

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 2nd FEBRUARY 2012

REPORT OF THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION, HOUSING AND PLANNING

SUBJECT:	THORNEYCROFT, PLUMER & RUNDLE STREETS NEIGHBOURHOOD OPTIONS APPRAISAL
WARDS AFFECTED:	BIDSTON & ST JAMES
REPORT OF:	ACTING DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION, HOUSING & PLANNING
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR GEORGE DAVIES
KEY DECISION?	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to note the findings of the Thorneycroft, Plumer and Rundle Streets Neighbourhood Options Appraisal (NOA) and to approve the recommendation for clearance and subsequent housing redevelopment as part of the Housing Market Renewal Exit Strategy.
- 1.2 Appendix B of this report contains exempt information set out in paragraph 3 of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and includes details regarding the current position with negotiations to acquire individual properties

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members note the findings of the Thorneycroft, Plumer and Rundle Streets Neighbourhood Options Appraisal (NOA) and approve the recommendation for clearance action involving 1-39 and 2-46 Thorneycroft Street, 1-39 and 4-26 Plumer Street, and 12-30 and 41-55 Rundle Street, with subsequent housing redevelopment of the cleared site.
- 2.2 Members agree to authorise the continued acquisition of the remaining privately owned buildings by negotiation and agreement with individual owners.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Based on the range of information collected as part of the NOA process, the consultation feedback and the number of residents and owners leaving the area over the course of the NOA, it is considered that comprehensive acquisition and demolition of all the houses in Area 2 (including Thorneycroft Street, Plumer Street and Rundle Street) with subsequent residential development is the most satisfactory option in this case. As things currently stand this will involve the acquisition of the remaining 31 housing units.

4.0 BACKGROUND & KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 Members will be aware that the Government established the Housing Market Renewal Fund in 2003 and that the Council started a programme of investigative work in relation to the future of houses, land and commercial interests located in various 'high housing market stress' areas on the eastern side of the borough.

- 4.2 Members endorsed a framework for regeneration for the North Birkenhead area on 16 June 2005, which set out a ten to fifteen year vision for the area based on preliminary investigative work and a variety of stakeholder consultation sessions and surveys carried out by consultants, GVA Grimley. This framework for regeneration proposed the potential clearance and redevelopment of Milner, Carrington, Thorneycroft, Plumer and Rundle Streets, amongst others, which warranted a more detailed assessment of the neighbourhood in the form of a Neighbourhood Options Appraisal (NOA).
- 4.3 Following a consultation event at Portland Primary School on the 16 May 2006, it was recognised that residents from the North Birkenhead area had some concerns about the long term future of Milner, Carrington and Rundle Streets but initially felt that Thorneycroft and Plumer Streets were more sustainable. In response to these findings, the Council decided to examine the locality in more detail and divided it into two areas (see appendix A). A detailed Neighbourhood Options Appraisal (NOA) was subsequently undertaken in Area 1 which resulted in an ongoing acquisition for clearance programme. This was approved by Cabinet on April 3rd 2008.
- 4.4 During the Area 1 NOA process the Council was approached by a number of property owners in both Area 1 and 2 wanting to sell and move on. Members endorsed the adjustment of the 2007-08 acquisitions programme on 6 September 2007 to include acquisitions within the two areas pending the final NOA Area 1 report. This was in view of public opinion, the likely outcome of the NOA and availability of financial resources to meet demand from property owners in the area who wanted to sell. Acquisitions were focused primarily in Area 1 although a limited number were made in Area 2.
- 4.5 A peripheral survey of residents in Area 2 undertaken during the Area 1 NOA showed that 36% of those consulted thought their properties should have been included in the Area 1 NOA, and a further 11% expressed a desire to leave the area completely.
- 4.6 The Cabinet report of 3rd April 2008 advised of the interest expressed by residents in Area 2 in disposing of their properties to the Council and that the Council would continue to monitor opinion in Area 2, with the option of carrying out a more detailed appraisal in the future. Over time the level of enquiries led to the start of a NOA in Area 2. This was approved by Cabinet on 15th October 2009.
- 4.7 Cabinet also agreed to the continued acquisition of properties in Area 2 in response to those residents wishing to sell to the Council before the result of the Area 2 NOA was determined.
- 4.8 The 2008-2011 HMRI programme was approved by Cabinet on 9th July 2008 and included provision for the Area 2 NOA as part of the Birkenhead Phase 2 Initiative.
- 4.9 Following the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010 the Government announced that both the HMRI programme and the Regional Housing fund would finish at the end of March 2011. This announcement was unexpected as the HMRI was originally planned to be a 15 year programme but was cancelled prematurely after 8 years. This announcement has delayed the completion of the Area 2 NOA due to the uncertainty about future resources to finalise ongoing projects originally started as part of the former HMRI.
- 4.10 Following the cessation of HMRI the Council has been actively bidding for resources to enable the completion of the Area 2 NOA and other HMRI projects. I am pleased to be able to report that in November 2011 the Council successfully secured £2.7 million of capital funding from HMRI Transitional Resources, which were allocated in recognition of the residents stranded in partly completed clearance schemes. These resources can only be used to acquire occupied properties and have to be match funded.

