plan as explained in Appendix 2.1.</p> <p>The BRF will explore the concepts of a ‘Left Bank- Regeneration Zone’ and a ‘Birkenhead Urban Garden City’ and set out the Council’s overall Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead.</p> <p>Masterplans will be prepared for New Brighton and Liscard which will inform the Council’s wider Regeneration Strategy for the Borough to be included in the draft final Local Plan.</p>	<p>Likely Significant Effects on European sites cannot be excluded.</p> <p>This text identifies that growth in the 2020-2035 Plan period will be delivered through regeneration, most notably in the Wirral Waters development and Birkenhead Town Centre. While it does not propose for a quantum of development, the preferred approach clearly identifies that the development capacity in these strategic sites will be maximized.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways are present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recreational pressure (both in SPAs and Ramsars, and functionally linked habitat Loss of functionally linked habitat

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	<p>The Council will work with our strategic partners: the Government, Homes England and the Combined Authority to make available sufficient resources to deliver a comprehensive regeneration strategy for Birkenhead to facilitate the delivery of strategic sites and realise the potential of Broad Locations for Growth.</p> <p>The Council will work with our strategic partners to establish an appropriate Regeneration delivery model for the scale of regeneration required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality • Water resources • Atmospheric pollution • Noise and visual disturbance from urbanization (e.g. construction, light pollution) <p>Due to these potential linking impact pathways, the text is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>5.2 Our Homes - Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Our preferred approach will be to seek to deliver an appropriate mix of dwelling size and type across the Borough through a Local Plan policy and/or specific site allocations for new housing based on the following dwelling mix:</p> <p>1-bedroom (8%) 2-bedroom (32%) 3-bedroom (41%) four or more-bedroom 19%</p> <p>60% houses 22% flats 18% bungalows (or level-access accommodation)</p> <p>The implementation of any policy for dwelling type and mix will need to be assessed and agreed on a case by case basis, based on location, site characteristics and development viability and applicants particularly on larger, more viable sites will need to show why they cannot meet these proportions, if they propose to vary from them.</p> <p>The policy will be subject to high-level viability appraisal before being included in the final draft Local Plan and will be secured through site allocations and through conditions and obligations attached to planning permissions.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text details the dwelling type and mix to be delivered across the Borough, such as the relative proportion of 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom flats / houses. However, it does not provide an actual quantum of housing.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>

<p>5.3 Affordable Housing Need – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Our preferred approach will be to seek to achieve up to 30% affordable housing¹⁸⁶ on all schemes of 10 or more dwellings¹⁸⁷, with the following dwelling mix, on a 60% rented and 40% intermediate basis, unless a high-level viability assessment shows that this would not be viable within a certain type of location or development¹⁸⁸:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17% of new affordable dwellings should have one-bedroom; • 47% of new affordable dwellings should have two-bedrooms; • 30% of new affordable dwellings should have three-bedrooms; and • 6% of new affordable dwellings should have four or more-bedrooms. <p>Our preferred approach will be to accommodate this requirement as part of the scheme to be developed on each site but in some cases a commuted sum, equivalent to the cost of providing the same affordable requirement off-site, may be appropriate, secured through a legal agreement attached to the planning permission for the development proposed.</p> <p>The policy will be subject to high-level viability appraisal before being included in the draft final Local Plan and will be secured through site allocations and through conditions and obligations attached to planning permissions.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text sets the targets for affordable housing and the specifications to which this will be delivered (i.e. how many bedrooms such development will have). However, the text does not provide an actual quantum of housing.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>5.4 The needs of other groups – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Based on the evidence of need set out in the Draft Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2019, our Preferred Approach is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To continue to encourage the provision of specialist housing for older people on appropriate sites with easy access to local services; and • To include a policy in the Local Plan to require that all schemes of 10 or more dwellings make suitable provision for M4(3) wheelchair user and M4(2) accessible and adaptable dwellings. 	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text considers the needs of other resident groups, such as older people and wheelchair users. The text does not provide for any housing or employment developments that are associated with impact pathways.</p>

¹⁸⁶ NPPF paragraph 64 states that where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect at least 10% of the homes to be available for affordable home ownership as part of the overall affordable housing contribution from the site unless this would significantly prejudice the ability to meet the identified affordable housing needs of specific groups.

