

Have your say

Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan Consultation



Consultation: 6 October 2023 – 1 December 2023

Report: 11 December 2023

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1.0 Executive Summary

Wirral Council is developing a masterplan for the Dock Branch Neighbourhood in Birkenhead. The focus of this plan is the area around the Dock Branch railway line and is one of nine projects which form the Birkenhead 2040 Framework. The framework sets out a 20-year plan for the transformational regeneration of Birkenhead.

The aim is to transform the area into a linear park and active travel corridor with walking and cycling routes. This will be carried out according to a masterplan which is a joined-up strategy that makes sure the changes are done so that new buildings, streets, and spaces can work together across a large area. Wirral Council wishes to use the momentum generated by this project to bring more improvements to the area including new homes, jobs, and community services.

A consultation was previously held on 16 January to 2023 to 16 February 2023 which was used to inform the next stages of design work and produce the Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan. The latest consultation was held from 6 October 2023 to 1 December 2023 and will be used to further shape the Masterplan.



1.1 Key Findings

- 66 responses were received online, and no paper copies were received.
- Most respondents stated that they were “Wider Wirral residents” (53.0%). (Question 1)
- “Leisure activities” was the most common reason for the respondents to spend time in the area (57.1%). (Question 2)
- 81.3% of respondents supported the Masterplan whilst 10.9% opposed it. (Question 3)
- “More greenspaces and wildlife” (69.7%) was the most common benefit respondents thought the project could deliver. (Question 4)
- 71.2% of respondents thought the development of this project will benefit Wirral and the Wider area whilst 15.2% thought it would not. (Question 5)
- “Funding” (66.1%) was the most common option chosen by respondents as the key element that is needed to ensure the Masterplan is a success. (Question 6)
- 74.2% of respondents thought that the New Community Park would likely attract them to use the park and visit this part of Birkenhead more often whilst 13.6% thought that it would not. (Question 7)
- The most raised theme of concern and commented on theme was “Project plan” (30.2% and 36.1%). This included concerns that the project would not have its desired impact. (Question 8 and Question 9)

2.0 Methodology

The public were asked to provide their views on the Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan through the Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan consultation.

The consultation was carried out between 6 October 2023 to 1 December 2023. The approach used was an online public consultation through the 'Have your say' consultation portal at www.haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk with a page dedicated to the Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan consultation. The site included the draft Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan Report and executive summary.

An online questionnaire was provided for residents to engage with. Respondents were also able to request paper copies, help completing the questionnaire, or submit additional comments via a dedicated email address, which was published on the 'Have your say' website alongside the online questionnaire.

The results of the consultation will be used to further shape the Masterplan.

2.1 Questionnaire

The consultation questionnaire was developed around understanding stakeholder views on the Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan.

To enable further understanding, and in-depth analysis, respondents were invited to provide free-text comments to expand on their ideas or concerns. Following closure of the consultation, the responses to each of the direct questions were collated and the responses included in this report. For the free-text comment questions, a text coding approach was used based on the reoccurring themes. This data was then collated and summarised in the report.

2.2 Analysis of Respondents

Respondents to the online tools were provided with the option to provide demographic information about themselves. It must be noted that this is an option and that not all respondents included this information. This data allows the demographic results to be included in this report to enable analysis of the scope of responses and representation from different demographic groups.

2.3 Interpretation of Results

In terms of the results, it is important to note that:

- The public consultation is not representative of the overall population but provides information the opinion of those residents who engaged.

- For some questions, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a statement, on a scale of Strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The average score out of 5 for each option was calculated to enable us to identify those statements that were most agreed with. The higher the average score, the higher the level of agreement with the statement.
- Free-text questions that offered respondents the option to provide written feedback could have covered multiple themes. Therefore, with free-text responses were categorised using a coding system. The percentages given, reflect the percentage of respondents who made the comment. As they may have made more than one comment, the total percentage may exceed 100%.
- For some questions, respondents were asked to select one or more options. The percentages given, reflect the percentage of respondents who selected the options. As they may have made more than one options, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

2.4 Direct Representations

Contact details were provided to enable organisations, groups, or special interest groups to directly submit their responses to the draft options.

2.5 Communication

The consultation was promoted through the council's corporate digital communication channels. This included:

- Organic social media; 9.5k views on Twitter and 812 views on Facebook.
- Media releases in Wirral Globe and Place North West.
- Wirral View news articles; 1,242 page views in total.
- Resident newsletters; 8 issues.

3.0 Results

3.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was responded to by 66 people. All responses came through the online portal. No questions were mandatory so respondents could choose which questions to respond to.

3.1.1 Question 1: Tell us about your connection to the Dock Branch Neighbourhood

66 people answered this question, and they may have selected more than one option. 53.0% of the responses stated that they were a “Wider Wirral resident”. The next most common options were “Birkenhead resident” (31.8%) and “Wirral business” (9.1%).

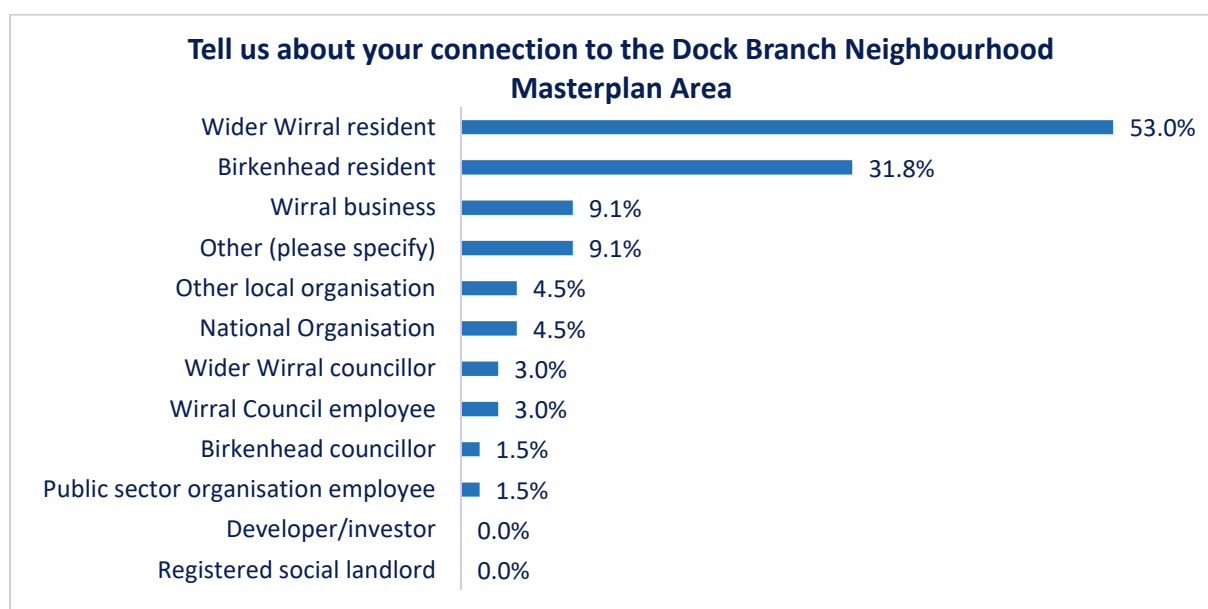


Figure 1: Chart displaying results to “Tell us about your connection to the Dock Branch Neighbourhood”

Tell us about your connection to the Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan Area	Total	%
Wider Wirral resident	35	53.0%
Birkenhead resident	21	31.8%
Wirral business	6	9.1%
Other (please specify)	6	9.1%
Other local organisation	3	4.5%
National Organisation	3	4.5%
Wider Wirral councillor	2	3.0%
Wirral Council employee	2	3.0%
Birkenhead councillor	1	1.5%
Public sector organisation employee	1	1.5%
Developer/investor	0	0.0%
Registered social landlord	0	0.0%

Table 1: Table displaying the results to “Tell us about your connection to the Dock Branch Neighbourhood”

3.1.2 Question 2: Do you currently spend time in the area? If so, what do you visit the area for?

63 people answered this question, and they may have selected more than one option.

“Leisure activities” (57.1%) was the most common option selected, followed by “Shopping” (39.7%).

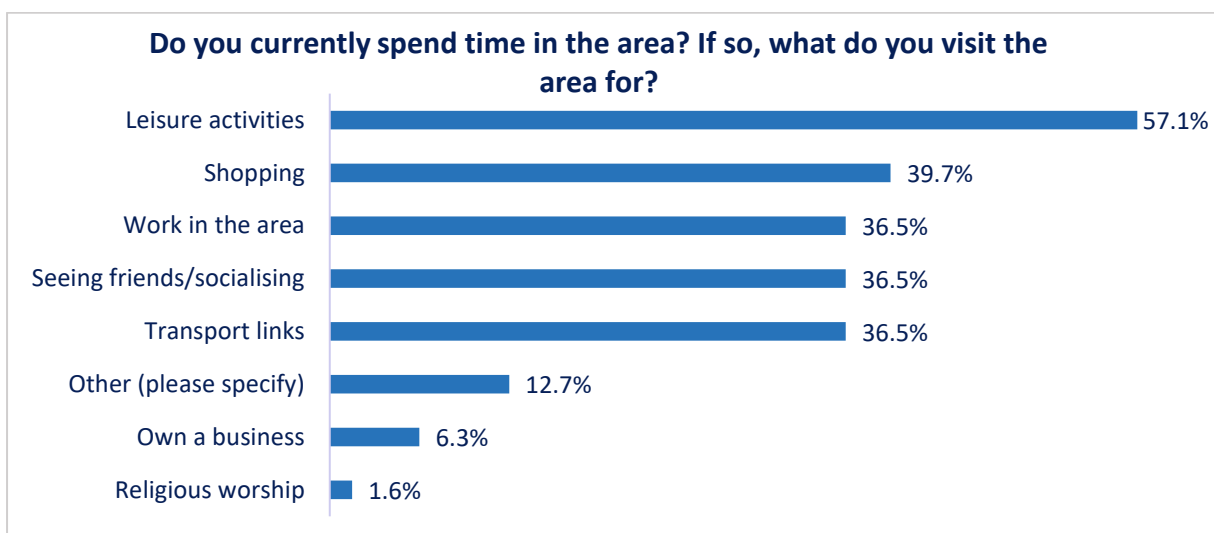


Figure 2: Chart displaying results to “Do you currently spend time in the area? If so, what do you visit the area for?”

Do you currently spend time in the area? If so, what do you visit the area for?	Total	%
Leisure activities	36	57.1%
Shopping	25	39.7%
Work in the area	23	36.5%
Seeing friends/socialising	23	36.5%
Transport links	23	36.5%
Other (please specify)	8	12.7%
Own a business	4	6.3%
Religious worship	1	1.6%

Table 2: Table displaying the results to “Do you currently spend time in the area? If so, what do you visit the area for?”

3.1.3 Question 3: Overall, do you support this Masterplan?

64 people answered this question, respondents selected one option that they agreed with. 81.3% of the respondents supported the Masterplan whilst 10.9% opposed it.

