

BIRKENHEAD AND WIRRAL WATERS INTEGRATED REGENERATION STUDY

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report seeks agreement to arrangements to consider the Birkenhead and Wirral Waters Integrated Regeneration Study.

2.0 THE STUDY

2.1 The proposed study of the Birkenhead/Wirral Waters Regeneration area is important for a number of reasons:

- the Study Area contains the major economic opportunity for regenerating Wirral which is being presented by the Wirral Waters proposal. Peel have welcomed the Study and are actively involved in its development.
- the Study will support the work of the Investment Board in delivering the Council's Investment Strategy, Enterprise Strategy and Full Employment Plan
- external funding agencies including the North West Development Agency and the Homes and Communities Agency (through the so-called 'Single Conversation') have requested a comprehensive regeneration study for the Study Area as this will provide a framework for their future financial investments. Without such a framework the Council will find it difficult to attract the required resources to complement those from the Private Sector.
- this Study will assist the Council's partners (including Merseytravel, Registered Social Landlords and NHS Wirral) to secure and target their future investments to assist in the regeneration of the Study Area.

2.2 The output from this study will be a comprehensive and integrated vision for the future regeneration of the area, which will provide an investment framework for partners and external agencies, and a delivery mechanism(s) for implementation.

2.3 The Director of Regeneration accepted a tender from GVA Grimley Consultants to undertake the Birkenhead and Wirral Waters Integrated Regeneration Study using his delegated authority. This was reported to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 September 2009 (Minute 16 refers). The Study is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2010 and will be reported to the next appropriate Cabinet meeting.

2.4 The study has five aims which are as follows:

- to provide a sound basis for spatial planning across the study area (the study area is shown on the plan attached to this report)

- to provide a framework for the integration of the Wirral Waters proposals with the surrounding residential neighbourhoods and Birkenhead Town Centre
- to guide the investment of external financial resources with the aim of regenerating the study area and revitalising failing housing markets
- to inform the development of the Local Development Framework and guide future planning decisions in the study area
- to provide a single integrated vision for the regeneration of the study area.

2.5 The Study has a number of stages which are set out below;

Stage 1 will collect and map evidence regarding 'People and Place'. This will include information on population, households, qualifications, skills, income, affordability, health, multiple deprivation and an assessment of the economy. It will also produce an initial analysis of the physical character of the study area along with an assessment of its function and form. This will allow some initial thinking to develop in terms of how the Wirral Waters area can integrate with the surrounding neighbourhoods. This is a very important aspect of the study as it seeks to avoid "the Canary Wharf effect" where a high value investment area is produced but "across the road" deprived communities have not benefited from the investment. Tackling this issue is a very challenging but important factor for the successful delivery of comprehensive regeneration of the Study Area.

Stage 2 develops options for the Study Area in terms of integrating the various areas within it. It will begin to consider how regeneration could be delivered in the area. There are a number of options which can be considered which include a Public Private Partnership, a Local Asset Backed Vehicle, a Development Company and other models.

Stage 3 will develop a preferred option for the regeneration of the Study Area and come to a view on what mechanism or mechanisms will be required to implement the project over a 20 to 25 year period. This stage will also prepare a funding strategy for realising, as far as can be done at this stage of development, the maximum external investment in the Study Area.

2.6 To provide overall direction to the project, three groups are being established.

A Project Board which, reflecting the political representation of the Investment Board, comprises of the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader, the Leader of the Conservative Group, in addition it also includes the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community Safety and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning Strategy. The Board has the responsibility for steering all aspects of the work and it receives reports from the two other working groups.

A Ward Members Working Group which includes all Members from the Wards of Bidston and St James, Birkenhead and Tranmere and Seacombe. This group's remit is to provide a perspective on the key community and local issues which need to be considered as part of the study.

Officer Working Group which includes representatives from Peel, Government Office for the North West, Homes and Communities Agency, North West Development Agency, Wirral Partnership Homes, Lovells, Keepmoat, Merseytravel and NewHeartlands. This group looks at the regional, sub-regional and inter-agency issues involved in this study.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The Study cost of £120,000 is being funded from a combination of £60,000 Investment Strategy funding and £60,000 Housing Market Renewal Initiative (Cabinet 5th February 2009, Minute 352 refers).

4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are none arising from this report.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are none arising from this report.

6.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 A comprehensive strategy for the Study Area will have positive effects on the local community by developing a strategic plan for the area which would require the designing out of crime and bring in new investment.

7.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none arising from this report.

8.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Any planning implications arising from this report will be addressed through the planning process. The Council is currently preparing its Local Development Framework, whose Core Strategy Spatial Options were considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 26th November 2009 (Minute 200 refers). The Birkenhead and Wirral Waters Integrated Regeneration Study findings would be a material consideration, which could carry some weight, although the Study cannot in itself allocate land.

9.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Investment planned for the Study Area seeks to create over 27,000 jobs which will help to tackle the poverty and deprivation in the Study Area and Borough.

10.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The regeneration of the Study Area will include projects and initiatives which will promote social inclusion for all residents of the area.

11.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Study Area contains parts of the following Wards: Birkenhead and Tranmere, Bidston and St James, Cloughton and Seacombe but this report will be of interest to all Members of the Council.

12.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None were used in the preparation of this report.

13.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 13.1 That the aims of the study are endorsed and the arrangements set out in this report for taking forward the study and considering the Final Report are endorsed by Cabinet.

Alan Stennard
Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by David Ball, Head of Housing and Regeneration who can be contacted on 691 8395.