¹⁸⁷ NPPF paragraph 63 states that provision of affordable housing should not be sought for residential developments that are not major developments, other than in designated rural areas and that to support the re-use of brownfield land, where vacant buildings are being reused or redeveloped, any affordable housing contribution should be reduced by a proportionate amount equivalent to the existing gross floorspace of the existing buildings.

¹⁸⁸ NPPF paragraph 57 states that it will be up to the applicant to demonstrate whether particular circumstances justify the need for a viability assessment at the application stage

	<p>The policy will be subject to high-level viability appraisal before being included in the draft Final Local Plan and will be secured through site allocations and through conditions and obligations attached to planning permissions.</p>	<p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>5.5 Empty Properties - Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Our preferred approach is to include an allowance for the return of long term empty homes as part of the future housing land supply, which will allow for the tapered delivery set out under Option 2 above, equivalent to 1,350 additional homes over the Plan period.</p> <p>Our preferred approach will also include a positive policy framework by including a Local Plan policy which will say:</p> <p>“The Council will support proposals for bringing suitable empty homes and buildings back into residential use. Where changes require planning permission, the Council will work proactively with applicants to progress applications, to ensure that any changes proposed meet the requirements of any other relevant Local Plan policies.”</p>	<p>Likely Significant Effects on European sites cannot be excluded.</p> <p>This text identifies that empty homes will deliver part of the residential growth in Wirral during the Plan period of 2020-2035, equivalent to 1,350 homes. While this is partly positive – for example brownfield sites rarely constitute functionally linked habitat – this text still provides for a population growth in Wirral.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways are present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational pressure • Water quality • Atmospheric pollution • Noise and visual disturbance from urbanization (e.g. construction, light pollution) <p>Due to these potential linking impact pathways, the text is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>5.6 Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show People - Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Based on the findings of the Wirral Local Plan Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2019, our preferred approach is to include a criteria-based policy in the Local Plan similar to the policy already consulted upon as part of the preparation of the previous Core Strategy Local Plan, which was published in December 2012 and modified in December 2014¹⁸⁹.</p>	<p>Likely Significant Effects on European sites cannot be excluded.</p> <p>This text highlights that the needs of gypsies, travelers and travelling show people will be considered in the Plan period of 2020-2035. Depending on where such plots will be</p>

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¹⁸⁹ Policy CS24 – Gypsies and Travellers, which can be viewed at <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-plans/core-strategy-local-plan/further> refers

	<p>The needs of households who no longer meet the planning definition will be addressed as part of general housing need and through separate Local Plan Policies for housing.</p>	<p>delivered, there is a potential for negative effects on European sites.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways are present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational pressure • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Atmospheric pollution • Noise and visual disturbance from urbanization (e.g. construction, light pollution) <p>Due to these potential linking impact pathways, the text is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>5.8 Houses in Multiple Occupation - Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The Council wants to support the provision of housing in multiple occupation in well-designed premises that can achieve safe and healthy living conditions with a high standard of amenity for future occupiers where unacceptable impacts on the neighbour's amenity and the character of the area would be avoided.</p> <p>Our approach is to include a criteria-based policy in the Local Plan as set out in Appendix 5.1. The policy sets out minimum room sizes and the basic amenities that should be provided.</p> <p>It also includes similar criteria to Policy HS14 in the current Unitary Development Plan, to protect the character and amenity of the area.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text supports the provision of housing in multiple occupation in well designed premises. The text does not provide for any housing or employment developments that are associated with impact pathways.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>6.2 Provisions for Future Employment Growth – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The council will seek to allocate a minimum of 80ha of employment land with employment growth and economic revitalisation focusing on the key employment areas at Birkenhead, Bromborough and Port Wirral. Development will be supported in these locations whereby:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The employment space caters for small and medium sized enterprises for B1 and B2 uses; or 	<p>Likely Significant Effects on European sites cannot be excluded.</p> <p>The Preferred Approach provides for 80ha of employment land in strategic areas, including Birkenhead, Bromborough and Port Wirral during the Plan period of 2020-2035.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant B1 office development is directed towards existing centres and then to existing employment areas and other locations with easy access to high-frequency public transport corridors. <p>The proposed release of some employment sites in the Bromborough area for residential development will be balanced out by the inclusion of sites in Wirral Waters as part of the employment land supply for allocation in the Local Plan.</p> <p>Alternative Approach</p> <p>The council will allocate 80ha of employment land within defined employment zones in urban and Green Belt sustainable locations across the borough, with a focus on locations around transport hubs and primary road networks, to maximise accessibility, to support local economic need and expansion of existing businesses.</p>	<p>The Alternative Approach allocates the 80ha of employment land in sustainable locations in urban areas and within the Green Belt. Both of the approaches would be associated with impact pathways.</p> <p>Potential impact pathways are present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of functionally linked habitat • Water quality • Atmospheric pollution • Noise and visual disturbance from urbanization (e.g. construction, light pollution) <p>Due to these potential linking impact pathways, the text is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>6.2.1 Protection of Existing Employment Areas - Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The council will seek to protect all sites currently in use, or allocated, for employment and resist development change of use to ensure continuation of employment uses for those sites. The council will specifically seek to protect employment land on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • land used, or allocated, in strategic employment areas; • land where there is market demand for employment uses; and • land allocated for employment in rural areas which meets local needs. <p>The council will only consider reallocating employment sites for other uses where it is demonstrated that there is no reasonable prospect of the site being utilised for employment uses and it is demonstrated that demand for employment land can be met in more sustainable locations.</p> <p>Alternative Approach</p> <p>The council will not take forward a policy to protect existing employment land and will let the market determine future use, taking account of tests for sustainable development.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text protects the existing employment land (both currently in use and allocated) in Wirral. This is a positive approach as existing employment land is already developed and its protection means that fewer greenfield sites will need to be developed.</p> <p>Existing employment land already contributes to impact pathways (e.g. water quality, atmospheric pollution) and would have already been assessed in a previous HRA.</p>

