

Wirral Liveable Neighbourhood Area Selection Report



June 2021

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Executive Summary

LCRCA, in partnership with Sustrans, have secured an initial £2.2m revenue funding from the Freshfield Foundation, to develop an LCR wide Liveable Neighbourhood programme.

During the three-year programme we will use our collaborative discovery, develop and design model to engage and work with local residents and districts. Working together we will design exemplar neighbourhoods that respond to local issues, creating healthier and safer places for people to live, work and play.

The main objectives of the programme are to:

- Create high-quality public spaces that prioritise people over cars
- Encourage more people to take journeys on foot, cycle or other active transport modes, reducing their carbon footprint
- Create low-traffic areas and remove rat running
- Provide opportunities for better social connections, thriving local economies and more sustainable living
- Give people the say in the design of their streets and foster more active and empowered communities

This report summarises Sustrans' scoping methodology and results for the 4 most suitable areas from an original list of 13 supplied by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council and includes recommendations for Wirral to consider in choosing the final Liveable Neighbourhood location. This is initial desk based research to inform area selection decisions at this stage. Once the area is selected, site visits and in-depth scoping work will enable more detailed analysis.

Area selection methodology

Wirral identified 13 potential areas that could benefit from the Liveable Neighbourhoods programme (see appendix A). Using Sustrans' selection and prioritisation criteria and data mapping using GIS, (table 1) each of the areas, were investigated for suitability and impact and the results provided for further scrutiny with Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council. Through a process of elimination using Wirral officer knowledge during Area Selection Workshop (22/01/2021), Wirral Borough Metropolitan Council provided further insight into each of the project areas leading to the selection 4 final areas (**Table 1**), each of which were given further analysis to look at school suitability and the types of business located in the area.

Table 1: Area selection criteria

Population density and land use	Internal road network	Boundary road viability
Considers population density within the area as well as it's relation to and ease of access of local facilities and services.	Considers permeability within the identified area and the likelihood of rat running.	It is important that the identified boundary roads can handle the potential (albeit limited) increases in traffic which may occur.
Deprivation	Percentage of households without a car	Killed or seriously Injured and road incidents
Key project aims to deliver benefits for more deprived areas to address transport equity. High levels of multiple deprivation are likely to be reflected by poor health and living environment.	Essential to identify if the project is to deliver greater transport equity and reduce car dependency/poverty.	Reflection on notable issues around road safety that the project can address.
Additional considerations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known political support • Known / anticipated local support • School suitability • Business types • Previous consultations & existing safety interventions (20mph zones, traffic calming etc.) • Pipeline capital funding 		

Results of final area selections

Analysis of all 13 potential areas highlighted Birkenhead, Claughton, Bebington and The Breck as the areas likely to have the highest level of impact and deliverability. **Table 2** summarises the data collection and associated scoring for key selection criteria critical to impact and delivery, and **Table 3** shows the traffic incidents per square mile for each of the 4 final areas.

Table 2: Area scoring

	Birkenhead	Claughton	Bebington	The Breck
Population density and land use – schools / shops and services within easy walking distance 0 = very low; 1 = low; 2 = fair; 3 = high; 4 = very high	3	3	3	3
Internal Road Network – Permeability / Likely levels of rat-running 0 = low permeability; 1 = semi-permeable; 2 = high permeability	2	2	2	1
Boundary road suitability 0 = low; 1 = acceptable; 2 = good	2	2	2	2
Index of Multiple Deprivation 1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high	3	3	2	2
HH's without a car 1 = very low; 2 = low; 3 = medium; 4 = high	4	4	2	1
Overall score	14	14	11	9

Table 3 Road Traffic incidents

	Birkenhead	Claughton	Bebington	The Breck
Road incidents within boundary 2005 – 2018 per square km	90	44	21	28
Road incidents along boundary roads 2005 – 2018 per square km	721	808	351	742

Additional considerations

Schools

Further analysis of schools was undertaken in each area. Early and meaningful school engagement is an integral part of the programme as they provide excellent links to the wider community, generally generate high volumes of traffic in neighbourhood areas and provide a good opportunity for mode shift and safety improvements (ideally we would work with up to 6 schools in each area where possible – schools within the boundary area are preferable).

