



REPORT TITLE:	CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT BIRKENHEAD REGENERATION FRAMEWORK
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks approval for the publication of the Draft Birkenhead Regeneration Framework for consultation. The Framework is a key evidence document which will inform the emerging Local Plan and sets out the most comprehensive land use proposals for Birkenhead since 1947.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Director of Regeneration and Place be recommended to approve the publication of the Draft Birkenhead Regeneration Framework main document, summary and accompanying appendices for public consultation between 24th March and 19th May 2021 (8 weeks).

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To enable the Council to consult on a draft comprehensive regeneration strategy for Birkenhead which is a key evidence document informing the emerging Local Plan.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Undertaking consultation on the Birkenhead Regeneration Framework at the same time as the publication of the Local Plan Regulation 19 document has been considered but been rejected as it would not enable the BRF work to be built into the Local Plan proposals at an early enough stage.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council is preparing a new Local Plan to a fast track programme agreed with the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government. The Council's preferred spatial strategy for the Local Plan, is to meet all of the Borough's development needs for the period 2020 to 2037 with existing urban areas by utilising brownfield land. The Birkenhead Regeneration Framework (BRF) has been prepared to provide key evidence to support this preferred approach for the Local Plan by setting out a comprehensive regeneration strategy for the Town (and part of Seacombe).
- 3.2 The emerging Local Plan is anticipated to be the most comprehensive development strategy for Birkenhead and the wider Borough since 1947. The BRF and summary are set out as Appendices 1 and 2 of this report.
- 3.3 The draft vision for the Birkenhead for 2040 is that Birkenhead:
- has grown into a thriving community on the left bank of the River Mersey;
 - is chosen as home for families and entrepreneurs alike, drawn by the unique and historic waterfront environment and iconic design.
 - is a place of creativity innovation and fun, a place to put down roots;
 - has the connectivity of city living but in harmony with nature. A place with room to breathe and a space to grow.
- 3.4 The BRF has the following objectives:
- Iconic Birkenhead;
 - Connected Birkenhead;
 - Cultural Birkenhead;
 - Waterfront Garden City;
 - Industrious Birkenhead;
 - Inclusive Birkenhead;
 - Sustainable Birkenhead;
 - Healthy Birkenhead; and
 - Resilient Birkenhead
- 3.5 The following Catalyst projects are set out:
- Wirral Waters;

- Dock Branch Park;
- Birkenhead Commercial District;
- Birkenhead Landing;
- East West Cultural Axis;
- Woodside Gyrotory;
- Mass transit; and
- Birkenhead District Heating Network.

3.6 The draft BRF sets out draft proposals and illustrative concepts for a number of identified neighbourhoods across Birkenhead as follows:

Central Birkenhead

Change is coming in the core of Birkenhead, at scale, and at pace. Work is now underway on a new office quarter and market, and further plans are focused around the creation of distinct neighbourhoods within the following parts of the central area:

- Grange Road (Birkenhead's High Street);
- Commercial District and Mixed-Use Quarter;
- St Werburgh's Quarter;
- Hamilton Square;
- Argyle Approach; and
- Argyle and Conway.

Birkenhead Waterfront

The Mersey River waterfront represents Birkenhead's most underutilised asset. Wirral Waters is transforming the dockside waterfront and the proposals in this Framework seek to expand regeneration to the Mersey riverfront.

Hind Street Urban Village

The Hind Street site offers a unique opportunity to create a sustainable, market changing, low carbon exemplar urban village of up to 1,000 new homes. Major landowners, including the Council, are already working on a masterplan.

Wirral Waters and Portside

The early phases of Wirral Waters are the most significant catalyst for the transformative regeneration of Birkenhead. They demonstrate that high quality, large scale investment is already underway.

Hamilton Park

Hamilton Park covers an area of 82 hectares sat between the internationally recognised and strategically significant Birkenhead Park to the south and the docklands of Wirral Waters to the north. It has good connectivity with the Birkenhead Park Merseyrail station. It is a mixture of characterful Victorian residential streets, interwar and more modern housing to the south and employment uses adjacent to the docks.

Scotts Quay

This neighbourhood to the north of Birkenhead docks presents early and medium-term opportunities for high quality residential-led redevelopment. This development must respond to its riverside location and impressive views whilst addressing constraints in terms of interface with the active Dock to the south and the Wastewater Treatment Plant to the north

Seacombe Riverside

This neighbourhood is the northern most area in the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and is a largely residential area with the imposing Wallasey Town Hall complex a focal point on the waterfront. It also includes the start of the riverside promenade to New Brighton, a major asset for the wider active travel networks.

