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1 Introduction

1.1 This document forms the next stage in the preparation of a Core Strategy Development Plan Document for the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral to 2031. It is published for the purpose of public consultation.

What is a Core Strategy?

1.2 The Core Strategy is a long term planning document that will set the framework for future development and investment in Wirral over the next 20 years.

1.3 Once adopted, the Core Strategy will form part of the Local Development Framework for the Borough. The Local Development Framework and the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West will form the statutory Development Plan for the Borough. The statutory Development Plan for the Borough is used as the basis for determining individual planning applications and for other decisions taken under the Planning Acts.

How is it Prepared?

1.4 A Core Strategy must be prepared in accordance with national procedures.

1.5 The Council began preparing a Core Strategy for Wirral in July 2005. Initial consultation began in March 2005 to identify the Borough's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and local needs. The findings were then prioritised by a series of public workshops held in November 2006. Additional consultation with under-represented groups took place during summer 2007. Consultation on the issues, vision and objectives to be included in the Core Strategy took place in February 2009 following an extensive series of evidence gathering in 2008 and 2009. Reports of consultation are available for public inspection and the results have been used to inform the content of this document.

1.6 The emerging Core Strategy will be assessed, at each stage, against a series of local social, economic and environmental sustainability objectives - a process called sustainability appraisal. The scope of the sustainability appraisal for the Core Strategy was agreed, following public consultation, in July 2007.

1.7 The Core Strategy will also need to be subject to a separate assessment under the national Habitats Regulations to ensure that it will not have a significant impact on sites of international importance for nature conservation.

What is this Document About?

1.8 This document sets out what the Council believes are the main options that will need to be considered before deciding on the most appropriate long term spatial strategy for the Borough. The options follow a description of the Borough and the main groups of settlements within it, a vision of what the Borough may become in the future and a statement of the objectives that the Core Strategy will be seeking to implement.

1.9 Two sets of options are presented. The first set of options consider the overall pattern of future development across the Borough. The second set of options consider the range of responses that could be made to a number of other subjects, as required by national policy. The extent to which each option would fit with the vision and objectives for the Core Strategy is explained, alongside a summary of the findings of the accompanying sustainability appraisal and a brief statement of the Council's conclusions so far.

1.10 A copy of the full sustainability appraisal, the results of the initial screening under the Habitat Regulations and an Equality and Diversity Impact Statement are available for public inspection alongside this document.

How Can You Comment?

1.11 You can comment on any aspect of this report or on the content of the accompanying supporting documents. A series of consultation questions have been included in this document to guide you to areas where we would especially like to hear your views.

1.12 Your comments must, however, be made in writing, by letter, e-mail or fax **and arrive at the address below no later than 17.00 hours on [date/month] 2009.**

1.13 It is more cost efficient for the Council if your comments can be made through the Council's on-line consultation system. This will help us to keep you up-to-date on future progress. It is easy to register and you will be given your own user name and password at <http://wirral-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal>

1.14 Please note that the Council will not be able to keep any of the comments you make private and that your name or organisation as well as your comments will need to be recorded in a published report of consultation.

1.15 Copies of this document have also been placed in public libraries and can be made available in alternative formats, on request.

What Will Happen Next?

1.16 The comments received will be used to help the Council decide on the Preferred Options for the Core Strategy which will then be used to influence the preparation of a full draft Plan.

1.17 The Council expects to consult on the Preferred Options, giving the reasons why they are preferred, in Spring 2010. A copy of a full draft Core Strategy will not be available until Summer 2010.

For further information please contact:

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Core Strategy Spatial Options Report Cabinet Draft

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2 Spatial Portrait

2.1 The Council consulted on the main elements of a Spatial Portrait for the Borough in the Issues, Vision and Objectives Report in February 2009. This information has now been re-presented in series of area profiles.

2.2 The following sections set out a brief description of the main features of the Borough followed by a description of the main settlement areas. They also identify the main issues that may need to be addressed by the Core Strategy.

2.1 Borough Profile

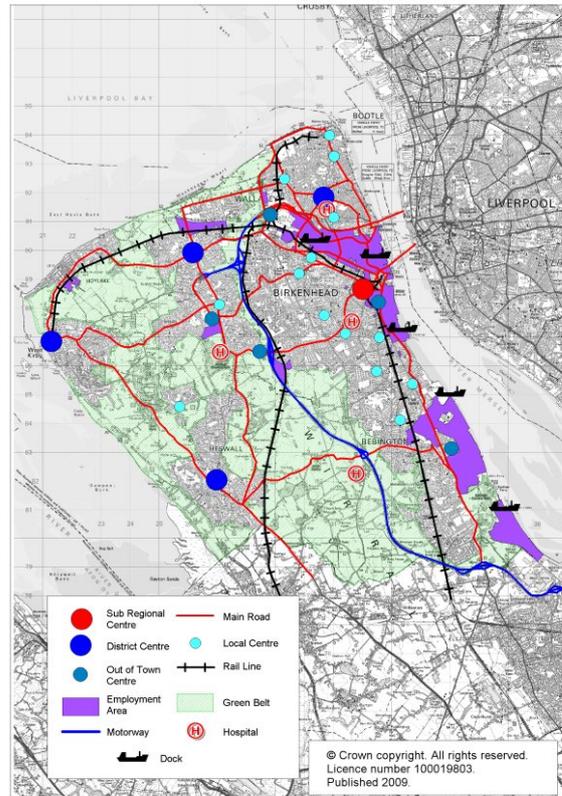
Borough Context

2.3 The Metropolitan Borough of Wirral covers 60 square miles across the northern part of the Wirral peninsula between the Dee and Mersey Estuaries, to the north of Cheshire West and Chester. The Borough is formed around two sandstone ridges stretching from Wallasey through Bidston and Storeton in the east and from West Kirby to Heswall in the west. The remaining land is boulder clay, drained by the rivers Birket and Fender in the north and by the Arrowse and Dibbin Brooks, further inland and to the west.

2.4 In the east, along the banks of the Mersey Estuary, the Borough is predominantly built up. Almost two thirds of the Borough's population lives within the urban area to the east of the M53 Motorway, between the coastal resort of New Brighton in the north to the entrance of the Manchester Ship Canal in the south. Birkenhead is the largest town within the area, historically built around the maritime trades associated with the Mersey docklands.

2.5 In the west, the Borough is characterised by a series of largely dormitory residential settlements surrounded by open countryside. Just under half the Borough is classified as rural.

2.6 Picture 2.1 shows the spatial distribution of the main settlements and retail centres, key transport routes, main employment areas including port facilities and the main hospitals. It also shows the present boundaries to the Merseyside Green Belt, which was first established by Merseyside County Council in the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan in 1983 and which was extended by the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral in February 2000.



Picture 2.1

Historic Context

2.7 Before the industrial revolution, Wirral contained only a collection of small farmsteads and fishing villages but during the 19th Century Birkenhead grew to a sizeable town, closely related to the growth of Liverpool. The introduction of steam powered boats across the Mersey made Birkenhead and the surrounding countryside attractive to wealthy commuters and high quality residential developments initially spread out around Birkenhead, close to the ferry terminals or up the hills of Clifton Park, Oxton Hill and Mountwood, where the views were more expansive and the air cleaner.

2.8 The establishment of John Laird's boiler, ironworks and shipyard at Tranmere, the construction of the inland dock estate at Birkenhead and the Levers Soap Works at Bromborough, opened up Wirral's eastern coast for industrialisation, with a reliance on chemicals and port-related heavy engineering. Wirral's first railway, in 1840, encouraged further growth and the opening of the Mersey Railway Tunnel in 1886 allowed residential development to move away from the ferry terminals. Many of Wirral's most distinctive and attractive residential areas originate from this period.

Core Strategy Spatial Options Report Cabinet Draft

2.9 Following a peak in growth during the 1960s, the area has seen a slow decline in jobs and population. Today, key sectors include retail, distribution, public administration, education, health and social care. In manufacturing, which now accounts for only 11% of local employment, the Borough is strongest in chemicals, food and drink. Tourism accounted for approximately 8% of jobs (NOMIS 2007).

2.10 Wirral has over recent years become increasingly influenced by the economic fortunes of a wider area outside Merseyside, including Ellesmere Port, Chester, Warrington and North Wales. This is particularly evident in trends in population, employment, journeys to work and shopping. The Council is increasingly working with partners across Merseyside and the wider Liverpool City Region and with authorities in North Wales as part of the Mersey Dee Alliance, to ensure that local strategies are aligned to meet common goals.

Economic Context

2.11 The Borough's long term economic performance is a source of major concern. Economic output, as measured by GVA per head, is the lowest in England and the third lowest in England and Wales. Job densities and VAT registrations are also well below national and regional averages. The Borough currently provides only 97,600 jobs for 183,300 residents of working age (NOMIS 2007) and jobs in Wirral generally pay less than jobs in surrounding areas.

2.12 The Wirral Enterprise Strategy, prepared as part of the Council's wider Investment Strategy, attributes this gap in performance to low productivity, low rates of enterprise and a lack in the quantity and quality of available business space. Over 40% of Wirral's stock of business floorspace dates from before 1960 and 30% of that dates from before 1939.

2.13 Major closures over recent years have included the factories at Mobil Oil in Birkenhead, Micropore Insulation and Federal Mogul Ignition in Upton, and Spectrum Adhesives, Lubrizol, D1 Oils, Unichema and Thermal Ceramics in Bromborough. Public sector jobs have also been lost from the Land Registry and Inland Revenue in Birkenhead.

2.14 A large part of central and eastern Wirral retained Assisted Area status in the national review announced in December 2006.

2.15 Revitalising the economy is a key objective of the Local Strategic Partnership's Sustainable Community Strategy and of the Council's Investment Strategy. The Council's Enterprise Strategy aims to increase entrepreneurial activity, enhance business start ups and raise Gross Value Added per head to regional levels by 2016.

Social Context

2.16 The Borough's social context is closely related to the economic fortunes of the wider sub-region.

2.17 The population has declined from 355,800 in 1971 to 309,500 in 2008 (ONS Mid Year Estimate) but is expected to increase to 314,800 by 2029 (ONS 2006-based). The number of households is expected to increase, from 136,000 in 2006 to 150,000 by 2031 (CLG 2006-based). By 2031, over 40% are expected to be single person households, one of the five highest proportions of single person households in the North West (CLG 2006-based).

2.18 Net out-migration is currently estimated at 800 people per year (ONS Mid Year 2008). The main flows out of the Borough are to Denbighshire, Flintshire and Chester. The main flows in are from Liverpool and the rest of Greater Merseyside. The largest flows are between Wirral and Liverpool.

2.19 Continued work-related migration has led to a disproportionate loss of younger age groups and to an ageing population. The proportion of people over 65 years of age is now expected to increase to over a quarter of the population by 2031 and the number of people over 85 is expected to double. The biggest decreases are expected in the 35-59 year age group.

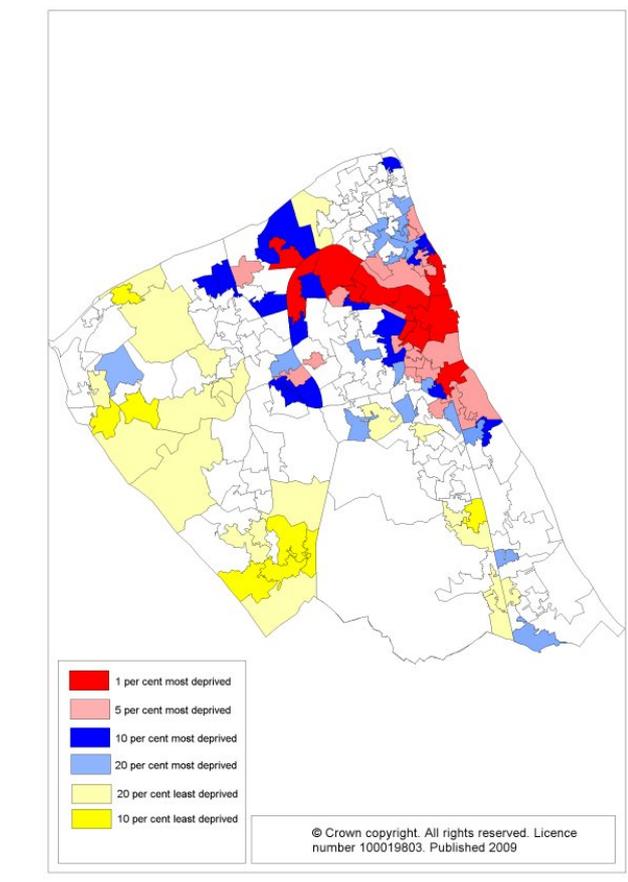
2.20 The proportion of people of working age, particularly of younger adults, is highest in the central and inner areas of east Wirral, while the proportion of older age groups is generally larger in the west. Fertility rates are also higher in east Wirral but there is a reducing cohort of children between 0 and 19 years of age overall. The 20% drop in pupil numbers in primary, secondary and special schools since 1983 has led to the closure and reorganisation of services. The latest projections, based on live births, show pupil numbers continuing to fall to 2010 with only small increases from 2011 onwards.

2.21 A mosaic analysis carried out by the Public Health Intelligence Team in 2008, shows:

- a higher than national average proportion of:
 - career professionals living in sought after locations;
 - low income families living in estate based social housing;
 - close-knit inner city and manufacturing town communities;
 - independent older people with relatively active lifestyles;
 - older families living in suburbia;
 - older people in social housing with high care needs; and
- an under-representation of:
 - educated young single people;
 - younger families living in newer homes;
 - upwardly mobile families; and
 - people living in rural areas.

2.22 Although average household incomes are among the highest in Merseyside, a higher than national average proportion of the working age population are on key benefits and a high number of localities fall within the most deprived in England.

2.23 Picture 2.2 shows the main concentrations of social, economic and environmental need recorded in the latest national Index of Multiple Deprivation in England (2007). Almost a third of the Wirral population lives in areas ranked as having some of the greatest needs in England, amongst the worst performing 20%. The Borough as a whole is ranked as the 8th worst out of the 354 English districts for employment-based deprivation.



Picture 2.2

2.24 A wide range of other socio-economic indicators, including employment, economic activity, worklessness, benefit dependency, educational attainment, health, life expectancy, infant mortality, teenage conception, mental illness, drug and alcohol abuse, fuel and child poverty, also mirror these spatial patterns. There is an eleven year gap in life expectancy for males between parts of east and west Wirral.

2.25 A higher than national average proportion of residents are educated to degree standard or above and only 11% of residents had no qualifications in 2008.

2.26 Most Wirral schools have been assessed by Ofsted as good or outstanding. Nearly 90% of 16 year olds stay on in school or college or go into employment. Almost half of 18 year olds go to university and attainment at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage

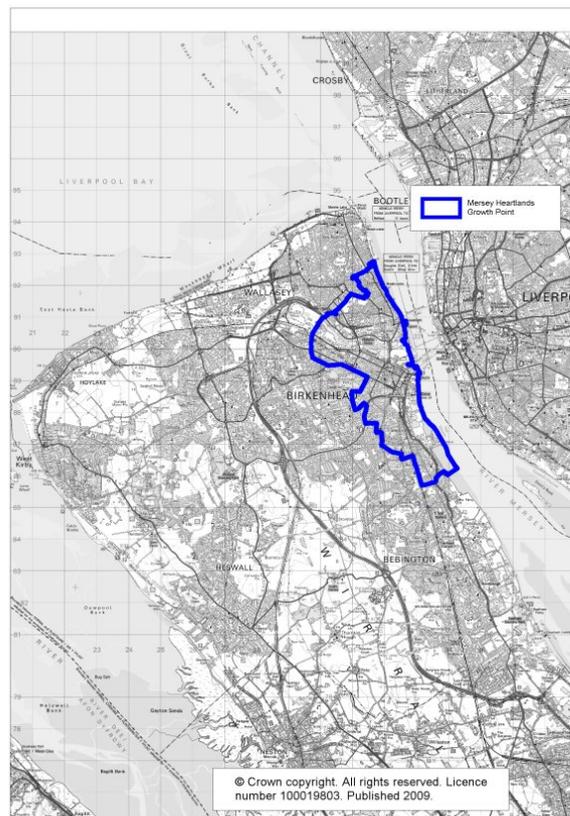
4 (GCSE) is consistently higher than the national average. The averages attained in Birkenhead and Wallasey (including Leasowe and Moreton) are, however, still below those attained in south east and west Wirral.

2.27 Wirral has a generally low crime rate. The majority of complaints relate to youths causing annoyance and drink related anti-social behaviour.

Housing Context

2.28 Wirral has many areas of attractive high quality housing, some amongst the best in Merseyside, but large concentrations of poorer stock remain, particularly associated with the older urban core in east Wirral.

2.29 A fifth of the Borough's housing stock was built before 1919 and a further quarter between 1919 and 1944. Approximately 10,800 households are considered to be living in unsuitable housing. Over a third of these households contain residents with mobility or health problems. Approximately 29,700 households are considered to contain residents with special needs.



Picture 2.3

2.30 In April 2002, the Secretary of State included parts of Liscard, Seacombe, Bidston, Birkenhead and Tranmere as part of the Newheartlands Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Area, a long term national programme to address low demand and vacancy, modernise the housing stock, diversify tenure and housing choice and

improve environmental conditions. The number of households living in unsuitable housing within the Pathfinder Area is over double the figure for the rest of the Borough. The Council has sought to focus new housing development to support the regeneration of this Area since December 2003.

2.31 The Newheartlands Pathfinder Area was also designated as a national Growth Point in December 2008, as part of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.

2.32 Approximately 15% of the Borough's housing stock is owned and managed by Registered Social Landlords. The majority of this stock is located in east and mid-Wirral. Allocation policies mean that these areas often correlate closely with areas of greatest socio-economic need but significant areas of need also extend into the private owned and private rented sector housing surrounding the older urban core.

2.33 Average property prices for the Borough as a whole are more than 3.5 times average incomes and there is a large demand for affordable housing. In September 2008, only terraced properties were considered affordable to households with an average income for the Borough. A large number of properties in south east and west Wirral were well in excess of four times the average house price for the Borough. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment, adopted by the Council in early 2008, is now being revised to take account of the economic downturn.

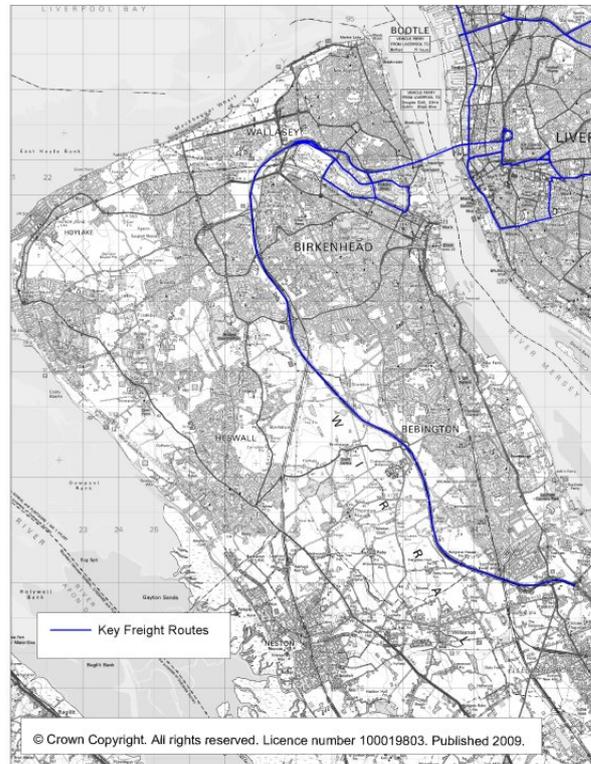
Transport Context

2.34 The Mersey road tunnels at Birkenhead and Wallasey provide direct access to Liverpool City Centre and the M53 Motorway connects the docks at Birkenhead to the national motorway network. The heavily trafficked A41 is the main arterial route through the urban areas in east Wirral to Ellesmere Port. The A540 is the main route through the west of the Borough between Hoylake and Chester.

2.35 High frequency bus services follow the principal radial routes running out of Birkenhead to outlying settlements. Consultation has highlighted poor accessibility between these routes and many cross-Borough journeys can require an interchange at Birkenhead. The Mersey Ferries provide an additional link to Liverpool from Woodside and Seacombe.

2.36 Wirral also has a well-established rail infrastructure, providing high frequency electrified services, linking mainline services in Liverpool to Chester, West Kirby and New Brighton. An hourly diesel service runs through mid-Wirral between Bidston and Wrexham in North Wales, with stops at Upton and Heswall. Discussions are ongoing between Merseytravel, Network Rail, Arriva trains (Wales), TAITH and Local Authorities along the route to upgrade the track and trains.

2.37 Picture 2.4 shows how the strategic freight network within the Borough links with the adjoining areas.



Picture 2.4

2.38 Each day, approximately 40,800 residents travel outside the Borough to find work, with principal flows to Liverpool (43%), Ellesmere Port and Neston (16%), Chester (8%) and North Wales (7%). The largest flows are from the western and south eastern fringes of the Borough. Main routes out of the Borough and to and from the Motorway are subject to significant congestion during the morning and evening peaks. Consultation has shown a continued dissatisfaction with the impact of traffic on local communities.

2.39 Almost a third of households did not have access to a private car in 2001, even though car ownership was higher than average for Merseyside. Access to a car was highest in the west Wirral settlements, in Greasby and in Clatterbridge and was lowest in the inner urban areas of east Wirral and the former outer Council estates in mid-Wirral. While the number of vehicles owned and licensed in the Borough has continued to rise and is forecast to increase further, there is no evidence to suggest that this overall pattern has significantly changed.

2.40 Journeys to work also appear to be lengthening over time. In the absence of additional controls, increasing car ownership and continuing high levels of commuting could have major implications for emissions and long term air quality.

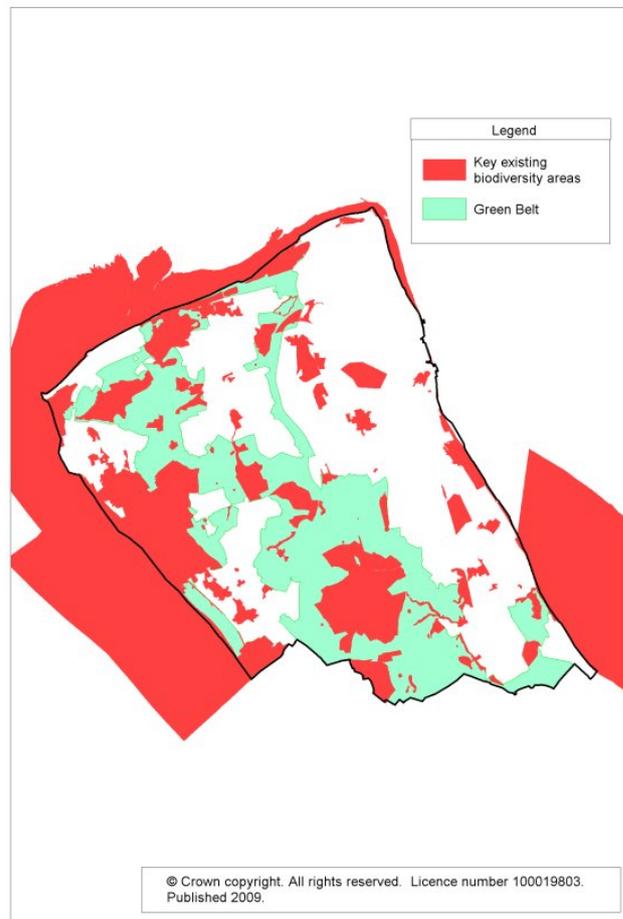
2.41 The cost of public transport fares can be an obstacle to travel for some people. A recent survey of people without a car found that a third have difficulty travelling to their local hospital, 16% find access to supermarkets difficult and 18% find meeting family and friends a problem.

Environmental Context

2.42 Wirral is generally considered to offer a high quality of life. A recent national survey indicated that over 80% of residents were happy to live within the area and consultation has shown access to countryside and coast to be one of the main attractions of the Borough, providing extensive opportunities for recreation, leisure and tourism.

2.43 Almost a third of the administrative area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The majority of the coastline is of international importance for nature conservation. Not all aspects of Wirral's biodiversity resources are currently captured by site designations. While the Borough has an extensive network of identified sites of local biological and geological importance, covering most of the habitats identified as priorities within the Wirral Biodiversity Action Plan, there are relatively few within the urban areas of east Wirral.

2.44 Picture 2.5 shows the Key Existing Biodiversity Areas identified in the Wirral Biodiversity Audit 2009.



Picture 2.5

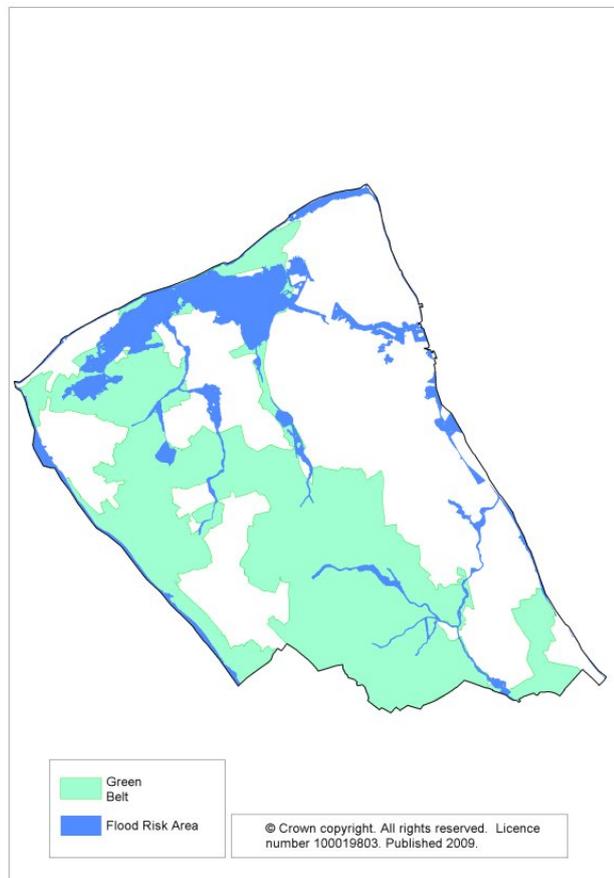
2.45 Local heritage is also highly valued. Almost 5% of the Borough's land area is either designated as a Conservation Area, Scheduled Ancient Monument or Historic Park or Garden. Particular concern has been expressed at perceived threats to local distinctiveness, including un-designated assets, particularly related to protecting the character of the coastal resorts and established residential areas, particularly those dating from the Edwardian and Victorian period.

2.46 Wirral contains a large amount of recreational open space but has a shortage of formal outdoor sports facilities, including playing fields. There are local shortages, particularly in the older urban areas in east Wirral. Consultation has consistently indicated concern about the quality and maintenance of the public realm. A quality audit of open space throughout the Borough has revealed a mixed picture, with average quality scores based on national benchmarks consistently below 50%.

2.47 Much of Wirral is founded on sandstone which is a major aquifer and groundwater provides around 13% of Wirral's water resources. The rest of Wirral's water supplies come from the River Dee, which could have implications for European designated sites within the wider river catchment.

2.48 Water quality within the Dee and Mersey Estuaries has improved substantially over recent years and Wirral's beaches are consistently among the cleanest in the North West. The Environment Agency has, however, indicated that rivers on Wirral are categorised as having poor or bad ecological status or potential, well below the good status or potential required by the Water Framework Directive.

2.49 Picture 2.6 shows the areas that the Environment Agency believes could potentially be liable to flooding, representing approximately 11% of the Borough's land area. The latest UK Climate Projections for 2009 expect North West sea levels to rise by an annual average of 2.5mm between 1990 and 2025.



Picture 2.6

2.50 A significant amount of renewable energy is being generated from wind energy within Liverpool Bay which is connected to the National Grid at Bidston. The local contribution to energy security from the on-shore generation of renewable, decentralised or low carbon energy recorded in successive Annual Monitoring Reports is, however, still minimal.

2.51 The Council was an early signatory to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change in 2001. The Council's Climate Change Strategy has concentrated on initiatives based on awareness, adaption, energy and transport. An initial target to

achieve a 20% reduction in carbon emissions by 2010 was achieved at the end of 2007. The revised headline targets agreed by the Council are to reduce carbon emissions by 60% by 2025 and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

2.52 The current level of per capita emissions in Wirral is 6 tonnes, the fifth lowest output in the North West Region. The largest output is currently from domestic gas at 421 KtCO₂ followed by commercial electricity at 406 KtCO₂.

Community Facilities

2.53 Birkenhead is the sub-regional service and retail centre for the Borough. Other centres operate below this serving more local catchments. The most significant are Liscard, West Kirby, Heswall and Moreton. The Croft Retail Park in Bromborough is now the second largest destination for comparison good spending behind Birkenhead.

2.54 Spending on weekly convenience goods is almost totally retained within Wirral but over a third of spending on non-food comparison goods is spent outside the Borough. The most significant destinations are Liverpool (13%), Internet and TV sales(8%), Chester (5%), catalogue shopping (3%) and the Cheshire Oaks retail outlet in Ellesmere Port (2%). Spending outside the Borough is lowest in the inner urban areas of east Wirral and highest from the settlements in the west and south east of the Borough.

2.55 Liverpool is also a significant destination for visits to restaurants; pubs, bars and nightclubs; museums and art galleries; and theatres and concerts.

2.56 Spending on convenience goods is unlikely to support additional floorspace, other than in areas where there is a specific local shortfall. Spending on comparison goods could, however, support additional floorspace based on reducing the amount of money spent outside the Borough by up to 10%. There is scope for additional food and drink and commercial leisure to 2021.

2.57 Wirral has an extensive network of community facilities including libraries, community centres, youth centres, children's centres, social centres, sports centres, public halls and museums. Like schools, the reduction in population over time has reduced the ability to support these facilities leading to churches, social centres and sports clubs being closed or rationalised.

2.58 The Council has recently reassessed the provision of publicly funded community facilities for cultural and leisure services.

2.59 Nine of the secondary schools with older premises have recently been re-configured under a Private Finance Initiative. The Council is also considering establishing two new-style Academies in and around Birkenhead. Wirral Metropolitan College has progressively centralised its main facilities in and around Birkenhead Town Centre and, in partnership with Chester University, is now seeking to establish a new University complex to the north of the Town Centre as part of a wider "knowledge hub" in and around Twelve Quays.

2.60 Access to GPs is generally good across the Borough. Access to main hospitals is more limited, especially to people without access to a car. Access to Clatterbridge Hospital is particularly difficult for some people. Major redevelopment proposals are under consideration at St Catherine's Hospital in Tranmere.

Waste Management

2.61 The Borough currently produces approximately 137,000 tonnes of municipal (household) waste each year. The amount recycled and composted has more than doubled over recent years, significantly reducing the amount that needs to go to landfill. Rates of recycling are, however, still low in some areas of the Borough.

2.62 Many of the issues related to planning for waste, including the identification of suitable sites for new or replacement facilities, is to be included in a separate Joint Waste Development Plan Document for Merseyside and Halton. The next stage of consultation on the Waste DPD is expected to take place in early 2010.

Wirral - Key Statistics

Administrative Area - 25,110 hectares (97 square miles)

Borough Land Area - 15,560 hectares (60 square miles)

Coastline - 41km (26 miles)

Urban area - 8,507 hectares (55% of total land area)

Green Belt - 7,053 hectares (45% of total land area)

Designated Employment Areas - 1120 hectares (7% of land area)

Available employment land - 87 sites (231 hectares) (April 2009)

Vacant Land - 386 sites (341 hectares) (April 2009)

Residential Properties - 147,076 (April 2007)

Population - 310,200 (Mid-2007)

Economically active population - 142,700 (April 2009)

Employee Jobs within the Borough - 97,600 (April 2009)

Average household income - £33,800 (2007)

Average property price - £160,077 (2007)

Population within lowest 20% of IMD 2007 - 99,400 (32% of Wirral)

Population within highest 20% of IMD 2007 - 44,200 (14% of Wirral)

Recreational Open Space - 2,233 hectares (7.2 hectares per 1000)

Publicly Accessible Open Space - 1,365 hectares (4.4 hectares per 1000)

Sites of Special Scientific Interest - 7,132 hectares (including inter-tidal areas)

Conservation Areas - 24 Areas; 707 hectares

Listed Buildings - 1771 structures

Scheduled Ancient Monuments - 9 Monuments; 5.7 hectares

Historic Parks and Gardens - 4 sites; 113 hectares

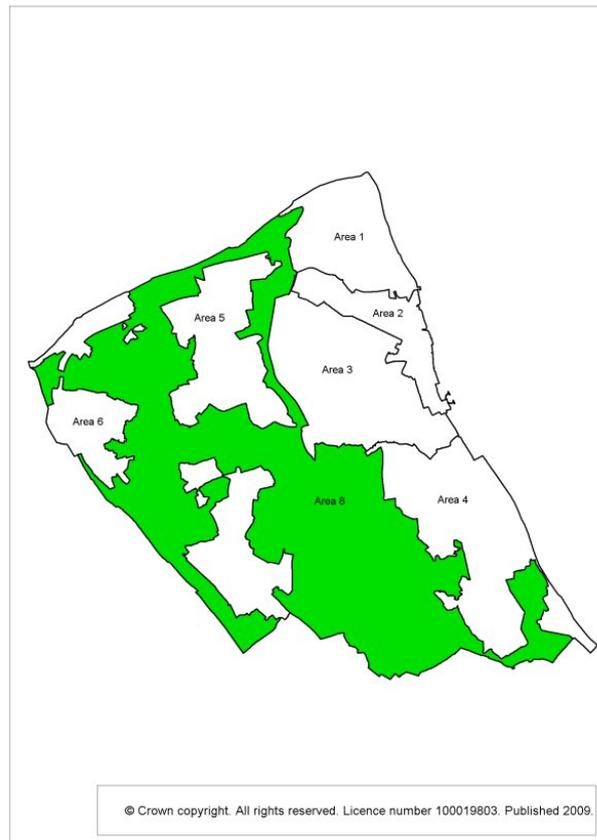
Area Potentially Liable to Flooding - 1,686 hectares (Functional Floodplain, Flood Zone 2 and Flood Zone 3)

2.63 The key issues identified for the Borough as a whole include:

- Promoting sustainable economic growth and revitalisation
- Aligning economic, social and environmental strategies with partners within the wider Liverpool City Region and North Wales
- Closing the gap between social, economic and environmental conditions and opportunities
- Addressing a continued loss of population
- Housing market renewal within the older urban areas of east Wirral
- Providing for affordable and specialist housing needs
- Providing for an ageing population
- Supporting the re-configuration of social, community, health and education services
- Retention of comparison retail spending
- Protecting locally distinctive assets such as landscape, countryside and coast, heritage, areas of international importance for nature conservation and areas of high quality housing
- Reducing the impact of traffic and congestion along radial routes into and out of Birkenhead and on main routes into and out of the Borough
- Improving the accessibility of employment, education and healthcare
- Addressing shortfalls in the quantity, quality and distribution of green infrastructure and providing for an increase in biodiversity in east Wirral
- Securing additional resources to improve and maintain the public realm
- Minimising the potential impact of flooding from all sources
- Increasing the contribution of renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy to local energy security
- Providing for adaption to and the mitigation of climate change
- Securing sustainable waste management

2.2 Settlement Area Profiles

2.64 The Council has divided Wirral into eight broad Settlement Areas based on the main groups of settlements within the Borough.

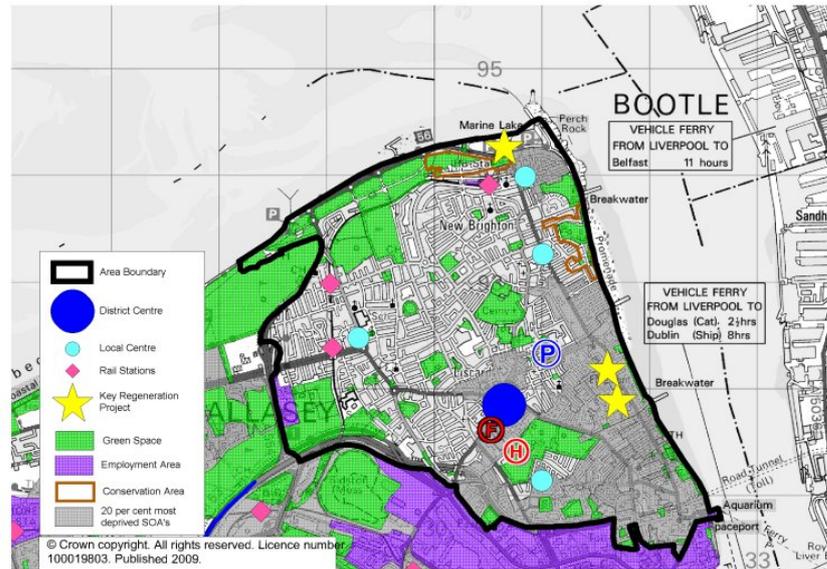


Picture 2.7

2.2.1 Settlement Area 1

2.65 Settlement Area 1 includes the urban settlements of Wallasey including New Brighton, Liscard, Seacombe, Poulton and Wallasey Village.

2.66 The Settlement Area is well located with access to Liverpool via the Kingsway Tunnel, Seacombe Ferry Terminal and three train stations at Wallasey Village, Wallasey Grove Road and New Brighton; to Birkenhead via Tower Road, Duke Street and Wallasey Bridge Road; and to the M53 Motorway from the Docks Link and Wallasey Link Roads.



Picture 2.8

Socio-Economic Background

2.67 The age profile for the Settlement Area broadly follows the Borough average, with a slightly higher proportion of younger adults and a slightly lower proportion of retired people. At a more local level, the profile is more mixed, with a higher proportion of young adults in Seacombe and Liscard and a higher proportion of older and elderly people in Wallasey and New Brighton. Seacombe has one of the highest proportions of children under 15 years of age in the Borough.

2.68 Seacombe, Liscard and New Brighton have some of the greatest social, economic and environmental needs in England. This is the second highest concentration of need in the Borough, representing almost a quarter of Wirral residents living in areas ranked within the lowest 20% of the national Index of deprivation. Only a small part of Wallasey Village fell within the highest 20% of the national Index in 2007.

2.69 The Settlement Area generated over 5,700 journeys to work to destinations outside the Borough in 2001, almost two thirds to Liverpool. Almost a third of these journeys were generated from the north and western part of the Settlement Area. Liscard and Seacombe, where over 40% of households did not have access to a private car, generated some of the lowest numbers of journeys outside the Borough for work.

Housing

2.70 The majority of higher density terraced housing is located in Seacombe, a legacy of the historic relationship with employment in the adjacent dockland areas. These older areas have been identified as part of the wider area requiring housing market renewal. Priority areas for new and improved housing to be promoted as

part of the Newheartlands Pathfinder include Royston Avenue/Woodhall Avenue which are being acquired and demolished for replacement with new build family dwellings and Trafalgar Road which is still subject to an options appraisal.

2.71 The majority of the higher quality detached and semi-detached properties are in the north and western part of the Settlement Area. The majority of the Settlement Area, outside the northwest, has been identified as a regeneration priority area since December 2003. These regeneration priority areas are now also designated as part of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.

Local Heritage

2.72 There are Conservation Areas at Magazine Promenade; and at Wellington Road, which includes the original cliff top villas at New Brighton.

2.73 Only Fort Perch Rock, Marine Promenade, New Brighton is included on English Heritage's Buildings and Monuments 'At Risk' Register.

Town Centres

2.74 Liscard is the main shopping and service centre for the Settlement Area. The whole of the Settlement Area is within 20 minutes of the centre by public transport. The Cherry Tree Shopping Centre and the pedestrianised Liscard Way form the core of the shopping area. Asda, at the edge of the town centre, is the main supermarket for the Settlement Area.

2.75 Key indicators suggest that the long-term decline of Liscard has continued: Liscard has experienced significant slippage in the national retail rankings; the comparison retail offer is at the value end of the spectrum; the vacancy rate is above the UK average; retail rents have generally been static; operator requirements are limited; anti-social behaviour and vandalism have been highlighted as additional problems; and there is limited scope for a substantial town centre development scheme over and above the existing proposals to extend the Cherry Tree Centre.

2.76 The secondary centres at Victoria Road; Seabank Road (New Brighton); King Street; Poulton Road; and Wallasey Village; provide more local facilities. All have experienced decline in their role as convenience shopping centres and have seen rising levels of vacancy, despite some investment, for example Tesco Express at Poulton Road. Victoria Road and Seabank Road in New Brighton have also benefited from regeneration funding. The physical environment and high level of vacancy in Poulton Road, Seacombe is a particular cause for concern and it is no longer considered a viable centre in its present form.

Employment

2.77 Cross Lane Industrial Estate is the only dedicated industrial estate within the Settlement Area. Only a small number of plots remain, mostly held for the expansion of existing businesses. The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2009 concluded that the Estate provided good local employment opportunities and should

be retained. The Study recommended that a small area adjacent to New Brighton railway station at Alexandra Road should also be retained for local employment uses unless it can be shown that the site is no longer marketable for industrial or office use.

New Brighton

2.78 The coastal resort of New Brighton has traditionally provided the majority of open space, leisure and recreation facilities for the Settlement Area but has continued to decline since its post-war heyday.

2.79 An initial proposal for a major private sector, leisure based redevelopment at the Marine Lake was refused by the Secretary of State following a public inquiry in 2006. The development has since been revised and split into two phases. Phase 1 was granted planning permission in October 2006 and the Floral Pavilion theatre and conference centre re-opened in December 2008. Outline consent for Phase 2, on the site of the former outdoor bathing pool, including a supermarket, hotel and leisure uses, was approved in November 2007 and reserved matters in August 2009. The regeneration of New Brighton remains a priority of the Council's Investment Strategy.

Recreation and Culture

2.80 The coastal promenade from Seacombe Ferry to New Brighton and the North Wirral Coastal Park is a major feature of the Settlement Area. The largest public open space is Liscard's Central Park. There is a shortage of playing pitches and the available open spaces are all intensively used.

2.81 The recent review of cultural and leisure services identified the Grosvenor Ballroom, Vale House, Wallasey Grange and the community centres at Liscard, New Brighton and Seacombe for possible community transfer.

Other Infrastructure

2.82 Police, Fire and Rescue and Ambulance services and Victoria Central Hospital are located at the edge of Liscard Town Centre. Council services are located at Wallasey Town Hall in Seacombe. The New Brighton Lifeboat is seeking to relocate in response to the regeneration of the resort, to gain easier access to a slipway.

2.83 Secondary schools within the Settlement Area have all recently been remodelled or redeveloped. A recent review of primary school places has led to the closure of Poulton Primary, although the site will remain in use until the new Park Primary School is available for occupation. The private preparatory schools at Marymount and Westbourne School have closed in recent years.

2.84 United Utilities operate a major pumping station at Scotts Field Seacombe and detention tanks at Coastal Drive and Tower Grounds in New Brighton.

Coast and Flooding

2.85 The majority of the Settlement Area is protected from the sea by the Wallasey Embankment. Approximately 92 hectares of land associated with the north Wirral coast and the Fender Valley is, however, still liable to potential tidal and fluvial (river) flooding, which could affect up to 420 properties at the edge of Wallasey and New Brighton.