Table 4: School analysis (See appendix B for schools scoping report)

	Birkenhead	Claughton	Bebington	The Breck
Number of schools and colleges in boundary	4	2	8	0
Schools and colleges outside boundary within workable distance	4	2	2	5
Schools and colleges with main access from boundary road only	1	3	1	1
Schools and colleges on the boundary with access from internal road network	0	0	1	0
Schools scoring (see appendix B for scoring breakdown for each area)	5	1	7	2

See appendix B for a review of the schools within and surrounding each area, the potential to work with each of the schools as part of the schools neighbourhoods and liveable neighbourhoods projects given location, street environment and age of pupils.

Businesses

Businesses are also a key consultee on neighbourhood schemes so our analysis concentrates on the types of businesses in each area in order to gain an overview of the impact on delivery of the number, type and location of businesses within the area.

Table 5 provides a guide to the numbers of community and leisure services, medical facilities, office, industrial and retail businesses in each of the areas. For detailed information and a

map of the buildings make up for each of the areas and the split of types of addresses within and on the boundary edge see Appendix C summary of building use in the proposed areas.

Businesses are key stakeholders in the development of the Liveable Neighbourhood project. It is important to ensure the specific needs of businesses, in terms of loading and deliveries, are addressed in any proposed designs and that the business community feels listened to and included in the design process. Businesses concerned about the implications of reducing or changing traffic movements on their business or the perceived need for customer and staff parking can become fierce opponents to a potential scheme. The challenges brought about by Covid 19 could understandably heighten concerns.

Access to local shops, facilities and services within walking distance can enable more people to change to walking or cycling more of their journeys instead of driving.

Table 5: Building Use

	Birkenhead	Claughton	Bebington	The Breck
Total residential	2474	2316	2379	1343
Non-residential: Community services	15	10	8	3
Non-residential: Medical	2	4	2	1
Non-residential: Leisure	7	3	14	2
Non-residential: Office	111	36	6	4
Non-residential: Industrial	127	7	4	2
Non-residential: Retail	114	94	76	32
Total non-residential	376	154	110	44

Ideally a Liveable Neighbourhood should have a good ratio of community services and medical, leisure and retail properties to residential properties to ensure that the majority of local services are within walking distance of the neighbourhood boundary. Higher ratios of industrial and office properties can be less desirable due to greater reliance on loading and occupancy, however location of these properties in relation to residential streets needs to be taken into account.

Community Groups and Networks

The level of community activism in each of the four proposed project areas varies.

Initial investigation has involved desk top research; looking at the community groups involved in traffic, air pollution, walking, cycling, greening, place making and youth organisations in each of the areas. The next steps involve engaging directly with local groups and organisations to build a clearer picture of local community networks.

Political Support

As WMBC's process dictates the need to go through committee before making any approaches to councillors, political support for Liveable Neighbourhood interventions is so far unclear. We recommend that WMBC organise a members briefing for relevant councillors when the final area selection has been made. During this briefing, Sustrans will explain the project and intended outcomes and invite councillors to comment on their support.

