

Appendix 3 – Detailed Policy/Strategy Appraisal: Document Review

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Introduction

This appendix focuses on national, regional and local policies that have a relevance to the allocation of employment land and premises. An understanding of the strategies and reports contained within this review is needed to show strategic alignment and a holistic approach to promote sustainable development. BE Group's recommendations will follow the general principles set by them. These documents have a major influence on development decisions in the Borough and include national, regional and local planning guidance together with the Regional Economic Strategy.

Planning Policy Statements/Guidance Notes

In respect of employment, national planning policy guidance points to six key areas, which will be considered in the conclusions and recommendations:

- PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development including Economic Development (2005)
- PPS3: Housing (2007)
- PPG4: Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms (1992)
- PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Development, Consultation Paper (2007)
- PPS6: Town Centres and Retail Development (2005)
- PPS7: Rural Areas (2004)
- PPG13: Transport (2001).

These guidance notes and statements are intended to assist local authority policy makers. The following key factors are important in deciding on new employment land allocations in Local Development Frameworks:

- Identify a range of sites for employment and mixed-use development
- Promote a range of new jobs, in both large and small businesses, and across different sectors
- Encourage high quality design and development
- Protect the natural environment and install mitigation measures where needed
- Provide sufficient land to meet future business and commercial requirements
- Provide land readily capable of development i.e. minimal servicing and remediation costs
- Provide sites well served by infrastructure i.e. services, communication and transport

- Utilise sustainable locations i.e. do not perpetuate use of the motorcar, rather encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking
- Avoid locations that are not well served by public transport.

Employment Land Review: Guidance Note (ODPM 2004)

Government guidance covering employment land reviews promotes a three-stage process, and provides a framework for this report.

Stage One: take stock of the existing situation including an initial assessment of 'fitness for purpose' of existing allocated employment sites. The objective is to identify the best employment sites to be protected; identify employment sites to be released and prepare an effective brief for Stages Two and Three of the review. The outcome of Stage One is to understand key employment land supply issues and generate a portfolio of potential employment sites to take forward for more detailed review.

Stage Two: to understand the future quantity of land required across the main business sectors; to provide a breakdown of that analysis in terms of quality and location and to provide an indication of 'gaps' in supply through economic forecasting, consideration of recent trends and/or assessment of local property market circumstances. The outcomes of this stage are broad quantitative employment land requirements across the principal market segments covering the plan period and an analysis of the likely 'gaps' in supply that need to be filled.

Stage Three: this entails a qualitative review of all significant sites (and premises) in the existing portfolio in order to: confirm which of them are unsuitable for/unlikely to continue in employment use; to establish the extent of 'gaps' in the portfolio; and if necessary, identify additional sites to be allocated or safeguarded. The outcome will be the completion of the employment land review, to be taken forward in the development plan.

Northern Way Growth Strategy (NWDA, 2005)

The Northern Way places Wirral in the Liverpool/Merseyside City Region. The Liverpool City Region Development Plan (LCRDP) sets out key deliverable targets over the next 20 years, through four strategic themes. These include:

- A premier destination city-region driven by Liverpool Capital of Culture 2008; a revitalised Liverpool city centre with the Paradise Street retail development; the city region's outstanding sport and leisure facilities; the heritage attractions of the City of Chester; the Merseyside Waterfront Regional Park, including the classic resort of

Southport, supported by a dynamic tourism strategy. Priorities for action include an international, national and North of England marketing strategy to promote the city region's world-class culture and leisure offer

- A connected city region whose role as a destination centre, the sea and air gateway to the North West and North Wales and fast growing economy, require enhanced transport infrastructure. Priorities for action include: the approval of the Mersey Gateway Bridge (the second river crossing); expansion of Liverpool John Lennon Airport (including trans-Atlantic connections) and the Port of Liverpool; improved road and rail connections with Manchester and Liverpool; and the multi-modal west-east axis through to Ireland and North America and via Hull to North Europe
- A creative and competitive city region, with priorities for action building on existing internationally significant knowledge economy assets to create a world class R&D and innovation base through the universities, Liverpool Science Park, National Biomanufacturing Centre in Speke and Daresbury Science and Research Park
- A city region of sustainable communities, with a diverse quality housing offer and thriving urban neighbourhoods with excellent schools and local amenities and a sustainable critical mass of population. Action priorities include housing market renewal, via the New Heartlands Pathfinder and measures to build socially and economically inclusive communities.

Regional Economic Strategy 2006-2020 (NWDA, 2006)

The fundamental purpose of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) is to improve economic performance and enhance the region's competitiveness.

The RES and Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) provide the context for economic and spatial development in the region. While the RSS focuses on spatial and land-use related issues, the RES provides the policy context for economic issues as they relate to development and regeneration.

The vision of the RES is to create "*a dynamic, sustainable international economy which competes on the basis of knowledge, advanced technology and an excellent quality of life for all where:*

- *Productivity and enterprise levels are high, in a low carbon economy, driven by innovation, leadership excellence and high skills*
- *Manchester and Liverpool are vibrant European cities and, with Preston, are key drivers of city-regional growth*

- *Growth opportunities around Crewe, Chester, Warrington, Lancaster and Carlisle are fully developed*
- *Key growth assets are fully utilised (priority sectors, the higher education and science base, ports/airports, strategic regional sites, the natural environment especially The Lake District, and the rural economy)*
- *The economies of East Lancashire, Blackpool, Barrow and West Cumbria are regenerated*
- *Employment rates are high and concentrations of low employment are eliminated.”*

The RES identifies three key drivers to achieve this:

- Improve productivity and grow the market
- Grow the size and capability of the workforce
- Create and maintain the conditions for sustainable growth.

With regards to enterprise, the RES states the need to develop key internationally competitive sectors and sectors with large and widespread employment.

In order to develop key internationally competitive sectors, the RES recognizes the need to undertake cluster programmes in priority sectors to develop higher value activity, improve productivity and identify future growth opportunities from converging markets/technologies including:

- Biomedical – biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and medical devices
- Energy and Environmental Technologies
- Advanced Engineering and Materials – chemicals, aerospace, automotive, advanced flexible materials
- Food and Drink
- Digital and Creative Industries
- Business and Professional Services.

In order to develop sectors with widespread employment, the RES recommends the need to develop skills and procurement initiatives, connect jobs with people and influence government policy to support:

- Maritime, Distribution, Aviation – logistics
- Construction – design, building construction, civil engineering and maintenance
- Visitor Economy
- Retail

- Public sector
- Care/Healthcare.

