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**Wirral**  
CH44 8ED

9<sup>th</sup> March 2015

Our Ref: Birkenhead and Tranmere NDP

Dear Andrew,

**Birkenhead and Tranmere Neighbourhood Plan: application for designation as a neighbourhood forum and a neighbourhood plan area**

Further to our previous meeting and correspondence, I am now writing on behalf of the Birkenhead and Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum to apply for the forum to be formally designated as a neighbourhood planning forum, and for their proposed plan area to be formally designated as a neighbourhood planning area. This letter closely follows the structure of the information set out as required by your email on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2015, and as such provides: the basic information required for the application; contact details for the forum; details of the representativeness of the forum membership; the background and development of the proposed forum; consideration of the issue of designating the neighbourhood plan as one that is business-led; and the rationale behind the proposed plan area boundary.

In addition to the requisite documents set out in section one overleaf, the application is accompanied by:

- A list giving details of the 26 members of the proposed forum
- A map of the proposed area showing the balance of residential and commercial land use, in relation to the issue of whether a neighbourhood plan for the proposed area should be business-led.
- A spreadsheet providing details of the demographic and social profile of the forum members



## 1. Required documents and information

This application has been submitted with the following documents as required under Regulations 5 and 8 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012:

- A copy of the written constitution of the Birkenhead and Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum
- A copy of the map showing the proposed neighbourhood plan area

## 2. Contact details for the proposed forum

The forum can be contacted through:

Mr Philip Barton, Chair, Birkenhead and Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum.

1 Lorn Court, Lorn Street, CH41 6SA

Phone number: 0151 666 2938

Email: [philipbarton@live.co.uk](mailto:philipbarton@live.co.uk)

It is understood and accepted by Mr Barton that these contact details will be made publicly available as part of the application.

## 3. Purpose and membership of the proposed forum

The purpose of the Birkenhead & Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum, as set out in its constitution, *“is to promote or improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Birkenhead & Tranmere area.”*

A list of members of the proposed forum has been included with this application. At time of writing, the forum comprises 26 members confirmed as qualified to be members of the forum. Of these, 21 are residents of the proposed area, five work in the area (two people both live and work in the area), and two are local councillors. The submitted list notes the names, qualifying address, and the way(s) in which each person is qualified to be a member of the forum. The proposed plan area map indicates where in the area the current members live or work. It demonstrates that the forum includes people living and working in different parts of the proposed plan area.

As noted above, the proposed body includes more than one member in each of the categories of membership.

The neighbourhood forum undertook an internal survey to identify the demographic composition of its members, to ensure that it is representative of different parts of the community. Of the seventeen members that have responded at time of writing:

- **Age:** There is at least one member in each of the age bands of 30-39 years (6% of respondents), 40-49 (35% of respondents), 50-59 (29% of respondents), 60-69 (18% of respondents), and 70-79 (12% of respondents), with people aged 40-49 the largest group at 35% of respondents.
- **Disability:** 24% declared themselves to be disabled.
- **Ethnicity:** Of 16 respondents, 88% are white and 12% are Chinese, with no other ethnic identities reported. 50% report their cultural identity as being English, 44% as British, and 6% as Irish.
- **Sexuality:** 86% of respondents identify as heterosexual, 7% as bisexual and 7% as asexual. No respondents identify as gay or lesbian.
- **Gender:** 63% of members report their gender identity at birth as being female, and 37% as male. No respondents report having undergone gender reassignment.
- **Political affiliation:** 27% of respondents are affiliated with the Labour Party, 13% with the Green Party. The remaining 60% of respondents are not affiliated with a political party.
- **Religion:** 40% of respondents are Christian, 33% are agnostic or atheist, 7% are Hindu, 7% are Humanists, and 13% are Taoists.
- **Household incomes:** 14% of respondents live in a household with a total income of between £5,001 and £10,000, 29% in households with an income of between £10,001 to £20,000, and 57% in households with an income of between £20,001 and £40,000. The membership can therefore be considered to include people with a variety of income levels.
- **Tenure:** 75% of members are owner occupiers, with the remaining 25% being social renting tenants. None of the respondents rent privately.

The forum therefore fulfils the expectation that it includes people from different places and sections of the community living in the proposed plan area.

#### **4. Background and history of the proposed forum; involvement and engagement**

The neighbourhood planning forum has emerged from an earlier community development group of local residents in Birkenhead, namely “These Streets are Our Streets”, formed in 2011. The group aimed to improve their neighbourhoods by collective action to find solutions to problems of community, environment, education, training, leisure and young people’s activities. The group continued to meet monthly to deliver community projects and events whilst building connections with other community groups and services. In 2014 the group considered whether the new opportunity of a neighbourhood plan would be useful to address the issues that concern local residents. The group agreed that this should be pursued and organised a public meeting of local residents. At this meeting 21 residents agreed to be involved in developing the neighbourhood plan for Birkenhead and Tranmere, thus forming the current group. The group became formally constituted at its inaugural meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

Members of the forum are also actively involved with other local groups and services, including Wirral History and Heritage Group, These Streets are Our Streets, the Friends of The Williamson and Birkenhead Priory, Lairdside Communities Together, St Catherine’s Community Centre, All Military Members Organisation (veterans network), The Quays rehabilitation centre, Grass Roots community allotment project at Birkenhead Park, Wirral Mind, and Rose Brae homeless hostel.

Prior to the inauguration of the forum in December 2014, 3000 leaflets were distributed to businesses and homes across the ward. The forum is currently developing a dedicated website to promote the prospective neighbourhood plan and to continue to encourage local people to be involved in its development.