		<p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>6.3 Town Centres and Retail – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Our preferred approach is to focus on promoting the vitality and viability of the hierarchy of centres within newly defined town centre boundaries that will best meet the limited need for retail development, and to carefully consider the potential role of East Float in the future. Primary shopping areas will be defined in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirements. We will identify local thresholds for impact assessment where necessary.</p> <p>We propose developing policy to best accommodate and encourage flexible uses in addition to retail that will complement their roles as town centres to maximise their vitality and viability. This will include residential development as well as the NPPF defined town centre uses.</p> <p>Allocate a suitable range of sites within the defined town centre boundaries to meet defined need over the first ten years of the plan.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>The Preferred Approach is to focus on the vitality and viability of the hierarchy of centres within newly defined town centre boundaries. The text further identifies that primary shopping areas will be defined in accordance with the NPPF. However, the text does not in itself provide for a quantum of residential or employment development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>6.4 Tourism – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>A growth in sustainable tourism will be focused on the quality of the Borough's natural environment; built heritage; country parks; and coastline, with appropriate visitor facilities at Birkenhead, New Brighton, Leasowe, Hoylake, West Kirby, Thurstaston and along the Mersey coast, managed to avoid harm to European Sites and their supporting habitat.</p> <p>Tourism investment will be targeted to support regeneration in Birkenhead; provide improvements within the coastal resorts of New Brighton, Hoylake and West Kirby and along the Mersey coastline (supported by the preparation of masterplans where appropriate); and to improve public access to the coast and countryside subject to the protection of European Sites and their supporting habitats.</p>	<p>Likely Significant Effects on European sites cannot be excluded.</p> <p>This text provides for a sustainable growth in tourism opportunities in Wirral's natural environment, including areas such as Hoylake, West Kirby, Thurstaston and the Mersey coast. The text also acknowledges the need for protecting the European sites and their supporting habitats. Nevertheless, there would be the potential for LSEs on European sites.</p> <p>The potential impact pathways for an increase in tourism are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational pressure • Loss of functionally linked habitat

