

**LIVERPOOL MARITIME MERCANTILE CITY WORLD HERITAGE SITE  
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT – LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL  
CONSULTATION – WIRRAL COUNCIL RESPONSE**

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**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Liverpool City Council has issued a consultation draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on the Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site (WHS), which includes the Liverpool Waterfront and parts of Liverpool City Centre. The Liverpool Waterfront has a buffer zone extending to the centre of the River Mersey, with rigorous controls on development to be provided in that zone by policies in the emerging Liverpool Local Development Framework. The City Council's draft SPD sets out a more detailed planning policy framework for the WHS, which has an overall aim of encouraging economic regeneration, whilst ensuring the protection of the outstanding universal value of the WHS.
- 1.2 Consultation responses are required by 14<sup>th</sup> April and Cabinet is asked to agree that the comments of the Director of Corporate Services within this report form the response to Liverpool City Council on the Liverpool World Heritage Site Supplementary Planning Document.

**2. The Consultation Supplementary Planning Document Outlined**

- 2.1 The Liverpool WHS was defined by the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) in 2004 as: *'the supreme example of a commercial port at the time of Britain's greatest global influence'*. Both the port and parts of the city centre were included to reflect the influence on the built environment of the early development of dock construction, port management and international trading systems in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The buildings and structures of the port and the city are seen as an exceptional testimony to mercantile culture, including the slave trade and the mass emigrations to the New World.
- 2.2 The WHS covers the majority of Liverpool City Centre and its central docks north to Stanley Dock and south to Wapping Dock. A buffer zone has been drawn to the centre of the River Mersey and across the city centre up to the Metropolitan and Anglican Cathedrals.
- 2.3 The Supplementary Planning Document was called for by UNESCO in October 2006, as a means of strengthening planning and design control over the WHS. The Liverpool City Council Unitary Development Plan (UDP) predated the WHS but the SPD has been linked to the planning policies for conservation within the UDP and also those in the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS issued September 2008) and the emerging Liverpool City Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

2.4 Liverpool City Council has set out a series of objectives for the WHS:

- i. Ensure that new developments in the WHS reflect the inherited patterns of local architectural diversity and the unique townscape and historic characteristics of each area of the WHS
- ii. Ensure that new developments protect the outstanding universal value of the WHS
- iii. Ensure that the setting of the WHS is adequately protected and that new development respects its visual and historic context
- iv. Encourage high quality developments that will stimulate city centre regeneration and enhance the profile and image of the City
- v. Safeguard the historic fabric of the WHS's historic buildings and ensure that they continue in appropriate uses
- vi. Encourage building owners and occupiers to maintain and conserve the WHS's stock of historic buildings and structures
- vii. Support the delivery of public realm schemes throughout the city centre to enhance the character of the WHS and Buffer Zone
- viii. Bring listed buildings in the WHS and its Buffer Zone that are currently 'at risk' due to under-use back into beneficial and sustainable use
- ix. Improve the character of the WHS in the long term through the sympathetic replacement of buildings that detract from its townscape character and quality
- x. Ensure that applicants engage in early pre-application discussions to assess the impact of their proposals on the outstanding universal value of the WHS and mitigation as appropriate

2.5 In addition to general policy derived from RSS and the Liverpool City development plans, the WHS has been divided into a series of 6 character areas. Specific policy is provided for 5 of these areas, as Duke Street already has its own within the Ropewalks SPD.

2.6 The WHS or its buffer zone does not extend into Wirral. However, the SPD notes the importance of views within, out of and into the WHS. Many of these important views are internal to Liverpool, from the ridge of land to the east of the city centre, framing views of the most important key buildings in the city centre and along the waterfront. Already development control decisions have been taken in Liverpool to balance the needs of economic regeneration and protection of the WHS.