Settlement Area 1 - Key Statistics

Area - 1,021 hectares (15% of Wirral land area)

Urban coastline - 6.5km (4 miles)

Population - 58,700 (mid-2007) 19% of Wirral

Number of dwellings - 28,100 (April 2007)

Dwellings per hectare - 28

Dwellings completed since 2000 (gross) - 714 (13% of Wirral)

Dwellings demolished since 2000 - 189 (7% of Wirral)

Land with planning permission for new housing (April 2009) - 11.5 hectares (767 units) 20% of supply

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Call for Sites - 1.6 hectares (5 sites)

Key Town Centres - Liscard Town Centre

Designated Employment Areas - Cross Lane Industrial Estate (7.0 hectares), Alexandra Road, New Brighton (1.3 hectares)

Employment land - 2 sites (1.8 hectares)

Vacant land - 48 sites (9.2 hectares)

Population within lowest 20% of IMD 2007 - 24,500 (42% of Area 1)

Population within highest 20% of IMD 2007 - 1,500 (3% of Area 1)

Recreational Open Space - 182 hectares (3.1 hectares per 1000)

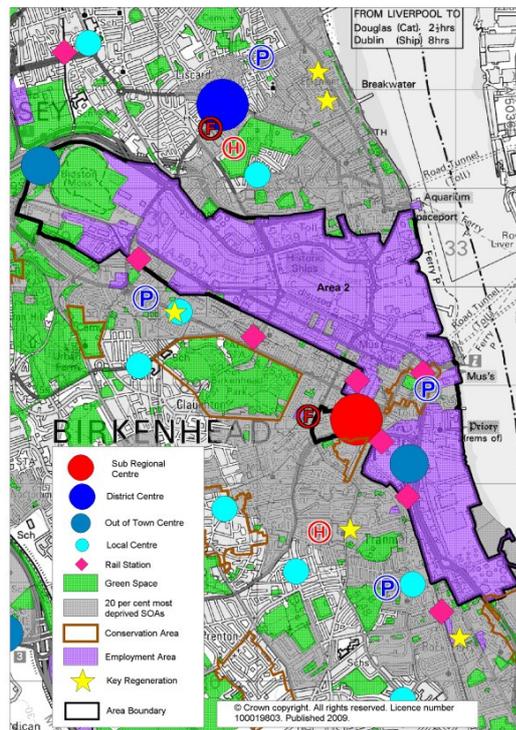
Publicly Accessible Open Space - 131 hectares (2.2 hectares per 1000)

2.86 Key Issues identified for Settlement Area 1 include:

- Securing the continued regeneration of New Brighton
- Addressing the decline of Liscard Town Centre
- Safeguarding employment uses at Cross Lane Industrial Estate
- Addressing the social, economic and environmental needs of Seacombe and Liscard
- Maintaining the attraction of coastal facilities and recreation
- Promoting a more sustainable pattern of journeys to work
- Providing for the concentration of younger age groups in Seacombe

2.2.2 Settlement Area 2

2.87 Settlement Area 2 is the historic industrial and commercial heart of the Borough at Bidston, Seacombe, Birkenhead and Tranmere, centred around the coastal and inland docks system dating from the early to mid 1800s. The residential areas within and immediately surrounding the Settlement Area have some of the greatest socio-economic needs in the country and the Settlement Area contains one of the largest concentrations of vacant previously developed land in the Borough.



Picture 2.9

2.88 The Settlement Area has been the focus of a continued series of national publicly funded regeneration initiatives since the 1970s, including Inner Area Programme, Merseyside Development Corporation, City Lands, City Challenge Hamilton Quarter, Wallasey and Lairdside SRB, Merseyside Objective One Programme and Housing Market Renewal. Twelve Quays has been a Strategic Regional Site since December 2001. A new Strategic Regional Site was recommended by the North West Development Agency in July 2009.

Transport Accessibility

2.89 The Settlement Area is by far the most accessible in the Borough, with good access by road, bus, rail and ferry. Picture 2.10 highlights the areas falling within 30 minutes travel time of Birkenhead Town Centre by public transport. All but the coastal western fringes of the Borough are within 20 minutes of the Town Centre by car.



Picture 2.10

2.90 The main routes in and out of the Settlement Area include major through routes from across the Borough; the road tunnels to Liverpool; the Docks Link Road to Junction 1 of the M53 Motorway; the three routes across the docks system at Tower Road, Duke Street and Wallasey Bridge Road; and the A41 south to Chester and Junction 5 of the M53 Motorway. The M53 Motorway enters the Settlement Area in flyover from the west.

2.91 The majority of the Borough's principal highways, radiate out from the Town Centre, providing high frequency bus services to all the Borough's main settlements. High frequency, electrified, passenger rail services run through the Centre to Liverpool, New Brighton, West Kirby and Chester. An hourly diesel service runs, with connections to Birkenhead, from Bidston to Wrexham in North Wales. The Mersey Ferries connect Woodside to Liverpool and Seacombe.

2.92 A disused freight line runs from Bidston through the docks and across Birkenhead Town Centre (in cutting) to Mollington Street in Tranmere. Proposals to reinstate the link from Bidston to the docks in Beaufort Road are being investigated as part of the transport strategy for Wirral Waters.

Employment

2.93 Industrial dock-related facilities dominate the character of the area. The Settlement Area is still the Borough's most significant destination for journeys to work (16%), is the largest contributor to the Borough's economic output (19% of total GVA) and provides almost half of the Borough's designated employment land.

2.94 The newly constructed Twelve Quays Roll-on Roll-off Ferry Terminal operates from the waterfront opposite Liverpool. Other significant waterfront facilities include the former Cammell Lairds ship yard, now part used for ship repair, and the nationally important Shell Oil Terminal at Tranmere, which feeds the upstream refinery facilities at Stanlow, in neighbouring Cheshire West and Chester, with up to 10 million tonnes of crude oil each year. The majority of the waterfront facilities at Woodside were redeveloped for offices and housing as part of regeneration programmes during the 1980s and 1990s.

2.95 The docks hinterland in Seacombe and North Birkenhead are an important source of local employment providing for a wide range of small and medium sized companies, mainly in light engineering, trade and distribution, of which a limited number are still port-related. The majority of the Borough's waste treatment facilities are also located in and around this hinterland. The Council has begun the process of promoting economic regeneration by clearing areas of housing, to the north of the railway in North Birkenhead, to allow employment-related redevelopment as part of the housing market renewal process.

2.96 The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2009 concluded, despite obvious signs of demand, that Birkenhead was no longer providing an attractive business offer and that occupiers, including major office uses, were increasingly being lost to more modern premises with car parking in outlying areas including Bromborough. Only a limited number of poorly located smaller sites were currently available in and around the Town Centre. The Study recommended that the Council considered establishing a designated office quarter for small and medium sized businesses, alongside a programme of land assembly and environmental improvements.

Town Centres

2.97 Birkenhead Town Centre is identified as a sub regional centre in the Regional Spatial Strategy. Assessment against health check indicators suggest a continuing decline in Birkenhead's overall vitality and viability, including; a fall in the national retail rankings; relatively low rents vis-a-vis comparable centres in the North West; a reduction in footfall; predominance of "value" fashion retailers; high vacancy rates; only one Department Store; the sub-standard quality of the physical environment on approaches to and within the Town Centre; and a disappointing food and drink offer.

2.98 There is limited operator interest in Birkenhead and there are significant constraints on the delivery of a new and improved comparison retail offer. Many of the shop units in the Grange shopping centre do not satisfy modern market

requirements. Some of the flyovers associated with the entrance to the Birkenhead road tunnel were removed during the 1990s but others remain, dividing the Town Centre from areas in the south. A new supermarket at Claughton Road is the only significant planned investment in the short term. The enabling Compulsory Purchase Order was confirmed in July 2009.

2.99 The A41 corridor includes a major concentration of out-of-centre retail development including Rock Retail Park. Junction 1 Retail Park, the third largest destination for comparison spending behind Birkenhead Town Centre and Croft Retail Park; and Tesco's at Bidston, one of the top three supermarkets for turnover in the Borough; also form a significant cluster of out-of-centre retail developments around Junction 1 of the M53 Motorway.

Hamilton Square and Heritage

2.100 The historic commercial area to the north of Birkenhead Town Centre around Hamilton Square is a nationally significant Conservation Area, with the largest collection of Victorian Grade I listed buildings outside London. Landmark features such as Hamilton Square Railway Station and the former Birkenhead Town Hall are all located within this area and the original "Laird grid" is still evident, in the area outside the Conservation Area to the west. Despite extensive improvements during the 1990s, a lack of private sector investment and increasing levels of vacancy has placed Hamilton Square on the national list of Conservation Areas at risk.

2.101 Only Birkenhead Priory is included on English Heritage's Buildings and Monuments 'At Risk' Register.

Housing

2.102 Small pockets of housing in the Settlement Area include areas of older terraces associated with the docks and some newer stock associated with attempts to diversify the area around Hamilton Square during the early 1990s. The Settlement Area currently has the lowest average number of people per dwelling, at just over one-to-one. The age profile is dominated by young adults.

2.103 The most recent residential development has seen the conversion of the listed former grain warehouses at Dock Road in Seacombe. Further phases are under consideration as part of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, designated by the Government in December 2008.

2.104 The whole of Settlement Area 2 has been identified as a regeneration priority area since December 2003.

Recreation and Culture

2.105 The only significant open spaces within the Settlement Area, outside the coastal footways associated with the Mersey waterfront, include the formal gardens at Hamilton Square in the east and the reclaimed landfill site at Bidston Moss in the west, which has recently been landscaped to provide community woodland and enhance the entrance to the Area from the M53 Motorway.

2.106 The review of cultural and leisure services has made Birkenhead Town Hall Museum, Pacific Road Theatre, the Transport Museum and Tramway and Shore Road Pumping Station available for expressions of interest.

Other Infrastructure

2.107 Wirral Metropolitan College, Fire and Rescue, Police, Magistrates, Probation and Council services are located in and around Birkenhead Town Centre. The main Police Custody Suite is adjacent to the docks. A new Command and Control Centre is to be developed at Beaufort Road. The Magistrates may also seek to relocate to more modern premises within the plan period. Wirral Metropolitan College is considering a partnership with Chester University which could form part of a wider "knowledge hub" alongside existing facilities at Twelve Quays.

2.108 Other key infrastructure includes the Borough's main Waste Water Treatment Works at Shore Road.

2.109 The high-pressure gas main for the Borough runs into the Settlement Area along M53 Motorway and the Wallasey tunnel approach road, serving the gas holders at Dock Road and Hind Street. Electricity from the wind turbines in Liverpool Bay runs from the north Wirral coast to a transformer at the edge of the Dock Estate.

2.110 The gasholders at Dock Road and Hind Street and the Shell Oil Terminal are registered COMAH sites.

Development Opportunities

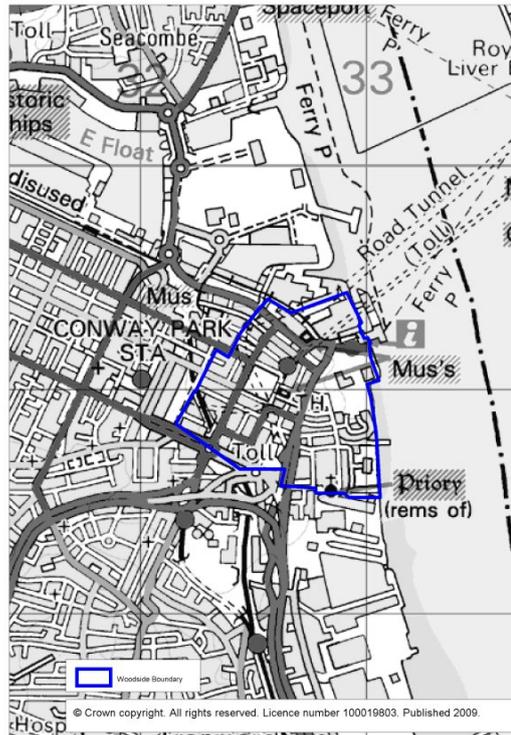
2.111 There are four main development opportunities within Settlement Area 2:

Woodside Development Area

2.112 Woodside is the waterfront area between Priory Wharf and Woodside Business Park, including the Ferry Terminal, the former Woodside Hotel, Woodside Bus Station, the 1990s public sector office developments at Woodside Approach and the area up to Hamilton Square Railway Station.

2.113 Phase 2 of the residential development at Priory Wharf was designated as a Housing Development Site in the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral but remains undeveloped. The remainder of the area is allocated as a mix of primarily industrial and commercial areas. The western parts of the area fall within the setting of Hamilton Square Conservation Area.

2.114 Woodside is directly served by the A41 and is already an intermodal terminus for bus, rail and ferry services. The ferry and bus facilities are currently poorly utilised and the area contains a number of vacant sites and a bus layover. The busy A41 acts as a barrier to pedestrian movements between the train station and the ferry terminal.



Picture 2.11

2.115 A masterplan for the area, which was subject to public consultation in 2006, identified the potential to accommodate a mix of residential, office, hotel and ancillary leisure floorspace. A larger site could be assembled, if the A41 was diverted. It would also be possible to exploit the change in level as the land dips towards the coast. A number of landowners, including public agencies, are close to signing a development agreement.

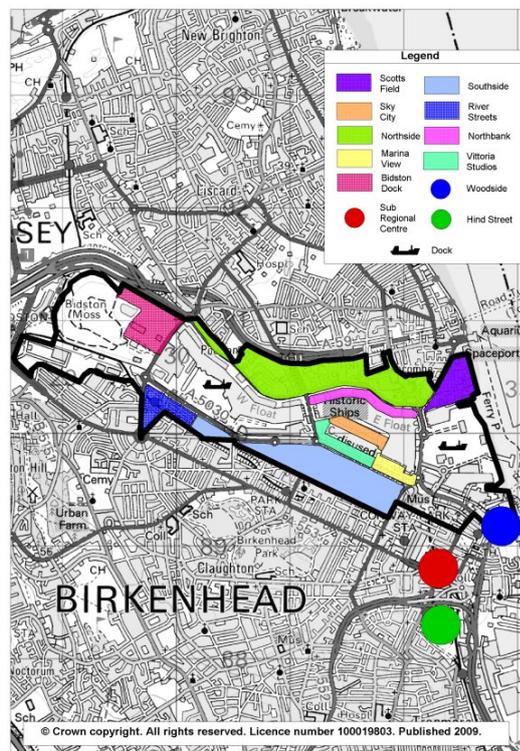
2.116 A Technical Appendix addresses the capacity for tall buildings, to complement the high rise buildings along the Liverpool waterfront, take best advantage of views to Liverpool, and provide a more distinct and defined urban character to the central commercial area of Birkenhead.

Birkenhead Dock Estate

2.117 The Dock Estate operates under permitted development rights granted by Acts of Parliament as part of the Port of Liverpool. Part of the area operates as a Freeport. Continued port use is increasingly limited by the capacity of the historic inland docks system, as vessels increase in size over time. The main focus for larger vessels is now the Roll-on, Roll-off Ferry Terminal at Twelve Quays. Bidston Dock

was backfilled in 2002 and approximately 56 hectares of the Dock Estate now lie vacant. Policy EM10 was deleted from the Unitary Development Plan in September 2007 as a first attempt to to promote the wider regeneration of the area which is now known as "Wirral Waters".

2.118 An initial Strategic Regeneration Framework for "Wirral Waters" was subject to public consultation in 2008. The Framework demonstrated that a high density mixed use development, over a 30 to 50 year time span, could be capable of accommodating up to 15,900 new dwellings and an estimated 30,000 new jobs.



Picture 2.12

2.119 The Framework shows the retention of the deep water river berth at Twelve Quays and the inland dock system between Duke Street and Wallasey Bridge Road (West Float) for port-related activities. Vacant areas in the north, between Tower Road and Duke Street are identified for the early phases of a mixed-use, high density, residential and commercial development (Northbank). Planning permissions for North Bank East were granted by the Council in August 2009.

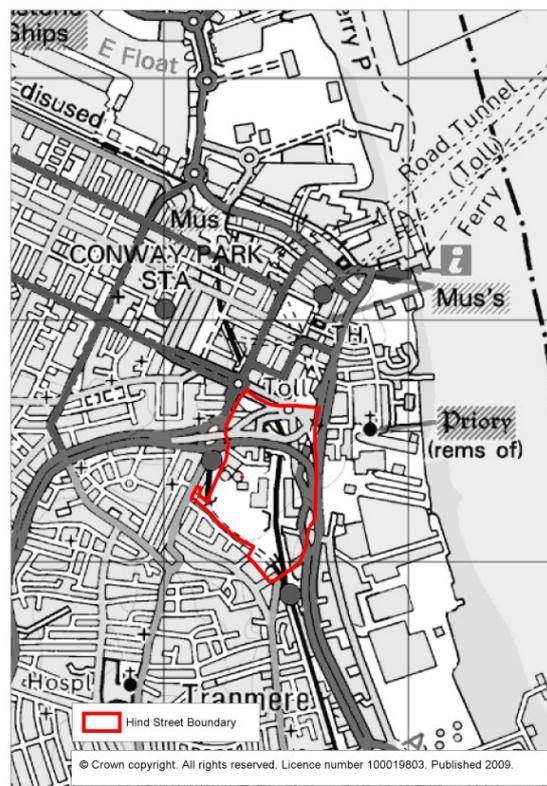
2.120 Over the longer term, this type of development is intended to extend south to include high-density mixed-use developments at Vittoria Dock (Sky City and Vittoria Studios) and Cathcart Wharf (Marina View), to provide a modern strategic office and business location to meet the aspirations of the Council's Investment Strategy and act as a catalyst for wider regeneration of the area.

2.121 Wirral Waters and the surrounding Newheartlands Housing Market Renewal Area were designated as part of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point in December 2008. The intention to designate a new Strategic Regional Site to help transform the Birkenhead Docklands into a high quality employment location was also announced in July 2009. Housing delivery within the Growth Point is expected to increase the Borough's population by at least 12,700 people, 4% above the ONS 2006-based population projections for the Borough, by 2026. New high density employment development is expected to provide up to 27,000 additional new jobs.

2.122 The Strategic Regeneration Framework identifies the former Bidston Dock as an opportunity for a major mixed-use retail and leisure development, to draw back the amount of comparison spending which goes out of the Borough to Liverpool, Chester and Cheshire Oaks.

2.123 The Council will take account of the evidence base prepared for the Wirral Waters Strategic Regeneration Framework in the development of the Local Development Framework and as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Hind Street Regeneration Area



Picture 2.13

2.124 Hind Street is a large underutilised area to the immediate south of Birkenhead Town Centre, to the west of the A41. The area includes operational gas holders, a former gas depot, a former car showroom, a disused railway station and other

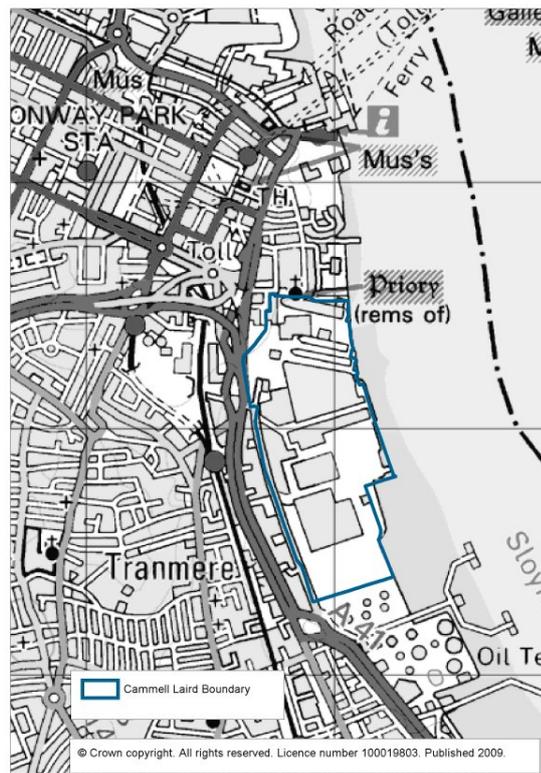
under-utilised areas associated with the tunnel marshalling yards. It is physically separated from the Town Centre by a series of flyovers. Highway access to the majority of the area is also physically constrained.

2.125 A study, funded by public sector partners in 2001, concluded that the area could provide an appropriate location for town centre uses. Initial proposals to identify the area as an expansion to the Town Centre were included in the Alterations to the Unitary Development Plan published for public consultation in July 2004. The proposals were, however, stalled to allow alternative Town Centre options to be further explored. A new superstore was granted outline consent at Cloughton Road within the Town Centre in February 2008. Part of the Hind Street area was granted consent for a mixed-use scheme in January 2009.

2.126 Approximately 8 hectares of the Hind Street area remain vacant, in multiple ownership. A revised masterplan is being considered to provide a more integrated approach to future development opportunities. Recent office development at Queens Gate, to the immediate north of the area, highlights the potential for high quality development and investment, and the area appears to have particular potential for office, light industrial and showroom development.

Cammell Lairds

2.127 The Cammell Lairds Shipyard has been a significant feature of the sub-regional economy since 1824.



Picture 2.14

2.128 Under previous ownership, the site had been suggested as an appropriate location for a large, mixed-use waterfront development. The site is now owned by the operator of the Port of Liverpool and is one of the few sites in the North West that would be capable of providing an additional deep water berth. The adjacent ship repair business is crucial to the continued viability of the wider Port of Liverpool.

Air Quality

2.129 The heavily trafficked A41 corridor is one of only two areas in the Borough where the potential increase in traffic could lead to the designation of an air quality management area. Traffic growth and the impact of any other pollutants along this corridor will need to be closely monitored.

Integrated Regeneration Study

2.130 The Council has recently commissioned an Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters to help produce a single, integrated, comprehensive regeneration plan for the commercial heartland of Birkenhead. The Study will address issues such as the future role of the Town Centre and the integration of proposals within the wider area, particularly with regard to housing market renewal and the "Northside" and "Southside" hinterland to the Wirral Waters proposals within the New Growth Point. The findings of this Study will be fed into the Core Strategy at a later date.

Settlement Area 2 - Key Statistics

Area - 1,433 hectares (9% of Wirral land area)

Urban coastline - 4km (2.5 miles)

Population - 1,375 (mid-2007) <0.5% of Wirral

Number of dwellings - 1,300 (April 2007)

Dwellings per hectare - 0.9

Dwellings completed since 2000 (gross) - 378 (6% of Wirral).

Dwellings demolished since 2000 - 349 (13% of Wirral)

Land with planning permission for new housing (April 2009) - 0.3 hectares (110 units) 3% of supply

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Call for Sites - 95.3 hectares (10 sites) 14% of total land

Key Town Centres - Birkenhead Town Centre

Other centres - Junction 1 Retail Park, Rock Retail Park, Tescos, Bidston

Designated Employment Areas - Twelve Quays (21.4 hectares), Dock Estate (158.5 hectares), Dock Road Corridor, Seacombe (79.9 hectares), Cleveland Street Corridor, Birkenhead (68.8 hectares), Beaufort Road (5.6 hectares), Valley Road Industrial Estate (19.1 hectares), Woodside Approach (3.6 hectares), A41 Corridor, Tranmere (147.2 hectares).

Available employment land - 40 sites (111.4 hectares) 48% of Borough

Vacant land - 95 sites (130.10 hectares) 38% of total vacant land supply.

Population within lowest 20% of IMD 2007 - 1,375 (100% of Area 2)

Population within highest 20% of IMD 2007 - none

Recreational Open Space - 51 hectares (36.7 hectares per 1000)

Publicly Accessible Open Space - 44 hectares (31.3 hectares per 1000)

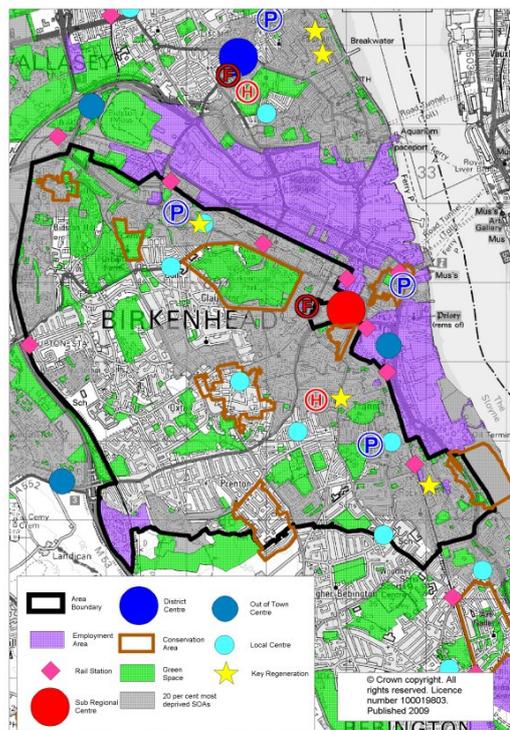
2.131 Key Issues identified for Settlement Area 2 include:

- Providing for the re-development of large areas of vacant and underused land and the future development of key waterfront locations

- Defining the future role of Birkenhead Town Centre
- Securing continued environmental improvements within the older urban areas
- Addressing the lack of appropriate 'quality' employment land, particularly for offices, in the most accessible locations
- Supporting the delivery of housing market renewal and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point
- Establishing a transport strategy to manage the impact of traffic and congestion on the Town Centre
- Facilitating the provision of a "knowledge hub" at Twelve Quays/Wirral Waters
- Preventing the further deterioration of air quality along the A41 corridor at Tranmere
- The integration of the proposals at Wirral Waters with the surrounding area.

2.2.3 Settlement Area 3

2.132 Settlement Area 3 includes the densely developed older terraced housing built during the early 1900s surrounding the Birkenhead Dock Estate and the central commercial areas in Birkenhead and Tranmere; the high quality lower density Edwardian and Victorian settlements along the Noctorum Ridge at Bidston, Claughton, Oxtan and Prenton; and the more densely developed, modern, outer suburbs at Beechwood, Noctorum and Prenton.



Picture 2.15

Local Heritage

2.133 The historical development of the Settlement Area has left a strong built heritage with a significant number of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, including:

- Oxton Village, an early Victorian commuter settlement developed over the summit of Oxton Hill;
- Rock Park, a purpose built, out of town, residential estate formed by Liverpool merchants sited near to a local cross river ferry terminal, which is now no longer in use;
- Clifton Park, a residential area developed in the 1840s, to the immediate south of the main commercial centre by Captain William Sharp to a layout by the architect Walter Scott;
- Birkenhead Park, the first publicly funded park in Britain, which provided the inspiration for the design of Central Park in New York and for the Victorian “Public Parks Movement”;
- Flaybrick Cemetery, a fine example of a formal Victorian cemetery, containing the graves of many people prominent in the early growth of Birkenhead; and
- Mountwood, a popular residential area for wealthy businessmen during the late 1800s and early 1900s which still ranks as one of the most affluent areas of the Borough.

2.134 Bidston Village Conservation Area, one of the earliest settlements in the Settlement Area, dating back to medieval times, still retains the character and appearance of a traditional English village.

2.135 Birkenhead Park Conservation Area is of national significance. Rock Park is on the national register of Conservation Areas at risk.

Socio-Economic Background

2.136 The steady decline of traditional industries has had an enduring impact. Almost two-thirds of the population live within communities with some of the greatest socio-economic needs in England. This is by far the largest concentration of need in the Borough, representing almost half the Wirral residents living in areas ranked within the lowest 20% of the national Index. Only parts of Prenton fell within the highest 20% of the national Index in 2007.

2.137 The Settlement Area has one of the highest proportions of people of working age in the Borough, especially amongst younger age groups. Fertility rates in Bidston, Birkenhead, Tranmere and Rock Ferry are amongst the highest in Wirral, and Bidston and Tranmere have some of the highest proportions of children under 15 years of age. Bidston has one of the highest proportions of 16 to 18 year olds not in education or employment and the outlying former Council estate at Beechwood ranks among the worst in England for child poverty.

2.138 The recent growth in the number of local people claiming Job Seekers Allowance due to the current recession has been highest in Settlement Area 3.

2.139 The Settlement Area generated approximately 6,100 journeys to destinations outside the Borough to work in 2001, over half to Liverpool. Half the households in Birkenhead, Bidston and Tranmere did not have access to a private car. These areas generated some of the lowest numbers of journeys to work outside the area, the majority to Settlement Area 2 and Settlement Area 4.

Housing

2.140 Parts of this Settlement Area are designated as part of the Newheartlands Pathfinder Area and as part of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point. Land values within these areas are low. This area has one of the highest concentrations of neighbourhoods where average house prices are still below the previous stamp duty threshold of £125,000.

2.141 New housing was specifically focused into this and adjoining Settlement Areas in December 2003. This was further tightened to include only the northern and eastern parts of the Settlement Area in October 2005, increasing the proportion of the Borough's new houses built within the Settlement Area from 18% in 2000/01 to 49% in 2008/09. Priority areas for new and improved housing to be promoted as part of the Newheartlands Pathfinder include: Fiveways, Rock Ferry; Church Road, Tranmere; Milner Street/Carrington Street; and Bray Street/Brassey Street/Brill Street, where acquisition for clearance and re-development is continuing.

Town Centres

2.142 Prenton is identified as a Key Town Centre in the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral but is now mainly a convenience and service centre with a declining shopping role. The centre has slipped in the retail rankings and the vacancy rate is rising. There is no current operator demand to locate in the centre.

2.143 There are a number of smaller more local centres within this Settlement Area at Grange Road/Oxton Road; Laird Street; Claughton Village; Oxton Village; Old Chester Road; Church Road; Borough Road (Prenton Park); and Dacre Hill.

2.144 Grange Road West/Oxton Road has a limited convenience offer and a comparison sector limited to bulky goods, charity shops and some specialist retailers linked to Birkenhead. A large number of businesses are in the food and drink sectors. Vacancy rates are high and environmental quality is poor and declining.

2.145 Laird Street has a reasonable convenience offer with good supermarket representation, but a limited comparison offer and some service uses. The centre is dominated by vacant units (40% of the total) and the physical environment is poor.

2.146 Claughton Village primarily provides a convenience shopping role including a Tesco Express and day to day services for local residents. There is a very limited comparison offer. The centre is generally clean, well maintained and has a pleasant environment.

2.147 Dacre Hill serves both a convenience (anchored by Tesco Metro) and limited comparison and service shopping role. Environmental quality is good and there were no vacant units as in May 2008.

2.148 Old Chester Road has seen significant redevelopment and consolidation as part of the Tranmere Urban Village Initiative. The centre now performs a convenience and service role to meet the day to day shopping needs of local residents and environmental quality has significantly improved.

2.149 Borough Road (Prenton Park) has a limited convenience and comparison retail offer with some services uses and meets some of the day to day convenience and service needs of local residents. While vacancy rates are low, there is scope for environmental improvement

2.150 Other centres not included in the Unitary Development Plan are Church Road and Oxton Village. Church Road is scheduled for contraction and redevelopment (in a similar manner to Tranmere Urban Village), as part of the Newheartlands Pathfinder. Oxton Village performs a convenience shopping role, with some comparison and service retailers, including a number of restaurants. Environmental quality is high, although the former bank site is awaiting redevelopment.

Employment

2.151 Outside these centres, the only significant designated employment area is the North Cheshire Trading Estate at Junction 4 of the M53 Motorway. The Estate is popular, almost fully occupied and only small infill plots are now available.

2.152 The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2009 recommended that smaller employment areas at Stanley Road; Craven Street; Moorcroft Road; and Railway Road, should be re-designated as primarily residential areas. No recommendation was made at Holborn Square as the units were fully occupied.

Recreation and Culture

2.153 As one of the Borough's most densely developed urban areas, open space is limited. Birkenhead Park and Bidston Hill provide the largest open spaces, supplemented by a number of smaller parks at Mersey Park at Tranmere; Victoria Park at Rock Ferry; The Arno at Oxton; and Walker Park at Prenton. Outside these areas, open space is often provided through a series of smaller poorer quality sites. There is high demand for playing pitches and existing local facilities are all intensively used.

2.154 A limited number of sites are designated for their importance for biodiversity, outside the natural and semi-natural greenspace at Bidston Hill.

2.155 A review of cultural and leisure services has identified Beechwood Recreation Centre, Grange Road West Sports Centre, the community centres at Beechwood, Gautby Road, Livingstone Street and Noctorum and the Turntable Building for possible community transfer.

Transport Accessibility

2.156 Main routes in and out of the Settlement Area include the Kingsway and Queensway Road Tunnels to Liverpool; the A41 south from Birkenhead to Chester and Junction 5 of the M53 Motorway; the A553 (Laird Street) west to Junction 2 of the M53 Motorway; the A552 west to Junction 3 of the M53 Motorway; and the A5027 west to Upton, Woodchurch and West Kirby. High frequency bus services operate along all these routes. The A552, east of the M53 Motorway, is identified as a congestion corridor in the Local Transport Plan, where traffic flows need to be managed to reduce journey times as part of the Council's Local Area Agreement.

2.157 High frequency electrified rail services run along the northern edge of the Settlement Area between Liverpool, Birkenhead, New Brighton and West Kirby and along the eastern edge of the Settlement Area between Liverpool, Birkenhead and Chester.

2.158 A more limited diesel service runs along the western edge of the Settlement Area along the Fender Valley, in the M53 Corridor, between Bidston and Wrexham in North Wales. The Unitary Development Plan identified the opportunity to enhance accessibility and expand number of rail passengers by constructing new stations at Beechwood and Woodchurch Road. The electrification of the line is now programmed in the Local Transport Plan, however the estimated costs are high and in the interim a more frequent diesel service is proposed until electrification is possible.

2.159 A cycle route through Beechwood links Woodchurch with Bidston and Wallasey as part of national Millennium Route 56.

Other Infrastructure

2.160 Birkenhead School in Oxtan is now the only remaining private secondary school within the Settlement Area, following the closure of Pershore House, Highfield School and the conversion of Birkenhead High School for girls to a new-style Academy for girls aged 3 to 19. Recent reviews of primary school places have led to the amalgamation of Hillside Infant and Junior School, of Prenton Infant and Junior School, and of Vyner Primary School and St Oswald's CE Primary School to form Bidston Village CE Primary School. The Dell Primary School in Rock Ferry was closed. The Council is considering replacing the secondary schools at Park, Rock Ferry and Ridgeway with two new-style Academies. The independent Sixth Form College operates from a re-modelled campus adjacent to Birkenhead Park in Cloughton.

2.161 St Catherine's Hospital, which operates from an older historic site at Derby Road, Tranmere is currently subject to major re-development proposals.

2.162 The Borough's principal electricity substation is located at the urban edge at Prenton Dell. There is also a water abstraction borehole at Prenton.

Flooding

2.163 Approximately 26 hectares of low lying land associated with the Fender Valley is liable to flooding, which could affect up to 400 properties at the edges of Noctorum, Prenton and North Birkenhead.

Settlement Area 3 - Key Statistics

Area - 1,806 hectares (12% of Wirral land area)

Urban coastline - 0.85km (0.5 miles)

Population - 82,500 (mid-2007) 27% of Wirral

Number of dwellings - 41,300 (April 2007)

Dwellings per hectare - 75

Dwellings completed since 2000 (gross) - 2190 (38% of Wirral).

Dwellings demolished since 2000 - 1752 (68% of Wirral)

Land with planning permission for new housing (April 2009) - 62.6 hectares (1,939 units) 50% of supply

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Call for Sites - 10.2 hectares (21 sites)

Key Town Centres - none

Designated Employment Areas - North Cheshire Trading Estate (29.7 hectares), Holborn Square (0.6 hectares), Craven Street (0.8 hectares), Stanley Road (2.4 hectares), Railway Road (1.5 hectares), Moorcroft Road (1.2 hectares).

Employment land - 5 sites (1.5 hectares)

Vacant land - 78 sites (27.6 hectares) 8.1%.

Population within lowest 20% of IMD 2007 - 48,100 (58% of Area 3)

Population within highest 20% of IMD 2007 - 1,500 (2% of Area 3)

Recreational Open Space - 318 hectares (3.9 hectares per 1000)

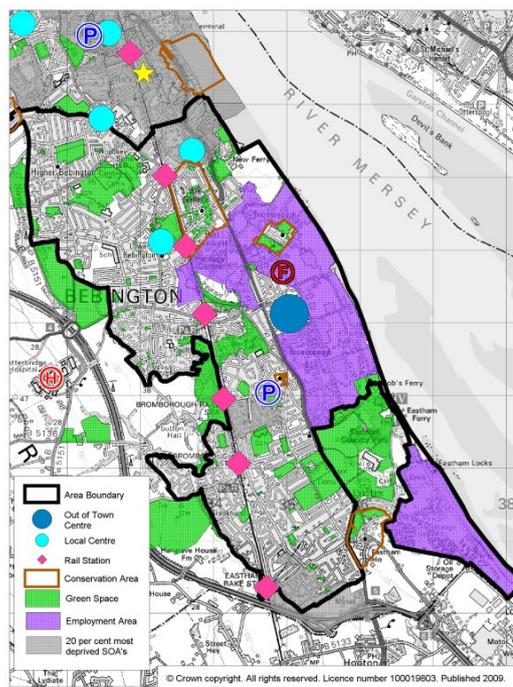
Publicly Accessible Open Space - 229 hectares (2.8 hectares per 1000)

2.164 Key Issues identified for Settlement Area 3 include:

- The continued promotion of housing market renewal and environmental improvements within the older urban areas to the north and east
- Addressing the social, economic and environmental needs of Beechwood, Bidston, Birkenhead, Tranmere and Rock Ferry
- Protecting the limited supply of open space and playing fields
- Managing the impact of traffic and congestion
- Providing for the protection of local heritage
- Preserving the attractiveness of higher quality residential areas along the Noctorum Ridge at Bidston, Noctorum, Claughton, Oxton and Mountwood
- Safeguarding employment uses at North Cheshire Trading Estate
- Providing for the electrification and improvement of the Bidston-Wrexham railway line
- Providing for younger people in Bidston and Tranmere.

2.2.4 Settlement Area 4

2.165 Settlement Area 4 includes the urban areas of Bebington, Bromborough and Eastham.



Picture 2.16

2.166 The Settlement Area contains some of the Borough's most significant economic assets and facilities, including 40% of the Borough's designated employment land. Bromborough is the Borough's second most significant destination for journeys to work (9%) and is the second largest contributor to the Borough's economic output

(12% of GVA). The Manchester Ship Canal deals with up to 8 million tonnes of cargo each year. Approximately 30% of the workforce at Vauxhall Motors, located just over the border in Cheshire West and Chester, live in Wirral.

Socio-Economic Background

2.167 The age profile of the Settlement Area broadly mirrors the Wirral average with a slightly higher than average proportion of retired people and a slightly lower proportion of younger age groups. There is, however, a marked contrast between the north and south of the Settlement Area.

2.168 Parts of the northern area, at New Ferry, demonstrate similar socio-economic needs to areas undergoing major clearance and re-development further north. The former Council Estates at Acre Lane, Bromborough and at Mill Park, Eastham also show some of these needs but with fewer signs of stress. Areas at Higher Bebington, Poulton-Spital and Brookhurst are some of the most attractive residential areas in Merseyside, with some of the highest skills and incomes in the Borough, representing almost 20% of Wirral residents living in areas ranked within the highest 20% of the national Index.

2.169 The Settlement Area, together with the rural settlements to the west, generated over 7,200 journeys to work outside the Borough in 2001, representing almost a quarter of all journeys to destinations outside the Borough, split almost equally between Liverpool and Cheshire West and Chester.

2.170 The majority of this Settlement Area has, since December 2003, been subject to restrictions on new house building to support development in the regeneration priority areas.

Local Heritage

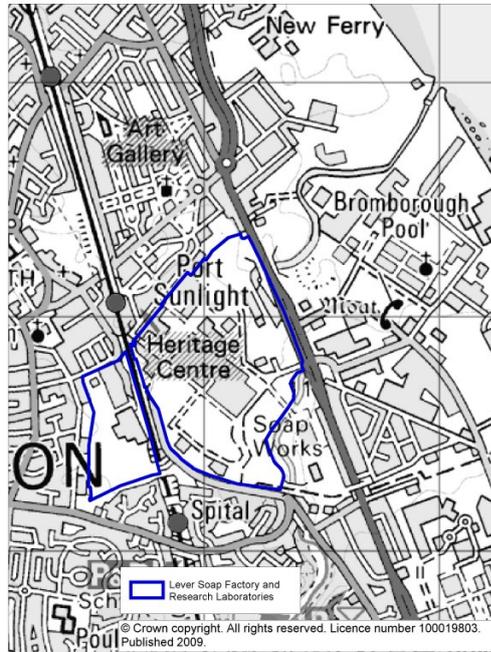
2.171 The older historic settlements at Bromborough Village and Eastham and the innovative early planned settlements for factory workers at Port Sunlight and Bromborough Pool are designated as Conservation Areas. Port Sunlight is of national significance. The Bromborough Courthouse site in the industrial area at Pool Lane is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

2.172 Bromborough Court House moated site and fishponds, Pool Lane, Bromborough is included on English Heritage's Buildings and Monuments 'At Risk' Register.

Wirral International Business Park

2.173 The International Business Park at Bromborough, a designated Strategic Regional Site, is one of the Borough's most successful business locations. Easily accessible to areas of need along the A41 corridor, the Park has accommodated over half the Borough's new employment floorspace, since the Unitary Development Plan was adopted in February 2000, at an annual average of 4.5 hectares.

Lever Faberge Soap Factory and Research Laboratories

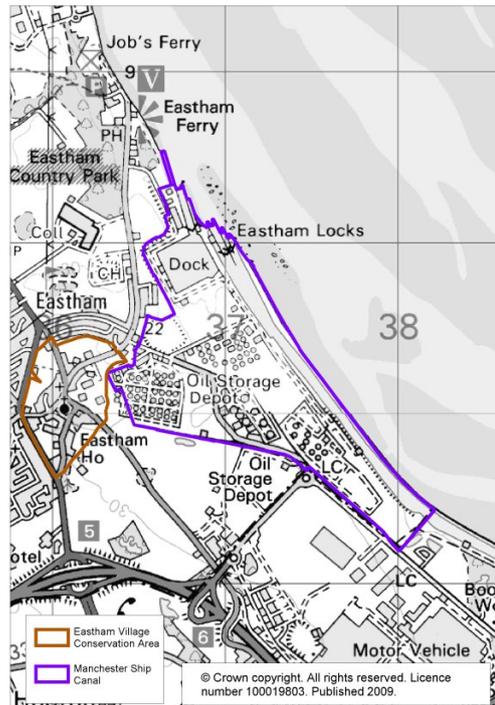


Picture 2.18

2.178 The Lever Faberge Soap Factory and adjacent Research Laboratory is still one of the largest private sector employers in the Borough. Almost a third of the factory complex is now vacant, including the former dockside facilities adjacent to New Chester Road. A redundant area to the east of the Dibbin Brook has recently been released for housing.

Manchester Ship Canal, Eastham

2.179 The Manchester Ship Canal is a regionally important facility with links to Stanlow, Runcorn and Manchester, operated under development rights granted by separate Acts of Parliament. A large area adjacent to the Canal entrance accommodates a series of refinery related industries and chemical storage compounds with direct access to the M53 Motorway. Over 21 hectares of the complex is vacant.



