



ECONOMY REGENERATION & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Monday, 22 November 2021

REPORT TITLE:	LISCARD NEIGHBOURHOOD FRAMEWORK: AN INTEGRATED MASTERPLAN
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLACE

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee with details of a new Neighbourhood Framework for Liscard: An Integrated Masterplan. The Council commissioned BDP, supported by Aspinall Verdi and Curtins, to produce a long-term framework for Liscard in March 2020. The framework is intended to provide an ambitious vision and strategic context to drive forward and guide the sustainable economic growth and renewal of Liscard over the next 15 years.

The Neighbourhood Framework has been funded through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) Town Centre Fund, which aims to support the viability and vitality of town centres. In addition to the Neighbourhood Framework, the funding is being used to support a range of interventions. These include the diversification of activity to bring vacant premises back into use, public realm and street scene improvements, and a number of community projects.

The Wirral Plan 2021 - 2026 sets out the Council's vision to secure the best possible future for our residents. The proposals contained in this report directly support the following key themes within the Plan:

- A thriving and inclusive economy, creating jobs and opportunities for all;
- A clean-energy, sustainable borough, leading the way in tackling the environment crisis;
- Brighter futures for all regardless of their background;
- Safe and pleasant communities that our residents are proud of; and
- Healthy and active lives for all, with the right care, at the right time.

This matter affects the wards of Liscard, Wallasey and Seacombe.

This is a key decision owing to the significance in terms of the effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the Borough.

RECOMMENDATION

Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee is recommended to approve the Liscard Neighbourhood Framework: An Integrated Masterplan, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report, as the Council's regeneration strategy for Liscard.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 The Neighbourhood Framework for Liscard: An Integrated Masterplan will support the long-term renewal of Liscard as a vital and viable town centre which will be well-connected and will provide a high-quality environment.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Not develop a framework – the option to not develop a Neighbourhood Framework for Liscard was considered. This option was rejected as it would be challenging to secure investment and support the long-term renewal of Liscard town centre without a robust framework in place.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRA) Town Centre Fund

- 3.1 The Council secured £500,000 grant funding for Liscard through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) Town Centre Fund in 2019. This fund aims to support the viability and vitality of town centres through a range of interventions including masterplan strategies, public realm improvements, physical and digital infrastructure, business support, town centre management plus events and marketing activities. In addition to a Neighbourhood Framework, the LCRCA Town Centre Fund funding is being used to support a range of interventions including the diversification of activity to bring vacant premises back into use; public realm and street scene improvements; and a number of community projects.
- 3.2 The Council commissioned BDP, supported by AspinallVerdi and Curtins, in March 2020 to produce a Neighbourhood Framework for Liscard, to provide an ambitious vision and a clear neighbourhood framework to drive forward and guide the sustainable economic growth and renewal of Liscard over the next 15 years.

Local Context

- 3.3 The Wirral Plan 2021 - 2026 sets out the Council's vision to secure the best possible future for our residents. The proposals contained in this report directly support the following key themes within the Plan:
- A thriving and inclusive economy, creating jobs and opportunities for all;
 - A clean-energy, sustainable borough, leading the way in tackling the environment crisis;
 - Brighter futures for all regardless of their background;
 - Safe and pleasant communities that our residents are proud of; and
 - Healthy and active lives for all, with the right care, at the right time.
- 3.4 The Council consulted on its Draft Local Plan between January and April 2020 under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The proposals for the Draft Local Plan identified Liscard as a

priority area for regeneration in recognition of its potential as a high-quality mixed-use centre.