The forum has made concerted efforts to engage the local business community in the creation of the forum, including contact with the commercial director of The Grange and The Pyramids shopping centre, who is supportive of the forum’s objectives. The Co-ordinator of the Birkenhead Business Improvement District has expressed interest in coordinating efforts with the forum. The forum has also notified Peel Group of the prospective plan, but no response has been received at time of writing.

## **5. Designation as a business neighbourhood plan area**

The proposed neighbourhood plan area comprises a number of sub-areas that are distinct in land-use. There are several areas where land use is predominantly residential. A single smaller area at the north is predominantly commercial. One area is evenly mixed between residential and commercial. Discounting this mixed area, areas that are predominantly residential in use occupy 53% of the proposed plan area. Furthermore, the residential portions of the proposed plan area are overall much denser, in terms of numbers of properties and households, than the commercial areas are in terms of numbers of premises and businesses.

It is therefore considered that the proposed neighbourhood plan area is overall residential in character. It is clear that the proposed area is not “*predominantly business in nature*”, and it would therefore be inappropriate for the proposed area to be designated as a business area under the conditions of Section 61(H) of the Localism Act 2011.

## **6. Justification of the proposed neighbourhood plan area**

The proposed area will include both of the traditional areas of Birkenhead and Tranmere, which until 2003 were administered as part of different wards. Consideration has been given to whether two separate neighbourhood plans should be developed, one each for the two parts of the ward. However, some of the local issues which the neighbourhood planning forum seeks to address can only be addressed by developing a single plan for the entire combined area of Birkenhead and Tranmere.

Some residents feel that the area suffers unreasonably from the detrimental effects of planning decisions, including the evident concentration of services for people with intense support needs, whose clients have caused significant disruption to the local community. Residents also feel that planning control of bars and nightclubs has been detrimental to residents in Birkenhead. The neighbourhood planning forum would like to see planning policy and decisions be joined-up and consistent with other Wirral communities, to avoid undue disadvantage and harm to the amenity and living conditions of residents in any particular area. Likewise, residents in the mainly residential Tranmere rely on the shops and services located in Birkenhead, which serves as their town centre. As such the plan should also allow residents of Tranmere to influence the future development of central Birkenhead.

Residents also feel that local planning policy could do more to support the economic growth of Birkenhead, and seek to ensure that any opportunities to address the economic issues in Birkenhead can be tackled more effectively by planning decisions, taking advantage of Birkenhead's qualities and assets to attract investors and potential new residents. Local businesses have expressed support for the forum's objectives of increasing the size of the residential population and re-balancing its social mix, and for improving the economic performance of Birkenhead.

### **Consideration of particular places proposed to be included in the neighbourhood plan area**

The proposed plan area is largely based on the Birkenhead and Tranmere ward boundary, with several additional areas of adjoining wards included and one notable part of the ward excluded. This proposed boundary has been developed with the involvement and agreement of Councillors for neighbouring wards. The proposed boundary adjoins the northern and eastern boundaries of the Devonshire Park neighbourhood plan, but does not propose to overlap it.

The forum originally proposed to include Victoria Park (which lies in Rock Ferry ward) in the plan area, but following an objection received from a Councillor for Rock Ferry ward, all of the boundary proposals were revisited at a meeting held on 26 January 2015, and members voted to exclude Victoria Park from the plan area. In addition, staff from the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum are aware of the proposal (noted below) to include it in the plan area and have not made any objection.

The forum also originally proposed to include shops along Grange Road West and Grange Mount and houses on Cole Street, Bentinck Place and Claughton Place, which straddle the ward boundary into Claughton ward. It was suggested that retail policy for Birkenhead and Tranmere should include the full extent of any shopping and services areas in the ward, ignoring the ward boundary. However when the boundary proposals were reviewed at the 26 January meeting, the members voted not to include the part of the Grange Road West / Grange Mount shops in Claughton ward in the proposed plan area.

**The Williamson Art Gallery and Museum** lies less than 200m outside the ward boundary in Oxtan ward. The forum intends to develop a planning policy that will support the development of arts and culture activities in an area at the west of the ward which encompasses the Williamson, Birkenhead Central Library and the Little Theatre. The forum

believe that such a policy will be most effective if it includes the Williamson. This would require the plan area to extend slightly beyond the ward boundary into Oxton ward. This will also allow staff from the Williamson to contribute to the development of the arts and culture policy, as well as the rest of the plan.

The inclusion of **Holborn Square**, an area of industrial units just outside the eastern boundary of the ward, is required to support the forum's desire to support future efforts to re-open and develop the Tranmere Tunnels running under nearby Holborn Hill as a tourist attraction. In order to form a functionally logical area, it is also suggested that the plan area boundary should further extend beyond the ward boundary to include Holt Road and Sidney Road, which are part of the contiguous residential area west of Old Chester Road.

The large **Cammell Laird** property straddles the boundary of Birkenhead and Tranmere ward and Rock Ferry ward. Any planning policy for the development of the site would have to be for its entirety, including the significant proportion outside the ward boundary. Given the nature of the site (size, land use and single ownership) it may be outside the reasonable scope for a neighbourhood plan to consider. The forum voted to exclude from the plan area the portion of the site within the ward boundary.

We trust that the above provides the required information for the Council to be able to accept our applications to designate the proposed forum and neighbourhood planning area, and to undertake to consult on the applications. However, should you have any queries or require any further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours Sincerely



Bob Phillips  
**Director, Planner and Urban Designer**  
**For BPUD Limited**

Sent via email

Encs.:

Birkenhead and Tranmere Neighbourhood Planning Forum Constitution

Map showing proposed neighbourhood plan area

Map of the proposed plan area showing areas of predominantly residential and commercial land uses

Names and locations of qualified members of the proposed forum

Demographic and social profile of the forum