Picture 2.19

2.180 The port operator has aspirations to improve the dock and canal entrances and to further exploit the potential for intermodal freight transfer by water, road and rail. The rationalisation of port facilities could also enable the redevelopment of more central areas in Ellesmere Port. There are continuing concerns about the environmental impact of port and industrial operations on Eastham Village.

Town Centres

2.181 Bromborough Village and New Ferry are designated as Key Town Centres in the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral. Bromborough Village is a relatively stable centre, with low vacancy rates and good environmental quality. The retail offer is limited in scale and diversity and there is limited scope for additional development. By contrast, the shopping area in New Ferry is in serious decline, despite an earlier substantial public sector regeneration initiative. The convenience sector meets a localised catchment. The comparison and service sector is very limited and oriented to the value end of the market. Despite previous contraction, the vacancy rate remains high and there is scope for further reduction in the size of the centre. The Farmers Market is, however, a major asset to the centre.

2.182 The traditional suburban centre of Lower Bebington has a limited convenience and comparison offer and is mainly dominated by service providers. The centre has good environmental quality and low vacancy rates, and benefits from the proximity of the Civic Centre complex.

2.183 Shopping parades at Allport Road; Cross Lane; Town Lane; Spital; and Eastham Rake/Mill Park Drive, serve more local catchments.

2.184 The Croft Retail and Leisure Park, to the east of the A41, is now second only to Birkenhead as the Borough's most important comparison shopping destination (by turnover). Only half of this turnover comes from the immediate area. The adjacent leisure park, providing food and drink, cinema, bingo and health and fitness, is in common ownership. Investment has been made to better integrate parking and traffic circulation but traffic congestion remains heavy at peak periods.

Transport Accessibility

2.185 Main routes into and out of the Settlement Area include the heavily trafficked A41, running between Birkenhead and Junction 5 of the M53 Motorway, which is a significant barrier to pedestrian movements; and the similarly busy B5137 running west to Junction 4 of the M53 Motorway. In the absence of more sustainable travel choices, there are likely to be significant highway capacity issues along these routes over the life time of the Core Strategy.

2.186 High frequency public transport services run along the A41 and the electrified passenger railway line provides links to Liverpool, Birkenhead, Ellesmere Port and Chester.

2.187 Cycle routes link Port Sunlight with the Wirral International Business Park and Eastham Country Park and the A41 to Eastham Rake Railway Station. Increasing the links between the railway stations and the Wirral International Business Park and increasing public access to and along the Bromborough coastline are long term aspirations.

2.188 The southern parts of the Settlement Area are affected by the flight paths associated with the operation of Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

Recreation and Culture

2.189 The majority of the Settlement Area is well-served by a wide range of open spaces and indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, with major sites at the Oval Sports Centre, Eastham Country Park, Brotherton Park including Dibbinsdale Local Nature Reserve, the Leverhulme Sports Ground and Plymyard Playing Fields. Playing fields in Eastham, support some of the highest quality competition in the Borough and serve a wider catchment from areas of shortfall further north up the A41 corridor.

2.190 A review of cultural and leisure services has identified Delamere Community Centre; Windsor Close Community Centre; Mayer Hall; New Ferry Village Hall; The Voluntary Services Centre at The Village, Bebington; and Victoria Hall for possible community transfer.

Other Infrastructure

2.191 The secondary schools at Bebington, South Wirral and Wirral Grammar for Girls were recently re-modelled as part of the wider Private Finance Initiative. The former high school at Acre Lane is now the Council's main teaching resource and training centre. Wirral Metropolitan College still operate services from Carlett Park

but have now requested that the remaining complex be considered for further housing development. A recent review of primary school places has led to the closure of two small primary schools at Bromborough Pool and St Mary's CE in Eastham.

2.192 United Utilities operate a large Waste Water Treatment Works adjacent to the coast at New Ferry, which has had recent investment to address odour problems.

2.193 The main electricity substation for the Settlement Area is located towards the south of the International Business Park. A number of major pipelines also run throughout the industrial areas and along the coast. A number of the industrial facilities at Bromborough and Eastham are registered IPPC and COMAH sites and a specialist Fire and Rescue service operates from Dock Road South. Police services operate from a site adjacent to Bromborough Village centre.

2.194 Bromborough Dock, until recently the Borough's main landfill site, is now being restored to create an additional area of coastal public open space.

Air Quality

2.195 The heavily trafficked A41 Corridor in Eastham is one of only two areas in the Borough where the potential increase in traffic could lead to the designation of an air quality management area. Traffic growth and the impact of any other pollutants along this corridor will need to be closely monitored.

Coast and Flooding

2.196 The only area of undeveloped coastline in east Wirral, at Shorefields in New Ferry, to the north of the Bromborough Dock landfill, is eroding at a predicted rate of 0.5m each year.

2.197 Approximately 62 hectares of land associated with the immediate coastline, Dibbinsdale Brook and Bromborough Pool is potentially liable to flooding, which could affect up to 350 dwellings at Port Sunlight and at the edges of Raby Mere and Eastham.

Settlement Area 4 - Key Statistics

Area - 1,912 hectares (12% of Wirral land area)

Urban coastline - 8.4km (5 miles)

Population - 55,000 (mid-2007) 18% of Wirral

Number of dwellings - 24,700 (April 2007)

Dwellings per hectare - 12.9

Dwellings completed since 2000 (gross) - 658 (10% of Wirral).

Dwellings demolished since 2000 - 19

Land with planning permission for new housing (April 2009) - 14.3 hectares (505 units) 13% of supply

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Call for Sites - 36.7 hectares (11 sites)

Key Town Centres - Bromborough Village

Other Centres - New Ferry, Lower Bebington, Croft Retail and Leisure Park

Designated Employment Areas - Wirral International Business Park (280.2 hectares), Lever Complex (64.7 hectares), Other Bromborough (14.2 hectares), Manchester Ship Canal, Eastham (133.5 hectares)

Employment land - 27 sites (99.5 hectares) 43% of total supply.

Vacant land - 115 sites (122.7 hectares) 36% of total supply.

Population within lowest 20% of IMD 2007 - 6,300 (11% of Area 4)

Population within highest 20% of IMD 2007 - 10,300 (19% of Area 4)

Recreational Open Space - 208 hectares (3.8 hectares per 1000)

Publicly Accessible Open Space - 155 hectares (2.8 hectares per 1000)

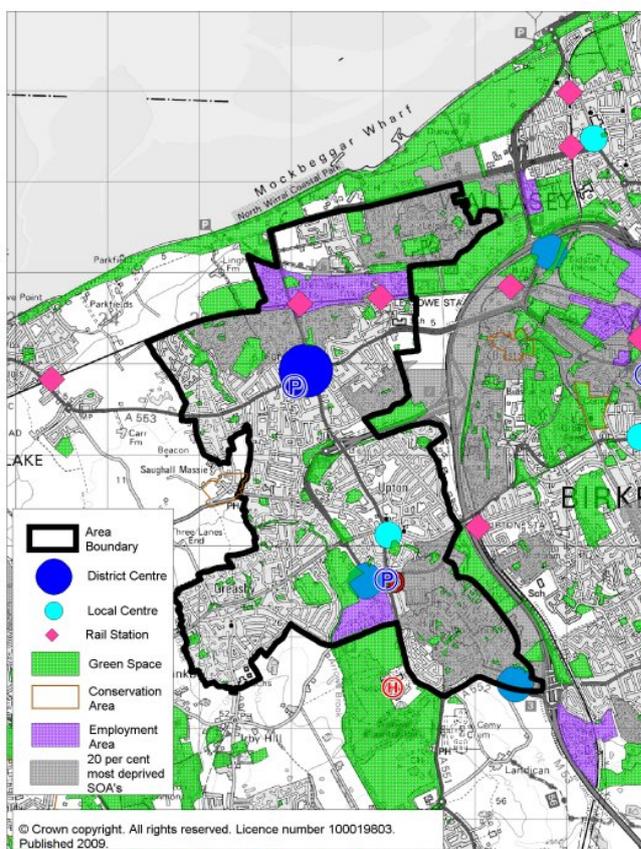
2.198 Key Issues identified for Settlement Area 4 include:

- Maintaining and enhancing the development of the Wirral International Business Park to maximise accessible employment opportunities
- Maintaining the capacity of the Manchester Ship Canal to operate as a sub-regional intermodal freight terminal

- Managing the impact of traffic and congestion on the A41 and B5137 Spital Road
- Addressing the social, economic and environmental needs of New Ferry and Mill Park, Eastham
- Protecting recreation facilities capable of addressing deficiencies in adjacent Areas
- Preserving the attractiveness of higher quality residential areas in the west of the Area at Poulton, Spital and Raby Mere
- Protecting the character of Eastham Village
- Preventing the further deterioration of air quality along the A41 corridor at Eastham

2.2.5 Settlement Area 5

2.199 Settlement Area 5 includes the largely dormitory mid-Wirral settlements of Leasowe, Moreton, Upton, Greasby and Woodchurch.



Picture 2.20

Socio-Economic Background

2.200 The age profile of the Settlement Area is broadly similar to the Borough average with a slightly lower proportion of children and young adults than Wirral as a whole.

2.201 The former Council estates at Leasowe, Moreton and Woodchurch have some of the greatest socio-economic needs in the country. This is the highest concentration of need outside Birkenhead and Wallasey, representing almost 20% of Wirral residents living in areas ranked within the lowest 20% of the national Index. Only Greasby fell within the highest 20% of the national Index in 2007.

2.202 The Settlement Area, excluding Greasby and Woodchurch, generated over 3,600 journeys to work outside the Borough in 2001, two-thirds to Liverpool. Almost 40% of residents in Leasowe and Moreton East did not have access to a private car and Leasowe, in particular, generated one of the lowest numbers of journeys to work to destinations outside the Borough.

Employment

2.203 The large industrial complexes between Moreton and Leasowe, including Tarran Industrial Estate provide important sources of local employment within easy reach of areas most in need. The industrial area at Arrowe Park Road in Upton has been affected by the closures of Federal Mogul and Micropore Insulation but still has the potential to provide an important source of local employment. Nearby Arrowe Park Hospital is also a major source of local employment.

Housing

2.204 The Unitary Development Plan for Wirral initially directed a large proportion of new housing to greenfield sites in Moreton and Leasowe but since December 2003 the majority of the Settlement Area, outside Leasowe and Woodchurch, has been subject to restrictions to support development in the regeneration priority areas. Since October 2005, only Leasowe has been identified as a regeneration priority area.

Local Heritage

2.205 The only designated assets within the Settlement Area are the Scheduled Ancient Monument at Overchurch Park in Upton and the stone cross at Woodchurch. The nearest Conservation Areas are the rural villages at the edge of the Settlement Area at Saughall Massie and Frankby.

2.206 The site at Overchurch Park is included on English Heritage's Buildings and Monuments 'At Risk' Register.

Town Centres

2.207 Moreton is the Key Town Centre for the Settlement Area. The centre is busy and stable, with low vacancy and a thriving service sector, despite the absence of a major supermarket and a limited comparison offer. Additional parking would be beneficial but sites are limited. There is little physical scope for additional retail floorspace in Moreton and limited operator demand.

2.208 Upton Village is the next largest centre within the Settlement Area and is considered to be reasonably healthy. Although the majority of units are small and occupied by service providers, the convenience offer is sufficient to meet local top-up shopping needs. There is a limited comparison offer. Environmental quality is generally good.

2.209 There are limited facilities within the former Council estates of Leasowe and Woodchurch, although Woodchurch is also served by two out-of-centre superstores. Greasby has its own local centres at Greasby Road and Frankby Road offering a mix of convenience goods, top-up food and groceries, limited comparison goods and specialist traders.

Transport Accessibility

2.210 The majority of the Settlement Area is highly accessible by road, with access to three junctions along the M53 Motorway. The Motorway spur road at Junction 2 runs into the heart of the Settlement Area between Moreton and Upton.

2.211 Main routes into and out of the Settlement Area include A551 Leasowe Road north and west to Wallasey and Junction 1 of the M53 Motorway; A553 east west from West Kirby and Hoylake to Birkenhead and Junction 1 of the M53 Motorway; A551 south to Junction 2 of the M53 Motorway; A552 south to Heswall and Junction 4 of the M53 Motorway; and A5027 Upton Road, west to Birkenhead.

2.212 There is heavy congestion at the heart of the Key Town Centre at Moreton Cross and along Hoylake Road at peak times. Improvements to Saughall Massie Road have meant that there is less congestion in Upton and Greasby but these routes are still liable to congestion at peak times.

2.213 High frequency electrified rail services between Liverpool and West Kirby pass through both Leasowe and Moreton. Upton, Greasby and Woodchurch are served by frequent public transport with regular bus links at peak times and throughout the day to West Kirby, Heswall and Liverpool. If the Bidston-Wrexham railway line was upgraded, the potential station at Woodchurch Road would be accessible to Woodchurch residents.

2.214 A series of cycle routes run throughout the Settlement Area: through Woodchurch and Beechwood to Wallasey and Birkenhead; from Woodchurch through Landican to Higher Bebington; along Arrowe Brook between Greasby and Upton; along the Birket from Leasowe to Meols; and along the coast between Wallasey and Hoylake.

Recreation and Culture

2.215 The Settlement Area benefits from access to major open spaces at North Wirral Coastal Park, Arrowe Park and the walkways and open spaces associated with the M53 Corridor. Although most of Greasby is poorly served by local open space, Royden Park is nearby to the west and Coronation Park and Upton Meadow to the east. There is heavy demand for playing pitches, especially in Moreton. Facilities in Leasowe provide overspill for Wallasey, while facilities at Arrowe Park provide overspill for Birkenhead.

2.216 A review of cultural and leisure services has identified Leasowe Recreation Centre; the community centres at Moreton, Greasby, Overton (Overchurch), Leasowe and Woodchurch; and Leasowe Lighthouse for possible community transfer.

Other Infrastructure

2.217 Fire and Rescue services operate from Upton and Police services from both Upton and Moreton. United Utilities operate a Waste Water Treatment plant to the north of Moreton and detention tanks at Moreton Spur in Upton

2.218 Secondary schools at Leasowe and Upton have recently been remodelled. A new replacement complex is under construction at Woodchurch. The vacant buildings at the former St Benedict's RC High School have now been cleared for housing development. A recent review of primary school places has led to the closure of Arrowe Hill Primary. There are surplus playing fields at Fender Primary and St Michael and All Angels RC Primary.

Flooding

2.219 The majority of the Settlement Area is protected from the sea by the Wallasey Embankment.

2.220 Approximately 318 hectares of low lying land associated with the north Wirral coastal plain and the Birket and Fender valleys, and with Arrowe Brook and Greasby Brook, is potentially liable to flooding, which could affect up to 4,800 properties in Leasowe, Moreton and Greasby. Other more localised flooding can, however, also be caused by extreme weather conditions causing flash-flooding and sewer surcharges in areas of Greasby and around the floodplains of Leasowe and Moreton.

2.221 Flood defences were constructed along the Birket in the 1990s and areas designated in the Unitary Development Plan, at Leasowe Road, Ditton Lane, Birket Avenue and in the Fender Valley, must be retained to provide flood water storage.

Settlement Area 5 - Key Statistics

Area - 1,249 hectares (11 % of Wirral land area)

Population - 53,400 (mid-2007) 18% of Wirral

Number of dwellings - 24,300 (April 2007)

Dwellings per hectare - 19.5

Dwellings completed since 2000 (gross) - 809 (14% of Wirral).

Dwellings demolished since 2000 - 200 (8% of Wirral)

Land with planning permission for new housing (April 2009) - 20.3 hectares (238 units) 6% of supply

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Call for Sites - 30.9 hectares (9 sites)

Key Town Centres - Moreton

Other Local Centres - Upton, Greasby, Wallasey Village, Woodchurch, Upton Retail Park

Designated Employment Areas - Moreton (58.4 hectares), Upton (24.0 hectares)

Employment land - 9 sites (16.4 hectares) 7% of supply

Vacant land - 13 sites (5.5 hectares)

Population within lowest 20% of IMD 2007 - 17,500 (33% of Area 5)

Population within highest 20% of IMD 2007 - 5,300 (10% of Area 5)

Recreational Open Space - 145 hectares (2.7 hectares per 1000)

Publicly Accessible Open Space - 130 hectares (2.4 hectares per 1000)

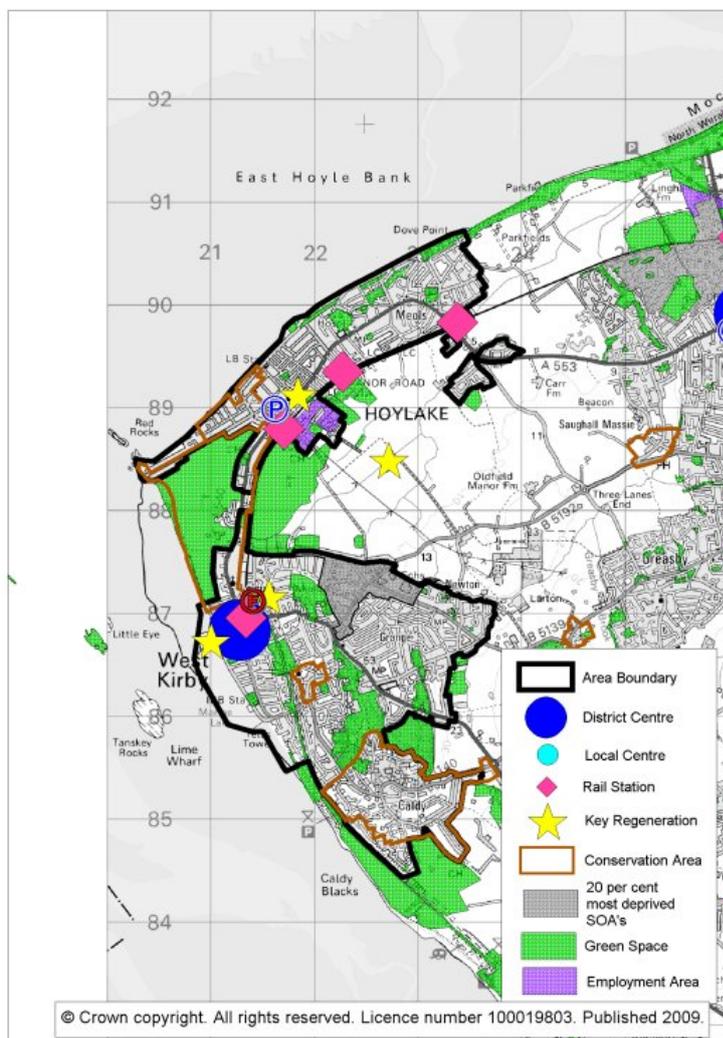
2.222 Key Issues identified for Settlement Area 5 include:

- Safeguarding employment uses at Moreton and Upton
- Addressing the social, economic and environmental needs of Leasowe, Moreton and Woodchurch
- Addressing the need for improved local retail facilities in Leasowe
- Managing the impact of traffic and congestion on Moreton Town Centre
- Managing the potential for flooding along the coast and the Birket and Fender Valleys

- Promoting the recreational potential of North Wirral Coastal Park
- Protecting recreation facilities capable of addressing deficiencies in adjacent Areas
- Facilitating the provision of a new multi-purpose community complex at Moreton
- Improve sustainable transport links with the surrounding areas.

2.2.6 Settlement Area 6

2.223 Settlement Area 6 includes the largely dormitory settlements associated with the coastal resorts of Hoylake and West Kirby.



Picture 2.21

Socio-Economic Background

2.224 The Settlement Area contains some of the most attractive residential areas in Merseyside, which are a significant economic asset to the sub-region. Skills and household incomes are amongst the highest in the Borough and Meols, West Kirby and Caldy represent one of the highest concentrations (over 20%) of Wirral residents living in areas ranked within the highest 20% of the national Index. Only one area, at Greenbank Road, West Kirby, ranks nationally as an area of socio-economic need.

2.225 Despite a higher than average proportion of retired people, one of the highest proportions of people over 75 years of age, and one of the lowest proportions of young adults in the Borough, there is still a significant daily outflow of journeys to work. Hoylake and Meols generated approximately 1,900 journeys to destinations outside Wirral in 2001, almost 70% to Liverpool. Just under 80% of households had access to a private car.

Local Heritage

2.226 The older historic settlements at West Kirby and Caldy are designated as Conservation Areas. Caldy Conservation Area also includes areas of high quality, lower density housing. The high quality, lower density housing areas associated with the Royal Liverpool Golf Course at Kings Gap and Meols Drive are also designated as Conservation Areas. The Meols coastline holds high value for archaeology.

2.227 The Settlement Area has been subject to restrictions on new house building, since December 2003, to support development in the regeneration priority areas in the east of the Borough.

Town Centres

2.228 West Kirby is an attractive, vibrant and stable town centre, with a healthy convenience and comparison retail offer, including specialist shops and independent retailers. The centre has good environmental quality, relatively low levels of vacancy and high levels of footfall. West Kirby Concourse provides indoor recreation facilities including a swimming pool and public services including library, meeting rooms, fire station and medical services.

2.229 Hoylake is Wirral's lowest ranking Key Town Centre in the UK retail rankings. The centre has a limited and contracting comparison retail sector, high vacancy rates, low footfall and limited operator demand. While the service sector (pubs and wine bars) is strong this has given rise to concerns about associated anti-social behaviour. There have, however, been significant environmental improvements, particularly at the western end of the centre. There is potential for consolidation around a centralised core, although the linear nature of the centre restricts the size of units and the scope for additional parking.

Employment

2.230 The only source of local employment outside these centres is Carr Lane Industrial Estate which, despite poor access across the railway line, is fully occupied by a wide range of small businesses and provides an important source of local employment.

Transport Accessibility

2.231 Main routes into and out of the Settlement Area include the A553, east to Moreton and Birkenhead; and the A540 south to Heswall and Chester. West Kirby is also the western terminus for high frequency bus and rail services running through Hoylake and Newton to Birkenhead and Liverpool.

2.232 Cycle routes with links to Moreton, Leasowe, Wallasey, New Brighton and Mid-Wirral run east along the coastal promenade from Hoylake and south along the Wirral Way from West Kirby to Thurstaston, Heswall, Parkgate and Hooton.

Tourism

2.233 Tourism is particularly important to the Settlement Area. The slipways, beaches, coastal promenades, West Kirby Marine Lake, West Kirby Concourse, Ashton Park and the northern entrance to the Wirral Way are popular visitor destinations, providing access to Hilbre Island and views across the Dee Estuary to North Wales. There are sailing clubs at West Kirby and Hoylake and facilities for both static and touring caravans, just outside the Settlement Area, along the coast at Meols and Thurstaston.

2.234 The Council approved a master plan for the regeneration of Hoylake and West Kirby, in 2004, following public consultation, to respond to the return of the Open Golf Tournament to the Royal Liverpool Golf Course in 2006, which was one of the most successful Open Tournaments in recent history. Early phases of improvements took place along the waterfronts, in the shopping centre at Hoylake and along the Wirral Way. The Marine Lake, which is used to host international sailing tournaments, was re-lined in 2009.

2.235 Further projects under consideration include: continued public realm improvements within the town centres of Hoylake and West Kirby; improvements to the promenades at Hoylake and Meols; the replacement of the Marine Lake Sailing School; the re-development of the area around West Kirby Concourse; the upgrading of Wirral Country Park Visitor Centre; and a potential Golf Resort in the area to the south of Carr Lane Industrial Estate, between the railway line and Heron Road, which has the potential to deliver major environmental and economic regeneration benefits. Additional studies have been undertaken to examine the feasibility and siting of the Golf Resort and it is intended to invite expressions of interest from potential private sector partners in due course.

Recreation and Culture

2.236 Outside the resort areas, open space is mainly natural and semi-natural, with an extensive network of public rights of way. Grange Hill and Caldy Hill are distinctive landmarks, noted for their biological and earth science importance.

2.237 A recent review of cultural and leisure services has identified the Hoylake and Westbourne Community Centres for possible community transfer.

Other Infrastructure

2.238 Secondary schools at West Kirby Grammar and Hilbre have recently been extended and re-modelled through the PFI scheme and provided with additional sports facilities. Private education is provided at Avalon School in West Kirby and Kingsmead School in Hoylake. Residential special needs education is provided at West Kirby Residential School for pupils aged 5 to 19, adjacent to the town centre. A review of primary school places is planned for 2010/11.

2.239 Fire and Rescue services operate from West Kirby Concourse. Lifeboats operate from both West Kirby and from a newly built, replacement facility at Hoylake promenade.

2.240 There are water abstraction boreholes at Newton and Grange in West Kirby.

Coast and Flooding

2.241 Sand accretion and naturalisation by spartina is occurring across the Hoylake shoreline.

2.242 Approximately 82 hectares of low lying land associated with the north Wirral coastal plain and the Birket Valley is potentially liable to tidal and fluvial (river) flooding, which could affect up to 760 properties at Meols and at the edge of George Road in Hoylake.

Settlement Area 6 - Key Statistics

Area - 810 hectares (5% of Wirral land area)

Urban coastline - 6.8km (4 miles)

Population - 25,000 (mid-2007) 8% of Wirral

Number of dwellings - 11,600 (April 2007)

Dwellings per hectare - 14.3

Dwellings completed since 2000 (gross) - 503 (9% of Wirral)

Dwellings demolished since 2000 - 21

Land with planning permission for new housing (April 2009) - 12.7 hectares (48 units) 1% of supply

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Call for Sites - 4.2 hectares (9 sites)

Key Town Centres - West Kirby

Other Local Centres - Hoylake

Designated Employment Areas - Carr Lane Industrial Estate (12.9 hectares)

Available employment land - 4 sites (0.32 hectares)

Vacant land - 3 sites (0.74 hectares)

Population within lowest 20% of IMD 2007 - 1,400 (6% of Area 6)

Population within highest 20% of IMD 2007 - 10,400 (42% of Area 6)

Recreational Open Space - 73 hectares (2.9 hectares per 1000)

Publicly Accessible Open Space - 68 hectares (2.7 hectares per 1000)

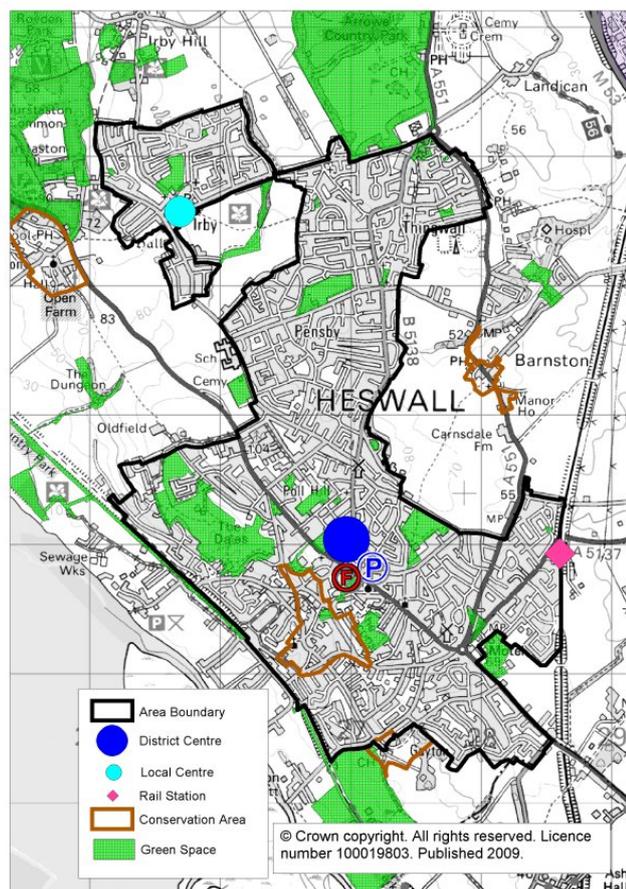
2.243 Key Issues identified for Settlement Area 6 include:

- Preserving the attractiveness of the higher quality residential areas at Kings Gap, Meols Drive, West Kirby, Newton, Caldy and Meols
- Securing continued improvements to tourist and visitor facilities in West Kirby, Hoylake and Meols
- Management of sand accretion and spartina
- Defining the future role of Hoylake shopping centre

- Redevelopment of the West Kirby Concourse
- Replacement for the Marine Lake Sailing School
- Promoting the development of a Hoylake Golf Resort
- Promotion of more sustainable travel choices
- Protection of employment uses at Carr Lane Industrial Estate
- Providing for older people in Hoyake

2.2.7 Settlement Area 7

2.244 Settlement Area 7 includes the dormitory settlements of Irby, Thingwall, Pensby, Heswall and Gayton.



Picture 2.22

Socio-Economic Background

2.245 The Settlement Area contains some of the most attractive residential areas in Merseyside, which are a significant economic asset to the sub-region. Skills and household incomes are amongst the highest in the Borough. Heswall and Gayton represent the highest concentration (30%) of Wirral residents living in areas ranked within the highest 20% of the national Index.

2.246 Settlement Area 7 has one of the lowest proportions of people under 45 years of age, some of the lowest proportions of children and young adults in the Borough and the highest proportion of people over retirement age, which account for almost a third of the local population. Heswall, in particular, has one of the highest proportions of people over 75 years of age in the Borough.

2.247 Land values are high and there is little vacant land. The Settlement Area has been subject to restrictions on new housebuilding, since December 2003, to support development in the regeneration priority areas in the east of the Borough. Prior to the adoption of the Interim Housing Policy in December 2003, evidence had begun to suggest that high values for residential uses in particular, were leading to a loss of local facilities and hindering the ability to find and obtain land for essential public services. The Settlement Area is constrained by a tight Green Belt.

Local Heritage

2.248 Conservation Areas cover the older cores of the original settlements at Lower Heswall and Gayton. An additional area of high quality lower density housing at Gayton is subject to development control density guidelines.

2.249 Irby Hall Moated Site (icehouse) is included on English Heritage's Buildings and Monuments 'At Risk' Register.

Town Centres

2.250 Heswall is the Key Town Centre for the Settlement Area: it performs strongly with a healthy convenience offer, large number of independent retailers and significant food and drink offer, improving investment yields and low levels of vacancy. Recent investment has included a Marks and Spencer Foodstore and there is interest from other retailers. Environmental quality is generally good, although traffic congestion occurs at the Pensby Road/Telegraph Road cross roads. The bus station provides services to Liverpool and Chester as well as local services to West Kirby.

2.251 Irby Village is designated as a Traditional Suburban Centre in the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral. The convenience and comparison retail offer is limited and over half the units are in the service sector but it is generally considered to be a pleasant and attractive centre.

2.252 A number of separate shopping parades along Pensby Road perform an additional local shopping and service function.

Employment

2.253 Employment opportunities are limited to the Key Town Centre and local centres and parades. Car ownership in Heswall is amongst the highest in the Borough. This area alone generated over 2,000 journeys to work outside the Borough in 2001, over half to Liverpool and almost 40% to Cheshire West and Chester. The nearest designated industrial area is outside the Borough in Neston.

Transport Accessibility

2.254 Main routes through and out of the Settlement Area include the A540 between West Kirby and Chester; the A5137 to the M53 Motorway at Clatterbridge; and the B5138 to the A552 and M53 Motorway at Prenton. There is congestion at all main junctions along all these routes: at Arrowe Park (A552); Clatterbridge (M53 Junction 5) and Heswall Town Centre (A540). High frequency bus services operate between Heswall and Birkenhead.

2.255 A limited passenger rail service runs along the eastern edge of the Settlement Area from Heswall Hills between Bidston and Wrexham in North Wales.

2.256 Cycle routes run from Thingwall to: Woodchurch and Beechwood; to Wallasey and Birkenhead; through Landican to Woodchurch, Storeton, Thornton Hough and Brimstage; and through Arrowe Park to Greasby and Upton.

Recreation and Culture

2.257 The Settlement Area benefits from high environmental quality, with access to the Dee coastline, the linked facilities associated with the Wirral Way and Wirral Country Park, the Local Nature Reserves at Heswall Dales and Thurstaston, and Arrowe Park.

2.258 While the majority of available open space is natural and semi-natural, there is limited provision for formal sport and indoor recreation. The secondary school facilities at Pensby are now subject to formal community use, following the construction of a new sports hall and floodlit all-weather pitch facility.

2.259 A review of cultural and leisure services has identified Kylemore Community Centre; Pensby Community Centre; Heswall Hall; and Alexander Hall for possible community transfer.

Other Infrastructure

2.260 The western part of the Settlement Area drains to the Welsh Water controlled Waste Water Treatment Works at Target Road. Restrictions on new development have only recently been lifted following improvements in capacity.

2.261 NHS Wirral are seeking to support the construction of new GP medical centres to replace older facilities associated with the local shopping centres at Heswall, Thingwall and Irby. The proposed site at the Warrens, at the north west edge of the Settlement Area, in the Green Belt at Arrowe Park, was granted planning permission in September 2009. An additional site in Heswall Town Centre for a second GP facility is still being considered.

2.262 Fire and Rescue and Police services both operate from Heswall Town Centre.

2.263 A recent review of primary school places has led to the closure of Pensby Park Primary, although the site has been retained as a Children's Centre, and to the amalgamation of the Pensby Infant and Junior Schools to form Pensby Primary School.

Flooding

2.264 Approximately 3 hectares of land associated with Arrowe Brook is potentially liable to flooding, which could affect up to 70 properties at the edge of Irby at Glenwood Drive and in the vicinity of Porto Hey Road.

Settlement Area 7 - Key Statistics

Area - 902 hectares (6% of Wirral land area)

Population - 28,500 (mid-2007) 9% of Wirral

Number of dwellings - 13,000 (April 2007)

Dwellings per hectare - 14.4

Dwellings completed since 2000 (gross) - 370 (7% of Wirral).

Dwellings demolished since 2000 - 30

Land with planning permission for new housing (April 2009) - 4.7 hectares (50 units) 1% of supply

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Call for Sites - 2.3 hectares (9 sites)

Key Town Centres - Heswall

Designated Employment Areas - none

Vacant land - 1 site (0.08 Hectares)

Population within lowest 20% of IMD 2007 - none

Population within highest 20% of IMD 2007 - 13,100 (46% of Area 7)

Recreational Open Space - 70 hectares (2.5 hectares per 1000)

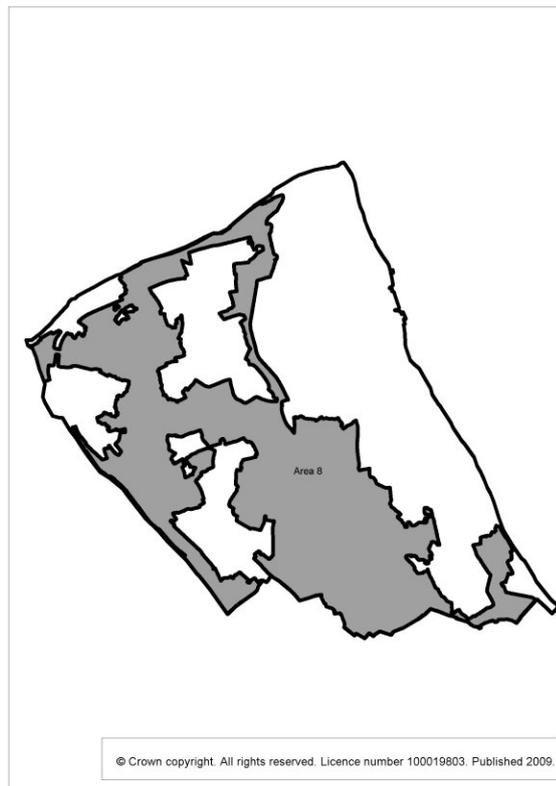
Publicly Accessible Open Space - 67 hectares (2.4 hectares per 1000)

2.265 The Key Issues identified for Settlement Area 7 include:

- Preserving the attractiveness of the higher quality residential areas at Heswall, Gayton and Barnston
- Making adequate provision for essential local services in and around existing centres
- Managing the impact of traffic and congestion on Heswall Town Centre and the main routes out of the Area to Chester, Birkenhead and the Motorway
- Promotion of more sustainable travel patterns
- Securing improvements in rail services along the Bidston to Wrexham railway line
- Protecting recreational open spaces
- Providing for older people in Heswall

2.2.8 Settlement Area 8

2.266 Settlement Area 8 mainly comprises open countryside but includes the rural villages of Eastham, Frankby, Saughall Massie, Thurstaston, Storeton, Thornton Hough, Raby, Brimstage and Barnston.



Picture 2.23

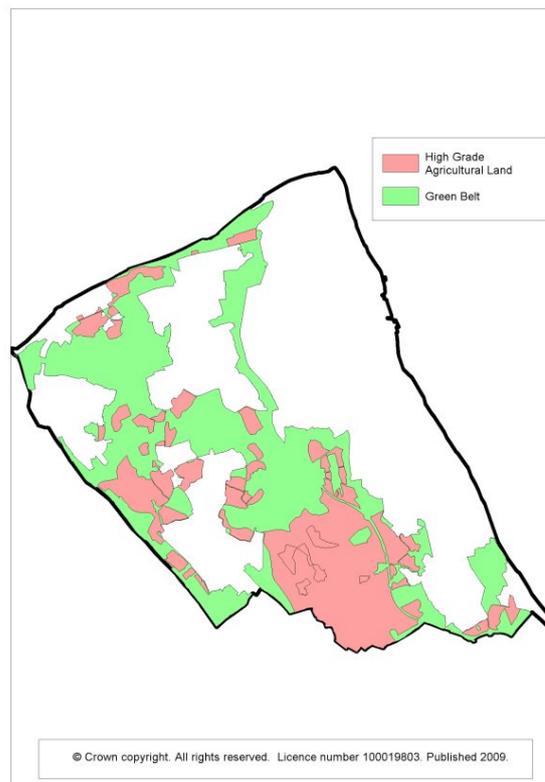
2.267 The Settlement Area is mainly characterised by open land, providing an essential separation between the surrounding urban settlements. The quality of the countryside is a key feature of the image and quality of life in Wirral and access to countryside and coast has been repeatedly identified as a major asset to visitors and

residents alike. Almost 40% of the Borough's residential properties are located within 400 metres of the open countryside in Settlement Area 8 and almost 10% of properties are located within 400m of the coast.

Socio-Economic Background

2.268 The majority of the population in the Settlement Area is over 45 years of age, with a lower than average proportion of children and young adults. Over a third of the population lives within areas ranked within the highest 20% in the national Index.

2.269 The majority of the land is used for agriculture or for formal or informal recreational uses. Although relatively unimportant in terms of total employment, farming still provides almost 4% of the Borough's economic output (GVA), double that across Merseyside as a whole. A reducing number of larger farm units is likely to lead to an increased number of redundant farm buildings and demand for new and larger livestock and processing units to meet the increased demands of environmental legislation. Approximately 40% of the Settlement Area is high grade agricultural land (2,657 hectares).



Picture 2.24

2.270 The Settlement Area has been subject to restrictions on new housebuilding since December 2003, to support development in the regeneration priority areas in the east of the Borough. The only identified local housing need relates to elderly people in Thornton Hough, who may need to leave their own home but wish to stay within the village.

Landscape Value

2.271 The Settlement Area contains some of the most appreciated landscapes in the Borough, a number of which were designated as Areas of Special Landscape Value in the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral. Open areas along the M53 Corridor, which were designated as Areas Requiring Landscape Renewal in the Unitary Development Plan, have seen extensive tree planting supported by the Forestry Commission and the Groundwork Trust.

2.272 The Wirral Landscape Character Assessment 2009 now divides the Settlement Area into thirteen character areas. The Assessment identifies seven areas that should be conserved, while the other six require some element of restoration or enhancement. The Cheshire Historic Landscape Assessment 2007 indicates that much of the remaining landscape is also of historic significance.

Local Heritage

2.273 The villages at Gayton, Thornton Hough, Barnston, Thurstaston, Frankby, Saughall Massie and Eastham are Conservation Areas. The villages at Thornton Hough, Storeton and Raby and areas of more modern suburban development at St David's Road, Eastham; Oxford Drive; Thornton Hough; and at Woodlands Drive and Overdale Avenue, Barnston, are designated as Infill Villages in the Green Belt.

2.274 Thornton Hough is the largest of the rural settlements and acts as a visitor destination in its own right. Brimstage, Carr Hall Farm and farm shops at Thurstaston and Clatterbridge also provide local attractions. Small areas of market gardens remain at Hoylake, Leasowe and along the Dee Coast.

2.275 Storeton Hall, Red Hill Road, Storeton is included on English Heritage's Buildings and Monuments 'At Risk' Register.

Employment

2.276 There are no Key Town Centres within the Settlement Area: retail provision is mainly limited to individual shops in villages such as Thornton Hough. The large hospitals at Arrowe Park, Clatterbridge and Thingwall are major sources of local employment and are designated as Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt alongside the educational facilities at Pensby and Carlett Park in Eastham. The hospitals at Arrowe Park and Clatterbridge have congestion and parking issues and need to improve their sustainable transport offer.

2.277 Mineral activities in Wirral have historically been limited to small quarries for local sandstone and winnable brick clay reserves. Only two sites remain, at Carr Lane, Moreton and Prenton Dell, with planning permission to extract clay to 2042. The Merseyside Mineral Study 2008 recommended that a mineral safeguarding area should be identified at Carr Lane to prevent incompatible development from sterilising the mineral reserve.

Transport Accessibility

2.278 A number of the roads throughout this Settlement Area are minor and retain a rural character.

2.279 The M53 Motorway runs on embankment and in flyover through the Fender Valley and in cutting across open countryside between Prenton and Eastham.

2.280 Major roads between main settlements and the M53 Motorway include A551 between Leasowe and Wallasey and A553 between Moreton and Birkenhead (to Junction 1); A5027 (Saughall Massie Road) between West Kirby and Saughall Massie (to Junction 2); A551 from Heswall to Woodchurch (to Junction 3) and A5137 between Heswall and Spital (to Junction 4). Other main routes crossing the Settlement Area include A553 between Hoylake and Moreton; B5139 between West Kirby and Greasby; and A540 between Hoylake, Heswall and Chester. Bus services to settlements outside these main routes are limited.

2.281 The railway line between Bidston and Wrexham in North Wales runs alongside the M53 Motorway in the Fender Valley between the mid-Wirral settlements and Birkenhead and across the open countryside from Prenton to Heswall with no stations within the rural area. The former station at Storeton Lane, near Barnston has been disused for over 40 years.

Recreation and Culture

2.282 The Settlement Area provides a wide range of country parks, open spaces and outdoor recreation facilities serving the adjacent urban populations, linked to an extensive network of public rights of way, including the Wirral Way, a popular 12-mile multi-purpose footpath, cycleway and bridleway, which runs from West Kirby south to Parkgate and Hooton in neighbouring Cheshire West and Chester. The majority of the Borough's most significant biodiversity assets are also located within this area including Local Nature Reserves at Bidston, Thurstaston, Dibbinsdale and Hilbre Island.

2.283 Over two thirds of the publicly accessible open space within the Settlement Area (384 hectares) lies within 400 metres of an adjacent Settlement Area and functions as local open space for the urban population.

Other Infrastructure

2.284 The Borough's main high pressure gas main runs along the M53 Corridor. An Aircraft Beacon for Liverpool Airport operates from a site just outside Moreton.