- 3.5 Liscard forms part of a wider transformational regeneration programme along the 'Left Bank' of the River Mersey stretching from New Brighton to Bromborough, with a particular focus on the creation of a sustainable, waterfront urban garden community in Birkenhead, underpinned by the Birkenhead 2040 Framework and emerging Local Plan.
- 3.6 The Wirral Community Wealth Building Strategy 2020-2025 supports the latest Wirral Plan and sets out three strategic objectives, which are: democratic economy, generative economy, and financial resilience. The three strategic objectives will be delivered across the following five pillars of the community wealth building:
- Plural ownership – residents in Wirral have a say on the wealth generated by their communities;
 - Land and assets – Council land and assets are used to build community wealth, including ways in which Council assets can be used for the benefit of the local community;
 - Making financial power work for local places – wealth that exists in Wirral is harnessed to increase investment in local communities;
 - Workforce – residents of Wirral are employed in secure, well-paid jobs with progression of opportunities and good terms and conditions;
 - Procurement – procurement practices of Wirral's anchor institutions are used to build the wealth of local communities.
- 3.7 It is considered that the Neighbourhood Framework supports the principles of community wealth building and is built around a vision for a Liscard as a place at the 'heart of the community':
- Where everyone feels welcome;
 - Where people can live, work and play;
 - Where there is a strong sense of local identity; and
 - Where people can come together
- 3.8 Wirral Council has declared an environment and climate emergency and has developed the Cool Wirral 2 Strategy as part of the Cool Wirral Partnership. This sets Wirral on the path to achieve two main goals:
- To stay within a local emissions 'budget' of 7.7 million tonnes (Mt) of CO₂ between 2020-2100 and to reach 'net zero' pollution as early as possible before 2041; and
 - To ensure a climate resilient Wirral adapted to cope with existing change and further unavoidable disruption this century.
- 3.9 The Neighbourhood Framework seeks to support active travel and the provision of electric vehicle charging points in support of the Cool Wirral 2 Strategy.

Baseline Review

- 3.10 A baseline review of Liscard identifies Liscard as an important retail centre offering a range of national retailers along the pedestrianised Liscard Way and a greater number of independent retailers and other service, financial and business uses along the outer arterial roads that lead to the central core. The area has seen limited investment in public realm enhancements in recent years and now suffers from above average vacancy rates, poor environmental quality, vandalism, anti-social behaviour and a limited leisure and cultural offer and night-time economy.
- 3.11 The baseline review identifies potential to diversify the offer in the town centre to provide a wider range of uses. There is potential to develop underused and vacant sites to create more footfall and activity, create more spaces for people to dwell and improve pedestrian connectivity in Liscard.

Vision and Objectives for Liscard

- 3.12 The Neighbourhood Framework recognises the changing nature of high streets and the significant move to on-line shopping. It notes that potential lasting changes following the Covid-19 pandemic may accelerate this process, leading to more store closures and an oversupply of floorspace. This provides an opportunity to re-imagine a new type of town centre that is more locally distinctive, more interesting and more community focused and less of a 'clone' and 'more Liscard.' A town that is:
- More diverse – retaining a good range of retail in the town centre while balancing this with a much wider range of uses including leisure, residential and workspace;
 - More people focused – reducing the impact of traffic and making the town centre easier to navigate from surrounding communities by foot, cycle and public transport;
 - More social – creating spaces (both internal and external) that bring people together and enliven the town centre both by day and into the evening; and
 - More attractive – enhancing the appearance of the town and the quality of spaces including more green infrastructure and colour.
- 3.13 These aspirations are supported by five themes:
1. Connected Town;
 2. Spaces for People;
 3. Renewing the Core;
 4. Urban Village; and
 5. Community Hub

Connected Town

- 3.14 The Neighbourhood Framework proposes to reduce the dominance of roads and create a safer, calmer and more attractive environment for pedestrians, cyclists and

bus users. This includes proposals to re-organise the roads that form the gyratory around the town centre to reduce the amount of space given over to vehicles and to create more space for pedestrians, cyclists and public realm. The Neighbourhood Framework also supports the proposals for a dedicated cycle corridor around the gyratory as part of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. It should be noted that this route will be subject to further public consultation.

- 3.15 In terms of parking, it is proposed that the Seaview Road car park will be developed as part of a high-quality housing scheme and that the amount of car parking would be retained at the Cherry Tree Centre. The parking at the Cherry Tree Centre could be re-provided as a multi-storey car park to release land for re-development.