The RES identifies 25 strategic regional sites across the region. Wirral has two sites on this list – Wirral International Business Park (WIBP), Bromborough and Twelve Quays, Birkenhead. With regards to employment land, the strategy refers to the need to deliver the designated strategic regional sites. The 25 designated sites are intended to:

- Encourage knowledge-based industry to develop within and close to areas of regeneration need
- Build on the region’s existing ‘knowledge’ assets, including universities and clusters of knowledge-based industries
- Develop strategic distribution facilities, particularly rail and seaport related.

The RES identifies the need for ensuring appropriate land use – both in terms of brownfield and new employment sites. The priorities for the use of land are shown in Table A3.1.

Table A3.1 – RES Land Use Priorities

Action	Reason
Deliver high quality employment sites and premises:	
Deliver the designated strategic regional sites as regional investment sites, knowledge nuclei or intermodal freight terminals	These sites provide a portfolio of opportunities to support knowledge-based growth, key sectors, sustainable freight distribution and economic restructuring
Identify and pursue reserve sites for major investment that would not otherwise take place in the North West in: - manufacturing - knowledge based industry, corporate headquarters and R&D	Evidence indicates potential future demand and a shortage of suitable sites
Develop a portfolio of sub-regionally important employment sites	Sub-regional sites will complement the existing regional sites to generate employment growth, especially where they are accessible to areas of worklessness
Secure new uses for brownfield land:	
Invest in quality business accommodation/workspace focused on: - HMR/URC areas - rural areas	These areas need quality accommodation to stimulate demand/enable growth. In rural areas this includes examining the feasibility of establishing more co-located office hubs, which allow local access to multi-use workspace/hot-desks
Develop new uses for brownfield land – including housing and the creation of new strategic greenspace	The region has the largest stock of brownfield land of any English region. Much of it will not find employment use again so new uses are needed to turn it into an asset

Source: *Regional Economic Strategy 2006*

With regards to the LCRDP, the strategy provides a list of the key assets and opportunities:

- Strong concentrations of high added-value activity in life sciences, digital/media, advanced engineering (including automotive), and chemical sectors. Other key clusters including maritime and tourism
- Quality business locations
- Significant knowledge assets in life sciences and health research
- Key gateway for trade and people into the North through the Port of Liverpool, and Liverpool John Lennon Airport
- Mersey Rail network and inter-city rail and motorway connections
- Critical mass of culture, sporting, heritage, leisure, natural environment and retail assets
- European Capital of Culture 2008 status as a key catalyst for the region and UK
- Key business tourism destination.

Conversely, the key challenges are:

- Need to continue to accelerate economic recovery and urban renaissance, given a continuing gap in underlying economic performance
- High concentrations of economically inactive people
- High concentrations of those with low levels of qualifications
- Delivery of major transport and infrastructure investments, including the Second Mersey Crossing
- Need to drive up productivity - including accelerated actions on skills and business formation
- Imperative of balancing growth with creation of sustainable communities.

North West Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (NWRA 2008)

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) was published at the end of September 2008. It provides a framework for development and investment in the North West over the next fifteen to twenty years.

A separate Implementation Framework is being prepared by the Regional Planning Body to provide more detail on methods for the delivery of RSS; the agencies that will carry it out; targets to be met and arrangements for monitoring progress. This is likely to address how sub-regional employment land allocations are to be distributed at individual local authority levels.

The RSS acknowledges that the strength of the regional economy is vital to the prosperity and quality of life of its residents. Therefore the following key objectives have been identified:

- Build on the region's economic strengths, particularly the opportunities which exist in the three city regions of Manchester, Liverpool and Central Lancashire
- Identify a range of significant investment opportunities for both existing and new inward and indigenous businesses and support important business sectors identified as transformational in the RES
- Ensure that a forward supply of business land is identified in each sub-region to ensure that growth of the economy is not constrained – but recognising that this should be an upper limit to encourage the best and most sustainable sites to be retained for employment uses, while at the same time allowing for less appropriate sites to be used for other land uses, both built and open
- Achieve wider social benefits, and more sustainable travel patterns, by linking new jobs opportunities with disadvantaged communities
- Make town and city centres the focus of retail, leisure and office development to underpin their vitality and viability and their role at the heart of sustainable communities.

The RSS identifies five sub-area Priority Areas, one of which is the Liverpool City Region. Wirral is included in the Liverpool City Region sub-area.

The key policies with relevance to employment land policy and provision are summarised.

Policy DP6 Marry Opportunity and Need

DP6 states that priority should be given, in locational choices and investment decisions, to linking areas of economic opportunity with areas in greatest need of restructuring and regeneration. Proximity to, access via public transport from, such areas will be important considerations in the choice of employment locations and sites.

Policy RDF1 Spatial Properties

This policy sets the regional centres of Manchester and Liverpool as the first priority for growth and development. Second priority is the inner areas surrounding them (with particular emphasis on Housing Market Renewal areas). Wirral east of the M53 is defined as being within the Liverpool City Region Inner Area.

This policy is the cornerstone of the RSS. It will guide decision-making and the targeting of resources in connection with the location of employment land.

Policy W1 Strengthening the Regional Economy

RSS acknowledges the North West requires a range of sites with influences at different spatial levels:

- Regionally significant – a limited number as a result of the type of development accommodated and the location e.g. sites to meet key growth sectors, knowledge nuclei, inward investment and headquarters functions. It should be noted that inter-modal freight terminals, previously considered within the region's strategic employment sites are now excluded and dealt with as part of transport policy, RT8. (for this study this applies to Birkenhead Waterfront and Eastham Docks – Wirral Waterfront SIA)
- Sub-regional – sites, which sit below and play a complementary role to the regional significant employment sites. These have the potential to make a significant contribution to the growth of the sub-regional economy. The RSS does not specifically address the location of these sites, but the amount of land required is set out in Policy W3.
- Local – provision of a wide range of sites to support the development of a diversified local economy, ensuring there is access to a range of job opportunities for the local population. Policy W3 also covers the requirement for this local employment land.

Policy W2 Locations for Regionally Significant Economic Development

Policy W2 addresses locations for regionally significant economic development. It states that sites will be identified in Local Development Documents, with the Regional Planning Body working with NWDA, GONW and partners to identify sites within the broad locations mentioned in Policy W2. The locations cited include the urban areas of Liverpool City Region.

RSS acknowledges some of these sites will be new. Others may be the Strategic Regional Sites previously identified by NWDA as being critical to the delivery of the RES (for this study these include Wirral International Business Park and Twelve Quays).

Policy W2 does state that sites for regionally significant office development should be located in accordance with the sequential approach in PPS6. For this study this means

focusing on that part of the Wirral defined as falling within Liverpool City Region's Inner Area.

Policy W3 Supply of Employment Land

Policy W3 deals with the supply of employment land, although it sets supply requirements only at the level of the five sub regions. For this study it means there needs to be recognition of the figures for Merseyside and Halton, as provision is not aligned to the Liverpool City Region.