2.285 The main educational facilities within the Settlement Area, with the exception of Thornton Hough Primary School, are more closely associated with the neighbouring urban Settlement Areas.

Coast and Flooding

2.286 Sand accretion and naturalisation by spartina is increasingly moving north along the Dee coastline.

2.287 The clay cliffs at Thurstaston, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, are currently eroding at a predicted rate of 0.5 metres each year.

2.288 Approximately 796 hectares of low lying land associated with the north Wirral coastal plain and the Birket and Fender valleys; Greasby Brook and Arrowe Brook in mid-Wirral; and Dibbinsdale Brook, Clatter Brook and their tributaries in south central Wirral, is potentially liable to flooding, which could affect up to 180 properties across the Settlement Area.

Settlement Area 8 - Key Statistics

Area - 7,053 hectares (45% of Wirral land area)

Undeveloped coastline - 15km (9 miles)

Population - 5,800 (mid-2007) 2% of Wirral

Number of dwellings - 2,800 (April 2007)

Dwellings per hectare - 0.4

Dwellings completed since 2000 (gross) - 136 units (3% of Wirral)

Dwellings demolished since 2000 - 16

Land with planning permission for new housing (April 2009) - 9.5 hectares (247 units) 6% of supply

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Call for Sites - 486.4 hectares (79 sites) 73% of total land

Key Town Centres - none

Designated Employment Areas - none

Vacant Land - 12 sites (43.9 Hectares), 12.9% of total supply.

Population within lowest 20% of IMD 2007 - 250 (4% of Area 8)

Population within highest 20% of IMD 2007 - 2100 (36% of Area 8)

Recreational Open Space - 1,186 hectares (201.6 hectares per 1000)

Publicly Accessible Open Space - 540 hectares (92.0 hectares per 1000)

2.289 The Key Issues identified for Settlement Area 8 include:

- Accommodating the economic restructuring of agriculture
- Maintaining the local distinctiveness of settlements, rural villages and Conservation Areas
- Maintaining the character of the landscape, rights of way, heritage, biodiversity and recreational open spaces associated with the countryside and coast and their contribution to the image and attractiveness of the Borough
- Meeting specialist local housing needs in Thornton Hough
- Improving accessibility to key opportunities of employment, education and health care

Consultation Question 1

Do you agree with the spatial portraits set out above? Is there anything else that you think should be included? Please refer to the Settlement Area to which you are referring in your response.

3 Spatial Vision

3.1 This section sets out the Council's Spatial Vision for the future development of the Borough to 2031.

3.2 The Council consulted on an initial Spatial Vision for Wirral, based on the vision contained within the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy, in the Issues Vision and Objectives Report, in February 2009. This section now sets out a revised Spatial Vision and provides additional background information on the wider context that has informed it.

3.1 Developing the Vision

3.3 In 2004, the Council commissioned consultants GVA Grimley and KPMG to:

- re-examine the existing framework of public sector strategies operating across the Borough;
- assess their compatibility with the objectives and priorities of external regeneration agencies;
- look again at the distinctive features of Wirral's "offer"; and
- make recommendations on a strategic and co-ordinated approach to future economic development to deliver the Borough's need for regeneration.

3.4 The consultants prepared an Audit and Analysis Report and undertook a Business Survey to analyse the investment needs of typical businesses across the North West.

3.5 The work was drawn together into an Economic Regeneration and Investment Framework, which concluded that the scale of the ongoing loss of key skills and population coupled with a weakening economic base was providing a clear challenge to Wirral's future economic prospects. Growing the economy was identified as the top priority.

3.6 Three potential options were identified, none of which were considered to be mutually exclusive:

- **Baseline Option** - the existing approach. This option was unlikely to reduce the gap in performance with the rest of Merseyside and the North West; would lead to limited change in the business and industrial structure of the Borough; would continue to hinder economic opportunities being taken up in the west; and would be likely to lead to a continued decline in population.
- **Development Option** - an aggressive business and development focus to reverse economic trends. This option was considered risky and difficult, requiring innovation and a more partisan approach, to spread wealth creating opportunities across the whole of the Borough and gain the support of national and regional stakeholders. The potential benefits would, however, include: a stronger economic role within Merseyside and the North West; the modernisation of the

industrial base; higher value employment opportunities; greater supply chain development opportunities; and the potential reversal of the growing prosperity gap with related social and labour market benefits.

- **Lifestyle Choice Option** - focusing on strengthening a dormitory role alongside the Borough's neighbouring economic powerhouses, which would follow the baseline option but with a greater focus on enhancing the lifestyle attributes of the Borough including a more proactive approach to residential development through actions such as releasing industrial land for housing. Potential benefits included clarifying the role of the Borough within a North West context; focusing activities to attract higher incomes to reduce any further economic leakage from the area; establishing a new purpose for business, tourism and leisure development; securing a more even spread of development activity across the Borough; and more targeted, higher value business activity linked to higher quality housing development with potential for stronger growth over the longer term.

3.7 The findings of this review have set a clear direction for the strategies for social and economic development which have followed.

Wirral Investment Strategy

3.8 The Council's Investment Strategy was adopted as a direct response to the recommendations of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Framework. A consultation event, attended by more than 170 private sector business representatives, established the key principles of the Strategy. The Council endorsed the Development Option as the approach most likely to deliver the economic improvements necessary to address the issues identified.

3.9 The Investment Strategy Vision Document, which was issued in final form in 2007, stated that *"Together with our partners, Wirral Council is committed to encouraging focused and dynamic development while maintaining and enhancing Wirral's unique character and high quality of life. The new Investment Strategy will ensure Wirral continues to be a prosperous and sustainable place to invest in, live, work and visit"*.

3.10 The Vision Document also identified a series of key opportunities and challenges under the headings of infrastructure; business; skills and education; people and jobs; and quality of life. Priority projects included:

- Mersey Waterfront Regional Park (a coastal regeneration initiative);
- Brand New Brighton (a coastal regeneration initiative);
- West Wirral Development (including West Wirral Enterprise Zone, Wirral Way, Hoylake and West Kirby and The Golf Resort);
- Wirral Docklands and Woodside (including Wirral Docklands, Woodside, Cammell Lairds and the Birkenhead Docks Rail Link);
- Wirral Strategic Investment Area (Wirral International Business Park);

- Wirral Strategic Rail and Road Transport and Infrastructure (Strategic Rail and Corridor Improvements including Bidston Viaduct and the Borderlands Bidston to Wrexham railway); and
- Birkenhead Town Centre (Town Centre regeneration).

3.11 The objective of the Investment Strategy was for partners to work to:

- raise productivity;
- retain and increase the number of higher value jobs in the Borough;
- encourage innovation and enterprise;
- tackle skills and employment disparities;
- develop and improve infrastructure;
- develop the future viability of existing employment space; and
- improve the availability of sites and premises for new investment.

3.12 The Investment Strategy is also underpinned by three further reports:

- **Employment for All: A Full Employment Strategy for Wirral** (October 2006), prepared by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, which identified a target of increasing the employment rate to 76% by 2012 - then equivalent to placing an additional 9,493 people into employment - and the actions and agencies required to achieve it;
- **Embracing Change: An Enterprise Strategy for Wirral** (January 2007), which set the direction of enterprise policy in Wirral for the following decade and identified the broad actions and approaches that would be needed to achieve the Council's ambitions. The overarching aim is to narrow the enterprise gap between Wirral and the North West in: self-employment rates; business start-up rates; business density/stocks; employment; and GVA per head. The Strategy acknowledges that the gap between some of these measures and other areas is large and that closing the gap would require long-term comprehensive targeted interventions with a focus on existing firms; inward investment; entrepreneurs; and the sectoral composition of Wirral's economy; and
- **The Wirral Employment and Investment Framework** (May 2008), prepared by Regeneris Consulting, to provide greater clarity on the interventions required to tackle employment, enterprise and skills; inform decisions on applications for external public funding; and provide a framework for commissioning projects under the Working Neighbourhood Fund. The Framework calculated that attaining regional levels of performance would require the creation of an additional 200 new VAT-registered businesses each year; increasing the number of entrepreneurs by 2,000; increasing the stock of VAT-registered businesses by 2,500 (based on a present stock of 5,450); and the generation of a further £1.3bn in GVA. The Framework also recognised that the national trend towards small and medium sized enterprises, could increase the gap in performance, in the absence of comprehensive local interventions. The Framework was updated during 2009 to respond to the recession and to changing economic conditions.

3.13 Together, these documents indicate that Wirral must adopt a far more ambitious approach towards growth and regeneration, if the social and economic challenges faced by the Borough are to be successfully addressed. The documents will be combined and updated to reflect the new statutory duty to prepare an Economic Assessment.

Wirral Sustainable Community Strategy

3.14 The Core Strategy Development Plan Document is intended to provide the spatial expression of the Sustainable Community Strategy for the Borough. National policy also states that the key spatial planning objectives for the area must be in alignment with the priorities identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy (PPS12).

3.15 The Sustainable Community Strategy, prepared by the Wirral Local Strategic Partnership - "Wirral 2025 - More Equal More Prosperous" - was adopted by the Council on 18 May 2009. The Strategy is intended to demonstrate how the local statutory agencies, private sector and community and voluntary sector will work together to harness the goals of the Investment Strategy.

3.16 The Sustainable Community Strategy for Wirral sets out a "story of place" which describes the Borough in general and provides additional detail in relation to the economy; crime and community safety; health and well-being; life chances for children and young people; living and working environments; and housing and states that *"Our vision is of a more prosperous and equal Wirral, enabling all communities and people to thrive and achieve their full potential"*.

3.17 The principal aims of the Community Strategy are to deliver:

- a strong local economy for Wirral;
- safer, stronger communities in all parts of the Borough;
- the best possible health and wellbeing for all families and individuals;
- excellent life chances for children and young people; and
- sustainable, appropriate housing for all.

3.18 The Community Strategy also sets out the intention to ensure that the increased prosperity resulting from a stronger local economy is accessible to all and to narrow the gap between Wirral's most affluent and most deprived communities in terms of health, education and crime.

3.19 The Community Strategy indicates that the Local Strategic Partnership is committed to large scale change by "thinking big" for Wirral. Thinking big means:

- focusing growth and investment on the east of the Borough, at the heart of the City Region, where social, economic and environmental challenges are most acute, regeneration and improvement are most needed and where the opportunities created will be most accessible to the greatest number of people;

- working together to ensure that the regional and local transport infrastructure supports Wirral's plans for continued growth and investment;
- developing the Birkenhead area as the Borough's principal focus for retailing and services, complemented by a network of local centres providing modern facilities for day-to-day needs and community support, making Birkenhead the retail destination of choice for all Wirral residents as opposed to just those in the immediate catchment and responding to competition from nearby Liverpool and Chester and developments such as Cheshire Oaks;
- expanding the scale and type of employment within Birkenhead and the A41 Corridor and redeveloping the vacant and under-used land within the Dock Estate to provide a step change in the mix, type and quality of business accommodation available;
- maximising the strengths of West Wirral, including its reputation for high quality homes and environment as well as being an increasingly recognised destination for countryside and coast recreation and tourism, which will in turn support growth and regeneration in the east of the Borough;
- transforming services, and looking at ways that partners can collaborate to maximise our strengths;
- ensuring that the strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector in Wirral plays an increasingly key role in improving quality of life for all;
- looking ahead to the challenges presented by an increasingly ageing population for services and the community;
- involving everyone – including residents, businesses and schools - in plans to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and to reduce Wirral's carbon footprint;
- working together to tackle issues such as alcohol abuse which, if addressed, will have added value for the community; and
- making the main priority for homes the creation of sustainable and cohesive communities at the heart of the urban area, promoting housing market renewal and providing a greater mix in the size, type, tenure, quality and affordability of housing available, supported by a high quality environment and modern services including health and education.

3.20 A number of major regeneration projects are highlighted, including Wirral Waters, Newheartlands and Woodside. A number of cross-cutting partnership principles are also identified to address the wider sustainability agenda, which include:

- living within environmental limits;

- working towards a strong, cohesive and fair Wirral;
- engaging communities;
- ensuring our services are accessible; and
- delivering value for money.

3.21 The Community Strategy indicates that its principal objectives are intended to be delivered through the Local Development Framework for Wirral, including the Core Strategy Development Plan Document, alongside key partner plans including the Council's Investment Strategy and Corporate Plan, the Local Transport Plan and the NHS Wirral Strategic Commissioning Plan.

Wirral Local Area Agreement

3.22 The short-term delivery plan for addressing the challenges identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy is set out within a Local Area Agreement.

3.23 The Local Area Agreement for Wirral, which was agreed on 31 May 2008 and refreshed on 26 March 2009, identifies a series of improvement targets for the period to March 2011 linked to a series of National Indicators related to worklessness; skills; business start-ups; employment land and premises; crime and anti-social behaviour; traffic accidents; health; environmental cleanliness; recycling and waste minimisation; social care; homelessness; homes for vulnerable people and housing delivery.

Liverpool City Region Multi Area Agreement

3.24 The Liverpool City Region Multi Area Agreement builds on the strategic priorities set out in the City Region Development Programme agreed in 2006. The Agreement identifies where joint working will take place, in collaboration with Government, under four "platforms".

3.25 A Story of Place and the Employment and Skills Platform was agreed with Government in January 2009. A revised Story of Place and the Platforms for Economy, Housing and Transport were agreed in September 2009.

3.26 Story of Place Priorities include:

- tackling worklessness and improving the quality of life of the most deprived people;
- improving the size and depth of the business base;
- equitably closing the wealth gap between the City Region and the rest of the UK;
- significantly raising the skill level of the population;
- developing a sustainable, modern and efficient, digital, transport and energy infrastructure; and
- improving the quality, availability and affordability of the housing stock.

3.27 Employment and Skills Platform priorities relate to: stimulating employer demand; integrating employment and skills delivery; and securing a more strategic approach.

3.28 Economy Platform priorities relate to: promoting the visitor economy; Liverpool SuperPort; a low carbon economy; the Mersey Tidal Energy project; next generation distribution networks; and the knowledge economy.

3.29 Housing Platform priorities relate to: supporting growth and renewal; improving the quality of private sector housing; housing energy efficiency; landlord accreditation; and returning housing delivery to levels of mean average completions for 2003-2008 by the end of 2011/12.

3.30 Transport Platform priorities relate to: improving accessibility to employment and opportunities; improving the capacity and connectivity of the City Region network; reducing emissions; and addressing climate change.

3.31 A Joint Investment Board is being established, to prepare a joint investment plan for the City Region for housing, regeneration and transport.

Wirral Council Corporate Plan

3.32 The Council's Corporate Plan was approved by Full Council on 9 February 2009 and sets out an expanded vision for Wirral:

- 'Our vision is of a more prosperous and equal Wirral, enabling all communities and people to thrive and achieve their full potential.'
- We aim to build a Borough founded on a strong, vibrant economy with high levels of employment. We will give priority to providing the environment and developing the skills needed to make Wirral a place where business chooses to invest – an economy that retains and attracts our young people and provides opportunity for all to realise their full potential. We have already agreed an Investment Strategy to help deliver this.
- Our ambition is to end deprivation. We will work to narrow the gap in education, employment, health and housing both within and between communities. We will give priority to raising the aspirations, opportunities and quality of life of our most vulnerable, disadvantaged or excluded citizens, wherever they might live.
- We will seek to establish a shared Wirral identity, which draws together the Borough's urban, rural and coastal communities – proud of our history and heritage, confident in our future, welcoming, inclusive and open to all people. We will encourage a real pride in the Borough, through high standards of cleanliness, environmental protection and public safety, creating a clean, safe and sustainable environment.

- We are committed to playing our full part in the economic, political and cultural life of the City Region. We recognise our success is closely linked with that of our neighbours in Liverpool, Chester and beyond. We will work enthusiastically with them and others to ensure Wirral both contributes to and benefits from growth and development in the Region. We will also develop links with regions elsewhere in the UK and abroad in order to further enhance our economic prosperity.
- As a 'can-do' Council, our aim is to deliver first class services, which are affordable, sustainable and meet the needs of local people. Wherever possible we will do this through the engagement and empowerment of individuals and communities in both the design and delivery of local services, and by working together with partners in the public, private and the community/voluntary sectors.

3.33 The Corporate Plan sets out five objectives to monitor progress against this vision:

- to create more jobs, achieve a prosperous economy and regenerate Wirral;
- to create a clean, pleasant, safe and sustainable environment;
- to improve health and well being for all, ensuring people who require support are full participants in mainstream society;
- to raise the aspirations of young people; and
- to create an excellent Council.

3.34 Each objective is then broken down into the Council's aims for the next five years and the immediate priorities for improvement in the year ahead.

3.2 Wider Policy Context

3.35 The Spatial Vision has also been influenced by wider policy requirements which place an additional limit on the choices available to the Council.

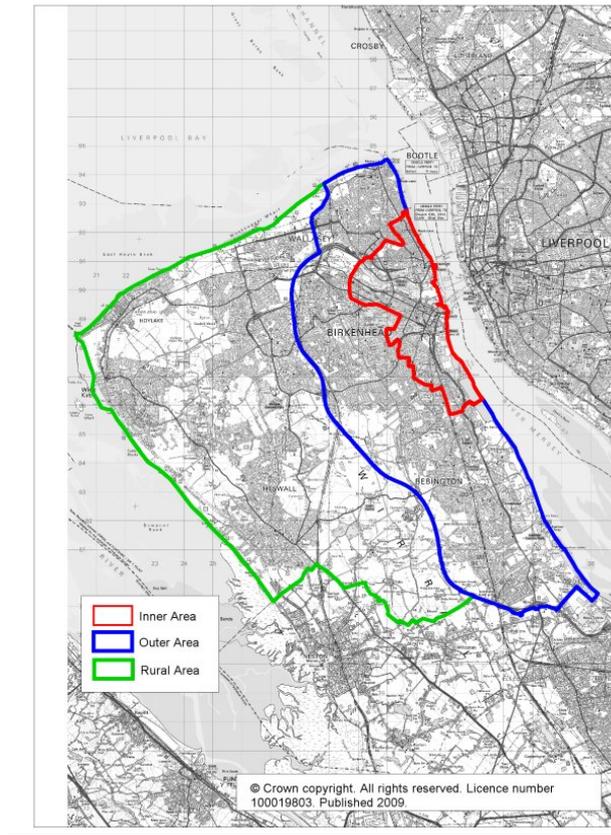
Merseyside Green Belt

3.36 Policies encouraging urban regeneration allied with a restrictive Green Belt tightly drawn around the existing urban area have been the cornerstone of land use planning strategies in Merseyside since the early 1980s. Once defined, Green Belts are subject to strict national policy controls and can only be altered in exceptional circumstances.

Regional Spatial Strategy

3.37 The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (September 2008) issued by the Secretary of State forms part of the existing statutory Development Plan for the Borough alongside the Council's Unitary Development Plan for Wirral (February 2000). The Council's Core Strategy Development Plan Document, which will replace large parts of the Unitary Development Plan, must be in general conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy and must take account of its policies and requirements.

3.38 The Regional Spatial Strategy divides the Borough into three broad spatial areas, which are illustrated on Picture 3.1 below:



Picture 3.1

3.39 In the **Inner Area** - defined as the Newheartlands Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Area - the priority is to maximise economic potential and promote urban renaissance and social inclusion; provide employment; support housing market renewal; address worklessness; enhance accessibility by public transport; provide environmental improvements including high quality green infrastructure; focus good quality residential development to secure a significant increase in population and to support major regeneration activity; and maintain and enhance the role of Birkenhead to provide community facilities, services and employment.

3.40 In the **Outer Area** - defined as the remaining urban area to the east of the M53 Motorway - the priority is to promote economic development; maximise employment potential; address worklessness, urban renaissance and social inclusion complementary to the regeneration of the Inner Area; support significant intervention in areas where housing market restructuring is required; expand the quality and choice of housing; and maintain and enhance the role of key service centres.

3.41 In the **Rural Area** - defined as the areas to the west of the M53 Motorway - the priority is to maximise economic potential; support sustainable farming and food; concentrate development in key service centres; ensure the provision of housing to

address barriers to affordability and to meet identified local needs; and enhance the value of the rural environment; consistent with other regeneration programmes and policies.

3.42 Policy RDF4 of the Regional Spatial Strategy states that the general extent of the Green Belt will be maintained and that there is no need for any exceptional substantial strategic change to the Green Belt and its boundaries within Merseyside before 2011. After 2011, the presumption will be against exceptional substantial strategic change to the Green Belt in Merseyside until a strategic study has been undertaken by the Regional Planning Body and the conclusions have been included in a future review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

3.43 The Regional Planning Body with Government Office North West have recently decided not to include a review of the Green Belt in the preparation of the single Regional Strategy (RS2010), which is intended to replace the existing Regional Spatial Strategy.

Other Initiatives

3.44 The national designation of major regeneration initiatives, including the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point in Settlement Areas 1, 2 and 3; the Assisted Areas in Settlement Areas 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5; the designation of the Strategic Regional Sites in Settlement Areas 2 and 4; and other initiatives within the wider Liverpool City Region must also be taken into account.

3.3 A Vision for Wirral

3.45 The amended Spatial Vision for the Core Strategy is, therefore, set out below:

Wirral 2031

A. By 2031, Wirral will be a Borough which offers a higher quality of life for all its residents and visitors;

B. The economic objectives of the Investment Strategy for Wirral will have been met; Wirral's economy will be strengthened and diversified; there will be a wide range of employment sites and premises served by modern communications and infrastructure which are attractive to existing businesses and inward investors; the Borough will be an attractive location for higher quality, better paying employers, particularly in the knowledge-based, high technology manufacturing and environmental technology sectors; and will be less dependent on jobs in retailing and public services;

C. Significant employment growth will have been focused on the designated Strategic Regional Sites at Birkenhead in Settlement Area 2; and at Wirral International Business Park in Settlement Area 4;

D. The population will have grown within Settlement Area 1, Settlement Area 2 and Settlement Area 3. Net out-migration from the Borough will have been reduced and there will be a higher proportion of younger age groups within the population as a whole;

E. Levels of unemployment and worklessness will have been significantly reduced and the skills base in Settlement Area 1, Settlement Area 2, Settlement Area 3, Settlement Area 4 and Settlement Area 5 will have been enhanced;

F. As a result of the Newheartlands Housing Market Renewal Initiative and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, Settlement Area 1, Settlement Area 2 and Settlement Area 3, will be seen as increasingly attractive places to live, through the promotion of sustainable, affordable, mixed communities and the provision of high quality, well designed, zero-carbon, mixed tenure housing, which will be capable of meeting the needs of all sectors of the community;

G. The amount of vacant and derelict land in the older urban areas of Settlement Area 1, Settlement Area 2, Settlement Area 3 and Settlement Area 4, will have been substantially reduced and used to secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits;

H. Settlement Area 2 will provide an enhanced and revitalised sub-regional centre as the retail, service and cultural centre of choice for all the Borough's residents, supported by a network of vital and viable district and local shopping centres;

I. Settlement Area 2 will be halfway through a long term transformational programme of development, achieving integrated, high density, mixed-use regeneration to re-create sustainable urban communities at the heart of the

older urban areas of east Wirral, securing thousands of new jobs and homes through the creation of new living and working markets in a world class environmental setting;

J. The potential of the Borough as a tourism destination will have been further developed by focusing on the quality of the natural environment and built heritage and the regeneration of the coastal resorts of New Brighton, West Kirby and Hoylake and the number of visitors and the proportion of jobs maintained will have increased;

K. The level of disparity in social, economic, environmental and health outcomes found in parts of Settlement Area 1, Settlement Area 2, Settlement Area 3, Settlement Area 4 and Settlement Area 5, will have been significantly reduced;

L. All new development will be suitably adapted to the potential impacts of climate change and flood risk, maximising energy efficiency and minimising carbon emissions and the consumption of water and other resources. Secure renewable, decentralised and low carbon sources of energy of an appropriate scale for Wirral will have been developed. All new residential developments will have been zero carbon from 2016 onwards and the Borough's total carbon emissions will have been cut by 60% by 2025;

M. The Borough will have maintained and enhanced a high quality urban and rural environment, with a fully established network of high quality green infrastructure including enhanced and safeguarded biodiversity and geodiversity resources. Local distinctiveness and heritage will be highly valued and supported by local controls over the design and character of new development;

N. The quantity of waste generated in the Borough and the proportion going to landfill will have been minimised through the promotion of sustainable waste management and a higher proportion of waste generated will be re-used, recycled or re-processed, locally or within the wider sub-region;

O. Transport and land use will have been co-ordinated to promote the most sustainable transport choices, to increase the number and proportion of journeys undertaken by public transport, walking and cycling; reduce the number and length of individual car journeys; and increase the amount of freight moved by rail and water; and

P. Public safety and crime prevention will be high priorities in the design and location of new development.

Consultation Question 2

Do you agree with the amended Spatial Vision for Wirral?

If not, please give the reasons for your answer and indicate how you think it could be improved.

4 Spatial Objectives

4.1 Delivering the Vision

4.1 The Council has identified a number of Spatial Objectives to help focus the delivery of the Spatial Vision.

4.2 The Council consulted on a series of twenty-nine potential strategic policy objectives as part of the Issues, Vision and Objectives Report in February 2009.

4.3 While the majority were well received, some respondents told us that the final objectives should be better focused on strategic spatial priorities, should be more geographically specific and should avoid re-stating national policy.

4.4 The Council has therefore revised the initial long list of strategic policy objectives to concentrate on a shorter, simpler list of Spatial Objectives, that concentrate on the spatial priorities that are most likely to influence the future pattern of development across the Borough.

4.5 The revised Spatial Objectives are briefly considered in turn below:

4.2 Spatial Objectives

Economic Revitalisation

4.6 Poor economic performance has limited Wirral's contribution to the economy of the sub-region and the ability to tackle the lack of income and employment in areas most in need. The Council has accepted the need to bring economic indicators up to regional levels and in the longer term to contribute more strongly to economic growth within the sub-region and to tackle the loss of spending on retail and leisure to destinations outside the Borough.

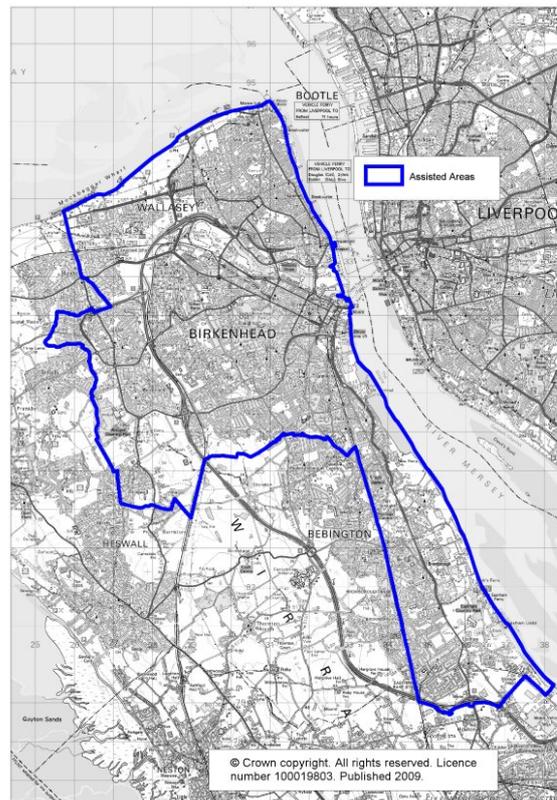
4.7 Economic revitalisation is a clear priority within the full range of local, regional and national documents including the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Council's Corporate Plan, the relevant Local Area and Multi Area Agreements as well as higher level documents including the Northern Way Growth Strategy, Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Spatial Strategy and the Liverpool City Region Action Plan. This applies to the full range of employment sectors including retail, leisure, tourism, agriculture as well as sectors more normally associated with business, industry and distribution.

4.8 The scale of the changes necessary to achieve regional averages in key indicators, such as output and the density of jobs and businesses, may not be fully achieved within the plan period.

4.9 The Enterprise Strategy for Wirral estimates that up to 2,500 new VAT registered firms would be needed to reach the North West average. This would require the provision of an additional 130,000 square metres of office floorspace and an additional 83,600 square metres of industrial floorspace. The Wirral Employment Land and

Premises Study 2009 indicates that up to 302 hectares of employment land could be needed to meet employment needs to 2031 and the Wirral Retail, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Study 2009 indicates that up to 85,300 square metres of additional net comparison retail floorspace is needed to reduce the loss of retail spending by up to 10%.

4.10 Spatial Objective 1 should be applied across the Borough with a special emphasis on the nationally defined Assisted Areas and on the delivery of designated Strategic Regional Sites. Wirral International Business Park has been designated as a Strategic Regional Site since October 1999. An additional Strategic Regional Site has now also been designated to help bring the Birkenhead Docklands into use as a high quality employment location. Picture 4.1 shows the Assisted Areas announced in December 2006.



Picture 4.1

4.11 Spatial Objective 1 should also be applied to support the delivery of Spatial Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11.

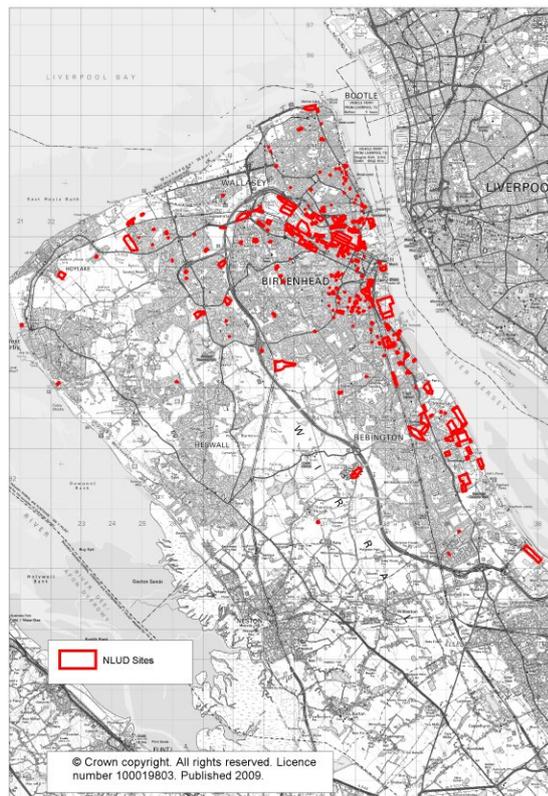
4.12 Progress against Spatial Objective 1 could be monitored against a basket of economic indicators including GVA per head, total employment by sector, amount and type of business floorspace, number of VAT registered businesses and job densities. Delivery would be supported by the allocation of land for development in site-specific Development Plan Documents.

Spatial Objective 1 - Economic Revitalisation

To develop the Assisted Areas and the Strategic Regional Sites in Settlement Areas 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 to revitalise, diversify and expand the Borough's economy and to increase rates of output, economic activity and employment to reach and maintain average levels of performance for the North West Region.

Vacant Urban Land

4.13 Evidence from the National Land Use Database shows a high proportion of vacant and underused land within the older urban areas of east Wirral. Vacant land and premises are a wasted resource, which can undermine economic revitalisation and housing market renewal. Contamination can be an additional barrier to beneficial re-use. The target for Wirral in the Regional Spatial Strategy is for at least 80% of new housing development to be on previously developed land.



Picture 4.2

4.14 The scale of development necessary to see the beneficial reuse and development of almost 350 hectares of vacant land, in addition to any further structural changes, is unlikely to be fully achieved within the plan period. Picture 4.2 illustrates the vacant sites registered in the National Land Use Database (NLUD) in April 2009.

4.15 Spatial Objective 2 should be particularly applied to support the delivery of Spatial Objectives 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11.

4.16

Progress against Spatial Objective 2 could be monitored against the total area of land registered as vacant in the National Land Use Database and the amount of land that has remained vacant for more than five years (NI170). Delivery would need to be supported by the allocation of land for development in site-specific Development Plan Documents.

Spatial Objective 2 - Vacant Urban Land

To significantly reduce the proportion of vacant and underused land in Settlement Area 2 and Settlement Area 4 and the number of vacant and underused sites in Settlement Area 1 and Settlement Area 3.

Housing Market Renewal

4.17 The Newheartlands Pathfinder identifies the southern part of Settlement Area 1, Settlement Area 2 and the eastern parts of Settlement Area 3 as priorities for tackling low demand and vacancy, increasing housing quality, diversifying tenure and providing greater housing choice, alongside improved services and higher environmental standards. The Government requires other policies and resources to be aligned to maximise the impact of public resources on the renewal of designated areas.

4.18 The delivery of market renewal is a national priority of the Sustainable Communities Plan, a regional priority for the Regional Spatial Strategy and the Regional Housing Strategy and is an essential part of the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy and the Wirral Housing Strategy.

4.19 Although the Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI) is currently only programmed to 2011, it is unlikely that the needs underpinning its designation will be fully satisfied within the plan period. Based on current commitments alone, the existing programme of intervention is likely to extend to at least 2014. The provision of additional monies could extend this further to deliver a wider package of improvements. Picture 4.3 shows the HMRI boundary.



Picture 4.3

4.20 Spatial Objective 3 should be applied to areas where evidence indicates that physical, social, economic, environmental conditions are worst and to support the delivery of Objectives 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11.

4.21 Progress against Spatial Objective 3 could be monitored against a basket of renewal indicators including trends in population, vacancy rates, tenure mix and house prices. Delivery could be further supported by the allocation of land for development in site-specific Development Plan Documents.

Spatial Objective 3 - Housing Market Renewal

To support the revitalisation of the housing market and improved housing conditions in the southern parts of Settlement Area 1, Settlement Area 2 and the northern and eastern parts of Settlement Area 3.

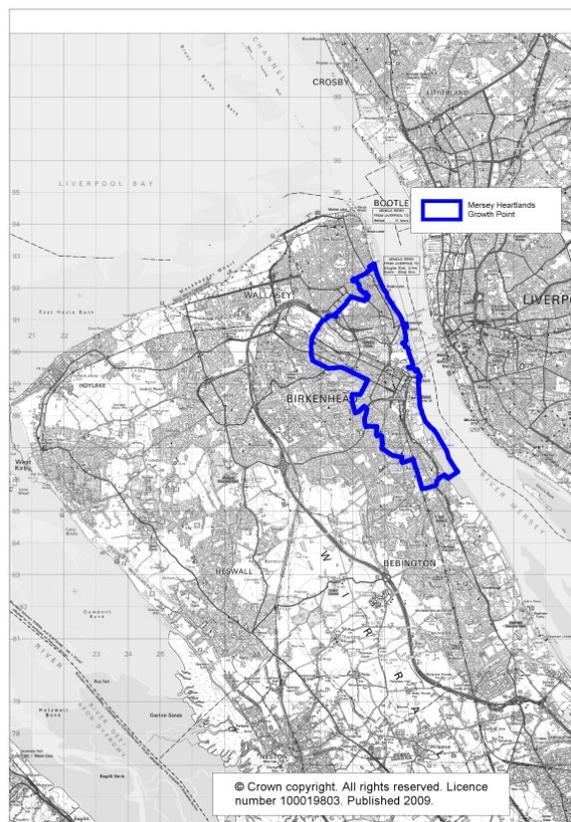
Housing Growth

4.22 Population stabilisation and housing growth form a key part of the revitalisation necessary to reverse the long term loss of jobs and population and to underpin successful physical, social, economic and environmental renewal. The national designation of a New Growth Point to deliver a minimum of 400 new homes each

year at the heart of the Newheartlands Pathfinder underlines the need for growth to be focused on the inner urban areas in Settlement Area 1, Settlement Area 2 and Settlement Area 3.

4.23 The delivery of housing growth is a national priority and is expected to be a priority for the review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. Housing growth forms an essential part of the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy and is a clear commitment within the Local Area Agreement for Wirral and within the Multi Area Agreement for the wider City Region. Picture 4.4 shows the boundary to the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.

4.24 Although the New Growth Point is initially only programmed to 2016 and funded to 2011, it is unlikely that the needs underpinning its designation will be fully satisfied during the plan period. The aspirations and programme of development for major regeneration schemes such as Wirral Waters extend well beyond the plan period.



Picture 4.4

4.25 Spatial Objective 4 should be applied to support the delivery of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 11.

4.26 Progress against Spatial Objective 4 could be monitored against a basket of indicators including the number of dwellings completed, growth in the local population and the number of homes provided against the targets for delivery set out in the

approved New Growth Point Programme of Development. Delivery would also need to be supported by the allocation of land for development in site-specific Development Plan Documents.

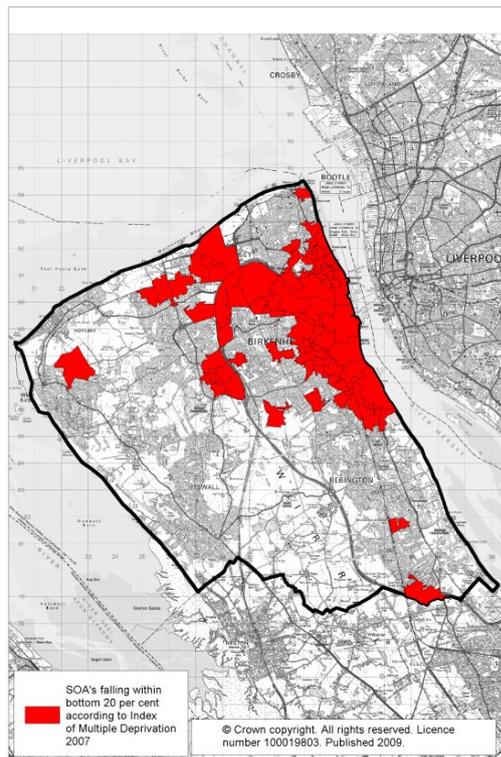
Spatial Objective 4 - Housing Growth

To focus housing growth on the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point in Settlement Area 2 and the surrounding urban areas in Settlement Area 1 and Settlement Area 3 .

Social Inclusion

4.27 Over a third of Wirral's population lives in areas ranked within the lowest 20% of the national Index of Multiple Deprivation for England. The extent of need within these areas is mirrored by a wide range of physical, social, economic and environmental indicators including health, educational attainment, benefit dependency, access to jobs and services, social cohesion and crime. There is a wide disparity between these areas and other more wealthy areas of the Borough.

4.28 Social inclusion is a national and regional priority and reducing disparity is an important objective of the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Local Area Agreement and the Council's Corporate Plan. Picture 4.5 demonstrates the areas falling within the worst 20 per cent in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2007).



Picture 4.5

4.29 The national Index is subject to periodic review, so Spatial Objective 5 will be flexible enough to maintain the core intention of maintaining an emphasis on communities most in need while ensuring that any future changes to the Index can be taken into account at a later date.

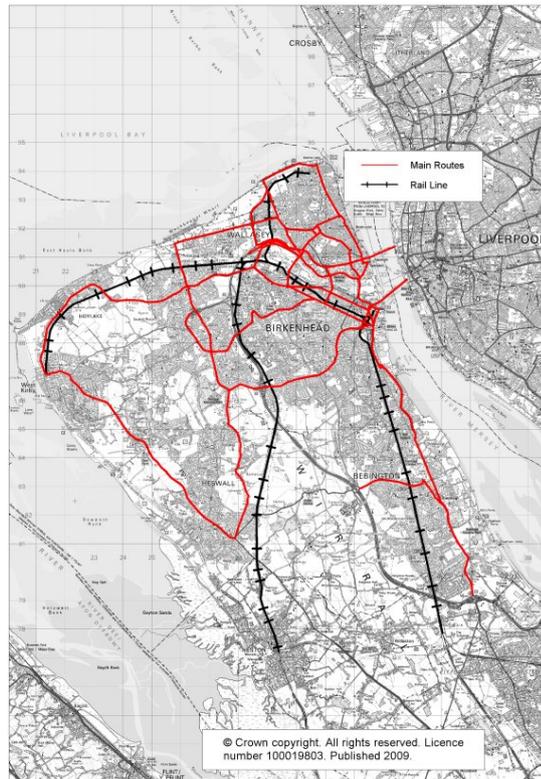
4.30 Progress against Spatial Objective 5 could be monitored against the periodic review of the national Index of Multiple Deprivation and a basket of indicators including educational attainment, economic activity and health outcomes. Delivery could be further supported by the allocation of land for development in site-specific Development Plan Documents.

Spatial Objective 5 - Social Inclusion

To focus development and investment to improve access to jobs and services and the living conditions, economic well being, housing choice, health, education and skills of communities living in areas ranked within the lowest twenty percent in the national Index of Multiple Deprivation for England.

Transport Accessibility

4.31 Accessibility is key to any successful economy and society. Linking jobs and services to areas of need can support economic revitalisation, housing market renewal and social inclusion. Travel choices can also have a significant impact on environmental conditions, levels of traffic and congestion, public safety, health and climate change. Provision for alternative means of transport will become increasingly important if predictions about peak oil are realised within the plan period. Picture 4.6 illustrates the key road and rail routes across the Borough.



Picture 4.6

4.32 Spatial Objective 6 should be applied to support the delivery of the spatial priorities of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 and Objectives 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11.

4.33 Spatial Objective 6 should also be directed to reduce the impact of traffic and congestion. Although detailed transport priorities may change to 2031, the emphasis on directing new development, investment and services to the most accessible locations is likely to remain the most important underlying objective throughout the plan period.

4.34 Progress against Spatial Objective 6 could be monitored against a basket of indicators including the proportion of new development within easy walking distance of a high frequency public transport service, levels of traffic and congestion and car use, and changes in the level of use of different modes of transport. Delivery would need to be supported by the allocation of land in site-specific Development Plan Documents and by standards contained within Supplementary Planning Documents related to transport and design.

Spatial Objective 6 - Transport Accessibility

To ensure that homes, jobs and services are provided in the most easily accessible locations to support: an increase in walking and cycling; the increased use of passenger rail services between Liverpool, Chester, Wrexham, New Brighton and West Kirby; and the increased use of other high frequency public transport services, particularly along the following main transport corridors:

- A41 Birkenhead to Chester (via B5136);
- B5137/A5137 Bromborough to Heswall;
- A522/B5138 Birkenhead to Heswall;
- A554 Birkenhead to New Brighton;
- A551 Seacombe to Arrowe Park;
- A5027/B5139 Birkenhead to West Kirby;
- A553 Birkenhead to Hoylake; and
- A540 Hoylake to Chester.

Local Distinctiveness

4.35 The character of the Borough's residential areas is a major feature of the attractiveness of the Borough to residents and investors. Higher quality residential areas, in particular, are capable of attracting and retaining a highly skilled workforce which are an economic asset to the sub-region.

4.36 Consultation has demonstrated the high value placed on retaining the local distinctiveness and separate identities of settlements. Concern is increasingly being expressed at the continued loss of un-designated features and buildings, many from the Edwardian and Victorian period, which were sound and worthy of reuse and which contributed to some of the most distinctive areas in Wirral. Additional evidence on areas of particular value may be provided by the Heritage Character Assessment of the urban areas currently being undertaken by National Museums Liverpool.

4.37 Spatial Objective 7 should be applied across the whole Borough and may increase in importance if development needs to take place across a wide area.

4.38 The protection of designated heritage assets including Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens and Scheduled Ancient Monuments are subject to separate legislation and detailed policies for these areas are expected to be included in a separate Heritage Development Plan Document.