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality • Atmospheric pollution • Noise and visual disturbance from urbanization (e.g. construction, light pollution) <p>Due to these potential linking impact pathways, the text is screened in for Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>7.1 Infrastructure Planning – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The Council will produce an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) to provide the evidence that the Local Plan is deliverable in infrastructure terms. It will identify the costs of necessary infrastructure to support development and how these costs can be met including recommendations on the contribution through planning obligations or a Community Infrastructure Levy towards critical, essential or desirable infrastructure that can be borne by developers through viability assessment.</p> <p>The Council proposes to develop the Infrastructure Delivery Plan in two stages:</p> <p>Stage 1: The production of an IDP Evidence Base Report for the Borough documenting the physical, social and environmental infrastructure and a schedule of planned infrastructure that may be needed for the proposed options over the next Local Plan period; and</p> <p>Stage 2: Identification of the infrastructure requirements, costs and funding opportunities for Local Plan site allocations and planned development (once known).</p> <p>Further stakeholder engagement including liaison with site promoters will be undertaken to assess potential site allocation infrastructure requirement, and studies to assess cumulative impact will be undertaken to produce the final IDP and IDP Schedule.</p> <p>The IDP Schedule will include the type and location of new infrastructure needed, provider, phasing, cost, funding source any funding gap. The final IDP will provide evidence to enable the Council to identify priority areas for infrastructure provision and protect sites which could be critical in developing infrastructure within the Local Plan.</p> <p>The Council will need to decide on whether funding will need to be secured through a fixed charge by way of a Community Infrastructure Levy and/or through planning obligations via individual planning applications.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>The text stipulates that Wirral Council will produce an Infrastructure Delivery Plan to provide evidence that the Local Plan is deliverable. This will include the physical, social and environmental infrastructure and identify any improvements that are needed to deliver the Local Plan. An IDP is positive because this would also help ensure that there are no adverse effects on European sites. For example, an IDP would assess Wirral’s wastewater treatment infrastructure, establishing its headroom to cater for new development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways associated with this text and, specifically, the text does not provide for a quantum of residential or employment development.</p> <p>Overall, there are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>

<p>7.2 Transport – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The Council is committed to using the Local Plan to support our transition to a lower carbon economy, and to supporting the Council’s Climate Change Action Plan.</p> <p>As a result, our preferred approach will be to propose new development in locations which are well supported by existing public transport provision, or where new public and active travel links can be provided to ensure that those developments can be provided with genuine modal choice which reduces reliance on the car.</p> <p>We will support and where appropriate ensure that existing public transport networks within Wirral are improved. This will ensure that existing urban areas around Wirral are provided with the most attractive possible non-car transport options. We will also support and plan for improvements to the Borough’s highway networks, both to alleviate existing congestion challenges and support new growth. These will particularly be prioritised where evidence shows that these schemes will reduce pollution and/or improve air quality in the vicinity of those locations. Electric vehicle charging infrastructure will also be expected to be provided as part of new development.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>The text stipulates that Wirral Council supports a low-carbon economy. It identifies that new development will be prioritized in locations with good public transport links to reduce the reliance on cars. Furthermore, the Council will work to improve the public transport network in Wirral. It is considered that a reduction in the number of car journeys would be positive for the estuarine sites that are sensitive to atmospheric pollution.</p> <p>Importantly, this text does not provide for a quantum of residential or employment development.</p> <p>Overall, there are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>7.3 Utilities – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Through the Local Plan the Council will promote opportunities for reduced reliance on fossil fuels, improved water efficiency and sustainable drainage within new development to support the Council’s Climate Change Action Plan. The Council will work with partners to implement the recommendations of borough wide and Wirral Waters and Birkenhead Sustainable Energy Studies.</p> <p>Early and continued detailed discussions with utility service providers will be undertaken to identify improvements to utilities infrastructure to support sustainable growth and ensure network resilience on a site by site and cumulative basis.</p> <p>We will monitor changes to government policy and regulation changes impacting the level of energy use and advancements in technology.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text summarises Wirral’s approach to utilities, detailing a reduced reliance on fossil fuels, improving water efficiency and introducing sustainable drainage systems. It also states that utility service providers will be consulted to identify any required improvements to infrastructure, such as WwTWs. This is positive text as it will ensure that European sites are not adversely affected.</p>

		<p>Importantly, the text also does not provide for a quantum of residential or employment development.</p> <p>Overall, there are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>7.4 Communications Infrastructure – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The Council considers that high quality digital infrastructure is essential infrastructure vital to the delivery of sustainable development.</p> <p>The Local Plan will seek to support the provision of high-quality digital infrastructure from a range of providers as part of new development and support the expansion of electronic communications networks.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text identifies that the Local Plan will deliver high-quality digital infrastructure, which does not have any impact pathways on European sites. The text does not provide for a quantum of residential or employment development.</p> <p>Overall, there are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>7.5 Social Infrastructure – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Social infrastructure planning will be embedded into the Local Plan site selection and master planning process through early and continued engagement across council departments and service providers. New and / or improved social infrastructure will be required to support new housing development which will be addressed through detail Development Management policies (Appendix 9.1).</p> <p>The Council will identify the likely school yield for all education phases (0-19) and Special Educational Needs from development based on past trends. An assessment of the capacity within school planning area catchment to accommodate likely pupil requirement will be undertaken and the opportunity for potential school expansion or new school provision reviewed as required. Following DfE Guidance on securing contributions for education. Our approach to developer contributions will be set out within the Local Plan and requirements per site allocation will be identified within the final IDP.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text states that social infrastructure planning, including the provision of schools and sports facilities, will be included in the Local Plan. This is positive because the provision of leisure facilities helps draw people away from sensitive European sites. It is a key complimentary mitigation approach to protect sites from adverse effects.</p>