RSS states local planning authorities should undertake a comprehensive review of commitments, to secure a portfolio of sites that complies with the spatial development principles set out in Policy DP1-9, RDF1 and sub-regional policies. To this end, planning authorities should ensure:

- The most appropriate range of sites, in terms of market attractiveness (and social, environmental, economic sustainability) are safeguarded for employment use
- These sites can meet the full range of needs, and are actively marketed
- At least 30 percent of sites are available at any one time
- The amount of brownfield land uses is maximised, reflecting likely increases in supply available as a result of economic restructuring
- Consideration is given to mixed-use development, particularly within centres and on larger sites
- Appropriate provision is made in Key Service Centres and the re-use of agricultural buildings is fully considered to facilitate the growth and diversification of the rural economy
- The implications of home working on the scale and location of future employment land requirements are considered
- The portfolio should be reviewed every three years, to ensure there is not an over- or under-allocation of land in relation to the actual scale of economic growth.

RSS Table 6.1 sets out the provision of employment land for the period 2005-2021. The figures for Merseyside and Halton have been extracted, and are detailed below.

Table A3.2 – RSS Employment Land Provision Extracts

	Merseyside & Halton
2005 Supply (ha)	1234
Current take-up pa (ha)	76

	Merseyside & Halton
Projected increase in take-up (%)	18.5
Projected take-up pa (ha)	90
Need 2005-2021 (ha)	1440
Extra allocation required	206
Flexibility Factor (%)	20
Need 2005-2021 (incorporating flexibility factor) (ha)	1728
Extra allocation required (incorporating flexibility factor) (ha)	494

Source: NW RSS, NWRA, 2008

The following points need to be noted about Policy W3:

- It focuses only on B1, B2, B8 land use allocations
- The need figures include regionally significant economic development (but not inter-modal freight terminals); sub-regional and local sites
- 'Available' site is defined as fully serviced, actively marketed or likely to be fully serviced and actively marketed in the next three years
- Portfolios should reflect the continuing economic restructure, which is likely to result in declining need for B2 and significant increased demand for B1 uses
- The inclusion of a 20 percent flexibility factor for Merseyside & Halton reflects the degree of uncertainty in establishing employment land requirements. It also recognises there may be, exceptionally, need to provide extra land to take account of special circumstances e.g. particular company expansion requirements, or the realisation of significant inward investment potential
- The split of figures for each sub-region, by local authority area, will require local authorities and other partners to work together to decide. The Regional Planning Body will facilitate this approach.

Policy W4 Release of Allocated Employment Land

Policy W4 deals with the release of allocated employment land. RSS acknowledges the demand for employment land to be released for other uses is particularly strong in parts of the North West, though Wirral is not included in the list of locations where there is strong demand for employment land to be released.

Policy W4 states that where sites are to be de-allocated, (following the review process defined in Policy W3) consideration should be given to a range of alternative uses. These should including housing and soft end uses. And in de-allocating sites local authorities should consider the need to create and sustain mixed-use communities.

The Liverpool City Region: Transforming Our Economy – The Strategic Proposals (The Mersey Partnership, 2005)

The vision for the LCRDP is to “*regain our status as a premier European city region by 2025. We will secure an internationally competitive economy and cultural offer; and outstanding quality of life; and vibrant communities contributing to and sharing in sustainable wealth creation.*” The LCRDP identifies six strategic priority themes for action:

- The city region as a premier destination centre with an exceptional critical mass of cultural, heritage, leisure and sports attractions
- The well connected city region – the sea gateway to the North West, connecting North America, Ireland and Northern Europe through the Liverpool to Hull Northern Way – and serving international, national and regional markets, investors and visitors through its ports and John Lennon Airport, road, rail and ICT connections
- The creative and competitive city region, with a world class science, innovation and R&D base, 21st century business environments, and employment and productivity levels on a par with the UK
- A city region of talented and able people – with a highly skilled and flexible workforce and full employment in every community
- A city region of sustainable neighbourhoods and communities, with high quality housing, liveability and health standards, celebrating cultural diversity, excellent public services and social inclusion
- Delivering the city region strategy – with high quality foresight and intelligence, effective strategic leadership, governance, collaboration and deliver.

Action Plan for the Liverpool City Region (Merseyside Sub-Regional Partnership, 2007)

The Action Plan sets out the investment framework to deliver economic growth over the period 2008 to 2011 and is therefore relevant to Wirral.

‘Generating Enterprise’ is the key priority, in order to make up an acute deficiency in the volume of high value businesses. It is estimated the LCR needs 11,000 new businesses to bring parity to the UK in terms of business density. The short-term challenge is to grow the business base through increased business start-ups and improved survival rates.

Both have implications for employment premises provision, linking with priorities for business infrastructure in the form of suitable incubation and grow-on space.

'Creating a Demand-led Infrastructure' is also an identified priority. Whilst it is noted substantial progress has been made over the past five years in bringing forward a suitable supply of 'investor –ready' sites and premises, there is still need to continue to provide the right conditions for further investment. This applies to new inward investors to strengthen the business base, and to speculative property developers.

The Action Plan schedules investment requirements for sites seen as important to LCR. These include the following:

- RV Chemicals Site, Wirral International Business Park
- Birkenhead Enterprise & Business Zone
- Wirral Strategic Investment Site
- Wirral Waters
- Woodside Waterfront

The Mersey Ports Growth Strategy 2006 (Mersey Maritime, 2006)

The strategy provides the following vision – *“for Merseyside to be the best business environment in the UK for the ports and maritime sector by 2020.”* The strategy states that the Mersey ports are a dynamic and growing sector of the region's economy and the current climate for growth is set to continue. The following objectives are identified:

- Develop a world class maritime cluster
- Maximise growth of global traffic through the Mersey ports
- Grow market share for cargo and containers
- Develop the Mersey ports as the central hub for feeder services to the UK west coast and Ireland
- Increase scope and depth of Liverpool's maritime services
- Develop Liverpool as a home port for cruise liners
- Identify key sites for expansion of value-added logistics services
- Develop a 'super port'.

The following threats are identified, which are relevant to this employment land review study:

- Insufficient available land for supply chain development
- Local road and rail network inadequate
- Lack of support for suitable supporting infrastructure.

The strategy's key priorities include addressing the above threats through obtaining suitable land for supply chain development and improving road and rail access infrastructure.

Reference is made to a number of significant private sector investment and appropriate public sector intervention projects that will help safeguard existing business, and facilitate significant growth of the Port and related facilities. These include the Birkenhead Branch increased rail capacity for port expansion.

Second Local Transport Plan for Merseyside 2006 – 2011 (The Mersey Transport Partnership, 2006)

The strategy aims to support the following priorities:

- The economic growth areas:
 - Liverpool City Centre
 - Liverpool John Lennon Airport
 - Mersey Ports
 - Strategic Investment Areas
- Sustainable Communities
- Capital of Culture and Tourism.