4.39 Progress against Spatial Objective 7 could be monitored against the results of satisfaction surveys, local character appraisals and compliance with local design controls. Delivery could be supported by criteria applied to the allocation of land for development in site-specific Development Plan Documents and by standards contained within Supplementary Planning Documents related to local character, heritage and design.

Spatial Objective 7 - Local Distinctiveness

To maintain the local distinctiveness and separation of settlements and the quality of residential areas by ensuring that the design, type, scale, nature, location and pattern of new development complements and enhances the character and appearance of Settlement Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Green Infrastructure

4.40 Wirral has a wide range of high quality green infrastructure providing for recreation, leisure, tourism, biodiversity, health and well bring, which contribute strongly to the image and attractiveness of the Borough. Consultation has repeatedly confirmed the high value that is placed on a wide range of infrastructure, including parks, play areas, open spaces, playing fields, cycleways, public rights of way, woodlands, ponds, beaches, waterways and other associated natural and semi-natural habitats and landscape features. Standards of maintenance are also a major local concern.

4.41 Picture 4.5 shows the current distribution of the Borough's main recreation facilities and public open spaces. There are local shortfalls of different types of recreational open space in most Settlement Areas. Development opportunities associated with the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point will offer the potential to address some of these local deficiencies in the quantity and quality of green infrastructure in areas of greatest need.



Picture 4.7

4.42 Spatial Objective 8 should be applied across the whole Borough to support the delivery of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11. The importance of Spatial Objective 8 is likely to endure throughout the plan period particularly if development needs to take place across a wide area.

4.43 Progress against Spatial Objective 8 could be monitored against a basket of indicators related to the quantity, quality, distribution and accessibility of different types of facility and the provision of public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways. Delivery would need to be supported by the allocation of land for development in site-specific Development Plan Documents and by standards contained within Supplementary Planning Documents related to the provision and maintenance of open space, transport, landscape, biodiversity and design.

Spatial Objective 8 - Green Infrastructure

To secure an equitable distribution of high quality green infrastructure to meet local needs for open space, sport, recreation, leisure, exercise, biodiversity and amenity; to support the new communities planned within the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point in Settlement Area 2; and to address other local shortfalls in Settlement Areas 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7.

Countryside and Coast

4.44 Wirral's countryside and coast is a strongly distinctive feature of the attractiveness of the Borough to residents, visitors and investors. The majority of the countryside and coast benefits from high environmental quality, including national and international designations for nature conservation. Countryside and coast is also a major theme in the Council's strategies for Investment and Tourism.

4.45 The majority of Wirral's countryside and undeveloped coast is designated as Green Belt. Consultation has repeatedly underlined the importance of these natural resources. Additional evidence is provided by the Wirral Landscape Character Assessment, the Historic Landscape Character Assessment undertaken by Cheshire County Council and the Wirral Biodiversity Audit. There is currently limited public access to parts of the Mersey coast and opportunities to improve and extend access should be taken, where they arise, to provide a similar level of access to that available in north and west Wirral and to support the delivery of the national Coastal Trail.

4.46 Spatial Objective 9 should primarily be applied to the countryside and coast in Settlement Area 8 and to support the delivery of Objectives 7, 8, 10 and 11. Progress against Spatial Objective 9 will, however, also support the wider attractiveness of the Borough necessary to underpin the delivery of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

4.47 Progress against Spatial Objective 9 could be monitored against the results of satisfaction surveys and compliance with the landscape character profiles prepared as part of the Wirral Landscape Character Assessment 2009. Delivery could be supported by the allocation of land for development in site-specific Development Plan Documents and by standards contained within Supplementary Planning Documents related to heritage, landscape, biodiversity and design.

Spatial Objective 9 - Countryside and Coast

To maintain and enhance the natural and semi-natural character and appearance of the Borough's coast and countryside in Settlement Area 8 and extend access to the Mersey coastline in Settlement Area 3 and Settlement Area 4.

Climate Change

4.48 Climate change has become an overriding theme of national and international policy. The North West, as a whole, faces the risk of more extreme and destructive weather events, causing drier summers, rising sea levels and flooding, which in turn could create dangers to health, prosperity, infrastructure and the environment. Planning for the future will need to reduce emissions, stabilise the level of change and take account of any unavoidable consequences. Public consultation has confirmed that making an effective response, to mitigate and adapt to climate change should be a central objective of the Core Strategy.

4.49 There are now national and regional targets for water and energy consumption; renewable energy generation; the reduction of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions; and sustainable waste management, design and construction; moving towards zero carbon development. A wide range of related initiatives linked to the prudent and efficient use of natural resources, energy security, travel generation, air quality, sustainable drainage, and a greater emphasis on living within our environmental limits are also being considered.

4.50 A Climate Change Impact Assessment, demonstrating how development will incorporate energy efficiency measures and reduce carbon emissions, is now required to be submitted under the Wirral Planning Applications Validation Checklist (July 2009).

4.51 One of the most obvious strategic spatial impacts of adapting to climate change in Wirral relates to drainage and flooding and national policy requires a sequential approach to be adopted in identifying sites for development to take proper account of future flood risk. Effective mitigation and adaption may, however, also lead to additional economic opportunities in the emerging low carbon/environmental technology sector.

4.52 Spatial Objective 10 needs to be flexible enough to respond effectively to this rapidly moving policy context, which is expected to change considerably throughout the plan period as interim targets are met and new and improved technologies become available. The headline targets agreed by the Council are to reduce carbon emissions by 60% by 2025 and to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

4.53 Spatial Objective 10 will need to be applied to all types of development across the Borough and will need to be directly addressed through the delivery of Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 11.

4.54 Progress against Spatial Objective 10 could be monitored against a basket of indicators including the delivery of new development to higher environmental standards, such as the Code for Sustainable Homes, BREEAM and the National Indicator for per capita CO2 emissions (NI186). Delivery could be supported by criteria applied to the allocation of land for development in site-specific Development Plan Documents and by standards contained within Supplementary Planning Documents related to transport, energy efficiency and sustainable design and construction.

Spatial Objective 10 - Climate Change

To ensure that all new development and investment will reduce the impact on global climate change and build in resilience to future climate change by minimising the risk of flooding in Settlement Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 and by contributing to the target of reducing carbon emissions by 60% by 2025 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

Public Safety

4.55 Hazards to public health and well-being can arise from the handling and treatment of dangerous goods and substances, pollution from waste, transport, construction and other industrial and commercial activities, and can include noise, light and smells, unstable land, flooding and crime. While many of these issues can be controlled under other legislation or as part of more detailed controls over design and layout, spatial planning can also help to minimise the likelihood of conflict between potential problem activities and sensitive receptors.

4.56 Specific strategic level risks apply to the concentration of registered installations, substances, processes and pipelines associated with the employment areas in Settlement Area 2 and Settlement Area 4; the need to maintain air quality at Tranmere and Eastham; and flood risks, particularly in north Wirral, which are already dealt with under Spatial Objective 10.

4.57 The promotion of public safety will need to be applied across the Borough and will need to be directly addressed through the delivery of Spatial Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

4.58 The need for Spatial Objective 11 is expected to endure, unaltered, throughout the plan period.

4.59 Progress against Spatial Objective 11 could be monitored against a basket of indicators including development permitted within the proximity of registered installations and air quality monitoring. Delivery could be supported by the allocation of land for development in site-specific Development Plan Documents and by standards contained within Supplementary Planning Documents related to design.

Spatial Objective 11 - Public Safety

To promote public safety and maintain the separation between sensitive uses and registered installations and processes and ensure that national air quality objectives continue to be achieved in Settlement Area 2 and Settlement Area 4.

4.60 The Spatial Objectives have been tested for their compatibility with each other and against the local sustainability objectives contained within the Sustainability Appraisal Framework for Wirral:

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The assessment of the suggests that there are no outright conflicts between the Spatial Objectives but that there are a number of uncertainties depending on how the final Core Strategy is implemented. For example: the Strategic Objectives for Climate Change, Green Infrastructure and Local Distinctiveness will need to be given due weight in relation to the Spatial Objective for Economic Growth; there are uncertainties related to Spatial Objectives 1 to 4 which aim to direct development to the east of the Borough and Spatial Objective 11 related to Public Safety; and some vacant land targeted under Spatial Objective 2 could acquire value as Green Infrastructure under Spatial Objective 8.

Consultation Question 3

Do you agree that these are the most appropriate Spatial Objectives for the Core Strategy to pursue? Is the wording correct or are any further changes needed?

Are there any other Spatial Objectives that should be included?

Please refer to the number of the Spatial Objective in your reply and give the reasons for your answer.

5 Spatial Options

5.1 The Need for Broad Spatial Options

5.1 The Council has identified three alternative Broad Spatial Options for delivering the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives and for delivering sustainable patterns of growth and investment across the Borough. These Broad Spatial Options have not previously been consulted on and are presented for the first time in this document.

5.2 The Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives both seek to focus economic and housing growth to support regeneration in the east of the Borough where social, economic and environmental needs are greatest. While the three Broad Spatial Options set out the scope for different overall patterns of development across the Borough, it is assumed that this overall emphasis will remain at the core of each of the Broad Spatial Options identified.

5.3 In developing the Broad Spatial Options, the Council has only considered alternative patterns of development that are likely to be reasonable in the context of national and regional policy and which would be capable of being delivered.

5.4 The common aspects that underpin each of the three Broad Spatial Options include:

- delivering a minimum of 600 additional new homes each year (the net annual average housing requirement in the Regional Spatial Strategy of 500 new homes was increased by 20% to 600 net new homes per year following the designation of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point in December 2008);
- directing the majority of this new housing growth, a minimum of 400 net new homes each year, to the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point;
- meeting the Regional Spatial Strategy minimum target of 80% of new housing on previously developed brownfield land, including the reuse of existing buildings and to reduce the amount of land recorded as vacant and derelict on the National Land Use Database;
- improving the quantity and quality of comparison retail floorspace, to improve the retail offer in the Borough and reduce the leakage of spending by residents to centres outside Wirral, in line with the findings of the Wirral Retail, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Study 2009;
- providing for economic revitalisation and restructuring and employment growth by protecting existing employment areas and planning for up to 302 hectares of land for new employment development, subject to the densities of development that can be achieved, to meet the needs of a wide range of businesses, in line with the findings of the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2009;

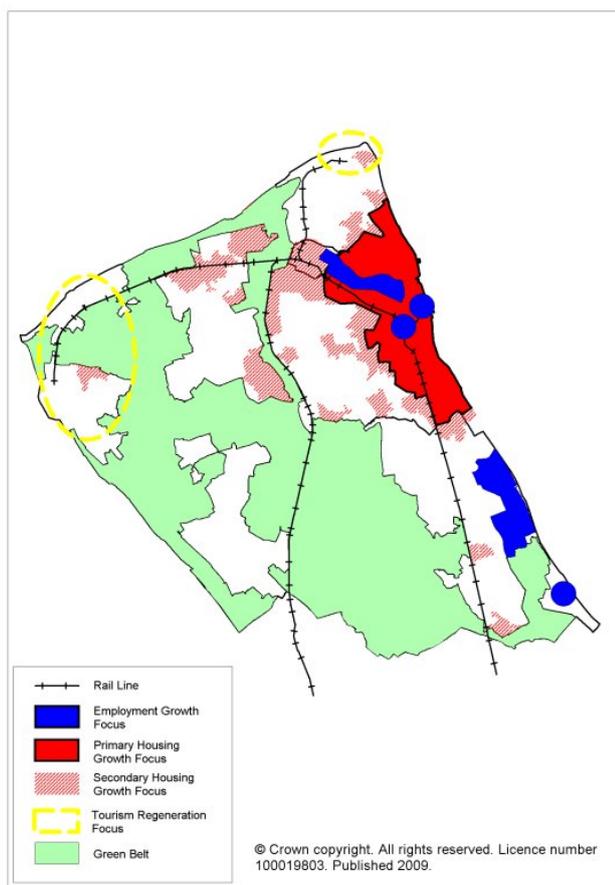
- supporting continued development and investment within the designated Strategic Regional Sites at Wirral International Business Park and at Birkenhead, to bring the Birkenhead Docklands into use as a high quality employment location;
- providing for the creation of a major focus for new office development in and around Birkenhead, including at Birkenhead Town Centre, Woodside and Wirral Waters within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point;
- providing for the creation of a Knowledge Economy Hub, to provide new and extended university and further education facilities within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point;
- supporting the continued development of a regional 'Super Port' by consolidating and improving the port facilities at Twelve Quays, West Float, Cammell Lairds and the Manchester Ship Canal;
- promoting opportunities to boost tourism and leisure to create a linked network of high quality coastal destinations and attractions, including Wirral Country Park and the Dee Coast, Hoylake and West Kirby, North Wirral Coastal Park, New Brighton, Seacombe Promenade, Wirral Waters, Woodside, Rock Park, the restoration of Bromborough Dock landfill and Eastham Country Park;
- matching growth and development with improvements in the quality, capacity and distribution of existing physical, community and green infrastructure;
- maximising the accessibility of homes, jobs and services by a choice of means of transport to promote social inclusion, sustainable travel patterns and reduce the impact of traffic and congestion;
- protecting and enhancing the quality and character of the natural and built environment to safeguard heritage and local distinctiveness; and
- the need to take full account of overriding issues such as flood risk, climate change and public safety.

5.5 The three Broad Spatial Options considered below are:

- Broad Spatial Option 1 - Focused Regeneration
- Broad Spatial Option 2 - Balanced Growth; and
- Broad Spatial Option 3 - Urban Expansion.

5.1.1 Broad Spatial Option 1 - Focused Regeneration

5.6 The first Broad Spatial Option, illustrated on Picture 5.1 below, is to maintain a very strong focus on growth and development within the older inner urban areas of east Wirral and other areas which are in the greatest need of social, economic and environmental regeneration.



Picture 5.1

Summary of Spatial Implications

5.7 Broad Spatial Option 1 would seek to focus growth and new development, almost exclusively, into identified regeneration priority areas including the Newheartlands Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder and other areas that demonstrate the highest levels of need as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation for England.

5.8 This priority would apply to all forms of development, including housing, retail, employment and services. Outside the regeneration priority areas the emphasis would be on maintaining existing patterns of provision, replacing existing facilities and providing for identified local needs, unless specific strategic opportunities could

identified, such as the Wirral International Business Park, the Manchester Ship Canal and the Hoylake Golf Resort. Previously undeveloped greenfield sites would not be developed until previously developed brownfield opportunities had first been taken up.

5.9 The main focus for new development would be on previously developed brownfield sites in older urban areas like Birkenhead Town Centre, Woodside, Hind Street and Cammell Lairds, the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point including Wirral Waters. Housing and employment densities in these areas would be medium to high to make the most efficient use of land, investment and infrastructure and to deliver the scale of transformation necessary to support a self-sustaining programme of regeneration.

5.10 Housing growth would focus on the delivery of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point and on the delivery of housing market renewal within the Newheartlands Pathfinder. Outside these areas, new housing would focus on providing for identified local needs.

5.11 Employment growth and economic revitalisation would focus on the Strategic Regional Sites at Birkenhead, including Wirral Waters and Wirral International Business Park and on Birkenhead Town Centre, Woodside, Hind Street and Cammell Lairds. Existing employment sites outside these areas would, however, continue to be protected to maintain an appropriate choice and distribution of employment opportunities and to minimise the need to travel.

5.12 Retail growth would be directed to Birkenhead, to Birkenhead Town Centre and/or Wirral Waters. Local centres within identified regeneration priority areas would be strengthened and enhanced as part of wider regeneration programmes. The vitality and viability of other centres across the Borough could continue to be supported by new investment but would not be promoted for major new development.

Policy Fit

5.13 Broad Spatial Option 1 would largely represent a continuation of the recent public policy emphasis on targeted growth and regeneration and the existing policy of supporting the delivery of new housing within the identified regeneration priority areas.

5.14 Broad Spatial Option 1 would strongly support the spatial principles of the Regional Spatial Strategy, including the emphasis on the Inner Area defined by the boundary to the Newheartlands Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder, where the priority is for new development to secure a significant increase in population and support major regeneration. Broad Spatial Option 1 would also be consistent with retaining the restrictions contained within the Council's existing Interim Housing Policy.

5.15 This pattern and density of growth, concentrated in the most accessible areas of the Borough, could also support a reduction in the need to travel by car and help tackle climate change by minimising carbon emissions.

5.16 Broad Spatial Option 1 would support the re-development of previously developed brownfield land, preserve the character of outlying areas and ensure the continued protection of the open countryside and undeveloped coastline.

Evidence Base

5.17 A series of studies and datasets related to social, economic and environmental conditions underline the need for regeneration in the inner urban areas in east Wirral and have identified the potential of these areas to accommodate high levels of development for homes, jobs and services. It is estimated that the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point alone has the potential to deliver up to 12,000 new homes and up to 27,000 new jobs during the plan period to 2031.

5.18 The Council's Economic Regeneration and Investment Framework and the Strategic Regeneration Framework for Wirral Waters, now part of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, include a comprehensive baseline assessment of the social, economic and environmental conditions within the area. Further evidence will be provided as part of the Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters.

5.19 The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment is still to report on the ability of the regeneration priority areas alone to support a suitable and deliverable long term supply of available housing land.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

5.20 Broad Spatial Option 1 would represent a close fit with elements of the the Spatial Vision related to the social, economic and environmental regeneration of east Wirral and to maintaining a high quality urban and rural environment.

Implications for the Spatial Objectives

5.21 The likely implications of Broad Spatial Option 1 for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications of Broad Spatial Option 1 - Focused Regeneration
Economic Revitalisation	Broad Spatial Option 1 would focus economic revitalisation on areas most closely associated with income and employment based deprivation and worklessness within the Assisted Areas and on the Strategic Regional Sites at Birkenhead and Bromborough.

Vacant Urban Land	Broad Spatial Option 1 would direct new development of all types to areas where the number and amount of vacant land is highest, in the older urban areas within the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Strategic Regional Site in Bromborough.
Housing Market Renewal	Broad Spatial Option 1 would focus development and investment within the Newheartlands Pathfinder.
Housing Growth	Broad Spatial Option 1 would focus housing growth within the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.
Social Inclusion	While Broad Spatial Option 1 would focus new development and economic revitalisation on areas most in need, there will be a need to ensure that programmes addressing issues such as employment, skills and worklessness enable local people to access the jobs created.
Transport Accessibility	Broad Spatial Option 1 would focus development on the most accessible areas of the Borough: in Birkenhead; along the A41 corridor; in New Brighton; and West Kirby, which are most able to support the increased use of public transport. Higher density mixed-use development within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point could also help to minimise the need to travel.
Local Distinctiveness	Broad Spatial Option 1 would direct the majority of new development to areas where local distinctiveness needs to be strengthened and enhanced. Growth in Settlement Areas 1, 2 and 3 will, however, need to be sensitive to surrounding character and existing heritage.
Green Infrastructure	Broad Spatial Option 1 would place additional pressure on areas with an existing shortfall of green infrastructure but would offer the opportunity to secure additional green infrastructure within the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.
Countryside and Coast	Broad Spatial Option 1 would allow for the continued protection of the Borough's countryside and undeveloped coast.
Climate Change	Focusing growth within the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point will offer the opportunity to provide high impact exemplar low carbon development. Additional controls may be needed to prevent flooding from sea level rise over the longer term within the dock estate and to prevent flooding in some of the priority areas in north Wirral.

Public Safety	Development within the Newheartlands Pathfinder, the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point and the Strategic Regional Sites would need to take full account of the location of registered installations and processes and the need to maintain air quality.
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Implications for Settlement Areas

5.22 Broad Spatial Option 1 is likely to have the following implications for each of the Settlement Areas:

Settlement Area	Likely Implications of Broad Spatial Option 1 - Focused Regeneration
Area 1	Housing regeneration would continue to be supported in the southern part of Settlement Area 1, around Seacombe, as well as in identified areas of need at New Brighton and Liscard. Tourist-related development within the Area would be focused on New Brighton.
Area 2	The majority of development, change and growth in the Borough would occur in Settlement Area 2. The highest levels of housing and employment growth would be directed to the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.
Area 3	Housing regeneration would continue to be supported in the eastern part of Settlement Area 3, around Tranmere and Rock Ferry, as well as in identified areas of need around Bidston and North Birkenhead, where additional development could be permitted to address social, economic and environmental needs. Initiatives to improve local retail centres will also be promoted within this Area.
Area 4	Settlement Area 4 would experience continued economic revitalisation and employment growth but see limited housing development, to meet identified local needs. Wirral International Business Park would be developed to full capacity and port-related facilities would be improved at the entrance to the Manchester Ship Canal at Eastham.
Area 5	Settlement Area 5 would see limited development, to meet identified local needs except in Leasowe, Moreton and Woodchurch where additional development could be permitted to address social, economic and environmental needs.
Area 6	Settlement Area 6 would see development and investment to enhance the area as a leisure and tourist destination but with limited housing development, to meet identified local needs.
Area 7	Settlement Area 7 would see limited development, to meet identified local needs.

Area 8	New development would continue to be restricted by national Green Belt controls with some limited development to strengthen and diversify the rural economy.
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Implications for Deliverability

5.23 Broad Spatial Option 1 would be supported by public and private sector funding associated with housing market renewal through the Newheartlands Pathfinder, the Regional Housing Strategy, the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point and the delivery of the Strategic Regional Sites.

5.24 The operation of the Council's Interim Housing Policy, prior to the economic downturn has demonstrated the potential to deliver high levels of housing ahead of regional targets within the identified regeneration priority areas. The background work already undertaken to support the reconfiguration of the Birkenhead Dock Estate at Wirral Waters, development at Birkenhead Town Centre, Woodside and Hind Street, including the designation of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point and the ongoing commitment of the landowners, indicate that high levels of development would be deliverable during the plan period.

5.25 The Birkenhead and Wirral Waters Integrated Regeneration Study, will merge the existing masterplanning work for Newheartlands, Wirral Waters, the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, Woodside, Hind Street, the surrounding neighbourhoods and their associated delivery frameworks, to secure the co-ordinated delivery of the Council's Investment Strategy aspirations for the older urban areas. A high dependence on these sites could require them to be identified as strategic allocations which are essential to the delivery of the strategy or as broad strategic locations within the Core Strategy.

5.26 The reliance on a smaller number of sites and development partners within a concentrated area may, however, make Broad Spatial Option 1 more vulnerable to more localised delivery problems, for example, from unforeseen delays in the provision of essential infrastructure or challenging market conditions.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

Broad Spatial Option 1 generally scores positively, given its focus on urban regeneration. However, over the longer term, there is potential for adverse impacts in terms of the separation of compatible land uses and traffic intrusion in residential areas, as development opportunities become more scarce. It is unclear, with the exception of major development opportunities such as Wirral Waters, whether the likely emphasis on smaller urban windfalls would deliver developments of sufficient scale to enable the incorporation of viable sustainable energy generation. Later on in the plan period, additional consideration may have to be given to sites in areas at risk of flooding, if a supply of sequentially preferable alternatives is not sustained.

Council's Current Assessment

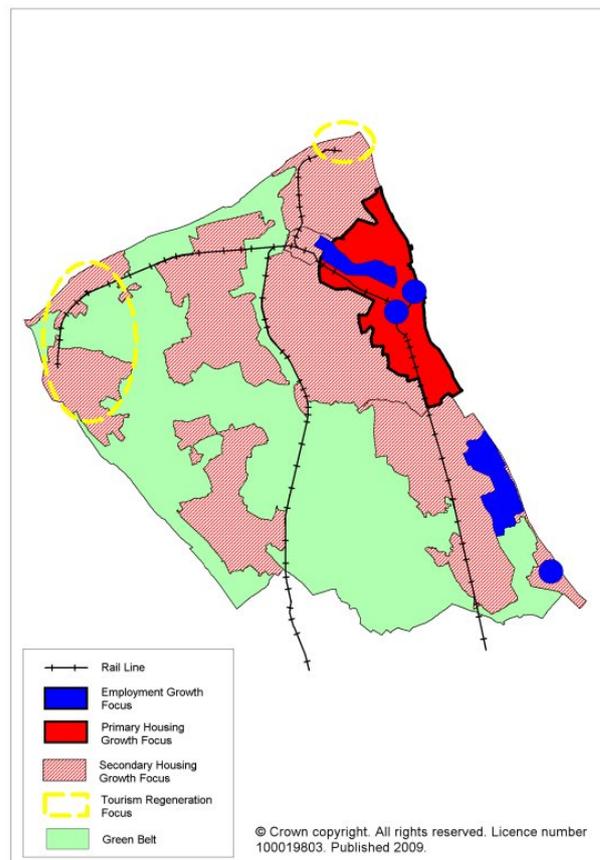
5.27 Broad Spatial Option 1 is likely to be the Council's preferred option as it has the closest fit with the delivery of the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives, would offer the strongest support for national and regional priorities and public investment programmes and would maximise the potential social, economic and environmental benefits of major urban re-development opportunities. It is also likely to provide the greatest level of protection for the wider environment outside the older urban areas and has the potential to be the most accessible solution, in terms of realistic access by a choice of means of transport.

Consultation Question 4

Is this a fair assessment of the likely implications of a Broad Spatial Option based on focused regeneration? Please give the reasons for your answer.

5.1.2 Broad Spatial Option 2 - Balanced Growth

5.28 The second Broad Spatial Option, illustrated on Picture 5.2 below, would continue to maintain an emphasis on development within the the older inner urban areas of east Wirral but would also seek to direct growth more widely across the existing urban areas.



Picture 5.2

Summary of Spatial Implications

5.29 Broad Spatial Option 2 would still seek to direct growth and investment to regeneration priority areas in east Wirral but would make a greater allowance for supporting development in other sustainable urban locations across the Borough. Priority would be given to locations close to existing centres or with good access to public transport. This would apply to all forms of development, including housing, retail, employment and services. Previously undeveloped greenfield sites would still not be developed until previously developed brownfield opportunities had been taken up.

5.30 A sequential approach to the spatial priorities set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy could still be maintained but Broad Spatial Option 2 would offer greater flexibility by allowing brownfield sites to be developed, outside the regeneration priority areas, in a wider range of areas across the Borough. Although Broad Spatial Option 2 would still make an efficient use of existing urban infrastructure, there could be less need to develop at higher densities. This could, however, provide less support for infrastructure enhancements in the inner urban areas.

5.31 Housing growth would still focus on the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point and the Newheartlands Pathfinder but a wider range and choice of housing could now also be provided outside the inner urban areas. This could lead to a further intensification of development within the outlying urban areas which, without additional controls, could have a cumulative impact on the character of these areas. This could also reduce the support for a self-sustaining programme of regeneration in the inner urban areas.

5.32 Employment growth and economic revitalisation would still focus on the Strategic Regional Sites at Birkenhead, including Wirral Waters and Wirral International Business Park, Birkenhead Town Centre, Woodside, Hind Street, Cammell Lairds and key facilities such as the Manchester Ship Canal but existing employment sites and centres outside these areas could now play a larger role in providing for the Borough's future employment needs.

5.33 Retail growth would, again, continue to be directed to Birkenhead and/or Wirral Waters but other local and district centres could also be considered for new development, which could help to promote their viability and reduce the need to travel from outlying areas.

5.34 A sub-option could direct development only to areas to the east of the M53 Motorway (Broad Spatial Option 2A).

5.35 Broad Spatial Option 2 (and Broad Spatial Option 2A) could continue to support regeneration and development in the coastal resorts of Hoylake, West Kirby and New Brighton to promote key tourism and leisure destinations, including the Hoylake Golf Resort.

Policy Fit

5.36 Broad Spatial Option 2 is essentially the approach followed by the existing Unitary Development Plan for Wirral (February 2000), before a more focused approach to urban regeneration was introduced by Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13, March 2003).

5.37 While Broad Spatial Option 2 would still be in general conformity within Regional Spatial Strategy objectives for areas to the east of the M53 Motorway, additional controls would be needed to align with the priorities for the Rural Areas to

the west of the M53 Motorway. The adoption of Broad Spatial Option 2 would, however, involve moving away from the position on focused regeneration set out in the Council's Interim Housing Policy.

5.38 Directing growth to locations with good access to public transport would align well with national and regional policies but allowing development over a wider area, depending on the type of development permitted, could increase the need to travel.

5.39 Without additional controls, Broad Spatial Option 2 could potentially undermine the delivery of housing market renewal and housing growth within the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point but could also offer additional flexibility, if progress on regeneration was not delivering the levels of development expected.

5.40 Broad Spatial Option 2 could maximise the potential for the re-development of previously developed urban land and could ensure the continued protection of the open countryside and undeveloped coastline but would need additional controls to preserve the character of outlying urban areas.

Evidence Base

5.41 The evidence base shows that vacant and underused urban land is largely concentrated within the regeneration priority areas in the older urban area. Broad Spatial Option 2, would, however, also allow additional previously developed sites to come forward outside these areas.

5.42 Evidence from the Council's less restrictive Interim Housing Policy, in operation between December 2003 and October 2005, was that new development did not go, as expected, to the most central regeneration priority areas in east Wirral but to outlying areas where housing stock was already attractive. Consultation has showed a strong resistance to the loss of local character in these areas, which already have a more strongly performing housing market.

5.43 Broad Spatial Option 2 would, however, align more strongly with the findings of the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2009, which indicates a need to widen the economic contribution of all the Borough's existing centres and employment areas.

5.44 The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment is still to report on whether there will be a need to rely on the wider urban area to support a suitable and deliverable long term supply of available housing land.

Implications for the Spatial vision

5.45 Broad Spatial Option 2 could still broadly align with the Spatial Vision but would focus less on maximising the regeneration potential of areas most in need of additional population and investment.

Implications for the Spatial Objectives

5.46 The likely implications of Broad Spatial Option 2 for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications of Broad Spatial Option 2 - Balanced Growth
Economic Revitalisation	Broad Spatial Option 2 would support economic revitalisation within the Strategic Regional Sites and Assisted Areas but could also provide for economic revitalisation across a wider area of the Borough.
Vacant Urban Land	Broad Spatial Option 2 would still support the re-use of vacant and underused urban land but may encourage additional sites to come forward from elsewhere within the urban area, outside the areas of greatest need.
Housing Market Renewal	Broad Spatial Option 2 would still focus development and investment within the Newheartlands Pathfinder but could slow the delivery of housing market renewal in these areas by allowing sites in outlying areas to come forward to development.
Housing Growth	Broad Spatial Option 2 would still focus housing growth within the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point but could distribute housing growth more widely, by allowing sites in outlying areas to come forward to development.
Social Inclusion	Broad Spatial Option 2 would promote access to improved homes, jobs and services across a wider area of the Borough but in the absence of additional controls could detract from directing investment to where it is needed most.
Transport Accessibility	Broad Spatial Option 2 would support development in existing centres and other areas accessible by public transport but in the absence of additional controls could lead to a more dispersed pattern of development which could increase the need to travel.
Local Distinctiveness	Additional controls would be needed to ensure that the local distinctiveness of outlying areas would be preserved.
Green Infrastructure	Broad Spatial Option 2 could spread the benefits of improvements to existing infrastructure over a wider area. Broad Spatial Option 2 could, however, reduce the amount of private open space by allowing a greater level of infill development in outlying areas.

Countryside and Coast	Broad Spatial Option 2 would allow for the continued protection of the Borough's countryside and undeveloped coast.
Climate Change	Promoting development in areas accessible by public transport could increase the potential to reduce carbon emissions. Additional controls, including sustainable urban drainage, may be required to minimise the risk of flooding in some outlying areas.
Public Safety	Additional controls could be needed to take full account of public safety.

Implications for Settlement Areas

5.47 Broad Spatial Option 2 is likely to have the following implications for each of the Settlement Areas:

Settlement Area	Likely Implications of Broad Spatial Option 2 - Balanced Growth
Area 1	Regeneration would continue to be supported in the southern part of Settlement Area 1 but moderate levels of development would also be permitted throughout the remaining urban area in the most accessible locations, in addition to the coastal resort of New Brighton.
Area 2	The majority of development and growth in the Borough would still continue to occur in Settlement Area 2, which would experience significant change. The highest levels of housing and employment growth would continue to be directed to the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.
Area 3	Regeneration would continue to occur in the eastern part of Settlement Area 3 but moderate levels of development would also be permitted throughout the remaining urban area in the most accessible locations.
Area 4	Settlement Area 4 would continue to experience continued economic revitalisation and employment growth but moderate levels of development would also be permitted throughout the remaining urban area in the most accessible locations.
Area 5	Moderate levels of development would be permitted throughout the urban area in the most accessible locations, subject to any additional controls to reflect the spatial priorities of the Regional Spatial Strategy. The employment areas at Moreton and Upton could be promoted to make a stronger contribution to economic revitalisation.

Area 6	Development and investment to enhance the Settlement Area as a leisure and tourist destination would continue to be supported but moderate levels of development would also be permitted throughout the remaining urban area in the most accessible locations, subject to any additional controls to reflect the spatial priorities of the Regional Spatial Strategy.
Area 7	Moderate levels of development would be permitted throughout the urban area in the most accessible locations, subject to any additional controls to reflect the spatial priorities of the Regional Spatial Strategy.
Area 8	New development would continue to be restricted by national Green Belt controls alongside development to strengthen and diversity the rural economy.

Implications for Deliverability

5.48 The delivery of additional urban sites is likely to be supported by the market as existing policies have restricted new housing development to the west of the M53 Motorway since December 2003 and outside the regeneration priority areas to the east of the M53 Motorway since October 2005. The delivery of additional employment development across a wider area may, however, still be more dependent on the pattern of grant aid and other support.

5.49 Allowing development to take place in a larger number of locations, involving a wider range of development interests, may make Broad Spatial Option 2 less vulnerable to problems with delivery but could also reduce the scale and pace of regeneration within the identified regeneration priority areas. Broad Spatial Option 2 could also serve to support additional improvements in local infrastructure across a wider area.

5.50 Careful monitoring of housing delivery would be required to support housing market renewal within the Newheartlands Pathfinder and to ensure that targets for the delivery of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point continue to be met. Maintaining the focus on housing growth within the Regional Spatial Strategy Inner Area could require sites within these areas to be identified as strategic allocations which are essential to the delivery of the strategy or as broad strategic locations within the Core Strategy.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

Broad Spatial Option 2 again generally scores positively, given the focus on development in the existing urban area, although scores less well than Broad Spatial Option 1 against issues such as tackling deprivation and support for housing market renewal. As with Broad Spatial Option 1, over the longer term there is potential for adverse impacts in terms of the separation of compatible land uses and traffic intrusion in residential areas, as development opportunities become more scarce. It is unclear, with the exception of major development opportunities such as Wirral Waters, whether the likely emphasis on smaller windfalls could deliver developments of sufficient scale to enable the incorporation of viable sustainable energy generation. Later on in the plan period additional consideration may have to be given to sites in areas at risk of flooding, if a supply of sequentially preferable alternatives is not sustained.

Council's Current Assessment

5.51 The Council is unlikely to prefer Broad Spatial Option 2 because of the potential for a lower focus on the delivery of regeneration priorities. A more dispersed pattern of development, albeit in locations accessible by public transport, is more likely to be less sustainable overall and would require additional mechanisms to safeguard regeneration and local distinctiveness.

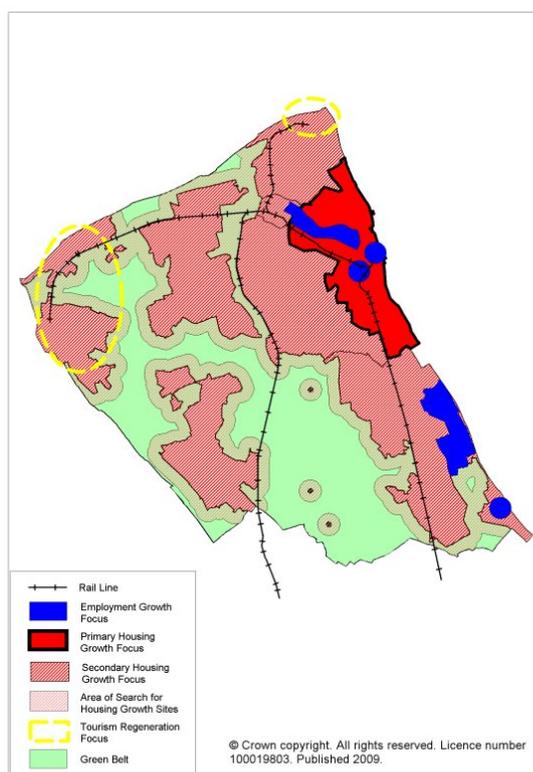
Consultation Question 5

Is this a fair assessment of the likely implications of a Broad Spatial Option based on balanced growth? Please give the reasons for your answer.

5.1.3 Broad Spatial Option 3 - Urban Expansion

5.52 The third Broad Spatial Option, illustrated on Picture 5.3 below, is to pursue a strategy of urban expansion. A strategy of this nature has not been pursued in Wirral since the 1960s and 1970s and has been specifically discounted in Development Plans since the Merseyside Structure Plan was adopted in 1980.

5.53 Although Broad Spatial Option 3 is likely to be the least consistent with the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives for the Core Strategy, some elements may need to be considered, at least towards the end of the plan period, if the Council is unable to demonstrate that a long term supply of suitable and deliverable sites is likely to be available within the existing urban area to 2031.



Picture 5.3

Summary of Spatial Implications

5.54 Broad Spatial Option 3 would involve actively permitting development to take place outside the existing urban areas on land currently within the Green Belt. Priority would be given to the most sustainable locations, that could best integrate with existing infrastructure and services such as public transport and existing centres, that would have the least impact on existing settlement patterns and that would continue to protect areas of environmental importance.

5.55 A sequential approach to meet the spatial priorities of the Regional Spatial Strategy may still be able to be maintained, with development directed first to the Inner Area (the Newheartlands Pathfinder and Mersey Heartlands Growth Point), then to the urban areas within the Outer Area (the remaining areas to the east of the M53 Motorway), then to the urban areas in the Rural Area (the settlements to the west of the M53 Motorway) and only then to Green Belt land.

5.56 Green Belt land in the Outer Area could also be favoured before Green Belt land in the Rural Area. An emphasis could also be placed on infill and "rounding off" existing urban areas. Previously developed brownfield opportunities could still be taken up before previously undeveloped greenfield sites were released for development.

5.57 Housing growth could still focus, in the first instance, on the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point but a wider range and choice of housing could also be provided elsewhere. Under Broad Spatial Option 3, this may not necessarily lead to a further intensification of development within the outlying urban areas but, without additional controls, could still reduce the support for a self-sustaining programme of regeneration in the inner urban areas. Outside the inner urban areas, the character of areas where greenfield sites were being identified for development would take the brunt of any future changes.

5.58 Existing employment sites and centres outside the inner urban areas could still play a larger role in providing for the Borough's future employment needs alongside the Strategic Regional Sites at Birkenhead and Wirral International Business Park but a greenfield replacement for the Wirral International Business Park could also be accommodated, in line with the findings of the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2009.

5.59 Retail growth could continue to be directed to Birkenhead and/or Wirral Waters as a strategic priority but other district and local centres could also be considered for new development, which could even include new purpose built centres and facilities to serve any major new areas of housing.

5.60 A sub-option could direct development only to areas to the east of the M53 Motorway (Broad Spatial Option 3A).

5.61 Broad Spatial Option 3 (and Broad Spatial Option 3A) could continue to support regeneration and development in the coastal resorts of Hoylake, West Kirby and New Brighton to promote key tourism and leisure destinations, including the Hoylake Golf Resort and may also provide the opportunity to allow additional enabling development.

Policy Fit

5.62 Broad Spatial Option 3 would be inconsistent with the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral, which established an extended Green Belt in Wirral in February 2000. Broad Spatial Option 3 would also be contrary to the Government commitment to maintaining or increasing the amount of Green Belt within every UK region (RSS, paragraph 5.25 refers).

5.63 A strategy of urban expansion would require a strategic review of the Green Belt, which could only be confirmed through a review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. RSS Policy RDF 4 states that there is no need for any exceptional substantial change to the Green Belt boundary in Merseyside before 2011, and that after this date the presumption will be against change to the boundaries.

5.64 In the absence of additional controls, Broad Spatial Option 3 could breach the Regional Spatial Strategy target of delivering at least 80% of new housing on previously developed brownfield land. The adoption of Broad Spatial Option 3 would also involve moving away from the position on focused regeneration set out in the Council's Interim Housing Policy and could undermine the Regional Spatial Strategy spatial priority of directing housing growth and renewal to the Inner Area of Liverpool City Region.

5.65 Without additional controls, development in the Green Belt could also have a major impact on the separation of settlements and the character of the countryside and undeveloped coastline.

Evidence

5.66 The Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment is still to report on the ability of the existing urban areas to support a suitable and deliverable long term supply of available housing land.

5.67 The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2009 indicates that there may be a longer term need for additional employment land towards the end of the plan period, subject to the densities of development that can be achieved on sites within the existing urban area.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

5.68 Broad Spatial Option 3 shows the least alignment with the Spatial Vision.

Implications for the Spatial Objectives

5.69 The likely implications of Broad Spatial Option 3 for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications of Strategic Spatial Option 3 - Urban Expansion
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Economic Revitalisation	Broad Spatial Option 3 would support economic revitalisation within the Strategic Regional Sites and Assisted Areas and could increase the availability of readily developable greenfield land.
Vacant Urban Land	Broad Spatial Option 3 could still support the reuse of vacant and underused urban land but would encourage additional sites to come forward on previously undeveloped greenfield land.
Housing Market Renewal	Broad Spatial Option 3 could still focus development and investment within the Newheartlands Pathfinder but could slow the delivery of housing market renewal by allowing greenfield sites in outlying areas to come forward to development.
Housing Growth	Broad Spatial Option 2 could still focus housing growth within the Newheartlands pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point but could also distribute housing growth more widely, by allowing greenfield sites in outlying areas to come forward to development.
Social Inclusion	Broad Spatial Option 3 could still promote access to improved homes, jobs and services across a wider area of the Borough but in the absence of additional controls could detract from directing investment to where it is needed most.
Transport Accessibility	Broad Spatial Option 3 could still support development in areas accessible to public transport but in the absence of additional controls could lead to a more dispersed pattern of development which could increase the need to travel.
Local Distinctiveness	Additional controls would be needed to ensure that the local distinctiveness of outlying areas and the separation of settlements would be preserved.
Green Infrastructure	Broad Spatial Option 3 could place increased pressure on green infrastructure at the edge of the existing urban areas but could also spread the benefits of improvements or of new provision over a wider area to address local deficiencies.
Countryside and Coast	Additional controls would be needed to minimise the impact on the natural and semi-natural character and appearance of the countryside and coast.
Climate Change	Promoting development in areas accessible by public transport and building to higher environmental standards could limit the potential impact on carbon emissions. Additional controls may be required to minimise the risk of flooding in some outlying areas.