5.0 NOA FINDINGS – HOUSING CONDITIONS

- 5.1 Area 2 consists of 93 residential properties in Thorneycroft, Plumer and Rundle Streets. Officers have undertaken a number of house condition surveys where access could be gained and consulted residents and owners about problems which they may be encountering within the neighbourhood, together with their perceived aspirations for the area.
- 5.2 The current method for measuring housing conditions was introduced as part of the Housing Act 2004 and is called the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The aim of the HHSRS is to identify health and safety hazards within dwellings which may result in illness or injury occurring during the next 12 months. These hazards are then scored and are classed as either 'Category 1' or 'Category 2' hazards. Where a 'Category 1' hazard is identified the Council has a statutory duty to deal with the hazard and where a 'Category 2' hazard is found action is discretionary.
- 5.3 Officers have carried out 45 house condition surveys representing over 48% of the total dwellings within Area 2, which are predominantly early 1900's terraced brick-built houses. . The number of surveys completed covers almost 58% of the properties in Area 2 which were occupied at the start of the NOA in October 2009. Approximately 26.6% of properties inspected have 'Category 1' hazards which require the Council to take action. The most common hazards identified were 'excess cold' and 'falls associated with stairs or steps'. The Council is legally obliged to utilise enforcement powers to ensure that all 'Category 1' hazards are mitigated either through improvements or demolition. The average cost of achieving an acceptable minimum standard would be in the region of £5,000 per property with Category 1 hazards; however, it should be noted that this amount represents the cost of repairs only and does not include any consideration of associated legal costs for enforcement in the event of an appeal.
- 5.4 In addition to assessing work needed to meet the minimum legal standards, costs associated with upgrading properties to meet the Government's 'Decent Homes Standard' have been calculated. The average cost to achieve the Decent Homes Standard is estimated to be in the region of £7,000 per property, with over 93% of the properties surveyed in the NOA area failing to reach the more desirable standard.
- 5.5 It was also noted that a small number of properties may have been subject to structural movement and further investigations by the Technical Services Department were carried out. The results of these surveys indicated that a representative sample of properties suffered from structural problems, which would require quite extensive remedial works in order to make the properties structurally sound. These recommended works include underpinning of load-bearing walls, roof strengthening and strengthening works to the front elevations. The average figure for these works is in the region of £28,000 per property. This figure does not incorporate any costs associated with temporary alternative accommodation, which may be necessary due to the extent of the structural rehabilitation works.
- 5.6 The value for money of investing in refurbishing stock in Area 2 to any of the standards set out above must be considered in the context of local housing market performance. The low demand for accommodation in Area 2, as evidenced by the number of owner-occupiers who have sold up and left the area prior to the result of the NOA being known, does not support the case for refurbishment as there is insufficient evidence that the properties will be let or sold following refurbishment. This is particularly relevant in the current housing market.