Spaces for People

- 3.16 The Neighbourhood Framework proposes to form more attractive and interactive public spaces, including through new paving, lighting, street furniture and green infrastructure along Liscard Way and at key gateways into the town centre.

Renewing the Core

- 3.17 The Neighbourhood Framework proposes to re-shape the town centre core through the part redevelopment of the Cherry Tree Centre and car park to potentially create space for a new food store and other commercial, business, service and residential uses. The Neighbourhood Framework also supports the high-quality refurbishment or redevelopment of Dominick House to bring it back into use, and the redevelopment of buildings on Liscard Way for new mixed-use development.

Urban Village

- 3.18 The Neighbourhood Framework proposes to create more housing in the town centre through the development of the Seaview Road car park and former Community Centre site for housing along with the conversion or redevelopment of the vacant Municipal Buildings. The Neighbourhood Framework also identifies potential to redevelop the site currently occupied by two automotive businesses on Burns Avenue for housing as a long-term potential proposal, and includes design principles for the conversion of commercial properties along the main routes into the town centre.

Community Hub

- 3.19 There is an aspiration to establish a community hub in the town centre. While every community hub is different, most community hubs host different partners in one or more buildings to deliver a wide range of services to the local community that meet community needs. Typically, community hubs are run and managed by a dedicated community organisation, but in other instances they may be owned or managed by a public agency such as a housing association, or local authority but with substantial input and influence from the community.

Delivery

- 3.20 As part of the Neighbourhood Framework, Aspinall Verdi has developed a high-level delivery plan to identify how the ambitions could potentially be delivered in the short, medium and long term. The delivery plan has been informed by a soft market testing exercise with a range of private sector developers and registered providers to gauge demand for investment in Liscard. Feedback indicates that developers specialising in regeneration have a particular interest in Liscard and that there is a perception that Liscard has significant potential, but the prolonged under-investment has affected market confidence. Feedback also stressed the importance of place-making and enhancements to the public realm.
- 3.21 The delivery plan highlights that public sector support will be required to create the conditions to de-risk early-stage development and provide confidence to investors and development. It identifies key opportunity sites to act as a catalyst for sustainable growth, including Seaview Road Car Park, Dominick House, and the Cherry Tree Centre.
- 3.22 The delivery plan recommends that the Council:
- appoints a project manager to lead on the delivery of Liscard;
 - agrees a development strategy for Council assets and acquisitions; and
 - appoints a steering group to ensure proposals are brought forward in a comprehensive way and to promote the need for coordinated public sector funding support to deliver key public realm and infrastructure.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The total cost of the Neighbourhood Framework was £81,773. £75,000 of the total cost has been funded through the LCR town Centres Fund and an additional £6,773 has been provided through the Regeneration & Place's capital budget.
- 4.2 The adoption of the document as a Neighbourhood Framework for Liscard has no direct financial implications. The Neighbourhood Framework sets out a series of recommendations to support delivery, which includes some options for public sector support. Any future proposals which would have financial implications for the Council would be subject to a separate decision(s).

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Any external grant funding secured to support the delivery of the Neighbourhood Framework will need to be subject to a formal grant agreement to ensure the delivery of the funding outcomes, to be agreed between the Council and the funding body.
- 5.2 Economy, Development and Regeneration is the relevant decision-making body within the Council for approving this Framework. This is on the basis that the document comes within the definition of a Master Plan or development brief, as referred to in the Committee's Terms of Reference. Potentially a future iteration of the Framework (or part of it) could be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 In order to deliver the ambitions of the Neighbourhood Framework, additional Council resources may be required in the form of a project manager and project delivery team. Existing officer time may be required to monitor any external grant funding secured. Further public consultation may also be required regarding site proposals and additional resourcing may be required in terms of officer time and consultation materials.
- 6.2 Any future proposals involving the disposal of Council-owned land, or the acquisition of privately owned land would be subject to a separate decision(s).