Public Safety	Additional controls could be needed to take full account of public safety.
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Implications for the Settlement Areas

5.70 Broad Spatial Option 3 is likely to have the following implications for each of the Settlement Areas:

Settlement Area	Likely Implications of Broad Spatial Option 3 - Urban Expansion
Area 1	Regeneration could continue to be supported in the southern part of Settlement Area 1 but moderate levels of development could also be permitted throughout the remaining urban area in the most accessible locations, in addition to the coastal resort of New Brighton.
Area 2	The majority of development and growth in the Borough could still continue to occur in Settlement Area 2, which would experience significant change. The highest levels of housing and employment growth could continue to be directed to the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.
Area 3	Regeneration could continue to occur in the eastern part of Settlement Area 3 but moderate levels of development could also be permitted throughout the remaining urban area in the most accessible locations.
Area 4	Settlement Area 4 would continue to experience continued economic revitalisation and employment growth. Moderate levels of development would also be permitted throughout the remaining urban area in the most accessible locations. The release of Green Belt land could be considered towards the eastern and southern edge of the urban area, subject to appropriate environmental controls.
Area 5	Moderate levels of development would be permitted throughout the urban area in the most accessible locations. The release of Green Belt land could be considered towards the edge of the urban area in areas that would not be subject to flooding or significantly reduce the separation between Settlement Areas, subject to any additional controls to reflect the spatial priorities of the Regional Spatial Strategy.
Area 6	Development and investment to enhance the Settlement Area as a leisure and tourist destination would continue to be supported. Moderate levels of development would also be permitted throughout the urban area in the most accessible locations. The release of Green Belt land could be considered towards the edge of the urban area in areas that would not be subject to flooding or significantly reduce the separation between Settlement Areas, subject to any additional controls to reflect the spatial priorities of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Area 7	Moderate levels of development would be permitted throughout the urban area in the most accessible locations. The release of Green Belt land towards the edge of the urban area could be considered in areas that would not significantly reduce the separation between Settlement Areas, subject to any additional controls to reflect the spatial priorities of the Regional Spatial Strategy.
Area 8	Limited development could be permitted in and around the designated Infill Villages at Storeton, Barnston, Thornton Hough, Raby Village and Eastham, subject to the impact on rural character.

Implications for Deliverability

5.71 The sites submitted to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Call for Sites (Picture 6.3 refers) indicate the willingness of landowners and developers to deliver the greenfield elements of Broad Spatial Option 3.

5.72 Broad Spatial Option 3 could, however, have significant implications for the scale and pace of the delivery of the wider economic, social and environmental benefits associated with regeneration at the heart of the urban area, which is the primary focus of the Regional Spatial Strategy. In the absence of additional controls, it could also have an impact on the scale and pace of regeneration within neighbouring areas outside the Borough.

5.73 The infrastructure that would be necessary to support Broad Spatial Option 3 has not yet been explored. Further information would need to be provided by the relevant utilities undertakers and service operators before Broad Spatial Option 3 could be realistically pursued.

5.74 Higher level policies would also need to be realigned to enable Broad Spatial Option 3 to proceed. A review of the Green Belt would need to await the findings of a strategic study carried out by the Regional Planning Body and would need to be confirmed in a replacement of the Regional Spatial Strategy. Given the decision not to include a review of the Green Belt as part of the preparation of the new single Regional Strategy (RS2010) it is doubtful whether Broad Spatial Option 3 could be realistically considered as deliverable, at least until the end of the plan period, when circumstances may, in any case, have markedly changed.

5.75 Maintaining a focus on housing growth within the Regional Spatial Strategy Inner Area could require Newheartlands and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point to be identified as strategic allocations which are essential to the delivery of the strategy or as broad strategic locations within the Core Strategy. A strategy of urban expansion, even late on in the plan period, may also require broad locations for potential new development in the Green Belt to be identified in the Core Strategy.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

Broad Spatial Option 3 generally scores poorly against sustainability objectives, with the exception of issues such as the separation of incompatible land uses and the reduction of exposure to pollution and hazards. Broad Spatial Option 3 has the potential to cause the most harm to sustainability objectives related to protection of the natural environment. Some of the adverse scores in relation to matters such as accessibility would, however, have potential for mitigation through additional infrastructure provided as part of development proposals.

Council's Current Assessment

5.76 The Council's current assessment is that a strategy of urban expansion is likely to be contrary to national policy and to run against the strategy of sustainable urban regeneration outlined in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

5.77 The Council considers that Broad Spatial Option 3 could only be justified as a last resort on the basis that sustainable urban regeneration had already been successfully completed and on the basis that land to meet identified development needs was no longer available within the existing urban areas.

5.78 The Council does not believe that the available evidence indicates that a strategy based on Broad Spatial Option 3 could be justified during the early periods of the Plan and believes that it could also be doubtful towards the end of the plan period, if schemes associated with the Newheartlands Pathfinder, the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point and the Strategic Regional Sites are effectively delivered and other opportunities within the urban area are fully exploited.

5.79 The Council also believes that a strategy of urban expansion would be undeliverable in the absence of a review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Consultation Question 6

Is this a fair assessment of the likely implications of a Broad Spatial Option based on urban expansion? Please give the reasons for your answer.

Consultation Question 7

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that Broad Spatial Option 1 - Focused Regeneration is most likely to be the preferred option for the future development of Wirral?

If not, please indicate which Broad Spatial Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

Consultation Question 8

Is there another Broad Spatial Option that you think the Council should consider before coming to a conclusion on the preferred options for the Core Strategy for Wirral?

If yes, please set out the main elements of the alternative Broad Spatial Option that you think the Council should consider.

6 Other Policy Options

6.1 There are a number of other policy areas that may also need to be considered as part of the Core Strategy to meet the requirements of national or regional policy. The Council has not previously consulted on these policy options as part of the preparation of the Core Strategy.

6.2 The policy options presented below relate to the provision to be made in the Core Strategy for:

- housing
- employment
- retailing
- renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy
- better design
- development management
- developer contributions; and
- green infrastructure.

6.1 Providing for Housing

Background

6.3 Wirral forms part of the Northern Housing Market Area of the Liverpool City Region, which also includes Liverpool, Knowsley and Sefton. This means that decisions made in Wirral are likely to have a direct impact on other parts of the Market Area.

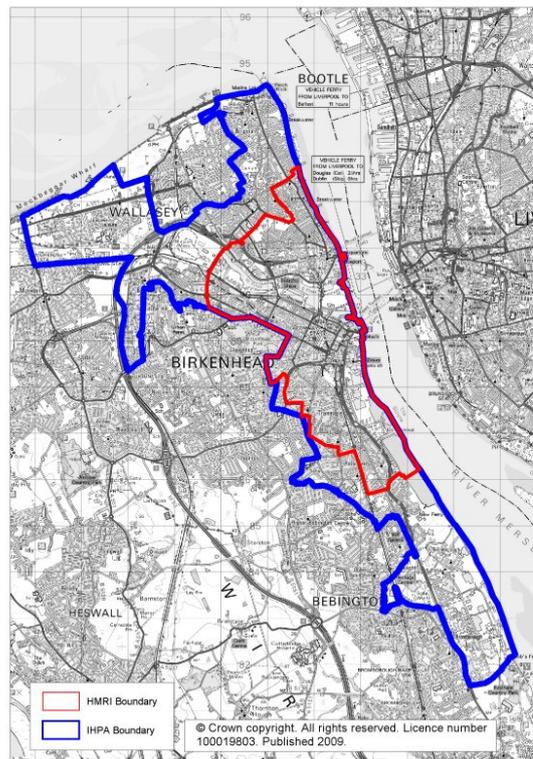
6.4 The main spatial priorities to secure housing market renewal and population stabilisation within the Newheartlands Pathfinder Area; to increase the range, choice and quality of housing; and to secure the delivery of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point apply across the Market Area as a whole and are included in the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy and the Multi Area Agreement with central Government.

Interim Housing Policy

6.5 The Council has successfully operated a non-statutory Interim Housing Policy since December 2003 to apply the spatial priorities set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy and to focus new housing development into identified regeneration priority

areas including the Newheartlands Pathfinder. The boundary was revised to focus on a smaller area in October 2005, which was re-confirmed by the Council's Cabinet in March 2009 (Minute 392).

6.6 Picture 6.1 shows the boundaries to the Newheartlands Pathfinder (HMRI) and to the revised Interim Housing Policy Area (IHPA):



Picture 6.1

6.7 The Interim Housing Policy has increased the proportion of new dwellings completed within the Newheartlands Pathfinder from 15% in 2000/01 (103 dwellings) to over 35% in 2008/09 (211 dwellings). Despite these restrictions, the total number of new dwellings completed across the Borough rose from 686 in 2003/04 to 820 in 2007/08. The proportion of dwellings completed within the wider regeneration priority area rose from 45% in 2000/01 to 72% in 2008/09.

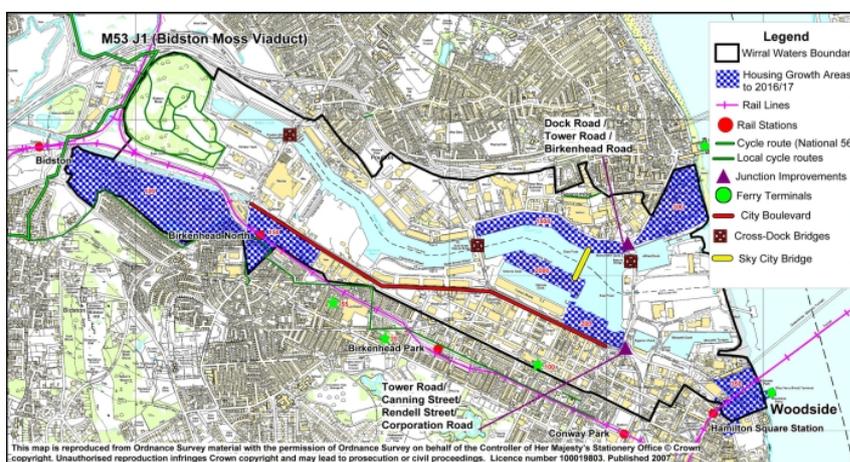
6.8 The recent recession has slowed house building since the middle of 2008. The total number of completions in 2008/09 fell to 599, down by 27% compared to the previous year and the number of dwellings started fell by 41% to 416. The number of starts has continued to fall in the first two quarters of 2009/10, even though the the supply of land with planning permission has increased. The forecast at the end of quarter 2 was for 350 net completions by the end of 2009/10.

6.9 The statutory Core Strategy Development Plan Document will replace the Interim Housing Policy.

New Dwelling Requirements

6.10 The Regional Spatial Strategy requires at least 9,000 additional dwellings to be provided in Wirral between 2003 and 2021, at an annual average rate of at least 500 additional dwellings each year. The Regional Spatial Strategy requires at least 80% of these new homes to be provided on brownfield sites.

6.11 The Mersey Heartlands Growth Point announced by the Government in December 2008 would raise this to 600 dwellings each year to 2016/17, by delivering an annual average of at least 400 additional dwellings within the Growth Point itself. Picture 6.2 identifies proposals at the core of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.



Picture 6.2

6.12 Based on existing build rates, to reach 9,000 additional dwellings by 2021 would need at least 621 additional homes to be built each year from April 2009 onwards. Taking account of demolitions would require a minimum gross annual level of completions of 871 dwellings. This level of development has not been achieved in Wirral since the early to mid-1980s and in one year in 1998/99.

6.13 Early indications are that the number of dwellings under construction will continue below previous expectations during 2009/10, even though adequate land with planning permission has been identified. There will, therefore, be even greater pressure to increase delivery in the later years of the plan period if these targets are to be met in full.

6.14 The current Regional Spatial Strategy assumes that dwelling requirements post 2021 will continue at 500 each year.

6.15 The Government has indicated that a further increase in the number of additional dwellings may be needed to address the national shortage of housing and to reduce house prices to more affordable levels through market forces. Early consultation on the options for a Partial Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy,

undertaken in June 2008, indicated that this could raise the additional dwelling requirement in Wirral to an annual average of up to 690 additional dwellings, to meet the upper range of estimates from the National Housing and Planning Advice Unit.

6.16 The final numbers, post 2021, will now be resolved through the single Regional Strategy (RS2010) being prepared by the North West Development Agency and 4NW. While no figures have yet been set, they could be published before the Core Strategy is adopted.

Housing Land Supply

6.17 The Council maintains an annual schedule of land with planning permission, which is published each December as part of a statutory Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

6.18 National policy requires the Council to maintain a five year supply of housing land. In Wirral's case, this requires land to be identified for at least 2,500 net new dwellings or a gross supply of at least 3,750, based on the Regional Spatial Strategy assumption of 250 demolitions each year. If a five year supply is not maintained, the Council is required to consider sites that would be suitable for new housing favourably, wherever they are located. This would not necessarily support the Council's objective to concentrate development and investment into areas most in need.

6.19 Development Plans like the Core Strategy must additionally demonstrate the ability to deliver a minimum fifteen year supply, with specific sites identified for the first five years and broad locations identified for years six to fifteen. The fifteen year supply must run from the date that the Core Strategy is adopted, which is currently expected to be June 2011. The Core Strategy must also include a housing trajectory, which must be monitored and rolled forward on an annual basis.

6.20 A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is required to consider all the available sites in the Borough that may be suitable to deliver new housing development. A selection of these sites must be brought forward, if needed, each year to ensure that a continuous supply of suitable and deliverable land is available.

6.21 The first SHLAA for Wirral is in preparation in partnership with Liverpool City Council as partners in the delivery of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point. The first list of sites will hopefully be available for inclusion in the AMR in December 2009.

6.22 Picture 6.3 shows the pattern of sites identified with potential for development in the SHLAA, prior to assessment. Not all of these sites will be suitable for housing. Areas shown in red were identified by developers in "call for sites" exercises undertaken in 2007 and 2009. Areas in blue are sites which already had planning permission for housing in April 2009.

- the spatial distribution of new housing development; and
- the approach to the phasing of development throughout the plan period.

Spatial Distribution of New Housing Development

6.27 The Regional Spatial Strategy states that sufficient new residential development must be provided in the eastern part of the Borough to support the inner areas as a priority for economic growth and regeneration and that elsewhere provision should focus on meeting local and affordable housing needs, with careful monitoring and management of housing provision, to ensure that new housing does not result in an adverse cumulative impact on local and neighbouring housing markets (Regional Spatial Strategy, paragraph 7.18, item f).

6.28 The Regional Spatial Strategy does not, however, set a target number below the overall Borough wide target of 500 additional dwellings each year. The only locally specific target is set by the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, at 400 additional dwellings each year, to reach an increased Borough wide annual average target of 600 additional dwellings each year by 2016/17.

6.29 There are, therefore, four main Policy Options for the distribution of net new dwellings:

	Policy Option HD1	Policy Option HD2	Policy Option HD3	Policy Option HD4
Growth Point	600	400	400	<400
RSS Outer Area	0	200	200	>200
RSS Rural Area		0		
Borough Total	600	600	600	600

Table 6.1

6.30 A map of the spatial Areas referred to in Table 6.1 is provided at Picture 3.1 of this document. The Mersey Heartlands Growth Point follows the same boundary as the Newheartlands Pathfinder Area and the Regional Spatial Strategy Inner Area.

6.31 Policy Option HD1 would focus new housing development solely into the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point and the Newheartlands Pathfinder Area, with only one for one replacement and local needs provided for in the remaining areas of the Borough.

6.32 Policy Option HD2 would extend the distribution of new development outside the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point and the Newheartlands Pathfinder into the wider Regional Spatial Strategy Outer Area. This could include the existing Interim Housing

Policy boundary (Picture 6.1 refers), which includes some of the older urban areas surrounding the Pathfinder Area, which also show signs of market decline. Only one for one replacement and local needs would be provided for in the Regional Spatial Strategy Rural Area.

6.33 Policy Option HD3 would distribute new development over a wider area outside the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, across the whole of the Borough.

6.34 Policy Option HD4 would deal with the situation where the Growth Point is unable to contribute sufficient dwellings to deliver the annual averages required, which would then need to be made up elsewhere within the Borough. Policy Option HD4 could, however, include variants of Policy Option HD2 and Policy Option HD3 where the balance of numbers between the Growth Point and the surrounding areas is altered to meet any anticipated shortfall within the RSS Outer Area (Policy Option HD2A) and/or the wider Borough (Policy Option HD3A).

6.35 The figures in Table 6.1 do not yet include any allowance for additional adjustments to take account of backlogs from previous or future years or take account of the additional dwellings that may need to be provided in each Area to compensate for demolitions and/or other losses.

6.36 Additional flexibility could be provided under Policy Option HD1 and Policy Option HD2 by permitting conversions and changes of use as well as one-for-one replacements and provision for local needs in areas subject to restrictions.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

6.37 Policy Option HD1 is likely to have the closest fit with the Spatial Vision but Policy Option HD2 could also deliver an appropriate outcome.

Implications for the Spatial Objectives

6.38 The implications for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Economic Revitalisation	Policy Options maintaining the number of dwellings within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point will assist economic revitalisation by ensuring that new high quality housing is provided alongside new employment to support wider regeneration and improvements. Policy Option HD4 would not support the same level of focused economic revitalisation but an appropriate quality of housing could still support the wider attractiveness of the Borough to investors.

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Vacant Urban Land	Policy Option HD1 and Policy Option HD2, are most likely to focus development on areas where vacant urban land is most prevalent. Policy Options allowing development over a wider area could potentially undermine the re-use of vacant urban land in more central areas.
Housing Market Renewal	Policy Option HD1 and Policy Option HD2 are most likely to support the continued delivery of housing market renewal. While Policy Option HD3 would retain an emphasis on the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 could undermine housing market renewal by providing for development across a wider area.
Housing Growth	Policy Option HD1 would maximise housing growth within the Growth Point. Policy Option HD2 and Policy Option HD3 would maintain the number of homes to be provided within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point but Policy Option HD4 would allow a wider balance of housing growth across the Borough, which could undermine the delivery of the Growth Point, in the absence of any additional restrictions.
Social Inclusion	Policy Option HD1 and Policy Option HD2 would most clearly focus investment into areas with the greatest social, economic and environmental needs but would not address equivalent needs in locations to the west of the M53 Motorway. Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 are, however, unlikely to address these needs in the absence of additional controls.
Transport Accessibility	Policy Option HD1 and Policy Option HD2 are most likely to direct new development to the most accessible locations. Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 could allow development in less sustainable locations, in the absence of further controls.
Local Distinctiveness	The protection of local distinctiveness under all of the Policy Options is more related to controls on design. Policy Options allowing development over a wider area are arguably more likely to lead to a potential conflict with local distinctiveness, in the absence of additional controls.
Green Infrastructure	Policy Options that concentrate development into the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point would maximise the opportunity for new green infrastructure in areas most in need. Policy Options that would allow a wider spread of investment could, however, enable green infrastructure to be provided and enhanced across a wider geographical area.

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Countryside and Coast	Policy Option HD1 would focus the new development into the existing urban areas. Policy Option HD2, Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 could require additional controls to prevent incursions into the open countryside.
Climate Change	Policy Options that concentrate development into the most accessible locations are likely to maximise the impact on emissions. Additional controls would be needed to ensure that new housing was provided away from areas at risk from flooding.
Public Safety	Additional controls would be needed to ensure that development within the RSS Inner Area and RSS Outer Area would be sited away from known hazards and that any increase in traffic did not harm local air quality.

Table 6.2

Implications for the Broad Spatial Options

6.39 The likely implications for each of the Broad Spatial Options include:

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
BSO1 - Focused Regeneration	Policy Option HD1 would be consistent with an aspiration for focused regeneration. Although a focus on the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point would be maintained under all the Policy Options, Policy Option HD4 is most likely to act against the effective delivery of focused regeneration.
BSO2 - Balanced Growth	While Policy Option HD2, Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 could each be consistent with balanced growth, Policy Option HD4 is more likely to support a greater balance of development across a wider area of the Borough, subject to additional controls preventing development outside the urban area.
BSO3 - Urban Expansion	Only Policy Option HD4 is likely to support a strategy of urban expansion, although green field sites at the edge of the urban area could also be considered in the RSS Outer Area under Policy Option HD2 and the RSS Rural Area under Policy Option HD3.

Table 6.3

Implications for Settlement Areas

6.40 The likely implications for each of the Settlement Areas include:

Settlement Area	Likely Implications
Area 1	Policy Option HD1 would focus new housing within the older urban areas to the south of Settlement Area 1. While Policy Option HD2, Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 would provide for development across the whole of Settlement Area 1, Policy Options HD3 and Policy Option HD4 could potentially reduce the pressure for new housing in Settlement Area 1 by making a wider range of Settlement Areas within the Borough available for development.
Area 2	Policy Option HD1, Policy Option HD2 and Policy Option HD3 would maintain a focus of new housing development in Settlement Area 2. Policy Option HD4 would reduce this by accepting a lower rate of delivery within Settlement Area 2 and by re-distributing any shortfall across a wider range of Settlement Areas.
Area 3	Policy Option HD1 would focus new housing within the older urban areas to the north of Settlement Area 3. While Policy Option HD2, Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 would provide for development across the whole of Settlement Area 3, Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 could reduce the pressure for new housing in Settlement Area 3 by making a wider range of Settlement Areas within the Borough available for development.
Area 4	Only Policy Option HD1 would restrict development in Settlement Area 4. While Policy Option HD2, Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 would provide for development across the whole of Area Settlement 4, Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 could potentially reduce the pressure for new housing in Settlement Area 4 by making a wider range of Settlement Areas within the Borough available for development.
Area 5	Policy Option HD1 and Policy Option HD2 would restrict development in Settlement Area 5. Only Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 would provide for new housing across the whole of Settlement Area 5. Policy Option HD4 could increase the level of provision in Settlement Area 5 to make good any shortfalls from Settlement Area 2.
Area 6	Policy Option HD1 and Policy Option HD2 would restrict development in Settlement Area 6. Only Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 would provide for new housing across the whole of Settlement Area

Settlement Area	Likely Implications
	6. Policy Option HD4 could increase the level of provision in Settlement Area 6 to make good any shortfalls from Settlement Area 2.
Area 7	Policy Option HD1 and Policy Option HD2 would restrict development in Settlement Area 7. Only Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 would provide for new housing across the whole of Settlement Area 7. Policy Option HD4 could increase the level of provision in Settlement Area 7 to make good any shortfalls from Settlement Area 2.
Area 8	Only Policy Option HD1 would restrict development in Settlement Area 8. Policy Option HD2 would only potentially provide for development in Settlement Area 8 to the east of the M53 Motorway, in the absence of additional controls. While Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 could potentially provide for development across the whole of Settlement Area 8, Policy Option HD4 could increase the level of provision in Settlement Area 8 to make good any shortfalls from Settlement Area 2.

Table 6.4

Implications for Deliverability

6.41 Previous rates of development would indicate that the total number of dwellings envisaged by Policy Option HD2, Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 in areas outside the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point are likely to be achievable, if delivery rates on previously developed land are maintained.

6.42 The restrictions set out in the Council's Interim Housing Policy still delivered over 800 gross new dwellings in 2007/08, with an annual average of 310 dwellings outside the regeneration priority areas over the last five years reducing to 166 in 2008/09 based on one-for-one replacements and provision for identified local needs. Policy Options that allow development over a wider area are also likely to be deliverable but may need to rely on the release of previously undeveloped greenfield sites in more peripheral locations, contrary to the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives.

6.43 There is no precedent for the delivery of up to 400 additional dwellings each year within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point but land has not previously been made available for large scale residential development within Settlement Area 2. Building at this rate within the Growth Point will, therefore, be entirely dependant on the delivery of Wirral Waters and other sites within the Newheartlands Pathfinder. A high dependence on these sites could require the Newheartlands Pathfinder and

the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point to be identified as a strategic allocation which is essential to the delivery of the strategy or as a broad strategic location within the Core Strategy.

6.44 Demolitions, initially programmed to reduce from 2007/08, have nevertheless remained high in 2008/09 due to public funding advanced from programmes for future years. This means that up to 850 annual gross completions or over 213 completions a quarter would be needed to meet the target of 600 net additional dwellings. The number of gross annual completions needed may, however, reduce if the public funding for demolitions reduces over future years.

6.45 The demolition of high-rise tower blocks and closure of elderly persons accommodation will reduce net additions over the next few years but will provide additional urban land for development. Additional urban land may, however, also come forward from the ongoing review of primary, secondary and special school places.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests that Policy Option HD1 would be the most sustainable. Policy Option HD1 could assist in restructuring local housing markets and attract a wider mix of population to the area, which could enhance economic performance. Policy Option HD1 could also assist in maximising the use of previously developed urban land and buildings whilst restricting development in the open countryside.

Council's Current Assessment

6.46 Council's current assessment is that Policy Option HD1, supported by the commitment to the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point and the ongoing programme within the Newheartlands Pathfinder, is more likely to be consistent with the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives for the Borough. Policy Option HD2, Policy Option HD3 and Policy Option HD4 would all be deliverable but are less likely to provide the full range of benefits envisaged by the Spatial Objectives for the Core Strategy.

Consultation Question 9

Is this a fair assessment of the available Policy Options for the spatial distribution of new housing development? Please give the reasons for your answer.

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that Policy Option HD1 is most likely to be the preferred option for the distribution of new housing? If not, please indicate which Policy Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

Phasing New Housing Development

6.47 There are two main options for the overall approach to the phasing of new housing development in the Core Strategy:

- Policy Option HP1 - Borough wide phasing
- Policy Option HP2 - Settlement Area phasing

6.48 Policy Option HP1 would phase development across the Borough as a whole on the basis of a preferred order of the types of land that should be developed before others are considered. A simple sequence could be urban brownfield land first, urban greenfield land second and only then greenfield sites outside the urban area. Control over the location of development would not, however, extend beyond the type of land under consideration.

6.49 Policy Option HP2 would phase development in a similar way but within each Settlement Area. The same sequence of land types could be applied as under Policy Option HP1.

6.50 Policy Option HP1 would allow a shortfall of one type of land to be made up by land of the same type in a different area. For example, if urban brownfield land ran out in Settlement Area 1, urban brownfield land could then be taken up in Settlement Area 2, before the next category of land was considered for release. Under Policy Option HP2, if the supply of brownfield urban land ran out in Settlement Area 5, urban green field land in Settlement Area 5 could then be considered.

6.51 Policy Option HP2 would require a number of dwellings to be allocated to each Settlement Area but could offer a stronger control over the location of new development and could be more firmly based on identified local needs. Difficulties may, however, arise in Settlement Areas where the opportunities to "overspill" into the next category of land are more limited or unacceptable. Strict controls would, for example, be needed to ensure that an appropriate network of green infrastructure could be retained in Settlement Areas where available urban brownfield land was limited.

6.52 A variation on Policy Option HP2 could phase development across the Regional Spatial Strategy Inner, Outer and Rural Areas (Policy Option HP2A).

6.53 Further detail on the types of land that could be included in a preferred order or sequence under either Policy Option are considered below and in Consultation Question 11.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

6.54 Both Policy Options for phasing new housing development could align with the Spatial Vision for the Borough but Policy Option HP2 is likely to better reflect the delivery of key spatial priorities.

Implications for the Spatial Objectives

6.55 The likely implications for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Economic Revitalisation	Both Policy Options would support economic revitalisation but Policy Option HP2 could offer greater synergies by directing new housing to specific locations more consistent with economic priorities.
Vacant Urban Land	Both Policy Options could be used to support the re-use of previously developed land. While Policy Option HP1 would focus on the re-use of all vacant land across the Borough, Policy Option HP2 could focus more on re-using vacant urban land in line with wider spatial priorities.
Housing Market Renewal	Both Policy Options are likely to support housing market renewal but Policy Option HP2 may be able to offer additional support by directing new housing development to specific locations.
Housing Growth	Both Policy Options are likely to support the delivery of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point but Policy Option HP2 may be able to offer additional support by directing new housing development to specific locations.
Social Inclusion	Both Policy Options could support social inclusion, alongside additional controls over housing tenure, mix and affordability but Policy Option HP2 may be able to offer additional support by directing new housing development to specific locations.
Transport Accessibility	Additional controls would be needed to secure transport accessibility under both Policy Options but Policy Option HP2 may be able to offer additional support by directing new housing development to specific locations.
Local Distinctiveness	Additional controls would be needed to respect local distinctiveness under both Policy Options but Policy Option HP2 may be able to offer additional support by directing new housing development to specific locations.
Green Infrastructure	Additional controls would be needed to secure the appropriate provision of green infrastructure under both Policy Options but Policy Option HP2 may be able to offer additional support by directing new housing development to specific locations.

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Countryside and Coast	Additional controls would be needed to reduce the impact on countryside and coast under both Policy Options but Policy Option HP2 may be able to offer additional support by directing new housing development to specific locations.
Climate Change	Additional controls would be needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change and avoid areas at risk from flooding under both Policy Options but Policy Option HP2 may be able to offer additional support by directing new housing development to specific locations.
Public Safety	Additional controls would be needed to take account of public safety under both Policy Options but Policy Option HP2 may be able to offer additional support by directing new housing development to specific locations.

Table 6.5

Implications for the Broad Spatial Options

6.56 The likely implications for each of the Broad Spatial Options for the Core Strategy include:

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
BSO1 - Focused Regeneration	Policy Option HP1 would be consistent with focused regeneration where sufficient suitable and deliverable land was available in regeneration priority areas. Policy Option HP2 may, however, better express the spatial priorities necessary to most effectively support a strategy of focused regeneration.
BSO2 - Balanced Growth	Both Policy Options could deliver balanced growth but Policy Option HP2 may be able to offer additional support by directing new housing development to specific locations.
BSO3 - Urban Expansion	The sequence of development under both Policy Options is likely to look towards urban expansion as a last resort but Policy Option HP2 could be used to support urban expansion by directing new housing development to specific locations.

Table 6.6

Implications for Settlement Areas

6.57 The implications for individual Settlement Areas are closely related to the preferred orders or sequences likely to be adopted. A sequence that prioritises the re-use of previously developed urban land is, for example, likely to favour higher levels of housing development in Settlement Area 1, Settlement 2 and Settlement 3. Policy Option HP2 would, however, offer additional control by directing new housing development to specific locations.

Implications for Deliverability

6.58 Both Policy Options would require the supply of land within different categories and locations to be monitored through the Annual Monitoring Report before any decision on the release of land of a different category or in a different location was permitted.

6.59 Both Policy Options would need to be based on figures associated with maintaining a continuous five year supply. Policy Option HP1 is likely to be simpler to apply. Policy Option HP2 would require a more complex classification involving a closer analysis of local housing needs and land supply within specific locations.

6.60 Both Policy Options would offer an element of flexibility, where suitable, deliverable land of one type or location was no longer available.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests that Policy Option HP2 would be the most sustainable. Directing housing development to particular areas could assist in restructuring local housing markets and attracting a wider mix of population to the area. Policy Option HP2 could also support economic revitalisation and reduce unemployment and income deprivation by focusing new housing on areas of employment growth.

Council's Current Assessment

6.61 The Council's current assessment is that Policy Option HP2 is more likely to deliver outcomes consistent with the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives for the Core Strategy.

Consultation Question 10

Is this a fair assessment of the available Policy Options for the phasing of new housing development? Please give the reasons for your answer.

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that Policy Option HP2 is most likely to be the preferred option for phasing new housing? If not, please indicate which Policy Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

Order of Preference

6.62 Both of the Policy Options for phasing new housing development would involve prioritising the types of land that should be developed before other types of land are considered. The range of choices could include:

- Urban brownfield - in regeneration priority areas
- Urban brownfield - in rest of east Wirral
- Urban brownfield - west Wirral
- Rural brownfield - east Wirral
- Rural brownfield - west Wirral
- Urban greenfield - east Wirral
- Urban greenfield - west Wirral
- Rural greenfield - east Wirral
- Rural greenfield - west Wirral

6.63 In interpreting the classifications above:

- East Wirral should be taken to mean land to the east of the M53 Motorway.
- West Wirral should be taken to mean land to the west of the M53 Motorway.
- Urban should be taken to mean land within the boundaries of the existing urban area (outside Settlement Area 8).
- Rural should be taken to mean land outside the boundary of the existing urban area (within Settlement Area 8).
- Brownfield should be taken to mean land which has previously been developed.
- Greenfield should be taken to mean land which has not previously been developed including playing fields, open space and open countryside.

6.64 National policy and the Regional Spatial Strategy do not differentiate between different types of previously developed brownfield land, which includes sites in active use as well as vacant land and land within the curtilage of an existing property, including private garden land. The formal definition of brownfield land is provided in Annex B of national Planning Policy Statement 3. National consultation on the inclusion of private gardens took place in April 2009. The Government's response is not yet available.

Consultation Question 11

Please place the following categories of land in order of priority for new housing development with "1" being the highest preference and "9" being lowest preference:

- Urban brownfield - in regeneration priority areas only
- Urban brownfield - in rest of east Wirral
- Urban brownfield - west Wirral
- Rural brownfield - east Wirral
- Rural brownfield - west Wirral
- Urban greenfield - east Wirral
- Urban greenfield - west Wirral
- Rural greenfield - east Wirral
- Rural greenfield - west Wirral
- Other (please specify)

Affordable and Specialist Housing

6.65 Affordable and specialist housing is provided through a mix of publicly funded schemes and contributions from private developers.

6.66 National policy defines affordable housing as social rented and intermediate housing provided to people who cannot afford to buy their own homes. Social rented housing is managed by Registered Social Landlords. Intermediate housing includes shared equity products, low cost homes for sale and intermediate rents, at prices greater than a social rent but still below market prices. Low cost market housing does not qualify as affordable housing. Specialist housing provides sheltered and supported housing for people with physical, learning, sensory or mental health problems, including the frail elderly.

6.67 The latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Wirral (September 2007) showed a Borough wide need for 1,767 affordable dwellings each year and recommended that 40% of all new housing should be affordable, in the ratio of 30% social rented and 10% intermediate housing on sites of 15 or more units. This approach was accepted by Cabinet in February 2008 (Minute 506). No specific target was recommended for the provision of specialist housing.

6.68 A further assessment has been commissioned to take the recent economic downturn into account and to re-assess the viability of providing affordable and specialist housing as part of market housing developments. The revised assessment is expected to recommend a ramped approach, increasing the proportion of affordable housing required as the housing market recovers over time.

6.69 In September 2008, the benchmark for an affordable home, based on average household incomes in Wirral, was £115,000. Within the Newheartlands Pathfinder the benchmark was £95,700. In September 2008, the average price for a terraced dwelling in Wirral was £107,000. The average price for a semi-detached house was £126,859.

6.70 Consultation has repeatedly identified affordable family and special needs housing as a significant local need. This is also reflected in the Wirral Housing Strategy and the Local Area Agreement.

Policy Options

6.71 There are two main options for the delivery of affordable and specialist housing:

- Policy Option AH1 - set a Borough-wide target in the Core Strategy for new housing developments
- Policy Option AH2 - set targets for geographically specific areas, where evidence shows specific local needs

6.72 Policy Option AH1 would set a blanket requirement for new housing developments along the lines of the current target of 40%, amended in response to the revised needs and viability assessments. Flexibility could be incorporated to take account of site-specific factors and changing economic circumstances. Delivery would be focused on securing on-site provisions or developer contributions to off-site works. Publicly funded schemes would continue to be delivered in addition to private sector contributions.

6.73 Policy Option AH2 would set more focused targets for delivery within each Settlement Area, which could then be provided by a mix of publicly funded schemes and developer contributions. The targets would be based on the revised assessment of identified local needs, viability assessments and the objectives of local housing strategies.

Policy Fit

6.74 The objectives of national policy are to ensure social progress which recognises the needs of everyone (PPS1) and to ensure everyone has the opportunity to live a decent home which they can afford (PPS3). Regional Spatial Strategy Policy L5 expects the Local Planning Authority to set targets based on evidence from Strategic Housing Market Assessments and up-to-date viability assessments.

6.75 Unitary Development Plan Policy HSG2 and Policy HS6 currently allow the Council to negotiate the provision of affordable housing with applicants and developers in line with an assessment of local needs. Private developers are usually required to enter a contract with a partner Registered Social Landlord to ensure the number

of affordable units provided continue to remain available. Policy HS7 and Policy HS9 provide for sheltered and mobility housing. Policy HS8 provides for nursing and residential care homes.

6.76 The Council's Interim Housing Policy currently permits the provision of affordable and specialist housing in areas that are subject to restrictions, where a proposal can be shown to meet an identified local housing need.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

6.77 Providing for affordable homes and specialist housing is consistent with the social aspirations of the Spatial Vision, which seeks sustainable, affordable, mixed communities.

Implications for the Spatial Objectives

6.78 The likely implications for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Economic Revitalisation	Both Policy Options could support economic revitalisation by providing a higher standard of modern affordable housing and construction jobs for employees in local industry. However, without additional controls, Policy Option AH2 could lead to an over-concentration of affordable housing which could have an impact on wider aspirations.
Vacant Urban Land	Both Policy Options could assist in reducing the amount of vacant urban land but Policy Option AH2 could provide additional support by directing development to specific locations.
Housing Market Renewal	Both Policy Options could assist in the delivery of housing market renewal but without additional controls Policy Option AH2 could lead to an over-concentration of affordable and specialist housing which could limit the choice of accommodation available within the Newheartlands Pathfinder.
Housing Growth	Both Policy Options could support housing growth within the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point but Policy Option AH2 could lead to an over-concentration of affordable housing which could limit the choice of housing available.
Social Inclusion	Both Policy Options would support social inclusion but without additional controls Policy Option AH2 could lead to an over-concentration of affordable and specialist housing which could hinder the delivery of sustainable, mixed communities.

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Transport Accessibility	Additional controls would be needed under both Policy Options to ensure affordable housing was delivered in the most accessible locations but Policy Option AH2 could provide additional support by directing affordable and specialist housing to specific locations.
Local Distinctiveness	Additional controls would be needed to ensure that affordable and specialist housing would support local distinctiveness but Policy Option AH2 could provide additional support by directing affordable housing to specific locations.
Green Infrastructure	Additional controls would be needed to ensure that affordable and specialist housing would contribute to the equitable provision of green infrastructure but Policy Option AH2 could provide additional support by directing affordable housing to specific locations.
Countryside and Coast	Additional controls would be needed to ensure that affordable and specialist housing did not harm the character of the countryside or coast but Policy Option AH2 could provide additional support by directing affordable housing to specific locations.
Climate Change	Publicly funded affordable and specialist housing is often built to an higher environmental standard than market housing. Additional controls would be needed to ensure that affordable and specialist housing provided by the private sector achieved similar standards and avoided areas at risk from flooding.
Public Safety	Additional controls would be needed to protect public safety. Policy Option AH2 could provide additional support by directing affordable and specialist housing to specific locations.

Table 6.7

Implications for the Broad Spatial Options

6.79 The likely implications for each of the Broad Spatial Options for the Core Strategy include:

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
BSO1 - Focused Regeneration	Broad Spatial Option 1 would direct the majority of affordable and specialist housing to regeneration priority areas, which could fail to address the scale of need in other areas of the Borough. The potential for an over-concentration of affordable and specialist housing would need to be balanced against the social benefit of providing affordable and specialist housing in the most accessible locations.
BSO2 - Balanced Growth	Broad Spatial Option 2 would support the delivery of affordable and specialist housing throughout the wider urban areas but Policy Option AH2 could focus provision towards areas of specific local need.
BSO3 - Urban Expansion	Broad Spatial Option 3 would support the delivery of affordable and specialist housing across an even wider area of the Borough but Policy Option AH2 could focus provision towards areas of specific local need.

Table 6.8

Implications for Settlement Areas

6.80 The implications for individual Settlement Areas are largely related to the Broad Spatial Option to be pursued. Policy Option AH1 would deliver affordable and specialist housing wherever new housing development was to be permitted within the Borough. Policy Option AH2 would allow provision to be directed to Settlement Areas with the greatest needs.

Implications for Deliverability

6.81 Both Policy Options could be used to support the development of sustainable, mixed communities, with varying levels of effectiveness.

6.82 The provision of affordable and specialist housing is largely reliant on the availability of public funding and development economics. This may mean that the ability to address the scale of need could be limited by market constraints.

6.83 Affordable and specialist housing is only deliverable by the private sector where the scale and value of market housing proposed is able to support it. The setting of targets would need to be firmly based on an up-to-date economic viability assessment, including factors that could change over time.

6.84 Total affordable and specialist housing needs would need to be considered against the housing requirement of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the objectives of regeneration programmes which aim to rebuild housing markets by providing for a wider choice and mix of housing.

6.85 A 40% target on new housing development could only provide up to 350 affordable units each year based on an average annual gross completion rate of 850 units to deliver a net annual average of 600 dwellings each year.

6.86 Policy Option AH1 could deliver affordable and specialist housing in areas that would not be priorities for publicly funded schemes.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests that Policy Option AH1 would be the most sustainable. Dispersing affordable and specialist housing across the Borough would better encourage the formation of more mixed, sustainable communities, supporting social inclusion, a more diverse housing offer and a wider mix of population.

Council's Current Assessment

6.87 The Council's current assessment is that Policy Option AH1 is likely to be the preferred option, as this is more likely to achieve mixed communities wherever new housing development takes place. Policy Option AH2 would direct affordable and specialist housing to areas of greatest need but could lead to an over-concentration of affordable and specialist housing, which could hinder wider objectives related to economic revitalisation, housing market renewal, balanced communities and a wider choice of housing.

Consultation Question 12

Is this a fair assessment of the available Policy Options for the delivery of affordable and specialist housing within the Borough? Please give the reasons for your answer.

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that Policy Option AH1 is most likely to be the preferred option for the delivery of affordable and specialist housing? If not, please indicate which Policy Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

Gypsies and Travellers

6.88 Gypsies and Travellers lead a nomadic way of life. The provision of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers is classed as a specialist housing need, comparable to affordable, mobility or sheltered housing.

6.89 Despite continued nil caravan counts and a low number of recorded visits and unauthorised encampments, the most recent Merseyside Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2007 indicates that Wirral may need to provide up to

ten permanent residential pitches and up to 5 transit pitches for Gypsies and Travellers passing through the area. These figures are now being taken forward more formally as part of a Partial Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. The Council has submitted a formal objection to the figures proposed.

6.90 No need for accommodation for Travelling Showpeople has been identified in the current proposals in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Policy Options

6.91 There are two main options for the development of a policy for providing accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers:

- Policy Option GT1 - set a geographically specific target in the Core Strategy
- Policy Option GT2 - set out criteria for the assessment of planning applications were they to be submitted in the Core Strategy

6.92 There is no need to duplicate the figures set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy through a Borough wide target.

6.93 Policy Option GT1 would seek to identify a general area of search where a site or sites for Gypsies and Travellers could be provided, in the event that a minimum number of pitches is set by the Regional Spatial Strategy. The numbers proposed are only likely to support one residential site and it is uncertain whether transit and permanent sites should be combined.

6.94 Policy Option GT2 would develop criteria that could take local circumstances into account in the event that a planning application was submitted. This approach would enable site specific factors to be considered, if demand actually arose. There is a need to avoid duplicating national and regional policy.

Policy Fit

6.95 National policy requires the Council to plan for the need to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers (PPS3). The number of pitches identified at regional level should be translated into specific site allocations (Circular 01/06). Core Strategies are expected to set out fair, reasonable, realistic and effective criteria for the location of sites to guide future allocations.

6.96 The Partial Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy indicates an urgent need to address a shortage of accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers across the North West.

6.97 The Council has a legal duty under the Housing Acts to make appropriate provision for accommodating Gypsies and Travellers in line with local needs.