	<p>The Council will continue to work with NHS Wirral and engage Primary Care Networks to identify any increased pressure on existing services and the opportunity for potential expansion or new provision as appropriate.</p> <p>The Council will implement the recommendations of the Indoor Sports Facilities Needs Assessment and work with Wirral Growth Company to identify opportunities for new leisure centre facilities if existing sites are affected by proposals.</p>	<p>Furthermore, the text does not provide for a quantum of residential or employment development.</p> <p>Overall, there are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>8.1 Climate Change – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The Council is committed to using the Local Plan to meet local climate goals and objectives where this is appropriate and, feasible.</p> <p>To inform the Local Plan the Council will complete a Climate Change and Renewable energy study in 2020. This is to advise how the Local Plan should best meet its statutory requirements and to provide guidance on how to implement appropriate elements of the Borough’s Climate strategy through the Local Plan. This will include the development of a positive strategy to promote the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and which would incorporate requirements on housing, employment, retail, leisure and tourism development to meet higher standards of energy efficiency.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>The Preferred Approach stipulates that the Council is committed to meeting climate goals. To this end a Climate Change and Renewable energy study will be undertaken in 2020. The Council will also promote the delivery of renewable and low-carbon energy. Furthermore, the text does not provide for a quantum of residential or employment development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>8.2 Green and Blue Infrastructure – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Green and Blue Infrastructure Standards</p> <p>The Local Plan will set Borough-wide standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of parks and gardens; natural and semi-natural greenspace; outdoor sports provision; amenity greenspace; provision for children and young people; and allotments.</p> <p>The Borough-wide standards will be used to protect and enhance existing provision and facilities and will identify priorities for new provision and improvements. Contributions for new or improved provision resulting from the demands of new development will be sought through developer contributions or through a Community Infrastructure Levy.</p> <p>New Development</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text provides for a comprehensive Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Wirral. It stipulates that the Local Plan will set standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of public greenspaces.</p> <p>Most importantly, it states that new developments will need to contribute towards</p>

Where appropriate, new development will be required to contribute towards the provision, protection and enhancement of green and blue infrastructure, whether on site or through developer contributions. Developers should secure multi-functional benefits to the Borough's identified green and blue network including:

- providing enough good quality, accessible public open space;
- mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change;
- maintaining and enhancing landscape features;
- sustainable management of surface water and drainage issues
- enhancing ecological networks;
- preserving and enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity assets;
- protecting and enhancing identified green and blue networks; and
- supporting health and wellbeing and enable sustainable patterns of development.

All development proposals and land allocations will be assessed against their contribution to:

- the standards to be set out in the Green and Blue Infrastructure Study 2020
- the priorities for the particular settlement(s) concerned;
- the delivery of the Council's overall Strategy for Green Infrastructure;
- the delivery of any other related initiatives and strategies; and
- the avoidance and mitigation of an adverse impact on internationally important wildlife.
- Tree Planting Strategy

In support of the emerging climate strategy the Council is also developing a Tree Strategy as a natural way to store carbon.

The vision for the Tree Strategy is '*In the ten-year span of this strategy we will raise woodland cover in the Borough to at least 10% to boost the benefits of trees and woodlands. We will*

both green and blue infrastructure, either on-site or through developer contributions. Such infrastructure includes publicly accessible open space, ecological networks and biodiversity. Development will be required to avoid and mitigate adverse impacts on internationally important wildlife, a key mechanism to protect Wirral's European sites. The text does not specify a location or quantum of residential and employment development.