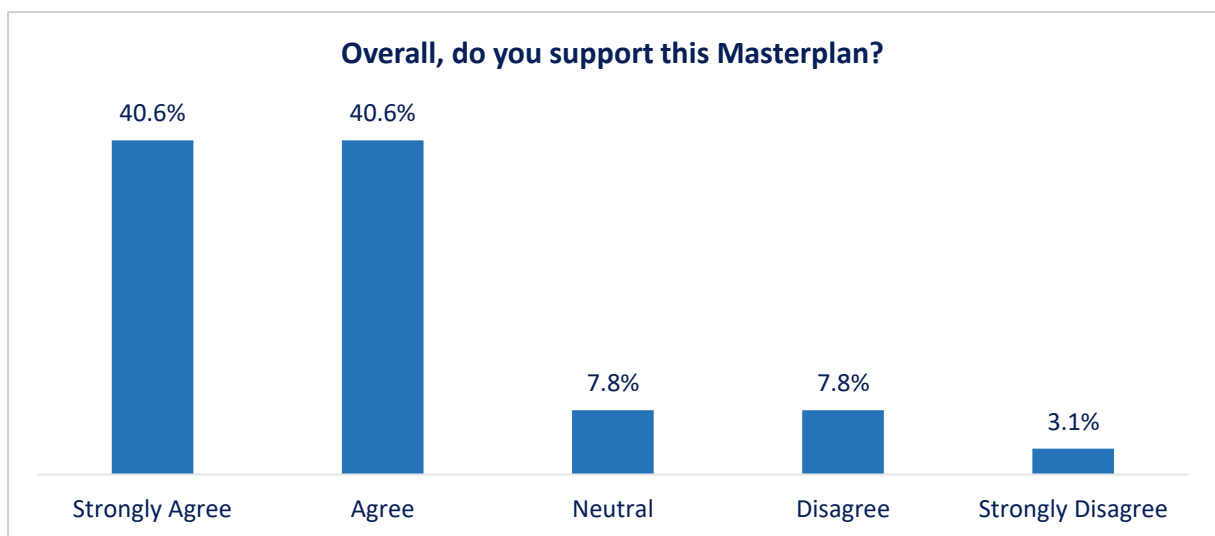


Figure 3: Chart displaying results to “Overall, do you support this Masterplan?”

Overall, do you support this Masterplan?	Total	%
Strongly Agree	26	40.6%
Agree	26	40.6%
Neutral	5	7.8%
Disagree	5	7.8%
Strongly Disagree	2	3.1%

Table 3: Table displaying the results to “Overall, do you support this Masterplan?”

3.1.4 Question 4: What do you think are the main benefits/opportunities the project could deliver?

66 people answered this question, and they may have selected more than one option. “More greenspaces and wildlife” (69.7%) was the most popular option, followed by “Provide a neighbourhood where local people may choose to stay and live” (65.2%) and “Promote healthy lifestyles by creating green routes between neighbourhoods” (63.6%).

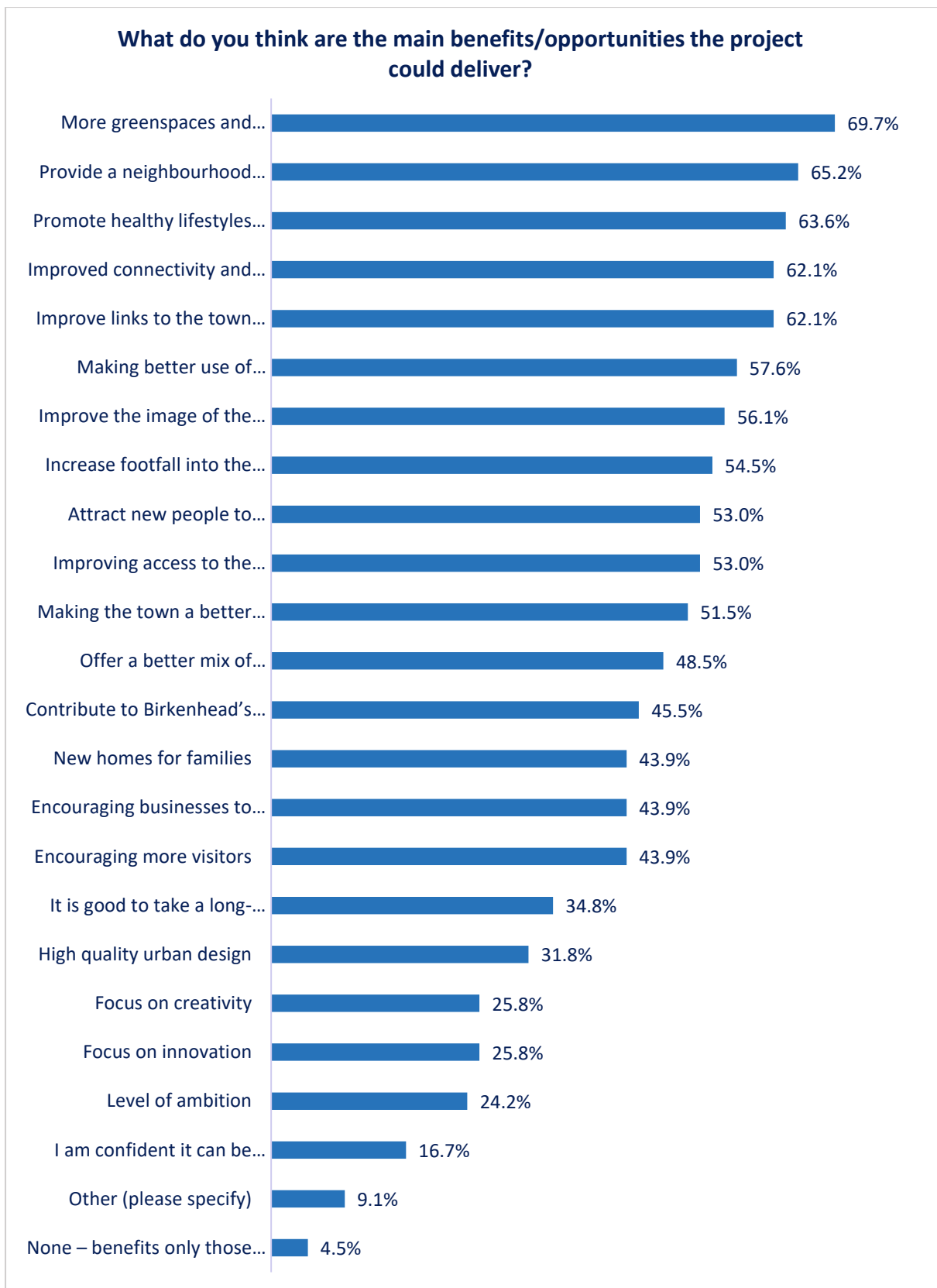


Figure 4: Chart displaying results to “What do you think are the main benefits/opportunities the project could deliver?”

What do you think are the main benefits/opportunities the project could deliver?	Total	%
More greenspaces and wildlife	46	69.7%
Provide a neighbourhood where local people may choose to stay and live	43	65.2%
Promote healthy lifestyles by creating green routes between neighbourhoods	42	63.6%
Improved connectivity and transport.	41	62.1%
Improve links to the town centre and the Waterfront	41	62.1%
Making better use of Birkenhead's heritage	38	57.6%
Improve the image of the town	37	56.1%
Increase footfall into the town centre and support local businesses	36	54.5%
Attract new people to move into Birkenhead	35	53.0%
Improving access to the waterfront	35	53.0%
Making the town a better place for children to grow up	34	51.5%
Offer a better mix of housing (including family and affordable homes)	32	48.5%
Contribute to Birkenhead's journey towards being more sustainable	30	45.5%
New homes for families	29	43.9%
Encouraging businesses to come to Birkenhead and to grow	29	43.9%
Encouraging more visitors	29	43.9%
It is good to take a long-term view	23	34.8%
High quality urban design	21	31.8%
Focus on creativity	17	25.8%
Focus on innovation	17	25.8%
Level of ambition	16	24.2%
I am confident it can be delivered	11	16.7%
Other (please specify)	6	9.1%
None – benefits only those who live there	3	4.5%

Table 4: Table displaying the results to "What do you think are the main benefits/opportunities the project could deliver?"

3.1.5 Question 5: Do you think the development of this project will benefit Wirral and the wider area?

66 people answered this question. Respondents selected one option that they agreed with. 71.2% of the respondents thought the development of this project will benefit Wirral and the wider area whilst 15.2% thought it would not.

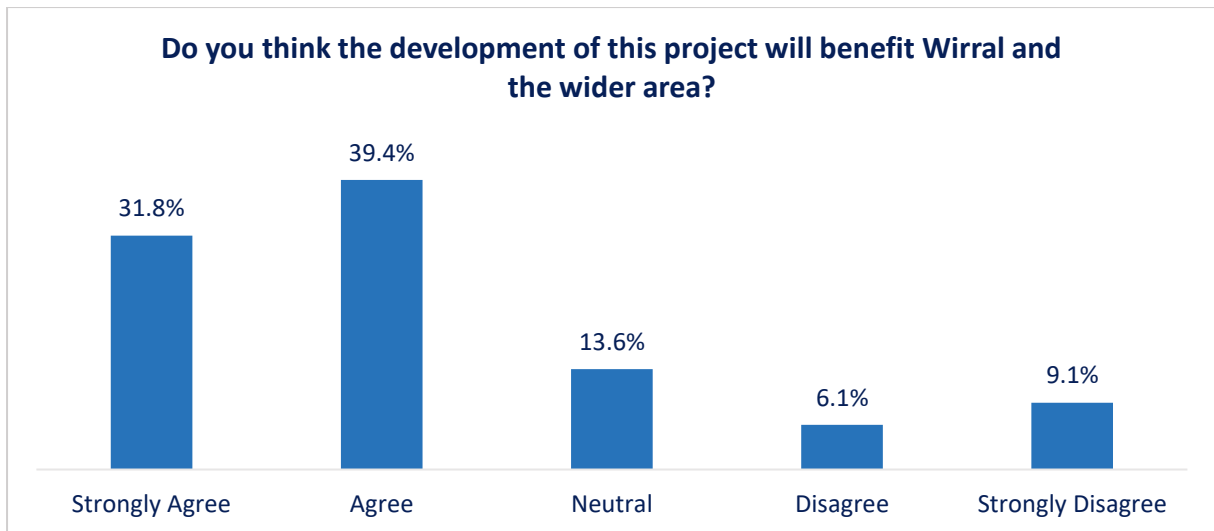


Figure 5: Chart displaying results to “Do you think the development of this project will benefit Wirral and the wider area?”

Do you think the development of this project will benefit Wirral and the wider area?	Total	%
Strongly Agree	21	31.8%
Agree	26	39.4%
Neutral	9	13.6%
Disagree	4	6.1%
Strongly Disagree	6	9.1%

Table 5: Table displaying the results to “Do you think the development of this project will benefit Wirral and the wider area?”

3.1.6 Question 6: What do you think are the key elements that are needed to ensure the Masterplan is a success?

62 people answered this question, and they may have selected more than one option. “Funding” (66.1%) was the most common option selected followed by “Support from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority” (56.5%) and “Support from central government” (53.2%).

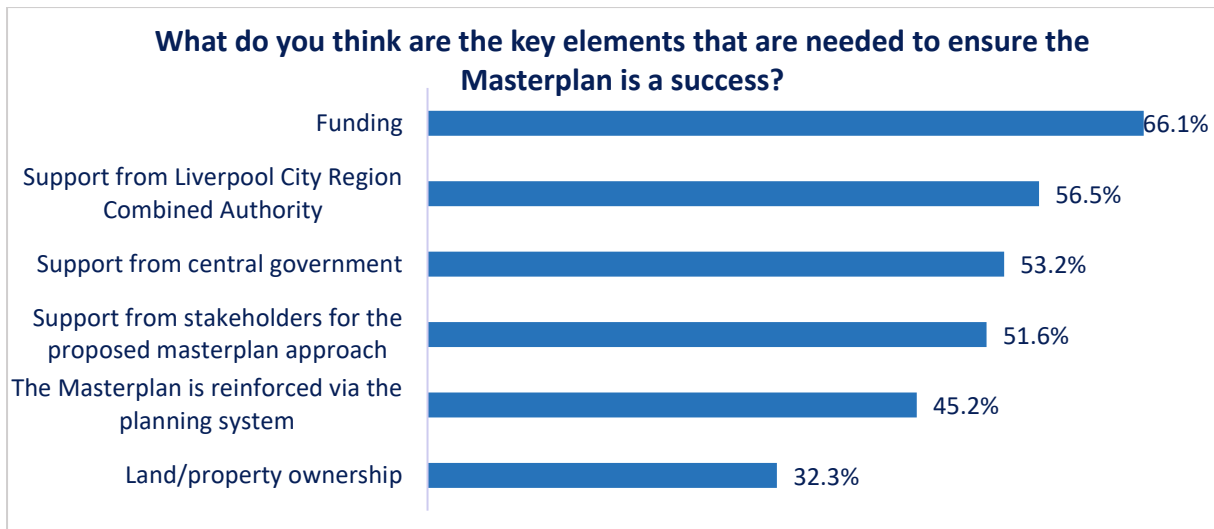


Figure 6: Chart displaying results to “What do you think are the key elements that are needed to ensure the Masterplan is a success?”