- 5.7 Standard Assessment Procedure 2005 (SAP) ratings for energy efficiency were also calculated for a 26% sample of the properties inspected and the results were analysed by an external agency (Energy Projects Plus). The SAP rating demonstrates the energy efficiency of a property on a scale of 0 to 100 with 0 being the least energy efficient. The average SAP rating for the representative sample within the NOA was 54.7, which compares favourably with the national average of 46 and the borough average of 49. However, it should be noted that these are sample averages and that there may be significant variation between individual properties. Also, options to incorporate further energy efficiency measures to improve SAP ratings, reduce energy consumption and lower carbon dioxide emissions will increase refurbishment costs and may be limited due to building design. Poor energy efficiency of properties contributes to fuel poverty and in turn can lead to poor health and financial difficulties especially in relation to current fuel price levels.
- 5.8 On the basis of house condition surveys undertaken, it is reasonable to conclude that although the majority of properties would not meet the Decent Home Standard and would require some intervention, there does seem to be a perception amongst residents that poor housing conditions exist (see paragraph 6.5). Officers encountered common complaints regarding narrow/steeply pitched stairs and small rear bedrooms, often used as storage only due to insufficient dimensions.
- 5.9 During the NOA a number of voluntary acquisitions were made by the Council (see 8.3). Once acquired, as requested by remaining residents, every effort was made to maintain property security without boarding up property openings. Over time the vacancy rate has increased and, unfortunately, properties have been damaged by theft and arson. This damage is now widespread and will greatly increase the costs involved in undertaking improvements to make the properties both habitable and desirable.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Prior to the start of the Neighbourhood Options Appraisal, in 2005 a masterplanning exercise was carried out in Birkenhead involving a series of 'drop in' sessions and consultation events at local venues. The findings of the masterplan indicated that there was strong local support for extensive redevelopment and regeneration in North Birkenhead, particularly in the NOA Areas 1 and 2.
- 6.2 In addition to house condition surveys, officers carried out owner/resident consultation interviews on a one to one basis wherever possible. This has allowed the Council to capture relevant information such as occupation, tenure and household income. More importantly, the interview went through the issues that each household felt were detrimental to the area and the different courses of action under consideration. Owners/residents were then given the opportunity to select the option they would prefer to be implemented to resolve the issues in the area.
- 6.3 At the beginning of this Options Appraisal in October 2009, over 57% of the occupied properties within Area 2 were owner-occupied, with just over 28% owned by private landlords and 14% owned by Registered Social Landlords. Of the 78 occupied properties, 48 consultation interviews were completed, equating to just over 61.5% of the area's residents.
- 6.4 The residents and absentee landlords who did not offer their opinion on the NOA process were approached by Council Officers on numerous occasions over the preceding few months and were sent newsletters requesting appointments. Despite this and door to door calling by officers, the remaining households proved to be either uncooperative in allowing access or in keeping appointments that had been made.

6.5 Area 2 survey findings underline the many social problems that residents in these streets face and those issues that residents perceive are at an unacceptable level with detrimental effects on the neighbourhood. These include anti-social behaviour, poor housing conditions, drug dealing, derelict properties, irresponsible landlords/tenants, graffiti, litter, and noise. A full breakdown of these issues is shown below:

Issues having a detrimental effect on the area	% of households that agree
Anti-social behaviour	50
Irresponsible tenants	43.75
Litter	39.58
Derelict Properties	37.5
Irresponsible Landlords	37.5
Dogs/Dog Fouling	35.4
Vandalism	31.25
Alleys (drains/rubbish)	31.25
Crime/Fear of crime	31.25
Drug dealing	29.16
Lack of children's play areas	29.16
Noise from people	27.08
Housing Conditions	25
On street Parking	22.91
Noise from roads	10.41
Grffiti	8.33
Poor Transport Links	6.25
Lack of local facilities	4.16
Lack of retail facilities	2.08
Prostitution	2.08
Racial Harassment	0

6.6 Most households were found to have below average income, with the majority group earning between £10-15k per annum. Over half of the households were in receipt of welfare benefits or tax credits. This is indicative of the low incomes and poverty associated with this ward and has implications for the level of investment which would be required to support any potential repair scheme.

6.7 As part of the consultation, residents in Area 2 were asked what they would most like to see happen in the area. They were given a number of possible options that were explained to them and asked for a preference. These options ranged from a 'do nothing' approach through to renovation schemes and more radical options of demolition and redevelopment.

48 households from the 78 occupied properties in the area responded and a breakdown of these results is shown below:

Preferred course of action for the area	% support
Full Demolition & Redevelopment	45.83
Retention & Improvement	29.16
Group Repair	16.66
Do nothing/ other	8.33
Partial Demolition & Redevelopment	0
Use of Neighbourhood Wardens	0
Environmental Improvements	0

- 6.8 The main findings of the consultation with residents in the area can be summarised by saying that although the same amount of people opted for overall retention and refurbishment as opted for demolition, the most favoured single option was in fact demolition and redevelopment.
- 6.9 Absentee landlords were also consulted with regard to the future of the properties in NOA Area 2 and they were equally split in their opinion on whether the properties in the area should be retained or demolished.
- 6.10 The level of feedback from the absentee landlords was on a similar scale to that of the residents, in that although they made up 28% of the ownership of the total properties in the area at the beginning of the NOA in October 2009, only the owners of two-thirds of these properties offered their opinion.
- 6.11 Of the landlords who responded, the owners of 6 properties opted for full demolition and redevelopment, the owners of 6 more chose retention and no form of demolition, and the owners of the 4 remaining properties that responded had either no opinion or a variety of opinions with no clear indication for or against retention or some form of demolition.