There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

	<p><i>seek to share these benefits across Wirral. Our planting will be based on "the right tree for the right place" building a strong legacy for our tree stock. For every tree Wirral Council are forced to fell we will net plant at least two more. We will work constructively with individuals and groups to deliver this vision'.</i></p> <p>The Local Plan is seen as a key mechanism to implement this Strategy.</p>	
<p>8.3 Open space, sport and recreation – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The Council has reviewed the open spaces to be protected from development in line with national policy in paragraphs 96 and 97 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposed boundaries to each of these sites, which are also listed in Appendix 8.1, can be viewed on the Council's website¹⁹⁰. The sites are based on the existing designations in the previous Unitary Development Plan and on the findings of the most recent Open Space Assessment and Playing Pitch Strategy.</p> <p>The Wirral Local Plan will include revised standards for the provision of open space in line with the recommendations to be contained within the Wirral Open Space Assessment 2019, which new development will also be required to comply with.</p> <p>Policies to support the continued provision of other sports facilities will also be included in the Local Plan, in line with the findings of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy 2016 and the Indoor and Built Facilities Assessment and Strategy 2019.</p> <p>The Wirral Local Plan will include revised standards for the provision of open space in line with the recommendations to be contained within the Wirral Open Space Assessment 2019, which new development will also be required to comply with.</p> <p>Policies to support the continued provision of other sports facilities will also be included in the Local Plan, in line with the findings of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Strategy 2016 and the Indoor and Built Facilities Assessment and Strategy 2019.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text sets the standard for the provision of open spaces within Wirral. Furthermore, it states that the provision of further sports facilities will be ensured through specific Local Plan policies. This is therefore considered to be positive text, because the provision of recreational infrastructure will aid in reducing recreational pressure in European sites.</p> <p>The text does not specify a location or quantum of residential and employment development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>8.4 Local Green Space – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The Council will consider designating sites nominated by local communities which meet the requirements for designation as set out in national policy and guidance</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text stipulates that the Council will consider designating sites nominated by local communities as local green spaces.</p>

¹⁹⁰ <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/local-planning-evidence-and-research-reports-3>

		<p>The text does not specify a location or quantum of residential and employment development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>8.5 Landscape – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Landscape is a fundamental part of the visual and cultural character of Wirral and its biodiversity. It is important that the Local Plan contains policies which protect and enhance Wirral’s most valuable landscapes.</p> <p>Additional Landscape Assessments</p> <p>To inform the Local Plan and complete the site selection process, additional landscape sensitivity assessments will be required for any additional areas identified through public consultation or in the Wirral Green Belt Review 2019 before the final draft Local Plan is prepared.</p> <p>A review of the Areas of Special Landscape Value (ASLV) within Wirral is also required following the introduction of the phrase ‘valued landscapes’ in paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework. This review will set out the justification for any continued or revised ASLV designations in terms of special character and qualities and where necessary, provide amendments to boundaries and / or allocate new areas, in order to provide evidence to underpin a robust set of up-to-date ASLVs.</p> <p>New Development</p> <p>The LSA provides general guidance for any potential development within each of the landscape areas assessed.</p> <p>Any new development would therefore need to take this guidance into consideration. Examples of this guidance include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserving and managing hedgerows as important wildlife habitats and landscape features. • Conserving, enhancing and managing any other valued habitats that have formed within the area. 	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text protects Wirral’s landscape and biodiversity. It states that any new development would have to conserve / manage hedgerows as important wildlife habitats, enhance network connectivity and protect public rights of way.</p> <p>The text does not specify a location or quantum of residential and employment development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserving and reinforcing the network of native hedgerows and seeking to create a stronger landscape structure to integrate development by increasing the presence of hedgerow trees and providing additional native woodland planting. • Avoiding visually intrusive development on more elevated areas. • Protecting and enhancing public rights of way and promoting further opportunities to increase access and enjoyment of the landscape in association with any new development. <p>It is intended that appropriate policies will be included in the Local Plan, to ensure that the findings of the Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Assessment are taken into account in land allocations and development management decisions.</p>	
<p>8.6 Flood Risk and Coastal Change – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The Local Plan will support climate change adaptation through the management of residual risk by guiding the appropriate location, layout and design of development to take account of flood risk and coastal change and by requiring the use of effective Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other flood risk management practices to reduce the impacts of flooding, such as safeguarding land and Natural Flood Management (NFM), as outlined in the Level1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2019, without having an adverse impact on water quality.</p> <p>The Local Plan will also provide policies to support the sustainable management of surface water and the maintenance of effective flood defences, land drainage infrastructure and river corridors, and to support improvements to water quality.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text provides for flood risk management and adaptation to climate change. It stipulates that Sustainable Drainage Systems will be employed and surface water courses will be managed sustainably. Furthermore, the Local Plan will contain policies to protect river corridors and water quality.</p> <p>The text does not specify a location or quantum of residential and employment development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>8.7 Habitats and Biodiversity – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The Council will seek to protect and enhance the natural environmental assets of the Borough, including the designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites; priority habitats and species; ancient woodland; and ancient and veteran trees found outside ancient woodland; and wherever possible provide net gains in biodiversity and establish coherent ecological networks.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text provides for the explicit protection of European sites in the Liverpool City Region</p>