What do you think are the key elements that are needed to ensure the Masterplan is a success?	Total	%
Funding	41	66.1%
Support from Liverpool City Region Combined Authority	35	56.5%
Support from central government	33	53.2%
Support from stakeholders for the proposed masterplan approach	32	51.6%
The Masterplan is reinforced via the planning system	28	45.2%
Land/property ownership	20	32.3%

Table 6: Table displaying the results to “What do you think are the key elements that are needed to ensure the Masterplan is a success?”

3.1.7 Question 7: The heart of the new Masterplan for Dock Branch Neighbourhood is a New Community Park. Do you think this is likely to attract you to use the park and to visit this part of Birkenhead more often?

66 people answered this question. Respondents selected one option that they agreed with. 74.2% of respondents thought it likely to attract them to use the park and to visit this part of Birkenhead more often whilst 13.6% thought it would not.

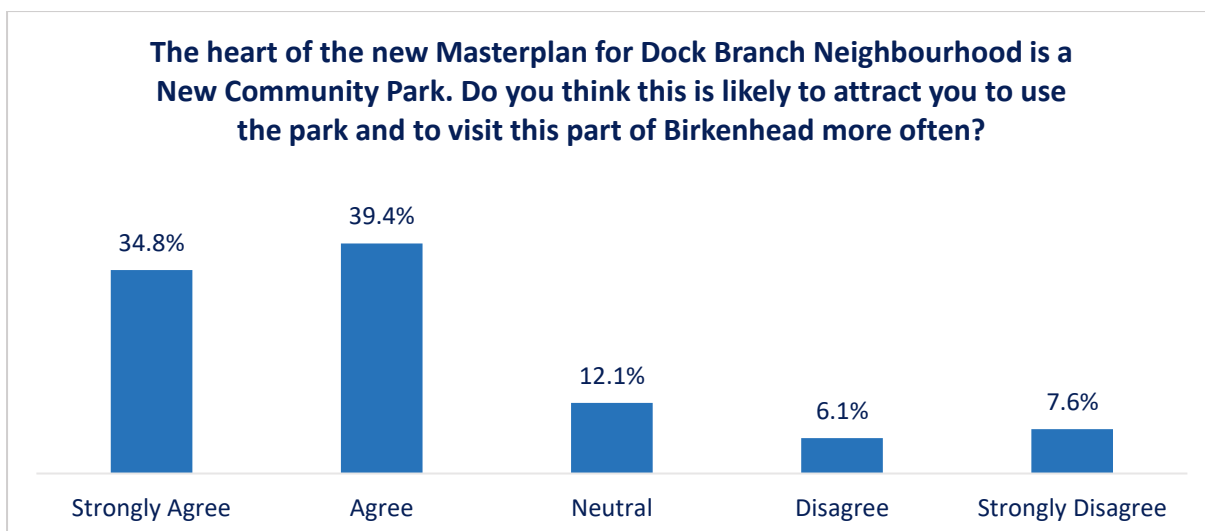


Figure 7: Chart displaying results to “The heart of the new Masterplan for Dock Branch Neighbourhood is a New Community Park. Do you think this is likely to attract you to use the park and to visit this part of Birkenhead more often?”

The heart of the new Masterplan for Dock Branch Neighbourhood is a New Community Park. Do you think this is likely to attract you to use the park and to visit this part of Birkenhead more often?	Total	%
Strongly Agree	23	34.8%
Agree	26	39.4%
Neutral	8	12.1%
Disagree	4	6.1%
Strongly Disagree	5	7.6%

Table 7: Table displaying the results to “The heart of the new Masterplan for Dock Branch Neighbourhood is a New Community Park. Do you think this is likely to attract you to use the park and to visit this part of Birkenhead more often?”

3.1.8 Question 8: Do you have any concerns about this project?

43 people answered this free text question. Below are the top themes that emerged from the free-text comments as a percentage of the number of people who provided an answer to the question. As the percentage reflects the proportion of respondents who made the comment and that respondents may have made more than one comment in their answer, the total percentages may exceed 100%.

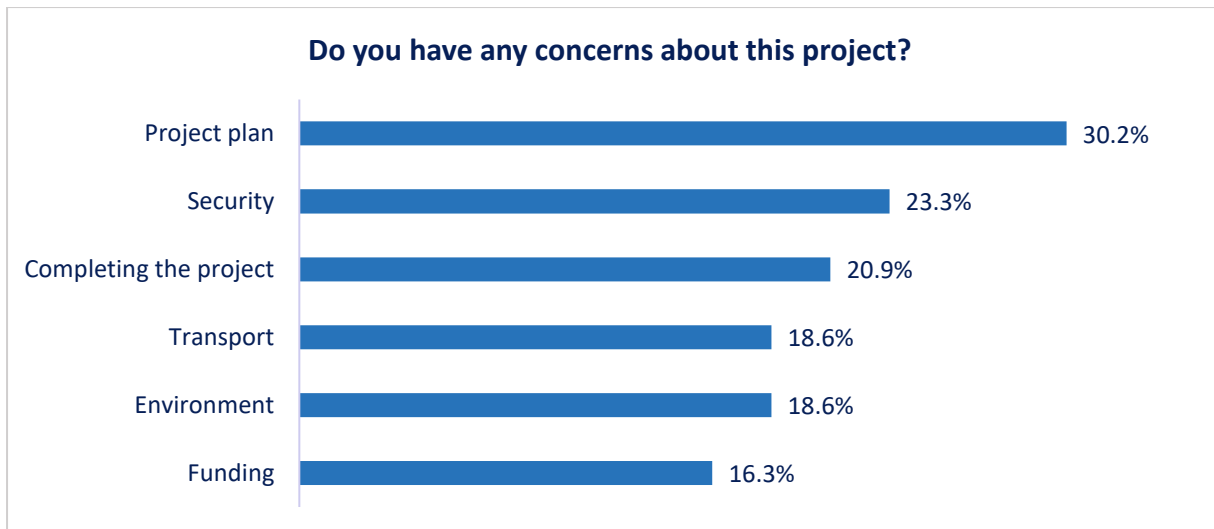


Figure 8: Chart displaying results to “Do you have any concerns about this project?”

Do you have any concerns about this project?	Total	%
Project plan	13	30.2%
Security	10	23.3%
Completing the project	9	20.9%
Transport	8	18.6%
Environment	8	18.6%
Funding	7	16.3%

Table 8: Table displaying the results to “Do you have any concerns about this project?”

- Project Plan (30.2%).** Respondents were concerned that the project would not have achieve its desired effect. Some discussed that there should more engagement with the public over the project and that it should further address the public’s needs (such as better housing quality and more accommodation for faith groups).
- Security (23.2%).** Respondents were concerned that antisocial behaviour may negate the benefits of the project. Some suggested that there should be more provision of lighting to help address this.
- Completing the Project (20.9%).** Respondents were concern that the project would take too long to complete and stated concerns that the project would not come to fruition.
- Transport (18.6%).** Some respondents raised the importance of transport for the project. They raised concerns that there would be insufficient parking, increased

traffic and that there should be more provisions for active transport and to improve accessibility.

- **Environment (18.6%).** Respondents suggested that there should be more provisions of green spaces and for wildlife. Some also raised concerns about the level of litter in the area.
- **Funding (16.3%).** Some respondents raised concerns that there is not sufficient funding available for the project and that the cost may be too high.

3.1.9 Question 9: Do you have any other comments or suggestions you would like to make about the Draft Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan?

36 people answered this free text question. Below are the top themes that emerged from the free-text comments as a percentage of the number of people who provided an answer to the question. As the percentage reflects the proportion of respondents who made the comment and that respondents may have made more than one comment in their answer, the total percentages may exceed 100%.

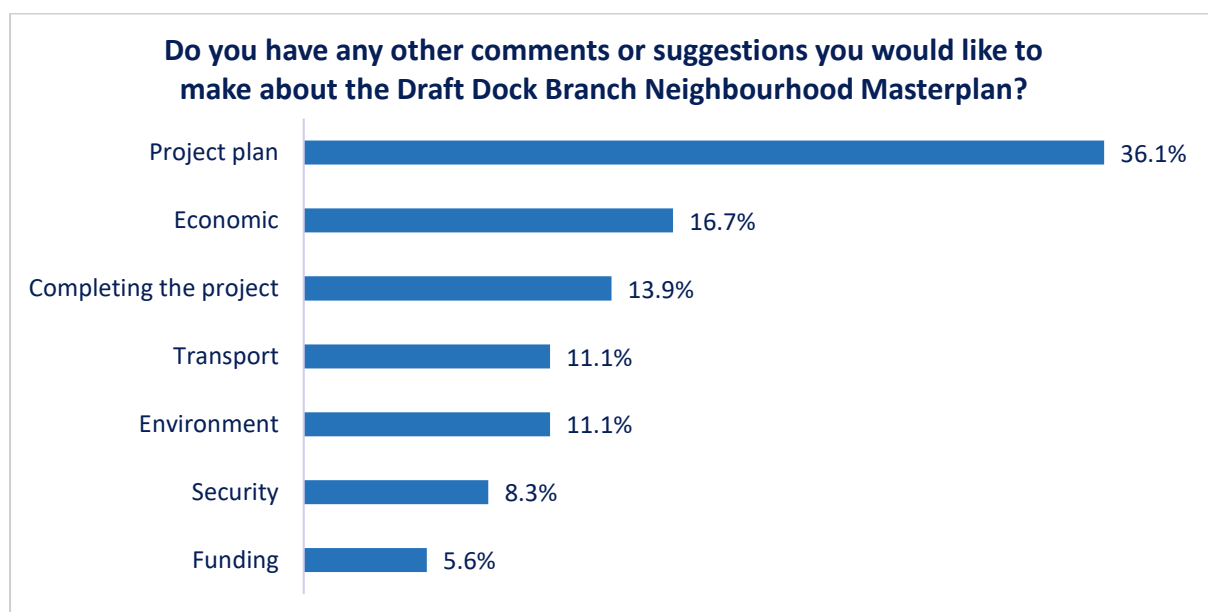


Figure 9: Chart displaying results to “Do you have any other comments or suggestions you would like to make about the Draft Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan?”

Do you have any other comments or suggestions you would like to make about the Draft Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan?	Total	%
Project plan	13	36.1%
Economic	6	16.7%
Completing the project	5	13.9%
Transport	4	11.1%
Environment	4	11.1%
Security	3	8.3%
Funding	2	5.6%

Table 9: Table displaying the results to “Do you have any other comments or suggestions you would like to make about the Draft Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan?”

The themes identified in this question were similar to those identified in Question 8 with the addition of an economic theme.

- **Economic (16.7%).** Respondents emphasised the importance of economic aspects of the plan. Specifically, they suggested that lowering business rates and supporting shops, tourism and cultural or leisure activities would help the area.

3.2 Direct Representations

Two direct representations were received during the consultation from the Dock Branch Community Panel and United Utilities.

The Dock Branch Community Panel was established in Spring 2023 with a basis to inform and support residents, businesses, and partners to work together in revitalising the neighbourhood, increasing economic opportunities, and leveraging the creativity and diversity of the community. The representation by the panel is in Appendix 1.

The United Utilities response was a technical response in relation to areas such as infrastructure, water and wastewater assets, and sustainable foul and surface water management. United Utilities requested to meet to discuss the response which will be actioned by the Regeneration Team.

4.0 Demographics and Site Traffic

4.1 Demographics

Registration was required to engage in the online Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan Consultation. The registration form included questions regarding demographics including gender, age group, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, however not all questions in the registration form were compulsory and respondents could choose to select 'prefer not to say' or skip the question. The demographics results are summarised below. The same questions were included on the paper-copy questionnaires.

Most respondents (75.7%) classed themselves as a local resident.