Individual area analysis

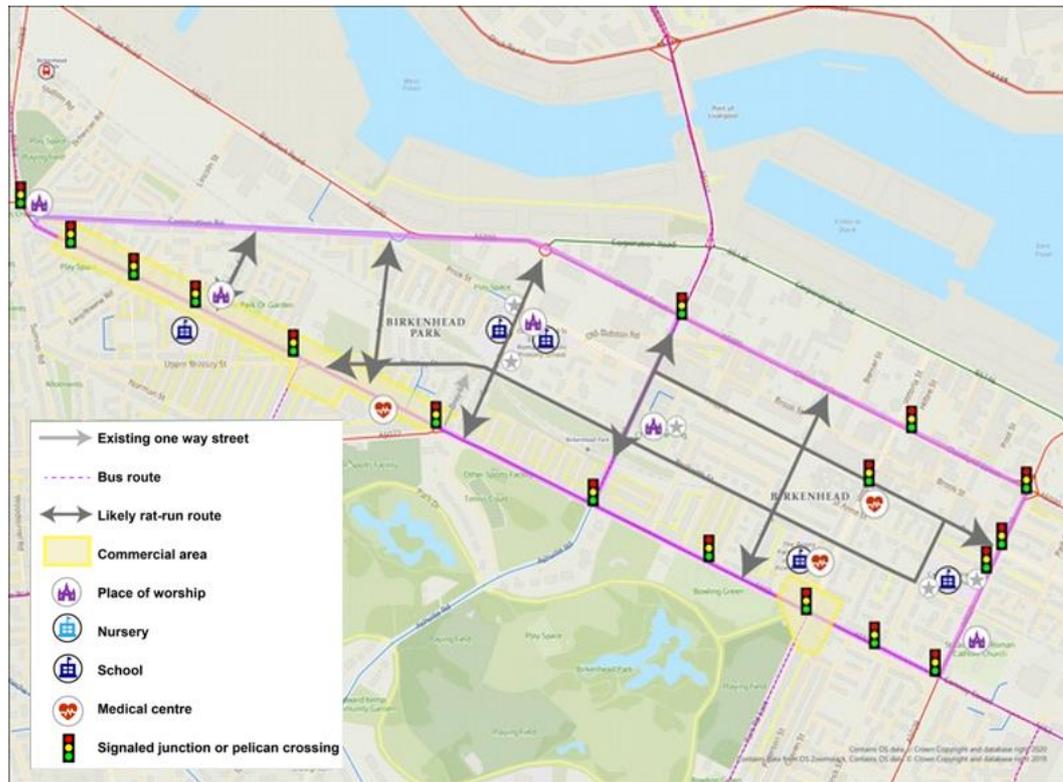
Table 6 summarises the individual overall score for each area. The additional strengths and weaknesses of each of the 4 areas are further summarised below.

Table 6: Final analysis

	Birkenhead	Bebington	Claughton	The Breck
Initial area criteria scoring	14	11	14	9
Schools scoring	5	7	1	2
Complimentary pipeline funding	1 (*)	2	2	1
FINAL COMPARATIVE SCORING	20	20	17	12

* reduced in consideration of Birkenhead 2040 framework planning

Birkenhead



Pros:

- Boundary comprises of classified 'A' roads
- Very high levels of deprivation and very low levels of car ownership
- Located directly adjacent to the town centre and the Wirral Docks
- High number of rat-running routes to bypass signalled junctions
- The large number of commercial and light industrial units are confined to the north side of the project area

Cons:

- Birkenhead regeneration plans are likely to clash with the Liveable Neighbourhoods timeframes with the risk of separate non complimentary schemes being developed at the same time. Due to this complication we would advise that the Birkenhead scheme should be reviewed again once the Birkenhead 2040 framework vision is established
- The size and geography of Birkenheads road layout is complex which may lead to more contentious interventions.

Comments from Wirral Council Highways team:

- This area covers a mixture of residential and commercial developments and is also on the boundary of the Wirral Waters Regeneration project

- Long standing issues along Harcourt Street with concerns raised about traffic re-routing along here to avoid Duke Street/Park Rd North jct. Traffic calming to be introduced here later this month
- Boundary identified benefits from being in close proximity to Claughton Rd zone
- Issues on Laird St near bus depot access.

Community Groups and Networks

HYPE (Helping Young People Everywhere) is active in the Birkenhead area, they run a number of initiatives to engage young people with their community. For example, a bike recycling project, a T room south of the project area and Vibrant Schools a project to teach children about healthy eating and growing their own food.