7.0 NOA FINDINGS – THE HOUSING MARKET

- 7.1 The majority of the residential buildings in the Birkenhead ADF area are largely pre-1919 terraced stock, which accounts for 48.9% of all housing in the area. Most of this is in North Birkenhead, off the Laird Street corridor. The median house price in the Birkenhead ADF stood at £65,500 in quarter 1 of 2010, based on sales in that period. This represented a 7% fall on the same period a year earlier.
- 7.2 The median house price across Wirral, which showed an annual increase of 3%, is at least double that of the Birkenhead ADF, and the price gap between Birkenhead and the Wirral grew between quarter 1 of 2009 and quarter 1 of 2010, yet fell when compared with similar properties throughout the former Newheartlands Pathfinder. On a national level house prices increased over the 12 months to the first quarter of 2010, and are nearly three times as high as in the Birkenhead ADF.
- 7.3 Levels of vacant and long term voids in the Birkenhead area are twice as high as those across the rest of the Borough, which illustrates low demand and a lack of interest in living in the area. The majority (93.7%) of housing stock in the Birkenhead ADF is in the lowest Council Tax Band (Band A), the number of which has fallen slightly since 2005 resulting from targeted demolition of poorer quality stock low demand stock in other clearance schemes. In contrast, only 40.3% of properties across the borough are in Council Tax Band A.
- 7.4 If the properties in Area 2 were acquired and demolished, the cleared site would be approximately 1.7 hectares (4.3 acres) and whilst the housing on the site is currently unpopular, it would be an attractive site for new-build housing. This is due in part to the Council's Interim Policy for New Housing Development, the proposed residential redevelopment of the adjacent Area 1 site and the ongoing residential redevelopment of the Bray Street site. Assuming that planning permission for residential development was forthcoming and the interim policy remains unchanged, the site may have a development value which would realise a high quality development. This site would be developed in partnership with Keepmoat as the Council's preferred developer for Birkenhead, and potentially an RSL who could provide a proportion of social housing.

8.0 STRATEGIC ACQUISITIONS

- 8.1 As previously mentioned the Area 2 NOA commenced in October 2009. Prior to this date the Council was approached by a number of property owners requesting that their properties were acquired. During the financial year 2006/07, a limited amount of funding was available to make some strategic acquisitions and was utilised in this area. A total of 7 property acquisitions were agreed in order to assist property owners in difficult circumstances, particularly residents who were the targeted victims of anti-social behaviour. A further 4 properties were bought prior to the start of the NOA in Area 2.
- 8.2 By agreeing to acquire a limited number of properties, residents' expectations were raised and this resulted in the Council receiving an increased demand from owners who wanted to sell their properties for a variety of reasons such as:
- Inability to sell their home due to low demand
 - Preference for moving to another area
 - Property being vacant and inability to re-let
 - Property not suitable for needs
 - Anti-social behaviour and other social issues
- 8.3 Members agreed to the acquisition proposals outlined in the Cabinet report of 15th October 2009 and to date the Council has acquired a total of 62 properties in Area 2, has agreed in principle to acquire another 1, and has also negotiated a property swap with the 2 of the RSLs at no extra financial cost to the Council, with the exception of associated fees and disturbance payments for residents. Negotiations remain ongoing with the remaining RSL to acquire the remaining 9 RSL properties. In total this represents a potential acquisition rate of over 76% of the housing stock in Area 2 already. Properties have been acquired at average values for the Birkenhead ADF area as a whole, or slightly above. All acquisitions have been made on a voluntary basis only and reinforce the lack of commitment to the future of these properties, initially established by the consultation exercise. There are currently 8 owner-occupiers and 14 private landlord owned properties remaining. Appendix B provides detail about current property ownership in Area 2.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The physical condition of the properties is mixed with structural remediation and energy improvements likely to be the largest expenditure items. While retention and rehabilitation would be the cheapest option the rapid physical deterioration over recent months and sharp escalation in crime has stigmatised the area to the point that this is not considered to be a viable option into the future. The area has been suffering from low demand and the majority of houses are now vacant. This has been endorsed by both the market appraisal and the majority of the residents and owners, both former and remaining. Any improvement option would result in the retention of houses that were designed and built over 100 years ago, of which there is an oversupply within the former HMRI area. An improvement scheme would also rely on the willingness of individual owners to both participate and in many cases, invest their own money to bring the properties up to a standard fit for the 21st century.
- 9.2 The consultation undertaken with a range of interested parties including both residents and absentee owners, in conjunction with the large number of Area 2 properties already sold to the Council on a voluntary basis has established that a large majority favour relocation from the area. This substantially strengthens the case for clearance. Redevelopment of any cleared site would complement the residential redevelopment of the adjoining Area 1 site, which is

