

<b>20. THE COASTAL ZONE</b>
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## PART ONE POLICY

**POLICY COA1 - PRINCIPLES FOR THE COASTAL ZONE**

**THERE WILL BE A COASTAL ZONE IN WIRRAL. IT'S BOUNDARIES ARE AS SHOWN ON THE PROPOSALS MAP. WITHIN THE COASTAL ZONE PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT WILL HAVE TO SATISFY ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONTROL CRITERIA RELATED TO:**

- (i) PRESERVING AND ENHANCING THE CHARACTER OF THE COAST, IN PARTICULAR, IT'S NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION AND THE QUALITY OF THE COASTAL LANDSCAPE;**
- (ii) DIRECTING DEVELOPMENT APPROPRIATE TO THE COASTAL ZONE TO THE DEVELOPED COAST;**
- (iii) PROVISION FOR APPROPRIATE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND RECREATION, AND (WITHIN THE DEVELOPED COAST) EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT; AND**
- (iv) THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF BATHING AND COASTAL WATERS.**

**POLICY COA1 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 20.1 Wirral's coast is approximately forty-one kilometres long and, directly or indirectly, has a major influence on the character of the Borough. The coast is of considerable importance for nature conservation and also plays an important leisure and recreation role particularly on the north Wirral and Dee coasts. Much of the Mersey coast is heavily developed.
- 20.2 A number of principles have underpinned the definition of the Coastal Zone, namely:
- the geographical extent of coastal natural processes - the limit in the seaward direction being the mean low water mark
  - the limit of human activities related to the coast, including industry, tourism and recreation
  - incorporation of that land which is clearly "coastal" in character but which is not necessarily affected by coastal processes
- 20.3 The inner boundary of the Coastal Zone varies considerably within Wirral, reflecting the differing influence of these factors. The Coastal Zone is at it's broadest on the north Wirral coast and along the Dee Estuary. With the exception of West Kirby and Hoylake, which can be considered to be developed residential coastline, this is essentially undeveloped coastline

where coastal influences and "coastal character" clearly extend further inland. This stretch of coastline is also important for coast-related recreation, nature conservation, archaeology and has a wide tidal range.

- 20.4 By contrast, the Coastal Zone along the River Mersey is more narrowly defined, reflecting the fact that much of this stretch has been developed for residential and industrial purposes and as a result the influence of coastal processes and coastal character does not extend far inland. This is particularly the case between New Brighton and Seacombe. South of this point, the Mersey coast is heavily industrialised with the exception of short stretches at New Ferry and Eastham, much of it with industries and activities which require a coastal location.
- 20.5 The Council's central aim is the preservation and enhancement of the character of the coast. Much of Wirral's coastline is of national and international importance for nature conservation. Along with other estuaries in the North West Region, the Dee and Mersey contribute to one of the most significant wetland habitats for birds in western Europe. However, it is the visual quality of the Wirral coastline rather than its nature conservation value which attracts many visitors, particularly to the Dee coast. Protection of landscape quality particularly on the undeveloped coastline is thus of considerable importance.
- 20.6 Stretches of the developed coast have considerable economic resource value as a location for uses which require a coastal location, for example, the Tranmere Oil Terminal, the Birkenhead and Wallasey Docks and the Eastham Locks/ QEII Dock Complex. There are also a number of significant development sites along the Mersey coast, including the former docks at Twelve Quays, at Cammell Lairds and at a number of sites in the Bromborough and Eastham areas which have a potentially important role to play in securing the Local Planning Authority's urban regeneration objectives. This will also help to secure the protection of the undeveloped coast.
- 20.7 The issue of bathing and coastal water quality has been thrown into sharp focus by the need for Britain to comply with two EC Directives covering Urban Waste Water and Bathing Water. Both require the achievement of certain standards by an end date. In the case of the Bathing Water Directive, the Government is committed to achieving compliance by 1995, while the Urban Waste Water Directive has to be implemented either by the year 2000 or by the year 2005 depending on the size of the population.
- 20.8 The Bathing Water Directive requires that "identified bathing waters" be brought into compliance with limit values for specified bacteria. All four of the identified bathing beaches in Wirral met EC standards during 1994, with Dee Lane in West Kirby, meeting the standards for the first time in the four years the site has been monitored. Another of the beaches, Pasture Road in Moreton, had one of the best results for the whole of the North West Region.