2.7 The WHS SPD recognises the role of tall buildings in the economic regeneration of the City but also the impact of those tall buildings and proposes two areas within which such buildings would be acceptable. These areas are to the south of the city around Parliament Street/Chaloner Street and to the north of the city at Old Hall Street/Tithebarn Street/Pall Mall. Whilst there is already a significant cluster of tall buildings at Princes Dock, the SPD notes that any further tall building development in this area should demonstrate how it relates to the commercial quarter functionality.

2.8 Tall buildings are defined by CABE and English Heritage as buildings significantly taller than the surrounding buildings and/or buildings that have a significant impact on

the City's skyline. The SPD draws on previous work by the City Council which identified mid rise buildings as 7-15 stories (21-45 metres) and high rise buildings as 15 or more storeys (over 45 metres).

- 2.9 In addition to the key local views, there are a number of distant views identified, including from the Wirral waterfront (Vale Park New Brighton, Egremont Promenade and Woodside) and Bidston Hill.
- 2.10 Within and into the WHS, the SPD notes the importance of river views, both from the river to the WHS and the visual connections between the WHS and the river, including river views of the river from the dockyards and surviving historic buildings along the river (eg from the Pier Head) and views of the river along the east-west roads within the WHS.
- 2.11 The SPD recognises that new development within the WHS and Buffer Zone has the potential to alter the visual character of the WHS. Most significant are tall buildings and high-rise proposals. The SPD sets out the importance of bringing forward new development in Liverpool in a manner that respects the network of views to, from and within the WHS. Liverpool City Council would expect to work with developers of schemes in Liverpool at the pre-application stage to determine which views require assessment and consideration as part of the application process.
- 2.12 The City Council would also expect applications for schemes in Liverpool to clearly demonstrate in their Design and Access Statements how they have addressed potential impacts on the agreed views and the City Council will require applicants for such schemes to provide accurate visual representations showing the effect of the development on the agreed views where the City Council considers that this is necessary to assess the scale of potential change. This will always be the case with high rise and tall building proposals in Liverpool.
- 2.13 Whilst the City Council accepts that all developments have some impact upon views, the City Council would expect applications for schemes in Liverpool not to have a significant adverse impact on the key views to, from and within the WHS.
- 2.14 The relationship between the River Mersey and the WHS is a fundamental aspect of its outstanding universal value. Views over the river towards the WHS are of importance as are views from the river itself. The SPD states that it will be important to deliver riverside development within the Buffer Zone in a manner that respects the importance of views of the Pier Head buildings as the focal point for Liverpool's and the WHS's river frontage and also respects the varied skyline of the city centre, in particular views to the cathedrals, the ridge and other landmark buildings.

### **3. Director's Comments**

- 3.1 The SPD is an important policy document for Liverpool City Council, providing a link between the Management Plan required by UNESCO (prepared in 2003) and the City Council's development plan. Because the WHS declaration post-dated Liverpool City Council's UDP, policy in the UDP does not take full account of the WHS. However, the emerging Liverpool Local Development Framework Core Strategy does take account of the WHS and the SPD will therefore in time draw support from the Core Strategy. It is consistent with the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), issued in September 2008.
- 3.2 I support the WHS SPD overarching aim, which is to provide a framework for protecting and enhancing the outstanding universal value of Liverpool – Maritime

Mercantile City WHS, whilst encouraging investment and development which secures a healthy economy and supports regeneration. However, I do have concerns that the control proposed over development around the WHS and its buffer zone might impact adversely on Wirral's own regeneration efforts.