Figure 10: Chart displaying registering

The age group profile is illustrated below with the most common age groups being 35-44 years (24.6%), followed by 45-54 years (23.1%) and 55-64 years (23.1%).

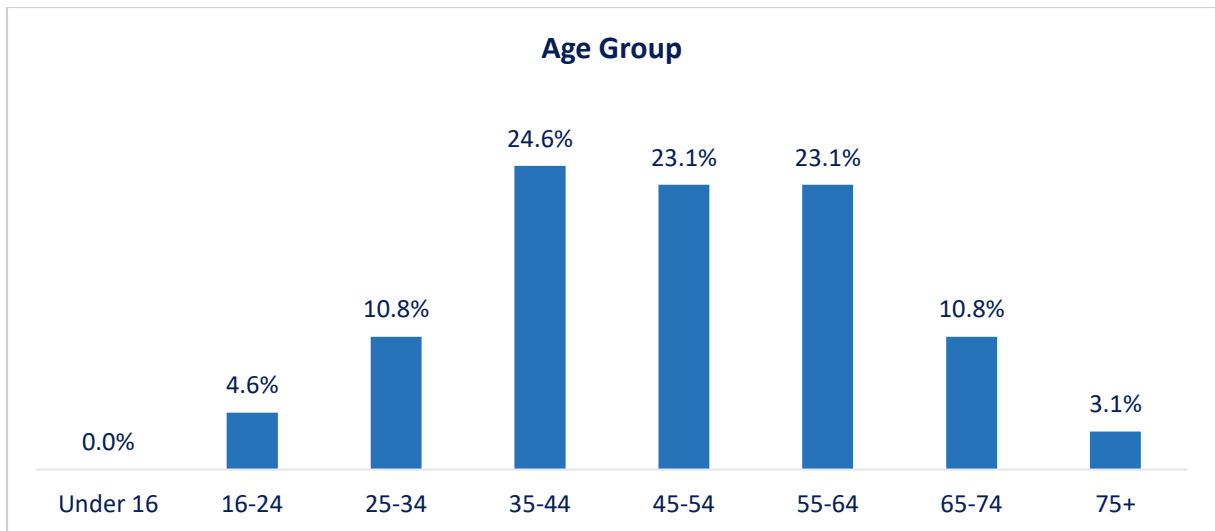


Figure 11: Chart displaying age groups

71.2% of respondents identified as male and 22.7% female. 6.1% preferring not to.

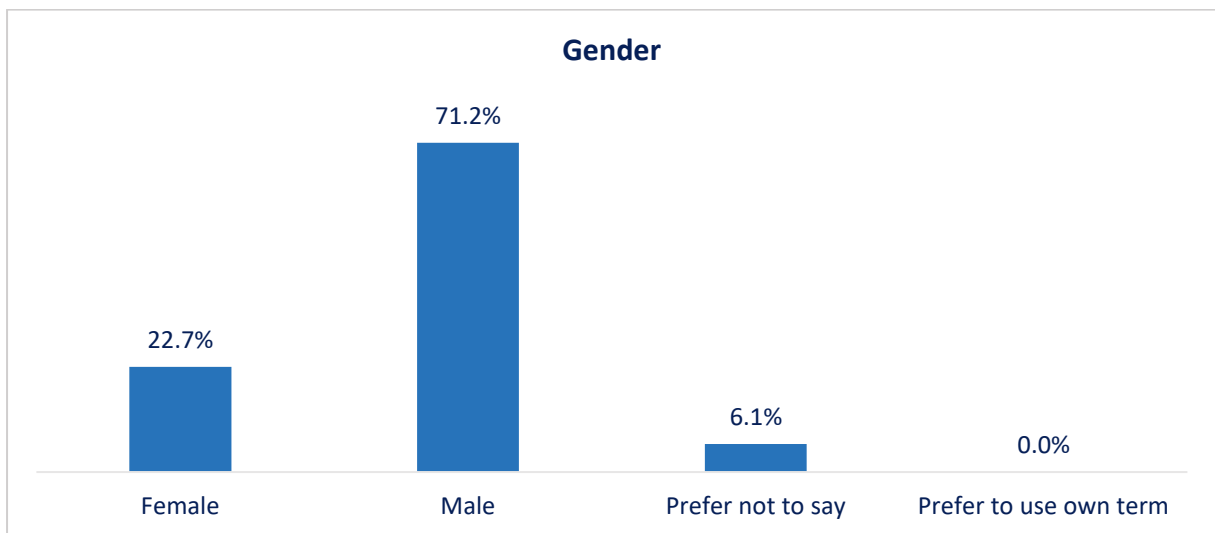


Figure 12: Chart displaying gender

71.4% of respondents were heterosexual, 1.6% were gay/ lesbian, 4.8% bisexual and 22.2% preferred not to say.

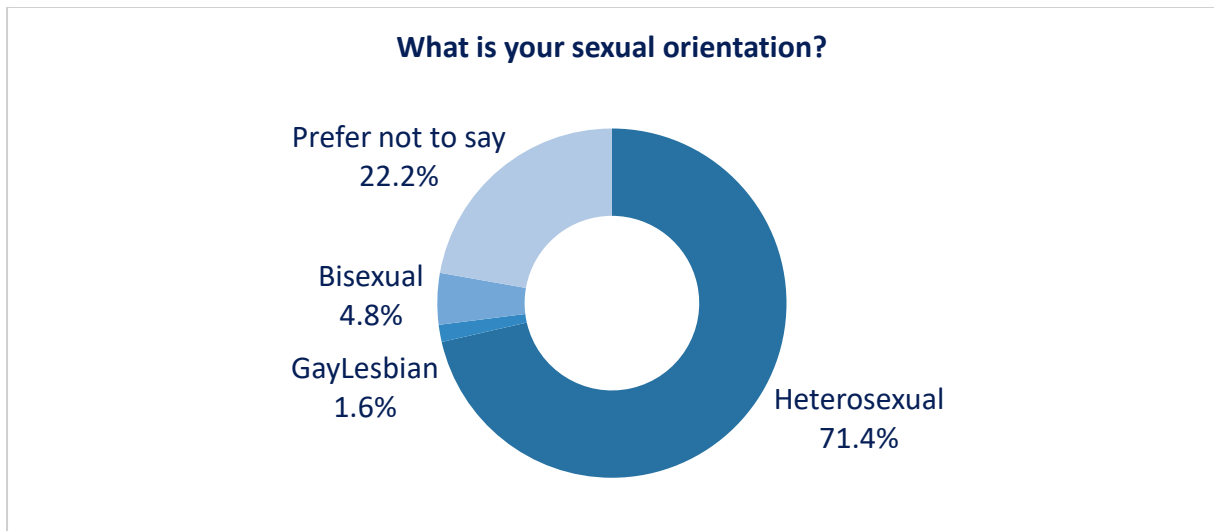


Figure 13: Chart displaying sexual orientation

82.4% said they did not have a disability whilst 5.9% of respondents said that they had a disability. 11.8% preferred not to say.

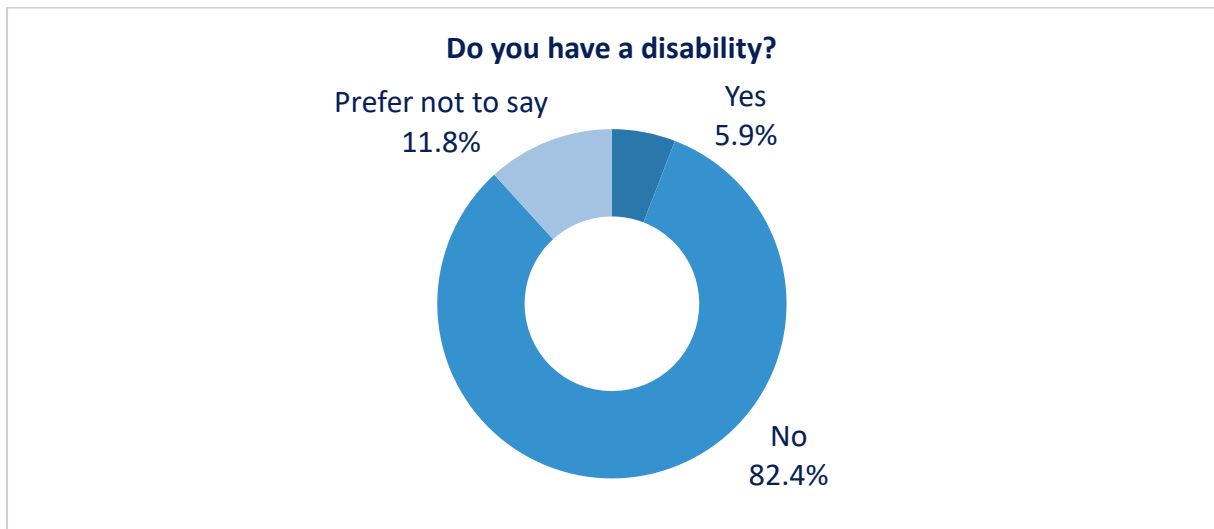


Figure 14: Chart displaying disability

The majority (90.8%) of respondents identified as White – English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British.

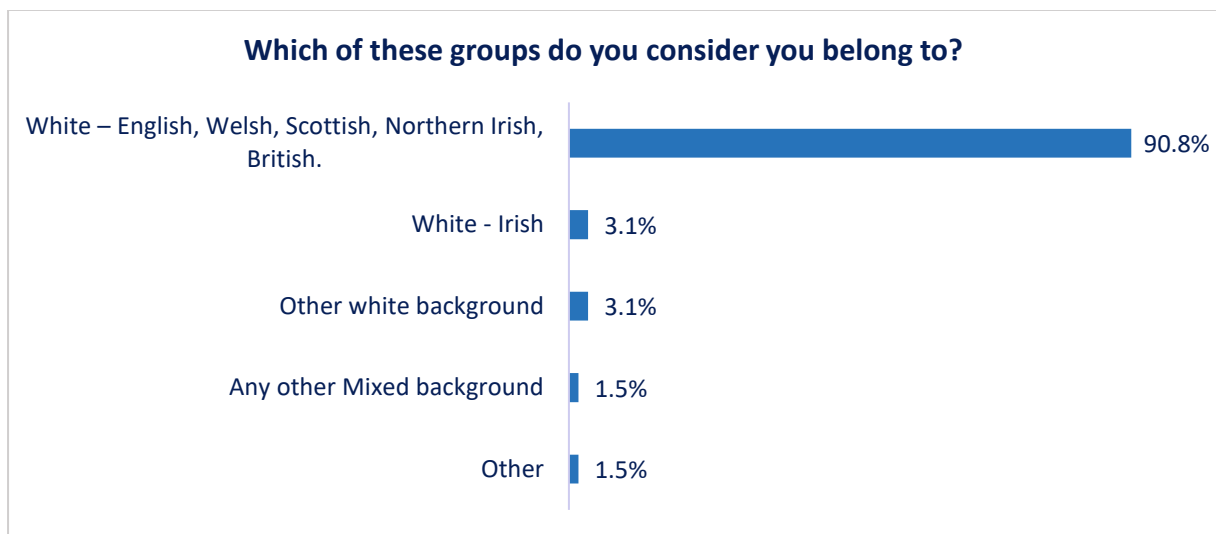


Figure 15: Chart displaying groups

The most represented ward was Birkenhead and Tranmere (18.6%) followed by Wallasey (8.5%).