currently being assembled. This would provide a mix of wider property types built to current standards and would achieve diversification in the local housing market.

- 9.3 Based on the range of information collected as part of the NOA process, the consultation feedback and the number of residents and owners leaving the area over the course of the NOA, it is considered that comprehensive acquisition and demolition of all the houses in Area 2 (including Thorneycroft Street, Plumer Street and Rundle Street) with subsequent residential development is the most satisfactory option in this case. As things currently stand this will involve the acquisition of the remaining 31 housing units.
- 9.4 In relation to the non residential properties 96-114 Laird Street, inclusive; these are included within the Laird Street Traditional Suburban Centre, as defined under Policy SH2 in the adopted Wirral UDP. As these properties form part of a rationalised Suburban Centre and are largely occupied it is suggested that these units should be excluded from the demolition involving the housing to the rear. In relation to the Baptist Church, also on Laird Street; the Minister and the congregation were consulted on their opinion of the prospective regeneration of the area at several meetings, and did not give an opinion for or against any of the possible options. The Church itself is fully active and as such it is suggested that the church should be retained and not be part of any proposed demolition works in the NOA Area 2.

10.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 10.1 Negotiations to voluntarily acquire properties have proved to be successful to date and it is envisaged that continuing negotiations with the remaining owners will result in the completion of the site assembly over time. There is a risk that these negotiations may not succeed and compulsory purchase powers might be necessary.
- 10.2 The remaining residents and/or owners may object to the outcome of the NOA and mount a campaign against the decision. It is considered that the Council has collected sufficient evidence to support and defend the decision to acquire, demolish and redevelop the Area 2 site.

11.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 11.1 A range of options for action (see 6.7) have been considered as part of the NOA process.

12.0 CONSULTATION

- 12.1 Extensive consultation has been undertaken throughout the NOA process, as discussed in 4.2 above

13.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 13.1 The completion of the Area 2 NOA and a decision on the most satisfactory course of action for dealing with the housing will determine the future of this particular area in line with community expectations raised at the beginning of the HMRI.

14.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

14.1 FINANCIAL

- 14.1.1 Area 2 acquisitions made to date have cost in the region of £5.6m. This figure includes compensation to residents and owners, relocation loans and security. To assemble the whole site it is estimated that a total of £2.8m will be required to purchase and demolish the remaining housing units.
- 14.1.2 The Housing Investment Programme for 2011/12 makes provision for a number of acquisitions in Area 2, however, these are restricted to ongoing commitments made before the demise of the HMRI programme earlier this year. The Council has recently been successful at bidding for HMRI Transitional Funding and has secured £2.7m to support remaining residents in clearance schemes. Although slightly less than anticipated, this funding, when combined with match funding, will enable the completion of most of the existing clearance commitments throughout the former HMRI area, based on estimates made at the time of the bid. This funding is matched by a combination of capital reserves carried over from 2010/11, new Homes Bonus and new capital receipts generated through the sale of strategic HMRI acquisitions. These resources will be partly used to complete the site assembly of Area 2 and it is envisaged that this will be achieved over 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14.
- 14.1.3 Financial resources mentioned in 14.1.2, above, will be used to purchase properties, make discretionary payments equal to the Statutory Homeloss/loss and Disturbance payments and fund the Council's new Relocation Loans. Resources will also be used to fund various activities supporting clearance including security costs and demolition.
- 14.1.4 Members should be aware that demolition and eventual residential redevelopment is not the cheapest option but is considered to be the best approach for dealing with the inherent problems of the area in the long term.
- 14.1.5 Planned demolitions will reduce the potential income generated under the New Homes Bonus for the following year but any new development and re-use of empty properties will offset this loss by providing an additional income in future years.