With regards to Birkenhead Docks, the strategy states that the site already has good connections to the national motorway network and there are proposals to reconnect Birkenhead Freeport to the rail network. The growth and increasing diversity of cargoes handled at Birkenhead Docks create a platform for the transfer of cargo from road to rail, and the restoration of the rail freight link is seen as an important aspect of continued development to improve transport links in the area. Recent investigations have concluded that minimal work is required to reintroduce rail freight operations, which makes the scheme very desirable.

The following key accessibility issues that are relevant to Wirral include:

- Poor access to employment opportunities on WIBP
- Poor cross boundary linkages to Deeside Industrial Park, Chester Business Park and Cheshire Oaks
- Poor accessibility to post 16 education at Wirral Met Twelve Quays site
- Poor links for many parts of Wirral to its major hospital at Arrowe Park
- Lack of evening public transport services.

The strategy refers to accessibility audits that have been completed using Accession in order to produce a series of maps showing accessibility by public transport to major employment sites, main hospitals, GP surgeries, colleges and main shopping centres across Merseyside

over a number of different time periods agreed with partners to reflect main journey patterns. Initial analysis of the results confirm that it is the 'Pathways Areas' that are suffering the most from poor accessibility to key opportunities and sites. Results from Accession have started to highlight specific accessibility problems i.e. poor accessibility to Chester Business Park from Wirral.

Wirral's Economic Strategy states that there are 13 designated pathways areas in the Borough. These areas have the greatest deprivation and therefore exhibit the greatest need for measures aimed at improving employability and quality of life. They are predominantly along the A41 and M53 corridors and cover the following areas:

- Egremont
- Seacombe/Poulton
- North and Central Birkenhead
- Tranmere/Rock Ferry
- Town Lane Bebington
- Bromborough
- Mill Park Eastham
- Leasowe
- North Moreton
- Sandbrook
- Beechwood/Ballantyne
- Woodchurch
- Prenton Dell Estate.

Wirral Access Plan (WMBC, 2006)

The Access Plan was developed alongside the Merseyside Local Transport Plan to assess the ability of people to access basic facilities including employment, education, health and local facilities, i.e. shopping. Where accessibility is found to be poor, the Access Plan proposes solutions.

The role of the Wirral Access Plan is to demonstrate how the objectives and priorities of the Merseyside Accessibility Strategy will be implemented and delivered in Wirral.

Of particular interest to this study is the level of accessibility by public transport to employment areas.

The Plan states that Wirral has a shortage of employment opportunities resulting in the need for residents to travel further to work. However, the plan also comments that the definition of employment areas and what constitutes an employment area is difficult to gain consensus on. In terms of mapping accessibility to employment it should be highlighted that the software only takes into account nearest employer and does not take into account employee skills that may be required or indeed whether there are actually any jobs available at the location.

The Plan identified the following employment destinations:

- Major business parks
- Wirral Waterfront Strategic Investment Area (WWSIA)
- Employers in Wirral with more than 50 employers
- Accessibility to known major employment area (Cheshire Oaks, Ellesmere Port Industrial Areas and Deeside Industrial Estate).

The Plan makes the following comments:

- Accessibility to Deeside is extremely poor or virtually impossible. Journey times are in excess of 70 minutes
- Only eight percent of the population (those living on the southern end of the A41 corridor) can access Cheshire Oaks within 40 minutes. Accessibility is the worst in West Wirral and Wallasey with journey times averaging over 100 minutes
- 36 percent of the population can access the major businesses parks within 20 minutes. The greater journey times are experienced by those living in Wallasey and parts of West Wirral
- Accessibility to Wirral Waterfront is very good (74 percent) and excellent (98 percent) within 40 minutes. For many areas on the western side of the Borough this journey is closer to an hour.

Other issues include:

- People are unwilling to travel for more than 30 minutes on public transport
- Majority of jobs on Deeside or Cheshire Oaks are relatively low paid. Taken into account with the length, reliability and cost of public transport, this can be a barrier to people taking up opportunities
- There is a need to recognise that Wirral is not self contained, there is a shortage of employment opportunities within the Borough and Liverpool. Cheshire and Flintshire will continue to be destinations with available employment opportunities.

The Plan provides a list of key actions that are devised to resolve issues with public transport. All action points focus on improving and increasing the public transport service and increasing awareness. There is no mention of the need to support further economic development in existing clusters or to direct future employment development to where public transport routes already exist.

The Mersey Ports Growth Strategy (Mersey Maritime, 2007)

The strategy provides the following vision “...for Merseyside to be the best business environment in the UK for the ports and maritime sector by 2020.” The strategy states that the Mersey ports are a dynamic and growing sector of the region’s economy and the current climate for growth is set to continue. The following objectives are identified:

- Develop a world class maritime cluster
- Maximise growth of global traffic through the Mersey ports
- Grow market share for cargo and containers
- Develop the Mersey ports as the central hub for feeder services to the UK west coast and Ireland
- Increase scope and depth of Liverpool’s maritime services
- Develop Liverpool as a home port for cruise liners
- Identify key sites for expansion of value-added logistics services
- Develop a ‘super port’.

The following threats are identified which are relevant to this study:

- Insufficient available land for supply chain development
- Lack of support for suitable supporting infrastructure.

There is no specific reference to the Wirral ports. The following key priorities are identified:

- Obtain suitable land for supply chain development
- Improve road and rail access infrastructure.

Unitary Development Plan for Wirral (WMBC, 2000)

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) for Wirral was adopted in February 2000. From May 2005, the UDP will be progressively replaced by a series of Local Development Documents prepared as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) for Wirral, introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The policies and proposals of the adopted UDP were initially 'saved', to remain in force until 2003. The saved policies that are relevant to this study are shown in Table A3.3.

Table A3.3 – Development and Urban Regeneration

Policy	Proposals
URN1	Full and effective use is made of land within the urban areas
	Neglected, unused or derelict land or buildings are brought into use
	The need for new services is minimised by promoting the use of spare capacity in existing services

Source: UDP for Wirral 2000

The UDP identified a total of 185 ha of land to be allocated for employment uses. This is made up of the following:

- Two special development opportunity sites in the Birkenhead area totalling 63.8 ha
- 99 ha for general employment uses principally in the Birkenhead, Wallasey, and Bromborough areas
- 21.6 ha for the expansion of existing firms.

Based on an average annual take up rate of 7.8 ha, the UDP recommends that a total of 117 ha of land is provided for employment use. Although historical take-up rates provide a general indication of levels of activity in the Borough, they are not necessarily a reliable guide to future rates of development. There are also other factors that need to be considered in assessing employment land requirements, including:

- The desirability of providing a range of sites in locations attractive to investors
- The high levels of unemployment and low mobility in the Borough's inner urban areas
- The needs of existing Wirral firms who might wish to expand their activities.