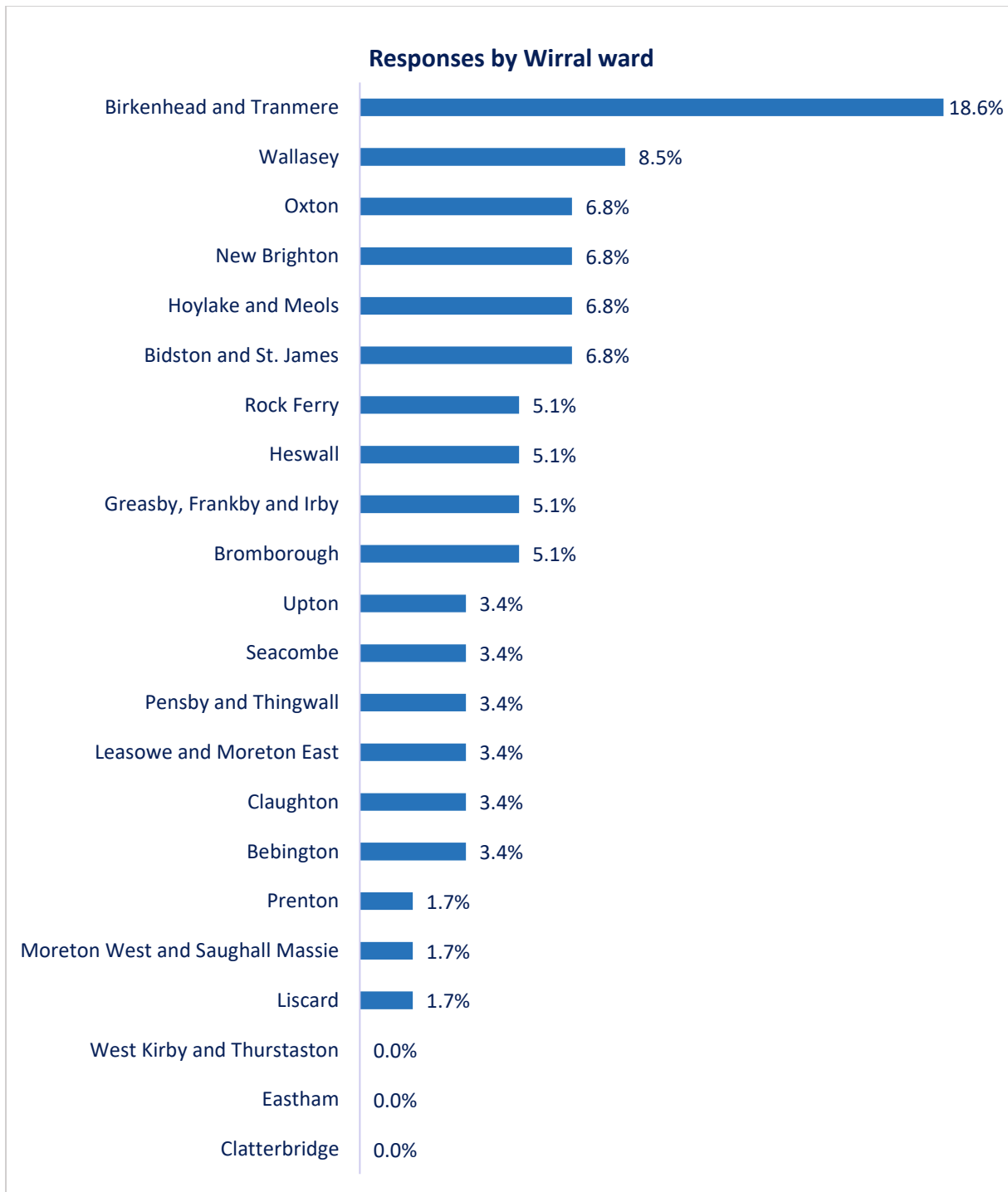


Figure 16: Chart displaying Wirral Ward representation

4.2 Have Your Say - Site Traffic

Reviewing the site activity, visits, and how people visit the site can be useful to evaluate if people are aware of the site, as well as to ensure engagement activities are deployed effectively, and to a wide range of different people – enhancing public engagement in the future. 1,552 unique visitors viewed the Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan consultation of the Have Your Say site. Of these, 433 visited multiple project pages, 110 viewed a photo and 319 viewed a document. 66 people in total completed the questionnaire.

These figures cannot be viewed as definitive as they are based on site tracking through ‘cookies’ and there are a number of factors that can impact on this. These include that cookies may be disabled or deleted, individuals may access the site multiple times through different devices or different browsers. However, the figures can be used to gauge how much interest has been generated in individual projects through the rate of engaged participants.

The route that people access the site is known as the traffic source. The ‘Have your say’ portal allows analysis to be carried out on traffic source, and if they lead to engagement in the site tools such as the questionnaire. This analysis allows a greater understanding of which communication and promotional tools to use to optimise engagement.

For this project a range of traffic sources have been reviewed and summarised in the table below. Most visits to the site were direct visits where people typed the internet address into their web browser (1,063).

Traffic Source	Aware Visits	Informed Visits (%)	Engaged Visits (%)
.gov sites	9	4 (44.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Direct	1,063	396 (37.3%)	36 (3.4%)
Email	264	61 (23.1%)	12 (4.5%)
Referrals	310	77 (24.8%)	6 (1.9%)
Search engine	188	102 (54.3%)	5 (2.7%)
Social	113	40 (35.4%)	7 (6.2%)
Total	1,947	680	66

Table 10: Site traffic sources

Appendix 1: Dock Branch Community Panel Direct Representation

Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan

October 2023 Edition

Response by Community Panel

28 November 2023

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Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan - Community Panel Response

Foreword

The Panel

The Community Panel was established in Spring 2023 to provide the primary connection between local people and the masterplanning team (the “Team”) comprising designers, economists, planners and advisors commissioned by the Council. The Panel began operating as the lead community-collaborator for the comprehensive redevelopment of the Dock Branch neighbourhood when the analysis of the area and concepts for its physical, social, and economic regeneration were being developed by the Team. The basis was for the Panel to inform and support residents, businesses and partners to work together in revitalising the neighbourhood, increasing economic opportunities, and leveraging the creativity and diversity of the community.

The Panel Members are, or aim to become, involved in wider community organising such as: going out and speaking to local community organisations and their leaders such as schools, places of worship, businesses, youth clubs and so on; carrying out surveys to test local opinion and build support; and door knocking in the area to explain aims and plans.

An open invitation was posted on the Community, Volunteer & Faith Sector (CVF) Forum with applicants agreeing to work with the Wirral Charter. Applications were submitted to the Council SRO for Regeneration Delivery, with the first Panel Meeting being held in April 2023. Panel Members at the time of submitting this Response to the Masterplan are:

Independent Regeneration Advisor to Wirral Council, was agreed as the Interim Chair of the Panel.

Basis of this Response

The Panel supports the adoption of a masterplan; the following sections of critical analysis are intended to help improve this part of Birkenhead for people that currently do and will eventually live/work/visit the town. The Panel’s intent is to act as critical friend to the process of preparing a masterplan that communicates to this audience and responds to their needs.

Introduction

The Wirral Compact

The Dock Branch Community Panel understands that its remit is to ensure that local communities and others with interests in central Birkenhead can enjoy continuing opportunities, now and in future, to be trusted and treated in accordance with the Wirral Compact between the Council and the community and voluntary sector.

<https://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/s3943/Appendix.pdf>

Consultation Process shortlisted for Awards scheme

The consultation process for this Masterplan was shortlisted for the 2023 “Pineapple Awards”. The Awards are run by “The Developer”, whose website states, “The Developer is the brainchild of its Editor-in-Chief, former editor of the Architects’ Journal and The Architectural Review, working in partnership with former colleague, its Director.”

Short Extracts from Wirral Council Presentation for judges of the Awards scheme

“We’re faced with a community that has a severe sort of apathy towards regeneration and scepticism that it won’t ever be delivered and we’ve had to combat that with our approach.”

“.....we’re going to be significantly changing the nature of the area and those local communities need to be brought along that journey.”

Dock Branch

“.....empower the community so we’ve moved from doing a very transactional approach to consultation to building up the spirit of community, enabling those community members to really take control.”

“.....it’s really important to make sure that people feel part of the journey and that’s hopefully, hopefully, making them feel like that.”

“.....those Masterplans really get kind of grass roots cultural engagement....”

“What we’re using with the sort of Dock Branch Community Panel model is seeing that Community Panel having an influence over the choice of a developer potentially, having a choice in some of the projects that are coming forward.....”

Communication of local aspects of the Masterplan

The Panel found that the Masterplan doesn't communicate the community and local business aspects that should help to attract appropriate development for the stated aims of

the Dock Branch Park and Neighbourhood, nor does it convey in any meaningful, visual way, many of the key unique aspects of Birkenhead that should be the physical anchors for attracting development in specific areas, such as heritage buildings and existing public spaces.

The Community Panel found technical language in the document which is unexplained. This may be of interest to specialist readers but is indecipherable to Panel members and others who do not share an understanding of this language. For convenience, the Community Panel has prepared a list of examples and locations of such language as Annex 3 of this response; this list is not exhaustive and the authors will need to satisfy the Community Panel that they have assessed the full document for any similar examples.

The Masterplan admits that its orientation is on “hard measures”, which it defines as “material, spatial and physical interventions that are masterplan-oriented, such as building and street design”.

The Masterplan states that “soft measures” are “programmed, managed and operational interventions that require collaboration between a diverse set of actors, such as community stewardship and innovative leasing strategies”. However, the Community Panel believes that soft measures are not always best “programmed” and need to be experimented with and grown now as a culture of collegiality where trust is built and where leadership and support change organically between trusted colleagues, private, voluntary and statutory.

The Panel believes that far more attention needs to be given to soft measures, whether within this Masterplan or beyond it – and the Community Panel believes that the opportunity is provided in the 2024 Wirral Borough of Culture whose legacy could include the development of the essential culture of stewardship which was enthusiastically referred to in a consultant’s illustrated verbal presentation to the Community Panel on 14 November 2023 at Future Yard, Birkenhead

The amount of attention required on soft measures is borne out by Masterplan’s own statement in 3.1.2 about hard and soft measures that “Neither in isolation can deliver the transformational regeneration for Dock Branch Neighbourhood and both must be committed to in order to realise its full economic, environmental and social potential.”

Yet the Community Panel finds in 6.1.5 “Approach to delivery”, the soft measures, as defined in 3.1.2 are completely ignored – soft measures are left out in complete ‘isolation’. Perhaps these are more fully explored in the draft Birkenhead Design Guide, but the Panel could not find an online copy of this for review alongside the Masterplan.

No mention is made of Wirral’s designation as Borough of Culture 2024 (far more imminent than the implementation of this physical Masterplan) where there is an ideal opportunity to develop the culture of civic stewardship that informs the entire physical brief. The current physical condition of the Dock Branch neighbourhood does not reflect the qualities and capacities of the local people whose stewardship of their own spaces is often markedly better than that of the public realm.

Indicative illustrations

The Community Panel emphasised that the proposed Masterplan and especially the indicative illustrations are not indicative of a **Birkenhead** focused project.

The Panel is extremely disappointed that illustrations have not been contextualised. The Panel recommended that the freely available Street View service provided by Google be used to locate proposals in the local context because it provides instantly recognisable photographic images of real places. These can be automatically linked and map-referenced so that the existing surroundings can be searched in virtual three dimensions. This allows interested people to place any proposals into a context with which they are familiar or can investigate easily, whether during a visit to the place or from a remote device.

Anything less than this level of context does not take advantage of current, freely available technology and is unacceptable in presentational terms, particularly for lay people.

The Panel remains strong and clear with its opinion that these illustrations are counter-productive not fit for purpose and should be replaced along the lines discussed.



COVER ILLUSTRATION

The Community Panel does not recognise this illustration as being related to Dock Branch Neighbourhood or Birkenhead.

1.1.4 Priority 1 **Streets and spaces that feel safe**

There are already homes in Central Birkenhead so the Masterplan does not “reintroduce homes”, it adds to homes that are already there and many people, who are proud of Birkenhead, live in them and look after them and adjacent open spaces – do these existing homes provide natural surveillance? If so, can we learn from these and if not, why not and how does the Masterplan help them to do so?

Priority 3 **A real mix of homes**

Mix of housing types and sizes seems to exclude some house types that are found in central Birkenhead at present – including single storey dwellings and detached dwellings, both types with their own private open spaces. Birkenhead has a large range of existing pre-1960's designs that could be inspirational.

Priority 5 **Spaces for the local communities**

Please explain how the workspaces can be “affordable in perpetuity”.