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

Tale 7.1: Risk Register

Risk	Identified Mitigation Measures
Failure to secure stakeholder/Elected Member buy-in	Ensure key stakeholders are engaged from outset; establish clear engagement strategy/structure; monitor and manage feedback from stakeholders
Failure to deliver desired outcomes / outputs	Ensure robust project management approach with clear output/outcome monitoring measures in place
Failure to secure future funding to realise ambitions of Neighbourhood Framework	Ensure business cases are robust; ensure governance structures are in place to monitor and respond to any new funding opportunities.
Failure to secure planning permission for redevelopment of key sites	Ensure governance structures are in place to monitor and respond to planning enquiries

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The team engaged with a range of stakeholders on a one-to-one basis, including local Ward Members and traders, as part of the baseline review of Liscard Town Centre. A webinar with community and business stakeholders was also held via Zoom on 8 July 2020, where the masterplan team presented a range of emerging options and sought feedback on proposals. Key feedback included:
- Local people / sense of community spirit is the town's greatest strength.
 - The town's appearance is its greatest weakness.
 - A community focal point, followed by unique businesses and public spaces would make Liscard a more distinctive destination.
 - There was very strong preference for a community hub and bringing new uses into the town centre.
- 8.2 Public consultation on the options took place between 12 October and 2 November 2020. Due to the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic all consultation was conducted in an on-line environment. Members of the public could access

information about the consultation including a YouTube video explaining the proposals and plans could be downloaded in pdf form. A link to a SurveyMonkey questionnaire was also provided from the website.

- 8.3 In total there were 175 respondents to the questionnaire. The strongest support was for the 'Renewing the Core' proposals with 64% ranking it 1st or 2nd priority and there was a strong focus on independent / local retailers as a priority. Feedback highlighted that a parking strategy is needed for new residential units, especially in central locations and that any residential conversions must be of high quality and aimed at the local housing need.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment is a tool to help council services identify steps they can take to ensure equality for anyone who might be affected by a particular policy, decision or activity.
- 9.2 The potential impact of the Liscard Neighbourhood Framework has been reviewed with regard to equality and links to the existing EIA conducted for Wirral's Growth Plan and no material amendments have been made.
- 9.3 A copy of the EIA can be viewed at:
<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments/equality-impact-assessments-2014-0>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Measures would need to be taken through the design and planning process to identify any potential impacts on factors including transport, flood risk, biodiversity and coastal change; with appropriate mitigation measures identified.
- 10.2 As a result of the initiatives outlined above, it is considered that the content and recommendations contained in this report are likely to have no overall impact on emissions of Greenhouse Gases and, where possible, the proposal could reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. A full assessment of environmental impact, including statutory assessments relating to flood risk and biodiversity, would be required as the scheme progresses.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 It is considered that the Framework supports the principles of community wealth building and is built around a vision for a Liscard as a place at the 'heart of the community': As the project moves into the delivery phase, all opportunities to secure community wealth and social value e.g. through Council contracts or planning agreements, will be explored.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Liscard Neighbourhood Framework: An Integrated Masterplan

Appendix 2 – Liscard Neighbourhood Framework: An Integrated Masterplan – Executive Summary

Appendix 3 – Report of Public Consultation

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Liscard Integrated Masterplan: Request for Quotation

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Town Centre Fund Prospectus

Liscard Masterplan: Baseline Report

Liscard Masterplan: Transport Baseline Report

(exempt) Liscard Neighbourhood Framework: An Integrated Masterplan – Delivery Plan

(exempt) – Liscard Neighbourhood Framework – Soft Market Testing Report

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Dominick House (Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee)	29/10/2021
Liverpool City Region Town Centre Fund (Officer Decision Report)	29/09/2021
Disposal of freehold reversionary interest – Dominick House, St Albans Road, Liscard. Delegated Member Decision	05/01/2019