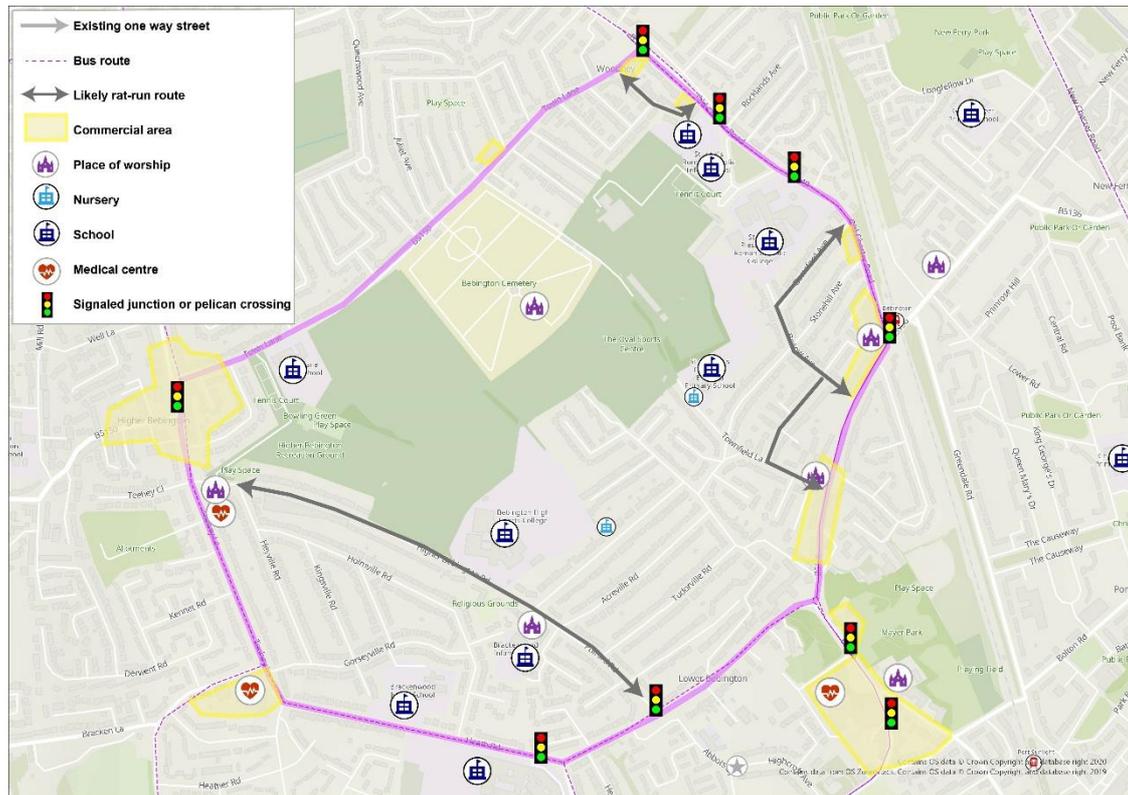
Ed Lamb who is a Liverpool City Region Active Travel Forum regular, has set up Rethinknow CIC (rethinknow.uk) with Tanya Leary and Ewan Wilkinson. After posting a film of his children cycling to school on social media, @edwardlamb has led to a community project on air quality around the school gates. Rethinknow engages Wirral communities with podcasts about local travel, climate change and parenting. A Climate Change Workshops project with Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council to explain the current climate emergency to Wirral residents is one of their recent projects.

Involve Northwest offers employment support, welfare and benefits advice to people on the Wirral. They empower local people and enable them to become active members of their community mostly on the east side of the Wirral.

Grow Wellbeing operates in Birkenhead and promotes holistic wellbeing through Forest school, horticulture, play and learning. They run sessions for local people in schools and nurseries to help them connect with the natural environment.

A number of bike projects operate in nearby Birkenhead Park to teach people how to ride in the safety of a park, they then progress to riding in a group situation out of the park. The groups have been set up by Sustrans, Cycling Projects and Cycling UK and now operate on their own out of the containers in the park.

Bebington



Pros:

- Known long running localised rat-running issues
- Very large number of schools within and adjacent to the project area
- Good mix of land use including retail and leisure

Cons:

- Relatively affluent with high car ownership

Comments from Wirral Council Highways team:

- Local Ward Cllrs have raised issues regarding traffic re-routing through Stonehill Av, Beresford Av & Barlowe Av to avoid Old Chester Rd/Bebington Rd jct. ATCs recently deployed in area so vehicle flow and speed data available. Requests have been made to introduce widespread 20mph although there are doubts over effectiveness of such measures to address this issue
- Need to consider impact of school traffic using link roads between Acres Rd and Higher Bebington Rd/Pulford Avenue
- Previous objections raised by residents of High Bebington Road regarding introduction of traffic calming measures.