14.2 IT

- 14.2.1 There are no IT implications.

14.3 STAFFING

- 14.3.1 The remaining Private Sector Housing Renewal Team, with support from other Council departments, will oversee the acquisition and demolition process and subsequent residential redevelopment. The remaining team has been substantially reduced in number since the demise of HMRI but has been able to retain the core skills to be able to continue to deliver the programme and is currently being funded by a combination of the Council's own resources, the Community Fund and NHS Wirral. Funding is currently in place to maintain the team until the end of March 2012.

14.4 ASSETS

- 14.4.1 Successful acquisitions will increase the value of the Council's assets in the area. Following demolition, the site will be subsequently redeveloped for housing use by the Council's partner developer, Keepmoat Homes. Provisional Development Appraisals anticipate a Capital Receipt in the region of £288,000, however, recent experience with the Bray Street site has established that the actual land value may well be substantially lower than originally anticipated. The actual value will be determined before handing the site over to developer.

The receipt will be split between the Council and the HCA on a proportional basis, based on the value of the previous investment made in assembling the site.

15.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 Should negotiations fail to secure the whole site over time a further report will be prepared presenting the case for compulsory purchase.
- 15.2 Longer term, there will be legal implications in relation to the preparation of the lease in connection with Keepmoat Homes and the eventual residential redevelopment of the site

16.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1 The Council's Homemovers Service is available to help all residents wanting to relocate away from the area, some of whom are considered to be vulnerable.
- 16.2 It is intended that the recommended course of action (acquisition and demolition) will have a positive impact on one of the most socially and economically deprived areas of Wirral and successful acquisition of properties will contribute to achieving delivery of the North Birkenhead masterplan.
- 16.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has previously been completed in 2009 for the combined delivery of the clearance, refurbishment and new build schemes in line with former Housing Market Renewal Programme and the Private Sector Housing and Regeneration Assistance Policy. This Assessment has recently been reviewed and a separate EIA has been completed to cover both NOAs and clearance schemes

17.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 17.1 The proposal to redevelop this area will assist in the creation of a sustainable community for the future. The residential redevelopment will take into account modern building practice and will be built to at least Code 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. In the longer term, evidence suggests that the CO2 emissions for the new houses will be substantially lower than those for the current houses.

18.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

The site is designated as a Primarily Residential Area, in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP saved by direction of the Secretary of State on 28th September 2007). The site is within the inner area of the City Region shown on the map with Policy LCR1 of the Northwest Regional Spatial Strategy (September 2008). The site is also located within a regeneration priority area identified in the Interim Planning Policy 'New Housing Development' (October 2005)

- 18.1 Although the Government intends to abolish RSS, subject to the outcome of consultation on Environmental Assessment, it will remain part of the statutory development plan until formally revoked.
- 18.2 Housing development in this location would be consistent with the principles of urban regeneration and the aim to revitalise the area through comprehensive area based regeneration schemes as set out in RSS and the UDP.

- 18.3 Planning applications are currently subject to UDP Policy HS4 'Criteria for New Housing Development' and RSS Spatial Principles which contain criteria for securing good design, including community safety and security, landscaping and public open space with children's play areas.
- 18.4 Once properties are acquired all openings are to be secured by metal sheets at ground and first floor levels. Regular monitoring throughout the acquisition phase will be undertaken with available staffing resources to ensure property integrity is maintained. It should be noted that with the demise of the HMRI the Council no longer has the Wardens Service to regularly monitor Council owned vacant properties.
- 18.5 There have been incidents of police intervention under the Crime & Disorder Initiative and it is hoped that the comprehensive regeneration of this area will alleviate difficult environmental conditions.
- 18.6 Demolition and residential redevelopment will employ 'secure by design' thus designing out potential crime at an early stage.
- 18.7 Relevant Planning Permission will be required for any housing redevelopment.
- 18.8 Demolition consent would also be required before the properties are demolished, and it is unlikely that an environmental impact assessment would be required for the redevelopment of the site.

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APPENDICES

A. Map to show NOA Area 1 and NOA Area 2

B. Map showing property ownership details in NOA Area 2 and progression of negotiations

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Thorneycroft, Plumer and Rundle Street, Birkenhead Neighbourhood Options Appraisal and Strategic Acquisitions	Cabinet 15 th October 2009
Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme End of Year Report 2010-11 Housing Investment Programme 2011/12	Cabinet 13 th October 2011