6.98 There is no target for provision in the current Unitary Development Plan.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

6.99 Provision for Gypsies and Travellers would be consistent with achieving sustainable, mixed, communities.

Implications for Spatial Objectives

6.100 The likely implications for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Economic Revitalisation	Properly designed and well-managed accommodation should not have any significant implications for economic revitalisation.
Vacant Urban Land	Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers could support the re-use of previously developed land.
Housing Market Renewal	Properly designed and well-managed accommodation should not have any significant implications for housing market renewal.
Housing Growth	The scale of accommodation likely to be required for Gypsies and Travellers is unlikely to have any significant implications for housing growth.
Social Inclusion	The provision of suitable accommodation and services could contribute towards the social inclusion of Gypsies and Travellers. Securing appropriate provision for Gypsies and Travellers has human rights and equalities implications.
Transport Accessibility	Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers will need to be well-related to the highway network.
Local Distinctiveness	Properly designed and well-managed accommodation should not have any significant implications for local distinctiveness.
Green Infrastructure	Properly designed and well-managed accommodation should not have any significant implications for green infrastructure.
Countryside and Coast	Properly designed and well-managed accommodation should not have any significant implications for the character of the countryside or coast.

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Climate Change	Provision for Gypsies and Travellers is unlikely to have significant implications for climate change and residential accommodation could encourage a reduction in the need to travel. Additional controls would be needed to avoid land at risk from flooding.
Public Safety	Properly designed and well-managed accommodation should not have any significant implications for public health.

Table 6.9

Implications for the Broad Spatial Options

6.101 The likely implications for each of the Broad Spatial Options for the Core Strategy include:

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
BSO1 - Focussed Regeneration	Broad Spatial Option 1 could lead to provision for Gypsy and Travellers as part of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point or the Newheartlands Pathfinder or elsewhere as an identified local need if a suitable site was not available.
BSO2 - Balanced Growth	Broad Spatial Option 2 could lead to provision for Gypsies and Travellers within the existing urban area.
BSO3 - Urban Expansion	Broad Spatial Option 3 could lead to provision for Gypsies and Travellers on sites outside the existing urban area.

Table 6.10

Implications for Settlement Area

6.102 Evidence is not yet available to suggest a geographical preference for site provision. An understanding of the travelling patterns of the Gypsy and Traveller Community would also need to be taken into account.

Implications for Deliverability

6.103 It is unlikely that a private developer would wish to provide Gypsy and Traveller accommodation as part of a wider proposal for development. In the absence of grant funding, the Council is also unlikely to have the resources necessary to identify, construct and manage a new site(s), given the scale of other priorities within the Borough.

6.104 The Council will need to screen sites emerging from the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment for their initial suitability for Gypsies and Travellers, against criteria already set out in national policy and guidance.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests that both Policy Options would be equally sustainable.

Council's Current Assessment

6.105 The Council's current assessment is that Policy Option GT2 is likely to provide the most flexible approach. There is, as yet, no evidence on which to base a more specific geographical target.

Consultation Question 13

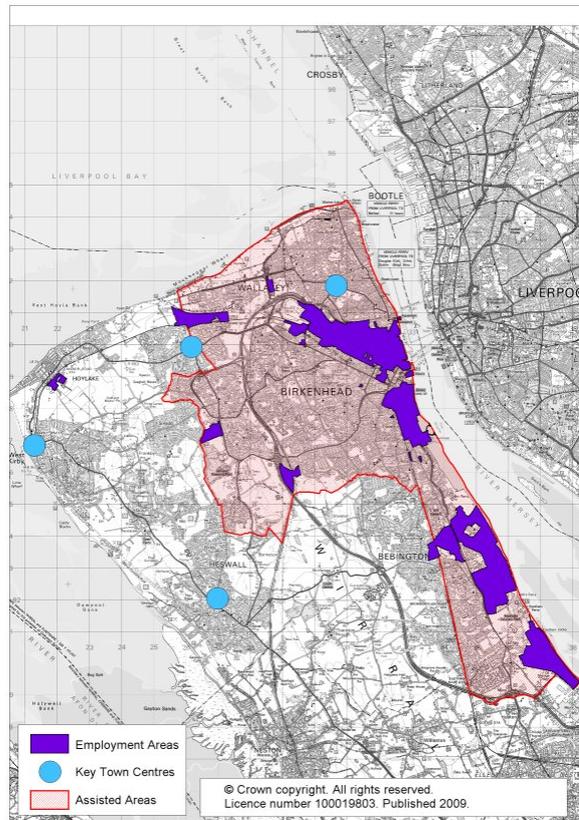
Is this a fair assessment of the available Policy Options for the approach to providing specialist accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers within the Borough? Please give the reasons for your answer.

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that Policy Option GT2 is most likely to be the preferred option for providing for Gypsies and Travellers? If not, please indicate which Policy Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

6.2 Providing for Employment

Background

6.106 Economic revitalisation has been identified as a key priority for the Core Strategy. Success will rely on the adequate provision of suitable, high quality land and premises and supporting infrastructure.



Picture 6.4

6.107 Picture 6.4 shows the existing distribution of designated employment areas, national Assisted Areas and the largest town centres across the Borough. The pattern of existing provision is heavily skewed towards east Wirral, in Birkenhead and Tranmere (Settlement Area 2) and Bromborough and Eastham (Settlement Area 4).

6.108 The availability of grant funding has underpinned the success of higher quality locations such as the Strategic Regional Sites at Twelve Quays in Birkenhead and Wirral International Business Park in Bromborough. Over half of new employment floorspace and nearly three quarters of the land taken up has been concentrated in these two areas since the Unitary Development Plan was adopted in February 2000.

6.109 There are very few employment opportunities in the settlements to the west of the M53 Motorway. Areas at Prenton (Settlement Area 4), Moreton and Upton (Settlement Area 5) and Hoylake (Settlement Area 6) and existing town centres will, therefore, remain important in maintaining local employment close to areas of need and in minimising the need to travel, particularly outside the Borough, to work.

6.110 The Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2009, which considered current and future provision for business, office, industrial, warehouse uses, shows:

- strong local demand for modern sites and premises in Birkenhead and Bromborough;

- an acute shortage of unconstrained immediately available employment land;
- a general lack of high quality sites for offices or general industry outside Wirral International Business Park;
- a dependency on grant aid, even in Bromborough; and
- the need for an additional 177ha of land to meet needs to 2030.

6.111 In the longer term, the Study identifies a potential need to replace Wirral International Business Park, which will remain a designated Strategic Regional Site until the remaining vacant sites are taken up. Few alternatives are available, beyond making the most of existing employment locations or providing a brand new site outside the existing urban area. Current rates of development indicate that the need for a new site may not, however, arise until the end of the plan period, post 2025, assuming that no additional sites become available within the Business Park, within that period.

6.112 The Strategic Regional Site at Twelve Quays is now essentially complete and will be replaced by a new Strategic Regional Site based around Wirral Waters to bring the Birkenhead Docklands into use as a high quality employment location. The final boundary to the new Strategic Regional Site is still to be confirmed. It is the Council's view that the opportunity at Wirral Waters is likely to be able to address any additional needs, without any incursion into the Green Belt, including the increasing demand for additional office based business floorspace identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy. The option of identifying a new long term strategic location outside the existing urban area has, however, been retained and assessed, in case this initial conclusion is later found to be incorrect.

Policy Options

6.113 There are, therefore, three main Policy Options:

- Policy Option EL1 - Concentrate on identified strategic locations in east Wirral
- Policy Option EL2 - Concentrate on existing industrial areas and town centres across all of Wirral
- Policy Option EL3 - Identify a new long term strategic location outside the existing urban area

6.114 Policy Option EL1 would seek to concentrate public resources at key strategic locations, similar to the successful approach to the transformation of Twelve Quays and Wirral International Business Park during the 1990s. This could, however, also include other strategically important facilities such as the Lever Faberge Soap Factory and Research Laboratories at Port Sunlight; the dock estate associated with the Manchester Ship Canal at Eastham; and major employment areas associated with Birkenhead Town Centre, Wirral Waters, Woodside, Hind Street and Cammell Lairds.

Other industrial areas and centres would still be retained for employment uses but their development would not have the same priority in terms of new investment and public funding.

6.115 Policy Option EL2 would seek to maximise the range of opportunities at all existing employment areas across the Borough rather than in just a few selected locations. The focus would be on encouraging the replacement and refurbishment of older premises, seeking to improve infrastructure and the environment wherever possible and to accommodate new floorspace more suitable for modern investors and operators. Policy Option EL2 would seek to retain the spread of employment across the Borough; maximise employment opportunities within town and district centres; and allow a greater provision of local employment to address local needs in areas such as Leasowe, Moreton and Woodchurch. Elements of Policy Option EL1 would, however, also continue to be pursued.

6.116 Policy Option EL3 would accept the long term need for a replacement for Wirral International Business Park but would seek to provide it outside the existing urban area. While this may be the least sustainable, in terms of accessibility, the reuse of previously developed land and support for regeneration programmes, the release of a large (circa 20 hectare) greenfield site outside the urban area could provide the most straightforward solution to the provision of jobs in a competitive, modern, high quality environment. Likely areas of search would be on a main transport route, near to a motorway junction. Elsewhere, elements of both Policy Option EL1 and Policy Option EL2 would continue to be pursued.

Policy Fit

6.117 National policy states that sufficient land should be readily available, to meet differing needs, provide for choice, flexibility and competition, minimise the length and number of trips especially by motor vehicle and discourage congestion (PPG4).

6.118 PPS4 is currently under review. Draft revisions, issued for consultation in March 2009, indicate that the Government may widen the definition of economic development, to allow a greater mix of uses that generate employment, wealth and economic output within industrial and commercial areas. This could extend beyond the range of uses considered in the Wirral Employment Land and Premises Study 2009 and require additional land to be identified.

6.119 The Regional Spatial Strategy identifies the need for an additional 494 hectares in Merseyside and Halton to meet anticipated demand to 2021. A third of the supply should be fully serviced and actively marketed or likely to be fully serviced and actively marketed in the next three years at any one time (Policy W3). Employment land should only be released for other uses following a comprehensive review of commitments and the promotion of social and economic inclusion, sustainable travel choices and access to services are important considerations (Policy W4).

6.120 While Policy Option EL1 would align most strongly with the spatial priorities identified for the Regional Spatial Strategy Inner and Outer Areas and the delivery of the Strategic Regional Sites identified as part of the Regional Economic Strategy, Policy Option EL2 and Policy Option EL3 could serve to significantly expand the choice and location of site available. Policy Option EL2 would also include sites within the national Assisted Areas to the west of the M53 Motorway.

6.121 Policy Option EL3 could provide an additional employment land in a variety of locations but would be limited by national Green Belt controls.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

6.122 Policy Option EL1 has the closest fit with the Spatial Vision. While Policy Option EL2 and Policy Option EL3 could expand the range of site available, they would be less supportive of priority regeneration programmes. Policy Option EL3, in particular, is most likely to directly undermine regeneration programmes at the heart of the urban area where social, economic and environmental needs are greatest.

Implications for the Spatial Objectives

6.123 The implications for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Economic Revitalisation	All three Policy Options would support economic revitalisation. While Policy Option EL2 and Policy Option EL3 would expand the range and choice of sites available, this could be at the expense of regeneration at the core of the older urban areas.
Vacant Urban Land	While Policy Option EL1 and Policy Option EL2 would support the reuse of vacant urban land, Policy Option EL1 is more likely to concentrate on locations where the proportion of vacant land is highest.
Housing Market Renewal	Policy Option EL1 is likely to offer the greatest level of support to market renewal within the Newheartlands Pathfinder.
Housing Growth	Policy Option EL1 is likely to offer the greatest level of support to housing growth within the Newheartlands Pathfinder and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.
Social Inclusion	Policy Option EL1 would direct the majority of new employment development to locations that are most likely to be accessible to areas of greatest need. Policy Option EL2 would, however, allow a greater level of local employment to be maintained in outlying areas of need such as Leasowe, Moreton and Upton. The

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
	performance of Policy Option EL3 would depend on the location and accessibility of the site(s) chosen to replace the Business Park.
Transport Accessibility	Policy Option EL1 is most likely to support employment development in the most accessible locations. Policy Option EL2 could, however reduce the need to travel by providing a higher level of employment across a wider area. The performance of Policy Option EL3 would depend on the location and accessibility of the site chosen to replace the Business Park.
Local Distinctiveness	By focusing on existing employment locations, Policy Option EL1 and Policy Option EL2 are unlikely to have a significant impact on local distinctiveness. Policy Option EL3 has the greatest potential to have a harmful impact subject to the location and design of the site(s) chosen to replace the Business Park.
Green Infrastructure	Additional controls would be necessary under Policy Option EL1 and Policy Option EL2 to ensure that new development contributed to enhancing green infrastructure in existing employment locations. Additional controls would also be needed to minimise the impact on green infrastructure outside the urban area under Policy Option EL3.
Countryside and Coast	Policy Option EL1 and Policy Option EL2 are unlikely to lead to additional development within the countryside and coast. Policy Option EL3 has the greatest potential to have a harmful impact subject to the location and design of the site(s) chosen to replace the Business Park.
Climate Change	Policy Option EL1 may provide the greatest opportunity to maximise the impact on carbon emissions through the promotion of high density, modern development associated with Wirral Waters and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point. Policy Option EL2 and Policy Option EL3 may make smaller contributions to the reduction of carbon emissions by promoting development across a wider area. Additional controls would be needed under all Policy Options, to avoid the risk of flooding.
Public Safety	Additional controls would be needed to protect public safety under all three Policy Options but Policy Option EL1 may need to be more carefully controlled to maintain the separation of sensitive uses and minimise any potential impact on air pollution.

Table 6.11

Implications for the Broad Spatial Options

6.124 The likely implications for each of the Broad Spatial Options for the Core Strategy include:

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
BSO1 - Focused Regeneration	Policy Option EL1 would be consistent with focusing new development and investment into identified regeneration priority areas in east Wirral. Policy Option EL2 would also address areas of identified need to the west of the M53 Motorway. Policy Option EL3 is least likely to support Broad Spatial Option 1.
BSO2 - Balanced Growth	Policy Option EL2 is the most likely to promote a balanced growth in employment across the urban area. Policy Option EL3 could also support a more balanced pattern of employment, subject to the location of the site(s) chosen to replace the Business Park.
BSO3 - Urban Expansion	Policy Option EL3 would be consistent with a strategy of urban expansion, although a strategy of urban expansion would not necessarily need to involve the identification of additional employment land outside the urban area.

Table 6.12

Implications for Settlement Areas

6.125 The likely implications for the Settlement Areas include:

Settlement Area	Likely Implications
Area 1	Policy Option EL1 would continue to focus new employment development to the south of Settlement Area 1. Policy Option EL2 would promote further opportunities at Liscard and other local centres, which could include New Brighton and Cross Lane Industrial Estate.
Area 2	Policy Option EL1 would continue to focus new employment development to the heart of Settlement Area 2, to sites in and around Birkenhead Town Centre, including Woodside, Hind Street and Cammell Lairds and the newly designated Strategic Regional Site at Birkenhead, including Wirral Waters. Policy Option EL2 and Policy Option EL3 would extend the range of opportunities outside Settlement Area 2.

Settlement Area	Likely Implications
Area 3	While Policy Option EL1 would continue to focus new employment development to the north and east of Settlement Area 3, Policy Option EL2 could promote a wider range of opportunities in local centres in Settlement Area 3.
Area 4	Policy Option EL1 would continue to focus new employment development to the Strategic Regional Site at Wirral International Business Park and other strategically important facilities such as the Lever Faberge Soap Factory and Research Laboratories at Port Sunlight and the dock estate associated with the Manchester Ship Canal at Eastham. While Policy Option EL2 could promote further opportunities within local centres, Policy Option EL3 could promote additional employment land at the urban edge of Settlement Area 4.
Area 5	Policy Option EL1 would not promote additional employment development within Settlement Area 5. While Policy Option EL2 could promote additional employment at the existing industrial areas at Leasowe, Moreton and Upton, at Moreton town centre and in other local centres, Policy Option EL3 could promote additional employment land at the urban edge of Settlement Area 5.
Area 6	Policy Option EL1 would not promote additional employment development within Settlement Area 6. While Policy Option EL2 could promote additional opportunities at West Kirby and in other local centres, Policy Option EL3 could promote additional employment land at the urban edge. Settlement Area 6 is, however, unlikely to be able to support a major strategic employment allocation.
Area 7	Policy Option EL1 would not promote additional employment development within Settlement Area 6. While Policy Option EL2 could promote additional opportunities at Heswall and in other local centres, Policy Option EL3 could promote additional employment land at the urban edge. Settlement Area 7 is, however, unlikely to be able to support a major strategic employment allocation.
Area 8	Only Policy Option EL3 is likely to have implications for the character of the undeveloped coast and countryside within Settlement Area 8.

Table 6.13

Implications for Deliverability

6.126 The past success of Wirral International Business Park; the designation of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point and the new Strategic Regional Site at Birkenhead; and the continued demand for sites and premises in Birkenhead and Bromborough, mean that Policy Option EL1 is likely to be the most deliverable, overall.

6.127 Policy Option EL1 would also be supported by proximity to Liverpool and the M53 Motorway; main freight routes; a readily available workforce in priority locations; and public funding to support the provision of new premises and infrastructure. A concentration on the most accessible locations, in and around Birkenhead, is also more likely to better support the provision of office-based developments.

6.128 A high dependence on Strategic Regional Sites, other strategic facilities and sites in and around Birkenhead could, however, require them to be identified as strategic allocations which are essential to the delivery of the strategy or as broad strategic locations within the Core Strategy.

6.129 Policy Option EL2 would largely need to be led by the private sector, as public resources are unlikely to be available to the levels needed across such a wide area of activity. While Policy Option EL2 would promote the spread of employment across the Borough and could reduce the need to travel, especially in areas of need like Leasowe, Moreton and Upton, the lack of public funding could hinder the delivery of the step change necessary to attract larger, non-local employers.

6.130 Policy Option EL2 could be further encouraged by allowing a wider range of ancillary uses to maximise local employment. However, while permitting a wider range of higher value uses might provide additional local employment, it could push out more traditional small and medium sized business, industrial and storage uses and could undermine employment in town centres.

6.131 Policy Option EL3 is likely to involve the release of land from the Green Belt, which would rely on a review of the Regional Spatial Strategy. No site has yet been identified and no willing landowner or developer is yet pursuing this solution, which is unlikely to attract public funding support.

6.132 The identification of additional strategic employment land under Policy Option EL3 would also require strategic allocations or broad locations to be identified in the Core Strategy, which would need to be supported by an additional evidence base, which has not yet been prepared.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests that Policy Option EL1 is likely to be the most sustainable as it would support the creation of employment opportunities in areas of greatest need and would provide new employment in the most accessible locations.

Council's Current Assessment

6.133 The Council's current assessment is that Policy Option EL1 is more likely to deliver the Spatial Vision and perform best against the Spatial Objectives. While Policy Option EL2 could offer additional benefits to other areas in need of employment, particularly to the west of the M53 Motorway, a wider distribution of opportunities may not support the most effective use of public sector resources.

6.134 The Council is not convinced that Policy Option EL3 will be necessary, even towards the end of the plan period, given the scale and quality of development that could be accommodated in and around Birkenhead, through projects such as Wirral Waters and Woodside and the wider benefits associated with the delivery of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.

Consultation Question 14

Is this a fair assessment of the available Policy Options for the spatial pattern of new employment development? Please give the reasons for your answer.

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that Policy Option EL1 is most likely to be the preferred option for the pattern of future employment? If not, please indicate which Policy Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

6.3 Providing for Retailing

Background

6.135 The Wirral Town Centres Retail and Commercial Leisure Study 2009 establishes that:

Convenience Retailing

- the Borough is largely self-contained in terms of convenience retailing (food drink and other everyday items);
- 96% of residents convenience spending takes place in existing centres and freestanding stores within the Borough;

- the nine largest foodstores account for 64% of total convenience spending;
- some of the Borough's local centres, which have traditionally performed a convenience shopping role centred around smaller and independent retailers are characterised by high vacancy levels and poor environmental quality.

6.136 The Study concludes that there is no need for additional convenience floorspace in any part of the Borough, over and above existing planning permissions (including the proposed superstores in Birkenhead and New Brighton), over the lifetime of the Core Strategy due to the low forecast rate of expenditure growth in the convenience sector. No specific local deficiencies in convenience retail provision have been identified in the Borough.

Comparison Retailing

- only 65% of residents spending on comparison goods (clothing, DIY, electrical and other non-food goods) takes place in stores and centres inside the Borough;
- Birkenhead Town Centre remains the main comparison goods destination in the Borough but its catchment is shrinking and its primary and secondary catchment areas have become more tightly focused on the immediate surrounding area;
- Croft Retail Park in Bromborough is now the second most important comparison goods destination in the Borough;
- the role of the other centres in the Borough for comparison goods is limited;
- Wirral residents are increasingly being attracted to locations outside the Borough, including Liverpool, Chester and Cheshire Oaks, and are utilising the internet and catalogue shopping for 10 per cent of spending on comparison goods;
- proposals such as the Northgate scheme in Chester will provide an additional threat to Wirral's centres.

6.137 The Study concludes that the retention of comparison spending will deteriorate unless there is a substantial, comparison retail-led development scheme of sufficient critical mass and quality to stave off at least some of the intense competition from Liverpool and Chester.

6.138 Achieving a significant improvement (up to 10%) in the level of comparison spending retained in the Borough and preventing the further decline of Birkenhead, would require the delivery of high-quality, large-scale retail development targeted at higher value middle and up-market comparison retailers. Scenario testing has led to the conclusion that up to 85,300 square metres of net comparison retail floorspace should be provided between 2009 and 2026, with a particular emphasis on the period after 2014.

The Leisure, Evening and Night-time Economy

- Birkenhead's food and drink offer remains poor;
- Liverpool is the most important destination for spending at restaurants followed by Heswall while Moreton, Liscard and Bromborough are also locally popular;
- Liverpool and Birkenhead are the top locations for spending in pubs and bars but West Kirby, Wallasey and Heswall are also popular destinations;

- Liverpool is by far the most important destination for visits to museums, art galleries, theatres and concert halls;
- Birkenhead was the main destination for gambling (casino/bingo/bookmakers);
- Croft Leisure Park in Bromborough and Birkenhead are the most important cinema destinations;
- New Brighton and the Croft Leisure Park dominate commercial leisure but in relation to health and fitness, no one location is dominant.

6.139 The Study concluded that residents spending on leisure services is expected to grow by £93.4m in the period to 2026, around 60 per cent of which (based on current spend patterns) will go to eating and drinking establishments. Capturing a sizeable proportion of this growth will be vital to the health of all existing centres in Wirral.

6.140 There are, therefore, two main strategic issues to resolve within the Core Strategy:

- the identification of a hierarchy of town, district and local centres which properly reflects their current and anticipated future roles; and
- deciding on the spatial priorities for the distribution of additional comparison floorspace within the Borough.

Town Centre Hierarchy

6.141 National policy seeks to ensure that people's every day needs, such as convenience shopping, are met on as localised a basis as possible.

6.142 The existing Unitary Development Plan identifies Birkenhead as the Borough's main retail centre, supported by a network of eight Key Town Centres and fourteen Traditional Suburban Centres, supplemented by a number of mixed-use Primarily Commercial Areas allowing for a wide range of town centre uses.

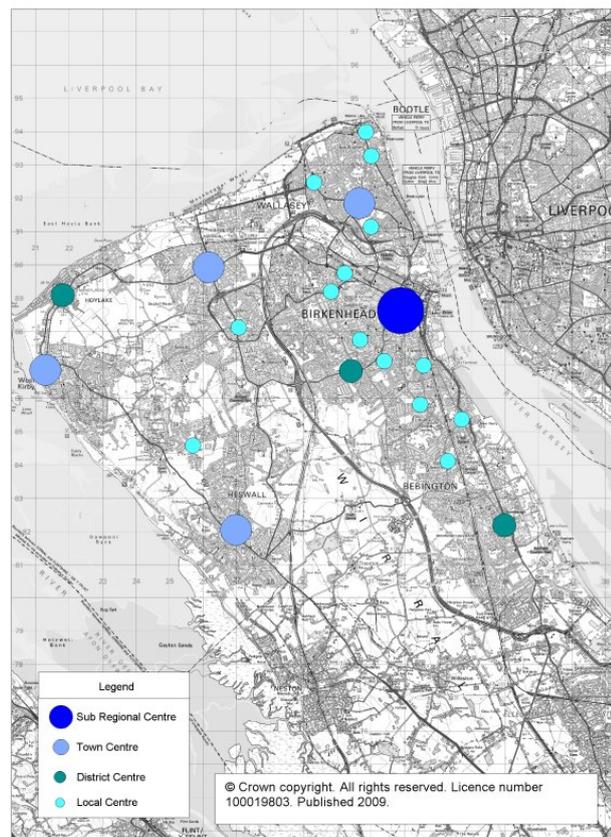
6.143 The Wirral Town Centres Retail and Commercial Leisure Study 2009 included up-to-date health checks of each centre, based on the following indicators, to determine their current role and performance:

- the composite market share for comparison goods;
- the quality of the convenience sector offer;
- a local provision index to establish the extent to which the Traditional Suburban Centres catered for the day-to-day shopping and service needs of local residents;
- the ranking in the MHE 2008 UK Shopping Index;
- the findings of a survey of 1500 households within the Borough;
- field visits to each centre;
- the typologies and advice contained in national policy (PPS6); and
- the hierarchy of centres identified in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

6.144 National policy (PPS6, Annex A) defines four types of centre, three of which are applicable to Wirral - Town Centres, District Centres and Local Centres. The adoption of this hierarchy would ensure consistency with national advice and would enable centres to be more accurately classified to reflect their current role. Birkenhead is proposed to be identified separately as a sub-regional centre, in line with its classification in the Regional Spatial Strategy.

6.145 The review of the hierarchy also presents an opportunity to consider whether other centres not identified in the Unitary Development Plan should now be included.

6.146 As almost all the urban areas in Wirral are within 15 minutes travelling time by public transport of one of the centres defined in the Unitary Development Plan, there are few obvious gaps in provision. There is, therefore, only one proposed addition to the hierarchy - Oxton Village, which is now included in the list of Local Centres. Although reasonably close to established centres in Birkenhead, Prenton and Claughton, Oxton Village has retained a number of independent retailers and clearly performs a role as a local centre at the heart of the Oxton Village Conservation Area.



Picture 6.5

6.147 The revised hierarchy of centres based on the findings of this assessment is illustrated on Picture 6.5 and set out in Table 6.14 below.

Proposed Status	Centre
Sub-Regional Centre	Birkenhead Town Centre (including Grange Road West/Oxton Road and Argyle Street)
Town Centre	Liscard Heswall West Kirby Moreton
District Centre	Bromborough Village Woodchurch Road, Prenton Hoylake
Local Centre	New Ferry Upton Village Wallasey Village Tranmere Urban Village Borough Road Prenton Park Claughton Village Lower Bebington Poulton Road, Seacombe Victoria Road, New Brighton Seabank Road, New Brighton Laird Street Dacre Hill Irby Village Oxton Village

Table 6.14

6.148 There will be a need to continue to monitor the performance of these centres over the lifetime of Core Strategy. More detailed recommendations, for example, with regard to the boundaries of individual centres and the definition of primary and secondary shopping areas, will need to be brought forward in a site-specific Development Plan Document.

6.149 Planning approval has already been obtained for a supermarket and other retail facilities at Northbank as part of the early development of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, which when implemented could potentially be considered for future designation as an additional local shopping centre.

Consultation Question 15

Do you agree with the proposed hierarchy of retail centres set out in Table 6.14? Are there any other centres that you think should be included? Please explain the reasons for your response.

Providing for Additional Comparison Floorspace

6.150 As indicated earlier, the primary requirement is for up to 85,300 square metres of additional net comparison retail floorspace over the plan period.

6.151 The Wirral Retail, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Study 2009 assessed six options for accommodating this additional floorspace:

1. dispersal across all nine of the existing Key Town Centres;
2. focus on Birkenhead Town Centre;
3. focus on Birkenhead and Liscard Key Town Centre;
4. focus on Birkenhead and Liscard Key Town Centre and Wirral Waters;
5. focus on Birkenhead Town Centre and Wirral Waters; and
6. focus on Wirral Waters.

6.152 These six policy options were assessed against the following objectives:

- managing travel demand;
- marrying opportunity to need;
- promoting environmental quality;
- conformity with the policy objectives for town centres and retailing set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy;
- deliverability; and
- the potential contribution to the wider Spatial Vision for the Borough.

6.153 The Study rated options 1 and 3 as "poor", options 2 and 4 as "moderate" and concluded that only options 5 and 6 were "good". These two "good" options are, therefore, considered in further detail below:

Policy Option CR1 - Focus on Birkenhead Town Centre and Wirral Waters

6.154 Policy Option CR1 assumes that Birkenhead Town Centre would remain the sub-regional centre for Wirral, as defined in the Regional Spatial Strategy and the hierarchy proposed in Table 6.14 above, and that high-quality, large-scale retail development targeted at higher value middle and up-market comparison retailers could be accommodated in part within or adjacent to the existing Town Centre and in part at Wirral Waters.

6.155 Policy Option CR1 is effectively a twin track approach, with the Council continuing to explore the potential for achieving development within the Town Centre throughout the plan period while also seeking to promote development at a new location, which together would be sufficient to retain up to 10% more spending within the Borough.

1. Birkenhead Town Centre

6.156 There are three main alternatives to accommodating this type of development within or adjacent to Birkenhead Town Centre:

Opportunities Within the Primary Town Centre Shopping Area

6.157 National policy requires opportunities to expand within the Town Centre to be considered first.

6.158 The opportunities to accommodate additional retail floorspace within the existing primary Town Centre shopping area are extremely limited. The primary Town Centre shopping area is self-contained, constrained on all sides by significant highway infrastructure and the main Grange and Pyramids Shopping Centres are in private ownership.

6.159 The Council has already taken proactive action to assemble a site for a new superstore, adjacent to Claughton Road, using land within in its own ownership supplemented by a successful Compulsory Purchase Order, to meet a previously identified need for additional convenience retailing in Birkenhead.

6.160 Aside from this, attention has focused on the redevelopment of some or all of the Grange Shopping Centre. Although comprehensively refurbished in the 1990s, the configuration of many of the shop units do not meet modern market requirements. Birkenhead Market, in separate private ownership, severely limits opportunities for redevelopment of the Grange Shopping Centre in isolation. The Market is an important element of Birkenhead's retail offer which will need to be retained. Negotiations between the Council, Birkenhead Market and the owner of the Grange Shopping Centre have not resulted in a commercially viable development scheme.

6.161 A further key difficulty has been a lack of firm operator interest. An earlier planning permission for a redevelopment scheme within the primary shopping area was not progressed when the intended operator, around whose requirements the

scheme had been designed, withdrew. The continuing general lack of interest has been confirmed by the Wirral Town Centre Retail and Commercial Leisure Study 2009.

6.162 Regardless of the issues surrounding commercial viability, any redevelopment of the Grange Shopping Centre and Birkenhead Market would need to be carefully managed to minimise disruption to active trading locations. Anecdotal evidence suggests that even minor extensions to shopping centres can deter customers, having a significant adverse impact on trade and footfall during the construction period.

6.163 Opportunities to convert vacant floorspace to meet current operator requirements have taken place at the former Co-op Department and Littlewoods stores, both of which were sub-divided to accommodate a range of retailers. This is, however, reliant on suitable premises becoming available, as windfalls, and cannot be easily predicted in advance.

6.164 While some form of redevelopment within the boundary of the primary Town Centre shopping area cannot be completely ruled out over the lifetime of the Core Strategy, concerns over the ability to deliver and accommodate the scale of additional retail growth required would indicate that this is not currently likely to be a reasonable alternative.

Opportunities to Extend the Primary Town Centre Shopping Area

6.165 Where retail growth cannot be accommodated within an existing centre, the opportunities for extending the primary Town Centre shopping area should be assessed.

6.166 The existing primary shopping area is tightly constrained. Borough Road (A552) and the flyover from the Queensway Tunnel define the southern boundary to the Town Centre, with residential areas beyond. Expansion to the north, east and west is similarly constrained by a mix of existing well-established commercial areas, Hamilton Square Conservation Area, residential areas, essential highway infrastructure and a disused railway line, which would involve expensive and challenging road diversions or the acquisition of private property in otherwise densely built-up areas.

6.167 The ability to deliver a site of sufficient size would, again, indicate that this is not likely to be a reasonable alternative.

Opportunities on Edge of Centre Sites

6.168 Where retail growth cannot be accommodated within an existing centre and the primary Town Centre shopping area cannot be extended, opportunities to provide additional retail development on edge-of-centre sites should be assessed.

6.169 Edge-of-centre sites are defined as sites that are well connected to and within easy walking distance (up to 300 metres) of the primary Town Centre shopping area. "Well connected" means an existing or proposed pedestrian route which provides safe and convenient access to the Town Centre. "Easy walking distance"

can be affected by topography or barriers to movement, such as highways and railway lines and the attractiveness and perceived safety of the route. The strength of attraction and the size of the Town Centre are also factors that must be taken into account.

6.170 Three potential edge-of-centre sites in and around Birkenhead Town Centre have been identified. Each location has been assessed against a range of criteria and the results are listed in Table 6.15 below:

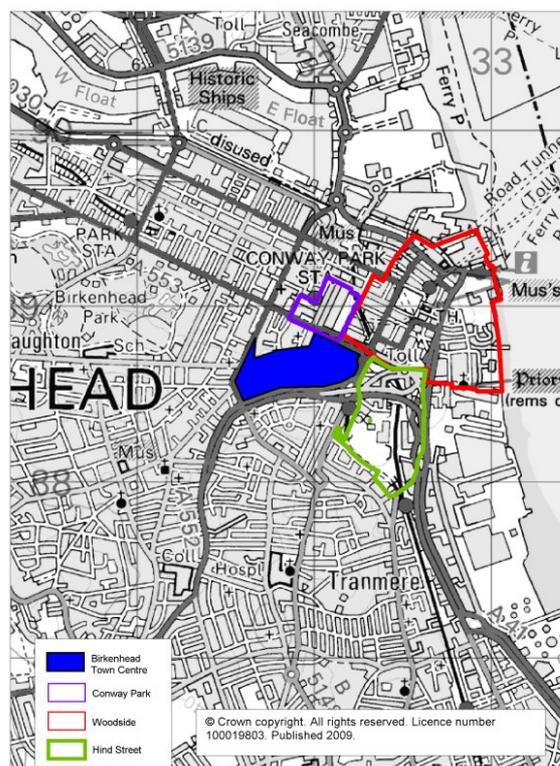
Criterion	Hind Street	Woodside	Conway Park
<i>Distance from Town Centre</i>	Less than 300 metres to edge of the primary Town Centre shopping area.	Over 300 metres to edge of primary Town Centre shopping area.	Within 300 metres of the primary Town Centre shopping area.
<i>Access Barriers</i>	Flyovers and busy roads are significant barriers to movement between the site and the primary Town Centre shopping area.	Grid-iron road pattern affects direct access to the primary Town Centre shopping area.	Separated from the primary Town Centre shopping area by Conway Street but with several light controlled pedestrian crossings.
<i>Public Transport Access</i>	Good access to Birkenhead Central Station and bus services along Argyle Street. Mollington Link Road (proposed) would enable bus services to pass through the site to and from the primary Town Centre shopping area.	Good access by rail, bus and ferry.	High quality rail links via Conway Park Station, adjacent to Birkenhead Bus Station.
<i>Quality of Environment</i>	Currently poor, on site and between the primary Town Centre shopping area and the site. Visual amenity and air quality (particularly in the eastern part of the site) could be difficult to improve.	Road network dominates and detracts from the quality of environment. Benefits from riverfront setting and views to Liverpool.	High. Europa Boulevard laid out to high standard with previous regeneration funding.

Criterion	Hind Street	Woodside	Conway Park
	Operational gas holders constrain visual quality and use of surrounding land.		
<i>Site Ownership</i>	Some Council ownership; Landowners (south of Hind Street) supportive of regeneration and working in partnership; Fragmented ownership (north of Hind Street) - site assembly would be required.	Various. A number of sites are in various public ownerships.	Remaining sites subject to development agreement for hotel, offices and leisure scheme.
<i>Competing Land Uses</i>	Employment related uses	Potential mixed-use area for employment, residential and leisure uses.	Remaining development sites identified for hotel, offices and leisure. Sites on opposite side of Europa Boulevard are in office/educational /administrative uses.
<i>Deliverability</i>	Outline approval already exists for mixed use scheme (south of Hind Street) including bulky goods retailing, provision of a road link between Rock Retail Park and	No planning permission but strong landowner/developer interest for mixed use development. Council-commissioned masterplan promotes mixed use development	Implementation to be market- led. Focus is on non-retail based town centre uses. Planning

Criterion	Hind Street	Woodside	Conway Park
	Central Station roundabout, and improved pedestrian links to the primary Town Centre shopping area. Implementation depends on market conditions. Land north of Hind Street subject of consultants study unlikely to come forward in short term.		permission granted for hotel, office and leisure.

Table 6.15

6.171 For the purpose of Table 6.15, the boundary of the primary Town Centre shopping area in Birkenhead Town Centre has been defined as the boundary to the Key Town Centre notation on the Unitary Development Plan Proposals Map adopted in February 2000. The boundary to the primary Town Centre shopping area and the locations under consideration are shown on Picture 6.6 below.



Picture 6.6

Woodside Regeneration Area is a key regeneration project in its own right, unlikely to function as a direct extension to the primary Town Centre shopping area. The Woodside Masterplan approved by the Council envisages a mix of uses that will support and complement rather than compete with or extend the retail dominated primary shopping area.

Prior to the identification of the site within the Town Centre at Claughton Road, **Hind Street** was initially promoted as a potential Town Centre extension. The highway/flyover constraints, ground conditions and mixed ownerships to the north of Hind Street still, however, severely restrict any effective integration with the rest of the Town Centre.

Significant enhancements to highway access and pedestrian linkages would be required before Hind Street could be considered as a legitimate extension to the primary shopping area and the planning permission on the southern part of the site has, therefore, been restricted to bulky goods rather than "town centre" retailing as part of a wider mixed use scheme. Allowing the full range of town centre uses in the absence of access improvements could lead to Hind Street functioning as an alternative town centre destination, drawing people and retailers away from the existing primary shopping area.

Conway Park is immediately adjacent to the primary Town Centre shopping area. Land on either side of Europa Boulevard has only recently been developed for a range of office, education and leisure uses and the remaining plots are subject to a development agreement, with permission for hotel, office and leisure uses, which will serve to strengthen the wider role of Birkenhead and further support the evening economy.

None of these three locations would, therefore, at present, appear to be able to support the provision of a major growth in comparison retail floorspace in or around the existing Town Centre. While Hind Street and Woodside are not seen as having strong potential for strengthening the primary Town Centre shopping area, the nature of the development envisaged for these sites means that they could still proceed, independently of any proposals within the primary shopping area.

2. Wirral Waters

Policy Option CR1 also assumes that high-quality, large-scale retail development targeted at higher value middle and up-market comparison retailers could additionally be accommodated at Wirral Waters, as part of the wider development of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.

The land associated with the former Bidston Dock, in particular, offers the opportunity to provide high-quality, retail and leisure floorspace on vacant previously developed land, in single ownership, which was subject to filling with inert wastes following planning approval in 2000. The site benefits from a central location at the heart of the older urban area with direct access to the M53 Motorway; close to Birkenhead

North Railway Station providing links to Liverpool, Chester, Wrexham, New Brighton and West Kirby; with the potential for additional access by public transport from both Birkenhead and Wallasey, along Dock Road and Wallasey Bridge Road.

These proposals were initially examined as part of the wider Strategic Regeneration Framework for the Wirral Waters, which Peel Holdings made subject to public consultation in September 2008. The delivery of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, which could raise the local population by up to 17,500 people and provide up to 30,000 new jobs over the life of the development, would also need to be taken into account in planning for any additional retail and leisure provision at this site.

Policy Option CR2 - Focus on Wirral Waters

Policy Option CR2 still assumes that Birkenhead Town Centre would remain the sub-regional centre for Wirral, as defined in the Regional Spatial Strategy and the hierarchy proposed in Table 6.14 above, but assumes that high-quality, large-scale retail development targeted at higher value middle and up-market comparison retailers is unlikely to come forward within the Town Centre within the plan period. Policy Option CR2 would, therefore, solely rely on securing a major retail and leisure development at Wirral Waters.

Existing opportunities within or adjacent to Birkenhead Town Centre, such as at Conway Park, would continue to be supported, alongside windfall developments, but any additional comparison development within the Town Centre would be expected to be small in scale. The convenience role of the Town Centre would continue to be strengthened by the development of the superstore at Claughton Road but the focus overall would be on strengthening and diversifying the other functions and roles of the Town Centre, for example, through provision for offices, leisure and other services.

The opportunities at Woodside and Hind Street could, again, proceed independently under Policy Option CR2.

Policy Fit

National policy (PPS6) seeks to encourage a wide range of services in existing centres, accessible to all but states that regional and local authorities should plan how best to distribute identified retail growth to achieve the objectives of their spatial strategies. Regional Spatial Strategy Policy W5 also states that plans and strategies should promote retail investment where it assists in the regeneration and economic growth of the North West's town and city centres.

While policy options focused on existing centres would comply more strongly with national and regional objectives, they have not scored highly enough within the Wirral Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure Study 2009 to be considered among the best alternatives available.

The Regional Spatial Strategy states that additional comparison retail floorspace should first and foremost be directed to Birkenhead Town Centre. Policy Option CR1, would comply with this requirement by directing part of the growth required to Birkenhead Town Centre but the delivery of suitable, available and viable sites is highly problematic. The Regional Spatial Strategy did not fully anticipate the difficulty in delivering this aspiration or anticipate the scale of population and employment growth now to be provided as part of the nationally designated Mersey Heartlands Growth Point. Sites within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point currently appear to present the only viable opportunities to widen the retail offer within Wirral, to meet the need to broaden the Borough's comparison goods retail offer, serve the new Wirral Waters community and directly support the wider regeneration of the area.

The mix of uses permitted under either Policy Option CR1 and Policy Option CR2 would need to be complementary to the Town Centre, to minimise any potential conflict with the objectives of Regional Spatial Strategy Policy W5. The wider economic and regeneration benefits of new retail development within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point would also need to be considered.

National policy (PPS6) states that new centres may be designated in areas of significant growth or where there is an identified deficiency in the existing network of centres, with priority given to deprived areas. Although Bidston Dock should not operate as a "town centre", it could potentially bring significant employment opportunities to a location close to areas with some of the greatest social, economic and environmental needs in the Borough. Although Birkenhead North Station lies within about 600 metres, the quality of pedestrian and cycle links would need to be improved and bus services enhanced and any development would need to be carefully integrated with the adjacent public open space at Bidston Moss.

The Council has not considered a further option of directing growth to existing out-of-centre facilities such as the Croft Retail and Leisure Park and Junction One Retail Park or adjacent to out-of-centre superstores, as these locations do not offer the same regeneration potential as Wirral Waters and are not higher priorities for consideration in terms of the sequential approach to site selection.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

6.172 Both Policy Options would contribute strongly towards the achievement of the Spatial Vision. Policy Option CR1 would provide for an element of development within the boundary of Birkenhead Town Centre as well as at Wirral Waters and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point as part of the wider regeneration of Settlement Area 2.