The UDP also comments that the type of site most attractive to some investors may not necessarily be in a location which will maximise urban regeneration benefits or which will be accessible to people without access to a car.

Tables A3.4 to A3.7 provide greater detail on the 185.0 ha of land allocated for employment use.

Table A3.4 – UDP Special Development Opportunity Sites

Proposal	Site	Size, ha	Allocation
EM1	Former Cammell Laird's Shipyard	57.0 (now 24.5)	Mix of B1 (Business), B2 (General Industry), B8 (Storage and Distribution) and D2 (Assembly and Leisure) uses
EM2	Conway Park	6.8 (now 1.66)	Mix of B1 (Business), A2 (Financial and Professional Services), A3 (Food and Drink), D1 (Non-Residential Institutions) and D2 (Assembly and Leisure) uses

Proposal	Site	Size, ha	Allocation
Sub Total		63.8	

Source: UDP for Wirral 2000

Wirral MBC now advise that of these sites, only 26.2 ha remain available for development.

Table A3.5 – Land for General Employment Use (Large Sites – 10 ha and above)

Number	Site	Size, ha	Allocation
1	Twelve Quays, Birkenhead (subject to Coastal Zone Policy CO1 and CO3)	16.3 (now 2.51)	B1, B2 or B8
2	Croft Business Park, Bromborough	11.5 (now 0.00)	B1, B2 or B8
3	Former Power Station, Power Road, Bromborough (subject to Coastal Zone Policy CO1 and CO3)	10.5 (now 2.93)	B1, B2 or B8
Sub Total		38.3	

Source: UDP for Wirral 2000

Wirral MBC now advise that of these sites only 5.4 ha remain undeveloped.

Table A3.6 – Land for General Employment Use (Medium Sized Sites 5-10 ha)

Number	Site	Size, ha	Allocation
4	Land West of Reeds Lane, Moreton	7.5	B1, B2 or B8
5	Slackwood, Plantation Road, Bromborough	6.1 (now 0.98)	B1, B2 or B8
6	RV Chemicals Phase 2, Stadium Road, Bromborough	6.1	B1, B2 or B8
7	QEII Dock, Bankfields Road, Eastham (subject to Coastal Zone Policy CO1 and Policy CO3)	6.0	B1, B2 or B8
8	North Cheshire Trading Estate, Prenton	5.5 (now 0.00)	B1, B2 or B8
9	South of Commercial Road, Bromborough	5.1 (now 1.74)	B1, B2 or B8
10	Bankfields, off North Road, Eastham (subject to Coastal Zone Policy CO1 and Policy CO3)	4.9	B1, B2 or B8
Sub Total		41.2	

Source: UDP for Wirral 2000

Wirral MBC now advise that of these sites, only 27.2 ha remain undeveloped.

Table A3.7 – Land for General Employment Use (Small Sized Sites 1-5 ha)

Number	Site	Size, ha	Allocation
11	North of North Road, Eastham (subject to Coastal Zone Policy CO1 and Policy CO3)	4.2	B1, B2 or B8
12	Former Mollington Street Depot, Tranmere	3.4	B1, B2 or B8
13	Cross Lane Industrial Estate, Wallasey	3.3 (now 1.83)	B1, B2 or B8
14	Former Coal Depot, Wallasey Bridge Road	2.3 (now 0.00)	B1, B2 or B8
15	North and South of Shore Road, Birkenhead (subject to Coastal Zone Policy CO1)	1.9 (now 0.00)	B1, B2 or B8
16	Gallagher's Hill, Corporation Road	1.3 (now 0.41)	B1, B2 or B8
17	Land South of Kelvinside, Seacombe	1.1 (now 0.00)	B1, B2 or B8
18	Former Depot, Birkenhead Road, Seacombe	1.0 (now 0.00)	B1, B2 or B8
19	Tarran Industrial Estate, Moreton	1.0 (now 0.00)	B1, B2 or B8
Sub Total		19.5	

Source: UDP for Wirral 2000

Wirral MBC now advise that that of these sites, over half have been developed with just 9.8 ha remaining.

Proposal EM4 provides 12.2 ha of employment land for the expansion of existing businesses (as shown in Table A3.8 below). However, now just 3.0 ha remains undeveloped.

Table A3.8 – Expansion Land for Existing Businesses

Number	Site	Size, ha	Allocation
1	Rear of Arrowebrook Road, Upton	2.0	Classes B1, B2 or B8 and subject to Policy EM6, Policy EM7 and Policy EM9, should they become surplus to the requirements of the holding company
2	North of Plantation Road, Bromborough	6.0 (now 0.0)	Classes B1, B2 or B8 and subject to Policy EM6, Policy EM7 and Policy EM9, should they become surplus to the requirements of the holding company
3	Former Power Station, Commercial Road, Bromborough (subject to Coastal Zone Policy CO1)	1.9 (now 0.0)	Classes B1, B2 or B8 and subject to Policy EM6, Policy EM7 and Policy EM9, should they become surplus to the requirements of the holding company
4	Land North of Oakdale Road, Seacombe	1.0	Classes B1, B2 or B8 and subject to Policy EM6, Policy EM7 and Policy EM9, should they become surplus to the requirements of the holding company

5	Land South of Oakdale Road, Seacombe	1.3 (now 0.0)	Classes B1, B2 or B8 and subject to Policy EM6, Policy EM7 and Policy EM9, should they become surplus to the requirements of the holding company
Total		12.2	

Source: UDP for Wirral 2000

Land at Dock Road South, Bromborough (Proposal – EM5: 9.7 ha remains undeveloped) is also identified as land for the expansion of existing businesses. The UDP provides a list of general and environmental criteria that must be adhered to regarding new employment development. These are shown in more detail in Table A3.9.

For the purposes of Policy EM6 ‘employment development’ is defined as that falling within Classes B1, B2 or B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, together with the following uses which are specifically excluded from the use classes order:

- (a) Land or buildings used for motor vehicle sales, display, hire or repair
- (b) Scrapyards, or yards used for the storage or distribution of minerals or the breaking of motor vehicles
- (c) Uses involving the manufacture, processing, keeping or use of a hazardous substance above its controlled quantity.