- 20.9 In practice, further significant improvements in the quality of the Borough's bathing waters will be difficult to achieve without major investment in improved sewage treatment. With the exception of primary treatment at the Target Road Sewage Works at Heswall, sewage is discharged from the area into the River Mersey/ north Wirral coast in an untreated state, apart from the screening of solids.
- 20.10 The UDP has a role to play both in terms of the control of potentially polluting development and also by identifying sites for sewage treatment works and outfalls and land-use policies relating to these matters can be found in Section 17, Section 19 and Section 21 of the Plan.
- 20.11 The UDP forms only one element of a package of measures concerned with the management of Wirral's coastline. The Leisure Services and Tourism Department produced a Coast Management Policy in 1989 which concentrated on managing the recreational use of the coastline. The Borough Engineer's Department also has a significant role through their responsibility for coastal and sea protection infrastructure, most of which is concentrated on the north Wirral and Mersey coasts.
- 20.12 Wirral Borough Council is also involved in the preparation of non-statutory, inter-agency, management plans for the Dee and Mersey Estuaries. The Dee Estuary Strategy was published in January 1996 and has been prepared on behalf of the Dee Estuary Forum by a Project Officer initially employed by English Nature. The Dee Estuary Forum comprises representatives from local authorities, the Environment Agency, conservation organisations and other interested groups. The aim of the Strategy is to achieve the "conservation and sustainable multi-use of the natural resource; providing a policy framework for integrating current and future uses and interests in the Estuary".
- 20.13 The Mersey Estuary Management Plan was published in February 1996. It was prepared by The University of Liverpool who began work on the draft Management Plan in 1992. The need for a management plan was agreed in 1990 by the Mersey Basin Campaign's Estuary Project Group, on which Wirral is represented. The aim of the Mersey Estuary Management Plan is "to provide an advisory framework for the future management of the Mersey Estuary within which existing interests can be safeguarded and development proposals evaluated, to enable the realisation of the fullest possible potential of the Estuary as a national resource".
- 20.14 The completed management plans provide important input into both the statutory and non-statutory planning and management of the estuaries. The presence of many different ownerships, users and other interests affecting the Dee and Mersey estuaries in particular could lead to conflicts in the management of the coastal waters. Advice contained within these management plans will be of particular value in helping to minimise these conflicts.

20.15 These management initiatives are now moving into the implementation phase, and action programmes have been prepared for both the Dee and Mersey Estuaries.

### **Policy CO1 - Development Within the Developed Coastal Zone**

**Development will be permitted within the Developed Coastal Zone subject to the following criteria:**

- (i) the development requires a coastal location, unless the applicant can demonstrate that there are no alternative sites outside the Coastal Zone capable of accommodating the proposed development;**
- (ii) the proposal will not adversely affect coastal and marine nature conservation or earth science, archaeology, urban or rural landscape value or visual quality; and**
- (iii) the proposal does not reduce the effectiveness or impede the maintenance of sea defence or coastal protection structures and additionally satisfies the requirements in Policy CO5 and Policy CO6 relating to development in areas at risk from flooding and erosion.**

**Public access to the coast will be expected to be preserved and, where practical and safe to do so, enhanced.**

**The Local Planning Authority will also have regard to possible cumulative impacts resulting from the combination of the proposal with other existing or proposed developments in the Coastal Zone.**

### **POLICY CO1 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

20.16 Policy CO1 sets out a number of criteria which will be applied to developments above the High Water Mark, other than to coastal or sea defence works, within the developed parts of the Coastal Zone. These criteria, particularly the requirement for a coastal location, reflect the national planning advice set out in PPG20.

20.17 The reasoned justification for Policy COA1 has outlined the importance of much of the coast for nature conservation. Given this situation, impact on nature conservation must be a key factor when assessing new proposals for development in the Coastal Zone. Particular regard will be had to the impact of development, in the industrial area around Bromborough and Eastham, on the Mersey Estuary SSSI. In this respect, the cumulative effect of a proposal, when combined with other existing or proposed developments within the Coastal Zone will be an important consideration. In general, development will not normally be permitted which would have a detrimental effect on nature conservation and where such an effect cannot be resolved through the use of planning conditions or Section 106 legal agreements. Further policy guidance on the assessment of proposals on nature conservation can be found in

Section 13 of the UDP.