	<p>Internationally Important sites: Our Preferred Approach</p> <p>The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Combined Authority is proposing to prepare a sub-regional Recreation Mitigation Strategy (RMS) which will seek to address the implications of growth across the Liverpool City Region for the City Region’s wildlife sites of international importance. It will enable sustainable housing and tourism development within the City Region, whilst securing sustainable, long term protection of the internationally important wildlife sites.</p> <p>A policy setting out the Council’s approach to recreation mitigation will be included in the Local Plan. The policy will need to include a recreation mitigation and avoidance mechanism for Wirral in advance of the LCR-wide study being completed, approved and implemented. The policy is likely to require that mitigation will be required for recreational disturbance from new residential development within 5km of the coast, through the funding of a strategy which will involve a mix of access management, habitat management and provision of alternative recreational space, to be secured through a legal agreement before planning permission is granted.</p> <p>In the meantime, Wirral Council will continue to work in collaboration with the LCR Combined Authority to contribute to the delivery of a RMS to address potential damage from increased recreation and visitor pressure on the species and habitats of the designated sites within the Borough on a City Region wide basis.</p> <p>An updated Habitat Regulations Assessment for the Local Plan is currently being undertaken which will examine whether the forthcoming policy framework will be sufficient to enable the avoidance or mitigation of adverse effects on European designated sites.</p>	<p>from the adverse effects of recreational pressure. The text makes reference to the emerging Recreation Mitigation Strategy, intending to address the in-combination effects of recreational pressure. This mitigation will likely include a combination of access management, habitat management and provision of alternative greenspaces. Importantly, the Preferred Approach also refers to the present Habitat Regulations Assessment, which will ensure that the Local Plan has no adverse effects on Wirral’s European sites.</p> <p>The text does not specify a location or quantum of residential and employment development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>8.8 Healthy Communities – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>Improving health will be a cross cutting theme in the final draft local plan and will be addressed in environment, design and infrastructure policies. In addition, a specific policy “Improving Health and addressing health inequalities” will be included in the Plan. This would provide details of when a Health Impact Assessment may be required to be submitted in support of certain types of development.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text outlines that a specific policy on improving health and addressing health inequalities will be included in the plan. .</p> <p>The text does not specify a location or quantum of residential and employment development.</p>

		<p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>8.9 Heritage – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>The Local Plan will set a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the Borough’s heritage assets through the vision, objectives, broad spatial strategy, strategic priorities for settlement areas and policies for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieving Sustainable Places; • Protection of Heritage Assets; • Each designated Conservation Area 	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>This text aims at the protection of the Borough’s heritage through a broad spatial strategy.</p> <p>The text does not specify a location or quantum of residential and employment development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>
<p>8.10 Minerals – Our Preferred Approach</p>	<p>It is recommended that the following topics be covered by individual policies in the emerging Local Plan;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General criteria for minerals development • Maintaining the supply of aggregates; • Safeguarding Mineral Reserves & Infrastructure; • Use of Secondary and Recycled Aggregates; • Oil and Gas Exploration; and • Site restoration <p>Proposed draft policies are set out within the Wirral Local Plan Minerals Report 2019, for public consultation.</p>	<p>There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.</p> <p>The text identifies that the Local Plan will contain specific policies relating to the extraction, supply and safeguarding of minerals resources during the Plan period.</p> <p>The text does not specify a location or quantum of residential and employment development.</p> <p>There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.</p>

8.11 Waste Management –
Our Preferred Approach

Waste policy objectives for Wirral will mainly be delivered through the policies in the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton, which will continue to remain in force and will not be superseded by the policies in the Wirral Local Plan and through any associated supporting policies for development management set out in the Wirral Local Plan.

Additional guidance on the space that will be necessary to allow safe access for the on-site storage, collection and emptying of containers and on the control of litter will be included in relevant Supplementary Planning Documents.

The Joint Waste Local Plan expires in 2027, mid-way through the Wirral Local Plan period. It is proposed that following completion of the 5th AMR 2018/19, a high-level 5-year review of the Waste Local Plan is undertaken. The review should identify areas which are sufficiently ineffective or out of date to trigger full review.