Community Groups and Networks

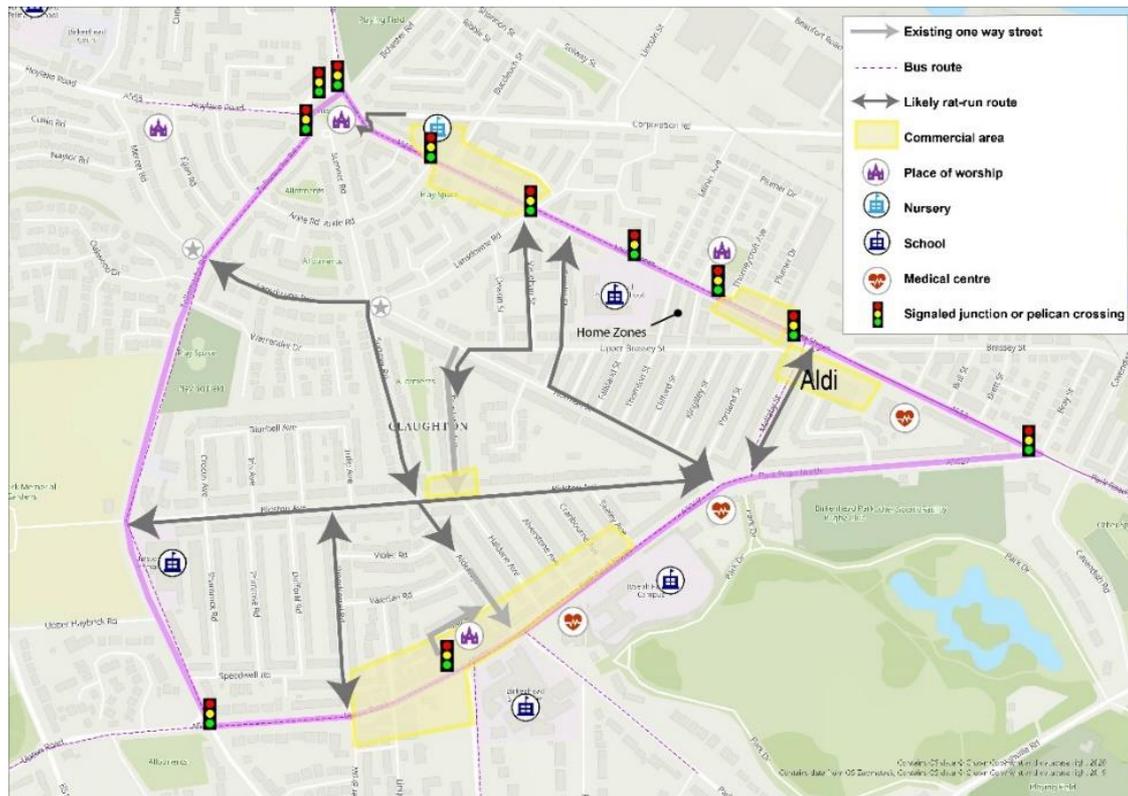
Wirral Unplugged operates in Bebington and seeks to unplug families from technology and create creative kids age 3 to 10. They've created the Fairy Troll Post, a free craft pack, weekly craft activity ideas aimed at connecting children with their local area.

Eco Church run at Christ Church Bebington encourages members of the community to adopt environmentally friendly lifestyle changes, they encourage wildlife on their land by green gardening practices.

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Originally set up by Sustrans, Wirral Community Bike Hubs run a popular bike recycling project in Eastham, close to Bebington. They train mechanics in how to refurbish bikes, sell them at low prices at regular sales and teach children to ride at nearby Port Sunlight River Park.

Cloughton



Pros:

- Generally very good boundary roads
- Lot's of existing traffic control infrastructure including one-way, filtering and home zones
- Very few businesses within the project area but lots along the boundary roads
- Very high levels of deprivation and very low levels of car ownership
- Approximately 400 metres from the Wirral Waters regeneration area.

Cons:

- All 4 local schools are located along the boundary road which could lead to worsened school access issues.

Comments from Wirral Council Highways team:

- Most of roads covered within this boundary already traffic calmed
- History of anti social / crime road safety issues to consider.