- 20.18 A key feature of Wirral's coastline is the high degree of public access to the coast, and a long-standing objective of the Council has been the completion of a continuous coastal route for pedestrians and cyclists. While this is substantially complete along the Dee Estuary and the north Wirral coast, substantial gaps exist along the Mersey coast, to the south of Seacombe. New development in these localities should make specific provision for public access to the coast where it is practical and safe to do so.
- 20.19 No development in the Coastal Zone should lead to a reduction in public access to the coast, and indeed where possible, should enhance it. Where this is not possible, Section 106 legal agreements may be used to secure alternative linkages.

#### **Policy CO2 - Development Within the Undeveloped Coastal Zone**

**Within the Undeveloped Coastal Zone, small-scale facilities for tourism and water-based recreation will be permitted subject to the following criteria:**

- (i) the proposal clearly requires a coastal location;
- (ii) is located unobtrusively and will not cause disturbance to areas of quiet enjoyment of the coast;
- (iii) the proposal will not adversely affect coastal and marine nature conservation or earth science, archaeology, landscape value or visual quality; and
- (iv) does not reduce the effectiveness or impede the maintenance of sea defence or coastal protection structures, and additionally satisfies the requirements in Policy CO5 and Policy CO6 relating to development in areas at risk from flooding and erosion.

**The Local Planning Authority will also have regard to possible cumulative impacts resulting from the combination of the proposal with other existing or proposed developments in the Coastal Zone.**

#### **POLICY CO2 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 20.20 Few developments require a coastal location, and the undeveloped coast should not be expected to accommodate new development which could be located inland or in existing developed areas. Where a coastal location is required, then the developed coast is the most appropriate location. Not only will this minimise the loss of undeveloped coastline but development here will help to secure wider urban regeneration objectives.

- 20.21 The fact that much of the landward undeveloped coast is Green Belt, and that the intertidal areas are covered by statutory nature conservation designations, provides strong safeguards against inappropriate development in the Undeveloped Coastal Zone. Policy CO2, therefore, provides further guidance on the two uses which may be appropriate within the undeveloped coast. Policy CO2 should, in particular, be read in conjunction with the policies for Green Belt and nature conservation which can be found in Section 7 and Section 13 of the UDP.
- 20.22 Small-scale visitor facilities for tourism or water-based recreation are considered acceptable on the undeveloped coast but only where this could be accommodated without detriment to nature conservation and areas of quiet enjoyment of the coast. This means that facilities for noisy watersports should normally be confined to the urban coast. As with the developed coast, the Local Planning Authority will need to be satisfied that proposals which individually may be acceptable do not have a detrimental impact when combined with other existing or proposed development.