There are no LSEs of this text on European sites.

This text stipulates that waste management will be primarily through the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton, which is set to expire in 2027. Any additional guidance on waste management will be stipulated in Supplementary Planning Documents.

The text does not specify a location or quantum of residential and employment development.

There are no impact pathways present and this text can thus be screened out from Appropriate Assessment.

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Council Meeting

13th January 2020

REPORT TITLE:	MEMBERSHIP OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND ASSURANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The ongoing review of the Council's governance arrangements will result in the introduction of a different set of roles and responsibilities for Members. At the meeting on the 26th September 2019, the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee agreed that in order to maintain a robust Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) review process and to sustain a public perception of independence it was necessary that the membership of the IRP be refreshed. Consequently, the Committee resolved that the Head of Democratic and Member Services be authorised:

- (a) to advertise for candidates from the general public and a wide range of organisations, including the local business community and voluntary organisations, for up to five members of the IRP to serve for a period of four years and conduct the next review of Members' Allowances; and
- (b) to interview and recommend for selection (in consultation with political Group Leaders) up to five nominees for appointment to the IRP.

It was further agreed that the appointment to the IRP be subject to approval of the Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Council is requested to appoint the following 6 persons to the Independent Remuneration Panel for a period of 4 years:-

Peter Bounds (Chair)
Helen Brennan
Jenny Chapman-Brown
Tony Green
Steve Griffiths
Keryn Malthouse

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 If the Council wishes to make or amend a Scheme of Members' Allowances for Councillors it must appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to conduct such a review. Whilst the membership of the IRP was confirmed at the Annual Council Meeting in May 2019 and that Panel was beginning its review of Members' Allowances under the Council's current governance arrangements, the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee determined that in order to maintain a robust IRP review process and to sustain a public perception of independence it was necessary that the membership of the IRP be refreshed in advance of implementation of any new or revised governance arrangements, and that the new IRP be tasked with formulating a new Scheme of Members' Allowances.
- 1.2 Guidance identifies the need to ensure that Councillors' allowances both encourages people to come forward as elected members and helps to retain such service to the community. Achieving a Panel that is independent, well qualified, and representative of the diversity of communities in the Borough is essential to this aim. The recruitment process was critical to a successful refresh: the approach adopted utilised advertising and inviting organisations to put forward candidates.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 An advert was placed on the Council Website in early November 2019 and the Recruitment Team shared it with partners across the borough as well as utilising Social Media. The Panel must consist of at least 3 members, none of whom can be a member of the authority or who would otherwise be disqualified from becoming a member of the authority.
- 2.2 The Head of Democratic and Member Services and the Head of Legal Services met with each candidate in early December and consulted with all group leaders providing them with an opportunity to comment on the suggested appointments.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee agreed that the Chair receives an honorarium set at £500 per annum.

4.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council must appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel to review its Scheme of Members' Allowances in accordance with the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

4.2 Whilst the IRP is required to make a recommendation, the IRP has always consulted all Political Group Leaders during each periodic review of Members' Allowances and then produced a written report for the Council to consider. It is the Council that decides whether or not to increase Members' allowances, not the IRP.

4.3 The Guidance referred to is that issued by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2003, which this Council has followed, and states as follows:

'5.1 A local authority should give very serious consideration not only to ensuring the independence of its independent remuneration panel but also the public perception of this independence. To maintain the credibility of its panel a local authority will need to consider the extent to which some, if not all, of its panel members are recognisable members of the local community. Political appointments, and appointments which are made through friendship or any other personal association of any members of the council should always be avoided.

5.2 Local authorities should consider very carefully the extent of any candidate's connections to a political party and whether these are such as to risk the effective discharge of the panel's functions were the candidate to be appointed.

5.3 In appointing its panel, a local authority should consider candidates' knowledge of local government and the way it works although lack of familiarity with the functions of councils should not be a bar to appointment.'

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

None.

8.0 RELEVANT RISKS

If the IRP is not appointed at the January Council Meeting there is a risk that the IRP will have insufficient time to formulate and recommend a new Members' Allowances Scheme to the Council in readiness for the start of the new Municipal Year.

9.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

Group Leaders were consulted.

10.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

None.

11.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

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APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003
Minutes of the Constitutional Oversight Committee – 26 September 2016

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee	26 Sept 2019
Council	14 May 2019