2.1.1 What is the date of the monochrome photograph please?

2.1.3 **Socio-economic context**

What has the Masterplan learned from these statistics and how can its stated remit to be about streets and buildings help? It may be helpful to compare mean or median household income in Dock Branch Neighbourhood with that elsewhere in Wirral and beyond; this could provide context for the more ambitious parts of the Masterplan (particularly those that involve significant physical infrastructure, such as district heating) which may have been adopted in wealthier parts of the world but for which resources are unlikely to be available in Birkenhead.

2.1.5 **Birkenhead qualities and characteristics**

Paragraph 1 line 8 & 9; Is it true that these things make Birkenhead “a vibrant and enticing destination”? What evidence is there of this?

Paragraph 2 line 5; **People**

Are these people “tribes”? They are communities of interest. What does the Masterplan do to make them visible and connected to each other and to the wider public?

Paragraph 4; **A town of firsts**

Where does the Masterplan celebrate and reinforce these “firsts”?

Paragraph 6; **Diverse mix**

“Concealed behind warehouse and workshops doors” – how does the Masterplan expose these and do the people prefer to be concealed?

2.2.1 Paragraph 9 line 7; **Social inclusion and participation**

“stewarded” should be listed and undertaken ahead of “designed” so that stewardship learning can inform design briefing that is specific to Birkenhead.

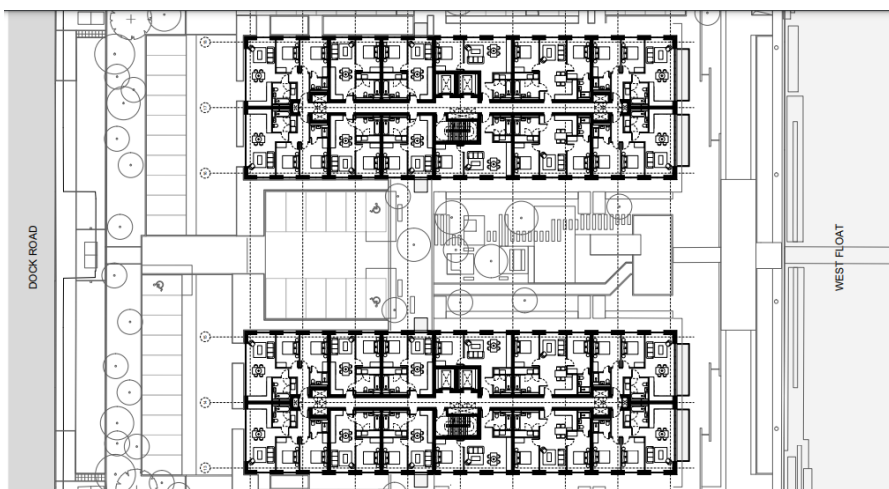
Paragraph 11 line 8; **Mixed workspaces** – but see 2.1.5 Paragraph 6 “Concealed behind warehouse and workshops doors” above – **which is it supposed to be and how will it work?**

Paragraph 14 line 4 & 5; **Circularity and local production** - How does the Masterplan integrate? Is there social integration at present and can this be encouraged, years ahead of physical change? If not, why not? If not now, why will social integration happen as a result of material, spatial and physical interventions that are masterplan-oriented, such as building and street design?

Paragraph 15 line 1; **Leisure and recreation** Are these civic or commercial suggestions for Birkenhead? Is this part of what is described as a “hard measures” Masterplan or is this just the equivalent of a magazine article?

2.2.2 Paragraph 1 line 6; **Town Centre (Commercial Centre)** “development of a new permanent market” appears to be out of date already if October 2023 press reports are to be believed.

The Community Panel states that Birkenhead Market should be regarded as a hub for business and residential regeneration of the whole of Birkenhead, including of course Dock Branch Neighbourhood. The Masterplan should reflect and reference the importance of the continuation of Birkenhead Market as part of the context of Dock Branch Neighbourhood and the overall regeneration of the town.



Plan of new housing being built at Wirral Waters

Paragraph 2 line 13; **Wirral Waters**

The “quality of design” referred to is questionable – multi-storey blocks arranged in a row, long straight corridors, very limited mix of apartment types (single living areas making flexibility difficult for home working for example, one or two bedrooms), hardly any private open space, large areas of hard standing for car parking.

Paragraph 7; lines 12 – 14; **Dock Branch Park**

“The project will involve working with community groups to identify opportunities for community ownership from the outset”. Where/how is this happening? No community ownership opportunities have been identified in the Masterplan yet we are beyond “the outset”. However, this could change quickly by arranging now for the curation of the Park, with an early series of activities with managed access at track level, visible from street level. (Please see Annex 1).

3.1.1 Liveable Birkenhead

“This liveable vision is shared at the town-wide and neighbourhood level, set out within the draft Birkenhead Design Guide, and the Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan set out here.”

It is apparent that the Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan has been developed to a vision for Birkenhead set out in the Design Guide, so it should be available to all as part of this Masterplan consultation but the Community Panel has not been able to find an on-line copy of the Design Guide.

3.1.2 Liveable Dock Branch Neighbourhood

Paragraph 2; “planning, design, delivery and stewardship” should be led by, not followed by stewardship – stewardship can start now and inform the remaining aspects.

“Hard measures can be described as material, spatial and physical interventions that are masterplan-oriented, such as building and street design. Soft measures can be described as programmed, managed and operational interventions that require collaboration between a diverse set of actors, such as community stewardship and innovative leasing strategies.”

So, are these “soft measures” the subject of some other document? Is this provided in the Birkenhead Design Guide? Shouldn’t these inform the Masterplan and shouldn’t they be available for consultation?

The Masterplan appears to be currently isolated from the soft measures, yet it states, “Neither in isolation can deliver the transformational regeneration for Dock Branch Neighbourhood and both must be committed to in order to realise its full economic, environmental and social potential.”

Movement M1 – Yet it appears that other proposals in other plans are promoting dedicated spaces for specific, **single travel functions** – you can’t use them if you don’t have a bike with you, for example.

Movement M2 – Promoting active travel does not make it the most convenient way to travel – it rains here!

Movement M3 – The legible environment is already being threatened by reports of more one-way streets, dedicated cycle lanes, etc. that make navigation difficult.

Public Realm PR1 – This is just fashionable jargon – where is the “blue” in Dock Branch Neighbourhood? And where is the green beyond the cutting?

Public Realm PR2 – The network of streets exists – why create it? Where are the open spaces in the Masterplan?

Public Realm PR3 – What events and activities will be brought by the Masterplan? Or is this aspect a part of a ‘not yet written’ document on “soft measures”?

Character C1 – Adaptive reuse – how does the Masterplan encourage this?

Character C3 – The Masterplan illustrations show the opposite – bland pastel coloured drawings unrelated to the freely available and publicly recognisable Street Views of Birkenhead.

Uses and resources UR1– “Add to Birkenhead’s mix of commercial, leisure, creative and community uses” is very relevant but without substance it is purely aspirational.

Uses and resources UR2 – How does the Masterplan suggest moving uses around? Is there help for participants to move premises to suit the Masterplan – is there a cost to the client?

Uses and resources UR3 – How does the Masterplan suggest moving uses around?

Uses and resources UR4 – The Masterplan shows projected housing typologies that the Panel has reviewed under paragraph 6.1.4 below. It does not refer to the Wirral Housing Density Study 2021 and this lack of attention to previous work commissioned by Wirral Council is unexplained. The Panel queries whether the housing types are sufficiently varied as they do not even match the range of choices currently available in central Birkenhead. Panel members would not choose to live in any of them, for reasons explained in subsequent, more detailed paragraphs.

Identity I1 – How does the Masterplan which claims to be about “building and street design” produce an “exciting programme of events and attractions”?

Identity I2 – How do “spaces” “support the conception, testing, growing and thriving of new ideas”?

Equity and inclusion EI1 How is engagement and collaboration happening? What citizen-led action is allowed?

3.2.1 Paragraph 2; **Compact neighbourhood** “Compact” sounds ok but it is really an estate agent’s way of saying “very small indeed – probably too small” – “compact typologies” of housing seldom offer flexibility. Shared courtyards and gardens are not normal in UK – and unless they are successfully stewarded they are great for creating disputes.

Paragraph 3; **Real choice** Urban terraces townhouses, maisonettes and apartments don’t extend the present range of types in Central Birkenhead and were not part of the consultation responses. Who wants a “maisonette”? Experience says “No maisonettes”.



Paragraph 4; **Happy and healthy** – did anybody ask who wants to travel between “the town centre and the docks”? What for? It wasn’t mentioned in consultation responses.

Paraphrasing Gertrude Stein in “Everybody's Autobiography” (1937), “When you get there, is there any there there?”



Paragraph 9; **Reinforcing local character** “New development will draw on the rich architectural palette of typologies, proportions, details, colours, textures and materials found across the town’s best examples of Georgian, Victorian and industrial heritage to reinforce Birkenhead’s local character.”

The illustration is not recognised as part of Birkenhead and it does not indicate any reinforcement of local character – rather the reverse!

Paragraph 10; **Renewable and circular resources**

Where is feasibility for “district heat network”, “electricity microgrid”, “heat recovery” and “communal organic waste converters”? These are very expensive infrastructure interventions that have not become standard practice in areas with twice the mean household incomes of Birkenhead and Wirral. Are these to be ‘pilots’? Is Birkenhead the ‘guinea pig’? District heat networks have been tried, failed and removed in the past.

Paragraph 11; **New models of stewardship** – NOT as a result of “local authorities increasingly under financial and resourcing strain”. BUT incorporated as part of the work needed to create and test realistic briefs for designers, tested now and developed now as part of the culture of Birkenhead, part of the Borough of Culture 2024, and included as part of any new development.

4.1.1 Paragraph 1; **Connecting the park to the docks**

Why? Is there any demand for this? Is this our destination? What’s the attraction here? The Masterplan could give examples of existing attractions at the North of the Park.

Paragraph 2; **Street level active promenade**

Can this be the **key to the stewardship** of the ‘already wilded’ Dock Branch railway?

The Community Panel understands that the funded brief is to promote active travel and considers that this may be best done by integrating the street level “promenade” with the Park corridor. This may be achieved through the Panel’s counter-proposal, included as Annex 1, in which Dock Branch Park is protected for nature and wildlife while becoming a carefully curated space for science, culture, arts and performances, with numerous observation opportunities at street level and controlled links to and from street level for activities and events by day and by night. This would enable the agreed funding to provide significant improvements to the public realm, particularly at street level with removal of unsightly palisade fencing and other barriers (or significant, maintained planting to screen them) including at the promenade and bridge crossings. This also creates an opportunity to continuously involve people who presently informally inhabit Dock Branch Park, offering them facilities and training in voluntary or professional roles that the curated space, Birkenhead Market and other town centre facilities need, now and in future, to be a success.

Paragraph 3; **Positive park edge**

What is the “historic relationship between built form and the park edge”? Design of this edge becomes very significant if Dock Branch Park becomes a curated space and can be informed by early events at the track level to test the scope for interactions.

Paragraph 4; **Using the park to stitch the neighbourhood together**

Where is there a “green street” or a “wild street” that the Panel can visit? Can we see one? How long to establish? How much to maintain? If Annex 1 opportunity is adopted, the proposed “green” and “wild” streets would relate to the bridge crossing points and the active promenade.

Paragraph 5; **Reinstating the Laird Grid**

This is important and connections should allow the Dock Branch Park to be followed at street level with particular viewing points at existing bridge crossings if the proposal at Annex 1 is to be considered.

Paragraph 6; **A neighbourhood of many characters**

The characters are reflected in the different extents of rewilding of the park area. The activities in the park (particularly if the curated model in Annex 1 is adopted) could influence the form and character of the surrounding neighbourhood.

4.2.1 Paragraph 5 “Different types of house will bring **people of all walks of life** to the area, **happily co-existing** in a vibrant, urban neighbourhood”. NOT all walks of life automatically happily co-exist..... The opportunities presented by Annex 1 allow for a very wide range of activities to be started now, including voluntary and professional inputs from “all walks of life”, whether they are from the local community or beyond.