Table A3.9 – General and Environmental Criteria for New Employment Development

Policy	Proposals
Policy EM6 – General Criteria for New Employment Development	Applications for all new employment development will be permitted subject to Policy EM7 and the following criteria:
	(i) The proposal does not lead to an unacceptable loss of amenity, have an adverse effect on the operations of neighbouring uses or compromise the future development of land in the vicinity for employment or other uses - visually intrusive activities, or those involving the handling of wind-blown materials, will be required to carry out all operations, including loading, within a building
	(ii) Satisfactory access to the development can be provided, before it comes into use, in a way which is not detrimental to the amenity of the area
	(iii) The proposal does not generate traffic in excess of that which can be accommodated by the existing or proposed highway network
	(iv) Adequate off-street car and cycle parking is provided - servicing for vehicles should be to the rear of the premises, or where the site lies near residential property, situated at the far side of the building
	(v) The siting, scale, design, choice of materials, boundary treatment and landscaping is of a satisfactory standard and is in keeping with neighbouring uses - temporary buildings or structures will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and only for a period not exceeding five years
	(vi) Where appropriate, the proposal also complies with the policies set out in Section 21 of the UDP

Policy	Proposals
Policy EM7 - Environmental Criteria for New Employment Development	Proposals which satisfy the requirements of Policy EM6 will be permitted when the local planning authority is satisfied that the benefits of the proposal outweigh the disadvantages when assessed against the additional criteria set out below
	(i) The extent to which the proposal will lead to an increase in the volume of traffic, especially heavy goods vehicles, passing through residential areas, particularly where the roads used are not already identified as part of the main road network
	(ii) The extent to which existing natural features and vegetation have been incorporated into the proposal
	(iii) The impact of the proposal on any site carrying nature conservation designations
	(iv) The extent to which the proposal is accessible by a choice of means of transport

Source: UDP for Wirral 2000

In addition to the above, the UDP also refers to Policy EM8 – Development within Primarily Industrial Areas. The policy states that within the Primarily Industrial Areas, proposals for the following uses will be permitted, subject to Policy EM6 and Policy EM7:

- (i) Uses falling within classes B1, B2 or B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987
- (ii) Proposals for the reconstruction, extension or expansion of existing businesses, including those involving the introduction of a notifiable hazardous substance above its controlled quantity subject to Policy PO8.

With regards to the Docklands, Policy EM10 (Birkenhead and Eastham Dock Estates) is relevant. The UDP states in the operational dock areas at Birkenhead and Eastham, development proposals beyond the permitted development rights of the Mersey Docks and the Harbour Company or the Manchester Ship Canal will be subject to Policy EM8, Policy EM9 and, where appropriate, Policy C01. Particular regard will be held to the extent to which proposals will utilise the port and/or associated rail facilities.

However, following a Direction issued by the Secretary of State in September 2007, Policy EM10 is no longer in force. The Dock Estates at Birkenhead and Eastham are now shown as land with no designation in the Local Development Plan.

Wirral Community Strategy – Getting Better Together – 2005-2008 (WMBC, 2005)

Wirral's first Community Strategy was published by the Wirral Strategic Partnership in 2003 but was updated in 2005 to re-focus on the areas that matter most to local people. The 'refreshed' Community Strategy sets out objectives over a three year period aimed at making

Wirral a place where people will want to live, work, visit and invest. The Community Strategy has four main themes. These are:

- Worklessness
- Cohesive sustainable communities
- A quality environment
- Access and equity.

With regards to worklessness, the Community Strategy wants all Wirral residents to have access to well paid jobs and to ensure that a range of opportunities and training are open to all communities, supporting work as an option and the development of an enterprise culture where local businesses are supported and entrepreneurship is encouraged.

The provision of training and ensuring access to local jobs has been identified as important in building a thriving local economy for Wirral. Therefore, the Community Strategy will continue to develop training programmes in the construction, hospitality and childcare sectors to provide opportunities for Wirral residents to gain employment in these industries.

In addition, the Strategy will support the development of SMEs and gain a growing understanding of the needs and barriers to entering self-employment, as well as the contribution of SMEs to Wirral's overall economic performance. The key measures in supporting worklessness activities include:

- Increase the number of business start-ups across Wirral
- Build an enterprise society in which small firms of all kinds thrive and achieve their potential:
 - Increase in the number of people going into business
 - An improvement in the overall productivity of small firms
 - More enterprise in disadvantaged areas
- Increase the number of new businesses/business expansions employing local people
- Increase the number of new Wirral jobs created/attracted.

Wirral's Local Area Agreement 2007-2008 (WMBC, 2007)

This is Wirral's second Local Area Agreement (LAA) and provides an opportunity to deliver local solutions to local needs and issues as a partnership. With regards to Economic Development and Enterprise Needs, the LAA sets the following priorities:

- To increase the number of employment opportunities available to Wirral residents
- To enable more people to access jobs
- To increase the vocational achievement of the workforce.

The LAA states that the overall ambition of the Economic Development and Enterprise theme is to increase Wirral's GVA and the overall productivity in the Borough. GVA in Wirral in 2003 was £2.8 billion and the GVA per capita for the same period was £9,653. By comparison with the rest of Merseyside and the North West this is relatively low.

There has been significant progress made in increasing the number of business start-ups across Wirral, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas. The number of businesses started at the six month review has already exceeded the baseline number for 2005/06. Through NRF commissioning, an enhanced level of support is now available for businesses in Wirral's most disadvantaged communities and this is reflected in the overall number of new starts. The programme has been successful in achieving the target for 2006/07 and the level of achievement in these areas has exceeded the expected level of delivery for the whole of Wirral.

The LAA states that Wirral faces a number of challenges that must be addressed if it is to become a thriving place for enterprise. The key issues are:

- Low rate of business start-ups (although survival rates are improving and are already better than the regional average)
- Low stock of VAT-registered businesses
- Very low job density
- Low rate of self-employment
- Below national average productivity in both manufacturing and services
- Growing gap in skill levels and prosperity within Wirral
- A shortfall in the quantity and quality of sites/premises for modern business needs.

Table A3.10 provides details on objectives relevant to this employment land study.

Table A3.10 – Increase the Number of Employment Opportunities to Wirral Residents

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline (and date)	Targets		
			2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Increase total entrepreneurial activity amongst the local population through increasing the	Number of new business start-ups supported through Wirral Biz or Business Link in Wirral (x these targets are cumulative)	87 (2004/05)	220x	330x	100 Additional

Outcome	Indicator	Baseline (and date)	Targets		
			2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
number of business start-ups, especially in disadvantaged areas	Number of businesses supported through Wirral Biz or Business Link in Wirral still operating 12 months after commencement (x these targets are cumulative)	70 (2004/05)	176x	264x	88 Additional
	Number of business start-ups across Wirral Neighbourhood Renewal Areas	Awaiting full 2006/07 baseline	Targets to be set subject to baseline April 1st		
Support the sustainable growth and reduce the unnecessary failure of locally owned businesses	Number of VAT de-registrations	525 (2005)	525	525	525

Source: Wirral's Local Area Agreement 2007

Wirral Economic Regeneration Strategy 2001-2010 (WMBC, 2000)

In 2000 the Wirral Partnership produced an Economic Regeneration Strategy for Wirral. The Strategy establishes four priorities.