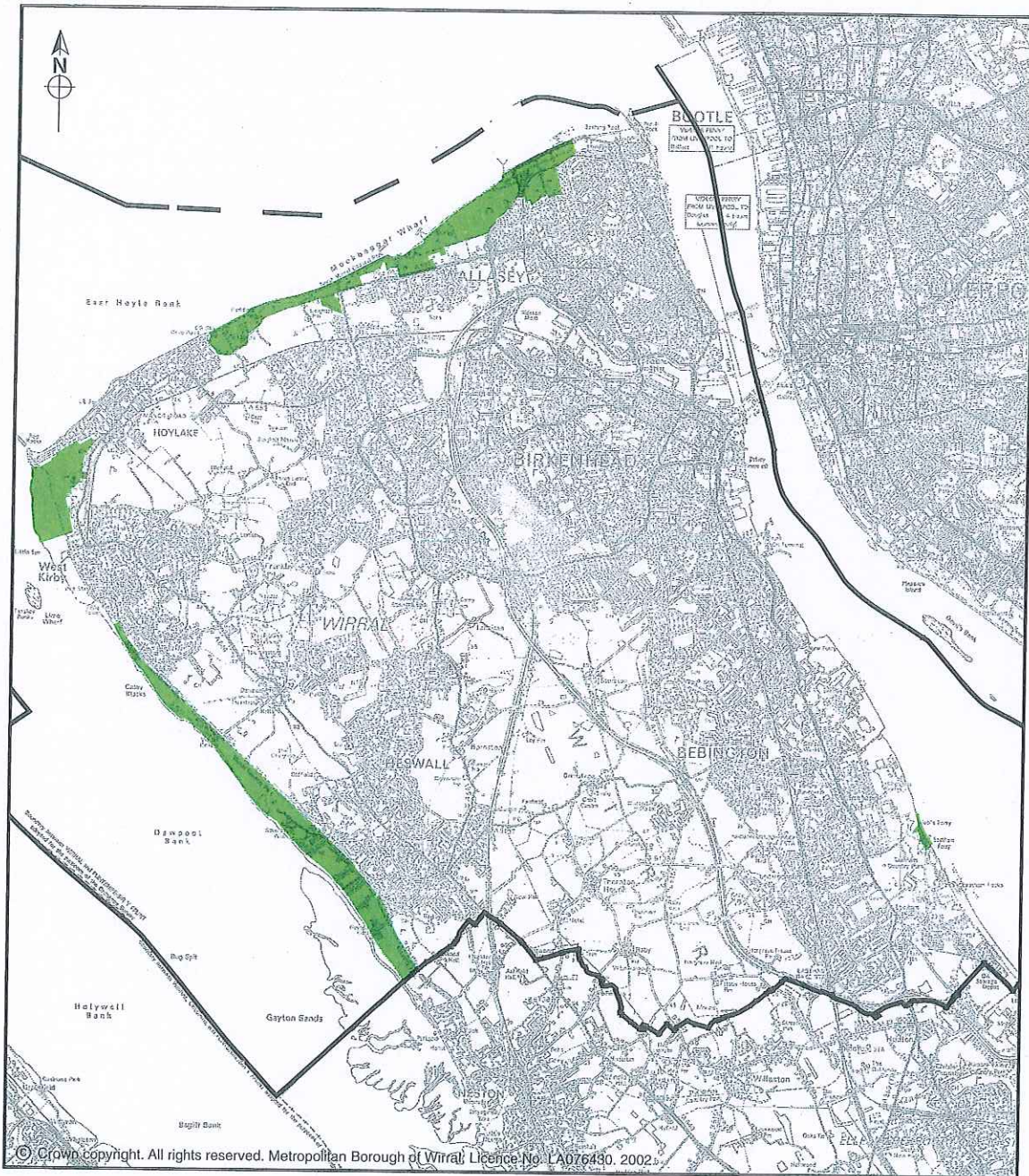
### **Policy CO3 - Tourism and Leisure in the Coastal Zone**

**The following sites allocated for employment or mixed-uses are considered to offer opportunities to enhance access to the coast and to offer opportunities for tourism and coast-related development. Proposals for development on these sites should, where practical and safe to do so, specifically provide for coastal access and an element of coast-related recreation or tourism as part of the overall development of the site:**

1. **Twelve Quays, Birkenhead (Proposal EM3/1)**
2. **Cammell Laird Shipyard, Birkenhead (Proposal EM1)**
3. **Former Power Station, Power Road, Bromborough (Proposal EM3/3)**

### **POLICY CO3 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 20.23 Promotion of access to the coast for tourism and informal recreation is seen as a high priority by the Council. The coast is also important for formal sport, with facilities such as the Marine Lake at West Kirby being of regional importance. However, formal sport needs careful control to avoid conflict with other uses.
- 20.24 Policy CO1 and Policy CO2 have already established the principle that anything other than small-scale visitor facilities for tourism and water-based recreation should normally be confined to the developed coast. There are a number of opportunities in New Brighton, and in addition, the three sites listed under Policy CO3, which are allocated elsewhere within the UDP for employment or mixed-uses, also fall within the developed coastline and represent an opportunity to enhance the provision of coast-related tourism or recreation facilities in a way that also contributes to urban regeneration.



Map 8

### Areas of Developed and Undeveloped Coast within the Wirral Coastal Zone

 Undeveloped coast

NB: For illustrative purposes only.  
Not to scale.

- 20.25 The main potential of the former Power Station site in Bromborough and the Twelve Quays site in Wallasey, lies in the further opening up of the coast to public access. This also applies to the Cammell Laird site, but this site also has the potential for more substantial development which could further exploit the existing fitting-out basin, for example, as a marina. This site lies within the area of the Merseyside Development Corporation which is involved in dialogue with Wirral Borough Council and others over the future use of this site, a dialogue that will extend beyond the life of the MDC.
- 20.26 The Coastal Management Plan produced by the Leisure Services and Tourism Department provides an important framework for aspects of recreational management which fall outside the land-use planning system, including for example, the value of promoting "honey pot" sites located away from sensitive locations. The Leisure Services and Tourism Department also has long-standing plans to expand shore facilities at the West Kirby Marine Lake.