4.2.2 Paragraph 4; **Real mix and choice of homes** – Why are there no serviced sites / self build? These could add considerably to the housing mix, particularly if sites were sold with outline planning permission with realistic conditions, giving smaller developers and self-builders early choices and good value. A condition of purchase could be that no two adjacent plots could be designed and built by the same developer. Thus Birkenhead could ensure different designs were used to provide visual interest across the new housing area (and overcome the tendency of 'social housing' to all be put together for the management convenience of the provider.) Such a proposal would avoid the predominance of a single, uniform design, indicative of 1960's Council Estates.

There is of course a local example in Wirral. Around thirty different architectural practices were well steered in Port Sunlight to provide significant variety within an overall planning concept that included and continues to include civic stewardship. It still holds good today in spite of many changes in ownerships, tenancies, lifestyles, means of transport, shopping, etc. Uses of buildings and land changed and continue to change accordingly within the overall concept and new buildings have maintained the overall character with innovative, cost effective and feasible interpretations of Port Sunlight's traditional materials and architectural elements.

Paragraph 5; **Vibrant mix of jobs, leisure and culture**

If it is possible to open up workspace and venues as “common platforms for after-hours community use”, why are we not doing this now? Is this a concert in the library, for example, or something different?

4.2.3 **Transport Museum**

With almost 600,000 visitors since July 2005 (approximately 32,000 per year), the Transport Museum is described as a “key heritage and visitor destination”. Dock Branch was generated by transport requirements and it is important to link the museum and its management system to activities in the Park, including for the Annex 1 option.

“Detailed business engagement will be needed to understand the full suite of spatial and operational requirements of existing businesses on site. Where residential and mixed uses are proposed a detailed co-location strategy will be necessary to enable the successful mitigation of potential conflicts.”

Attempts to force businesses to relocate could waste resources. Businesses will relocate most satisfactorily wherever their needs are best met. Any strategy should be driven by the businesses themselves, with resources allocated to help them with this.

“Workshops and flexible commercial workspace in the neighbourhood can provide a good value offer for micro and SMEs that would work well as a part of a vibrant urban neighbourhood mix, but might otherwise end up dispersed in isolated industrial estates or cottage industries due to a lack of suitable, available space. Clustering industries within the

neighbourhood not only adds to the diversity of user and activity but offers economic possibilities of inter-industry collaboration and convergence that struggles to occur in silo.”

Can we do this now – can we create an ongoing Business Fair? This is wider than Dock Branch Neighbourhood and with the Market, Pyramids and Precinct in public ownership, only a short walk away from the Masterplan boundary, it would logically be accommodated in such vacant space.

4.4.3 Paragraph 1; **Car storage**

What does “divorcing car parking from home ownership” mean?

Paragraph 2 &3; **Car barns**

This seems to be just another name for multi-storey car parks, each containing “up to several hundred unallocated car parking spaces”. There was no mention of a need for multi-storey car parking in the consultation responses. Any proposal for multi-storey car parks for hundreds of cars would not only serve people living in a neighbourhood but would also serve other parts of the town centre including stations to provide connections. How heavily used is the Pyramids multi-storey car park? Day? Night? Closes at 8.00pm?

Paragraph 6; **Modal shift**

What is the “Wirral Mass Transit route”?

Paragraph 7 &8; **Car clubs**

These can be organised without any Masterplan or special infrastructure – there is already a Car Club in Tranmere.

https://www.enterpriseclub.co.uk/gb/en/programs/promotion/black-friday.html?mcid=paidsearch:1738&gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIQobChMI55Hz7aTgggMVmvntCh00vQzgEAAYASAAEglin_D_BwE&gclsrc=aw.ds

4.5.2 **Views and landmarks**

The Masterplan states “Birkenhead is characterised by predominantly low to midrise building heights, with this consistent datum creating a uniformity and order. This datum is infrequently interrupted by buildings and structures taller than the prevailing height, though in these instances they perform an essential role in the legibility of the town. These buildings and structures and landmarks act as key wayfinding devices, enabling you to orient and locate yourself in relation to them.”

Unfortunately, although the taller structures are visible to the pedestrian, cyclist and motorist, they are seldom accessible by any direct (or logical grid pattern) route because of the obstacles to movement caused by one way streets, blocked streets, bollards, fences, culs de sacs, roundabouts, ‘flyovers’ and steel railings that have been created by highway engineers to smooth vehicle traffic flows and prevent or reduce the severity of road traffic

accidents. Some of the interventions were put in place before the M53 motorway significantly reduced the use of Birkenhead town centre by through traffic (including large commercial vehicles) and flyovers are already highlighted for demolition. Other traffic management systems are more recent but, with central Birkenhead's normally light traffic, they appear to the Community Panel to be an over-reaction to the risks caused by movement. The recent introduction of 20mph speed limits has further reduced the need for the previous interventions and these should now be reassessed in their entirety to make movement easier, more logical and less stressful for all users, with particular attention being given to those who require access that is unimpeded by abrupt changes in level (even if the changes in level are small).

Following its searches in the "Have Your Say Wirral" website and the documents submitted for the Local Plan Examination, the Community Panel has not been able to find an available on-line copy of the draft Birkenhead Design Guide which was consulted upon in November/December 2021 and is still reported as being "Under Review" at <https://haveyoursay.wirral.gov.uk/birkenhead-design-guide>

The Masterplan shows limited and very narrow views that do not recognise the extent of the landmarks' significance across central Birkenhead, calling these narrow views "viewing corridors".

4.6.4 "The approach to regeneration - from design to civic stewardship to local investment - can actively build this social foundation and support local communities to thrive."

NOT from design to civic stewardship but from civic stewardship to design.....

Post-occupancy evaluations are too late! By definition!

NOT "Collaborate with local community and networks, especially groups identified in LNA, in a codesign process to ensure design matches the needs of local residents."

INSTEAD, Operate civic stewardship of places before designing new ones – with learning from this!

"Citizens assembly forum" "Policy of plural ownership and community-led stewardship". Does this need a new Council policy and can the everlasting culture of civic stewardship be part of the legacy of the Wirral Borough of Culture 2024?

5.1.4 "A delivery and stewardship strategy will be needed to encourage the maintenance and care of all street and open space improvements, including Dock Branch Park."

5.1.6 Successful regeneration is not helped by excluding movement through a place by closing streets to vehicles. There are recent instances of electric bikes, for example, being able to negotiate vehicle barriers that excluded emergency service vehicles, leading to disastrous, fatal consequences. Instead, the nature of the place can indicate to vehicle drivers that through passage is available with care and attention to the surrounding environment.

5.2.4 “A delivery and stewardship strategy will be needed to encourage the maintenance and care of all street and open space improvements, including Dock Branch Park.”

5.3.4 “A delivery and stewardship strategy will be needed to encourage the maintenance and care of all street and open space improvements, including Dock Branch Park.”

5.4.3 “A delivery and stewardship strategy will be needed to encourage the maintenance and care of all street and open space improvements, including Dock Branch Park.”

These are repetitive and do not address the issue that needs to be addressed – learning now to steward the places we have so that when we get new places we have the means and methods in place to intuitively steward them.

6.1.3 **Indicative capacity**

Paragraph 2; **Residential quanta**

890 apartments are proposed. The total number of dwellings is 990 so apartments are to make up almost 90% of the proposed housing. This is an overwhelming percentage and no evidence is given that this is appropriate to meet people’s needs and aspirations for buying or renting their home in Birkenhead town centre. Houses at approximately 5% and maisonettes, at the same 5% of the total, strictly limit the proposed choice.

6.1.4 **Appropriate typologies**

Paragraph 1; **Family maisonettes**

It is misleading to state that “Stacked maisonettes offer house-like living”. They do not – and the drawings show that. The front door of the upper maisonette is shown to be four floors above ground level – that is not “house-like living”. There is no indication about how one gets access to the front door – how the prams, bikes, trikes, etc. get up and down, how the shopping goes up and the rubbish and recycling go down – is it by communal lifts and stairs to this four bedroom dwelling? Are there communal hallways? None of this is “house-like living”. Selected photographs illustrate precedents from London and Antwerp. The Masterplan offers no reasons for giving examples from places that are very different from Birkenhead.

Paragraph 2; **Family houses with communal gardens**

The concept of “communal gardens featuring allotments, play spaces and games areas” for family homes in Birkenhead is unusual. It is not clear whether these spaces are communal only to the residents or whether they are open to the general public and how access is managed. The Masterplan indicates (in the Cambridge precedent) that individual residents’ maintenance responsibility is “limited”; however, communal areas require stewardship and rather than limiting the

responsibility of individual residents, it is important that this is understood and addressed if such communal areas are to be successful. The precedent of Port Sunlight Village Trust would be more local and might be more appropriate than those of Norwich or Cambridge.

The Community Panel's experience (from people living in the Ward) is that green spaces that are not allocated to specific owners quickly become a source of problems regarding long term maintenance and management. If Wirral Council is unwilling to take on the maintenance and management of these new open green areas, we can refer back to historical Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian ideas of green spaces as 'private parks' maintained by the surrounding residents. The introduction of 'local park maintenance' for such larger private green spaces could provide the opportunity for local employment and rehearsals for this could start now, without waiting decades for some 'new' open spaces (for that is how long they take – decades). The Panel is not aware that any details of this option appear in the proposed Masterplan for discussion.

Paragraph 3; Mixed use with apartments above

“Gallery access” flats have a poor history. The fact that a bedroom needs a “high-sill window” indicates that the typology represents an unsatisfactory solution.

The idealistic re-location of existing residents and businesses is just that – idealistic for designers to ‘tidy up’ streets – but not realistic in terms of the logistics and costs as witnessed in Birkenhead previously.



Google Street view images of previous redevelopment endeavour to relocate residents in Birkenhead

The Community Panel knows of similar issues that are currently affecting traditional physical planning in other parts of the UK, including the capital city of Scotland whose New Town was the genesis of the Laird Grid and Hamilton Square and its surroundings which are now a Conservation Area.

The Community Panel is very concerned therefore that there appears to be little recognition in the Masterplan of the existence and value of current local businesses, or the needs and desires of the existing local residents. This lack of

acknowledgement by Wirral Council and its Consultants was a common complaint by the public when allowed to view proposals which was organised by “PLACED”.

The whole purpose of the public consultation was to provide feedback and public involvement. The Community Panel stresses its position that Council promised involvement at every stage and not just low level ‘consultation’ that can be ignored without any explanation.

The London precedents shown have illustrated bleak and uninspiring places that are uncharacteristic of Birkenhead and would not add to the quality of life in the town.

They are completely at odds with the images of Birkenhead shown in section 4.5.1 and 4.5.2, “Character and Townscape Framework”. Birkenhead needs height restrictions to ensure the character of the area is enhanced, and the use of more ornate 'soft architecture' rather than contemporary minimalist blocks such as those illustrated on page 53, 54, 58, 87,120, 142, 144, 145, 146, 154, 168 and 172 as well as all the pastel coloured images drawn in most cases without any recognisable context in the town.

The term “soft architecture” is used as described in <https://youtu.be/XfonhIM6l7w?si=tYXYHMBqpYS20hL9>



shutterstock.com - 470198897



Characteristic examples of ‘soft architecture’ (old and new) in Birkenhead

6.1.5 Approach to delivery

Paragraph 1; Approach

“The Council will be looking for a Delivery Partner” is a restrictive approach. Birkenhead’s character is varied and there should be encouragement for smaller development proposals that meet actual (rather than theoretical or fanciful, designer-conceived) needs of people and businesses.

Over-scaled interventions (in both buildings and infrastructure) have been unsuccessful in Birkenhead with some of these already demolished (including maisonette types having had to be ‘topped’ with upper levels removed) and others scheduled for demolition. Others still have lost value and been sold off at very low prices. One large ‘investment’ in the town centre was reportedly bought for £70million and sold for £10 million just a few years later.