Northside

Strategically located, benefitting from direct access to the M53 motorway, Northside represents a key location underpinning the Wirral employment land strategy. It is also a key location in the successful Freeports proposal for the Liverpool City Region. It has the potential to accommodate new, modern and intensified employment growth, which could also support the relocation of industrial uses from other neighbourhoods across the urban area. It is a critical neighbourhood supporting the wider regeneration programme, ensuring that businesses are not displaced from Birkenhead.

Bidston Moss

Future development must serve to protect the recreational offer at the Moss, recognising that beyond Birkenhead Park and Bidston Hill, the Birkenhead urban area does not have a wealth of open green space to provide amenity for local residents. A route to all of them will be better sign-posted, strengthened and enhanced including through any new development at Bidston Dock.

- 3.7 The draft proposals and illustrative concepts set out in the draft BRF will also support the delivery of the Wirral Plan 2025 themes, specifically Inclusive Economy: Working towards a prosperous, inclusive economy where local people can get good jobs and achieve their aspirations.

Next Steps

- 3.8 Following the completion of consultation the Draft BRF document will be finalised and will be presented to a future meeting of the Local Plan Steering Sub Committee for consideration.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from the publication of the Draft BRF for consultation although there are and may be financial implication relating to projects included with it. Many of the projects including key infrastructure identified will require funding from the public sector to enable delivery. All relevant projects which have financial implications for the Council will be reported to appropriate Committees as required. Costs relating to consultation media can be met from within existing budgets.

- 4.2 The continued preparation of the Council's Local Plan will be funded from existing resources for Regeneration and Place.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 set out minimum standards for community engagement in the development of planning policy. The minimum standards can be exceeded, if required in particular cases but once formally adopted cannot be reduced or amended without a further formal revision to the SCI.
- 5.2 The proposals within this report exceed the requirements of the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 There are no IT, staffing or asset implications arising from this report, beyond the need to make staff resources available to engage in meetings and respond to queries from the public.
- 6.2 The Council's Local Plan will be prepared using existing IT and staff resources for Regeneration and Place.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Failure to consult on the Draft BRF could lead to a delay in submitting the Local Plan as issues may be raised at Regulation 19 stage which were not foreseen. The proposals within this report mitigate against that risk.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 As evidence informing the Local Plan there is no specific requirement in the adopted Statement of Community Involvement or legally to consult. However, given the importance of the contents of the BRF it is recognised that it is appropriate to consult with local communities, land owners and developers on its proposals.
- 8.2 Consultation will be undertaken for a period of 8 weeks between 24th March and 19th May 2021. Because of Covid restrictions consultation will be primarily online, but we will seek to undertake remote online group workshops with care homes, and homeless hostels. We will contact specialist groups representing special needs, ethnic minorities, the aged and young people to arrange online workshops, and we will make hard copies of documents and questionnaires available. We will use print and digital media to advertise the consultation.
- 8.3 A consultation statement summarising all the comments received will be prepared and submitted to a future meeting of the Economic Regeneration and Development Committee when considering the Final BRF document

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The proposals set out in the emerging Local Plan could have significant impacts on the lives of Birkenhead residents and businesses. Overall, we believe these proposals will be beneficial as they will lead to the regeneration of Birkenhead as a more sustainable and equitable place.
- 9.2 The Local Plan and its associated actions will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment from engagement, formulation and implementation.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The document contains a series of proposals which will contribute to the regeneration of Birkenhead as a green and sustainable town. The proposals of the BRF which are taken forward into the Local Plan will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment. It is proposed to prepare a sustainability and green strategy to inform the delivery of the BRF proposals. Where appropriate individual projects will be subject to environmental impact assessment at planning application stage.

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APPENDICES

[Appendix 1: Birkenhead Regeneration Framework](#)
[Appendix 2: Birkenhead Regeneration Framework Summary](#)

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Document – January 2020
[Wirral Local Plan Issues and Options consultation document.pdf \(wirral.gov.uk\)](#)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Special Cabinet Meeting 13 th January 2020 Agenda item - Wirral Local Plan - 2020-2035: Approval of Issues and Options Document for Public Consultation Wirral Council	13/01/2020
Council Meeting 13 th January 2020 Decision - Wirral Local Plan - 2020-2035: Approval of Issues and Options Document for Public Consultation Wirral Council	13/01/2020