#### **Policy CO4 - Criteria for Coastal Protection and Sea Defence Works**

**Proposals for new coastal protection and sea defence works will be permitted subject to the following criteria:**

- (i) the works are necessary to protect life, existing built development or fixed capital assets which cannot be relocated inland;**
- (ii) other options for achieving the same end have been considered, including managed retreat and other soft engineering techniques;**
- (iii) allowance has been made for sea level rise;**
- (iv) impacts on sediment movement within the same sedimentary cell have been examined and minimised;**
- (v) impacts on landscape character and visual quality have been minimised, particularly within Areas of Special Landscape Value and along the undeveloped part of the coastline;**
- (vi) the works safeguard sites of international, national and special local importance for nature conservation and earth science on both the landward and seaward sides of the coast;**
- (vii) impacts on the archaeological resource are identified and assessed to minimise potential loss or damage.**
- (viii) the works preserve and enhance public access to the coastline, and do not impede navigation;**
- (ix) satisfactory measures are proposed to minimise the environmental impact of any construction activity; and**
- (x) the works do not increase the risk of coastal erosion or flooding elsewhere.**



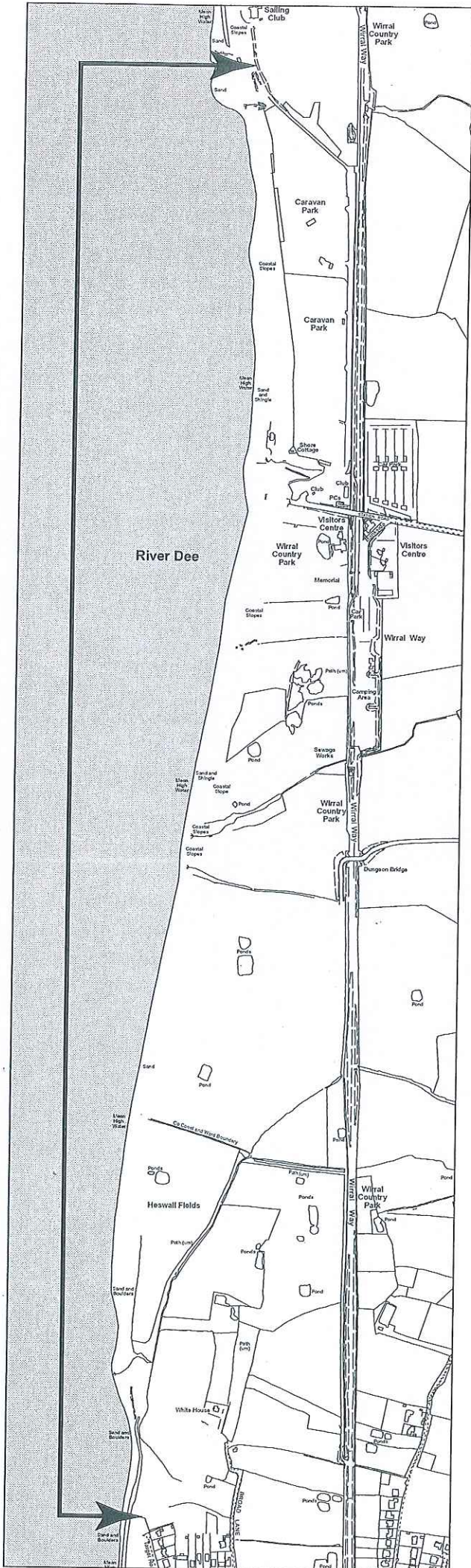
## POLICY CO4 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 20.27 In the Mersey Estuary, a large proportion of the waterfront now consists of the vertical walls of promenades, Docks and private, industrial premises. In the Dee Estuary, a sandstone wall was constructed at Gayton, but is now rarely reached by the tide. North of this, the Dee Cliffs at Thurstaston, are vulnerable to erosion and the resultant land loss is a serious threat to the recreational activities which take place on the cliff tops. However, this has to be balanced against the ecological status of the cliffs, because their value as a Site of Special Scientific Interest lies in the plant successions resulting from erosion. Further north again, at West Kirby and Hoylake, there are promenades and a Marine Lake which can be overtopped by high tides.
- 20.28 Coast protection and sea defence structures exist along the entire north Wirral coast. The Wallasey Embankment protects low-lying land, and small island breakwaters at Leasowe and New Brighton are designed to encourage deposition and thus raise beach levels.
- 20.29 There is growing world-wide concern about the possible impact of sea level rises resulting from global warming. In the Wirral context, the Flood Defence Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, considers that the best estimate of sea level rise for the North West Region of the Environment Agency is 4.0 millimetres each year or 0.2 metres over 50 years; and for the Welsh Region of the Environment Agency, 5.0 millimetres each year or 0.25 metres over 50 years. It is, therefore, considered that only limited areas of Wirral, such as the Gayton Marsh area, are at risk from tidal flooding as a result of sea level rise.
- 20.30 Projects for new flood defence works require planning permission and are covered by the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 (SI 1199). Improvement works have deemed planning permission but are subject to the similar Land Drainage Improvement Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988 (SI 1217). Coast protection works require planning permission and are subject to environmental assessment under the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) (Amendment) Regulations 1994 (SI 677).
- 20.31 Policy CO4 is, therefore, intended to ensure that all the potential impacts of sea defence and coastal protection works are taken into account. In particular, it establishes the principle that new defence protection works should only be constructed where they are necessary to protect life, existing built development or other fixed capital assets. The desirability of preserving the character and amenity of the undeveloped coast means that in these areas, the emphasis should be on natural sea or coastal defences and allowing the coast to adjust to changing conditions. This approach will also