Community Groups and Networks

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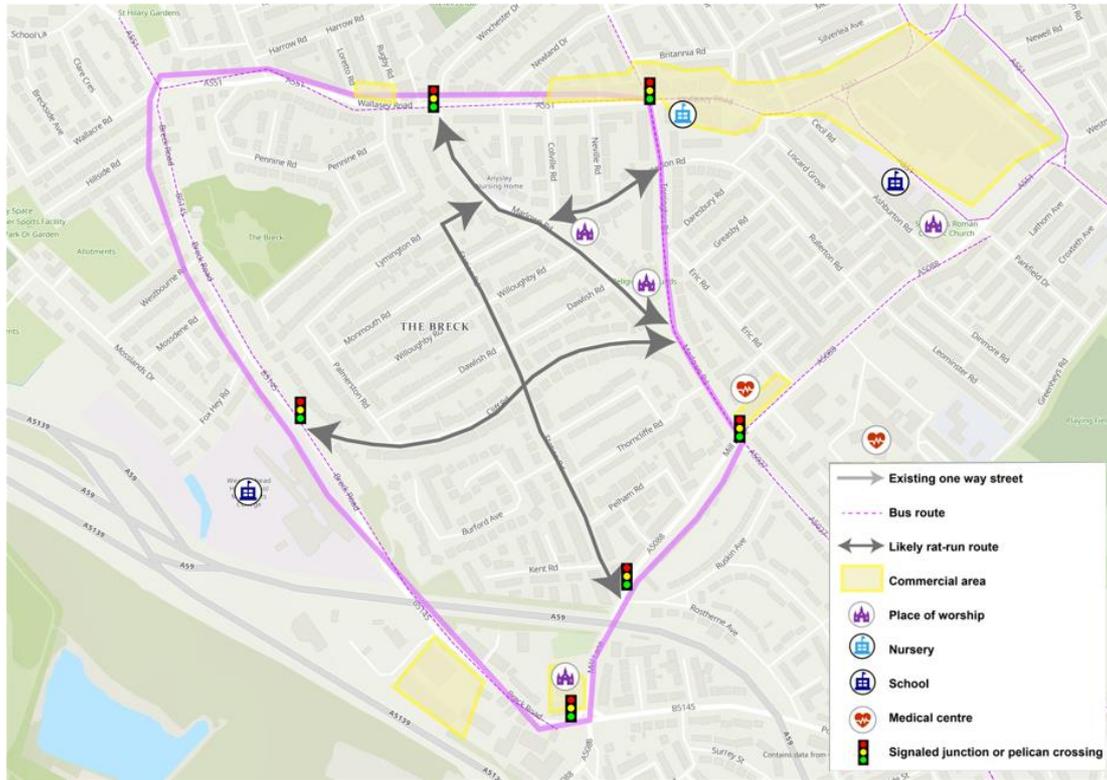
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The Breck



Pros:

- Adjacent to Wallasey town centre
- Know rat-running issues in the area
- Very few businesses operating within the boundary.

Cons:

- Project area expanded to the east or a two cell design could be an option. This would risk encouraging more traffic to pass through the one way system around the main shopping area
- Very high car ownership.

Comments from Wirral Council Highways team:

- Area of Station Rd/Cliff Rd already covered by 20mph speed limit restrictions. Currently no count data available to evidence compliance. Any traffic re-routing via Cliff Rd likely to be local traffic
- Temporary Road Closure currently in operation on Ashbuton Rd o/s St Albans Primary School to support social distancing
- Interface with Liscard masterplan needs to be considered
- Issues with traffic re-routing along Rullerton Rd to avoid Mill Lane/Marlowe Rd jct. Requirement to assess impact of nearby junctions

- Review traffic management measures along south westerly boundary line (Breck Rd near Weatherhead High School)
- Traffic survey data required to provide evidence of existing issues and help select preferred measures.

Community Groups and Networks

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The local park provides focus for the community with rock climbing and views over the Wirral. The Friends of the Breck group work with the rangers to improve it for wildlife and the local community with their weekly Thursday volunteer tasks days.

Next steps

Sustrans' early analysis would suggest that both Bebington and Birkenhead Park are the natural choices for School Neighbourhood and Liveable Neighbourhood development, however we recommend that Birkenhead Park should be revisited at a later date to better align with the Birkenhead 2040 framework vision.

The final area selection will be made and owned by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council's cross party active travel group. Sustrans recommends that the group consider the councils key strategic policy areas (safe access to schools and area wide regeneration) when making a final decision.

Once instructed on the final area selection, Sustrans will produce a detailed engagement plan and timeline of activity for discussion with Wirral at project inception. Sustrans will also work with Wirral to produce a joint comms strategy, discuss highways restrictions and asset adoption and liaise with appropriate teams for strategic links and business case submission.