Priority 1: Focusing on a chosen area of the district – in which resources will be focused upon the Employment Corridor and the Pathways Areas to deliver integrated development planning and fulfil the land development, economic and social potential of the area;

Priority 2: Supporting business – whereby business support shall improve the competitive position of Wirral's economy, making the most of new technological development and encouraging the expansion and growth of SMEs through developing supply-chain opportunities and promoting entrepreneurship;

Priority 3: Investing in Wirral's people – in order to improve employability and reduce social exclusion, particularly in the designated Pathway Areas. This included reducing barriers to opportunity and lifelong learning and improving health and community safety;

Priority 4: Infrastructure and the environment – promoting Wirral as a quality location for business development, to improve its physical fabric, public transport links and to promote a better quality environment, including reducing dereliction. Expanding business, culture and leisure tourism is specifically identified.

Beyond the Employment Corridor and Pathways Areas the Strategy sets out the intention to consider selective support for regeneration initiatives in other areas, including Hoylake, the north and west Wirral coasts and the M53 corridor.

Wirral's Regeneration Priorities (WMBC, 2004)

Wirral's Regeneration Priorities updates the Wirral Economic Regeneration Strategy 2001-2010. It seeks to be consistent with the RES and the Merseyside Economic Review 2003. The strategy makes the following key points on the Wirral economy:

- A significant proportion of residents are more than likely to experience unemployment or deprivation or both
- Many people travel outside the area to work
- Dependence on lower value manufacturing and service sector activities with low training achievement such as personal and protective services and plant and machine operatives
- Lack of dynamic higher value sectors such as the knowledge-based sector
- Severe pockets of deprivation persist in the most deprived parts of the Borough
- Wirral has higher than average levels of unemployment
- 150 ha designated for business use but much of this has been available for a while and is clearly not attractive to potential investors. The immediately available, unconstrained land is about 30 hectares. The majority of this land is in the Wirral Employment Corridor, now incorporated into the Wirral WWSIA.

The Wirral Waterfront area includes: WIBP, Twelve Quays, Cammell Laird shipyard, Priory Industrial Estate, Birkenhead and Wallasey Docks, Birkenhead town centre, Hamilton Quarter and Central & North Birkenhead. Other key employment sites in the Borough are: North Cheshire Trading Estate, Carr Lane Hoylake, Moreton and Upton.

The following key points are made with regard to business and enterprise in the Borough:

- Merseyside has an over-representation of high-volume/low-value manufacturing and primary activities
- Strongest employment growth at Woodside, Twelve Quays and WIBP
- Employment growth concentrated amongst smaller companies (below ten employees), there has been little employment growth in larger employers
- Significant job losses amongst major employers
- Number of VAT registrations is below regional and national rate
- Reduction in the number of enquiries from companies located outside the area.

The strategy is concerned with maximising Wirral's opportunity to attract inward investment creating major direct and indirect economic benefits, wealth creation and consequent quality of life improvements. The strategy comprises four themes that are relevant to this study:

- The Maritime Economy – it is believed that this sector will continue to be a key local economic driver. Future activities will continue to be enhanced through the Dockland Development Zone (DDZ), which incorporates part of Twelve Quays
- Opportunity Sites – a number of key sites have been identified:
 - Birkenhead town centre – the central Hind Street area has the potential for commercial/retail use
 - WIBP – employment 'hot spot' and one of the North West's Strategic Regional Sites. The completion of the park will be achieved through the development of key schemes including: The Oracle, The Gateway, Riverview and Greenfield Phase Three
 - Woodside – the site has the potential for significant redevelopment and reshaping as a key commercial and leisure focal point
 - Levers, Port Sunlight – 36 ha of surplus land identified, effective management of the land is an important consideration in the viability of the existing manufacturing complex
- Developing Wirral's key corridors and gateways. A number of key strategic corridors have been identified:
 - The A41
 - Dock road corridor (M53 to Ro-Ro Ferry terminal)
 - Linear retail corridors
- Enterprise Development – this seeks to ensure Wirral has a diverse economy to ensure that it does not become overly dependent upon key sectors and that emerging sectors are recognised and responded to quickly, it identifies that the sub-region needs more entrepreneurs, and seeks to encourage and develop entrepreneurial skills.

A Strategy for Inner Wirral (WMBC, 2004)

The strategy was developed by the Council and Wirral's Local Strategic Partnership and sets out a comprehensive approach to the restructuring of local housing markets in Inner Wirral. Inner Wirral is an area of 1220 ha on the eastern side of the Wirral peninsular. The area is home to some 45,750 people in 23,882 properties.

The strategy has three key themes, including:

- Housing and the environment
- Access to employment

- Community infrastructure.

With regard to Access to Employment the following objectives and outcomes are set (see Table A3.11).

Table A3.11 – Access to Employment Objectives

Objective	Outcome Target (by 2014)
C1	1 million sqm of new, converted, or brought back into use, high quality commercial and employment floorspace is created in the strategic employment areas for the identified growth sectors and clusters, for new and existing investment, and that this is assembled at an average annual rate of 120,000 sqm for the first three years.
C2	To rationalise the amount of vacant industrial and office floorspace in Inner Wirral by reducing the level of vacancy by 50 percent across both sectors, with a particular focus on those areas outside of the strategic employment areas and in close proximity to residential areas.
C3	1500 new SMEs are formed in the strategic employment areas of Inner Wirral and that flexible and secure premises of 464 to 929 sqm are built to meet this expansion.
C4	Reduce the amount of severely and moderately constrained sites, with or without contamination, by 50 percent, with a specific priority for addressing the need to create an attractive business environment around the strategic employment areas in Inner Wirral and also where there is an interface with residential locations.
C6	To enhance the role of Birkenhead town centre as the focus for B1 office development by reducing the vacancy rate in the town centre and providing 46,450 sqm of new and improved office floorspace.

Source: A Strategy for Inner Wirral 2004

Inner Wirral accommodates approximately 202 ha of employment land (as of 1st April 2007), largely focused around Twelve Quays, the Dockland Development Zone, Cammell Laird's and WIBP. The strategy makes the following key points on the economy of Wirral:

- There is an over-supply of employment land in Inner Wirral
- Take-up rates for employment land have been increasing steadily, up to 12 ha per annum. Nonetheless, there is sufficient supply to meet employment needs to 2014. It is therefore crucial to ensure that the right sort of developments take place at these strategic sites
- In 2003, there was over 97,300 sqm of vacant offices in the Wirral (86 percent in Inner Wirral) and just over 49,000 sqm of vacant industrial space, (87 percent in Inner Wirral). A high level of vacancy is a symptom of low demand and presents a very negative image in attracting further investment. In order to stimulate the local economy, reducing the high vacancy rate is crucial. This could possibly be achieved through an active programme of clearance. However the level of demand for floorspace amongst SMEs is high. The majority of enquiries received by Wirral Direct are for premises of upto 464 sqm

- Inner Wirral offers a real mix of high quality and high value office and industrial uses, such as the offices at Egerton House and the industrial units at Maritime Park. However, such developments are next to large swathes of low value and low quality floorspace, large amounts of vacant land and severely constrained sites
- Wirral has 96 ha of severely constrained land and 113 ha of moderately constrained land (the majority of which is in Inner Wirral). Moreover, much of these low quality employment sites are adjacent to residential areas.