Implications for the Spatial Objectives

6.173 The implications for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Economic Revitalisation	Both Policy Options would direct growth to locations in the Borough in need of economic revitalisation.
Vacant Urban Land	Both Policy Options have the potential to reduce the amount of vacant and under-used land.
Housing Market Renewal	Both Birkenhead Town Centre and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point, including Wirral Waters, fall within the boundary of the Newheartlands Pathfinder and would support the objectives of housing market renewal.
Housing Growth	New retail development at Birkenhead Town Centre and/or Wirral Waters would support housing growth within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point. Policy Option CR2 could, however, have a more direct impact on the delivery of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.
Social Inclusion	Both Policy Options would provide enhanced facilities and employment opportunities in areas most in need of social, economic and environmental regeneration.
Transport Accessibility	Provision within the existing Town Centre under Policy Option CR1 would be highly accessible. Development within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point at Wirral Waters, under Policy Option CR1 and Policy Option CR2 would require improvements to access by public transport, walking and cycling.
Local Distinctiveness	Both Policy Options would contribute towards the improvement of local distinctiveness, subject to the application of high standards of design.
Green Infrastructure	The delivery of the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point under Policy Option CR1 and Policy Option CR2 would support the provision of enhanced green infrastructure in an area most in need of environmental improvements. Development within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point under Policy Option CR1 or Policy Option CR2 would need to be integrated with existing green infrastructure at Bidston Moss.
Countryside and Coast	Both Policy Options would preserve the character of the countryside and undeveloped coastline. Development within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point under Policy Option CR1 or Policy Option CR2 would need to be integrated with open land associated with the M53 Corridor.

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Climate Change	Development under both Policy Options would need to be designed to minimise carbon emissions and adapt to the future impact of climate change, particularly on any additional potential for flooding within and around the Dock Estate.
Public Safety	Development under both Policy Options would need to take account of any impact from contaminated land, proximity to hazardous installations and industrial processes and crime prevention (for example, at Hind Street, Birkenhead)

Table 6.16

Implications for the Broad Spatial Options

6.174 Policy Option CR1 and Policy Option CR2 would both support the regeneration of the Regional Spatial Strategy Inner Area under each of the Broad Spatial Options. A wider distribution of retail growth, which could be accommodated under Broad Spatial Option 2 and Broad Spatial Option 3, has been assessed and discounted as part of Wirral Retail, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Study 2009.

Implications for Settlement Areas

6.175 The implications for each of the Settlement Areas include:

Settlement Area	Likely Implications
Area 1	The direction of retail growth to Birkenhead and/or Wirral Waters under Policy Option CR1 and Policy Option CR2 could provide an additional retail destination for Settlement Area 1. Development in Birkenhead under Policy Option CR1 would be accessible by a choice of means of transport. Public transport enhancements could be required to ensure that Wirral Waters was highly accessible to all residents in Settlement Area 1.
Area 2	Both Policy Options would support the wider regeneration of Settlement Area 2. Only Policy Option CR1 would provide for additional growth within Birkenhead Town Centre.
Area 3	Both Policy Options would enhance retail provision to the immediate north of Settlement Area 3. Development in Birkenhead under Policy Option CR1 would be accessible by a choice of means of transport. Public transport enhancements could be required to ensure that Wirral Waters was accessible to all residents in Settlement Area 3.

Settlement Area	Likely Implications
Area 4	Enhancing retail provision at Birkenhead and/or Wirral Waters under Policy Option CR1 and Policy Option CR2 could have an impact on Croft Retail and Leisure Park, which is not protected under national or regional policies. Development in Birkenhead under Policy Option CR1 would be accessible by a choice of means of transport. Public transport enhancements would be required to ensure that Wirral Waters was accessible to all residents in Settlement Area 4.
Area 5	Development at Birkenhead and/or Wirral Waters under Policy Option CR1 and Policy Option CR2 would be accessible by a choice of means of transport from the northern parts of Settlement Area 5 but enhanced linkages may be required with Wirral Waters. Public transport enhancements would be required to ensure that Wirral Waters was accessible to all residents in Settlement Area 5. There is limited provision for comparison goods within existing centres in Settlement Area 5.
Area 6	Development at both Birkenhead and/or Wirral Waters under Policy Option CR1 and Policy Option CR2 would be accessible by a choice of means of transport from the majority of Settlement Area 6 but enhanced linkages may be required with Wirral Waters. Public transport enhancements could be required to ensure that Wirral Waters was accessible to all residents in Settlement Area 6. The travelling distances involved could limit the impact on local comparison retailers in existing centres.
Area 7	Development in Birkenhead under Policy Option CR1 would be accessible by a choice of means of transport. Public transport enhancements would be required to ensure that Wirral Waters was accessible to all residents in Settlement Area 7. The travelling distances involved could limit the impact on local comparison retailers in existing centres.
Area 8	Access by a choice of means of transport to Birkenhead and/or Wirral Waters is limited from many of the rural areas in Settlement Area 8. Development in Birkenhead under Policy Option CR1 may be more accessible but public transport enhancements would be required to ensure that Wirral Waters was accessible to all residents in Settlement Area 8.

Table 6.17

Implications for Deliverability

6.176 Core Strategy proposals for retailing will need to be delivered through the combined actions of landowners, developers and retailers. The Council's role in direct delivery is limited, for example, through the use and sale of its own land and buildings and the management and improvement of assets that it is responsible for such as highways and open space. Retail development is generally ineligible for direct external regeneration funding.

6.177 The absence of firm operator interest and the existing configuration of Birkenhead Town Centre appears to be limiting the delivery of new high quality retail floorspace. The realisation of Town Centre development opportunities under Policy Option CR1 would, therefore, largely need to rely on windfall opportunities. There is an additional a risk that pursuing a twin track approach would not provide sufficient certainty to developers and retailers about the Council's preferred option for accommodating retail growth, which could further deter significant investment decisions.

6.178 Policy Option CR2 is likely to be more deliverable because of the availability and single ownership of the land at Bidston Dock and of other sites within Wirral Waters and the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point.

6.179 If Wirral Waters is identified as a key site for the delivery of additional comparison retailing under Policy Option CR1 or Policy Option CR2, the site may need to be identified as a strategic allocation which is essential to the delivery of the strategy or as a broad strategic location within the Core Strategy. The proposal would also need to be supported by a land allocation in a site-specific Development Plan Document.

6.180 Consideration may need to be given to phasing the development at Wirral Waters, to take account of the time frame for bringing forward additional comparison floorspace identified in the Wirral Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure Study 2009.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests that Policy Option CR1 is likely to be the most sustainable on the basis that it will ensure a wider balance of investment opportunities and is likely to secure the most accessible opportunities for retail and employment.

Council's Current Assessment

6.181 The Council's current assessment is that while Policy Option CR1 and Policy Option CR2 would both be well placed to deliver the Spatial Vision and Spatial Objectives, Policy Option CR2 is likely to represent the most deliverable Policy Option

currently available to provide for the scale and nature of the additional comparison floorspace identified in the Wirral Retail, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Study 2009.

Consultation Question 16

Is this a fair assessment of the available Policy Options for accommodating future retail growth across the Borough? Are there any other Policy Options that should be considered? Please explain the reasons for your answer.

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that Policy Option CR2 is most likely to be the preferred option for accommodating future retail growth? If not, please indicate which Policy Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

6.4 Providing for Renewable, Decentralised and Low Carbon Energy

Background

6.182 Increasing the generation of renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy is a major part of the Government's commitment to reducing carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emissions, mitigating the impacts of climate change and making more efficient use of natural resources. Diversity in energy generation is also essential to maintaining energy security in the longer term.

6.183 The North West Sustainable Energy Strategy seeks at least 10% of electricity to be provided from renewable sources by 2010, rising to at least 15% by 2015 and at least 20% by 2020. Applied pro-rata in Wirral, this would mean generating up to 687 GWh by 2010 and 1,374 GWh by 2020 through alternative energy applications. Wirral's consumption from these sources, in 2006, was estimated at 0.1% at 8.2GWh.

6.184 The Borough could potentially have access to significant sources of renewable energy from wind; water within the surrounding estuaries; district heating and energy schemes as part of major new developments such as Wirral Waters; and domestic microgeneration; as well as more industrial applications, like energy from waste. While wind energy is already being exploited in Liverpool Bay, on-shore generation has been limited to a small number of individual wind turbines and a declining resource of landfill gas from Bidston Moss.

6.185 A proposed waste treatment plant at Eastham has the potential to generate up to 30MW. A feasibility study into Mersey Tidal Power is also currently underway, supported by the NWDA and Peel Holdings. The largest scheme envisaged could have the potential to deliver enough energy to meet the average needs of up to 260,000 homes.

Policy Fit

6.186 National policy expects Development Plans to promote renewable energy generation, set out key criteria and include policies that require a percentage of the energy used in new residential, commercial or industrial developments to come from on-site renewable sources (PPS22).

6.187 The Regional Spatial Strategy expects local targets to be identified to support delivery. The interim target is for new non-residential development above 1,000 square metres and new residential development of 10 or more units to secure at least 10% of their predicted energy needs from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources, subject to an appropriate local viability assessment.

6.188 Unitary Development Plan Policy REN1 currently provides a permissive general policy subject to the protection of local amenity. No targets are specified.

6.189 The emerging Joint Waste DPD for Merseyside and Halton is expected to refer to the potential of using waste as a source of renewable or low carbon fuel to produce combined heat and power.

Policy Options

6.190 There are three main Policy Options to enable Wirral to contribute to national and regional targets:

- Policy Option RE1 - set a Borough wide target(s) to be achieved by all types of development
- Policy Option RE2 - set a Borough wide target(s) to be achieved by specific types of development
- Policy Option RE3 - set geographically specific targets for each Settlement Area

6.191 Policy Option RE1 would allow the Core Strategy to set targets for all types of development, related to the capacity of the development to generate renewable energy, subject to a viability assessment.

6.192 Policy Option RE2 would only allow the Core Strategy to set targets for specific types of development that are most likely to be able to generate significant amounts of renewable energy, such as industrial energy generation, energy from waste facilities and major development schemes, again, subject to a viability assessment.

6.193 Policy Option RE3 would allow the Core Strategy to set targets for specific geographical areas based on the likely capacity of each area to generate renewable energy and would allow larger, stand-alone schemes to be considered alongside contributions from smaller developments on the basis of an assessed local capacity.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

6.194 All of the Policy Options would provide for a potential increase in the amount of renewable, decentralised or low carbon energy produced, in line with the Spatial Vision.

Implications for Spatial Objectives

6.195 The likely implications for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Economic Revitalisation	The generation of renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy can provide jobs, contribute to the viability of new development and provide major industries with cheaper power, increasing their efficiency and their likelihood to remain within the Borough.
Vacant Urban Land	The generation of renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy can provide a beneficial use for previously developed land.
Housing Market Renewal	The scale of new and refurbished development to be provided within the Newheartlands Pathfinder offers an opportunity to provide a higher level of renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy at the heart of the older urban area.
Housing Growth	The scale of development to be provided within the Mersey Heartlands Growth Point offers an opportunity to provide a higher level of renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy at the heart of the older urban area.
Social Inclusion	Micro-generation and district power and heating schemes can make energy bills more affordable, provided that ongoing maintenance costs can be kept within acceptable levels.
Transport Accessibility	The location of facilities may be limited by the type and source of the renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy being used. The main implications relate to the location of operational facilities in terms of journeys to work, the delivery of any feedstock and the number of HGV movements required. Sites benefiting from other transport modes (such as water or rail) may need to be preferred.
Local Distinctiveness	Public opinion can be divided but certain types of renewable, decentralised and or low carbon energy generation can conflict with the existing character of an area and distinctive features of design and heritage.

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Green Infrastructure	There is little direct relationship between the generation of renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy and green infrastructure, although certain types of energy facility may require a prominent location within otherwise open land or feedstock derived from the natural environment.
Countryside and Coast	The visual impact of energy infrastructure can conflict with preserving the quality of countryside and coast which can provide the richest resources to generate energy from wind and water.
Climate Change	Renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy generation can maximise the prudent use of natural resources and make a direct contribution to mitigating and adapting to climate change by reducing harmful emissions.
Public Safety	Renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy generation can have less hazardous environmental consequences than traditional sources of energy generation.

Table 6.18

Implications for the Broad Spatial Options

6.196 The likely implications for each of the Broad Spatial Options for the Core Strategy include:

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
BSO1 - Focused Regeneration	Broad Spatial Option 1 is likely to focus investment in development-related energy generation to the older urban area. Restrictions on development outside this area could overlook the capacity of other areas to contribute toward regional targets.
BSO2 - Balanced Growth	Broad Spatial Option 2 would extend the potential benefits of development-related energy generation across a wider area, which would allow the capacity of other urban areas to contribute towards regional targets.
BSO3 - Urban Expansion	Broad Spatial Option 3 could maximise the potential benefits of development-related energy generation but these benefits could be outweighed by the harm which could be caused by

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
	the loss of previously undeveloped greenfield land and the emissions which may be generated from serving development in less accessible locations.

Table 6.19

Implications for Settlement Areas

6.197 The implications for individual Settlement Areas are closely related to the Broad Spatial Option likely to be pursued. Policy Option RE3 would have the clearest geographical implications but Policy Option RE2 may also have local implications dependent on the specific types of development likely to be permitted within each Settlement Area. Additional controls may be needed to reflect the locational requirements of certain types of energy generation.

Implications for Deliverability

6.198 Additional evidence would be needed to support the feasibility and viability of any additional policy requirements. Policy Option RE3 would rely on the development of a geographically specific evidence base.

6.199 A Merseyside Renewable Energy Capacity Study is currently being undertaken to determine the capacity of the area to generate renewable energy, which could be used as the basis for local targets. The feasibility and viability of each of these Policy Options will not be properly known until the Capacity Study has reported.

6.200 All the Policy Options could be supported by an appropriate Supplementary Planning Document or Developer's Guide and/or by requirements attached to land allocations in site-specific Development Plan Document.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests that Policy Option RE3, by setting targets based on the capacity of each Settlement Area and to combine stand-alone schemes with contributions from smaller developments, is the most sustainable.

Council's Current Assessment

6.201 Council's current assessment is that a combination of Policy Options may be necessary to balance the provision of new stand-alone renewable energy schemes against a wider requirement for renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy to be generated as part of most types of new development.

Consultation Question 17

Is this a fair assessment of the available Policy Options for providing for the increased generation of renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy within the Borough? Please give the reasons for your answer.

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that a hybrid of Policy Options is most likely to be the preferred option for providing for renewable, decentralised and low carbon energy? If not, please indicate which Policy Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

6.5 Providing for Better Design

Background

6.202 Design is becoming an increasingly important aspect of national policy, as the Country moves towards more sustainable construction and waste management and a greater emphasis on quality of life and place. Closer control over the design of new development also has an increasingly stronger correlation with local policy objectives such as sustainable urban regeneration and market renewal. A continued emphasis on improved design can also help to lend further support to successful crime prevention initiatives which have, for example, seen burglary reduce by 65% since 2003/04.

6.203 Consultation has repeatedly shown that the acceptability of new development is often most related to issues of design and the impact of the proposals on the character of the area.

6.204 Design can cover a wide range of visual and operational impacts, including layout, scale, massing, density, elevations, materials, space standards, separation distances, the impact on the amenity of occupiers and neighbours, landscaping, surface and boundary treatments, highway, parking, servicing and accessibility requirements and drainage. Sustainable design can also include more detailed matters such as the provision of porous surfaces, passive solar gain, energy and water efficiency, waste and water management and other matters related to the promotion of zero carbon development.

6.205 Design matters are currently dealt with in negotiation with individual applicants for planning permission on a case by case basis.

Policy Options

6.206 There are three main Policy Options for the promotion of sustainable design and construction in the Core Strategy:

- Policy Option DE1 - Integrate requirements for improved design across all the other policies within the Core Strategy
- Policy Option DE2 - Include a separate Borough wide design policy in the Core Strategy
- Policy Option DE3 - Include provision for geographically specific design policies within the Core Strategy

6.207 Policy Option DE1 would ensure that every relevant policy within the Core Strategy would seek a high standard of design in line with the aim to preserve and strengthen local character and distinctiveness under Spatial Objective 7 and Spatial Objective 9, without introducing any specific stand alone design policy into the Core Strategy.

6.208 Policy Option DE2 would set out a general Borough wide design policy within the Core Strategy which could then be supported by additional supporting information in a related Supplementary Planning Document or Developer's Guide, as required.

6.209 Policy Option DE3 would allow for design policies to be produced for geographically specific areas such as major development opportunities such as Newheartlands or Wirral Waters or as part of detailed requirements for land allocations contained within a site-specific Development Plan Document.

Policy Fit

6.210 National policy expects authorities to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design (PPS1). The Regional Spatial Strategy also makes specific provision for the promotion of environmental quality (Policy DP7).

6.211 While the Unitary Development Plan did not include a specific policy on design, the protection of character and amenity, controls over density and the impact on heritage, landscape, greenspace and biodiversity assets form a major part of criteria based policies for different types and classes of development.

6.212 Specific design guidance has been produced by national bodies such as the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE). Other guidance includes By Design; the Manual for Streets; Code for Sustainable Homes; Building for Life; Guidance on Tall Buildings (CABE); Secure by Design; and BREEAM, which can all be used to shape and guide the design of new development.

6.213 Design policies must not be over-prescriptive, stifle innovation or unreasonably affect the viability of development.

Implications for Spatial Vision

6.214 All three Policy Options have the potential to have a positive impact on the delivery of the Spatial Vision. Policy Option DE3 is, however, only likely to have a significant impact in areas where major change is envisaged.

Implications for Spatial Objectives

6.215 All three Policy Options could have a positive impact on on the delivery of the Spatial Objectives. The main implications for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Economic Revitalisation	Good design can support economic revitalisation by contributing towards the image, efficiency and attractiveness of the area.
Vacant Urban Land	Good design can encourage the re-use of previously developed land by supporting the viability of development and the attractiveness of the wider area.
Housing Market Renewal	Good design can support the effective delivery of housing market renewal by providing attractive places where people will want to live and work.
Housing Growth	Good design can support the effective delivery of housing growth by providing attractive places where people will want to live, particularly where housing densities could be high.
Social Inclusion	Good design can support social inclusion by ensuring that development is accessible to all, built to appropriate standards and affordable to maintain.
Transport Accessibility	Good design should include specific provision for high levels of accessibility by a choice of means of transport.
Local Distinctiveness	Good design can contribute to the provision and maintenance of local distinctiveness and heritage.
Green Infrastructure	Good design can contribute to the provision, maintenance and accessibility of green infrastructure including landscaping and biodiversity.
Countryside and Coast	Good design can contribute to maintaining and enhancing the character and attractiveness of the countryside and coast.

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Climate Change	Good design can support the delivery of measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change and support a move towards zero carbon development.
Public Safety	Good design can provide an important additional support for measures to protect public safety, including crime reduction.

Table 6.20

Implications for Broad Spatial Options

6.216 The likely implications for each of the Broad Spatial Options include:

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
BSO1 - Focused Regeneration	Broad Spatial Option 1 would focus the benefits of good design on the older urban area, where the need for environmental renewal is likely to be greatest. Restricting new development outside this area could, however, mean that the potential benefits of any new design approach would be less widely felt across the Borough as a whole. Policy Option DE3 could provide additional site-specific safeguards for major proposals that are more likely to have the greatest impact on the image of the Borough.
BSO2 - Balanced Growth	Broad Spatial Option 2 would expand the potential benefits of good design across a wider area of the Borough. Policy Option DE2 could be the most suitable approach to deal with the promotion of a wider range of smaller infill developments within the urban area.
BSO3 - Urban Expansion	Broad Spatial Option 3 would expand the potential benefits of good design in new development outside the existing urban area. Policy Option DE3 could be most appropriate approach, if larger land releases are required.

Table 6.21

Implications for Settlement Areas

6.217 The implications for the Settlement Areas are more closely related to the Broad Spatial Option likely to be pursued, than any of the three Policy Options for the regulation of design.

Implications for Deliverability

6.218 The scope for obtaining good design is often related to the value and financial viability of the development proposed. The Council may need to balance the requirements of good design against the benefits of obtaining the development proposed.

6.219 All three Policy Options would be equally deliverable but Policy Options seeking to be more specific about local standards could require a greater level of detailed background work to be undertaken to operate effectively. Policy Option DE2, for example, may only be able to provide a brief and general precis of existing national policy and guidance in so far as it was considered relevant to local circumstances in Wirral.

6.220 While Policy Option DE3 would provide clear site-specific requirements and would allow any site-specific considerations to be consulted on in detail before a major allocation for development was confirmed, it may not provide the same level of control over proposals coming forward on un-allocated sites.

6.221 Each of the Policy Options could be supported by additional details included in a separate but related Supplementary Planning Document or Developer's Guide.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests that all three Policy Options are likely to be equally sustainable.

Council's Current Assessment

6.222 The Council's current assessment is that a hybrid of Policy Options may be necessary, to provide an adequate level of control without over-burdening the Core Strategy with non-strategic details. Policy Option DE3 is likely to be the most robust approach to managing major areas of change, provided that the framework provided in the Core Strategy can also deal effectively with development brought forward on un-allocated sites.

Consultation Question 18

Is this a fair assessment of the available Policy Options for the approach to securing the most appropriate design in new developments? Please give the reasons for your answer.

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that a hybrid of Policy Options is most likely to be the preferred option for securing better design in new developments? If not, please indicate which Policy Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

6.6 Providing for Development Management

Background

6.223 One of the benefits of the previous Unitary Development Plan was that the issues that needed to be considered for each type of development were clearly listed in a series of topic-specific policies. The new Development Plans system is no longer intended to follow that approach. Consultation has, nevertheless, shown that this element of the old-style Unitary Development Plan was widely appreciated.

6.224 Prior to the adoption of the new Development Plans system a number of authorities had already begun to include general criteria based policies in their Development Plans and some authorities have sought to carry these over into the new-style Development Plan Documents. The Government is, however, keen to prevent numerous topic-based policies for development management which merely re-state many of the requirements of national policy.

6.225 The Council's Validation Checklist now sets out the type of information that should be included in most types of planning application but does not set out the general policy criteria under which applications will be assessed. A series of criteria setting out the main basic requirements could, therefore, still be useful to developers, agents, the local community and other stakeholders, to provide a summary of the type of issue that are likely to be decisive for most types of planning application.

6.226 The Council's latest Validation Checklist was published for public consultation in April 2009 and approved in July 2009.

Policy Options

6.227 There are two main Policy Options:

- Policy Option DM1 - include no specific policy in the Core Strategy
- Policy Option DM2 - set out a list of general criteria within the Core Strategy

6.228 Policy Option DM1 would rely upon the application of national and regional policies, consideration against the Spatial Vision and Strategic Objectives and any other area-specific policies within the Core Strategy, the Council's Validation Checklist and any additional non-statutory advice or guidance, such as a Developer's Guide, produced to clarify the requirements of the Council's Development Management Service. No single policy statement summarising these requirements in one place would be provided within the Core Strategy.

6.229 Policy Option DM2 would include a list of general criteria that would be used to determine the majority of planning applications, which could include criteria such as:

- consistency with the Regional Spatial Strategy;

- contribution to the Spatial Vision set out in the Core Strategy;
- contribution to the Strategic Objectives set out in the Core Strategy;
- design, including layout, scale and massing;
- impact on local character and amenity;
- highway access and servicing; and
- impact on designated sites or features, including heritage and biodiversity etc

6.230 Any such list could not be too exhaustive or overly specific, as changes to national policy could require them to be added to or amended over time.

6.231 Further consultation would be required on the criteria to be included, if Policy Option DM2 was to be preferred.

Policy Fit

6.232 Circular 01/2006 sets out guidance on Changes to the Development Control System, which sets out information and criteria which must be considered and addressed when submitting an outline planning application. Advice on the information to be submitted in a design and access statement is also provided.

6.233 Circular 02/2008 Standard Application Form and Validation provides guidance on the New National Standard Application form for planning permission and other associated consents.

6.234 Policies DP1 to DP9 in the Regional Spatial Strategy also set out a series of general criteria to promote a sustainable pattern of development, to apply across the North West Region.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

6.235 The inclusion of general criteria for development management is unlikely to have significant implications for the Spatial Vision. Policy Option DM2 may, however, offer additional benefits by re-enforcing and interpreting the wider implications of the Spatial Vision in the consideration of individual planning applications.

Implications for the Spatial Objectives

6.236 The inclusion of general criteria for development management is unlikely to have significant implications for the Spatial Objectives. Policy Option DM2 may, however, offer additional benefits by re-enforcing and interpreting the wider implications of the Spatial Objectives in the consideration of individual planning applications.

Implications for the Broad Spatial Options

6.237 General criteria for development management will apply equally, whichever Broad Spatial Option is eventually preferred. The preferred Broad Spatial Option may, however, influence the nature of the criteria to be included under Policy Option DM2:

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
BSO1 - Focused Regeneration	The Development Management criteria to be included may need to be tailored to issues related to the consideration of development within the older, inner urban areas of east Wirral.
BSO2 - Balanced Growth	The Development Management criteria to be included may need to be tailored to issues related to the consideration of development within the wider urban areas across the Borough.
BSO3 - Urban Expansion	The Development Management criteria to be included may need to be tailored to issues related to the consideration of development on previously undeveloped greenfield sites outside the existing urban areas.

Table 6.22

Implications for the Settlement Areas

6.238 The inclusion of general criteria for development management is unlikely to have any significant implications for any specific Settlement Area.

Implications for Deliverability

6.239 Both Policy Options would be deliverable. Policy Option DM1 is likely to be the most flexible in terms of changes in circumstances over time but would not be able to provide a useful summary statement of likely considerations to help people less familiar with the requirements of the planning system. Policy Option DM2 is likely to provide a more clear and robust approach, providing that any wording was flexible enough deal with any future changes to national policy during the plan period.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests that Policy Option DM2 is likely to be the most sustainable approach because of the opportunity to introduce more locally specific guidance. While Policy Option DM1 is unlikely to have any adverse effects, it is likely to be the least sustainable because of the need to translate the implementation of national and regional policies at local level.

Council's Current Assessment

6.240 The Council's current assessment is that Policy Option DM2 is likely to be the clearest and most beneficial approach overall.

Consultation Question 19

Is this a fair assessment of the available Policy Options for providing criteria for development management decisions within the Borough? Please give the reasons for your answer.

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that Policy Option DM2 is most likely to be the preferred option for providing criteria for development management? If not, please indicate which Policy Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

6.7 Providing for Developer Contributions

Background

6.241 National policy allows the Council to require developers to contribute towards the provision of new and/or improved infrastructure and services where they are not available to the standard required to serve the new development being proposed.

6.242 Planning obligations can include a wide range of issues, including affordable housing; new, improved or replacement physical, social or green infrastructure; highway improvements and travel monitoring. They must not, however, be used to make an otherwise unacceptable development acceptable; to make good an existing deficiency; and must be fairly and reasonably related to the scale and type of development proposed.

6.243 Planning obligations are normally obtained, on a case by case basis, through a legal agreement or unilateral undertaking attached to the grant of planning permission or entered into under the Highway Acts.

6.244 The way planning obligations are obtained could be altered by national proposals for a Community Infrastructure Levy, which would allow the Council to levy a standard fee for an agreed package of benefits set out in advance. The Community Infrastructure Levy is expected to be based on a locally agreed Charging Schedule setting out the standard charges to be applied to different types and scales of development. A national standard may be imposed to ensure consistency in charging costs based on an agreed definition of infrastructure. The remaining role, if any, for "old-style" planning obligations is still to be determined.

6.245 A list of programmed infrastructure improvements and standards of provision for common services will, in any case, need to be provided as part of the delivery framework for the final Core Strategy.

Policy Options

6.246 There are two main Policy Options for securing developer contributions from new developments in the Core Strategy:

- Policy Option DC1 - set out an enabling policy to support requirements through legal agreements and obligations.
- Policy Option DC2 - set out an enabling policy to support requirements both through legal agreements and obligations and as part of a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule.

6.247 Policy Option DC1 would set out detailed local requirements in the Core Strategy, which would continue to be implemented through the negotiation of legal agreements on a site-by-site basis.

6.248 Policy Option DC2 would include an enabling policy to support the application of the Community Infrastructure Levy, when enacted, as well as any remaining local requirements that would still need to be implemented through the negotiation of legal agreements on a site-by-site basis.

Policy Fit

6.249 Policy Option DC1 would comply with the existing requirements of national policy for drawing down planning obligations. Policy Option DC2 would comply with the emerging published proposals for the relationship between planning obligations and the application of the new Community Infrastructure Levy. The national framework for the application of the Community Infrastructure Levy has, however, not yet been finalised.

6.250 Unitary Development Plan Policy URN2 already provides for planning obligations to be negotiated to support urban regeneration by securing the best use of land, desirable community benefits and a planned, sustainable environment. More specific requirements relate to affordable housing, urban greenspace, children's play equipment, contaminated land, drainage and highway improvements.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

6.251 Both of the Policy Options for developer contributions could align with the Spatial Vision for the Core Strategy.

Implications for the Spatial Objectives

6.252 Both of the Policy Options for developer contributions would be capable of supporting the Spatial Objectives for the Core Strategy. Policy Option DC1 may, however, limit the Council's ability to maximise the type and scope of obligations that could be obtained, in the event that the proposals for the Community Infrastructure Levy are enacted as currently published.

Implications for the Broad Spatial Options

6.253 The likely implications for each of the Broad Spatial Options for the Core Strategy include:

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
BSO1 - Focused Regeneration	Broad Spatial Option 1 would focus the private sector resources likely to be generated by new development on the heart of the older urban area. The additional costs associated with brownfield development in the older urban areas could, however, limit the level of contribution that would be viable to draw down.
BSO2 - Balanced Growth	Broad Spatial Option 2 would spread the potential benefits of the private sector resources likely to be generated by new development across a wider range of areas in the Borough and may, therefore, be able to generate a wider range of improvements and a higher level of contribution overall.
BSO3 - Urban Expansion	Broad Spatial Option 3 is more likely to focus the private sector resources likely to be generated by new development on providing new facilities necessary to service development on greenfield sites outside the existing urban area. As greenfield development is likely to be more lucrative to developers and the range of facilities required is likely to be wider, the level of contribution obtainable could be higher than under Broad Spatial Option 1 or Broad Spatial Option 2.

Table 6.23

Implications for Settlement Areas

6.254 The implications for the Settlement Areas are more closely related to the Broad Spatial Options for the Core Strategy, than either of the Policy Options for the regulation of developer contributions. Both Policy Options could be used to set out specific requirements within each individual Settlement Area.

Implications for Deliverability

6.255 The scope for obtaining developer contributions, which are paid for out of the value of the development, is limited by national policy and the Courts and by the financial viability of the development proposed. In some cases, the Council will need to prioritise the obligations that a particular development will provide.

6.256 Both Policy Options will require a clearly established policy framework to draw down any necessary contributions and could require a substantial amount of information to be provided within the Core Strategy to set out the Council's precise

requirements for a wide range of different types of obligation, supported by additional information within a separate but related Supplementary Planning Document or Charging Schedule.

6.257 While Policy Option DC1 would offer the greatest level of flexibility, it is least likely to align with the emerging requirements of the Community Infrastructure Levy. Any approach set out in the Core Strategy may need to be revised to meet the requirements of the Community Infrastructure Levy at a later date.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests that both Policy Options are likely to be equally sustainable.

Council's Current Assessment

6.258 The Council's current assessment is that Policy Option DC2 is likely to deliver the most reliable framework for the regulation of developer contributions, subject to the publication of the final proposals for the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Consultation Question 20

Is this a fair assessment of the available Policy Options for the approach to securing appropriate developer contributions from new developments? Please give the reasons for your answer.

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that Policy Option DC2 is most likely to be the preferred option for securing developer contributions? If not, please indicate which Policy Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

6.8 Providing for Green Infrastructure

Background

6.259 Green infrastructure covers a wide range of open land including traditional public open spaces; facilities for sport and recreation; coastal facilities; public rights of way; cycle paths; river corridors; water bodies; woodlands; hedgerows; open countryside; locally distinctive habitats; and sites designated for the conservation of biodiversity and geology. Green Infrastructure can also have an important role in sustainable resource management, in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change and in contributing to health and well-being.

6.260 Consultation has repeatedly underlined the high importance placed on various types of green infrastructure by local people.

6.261 The Wirral Open Space Audit 2009, which is still being finalised, sets out the current level of provision for various types of recreational open space across the Borough. The Audit identifies potential areas of deficiency and recommends a series of standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of various types of open space. An initial assessment indicates the following potential shortfalls in the quantity of various types of recreational open space:

Open Space Typology	Areas of Potential Shortfall (Electoral Wards)
Parks and Gardens	<p>Liscard; New Brighton; and Wallasey (Settlement Area 1)</p> <p>Bidston and St James; Birkenhead and Tranmere; Oxton; Prenton; and Rock Ferry (Settlement Area 3)</p> <p>Bebington; Bromborough; and Clatterbridge (Settlement Area 4)</p> <p>Upton (Settlement Area 5)</p> <p>Hoylake and Meols (Settlement Area 6)</p> <p>Heswall (Settlement Area 7)</p>
Natural and Semi-Natural	<p>Liscard; New Brighton; Seacombe; and Wallasey (Settlement Area 1)</p> <p>Birkenhead and Tranmere; Claughton; Oxton; Prenton; and Rock Ferry (Settlement Area 3)</p> <p>Bromborough (Settlement Area 4)</p> <p>Leasowe and Moreton East; and Moreton West and Saughall Massie (Settlement Area 5)</p> <p>Pensby and Thingwall (Settlement Area 7)</p>
Sport and Recreation (including pitches, courts and greens)	<p>Liscard; New Brighton; and Seacombe (Settlement Area 1)</p> <p>Bidston and St James; Birkenhead and Tranmere; Oxton; and Rock Ferry (Settlement Area 3)</p> <p>Bromborough (Settlement Area 4)</p>

Open Space Typology	Areas of Potential Shortfall (Electoral Wards)
	Greasby Frankby and Irby; Moreton West and Saughall Massie; and Upton (Settlement Area 5)
Amenity Open Space	Liscard; and Seacombe (Settlement Area 1) Birkenhead and Tranmere; and Prenton (Settlement Area 3) Bebington; Clatterbridge (Settlement Area 4) Leasowe and Moreton East (Settlement Area 5) West Kirby and Thurstaston (Settlement Area 6) Heswall; Pensby and Thingwall (Settlement Area 7)
Children and Young People (including play equipment and games courts)	Liscard (Settlement Area 1) Claughton; Oxton; and Prenton (Settlement Area 3) Bebington; and Clatterbridge (Settlement Area 4) Greasby Frankby and Irby; Moreton West and Saughall Massie; and Upton (Settlement Area 5) Heswall; Pensby and Thingwall (Settlement Area 7)
Allotments	New Brighton; and Wallasey (Settlement Area 1) Birkenhead and Tranmere (Settlement Area 3) Clatterbridge (Settlement Area 4) Greasby Frankby and Irby; Leasowe and Moreton East; Moreton West and Saughall Massie; and Upton (Settlement Area 5) Heswall; Pensby and Thingwall (Settlement Area 7)

Table 6.24

6.262 The Audit also revealed a need to address the quality of facilities available by ensuring that a wider range of developments contribute to the improvement of publicly accessible open space.

6.263 The findings of the Audit will need to be integrated with the findings from the Wirral Biodiversity Audit 2009; the priority species and habitats identified in key documents such as the UK, Cheshire and Wirral Biodiversity Action Plans; the Wirral Landscape Character Assessment 2009; the Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation 2007; and information on public rights of way and cycle ways maintained by the Council's Technical Services Department, to identify the Borough's total green infrastructure resource.

Policy Options

6.264 There are two main Policy Options for developing an appropriate network of green infrastructure across the Borough:

- Policy Option G11 - identify Borough wide numerical standards for the provision of various types of green infrastructure within the Core Strategy
- Policy Option G12 - identify specific priorities for the provision of various types of green infrastructure within each Settlement Area to reflect local needs and characteristics

6.265 Policy Option G11 would allow Borough wide standards of provision to be set for different types of space or feature. While this approach can be effective for facilities such as public open space and play areas, it is more difficult to apply to other types of green infrastructure, such as sand dune systems, lowland heath and woodland, which are locally distinctive or less evenly distributed across the Borough.

6.266 Policy Option G12 could allow more locally sensitive priorities to be identified within each Settlement Area, which are more clearly related to local circumstances and identified local needs. This will include the need to address specific local shortfalls and to protect locally distinctive features and habitats with a lower emphasis on rigid numerical standards.

Policy Fit

6.267 Both Policy Options would support national policy objectives for creating sustainable communities (PPS1); green belts (PPG2); housing (PPG3); biodiversity and geological conservation (PPS9); and planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG17). PPG17 advocates the setting of local standards to guide the future provision of open space and sport and recreation facilities. Natural England recommend a national minimum standard of 1 hectare of natural and semi natural green space for every thousand residents.

6.268 Policy EM3 of the Regional Spatial Strategy seeks to widen the provision of green infrastructure to meet social, economic and environmental goals. The Unitary Development Plan for Wirral 2000 includes standards for the quantity and distribution of publicly accessible open space. Policy GR6 requires additional provision in areas of new family housing. The Wirral Playing Pitch Assessment 2004 sets local standards of provision for pitch sports.

6.269 The Council's Parks and Countryside Service is currently producing a service delivery plan which is likely to include a hierarchy of public parks and open spaces and a strategy for future maintenance. Complimentary sub-regional green infrastructure strategies are also currently being drawn up for the wider Liverpool City Region; and for the Dee Estuary on behalf of the Mersey Dee Alliance; alongside the proposals for a national Coastal Trail; including a Merseyside Ecological Framework.

Implications for the Spatial Vision

6.270 Both Policy Options are capable of supporting the delivery of the Spatial Vision. Policy Option GI2 may, however, be able to better reflect local distinctiveness.

Implications for the Spatial Objectives

6.271 The likely implications for the Spatial Objectives include:

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Economic Revitalisation	Green infrastructure can support economic revitalisation through the promotion of higher environmental quality. Policy Option GI2 could, however, provide a more flexible response to local needs and circumstances.
Vacant Urban Land	Green infrastructure can provide a beneficial use of vacant urban land and can support the attractiveness and viability of other nearby development opportunities.
Housing Market Renewal	Green Infrastructure can support Housing Market Renewal through the promotion of a more attractive residential environment.
Housing Growth	The provision of green infrastructure can support the effective delivery of housing growth, through the promotion of a more attractive residential environment.
Social Inclusion	The provision and protection of green infrastructure can assist social inclusion. While Policy Option GI1 would require all parts of the Borough to have access to a similar standard of provision, Policy Option GI2 could allow any new provision to better reflect more local needs and circumstances.
Transport Accessibility	Both Policy Options could reduce the need to travel and promote walking and cycling by providing a higher quality of neighbourhood level facilities either by setting a minimum standard under Policy Option GI1 or by identifying local priorities under Policy Option GI2.

Spatial Objective	Likely Implications
Local Distinctiveness	While Policy Option GI1 would lead to a standardised approach across the Borough, Policy Option GI2 is more likely to better reflect local distinctiveness.
Green Infrastructure	Both Policy Options could support the provision of additional green infrastructure in areas most in need of environmental improvement.
Countryside and Coast	While Policy Option GI1 would lead to a standardised approach across the Borough, Policy Option GI2 is more likely to better reflect local distinctiveness.
Climate Change	Both Policy Options could support wider measures to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.
Public Safety	Both Policy Options could support the separation of sensitive uses and support improved air quality.

Table 6.25

Implications for the Broad Spatial Options

6.272 The likely implications for each of the Broad Spatial Options for the Core Strategy include:

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
BSO1 - Focused Regeneration	Broad Spatial Option 1 would focus the provision of new green infrastructure on areas most likely to be in greatest need of environmental improvements. While Policy Option GI1 could support provision to a Borough wide standard, Policy Option GI2 could focus provision to meet specific local priorities.
BSO2 - Balanced Growth	Broad Spatial Option 2 could drawn in additional resources for green infrastructure within the wider urban area but could also increase the pressure on existing features through infill development. While Policy Option GI1 could support provision to a Borough wide standard, Policy Option GI2 could focus provision to meet specific local priorities.
BSO3 - Urban Expansion	Broad Spatial Option 3 could threaten natural and semi natural green infrastructure at the edge of the urban area but could also provide public access to a wider range of habitat, feature

Broad Spatial Option	Likely Implications
	or facility. While Policy Option GI1 could support provision to a Borough wide standard, Policy Option GI2 could focus provision to protect locally distinctive features.

Table 6.26

Implications for Settlement Areas

6.273 The implications for the Settlement Areas are more closely related to the Broad Spatial Option likely to be pursued than either of the policy options for green infrastructure. While Policy Option GI1 would support provision in each Settlement Area to a Borough wide standard, Policy Option GI2 could better focus provision to reflect locally distinctive characteristics.

Implications for Deliverability

6.274 Both Policy Options are equally deliverable. The scope for providing additional or improved green infrastructure is, however, limited by the availability of public funds, developer contributions, the value of any development being proposed and the presence and quality of any existing features. Provision must also be made for future maintenance to an appropriate standard.

6.275 Policy Option GI1 would be robust in terms of setting out a clear and consistent statement of local requirements which could be backed up by numerical analysis. This analysis could be provided by the Wirral Open Space Audit 2009. Numerical standards do not, however, take into account wider considerations such as locally distinctive habitats or features which could not be provided at the same level in every settlement area in the Borough. As green infrastructure includes a wide range of these types of facilities and features, such as beaches, wetlands and priority habitats, Policy Option GI2 may offer greater flexibility by focusing on locally distinctive characteristics.

6.276 Both Policy Options would need to be supported by land allocations contained within a site-specific Development Plan Document and/or by design-based Supplementary Planning Documents and would need to be integrated with the approach to developer contributions.

Sustainability Appraisal Summary

The Sustainability Appraisal suggests that Policy Option GI2 is likely to be the most sustainable, on the basis that a neighbourhood level approach to identifying priorities and targets for the provision of various types of green infrastructure is likely to be more clearly related to local circumstances and identified local needs.

Council's Current Assessment

6.277 The Council's current assessment is that Policy Option GI2 is likely to be the most appropriate approach to providing for green infrastructure. Although Policy Option GI1 would provide green infrastructure to an equitable standard, Policy Option GI2 is likely to be more sensitive to types of green infrastructure that may be more difficult to assess against a numeric target.

Consultation Question 21

Is this a fair assessment of the available Policy Options for the protection and provision of green infrastructure across Borough? Please give the reasons for your answer.

Do you agree with the Council's conclusion that Policy Option GI2 is most likely to be the preferred option for the protection and provision of green infrastructure? If not, please indicate which Policy Option you would prefer and explain the reasons for your preference.

Consultation Question 22

Are there any other policy areas that you think should be considered as part of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document for Wirral? Please give the reasons for your answer.

7 Document List

8 Glossary