# Land Liable to Erosion by the Sea

(See Policies CO5 and CO6.)

For illustrative purposes only  
Not to Scale

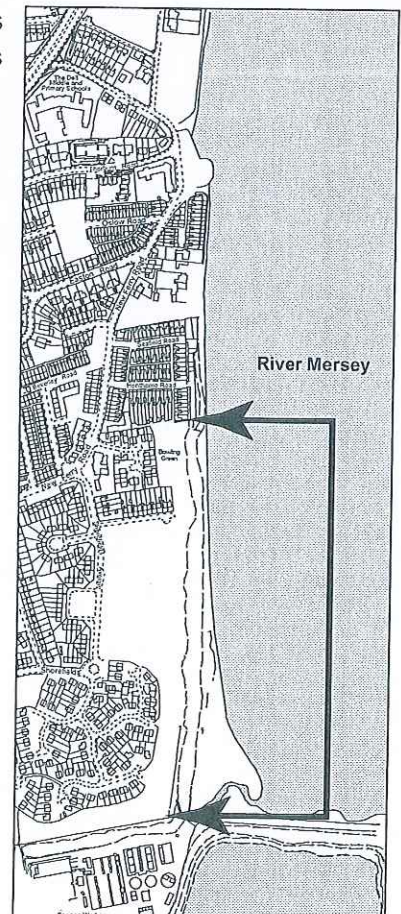


## Thurstaston Cliffs

Area liable to erosion lies between the two arrows. The predicted recession rate from the top of the cliff is 0.5m per year.

## New Ferry Cliffs

Area liable to erosion lies between the two arrows. The predicted recession rate from the top of the cliff is 0.5m per year.



safeguard the acknowledged nature conservation importance of much of the undeveloped coastline.

#### **Policy CO5 - Development Requiring Additional Coastal Defence Works**

**Within areas considered to be at risk from coastal flooding or erosion, development will only be permitted where this would not necessitate the construction of additional sea defence or coastal protection works.**

#### **POLICY CO5 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 20.32 Policy CO4 has established the principle of limiting the spread of sea defence and coast protection works along the coast unless these are necessary to protect existing development. Allowing new development in areas prone to flooding and erosion where this would require the construction of additional sea defence and coastal protection works is therefore unacceptable. Policies designed to prevent flooding are also contained within Section 19 of the UDP.

#### **Policy CO6 - Development within Areas at Risk of Coastal Erosion**

**Development proposed within areas likely to be affected by coastal erosion or land instability should comply with Policy PO7, but will only be permitted where erosion or landslips are not likely to occur during the lifetime of the building.**

#### **POLICY CO6 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

- 20.33 Even where a proposed building is not at immediate risk from erosion, and coastal defence works are not required in order to enable the development to proceed, such development will not be permitted where it is likely to be at risk from erosion at any time during its anticipated lifespan such that new coastal defences would be required. This reinforces the principle, established by Policy CO4 and Policy CO5, of restricting the construction of new coastal defence works to those necessary to protect existing development. Policy PO7, which can be found in Section 21 of the Plan, provides additional guidance for development on unstable land.
- 20.34 Areas known to be at risk of coastal erosion are shown on Map 9.