RPG13 guidance establishes a clear policy direction for office development to be focussed in the regional towns. The Strategy for Inner Wirral will seek to ensure that Birkenhead town centre capitalises on this. The impetus for this could be provided by the relocation of the Council's office and administration functions from Wallasey.

A Full Employment Strategy for Wirral (WMBC, 2006)

The strategy aims for Wirral to contribute to the economy of the Liverpool City Region, and to build the aspirations of local residents. The goal is to achieve a 76 percent employment rate by 2012, which means placing an additional 9493 people into employment.

Recent research conducted by the Mersey Partnership indicates that the priority growth areas for the Merseyside economy continue to be:

- Construction
- Hospitality and tourism
- Retail
- Health and social care
- Public services, including education
- Port related industries.

With regard to port-related industries, The LCRDP identifies WWSIA as vital in driving economic revitalisation through WIBP, Twelve Quays and the Wallasey and Birkenhead Docklands. It is anticipated that employment growth will result from both the construction phase and its end use.

Embracing Change: An Enterprise Strategy for Wirral (WMBC, 2007)

The Strategy refers to the following key issues apparent in the Borough's economy:

- Low rate of business start-ups
- Low stock of VAT-registered businesses
- Very low job density
- Decline in employment in Wirral since the late 1990s

- Low rate of self-employment
- Below national average productivity in manufacturing and services
- Growing gap in skill levels and prosperity in Wirral
- A shortfall in quantity and quality of sites/premises for modern business needs.

The Strategy provides a list of priorities and action areas (see Table A3.12).

Table A3.12 – Priorities and Action Areas

Priority	Aim	Objective
Priority 1 – Creating an Enterprising Culture	Raising interest in enterprise across Wirral's communities	A more enterprising East Wirral
		Women in enterprise
		Experienced enterprise
		Education in enterprise
Priority 2 – Supporting Enterprise Success	Addressing those secondary factors that underpin enterprise	Creating enterprise space
		Managing enterprise space
		Enterprise friendly Wirral
Priority 3 – Maximising Enterprise Returns	Maximising the competitiveness of existing business, start-ups and entrepreneurs	Enterprising start-ups
		Enterprising businesses

Source: *An Enterprise Strategy for Wirral 2007*

Priority 2 is focused on tackling the supply side that provides the backbone for enterprise. It is acknowledged that there is a need to ensure that the stock of business premises is of a sufficient quality to provide entrepreneurs with a place to set up and to grow their businesses and to reduce accommodation-based barriers to firm creation. It is also acknowledged there is need to ensure that existing stock is efficiently utilised. The following evidence is referred to:

- Wirral has an inadequate supply of start-up and small office space
- 95 percent of enquiries are for properties of less than 979 sqm, however just a third of properties are suitable
- 75 percent of enquiries are for space below 93 sqm
- Weak inward investment performance
- Too few people travelling into Wirral to set up their businesses.

Area Action 2A refers to the need to increase the quantity of high-quality business space through the stimulation and attraction of private sector investment as the primary developer of business space. It is proposed that this will be achieved through:

- Help private developers to appreciate the scale of the potential market for start-ups

- Fill any gaps in private sector provision for size/type through information, policy support and (as a last resort) gap funding to ensure that provision meets particular sectoral or start-up needs.

The Strategy states that amount of business space needs to increase. In 2004, there was 1.6 million sqm of industrial and 288,000 sqm of office floorspace in Wirral. Of this, there is vacant industrial floorspace amounting 32,200 sqm, and 6782 sqm of vacant office space. Although these figures do not take into account future developments, this level of provision will not be sufficient to house the volume of businesses needed to close the business stock gap with the North West average. If the business stock gap were to be closed there would need to be at least:

- 83,600 sqm of industrial floorspace
- 130,060 sqm of office floorspace
- 102,190 sqm of retail floorspace.

These figures are based on a calculation of average employment in the sectors which need to grow, projected employment numbers, the land use requirements of these sectors, and employment densities for these types of land.

Wirral's Future – Open to All: An Investment Strategy for Wirral (WMBC 2007)

The strategy's vision for Wirral is as follows: *"...together with our partners, Wirral Council is committed to encouraging focused and dynamic development while maintaining and enhancing Wirral's unique character and high quality of life. The new Investment Strategy will ensure Wirral continues to be a prosperous and sustainable place to invest in, live, work and visit."* A number of opportunities and challenges are identified under the headings of:

- Infrastructure
- Business
- Skills and education
- People and jobs
- Quality of life.

These are highlighted in Table A3.13.

Table A3.13 – Opportunities and Challenges for Wirral

Opportunities	Challenges
Infrastructure	
A co-ordinated development strategy for Wirral's Waterfront and Docklands led by world class developers	Poor capital base for manufacturing with old stock and units
The regeneration of Birkenhead, New Brighton and the Dee Coast	
Approximately 217 ha of land available for high quality development opportunities	Shortfall in quantity and quality of sites/premises for modern business needs
Housing Market Renewal investment	Evidence of market failure in the most deprived areas
Business	
High value manufacturing base	Low productivity and VAT-registrations
Significant R&D investment opportunities including investment in the IT sector. In addition the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative provides the opportunity to create an enterprise culture	
Skills and Education	
Average/above average levels of overall skills and an excellent educational offer	Low level of graduate retention due to shortage of higher skilled employment opportunities and low rate of self employment
A co-ordinated approach to employer engagement and workforce development	Significant pockets of inequalities including low skill levels and a poor performance
People and Jobs	
Full employment strategy	Low job density and leakage out of the economy of residents travelling outside of Wirral to work. Population decline and an ageing population
Sub-regional working through City Employment Strategy	
Innovate programme of engagement through 'Reach Out'	
Quality of Life	
High quality of life and Wirral's improving tourism offer following the successful 2006 Open Championship	Lack of clear Wirral package and brand

Source: Investment Strategy for Wirral 2007

The following projects are identified as priorities:

- Mersey Waterfront Regional Park
- Brand New Brighton
- West Wirral Development
- Wirral Docklands and Woodside
- WWSIA
- Wirral Strategic Rail and Road Transport and Infrastructure
- Birkenhead Town Centre.