As stated above, the Community Panel is very concerned that in spite of the presentation given on 14 November 2023 by one of the constituent consultants of the essential requirement of stewardship (and an agreement with the Panel’s view that stewardship can start now, improve places immediately and inform design), no mention is made, let alone any detailed proposal, of this “soft measure”.

ANNEX 1

DOCK BRANCH PARK AS A CURATED OUTDOOR SPACE AT THE CENTRE OF ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

Consultations between the Community Panel and the designers of the Park have indicated:

1. The biodiversity of current design proposals would be lower than the present condition;
2. There are significant levels issues concerning access by ramps; stairs may conflict with heritage arches and walls and it is unlikely that there will be more than a single lift (located near to Future Yard);
3. The original proposal to include a multi-level connection at a proposed transport museum (with Liverpool Museums) was beyond the budget and has been abandoned;
4. Multi-use paths are proposed, to accommodate people walking, cycling and using wheeled chairs, pushchairs, scooters, etc. and detail design is needed to allow this varied access whilst managing unsocial or anti-social use of vehicles such as motor bikes;
5. Proposals currently do not include toilets, lighting, power (for events), wi-fi or refreshment facilities and budgets would need to be adjusted to include these;
6. As per the Masterplan, significant recurring resources will be required for stewardship of the Park and these stewardship techniques are not yet in place in Birkenhead.

A “curated” approach to the track level of the Park was therefore considered by the Panel as an option.

This curated approach would divert some of the capital construction resources from the track level to the street level to encourage active travel through an integrated Park and street level route. The track level would have curated access. Curated access would produce minimum interference with the current eco-systems that have grown up over 30 years of under-use; it would maintain and enhance the biodiversity with specialised scientific studies (both voluntary and professional) and encourage appropriate cultural, heritage, arts and performance activities within a precious, managed place that includes natural botanical, wildlife and human activities.

Viewing points opened at bridge crossings at street level would greatly enhance the amenity of the street, increasing the attraction of active travel, by offering ‘seeing and listening’ links between activities at the track level and the street level with stopping / observation locations along the length of the park. These activities would be highly varied and include groups and individuals, with larger events set within longer term programming and smaller

ones arranged almost spontaneously by appointment with the curator with daily changes depending on weather and other factors.

Examples of activities promoting the Culture of Stewardship, that could be developed, tested and refined as part of the legacy of 2024 Wirral Borough of Culture, include:

1. On-going scientific studies – plants, animals, insects, etc. with opportunities for professional / voluntary / educational visits to meet specialists;
2. On-going food production – honey, edible plants, chickens, eggs, etc. and associated active, careful tending;
3. Regular or sporadic guided walking tours for individuals and organised groups, by day and night;
4. Performances by local and visiting musicians – either at a single, street level viewing / listening point or moving from location to location at track level;
5. Drama productions – either at a single, street level viewing / listening point or moving from location to location at track level;
6. Installations by local and visiting artists, clustered around street level viewing / listening points;
7. Special occasions – a birthday picnic with music – an anniversary celebration – for individuals, couples, families, friends, colleagues;
8. Use of restricted-access, domestic-type facilities to accommodate the scientists, artists, track level visitors and the existing informal habitation of the track level, with mutually written and agreed stewardship arrangements and codes of conduct in place, developed, tested and refined as part of the 2024 Wirral Borough of Culture to ensure mutual and public benefit;
9. Useful art – whereby a lift, for example, is inspired by artists collaborating with engineers and apprentices, designed to travel on existing rails and available at several locations for full accessibility;
10. Training and practice for all interested people in all of the above.

ANNEX 2 TYPOGRAPHICAL / GRAMMATICAL / FACTUAL POINTS TO BE CONSIDERED FOR EASE OF READING

GENERALLY – Every paragraph should be numbered please, for ease of reference.

Paragraph 2

Why is “transfor-mation” hyphenated?

Why does “Wirral Councils” not have an apostrophe?

1.1.3 Why does “The Councils” not have an apostrophe? (Heading and line 1).

If it is the ‘left bank’ of the Mersey, Bromborough to New Brighton would be the order, not New Brighton to Bromborough.

2.1.2 Paragraph 1 line 3; “has” should read “was” and in line 6, “is” is needed between “Priory” and “the”.

Paragraph 4 line 4; “driving” should be “drove”.

2.1.4 Paragraph 5 line 3; What is the “volume natural surfaces”? A surface has an area. Is it the number or size of natural surfaces that is being discussed?

2.2.1 Paragraph 1 line 10 “are” should read “is”.

Paragraph 2 line 4 “enable” should read “enables”.

Paragraph 2 line 11 “have” should read “has”.

Paragraph 4 line 5 “have” should read “has”.

Paragraph 12 line 2 “favours” should read “favour”.

Paragraph 15 line 1 “has” should read “have”.

3.2.1 Paragraph 6; line 4 “A” should be omitted at the beginning of the sentence.

4.4.4 2. “Rendell” should read “Rendel”.

ANNEX 3 EXAMPLES OF MASTERPLAN LANGUAGE FOUND BY THE COMMUNITY PANEL TO BE INAPPROPRIATE, WITH REASONS

The Community Panel understands that the Masterplan may need to provide technical information for specialist use; however, to meet the conditions of the Wirral Compact, any departure from plain English must be acknowledged and carefully explained. The present edition contains no coherent system in the document to enable Community Panel readers to find answers to questions such as “What does SuDS mean?” Whilst this abbreviation is indicated in the Contents page, Panel readers would find it helpful if the Masterplan included a glossary of all technical terms, acronyms and abbreviations that remain in the document following the removal of any verbose, speculative, pretentious or otherwise unessential departures from plain English.

Below is a list of used terms that the Community Panel readers find to be inappropriate for this document which it understands is designed to be community facing and promoting of citizen stewardship.

Usage of language other than plain English without explanation moves the Masterplan away from Birkenhead and, when considered alongside the illustrations, it takes the document into a generic wonderland of pastel shades that is un-relatable to on the ground.

5.1.1 Compact infill development (is this squeezing in buildings where there's space?)

Tenures and dwelling sizes (do people in Birkenhead live or dwell?)

Fine grain buildings and fine grain network (what is a fine grain building?)

5.1.2 “The urban design framework opposite...should provide key design cues” (It is a very poorly zoomed in map, so what do these cues look like?)

5.1.3 “Typologies”(system of dividing into types -does this just mean different types of building?)

Point blocks and linear blocks (What do they look like to someone in Birkenhead? Panel readers have no idea.)

“Consistent mid rise datum” (ditto “Typologies” above.)

“Massing” (Is that just what it looks like in 3 dimensions?)

“Townscape”–“Proposals should enhance this established character”. An important part of this Masterplan is to explain why this is, and where are pictures to illustrate what this Georgian and Victorian Character manifests as in Birkenhead?)

“Rectilinear” is a lovely word meaning made up of straight lines, but to Community Panel readers it is not common parlance. Part of Birkenhead’s character includes buildings that are not made up of straight lines and this should be respected.

“Massing should *respond* to the geometry of the site in which it sits” Panel Members found that it would be helpful if the Masterplan showed examples of buildings (particularly local examples) which respond to the geometry of the site and those that do not.

5.1.4 “principal movement route” (The Community Panel has been told by a community member to 'jog on' when Argyle Street was described as such.)

The Community Panel has photos available of community cinemas on the Wirral and a similar comment applies to the barbershop photo, for example. The Panel is concerned that the Masterplan consultants have failed to listen carefully and recognise the community and local business aspects of central Birkenhead. It is of particular concern that this matter has been raised many times and ignored without any reason having been given.

“There is scope to encourage convergence between Birkenhead’s burgeoning sectoral strengths”. The Community Panel cannot understand why a real positive opportunity is being hidden with verbose vocabulary.

“Spill out” (Community Panel readers found that spilling only has negative connotations around Birkenhead). Spilling out sounds dreadfully messy but it is used multiple times for different things.

5.1.7 “Deeper pavements” is confusing. Is this intended to mean “wider pavements”? If so, the Masterplan should use the correct terminology.

Are the listed species in any of the photos? If so, they are not identified but could usefully be.

“Rain gardens” and “gabions”. These do not appear to the Community Panel to be shown in the images on the page.

The Panel is unaware that the “Playful artworks” photo is local, although it refers to “working with local artists, manufacturers and fabricators”. Community Panel readers feel that ignoring local examples creates an impression that local endeavours are not important.

“Synergy” – Community Panel members would prefer language that is more comprehensible and less scientific.

5.2.1 There are big opportunities in this section to communicate the plans in a way that would have a positive impact on some of the issues people in Birkenhead really care about on a day to day basis. The mention of a microgrid is great, but perhaps the language of money and savings and financial sustainability/resilience could be included here as a very powerful encouragement, benefiting people's mental health.

“Urban bosque” is not defined – what is it please?

3.2.1, 4.2.3 “Industrious activities”

“Industrious” is applied to people who are diligent and hard working; is the Masterplan confusing “industrious” with “industrial” or “light industrial”? If not, many local diligent and hard working activities have been omitted.

5.2.3 “On plot undercroft parking” (no one from the community can tell the Panel what that might mean).

“Low threshold enterprise spaces” (These would need definition).

Under Typologies it says “residential ground floors should be designed as housefronts.... a sense of ownership over the public realm”. The Panel understands this to be diametrically opposed to the language used under the Townscape sub heading 'establish a consistent tight building line with a modest, defensible boundary' and could be construed as disingenuous, particularly in relation to the use of these places by children and vulnerable adults.

5.2.4 Front doors onto streets and doorstep play (as per 5.2.3, this is unclear and the perception of this already in Birkenhead is that it's not safe and its inclusion appears to depart from the provision of any defensible space.)

5.2.5 Built Form – this term is vague – could it please be explained for community understanding?

5.3.1 Last paragraph “spills up” from the cutting, and “spills out” from the transport museum (whose future at Dock Branch now appears to be uncertain. As stated previously, to Community Panel readers the terms suggest there will be so much going on that it all overflows – could the intended meaning be better explained to communities?

MAPS

The Community Panel also found the following general points about the maps used in the Masterplan which are extremely unclear to Community Panel readers who have taken time to study and analyse the document in considerable detail.

Are those little clock symbols which appear on some but not all maps (with no North/South designated) supposed to be the compass? Although this may be considered a small thing, some people won't get it and the Masterplan must be designed to not confuse. The Wirral Local Plan is referred to in the Masterplan. Local Plan maps use the normal convention of North to the top of the map. Ordnance Survey maps and on-line maps with which people are familiar are also oriented with North to the top of the page and for any comparative purpose that would be preferred.

Further confusion arises when the three dimensional map shown on pages 163 and 164 is set at a completely different angle from the other maps in the Masterplan and those in the

Local Plan, Ordnance Survey and on-line maps; on the three dimensional map, no compass is shown at all.

Keys/Legends have things on them that are not on the corresponding maps.

No consideration appears to have been given to colour blindness or monochrome reproduction. Hatching or other patterning would help to clarify what is intended by the authors.

Items such as Linear Blocks and Villas on maps are almost the same colour; there is no need for the confusion.

It is not clear why some views towards landmarks include “height sensitive location” and others do not. It is also unclear why some views towards landmarks refer to “Draft Birkenhead Design Guide” and others to “Birkenhead Character Study & Dock Branch Neighbourhood Masterplan analysis”.

Map in 4.5.2 appears to be incomplete. Some views are numbered and appear (without explanation) to relate to the numbered photographs that precede the map, but other views are unexplained, unnumbered and no photographs are shown.

Map 2 in 5.1.3 shows an unidentified landmark and a view towards a landmark, however the view does not appear to the Panel to relate to the landmark at all.

Second map for 5.3.3 has a 'Landmark' on it with one narrow view towards it. Views towards other landmarks are shown but no reference is made to indicate what any of the landmarks are. No “height sensitive location” is shown on this map.

Not all maps have street names on them, which isn't helpful for orientation.

The Panel readers fail to see how many photos relate to the maps on the same pages.

Maps and diagrams are not numbered or otherwise identified for ease of reference, adding to the confusing nature of the document for the Community Panel readers, local communities and communities of interest to whom the Panel relates.