#### **Policy CO7 - Criteria for Development in the Inter-Tidal Zone**

**Proposals for structures in the Coastal Zone, part or all of which are below the High Water Mark, other than for coastal protection and sea defence works, will be permitted subject to the following criteria:**

- (i) the proposal requires a location on or near the foreshore or in coastal waters;

- (ii) the proposal should not interfere with navigation in the Dee Estuary or Mersey Estuary or along the North Wirral Foreshore, nor prejudice the operation of commercial fisheries;
- (iii) impacts on sedimentary movement within the same sedimentary cell have been examined and minimised;
- (iv) the proposal does not reduce the effectiveness or impede the maintenance of sea defence or coastal protection structures and does not increase the risk of flooding or coastal erosion elsewhere;
- (v) the proposal will not adversely affect coastal and marine nature conservation or earth science, archaeology, landscape character or visual quality;
- (vi) public access is preserved or enhanced unless this would be impractical; and
- (vii) any associated on-shore facilities satisfy the requirements of Policy CO1 and Policy CO2.

The Local Planning Authority will also have regard to possible cumulative impacts resulting from the combination of the proposal with other existing or proposed development in the Coastal Zone.

#### **POLICY CO7 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION**

20.35 Policy CO7 is intended to cover development in the inter-tidal zone such as slipways, jetties, piers and outfalls. The key additional criteria relate to the need to ensure that navigation and the operation of commercial fisheries is not impeded and that the impact on sedimentary movement is considered. New development requiring direct access to the water should normally be located near existing facilities. Facilities in other locations will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, subject to any proposal satisfying the requirements of Policy CO1 and Policy CO2.

#### **Policy CO8 - Development in the Coastal Zone Requiring Environmental Assessment**

Where the nature and scale of a development proposal within the Coastal Zone requires that an environmental assessment be submitted, the statement should address the following issues, in addition to other specified information:

- (i) the necessity for location on the coast/ intertidal zone/ in coastal waters;
- (ii) the degree of modification of physical features of the Coastal Zone;
- (iii) implications for sea defences, coastal protection and sediment movement;

- (iv) **impacts on landscape character and visual quality, particularly within Areas of Special Landscape Value and along the undeveloped parts of the coastline;**
- (v) **impacts on ecological values, and particularly on sites of importance for nature conservation or earth science;**
- (vi) **implications for the archaeological resource, with impacts identified and assessed to minimise potential loss or damage;**
- (vii) **possible conflicts with other uses and measures intended to mitigate these;**
- (viii) **impacts on navigation and public access to the coastline;**
- (ix) **impacts on local amenity and any public amenity benefit resulting from the project;**
- (x) **any associated environmental benefit resulting from the project, such as habitat creation, restoration or enhancement; and**
- (xi) **availability of parking and effects on traffic circulation, where relevant.**

#### POLICY CO8 - REASONED JUSTIFICATION

- 20.36 Major developments such as ports, power stations, waste disposal installations and oil refineries are categorised as "Schedule 1" developments by the Town and Country Planning (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1988, as amended, and submission of an Environmental Statement (ES) is mandatory. Other development such as land reclamation, minerals extraction, oil and gas terminals are classified as "Schedule 2" developments for which the Local Planning Authority has discretionary powers to require that an ES be submitted.
- 20.37 While the regulations identify specified information which an ES *must* include, Policy CO8 provides additional guidance for developments within the Coastal Zone reflecting the particular circumstances within this area. An ES for a proposed development should address these issues as part of the information requirements specified in the Regulations. The environmental sensitivity of much of the Wirral coastline has already been highlighted, and the Local Planning Authority does not consider major development to be appropriate within areas of open coast.
- 20.38 Although it now seems unlikely to proceed, in the event of any revived proposal for a barrage across the River Mersey, the Local Planning Authority would require the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (under the terms of Schedule 2 of the Regulations), which would especially have to consider impacts on the hydrodynamics and nature conservation value of the Mersey Estuary.