- 3.3 Members will recall that I reported on WHS issues twice last year, to Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2008 (Government consultation on the impact of significant development on WHS) and to Cabinet on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2008 on draft Communities and Local Government/English Heritage (CLG/EH) guidance. The September report identified a series of principles within the draft CLG/EH guidance, which included balancing conservation needs against access, the interests of the local community and the achievement of sustainable economic growth.
- 3.4 The Liverpool draft SPD sets out guidance in the context of that balance between conservation and economic regeneration. As the document is currently drafted, Liverpool City Council has not attempted to influence development within Wirral (including at Wirral Waters) to the detriment of those principles within Wirral. The WHS Buffer Zone is restricted to the middle of the River Mersey, which provides an adequate buffer to the WHS. Whilst it is still open to Liverpool City Council as an adjoining local planning authority to comment on individual planning applications of a significant scale, I would expect them to consider the need to provide a balanced response.
- 3.5 I have previously sought clarification from the Government on the issue of the impact of development within Wirral, outside the WHS and its Buffer Zone, on the WHS's outstanding universal value. The CLG has not responded to that request. I can only propose that in principle Wirral Council should expect that Liverpool City Council would provide a balanced response in any consultation on any significant development within Wirral outside the WHS Buffer Zone. Consistent with its previous response to CLG, Wirral Council should confirm its understanding that development outside the buffer zone, within Wirral, will not impact on the WHS.
- 3.6 In particular, it should be made clear in the strongest possible terms that the issue of views out of the WHS should not include attempts to control development within Wirral (ie outside the buffer zone). The WHS draft SPD can only be used in conjunction with Liverpool City Council's development plan and cannot be used to augment Wirral's development plan, against Wirral Council's wishes.

#### **4. Financial implications**

- 4.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

#### **5. Staffing implications**

- 5.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

#### **6. Equal Opportunities implications**

- 6.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

#### **7. Community Safety implications**

7.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

## **8. Local Agenda 21 implications**

8.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report. The protection of local heritage is, however, a significant element in the pursuit of sustainable development.

## **9. Planning implications**

9.1 When adopted the Liverpool City Council SPD will be a significant material consideration, alongside the adopted Liverpool UDP and RSS in the determination of planning applications within Liverpool. In due course, the Liverpool Local Development Framework Core Strategy will replace the Liverpool UDP and be supported by the SPD. The SPD cannot be used in conjunction with Wirral's development plan.

## **10. Anti-poverty implications**

10.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

## **11. Human Rights implications**

11.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

## **12. Social Inclusion implications**

12.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

## **13. Local Member Support implications**

13.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

## **14. Background Papers**

14.1 The following background papers have been used in the preparation of this report:

(i) Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City – World Heritage Site, Supplementary Planning Document, Consultation Draft, Liverpool City Council, March 2009

[http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/Environment/Planning/Local\\_Development\\_Framework/work\\_in\\_progress/World\\_Heritage\\_Site/index.asp](http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/Environment/Planning/Local_Development_Framework/work_in_progress/World_Heritage_Site/index.asp)

(ii) Protection of World Heritage Sites, DCLG, May 2008

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/worldheritagesitesconsultation>

(iii) Seeing the History in the View: A Method for Assessing Heritage Significance Within Views, English Heritage, April 2008

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.13380>

- (iv) Liverpool City Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy Preferred Options, March 2008  
[http://liverpool-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/cspo/cspo?pointId=project\\_15](http://liverpool-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal/planning/cspo/cspo?pointId=project_15)
- (v) North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021, Government Office for the North West, September 2008  
<http://www.gos.gov.uk/gonw/Planning/RegionalPlanning>
- (vi) Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City – Management Plan, Liverpool City Council, December 2003  
[http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/Leisure\\_and\\_culture/Tourism\\_and\\_travel/World\\_heritage\\_site/Management\\_plan/index.asp](http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/Leisure_and_culture/Tourism_and_travel/World_heritage_site/Management_plan/index.asp)

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That Cabinet agrees that this report forms the basis of Wirral Council's response to the Liverpool City Council consultation on its draft Supplementary Planning Document for the Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City World Heritage Site.
2. That Liverpool City Council be advised that Wirral Council understands that the World Heritage Supplementary Planning Document cannot be used to control development outside the buffer zone, in Wirral and that references to views out from the World Heritage Site in the draft SPD are limited to those within the City and the buffer zone.

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